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NAMES AND ORDER OF THE BOOKS OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS WITH THE APOCRYPHAL/ DEUTEROCANONICAL BOOKS

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2 Kings (4 Kingdoms in Greek)	559
1 Chronicles (1 Paralipomenon in Greek)	605
2 Chronicles (2 Paralipomenon in Greek)	647
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Proverbs	938
Ecclesiastes	986
Song of Solomon	1000
Isaiah	1011
Jeremiah	1110
Lamentations	1208
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Daniel	1302
Hosea	1329
Joel	1347
Amos	1355
Obadiah	1370
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Micah	1379
Nahum	1391
Habakkuk	1396
Zephaniah	1402
Haggai	1408
Zechariah	1412
Malachi	1428

The Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books

The Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books are listed here in four groupings, as follows:

(a) *Books and Additions to Esther and Daniel that are in the Roman Catholic, Greek, and Slavonic Bibles*

Tobit 1437
Judith 1459
The Additions to the Book of Esther
(with a translation of the entire Greek text of Esther) 1481
Wisdom of Solomon 1497
Ecclesiasticus, or the Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach 1530
Baruch 1617
The Letter of Jeremiah (= Baruch ch. 6) 1627
The Additions to the Book of Daniel
The Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Jews 1632
Susanna 1637
Bel and the Dragon 1641
1 Maccabees 1645
2 Maccabees 1691

(b) *Books in the Greek and Slavonic Bibles; not in the Roman Catholic Canon*

1 Esdras (= 2 Esdras in Slavonic, = 3 Esdras in Appendix to Vulgate) 1723
Prayer of Manasseh (in Appendix to Vulgate) 1746
Psalm 151, following Psalm 150 in the Greek Bible 1749
3 Maccabees 1752

(c) *In the Slavonic Bible and in the Latin Vulgate Appendix*

2 Esdras (= 3 Esdras in Slavonic, = 4 Esdras in Vulgate Appendix)
(Note: In the Latin Vulgate, Ezra-Nehemiah = 1 and 2 Esdras.) 1768

(d) *In an Appendix to the Greek Bible*

4 Maccabees 1814

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Mark 1915
Luke 1953
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2 Corinthians 2164
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1 Thessalonians 2218
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2 Peter 2286
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2 John 2300
3 John 2302
Jude 2304
Revelation 2307

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Baruch	1617
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Haggai	1408
Hebrews	2250
Hosea	1329
Isaiah	1011
James	2269
Jeremiah	1110
Job	749
Joel	1347
John	2011
1 John	2292
2 John	2300
3 John	2302
Jonah	1374
Joshua	326
Jude	2304
Judges	367
Judith	1459
1 Kings	509
2 Kings	559
Lamentations	1208
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1 Maccabees	1645
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3 Maccabees	1752
4 Maccabees	1814
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Mark	1915
Matthew	1857
Micah	1379

Nahum 1391
Nehemiah 717
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Obadiah 1370
1 Peter 2277
2 Peter 2286
Philemon 2247
Philippians 2202
Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Jews 1632
Prayer of Manasseh 1746
Proverbs 938
Psalm 151 1749
Psalms 797
Revelation 2307
Romans 2114
Ruth 408
1 Samuel 416
2 Samuel 466
Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) 1530
Song of Solomon 1000
Susanna 1637
1 Thessalonians 2218
2 Thessalonians 2225
1 Timothy 2229
2 Timothy 2238
Titus 2243
Tobit 1437
Wisdom of Solomon 1497
Zechariah 1412
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INTRODUCTION

TO THE

HARPER COLLINS STUDY BIBLE

By Wayne A. Meeks

THE BIBLE IS THE MOST FAMILIAR BOOK in the English-speaking world; certainly it is the one most often published and most widely owned. Yet many a serious reader has found it one of the strangest of books. This paradox arises from factors in the book's history as well as from dimensions of our own history that have shaped the expectations with which we begin to read.

Enabling the Reader to Read

The most elementary of the obstacles standing in the way of reading the Bible is that its component parts were originally written in languages most of us do not know. Reading must therefore begin with a translation. The New Revised Standard Version stands in a tradition, many centuries old, of translating the Bible so that ordinary people can understand it when it is read aloud in worship gatherings or when they study it for themselves. More immediately, the NRSV stands in a direct succession from the King James Version of 1611 (as Professor Metzger explains in the Translation Committee's preface, pp. xxv–xxx). The NRSV is one among a large number of recent translations of the whole or parts of the Bible that together give to the present generation of English readers an unprecedented variety of fresh renderings of the original languages. All these are informed by significant advances in historical, archaeological, and linguistic knowledge that have occurred in recent decades.

The NRSV is selected for this *HarperCollins Study Bible* for several reasons, of which two are most significant. First, the declared intention of the Translation Committee to produce a translation "as literal as possible" makes this version well adapted for *study*. For example, careful reading is enhanced when we can observe such things as the recurrence of certain key words; if these are rendered into our language with some consistency, the task is obviously easier. Second, the NRSV was designed to be as *inclusive* as possible, in two different senses. It includes the most complete range of biblical books representing the several differing canons of scripture (about which more will be said below) than any other English version. In addition, it avoids language that might inappropriately suggest limits of gender.

Yet even the most excellent translation from the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts cannot by itself completely remove the strangeness that many modern

readers sense when they encounter the Bible. It is, after all, an ancient book. Indeed, it is a collection—no, several collections—of books that were formed and written in cultures distant from our own not only in time and space but also in character. Indeed, what is required of us as readers is rather to enter, through these texts, into another world of meaning. Only when we have sensed the peculiarity and integrity of that other world can we build a bridge of understanding between it and our own. The introductions and notes accompanying the text in the *HarperCollins Study Bible* are designed to provide readers with information that will make it easier to use this excellent translation for the deeper kind of translation readers must make for themselves: the actual encounter with the multiple worlds of meaning that these texts can reveal.

With the aim of removing as many obstacles as possible between readers and the text, the notes in this volume provide several kinds of information. First, they point to characteristics of the language that are significant for meaning. These include the biblical writers' choice of words, the formal patterns of speech, the styles and genres of ancient literature that appear in the texts, and the rhetorical strategies—familiar to ancient readers but foreign to us—adopted by the writers. Second, the notes contain facts about historical events alluded to in the texts or underlying their message. Many of these facts have come to light through modern archaeological discoveries and the analysis of ancient inscriptions and other material evidence. Comparisons and contrasts between the biblical writings and other writings from around the same time and from the same part of the world also help to place them in their historical context. Third, the notes call attention to echoes between different texts of scripture. Sometimes these are direct quotations or paraphrases of earlier texts by later ones. At other times, they represent parallel formulations of common traditions or retellings of familiar stories in new settings. Fourth, the notes sometimes illuminate ambiguities in the text, multiple possibilities that the original languages leave open but that cannot be directly expressed by a single English translation.

One Book or Many?

Anyone who looks carefully at the Bible will be struck by the immense variety of its contents. Here we have prose and poetry, expansive narratives and short stories, legal codes embedded in historical reports, hymns and prayers, quoted archival documents, quasi-mythic accounts of things that happened "in the beginning" or in God's court in heaven, collections of proverbs, maxims, aphorisms, and riddles, letters to various groups, and reports of mysterious revelations interpreted by heavenly figures. This variety accounts for some of the richness that generations of readers have found within its pages, but it also causes much of the puzzlement even the most devoted readers often feel. How did it come about that so many different kinds of writing have been brought together into one book?

This is a question that has preoccupied many modern scholars. They have sought to answer it by investigating the history of the Bible itself. The very word

"Bible" is derived from a plural Greek word, *ta biblia*, "the little scrolls." A Christian term, the latter refers to the separate rolls of leather or papyrus on which the sacred writings, like other literary works in antiquity, were ordinarily written. The physical limits of the roll meant that many rolls were required for the writings that had come to be held sacred in the Jewish and Christian communities. Sometimes a long document had to be divided into two scrolls, like the books of Samuel and Kings, or the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. As early as the second century, Christians began to use instead the relatively new form of the codex, very much like our modern books. This made it possible actually to put all the sacred writings into one large manuscript—but the name *ta biblia* somehow stuck.

The individual books that make up our Bible were written over a period of more than a thousand years. During that time the people of Israel underwent many changes, even deep transformations, in their national life and culture. Their patterns of government, their cultic and legal organization, and their relationships to neighboring peoples and to the great empires of the ancient Mesopotamian and Mediterranean regions all changed. Those changes go far to account for the variety we see in content, language, and style of the biblical books.

Critical Study of the Old Testament

Several major narrative complexes within the Bible extend across several books. These have been the focus of especially intense research in the attempt to understand how these books came to have the form in which we know them. The first of these complexes is the Pentateuch (so called from a Greek word meaning "Five Scrolls"): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. These five books constitute the Torah (Hebrew for "teaching") in the Hebrew scriptures. Some scholars have preferred to speak of a Tetrateuch ("Four Scrolls"), taking Deuteronomy to be the foundation and introduction for the second great narrative. That second narrative, comprising the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings, is called the "Deuteronomistic History" because its understanding of the Mosaic covenant and Israel's obligations under it are those expounded in Deuteronomy. The history of Israel's national life down to the Babylonian exile is explained and judged according to the degree to which each generation, particularly the monarchs of Israel and of the divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah, abided by the laws of Deuteronomy.

The third major composition presents the same history related in the Deuteronomistic account, though from a quite different point of view, and extends it to include the restoration of Israel as a subject people under the Persian Empire. This composition comprises the books of 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah. Its unknown author is often called "the Chronicler," though we cannot be certain that a single person was responsible for the composition.

In addition to the three major narrative complexes, some scholars have isolated smaller compositions, such as the cycle of Joseph stories (Gen 37–50) and the narrative of the succession to David's throne (2 Sam 9–1 Kings 2), that may

have existed on their own before being woven into the larger narratives.

The history of the biblical writings is further complicated by the fact that some of these books speak of still earlier times, before any of them were written. What were the sources for the pictures of the ancient days that these writers passed on? Some of the writings refer explicitly to other books or archives; others show less direct evidence of predecessors who told or sang the stories and codes and prayers that are now included in the larger literary frameworks.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, scholars began by trying to detect in the existing narratives differences in style, language, or ideas that might indicate "seams" in the text, where older documents had been inserted or where two older versions of one story or two different sets of similar rules had been joined together. The most famous and controversial of the hypotheses that emerged was a reconstruction of four extended sources that, its advocates proposed, had been brought together over a period of centuries and through several distinct stages of editing or "redaction" to produce the Pentateuch (or, in other versions of the theory, the Tetrateuch, Genesis–Numbers, or the Hexateuch, Genesis–Joshua). Beginning with the observations that some passages used almost exclusively the name represented by the Hebrew letters *YHWH* to speak of God, while others used mostly a common Semitic word for a divine being, but in its plural form, *'Elohim*, these scholars guessed that these passages had originally belonged to separate documents. These hypothetical documents, which also differed in other characteristics of both style and content, were accordingly labeled "J" for "Yahwist" (because *j* in German and neo-Latin is pronounced like the Hebrew *y*) and "E" for "Elohist." A later source, called "D" by the scholars, was identified with an early version of the book of Deuteronomy. The fourth and latest document, thought to serve as the framework for the final stage of editing the whole Pentateuch, was intensely concerned with cultic matters, especially rules for priests and the temple, so it was called "P" for "priestly."

This "Documentary Hypothesis," first associated especially with the name of the German Protestant scholar Julius Wellhausen, came to dominate much of Old Testament scholarship in Europe, Britain, and America in the early twentieth century. In some circles great ingenuity was exercised in trying to assign each verse, or even parts of verses, to one or another of the hypothetical sources or to the "redactors" who put them together. The very complexity of the results aroused skepticism in other quarters, and many scholars came to feel that the documentary analysts were not taking sufficient account of two other factors affecting the formation of the biblical books. The first was the importance of oral transmission and memory in ancient societies. The other was the stylistic conventions and inventions of ancient writers, which were in many ways quite different from the expectations of modern print-based intellectual culture.

The response to the first of these concerns was the attempt to investigate characteristics of oral folklore that might be comparable to the lore of ancient Israel lying behind the written documents we possess. By studying the particular

patterns of speech often repeated in various texts and by comparing these with similar patterns found in neighboring cultures, "form critics" undertook to discover the typical settings in the life of the community in which each "form" or pattern was characteristically used. By further analyzing variations in that form in other texts, they tried further to reconstruct a "history of forms" or "history of traditions." For example, one might seek to show how a maxim or a style of address first used in village courts under local elders could later have affected central legal codes and, again, how it might have become a metaphor in prophetic speech to describe God's "case" against the whole people.

Some of the "form critics" were satisfied to describe small, individual units of tradition they thought were eventually embedded in the literary compositions of the Bible. Others, however, were interested in the process of oral composition as seen, for example, in the sagas of the Old Norse and Icelandic peoples or in the lengthy tales sung by skilled reciters in some parts of the modern Balkans and Africa. For some, it seemed plausible that the supposed "documents" of the Pentateuch had been rather the orally transmitted traditions of different groups within the people Israel. There also seemed no good reason to suppose that the oral culture of such groups would have disappeared once their traditions were put into writing. Oral recitation would have continued to affect the way writers remembered and copied documents.

Furthermore, many readers felt that the attempts to distinguish separate sources and the early, analytic kind of form criticism tended to dissolve the larger units of the text into unrelated fragments. They sensed that these results obscured the unique literary qualities of the final compositions, for some of these qualities are produced by the interplay between just those "doublets" and dissonant elements that had set the critics looking for earlier sources or embedded forms. Both within the guild of biblical scholars and from literary critics outside it, there has come in recent decades a new attention to the rhetorical and literary qualities of the biblical books and larger compositions as we have received them.

Critical Study of the New Testament

The New Testament contains no narrative of the length and scope of those of the Old Testament, but the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles present problems that are in some ways analogous to the OT compositions. The methods by which scholars have tried to solve them have been, in part, similar. Scholars of the nineteenth century attempted to solve the "synoptic problem"—why Matthew, Mark, and Luke are in some places similar to the point of identical wording, while in other respects they differ substantially—by discovering what sources each Gospel writer used. The hypothesis that emerged as the dominant explanation was called the "Two-Source Hypothesis." According to it, Matthew and Luke independently used the earlier Gospel of Mark, keeping almost entirely to its narrative outline but adjusting its style to their own somewhat more literary tastes and adding to it large blocks of material they had from other sources.

Among these other sources was one that they had in common (the second of the "two sources"), from which they drew the sayings of Jesus that were not found in Mark. Conventionally, this hypothetical second source has been called "Q," presumably from the German word *Quelle*, "source."

The Two-Source Hypothesis is still taken as the working hypothesis by most critical scholars of the NT, though everyone acknowledges that it does not explain all the peculiarities of the relationships among the first three Gospels. Attempts to revive earlier hypotheses, such as the proposal that Matthew wrote first, Luke adapted Matthew's Gospel, and Mark excerpted rather idiosyncratically from both, have not won wide acceptance. Also unconvincing have been the many attempts to fine-tune the Two-Source Hypothesis by adding yet other hypothetical sources. The remaining problems with the hypothesis are better solved by considering the impact of oral tradition, on the one hand, and the skill and freedom of the Gospels' writers, on the other.

Form criticism, too, was employed by students of the NT in attempts to reconstruct the process by which the stories about Jesus and the sayings attributed to him were shaped, transmitted, and modified by their uses in the life of the early Christian communities. Applied to the Letters of the NT, similar techniques isolated some passages that seemed to be excerpts from liturgical poetry or from simple creeds or confessional formulas.

In NT scholarship, too, there have been reactions against what many have come to see as an overemphasis on the hypothetical prehistory of writings to the neglect of the rhetorical and literary qualities of the books as we have them. Many recent commentators have emphasized the role of the Gospel writers as authors, fully in command of whatever sources they used and creating from them coherent literary wholes. Others have warned against forcing these ancient writings into modern categories by imposing on them literary theories derived from the study of the modern novel or modern poetry. At the same time, extensive study of ancient genres of writing and patterns of rhetoric have provided sturdier models with which to compare the biblical documents.

Biblical Scholarship Today

The issues mentioned in this brief survey are only examples of the issues raised in the several phases of modern critical study of the Bible. Historical and literary studies have affected our understanding of the other parts of the Bible as well, raising analogous problems. Some of the issues are discussed in the introductions and notes to individual books.

The present moment in scholarly investigation of the Bible is a time when many different methods are in use. That diversity of method is reflected to some extent in the notes in this study Bible. The scholar chosen to annotate each book is an expert on that particular document and may emphasize the results of one or another method that seems most useful in understanding that book. Characteristic of the best scholarship is a healthy degree of self-criticism and skepticism about any

rigid hypotheses. All of our annotators, even when they differ from one another on theoretical matters, have in common a primary focus on the text. Their notes are designed to help readers make sense of that text, in its parts and as a whole.

Some questions raised by material in the Bible, however, cannot be answered on the basis of our present knowledge. For example, despite the impressive results and continuing discoveries of archaeology in the Middle East, some places mentioned in the Bible cannot be located with certainty on a modern map. Some discrepancies in chronology cannot be resolved. In a few instances where experts differ on such matters, we have allowed inconsistencies between one scholar's notes and another's to stand, as a reminder that our knowledge of the ancient world remains imperfect.

Bibles and Their Communities

Despite the Bible's diversity, most readers do feel that *as a whole* it somehow makes sense. There is an odd concentricity about its diverse stories and its various genres. The tensions within it are held within some common framework. In some more than trivial way, "the Bible" is one book.

Yet our perception of the Bible's unity may obscure a complicated reality. If one asks a reader exactly what gives the Bible its oneness and wholeness, the answer will depend in part on the religious community to which that reader belongs. Our notes try to come to terms with the fact that we have, so to speak, at least two Bibles between the same covers: a Jewish Bible and a Christian Bible. This is not a superficial difference. It is not merely that the Christian Bible adds a New Testament and therefore calls the Jewish scriptures "the Old Testament." The Jewish scriptures are not the same as the Old Testament. The order is different (see the table on p. xxxvii). The text has been transmitted by different means and with different approaches to establishing authoritative readings. For example, the Bible of most of the early Christians was the Septuagint. Even the list of books included has differed.

More important than these external differences, however, is the different sense of the whole that is engendered when, on the one hand, we read the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings of the Hebrew Bible as complete in themselves, the foundation of the life of Israel through the ages, or when, on the other hand, we read them as open toward a future that was "fulfilled" in the events of the NT and still awaits an "end." In the latter case, the Christian Bible presents us with a single narrative line that unites all the diverse episodes and different kinds of writing into a sweeping epic, almost a giant novel claiming to embrace the entire story of humanity. It begins "in the beginning," treats of God's electing a special people, recounts their disobedience, punishment, and hope, declares the story's climax in the appearance of God's Son, and looks to a final "coming."

When read independently of the Christian additions and Christian habits of reading, the unity of the Hebrew scriptures looks quite different. They do not have a single plot or a single center, but many. The many voices that speak are

not united in a single hope, nor do they point to a single future. Their unity lies rather in a continuous counterpoint. The multiple plots of the narratives move forward with odd echoes of the past, repetitions and rehearsals, reminders and foreshadowings. The wisdom gathered and cultivated by professional elites and servants of kings rubs against the sensibilities of peasants. Codes from the time when "there was no king in Israel" stand beside laws of monarchy and laws of a temple state. Prophets name the injustice done to the common poor by petty local tyrants and perceive in the march of great empires the chastening hand of God. The people Israel sings in the manifold occasions of its national and cultic life, and it sings the complaints, fears, and hopes of its individuals. All this variety, and more, is woven together by complex threads, but its rhythms are quite different from the dominant pulse of the Christian Bible.

The overall arrangement of the NRSV is that of Protestant Bibles, because that is the arrangement that has dominated the public use of the Bible in English-speaking countries since the seventeenth century. However, the NRSV has included the books that are variously called apocryphal or deuterocanonical and are found in the Bible used by one or more of the Roman Catholic, Greek, and Slavonic churches. In this respect the NRSV is the most inclusive English version now commonly available. (For the several canons, see the tables on pp. xxxvii–xl, as well as the introductions to the books of the Apocrypha.) Readers thus have in hand not merely *two* Bibles, the Jewish and the Christian, but *several* Bibles that have spoken and continue to speak to historically diverse Jewish and Christian communities.

The Society of Biblical Literature

The editors and annotators who have worked together to produce the *Harper Collins Study Bible* themselves exemplify the diversity of confessional traditions for which the Bible is foundational. What unites them, however, is the tradition of historical, critical, and open scholarship that has been fostered for more than a century by the Society of Biblical Literature, the sponsor of the present project.

The Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis was founded in 1880 and is one of the oldest learned societies in the United States. Its purpose is to stimulate the critical investigation of classical biblical literatures, together with other related literatures, by the exchange of scholarly research both in published form and in public forum. It has at present over 5,500 members from more than 80 countries.

The *HarperCollins Study Bible* is one of a series of publishing projects undertaken by the SBL in conjunction with HarperCollins. Others include *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, *Harper's Bible Commentary*, and *Harper's Bible Pronunciation Guide*. Users of the *HarperCollins Study Bible* who wish to pursue their studies further will find more detailed information on many biblical topics in the articles of those companion volumes. All of these joint projects represent the commitment of the Society to share the results of scholarly research with a wide public who are interested in the Bible and the religious traditions associated with it.

TO THE READER

This preface is addressed to you by the Committee of translators, who wish to explain, as briefly as possible, the origin and character of our work. The publication of our revision is yet another step in the long, continual process of making the Bible available in the form of the English language that is most widely current in our day. To summarize in a single sentence: the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible is an authorized revision of the Revised Standard Version, published in 1952, which was a revision of the American Standard Version, published in 1901, which, in turn, embodied earlier revisions of the King James Version, published in 1611.

In the course of time, the King James Version came to be regarded as "the Authorized Version." With good reason it has been termed "the noblest monument of English prose," and it has entered, as no other book has, into the making of the personal character and the public institutions of the English-speaking peoples. We owe to it an incalculable debt.

Yet the King James Version has serious defects. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the development of biblical studies and the discovery of many biblical manuscripts more ancient than those on which the King James Version was based made it apparent that these defects were so many as to call for revision. The task was begun, by authority of the Church of England, in 1870. The (British) Revised Version of the Bible was published in 1881–1885; and the American Standard Version, its variant embodying the preferences of the American scholars associated with the work, was published, as was mentioned above, in 1901. In 1928 the copyright of the latter was acquired by the International Council of Religious Education and thus passed into the ownership of the churches of the United States and Canada that were associated in this Council through their boards of education and publication.

The Council appointed a committee of scholars to have charge of the text of the American Standard Version and to undertake inquiry concerning the need for further revision. After studying the questions whether or not revision should be undertaken, and if so, what its nature and extent should be, in 1937 the Council authorized a revision. The scholars who served as members of the Committee worked in two sections, one dealing with the Old Testament and one with the New Testament. In 1946 the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament was published. The publication of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, containing the Old and New Testaments, took place on September 30, 1952. A translation of the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books of the Old Testament followed in 1957. In 1977 this collection was issued in an expanded edition, containing three additional texts received by Eastern Orthodox communions (3 and 4 Maccabees and Psalm 151). Thereafter the Revised Standard Version gained the distinction of being officially authorized for use by all major Christian churches: Protestant, Anglican, Roman Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox.

The Revised Standard Version Bible Committee is a continuing body, comprising about thirty members, both men and women. Ecumenical in representation, it includes scholars affiliated with various Protestant denominations, as well as several Roman Catholic members, an Eastern Orthodox member, and a Jewish member who serves in the Old Testament section. For a period of time the Committee included several members from Canada and from England.

Because no translation of the Bible is perfect or is acceptable to all groups of readers, and because discoveries of older manuscripts and further investigation of linguistic features of the text continue to become available, renderings of the Bible have proliferated. During the years following the publication of the Revised Standard Version, twenty-six other English translations and revisions of the Bible were produced by committees and by individual scholars—not to mention twenty-five other translations and revisions of the New Testament alone. One of the latter was the second edition of the RSV New Testament, issued in 1971, twenty-five years after its initial publication.

Following the publication of the RSV Old Testament in 1952, significant advances were made in the discovery and interpretation of documents in Semitic languages related to Hebrew. In addition to the information that had become available in the late 1940s from the Dead Sea texts of Isaiah and Habakkuk, subsequent acquisitions from the same area brought to light many other early copies of all the books of the Hebrew Scriptures (except Esther), though most of these copies are fragmentary. During the same period early Greek manuscript copies of books of the New Testament also became available.

In order to take these discoveries into account, along with recent studies of documents in Semitic languages related to Hebrew, in 1974 the Policies Committee of the Revised Standard Version, which is a standing committee of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., authorized the preparation of a revision of the entire RSV Bible.

For the Old Testament the Committee has made use of the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (1977; ed. sec. emendata, 1983). This is an edition of the Hebrew and Aramaic text as current early in the Christian era and fixed by Jewish scholars (the "Masoretes") of the sixth to the ninth centuries. The vowel signs, which were added by the Masoretes, are accepted in the main, but where a more probable and convincing reading can be obtained by assuming different vowels, this has been done. No notes are given in such cases, because the vowel points are less ancient and reliable than the consonants. When an alternative reading given by the Masoretes is translated in a footnote, this is identified by the words "Another reading is."

Departures from the consonantal text of the best manuscripts have been made only where it seems clear that errors in copying had been made before the text was standardized. Most of the corrections adopted are based on the ancient versions (translations into Greek, Aramaic, Syriac, and Latin), which were made prior to the time of the work of the Masoretes and which therefore may reflect earlier forms of the Hebrew text. In such instances a footnote specifies the version or versions from which the correction has been derived and also gives a translation of the Masoretic Text. Where

it was deemed appropriate to do so, information is supplied in footnotes from subsidiary Jewish traditions concerning other textual readings (the *Tiqqune Sopherim*, "emendations of the scribes"). These are identified in the footnotes as "Ancient Heb tradition."

Occasionally it is evident that the text has suffered in transmission and that none of the versions provides a satisfactory restoration. Here we can only follow the best judgment of competent scholars as to the most probable reconstruction of the original text. Such reconstructions are indicated in footnotes by the abbreviation Cn ("Correction"), and a translation of the Masoretic Text is added.

For the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books of the Old Testament the Committee has made use of a number of texts. For most of these books the basic Greek text from which the present translation was made is the edition of the Septuagint prepared by Alfred Rahlfs and published by the Württemberg Bible Society (Stuttgart, 1935). For several of the books the more recently published individual volumes of the Göttingen Septuagint project were utilized. For the book of Tobit it was decided to follow the form of the Greek text found in codex Sinaiticus (supported as it is by evidence from Qumran); where this text is defective, it was supplemented and corrected by other Greek manuscripts. For the three Additions to Daniel (namely, Susanna, the Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Jews, and Bel and the Dragon) the Committee continued to use the Greek version attributed to Theodotion (the so-called "Theodotion-Daniel"). In translating Ecclesiasticus (Sirach), while constant reference was made to the Hebrew fragments of a large portion of this book (those discovered at Qumran and Masada as well as those recovered from the Cairo Geniza), the Committee generally followed the Greek text (including verse numbers) published by Joseph Ziegler in the Göttingen Septuagint (1965). But in many places the Committee has translated the Hebrew text when this provides a reading that is clearly superior to the Greek; the Syriac and Latin versions were also consulted throughout and occasionally adopted. The basic text adopted in rendering 2 Esdras is the Latin version given in *Biblia Sacra*, edited by Robert Weber (Stuttgart, 1971). This was supplemented by consulting the Latin text as edited by R. L. Bensly (1895) and by Bruno Violet (1910), as well as by taking into account the several Oriental versions of 2 Esdras, namely, the Syriac, Ethiopic, Arabic (two forms, referred to as Arabic 1 and Arabic 2), Armenian, and Georgian versions. Finally, since the Additions to the Book of Esther are disjointed and quite unintelligible as they stand in most editions of the Apocrypha, we have provided them with their original context by translating the whole of the Greek version of Esther from Robert Hanhart's Göttingen edition (1983).

For the New Testament the Committee has based its work on the most recent edition of *The Greek New Testament*, prepared by an interconfessional and international committee and published by the United Bible Societies (1966; 3d ed. corrected, 1983; information concerning changes to be introduced into the critical apparatus of the forthcoming 4th edition was available to the Committee). As in that edition, double brackets are used to enclose a few passages that are generally regarded to be later additions to the text, but that we have retained because of their evident antiquity and

their importance in the textual tradition. Only in very rare instances have we replaced the text or the punctuation of the Bible Societies' edition by an alternative that seemed to us to be superior. Here and there in the footnotes the phrase, "Other ancient authorities read," identifies alternative readings preserved by Greek manuscripts and early versions. In both Testaments, alternative renderings of the text are indicated by the word "Or."

As for the style of English adopted for the present revision, among the mandates given to the Committee in 1980 by the Division of Education and Ministry of the National Council of Churches of Christ (which now holds the copyright of the RSV Bible) was the directive to continue in the tradition of the King James Bible, but to introduce such changes as are warranted on the basis of accuracy, clarity, euphony, and current English usage. Within the constraints set by the original texts and by the mandates of the Division, the Committee has followed the maxim, "As literal as possible, as free as necessary." As a consequence, the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) remains essentially a literal translation. Paraphrastic renderings have been adopted only sparingly, and then chiefly to compensate for a deficiency in the English language—the lack of a common-gender third-person singular pronoun.

During the almost half a century since the publication of the RSV, many in the churches have become sensitive to the danger of linguistic sexism arising from the inherent bias of the English language toward the masculine gender, a bias that in the case of the Bible has often restricted or obscured the meaning of the original text. The mandates from the Division specified that, in references to men and women, masculine-oriented language should be eliminated as far as this can be done without altering passages that reflect the historical situation of ancient patriarchal culture. As can be appreciated, more than once the Committee found that the several mandates stood in tension and even in conflict. The various concerns had to be balanced case by case in order to provide a faithful and acceptable rendering without using contrived English. Only very occasionally has the pronoun "he" or "him" been retained in passages where the reference may have been to a woman as well as to a man, for example, in several legal texts in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. In such instances of formal, legal language, the options of either putting the passage in the plural or of introducing additional nouns to avoid masculine pronouns in English seemed to the Committee to obscure the historic structure and literary character of the original. In the vast majority of cases, however, inclusiveness has been attained by simple rephrasing or by introducing plural forms when this does not distort the meaning of the passage. Of course, in narrative and in parable no attempt was made to generalize the sex of individual persons.

Another aspect of style will be detected by readers who compare the more stately English rendering of the Old Testament with the less formal rendering adopted for the New Testament. For example, the traditional distinction between *shall* and *will* in English has been retained in the Old Testament as appropriate in rendering a document that embodies what may be termed the classic form of Hebrew, while in the New Testament the abandonment of such distinctions in the usage of the future tense

in English reflects the more colloquial nature of the koine Greek used by most New Testament authors except when they are quoting the Old Testament.

Careful readers will notice that here and there in the Old Testament the word LORD (or in certain cases GOD) is printed in capital letters. This represents the traditional manner in English versions of rendering the Divine Name, the "Tetragrammaton" (see the text notes on Exodus 3.14, 15), following the precedent of the ancient Greek and Latin translators and the long-established practice in the reading of the Hebrew Scriptures in the synagogue. While it is almost if not quite certain that the Name was originally pronounced "Yahweh," this pronunciation was not indicated when the Masoretes added vowel sounds to the consonantal Hebrew text. To the four consonants YHWH of the Name, which had come to be regarded as too sacred to be pronounced, they attached vowel signs indicating that in its place should be read the Hebrew word *Adonai* meaning "Lord" (or *Elohim* meaning "God"). Ancient Greek translators employed the word *Kyrios* ("Lord") for the Name. The Vulgate likewise used the Latin word *Dominus* ("Lord"). The form "Jehovah" is of late medieval origin; it is a combination of the consonants of the Divine Name and the vowels attached to it by the Masoretes but belonging to an entirely different word. Although the American Standard Version (1901) had used "Jehovah" to render the Tetragrammaton (the sound of Y being represented by J and the sound of W by V, as in Latin), for two reasons the Committees that produced the RSV and the NRSV returned to the more familiar usage of the King James Version. (1) The word "Jehovah" does not accurately represent any form of the Name ever used in Hebrew. (2) The use of any proper name for the one and only God, as though there were other gods from whom the true God had to be distinguished, began to be discontinued in Judaism before the Christian era and is inappropriate for the universal faith of the Christian Church.

It will be seen that in the Psalms and in other prayers addressed to God the archaic second-person singular pronouns (*thee, thou, thine*) and verb forms (*art, hast, hadst*) are no longer used. Although some readers may regret this change, it should be pointed out that in the original languages neither the Old Testament nor the New makes any linguistic distinction between addressing a human being and addressing the Deity. Furthermore, in the tradition of the King James Version one will not expect to find the use of capital letters for pronouns that refer to the Deity — such capitalization is an unnecessary innovation that has only recently been introduced into a few English translations of the Bible. Finally, we have left to the discretion of the licensed publishers such matters as section headings, cross-references, and clues to the pronunciation of proper names.

This new version seeks to preserve all that is best in the English Bible as it has been known and used through the years. It is intended for use in public reading and congregational worship, as well as in private study, instruction, and meditation. We have resisted the temptation to introduce terms and phrases that merely reflect current moods, and have tried to put the message of the Scriptures in simple, enduring words and expressions that are worthy to stand in the great tradition of the King James Bible and its predecessors.

In traditional Judaism and Christianity, the Bible has been more than a historical document to be preserved or a classic of literature to be cherished and admired; it is recognized as the unique record of God's dealings with people over the ages. The Old Testament sets forth the call of a special people to enter into covenant relation with the God of justice and steadfast love and to bring God's law to the nations. The New Testament records the life and work of Jesus Christ, the one in whom "the Word became flesh," as well as describes the rise and spread of the early Christian Church. The Bible carries its full message, not to those who regard it simply as a noble literary heritage of the past or who wish to use it to enhance political purposes and advance otherwise desirable goals, but to all persons and communities who read it so that they may discern and understand what God is saying to them. That message must not be disguised in phrases that are no longer clear, or hidden under words that have changed or lost their meaning; it must be presented in language that is direct and plain and meaningful to people today. It is the hope and prayer of the translators that this version of the Bible may continue to hold a large place in congregational life and to speak to all readers, young and old alike, helping them to understand and believe and respond to its message.

For the Committee,

BRUCE M. METZGER

ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used for the books of the Bible:

Old Testament

Gen	Genesis	2 Chr	2 Chronicles	Dan	Daniel
Ex	Exodus	Ezra	Ezra	Hos	Hosea
Lev	Leviticus	Neh	Nehemiah	Joel	Joel
Num	Numbers	Esth	Esther	Am	Amos
Deut	Deuteronomy	Job	Job	Ob	Obadiah
Josh	Joshua	Ps	Psalms	Jon	Jonah
Judg	Judges	Prov	Proverbs	Mic	Micah
Ruth	Ruth	Eccl	Ecclesiastes	Nah	Nahum
1 Sam	1 Samuel	Song	Song of Solomon	Hab	Habakkuk
2 Sam	2 Samuel	Isa	Isaiah	Zeph	Zephaniah
1 Kings	1 Kings	Jer	Jeremiah	Hag	Haggai
2 Kings	2 Kings	Lam	Lamentations	Zech	Zechariah
1 Chr	1 Chronicles	Ezek	Ezekiel	Mal	Malachi

Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books

Tob	Tobit	Pr Azar	Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Jews
Jdt	Judith		
Add Esth	Additions to Esther	Sus	Susanna
Wis	Wisdom	Bel	Bel and the Dragon
Sir	Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)	1 Macc	1 Maccabees
Bar	Baruch	2 Macc	2 Maccabees
1 Esd	1 Esdras	3 Macc	3 Maccabees
2 Esd	2 Esdras	4 Macc	4 Maccabees
Let Jer	Letter of Jeremiah	Pr Man	Prayer of Manasseh

New Testament

Mt	Matthew	Eph	Ephesians	Heb	Hebrews
Mk	Mark	Phil	Philippians	Jas	James
Lk	Luke	Col	Colossians	1 Pet	1 Peter
Jn	John	1 Thess	1 Thessalonians	2 Pet	2 Peter
Acts	Acts of the Apostles	2 Thess	2 Thessalonians	1 Jn	1 John
Rom	Romans	1 Tim	1 Timothy	2 Jn	2 John
1 Cor	1 Corinthians	2 Tim	2 Timothy	3 Jn	3 John
2 Cor	2 Corinthians	Titus	Titus	Jude	Jude
Gal	Galatians	Philem	Philemon	Rev	Revelation

In the text notes to the books of the Old Testament the following abbreviations are used:

Ant.	Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*
Aram	Aramaic
Ch, chs	Chapter, chapters
Cn	Correction; made where the text has suffered in transmission and the versions provide no satisfactory restoration but where the Standard Bible Committee agrees with the judgment of competent scholars as to the most probable reconstruction of the original text.
Gk	Septuagint, Greek version of the Old Testament
Heb	Hebrew of the consonantal Masoretic Text of the Old Testament
Josephus	Flavius Josephus (Jewish historian, about 37 to about 95 C.E.)
Macc.	The book(s) of the Maccabees
Ms(s)	Manuscript(s)
MT	The Hebrew of the pointed Masoretic Text of the Old Testament
OL	Old Latin
Q Ms(s)	Manuscript(s) found at Qumran by the Dead Sea
Sam	Samaritan Hebrew text of the Old Testament
Syr	Syriac Version of the Old Testament
Syr H	Syriac Version of Origen's Hexapla
Tg	Targum
Vg	Vulgate, Latin Version of the Old Testament

Abbreviations used in the study notes:

ch(s).	chapter(s)
v(v).	verse(s)
OT	Old Testament
NT	New Testament
B.C.E.	Before the Common Era
C.E.	Common Era

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NAMES AND ORDER OF BOOKS OF THE BIBLE IN SEVERAL TRADITIONS

Jewish Bibles

Jewish Bibles include the books of the Hebrew scriptures (Tanakh). Most modern editions present the twenty-four books (counting the Twelve Prophets as one book) in the following order:

TORAH	PROPHETS	WRITINGS
Genesis	Joshua	Psalms
Exodus	Judges	Proverbs
Leviticus	Samuel (1 & 2)	Job
Numbers	Kings (1 & 2)	Song of Solomon
Deuteronomy	Isaiah	Ruth
	Jeremiah	Lamentations
	Ezekiel	Ecclesiastes
	The Twelve:	Esther
	Hosea	Daniel
	Joel	Ezra-Nehemiah
	Amos	Chronicles (1 & 2)
	Obadiah	
	Jonah	
	Micah	
	Nahum	
	Habakkuk	
	Zephaniah	
	Haggai	
	Zechariah	
	Malachi	

Orthodox Bibles

Bibles of the Orthodox churches consist of the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament contains, in addition to all the books of the Jewish Bible (as translated into Greek in the Septuagint), Tobit, Judith, 1, 2, and 3 Maccabees (with 4 Maccabees as an appendix), the Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach, Baruch, the Letter of Jeremiah, 1 Esdras, the Prayer of Manasseh, and Psalm 151. The book of Esther includes the six additions to Esther, and the book of Daniel includes the Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Jews, Susanna, and Bel and the Dragon. Slavonic Bibles of the Russian Orthodox church also include 3 Esdras. The order of books varies somewhat in different editions.

OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis	Judith	Jonah
Exodus	Tobit	Nahum
Leviticus	1 Maccabees	Habakkuk
Numbers	2 Maccabees	Zephaniah
Deuteronomy	3 Maccabees	Haggai
Joshua	Psalms (with Psalm 151)	Zechariah
Judges		Malachi
Ruth	Prayer of Manasseh	Isaiah
1 Kingdoms (1 Samuel)	Job	Jeremiah
2 Kingdoms (2 Samuel)	Proverbs	Baruch
3 Kingdoms (1 Kings)	Ecclesiastes	Lamentations
4 Kingdoms (2 Kings)	Song of Solomon	Letter of Jeremiah
1 Chronicles	Wisdom of Solomon	Ezekiel
2 Chronicles	Sirach	Daniel (including the Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Jews, Susanna, Bel and the Dragon)
1 Esdras	Hosea	
2 Esdras (Ezra, Nehemiah)	Amos	
	Micah	
Esther (with the Additions)	Joel	
	Obadiah	(4 Maccabees in appendix)

NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew	Ephesians	Hebrews
Mark	Philippians	James
Luke	Colossians	1 Peter
John	1 Thessalonians	2 Peter
Acts	2 Thessalonians	1 John
Romans	1 Timothy	2 John
1 Corinthians	2 Timothy	3 John
2 Corinthians	Titus	Jude
Galatians	Philemon	Revelation

Catholic Bibles

Catholic Bibles include forty-six books in the Old Testament (as listed by the Council of Trent in 1546) and the books of the New Testament. The Old Testament includes the following books not found in Jewish Bibles: Tobit, Judith, 1 and 2 Maccabees, the Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach, and Baruch with the Letter of Jeremiah. The book of Esther includes the six additions to Esther, and the book of Daniel includes the Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Jews, Susanna, and Bel and the Dragon.

OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy
Joshua
Judges
Ruth
1 Samuel
2 Samuel
1 Kings
2 Kings
1 Chronicles
2 Chronicles
Ezra
Nehemiah
Tobit
Judith
Esther (with the Additions)
1 Maccabees
2 Maccabees
Job
Psalms
Proverbs
Ecclesiastes
Song of Solomon
Wisdom of Solomon
Sirach
Isaiah
Jeremiah
Lamentations
Baruch
Letter of Jeremiah
Ezekiel
Daniel
Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Jews
Susanna
Bel and the Dragon
Hosea
Joel
Amos
Obadiah
Jonah
Micah
Nahum
Habakkuk
Zephaniah
Haggai
Zechariah
Malachi

NEW TESTAMENT

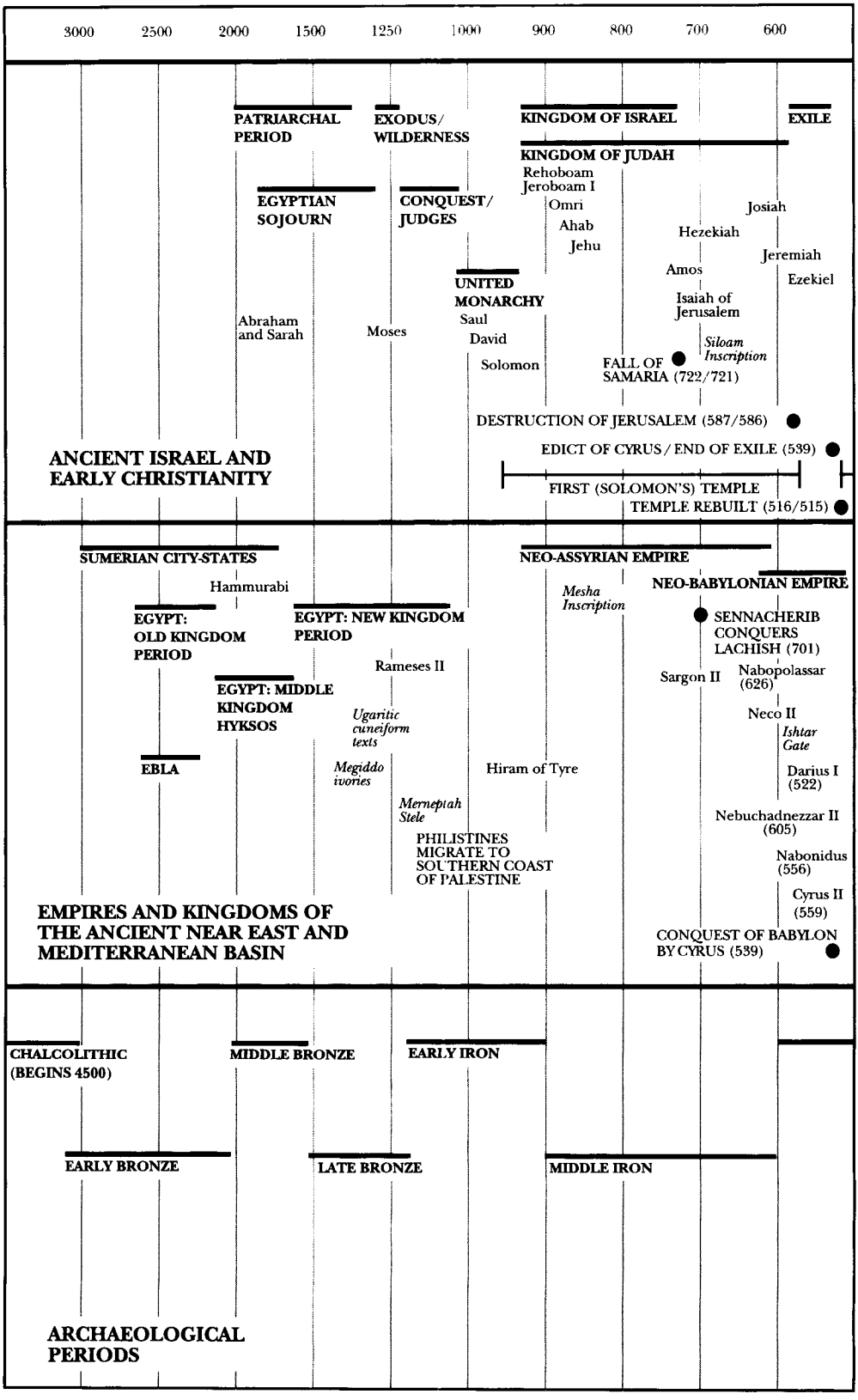
Matthew
Mark
Luke
John
Acts
Romans
1 Corinthians
2 Corinthians
Galatians
Ephesians
Philippians
Colossians
1 Thessalonians
2 Thessalonians
1 Timothy
2 Timothy
Titus
Philemon
Hebrews
James
1 Peter
2 Peter
1 John
2 John
3 John
Jude
Revelation

Protestant Bibles

Protestant Bibles include the books of the Hebrew scriptures (also known as the Old Testament) and the books of the New Testament. The Old Testament is arranged in thirty-nine books (counting 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, each of the Twelve Prophets, and Ezra and Nehemiah as separate books). Some Protestant Bibles include the Apocrypha—those books of the Catholic Old Testament not found in Jewish Bibles—but as a distinct section.

OLD TESTAMENT		
Genesis	2 Chronicles	Daniel
Exodus	Ezra	Hosea
Leviticus	Nehemiah	Joel
Numbers	Esther	Amos
Deuteronomy	Job	Obadiah
Joshua	Psalms	Jonah
Judges	Proverbs	Micah
Ruth	Ecclesiastes	Nahum
1 Samuel	Song of Solomon	Habakkuk
2 Samuel	Isaiah	Zephaniah
1 Kings	Jeremiah	Haggai
2 Kings	Lamentations	Zechariah
1 Chronicles	Ezekiel	Malachi

NEW TESTAMENT		
Matthew	Ephesians	Hebrews
Mark	Philippians	James
Luke	Colossians	1 Peter
John	1 Thessalonians	2 Peter
Acts	2 Thessalonians	1 John
Romans	1 Timothy	2 John
1 Corinthians	2 Timothy	3 John
2 Corinthians	Titus	Jude
Galatians	Philemon	Revelation


3000
2500
2000
1500
1250
1000
900
800
700
600
PATRIARCHAL PERIOD
EXODUS/ WILDERNESS
KINGDOM OF ISRAEL
EXILE
KINGDOM OF JUDAH
Rehoboam
Jeroboam I
EGYPTIAN SOJOURN
CONQUEST/ JUDGES
Omri
Ahab
Jehu
Josiah
Hezekiah
Jeremiah
Amos
Ezekiel
UNITED MONARCHY
Isaiah of Jerusalem
Abraham and Sarah
Moses
Saul
David
Siloam Inscription
Solomon
FALL OF SAMARIA (722/721)
DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM (587/586)
ANCIENT ISRAEL AND EARLY CHRISTIANITY
EDICT OF CYRUS / END OF EXILE (539)
FIRST (SOLOMON'S) TEMPLE
TEMPLE REBUILT (516/515)
SUMERIAN CITY-STATES
NEO-ASSYRIAN EMPIRE
NEO-BABYLONIAN EMPIRE
Hammurabi
Mesha Inscription
EGYPT: OLD KINGDOM PERIOD
EGYPT: NEW KINGDOM PERIOD
SENNACHERIB CONQUERS LACHISH (701)
Rameses II
Sargon II
Nabopolassar (626)
EGYPT: MIDDLE KINGDOM HYKSOS
Neco II
Ugaritic cuneiform texts
Ishtar Gate
EBLA
Megiddo ivories
Hiram of Tyre
Darius I (522)
Merneptah Stele
Nebuchadnezzar II (605)
PHILISTINES MIGRATE TO SOUTHERN COAST OF PALESTINE
Nabonidus (556)
Cyrus II (559)
EMPIRES AND KINGDOMS OF THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST AND MEDITERRANEAN BASIN
CONQUEST OF BABYLON BY CYRUS (539)
CHALCOLITHIC (BEGINS 4500)
MIDDLE BRONZE
EARLY IRON
EARLY BRONZE
LATE BRONZE
MIDDLE IRON
ARCHAEOLOGICAL PERIODS

400 300 200 150 100 50 B.C.E. C.E. 50 100 150

PERSIAN PERIOD (BEGINS 539)

HELLENISTIC PERIOD

REVOLT AGAINST ROME

MACCABEAN PERIOD
Judas Maccabeus

ROMAN RULE IN PALESTINE

Jesus

Herod the Great

Mark
Matthew
Luke
John

Ezra
Nehemiah

Peter
Paul

1 Thessalonians
Romans

SECOND TEMPLE PERIOD

HEROD'S TEMPLE

PERSIAN EMPIRE (BEGINS 550)

ROMAN EMPIRE

Alexander the Great

Augustus

Tiberius

Claudius

Vespasian

Antiochus IV (Epiphanes)

Nero

ALEXANDRIA FOUNDED (EGYPT, 332)

Arch of Titus in Rome

ROMAN DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM (70)

LATE IRON

NOTE: The period of time between vertical bars increases at intervals from right to left; this allows a wide range of events to be shown across the breadth of two pages.

THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES

COMMONLY CALLED

THE OLD TESTAMENT

New Revised Standard Version

GENESIS

IF THE HEBREW BIBLE is indebted to any one biblical book for its daring historical argument, that book is Genesis. It is Genesis that transforms the history of a small, vulnerable kingdom at the juncture of three continents into a history of the world and humankind. Even without its first chapter—the magisterial account of creation—Genesis tells of nations being weighed in the historical plan of God. One lone God, Creator of all things, is portrayed restlessly juggling the fortunes of individuals and peoples to right the balance of moral justice. This is, properly speaking, neither a tragic nor, as often maintained, a "salvation" history—for its original audience believed its true outcome to hinge on present and future events. And so, Genesis, like the scripture it introduces, is sublimely open-ended, a preface to the present.

Structure

Genesis has four movements: the primordial history (chs. 1–11), the Abraham cycle (12.1–25.18), the Jacob cycle (25.19–36.43), and the saga of Joseph and his brothers (chs. 37–50). Each segment tells, in progressively greater specificity, the events leading to the people Israel—the descendants of Jacob's twelve sons—whose tribes are traditionally believed to have conquered Canaan in the era of Joshua. The final word of Genesis is "Egypt," just as the Pentateuch's final word (Deut 34.12) is "Israel," for one major task of the final movement of Genesis is to account for the presence of Israel in Egypt. It is with that situation that the political history of Israel properly begins.

Sources

Modern historical scholarship has customarily identified three main sources of Genesis—the pentateuchal sources "J" ("Jahwist" or "Yahwist," so named for its characteristic use of the divine name *YHWH*, "LORD"; see 4.26), "E" ("Elohist," for its use of the divine name *'Elohim*, "God"), and "P" (or "Priestly" source), dated respectively to the tenth (or ninth), eighth, and sixth centuries B.C.E. But these alleged sources are orchestrated so skillfully and meaningfully by a later editor that the book's true literary magic arises not from the sources in their

original state—if such can be known—but from their assemblage in a unified composition. The notes that follow presuppose most of the customary source divisions but, for all practical purposes, as preliterary traditions.

Symmetries

This more flexible sense of the Genesis traditions reveals subtle design in the structure of the book's stories and cycles. The most common arrangement of preliterary units is in complex symmetries, revealing parallel relationships between traditions or motifs. The Garden story, for example (2.4–3.24), manifests a double symmetry, the main part of which is shown in the accompanying table, "The Symmetry of the Garden Story." It begins with a headnote on the generations (2.4), climaxes in the eating of the fruit (3.6), and ends with the birth of a child completing one generation (4.1). Within this larger symmetry is a smaller one shown in the table, "A Subsymmetry in the Garden Story," a postmortem on the transgression event (3.11–19a). Through these symmetries, the story's

THE SYMMETRY OF THE GARDEN STORY (GENESIS 2.4–4.1)

A Headnote: "These are the generations . . ." (2.4)
B No field economy: ". . . no one to till the ground" (2.5–6)
C Human beings given life, installed in Garden (2.7–17)
D Man prefers human companionship over beasts (2.18–22)
E Man calls his companion "Woman" (2.23)
F Etiological summary: "Therefore a man leaves . . ." (2.24)
G Human couple "naked and . . . not ashamed" (2.25)
H Serpent promises "eyes will be opened" (3.1–5)
I Transgression (3.6)
H′ The couple's "eyes are opened" (3.7a)
G′ They experience shame (3.7b–10)
F′ Etiological summary: "For . . . you are dust . . ." (3.19b)
E′ Man calls his companion "Eve" ("Life-bearer") (3.20)
D′ Man and woman wear skins of beasts (3.21)
C′ Humans expelled from Garden, denied immortality (3.22–24)
B′ Field economy begins (implied; see subsymmetry and 3.23b)
A′ Birth of a child completes one generation (4.1)

A SUBSYMMETRY IN THE GARDEN STORY (GENESIS 3.11–19A)

X God questions man; man points to woman (3.11–12)
Y God questions woman; woman points to serpent (3.13)
Z [Serpent is silent]
Z′ God passes judgment on serpent (3.14–15)
Y′ God passes judgment on woman (3.16)
X′ God passes judgment on man (3.17–19a)

underlying thematic contrasts (Garden/field, immortality/mortality, nakedness/clothing, nature/culture, innocence/knowledge, etc.) are deepened to comment upon one another—and the entire complex causal scheme is centered on the fateful human choice made in Gen 3.6.

A similar symmetrical pattern can be shown to operate in story cycles. The Abraham cycle, for example, begins and ends with a genealogical framework (11.10–32; 25.1–18) and culminates in the story of the expulsion and rescue of Hagar (16.1–16; see the table, "The Abraham Cycle," at Gen 11). Two episodes lie largely outside this scheme: the second expulsion of Hagar, with the endangering and rescue of Ishmael (21.8–21), and the endangering and rescue of Isaac (22.1–19). But both episodes are virtually identical in structure to the one that stands at the center (X) of the symmetry, and both deepen the cycle's main preoccupation: the question of a child to succeed Abraham and the consequent rivalry between Sarah and Hagar. Thus, even the departures from symmetry supply a dynamic development to the overall framework, and so participate in it.

In short, virtually no detail of Genesis is casual or arbitrary; every variant tradition is permitted its unique voice and function amid the whole. The book's narratives and movements are bound by a systematic use of key words—where helpful the notes highlight the Hebrew wordplay punctuating each story—and the overall history is presented through the experience of paradigmatic households. Domestic relations—spouse and spouse, parent and child, sibling and sibling, householder and servant—form the core of the book's preoccupations, and these are carefully framed by a history of journeys and settlements, conflicts and treaties, and human and divine encounters. All the relevant themes and polarities of Israel's later history are present here—Genesis is the Hebrew Bible in miniature. *Joel W. Rosenberg*

Six Days of Creation and the Sabbath

1 In the beginning when God created[a] the heavens and the earth,
2 the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a
wind from God[b] swept over the face of
the waters. 3 Then God said, "Let there be
light"; and there was light. 4 And God saw
that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. 5 God
called the light Day, and the darkness he
called Night. And there was evening and
there was morning, the first day.

6 And God said, "Let there be a dome
in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." 7 So God
made the dome and separated the waters
that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was
so. 8 God called the dome Sky. And there
was evening and there was morning, the
second day.

9 And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one
place, and let the dry land appear." And it
was so. 10 God called the dry land Earth,
and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it
was good. 11 Then God said, "Let the
earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding
seed, and fruit trees of every kind on
earth that bear fruit with the seed in it."
And it was so. 12 The earth brought forth
vegetation: plants yielding seed of every
kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit
with the seed in it. And God saw that it
was good. 13 And there was evening and
there was morning, the third day.

14 And God said, "Let there be lights
in the dome of the sky to separate the day
from the night; and let them be for signs
and for seasons and for days and years,
15 and let them be lights in the dome of
the sky to give light upon the earth." And
it was so. 16 God made the two great lights
—the greater light to rule the day and the
lesser light to rule the night—and the
stars. 17 God set them in the dome of the
sky to give light upon the earth, 18 to rule
over the day and over the night, and to
separate the light from the darkness. And
God saw that it was good. 19 And there
was evening and there was morning, the
fourth day.

a Or *when God began to create* or *In the beginning God created* b Or *while the spirit of God* or *while a mighty wind*

1.1–11.32 The primordial history recounts the earliest generations of the world and humankind as background for the call of Abram in 12.1. Although human events are viewed pessimistically—through its misdeeds humankind repeatedly brings God's curse upon itself and all life—the hope for a divinely blessed flourishing of life never truly dies, and God does not abandon the world.

1.1–2.3 The creation story serves as a preface not just to Genesis but to the entire Hebrew Bible. Recounting the origin of the cosmos and its glorious centerpiece, earth, it shows God masterfully orchestrating the events of creation. Each phase follows more or less the same basic pattern established on day one: divine command, result, divine approval, enumeration of the day. But the effect is anything but monotonous. Like a musical theme with variations, the story shows the world gradually becoming more mobile and complex, until, by the sixth day, it is ready for self-perpetuation through procreation. **1.1** *In the beginning when God created*, lit. "In the beginning of God's creating" or "When God first created." Cf. the dependent clause introducing the Babylonian creation story, *Enuma Elish*: "When on high the heavens had not been named . . . ." **1.2** *A formless void*, Hebrew *tohu wabohu*, in effect "formlessness and normlessness," the primordial chaos. Divine mastery of the primordial deep, a motif common in ancient creation myths, is drawn in more detail in Isa 40.12; Ps 33.6–7; Job 38.8–11. **1.3** Sun and stars do not yet exist, only undifferentiated light. Cf. 1.14–19. **1.4** *Good* suggests both "acceptable, viable" (cf. Isa 41.7) and "intrinsically good." The purpose of every creation is good and for the benefit of all. **1.5** *God called*. The temporal and physical frameworks of the cosmos (night/day, sky/earth, ocean/land) are named by God; their inhabitants, by human beings; cf. 2.19–20. *Evening . . . morning*. The Israelite calendar, accordingly, reckons dates from sunset to sunset. **1.5, 8** *The first day . . . the second day*, lit. "one day . . . a second day." Similarly, "a third day" (v. 13), etc. **1.6–8** The story depicts a flat earth and curved celestial dome surrounded above and below by primordial waters. The universe is conceived from the vantage point of earth, its center. **1.11, 20, 24, 26** Remarkably, the story's order of life-forms resembles that of our modern theory of evolution: vegetation, swarming creatures, fish, birds, animals (mammals), and human beings. **1.14–19** *Lights*. The undifferentiated primordial light is now parceled into the heavenly orbs, by whose movements time

20 And God said, "Let the waters
bring forth swarms of living creatures,
and let birds fly above the earth across the
dome of the sky." 21 So God created the
great sea monsters and every living crea-
ture that moves, of every kind, with which
the waters swarm, and every winged bird
of every kind. And God saw that it was
good. 22 God blessed them, saying, "Be
fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in
the seas, and let birds multiply on the
earth." 23 And there was evening and
there was morning, the fifth day.

24 And God said, "Let the earth bring
forth living creatures of every kind: cattle
and creeping things and wild animals of
the earth of every kind." And it was so.
25 God made the wild animals of the earth
of every kind, and the cattle of every kind,
and everything that creeps upon the
ground of every kind. And God saw that
it was good.

26 Then God said, "Let us make hu-
mankind[c] in our image, according to our
likeness; and let them have dominion over
the fish of the sea, and over the birds of
the air, and over the cattle, and over all
the wild animals of the earth,[d] and over
every creeping thing that creeps upon the
earth."

27 So God created humankind[c] in
his image,
in the image of God he created
them;[e]
male and female he created
them.

28 God blessed them, and God said to
them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill
the earth and subdue it; and have domin-
ion over the fish of the sea and over the
birds of the air and over every living thing
that moves upon the earth." 29 God said,
"See, I have given you every plant yield-
ing seed that is upon the face of all the
earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit;
you shall have them for food. 30 And to
every beast of the earth, and to every bird
of the air, and to everything that creeps
on the earth, everything that has the
breath of life, I have given every green
plant for food." And it was so. 31 God saw
everything that he had made, and indeed,
it was very good. And there was evening
and there was morning, the sixth day.

2 Thus the heavens and the earth
were finished, and all their multi-
tude. 2 And on the seventh day God fin-
ished the work that he had done, and he
rested on the seventh day from all the
work that he had done. 3 So God blessed
the seventh day and hallowed it, because
on it God rested from all the work that he
had done in creation.

4 These are the generations of the
heavens and the earth when they were
created.

The Garden of Eden

In the day that the LORD God made the
earth and the heavens, 5 when no plant of
the field was yet in the earth and no herb

c Heb *adam* d Syr: Heb *and over all the earth*
e Heb *him*

---

is measured. **1.21** *Created*, Hebrew *bara'*, a verb whose sole subject is God, here takes only three objects: the universe as a whole (1.1); sea monsters, masters of the waters (1.21); and human beings, masters of land (1.27). **1.26–27** *Let us*. The plural form does not indicate multiple gods, but God and the retinue of the divine court. *In our image*. Paradoxically, the human image resembles imageless divinity in some respect—perhaps speech, reason, or morality. But biblical narrative was not hesitant to depict divine manifestation in human form. Cf. 18.1–2; 32.22–32; Ex 15.3; 24.10; Dan 7.9. *Male and female*. Both man and woman are created in the image of God, who is beyond gender or comprises both. **2.1–3** The true culmination of creation is the sabbath on the seventh day. God's cessation from labor is the paradigm of sabbath rest in the human household; cf. Ex 20.8–11.

2.4–3.24 The garden of Eden story recounts the beginning of human life and culture as well as the first human transgression and its punishment. In presenting our present reality as an "exile" from a prior perfection, it portrays allegorically the origin of the awareness, in every lifetime, of life's difficulties and the need for human interdependence. By the end of the story (3.24), the groundwork for civilized life has been laid. **2.4** This verse—rendered in some translations as a single, whole sentence—forms a symmetry (*heavens/earth, earth/heavens*), marking the transition between the creation and garden of Eden stories. *These are the generations* (in the variant translations "These are the descendants," "This is the story") introduces the story as it introduces that of Noah (6.9), the post-flood era (10.1), Abraham (11.27), Isaac's household (25.19), and Jacob's household (37.2). See also 5.1; 11.10; 25.12; 36.1, 9; Num 3.1. **2.5–7** The creation of human beings (see 1.26–28) is described a second time,

of the field had yet sprung up—for the
LORD God had not caused it to rain upon
the earth, and there was no one to till the
ground; 6 but a stream would rise from
the earth, and water the whole face of the
ground— 7 then the LORD God formed
man from the dust of the ground,[f] and
breathed into his nostrils the breath of
life; and the man became a living being.
8 And the LORD God planted a garden in
Eden, in the east; and there he put the
man whom he had formed. 9 Out of the
ground the LORD God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and
good for food, the tree of life also in the
midst of the garden, and the tree of the
knowledge of good and evil.

10 A river flows out of Eden to water
the garden, and from there it divides and
becomes four branches. 11 The name of
the first is Pishon; it is the one that flows
around the whole land of Havilah, where
there is gold; 12 and the gold of that land
is good; bdellium and onyx stone are
there. 13 The name of the second river is
Gihon; it is the one that flows around the
whole land of Cush. 14 The name of the
third river is Tigris, which flows east of
Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

15 The LORD God took the man and
put him in the garden of Eden to till it
and keep it. 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, "You may freely eat of
every tree of the garden; 17 but of the tree
of the knowledge of good and evil you
shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of
it you shall die."

18 Then the LORD God said, "It is not
good that the man should be alone; I will
make him a helper as his partner." 19 So
out of the ground the LORD God formed
every animal of the field and every bird of
the air, and brought them to the man to
see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature,
that was its name. 20 The man gave names
to all cattle, and to the birds of the air,
and to every animal of the field; but for
the man[g] there was not found a helper as
his partner. 21 So the LORD God caused a
deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he
slept; then he took one of his ribs and
closed up its place with flesh. 22 And the
rib that the LORD God had taken from the
man he made into a woman and brought
her to the man. 23 Then the man said,

"This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
this one shall be called Woman,[h]
for out of Man[i] this one was
taken."

24 Therefore a man leaves his father and
his mother and clings to his wife, and they
become one flesh. 25 And the man and his
wife were both naked, and were not
ashamed.

f Or *formed a man* (Heb *adam*) *of dust from the ground* (Heb *adamah*) *g* Or *for Adam*
h Heb *ishshah* *i* Heb *ish*

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now in more detail and from the human perspective. **2.5** The absence of vegetation and of humankind as tillers of the soil anticipates the sending forth of human beings to till the earth; see 3.23. **2.6** Eden is watered by a continuous flow from underground instead of by rain, which comes and goes capriciously; cf. 3.17–19. **2.8** The name *Eden* may mean "pleasure, delight." It corresponds to no known geographical site. **2.9** *The tree of life* is mentioned again only in 3.22, 24. *The tree of the knowledge of good and evil* anticipates the events of ch. 3. **2.10–14** The four rivers (only Tigris and Euphrates correspond to known ones) suggest the whole of the eventual settled world, with Eden at its center. *Havilah* is sometimes identified with the Arabian Peninsula and *Cush* with the Horn of Africa. **2.12** *Gold . . . bdellium and onyx.* Cf. the mineral wealth and gems of the "Eden" in Ezek 28.13. **2.15** The human being will have labor, but none as demanding as that of the tiller of soil. **2.16–17** Cf. 1.29–30. **2.18–22** The creation of woman is also the origin of human society. Human beings require the company of their own species (see v. 20). **2.20** *But for the man . . . was not found,* lit. "but for 'Adam' was not found." In Hebrew, male and female of a species are designated by masculine and feminine forms of the same word—except for "Adam." No creature born of earth (*'adamah*) is yet a fitting partner. *Helper* does not indicate a servant relation but a true partnership. Similarly, the making of woman from the man's rib suggests their equality and kinship, not her subordination (see 2.18). **2.23** The man expresses his partnership to the woman by renaming himself—*'adam* (human being) becomes *'ish* (man), partner to *'ishshah* (woman). *'Ish* is used only thrice more in the story: 2.24; 3.6; 3.16. **2.24** This adage justifies the later human institution of marriage by showing its origins with the first human couple. *One flesh,* in mutual loyalty, in sexual union, and in their offspring.

Expulsion from the Garden

3 Now the serpent was more crafty
than any other wild animal that the
LORD God had made. He said to the
woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat
from any tree in the garden'?" 2 The
woman said to the serpent, "We may eat
of the fruit of the trees in the garden;
3 but God said, 'You shall not eat of the
fruit of the tree that is in the middle of
the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you
shall die.'" 4 But the serpent said to the
woman, "You will not die; 5 for God
knows that when you eat of it your eyes
will be opened, and you will be like God,[j]
knowing good and evil." 6 So when the
woman saw that the tree was good for
food, and that it was a delight to the eyes,
and that the tree was to be desired to
make one wise, she took of its fruit and
ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate.
7 Then the eyes of both were opened, and
they knew that they were naked; and they
sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

8 They heard the sound of the LORD
God walking in the garden at the time of
the evening breeze, and the man and his
wife hid themselves from the presence of
the LORD God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the LORD God called to the
man, and said to him, "Where are you?"
10 He said, "I heard the sound of you in
the garden, and I was afraid, because I
was naked; and I hid myself." 11 He said,
"Who told you that you were naked?
Have you eaten from the tree of which I
commanded you not to eat?" 12 The man
said, "The woman whom you gave to be
with me, she gave me fruit from the tree,
and I ate." 13 Then the LORD God said to
the woman, "What is this that you have
done?" The woman said, "The serpent
tricked me, and I ate." 14 The LORD God
said to the serpent,

"Because you have done this,
cursed are you among all
animals
and among all wild creatures;
upon your belly you shall go,
and dust you shall eat
all the days of your life.
15 I will put enmity between you
and the woman,
and between your offspring
and hers;
he will strike your head,
and you will strike his heel."

16 To the woman he said,

"I will greatly increase your pangs
in childbearing;
in pain you shall bring forth
children,
yet your desire shall be for your
husband,
and he shall rule over you."

17 And to the man[k] he said,

j Or *gods* *k* Or *to Adam*

3.1–24 Ch. 3 continues the narrative, describing how the Garden was lost through human disobedience. **3.1** The *serpent* is reminiscent of the snake who steals from Gilgamesh a plant conferring immortality in the Mesopotamian epic (*Epic of Gilgamesh* 11.287–89). *More crafty*, in Hebrew a wordplay on "naked" in 2.25. *Wild animal*, or "beast of the field"; cf. the term's first use in 2.19–20. *Any tree*, or "every tree"; the serpent's ambiguity may be deliberate. **3.3** *Nor shall you touch it.* The woman possibly exaggerates or misconstrues the divine command of 2.16–17. Cf. Deut 4.2. **3.4–5** The serpent does not lie, but tailors the truth to incite envy. *Knowing good and evil.* See note on 3.22. **3.6** *The woman saw.* The eyes often lead one astray; cf. 12.14–15; Num 15.39; Judg 14.1; 2 Sam 11.2. *Desired to make one wise*, or simply "desirable to contemplate." *She took . . . and ate, and . . . gave . . . and he ate*, the story's central event. Both woman and man participate. No seduction is involved. **3.8** God appears physically close to earthly beings; cf. Ex 33.19–23. **3.9–11** God knows of the couple's whereabouts and deeds but asks in order to elicit confession. **3.11–19** God interrogates the man, who blames the woman, who blames the serpent. God's judgments are pronounced in the reverse order. These verses provide causal explanations (etiologies) for present-day historical realities: agriculture, prepared food, childbearing, the conjugal family. **3.12** *The woman whom you gave.* The man shifts the blame to his Creator as well. **3.13** *Tricked me*, Hebrew *hissi'ani*, a play on the serpent's hiss. **3.14** *Upon your belly* suggests that the serpent's posture was once upright. **3.15** *Enmity* perhaps suggests humanity's sad alienation not just from serpents but from all animals; see note on 3.21. **3.16** Woman's historical subordination to man is a consequence of human events, not an ideal in its own right. Responsibilities of procreation will compromise the autonomy of both sexes. **3.17–19** Humans will become tillers of the soil, a major step in human evolution but one beset with difficulty and hard work.

"Because you have listened to the
voice of your wife,
and have eaten of the tree
about which I commanded you,
'You shall not eat of it,'
cursed is the ground because
of you;
in toil you shall eat of it all the
days of your life;
18 thorns and thistles it shall bring
forth for you;
and you shall eat the plants of
the field.
19 By the sweat of your face
you shall eat bread
until you return to the ground,
for out of it you were taken;
you are dust,
and to dust you shall return."

20 The man named his wife Eve,[l] because she was the mother of all living. 21 And the LORD God made garments of skins for the man[m] and for his wife, and clothed them.

22 Then the LORD God said, "See, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"— 23 therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken. 24 He drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a sword flaming and turning to guard the way to the tree of life.

Cain Murders Abel

4 Now the man knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have produced[n] a man with the help of the LORD." 2 Next she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a tiller of the ground. 3 In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, 4 and Abel for his part brought of the firstlings of his flock, their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, 5 but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. 6 The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your countenance fallen? 7 If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it."

8 Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let us go out to the field."[o] And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel, and killed him. 9 Then the

l In Heb *Eve* resembles the word for *living*
m Or *for Adam* *n* The verb in Heb resembles the word for *Cain* *o* Sam Gk Syr Compare Vg: MT lacks *Let us go out to the field*

Unlike fruit, *bread* requires many steps and much human cooperation in its preparation. *Until you return . . . to dust you shall return*, the first clear indication of human mortality. **3.20** *Eve*, Hebrew for "Life-bearer." This second naming of woman (cf. 2.23) reflects the couple's new role as procreators. **3.21** *Garments of skins* perhaps suggests the new alienation between humans and animals; cf. 3.15; *Epic of Gilgamesh* 1.4.24–25. **3.22** *Like one of us*. See note on 1.26–27. *Knowing good and evil* can suggest "everything, all extremes," as well as knowledge of sex, mortality, and moral distinctions; cf. 2 Sam 14.17, 20; 1 Kings 3.9. Instead of the eternal life conferred by *the tree of life*, humans must settle for the collective immortality of generational succession—the human family tree. **3.23** *To till the ground from which he was taken*, and to which he will return; cf. 3.19b. **3.24** *Cherubim*, angelic guardians fearsome in appearance, wield *a sword flaming and turning* to prevent the couple from returning to Eden.

4.1–16 The story of Cain and Abel recounts the world's first human death, indeed, its first murder. In punishment, Cain is banished. A wanderer, he comes to build a city. Other inhabitants of the world seem to arise from nowhere in particular (see note on 5.4). **4.1** *The man knew his wife*, i.e., sexually. *Knew* presupposes "knowledge of good and evil" already described (3.22). *And bore*, in Hebrew a wordplay on "generations" in 2.4—the turning of one generation is now complete. *Cain*, in Hebrew folk etymology "Acquisition, Production." Biblical naming of children or places typically involves puns on key events. **4.2** *Abel*, in Hebrew folk etymology "Emptiness, Futility," the perfect counterpart of "Acquisition" (see note on 4.1). Biblical brother pairs are typically opposed in temperament, way of life, and destiny (see esp. 25.19–28). **4.2–5** The historical opposition of shepherds and farmers is told here. God favors the shepherd, but the choice comes to grief in any case. Unequal favor of one's children is often a source of strife; cf. 9.20–27; 21.10–21; 25.28; 27.1–40; 37.1–36. **4.6–7** The text is uncertain or elliptical. *Will you not be accepted*, lit. "[There is] uplifting, favor" (cf. Num 6.26). Cain is told that all depends on righteousness. **4.9** *Where is your brother Abel?* See note on

LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother
Abel?" He said, "I do not know; am I my
brother's keeper?" 10 And the LORD said,
"What have you done? Listen; your
brother's blood is crying out to me from
the ground! 11 And now you are cursed
from the ground, which has opened its
mouth to receive your brother's blood
from your hand. 12 When you till the
ground, it will no longer yield to you its
strength; you will be a fugitive and a wan-
derer on the earth." 13 Cain said to the
LORD, "My punishment is greater than I
can bear! 14 Today you have driven me
away from the soil, and I shall be hidden
from your face; I shall be a fugitive and a
wanderer on the earth, and anyone who
meets me may kill me." 15 Then the LORD
said to him, "Not so![p] Whoever kills Cain
will suffer a sevenfold vengeance." And
the LORD put a mark on Cain, so that no
one who came upon him would kill him.
16 Then Cain went away from the pres-
ence of the LORD, and settled in the land
of Nod,[q] east of Eden.

Beginnings of Civilization

17 Cain knew his wife, and she con-
ceived and bore Enoch; and he built a
city, and named it Enoch after his son
Enoch. 18 To Enoch was born Irad; and
Irad was the father of Mehujael, and Me-
hujael the father of Methushael, and Me-
thushael the father of Lamech. 19 Lamech
took two wives; the name of the one was
Adah, and the name of the other Zillah.
20 Adah bore Jabal; he was the ancestor of
those who live in tents and have livestock.
21 His brother's name was Jubal; he was
the ancestor of all those who play the lyre
and pipe. 22 Zillah bore Tubal-cain, who
made all kinds of bronze and iron tools.
The sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah.

23 Lamech said to his wives:
"Adah and Zillah, hear my voice;
you wives of Lamech, listen to
what I say:
I have killed a man for
wounding me,
a young man for striking me.
24 If Cain is avenged sevenfold,
truly Lamech
seventy-sevenfold."

25 Adam knew his wife again, and she
bore a son and named him Seth, for she
said, "God has appointed[r] for me an-
other child instead of Abel, because Cain
killed him." 26 To Seth also a son was
born, and he named him Enosh. At that
time people began to invoke the name of
the LORD.

From Adam to Noah

5 This is the list of the descendants of
Adam. When God created human-
kind,[s] he made them[t] in the likeness of
God. 2 Male and female he created them,
and he blessed them and named them
"Humankind"[s] when they were created.

3 When Adam had lived one hundred
thirty years, he became the father of a son
in his likeness, according to his image,
and named him Seth. 4 The days of Adam
after he became the father of Seth were

p Gk Syr Vg: Heb *Therefore* q That is *Wandering* r The verb in Heb resembles the word for *Seth* s Heb *adam* t Heb *him*

3.9–11. **4.11–12** The ground is again cursed for a human action; cf. 3.17. As *a fugitive and a wanderer*, Cain will enjoy no citizens' rights, at least in his initial homeland. **4.13–16** In antiquity, certain criminals were offered limited asylum when uncontrolled reprisals posed a greater social danger than the criminals themselves; cf. 4.23–24; Num 35.9–16; Deut 4.41–43; 2 Sam 14.1–24.

4.17–26 The line of Cain and the birth of Seth, third son of Adam and Eve. Most names from the Cainite genealogy have Sethite counterparts in 5.1–32 (e.g., Irad, Jared; Methushael, Methuselah; Naamah, Noah). The Cainites' stockbreeding and artisan trades were vital to the rise of cities. **4.23–24** Lamech's boastful song typifies the world's multiplication of violence, despite God's effort in 4.15 to restrain blood vengeance. **4.26** *People began to invoke.* The worship of YHWH ("LORD"), by this account, long anticipates Israelite religion. The divine name means lit. "He-[who]-brings-into-being."

5.1–32 The Sethite genealogy seemingly ignores the line of Cain but duplicates most of its names; see note on 4.17–26. From Adam to Noah are ten generations. The average life span grows progressively shorter as we approach the present. **5.1** *List*, lit. "book," an originally independent scroll or source. **5.4** *And he had other sons and daughters.* This repeated formula stands as explanation for the world's growing population.

eight hundred years; and he had other
sons and daughters. 5 Thus all the days
that Adam lived were nine hundred thirty
years; and he died.

6 When Seth had lived one hundred
five years, he became the father of Enosh.
7 Seth lived after the birth of Enosh eight
hundred seven years, and had other sons
and daughters. 8 Thus all the days of Seth
were nine hundred twelve years; and he
died.

9 When Enosh had lived ninety years,
he became the father of Kenan. 10 Enosh
lived after the birth of Kenan eight hun-
dred fifteen years, and had other sons
and daughters. 11 Thus all the days of
Enosh were nine hundred five years; and
he died.

12 When Kenan had lived seventy
years, he became the father of Mahalalel.
13 Kenan lived after the birth of Mahalalel
eight hundred and forty years, and had
other sons and daughters. 14 Thus all the
days of Kenan were nine hundred and
ten years; and he died.

15 When Mahalalel had lived sixty-
five years, he became the father of Jared.
16 Mahalalel lived after the birth of Jared
eight hundred thirty years, and had other
sons and daughters. 17 Thus all the days
of Mahalalel were eight hundred ninety-
five years; and he died.

18 When Jared had lived one hun-
dred sixty-two years he became the father
of Enoch. 19 Jared lived after the birth of
Enoch eight hundred years, and had
other sons and daughters. 20 Thus all the
days of Jared were nine hundred sixty-
two years; and he died.

21 When Enoch had lived sixty-five
years, he became the father of Methuse-
lah. 22 Enoch walked with God after the
birth of Methuselah three hundred years,
and had other sons and daughters.
23 Thus all the days of Enoch were three
hundred sixty-five years. 24 Enoch walked
with God; then he was no more, because
God took him.

25 When Methuselah had lived one
hundred eighty-seven years, he became
the father of Lamech. 26 Methuselah lived
after the birth of Lamech seven hundred
eighty-two years, and had other sons and
daughters. 27 Thus all the days of Methu-
selah were nine hundred sixty-nine years;
and he died.

28 When Lamech had lived one hun-
dred eighty-two years, he became the fa-
ther of a son; 29 he named him Noah,
saying, "Out of the ground that the LORD
has cursed this one shall bring us relief
from our work and from the toil of our
hands." 30 Lamech lived after the birth of
Noah five hundred ninety-five years, and
had other sons and daughters. 31 Thus all
the days of Lamech were seven hundred
seventy-seven years; and he died.

32 After Noah was five hundred years
old, Noah became the father of Shem,
Ham, and Japheth.

The Wickedness of Humankind

6 When people began to multiply on
the face of the ground, and daugh-
ters were born to them, 2 the sons of God
saw that they were fair; and they took
wives for themselves of all that they chose.
3 Then the LORD said, "My spirit shall not
abide[u] in mortals forever, for they are
flesh; their days shall be one hundred
twenty years." 4 The Nephilim were on
the earth in those days—and also
afterward—when the sons of God went in
to the daughters of humans, who bore
children to them. These were the heroes
that were of old, warriors of renown.

5 The LORD saw that the wickedness
of humankind was great in the earth, and
that every inclination of the thoughts of
their hearts was only evil continually.

u Meaning of Heb uncertain

5.6 *Enosh,* like "Adam," means "human being." As Adam's son is Cain (Kayin), Enosh's is Kenan (5.9). Enosh possibly begins the original genealogy used by the biblical author. **5.24** *He was no more because God took him,* an atypical wording suggesting something other than physical death; cf. Elijah in 2 Kings 2.11. **5.27** *Methuselah* is the Bible's longest-lived person; a proverbial symbol of longevity. **5.29** *Out of the ground that the LORD has cursed.* Cf. 3.17–19; 4.11–12.

6.2, 4 The *sons of God*—explained in later eras as renegade angels—resemble many figures of ancient mythology who recognize no border between heaven and earth. The term is perhaps synonymous with *Nephilim* (v. 4), a word possibly related to the Hebrew root "to fall." These are called *heroes . . . of old, warriors of renown* with some irony—their legacy is now faint, nearly forgotten. **6.3** The fixing of a life span at *one hundred twenty years,* the age of Moses at his death, is only a moderate exaggeration of the normal, appropriate to a heroic era. God shortens human life out

6 And the LORD was sorry that he had
made humankind on the earth, and it
grieved him to his heart. 7 So the LORD
said, "I will blot out from the earth the
human beings I have created—people to-
gether with animals and creeping things
and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I
have made them." 8 But Noah found fa-
vor in the sight of the LORD.

The Command to Build an Ark

9 These are the descendants of Noah.
Noah was a righteous man, blameless in
his generation; Noah walked with God.
10 And Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham,
and Japheth.
11 Now the earth was corrupt in God's
sight, and the earth was filled with vio-
lence. 12 And God saw that the earth was
corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted its
ways upon the earth. 13 And God said to
Noah, "I have determined to make an end
of all flesh, for the earth is filled with vio-
lence because of them; now I am going to
destroy them along with the earth.
14 Make yourself an ark of cypress[v]
wood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it
inside and out with pitch. 15 This is how
you are to make it: the length of the ark
three hundred cubits, its width fifty cu-
bits, and its height thirty cubits. 16 Make a
roof[w] for the ark, and finish it to a cubit
above; and put the door of the ark in its
side; make it with lower, second, and
third decks. 17 For my part, I am going to
bring a flood of waters on the earth, to
destroy from under heaven all flesh in
which is the breath of life; everything that
is on the earth shall die. 18 But I will estab-
lish my covenant with you; and you shall
come into the ark, you, your sons, your
wife, and your sons' wives with you.
19 And of every living thing, of all flesh,
you shall bring two of every kind into the
ark, to keep them alive with you; they
shall be male and female. 20 Of the birds
according to their kinds, and of the ani-
mals according to their kinds, of every
creeping thing of the ground according to
its kind, two of every kind shall come in to
you, to keep them alive. 21 Also take with
you every kind of food that is eaten, and
store it up; and it shall serve as food for
you and for them." 22 Noah did this; he
did all that God commanded him.

The Great Flood

7 Then the LORD said to Noah, "Go
into the ark, you and all your house-
hold, for I have seen that you alone are
righteous before me in this generation.
2 Take with you seven pairs of all clean
animals, the male and its mate; and a pair
of the animals that are not clean, the male
and its mate; 3 and seven pairs of the birds
of the air also, male and female, to keep
their kind alive on the face of all the
earth. 4 For in seven days I will send rain
on the earth for forty days and forty
nights; and every living thing that I have
made I will blot out from the face of the
ground." 5 And Noah did all that the
LORD had commanded him.
6 Noah was six hundred years old
when the flood of waters came on the
earth. 7 And Noah with his sons and his
wife and his sons' wives went into the ark
to escape the waters of the flood. 8 Of
clean animals, and of animals that are not
clean, and of birds, and of everything that
creeps on the ground, 9 two and two, male
and female, went into the ark with Noah,
as God had commanded Noah. 10 And af-

v Meaning of Heb uncertain w Or *window*

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of apparent displeasure. **6.8** *But Noah found favor.* The planned destruction becomes a reconstruction; a righteous remnant (cf., e.g., Ex 32.9–10; 1 Kings 19.17–18; Isa 4.3) will survive and regenerate.

6.9–9.17 The story of Noah. Legends of a universal deluge are common to many prebiblical cultures. Strikingly similar is the story in the old Mesopotamian *Epic of Gilgamesh* (11.9–199). **6.9** *Blameless in his generation,* blameless relative to the era. *Walked with God* indicates righteousness; cf. 5.22. *Shem, Ham, and Japheth.* See note on 10.1–32. **6.14** *Ark,* from a word meaning "chest, box"; cf. Ex 2.3 (there translated "basket"). This vessel is to be a huge ship. *Cypress,* Hebrew *gopher,* meaning uncertain. **6.15** *Cubit,* the distance from the elbow to the middle fingertip, about 18 inches. **6.18** *Covenant.* Cf. 9.9–17; 15.18; 17.2. **6.19** *Two of every kind . . . male and female,* to ensure the continuance of all species; see 6.20; 7.3. **7.1–5** See 6.19. On clean and unclean species, cf. Lev 11.1–47; Deut 14.3–21.

7.6–8.22 The flood rises and recedes, leaving the ark at rest atop the Ararat range. All land and air life perishes except the ark's inhabitants. **7.6** A continuation of the preoccupation with historical dates begun in ch. 5. The flood will last just

ter seven days the waters of the flood
came on the earth.
11 In the six hundredth year of
Noah's life, in the second month, on the
seventeenth day of the month, on that day
all the fountains of the great deep burst
forth, and the windows of the heavens
were opened. 12 The rain fell on the earth
forty days and forty nights. 13 On the very
same day Noah with his sons, Shem and
Ham and Japheth, and Noah's wife and
the three wives of his sons entered the
ark, 14 they and every wild animal of every
kind, and all domestic animals of every
kind, and every creeping thing that creeps
on the earth, and every bird of every kind
—every bird, every winged creature.
15 They went into the ark with Noah, two
and two of all flesh in which there was the
breath of life. 16 And those that entered,
male and female of all flesh, went in as
God had commanded him; and the LORD
shut him in.
17 The flood continued forty days on
the earth; and the waters increased, and
bore up the ark, and it rose high above
the earth. 18 The waters swelled and in-
creased greatly on the earth; and the ark
floated on the face of the waters. 19 The
waters swelled so mightily on the earth
that all the high mountains under the
whole heaven were covered; 20 the waters
swelled above the mountains, covering
them fifteen cubits deep. 21 And all flesh
died that moved on the earth, birds, do-
mestic animals, wild animals, all swarming
creatures that swarm on the earth, and all
human beings; 22 everything on dry land
in whose nostrils was the breath of life
died. 23 He blotted out every living thing
that was on the face of the ground, hu-
man beings and animals and creeping
things and birds of the air; they were blot-
ted out from the earth. Only Noah was
left, and those that were with him in the
ark. 24 And the waters swelled on the
earth for one hundred fifty days.

The Flood Subsides

8 But God remembered Noah and all
the wild animals and all the domestic
animals that were with him in the ark.
And God made a wind blow over the
earth, and the waters subsided; 2 the foun-
tains of the deep and the windows of the
heavens were closed, the rain from the
heavens was restrained, 3 and the waters
gradually receded from the earth. At the
end of one hundred fifty days the waters
had abated; 4 and in the seventh month,
on the seventeenth day of the month, the
ark came to rest on the mountains of Ara-
rat. 5 The waters continued to abate until
the tenth month; in the tenth month, on
the first day of the month, the tops of the
mountains appeared.
6 At the end of forty days Noah
opened the window of the ark that he had
made 7 and sent out the raven; and it went
to and fro until the waters were dried up
from the earth. 8 Then he sent out the
dove from him, to see if the waters had
subsided from the face of the ground;
9 but the dove found no place to set its
foot, and it returned to him to the ark, for
the waters were still on the face of the
whole earth. So he put out his hand and
took it and brought it into the ark with
him. 10 He waited another seven days, and
again he sent out the dove from the ark;
11 and the dove came back to him in the
evening, and there in its beak was a
freshly plucked olive leaf; so Noah knew
that the waters had subsided from the
earth. 12 Then he waited another seven
days, and sent out the dove; and it did not
return to him any more.
13 In the six hundred first year, in the
first month, on the first day of the month,

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over a year; see 8.13–14. **7.11** The flood comes from two directions: the subterranean abyss and the skies. On waters above the skies, cf. 1.6–8. **7.16** *And the LORD shut him in.* Cf. 8.6. **7.24** *The waters swelled . . . for one hundred fifty days.* Cf. 8.3.

8.1–19 Virtually an exact reversal of 7.11–24, recounting the floodwater's cessation and drying. **8.1** *But God remembered . . . in the ark,* the structural midpoint—and dramatic turning point—of the story. On divine remembering, cf. 19.29; 30.22; Ex 2.24. *Made a wind blow.* Cf. 1.2, 9. **8.4** *Ararat,* Assyrian *Urartu,* a mountain or range in historical Armenia. **8.6–12** Noah sends forth the birds. Cf. *Epic of Gilgamesh* 11.145–55. **8.7** The *raven* perhaps represents the unclean species; see Lev 11.15. *Went to and fro.* The raven, being used to wilderness habits, returned sporadically throughout the drying. **8.8** Noah sends the *dove* three times, gradually eliciting evidence of a habitable earth. The dove is a clean animal (absent from the unclean in Lev 11.13–19). **8.9** *Place to set,* Hebrew *manoah,* a play on "Noah." **8.11** *Olive leaf* proverbial symbol of peace and flourishing life. **8.12** *It did not*

the waters were dried up from the earth;
and Noah removed the covering of the
ark, and looked, and saw that the face of
the ground was drying. 14 In the second
month, on the twenty-seventh day of the
month, the earth was dry. 15 Then God
said to Noah, 16 "Go out of the ark, you
and your wife, and your sons and your
sons' wives with you. 17 Bring out with you
every living thing that is with you of all
flesh—birds and animals and every creep-
ing thing that creeps on the earth—so
that they may abound on the earth, and
be fruitful and multiply on the earth."
18 So Noah went out with his sons and his
wife and his sons' wives. 19 And every ani-
mal, every creeping thing, and every bird,
everything that moves on the earth, went
out of the ark by families.

God's Resolve Not to Destroy

20 Then Noah built an altar to the
LORD, and took of every clean animal and
of every clean bird, and offered burnt
offerings on the altar. 21 And when the
LORD smelled the pleasing odor, the LORD
said in his heart, "I will never again curse
the ground because of humankind, for
the inclination of the human heart is evil
from youth; nor will I ever again destroy
every living creature as I have done.
22 As long as the earth endures,
seedtime and harvest, cold and
heat,
summer and winter, day and
night,
shall not cease."

The Covenant with Noah

9 God blessed Noah and his sons, and
said to them, "Be fruitful and multi-
ply, and fill the earth. 2 The fear and
dread of you shall rest on every animal of
the earth, and on every bird of the air, on
everything that creeps on the ground, and
on all the fish of the sea; into your hand
they are delivered. 3 Every moving thing
that lives shall be food for you; and just as
I gave you the green plants, I give you
everything. 4 Only, you shall not eat flesh
with its life, that is, its blood. 5 For your
own lifeblood I will surely require a reck-
oning: from every animal I will require it
and from human beings, each one for the
blood of another, I will require a reckon-
ing for human life.
6 Whoever sheds the blood of a
human,
by a human shall that person's
blood be shed;
for in his own image
God made humankind.
7 And you, be fruitful and multiply,
abound on the earth and multiply in it."
8 Then God said to Noah and to his
sons with him, 9 "As for me, I am estab-
lishing my covenant with you and your
descendants after you, 10 and with every
living creature that is with you, the birds,

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return, because it found a place to nest. **8.13** *Removed the covering*, opened the cover of the hatch, from which one peers forth. **8.15–19** The command to leave the ark parallels the one to enter it in 7.1–5. **8.17** *Be fruitful and multiply* recalls 1.28. **8.19** *By families*. All species exhibit domestic habits.

8.20–22 Noah's first act upon dry land, the building of an altar, and the divine resolve not to send another flood. **8.20** *Noah built an altar*. On sacrifice after the flood, cf. *Epic of Gilgamesh* 11.156–58. **8.21** *The pleasing odor*. Cf. *Epic of Gilgamesh* 11.159–61; Ex 29.18, 25, 41; Lev 1.9. *Said in his heart*, i.e., to himself. *I will never again curse the ground because of humankind*. Cf. 3.17–19; 4.11–12; 5.29. *For the inclination*, "although the inclination." *Nor will I . . . destroy*. God may punish individuals and communities but will not destroy the world. **8.22** The rhythms suggest an ancient verse or proverb.

9.1–17 The Noahide covenant is the precursor to the Sinai covenant; cf. the blessing of humankind in 1.28–30. **9.1** *Be fruitful and multiply*. Cf. 1.28. **9.2–3** *The fear and dread of you*, as users of animals for food, labor, and hides. *Into your hand they are delivered*. Humans have the power of life and death over animals and they are to use it wisely. *Every moving thing that lives*, all animal life. These words—like the story itself—continue the preoccupation with relations between humans and animals begun in 1.28–30; 2.18–20; 3.1–6, 13–15, 21; 4.7, 20. **9.4** Cf. Deut 12.23. Blood is the repository of life; it must be drained from every animal killed for food. Israelite law prohibited animal flesh torn in the field by beasts (see Ex 22.31 [v. 30 in Hebrew]). **9.5** *For your own lifeblood . . . a reckoning*. All taking of human life is subject to the rule of law. *From every animal*. Even animals were punished for homicide; see Ex 21.28–32. *And from human beings*. Cf. Ex 21.12–14. **9.6** *Whoever sheds . . . blood be shed*. In Hebrew the couplet is symmetrical: (a) Shedder (b) of blood (c) of a human parallels (c′) by a human (b′) his blood (a′) shall be shed. **9.8** *Cove-*

the domestic animals, and every animal of
the earth with you, as many as came out of
the ark.[x] 11 I establish my covenant with
you, that never again shall all flesh be cut
off by the waters of a flood, and never
again shall there be a flood to destroy the
earth." 12 God said, "This is the sign of the
covenant that I make between me and you
and every living creature that is with you,
for all future generations: 13 I have set my
bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of
the covenant between me and the earth.
14 When I bring clouds over the earth and
the bow is seen in the clouds, 15 I will re-
member my covenant that is between me
and you and every living creature of all
flesh; and the waters shall never again be-
come a flood to destroy all flesh. 16 When
the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and
remember the everlasting covenant be-
tween God and every living creature of all
flesh that is on the earth." 17 God said to
Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant
that I have established between me and all
flesh that is on the earth."

The Sons of Noah

18 The sons of Noah who went out of
the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth.
Ham was the father of Canaan. 19 These
three were the sons of Noah; and from
these the whole earth was peopled.

20 Noah, a man of the soil, was the
first to plant a vineyard. 21 He drank some
of the wine and became drunk, and he lay
uncovered in his tent. 22 And Ham, the
father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of
his father, and told his two brothers out-
side. 23 Then Shem and Japheth took a
garment, laid it on both their shoulders,
and walked backward and covered the na-
kedness of their father; their faces were
turned away, and they did not see their
father's nakedness. 24 When Noah awoke
from his wine and knew what his young-
est son had done to him, 25 he said,

"Cursed be Canaan;
lowest of slaves shall he be to
his brothers."

26 He also said,

"Blessed by the LORD my God be
Shem;
and let Canaan be his slave.
27 May God make space for[y]
Japheth,
and let him live in the tents of
Shem;
and let Canaan be his slave."

28 After the flood Noah lived three
hundred fifty years. 29 All the days of
Noah were nine hundred fifty years; and
he died.

Nations Descended from Noah

10 These are the descendants of
Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Ja-
pheth; children were born to them after
the flood.

x Gk: Heb adds *every animal of the earth*
y Heb *yapht*, a play on *Japheth*

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nant. Cf. 6.18. **9.11** *That never again . . . destroy the earth*. Cf. 8.21–22. **9.12–17** *Sign of the covenant . . . my bow*. A deity wielding a bow as a weapon is depicted in ancient art. Cf. Lam 2.4; Hab 3.9–11. Hanging up the bow signifies retirement from battle.

9.18–27 An originally independent legend of Noah's life after the flood. The "blameless" Noah (6.9) is less so here, quickly succumbing to the bad habits of settled society. **9.22** *Ham . . . father of Canaan*. The Canaanites, viewed by biblical tradition as later Israel's immediate predecessors in the land, are the chief preoccupation here; cf. vv. 25–27; 10.6, 15–20. *Saw the nakedness of his father* possibly denotes a sexual act; Lev 18.7. On *saw* cf. Gen 3.6; 6.2, 5. **9.23** Shem and Japheth behave with respect toward their father, covering him without looking. **9.24** *Knew*, again a key word; cf. 3.5, 7, 22; 4.1, 17, 25; 8.11. **9.25–27** The hostility toward Canaan is rooted in Israel's memory of Canaan's onetime hegemony in the land under protection of Egyptian might; see note on 10.6.

10.1–11.32 A record of the rise of nations and peoples consisting of two genealogies surrounding the Tower of Babel story. Cf. 9.18–19. **10.1–32** The Table of Nations, with its magnificent geographical sweep, lists many historical peoples, but its lineages should not be taken too literally—the biblical genealogist began with existing political and cultural relations and constructed from them a system of kinship, mingling cities, lands, and peoples as "ancestors." Ham is here progenitor of several large, imperial nations (Egyptians, Babylonians, Hittites, etc.) who were in fact ethnically unrelated peoples. Many names reappear in biblical poetry and prophecy; see especially Isa 7–23; Jer 46–51; Ezek 27–30; 38–39. The branching families of humankind suggest a temporal "tree of life."

2 The descendants of Japheth: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras. 3 The descendants of Gomer: Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah. 4 The descendants of Javan: Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Rodanim.[z] 5 From these the coastland peoples spread. These are the descendants of Japheth[a] in their lands, with their own language, by their families, in their nations.

6 The descendants of Ham: Cush, Egypt, Put, and Canaan. 7 The descendants of Cush: Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabteca. The descendants of Raamah: Sheba and Dedan. 8 Cush became the father of Nimrod; he was the first on earth to become a mighty warrior. 9 He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; therefore it is said, "Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the LORD." 10 The beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, and Accad, all of them in the land of Shinar. 11 From that land he went into Assyria, and built Nineveh, Rehoboth-ir, Calah, and 12 Resen between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city. 13 Egypt became the father of Ludim, Anamim, Lehabim, Naphtuhim, 14 Pathrusim, Casluhim, and Caphtorim, from which the Philistines come.[b]

15 Canaan became the father of Sidon his firstborn, and Heth, 16 and the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, 17 the Hivites, the Arkites, the Sinites, 18 the Ar-

z Heb Mss Sam Gk See 1 Chr 1.7: MT *Dodanim*
a Compare verses 20, 31. Heb lacks *These are the descendants of Japheth*
b Cn: Heb *Casluhim, from which the Philistines come, and Caphtorim*

10.2 *The descendants of Japheth,* peoples of the Aegean peninsula, Asia Minor and farther east. The best known are *Gomer* (Cimmerians), *Madai* (Medes), and *Javan* (Ionians). *Tubal, Meshech.* Cf. Ezek 27.13; 32.26; 38.2; 39.1. *Tiras,* often identified with the Etruscans or (by Josephus) with the Thracians. **10.3** *Ashkenaz,* probably the Scythians, an Indo-European people; in medieval Hebrew sources it is a term for eastern Europe and its Jews. *Riphath ... Togarmah,* in Asia Minor. **10.4** *Elishah,* possibly Alashiah, in Cyprus. Cf. Ezek 27.7. *Tarshish,* possibly Tartessos, in Spain. Cf. Jon 1.3; 4.2. *Kittim and Rodanim,* in Cypress (or Crete) and Rhodes. The Hebrew text reads "... and Dodanim." **10.6** *Descendants of Ham* here designates peoples of North Africa, Canaan, Arabia, and Mesopotamia. *Cush,* the land south of Egypt, Nubia, or Ethiopia in Greek, Assyrian *Kusu. Put,* a North African people; cf. Jer 46.9; Ezek 30.5; Nah 3.9. *Canaan.* Egypt's close relations with Canaan before the Amarna period and exodus era (fourteenth–thirteenth century B.C.E.) accounts for their kinship here. **10.7** *Seba,* in or near Ethiopia; cf. Ps 72.10; Isa 43.3; 45.14. *Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah,* Arabian locations. *Sabteca.* Location uncertain. *Sheba,* in Arabia. Cf. 1 Kings 10.1–10 (queen of Sheba); see also Job 1.15; Ps 72.15; Isa 60.6; Jer 6.20. *Dedan,* in Edom or northern Arabia; cf. Isa 21.13; Jer 25.23; 49.8; Ezek 25.13. **10.8** *Nimrod,* variously identified with Babylonian deities Marduk and Ninurta, the Greek hunter Orion and other mythic figures, and historical kings such as Sumer's Gilgamesh and Egypt's Amenhotep III. Cf. Mic 5.6 (v. 5 in Hebrew). *The first ... mighty warrior.* His rule is singled out for its power and fearsomeness. Cf. *Epic of Gilgamesh* 1.2.9–28. **10.9** *A mighty hunter before the LORD* can imply either divine favor or disapproval. *Therefore, it is said,* quoting a popular adage or royal epithet. **10.10** *Beginning,* or "mainstay." *Babel,* Babylon; see note on 11.9. *Erech,* Babylonian *Uruk,* city of Gilgamesh. *Accad,* Sumerian *Agade,* an important Mesopotamian city and state. *Shinar,* the land of Babylon. **10.11–12** *Nineveh,* capital of Assyria, near modern Mosul. Cf. 2 Kings 19.36 (Isa 37.37); Jon 1.2; 3.2–7; 4.11. *Rehoboth-ir; Calah, Resen,* towns in environs of Nineveh. *That is the great city,* Greater Nineveh; cf. Jon 1.2; 3.2–3; 4.11. **10.13–14** Identifications uncertain, probably regions of Egypt or its closely allied peoples. *Caphtorim,* probably people of Crete (Kaphtor). *Philistines,* one of the "Sea Peoples" who migrated from the Aegean basin to settle on the southern Canaanite shore. Israelite-Philistine relations are recounted extensively in Judges and 1 and 2 Samuel. **10.15–20** *Canaan* is described as the ancestor of various peoples in and around Palestine; cf. lists of Canaanite peoples in 15.19–21; Ex 23.23; 34.11. **10.15** *Sidon,* Phoenician port on the Lebanese coast. *Firstborn* of Canaan, Sidon is treated as the founding father of Phoenicia. *Heth,* eponymous ancestor of the Hittites, an Anatolian people of Indo-European origin allegedly living in Canaan (Canaanite "Hittites" were more likely Semites); cf. 23.3–20; 2 Sam 11.3; 23.39. **10.16** *Jebusites,* pre-Israelite inhabitants of Jerusalem; cf. 24.16–25; Josh 15.8; 18.28; Judg 1.21; 19.10. *Amorites,* Akkadian *Amurru,* actually Semites of western Palestine and Syria; the term sometimes overlaps with "Canaanite." Cf. 15.16; Num 13.29; Deut 1.7, 19, 20, 44; Ezek 16.3. *Girgashites,* name found also in 15.21; Deut 7.1; Josh 3.10; 24.11; Neh 9.8. The region of their origin is uncertain. **10.17–18** *Hivites,* a people probably of central Palestine. *Arkites ... Hamathites,* a list of

vadites, the Zemarites, and the Hamathites. Afterward the families of the
Canaanites spread abroad. 19 And the territory of the Canaanites extended from
Sidon, in the direction of Gerar, as far as
Gaza, and in the direction of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, as far as
Lasha. 20 These are the descendants of
Ham, by their families, their languages,
their lands, and their nations.

21 To Shem also, the father of all the
children of Eber, the elder brother of
Japheth, children were born. 22 The descendants of Shem: Elam, Asshur,
Arpachshad, Lud, and Aram. 23 The descendants of Aram: Uz, Hul, Gether, and
Mash. 24 Arpachshad became the father
of Shelah; and Shelah became the father
of Eber. 25 To Eber were born two sons:
the name of the one was Peleg,[c] for in his
days the earth was divided, and his
brother's name was Joktan. 26 Joktan became the father of Almodad, Sheleph,
Hazarmaveth, Jerah, 27 Hadoram, Uzal,
Diklah, 28 Obal, Abimael, Sheba, 29 Ophir,
Havilah, and Jobab; all these were the
descendants of Joktan. 30 The territory in which they lived extended from
Mesha in the direction of Sephar, the
hill country of the east. 31 These are the
descendants of Shem, by their families, their languages, their lands, and
their nations.

32 These are the families of Noah's
sons, according to their genealogies, in
their nations; and from these the nations
spread abroad on the earth after the
flood.

The Tower of Babel

11 Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. 2 And
as they migrated from the east,[d] they
came upon a plain in the land of Shinar
and settled there. 3 And they said to one
another, "Come, let us make bricks, and
burn them thoroughly." And they had
brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar.
4 Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the
heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves; otherwise we shall be scattered
abroad upon the face of the whole earth."
5 The LORD came down to see the city and
the tower, which mortals had built. 6 And
the LORD said, "Look, they are one people, and they have all one language; and
this is only the beginning of what they will
do; nothing that they propose to do will
now be impossible for them. 7 Come, let
us go down, and confuse their language
there, so that they will not understand
one another's speech." 8 So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the
face of all the earth, and they left off
building the city. 9 Therefore it was called
Babel, because there the LORD confused[e]
the language of all the earth; and from
there the LORD scattered them abroad
over the face of all the earth.

Descendants of Shem

10 These are the descendants of
Shem. When Shem was one hundred

c That is *Division* d Or *migrated eastward*
e Heb *balal*, meaning *to confuse*

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peoples of Phoenician cities. **10.19** *Gerar*. Cf. 20.1; 26.1. *Sodom* ... *Zeboiim*. Cf. 13.10–13; 14.1–16; 18.16–19.29. **10.21–31** The children of Shem; cf. 11.10–26. **10.21** *Eber*, eponymous ancestor of the Hebrews. The identification of this term with Akkadian *'apiru/habiru* ("migrant, transient") is uncertain, but see note on 14.13. **10.22** *Elam*, a non-Semitic people east of Babylonia. *Asshur*, Assyria. *Arpachshad*. Name's origin uncertain. *Lud*, possibly another version of "Ludim" (10.13), perhaps Lydians, an Anatolian people. *Aram*, the Arameans (i.e., Syrians); see note on 22.20–24. **10.25** *Peleg*, lit. "Division," associated etiologically with the division of nations described in this chapter. **10.26–29** *Joktan* ... *Jobab*, Arabic tribal names, including two given earlier (Sheba, Havilah; see 10.7).

11.1–9 A brief allegorical tale about the separation of languages and peoples already described in ch. 10 (see esp. 10.5, 20, 31). Like the garden of Eden story, it is a folktale of human pride and folly, here with a decidedly antiurban bias. **11.2** *Shinar*. See note on 10.10. **11.3** *Come, let us* ... is repeated throughout (11.2, 4, 7). **11.4** *A tower with its top in the heavens*, probably a ziggurat, a pyramidic temple tower such as Entemenanki in Babylon. *Otherwise we shall be scattered*. The root of overweening ambition is often fear. **11.6** Cf. 3.22–23; 11.3. **11.7** *And confuse*, in Hebrew a wordplay on "Babel." **11.8** *So the LORD scattered them abroad*. Their worst fear is realized (see v. 4). **11.9** *Babel*, Akkadian *Bab-ilani*, "Gate of the gods." *Confused*, in Hebrew a continuation of the wordplay on "Babel" (see v. 7).

11.10–26 Another version of 10.21–30, continuing the concern for chronology introduced in

years old, he became the father of Arpachshad two years after the flood; 11 and Shem lived after the birth of Arpachshad five hundred years, and had other sons and daughters.

12 When Arpachshad had lived thirty-five years, he became the father of Shelah; 13 and Arpachshad lived after the birth of Shelah four hundred three years, and had other sons and daughters.

14 When Shelah had lived thirty years, he became the father of Eber; 15 and Shelah lived after the birth of Eber four hundred three years, and had other sons and daughters.

16 When Eber had lived thirty-four years, he became the father of Peleg; 17 and Eber lived after the birth of Peleg four hundred thirty years, and had other sons and daughters.

18 When Peleg had lived thirty years, he became the father of Reu; 19 and Peleg lived after the birth of Reu two hundred nine years, and had other sons and daughters.

20 When Reu had lived thirty-two years, he became the father of Serug; 21 and Reu lived after the birth of Serug two hundred seven years, and had other sons and daughters.

22 When Serug had lived thirty years, he became the father of Nahor; 23 and Serug lived after the birth of Nahor two hundred years, and had other sons and daughters.

24 When Nahor had lived twenty-nine years, he became the father of Terah; 25 and Nahor lived after the birth of Terah one hundred nineteen years, and had other sons and daughters.

26 When Terah had lived seventy years, he became the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

Descendants of Terah

27 Now these are the descendants of Terah. Terah was the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran was the father of Lot. 28 Haran died before his fa-

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ch. 5. Unlike 10.21–30, this genealogy places less emphasis on sibling relationships and more on a favored successor—a tension between these viewpoints animates all of Genesis. This and the following section provide a bridge from world history to the Israelite ancestral history beginning in ch. 12.

11.27–32 The branch of Shem, via Terah, that leads to Abraham. **11.27** *Abram* is Abraham's name until 17.5. *Lot.* See 12.4; 13.2–13;

THE ABRAHAM CYCLE (GENESIS 11–25)

The episodes in the Abraham story cycle have a complex symmetry. Their arrangement in this table shows parallel relationships between traditions and motifs. Materials violating the symmetry are given in square brackets.

A Genealogical framework (11.10–32)
  B Migration from Haran; separation from Nahor ([12.1–3] 12.4–5a)
    C Building of altars; land promised (12.5b–9 [13.14–18])
      D "Wife-sister" episode (12.10–20)
        E Border agreement with Lot (13.1–13)
          F Sodom episode and rescue of Lot (14.1–24)
            G Covenant of sacrifice (15.1–21)
              X Expulsion and rescue of Hagar (16.1–16)
            G′ Covenant of circumcision (17.1–27)
          F′ Sodom episode and rescue of Lot (18.1–19.38)
        [E′ Border agreement with Abimelech (21.22–34)]
      D′ "Wife-sister" episode (20.1–18)
    C′ Building of altar (22.6); land secured (22.17b; 23.1–20)
  B′ Migration to Haran; reunification with Nahor's line (24.1–67)
A′ Genealogical framework ([22.20–24] 25.1–18)

ther Terah in the land of his birth, in Ur
of the Chaldeans. 29 Abram and Nahor
took wives; the name of Abram's wife was
Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife was
Milcah. She was the daughter of Haran
the father of Milcah and Iscah. 30 Now Sa-
rai was barren; she had no child.
31 Terah took his son Abram and his
grandson Lot son of Haran, and his
daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abram's
wife, and they went out together from Ur
of the Chaldeans to go into the land of
Canaan; but when they came to Haran,
they settled there. 32 The days of Terah
were two hundred five years; and Terah
died in Haran.

The Call of Abram

12 Now the LORD said to Abram,
"Go from your country and your
kindred and your father's house to the
land that I will show you. 2 I will make of
you a great nation, and I will bless you,
and make your name great, so that you
will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who
bless you, and the one who curses you I
will curse; and in you all the families of
the earth shall be blessed."[f]
4 So Abram went, as the LORD had
told him; and Lot went with him. Abram
was seventy-five years old when he de-
parted from Haran. 5 Abram took his wife
Sarai and his brother's son Lot, and all the
possessions that they had gathered, and
the persons whom they had acquired in
Haran; and they set forth to go to the
land of Canaan. When they had come to
the land of Canaan, 6 Abram passed
through the land to the place at Shechem,
to the oak[g] of Moreh. At that time the
Canaanites were in the land. 7 Then the
LORD appeared to Abram, and said, "To
your offspring[h] I will give this land." So
he built there an altar to the LORD, who
had appeared to him. 8 From there he
moved on to the hill country on the east of
Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel
on the west and Ai on the east; and there
he built an altar to the LORD and invoked
the name of the LORD. 9 And Abram jour-
neyed on by stages toward the Negeb.

Abram and Sarai in Egypt

10 Now there was a famine in the
land. So Abram went down to Egypt to
reside there as an alien, for the famine

f Or *by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves* g Or *terebinth* h Heb *seed*

14.12–16; 19.1–29. **11.28** *Died before his father*, the gravest of family tragedies. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will each be informed of a son's death or mortal endangerment. **11.28, 31** *Ur*, ancient Mesopotamian city. *Chaldeans*, Semitic-, possibly Aramaic-speaking peoples of Mesopotamia. 12.1, 5 identifies Haran (see note on 11.31) as Abraham's birthplace. **11.29** *Sarai*, Sarah's name until 17.15. *Nahor's wife ... Milcah.* The fuller significance of Nahor's household will become clear in 22.20–24; 24.1–67. **11.30** *Sarai was barren.* It is unusual for a genealogy to record the *lack* of children—this dearth forms the thematic linchpin of the entire Abraham cycle. **11.31** *To go into ... Canaan.* An effort to settle Canaan antedates Abraham's journey there. *Haran* (place-name unrelated to the person Haran), an important city of the Hurrians located in northern Mesopotamia.

11.27–25.18 The Abraham cycle recounts the life history of the first ancestor of Israel to settle in Canaan. It describes his migrations and sites of worship, promises from and covenants with God, dealings with the land's inhabitants, and domestic life. Gradually, it focuses on the all-important question of an heir to Abraham and on the status of his two sons, Ishmael and Isaac. Most of the cycle's elements form a symmetry whose center is ch. 16. **12.1** *The LORD said.* None of Abram's earlier life is considered relevant. *Go from your country ... and your father's house.* Separation of parent and child echoes throughout Genesis; see 2.24; 22.2; 27.41–45; 37.12–36. *To the land that I will show you.* The exact goal unspecified, as if a test of faith; cf. 22.2. **12.2–3** Divine promise of land and posterity echoes throughout Genesis; cf. 13.15–17; 15.5, 7, 18–21; 17.2–8; 22.17–18; 24.60; 26.2–4; 28.3–4, 13–15 and the formula of fulfillment in Solomon's time (1 Kings 4.20). **12.4** *So Abram went as the LORD had told him.* Abram's obedience is immediate and unquestioning; cf. 22.3. *Abram was seventy-five years old.* Cf. other chronological references in the cycle: 16.3, 16; 17.1, 17, 24, 25; 21.5; 23.1; 25.7, 17. **12.5** *The persons whom they had acquired*, as servants, companions, and co-religionists. **12.6** *Shechem*, site of the twelve-tribe covenant of confederacy formed under Joshua's leadership (Josh 24.1–28). *At that time*, then but no longer, or simply "by then." **12.7–9** *He built ... an altar ... and invoked.* Abram's devotions are further depicted in 13.3–4, 18; 15.10–11; 22.13. *From there he moved on.* Cf. Josh 24.3; Abram's journeys suggest the eventual range of Israelite settlement. *Negeb*, the present-day Negev desert.

12.10–20 Abram, forced by famine to take

was severe in the land. 11 When he was
about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife
Sarai, "I know well that you are a woman
beautiful in appearance; 12 and when the
Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is
his wife'; then they will kill me, but they
will let you live. 13 Say you are my sister, so
that it may go well with me because of
you, and that my life may be spared on
your account." 14 When Abram entered
Egypt the Egyptians saw that the woman
was very beautiful. 15 When the officials
of Pharaoh saw her, they praised her to
Pharaoh. And the woman was taken into
Pharaoh's house. 16 And for her sake he
dealt well with Abram; and he had sheep,
oxen, male donkeys, male and female
slaves, female donkeys, and camels.

17 But the LORD afflicted Pharaoh
and his house with great plagues because
of Sarai, Abram's wife. 18 So Pharaoh
called Abram, and said, "What is this you
have done to me? Why did you not tell me
that she was your wife? 19 Why did you
say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her
for my wife? Now then, here is your wife,
take her, and be gone." 20 And Pharaoh
gave his men orders concerning him; and
they set him on the way, with his wife and
all that he had.

Abram and Lot Separate

13 So Abram went up from Egypt,
he and his wife, and all that he
had, and Lot with him, into the Negeb.

2 Now Abram was very rich in live-
stock, in silver, and in gold. 3 He jour-
neyed on by stages from the Negeb as far
as Bethel, to the place where his tent had
been at the beginning, between Bethel
and Ai, 4 to the place where he had made
an altar at the first; and there Abram
called on the name of the LORD. 5 Now
Lot, who went with Abram, also had
flocks and herds and tents, 6 so that the
land could not support both of them liv-
ing together; for their possessions were so
great that they could not live together,
7 and there was strife between the herders
of Abram's livestock and the herders of
Lot's livestock. At that time the Canaan-
ites and the Perizzites lived in the land.

8 Then Abram said to Lot, "Let there
be no strife between you and me, and be-
tween your herders and my herders; for
we are kindred. 9 Is not the whole land
before you? Separate yourself from me. If
you take the left hand, then I will go to
the right; or if you take the right hand,
then I will go to the left." 10 Lot looked
about him, and saw that the plain of the
Jordan was well watered everywhere like
the garden of the LORD, like the land of
Egypt, in the direction of Zoar; this was
before the LORD had destroyed Sodom
and Gomorrah. 11 So Lot chose for him-
self all the plain of the Jordan, and Lot
journeyed eastward; thus they separated
from each other. 12 Abram settled in the
land of Canaan, while Lot settled among
the cities of the Plain and moved his tent
as far as Sodom. 13 Now the people of
Sodom were wicked, great sinners against
the LORD.

14 The LORD said to Abram, after Lot
had separated from him, "Raise your eyes
now, and look from the place where you
are, northward and southward and east-
ward and westward; 15 for all the land that
you see I will give to you and to your off-
spring[i] forever. 16 I will make your off-

i Heb *seed*

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up alien status in a foreign land (cf. 20.1; 26.1; 46.1–4), represents his wife as his sister (cf. 20.2; 26.7). The episode, like its parallels, emphasizes a moment when the destined line of Isaac was nearly lost before it began because of erroneous appropriation of the ancestral mother by a foreign king. **12.17** *Great plagues* foretoken the plagues visited on Egypt in Ex 7.14–12.32. **12.20** *They set him on his way,* foretokening the exodus. *With his wife and all that he had.* The Israelites, too, would leave Egypt with their families and a wealth of possessions; see 12.16; 15.14; 20.14–16; Ex 12.36.

13.1–18 The separation between Abram and his nephew Lot. Despite Lot's departure, Abraham remains concerned for his welfare in 14.14–16; 18.23–33. **13.3** *Where his tent had been.* See 12.8. **13.7** *And there was strife.* A similar amicably settled dispute over servants' actions arises between Abraham and Abimelech in 21.25–34. *At that time.* See note on 12.6. **13.10–13** Lot's choice will prove to be shortsighted. *Like the garden . . . like . . . Egypt* connects the story thematically with both the garden of Eden story and the future episodes of Israelites in Egypt. *The people of Sodom were wicked,* as 18.16–19.29 will make clearer. **13.14** *Raise your eyes now.* Lot's shortsightedness and Abram's foresight here contrast. *Northward . . . westward* anticipates Israel's maximum expansion in the era of

spring like the dust of the earth; so that if
one can count the dust of the earth, your
offspring also can be counted. 17 Rise up,
walk through the length and the breadth
of the land, for I will give it to you." 18 So
Abram moved his tent, and came and set-
tled by the oaks[j] of Mamre, which are at
Hebron; and there he built an altar to the
LORD.

Lot's Captivity and Rescue

14 In the days of King Amraphel of
Shinar, King Arioch of Ellasar,
King Chedorlaomer of Elam, and King
Tidal of Goiim, 2 these kings made war
with King Bera of Sodom, King Birsha of
Gomorrah, King Shinab of Admah, King
Shemeber of Zeboiim, and the king of
Bela (that is, Zoar). 3 All these joined
forces in the Valley of Siddim (that is, the
Dead Sea).[k] 4 Twelve years they had
served Chedorlaomer, but in the thir-
teenth year they rebelled. 5 In the four-
teenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings
who were with him came and subdued the
Rephaim in Ashteroth-karnaim, the Zu-
zim in Ham, the Emim in Shaveh-
kiriathaim, 6 and the Horites in the hill
country of Seir as far as El-paran on the
edge of the wilderness; 7 then they turned
back and came to En-mishpat (that is, Ka-
desh), and subdued all the country of the
Amalekites, and also the Amorites who
lived in Hazazon-tamar. 8 Then the king
of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the
king of Admah, the king of Zeboiim, and
the king of Bela (that is, Zoar) went out,
and they joined battle in the Valley of Sid-
dim 9 with King Chedorlaomer of Elam,
King Tidal of Goiim, King Amraphel of
Shinar, and King Arioch of Ellasar, four
kings against five. 10 Now the Valley of
Siddim was full of bitumen pits; and as
the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled,
some fell into them, and the rest fled to
the hill country. 11 So the enemy took all
the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and

j Or *terebinths* *k* Heb *Salt Sea*

Solomon; see 1 Kings 4.20–25. **13.18** *The oaks of Mamre . . . at Hebron.* Cf. "oak of Moreh" at Shechem (12.6). The hill country from Shechem to Hebron will comprise the core of later Israelite settlement.

14.1–24 A military exploit by Abram to rescue Lot from capture by an alliance of eastern kings at war with cities in the Jordan plain. The account, whose origins are difficult to identify, contains authentic Bronze Age names, but corresponds to no known events, portraying Abram as a figure of world-historical importance—an *'apiru*-type military chieftain (see note on 14.13), a man of dignity and scrupulousness who, in rescuing his kinsman, decisively aided a faltering local rebellion against Mesopotamian rule. **14.1** *Amraphel.* Once identified with Hammurabi of Babylon, the name is of uncertain origin. *Shinar,* probably Babylon. *Arioch.* Scholars have suggested identifications with Sumerian *Eri-aku* or Mari *Ariwuk* but the actual identity is uncertain. *Ellasar.* Identification with Larsa uncertain. *Chedorlaomer. Kudur-lagamar* is an authentic Elamite name. *Elam.* See 10.22. *Tidal* resembles Hittite *Tudhalia. Goiim,* lit. "nations," possibly a city-state league. **14.2** Some ancient and modern commentators have seen these names of kings as allegorical (e.g., *Bera,* "In Evil," *Birsha,* "In Wickedness"), but they, like the city names, are problematical. *Sodom, Gomorrah.* See ch. 19. *Admah, Zeboiim.* Cf. 10.19; Deut 29.23 (v. 22 in Hebrew); Hos 11.8. *Zoar.* Cf. 19.20–23. **14.3** *All these joined forces in,* the four eastern kings lit. "came in league against." *The Valley of Siddim.* The name is unattested elsewhere, although it probably means "Valley of Demons," i.e., spirits of the dead. **14.4** *They had served,* as vassal states, paying tribute in taxes. **14.5** *Chedorlaomer,* here the league's leader. *Rephaim,* lit. "Shades, Spirits." The term is used to refer to pre-Israelite inhabitants of Palestine (15.20), while geographic areas such as Ashtaroth, the capital city of Og, are said to be of the "land of the Rephaim." (See also Deut 2.11; 1 Chr 20.4.) *Asteroth-karnaim,* lit. "Two-Horned Astarte" a place-name (cf. Am 6.13). *Zuzim.* Place unknown. One Greek manuscript tradition reads Zamzummim (Deut 2.20). *Ham.* Place unknown. *Emim,* in Deut 2.10–11 another race of Canaanite giants. *Shaveh-kiriathaim,* a Transjordanian city (probably near modern el-Qereiyat; cf. Num 32.37; Josh 13.19). **14.6** *Horites,* a Semitic people (therefore, not Hurrians) said to have dwelt in *Seir* before the Edomites; cf. Deut 2.12, 22; in Gen 36.2 they are called "Hivites." *El-paran,* lit. "Tree of Paran," possibly to be identified with Elath (Deut 2.8). **14.7** *En-mishpat . . . Kadesh,* probably modern 'Ayn-Gedeirat. Cf. Ex 17.7; Num 20.1; Deut 1.2. *Amalekites,* a Negev people, historical enemies of Israel; cf. Ex 17.8–16; Num 14.43–45; 1 Sam 15.5–33. *Amorites.* See note on 10.16. *Hazazon-tamar,* possibly En-gedi (cf. 2 Chr 20.2) or Tamar (1 Kings 9.18; cf. Ezek 47.19; 48.28). **14.10** *Kings of Sodom and Gomorrah.* All five Canaanite kings are meant here. *Some,* not the king of Sodom; cf. 14.21. *Fled to the hill country.* Cf.

all their provisions, and went their way;
12 they also took Lot, the son of Abram's
brother, who lived in Sodom, and his
goods, and departed.
13 Then one who had escaped came
and told Abram the Hebrew, who was living by the oaks[l] of Mamre the Amorite,
brother of Eshcol and of Aner; these were
allies of Abram. 14 When Abram heard
that his nephew had been taken captive,
he led forth his trained men, born in his
house, three hundred eighteen of them,
and went in pursuit as far as Dan. 15 He
divided his forces against them by night,
he and his servants, and routed them and
pursued them to Hobah, north of Damascus. 16 Then he brought back all the
goods, and also brought back his nephew
Lot with his goods, and the women and
the people.

Abram Blessed by Melchizedek

17 After his return from the defeat of
Chedorlaomer and the kings who were
with him, the king of Sodom went out to
meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is,
the King's Valley). 18 And King Melchizedek of Salem brought out bread and
wine; he was priest of God Most High.[m]
19 He blessed him and said,

"Blessed be Abram by God Most
High,[m]
maker of heaven and earth;
20 and blessed be God Most High,[m]
who has delivered your enemies
into your hand!"

And Abram gave him one-tenth of everything. 21 Then the king of Sodom said to
Abram, "Give me the persons, but take
the goods for yourself." 22 But Abram said
to the king of Sodom, "I have sworn to the
LORD, God Most High,[m] maker of heaven
and earth, 23 that I would not take a
thread or a sandal-thong or anything that
is yours, so that you might not say, 'I have
made Abram rich.' 24 I will take nothing
but what the young men have eaten, and
the share of the men who went with me—
Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre. Let them take
their share."

God's Covenant with Abram

15 After these things the word of the
LORD came to Abram in a vision,
"Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your

l Or *terebinths* *m* Heb *El Elyon*

19.20–29. **14.12** *Son of Abram's brother* establishes the tale's first connection to Abram. **14.13** *Hebrew*, later a term for an Israelite used chiefly by (or when addressing) foreigners; cf. 38.14; 41.12; Jon 1.9. Cf. Canaanite-Akkadian *'apiru* or *habiru* ("migrant, transient"), a Bronze Age sojourner, but see note on 10.21. *Mamre*. See 13.18. *Eshcol*, lit. "Grape-cluster," a Hebronite place-name in Num 13.23–24; Deut 1.24. *Aner*. Reference uncertain. **14.14** *Nephew*, lit. "brother, kinsman." *Led forth*, lit. "unsheathed." *Trained men, born in his house*, proven warriors and trusted associates. *Three hundred eighteen*, a miraculously small number against such formidable foes; cf. note on 14.15. **14.15** *Pursued them . . . north of Damascus*, an exaggeration in keeping with the tale's miraculous character. *Hobah*, possibly Ube, in Bronze Age sources, a land whose capital was Damascus.

14.17–24 Abram's victorious return from battle. Vv. 18–20 comprise an independent tradition about Abram's meeting with King Melchizedek of Salem. **14.17** *Valley of Shaveh . . . the King's Valley*, sometimes identified with the valley of Absalom's monument, near Jerusalem (see 2 Sam 18.18). **14.18** *King Melchizedek*, a Canaanite priest-king. *Salem*, identified with Jerusalem in Ps 76.3, in extrabiblical sources with *Uru-Salim*. *God Most High*, or El Elyon, was a Canaanite deity whose identity here is merged with Abram's God. **14.20** *Abram gave . . . one-tenth*, possibly an explanation of the Israelite law of tithing; cf. 28.22; Deut 14.22–29. **14.21–24** Abram's refusal makes him more than a mere mercenary and places the kings of the region enduringly in his debt, a further sign of his foothold in the promised land.

15.1–21 The first of two episodes (cf. ch. 17) describing a divine covenant with Abraham. The chapter continues the dual-promise theme (land and posterity) begun in chs. 12–13. **15.1** *After these things*. Cf. 22.1, 20; 39.7; 40.1; 48.1. *The word of the LORD came . . . in a vision* draws attention more explicitly than in previous episodes to prophetic revelation. *Do not be afraid*, a formula common in oracles of promise (cf., e.g., 26.24; 46.3; Deut 1.21; Judg 6.23; Isa 41.10). Divine reassurance perhaps makes best sense after Lot's departure in ch. 13—Abram is now left with no potential heir. But ch. 14 deepens the effect: Abram's concern about an heir assails him precisely at a moment of worldly triumph. *Shield*. Cf. Deut 33.29; Pss 18.2, 30 (vv. 3, 31 in Hebrew);

shield; your reward shall be very great."
2 But Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will
you give me, for I continue childless, and
the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damas-
cus?"[n] 3 And Abram said, "You have
given me no offspring, and so a slave born
in my house is to be my heir." 4 But the
word of the LORD came to him, "This man
shall not be your heir; no one but your
very own issue shall be your heir." 5 He
brought him outside and said, "Look to-
ward heaven and count the stars, if you
are able to count them." Then he said to
him, "So shall your descendants be."
6 And he believed the LORD; and the
LORD[o] reckoned it to him as righ-
teousness.

7 Then he said to him, "I am the LORD
who brought you from Ur of the Chalde-
ans, to give you this land to possess." 8 But
he said, "O Lord GOD, how am I to know
that I shall possess it?" 9 He said to him,
"Bring me a heifer three years old, a fe-
male goat three years old, a ram three
years old, a turtledove, and a young pi-
geon." 10 He brought him all these and cut
them in two, laying each half over against
the other; but he did not cut the birds in
two. 11 And when birds of prey came
down on the carcasses, Abram drove them
away.

12 As the sun was going down, a deep
sleep fell upon Abram, and a deep and
terrifying darkness descended upon him.
13 Then the LORD[o] said to Abram, "Know
this for certain, that your offspring shall
be aliens in a land that is not theirs, and
shall be slaves there, and they shall be op-
pressed for four hundred years; 14 but I
will bring judgment on the nation that
they serve, and afterward they shall come
out with great possessions. 15 As for your-
self, you shall go to your ancestors in
peace; you shall be buried in a good old
age. 16 And they shall come back here in
the fourth generation; for the iniquity of
the Amorites is not yet complete."

17 When the sun had gone down and
it was dark, a smoking fire pot and a flam-
ing torch passed between these pieces.
18 On that day the LORD made a covenant
with Abram, saying, "To your descen-
dants I give this land, from the river of
Egypt to the great river, the river Euphra-
tes, 19 the land of the Kenites, the Keniz-
zites, the Kadmonites, 20 the Hittites, the
Perizzites, the Rephaim, 21 the Amorites,
the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the
Jebusites."

n Meaning of Heb uncertain *o* Heb *he*

84.11; 144.2. **15.2** *O Lord GOD,* Hebrew *'adonai YHWH* ("Lord YHWH"), a form of address often used in scenes of prophetic call (cf. Judg 6.22; Jer 1.6). *What will you give me?* Abram desires a sign or reassurance—or perhaps he means: What is "reward" worth without an heir? Abram's doubts and God's reassurances again foreshadow scenes of prophetic call (cf. Ex 3; Judg 6.11–27; Isa 6.1–13; Jer 1.1–19). Here the prophetic "mission" is not to preach but to procreate. *Eliezer of Damascus,* lit. "The Damascan, Eliezer" perhaps Abram's chief steward (cf. 24.2). Abram possibly exaggerates for emphasis; Eliezer is not necessarily his legal heir. **15.4** After promises of "innumerable" offspring and a "nation" from Abram's loins, the first reference to a *specific* heir; cf. note on 16.11. **15.5** Cf. 13.16. **15.6** Abraham's legendary reputation for faith (cf. Gal 3.6–9; Heb 11.8–12) is rooted in this verse. **15.7** Cf. Ex 20.2. **15.8** *How am I to know?* Abram's doubt about posterity is matched by doubt about the promised land. **15.9–11** God's answer is indirect—Abram must now reformulate his question as a ritual of oracle seeking. Cf. v. 13. **15.12** *Deep sleep.* The same word is used in 2.21. **15.13–21** The sole reference in Genesis to events of the exodus. While never mentioned by name, Egypt is clearly intended in vv. 13–14. **15.13** *Know . . . for certain* recalls Abram's question in 15.8. See note on 9.24. *Aliens.* See note on 23.4. *They shall be oppressed.* See note on 16.6. *Four hundred years,* a schematic figure; the total Egyptian sojourn is later reckoned at 430 years (Ex 12.40). **15.14** *Judgment,* the ten plagues. *With great possessions.* Cf. Ex 12.35–36. **15.15** *Old age,* lit. "gray hairs"; cf. 25.8; 42.38. **15.16** *The fourth generation.* A four-generation cycle of divine justice is implied; cf. Ex 20.5; 34.7; Num 14.18; Deut 5.9. The Egyptian sojourn begins in the fourth generation after Abraham, the exodus in the fourth generation after Jacob. *The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.* A society's evil can take as long as four generations to mature before warranting divine retribution against the whole people. Possession of Canaan is hinged on the justness of its inhabitants. Cf. Ex 23.23–33; Lev 26.3–13; Deut 28.1–68. **15.17** *A smoking fire pot . . . between these pieces* indicates divine acceptance of the offering. **15.18** *From the river of Egypt to . . . the river Euphrates.* Cf. 13.14–17; Deut 11.24; 1 Kings 4.21. **15.19–21** Ten nations are mentioned, in contrast to six in Ex 23.23; 34.11, and

The Birth of Ishmael

16 Now Sarai, Abram's wife, bore him no children. She had an Egyptian slave-girl whose name was Hagar, 2 and Sarai said to Abram, "You see that the LORD has prevented me from bearing children; go in to my slave-girl; it may be that I shall obtain children by her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. 3 So, after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her slave-girl, and gave her to her husband Abram as a wife. 4 He went in to Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress. 5 Then Sarai said to Abram, "May the wrong done to me be on you! I gave my slave-girl to your embrace, and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked on me with contempt. May the LORD judge between you and me!" 6 But Abram said to Sarai, "Your slave-girl is in your power; do to her as you please." Then Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she ran away from her.

7 The angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur. 8 And he said, "Hagar, slave-girl of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?" She said, "I am running away from my mistress Sarai." 9 The angel of the LORD said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit to her." 10 The angel of the LORD also said to her, "I will so greatly multiply your offspring that they cannot be counted for multitude." 11 And the angel of the LORD said to her,

"Now you have conceived and
shall bear a son;
you shall call him Ishmael,[p]
for the LORD has given heed to
your affliction.
12 He shall be a wild ass of a man,
with his hand against everyone,
and everyone's hand
against him;
and he shall live at odds with all
his kin."

13 So she named the LORD who spoke to her, "You are El-roi";[q] for she said, "Have I really seen God and remained alive after seeing him?"[r] 14 Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi;[s] it lies between Kadesh and Bered.

15 Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. 16 Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him[t] Ishmael.

p That is *God hears* q Perhaps *God of seeing* or *God who sees* r Meaning of Heb uncertain
s That is *the Well of the Living One who sees me*
t Heb *Abram*

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seven in Deut 7.1. See note on 10.15–20.

16.1–16 The birth of Abram's first child, Ishmael, through his servant Hagar—our first close glimpse of life in Abram's household and the basis for much that will happen later. **16.1** *An Egyptian slave-girl.* Hagar's Egyptian identity is important to the story; see note on 16.6. **16.2** *Obtain children by her.* Sarai's plan, probably common practice in slave-owning households (cf. 30.3, 9), represents a moral compromise, for Hagar's rights as mother will be subordinate to Sarai's. Cf. Ex 2.1–10. *Abram listened,* in Hebrew a play on "Ishmael"—the same verb occurs in v. 11; 17.20; 21.17. Cf. its use in 3.10, 17. **16.3** *Ten years,* a natural time for pondering the future. *Took . . . and gave.* Cf. use of these verbs in 3.6. **16.4** *She looked with contempt.* Cf. 1 Sam 1.6. **16.5** Cf. Sarah's demand for Abraham's intervention in 21.10 and the situations in 31.53; Ex 5.21; 1 Sam 24.12. **16.6** Sarai *dealt harshly with her,* lit. "oppressed her." Harkening back to 15.13 and foreshadowing Ex 1.11, this connects Sarai's oppression of an Egyptian with the Egyptians' oppression of Sarai's descendants. Indeed, in 37.28 it is Ishmaelites, Hagar's descendants, who transport the enslaved Joseph to Egypt. **16.7** *Angel of the LORD.* Cf. 18.1–16; 19.1–22; 21.17; 22.11–18. *Shur,* near the ancient border of Egypt. **16.9** *Return . . . and submit,* thus explaining Hagar's continued presence in the household of Abraham and Sarah. Hagar is otherwise vindicated in the words that follow. **16.10** Essentially the same promise given to Abram in 13.16; 15.5, but conspicuously understated. Cf. 21.18. **16.11** The promise of a child to Abram now gains additional definition: the mother is identified and the child's name mentioned—but Abram's problem of succession is still by no means solved. **16.12** Possibly a description cherished by early Ishmaelites themselves—cf. the defiant tribal mottoes in Jacob's blessing, especially 49.17, 27. **16.13–14** Both Ishmael and Isaac are the subject of narratives that turn conspicuously on the verb "see"; cf. 21.9, 16, 19; 22.4, 8, 13, 14. **16.15** *Abram named his son . . . Ishmael.* Abram either listened to Hagar (cf. v. 2), or divine will influenced his choice of name. **16.16** This verse continues the preoccupation with chronology expressed in v. 3.

The Sign of the Covenant

17 When Abram was ninety-nine
years old, the LORD appeared to
Abram, and said to him, "I am God Al-
mighty;[u] walk before me, and be blame-
less. 2 And I will make my covenant
between me and you, and will make you
exceedingly numerous." 3 Then Abram
fell on his face; and God said to him, 4 "As
for me, this is my covenant with you: You
shall be the ancestor of a multitude of na-
tions. 5 No longer shall your name be
Abram,[v] but your name shall be Abra-
ham;[w] for I have made you the ancestor
of a multitude of nations. 6 I will make
you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make
nations of you, and kings shall come from
you. 7 I will establish my covenant between
me and you, and your offspring after you
throughout their generations, for an ever-
lasting covenant, to be God to you and to
your offspring[x] after you. 8 And I will
give to you, and to your offspring after
you, the land where you are now an alien,
all the land of Canaan, for a perpetual
holding; and I will be their God."

9 God said to Abraham, "As for you,
you shall keep my covenant, you and your
offspring after you throughout their gen-
erations. 10 This is my covenant, which
you shall keep, between me and you and
your offspring after you: Every male
among you shall be circumcised. 11 You
shall circumcise the flesh of your fore-
skins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant
between me and you. 12 Throughout your
generations every male among you shall
be circumcised when he is eight days old,
including the slave born in your house
and the one bought with your money
from any foreigner who is not of your off-
spring. 13 Both the slave born in your
house and the one bought with your
money must be circumcised. So shall my
covenant be in your flesh an everlasting
covenant. 14 Any uncircumcised male who
is not circumcised in the flesh of his fore-
skin shall be cut off from his people; he
has broken my covenant."

15 God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai
your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but
Sarah shall be her name. 16 I will bless her,
and moreover I will give you a son by her.
I will bless her, and she shall give rise to
nations; kings of peoples shall come from
her." 17 Then Abraham fell on his face
and laughed, and said to himself, "Can a
child be born to a man who is a hundred
years old? Can Sarah, who is ninety years
old, bear a child?" 18 And Abraham said to
God, "O that Ishmael might live in your
sight!" 19 God said, "No, but your wife
Sarah shall bear you a son, and you shall
name him Isaac.[y] I will establish my cove-
nant with him as an everlasting covenant
for his offspring after him. 20 As for Ish-
mael, I have heard you; I will bless him

u Traditional rendering of Heb *El Shaddai* *v* That is *exalted ancestor* *w* Here taken to mean *ancestor of a multitude* *x* Heb *seed* *y* That is *he laughs*

17.1–27 An alternate version of the covenant concluded in ch. 15—here thirteen years after Ishmael's birth. The rite of circumcision is instituted, and Abram's and Sarai's names are changed to their more familiar forms. **17.1** *God Almighty*, in Hebrew *El Shaddai*, a name prominent in Priestly tradition; see Introduction; 28.3; 35.11; 48.3. In Ex 6.3, the name is restricted to the ancestral era. *Shaddai* is also common in other expressions of blessing (cf., e.g., Gen 43.14; 49.25; Num 24.4, 16) and occurs extensively throughout Job. **17.4** *Covenant* is a recurring motif throughout the chapter; see vv. 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 19, 21. **17.5** *Abram, Abraham.* The first name means "Ab [a divine name] is lofty"; the second is construed to mean "Father of a multitude." *A multitude of nations.* Cf. v. 6. Among non-Israelites, the Arabs, notably, claim descent from Abraham through Ishmael. On Abraham in Islamic tradition, cf. Qur'an 14.35–42. **17.8** *Canaan, for a perpetual holding.* The idea did not always match the reality—it implicitly contradicts the perspective of 15.13–16, where justice alone determines the land's ownership. **17.10** *Every male . . . circumcised.* The rite is practiced today among Jews and Moslems. On its importance, see Ex 4.24–26. **17.12** *When he is eight days old*, the present practice among Jews; among Moslems, the rite is administered at age thirteen; cf. v. 25. **17.14** *Shall be cut off.* On excommunication, a severe penalty in biblical law, see Ex 30.33, 38; 31.14; Lev 7.20–27; 17.9. **17.15–16** The first time that a child is promised explicitly to Sarah. **17.17** Cf. Sarah's incredulity in 18.12–15. In Hebrew *laughed* is a play on "Isaac"; see also v. 19; 21.6–7. **17.18** Cf. Abraham's concern in 21.11. **17.19** *My covenant with him*, with Isaac. This anticipates the Sinaitic revelation in Ex 20–24; see note on 17.21. **17.20** *I have heard you*, in Hebrew, another play on "Ishmael"; see note

and make him fruitful and exceedingly
numerous; he shall be the father of twelve
princes, and I will make him a great na-
tion. 21 But my covenant I will establish
with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you
at this season next year." 22 And when he
had finished talking with him, God went
up from Abraham.

23 Then Abraham took his son Ish-
mael and all the slaves born in his house
or bought with his money, every male
among the men of Abraham's house, and
he circumcised the flesh of their foreskins
that very day, as God had said to him.
24 Abraham was ninety-nine years old
when he was circumcised in the flesh of
his foreskin. 25 And his son Ishmael was
thirteen years old when he was circum-
cised in the flesh of his foreskin. 26 That
very day Abraham and his son Ishmael
were circumcised; 27 and all the men of his
house, slaves born in the house and those
bought with money from a foreigner,
were circumcised with him.

A Son Promised to Abraham and Sarah

18 The LORD appeared to Abra-
ham[z] by the oaks[a] of Mamre, as
he sat at the entrance of his tent in the
heat of the day. 2 He looked up and saw
three men standing near him. When he
saw them, he ran from the tent entrance
to meet them, and bowed down to the
ground. 3 He said, "My lord, if I find fa-
vor with you, do not pass by your servant.
4 Let a little water be brought, and wash
your feet, and rest yourselves under the
tree. 5 Let me bring a little bread, that you
may refresh yourselves, and after that you
may pass on—since you have come to
your servant." So they said, "Do as you
have said." 6 And Abraham hastened into
the tent to Sarah, and said, "Make ready
quickly three measures[b] of choice flour,
knead it, and make cakes." 7 Abraham ran
to the herd, and took a calf, tender and
good, and gave it to the servant, who has-
tened to prepare it. 8 Then he took curds
and milk and the calf that he had pre-
pared, and set it before them; and he
stood by them under the tree while
they ate.

9 They said to him, "Where is your
wife Sarah?" And he said, "There, in the
tent." 10 Then one said, "I will surely re-
turn to you in due season, and your wife
Sarah shall have a son." And Sarah was
listening at the tent entrance behind him.
11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old, ad-
vanced in age; it had ceased to be with
Sarah after the manner of women. 12 So
Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I
have grown old, and my husband is old,
shall I have pleasure?" 13 The LORD said
to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, and
say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that
I am old?' 14 Is anything too wonderful
for the LORD? At the set time I will return
to you, in due season, and Sarah shall
have a son." 15 But Sarah denied, saying,
"I did not laugh"; for she was afraid. He
said, "Oh yes, you did laugh."

z Heb *him* *a* Or *terebinths* *b* Heb *seahs*

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on 16.2. *Make him fruitful.* Cf. 16.10. *Father of twelve princes.* See 25.12–16. **17.21** Thus, two senses of "covenant" apply in this story: circumcision (applicable to both sons) and Sinaitic revelation (to Isaac alone).

18.1–19.38 God's destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and its aftermath. **18.1–15** Another version of the annunciation of Isaac told in 17.15–21, the news here brought by the same emissaries who carry out the destruction in ch. 19. **18.1** *The LORD appeared* makes clear that the three strangers described next are not earthly beings. *Oaks of Mamre,* in Hebron; cf. 13.18; 14.13. *In the heat of the day,* a natural time for travelers to seek shelter. **18.2** The unearthly identity of the *three men* is not apparent to Abraham; he bestows on them the same generous hospitality he might show any human visitor. *He ran . . . and bowed.* The text emphasizes his exertions in their honor; cf. the verbs of hastening in vv. 6–7. **18.3** *My lord* can mean "my lords," "my lord" (spoken to one visitor on behalf of all three), or "my Lord" (meaning God). The Hebrew text is vocalized to indicate the third possibility, but the first or second is more appropriate to the immediate situation. **18.8** *Stood by them,* out of concern for their comfort. **18.10** *One said,* lit. "He [God] said." God seems to speak directly in the exchange that follows, not through emissaries. **18.11** *It had ceased . . . the manner of women.* Sarah no longer had menstrual periods. **18.12** *Laughed,* in Hebrew another play on "Isaac"; see note on 17.17. *Pleasure,* i.e., sexual enjoyment. **18.14** *Too wonderful for the LORD,* i.e., beyond God's powers; cf. Num 11.23. **18.15** *Sarah denied.* She seeks to cancel or retract her laughter. *Oh yes, you did laugh,* not an accusation, but provoking the reflection that will result in her child's name.

The Fate of Sodom

16 Then the men set out from there,
and they looked toward Sodom; and
Abraham went with them to set them on
their way. 17 The LORD said, "Shall I hide
from Abraham what I am about to do,
18 seeing that Abraham shall become a
great and mighty nation, and all the na-
tions of the earth shall be blessed in
him?[c] 19 No, for I have chosen[d] him,
that he may charge his children and his
household after him to keep the way of
the LORD by doing righteousness and jus-
tice; so that the LORD may bring about for
Abraham what he has promised him."
20 Then the LORD said, "How great is the
outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah and
how very grave their sin! 21 I must go
down and see whether they have done al-
together according to the outcry that has
come to me; and if not, I will know."
22 So the men turned from there, and
went toward Sodom, while Abraham re-
mained standing before the LORD.[e]
23 Then Abraham came near and said,
"Will you indeed sweep away the righ-
teous with the wicked? 24 Suppose there
are fifty righteous within the city; will you
then sweep away the place and not forgive
it for the fifty righteous who are in it?
25 Far be it from you to do such a thing, to
slay the righteous with the wicked, so that
the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be
that from you! Shall not the Judge of all
the earth do what is just?" 26 And the
LORD said, "If I find at Sodom fifty righ-
teous in the city, I will forgive the whole
place for their sake." 27 Abraham an-
swered, "Let me take it upon myself to
speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and
ashes. 28 Suppose five of the fifty righ-
teous are lacking? Will you destroy the
whole city for lack of five?" And he said,
"I will not destroy it if I find forty-five
there." 29 Again he spoke to him, "Sup-
pose forty are found there." He an-
swered, "For the sake of forty I will not do
it." 30 Then he said, "Oh do not let the
Lord be angry if I speak. Suppose thirty
are found there." He answered, "I will not
do it, if I find thirty there." 31 He said,
"Let me take it upon myself to speak to
the Lord. Suppose twenty are found
there." He answered, "For the sake of
twenty I will not destroy it." 32 Then he
said, "Oh do not let the Lord be angry if I
speak just once more. Suppose ten are
found there." He answered, "For the sake
of ten I will not destroy it." 33 And the
LORD went his way, when he had finished
speaking to Abraham; and Abraham re-
turned to his place.

The Depravity of Sodom

19 The two angels came to Sodom in
the evening, and Lot was sitting
in the gateway of Sodom. When Lot saw
them, he rose to meet them, and bowed
down with his face to the ground. 2 He

c Or *and all the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by him* d Heb *known* e Another ancient tradition reads *while the LORD remained standing before Abraham*

18.16–33 A discussion between Abraham and God over the fate of Sodom, where Lot dwells, deepening the theme of moral justice introduced in 13.13; 15.16. Sodom's inhabitants represent the first people displaced from the land for moral depravity (cf. 13.13; 15.16)—yet even a righteous few could save the whole. **18.16** *And Abraham went with them,* as hospitality demanded. **18.17** A unique moment of divine reflection suggesting God's esteem for Abraham, implicitly a confirmation of Abraham's standing as a prophet or seer; cf. 20.7, 17; 21.22. **18.18** *All the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him.* Cf. 12.3. **18.19** *I have chosen,* lit. "known"; cf. notes on 9.24; 15.13. *The way of the LORD* anticipates the Sinai covenant in Ex 20–24. **18.20** *Outcry against,* lit. "cry of," perhaps the raucous noise of their violence and merriment; cf. Ex 32.17–18. **18.21** *I must go down and see,* through the emissaries in 19.1–11. **18.23** *Abraham came near,* a measure of his courage and daring. **18.23–33** In "bargaining" for God's promise to spare Sodom and Gomorrah for the sake of ten righteous inhabitants, Abraham presents an important quandary: What is the power (and limitation) of righteousness to sway God's intentions? **18.25** *Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?* This question is the core of the issue and crucial to the events of ch. 22. **18.32** *Just once more.* The discussion considers no fewer than ten—God's forbearance for a smaller number's sake cannot be predicted.

19.1–11 A close glimpse of a community whose evil places them beyond redemption. This episode strongly resembles Judg 19.10–30. **19.1–3** These events recall Abraham's hospitality in 18.1–8. Lot's kindnesses are less impressive, but enough to show him as righteous, however minimally. **19.1** *Two angels,* as if the third of the three (18.2) had been God himself, who remained

said, "Please, my lords, turn aside to your
servant's house and spend the night, and
wash your feet; then you can rise early
and go on your way." They said, "No; we
will spend the night in the square." 3 But
he urged them strongly; so they turned
aside to him and entered his house; and
he made them a feast, and baked unleav-
ened bread, and they ate. 4 But before
they lay down, the men of the city, the
men of Sodom, both young and old, all
the people to the last man, surrounded
the house; 5 and they called to Lot,
"Where are the men who came to you to-
night? Bring them out to us, so that we
may know them." 6 Lot went out of the
door to the men, shut the door after him,
7 and said, "I beg you, my brothers, do not
act so wickedly. 8 Look, I have two daugh-
ters who have not known a man; let me
bring them out to you, and do to them as
you please; only do nothing to these men,
for they have come under the shelter of
my roof." 9 But they replied, "Stand
back!" And they said, "This fellow came
here as an alien, and he would play the
judge! Now we will deal worse with you
than with them." Then they pressed hard
against the man Lot, and came near the
door to break it down. 10 But the men in-
side reached out their hands and brought
Lot into the house with them, and shut
the door. 11 And they struck with blind-
ness the men who were at the door of the
house, both small and great, so that they
were unable to find the door.

Sodom and Gomorrah Destroyed

12 Then the men said to Lot, "Have
you anyone else here? Sons-in-law, sons,
daughters, or anyone you have in the city
—bring them out of the place. 13 For we
are about to destroy this place, because
the outcry against its people has become
great before the LORD, and the LORD has
sent us to destroy it." 14 So Lot went out
and said to his sons-in-law, who were to
marry his daughters, "Up, get out of this
place; for the LORD is about to destroy the
city." But he seemed to his sons-in-law to
be jesting.

15 When morning dawned, the angels
urged Lot, saying, "Get up, take your wife
and your two daughters who are here, or
else you will be consumed in the punish-
ment of the city." 16 But he lingered; so
the men seized him and his wife and his
two daughters by the hand, the LORD be-
ing merciful to him, and they brought
him out and left him outside the city.
17 When they had brought them outside,
they[f] said, "Flee for your life; do not look
back or stop anywhere in the Plain; flee to
the hills, or else you will be consumed."
18 And Lot said to them, "Oh, no, my
lords; 19 your servant has found favor
with you, and you have shown me great
kindness in saving my life; but I cannot
flee to the hills, for fear the disaster will
overtake me and I die. 20 Look, that city is
near enough to flee to, and it is a little
one. Let me escape there—is it not a little
one?—and my life will be saved!" 21 He
said to him, "Very well, I grant you this
favor too, and will not overthrow the city
of which you have spoken. 22 Hurry, es-
cape there, for I can do nothing until you
arrive there." Therefore the city was
called Zoar.[g] 23 The sun had risen on the
earth when Lot came to Zoar.

24 Then the LORD rained on Sodom
and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the
LORD out of heaven; 25 and he overthrew
those cities, and all the Plain, and all the
inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on
the ground. 26 But Lot's wife, behind him,
looked back, and she became a pillar of
salt.

27 Abraham went early in the morn-

f Gk Syr Vg: Heb *he* *g* That is *Little*

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to converse with Abraham. **19.4** *Young and old . . . to the last man* stresses the completeness of their iniquity, conspicuously recalling 15.16. **19.5** *That we may know them*, i.e., sexually; cf. Judg 19.22. **19.8** *Look, I have two daughters . . . do to them as you please.* Lot's solution is less than exemplary; cf. Judg 19.24–25 and see note on 19.30–38. **19.9** *He would play the judge*, a ready rationalization by those accused of wrongdoing; cf. Ex 2.14; Num 16.13. **19.11** *Blindness*, or "blinding light"; cf. 2 Kings 6.18.

19.12–29 The final step in the angels' mission, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. **19.14** *Seemed . . . to be jesting.* Their refusal to take Lot seriously seals their doom; cf. v. 31. **19.15** *Your wife and . . . daughters.* The number saved narrows conspicuously. **19.18** *My lords.* See note on 18.3. **19.25** *Overthrew.* Cf. Jon 3.4. **19.26** *Pillar of salt*, possibly a local landmark. The number saved now shrinks to three. **19.27–29** The story returns to the context established in 18.23–33.

ing to the place where he had stood be-
fore the LORD; 28and he looked down
toward Sodom and Gomorrah and toward
all the land of the Plain and saw the
smoke of the land going up like the smoke
of a furnace.
29 So it was that, when God destroyed
the cities of the Plain, God remembered
Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of
the overthrow, when he overthrew the cit-
ies in which Lot had settled.

The Origin of Moab and Ammon

30 Now Lot went up out of Zoar and
settled in the hills with his two daughters,
for he was afraid to stay in Zoar; so he
lived in a cave with his two daughters.
31And the firstborn said to the younger,
"Our father is old, and there is not a man
on earth to come in to us after the manner
of all the world. 32Come, let us make our
father drink wine, and we will lie with
him, so that we may preserve offspring
through our father." 33So they made
their father drink wine that night; and the
firstborn went in, and lay with her father;
he did not know when she lay down or
when she rose. 34On the next day, the
firstborn said to the younger, "Look, I lay
last night with my father; let us make him
drink wine tonight also; then you go in
and lie with him, so that we may preserve
offspring through our father." 35So they
made their father drink wine that night
also; and the younger rose, and lay with
him; and he did not know when she lay
down or when she rose. 36Thus both the
daughters of Lot became pregnant by
their father. 37The firstborn bore a son,
and named him Moab; he is the ancestor
of the Moabites to this day. 38The young-
er also bore a son and named him
Ben-ammi; he is the ancestor of the
Ammonites to this day.

Abraham and Sarah at Gerar

20 From there Abraham journeyed
toward the region of the Negeb,
and settled between Kadesh and Shur.
While residing in Gerar as an alien,
2Abraham said of his wife Sarah, "She is
my sister." And King Abimelech of Gerar
sent and took Sarah. 3But God came to
Abimelech in a dream by night, and said
to him, "You are about to die because of
the woman whom you have taken; for she
is a married woman." 4Now Abimelech
had not approached her; so he said,
"Lord, will you destroy an innocent peo-
ple? 5Did he not himself say to me, 'She is
my sister'? And she herself said, 'He is my
brother.' I did this in the integrity of my
heart and the innocence of my hands."
6Then God said to him in the dream,
"Yes, I know that you did this in the in-
tegrity of your heart; furthermore it was I
who kept you from sinning against me.
Therefore I did not let you touch her.
7Now then, return the man's wife; for he
is a prophet, and he will pray for you and
you shall live. But if you do not restore
her, know that you shall surely die, you
and all that are yours."
8 So Abimelech rose early in the
morning, and called all his servants and
told them all these things; and the men
were very much afraid. 9Then Abimelech
called Abraham, and said to him, "What
have you done to us? How have I sinned
against you, that you have brought such
great guilt on me and my kingdom? You
have done things to me that ought not to
be done." 10And Abimelech said to Abra-
ham, "What were you thinking of, that

19.30–38 The aftermath of Lot's escape from Sodom, explaining the origin of the Ammonites and Moabites, two Transjordanian peoples adjoining the Canaanites. This unflattering episode constitutes a fitting recompense for Lot's carelessness about his daughters' welfare in 19.8. But from Moab will eventually come Ruth, ancestor of King David (see Ruth 4.13–18). **19.31** *To come in . . . after the manner of all the world,* to cohabit sexually. **19.32–35** This passage recalls the drunkenness of Noah and resultant sexual indiscretion by one of his offspring in 9.18–27. **19.37–38** *Moab,* in the Hebrew a play on "[Of] the Same Father," as the Septuagint makes explicit. *Ben-ammi* can be translated "Son of My Paternal Kin" as glossed in the Septuagint. Both sons' names play on the incest theme.

20.1–18 An echo of the "wife-sister" episode of 12.10–20. Here the locale, as in 26.1–17, is Gerar. **20.1** *From there,* presumably from the oaks of Mamre in Hebron; cf. 13.18; 14.13; 18.1. On *Kadesh,* cf. 14.7. On *Shur,* cf. 16.7. *Gerar,* possibly a town in the Negev. Exact location uncertain. **20.6** *I . . . kept you from sinning.* Cf. 12.17; 20.18. **20.7** *For he is a prophet,* the sole reference to Abraham as a prophet, but consistent with "prophetic call" motifs of ch. 15; see note on

you did this thing?" 11 Abraham said, "I
did it because I thought, There is no fear
of God at all in this place, and they will kill
me because of my wife. 12 Besides, she is
indeed my sister, the daughter of my fa-
ther but not the daughter of my mother;
and she became my wife. 13 And when
God caused me to wander from my fa-
ther's house, I said to her, 'This is the
kindness you must do me: at every place
to which we come, say of me, He is my
brother.' " 14 Then Abimelech took sheep
and oxen, and male and female slaves,
and gave them to Abraham, and restored
his wife Sarah to him. 15 Abimelech said,
"My land is before you; settle where it
pleases you." 16 To Sarah he said, "Look, I
have given your brother a thousand
pieces of silver; it is your exoneration be-
fore all who are with you; you are com-
pletely vindicated." 17 Then Abraham
prayed to God; and God healed Abime-
lech, and also healed his wife and female
slaves so that they bore children. 18 For
the LORD had closed fast all the wombs of
the house of Abimelech because of Sarah,
Abraham's wife.

The Birth of Isaac

21 The LORD dealt with Sarah as he
had said, and the LORD did for
Sarah as he had promised. 2 Sarah con-
ceived and bore Abraham a son in his old
age, at the time of which God had spoken
to him. 3 Abraham gave the name Isaac to
his son whom Sarah bore him. 4 And
Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when
he was eight days old, as God had com-
manded him. 5 Abraham was a hundred
years old when his son Isaac was born to
him. 6 Now Sarah said, "God has brought
laughter for me; everyone who hears will
laugh with me." 7 And she said, "Who
would ever have said to Abraham that
Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have
borne him a son in his old age."

Hagar and Ishmael Sent Away

8 The child grew, and was weaned;
and Abraham made a great feast on the
day that Isaac was weaned. 9 But Sarah
saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom
she had borne to Abraham, playing with
her son Isaac.[h] 10 So she said to Abraham,
"Cast out this slave woman with her son;
for the son of this slave woman shall not
inherit along with my son Isaac." 11 The
matter was very distressing to Abraham
on account of his son. 12 But God said to
Abraham, "Do not be distressed because
of the boy and because of your slave
woman; whatever Sarah says to you, do as
she tells you, for it is through Isaac that
offspring shall be named for you. 13 As
for the son of the slave woman, I will
make a nation of him also, because he is
your offspring." 14 So Abraham rose early
in the morning, and took bread and a skin
of water, and gave it to Hagar, putting it
on her shoulder, along with the child, and
sent her away. And she departed, and
wandered about in the wilderness of
Beer-sheba.

15 When the water in the skin was
gone, she cast the child under one of the

h Gk Vg: Heb lacks *with her son Isaac*

15.2. **20.11** *There is no fear of God at all in this place*, a notion explicitly contradicted by 20.8. Cf. 21.22. This people's "iniquity . . . is not yet complete" (see 15.16). **20.12** An unanticipated rationale for the disguise undertaken in 20.2. Sarah's parentage is otherwise unmentioned; cf. 11.29. **20.14–16** Abimelech's generosity to Abraham recalls Pharaoh's in 12.16; cf. note on 12.20. **20.17** *Abraham prayed*, confirming his role as prophetic intercessor. **20.18** *For the LORD . . . house of Abimelech* recalls the plague visited on Egypt in 12.17.

21.1–7 The fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham and Sarah in 17.15–27; 18.1–15. **21.1** *As he had said . . . as he had promised*, probably referring to 18.15. **21.4** This verse continues the preoccupation with circumcision introduced in ch. 17. **21.6** *Laughter*, in Hebrew another play on "Isaac"; cf. 17.17; 18.12–15.

21.8–21 A repetition of the chief events of the domestic struggle portrayed in ch. 16: vying of Sarah and Hagar (cf. 16.4–6); Hagar's journey into the wilderness (cf. 16.7); encounter with an angel (cf. 16.7–8); consolations of Hagar (cf. 16.9–12); and miracle at a well (cf. 16.13–14). **21.9** *Sarah saw*. As in ch. 16, the verb "see" reverberates throughout. *Playing*, Hebrew *metzacheq*, a further play on "Isaac" (*Yitzchaq*). The word could signify "mocking," as Sarah's reaction suggests. **21.11** *Distressing*, lit. "evil," recalling Sarah's harsh treatment of Hagar in 16.6 (see note on 16.6; cf. 17.18), but Sarah is vindicated in the next verse. **21.12–13** Cf. 17.20–21. **21.14** Abraham's provisions for Hagar and Ishmael are conspicuously

bushes. 16 Then she went and sat down
opposite him a good way off, about the
distance of a bowshot; for she said, "Do
not let me look on the death of the child."
And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up
her voice and wept. 17 And God heard the
voice of the boy; and the angel of God
called to Hagar from heaven, and said to
her, "What troubles you, Hagar? Do not
be afraid; for God has heard the voice of
the boy where he is. 18 Come, lift up the
boy and hold him fast with your hand, for
I will make a great nation of him."
19 Then God opened her eyes and she saw
a well of water. She went, and filled the
skin with water, and gave the boy a drink.
20 God was with the boy, and he grew
up; he lived in the wilderness, and be-
came an expert with the bow. 21 He lived
in the wilderness of Paran; and his
mother got a wife for him from the land
of Egypt.

Abraham and Abimelech Make a Covenant

22 At that time Abimelech, with Phicol
the commander of his army, said to Abra-
ham, "God is with you in all that you do;
23 now therefore swear to me here by God
that you will not deal falsely with me or
with my offspring or with my posterity,
but as I have dealt loyally with you, you
will deal with me and with the land where
you have resided as an alien." 24 And
Abraham said, "I swear it."
25 When Abraham complained to
Abimelech about a well of water that
Abimelech's servants had seized, 26 Abim-
elech said, "I do not know who has done
this; you did not tell me, and I have not
heard of it until today." 27 So Abraham
took sheep and oxen and gave them to
Abimelech, and the two men made a cove-
nant. 28 Abraham set apart seven ewe
lambs of the flock. 29 And Abimelech said
to Abraham, "What is the meaning of
these seven ewe lambs that you have set
apart?" 30 He said, "These seven ewe
lambs you shall accept from my hand, in
order that you may be a witness for me
that I dug this well." 31 Therefore that
place was called Beer-sheba;[i] because
there both of them swore an oath.
32 When they had made a covenant at
Beer-sheba, Abimelech, with Phicol the
commander of his army, left and re-
turned to the land of the Philistines.
33 Abraham[j] planted a tamarisk tree in
Beer-sheba, and called there on the name
of the LORD, the Everlasting God.[k]
34 And Abraham resided as an alien many
days in the land of the Philistines.

The Command to Sacrifice Isaac

22 After these things God tested
Abraham. He said to him, "Abra-
ham!" And he said, "Here I am." 2 He
said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac,
whom you love, and go to the land of Mo-
riah, and offer him there as a burnt offer-
ing on one of the mountains that I shall

i That is *Well of seven* or *Well of the oath*
j Heb *He* *k* Or *the* LORD, *El Olam*

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minimal. Also cf. 25.5–6. **21.16** *Do not let me look.* See note on 21.9. **21.17** *Heard, has heard* in Hebrew plays on the name "Ishmael"; see note on 16.2. **21.21** *A wife for him from . . . Egypt,* in keeping with Hagar's own origins and in contrast to Abraham's plans for Isaac; cf. 24.2–8.

21.22–34 A return to Abraham's dealings with King Abimelech, begun in ch. 20. **21.22** *God is with you.* See note on 20.11. **21.25** *When Abraham complained.* See note on 13.7. **21.31** An etiological conclusion explaining a place-name; cf. 16.14; 19.22. **21.32** *Land of the Philistines,* an anachronism. Philistines did not arrive in Canaan until the era of Judges; cf. 10.14; 26.1; Judg 3.31; 13.1. **21.33** *Everlasting God,* possibly the name of a local Canaanite deity; cf. "El Elyon" (God Most High) in 14.19–20.

22.1–19 These verses narrate an extraordinary test of faith placed upon Abraham in the aftermath of Hagar's expulsion, an ironic culmination of the hopes and promises centered on Isaac throughout the cycle. The chief events of the narrative echo the two Hagar episodes: a journey into the wilderness, encounter with an angel, divine consolation, miracle at the site, and naming of the site. Cf. note on 21.8–21. **22.1** *After these things.* Cf. 15.1. *God tested.* The command is not in earnest, but Abraham does not know this. Cf. Job 1.12; 2.6. *Here I am,* archetypal response of the faithful servant of God; cf. 22.11; 31.11; 46.2; Ex 3.4; 1 Sam 3.4. **22.2** *Take your only son . . . whom you love,* in the Hebrew, "Take your son, your only son whom you love, Isaac." Not until Isaac's name is reached is the command's object clearly known; the phrase conceptually echoes 12.1. Although Ishmael is not mentioned, the verse presupposes his expulsion (21.8–14) and the strife over inheritance. *Land of Moriah.* Location unknown, later identified with the temple mount in Jerusalem (2 Chr 3.1); cf. note on 22.14. *On one of the moun-*

show you." 3 So Abraham rose early in the
morning, saddled his donkey, and took
two of his young men with him, and his
son Isaac; he cut the wood for the burnt
offering, and set out and went to the place
in the distance that God had shown him.
4 On the third day Abraham looked up
and saw the place far away. 5 Then Abra-
ham said to his young men, "Stay here
with the donkey; the boy and I will go
over there; we will worship, and then we
will come back to you." 6 Abraham took
the wood of the burnt offering and laid it
on his son Isaac, and he himself carried
the fire and the knife. So the two of them
walked on together. 7 Isaac said to his fa-
ther Abraham, "Father!" And he said,
"Here I am, my son." He said, "The fire
and the wood are here, but where is the
lamb for a burnt offering?" 8 Abraham
said, "God himself will provide the lamb
for a burnt offering, my son." So the two
of them walked on together.

9 When they came to the place that
God had shown him, Abraham built an
altar there and laid the wood in order. He
bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the
altar, on top of the wood. 10 Then Abra-
ham reached out his hand and took the
knife to kill[l] his son. 11 But the angel of
the LORD called to him from heaven, and
said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said,
"Here I am." 12 He said, "Do not lay your
hand on the boy or do anything to him;
for now I know that you fear God, since
you have not withheld your son, your only
son, from me." 13 And Abraham looked
up and saw a ram, caught in a thicket by
its horns. Abraham went and took the
ram and offered it up as a burnt offering
instead of his son. 14 So Abraham called
that place "The LORD will provide";[m] as it
is said to this day, "On the mount of the
LORD it shall be provided."[n]

15 The angel of the LORD called to
Abraham a second time from heaven,
16 and said, "By myself I have sworn, says
the LORD: Because you have done this,
and have not withheld your son, your
only son, 17 I will indeed bless you, and I
will make your offspring as numerous as
the stars of heaven and as the sand that is
on the seashore. And your offspring shall
possess the gate of their enemies, 18 and
by your offspring shall all the nations of
the earth gain blessing for themselves, be-
cause you have obeyed my voice." 19 So
Abraham returned to his young men, and
they arose and went together to Beer-
sheba; and Abraham lived at Beer-sheba.

The Children of Nahor

20 Now after these things it was told
Abraham, "Milcah also has borne chil-
dren, to your brother Nahor: 21 Uz the
firstborn, Buz his brother, Kemuel the fa-
ther of Aram, 22 Chesed, Hazo, Pildash,

l Or *to slaughter* *m* Or *will see*; Heb traditionally transliterated *Jehovah Jireh* *n* Or *he shall be seen*

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tains that I shall show you. See note on 12.1. **22.3** Abraham's obedience is unquestioning (cf. 12.4); cf. his exertions on behalf of Sodom to avert the impending action in 18.16–33. **22.4** *And saw*, continuing plays on the verb "see"; cf. notes on 16.13–14; 21.9; 22.14. **22.5** *We will worship, and . . . come back.* Abraham either anticipates a favorable outcome or conceals the nature of his mission. **22.6** *Fire*, a torch, probably not yet ignited, for kindling the offering. **22.7** Isaac's question deepens the pathos of the events. *Here I am*, an ironic echo of 22.1; cf. note there. **22.8** *Will provide*, lit. "will see [to]," further echoing this key verb; see note on 22.4. **22.12** *Now I know* continues the plays on "know" throughout Genesis. *Fear* in Hebrew plays further on "see" (22.4). **22.13** The miraculous substitution of a ram for Isaac vindicates Abraham's act of faith. *And saw*. See note on 22.4. **22.14** *The LORD will provide*, Hebrew *YHWH yir'eh*, lit. "The LORD sees." *On the mount . . . provided.* The verb *yera'eh*, better left untranslated, carries a threefold pun: (1) He (God) appears. (2) It (a ram) is provided. (3) One should appear, for pilgrim festivals (see Ex 23.17; 34.23). If the locale is Jerusalem, there is a further pun on its name, *Yeru-Shalem/Yerushalayim*, and on "Moriah." Cf. note on 14.18. **22.15–18** The promise of "innumerable" offspring (cf. 12.2; 13.16; 15.5) is restated—now as reward for Abraham's act of faith. **22.17** *Your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies*, the first explicit declaration that Israel's later inheritance of Canaan will entail war; cf. 15.18–21; 24.60. **22.18** *Obeyed*, lit. "heard"; cf. plays on that verb in the Hagar episodes (see notes on 16.2; 17.20; 21.17).

22.20–24 An implicit confirmation of the repeated promise of offspring through Isaac. *Aram*, eponymous ancestor of the Arameans (Syrians), whose language, Aramaic, was the *lingua franca* of the Near East between 700 B.C.E. and 600 C.E. and still survives today. *Bethuel became father of Rebekah* alludes to 24.1–67, where a bride for Isaac is secured. Cf. 11.29.

Jidlaph, and Bethuel." 23 Bethuel became
the father of Rebekah. These eight Milcah
bore to Nahor, Abraham's brother.
24 Moreover, his concubine, whose name
was Reumah, bore Tebah, Gaham, Ta-
hash, and Maacah.

Sarah's Death and Burial

23 Sarah lived one hundred twenty-
seven years; this was the length of
Sarah's life. 2 And Sarah died at Kiriath-
arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Ca-
naan; and Abraham went in to mourn for
Sarah and to weep for her. 3 Abraham
rose up from beside his dead, and said to
the Hittites, 4 "I am a stranger and an
alien residing among you; give me prop-
erty among you for a burying place, so
that I may bury my dead out of my sight."
5 The Hittites answered Abraham, 6 "Hear
us, my lord; you are a mighty prince
among us. Bury your dead in the choicest
of our burial places; none of us will with-
hold from you any burial ground for
burying your dead." 7 Abraham rose and
bowed to the Hittites, the people of the
land. 8 He said to them, "If you are willing
that I should bury my dead out of my
sight, hear me, and entreat for me
Ephron son of Zohar, 9 so that he may
give me the cave of Machpelah, which he
owns; it is at the end of his field. For the
full price let him give it to me in your
presence as a possession for a burying
place." 10 Now Ephron was sitting among
the Hittites; and Ephron the Hittite an-
swered Abraham in the hearing of the
Hittites, of all who went in at the gate of
his city, 11 "No, my lord, hear me; I give
you the field, and I give you the cave that
is in it; in the presence of my people I give
it to you; bury your dead." 12 Then Abra-
ham bowed down before the people of
the land. 13 He said to Ephron in the hear-
ing of the people of the land, "If you only
will listen to me! I will give the price of the
field; accept it from me, so that I may
bury my dead there." 14 Ephron answered
Abraham, 15 "My lord, listen to me; a
piece of land worth four hundred shekels
of silver—what is that between you and
me? Bury your dead." 16 Abraham agreed
with Ephron; and Abraham weighed out
for Ephron the silver that he had named
in the hearing of the Hittites, four hun-
dred shekels of silver, according to the
weights current among the merchants.
17 So the field of Ephron in Machpe-
lah, which was to the east of Mamre, the
field with the cave that was in it and all the
trees that were in the field, throughout its
whole area, passed 18 to Abraham as a
possession in the presence of the Hittites,
in the presence of all who went in at the
gate of his city. 19 After this, Abraham
buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the
field of Machpelah facing Mamre (that is,
Hebron) in the land of Canaan. 20 The
field and the cave that is in it passed from
the Hittites into Abraham's possession as a
burying place.

The Marriage of Isaac and Rebekah

24 Now Abraham was old, well ad-
vanced in years; and the LORD
had blessed Abraham in all things. 2 Abra-
ham said to his servant, the oldest of his
house, who had charge of all that he had,

23.1–20 Abraham's purchase of the cave of Machpelah and surrounding field near Kiriath-arba (Hebron) as burial ground for Sarah and family plot. Ownership of burial land is a crucial step in establishing legal residence. **23.1** The juxtaposition of the information in this verse to the preceding episode prompts—perhaps intentionally—many unanswerable questions about Sarah's reaction to its events and about her final days. **23.3** *Hittites*, lit. "children of Heth" (see 10.15), not the historical Hittites but a term for pre-Israelite inhabitants of Palestine. On the region's "Hittite" heritage, cf. Ezek 16.3, 45. **23.4** *Stranger . . . residing*, lit. "stranger and resident," in contrast to *'am ha'aretz*, "people of the land, natives" (vv. 7, 12). Cf. 12.10; 15.13; 19.9. *Bury my dead.* The phrase "bury [one's] dead" occurs often here, suggesting a legal formula. **23.6** *Mighty prince*, lit. "one lifted up by God" or "favored of God." **23.7** *Entreat for me*, a necessary ritual or legal formality. *Ephron son of Zohar.* The names are Semitic, not Hittite; cf. 26.34; 2 Sam 11.3. **23.10** *Who went in at the gate*, who deliberated official matters. **23.11** Ephron offers the plot as a gift, but Abraham will insist on clearer title. **23.13** *If only you will listen to me!* Abraham's plea for close attention suggests the legal nature of his request. *I will give* counters Ephron's "I give" in the previous verse. **23.15** *Four hundred shekels of silver.* Ephron makes the sum seem trifling, but the price is quite high. **23.16** *Agreed*, lit. "heard." The verb occurs conspicuously throughout (vv. 6, 11, 13).

24.1–67 The securing of a bride for Isaac

"Put your hand under my thigh 3and I
will make you swear by the LORD, the God
of heaven and earth, that you will not get
a wife for my son from the daughters of
the Canaanites, among whom I live, 4but
will go to my country and to my kindred
and get a wife for my son Isaac." 5The
servant said to him, "Perhaps the woman
may not be willing to follow me to this
land; must I then take your son back to
the land from which you came?" 6Abra-
ham said to him, "See to it that you do not
take my son back there. 7The LORD, the
God of heaven, who took me from my fa-
ther's house and from the land of my
birth, and who spoke to me and swore to
me, 'To your offspring I will give this
land,' he will send his angel before you,
and you shall take a wife for my son from
there. 8But if the woman is not willing to
follow you, then you will be free from this
oath of mine; only you must not take my
son back there." 9So the servant put his
hand under the thigh of Abraham his
master and swore to him concerning this
matter.

10 Then the servant took ten of his
master's camels and departed, taking all
kinds of choice gifts from his master; and
he set out and went to Aram-naharaim, to
the city of Nahor. 11He made the camels
kneel down outside the city by the well of
water; it was toward evening, the time
when women go out to draw water. 12And
he said, "O LORD, God of my master
Abraham, please grant me success today
and show steadfast love to my master
Abraham. 13I am standing here by the
spring of water, and the daughters of the
townspeople are coming out to draw wa-
ter. 14Let the girl to whom I shall say,
'Please offer your jar that I may drink,'
and who shall say, 'Drink, and I will water
your camels'—let her be the one whom
you have appointed for your servant
Isaac. By this I shall know that you have
shown steadfast love to my master."

15 Before he had finished speaking,
there was Rebekah, who was born to Be-
thuel son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor,
Abraham's brother, coming out with her
water jar on her shoulder. 16The girl was
very fair to look upon, a virgin, whom no
man had known. She went down to the
spring, filled her jar, and came up.
17Then the servant ran to meet her and
said, "Please let me sip a little water from
your jar." 18"Drink, my lord," she said,
and quickly lowered her jar upon her
hand and gave him a drink. 19When she
had finished giving him a drink, she said,
"I will draw for your camels also, until
they have finished drinking." 20So she
quickly emptied her jar into the trough
and ran again to the well to draw, and she
drew for all his camels. 21The man gazed
at her in silence to learn whether or not
the LORD had made his journey suc-
cessful.

22 When the camels had finished
drinking, the man took a gold nose-ring
weighing a half shekel, and two bracelets

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from among Abraham's kin in Aram-naharaim through the efforts of Abraham's servant, who journeys there. This elaborate tale marks the last, decisive step toward fulfillment of the promise of progeny through Isaac, providing a luxuriantly rounded conclusion to the narratives of the Abraham cycle. **24.1** *Abraham was old,* therefore succession is urgent. *Blessed . . . in all things,* pending, that is, the conclusion of the following narrative. **24.2** *Under my thigh,* near the organs of procreation, signifying the solemnity of the oath that follows. **24.3–4** Cf. 26.34–35; 27.46–29.9. **24.5** The servant's hesitation follows naturally from the mission's importance. *Perhaps the woman may not be willing.* See note on 24.58. **24.6** *Do not take my son back there.* Abraham clings firmly to two conflicting imperatives: attachment to his distant kin and attachment to his present land. **24.7** *From my father's house . . . the land of my birth.* Cf. 12.1. *And who spoke . . . I will give this land.* See 12.7; 13.15. *Will send his angel,* i.e., will protect you on this mission and ensure its success; cf. Ex 23.20, 23; 33.2; Mal 3.1. **24.10** *Ten . . . camels.* See note on 24.61. *Aram-naharaim . . . city of Nahor,* Haran; see 11.31.

24.11–49 An encounter at a well forms the core of two other stories of betrothal, 29.1–14 (Jacob and Rachel) and Ex 2.15–22 (Moses and Zipporah). **24.12** Divine guidance is a preoccupation in this tale (cf. vv. 7, 21, 27, 40, 42, 48, 56). **24.14** *Steadfast love,* Hebrew *chesed,* a kindness beyond measure. Cf. vv. 27, 49. **24.15** The text belabors Rebekah's lineage—the goal is at hand. Cf. vv. 24, 47. **24.16** *Very fair . . . a virgin,* further sign of the mission's success. **24.17–19** The wording differs from the servant's envisioning in vv. 13–14, but events transpire as anticipated. **24.18** *Drink, my lord.* She does not know he is a servant. His own retelling (vv. 44, 46) omits "my lord." **24.21** *To learn,* lit. "to know." **24.22** *The man took . . . bracelets,* to place upon her; cf. vv. 30, 47.

for her arms weighing ten gold shekels,
23 and said, "Tell me whose daughter you
are. Is there room in your father's house
for us to spend the night?" 24 She said to
him, "I am the daughter of Bethuel son of
Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor." 25 She
added, "We have plenty of straw and fod-
der and a place to spend the night."
26 The man bowed his head and wor-
shiped the LORD 27 and said, "Blessed be
the LORD, the God of my master Abra-
ham, who has not forsaken his steadfast
love and his faithfulness toward my mas-
ter. As for me, the LORD has led me on
the way to the house of my master's kin."

28 Then the girl ran and told her
mother's household about these things.
29 Rebekah had a brother whose name was
Laban; and Laban ran out to the man, to
the spring. 30 As soon as he had seen the
nose-ring, and the bracelets on his sister's
arms, and when he heard the words of his
sister Rebekah, "Thus the man spoke to
me," he went to the man; and there he
was, standing by the camels at the spring.
31 He said, "Come in, O blessed of the
LORD. Why do you stand outside when I
have prepared the house and a place for
the camels?" 32 So the man came into the
house; and Laban unloaded the camels,
and gave him straw and fodder for the
camels, and water to wash his feet and the
feet of the men who were with him.
33 Then food was set before him to eat;
but he said, "I will not eat until I have told
my errand." He said, "Speak on."

34 So he said, "I am Abraham's ser-
vant. 35 The LORD has greatly blessed my
master, and he has become wealthy; he
has given him flocks and herds, silver and
gold, male and female slaves, camels and
donkeys. 36 And Sarah my master's wife
bore a son to my master when she was old;
and he has given him all that he has. 37 My
master made me swear, saying, 'You shall
not take a wife for my son from the
daughters of the Canaanites, in whose
land I live; 38 but you shall go to my fa-
ther's house, to my kindred, and get a
wife for my son.' 39 I said to my master,
'Perhaps the woman will not follow me.'
40 But he said to me, 'The LORD, before
whom I walk, will send his angel with you
and make your way successful. You shall
get a wife for my son from my kindred,
from my father's house. 41 Then you will
be free from my oath, when you come to
my kindred; even if they will not give her
to you, you will be free from my oath.'

42 "I came today to the spring, and
said, 'O LORD, the God of my master
Abraham, if now you will only make suc-
cessful the way I am going! 43 I am stand-
ing here by the spring of water; let the
young woman who comes out to draw, to
whom I shall say, "Please give me a little
water from your jar to drink," 44 and who
will say to me, "Drink, and I will draw for
your camels also"—let her be the woman
whom the LORD has appointed for my
master's son.'

45 "Before I had finished speaking in
my heart, there was Rebekah coming out
with her water jar on her shoulder; and
she went down to the spring, and drew. I
said to her, 'Please let me drink.' 46 She
quickly let down her jar from her shoul-
der, and said, 'Drink, and I will also water
your camels.' So I drank, and she also wa-
tered the camels. 47 Then I asked her,
'Whose daughter are you?' She said, 'The
daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom
Milcah bore to him.' So I put the ring on
her nose, and the bracelets on her arms.
48 Then I bowed my head and worshiped
the LORD, and blessed the LORD, the God
of my master Abraham, who had led me
by the right way to obtain the daughter of
my master's kinsman for his son. 49 Now
then, if you will deal loyally and truly with
my master, tell me; and if not, tell me, so
that I may turn either to the right hand or
to the left."

50 Then Laban and Bethuel an-
swered, "The thing comes from the LORD;
we cannot speak to you anything bad or
good. 51 Look, Rebekah is before you,
take her and go, and let her be the wife of

24.24 *I am the daughter . . . bore to Nahor* confirms that she is the one anticipated. **24.25** Her hospitality is further sign of the mission's success. **24.30** *Thus the man spoke to me.* Further words of hers are assumed. **24.41** *Then you will be free from my oath.* Abraham (v. 8) had freed him from responsibility if the mission *failed.* The servant feels obligated until its completion—only as an afterthought (next clause) does he envisage earlier release. *Even if they will not give her to you.* Actually the stipulation was if *she* refused. **24.49** *Deal loyally,* lit. "do *chesed*"; see note on 24.14. **24.50** *Cannot speak . . . bad or good.* Cf. 2 Sam

your master's son, as the LORD has
spoken."
52 When Abraham's servant heard
their words, he bowed himself to the
ground before the LORD. 53 And the ser-
vant brought out jewelry of silver and of
gold, and garments, and gave them to Re-
bekah; he also gave to her brother and to
her mother costly ornaments. 54 Then he
and the men who were with him ate and
drank, and they spent the night there.
When they rose in the morning, he said,
"Send me back to my master." 55 Her
brother and her mother said, "Let the girl
remain with us a while, at least ten days;
after that she may go." 56 But he said to
them, "Do not delay me, since the LORD
has made my journey successful; let me
go that I may go to my master." 57 They
said, "We will call the girl, and ask her."
58 And they called Rebekah, and said to
her, "Will you go with this man?" She
said, "I will." 59 So they sent away their
sister Rebekah and her nurse along with
Abraham's servant and his men. 60 And
they blessed Rebekah and said to her,

"May you, our sister, become
thousands of myriads;
may your offspring gain
possession
of the gates of their foes."

61 Then Rebekah and her maids rose up,
mounted the camels, and followed the
man; thus the servant took Rebekah, and
went his way.
62 Now Isaac had come from[o] Beer-
lahai-roi, and was settled in the Negeb.
63 Isaac went out in the evening to walk[p]
in the field; and looking up, he saw cam-
els coming. 64 And Rebekah looked up,
and when she saw Isaac, she slipped
quickly from the camel, 65 and said to the
servant, "Who is the man over there,
walking in the field to meet us?" The ser-
vant said, "It is my master." So she took
her veil and covered herself. 66 And the
servant told Isaac all the things that he
had done. 67 Then Isaac brought her into
his mother Sarah's tent. He took Rebekah,
and she became his wife; and he loved
her. So Isaac was comforted after his
mother's death.

Abraham Marries Keturah

25 Abraham took another wife,
whose name was Keturah. 2 She
bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Mid-
ian, Ishbak, and Shuah. 3 Jokshan was the
father of Sheba and Dedan. The sons of
Dedan were Asshurim, Letushim, and Le-
ummim. 4 The sons of Midian were
Ephah, Epher, Hanoch, Abida, and El-
daah. All these were the children of Ketu-
rah. 5 Abraham gave all he had to Isaac.
6 But to the sons of his concubines Abra-
ham gave gifts, while he was still living,
and he sent them away from his son Isaac,
eastward to the east country.

The Death of Abraham

7 This is the length of Abraham's life,
one hundred seventy-five years. 8 Abra-
ham breathed his last and died in a good

o Syr Tg: Heb *from coming to*
p Meaning of Heb word is uncertain

13.22. **24.53** *Jewelry . . . and garments,* gifts, not a bride-price; see v. 10. **24.54** *The men who were with him,* the first mention of an entourage with the servant. **24.58** Rebekah's consent is crucial to the mission, as already envisaged in v. 5. **24.60** See note on 22.17. **24.61** *Rebekah and her maids . . . mounted the camels* explains why the servant had brought ten camels. **24.62** *Beer-lahai-roi,* site of the annunciation of Ishmael's birth to Hagar; see 16.14. Isaac's emergence *from* there has symbolic resonance—henceforth he will have his own posterity. **24.65** *It is my master.* Throughout the story his master has been Abraham; henceforth it is Isaac.

25.1–18 Information, in the style of an archive, about Abraham's children by Keturah (vv. 1–6), Abraham's death and burial (vv. 7–11), and Ishmael's offspring (vv. 12–18) paralleling the archival traditions of 11.10–32, which preface the Abraham cycle. The emphasis here is on the secondary lines of Abraham's—those displaced by Isaac. **25.1–6** In a situation similar to Hagar's (cf. 16.3), *Keturah* is called both wife and concubine. She, too, is sent away with her children, and Isaac named as heir. Her best-known child is *Midian,* here ancestor of a powerful nomadic people that biblical passages place in Sinai, Canaan, the Jordan Valley, Moab, and Transjordan; cf. Judg 8.22–24. According to Ex 2.15–22; 18.1, Moses' father-in-law was Midianite. Like Hagar's offspring, the Midianites are said to assist in bringing Joseph to Egypt as a slave (37.28, 36; see note on 16.6). **25.7–11** The death of Abraham, ripe in years, in a time of tranquility and plenty. He is buried beside Sarah at Machpelah (cf. 23.1–20). Notably, Isaac and Ishmael appear in peaceful relations, and Isaac settles at Beer-lahai-roi (cf. 16.13–14; see note on 24.62).

old age, an old man and full of years, and
was gathered to his people. 9 His sons
Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave
of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron son
of Zohar the Hittite, east of Mamre, 10 the
field that Abraham purchased from the
Hittites. There Abraham was buried, with
his wife Sarah. 11 After the death of Abra-
ham God blessed his son Isaac. And Isaac
settled at Beer-lahai-roi.

Ishmael's Descendants

12 These are the descendants of Ish-
mael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the
Egyptian, Sarah's slave-girl, bore to Abra-
ham. 13 These are the names of the sons
of Ishmael, named in the order of their
birth: Nebaioth, the firstborn of Ishmael;
and Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, 14 Mishma,
Dumah, Massa, 15 Hadad, Tema, Jetur,
Naphish, and Kedemah. 16 These are the
sons of Ishmael and these are their
names, by their villages and by their en-
campments, twelve princes according to
their tribes. 17 (This is the length of the
life of Ishmael, one hundred thirty-seven
years; he breathed his last and died, and
was gathered to his people.) 18 They set-
tled from Havilah to Shur, which is op-
posite Egypt in the direction of Assyria;
he settled down[q] alongside of[r] all his
people.

The Birth and Youth of Esau and Jacob

19 These are the descendants of Isaac,
Abraham's son: Abraham was the father
of Isaac, 20 and Isaac was forty years old
when he married Rebekah, daughter of
Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram,
sister of Laban the Aramean. 21 Isaac
prayed to the LORD for his wife, because
she was barren; and the LORD granted his
prayer, and his wife Rebekah conceived.
22 The children struggled together within
her; and she said, "If it is to be this way,
why do I live?"[s] So she went to inquire of
the LORD. 23 And the LORD said to her,

"Two nations are in your womb,
and two peoples born of you
shall be divided;
the one shall be stronger than the
other,
the elder shall serve the
younger."

24 When her time to give birth was at
hand, there were twins in her womb.
25 The first came out red, all his body like
a hairy mantle; so they named him Esau.
26 Afterward his brother came out, with

q Heb *he fell* *r* Or *down in opposition to*
s Syr: Meaning of Heb uncertain

25.12–18 A record of the line of Ishmael and his death at 137. Like later Israel, the Ishmaelites constitute twelve tribes, settled chiefly in Arabia. **25.16** *By their villages and . . . encampments.* Cf. formula in 10.31. Here the phrase is meant to reflect a partly settled, partly nomadic culture. **25.18** *From Havilah to Shur,* frontier limits; cf. 2.11; 10.29; 16.7. *Settled . . . alongside of,* or "fell upon, made raids against"; cf. 16.12.

25.19–36.43 A well-defined cycle of stories about Jacob, recounting the origins of the people Israel in the life history of their eponymous ancestor, Jacob/Israel (cf. 32.28). Like the Abraham cycle, it is roughly symmetrical, its centerpiece being the birth of Jacob's children in 29.31–30.24. Legends about twins or siblings (cf., e.g., Romulus and Remus, Castor and Pollux) often characterize the early history of civilizations. The rivalry of Jacob and Esau, expressing the historical opposition of Israel and Edom, finds a counterpart in that between Rachel and Leah, expressing the historical opposition between Israel and Judah—the northern and southern Israelite kingdoms, whose parallel histories are told in 1 Kings 12–2 Kings 25.

25.19–28 A condensed rendition of the rivalry between Jacob and Esau, which forms the cycle's principal conflict. Each of its discrete traditions presents a facet of the brothers' opposition. **25.19** *These are the descendants.* See note on 2.4. **25.20** *Isaac was forty years old.* Cf. other chronological references in the cycle: 25.26; 26.34; 35.28. *Bethuel the Aramean, Laban the Aramean.* Bethuel and Laban are termed "Arameans," descendants of Aram, here to show their connection to Aram (see 22.20–23). They are, strictly speaking, portrayed as uncle and cousin to Aram, not descendants. *Paddan-aram,* lit. "Road of Aram." The name overlaps with Aram-naharaim, "Mesopotamian Aram," the locale of Haran (see notes on 11.31; 24.10). **25.21** Like Sarah (and later Rachel) Rebekah was *barren.* **25.22–23** A tradition from the early monarchy, here anticipating Israel's dominance over Edom in the era of David and Solomon. **25.22** *Why do I live?* How can I endure the pain? **25.24–26** An etiological tradition stressing the twins' striking difference in appearance. *Red,* in Hebrew a play on "Edom," Esau's other name (cf. 36.1). *Hairy mantle,* in Hebrew a play on "Seir," where Esau settled; see 36.8, 20. **25.26** An etiological tradition rooting the name *Jacob* in the Hebrew word for

his hand gripping Esau's heel; so he was
named Jacob.[t] Isaac was sixty years old
when she bore them.
27 When the boys grew up, Esau was a
skillful hunter, a man of the field, while
Jacob was a quiet man, living in tents.
28 Isaac loved Esau, because he was fond
of game; but Rebekah loved Jacob.

Esau Sells His Birthright

29 Once when Jacob was cooking a
stew, Esau came in from the field, and he
was famished. 30 Esau said to Jacob, "Let
me eat some of that red stuff, for I am
famished!" (Therefore he was called
Edom.[u]) 31 Jacob said, "First sell me your
birthright." 32 Esau said, "I am about to
die; of what use is a birthright to me?"
33 Jacob said, "Swear to me first."[v] So he
swore to him, and sold his birthright to
Jacob. 34 Then Jacob gave Esau bread and
lentil stew, and he ate and drank, and rose
and went his way. Thus Esau despised his
birthright.

Isaac and Abimelech

26 Now there was a famine in the
land, besides the former famine
that had occurred in the days of Abra-
ham. And Isaac went to Gerar, to King
Abimelech of the Philistines. 2 The LORD
appeared to Isaac[w] and said, "Do not go
down to Egypt; settle in the land that I
shall show you. 3 Reside in this land as an
alien, and I will be with you, and will bless
you; for to you and to your descendants I
will give all these lands, and I will fulfill
the oath that I swore to your father Abra-
ham. 4 I will make your offspring as nu-
merous as the stars of heaven, and will
give to your offspring all these lands; and
all the nations of the earth shall gain bless-
ing for themselves through your off-
spring, 5 because Abraham obeyed my
voice and kept my charge, my command-
ments, my statutes, and my laws."
6 So Isaac settled in Gerar. 7 When the
men of the place asked him about his
wife, he said, "She is my sister"; for he was
afraid to say, "My wife," thinking, "or else
the men of the place might kill me for the
sake of Rebekah, because she is attractive
in appearance." 8 When Isaac had been
there a long time, King Abimelech of the
Philistines looked out of a window and
saw him fondling his wife Rebekah. 9 So
Abimelech called for Isaac, and said, "So
she is your wife! Why then did you say,
'She is my sister'?" Isaac said to him, "Be-
cause I thought I might die because of
her." 10 Abimelech said, "What is this you
have done to us? One of the people might
easily have lain with your wife, and you
would have brought guilt upon us." 11 So
Abimelech warned all the people, saying,
"Whoever touches this man or his wife
shall be put to death."
12 Isaac sowed seed in that land, and
in the same year reaped a hundredfold.
The LORD blessed him, 13 and the man be-
came rich; he prospered more and more
until he became very wealthy. 14 He had
possessions of flocks and herds, and a
great household, so that the Philistines
envied him. 15 (Now the Philistines had

t That is *He takes by the heel* or *He supplants*
u That is *Red* v Heb *today* w Heb *him*

"heel." **25.27** An etiological tradition stressing the brothers' (or their offspring's) contrasting ways of life. **25.28** A folkloric tradition expressing the brothers' opposition as opposed preferences of the parents. As in Abraham's case, the wife's preference eventually prevails. *Because he was fond of game*, lit. "Game [was] in his mouth" or "Game [was brought] at his behest."

25.29–34 An etiological tradition offering an additional reason for Jacob's (Israel's) dominance over Esau (Edom). **25.30** *Red stuff*, in Hebrew a play on "Edom." **25.31** *Birthright*, in Hebrew a play on "blessing," a key theme later in the cycle (see esp. 27.1–45; 28.10–17; 32.22–32). On the birthright, cf. Deut 21.15–17.

26.1–33 The only traditions about Isaac in the prime of life. Both concern Isaac's dealings with Abimelech of Gerar and are essentially variants of traditions about Abraham in Gerar; see 20.1–18; 21.22–34. **26.1** *Former famine.* See 12.10. *Philistines.* See note on 21.32. **26.2** *Do not go down to Egypt.* Isaac is the only patriarch who spends no time outside Canaan. **26.3** *Alien.* See note on 23.4. *Oath . . . I swore*, the often repeated double promise—progeny and land. **26.5** Again, moral justice is pivotal to divine promise; see notes on 15.16; 18.16–33. **26.8** *Fondling*, in Hebrew another play on "Isaac"; cf. 17.17; 18.12–15; 21.6, 9. **26.12–14** All three patriarchs are said to be rich (cf. 12.16; 13.2; 24.1; 30.43), in conformance with divine blessing, but the memory reflects some ambivalence—wealth is also a source of strife and envy; see vv. 15–22. **26.14, 16** Local distrust of a powerful alien also underlies 21.22–23; Ex 1.9–10. But similar tensions can arise among kin; cf. 13.2–13. **26.15** If

stopped up and filled with earth all the
wells that his father's servants had dug in
the days of his father Abraham.) 16 And
Abimelech said to Isaac, "Go away from
us; you have become too powerful
for us."
17 So Isaac departed from there and
camped in the valley of Gerar and settled
there. 18 Isaac dug again the wells of water
that had been dug in the days of his father
Abraham; for the Philistines had stopped
them up after the death of Abraham; and
he gave them the names that his father
had given them. 19 But when Isaac's ser-
vants dug in the valley and found there a
well of spring water, 20 the herders of Ge-
rar quarreled with Isaac's herders, saying,
"The water is ours." So he called the well
Esek,[x] because they contended with him.
21 Then they dug another well, and they
quarreled over that one also; so he called
it Sitnah.[y] 22 He moved from there and
dug another well, and they did not quar-
rel over it; so he called it Rehoboth,[z] sa-
ying, "Now the LORD has made room for
us, and we shall be fruitful in the land."
23 From there he went up to Beer-
sheba. 24 And that very night the LORD ap-
peared to him and said, "I am the God of
your father Abraham; do not be afraid,
for I am with you and will bless you and
make your offspring numerous for my
servant Abraham's sake." 25 So he built an
altar there, called on the name of the
LORD, and pitched his tent there. And
there Isaac's servants dug a well.
26 Then Abimelech went to him from
Gerar, with Ahuzzath his adviser and Phi-
col the commander of his army. 27 Isaac
said to them, "Why have you come to me,
seeing that you hate me and have sent me
away from you?" 28 They said, "We see
plainly that the LORD has been with you;
so we say, let there be an oath between
you and us, and let us make a covenant
with you 29 so that you will do us no harm,
just as we have not touched you and have
done to you nothing but good and have
sent you away in peace. You are now the
blessed of the LORD." 30 So he made them
a feast, and they ate and drank. 31 In the
morning they rose early and exchanged
oaths; and Isaac set them on their way,
and they departed from him in peace.
32 That same day Isaac's servants came
and told him about the well that they had
dug, and said to him, "We have found wa-
ter!" 33 He called it Shibah;[a] therefore
the name of the city is Beer-sheba[b] to
this day.

Esau's Hittite Wives

34 When Esau was forty years old, he
married Judith daughter of Beeri the Hit-
tite, and Basemath daughter of Elon the
Hittite; 35 and they made life bitter for
Isaac and Rebekah.

Isaac Blesses Jacob

27 When Isaac was old and his eyes
were dim so that he could not see,
he called his elder son Esau and said to
him, "My son"; and he answered, "Here I
am." 2 He said, "See, I am old; I do not
know the day of my death. 3 Now then,
take your weapons, your quiver and your
bow, and go out to the field, and hunt
game for me. 4 Then prepare for me sa-
vory food, such as I like, and bring it to

x That is *Contention* y That is *Enmity* z That is *Broad places* or *Room* a A word resembling the word for *oath* b That is *Well of the oath* or *Well of seven*

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parenthetic, this anticipates v. 18. Otherwise it is expression of the envy just mentioned. **26.18–22** The background to vv. 26–31. The place-names play on the strife and resolution depicted throughout ch. 26. **26.23–25** An altar tradition analogous to 12.7–8; 13.4. *And there Isaac's servants dug a well* returns the narrative to the well dispute theme. **26.26–31** Isaac's pact with Abimelech resolves all disputes hitherto described. As in 21.22–34, it culminates in the naming of Beer-sheba. **26.26** *Phicol.* Cf. 21.22, 32. **26.27** *Sent me away.* See v. 16. **26.28** *The LORD has been with you.* Cf. 21.22. **26.30** *They ate and drank,* covenant formalities. **26.32** An early tradition; with vv. 18–25 it brackets the Abimelech pact. **26.33** *Shibah,* a play on Hebrew *shebu'ah,* "oath," and *sheba',* "seven."

26.34–35 A tradition about Esau's Hittite wives. Cf. 24.3–4; 27.46–28.9. As in 23.8, these "Hittites" bear Semitic names.

27.1–40 The story of Jacob's deception of his blind father and theft of his brother's blessing, an elaborated variant of the "birthright" tradition in 25.29–34 and the background for the reconciliation in ch. 33. Jacob here acts on Rebekah's initiative (cf. 25.28); she disguises him as Esau and later arranges his escape. **27.1** *His eyes were dim.* The many plays on "see" in ch. 22 are relevant here. Cf. note on 27.27. **27.3** *Hunt game.* Cf. 25.28. **27.4** *That I may bless,* lit. "that my soul may bless"

me to eat, so that I may bless you before
I die."
5 Now Rebekah was listening when
Isaac spoke to his son Esau. So when Esau
went to the field to hunt for game and
bring it, 6 Rebekah said to her son Jacob,
"I heard your father say to your brother
Esau, 7 'Bring me game, and prepare for
me savory food to eat, that I may bless you
before the LORD before I die.' 8 Now
therefore, my son, obey my word as I
command you. 9 Go to the flock, and get
me two choice kids, so that I may prepare
from them savory food for your father,
such as he likes; 10 and you shall take it to
your father to eat, so that he may bless
you before he dies." 11 But Jacob said to
his mother Rebekah, "Look, my brother
Esau is a hairy man, and I am a man of
smooth skin. 12 Perhaps my father will feel
me, and I shall seem to be mocking him,
and bring a curse on myself and not a
blessing." 13 His mother said to him, "Let
your curse be on me, my son; only obey
my word, and go, get them for me." 14 So
he went and got them and brought them
to his mother; and his mother prepared
savory food, such as his father loved.
15 Then Rebekah took the best garments
of her elder son Esau, which were with
her in the house, and put them on her
younger son Jacob; 16 and she put the
skins of the kids on his hands and on the
smooth part of his neck. 17 Then she
handed the savory food, and the bread
that she had prepared, to her son Jacob.
18 So he went in to his father, and
said, "My father"; and he said, "Here I
am; who are you, my son?" 19 Jacob said to
his father, "I am Esau your firstborn. I
have done as you told me; now sit up and
eat of my game, so that you may bless
me." 20 But Isaac said to his son, "How is it
that you have found it so quickly, my
son?" He answered, "Because the LORD
your God granted me success." 21 Then
Isaac said to Jacob, "Come near, that I
may feel you, my son, to know whether
you are really my son Esau or not." 22 So
Jacob went up to his father Isaac, who felt
him and said, "The voice is Jacob's voice,
but the hands are the hands of Esau."
23 He did not recognize him, because his
hands were hairy like his brother Esau's
hands; so he blessed him. 24 He said, "Are
you really my son Esau?" He answered, "I
am." 25 Then he said, "Bring it to me, that
I may eat of my son's game and bless
you." So he brought it to him, and he ate;
and he brought him wine, and he drank.
26 Then his father Isaac said to him,
"Come near and kiss me, my son." 27 So
he came near and kissed him; and he
smelled the smell of his garments, and
blessed him, and said,

"Ah, the smell of my son
is like the smell of a field that
the LORD has blessed.
28 May God give you of the dew of
heaven,
and of the fatness of the earth,
and plenty of grain and wine.
29 Let peoples serve you,
and nations bow down to you.
Be lord over your brothers,
and may your mother's sons
bow down to you.
Cursed be everyone who
curses you,
and blessed be everyone who
blesses you!"

Esau's Lost Blessing

30 As soon as Isaac had finished bless-
ing Jacob, when Jacob had scarcely gone
out from the presence of his father Isaac,
his brother Esau came in from his hunt-
ing. 31 He also prepared savory food, and
brought it to his father. And he said to his
father, "Let my father sit up and eat of his
son's game, so that you may bless me."
32 His father Isaac said to him, "Who are

(cf. vv. 19, 25, 31), suggesting the act's ritual and legal importance. **27.11–12** Cf. 25.25. **27.13** *Let your curse be on me.* Rebekah indeed suffers the consequences—after Jacob's flight she will probably never see him again. **27.19** *I am . . . your firstborn* underscores that inheritance is at stake. **27.20–27** Isaac's suspicions heighten the tension and confirm the reason for Rebekah's disguise. Hearing, feeling, and smelling are prominent here, underscoring Isaac's blindness. **27.23** *Recognize*, a key verb in 31.32; 37.32–33; 38.25–26; 42.7–8. **27.27** *Ah*, lit. "See!" **27.29** *Be lord over your brothers.* No traditions exist of other brothers beside Esau; the plural, in context, suggests "your brother's children." See note on 27.37. In the next generation, the notion expressed here will return to haunt Jacob (cf. 37.5–11, 32–35).

27.30–40 The return and reaction of Esau.

you?" He answered, "I am your firstborn
son, Esau." 33 Then Isaac trembled vio-
lently, and said, "Who was it then that
hunted game and brought it to me, and I
ate it all[c] before you came, and I have
blessed him?—yes, and blessed he shall
be!" 34 When Esau heard his father's
words, he cried out with an exceedingly
great and bitter cry, and said to his father,
"Bless me, me also, father!" 35 But he said,
"Your brother came deceitfully, and he
has taken away your blessing." 36 Esau
said, "Is he not rightly named Jacob?[d]
For he has supplanted me these two
times. He took away my birthright; and
look, now he has taken away my blessing."
Then he said, "Have you not reserved a
blessing for me?" 37 Isaac answered Esau,
"I have already made him your lord, and
I have given him all his brothers as ser-
vants, and with grain and wine I have sus-
tained him. What then can I do for you,
my son?" 38 Esau said to his father, "Have
you only one blessing, father? Bless me,
me also, father!" And Esau lifted up his
voice and wept.

39 Then his father Isaac an-
swered him:

"See, away from[e] the fatness of
the earth shall your
home be,
and away from[f] the dew of
heaven on high.
40 By your sword you shall live,
and you shall serve your
brother;
but when you break loose,[g]
you shall break his yoke from
your neck."

Jacob Escapes Esau's Fury

41 Now Esau hated Jacob because of
the blessing with which his father had
blessed him, and Esau said to himself,
"The days of mourning for my father are
approaching; then I will kill my brother
Jacob." 42 But the words of her elder son
Esau were told to Rebekah; so she sent
and called her younger son Jacob and said
to him, "Your brother Esau is consoling
himself by planning to kill you. 43 Now
therefore, my son, obey my voice; flee at
once to my brother Laban in Haran,
44 and stay with him a while, until your
brother's fury turns away— 45 until your
brother's anger against you turns away,
and he forgets what you have done to
him; then I will send, and bring you back
from there. Why should I lose both of you
in one day?"

46 Then Rebekah said to Isaac, "I am
weary of my life because of the Hittite
women. If Jacob marries one of the Hit-
tite women such as these, one of the
women of the land, what good will my life
be to me?"

28 Then Isaac called Jacob and
blessed him, and charged him,
"You shall not marry one of the Canaan-
ite women. 2 Go at once to Paddan-aram
to the house of Bethuel, your mother's fa-
ther; and take as wife from there one of
the daughters of Laban, your mother's
brother. 3 May God Almighty[h] bless you
and make you fruitful and numerous,

c Cn: Heb *of all* d That is *He supplants* or *He takes by the heel* e Or *See, of* f Or *and of* g Meaning of Heb uncertain h Traditional rendering of Heb *El Shaddai*

27.34 The narrative's sympathy here for Esau is genuine, contrasting with the scorn of 25.34. But cf. note on 27.37. Esau is as much a victim of Isaac's rigidity as of Jacob's trickery. **27.35** Like an oath, a blessing, once conferred, cannot be retracted. **27.36** *Jacob . . . has supplanted.* See text note *d* and the note on 25.26. *Birthright . . . blessing.* See note on 25.31. **27.37** This and v. 29 make clear the drastic nature of Isaac's preferential policy, supplying more justification for Rebekah's ruse. **27.39** *Away from . . . away from.* The double meaning in Hebrew *mi-* ("of" and "away from") carries the ambivalence of this blessing. **27.40** *By your sword . . . serve your brother.* Cf. the oracle about Ishmael in 16.12—contentiousness will partly compensate for historical eclipse. *But when you break loose . . . from your neck.* Cf. 2 Kings 8.20, 22.

27.41–28.5 Jacob's escape. **27.41** *Then I will kill,* after mourning for Isaac is completed. **27.42** *The words . . . were told.* Esau's secret intentions became publicly known. *Is consoling himself.* Rebekah sees Esau's anger as temporary. **27.44–45** *Until . . . he forgets.* Rebekah's suggestion will hold true (see ch. 33), but she greatly miscalculates the time involved; see note on 27.13. *Lose both,* lit. "be bereaved of both." Rebekah anticipates Esau's death by execution or blood vengeance if he kills Jacob. **27.46** *Because of the Hittite women.* Cf. 24.3; 26.35. **28.1** *Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him.* Any distress over the deception (cf. 27.33) remains unmentioned. The blessing is for his journey, not a duplicate of the earlier blessing. **28.2** *Paddan-aram.* See note on

that you may become a company of peoples. 4 May he give to you the blessing of
Abraham, to you and to your offspring
with you, so that you may take possession
of the land where you now live as an alien
—land that God gave to Abraham."
5 Thus Isaac sent Jacob away; and he went
to Paddan-aram, to Laban son of Bethuel
the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob's and Esau's mother.

Esau Marries Ishmael's Daughter

6 Now Esau saw that Isaac had blessed
Jacob and sent him away to Paddan-aram
to take a wife from there, and that as he
blessed him he charged him, "You shall
not marry one of the Canaanite women,"
7 and that Jacob had obeyed his father
and his mother and gone to Paddan-
aram. 8 So when Esau saw that the Canaanite women did not please his father
Isaac, 9 Esau went to Ishmael and took
Mahalath daughter of Abraham's son Ishmael, and sister of Nebaioth, to be his wife
in addition to the wives he had.

Jacob's Dream at Bethel

10 Jacob left Beer-sheba and went toward Haran. 11 He came to a certain place
and stayed there for the night, because
the sun had set. Taking one of the stones
of the place, he put it under his head and
lay down in that place. 12 And he dreamed
that there was a ladder[i] set up on the
earth, the top of it reaching to heaven;
and the angels of God were ascending
and descending on it. 13 And the LORD
stood beside him[j] and said, "I am the
LORD, the God of Abraham your father
and the God of Isaac; the land on which
you lie I will give to you and to your offspring; 14 and your offspring shall be like
the dust of the earth, and you shall spread
abroad to the west and to the east and to
the north and to the south; and all the
families of the earth shall be blessed[k] in
you and in your offspring. 15 Know that I
am with you and will keep you wherever
you go, and will bring you back to this
land; for I will not leave you until I have
done what I have promised you." 16 Then
Jacob woke from his sleep and said,
"Surely the LORD is in this place—and I
did not know it!" 17 And he was afraid,
and said, "How awesome is this place!
This is none other than the house of God,
and this is the gate of heaven."

18 So Jacob rose early in the morning,
and he took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and
poured oil on the top of it. 19 He called
that place Bethel;[l] but the name of the
city was Luz at the first. 20 Then Jacob
made a vow, saying, "If God will be with
me, and will keep me in this way that I go,
and will give me bread to eat and clothing
to wear, 21 so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the LORD shall
be my God, 22 and this stone, which I have
set up for a pillar, shall be God's house;
and of all that you give me I will surely
give one-tenth to you."

Jacob Meets Rachel

29 Then Jacob went on his journey,
and came to the land of the people of the east. 2 As he looked, he saw a
well in the field and three flocks of sheep
lying there beside it; for out of that well
the flocks were watered. The stone on the

i Or *stairway* or *ramp* *j* Or *stood above it*
k Or *shall bless themselves* *l* That is *House of God*

25.20. **28.3–4** The familiar double promise (land/progeny) is reiterated here. *God Almighty.* See note on 17.1. **28.5** *Bethuel the Aramean.* See note on 25.20.

28.6–9 An addendum mentioning Esau's efforts to please his parents by finding a wife from among kin, although he does not renounce his Hittite wives (v. 9).

28.10–22 Jacob's first vision of God, here at Bethel (cf. 35.1–15). **28.13–15** The double promise again (land/progeny). **28.15** *I am with you,* even though you depart from the land; cf. 46.4. **28.16** *And I did not know it.* Otherwise Jacob would not have slept there; see v. 11. **28.17** *House of God,* in Hebrew a play on "Bethel"; cf. v. 19. **28.18** Probably an allusion to a local landmark. **28.19** *Luz,* lit. "Almond tree"; cf. 35.6; 48.3; Josh 16.2; 18.13; Judg 1.23. **28.20–22** Jacob's faith is more markedly contractual than Abraham's; cf. 15.6; 22.3. **28.22** *One-tenth.* See note on 14.20.

29.1–14 Jacob's meeting with Rachel, daughter of his uncle, Laban. This is a less-elaborated version of the genre represented by ch. 24 and culminates, similarly, in betrothal. **29.1** *People of the east,* of the Syrian-Arabian desert northeast of Canaan. Cf. 25.6; Judg 6.3, 33; Isa 11.14; Jer

well's mouth was large, 3 and when all the
flocks were gathered there, the shepherds
would roll the stone from the mouth of
the well, and water the sheep, and put the
stone back in its place on the mouth of the
well.
4 Jacob said to them, "My brothers,
where do you come from?" They said,
"We are from Haran." 5 He said to them,
"Do you know Laban son of Nahor?"
They said, "We do." 6 He said to them, "Is
it well with him?" "Yes," they replied,
"and here is his daughter Rachel, coming
with the sheep." 7 He said, "Look, it is still
broad daylight; it is not time for the ani-
mals to be gathered together. Water the
sheep, and go, pasture them." 8 But they
said, "We cannot until all the flocks are
gathered together, and the stone is rolled
from the mouth of the well; then we water
the sheep."
9 While he was still speaking with
them, Rachel came with her father's
sheep; for she kept them. 10 Now when
Jacob saw Rachel, the daughter of his
mother's brother Laban, and the sheep of
his mother's brother Laban, Jacob went
up and rolled the stone from the well's
mouth, and watered the flock of his
mother's brother Laban. 11 Then Jacob
kissed Rachel, and wept aloud. 12 And Ja-
cob told Rachel that he was her father's
kinsman, and that he was Rebekah's son;
and she ran and told her father.
13 When Laban heard the news about
his sister's son Jacob, he ran to meet him;
he embraced him and kissed him, and
brought him to his house. Jacob[m] told La-
ban all these things, 14 and Laban said to
him, "Surely you are my bone and my
flesh!" And he stayed with him a month.

Jacob Marries Laban's Daughters

15 Then Laban said to Jacob, "Be-
cause you are my kinsman, should you
therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me,
what shall your wages be?" 16 Now Laban
had two daughters; the name of the elder
was Leah, and the name of the younger
was Rachel. 17 Leah's eyes were lovely,[n]
and Rachel was graceful and beautiful.
18 Jacob loved Rachel; so he said, "I will
serve you seven years for your younger
daughter Rachel." 19 Laban said, "It is bet-
ter that I give her to you than that I
should give her to any other man; stay
with me." 20 So Jacob served seven years
for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a
few days because of the love he had
for her.
21 Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give
me my wife that I may go in to her, for my
time is completed." 22 So Laban gathered
together all the people of the place, and
made a feast. 23 But in the evening he
took his daughter Leah and brought her
to Jacob; and he went in to her. 24 (Laban
gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah
to be her maid.) 25 When morning came, it
was Leah! And Jacob said to Laban,
"What is this you have done to me? Did I
not serve with you for Rachel? Why then
have you deceived me?" 26 Laban said,
"This is not done in our country—giving
the younger before the firstborn. 27 Com-
plete the week of this one, and we will give
you the other also in return for serving
me another seven years." 28 Jacob did so,
and completed her week; then Laban
gave him his daughter Rachel as a wife.
29 (Laban gave his maid Bilhah to his

m Heb *He* *n* Meaning of Heb uncertain

49.38. **29.10** *His mother's brother Laban* occurs thrice, underscoring their kinship. *Rolled the stone,* a prodigious feat for one person—a measure of Jacob's elation at seeing his kinswoman. **29.11** *Kissed . . . and wept,* gestures common for kin long separated; cf. 33.4; 45.14–15. **29.14** *My bone and my flesh,* a frequent expression for acknowledging kinship; cf. 2.23; Judg 9.2; 2 Sam 5.1; 19.13–14.

29.15–30 Jacob's marriage to Laban's daughters, his agreement to serve Laban for fourteen years, and the birth of his children. **29.15** An overture typical of Laban's calculating character—why should service be mentioned at all? Laban perhaps already perceives Jacob's love for Rachel (v. 18) and undertakes to exploit it. **29.17** *Lovely,* or "soft, weak," suggesting, conversely, a defect in her beauty; cf. v. 18. *Rachel was graceful and beautiful,* as Sarah (12.11) and Rebekah (24.16) had been; here the language is even more emphatic. **29.18** *I will serve.* See note on 31.15–16. **29.23** Laban's personality further reveals itself. But the exchange of brides under cloak of darkness enacts divine justice as well, for Jacob had similarly defrauded his blind father. Cf. note on 29.26. **29.24** A detail commonly mentioned in Hurrian marriage contracts; cf. v. 29. **29.26** This recalls Jacob's violation of firstborn protocol in ch. 27. **29.27** *Complete the week,* of nuptial festivities; cf. Judg 14.10, 12.

daughter Rachel to be her maid.) 30 So Jacob went in to Rachel also, and he loved Rachel more than Leah. He served Laban[o] for another seven years.

The Birth of Jacob's Children

31 When the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, he opened her womb; but Rachel was barren. 32 Leah conceived and bore a son, and she named him Reuben;[p] for she said, "Because the LORD has looked on my affliction; surely now my husband will love me." 33 She conceived again and bore a son, and said, "Because the LORD has heard[q] that I am hated, he has given me this son also"; and she named him Simeon. 34 Again she conceived and bore a son, and said, "Now this time my husband will be joined[r] to me, because I have borne him three sons"; therefore he was named Levi. 35 She conceived again and bore a son, and said, "This time I will praise[s] the LORD"; therefore she named him Judah; then she ceased bearing.

30 When Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she envied her sister; and she said to Jacob, "Give me children, or I shall die!" 2 Jacob became very angry with Rachel and said, "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?" 3 Then she said, "Here is my maid Bilhah; go in to her, that she may bear upon my knees and that I too may have children through her." 4 So she gave him her maid Bilhah as a wife; and Jacob went in to her. 5 And Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son. 6 Then Rachel said, "God has judged me, and has also heard my voice and given me a son"; therefore she named him Dan.[t] 7 Rachel's maid Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. 8 Then Rachel said, "With mighty wrestlings I have wrestled[u] with my sister, and have prevailed"; so she named him Naphtali.

9 When Leah saw that she had ceased bearing children, she took her maid Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as a wife. 10 Then Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a son. 11 And Leah said, "Good fortune!" so she named him Gad.[v] 12 Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a second son. 13 And Leah said, "Happy am I! For the women will call me happy"; so she named him Asher.[w]

14 In the days of wheat harvest Reuben went and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them to his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, "Please give me some of your son's mandrakes." 15 But she said to her, "Is it a small matter that you have taken away my husband? Would you take away my son's mandrakes also?" Rachel said, "Then he may lie with you tonight for your son's mandrakes." 16 When Jacob came from the field in the evening, Leah went out to meet him, and said, "You must come in to me; for I have hired you with my son's mandrakes." So he lay with her that night. 17 And God heeded Leah, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son. 18 Leah said, "God has given me my hire[x] because I gave my maid to my husband"; so she named him Issachar. 19 And Leah conceived again, and she bore Jacob a sixth son. 20 Then Leah said, "God has endowed me with a good dowry; now my husband will honor[y] me, because I have borne him six sons"; so she named him Zebulun. 21 Afterwards she bore a daughter, and named her Dinah.

22 Then God remembered Rachel, and God heeded her and opened her

o Heb *him* *p* That is *See, a son* *q* Heb *shama* *r* Heb *lawah* *s* Heb *hodah* *t* That is *He judged* *u* Heb *niphtal* *v* That is *Fortune* *w* That is *Happy* *x* Heb *sakar* *y* Heb *zabal*

29.30 *He loved Rachel more than Leah.* The "loved" wife and the "disliked" wife were legally recognized (but not sanctioned) categories; cf. Deut 21.15–17; note on Gen 29.31.

29.31–30.24 The core of the Jacob cycle, recounting the birth of Jacob's children and, so, of the tribes of Israel. Each child's name plays on the events accompanying its conception or birth. **29.31** *When the LORD saw.* Disapproval of Jacob's preferential treatment is implied. Cf. 1 Sam 1.5. **29.32–33** *Reuben, Simeon.* The plays on "see" and "hear" recall the narratives about Abraham's children; see notes on 16.2; 16.13–14. The tribes of Reuben and Simeon were absorbed into Judah early in Israel's history. **29.34–35** From the tribes of *Levi* and *Judah* will come Moses and David, respectively, Israel's two historically most pivotal leaders. **30.3** Cf. 16.2. **30.14** *Mandrakes,* or mandragora, an herb thought to confer fertility. **30.15** As favored wife, Rachel effectively has primary right of cohabitation and can barter it temporarily for concessions. **30.21** *Dinah.* No reason for the name is given. Dinah will be the subject of ch. 34 but is not herself a tribal

womb. 23 She conceived and bore a son,
and said, "God has taken away my re-
proach"; 24 and she named him Joseph,[z]
saying, "May the LORD add to me an-
other son!"

Jacob Prospers at Laban's Expense

25 When Rachel had borne Joseph,
Jacob said to Laban, "Send me away, that
I may go to my own home and country.
26 Give me my wives and my children for
whom I have served you, and let me go;
for you know very well the service I have
given you." 27 But Laban said to him, "If
you will allow me to say so, I have learned
by divination that the LORD has blessed
me because of you; 28 name your wages,
and I will give it." 29 Jacob said to him,
"You yourself know how I have served
you, and how your cattle have fared with
me. 30 For you had little before I came,
and it has increased abundantly; and the
LORD has blessed you wherever I turned.
But now when shall I provide for my own
household also?" 31 He said, "What shall I
give you?" Jacob said, "You shall not give
me anything; if you will do this for me, I
will again feed your flock and keep it:
32 let me pass through all your flock today,
removing from it every speckled and spot-
ted sheep and every black lamb, and the
spotted and speckled among the goats;
and such shall be my wages. 33 So my hon-
esty will answer for me later, when you
come to look into my wages with you. Ev-
ery one that is not speckled and spotted
among the goats and black among the
lambs, if found with me, shall be counted
stolen." 34 Laban said, "Good! Let it be as
you have said." 35 But that day Laban re-
moved the male goats that were striped
and spotted, and all the female goats that
were speckled and spotted, every one that
had white on it, and every lamb that was
black, and put them in charge of his sons;
36 and he set a distance of three days' jour-
ney between himself and Jacob, while Ja-
cob was pasturing the rest of Laban's
flock.

37 Then Jacob took fresh rods of pop-
lar and almond and plane, and peeled
white streaks in them, exposing the white
of the rods. 38 He set the rods that he had
peeled in front of the flocks in the
troughs, that is, the watering places,
where the flocks came to drink. And since
they bred when they came to drink, 39 the
flocks bred in front of the rods, and so the
flocks produced young that were striped,
speckled, and spotted. 40 Jacob separated
the lambs, and set the faces of the flocks
toward the striped and the completely
black animals in the flock of Laban; and
he put his own droves apart, and did not
put them with Laban's flock. 41 Whenever
the stronger of the flock were breeding,
Jacob laid the rods in the troughs before
the eyes of the flock, that they might
breed among the rods, 42 but for the fee-
bler of the flock he did not lay them
there; so the feebler were Laban's, and
the stronger Jacob's. 43 Thus the man
grew exceedingly rich, and had large
flocks, and male and female slaves, and
camels and donkeys.

Jacob Flees with Family and Flocks

31 Now Jacob heard that the sons of
Laban were saying, "Jacob has
taken all that was our father's; he has
gained all this wealth from what belonged
to our father." 2 And Jacob saw that La-
ban did not regard him as favorably as he

z That is *He adds*

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ancestor. **30.22** *Then God remembered.* Cf. 21.1; 25.21; 1 Sam 1.27. **30.23** *Has taken away,* Hebrew *'asaf,* an additional play on "Joseph"; cf. v. 24.

30.25–43 How Jacob obtains partial redress for the disadvantageous deal struck in 29.15–30. **30.27** *Divination,* a practice condemned in other threads in the Hebrew Bible (see 2 Kings 21.6; cf. Gen 44.5, 15). **30.28** *Name your wages,* another deceitful overture; cf. 29.15; 30.33. **30.32** *Speckled and spotted.* All references to markings indicate white markings; see note on 30.35. **30.33** *When you come to look into my wages,* when you later take inventory by breed to determine what is mine and yours. **30.35** *Every one that had white on it,* white markings, indicating Jacob's sheep. In Hebrew "white" is a play on "Laban." **30.36** *Set a distance . . . between himself and Jacob,* thereby avoiding answerability for the injustice. Jacob, at this point, has been swindled again. **30.37–42** Jacob's strategy presupposes that the offspring's coloration is determined by what its parents see during mating.

31.1–21 Jacob's preparations for departure from Laban as their relations worsen. Jacob heads toward Canaan, ending twenty years of exile. **31.1–2** Jacob's newfound wealth has clearly ex-

did before. 3 Then the LORD said to Jacob,
"Return to the land of your ancestors and
to your kindred, and I will be with you."
4 So Jacob sent and called Rachel and
Leah into the field where his flock was,
5 and said to them, "I see that your father
does not regard me as favorably as he did
before. But the God of my father has
been with me. 6 You know that I have
served your father with all my strength;
7 yet your father has cheated me and
changed my wages ten times, but God did
not permit him to harm me. 8 If he said,
'The speckled shall be your wages,' then
all the flock bore speckled; and if he said,
'The striped shall be your wages,' then all
the flock bore striped. 9 Thus God has
taken away the livestock of your father,
and given them to me.

10 During the mating of the flock I
once had a dream in which I looked up
and saw that the male goats that leaped
upon the flock were striped, speckled,
and mottled. 11 Then the angel of God
said to me in the dream, 'Jacob,' and I
said, 'Here I am!' 12 And he said, 'Look up
and see that all the goats that leap on the
flock are striped, speckled, and mottled;
for I have seen all that Laban is doing to
you. 13 I am the God of Bethel,[a] where
you anointed a pillar and made a vow to
me. Now leave this land at once and re-
turn to the land of your birth.'" 14 Then
Rachel and Leah answered him, "Is there
any portion or inheritance left to us in our
father's house? 15 Are we not regarded by
him as foreigners? For he has sold us, and
he has been using up the money given for
us. 16 All the property that God has taken
away from our father belongs to us and to
our children; now then, do whatever God
has said to you."

17 So Jacob arose, and set his children
and his wives on camels; 18 and he drove
away all his livestock, all the property that
he had gained, the livestock in his posses-
sion that he had acquired in Paddan-
aram, to go to his father Isaac in the land
of Canaan.

19 Now Laban had gone to shear his
sheep, and Rachel stole her father's
household gods. 20 And Jacob deceived
Laban the Aramean, in that he did not tell
him that he intended to flee. 21 So he fled
with all that he had; starting out he
crossed the Euphrates,[b] and set his face
toward the hill country of Gilead.

Laban Overtakes Jacob

22 On the third day Laban was told
that Jacob had fled. 23 So he took his kins-
folk with him and pursued him for seven
days until he caught up with him in the
hill country of Gilead. 24 But God came to
Laban the Aramean in a dream by night,
and said to him, "Take heed that you say
not a word to Jacob, either good or bad."

25 Laban overtook Jacob. Now Jacob
had pitched his tent in the hill country,
and Laban with his kinsfolk camped in
the hill country of Gilead. 26 Laban said to
Jacob, "What have you done? You have
deceived me, and carried away my daugh-

a Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain *b* Heb *the river*

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acerbated tensions. **31.8** In 30.25–43, it was Jacob who set the wages, and it was his cunning, more than divine providence, that brought success. But he speaks subjectively here and is essentially correct; see note on 31.10. **31.10** This now makes 30.37–42 a divinely mandated strategy. Biblical narrative typically withholds information until the moment is ripe for it. Cf. notes on 20.12; 31.13, 14–16, 15–16. **31.12** This drastically simplifies the strategy of 30.37–42 for storytelling purposes. **31.13** See 28.10–22. This suggests strongly that Jacob has always viewed his exilic experience in the light of those events. **31.14–16** Rachel and Leah now air, for the first time, their bitterness toward their father. **31.15–16** The wealth earned by Jacob's indentured labor was meant for Rachel and Leah's support and welfare, not Laban's personal enrichment. **31.19** *Household gods*, Hebrew *teraphim*, figurines common in Syria and Palestine, even among Israelites, throughout the preexilic period. Talismanic, cultic, and legal significance accrued to their possession; cf. Judg 17.5; 18.17, 20; Ezek 21.21. **31.20** *Deceived.* Open declaration of intent to leave would provoke unwanted conflict and forestall departure. *Aramean.* See note on 25.20. **31.21** *Gilead,* in northeast Transjordan, adjacent to Canaan. Cf. Num 26.29–30; Josh 17.1, 3; Judg 5.17.

31.22–42 Laban's pursuit of Jacob and their exchange of grievances. **31.22** *On the third day.* The figure is approximate, a storytelling formula; cf. 22.4; 34.25. **31.23** *Seven days,* again, a formulaic approximation. **31.24** Laban's restraint in what follows can be attributed to this warning; cf. v. 29. **31.26–30** Laban's grievances, sounding quite reasonable, ignore his longtime misuse

ters like captives of the sword. 27 Why did
you flee secretly and deceive me and not
tell me? I would have sent you away with
mirth and songs, with tambourine and
lyre. 28 And why did you not permit me to
kiss my sons and my daughters farewell?
What you have done is foolish. 29 It is in
my power to do you harm; but the God of
your father spoke to me last night, saying,
'Take heed that you speak to Jacob nei-
ther good nor bad.' 30 Even though you
had to go because you longed greatly for
your father's house, why did you steal my
gods?" 31 Jacob answered Laban, "Because
I was afraid, for I thought that you would
take your daughters from me by force.
32 But anyone with whom you find your
gods shall not live. In the presence of our
kinsfolk, point out what I have that is
yours, and take it." Now Jacob did not
know that Rachel had stolen the gods.[c]

33 So Laban went into Jacob's tent,
and into Leah's tent, and into the tent of
the two maids, but he did not find them.
And he went out of Leah's tent, and en-
tered Rachel's. 34 Now Rachel had taken
the household gods and put them in the
camel's saddle, and sat on them. Laban
felt all about in the tent, but did not find
them. 35 And she said to her father, "Let
not my lord be angry that I cannot rise
before you, for the way of women is upon
me." So he searched, but did not find the
household gods.

36 Then Jacob became angry, and up-
braided Laban. Jacob said to Laban,
"What is my offense? What is my sin, that
you have hotly pursued me? 37 Although
you have felt about through all my goods,
what have you found of all your house-
hold goods? Set it here before my kinsfolk
and your kinsfolk, so that they may decide
between us two. 38 These twenty years I
have been with you; your ewes and your
female goats have not miscarried, and I
have not eaten the rams of your flocks.
39 That which was torn by wild beasts I did
not bring to you; I bore the loss of it my-
self; of my hand you required it, whether
stolen by day or stolen by night. 40 It was
like this with me: by day the heat con-
sumed me, and the cold by night, and my
sleep fled from my eyes. 41 These twenty
years I have been in your house; I served
you fourteen years for your two daugh-
ters, and six years for your flock, and you
have changed my wages ten times. 42 If
the God of my father, the God of Abra-
ham and the Fear[d] of Isaac, had not been
on my side, surely now you would have
sent me away empty-handed. God saw my
affliction and the labor of my hands, and
rebuked you last night."

Laban and Jacob Make a Covenant

43 Then Laban answered and said to
Jacob, "The daughters are my daughters,
the children are my children, the flocks
are my flocks, and all that you see is mine.
But what can I do today about these
daughters of mine, or about their chil-
dren whom they have borne? 44 Come
now, let us make a covenant, you and I;
and let it be a witness between you and
me." 45 So Jacob took a stone, and set it up
as a pillar. 46 And Jacob said to his kins-
folk, "Gather stones," and they took
stones, and made a heap; and they ate
there by the heap. 47 Laban called it Jegar-
sahadutha:[e] but Jacob called it Galeed.[f]

c Heb *them* d Meaning of Heb uncertain
e In Aramaic *The heap of witness* f In Hebrew *The heap of witness*

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of Jacob's household. **31.27** *I would have sent you away . . . with tambourine and lyre.* This action is unlikely, given his past resistance to their departure. **31.31** Jacob's words are not a reply to the question of v. 30, but to what preceded it. Cf. v. 32. **31.32** *But anyone with whom you find your gods shall not live.* The words prove unintentionally prophetic—Rachel will indeed soon die (35.16–20). *In the presence of our kinsfolk,* in effect, a public litigation. **31.35** *The way of women,* her menstrual period; contact with anything she sits upon is probably taboo (cf. Lev 15.20). **31.36–42** Jacob's impassioned defense is masterfully convincing. Its rhetorical form is the *riv* (Hebrew, "upbraiding"; see v. 36), common in biblical legal discourse. Cf. Job 31. **31.39** Contrary to common practice, which did not require restitution (cf. *Code of Hammurabi* 266; Ex 22.13). **31.40** *By day . . . by night.* Cf. Pss 91.5–6; 121.6. **31.42** *Fear of Isaac,* an unusual name. Some scholars suggest "Kinsman of Isaac." Isaac's ordeal in ch. 22 naturally comes to mind.

31.43–55 The conclusion of the dispute, resulting in a treaty between the opponents. The passage is etiological, concerned with later Israelite-Aramean relations and with the place-names "Gilead" and "Mizpah" (vv. 47–48). **31.43** Without admitting error, Laban effectively concedes defeat. **31.47** *Jegar-sahadutha,* an Aramaic name. The oldest surviving Aramaic texts

48 Laban said, "This heap is a witness between you and me today." Therefore he called it Galeed, 49 and the pillar[g] Mizpah,[h] for he said, "The LORD watch between you and me, when we are absent one from the other. 50 If you ill-treat my daughters, or if you take wives in addition to my daughters, though no one else is with us, remember that God is witness between you and me."

51 Then Laban said to Jacob, "See this heap and see the pillar, which I have set between you and me. 52 This heap is a witness, and the pillar is a witness, that I will not pass beyond this heap to you, and you will not pass beyond this heap and this pillar to me, for harm. 53 May the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor"—the God of their father—"judge between us." So Jacob swore by the Fear[i] of his father Isaac, 54 and Jacob offered a sacrifice on the height and called his kinsfolk to eat bread; and they ate bread and tarried all night in the hill country.

55[j] Early in the morning Laban rose up, and kissed his grandchildren and his daughters and blessed them; then he departed and returned home.

32 Jacob went on his way and the angels of God met him; 2 and when Jacob saw them he said, "This is God's camp!" So he called that place Mahanaim.[k]

Jacob Sends Presents to Appease Esau

3 Jacob sent messengers before him to his brother Esau in the land of Seir, the country of Edom, 4 instructing them, "Thus you shall say to my lord Esau: Thus says your servant Jacob, 'I have lived with Laban as an alien, and stayed until now; 5 and I have oxen, donkeys, flocks, male and female slaves; and I have sent to tell my lord, in order that I may find favor in your sight.' "

6 The messengers returned to Jacob, saying, "We came to your brother Esau, and he is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him." 7 Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed; and he divided the people that were with him, and the flocks and herds and camels, into two companies, 8 thinking, "If Esau comes to the one company and destroys it, then the company that is left will escape."

9 And Jacob said, "O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O LORD who said to me, 'Return to your country and to your kindred, and I will do you good,' 10 I am not worthy of the least of all the steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan; and now I have become two companies. 11 Deliver me, please, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I am afraid of him; he may come and kill us all, the mothers with the children. 12 Yet you have said, 'I will surely do you good, and make your offspring as the sand of the sea, which cannot be counted because of their number.' "

13 So he spent that night there, and from what he had with him he took a present for his brother Esau, 14 two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, 15 thirty milch camels and their colts, forty

g Compare Sam: MT lacks *the pillar* *h* That is *Watchpost* *i* Meaning of Heb uncertain
j Ch 32.1 in Heb *k* Here taken to mean *Two camps*

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date from the tenth century B.C.E. Biblical Aramaic is also present in Ezra 4.8–6.18; 7.12–26; Dan 2.4–7.28; Jer 10.11. *Galeed,* probably a folk etymology for "Gilead," site of the present episode (cf. vv. 21, 23). **31.48** *Mizpah,* or Mizpah-Gilead; cf. Judg 10.17; 11.11, 29, 34; Hos 5.1. **31.53** *The God of their father,* probably a gloss, as the third person indicates. *Fear of . . . Isaac.* See note on 31.42.

32.1–2 These verses properly belong to the episode that follows. **32.1** *Angels.* The same Hebrew word signifies "messengers" in 32.3. **32.2** *Mahanaim,* lit. "Two Camps"; cf. the "ascending" and "descending" angels in 28.12. The "doubleness" of the angelic hosts is a foreshadowing of the twin-brother theme that dominates chs. 32–33; cf. note on 32.7.

32.3–32 Jacob's preparations for reunion with his brother, culminating in the remarkable divine encounter of vv. 22–32, which to modern readers suggests the nightmare of a distraught traveler, anxious about what lies ahead. **32.3** *Land of Seir.* Cf. 14.6; 36.20–21. *Edom.* Cf. 36.1, 6. **32.5** Jacob abruptly dwells on his possessions, a measure of his anxiety. Cf. vv. 13–16. **32.6** *Four hundred men,* seemingly portending a military confrontation. **32.7** *He divided . . . into two companies* continues the "doubleness" motif begun in v. 2. **32.10** *Steadfast love.* See note on 24.14. *Two companies.* See notes on 32.2; 32.7.

cows and ten bulls, twenty female donkeys
and ten male donkeys. 16 These he deliv-
ered into the hand of his servants, every
drove by itself, and said to his servants,
"Pass on ahead of me, and put a space
between drove and drove." 17 He in-
structed the foremost, "When Esau my
brother meets you, and asks you, 'To
whom do you belong? Where are you go-
ing? And whose are these ahead of you?'
18 then you shall say, 'They belong to your
servant Jacob; they are a present sent to
my lord Esau; and moreover he is behind
us.'" 19 He likewise instructed the second
and the third and all who followed the
droves, "You shall say the same thing to
Esau when you meet him, 20 and you shall
say, 'Moreover your servant Jacob is be-
hind us.'" For he thought, "I may ap-
pease him with the present that goes
ahead of me, and afterwards I shall see
his face; perhaps he will accept me." 21 So
the present passed on ahead of him; and
he himself spent that night in the camp.

Jacob Wrestles at Peniel

22 The same night he got up and took
his two wives, his two maids, and his
eleven children, and crossed the ford of
the Jabbok. 23 He took them and sent
them across the stream, and likewise ev-
erything that he had. 24 Jacob was left
alone; and a man wrestled with him until
daybreak. 25 When the man saw that he
did not prevail against Jacob, he struck
him on the hip socket; and Jacob's hip was
put out of joint as he wrestled with him.
26 Then he said, "Let me go, for the day is
breaking." But Jacob said, "I will not let
you go, unless you bless me." 27 So he said
to him, "What is your name?" And he
said, "Jacob." 28 Then the man[l] said,
"You shall no longer be called Jacob, but
Israel,[m] for you have striven with God
and with humans,[n] and have prevailed."
29 Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me
your name." But he said, "Why is it that
you ask my name?" And there he blessed
him. 30 So Jacob called the place Peniel,[o]
saying, "For I have seen God face to face,
and yet my life is preserved." 31 The sun
rose upon him as he passed Penuel, limp-
ing because of his hip. 32 Therefore to this
day the Israelites do not eat the thigh
muscle that is on the hip socket, because
he struck Jacob on the hip socket at the
thigh muscle.

Jacob and Esau Meet

33 Now Jacob looked up and saw
Esau coming, and four hundred
men with him. So he divided the children
among Leah and Rachel and the two

l Heb *he* *m* That is *The one who strives with God* or *God strives* *n* Or *with divine and human beings*
o That is *The face of God*

32.15 *Milch,* nursing, milk-producing. **32.16** *Put a space between drove and drove.* Jacob's gifts are made to seem like decoys; cf. vv. 8, 17–20. **32.20** *His face.* "Face, presence" (Hebrew *panim*) is a key word throughout chs. 32–33, on which the folk etymology of Peniel/Penuel (vv. 30–31) depends. **32.22** *Jabbok,* possibly a play on "Jacob." The river is an eastern tributary of the Jordan originating near present-day Amman. **32.24** *Jacob was left alone,* a pregnant moment suggesting Jacob's anguished apprehensions before meeting Esau. *And a man.* No preparation or context is supplied, suggesting the event's internal or supernatural nature. *Wrestled,* in Hebrew a play on "Jabbok" and "Jacob." **32.25** *Hip socket,* or fleshy part of the thigh. Injury to the reproductive organs is hinted, and indeed with Benjamin already conceived Jacob will beget no further children. Cf. note on 32.31. **32.26–28** *He said.* Confusion of the two speakers is intentional, suggesting the confusion of their melee, their "twinlike" equivalence as combatants, and their complete standoff. **32.26** *Unless you bless.* The theme of blessing, surfacing here in a dreamlike way, again reminds us that Jacob is preoccupied with the brother whose blessing he stole. **32.28** *Israel.* At the very moment Jacob reaches full maturity, his descendants acquire their national name. Later Israel's encounters with God will similarly entail intense struggle, with divine and human alike. **32.29** *Why is it that you ask my name?* See note on 33.15. *And there he blessed him.* Curiously, the blessing's words are not mentioned—the moment remains private and mysterious. **32.30** *Peniel.* Its variant, Penuel, appears in v. 31. *Face to face.* On this problematic notion, cf. Ex 33.11–23; Deut 5.4; 34.10; Judg 6.22. **32.31** *Limping,* a frequent motif in myth and legend (Oedipus, too, limps), suggesting maturation, both personal and cultural—parallel, in certain ways, to the ordeal of Abraham and Isaac at Moriah. This "diminished" Jacob is paradoxically more complete. **32.32** A version of this prohibition survives in Jewish dietary laws. This is the Hebrew Bible's sole reference to the practice.

33.1–17 The meeting of Jacob and Esau after twenty years apart. Their encounter proves unexpectedly cordial, and their long-deferred conflict

maids. 2 He put the maids with their children in front, then Leah with her children, and Rachel and Joseph last of all.
3 He himself went on ahead of them, bowing himself to the ground seven times, until he came near his brother.
4 But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept. 5 When Esau looked up and saw the women and children, he said, "Who are these with you?" Jacob said, "The children whom God has graciously given your servant." 6 Then the maids drew near, they and their children, and bowed down; 7 Leah likewise and her children drew near and bowed down; and finally Joseph and Rachel drew near, and they bowed down. 8 Esau said, "What do you mean by all this company that I met?" Jacob answered, "To find favor with my lord." 9 But Esau said, "I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself." 10 Jacob said, "No, please; if I find favor with you, then accept my present from my hand; for truly to see your face is like seeing the face of God—since you have received me with such favor.
11 Please accept my gift that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have everything I want." So he urged him, and he took it.
12 Then Esau said, "Let us journey on our way, and I will go alongside you."
13 But Jacob said to him, "My lord knows that the children are frail and that the flocks and herds, which are nursing, are a care to me; and if they are overdriven for one day, all the flocks will die. 14 Let my lord pass on ahead of his servant, and I will lead on slowly, according to the pace of the cattle that are before me and according to the pace of the children, until I come to my lord in Seir."
15 So Esau said, "Let me leave with you some of the people who are with me." But he said, "Why should my lord be so kind to me?" 16 So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir. 17 But Jacob journeyed to Succoth,[p] and built himself a house, and made booths for his cattle; therefore the place is called Succoth.

Jacob Reaches Shechem

18 Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, on his way from Paddan-aram; and he camped before the city. 19 And from the sons of Hamor, Shechem's father, he bought for one hundred pieces of money[q] the plot of land on which he had pitched his tent. 20 There he erected an altar and called it El-Elohe-Israel.[r]

The Rape of Dinah

34 Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the women of the region. 2 When Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the region, saw her, he seized her and lay with her by force.
3 And his soul was drawn to Dinah daugh-

p That is *Booths* *q* Heb *one hundred qesitah*
r That is *God, the God of Israel*

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seems resolved. **33.1** *So he divided.* See note on 32.7. **33.2** Jacob's most cherished household members are placed farthest from Esau's grasp. **33.4** *Kissed ... wept.* See note on 29.11. **33.10** *Like seeing the face of God,* a courtly exaggeration, but containing a measure of truth. It alludes to 32.22–32, which was, by its timing and verbal associations, closely tied to the present encounter. Cf. Hos 12.3. **33.14** *Until I come to ... Seir,* a puzzling detail—no trip to Seir is reported. **33.15** *But he said.* The speaker here is presumably Jacob, but the ambiguity may be intentional. Like the divine encounter in 32.22–32, this one ends with an unanswered question. **33.17** *Succoth,* a Transjordanian town near the Jordan Valley. Cf. Josh 13.27; Judg 8.5–9, 14–16; 1 Kings 7.46. **33.18–20** Jacob's arrival at Shechem, as for Abraham (12.6) the first encampment in Canaan. *Shechem's father* carries a double meaning—Hamor's son is named Shechem, and Hamor is a "city father." *El-Elohe-Israel,* a Canaanite type ("El") divine name. Cf. El Elyon (14.19), El Shaddai (17.1), El Olam (21.33), and El-bethel (35.7).

34.1–31 The Jacob cycle's last elaborated narrative recounts the rape of Jacob's daughter, Dinah, by Hamor's son Shechem and its violent avenging by Jacob's sons Simeon and Levi—the first acts of violence between Canaanites and Israelites, disrupting otherwise peaceful relations. **34.1** Much time has elapsed since the previous episode; Jacob's children are young adults. *To visit the women of the region.* Relations with Canaanites were cordial, and the women of both peoples moved about freely. **34.2** *Hivite.* Cf. 10.17; Josh 9.7; 11.3, 19. The Septuagint reads "Horites" (cf. notes on 14.6; 36.20). **34.2–3** Without condoning the rape, the narrator presupposes it as compatible with love; here, indeed, love complicates the situation meaningfully. Dinah's reactions go

ter of Jacob; he loved the girl, and spoke
tenderly to her. 4 So Shechem spoke to his
father Hamor, saying, "Get me this girl to
be my wife."
5 Now Jacob heard that Shechem[s]
had defiled his daughter Dinah; but his
sons were with his cattle in the field, so
Jacob held his peace until they came.
6 And Hamor the father of Shechem went
out to Jacob to speak with him, 7 just as
the sons of Jacob came in from the field.
When they heard of it, the men were in-
dignant and very angry, because he had
committed an outrage in Israel by lying
with Jacob's daughter, for such a thing
ought not to be done.
8 But Hamor spoke with them, saying,
"The heart of my son Shechem longs for
your daughter; please give her to him in
marriage. 9 Make marriages with us; give
your daughters to us, and take our
daughters for yourselves. 10 You shall live
with us; and the land shall be open to you;
live and trade in it, and get property in it."
11 Shechem also said to her father and to
her brothers, "Let me find favor with you,
and whatever you say to me I will give.
12 Put the marriage present and gift as
high as you like, and I will give whatever
you ask me; only give me the girl to be my
wife."
13 The sons of Jacob answered She-
chem and his father Hamor deceitfully,
because he had defiled their sister Dinah.
14 They said to them, "We cannot do this
thing, to give our sister to one who is un-
circumcised, for that would be a disgrace
to us. 15 Only on this condition will we
consent to you: that you will become as we
are and every male among you be circum-
cised. 16 Then we will give our daughters
to you, and we will take your daughters
for ourselves, and we will live among you
and become one people. 17 But if you will
not listen to us and be circumcised, then
we will take our daughter and be gone."
18 Their words pleased Hamor and
Hamor's son Shechem. 19 And the young
man did not delay to do the thing, be-
cause he was delighted with Jacob's
daughter. Now he was the most honored
of all his family. 20 So Hamor and his son
Shechem came to the gate of their city
and spoke to the men of their city, saying,
21 "These people are friendly with us; let
them live in the land and trade in it, for
the land is large enough for them; let us
take their daughters in marriage, and let
us give them our daughters. 22 Only on
this condition will they agree to live
among us, to become one people: that ev-
ery male among us be circumcised as they
are circumcised. 23 Will not their livestock,
their property, and all their animals be
ours? Only let us agree with them, and
they will live among us." 24 And all who
went out of the city gate heeded Hamor
and his son Shechem; and every male was
circumcised, all who went out of the gate
of his city.

Dinah's Brothers Avenge Their Sister

25 On the third day, when they were
still in pain, two of the sons of Jacob, Sim-
eon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, took their
swords and came against the city un-
awares, and killed all the males. 26 They
killed Hamor and his son Shechem with
the sword, and took Dinah out of She-
chem's house, and went away. 27 And the
other sons of Jacob came upon the slain,
and plundered the city, because their sis-
ter had been defiled. 28 They took their
flocks and their herds, their donkeys, and
whatever was in the city and in the field.
29 All their wealth, all their little ones and
their wives, all that was in the houses, they
captured and made their prey. 30 Then

s Heb *he*

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unrecorded. **34.7** *An outrage in Israel*, i.e., among our people. Jacob's children manifest the sense of nationhood that the tale's audience took for granted. On the expression, cf. Judg 20.6 (and 19.1–20.5); 2 Sam 13.12. **34.9–10** These overtures are problematic in the light of the admonitions of Ex 23.23–33; Deut 7.1–11. **34.13** *Deceitfully*. Cf. 31.20. The justice of their deceit is neither affirmed nor denied by the narrator; cf. notes on 34.2–3; 34.30–31. **34.19** *The most honored*, i.e., in the eyes of their townspeople, perhaps explaining why the townsmen consent to circumcision (v. 24). **34.23** They either reveal here their own baser motives or use material incentives to sway their compatriots. **34.24** *All who went out of the city gate*, those held fit for military service, able-bodied adult males. **34.25** *On the third day*. See note on 31.22. *Still in pain*. The operation entails temporary incapacitation, forestalling their self-defense. **34.27** The inclusion of *the other sons* makes the avenging more than a rash adventure by Simeon and Levi, but cf. v. 30 and 49.5–7, which focus blame on the two. Jacob's later retreat from Shechem (35.1) suggests mili-

Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "You have brought trouble on me by making me odious to the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites and the Perizzites; my numbers are few, and if they gather themselves against me and attack me, I shall be destroyed, both I and my household." 31 But they said, "Should our sister be treated like a whore?"

Jacob Returns to Bethel

35 God said to Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel, and settle there. Make an altar there to the God who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau." 2 So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Put away the foreign gods that are among you, and purify yourselves, and change your clothes; 3 then come, let us go up to Bethel, that I may make an altar there to the God who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me wherever I have gone." 4 So they gave to Jacob all the foreign gods that they had, and the rings that were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak that was near Shechem.

5 As they journeyed, a terror from God fell upon the cities all around them, so that no one pursued them. 6 Jacob came to Luz (that is, Bethel), which is in the land of Canaan, he and all the people who were with him, 7 and there he built an altar and called the place El-bethel,[t] because it was there that God had revealed himself to him when he fled from his brother. 8 And Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died, and she was buried under an oak below Bethel. So it was called Allon-bacuth.[u]

9 God appeared to Jacob again when he came from Paddan-aram, and he blessed him. 10 God said to him, "Your name is Jacob; no longer shall you be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name." So he was called Israel. 11 God said to him, "I am God Almighty:[v] be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall spring from you. 12 The land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you, and I will give the land to your offspring after you." 13 Then God went up from him at the place where he had spoken with him. 14 Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he had spoken with him, a pillar of stone; and he poured out a drink offering on it, and poured oil on it. 15 So Jacob called the place where God had spoken with him Bethel.

The Birth of Benjamin and the Death of Rachel

16 Then they journeyed from Bethel; and when they were still some distance from Ephrath, Rachel was in childbirth, and she had hard labor. 17 When she was in her hard labor, the midwife said to her, "Do not be afraid; for now you will have another son." 18 As her soul was departing (for she died), she named him Ben-oni;[w] but his father called him Benjamin.[x] 19 So Rachel died, and she was buried on the

t That is *God of Bethel* *u* That is *Oak of weeping*
v Traditional rendering of Heb *El Shaddai*
w That is *Son of my sorrow* *x* That is *Son of the right hand* or *Son of the South*

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tary defeat. **34.30–31** Jacob's objections seem motivated more by pragmatism than by honor or justice; the sons, in turn, ignore the dishonorable implications of their deceit. The story offers no easy answer to the dilemma. Sadly, other than in 46.15 Dinah is not mentioned again.

35.1–15 Jacob's return to Bethel, site of his first divine vision during his escape from Esau (see 28.10–22). Chs. 35–36 represent a typical conclusion, in archival style, to the Jacob cycle; cf. 10.1–32; 11.10–32; 25.1–18. **35.2** *Put away the foreign gods.* Cf. Josh 24.14. *Purify yourselves and change your clothes.* Cf. Ex 19.10–14. **35.4** *Under the oak . . . near Shechem.* Cf. Josh 24.26. **35.5** After the hostilities exchanged at Shechem (ch. 34), Canaanites were no longer assumed to be friendly. **35.6** *Luz.* See note on 28.19. **35.7** *El-bethel.* See note on 33.18–20. **35.8** *Deborah, Rebekah's nurse.* Cf. 24.59, where her last name is unmentioned. **35.10** Cf. 32.27–28. Unlike Abraham's, Jacob's new name is used interchangeably with the old. **35.11** *God Almighty.* See note on 17.1. **35.14** Cf. 28.18.

35.16–29 The birth of Jacob's youngest child, Benjamin; the death of Rachel; Reuben's transgression; the list of Jacob's sons; and Isaac's death. **35.16** *Ephrath.* Cf. Ruth 1.2; 1 Sam 17.12. **35.18** *Ben-oni . . . Benjamin.* Jacob reverses the tragic implications of the child's name to mean "son of the right hand"/"son of fortune" or "son of the south." The latter would express the vantage point of northern-based Israelites. **35.19** *Bethlehem,* a small town about five miles south of Jerusalem. Cf. Judg 17.7–9; 19.1–2, 18;

way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem),
20 and Jacob set up a pillar at her grave; it
is the pillar of Rachel's tomb, which is
there to this day. 21 Israel journeyed on,
and pitched his tent beyond the tower of
Eder.
22 While Israel lived in that land,
Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his fa-
ther's concubine; and Israel heard of it.
Now the sons of Jacob were twelve.
23 The sons of Leah: Reuben (Jacob's first-
born), Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and
Zebulun. 24 The sons of Rachel: Joseph
and Benjamin. 25 The sons of Bilhah, Ra-
chel's maid: Dan and Naphtali. 26 The
sons of Zilpah, Leah's maid: Gad and
Asher. These were the sons of Jacob who
were born to him in Paddan-aram.

The Death of Isaac

27 Jacob came to his father Isaac at
Mamre, or Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron),
where Abraham and Isaac had resided as
aliens. 28 Now the days of Isaac were one
hundred eighty years. 29 And Isaac
breathed his last; he died and was gath-
ered to his people, old and full of days;
and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

Esau's Descendants

36 These are the descendants of
Esau (that is, Edom). 2 Esau took
his wives from the Canaanites: Adah
daughter of Elon the Hittite, Oholibamah
daughter of Anah son[y] of Zibeon the Hi-
vite, 3 and Basemath, Ishmael's daughter,
sister of Nebaioth. 4 Adah bore Eliphaz to
Esau; Basemath bore Reuel; 5 and Oholi-
bamah bore Jeush, Jalam, and Korah.
These are the sons of Esau who were born
to him in the land of Canaan.
6 Then Esau took his wives, his sons,
his daughters, and all the members of his
household, his cattle, all his livestock, and
all the property he had acquired in the
land of Canaan; and he moved to a land
some distance from his brother Jacob.
7 For their possessions were too great for
them to live together; the land where they
were staying could not support them be-
cause of their livestock. 8 So Esau settled
in the hill country of Seir; Esau is Edom.
9 These are the descendants of Esau,
ancestor of the Edomites, in the hill coun-
try of Seir. 10 These are the names of
Esau's sons: Eliphaz son of Adah the wife
of Esau; Reuel, the son of Esau's wife Ba-
semath. 11 The sons of Eliphaz were Te-
man, Omar, Zepho, Gatam, and Kenaz.
12 (Timna was a concubine of Eliphaz,
Esau's son; she bore Amalek to Eliphaz.)
These were the sons of Adah, Esau's wife.
13 These were the sons of Reuel: Nahath,
Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah. These
were the sons of Esau's wife, Basemath.
14 These were the sons of Esau's wife
Oholibamah, daughter of Anah son[z] of
Zibeon: she bore to Esau Jeush, Jalam,
and Korah.

Clans and Kings of Edom

15 These are the clans[a] of the sons of
Esau. The sons of Eliphaz the firstborn of
Esau: the clans[a] Teman, Omar, Zepho,
Kenaz, 16 Korah, Gatam, and Amalek;
these are the clans[a] of Eliphaz in the land
of Edom; they are the sons of Adah.

y Sam Gk Syr: Heb *daughter* *z* Gk Syr: Heb *daughter* *a* Or *chiefs*

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1 Sam 16.1. **35.20** *Rachel's tomb.* Present-day Bethlehem still honors the reputed site. **35.21** *Tower of Eder,* between Bethlehem and Hebron. **35.22a** Cf. 49.3–4; Deut 33.6; 1 Chr 5.1. **35.22b–26** A Priestly genealogy (see Introduction), the first complete listing of Jacob's twelve sons and so of Israel's tribal groups (Joseph's descendants comprised two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim; see note on 48.1–22). **35.26** *Born to him in Paddan-aram,* except Benjamin, born between Bethel and Ephrath. **35.27–29** Another Priestly tradition (see Introduction), notable for showing Esau and Jacob in peaceful relations (v. 29). Since Isaac was virtually on his deathbed twenty years earlier, this tradition may appear here for reasons other than strictly chronological ones.

36.1–43 A lengthy appendix in archival style about Esau's descendants, the nation Edom, south of the Dead Sea. The historical Edomites (like the Canaanites) spoke a language similar to Hebrew. The chapter contains several lists, each with a different emphasis: Esau's wives (vv. 1–5); Esau's sons and grandsons (vv. 9–14); Esauite clans (vv. 15–19); the proto-Edomite Horites (vv. 20–30); the earliest kings of Edom (vv. 31–39); and another Esauite clan list (vv. 40–43). The brief notation about Esau's migration (vv. 6–8) resembles that concerning Lot's departure from Abraham (13.3–13). **36.12** *Amalek.* See note on 14.7. **36.15** *Eliphaz . . . Teman.* Cf. Eliphaz the

17 These are the sons of Esau's son Reuel:
the clans[b] Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and
Mizzah; these are the clans[b] of Reuel in
the land of Edom; they are the sons of
Esau's wife Basemath. 18 These are the
sons of Esau's wife Oholibamah: the
clans[b] Jeush, Jalam, and Korah; these are
the clans[b] born of Esau's wife Oholiba-
mah, the daughter of Anah. 19 These are
the sons of Esau (that is, Edom), and these
are their clans.[b]

20 These are the sons of Seir the Ho-
rite, the inhabitants of the land: Lotan,
Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, 21 Dishon, Ezer,
and Dishan; these are the clans[b] of the
Horites, the sons of Seir in the land of
Edom. 22 The sons of Lotan were Hori
and Heman; and Lotan's sister was
Timna. 23 These are the sons of Shobal:
Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho, and
Onam. 24 These are the sons of Zibeon:
Aiah and Anah; he is the Anah who
found the springs[c] in the wilderness, as
he pastured the donkeys of his father Zib-
eon. 25 These are the children of Anah:
Dishon and Oholibamah daughter of
Anah. 26 These are the sons of Dishon:
Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran, and Cheran.
27 These are the sons of Ezer: Bilhan, Zaa-
van, and Akan. 28 These are the sons of
Dishan: Uz and Aran. 29 These are the
clans[b] of the Horites: the clans[b] Lotan,
Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, 30 Dishon, Ezer,
and Dishan; these are the clans[b] of the
Horites, clan by clan[d] in the land of Seir.

31 These are the kings who reigned in
the land of Edom, before any king
reigned over the Israelites. 32 Bela son of
Beor reigned in Edom, the name of his
city being Dinhabah. 33 Bela died, and Jo-
bab son of Zerah of Bozrah succeeded
him as king. 34 Jobab died, and Husham
of the land of the Temanites succeeded
him as king. 35 Husham died, and Hadad
son of Bedad, who defeated Midian in the
country of Moab, succeeded him as king,
the name of his city being Avith. 36 Hadad
died, and Samlah of Masrekah succeeded
him as king. 37 Samlah died, and Shaul of
Rehoboth on the Euphrates succeeded
him as king. 38 Shaul died, and Baal-
hanan son of Achbor succeeded him as
king. 39 Baal-hanan son of Achbor died,
and Hadar succeeded him as king, the
name of his city being Pau; his wife's
name was Mehetabel, the daughter of Ma-
tred, daughter of Me-zahab.

40 These are the names of the clans[b]
of Esau, according to their families and
their localities by their names: the clans[b]
Timna, Alvah, Jetheth, 41 Oholibamah,
Elah, Pinon, 42 Kenaz, Teman, Mibzar,
43 Magdiel, and Iram; these are the clans[b]
of Edom (that is, Esau, the father of
Edom), according to their settlements in
the land that they held.

Joseph Dreams of Greatness

37 Jacob settled in the land where
his father had lived as an alien,
the land of Canaan. 2 This is the story of
the family of Jacob.

Joseph, being seventeen years old, was

b Or *chiefs* *c* Meaning of Heb uncertain
d Or *chief by chief*

Temanite in Job 2.11. **36.20** *Horite.* These Horites are Semites, not Hurrians; cf. note on 14.6. The name may mean "cave dweller." **36.31–39** The kingship of Edom was apparently elective, not hereditary.

37.1–50.26 The final narrative sequence in Genesis, the magisterial saga of Joseph and his brothers. Joseph is not a patriarch in the same sense as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but the ancestor of two Israelite tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim, which produced some of Israel's most important leaders (Joshua, Gideon, Samuel) between the eras of Moses and David. Properly speaking, this is not a story about Joseph alone, but about all twelve sons of Jacob. Yet, for reasons of storytelling (and because of the course of later Israelite history), two brothers occupy the forefront of the narrative, Joseph and Judah. And it is Joseph's unique vantage point that gives the tale its dramatic force. He is the first offspring of Jacob to experience slavery in Egypt; and his dazzling rise to power in his adopted country and his poignant reunion with his brothers and aged father enact a drama of divine providence that ties together all the themes and concerns of Genesis. Like the rest of Genesis, the saga is built out of earlier traditions, here reworked extensively by a literary artist of refined imagination. Its function is twofold: to supply a fitting conclusion to the ancestral narratives that precede it and to provide a bridge to the exodus story that follows.

37.1–11 The stage is set for the saga by recounting Joseph's boyhood interaction with his father and brothers and the resentments he aroused. **37.2** *This is the story of the family,* lit. "These are the generations"; see note on 2.4. *Wives,* i.e., concubines, introduced here in order to include in the narrative most of the brothers

shepherding the flock with his brothers;
he was a helper to the sons of Bilhah and
Zilpah, his father's wives; and Joseph
brought a bad report of them to their father. 3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than
any other of his children, because he was
the son of his old age; and he had made
him a long robe with sleeves.[e] 4 But when
his brothers saw that their father loved
him more than all his brothers, they hated
him, and could not speak peaceably
to him.

5 Once Joseph had a dream, and
when he told it to his brothers, they hated
him even more. 6 He said to them, "Listen
to this dream that I dreamed. 7 There we
were, binding sheaves in the field. Suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright;
then your sheaves gathered around it,
and bowed down to my sheaf." 8 His
brothers said to him, "Are you indeed to
reign over us? Are you indeed to have dominion over us?" So they hated him even
more because of his dreams and his
words.

9 He had another dream, and told it
to his brothers, saying, "Look, I have had
another dream: the sun, the moon, and
eleven stars were bowing down to me."
10 But when he told it to his father and to
his brothers, his father rebuked him, and
said to him, "What kind of dream is this
that you have had? Shall we indeed come,
I and your mother and your brothers,
and bow to the ground before you?" 11 So
his brothers were jealous of him, but his
father kept the matter in mind.

Joseph Is Sold by His Brothers

12 Now his brothers went to pasture
their father's flock near Shechem. 13 And
Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers pasturing the flock at Shechem?
Come, I will send you to them." He answered, "Here I am." 14 So he said to him,
"Go now, see if it is well with your brothers and with the flock; and bring word
back to me." So he sent him from the valley of Hebron.

He came to Shechem, 15 and a man
found him wandering in the fields; the
man asked him, "What are you seeking?"
16 "I am seeking my brothers," he said;
"tell me, please, where they are pasturing
the flock." 17 The man said, "They have
gone away, for I heard them say, 'Let us
go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after his
brothers, and found them at Dothan.
18 They saw him from a distance, and before he came near to them, they conspired to kill him. 19 They said to one
another, "Here comes this dreamer.
20 Come now, let us kill him and throw
him into one of the pits; then we shall say
that a wild animal has devoured him, and
we shall see what will become of his
dreams." 21 But when Reuben heard it, he
delivered him out of their hands, saying,
"Let us not take his life." 22 Reuben said to
them, "Shed no blood; throw him into this
pit here in the wilderness, but lay no hand
on him"—that he might rescue him out of
their hand and restore him to his father.
23 So when Joseph came to his brothers,
they stripped him of his robe, the long
robe with sleeves[f] that he wore; 24 and
they took him and threw him into a pit.
The pit was empty; there was no water
in it.

e Traditional rendering (compare Gk): *a coat of many colors*; Meaning of Heb uncertain f See note on 37.3

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whose names are not mentioned. *Brought a bad report.* Cf. note on 42.9. **37.3** *Israel loved Joseph.* Again, favoritism will be the root of conflict. *The son of his old age,* a designation more appropriate to Benjamin, who, similarly, was a child of Rachel, Jacob's favorite wife. Benjamin, however, being associated with Rachel's death (35.16–20), was perhaps less favored. *Long robe with sleeves,* or a "striped coat." **37.4** *Peaceably.* The word *shalom* (Hebrew, "peace") is a key word throughout the saga. **37.5–11** In each of the story's three dreaming episodes (cf. 40.5–23; 41.1–36), two dreams are told. Here Joseph's dreams prophesy the events of chs. 42–50. **37.10** *And your mother.* Jacob speaks as if Rachel were still alive—her memory is still a living reality for him and appropriate to his rebuke. **37.11** *Kept the matter in mind.* Jacob already knew the importance of dreams (cf. 28.10–17) and so took the matter seriously. **37.14** *If it is well,* lit. "if [there is] peace." Cf. note on 37.4. **37.15** *A man,* a mysterious stranger who may play the role of divine messenger, but who is not identified directly as such. **37.17** *Dothan,* a site near Shechem. **37.21–24, 28a** Here, Reuben restrains his brothers and Midianites carry Joseph to Egypt; cf. vv. 25–27, 28b. **37.23** *They stripped him.* Cf. 39.12. In 41.14 Joseph's donning of new clothes marks a turning point in his fortunes; see also 41.42. **37.25–27, 28b** Here, in contrast to

25 Then they sat down to eat; and
looking up they saw a caravan of Ishmael-
ites coming from Gilead, with their camels
carrying gum, balm, and resin, on their
way to carry it down to Egypt. 26 Then Ju-
dah said to his brothers, "What profit is it
if we kill our brother and conceal his
blood? 27 Come, let us sell him to the Ish-
maelites, and not lay our hands on him,
for he is our brother, our own flesh." And
his brothers agreed. 28 When some
Midianite traders passed by, they drew
Joseph up, lifting him out of the pit, and
sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty
pieces of silver. And they took Joseph
to Egypt.

29 When Reuben returned to the pit
and saw that Joseph was not in the pit, he
tore his clothes. 30 He returned to his
brothers, and said, "The boy is gone; and
I, where can I turn?" 31 Then they took
Joseph's robe, slaughtered a goat, and
dipped the robe in the blood. 32 They had
the long robe with sleeves[g] taken to their
father, and they said, "This we have
found; see now whether it is your son's
robe or not." 33 He recognized it, and said,
"It is my son's robe! A wild animal has
devoured him; Joseph is without doubt
torn to pieces." 34 Then Jacob tore his gar-
ments, and put sackcloth on his loins, and
mourned for his son many days. 35 All his
sons and all his daughters sought to com-
fort him; but he refused to be comforted,
and said, "No, I shall go down to Sheol to
my son, mourning." Thus his father be-
wailed him. 36 Meanwhile the Midianites
had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, one of
Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the
guard.

Judah and Tamar

38 It happened at that time that Ju-
dah went down from his brothers
and settled near a certain Adullamite
whose name was Hirah. 2 There Judah
saw the daughter of a certain Canaanite
whose name was Shua; he married her
and went in to her. 3 She conceived and
bore a son; and he named him Er. 4 Again
she conceived and bore a son whom she
named Onan. 5 Yet again she bore a son,
and she named him Shelah. She[h] was in
Chezib when she bore him. 6 Judah took a
wife for Er his firstborn; her name was
Tamar. 7 But Er, Judah's firstborn, was
wicked in the sight of the LORD, and the
LORD put him to death. 8 Then Judah said
to Onan, "Go in to your brother's wife
and perform the duty of a brother-in-law
to her; raise up offspring for your
brother." 9 But since Onan knew that the
offspring would not be his, he spilled his
semen on the ground whenever he went
in to his brother's wife, so that he would
not give offspring to his brother. 10 What
he did was displeasing in the sight of the
LORD, and he put him to death also.
11 Then Judah said to his daughter-in-law
Tamar, "Remain a widow in your father's
house until my son Shelah grows up"—
for he feared that he too would die, like
his brothers. So Tamar went to live in her
father's house.

12 In course of time the wife of Ju-
dah, Shua's daughter, died; when Judah's
time of mourning was over,[i] he went up
to Timnah to his sheepshearers, he and
his friend Hirah the Adullamite. 13 When

g See note on 37.3 *h* Gk: Heb *He*
i Heb *when Judah was comforted*

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vv. 21–24, 28a, it is Judah who restrains his brothers and Ishmaelites (see 39.1) who carry Joseph to Egypt. On the significance of both Ishmaelites and Midianites to the providential scheme enacted in Genesis, see notes on 16.6; 25.1–6. **37.32** *See now*, lit. "Recognize, please." See note on 38.25. **37.34** *Tore his garments*, the traditional gesture of mourning; cf. v. 29; 2 Sam 3.31.

38.1–30 An important subplot to the saga concerned with Judah's begetting of Perez and Zerah. Judah's neglect of the levirate obligation (see note on 38.8) to his daughter-in-law, Tamar, leads to an elaborate artifice on her part to conceive offspring by him. The event's significance was well known in ancient Israel, for from the line of Perez will come King David; cf. Ruth 3.11–13; 4.1–22; which likewise turn on the levirate theme. **38.1** *Adullamite*, a Canaanite from the Judean hills. Cf. 1 Sam 22.1–2. **38.7** *But Er . . . was wicked.* No details are given, nor are they necessary to the story. **38.8** *Perform the duty of a brother-in-law.* The rest of the verse explains the obligation, known as levirate law; see Deut 25.5–10. **38.9** *Onan . . . spilled his semen.* The offense at issue is neither masturbation as such ("onanism") nor the efforts at birth control, but failure to fulfill the levirate obligation. **38.11** *Remain a widow . . . until . . . Shelah grows up.* Judah effectively consigns Tamar to oblivion—he apparently has no true intention of giving Shelah to her in marriage; cf. v. 14. **38.12** *Timnah*, a town in the southern hill country (see Josh 15.57);

Tamar was told, "Your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep,"
14 she put off her widow's garments, put
on a veil, wrapped herself up, and sat
down at the entrance to Enaim, which is
on the road to Timnah. She saw that Shelah was grown up, yet she had not been
given to him in marriage. 15 When Judah
saw her, he thought her to be a prostitute,
for she had covered her face. 16 He went
over to her at the roadside, and said,
"Come, let me come in to you," for he did
not know that she was his daughter-in-law. She said, "What will you give me, that
you may come in to me?" 17 He answered,
"I will send you a kid from the flock."
And she said, "Only if you give me a
pledge, until you send it." 18 He said,
"What pledge shall I give you?" She replied, "Your signet and your cord, and
the staff that is in your hand." So he gave
them to her, and went in to her, and she
conceived by him. 19 Then she got up and
went away, and taking off her veil she put
on the garments of her widowhood.

20 When Judah sent the kid by his
friend the Adullamite, to recover the
pledge from the woman, he could not
find her. 21 He asked the townspeople,
"Where is the temple prostitute who was
at Enaim by the wayside?" But they said,
"No prostitute has been here." 22 So he returned to Judah, and said, "I have not
found her; moreover the townspeople
said, 'No prostitute has been here.' " 23 Judah replied, "Let her keep the things as
her own, otherwise we will be laughed at;
you see, I sent this kid, and you could not
find her."

24 About three months later Judah
was told, "Your daughter-in-law Tamar
has played the whore; moreover she is
pregnant as a result of whoredom." And
Judah said, "Bring her out, and let her be
burned." 25 As she was being brought out,
she sent word to her father-in-law, "It was
the owner of these who made me pregnant." And she said, "Take note, please,
whose these are, the signet and the cord
and the staff." 26 Then Judah acknowledged them and said, "She is more in the
right than I, since I did not give her to my
son Shelah." And he did not lie with her
again.

27 When the time of her delivery
came, there were twins in her womb.
28 While she was in labor, one put out a
hand; and the midwife took and bound
on his hand a crimson thread, saying,
"This one came out first." 29 But just then
he drew back his hand, and out came his
brother; and she said, "What a breach you
have made for yourself!" Therefore he
was named Perez.[j] 30 Afterward his
brother came out with the crimson thread
on his hand; and he was named Zerah.[k]

Joseph and Potiphar's Wife

39 Now Joseph was taken down to
Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of
Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an
Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmael-

j That is *A breach* *k* That is *Brightness*; perhaps alluding to the crimson thread

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cf. note on 38.14. **38.14** *Entrance to Enaim*, lit. "opening of the eyes," a wordplay, just as Timnah plays on the Hebrew word for "conceal." **38.18** Tamar's foresight in requesting the items from Judah will become clear as the tale unfolds. **38.21** *Temple prostitute*, Hebrew *kedēshah*, lit. "sacred woman." Cultic prostitution was common in Mesopotamia and Canaan. In v. 15 the term is simply the less-esteemed "prostitute" (*zonah*, perhaps lit. "one who whores for sustenance"). Hirah attempts to dignify Judah's actions according to the era's customs. *No prostitute*, i.e. *kedēshah*. **38.23** *Otherwise we will be laughed at*. An atmosphere of gossip and scandal clearly prevails and is important to the tale's conclusion; see notes on 38.25; 38.26. **38.24** *Played the whore*. The verb is related to *zonah*, the less respectable term (see note on 38.21). *Let her be burned*. Judah still does not realize his own role in the events. **38.25** *Take note, please*, lit. "Recognize, please"—the same words used in 37.32, thus here a preliminary justice for Judah's role in the sale of Joseph and deception of Jacob. **38.26** *Acknowledged*, lit. "recognized." Judah's embarrassment is complete, and he takes the only dignified way out—admission of his error and protection of Tamar. *He did not lie with her again*, thus reconfirming his in-law (and exclusively levirate) relation to her. **38.27** *Twins in her womb*. Cf. 25.22–23. Here, similarly, the second-born usurps first place. **38.28–30** An etiological conclusion, explaining the children's names. Perez will be an ancestor of King David.

39.1–23 The resumption of Joseph's tale recounting his experiences while serving in the household of Potiphar, Pharaoh's chief steward, who treats Joseph kindly until a false accusation arises. **39.1** *Pharaoh*, from Egyptian for "great

ites who had brought him down there.
2 The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man; he was in the
house of his Egyptian master. 3 His master
saw that the LORD was with him, and that
the LORD caused all that he did to prosper
in his hands. 4 So Joseph found favor in
his sight and attended him; he made him
overseer of his house and put him in
charge of all that he had. 5 From the time
that he made him overseer in his house
and over all that he had, the LORD blessed
the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake;
the blessing of the LORD was on all that he
had, in house and field. 6 So he left all that
he had in Joseph's charge; and, with him
there, he had no concern for anything but
the food that he ate.

Now Joseph was handsome and good-
looking. 7 And after a time his master's
wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, "Lie
with me." 8 But he refused and said to his
master's wife, "Look, with me here, my
master has no concern about anything in
the house, and he has put everything that
he has in my hand. 9 He is not greater in
this house than I am, nor has he kept back
anything from me except yourself, because you are his wife. How then could I
do this great wickedness, and sin against
God?" 10 And although she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not consent
to lie beside her or to be with her. 11 One
day, however, when he went into the
house to do his work, and while no one
else was in the house, 12 she caught hold
of his garment, saying, "Lie with me!" But
he left his garment in her hand, and fled
and ran outside. 13 When she saw that he
had left his garment in her hand and had
fled outside, 14 she called out to the members of her household and said to them,
"See, my husband[l] has brought among
us a Hebrew to insult us! He came in to
me to lie with me, and I cried out with a
loud voice; 15 and when he heard me raise
my voice and cry out, he left his garment
beside me, and fled outside." 16 Then she
kept his garment by her until his master
came home, 17 and she told him the same
story, saying, "The Hebrew servant,
whom you have brought among us, came
in to me to insult me; 18 but as soon as I
raised my voice and cried out, he left his
garment beside me, and fled outside."

19 When his master heard the words
that his wife spoke to him, saying, "This is
the way your servant treated me," he became enraged. 20 And Joseph's master
took him and put him into the prison, the
place where the king's prisoners were confined; he remained there in prison. 21 But
the LORD was with Joseph and showed
him steadfast love; he gave him favor in
the sight of the chief jailer. 22 The chief
jailer committed to Joseph's care all the
prisoners who were in the prison, and
whatever was done there, he was the one
who did it. 23 The chief jailer paid no
heed to anything that was in Joseph's
care, because the LORD was with him; and
whatever he did, the LORD made it
prosper.

The Dreams of Two Prisoners

40 Some time after this, the cupbearer of the king of Egypt and
his baker offended their lord the king of
Egypt. 2 Pharaoh was angry with his two
officers, the chief cupbearer and the chief

l Heb *he*

house," here and elsewhere a generic term (though wielded like a name) for the king of Egypt, whose given name is never mentioned. *Ishmaelites.* See note on 37.25–27, 28b. **39.2** *He was in the house.* Normally a slave would serve in the fields or at construction. **39.4** *Overseer . . . in charge of all,* a rehearsal for Joseph's more exalted role in the future. **39.5** *The blessing of the LORD was on all that he had, in house and field,* as later it would be upon Egypt through Joseph's leadership.

39.7–18 These events are frequently compared to an Egyptian tale, "Story of Two Brothers." Joseph's self-restraint contrasts markedly with Judah's patronage of prostitution (38.16). **39.9** *God.* The name YHWH, translated "LORD" in NRSV, is never used in conversation with non-Israelites. **39.14** *A Hebrew.* See note on 14.13. **39.20** The significance of *the place where the king's prisoners were confined* will become clear in ch. 40. Joseph's punishment is surprisingly mild, given the allegation's seriousness and Potiphar's high station. **39.21** *Steadfast love.* See note on 24.14; cf. 24.27, 49; 32.10. *Gave him favor.* As in v. 4, a strange turnabout for one who so persistently alienated his brothers. **39.22** *Committed to Joseph's care.* In every circumstance, Joseph demonstrates his capacity for leadership. **39.23** *The chief jailer paid no heed to anything,* just as Potiphar "had no concern for anything" (v. 6).

40.1–23 Joseph's interpretation of the dreams of two fellow prisoners, servants of Phar-

baker, 3 and he put them in custody in the
house of the captain of the guard, in the
prison where Joseph was confined. 4 The
captain of the guard charged Joseph with
them, and he waited on them; and they
continued for some time in custody. 5 One
night they both dreamed—the cupbearer
and the baker of the king of Egypt, who
were confined in the prison—each his
own dream, and each dream with its own
meaning. 6 When Joseph came to them in
the morning, he saw that they were trou-
bled. 7 So he asked Pharaoh's officers,
who were with him in custody in his mas-
ter's house, "Why are your faces downcast
today?" 8 They said to him, "We have had
dreams, and there is no one to interpret
them." And Joseph said to them, "Do not
interpretations belong to God? Please tell
them to me."

9 So the chief cupbearer told his
dream to Joseph, and said to him, "In my
dream there was a vine before me, 10 and
on the vine there were three branches. As
soon as it budded, its blossoms came out
and the clusters ripened into grapes.
11 Pharaoh's cup was in my hand; and I
took the grapes and pressed them into
Pharaoh's cup, and placed the cup in
Pharaoh's hand." 12 Then Joseph said to
him, "This is its interpretation: the three
branches are three days; 13 within three
days Pharaoh will lift up your head and
restore you to your office; and you shall
place Pharaoh's cup in his hand, just as
you used to do when you were his cup-
bearer. 14 But remember me when it is
well with you; please do me the kindness
to make mention of me to Pharaoh, and
so get me out of this place. 15 For in fact I
was stolen out of the land of the Hebrews;
and here also I have done nothing that
they should have put me into the
dungeon."

16 When the chief baker saw that the
interpretation was favorable, he said to
Joseph, "I also had a dream: there were
three cake baskets on my head, 17 and in
the uppermost basket there were all sorts
of baked food for Pharaoh, but the birds
were eating it out of the basket on my
head." 18 And Joseph answered, "This is
its interpretation: the three baskets are
three days; 19 within three days Pharaoh
will lift up your head—from you!—and
hang you on a pole; and the birds will eat
the flesh from you."

20 On the third day, which was Phar-
aoh's birthday, he made a feast for all his
servants, and lifted up the head of the
chief cupbearer and the head of the chief
baker among his servants. 21 He restored
the chief cupbearer to his cupbearing,
and he placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand;
22 but the chief baker he hanged, just as
Joseph had interpreted to them. 23 Yet the
chief cupbearer did not remember Jo-
seph, but forgot him.

Joseph Interprets Pharaoh's Dream

41 After two whole years, Pharaoh
dreamed that he was standing by
the Nile, 2 and there came up out of the
Nile seven sleek and fat cows, and they
grazed in the reed grass. 3 Then seven

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aoh who had fallen from favor. **40.1** *Some time after this.* As in 15.1; 22.1; 22.20; 39.7, this formula and the words immediately following are a heading for the whole episode; the next verse, therefore, is not redundant. **40.5** *Each his own dream.* Like Joseph's two boyhood dreams (37.5–11), these are parallel but, unlike them, differ drastically in the outcomes they portend. **40.8** *Do not interpretations belong to God?* After his boyhood dreams, it was others who did the interpreting; here Joseph takes on the task, acknowledging the interpreter's debt to God. Cf. note on 41.32. On the name "God," see note on 39.9. **40.9–11** See note on 40.16–17. **40.13** *Will lift up your head* conceals a double meaning; see note on 40.19. **40.14** See note on 40.23. **40.15** *Stolen out of the land of the Hebrews.* See note on 45.4. **40.16–17** In the cupbearer's dream, Pharaoh was being nourished; here Pharaoh is deprived of nourishment. This contrast portends Joseph's eventual role as provider of food for all Egypt. **40.17** *The birds were eating it.* Preservation of precious food supplies against the ravages of nature will eventually be the key to Egypt's salvation; cf. 41.25–36. **40.19** *Will lift up your head—from you!* "Lift up . . . [the] head" means both "favor, forgive" and "behead." Cf. v. 20b. **40.20** *On the third day.* See note on 31.22. **40.23** Had the cupbearer obtained Joseph's release *before* Pharaoh's dreams (ch. 41), the historically critical moment for Joseph's services would have been wasted. Joseph's powers are recalled when the need is greatest.

41.1–36 The saga's central episode, recounting the turning point in Joseph's career: his interpreting of Pharaoh's two dreams, which portend for Egypt seven years of plenty and seven years of famine. **41.1** *Pharaoh dreamed.* The previous

other cows, ugly and thin, came up out of
the Nile after them, and stood by the
other cows on the bank of the Nile. 4 The
ugly and thin cows ate up the seven sleek
and fat cows. And Pharaoh awoke. 5 Then
he fell asleep and dreamed a second time;
seven ears of grain, plump and good,
were growing on one stalk. 6 Then seven
ears, thin and blighted by the east wind,
sprouted after them. 7 The thin ears swal-
lowed up the seven plump and full ears.
Pharaoh awoke, and it was a dream. 8 In
the morning his spirit was troubled; so he
sent and called for all the magicians of
Egypt and all its wise men. Pharaoh told
them his dreams, but there was no one
who could interpret them to Pharaoh.

9 Then the chief cupbearer said to
Pharaoh, "I remember my faults today.
10 Once Pharaoh was angry with his ser-
vants, and put me and the chief baker in
custody in the house of the captain of the
guard. 11 We dreamed on the same night,
he and I, each having a dream with its
own meaning. 12 A young Hebrew was
there with us, a servant of the captain of
the guard. When we told him, he inter-
preted our dreams to us, giving an inter-
pretation to each according to his dream.
13 As he interpreted to us, so it turned
out; I was restored to my office, and the
baker was hanged."

14 Then Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and
he was hurriedly brought out of the dun-
geon. When he had shaved himself and
changed his clothes, he came in before
Pharaoh. 15 And Pharaoh said to Joseph,
"I have had a dream, and there is no one
who can interpret it. I have heard it said
of you that when you hear a dream you
can interpret it." 16 Joseph answered
Pharaoh, "It is not I; God will give Phar-
aoh a favorable answer." 17 Then Pharaoh
said to Joseph, "In my dream I was stand-
ing on the banks of the Nile; 18 and seven
cows, fat and sleek, came up out of the
Nile and fed in the reed grass. 19 Then
seven other cows came up after them,
poor, very ugly, and thin. Never had I
seen such ugly ones in all the land of
Egypt. 20 The thin and ugly cows ate up
the first seven fat cows, 21 but when they
had eaten them no one would have
known that they had done so, for they
were still as ugly as before. Then I awoke.
22 I fell asleep a second time[m] and I saw in
my dream seven ears of grain, full and
good, growing on one stalk, 23 and seven
ears, withered, thin, and blighted by the
east wind, sprouting after them; 24 and
the thin ears swallowed up the seven good
ears. But when I told it to the magicians,
there was no one who could explain it
to me."

25 Then Joseph said to Pharaoh,
"Pharaoh's dreams are one and the same;
God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is
about to do. 26 The seven good cows are
seven years, and the seven good ears are
seven years; the dreams are one. 27 The
seven lean and ugly cows that came up
after them are seven years, as are the
seven empty ears blighted by the east
wind. They are seven years of famine.
28 It is as I told Pharaoh; God has shown
to Pharaoh what he is about to do.
29 There will come seven years of great
plenty throughout all the land of Egypt.
30 After them there will arise seven years
of famine, and all the plenty will be for-
gotten in the land of Egypt; the famine
will consume the land. 31 The plenty will
no longer be known in the land because of
the famine that will follow, for it will be
very grievous. 32 And the doubling of
Pharaoh's dream means that the thing is

m Gk Syr Vg: Heb lacks *I fell asleep a second time*

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dreamers, Joseph's fellow prisoners (ch. 40), were at the bottom of the social ladder; this one is at the top. Joseph's interpretive vision encompasses the whole. **41.2, 5** *Cows, ears of grain.* The two dreams concern the heart of Egypt's economy: livestock and agriculture. Throughout Genesis, food is a core preoccupation. **41.2** The Hebrew words for *Nile* and *reed grass* are of Egyptian origin; similar Egyptian touches occur throughout the saga. Cf. 41.42–45. For Egypt, the Nile (lit. "the River") is the source of all sustenance and life. **41.7** *Pharaoh awoke, and it was a dream.* The disorientation of one awakening is shown here. **41.8** *No one who could interpret.* Cf. the consternation in the royal court in Esth 6.1–13; Dan 2.1–16. The king's courtiers fail where a wise outsider succeeds. **41.9** *I remember my faults today.* See note on 40.23; cf. 42.21. **41.12** *A young Hebrew.* See note on 14.13. **41.14** *Changed his clothes.* See note on 37.23. **41.16** *Not I; God will give.* Again, Joseph credits God for the interpretation he will advance; cf. 40.8; 41.32. **41.17–24** As in ch. 24, in the retelling of an event the wording is subtly varied. Pharaoh's description is more detailed and emotional than the narrator's. **41.25** *One and the same.* See note on

fixed by God, and God will shortly bring it
about. 33 Now therefore let Pharaoh select
a man who is discerning and wise, and set
him over the land of Egypt. 34 Let Phar-
aoh proceed to appoint overseers over the
land, and take one-fifth of the produce of
the land of Egypt during the seven plen-
teous years. 35 Let them gather all the
food of these good years that are coming,
and lay up grain under the authority of
Pharaoh for food in the cities, and let
them keep it. 36 That food shall be a re-
serve for the land against the seven years
of famine that are to befall the land of
Egypt, so that the land may not perish
through the famine."

Joseph's Rise to Power

37 The proposal pleased Pharaoh and
all his servants. 38 Pharaoh said to his ser-
vants, "Can we find anyone else like this—
one in whom is the spirit of God?" 39 So
Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has
shown you all this, there is no one so dis-
cerning and wise as you. 40 You shall be
over my house, and all my people shall
order themselves as you command; only
with regard to the throne will I be greater
than you." 41 And Pharaoh said to Joseph,
"See, I have set you over all the land of
Egypt." 42 Removing his signet ring from
his hand, Pharaoh put it on Joseph's
hand; he arrayed him in garments of fine
linen, and put a gold chain around his
neck. 43 He had him ride in the chariot of
his second-in-command; and they cried
out in front of him, "Bow the knee!"[n]
Thus he set him over all the land of
Egypt. 44 Moreover Pharaoh said to Jo-
seph, "I am Pharaoh, and without your
consent no one shall lift up hand or foot
in all the land of Egypt." 45 Pharaoh gave
Joseph the name Zaphenath-paneah; and
he gave him Asenath daughter of Potiph-
era, priest of On, as his wife. Thus Joseph
gained authority over the land of Egypt.
46 Joseph was thirty years old when
he entered the service of Pharaoh king of
Egypt. And Joseph went out from the
presence of Pharaoh, and went through
all the land of Egypt. 47 During the seven
plenteous years the earth produced abun-
dantly. 48 He gathered up all the food of
the seven years when there was plenty[o] in
the land of Egypt, and stored up food in
the cities; he stored up in every city the
food from the fields around it. 49 So Jo-
seph stored up grain in such abundance—
like the sand of the sea—that he stopped
measuring it; it was beyond measure.
50 Before the years of famine came,
Joseph had two sons, whom Asenath
daughter of Potiphera, priest of On, bore
to him. 51 Joseph named the firstborn Ma-
nasseh,[p] "For," he said, "God has made
me forget all my hardship and all my fa-
ther's house." 52 The second he named
Ephraim,[q] "For God has made me fruit-
ful in the land of my misfortunes."
53 The seven years of plenty that pre-
vailed in the land of Egypt came to an
end; 54 and the seven years of famine be-
gan to come, just as Joseph had said.
There was famine in every country, but
throughout the land of Egypt there was
bread. 55 When all the land of Egypt was

n *Abrek*, apparently an Egyptian word similar in sound to the Hebrew word meaning *to kneel*
o Sam Gk: MT *the seven years that were* *p* That is *Making to forget* *q* From a Hebrew word meaning *to be fruitful*

41.32. **41.32** *The doubling*, a delayed explanation for the double occurrence of dreams in 37.5–9; 40.5, 9–11, 16–17; 41.1–7—it is God who causes the doubling in order to convey a message. **41.33** *Discerning and wise*. Cf. v. 39. Cf. also the pairing of these and comparable traits in 1 Kings 3.12; Job 12.2–3; Prov 8.14.

41.37–57 Joseph's sudden rise to power as chief overseer of Egypt, to carry out his recommended plan. **41.38** *Spirit of God*. Since the pharaohs were themselves regarded as gods, this one's sincere obeisance to God seems unusual. Cf. 20.8; 21.22. On *God*, see note on 39.9. **41.40** Joseph's third and most consequential appointment to responsibility over others; cf. 39.4–6, 22–23. **41.42** Again, Joseph's garments mirror his fortunes; cf. 37.3, 23, 31–32; 39.12; 41.14. **41.43** *He had him ride*. Cf. Esth 6.7–11. *Bow the knee!* No agreement exists about the meaning of the Egyptian word exclaimed here, but as a Hebrew expression it anticipates 42.6. **41.45** *Zaphenath-paneah*. Jewish commentary reads this Egyptian name as the Hebrew words "He Deciphers the Concealed." *Potiphera*, a variant of "Potiphar," probably indicating another person. **41.51–52** The names *Manasseh* and *Ephraim* are made to signify the psychological remoteness of Joseph's native land—in context a profound (if thus far rare) glimpse of Joseph's inner life. Paradoxically, the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim are later said to settle the heart of Canaan and adjacent Transjordan; see Josh

famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for
bread. Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians,
"Go to Joseph; what he says to you, do."
56 And since the famine had spread over
all the land, Joseph opened all the store-
houses,[r] and sold to the Egyptians, for
the famine was severe in the land of
Egypt. 57 Moreover, all the world came to
Joseph in Egypt to buy grain, because the
famine became severe throughout the
world.

Joseph's Brothers Go to Egypt

42 When Jacob learned that there
was grain in Egypt, he said to his
sons, "Why do you keep looking at one
another? 2 I have heard," he said, "that
there is grain in Egypt; go down and buy
grain for us there, that we may live and
not die." 3 So ten of Joseph's brothers
went down to buy grain in Egypt. 4 But
Jacob did not send Joseph's brother Ben-
jamin with his brothers, for he feared that
harm might come to him. 5 Thus the sons
of Israel were among the other people
who came to buy grain, for the famine
had reached the land of Canaan.

6 Now Joseph was governor over the
land; it was he who sold to all the people
of the land. And Joseph's brothers came
and bowed themselves before him with
their faces to the ground. 7 When Joseph
saw his brothers, he recognized them, but
he treated them like strangers and spoke
harshly to them. "Where do you come
from?" he said. They said, "From the land
of Canaan, to buy food." 8 Although Jo-
seph had recognized his brothers, they
did not recognize him. 9 Joseph also re-
membered the dreams that he had
dreamed about them. He said to them,
"You are spies; you have come to see the
nakedness of the land!" 10 They said to
him, "No, my lord; your servants have
come to buy food. 11 We are all sons of
one man; we are honest men; your ser-
vants have never been spies." 12 But he
said to them, "No, you have come to see
the nakedness of the land!" 13 They said,
"We, your servants, are twelve brothers,
the sons of a certain man in the land of
Canaan; the youngest, however, is now
with our father, and one is no more."
14 But Joseph said to them, "It is just as I
have said to you; you are spies! 15 Here is
how you shall be tested: as Pharaoh lives,
you shall not leave this place unless your
youngest brother comes here! 16 Let one
of you go and bring your brother, while
the rest of you remain in prison, in order
that your words may be tested, whether
there is truth in you; or else, as Pharaoh
lives, surely you are spies." 17 And he put
them all together in prison for three days.

18 On the third day Joseph said to
them, "Do this and you will live, for I fear
God: 19 if you are honest men, let one of
your brothers stay here where you are im-
prisoned. The rest of you shall go and
carry grain for the famine of your house-
holds, 20 and bring your youngest brother
to me. Thus your words will be verified,
and you shall not die." And they agreed to

r Gk Vg Compare Syr: Heb *opened all that was in* (or, *among*) *them*

13.29–33; 16.1–17.18; Judg 1.22–29. **41.57** As before (cf. 12.10), the surrounding lands look to Egypt for food in time of famine. Joseph's role in saving his kin in Canaan is central to the saga; cf. 45.5–8. This verse serves as a bridge to the next chapter, which returns to Jacob's household.

42.1–25 The first journey to Egypt by Joseph's brothers to buy grain for their father's household. Joseph immediately recognizes them but pretends not to know them while observing their behavior. They do not recognize him but remember well their betrayal of Joseph years before. **42.1** *Learned*, lit. "saw," continuing the echo of this important verb. See, e.g., notes on 16.13–14; 21.9; 22.14. *Looking at one another*, lit. "seeing one another," or possibly "showing yourselves [before me]." **42.4** *Did not send . . . Benjamin.* With Joseph gone, Jacob's protectiveness naturally shifts to Benjamin. *Joseph's brother*, i.e., *full* brother; cf. note on 43.29. **42.6** *Joseph's brothers came and bowed.* Joseph's early dreams (37.5–9) have come true (cf. v. 9). **42.7** *He recognized.* Cf. 37.32–33; 38.25–26. *Treated them like strangers*, lit. "played the stranger." The Hebrew word plays on "recognized"; see v. 8. **42.9** *Remembered the dreams.* See note on 42.6. *You are spies* recalls Joseph's own spying on his brothers (37.2)—indeed, he spies on them now. *To see the nakedness of the land.* The language of sexual transgression (cf. 9.22; Lev 18.6) emphasizes their illegitimacy of purpose. **42.13** They omit mentioning their role in Joseph's enslavement. **42.17** Joseph makes them relive his own uncertainty and helplessness when sold as a slave. *Put*, in Hebrew a play on "Joseph"; cf. 30.23. **42.18** *On the third day.* See note on 31.22. *For I fear God.* Joseph neither wishes their death nor will behave unjustly. **42.19** *Honest men*, and not

do so. 21 They said to one another, "Alas,
we are paying the penalty for what we did
to our brother; we saw his anguish when
he pleaded with us, but we would not listen. That is why this anguish has come
upon us." 22 Then Reuben answered
them, "Did I not tell you not to wrong the
boy? But you would not listen. So now
there comes a reckoning for his blood."
23 They did not know that Joseph understood them, since he spoke with them
through an interpreter. 24 He turned
away from them and wept; then he returned and spoke to them. And he picked
out Simeon and had him bound before
their eyes. 25 Joseph then gave orders to
fill their bags with grain, to return every
man's money to his sack, and to give them
provisions for their journey. This was
done for them.

Joseph's Brothers Return to Canaan

26 They loaded their donkeys with
their grain, and departed. 27 When one of
them opened his sack to give his donkey
fodder at the lodging place, he saw his
money at the top of the sack. 28 He said to
his brothers, "My money has been put
back; here it is in my sack!" At this they
lost heart and turned trembling to one another, saying, "What is this that God has
done to us?"

29 When they came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan, they told him
all that had happened to them, saying,
30 "The man, the lord of the land, spoke
harshly to us, and charged us with spying
on the land. 31 But we said to him, 'We are
honest men, we are not spies. 32 We are
twelve brothers, sons of our father; one is
no more, and the youngest is now with
our father in the land of Canaan.' 33 Then
the man, the lord of the land, said to us,
'By this I shall know that you are honest
men: leave one of your brothers with me,
take grain for the famine of your households, and go your way. 34 Bring your
youngest brother to me, and I shall know
that you are not spies but honest men.
Then I will release your brother to you,
and you may trade in the land.' "

35 As they were emptying their sacks,
there in each one's sack was his bag of
money. When they and their father saw
their bundles of money, they were dismayed. 36 And their father Jacob said to
them, "I am the one you have bereaved of
children: Joseph is no more, and Simeon
is no more, and now you would take Benjamin. All this has happened to me!"
37 Then Reuben said to his father, "You
may kill my two sons if I do not bring him
back to you. Put him in my hands, and I
will bring him back to you." 38 But he said,
"My son shall not go down with you, for
his brother is dead, and he alone is left. If
harm should come to him on the journey
that you are to make, you would bring
down my gray hairs with sorrow to
Sheol."

The Brothers Return to Egypt with Benjamin

43 Now the famine was severe in the
land. 2 And when they had eaten
up the grain that they had brought from
Egypt, their father said to them, "Go
again, buy us a little more food." 3 But Judah said to him, "The man solemnly
warned us, saying, 'You shall not see my
face unless your brother is with you.' 4 If

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spies; cf. v. 34. **42.20** *They agreed to do so*, lit. "They did so (Hebrew *ken*)," a play on *kenim* ("honest") in v. 19. **42.21** *Saw . . . but would not listen.* These two key verbs now sum up their crime in ch. 37. *This anguish.* For the first time, they view the sale of Joseph from his perspective. **42.22** *Did I not tell you . . . you would not listen.* See 37.21–22. *A reckoning for his blood.* Cf. 4.10; 9.5. **42.23** This emphasizes that Joseph's self-disguise continues. Cf. note on 43.32. **42.24** *Simeon* (cf. 29.33) plays on "we would not listen" (v. 21); Joseph virtually imprisons their ears for the crime of heedlessness. **42.25** *Return every man's money.* The reason becomes clearer in vv. 27–28, 35; 43.12, 20–23.

42.26–38 The brothers' return to Canaan and Jacob's reactions to their journey. **42.32** Again (see v. 13) they restate the situation of ch. 37, but now Joseph is mentioned before Benjamin, for he is fresher in their minds. **42.35a** One had already found his money (v. 27); the rest now discover what they were afraid to check for then (v. 28). **42.36** *Bereaved.* Cf. Rebekah's use of this word translated "lose" in 27.45; see also 43.14. **42.38** *Bring down . . . to Sheol.* Cf. 37.35. On *gray hairs*, see note on 15.15.

43.1–34 The brothers' second trip to Egypt, this time with Benjamin. Joseph, still unrecognized by them, receives them amicably and invites them to dine—but sits apart. **43.3** *Shall not see*

you will send our brother with us, we will
go down and buy you food; 5 but if you
will not send him, we will not go down, for
the man said to us, 'You shall not see my
face, unless your brother is with you.'"
6 Israel said, "Why did you treat me so
badly as to tell the man that you had an-
other brother?" 7 They replied, "The man
questioned us carefully about ourselves
and our kindred, saying, 'Is your father
still alive? Have you another brother?'
What we told him was in answer to these
questions. Could we in any way know that
he would say, 'Bring your brother
down'?" 8 Then Judah said to his father
Israel, "Send the boy with me, and let us
be on our way, so that we may live and not
die—you and we and also our little ones.
9 I myself will be surety for him; you can
hold me accountable for him. If I do not
bring him back to you and set him before
you, then let me bear the blame forever.
10 If we had not delayed, we would now
have returned twice."

11 Then their father Israel said to
them, "If it must be so, then do this: take
some of the choice fruits of the land in
your bags, and carry them down as a
present to the man—a little balm and a
little honey, gum, resin, pistachio nuts,
and almonds. 12 Take double the money
with you. Carry back with you the money
that was returned in the top of your sacks;
perhaps it was an oversight. 13 Take your
brother also, and be on your way again to
the man; 14 may God Almighty[s] grant
you mercy before the man, so that he may
send back your other brother and Benja-
min. As for me, if I am bereaved of my
children, I am bereaved." 15 So the men
took the present, and they took double
the money with them, as well as Benja-
min. Then they went on their way down
to Egypt, and stood before Joseph.

16 When Joseph saw Benjamin with
them, he said to the steward of his house,
"Bring the men into the house, and
slaughter an animal and make ready, for
the men are to dine with me at noon."
17 The man did as Joseph said, and
brought the men to Joseph's house.
18 Now the men were afraid because they
were brought to Joseph's house, and they
said, "It is because of the money, replaced
in our sacks the first time, that we have
been brought in, so that he may have an
opportunity to fall upon us, to make
slaves of us and take our donkeys." 19 So
they went up to the steward of Joseph's
house and spoke with him at the entrance
to the house. 20 They said, "Oh, my lord,
we came down the first time to buy food;
21 and when we came to the lodging place
we opened our sacks, and there was each
one's money in the top of his sack, our
money in full weight. So we have brought
it back with us. 22 Moreover we have
brought down with us additional money
to buy food. We do not know who put our
money in our sacks." 23 He replied, "Rest
assured, do not be afraid; your God and
the God of your father must have put
treasure in your sacks for you; I received
your money." Then he brought Simeon
out to them. 24 When the steward[t] had
brought the men into Joseph's house, and
given them water, and they had washed
their feet, and when he had given their
donkeys fodder, 25 they made the present
ready for Joseph's coming at noon, for
they had heard that they would dine
there.

26 When Joseph came home, they
brought him the present that they had
carried into the house, and bowed to the
ground before him. 27 He inquired about
their welfare, and said, "Is your father
well, the old man of whom you spoke? Is
he still alive?" 28 They said, "Your servant
our father is well; he is still alive." And
they bowed their heads and did obeisance.
29 Then he looked up and saw his brother

s Traditional rendering of Heb *El Shaddai*
t Heb *the man*

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my face, their own words (cf. 42.19–20). The language recalls 32.30; 33.10. **43.7** *Questioned us carefully*, again, their embellishment. See also 44.19. **43.8** *Judah said* anticipates Judah's key role in 44.18–34. *Live and not die.* Cf. 42.2, 20. **43.10** *Twice.* The motif of "doubling" (cf. 41.32) returns here and in vv. 12, 15. **43.14** *God Almighty.* See note on 17.1. **43.23** *Rest assured*, lit. "Be at peace"; cf. note on 37.4. *Brought Simeon out to them*, ending the detention begun in 42.24. **43.26** *And bowed* now gives new meaning to the doubling of Joseph's early dream (35.5–9)—it prophesied *two* obeisances. **43.27** *Welfare*, lit. "peace." *Is your father well*, lit. "Is your father [at] peace"; cf. note on 37.4. **43.27–28** *Still alive.* See note on 45.5. **43.29** *Looked up and saw.* Cf. 22.4. *His mother's son.* Their common descent through Rachel is stressed, associating both of

Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, "Is
this your youngest brother, of whom you
spoke to me? God be gracious to you, my
son!" 30 With that, Joseph hurried out, be-
cause he was overcome with affection for
his brother, and he was about to weep. So
he went into a private room and wept
there. 31 Then he washed his face and
came out; and controlling himself he said,
"Serve the meal." 32 They served him by
himself, and them by themselves, and the
Egyptians who ate with him by them-
selves, because the Egyptians could not
eat with the Hebrews, for that is an abom-
ination to the Egyptians. 33 When they
were seated before him, the firstborn ac-
cording to his birthright and the youngest
according to his youth, the men looked at
one another in amazement. 34 Portions
were taken to them from Joseph's table,
but Benjamin's portion was five times as
much as any of theirs. So they drank and
were merry with him.

Joseph Detains Benjamin

44 Then he commanded the steward
of his house, "Fill the men's sacks
with food, as much as they can carry, and
put each man's money in the top of his
sack. 2 Put my cup, the silver cup, in the
top of the sack of the youngest, with his
money for the grain." And he did as Jo-
seph told him. 3 As soon as the morning
was light, the men were sent away with
their donkeys. 4 When they had gone only
a short distance from the city, Joseph said
to his steward, "Go, follow after the men;
and when you overtake them, say to them,
'Why have you returned evil for good?
Why have you stolen my silver cup?[u] 5 Is
it not from this that my lord drinks? Does
he not indeed use it for divination? You
have done wrong in doing this.'"
6 When he overtook them, he re-
peated these words to them. 7 They said to
him, "Why does my lord speak such
words as these? Far be it from your ser-
vants that they should do such a thing!
8 Look, the money that we found at the
top of our sacks, we brought back to you
from the land of Canaan; why then would
we steal silver or gold from your lord's
house? 9 Should it be found with any one
of your servants, let him die; moreover
the rest of us will become my lord's
slaves." 10 He said, "Even so; in accor-
dance with your words, let it be: he with
whom it is found shall become my slave,
but the rest of you shall go free." 11 Then
each one quickly lowered his sack to the
ground, and each opened his sack. 12 He
searched, beginning with the eldest and
ending with the youngest; and the cup
was found in Benjamin's sack. 13 At this
they tore their clothes. Then each one
loaded his donkey, and they returned to
the city.
14 Judah and his brothers came to Jo-
seph's house while he was still there; and
they fell to the ground before him. 15 Jo-
seph said to them, "What deed is this that
you have done? Do you not know that one
such as I can practice divination?" 16 And
Judah said, "What can we say to my lord?
What can we speak? How can we clear
ourselves? God has found out the guilt of
your servants; here we are then, my lord's

u Gk Compare Vg: Heb lacks *Why have you stolen my silver cup?*

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them with their father's favor. **43.30–31** Cf. 42.24. **43.32** The eating arrangements are a measure of how distant Joseph has become from his native ways, at least outwardly; cf. 41.51–52; 42.23. **43.33** *The firstborn . . . to his youth,* a formality imposed by the Egyptian court, not their natural protocol, given Reuben's and Simeon's ostracism at home (see 34.30; 35.22; 49.3–7). Their *amazement* is understandable. Cf. v. 34. **43.34** *Benjamin's portion . . . five times as much.* Paradoxically, the youngest, being full brother to Joseph, receives preferential treatment.

44.1–17 The brothers again find themselves in trouble, and Joseph demands Benjamin's detention. **44.2** Joseph continues his scheme to embarrass his brothers. **44.4** *Evil for good.* This classic dyad (cf. 2.9) recalls the garden of Eden story, which echoes throughout Genesis. **44.5** *Does he not indeed use it for divination,* an affectation—Joseph's divinatory powers are surely more direct. Cf. v. 9. The word "divination," associated with Laban in 30.27, increases the similarity between this scene and 31.22–35. **44.9** *Let him die.* These words, recalling Jacob's in 31.32, unintentionally place Benjamin in mortal danger, at least in theory (Joseph's ultimate intention is in fact not yet clear). **44.10** *Shall become my slave.* See note on 44.16. **44.12** *Beginning with the eldest,* "Egyptian" protocol (see note on 43.33), increasing suspense to explosive proportions by the time Benjamin is reached. **44.15** *Divination.* See note on 44.5. **44.16** *Here we are then, my lord's slaves.* Their former sale of Joseph has come full

slaves, both we and also the one in whose
possession the cup has been found."
17 But he said, "Far be it from me that I
should do so! Only the one in whose pos-
session the cup was found shall be my
slave; but as for you, go up in peace to
your father."

Judah Pleads for Benjamin's Release

18 Then Judah stepped up to him and
said, "O my lord, let your servant please
speak a word in my lord's ears, and do not
be angry with your servant; for you are
like Pharaoh himself. 19 My lord asked his
servants, saying, 'Have you a father or a
brother?' 20 And we said to my lord, 'We
have a father, an old man, and a young
brother, the child of his old age. His
brother is dead; he alone is left of his
mother's children, and his father loves
him.' 21 Then you said to your servants,
'Bring him down to me, so that I may set
my eyes on him.' 22 We said to my lord,
'The boy cannot leave his father, for if he
should leave his father, his father would
die.' 23 Then you said to your servants,
'Unless your youngest brother comes
down with you, you shall see my face no
more.' 24 When we went back to your ser-
vant my father we told him the words of
my lord. 25 And when our father said, 'Go
again, buy us a little food,' 26 we said, 'We
cannot go down. Only if our youngest
brother goes with us, will we go down; for
we cannot see the man's face unless our
youngest brother is with us.' 27 Then your
servant my father said to us, 'You know
that my wife bore me two sons; 28 one left
me, and I said, Surely he has been torn to
pieces; and I have never seen him since.
29 If you take this one also from me, and
harm comes to him, you will bring down
my gray hairs in sorrow to Sheol.' 30 Now
therefore, when I come to your servant
my father and the boy is not with us, then,
as his life is bound up in the boy's life,
31 when he sees that the boy is not with us,
he will die; and your servants will bring
down the gray hairs of your servant our
father with sorrow to Sheol. 32 For your
servant became surety for the boy to my
father, saying, 'If I do not bring him back
to you, then I will bear the blame in the
sight of my father all my life.' 33 Now
therefore, please let your servant remain
as a slave to my lord in place of the boy;
and let the boy go back with his brothers.
34 For how can I go back to my father if
the boy is not with me? I fear to see the
suffering that would come upon my
father."

Joseph Reveals Himself to His Brothers

45 Then Joseph could no longer
control himself before all those
who stood by him, and he cried out,
"Send everyone away from me." So no
one stayed with him when Joseph made
himself known to his brothers. 2 And he
wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it,
and the household of Pharaoh heard it.
3 Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Jo-
seph. Is my father still alive?" But his
brothers could not answer him, so dis-
mayed were they at his presence.
4 Then Joseph said to his brothers,
"Come closer to me." And they came
closer. He said, "I am your brother, Jo-
seph, whom you sold into Egypt. 5 And
now do not be distressed, or angry with
yourselves, because you sold me here; for
God sent me before you to preserve life.
6 For the famine has been in the land
these two years; and there are five more

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circle. **44.17** *Go up*, the standard term for migration toward Canaan/Israel. *In peace.* See note on 37.4.

44.18–34 One of the longest in biblical narrative, this speech marks the turning point in the brothers' present dealings with Joseph. Judah is the hero of this scene, remarkably retelling the entire story up to now. **44.34** *I fear . . . upon my father.* This final remark, more than any other, touches Joseph deeply; cf. note on 42.21.

45.1–28 The saga's dramatic culmination presents two of biblical narrative's most fundamental moments: acknowledgement of kinship and reunion after long absence. Cf. the more subdued reunion of Jacob and Esau in ch. 33. **45.1** *Send everyone away*, i.e., members of the Egyptian court. *When Joseph made himself known.* Again, "knowledge" is a key theme. See, e.g., Gen 31.32; 38.16; 42.23. **45.2** *And he wept.* For the third and most decisive time, Joseph is overcome with emotion; cf. 42.24; 43.30–31. **45.4** *Whom you sold.* Joseph's first explicit declaration of blame, though it is tempered in the next verse. **45.5** *To preserve life.* The often repeated "that we may live . . ." finds culmination here and is echoed in 46.30. Joseph's statement has both a familial and world-historical dimension. **45.6** *Neither plowing nor harvest,* no plowing that will lead to

years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. 7 God sent me before you
to preserve for you a remnant on earth,
and to keep alive for you many survivors.
8 So it was not you who sent me here, but
God; he has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler
over all the land of Egypt. 9 Hurry and go
up to my father and say to him, 'Thus says
your son Joseph, God has made me lord
of all Egypt; come down to me, do not
delay. 10 You shall settle in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and
your children and your children's children, as well as your flocks, your herds,
and all that you have. 11 I will provide for
you there—since there are five more
years of famine to come—so that you and
your household, and all that you have,
will not come to poverty.' 12 And now your
eyes and the eyes of my brother Benjamin
see that it is my own mouth that speaks to
you. 13 You must tell my father how
greatly I am honored in Egypt, and all
that you have seen. Hurry and bring my
father down here." 14 Then he fell upon
his brother Benjamin's neck and wept,
while Benjamin wept upon his neck.
15 And he kissed all his brothers and wept
upon them; and after that his brothers
talked with him.

16 When the report was heard in
Pharaoh's house, "Joseph's brothers have
come," Pharaoh and his servants were
pleased. 17 Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Say to
your brothers, 'Do this: load your animals
and go back to the land of Canaan.
18 Take your father and your households
and come to me, so that I may give you
the best of the land of Egypt, and you may
enjoy the fat of the land.' 19 You are further charged to say, 'Do this: take wagons
from the land of Egypt for your little ones
and for your wives, and bring your father,
and come. 20 Give no thought to your possessions, for the best of all the land of
Egypt is yours.'"

21 The sons of Israel did so. Joseph
gave them wagons according to the instruction of Pharaoh, and he gave them
provisions for the journey. 22 To each one
of them he gave a set of garments; but to
Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces
of silver and five sets of garments. 23 To
his father he sent the following: ten donkeys loaded with the good things of
Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded
with grain, bread, and provision for his
father on the journey. 24 Then he sent his
brothers on their way, and as they were
leaving he said to them, "Do not quarrel[v]
along the way."

25 So they went up out of Egypt and
came to their father Jacob in the land of
Canaan. 26 And they told him, "Joseph is
still alive! He is even ruler over all the
land of Egypt." He was stunned; he could
not believe them. 27 But when they told
him all the words of Joseph that he had
said to them, and when he saw the wagons
that Joseph had sent to carry him, the
spirit of their father Jacob revived. 28 Israel said, "Enough! My son Joseph is still
alive. I must go and see him before I die."

Jacob Brings His Whole Family to Egypt

46 When Israel set out on his journey with all that he had and came
to Beer-sheba, he offered sacrifices to the
God of his father Isaac. 2 God spoke to
Israel in visions of the night, and said, "Jacob, Jacob." And he said, "Here I am."
3 Then he said, "I am God,[w] the God of
your father; do not be afraid to go down
to Egypt, for I will make of you a great
nation there. 4 I myself will go down with
you to Egypt, and I will also bring you up

v Or *be agitated* w Heb *the God*

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harvest. **45.7** *A remnant on earth.* See note on 6.8. **45.8** *A father to Pharaoh,* a protector and benefactor. **45.10** *Land of Goshen.* See note on 46.28. *And your children and your children's children.* This last intention will be imperiled by the Israelite servitude after Joseph's lifetime. **45.11** *So that you . . . will not come to poverty.* See note on 45.10. **45.20** *For the best of all the land of Egypt is yours,* a decision with problematic consequences; see note on 47.13–26. **45.22** *But to Benjamin . . . garments,* as if to underscore the previous verse's theme of favoritism. **45.24** *Do not quarrel.* If translated thus, the remark supplies a humorous rounding off of Joseph's ancient quarrel with them. **45.27–28** *Revived, alive.* Cf. 46.30 and note on 45.5. **45.28** *Enough!* In his excitement over Joseph, Jacob does not dwell on the brothers' former treachery, perhaps in silent acknowledgement of his own implicit role in what happened.

46.1–27 Jacob's migration to Egypt with his children and grandchildren, a divine revelation sanctioning the move, and a list of Jacob's children and grandchildren. **46.2** *Here I am.* See note on 22.1. **46.3** *Do not be afraid.* Cf. 28.13;

again; and Joseph's own hand shall close
your eyes."
5 Then Jacob set out from Beer-
sheba; and the sons of Israel carried their
father Jacob, their little ones, and their
wives, in the wagons that Pharaoh had
sent to carry him. 6 They also took their
livestock and the goods that they had ac-
quired in the land of Canaan, and they
came into Egypt, Jacob and all his off-
spring with him, 7 his sons, and his sons'
sons with him, his daughters, and his sons'
daughters; all his offspring he brought
with him into Egypt.
8 Now these are the names of the Isra-
elites, Jacob and his offspring, who came
to Egypt. Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, 9 and
the children of Reuben: Hanoch, Pallu,
Hezron, and Carmi. 10 The children of
Simeon: Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zo-
har, and Shaul,[x] the son of a Canaanite
woman. 11 The children of Levi: Gershon,
Kohath, and Merari. 12 The children of
Judah: Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez, and Ze-
rah (but Er and Onan died in the land of
Canaan); and the children of Perez were
Hezron and Hamul. 13 The children of Is-
sachar: Tola, Puvah, Jashub,[y] and Shim-
ron. 14 The children of Zebulun: Sered,
Elon, and Jahleel 15 (these are the sons of
Leah, whom she bore to Jacob in Padda-
naram, together with his daughter Dinah;
in all his sons and his daughters num-
bered thirty-three). 16 The children of
Gad: Ziphion, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri,
Arodi, and Areli. 17 The children of
Asher: Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, Beriah, and
their sister Serah. The children of Beriah:
Heber and Malchiel 18 (these are the chil-
dren of Zilpah, whom Laban gave to his
daughter Leah; and these she bore to
Jacob—sixteen persons). 19 The children
of Jacob's wife Rachel: Joseph and Benja-
min. 20 To Joseph in the land of Egypt
were born Manasseh and Ephraim, whom
Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of
On, bore to him. 21 The children of Benja-
min: Bela, Becher, Ashbel, Gera, Naa-
man, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppim, and
Ard 22 (these are the children of Rachel,
who were born to Jacob—fourteen per-
sons in all). 23 The children of Dan: Ha-
shum.[z] 24 The children of Naphtali:
Jahzeel, Guni, Jezer, and Shillem 25 (these
are the children of Bilhah, whom Laban
gave to his daughter Rachel, and these
she bore to Jacob—seven persons in all).
26 All the persons belonging to Jacob who
came into Egypt, who were his own off-
spring, not including the wives of his sons,
were sixty-six persons in all. 27 The chil-
dren of Joseph, who were born to him in
Egypt, were two; all the persons of the
house of Jacob who came into Egypt were
seventy.

Jacob Settles in Goshen

28 Israel[a] sent Judah ahead to Joseph
to lead the way before him into Goshen.
When they came to the land of Goshen,
29 Joseph made ready his chariot and went
up to meet his father Israel in Goshen. He
presented himself to him, fell on his neck,
and wept on his neck a good while. 30 Is-
rael said to Joseph, "I can die now, having
seen for myself that you are still alive."
31 Joseph said to his brothers and to his
father's household, "I will go up and tell

x Or *Saul* y Compare Sam Gk Num 26.24; 1 Chr 7.1: MT *Iob* z Gk: Heb *Hushim*
a Heb *He*

26.2. **46.4** *You*, i.e., your descendants and your remains; cf. 47.30; 49.29–50.13. *Joseph's own hand shall close your eyes.* Cf. 50.1. **46.7** *Daughters . . . sons' daughters.* The women of Jacob's extended family, not daughters as such (Dinah is mentioned separately in v. 15). **46.8** *Now these are the names.* Cf. Ex 1.1. Cf. lists in Ex 1.1–7; 6.14–25; Num 1.1–47; 26.1–65; 1 Chr 2–8. **46.12** *Er and Onan died.* See 38.7–10. **46.15** *Together with . . . Dinah.* Dinah, in fact, seems excluded from the *thirty-three*, but cf. note on 46.26. **46.18** *Children of Zilpah.* Each concubine has half as many children and grandchildren as her mistress; cf. v. 25. **46.21** *Children of Benjamin.* The reference is anachronistic—Benjamin is still a young man. **46.26** *Sixty-six.* This includes Dinah, but excludes Er, Onan, Joseph, Manasseh, and Ephraim. **46.27** *Who came into Egypt*, i.e., who lived there after the migration, whether immigrant or native. *Seventy.* This adds to the preceding number: Jacob, Joseph, Manasseh, and Ephraim. On "seventy," cf. Ex 1.5; 24.1–9; Num 11.16; Deut 10.22. This list constitutes the entire people Israel in miniature, marking a transition to the collective history narrated from Exodus onward.

46.28–47.12 The tearful reunion of Jacob (Israel) with Joseph, the newcomers' introduction to Pharaoh, and Pharaoh's invitation to settle in Goshen. **46.28** *Goshen*, in the northeast part of the Nile Delta, chiefly suitable for sheep grazing. **46.29** *Fell on his neck, and wept.* Cf. 33.4; 45.14–15. **46.30** See notes on 45.5; 45.27–28.

Pharaoh, and will say to him, 'My brothers
and my father's household, who were in
the land of Canaan, have come to me.
32 The men are shepherds, for they have
been keepers of livestock; and they have
brought their flocks, and their herds, and
all that they have.' 33 When Pharaoh calls
you, and says, 'What is your occupation?'
34 you shall say, 'Your servants have been
keepers of livestock from our youth even
until now, both we and our ancestors'—in
order that you may settle in the land of
Goshen, because all shepherds are abhor-
rent to the Egyptians."

47 So Joseph went and told Phar-
aoh, "My father and my brothers,
with their flocks and herds and all that
they possess, have come from the land of
Canaan; they are now in the land of Go-
shen." 2 From among his brothers he took
five men and presented them to Pharaoh.
3 Pharaoh said to his brothers, "What is
your occupation?" And they said to Phar-
aoh, "Your servants are shepherds, as our
ancestors were." 4 They said to Pharaoh,
"We have come to reside as aliens in the
land; for there is no pasture for your ser-
vants' flocks because the famine is severe
in the land of Canaan. Now, we ask you,
let your servants settle in the land of Go-
shen." 5 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph,
"Your father and your brothers have
come to you. 6 The land of Egypt is before
you; settle your father and your brothers
in the best part of the land; let them live
in the land of Goshen; and if you know
that there are capable men among them,
put them in charge of my livestock."

7 Then Joseph brought in his father
Jacob, and presented him before Phar-
aoh, and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. 8 Phar-
aoh said to Jacob, "How many are the
years of your life?" 9 Jacob said to Phar-
aoh, "The years of my earthly sojourn are
one hundred thirty; few and hard have
been the years of my life. They do not
compare with the years of the life of my
ancestors during their long sojourn."
10 Then Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went
out from the presence of Pharaoh. 11 Jo-
seph settled his father and his brothers,
and granted them a holding in the land of
Egypt, in the best part of the land, in the
land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had in-
structed. 12 And Joseph provided his fa-
ther, his brothers, and all his father's
household with food, according to the
number of their dependents.

The Famine in Egypt

13 Now there was no food in all the
land, for the famine was very severe. The
land of Egypt and the land of Canaan lan-
guished because of the famine. 14 Joseph
collected all the money to be found in the
land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan,
in exchange for the grain that they
bought; and Joseph brought the money
into Pharaoh's house. 15 When the money
from the land of Egypt and from the land
of Canaan was spent, all the Egyptians
came to Joseph, and said, "Give us food!
Why should we die before your eyes? For
our money is gone." 16 And Joseph an-
swered, "Give me your livestock, and I
will give you food in exchange for your
livestock, if your money is gone." 17 So
they brought their livestock to Joseph;
and Joseph gave them food in exchange

46.31 *I will . . . tell Pharaoh.* Pharaoh has already approved their migration; see 45.16–20. **46.34** *All shepherds are abhorrent,* probably all *foreign* shepherds, not shepherds as such—but, being a threat to agriculture, shepherding was perhaps confined to the outskirts of settled areas. **47.7, 10** *Jacob blessed Pharaoh,* perhaps alluding to 12.3. **47.8–9** Preoccupation with Jacob's life span underscores the transience of a generation, implicitly reminding readers of a Pharaoh to come "who did not know Joseph" (Ex 1.8). *Few and hard* recalls Jacob's harsh sojourn with Laban (cf. 31.38–42), the years of famine, and his grief over Joseph's absence—remote, indeed, seems the blessedness of Abraham! **47.11** *Land of Rameses,* a synonym for Goshen. The city's founder, Ramses II (1279–1212 B.C.E.), postdates the purported era of Jacob.

47.13–26 A variant of 41.46–57 emphasizing the Egyptian populace's gradual impoverishment and enslavement under Joseph's authority, resulting in concentration of Egypt's wealth into the hands of Pharaoh and his priests. This dismaying description, combined with traditions about preferential treatment of Joseph's kin (45.20; 47.6), provides a cogent explanation of the backlash soon to erupt against Israelites under the next Pharaoh (see Ex 1.8–14)—recalling the scheme of reciprocal justice first suggested in 15.16; 16.6 (see notes there). **47.14–25** A four-step process of impoverishment: money (vv. 14–15), livestock (vv. 16–17), land (vv. 18–20), and freedom (vv. 21–25). **47.15** *Why should we die?* Cf. "life/death" theme presented in 42.2, 18; 43.27–28;

for the horses, the flocks, the herds, and
the donkeys. That year he supplied them
with food in exchange for all their live-
stock. 18 When that year was ended, they
came to him the following year, and said
to him, "We can not hide from my lord
that our money is all spent; and the herds
of cattle are my lord's. There is nothing
left in the sight of my lord but our bodies
and our lands. 19 Shall we die before your
eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and
our land in exchange for food. We with
our land will become slaves to Pharaoh;
just give us seed, so that we may live and
not die, and that the land may not become
desolate."

20 So Joseph bought all the land of
Egypt for Pharaoh. All the Egyptians sold
their fields, because the famine was severe
upon them; and the land became Phar-
aoh's. 21 As for the people, he made slaves
of them[b] from one end of Egypt to the
other. 22 Only the land of the priests he
did not buy; for the priests had a fixed
allowance from Pharaoh, and lived on the
allowance that Pharaoh gave them; there-
fore they did not sell their land. 23 Then
Joseph said to the people, "Now that I
have this day bought you and your land
for Pharaoh, here is seed for you; sow the
land. 24 And at the harvests you shall give
one-fifth to Pharaoh, and four-fifths shall
be your own, as seed for the field and as
food for yourselves and your households,
and as food for your little ones." 25 They
said, "You have saved our lives; may it
please my lord, we will be slaves to Phar-
aoh." 26 So Joseph made it a statute con-
cerning the land of Egypt, and it stands to
this day, that Pharaoh should have the
fifth. The land of the priests alone did not
become Pharaoh's.

The Last Days of Jacob

27 Thus Israel settled in the land of
Egypt, in the region of Goshen; and they
gained possessions in it, and were fruitful
and multiplied exceedingly. 28 Jacob lived
in the land of Egypt seventeen years; so
the days of Jacob, the years of his life,
were one hundred forty-seven years.

29 When the time of Israel's death
drew near, he called his son Joseph and
said to him, "If I have found favor with
you, put your hand under my thigh and
promise to deal loyally and truly with me.
Do not bury me in Egypt. 30 When I lie
down with my ancestors, carry me out of
Egypt and bury me in their burial place."
He answered, "I will do as you have said."
31 And he said, "Swear to me"; and he
swore to him. Then Israel bowed himself
on the head of his bed.

Jacob Blesses Joseph's Sons

48 After this Joseph was told, "Your
father is ill." So he took with him
his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.
2 When Jacob was told, "Your son Joseph
has come to you," he[c] summoned his
strength and sat up in bed. 3 And Jacob
said to Joseph, "God Almighty[d] appeared
to me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and
he blessed me, 4 and said to me, 'I am go-

b Sam Gk Compare Vg: MT *He removed them to the cities* *c* Heb *Israel* *d* Traditional rendering of Heb *El Shaddai*

45.3, 5. **47.19, 21** *Slaves.* See note on 47.25. **47.20** *So Joseph bought . . . for Pharaoh.* Joseph's policies stem foremost from his identification of Pharaoh's welfare with Egypt's, ignoring the long-term social consequences. **47.22** *Fixed allowances.* On the priestly allowance, cf. Ex 29.28; Lev 10.12–15 (Hebrew term identical). **47.25** The thrice-mentioned word *slaves* (cf. vv. 19, 21) stresses that slavery is the main preoccupation of this section, in anticipation of the events of Ex 1.8–14.

47.27–31 Introduction to Jacob's deathbed addresses, recording the prosperity of his final days, and his orders to Joseph to bury him beside his departed kin in Canaan. **47.27** Following immediately upon the preceding section, this verse reemphasizes the growing strength of the Israelites in Egypt. **47.29** *Hand under my thigh.* See note on 24.2. **47.30** *Their burial place,* at Machpelah cave; see 23.1–20; 25.9; 49.29–52. **47.31** *Bowed himself,* i.e., nodded in reclinement, approving the oath.

48.1–22 Jacob's next deathbed pronouncement is the blessing of Manasseh and Ephraim—these sons of Joseph are adopted as full sons of Jacob, standing for the children Rachel might have provided if she had lived (see v. 7). This tradition may stem from two needs: to confer full Israelite status on children born of an Egyptian mother; and to explain the eventual use of Manasseh and Ephraim as tribal names (in lieu of Joseph) and the prominence of the two tribes in Israel's later history. Cf. notes on 41.51–52; 48.19. **48.1** *Your father is ill.* His condition has worsened; he was already bedridden. **48.3** *God*

ing to make you fruitful and increase
your numbers; I will make of you a com-
pany of peoples, and will give this land to
your offspring after you for a perpetual
holding.' 5 Therefore your two sons, who
were born to you in the land of Egypt be-
fore I came to you in Egypt, are now
mine; Ephraim and Manasseh shall be
mine, just as Reuben and Simeon are. 6 As
for the offspring born to you after them,
they shall be yours. They shall be re-
corded under the names of their brothers
with regard to their inheritance. 7 For
when I came from Paddan, Rachel, alas,
died in the land of Canaan on the way,
while there was still some distance to go to
Ephrath; and I buried her there on the
way to Ephrath" (that is, Bethlehem).

8 When Israel saw Joseph's sons, he
said, "Who are these?" 9 Joseph said to his
father, "They are my sons, whom God has
given me here." And he said, "Bring them
to me, please, that I may bless them."
10 Now the eyes of Israel were dim with
age, and he could not see well. So Joseph
brought them near him; and he kissed
them and embraced them. 11 Israel said to
Joseph, "I did not expect to see your face;
and here God has let me see your children
also." 12 Then Joseph removed them from
his father's knees,[e] and he bowed himself
with his face to the earth. 13 Joseph took
them both, Ephraim in his right hand to-
ward Israel's left, and Manasseh in his left
hand toward Israel's right, and brought
them near him. 14 But Israel stretched out
his right hand and laid it on the head of
Ephraim, who was the younger, and his
left hand on the head of Manasseh, cross-
ing his hands, for Manasseh was the first-
born. 15 He blessed Joseph, and said,

"The God before whom my
ancestors Abraham and
Isaac walked,
the God who has been my
shepherd all my life to
this day,
16 the angel who has redeemed me
from all harm, bless the
boys;
and in them let my name be
perpetuated, and the name
of my ancestors Abraham
and Isaac;
and let them grow into a
multitude on the earth."

17 When Joseph saw that his father
laid his right hand on the head of
Ephraim, it displeased him; so he took
his father's hand, to remove it from
Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. 18 Jo-
seph said to his father, "Not so, my father!
Since this one is the firstborn, put your
right hand on his head." 19 But his father
refused, and said, "I know, my son, I
know; he also shall become a people, and
he also shall be great. Nevertheless his
younger brother shall be greater than he,
and his offspring shall become a multi-
tude of nations." 20 So he blessed them
that day, saying,

"By you[f] Israel will invoke
blessings, saying,
'God make you[f] like Ephraim
and like Manasseh.' "

So he put Ephraim ahead of Manasseh.
21 Then Israel said to Joseph, "I am about
to die, but God will be with you and will
bring you again to the land of your ances-

e Heb *from his knees* f *you* here is singular in Heb

Almighty. See note on 17.1. **48.5** *Just as Reuben and Simeon are,* i.e., of my flesh and of their generation. Jacob's choice of his two least-favored sons as examples makes clear that he has these factors in mind, rather than favoredness per se. But he perhaps also wishes Joseph's sons to be "firstborn," in lieu of Reuben and Simeon (see note on 48.22). **48.6** That is, children born to Joseph from now on shall take the place of Ephraim and Manasseh in the line of inheritance, though no other children are said to be born to Joseph. **48.7** *Paddan,* Paddan-aram. *Rachel, alas, died* stresses that Manasseh and Ephraim are symbolically *her* children. *Ephrath.* See note on 35.16. **48.8** *Who are these?* Jacob's intelligence does not falter—his eyesight is dim (v. 10) and he must ascertain if they are the children he has been discussing. **48.13** Joseph, with his left hand, sends Manasseh toward Jacob's right, the favored position. **48.14** *Crossing his hands,* placing his hand of favor on the younger son. *For Manasseh was,* "although Manasseh was." **48.15** *He blessed Joseph,* with Joseph's children betokening Joseph. **48.17** *It displeased him.* Cf. Joseph's "firstborn" protocol in 43.33. **48.19** Cf. God's reassurance of Abraham about Ishmael (17.20; 21.13). *Younger . . . shall be greater.* Israel's two most prominent leaders in the confederate era after Moses were Ephraimite (Joshua and Samuel); a third was Manassite (Gideon). **48.20** *By you Israel will invoke . . . like Manasseh,* a widespread household custom that has continued into Jewish practice down to

tors. 22 I now give to you one portion[g]
more than to your brothers, the portion[g]
that I took from the hand of the Amorites
with my sword and with my bow."

Jacob's Last Words to His Sons

49 Then Jacob called his sons, and said: "Gather around, that I may tell you what will happen to you in days to come.

2 Assemble and hear, O sons of Jacob;
listen to Israel your father.

3 Reuben, you are my firstborn,
my might and the first fruits of my vigor,
excelling in rank and excelling in power.
4 Unstable as water, you shall no longer excel
because you went up onto your father's bed;
then you defiled it—you[h] went up onto my couch!

5 Simeon and Levi are brothers;
weapons of violence are their swords.
6 May I never come into their council;
may I not be joined to their company—
for in their anger they killed men,
and at their whim they hamstrung oxen.
7 Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce,
and their wrath, for it is cruel!
I will divide them in Jacob,
and scatter them in Israel.

8 Judah, your brothers shall praise you;
your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies;
your father's sons shall bow down before you.
9 Judah is a lion's whelp;
from the prey, my son, you have gone up.
He crouches down, he stretches out like a lion,
like a lioness—who dares rouse him up?
10 The scepter shall not depart from Judah,
nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,
until tribute comes to him;[i]
and the obedience of the peoples is his.
11 Binding his foal to the vine
and his donkey's colt to the choice vine,
he washes his garments in wine

g Or *mountain slope* (Heb *shekem*, a play on the name of the town and district of Shechem)
h Gk Syr Tg: Heb *he* *i* Or *until Shiloh comes* or *until he comes to Shiloh* or (with Syr) *until he comes to whom it belongs*

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the present. **48.22** *One portion*, lit. "a shoulder-height," a play on the town name Shechem. *That I took from . . . the Amorites*. Cf. 33.18–20; 34.25–31. Shechem sits near the later tribal borders between Manasseh and Ephraim. Its mention here links the adoption of Joseph's sons with the censure of Simeon and Levi in 34.30; 49.5–7. Joseph was eventually buried there (Josh 24.32).

49.1–28 Vv. 3–27 are a lengthy and ancient poetic composition whose contents concern the era of the judges and the monarchy. Woven from once-independent songs or mottoes, it glimpses the tribes of Israel in their early days in Canaan with occasional references to later history. The language is obscure; translation is necessarily approximate. Cf. Judg 5; Deut 33, which similarly deal with Israel's early history, the latter, like Gen 49, placed near the book's end to signify the close of a historical era (cf. 2 Sam 1.19–27; 22.2–51). **49.1** Jacob's ability to envisage *days to come* stems from his implicit status (like Abraham's) as a prophet. **49.3–4** *Because you went up . . . onto my bed*, based on 35.22; cf. Deut 33.6; 1 Chr 5.1. **49.5–7** Based on 34.25–31. Simeon is missing from Deut 33, and Levi's "violence" is there changed to reflect Ex 32.25–29. **49.7** *I will divide . . . and scatter*. Simeon was eventually absorbed into Judah (see Josh 19.9), and Levi, perhaps decimated by wars, became the landless levitical priesthood; see Num 18.6–7, 20; 35.1–8. **49.8** *Shall praise you*, in Hebrew a play on "Judah." Vv. 8–10 anticipate the monarchy under Judah's descendant David. **49.10** *Until tribute comes to him*, see text note *i*. Shiloh was an early Israelite military and religious center (see Josh 18.1; 22.9, 12; Judg 18.31; 1 Sam 1.1–2), but it suffered disaster (1 Sam 4) and later symbolized northern Israel's desolation (Jer 7.12–14; 26.6, 9). This obscure phrase could thus express Judah's later hopes for renewal of dominion over

and his robe in the blood of grapes;
12 his eyes are darker than wine,
and his teeth whiter than milk.

13 Zebulun shall settle at the shore of the sea;
he shall be a haven for ships,
and his border shall be at Sidon.

14 Issachar is a strong donkey,
lying down between the sheepfolds;
15 he saw that a resting place was good,
and that the land was pleasant;
so he bowed his shoulder to the burden,
and became a slave at forced labor.

16 Dan shall judge his people
as one of the tribes of Israel.
17 Dan shall be a snake by the roadside,
a viper along the path,
that bites the horse's heels
so that its rider falls backward.

18 I wait for your salvation, O LORD.

19 Gad shall be raided by raiders,
but he shall raid at their heels.

20 Asher's[j] food shall be rich,
and he shall provide royal delicacies.

21 Naphtali is a doe let loose
that bears lovely fawns.[k]

22 Joseph is a fruitful bough,
a fruitful bough by a spring;
his branches run over the wall.[l]
23 The archers fiercely attacked him;
they shot at him and pressed him hard.
24 Yet his bow remained taut,
and his arms[m] were made agile
by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob,
by the name of the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel,
25 by the God of your father, who will help you,
by the Almighty[n] who will bless you
with blessings of heaven above,
blessings of the deep that lies beneath,
blessings of the breasts and of the womb.
26 The blessings of your father
are stronger than the blessings of the eternal mountains,
the bounties[o] of the everlasting hills;
may they be on the head of Joseph,
on the brow of him who was set apart from his brothers.

27 Benjamin is a ravenous wolf,
in the morning devouring the prey,
and at evening dividing the spoil."

28 All these are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father said to them when he blessed them, blessing each one of them with a suitable blessing.

j Gk Vg Syr: Heb *From Asher* *k* Or *that gives beautiful words* *l* Meaning of Heb uncertain *m* Heb *the arms of his hands* *n* Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai* *o* Cn Compare Gk: Heb *of my progenitors to the boundaries*

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northern Israel. **49.13** *Zebulun shall settle*, a possible play on Hebrew *zabal*, "dwell." Zebulun's territory was in southern Galilee. The *sea* is perhaps Lake Chinnereth (Sea of Galilee), although most scholars suggest the Mediterranean Sea. Cf. Josh 19.10–16. *Border . . . at Sidon*, a poetic overstatement or a suggestion that Zebulun adopted Phoenician culture. **49.14–15** A play on Issachar's name to suggest "hired" man. Cf. 30.18. **49.16–17** *Shall judge*, Hebrew *yadin*, playing on "Dan." The passage depicts the brigand existence of Israel's early confederate days; cf. v. 27. **49.19** *Raided, raiders, shall raid*, in Hebrew, all plays on "Gad." **49.22** *Fruitful bough*, Hebrew *ben porat*, plays implicitly on "Ephraim." Many translations are possible for this obscure term. **49.25** *Blessings of the breasts and of the womb*, blessings of plenitude and fertility. **49.28** This verse makes clear the identification of the sons with tribes and concludes the section.

Jacob's Death and Burial

29 Then he charged them, saying to
them, "I am about to be gathered to my
people. Bury me with my ancestors—in
the cave in the field of Ephron the Hittite,
30 in the cave in the field at Machpelah,
near Mamre, in the land of Canaan, in the
field that Abraham bought from Ephron
the Hittite as a burial site. 31 There Abra-
ham and his wife Sarah were buried;
there Isaac and his wife Rebekah were
buried; and there I buried Leah— 32 the
field and the cave that is in it were pur-
chased from the Hittites." 33 When Jacob
ended his charge to his sons, he drew up
his feet into the bed, breathed his last, and
was gathered to his people.

50 Then Joseph threw himself on
his father's face and wept over
him and kissed him. 2 Joseph commanded
the physicians in his service to embalm his
father. So the physicians embalmed Is-
rael; 3 they spent forty days in doing this,
for that is the time required for embalm-
ing. And the Egyptians wept for him sev-
enty days.

4 When the days of weeping for him
were past, Joseph addressed the house-
hold of Pharaoh, "If now I have found
favor with you, please speak to Pharaoh as
follows: 5 My father made me swear an
oath; he said, 'I am about to die. In the
tomb that I hewed out for myself in the
land of Canaan, there you shall bury me.'
Now therefore let me go up, so that I may
bury my father; then I will return."
6 Pharaoh answered, "Go up, and bury
your father, as he made you swear to do."

7 So Joseph went up to bury his fa-
ther. With him went up all the servants of
Pharaoh, the elders of his household, and
all the elders of the land of Egypt, 8 as well
as all the household of Joseph, his broth-
ers, and his father's household. Only their
children, their flocks, and their herds
were left in the land of Goshen. 9 Both
chariots and charioteers went up with
him. It was a very great company.
10 When they came to the threshing floor
of Atad, which is beyond the Jordan, they
held there a very great and sorrowful
lamentation; and he observed a time of
mourning for his father seven days.
11 When the Canaanite inhabitants of the
land saw the mourning on the threshing
floor of Atad, they said, "This is a griev-
ous mourning on the part of the Egyp-
tians." Therefore the place was named
Abel-mizraim;[p] it is beyond the Jordan.
12 Thus his sons did for him as he had
instructed them. 13 They carried him to
the land of Canaan and buried him in the
cave of the field at Machpelah, the field
near Mamre, which Abraham bought as a
burial site from Ephron the Hittite. 14 After
he had buried his father, Joseph re-
turned to Egypt with his brothers and all
who had gone up with him to bury his
father.

Joseph Forgives His Brothers

15 Realizing that their father was
dead, Joseph's brothers said, "What if Jo-
seph still bears a grudge against us and
pays us back in full for all the wrong that
we did to him?" 16 So they approached[q]
Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this in-
struction before he died, 17 'Say to Joseph:
I beg you, forgive the crime of your
brothers and the wrong they did in harm-
ing you.' Now therefore please forgive the
crime of the servants of the God of your
father." Joseph wept when they spoke to
him. 18 Then his brothers also wept,[r] fell
down before him, and said, "We are here

p That is *mourning* (or *meadow*) *of Egypt*
q Gk Syr: Heb *they commanded*
r Cn: Heb *also came*

49.29–50.14 The conclusion of the traditions about Jacob, recounting his death and his burial in Canaan at Machpelah cave. **49.29–33** A variant of the tradition recorded in 49.29–31; together with 50.12–13, it encloses the main narrative. On Machpelah, see ch. 23. **50.2** *To embalm*, an Egyptian, not an Israelite, practice. Its presence here underscores Joseph's Egyptian ways and the esteem of the Egyptians (see vv. 3, 7) and perhaps intends to explain the corpse's preservation until burial in Canaan. **50.5–6** This benign encounter with Pharaoh to request permission for departure foreshadows Moses' repeated entreaties beginning in Ex 5.1. **50.8** *Only their children . . . in the land of Goshen* stresses the temporary nature of their departure.

50.15–21 The brothers' anxiety that, with their father dead (cf. 27.41), Joseph might revenge the wrongs once done to him. Joseph, however, reassures them of his continued loyalty and care. **50.17–18** *Servants, slaves.* These words (identical in Hebrew) continue the preoccupation with servitude and foreshadow Ex 1.8–14.

as your slaves." 19 But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God? 20 Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today. 21 So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones." In this way he reassured them, speaking kindly to them.

Joseph's Last Days and Death

22 So Joseph remained in Egypt, he and his father's household; and Joseph lived one hundred ten years. 23 Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third generation; the children of Machir son of Manasseh were also born on Joseph's knees.

24 Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die; but God will surely come to you, and bring you up out of this land to the land that he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." 25 So Joseph made the Israelites swear, saying, "When God comes to you, you shall carry up my bones from here." 26 And Joseph died, being one hundred ten years old; he was embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt.

50.19 *Am I in the place of God,* an intriguing echo of Jacob's words to Joseph's mother-to-be in 30.2. **50.20** *Even though you intended to do harm* [lit. "evil"] *to me, God intended it for good,* a restatement of the book's theme of "good and evil." *To preserve,* lit. "to give life."

50.22–26 An account of Joseph's last days and his death. He assures his brothers of God's intention to bring the Israelites out of Egypt and extracts from them a promise to bring his bones from there—which is fulfilled in Ex 13.19.

EXODUS

Name and Content

THE NAME EXODUS, DERIVED FROM GREEK, refers to the first of the two central narrative events in the book—the liberation of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage (chs. 1–15). The other event, the Lord's covenant-forging revelation to Israel at Mount Sinai (chs. 19–24), and the laws and instructions that ensue from it complete the book.

The book's Hebrew name, "These are the names," derives from the first words of the text's prologue (1.1–7), which harks back to and abridges the genealogy in Gen 46.8–27. In one sense Exodus directly continues the story of Jacob's clan in Egypt (Gen 37–50). The Lord is said to rescue Israel on account of his covenant with their ancestors (2.24; cf. 3.6, 15–16; 4.5; 6.2–4). In another sense, Exodus is a distinct book, relating the story of Israel's formation as a people and its covenant with God. The second part of the story is dependent on the first: by redeeming the Israelite slaves from Egypt, the Lord earns the right to "enslave" them to himself (Lev 25.42, 55) by binding them to the covenant obligations.

Biblical Context

Covenant law issuing immediately or indirectly from the Sinai event makes up most of what follows Exodus in the Pentateuch. Moses has the people recommit themselves to the covenant before he dies (Deut 29–30). In the next generation the Israelites twice reaffirm the covenant (Josh 4–5, 24), an act that will be expressly repeated only centuries later (2 Kings 22–23) and again after the Babylonian exile (Neh 8–10). Precedent for renewing, or restoring, the covenant is set within Exodus itself, following the golden calf incident (ch. 34).

Although biblical tradition links the exodus with a (geographically unspecified) covenant (e.g., Deut 4.45; 6.21–25; 29.25; 1 Kings 8.9, 21; Jer 11.2–4, 6–7; 31.32; 34.13), it is the exodus itself that chiefly exercises the biblical memory. Within the Pentateuch, or Torah, the recent exodus provides a motive for worshiping the Lord (e.g., Ex 20.2; 29.46; Lev 26.13; Deut 6.12; 13.6–10; cf. Josh 24.17) and observing the law (e.g., Lev 11.45; 22.32–33; Num 15.41;

Deut 5.15; 8.11–14; 29.2), especially those precepts protecting the disadvantaged (e.g., Lev 19.35; 25.38, 42, 55), because the experience of slavery is meant to instill empathy for them (e.g., Ex 23.9; Lev 19.34; Deut 10.19; 15.15; 16.12; 24.22; and see Jer 34.13–14). Moreover, the rescue of Israel from Egypt serves as a paradigm of divine saving power, within the Torah (e.g., Lev 26.24–25; Num 23.22; 24.8; Deut 6.21–22; 20.1; 26.8) as well as among the prophets (e.g., Isa 11.16; 51.10; Jer 16.14–15; 23.7–8; 32.20–21; Am 2.10; 9.7; Mic 6.4; 7.15; cf. also Dan 9.15) and psalmists (e.g., Pss 77; 78; 81; 105; 106; 136). Unlike the Sinai revelation, the exodus event functions as a point of chronological reference (e.g., Num 1.1; 9.1; Deut 9.7; Judg 19.30; 1 Sam 8.8; 2 Sam 7.6; 1 Kings 6.1; 8.16; 2 Kings 21.15; Jer 7.25).

Historical Context

The present text seems to incorporate a variety of once independent sources (e.g., 4.24–26; 15.1–18; 20.2–17; chs. 21–23). The narratives of complaint during the wilderness trek (15.22–17.7) overlap with stories in Numbers; the plagues narrative (chs. 7–11) and Passover passage (ch. 12) manifest the kinds of duplication and dissonance that suggest the presence of different traditions. Comparison of Exodus with folklore and myth suggests the story is already the stuff of legend. Historical reconstruction is accordingly obstructed by a centuries-long process of literary formation that can hardly be retraced.

Nevertheless, the sojourn of Israelites in Egypt, plagues, and crossing the sea and wilderness are traditions on which diverse biblical sources inside and outside the Torah agree. The details of the narrative, however, frequently conflict or make little sense; for example, though the Israelites are said to live apart in Goshen (e.g., Gen 47.1–6; Ex 8.22; 9.26), they borrow valuable objects from their Egyptian neighbors (3.21–22) and the Lord must pass over Israelite homes to strike Egyptian households in the tenth plague (12.12–13). External factors lead many to place the historical exodus in the late thirteenth century B.C.E.; but historical references in Exodus are slim, vague, or problematic, and there is no archaeological record of the exodus in Egypt. *Edward L. Greenstein*

1 These are the names of the sons of
Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob,
each with his household: 2 Reuben, Sim-
eon, Levi, and Judah, 3 Issachar, Zebulun,
and Benjamin, 4 Dan and Naphtali, Gad
and Asher. 5 The total number of people
born to Jacob was seventy. Joseph was al-
ready in Egypt. 6 Then Joseph died, and
all his brothers, and that whole genera-
tion. 7 But the Israelites were fruitful and
prolific; they multiplied and grew exceed-
ingly strong, so that the land was filled
with them.

The Israelites Are Oppressed

8 Now a new king arose over Egypt,
who did not know Joseph. 9 He said to his
people, "Look, the Israelite people are
more numerous and more powerful than
we. 10 Come, let us deal shrewdly with
them, or they will increase and, in the
event of war, join our enemies and fight
against us and escape from the land."
11 Therefore they set taskmasters over
them to oppress them with forced labor.
They built supply cities, Pithom and Ram-
eses, for Pharaoh. 12 But the more they
were oppressed, the more they multiplied
and spread, so that the Egyptians came to
dread the Israelites. 13 The Egyptians be-
came ruthless in imposing tasks on the Is-
raelites, 14 and made their lives bitter with
hard service in mortar and brick and in
every kind of field labor. They were ruth-

1.1–7 The prologue returns to a point prior to the conclusion of Genesis (see Introduction). The story of the Israelite population explosion in Egypt fulfills the Lord's promise of numerous progeny to the patriarchs (Gen 13.16; 15.5; 22.17; 26.4; 32.13). **1.1** *Israel*, the patriarch Jacob (Gen 32.29; 35.10). **1.2–4** The list of Jacob's sons separates the sons of his wives, Leah and Rachel, from those of his concubines, Bilhah and Zilpah. Daughter Dinah (Gen 30.21; 34) is, like other women, omitted in this enumeration. **1.5** *Born to Jacob*, lit. "coming out of Jacob's thigh," which was impaired (Gen 32.26, 32). *Seventy*, counting only Jacob's sons and grandsons, a very close approximation. **1.6** *Joseph's* death and mummification conclude Genesis. *Generation*, the unit of patriarchal periodization; cf. note on 12.40. **1.7** *Israelites*, lit. "the sons of Israel" (cf. v. 1), but here referring to the "children of Israel" as a people. *Fruitful . . . and multiplied.* See Gen 47.27; cf. Gen 1.28; 9.1, 7; 17.6, 20. *Prolific.* The unusual Hebrew term (cf. Gen 9.7) connotes the proliferation of animals (e.g., Gen 1.21; 8.17; Ex 8.3). Israel's populousness motivates the pharaoh's attempts at genocide.

1.8–22 The episode of the midwives recalls such fairy tales as "Snow White": a monarch orders a servant of the opposite sex to murder a child of the monarch's sex who is feared as a threat to the throne. **1.8** The *new king* seems to initiate a new policy toward the Asian foreigners, but *did not know* might mean "did not care about" (the same Hebrew verb is translated *took notice* in 2.25). The king remains anonymous, although many identify him with Ramses II (ca. 1290–1224 B.C.E.) on the basis of v. 11 and the mention of "Israel" within Canaan on a monument of the succeeding pharaoh, Merneptah (ca. 1224–1211). **1.9** *The Israelite people*, in contrast to *his* (the king's) *people. Numerous . . . powerful*, in Hebrew cognate to the verbs rendered *multiplied* and *grew strong* in v. 7; both terms may refer to strength in numbers (cf. e.g., Num 32.1; Deut 26.5; Joel 1.6). The assertion that Israel outnumbers Egypt is surely hyperbolic. **1.10** *Shrewdly*, lit. "wisely"—an earlier pharaoh had called Joseph incomparably "wise" (Gen 41.39); the king may resent Egypt's debt to Joseph. *Join*, the same Hebrew verb (*nosaf*) as the name Joseph (*yosef*). *Escape*, lit. "go up," more aptly referring to taking control ("rising over") rather than leaving. Letters from Egypt's agents in Canaan to pharaohs of the fourteenth century B.C.E. at el-Amarna complain of landless "Apiru" joining forces with rebellious towns. Scholars have suggested a link between these landless folk and the "Hebrews," a term that may be related to "Apiru." **1.11** *They set.* The king's people cooperate. *Taskmasters*, lit. "officers of the corvée" (cf. 1 Kings 5.13–14). *To oppress*, used prophetically of the Egyptian bondage (Gen 15.13) and of Sarai's affliction of Hagar (Gen 16.6, 9, 11). *Pithom*, Egyptian *Per-Atum*, "House of (the sun god) Atum," and *Rameses*, "(House of) Rameses," sites in the region presumably inhabited by the Israelites in the eastern Nile Delta, the latter possibly Tanis, the capital of Rameses II, but also possibly a first-millennium B.C.E. city. *Pharaoh*, Egyptian *Per-ʿo*, "Great House," used to refer to the king of Egypt as though it were a proper name. **1.12** *They were oppressed*, lit. "they (namely, the Egyptians) oppressed him (namely, the Israelite people)," emphasizing the Egyptians' role. *The more they multiplied.* The Hebrew *ken yirbeh* mocks the pharaoh's words in v. 10, *pen yirbeh, or* ("lest") *they will increase. Spread*, the same Hebrew verb rendered "grew . . . rich" in Gen 30.43; Israel's proliferation in the face of Pharaoh's measures echoes Jacob's increase despite Laban's scheme. The Hebrew verb, which means lit. "to explode," sounds like a contraction of *were fruitful*

less in all the tasks that they imposed on them.

15 The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, 16 "When you act as midwives to the Hebrew women, and see them on the birthstool, if it is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, she shall live." 17 But the midwives feared God; they did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but they let the boys live. 18 So the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and said to them, "Why have you done this, and allowed the boys to live?" 19 The midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them." 20 So God dealt well with the midwives; and the people multiplied and became very strong. 21 And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families. 22 Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, "Every boy that is born to the Hebrews[a] you shall throw into the Nile, but you shall let every girl live."

Birth and Youth of Moses

2 Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a Levite woman. 2 The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was a fine baby, she hid him three months. 3 When she could hide him no longer she got a papyrus basket for him, and plastered it with bitumen and pitch; she put the child in it and placed it among the reeds on the bank of the river. 4 His sister stood at a distance, to see what would happen to him.

5 The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her attendants walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid to bring it. 6 When she opened it, she saw the child. He was crying, and she

a Sam Gk Tg: Heb lacks *to the Hebrews*

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and prolific (v. 7), an ironic reversal of the pharaoh's plan to contain Hebrew reproduction. *Came to dread.* Cf. Num 22.3. **1.13** More precisely, "The Egyptians made the Israelites work to the point of collapse," a practice explicitly forbidden in Lev 25.43, 46; this is repeated in v. 14. **1.14** *Made . . . bitter.* See 12.8. *Mortar,* more likely "bitumen" as in another text tradition; the Hebrew words are spelled the same but vocalized differently (cf. Gen 11.3). *Field labor,* including digging irrigation canals (see Deut 11.10). **1.15** *Hebrew midwives.* Despite the Semitic names of the midwives, the Hebrew may be interpreted as "midwives of the Hebrews," i.e., Egyptian women serving the Israelites. Unlike the pharaoh, these heroic women are named. **1.16** In ancient Israel ethnicity was patrilineal, so that eliminating the males suffices to wipe out the people. **1.17** For the motif of a Gentile acknowledging Israel's God, see 18.1–12; Gen 14.18–20; Num 24.1; Josh 2.10–11; 2 Kings 5.15; Jon 1.16. The midwives precede both Israel and Egypt in recognizing Israel's national God as the true one. **1.19** *Vigorous,* lit. "lively," probably "quick." **1.20** *Multiplied and became . . . strong,* the same verbs as in vv. 7, 9; see note on 1.9. **1.21** *Families;* lit. "house(hold)s." **1.22** *All his people,* and not only the midwives (see note on 1.15). Since all Egyptians are involved in the genocide, all Egyptian households will suffer the plagues (chs. 7–12). *Every boy.* See v. 16. *Nile,* Hebrew *ye'or,* "river" in Egyptian.

2.1–10 The story of Moses' exposure and miraculous survival resembles diverse folktales of a hero's birth, especially that of Sargon of Akkad (probably from the late eighth century B.C.E.). **2.1** The parents are unnamed as in folktales; they are identified as Amram and Jochebed in 6.20. *A Levite woman,* or, since in 6.20 Amram marries *his father's sister,* "a daughter of (the tribal namesake) Levi." Moses' Levitical pedigree is emphasized; cf. 6.14–27. **2.2** *That he was . . . fine,* the same phrase rendered "that it was good" in the creation story (e.g., Gen 1.10, 12, 18). *Baby,* not in the Hebrew. **2.3** *Papyrus,* a seaworthy material (cf. Isa 18.2). *Basket,* an Egyptian loanword, used only here and of Noah's ark (e.g., Gen 6.14), another rudderless box under the deity's protection. *Plastered,* from the same Hebrew root as "bitumen" (see note on 1.14); different from the term rendered "pitch" (Gen 6.14). *The river,* lit. "the Nile"; cf. 1.22. **2.4** *His sister* is unnamed, but later identified with Miriam, who is introduced as Aaron's sister in 15.20 and cited as Moses' sister in Num 26.59. *Stood,* more precisely "stationed herself." *Would happen,* lit. "would be done." **2.5** *The daughter of Pharaoh* too is unnamed. *The river,* both times lit. "the Nile"; see note on 2.3. **2.6** *He was crying,* rather "and here: a lad crying," indicating that that is what she saw. *Children,* lit. "boys." Although "boy" in Hebrew is a generic term for "child," she seems to recognize him as a boy. The daughter's compassion contrasts with

took pity on him. "This must be one of the
Hebrews' children," she said. 7 Then his
sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I
go and get you a nurse from the Hebrew
women to nurse the child for you?"
8 Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Yes."
So the girl went and called the child's
mother. 9 Pharaoh's daughter said to her,
"Take this child and nurse it for me, and
I will give you your wages." So the woman
took the child and nursed it. 10 When the
child grew up, she brought him to Phar-
aoh's daughter, and she took him as her
son. She named him Moses,[b] "because,"
she said, "I drew him out[c] of the water."

Moses Flees to Midian

11 One day, after Moses had grown
up, he went out to his people and saw
their forced labor. He saw an Egyptian
beating a Hebrew, one of his kinsfolk.
12 He looked this way and that, and seeing
no one he killed the Egyptian and hid him
in the sand. 13 When he went out the next
day, he saw two Hebrews fighting; and he
said to the one who was in the wrong,
"Why do you strike your fellow Hebrew?"
14 He answered, "Who made you a ruler
and judge over us? Do you mean to kill
me as you killed the Egyptian?" Then Mo-
ses was afraid and thought, "Surely the
thing is known." 15 When Pharaoh heard
of it, he sought to kill Moses.

But Moses fled from Pharaoh. He set-
tled in the land of Midian, and sat down
by a well. 16 The priest of Midian had
seven daughters. They came to draw wa-
ter, and filled the troughs to water their
father's flock. 17 But some shepherds
came and drove them away. Moses got up
and came to their defense and watered
their flock. 18 When they returned to their
father Reuel, he said, "How is it that you
have come back so soon today?" 19 They
said, "An Egyptian helped us against the
shepherds; he even drew water for us and
watered the flock." 20 He said to his
daughters, "Where is he? Why did you
leave the man? Invite him to break
bread." 21 Moses agreed to stay with the
man, and he gave Moses his daughter Zip-
porah in marriage. 22 She bore a son, and
he named him Gershom; for he said, "I

b Heb *Mosheh* *c* Heb *mashah*

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her father's brutality. **2.8** *Girl*, one who is past puberty (cf. Gen 24.43; Isa 7.14). **2.9** *Take*, better "take away," echoing "Go!" (rendered *Yes*) in v. 8. **2.10** *She took him as her son*, lit. "he became a son to her," an idiom indicating adoption. *Moses* in Hebrew means "the one who draws out," not, as the punning princess implies, the one she has drawn out. The name may derive from Egyptian "child of" (e.g., Thutmose) and/or be related to the Levitical clan of Mushites (e.g., 6.19; Num 3.20, 33; 26.58).

2.11–22 Moses' flight prior to a comeback as national deliverer parallels the stories of Jacob (Gen 27–33), Jephthah (Judg 11), and David (e.g., 1 Sam 20), as well as the extrabiblical stories of the Egyptian Sinuhe and the Syrian Idrimi (fifteenth century B.C.E.). The flight eastward and dispute with the Hebrews anticipates the exodus and later confrontations (15.22–17.7; Num 11; 14; 16). The episode at the well in Midian (vv. 15–21) evokes a traditional motif (Gen 24; 29); the present version highlights Moses' role as savior (v. 17). **2.11** *One day*, rather "in those days" of oppression. *His people*, lit. "his brothers," the same word translated *his kinsfolk* in the next sentence; Moses seems to identify with the Israelites. *Their forced labor*. See 1.11. *Beating*. The retributive plagues use the same Hebrew verb (translated *strike*; e.g., 3.20; 7.17, 20, 25; 8.16–17; 9.15; 12.12–13, 29). **2.12** *Killed*, lit. "struck," the same Hebrew word translated *beating* in v. 11. *Hid*, used mostly of burying in the ground, a different Hebrew word from that translated *hid/hide* in vv. 2–3. **2.13** *Strike*, the same Hebrew word translated *beat* in v. 11 and *kill* in v. 12. **2.14** *Kill*, not the Hebrew term translated *strike* in vv. 11–13. *Surely*, contrary to what I thought (e.g., Gen 28.16). **2.15** *Kill*, the verb used in v. 14. *Midian*. The Midianites, described in Gen 25.2 as nomadic offspring of Abraham and Keturah, range from the Sinai Peninsula to northern Arabia. **2.16** *Priest*, probably a position of leadership, like Moses' later role. *Seven*, a round number, characteristic of folktales. **2.17** *Came to their defense*, rendered *saved* in 14.30, foreshadows the rescue of Israel. **2.18** *Reuel*, meaning "Friend of God" in Hebrew, is of the same root as *fellow* (v. 13) and echoes the Hebrew *ro'eh*, "shepherd" (v. 17). Different traditions name him Jethro (e.g., 3.1; 18.1) and Hobab (Num 10.29, where he is Reuel's son); in Judg 4.11 he is a Kenite, traced to the nomadic Cain (Gen 4.12, 14); concerning the hypothesis of diverse sources, see note on 4.2–5. **2.19** *Egyptian*. Raised in Pharaoh's household, Moses still looks Egyptian. *Drew water*. Moses' generosity recalls Rebekah's (Gen 24.19). **2.21** *In marriage*, lit. "as a wife," added to the Hebrew text on the basis of some versions. There is a parallel in the Egyptian tale of Sinuhe. **2.22** *Gershom*, interpreted by wordplay

have been an alien[d] residing in a foreign land."

23 After a long time the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned under their slavery, and cried out. Out of the slavery their cry for help rose up to God. 24 God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. 25 God looked upon the Israelites, and God took notice of them.

Moses at the Burning Bush

3 Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. 2 There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. 3 Then Moses said, "I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up." 4 When the LORD saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." 5 Then he said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." 6 He said further, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

7 Then the LORD said, "I have ob-

d Heb *ger*

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here and in 18.3 as *ger-sham*, Hebrew, "an alien there," referring to Midian or possibly Egypt; the letters of the name also echo *drove them away* (v. 17). **2.23–25** God's renewed attention to the Israelites' plight is conditioned by the covenant with Israel's ancestors. **2.23** *A long time*, lit. "in those many days" of Moses' exile and/or Israel's oppression; see v. 11. *The king of Egypt died.* The stage is set for Moses' return; see 4.19. *Slavery*, the term rendered *tasks* and *service* in 1.13–14, a reference more to hard labor than to slavery per se. *Cried out*, supplication, not merely an outcry (e.g., Judg 3.9; 1 Sam 7.9; Ps 107.13; Jer 11.11–12, Jon 1.5); the plea is not directed to the Lord (cf. 14.10). **2.24** *Groaning*, the sound of the oppressed (see Judg 2.18). *Remembered.* Hebrew does not distinguish "to remember" from "to pay mind to," which seems more apt in context. *Abraham.* Cf. Gen 17.7–8. *Isaac.* Cf. Gen 17.19, 21. *Jacob.* Cf. Gen 35.11–12; 46.3–4. **2.25** *Looked upon*, in the sense of "took note." *Took notice.* See note on 1.8.

3.1–12 The commissioning of Moses begins with a numinous experience, appropriate to the wonder-working task that awaits him. **3.1** *Moses was*, lit. "Now Moses, he was . . . ," indicating that the ensuing episode takes place simultaneously with the preceding (2.23–25). *Keeping*, from the same Hebrew root as *shepherd* (2.17), a distinctively Hebrew occupation (Gen 46.32–34; 47.3–4). Moses' future role is betokened: "shepherd" is a metaphor for leader (see Num 27.17; 2 Sam 5.2; Jer 22.22; Ezek 34.2); David, too, was a shepherd (2 Sam 7.8). *Jethro.* See note on 2.18. *He led*, apparently intentionally; see note on 4.18–20. *Beyond.* The odd Hebrew has "behind." *Horeb*, the name of Mount Sinai in a tradition ascribed by scholars to the putative Elohist and Deuteronomic sources, that is, to traditions in Genesis–Exodus and Deuteronomy (e.g., 17.6; 33.6; Deut 1.2, 6). *Mountain of God*, the narrator's anticipation or Moses knowledge prior to the revelation to follow that it was a holy mountain; see note on 4.18–20. **3.2** *Fire*, a conventional medium of the divine presence (e.g., Gen 15.17; Judg 13.20). *A bush*, in Hebrew "the bush," another hint that the site was known to be sacred. The Hebrew term for "bush," *seneh*, suggests the mountain's name, Sinai, Yahweh's original location according to Deut 33.2; Judg 5.5 and site of the Lord's appearance before all Israel (chs. 19–20). *It.* The Hebrew repeats "the bush." **3.3** *Look* and *sight* are from the same root in Hebrew. *And see*, is not in the Hebrew, where *why* begins Moses' question to himself. *Is not burned up*, rather "does not burn." **3.4** *The LORD.* Although it was an *angel* that appeared in v. 2, there is no substantive difference between the deity and his agents. *Moses, Moses!* Doubling the name may serve to reassure that it is not mirage (cf. Gen 22.11; 1 Sam 3.10). *Here I am*, an obliging gesture on Moses' part (e.g., Gen 22.1; 1 Sam 3.4). **3.5** *No closer.* Cf. 19.12, 21–24. *Remove . . . holy ground.* Cf. Josh 5.15. **3.6** *God of . . . Jacob.* Cf. 2.24. *Hid his face*, a phrase elsewhere used mostly of God's shutting out human affairs, e.g., Deut 31.17–18; Ps 44.24; Isa 8.17; Ezek 39.23–24. *Afraid to look.* Gazing directly into the deity's face is said to be fatal (see 33.20; cf. Isa 6.5), but seeing an angel or a mitigated divine vision does no harm; see Gen 32.30; Ex 24.11; 33.23; Judg 6.22–23; 13.22–23; cf. Ex. 33.11. **3.7–9** An elaboration of 2.23–25. **3.7** *Observed*, the same Hebrew term rendered *looked upon* (2.25), *looked/look* (3.2–3), and *saw* (3.4). *Misery*, or "affliction," cognate to *oppress* (1.11). *Their cry*, "outcry," connoting moral outrage (e.g., Gen 18.21; Isa 5.7). *Sufferings*, physical pain (e.g., Isa

served the misery of my people who are in
Egypt; I have heard their cry on account
of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their
sufferings, 8and I have come down to de-
liver them from the Egyptians, and to
bring them up out of that land to a good
and broad land, a land flowing with milk
and honey, to the country of the Canaan-
ites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Peri-
zzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. 9The
cry of the Israelites has now come to me;
I have also seen how the Egyptians op-
press them. 10So come, I will send you to
Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israel-
ites, out of Egypt." 11But Moses said to
God, "Who am I that I should go to Phar-
aoh, and bring the Israelites out of
Egypt?" 12He said, "I will be with you;
and this shall be the sign for you that it is
I who sent you: when you have brought
the people out of Egypt, you shall worship
God on this mountain."

The Divine Name Revealed

13 But Moses said to God, "If I come
to the Israelites and say to them, 'The
God of your ancestors has sent me to you,'
and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what
shall I say to them?" 14God said to Moses,
"I AM WHO I AM."[e] He said further,
"Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'I AM
has sent me to you.'" 15God also said to
Moses, "Thus you shall say to the Israel-
ites, 'The LORD,[f] the God of your ances-
tors, the God of Abraham, the God of
Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me
to you':

This is my name forever,
and this my title for all
generations.

16Go and assemble the elders of Israel,
and say to them, 'The LORD, the God of
your ancestors, the God of Abraham, of
Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me,
saying: I have given heed to you and to
what has been done to you in Egypt. 17I
declare that I will bring you up out of the
misery of Egypt, to the land of the Ca-
naanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the
Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, a
land flowing with milk and honey.'
18They will listen to your voice; and you
and the elders of Israel shall go to the
king of Egypt and say to him, 'The LORD,
the God of the Hebrews, has met with us;
let us now go a three days' journey into

e Or *I AM WHAT I AM* or *I WILL BE WHAT I WILL BE*
f The word "LORD" when spelled with capital letters stands for the divine name, *YHWH*, which is here connected with the verb *hayah*, "to be"

53.4; Jer 20.15; 51.8). **3.8** *Have come down*, from God's abode in the sky (e.g., 19.11, 20; Gen 11.5; 18.21; 28.13; Ps 18.7–20). *Milk and honey*, the first instance of this cliché for the land of Israel (e.g., 13.5; 33.3; Lev 20.24; Num 13.27; Deut 6.3). *Canaanites . . . Jebusites*, six of the indigenous Canaanite peoples, recapitulated in v. 17. Gen 15.19–21 lists ten, but not the Hivites. *Hittites*, a people originally from Asia Minor who populated Canaan beginning about 1400 B.C.E. *Amorites*, a generic term for western Semites. *Jebusites*, inhabitants of Jerusalem, conquered by David (2 Sam 5.6–7). **3.9** *Seen*, the same Hebrew term rendered *observed* in v. 7. *Oppress*, different from the term in 1.11–12; used twice in the Hebrew phrasing, it has the root sense of "press"; cf. 22.20; 23.9. **3.10** *So*. The Hebrew is stronger: "Now then." *Send*. This verb defines the prophet's role as a messenger from God. *Pharaoh*. Moses may not know the pharaoh; the one he knew has died (2.23; see note on 4.18–20). *Bring . . . out*, the causative verb "to have them go out," the etymology of "exodus," a themeword of the narrative and a term by which the delivering Lord will be identified (e.g., 6.6–7; 20.2). **3.11** A pragmatic concern or a display of Moses' famed modesty (Num 12.3). Moses plays the reluctant prophet (cf. Judg 6.15; Isa 6.8; Jer 1). **3.12** The deity echoes Moses' language. Although not reflected in the English, the Hebrew particle "that, indeed" is used twice by Moses in v. 11 and twice by God in this verse. *Sign*, a key term throughout this and the ensuing narrative. Signs authenticate those who perform them and demonstrate the Lord's power.

3.13–22 The Lord is revealed as the God of Israel's ancestors, and the exodus is previewed. **3.13** *Ask*, the same Hebrew verb rendered *say* here twice. **3.14** *I AM WHO I AM*, on the basis of 33.19 (*I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious . . .*), "I will be whatever I will be." The name puns on the divine name Yahweh and in the present context would seem to connote "being there" for Moses and the Israelites. **3.15** The speech is punctuated by a parallel, adding drama and/or solemnity. *My title*, the name by which I shall be invoked or memorialized; cf. 20.24 where *cause my name to be remembered* uses the same Hebrew root; cf. 23.13. **3.16** Moses will convince his people only after the Lord has performed wonders. **3.18** The ruse will not fool Pharaoh (5.1–4; 8.21–24; 10.8–11). *Sacrifice*. The term in Hebrew connotes slaughtering an animal, part of which is offered to the deity; it lacks the English word's

the wilderness, so that we may sacrifice to
the LORD our God.' 19 I know, however,
that the king of Egypt will not let you go
unless compelled by a mighty hand.[g]
20 So I will stretch out my hand and strike
Egypt with all my wonders that I will per-
form in it; after that he will let you go. 21 I
will bring this people into such favor with
the Egyptians that, when you go, you will
not go empty-handed; 22 each woman
shall ask her neighbor and any woman liv-
ing in the neighbor's house for jewelry of
silver and of gold, and clothing, and you
shall put them on your sons and on your
daughters; and so you shall plunder the
Egyptians."

Moses' Miraculous Power

4 Then Moses answered, "But suppose
they do not believe me or listen to
me, but say, 'The LORD did not appear to
you.'" 2 The LORD said to him, "What is
that in your hand?" He said, "A staff."
3 And he said, "Throw it on the ground."
So he threw the staff on the ground, and
it became a snake; and Moses drew back
from it. 4 Then the LORD said to Moses,
"Reach out your hand, and seize it by the
tail"—so he reached out his hand and
grasped it, and it became a staff in his
hand— 5 "so that they may believe that
the LORD, the God of their ancestors, the
God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and
the God of Jacob, has appeared to you."
6 Again, the LORD said to him, "Put
your hand inside your cloak." He put his
hand into his cloak; and when he took it
out, his hand was leprous,[h] as white as
snow. 7 Then God said, "Put your hand
back into your cloak"—so he put his hand
back into his cloak, and when he took it
out, it was restored like the rest of his
body— 8 "If they will not believe you or
heed the first sign, they may believe the
second sign. 9 If they will not believe even
these two signs or heed you, you shall take
some water from the Nile and pour it on
the dry ground; and the water that you
shall take from the Nile will become blood
on the dry ground."

g Gk Vg: Heb *no, not by a mighty hand* *h* A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain

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connotation of surrender. **3.19** *Let . . . go*, not the same Hebrew verb as in v. 20 and in the recurrent liberation formula usually rendered *let go* (e.g., 4.23; 5.1; 7.16). The latter are from the root "to send." *Compelled*, added for clarity. *Mighty hand*. The difficult, textually uncertain Hebrew leaves open whether God will force Pharaoh's hand (cf. 13.9) or whether Pharaoh will force Israel out (cf. 6.1). **3.20** *Stretch out . . . hand*, lit. "send (the) hand," an idiom for inflicting harm (e.g., 1 Sam 22.17; Esth 2.21). *Strike*, translated *beat* in (see note on) 2.11. *Wonders*, a term used within the exodus story only here and in 34.10 but commonly in later texts referring to the exodus (e.g., Judg 6.13; Pss 78.4, 11; 106.22; Mic 7.15). *Let you go*. See note on 3.19. **3.21** The Israelites will not leave *empty-handed*, the way Jacob (Israel) left Laban (Gen 31.42); when the Israelites become autonomous, they must not "release" their slaves (Deut 15.13) or worship God (23.15; 34.20; Deut 16.16) empty-handed. Cf. Gen 15.14. **3.22** *Plunder*, lit. "stripping," divine compensation for Egypt's exploitation of the Hebrews; cf. Gen 12.16; 20.14–16. The "borrowing" is effected in 12.35–36, echoing the terms of vv. 21–22 here but in reverse (chiastic) order, indicating completion of the thematic unit (see notes on 4.30–31; 6.26–27; 17.7). Later Jewish traditions suggest that the women do the borrowing because they will dress their children in the Egyptians' clothes and jewels.

4.1–17 Moses suggests two further impediments: credibility (vv. 1–9) and problematic speech (vv. 10–16). **4.1** *They*, the elders (3.16). *Believe*, in the sense of trust (19.9); cf. 14.31; in v. 5 below *believe* in the sense of "accept as true" is more apt. **4.2–5** Some explain the wondrous signs naturalistically, pointing here to the fact that some snakes stiffen when one grasps their tails. V. 2 makes clear that the snake began as Moses' staff. The deity's power is demonstrated by producing the fantastic from the ordinary. Moses will use none of the three signs to convince the Israelites; Aaron will turn the staff into a "serpent" (a different word in the Hebrew) in an attempt to persuade Pharaoh (7.8–13). On account of discrepancies like this (different word, actor, storyline) some scholars suppose that the text is woven from different sources; others do not expect the text to be consistent or smooth. **4.3** *Drew back*, lit. "fled" (14.27). Gen 3.15 posits a normal human phobia of snakes. **4.4** *Reach out*, lit. "send" (see note on 3.20). **4.5** Cf. 3.16. **4.6–9** The third sign anticipates the first plague (7.14–25). In view of this, the second sign, which is never used, may anticipate the plague of boils (9.8–12); and the first may suggest the plague of frogs, which is initiated by stretching the staff over Egypt's waterways (8.5–6). **4.7** *Rest of his body*, lit. "his flesh." **4.9** *Dry ground* anticipates the Is-

10 But Moses said to the LORD, "O my
Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither
in the past nor even now that you have
spoken to your servant; but I am slow of
speech and slow of tongue." 11 Then the
LORD said to him, "Who gives speech to
mortals? Who makes them mute or deaf,
seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?
12 Now go, and I will be with your mouth
and teach you what you are to speak."
13 But he said, "O my Lord, please send
someone else." 14 Then the anger of the
LORD was kindled against Moses and he
said, "What of your brother Aaron the
Levite? I know that he can speak fluently;
even now he is coming out to meet you,
and when he sees you his heart will be
glad. 15 You shall speak to him and put
the words in his mouth; and I will be with
your mouth and with his mouth, and will
teach you what you shall do. 16 He indeed
shall speak for you to the people; he shall
serve as a mouth for you, and you shall
serve as God for him. 17 Take in your
hand this staff, with which you shall perform the signs."

Moses Returns to Egypt

18 Moses went back to his father-in-
law Jethro and said to him, "Please let me
go back to my kindred in Egypt and see
whether they are still living." And Jethro
said to Moses, "Go in peace." 19 The LORD
said to Moses in Midian, "Go back to
Egypt; for all those who were seeking
your life are dead." 20 So Moses took his
wife and his sons, put them on a donkey,
and went back to the land of Egypt; and
Moses carried the staff of God in his
hand.

21 And the LORD said to Moses,
"When you go back to Egypt, see that you
perform before Pharaoh all the wonders

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raelites' crossing the sea on dry ground (14.22). **4.10** *Eloquent*, lit. "a man of words," of the same Hebrew root as *spoken*. *Slow of speech*, lit. "heavy of mouth." *Slow of tongue*, lit. "heavy of tongue"; see 6.12, 30. "Heavy" in various forms will figure throughout the plagues and exodus narrative (see, e.g., 5.9; notes on 4.21; 9.3; 10.14; 14.4; 14.25). Moses' "heavy" speech may entail a physical impediment (so comparative evidence) or an inability to wax eloquent in Egyptian (see Ezek 3.6, where foreign speech is indicated); in this story, however, Egyptians speak Hebrew (see 2.10). **4.11** *Speech*, lit. "a mouth"; Moses, whose mouth will be accompanied by the Lord (vv. 12, 15), will put the necessary words into Aaron's mouth (v. 15). Prophecy consists of the deity's very words (e.g., Deut 18.18; Jer 1.9; Ezek 2.7–3.3; 3.4, 10). **4.13** *Someone else*, rather "whomever you will send," a construction resembling *I AM WHO I AM* in 3.14. **4.14** *Speak fluently*. Cf. the historical role of the Levites as transmitters of divine instructions (Deut 33.10); cf. 18.15, where Moses the Levite functions as an oracle. **4.15–16** Aaron will play the role of oracle (*mouth*) to Moses' role as God, the source of revelation; see 7.1, where the analogy is: Moses is to Aaron as God is to a prophet. For God as an oracular source, see 18.15; 21.6; 22.7.

4.18–31 The anticipation of the tenth plague—the slaying of Egypt's firstborn (v. 23)—provides background to the assault on Moses or his firstborn (vv. 24–26). The perilous meeting with the Lord en route to Egypt contrasts with Aaron's meeting Moses (v. 27): the return to Egypt is hazardous; the journey away is smooth; cf. Deut 17.16. **4.18–20** In v. 19 the Lord orders Moses back to Egypt as though the preceding dialogue has not taken place; it implies that Moses' reluctance to return stems from the same fear that led to his flight (2.15). The language of 3.1 suggests that Moses has gone to the mountain for a purpose. Vv. 18–20 may reflect a different tradition from 3.1–4.17, one in which Moses, in the manner of other fugitive heroes, goes to Sinai/Horeb seeking an oracle, to learn if it is safe to go home to Egypt and see his kin (4.18). **4.18** *Jethro*. The Hebrew has the variant "Jether"; see note on 2.18. *Kindred*, lit. "brothers"; see note on 2.11. **4.19** See 2.23. **4.20** *Sons*. The birth of only one of Moses' sons has been reported (2.22); see 18.2–6. Apart from the episode in vv. 24–26, Moses' Midianite family plays no role in the exodus story. *Staff of God*, perhaps one given to him by God (cf. v. 17), not the one he used as a shepherd. **4.21** *Wonders*, better "signs" (so too 7.3, 9; 11.9–10), synonymous with the Hebrew word translated *sign* in 4.8–9, 30, not the same as *wonders* in 3.20, a word from a different Hebrew root. *Your power*, lit. "your hand"; the three signs given in vv. 2–9 are all indeed performed by one hand. *Harden his heart*. In 3.19 the Lord says that Pharaoh will be stubborn, but here the Lord claims responsibility for "stiffening" the Egyptian's will; as the story unfolds Pharaoh's heart will "stiffen" or "grow heavy" (see note on 4.10) by Pharaoh's own will (7.13–14, 22–23; 8.15, 19, 32; 9.7, 34–35) or it will be stiffened, made heavy, or hardened by the Lord (9.12; 10.1, 20, 27; 11.10; 14.8). The hardening prolongs the plagues and ensures that Egypt will suffer the punishment it deserves and witness the Lord's power; see note on 1.22; cf. 7.3–5; 14.4.

that I have put in your power; but I will
harden his heart, so that he will not let the
people go. 22 Then you shall say to Phar-
aoh, 'Thus says the LORD: Israel is my
firstborn son. 23 I said to you, "Let my son
go that he may worship me." But you re-
fused to let him go; now I will kill your
firstborn son.' "

24 On the way, at a place where they
spent the night, the LORD met him and
tried to kill him. 25 But Zipporah took a
flint and cut off her son's foreskin, and
touched Moses'[i] feet with it, and said,
"Truly you are a bridegroom of blood to
me!" 26 So he let him alone. It was then
she said, "A bridegroom of blood by cir-
cumcision."

27 The LORD said to Aaron, "Go into
the wilderness to meet Moses." So he
went; and he met him at the mountain of
God and kissed him. 28 Moses told Aaron
all the words of the LORD with which he
had sent him, and all the signs with which
he had charged him. 29 Then Moses and
Aaron went and assembled all the elders
of the Israelites. 30 Aaron spoke all the
words that the LORD had spoken to Mo-
ses, and performed the signs in the sight
of the people. 31 The people believed; and
when they heard that the LORD had given
heed to the Israelites and that he had seen
their misery, they bowed down and
worshiped.

Bricks Without Straw

5 Afterward Moses and Aaron went to
Pharaoh and said, "Thus says the
LORD, the God of Israel, 'Let my people
go, so that they may celebrate a festival to
me in the wilderness.' " 2 But Pharaoh
said, "Who is the LORD, that I should heed
him and let Israel go? I do not know the
LORD, and I will not let Israel go." 3 Then
they said, "The God of the Hebrews has
revealed himself to us; let us go a three
days' journey into the wilderness to sacri-

i Heb *his*

4.22–23 The metaphor of Israel's election as the Lord's *firstborn son* (see Jer 31.9; Hos 11.1) lends the tenth plague a quality of poetic justice. *Worship*, the same Hebrew verb as "to serve, work, act-as-a-slave" (see note on 2.23); the Hebrews are to be the Lord's servants, not Pharaoh's (cf. Lev 25.42, 55). **4.24–26** The unmotivated divine assault is made even stranger by its ambiguous use of pronouns: it remains unclear whether Moses or his son is the victim. The juxtaposition with Pharaoh's *firstborn son* (v. 23) suggests that Moses' son may be the one at risk. The episode runs against the larger narrative sequence in which Moses has two sons (4.20; 18.2–6). **4.24** *At a place . . . night.* The laconic Hebrew has only "at-the-lodging-place" (*bammalon*). *Tried*, the same Hebrew verb rendered "seeking" in v. 19. **4.25** In the context of Exodus the ritual blood produced by the circumcision serves to protect against destructive divine power, like the blood of the paschal lamb (12.7, 12–13, 21–27). *Zipporah*, a priest's daughter, may be acquainted with ritual procedures. *Flint*, sharpened stone used in circumcision; e.g., Josh 5.2–3. *Cut off*, not the Hebrew term "to circumcise." *Moses' feet*, lit. "his feet" (see text note *i*), possibly a euphemism for the genitals (e.g., 2 Kings 18.27; Isa 6.2; 7.20), Moses' or his son's. *Bridegroom*, either Moses (since among certain Semites a bridegroom was circumcised by his father-in-law; the Hebrew term for "father-in-law" means "one who circumcises") or his son (since among some Semites a boy undergoing circumcision is called a bridegroom). **4.26** *He*, the Lord. *Let him alone*, more precisely "let him loose." *A bridegroom . . . circumcision*, an apparent byword, the meaning of which, like the historical sense of the episode, has been lost. **4.27** *He met him.* See note on 4.18–31. *Mountain of God*, Sinai/Horeb (see note on 3.1). *Kissed him* evokes Gen 33.4; 45.14–15. **4.29** According to the instructions in 3.16. **4.30–31** Aaron's role (v. 30) answers to Moses' fourth objection (vv. 10–17) and the people's acceptance (v. 31) obviates the need for the signs provided in response to Moses' objection in vv. 1–9. The reverse (chiastic) sequence closes the passage; cf. note on 3.22. **4.31** *People*, not only the elders (v. 29). *Worshiped*, lit. "prostrated themselves," which signifies obedience to God (see 12.27).

5.1–6.1 Pharaoh reacts to Moses and Aaron by making matters worse, vindicating the Lord's prediction (3.19) and further justifying the plagues. **5.1** *Moses and Aaron.* The elders are not included as the Lord ordained (3.18). *The LORD*, the first time in this story that the Lord's name is announced in Egypt; cf. v. 23. *Celebrate a festival*, one verb in Hebrew; the Hebrew cognate noun *hag* (cf. Arabic *haj*) denotes a pilgrimage. They do not yet ask for three days' leave (as in 3.18; 5.3). **5.2** *Who is the LORD*, an echo of what Moses said in 3.11. *Heed him*, lit. "listen to his voice," an echo of what Moses said in 4.1. *I do not know.* Cf. 1.8. To know the Lord is a main theme of the succeeding narrative (e.g., 7.5, 17; 8.10; 9.14; 14.18). **5.3** A recapitulation of 3.18 with the addition *or* ("lest") *he will fall . . . sword*, an ironic hint of the plagues that will beset Egypt; *pestilence* is used of the fifth plague (9.3), *the sword* foreshadows the quasi-

fice to the LORD our God, or he will fall upon us with pestilence or sword." 4 But the king of Egypt said to them, "Moses and Aaron, why are you taking the people away from their work? Get to your labors!" 5 Pharaoh continued, "Now they are more numerous than the people of the land[j] and yet you want them to stop working!" 6 That same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters of the people, as well as their supervisors, 7 "You shall no longer give the people straw to make bricks, as before; let them go and gather straw for themselves. 8 But you shall require of them the same quantity of bricks as they have made previously; do not diminish it, for they are lazy; that is why they cry, 'Let us go and offer sacrifice to our God.' 9 Let heavier work be laid on them; then they will labor at it and pay no attention to deceptive words."

10 So the taskmasters and the supervisors of the people went out and said to the people, "Thus says Pharaoh, 'I will not give you straw. 11 Go and get straw yourselves, wherever you can find it; but your work will not be lessened in the least.'" 12 So the people scattered throughout the land of Egypt, to gather stubble for straw. 13 The taskmasters were urgent, saying, "Complete your work, the same daily assignment as when you were given straw."

j Sam: Heb *The people of the land are now many*

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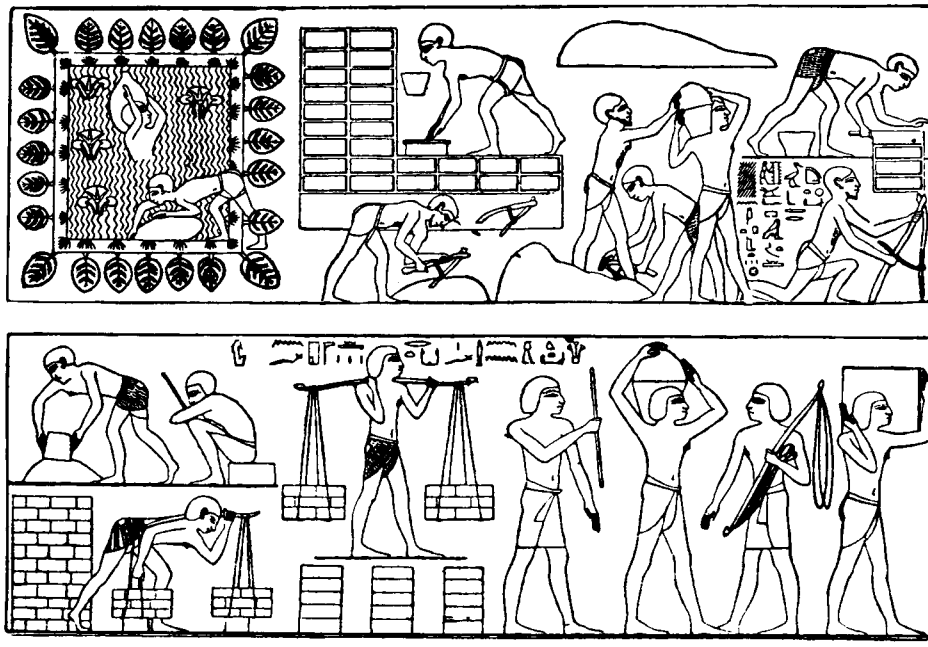
battle at the sea (see 15.9). **5.4** *King of Egypt.* By avoiding "Pharaoh" here a pun in Hebrew is averted on the verb *taking away from. Labors,* imposed in 1.11. **5.5** *More numerous.* See 1.9. *You want them to stop,* lit. "you are stopping them." The Hebrew verb translated *stop* is the root of "sabbath" (see note on 16.23); the Lord, in contrast to Pharaoh, ordains a break from labor (see Deut 5.12–15). **5.6** *Taskmasters,* lit. "oppressors," used in 3.7 and below in vv. 10, 13, 14, not the term rendered *taskmasters* in 1.11. Egyptian art depicts laborers being overseen, and sometimes beaten, by rod-wielding taskmasters. *Supervisors,* apparently Israelites (see v. 14). **5.7** *As before.* Only brick making was assigned in 1.14. **5.9** *Deceptive words,* rather "lies," that the Hebrews' God has appeared to Moses. **5.11** *Lessened,* translated *diminish* in v. 8. *Your work . . . in the least,* lit. "not a thing



Asiatic captives making bricks under Thutmose III, ruler of Egypt in the fifteenth century B.C.E., *for the temple of Amon at Thebes. Line drawing of an illustration from the tomb of Rekhmara. (From S. R. Driver,* The Book of Exodus.*)*

14 And the supervisors of the Israelites,
whom Pharaoh's taskmasters had set over
them, were beaten, and were asked, "Why
did you not finish the required quantity
of bricks yesterday and today, as you did
before?"
15 Then the Israelite supervisors
came to Pharaoh and cried, "Why do you
treat your servants like this? 16 No straw is
given to your servants, yet they say to us,
'Make bricks!' Look how your servants are
beaten! You are unjust to your own peo-
ple."[k] 17 He said, "You are lazy, lazy; that
is why you say, 'Let us go and sacrifice to
the LORD.' 18 Go now, and work; for no
straw shall be given you, but you shall still
deliver the same number of bricks."
19 The Israelite supervisors saw that they
were in trouble when they were told,
"You shall not lessen your daily number
of bricks." 20 As they left Pharaoh, they
came upon Moses and Aaron who were
waiting to meet them. 21 They said to
them, "The LORD look upon you and
judge! You have brought us into bad odor
with Pharaoh and his officials, and have
put a sword in their hand to kill us."
22 Then Moses turned again to the
LORD and said, "O LORD, why have you
mistreated this people? Why did you ever
send me? 23 Since I first came to Pharaoh
to speak in your name, he has mistreated
this people, and you have done nothing at
all to deliver your people."

Israel's Deliverance Assured

6 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Now
you shall see what I will do to Phar-
aoh: Indeed, by a mighty hand he will let
them go; by a mighty hand he will drive
them out of his land."
2 God also spoke to Moses and said to
him: "I am the LORD. 3 I appeared to
Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Al-
mighty,[l] but by my name 'The LORD'[m] I
did not make myself known to them. 4 I
also established my covenant with them,
to give them the land of Canaan, the land
in which they resided as aliens. 5 I have
also heard the groaning of the Israelites
whom the Egyptians are holding as slaves,
and I have remembered my covenant.
6 Say therefore to the Israelites, 'I am the
LORD, and I will free you from the bur-
dens of the Egyptians and deliver you
from slavery to them. I will redeem you
with an outstretched arm and with mighty
acts of judgment. 7 I will take you as my
people, and I will be your God. You shall
know that I am the LORD your God, who
has freed you from the burdens of the
Egyptians. 8 I will bring you into the land
that I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac,
and Jacob; I will give it to you for a pos-
session. I am the LORD.' " 9 Moses told this

k Gk Compare Syr Vg: Heb *beaten, and the sin of your people* *l* Traditional rendering of Heb *El Shaddai* *m* Heb *YHWH*; see note at 3.15

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will be removed from your work." **5.14** *Were beaten.* Cf. 2.11. **5.15** *Cried* connotes complaining, as in 14.15 and perhaps in 5.8. *Servants,* the same term as that for the slaves they oversee. **5.16** *You are unjust,* rather "you sin against," as in 9.27. **5.17** Cf. v. 8. **5.19** *Trouble,* lit. "bad, evil." **5.21** *You have brought us into a bad odor with Pharaoh,* lit. "You have made our smell stink in the eyes of Pharaoh." Bad odor will attend the first two plagues (see 7.21; 8.10). **5.22** *Turned again,* returned to Mount Sinai. *Mistreated,* of the same Hebrew root as the word translated *trouble* in v. 19. **5.23** *First,* not in the Hebrew. *You have done nothing at all to deliver,* rather "you have not (yet) rescued, not rescued." *Your name* and *your people* stress the Lord's responsibility and evoke Moses' diffidence at the burning bush (chs. 3–4); cf. 32.7, 11. **6.1** *Mighty hand.* Cf. 3.19–20.

6.2–13 Cf. the parallel passage, chs. 3–4, which scholars trace to a different tradition. In context, the present passage presupposes the Israelites' discouragement after the initial confrontation with Pharaoh (v. 9), and the divine charge to go to Pharaoh (v. 11) is a reassurance. **6.2** *Also,* not in the Hebrew. **6.3** *Almighty.* Etymologically the name suggests "One of the Mountain," appropriate for a deity who reveals himself on Horeb/Sinai; cf. Gen 17.1; 28.3; 35.11. *The LORD,* Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob each use this name (Gen 12.8; 26.22; 32.10); the present passage seems to know a different tradition. **6.4** *Resided as aliens.* In this context merely "resided" might be more accurate (cf. Gen 26.3). The verse echoes Gen 17.7–8. **6.5** This verse echoes 2.24. **6.6** *Free.* See 3.10, where the same Hebrew verb is rendered *bring . . . out.* The Hebrew word translated *burdens* is rendered *forced labor* in 1.11; 2.11 and *labors* in 5.4. *Redeem* connotes the ransom of indentured kin; cf. Lev 25.47–49. **6.7** *Know.* See note on 5.2. The relationship between God and Israel is expressed as a legal adoption; cf., e.g., Lev 26.12; 2 Sam 7.14. **6.8** *I swore,* expressed idiomatically in Hebrew by a gesture of

to the Israelites; but they would not listen
to Moses, because of their broken spirit
and their cruel slavery.

10 Then the LORD spoke to Moses,
11 "Go and tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to
let the Israelites go out of his land." 12 But
Moses spoke to the LORD, "The Israelites
have not listened to me; how then shall
Pharaoh listen to me, poor speaker that I
am?"[n] 13 Thus the LORD spoke to Moses
and Aaron, and gave them orders regard-
ing the Israelites and Pharaoh king of
Egypt, charging them to free the Israelites
from the land of Egypt.

The Genealogy of Moses and Aaron

14 The following are the heads of
their ancestral houses: the sons of Reu-
ben, the firstborn of Israel: Hanoch,
Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi; these are the
families of Reuben. 15 The sons of Sim-
eon: Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar,
and Shaul,[o] the son of a Canaanite
woman; these are the families of Simeon.
16 The following are the names of the sons
of Levi according to their genealogies:
Gershon,[p] Kohath, and Merari, and the
length of Levi's life was one hundred
thirty-seven years. 17 The sons of Ger-
shon:[p] Libni and Shimei, by their fami-
lies. 18 The sons of Kohath: Amram,
Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel, and the length
of Kohath's life was one hundred thirty-
three years. 19 The sons of Merari: Mahli
and Mushi. These are the families of the
Levites according to their genealogies.
20 Amram married Jochebed his father's
sister and she bore him Aaron and Moses,
and the length of Amram's life was one
hundred thirty-seven years. 21 The sons of
Izhar: Korah, Nepheg, and Zichri. 22 The
sons of Uzziel: Mishael, Elzaphan, and
Sithri. 23 Aaron married Elisheba, daugh-
ter of Amminadab and sister of Nahshon,
and she bore him Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar,
and Ithamar. 24 The sons of Korah: Assir,
Elkanah, and Abiasaph; these are the
families of the Korahites. 25 Aaron's son
Eleazar married one of the daughters of
Putiel, and she bore him Phinehas. These
are the heads of the ancestral houses of
the Levites by their families.

26 It was this same Aaron and Moses
to whom the LORD said, "Bring the Israel-
ites out of the land of Egypt, company by
company." 27 It was they who spoke to
Pharaoh king of Egypt to bring the Israel-
ites out of Egypt, the same Moses and
Aaron.

n Heb *me? I am uncircumcised of lips* *o* Or *Saul*
p Also spelled *Gershom*; see 2.22

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oath-taking, "I have raised my hand" (e.g., Deut 32.40). **6.9** *Broken spirit,* lit. "shortness of breath," frustration perhaps. *Cruel slavery,* the same phrase translated *hard service* in 1.14. **6.11** *Tell,* the substance of the preceding revelation. *To let,* rather "so that he (Pharaoh) will let." **6.12** *Poor speaker.* See note on 4.10. **6.13** *Aaron.* Cf. 4.14.

6.14–27 The narrative is interrupted by a genealogy that places Moses and Aaron within the lineage of the Israelite tribe and among the various Levitical clans. Vv. 26–27 repeat the contents of vv. 10–13 and resume the narrative. The genealogy breaks off after Levi, giving the impression that the text is excerpted from a fuller list, such as Gen 46.8–27. See the more ramified genealogy in Num 26. **6.14** *Ancestral houses,* lit. "father's houses," denotes tribal divisions. **6.16** *Merari,* an Egyptian name. *One hundred thirty-seven.* The limit of 120 years (Gen 6.3) only applies from Moses' generation on. **6.20** *Father's sister.* See note on 2.1. This is incest according to Lev 18.12. Heroes' births are often marked by the illicit; cf. the birth of Isaac from a brother and half-sister (Gen 20.12), David from a Moabite (Ruth), and Solomon from the once-adulterous couple, David and Bathsheba. *Aaron and Moses.* Some versions add here "and Miriam their sister" (see Num 26.59). **6.23** *Elisheba,* "Elizabeth" in the Greek version. *Amminadab,* clan head of Judah (Num 1.7). *Sister of Nahshon.* An unmarried woman is sometimes identified by her eldest brother, who may play a role in arranging her marriage (see Gen 24); cf. Ex 15.20; Gen 25.20; 28.9. *Nahshon* is the military chieftain of Judah (Num 2.3). *Nadab . . . Ithamar.* The Hebrew couples "Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar"; the older pair will die (Lev 10.1–5) and the younger will succeed to priestly leadership; cf. note on 7.7. **6.24** *Korah,* rebel (Num 16) and namesake of the Second Temple gatekeepers (1 Chr 9.19). **6.25** *Putiel,* an Egyptian name; cf. Potiphar (Gen 39.1), Potiphera (Gen 41.45). *Phinehas,* an Egyptian name. A large number of Egyptian names are concentrated in the Levite tribe (e.g., Moses, Aaron, Miriam, Merari, Hophni), leading some to trace only the Levites to Egypt. **6.26–27** The resumptive unit begins with the sequence *Aaron and Moses* and ends chiastically with *Moses and Aaron.* **6.26** *Company,* in a military sense (see Num 2); see 12.41; cf. 7.4; 12.51; 13.18.

Moses and Aaron Obey God's Commands

28 On the day when the LORD spoke
to Moses in the land of Egypt, 29 he said to
him, "I am the LORD; tell Pharaoh king of
Egypt all that I am speaking to you."
30 But Moses said in the LORD's presence,
"Since I am a poor speaker,[q] why would
Pharaoh listen to me?"

7 The LORD said to Moses, "See, I have
made you like God to Pharaoh, and
your brother Aaron shall be your
prophet. 2 You shall speak all that I com-
mand you, and your brother Aaron shall
tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites go out of
his land. 3 But I will harden Pharaoh's
heart, and I will multiply my signs and
wonders in the land of Egypt. 4 When
Pharaoh does not listen to you, I will lay
my hand upon Egypt and bring my peo-
ple the Israelites, company by company,
out of the land of Egypt by great acts of
judgment. 5 The Egyptians shall know
that I am the LORD, when I stretch out my
hand against Egypt and bring the Israel-
ites out from among them." 6 Moses and
Aaron did so; they did just as the LORD
commanded them. 7 Moses was eighty
years old and Aaron eighty-three when
they spoke to Pharaoh.

Aaron's Miraculous Rod

8 The LORD said to Moses and Aaron,
9 "When Pharaoh says to you, 'Perform a
wonder,' then you shall say to Aaron,
'Take your staff and throw it down before
Pharaoh, and it will become a snake.'"
10 So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh
and did as the LORD had commanded;
Aaron threw down his staff before Phar-
aoh and his officials, and it became a
snake. 11 Then Pharaoh summoned the
wise men and the sorcerers; and they also,
the magicians of Egypt, did the same by
their secret arts. 12 Each one threw down
his staff, and they became snakes; but
Aaron's staff swallowed up theirs. 13 Still
Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he
would not listen to them, as the LORD had
said.

The First Plague: Water Turned to Blood

14 Then the LORD said to Moses,
"Pharaoh's heart is hardened; he refuses
to let the people go. 15 Go to Pharaoh in
the morning, as he is going out to the wa-
ter; stand by at the river bank to meet
him, and take in your hand the staff that
was turned into a snake. 16 Say to him,
'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, sent
me to you to say, "Let my people go, so
that they may worship me in the wilder-
ness." But until now you have not lis-

[q] Heb *am uncircumcised of lips*; see 6.12

6.28–7.7 A recapitulation of earlier passages, underscoring the fact that when Moses and Aaron address Pharaoh, they represent the Lord. **6.30** An echo of 6.12. **7.1–2** An echo of 4.16. **7.2** An echo of 6.11. **7.3–5** An echo of 3.19–20; 4.21. **7.3** *Wonders* anticipates vv. 8–13. **7.4** *Great acts of judgment* echoes 6.6; cf. 12.12. **7.5** *Shall know* echoes 6.7 and anticipates v. 17. *Stretch out my hand* (see note on 3.20) echoes 6.6 and anticipates the first three plagues (see 7.19; 8.5–6, 16–17). **7.7** In traditional literature and regularly in the narrative traditions of the Hebrew Bible, the older brother is subordinated to the younger.

7.8–13 See note on 4.2. Here, as in the first three plagues, Aaron performs the signs with his own staff and not Israel but Pharaoh is the object. **7.9** *Snake*. See note on 4.2–5; in Ezek 29.3; 32.2 the term is used to describe a pharaoh as a "dragon." **7.11** *Magicians*. The Hebrew is a loanword from Egyptian, used in the Pentateuch only of Egyptians. **7.12** *Swallowed*. Cf. 15.12. The one staff swallowing the many recalls the dream Egypt's magicians could not interpret (Gen 41.1–7). The magicians' competition with Aaron here and in the first three plagues prefigures the contest between the Lord and Pharaoh. **7.13** *Hardened*, "stiffened"; see note on 4.21. **7.14–12.32** The ten plagues appear to comprise different traditions; Pss 78; 105 count no more than eight of them. Here they are arranged in three sets of three plus a climatic tenth. Although some see the plagues as a plausible series of natural disasters, the narrative distinguishes their incredible, unprecedented (9.18, 24; 10.6, 14; 11.6) character; the tenth admits of no "natural" explanation.

7.14–25 Afflicting Egypt's deified life source recalls the genocide at the Nile (1.22). **7.14** *Hardened*, lit. "heavy"; see note on 4.21. **7.15** Each set of three plagues begins with Moses alone confronting Pharaoh in the morning (cf. 8.20; 9.13). Moses' concern in 3.11 was for naught. *Turned* anticipates the coming plague (see vv. 17, 20). *Snake*, the term used in 4.3. **7.16** An

tened. 17 Thus says the LORD, "By this
you shall know that I am the LORD." See,
with the staff that is in my hand I will
strike the water that is in the Nile, and it
shall be turned to blood. 18 The fish in the
river shall die, the river itself shall stink,
and the Egyptians shall be unable to drink
water from the Nile.'" 19 The LORD said
to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Take your staff
and stretch out your hand over the waters
of Egypt—over its rivers, its canals, and
its ponds, and all its pools of water—so
that they may become blood; and there
shall be blood throughout the whole land
of Egypt, even in vessels of wood and in
vessels of stone.'"

20 Moses and Aaron did just as the
LORD commanded. In the sight of Phar-
aoh and of his officials he lifted up the
staff and struck the water in the river, and
all the water in the river was turned into
blood, 21 and the fish in the river died.
The river stank so that the Egyptians
could not drink its water, and there was
blood throughout the whole land of
Egypt. 22 But the magicians of Egypt did
the same by their secret arts; so Pharaoh's
heart remained hardened, and he would
not listen to them, as the LORD had said.
23 Pharaoh turned and went into his
house, and he did not take even this
to heart. 24 And all the Egyptians had
to dig along the Nile for water to drink,
for they could not drink the water of
the river.

25 Seven days passed after the LORD
had struck the Nile.

The Second Plague: Frogs

8 [r] Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to
Pharaoh and say to him, 'Thus says
the LORD: Let my people go, so that they
may worship me. 2 If you refuse to let
them go, I will plague your whole country
with frogs. 3 The river shall swarm with
frogs; they shall come up into your pal-
ace, into your bedchamber and your bed,
and into the houses of your officials and
of your people,[s] and into your ovens and
your kneading bowls. 4 The frogs shall
come up on you and on your people and
on all your officials.'" 5 [t] And the LORD
said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Stretch out
your hand with your staff over the rivers,
the canals, and the pools, and make frogs
come up on the land of Egypt.'" 6 So
Aaron stretched out his hand over the wa-
ters of Egypt; and the frogs came up and
covered the land of Egypt. 7 But the magi-
cians did the same by their secret arts, and
brought frogs up on the land of Egypt.

8 Then Pharaoh called Moses and
Aaron, and said, "Pray to the LORD to take
away the frogs from me and my people,
and I will let the people go to sacrifice to
the LORD." 9 Moses said to Pharaoh,
"Kindly tell me when I am to pray for you
and for your officials and for your peo-
ple, that the frogs may be removed from
you and your houses and be left only in
the Nile." 10 And he said, "Tomorrow."
Moses said, "As you say! So that you may
know that there is no one like the LORD

r Ch 7.26 in Heb
s Gk: Heb *upon your people*
t Ch 8.1 in Heb

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allusion to 5.1–4. **7.17** *Know.* See note on 5.2. *It,* the water. **7.18** *Shall stink.* Cf. 5.21. **7.19** *Canals,* plural of the same word translated "Nile." *Pools of water,* a term used in Gen 1.10, suggesting perhaps that the plagues, like the flood, reverse the order of creation. *Vessels,* added for clarity; this fact differentiates the plague from a "natural" disaster of the Nile. **7.20** *Struck.* See note on 2.11. **7.20–21** *The river,* in Hebrew refers to "the Nile." **7.22** Where the *magicians* found water to turn to blood is not explained. *Hardened,* "stiffened." See note on 4.21. The sentence repeats v. 13 verbatim, lending coherence to the narrative. **7.23** *Turned,* did an about-face. **7.25** *Seven days,* a round number. The unusual waiting period allows the Nile to return to normal and serve as the source of the next plague (see 8.3). *Struck.* See v. 20.

8.1–15 The first of four plagues connected with animals is remarkable for its extent. The magicians can produce frogs, ironically compounding the plague, but they cannot remove them. **8.1** Cf. 7.16. **8.3** *The river,* "the Nile." *Swarm.* Cf. Gen 1.20; see note on Ex 1.7, in whose light the plague is poetic justice. *Kneading bowls.* The first plague made it impossible to drink, the second to cook. **8.5** *Stretch out.* See note on 7.5; an echo of 7.19. **8.6** *Covered,* a motif recurring in the plagues of hail, locusts, and darkness. **8.8** Recalling 7.22, one is surprised that now *Pharaoh calls Moses and Aaron. Pray,* entreat. *From me.* The plague was directed at Pharaoh first (vv. 3–4). **8.9** *That the frogs may be removed.* In Hebrew the verb is active, "to cut off the frogs." **8.10** *Know.* See 7.17; Moses is "calling the shot" to demonstrate the plague is directed by Yahweh.

our God, 11 the frogs shall leave you and
your houses and your officials and your
people; they shall be left only in the Nile."
12 Then Moses and Aaron went out from
Pharaoh; and Moses cried out to the LORD
concerning the frogs that he had brought
upon Pharaoh.[u] 13 And the LORD did as
Moses requested: the frogs died in the
houses, the courtyards, and the fields.
14 And they gathered them together in
heaps, and the land stank. 15 But when
Pharaoh saw that there was a respite, he
hardened his heart, and would not listen
to them, just as the LORD had said.

The Third Plague: Gnats

16 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Say
to Aaron, 'Stretch out your staff and
strike the dust of the earth, so that it may
become gnats throughout the whole land
of Egypt.'" 17 And they did so; Aaron
stretched out his hand with his staff and
struck the dust of the earth, and gnats
came on humans and animals alike; all the
dust of the earth turned into gnats
throughout the whole land of Egypt.
18 The magicians tried to produce gnats
by their secret arts, but they could not.
There were gnats on both humans and
animals. 19 And the magicians said to
Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God!" But
Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he
would not listen to them, just as the LORD
had said.

The Fourth Plague: Flies

20 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Rise
early in the morning and present yourself
before Pharaoh, as he goes out to the water, and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD:
Let my people go, so that they may worship me. 21 For if you will not let my people go, I will send swarms of flies on you,
your officials, and your people, and into
your houses; and the houses of the Egyptians shall be filled with swarms of flies; so
also the land where they live. 22 But on
that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, where my people live, so that no
swarms of flies shall be there, that you
may know that I the LORD am in this land.
23 Thus I will make a distinction[v] between my people and your people. This
sign shall appear tomorrow.'" 24 The
LORD did so, and great swarms of flies
came into the house of Pharaoh and into
his officials' houses; in all of Egypt the
land was ruined because of the flies.

u Or *frogs, as he had agreed with Pharaoh*
v Gk Vg: Heb *will set redemption*

8.12 *Cried out,* used in 14.15; 15.25 as well as in 3.7; 12.30. **8.13** *Died in,* in Hebrew "died from," meaning that the frogs in these areas died; for a similar usage, see 9.6–7. **8.14** *They,* the Egyptians. **8.15** *Hardened,* "made heavy"; see note on 4.21.

8.16–19 The term *gnats,* or mosquitoes, which are indigenous to Egypt, has also been interpreted as "lice," which are not. The last plague in each set of three is narrated briefly; there is no encounter with Pharaoh and no mention of removing the pest. **8.17** *Animals.* As in the flood story of Gen 6–9, animals are innocent victims, here afflicted to punish the Egyptians. *All the dust of the earth turned into gnats,* an impossible, therefore amazing, feat; cf. 7.19. **8.18** See v. 7. **8.19** *This is . . . God.* To acknowledge God's power was an explicit purpose of the preceding two plagues (7.17; 8.10). *Hardened,* "stiffened." See note on 4.21.

8.20–32 The Hebrew word translated *flies* occurs only in connection with this plague and is not precisely defined. It may derive from the sense of "swarm"; Jewish tradition interprets "wild animals." The word resembles the word for "locusts" (eighth plague) and the sense of "fly" suits Ps 78.45. **8.20** *Morning.* See note on 7.15. *Present yourself,* "position yourself," as in 2.4; 7.15 in which the term is translated with the verb "to stand." **8.21** This verse is an echo of vv. 3–4, forging coherence with the second plague. *Flies.* See note on 8.20–32. *Send.* The Hebrew term is of the same root as *let . . . go. Filled,* a verbal link with the first plague, rendered *passed* in 7.25. **8.22** *Set apart.* As in the fifth (9.4), seventh (9.26), ninth (10.23), and tenth (11.7; 12.23) plagues the Israelites are miraculously spared; see also note on 14.1–31. Segregating the Hebrews, by which Egypt had asserted its superiority (Gen 43.32; 46.34), is turned to Israel's advantage. *Goshen.* See Gen 45.10; the name may derive from Arabs who spread into Egypt in the seventh century B.C.E. *Know.* See note on 8.19. *In this land,* lit. "in the midst of the land." **8.23** *Sign,* as in 4.8–9. *Tomorrow* recalls 8.10. **8.24** *The LORD* effects this plague without the intermediation of Moses or Aaron. *Great swarms of flies,* lit. "a heavy swarm-of-flies"; see note on 4.10. *Ruined* evokes "corrupt"

25 Then Pharaoh summoned Moses
and Aaron, and said, "Go, sacrifice to
your God within the land." 26 But Moses
said, "It would not be right to do so; for
the sacrifices that we offer to the LORD
our God are offensive to the Egyptians. If
we offer in the sight of the Egyptians sac-
rifices that are offensive to them, will they
not stone us? 27 We must go a three days'
journey into the wilderness and sacrifice
to the LORD our God as he commands us."
28 So Pharaoh said, "I will let you go to
sacrifice to the LORD your God in the wil-
derness, provided you do not go very far
away. Pray for me." 29 Then Moses said,
"As soon as I leave you, I will pray to the
LORD that the swarms of flies may depart
tomorrow from Pharaoh, from his offi-
cials, and from his people; only do not let
Pharaoh again deal falsely by not letting
the people go to sacrifice to the LORD."
30 So Moses went out from Pharaoh
and prayed to the LORD. 31 And the LORD
did as Moses asked: he removed the
swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his
officials, and from his people; not one re-
mained. 32 But Pharaoh hardened his
heart this time also, and would not let the
people go.

The Fifth Plague: Livestock Diseased

9 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to
Pharaoh, and say to him, 'Thus says
the LORD, the God of the Hebrews: Let
my people go, so that they may worship
me. 2 For if you refuse to let them go and
still hold them, 3 the hand of the LORD will
strike with a deadly pestilence your live-
stock in the field: the horses, the donkeys,
the camels, the herds, and the flocks.
4 But the LORD will make a distinction be-
tween the livestock of Israel and the live-
stock of Egypt, so that nothing shall die of
all that belongs to the Israelites.'" 5 The
LORD set a time, saying, "Tomorrow the
LORD will do this thing in the land." 6 And
on the next day the LORD did so; all the
livestock of the Egyptians died, but of the
livestock of the Israelites not one died.
7 Pharaoh inquired and found that not
one of the livestock of the Israelites was
dead. But the heart of Pharaoh was hard-
ened, and he would not let the people go.

The Sixth Plague: Boils

8 Then the LORD said to Moses and
Aaron, "Take handfuls of soot from the
kiln, and let Moses throw it in the air in
the sight of Pharaoh. 9 It shall become

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and "destroy" from the same Hebrew root in Gen 6.11–13. **8.25–27** Cf. 5.3. **8.26** The Hebrew terms for *right* and *so* play on the same root. *Offensive*, an "abomination." See note on 8.22. Egypt abominates Israelite sheepherding (Gen 46.34), and Israel would offer sheep to its God; cf. 12.3–5. **8.29** *Tomorrow*, emphasized in the Hebrew. *Only*, rendered *provided* in v. 28; Moses' reply plays on Pharaoh's rhetoric. *Deal falsely*, play a dirty trick (e.g., Gen 31.7). **8.31** *Removed*, lit. "caused to depart," the Hebrew root used in v. 29 and of the removal of the frogs in vv. 9–11. *Remained*, another verbal link with the second plague (translated *be left* in v. 9). **8.32** *Hardened*, "made heavy" (see 8.15).

9.1–7 The affliction of Egypt's animals, anticipated in the third plague (see note on 8.17), is resumed in the sixth (vv. 9–10), seventh (9.19–22, 25), and tenth (11.5; 12.29) plagues. The Israelites' livestock is spared and will accompany them out of Egypt (10.26; 12.32, 38). Pestilence becomes a curse for the Israelites to shun (Lev 26.25; Deut 28.21). **9.1** The freedom refrain (7.16; 8.1, 20). **9.2** *Hold*, the Hebrew root of *hardened* in 7.13, 22; 8.19 (see note on 4.21). **9.3** *The LORD*, as in the preceding plague (see note on 8.24). *Strike with a deadly pestilence*, lit. "will be there . . . , a very heavy pestilence." "Will-be-there" is of the same root as the divine name (see note on 3.14); on "heavy," see note on 4.10. *Camels*, an anachronism; camels weren't used in Israel in substantial numbers until ca. 600 B.C.E. and in Egypt even later. **9.4** *Distinction*, as in the preceding plague (8.22–23). **9.5** See 8.10, 23. *Thing*, Hebrew *davar*, also used in *nothing* (v. 4) and in the phrase translated *did so* (v. 6), a play on *pestilence* (Hebrew *dever*) in v. 3. **9.6** *All the livestock*, a detail that, like *all the water* in 7.20, is inconsistent with what follows; some of Egypt's livestock will be explicitly affected by the sixth (9.10), seventh (9.19–21), and tenth (11.5; 12.29) plagues. **9.7** *Inquired*, lit. "sent," an ironic play in Hebrew on the cognate *let go* (v. 1). *Was hardened*, lit. "became heavy" (see 8.15, 32).

9.8–12 See note on 8.16–19; Pharaoh is not addressed, but he is to witness the transformation of soot into boils. Boils is the first plague to affect humans directly; the "boils of Egypt" is a curse (Deut 28.27). **9.8** The Hebrew terms for *handful* and *soot* form a wordplay. *Moses*. Moses and Aaron collect the soot, but only Moses effects the plague by throwing the soot. **9.8, 10** *In the air*,

fine dust all over the land of Egypt, and
shall cause festering boils on humans and
animals throughout the whole land of
Egypt." 10 So they took soot from the kiln,
and stood before Pharaoh, and Moses
threw it in the air, and it caused festering
boils on humans and animals. 11 The ma-
gicians could not stand before Moses be-
cause of the boils, for the boils afflicted
the magicians as well as all the Egyptians.
12 But the LORD hardened the heart of
Pharaoh, and he would not listen to them,
just as the LORD had spoken to Moses.

The Seventh Plague: Thunder and Hail

13 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Rise
up early in the morning and present
yourself before Pharaoh, and say to him,
'Thus says the LORD, the God of the He-
brews: Let my people go, so that they may
worship me. 14 For this time I will send all
my plagues upon you yourself, and upon
your officials, and upon your people, so
that you may know that there is no one
like me in all the earth. 15 For by now I
could have stretched out my hand and
struck you and your people with pesti-
lence, and you would have been cut off
from the earth. 16 But this is why I have
let you live: to show you my power, and to
make my name resound through all the
earth. 17 You are still exalting yourself
against my people, and will not let them
go. 18 Tomorrow at this time I will cause
the heaviest hail to fall that has ever fallen
in Egypt from the day it was founded un-
til now. 19 Send, therefore, and have your
livestock and everything that you have in
the open field brought to a secure place;
every human or animal that is in the open
field and is not brought under shelter will
die when the hail comes down upon
them.' " 20 Those officials of Pharaoh who
feared the word of the LORD hurried their
slaves and livestock off to a secure place.
21 Those who did not regard the word of
the LORD left their slaves and livestock in
the open field.

22 The LORD said to Moses, "Stretch
out your hand toward heaven so that hail
may fall on the whole land of Egypt, on
humans and animals and all the plants of
the field in the land of Egypt." 23 Then
Moses stretched out his staff toward
heaven, and the LORD sent thunder and
hail, and fire came down on the earth.
And the LORD rained hail on the land of
Egypt; 24 there was hail with fire flashing
continually in the midst of it, such heavy
hail as had never fallen in all the land of
Egypt since it became a nation. 25 The hail
struck down everything that was in the

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lit. "heavenward." **9.11** The *magicians*, who increasingly fail, are not only beaten but ridiculed. *Could not*, a motif; cf. 7.18 (*be unable*); 7.21, 24; 8.18. **9.12** *Hardened*, lit. "stiffened"; this is the first time the Lord brings on Pharaoh's stubbornness; see note on 4.21.

9.13–35 The first in the third set of plagues (see note on 7.15) is drawn out. Moses explains the reason for prolonging the plagues (vv. 14–16). The hail is extraordinary for its combination with fire, its unprecedented extent (vv. 18, 23–24), and the exemption of the Israelites (v. 26). Pharaoh's temporary surrender (v. 27) is an anticlimax. **9.13** *Present yourself*. See note on 8.20. The rest of the verse echoes 9.1. **9.14** *All my plagues*. This is curious; perhaps it refers to the severity of the plague, or *this time* refers to the set of three plagues. *There is no one like me*. The claim carries greater conviction following the utter defeat of the magicians. **9.15** *Stretched*, rendered *send* in v. 14; cf. note on 3.20. *Struck*. See note on 2.11. Until now only the cattle have been afflicted with *pestilence* (v. 3). **9.16** *To make . . . resound*, lit. "to tell"; cf. 10.2; 12.27–28; 13.8; cf. Ps 78.1–6. **9.17** *Exalting*, elevating (see Prov 4.8). **9.18** *Tomorrow*. See 8.10. *Heaviest hail*, a close echo in Hebrew of "a very heavy pestilence" (see note on 9.3). *Has ever fallen*. See note on 7.14–12.32. **9.19** *Send*, proclaim through messengers. *Livestock*. According to v. 6, all the livestock of the Egyptians died in the fifth plague; see note on 9.6. The plague is directed against life supports, not life itself. **9.20** *Officials*. See 7.10. *A secure place*; rather *shelters* (v. 19). **9.21** *Did not regard*, a faint echo of *did not take . . . to heart* (7.23). Egypt's willfulness is ultimately responsible for its catastrophic fate; see note on 1.22. **9.22** *Stretch*. See note on 7.5. *Toward heaven*, a link with vv. 8, 10. *Whole land . . . on humans and animals* seems dissonant with vv. 20–21; for consistency one assumes that the persons and livestock of the God-fearing are excepted. *Plants of the field*, also in v. 25, evokes Gen 2.5; see note on 7.19. **9.23** Extending the arm (v. 22) and extending the *staff* are viewed as the same act, as in 10.12–13; 14.16, 21. *Thunder* (lit. "sounds") and *fire* anticipate the Sinai revelation (19.16, 18). The combination of *heaven*, *fire*, and *rained* recalls the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19.24). **9.24** *Flashing*, elsewhere only in Ezek 1.4. *Such . . . hail*, an echo of *no one like me* (v. 14); the incomparable deity effects unprecedented phenomena; cf. also v. 18.

open field throughout all the land of
Egypt, both human and animal; the hail
also struck down all the plants of the field,
and shattered every tree in the field.
26 Only in the land of Goshen, where the
Israelites were, there was no hail.
27 Then Pharaoh summoned Moses
and Aaron, and said to them, "This time I
have sinned; the LORD is in the right, and
I and my people are in the wrong. 28 Pray
to the LORD! Enough of God's thunder
and hail! I will let you go; you need stay
no longer." 29 Moses said to him, "As soon
as I have gone out of the city, I will stretch
out my hands to the LORD; the thunder
will cease, and there will be no more hail,
so that you may know that the earth is the
LORD's. 30 But as for you and your offi-
cials, I know that you do not yet fear the
LORD God." 31 (Now the flax and the bar-
ley were ruined, for the barley was in the
ear and the flax was in bud. 32 But the
wheat and the spelt were not ruined, for
they are late in coming up.) 33 So Moses
left Pharaoh, went out of the city, and
stretched out his hands to the LORD; then
the thunder and the hail ceased, and the
rain no longer poured down on the earth.
34 But when Pharaoh saw that the rain
and the hail and the thunder had ceased,
he sinned once more and hardened his
heart, he and his officials. 35 So the heart
of Pharaoh was hardened, and he would
not let the Israelites go, just as the LORD
had spoken through Moses.

The Eighth Plague: Locusts

10 Then the LORD said to Moses,
"Go to Pharaoh; for I have hard-
ened his heart and the heart of his offi-
cials, in order that I may show these signs
of mine among them, 2 and that you may
tell your children and grandchildren how
I have made fools of the Egyptians and
what signs I have done among them—so
that you may know that I am the LORD."
3 So Moses and Aaron went to Phar-
aoh, and said to him, "Thus says the
LORD, the God of the Hebrews, 'How long
will you refuse to humble yourself before
me? Let my people go, so that they may
worship me. 4 For if you refuse to let my
people go, tomorrow I will bring locusts
into your country. 5 They shall cover the
surface of the land, so that no one will be
able to see the land. They shall devour the
last remnant left you after the hail, and
they shall devour every tree of yours that
grows in the field. 6 They shall fill your
houses, and the houses of all your officials
and of all the Egyptians—something that
neither your parents nor your grandpar-
ents have seen, from the day they came on
earth to this day.' " Then he turned and
went out from Pharaoh.

9.25 *Struck . . . shattered,* parallelism (see note on 3.15); cf. Ps 29.5. **9.26** See note on 8.22. **9.27** *Summoned,* lit. "sent and called for," using the Hebrew rendered *send* in v. 19. *In the right,* legal terminology (e.g., Deut 25.1) suggesting the Lord's superiority is proved by the evidence of the plagues. *In the right* and *in the wrong* also connote the "righteous" and "wicked," again evoking Sodom and Gomorrah (see note on v. 23; cf. Gen 18.23). **9.28** *Pray.* Cf. 8.28. *Enough,* lit. "it is (too) great"; cf. 1.9, where *more numerous* is lit. "too great." *God's thunder,* idiomatic for "very great thunder." **9.29** *Out of the city,* an indication of leaving the royal precincts or possibly a suggestion that the Lord may be contacted only outside the pagan site. *Stretch,* or "spread," a gesture of prayer (e.g., 1 Kings 8.22; Isa 1.15). *You may know* echoes v. 14. **9.30** Moses explains why he needed to provide additional proof that God is the supreme power by predicting the end of the plague. **9.31–32** Some crops had to survive to serve as fodder for the locusts in the next plague (10.5, 12, 15). **9.33** *Stretched.* See note on 9.29. *Rain,* not mentioned except in *cause . . . to fall* (v. 18). **9.34** *Sinned.* See v. 27. *Hardened,* "made heavy" (see note on 4.21). **9.35** *Hardened,* "stiffened" by itself (see note on 4.21).

10.1–20 The locusts devour the remaining vegetation and cover the land (vv. 5, 15), providing a transition from the devastation of crops by hail to the darkness that follows. For the first time Pharaoh is pressured to release the Hebrews (v. 7), anticipating the tenth plague (12.33). Locusts are a curse (Deut 28.38); cf. note on 9.8–12. **10.1** *Hardened,* "made heavy," as in 9.34. **10.2** *Tell.* See note on 9.16. **10.3** *How long,* a rhetorical addition to the formula in 9.13. *Humble yourself,* the same Hebrew root translated *oppress* in 1.11–12; Pharaoh must receive poetic justice. **10.4** An echo of 8.2. *Tomorrow.* See 8.10. **10.5** The imagery is elaborated in Joel 1; cf. Judg 6.5; 7.12. Here human and animal life are only indirectly affected, as the severest plague is saved for last. *Cover the surface.* Cf. Num 22.5, 11. *Remnant.* See note on 9.31–32. **10.6** Another echo of the frog plague (8.3–6), whose relative harmlessness contrasts with the severity of the locust plague. *Turned,* "faced" away, foreshadow-

7 Pharaoh's officials said to him, "How
long shall this fellow be a snare to us? Let
the people go, so that they may worship
the LORD their God; do you not yet un-
derstand that Egypt is ruined?" 8 So Moses
and Aaron were brought back to Pharaoh,
and he said to them, "Go, worship the
LORD your God! But which ones are to
go?" 9 Moses said, "We will go with our
young and our old; we will go with our
sons and daughters and with our flocks
and herds, because we have the LORD's
festival to celebrate." 10 He said to them,
"The LORD indeed will be with you, if ever
I let your little ones go with you! Plainly,
you have some evil purpose in mind.
11 No, never! Your men may go and wor-
ship the LORD, for that is what you are
asking." And they were driven out from
Pharaoh's presence.

12 Then the LORD said to Moses,
"Stretch out your hand over the land of
Egypt, so that the locusts may come upon
it and eat every plant in the land, all that
the hail has left." 13 So Moses stretched
out his staff over the land of Egypt, and
the LORD brought an east wind upon the
land all that day and all that night; when
morning came, the east wind had brought
the locusts. 14 The locusts came upon all
the land of Egypt and settled on the whole
country of Egypt, such a dense swarm of
locusts as had never been before, nor ever
shall be again. 15 They covered the surface
of the whole land, so that the land was
black; and they ate all the plants in the
land and all the fruit of the trees that the
hail had left; nothing green was left, no
tree, no plant in the field, in all the land
of Egypt. 16 Pharaoh hurriedly sum-
moned Moses and Aaron and said, "I
have sinned against the LORD your God,
and against you. 17 Do forgive my sin just
this once, and pray to the LORD your God
that at the least he remove this deadly
thing from me." 18 So he went out from
Pharaoh and prayed to the LORD. 19 The
LORD changed the wind into a very strong
west wind, which lifted the locusts and
drove them into the Red Sea;[w] not a sin-
gle locust was left in all the country of
Egypt. 20 But the LORD hardened Phar-
aoh's heart, and he would not let the Isra-
elites go.

The Ninth Plague: Darkness

21 Then the LORD said to Moses,
"Stretch out your hand toward heaven so

w Or *Sea of Reeds*

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ing vv. 28–29. **10.7** *How long* echoes v. 3. *This fellow*, lit. "this" (see note on 32.1). *Snare*. Cf., e.g., 23.33; 34.12; Deut 7.16. *People*. The Hebrew has "persons," not the collective term "people." *Ruined*, not the Hebrew term so translated in 8.24. **10.8** In contrast to 8.8 and v. 16 below, Pharaoh does not directly summon *Moses and Aaron*. *Which ones*. Pharaoh is prepared to make a concession as in 8.25–28, but again with restrictions. **10.9** *Festival to celebrate*. See note on 5.1. **10.10** *Evil* may pun in Hebrew on the name of the Egyptian god Ra (Re). **10.11** *No, never*, or "No indeed," echoing *indeed* in v. 10. *Men*, as in 23.17; 34.23; Deut 16.16. *They were driven*, lit. "he drove them"; some versions read "they drove them." *Presence*, "face," again (see note on 10.6) foreshadowing vv. 28–29. **10.12** *Stretch*, as in 9.22; see note on 7.5. **10.13** *Staff*. See note on 9.23. *East wind*, an anticipation of 14.21. *All that night*, "all night," exactly as in 14.20. **10.14** *Dense swarm*, lit. "very heavy"; see note on 4.10. **10.15** *Covered*. See note on 10.5. *The land was black*, or "and the land became dark," anticipating the plague of darkness (vv. 21–22). *All the plants*, inconsistent with the Israelites' use of herbs and hyssop (12.8, 22) unless Goshen is spared. **10.16** *Hurriedly* foreshadows 12.33. *Summoned*. See note on 10.8. *Sinned*. Pharaoh has said this before (9.27). **10.17** *Pray* as in 8.8, 28; 9.28. *Deadly thing*, lit. "death," hyperbole here but foreshadowing the tenth plague. **10.19** *West wind*, lit. "sea wind," an Israelite perspective since the Mediterranean lies west of Israel; cf. note on 26.18. References to "sea," *wind*, and *Red Sea* anticipate 14.21–28. *Drove into*, not toward but lit. "into," different from *driven out* in v. 11; cf. Joel 2.20. *Red Sea*, the "Sea of Reeds," possibly one of the lagoons along the Mediterranean coast of the Sinai Peninsula; see note on 14.2. Few of the geographical sites in the Exodus narrative can be identified, and it is possible the Red Sea is meant; although it is unrealistic here, it may have been adopted to present a later Israelite audience with a well-known body of water. *Not a single ... was left*, the same Hebrew phrase rendered *not one remained* in 8.31, an anticipation of 14.28. **10.20** *Hardened*, "stiffened," as in 9.35.

10.21–29 Because light symbolizes freedom (e.g., Isa 9.1; Lam 3.1–2, where darkness and "oppression" are juxtaposed), the plague of darkness gives Egypt a taste of enslavement (see v. 23) and Israel a foretaste of liberation. The darkness also foreshadows the tenth plague (see 12.29). Cf. Deut 28.29. **10.21** *Stretch*, as in v. 12; see note on 7.5. That the darkness *can be felt* distinguishes

that there may be darkness over the land
of Egypt, a darkness that can be felt."
22 So Moses stretched out his hand toward
heaven, and there was dense darkness in
all the land of Egypt for three days.
23 People could not see one another, and
for three days they could not move from
where they were; but all the Israelites had
light where they lived. 24 Then Pharaoh
summoned Moses, and said, "Go, worship
the LORD. Only your flocks and your
herds shall remain behind. Even your
children may go with you." 25 But Moses
said, "You must also let us have sacrifices
and burnt offerings to sacrifice to the
LORD our God. 26 Our livestock also must
go with us; not a hoof shall be left behind,
for we must choose some of them for the
worship of the LORD our God, and we will
not know what to use to worship the LORD
until we arrive there." 27 But the LORD
hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he was unwilling to let them go. 28 Then Pharaoh
said to him, "Get away from me! Take
care that you do not see my face again, for
on the day you see my face you shall die."
29 Moses said, "Just as you say! I will never
see your face again."

Warning of the Final Plague

11 The LORD said to Moses, "I will
bring one more plague upon
Pharaoh and upon Egypt; afterwards he
will let you go from here; indeed, when
he lets you go, he will drive you away.
2 Tell the people that every man is to ask
his neighbor and every woman is to ask
her neighbor for objects of silver and
gold." 3 The LORD gave the people favor
in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover,
Moses himself was a man of great importance in the land of Egypt, in the sight of
Pharaoh's officials and in the sight of the
people.

4 Moses said, "Thus says the LORD:
About midnight I will go out through
Egypt. 5 Every firstborn in the land of
Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of
Pharaoh who sits on his throne to the
firstborn of the female slave who is behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of
the livestock. 6 Then there will be a loud
cry throughout the whole land of Egypt,
such as has never been or will ever be
again. 7 But not a dog shall growl at any of
the Israelites—not at people, not at
animals—so that you may know that the

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it from ordinary darkness. **10.22** *Three days,* the only notice of a plague's duration since 7.25, forming a frame around the first nine plagues. **10.23** *The Israelites had light.* See note on 8.22. **10.24** Pharaoh reverses himself (see v. 10). **10.25** *Let us have,* lit. "give into our hands"; Pharaoh must contribute toward, and not merely tolerate, Israelite cult *sacrifices,* slaughtered animals that are partly burned on the altar and partly eaten by the worshiper. **10.26** *What to use,* or "how." **10.27** *Hardened,* "stiffened," as in v. 20. **10.28** *Take care,* be on your guard. **10.29** It was Pharaoh who summoned Moses in the eighth and ninth plagues; and he will summon Moses and Aaron after the tenth (12.31). Moses defies Pharaoh's warning (11.8).

11.1–10 The tenth plague has been adumbrated since 4.22–23. In light of 13.1–2, another purpose to slaying both human and animal (v. 5) firstborns is suggested: the Lord exercises his right to collect, as it were, all firstborn males. **11.1** The Hebrew term translated *plague* is of the root "touch" and connotes disease; it is different from the word also translated *plague* in 9.14; and *strike* in 12.23. "Touch" figured in 4.25, just after the firstborn plague was first revealed. *Upon,* against. *Afterwards,* as predicted in 3.20. *Drive you away.* The Hebrew adds "completely"; others interpret "as he would divorce a bride." **11.2** Predicted in 3.22 (see note there). *Tell,* lit. "say now in the ears of." *And gold,* lit. "and objects of gold." 3.22; 12.35 mention *clothing,* which term is also found here in some versions. **11.3** *Sight,* lit. "eyes"; that the people found favor is predicted in 3.21. *Man . . . importance,* ironic (see 10.28–29). Again (see 10.7) Pharaoh's underlings arrive at the truth before he does. **11.4** It is surprising, in view of 10.28–29 and the omission of any reference to Pharaoh here, that this speech is addressed to Pharaoh in person (see v. 8). *Midnight,* an hour associated with death (Job 34.20; cf. Gen 32.23–25; Ex 4.24). *Go out,* the verb denoting "exodus" (see note on 3.10). **11.5** *Firstborn,* that is "firstborn male"; see note on 13.1–2. *Female slave.* Egypt had other than Hebrew slaves. *Handmill,* a stationary horizontal round stone with a mobile upper grinding stone; using it was the most menial chore (Isa 47.1–2). The *livestock* were all said to have perished (see note on 9.6). **11.6** *Cry,* poetic justice: see note on 3.7. *Never been.* See note on 7.14–12.32. *Will . . . again* echoes *never . . . again* in 10.28–29. **11.7** *Growl,* lit. "chop with the tongue," hence "bark"; cf. Josh 10.21. While Egypt is beset by unprecedented screams, Israel will not be disturbed by so much as a barking dog. *Distinction.* Cf. *distinction* in 9.4, *set apart* in 8.22;

LORD makes a distinction between Egypt
and Israel. 8 Then all these officials of
yours shall come down to me, and bow
low to me, saying, 'Leave us, you and all
the people who follow you.' After that I
will leave." And in hot anger he left
Pharaoh.
9 The LORD said to Moses, "Pharaoh
will not listen to you, in order that my
wonders may be multiplied in the land of
Egypt." 10 Moses and Aaron performed
all these wonders before Pharaoh; but the
LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he
did not let the people of Israel go out of
his land.

The First Passover Instituted

12 The LORD said to Moses and
Aaron in the land of Egypt:
2 This month shall mark for you the be-
ginning of months; it shall be the first
month of the year for you. 3 Tell the
whole congregation of Israel that on the
tenth of this month they are to take a
lamb for each family, a lamb for each
household. 4 If a household is too small
for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest
neighbor in obtaining one; the lamb shall
be divided in proportion to the number of
people who eat of it. 5 Your lamb shall be
without blemish, a year-old male; you may
take it from the sheep or from the goats.
6 You shall keep it until the fourteenth
day of this month; then the whole assem-
bled congregation of Israel shall slaughter
it at twilight. 7 They shall take some of the
blood and put it on the two doorposts and
the lintel of the houses in which they eat
it. 8 They shall eat the lamb that same
night; they shall eat it roasted over the
fire with unleavened bread and bitter
herbs. 9 Do not eat any of it raw or boiled
in water, but roasted over the fire, with its

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see note on 8.22. **11.8** *Officials*, lit. "servants," who will now "serve" the Lord. In Hebrew *these* and *to me* sound alike, reinforcing the sense that Pharaoh's courtiers will render homage to God. *Left Pharaoh.* See note on 11.4. **11.9** The plagues narrative pauses, echoing the story's beginning (7.3–4). **11.10** *Hardened.* See note on 4.21.

12.1–28 Although the Passover ceremony may have its origins in a spring fertility rite, it serves two functions here: the immediate one of warding off the plague (vv. 7, 13, 22–23) and the perennial one of commemorating the exodus redemption (vv. 14, 24–27). The week-long Festival of Unleavened Bread (vv. 14–20), which immediately follows (Lev 23.5–6; Num 28.16–17) and coalesces with Passover (Deut 16.1–8; but see Ex 23.15; 34.18), is not celebrated before leaving Egypt but is ordained here as it, too, comes to commemorate the exodus (vv. 15–20; 13.3–10). **12.1** *Egypt.* The Egyptian Passover is distinguished from the perennial one (vv. 17, 20). Deut 16.1–8 centralizes the rite at a single shrine (cf. 2 Kings 23.21–23). **12.2** The Bible's cultic calendar begins with the exodus season. The "priestly" term *first month* (Lev 23.5; Num 28.16) is Abib (Hebrew "new ear of grain") elsewhere in the Pentateuch (Ex 13.4; 23.15; 34.18; Deut 16.1) and Nisan (from Babylonian) in postexilic books (Neh 2.1; Esth 3.7). The agricultural calendar begins with the seventh month; see 23.17 and the tenth-century B.C.E. Gezer inscription, which lists agricultural tasks by month. *Mark*, lit. "be." *Beginning*, lit. "head," cognate to *first.* **12.3** *Israel* has not expressly heard from Moses and Aaron since 6.12; its cooperation now reflects the impact of the Lord's wonders. The *tenth* day of the seventh month is the Day of Atonement (Lev 23.27). *Family*, lit. "house of fathers." **12.4** *It shall join . . . in obtaining*, lit. "he and his neighbor closest to his house will take." *The lamb . . . eat of it*, "according to the number of persons, each by how much he eats, you shall divide the lamb." **12.5** *Without blemish*, a stipulation for all sacrificial offerings (e.g., Lev 1.3, 10). *A year-old male*, a typical sacrificial offering (e.g., Num 28.3; 29.2). **12.6** The *fourteenth*, the full moon, a propitious time when the night is brightest; see also Lev 23.34. *The whole assembled congregation*, or "the entire assembly," which does not imply that everyone performed the rite together. *Twilight*, lit. "between the two settings," apparently between sunset and the last of the residual light in the sky. **12.7** See note on 4.25. By performing this apotropaic ritual Israel is again "set apart" from Egypt (11.7). *They eat*, lit. "they shall eat." **12.8** *Same night.* See Num 9.12; Deut 16.4. The sacred meal may also serve to protect the household. *Roasted.* See note on 12.9. *Unleavened bread*, minimally cooked, biscuitlike "matsah" bread used generally in ritual offerings (e.g., Lev 2.4–5; 6.9); leavening removes the flour further from its natural, created state. See the symbolic interpretation in vv. 33–34. *Bitter herbs*, the species is uncertain, but see 1.14. The three components of the offering signify a complete meal. **12.9** The prohibition against eating the offering *raw or boiled* means that it must be *roasted*, which ensures that the blood, the protective element, is removed. Blood, the symbol of life (Gen 9.4; Lev 17.11, 14), is divine property and must be returned to the deity whenever meat is eaten (Lev 17.3–6; Deut 12.16); cf. Deut 16.7, which is har-

head, legs, and inner organs. 10 You shall
let none of it remain until the morning;
anything that remains until the morning
you shall burn. 11 This is how you shall eat
it: your loins girded, your sandals on your
feet, and your staff in your hand; and you
shall eat it hurriedly. It is the passover of
the LORD. 12 For I will pass through the
land of Egypt that night, and I will strike
down every firstborn in the land of Egypt,
both human beings and animals; on all
the gods of Egypt I will execute judg-
ments: I am the LORD. 13 The blood shall
be a sign for you on the houses where you
live: when I see the blood, I will pass over
you, and no plague shall destroy you
when I strike the land of Egypt.

14 This day shall be a day of remem-
brance for you. You shall celebrate it as a
festival to the LORD; throughout your
generations you shall observe it as a per-
petual ordinance. 15 Seven days you shall
eat unleavened bread; on the first day you
shall remove leaven from your houses, for
whoever eats leavened bread from the
first day until the seventh day shall be cut
off from Israel. 16 On the first day you
shall hold a solemn assembly, and on the
seventh day a solemn assembly; no work
shall be done on those days; only what ev-
eryone must eat, that alone may be pre-
pared by you. 17 You shall observe the
festival of unleavened bread, for on this
very day I brought your companies out of
the land of Egypt: you shall observe this
day throughout your generations as a per-
petual ordinance. 18 In the first month,
from the evening of the fourteenth day
until the evening of the twenty-first day,
you shall eat unleavened bread. 19 For
seven days no leaven shall be found in
your houses; for whoever eats what is
leavened shall be cut off from the congre-
gation of Israel, whether an alien or a na-
tive of the land. 20 You shall eat nothing
leavened; in all your settlements you shall
eat unleavened bread.

21 Then Moses called all the elders of
Israel and said to them, "Go, select lambs
for your families, and slaughter the pass-
over lamb. 22 Take a bunch of hyssop, dip
it in the blood that is in the basin, and

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monized in 2 Chr 35.13. *With its . . . organs,* in contradistinction to the wholly burnt offering (Lev 1.8–9). **12.10** *Let none of it remain,* lest it be profaned; cf. 23.18; Lev 7.15; see notes on 12.8; 10.19. **12.11** *Passover.* The name of the offering and its festival are related to the cognate verb *pass over* in vv. 13, 23, 27. **12.12** *Pass through,* not pass over (see note on 12.11). *Strike.* See note on 2.11. *Firstborn.* See note on 13.1–2. *Gods.* See Num 33.4. By causing so severe a catastrophe in Egypt, the Lord, who has sought acknowledgment among the Egyptians (see 9.14; cf. note on 5.2), defeats Egypt's gods, who, like Pharaoh's magicians (see notes on 7.12; 9.11), prove powerless. Deities other than the Lord are assumed to exist, even if they are ineffectual; cf. 15.11. **12.13** *No plague shall destroy,* rather "no plague will be a destroyer," the demonic agent that brings death ("ravager" in Isa 54.16), distinguished from the deity in v. 23. **12.14** *Celebrate . . . festival.* See note on 5.1. *Perpetual.* See note on 12.1; cf. v. 17. **12.15** See note on 12.1–28. *Remove,* lit. "cause to stop" (see note on 5.5). *Cut off,* a punishment imposed in the priestly Torah literature primarily for serious ritual infractions (e.g., Lev 17.4); because it contrasts with capital punishment (31.14), it may entail divine retribution for transgressions that escape human detection. **12.16** See Lev 23.7–8; Num 28.18,25. *Assembly,* or "convocation." The preparation of food for immediate consumption is permitted during the festival but prohibited on the sabbath (16.23; 35.3). **12.17** *I brought.* The Passover in Egypt is seen as past. *Companies.* See note on 6.26. **12.18** *Until,* up to the eve of the twenty-first if the festivals of Passover and Unleavened Bread have coalesced (see note on 12.1–28), up through the eve of the twenty-first if the festivals are discrete. **12.19** Cf. v. 15. *Alien.* Aliens who reside among the Israelites by dint of marriage or another circumstance and are circumcised (v. 48) are enjoined to observe most laws (so v. 49) and are protected from abuse (e.g., 22.20–22). **12.20** *Settlements* refers to Israel's future circumstances, as in v. 17. **12.21–28** An elaboration of the laws in vv. 1–13. The Festival of Unleavened Bread, which does not take place the night of the plague, is omitted. **12.21** *Moses.* Cf. v. 28, which includes Aaron. *Lambs,* rather "small cattle," sheep or goats; see v. 5. *Families,* not the term used in v. 3. *Select . . . and slaughter the passover lamb.* The instruction presupposes that the ritual is already familiar; the term *passover* is introduced in v. 11 only after the offering has been described. **12.22** *Hyssop,* a brushlike plant of uncertain identity, used also in purification rites (e.g., Lev 14.4, 6; Num 19.6). *Basin,* to collect the blood of the Passover animal. *Touch.* Cf. 4.25. *None . . . go outside.* The phrasing, absent from the foregoing instructions, suggests the protective function of the ritual; see notes on 12.8; 12.42; see also v. 46.

touch the lintel and the two doorposts
with the blood in the basin. None of you
shall go outside the door of your house
until morning. 23 For the LORD will pass
through to strike down the Egyptians;
when he sees the blood on the lintel and
on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass
over that door and will not allow the de-
stroyer to enter your houses to strike you
down. 24 You shall observe this rite as a
perpetual ordinance for you and your
children. 25 When you come to the land
that the LORD will give you, as he has
promised, you shall keep this observance.
26 And when your children ask you, 'What
do you mean by this observance?' 27 you
shall say, 'It is the passover sacrifice to the
LORD, for he passed over the houses of
the Israelites in Egypt, when he struck
down the Egyptians but spared our
houses.'" And the people bowed down
and worshiped.

28 The Israelites went and did just as
the LORD had commanded Moses and
Aaron.

The Tenth Plague: Death of the Firstborn

29 At midnight the LORD struck down
all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from
the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his
throne to the firstborn of the prisoner
who was in the dungeon, and all the first-
born of the livestock. 30 Pharaoh arose in
the night, he and all his officials and all
the Egyptians; and there was a loud cry in
Egypt, for there was not a house without
someone dead. 31 Then he summoned
Moses and Aaron in the night, and said,
"Rise up, go away from my people, both
you and the Israelites! Go, worship the
LORD, as you said. 32 Take your flocks and
your herds, as you said, and be gone. And
bring a blessing on me too!"

The Exodus: From Rameses to Succoth

33 The Egyptians urged the people to
hasten their departure from the land, for
they said, "We shall all be dead." 34 So the
people took their dough before it was
leavened, with their kneading bowls
wrapped up in their cloaks on their shoul-
ders. 35 The Israelites had done as Moses
told them; they had asked the Egyptians
for jewelry of silver and gold, and for
clothing, 36 and the LORD had given the
people favor in the sight of the Egyptians,
so that they let them have what they
asked. And so they plundered the
Egyptians.

37 The Israelites journeyed from
Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred
thousand men on foot, besides children.
38 A mixed crowd also went up with them,
and livestock in great numbers, both
flocks and herds. 39 They baked unleav-
ened cakes of the dough that they had
brought out of Egypt; it was not leavened,
because they were driven out of Egypt
and could not wait, nor had they pre-
pared any provisions for themselves.

12.23 *Pass through.* See note on 12.12. *Strike down,* or "afflict with plague" (twice), cognate to *plague* (v. 13). *The destroyer.* See note on 12.13. **12.24** *Rite,* lit. "word," command. **12.25** Cf., e.g., 3.8, 17; 6.8–9. The topic of rites to be observed once Israel is settled in Canaan is resumed in 13.5. **12.26** See note on 9.16. **12.27** *Struck down.* See note on 12.23. *Worshiped.* See note on 4.31. **12.28** *Aaron.* See note on 12.21.

12.29–30 The fulfillment of 11.4–6, with some variations; cf. note on 11.1–10. **12.29** *Prisoner,* more severe than the image in 11.5. *Dungeon,* lit. "pit," alluding perhaps to Gen 41.14. **12.30** *Arose,* aroused by the outcry. **12.31** *Summoned.* See note on 10.29. Pharaoh's implicit surrender to the Lord is a reversal (see 5.2). **12.32** Pharaoh reverses his refusal in 10.24. *Bring a blessing on me too,* "bless me too" when you worship the Lord. **12.33** *Egyptians.* Cf. 10.7. *Urged,* ironically another rendering of the Hebrew verb used of "stiffening" Pharaoh's heart in 14.4, 8 (*hardened;* see note on 4.21). *Hasten.* See note on 10.16. *All.* They fear the tenth plague is not the last. **12.34** *Leavened,* a symbolic interpretation of v. 8 (cf. v. 11) and of the Festival of Unleavened Bread; see v. 39. *Kneading bowls,* an echo of 8.3 (7.28 in Hebrew). **12.35** *Told them.* It has not been reported that Moses gave the instruction to ask for jewelry and clothing, although he was so ordered (3.21–22; 11.2–3). *Clothing,* the *cloaks* of v. 34. *Plundered.* See note on 3.22. **12.37** *Rameses.* See 1.11. *Succoth,* hebraization ("Booths") of an Egyptian name, in the area of Pithom (see 1.11). Num 33.4 adds a macabre detail. *Six hundred thousand.* 603,550 in Num 1.46, excluding 8,580 Levite men (Num 4.48). Counting women, children, and the elderly, the total would well exceed 2 million; a large army comprised perhaps 20,000 soldiers. **12.38** *Mixed,* intermarried (Neh 13.3); see Num 11.4; cf. Lev 24.10. The Hebrew term recalls the fourth plague's flies. *Great numbers,* "very heavy" (see note on 4.10). **12.39** See

40 The time that the Israelites had
lived in Egypt was four hundred thirty
years. 41 At the end of four hundred
thirty years, on that very day, all the com-
panies of the LORD went out from the
land of Egypt. 42 That was for the LORD a
night of vigil, to bring them out of the
land of Egypt. That same night is a vigil to
be kept for the LORD by all the Israelites
throughout their generations.

Directions for the Passover

43 The LORD said to Moses and
Aaron: This is the ordinance for the pass-
over: no foreigner shall eat of it, 44 but
any slave who has been purchased may
eat of it after he has been circumcised;
45 no bound or hired servant may eat of it.
46 It shall be eaten in one house; you shall
not take any of the animal outside the
house, and you shall not break any of its
bones. 47 The whole congregation of Is-
rael shall celebrate it. 48 If an alien who
resides with you wants to celebrate the
passover to the LORD, all his males shall be
circumcised; then he may draw near to
celebrate it; he shall be regarded as a na-
tive of the land. But no uncircumcised
person shall eat of it; 49 there shall be one
law for the native and for the alien who
resides among you.

50 All the Israelites did just as the
LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron.
51 That very day the LORD brought the Is-
raelites out of the land of Egypt, company
by company.

13 The LORD said to Moses: 2 Conse-
crate to me all the firstborn;
whatever is the first to open the womb
among the Israelites, of human beings
and animals, is mine.

The Festival of Unleavened Bread

3 Moses said to the people, "Remem-
ber this day on which you came out of
Egypt, out of the house of slavery, be-
cause the LORD brought you out from
there by strength of hand; no leavened
bread shall be eaten. 4 Today, in the
month of Abib, you are going out. 5 When
the LORD brings you into the land of the
Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the
Hivites, and the Jebusites, which he swore
to your ancestors to give you, a land flow-
ing with milk and honey, you shall keep
this observance in this month. 6 Seven
days you shall eat unleavened bread, and
on the seventh day there shall be a festival
to the LORD. 7 Unleavened bread shall be
eaten for seven days; no leavened bread
shall be seen in your possession, and no
leaven shall be seen among you in all your
territory. 8 You shall tell your child on
that day, 'It is because of what the LORD
did for me when I came out of Egypt.' 9 It

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note on 12.34. **12.40** *The time . . . lived,* lit. "The dwelling . . . dwelled." *Four hundred thirty.* It is 400 years in Gen 15.13. Gen 15.16 predicts four generations (160 years), a count that conforms to 6.16–20, in which Moses is the fourth generation in Egypt. **12.41** *Companies.* See note on 6.26. **12.42** If the *vigil* is Israel's and not the Lord's (the Hebrew is ambiguous), a protective function for the Passover rite is again suggested (see notes on 12.8; 12.22; see also v. 46).

12.43–49 A resumption of the instructions for the Passover night ritual (vv. 1–13, 21–27); cf. v. 19. Since vv. 14, 28 seems to close the preceding units, the present passage appears to be a codicil. See also Num 9.1–14. **12.43** *Foreigner,* not *alien* (vv. 19, 48–49). **12.44** *Purchased.* The Hebrew adds "for silver" (cf. Gen 37.28). **12.45** *Bound . . . servant,* more likely a transient "resident"; cf. a similar distinction in Lev 22.10–11. **12.46** *Outside.* See note on 12.22. *Bones.* See Num 9.12; cf. Jn 19.36. **12.48** *Alien.* See note on 12.19. *All his males shall be circumcised,* like Abraham and the males of his household (Gen 17.10–14, 23–27). **12.49** *Law,* lit. "instruction" (Hebrew *torah*). Cf. Lev 24.22. **12.51** A repetition of v. 41, enclosing the codicil. *Company.* See note on 6.26. **13.1–2** The law to consecrate Israel's human and animal firstborn is juxtaposed with the slaying of Egypt's firstborn, as in 34.18–20; Deut 15.19–16.8; see note on 11.1–10. It is assumed on the basis of vv. 12, 15 and all parallel passages that only males are meant (cf. 11.5; 12.29). The elaboration in vv. 11–26 is paralleled by 34.19–20; Num 18.15–18. The parallel law in 22.29–30 does not elaborate a method of consecration. Cf. the practices in Num 18; Deut 15.19–23 (which does not relate to firstborn humans) and the motive in Num 3.11–13, 41, 45; 8.17.

13.3–10 Cf. 12.14–20; differences suggest diverse traditions. **13.3** Cf. 12.14. *House of slavery.* Cf. 20.2. *Strength of hands.* See vv. 9, 14, 16; cf. *mighty hand* (6.1, from the same root) and 3.19. *No leavened bread.* Cf. 12.15. **13.4** *Abib.* See note on 12.2. **13.5** Cf. 3.17; see note on 12.25. **13.6** *Seventh day.* See 12.16. **13.7** In Hebrew *in your possession* and *among you* are expressed identically, creating a parallelism (see note on 3.15). **13.8** Cf. 12.26. **13.9** *On your hand, on your fore-*

shall serve for you as a sign on your hand
and as a reminder on your forehead, so
that the teaching of the LORD may be on
your lips; for with a strong hand the LORD
brought you out of Egypt. 10 You shall
keep this ordinance at its proper time
from year to year.

The Consecration of the Firstborn

11 "When the LORD has brought you
into the land of the Canaanites, as he
swore to you and your ancestors, and has
given it to you, 12 you shall set apart to the
LORD all that first opens the womb. All the
firstborn of your livestock that are males
shall be the LORD's. 13 But every firstborn
donkey you shall redeem with a sheep; if
you do not redeem it, you must break its
neck. Every firstborn male among your
children you shall redeem. 14 When in the
future your child asks you, 'What does
this mean?' you shall answer, 'By strength
of hand the LORD brought us out of
Egypt, from the house of slavery. 15 When
Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go,
the LORD killed all the firstborn in the
land of Egypt, from human firstborn to
the firstborn of animals. Therefore I sac-
rifice to the LORD every male that first
opens the womb, but every firstborn of
my sons I redeem.' 16 It shall serve as a
sign on your hand and as an emblem[x] on
your forehead that by strength of hand
the LORD brought us out of Egypt."

The Pillars of Cloud and Fire

17 When Pharaoh let the people go,
God did not lead them by way of the land
of the Philistines, although that was
nearer; for God thought, "If the people
face war, they may change their minds
and return to Egypt." 18 So God led the
people by the roundabout way of the wil-
derness toward the Red Sea.[y] The Israel-
ites went up out of the land of Egypt
prepared for battle. 19 And Moses took
with him the bones of Joseph who had re-
quired a solemn oath of the Israelites, say-
ing, "God will surely take notice of you,
and then you must carry my bones with
you from here." 20 They set out from Suc-
coth, and camped at Etham, on the edge
of the wilderness. 21 The LORD went in
front of them in a pillar of cloud by day,
to lead them along the way, and in a pillar
of fire by night, to give them light, so that
they might travel by day and by night.
22 Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor
the pillar of fire by night left its place in
front of the people.

x Or *as a frontlet*; Meaning of Heb uncertain
y Or *Sea of Reeds*

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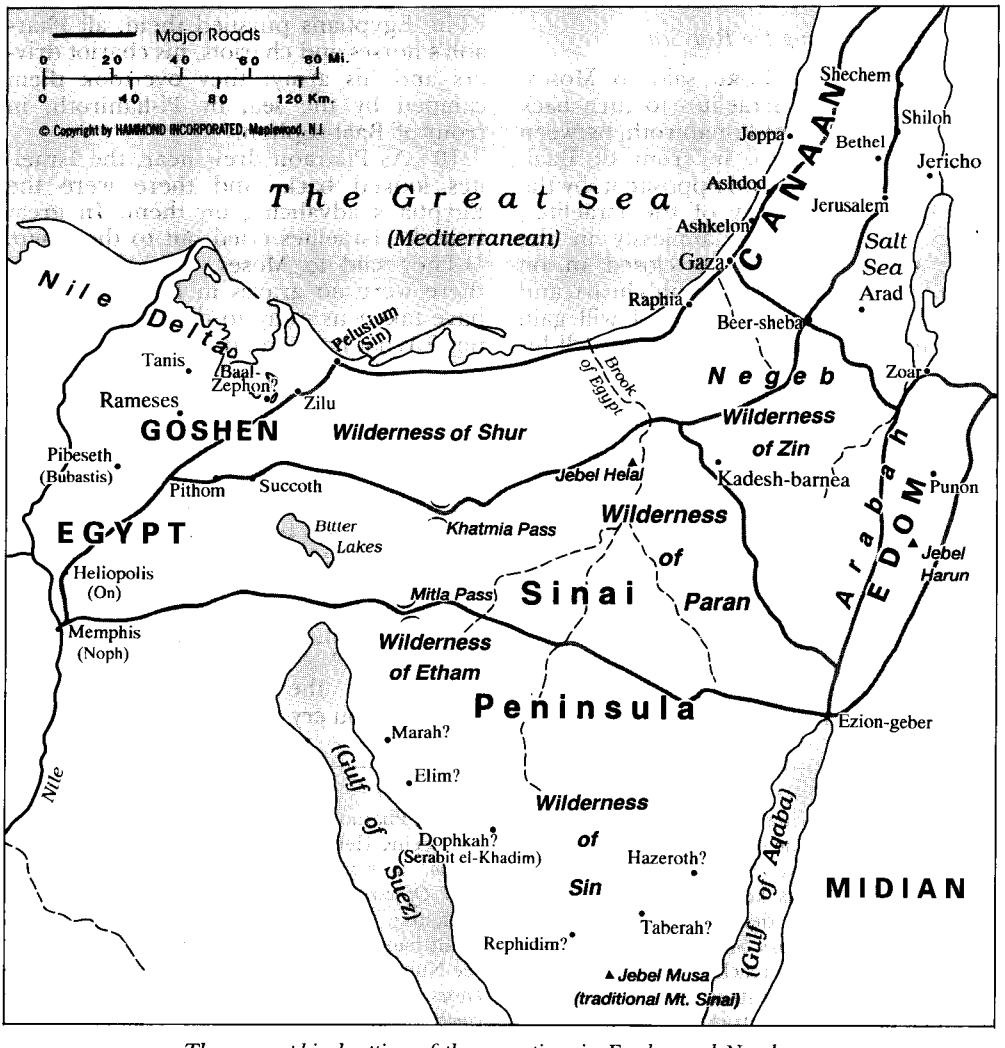
head, places where people would string identifying seals or ornaments; as in v. 16 a metaphor for a reminder (cf. Deut 6.8; Song 8.6). **13.11–16** An elaboration of vv. 1–2. Firstborn redemption, like the Feast of Unleavened Bread (v. 6), is to be interpreted to the next generations in connection with the exodus (v. 14). **13.11** Cf. v. 5. **13.12** *Males*. See note on 13.1–2. **13.13** The *donkey* is ritually tainted (Lev 11.3); the *sheep* is pure. *Break its neck*, to kill the animal without ritually slaughtering it since it is tainted; the animal is rightfully God's and may not be used. Lev 27.27 stipulates that the tainted animal must be redeemed at 120 percent its value, which favors the priests, who suffer a loss here because a sheep is worth less than a donkey. *Children*, lit. "sons" (see note on 13.1–2). *Redeem*. The sum is not fixed; Num 18.16 specifies 5 shekels. **13.14** Cf. v. 8. *Strength of hand*. Cf. vv. 3, 9, 16. **13.15** *Stubbornly refused*, lit. "made hard" (see note on 4.21). *Therefore*, a formula introducing an explanation of origins (etiology). *Sacrifice*. See note on 3.18. *Every male*, of the pure animals (see v. 13). **13.16** *Emblem*, a pendant or headband, interpreted in Judaism as phylacteries; see note on 13.9. **13.17** *Philistines*, apparently anachronistic; the Philistines would only have begun to settle the coast of Canaan at the time of the exodus; yet a Philistine presence there is taken for granted (see 15.14; cf. Gen 21.34; 26.1). *Thought*, lit. "said"; the apprehension anticipates 14.10–11. *Change their minds*, or "repent," a pun in Hebrew on *lead them*. **13.18** *Led . . . roundabout*, lit. "had go around" (Hebrew *wayyasev*) plays on "Sea of Reeds" (*yam suf*); see note on 10.19. *Prepared for battle*, or "armed" (Judg 7.11). **13.19** See Gen 50.25. **13.20** *Succoth*. See note on 12.37, whose narrative is resumed here. *Etham*. The site is uncertain; Num 33.8 places the Etham wilderness on the far side of the water Israel will cross; see 14.2. **13.21** The Lord, depicted as a storm god (see chs. 15, 19), radiates light from within a cover of cloud (cf. Ps 18.9–13). The two pillars are one (see 14.25): by day only the cloud is visible, by night only the light; cf. 24.15–17; 40.34–38.



The geographical setting of the narratives in Exodus and Numbers.

Crossing the Red Sea

14 Then the LORD said to Moses:
2 Tell the Israelites to turn back
and camp in front of Pi-hahiroth, between
Migdol and the sea, in front of Baal-
zephon; you shall camp opposite it, by the
sea. 3 Pharaoh will say of the Israelites,
"They are wandering aimlessly in the
land; the wilderness has closed in on
them." 4 I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and
he will pursue them, so that I will gain
glory for myself over Pharaoh and all his
army; and the Egyptians shall know that I
am the LORD. And they did so.
5 When the king of Egypt was told
that the people had fled, the minds of
Pharaoh and his officials were changed
toward the people, and they said, "What
have we done, letting Israel leave our ser-
vice?" 6 So he had his chariot made ready,
and took his army with him; 7 he took six
hundred picked chariots and all the other
chariots of Egypt with officers over all of
them. 8 The LORD hardened the heart of
Pharaoh king of Egypt and he pursued
the Israelites, who were going out boldly.
9 The Egyptians pursued them, all Phar-
aoh's horses and chariots, his chariot driv-
ers and his army; they overtook them
camped by the sea, by Pi-hahiroth, in
front of Baal-zephon.
10 As Pharaoh drew near, the Israel-
ites looked back, and there were the
Egyptians advancing on them. In great
fear the Israelites cried out to the LORD.
11 They said to Moses, "Was it because
there were no graves in Egypt that you
have taken us away to die in the wilder-
ness? What have you done to us, bringing
us out of Egypt? 12 Is this not the very
thing we told you in Egypt, 'Let us alone
and let us serve the Egyptians'? For it
would have been better for us to serve the
Egyptians than to die in the wilderness."
13 But Moses said to the people, "Do not
be afraid, stand firm, and see the deliver-
ance that the LORD will accomplish for
you today; for the Egyptians whom you
see today you shall never see again. 14 The
LORD will fight for you, and you have only
to keep still."
15 Then the LORD said to Moses,
"Why do you cry out to me? Tell the Isra-

14.1–31 Following the pattern of contrasts developed through the plagues (see note on 8.22), Israel, whose sons had been marked for drowning by Pharaoh (1.22), is kept in life on dry land as Egypt is dealt a death blow in the water (vv. 27–30). **14.2** *Turn back.* Although the Israelites seem to have reached beyond the sea (see 13.20), they are instructed to double back in order to bait and entrap the Egyptians. *Pi-hahiroth,* possibly a temple site in the region of Succoth (13.20). *Migdol,* "Tower" in Hebrew, probably a fortification against Assyria north of the Bitter Lakes built in the seventh century B.C.E. (cf. Jer 44.1). If *Baal-zephon* is the Zeus Casius temple that juts into Lake Sarbonis, the other sites too are located along the northern Sinai coast, and Lake Sarbonis is the *sea. Baal* is the Canaanite storm god; "Zaphon" is known as his home on the north Syrian coast, probably Mount Casius. **14.3** *Closed in on,* or "enclosed" (cf. Josh 6.1). **14.4** *Harden,* "stiffen" (see note on 4.21) a strong link with the plagues narratives. *Gain glory for myself,* lit. "prove heavy"; see v. 18; note on 4.10. *Know.* See note on 5.2; cf. also Josh 4.24. **14.5** *The people ... fled,* as if Egypt had not pressed them to leave (12.31–33); or it has dawned on the Egyptians that the Israelites had left for more than three days (5.3). **14.6** *He had ... made ready,* lit. "he (himself) harnessed"; see also note on 14.25. *Army,* lit. "people" (cf. Num 21.23); Pharaoh musters his "people" to head off the fleeing Hebrew *people* (v. 5). *With him,* Hebrew *'immo,* a wordplay on "his people (*'ammo*)." **14.7** *Officers,* not the *officials* of v. 5 but military captains. **14.8** *Hardened.* See v. 4. *Boldly,* lit. "with hand (held) high," defiantly (Num 15.30); see Num 33.3. **14.9** In the Hebrew *all Pharaoh's horses ... army* is placed awkwardly following *camped by the sea*; similar phrases read smoothly in v. 23. On the anachronistic use of cavalry, see note on 15.1. **14.10** *Pharaoh.* The king is in focus even though the entire army is in pursuit; cf. v. 6. *There were,* "here: ..."; see note on 2.6. *Advancing.* In the Hebrew the verb is singular, suggesting that the Egyptian army is perceived as a single horde. *In great fear.* Cf. Moses' reply in v. 13. *Cried out to the LORD.* Cf. 2.23, where the prayer is undirected, and 5.15, where appeal is made to Pharaoh. **14.11–12** *Egypt* is used five times in two verses. **14.11** Cf. Num 11.18–20; 14.2–4. **14.12** *The very thing,* not exactly; see 5.20–21. **14.13** *Deliverance,* in Hebrew cognate to *came to their defense* in 2.17 and *saved* in 14.30; it anticipates 15.2, where it is rendered *salvation. Never see again* echoes 10.28–29. **14.14** *Will fight* anticipates the cognate *warrior* in 15.3. God's fighting on Israel's behalf (see Deut 1.30; 3.22; 20.4) is developed in Joshua (10.14, 42; 23.3, 10). **14.15** It is presupposed that, beside responding to the people's complaint (vv. 13–14), Moses ap-

elites to go forward. 16 But you lift up
your staff, and stretch out your hand over
the sea and divide it, that the Israelites
may go into the sea on dry ground.
17 Then I will harden the hearts of the
Egyptians so that they will go in after
them; and so I will gain glory for myself
over Pharaoh and all his army, his chari-
ots, and his chariot drivers. 18 And the
Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD,
when I have gained glory for myself over
Pharaoh, his chariots, and his chariot
drivers."

19 The angel of God who was going
before the Israelite army moved and went
behind them; and the pillar of cloud
moved from in front of them and took its
place behind them. 20 It came between the
army of Egypt and the army of Israel.
And so the cloud was there with the dark-
ness, and it lit up the night; one did not
come near the other all night.

21 Then Moses stretched out his hand
over the sea. The LORD drove the sea back
by a strong east wind all night, and turned
the sea into dry land; and the waters were
divided. 22 The Israelites went into the sea
on dry ground, the waters forming a wall
for them on their right and on their left.
23 The Egyptians pursued, and went into
the sea after them, all of Pharaoh's horses,
chariots, and chariot drivers. 24 At the
morning watch the LORD in the pillar of
fire and cloud looked down upon the
Egyptian army, and threw the Egyptian
army into panic. 25 He clogged[z] their
chariot wheels so that they turned with
difficulty. The Egyptians said, "Let us flee
from the Israelites, for the LORD is fight-
ing for them against Egypt."

The Pursuers Drowned

26 Then the LORD said to Moses,
"Stretch out your hand over the sea, so
that the water may come back upon the
Egyptians, upon their chariots and chariot
drivers." 27 So Moses stretched out his
hand over the sea, and at dawn the sea
returned to its normal depth. As the
Egyptians fled before it, the LORD tossed
the Egyptians into the sea. 28 The waters
returned and covered the chariots and the
chariot drivers, the entire army of Phar-
aoh that had followed them into the sea;
not one of them remained. 29 But the Isra-
elites walked on dry ground through the
sea, the waters forming a wall for them on
their right and on their left.

30 Thus the LORD saved Israel that
day from the Egyptians; and Israel saw

z Sam Gk Syr: MT *removed*

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pealed to the Lord, as in 5.22–23. **14.16** *Staff* (see note on 7.8–13) and *stretch out your hand* (see note on 7.5) recall the plagues (e.g., 10.12–13). *Divide.* Splitting the sea evokes an Israelite creation myth in which the Lord cuts through the primeval sea monster (Isa 51.9; Job 26.13); Isa 51.10 in fact compares the exodus to creation. The nature myth, shared with other Near Eastern cultures, in which the Lord cleaves the hostile sea monster is transformed here into a historical drama in which the Lord divides an inanimate sea and slays his enemies in it. *Dry ground,* an allusion to a version of the creation myth in which the Lord dries up the primeval sea (Ps 74.13–15; Isa 50.2; 51.10; Nah 1.4). **14.17** *Gain glory.* See note on 14.4. **14.19** *Angel,* a divine manifestation in the cloud and fire, *the LORD* in v. 24; see note on 3.4. *Army,* lit. "camp" here and in vv. 20, 24. **14.20** *It . . . it,* apparently the *angel.* The divine presence, glowing within the cloud, blocks the oncoming Egyptians; see note on 13.21; cf. Josh 24.7. *One . . . the other,* the Israelite and Egyptian camps. **14.21** See note on 14.16. *Strong* anticipates *my strength* in 15.2. *East wind.* See 10.13. *Dry land,* different from Hebrew term rendered *dry ground* in vv. 16, 22; used in Gen 7.22; Josh 3.17; 4.18. **14.23** The Hebrew defers *into the sea* to the verse's end. **14.24** *The LORD.* See note on 14.19. *Looked down.* The radiant face of the Lord, no longer veiled by cloud, "panics" the Egyptians, who recognize him (v. 25). Mesopotamian kings boasted that the mere sight of their divine auras would terrify the enemy. **14.25** *Clogged,* lit. "removed" or "turned aside." Greek and other manuscript traditions read lit. "he bound," thus having the Lord mirror Pharaoh, who "binds" or "harnesses," preparing his chariot in v. 6 (see note on 14.6). *Difficulty,* lit. "heaviness"; in vv. 4, 17 the Lord says he will "prove heavy" for Pharaoh's army (see note on 14.4). *Fighting.* See note on 14.14. **14.27** *Normal depth,* lit. "full strength." *Egyptians,* lit. "Egypt," which occurs twice midverse, is enclosed by *sea,* twice before and once after, as the Egyptians are enveloped by the water. **14.28** *Not one . . . remained,* an echo of the plagues (see note on 10.19). **14.29** *Walked.* The Hebrew syntax may be better understood as "had walked"; see v. 22, whose echo here frames the episode of drowning; the frame highlights Israel's salvation. **14.30** *Saved.* See note on 14.13. *From the Egyptians,* lit. "from Egypt's hand," contrasting with the Lord's marvelous "hand," rendered *work*

the Egyptians dead on the seashore. 31 Israel saw the great work that the LORD did against the Egyptians. So the people feared the LORD and believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses.

The Song of Moses

15 Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD:
"I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously;
horse and rider he has thrown into the sea.
2 The LORD is my strength and my might,[a]
and he has become my salvation;
this is my God, and I will praise him,
my father's God, and I will exalt him.
3 The LORD is a warrior;
the LORD is his name.

4 "Pharaoh's chariots and his army he cast into the sea;
his picked officers were sunk in the Red Sea.[b]
5 The floods covered them;
they went down into the depths like a stone.
6 Your right hand, O LORD, glorious in power—
your right hand, O LORD, shattered the enemy.
7 In the greatness of your majesty you overthrew your adversaries;
you sent out your fury, it consumed them like stubble.
8 At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up,
the floods stood up in a heap;
the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea.
9 The enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake,
I will divide the spoil, my desire shall have its fill of them.
I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.'
10 You blew with your wind, the sea covered them;
they sank like lead in the mighty waters.

a Or *song* b Or *Sea of Reeds*

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in v. 31. **14.31** *The Egyptians*, lit. "Egypt," referring perhaps to the wonders the Lord performed there. *Believed*. See note on 4.1.

15.1–19 The song of Moses proper, vv. 1b–18, written in "high," archaic Hebrew verse, extensively using parallelism, expresses Israel's trust (14.31; cf. Ps 106.12). Although the song refers to the events related in ch. 14, it does not narrate them in sequence and the descriptions do not entirely match. **15.1** *Moses*. See note on 15.21. *Israelites*. Since the song is formulated in the first-person singular, perhaps Moses sings a line and the Israelites respond antiphonally. *I will sing*, or "let me sing." The Hebrew rendered *triumphed gloriously* is used elsewhere of the sea's excrescence (e.g., Ps 89.9) and of human arrogance (e.g., Isa 2.12); the basic sense is "to be high," a polar contrast to the Egyptians (see vv. 5, 10). *Horse*. Egyptian reliefs and paintings of the late second millennium B.C.E. show horses pulling chariots but not being ridden. Biblical texts of the eighth century B.C.E. (e.g., Isa 31.1) know of Egyptians traveling on horseback. *Rider*, lit. "its rider." *Thrown*. Ironically, homonymous with "high" in "high hand" (see note on 14.8). **15.2** *The LORD*, the short name "Yah," placed at the end of the clause in Hebrew, meaning that the Israelites declare that "Yah"—and no other—is their God; see v. 11. *Salvation*. See note on 14.13. *Praise*, lit. "enshrine." *My father's God*. Cf. 3.15–16. *Exalt*, cognate to "high" in (see note on) 14.8. **15.3** *Warrior*, lit. "man of war," typical of a storm god (see notes on 9.23; 13.21); cf. Ps 24.8. *Name*. See 3.13–15; 6.3. **15.4** The language recalls 14.7. *Red Sea*. See note on 10.19. **15.5** This verse chronologically follows vv. 8–10. *Floods*, plural of "the deep" (Gen 1.2). **15.7** *Majesty*; in Hebrew cognate to *triumphed* (v. 1). The first clause of this verse forms the third line of the distinctively Canaanite "staircase" parallelism begun in v. 6; other "staircases" are vv. 11, 16b–17a. Staircases have a retarding effect. *Fury* connotes burning. **15.8** The mobile is turned stationary. *Nostrils*. Cf. Ps 18.8; cf. also Ex 14.21; Deut 11.4. *Floods* denotes "flow," a different Hebrew term from that translated *floods* in v. 5. In Hebrew this clause alliterates. *Heap*, used nearly always of water; cf. *wall* in 14.22, 29. *Deeps*, rendered *floods* in v. 5. *The sea*, or "Sea," a name of the Canaanite sea god; see note on 14.16. **15.9** The first five Hebrew words (through *spoil*) alliterate. *Destroy*, lit. "dispossess," an intention at cross-purposes with the Lord's (see v. 17). **15.10** *Blew*, a rare verb in Hebrew. *Sank*, a different Hebrew verb from that translated *sunk* in v. 4, echoing *depths* in v. 5. *Lead*. Cf. *stone* in v. 5. *Mighty*, in Hebrew cognate to *glo-*

11 "Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods?
Who is like you, majestic in holiness,
awesome in splendor, doing wonders?
12 You stretched out your right hand,
the earth swallowed them.

13 "In your steadfast love you led the people whom you redeemed;
you guided them by your strength to your holy abode.
14 The peoples heard, they trembled;
pangs seized the inhabitants of Philistia.
15 Then the chiefs of Edom were dismayed;
trembling seized the leaders of Moab;
all the inhabitants of Canaan melted away.
16 Terror and dread fell upon them;
by the might of your arm, they became still as a stone
until your people, O LORD, passed by,
until the people whom you acquired passed by.
17 You brought them in and planted them on the mountain of your own possession,
the place, O LORD, that you made your abode,
the sanctuary, O LORD, that your hands have established.
18 The LORD will reign forever and ever."

19 When the horses of Pharaoh with his chariots and his chariot drivers went into the sea, the LORD brought back the waters of the sea upon them; but the Israelites walked through the sea on dry ground.

The Song of Miriam

20 Then the prophet Miriam, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand; and all the women went out after her with

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rious in v. 6. **15.11** The second praise in direct address, also a "staircase" parallelism (see note on 15.7). *Gods.* See note on 12.12; cf. 2 Sam 7.22–23; Ps 86.8–10. *Majestic,* rendered *glorious* in v. 6, a repetition enhancing coherence. *In holiness,* or "among the holy ones" (so too in Ps 68.17 and perhaps 16.24). **15.12** *Stretched.* See note on 14.16. *Right hand.* See v. 6. *Earth,* probably connoting the netherworld (e.g., Eccl 3.21; Isa 14.12), whose *swallow* (Num 16.32) is figurative of burial; cf. Isa 5.14 and the voracious appetite of the Canaanite death god Mot. **15.13** The song turns to the Lord's guidance of Israel to its land, using pastoral language: *led, abode* (lit. "pasture") as in Ps 23.2–3. *Steadfast love,* used of covenantal as well as personal devotion. *Redeemed.* See note on 6.6. *Strength* recalls v. 2, lending coherence. *Abode,* in Hebrew cognate to *exalt* (v. 2), the land of Israel (see v. 17). **15.14–16** Anachronistic anticipation of the reaction in the east to the news of Egypt's destruction; cf. 18.1; Josh 2.9–11; but see note on 15.15. **15.14** *Philistia.* See note on 13.17. **15.15** The widespread dread suggested here (cf. Josh 9.9–10) is contradicted by the succeeding narrative; neither the Edomites (Num 20.14–21), the southern Canaanites (Num 21.1), nor the Amorites (Num 21.21–23) are intimidated by Israel; Moab conspires with Midian to defeat Israel by magic (Num 22.2–7). The terminology *chiefs,* lit. "bulls," and *leaders,* lit. "rams," reflects ancient Canaanite usage. **15.16** Ps 105.38 attributes the same *dread* to the post-plague Egyptians. *As a stone.* The simile's repetition (see v. 5) links the second part of the song with the first. The Israelites *passed by* the peoples situated en route to Canaan (cf. Deut 29.16). *Acquired.* "Created" is more in keeping with archaic usage (e.g., Gen 14.19, 22; Deut 32.6; Pss 74.2; 78.54; 139.13; Prov 8.22). **15.17** *Mountain of . . . possession,* an archaic expression referring either anachronistically to Mount Zion or to hilly Canaan (e.g., Deut 3.25). *Abode,* not the same Hebrew word as that rendered *abode* in v. 13 but cognate to *established* here. *Sanctuary,* the Jerusalem temple or a holy abode in general (cf. Ps 78.54). When Israel takes possession of the land, it becomes the Lord's holy (designated) place (Ps 114.2). **15.18** Proclaiming the deity king is customary in Near Eastern creation myths; cf., e.g., Deut 33.5; Ps 29.10. **15.19** This verse recapitulates and resumes the narrative in 14.27–29. **15.20** *Prophet,* Miriam, so called only here; cf. Num 12.1–9; see Mic 6.4. *Miriam.* See note on 2.4. *Aaron's sister.* See note on 6.23; she conspires with Aaron in Num 12. *Tambourine.* Archaeological finds depict a hand drum without jingles. *Dancing,* a form of (not only female) religious praise; e.g., 32.19; Judg 21.21; 2 Sam 6.5;

tambourines and with dancing. 21 And
Miriam sang to them:
"Sing to the LORD, for he has
triumphed gloriously;
horse and rider he has thrown
into the sea."

Bitter Water Made Sweet

22 Then Moses ordered Israel to set
out from the Red Sea,[c] and they went
into the wilderness of Shur. They went
three days in the wilderness and found no
water. 23 When they came to Marah, they
could not drink the water of Marah be-
cause it was bitter. That is why it was
called Marah.[d] 24 And the people com-
plained against Moses, saying, "What shall
we drink?" 25 He cried out to the LORD;
and the LORD showed him a piece of
wood;[e] he threw it into the water, and
the water became sweet.

There the LORD[f] made for them a stat-
ute and an ordinance and there he put
them to the test. 26 He said, "If you will
listen carefully to the voice of the LORD
your God, and do what is right in his
sight, and give heed to his command-
ments and keep all his statutes, I will not
bring upon you any of the diseases that I
brought upon the Egyptians; for I am the
LORD who heals you."

27 Then they came to Elim, where
there were twelve springs of water and
seventy palm trees; and they camped
there by the water.

Bread from Heaven

16 The whole congregation of the
Israelites set out from Elim; and
Israel came to the wilderness of Sin,
which is between Elim and Sinai, on the
fifteenth day of the second month after
they had departed from the land of
Egypt. 2 The whole congregation of the
Israelites complained against Moses and
Aaron in the wilderness. 3 The Israelites
said to them, "If only we had died by the
hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt,
when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our
fill of bread; for you have brought us out
into this wilderness to kill this whole as-
sembly with hunger."

4 Then the LORD said to Moses, "I am
going to rain bread from heaven for you,
and each day the people shall go out and
gather enough for that day. In that way I
will test them, whether they will follow my
instruction or not. 5 On the sixth day,
when they prepare what they bring in, it
will be twice as much as they gather on

c Or *Sea of Reeds* d That is *Bitterness* e Or *a tree* f Heb *he*

Pss 149.3; 150.4. **15.21** The victory song typically belongs to women (see Judg 11.34; 1 Sam 18.6–7); Miriam and her cohort may in an earlier tradition have initiated the song; note the exhortation *sing* in contrast to "let me sing" in v. 1; but in the present context the women answer the men. **15.22–27** In parallel episodes in Numbers, Israel is punished for its complaints. **15.22** *Shur*, the site of an oasis (see Gen 16.7), located between the Negev and Egypt (Gen 20.1). **15.23** *Marah*, often identified with Hawwarah, the site of a bitter spring down the eastern coast of the Gulf of Suez. **15.24** *Complained*, the key verb in virtually all the complaint episodes. **15.25** *Showed*, unusual usage of "to instruct" ("teach" in Deut 33.10), punning on the soundalike *Marah* and on *statute and . . . ordinance*, synonyms of the Hebrew cognate *torah*, "instruction." The reference of *statute and . . . ordinance* is unclear; see 16.4. *He put them.* The Hebrew "he put him" is ambiguous; Israel may be testing God's reliability too. **15.26** *Diseases*, not necessarily the plagues; Egypt is also otherwise portrayed as a diseased land (e.g., Deut 7.15). *Heals*, used of purifying water in a similar miracle tale ("made . . . wholesome" in 2 Kings 2.21–22), making the analogy plain: I can cure you as I cured the water—if you obey me. **15.27** *Elim*, often identified with Wadi Gharandel, south of Hawwarah (see note on 15.23). The round numbers set a legendary tone.

16.1–36 In the parallel episode in Num 11, God produces the quails only after the manna fails to suffice. **16.1** *The whole . . . came*, lit. "They set out from Elim, and the whole congregation came," an irregular variant on the typical travel formula (see Num 33). *Sin*, of uncertain identification, similar to *Sinai*. *Second month.* They have traveled exactly one month (see 12.6, 17–18), and this is the seventh stop (see 12.37; 13.20; 14.9; 15.22, 23, 27) and the third complaint (see 14.11; 15.24). *Departed*, the theme word "exodus" (see note on 3.10). **16.2** *Aaron.* In 15.24 the people *complain* against Moses alone. *In the wilderness*, superfluous information, suggesting perhaps that the wilderness is a factor (see v. 3). **16.3** Cf. 14.11; Num 20.3–5. **16.4** *Rain.* Cf. the hail the Lord "rained down" on Egypt (rendered *cause to fall* in 9.18). *Test.* Cf. 15.25–26; Deut 8.16. *Instruction*, Hebrew *torah*; see note on 15.25. **16.5** *Prepare*, in the sense of "set aside" (e.g., 23.20; Josh 4.3) or "measure" ("calculate" in

other days." 6 So Moses and Aaron said to
all the Israelites, "In the evening you shall
know that it was the LORD who brought
you out of the land of Egypt, 7 and in the
morning you shall see the glory of the
LORD, because he has heard your com-
plaining against the LORD. For what are
we, that you complain against us?" 8 And
Moses said, "When the LORD gives you
meat to eat in the evening and your fill of
bread in the morning, because the LORD
has heard the complaining that you utter
against him—what are we? Your com-
plaining is not against us but against the
LORD."

9 Then Moses said to Aaron, "Say to
the whole congregation of the Israelites,
'Draw near to the LORD, for he has heard
your complaining.'" 10 And as Aaron
spoke to the whole congregation of the Is-
raelites, they looked toward the wilder-
ness, and the glory of the LORD appeared
in the cloud. 11 The LORD spoke to Moses
and said, 12 "I have heard the complain-
ing of the Israelites; say to them, 'At twi-
light you shall eat meat, and in the morn-
ing you shall have your fill of bread; then
you shall know that I am the LORD
your God.'"

13 In the evening quails came up and
covered the camp; and in the morning
there was a layer of dew around the camp.
14 When the layer of dew lifted, there on
the surface of the wilderness was a fine
flaky substance, as fine as frost on the
ground. 15 When the Israelites saw it, they
said to one another, "What is it?"[g] For
they did not know what it was. Moses said
to them, "It is the bread that the LORD has
given you to eat. 16 This is what the LORD
has commanded: 'Gather as much of it as
each of you needs, an omer to a person
according to the number of persons, all
providing for those in their own tents.'"
17 The Israelites did so, some gathering
more, some less. 18 But when they mea-
sured it with an omer, those who gathered
much had nothing over, and those who
gathered little had no shortage; they gath-
ered as much as each of them needed.
19 And Moses said to them, "Let no one
leave any of it over until morning." 20 But
they did not listen to Moses; some left
part of it until morning, and it bred
worms and became foul. And Moses was
angry with them. 21 Morning by morning
they gathered it, as much as each needed;
but when the sun grew hot, it melted.

22 On the sixth day they gathered
twice as much food, two omers apiece.
When all the leaders of the congregation
came and told Moses, 23 he said to them,
"This is what the LORD has commanded:
'Tomorrow is a day of solemn rest, a holy
sabbath to the LORD; bake what you want

g Or "*It is manna*" (Heb *man hu*, see verse 31)

Deut 19.3) as in v. 18. *Twice as much*, so that one portion can be saved for the sabbath, on which gathering is forbidden (Num 15.32–36); see vv. 22–30. **16.6–7** There is no mention of quail, as in v. 13. *Know*. See note on 5.2; cf. v. 12. *Glory*, the divine aura (e.g., v. 10; 24.16; 33.18–23; 40.34–35; see notes on 13.21; 14.24), lit. "heaviness" (see note on 4.10). *We*, an unusual Aramaic-like form, repeated in v. 8; see note on 16.15. **16.8** *Meat*, quail (v. 13). *Bread*, manna (vv. 13–15). **16.9** *To the LORD*, lit. "before the LORD," perhaps an anachronistic reference to the tabernacle; cf. vv. 33–34. **16.10** Cf. Num 16.42. **16.12** *Twilight* evokes Passover (12.6). *Know*. See v. 6; note on 5.2. **16.13** Cf. Num 11.31–32. Quails migrate across the Red Sea to Europe in the spring, landing for rest at night. **16.14** *Lifted*, rendered *came up* in v. 13. *Flaky substance*, an unusual word in Hebrew, possibly related to "sherd" in Aramaic; see note on 16.15. **16.15** *What is it*, possibly Aramaic, a popular etymology of *manna* (v. 31); note the Aramaic coloring of the preceding passage (vv. 7–8, 14?). *What it was*, the Hebrew equivalent of *what is it*. **16.16** *Each of you*, lit. "(each) man"; apparently the head of each household collected for his family. *Needs*, in Hebrew "eats," another (see note on 16.11) evocation of the Passover (see note on 12.4). *Omer*. See v. 36. *A person*, lit. *a head* (as in 38.26). *All*, lit. "(each) man." **16.18** *No shortage*, quoted in 2 Cor 8.15. *Needed*, lit. "eats"; each took the quantity appropriate to his family size. **16.19** *Leave ... over*, another evocation of the Passover (rendered *let ... remain* in 12.10). **16.20** *Bred*, a unique Hebrew verb meaning "to crawl with," cognate to *worms* in v. 24. *Foul*, rendered *stank*, in 7.21. *Was angry*. The root meaning is "to foam (at the mouth)." **16.21** *Each needed*. See note on 16.16. **16.22** *Twice as much*. See note on 16.5. *Leaders*, lit. the "elevated," tribal chiefs (Num 8). **16.23** *Commanded*, lit. "spoken," rendered "meant" in Lev 10.3, where it likewise introduces an explanation of the mysterious. *Day of solemn rest*, lit., "a (time of) cessation (from work)," cognate to *sabbath* (*rested* in v. 30; Gen 2.2–3). Cooking is forbidden on the sabbath (cf. 35.3). *To*

to bake and boil what you want to boil,
and all that is left over put aside to be kept
until morning.'" 24 So they put it aside
until morning, as Moses commanded
them; and it did not become foul, and
there were no worms in it. 25 Moses said,
"Eat it today, for today is a sabbath to the
LORD; today you will not find it in the
field. 26 Six days you shall gather it; but on
the seventh day, which is a sabbath, there
will be none."

27 On the seventh day some of the
people went out to gather, and they
found none. 28 The LORD said to Moses,
"How long will you refuse to keep my
commandments and instructions? 29 See!
The LORD has given you the sabbath,
therefore on the sixth day he gives you
food for two days; each of you stay where
you are; do not leave your place on the
seventh day." 30 So the people rested on
the seventh day.

31 The house of Israel called it
manna; it was like coriander seed, white,
and the taste of it was like wafers made
with honey. 32 Moses said, "This is what
the LORD has commanded: 'Let an omer
of it be kept throughout your generations,
in order that they may see the food with
which I fed you in the wilderness, when I
brought you out of the land of Egypt.'"
33 And Moses said to Aaron, "Take a jar,
and put an omer of manna in it, and place
it before the LORD, to be kept throughout
your generations." 34 As the LORD com-
manded Moses, so Aaron placed it before
the covenant,[h] for safekeeping. 35 The Is-
raelites ate manna forty years, until they
came to a habitable land; they ate manna,
until they came to the border of the land
of Canaan. 36 An omer is a tenth of an
ephah.

Water from the Rock

17 From the wilderness of Sin the
whole congregation of the Israel-
ites journeyed by stages, as the LORD com-
manded. They camped at Rephidim, but
there was no water for the people to
drink. 2 The people quarreled with Moses,
and said, "Give us water to drink." Moses
said to them, "Why do you quarrel with
me? Why do you test the LORD?" 3 But the
people thirsted there for water; and the
people complained against Moses and
said, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt,
to kill us and our children and livestock
with thirst?" 4 So Moses cried out to the
LORD, "What shall I do with this people?
They are almost ready to stone me." 5 The
LORD said to Moses, "Go on ahead of the
people, and take some of the elders of Is-

h Or *treaty* or *testimony*; Heb *eduth*

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be kept, another evocation of the Passover (12.6). **16.24** See note on 16.20. **16.26** God, like Israel, ceases to labor on the sabbath (Gen 2.2–3); the formula anticipates 20.9–10. **16.27** *Some*, lit. "they." **16.28** *You*, plural. *Instructions*. See v. 4. **16.29** *Stay . . . do not leave*. The positive-negative combination typifies laws contrary to natural inclination, e.g., Deut 9.7; 15.7–8, 12–13. Jewish law interprets this to prohibit travel on the sabbath. **16.31** *House of Israel*, a rare usage, elsewhere in Exodus only in 40.38, possibly evoking the Passover again (12.3–4, 27). *Manna*. See note on 16.15. *Coriander*. Cf. Num 11.7. *Made with*, or dipped in (the Hebrew is elliptical). *Honey*. See Num 11.7. **16.32** *An omer*, lit. "an omerful." See v. 16. *Be kept*. See note on 16.23; cf. the commemorative aspect of Passover (12.24–27). **16.33** *To Aaron* anticipates his priestly function; see note on 19.22. *Before the LORD*. See note on 16.9. **16.34** *Covenant*, the two stone tablets (25.16) or (metonymically) the ark (30.36), which would be anachronistic; but see note on 17.4–6. *For safekeeping*, rendered *to be kept* in vv. 23, 32. **16.35** A retrospective comment. *Canaan*. Cf. Josh 5.12. **16.36** An explanation called for by the fact that elsewhere in the Torah an *omer* is a sheaf of grain, not a measure, and that elsewhere a tenth of an ephah is an *issaron* (*one-tenth* in 29.40). An *ephah* is 22 liters.

17.1–7 Another version of the incident appears in Num 20.2–13. **17.1** *Stages*, journey stops; cf. Num 33.1. *There was no water . . . to drink*. Hebrew syntax favors "there was not (enough) water for the people to drink." **17.2** *Quarreled*, not *complained* (as in v. 3; see note on 15.24); the term is one root of the site's new compound name (v. 7; Num 20.3, 13). *Moses*. In 16.2; Num 20.2 Aaron too is addressed. *Test*, an echo of the two preceding episodes (15.25–26; 16.4) and root of the site's new name (v. 7), but unreflected in Num 20. The two verbs are arranged in parallel clauses (see note on 3.15). **17.3** See note on 16.3. Although some versions read *us . . . our*, the traditional Hebrew text has the more personal "me . . . my." **17.4** *Cried*, as in 14.15; 15.25. Unlike in Num 20.6, there is no shrine here at which to seek divine counsel. *Stone*. See 1 Sam 30.6. **17.5** *Struck the Nile*, and removed drinkable water from Egypt (7.21, 24). Num 20.8 lacks such a reference, perhaps on account of its magical aspect.

rael with you; take in your hand the staff
with which you struck the Nile, and go. 6 I
will be standing there in front of you on
the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and
water will come out of it, so that the peo-
ple may drink." Moses did so, in the sight
of the elders of Israel. 7 He called the
place Massah[i] and Meribah,[j] because
the Israelites quarreled and tested the
LORD, saying, "Is the LORD among us
or not?"

Amalek Attacks Israel and Is Defeated

8 Then Amalek came and fought with
Israel at Rephidim. 9 Moses said to
Joshua, "Choose some men for us and go
out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will
stand on the top of the hill with the staff
of God in my hand." 10 So Joshua did as
Moses told him, and fought with Amalek,
while Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to
the top of the hill. 11 Whenever Moses
held up his hand, Israel prevailed; and
whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek
prevailed. 12 But Moses' hands grew
weary; so they took a stone and put it un-
der him, and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur
held up his hands, one on one side, and
the other on the other side; so his hands
were steady until the sun set. 13 And
Joshua defeated Amalek and his people
with the sword.

14 Then the LORD said to Moses,
"Write this as a reminder in a book and
recite it in the hearing of Joshua: I will
utterly blot out the remembrance of Ama-
lek from under heaven." 15 And Moses
built an altar and called it, The LORD is
my banner. 16 He said, "A hand upon the
banner of the LORD[k] The LORD will have
war with Amalek from generation to gen-
eration."

Jethro's Advice

18 Jethro, the priest of Midian, Mo-
ses' father-in-law, heard of all
that God had done for Moses and for his
people Israel, how the LORD had brought

i That is *Test* *j* That is *Quarrel*
k Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain

17.6 *I*, the Lord, visibly (see note on 13.21; see also Gen 18.22). *Horeb*. See note on 3.1. According to 19.1–2; Num 33.15, Sinai is the next journey stop. *Strike*. In Num 20.8 Moses and Aaron are to "command" the rock, making the same point that the Lord is responsible for the water but without manifesting the Lord's presence there physically. **17.7** *Massah and Meribah*. Only the latter name is used in Num 20.13. Deut 33.8–9 pairs the two names in reference to an opaque episode in which the Levites proved loyal to God in time of rebellion (cf. 32.25–28); *Massah* alone occurs in Deut 6.16; 9.22. A chiastic parallelism (*Test, Quarrel, quarrel, test*) closes the unit (see note on 3.22). *Among us*. See v. 6.

17.8–15 Typically, as in Assyrian annals and Xenophon's *Anabasis*, a raggedy group on march is attacked by marauders. In the light of the preceding episode, the unmotivated attack may be a fight over water rights; but cf. Deut 25.7–9; 1 Sam 30.1–20. **17.8** *Amalek*, an Edomite tribe (Gen 36.12), said to dwell in the Negev (Num 13.29). *Rephidim*. See v. 1; note on 17.6. **17.9** *Joshua*, Moses' field commander, mentioned without his patronym, "son of Nun," as if he were already introduced; he is described elsewhere as Moses' young assistant (e.g., 33.11) and made his successor in Num 27. The name in Hebrew means "The LORD saves" (cf. Ex 2.17, which uses the same verb; see note on 2.17). *Staff*. See v. 5. **17.10** *Hur*, apparently a notable of the tribe of Judah, grandfather of the artisan Bezalel (31.2), paired here and in 24.14 with *Aaron*, who married Judean nobility (6.23); cf. note on 31.2. **17.11** The raised arms symbolize power and inspire morale. It is unclear whether Moses is holding up the staff (v. 9); cf. Josh 8.18–19. *Prevailed*, or "proved strong," unrelated to the term rendered "prevailed" in Gen 32.28. **17.12** *Weary*, lit. "heavy" (see note on 14.24). *Steady*, in Hebrew cognate to *believed* in 14.31. **17.13** *Defeated*, lit. "weakened," here antonymous to *steady* (v. 12); the Samaritan version adds "and smote." *Sword*. See 13.18. **17.14** *Reminder*. Cf. 16.32–33. *Book*, any document (see note on 17.16); this is the first text Moses is told to write. *Remembrance*, judging by curses typical of ancient royal inscriptions a reference to posterity as well to the name *Amalek*; cf. Deut 25.17–19. King Saul is ordered to obliterate the Amalekites (1 Sam 15.2–3) but fails (see 2 Sam 1.1–10; Esth 3.1). **17.15** *Altar*, for commemoration, not necessarily thanksgiving (e.g., Judg 6.24). *Banner*, a Hebrew term from a root similar to *test* (v. 2). **17.16** *Hand upon*, or "monument to" (e.g., 1 Sam 15.12), perhaps a stele on which he wrote the inscription. *Banner*. The translation assumes a scribal error; the Hebrew and ancient versions have "seat," referring perhaps to the stone on which Moses sat, hands raised (v. 12). The utterance is often understood as an oath gesture. *The LORD*, "Yah" (see note on 15.2). *Generation*, see Num 14.43–45; Judg 3.13; 6.3; 1 Sam 30.1–2.

18.1–27 Although Moses' establishment of a

Israel out of Egypt. 2 After Moses had
sent away his wife Zipporah, his father-in-
law Jethro took her back, 3 along with her
two sons. The name of the one was Ger-
shom (for he said, "I have been an alien[l]
in a foreign land"), 4 and the name of the
other, Eliezer[m] (for he said, "The God of
my father was my help, and delivered me
from the sword of Pharaoh"). 5 Jethro,
Moses' father-in-law, came into the wil-
derness where Moses was encamped at
the mountain of God, bringing Moses'
sons and wife to him. 6 He sent word to
Moses, "I, your father-in-law Jethro, am
coming to you, with your wife and her two
sons." 7 Moses went out to meet his father-
in-law; he bowed down and kissed him;
each asked after the other's welfare, and
they went into the tent. 8 Then Moses told
his father-in-law all that the LORD had
done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for
Israel's sake, all the hardship that had be-
set them on the way, and how the LORD
had delivered them. 9 Jethro rejoiced for
all the good that the LORD had done to
Israel, in delivering them from the
Egyptians.

10 Jethro said, "Blessed be the LORD,
who has delivered you from the Egyptians
and from Pharaoh. 11 Now I know that
the LORD is greater than all gods, because
he delivered the people from the Egyp-
tians,[n] when they dealt arrogantly with
them." 12 And Jethro, Moses' father-in-
law, brought a burnt offering and sacri-
fices to God; and Aaron came with all the
elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses'
father-in-law in the presence of God.

13 The next day Moses sat as judge
for the people, while the people stood
around him from morning until evening.
14 When Moses' father-in-law saw all that
he was doing for the people, he said,
"What is this that you are doing for the
people? Why do you sit alone, while all
the people stand around you from morn-
ing until evening?" 15 Moses said to his

l Heb *ger* *m* Heb *Eli*, my God; *ezer*, help
n The clause *because . . . Egyptians* has been transposed from verse 10

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judicial system appears to precede the legislation that follows, v. 5 places it at what seems to be Sinai, where the Israelites are reported to arrive in 19.1–2. To the juxtaposition of the Midianite priest Jethro and the Amalekites here, cf. the conjunction of Midian and Amalek in Judg 6.3, 33; 7.12. The chapter is marked by uncommon usages of biblical language: *sent away* (v. 2), *rejoiced* (v. 9), *wear . . . out* (v. 18), *teach* (v. 20), *look for* (v. 21), and the forms of *them* (v. 20) and *decided* (v. 26); some linguistic features are shared by 20.22–23.33. **18.1** *Jethro.* See note on 2.18. *Heard.* Cf. 15.14; see note on 1.17. **18.2–4** A comment resolving the contradiction between vv. 5–6 and (see note on) 4.20. **18.2** *Sent away,* in Deut 24.1 a term for divorce. **18.3** *Gershom.* See note on 2.22. **18.4** *Father.* See 3.6. *Help.* Cf. Gen 49.25. *Pharaoh.* See 2.15; 4.19. **18.5** *Bringing,* added in English to smooth the syntax; the verse reads lit. "Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, and his sons and his wife, came . . ." *Mountain of God.* See 3.1; and note on 18.1–27. **18.6** *Sent word,* in Hebrew "said," but see v. 7. *With . . . sons.* In Hebrew the phrase sounds tacked on. **18.7** No reference is made here or below to Moses' wife and sons; cf. note on 4.20. Unlike Genesis, Exodus through Deuteronomy concerns the entire people and not families per se. *Bowed down and kissed.* Cf., e.g., Gen 33.4–7; 2 Sam 14.33. *Tent,* presumably Jethro's. **18.8** *Told,* as in 10.2 (*tell*). *Egyptians.* See note on 14.31. *For Israel's sake,* rather "about" (Gen 21.25) or "on account of" (Gen 21.11) "Israel." *Hardship,* in Hebrew cognate to *unable* (7.18), rendered "adversity" in Num 20.14. *On the way.* See 15.22–17.16. **18.9** *Good,* acts of good. *To,* for. *From the Egyptians,* lit. "from the hand of Egypt," somewhat echoing v. 4; see note on 18.10. **18.10** *Blessed be the LORD.* Cf. Gen 14.20; see note on 1.17. *Delivered,* the verb used in vv. 4, 8–9, not the one translated "delivered" in Gen 14.20. *From the Egyptians and from Pharaoh,* lit. "from the hand of Egypt and from the hand of Pharaoh," echoing (see note on) 14.30. **18.11** *I know.* Cf. 5.2. *Gods.* See note on 15.11. *From the Egyptians,* lit. "from under the hand of Egypt," an idiom for overturning foreign rule (e.g., 2 Kings 8.20; 13.5). The transposed clause (see text note *n*) may well belong in v. 10: Jethro celebrates the divine deliverance expansively. *Dealt arrogantly with,* or "acted with malice against" (see e.g., 1.10), in Hebrew cognate to *willfully attacks* in 21.14 and alluded to in Neh 9.10. **18.12** *Burnt offering,* one wholly incinerated in an altar (20.24). *Sacrifices.* See note on 10.25. *Bread,* in the sense of "food" (Lev 3.11). The homage ritual often entails a meal shared by the deity and worshiper (e.g., 24.11; 32.6) just as ancient pacts were often so sealed (e.g., Gen 26.30). *In the presence of God,* in front of the mountain (v. 5). **18.13–16** Moses legislates ad hoc, case by case, in advance of the code that will issue from the Sinai revelation (chs. 20–23). **18.13** *Sat,* according to ancient custom (e.g., Judg 4.5), illustrated already in Ugaritic epic (mid-second millennium B.C.E.). **18.14** *This,* Hebrew "this thing (lit. word)," a pun on *dispute* (v. 16). **18.15** *To inquire of God,* to seek an oracle (cf., e.g.,

father-in-law, "Because the people come
to me to inquire of God. 16 When they
have a dispute, they come to me and I
decide between one person and another,
and I make known to them the statutes
and instructions of God." 17 Moses' father-
in-law said to him, "What you are doing is
not good. 18 You will surely wear yourself
out, both you and these people with you.
For the task is too heavy for you; you can-
not do it alone. 19 Now listen to me. I will
give you counsel, and God be with you!
You should represent the people before
God, and you should bring their cases be-
fore God; 20 teach them the statutes and
instructions and make known to them the
way they are to go and the things they are
to do. 21 You should also look for able
men among all the people, men who fear
God, are trustworthy, and hate dishonest
gain; set such men over them as officers
over thousands, hundreds, fifties and
tens. 22 Let them sit as judges for the peo-
ple at all times; let them bring every im-
portant case to you, but decide every
minor case themselves. So it will be easier
for you, and they will bear the burden
with you. 23 If you do this, and God so
commands you, then you will be able to
endure, and all these people will go to
their home in peace."

24 So Moses listened to his father-in-
law and did all that he had said. 25 Moses
chose able men from all Israel and ap-
pointed them as heads over the people, as
officers over thousands, hundreds, fifties,
and tens. 26 And they judged the people at
all times; hard cases they brought to Mo-
ses, but any minor case they decided
themselves. 27 Then Moses let his father-
in-law depart, and he went off to his own
country.

The Israelites Reach Mount Sinai

19 On the third new moon after the
Israelites had gone out of the
land of Egypt, on that very day, they came
into the wilderness of Sinai. 2 They had
journeyed from Rephidim, entered the

Gen 25.22; see notes on 4.14; 4.15–16; 4.18–20); used of seeking prophetic oracles (e.g., 1 Sam 9.9; 2 Kings 8.8; Ezek 20.1) and later of scriptural exegesis (Ezra 7.10). **18.16** *Dispute*, a legal case (v. 19), lit. "a word." *They come*, in Hebrew "he (the people, v. 15) comes" or "it (the case) comes"; 22.9 favors the latter. *Person*, lit. "man"; it is unclear whether a woman could personally initiate or appear in a litigation. *Another*, lit. "his fellow." *Instructions*. See note on 16.4. The Hebrew cognate verb is used of priestly "instruction" or "teaching" (e.g., Deut 17.10; 33.10). **18.17–23** In Deut 1.9–18 Moses credits himself with setting up the judicial system. **18.17** *What*, Hebrew "the thing" (see note on 18.14). **18.18** *Wear . . . out*, the less common form of the Hebrew verbal root, punning on the verbs "to be foolhardy" (e.g., Deut 32.6; 1 Sam 25.25) and "to confound" (e.g., Gen 11.7, 9). *Task*, lit. "thing" (see note on 18.14). *Alone*, the same word rendered "all by myself" in Deut 1.12. **18.19** *Counsel*. See Num 10.29–32. *God*, the oracle (see note on 18.15), punning in Hebrew on *God be with you*. *Cases*, another pun (see note on 18.16) since an oracle "speaks" (see notes on 4.14; 4.15–16). Typically (cf. Abigail, 1 Sam 25.2, 25) Jethro's wisdom is demonstrated by his wit. **18.20** *Teach* connotes illumining and admonishing. *The way*. Israel's actual way in the wilderness is attributed to Jethro's eyes (Num 10.31). *Things*, lit. "acts." **18.21** Cf. Deut 1.13. *You should also*, or "You yourself." *Look for*, and find (cf. the use of "see," rendered "provided" in Gen 22.8; 1 Sam 16.1), elsewhere "to prophesy" and therefore perhaps another pun (see note on 18.19). *Able*. Other nuances are "worthy" (1 Kings 1.42) and "valiant" (1 Sam 14.52). *Dishonest gain*. Cf. 23.6–8. *Officers*, elsewhere where used militarily; the judicial levels and divisions seem artificial. **18.22** *Sit as judges*, lit. "judge," but see vv. 13–14. *You*. Under the monarchy the king acts as chief judge (e.g., 2 Sam 15.2; 1 Kings 3.16–28). *Decide*, "judge." *Easier*, lit. "lighter," the antithesis of *heavy* (v. 18). **18.23** *This*. See note on 18.14. *And God so commands you*, or "when the oracle directs you." *Endure*, lit. "stand," punning perhaps on *sat/sit* (vv. 13–14). *Home*, lit. "place." **18.24** *Listened*. See v. 19. **18.26** *Brought . . . decided*, "would bring . . . would judge" (see note on 18.22). **18.27** *Let . . . depart*, the same Hebrew verb rendered *let . . . go* in the liberation formula (see note on 3.19).

19.1–24.18 The Sinai revelation, in which context the Ten Commandments (34.28) and the Book of the Covenant (24.7) are presented, is comprised of several units beginning with 19.1–9. The arrangement of diverse sections seems to conclude at 24.18. The laws are surrounded by a covenant framework (19.3–6; 24.1–14) to which the people commit themselves (19.7–25; 24.3–8). Israel remains encamped at Sinai until Num 10.11–12 (second year, second month, twentieth day). Moses' repeated trips up and down the mountain together with his exclusive admission to the divine presence (cf. 3.5) strengthen his image as divine mediator. **19.1** The *Sinai* Peninsula contains a large mountainous center; several

wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the
wilderness; Israel camped there in front
of the mountain. 3 Then Moses went up to
God; the LORD called to him from the
mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to
the house of Jacob, and tell the Israelites:
4 You have seen what I did to the Egyp-
tians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings
and brought you to myself. 5 Now there-
fore, if you obey my voice and keep my
covenant, you shall be my treasured pos-
session out of all the peoples. Indeed, the
whole earth is mine, 6 but you shall be for
me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation.
These are the words that you shall speak
to the Israelites."

7 So Moses came, summoned the el-
ders of the people, and set before them all
these words that the LORD had com-
manded him. 8 The people all answered as
one: "Everything that the LORD has spo-
ken we will do." Moses reported the
words of the people to the LORD. 9 Then
the LORD said to Moses, "I am going to
come to you in a dense cloud, in order
that the people may hear when I speak
with you and so trust you ever after."

The People Consecrated

When Moses had told the words of the
people to the LORD, 10 the LORD said to
Moses: "Go to the people and consecrate
them today and tomorrow. Have them
wash their clothes 11 and prepare for the
third day, because on the third day the
LORD will come down upon Mount Sinai
in the sight of all the people. 12 You shall
set limits for the people all around, say-
ing, 'Be careful not to go up the mountain
or to touch the edge of it. Any who touch
the mountain shall be put to death. 13 No
hand shall touch them, but they shall be
stoned or shot with arrows;[o] whether ani-
mal or human being, they shall not live.'
When the trumpet sounds a long blast,
they may go up on the mountain." 14 So
Moses went down from the mountain to
the people. He consecrated the people,
and they washed their clothes. 15 And he
said to the people, "Prepare for the third
day; do not go near a woman."

16 On the morning of the third day
there was thunder and lightning, as well

o Heb lacks *with arrows*

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peaks have been proposed for Mount Sinai, and one in the south-central peninsula (e.g., Jebel Musa, Jebel Serbal) is most consistent with earlier locations on the route (see 15.23, 27). On the chronology, see introduction; note on 18.1–27. **19.2** *Had journeyed.* The Hebrew means only "journeyed"; v. 2 chronologically precedes v. 1, making v. 1 look like an overview. **19.3** *Then Moses went.* Hebrew syntax favors "Moses had gone . . ." It is unclear in what manifestation the Lord addresses Moses; he is said to descend onto the mountain only on the *third day* (vv. 16–20). *Thus . . . Israelites,* expressed in parallelism (see note on 3.15). **19.4** *You have seen,* a motif phrase unifying the larger passage (see 20.22; 20.18, where *witnessed* is lit. "seen"); in Deut 4.12, 15 the aural experience is favored. *Eagle's wings.* Cf. Deut 32.11. **19.5** *Treasured.* For the literal root of the metaphor see 1 Chr 29.3; cf. Deut 7.6; 14.2; 26.18–19; Ps 135.4. *Indeed,* or "because"; the Lord has the right to covenant with any people he wants; see Deut 10.14–15. **19.6** *But,* not expressed in Hebrew. *Priestly.* Israel is meant to maintain a degree of holiness higher than that of other nations just as priests observe more stringent purity rules than other Israelites; see v. 10. Isa 61.6 uses a similar metaphor of restored Judah, and 1 Pet 2.5, 9; Rev 1.6 apply it to the Christian community. **19.7** *Elders.* Cf. e.g., 3.16; 4.29; 12.21. Typically the Torah does not report that the elders fulfill the mediating function. **19.9** *Hear,* that the Lord speaks directly to Moses; the people do not seem to discern the words themselves; see 20.18–21; cf. Deut 4.10, 12; 5.22; see note on 19.25. *Trust.* Cf. 14.31. *When,* not expressed in Hebrew. Syntactically the phrase, which seems to duplicate v. 8b, may belong to what precedes rather than to what follows. **19.10** *Consecrate,* by rituals of purification and avoidance of defilement (see v. 15); the people must be in a priestly state for the divine encounter (cf. 28.41); cf., e.g., 1 Sam 16.5. *Clothes.* See Num 8.21. **19.11** *Third day.* Priests undergo a seven-day rite (29.35). *Sight.* See note on 19.4. **19.12** *Limits,* physical boundaries (Deut 20.14). *Edge,* even the edge. **19.13** *No hand shall touch* lest the executioner become contaminated or transgress the limit. *Stoned or shot,* from outside the limit. Vv. 22, 24 describe direct extermination by God, whose holy presence will tolerate no contact with the impure, even impure animals. *Trumpet,* ram's horn, used for signaling (Josh 6.5), by metonymy the jubilee (Lev 25.9–10). **19.15** *The third day,* lit. "three days." *Do not go near a woman* and through the sexual act become ritually defiled for a day (Deut 23.10–11); cf. 1 Sam 21.4; only adult males are addressed. **19.16–24** The Lord (Yahweh) is described in the conventional imagery of a Canaanite storm god, as in ch. 15

as a thick cloud on the mountain, and a
blast of a trumpet so loud that all the peo-
ple who were in the camp trembled.
17 Moses brought the people out of the
camp to meet God. They took their stand
at the foot of the mountain. 18 Now
Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke, be-
cause the LORD had descended upon it in
fire; the smoke went up like the smoke of
a kiln, while the whole mountain shook
violently. 19 As the blast of the trumpet
grew louder and louder, Moses would
speak and God would answer him in
thunder. 20 When the LORD descended
upon Mount Sinai, to the top of the
mountain, the LORD summoned Moses to
the top of the mountain, and Moses went
up. 21 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go
down and warn the people not to break
through to the LORD to look; otherwise
many of them will perish. 22 Even the
priests who approach the LORD must con-
secrate themselves or the LORD will break
out against them." 23 Moses said to the
LORD, "The people are not permitted to
come up to Mount Sinai; for you yourself
warned us, saying, 'Set limits around the
mountain and keep it holy.'" 24 The LORD
said to him, "Go down, and come up
bringing Aaron with you; but do not let
either the priests or the people break
through to come up to the LORD; other-
wise he will break out against them." 25 So
Moses went down to the people and told
them.

The Ten Commandments

20 Then God spoke all these words:
2 I am the LORD your God, who
brought you out of the land of Egypt, out
of the house of slavery; 3 you shall have no
other gods before[p] me.
4 You shall not make for yourself an
idol, whether in the form of anything that
is in heaven above, or that is on the earth
beneath, or that is in the water under the
earth. 5 You shall not bow down to them
or worship them; for I the LORD your

p Or *besides*

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and Pss 18; 29; 68. **19.16** *Morning*, more precisely "daybreak." *Thick*, lit. "heavy." *Trumpet*, the more common term, not the one so translated in v. 13. The storm god is a warrior (see 15.3), and the trumpet signals battle (Num 10.9); cf. Zech 9.14. *So ... that*, not in the Hebrew. **19.18** *Wrapped in smoke*, lit. "all smoking." *Shook*, the same Hebrew term rendered *trembled* in v. 16. In Ugaritic epic and Pss 18.7; 68.8 the earth quakes at the storm god's appearance. **19.19** *Thunder*, different in form from *thunder* in v. 16, more probably "(human) voice" (see 33.11; 1 Sam 3.4–8). **19.20** *When*, not in the Hebrew, added because v. 18 already reports the Lord's descent; but *The LORD summoned ... Moses went up* seems prior to v. 19. **19.21** *To look*, at odds with 20.18–21; Deut 5.5, 25–27. *Otherwise*, lit. "and (as a result)." *Perish*, lit. "fall" (32.28) through a divine outburst (see vv. 22, 24; 2 Sam 6.6–8). **19.22** *Priests*, anachronistic since the priests are not yet commissioned (Lev 8–9). *Break out*, not the Hebrew word for *break through* in vv. 21, 24 but the root rendered *break out* in v. 24 and "burst forth" in 2 Sam 6.8; see note on 19.13. The divine presence neutralizes any encroachment; cf. also Lev 10.1–5. **19.23** *Limits*. See note on 19.12. **19.24** A repetition of vv. 21–22, adding an order to *bring Aaron*, vaguely anticipating 24.1. *Break out*. See note on 19.22. **19.25** *Told them*, rather "said to them," apparently governing 20.1–17. Moses seems to relate the laws to the people (see note on 19.9).

20.1–17 The Decalogue comprises a core of ten rules (lit. *words*, 34.28), essentially prohibitions, addressed to the individual, with no penalties and few details spelled out. Nine of the rules appear variously elsewhere in the Torah, and the core Decalogue is elaborated differently in Deut 5.6–21. Prophets hold Israel accountable for the rules (e.g., Jer 7.9; 29.23; Ezek 18.5–18; 22.6–12; Hos 4.2), and psalms allude to them (e.g., Pss 50.16–19; 81.9–10); see also Mk 10.19; Lk 18.20; Rom 13.9. The severity of the commandments is such that violation of most of them is elsewhere said to punishable by death. The Decalogue may have served as a creed, as it did later in Judaism and Christianity. The text of the Decalogue will be inscribed by God (31.18; 32.16) and placed in the ark of the covenant (Deut 10.1–5; cf. Ex 25.16, 22). **20.2** A prologue. **20.3** The first rule; cf. 23.24; 34.14; Deut 6.13. *Gods*. See note on 12.12. **20.4–6** Cf. v. 23; 34.17; Lev 19.4; 26.1; Deut 4.15–20. **20.4** *Water under the earth*, the subterranean ocean (e.g., Gen 49.25; Ps 24.2). For the division heaven-earth-water, cf. Gen 1. The tabernacle's iconography depicts creatures not of this world; see note on 25.18. **20.5** *Worship*. See note on 4.22–23. *Jealous*. The Hebrew term also connotes zeal (e.g., Num 25.11); cf. Deut 4.24; 6.15. *Punishing children for the iniquity of parents*, lit. "accounting the sins of the fathers to the sons" (cf. 34.7); that God punishes vicariously is denied by Jer 31.29–30; Ezek 18. In contrast to other ancient Near Eastern legislation, vicarious punishment is prohibited in criminal matters (Deut 24.16); but see Josh 7.24; 2 Kings 9.26.

God am a jealous God, punishing children
for the iniquity of parents, to the third
and the fourth generation of those who
reject me, 6 but showing steadfast love to
the thousandth generation[q] of those who
love me and keep my commandments.
7 You shall not make wrongful use of
the name of the LORD your God, for the
LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses
his name.
8 Remember the sabbath day, and
keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and
do all your work. 10 But the seventh day is
a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall
not do any work—you, your son or your
daughter, your male or female slave, your
livestock, or the alien resident in your
towns. 11 For in six days the LORD made
heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is
in them, but rested the seventh day;
therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath
day and consecrated it.
12 Honor your father and your
mother, so that your days may be long in
the land that the LORD your God is giving you.
13 You shall not murder.[r]
14 You shall not commit adultery.
15 You shall not steal.
16 You shall not bear false witness
against your neighbor.
17 You shall not covet your neighbor's
house; you shall not covet your neighbor's
wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or
donkey, or anything that belongs to your
neighbor.
18 When all the people witnessed the
thunder and lightning, the sound of the
trumpet, and the mountain smoking, they
were afraid[s] and trembled and stood at a
distance, 19 and said to Moses, "You speak
to us, and we will listen; but do not let
God speak to us, or we will die." 20 Moses
said to the people, "Do not be afraid; for
God has come only to test you and to put

q Or *to thousands* r Or *kill* s Sam Gk Syr Vg: MT *they saw*

Reject, lit. "hate." **20.6** *Steadfast love*. See note on 15.13; see also Deut 7.9. *Thousandth generation*. See Deut 7.9. **20.7** *Make wrongful use*, particularly in an oath (Lev 6.3; 19.12; Ps 24.4), in which the deity's name is typically invoked (Deut 6.13; 10.20; cf., e.g., Gen 14.22; 24.3). *Acquit*, rendered *clear ... the guilty* in 34.7. *Misuses*, the same Hebrew term rendered *makes wrongful use of*. For a thematic link between this commandment and the preceding two, see 23.13. **20.8–11** Cf. 23.12; 31.12–17; 34.21; 35.1–3; Lev 23.3; Jer 17.19–27. **20.8** *Remember*. See note on 2.24; in Deut 5.12, "observe" (or "keep"). *Sabbath*. See note on 16.23. Mesopotamians sought to avoid evil spirits on the seventh, fourteenth, twenty-first and twenty-eighth days of the (lunar) month; the Torah's proscriptions of fire and work/movement outdoors on the sabbath are consonant with an original motive to avoid danger. *Keep ... holy*, "hallow" in Gen 2.3 and *consecrate* in v. 11; by observing the sabbath one does what God does. **20.10** Major textual versions add "on it" after *do*. *Livestock*. Deut 5.14 adds here "or your ox or your donkey" and at the end "so that your ... slave may rest as well as you" in accordance with the motive there. *Alien resident*. See Introduction. *Towns*, lit. "city gates," a locution characteristic of Deut (e.g., 12.12, 18). **20.11** *Therefore*. Cf. Gen 2.3; cf. 23.12; Deut 5.15. **20.12** Cf. Lev 19.3; Prov 19.26; 28.24; elsewhere this commandment is formulated as a prohibition (Ex 21.15, 17; Lev 20.9; Deut 27.16; and see Deut 21.18–21); for linking the positive and negative formulations, see Mt 15.4. Honoring parents serves as a metaphor for the covenant between God and Israel (e.g., Deut 32.16–21; Isa 1.2; Mal 1.6). *Long*, an expression characteristic of Deuteronomy (e.g., 4.40; 22.6–7). **20.13** *Murder*. Cf. 21.12; Lev 24.17; Num 35.30–34; Deut 19.11–13; see Gen 9.5–6. **20.14** Since men may be polygamous, adultery is intercourse between a married woman and any man but her husband; cf. Lev 18.20; 20.10; Deut 22.22; also cf. Num 5.11–31. For adultery as a metaphor for apostasy, cf., e.g., Hos 1–3; Mal 2.13–16. In some versions this commandment precedes v. 13. **20.15** Cf. 22.1–12; Lev 19.11. *Steal*, possibly referring to kidnapping (21.16; Deut 24.7; cf. Gen 40.15). **20.16** Witnesses not only testify but bring charges (e.g., Deut 19.15–19; 1 Kings 21.13). Cf. Ex 23.1; Num 35.30; Deut 19.16–21; Prov 6.19; 14.5, 25; 19.5, 9. **20.17** *Covet*, to the point of theft (see 34.24; Deut 7.25; Josh 7.21; Mic 2.2; cf. 2 Sam 11; 1 Kings 21, although the term *covet* is not employed there). *House*, household, including the wife, whom Deut 5.21 separates as an individual. **20.18–21** A different perspective from that of 19.16–23; cf. Deut 5.5, 22–27. The passage serves to incorporate the succeeding laws into the Sinai revelation. **20.18** *Witnessed*. See note on 19.4. The paradoxical "seeing" *the thunder* lends mystique to the revelation. *Lightning*, lit. "torches," not the Hebrew term so translated in 19.16. *Trembled*, different from the term used in 19.16, but the same as the term translated "shook" in Isa 7.2. **20.19** *And we will listen*, rather "so that we may listen/hear." *Or we will die*, "lest we die"; cf. Deut 4.33; 5.23–26. **20.20** *Test*. Cf. 16.4;

the fear of him upon you so that you do
not sin." 21 Then the people stood at a dis-
tance, while Moses drew near to the thick
darkness where God was.

Laws Concerning Worship

22 The LORD said to Moses: Thus you
shall say to the Israelites: "You have seen
for yourselves that I spoke with you from
heaven. 23 You shall not make gods of sil-
ver alongside me, nor shall you make for
yourselves gods of gold. 24 You need
make for me only an altar of earth and
sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and
your offerings of well-being, your sheep
and your oxen; in every place where I
cause my name to be remembered I will
come to you and bless you. 25 But if you
make for me an altar of stone, do not
build it of hewn stones; for if you use a
chisel upon it you profane it. 26 You shall
not go up by steps to my altar, so that
your nakedness may not be exposed
on it."

The Law Concerning Slaves

21 These are the ordinances that
you shall set before them:
2 When you buy a male Hebrew slave,
he shall serve six years, but in the seventh
he shall go out a free person, without
debt. 3 If he comes in single, he shall go
out single; if he comes in married, then
his wife shall go out with him. 4 If his mas-
ter gives him a wife and she bears him
sons or daughters, the wife and her chil-
dren shall be her master's and he shall go
out alone. 5 But if the slave declares, "I
love my master, my wife, and my chil-
dren; I will not go out a free person,"
6 then his master shall bring him before

Judg 2.22–23. **20.21** *Thick darkness*, or "fog" (e.g., Ps 18.10), synonymous with *cloud* (19.9, 16). References to Moses' approach to God here and in 24.2, where *come near* is the same as *drew near* here, frame the corpus of law that follows.

20.22–23.33 The so-called Book of the Covenant (see 24.7) is generally regarded as the oldest legislation in the Bible, dating perhaps to premonarchical times. Parallels to Mesopotamian law abound, and subsequent biblical texts may be taken to repeat and revise the law found here. Sections of ritual and civil/criminal law alternate. The archaic language has some features in common with ch. 18 (see note on 18.1–27). **20.22–26** The laws of worship elaborate the second commandment (vv. 4–6), adding positive injunctions to the commandment's prohibitions. **20.22** *Seen*, a link to the preceding section (see note on 19.4). *With you*, in tension with 20.18–21 (see note there). **20.23** *Silver . . . gold* is an ancient and common word pair in parallelism (see note on 3.15). **20.24** *Altar of earth*. Such a primitive altar was found at Mari, a northwest Mesopotamian city of the eighteenth century B.C.E. with a West Semitic population; see 2 Kings 5.17; cf. 27.1–8; 1 Kings 8.64. *Sacrifice*. See note on 3.18. *Burnt offerings*. See note on 18.12. *Well-being*, or "goodwill," for propitiation; cf. Lev 3.1–16; 7.11–18. *Every place*. Many local altars are implied; cf., e.g., Judg 6.24; 1 Sam 14.35; cf. Deut 12.5–14, which is taken to originate centuries later. On the *altar* as a place where God is *remembered*, see note on 17.15 or *invoked* (as in 23.13; see note on 3.15). **20.25** *Stone*. See Deut 27.5–6; Josh 8.30–31; 1 Kings 18.31–32; 1 Macc 4.47; cf. Judg 13.19; 1 Sam 6.14; 1 Kings 1.9. Early Israelite religion favors the natural; cf. note on 12.8; cf. 27.1–8. *Use*, in a sweeping motion. *Chisel*, a cutting tool (or weapon) specified as iron in Deut 27.5; Josh 8.31. Metal tools taint the sanctuary (1 Kings 6.7). **20.26** *Steps*. Cf. Ezek 43.17; the eighth-century B.C.E. altar at Dan, too, was reached by steps. *Nakedness*. Cf. 28.42. It is implied that sacrificers—who are not necessarily priests—wear full-length garments, like God (Isa 6.1); cf. 28.42. Cultic practices had no sexual aspect in Israelite religion; accordingly, women did not serve in the cult, to avoid the aspect of a sexual relationship to the Lord, who is conceived as male.

21.1–22.17 Civil and criminal laws mostly formulated casuistically ("When/if . . . then . . .") in the fashion of other ancient Near Eastern collections. **21.2–11** Laws involving slavery, a prominent theme of the exodus (see Introduction) and in the prologue to the Decalogue (20.2). **21.1** *These*, "And these"; the succeeding laws are attached to the foregoing. **21.2** *Buy*. The law is seller-oriented; cf. Lev 25.39; Deut 15.12. *Male*. Deut 15.12–17 treats the female as an individual. *Seventh*. Cf. Lev 25.40. *Without debt*, "gratis" ("for nothing" in Gen 29.15); see v. 11; note on 3.21. **21.3** *Married*, lit. "master of a woman." The provisions in vv. 3–5 are irrelevant to Deut 15.12–17 (see note on 21.2). **21.5** *Master*. Cf. Deut 15.16. **21.6** *God*, the household gods, an oracle (see note on 4.15–16), or the local shrine; omitted in Deut 15.17. *Door*, of the master's house. *Ear*. The wound disappears, but the blood on the doorpost signifies the permanent attachment of the person to the household. *For life*. Slavery of Israelites is a vocation, taken on to re-

God.[t] He shall be brought to the door or the doorpost; and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him for life.

7 When a man sells his daughter as a slave, she shall not go out as the male slaves do. 8 If she does not please her master, who designated her for himself, then he shall let her be redeemed; he shall have no right to sell her to a foreign people, since he has dealt unfairly with her. 9 If he designates her for his son, he shall deal with her as with a daughter. 10 If he takes another wife to himself, he shall not diminish the food, clothing, or marital rights of the first wife.[u] 11 And if he does not do these three things for her, she shall go out without debt, without payment of money.

The Law Concerning Violence

12 Whoever strikes a person mortally shall be put to death. 13 If it was not premeditated, but came about by an act of God, then I will appoint for you a place to which the killer may flee. 14 But if someone willfully attacks and kills another by treachery, you shall take the killer from my altar for execution.

15 Whoever strikes father or mother shall be put to death.

16 Whoever kidnaps a person, whether that person has been sold or is still held in possession, shall be put to death.

17 Whoever curses father or mother shall be put to death.

18 When individuals quarrel and one strikes the other with a stone or fist so that the injured party, though not dead, is confined to bed, 19 but recovers and walks around outside with the help of a staff, then the assailant shall be free of liability, except to pay for the loss of time, and to arrange for full recovery.

t Or *to the judges* *u* Heb *of her*

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pay debts (see v. 7; 22.3; Lev 25.39; 2 Kings 4.1; Neh 5.4–5); foreign slaves are permanent (Lev 25.44–46). **21.7** *Daughter.* The Code of Hammurabi sets a three-year term on family members sold to repay a debt. Israelite sons, who could also be sold (see note on 21.6), seemed to go free after six years (v. 2) since the present law deals only with the contingencies of selling a daughter. No such situation is treated in Deut 15.12–17. Lev 25.41 treats indentured children the same as parents. *Slave,* a term designating a woman often purchased for concubinage ("slave woman" in Gen 21.10–13; Judg 9.18; 19.19, where the translation omits "slave" before "woman"). **21.8** *Designated her,* as a concubine (see note on 21.7); cf. Lev 19.20. *Foreign people,* or "another clan" than hers (taking *people* in its archaic sense); redemption is the clan's duty (see Ruth 3.13, where "act as next-of-kin" translates the verb elsewhere rendered "redeem" and Ezek 11.15, where Hebrew "people of your redemption" denotes kin; cf. Lev 25.25). *Dealt unfairly,* rather "broken faith" (e.g., Jer 3.20), reneged. **21.9** *As with a daughter,* more precisely "according to the rule of (free) daughters." **21.10–11** These verses resume the situation on v. 8. **21.10** *Wife.* The Hebrew has "another (female)," probably a concubine. *Food,* lit. "meat." *Marital rights,* the traditional conjugal understanding. Etymology and Islamic parallels favor "lodging"; Mesopotamian parallels favor "(cosmetic) oil" (cf. Hos 2.8). **21.11** *Without debt.* See note on 21.2.

21.12–17 Capital crimes corresponding to rules on murder, honoring parents, and theft in the Decalogue (20.12–15; see notes there). **21.12** *Put to death,* by the "avenger of blood" (Num 35.19, 21; Deut 19.12; 2 Sam 14.11). Hittite laws (see note on 3.8) provide for compensation. **21.13** *Not premeditated,* lit. "If he did not hunt"; cf. Num 35.20. Num 35.11, 15; Deut 19.4 are less graphic. *Act of God.* For illustrations, see Num 35.22–23; Deut 19.5. *A place,* elaborated as the six cities of refuge (Num 35.9–28; Deut 19.1–13; Josh 20). **21.14** *Willfully attacks.* See note on 18.11. *Altar.* See 1 Kings 1.50–53; 2.28–34. The altar, like the cities of refuge (see note on 21.13), apparently protects accidental slayers. **21.15** *Strikes,* less than fatally (cf. v. 12). The Code of Hammurabi prescribes cutting off the hand. **21.16** *Kidnaps,* the same Hebrew term rendered *steal* in 20.15. *Person.* Deut 24.7 and ancient translations of the present verse indicate that an Israelite is meant. *Sold,* as a slave (e.g., Gen 37.27–28, 36; Joel 3.6). *Death,* the punishment also in the Code of Hammurabi; Hittite laws (see note on 3.8) penalize economically. **21.17** *Curses,* rejects the authority of or denounces (cf. 2 Sam 16.5–8), in Hebrew cognate to "dishonors" (Deut 27.16); cf. Lev 20.9; Deut 21.18–21; Prov 20.20. Various ancient Near Eastern laws punish rejection of parents with disinheritance or enslavement.

21.18–27 A resumption of the topic of vv. 12–14, treating less than fatal "striking" of persons by persons. **21.18** *Injured party,* supplied for clarity. *Not dead.* If death is caused, the culprit presumably seeks asylum (v. 13); other Near Eastern codes fix a fine. *Is confined,* lit. "falls." **21.19** *But,* lit. "if he." *Recovers,* lit. "gets up." *To*

20 When a slaveowner strikes a male
or female slave with a rod and the slave
dies immediately, the owner shall be pun-
ished. 21 But if the slave survives a day or
two, there is no punishment; for the slave
is the owner's property.
22 When people who are fighting in-
jure a pregnant woman so that there is a
miscarriage, and yet no further harm fol-
lows, the one responsible shall be fined
what the woman's husband demands, pay-
ing as much as the judges determine. 23 If
any harm follows, then you shall give life
for life, 24 eye for eye, tooth for tooth,
hand for hand, foot for foot, 25 burn for
burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.
26 When a slaveowner strikes the eye
of a male or female slave, destroying it,
the owner shall let the slave go, a free per-
son, to compensate for the eye. 27 If the
owner knocks out a tooth of a male or fe-
male slave, the slave shall be let go, a free
person, to compensate for the tooth.

Laws Concerning Property

28 When an ox gores a man or a
woman to death, the ox shall be stoned,
and its flesh shall not be eaten; but the
owner of the ox shall not be liable. 29 If
the ox has been accustomed to gore in the
past, and its owner has been warned but
has not restrained it, and it kills a man or
a woman, the ox shall be stoned, and its
owner also shall be put to death. 30 If a
ransom is imposed on the owner, then the
owner shall pay whatever is imposed for
the redemption of the victim's life. 31 If it
gores a boy or a girl, the owner shall be
dealt with according to this same rule.
32 If the ox gores a male or female slave,
the owner shall pay to the slaveowner
thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be
stoned.
33 If someone leaves a pit open, or
digs a pit and does not cover it, and an ox
or a donkey falls into it, 34 the owner of
the pit shall make restitution, giving
money to its owner, but keeping the dead
animal.
35 If someone's ox hurts the ox of an-
other, so that it dies, then they shall sell
the live ox and divide the price of it; and
the dead animal they shall also divide.
36 But if it was known that the ox was ac-
customed to gore in the past, and its
owner has not restrained it, the owner
shall restore ox for ox, but keep the dead
animal.

Laws of Restitution

22 [v] When someone steals an ox or a
sheep, and slaughters it or sells it,
the thief shall pay five oxen for an ox, and
four sheep for a sheep. [w] The thief shall
make restitution, but if unable to do so,

v Ch 21.37 in Heb w Verses 2, 3, and 4 rearranged thus: 3b, 4, 2, 3a

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pay, lit. "he must pay." *Loss of time*, unemployment compensation. *Recovery*, lit. "healing." **21.20** *Slaveowner*, lit. "a man," but a woman too might abuse her slave (e.g., Gen 16.6). *A . . . slave*, "his (own) . . . slave." *Punished*, lit. "avenged," by the victim's kin or another party (see Num 35.16–19). **21.21** *Survives*, lit. "stands." *Property*. The economic loss is sufficient punishment. **21.22** *Harm*, to the woman. *Demands, imposes* as in v. 30. Vv. 12–14 do not apply because the fetus is legally not a person. **21.23** *Life for life*, life of the perpetrator for the life of the woman. The Code of Hammurabi requires the life of the perpetrator's daughter; biblical law opposes vicarious punishment (see note on 20.5). **21.24** *Eye*. Cf. Lev 24.19–21; Deut 19.21. Unlike other Near Eastern codes, biblical law puts no price on limbs as it puts none on life (Num 35.31). **21.26** *Slaveowner*. See note on 21.20. *A . . . slave*, "his (own) . . . slave." *Free person*. Cf. v. 2. Near Eastern codes generally penalize economically.

21.28–36 Personal injuries caused by animals or negligence. **21.28** *Stoned*. See Gen 9.5. *Not be eaten*, because the animal is not properly slaughtered (22.31; Lev 17; Deut 12.15–16) and/or because it is polluted by bloodguilt (cf. Deut 21.1–9). **21.29** *Death*, in theory (see v. 30); the Code of Hammurabi imposes a fine and in no case has the animal killed. **21.30** *Ransom*. Compensation is allowed, contra Num 35.31, because this is not premeditated murder. *Imposed*, by the victim's kin. **21.31** *A boy or a girl*, lit. "a son . . . or a daughter." Vicarious punishment (see note on 21.23) is ruled out; in the Code of Hammurabi if a builder's faulty work kills a citizen's child, his own child is executed. **21.32** *Thirty*. Cf. Gen 37.28. **21.34** *Keeping*, for its hide and for food if Lev 17.15; Deut 14.21 do not yet hold. **21.35** *Divide*, lit. "halve." **21.36** *If it was known*, "If he (the owner) was informed." *Restore*, "pay." *Keep*. See note on 21.34.

22.1 *Oxen*, any "large cattle." *Five . . . and four*, ten and six in Hittite laws (see note on 3.8); cf. 2 Sam 12.6. *Sheep*, any "small cattle." *Make restitution*, "pay" restitution plus the fine. *Unable to do so*, lit. "he doesn't have it." *Sold*. See note on

shall be sold for the theft. 4 When the animal, whether ox or donkey or sheep, is found alive in the thief's possession, the thief shall pay double.

2[x] If a thief is found breaking in, and is beaten to death, no bloodguilt is incurred; 3 but if it happens after sunrise, bloodguilt is incurred.

5 When someone causes a field or vineyard to be grazed over, or lets livestock loose to graze in someone else's field, restitution shall be made from the best in the owner's field or vineyard.

6 When fire breaks out and catches in thorns so that the stacked grain or the standing grain or the field is consumed, the one who started the fire shall make full restitution.

7 When someone delivers to a neighbor money or goods for safekeeping, and they are stolen from the neighbor's house, then the thief, if caught, shall pay double. 8 If the thief is not caught, the owner of the house shall be brought before God,[y] to determine whether or not the owner had laid hands on the neighbor's goods.

9 In any case of disputed ownership involving ox, donkey, sheep, clothing, or any other loss, of which one party says, "This is mine," the case of both parties shall come before God;[y] the one whom God condemns[z] shall pay double to the other.

10 When someone delivers to another a donkey, ox, sheep, or any other animal for safekeeping, and it dies or is injured or is carried off, without anyone seeing it, 11 an oath before the LORD shall decide between the two of them that the one has not laid hands on the property of the other; the owner shall accept the oath, and no restitution shall be made. 12 But if it was stolen, restitution shall be made to its owner. 13 If it was mangled by beasts, let it be brought as evidence; restitution shall not be made for the mangled remains.

14 When someone borrows an animal from another and it is injured or dies, the owner not being present, full restitution shall be made. 15 If the owner was present, there shall be no restitution; if it was hired, only the hiring fee is due.

Social and Religious Laws

16 When a man seduces a virgin who is not engaged to be married, and lies with her, he shall give the bride-price for her and make her his wife. 17 But if her father refuses to give her to him, he shall pay an

x Ch 22.1 in Heb y Or *before the judges*
z Or *the judges condemn*

21.6. Hammurabi's laws would have the insolvent thief executed. **22.4** *Double*, restitution plus fine; cf. vv. 7, 9. **22.2** *Breaking in*, the Hebrew root means "to dig"; "digging" is figurative for "in the act"; cf. Job 24.16. *Is beaten to death*, rather "is struck and dies." *Bloodguilt*, "blood" (plural) criminally spilled; cf. Gen 4.10. *Incurred*. Greek and Roman law similarly allow for defense against thieves. **22.3** *After sunrise*, lit. "the sun shone on him," the thief is caught sometime after the crime, which is typically perpetrated at night (see Job 24.14–17). *Bloodguilt is incurred*, because the slaying is premeditated. **22.5** *Restitution . . . vineyard* or "(the perpetrator) shall pay the best (highest potential yield) of (the owner's) field or vineyard." **22.6** *Thorns*, used to hedge a field (Sir 28.24), removed to this day by burning. *Started the fire*, in Hebrew plays on *causes . . . to be grazed* (v. 5); it is a case of negligence. *Restitution*, according the principle in v. 5. **22.7–15** On the safekeeping and use of another's property. **22.7** *Goods*, "utensils." *Double*, as in v. 4. **22.8** *Be brought*, rather "approach." *God*, an oracle (see note on 21.6). *To determine*, not in the Hebrew; rather, the householder swears (the words rendered *whether or not* are an oath formula) "he did not lay a hand . . ." *Goods, property* as in v. 11, not *goods* as in v. 7. **22.9** *God*. See note on 22.8; cf. 1 Kings 8.31–32. *Condemns*, or "declares to be in the wrong" (as in Deut 25.1). *Double*, as in v. 4. The Code of Hammurabi condemns the culprit to death. **22.10** *Carried off*. Cf. Job 1.14–17. **22.11** *Before the LORD*, or "(taking) the LORD's (name)" (see note on 21.6); cf. 1 Kings 2.43. *That*, the oath formula (see note on 22.8), taken by the safekeeper. *No restitution shall be made*, "(one) does not pay" restitution plus fine (see v. 9). **22.12** *Restitution shall be made*, because the safekeeper's negligence, spelled out in Hammurabi's laws, is assumed. **22.13** *Evidence*. Cf. 1 Sam 17.34–35; Am 3.12. *Restitution . . . remains*. In Gen 31.39 Jacob goes beyond the law. **22.14** *An animal*, not in the Hebrew; any borrowed property may be meant. *Injured*, "broken," referring to an animal or object. **22.15** *If the owner was present*. The owner could have prevented a mishap as well as the borrower. *It*, the object or animal. *The hiring fee is due* because the renter paid for a sound implement or animal. **22.16** *A virgin*, a young woman. *Is not*, more precisely "has never been." *Bride-price*. Cf. Gen 24.12; 1 Sam 18.25. Deut 22.29 specifies 50 shekels. Cf. Deut 22.23–27

amount equal to the bride-price for virgins.

18 You shall not permit a female sorcerer to live.

19 Whoever lies with an animal shall be put to death.

20 Whoever sacrifices to any god, other than the LORD alone, shall be devoted to destruction.

21 You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. 22 You shall not abuse any widow or orphan. 23 If you do abuse them, when they cry out to me, I will surely heed their cry; 24 my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children orphans.

25 If you lend money to my people, to the poor among you, you shall not deal with them as a creditor; you shall not exact interest from them. 26 If you take your neighbor's cloak in pawn, you shall restore it before the sun goes down; 27 for it may be your neighbor's only clothing to use as cover; in what else shall that person sleep? And if your neighbor cries out to me, I will listen, for I am compassionate.

28 You shall not revile God, or curse a leader of your people.

29 You shall not delay to make offerings from the fullness of your harvest and from the outflow of your presses.[a]

The firstborn of your sons you shall give to me. 30 You shall do the same with your oxen and with your sheep: seven days it shall remain with its mother; on the eighth day you shall give it to me.

31 You shall be people consecrated to me; therefore you shall not eat any meat that is mangled by beasts in the field; you shall throw it to the dogs.

Justice for All

23 You shall not spread a false report. You shall not join hands with the wicked to act as a malicious witness. 2 You shall not follow a majority in wrongdoing; when you bear witness in a lawsuit, you shall not side with the majority so as to pervert justice; 3 nor shall you be partial to the poor in a lawsuit.

4 When you come upon your enemy's

a Meaning of Heb uncertain

(rape). **22.17** *If her father refuses.* Deut 22.29 excludes the circumstance so that the girl's marriage is guaranteed. *For virgins.* Cf. the legal principle implied in (see note on) 22.5. **22.18–22** These laws are formulated apodictically (*you shall/shall not*) like the Ten Commandments. **22.18** *Female sorcerer,* from the Hebrew for "to cast a spell," singled out perhaps for her popularity (cf. 1 Sam 28; Ezek 13.17–23); for the popularity of sorcery generally, see, e.g., 2 Kings 23.24; Isa 3.2–3. The Torah abominates any form of divine manipulation other than a direct approach to the Lord; cf. Lev 19.26, 31; 20.6, 27; Deut 18.9–14. **22.19** Cf. Lev 18.23; 20.15–16; Deut 27.21. **22.20** *Devoted* to destruction, placed under ban; see Deut 13.12–17; cf. Lev 27.28–29; Josh 6.21, 7; Judg 21.5–11; 1 Sam 15.1–9. **22.21** *Oppress.* See 3.9; cf. 23.9. *Aliens.* See Introduction. **22.22** *Abuse.* See 1.11–12. *Orphan.* Protecting the "fatherless," along with the indigent *widow,* is an expressed duty of Near Eastern monarchs as well as the Lord (e.g., Deut 10.18; Ps 68.5); cf., e.g., Deut 24.17; Isa 1.17; Jer 7.6; 22.3; Zech 7.10. **22.23** *Cry.* See 3.7. **22.24** *Sword,* in war (cf. Isa 9.11–17). *Wives.* Men are addressed (see note on 19.15). The grim poetic justice underscores the idea that Israel was liberated for the purpose of establishing a just society. **22.25** *People,* Israel. Cf. Lev 25.36–37; Deut 23.19–20; Ps 15.5; Prov 28.8; Ezek 18.8, 13, 17. **22.26–27** Cf. Deut 24.6, 10–13; Ezek 18.12, 16; 33.15. **22.26** *Cloak.* Cf. Am 2.8. An Israelite letter from the seventh century B.C.E. complains that a laborer's garment was distrained for unsatisfactory work. **22.27** *For . . . cover,* lit. "for it is his only covering, it is his cloak for his skin." Cf. Job 22.6; 24.7. *Compassionate* anticipates 34.6 (rendered *gracious* there). **22.28** *Revile,* rather "curses," as in Lev 24.11–16, 23; cf. 1 Kings 21.13; Job 2.9–10; Isa 8.21. *Leader.* See note on 16.22; cf. 2 Sam 16.5–13. Quoted in Acts 23.5. **22.29** *Offerings,* added in translation, inferred from such passages as Num 18.11–12, 26–30; Deut 26.1–15; the juxtaposition with the firstborn law suggests first fruits (23.19) are meant, but tithes (Num 18.21–32; Deut 14.22–29) too may be intended. *Firstborn.* See note on 13.1–2. **22.30** *On the eighth day,* following a seven-day period for overcoming the ritual pollution that accompanies birth (Lev 12.2–3); see Lev 22.27; cf. Ex 29.35–37. **22.31** *Consecrated,* or "who are holy," as in Lev 19.2, a similar context. *Mangled.* See note on 21.28.

23.1–3 Laws addressed to potential witnesses. **23.1** *False.* Cf. (and see note on) 20.16; Lev 19.16; Deut 5.20. *Malicious.* See Pss 27.12; 35.11. The penalty would seem to be as in Deut 19.18–19 (and in the Code of Hammurabi). **23.3** *Partial.* See Deut 16.19. *To the poor,* in light of Lev 19.15; Deut 1.17; and especially v. 6 below,

ox or donkey going astray, you shall bring it back.

5 When you see the donkey of one who hates you lying under its burden and you would hold back from setting it free, you must help to set it free.[b]

6 You shall not pervert the justice due to your poor in their lawsuits. 7 Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent and those in the right, for I will not acquit the guilty. 8 You shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the officials, and subverts the cause of those who are in the right.

9 You shall not oppress a resident alien; you know the heart of an alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.

Sabbatical Year and Sabbath

10 For six years you shall sow your land and gather in its yield; 11 but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, so that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave the wild animals may eat. You shall do the same with your vineyard, and with your olive orchard.

12 Six days you shall do your work, but on the seventh day you shall rest, so that your ox and your donkey may have relief, and your homeborn slave and the resident alien may be refreshed. 13 Be attentive to all that I have said to you. Do not invoke the names of other gods; do not let them be heard on your lips.

The Annual Festivals

14 Three times in the year you shall hold a festival for me. 15 You shall observe the festival of unleavened bread; as I commanded you, you shall eat unleavened bread for seven days at the appointed time in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt.

No one shall appear before me empty-handed.

16 You shall observe the festival of harvest, of the first fruits of your labor, of what you sow in the field. You shall observe the festival of ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in from the field the fruit of your labor. 17 Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the Lord GOD.

18 You shall not offer the blood of my

b Meaning of Heb uncertain

"(even) to the poor," for whom sympathy is natural (for the style see v. 4). **23.4** *Your enemy's*, "(even) your enemy's" (see note on 23.3), anyone's; cf. Deut 22.1–3. On overcoming hatred, cf. Lev 19.17–18. **23.5** *One who hates*, a poetic synonym of *enemy* (e.g., Ps 21.8). *Setting it free*, or "unloading it"; cf. Deut 22.4, where loading or "lifting up," a more demanding activity is called for. **23.6–9** These verses resume vv. 1–3 and address judges. **23.6** See note on 23.3; cf. Ps 82.3–4; Isa 10.2; Jer 5.28; Am 2.6–7; 5.12. **23.7** *False charge*. Cf. v. 1. *Kill*, by erroneous condemnation; cf. Ps 94.6–7. *Acquit*, "declare in the right" (as in Deut 25.1); cf. Ex 34.7. **23.8** See Deut 1.17; 16.19; 27.25; cf. Ps 26.9–10; Prov 17.23; Isa 1.23; 5.23; Ezek 22.12; Mic 3.11. **23.9** See 22.21; Introduction. **23.10–11** Cf. the cultic emphasis of Lev 25.1–7, 20–22 and the socioeconomic emphasis of Deut 15. **23.12** *Refreshed*, like the Lord after creation (31.17). See note on 20.8–11; cf. the motive in 23.11; Deut 5.14–15. **23.13** *Invoke* may be taken to elaborate 20.3; cf. Josh 23.7; Hos 2.17; Zech 13.2. The repetitive, impressionistic style called "parallelism" brings the section to closure. **23.14–17** On the calendar, see note on 12.2. **23.14** *Hold a festival*. See note on 5.1. **23.15** *Commanded*. See 12.14–20; 13.3–10. The Passover offering, a home ritual (see 12.1–11), is not mentioned here (see note on 12.1–28). *Abib*. See note on 12.2. *Appear before me*, lit. "see my face," an idiom meaning "to worship," devolving from the practice of seeing a god's image in a shrine (e.g., Ps 42.2; Isa 1.12). *Empty-handed*. See note on 3.21. **23.16** *Festival of harvest*, the Festival of Weeks (34.22; Num 28.26; Deut 16.10; cf. Lev 23.15), so named for its timing seven weeks after Passover (Lev 23.15; Deut 16.9). *First fruits*. The first produce of each crop, like human and animal firstborn (see note on 13.1–2), is rendered to God; cf. v. 19. Deut 26.1–11 does not connect first fruits with a particular festival. The crop is elsewhere described as *wheat* (34.22), "new grain" (Lev 23.16; Num 28.26), and "standing grain" (Deut 16.9). *Festival of ingathering*, the Festival of Booths (Lev 23.34; Deut 16.13). The priestly traditions reflected in Lev 23.34; Num 29.12 date it to the fifteenth day of the seventh month. *Fruit of your labor*. See Deut 16.13. **23.17** *Males*. See note on 10.11. *Appear before*, "see the face of" (see note on 23.15). *Lord, master* in 21.4–6, implying the Israelites are the Lord's servants (Lev 25.55). *GOD*, the name Yahweh, elsewhere rendered LORD. **23.18** *Leavened*, in light of 34.25; Deut 16.3–4, an addendum to v. 15. *Fat*, the hard, inedible coating of the entrails, burned into smoke (e.g., 29.12; Lev 3.5) and savored by God, signifying acceptance (e.g., Gen 8.21; Lev 26.31). *Until the morn-*

sacrifice with anything leavened, or let the fat of my festival remain until the morning.

19 The choicest of the first fruits of your ground you shall bring into the house of the LORD your God.

You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk.

The Conquest of Canaan Promised

20 I am going to send an angel in front of you, to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared. 21 Be attentive to him and listen to his voice; do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgression; for my name is in him.

22 But if you listen attentively to his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and a foe to your foes.

23 When my angel goes in front of you, and brings you to the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, and I blot them out, 24 you shall not bow down to their gods, or worship them, or follow their practices, but you shall utterly demolish them and break their pillars in pieces. 25 You shall worship the LORD your God, and I[c] will bless your bread and your water; and I will take sickness away from among you. 26 No one shall miscarry or be barren in your land; I will fulfill the number of your days. 27 I will send my terror in front of you, and will throw into confusion all the people against whom you shall come, and I will make all your enemies turn their backs to you. 28 And I will send the pestilence[d] in front of you, which shall drive out the Hivites, the Canaanites, and the Hittites from before you. 29 I will not drive them out from before you in one year, or the land would become desolate and the wild animals would multiply against you. 30 Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have increased and possess the land. 31 I will set your borders from the Red Sea[e] to the sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the Euphrates; for I will hand over to you the inhabitants of the land, and

c Gk Vg: Heb *he* d Or *hornets*: Meaning of Heb uncertain e Or *Sea of Reeds*

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ing. See note on 12.10. **23.19** *Choicest, best* in 34.26; an addendum to v. 16. The amount depends on individual ability (Deut 16.17). *House*, a temple such as that at Shiloh (Judg 18.31; 1 Sam 1.17) or Jerusalem (1 Kings 8.10). *You shall not . . . milk*. Mixing death with a life fluid is ritually polluting (cf. blood or semen loss from a reproductive organ, Lev 12; 15). The context here and in 34.26 is opaque, but in Deut 14.21 the law occurs among eating regulations.

23.20–33 Biblical law is presented through the analogy of Near Eastern treaty conditions that an overlord (the Lord) imposes on a vassal (Israel). Such treaties conclude with curses to befall the vassal should it disobey. Blessings and curses conclude legislation in Lev 26; Deut 28. Here they are intermixed with commands because the legislation does not end but resumes with cultic law. The passage is elaborated in Deut 7.12–26. **23.20** *Angel*. Cf. 14.19; see Josh 5.13–15; Judg 2.1–5. **23.21** *Name*, a concretization of the deity; e.g., Deut 12.5, 11; Pss 20.1; 54.1. **23.22** *Foe*, Hebrew *tsar*, perhaps a play on Egypt (*mitzrayim*). Cf. Lev 26.7–8; Deut 28.7. The last two clauses are parallel (see note on 3.15). **23.23** *Jebusites*. Cf. 3.17; Josh 3.10; 24.11. *Blot . . . out*, as Pharaoh has been (the same Hebrew verb rendered *cut off* in 9.15). **23.24** *Bow down . . . worship*. Cf. 20.5; Deut 28.14. *Pillars*, steles, representing deities, on which libations are poured, well attested archaeologically in Canaan; cf. 34.13; Deut 12.3. Israelite pillars are eventually forbidden (Lev 26.1; Deut 16.22; 2 Kings 18.4; 23.14). **23.25** *Bread*. Cf. Lev 26.5, 26. *Sickness*, such as God brought upon Egypt (the same Hebrew word translated *diseases* in 15.26); cf. Lev 26.16; Deut 28.21–22, 58–61. **23.26** Cf. Lev 26.9; Deut 28.4, 11; also cf. Lev 26.22 ("bereave" is the same Hebrew verb as *miscarry* here); Deut 28.18, 63. **23.27** *Terror*. Cf. 15.14–16; see note on 14.24. *Throw into confusion*, as the Lord has done to Egypt (14.24, where *threw into panic* is the same verb); cf. Josh 10.10; also cf. Lev 26.36–37; Deut 28.20, 28–29. *Turn their backs*, as Israel must do when it is punished (Josh 7.8, 12); cf. Lev 26.7–8; Deut 28.7; 28.25. **23.28** *Pestilence*, Hebrew *tsir'ah*, personified angel of destruction as in v. 20 and like "the destroyer" the Hebrew of 12.13 (see note there); in Hebrew it echoes *foe* in v. 22; cf. Deut 7.20; Josh 24.12. *Hivites . . . Hittites*, a list abridged from v. 23. **23.29** *In one year*, as in Josh 10–11, but gradually as in Josh 13; Judg 1. *Wild animals*. Cf. Lev 26.22; Lam 5.18. **23.30** *Increased*, as you began to do in Egypt (1.7, 12). *Possess*, inherit (e.g., Josh 14.1); cf. Josh 13.6–7. **23.31** *Sea of the Philistines*: the Mediterranean ("Western Sea" in Deut 11.24; "Great Sea" in Josh 1.4). *Wilderness*, the Negev (cf. Deut 11.24; Josh 1.4). *Euphrates*, lit. "the river" (see Deut 11.24). Cf. the extent of Solomon's kingdom (1 Kings 4.21).

you shall drive them out before you.
32 You shall make no covenant with them
and their gods. 33 They shall not live in
your land, or they will make you sin
against me; for if you worship their gods,
it will surely be a snare to you.

The Blood of the Covenant

24 Then he said to Moses, "Come up
to the LORD, you and Aaron, Na-
dab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders
of Israel, and worship at a distance. 2 Mo-
ses alone shall come near the LORD; but
the others shall not come near, and the
people shall not come up with him."
3 Moses came and told the people all
the words of the LORD and all the ordi-
nances; and all the people answered with
one voice, and said, "All the words that
the LORD has spoken we will do." 4 And
Moses wrote down all the words of the
LORD. He rose early in the morning, and
built an altar at the foot of the mountain,
and set up twelve pillars, corresponding
to the twelve tribes of Israel. 5 He sent
young men of the people of Israel, who
offered burnt offerings and sacrificed
oxen as offerings of well-being to the
LORD. 6 Moses took half of the blood and
put it in basins, and half of the blood he
dashed against the altar. 7 Then he took
the book of the covenant, and read it in
the hearing of the people; and they said,
"All that the LORD has spoken we will do,
and we will be obedient." 8 Moses took the
blood and dashed it on the people, and
said, "See the blood of the covenant that
the LORD has made with you in accor-
dance with all these words."

On the Mountain with God

9 Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and
Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel
went up, 10 and they saw the God of Is-
rael. Under his feet there was something
like a pavement of sapphire stone, like the
very heaven for clearness. 11 God[f] did
not lay his hand on the chief men of the
people of Israel; also they beheld God,
and they ate and drank.
12 The LORD said to Moses, "Come up
to me on the mountain, and wait there;
and I will give you the tablets of stone,

f Heb *He*

23.32–33 These verses are elaborated in 34.11–16; cf. Josh 23.12–13; Judg 2.2–3; and note the trick in Josh 9. **23.33** *A snare,* eventually leading to disaster; cf. Judg 8.27; 1 Sam 18.21.

24.1–8 Ritual ratification of the covenant (cf. note on 19.1–9), an apparent but imprecise sequel to 19.24 (see 20.21). **24.1** *To Moses.* Cf. the address to all Israel (20.22). *To the LORD.* The Lord refers to himself in the third person as in 19.24. *Nadab and Abihu.* Cf. 6.23. *Seventy,* a full complement (cf. 1.5). Cf. Num 11.16–17, 24–25. *Elders.* Cf. 19.7. *Worship,* lit. "bow down." *At a distance.* Cf. 20.18, 21. **24.3** *Came,* presumably prior to fulfilling the command in vv. 1–2; see note on 24.9–11. *Ordinances,* in 20.23–23.19. *Do.* Cf. v. 7; 19.8; see note on 19.1–9. The repetition of *all* suggests completion. **24.4** *Wrote down.* Cf. 17.14. The *book* (v. 7), presumably parchment since stone is not specified (as in v. 12; 31.18), may be understood to be deposited in the ark (25.16, 21) as was customary with treaty documents. *Pillars,* as witnesses (Gen 31.44–48; Josh 24.26–27); cf. note on 23.24. **24.5** *Young men,* acting as cultic assistants prior to the establishment of the hereditary priesthood (cf. 1 Sam 2.11–18). *Oxen,* rather "bulls"; the term occurs at the end of the sentence in the Hebrew, meaning that both types of offering consist of bulls. *Well-being.* See note on 20.24. The people eat the flesh of this offering (see Lev 3) so that both parties partake. **24.6** The Hebrew term translated *basins* here is never used of implements in priestly practices. *Altar,* the Lord's surrogate in the ceremony. **24.7** *Read it.* Cf. Deut 31.9–13; 2 Kings 23.1–3; Neh 8.1–8. *Be obedient,* the same term rendered *listen* in 20.19. **24.8** *People,* or the pillars (v. 4) as their surrogates. Dashing blood, elsewhere an instrument of purification and atonement, on the two parties signifies somehow that the onus is on both; cf. Heb 9.18–22. **24.9–11** A resumption of vv. 1–2. **24.10** *Saw.* See note on 19.4. *Something like,* more precisely "like the construction of" (e.g., Ezek 1.16). *Sapphire,* as in Ezek 1.26–28; God's upper body is not directly perceived (cf. Ex 33.20). **24.11** *Lay his hand.* The command in vv. 1–2 supersedes 19.24. *Chief men,* presumably the *elders* (v. 9). *Beheld,* elsewhere used of prophetic visions (e.g., 1 Kings 22.19; Isa 6.1 where *beheld* is translated "to see"). *Ate and drank.* See note on 18.12. **24.12–18** Since Moses is already on the mountain, this resumes v. 8 or takes place after the others mentioned in v. 9 descend (see v. 14). **24.12** *Wait,* lit. "be," the root of God's name (see note on 3.14). *And I will,* rather "so that I may." *Tablets of stone.* Cf. 31.18; 34.1; Deut 4.13; called "tablets of the covenant" in Deut 9.9. *Law* (He-

with the law and the commandment,
which I have written for their instruc-
tion." 13 So Moses set out with his assistant
Joshua, and Moses went up into the
mountain of God. 14 To the elders he had
said, "Wait here for us, until we come to
you again; for Aaron and Hur are with
you; whoever has a dispute may go to
them."

15 Then Moses went up on the moun-
tain, and the cloud covered the mountain.
16 The glory of the LORD settled on Mount
Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six
days; on the seventh day he called to Mo-
ses out of the cloud. 17 Now the appear-
ance of the glory of the LORD was like a
devouring fire on the top of the mountain
in the sight of the people of Israel. 18 Mo-
ses entered the cloud, and went up on the
mountain. Moses was on the mountain for
forty days and forty nights.

Offerings for the Tabernacle

25 The LORD said to Moses: 2 Tell
the Israelites to take for me an
offering; from all whose hearts prompt
them to give you shall receive the offering
for me. 3 This is the offering that you shall
receive from them: gold, silver, and
bronze, 4 blue, purple, and crimson yarns
and fine linen, goats' hair, 5 tanned rams'
skins, fine leather,[g] acacia wood, 6 oil for
the lamps, spices for the anointing oil and
for the fragrant incense, 7 onyx stones and
gems to be set in the ephod and for the
breastpiece. 8 And have them make me a
sanctuary, so that I may dwell among
them. 9 In accordance with all that I show
you concerning the pattern of the taber-
nacle and of all its furniture, so you shall
make it.

The Ark of the Covenant

10 They shall make an ark of acacia
wood; it shall be two and a half cubits
long, a cubit and a half wide, and a cubit
and a half high. 11 You shall overlay it
with pure gold, inside and outside you
shall overlay it, and you shall make a
molding of gold upon it all around. 12 You
shall cast four rings of gold for it and put
them on its four feet, two rings on the one
side of it, and two rings on the other side.

g Meaning of Heb uncertain

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brew *torah*) is cognate to the verb translated *instruction*; see note on 18.16. **24.13** *Joshua*. See note on 17.9. Joshua appears to station himself partway up the mountain (cf. 32.17). *Mountain of God*. See 3.1. **24.14** *Wait here*. See Gen 22.5. The vagueness sets the stage for 32.1. *Hur*. See note on 17.10; Hur fulfills Moses' judicial duties (18.26) along with Aaron. *Dispute*. See note on 18.16. **24.15–16** These verses anticipate 40.34–35. **24.15** *Cloud*. Cf. 19.9, 16; 20.21. **24.16** *Glory*. See note on 16.6–7. *Settled*, the same term rendered *dwell* in 25.8, used of making the divine presence, in whatever form, immanent. *Six days*, double the period the people underwent sanctification merely to witness the divine presence (see 19.11). **24.17** *Devouring fire*. Cf. Isa 30.30; Ezek 1.4; note on 13.21. **24.18** *Forty*, a stereotypical number indicating a full period; cf. 34.28; Deut 9.9–11, 18, 25.

25.1–31.18 Moses learns how to set up a mobile dwelling (tabernacle) for the deity in the midst of the Israelite camp and to establish its priesthood. The dwelling serves as a shrine for worship and as an oracular source (29.43–44), the tent of meeting (27.21); cf. note on 33.7. The construction of the dwelling follows the golden calf incident (ch. 32) and consequent renewal of the covenant (chs. 33–34). It is uncertain whether the tabernacle described here corresponds to any historical edifice. **25.2** *Offering*, from the Hebrew for "to raise," unrelated to term for sacrificial offerings, a "donation" (Num 15.19–21; Deut 12.6, 11, 17) to the priests and cult. *You*, plural, Israel at large. **25.3** *Gold, . . . bronze*. Like descriptions of the tabernacle and its paraphernalia generally, the three metals are presented in descending order of value. The holier the object (the more immediately it impinges upon the divine presence), the more valuable the materials of which it is made. **25.4** *Blue, purple*, dyes fit for royalty (Esth 1.6; 8.15), taken from the sea (Ezek 27.7), a staple of Canaanite industry. *Fine linen*, an Egyptian export (Ezek 27.7), worn by nobility (Gen 41.42). **25.5** *Tanned*, lit. "reddened." *Fine leather*, cognate to Akkadian (Mesopotamian Semitic) "dyed sheep/goat leather." *Acacia*, found locally. **25.6** *Oil*, of olives (27.20). *Spices*. See 30.23–38. *Incense*. See 30.34–38. **25.7** *Onyx*. Cf. Gen 2.12; Ezek 28.13. *Ephod*. See 28.6–14. *Breastpiece*. See 28.15–30. **25.8** Cf. 29.43–46. **25.9** *Pattern*, structural design, from the Hebrew "to build." Ascribing a temple's blueprint to its god is attested, too, in Mesopotamia and Egypt. **25.10–22** That the Lord sits between and above two cherubim in the manner of ancient Near Eastern kings indicates that the ark is the divine throne or its footstool; cf. Ps 99.1. **25.10** *Ark*, lit. "box, chest," not the Hebrew term translated "ark" in Gen 6.14 (see note on 2.3). **25.11** *Molding*, an ornamented ridge. **25.12** *Feet*, bottom corners. *Side*, the shorter side, so that the divine presence always faces forward;

13 You shall make poles of acacia wood,
and overlay them with gold. 14 And you
shall put the poles into the rings on the
sides of the ark, by which to carry the ark.
15 The poles shall remain in the rings of
the ark; they shall not be taken from it.
16 You shall put into the ark the cove-
nant[h] that I shall give you.

17 Then you shall make a mercy
seat[i] of pure gold; two cubits and a half
shall be its length, and a cubit and a half
its width. 18 You shall make two cherubim
of gold; you shall make them of ham-
mered work, at the two ends of the mercy
seat.[j] 19 Make one cherub at the one end,
and one cherub at the other; of one piece
with the mercy seat[j] you shall make the
cherubim at its two ends. 20 The cherubim
shall spread out their wings above, over-
shadowing the mercy seat[j] with their
wings. They shall face one to another; the
faces of the cherubim shall be turned to-
ward the mercy seat.[j] 21 You shall put the
mercy seat[j] on the top of the ark; and in
the ark you shall put the covenant[h] that I
shall give you. 22 There I will meet with
you, and from above the mercy seat,[j]
from between the two cherubim that are
on the ark of the covenant,[h] I will deliver
to you all my commands for the Israelites.

The Table for the Bread of the Presence

23 You shall make a table of acacia
wood, two cubits long, one cubit wide, and
a cubit and a half high. 24 You shall over-
lay it with pure gold, and make a molding
of gold around it. 25 You shall make
around it a rim a handbreadth wide, and
a molding of gold around the rim. 26 You
shall make for it four rings of gold, and
fasten the rings to the four corners at its
four legs. 27 The rings that hold the poles
used for carrying the table shall be close
to the rim. 28 You shall make the poles of
acacia wood, and overlay them with gold,
and the table shall be carried with these.
29 You shall make its plates and dishes for
incense, and its flagons and bowls with
which to pour drink offerings; you shall
make them of pure gold. 30 And you shall
set the bread of the Presence on the table
before me always.

The Lampstand

31 You shall make a lampstand of
pure gold. The base and the shaft of the
lampstand shall be made of hammered
work; its cups, its calyxes, and its petals
shall be of one piece with it; 32 and there
shall be six branches going out of its sides,
three branches of the lampstand out of
one side of it and three branches of the
lampstand out of the other side of it;
33 three cups shaped like almond blos-
soms, each with calyx and petals, on one

h Or *treaty*, or *testimony*; Heb *eduth* *i* Or *a cover*
j Or *the cover*

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the poles, which are never removed (v. 15), are perpendicular to the ark's length (cf. 1 Kings 8.8). **25.15** Once the tablets of the covenant (vv. 16, 21) are deposited in it (40.20), the ark itself becomes too holy to handle (see 2 Sam 6.6–7). **25.16** *Covenant*, the Ten Commandments (31.18). **25.17** *Pure gold*, solid gold, not plated like the rest of the ark, because God sits directly above it (cf. note on 25.3). **25.18** *Cherubim*, winged sphinxes with the body of a bull or lion and a human head; representations of these creatures are abundant in the archaeological evidence. Cf. Ezek 1; 10; 41.18–20; cf. the size and position of the cherubim in 1 Kings 6.23–28. These hybrid creatures represent the various animal powers over which God has control; cf. Gen 3.24; Ps 18.10. **25.20** *Spread*, to support the divine presence; cf. Ezek 1.11. *Overshadowing*, "screening over," so that the entire divine presence is seated above the lid (mercy seat). **25.22** *Meet*. See note on 25.1–31.18. *I will deliver to you all my commands*, lit. "I will speak with you all I will command you"; cf. Num 7.89. **25.23** For the *table*'s placement, see 26.35. **25.25** *Rim*, more precisely "frame"; the area between it and the molding above it gives a sunken look, described by the historian Josephus and depicted on the Arch of Titus (70 C.E.). **25.27** *That hold the poles*, lit. "for houses for the poles," a rhyming phrase in Hebrew. **25.29** *For incense*, added in translation, assuming that this is the purpose of the dishes (cf. Lev 24.7). *With which*, or "into which." *To pour*, or "can be poured"; in fact no liquid is poured into or out of these (cf. 30.9). *Drink offerings*, added in translation. **25.30** *Bread*, laid out for presentation but consumed by the priests (Lev 24.5–9; 1 Sam 21.1–6). Since the deity does not eat or drink, setting the table is a show of hospitality. *Presence*, lit. "face" (cf. note on 23.15). *Always*, rather "regularly" (as in 27.20), every sabbath (Lev 24.8; 1 Chr 9.32). **25.31** For the placement of the *lampstand*, see 26.35. *Pure*, solid. *Calyxes*, "capitals" in Am 9.1. *Petals*, "flowers." **25.32** *Branches*, the same

branch, and three cups shaped like almond blossoms, each with calyx and petals, on the other branch—so for the six branches going out of the lampstand. 34On the lampstand itself there shall be four cups shaped like almond blossoms, each with its calyxes and petals. 35There shall be a calyx of one piece with it under the first pair of branches, a calyx of one piece with it under the next pair of branches, and a calyx of one piece with it under the last pair of branches—so for the six branches that go out of the lampstand. 36Their calyxes and their branches shall be of one piece with it, the whole of it one hammered piece of pure gold. 37You shall make the seven lamps for it; and the lamps shall be set up so as to give light on the space in front of it. 38Its snuffers and trays shall be of pure gold. 39It, and all these utensils, shall be made from a talent of pure gold. 40And see that you make them according to the pattern for them, which is being shown you on the mountain.

The Tabernacle

26 Moreover you shall make the tabernacle with ten curtains of fine twisted linen, and blue, purple, and crimson yarns; you shall make them with cherubim skillfully worked into them. 2The length of each curtain shall be twenty-eight cubits, and the width of each curtain four cubits; all the curtains shall be of the same size. 3Five curtains shall be joined to one another; and the other five curtains shall be joined to one another. 4You shall make loops of blue on the edge of the outermost curtain in the first set; and likewise you shall make loops on the edge of the outermost curtain in the second set. 5You shall make fifty loops on the one curtain, and you shall make fifty loops on the edge of the curtain that is in the second set; the loops shall be opposite one another. 6You shall make fifty clasps of gold, and join the curtains to one another with the clasps, so that the tabernacle may be one whole.

7 You shall also make curtains of goats' hair for a tent over the tabernacle; you shall make eleven curtains. 8The length of each curtain shall be thirty cubits, and the width of each curtain four cubits; the eleven curtains shall be of the same size. 9You shall join five curtains by themselves, and six curtains by themselves, and the sixth curtain you shall double over at the front of the tent. 10You shall make fifty loops on the edge of the curtain that is outermost in one set, and fifty loops on the edge of the curtain that is outermost in the second set.

11 You shall make fifty clasps of bronze, and put the clasps into the loops, and join the tent together, so that it may be one whole. 12The part that remains of the curtains of the tent, the half curtain that remains, shall hang over the back of the tabernacle. 13The cubit on the one side, and the cubit on the other side, of what remains in the length of the curtains of the tent, shall hang over the sides of the tabernacle, on this side and that side, to cover it. 14You shall make for the tent a covering of tanned rams' skins and an outer covering of fine leather.[k]

k Meaning of Heb uncertain

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word translated *shaft* in v. 31. **25.34** *Itself*, the center shaft. **25.37** *Shall be set*, lit. "he (Aaron) shall set," every evening (30.8), treating the deity like a royal guest. **25.38** *Snuffers*, "tongs" for adjusting the wicks and removing their charred remains. **25.39** *Talent*, an "ingot" weighing 3,000 shekels.

26.1–14 Four layers cover the frame of the tabernacle, the "dwelling" proper (not including the courtyard and its altar). **26.1** *Ten*. Segmenting the curtain facilitates transport. *Curtains*, to be laid over the top of the structure along the shorter side. *Cherubim*. See note on 25.18. The design of the bottommost curtain is visible only on the inside. *Skillfully worked into them*, lit. "the work of a designer" (cf. 35.32), woven in. **26.2** *Twenty-eight*. This decorative curtain is a cubit off the ground on both ends. *Four*, making the total length of all ten 40, covering the 30-cubit length of the tabernacle and overlapping the front and back (vv. 12–13). **26.4** *Set*, in Hebrew cognate to *join* in v. 3. **26.6** *Whole*, added in translation. The *goats' hair* was woven into a heavy cloth, a practice still current among Bedouin. *Tent*, a cover for the curtain beneath. *Eleven*, the extra length (cf. v. 1) makes a portal (v. 9). **26.11** *Bronze*. See note on 25.3. **26.12** *Part*, more precisely "extension," cognate to *hang over*. **26.14** *Fine leather*. See note on 25.6. The two

The Framework

15 You shall make upright frames of
acacia wood for the tabernacle. 16 Ten cu-
bits shall be the length of a frame, and a
cubit and a half the width of each frame.
17 There shall be two pegs in each frame
to fit the frames together; you shall make
these for all the frames of the tabernacle.
18 You shall make the frames for the tab-
ernacle: twenty frames for the south side;
19 and you shall make forty bases of silver
under the twenty frames, two bases under
the first frame for its two pegs, and two
bases under the next frame for its two
pegs; 20 and for the second side of the tab-
ernacle, on the north side twenty frames,
21 and their forty bases of silver, two bases
under the first frame, and two bases un-
der the next frame; 22 and for the rear of
the tabernacle westward you shall make
six frames. 23 You shall make two frames
for corners of the tabernacle in the rear;
24 they shall be separate beneath, but
joined at the top, at the first ring; it shall
be the same with both of them; they shall
form the two corners. 25 And so there
shall be eight frames, with their bases of
silver, sixteen bases; two bases under the
first frame, and two bases under the next
frame.

26 You shall make bars of acacia
wood, five for the frames of the one side
of the tabernacle, 27 and five bars for the
frames of the other side of the tabernacle,
and five bars for the frames of the side of
the tabernacle at the rear westward.
28 The middle bar, halfway up the frames,
shall pass through from end to end.
29 You shall overlay the frames with gold,
and shall make their rings of gold to hold
the bars; and you shall overlay the bars
with gold. 30 Then you shall erect the tab-
ernacle according to the plan for it that
you were shown on the mountain.

The Curtain

31 You shall make a curtain of blue,
purple, and crimson yarns, and of fine
twisted linen; it shall be made with cheru-
bim skillfully worked into it. 32 You shall
hang it on four pillars of acacia overlaid
with gold, which have hooks of gold and
rest on four bases of silver. 33 You shall
hang the curtain under the clasps, and
bring the ark of the covenant[l] in there,
within the curtain; and the curtain shall
separate for you the holy place from the
most holy. 34 You shall put the mercy
seat[m] on the ark of the covenant[l] in the
most holy place. 35 You shall set the table
outside the curtain, and the lampstand on
the south side of the tabernacle opposite
the table; and you shall put the table
on the north side.

36 You shall make a screen for the en-
trance of the tent, of blue, purple, and
crimson yarns, and of fine twisted linen,
embroidered with needlework. 37 You

l Or *treaty*, or *testimony*; Heb *eduth* *m* Or *the cover*

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outer layers are weatherproofing. **26.15** *Upright frames*, "planks," which, placed side by side, form the 10-by-30-cubit structure. **26.17** *Pegs*, tenons on the bottom edge to be inserted into the bases (v. 19). *To fit the frames together*, rather "each (peg) parallel to the other," perpendicular to the bottom edge of the plank. **26.18** *South*, lit. "toward the Negev, southward," an orientation assuming a setting in the land of Israel. **26.19** *Bases*, sockets. *Silver*. See note on 25.3. **26.22** *Westward*, lit. "toward the (Mediterranean) sea"; see notes on v. 18; 10.19. **26.23** *Corners*, to enclose the open space left by the six planks in the rear, which cover only 9 cubits of the length. **26.24** *Separate*, rather "congruent" ("twinned"); the spaces on each side of the rear planks are to be symmetrical. *But joined*, rather "and identically (in the same pattern) will they end" (a Hebrew play on "congruent"). *First ring*, or "one ring," a crux, possibly a single band holding the planks together around the top of the perimeter. **26.25** *Eight*, the six planks plus the two corners. **26.26** *Bars*, to stabilize the planks in the middle. *Side*, "flank," different from *side* in vv. 18, 20. **26.28** *Halfway up*, "in the middle" (cognate to *middle*). *Pass through*, cognate to *bar*. The other bars, surely to be arranged in parallel, above and below the middle, do not extend all the way across. **26.30** *Plan*, *ordinance* in 21.1 and "rule" in 21.9 (see note there). Cf. 25.40. **26.31** *Curtain*, close in sound to *mercy seat* (25.17), referred to in v. 34. *Cherubim*. Cf. 26.1. *Skillfully worked*. See note on 26.1. The curtain matches the draped walls and ceiling of the *most holy place* (v. 34). **26.32** The construction is the same as the tabernacle framework. **26.33** *Under the clasps*, i.e., under the ceiling drape; see 26.6. **26.34** *Most holy place*, "holy of holies," the 10-cubit cube on the western end of the tabernacle proper, where the divine presence rests. Symmetry of space signifies holiness; cf. 27.1. **26.36** *Embroidered*, not woven in like the curtain (v. 31) since it is farther from the divine presence.

shall make for the screen five pillars of acacia, and overlay them with gold; their hooks shall be of gold, and you shall cast five bases of bronze for them.

The Altar of Burnt Offering

27 You shall make the altar of acacia wood, five cubits long and five cubits wide; the altar shall be square, and it shall be three cubits high. 2 You shall make horns for it on its four corners; its horns shall be of one piece with it, and you shall overlay it with bronze. 3 You shall make pots for it to receive its ashes, and shovels and basins and forks and firepans; you shall make all its utensils of bronze. 4 You shall also make for it a grating, a network of bronze; and on the net you shall make four bronze rings at its four corners. 5 You shall set it under the ledge of the altar so that the net shall extend halfway down the altar. 6 You shall make poles for the altar, poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with bronze; 7 the poles shall be put through the rings, so that the poles shall be on the two sides of the altar when it is carried. 8 You shall make it hollow, with boards. They shall be made just as you were shown on the mountain.

The Court and Its Hangings

9 You shall make the court of the tabernacle. On the south side the court shall have hangings of fine twisted linen one hundred cubits long for that side; 10 its twenty pillars and their twenty bases shall be of bronze, but the hooks of the pillars and their bands shall be of silver. 11 Likewise for its length on the north side there shall be hangings one hundred cubits long, their pillars twenty and their bases twenty, of bronze, but the hooks of the pillars and their bands shall be of silver. 12 For the width of the court on the west side there shall be fifty cubits of hangings, with ten pillars and ten bases. 13 The width of the court on the front to the east shall be fifty cubits. 14 There shall be fifteen cubits of hangings on the one side, with three pillars and three bases. 15 There shall be fifteen cubits of hangings on the other side, with three pillars and three bases. 16 For the gate of the court there shall be a screen twenty cubits long, of blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and of fine twisted linen, embroidered with needlework; it shall have four pillars and with them four bases. 17 All the pillars around the court shall be banded with silver; their hooks shall be of silver, and their bases of bronze. 18 The length of the court shall be one hundred cubits, the width fifty, and the height five cubits, with hangings of fine twisted linen and bases of bronze. 19 All the utensils of the tabernacle for every use, and all its pegs and all the pegs of the court, shall be of bronze.

The Oil for the Lamp

20 You shall further command the Israelites to bring you pure oil of beaten olives for the light, so that a lamp may be set up to burn regularly. 21 In the tent of meeting, outside the curtain that is before

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27.1–8 The courtyard altar, the altar of burnt offering (38.1), is bronze (cf. 30.3; note on 25.3); also cf. 20.24–25. **27.1** *Square*. See note on 26.34; the *altar* is called *most holy* (29.37). **27.2** *Horns*, a symbol of God (cf. Num 23.22 and note that the Canaanite god Baal is depicted with horns on his helmet) or the animals offered; cf. 1 Kings 1.50–53; 2.28–34. Stone altars with "horns" at the four corners have been excavated at several Israelite sites. **27.4** *Grating*, to support the ledge (v. 5), on which the officiating priests presumably stood. **27.5** *Down*, lit. "up" from the ground. **27.8** *Boards*, panels, the same word translated *tablets* (e.g., 24.12). *Shown*. Cf. 25.40; 26.30. **27.9–19** The 50-by-100-cubit rectangular court, a topless tent, surrounds the tabernacle in its western half and the bronze altar in its eastern half; it is assumed that the ark and altar were situated at the centers of their respective squares, in which case the eastern edge of the tabernacle proper lies on the line that bisects the court's length. **27.10** *Bases*, sockets. *Hooks*, for holding the hangings. *Bands*, decoration encircling the pillars; see v. 17; 38.17, which also mentions capitals. **27.13** Oriented eastward, the tabernacle fills with sunlight in the morning. **27.16** The *gate* stands in front of an open entryway in the middle of the eastern edge. *Screen*, like the one in 26.36 but narrower. **27.19** *Use*, a term for cultic "service" (cognate to *worship* in 4.23). *Pegs*, tent-pins whose cords (35.18) stabilize the pillars. **27.20** *To burn*, not in the Hebrew. *Regularly*, every evening (v. 21). The instructions return to service within the tabernacle itself. **27.21** *Tent of meeting*, the tabernacle proper (see note on 25.1–31.18). *Covenant*, elliptical for *ark of the cove-*

the covenant,[n] Aaron and his sons shall tend it from evening to morning before the LORD. It shall be a perpetual ordinance to be observed throughout their generations by the Israelites.

Vestments for the Priesthood

28 Then bring near to you your brother Aaron, and his sons with him, from among the Israelites, to serve me as priests—Aaron and Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. 2 You shall make sacred vestments for the glorious adornment of your brother Aaron. 3 And you shall speak to all who have ability, whom I have endowed with skill, that they make Aaron's vestments to consecrate him for my priesthood. 4 These are the vestments that they shall make: a breastpiece, an ephod, a robe, a checkered tunic, a turban, and a sash. When they make these sacred vestments for your brother Aaron and his sons to serve me as priests, 5 they shall use gold, blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and fine linen.

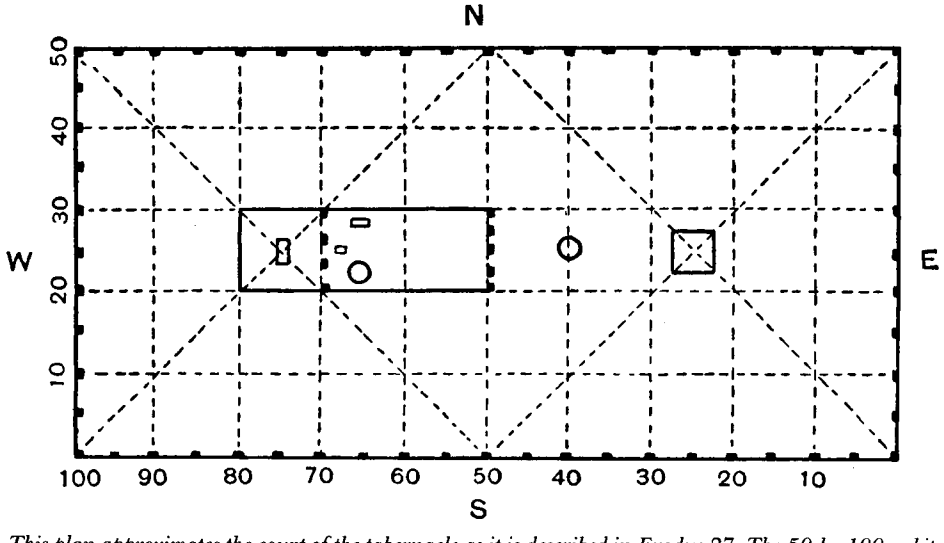
The Ephod

6 They shall make the ephod of gold, of blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and of fine twisted linen, skillfully worked. 7 It shall have two shoulder-pieces attached to its two edges, so that it may be joined together. 8 The decorated band on it shall be of the same workmanship and materials, of gold, of blue, purple, and crimson

n Or *treaty*, or *testimony*; Heb *eduth*

nant (25.22). *Aaron and his sons*, whoever of Aaron's lineage is the chief priest at the time (see Lev 24.3). *Tend*, lit. "arrange," fill the lamp every evening with enough fuel to burn till daybreak (cf. 1 Sam 3.3). *Perpetual*, and not the one time implied by 25.1–7. *To be observed*, added for clarity.

28.1–43 The description up to v. 40 concerns the vestments only the chief priest (Aaron) wears, only when officiating inside the tabernacle. **28.1** Cf. 6.23. **28.3** *To all who have ability*, lit. "to all wise of heart," cognate to *skill*. *To consecrate*. See 29.5–6; Lev 8.6–13. *For my priesthood, to serve me as priest* (vv. 1, 4). **28.4** *Checkered*, or "fringed," cognate to *filigree* (e.g., v. 11). **28.6** *Ephod*, a long vest (1 Sam 2.18; 2 Sam 6.14) made of the same materials as the curtain (26.31), open at the bottom and fastened at the top; it is possibly derived from the questionable cult object of the same name (e.g., Judg 8.27; 17.5; 1 Sam 21.9; Hos 3.4) used as an oracle (1 Sam 23.9–12; 30.7–8). **28.7** *Attached*, permanently (sewn on). The Hebrew is unclear; *to its two edges* may modify *it may be joined*, i.e., it is to be fastened at the top corner edges, on the shoulders. **28.8** *Decorated band*, a girdle around the middle, perhaps more



This plan approximates the court of the tabernacle as it is described in Exodus 27. The 50-by-100-cubit rectangular court, a topless tent, surrounds the tabernacle in its western half and the bronze courtyard altar, the altar of burnt offering, in its eastern half. (From S. R. Driver, The Book of Exodus.*)*

yarns, and of fine twisted linen. 9 You
shall take two onyx stones, and engrave
on them the names of the sons of Israel,
10 six of their names on the one stone, and
the names of the remaining six on the
other stone, in the order of their birth.
11 As a gem-cutter engraves signets, so
you shall engrave the two stones with the
names of the sons of Israel; you shall
mount them in settings of gold filigree.
12 You shall set the two stones on the
shoulder-pieces of the ephod, as stones of
remembrance for the sons of Israel; and
Aaron shall bear their names before the
LORD on his two shoulders for remem-
brance. 13 You shall make settings of gold
filigree, 14 and two chains of pure gold,
twisted like cords; and you shall attach the
corded chains to the settings.

The Breastplate

15 You shall make a breastpiece of
judgment, in skilled work; you shall make
it in the style of the ephod; of gold, of
blue and purple and crimson yarns, and
of fine twisted linen you shall make it. 16 It
shall be square and doubled, a span in
length and a span in width. 17 You shall
set in it four rows of stones. A row of car-
nelian,[o] chrysolite, and emerald shall be
the first row; 18 and the second row a tur-
quoise, a sapphire[p] and a moonstone;
19 and the third row a jacinth, an agate,
and an amethyst; 20 and the fourth row a
beryl, an onyx, and a jasper; they shall be
set in gold filigree. 21 There shall be
twelve stones with names corresponding
to the names of the sons of Israel; they
shall be like signets, each engraved with
its name, for the twelve tribes. 22 You shall
make for the breastpiece chains of pure
gold, twisted like cords; 23 and you shall
make for the breastpiece two rings of
gold, and put the two rings on the two
edges of the breastpiece. 24 You shall put
the two cords of gold in the two rings at
the edges of the breastpiece; 25 the two
ends of the two cords you shall attach to
the two settings, and so attach it in front
to the shoulder-pieces of the ephod.
26 You shall make two rings of gold, and
put them at the two ends of the breast-
piece, on its inside edge next to the
ephod. 27 You shall make two rings of
gold, and attach them in front to the
lower part of the two shoulder-pieces of
the ephod, at its joining above the deco-
rated band of the ephod. 28 The breast-
piece shall be bound by its rings to the
rings of the ephod with a blue cord, so
that it may lie on the decorated band of
the ephod, and so that the breastpiece
shall not come loose from the ephod. 29 So
Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of
Israel in the breastpiece of judgment on
his heart when he goes into the holy place,
for a continual remembrance before the
LORD. 30 In the breastpiece of judgment
you shall put the Urim and the Thum-
mim, and they shall be on Aaron's heart
when he goes in before the LORD; thus
Aaron shall bear the judgment of the Is-

o The identity of several of these stones is uncertain *p* Or *lapis lazuli*

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precisely "the band of the vest." *Decorated* is a play on *skillfully worked* (v. 6); *band* is cognate to *ephod*. **28.10** *In the order of their birth* (see Gen 29–30; 35), or "according to their lineages," in order by mother (cf. Gen 46; Num 1). **28.12** *Remembrance*, to call Israel, the covenant partner the priest represents, to the Lord's attention; cf. v. 29; 2.24; 30.16; Num 10.10; 31.54. **28.13** *Settings*, in the shoulder-pieces of the ephod (v. 7). **28.14** *Chains*, to attach the breastpiece (vv. 22–28) to the ephod. **28.15** *Breastpiece*, or "pouch." *Judgment*, in the sense of divine messages (cf. 22.9) mediated by the Urim and Thummim (v. 30; see note on 28.30). **28.16** *Square*. Cf. 27.1. *Doubled*, to form the pouch (see note on 28.15). **28.17** *In it*. The Hebrew adds "settings of stone." *Stones*. The gems in all but row three (v. 19) are said by Ezekiel (28.13) to adorn "Eden, the garden of God" (cf. Gen 2.12) and the king of Tyre; cf. Rev 21.19–20. **28.23** *On the . . . edges*, at the shoulders (cf. note on 28.7). **28.25** *Settings*. See v. 13. *In front*, more precisely "opposite the face (front)"; the *ephod* will double under (v. 26). **28.26** *On its inside edge next to the ephod*, more precisely "on its lip (hemmed edge) (running) along the ephod on the inside." **28.27** See notes on 28.7; 28.8. **28.28** *Bound*, linked. *Blue*. See note on 25.4; cf. Num 15.38. *Lie on*, more precisely "be (right) over." **28.29** *In*, or "on." *Holy place*, the outer part of the tabernacle proper, location of the lampstand and table. *Continual*, rendered *regularly* in 27.20. *Remembrance*. Cf. v. 12. **28.30** *Urim and Thummim*. Comparative evidence suggests they are light and dark stones, extracted from the pouch for the purposes of divination (see 1 Sam 14.41; cf. Num 27.21; Deut 33.8; 1 Sam 28.6; Ezra 2.63). *Bear the judgment*, carry the divining medium (cf. note on 28.15).

raelites on his heart before the LORD continually.

Other Priestly Vestments

31 You shall make the robe of the ephod all of blue. 32 It shall have an opening for the head in the middle of it, with a woven binding around the opening, like the opening in a coat of mail,[q] so that it may not be torn. 33 On its lower hem you shall make pomegranates of blue, purple, and crimson yarns, all around the lower hem, with bells of gold between them all around—34 a golden bell and a pomegranate alternating all around the lower hem of the robe. 35 Aaron shall wear it when he ministers, and its sound shall be heard when he goes into the holy place before the LORD, and when he comes out, so that he may not die.

36 You shall make a rosette of pure gold, and engrave on it, like the engraving of a signet, "Holy to the LORD." 37 You shall fasten it on the turban with a blue cord; it shall be on the front of the turban. 38 It shall be on Aaron's forehead, and Aaron shall take on himself any guilt incurred in the holy offering that the Israelites consecrate as their sacred donations; it shall always be on his forehead, in order that they may find favor before the LORD.

39 You shall make the checkered tunic of fine linen, and you shall make a turban of fine linen, and you shall make a sash embroidered with needlework.

40 For Aaron's sons you shall make tunics and sashes and headdresses; you shall make them for their glorious adornment. 41 You shall put them on your brother Aaron, and on his sons with him, and shall anoint them and ordain them and consecrate them, so that they may serve me as priests. 42 You shall make for them linen undergarments to cover their naked flesh; they shall reach from the hips to the thighs; 43 Aaron and his sons shall wear them when they go into the tent of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister in the holy place; or they will bring guilt on themselves and die. This shall be a perpetual ordinance for him and for his descendants after him.

The Ordination of the Priests

29 Now this is what you shall do to them to consecrate them, so that they may serve me as priests. Take one young bull and two rams without blemish, 2 and unleavened bread, unleavened

q Meaning of Heb uncertain

28.31 The *robe* is worn underneath the ephod; it is woven 39.22). *All*, or "of one piece of," in Hebrew plays on the sound of *blue*. *Blue*. See note on 25.4. **28.33** *Hem*, of fine twisted linen (39.24). *Pomegranates*, a common decorative pattern; cf. the almond blossoms in 25.33–34. **28.34** *Alternating*, lit. "a golden bell and a pomegranate," which rhyme in Hebrew, creating euphony; the rhythmic and sound patterns that adorn the descriptions are lost in translation. **28.35** The *sound* of the bells shows courtesy to the deity, who, like a monarch, may not be approached without announcement; cf. note on 25.10–22. *So that he may not die*, an admonition accompanying various cultic instructions (e.g., 30.20, 21; Lev 8.35; 10.9). **28.36** *Rosette*, lit. "flower," but more probably "shiny plate" (some Hebrew verbs for sprouting denote shining too) on which an inscription could be engraved; cf. 39.30. *Holy to*, or "sacred property of" (singular in Hebrew of *sacred donations* in v. 38). **28.37** *Blue cord*. Cf. v. 28. **28.38** *On*, or "above, over." *Incurred*. Cf. Lev 22.3, 9, 15–16. The head-plate may act like a lightning rod, mitigating divine reaction against unwitting desecrations (cf. notes on 19.13; 19.21). *Always*, regularly (27.20), when he enters the *holy place* (v. 35). *They*, the sacred donations (cf., e.g., Lev 22.20). **28.39** *Checkered*. See note on 28.4. *Tunic*, woven of one cloth (39.27). *Turban*, worn by at least one Judean king (Ezek 21.26). *Sash*, worn by nobility (Isa 22.21). *With needlework*, added for clarity. The *sash* exhibits the royal hues that adorn the chief priest's vestments; see 39.29. **28.40** The *headdresses* are apparently wound on like a turban into a conical shape. See 29.9, where the headdresses are *tied* or lit. "wound" on. *Glorious adornment*. Cf. v. 2. **28.41** *Ordain*, lit. "fill the hands" ("mandate"). The verse previews ch. 29. **28.42** *Undergarments*, drawers; see note on 20.26. **28.43** *Tent of meeting*. See note on 27.21. *Holy place*, here the tabernacle and its court, where the altar stands (e.g., 36.1). *Die*. See note on 28.35.

29.1–35 The ordination procedure includes washing, investiture, and anointing (vv. 4–9), purification (vv. 10–14), propitiation (vv. 15–18), ordination (vv. 19–21), and homage (vv. 22– 27). The ordination is performed in Lev 8–9. **29.1** *You*, Moses (25.1). *Them*, Aaron and his sons (28.43). *Without blemish*, lit. "whole." **29.2** *Unleavened*. See note on 12.8. *Cakes . . . wafers*. Cf. Lev 2.4. *Spread*, elsewhere translated "anointed" (e.g.,

cakes mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers spread with oil. You shall make them of choice wheat flour. 3 You shall put them in one basket and bring them in the basket, and bring the bull and the two rams. 4 You shall bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the tent of meeting, and wash them with water. 5 Then you shall take the vestments, and put on Aaron the tunic and the robe of the ephod, and the ephod, and the breastpiece, and gird him with the decorated band of the ephod; 6 and you shall set the turban on his head, and put the holy diadem on the turban. 7 You shall take the anointing oil, and pour it on his head and anoint him. 8 Then you shall bring his sons, and put tunics on them, 9 and you shall gird them with sashes[r] and tie headdresses on them; and the priesthood shall be theirs by a perpetual ordinance. You shall then ordain Aaron and his sons.

10 You shall bring the bull in front of the tent of meeting. Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the bull, 11 and you shall slaughter the bull before the LORD, at the entrance of the tent of meeting, 12 and shall take some of the blood of the bull and put it on the horns of the altar with your finger, and all the rest of the blood you shall pour out at the base of the altar. 13 You shall take all the fat that covers the entrails, and the appendage of the liver, and the two kidneys with the fat that is on them, and turn them into smoke on the altar. 14 But the flesh of the bull, and its skin, and its dung, you shall burn with fire outside the camp; it is a sin offering.

15 Then you shall take one of the rams, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the ram, 16 and you shall slaughter the ram, and shall take its blood and dash it against all sides of the altar. 17 Then you shall cut the ram into its parts, and wash its entrails and its legs, and put them with its parts and its head, 18 and turn the whole ram into smoke on the altar; it is a burnt offering to the LORD; it is a pleasing odor, an offering by fire to the LORD.

19 You shall take the other ram; and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the ram, 20 and you shall slaughter the ram, and take some of its blood and put it on the lobe of Aaron's right ear and on the lobes of the right ears of his sons, and on the thumbs of their right hands, and on the big toes of their right feet, and dash the rest of the blood against all sides of the altar. 21 Then you shall take some of the blood that is on the altar, and some of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it on Aaron and his vestments and on his sons and his sons' vestments with him; then he and his vestments shall be holy, as well as his sons and his sons' vestments.

22 You shall also take the fat of the ram, the fat tail, the fat that covers the entrails, the appendage of the liver, the two kidneys with the fat that is on them, and the right thigh (for it is a ram of ordination), 23 and one loaf of bread, one cake of bread made with oil, and one wafer, out of the basket of unleavened bread that is before the LORD; 24 and you shall place all these on the palms of Aaron and

r Gk: Heb *sashes, Aaron and his sons*

Ex 29.36). **29.3** *In*, "on," suggesting an open basket or tray. *Bring*, "bring near," used of cultic offerings and approaching the deity, often repeated in this section. **29.5** *Vestments*. See ch. 28. The *undergarments* (28.42) are not mentioned because the priests put them on alone. *Gird*, in Hebrew cognate to *ephod*. **29.6** *Diadem*, the rosette (28.36), also used of a royal crown (e.g., 2 Sam 1.10). **29.7** *Anointing oil*. See 30.22–33. Anointing, performed also on kings, signifies luxury and privilege (cf., e.g., Ps 23.5; Eccl 9.8). **29.9** *Ordain*. See note on 28.41. **29.10** *Lay their hands*, to signify it is theirs (e.g., Lev 1.4); cf. Lev 4.4. **29.12** *The rest of*, added for clarity. **29.13** *Fat*. See note on 23.18. **29.14** *Outside the camp*, because the offering pollutes; cf. Num 19. *Sin offering*, or "purification offering" (from the verb "cleanse," Lev 14.52). Its purpose is to remove ritual pollution and transform to a state of purity, a prerequisite to approaching God (cf. note on 19.10); it is used of purifying the altar in vv. 36–37. **29.16** *Dashing* the blood signifies its return to God (cf. Lev 17.6, 11). **29.17** *Parts*, in Hebrew cognate to "cut"; cf. Lev 1.6. *With*, rather "on top of." **29.18** *Odor*. See note on 23.18. **29.19–28** The ordination rite adapts the well-being offering (Lev 3). **29.20** *Blood*, a divine substance (cf. Lev 17.11) and therefore an agent of purification and safeguard against ritual pollution (see v. 21). Cf. Lev 14.14. *The rest of*, added for clarity. **29.22** *Fat tail*, part of the fat (Lev 3.9). *Right thigh*, ordinarily eaten by the priests (Lev 7.32–33), here served to God; the offering symbolizes a meal (see v. 25). **29.23** *Loaf*, more

on the palms of his sons, and raise them as
an elevation offering before the LORD.
25 Then you shall take them from their
hands, and turn them into smoke on the
altar on top of the burnt offering of pleas-
ing odor before the LORD; it is an offering
by fire to the LORD.
26 You shall take the breast of the ram
of Aaron's ordination and raise it as an
elevation offering before the LORD; and it
shall be your portion. 27 You shall conse-
crate the breast that was raised as an ele-
vation offering and the thigh that was
raised as an elevation offering from the
ram of ordination, from that which be-
longed to Aaron and his sons. 28 These
things shall be a perpetual ordinance for
Aaron and his sons from the Israelites,
for this is an offering; and it shall be an
offering by the Israelites from their sacri-
fice of offerings of well-being, their offer-
ing to the LORD.
29 The sacred vestments of Aaron
shall be passed on to his sons after him;
they shall be anointed in them and or-
dained in them. 30 The son who is priest
in his place shall wear them seven days,
when he comes into the tent of meeting to
minister in the holy place.
31 You shall take the ram of ordina-
tion, and boil its flesh in a holy place;
32 and Aaron and his sons shall eat the
flesh of the ram and the bread that is in
the basket, at the entrance of the tent of
meeting. 33 They themselves shall eat the
food by which atonement is made, to or-
dain and consecrate them, but no one else
shall eat of them, because they are holy.
34 If any of the flesh for the ordination, or
of the bread, remains until the morning,
then you shall burn the remainder with
fire; it shall not be eaten, because it is
holy.
35 Thus you shall do to Aaron and to
his sons, just as I have commanded you;
through seven days you shall ordain
them. 36 Also every day you shall offer a
bull as a sin offering for atonement. Also
you shall offer a sin offering for the altar,
when you make atonement for it, and
shall anoint it, to consecrate it. 37 Seven
days you shall make atonement for the al-
tar, and consecrate it, and the altar shall
be most holy; whatever touches the altar
shall become holy.

The Daily Offerings

38 Now this is what you shall offer on
the altar: two lambs a year old regularly
each day. 39 One lamb you shall offer in
the morning, and the other lamb you shall
offer in the evening; 40 and with the first
lamb one-tenth of a measure of choice
flour mixed with one-fourth of a hin of
beaten oil, and one-fourth of a hin of
wine for a drink offering. 41 And the
other lamb you shall offer in the evening,
and shall offer with it a grain offering and
its drink offering, as in the morning, for a
pleasing odor, an offering by fire to the
LORD. 42 It shall be a regular burnt offer-
ing throughout your generations at the
entrance of the tent of meeting before the
LORD, where I will meet with you, to
speak to you there. 43 I will meet with the
Israelites there, and it shall be sanctified
by my glory; 44 I will consecrate the tent of
meeting and the altar; Aaron also and his
sons I will consecrate, to serve me as
priests. 45 I will dwell among the Israelites,
and I will be their God. 46 And they shall

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precisely "a (flat) round." **29.24** *Raise*, in Hebrew cognate to *elevation*; on the significance of the presentation, cf. note on 25.30. *Before the LORD*, in front of the tent of meeting (v. 4). **29.26** *You*, Moses, who partakes of the offering since he functions here as priest; cf. Lev 7.30–31. **29.27** *Consecrate*, render as cultic property. The second occurrence of *elevation offering* in this verse translates a generic Hebrew term for cultic donations (see note on 25.2), rendered *offering* in v. 28. The first occurrence translates a different Hebrew word, also in v. 26. **29.28** *Perpetual*. See Lev 7.28–36; Num 18.8, 18–19. **29.29** See Num 20.26. **29.30** *Seven days*. See vv. 35–37. *When he comes*, rather "who will come," in apposition to *priest*. **29.31** A resumption of v. 27. **29.33** *No one else*, an outsider (Num 1.51; 3.10, 38; 16.40; 18.4, 7) or nonpriest, here applied to any but the chief priests (as in Num 16.40). **29.34** *Holy*, rendered *sacred donations* in 28.38. **29.36** *Sin offering*. See note on 29.14. *Atonement*, in the sense of expurgating ritual pollution, such as that of the altar; cf. Lev 16. **29.37** *Seven days*. Cf. Ezek 43.26. *Most holy*, "holy of holies"; cf. 40.10. *Holy*, cultic property (a noun); see note on 29.34; cf. Num 16.37–39. **29.38–42** A digression on the use of the *altar*; cf. Num 28.3–6. **29.39** *In the evening*, rather *at twilight*, as translated in 12.6. **29.40** *A measure*, an ephah (see note on 16.36). *Hin*, one-sixth of a bath, the liquid equivalent of an ephah. **29.42** *Meet*. See note on 25.1–31.18. **29.43** *Glory*. See note on 16.6–7.

know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them; I am the LORD their God.

The Altar of Incense

30 You shall make an altar on which to offer incense; you shall make it of acacia wood. 2 It shall be one cubit long, and one cubit wide; it shall be square, and shall be two cubits high; its horns shall be of one piece with it. 3 You shall overlay it with pure gold, its top, and its sides all around and its horns; and you shall make for it a molding of gold all around. 4 And you shall make two golden rings for it; under its molding on two opposite sides of it you shall make them, and they shall hold the poles with which to carry it. 5 You shall make the poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold. 6 You shall place it in front of the curtain that is above the ark of the covenant,[s] in front of the mercy seat[t] that is over the covenant,[s] where I will meet with you. 7 Aaron shall offer fragrant incense on it; every morning when he dresses the lamps he shall offer it, 8 and when Aaron sets up the lamps in the evening, he shall offer it, a regular incense offering before the LORD throughout your generations. 9 You shall not offer unholy incense on it, or a burnt offering, or a grain offering; and you shall not pour a drink offering on it. 10 Once a year Aaron shall perform the rite of atonement on its horns. Throughout your generations he shall perform the atonement for it once a year with the blood of the atoning sin offering. It is most holy to the LORD.

The Half Shekel for the Sanctuary

11 The LORD spoke to Moses: 12 When you take a census of the Israelites to register them, at registration all of them shall give a ransom for their lives to the LORD, so that no plague may come upon them for being registered. 13 This is what each one who is registered shall give: half a shekel according to the shekel of the sanctuary (the shekel is twenty gerahs), half a shekel as an offering to the LORD. 14 Each one who is registered, from twenty years old and upward, shall give the LORD's offering. 15 The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less, than the half shekel, when you bring this offering to the LORD to make atonement for your lives. 16 You shall take the atonement money from the Israelites and shall designate it for the service of the tent of meeting; before the LORD it will be a reminder to the Israelites of the ransom given for your lives.

The Bronze Basin

17 The LORD spoke to Moses: 18 You shall make a bronze basin with a bronze stand for washing. You shall put it between the tent of meeting and the altar, and you shall put water in it; 19 with the

s Or *treaty*, or *testimony*; Heb *eduth* t Or *the cover*

29.45 *Dwell.* See note on 25.1–31.18. **29.46** *Know.* Cf. note on 5.2; cf. 20.2.

30.1–5 The incense altar is constructed like that of the courtyard, but it is of more precious material since it will stand in the "holy place"; cf. note on 27.1–8. **30.1** *Offer,* in Hebrew cognate to *incense,* lit. "(aromatic) smoke." **30.4** *On two opposite sides,* lit. "on its two flanks, on its two sides." **30.6** *It,* the altar (v. 1). *Above,* rather "over" (see 26.31–33; 35.12). *Meet.* See 25.21–22. **30.7** *Offer,* burn (see note on v. 1). *Every morning,* lit. "in the morning, in the morning." *Dresses,* or cleans. **30.8** *Sets up.* Cf. 27.21. *In the evening.* See note on 29.39. **30.9** *Unholy,* lit. "alien"; cf. Lev 10.1; see note on 29.33. **30.10** *Once a year,* presumably on the Day of Atonement, although this rite is not specified in Lev 16. *Atonement.* See note on 29.36. *Most holy.* See note on 29.37. **30.11–16** The levy gives the Israelites a share in the tabernacle and protects them against the demonic attack that a head count attracts; cf. 2 Sam 24; also cf. the harmless military census in Num 1. For the use of the levy, see 38.25–28; cf. 2 Chr 24.4–10; Mt 17.24. **30.12** *Take a census,* lit. "raise the head" (see Num 1.2). *Register,* rendered "take a census" in 2 Sam 24.2. *Plague,* the Hebrew term also rendered *plague* in 12.13 but not the one rendered "pestilence" in 2 Sam 24.15. **30.13** *Each one,* only males (cf. Num 1.2). *Twenty gerahs.* Cf. Lev 27.25; Num 3.47; 18.16. *Offering.* See note on 25.2. **30.14** *Twenty.* Cf. Num 1.3. **30.15** *To make atonement,* "ransom," in Hebrew cognate to *ransom* in v. 12; the same phrase is translated as *ransom* in v. 16 (see note there). **30.16** *To the Israelites,* rather "of the Israelites" *before the LORD;* see note on 28.12. *Of the ransom given for your lives,* rather "to ransom your lives." **30.18** *Basin,* or "laver," a different Hebrew term from the one so rendered in 24.6; the term is used in 1 Kings 7.38, where,

water[u] Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet. 20 When they go into the tent of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister, to make an offering by fire to the LORD, they shall wash with water, so that they may not die. 21 They shall wash their hands and their feet, so that they may not die: it shall be a perpetual ordinance for them, for him and for his descendants throughout their generations.

The Anointing Oil and Incense

22 The LORD spoke to Moses: 23 Take the finest spices: of liquid myrrh five hundred shekels, and of sweet-smelling cinnamon half as much, that is, two hundred fifty, and two hundred fifty of aromatic cane, 24 and five hundred of cassia—measured by the sanctuary shekel—and a hin of olive oil; 25 and you shall make of these a sacred anointing oil blended as by the perfumer; it shall be a holy anointing oil. 26 With it you shall anoint the tent of meeting and the ark of the covenant,[v] 27 and the table and all its utensils, and the lampstand and its utensils, and the altar of incense, 28 and the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the basin with its stand; 29 you shall consecrate them, so that they may be most holy; whatever touches them will become holy. 30 You shall anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, in order that they may serve me as priests. 31 You shall say to the Israelites, "This shall be my holy anointing oil throughout your generations. 32 It shall not be used in any ordinary anointing of the body, and you shall make no other like it in composition; it is holy, and it shall be holy to you. 33 Whoever compounds any like it or whoever puts any of it on an unqualified person shall be cut off from the people."

34 The LORD said to Moses: Take sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum, sweet spices with pure frankincense (an equal part of each), 35 and make an incense blended as by the perfumer, seasoned with salt, pure and holy; 36 and you shall beat some of it into powder, and put part of it before the covenant[v] in the tent of meeting where I shall meet with you; it shall be for you most holy. 37 When you make incense according to this composition, you shall not make it for yourselves; it shall be regarded by you as holy to the LORD. 38 Whoever makes any like it to use as perfume shall be cut off from the people.

Bezalel and Oholiab

31 The LORD spoke to Moses: 2 See, I have called by name Bezalel son of Uri son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: 3 and I have filled him with divine spirit,[w] with ability, intelligence, and knowledge

u Heb *it* v Or *treaty*, or *testimony*; Heb *eduth*
w Or *with the spirit of God*

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unlike here, dimensions are given. **30.19** *With the water*, rather "from it," from the basin. **30.20** *Die*. See note on 28.35. **30.21** A parallelism effects closure (cf. note on 23.13). **30.22–38** For the actual anointing, see Lev 8.10–12. **30.23** *Finest spices*. Cf. Song 4.14. *Liquid*, or "solidified" (resinous), contrasting with the flowing state described in Song 5.5, 13. *Aromatic*, cognate to *spice* and *sweet-smelling*. **30.24** *Hin*. See note on 29.40. **30.25** *Blended as by the perfumer*. The Hebrew plies the same root three ways. *Holy*, the same Hebrew term rendered *sacred*; see also v. 32. **30.29** *Holy*. See note on 29.37. **30.30** *And his sons*. 29.7, 29 direct only that Aaron and his vestments be anointed; to resolve the discrepancy, cf. note on 27.21. **30.31** Cf. 1 Chr 9.30. **30.32** *It shall not be used in any ordinary anointing of the body*, lit. "On (ordinary) human flesh it shall not be poured." **30.33** *Compounds*, in Hebrew cognate to *blend*, rendered *perfumer* in v. 25. *Unqualified person*. See note on 30.9 (where the term is translated *unholy*). *Cut off*. See note on 12.15. **30.34** *Sweet spices*, a different Hebrew term from (aromatic) *spices* in v. 23 and *fragrant* (spices) in 25.6. *An equal part of each*, lit. "part like part shall it be." **30.35** *Make*, lit. "make of them." *Blended*. Cf. v. 25. *Seasoned with salt*, rather "salted." *Pure*, ritually pure (not as in v. 34, which uses a different term). *Holy*. See note on 29.37. **30.36** *Part*, the same Hebrew term rendered *some*. *Covenant*. See note on 27.21. **30.38** *To use as perfume*, lit. "to smell by it." *Cut off*. Cf. v. 33.

31.1–11 The primary role of a Judahite versus the secondary role of a Danite in constructing the tabernacle presages the superiority of the Jerusalem temple of Solomon (of Judah; 1 Kings 6) over Jeroboam's shrine at Dan (1 Kings 12.25–30); cf. note on 32.1–35. The passage is reprised in 35.30–36.1. **31.2** *Called by name*, idiomatic for "designated" (e.g., Isa 43.1). *Bezalel* in Hebrew means "In-the-Shade (Protection)-of-God." *Hur*. See note on 17.10. Hur, Uri, and Bezalel are descendants of the Judahite Caleb (Num 13.6) in 1 Chr 2.18–20. **31.3** *Divine spirit*. Cf.

in every kind of craft, 4 to devise artistic
designs, to work in gold, silver, and
bronze, 5 in cutting stones for setting, and
in carving wood, in every kind of craft.
6 Moreover, I have appointed with him
Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of
Dan; and I have given skill to all the skill-
ful, so that they may make all that I have
commanded you: 7 the tent of meeting,
and the ark of the covenant,[x] and the
mercy seat[y] that is on it, and all the fur-
nishings of the tent, 8 the table and its
utensils, and the pure lampstand with all
its utensils, and the altar of incense, 9 and
the altar of burnt offering with all its
utensils, and the basin with its stand,
10 and the finely worked vestments, the
holy vestments for the priest Aaron and
the vestments of his sons, for their service
as priests, 11 and the anointing oil and the
fragrant incense for the holy place. They
shall do just as I have commanded you.

The Sabbath Law

12 The LORD said to Moses: 13 You
yourself are to speak to the Israelites:
"You shall keep my sabbaths, for this is a
sign between me and you throughout
your generations, given in order that you
may know that I, the LORD, sanctify you.
14 You shall keep the sabbath, because it is
holy for you; everyone who profanes it
shall be put to death; whoever does any
work on it shall be cut off from among the
people. 15 Six days shall work be done, but
the seventh day is a sabbath of solemn
rest, holy to the LORD; whoever does any
work on the sabbath day shall be put to
death. 16 Therefore the Israelites shall
keep the sabbath, observing the sabbath
throughout their generations, as a perpet-
ual covenant. 17 It is a sign forever be-
tween me and the people of Israel that in
six days the LORD made heaven and earth,
and on the seventh day he rested, and was
refreshed."

The Two Tablets of the Covenant

18 When God[z] finished speaking
with Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him
the two tablets of the covenant,[x] tablets
of stone, written with the finger of God.

The Golden Calf

32 When the people saw that Moses
delayed to come down from the
mountain, the people gathered around
Aaron, and said to him, "Come, make
gods for us, who shall go before us; as for
this Moses, the man who brought us up
out of the land of Egypt, we do not know
what has become of him." 2 Aaron said to
them, "Take off the gold rings that are on

x Or *treaty*, or *testimony*; Heb *eduth* y Or *the cover*
z Heb *he*

Gen 41.38. *Craft*, rendered *work* in 20.9. **31.4** *Devise*, in Hebrew cognate to *designs*. **31.5** *Setting*. Cf., e.g., 25.7. *Carving*, the same word rendered *cutting*. *In*. The Hebrew adds "doing," which is assonant with *setting*. **31.6** *Oholiab* in Hebrew means "My-Tent-is-the-Father (God)." *Skill to all the skillful*, lit. "wisdom in the heart of every wise of heart"; cf. note on 28.3. **31.7** *Furnishings*, the same term rendered *utensils* in vv. 8–9. **31.10** *Finely worked*, some ancient manuscript traditions read "service," of a root similar to *to minister* (e.g., 30.20). **31.12–17** The sacred time of the sabbath is analogous to the sacred space of the tabernacle; see Lev 19.30; cf. Ex 39.32; 40.34; Gen 2.1–2; also cf. Ex 39.43; Gen 2.3. See also Ex 16.22–26; 20.8–11; 23.12; 34.21; 35.2–3. **31.13** *You yourself*, a rhetorical indication of a new topic (27.20; 28.1; 30.23), not an emphasis on Moses' personal performance. *Keep*. See note on 20.8 (where the term is translated *remember*); cf. Lev 19.3, 30. *Sign*. Cf. Gen 9.12–13; 17.11. *Know*. Cf. 29.46; see Ezek 20.12. **31.14** *Holy*. See note on 29.37. *Profanes*, used of the sanctuary (e.g., Lev 21.12, 23; Ezek 23.39) as well as the sabbath (e.g., Ezek 20.13). *Put to death*, by the community; cf. Num 15.32–36. *Work*. Cf. 20.9. *Cut off*. See note on 12.15. **31.15** *Solemn rest*. See note on 16.23. **31.17** *Rested*. Cf. Gen 2.2. *Refreshed*. Cf. 23.12. **31.18** *He gave him*. In Hebrew the phrase prominently begins the verse. *Tablets*. See 24.12.

32.1–35 Making the golden calf violates 20.4, 23; cf. King Jeroboam's calves (1 Kings 12.25–33; see note on 32.4), which functioned historically not as idols but as pedestals for the deity (like the cherubim; see note on 25.18), but which are viewed as idolatrous in 2 Kings 17.16; Hos 8.4–6; 10.5–6; 13.2. Cf. the variations in Deut 9.8–21, 25–29; also Neh 9.16–18. **32.1** *Delayed*. Readers know Moses will be on the mountain forty days (24.18), but the Israelites do not. *Around*, rather "against" (e.g., Num 16.3). *Aaron*. See 24.14. *Gods*, or "a god." *This*, an expression of contempt (e.g., 1 Sam 10.27; 21.15). *The man*, or "this man Moses." **32.2** *Rings*, associated in Gen 35.4 with foreign gods that must be suppressed at Bethel, one of Jeroboam's cult sites (see note on 32.1–35).

the ears of your wives, your sons, and
your daughters, and bring them to me."
3 So all the people took off the gold rings
from their ears, and brought them to
Aaron. 4 He took the gold from them,
formed it in a mold,[a] and cast an image
of a calf; and they said, "These are your
gods, O Israel, who brought you up out
of the land of Egypt!" 5 When Aaron saw
this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron
made proclamation and said, "Tomorrow
shall be a festival to the LORD." 6 They
rose early the next day, and offered burnt
offerings and brought sacrifices of well-
being; and the people sat down to eat and
drink, and rose up to revel.

7 The LORD said to Moses, "Go down
at once! Your people, whom you brought
up out of the land of Egypt, have acted
perversely; 8 they have been quick to turn
aside from the way that I commanded
them; they have cast for themselves an
image of a calf, and have worshiped it and
sacrificed to it, and said, 'These are your
gods, O Israel, who brought you up out
of the land of Egypt!' " 9 The LORD said to
Moses, "I have seen this people, how stiff-
necked they are. 10 Now let me alone, so
that my wrath may burn hot against them
and I may consume them; and of you I
will make a great nation."

11 But Moses implored the LORD his
God, and said, "O LORD, why does your
wrath burn hot against your people,
whom you brought out of the land of
Egypt with great power and with a mighty
hand? 12 Why should the Egyptians say, 'It
was with evil intent that he brought them
out to kill them in the mountains, and to
consume them from the face of the
earth'? Turn from your fierce wrath;
change your mind and do not bring disas-
ter on your people. 13 Remember Abra-
ham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, how
you swore to them by your own self, say-
ing to them, 'I will multiply your descen-
dants like the stars of heaven, and all this
land that I have promised I will give to
your descendants, and they shall inherit it
forever.' " 14 And the LORD changed his
mind about the disaster that he planned
to bring on his people.

15 Then Moses turned and went
down from the mountain, carrying the
two tablets of the covenant[b] in his hands,
tablets that were written on both sides,
written on the front and on the back.
16 The tablets were the work of God, and
the writing was the writing of God, en-
graved upon the tablets. 17 When Joshua
heard the noise of the people as they
shouted, he said to Moses, "There is a
noise of war in the camp." 18 But he said,

"It is not the sound made by
victors,
or the sound made by losers;
it is the sound of revelers that I
hear."

19 As soon as he came near the camp and
saw the calf and the dancing, Moses' an-

a Or *fashioned it with a graving tool*; Meaning of Heb uncertain b Or *treaty*, or *testimony*; Heb *eduth*

32.4 *Image.* "Molten" is connoted. *Calf*, or young bull (cf. Ps 106.19–20, where the word translated "ox" means "bull"), an image applied to leading Canaanite gods; but see note on 32.1–35. *These.* The plural pronoun, which is more appropriate in 1 Kings 12.28 (a verse in which the words are virtually identical to this one), evokes Jeroboam's calves; cf. Neh 9.18. **32.5** *Saw.* Cf. v. 1. *Altar.* Cf. the legitimate altar (27.1–8). *It*, the calf (v. 4). *Festival.* Cf. 23.14–17. **32.6** *Revel.* Cf. v. 19; the verb has sexual overtones ("fondling" in Gen 26.8). The ritual seems to parody 24.5, 11; see also note on 32.8. **32.7** *Go down*, counterposed to v. 1. *Your . . . you.* The Lord follows suit in disavowing the people; cf., e.g., 20.2; 29.46. *Perversely*, translated "corrupt" in Gen 6.11–12; "dealt falsely" in Deut 32.5a. **32.8** *Worshiped.* Cf. 24.1; see note on 4.31. *These.* See note on 32.4. **32.9** *Seen.* Cf. v. 5. *Stiff-necked*, like an unresponsive draft animal (cf. Num 22.23). **32.10** *Consume*, in the sense of "put to an end," perhaps a pun in Hebrew on "devour" (Deut 4.24). *Great nation.* See Gen 12.2; cf. Num 14.12. Moses responds in v. 32. **32.11** *Your people.* Cf. v. 7; 33.13. **32.12** *Egyptians.* Cf. Num 14.13–16. *Mountains.* See note on 19.1. *Consume.* See note on 32.10. *Fierce*, burning (vv. 10–11). *Change your mind*, in Hebrew a pun on *let me alone* (v. 10); cf. Jon 3.9–10. *Disaster*, the same term rendered *evil intent.* **32.13** *Israel*, not *Jacob* as in 2.24, reiterating the bond between the people and its namesake. *Swore.* See Gen 22.16–17. *Forever.* See Gen 17.7–8. **32.14** *His people.* See v. 11. **32.15** *Turned*, "about-faced" (see note on 32.11). *Carrying*, not in the Hebrew. *Hands*, "hand" in Hebrew. **32.17** *Joshua.* See note on 24.13. *Noise*, the same term rendered *sound* in v. 18. *As they shouted*, in Hebrew a pun on *with evil intent* (v. 12). **32.18** *Made by victors*, more precisely "of singing triumph," as in 15.1–18. *Made by losers*, more precisely "of singing defeat." *Revelers*, "singing" (the same Hebrew verb as in 15.21; Isa 27.2).

ger burned hot, and he threw the tablets
from his hands and broke them at the
foot of the mountain. 20 He took the calf
that they had made, burned it with fire,
ground it to powder, scattered it on the
water, and made the Israelites drink it.

21 Moses said to Aaron, "What did
this people do to you that you have
brought so great a sin upon them?"
22 And Aaron said, "Do not let the anger
of my lord burn hot; you know the people, that they are bent on evil. 23 They said
to me, 'Make us gods, who shall go before
us; as for this Moses, the man who
brought us up out of the land of Egypt,
we do not know what has become of him.'
24 So I said to them, 'Whoever has gold,
take it off'; so they gave it to me, and I
threw it into the fire, and out came this
calf!"

25 When Moses saw that the people
were running wild (for Aaron had let
them run wild, to the derision of their enemies), 26 then Moses stood in the gate of
the camp, and said, "Who is on the LORD's
side? Come to me!" And all the sons of
Levi gathered around him. 27 He said to
them, "Thus says the LORD, the God of
Israel, 'Put your sword on your side, each
of you! Go back and forth from gate to
gate throughout the camp, and each of
you kill your brother, your friend, and
your neighbor.'" 28 The sons of Levi did
as Moses commanded, and about three
thousand of the people fell on that day.
29 Moses said, "Today you have ordained
yourselves[c] for the service of the LORD,
each one at the cost of a son or a brother,
and so have brought a blessing on yourselves this day."

30 On the next day Moses said to the
people, "You have sinned a great sin. But
now I will go up to the LORD; perhaps I
can make atonement for your sin." 31 So
Moses returned to the LORD and said,
"Alas, this people has sinned a great sin;
they have made for themselves gods of
gold. 32 But now, if you will only forgive
their sin—but if not, blot me out of the
book that you have written." 33 But the
LORD said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned
against me I will blot out of my book.
34 But now go, lead the people to the place
about which I have spoken to you; see, my
angel shall go in front of you. Nevertheless, when the day comes for punishment,
I will punish them for their sin."

35 Then the LORD sent a plague on
the people, because they made the calf—
the one that Aaron made.

The Command to Leave Sinai

33 The LORD said to Moses, "Go,
leave this place, you and the people whom you have brought up out of
the land of Egypt, and go to the land of which
I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,
saying, 'To your descendants I will give it.'
2 I will send an angel before you, and I
will drive out the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. 3 Go up to a land
flowing with milk and honey; but I will
not go up among you, or I would con-

c Gk Vg Compare Tg: Heb *Today ordain yourselves*

32.19 *Dancing,* as in 15.20. *Anger.* Cf. Num 20.10–11. *Burned hot.* Cf. vv. 10–11. **32.20** *Drink it,* a detail that goes beyond Deut 9.21; cf. Num 5.24. The calf is annihilated like a god in Ugaritic myth. **32.22** *Aaron* echoes Moses in v. 11. *Bent on evil.* The soundalike *running wild* (v. 25) is read here by another version. **32.23** Cf. v. 1. **32.24** *Threw* echoes Moses' action in v. 19; cf. v. 4. In Deut 9.20 Moses prays for Aaron's life. **32.25** *Let them run wild.* The Hebrew (*pera'o*) puns on "Pharaoh" and perhaps "Peor" (Num 25); see note on 32.28. **32.26** *Gate,* the place of assembly (e.g., Gen 23.10; Ruth 4.1). *Camp.* Cf. 19.2; see also Num 2. *On the LORD's side,* lit. "for the LORD." *Levi.* The Levites are subordinated to Aaron narratively in Num 16–18; cf. Deut 10.8–9; they are first consecrated for cultic service in Num 8. **32.27** *Neighbor,* or "relative"; cf. Deut 33.9. **32.28** Cf. Num 25.6–12. **32.29** *Ordained.* See note on 28.41. *For the service of,* Hebrew "for," as in v. 26 (see note on 32.26). *So have brought,* rather "so that he (the LORD) will bring." **32.30** *Great sin.* Cf. v. 21. **32.31** *Returned,* ironic for Moses, who had begged the Lord to *turn* (same Hebrew verb, v. 12). *Gods.* See note on 32.1. **32.32** *Book.* See note on 17.14. That the names of those who are to live is recorded on high is an ancient Near Eastern tradition; cf. Ps 69.28; Isa 4.3; Mal 3.16; also cf. Num 11.15. **32.34** *Lead,* a play in Hebrew on *let me alone* (v. 10). *Angel.* See 33.2. *For punishment;* lit. "of my accounting" (cf. 20.5). **32.35** *Plague.* See note on 30.12; the plague may result from the account in v. 20.

33.1 *Leave,* lit. "go up" (cf. 32.7). *You.* Cf. 32.7. *Jacob.* See note on 32.13. **33.2** *Angel.* Cf. 23.20. *Drive out.* Cf. 23.28; 34.11. **33.3** *Milk and honey.* Cf. 3.8. *I will not.* See vv. 16–17. *Or,* "lest," an

sume you on the way, for you are a stiff-
necked people."
4 When the people heard these harsh
words, they mourned, and no one put on
ornaments. 5 For the LORD had said to
Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'You are a
stiff-necked people; if for a single mo-
ment I should go up among you, I would
consume you. So now take off your orna-
ments, and I will decide what to do to
you.'" 6 Therefore the Israelites stripped
themselves of their ornaments, from
Mount Horeb onward.

The Tent Outside the Camp

7 Now Moses used to take the tent and
pitch it outside the camp, far off from the
camp; he called it the tent of meeting.
And everyone who sought the LORD
would go out to the tent of meeting,
which was outside the camp. 8 Whenever
Moses went out to the tent, all the people
would rise and stand, each of them, at the
entrance of their tents and watch Moses
until he had gone into the tent. 9 When
Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud
would descend and stand at the entrance
of the tent, and the LORD would speak
with Moses. 10 When all the people saw
the pillar of cloud standing at the en-
trance of the tent, all the people would
rise and bow down, all of them, at the en-
trance of their tent. 11 Thus the LORD
used to speak to Moses face to face, as one
speaks to a friend. Then he would return
to the camp; but his young assistant,
Joshua son of Nun, would not leave the
tent.

Moses' Intercession

12 Moses said to the LORD, "See, you
have said to me, 'Bring up this people';
but you have not let me know whom you
will send with me. Yet you have said, 'I
know you by name, and you have also
found favor in my sight.' 13 Now if I have
found favor in your sight, show me your
ways, so that I may know you and find
favor in your sight. Consider too that this
nation is your people." 14 He said, "My
presence will go with you, and I will give
you rest." 15 And he said to him, "If your
presence will not go, do not carry us up
from here. 16 For how shall it be known
that I have found favor in your sight, I
and your people, unless you go with us?
In this way, we shall be distinct, I and
your people, from every people on the
face of the earth."
17 The LORD said to Moses, "I will do
the very thing that you have asked; for
you have found favor in my sight, and I
know you by name." 18 Moses said, "Show
me your glory, I pray." 19 And he said, "I
will make all my goodness pass before
you, and will proclaim before you the
name, 'The LORD';[d] and I will be gracious
to whom I will be gracious, and will show

d Heb *YHWH*; see note at 3.15

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anticipation of rebellions to come (e.g., Num 11, 14). *Consume.* See note on 32.10. **33.4** *Harsh* or "disastrous" (see 32.12). *Ornaments.* Cf. Jdt 10.1–4. In contrast to vv. 5–6, here the people take the initiative. **33.5** *For the LORD had said,* lit. "The LORD said," which would seem to precede v. 4. *And I will decide,* lit. "so that I will know," in Hebrew a pun on *ornaments.* **33.6** *Horeb.* See note on 3.1. **33.7** *Pitch it.* The Hebrew adds "for himself." Moses pitches the tent to administer the oracle (see v. 9; cf. note on 25.1–31.18). This *tent of meeting* is the precursor of the tabernacle, also called the tent of meeting (e.g., 27.21), which will be located at the center of the camp (Num 2.2). The *tent* cannot be situated in the camp until the camp can be cleansed of ritual pollution through appropriate cultic activity (cf. Num 5.1–4). **33.9** *Cloud.* See notes on 13.21; 24.15; cf. 40.34–38; Num 11.25; 12.5; Deut 31.15. *Entrance.* Cf. 25.22. **33.11** *Face to face,* figurative for immediate contact (see vv. 20–23); cf. Num 12.8 (lit. "mouth to mouth"); Deut 34.10. *Joshua.* See note on 17.9. **33.12–23** Note the key words *see, face* (cf. v. 11), and *know.* **33.12** *See,* responding to vv. 1–3. *Whom.* In light of v. 2, Moses would be asking for the angel's name (see Gen 32.29; Judg 13.17–18; cf. 3.13). *Know,* lit. "have known," an idiom for "to elect" (Jer 1.5; Hos 13.5). Moses anticipates the Lord (v. 17). **33.13** *Show me,* lit. "let me know." *Ways.* See v. 19; 34.6–7; cf. Ps 103.7–18. *Consider,* rendered *see* in v. 12. *Your,* responding to v. 1; cf. 32.11. **33.14** *Presence,* lit. "face" (also v. 15), replying to vv. 2–3 and anticipating 34.9. *Go.* Cf. 32.1. *Give you rest,* a play in Hebrew on *lead* (32.34) and referring to the settlement of Israel in Canaan (see Deut 3.20; 12.10; Josh 22.4). **33.15** *Carry . . . up,* the same Hebrew verb rendered *bring up* in v. 12. **33.16** *Be distinct.* See note on 11.7; cf. Deut 7.6. **33.17** *Know.* See note on 33.12. **33.18** *Show me,* lit. "let me see." *Glory.* See note on 16.6–7. **33.19** *Goodness,* or "splendor" ("fair" in Hos 10.11). *LORD.* See note on 3.14. *Gracious,* in Hebrew cognate to *favor*

mercy on whom I will show mercy.
20 But," he said, "you cannot see my face;
for no one shall see me and live." 21 And
the LORD continued, "See, there is a place
by me where you shall stand on the rock;
22 and while my glory passes by I will put
you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover
you with my hand until I have passed by;
23 then I will take away my hand, and you
shall see my back; but my face shall not be
seen."

Moses Makes New Tablets

34 The LORD said to Moses, "Cut
two tablets of stone like the former ones, and I will write on the tablets
the words that were on the former tablets,
which you broke. 2 Be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning to
Mount Sinai and present yourself there to
me, on the top of the mountain. 3 No one
shall come up with you, and do not let
anyone be seen throughout all the mountain; and do not let flocks or herds graze
in front of that mountain." 4 So Moses cut
two tablets of stone like the former ones;
and he rose early in the morning and
went up on Mount Sinai, as the LORD had
commanded him, and took in his hand
the two tablets of stone. 5 The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him
there, and proclaimed the name, "The
LORD."[e] 6 The LORD passed before him,
and proclaimed,

"The LORD, the LORD,
a God merciful and gracious,
slow to anger,
and abounding in steadfast love
and faithfulness,
7 keeping steadfast love for the
thousandth generation,[f]
forgiving iniquity and
transgression and sin,
yet by no means clearing the
guilty,
but visiting the iniquity of the
parents
upon the children
and the children's children,
to the third and the fourth
generation."

8 And Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth, and worshiped. 9 He said,
"If now I have found favor in your sight,
O Lord, I pray, let the Lord go with us.
Although this is a stiff-necked people,
pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take
us for your inheritance."

The Covenant Renewed

10 He said: I hereby make a covenant.
Before all your people I will perform
marvels, such as have not been performed
in all the earth or in any nation; and all
the people among whom you live shall see
the work of the LORD; for it is an awesome
thing that I will do with you.
11 Observe what I command you today. See, I will drive out before you the
Amorites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the
Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.
12 Take care not to make a covenant with
the inhabitants of the land to which you
are going, or it will become a snare among
you. 13 You shall tear down their altars,
break their pillars, and cut down their

e Heb *YHWH*; see note at 3.15 *f* Or *for thousands*

(vv. 12, 13, 16, 17). Cf. 34.6. **33.20** See note on 3.6. **33.21** *See*, lit. "here." *Place*. Cf. 3.5. *Stand*. See note on 2.4. The Hebrew term is rendered *present yourself* in 34.2. *Rock*. Cf. 17.6. **33.22** *Passed*. See 1 Kings 19.11–12. **33.23** For the effect, see 34.29.

34.1–8 Following the pardon of the people's apostasy, the Lord dispenses another covenant-forging revelation. **34.1** *Cut*. Cf. v. 28. *I will write*. Cf. v. 28; see Deut 10.1–2, 4. **34.2** *Be ready* and *morning* evoke the Sinai revelation (see 19.11, 15, 16; the Hebrew term rendered *prepare* there is the same one rendered *ready* here). *Top*. Cf. 19.20. **34.3** *No one*. Cf. 24.2, 12; 19.24. *Be seen*. Cf. 19.12–13, 21–24. **34.5** *The cloud*, lit. "a cloud"; cf. 19.9, 16; 24.15; see note on 13.21. *Stood*. See note on 33.21. *Proclaimed*. Cf. 33.19; or "invoked" (e.g., Gen 12.8), the subject being Moses. **34.6–7** See notes on 20.5; 20.6; 20.7. Variants are quoted in Num 14.18; Neh 9.17; Pss 86.15; 103.8; 145.8; Jer 32.18; Joel 2.13; Jon 4.2; Nah 1.3. **34.8** *Toward the earth*. Bowing the head "to the ground" was a conventional gesture of homage and is depicted in ancient art. **34.9** See note on 33.14. **34.10–26** In view of Israel's deviance in the golden calf incident (ch. 32), a reiteration of some fundamental covenantal laws. **34.10** *Marvels*, translated *wonders* in 3.20 and similar to the term rendered *set apart* in 8.22. *Performed*, rather "created"; cf. Num 16.30; Deut 4.32–34. **34.11** Cf. 23.28; 33.2. **34.12** Cf. 23.32–33. **34.13** *Pillars*. Cf. 23.24. *Sacred poles*, stylized trees (Deut 16.21); the Hebrew term for them *asherim*, is cognate to Asherah, the Canaan-

sacred poles[g] 14 (for you shall worship no other god, because the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God). 15 You shall not make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, for when they prostitute themselves to their gods and sacrifice to their gods, someone among them will invite you, and you will eat of the sacrifice. 16 And you will take wives from among their daughters for your sons, and their daughters who prostitute themselves to their gods will make your sons also prostitute themselves to their gods.

17 You shall not make cast idols.

18 You shall keep the festival of unleavened bread. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month of Abib; for in the month of Abib you came out from Egypt.

19 All that first opens the womb is mine, all your male[h] livestock, the firstborn of cow and sheep. 20 The firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, or if you will not redeem it you shall break its neck. All the firstborn of your sons you shall redeem.

No one shall appear before me empty-handed.

21 Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; even in plowing time and in harvest time you shall rest. 22 You shall observe the festival of weeks, the first fruits of wheat harvest, and the festival of ingathering at the turn of the year. 23 Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the LORD God, the God of Israel. 24 For I will cast out nations before you, and enlarge your borders; no one shall covet your land when you go up to appear before the LORD your God three times in the year.

25 You shall not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leaven, and the sacrifice of the festival of the passover shall not be left until the morning.

26 The best of the first fruits of your ground you shall bring to the house of the LORD your God.

You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk.

27 The LORD said to Moses: Write these words; in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel. 28 He was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.[i]

The Shining Face of Moses

29 Moses came down from Mount Sinai. As he came down from the mountain with the two tablets of the covenant[j] in his hand, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. 30 When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, the skin of his face was shining, and they were afraid to come near him. 31 But Moses called to them; and Aaron and all the leaders of the congregation returned to

g Heb *Asherim* *h* Gk Theodotion Vg Tg: Meaning of Heb uncertain *i* Heb *words*
j Or *treaty*, or *testimony*; Heb *eduth*

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ite fertility goddess (cf. Judg 6.25); cf. Deut 7.5; 12.3. **34.14** *Jealous*, perhaps a play on the Lord's name, Yahweh, whose root can mean "crave" (Prov 10.3). Cf. 20.3, 5. **34.15** *Prostitute themselves*. See Num 25.1–2; cf. Lev 17.7; 20.5–6; Deut 31.16; Judg 2.17; 8.33. **34.16** Cf. Judg 3.6. **34.17** Cf. 20.4, 23; Lev 19.4. **34.18** In contrast to 23.12–15, the *festival of unleavened bread* is mentioned here before the sabbath and is separated from the other two pilgrimages, perhaps by virtue of its immediate connection to the exodus. **34.19–20** Cf. 13.12–13. *No one ... empty-handed* pertains to the preceding law (v. 18; see 23.15); in ch. 13, too, the law about the firstborn is juxtaposed with the *Festival of Unleavened Bread*. **34.21** Cf. 23.12. **34.22–23** Cf. 23.16–17. For the name *festival of weeks*, see Deut 16.9–10. **34.22** *Turn*, lit. "(completed) circuit." **34.24** *Cast out*, lit. "dispossess" (Deut 9.5); cf. 23.23, 27–31; Deut 4.38 (where "driving out" translates the same verb). *Enlarge*. Cf. Deut 12.20 (where "territory" translates the same word as *borders* here). *Covet*. See note on 20.17; cf. the allaying fear in 23.29–30. *Go up*, an anticipation of the Jerusalem temple (e.g., 1 Kings 12.27). **34.25–26** Cf. 23.18–19. **34.27** *These words*, vv. 11–26. **34.28** *Forty*. Cf. 24.18. Here a second forty-day period is indicated; cf. Deut 10.10. *Neither ate bread nor drank water*. Cf. Deut 9.9, 18; a semidivine state is suggested. *Wrote*. See note on 34.1. *Commandments*. See v. 1. **34.29** *Moses came*, rather, "As Moses came." *Shone*, in Hebrew cognate to "rays" (Hab 3.4); see note on 13.21; 14.24. *God*, lit. "him," some of whose radiance was imparted to Moses (see 33.17–23). **34.30** *They were afraid*, because Moses looked like a god; see v. 20; cf. 14.24. **34.31** *Returned*, rather "turned."

him, and Moses spoke with them. 32 Afterward all the Israelites came near, and he gave them in commandment all that the LORD had spoken with him on Mount Sinai. 33 When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face; 34 but whenever Moses went in before the LORD to speak with him, he would take the veil off, until he came out; and when he came out, and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, 35 the Israelites would see the face of Moses, that the skin of his face was shining; and Moses would put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with him.

Sabbath Regulations

35 Moses assembled all the congregation of the Israelites and said to them: These are the things that the LORD has commanded you to do:

2 Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day you shall have a holy sabbath of solemn rest to the LORD; whoever does any work on it shall be put to death. 3 You shall kindle no fire in all your dwellings on the sabbath day.

Preparations for Making the Tabernacle

4 Moses said to all the congregation of the Israelites: This is the thing that the LORD has commanded: 5 Take from among you an offering to the LORD; let whoever is of a generous heart bring the LORD's offering: gold, silver, and bronze; 6 blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and fine linen; goats' hair, 7 tanned rams' skins, and fine leather;[k] acacia wood, 8 oil for the light, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, 9 and onyx stones and gems to be set in the ephod and the breastpiece.

10 All who are skillful among you shall come and make all that the LORD has commanded: the tabernacle, 11 its tent and its covering, its clasps and its frames, its bars, its pillars, and its bases; 12 the ark with its poles, the mercy seat,[l] and the curtain for the screen; 13 the table with its poles and all its utensils, and the bread of the Presence; 14 the lampstand also for the light, with its utensils and its lamps, and the oil for the light; 15 and the altar of incense, with its poles, and the anointing oil and the fragrant incense, and the screen for the entrance, the entrance of the tabernacle; 16 the altar of burnt offering, with its grating of bronze, its poles, and all its utensils, the basin with its stand; 17 the hangings of the court, its pillars and its bases, and the screen for the gate of the court; 18 the pegs of the tabernacle and the pegs of the court, and their cords; 19 the finely worked vestments for ministering in the holy place, the holy vestments for the priest Aaron, and the vestments of his sons, for their service as priests.

Offerings for the Tabernacle

20 Then all the congregation of the Israelites withdrew from the presence of Moses. 21 And they came, everyone whose heart was stirred, and everyone whose spirit was willing, and brought the LORD's offering to be used for the tent of meeting, and for all its service, and for the sacred vestments. 22 So they came, both men and women; all who were of a willing

k Meaning of Heb uncertain *l* Or *the cover*

34.33 *Veil.* Cf. the cloud covering the deity's glory (e.g., 24.16). **34.34** *Before the LORD,* into the tent of meeting, see 33.7; Num 7.89.

35.1–3 Moses begins his instructions to the Israelites with the last matter in which he was instructed before descending the mountain (31.12–17); in this way the preceding topic of building the tabernacle (chs. 25–31) is resumed in what follows (chs. 35–40). The preparations for and construction of the tabernacle repeat the language of the instructions nearly verbatim, though with several ellipses. **35.2** Cf. 31.15. **35.3** Cf. 16.23; see note on 20.8. **35.4–9** Cf. 25.2–7. The tabernacle's purpose (see 25.8; 29.45–46) is omitted. **35.10–19** An expansive parallel to 31.6–11; the list is pervaded by rhythmic repetition, assonance, and rhyme (cf. note on 28.34). The description moves from the holy of holies to the tabernacle proper to the court, each closed on the east by a screen (vv. 12, 10, 17). **35.10** *Skillful.* See note on 28.3 **35.12** *Curtain for the screen,* called a *screen* only here; cf. 26.31–33, where no screen is mentioned, but see 40.3 for an association between the terms screen and curtain. **35.14** *Also,* not in the Hebrew. **35.20–29** The overwhelming response (see also 36.3–7) redeems the people's contributions to the illicit cult (32.2–3). Cf. 2 Chr 24.4–14. **35.20** *The presence of,* or "attendance upon." **35.22** *Earrings.* Cf. 32.2–3. *Offering,* rendered *elevation offering* in 29.27, here in a general sense (as in 38.24).

heart brought brooches and earrings and
signet rings and pendants, all sorts of gold
objects, everyone bringing an offering of
gold to the LORD. 23 And everyone who
possessed blue or purple or crimson yarn
or fine linen or goats' hair or tanned
rams' skins or fine leather,[m] brought
them. 24 Everyone who could make an
offering of silver or bronze brought it as
the LORD's offering; and everyone who
possessed acacia wood of any use in the
work, brought it. 25 All the skillful women
spun with their hands, and brought what
they had spun in blue and purple and
crimson yarns and fine linen; 26 all the
women whose hearts moved them to use
their skill spun the goats' hair. 27 And the
leaders brought onyx stones and gems to
be set in the ephod and the breastpiece,
28 and spices and oil for the light, and for
the anointing oil, and for the fragrant in-
cense. 29 All the Israelite men and women
whose hearts made them willing to bring
anything for the work that the LORD had
commanded by Moses to be done,
brought it as a freewill offering to the
LORD.

Bezalel and Oholiab

30 Then Moses said to the Israelites:
See, the LORD has called by name Bezalel
son of Uri son of Hur, of the tribe of Ju-
dah; 31 he has filled him with divine
spirit,[n] with skill, intelligence, and knowl-
edge in every kind of craft, 32 to devise
artistic designs, to work in gold, silver,
and bronze, 33 in cutting stones for set-
ting, and in carving wood, in every kind
of craft. 34 And he has inspired him to
teach, both him and Oholiab son of Ahisa-
mach, of the tribe of Dan. 35 He has filled
them with skill to do every kind of work
done by an artisan or by a designer or by
an embroiderer in blue, purple, and crim-
son yarns, and in fine linen, or by a
weaver—by any sort of artisan or skilled
designer.

36 Bezalel and Oholiab and every
skillful one to whom the LORD
has given skill and understanding to know
how to do any work in the construction of
the sanctuary shall work in accordance
with all that the LORD has commanded.
2 Moses then called Bezalel and Oho-
liab and every skillful one to whom the
LORD had given skill, everyone whose
heart was stirred to come to do the work;
3 and they received from Moses all the
freewill offerings that the Israelites had
brought for doing the work on the sanctu-
ary. They still kept bringing him freewill
offerings every morning, 4 so that all the
artisans who were doing every sort of task
on the sanctuary came, each from the task
being performed, 5 and said to Moses,
"The people are bringing much more
than enough for doing the work that the
LORD has commanded us to do." 6 So Mo-
ses gave command, and word was pro-
claimed throughout the camp: "No man
or woman is to make anything else as an
offering for the sanctuary." So the people
were restrained from bringing; 7 for what
they had already brought was more than
enough to do all the work.

Construction of the Tabernacle

8 All those with skill among the work-
ers made the tabernacle with ten curtains;
they were made of fine twisted linen, and
blue, purple, and crimson yarns, with
cherubim skillfully worked into them.
9 The length of each curtain was twenty-
eight cubits, and the width of each curtain
four cubits; all the curtains were of the
same size.
10 He joined five curtains to one an-
other, and the other five curtains he
joined to one another. 11 He made loops

m Meaning of Heb uncertain *n* Or *the spirit of God*

35.23 *Fine leather.* See note on 25.5. **35.30–33** Cf. 31.1–5. **35.34–35** A more elaborate version of 31.6, adding notably *to teach* the artisans. **36.1** *In the construction of,* rather "in connection with the service (i.e., sacrificial cult)" (see 39.40); cf. note on 27.19. **36.2** *Come,* "come near" (see note on 29.3). **36.3** *Received,* "took." *Freewill offering,* rather *an offering* (as in v. 6). *Doing the work,* or "the work of the service" (see note on 36.1). **36.4** *Task,* rendered *work* in vv. 1–2. **36.5–7** Cf. Pharaoh's complaint (5.4–9).

36.8–39.31 Unlike the instructions, which tend to treat the holiest objects first, the construction follows a practical sequence in which the holiest objects are not made until their protective surroundings are. Portions of instructions that deal with the use of the ritual paraphernalia are typically omitted. **36.8–19** Cf. 26.1–14. **36.10** *He,* Bezalel (35.30–35; cf. 37.1).

of blue on the edge of the outermost curtain of the first set; likewise he made them on the edge of the outermost curtain of the second set; 12 he made fifty loops on the one curtain, and he made fifty loops on the edge of the curtain that was in the second set; the loops were opposite one another. 13 And he made fifty clasps of gold, and joined the curtains one to the other with clasps; so the tabernacle was one whole.

14 He also made curtains of goats' hair for a tent over the tabernacle; he made eleven curtains. 15 The length of each curtain was thirty cubits, and the width of each curtain four cubits; the eleven curtains were of the same size. 16 He joined five curtains by themselves, and six curtains by themselves. 17 He made fifty loops on the edge of the outermost curtain of the one set, and fifty loops on the edge of the other connecting curtain. 18 He made fifty clasps of bronze to join the tent together so that it might be one whole. 19 And he made for the tent a covering of tanned rams' skins and an outer covering of fine leather.[o]

20 Then he made the upright frames for the tabernacle of acacia wood. 21 Ten cubits was the length of a frame, and a cubit and a half the width of each frame. 22 Each frame had two pegs for fitting together; he did this for all the frames of the tabernacle. 23 The frames for the tabernacle he made in this way: twenty frames for the south side; 24 and he made forty bases of silver under the twenty frames, two bases under the first frame for its two pegs, and two bases under the next frame for its two pegs. 25 For the second side of the tabernacle, on the north side, he made twenty frames 26 and their forty bases of silver, two bases under the first frame and two bases under the next frame. 27 For the rear of the tabernacle westward he made six frames. 28 He made two frames for corners of the tabernacle in the rear. 29 They were separate beneath, but joined at the top, at the first ring; he made two of them in this way, for the two corners. 30 There were eight frames with their bases of silver: sixteen bases, under every frame two bases.

31 He made bars of acacia wood, five for the frames of the one side of the tabernacle, 32 and five bars for the frames of the other side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the frames of the tabernacle at the rear westward. 33 He made the middle bar to pass through from end to end halfway up the frames. 34 And he overlaid the frames with gold, and made rings of gold for them to hold the bars, and overlaid the bars with gold.

35 He made the curtain of blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and fine twisted linen, with cherubim skillfully worked into it. 36 For it he made four pillars of acacia, and overlaid them with gold; their hooks were of gold, and he cast for them four bases of silver. 37 He also made a screen for the entrance to the tent, of blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and fine twisted linen, embroidered with needlework; 38 and its five pillars with their hooks. He overlaid their capitals and their bases with gold, but their five bases were of bronze.

Making the Ark of the Covenant

37 Bezalel made the ark of acacia wood; it was two and a half cubits long, a cubit and a half wide, and a cubit and a half high. 2 He overlaid it with pure gold inside and outside, and made a molding of gold around it. 3 He cast for it four rings of gold for its four feet, two rings on its one side and two rings on its other side. 4 He made poles of acacia wood, and overlaid them with gold, 5 and put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark, to carry the ark. 6 He made a mercy seat[p] of pure gold; two cubits and a half was its length, and a cubit and a half its width. 7 He made two cherubim of hammered gold; at the two ends of the mercy seat[q] he made them, 8 one cherub at the one end, and one cherub at the other end; of one piece with the mercy seat[q] he made the cherubim at its two ends. 9 The cherubim spread out their wings above, overshadowing the mercy seat[q] with their wings. They faced one

o Meaning of Heb uncertain p Or *a cover*
q Or *the cover*

36.20–34 Cf. 26.15–29. The command to erect the tabernacle (26.30) is fulfilled not here but in 40.17–19. Most other details of setting up parts of the tabernacle are altogether omitted. **36.35–38** Cf. 26.31–32, 36–37.

37.1–9 Cf. 25.10–14, 17–20. **37.1** *Bezalel,*

another; the faces of the cherubim were turned toward the mercy seat.[r]

Making the Table for the Bread of the Presence

10 He also made the table of acacia wood, two cubits long, one cubit wide, and a cubit and a half high. 11 He overlaid it with pure gold, and made a molding of gold around it. 12 He made around it a rim a handbreadth wide, and made a molding of gold around the rim. 13 He cast for it four rings of gold, and fastened the rings to the four corners at its four legs. 14 The rings that held the poles used for carrying the table were close to the rim. 15 He made the poles of acacia wood to carry the table, and overlaid them with gold. 16 And he made the vessels of pure gold that were to be on the table, its plates and dishes for incense, and its bowls and flagons with which to pour drink offerings.

Making the Lampstand

17 He also made the lampstand of pure gold. The base and the shaft of the lampstand were made of hammered work; its cups, its calyxes, and its petals were of one piece with it. 18 There were six branches going out of its sides, three branches of the lampstand out of one side of it and three branches of the lampstand out of the other side of it; 19 three cups shaped like almond blossoms, each with calyx and petals, on one branch, and three cups shaped like almond blossoms, each with calyx and petals, on the other branch—so for the six branches going out of the lampstand. 20 On the lampstand itself there were four cups shaped like almond blossoms, each with its calyxes and petals. 21 There was a calyx of one piece with it under the first pair of branches, a calyx of one piece with it under the next pair of branches, and a calyx of one piece with it under the last pair of branches. 22 Their calyxes and their branches were of one piece with it, the whole of it one hammered piece of pure gold. 23 He made its seven lamps and its snuffers and its trays of pure gold. 24 He made it and all its utensils of a talent of pure gold.

Making the Altar of Incense

25 He made the altar of incense of acacia wood, one cubit long, and one cubit wide; it was square, and was two cubits high; its horns were of one piece with it. 26 He overlaid it with pure gold, its top, and its sides all around, and its horns; and he made for it a molding of gold all around, 27 and made two golden rings for it under its molding, on two opposite sides of it, to hold the poles with which to carry it. 28 And he made the poles of acacia wood, and overlaid them with gold.

Making the Anointing Oil and the Incense

29 He made the holy anointing oil also, and the pure fragrant incense, blended as by the perfumer.

Making the Altar of Burnt Offering

38 He made the altar of burnt offering also of acacia wood; it was five cubits long, and five cubits wide; it was square, and three cubits high. 2 He made horns for it on its four corners; its horns were of one piece with it, and he overlaid it with bronze. 3 He made all the utensils of the altar, the pots, the shovels, the basins, the forks, and the firepans: all its utensils he made of bronze. 4 He made for the altar a grating, a network of bronze, under its ledge, extending halfway down. 5 He cast four rings on the four corners of the bronze grating to hold the poles; 6 he made the poles of acacia wood, and overlaid them with bronze. 7 And he put the poles through the rings on the sides of the altar, to carry it with them; he made it hollow, with boards.

r Or *the cover*

Moses according to Deut 10.3, 5. **37.10–16** Cf. 25.23–29. **37.17–24** Cf. 25.31–39. **37.25–28** Cf. 30.1–5. **37.29** A summary of 30.22–25, 34–35. **38.1–7** Cf. 27.1–8. **38.1** *Altar of burnt offering*, in contradistinction to the altar of incense (37.25–28). **38.2** *He*, Bezalel, but Eleazar according to Num 16.38–39. **38.8** *Basin of bronze.* Cf. 30.18. *From the mirrors . . . tent of meeting* provides new information, possibly alluding to a lost episode similar to the one in 1 Sam 2.22 in which the women who served were made to surrender their mirrors on account of sexual misconduct; for ritual paraphernalia as a reminder of misdeeds, see Num 16.36–40. The reference is out of

8 He made the basin of bronze with its
stand of bronze, from the mirrors of the
women who served at the entrance to the
tent of meeting.

Making the Court of the Tabernacle

9 He made the court; for the south
side the hangings of the court were of fine
twisted linen, one hundred cubits long;
10 its twenty pillars and their twenty bases
were of bronze, but the hooks of the pil-
lars and their bands were of silver. 11 For
the north side there were hangings one
hundred cubits long; its twenty pillars and
their twenty bases were of bronze, but the
hooks of the pillars and their bands were
of silver. 12 For the west side there were
hangings fifty cubits long, with ten pillars
and ten bases; the hooks of the pillars and
their bands were of silver. 13 And for the
front to the east, fifty cubits. 14 The hang-
ings for one side of the gate were fifteen
cubits, with three pillars and three bases.
15 And so for the other side; on each side
of the gate of the court were hangings of
fifteen cubits, with three pillars and three
bases. 16 All the hangings around the
court were of fine twisted linen. 17 The
bases for the pillars were of bronze, but
the hooks of the pillars and their bands
were of silver; the overlaying of their cap-
itals was also of silver, and all the pillars of
the court were banded with silver. 18 The
screen for the entrance to the court was
embroidered with needlework in blue,
purple, and crimson yarns and fine
twisted linen. It was twenty cubits long
and, along the width of it, five cubits high,
corresponding to the hangings of the
court. 19 There were four pillars; their
four bases were of bronze, their hooks of
silver, and the overlaying of their capitals
and their bands of silver. 20 All the pegs
for the tabernacle and for the court all
around were of bronze.

Materials of the Tabernacle

21 These are the records of the taber-
nacle, the tabernacle of the covenant,[s]
which were drawn up at the command-
ment of Moses, the work of the Levites
being under the direction of Ithamar son
of the priest Aaron. 22 Bezalel son of Uri
son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, made all
that the LORD commanded Moses; 23 and
with him was Oholiab son of Ahisamach,
of the tribe of Dan, engraver, designer,
and embroiderer in blue, purple, and
crimson yarns, and in fine linen.
24 All the gold that was used for the
work, in all the construction of the sanctu-
ary, the gold from the offering, was
twenty-nine talents and seven hundred
thirty shekels, measured by the sanctuary
shekel. 25 The silver from those of the
congregation who were counted was one
hundred talents and one thousand seven
hundred seventy-five shekels, measured
by the sanctuary shekel; 26 a beka a head
(that is, half a shekel, measured by the
sanctuary shekel), for everyone who was
counted in the census, from twenty years
old and upward, for six hundred three
thousand, five hundred fifty men. 27 The
hundred talents of silver were for casting
the bases of the sanctuary, and the bases
of the curtain; one hundred bases for the
hundred talents, a talent for a base. 28 Of
the thousand seven hundred seventy-five
shekels he made hooks for the pillars, and
overlaid their capitals and made bands for
them. 29 The bronze that was contributed
was seventy talents, and two thousand
four hundred shekels; 30 with it he made
the bases for the entrance of the tent of
meeting, the bronze altar and the bronze
grating for it and all the utensils of the
altar, 31 the bases all around the court,
and the bases of the gate of the court, all
the pegs of the tabernacle, and all the
pegs around the court.

s Or *treaty*, or *testimony*; Heb *eduth*

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place here since the tent has not yet been erected. **38.9–20** Cf. 27.9–19. **38.21–31** The inventory of metals presupposes the census that is prescribed in 30.12–16 but performed only in Num 1, dated a month later than the erection of the tabernacle (cf. 40.17; Num 1.1). **38.21** *Records*, rather "tally" (rendered *counted, census* in vv. 25–26). *Drawn up*, rather "counted." *Levites*, anachronistic (see Num 3.5–13). *Ithamar.* Cf. Num 4.33; the death of Aaron's older sons (Lev 10.1–2) seems to be assumed. **38.22–23** Cf. 31.2–6; 35.30–35. **38.24** *Talents.* See note on 25.39. **38.25** There is also freely donated silver (25.2–3; 35.5, 24). **38.26** *Beka*, the term found as a label on excavated weights of that size. *Census.* Cf. Num 1.45–46. **38.30** The *basin* is omitted; see v. 8.

Making the Vestments for the Priesthood

39 Of the blue, purple, and crimson yarns they made finely worked vestments, for ministering in the holy place; they made the sacred vestments for Aaron; as the LORD had commanded Moses.

2 He made the ephod of gold, of blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and of fine twisted linen. 3 Gold leaf was hammered out and cut into threads to work into the blue, purple, and crimson yarns and into the fine twisted linen, in skilled design. 4 They made for the ephod shoulder-pieces, joined to it at its two edges. 5 The decorated band on it was of the same materials and workmanship, of gold, of blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and of fine twisted linen; as the LORD had commanded Moses.

6 The onyx stones were prepared, enclosed in settings of gold filigree and engraved like the engravings of a signet, according to the names of the sons of Israel. 7 He set them on the shoulder-pieces of the ephod, to be stones of remembrance for the sons of Israel; as the LORD had commanded Moses.

8 He made the breastpiece, in skilled work, like the work of the ephod, of gold, of blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and of fine twisted linen. 9 It was square; the breastpiece was made double, a span in length and a span in width when doubled. 10 They set in it four rows of stones. A row of carnelian,[t] chrysolite, and emerald was the first row; 11 and the second row, a turquoise, a sapphire,[u] and a moonstone; 12 and the third row, a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst; 13 and the fourth row, a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper; they were enclosed in settings of gold filigree. 14 There were twelve stones with names corresponding to the names of the sons of Israel; they were like signets, each engraved with its name, for the twelve tribes. 15 They made on the breastpiece chains of pure gold, twisted like cords; 16 and they made two settings of gold filigree and two gold rings, and put the two rings on the two edges of the breastpiece; 17 and they put the two cords of gold in the two rings at the edges of the breastpiece. 18 Two ends of the two cords they had attached to the two settings of filigree; in this way they attached it in front to the shoulder-pieces of the ephod. 19 Then they made two rings of gold, and put them at the two ends of the breastpiece, on its inside edge next to the ephod. 20 They made two rings of gold, and attached them in front to the lower part of the two shoulder-pieces of the ephod, at its joining above the decorated band of the ephod. 21 They bound the breastpiece by its rings to the rings of the ephod with a blue cord, so that it should lie on the decorated band of the ephod, and that the breastpiece should not come loose from the ephod; as the LORD had commanded Moses.

22 He also made the robe of the ephod woven all of blue yarn; 23 and the opening of the robe in the middle of it was like the opening in a coat of mail,[v] with a binding around the opening, so that it might not be torn. 24 On the lower hem of the robe they made pomegranates of blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and of fine twisted linen. 25 They also made bells of pure gold, and put the bells between the pomegranates on the lower hem of the robe all around, between the pomegranates; 26 a bell and a pomegranate, a bell and a pomegranate all around on the lower hem of the robe for ministering; as the LORD had commanded Moses.

27 They also made the tunics, woven of fine linen, for Aaron and his sons, 28 and the turban of fine linen, and the headdresses of fine linen, and the linen undergarments of fine twisted linen, 29 and the sash of fine twisted linen, and of blue, purple, and crimson yarns, embroidered with needlework; as the LORD had commanded Moses.

t The identification of several of these stones is uncertain *u* Or *lapis lazuli* *v* Meaning of Heb uncertain

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39.1–31 Cf. ch. 28. **39.1** *Of the blue . . . yarns* harks back to 38.23 (accordingly the use here of *they*, Bezalel and Oholiab) but *fine linen* is omitted. *As the LORD*, a sevenfold refrain in the passage, recalling the structure of Gen 1.1–2.4. **39.2** *He*, Bezalel (37.1). **39.3** *Gold leaf*, an additional detail. *Was hammered out*, rather "they hammered out," the volunteers (36.2, 4), who apparently also made the curtains, screen, and hangings (26.1–14, 31, 36; 27.9–15) that are omitted from

30 They made the rosette of the holy
diadem of pure gold, and wrote on it an
inscription, like the engraving of a signet,
"Holy to the LORD." 31 They tied to it a
blue cord, to fasten it on the turban
above; as the LORD had commanded
Moses.

The Work Completed

32 In this way all the work of the tab-
ernacle of the tent of meeting was fin-
ished; the Israelites had done everything
just as the LORD had commanded Moses.
33 Then they brought the tabernacle to
Moses, the tent and all its utensils, its
hooks, its frames, its bars, its pillars, and
its bases; 34 the covering of tanned rams'
skins and the covering of fine leather,[w]
and the curtain for the screen; 35 the ark
of the covenant[x] with its poles and the
mercy seat;[y] 36 the table with all its uten-
sils, and the bread of the Presence; 37 the
pure lampstand with its lamps set on it
and all its utensils, and the oil for the
light; 38 the golden altar, the anointing oil
and the fragrant incense, and the screen
for the entrance of the tent; 39 the bronze
altar, and its grating of bronze, its poles,
and all its utensils; the basin with its stand;
40 the hangings of the court, its pillars,
and its bases, and the screen for the gate
of the court, its cords, and its pegs; and all
the utensils for the service of the taberna-
cle, for the tent of meeting; 41 the finely
worked vestments for ministering in the
holy place, the sacred vestments for the
priest Aaron, and the vestments of his
sons to serve as priests. 42 The Israelites
had done all of the work just as the LORD
had commanded Moses. 43 When Moses
saw that they had done all the work just as
the LORD had commanded, he blessed
them.

The Tabernacle Erected and Its Equipment Installed

40 The LORD spoke to Moses: 2 On
the first day of the first month
you shall set up the tabernacle of the tent
of meeting. 3 You shall put in it the ark of
the covenant,[x] and you shall screen the
ark with the curtain. 4 You shall bring in
the table, and arrange its setting; and you
shall bring in the lampstand, and set up its
lamps. 5 You shall put the golden altar for
incense before the ark of the covenant,[x]
and set up the screen for the entrance of
the tabernacle. 6 You shall set the altar of
burnt offering before the entrance of the
tabernacle of the tent of meeting, 7 and
place the basin between the tent of meet-
ing and the altar, and put water in it.
8 You shall set up the court all around,
and hang up the screen for the gate of the
court. 9 Then you shall take the anointing
oil, and anoint the tabernacle and all that
is in it, and consecrate it and all its furni-
ture, so that it shall become holy. 10 You
shall also anoint the altar of burnt offer-
ing and all its utensils, and consecrate the
altar, so that the altar shall be most holy.
11 You shall also anoint the basin with its
stand, and consecrate it. 12 Then you shall
bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance
of the tent of meeting, and shall wash
them with water, 13 and put on Aaron the
sacred vestments, and you shall anoint
him and consecrate him, so that he may
serve me as priest. 14 You shall bring his
sons also and put tunics on them, 15 and
anoint them, as you anointed their father,
that they may serve me as priests: and
their anointing shall admit them to a per-
petual priesthood throughout all genera-
tions to come.
16 Moses did everything just as the

w Meaning of Heb uncertain x Or *treaty*, or *testimony*; Heb *eduth* y Or *the cover*

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the account; cf. v. 42. **39.30** *Diadem.* Cf. 29.6. **39.32** *In this way,* not in the Hebrew. *Finished.* Cf. Gen 2.1; also cf. Ex 40.33; Gen 2.2; see note on 39.43. Near Eastern myth, e.g., the Babylonian *Enuma Elish,* associates temple building with creation; see note on 40.2. **39.33–41** Cf. 35.11–19. **39.42** *Israelites.* See note on 39.3. *Work* connotes service in maintaining the cultic or religious life of the community (see note on 36.1), different from the term translated *work* in v. 43. **39.43** *Work,* as in Gen 2.2–3. *Blessed.* Cf. Gen 2.3.

40.2 *First month,* the new year according to the rhythms of the ritual life of the community; see 12.2; note on 39.32. New year, temple (or tabernacle) building, and creation are associated in Israelite worldview. Cf. v. 17. *You.* See 25.9. **40.3** *Screen.* Cf. 35.12. **40.4** *Setting.* See 25.29–30. **40.5** *Before,* but outside the curtain (see 30.6). **40.9** *Furniture,* translated *utensils* in v. 10. *Holy.* See note on 29.37. **40.10** *Most holy.* See note on 29.37. **40.12** *Bring.* See note on 29.3; see also v. 14. **40.15** *Perpetual.* Cf. 29.9;

LORD had commanded him. 17 In the first
month in the second year, on the first day
of the month, the tabernacle was set up.
18 Moses set up the tabernacle; he laid its
bases, and set up its frames, and put in its
poles, and raised up its pillars; 19 and he
spread the tent over the tabernacle, and
put the covering of the tent over it; as the
LORD had commanded Moses. 20 He took
the covenant[z] and put it into the ark, and
put the poles on the ark, and set the
mercy seat[a] above the ark; 21 and he
brought the ark into the tabernacle, and
set up the curtain for screening, and
screened the ark of the covenant;[z] as the
LORD had commanded Moses. 22 He put
the table in the tent of meeting, on the
north side of the tabernacle, outside the
curtain, 23 and set the bread in order on it
before the LORD; as the LORD had com-
manded Moses. 24 He put the lampstand
in the tent of meeting, opposite the table
on the south side of the tabernacle, 25 and
set up the lamps before the LORD; as the
LORD had commanded Moses. 26 He put
the golden altar in the tent of meeting be-
fore the curtain, 27 and offered fragrant
incense on it; as the LORD had com-
manded Moses. 28 He also put in place the
screen for the entrance of the tabernacle.
29 He set the altar of burnt offering at the
entrance of the tabernacle of the tent of
meeting, and offered on it the burnt
offering and the grain offering as the
LORD had commanded Moses. 30 He set
the basin between the tent of meeting and
the altar, and put water in it for washing,
31 with which Moses and Aaron and his
sons washed their hands and their feet.
32 When they went into the tent of meet-
ing, and when they approached the altar,
they washed; as the LORD had com-
manded Moses. 33 He set up the court
around the tabernacle and the altar, and
put up the screen at the gate of the court.
So Moses finished the work.

The Cloud and the Glory

34 Then the cloud covered the tent of
meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled
the tabernacle. 35 Moses was not able to
enter the tent of meeting because the
cloud settled upon it, and the glory of the
LORD filled the tabernacle. 36 Whenever
the cloud was taken up from the taberna-
cle, the Israelites would set out on each
stage of their journey; 37 but if the cloud
was not taken up, then they did not set
out until the day that it was taken up.
38 For the cloud of the LORD was on the
tabernacle by day, and fire was in the
cloud[b] by night, before the eyes of all the
house of Israel at each stage of their
journey.

z Or *treaty*, or *testimony*; Heb *eduth* *a* Or *the cover*
b Heb *it*

Num 25.11–13. **40.17** See note on 40.2. **40.18** *Moses.* Cf. v. 2. **40.19** *Tent.* See 26.7, 11. *Covering.* See 26.14. **40.20** *Poles.* See note on 25.12. *Above,* rather "on top of" (25.21). **40.22** *Tent of meeting.* See note on 27.21. **40.27** *Offered.* See note on 30.1. **40.28** *For the entrance,* aligned with but at some remove (see note on 27.9–19). **40.29** *Burnt offering.* See 28.38–39. *Grain offering.* See 28.40. Mention of the offerings provides a transition to Leviticus, which begins with the burnt offering (ch. 1) and grain offering (ch. 2). **40.31** *Washed,* or "would wash." **40.32** *Went ... approached ... washed.* Rather, in the Hebrew the tense is present, describing ongoing activity and interrupting the investiture and anointing ceremony (vv. 13–15), which is resumed in Lev 8. **40.33** *Finished.* See note on 39.32. **40.34–38** The descent of the divine presence into the "dwelling" (*tabernacle*) parallels the *settling* (same Hebrew verb) of the Lord atop Mount Sinai (24.15–16). **40.34** *Cloud.* See note on 13.21. *Glory.* See note on 16.6–7; cf. 24.16–17. **40.35** Cf. 1 Kings 8.10–11. **40.36–38** An institutionalization of the *pillars* in 13.21–22; cf. Num 9.15–23. **40.38** *At each stage ... journey,* lit. "in each of their journeys"; cf. Num 10.11–36.

LEVITICUS

THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS is more aptly described by its tannaitic, or early rabbinic, name, *Torat Kohanim*, the Priests' Manual. It is thematically an independent entity. Priestly material in the book of Exodus describes the construction of the Israelite cultic implements (the sacred religious objects used in ritual—the tabernacle, its contents, and the priestly vestments); in Leviticus this static picture is converted into scenes from the living cult. The book of Numbers which follows concentrates on the cultic laws of the camp in motion. Since the transport of the sacred paraphernalia and their protection against encroachment by impurity is the function of the Levites, it is no accident that all the cultic laws pertaining to the Levites are in Numbers, and none are in Leviticus.

The Priesthood

Although the Priests' Manual focuses on the priesthood, few laws are reserved for priests alone (Lev 8–10; 16.1–28; 21.1–22.16). Their role is defined in pedagogic terms: to teach the distinctions "between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean" (10.10 [cf. 14.57]; 15.31). They must do this because Israel's moral sins and physical impurities are leading to the pollution of the sanctuary and the expulsion of Israel from its land. The priests, then, are charged with a double task: to instruct Israel not to cause defilement and to purge the sanctuary whenever it is defiled. However, Leviticus is not just a collection of rituals. On the contrary, the ethical element fuses with and even informs the ritual, so that one may seek a moral basis behind each ritual act.

Israel's priests were not an insular elite. They were military chaplains, accompanying Israel's armies in distant and dangerous battlefields (Num 31.6). They were called outside the sanctuary and, indeed, outside the settlements to quarantine and certify carriers of scale disease (Lev 14.2). The responsibility of the priesthood for the welfare of all Israel is nowhere better exemplified than in the relationship of priests and laity in the sacrificial service. The preliminary rites with the sacrificial animal are performed by the offerer: hand-leaning, slaughtering, flaying, quartering, and washing (1.1–9). The priest takes over at the altar and continues the sacrificial ritual in silence. By virtue of his sacred status, the

priest acts as the offerer's (silent) intermediary before God. But he is more than a mere technician. In effect, he is the cultic counterpart of the prophet. Both represent the Israelites before God. Both intercede on their behalf, one through ritual, the other through prayer. The welfare of Israel depends on both a Moses and an Aaron.

Ideas of Holiness and Pollution According to P and H

The book of Leviticus comprises two priestly sources, known as P (Priestly code) and H (Holiness code). They are not homogeneous; each betrays the work of schools. For example, two P strata are discernible in ch. 11 (a later P stratum in vv. 24–38, 47), as are two H strata in ch. 23 (a later H stratum in vv. 2–3, 39–43). Whether material belongs to P or H can be determined by two criteria: ideology and terminology.

The most important ideological distinction between the two codes rests in their contrasting concepts of holiness. For P, spatial holiness is limited to the sanctuary; for H, it is coextensive with the promised land. As for the holiness of persons, P restricts it to priests and Nazirites (cf. Num 6.5–8); H extends it to all of Israel. This expansion follows logically from H's doctrine of spatial holiness: since the land is holy, all who reside on it are to keep it that way. All adult Israelites are enjoined to attain holiness by observing God's commandments, and even resident aliens must heed the prohibitive commandments, the violation of which threatens to pollute the land for all (e.g., 18.26).

P's doctrine of holiness is static; H's is dynamic. P constricts holiness to the sanctuary and its priests, assiduously avoiding the root of the word "holy" even in describing the Levites. Although H concedes that only priests are innately holy, it repeatedly calls upon Israel to strive for holiness. The dynamic quality of H's concept is highlighted by the term "sanctify," used to describe the holiness of the laity and the priesthood. Sanctification is an ongoing process for priests (21.8, 15, 23; 22.9, 16) as well as for all Israelites (21.8; 22.32). The holiness of the priests and Israelites expands or contracts in proportion to their adherence to God's commandments.

The converse, the doctrine of pollution, also varies sharply. P holds that the sanctuary is polluted by Israel's moral and ritual violations (4.2) committed anywhere in the camp (but not outside) and that this pollution can and must be effaced by the violator's purification offering and, if committed deliberately, by priestly sacrifice and confession (16.3–22). H, however, concentrates instead on the polluting effects of Israel's violations of the covenant (26.15), for example, incest (18; 20.11–24), idolatry (20.1–6), and depriving the land of its sabbaths (26.34–35). Pollution for H is nonritualistic, as shown by its metaphoric usage (e.g., 18.20, 24; 19.31) and by the fact that the polluted land cannot be expiated by ritual. Violations irrevocably lead to the expulsion of its inhabitants (18.24–29; 20.22).

The distinctive vocabularies of P and H emerge in their use of homonyms and

synonyms. For example, in P *shiqqetz* means "defile (by ingestion)" (translated "unclean" in 11.8) and *timmē'* means "defile (by contact)" (translated "detestable" in 11.11), whereas in H they are used interchangeably (20.25). P's term for "law" or "statute" is always given in the feminine form *chuqqah, chuqqot* (e.g., 10.9), whereas H also resorts to masculine *choq, chuqqim* (e.g., 26.46). The term "commit sacrilege" in P is *ma'al,* translated "commit a trespass" (6.2), and in H is *chillel,* translated "profaned" (19.8). The pervasive intrusion of H characteristics into the P text points to the strong possibility that H is not only subsequent to P but is also P's redactor.

Structure

Generally, the book of Leviticus divides into the main P text (chs. 1–16), comprising descriptions of the sacrificial system, the inaugural service at the sanctuary, and the laws of impurities; the H text (chs. 17–26); and a section on commutation of gifts to the sanctuary (ch. 27). *Jacob Milgrom*

The Burnt Offering

1 The LORD summoned Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting, saying: 2 Speak to the people of Israel and say to them: When any of you bring an offering of livestock to the LORD, you shall bring your offering from the herd or from the flock.

3 If the offering is a burnt offering from the herd, you shall offer a male without blemish; you shall bring it to the

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1.1–7.38 The sacrificial system. Sacrifice is a flexible symbol that conveys a variety of possible meanings. The quintessential sacrificial act is the transference of property from the profane to the sacred realm, in other words, a gift to the deity. That this notion is also basic to Israelite sacrifice is demonstrated by fundamental sacrificial terms that connote a gift, such as *mattanah* (23.38), *minchah,* rendered *grain offering* (2.1), and *'isheh, an offering by fire* (see 1.9). It explains why game and fish were unacceptable as sacrifices: "I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God that cost me nothing" (2 Sam 24.24). To date, however, no single theory can encompass the sacrificial system of any society, even the most primitive. In chs. 1–5 the sacrifices are characterized by donor: chs. 1–3 speak of sacrifices brought spontaneously (burnt, cereal, well-being); chs. 4–5, of sacrifices required for expiation (purification and reparation). Chs. 6–7 regroup these sacrifices in order of their sanctity. The common denominator of the sacrifices discussed in these chapters is that they arise in answer to an unpredictable religious or emotional need and are thereby set apart from the sacrifices of the public feasts and fasts that are fixed by the calendar (chs. 9, 16, 23; cf. Num 28–29).

1.1–17 The burnt offering is the only sacrifice that is entirely consumed on the altar (cf. Deut 33.10; 1 Sam 7.9). Vv. 3–5 summarize the major concepts of the sacrificial system: imposition of hands, acceptance, expiation, slaughter, blood manipulation, and entrance to the tent of meeting. The donor is an active participant in the ritual. The burnt offering must be an unblemished male animal from an eligible species of livestock or birds. It is probably the oldest and most popular sacrifice (*Tosefta Zebachim* 13.1). Its function here is expiatory (v. 4; cf. 9.7; 14.20; Job 1.5; 42.8) and finds parallels in Ugaritic texts found at Ras Shamra on the coast of Syria dating to the middle of the second millennium B.C.E, but in H (see Introduction), the burnt offering by an individual marks a joyous occasion (cf. Lev 22.17–21; Num 15.1–11). **1.2** *Any of you.* The text can be read "any person among you," thereby explaining the third person in the Hebrew of vv. 2, 3, 4, 10, translated by the second person in the NRSV. **1.3** *Without blemish.* The significance of this requirement is vividly underscored by the prophet: "When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that not wrong? And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that not wrong? Try presenting that to your governor, will he be pleased with you

entrance of the tent of meeting, for acceptance in your behalf before the LORD.
4 You shall lay your hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be acceptable in your behalf as atonement for you.
5 The bull shall be slaughtered before the LORD; and Aaron's sons the priests shall offer the blood, dashing the blood against all sides of the altar that is at the entrance of the tent of meeting. 6 The burnt offering shall be flayed and cut up into its parts. 7 The sons of the priest Aaron shall put fire on the altar and arrange wood on the fire. 8 Aaron's sons the priests shall arrange the parts, with the head and the suet, on the wood that is on the fire on the altar; 9 but its entrails and its legs shall be washed with water. Then the priest shall turn the whole into smoke on the altar as a burnt offering, an offering by fire of pleasing odor to the LORD.

10 If your gift for a burnt offering is from the flock, from the sheep or goats, your offering shall be a male without blemish. 11 It shall be slaughtered on the north side of the altar before the LORD, and Aaron's sons the priests shall dash its blood against all sides of the altar. 12 It shall be cut up into its parts, with its head and its suet, and the priest shall arrange them on the wood that is on the fire on the altar; 13 but the entrails and the legs shall be washed with water. Then the priest shall offer the whole and turn it into smoke on the altar; it is a burnt offering, an offering by fire of pleasing odor to the LORD.

14 If your offering to the LORD is a burnt offering of birds, you shall choose your offering from turtledoves or pigeons. 15 The priest shall bring it to the altar and wring off its head, and turn it into smoke on the altar; and its blood shall be drained out against the side of the altar. 16 He shall remove its crop with its contents[a] and throw it at the east side of the altar, in the place for ashes. 17 He shall tear it open by its wings without severing it. Then the priest shall turn it into smoke on the altar, on the wood that is on the fire; it is a burnt offering, an offering by fire of pleasing odor to the LORD.

Grain Offerings

2 When anyone presents a grain offering to the LORD, the offering shall be of choice flour; the worshiper shall pour oil on it, and put frankincense on it, 2 and

a Meaning of Heb uncertain

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or show you favor? says the LORD of hosts" (Mal 1.8). *Tent of meeting*, a term referring to the wilderness sanctuary, also called the tabernacle, which was contained within a collapsible and portable tent and itself contained an incense altar, a table for the bread of Presence, a lampstand, and, separated from these sacred objects by a curtain, the ark of the covenant (Ex 25.10–40). Its name is derived from its function; see Ex 29.42–43. The tent of meeting was surrounded by a fenced courtyard. The whole courtyard from its entrance to the entrance of the tent was accessible to the lay offerer and was where he performed the preliminary sacrificial rites (see Introduction). **1.4** *Lay your hand* (cf. 3.2, 8, 12; 4.4, 15, 24), lit. "lean your hand." This rite required pressure. Its purpose is to signify ownership, so that the benefits of the sacrifice will be accrued to the donor. Hand-leaning was not required whenever the offering could be carried by hand—cases where ownership was obvious—such as the burnt offering of birds, the grain offering, and the reparation-offering money (e.g., 5.14–6.7). *Atonement.* Originally the burnt offering may have been the only expiatory sacrifice. However, once the exclusively expiatory purification and reparation offerings came into being (see chs. 4–5), the sole expiatory function remaining for the burnt offering was to atone for neglected performative commandments or for sinful thoughts (see Job 1.5). **1.9** *Turn . . . into smoke.* This term is carefully distinguished from "burn," the normal term for nonsacrificial incineration, to indicate that the offering is not destroyed but transformed into smoke so that it can ascend to heaven above, the dwelling place of God. *An offering by fire* (cf 1.13, 17; 2.3, 10), more accurately "a food gift." **1.16** *Crop with its contents*, or "crissum by its feathers." The waste material inside the bird is removed by cutting around and pulling its tail.

2.1–16 In non-priestly texts the term "grain offering" connotes a present made to secure goodwill (e.g., Gen 32.13–21) or a tribute brought by subjects to their overlords, both human (Judg 3.15–18) and divine. This sacrifice may be brought in either animal or vegetable form (Gen. 4.3; 1 Sam 2.17). In P, however, (see Introduction) it is exclusively grain, semolina (Lev 2.1–3), semolina cakes (2.4–10), or roasted grain (2.14–16). Because leaven and honey (fruit syrup) ferment and salt preserves, the first two are forbidden, and salt is required on the altar (2.11–13). Leaven, however, is permitted as a first-fruit offering to the priest (23.17; 2 Chr

bring it to Aaron's sons the priests. After
taking from it a handful of the choice
flour and oil, with all its frankincense, the
priest shall turn this token portion into
smoke on the altar, an offering by fire of
pleasing odor to the LORD. 3And what is
left of the grain offering shall be for
Aaron and his sons, a most holy part of
the offerings by fire to the LORD.

4 When you present a grain offering
baked in the oven, it shall be of choice
flour: unleavened cakes mixed with oil, or
unleavened wafers spread with oil. 5If
your offering is grain prepared on a grid-
dle, it shall be of choice flour mixed with
oil, unleavened; 6break it in pieces, and
pour oil on it; it is a grain offering. 7If
your offering is grain prepared in a pan,
it shall be made of choice flour in oil.
8You shall bring to the LORD the grain
offering that is prepared in any of these
ways; and when it is presented to the
priest, he shall take it to the altar. 9The
priest shall remove from the grain offer-
ing its token portion and turn this into
smoke on the altar, an offering by fire of
pleasing odor to the LORD. 10And what is
left of the grain offering shall be for
Aaron and his sons; it is a most holy part
of the offerings by fire to the LORD.

11 No grain offering that you bring to
the LORD shall be made with leaven, for
you must not turn any leaven or honey
into smoke as an offering by fire to the
LORD. 12You may bring them to the LORD
as an offering of choice products, but they
shall not be offered on the altar for a
pleasing odor. 13You shall not omit from
your grain offerings the salt of the cove-
nant with your God; with all your offer-
ings you shall offer salt.

14 If you bring a grain offering of
first fruits to the LORD, you shall bring as
the grain offering of your first fruits
coarse new grain from fresh ears, parched
with fire. 15You shall add oil to it and lay
frankincense on it; it is a grain offering.
16And the priest shall turn a token por-
tion of it into smoke—some of the coarse
grain and oil with all its frankincense; it is
an offering by fire to the LORD.

31.5). The restriction to grain emphasizes that people's tribute to God should be from the fruits of their labors on the soil. As in other ancient Near Eastern cultures, the burnt offering could appease the deity's anger. Because grain was abundant and cheap, it became the poor person's burnt offering (Philo *On the Special Laws* 1.271; *Leviticus Rabbah* 8.4). **2.1** *Choice flour,* more specifically "semolina," or coarsely ground flour that remains after the fine flour has been extracted from the wheat (cf. *Mishnah 'Abot* 5.15). *Frankincense,* a fragrant and costly gum-resin tapped from three species of the Boswellia tree native only to southern Arabia (see Jer 6.20) and Somaliland. It was also the main ingredient in the incense burned on the incense altar (Ex 30.7–8, 34–36). **2.2** *Token portion.* The entire grain offering should go up in smoke, but only a portion does, *pars pro toto.* **2.3** *Most holy* defines the burnt, grain, purification, and reparation offerings (6.17, 25; 7.6), as distinct from the rest of the offerings designated by the term "holy," namely, the well-being offering, the devoted thing, and the first of animals, fruits, and processed foods (Num 18.12–19). **2.4–10** Four different preparations of the grain offering are here included: oven-baked (two varieties), griddle-toasted, and pan-fried. Their common denominator is that they are all cooked, unleavened semolina. Frankincense is not required for these cooked grain offerings, possibly as a deliberate concession to the poor. **2.10** This verse stands in flat contradiction to 7.9, which assigns the cooked grain offering to the officiating priest. This may reflect different sanctuary traditions: the officiating priest was recompensed at the small, local sanctuary, whereas the priestly corps distributed the perquisites equitably at the Jerusalem temple (see also 7.31–33). **2.12** *An offering of choice products,* or "a first-processed offering." The gift of the first fruits is due not only from the first-ripe crops but also from certain foods processed from these crops, namely, grain, new wine (must), new (olive) oil, fruit syrup, leavened food, and meal dough. **2.13** *Salt of the covenant.* Since salt was the preservative par excellence in antiquity, it made the ideal symbol for the perdurability of a covenant, and it is likely that salt played a prominent role at the solemn meal that sealed a covenant in the ancient Near East. **2.14** *First fruits* refers to barley, which Arab peasants roast to this day, but not to wheat because of its flat taste (note the absence of the term "semolina"). It may refer to the offering originally required of each Israelite barley grower (see 23.10–11). *Coarse new grain from fresh ears,* more specifically "milky grain, groats of the first ear." Hebrew *'abib,* "milky grain," represents the intermediate (milky) stage between mere stalks and fully ripe grain; Hebrew *geres* (rabbinic *gerisim*) means "groats"; and *karmel* refers to the grain, namely the "fresh ear" (cf. 2 Kings 4.42).

Offerings of Well-Being

3 If the offering is a sacrifice of well-
being, if you offer an animal of the
herd, whether male or female, you shall
offer one without blemish before the
LORD. 2 You shall lay your hand on the
head of the offering and slaughter it at
the entrance of the tent of meeting; and
Aaron's sons the priests shall dash the
blood against all sides of the altar. 3 You
shall offer from the sacrifice of well-
being, as an offering by fire to the LORD,
the fat that covers the entrails and all the
fat that is around the entrails; 4 the two
kidneys with the fat that is on them at the
loins, and the appendage of the liver,
which he shall remove with the kidneys.
5 Then Aaron's sons shall turn these into
smoke on the altar, with the burnt offer-
ing that is on the wood on the fire, as an
offering by fire of pleasing odor to the
LORD.

6 If your offering for a sacrifice of
well-being to the LORD is from the flock,
male or female, you shall offer one with-
out blemish. 7 If you present a sheep as
your offering, you shall bring it before
the LORD 8 and lay your hand on the head
of the offering. It shall be slaughtered be-
fore the tent of meeting, and Aaron's sons
shall dash its blood against all sides of the
altar. 9 You shall present its fat from the
sacrifice of well-being, as an offering by
fire to the LORD: the whole broad tail,
which shall be removed close to the back-
bone, the fat that covers the entrails, and
all the fat that is around the entrails;
10 the two kidneys with the fat that is on
them at the loins, and the appendage of
the liver, which you shall remove with the
kidneys. 11 Then the priest shall turn
these into smoke on the altar as a food
offering by fire to the LORD.

12 If your offering is a goat, you shall
bring it before the LORD 13 and lay your
hand on its head; it shall be slaughtered
before the tent of meeting; and the sons
of Aaron shall dash its blood against all
sides of the altar. 14 You shall present as
your offering from it, as an offering by
fire to the LORD, the fat that covers the
entrails, and all the fat that is around the
entrails; 15 the two kidneys with the fat
that is on them at the loins, and the ap-
pendage of the liver, which you shall re-
move with the kidneys. 16 Then the priest
shall turn these into smoke on the altar as
a food offering by fire for a pleasing
odor.

All fat is the LORD's. 17 It shall be a per-
petual statute throughout your genera-
tions, in all your settlements: you must
not eat any fat or any blood.

Purification Offerings

4 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying,
2 Speak to the people of Israel, say-
ing: When anyone sins unintentionally in
any of the LORD's commandments about
things not to be done, and does any one of
them:

3 If it is the anointed priest who sins,

3.1–17 The well-being offering never serves as expiation (but cf. ch. 17). Its basic function is simply to permit the consumption of meat. The motivation was usually spontaneous and occasioned by a sense of elation. The rules are similar to those of the burnt offering except that the victims may be female but not birds. Also, being of lesser sanctity, its portions are assigned to the donor as well as to God. The choicest internal fats (suet) are turned to smoke. **3.1** *You* (and throughout the chapter), lit. "he"/"him." *Without blemish.* See 1.3. **3.3** *Fat* (and throughout the chapter), more specifically "suet," referring to the layer of fat beneath the surface of the animal's skin and around its organs, which can be peeled off, in contrast to the fat that is inextricably entwined in the musculature. **3.4** *Appendage,* i.e., the caudate lobe of the liver. **3.9** *Backbone,* rather the "sacrum," the lowest part of the spine closest to the broad tail. **3.16** *All fat is the LORD's.* Hence all sacrificial meat must initially be brought to the altar. Together with v. 17, this phrase is probably an H supplement (see Introduction).

4.1–35 The purpose of the purification offering (not properly *sin offering*) is to remove the impurity inflicted upon the sanctuary by the inadvertent violation of prohibitions. The brazen violation of these laws is punishable by death through divine agency (Num 15.27–31). Such serious violations include defilement of holy days (e.g., the Day of Atonement, Lev 23.29–30), contamination of sacred objects (7.20–21), prohibited ritual acts (17.3–4, 8–9), and illicit sex (18.29). The greater the sin, the deeper the penetration into the sanctuary compound and the more extensive the purification required (cf. vv. 3–21, 22–35; see note on 16.1–34). **4.3** *Anointed priest,* the title of the high priest in preexilic times. *Guilt on,* more accurately "harm to," the consequential meaning of the Hebrew noun *'asham,* "guilt" (cf.

thus bringing guilt on the people, he shall
offer for the sin that he has committed a
bull of the herd without blemish as a sin
offering to the LORD. 4 He shall bring the
bull to the entrance of the tent of meeting
before the LORD and lay his hand on the
head of the bull; the bull shall be slaugh-
tered before the LORD. 5 The anointed
priest shall take some of the blood of the
bull and bring it into the tent of meeting.
6 The priest shall dip his finger in the
blood and sprinkle some of the blood
seven times before the LORD in front of
the curtain of the sanctuary. 7 The priest
shall put some of the blood on the horns
of the altar of fragrant incense that is in
the tent of meeting before the LORD; and
the rest of the blood of the bull he shall
pour out at the base of the altar of burnt
offering, which is at the entrance of the
tent of meeting. 8 He shall remove all the
fat from the bull of sin offering: the fat
that covers the entrails and all the fat that
is around the entrails; 9 the two kidneys
with the fat that is on them at the loins;
and the appendage of the liver, which he
shall remove with the kidneys, 10 just as
these are removed from the ox of the sac-
rifice of well-being. The priest shall turn
them into smoke upon the altar of burnt
offering. 11 But the skin of the bull and all
its flesh, as well as its head, its legs, its
entrails, and its dung— 12 all the rest of
the bull—he shall carry out to a clean
place outside the camp, to the ash heap,
and shall burn it on a wood fire; at the ash
heap it shall be burned.

13 If the whole congregation of Israel
errs unintentionally and the matter es-
capes the notice of the assembly, and they
do any one of the things that by the
LORD's commandments ought not to be
done and incur guilt; 14 when the sin that
they have committed becomes known, the
assembly shall offer a bull of the herd for
a sin offering and bring it before the tent
of meeting. 15 The elders of the congrega-
tion shall lay their hands on the head of
the bull before the LORD, and the bull
shall be slaughtered before the LORD.
16 The anointed priest shall bring some of
the blood of the bull into the tent of meet-
ing, 17 and the priest shall dip his finger in
the blood and sprinkle it seven times be-
fore the LORD, in front of the curtain.
18 He shall put some of the blood on the
horns of the altar that is before the LORD
in the tent of meeting; and the rest of the
blood he shall pour out at the base of the
altar of burnt offering that is at the en-
trance of the tent of meeting. 19 He shall
remove all its fat and turn it into smoke

Gen 26.10; Jer 51.5b). **4.6** *Sprinkle ... blood seven times.* Sevenfold sprinkling is attested for the blood of the purification offering (4.6, 17; 16.14, 15, 19; Num 19.4), for the oil and mixture of blood and water used in the purification of the healed leper (Lev 14.7, 16, 27, 51), and for anointing oil on the altar (8.11). In this chapter the blood of the purification offering acts as a ritual detergent purging the sanctuary of Israel's impurities. Seven is the number of completion and occurs frequently in the cultic calendar: seventh day (sabbath), seventh week (Pentecost), seventh month (Tishri), seventh year (sabbatical), and forty-ninth (seven times seven) year (jubilee). Even the magical use of seven is attested in the Bible: Balaam requires seven altars, seven bulls, and seven rams for his divination (Num 23.1); Job's friends require the same sacrifices (Job 42.8); Naaman bathes seven times in the Jordan (2 Kings 5.10, 14); Elijah's servant scans the skies seven times for signs of rain (1 Kings 18.43); Joshua's armies circuit Jericho seven times on the seventh day (Josh 6.15). **4.7** *Horns.* The altar's horns are right-angle tetrahedra projecting from the four corners and are of one piece with the altar (Ex 27.2; 30.2), as illustrated by archaeological finds from Megiddo and Beer-sheba. Their daubing with the purification blood meant the purgation of the entire altar by the principle of *pars pro toto.* **4.12** *Clean place.* Though the sacrificial carcass has symbolically absorbed the sanctuary's impurities, it is still sacred and must be treated as such. *Ash heap.* That there actually existed a special dump for the sacrificial ashes outside Solomon's temple is shown by Jer 31.40 and by the discovery of a huge ash dump just north of ancient Jerusalem at the Mandelbaum Gate (the former passageway between East and West Jerusalem) consisting exclusively of remains of animal flesh, bones, and teeth. **4.13–21** This passage forms a single case with vv. 1–12. The high priest has erred in judgment, causing the people who follow his ruling also to err (v. 3). Because both errors comprise inadvertent violations of prohibitive commandments (vv. 2, 13) that pollute the shrine, each party is responsible for purging the shrine with the blood of a similar sacrifice, a purification-offering bull. **4.13** *Incur guilt.* The nuance is to feel guilt (see vv. 22, 27), the psychological component of the verb *'asham* (cf. 5.2–5, 17; 6.4a). **4.15** *Elders* act on behalf of the congregation (9.1; see Ex 3.16; 4.29; 12.21; 17.6;

on the altar. 20 He shall do with the bull
just as is done with the bull of sin offer-
ing; he shall do the same with this. The
priest shall make atonement for them,
and they shall be forgiven. 21 He shall
carry the bull outside the camp, and burn
it as he burned the first bull; it is the sin
offering for the assembly.

22 When a ruler sins, doing unintentionally any one of all the things that by commandments of the LORD his God ought not to be done and incurs guilt, 23 once the sin that he has committed is made known to him, he shall bring as his offering a male goat without blemish. 24 He shall lay his hand on the head of the goat; it shall be slaughtered at the spot where the burnt offering is slaughtered before the LORD; it is a sin offering. 25 The priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and pour out the rest of its blood at the base of the altar of burnt offering. 26 All its fat he shall turn into smoke on the altar, like the fat of the sacrifice of well-being. Thus the priest shall make atonement on his behalf for his sin, and he shall be forgiven.

27 If anyone of the ordinary people among you sins unintentionally in doing any one of the things that by the LORD's commandments ought not to be done and incurs guilt, 28 when the sin that you have committed is made known to you, you shall bring a female goat without blemish as your offering, for the sin that you have committed. 29 You shall lay your hand on the head of the sin offering; and the sin offering shall be slaughtered at the place of the burnt offering. 30 The priest shall take some of its blood with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and he shall pour out the rest of its blood at the base of the altar. 31 He shall remove all its fat, as the fat is removed from the offering of well-being, and the priest shall turn it into smoke on the altar for a pleasing odor to the LORD. Thus the priest shall make atonement on your behalf, and you shall be forgiven.

32 If the offering you bring as a sin offering is a sheep, you shall bring a female without blemish. 33 You shall lay your hand on the head of the sin offering; and it shall be slaughtered as a sin offering at the spot where the burnt offering is slaughtered. 34 The priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and pour out the rest of its blood at the base of the altar. 35 You shall remove all its fat, as the fat of the sheep is removed from the sacrifice of well-being, and the priest shall turn it into smoke on the altar, with the offerings by fire to the LORD. Thus the priest shall make atonement on your behalf for the sin that you have committed, and you shall be forgiven.

5 When any of you sin in that you have heard a public adjuration to testify and—though able to testify as one who has seen or learned of the matter—do not speak up, you are subject to punishment. 2 Or when any of you touch any unclean thing—whether the carcass of an unclean beast or the carcass of unclean livestock or the carcass of an unclean swarming thing—and are unaware of it, you have become unclean, and are guilty. 3 Or when you touch human uncleanness—any uncleanness by which one can become unclean—and are unaware of it, when you come to know it, you shall be guilty. 4 Or when any of you utter aloud a rash oath for a bad or a good purpose, whatever people utter in an oath, and are

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18.12; 24.9). **4.20** *Sin offering*, that is, the "purification offering." *And*, better "so that." Only God determines the efficacy of sacrifice. **4.22** *A ruler*, more specifically "a (tribal) chieftain."

5.1–13 Rabbinic tradition distinguishes between the purification offering of ch. 4 and that of 5.1–13, calling the latter "the scaled offering" because it is geared not to status but to the financial means of the offender. This separate offering probably arises from the failure or inability to cleanse impurity immediately upon its incurrence. **5.1** *Any of you*; see 1.2. *Public adjuration*, lit. "imprecation." Thus Micah is induced by his mother's imprecation to confess that he had stolen her silver (Judg 17.1–5). A striking parallel to this case is cited in Prov 29.24, which might be translated "He who shares with a thief is his own enemy; he hears the imprecation and does not testify." **5.2–4** *Are unaware of it.* The fact escapes him, i.e., he has perhaps repressed the matter. *You have become unclean . . . you come to know it* might be translated "though he has become unclean . . . though he has known it," i.e., he knows he did wrong before amnesia set in and prolonged his impure state. *Are guilty . . . shall be*

unaware of it, when you come to know it,
you shall in any of these be guilty. 5 When
you realize your guilt in any of these, you
shall confess the sin that you have com-
mitted. 6 And you shall bring to the LORD,
as your penalty for the sin that you have
committed, a female from the flock, a
sheep or a goat, as a sin offering; and the
priest shall make atonement on your be-
half for your sin.

7 But if you cannot afford a sheep,
you shall bring to the LORD, as your pen-
alty for the sin that you have committed,
two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a
sin offering and the other for a burnt
offering. 8 You shall bring them to the
priest, who shall offer first the one for the
sin offering, wringing its head at the nape
without severing it. 9 He shall sprinkle
some of the blood of the sin offering on
the side of the altar, while the rest of the
blood shall be drained out at the base of
the altar; it is a sin offering. 10 And the
second he shall offer for a burnt offering
according to the regulation. Thus the
priest shall make atonement on your be-
half for the sin that you have committed,
and you shall be forgiven.

11 But if you cannot afford two turtle-
doves or two pigeons, you shall bring as
your offering for the sin that you have
committed one-tenth of an ephah of
choice flour for a sin offering; you shall
not put oil on it or lay frankincense on it,
for it is a sin offering. 12 You shall bring it
to the priest, and the priest shall scoop up
a handful of it as its memorial portion,
and turn this into smoke on the altar, with
the offerings by fire to the LORD; it is a sin
offering. 13 Thus the priest shall make
atonement on your behalf for whichever
of these sins you have committed, and you
shall be forgiven. Like the grain offering,
the rest shall be for the priest.

Reparation Offerings

14 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:
15 When any of you commit a trespass and
sin unintentionally in any of the holy
things of the LORD, you shall bring, as
your guilt offering to the LORD, a ram
without blemish from the flock, convert-
ible into silver by the sanctuary shekel; it
is a guilt offering. 16 And you shall make
restitution for the holy thing in which you
were remiss, and shall add one-fifth to it
and give it to the priest. The priest shall
make atonement on your behalf with the
ram of the guilt offering, and you shall be
forgiven.

17 If any of you sin without knowing
it, doing any of the things that by the
LORD's commandments ought not to be
done, you have incurred guilt, and are
subject to punishment. 18 You shall bring
to the priest a ram without blemish from
the flock, or the equivalent, as a guilt
offering; and the priest shall make atone-
ment on your behalf for the error that
you committed unintentionally, and you
shall be forgiven. 19 It is a guilt offering;
you have incurred guilt before the LORD.

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guilty, feels guilt (see 4.13). **5.5** *Confess.* The Septuagint translates "declare," i.e., articulate the confession, as distinct from the silent "confession" mandated for the inadvertent wrongdoer. Confession must be verbalized because it is the act that counts, not just the intention. By the same token, neither can mere thought bear consequences. For a curse to incur penalty, it must be pronounced and the name of God articulated (see 24.16). Confession is never required for inadvertences but only for deliberate sins (5.1–4; 16.21; 26.40; Num 5.6–7). Confession converts deliberate sins into inadvertences, thereby qualifying them for sacrificial expiation (see 6.1–7).

5.14–6.7 The reparation offering is prescribed for trespass upon divine or human property, the latter through the use of a false oath. The sin to which it relates is desecration: the sacred objects (*holy things*) or the name of God have become desanctified (as opposed to cases of the purification offering in ch. 4, where the sin is contamination of sacred objects). Sins brazenly committed against God (i.e., a lying oath) can be commuted retroactively to inadvertent sins by subsequent repentance. **5.14–16** Reparation offerings for malevolent sacrilege against sacred objects. **5.15** *Trespass*, more accurately "sacrilege," the legal term for the wrong that is redressed by the reparation offering. *Convertible into silver.* The priest charges the supplicant the amount of the desecrated sacred object plus the amount needed to purchase the requisite reparation animal. *Guilt offering*, better "reparation offering." God must be compensated for the desecrated sacred object. **5.16** *And give it to the priest*, or "when he gives it to the priest." **5.17–19** Reparation for suspected trespass against sacred objects. **5.17** *You have incurred guilt.* He feels guilt (cf. 4.13), though he only suspects he has sinned. **5.18** *The equivalent*, its

6 [b] The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:
2 When any of you sin and commit a
trespass against the LORD by deceiving a
neighbor in a matter of a deposit or a
pledge, or by robbery, or if you have de-
frauded a neighbor, 3 or have found
something lost and lied about it—if you
swear falsely regarding any of the various
things that one may do and sin thereby—
4 when you have sinned and realize your
guilt, and would restore what you took by
robbery or by fraud or the deposit that
was committed to you, or the lost thing
that you found, 5 or anything else about
which you have sworn falsely, you shall
repay the principal amount and shall add
one-fifth to it. You shall pay it to its owner
when you realize your guilt. 6 And you
shall bring to the priest, as your guilt
offering to the LORD, a ram without blem-
ish from the flock, or its equivalent, for a
guilt offering. 7 The priest shall make
atonement on your behalf before the
LORD, and you shall be forgiven for any of
the things that one may do and incur guilt
thereby.

Instructions Concerning Sacrifices

8 [c] The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:
9 Command Aaron and his sons, saying:
This is the ritual of the burnt offering.
The burnt offering itself shall remain on
the hearth upon the altar all night until
the morning, while the fire on the altar
shall be kept burning. 10 The priest shall
put on his linen vestments after putting
on his linen undergarments next to his
body; and he shall take up the ashes to
which the fire has reduced the burnt
offering on the altar, and place them be-
side the altar. 11 Then he shall take off his
vestments and put on other garments,
and carry the ashes out to a clean place
outside the camp. 12 The fire on the altar
shall be kept burning; it shall not go out.
Every morning the priest shall add wood
to it, lay out the burnt offering on it, and
turn into smoke the fat pieces of the
offerings of well-being. 13 A perpetual fire
shall be kept burning on the altar; it shall
not go out.

14 This is the ritual of the grain offer-
ing: The sons of Aaron shall offer it be-
fore the LORD, in front of the altar.
15 They shall take from it a handful of the
choice flour and oil of the grain offering,
with all the frankincense that is on the
offering, and they shall turn its memorial
portion into smoke on the altar as a pleas-
ing odor to the LORD. 16 Aaron and his
sons shall eat what is left of it; it shall be
eaten as unleavened cakes in a holy place;
in the court of the tent of meeting they
shall eat it. 17 It shall not be baked with
leaven. I have given it as their portion of
my offerings by fire; it is most holy, like
the sin offering and the guilt offering.
18 Every male among the descendants of
Aaron shall eat of it, as their perpetual
due throughout your generations, from

b Ch 5.20 in Heb *c* Ch 6.1 in Heb

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assessment in sanctuary-weighed silver. **6.2** *Deposit.* The neighbor was entrusted with the safekeeping of an object. *A pledge,* probably an investment. **6.2, 4** *Defrauded,* better "withheld from." The specific case is withholding wages from an employee (19.13). **6.6** *Equivalent.* See 5.18.

6.8–7.38 Supplementary instructions for sacrifices. Since the well-being offering is eaten chiefly by the donor, the rules pertain mainly to him (7.11–34, esp. 23, 29). Otherwise they are the concerns of the officiating priest. The subjects are the altar fire (6.8–13); the manner and place for eating the grain offering (6.14–18); the daily grain offering of the high priest and the voluntary one of the ordinary priest (6.19–23); safeguards in sacrificing the purification offering (6.24–30); the ritual for the reparation offering (7.1–7, missing in ch. 5); the priestly share in the burnt and cereal offerings (7.8–10); the types of well-being offering and their taboos (7.11–21); the prohibition against eating suet and blood (7.22–27); the priestly share of the well-being offering, set aside by the donor (7.28–36); and the summation (7.37–38). **6.10** *Body,* a euphemism for genitals. **6.11** *Other garments.* These must be nonsacral, profane clothes, as the priest was forbidden to wear his priestly vestments outside the sanctuary (see Ezek 44.19). **6.13** *A perpetual fire.* The sacrifices offered up at the inauguration of the public cult were consumed miraculously by a divine fire (9.24), and it is this fire that is not allowed to die out, so that all subsequent sacrifices might claim divine acceptance (see Philo *On the Special Laws* 1.286). **6.14** *The grain offering,* the raw type described in 2.1–3. **6.18** *Anything,* but not anyone. The priestly legists

the LORD's offerings by fire; anything that touches them shall become holy.

19 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 20 This is the offering that Aaron and his sons shall offer to the LORD on the day when he is anointed: one-tenth of an ephah of choice flour as a regular offering, half of it in the morning and half in the evening. 21 It shall be made with oil on a griddle; you shall bring it well soaked, as a grain offering of baked[d] pieces, and you shall present it as a pleasing odor to the LORD. 22 And so the priest, anointed from among Aaron's descendants as a successor, shall prepare it; it is the LORD's —a perpetual due—to be turned entirely into smoke. 23 Every grain offering of a priest shall be wholly burned; it shall not be eaten.

24 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 25 Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying: This is the ritual of the sin offering. The sin offering shall be slaughtered before the LORD at the spot where the burnt offering is slaughtered; it is most holy. 26 The priest who offers it as a sin offering shall eat of it; it shall be eaten in a holy place, in the court of the tent of meeting. 27 Whatever touches its flesh shall become holy; and when any of its blood is spattered on a garment, you shall wash the bespattered part in a holy place. 28 An earthen vessel in which it was boiled shall be broken; but if it is boiled in a bronze vessel, that shall be scoured and rinsed in water. 29 Every male among the priests shall eat of it; it is most holy. 30 But no sin offering shall be eaten from which any blood is brought into the tent of meeting for atonement in the holy place; it shall be burned with fire.

7 This is the ritual of the guilt offering. It is most holy; 2 at the spot where the burnt offering is slaughtered, they shall slaughter the guilt offering, and its blood shall be dashed against all sides of the altar. 3 All its fat shall be offered: the broad tail, the fat that covers the entrails, 4 the two kidneys with the fat that is on them at the loins, and the appendage of the liver, which shall be removed with the kidneys. 5 The priest shall turn them into smoke on the altar as an offering by fire to the LORD; it is a guilt offering. 6 Every male among the priests shall eat of it; it shall be eaten in a holy place; it is most holy.

7 The guilt offering is like the sin offering, there is the same ritual for them; the priest who makes atonement with it shall have it. 8 So, too, the priest who offers anyone's burnt offering shall keep the skin of the burnt offering that he has offered. 9 And every grain offering baked in the oven, and all that is prepared in a pan or on a griddle, shall belong to the priest who offers it. 10 But every other grain offering, mixed with oil or dry, shall belong to all the sons of Aaron equally.

Further Instructions

11 This is the ritual of the sacrifice of the offering of well-being that one may offer to the LORD. 12 If you offer it for thanksgiving, you shall offer with the thank offering unleavened cakes mixed with oil, unleavened wafers spread with oil, and cakes of choice flour well soaked in oil. 13 With your thanksgiving sacrifice of well-being you shall bring your offer-

d Meaning of Heb uncertain

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have limited that which is subject to contagion to things. **6.20** *On the day*, or "from the time." The high priest's grain offering is sacrificed every day. **6.27–30** Paradoxically, the purification offering, though it is most holy, pollutes objects that it contacts because it absorbs the impurities it purges. However, if it purges severe impurity, i.e., one that polluted the shrine, it must be eliminated by burning. **7.1–6** Since one liable for a reparation offering was expected to bring its monetary equivalent to the sanctuary (5.15), the procedure for the sacrifice is given here in the administrative unit addressed to the priests (6.8–7.38) rather than in the didactic order addressed to the laity (1.1–6.7). Once the lay offerer purchases the requisite reparation animal from the priest, the latter makes certain that the proper sacrificial procedure is followed. **7.7–10** The priestly prebends belong to the officiating priest. The sole exception is the raw grain offering, which is divided equally among all the priests, a development that probably reflects the Jerusalem temple and its large priestly corps (see also vv. 31–33). **7.11** *That one may offer to the LORD*, an admission that it is permitted to eat the meat of pure, nonsacrificial animals. **7.12–21, 28–32** *You.* All second-person pronouns are actually third person in the Hebrew. **7.13, 15** *Thanksgiving sacrifice of well-being.* P's conflation of two sacrifices, the thanksgiving offering and the well-being offering, H treats as distinct sacrifices (22.21, 29)

ing with cakes of leavened bread. 14 From
this you shall offer one cake from each
offering, as a gift to the LORD; it shall be-
long to the priest who dashes the blood of
the offering of well-being. 15 And the
flesh of your thanksgiving sacrifice of
well-being shall be eaten on the day it is
offered; you shall not leave any of it until
morning. 16 But if the sacrifice you offer is
a votive offering or a freewill offering, it
shall be eaten on the day that you offer
your sacrifice, and what is left of it shall be
eaten the next day; 17 but what is left of
the flesh of the sacrifice shall be burned
up on the third day. 18 If any of the flesh
of your sacrifice of well-being is eaten on
the third day, it shall not be acceptable,
nor shall it be credited to the one who of-
fers it; it shall be an abomination, and the
one who eats of it shall incur guilt.

19 Flesh that touches any unclean
thing shall not be eaten; it shall be burned
up. As for other flesh, all who are clean
may eat such flesh. 20 But those who eat
flesh from the LORD's sacrifice of well-
being while in a state of uncleanness shall
be cut off from their kin. 21 When any one
of you touches any unclean thing—
human uncleanness or an unclean animal
or any unclean creature—and then eats
flesh from the LORD's sacrifice of well-
being, you shall be cut off from your kin.

22 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:
23 Speak to the people of Israel, saying:
You shall eat no fat of ox or sheep or
goat. 24 The fat of an animal that died or
was torn by wild animals may be put to
any other use, but you must not eat it. 25 If
any one of you eats the fat from an animal
of which an offering by fire may be made
to the LORD, you who eat it shall be cut
off from your kin. 26 You must not eat any
blood whatever, either of bird or of ani-
mal, in any of your settlements. 27 Any
one of you who eats any blood shall be cut
off from your kin.

28 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:
29 Speak to the people of Israel, saying:
Any one of you who would offer to the
LORD your sacrifice of well-being must
yourself bring to the LORD your offering
from your sacrifice of well-being. 30 Your
own hands shall bring the LORD's offering
by fire; you shall bring the fat with the
breast, so that the breast may be raised as
an elevation offering before the LORD.
31 The priest shall turn the fat into smoke
on the altar, but the breast shall belong to
Aaron and his sons. 32 And the right thigh
from your sacrifices of well-being you
shall give to the priest as an offering;
33 the one among the sons of Aaron who
offers the blood and fat of the offering of
well-being shall have the right thigh for a
portion. 34 For I have taken the breast of
the elevation offering, and the thigh that
is offered, from the people of Israel, from
their sacrifices of well-being, and have
given them to Aaron the priest and to his
sons, as a perpetual due from the people
of Israel. 35 This is the portion allotted to
Aaron and to his sons from the offerings
made by fire to the LORD, once they have
been brought forward to serve the LORD
as priests; 36 these the LORD commanded
to be given them, when he anointed them,
as a perpetual due from the people of Is-
rael throughout their generations.

37 This is the ritual of the burnt offer-
ing, the grain offering, the sin offering,

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and H, see Introduction. **7.16** *Votive offering*, brought following the successful fulfillment of a vow (e.g., 2 Sam 15.7–8; Prov 7.14). *Freewill offering*, brought as the spontaneous by-product of one's happiness, whatever its cause (e.g., Num 15.3, 8; Ezek 46.12). **7.18** *It shall not be acceptable.* The sacrifice retains its holiness until the time of its elimination. **7.20, 21, 25** *Cut off from their/your kin*, extermination of the line by God. In consonance with the sacrificial system, which clearly recognizes the principle of intention (chs. 4–5), it must be assumed that if any impure person inadvertently, not deliberately, eats sacred food, his wrong will be expiated by a purification offering. **7.21** *Unclean creature*, any of the eight quadrupeds singled out in 11.29–31 whose contact is defiling. **7.22–27** This passage differs from the rest of the chapter by employing the second person in the Hebrew rather than the third. Furthermore, the banning of the suet of all sacrificial animals differs from P, which allows for profane slaughter, and is a telltale sign of H (cf. 3.16–17; 17.3–5). On P and H, see Introduction. **7.28–32** *You.* See 7.12–21. **7.30** The *elevation offering* transfers the object from the offerer to the deity (represented by the priest). Thus the hands of both the offerer and the priest are placed under the offering in the performance of this rite. **7.31–33** The breast belongs to the entire priestly corps, whereas the right thigh is awarded the officiating priest, the latter prebend probably reflecting the older custom prevailing in any of the small sanctuaries attended by a single priestly family (e.g., Shiloh). **7.37** *The offering of*

the guilt offering, the offering of ordination, and the sacrifice of well-being,
38 which the LORD commanded Moses on
Mount Sinai, when he commanded the
people of Israel to bring their offerings to
the LORD, in the wilderness of Sinai.

The Rites of Ordination

8 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:
2 Take Aaron and his sons with him,
the vestments, the anointing oil, the bull
of sin offering, the two rams, and the bas-
ket of unleavened bread; 3 and assemble
the whole congregation at the entrance of
the tent of meeting. 4 And Moses did as
the LORD commanded him. When the
congregation was assembled at the en-
trance of the tent of meeting, 5 Moses said
to the congregation, "This is what the
LORD has commanded to be done."
6 Then Moses brought Aaron and his
sons forward, and washed them with wa-
ter. 7 He put the tunic on him, fastened
the sash around him, clothed him with the
robe, and put the ephod on him. He then
put the decorated band of the ephod
around him, tying the ephod to him with
it. 8 He placed the breastpiece on him, and
in the breastpiece he put the Urim and
the Thummim. 9 And he set the turban on
his head, and on the turban, in front, he
set the golden ornament, the holy crown,
as the LORD commanded Moses.
10 Then Moses took the anointing oil
and anointed the tabernacle and all that
was in it, and consecrated them. 11 He
sprinkled some of it on the altar seven
times, and anointed the altar and all its
utensils, and the basin and its base, to con-
secrate them. 12 He poured some of the
anointing oil on Aaron's head and
anointed him, to consecrate him. 13 And
Moses brought forward Aaron's sons,
and clothed them with tunics, and fas-
tened sashes around them, and tied head-
dresses on them, as the LORD commanded
Moses.
14 He led forward the bull of sin
offering; and Aaron and his sons laid
their hands upon the head of the bull of
sin offering, 15 and it was slaughtered.
Moses took the blood and with his finger
put some on each of the horns of the al-
tar, purifying the altar; then he poured
out the blood at the base of the altar.
Thus he consecrated it, to make atone-
ment for it. 16 Moses took all the fat that
was around the entrails, and the appen-
dage of the liver, and the two kidneys with
their fat, and turned them into smoke on
the altar. 17 But the bull itself, its skin and
flesh and its dung, he burned with fire
outside the camp, as the LORD com-
manded Moses.
18 Then he brought forward the ram
of burnt offering. Aaron and his sons laid
their hands on the head of the ram, 19 and
it was slaughtered. Moses dashed the

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ordination. The mention of this offering before the well-being offering suggests that a section based on Ex 29 originally preceded 7.11.

8.1–10.20 In chs. 8–10, which follow logically and chronologically upon Ex 35–40, the priests are inducted into service after the priestly vestments and the tabernacle are completed. It is not Aaron, however, but Moses who dominates the scene. He conducts the inaugural service, consecrates the priests, and apportions all tasks, while Aaron is clearly answerable to him (see 10.16–20). Strikingly, the superiority of prophet over priest is insisted upon by the priestly document.

8.1–36 *To ordain you* (v. 33), lit. "to fill your hands." In scripture this phrase is used exclusively for the consecration of priests (Ex 32.29; Judg 17.5, 12; 1 Kings 13.33), but in other ancient Near Eastern texts it refers to the distribution of booty. Thus, the Hebrew idiom indicates that installation rites officially entitle the priests to their share of the revenues and sacrifices brought to the sanctuary. *As the LORD commanded Moses* concludes each phase of the consecration ceremony, a reminder that this chapter is a repetition of the instructions in Ex 29. **8.7** *Ephod*, a garment, shaped like an apron, covering the loins and suspended from two shoulder pieces (Ex 28.6–14). It must be distinguished from the linen ephod attributed in non-priestly sources to the ordinary priest (1 Sam. 2.18; 22.18; 2 Sam. 6.14) and from the oracular ephod (1 Sam 23.6, 9; Hos 3.4). **8.8** *The Urim and the Thummim*, a form of oracle placed inside the pocket-shaped breastpiece worn by the high priest on his chest. Their shape and function are still undetermined. **8.9** *Ornament*. The Hebrew word means "flower." Possibly it took the shape of a plate (so the Septuagint) containing a floral decoration. **8.10** *Anointing oil*. For consecration see vv. 10–13, 30 and Ex 30.23–24. *Tabernacle*. See 1.3. **8.11** *Sprink' ' seven*. See 4.6. **8.16** *Turned ... into*

blood against all sides of the altar. 20 The
ram was cut into its parts, and Moses
turned into smoke the head and the parts
and the suet. 21 And after the entrails and
the legs were washed with water, Moses
turned into smoke the whole ram on the
altar; it was a burnt offering for a pleasing
odor, an offering by fire to the LORD, as
the LORD commanded Moses.

22 Then he brought forward the sec-
ond ram, the ram of ordination. Aaron
and his sons laid their hands on the head
of the ram, 23 and it was slaughtered. Mo-
ses took some of its blood and put it on
the lobe of Aaron's right ear and on the
thumb of his right hand and on the big
toe of his right foot. 24 After Aaron's sons
were brought forward, Moses put some of
the blood on the lobes of their right ears
and on the thumbs of their right hands
and on the big toes of their right feet; and
Moses dashed the rest of the blood against
all sides of the altar. 25 He took the fat—
the broad tail, all the fat that was around
the entrails, the appendage of the liver,
and the two kidneys with their fat—and
the right thigh. 26 From the basket of un-
leavened bread that was before the LORD,
he took one cake of unleavened bread,
one cake of bread with oil, and one wafer,
and placed them on the fat and on the
right thigh. 27 He placed all these on the
palms of Aaron and on the palms of his
sons, and raised them as an elevation
offering before the LORD. 28 Then Moses
took them from their hands and turned
them into smoke on the altar with the
burnt offering. This was an ordination
offering for a pleasing odor, an offering
by fire to the LORD. 29 Moses took the
breast and raised it as an elevation offer-
ing before the LORD; it was Moses' portion
of the ram of ordination, as the LORD
commanded Moses.

30 Then Moses took some of the
anointing oil and some of the blood that
was on the altar and sprinkled them on
Aaron and his vestments, and also on his
sons and their vestments. Thus he conse-
crated Aaron and his vestments, and also
his sons and their vestments.

31 And Moses said to Aaron and his
sons, "Boil the flesh at the entrance of the
tent of meeting, and eat it there with the
bread that is in the basket of ordination
offerings, as I was commanded, 'Aaron
and his sons shall eat it'; 32 and what re-
mains of the flesh and the bread you shall
burn with fire. 33 You shall not go outside
the entrance of the tent of meeting for
seven days, until the day when your pe-
riod of ordination is completed. For it will
take seven days to ordain you; 34 as has
been done today, the LORD has com-
manded to be done to make atonement
for you. 35 You shall remain at the en-
trance of the tent of meeting day and
night for seven days, keeping the LORD's
charge so that you do not die; for so I am
commanded." 36 Aaron and his sons did
all the things that the LORD commanded
through Moses.

See 1.9. **8.23–24** In the ancient Near East, incantations recited during the ritual smearing of persons, statues of gods, and buildings testify that its purpose is purificatory and apotropaic: to wipe off and ward off the incursions of menacing forces. Always it is the vulnerable parts of bodies (extremities) and structures (corners, entrances) that are smeared with magical substances. **8.27** *Elevation offering.* See 7.30. Because the right thigh is given directly by its offerer to the officiating priest without the benefit of a ritual (7.32–33), it is imperative that it undergo the rite of elevation to indicate that it no longer belongs to the offerer but now belongs to God and must be offered up on the altar. **8.28** *Ordination offering.* In 7.30, this sacrifice stands between the most holy offerings (burnt, grain, purification, reparation) and holy offerings (well-being). Like the most holy offerings it is eaten only by male priests in the sanctuary court (v. 31; cf. 6.16, 26; 7.6); the priestly prebends of the well-being offering may be eaten by the priest's family at any pure place. Of the three kinds of well-being offering (7.11–16), it resembles most the thanksgiving offering in that it is also accompanied by bread offerings (v. 2; cf. Ex 29.2; Lev 7.12) and is consumed on the same day. It is a transitional offering and it corresponds with the transitional nature of its offerers, the priestly consecrands, who are passing from the realm of the profane to the realm of the sacred. **8.29** Moses receives the breast as his prebend (from God but not from the offerers, the priests) but not the thigh, lest that make him in the people's eyes a priest (see 7.34). **8.30** Whereas the blood daubing is for purification (vv. 23–24), the blood sprinkling is for consecration (16.19). **8.33, 35** The seven-day priestly consecration is a rite of passage from the profane to the sacred sphere, a liminal state fraught with peril for initiates.

Aaron's Priesthood Inaugurated

9 On the eighth day Moses summoned
Aaron and his sons and the elders of
Israel. 2He said to Aaron, "Take a bull
calf for a sin offering and a ram for a
burnt offering, without blemish, and of-
fer them before the LORD. 3And say to
the people of Israel, 'Take a male goat for
a sin offering; a calf and a lamb, yearlings
without blemish, for a burnt offering;
4and an ox and a ram for an offering of
well-being to sacrifice before the LORD;
and a grain offering mixed with oil. For
today the LORD will appear to you.'"
5They brought what Moses commanded
to the front of the tent of meeting; and
the whole congregation drew near and
stood before the LORD. 6And Moses said,
"This is the thing that the LORD com-
manded you to do, so that the glory of the
LORD may appear to you." 7Then Moses
said to Aaron, "Draw near to the altar and
sacrifice your sin offering and your burnt
offering, and make atonement for your-
self and for the people; and sacrifice the
offering of the people, and make atone-
ment for them; as the LORD has
commanded."

8 Aaron drew near to the altar, and
slaughtered the calf of the sin offering,
which was for himself. 9The sons of
Aaron presented the blood to him, and he
dipped his finger in the blood and put it
on the horns of the altar; and the rest of
the blood he poured out at the base of the
altar. 10But the fat, the kidneys, and the
appendage of the liver from the sin offer-
ing he turned into smoke on the altar, as
the LORD commanded Moses; 11and
the flesh and the skin he burned with fire out-
side the camp.

12 Then he slaughtered the burnt
offering. Aaron's sons brought him the
blood, and he dashed it against all sides of
the altar. 13And they brought him the
burnt offering piece by piece, and the
head, which he turned into smoke on
the altar. 14He washed the entrails and
the legs and, with the burnt offering,
turned them into smoke on the altar.

15 Next he presented the people's
offering. He took the goat of the sin
offering that was for the people, and
slaughtered it, and presented it as a sin
offering like the first one. 16He presented
the burnt offering, and sacrificed it ac-
cording to regulation. 17He presented the
grain offering, and, taking a handful of it,
he turned it into smoke on the altar, in
addition to the burnt offering of the
morning.

18 He slaughtered the ox and the ram
as a sacrifice of well-being for the people.
Aaron's sons brought him the blood,
which he dashed against all sides of the
altar, 19and the fat of the ox and of the
ram—the broad tail, the fat that covers
the entrails, the two kidneys and the fat
on them,[e] and the appendage of the
liver. 20They first laid the fat on the
breasts, and the fat was turned into smoke
on the altar; 21and the breasts and the
right thigh Aaron raised as an elevation
offering before the LORD, as Moses had
commanded.

22 Aaron lifted his hands toward the
people and blessed them; and he came
down after sacrificing the sin offering, the
burnt offering, and the offering of well-
being. 23Moses and Aaron entered the
tent of meeting, and then came out and
blessed the people; and the glory of the
LORD appeared to all the people. 24Fire
came out from the LORD and consumed

e Gk: Heb *the broad tail, and that which covers, and the kidneys*

9.1–24 On the eighth day following the week of consecration, the priests begin their official duties. They offer up special sacrifices for the people *that the glory of the LORD may appear* (9.6; also 9.4, 9.23). Indeed, the whole purpose of the sacrificial system is revelation, the assurance that God is with his people. However, God's presence is never assumed to be a coefficient of the ritual performed; it is always viewed as an act of his grace. **9.2** *Sin offering*, more accurately "purification offering"; see note on 4.1–35. **9.9** *Horns*. See 7.7. **9.10** *Turned into smoke*. See 1.9. **9.12** *Burnt offering*. See note on 1.1–17. **9.17** *Grain offering*. See note on 2.1–16. *Burnt offering of the morning*. See Ex 29.38–42. **9.18** *Sacrifice of well-being*. See note on 3.1–17. **9.21** *Elevation offering*. See 7.30. **9.22** *Blessed them*, probably with the priestly blessing of Num 6.24–26. *He came down*. Presumably, the blessing was recited from the top of the altar. **9.23** *The glory of the LORD appeared*, in the form of fire. Israel will be guided in the wilderness not by God's voiced commands but by his visible presence, a cloud-encased fire (Ex 40.38) identified with God's "glory" (Ex 24.17; Ezek 1.27–28; 2 Chr 7.3). **9.24** *Fire came out from the LORD*, presumably

the burnt offering and the fat on the altar; and when all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces.

Nadab and Abihu

10 Now Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, each took his censer, put fire in it, and laid incense on it; and they offered unholy fire before the LORD, such as he had not commanded them. 2 And fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. 3 Then Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD meant when he said,

'Through those who are near me
I will show myself holy,
and before all the people
I will be glorified.'"

And Aaron was silent.

4 Moses summoned Mishael and Elzaphan, sons of Uzziel the uncle of Aaron, and said to them, "Come forward, and carry your kinsmen away from the front of the sanctuary to a place outside the camp." 5 They came forward and carried them by their tunics out of the camp, as Moses had ordered. 6 And Moses said to Aaron and to his sons Eleazar and Ithamar, "Do not dishevel your hair, and do not tear your vestments, or you will die and wrath will strike all the congregation; but your kindred, the whole house of Israel, may mourn the burning that the LORD has sent. 7 You shall not go outside the entrance of the tent of meeting, or you will die; for the anointing oil of the LORD is on you." And they did as Moses had ordered.

8 And the LORD spoke to Aaron: 9 Drink no wine or strong drink, neither you nor your sons, when you enter the tent of meeting, that you may not die; it is a statute forever throughout your generations. 10 You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean; 11 and you are to teach the people of Israel all the statutes that the LORD has spoken to them through Moses.

12 Moses spoke to Aaron and to his remaining sons, Eleazar and Ithamar:

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from the adytum (the innermost part of the tabernacle), where God's "glory" rested between the outspread wings of the cherubim flanking the ark (Ex 25.22). The theophany functioned to legitimize the Aaronite priesthood.

10.1–20 Ch. 10 continues the material from ch. 9. Grain and well-being offerings are eaten by the priests in accordance with the injunctions of 6.16; 7.28–34. But the procedure for the purification offering is switched from the individual to the communal form: the disposal of blood (9.9; 10.18) has been carried out in accordance with 4.30 but not the disposal of the flesh (10.18), which follows 4.12 rather than 6.26. The death of Nadab and Abihu has intervened. Aaron follows the more stringent procedure of destroying rather than eating the sacrificial meat because it has been doubly polluted by the sin and death of his sons. **10.1** *Unholy fire*, "unauthorized coals" (cf. Num 16.37, 40). **10.2** *And fire came out from the presence of the LORD*, a measure-for-measure principle: those who sinned by fire are punished by fire. **10.3** *What the LORD meant when he said*, more accurately "what the LORD has decreed, saying" (see Gen 24.51). *Those who are near me*, i.e., the priests (Ezek 42.13, translated "who approach"). The greater responsibility of the priests is evidenced in the rules dealing with the crime of encroaching upon the sacred spaces and objects (Num 18.1, 3, 7). The penalty is that of Nadab and Abihu—death by divine agency. The Lord becomes sanctified and glorified through punishment (see Ezek 28.22). *And Aaron was silent*, contrasting starkly with the people's shouting moments earlier (9.24). **10.4** *Mishael and Elzaphan* are Levites, not priests, hence, permitted to come in contact with the dead. **10.6** *Dishevel your hair . . . tear your vestments*, signs of mourning (e.g., Gen 37.29, 34; Lev 13.45). Although Eleazar and Ithamar, the surviving sons of Aaron, were permitted to mourn their brothers (21.1–3), they were on duty, assisting their father in the performance of the sacrifices (9.9, 12, 18) and had yet to eat the sacred meat (10.17). Moreover, they were anointed, in contrast to their priestly successors (Ex 40.15). Hence they were forbidden to mourn as their father was (21.10–11) because *the anointing oil of the LORD is on you* (v. 7). **10.9** *Strong drink*, probably "ale." The existence of a beer industry in Israel is attested by the prevalence of the beer jug in archaeological excavations. *When you enter the tent of meeting*, also forbidden to a priest if he was improperly washed (Ex 30.20), physically blemished (Lev 21.23), or improperly dressed (Ex 28.43). **10.10** Teaching these distinctions is essential to the priestly function (see Ezek 44.21–23). **10.11** *To them*, to Israel, not to the priests. The priests carry no new instruction; they transmit the old, the teaching imparted to Israel through the mediation of Moses. This may be a telltale sign of H (see Introduction). **10.12** *Grain offering*. See note on 2.1–16. *Most holy*. See 2.3.

Take the grain offering that is left from
the LORD's offerings by fire, and eat it un-
leavened beside the altar, for it is most
holy; 13 you shall eat it in a holy place, be-
cause it is your due and your sons' due,
from the offerings by fire to the LORD; for
so I am commanded. 14 But the breast that
is elevated and the thigh that is raised,
you and your sons and daughters as well
may eat in any clean place; for they have
been assigned to you and your children
from the sacrifices of the offerings of
well-being of the people of Israel. 15 The
thigh that is raised and the breast that is
elevated they shall bring, together with
the offerings by fire of the fat, to raise for
an elevation offering before the LORD;
they are to be your due and that of your
children forever, as the LORD has
commanded.

16 Then Moses made inquiry about
the goat of the sin offering, and—it had
already been burned! He was angry with
Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's remaining
sons, and said, 17 "Why did you not eat the
sin offering in the sacred area? For it is
most holy, and God[f] has given it to you
that you may remove the guilt of the con-
gregation, to make atonement on their be-
half before the LORD. 18 Its blood was not
brought into the inner part of the sanctu-
ary. You should certainly have eaten it in
the sanctuary, as I commanded." 19 And
Aaron spoke to Moses, "See, today they
offered their sin offering and their burnt
offering before the LORD; and yet such
things as these have befallen me! If I had
eaten the sin offering today, would it have
been agreeable to the LORD?" 20 And
when Moses heard that, he agreed.

Clean and Unclean Foods

11 The LORD spoke to Moses and
Aaron, saying to them: 2 Speak to
the people of Israel, saying:

From among all the land animals, these
are the creatures that you may eat. 3 Any
animal that has divided hoofs and is cleft-

f Heb *he*

10.13 *Holy place.* See 6.16. **10.14** *Offerings of well-being.* See note on 3.1–12. **10.15** *Elevation offering.* See 7.30. **10.16** *Sin offering,* better "purification offering." See note on 4.1–35. *He was angry;* Moses was angry. The purification offering, whose blood is daubed on the horns of the outer altar (4.25, 30, 34) but not brought inside the tent of meeting (6.30), must be eaten by the officiating priest (6.26), namely, Aaron, and what he cannot finish must be eaten by the rest of the priestly cadre (6.29), namely, his remaining sons, Eleazar and Ithamar. Moses may have become angry because the reluctance of the priests to eat this sacrifice would engender the suspicion that they were afraid of the harm that might befall them if they ate the impurity-laden meat, a belief that was current in Israel's contemporary world but that the Priestly source (P) assiduously attempted to eradicate. **10.17** *Remove the guilt,* remove the iniquity by ingesting the purificatory offering. This sacrifice is the analogic counterpart to the high priest's golden plate (8.9). Just as the latter symbolically draws to itself all the impurities of Israel's sacred offerings (Ex 28.38) so the former, by the blood manipulation, draws out the pollution of the sanctuary caused by Israel's impurities and iniquities (see notes on 4.1–35; 16.1–34). **10.18** In accordance with 6.26, 30. **10.19** Aaron's excuse; see note on 10.1–20. **10.20** That the ministrations of Aaron and his sons require the approval not only of God but also of Moses strikingly proves that the Priestly source acknowledges the superiority of the prophet (Moses) over the priest (Aaron).

11.1–16.34 Laws dealing with four sources of impurity: carcasses (ch. 11), childbirth (ch. 12), scale disease (chs. 13–14), and genital discharges (ch. 15). (A fifth source, the corpse, is dealt with in Num 19.) The common denominator of these impurity sources is that they stand for death. Blood and semen represent the forces of life and their loss, death. The wasting of the body, the characteristic of scale disease, symbolizes the death process (cf. Num 12.12) as much as the loss of blood and semen. Carcasses and corpses obviously are the epitome of death and therefore of impurity. Since impurity and holiness are semantic opposites, it is incumbent upon Israel to prevent impurity or, at least, to control its occurrence, lest it impinge upon the sanctuary, the realm of the holy God.

11.1–23 Clean and unclean foods. **11.1–8** Cf. vv. 3–4 with Deut 14.4–6, where the permitted land animals are named. The classification is the result not of empirical medical knowledge but of the universal need to classify phenomena by establishing beneficent and destructive categories. **11.2** *Land animals,* i.e., quadrupeds. **11.3** *Divided hoofs,* rather "hoofs." Israel's access is thus limited to the main domestic species—cattle, sheep, and goats (plus several wild but virtually unobtainable animals, Deut 14.4–5). *Chews the cud* excludes the pig (v. 7), regarded as an abomination particularly because it was revered in chthonic cults that penetrated into Israel as late as the sixth century B.C.E., arousing the wrath of

footed and chews the cud—such you may
eat. 4 But among those that chew the cud
or have divided hoofs, you shall not eat
the following: the camel, for even though
it chews the cud, it does not have divided
hoofs; it is unclean for you. 5 The rock
badger, for even though it chews the cud,
it does not have divided hoofs; it is un-
clean for you. 6 The hare, for even though
it chews the cud, it does not have divided
hoofs; it is unclean for you. 7 The pig, for
even though it has divided hoofs and is
cleft-footed, it does not chew the cud; it is
unclean for you. 8 Of their flesh you shall
not eat, and their carcasses you shall not
touch; they are unclean for you.

9 These you may eat, of all that are in
the waters. Everything in the waters that
has fins and scales, whether in the seas or
in the streams—such you may eat. 10 But
anything in the seas or the streams that
does not have fins and scales, of the
swarming creatures in the waters and
among all the other living creatures that
are in the waters—they are detestable to
you 11 and detestable they shall remain.
Of their flesh you shall not eat, and their
carcasses you shall regard as detestable.
12 Everything in the waters that does not
have fins and scales is detestable to you.

13 These you shall regard as detest-
able among the birds. They shall not be
eaten; they are an abomination: the eagle,
the vulture, the osprey, 14 the buzzard, the
kite of any kind; 15 every raven of any
kind; 16 the ostrich, the nighthawk, the sea
gull, the hawk of any kind; 17 the little
owl, the cormorant, the great owl, 18 the
water hen, the desert owl,[g] the carrion
vulture, 19 the stork, the heron of any
kind, the hoopoe, and the bat.[h]

20 All winged insects that walk upon
all fours are detestable to you. 21 But
among the winged insects that walk on all
fours you may eat those that have jointed
legs above their feet, with which to leap
on the ground. 22 Of them you may eat:
the locust according to its kind, the bald
locust according to its kind, the cricket ac-
cording to its kind, and the grasshopper
according to its kind. 23 But all other
winged insects that have four feet are de-
testable to you.

Unclean Animals

24 By these you shall become unclean;
whoever touches the carcass of any of
them shall be unclean until the evening,
25 and whoever carries any part of the car-
cass of any of them shall wash his clothes
and be unclean until the evening. 26 Every
animal that has divided hoofs but is not
cleft-footed or does not chew the cud is
unclean for you; everyone who touches
one of them shall be unclean. 27 All that
walk on their paws, among the animals
that walk on all fours, are unclean for
you; whoever touches the carcass of any
of them shall be unclean until the eve-
ning, 28 and the one who carries the car-
cass shall wash his clothes and be unclean
until the evening; they are unclean
for you.

g Or *pelican* *h* Identification of several of the birds in verses 13-19 is uncertain

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prophet and priest alike (Isa 66.3, 17; cf. 65.4–5). **11.5–6** The *rock badger* and *hare* are not true ruminants, but the sideward movement of their jaws gives them the appearance of one. Their habit of chewing their food twice also creates the impression that they are incessantly chewing food. **11.9–12** That neither prohibited nor permitted fish are enumerated (either here or in Deut 14.9) may be explained by the relatively limited variety of species of sea life in the Mediterranean prior to the construction of the Suez Canal. Fish—alone among the creatures—were not named by Adam (Gen 2.19–20). **11.13–19** No criteria are stated for *birds*. The fact that only impure birds are enumerated implies that the species of pure birds are innumerable (*Sipre Deuteronomy* 103). **11.20–23** *Winged insects*. The reason for exempting locusts is not clear. It may be related to Israel's pastoral life in its presettlement period, when the community subsisted on its herds as well as on the sporadic visits of locusts, just as bedouin do to this day (cf. Mt 3.4; Mk 1.6).

11.24–40 Impurity by contact with carcasses. This section is an insertion from another source, since it interrupts the fourfold classification (11.46) of creatures that may not be eaten. Nonporous articles polluted by cadavers of the species listed in vv. 29–30 must be washed, but contaminated earthenware (porous and absorbent, 6.28) may never be reused. Food and seed grain are immune to impurity except when moist, since water is an impurity carrier. Only the carcasses of quadrupeds and eight reptiles contaminate by touch; all others contaminate by ingestion. **11.24** *Unclean until evening*. Bathing is presumed, but impurity also needs time to completely dissipate, in the case of minor impurities, until evening. **11.25** *Wash his clothes*. Bathing is pre-

29 These are unclean for you among
the creatures that swarm upon the earth:
the weasel, the mouse, the great lizard ac-
cording to its kind, 30 the gecko, the land
crocodile, the lizard, the sand lizard, and
the chameleon. 31 These are unclean for
you among all that swarm; whoever
touches one of them when they are dead
shall be unclean until the evening. 32 And
anything upon which any of them falls
when they are dead shall be unclean,
whether an article of wood or cloth or
skin or sacking, any article that is used for
any purpose; it shall be dipped into water,
and it shall be unclean until the evening,
and then it shall be clean. 33 And if any of
them falls into any earthen vessel, all that
is in it shall be unclean, and you shall
break the vessel. 34 Any food that could be
eaten shall be unclean if water from any
such vessel comes upon it; and any liquid
that could be drunk shall be unclean if it
was in any such vessel. 35 Everything on
which any part of the carcass falls shall be
unclean; whether an oven or stove, it shall
be broken in pieces; they are unclean, and
shall remain unclean for you. 36 But a
spring or a cistern holding water shall be
clean, while whatever touches the carcass
in it shall be unclean. 37 If any part of
their carcass falls upon any seed set aside
for sowing, it is clean; 38 but if water is put
on the seed and any part of their carcass
falls on it, it is unclean for you.

39 If an animal of which you may eat
dies, anyone who touches its carcass shall
be unclean until the evening. 40 Those
who eat of its carcass shall wash their
clothes and be unclean until the evening;
and those who carry the carcass shall wash
their clothes and be unclean until the
evening.

41 All creatures that swarm upon the
earth are detestable; they shall not be
eaten. 42 Whatever moves on its belly, and
whatever moves on all fours, or whatever
has many feet, all the creatures that
swarm upon the earth, you shall not eat;
for they are detestable. 43 You shall not
make yourselves detestable with any crea-
ture that swarms; you shall not defile
yourselves with them, and so become un-
clean. 44 For I am the LORD your God;
sanctify yourselves therefore, and be holy,
for I am holy. You shall not defile your-
selves with any swarming creature that
moves on the earth. 45 For I am the LORD
who brought you up from the land of
Egypt, to be your God; you shall be holy,
for I am holy.

46 This is the law pertaining to land
animal and bird and every living creature
that moves through the waters and every
creature that swarms upon the earth, 47 to
make a distinction between the unclean
and the clean, and between the living
creature that may be eaten and the living
creature that may not be eaten.

Purification of Women After Childbirth

12 The LORD spoke to Moses, sayingsaying: 2 Speak to the people of Is-
rael, saying:

If a woman conceives and bears a male
child, she shall be ceremonially unclean
seven days; as at the time of her menstru-
ation, she shall be unclean. 3 On the
eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall
be circumcised. 4 Her time of blood purifi-

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sumed. **11.29–30** These eight named land swarmers differ from the rest of their kind (vv. 41–43) in that they contaminate not only by ingestion but also by touch (v. 31), a characteristic they share with the impure quadrupeds (vv. 8, 24–28). These eight would commonly be found in the kitchen, and, being small, might be found inside vessels (vv. 32–38). **11.33** Contaminated earthenware must be broken because it absorbs impurities that cannot be removed. **11.34** Once wetted by liquid, food becomes susceptible to impurity (v. 38). **11.35** Ovens and stoves are made of earthenware. **11.36** Water sources are, however, not susceptible to impurity because they are embedded in the ground. **11.39–40** The carcasses of clean (i.e., edible) animals also defile. **11.41–42** These verses on swarming things continue 11.23. **11.43–45** Israel enjoined to be holy. An interpolation from H (see Introduction). **11.46–47** A summary of the entire chapter.

12.1–8 For seven days following the birth of a male child and fourteen days following that of a female child, no conjugal relations are allowed. For an additional period of thirty-three and sixty-six days respectively, contact with sacred spaces and objects is proscribed. That sacrifices are brought only after the impurity has totally disappeared is proof that their function is neither apotropaic nor medicinal; only ritual impurity adheres, which time and ablutions remove. The rite is scaled to economic circumstances (5.7–13; 14.21–32). **12.2** *Conceives,* lit. "produces seed." **12.3** *Flesh of his foreskin,* or "foreskin of his mem-

cation shall be thirty-three days; she shall not touch any holy thing, or come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purification are completed. 5 If she bears a female child, she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her menstruation; her time of blood purification shall be sixty-six days.

6 When the days of her purification are completed, whether for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring to the priest at the entrance of the tent of meeting a lamb in its first year for a burnt offering, and a pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering. 7 He shall offer it before the LORD, and make atonement on her behalf; then she shall be clean from her flow of blood. This is the law for her who bears a child, male or female. 8 If she cannot afford a sheep, she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement on her behalf, and she shall be clean.

Scale Disease, Varieties and Symptoms

13 The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying:

2 When a person has on the skin of his body a swelling or an eruption or a spot, and it turns into a leprous[i] disease on the skin of his body, he shall be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons the priests. 3 The priest shall examine the disease on the skin of his body, and if the hair in the diseased area has turned white and the disease appears to be deeper than the skin of his body, it is a leprous[i] disease; after the priest has examined him he shall pronounce him ceremonially unclean. 4 But if the spot is white in the skin of his body, and appears no deeper than the skin, and the hair in it has not turned white, the priest shall confine the diseased person for seven days. 5 The priest shall examine him on the seventh day, and if he sees that the disease is checked and the disease has not spread in the skin, then the priest shall confine him seven days more. 6 The priest shall examine him again on the seventh day, and if the disease has abated and the disease has not spread in the skin, the priest shall pronounce him clean; it is only an eruption; and he shall wash his clothes, and be clean. 7 But if the eruption spreads in the skin after he has shown himself to the priest for his cleansing, he shall appear again before the priest. 8 The priest shall make an examination, and if the eruption has spread in the skin, the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is a leprous[i] disease.

9 When a person contracts a leprous[i] disease, he shall be brought to the priest. 10 The priest shall make an examination, and if there is a white swelling in the skin

[i] A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain

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ber." **12.5** The reason for the disparity between the sexes is unknown. **12.6** The rendering *sin offering* seems especially misleading in this case. What sin has the new mother committed? A better rendering would be "purification offering" merely indicating that her postpartum blood flow has engendered a ritual impurity that has contaminated the sanctuary, for which a purification offering is mandated once she is completely healed (see expressly 14.19). **12.7** *Flow*, lit. "source."

13.1–14.57 The priest is instructed to identify and isolate those afflicted with scale disease, traditionally but not properly translated "leprosy" (Hansen's disease). It is mainly a noncontagious condition, probably vitiligo or, less likely, psoriasis. (Regarding these examples of scale disease as ritually contaminating, see note on 11.1–16.34.) Scaling is the common denominator of all the skin ailments described in ch. 13, as follows: boils (vv. 18–23), burns (vv. 24–28), scalls, i.e., infection of the hairy parts of the head (vv. 29–37), tetters and normal baldness (pure manifestations; vv. 38–41); and impure baldness (vv. 42–44). The comportment of a certified scale-disease carrier is described in 13.45–46 and his or her purificatory rites in 14.1–20. Lev 13.47–59 describes the deterioration of garments probably because of mildew or fungus, and 14.33–53 describes the infection of houses because of the spread of saltpeter or moss, in which case quarantine procedures are also enforced. Unusual considerations for property are reflected in 14.36: the priest clears the house prior to his inspection so that the contents will not be condemned with the house. The priest is not a physician. His rituals commence only after the disease has passed. Both disease and healing stem from the one God. Chs. 13–14 are summarized in 14.54–57. **13.2** *A swelling or an eruption or a spot.* A preferable translation might be "a discoloration or a scab or a shining mark." Vv. 2–8 deal with shining marks and vv. 9–17 with discolorations. Nonspreading scabs are not impure (vv. 7–8). **13.3** *Leprous disease*, rather "scale disease" (so throughout; see

that has turned the hair white, and there
is quick raw flesh in the swelling, 11 it is a
chronic leprous[j] disease in the skin of his
body. The priest shall pronounce him un-
clean; he shall not confine him, for he is
unclean. 12 But if the disease breaks out in
the skin, so that it covers all the skin of the
diseased person from head to foot, so far
as the priest can see, 13 then the priest
shall make an examination, and if the dis-
ease has covered all his body, he shall pro-
nounce him clean of the disease; since it
has all turned white, he is clean. 14 But if
raw flesh ever appears on him, he shall be
unclean; 15 the priest shall examine the
raw flesh and pronounce him unclean.
Raw flesh is unclean, for it is a leprous[j]
disease. 16 But if the raw flesh again turns
white, he shall come to the priest; 17 the
priest shall examine him, and if the dis-
ease has turned white, the priest shall pro-
nounce the diseased person clean. He is
clean.

18 When there is on the skin of one's
body a boil that has healed, 19 and in the
place of the boil there appears a white
swelling or a reddish-white spot, it shall be
shown to the priest. 20 The priest shall
make an examination, and if it appears
deeper than the skin and its hair has
turned white, the priest shall pronounce
him unclean; this is a leprous[j] disease,
broken out in the boil. 21 But if the priest
examines it and the hair on it is not white,
nor is it deeper than the skin but has
abated, the priest shall confine him seven
days. 22 If it spreads in the skin, the priest
shall pronounce him unclean; it is dis-
eased. 23 But if the spot remains in one
place and does not spread, it is the scar of
the boil; the priest shall pronounce him
clean.

24 Or, when the body has a burn on
the skin and the raw flesh of the burn be-
comes a spot, reddish-white or white,
25 the priest shall examine it. If the hair in
the spot has turned white and it appears
deeper than the skin, it is a leprous[j] dis-
ease; it has broken out in the burn, and
the priest shall pronounce him unclean.
This is a leprous[j] disease. 26 But if the
priest examines it and the hair in the spot
is not white, and it is no deeper than the
skin but has abated, the priest shall con-
fine him seven days. 27 The priest shall ex-
amine him the seventh day; if it is
spreading in the skin, the priest shall pro-
nounce him unclean. This is a leprous[j]
disease. 28 But if the spot remains in one
place and does not spread in the skin but
has abated, it is a swelling from the burn,
and the priest shall pronounce him clean;
for it is the scar of the burn.

29 When a man or woman has a dis-
ease on the head or in the beard, 30 the
priest shall examine the disease. If it ap-
pears deeper than the skin and the hair in
it is yellow and thin, the priest shall pro-
nounce him unclean; it is an itch, a lep-
rous[j] disease of the head or the beard.
31 If the priest examines the itching dis-
ease, and it appears no deeper than the
skin and there is no black hair in it, the
priest shall confine the person with the itch-
ing disease for seven days. 32 On the
seventh day the priest shall examine the
itch; if the itch has not spread, and there
is no yellow hair in it, and the itch appears
to be no deeper than the skin, 33 he shall
shave, but the itch he shall not shave. The
priest shall confine the person with the
itch for seven days more. 34 On the sev-
enth day the priest shall examine the itch;
if the itch has not spread in the skin and it
appears to be no deeper than the skin, the
priest shall pronounce him clean. He shall
wash his clothes and be clean. 35 But if the
itch spreads in the skin after he was pro-
nounced clean, 36 the priest shall examine
him. If the itch has spread in the skin, the
priest need not seek for the yellow hair;
he is unclean. 37 But if in his eyes the itch
is checked, and black hair has grown in it,
the itch is healed, he is clean; and the
priest shall pronounce him clean.

38 When a man or a woman has spots
on the skin of the body, white spots, 39 the
priest shall make an examination, and if
the spots on the skin of the body are of a
dull white, it is a rash that has broken out
on the skin; he is clean.

40 If anyone loses the hair from his
head, he is bald but he is clean. 41 If he
loses the hair from his forehead and tem-
ples, he has baldness of the forehead but
he is clean. 42 But if there is on the bald
head or the bald forehead a reddish-white
diseased spot, it is a leprous[j] disease
breaking out on his bald head or his bald
forehead. 43 The priest shall examine
him; if the diseased swelling is reddish-
white on his bald head or on his bald fore-
head, which resembles a leprous[j] disease
in the skin of the body, 44 he is leprous,[j]

[j] A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain

he is unclean. The priest shall pronounce him unclean; the disease is on his head.

45 The person who has the leprous[k] disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head be disheveled; and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out, "Unclean, unclean." 46 He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease; he is unclean. He shall live alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp.

47 Concerning clothing: when a leprous[k] disease appears in it, in woolen or linen cloth, 48 in warp or woof of linen or wool, or in a skin or in anything made of skin, 49 if the disease shows greenish or reddish in the garment, whether in warp or woof or in skin or in anything made of skin, it is a leprous[k] disease and shall be shown to the priest. 50 The priest shall examine the disease, and put the diseased article aside for seven days. 51 He shall examine the disease on the seventh day. If the disease has spread in the cloth, in warp or woof, or in the skin, whatever be the use of the skin, this is a spreading leprous[k] disease; it is unclean. 52 He shall burn the clothing, whether diseased in warp or woof, woolen or linen, or anything of skin, for it is a spreading leprous[k] disease; it shall be burned in fire.

53 If the priest makes an examination, and the disease has not spread in the clothing, in warp or woof or in anything of skin, 54 the priest shall command them to wash the article in which the disease appears, and he shall put it aside seven days more. 55 The priest shall examine the diseased article after it has been washed. If the diseased spot has not changed color, though the disease has not spread, it is unclean; you shall burn it in fire, whether the leprous[k] spot is on the inside or on the outside.

56 If the priest makes an examination, and the disease has abated after it is washed, he shall tear the spot out of the cloth, in warp or woof, or out of skin. 57 If it appears again in the garment, in warp or woof, or in anything of skin, it is spreading; you shall burn with fire that in which the disease appears. 58 But the cloth, warp or woof, or anything of skin from which the disease disappears when you have washed it, shall then be washed a second time, and it shall be clean.

59 This is the ritual for a leprous[k] disease in a cloth of wool or linen, either in warp or woof, or in anything of skin, to decide whether it is clean or unclean.

Purification of Scale-Diseased Persons and Houses

14 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 2 This shall be the ritual for the leprous[k] person at the time of his cleansing:

He shall be brought to the priest; 3 the priest shall go out of the camp, and the priest shall make an examination. If the disease is healed in the leprous[k] person, 4 the priest shall command that two living clean birds and cedarwood and crimson yarn and hyssop be brought for the one who is to be cleansed. 5 The priest shall command that one of the birds be slaughtered over fresh water in an earthen vessel. 6 He shall take the living bird with the cedarwood and the crimson yarn and the hyssop, and dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was slaughtered over the fresh water. 7 He shall sprinkle it seven times upon the one who is to be cleansed of the leprous[k] disease; then he shall pronounce him clean, and he shall let the living bird go into the open field. 8 The one who is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, and shave off all his hair, and bathe himself in water, and he shall be clean. After that he shall come into the camp, but shall live outside his tent seven

k A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain

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note on 13.1–14.57). **13.43** *Diseased swelling,* or "discolored affliction." **13.45** The certified scale-diseased person adopts the manner of a mourner. **13.51** *Spreading,* a malignant disease (also 14.44).

14.1–32 Three separate purificatory ceremonies are required for a healed scale-diseased person: for the first day (vv. 2–8; also invoked for houses, vv. 48–53), for the seventh day (v. 9), and for the eighth day (vv. 10–32). They constitute a rite of passage whereby the person is successively reintegrated into the community. **14.2** *He shall be brought to the priest,* preferably "When it is reported to the priest," in view of the subsequent statement *the priest shall go out of the camp.* **14.4–8** The living bird, dipped in the blood of the slain bird, carries off enough ritual impurity to allow the erstwhile "leper" to reenter the camp after he shaves and bathes but not to reenter his (or any) tent lest he contaminate it (see 14.46).

days. 9 On the seventh day he shall shave
all his hair: of head, beard, eyebrows; he
shall shave all his hair. Then he shall wash
his clothes, and bathe his body in water,
and he shall be clean.

10 On the eighth day he shall take two
male lambs without blemish, and one ewe
lamb in its first year without blemish, and
a grain offering of three-tenths of an
ephah of choice flour mixed with oil, and
one log[l] of oil. 11 The priest who cleanses
shall set the person to be cleansed, along
with these things, before the LORD, at the
entrance of the tent of meeting. 12 The
priest shall take one of the lambs, and of-
fer it as a guilt offering, along with the
log[l] of oil, and raise them as an elevation
offering before the LORD. 13 He shall
slaughter the lamb in the place where the
sin offering and the burnt offering are
slaughtered in the holy place; for the guilt
offering, like the sin offering, belongs to
the priest: it is most holy. 14 The priest
shall take some of the blood of the guilt
offering and put it on the lobe of the right
ear of the one to be cleansed, and on the
thumb of the right hand, and on the big
toe of the right foot. 15 The priest shall
take some of the log[l] of oil and pour it
into the palm of his own left hand, 16 and
dip his right finger in the oil that is in his
left hand and sprinkle some oil with his
finger seven times before the LORD.
17 Some of the oil that remains in his hand
the priest shall put on the lobe of the right
ear of the one to be cleansed, and on the
thumb of the right hand, and on the big
toe of the right foot, on top of the blood
of the guilt offering. 18 The rest of the oil
that is in the priest's hand he shall put on
the head of the one to be cleansed. Then
the priest shall make atonement on his be-
half before the LORD: 19 the priest shall
offer the sin offering, to make atonement
for the one to be cleansed from his un-
cleanness. Afterward he shall slaughter
the burnt offering; 20 and the priest shall
offer the burnt offering and the grain
offering on the altar. Thus the priest shall
make atonement on his behalf and he
shall be clean.

21 But if he is poor and cannot afford
so much, he shall take one male lamb for
a guilt offering to be elevated, to make
atonement on his behalf, and one-tenth of
an ephah of choice flour mixed with oil
for a grain offering and a log[l] of oil;
22 also two turtledoves or two pigeons,
such as he can afford, one for a sin offer-
ing and the other for a burnt offering.
23 On the eighth day he shall bring them
for his cleansing to the priest, to the en-
trance of the tent of meeting, before the
LORD; 24 and the priest shall take the lamb
of the guilt offering and the log[l] of oil,
and the priest shall raise them as an eleva-
tion offering before the LORD. 25 The
priest shall slaughter the lamb of the guilt
offering and shall take some of the blood
of the guilt offering, and put it on the
lobe of the right ear of the one to be
cleansed, and on the thumb of the right
hand, and on the big toe of the right foot.
26 The priest shall pour some of the oil
into the palm of his own left hand, 27 and
shall sprinkle with his right finger some of
the oil that is in his left hand seven times
before the LORD. 28 The priest shall put
some of the oil that is in his hand on the
lobe of the right ear of the one to be
cleansed, and on the thumb of the right
hand, and the big toe of the right foot,
where the blood of the guilt offering was
placed. 29 The rest of the oil that is in the
priest's hand he shall put on the head of
the one to be cleansed, to make atone-
ment on his behalf before the LORD.
30 And he shall offer, of the turtledoves or
pigeons such as he can afford, 31 one[m]
for a sin offering and the other for a burnt
offering, along with a grain offering; and
the priest shall make atonement before
the LORD on behalf of the one being
cleansed. 32 This is the ritual for the one

l A liquid measure
m Gk Syr: Heb *afford,* [31]*such as he can afford, one*

14.9 After his second shaving and ablution on the seventh day, he resumes normal intercourse with family. **14.10–20** The final stage of his purification takes place the following day when he brings a reparation offering for having possibly desecrated a sacred object or space (see 5.17–19), the blood of which together with sanctified oil is smeared on his extremities to purify him (see 8.30); a purification offering (not properly *sin offering*) for having contaminated the sanctuary by his impurity (see esp. v. 19); and a burnt offering and a grain offering to expiate for neglected performative commandments or sinful thoughts (see 1.4). **14.16** *Seven times before the*

who has a leprous[n] disease, who cannot
afford the offerings for his cleansing.
33 The LORD spoke to Moses and
Aaron, saying:
34 When you come into the land of
Canaan, which I give you for a possession,
and I put a leprous[n] disease in a house in
the land of your possession, 35 the owner
of the house shall come and tell the priest,
saying, "There seems to me to be some
sort of disease in my house." 36 The priest
shall command that they empty the house
before the priest goes to examine the dis-
ease, or all that is in the house will become
unclean; and afterward the priest shall go
in to inspect the house. 37 He shall exam-
ine the disease; if the disease is in the walls
of the house with greenish or reddish
spots, and if it appears to be deeper than
the surface, 38 the priest shall go outside
to the door of the house and shut up the
house seven days. 39 The priest shall come
again on the seventh day and make an in-
spection; if the disease has spread in the
walls of the house, 40 the priest shall com-
mand that the stones in which the disease
appears be taken out and thrown into an
unclean place outside the city. 41 He shall
have the inside of the house scraped thor-
oughly, and the plaster that is scraped off
shall be dumped in an unclean place out-
side the city. 42 They shall take other
stones and put them in the place of those
stones, and take other plaster and plaster
the house.
43 If the disease breaks out again in
the house, after he has taken out the
stones and scraped the house and plas-
tered it, 44 the priest shall go and make
inspection; if the disease has spread in the
house, it is a spreading leprous[n] disease
in the house; it is unclean. 45 He shall have
the house torn down, its stones and tim-
ber and all the plaster of the house, and
taken outside the city to an unclean place.
46 All who enter the house while it is shut
up shall be unclean until the evening;
47 and all who sleep in the house shall
wash their clothes; and all who eat in the
house shall wash their clothes.
48 If the priest comes and makes an
inspection, and the disease has not spread
in the house after the house was plas-
tered, the priest shall pronounce the
house clean; the disease is healed. 49 For
the cleansing of the house he shall take
two birds, with cedarwood and crimson
yarn and hyssop, 50 and shall slaughter
one of the birds over fresh water in an
earthen vessel, 51 and shall take the cedar-
wood and the hyssop and the crimson
yarn, along with the living bird, and dip
them in the blood of the slaughtered bird
and the fresh water, and sprinkle the
house seven times. 52 Thus he shall
cleanse the house with the blood of the
bird, and with the fresh water, and with
the living bird, and with the cedarwood
and hyssop and crimson yarn; 53 and he
shall let the living bird go out of the city
into the open field; so he shall make
atonement for the house, and it shall be
clean.
54 This is the ritual for any leprous[n]
disease: for an itch, 55 for leprous[n] dis-
eases in clothing and houses, 56 and for a
swelling or an eruption or a spot, 57 to de-
termine when it is unclean and when it is
clean. This is the ritual for leprous[n]
diseases.

Concerning Bodily Discharges

15 The LORD spoke to Moses and
Aaron, saying: 2 Speak to the peo-
ple of Israel and say to them:
When any man has a discharge from his
member,[o] his discharge makes him cere-

n A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain *o* Heb *flesh*

LORD, to consecrate the oil (see 4.6). **14.36** Persons and objects that were in the house prior to its quarantine by the priest are declared pure. **14.46** *All who enter* points to the extraordinary power of the fungous house to contaminate by overhang, that is, to contaminate anyone under its roof, proof that scale disease (and all severe impurities) emits a miasma that contaminates the sanctuary at a distance and, in the case of scale disease and corpse contamination (see Num 19.14), defiles persons and objects inside a house. **14.49–52** For the cleansing of the house only the first-day rite for scale disease (vv. 4–8) is required since the impurity generated by the house is not strong enough to contaminate the sanctuary from afar.

15.1–33 Ch. 15 is composed of two sections: natural discharges of men and women (15.16–18; 15.19–24, respectively), an impurity removed simply by bathing, and pathological discharges (15.2–15; 15.25–30, respectively), which require sacrificial expiation. The eight-day ritual for the latter, as for the scale-diseased person, is a rite of passage from death to life. **15.2** *Discharge*, an

monially unclean. 3 The uncleanness of
his discharge is this: whether his mem-
ber[p] flows with his discharge, or his
member[p] is stopped from discharging, it
is uncleanness for him. 4 Every bed on
which the one with the discharge lies shall
be unclean; and everything on which he
sits shall be unclean. 5 Anyone who
touches his bed shall wash his clothes, and
bathe in water, and be unclean until the
evening. 6 All who sit on anything on
which the one with the discharge has sat
shall wash their clothes, and bathe in wa-
ter, and be unclean until the evening. 7 All
who touch the body of the one with the
discharge shall wash their clothes, and
bathe in water, and be unclean until the
evening. 8 If the one with the discharge
spits on persons who are clean, then they
shall wash their clothes, and bathe in wa-
ter, and be unclean until the evening.
9 Any saddle on which the one with the
discharge rides shall be unclean. 10 All
who touch anything that was under him
shall be unclean until the evening, and all
who carry such a thing shall wash their
clothes, and bathe in water, and be un-
clean until the evening. 11 All those whom
the one with the discharge touches with-
out his having rinsed his hands in water
shall wash their clothes, and bathe in wa-
ter, and be unclean until the evening.
12 Any earthen vessel that the one with the
discharge touches shall be broken; and ev-
ery vessel of wood shall be rinsed in water.

13 When the one with a discharge is
cleansed of his discharge, he shall count
seven days for his cleansing; he shall wash
his clothes and bathe his body in fresh wa-
ter, and he shall be clean. 14 On the eighth
day he shall take two turtledoves or two
pigeons and come before the LORD to the
entrance of the tent of meeting and give
them to the priest. 15 The priest shall offer
them, one for a sin offering and the other
for a burnt offering; and the priest shall
make atonement on his behalf before the
LORD for his discharge.

16 If a man has an emission of semen,
he shall bathe his whole body in water,
and be unclean until the evening. 17 Ev-
erything made of cloth or of skin on
which the semen falls shall be washed with
water, and be unclean until the evening.
18 If a man lies with a woman and has an
emission of semen, both of them shall
bathe in water, and be unclean until the
evening.

19 When a woman has a discharge of
blood that is her regular discharge from
her body, she shall be in her impurity for
seven days, and whoever touches her shall
be unclean until the evening. 20 Every-

p Heb *flesh*

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abnormal one, usually but not exclusively identified with gonorrhea. **15.3** The loss of semen and genital blood (vv. 19–30) generates impurity since it represents the loss of life and, hence, is opposed to the Lord, the source of holiness and life (see note on 11.1–16.34). **15.5** This extra-strength impurity, affecting persons and objects at a second (even a third, v. 23) remove, is limited to objects directly underneath those having genital discharges. **15.11** *Rinsed his hands.* Whoever takes this precaution may touch persons and objects. Thus he may live at home, a far-reaching leniency. **15.12** See 11.33. **15.13** *Fresh water.* Fresh, lit. "living," water is also required in two other cases: corpse contamination (Num 19.17) and scale disease (Lev 14.5–6, 50–52). Together with genital discharges they comprise all the sources of severe impurity (lasting seven days or more). Since impurity is symbolic of death, its antidote is that which fosters life. **15.15** *Sin offering,* more accurately "purification offering" (see note on 4.1–35), for having polluted the sanctuary with his impurity. The function of the *burnt offering* here is to provide adequate substance for the altar, since the meat is assigned to the officiating priest (6.26). So too must every other purification-offering bird be accompanied by a burnt-offering bird (5.7; 12.8; 14.30–31). **15.16** Natural emissions of semen, as opposed to pathological ones, constitute only a minor impurity of one day's duration. **15.18** In many ancient cultures sexual intercourse disqualified a person from participating in religious ritual. The rite frequently prescribed for purification from sexual impurity is bathing, but the Bible uniquely adds one stipulation: for the impurity to be completely eliminated one must wait until evening (see 11.24). One can understand that seminal emissions, being a total loss of life-giving fluids, were regarded as impure. But in conjugal union, the act of procreation? Obviously, the priestly legists were aware of the fact that it is the rare seed that results in procreation; mostly it is wasted. **15.19** Laundering and bathing at the end of seven days must be presumed. **15.19–23** The menstruant is not banished but remains at home. She may prepare meals and perform her household chores. The family, in turn, has to avoid lying in her bed, sitting in her chair, or touching

thing upon which she lies during her impurity shall be unclean; everything also upon which she sits shall be unclean. 21 Whoever touches her bed shall wash his clothes, and bathe in water, and be unclean until the evening. 22 Whoever touches anything upon which she sits shall wash his clothes, and bathe in water, and be unclean until the evening; 23 whether it is the bed or anything upon which she sits, when he touches it he shall be unclean until the evening. 24 If any man lies with her, and her impurity falls on him, he shall be unclean seven days; and every bed on which he lies shall be unclean.

25 If a woman has a discharge of blood for many days, not at the time of her impurity, or if she has a discharge beyond the time of her impurity, all the days of the discharge she shall continue in uncleanness; as in the days of her impurity, she shall be unclean. 26 Every bed on which she lies during all the days of her discharge shall be treated as the bed of her impurity; and everything on which she sits shall be unclean, as in the uncleanness of her impurity. 27 Whoever touches these things shall be unclean, and shall wash his clothes, and bathe in water, and be unclean until the evening. 28 If she is cleansed of her discharge, she shall count seven days, and after that she shall be clean. 29 On the eighth day she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons and bring them to the priest at the entrance of the tent of meeting. 30 The priest shall offer one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering; and the priest shall make atonement on her behalf before the LORD for her unclean discharge.

31 Thus you shall keep the people of Israel separate from their uncleanness, so that they do not die in their uncleanness by defiling my tabernacle that is in their midst.

32 This is the ritual for those who have a discharge: for him who has an emission of semen, becoming unclean thereby, 33 for her who is in the infirmity of her period, for anyone, male or female, who has a discharge, and for the man who lies with a woman who is unclean.

The Day of Atonement

16 The LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they drew near before the LORD and died. 2 The LORD said to Moses:

Tell your brother Aaron not to come just at any time into the sanctuary inside

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her. **15.23** *The bed or anything*, more precisely "on the bed or on anything." An object can be contaminated at a third remove provided it is in unbroken contact with the menstruant. **15.24** *If any man . . . on him* may be translated "if any man lies with her, her impurity will fall upon him," implying that copulation may have been a deliberate act, punishable by excision (20.18). The severe, seven-day impurity may be due to the loss of both life-giving semen and genital blood. **15.25** *The days of her impurity*, lit. "the days of her menstrual impurity," a reference to vv. 20, 22. **15.27** *These things*. Possibly with Septuagint read "her," in conformance with the law concerning men's *discharge* (v. 7). **15.30** See v. 15. **15.31** *Defiling my tabernacle*. Severe impurity incurred anywhere in the community will pollute the sanctuary. For this spatial notion of impurity, see chs. 4 and 16.

16.1–34 The annual Day of Atonement for the sanctuary and people. According to v. 1, ch. 16 follows upon ch. 10. Thus, chs. 11–15 are an insert listing the specific impurities that will contaminate the sanctuary (15.31) for which the purification ritual of ch. 16 is mandated. The impurities of the sanctuary are eliminated by purification offerings (16.16–19). The iniquities of the people are eliminated by the confession of the high priest over the dispatched goat while the people fast (vv. 21–22, 29–31). The text strongly suggests that the original form of the purgation rite described in vv. 2–28 was an emergency measure invoked by the high priest whenever he felt that the entire sanctuary had to be purged. It is the appendix, vv. 29–34, that fixes this rite as an annual observance. That it comprises an appendix is ascertained by the change of person (direct address to Israel); the fact that not Aaron but his descendants are officiating (v. 32); a change in terminology (e.g., the adytum is now called "the holiest part of the sanctuary"; see v. 33); only here is the date specified at the end (vv. 29, 34), whereas all other festival prescriptions begin with the date; and the unexpected inclusion of resident aliens, its first occurrence in the book of Leviticus. All seventeen subsequent attestations in chs. 17–24 are, by common scholarly consent, attributed to H (see Introduction). **16.1** *Drew near before*, better "encroached upon." **16.2** *In the cloud*, by means of the screen of incense raised by the high priest (v. 13). **16.2–3** *Sanctuary/holy place*, the adytum, innermost part of the tabernacle. *Sin offering*, better "purification offering" (see

the curtain before the mercy seat[q] that is
upon the ark, or he will die; for I appear
in the cloud upon the mercy seat.[q] 3 Thus
shall Aaron come into the holy place: with
a young bull for a sin offering and a ram
for a burnt offering. 4 He shall put on the
holy linen tunic, and shall have the linen
undergarments next to his body, fasten
the linen sash, and wear the linen turban;
these are the holy vestments. He shall
bathe his body in water, and then put
them on. 5 He shall take from the congre-
gation of the people of Israel two male
goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a
burnt offering.

6 Aaron shall offer the bull as a sin
offering for himself, and shall make
atonement for himself and for his house.
7 He shall take the two goats and set them
before the LORD at the entrance of the
tent of meeting; 8 and Aaron shall cast lots
on the two goats, one lot for the LORD and
the other lot for Azazel.[r] 9 Aaron shall
present the goat on which the lot fell for
the LORD, and offer it as a sin offering;
10 but the goat on which the lot fell for
Azazel[r] shall be presented alive before
the LORD to make atonement over it, that
it may be sent away into the wilderness to
Azazel.[r]

11 Aaron shall present the bull as a sin
offering for himself, and shall make
atonement for himself and for his house;
he shall slaughter the bull as a sin offering
for himself. 12 He shall take a censer full
of coals of fire from the altar before the
LORD, and two handfuls of crushed sweet
incense, and he shall bring it inside the
curtain 13 and put the incense on the fire
before the LORD, that the cloud of the in-
cense may cover the mercy seat[q] that is
upon the covenant,[s] or he will die. 14 He
shall take some of the blood of the bull,
and sprinkle it with his finger on the front
of the mercy seat,[q] and before the mercy
seat[q] he shall sprinkle the blood with his
finger seven times.

15 He shall slaughter the goat of the
sin offering that is for the people and
bring its blood inside the curtain, and do
with its blood as he did with the blood of
the bull, sprinkling it upon the mercy
seat[q] and before the mercy seat.[q]
16 Thus he shall make atonement for the
sanctuary, because of the uncleannesses
of the people of Israel, and because of
their transgressions, all their sins; and so
he shall do for the tent of meeting, which
remains with them in the midst of their
uncleannesses. 17 No one shall be in the
tent of meeting from the time he enters to
make atonement in the sanctuary until he
comes out and has made atonement for
himself and for his house and for all the
assembly of Israel. 18 Then he shall go out
to the altar that is before the LORD and

q Or *the cover* r Traditionally rendered *a scapegoat* s Or *treaty*, or *testament*; Heb *eduth*

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note on 4.1–35). **16.4** The high priest donned linen garments perhaps because entering the adytum was equivalent to being admitted to the heavenly council, whose members, the angels, were also dressed in linen (Ezek 9.2–3, 11; 10.2; Dan 10.5) **16.6** *Offer*, lit. "bring forward," as in v. 11, "present." **16.8** *Azazel*, probably the name of a demon who has been stripped of his alleged powers by the priestly legists. No longer a personality but just a name, he designates the place to which Israel's impurities and sins are banished. **16.10** *To make atonement over it*, by the confession of Israel's sins (v. 21). **16.11** The high priest must purge the sanctuary of the impurities he and his fellow priests have caused before he is eligible to do the same for the people. **16.12–13** If the purpose of the incense is to raise a cloud of smoke that screens the high priest's view of the ark, how could it be that he lights the incense only *after* he enters the adytum? The clue to the solution is supplied by the fact that the lit incense by itself does not produce a cloud of smoke. Thus another smoke-raising ingredient has to be added to the incense and it, not the incense, was ignited by the high priest before he entered the adytum and ignited the incense. The incense, then, would have functioned to placate God for the high priest's presumption in entering before his presence. *The covenant*, short for "the ark of the covenant." **16.14** *On the front of*, lit. "on the surface of . . . the east side." Since the high priest could not see the ark cover, he merely threw the drop of blood toward it but made sure it landed on its east side, namely, before it. Thus symbolically the ark was purged, as was the entire adytum, by the sevenfold blood sprinkling on the adytum floor. **16.16** *Make atonement for the sanctuary*, purge the adytum. *Transgressions*. In the priestly theology it is the transgressions, the willful, brazen impurities committed by the people, that have penetrated into the adytum, requiring its purgation by the high priest on the annual Day of Atonement. *So he shall do for the tent of meeting*. The purgation rite of 4.6–7, 17–18 is presumed. The tent of meeting here refers to the outer room, the shrine. **16.18** *On its behalf*, better "upon it." Purification-

make atonement on its behalf, and shall take some of the blood of the bull and of the blood of the goat, and put it on each of the horns of the altar. 19 He shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it and hallow it from the uncleannesses of the people of Israel.

20 When he has finished atoning for the holy place and the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall present the live goat. 21 Then Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and sending it away into the wilderness by means of someone designated for the task.[t] 22 The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to a barren region; and the goat shall be set free in the wilderness.

23 Then Aaron shall enter the tent of meeting, and shall take off the linen vestments that he put on when he went into the holy place, and shall leave them there. 24 He shall bathe his body in water in a holy place, and put on his vestments; then he shall come out and offer his burnt offering and the burnt offering of the people, making atonement for himself and for the people. 25 The fat of the sin offering he shall turn into smoke on the altar. 26 The one who sets the goat free for Azazel[u] shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and afterward may come into the camp. 27 The bull of the sin offering and the goat of the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the holy place, shall be taken outside the camp; their skin and their flesh and their dung shall be consumed in fire. 28 The one who burns them shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and afterward may come into the camp.

29 This shall be a statute to you forever: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall deny yourselves,[v] and shall do no work, neither the citizen nor the alien who resides among you. 30 For on this day atonement shall be made for you, to cleanse you; from all your sins you shall be clean before the LORD. 31 It is a sabbath of complete rest to you, and you shall deny yourselves;[v] it is a statute forever. 32 The priest who is anointed and consecrated as priest in his father's place shall make atonement, wearing the linen vestments, the holy vestments. 33 He shall make atonement for the sanctuary, and he shall make atonement for the tent of meeting and for the altar, and he shall make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly. 34 This shall be an everlasting statute for you, to make atonement for the people of Israel once in the year for all their sins. And Moses did as the LORD had commanded him.

The Slaughtering of Animals

17 The LORD spoke to Moses:
2 Speak to Aaron and his sons and to all the people of Israel and say to them: This is what the LORD has com-

t Meaning of Heb uncertain *u* Traditionally rendered *a scapegoat* *v* Or *shall fast*

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offering blood is put directly on the sacrificial altar (see Ex 29.36). **16.18–19** The daubing of the blood on the altar purifies it (see 4.7, 25; 8.15); the sprinkling rite sanctifies it (see 8.11). **16.21** *Lay*, lit. "lean" (see 1.4). *Both his hands*, an act of transference (as in 24.14), in contrast with sacrificial, one-handed hand-leaning, an act of ownership (1.4). *Iniquities*. Whereas the blood rites in the sanctuary purge it of Israel's impurities (*uncleanness*, v. 16), the hand-leaning on the confession over the live goat purge the people of their sins by transferring them to the head of the goat and dispatching it into the wilderness. *Confess*. Confession is required only for brazen, presumptuous sins (5.5; 26.40; Num 5.7). **16.22** *And*. Translate "when" and connect with v. 23 to avoid a redundancy with v. 21b. **16.23** *Leave them there*, because they contracted the extreme sanctity of the adytum. **16.24** *His vestments*, i.e., the ornate ones he always wore while officiating at the altar (8.6–9). **16.26–28** The handlers of the slain and live purification offerings are contaminated, but not the high priest who is immune to impurity while officiating. **16.29** *Deny yourselves*. "Afflict yourselves, from food, drink, and from enjoying bathing, and from anointing, and from sexual intercourse" (*Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*). **16.29–31** See also 23.26–32. **16.32** *Priest in his father's place*. In contrast to vv. 2–28, which speak solely of Aaron, this verse focuses on his successors. **16.33** *The sanctuary*, rather "the holiest part of the sanctuary," i.e., the adytum.

17.1–26.46 The Holiness source (H). The remainder of the book of Leviticus (excluding ch. 27), it is often held, consists largely of an independent code in which moral and ritual laws alter-

manded. 3 If anyone of the house of Israel
slaughters an ox or a lamb or a goat in the
camp, or slaughters it outside the camp,
4 and does not bring it to the entrance of
the tent of meeting, to present it as an
offering to the LORD before the taberna-
cle of the LORD, he shall be held guilty of
bloodshed; he has shed blood, and he
shall be cut off from the people. 5 This is
in order that the people of Israel may
bring their sacrifices that they offer in the
open field, that they may bring them to
the LORD, to the priest at the entrance of
the tent of meeting, and offer them as sac-
rifices of well-being to the LORD. 6 The
priest shall dash the blood against the al-
tar of the LORD at the entrance of the tent
of meeting, and turn the fat into smoke as
a pleasing odor to the LORD, 7 so that they
may no longer offer their sacrifices for
goat-demons, to whom they prostitute
themselves. This shall be a statute forever
to them throughout their generations.

8 And say to them further: Anyone of
the house of Israel or of the aliens who
reside among them who offers a burnt
offering or sacrifice, 9 and does not bring
it to the entrance of the tent of meeting,
to sacrifice it to the LORD, shall be cut off
from the people.

Eating Blood Prohibited

10 If anyone of the house of Israel or
of the aliens who reside among them eats
any blood, I will set my face against that
person who eats blood, and will cut that
person off from the people. 11 For the life
of the flesh is in the blood; and I have
given it to you for making atonement for
your lives on the altar; for, as life, it is the
blood that makes atonement. 12 Therefore
I have said to the people of Israel: No
person among you shall eat blood, nor
shall any alien who resides among you eat
blood. 13 And anyone of the people of Is-
rael, or of the aliens who reside among
them, who hunts down an animal or bird
that may be eaten shall pour out its blood
and cover it with earth.

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nate, motivated by holiness. This, however, is questionable. Ch. 17, the alleged beginning of the code, is connected thematically and verbally with the preceding chapters. Chs. 25–26, which are often alleged to be the conclusion, form an independent scroll, to judge from the unique vocabulary (e.g., 25.18–19; 26.5), theme (25.8–13; 26.34–35, 43), and redaction (25.1; 26.46). Nonetheless, much of the language and some ideas in chs. 17–26 differ from the first part of Leviticus. For a fuller discussion of H and of the relationship between P and H, see the Introduction.

17.1–16 Whoever kills a sacrificial animal outside the sanctuary is guilty of murder (17.3–4). Sacrifice to goat-demons or "satyrs" is thus abolished (17.5–9), and expiation for killing the animal is assured through a ritual by which its lifeblood is returned to its creator, either upon the altar (17.10–12) or by being drained and covered by earth in the case of game animals (17.13–14; cf. Deut 12.16). V. 11 has nothing to do with the expiation of sin in general. **17.3–7** No common slaughter. **17.3** *Outside the camp*, but within easy access of the sanctuary. **17.4** *Guilty of bloodshed*, a capital crime. *Cut off from the people*, i.e., extinction of his line by divine agency, a capital punishment (see 7.20). **17.5** *In the open field*, for chthonic worship (see v. 7). *Sacrifices of well-being to the LORD*. Henceforth, common slaughter is strictly forbidden. Meat for the table must initially be a sacrifice. **17.7** *Goat-demons*. It is possible that the demon Azazel (the first element of which means "goat"; see 16.8) was also a satyr. *Prostitute themselves*, a metaphor for idolatry (Ex 34.15–16; Lev 20.5, 6; Deut 31.16). **17.8–9** No sacrifices to other gods. **17.8** If *aliens* wish to have meat, they need not bring their animals to the sanctuary (a performative commandment), but they are forbidden to worship other gods (a prohibitive commandment). *Burnt offering or sacrifice*. The latter refers to the well-being (including the thanksgiving) offering. Thus, the purification and reparation offerings are excluded, possibly a reflex of the popular religion, which knew only the burnt offering as the exclusive expiatory sacrifice (see also 22.17–21). **17.10–12** Blood of sacrificial animals may not be ingested. Vv. 11–12 are an aside to Moses; only the law is given to Israel, not its rationale. **17.10** *Aliens* are forbidden to ingest blood, a prohibitive commandment. *Eats*, proof that the blood is ingested in the course of eating meat. **17.11** *To you*, to Israel, but not to aliens who may slaughter animals at home. *For making atonement*, or "to ransom" (see Ex 30.12, 15, 16). Animal slaughter is murder except at the authorized altar, where the offered blood ransoms the donor's life. *As life, it is the blood that makes atonement*, or "it is the blood that ransoms by means of life." **17.13–14** The blood of game may not be ingested. Assumed is the knowledge of 11.13–19, 24–28. **17.13** *Cover it with earth*: so that the blood will not be used in chthonic worship (e.g., for divination) but returned to God, who en-

14 For the life of every creature—its
blood is its life; therefore I have said to
the people of Israel: You shall not eat the
blood of any creature, for the life of every
creature is its blood; whoever eats it shall
be cut off. 15 All persons, citizens or aliens,
who eat what dies of itself or what has
been torn by wild animals, shall wash their
clothes, and bathe themselves in water,
and be unclean until the evening; then
they shall be clean. 16 But if they do not
wash themselves or bathe their body, they
shall bear their guilt.

Sexual Relations

18 The LORD spoke to Moses,
saying:
2 Speak to the people of Israel and say
to them: I am the LORD your God. 3 You
shall not do as they do in the land of
Egypt, where you lived, and you shall not
do as they do in the land of Canaan, to
which I am bringing you. You shall not
follow their statutes. 4 My ordinances you
shall observe and my statutes you shall
keep, following them: I am the LORD your
God. 5 You shall keep my statutes and my
ordinances; by doing so one shall live: I
am the LORD.
6 None of you shall approach anyone
near of kin to uncover nakedness: I am
the LORD. 7 You shall not uncover the na-
kedness of your father, which is the na-
kedness of your mother; she is your
mother, you shall not uncover her naked-
ness. 8 You shall not uncover the naked-
ness of your father's wife; it is the
nakedness of your father. 9 You shall not
uncover the nakedness of your sister,

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dowed animals as well as humans with *nefesh* (Hebrew), "life, soul." **17.14** The third aside to Moses providing rationales for required actions (in addition to vv. 5–7, 11–12), virtually repeating vv. 10–11a. **17.15–16** Eating of a carcass requires purification. **17.15** Lest they pollute the land, *aliens* must also purify themselves after eating of a carcass. **17.16** *Guilt*, or "punishment." If their impurity is prolonged, leading to the pollution of the sanctuary, they will be punished by the excision of their line (see 5.1–13).

18.1–20.27 On being holy. Though chs. 18–20 were originally independent, they are thematically united: ch. 20 prescribes the penalties for the illicit relations and homicidal cult practices proscribed in ch. 18 (20.1–5) and for violating the ban on magic put into effect in 19.31 (20.6). Moreover, the entire unit is framed by a single goal: separation of the Israelites from the Canaanites, who are portrayed as engaging in idolatrous and immoral practices, which pollute the divinely chosen land (18.3; 18.24–30; 20.22–24). The arrangement of Ezek 22 contains a mixture of ethical and ritual sins based solely on these chapters, indicating that their written formulation is preexilic.

The key word in this section is *holy*. This word clusters in the food prohibitions (Lev 11.44–47; 20.23–26) and significantly in only one other context, the rules concerning the priesthood, 21.6–8. The priesthood, Israel, and humankind form three rings of decreasing holiness about the center, God. Ideally, all Israel shall be "a priestly kingdom and a holy nation" (Ex 19.6). If Israel is to attain its higher level of holiness, it must abide by a more rigid code of behavior than that practiced by other nations, just as the priests live by more stringent standards than common Israelites. Holiness, then, implies separation and is so defined in 20.26. The positive aspect of holiness is discussed in ch. 19.

18.1–30 The list of prohibitions is framed by passages (18.1–5; 18.24–30) castigating the sexual mores of the Egyptians and the Canaanites. Israel is charged with an exacting code of family purity whose violation means death (20.10–16). Only the Holiness source proclaims the sanctity of the land of Canaan; hence both Israelites and resident strangers are responsible for maintaining its sanctity (18.26–27; 20.2; 24.22). The moral justification for its conquest (18.27–28; 20.22) is also a warning: if guilty of the same infractions, Israel too will be "vomited out." **18.2** *I am the LORD your God*, or "I the LORD am your God." Hence, you must follow my laws. **18.3** *Egypt* and *Canaan* are accused by biblical authors of consanguineous, incestuous, promiscuous, and homosexual unions (Gen 9.24; 19.5; 34.2; 39.7; Ezek 16.26; 23.3, 20). **18.5** *I am the LORD*, or "I the LORD," i.e., "I the LORD have spoken," equivalent to the prophetic "says the LORD" (e.g., Amos 2.16; 3.15). **18.6** *Approach*, a euphemism for "have sex with." *Near of kin*, lit. "flesh of his flesh," i.e., the nearest kin, one's mother, sister, and daughter, the last two otherwise missing in this list. *Uncover nakedness*, another euphemism for having sex with, given here in this initial law for emphasis. **18.7** *The nakedness of your father*, i.e., your father's exclusive possession (18.8; 20.11; Deut 22.30; cf. Lev 20.20, 21). **18.9** *Born at home or born abroad*, i.e., whether she belongs to your kin group or another kin group; that is, even if your half sister is totally unrelated to you by blood, she is forbid-

your father's daughter or your mother's
daughter, whether born at home or born
abroad. 10 You shall not uncover the na-
kedness of your son's daughter or of your
daughter's daughter, for their nakedness
is your own nakedness. 11 You shall not
uncover the nakedness of your father's
wife's daughter, begotten by your father,
since she is your sister. 12 You shall not
uncover the nakedness of your father's
sister; she is your father's flesh. 13 You
shall not uncover the nakedness of your
mother's sister, for she is your mother's
flesh. 14 You shall not uncover the naked-
ness of your father's brother, that is, you
shall not approach his wife; she is your
aunt. 15 You shall not uncover the naked-
ness of your daughter-in-law: she is your
son's wife; you shall not uncover her na-
kedness. 16 You shall not uncover the na-
kedness of your brother's wife; it is your
brother's nakedness. 17 You shall not un-
cover the nakedness of a woman and her
daughter, and you shall not take[w] her
son's daughter or her daughter's daugh-
ter to uncover her nakedness; they are
your[x] flesh; it is depravity. 18 And you
shall not take[w] a woman as a rival to her
sister, uncovering her nakedness while
her sister is still alive.

19 You shall not approach a woman to
uncover her nakedness while she is in her
menstrual uncleanness. 20 You shall not
have sexual relations with your kinsman's
wife, and defile yourself with her. 21 You
shall not give any of your offspring to sac-
rifice them[y] to Molech, and so profane
the name of your God: I am the LORD.
22 You shall not lie with a male as with a
woman; it is an abomination. 23 You shall
not have sexual relations with any animal
and defile yourself with it, nor shall any
woman give herself to an animal to have
sexual relations with it: it is perversion.

24 Do not defile yourselves in any of
these ways, for by all these practices the
nations I am casting out before you have
defiled themselves. 25 Thus the land be-
came defiled; and I punished it for its in-
iquity, and the land vomited out its
inhabitants. 26 But you shall keep my stat-
utes and my ordinances and commit none
of these abominations, either the citizen
or the alien who resides among you 27 (for
the inhabitants of the land, who were be-
fore you, committed all of these abomina-
tions, and the land became defiled);
28 otherwise the land will vomit you out
for defiling it, as it vomited out the nation
that was before you. 29 For whoever com-
mits any of these abominations shall be
cut off from their people. 30 So keep my
charge not to commit any of these abomi-
nations that were done before you, and
not to defile yourselves by them: I am the
LORD your God.

w Or *marry* x Gk: Heb lacks *your* y Heb *to pass them over*

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den. But see Gen 20.12 in which Abraham married his half sister. **18.11** *Begotten by your father*, rather "of your father's kin." But if she belongs to a different kin group, marriage is permissible. **18.12** Amram married Jochebed, his paternal aunt (they were the parents of Aaron and Moses), despite this prohibition. Reflecting sensitivity to this discrepancy, the Septuagint in Ex 6.20 reads "the daughter of his father's brother," i.e., his cousin. Perhaps for this reason the birth of Moses is attributed to anonymous Levite parents (Ex 2.1). **18.15** Judah married his daughter-in-law, Tamar, despite this prohibition—an early form of levirate marriage (cf. Gen 38; Deut 25.5–10). **18.16** Ostensibly, the verse is opposed to the institution of levirate marriage (Deut 25.5–10; see Lev 20.21). **18.18** Despite this prohibition, Jacob married two sisters, Rachel and Leah, while both were alive (Gen 29.15–30). The obvious answer to all four above-mentioned marital discrepancies with vv. 9, 12, 18 is that they occurred before the Sinaitic law code became operative. **18.20** *Kinsman's*, rather "neighbor's" (cf. Ezek 18.6, 15). **18.21** *Give ... offspring to sacrifice.* See 2 Kings 23.10; cf. Deut 12.31; 2 Kings 16.3; Jer 7.31; 19.5; 32.35. *Molech* may stand for *melek*, "king (of the underworld)," who was probably identified by his worshipers with Israel's God (cf. Jer 7.31; 19.5). If it were another god, the sacrifice would have been condemned as murder. See further in 20.2. *Profane the name of your God*, since the rite is dedicated to him. **18.23** Different species should be kept apart, following God's example at creation (Gen 1); see further in Lev 19.19. **18.25** Moral sins pollute the earth, e.g., those of Adam and Eve (Gen 3.17), Cain (Gen 4.10–12), and Noah's generation (see Gen 8.21). Here, however, the pollution is confined to the land of Canaan (Ezek 36.17; see Num 35.33; Deut 21.23; Jer 2.7). Therein lies the theological basis of the concept of the holy land, namely, that all who reside on this land, including all aliens, must observe God's prohibitive commandments (see Lev 17.8, 10; esp. 24.16).

Ritual and Moral Holiness

19 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:
2 Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them: You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy. 3 You shall each revere your mother and father, and you shall keep my sabbaths: I am the LORD your God. 4 Do not turn to idols or make cast images for yourselves: I am the LORD your God.
5 When you offer a sacrifice of well-being to the LORD, offer it in such a way that it is acceptable in your behalf. 6 It shall be eaten on the same day you offer it, or on the next day; and anything left over until the third day shall be consumed in fire. 7 If it is eaten at all on the third day, it is an abomination; it will not be acceptable. 8 All who eat it shall be subject to punishment, because they have profaned what is holy to the LORD; and any such person shall be cut off from the people.
9 When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. 10 You shall not strip your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the alien: I am the LORD your God.
11 You shall not steal; you shall not deal falsely; and you shall not lie to one another. 12 And you shall not swear falsely by my name, profaning the name of your God: I am the LORD.
13 You shall not defraud your neighbor; you shall not steal; and you shall not keep for yourself the wages of a laborer until morning. 14 You shall not revile the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind; you shall fear your God: I am the LORD.
15 You shall not render an unjust judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great: with justice you shall judge your neighbor. 16 You shall not go around as a slanderer[z] among your people, and you shall not profit by the blood[a] of your neighbor: I am the LORD.
17 You shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin; you shall reprove your neighbor, or you will incur guilt yourself. 18 You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.
19 You shall keep my statutes. You shall not let your animals breed with a different kind; you shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed; nor shall you put on a garment made of two different materials.
20 If a man has sexual relations with a woman who is a slave, designated for an-

z Meaning of Heb uncertain *a* Heb *stand against the blood*

19.1–37 For Israel, "holy" means more than that which is unapproachable. It becomes a positive concept, an inspiration and a goal associated with God's nature and his desire for humans to be holy: *You shall be holy; for I . . . am holy* (19.2). That which humans are not, nor can ever fully be, but which they are commanded to emulate and approximate is what the Bible calls "holy." Holiness means *imitatio Dei*—the life of godliness. How can human beings imitate God? The answer of Lev 19 is given in a series of ethical and ritual commands, above which soars the commandment to love all persons (19.18), including aliens (19.34). Such love must be concretely expressed in deeds: equality in civil justice (24:22; Num 35.15), free loans (Lev 25.35–38; Deut 10.18; 23.20), and free gleanings (Lev 19.9–10). **19.5–8** Here the well-being sacrifice is limited to the freewill and votive offerings, in contrast to 7.11–16, which includes the thanksgiving offering. **19.10** The widow and orphan fall under the category of the *poor*. The poor, however, do not appear as a separate category in the humanitarian legislation of Deuteronomy, which instead ordains for them loans (Deut 15.7–11); i.e., they can work off their debt, something that widows and orphans cannot. *I am the LORD your God*, "for the LORD pleads their cause and despoils of life those who despoil them" (Prov 22.23). **19.11** *Deal falsely*, e.g., deny you possessed your neighbor's property (6.2). **19.13** *Steal*, rather "rob" (cf. v. 11). **19.16** *Profit*, lit. "stand," i.e., don't stand by idle when your neighbor is in danger. **19.17** *Guilt*, i.e., "punishment." *Yourself*, more accurately "because of him," i.e., you are likely to take action against him that may be sinful. **19.18** *Love*, reach out, befriend. Love here is not an emotion. *Neighbor*, i.e., an Israelite (cf. v. 34). *As yourself*, i.e., as you love yourself, or "who is like you," since he or she is also created by God. **19.19** *Two kinds of seed, two different materials.* (See Deut 22.9.) God separated everything according to its species (Gen 1). The human world should mirror the natural world. Israel, therefore, may not mix with other nations, but be holy,

other man but not ransomed or given her
freedom, an inquiry shall be held. They
shall not be put to death, since she has not
been freed; 21 but he shall bring a guilt
offering for himself to the LORD, at the
entrance of the tent of meeting, a ram as
guilt offering. 22 And the priest shall
make atonement for him with the ram of
guilt offering before the LORD for his sin
that he committed; and the sin he com-
mitted shall be forgiven him.

23 When you come into the land and
plant all kinds of trees for food, then you
shall regard their fruit as forbidden;[b]
three years it shall be forbidden[c] to you,
it must not be eaten. 24 In the fourth year
all their fruit shall be set apart for rejoic-
ing in the LORD. 25 But in the fifth year
you may eat of their fruit, that their yield
may be increased for you: I am the LORD
your God.

26 You shall not eat anything with its
blood. You shall not practice augury or
witchcraft. 27 You shall not round off the
hair on your temples or mar the edges of
your beard. 28 You shall not make any
gashes in your flesh for the dead or tattoo
any marks upon you: I am the LORD.

29 Do not profane your daughter by
making her a prostitute, that the land not
become prostituted and full of depravity.
30 You shall keep my sabbaths and rever-
ence my sanctuary: I am the LORD.

31 Do not turn to mediums or wiz-
ards; do not seek them out, to be defiled
by them: I am the LORD your God.

32 You shall rise before the aged, and
defer to the old; and you shall fear your
God: I am the LORD.

33 When an alien resides with you in
your land, you shall not oppress the alien.
34 The alien who resides with you shall be
to you as the citizen among you; you shall
love the alien as yourself, for you were
aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD
your God.

35 You shall not cheat in measuring
length, weight, or quantity. 36 You shall
have honest balances, honest weights, an
honest ephah, and an honest hin: I am
the LORD your God, who brought you out
of the land of Egypt. 37 You shall keep all
my statutes and all my ordinances, and
observe them: I am the LORD.

Penalties for Violations of Holiness

20 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 2 Say further to the people of Israel:

Any of the people of Israel, or of the aliens who reside in Israel, who give any of their offspring to Molech shall be put to death; the people of the land shall stone them to death. 3 I myself will set my face against them, and will cut them off

b Heb *as their uncircumcision*
c Heb *uncircumcision*

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set apart for God. **19.20–22** A marginal case. Though not guilty before humans (not adulterous), he is guilty before God; hence he brings a reparation offering. **19.24** *Set apart . . . in the LORD*, lit. "holy . . . before the LORD," i.e., at the sanctuary. **19.26** *With*, lit. "over," a chthonic rite for the purpose of consulting the dead spirits (see v. 31; 17.5–7, 13–14; 20.6; 1 Sam 14.32–35). Instead, the blood should be offered on the altar (Lev 17.3–4, 11). **19.27–28** Pagan mourning rites. **19.31** Mediums, or "ancestral spirits" (see v. 26; 20.27). **19.33** *Oppress*, or "cheat." **19.34** The summit of biblical ethics.

20.1–27 The penalties for illicit sexual relations are graded according to their severity: vv. 10–16, death by humans; vv. 17–19, death by God; vv. 20–21, childlessness. Of illicit worship of God, only Molech worship and oracles through mediums are singled out, the former because of its monstrousness and the latter because of its prevalence (Deut 18.9–12; 1 Sam 28.9; Isa 8.19). The absence of the lofty pronouncements of ch. 19 from this list is mute evidence that ethics are really unenforceable. **20.2** Since *aliens* reside in the Lord's land, they are required to observe all the prohibitive commandments (see 17.8, 10). The *Molech* cult is expressly mentioned in 18.21; 20.2–5; 2 Kings 23.10; Jer 32.35 and alluded to in Isa 57.9; Jer 7.31; 19.5. Though the Leviticus texts use the ambiguous verbs "give" and "pass over" (alternative translation of "give" in 18.21), other references explicitly use the verb "burn" (Jer 7.31; 19.5; cf. 32.35; Isa 30.33). The reason this prohibition is set among the sexual offenses (note the sexual imagery in v. 5) is that it (and, indeed, all idolatry) was regarded as spiritual adultery (Ex 34.15–16; cf. Jer 3). Molech is probably identical with the Canaanite god *mlk*, who in Akkadian sources is called Malik and is equated with the underworld god Nergal. The sacrifices to Molech were offered in the Valley of Hinnom, just outside Jerusalem (2 Kings 23.10; cf. Jer 7.31, 32.35). **20.3** *Defiling my sanctuary.* Since Molech worship was practiced just beneath the temple mount in the Valley of Hinnom (Jer 32.35), it was feasible to worship at both sites the

from the people, because they have given
of their offspring to Molech, defiling my
sanctuary and profaning my holy name.
4 And if the people of the land should
ever close their eyes to them, when they
give of their offspring to Molech, and do
not put them to death, 5 I myself will set
my face against them and against their
family, and will cut them off from among
their people, them and all who follow
them in prostituting themselves to
Molech.

6 If any turn to mediums and wizards,
prostituting themselves to them, I will set
my face against them, and will cut them
off from the people. 7 Consecrate your-
selves therefore, and be holy; for I am the
LORD your God. 8 Keep my statutes, and
observe them; I am the LORD; I sanctify
you. 9 All who curse father or mother
shall be put to death; having cursed fa-
ther or mother, their blood is upon them.

10 If a man commits adultery with the
wife of[d] his neighbor, both the adulterer
and the adulteress shall be put to death.
11 The man who lies with his father's wife
has uncovered his father's nakedness;
both of them shall be put to death; their
blood is upon them. 12 If a man lies with
his daughter-in-law, both of them shall be
put to death; they have committed per-
version, their blood is upon them. 13 If a
man lies with a male as with a woman,
both of them have committed an abomi-
nation; they shall be put to death; their
blood is upon them. 14 If a man takes a
wife and her mother also, it is depravity;
they shall be burned to death, both he and
they, that there may be no depravity
among you. 15 If a man has sexual rela-
tions with an animal, he shall be put to
death; and you shall kill the animal. 16 If a
woman approaches any animal and has
sexual relations with it, you shall kill the
woman and the animal; they shall be put
to death, their blood is upon them.

17 If a man takes his sister, a daughter
of his father or a daughter of his mother,
and sees her nakedness, and she sees his
nakedness, it is a disgrace, and they shall
be cut off in the sight of their people; he
has uncovered his sister's nakedness, he
shall be subject to punishment. 18 If a man
lies with a woman having her sickness and
uncovers her nakedness, he has laid bare
her flow and she has laid bare her flow of
blood; both of them shall be cut off from
their people. 19 You shall not uncover the
nakedness of your mother's sister or of
your father's sister, for that is to lay bare
one's own flesh; they shall be subject to
punishment. 20 If a man lies with his un-

d Heb repeats *if a man commits adultery with the wife of*

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same day (Ezek 23.32–39), an indication that its devotees felt that its worship was compatible with the worship of and, indeed, demanded by the Lord. **20.5** *Them*, i.e., the Molech worshipers. *Their family*. The family may have protected them. **20.5–6** *People*, better "(deceased) kin." The Lord imposes a measure-for-measure punishment: he cuts off from ancestral spirits the one who tries to placate them. **20.6** It is no accident that this prohibition against turning to mediums and wizards (for the purpose of consulting the ancestral spirits; see 19.26) is cojoined with the Molech prohibition. Both are directed against chthonic worship, which especially prevailed in Judah at the end of the eighth and beginning of the seventh century B.C.E. The Judean kings of this period, Ahaz and Manasseh, are accused of practicing Molech worship (2 Kings 16.3; 21.6), and Isaiah (eighth century) reports the resort to mediums and wizards (19.3 explicitly mentions its goal: "[to] consult . . . the spirits of the dead")—further indication that the Holiness source (H) originates from this period. **20.8** *I am the LORD; I sanctify you*, or "I, the LORD, sanctify you." Israel acquires holiness by observing the commandments (22.32; cf. Ex 31.13; Ezek 20.12; 37.28). **20.9** *Curse*, perhaps "insult, dishonor" (see Ex 21.17; Prov 20.20; Mt 15.4; Mk 7.10). *Their blood is upon them*, that is, their executioner need not fear that their blood will be "on his head" (see Josh 2.14; 2 Sam 1.16; 1 Kings 2.37), namely, that God will hold him responsible for spilling their blood. **20.10** The text begins *If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbor*. The specification "his neighbor" limits the penalty to Israelites. Though adultery is listed last among the illicit heterosexual relations (18.20), it is first when it comes to these penalties since it concerns not only private morality but the stability and welfare of the community. **20.11** *His father's wife*. His mother is assumed (18.7–8). **20.12** See 18.15. **20.13** See 18.22. **20.14** *Takes*, in marriage or by common consent. See 18.17. **20.15–16** See 18.23. **20.15** *Kill the animal*, which has also sinned (cf. Ex 21.28–29). **20.17** See 18.9. *Sees her nakedness . . . sees his nakedness*, a willful act. *Subject to punishment*, probably excision. **20.18** *Sickness*, not just menstruation but any genital flow (15.25, 33), an expansion of 18.19. **20.19** See 18.12–13. *One's own flesh*, actually "the

cle's wife, he has uncovered his uncle's nakedness; they shall be subject to punishment; they shall die childless. 21 If a man takes his brother's wife, it is impurity; he has uncovered his brother's nakedness; they shall be childless.

22 You shall keep all my statutes and all my ordinances, and observe them, so that the land to which I bring you to settle in may not vomit you out. 23 You shall not follow the practices of the nation that I am driving out before you. Because they did all these things, I abhorred them. 24 But I have said to you: You shall inherit their land, and I will give it to you to possess, a land flowing with milk and honey. I am the LORD your God; I have separated you from the peoples. 25 You shall therefore make a distinction between the clean animal and the unclean, and between the unclean bird and the clean; you shall not bring abomination on yourselves by animal or by bird or by anything with which the ground teems, which I have set apart for you to hold unclean. 26 You shall be holy to me; for I the LORD am holy, and I have separated you from the other peoples to be mine.

27 A man or a woman who is a medium or a wizard shall be put to death; they shall be stoned to death, their blood is upon them.

The Holiness of Priests

21 The LORD said to Moses: Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them:

No one shall defile himself for a dead person among his relatives, 2 except for his nearest kin: his mother, his father, his son, his daughter, his brother; 3 likewise, for a virgin sister, close to him because she has had no husband, he may defile himself for her. 4 But he shall not defile himself as a husband among his people and so profane himself. 5 They shall not make bald spots upon their heads, or shave off the edges of their beards, or make any gashes in their flesh. 6 They shall be holy to their God, and not profane the name of their God; for they offer the LORD's offerings by fire, the food of their God; therefore they shall be holy. 7 They shall not marry a prostitute or a woman who has been defiled; neither shall they marry a woman divorced from her husband. For they are holy to their God, 8 and you shall treat them as holy, since they offer the

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flesh of one's flesh." **20.20** See 18.14. **20.21** A rejection of the levirate (Deut 25.5), whereby the name of the deceased husband is preserved through the progeny born of his wife and his brother. *Childless.* Once again, the divine measure-for-measure punishment is manifest: his wish to have a child from his brother's widow will be denied. **20.24** *Honey*, date syrup (Deut 8.8). **20.25** Making distinctions between the animals that form one's diet teaches one to make distinctions in human contact. **20.27** *Is a medium*, lit. "has inside him an ancestral spirit." An appendix. Whereas those who consult mediums are punished by God (v. 6), the mediums themselves are put to death by people.

21.1–22.33 Restrictions are placed upon the priests to guard against moral and ritual defilement, which might entail dire consequences for them and the people (22.9, 15–16; cf. 4.3; 15.31). Disqualifications of sacrifices are also enumerated (22.21–24). Ritual impurity stems from these sources: certain scale diseases (see chs. 13–14), genital fluxes, both male and female (see ch. 15), and carcasses (see ch. 11) or corpses (Num 19, a knowledge of which is presumed here). Contamination by corpses is the most severe of the ritual impurities because a person becomes contaminated merely by being under the same roof as a corpse (Num 19.14) and because the impurity lasts for seven days (Num 19.14, 16) and can only be eliminated by the unique rite of being aspersed with the ashes of a red cow (Num 19.17–19). There is no prohibition against coming in contact with a corpse (it is assumed that one may, and indeed should, bury the dead). The only restriction is that the purificatory rite may not be overlooked or even delayed (Num 19.13, 19). This allowance, however, does not hold for a priest. He is holy, and the contact between holiness and impurity not only is forbidden; it is lethal (see 7.20–21; 22.9). Thus, the permission given to priests to bury their closest blood relatives (their nuclear family; 21.1–4) constitutes a concession. **21.4** *People*, rather "kin" (see 20.5–6), implying that the priest may not defile himself for the burial of his wife or any of her relatives. If, however, the words "as a husband" are deleted (a possible dittography of the following word), then the prohibition repeats and forms an inclusion with v. 1, a structure repeated in vv. 17b, 21. **21.5** These mourning rites are also forbidden to Israelites (19.27–28). **21.7** *Woman who has been defiled*, probably raped, which carries no stigma for her if she is the daughter of a layman (Deut 22.28–29; cf. Lev 21.9). *Divorced*, but not a widow; the criterion is reputation. **21.8** *Treat them as*

food of your God; they shall be holy to
you, for I the LORD, I who sanctify you,
am holy. 9 When the daughter of a priest
profanes herself through prostitution, she
profanes her father; she shall be burned
to death.

10 The priest who is exalted above his
fellows, on whose head the anointing oil
has been poured and who has been conse-
crated to wear the vestments, shall not di-
shevel his hair, nor tear his vestments.
11 He shall not go where there is a dead
body; he shall not defile himself even for
his father or mother. 12 He shall not go
outside the sanctuary and thus profane
the sanctuary of his God; for the conse-
cration of the anointing oil of his God is
upon him: I am the LORD. 13 He shall
marry only a woman who is a virgin. 14 A
widow, or a divorced woman, or a woman
who has been defiled, a prostitute, these
he shall not marry. He shall marry a vir-
gin of his own kin, 15 that he may not pro-
fane his offspring among his kin; for I am
the LORD; I sanctify him.

16 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:
17 Speak to Aaron and say: No one of
your offspring throughout their genera-
tions who has a blemish may approach to
offer the food of his God. 18 For no one
who has a blemish shall draw near, one
who is blind or lame, or one who has a
mutilated face or a limb too long, 19 or
one who has a broken foot or a broken
hand, 20 or a hunchback, or a dwarf, or a
man with a blemish in his eyes or an itch-
ing disease or scabs or crushed testicles.
21 No descendant of Aaron the priest who
has a blemish shall come near to offer the
LORD's offerings by fire; since he has a
blemish, he shall not come near to offer
the food of his God. 22 He may eat the
food of his God, of the most holy as well
as of the holy. 23 But he shall not come
near the curtain or approach the altar, be-
cause he has a blemish, that he may not
profane my sanctuaries; for I am the
LORD; I sanctify them. 24 Thus Moses
spoke to Aaron and to his sons and to all
the people of Israel.

The Use of Holy Offerings

22 The LORD spoke to Moses, say-
ing: 2 Direct Aaron and his sons
to deal carefully with the sacred donations
of the people of Israel, which they dedi-
cate to me, so that they may not profane
my holy name; I am the LORD. 3 Say to
them: If anyone among all your offspring
throughout your generations comes near
the sacred donations, which the people of
Israel dedicate to the LORD, while he is in
a state of uncleanness, that person shall be
cut off from my presence: I am the LORD.
4 No one of Aaron's offspring who has a
leprous[e] disease or suffers a discharge
may eat of the sacred donations until he is
clean. Whoever touches anything made
unclean by a corpse or a man who has had
an emission of semen, 5 and whoever
touches any swarming thing by which he
may be made unclean or any human be-
ing by whom he may be made unclean—
whatever his uncleanness may be— 6 the
person who touches any such shall be un-

e A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain

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holy, by seeing to it that your daughters qualify as their wives (vv. 7, 9). *Sanctify you.* One may read "sanctify them" with Septuagint, the Samaritan Pentateuch, and a Dead Sea Scroll fragment of Leviticus written in the old Hebrew alphabet (11QpaleoLev). **21.9** *She profanes her father,* just as a wife's character reflects on her husband (v. 7). **21.10** *The priest . . . exalted above his fellows,* i.e., the high priest, may not engage even in permitted mourning rites. **21.11** Sight of a corpse also contaminates a high priest. **21.12** He may not leave the sanctuary to follow the bier (see 10.7). **21.13** Since he is appointed during the lifetime of his father (6.22; 16.32), he could be young and unmarried. **21.17, 21** *Approach . . . come near,* more precisely "qualify." **21.23** *Near the curtain,* i.e., officiate, the prerogative only of the high priest. *My sanctuaries,* literally, "my holy things." *I sanctify them.* Though the priests are invariably holy, their sanctity is enhanced by their observance of these prohibitions. **22.2** *Deal carefully with,* lit. "separate themselves from" (see Num 6.3; Ezek 14.7). *Sacred donations* include all the sacrifices and offerings to the sanctuary, both the less holy (e.g., the well-being offering, v. 21) and the most holy (e.g., the purification offering, 6.25) from which the priest receives stipulated prebends (see 6.25; 7.31–32) and which he would defile if he ate them in a state of impurity (vv. 4–8). **22.3** *Comes near,* or "encroaches upon." **22.4** *Has a leprous disease or suffers a discharge.* See chs. 13–15. The third source of contamination, the corpse, is assumed. *Anything,* more accurately "anyone" (similarly "it" in Num 19.22 should read "him"). **22.6–7** *Washed . . . When,* rather "first washed . . . Then when."

clean until evening and shall not eat of the
sacred donations unless he has washed his
body in water. 7 When the sun sets he shall
be clean; and afterward he may eat of the
sacred donations, for they are his food.
8 That which died or was torn by wild ani-
mals he shall not eat, becoming unclean
by it: I am the LORD. 9 They shall keep my
charge, so that they may not incur guilt
and die in the sanctuary[f] for having pro-
faned it: I am the LORD; I sanctify them.
10 No lay person shall eat of the sa-
cred donations. No bound or hired ser-
vant of the priest shall eat of the sacred
donations; 11 but if a priest acquires any-
one by purchase, the person may eat of
them; and those that are born in his house
may eat of his food. 12 If a priest's daugh-
ter marries a layman, she shall not eat of
the offering of the sacred donations;
13 but if a priest's daughter is widowed or
divorced, without offspring, and returns
to her father's house, as in her youth, she
may eat of her father's food. No lay per-
son shall eat of it. 14 If a man eats of the
sacred donation unintentionally, he shall
add one-fifth of its value to it, and give
the sacred donation to the priest. 15 No
one shall profane the sacred donations of
the people of Israel, which they offer to
the LORD, 16 causing them to bear guilt re-
quiring a guilt offering, by eating their sa-
cred donations: for I am the LORD; I
sanctify them.

Acceptable Offerings

17 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:
18 Speak to Aaron and his sons and all the
people of Israel and say to them: When
anyone of the house of Israel or of the
aliens residing in Israel presents an offer-
ing, whether in payment of a vow or as a
freewill offering that is offered to the
LORD as a burnt offering, 19 to be accept-
able in your behalf it shall be a male with-
out blemish, of the cattle or the sheep or
the goats. 20 You shall not offer anything
that has a blemish, for it will not be ac-
ceptable in your behalf.
21 When anyone offers a sacrifice of
well-being to the LORD, in fulfillment of a
vow or as a freewill offering, from the
herd or from the flock, to be acceptable it
must be perfect; there shall be no blemish
in it. 22 Anything blind, or injured, or
maimed, or having a discharge or an itch
or scabs—these you shall not offer to the
LORD or put any of them on the altar as
offerings by fire to the LORD. 23 An ox or
a lamb that has a limb too long or too
short you may present for a freewill offer-
ing; but it will not be accepted for a vow.
24 Any animal that has its testicles bruised
or crushed or torn or cut, you shall not
offer to the LORD; such you shall not do
within your land, 25 nor shall you accept
any such animals from a foreigner to of-
fer as food to your God; since they are
mutilated, with a blemish in them, they
shall not be accepted in your behalf.
26 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:
27 When an ox or a sheep or a goat is
born, it shall remain seven days with its
mother, and from the eighth day on it
shall be acceptable as the LORD's offering
by fire. 28 But you shall not slaughter,
from the herd or the flock, an animal with
its young on the same day. 29 When you
sacrifice a thanksgiving offering to the
LORD, you shall sacrifice it so that it may
be acceptable in your behalf. 30 It shall be
eaten on the same day; you shall not leave
any of it until morning: I am the LORD.
31 Thus you shall keep my command-
ments and observe them: I am the LORD.
32 You shall not profane my holy name,
that I may be sanctified among the people

f Vg: Heb *incur guilt for it and die in it*

For they are his food, a concession. Note that Ezek 44.26 requires more rigorous purification. **22.8** Not forbidden to laypersons (17.15). **22.9** *Keep my charge,* i.e., "observe my prohibitions." *Incur guilt and die in the sanctuary for having profaned it,* more precisely, "incur punishment and die for it, having profaned it (the prohibition)." **22.10** *Bound or hired servant,* a resident laborer. **22.15** *No one,* i.e., no priest. **22.16** *Guilt requiring a guilt offering,* a penalty of reparation. **22.18** *Payment of a vow or as a freewill offering.* See 7.16. **22.21–24** The defects that disqualify animals from the altar closely resemble those that disqualify priests from officiating at it (21.16–23). **22.21** *In fulfillment of a,* or "for an explicit." **22.28** *An animal,* i.e., a mother. **22.29** *Thanksgiving offering.* In H this offering is not a well-being offering (v. 21; 19.5; cf. 7.11–15 [P]; on H and P, see Introduction). **22.32** *I sanctify you,* namely, Israel (see v. 33). However, Israel is not innately holy as are the priests (21.7); Israel is enjoined to strive for a holy life by obeying the Lord's commandments (v. 31; see note on 19.1–37).

of Israel: I am the LORD; I sanctify you,
33 I who brought you out of the land of
Egypt to be your God: I am the LORD.

Appointed Festivals

23 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 2 Speak to the people of Israel and say to them: These are the appointed festivals of the LORD that you shall proclaim as holy convocations, my appointed festivals.

The Sabbath, Passover, and Unleavened Bread

3 Six days shall work be done; but the seventh day is a sabbath of complete rest, a holy convocation; you shall do no work: it is a sabbath to the LORD throughout your settlements.

4 These are the appointed festivals of the LORD, the holy convocations, which you shall celebrate at the time appointed for them. 5 In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, at twilight,[g] there shall be a passover offering to the LORD, 6 and on the fifteenth day of the same month is the festival of unleavened bread to the LORD; seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. 7 On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall not work at your occupations. 8 For seven days you shall present the LORD's offerings by fire; on the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation: you shall not work at your occupations.

The Offering of First Fruits

9 The LORD spoke to Moses: 10 Speak to the people of Israel and say to them: When you enter the land that I am giving you and you reap its harvest, you shall bring the sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest. 11 He shall raise the sheaf before the LORD, that you may find acceptance; on the day after the sabbath the priest shall raise it. 12 On the day when you raise the sheaf, you shall offer a lamb a year old, without blemish, as a burnt offering to the LORD. 13 And the grain offering with it shall be two-tenths of an ephah of choice flour mixed with oil, an offering by fire of pleasing odor to the LORD; and the drink offering with it shall be of wine, one-fourth of a hin. 14 You shall eat no bread or parched grain or fresh ears until that very day, until you have brought the offering of your God: it is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your settlements.

The Festival of Weeks

15 And from the day after the sabbath, from the day on which you bring the sheaf of the elevation offering, you shall count off seven weeks; they shall be complete. 16 You shall count until the day after the seventh sabbath, fifty days; then you shall present an offering of new grain to the LORD. 17 You shall bring from your

g Heb *between the two evenings*

23.1–44 H's listing of the festivals is distinguished from the Old Epic (JE) tradition (Ex 23.14–17; 34.21–23; see Introduction to Genesis) and the Deuteronomical influence (Deut 16; see Introduction to Deuteronomy) by emphasis on natural and agricultural data. Because Lev 23 addresses laypeople like farmers, rather than priests, the New Moon festival is omitted (on this day the Israelites have no special duties or prohibitions). Indeed, with the exception of vv. 13, 18–20, all requirements of the priestly, public cult are ignored, and only the offerings of individual farmers are enumerated. **23.3** This verse dealing with the sabbath is a later interpolation, possibly from exilic times, since it mentions no sacrifices. Its incongruity in this chapter is emphasized by the fact that the sabbath is not an appointed festival (v. 2) and that the original beginning of this chapter is clearly v. 4. **23.5–8** Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread were originally discrete festivals. The Passover was observed at home (Ex 12) and the pilgrimage to the local sanctuary took place on the seventh day (Ex 13.6). When worship was centralized, the Passover sacrifice was observed at the Jerusalem temple and the pilgrimage was transferred to the first day, thus amalgamating the two festivals (Deut 16.1–8). **23.8** *The LORD's offerings*, enumerated in Num 28.16–25. **23.10** *Sheaf*, or "armful." *First fruits of your harvest*, i.e., barley. See 2.14. **23.11** *That you may find acceptance*, so that the Lord will bless your crop. *The day after the sabbath*. Three opinions about the day were recorded in Second Temple times—the day after the Passover, Nisan 16 (Pharisees); the Sunday falling during the festival (Sadducees); and the Sunday after the festival (Qumran)—creating confusion when to celebrate the Festival of Weeks. This phrase (also in v. 15) is probably a gloss, and originally each farmer brought the first grain offering whenever it ripened. **23.15** *Seven weeks*, lit. "seven sabbaths," i.e., seven weeks, each

settlements two loaves of bread as an elevation offering, each made of two-tenths of an ephah; they shall be of choice flour, baked with leaven, as first fruits to the LORD. 18 You shall present with the bread seven lambs a year old without blemish, one young bull, and two rams; they shall be a burnt offering to the LORD, along with their grain offering and their drink offerings, an offering by fire of pleasing odor to the LORD. 19 You shall also offer one male goat for a sin offering, and two male lambs a year old as a sacrifice of well-being. 20 The priest shall raise them with the bread of the first fruits as an elevation offering before the LORD, together with the two lambs; they shall be holy to the LORD for the priest. 21 On that same day you shall make proclamation; you shall hold a holy convocation; you shall not work at your occupations. This is a statute forever in all your settlements throughout your generations.

22 When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest; you shall leave them for the poor and for the alien: I am the LORD your God.

The Festival of Trumpets

23 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 24 Speak to the people of Israel, saying: In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe a day of complete rest, a holy convocation commemorated with trumpet blasts. 25 You shall not work at your occupations; and you shall present the LORD's offering by fire.

The Day of Atonement

26 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 27 Now, the tenth day of this seventh month is the day of atonement; it shall be a holy convocation for you: you shall deny yourselves[h] and present the LORD's offering by fire; 28 and you shall do no work during that entire day; for it is a day of atonement, to make atonement on your behalf before the LORD your God. 29 For anyone who does not practice self-denial[i] during that entire day shall be cut off from the people. 30 And anyone who does any work during that entire day, such a one I will destroy from the midst of the people. 31 You shall do no work: it is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your settlements. 32 It shall be to you a sabbath of complete rest, and you shall deny yourselves;[h] on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening you shall keep your sabbath.

The Festival of Booths

33 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 34 Speak to the people of Israel, saying: On the fifteenth day of this seventh month, and lasting seven days, there shall be the festival of booths[j] to the LORD. 35 The first day shall be a holy convocation; you shall not work at your occupations. 36 Seven days you shall present the LORD's offerings by fire; on the eighth day you shall observe a holy convocation and present the LORD's offerings by fire; it is a solemn assembly; you shall not work at your occupations.

37 These are the appointed festivals of the LORD, which you shall celebrate as times of holy convocation, for presenting to the LORD offerings by fire—burnt offerings and grain offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings, each on its proper day— 38 apart from the sabbaths of the LORD, and apart from your gifts, and apart from all your votive offerings, and

h Or *shall fast* *i* Or *does not fast*
j Or *tabernacles*: Heb *succoth*

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ending with the sabbath. **23.16** *New grain*, i.e., wheat. **23.18–19** The sacrifices are enumerated since they differ slightly from those specified in Num 28.26–31. **23.22** Closing statement for both the barley and wheat harvests (cf. 19.9–10). **23.24, 39** *Complete rest*, not complete, since only occupational work is forbidden (v. 25). *Trumpet*, rather "horn" (Hebrew *shofar*; cf. Ps. 81.3). Its use marks the beginning of the old, agricultural calendar when the fates of humans and nature (i.e., adequate rain) were decided. **23.25** *LORD's offering*, prescribed in Num 29.1–6. **23.27** *LORD's offering*, prescribed in Num 29.7–11. **23.28** Prescriptions for the *day of atonement* are given in 16.1–28. **23.29** *Self-denial*. See 16.29. **23.30** *I will destroy*. Work, a public act, is a worse violation than eating, a private act, evoking God's immediate retribution. **23.36** *LORD's offerings*, prescribed in Num 29.12–34, 35–38. The *solemn assembly*, the purpose of which is to pray for rain, is an important function of all the festivals of the seventh month (cf. Joel 2.15). **23.38** *Apart from the sabbaths*—proof that the prescription for the sabbath

apart from all your freewill offerings,
which you give to the LORD.
39 Now, the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the produce of the land, you shall keep the festival of the LORD, lasting seven days; a complete rest on the first day, and a complete rest on the eighth day. 40 On the first day you shall take the fruit of majestic[k] trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days. 41 You shall keep it as a festival to the LORD seven days in the year; you shall keep it in the seventh month as a statute forever throughout your generations. 42 You shall live in booths for seven days; all that are citizens in Israel shall live in booths, 43 so that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.
44 Thus Moses declared to the people of Israel the appointed festivals of the LORD.

The Lamp

24 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 2 Command the people of Israel to bring you pure oil of beaten olives for the lamp, that a light may be kept burning regularly. 3 Aaron shall set it up in the tent of meeting, outside the curtain of the covenant,[l] to burn from evening to morning before the LORD regularly; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations. 4 He shall set up the lamps on the lampstand of pure gold[m] before the LORD regularly.

The Bread for the Tabernacle

5 You shall take choice flour, and bake twelve loaves of it; two-tenths of an ephah shall be in each loaf. 6 You shall place them in two rows, six in a row, on the table of pure gold.[n] 7 You shall put pure frankincense with each row, to be a token offering for the bread, as an offering by fire to the LORD. 8 Every sabbath day Aaron shall set them in order before the LORD regularly as a commitment of the people of Israel, as a covenant forever. 9 They shall be for Aaron and his descendants, who shall eat them in a holy place, for they are most holy portions for him from the offerings by fire to the LORD, a perpetual due.

Blasphemy and Its Punishment

10 A man whose mother was an Israelite and whose father was an Egyptian came out among the people of Israel; and the Israelite woman's son and a certain Israelite began fighting in the camp. 11 The Israelite woman's son blasphemed the Name in a curse. And they brought him

k Meaning of Heb uncertain *l* Or *treaty*, or *testament*; Heb *eduth* *m* Heb *pure lampstand* *n* Heb *pure table*

(vv. 2b–3) was not originally part of this chapter. **23.40** *Fruit of majestic trees*, traditionally, the citron. *Leafy trees*, identified with the myrtle. *Seven days*, to be spent at the sanctuary. **23.42** Possibly the *booths* were to accommodate the vast number of pilgrims at the sanctuary (cf. Hos 12.9). *Citizens*, but not aliens, who are not bound by performative commandments. **23.43** *Booths* (Hebrew *sukkot*), possibly a topographical name referring to the first station in the wilderness after the exodus (Ex 12.37; Num 33.5).

24.1–23 Instructions on the lamp, the bread, and blasphemy. **24.1–4** The lamp oil. Since the lampstand stood inside the sanctuary, its greater sanctity required the use of pure oil and also required it to be lighted by the high priest (Ex 30.7; Num 8.1–4; "sons" in Ex 27.21 is a probable error). **24.2** *For the lamp, that a light*, or "for lighting, so that a lamp." **24.3** *Curtain of the covenant*, short for "curtain that is over the ark of the covenant" (Ex 30.6). **24.5–9** The bread of the Presence. **24.5** Moses provides the loaves the first time; thereafter, they are provided by the Israelites (v. 8). **24.6** *Rows*, i.e., piles. **24.7** The *token offering* is always offered up with part of the grain offering (2.9), but here, since none of the bread goes on the altar, the text must state that the token offering comprises solely the frankincense. **24.8** *Every sabbath day* Aaron should remove the old loaves and set up the new. **24.10–14, 23** The law of blasphemy. Blasphemy means more than speaking contemptuously of God, for which there is no stated penalty (Ex 22.28). It must involve the additional offense of uttering the sacred name of God, the Tetragrammaton (YHWH), and it is the combination of the two (24.15–16) that warrants the death penalty. The Tetragrammaton's power affects not only the speaker but the hearers; their contamination is literally transferred back to the blasphemer by the ritual of the imposition of hands. **24.11** *The Name*, a circumlocution for the divine name.

to Moses—now his mother's name was
Shelomith, daughter of Dibri, of the tribe
of Dan— 12and they put him in custody,
until the decision of the LORD should be
made clear to them.

13 The LORD said to Moses, saying:
14Take the blasphemer outside the camp;
and let all who were within hearing lay
their hands on his head, and let the whole
congregation stone him. 15And speak to
the people of Israel, saying: Anyone who
curses God shall bear the sin. 16One who
blasphemes the name of the LORD shall be
put to death; the whole congregation shall
stone the blasphemer. Aliens as well as cit-
izens, when they blaspheme the Name,
shall be put to death. 17Anyone who kills
a human being shall be put to death.
18Anyone who kills an animal shall make
restitution for it, life for life. 19Anyone
who maims another shall suffer the same
injury in return: 20fracture for fracture,
eye for eye, tooth for tooth; the injury in-
flicted is the injury to be suffered. 21One
who kills an animal shall make restitution
for it; but one who kills a human being
shall be put to death. 22You shall have
one law for the alien and for the citizen:
for I am the LORD your God. 23Moses
spoke thus to the people of Israel; and
they took the blasphemer outside the
camp, and stoned him to death. The peo-
ple of Israel did as the LORD had com-
manded Moses.

The Sabbatical Year

25 The LORD spoke to Moses on
Mount Sinai, saying: 2Speak to
the people of Israel and say to them:
When you enter the land that I am giving
you, the land shall observe a sabbath for
the LORD. 3Six years you shall sow your
field, and six years you shall prune your
vineyard, and gather in their yield; 4but
in the seventh year there shall be a sab-
bath of complete rest for the land, a sab-
bath for the LORD: you shall not sow your
field or prune your vineyard. 5You shall
not reap the aftergrowth of your harvest
or gather the grapes of your unpruned
vine: it shall be a year of complete rest for
the land. 6You may eat what the land
yields during its sabbath—you, your male
and female slaves, your hired and your
bound laborers who live with you; 7for
your livestock also, and for the wild ani-
mals in your land all its yield shall be for
food.

The Year of Jubilee

8 You shall count off seven weeks[o] of
years, seven times seven years, so that the
period of seven weeks of years gives forty-
nine years. 9Then you shall have the
trumpet sounded loud; on the tenth day
of the seventh month—on the day of
atonement—you shall have the trumpet

o Or *sabbaths*

24.14 The purpose of the hand-leaning was to transfer the pollution generated by the blasphemy back to its source. **24.15–22** An appendix of civil-damage laws. The extension of *lex talionis* (Ex 21.23–25; Deut 19.21) to the stranger is one of the great moral achievements of the legislation preserved in Leviticus. Every distinction is eradicated not only between the powerful and the helpless but even between the Israelite and the non-Israelite. The interpolation of these civil statutes, with their emphasis upon the resident alien, is due to the legal status of the half-Israelite offender. **24.15–16** One who *curses God*, in secret, will be punished by God; one who *blasphemes*, in public, will be punished by human agency. **24.16** *Aliens*, thereby including the blasphemer of vv. 10–11, the son of a non-Israelite father. **24.18** *Life for life* perhaps originally began the talion formula of v. 20. **24.21** A repetition of vv. 17–18 for the sake of an envelope structure.

25.1–55 Each seventh year is a sabbath of liberating respite for Hebrew slaves (Ex 21.2–6; Deut 15.12–18), and the land (Ex 23.10–11). In H (see Introduction), this "full" sabbatical is reserved for the jubilee, whereas the seventh-year sabbatical applies only to the land. These two laws are not in conflict. Exodus refers to members of a *landless* class who voluntarily sell themselves into slavery. Lev 25 deals with impoverished *landed* Israelites who are free to sell themselves as slaves but who may not be treated as slaves and who return to their land at the jubilee or when they are redeemed (vv. 39–42). Deuteronomy extends the sabbatical release to debtors (Deut 15.1–11). **25.1** *Mount Sinai* forms an inclusion with 26.46, indicating that, originally, chs. 25–26 formed a separate scroll. **25.2** *The land shall observe a sabbath.* All who reside on it, including aliens, must observe it. **25.3–5, 11** *Sow . . . reap*, proof that the sabbatical and jubilee years begin in the fall. **25.6** This verse alters Ex 23.11 by denying the sabbatical aftergrowth to the poor and endowing it to the owner and his household. H (see Introduction) makes other, ongoing provisions for the

sounded throughout all your land. 10 And
you shall hallow the fiftieth year and you
shall proclaim liberty throughout the land
to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee
for you: you shall return, every one of
you, to your property and every one of
you to your family. 11 That fiftieth year
shall be a jubilee for you: you shall not
sow, or reap the aftergrowth, or harvest
the unpruned vines. 12 For it is a jubilee; it
shall be holy to you: you shall eat only
what the field itself produces.

13 In this year of jubilee you shall re-
turn, every one of you, to your property.
14 When you make a sale to your neighbor
or buy from your neighbor, you shall not
cheat one another. 15 When you buy from
your neighbor, you shall pay only for the
number of years since the jubilee; the
seller shall charge you only for the re-
maining crop years. 16 If the years are
more, you shall increase the price, and if
the years are fewer, you shall diminish the
price; for it is a certain number of har-
vests that are being sold to you. 17 You
shall not cheat one another, but you shall
fear your God; for I am the LORD
your God.

18 You shall observe my statutes and
faithfully keep my ordinances, so that you
may live on the land securely. 19 The land
will yield its fruit, and you will eat your fill
and live on it securely. 20 Should you ask,
"What shall we eat in the seventh year, if
we may not sow or gather in our crop?" 21 I
will order my blessing for you in the sixth
year, so that it will yield a crop for three
years. 22 When you sow in the eighth year,
you will be eating from the old crop; until
the ninth year, when its produce comes
in, you shall eat the old. 23 The land shall
not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is
mine; with me you are but aliens and ten-
ants. 24 Throughout the land that you
hold, you shall provide for the redemp-
tion of the land.

25 If anyone of your kin falls into dif-
ficulty and sells a piece of property, then
the next of kin shall come and redeem
what the relative has sold. 26 If the person
has no one to redeem it, but then pros-
pers and finds sufficient means to do so,
27 the years since its sale shall be com-
puted and the difference shall be re-
funded to the person to whom it was sold,
and the property shall be returned. 28 But
if there are not sufficient means to recover
it, what was sold shall remain with the
purchaser until the year of jubilee; in the
jubilee it shall be released, and the prop-
erty shall be returned.

29 If anyone sells a dwelling house in
a walled city, it may be redeemed until a
year has elapsed since its sale; the right of
redemption shall be one year. 30 If it is not
redeemed before a full year has elapsed, a
house that is in a walled city shall pass in
perpetuity to the purchaser, throughout
the generations; it shall not be released in
the jubilee. 31 But houses in villages that
have no walls around them shall be
classed as open country; they may be re-
deemed, and they shall be released in the
jubilee. 32 As for the cities of the Levites,

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poor (19.9–10; 23.20). **25.10** *Liberty*. Hebrew *deror* is related to Akkadian *duraru*, which could also entail the emancipation of indentured slaves, the return of confiscated land, and the cancellation of debts. However, it was episodic, occasionally proclaimed on the ascension of the Mesopotamian king to the throne. Also its purpose was strictly economic, to relieve the plight of the poor, whereas in Israel its goal was social as well, to preserve the clan structure by restoring its landholdings. *For you*, not for the land or for the release of alien slaves (vv. 45–46). Note that the term "sabbath" is absent in the jubilee provisions. **25.15** *Pay*, i.e., deduct. **25.20–22** The sixth to ninth years, mentioned here, are reckoned by the spring calendar. Hence the sabbatical and succeeding jubilee years, which follow the fall calendar, must begin in the fall of the sixth and seventh years and terminate in the spring of the seventh and eighth years, respectively. Thus, what is sown in the eighth year will be reaped in the ninth, and the harvest of the sixth year must therefore last three years. **25.23** *In perpetuity*, Hebrew *tzemitut*, related to the Akkadian verb *tzamatu*, "financially hand over (real estate)"; i.e., neither the seller nor his heirs may ever revoke the sale. **25.25–55** Four cases of worsening impoverishment: selling part of the land, depending upon an Israelite (probably a kinsman) for support, selling oneself as a resident laborer to an Israelite (probably a kinsman), selling oneself as a slave to a resident alien. **25.25** Since the purpose of the jubilee is to preserve the clan holdings, the redeemer (a close kinsman) probably keeps the land until the jubilee (as shown by v. 33 below) as compensation for his purchase. **25.29–34** Unwalled (Canaanite) cities, not having been allocated to the tribal clans, are not subject to the jubilee. Redemption and jubilee, however, apply to the al-

the Levites shall forever have the right of redemption of the houses in the cities belonging to them. 33 Such property as may be redeemed from the Levites—houses sold in a city belonging to them—shall be released in the jubilee; because the houses in the cities of the Levites are their possession among the people of Israel. 34 But the open land around their cities may not be sold; for that is their possession for all time.

35 If any of your kin fall into difficulty and become dependent on you,[p] you shall support them; they shall live with you as though resident aliens. 36 Do not take interest in advance or otherwise make a profit from them, but fear your God; let them live with you. 37 You shall not lend them your money at interest taken in advance, or provide them food at a profit. 38 I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan, to be your God.

39 If any who are dependent on you become so impoverished that they sell themselves to you, you shall not make them serve as slaves. 40 They shall remain with you as hired or bound laborers. They shall serve with you until the year of the jubilee. 41 Then they and their children with them shall be free from your authority; they shall go back to their own family and return to their ancestral property. 42 For they are my servants, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt; they shall not be sold as slaves are sold. 43 You shall not rule over them with harshness, but shall fear your God. 44 As for the male and female slaves whom you may have, it is from the nations around you that you may acquire male and female slaves. 45 You may also acquire them from among the aliens residing with you, and from their families that are with you, who have been born in your land; and they may be your property. 46 You may keep them as a possession for your children after you, for them to inherit as property. These you may treat as slaves, but as for your fellow Israelites, no one shall rule over the other with harshness.

47 If resident aliens among you prosper, and if any of your kin fall into difficulty with one of them and sell themselves to an alien, or to a branch of the alien's family, 48 after they have sold themselves they shall have the right of redemption; one of their brothers may redeem them, 49 or their uncle or their uncle's son may redeem them, or anyone of their family who is of their own flesh may redeem them; or if they prosper they may redeem themselves. 50 They shall compute with the purchaser the total from the year when they sold themselves to the alien until the jubilee year; the price of the sale shall be applied to the number of years: the time they were with the owner shall be rated as the time of a hired laborer. 51 If many years remain, they shall pay for their redemption in proportion to the purchase price; 52 and if few years remain until the jubilee year, they shall compute thus: according to the years involved they shall make payment for their redemption. 53 As a laborer hired by the year they shall be under the alien's authority, who shall not, however, rule with harshness over them in your sight. 54 And if they have not been redeemed in any of these ways, they and their children with them shall go free in the jubilee year. 55 For to me the people of Israel are servants; they are my servants whom I brought out from the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

Rewards for Obedience

26 You shall make for yourselves no idols and erect no carved images or pillars, and you shall not place figured stones in your land, to worship at them;

p Meaning of Heb uncertain

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located cities of the Levites. **25.33** The first half of this verse reads better as "Whoever of the Levites redeems the house, which was sold in the city of his possession [so Septuagint], must be released in the jubilee." **25.36** *Otherwise make a profit,* rather "accrued interest." **25.37** *A profit,* or "accrued interest." **25.39–43** The fact that female slaves are not mentioned here (cf. v. 44) implies that the Holiness (H) source did not permit, or perhaps even contemplate, female slavery. Cf. Ex 21.7–11; Deut 15.12–18 where, however, the context speaks of Hebrews (i.e., impoverished, landless Israelites; see note on 25.1–55) who sell their daughters for the purpose of marriage. **25.40** *Or bound,* rather "resident." **25.42** *My servants,* not yours. The heart of this chapter; cf. also v. 55.

26.1–46 The threat of total destruction and

for I am the LORD your God. 2 You shall
keep my sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary: I am the LORD.
3 If you follow my statutes and keep
my commandments and observe them
faithfully, 4 I will give you your rains in
their season, and the land shall yield its
produce, and the trees of the field shall
yield their fruit. 5 Your threshing shall
overtake the vintage, and the vintage shall
overtake the sowing; you shall eat your
bread to the full, and live securely in your
land. 6 And I will grant peace in the land,
and you shall lie down, and no one shall
make you afraid; I will remove dangerous
animals from the land, and no sword shall
go through your land. 7 You shall give
chase to your enemies, and they shall fall
before you by the sword. 8 Five of you
shall give chase to a hundred, and a hundred of you shall give chase to ten thousand; your enemies shall fall before you
by the sword. 9 I will look with favor upon
you and make you fruitful and multiply
you; and I will maintain my covenant with
you. 10 You shall eat old grain long stored,
and you shall have to clear out the old to
make way for the new. 11 I will place my
dwelling in your midst, and I shall not abhor you. 12 And I will walk among you,
and will be your God, and you shall be my
people. 13 I am the LORD your God who
brought you out of the land of Egypt, to
be their slaves no more; I have broken the
bars of your yoke and made you walk
erect.

Penalties for Disobedience

14 But if you will not obey me, and do
not observe all these commandments, 15 if
you spurn my statutes, and abhor my ordinances, so that you will not observe all
my commandments, and you break my
covenant, 16 I in turn will do this to you: I
will bring terror on you; consumption and
fever that waste the eyes and cause life to
pine away. You shall sow your seed in
vain, for your enemies shall eat it. 17 I will
set my face against you, and you shall be
struck down by your enemies; your foes
shall rule over you, and you shall flee
though no one pursues you. 18 And if in
spite of this you will not obey me, I will
continue to punish you sevenfold for your
sins. 19 I will break your proud glory, and
I will make your sky like iron and your
earth like copper. 20 Your strength shall
be spent to no purpose: your land shall
not yield its produce, and the trees of the
land shall not yield their fruit.
21 If you continue hostile to me, and
will not obey me, I will continue to plague
you sevenfold for your sins. 22 I will let
loose wild animals against you, and they
shall bereave you of your children and destroy your livestock; they shall make you
few in number, and your roads shall be
deserted.
23 If in spite of these punishments
you have not turned back to me, but continue hostile to me, 24 then I too will continue hostile to you: I myself will strike
you sevenfold for your sins. 25 I will bring
the sword against you, executing vengeance for the covenant; and if you withdraw within your cities, I will send
pestilence among you, and you shall be
delivered into enemy hands. 26 When I
break your staff of bread, ten women
shall bake your bread in a single oven,
and they shall dole out your bread by
weight; and though you eat, you shall not
be satisfied.
27 But if, despite this, you disobey me,
and continue hostile to me, 28 I will con-

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exile appears in three other books of the Bible: Deuteronomy, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel (whose eschatology is largely based on Lev 26). These books also share with this chapter a view that cultic transgressions alone, as here defined, cause the nation's collapse; idolatry (26.1) and the neglect of the sabbatical system (26.2, 34–35) are specified here. Since the events in chs. 25–26 are attributed to Israel's sojourn at Mount Sinai (25.1; 26.46), these may well constitute the text of the Sinaitic covenant according to the Holiness source. **26.1** *Carved images* even of Israel's God (Ex 20.4, 23). *Pillars.* This prohibition was originally restricted to worship of foreign gods (Ex 23.24), but beginning with Hezekiah and Josiah, kings of the eighth and seventh centuries B.C.E. respectively, it was extended to include Israel's God (Deut 16.22). *At,* rather "on." For similar language see Gen 47.31. **26.2** *Sabbaths,* i.e., the weekly sabbaths (19.3, 30), which may account for the inclusion of vv. 1–2 in this chapter to remind readers that not only neglecting the sabbatical year (vv. 34–35) but also the sabbath day accounts for Israel's exile. **26.3–13** The conditionality of the blessing is also found in ancient Near Eastern treaties. **26.14–39** Comparable curses are

tinue hostile to you in fury; I in turn will
punish you myself sevenfold for your sins.
29 You shall eat the flesh of your sons, and
you shall eat the flesh of your daughters.
30 I will destroy your high places and cut
down your incense altars; I will heap your
carcasses on the carcasses of your idols. I
will abhor you. 31 I will lay your cities
waste, will make your sanctuaries deso-
late, and I will not smell your pleasing
odors. 32 I will devastate the land, so that
your enemies who come to settle in it shall
be appalled at it. 33 And you I will scatter
among the nations, and I will unsheathe
the sword against you; your land shall be
a desolation, and your cities a waste.

34 Then the land shall enjoy[q] its sab-
bath years as long as it lies desolate, while
you are in the land of your enemies; then
the land shall rest, and enjoy[q] its sabbath
years. 35 As long as it lies desolate, it shall
have the rest it did not have on your sab-
baths when you were living on it. 36 And
as for those of you who survive, I will send
faintness into their hearts in the lands of
their enemies; the sound of a driven leaf
shall put them to flight, and they shall flee
as one flees from the sword, and they
shall fall though no one pursues. 37 They
shall stumble over one another, as if to
escape a sword, though no one pursues;
and you shall have no power to stand
against your enemies. 38 You shall perish
among the nations, and the land of your
enemies shall devour you. 39 And those of
you who survive shall languish in the land
of your enemies because of their iniqui-
ties; also they shall languish because of
the iniquities of their ancestors.

40 But if they confess their iniquity
and the iniquity of their ancestors, in that
they committed treachery against me and,
moreover, that they continued hostile to
me— 41 so that I, in turn, continued hos-
tile to them and brought them into the
land of their enemies; if then their uncir-
cumcised heart is humbled and they make
amends for their iniquity, 42 then will I re-
member my covenant with Jacob; I will
remember also my covenant with Isaac
and also my covenant with Abraham, and
I will remember the land. 43 For the land
shall be deserted by them, and enjoy[q] its
sabbath years by lying desolate without
them, while they shall make amends for
their iniquity, because they dared to
spurn my ordinances, and they abhorred
my statutes. 44 Yet for all that, when they
are in the land of their enemies, I will not
spurn them, or abhor them so as to de-
stroy them utterly and break my covenant
with them; for I am the LORD their God;
45 but I will remember in their favor the
covenant with their ancestors whom I
brought out of the land of Egypt in the
sight of the nations, to be their God: I am
the LORD.

46 These are the statutes and ordi-
nances and laws that the LORD established
between himself and the people of Israel
on Mount Sinai through Moses.

Votive Offerings and Dedications

27 The LORD spoke to Moses, say-
ing: 2 Speak to the people of Is-
rael and say to them: When a person
makes an explicit vow to the LORD con-
cerning the equivalent for a human being,

q Or *make up for*

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appended to ancient Near Eastern treaties. **26.31** *Sanctuaries*, the multiple sanctuaries throughout the land before Hezekiah's reform. **26.34** *Sabbath years* refers to the sabbaticals, but not the jubilees since the term "sabbath" is inappropriate for the jubilee. **26.40** *Confess*. For the priestly tradition confession must be a coefficient of sacrifice (e.g. 5.5–6), but obviously not in exile.

27.1–34 An appendix closely associated with ch. 25 by its theme, the redemption of dedications (not votive offerings). It is organized as follows: (1) Redemption does not apply to humans since only their value, not their person, may be dedicated (vv. 1–28; but cf. v. 29). (2) Only impure animals may be redeemed; offerable ones must be sacrificed (vv. 9–13). (3) All land is redeemable because land is unofferable (vv. 14–19, 22–25); only *cherem* (Hebrew, "devoted") dedications (man, animal, or land, vv. 20–21, 28–29) may not be redeemed. (4) Firstlings (vv. 26–27) must be sacrificed unless they are defective or impure, in which case they are redeemed or sold. (5) Offerable crop tithe is redeemable; offerable animal tithe is unredeemable (vv. 30–33). One postulate explains these gradations: offerable animals are irredeemable because they must be sacrificed, whereas nonofferable animals and other "holy things" (see 5.14–6.7) are redeemable unless they are *cherem* (see note on 27.28–29). **27.1–8** The values in this section probably prevailed in the slave markets. Note that the price of a male infant (v. 6) above the age of one month corresponds with the redemption price of a male firstborn (Num 3.47; 18.16) and that the priest is enjoined

3 the equivalent for a male shall be: from
twenty to sixty years of age the equivalent
shall be fifty shekels of silver by the sanc-
tuary shekel. 4 If the person is a female,
the equivalent is thirty shekels. 5 If the age
is from five to twenty years of age, the
equivalent is twenty shekels for a male
and ten shekels for a female. 6 If the age is
from one month to five years, the equiva-
lent for a male is five shekels of silver, and
for a female the equivalent is three shek-
els of silver. 7 And if the person is sixty
years old or over, then the equivalent for
a male is fifteen shekels, and for a female
ten shekels. 8 If any cannot afford the
equivalent, they shall be brought before
the priest and the priest shall assess them;
the priest shall assess them according to
what each one making a vow can afford.

9 If it concerns an animal that may be
brought as an offering to the LORD, any
such that may be given to the LORD shall
be holy. 10 Another shall not be ex-
changed or substituted for it, either good
for bad or bad for good; and if one ani-
mal is substituted for another, both that
one and its substitute shall be holy. 11 If it
concerns any unclean animal that may not
be brought as an offering to the LORD, the
animal shall be presented before the
priest. 12 The priest shall assess it:
whether good or bad, according to the as-
sessment of the priest, so it shall be. 13 But
if it is to be redeemed, one-fifth must be
added to the assessment.

14 If a person consecrates a house to
the LORD, the priest shall assess it:
whether good or bad, as the priest as-
sesses it, so it shall stand. 15 And if the one
who consecrates the house wishes to re-
deem it, one-fifth shall be added to its as-
sessed value, and it shall revert to the
original owner.

16 If a person consecrates to the LORD
any inherited landholding, its assessment
shall be in accordance with its seed re-
quirements: fifty shekels of silver to a ho-
mer of barley seed. 17 If the person
consecrates the field as of the year of jubi-
lee, that assessment shall stand; 18 but if
the field is consecrated after the jubilee,
the priest shall compute the price for it
according to the years that remain until
the year of jubilee, and the assessment
shall be reduced. 19 And if the one who
consecrates the field wishes to redeem it,
then one-fifth shall be added to its as-
sessed value, and it shall revert to the
original owner; 20 but if the field is not
redeemed, or if it has been sold to some-
one else, it shall no longer be redeemable.
21 But when the field is released in the ju-
bilee, it shall be holy to the LORD as a de-
voted field; it becomes the priest's
holding. 22 If someone consecrates to the
LORD a field that has been purchased,
which is not a part of the inherited land-
holding, 23 the priest shall compute for it
the proportionate assessment up to the
year of jubilee, and the assessment shall
be paid as of that day, a sacred donation
to the LORD. 24 In the year of jubilee the
field shall return to the one from whom it
was bought, whose holding the land is.
25 All assessments shall be by the sanctu-
ary shekel: twenty gerahs shall make a
shekel.

26 A firstling of animals, however,
which as a firstling belongs to the LORD,
cannot be consecrated by anyone;
whether ox or sheep, it is the LORD's. 27 If
it is an unclean animal, it shall be ran-
somed at its assessment, with one-fifth
added; if it is not redeemed, it shall be
sold at its assessment.

28 Nothing that a person owns that
has been devoted to destruction for the
LORD, be it human or animal, or inherited
landholding, may be sold or redeemed;
every devoted thing is most holy to the
LORD. 29 No human beings who have been
devoted to destruction can be ransomed;
they shall be put to death.

30 All tithes from the land, whether

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to adjust the price according to the economic conditions of the vower (v. 8). **27.13** *If it is . . . redeemed.* This rule applies only to the owner, but the sanctuary may sell it to anyone else for the assessment price (v. 27). **27.20** *Has,* rather "had." The owner dedicated his field after he sold it. **27.21** *Devoted field,* i.e., *cherem* dedications are irredeemable. **27.28–29** *Devoted to destruction,* more precisely "totally dedicated," the distinction being that *cherem* (Hebrew, "devoted") animals and lands become the permanent property of the sanctuary, whereas *cherem* persons—probably prisoners of war resulting from *cherem* vows taken against an enemy (e.g., Num 21.1–3; 1 Sam 15.3, 33)—must be destroyed. **27.30** These tithes differ from those of Num 18.21 (P) and Deut 14.22–29 (D) in that they are assigned to the sanc-

the seed from the ground or the fruit
from the tree, are the LORD's; they are
holy to the LORD. 31 If persons wish to re-
deem any of their tithes, they must add
one-fifth to them. 32 All tithes of herd and
flock, every tenth one that passes under
the shepherd's staff, shall be holy to the
LORD. 33 Let no one inquire whether it is
good or bad, or make substitution for it; if
one makes substitution for it, then both it
and the substitute shall be holy and can-
not be redeemed.
34 These are the commandments that
the LORD gave to Moses for the people of
Israel on Mount Sinai.

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tuary; those in Numbers belong to the Levites and those in Deuteronomy to the owner. **27.32** The only recorded instance of the animal tithe is during the reign of Hezekiah (2 Chr 31.6), an indication that H formed the basis of Hezekiah's reform. (On P and H, see Introduction.)

NUMBERS

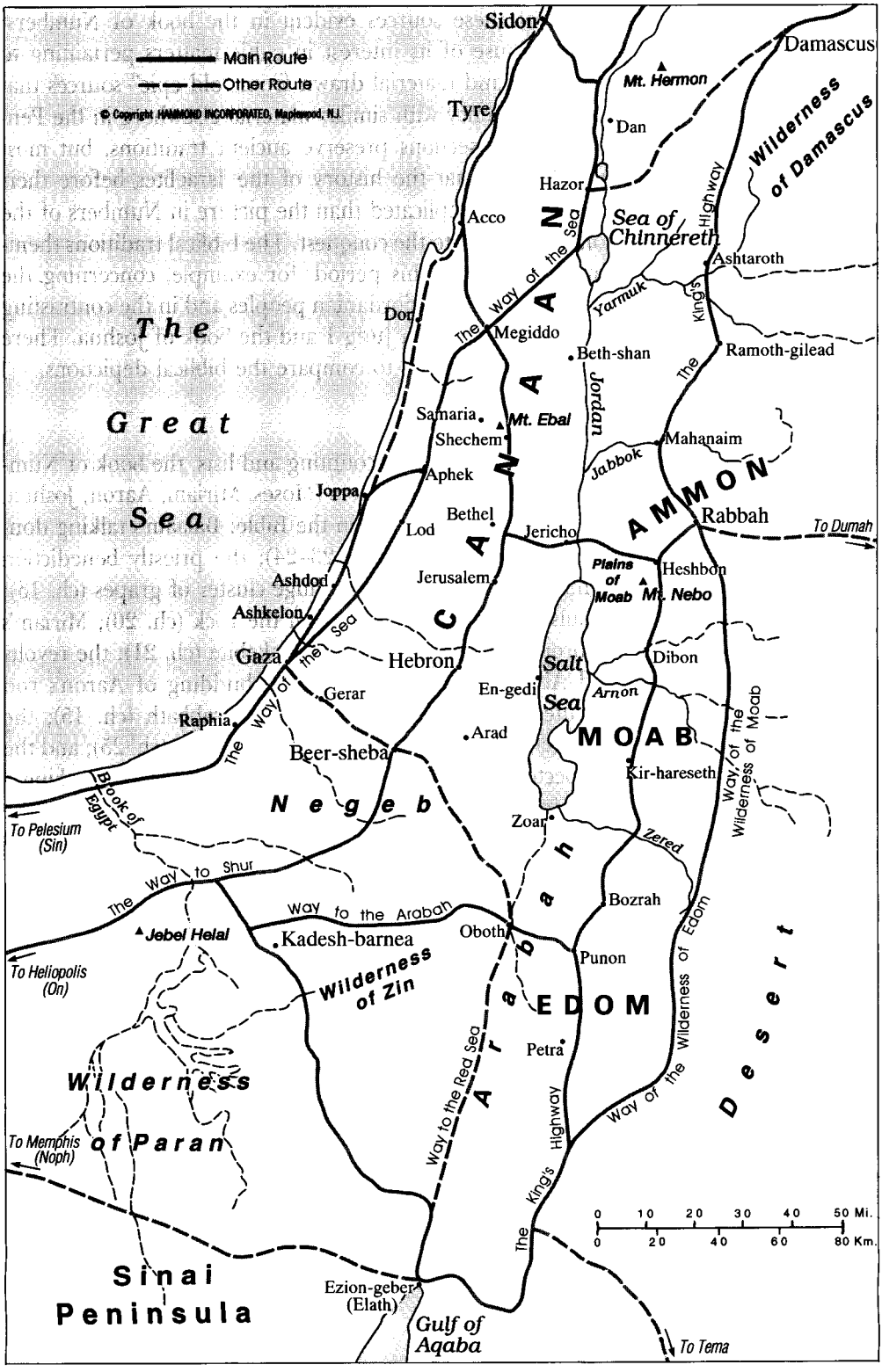
NUMBERS IS THE FOURTH BOOK of the Bible and therefore the fourth in the Pentateuch ("five scrolls"), or Torah, as the first five books are known collectively. Numbers takes its English name from *Arithmoi*, the title of the book in the ancient Greek translation called the Septuagint, begun in the third century B.C.E. In Hebrew the book is called *Bemidbar*, "in the wilderness," a word in the first verse of the book and perhaps a more appropriate title given its contents. The book of Numbers begins with the Israelites in the wilderness of Sinai and spans the forty years of the wilderness wanderings, ending with the people on the east side of the Jordan River, in the "plains of Moab," poised for the conquest of Canaan. Lack of faith (chs. 13–14) leads to the almost complete destruction of the exodus generation, which is to be replaced by a new generation born in the wilderness and looking forward to Canaan rather than backward to Egypt.

Structure and Sources

The structure of the book follows the geographical sequence of the account as well as the change in generations over the forty years of wandering. Geographically, Numbers can be divided into three fairly neat sections: in the wilderness of Sinai, 1.1–10.10; the march through the wilderness to Transjordan, 10.11–22.1; and in the plains of Moab, 22.2–36.13. The book is also, however, divided into two sections by the two military censuses in chs. 1 and 26, which represent the doubting exodus generation and the new generation that takes its place. These two censuses, as well as several other counting episodes, have led to the impression that "numbers" are the principal topic of the book, hence its title in the Septuagint.

Modern scholars believe that the material in the Pentateuch, and therefore in the book of Numbers, was brought together from several sources. It is useful to

Map opposite: *The major places and routes that figure in the narratives of Israel's migration into Canaan (Numbers, Joshua, and Judges).*


Main Route
Other Route
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Sidon
Damascus
Mt. Hermon
Tyre
Dan
Wilderness of Damascus
Hazor
Acco
Sea of Chinnereth
Ashtaroth
The Way of the Sea
Yarmuk
The King's Highway
Dor
Megiddo
Beth-shan
Ramoth-gilead
The Great Sea
Samaria
Mt. Ebal
Shechem
Jordan
Mahanaim
Jabbok
Aphek
Joppa
Bethel
Lod
Jericho
Rabbah
To Dumah
Plains of Moab
Mt. Nebo
Heshbon
Ashdod
Jerusalem
Ashkelon
Gaza
Hebron
Salt Sea
Dibon
En-gedi
Arnon
Gerar
Raphia
Arad
MOAB
Beer-sheba
Kir-hareseth
Way of the Wilderness of Moab
Negeb
Brook of Egypt
To Pelesium (Sin)
Zoar
Zered
The Way to Shur
Way to the Arabah
Bozrah
Jebel Helal
Kadesh-barnea
Oboth
Punon
To Heliopolis (On)
Wilderness of Zin
EDOM
Way of the Wilderness of Edom
Arabah
Petra
Desert
Wilderness of Paran
Way to the Red Sea
The King's Highway
To Memphis (Noph)
0 10 20 30 40 50 Mi.
0 20 40 60 80 Km.
Sinai Peninsula
Ezion-geber (Elath)
Gulf of Aqaba
To Tema

consider two broad types of these sources evident in the book of Numbers: material called "priestly" because of its interest in cultic matters pertaining to religious ritual and genealogy and material drawn from "old epic" sources that has a lexical and stylistic consistency with similar material elsewhere in the Pentateuch. Both priestly and epic sections preserve ancient traditions, but most modern scholars would suggest that the history of the Israelites before their settlement in Canaan was more complicated than the picture in Numbers of the twelve-tribe march from the exodus to the conquest. The biblical traditions themselves contain some ambiguity about this period, for example, concerning the Israelites' relationships with other Transjordanian peoples and in the contrasting pictures of the settlement that emerge in Judg 1 and the book of Joshua. There is little extrabiblical evidence with which to compare the biblical depictions.

Content

Despite a name that indicates a passion for counting and lists, the book of Numbers in fact contains a cast of familiar characters (Moses, Miriam, Aaron, Joshua, Caleb) and some of the best-known passages in the Bible: Balaam's talking donkey (ch. 22) and the oracles of Balaam (chs. 23–24); the priestly benediction (ch. 6); the spies returning from Canaan with a huge cluster of grapes (ch. 13); the manna and the quails (ch. 11); the water from the rock (ch. 20); Miriam's "leprosy" (ch. 12); the bronze serpent that healed snakebite (ch. 21); the revolts of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (ch. 16); the magical budding of Aaron's rod (ch. 17); the man executed for gathering sticks on the sabbath (ch. 15); the daughters of Zelophehad (chs. 27, 36); the apostasy at Baal-peor (ch. 25); and the rituals for a woman suspected of adultery (ch. 5), for men and women taking a Nazirite vow (ch. 6), and for cleansing pollution from contact with a corpse (the "red heifer," ch. 19). *Jo Ann Hackett*

The First Census of Israel

1 The LORD spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tent of meeting, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying: 2 Take a census of the whole congregation of Israelites, in their clans, by ancestral houses, according to the number of names, every male individually; 3 from twenty years old and upward, everyone in Israel able to go to war. You and Aaron shall enroll them, company by company. 4 A man from each tribe shall be with you, each man the head of his ancestral house. 5 These are the names of the men who shall assist you:

From Reuben, Elizur son of Shedeur.
6 From Simeon, Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai.
7 From Judah, Nahshon son of Amminadab.
8 From Issachar, Nethanel son of Zuar.
9 From Zebulun, Eliab son of Helon.
10 From the sons of Joseph:
from Ephraim, Elishama son of Ammihud;
from Manasseh, Gamaliel son of Pedahzur.
11 From Benjamin, Abidan son of Gideoni.
12 From Dan, Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai.
13 From Asher, Pagiel son of Ochran.
14 From Gad, Eliasaph son of Deuel.
15 From Naphtali, Ahira son of Enan.

16 These were the ones chosen from the congregation, the leaders of their ancestral tribes, the heads of the divisions of Israel.

17 Moses and Aaron took these men who had been designated by name, 18 and on the first day of the second month they assembled the whole congregation together. They registered themselves in their clans, by their ancestral houses, according to the number of names from twenty years old and upward, individually, 19 as the LORD commanded Moses. So

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1.1–54 Moses, Aaron, and one man from each tribe are commanded to take a census of all males age twenty and older who are able to serve in the military. The expeditions envisioned are the battles to conquer the promised land, but in fact, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb, these are the men of the generation who will die in the wilderness because of their lack of faith (see chs. 13–14). The similar census reported in ch. 26 then counts a new generation of men to fight those battles (26.64–65). **1.1** The setting of the beginning of the book of Numbers is the *wilderness of Sinai*, where the Israelites have been encamped since the third month after the exodus (Ex 19.1, 2). The *tent of meeting* is the goat-hair tent that covers the tabernacle, which houses the ark of the covenant, first described in Ex 26.7. The date is one month after the setting up of the tabernacle (Ex 40.17). **1.2** A tribe in Israel is made up of several *clans*, and each clan of several *ancestral houses*. Each individual male counted is to be identified by ancestral house and clan within each tribe. **1.3** Ex 30.11–12 reports the belief that a military census could result in a plague (see 2 Sam 24; 1 Chr 21), and so a tax was to be paid to the sanctuary as a "ransom" for the lives of those counted. (See also Ex 38.25–28.) The word here translated *company* can also be translated "army" or "host" and refers to a group organized for war. **1.5–15** These same names also occur in lists in 2.3–31; 7.12–83; 10.14–28. The order in which the tribes are listed in these verses is based for the most part on subgroupings characterized as Jacob's sons born of the same mother, according to Gen 29.31–30.24; 35.16–18. Reuben, Simeon, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun were sons of Leah. Levi was Leah's third son, but the tribe of Levi is not here listed as part of the military census (see Num 1.47–54). To compensate for the loss of Levi and preserve the number twelve for the total number of tribes, the tribe of Joseph is divided into Ephraim and Manasseh (see Gen 48.8–20) and listed along with Benjamin. Joseph and Benjamin were Rachel's sons in Genesis. Of the final four tribes, Dan and Naphtali were the sons of Rachel's maid Bilhah, and Gad and Asher were the sons of Leah's maid Zilpah. (Naphtali and Asher have switched positions in the list here.) **1.17–46** The tribes are listed in the same order as in vv. 5–15, except that Gad has shifted position. Gad occupies the third slot in this list, right after Reuben and Simeon. This shift seems to be based on Gad's position in the arrangement of tribes in the camp described in ch. 2. There Gad is joined with Simeon and Reuben on the south side (see 2.10–16). The total of 603,550 military men (v. 46) has seemed unrealistically high to commentators, as has the similar number,

he enrolled them in the wilderness of
Sinai.
20 The descendants of Reuben, Israel's firstborn, their lineage, in their clans, by their ancestral houses, according to the number of names, individually, every male from twenty years old and upward, everyone able to go to war: 21 those enrolled of the tribe of Reuben were forty-six thousand five hundred.
22 The descendants of Simeon, their lineage, in their clans, by their ancestral houses, those of them that were numbered, according to the number of names, individually, every male from twenty years old and upward, everyone able to go to war: 23 those enrolled of the tribe of Simeon were fifty-nine thousand three hundred.
24 The descendants of Gad, their lineage, in their clans, by their ancestral houses, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, everyone able to go to war: 25 those enrolled of the tribe of Gad were forty-five thousand six hundred fifty.
26 The descendants of Judah, their lineage, in their clans, by their ancestral houses, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, everyone able to go to war: 27 those enrolled of the tribe of Judah were seventy-four thousand six hundred.
28 The descendants of Issachar, their lineage, in their clans, by their ancestral houses, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, everyone able to go to war: 29 those enrolled of the tribe of Issachar were fifty-four thousand four hundred.
30 The descendants of Zebulun, their lineage, in their clans, by their ancestral houses, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, everyone able to go to war: 31 those enrolled of the tribe of Zebulun were fifty-seven thousand four hundred.
32 The descendants of Joseph, namely, the descendants of Ephraim, their lineage, in their clans, by their ancestral houses, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, everyone able to go to war: 33 those enrolled of the tribe of Ephraim were forty thousand five hundred.
34 The descendants of Manasseh, their lineage, in their clans, by their ancestral houses, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, everyone able to go to war: 35 those enrolled of the tribe of Manasseh were thirty-two thousand two hundred.
36 The descendants of Benjamin, their lineage, in their clans, by their ancestral houses, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, everyone able to go to war: 37 those enrolled of the tribe of Benjamin were thirty-five thousand four hundred.
38 The descendants of Dan, their lineage, in their clans, by their ancestral houses, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, everyone able to go to war: 39 those enrolled of the tribe of Dan were sixty-two thousand seven hundred.
40 The descendants of Asher, their lineage, in their clans, by their ancestral houses, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, everyone able to go to war: 41 those enrolled of the tribe of Asher were forty-one thousand five hundred.
42 The descendants of Naphtali, their lineage, in their clans, by their ancestral houses, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, everyone able to go to war: 43 those enrolled of the tribe of Naphtali were fifty-three thousand four hundred.
44 These are those who were enrolled, whom Moses and Aaron enrolled with the help of the leaders of Israel, twelve men, each representing his ancestral house. 45 So the whole number of the Israelites, by their ancestral houses, from twenty years old and upward, everyone able to go to war in Israel— 46 their whole number was six hundred three thousand five hundred fifty. 47 The Levites, however, were not numbered by their ancestral tribe along with them.
48 The LORD had said to Moses: 49 Only the tribe of Levi you shall not enroll, and you shall not take a census of them with the other Israelites. 50 Rather

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601,730, in the second census in ch. 26 (v. 51).
1.47–54 The tribe of Levi is to be considered separately from the "landed" tribes and dedicated entirely to service at the tabernacle (see also, e.g., Deut 10.8–9; 12.12; Josh 13.14, 33). Levi is left out of the tribal list in the poem in Judg 5.

you shall appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of the covenant,[a] and over all its equipment, and over all that belongs to it; they are to carry the tabernacle and all its equipment, and they shall tend it, and shall camp around the tabernacle. 51 When the tabernacle is to set out, the Levites shall take it down; and when the tabernacle is to be pitched, the Levites shall set it up. And any outsider who comes near shall be put to death. 52 The other Israelites shall camp in their respective regimental camps, by companies; 53 but the Levites shall camp around the tabernacle of the covenant,[a] that there may be no wrath on the congregation of the Israelites; and the Levites shall perform the guard duty of the tabernacle of the covenant.[a] 54 The Israelites did so; they did just as the LORD commanded Moses.

The Order of Encampment and Marching

2 The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: 2 The Israelites shall camp each in their respective regiments, under ensigns by their ancestral houses; they shall camp facing the tent of meeting on every side. 3 Those to camp on the east side toward the sunrise shall be of the regimental encampment of Judah by companies. The leader of the people of Judah shall be Nahshon son of Amminadab, 4 with a company as enrolled of seventy-four thousand six hundred. 5 Those to camp next to him shall be the tribe of Issachar. The leader of the Issacharites shall be Nethanel son of Zuar, 6 with a company as enrolled of fifty-four thousand four hundred. 7 Then the tribe of Zebulun: The leader of the Zebulunites shall be Eliab son of Helon, 8 with a company as enrolled of fifty-seven thousand four hundred. 9 The total enrollment of the camp of Judah, by companies, is one hundred eighty-six thousand four hundred. They shall set out first on the march.

10 On the south side shall be the regimental encampment of Reuben by companies. The leader of the Reubenites shall be Elizur son of Shedeur, 11 with a company as enrolled of forty-six thousand five hundred. 12 And those to camp next to him shall be the tribe of Simeon. The leader of the Simeonites shall be Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai, 13 with a company as enrolled of fifty-nine thousand three hundred. 14 Then the tribe of Gad: The leader of the Gadites shall be Eliasaph son of Reuel, 15 with a company as enrolled of forty-five thousand six hundred fifty. 16 The total enrollment of the camp of Reuben, by companies, is one

a Or *treaty*, or *testimony*; Heb *eduth*

1.50, 53 The tabernacle is called *tabernacle of the covenant* elsewhere only in Ex 38.21; Num 10.11. **1.51** The term *outsider* here refers to anyone who is not a Levite (see also 3.10, 38; 18.7; cf. 16.40). **1.52** The word translated *regiment* probably originally referred to a standard or banner that was used to mark a military unit and then was extended to denote the unit itself, as here (cf. the translation, *standard*, of the same word in 10.14, 18, 22, 25). In fifth-century B.C.E. texts from the Jewish colony at Elephantine in Egypt, this word can even represent a larger legal entity that includes the families of military men. **1.53** The *wrath* of the Lord would be brought on by any non-Levitical trespasser who came into contact with the tabernacle. The Levites are literally its guards.

2.1–34 The tabernacle within the tent of meeting stands at the center of the camp in this description (cf. Ex 33.7–11, where the tent is set up outside the camp). At each of the cardinal points around the tent are three tribes, separated from the tent by Levites (v. 17; 1.52–53). Each group of three is arranged in a camp named for the dominant tribe of the three. The order in which they camp is also the order in which they march, the tribes on the east leading the march. The sequence in which the tribes are named in this chapter is based on the genealogically organized list in 1.5–15 with minor changes; see vv. 3–9, 10–16. The leaders are those in the lists in 1.5–15; 7.12–83; 10.14–28. **2.2** *Ensign* or "sign" here suggests that each ancestral house had its own symbol that could be displayed. **2.3–9** Judah is the preeminent tribe in this scheme: it is the first tribe listed on the east side of the tabernacle and so leads the march. Judah takes with it Issachar and Zebulun from the list in ch. 1 to make up the *camp of Judah* (v. 9). **2.10–16** The tribes on the south side are next, headed by Reuben, the traditional firstborn. Since Judah is now at the head of the entire list, the *camp of Reuben* (v. 16) includes Gad, in the position Judah held in the list in ch. 1. Gad is the tribe to be moved up either because Reuben and Gad are associated as Transjordanian tribes or because the earlier tribes have all been "Leah" tribes (see 1.5–15) and Gad is the firstborn of Leah's maid Zilpah (Gen 30.9–11). **2.14** For *Reuel*, read "Deuel," following 1.14 and several ancient

hundred fifty-one thousand four hundred fifty. They shall set out second.

17 The tent of meeting, with the camp of the Levites, shall set out in the center of the camps; they shall set out just as they camp, each in position, by their regiments.

18 On the west side shall be the regimental encampment of Ephraim by companies. The leader of the people of Ephraim shall be Elishama son of Ammihud, 19 with a company as enrolled of forty thousand five hundred. 20 Next to him shall be the tribe of Manasseh. The leader of the people of Manasseh shall be Gamaliel son of Pedahzur, 21 with a company as enrolled of thirty-two thousand two hundred. 22 Then the tribe of Benjamin: The leader of the Benjaminites shall be Abidan son of Gideoni, 23 with a company as enrolled of thirty-five thousand four hundred. 24 The total enrollment of the camp of Ephraim, by companies, is one hundred eight thousand one hundred. They shall set out third on the march.

25 On the north side shall be the regimental encampment of Dan by companies. The leader of the Danites shall be Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai, 26 with a company as enrolled of sixty-two thousand seven hundred. 27 Those to camp next to him shall be the tribe of Asher. The leader of the Asherites shall be Pagiel son of Ochran, 28 with a company as enrolled of forty-one thousand five hundred. 29 Then the tribe of Naphtali: The leader of the Naphtalites shall be Ahira son of Enan, 30 with a company as enrolled of fifty-three thousand four hundred. 31 The total enrollment of the camp of Dan is one hundred fifty-seven thousand six hundred. They shall set out last, by companies.[b]

32 This was the enrollment of the Israelites by their ancestral houses; the total enrollment in the camps by their companies was six hundred three thousand five hundred fifty. 33 Just as the LORD had commanded Moses, the Levites were not enrolled among the other Israelites.

34 The Israelites did just as the LORD had commanded Moses: They camped by regiments, and they set out the same way, everyone by clans, according to ancestral houses.

The Sons of Aaron

3 This is the lineage of Aaron and Moses at the time when the LORD spoke with Moses on Mount Sinai. 2 These are the names of the sons of Aaron: Nadab the firstborn, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar; 3 these are the names of the sons of Aaron, the anointed priests, whom he ordained to minister as priests. 4 Nadab and Abihu died before the LORD when they offered unholy fire before the LORD in the wilderness of Sinai, and they had no children. Eleazar and Ithamar served as priests in the lifetime of their father Aaron.

The Duties of the Levites

5 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 6 Bring the tribe of Levi near, and set them before Aaron the priest, so that they may assist him. 7 They shall perform duties for him and for the whole congregation in front of the tent of meeting, doing service at the tabernacle; 8 they shall be in charge of all the furnishings of the tent of meeting, and attend to the duties for the Israelites as they do service at the tabernacle. 9 You shall give the Levites to Aaron

b Compare verses 9, 16, 24: Heb *by their regiments*

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manuscripts. **2.18–24** Ephraim heads the western camp because in Genesis he became the dominant son of Jacob's favorite son, Joseph (Gen 48.13–20). **2.25–31** Dan is first in the northern camp because he was the eldest son born to a concubine of Jacob (Bilhah, Gen 30.1–6). **2.33** See 1.48–49.

3.1–51 The duties, arrangement, and numbers of the tribe of Levi. **3.1** *Aaron* is listed before *Moses* here because Aaron is the firstborn. This verse is set at *Mount Sinai* (cf. 1.1; 3.14), when Nadab and Abihu were alive (see v. 4). In reverting to Mount Sinai for a few verses, the narrative implies that the information in vv. 5–13 was already understood at the time the rest of the activity in this chapter takes place. **3.2** See also Ex 6.23. **3.3** *He*. It was Moses who ordained the sons of Aaron (Lev 8.30; see also Ex 29.21; 30.30; 40.12–15; cf. Lev 8.12). **3.4** See Lev 10.1–2. **3.5–10** A distinction is made between Aaron and his descendants (the anointed priests) and the rest of the tribe of Levi, to which both Aaron and Moses belong. The rest of the Levites will *assist* (v. 6) Aaron and his descendants. **3.7–8** One of the *duties* of the Levites is to guard the tabernacle from intrusion. **3.9** Instead of *to him*, several

and his descendants; they are unreservedly given to him from among the Israelites. 10 But you shall make a register of Aaron and his descendants; it is they who shall attend to the priesthood, and any outsider who comes near shall be put to death.

11 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 12 I hereby accept the Levites from among the Israelites as substitutes for all the firstborn that open the womb among the Israelites. The Levites shall be mine, 13 for all the firstborn are mine; when I killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I consecrated for my own all the firstborn in Israel, both human and animal; they shall be mine. I am the LORD.

A Census of the Levites

14 Then the LORD spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, saying: 15 Enroll the Levites by ancestral houses and by clans. You shall enroll every male from a month old and upward. 16 So Moses enrolled them according to the word of the LORD, as he was commanded. 17 The following were the sons of Levi, by their names: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. 18 These are the names of the sons of Gershon by their clans: Libni and Shimei. 19 The sons of Kohath by their clans: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. 20 The sons of Merari by their clans: Mahli and Mushi. These are the clans of the Levites, by their ancestral houses.

21 To Gershon belonged the clan of the Libnites and the clan of the Shimeites; these were the clans of the Gershonites. 22 Their enrollment, counting all the males from a month old and upward, was seven thousand five hundred. 23 The clans of the Gershonites were to camp behind the tabernacle on the west, 24 with Eliasaph son of Lael as head of the ancestral house of the Gershonites. 25 The responsibility of the sons of Gershon in the tent of meeting was to be the tabernacle, the tent with its covering, the screen for the entrance of the tent of meeting, 26 the hangings of the court, the screen for the entrance of the court that is around the tabernacle and the altar, and its cords—all the service pertaining to these.

27 To Kohath belonged the clan of the Amramites, the clan of the Izharites, the clan of the Hebronites, and the clan of the Uzzielites; these are the clans of the Kohathites. 28 Counting all the males, from a month old and upward, there were eight thousand six hundred, attending to the duties of the sanctuary. 29 The clans of the Kohathites were to camp on

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manuscripts have "to me," as in 8.16; see also 3.12; 18.6. **3.10** *Outsider.* See 1.51. **3.11–13** See 8.16–18. **3.12** Earlier laws had required that human *firstborn* (males are usually specified) be consecrated to the Lord (to a life of religious service), redeemed, or perhaps even sacrificed, presumably to ensure continued fertility (see Ex 13.2, 11–15; 22.29b–30; 34.19–20; see also Num 18.15).

3.14–39 Census of the Levites and recording of their duties. **3.14** This verse returns to the narrative's present time and place, in the *wilderness of Sinai.* **3.15–16** Cf. 1.47–49. The prohibition apparently does not extend to a separate census of the Levites. **3.15** *By ancestral houses and by clans.* Note the reverse order in 1.2 and throughout ch. 1. Unlike the earlier military census, which counted males twenty and older, this census of the Levites counts *every male from a month old and upward,* because they will be substitutes for Israelite firstborn males a month old and upward (vv. 40–41). One month seems to be the age at which personhood was believed to begin; see Lev 27.6. **3.17–20** See Gen 46.11; Ex 6.16–19. **3.21–39** The Levitical clans are to encamp between the tabernacle and the Israelites on three sides of the tabernacle and are given the responsibility to protect and to transport the tabernacle and its accessories, including the tent of meeting. **3.21–26** The first Levitical clan discussed is the Gershonites; see v. 17. **3.23, 25** The Gershonites encamp on the west side of the tabernacle and have custody over the accessories made of fabric (see also 4.25–26): the *tabernacle,* the innermost tent housing the ark, made of blue (or violet), purple, and crimson linen curtains with a cherubim design (Ex 26.1); the *tent* of meeting, made of goat-hair curtains (Ex 26.7), and its ramskin and leather *covering* (Ex 26.14); the linen *screen* for the entrance to the tent (Ex 26.36); the linen *hangings* for the court surrounding the tabernacle (Ex 27.9); and the linen *screen* for the entrance to the court (Ex 27.16) and its *cords* (Ex 39.40). **3.27–32** *Kohathites.* See v. 17. **3.28** *Eight thousand six hundred.* The Septuagint has "eight thousand three hundred," which accords with the total of twenty-two thousand reported in v. 39. The difference between the Hebrew words for "six" and "three" is only one consonant. **3.29, 31** The Kohathites camp on the *south side* of the tabernacle and have custody over the most sacred items: the *ark* itself (Ex 25.10–22) and its

the south side of the tabernacle, 30 with
Elizaphan son of Uzziel as head of the an-
cestral house of the clans of the Kohath-
ites. 31 Their responsibility was to be the
ark, the table, the lampstand, the altars,
the vessels of the sanctuary with which the
priests minister, and the screen—all the
service pertaining to these. 32 Eleazar son
of Aaron the priest was to be chief over
the leaders of the Levites, and to have
oversight of those who had charge of the
sanctuary.

33 To Merari belonged the clan of the
Mahlites and the clan of the Mushites:
these are the clans of Merari. 34 Their en-
rollment, counting all the males from a
month old and upward, was six thousand
two hundred. 35 The head of the ancestral
house of the clans of Merari was Zuriel
son of Abihail; they were to camp on the
north side of the tabernacle. 36 The re-
sponsibility assigned to the sons of Merari
was to be the frames of the tabernacle, the
bars, the pillars, the bases, and all their
accessories—all the service pertaining to
these; 37 also the pillars of the court all
around, with their bases and pegs and
cords.

38 Those who were to camp in front
of the tabernacle on the east—in front of
the tent of meeting toward the east—were
Moses and Aaron and Aaron's sons, hav-
ing charge of the rites within the sanctu-
ary, whatever had to be done for the
Israelites; and any outsider who came
near was to be put to death. 39 The total
enrollment of the Levites whom Moses
and Aaron enrolled at the commandment
of the LORD, by their clans, all the males
from a month old and upward, was
twenty-two thousand.

The Redemption of the Firstborn

40 Then the LORD said to Moses: En-
roll all the firstborn males of the Israel-
ites, from a month old and upward, and
count their names. 41 But you shall accept
the Levites for me—I am the LORD—as
substitutes for all the firstborn among the
Israelites, and the livestock of the Levites
as substitutes for all the firstborn among
the livestock of the Israelites. 42 So Moses
enrolled all the firstborn among the Isra-
elites, as the LORD commanded him.
43 The total enrollment, all the firstborn
males from a month old and upward,
counting the number of names, was
twenty-two thousand two hundred
seventy-three.

44 Then the LORD spoke to Moses,
saying: 45 Accept the Levites as substitutes
for all the firstborn among the Israelites,
and the livestock of the Levites as substi-
tutes for their livestock; and the Levites
shall be mine. I am the LORD. 46 As the
price of redemption of the two hundred

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immediate surroundings—the *table* that holds the bread of the Presence (Ex 25.23–30; 35.13; 39.36); the *lampstand* (Ex 25.31–40); the two horned *altars*, one covered with bronze in the court (Ex 27.1–8) and one covered with gold for burning incense (Ex 30.1–10); the *vessels of the sanctuary*, also translated "utensils" (e.g., Ex 27.19; 30.17–21, 26–29; 37.16; 38.3), enumerated in Num 4.5–15; and the *screen* (not one of the screens in vv. 25–26, but rather the curtain that sets off the holiest portion of the tabernacle, otherwise always called the "curtain," the "screening curtain," the "curtain for the screen," or the "curtain for screening," e.g., Ex 26.31–35; 35.12; 39.34; 40.21). **3.32** *Eleazar* (see also 4.16), like Aaron and Moses, is a Kohathite (Ex 6.16, 18, 20, 23). **3.33–37** Merarites; see v. 17. **3.35–36** The Merarites camp on the *north side* of the tabernacle and have custody over the supporting structure of the tabernacle, i.e., the wooden *frames*, *bars*, *pillars*, silver *bases*, and *accessories* (Ex 26.15–30; 35.10–11; 39.33; 40.18; see also Num 4.31), and of the surrounding court, its wooden *pillars*, its bronze *bases* and *pegs*, and its *cords* (Ex 27.10–19; 35.17–18; 39.40). **3.38** The preeminent position to the *east* of the tabernacle is taken by Moses, Aaron, and the descendants of Aaron, set apart from the other Levites (see 3.5–10). *Outsider*. See 1.51. **3.39** *Twenty-two thousand*. The numbers in the text actually total twenty-two thousand, three hundred; see 3.28.

3.40–51 The Levites are substitutes for firstborn males (3.14–15). **3.41** Even the Levites' *livestock* are substituted for the livestock of the firstborn (see also v. 45, but cf. 18.17). **3.43** The number of firstborn males (22,273) is very low compared to the census numbers reported in 1.17–46. **3.46–48** Since each Levite could redeem only one firstborn male, a ransom of *five shekels* each had to be paid for the 273 above and beyond the number of Levites (unless that number should actually be 300 higher; see vv. 28, 39). Archaeological evidence suggests that the shekel in ancient Israel weighed about 11.4 grams, though it is possible that there were two systems at work simultaneously, as in ancient Mesopotamia, and that *the shekel of the sanctuary* (v. 47) was

seventy-three of the firstborn of the Israelites, over and above the number of the Levites, 47you shall accept five shekels apiece, reckoning by the shekel of the sanctuary, a shekel of twenty gerahs. 48Give to Aaron and his sons the money by which the excess number of them is redeemed. 49So Moses took the redemption money from those who were over and above those redeemed by the Levites; 50from the firstborn of the Israelites he took the money, one thousand three hundred sixty-five shekels, reckoned by the shekel of the sanctuary; 51and Moses gave the redemption money to Aaron and his sons, according to the word of the LORD, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

The Kohathites

4 The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: 2Take a census of the Kohathites separate from the other Levites, by their clans and their ancestral houses, 3from thirty years old up to fifty years old, all who qualify to do work relating to the tent of meeting. 4The service of the Kohathites relating to the tent of meeting concerns the most holy things.

5 When the camp is to set out, Aaron and his sons shall go in and take down the screening curtain, and cover the ark of the covenant[c] with it; 6then they shall put on it a covering of fine leather,[d] and spread over that a cloth all of blue, and shall put its poles in place. 7Over the table of the bread of the Presence they shall spread a blue cloth, and put on it the plates, the dishes for incense, the bowls, and the flagons for the drink offering; the regular bread also shall be on it; 8then they shall spread over them a crimson cloth, and cover it with a covering of fine leather,[d] and shall put its poles in place. 9They shall take a blue cloth, and cover the lampstand for the light, with its lamps, its snuffers, its trays, and all the vessels for oil with which it is supplied; 10and they shall put it with all its utensils in a covering of fine leather,[d] and put it on the carrying frame. 11Over the golden altar they shall spread a blue cloth, and cover it with a covering of fine leather,[d] and shall put its poles in place; 12and they shall take all the utensils of the service that are used in the sanctuary, and put them in a blue cloth, and cover them with a covering of fine leather,[d] and put them on the carrying frame. 13They shall take away the ashes from the altar, and spread a purple cloth over it; 14and they shall put on it all the utensils of the altar, which are used for the service there, the firepans, the forks, the shovels, and the basins, all the utensils of the altar; and they shall spread on it a covering of fine leather,[d] and shall put its poles in place. 15When Aaron and his sons have finished covering the sanctuary and all the furnishings of the sanctuary, as the camp sets out, after that the Kohathites shall come to carry these, but they must not touch the holy things, or they will die. These are the things of the tent of meeting that the Kohathites are to carry.

16 Eleazar son of Aaron the priest

c Or *treaty*, or *testimony*; Heb *eduth* *d* Meaning of Heb uncertain

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heavier than the common shekel (see also the "shekels by the king's weight" in 2 Sam 14.26). **3.49–50** The ransom money will be paid by the firstborn (v. 50) or by a portion of them (v. 49).

4.1–49 The second Levitical census, to determine the number of Levites between the ages of thirty and fifty, the years in which they are qualified to perform their priestly duties (but cf. 8.24–26). **4.2–4** In 3.14–37 Gershon was counted first because Gershon is the "firstborn" (3.17, 21–26). Here, the Kohathites are counted first and are singled out *from the other Levites* because they have custody over *the most holy things* (v. 4; see also 3.31). **4.5–14** The most holy things are prepared for the march by Aaron and his sons. **4.5** *Screening curtain.* See 3.31. **4.6** The *poles* are for carrying the ark (Ex 25.13–15). **4.7** *Table of the bread of the Presence.* See 3.31. The *plates, dishes for incense, bowls,* and *flagons for the drink offering* (Ex 25.29; 37.16). The *regular bread* is the bread that is continually on the table (Ex 25.30; Lev 24.5–9). **4.8** *Poles* for carrying the table (Ex 25.28). **4.9** *Lampstand.* See 3.31. **4.11** The *golden altar* for burning incense. See 3.31 (its *poles*, Ex 30.4–5). **4.12** The *utensils of the service that are used in the sanctuary* are those that are used inside the tent itself and are most sacred (see 3.31). The *blue* (or violet) *cloth* and *fine leather* indicate the very sacred status of these items, which are placed within the tent while the camp is at rest. **4.13–14** The *altar* here is the bronze altar for sacrifice in the court that surrounds the tabernacle (see 3.31) with its *utensils* (Ex 27.3) and its *poles* (Ex 27.6–7). **4.15** *Or they will die.* See Ex 19.20–24 (cf. Ex 19.12–13); 1 Sam 6.19 (Hebrew text in note *v*); 2 Sam 6.6–15.

shall have charge of the oil for the light,
the fragrant incense, the regular grain
offering, and the anointing oil, the over-
sight of all the tabernacle and all that is in
it, in the sanctuary and in its utensils.
17 Then the LORD spoke to Moses and
Aaron, saying: 18 You must not let the
tribe of the clans of the Kohathites be de-
stroyed from among the Levites. 19 This is
how you must deal with them in order
that they may live and not die when they
come near to the most holy things: Aaron
and his sons shall go in and assign each to
a particular task or burden. 20 But the Ko-
hathites[e] must not go in to look on the
holy things even for a moment; otherwise
they will die.

The Gershonites and Merarites

21 Then the LORD spoke to Moses,
saying: 22 Take a census of the Gershon-
ites also, by their ancestral houses and by
their clans; 23 from thirty years old up to
fifty years old you shall enroll them, all
who qualify to do work in the tent of
meeting. 24 This is the service of the clans
of the Gershonites, in serving and bearing
burdens: 25 They shall carry the curtains
of the tabernacle, and the tent of meeting
with its covering, and the outer covering
of fine leather[f] that is on top of it, and
the screen for the entrance of the tent of
meeting, 26 and the hangings of the court,
and the screen for the entrance of the
gate of the court that is around the taber-
nacle and the altar, and their cords, and
all the equipment for their service; and
they shall do all that needs to be done with
regard to them. 27 All the service of the
Gershonites shall be at the command of
Aaron and his sons, in all that they are to
carry, and in all that they have to do; and
you shall assign to their charge all that
they are to carry. 28 This is the service of
the clans of the Gershonites relating to
the tent of meeting, and their responsibili-
ties are to be under the oversight of Itha-
mar son of Aaron the priest.
29 As for the Merarites, you shall en-
roll them by their clans and their ancestral
houses; 30 from thirty years old up to fifty
years old you shall enroll them, everyone
who qualifies to do the work of the tent of
meeting. 31 This is what they are charged
to carry, as the whole of their service in
the tent of meeting: the frames of the tab-
ernacle, with its bars, pillars, and bases,
32 and the pillars of the court all around
with their bases, pegs, and cords, with all
their equipment and all their related ser-
vice; and you shall assign by name the ob-
jects that they are required to carry.
33 This is the service of the clans of the
Merarites, the whole of their service relat-
ing to the tent of meeting, under the hand
of Ithamar son of Aaron the priest.

Census of the Levites

34 So Moses and Aaron and the lead-
ers of the congregation enrolled the Ko-
hathites, by their clans and their ancestral
houses, 35 from thirty years old up to fifty
years old, everyone who qualified for
work relating to the tent of meeting;
36 and their enrollment by clans was two
thousand seven hundred fifty. 37 This was
the enrollment of the clans of the Kohath-
ites, all who served at the tent of meeting,
whom Moses and Aaron enrolled accord-
ing to the commandment of the LORD by
Moses.
38 The enrollment of the Gershonites,
by their clans and their ancestral houses,
39 from thirty years old up to fifty years
old, everyone who qualified for work re-
lating to the tent of meeting— 40 their en-
rollment by their clans and their ancestral
houses was two thousand six hundred
thirty. 41 This was the enrollment of the
clans of the Gershonites, all who served at
the tent of meeting, whom Moses and
Aaron enrolled according to the com-
mandment of the LORD.
42 The enrollment of the clans of the
Merarites, by their clans and their ances-
tral houses, 43 from thirty years old up to

e Heb *they* f Meaning of Heb uncertain

4.16 See 3.32. **4.19** *Burden*, i.e., that which he is to transport. **4.21–28** The census of the Gershonites aged thirty to fifty and the items they are to transport; see 3.21–26. **4.28** As Eleazar is supervisor for the Kohathites and any work having to do with the tabernacle itself, Aaron's other living son, *Ithamar* (see 3.1–4), is responsible for the Gershonites and the Merarites (v. 33) and the rest of the Levitical service. **4.29–33** The census of the Merarites aged thirty to fifty and the items they are to transport; see 3.33–37. **4.33** See v. 28. **4.36, 40, 44, 48** The numbers here refer only to male Levites aged thirty to fifty; cf. 3.22, 28, 34, 39.

fifty years old, everyone who qualified for work relating to the tent of meeting—
44 their enrollment by their clans was three thousand two hundred. 45 This is the enrollment of the clans of the Merarites, whom Moses and Aaron enrolled according to the commandment of the LORD by Moses.

46 All those who were enrolled of the Levites, whom Moses and Aaron and the leaders of Israel enrolled, by their clans and their ancestral houses, 47 from thirty years old up to fifty years old, everyone who qualified to do the work of service and the work of bearing burdens relating to the tent of meeting, 48 their enrollment was eight thousand five hundred eighty. 49 According to the commandment of the LORD through Moses they were appointed to their several tasks of serving or carrying; thus they were enrolled by him, as the LORD commanded Moses.

Unclean Persons

5 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 2 Command the Israelites to put out of the camp everyone who is leprous,[g] or has a discharge, and everyone who is unclean through contact with a corpse; 3 you shall put out both male and female, putting them outside the camp; they must not defile their camp, where I dwell among them. 4 The Israelites did so, putting them outside the camp; as the LORD had spoken to Moses, so the Israelites did.

Confession and Restitution

5 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 6 Speak to the Israelites: When a man or a woman wrongs another, breaking faith with the LORD, that person incurs guilt 7 and shall confess the sin that has been committed. The person shall make full restitution for the wrong, adding one-fifth to it, and giving it to the one who was wronged. 8 If the injured party has no next of kin to whom restitution may be made for the wrong, the restitution for wrong shall go to the LORD for the priest, in addition to the ram of atonement with which atonement is made for the guilty party. 9 Among all the sacred donations of the Israelites, every gift that they bring to the priest shall be his. 10 The sacred donations of all are their own; whatever anyone gives to the priest shall be his.

Concerning an Unfaithful Wife

11 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 12 Speak to the Israelites and say to them: If any man's wife goes astray and is unfaithful to him, 13 if a man has had intercourse with her but it is hidden from her husband, so that she is undetected though she has defiled herself, and there is no witness against her since she was not caught in the act; 14 if a spirit of jealousy comes on him, and he is jealous of his wife who has defiled herself; or if a spirit of jealousy comes on him, and he is jealous of his wife, though she has not defiled herself; 15 then the man shall bring his wife to the priest. And he shall bring the offering required for her, one-tenth of an ephah of barley flour. He shall pour no oil on it and put no frankincense on it, for

g A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain

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5.1–4 The entire encampment is treated as sacred because of the presence of the tabernacle, the place, the Lord says, *where I dwell among them* (v. 3). Any impurity, therefore, that is "contagious" must be kept outside the camp. Here the possibility of contagion comes from people ritually "unclean" because of a skin condition (Lev 13, esp. vv. 45–46), because of a bodily discharge (presumably, as in Lev 15, from the genitalia), or because of contact with a corpse (see Num 19.11–20). **5.5–8** A supplement to Lev 6.1–7, for the case in which the injured party has died and there is no next of kin. **5.8** *Next of kin*, lit. "redeemer." See Lev 25.25–26, 48–49; Num 35.12. *Ram of atonement.* Lev 6.6–7. **5.9–10** An instruction providing that Israelites can earmark their donations for individual priests (see Lev 7.7–9, 14, 32–33; cf. 7.10, 31).

5.11–31 The instruction for a woman who is suspected of adultery. **5.12–14** Vv. 12–13 describe a wife who has in fact committed adultery, although there is no proof available. *Is unfaithful to him* uses the same Hebrew phrase as *breaking faith with the LORD* in v. 6. V. 14 describes a husband who is jealous without knowing whether his wife has in fact committed adultery. This instruction, then, concerns two types of cases in which a woman's guilt or innocence cannot be proven by the usual means. **5.15** An *ephah* is estimated to be between three-eighths and two-thirds of a bushel. *Oil* and *frankincense* (or oil alone, Lev 2.4–7; 14.10, 21; Num 6.15) were usually poured on a grain offering, and the grain is usually choice wheat flour, not barley flour (Lev 2.1; 6.14–15;

it is a grain offering of jealousy, a grain offering of remembrance, bringing iniquity to remembrance.

16 Then the priest shall bring her near, and set her before the LORD; 17 the priest shall take holy water in an earthen vessel, and take some of the dust that is on the floor of the tabernacle and put it into the water. 18 The priest shall set the woman before the LORD, dishevel the woman's hair, and place in her hands the grain offering of remembrance, which is the grain offering of jealousy. In his own hand the priest shall have the water of bitterness that brings the curse. 19 Then the priest shall make her take an oath, saying, "If no man has lain with you, if you have not turned aside to uncleanness while under your husband's authority, be immune to this water of bitterness that brings the curse. 20 But if you have gone astray while under your husband's authority, if you have defiled yourself and some man other than your husband has had intercourse with you," 21 —let the priest make the woman take the oath of the curse and say to the woman—"the LORD make you an execration and an oath among your people, when the LORD makes your uterus drop, your womb discharge; 22 now may this water that brings the curse enter your bowels and make your womb discharge, your uterus drop!" And the woman shall say, "Amen. Amen."

23 Then the priest shall put these curses in writing, and wash them off into the water of bitterness. 24 He shall make the woman drink the water of bitterness that brings the curse, and the water that brings the curse shall enter her and cause bitter pain. 25 The priest shall take the grain offering of jealousy out of the woman's hand, and shall elevate the grain offering before the LORD and bring it to the altar; 26 and the priest shall take a handful of the grain offering, as its memorial portion, and turn it into smoke on the altar, and afterward shall make the woman drink the water. 27 When he has made her drink the water, then, if she has defiled herself and has been unfaithful to her husband, the water that brings the curse shall enter into her and cause bitter pain, and her womb shall discharge, her uterus drop, and the woman shall become an execration among her people. 28 But if the woman has not defiled herself and is clean, then she shall be immune and be able to conceive children.

29 This is the law in cases of jealousy, when a wife, while under her husband's authority, goes astray and defiles herself, 30 or when a spirit of jealousy comes on a man and he is jealous of his wife; then he shall set the woman before the LORD, and the priest shall apply this entire law to her. 31 The man shall be free from iniquity, but the woman shall bear her iniquity.

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cf. Lev 5.11). **5.16** *Before the LORD*, probably before the altar of burnt offering in the court surrounding the tabernacle (see 3.31; 1 Kings 8.31–32). **5.17** *Holy water*. See Ex 30.17–21, 28–29. An *earthen vessel* can be broken after use so that its contents do not pollute or endanger (see Lev 6.24–28; 11.33; 14.5, 50; 15.12). *Dust that is on the floor of the tabernacle* is presumably thought to be powerful because of its association with the tabernacle. **5.18** *Dishevel the woman's hair*, a sign of mourning in Lev 10.6; 21.10, and of uncleanness because of skin disease in Lev 13.45. **5.19–22** The woman suspected of adultery must take an oath that she has not been unfaithful (see Ex 22.10–11). It is on the basis of this oath that the ordeal in vv. 23–28 operates. If she has sworn falsely, the *water of bitterness* (v. 19) will have an immediate negative effect on her body; if what she has sworn is the truth, there will be no effect. **5.21** *The LORD make you an execration and an oath among your people*. See Job 30.9; Jer 29.21–23. *Uterus drop ... womb discharge*. The symptoms the woman is warned of seem to describe a prolapsed uterus. **5.22** *"Amen, amen"* signals the woman's acceptance of the consequences of a false oath, the equivalent of taking an oath that she has not committed adultery. A guilty woman would hesitate to take the oath. See also Deut 27.15–26; Neh 5.13. **5.23–28** The ordeal. The *water of bitterness* (vv. 23, 24) will test the truth of the woman's oath. **5.23** The priest writes on something that would allow the writing to dissolve in water. The water then carries the force of the curse. See Jer 51.59–64; Ezek 3.1–4. **5.24** The *bitterness* is etymologized as causing *bitter (pain)*, presumably to a guilty woman only. (See Ex 32.20, 35.) V. 24 (perhaps vv. 23–24) is anticipatory, as the entire procedure is spelled out in vv. 25–27. **5.25** On elevating the guilt offering, see Lev 14.12, 21, 24. **5.26** For a *handful of the grain offering* as a *memorial portion*, see Lev 2.2, 9, 16 (there translated "token portion"). **5.28** The punishment for the one who swears falsely is a condition that precludes

The Nazirites

6 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:
2 Speak to the Israelites and say to
them: When either men or women make
a special vow, the vow of a nazirite,[h] to
separate themselves to the LORD, 3 they
shall separate themselves from wine and
strong drink; they shall drink no wine vin-
egar or other vinegar, and shall not drink
any grape juice or eat grapes, fresh or
dried. 4 All their days as nazirites[i] they
shall eat nothing that is produced by
the grapevine, not even the seeds or
the skins.
5 All the days of their nazirite vow no
razor shall come upon the head; until the
time is completed for which they separate
themselves to the LORD, they shall be
holy; they shall let the locks of the head
grow long.
6 All the days that they separate them-
selves to the LORD they shall not go near a
corpse. 7 Even if their father or mother,
brother or sister, should die, they may not
defile themselves; because their consecra-
tion to God is upon the head. 8 All their
days as nazirites[i] they are holy to the
LORD.
9 If someone dies very suddenly
nearby, defiling the consecrated head,
then they shall shave the head on the day
of their cleansing; on the seventh day they
shall shave it. 10 On the eighth day they
shall bring two turtledoves or two young
pigeons to the priest at the entrance of the
tent of meeting, 11 and the priest shall of-
fer one as a sin offering and the other as
a burnt offering, and make atonement for
them, because they incurred guilt by rea-
son of the corpse. They shall sanctify the
head that same day, 12 and separate them-
selves to the LORD for their days as naz-
irites,[i] and bring a male lamb a year old
as a guilt offering. The former time shall
be void, because the consecrated head was
defiled.
13 This is the law for the nazirites[i]
when the time of their consecration has
been completed: they shall be brought to
the entrance of the tent of meeting, 14 and
they shall offer their gift to the LORD, one
male lamb a year old without blemish as a
burnt offering, one ewe lamb a year old
without blemish as a sin offering, one ram
without blemish as an offering of well-
being, 15 and a basket of unleavened
bread, cakes of choice flour mixed with oil
and unleavened wafers spread with oil,
with their grain offering and their drink
offerings. 16 The priest shall present them
before the LORD and offer their sin offer-
ing and burnt offering, 17 and shall offer
the ram as a sacrifice of well-being to the
LORD, with the basket of unleavened

h That is *one separated* or *one consecrated* *i* That is *those separated* or *those consecrated*

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bearing children. **5.31** The husband will not be punished for putting even an innocent wife through the oath and ordeal; it is his right to ask for the procedure. The wife's punishment or lack of it will depend on the outcome of the ordeal.

6.1–21 The temporary Nazirite vow. **6.2** For women's vows, see also 30.3–16. On the Nazirite, see also Judg 13.2–14; 16.4–31; 1 Sam 1.11; Am 2.11–12. **6.3–4** Nazirites must abstain from all products of the vine; cf. the Rechabites (Jer 35; 2 Kings 10.15–28). *Other vinegar*, lit. "vinegar from (any) intoxicant." Even Samson's pregnant mother was to abstain from intoxicants and other grape products (Judg 13.4, 7, 14). See also 1 Sam 1.11; Am 2.11–12. *All their days as nazirites* (vv. 4, 5, 6, 8, 12), instructions for a temporary naziriteship, unlike Samson's and Samuel's, which were lifelong. **6.5** *Locks . . . grow long*. The Nazirites' uncut hair was their most important feature. See vv. 7, 9, 18 and the story of Samson's naziriteship (Judg 13.5; 16.4–31). (See also Lev 25.5, 11, where the unpruned vine is called in Hebrew *nazir*.) **6.6–7** Like the high priest, Nazirites were to avoid contact with a corpse, even of a close member of the family (see Lev 21.10–11; cf. vv. 1–3). **6.9–12** Accidental contact with a corpse requires purification and rededication. **6.9** *Suddenly* implies there was no time for the Nazirite to avoid contact. *Seventh day*. See 19.11–12, 19. **6.10–12** Even priests who were contaminated by contact with a corpse were not required to undergo such a purification (see 19.11–12; cf. Ezek 44.25–27; see Lev 12.6–8; 14.10–32; 15.13–15, 28–30 for similar purification rituals). *Sanctify the head*, in preparation for a new vow of naziriteship, beginning the period of separation over again (v. 12). **6.13–20** The instruction for the ritual upon the completion of the Nazirite vow. **6.14–17** Regulations for the *burnt offering* are in Lev 1, for the *sin offering* in Lev 4.1–5.13, for the *offering of well-being* in Lev 3, and for the *grain offering* in Lev 2. For *drink offerings*, see Ex 29.40; 30.9; Lev 23.13. The extent of the ritual indicates the seriousness

bread; the priest also shall make the accompanying grain offering and drink offering. 18 Then the nazirites[j] shall shave the consecrated head at the entrance of the tent of meeting, and shall take the hair from the consecrated head and put it on the fire under the sacrifice of well-being. 19 The priest shall take the shoulder of the ram, when it is boiled, and one unleavened cake out of the basket, and one unleavened wafer, and shall put them in the palms of the nazirites,[j] after they have shaved the consecrated head. 20 Then the priest shall elevate them as an elevation offering before the LORD; they are a holy portion for the priest, together with the breast that is elevated and the thigh that is offered. After that the nazirites[j] may drink wine.

21 This is the law for the nazirites[j] who take a vow. Their offering to the LORD must be in accordance with the nazirite[k] vow, apart from what else they can afford. In accordance with whatever vow they take, so they shall do, following the law for their consecration.

The Priestly Benediction

22 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 23 Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the Israelites: You shall say to them,

24 The LORD bless you and
keep you;
25 the LORD make his face to shine
upon you, and be gracious
to you;
26 the LORD lift up his countenance
upon you, and give you
peace.

27 So they shall put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.

Offerings of the Leaders

7 On the day when Moses had finished setting up the tabernacle, and had anointed and consecrated it with all its furnishings, and had anointed and consecrated the altar with all its utensils, 2 the leaders of Israel, heads of their ancestral houses, the leaders of the tribes, who were over those who were enrolled, made offerings. 3 They brought their offerings before the LORD, six covered wagons and twelve oxen, a wagon for every two of the leaders, and for each one an ox; they presented them before the tabernacle. 4 Then the LORD said to Moses: 5 Accept these from them, that they may be used in doing the service of the tent of meeting, and give them to the Levites, to each according to his service. 6 So Moses took the wagons and the oxen, and gave them to the Levites. 7 Two wagons and four oxen he gave to the Gershonites, according to their service; 8 and four wagons and eight oxen he gave to the Merarites, according

j That is *those separated* or *those consecrated*
k That is *one separated* or *one consecrated*

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of the transformation from a state of consecration back to a mundane life. **6.18** The sacrifice of hair is not uncommon among the world's religions. Here the hair must be burned, *put on the fire*, because it is holy (see Lev 7.16–17; 19.5–8). **6.20** See Ex 29.26–28; Lev 7.32–34; 10.14–15.

6.22–27 The ancient and lovely priestly benediction which appears here need not be connected with its immediate context; it is in general a function of the priesthood to bless the worshiping community; see Lev 9.22–23; Deut 10.8; 21.5; 2 Chr 30.27; Ps 118.26. **6.24–26** Portions of this blessing appear on two tiny silver scroll-amulets found in a tomb in Jerusalem from the seventh or sixth century B.C.E. **6.25** The *shining* face of the Lord is a sign of protection (Pss 4.6; 31.16; 44.3; 80.3; 89.15; cf. Deut 31.17–18). **6.26** The lifting up of the Lord's *countenance* is a sign of favor; the Hebrew is similar in Gen 19.21; 32.20; Job 42.8–9; Mal 1.8–9. *Peace*, i.e., well-being, wholeness. **6.27** Putting the Lord's name on the Israelites implies ownership; see Deut 12.5; 28.10; Jer 7.10–11; 14.9. This command may have been taken literally, i.e., by wearing the name of God as part of an amulet (see note on 6.24–26).

7.1–9 *On the day*. Even though set one month earlier than the beginning of the book of Numbers (v. 1; see Ex 40.17; cf. Num 1.1), this description of the gifts offered presumes the information presented just prior to this section: the *wagons* and *oxen* are given to transport the sanctuary items assigned to the Levites in chs. 3–4, except for the items the Kohathites were to carry on their shoulders. The Merarites are given twice as many oxen and wagons as the Gershonites, since transporting the supporting structure of the tabernacle would be more burdensome than transporting its vari-

to their service, under the direction of
Ithamar son of Aaron the priest. 9 But to
the Kohathites he gave none, because they
were charged with the care of the holy
things that had to be carried on the
shoulders.

10 The leaders also presented offer-
ings for the dedication of the altar at the
time when it was anointed; the leaders
presented their offering before the altar.
11 The LORD said to Moses: They shall
present their offerings, one leader each
day, for the dedication of the altar.

12 The one who presented his offer-
ing the first day was Nahshon son of Am-
minadab, of the tribe of Judah; 13 his
offering was one silver plate weighing one
hundred thirty shekels, one silver basin
weighing seventy shekels, according to the
shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full
of choice flour mixed with oil for a grain
offering; 14 one golden dish weighing ten
shekels, full of incense; 15 one young bull,
one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a
burnt offering; 16 one male goat for a sin
offering; 17 and for the sacrifice of well-
being, two oxen, five rams, five male
goats, and five male lambs a year old. This
was the offering of Nahshon son of Am-
minadab.

18 On the second day Nethanel son of
Zuar, the leader of Issachar, presented an
offering; 19 he presented for his offering
one silver plate weighing one hundred
thirty shekels, one silver basin weighing
seventy shekels, according to the shekel of
the sanctuary, both of them full of choice
flour mixed with oil for a grain offering;
20 one golden dish weighing ten shekels,
full of incense; 21 one young bull, one
ram, one male lamb a year old, as a burnt
offering; 22 one male goat as a sin offer-
ing; 23 and for the sacrifice of well-being,
two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and
five male lambs a year old. This was the
offering of Nethanel son of Zuar.

24 On the third day Eliab son of He-
lon, the leader of the Zebulunites: 25 his
offering was one silver plate weighing one
hundred thirty shekels, one silver basin
weighing seventy shekels, according to the
shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full
of choice flour mixed with oil for a grain
offering; 26 one golden dish weighing ten
shekels, full of incense; 27 one young bull,
one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a
burnt offering; 28 one male goat for a sin
offering; 29 and for the sacrifice of well-
being, two oxen, five rams, five male
goats, and five male lambs a year old. This
was the offering of Eliab son of Helon.

30 On the fourth day Elizur son of
Shedeur, the leader of the Reubenites:
31 his offering was one silver plate weigh-
ing one hundred thirty shekels, one silver
basin weighing seventy shekels, according
to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of
them full of choice flour mixed with oil
for a grain offering; 32 one golden dish
weighing ten shekels, full of incense;
33 one young bull, one ram, one male
lamb a year old, for a burnt offering;
34 one male goat for a sin offering; 35 and
for the sacrifice of well-being, two oxen,
five rams, five male goats, and five male
lambs a year old. This was the offering of
Elizur son of Shedeur.

36 On the fifth day Shelumiel son of
Zurishaddai, the leader of the Simeonites:
37 his offering was one silver plate weigh-
ing one hundred thirty shekels, one silver
basin weighing seventy shekels, according
to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of
them full of choice flour mixed with oil
for a grain offering; 38 one golden dish
weighing ten shekels, full of incense;
39 one young bull, one ram, one male
lamb a year old, for a burnt offering;
40 one male goat for a sin offering; 41 and
for the sacrifice of well-being, two oxen,
five rams, five male goats, and five male
lambs a year old. This was the offering of
Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai.

42 On the sixth day Eliasaph son of
Deuel, the leader of the Gadites: 43 his
offering was one silver plate weighing one
hundred thirty shekels, one silver basin
weighing seventy shekels, according to the
shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full
of choice flour mixed with oil for a grain
offering; 44 one golden dish weighing ten
shekels, full of incense; 45 one young bull,
one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a
burnt offering; 46 one male goat for a sin

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ous cloth items; see 3.23, 25, 35–37. **7.10** See vv. 1, 4–9. **7.12–83** The leaders are those in 1.5–15; 2.3–31; and 10.14–28, presented in the order of the list in 2.3–31. The dedication offerings are the same from each tribe. **7.13** *Shekel of the sanctuary.* See 3.46–48. **7.17** *Oxen* here does not indicate castrated bulls, but simply male bovines. Castrated animals would not have been

offering; 47and for the sacrifice of well-
being, two oxen, five rams, five male
goats, and five male lambs a year old. This
was the offering of Eliasaph son of Deuel.
48 On the seventh day Elishama son
of Ammihud, the leader of the Ephraim-
ites: 49his offering was one silver plate
weighing one hundred thirty shekels, one
silver basin weighing seventy shekels, ac-
cording to the shekel of the sanctuary,
both of them full of choice flour mixed
with oil for a grain offering; 50one golden
dish weighing ten shekels, full of incense;
51one young bull, one ram, one male
lamb a year old, for a burnt offering;
52one male goat for a sin offering; 53and
for the sacrifice of well-being, two oxen,
five rams, five male goats, and five male
lambs a year old. This was the offering of
Elishama son of Ammihud.
54 On the eighth day Gamaliel son of
Pedahzur, the leader of the Manassites:
55his offering was one silver plate weigh-
ing one hundred thirty shekels, one silver
basin weighing seventy shekels, according
to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of
them full of choice flour mixed with oil
for a grain offering; 56one golden dish
weighing ten shekels, full of incense;
57one young bull, one ram, one male
lamb a year old, for a burnt offering;
58one male goat for a sin offering; 59and
for the sacrifice of well-being, two oxen,
five rams, five male goats, and five male
lambs a year old. This was the offering of
Gamaliel son of Pedahzur.
60 On the ninth day Abidan son of
Gideoni, the leader of the Benjaminites:
61his offering was one silver plate weigh-
ing one hundred thirty shekels, one silver
basin weighing seventy shekels, according
to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of
them full of choice flour mixed with oil
for a grain offering; 62one golden dish
weighing ten shekels, full of incense;
63one young bull, one ram, one male
lamb a year old, for a burnt offering;
64one male goat for a sin offering; 65and
for the sacrifice of well-being, two oxen,
five rams, five male goats, and five male
lambs a year old. This was the offering of
Abidan son of Gideoni.
66 On the tenth day Ahiezer son of
Ammishaddai, the leader of the Danites:
67his offering was one silver plate weigh-
ing one hundred thirty shekels, one silver
basin weighing seventy shekels, according
to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of
them full of choice flour mixed with oil
for a grain offering; 68one golden dish
weighing ten shekels, full of incense;
69one young bull, one ram, one male
lamb a year old, for a burnt offering;
70one male goat for a sin offering; 71and
for the sacrifice of well-being, two oxen,
five rams, five male goats, and five male
lambs a year old. This was the offering of
Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai.
72 On the eleventh day Pagiel son of
Ochran, the leader of the Asherites: 73his
offering was one silver plate weighing one
hundred thirty shekels, one silver basin
weighing seventy shekels, according to the
shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full
of choice flour mixed with oil for a grain
offering; 74one golden dish weighing ten
shekels, full of incense; 75one young bull,
one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a
burnt offering; 76one male goat for a sin
offering; 77and for the sacrifice of well-
being, two oxen, five rams, five male
goats, and five male lambs a year old. This
was the offering of Pagiel son of Ochran.
78 On the twelfth day Ahira son of
Enan, the leader of the Naphtalites: 79his
offering was one silver plate weighing one
hundred thirty shekels, one silver basin
weighing seventy shekels, according to the
shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full
of choice flour mixed with oil for a grain
offering; 80one golden dish weighing ten
shekels, full of incense; 81one young bull,
one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a
burnt offering; 82one male goat for a sin
offering; 83and for the sacrifice of well-
being, two oxen, five rams, five male
goats, and five male lambs a year old.
This was the offering of Ahira son
of Enan.
84 This was the dedication offering
for the altar, at the time when it was
anointed, from the leaders of Israel:
twelve silver plates, twelve silver basins,
twelve golden dishes, 85each silver plate
weighing one hundred thirty shekels and
each basin seventy, all the silver of the ves-
sels two thousand four hundred shekels
according to the shekel of the sanctuary,
86the twelve golden dishes, full of in-
cense, weighing ten shekels apiece accord-
ing to the shekel of the sanctuary, all the
gold of the dishes being one hundred
twenty shekels; 87all the livestock for the
burnt offering twelve bulls, twelve rams,
twelve male lambs a year old, with their
grain offering; and twelve male goats for

a sin offering; 88 and all the livestock for the sacrifice of well-being twenty-four bulls, the rams sixty, the male goats sixty, the male lambs a year old sixty. This was the dedication offering for the altar, after it was anointed.

89 When Moses went into the tent of meeting to speak with the LORD,[l] he would hear the voice speaking to him from above the mercy seat[m] that was on the ark of the covenant[n] from between the two cherubim; thus it spoke to him.

The Seven Lamps

8 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 2 Speak to Aaron and say to him: When you set up the lamps, the seven lamps shall give light in front of the lampstand. 3 Aaron did so; he set up its lamps to give light in front of the lampstand, as the LORD had commanded Moses. 4 Now this was how the lampstand was made, out of hammered work of gold. From its base to its flowers, it was hammered work; according to the pattern that the LORD had shown Moses, so he made the lampstand.

Consecration and Service of the Levites

5 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 6 Take the Levites from among the Israelites and cleanse them. 7 Thus you shall do to them, to cleanse them: sprinkle the water of purification on them, have them shave their whole body with a razor and wash their clothes, and so cleanse themselves. 8 Then let them take a young bull and its grain offering of choice flour mixed with oil, and you shall take another young bull for a sin offering. 9 You shall bring the Levites before the tent of meeting, and assemble the whole congregation of the Israelites. 10 When you bring the Levites before the LORD, the Israelites shall lay their hands on the Levites, 11 and Aaron shall present the Levites before the LORD as an elevation offering from the Israelites, that they may do the service of the LORD. 12 The Levites shall lay their hands on the heads of the bulls, and he shall offer the one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering to the LORD, to make atonement for the Levites. 13 Then you shall have the Levites stand

l Heb *him* *m* Or *the cover* *n* Or *treaty*, or *testimony*; Heb *eduth*

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considered suitable for sacrifice. **7.84, 88** See vv. 1, 4–9. **7.89** This short notice has no obvious connection with what precedes or follows, except that it concerns the sanctuary. The *mercy seat* with the two cherubim is the cover of the ark, and it is from above the mercy seat, between the *cherubim*, that the Lord promises to meet with Moses (Ex 25.17–22; 30.6, 36). In 1 Chr 28.2 the ark is called God's "footstool" (see also Pss 99.5; 132.7), and the Lord is said to be enthroned upon the cherubim (1 Sam 4.4; 2 Sam 6.2; 2 Kings 19.15; 1 Chr 13.6; Pss 80.1; 99.1). Such a throne for a deity is also known from Canaanite iconography. **8.1** The setting is presumably still that of Ex 40.17 (see Num 7.1–9). **8.2–4** *In front of.* That the lamps should throw light forward (northward) toward the ark, the incense altar, and the table of the bread of the Presence was specified in the command to build the lampstand in Ex 25.31–40 (see v. 37), but not in the report of its construction in Ex 37.17–24. See also Ex 27.20–21; 30.7–8; Lev 24.4; 1 Sam 3.3. *Pattern.* See Ex 25.9, 40.

8.5–26 The Levites (presumably those twenty-five and older; see vv. 24–26) are purified by cleansing and sacrifice so that they will be in an appropriate state to handle the sanctuary items (v. 15). Cf. the anointing and ordination of the priests in Ex 29; Lev 8. **8.6–7** *From among the Israelites.* See 1.48–54; 3.11–13. *Cleanse*, i.e., make ritually "clean." *Water of purification.* See also 19.9, 17–19, 21; 31.23; the "water of cleansing" would seem to be the same as the "water of purification" (see also Ezek 36.25), but it is not the "holy water" for the priests mentioned in Num 5.17. In 8.7, "purification" or "purification offering" is the same Hebrew word generally translated "sin" or "sin offering." *Have them shave their whole body with a razor*, lit. "make a razor pass over their entire body" (cf. 6.9). Then they are to *wash their clothes* and presumably themselves (see Lev 13.29–34; 14.8–9; Num 19.19). See also Lev 8; 11; 16; 17 for various rituals involving washing of clothes or persons. **8.8** The first *young bull* is to be a burnt offering; see v. 12. **8.9–11** *Before the LORD*, i.e., at the entrance to the tent (cf., e.g., Ex 29.11, 42; Num 16.16–18). The laying on of *hands* identifies the sacrificer with the sacrificial victim (Lev 1.4; and see Num 8.12). The Levites have become the sacrifice, i.e., they have been dedicated to the Lord and serve as Israel's representatives in the sanctuary. **8.12** The Levites offer a sin offering and a burnt offering to atone for any possible sin (Lev 1.4; 4.20); see v. 15. **8.13** As an *elevation offering* the Levites also belong to Aaron and his descendants (see Ex 29.26–28; Lev 7.34–36;

before Aaron and his sons, and you shall
present them as an elevation offering to
the LORD.
14 Thus you shall separate the Levites
from among the other Israelites, and the
Levites shall be mine. 15 Thereafter the
Levites may go in to do service at the tent
of meeting, once you have cleansed them
and presented them as an elevation offer-
ing. 16 For they are unreservedly given to
me from among the Israelites; I have
taken them for myself, in place of all that
open the womb, the firstborn of all the
Israelites. 17 For all the firstborn among
the Israelites are mine, both human and
animal. On the day that I struck down all
the firstborn in the land of Egypt I conse-
crated them for myself, 18 but I have
taken the Levites in place of all the first-
born among the Israelites. 19 Moreover, I
have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron
and his sons from among the Israelites, to
do the service for the Israelites at the tent
of meeting, and to make atonement for
the Israelites, in order that there may be
no plague among the Israelites for com-
ing too close to the sanctuary.
20 Moses and Aaron and the whole
congregation of the Israelites did with the
Levites accordingly; the Israelites did with
the Levites just as the LORD had com-
manded Moses concerning them. 21 The
Levites purified themselves from sin and
washed their clothes; then Aaron pre-
sented them as an elevation offering be-
fore the LORD, and Aaron made
atonement for them to cleanse them.
22 Thereafter the Levites went in to do
their service in the tent of meeting in at-
tendance on Aaron and his sons. As the
LORD had commanded Moses concerning
the Levites, so they did with them.
23 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:
24 This applies to the Levites: from
twenty-five years old and upward they
shall begin to do duty in the service of the
tent of meeting; 25 and from the age of
fifty years they shall retire from the duty
of the service and serve no more. 26 They
may assist their brothers in the tent of
meeting in carrying out their duties, but
they shall perform no service. Thus you
shall do with the Levites in assigning their
duties.

The Passover at Sinai

9 The LORD spoke to Moses in the wil-
derness of Sinai, in the first month
of the second year after they had come
out of the land of Egypt, saying: 2 Let the
Israelites keep the passover at its ap-
pointed time. 3 On the fourteenth day of
this month, at twilight,[o] you shall keep it
at its appointed time; according to all its
statutes and all its regulations you shall
keep it. 4 So Moses told the Israelites that
they should keep the passover. 5 They
kept the passover in the first month, on
the fourteenth day of the month, at twi-
light,[o] in the wilderness of Sinai. Just as
the LORD had commanded Moses, so the
Israelites did. 6 Now there were certain
people who were unclean through touch-
ing a corpse, so that they could not keep
the passover on that day. They came be-
fore Moses and Aaron on that day, 7 and
said to him, "Although we are unclean
through touching a corpse, why must we
be kept from presenting the LORD's offer-
ing at its appointed time among the Isra-
elites?" 8 Moses spoke to them, "Wait, so

o Heb *between the two evenings*

10.12–15). **8.14** See vv. 6–7. **8.16–18** See 3.11–13. **8.19** *As a gift to Aaron and his sons.* See 3.5–9. Because the Levites stood between the Israelites and the sanctuary, the Israelites were less likely to trespass in dangerous proximity to the sanctuary; see 1.51–53; 2.17. **8.23–26** On the age limits for Levitical duty, cf. 4.3, 23, 30. Num 8 liberalizes the age limits, and other writings expand them even more (see 1 Chr 23.3, 24, 27; 2 Chr 31.17; Ezra 3.8). The differences are presumably due to variations over time in the numbers and duties of the Levites; an upper age limit is more appropriate for those doing heavy work such as transporting (Num 3–4); in v. 26 Levites over fifty could still assist in the tent of meeting. When the tabernacle was stationary within the temple (see 1 Kings 8.1–13), no such duties would fall to the Levites. Differences in lower age limits may be due to changing numbers of available Levite males (see Ezra 2.1–2, 40; Neh 7.6–7, 43).

9.1–5 The Passover is kept in the wilderness of Sinai. This second Passover is celebrated immediately before the people set out on a march, as was the first (Ex 12–13). **9.1** One month before the date in 1.1; see 7.1–9. **9.2–4** See Ex 12.1–27, 43–49. **9.6** *Unclean through touching a corpse.* See 19.11–20; also 5.2. *Aaron* seems to be an addition here; the rest of the narrative involves

that I may hear what the LORD will command concerning you."

9 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:
10 Speak to the Israelites, saying: Anyone
of you or your descendants who is un-
clean through touching a corpse, or is
away on a journey, shall still keep the
passover to the LORD. 11 In the second
month on the fourteenth day, at twi-
light,[p] they shall keep it; they shall eat it
with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.
12 They shall leave none of it until morn-
ing, nor break a bone of it; according to
all the statute for the passover they shall
keep it. 13 But anyone who is clean and is
not on a journey, and yet refrains from
keeping the passover, shall be cut off
from the people for not presenting the
LORD's offering at its appointed time;
such a one shall bear the consequences for
the sin. 14 Any alien residing among you
who wishes to keep the passover to the
LORD shall do so according to the statute
of the passover and according to its regu-
lation; you shall have one statute for both
the resident alien and the native.

The Cloud and the Fire

15 On the day the tabernacle was set
up, the cloud covered the tabernacle, the
tent of the covenant;[q] and from evening
until morning it was over the tabernacle,
having the appearance of fire. 16 It was al-
ways so: the cloud covered it by day[r] and
the appearance of fire by night. 17 When-
ever the cloud lifted from over the tent,
then the Israelites would set out; and in
the place where the cloud settled down,
there the Israelites would camp. 18 At the
command of the LORD the Israelites
would set out, and at the command of the
LORD they would camp. As long as the
cloud rested over the tabernacle, they
would remain in camp. 19 Even when the
cloud continued over the tabernacle many
days, the Israelites would keep the charge
of the LORD, and would not set out.
20 Sometimes the cloud would remain a
few days over the tabernacle, and accord-
ing to the command of the LORD they
would remain in camp; then according to
the command of the LORD they would set
out. 21 Sometimes the cloud would remain
from evening until morning; and when
the cloud lifted in the morning, they
would set out, or if it continued for a day
and a night, when the cloud lifted they
would set out. 22 Whether it was two days,
or a month, or a longer time, that the
cloud continued over the tabernacle, rest-
ing upon it, the Israelites would remain in
camp and would not set out; but when it
lifted they would set out. 23 At the com-

p Heb *between the two evenings* q Or *treaty*, or *testimony*; Heb *eduth* r Gk Syr Vg: Heb lacks *by day*

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only Moses. **9.10** *Unclean . . . corpse.* See 9.6. Being *away on a journey* was not part of the original question and seems to assume a settled life in Canaan (note the phrase *or your descendants*). **9.11** Supplemental instructions adapt the older regulations to unaddressed circumstances (see also 2 Chr 30.1–3, 15). **9.12** See Ex 12.10, 46; see also Ex 29.34; Lev 7.15; 22.29–30. **9.13** Commentators are divided on the precise meaning of the phrase *cut off from the people* as to whether the guilty person is killed or his family line is cut off, but most agree the phrase implies punishment by divine rather than human agency. For a clearer case, see 15.30–31. **9.14** The resident *alien* is not a native Israelite, but rather someone who has taken up permanent residence among the Israelites and finds protection in that community. Resident aliens, in contrast to foreigners passing through or living only temporarily in the Israelite community (Ex 12.43), were allowed to participate in the Passover as long as their males were circumcised (Ex 12.48–49), but they were not punished for not participating as native Israelites would be (Num 9.13).

9.15–23 The setting of these verses is the march from the wilderness of Sinai, although the beginning of the march is not reported until 10.11. **9.15–16** *Day . . . was set up.* On the date, see v. 1. *The cloud covered the tabernacle, the tent of the covenant*: among earlier mentions of the cloud, see Ex 13.21–22, where the cloud and the fire are described separately, the cloud by day and the fire by night; see other variations in Ex 16.10; 24.15–18; 33.9–10; 40.34–38; Lev 16.2. See also Ex 14.19, 24; Num 14.14; Deut 31.15; Neh 9.12, 19. The fire that is in the cloud in some descriptions has been associated with the "glory" of the Lord, and such descriptions have led commentators to describe this "glory"-cloud as a kind of glowing aura, like the "radiance" of Mesopotamian gods (see, e.g., Ex 16.10; 24.16–18; also 40.34–35; Num 16.42; Ezek 1.28; 10.4). **9.16** Cf. Pss 78.14; 105.39. **9.17–23** See, e.g., Ex 40.36–37; Num 10.11–13. **9.17** *Settled down*, lit. "tabernacled." Presumably the cloud stopped at the point where the tabernacle was to be set up, determining, then, the position of the rest of the camp (ch. 2).

mand of the LORD they would camp, and at the command of the LORD they would set out. They kept the charge of the LORD, at the command of the LORD by Moses.

The Silver Trumpets

10 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 2 Make two silver trumpets; you shall make them of hammered work; and you shall use them for summoning the congregation, and for breaking camp. 3 When both are blown, the whole congregation shall assemble before you at the entrance of the tent of meeting. 4 But if only one is blown, then the leaders, the heads of the tribes of Israel, shall assemble before you. 5 When you blow an alarm, the camps on the east side shall set out; 6 when you blow a second alarm, the camps on the south side shall set out. An alarm is to be blown whenever they are to set out. 7 But when the assembly is to be gathered, you shall blow, but you shall not sound an alarm. 8 The sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow the trumpets; this shall be a perpetual institution for you throughout your generations. 9 When you go to war in your land against the adversary who oppresses you, you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets, so that you may be remembered before the LORD your God and be saved from your enemies. 10 Also on your days of rejoicing, at your appointed festivals, and at the beginnings of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings and over your sacrifices of well-being; they shall serve as a reminder on your behalf before the LORD your God: I am the LORD your God.

Departure from Sinai

11 In the second year, in the second month, on the twentieth day of the month, the cloud lifted from over the tabernacle of the covenant.[s] 12 Then the Israelites set out by stages from the wilderness of Sinai, and the cloud settled down in the wilderness of Paran. 13 They set out for the first time at the command of the LORD by Moses. 14 The standard of the camp of Judah set out first, company by company, and over the whole company was Nahshon son of Amminadab. 15 Over the company of the tribe of Issachar was Nethanel son of Zuar; 16 and over the company of the tribe of Zebulun was Eliab son of Helon.

17 Then the tabernacle was taken down, and the Gershonites and the Mera-

s Or *treaty*, or *testimony*; Heb *eduth*

10.1–10 Moses is to make two silver trumpets to be used during the march from the wilderness of Sinai. **10.2** There are several Hebrew words translated *trumpets*. The trumpets in this narrative are made of metal, not animal horns, and are used almost entirely for sacred and not secular purposes. They are blown by priests (see v. 8). According to Josephus and as depicted on later coins, they were slender with a wide mouth and about one foot long. **10.4** *The leaders, the heads of the tribes of Israel.* See 1.16. **10.5–6** Many commentators suggest that an *alarm* is a series of short blasts, as distinguished from a *blow*, a long blast (v. 7). The Hebrew word translated "alarm" here is commonly a battle cry (e.g., v. 9; 31.6; Josh 6.5, 20; 2 Chr 13.12–16) but can also be a shout for joy (e.g., 2 Sam 6.15; Ps 33.3). Presumably an alarm is blown for the tribes on the west and north as well (so the Septuagint). **10.7** *Blow.* See 10.5–6. **10.8** On these particular trumpets as *priestly* instruments, see v. 2. **10.10** *Days of rejoicing*, e.g., the coronation of King Joash (2 Kings 11.14) or the laying of the foundation of the second temple (Ezra 3.10). *Appointed festivals.* See Num 28–29; Lev 23. *Beginnings of your months.* See Num 28.11–15.

10.11–22.1 The march from the wilderness of Sinai to Transjordan. **10.11–36** Cf. Deut 1.6–8. **10.11–12** *Second year ... month.* The date is nineteen days after the census in 1.1 and eleven months and nineteen days after the Israelites arrived at the wilderness of Sinai (Ex 19.1). *Cloud.* See 9.15–23. For the *stages* of their journey, see also 33.1–49. In the first stage, the people move from the wilderness of Sinai to the wilderness of Paran (see also 11.3, 35; 12.16). Paran seems to refer to the entire area of the northern Sinai between Egypt and Midian (1 Kings 11.18). **10.14–28** For the order of the march, see ch. 2. Positions of the Levitical families during the march are not quite symmetrically assigned. Those who are *over the company* parallel the lists of leaders in 1.5–15; 2.3–31; 7.12–83. For the *standard* of a tribe (vv. 14, 18, 22, and 25), see 1.52. There are three tribes for each standard as there are three tribes for each "regimental encampment" in ch. 2. A regimental encampment consists of the tribes who camp under the same standard. *Company by company.* See 1.3. **10.17** The Gershonites and Merarites presumably also took down the parts of the tabernacle that they transported on wagons (7.1–9) and put the structure

rites, who carried the tabernacle, set out.
18 Next the standard of the camp of Reuben set out, company by company; and over the whole company was Elizur son of Shedeur. 19 Over the company of the tribe of Simeon was Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai, 20 and over the company of the tribe of Gad was Eliasaph son of Deuel.
21 Then the Kohathites, who carried the holy things, set out; and the tabernacle was set up before their arrival. 22 Next the standard of the Ephraimite camp set out, company by company, and over the whole company was Elishama son of Ammihud. 23 Over the company of the tribe of Manasseh was Gamaliel son of Pedahzur, 24 and over the company of the tribe of Benjamin was Abidan son of Gideoni.
25 Then the standard of the camp of Dan, acting as the rear guard of all the camps, set out, company by company, and over the whole company was Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai. 26 Over the company of the tribe of Asher was Pagiel son of Ochran, 27 and over the company of the tribe of Naphtali was Ahira son of Enan. 28 This was the order of march of the Israelites, company by company, when they set out.
29 Moses said to Hobab son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, "We are setting out for the place of which the LORD said, 'I will give it to you'; come with us, and we will treat you well; for the LORD has promised good to Israel." 30 But he said to him, "I will not go, but I will go back to my own land and to my kindred." 31 He said, "Do not leave us, for you know where we should camp in the wilderness, and you will serve as eyes for us. 32 Moreover, if you go with us, whatever good the LORD does for us, the same we will do for you."
33 So they set out from the mount of the LORD three days' journey with the ark of the covenant of the LORD going before them three days' journey, to seek out a resting place for them, 34 the cloud of the LORD being over them by day when they set out from the camp.
35 Whenever the ark set out, Moses would say,

"Arise, O LORD, let your enemies
be scattered,
and your foes flee before you."

36 And whenever it came to rest, he would say,

"Return, O LORD of the ten
thousand thousands of
Israel."[t]

Complaining in the Desert

11 Now when the people complained in the hearing of the LORD about their misfortunes, the LORD heard it and his anger was kindled. Then

[t] Meaning of Heb uncertain

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up again when the people camped (see 10.21). The descendants of Aaron pack up the most sacred items of the tabernacle structure for the Kohathites to carry (v. 21 here; 3.31–32; 4.5–20), and the dismantling of the rest is perhaps implied in 4.27–28, 32b–33. For the items that the Gershonites and Merarites transport, see 3.25–26, 36–37; 4.24–26, 31–32a. **10.21** See 10.17. **10.25** *Rear guard,* lit. "gatherer"; see also Josh 6.9, 13; Isa 52.12. **10.29–36** At this point old epic materials return, interrupting the so-called priestly materials (see Introduction) that have been the source of the narrative since Ex 35. **10.29–32** *Hobab son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law* is persuaded to accompany the people on their march. Elsewhere called Jethro (Ex 3.1; 4.18; 18.1–12) or even Reuel (Ex 2.18), Hobab is mentioned again in Judg 4.11 and in the Septuagint in Judg 1.16. Moses is frequently associated with Midianites or with the related Kenites, and his father-in-law is a priest of the Lord (Ex 2.16) even before Moses' encounter with the deity at the burning bush (Ex 3). Moses' and Israel's relations with Midianites or Kenites are sometimes described positively (Ex 2.11–22; 3.1–6; 4.18–20; 18; Judg 1.16; 4.11; 1 Sam 15.6; 27.8–12; 30.26–31), but sometimes a tradition of animosity against Midian is evident (Num 22.4, 7; 25; 31; Josh 13.21–23; Judg 6–8; Ps 83.9; Isa 9.4; 10.26). **10.33–34** *Mount of the LORD.* See Deut 1.6. For the *cloud* that was over the people by day, see 9.15–23. That the ark went before them *three days' journey* makes little sense; the temporal phrase is perhaps repeated mistakenly from earlier in the verse. Cf. Josh 3.1–4. **10.35–36** Two very short pieces that appear to be ancient battle cries. *"Arise, O LORD"* and *"Return, O LORD"* imply that the ark represents the presence of the Lord among the people (see 7.89; 14.44; Ex 25.10–22; 1 Sam 4.1–7.2; 2 Sam 6.1–19; 2 Chr 6.41; Pss 68.1; 132.8). In Hebrew manuscripts, this two-verse portion is set off by an inverted Hebrew letter *nun* at the beginning and end, indicating that ancient Jewish tradition considered these verses special in some way and took pains to mark them as such.

the fire of the LORD burned against them,
and consumed some outlying parts of the
camp. 2 But the people cried out to Moses;
and Moses prayed to the LORD, and the
fire abated. 3 So that place was called Tab-
erah,[u] because the fire of the LORD
burned against them.

4 The rabble among them had a
strong craving; and the Israelites also
wept again, and said, "If only we had
meat to eat! 5 We remember the fish we
used to eat in Egypt for nothing, the cu-
cumbers, the melons, the leeks, the on-
ions, and the garlic; 6 but now our
strength is dried up, and there is nothing
at all but this manna to look at."

7 Now the manna was like coriander
seed, and its color was like the color of
gum resin. 8 The people went around and
gathered it, ground it in mills or beat it in
mortars, then boiled it in pots and made
cakes of it; and the taste of it was like the
taste of cakes baked with oil. 9 When the
dew fell on the camp in the night, the
manna would fall with it.

10 Moses heard the people weeping
throughout their families, all at the en-
trances of their tents. Then the LORD be-
came very angry, and Moses was
displeased. 11 So Moses said to the LORD,
"Why have you treated your servant so
badly? Why have I not found favor in
your sight, that you lay the burden of all
this people on me? 12 Did I conceive all
this people? Did I give birth to them, that
you should say to me, 'Carry them in your
bosom, as a nurse carries a sucking child,'
to the land that you promised on oath to
their ancestors? 13 Where am I to get meat
to give to all this people? For they come
weeping to me and say, 'Give us meat to
eat!' 14 I am not able to carry all this peo-

u That is *Burning*

11.1–35 The stories in ch. 11 appear to be a doublet of the set of incidents in Ex 15.22–16.36. In each case there is a three-day march (Ex 15.22; Num 10.33), a set of complaints (Ex 15.24; 16.2–3; Num 11.1, 4, 10), and the provision of manna and quails for the people to eat (Ex 16.4, 13–15, 31–36; Num 11.7–9, 31–32). **11.1–3** A schematic story of complaint. This is the first appearance in Numbers of the common motif of the people's complaining because of the hardship of their life in the desert. They long for the settled life of Egypt and regret that they left what was familiar to make the dangerous trek through the unknown. Typically they complain and are punished by the Lord. In some of the stories, Moses intercedes with the Lord on behalf of the people, and in some the name of the place where the complaining happens is etymologized with reference to some incident or element within the story. Such stories begin in Ex 14.10; 15.24; 16.2; 17.2; (32.1); Num 11.1; 11.4; 14.1; 16.41; 20.3; and 21.4. (See also Pss 78.15–31; 106.13–15.) **11.1** The *misfortunes* mentioned here are unspecified. *Fire of the LORD* is probably lightning (see Ex 9.23–24; 19.18; 2 Kings 1.9–14). **11.2** Moses *prayed* for the people, suggesting the prophet's role as intercessor. Complaint stories often include some intercession by Moses; see further in vv. 10–15. **11.3** *Fire of the LORD.* See v. 1. *Taberah,* presumably a place in the wilderness of Paran (see 10.11–12; Deut 9.22; cf. Num 33.16–17). **11.4–9** Another complaint, this time first voiced by the *rabble* (v. 4). **11.4** The word for *rabble,* lit. "a collection," occurs only here and means a mixed group of people, i.e., non-Israelites who were attached to the people (see Ex 12.38; Lev 24.10). This verse is evidence of a tradition that the Israelites did not have animals with them on the march; cf. Ex 10.24–26; 12.32, 38; 17.3; 34.3; Num 14.33; 32.1. **11.5** The foods listed here are typical in Egypt. Note that none is precisely "meat"; in fact, most are vegetables. **11.6–9** *Manna.* See Ex 16.14–21, 31. **11.8** *Cakes baked with oil,* a loose translation (see Ex 16.31); a literal translation would be "cream of oil," perhaps rich or choice cream. **11.10–15** In a very unusual passage, Moses, like the people, complains of his lot and says he would prefer death to a continuation of the current situation. Moses' complaint is that the Lord has not been responsible in caring for the Israelites, even though their situation is a result of the Lord's previous activity and promises; he feels caught in the middle between a complaining throng and an unconcerned deity (see v. 14). Moses' role as intercessor is not unusual (see v. 3; 14.13–19; 16.22; 21.7; see also Abraham in Gen 18.22–32), but in several instances his pleas are rather extended and in some of these, as here, he is surprisingly indignant about his own role (see Ex 17.2–4; 32.11–14, 30–32; 33.12–16; cf. Ex 14.15–18, which seems to be a response to such an outcry, now lost). **11.12** The use of an extra Hebrew pronoun *I* twice lends emphasis to Moses' implication here that it was indeed the Lord who conceived and gave birth to Israel. (It is used again in v. 14.) The female imagery used here of the Lord and of Moses (he has been designated Israel's wet nurse) is unusual, but not unique (see Deut 32.18; also Isa 42.14; 66.13). *Carry them in your bosom,* a wet nurse's activity (see Isa 40.11 for the same image as a description of a shepherd with lambs). **11.14** Cf. Ex 18.17–18.

ple alone, for they are too heavy for me.
15 If this is the way you are going to treat
me, put me to death at once—if I have
found favor in your sight—and do not let
me see my misery."

The Seventy Elders

16 So the LORD said to Moses, "Gather
for me seventy of the elders of Israel,
whom you know to be the elders of the
people and officers over them; bring
them to the tent of meeting, and have
them take their place there with you. 17 I
will come down and talk with you there;
and I will take some of the spirit that is on
you and put it on them; and they shall
bear the burden of the people along with
you so that you will not bear it all by your-
self. 18 And say to the people: Consecrate
yourselves for tomorrow, and you shall
eat meat; for you have wailed in the hear-
ing of the LORD, saying, 'If only we had
meat to eat! Surely it was better for us in
Egypt.' Therefore the LORD will give you
meat, and you shall eat. 19 You shall eat
not only one day, or two days, or five
days, or ten days, or twenty days, 20 but
for a whole month—until it comes out of
your nostrils and becomes loathsome to
you—because you have rejected the LORD
who is among you, and have wailed be-
fore him, saying, 'Why did we ever leave
Egypt?' " 21 But Moses said, "The people I
am with number six hundred thousand
on foot; and you say, 'I will give them
meat, that they may eat for a whole
month'! 22 Are there enough flocks and
herds to slaughter for them? Are there
enough fish in the sea to catch for them?"
23 The LORD said to Moses, "Is the LORD's
power limited?[v] Now you shall see
whether my word will come true for you
or not."

24 So Moses went out and told the
people the words of the LORD; and he
gathered seventy elders of the people,
and placed them all around the tent.
25 Then the LORD came down in the cloud
and spoke to him, and took some of the
spirit that was on him and put it on the
seventy elders; and when the spirit rested
upon them, they prophesied. But they did
not do so again.

26 Two men remained in the camp,
one named Eldad, and the other named
Medad, and the spirit rested on them;
they were among those registered, but
they had not gone out to the tent, and so
they prophesied in the camp. 27 And a
young man ran and told Moses, "Eldad
and Medad are prophesying in the camp."
28 And Joshua son of Nun, the assistant of
Moses, one of his chosen men,[w] said, "My
lord Moses, stop them!" 29 But Moses said
to him, "Are you jealous for my sake?
Would that all the LORD's people were
prophets, and that the LORD would put
his spirit on them!" 30 And Moses and the
elders of Israel returned to the camp.

The Quails

31 Then a wind went out from the
LORD, and it brought quails from the sea
and let them fall beside the camp, about a
day's journey on this side and a day's jour-
ney on the other side, all around the

v Heb *LORD's hand too short?* w Or *of Moses from his youth*

11.15 See Ex 32.32.

11.16–17 See a similar solution in Ex 18.13–26. **11.16** *Seventy of the elders.* See also Ex 24.1, 9. In the old epic traditions represented here (see Introduction) the *tent of meeting* is outside the camp (see vv. 26, 30), as in Ex 33.7–11 (note Joshua's role there also); Num 12.4; 19.1–4; it is pitched quite simply by Moses (Ex 33.7). The tradition that reports the tent outside the camp presents it as the site where anyone can obtain an oracle from the Lord (Ex 33.7) as Miriam and Aaron do in 12.4–9. **11.17** *I will come down and talk with you there.* See 7.89. Leaders and prophets are commonly perceived to possess a special *spirit* (see, e.g., 24.2–3; Judg 3.10; Ezek 2.2), and that spirit can be passed to others (Num 11.24–29; 1 Sam 10.5–10; 19.18–24; 2 Kings 2.9–15). **11.18** *Consecrate yourselves,* implying an upcoming encounter with the divine or the sacred. **11.20** See 14.27; 1 Sam 8.7; 10.19. **11.21** The *six hundred thousand on foot* are the soldiers (see Ex 12.37; cf. Num 1.46). **11.23** *Is the LORD's power limited?* See text note *v*. See Isa 50.2; 59.1 for the same image. **11.24–30** See 11.17. **11.25** The prophesying was a temporary condition and not a permanent occupation. **11.26, 30** The tent of meeting is outside the camp.

11.31–34 This section returns to the topic of vv. 18–24a; see Ps 105.40. **11.31** *Wind* provides a verbal connection with the preceding section because "wind" and "spirit" are the same word in Hebrew. *Quails.* See Ex 16.13. *Two cubits,* about

camp, about two cubits deep on the
ground. 32 So the people worked all that
day and night and all the next day, gath-
ering the quails; the least anyone gath-
ered was ten homers; and they spread
them out for themselves all around the
camp. 33 But while the meat was still be-
tween their teeth, before it was consumed,
the anger of the LORD was kindled against
the people, and the LORD struck the peo-
ple with a very great plague. 34 So that
place was called Kibroth-hattaavah,[x] be-
cause there they buried the people who
had the craving. 35 From Kibroth-
hattaavah the people journeyed to
Hazeroth.

Aaron and Miriam Jealous of Moses

12 While they were at Hazeroth,
Miriam and Aaron spoke against
Moses because of the Cushite woman
whom he had married (for he had indeed
married a Cushite woman); 2 and they
said, "Has the LORD spoken only through
Moses? Has he not spoken through us
also?" And the LORD heard it. 3 Now the
man Moses was very humble,[y] more so
than anyone else on the face of the earth.
4 Suddenly the LORD said to Moses,
Aaron, and Miriam, "Come out, you
three, to the tent of meeting." So the
three of them came out. 5 Then the LORD
came down in a pillar of cloud, and stood
at the entrance of the tent, and called
Aaron and Miriam; and they both came
forward. 6 And he said, "Hear my words:

When there are prophets
among you,
I the LORD make myself known
to them in visions;
I speak to them in dreams.
7 Not so with my servant Moses;
he is entrusted with all my
house.
8 With him I speak face to face—
clearly, not in riddles;

x That is *Graves of craving* y Or *devout*

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one yard. **11.32** Some sources indicate a *homer* is about 6 bushels, others that it is as high as 14 bushels. They *spread out* the quails to dry and preserve them. **11.33** On the Lord's anger resulting in a plague, see Ex 9.15; Lev 26.21; Num 12.9–10; 14.11–12, 36–37; 16.45–46; 21.5–6 (serpents); 25.1–9, 18; Deut 28.15, 27; 1 Sam 4.5–8; 2 Sam 24.10–17; 1 Chr 21.1–17; Jer 14.10–12. **11.34** The mention of *craving* here forms an inclusio with v. 4, in which the rabble had a strong craving. Taken literally, the use of this phrase suggests that only the rabble were affected by the plague. **11.35** The next stage on the journey. *Kibroth-hattaavah.* See 33.16–17; Deut 9.22. *Hazeroth.* See Num 12.1, 16; 33.17–18; Deut 1.1; cf. Num 10.11–12.

12.1 *Hazeroth.* See 11.35. *Miriam and Aaron* are Moses' sister and brother (Ex 4.14; 15.20). *A Cushite woman.* Cush often refers to Ethiopia in the Bible, and the Septuagint translates "Ethiopian" here. There is also a place called Cush in northern Arabia, however, and, given Hab 3.7 where "Cushan" is used in parallel with Midian, it must be the north Arabian Cush that is referred to here. Thus the Cushite woman would be Zipporah, a Midianite (Ex 2.15–21; 3.1; Num 10.29), more specifically a member of the Midianite subgroup the Kenites (Judg 1.16; 4.11). **12.2** In this verse Miriam and Aaron offer a different reason for their speaking against their brother Moses: he should not be considered the only intermediary for Israel since they also have received communications from the Lord (see Ex 4.14–16; 15.20–21; Mic 6.4). At question here is Moses' unique position as the leader of the people; this passage probably reflects issues of a later day when groups who traced their authority to Moses were involved in a power struggle with groups who traced their authority to Miriam or Aaron. **12.3** This verse, because of its laudatory third-person reference to Moses, was a stumbling block to earlier readers who understood the entire Pentateuch to have been written by Moses himself. **12.4** *Come out . . . to the tent.* See 11.16, 26, 30. **12.5** See 9.15–16. **12.6** *Visions* and *dreams* are a valid form of communication from the Lord in Israel (see Joel 2.28; also Gen 15.1; 40–41), but dreams are often distinguished from communications through prophets (Deut 13.1, 3, 5; 1 Sam 28.6, 15; Jer 27.9; 29.8), and sometimes dreams are ranked below a prophet's communications (Jer 23.28). The verbs in this verse are habitual or customary: this is how it is usually done. **12.7** Moses is distinguished from all other prophets, from what is customary (v. 6). The Lord's *house* is Israel (Jer 12.7; Hos 8.1); see also Gen 24.2; 39.4–6; 41.40; and the frequent reference to Israel as "the house of Israel" (as in Ex 16.31; 40.38). **12.8** *Face to face* is not meant to be taken literally here; the literal translation in this verse would be "mouth to mouth." That the Lord spoke to Moses "face to face" perhaps always means simply that they spoke directly, without an intermediary or a medium such as a dream (Ex 33.11; Deut 34.10 [both lit. "face to face"]; Num 14.14; Isa 52.8 [both lit. "eye to eye"]). Moses *beholds the form of the*

and he beholds the form of the
LORD.
Why then were you not afraid to speak
against my servant Moses?" 9 And the an-
ger of the LORD was kindled against them,
and he departed.

10 When the cloud went away from over the tent, Miriam had become leprous,[z] as white as snow. And Aaron turned towards Miriam and saw that she was leprous. 11 Then Aaron said to Moses, "Oh, my lord, do not punish us[a] for a sin that we have so foolishly committed. 12 Do not let her be like one stillborn, whose flesh is half consumed when it comes out of its mother's womb." 13 And Moses cried to the LORD, "O God, please heal her." 14 But the LORD said to Moses, "If her father had but spit in her face, would she not bear her shame for seven days? Let her be shut out of the camp for seven days, and after that she may be brought in again." 15 So Miriam was shut out of the camp for seven days; and the people did not set out on the march until Miriam had been brought in again. 16 After that the people set out from Hazeroth, and camped in the wilderness of Paran.

Spies Sent into Canaan

13 The LORD said to Moses, 2 "Send men to spy out the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites; from each of their ancestral tribes you shall send a man, every one a leader among them." 3 So Moses sent them from the wilderness of Paran, according to the command of the LORD, all of them leading men among the Israelites. 4 These were their names: From the tribe of Reuben, Shammua son of Zaccur; 5 from the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat son of Hori; 6 from the tribe of Judah, Caleb son of Jephunneh; 7 from the tribe of Issachar, Igal son of Joseph; 8 from the tribe of Ephraim, Hoshea son of Nun; 9 from the tribe of Benjamin, Palti son of Raphu; 10 from the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddiel son of Sodi; 11 from the tribe of Joseph (that is, from the tribe of Manasseh), Gaddi son of Susi; 12 from the tribe of Dan, Ammiel son of Gemalli; 13 from the tribe of Asher, Sethur son of Michael; 14 from the tribe of Naphtali, Nahbi son of Vophsi; 15 from the tribe of Gad, Geuel son of Machi. 16 These were the names of the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land. And Moses changed the name of Hoshea son of Nun to Joshua.

17 Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said to them, "Go up there into the Negeb, and go up into the hill country, 18 and see what the land is like, and whether the people who live in it are strong or weak, whether they are few or many, 19 and whether the land they live in is good or bad, and whether the towns that they live in are unwalled or fortified, 20 and whether the land is rich or poor, and whether there are trees in it or not. Be bold, and bring some of the fruit of

z A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain a Heb *do not lay sin upon us*

LORD, however (see Ex 33.17–23; cf. Deut 4.12, 15, where the people behold no form; Ps 17.15). **12.10** *Leprous.* See text note z and vv. 13–15. We do not know why Miriam is punished, but not Aaron. Aaron, in v. 11, asks that Moses not punish the two of them, as if he too is suffering or about to suffer. **12.11** Aaron addresses Moses as *my lord*, ironically acknowledging Moses' superiority in his plea for help. *Do not punish us.* See 12.10. **12.13** Moses' intercession on behalf of Miriam is typical. See 11.10–15. **12.14** *Spit in her face.* On spitting as a sign of humiliation, see Deut 25.9; Job 30.10; Isa 50.6. **12.15** See Lev 13.1–17, especially v. 4; 14.1–32, especially v. 8. **12.16** Either this verse means that the people are still in the wilderness of Paran, or else the old epic traditions represented here (see Introduction) do not consider that they enter the wilderness of Paran until they leave Hazeroth.

13.1–3 Like those who helped with the census, 1.4, the men sent to spy out the land for the people at the Lord's command (cf. Deut 1.22–25) are chosen because each is a leader in one of the twelve tribes. The setting is the wilderness of Paran; see 12.16. **13.4–16** The order in which the tribes are listed is similar to that in 1.5–15, but the leaders are not the same. This list of names is not duplicated. **13.6** Elsewhere (32.12; Josh 14.6, 14) Caleb is called a Kenizzite; see Num 14.24. **13.17** *Negeb* (pronounced "negev"), the generally dry waste country just north of the Sinai Peninsula, south of what is later Judah, and to the west and south of the Dead Sea. The *hill country* referred to here is either the highlands of the Negeb itself (see 14.40; Deut 1.20) or the highlands of Judah (Judg 1.19), part of the central spine of hills that runs north and south through Canaan. **13.20** *The season of the first ripe grapes*

the land." Now it was the season of the first ripe grapes.

21 So they went up and spied out the land from the wilderness of Zin to Rehob, near Lebo-hamath. 22 They went up into the Negeb, and came to Hebron; and Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, the Anakites, were there. (Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.) 23 And they came to the Wadi Eshcol, and cut down from there a branch with a single cluster of grapes, and they carried it on a pole between two of them. They also brought some pomegranates and figs. 24 That place was called the Wadi Eshcol,[b] because of the cluster that the Israelites cut down from there.

The Report of the Spies

25 At the end of forty days they returned from spying out the land. 26 And they came to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation of the Israelites in the wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh; they brought back word to them and to all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land. 27 And they told him, "We came to the land to which you sent us; it flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. 28 Yet the people who live in the land are strong, and the towns are fortified and very large; and besides, we saw the descendants of Anak there. 29 The Amalekites live in the land of the Negeb; the Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites live in the hill country; and the Canaanites live by the sea, and along the Jordan."

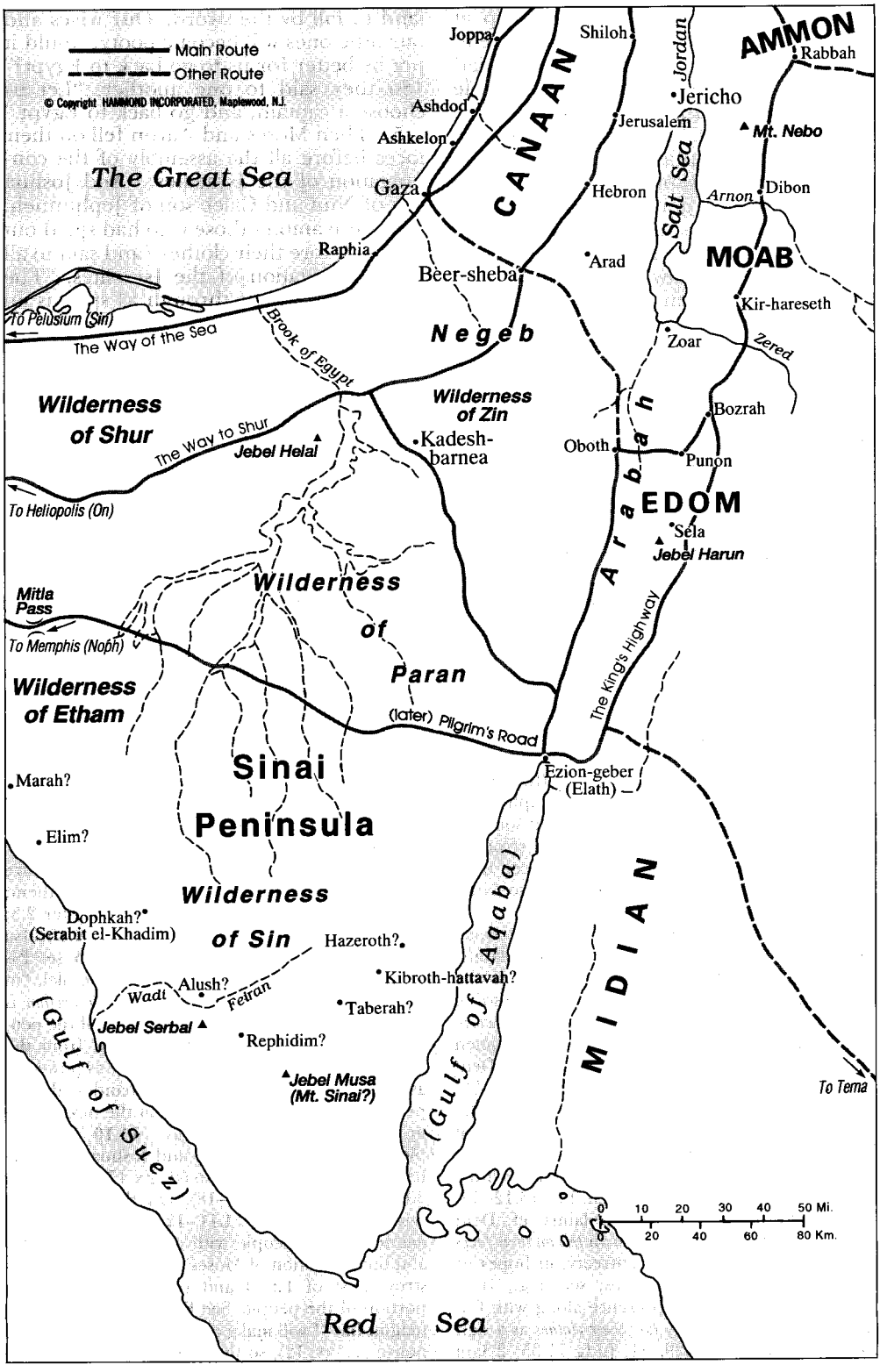
30 But Caleb quieted the people be-

b That is *Cluster*

is July/August. **13.21–24** Cf. Deut 1.24–25a. **13.21** Another note from the priestly traditions (see Introduction). While the following old epic story (vv. 22–24) locates the reconnoitering entirely in the area of the Negeb and Judah, the priestly traditions state that the spies went from the far southern end of the promised land in the *wilderness of Zin* (see 34.1–4; Josh 15.1–3) to the far northern end at *Rehob* or Beth-rehob, described as near *Lebo-hamath* (lit. "the entrance to Hamath" in southern Syria), often mentioned as part of Israel's northern border (see 34.7–8; Judg 18.27–28; 2 Sam 10.6, 8). **13.22** *Negeb.* See 13.17. *Hebron,* an important city in Judah, especially in the family narratives in Genesis, is about twenty miles south of Jerusalem. The *Anakites* are one of several groups described as the indigenous peoples of Canaan, many of whom are remembered as giants; see vv. 32–33 (see also Gen 6.1–4); Deut 2.9–11, 19–21; 9.1–2; Josh 11.21–22; 14.12–15; 15.13–14; Judg 1.10, 20; see also Gen 14.5; 15.20; Deut 3.11, 13; Josh 12.4–5; 13.12; 17.15; 1 Chr 20.4. *Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai.* See Josh 15.14; Judg 1.10. *Zoan in Egypt,* in the eastern Delta (Ex 1.11). **13.23–24** *Wadi Eshcol,* site unknown, is etymologized by being tied to the spies' acquisition of oversized fruit there. In Hebrew an *eshcol* is a cluster of grapes; see text note *b*. *Grapes, pomegranates,* and *figs* do grow in the Hebron area, as well as many other areas of Palestine.

13.25–33 See Deut 1.25b. **13.25** *Forty days* is a stereotyped expression of time in biblical literature; see, e.g., Gen 7.4; Ex 24.18; 1 Sam 17.16; 1 Kings 19.8; Ezek 4.6. **13.26** This is the first mention of the oasis *Kadesh* (Kadesh-barnea; see, e.g., 32.8), where much of the forty years in the wilderness will be spent (including the events in chs. 13–20). According to the priestly traditions (see Introduction), Kadesh is in the wilderness of Zin (20.1); it is placed in the wilderness of Paran in the old epic traditions. Kadesh-barnea was probably one of a group of oases located about fifty miles south of Beer-sheba, one of which is still called "the spring Kadesh." (See Ex 17.7.) **13.27** The spies say the land *flows with milk and honey* in the first use in the book of Numbers of the well-known phrase. See also 14.8; 16.13 (used of Egypt!), 14; Ex 3.8. **13.28** The *descendants of Anak* are the Anakites of v. 22. A common Semitic way of designating the members of a group is to call them "the descendants/children" of an eponymous ancestor or of a typical member of the group: "the children of Israel" are the Israelites; "the sons of the prophets" in 1 Kings 20.35 (see text note *r*), are themselves prophets. **13.29** The *Amalekites* are a perennial enemy of the Israelites (e.g., Gen 14.7; Ex 17.8–16; Judg 3.12–13; 1 Sam 15.1–9) who apparently inhabited the Negeb area where the people are to spend the next forty years. On the *Hittites, Jebusites, Amorites,* and *Canaanites,* see Ex 3.8. The spies' listing of these indigenous peoples divides the land into its constituent parts: the Negeb, the central hill country, the seacoast, and the Jordan Valley. Cf. 14.25, 45, for a slightly different arrangement of peoples. **13.30–31** In this old epic passage (see Introduction) Caleb is the only

Map opposite: *The "Land of Canaan" at the end of the second millennium* B.C.E., *showing possible routes into Canaan from Sinai.*


Main Route
Other Route
© Copyright HAMMOND INCORPORATED, Maplewood, N.J.
The Great Sea
Joppa
Ashdod
Ashkelon
Gaza
Raphia
CANAAN
Shiloh
Jordan
AMMON
Rabbah
Jericho
Jerusalem
Mt. Nebo
Salt Sea
Hebron
Arnon
Dibon
Arad
MOAB
Beer-sheba
Kir-hareseth
To Pelusium (Sin)
The Way of the Sea
Brook of Egypt
Negeb
Zoar
Zered
Wilderness of Shur
The Way to Shur
Jebel Helal
Wilderness of Zin
Kadesh-barnea
Bozrah
Oboth
Punon
Arabah
To Heliopolis (On)
EDOM
Sela
Jebel Harun
Mitla Pass
To Memphis (Noph)
Wilderness of Paran
The King's Highway
Wilderness of Etham
(later) Pilgrim's Road
Ezion-geber (Elath)
Marah?
Sinai Peninsula
Elim?
Wilderness of Sin
Dophkah? (Serabit el-Khadim)
Hazeroth?
Kibroth-hattavah?
Alush?
Wadi Feiran
Taberah?
Jebel Serbal
Rephidim?
Jebel Musa (Mt. Sinai?)
(Gulf of Suez)
(Gulf of Aqaba)
MIDIAN
To Tema
0 10 20 30 40 50 Mi.
0 20 40 60 80 Km.
Red Sea

fore Moses, and said, "Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it." 31 Then the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against this people, for they are stronger than we." 32 So they brought to the Israelites an unfavorable report of the land that they had spied out, saying, "The land that we have gone through as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants; and all the people that we saw in it are of great size. 33 There we saw the Nephilim (the Anakites come from the Nephilim); and to ourselves we seemed like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them."

The People Rebel

14 Then all the congregation raised a loud cry, and the people wept that night. 2 And all the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron; the whole congregation said to them, "Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! 3 Why is the LORD bringing us into this land to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become booty; would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?" 4 So they said to one another, "Let us choose a captain, and go back to Egypt."

5 Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the Israelites. 6 And Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes 7 and said to all the congregation of the Israelites, "The land that we went through as spies is an exceedingly good land. 8 If the LORD is pleased with us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey. 9 Only, do not rebel against the LORD; and do not fear the people of the land, for they are no more than bread for us; their protection is removed from them, and the LORD is with us; do not fear them." 10 But the whole congregation threatened to stone them.

Then the glory of the LORD appeared at the tent of meeting to all the Israelites. 11 And the LORD said to Moses, "How long

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spy who dissents from the majority opinion voiced in vv. 28–29. Joshua is included only in verses that stem from the priestly tradition (vv. 8, 16; 14.6, 38). **13.32–33** That the land *devours its inhabitants* can be taken either as a sign of infertility and therefore a contradiction of v. 27 (two verses from different traditions) or as a metaphor for the inevitability of warfare in a place with so many peoples, many of whom are bigger and stronger than the Israelites. Ezek 36.13–15 has been used to support both interpretations. See also Num 14.3, 9. *Nephilim.* See 13.22; Gen 6.4.

14.1–4 The people respond to the spies' negative report (13.27–33) with their complaints; see also Deut 1.26–28; Ps 106.24–25. On the complaint stories, see 11.1–3. **14.1** *Raised a loud cry.* See 13.30. **14.3a** *Fall by the sword.* See 13.32–33. On Israelite and foreign women and children as booty, see 31.13–18; Deut 20.10–15; 21.10–14; 1 Sam 30.1–6, 16–20. **14.3b–4** The longing for Egypt is typical of the complaint stories (Ex 14.10–12; 16.3; 17.3; Num 11.5; 14.2; 16.13; 20.5; 21.5; cf. Josh 7.7), but here the people actually plot to return, and with a leader other than Moses; cf. ch. 12; 16.12–14. **14.5–12** Responses to the complaints; cf. Deut 1.29–33. **14.5** Moses and Aaron *fell on their faces* as an act of contrition and entreaty, in hopes of avoiding terrible consequences; see, e.g., 16.4, 22. **14.6** Note *Joshua*'s presence along with Caleb's; cf. 13.30–31. They *tore their clothes* as a sign of grief (e.g., Gen 37.29, 34; Judg 11.35; 2 Sam 1.11). The act is similar to Moses' and Aaron's falling on their faces, because mourning practices in Israel, like tearing clothes and putting dirt on the head, are also obviously acts of contrition and humility before the deity. **14.7–9** See 13.27, 30; cf. 13.32–33. **14.8–9** *If the LORD is pleased with us . . . Only, do not rebel against the LORD* foreshadows the Lord's rejection of this generation, vv. 20–24, 28–35. **14.8** *A land that flows with milk and honey.* See 13.27. **14.9** The people of the land are *bread for us*, i.e., the Israelites will conquer them; see 13.32–33; 24.8; Pss 14.4; 53.4; 79.7; Jer 2.3; 10.25. *Protection*, lit. "shadow" (Judg 9.15; Isa 32.2). For a shadow as a god's protection, see Pss 91.1; 121.5; Isa 25.4; and the name Bezalel, "in the shadow of God," Ex 31.2. *Their protection is removed from them* implies that the gods of the people of the land will not protect them from the Israelites, either because they are not as powerful as the Lord or because they have abandoned their people. It is significant, then, that the next clause in v. 9 is *and the LORD is with us.* **14.10** The people threaten to stone Caleb and Joshua, and perhaps Moses and Aaron also (cf. Ex 17.1–4; 1 Sam 30.1–6; 1 Kings 12.17–18). On the *glory of the LORD*, see 9.15–16. **14.11–12** The Lord threatens to kill the people with a plague (see 11.33) and build a nation of Moses' offspring, i.e., to destroy most of Israel and start again with one portion of the people. See Ex 32.9–10. The Septuagint has "I will make of you and your ancestral house . . ." (v. 12), so that Aaron and his descen-

will this people despise me? And how long
will they refuse to believe in me, in spite
of all the signs that I have done among
them? 12 I will strike them with pestilence
and disinherit them, and I will make of
you a nation greater and mightier than
they."

Moses Intercedes for the People

13 But Moses said to the LORD, "Then
the Egyptians will hear of it, for in your
might you brought up this people from
among them, 14 and they will tell the in-
habitants of this land. They have heard
that you, O LORD, are in the midst of this
people; for you, O LORD, are seen face to
face, and your cloud stands over them
and you go in front of them, in a pillar of
cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by
night. 15 Now if you kill this people all at
one time, then the nations who have
heard about you will say, 16 'It is because
the LORD was not able to bring this people
into the land he swore to give them that
he has slaughtered them in the wilder-
ness.' 17 And now, therefore, let the power
of the LORD be great in the way that you
promised when you spoke, saying,

18 'The LORD is slow to anger,
and abounding in steadfast love,
forgiving iniquity and
transgression,
but by no means clearing the
guilty,
visiting the iniquity of the parents
upon the children
to the third and the fourth
generation.'

19 Forgive the iniquity of this people ac-
cording to the greatness of your steadfast
love, just as you have pardoned this peo-
ple, from Egypt even until now."

20 Then the LORD said, "I do forgive,
just as you have asked; 21 nevertheless—as
I live, and as all the earth shall be filled
with the glory of the LORD— 22 none of
the people who have seen my glory and
the signs that I did in Egypt and in the
wilderness, and yet have tested me these
ten times and have not obeyed my voice,
23 shall see the land that I swore to give to
their ancestors; none of those who de-
spised me shall see it. 24 But my servant
Caleb, because he has a different spirit
and has followed me wholeheartedly, I
will bring into the land into which he
went, and his descendants shall possess it.
25 Now, since the Amalekites and the Ca-
naanites live in the valleys, turn tomorrow
and set out for the wilderness by the way
to the Red Sea."[c]

An Attempted Invasion Is Repulsed

26 And the LORD spoke to Moses and
to Aaron, saying: 27 How long shall this
wicked congregation complain against

c Or *Sea of Reeds*

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dants are also included in the promise. After Moses' intercession, the Lord's threat will be tempered so that, although this generation of Israel will not see the promised land (vv. 20–24, 28–35), Israel will not be entirely destroyed.

14.13–19 Moses argues that the Lord should not destroy Israel, for the Egyptians and the people of Canaan will assume it was the Lord's failure to settle the people in the land that forced the annihilation (see Deut 32.26–27; Josh 7.6–9; Ezek 20.8–9; 36.18–32; 39.21–29); furthermore, the Lord has promised (Ex 34.6–7) to "forgive iniquity" and Moses urges the Lord to do so in this instance. This is not the first time Moses has interceded for the people; see Num 11.10–15. **14.14** *Face to face*, lit. "eye to eye"; see 12.8. *Your cloud*. See 9.15–16. *Pillar of cloud, pillar of fire*. See 12.5. **14.18** Abbreviated from Ex 34.6–7. **14.20–25** The Lord's response to Moses' intercession; cf. Deut 1.34–36. The Lord replies that he will acquiesce to Moses' wishes and not exterminate Israel, but none of the Israelites who rebelled will be allowed to see the promised land; see also vv. 28–35; 26.64–65; 32.10–12. Only Caleb is exempt (Deut 1.35 also, but see Num 14.30; 32.12). **14.21** *As I live*, a typical oath formula. Although people usually swear on the life of the Lord or a ruler (e.g., Gen 42.15–16; Ruth 3.13; 1 Sam 14.39, 45; 25.26, 34; 28.10; 2 Sam 15.21), the Lord must swear "on my life" (e.g., Gen 22.16; Num 14.28; Isa 49.18). **14.22** *Ten times*, i.e., frequently (see, e.g., Gen 31.7, 41). **14.23** The Septuagint has here that their innocent children will be given the land, as in v. 31; Deut 1.39. **14.24** On *Caleb* alone, see 13.30–31. Caleb's inheriting of a portion of the land, foretold here, is reported in Josh 14.6–14. Commentators have long suggested that Caleb represents a family group rather than an individual (perhaps the "dog clan" since the name Caleb means "dog"), one that eventually joined with the tribe of Judah. **14.25** *In the valleys*. Cf. 13.29; 14.45. *Turn*, i.e., turn back, because this generation is not to move forward but to remain in the wilderness. *By the way to the Red Sea*, see text note *c*. The Hebrew is "Sea of Reeds"; see Ex 10.19.

me? I have heard the complaints of the
Israelites, which they complain against
me. 28 Say to them, "As I live," says the
LORD, "I will do to you the very things I
heard you say: 29 your dead bodies shall
fall in this very wilderness; and of all your
number, included in the census, from
twenty years old and upward, who have
complained against me, 30 not one of you
shall come into the land in which I swore
to settle you, except Caleb son of Jephun-
neh and Joshua son of Nun. 31 But your
little ones, who you said would become
booty, I will bring in, and they shall know
the land that you have despised. 32 But as
for you, your dead bodies shall fall in this
wilderness. 33 And your children shall be
shepherds in the wilderness for forty
years, and shall suffer for your faithless-
ness, until the last of your dead bodies lies
in the wilderness. 34 According to the
number of the days in which you spied
out the land, forty days, for every day a
year, you shall bear your iniquity, forty
years, and you shall know my displea-
sure." 35 I the LORD have spoken; surely I
will do thus to all this wicked congrega-
tion gathered together against me: in this
wilderness they shall come to a full end,
and there they shall die.

36 And the men whom Moses sent to
spy out the land, who returned and made
all the congregation complain against him
by bringing a bad report about the land—
37 the men who brought an unfavorable
report about the land died by a plague
before the LORD. 38 But Joshua son of
Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh alone
remained alive, of those men who went to
spy out the land.

39 When Moses told these words to all
the Israelites, the people mourned
greatly. 40 They rose early in the morning
and went up to the heights of the hill
country, saying, "Here we are. We will go
up to the place that the LORD has prom-
ised, for we have sinned." 41 But Moses
said, "Why do you continue to transgress
the command of the LORD? That will not
succeed. 42 Do not go up, for the LORD is
not with you; do not let yourselves be
struck down before your enemies. 43 For
the Amalekites and the Canaanites will
confront you there, and you shall fall by
the sword; because you have turned back
from following the LORD, the LORD will
not be with you." 44 But they presumed to
go up to the heights of the hill country,
even though the ark of the covenant of
the LORD, and Moses, had not left the
camp. 45 Then the Amalekites and the Ca-
naanites who lived in that hill country

14.26–35 Continuation of the Lord's response. Cf. Deut 1.37–40 (although nothing in Num 14.26–35 corresponds to Deut 1.37); Ps 106.26–27. **14.27** They *complain against me.* See 11.20. **14.28–35** Their punishment corresponds to the Israelites' fears. **14.28** *As I live.* See 14.21. **14.29** *Your dead bodies shall fall in this very wilderness.* The immediate referent is v. 2. *Included in the census,* lit. "your enrolled ones," in the census in ch. 1. Note that this leaves ambiguous the fate of the Levites, who were not counted in the census in ch. 1; see 1.49; 3.15. There were also no Levites represented among the spies. Moreover, Aaron's son Eleazar, surely twenty years old by now (see 3.32; 4.16), does enter the land (e.g., Josh 14.1; 17.4; 24.33). **14.30** *I swore,* lit. "I raised my hand"; see also Gen 14.22; Ex 6.8; Ps 106.26. On the inclusion of Joshua, see 13.30–31. **14.31a** On children as booty, see 14.3. **14.33** *Forty years* is a typical biblical expression for one generation (see Gen 25.20; 26.34). **14.34** *Forty days, for every day a year.* See 13.25. See the similar phrase in Ezek 4.6. The tradition that Israel spent forty years in the wilderness is reported also in the early prophets (Am 2.10; 5.25; see also Hos 2.14–15), although there is no sense in these passages that the wilderness sojourn is a punishment; cf. Ps 95.10. **14.36–38** The spies, except for Joshua and Caleb, are killed by the Lord. **14.36** See 13.32; 14.1–4. **14.37** *Plague.* See 11.33. The Hebrew word used here simply means some form of death, lit. "a smiting." **14.38** On *Joshua* and *Caleb,* see 13.30–31. **14.39–45** An abortive attempt to enter the land from the south; cf. Deut 1.41–45. **14.39–40** The people change their minds when they hear their punishment. **14.40** *They rose early in the morning.* Cf. "tomorrow" in v. 25. **14.41** Moses explains that it is no better to go when the Lord has commanded them to turn back (v. 25) than it was to refuse to go when the Lord commanded them to go. **14.42–43** Moses says that the Lord will not be with them in this venture. Cf. v. 9 and see also v. 44; in Deut 1.42 it is the Lord who says this. **14.43, 45** *Amalekites, Canaanites.* See 14.25. On the enmity between Israelites and Amalekites, see 13.29 (cf. Deut 1.44: "Amorites"). *Fall by the sword.* See 14.3, 28–35. **14.44** This verse makes clear what it means that the Lord will not be with the people: the ark will not go up with them; see 7.89; 10.35–36. **14.45** *Hormah,* in the extreme south of Israel's possessions; see 21.1–3

came down and defeated them, pursuing them as far as Hormah.

Various Offerings

15 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 2 Speak to the Israelites and say to them: When you come into the land you are to inhabit, which I am giving you, 3 and you make an offering by fire to the LORD from the herd or from the flock—whether a burnt offering or a sacrifice, to fulfill a vow or as a freewill offering or at your appointed festivals—to make a pleasing odor for the LORD, 4 then whoever presents such an offering to the LORD shall present also a grain offering, one-tenth of an ephah of choice flour, mixed with one-fourth of a hin of oil. 5 Moreover, you shall offer one-fourth of a hin of wine as a drink offering with the burnt offering or the sacrifice, for each lamb. 6 For a ram, you shall offer a grain offering, two-tenths of an ephah of choice flour mixed with one-third of a hin of oil; 7 and as a drink offering you shall offer one-third of a hin of wine, a pleasing odor to the LORD. 8 When you offer a bull as a burnt offering or a sacrifice, to fulfill a vow or as an offering of well-being to the LORD, 9 then you shall present with the bull a grain offering, three-tenths of an ephah of choice flour, mixed with half a hin of oil, 10 and you shall present as a drink offering half a hin of wine, as an offering by fire, a pleasing odor to the LORD.

11 Thus it shall be done for each ox or ram, or for each of the male lambs or the kids. 12 According to the number that you offer, so you shall do with each and every one. 13 Every native Israelite shall do these things in this way, in presenting an offering by fire, a pleasing odor to the LORD. 14 An alien who lives with you, or who takes up permanent residence among you, and wishes to offer an offering by fire, a pleasing odor to the LORD, shall do as you do. 15 As for the assembly, there shall be for both you and the resident alien a single statute, a perpetual statute throughout your generations; you and the alien shall be alike before the LORD. 16 You and the alien who resides with you shall have the same law and the same ordinance.

17 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 18 Speak to the Israelites and say to them: After you come into the land to which I am bringing you, 19 whenever you eat of the bread of the land, you shall present a donation to the LORD. 20 From your first batch of dough you shall present a loaf as a donation; you shall present it just as you present a donation from the threshing floor. 21 Throughout your generations you shall give to the LORD a donation from the first of your batch of dough.

22 But if you unintentionally fail to observe all these commandments that the LORD has spoken to Moses— 23 every-

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(where the name is etymologized as "destruction"); Judg 1.16–17 (with the same etymology); 1 Sam 30.26–31. In Deut 1.44 it is associated with Seir, i.e., Edom.

15.1–16 These verses prescribe grain and drink offerings to go along with burnt offerings and offerings of well-being. Cf. Ezek 46.4–15; see also Num 28–29; Ex 29.38–42. **15.2** *When you come into the land.* The prescribed offerings reflect a settled agricultural life. There is irony in this verse: this generation will not, in fact, "come into the land"; see 14.20–24, 28–35. **15.3** *An offering by fire* perhaps is not specifically a fire offering, but simply any offering, cognate to a word for "gift" in the language of the ancient city of Ugarit. *From the herd or from the flock,* i.e., domestic animals, not wild, are used for sacrifice. On various offerings, see 6.14–17. *Sacrifice,* here the equivalent of an offering of well-being, i.e., an offering in which the worshiper participates. Lev 7.11–18 describes the three kinds of offerings of well-being: thanksgiving, votive, and freewill, two of which are named in Num 15.3 as well. *A pleasing odor for the LORD* describes an acceptable offering; see Gen 8.20–22. **15.4** *Ephah.* See 5.15 (note the grain offering mixed with oil). A *hin* was approximately 12 pints. **15.5** *For each lamb.* See v. 11 where both lambs and goats are included. **15.6–10** The amounts of the accompanying grain and drink offerings increase with the size of the animal offered. **15.11–16** The same rules apply to resident *aliens* as to Israelites; see 9.14; also 15.26, 29. **15.16** See also Ex 12.43–49; cf. Deut 14.21. **15.19** A *donation* is simply an offering dedicated to the Lord, in this case for the priests. **15.20** An offering from the *first batch of dough* is like a first-fruits offering; see Neh 10.36–37; Ezek 44.30; see also Ex 22.29a; 23.19a; 34.26a; Lev 23.9–14; Num 18.13–18; Deut 26.1–11. *A donation from the threshing floor.* See 18.27. **15.22–29** Atonement for unintentional sins; see also Lev 4–5. **15.22** *You* here is plural

thing that the LORD has commanded you
by Moses, from the day the LORD gave
commandment and thereafter, through-
out your generations— 24then if it was
done unintentionally without the knowl-
edge of the congregation, the whole con-
gregation shall offer one young bull for a
burnt offering, a pleasing odor to the
LORD, together with its grain offering and
its drink offering, according to the ordi-
nance, and one male goat for a sin offer-
ing. 25The priest shall make atonement
for all the congregation of the Israelites,
and they shall be forgiven; it was unin-
tentional, and they have brought their offer-
ing, an offering by fire to the LORD, and
their sin offering before the LORD, for
their error. 26All the congregation of the
Israelites shall be forgiven, as well as the
aliens residing among them, because the
whole people was involved in the error.
27 An individual who sins unin-
tentionally shall present a female goat a year
old for a sin offering. 28And the priest
shall make atonement before the LORD
for the one who commits an error, when it
is unintentional, to make atonement for
the person, who then shall be forgiven.
29For both the native among the Israelites
and the alien residing among them—you
shall have the same law for anyone who
acts in error. 30But whoever acts high-
handedly, whether a native or an alien,
affronts the LORD, and shall be cut off
from among the people. 31Because of
having despised the word of the LORD
and broken his commandment, such a
person shall be utterly cut off and bear
the guilt.

Penalty for Violating the Sabbath

32 When the Israelites were in the wil-
derness, they found a man gathering
sticks on the sabbath day. 33Those who
found him gathering sticks brought him
to Moses, Aaron, and to the whole con-
gregation. 34They put him in custody, be-
cause it was not clear what should be done
to him. 35Then the LORD said to Moses,
"The man shall be put to death; all the
congregation shall stone him outside the
camp." 36The whole congregation
brought him outside the camp and stoned
him to death, just as the LORD had com-
manded Moses.

Fringes on Garments

37 The LORD said to Moses: 38Speak
to the Israelites, and tell them to make
fringes on the corners of their garments
throughout their generations and to put a
blue cord on the fringe at each corner.
39You have the fringe so that, when you
see it, you will remember all the com-
mandments of the LORD and do them,
and not follow the lust of your own heart
and your own eyes. 40So you shall remem-
ber and do all my commandments, and
you shall be holy to your God. 41I am the
LORD your God, who brought you out of
the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am
the LORD your God.

The Revolt of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram

16 Now Korah son of Izhar son of
Kohath son of Levi, along with
Dathan and Abiram sons of Eliab, and On
son of Peleth—descendants of Reuben—

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in Hebrew. **15.24** *According to the ordinance*, i.e., vv. 1–16. **15.25** It is the priest who makes *atonement* for the ones who are in error; see Ex 29.10–37; Lev 1.4; Num 8.10–11. *An offering by fire*. See 15.3. **15.28** See 15.25. **15.30–31** Intentional sins. One who *acts high-handedly* sins boldly; see the translation "boldly" for "high-handedly" in 33.3; Ex 14.8. *Cut off*. See 9.13. Here execution is plainly meant; see 15.35–36, especially "just as" in v. 36. **15.32–36** See the similar story in Lev 24.10–23. Intentional violation of the sabbath carries the death penalty (Ex 31.14–15; 35.2). **15.34** *They put him in custody* until a decision was made; see also Lev 24.12. **15.35–36** The man was stoned outside the camp so as not to disturb the sanctity of the camp; see also Lev 24.14, 23; 1 Kings 21.10, 23–24. **15.37–41** *Fringes on ... garments*. Cf. Deut 22.12. **15.38** The fringes apparently resembled locks of hair; see the translation "lock (of hair)" for the same word in Ezek 8.3. Fringe on garments is known elsewhere in the ancient Near East from pictorial representations. Fringes are still worn on the prayer shawl or *tallit* of Orthodox Jewish men. *Blue* or violet, the same color as some of the hangings of the tabernacle enclosure; see 4.5–12. **15.41** For variations on the formulaic sayings in this verse, see, e.g., Ex 6.6–7; 20.2; Lev 26.13; Deut 5.6; cf. Gen 15.7.

16.1–40 In this section on the revolt of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, there is some mixing of traditions: the complaints are against Moses or Aaron or both; the complaints are about secular or sacred leadership; either Levites or Reubenites,

took [2]two hundred fifty Israelite men,
leaders of the congregation, chosen from
the assembly, well-known men,[d] and they
confronted Moses. [3]They assembled
against Moses and against Aaron, and said
to them, "You have gone too far! All the
congregation are holy, every one of them,
and the LORD is among them. So why then
do you exalt yourselves above the assem-
bly of the LORD?" [4]When Moses heard it,
he fell on his face. [5]Then he said to Ko-
rah and all his company, "In the morning
the LORD will make known who is his, and
who is holy, and who will be allowed to
approach him; the one whom he will
choose he will allow to approach him. [6]Do
this: take censers, Korah and all your[e]
company, [7]and tomorrow put fire in
them, and lay incense on them before the
LORD; and the man whom the LORD
chooses shall be the holy one. You Levites
have gone too far!" [8]Then Moses said to
Korah, "Hear now, you Levites! [9]Is it too
little for you that the God of Israel has
separated you from the congregation of
Israel, to allow you to approach him in
order to perform the duties of the LORD's
tabernacle, and to stand before the con-
gregation and serve them? [10]He has al-
lowed you to approach him, and all your
brother Levites with you; yet you seek the
priesthood as well! [11]Therefore you and
all your company have gathered together
against the LORD. What is Aaron that you
rail against him?"

12 Moses sent for Dathan and Abiram
sons of Eliab; but they said, "We will not
come! [13]Is it too little that you have
brought us up out of a land flowing with
milk and honey to kill us in the wilder-
ness, that you must also lord it over us?
[14]It is clear you have not brought us into
a land flowing with milk and honey, or
given us an inheritance of fields and vine-
yards. Would you put out the eyes of
these men? We will not come!"

15 Moses was very angry and said to
the LORD, "Pay no attention to their offer-
ing. I have not taken one donkey from

d Cn: Heb *and they confronted Moses, and two hundred fifty men . . . well-known men* *e* Heb *his*

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or even the whole community are the rebels; the rebels are swallowed whole or are burned by fire from the Lord. Commentators have divided these stories into two major strands (with subplots within them): a priestly strand with the story of Korah's rebellion and an old epic strand with a secular rebellion led by Reubenites (see Introduction). The two strands are combined by vv. 1, 24, 27a, 32b. Cf. Deut 11.6; Ps 106.16–18. **16.1** For *Korah*'s genealogy, see Ex 6.16–21. See also the titles to Pss 42; 44–49; 84–85; 87–88. Korah is apparently the eponymous ancestor of a group of temple singers (1 Chr 6.16–38). **16.2** *Well-known men*, lit. "men of name." A similar phrase is used in Gen 6.4, there translated "warriors of renown"; 1 Chr 5.24; 12.30. In Job 30.8, the "disreputable brood" are "those without name" in Hebrew. **16.3** There are actually two levels of priestly conflict in this Korah narrative: in one level, Korah argues that *all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them*, thus denying any prerogatives the descendants of Levi might have, whether Aaronite priests or Levites. (See 5.3; 15.40; Ex 19.5–6; Deut 7.6; 14.2, 21a; 28.9; Isa 61.6). In this level, we assume Korah and his followers are not Levites (see 27.1–3, where a Manassite's family feel they must defend their father against any suspicion that he was part of Korah's group) and that the censer test is a matter of non-Levitical people using censers, something that had been a prerogative of the Levites. On a second level, however, Korah's group is addressed as Levites attempting to usurp the prerogatives of the Aaronite priesthood (vv. 1, 7b, 8–11), and the test is one of lesser-ranked Levites using the censers of the Aaronite priesthood (see v. 40; 1 Chr 6.49; 2 Chr 26.16–21). With Korah's complaint here, cf. 12.1–2. *Exalt yourselves*. See 16.13; cf. Ex 2.14. **16.4** *Fell on his face*. See 14.5; 16.22, 45; 20.6. **16.5** *Who will be allowed to approach him*, i.e., who will be allowed to approach the altar. **16.6–7** The *censers* were apparently trays that would hold coals onto which incense could be placed (see Ex 25.38; 27.3; 37.23; 38.3; Lev 10.1–2; 16.12). *Before the LORD*, at the entrance to the tent of meeting; see vv. 18–19. **16.9** On the Levites' prescribed *duties*, see 1.47–54; 3; 4; 8. **16.10** *You seek the priesthood as well!* See 3.5–10; 8.5–22, especially vv. 19, 22. **16.11** *What is Aaron that you rail against him?* Cf. Ex 16.8. **16.12–14** The Reubenites' complaint. It is logical that Reubenites should lead a civil revolt since they had once been the preeminent tribe; see Gen 35.22–26; 49.3–4. **16.13–14** This is a typical complaint narrative; see 11.1–3. Here it is Moses' leadership on the march that is in question. **16.13** *A land flowing with milk and honey*, here used anomalously of Egypt instead of Canaan; see 13.27. *Lord it over us*. See 16.3; Ex 2.14. **16.14** *Put out the eyes*, i.e., deceive them. Cf. the modern phrase "pull the wool over the eyes." **16.15** *Pay no attention to their offering*, a metaphor for withholding favor; see the rejection

them, and I have not harmed any one of
them." 16And Moses said to Korah, "As
for you and all your company, be present
tomorrow before the LORD, you and they
and Aaron; 17and let each one of you take
his censer, and put incense on it, and each
one of you present his censer before the
LORD, two hundred fifty censers; you also,
and Aaron, each his censer." 18So each
man took his censer, and they put fire in
the censers and laid incense on them, and
they stood at the entrance of the tent of
meeting with Moses and Aaron. 19Then
Korah assembled the whole congregation
against them at the entrance of the tent of
meeting. And the glory of the LORD ap-
peared to the whole congregation.

20 Then the LORD spoke to Moses and
to Aaron, saying: 21Separate yourselves
from this congregation, so that I may con-
sume them in a moment. 22They fell on
their faces, and said, "O God, the God of
the spirits of all flesh, shall one person sin
and you become angry with the whole
congregation?"

23 And the LORD spoke to Moses, sa-
ying: 24Say to the congregation: Get away
from the dwellings of Korah, Dathan, and
Abiram. 25So Moses got up and went to
Dathan and Abiram; the elders of Israel
followed him. 26He said to the congrega-
tion, "Turn away from the tents of these
wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs,
or you will be swept away for all their
sins." 27So they got away from the dwell-
ings of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; and
Dathan and Abiram came out and stood
at the entrance of their tents, together
with their wives, their children, and their
little ones. 28And Moses said, "This is how
you shall know that the LORD has sent me
to do all these works; it has not been of
my own accord: 29If these people die a
natural death, or if a natural fate comes
on them, then the LORD has not sent me.
30But if the LORD creates something new,
and the ground opens its mouth and swal-
lows them up, with all that belongs to
them, and they go down alive into Sheol,
then you shall know that these men have
despised the LORD."

31 As soon as he finished speaking all
these words, the ground under them was
split apart. 32The earth opened its mouth
and swallowed them up, along with their
households—everyone who belonged to
Korah and all their goods. 33So they with
all that belonged to them went down alive

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of Cain in Gen 4. *I have not taken one donkey from them.* Cf. 1 Sam 12.1–5. **16.16–17** These verses repeat the information in vv. 6–7, but the addition of Aaron moves the story from the level of congregation vs. Levites to Levites vs. Aaronite priests; see 16.3. **16.16** *Before the LORD*, i.e., at the entrance to the tent of meeting; see vv. 18–19. **16.19** *The glory of the LORD appeared.* See 9.15–16. **16.21** The Lord threatens to *consume* the congregation; see also 16.45; 14.11–12. *In a moment.* This generation will die in the desert, 14.28–30, but here the Lord threatens to kill them immediately. **16.22** *Fell on their faces*, see 16.4; 14.5. *The God of the spirits of all flesh* is used elsewhere only in 27.16. But the Hebrew word for "spirit" also means "breath," and the Lord is frequently described as the giver and taker of human breath. See Gen 2.7 (with a different Hebrew word for "breath"); Isa 42.5. *Shall one person sin.* Dathan and Abiram are not at issue here in this strand of the narrative. Cf. Abraham's intercession in Gen 18.23–33. On prophetic intercession, see 11.10–15. **16.24** The number of the punished is reduced to the rebels and their families, in response to Moses and Aaron's intercession (v. 22). The word for *dwellings* (singular in Hebrew) here and in v. 27 is the same as the word commonly used for the Lord's tabernacle and is elsewhere never used in the singular to mean a secular dwelling. Commentators have suggested that this part of the text has been disturbed by the attempt to connect Korah and his followers to the story of the punishment of Dathan and Abiram. **16.25** On the *elders* who accompany Moses, see 11.16–30. **16.26** The people are told to *touch nothing* that belongs to the rebels because their sins are polluting. Elsewhere, similar commands convey the belief that holiness itself is dangerous, improper contact with it is polluting and life-threatening; see Ex 19.12–13; Num 4.15; 2 Sam 6.6–7; 1 Chr 13.9–10. Even seeing holy things can be dangerous: Num 4.20; cf. the Hebrew of 1 Sam 6.19. **16.27–33** These verses express the belief in corporate guilt and in the family as the extension of the (usually male) head of the family; see Josh 7.24–26. **16.30, 33** *Sheol* is the underworld home of the dead (see Gen 37.35; 1 Sam 28.11–14; Isa 14.9–11). In Isa 5.14 Sheol opens its mouth to eat the doomed. **16.32** Dathan and Abiram are not mentioned here and instead we have only *everyone who belonged to Korah.* Commentators have assumed this phrase displaced the mention of Dathan and Abiram in an editor's attempt to combine the two strands; cf. Deut 11.6; Ps 106.17. This verse does not say that Korah himself was killed, but cf.

into Sheol; the earth closed over them,
and they perished from the midst of the
assembly. 34 All Israel around them fled at
their outcry, for they said, "The earth will
swallow us too!" 35 And fire came out
from the LORD and consumed the two
hundred fifty men offering the incense.
36[f] Then the LORD spoke to Moses,
saying: 37 Tell Eleazar son of Aaron the
priest to take the censers out of the blaze;
then scatter the fire far and wide. 38 For
the censers of these sinners have become
holy at the cost of their lives. Make them
into hammered plates as a covering for
the altar, for they presented them before
the LORD and they became holy. Thus
they shall be a sign to the Israelites. 39 So
Eleazar the priest took the bronze censers
that had been presented by those who
were burned; and they were hammered
out as a covering for the altar— 40 a re-
minder to the Israelites that no outsider,
who is not of the descendants of Aaron,
shall approach to offer incense before the
LORD, so as not to become like Korah and
his company—just as the LORD had said
to him through Moses.
41 On the next day, however, the
whole congregation of the Israelites re-
belled against Moses and against Aaron,
saying, "You have killed the people of the
LORD." 42 And when the congregation had
assembled against them, Moses and
Aaron turned toward the tent of meeting;
the cloud had covered it and the glory of
the LORD appeared. 43 Then Moses and
Aaron came to the front of the tent of
meeting, 44 and the LORD spoke to Moses,
saying, 45 "Get away from this congrega-
tion, so that I may consume them in a mo-
ment." And they fell on their faces.
46 Moses said to Aaron, "Take your cen-
ser, put fire on it from the altar and lay
incense on it, and carry it quickly to the
congregation and make atonement for
them. For wrath has gone out from the
LORD; the plague has begun." 47 So Aaron
took it as Moses had ordered, and ran into
the middle of the assembly, where the
plague had already begun among the peo-
ple. He put on the incense, and made
atonement for the people. 48 He stood be-
tween the dead and the living; and the
plague was stopped. 49 Those who died by
the plague were fourteen thousand seven
hundred, besides those who died in the
affair of Korah. 50 When the plague was
stopped, Aaron returned to Moses at the
entrance of the tent of meeting.

The Budding of Aaron's Rod

17[g] The LORD spoke to Moses, say-
ing: 2 Speak to the Israelites, and
get twelve staffs from them, one for each
ancestral house, from all the leaders of
their ancestral houses. Write each man's

f Ch 17.1 in Heb *g* Ch 17.16 in Heb

16.40; 26.10–11. **16.35** The *two hundred fifty* who are elsewhere "the company of Korah" are killed separately by fire from the Lord; see 11.1. Cf. Lev 10.1–2. In Num 16.17, it is assumed that the two hundred and fifty are Levites; each has his own censer. V. 2, however, implies they came from all the tribes; see 27.1–3. **16.37–39** It is *Eleazar* instead of Aaron who has contact with the censers, perhaps because of a rule like the one in Lev 21.10–11. See also Num 19.3. The censers *have become holy at the cost of* [the rebels'] *lives*, i.e., they are holy because they were presented before the Lord, but since they were offered by those who were not qualified to offer incense, the offering was at the cost of those men's lives. These verses present an etiology of the bronze covering of the altar that is different from Ex 27.1–2; 38.1–2. **16.40** This event has served to reinforce the prerogatives of Aaron and his descendants; thus, commentators have assumed that the Korah narrative reflects conflicts in later rival priestly groups, with Aaronite priests claiming supremacy based on this story and others like it (see 16.3; 12.2).

16.41–50 Revolt of the whole congregation; see 11.1–3. Since it is "the whole congregation" that is at fault, the intercession in 16.22 is no longer valid. The complaint this time concerns the deaths of Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and their families and followers. **16.41** There is in the Hebrew an extra pronoun "you" for emphasis in *You have killed the people of the LORD*, so that one might translate "It is you who killed the people of the LORD," i.e., Moses and Aaron and not really God. **16.42** On the *tent*, the *cloud*, and the *glory*, see 7.89; 9.15–16; 12.5. **16.45** On the Lord's *consuming* the congregation, see 16.21. *Fell on their faces*. See 16.4; 14.5. **16.46** The priest makes *atonement*; see 15.25. Incense is not the usual medium of atonement, but it is fitting in this story; cf. 5.21; 21.6–9. On the Lord's *wrath* and *plague*, see 11.33. **16.48** See Lev 21.10–11; such an instruction underlines the seriousness of Aaron's act here. **16.49** *Those who died in the affair of Korah*, i.e., the two hundred and fifty (v. 35).

17.1–13 Another proof that the tribe of Levi

name on his staff, 3and write Aaron's
name on the staff of Levi. For there shall
be one staff for the head of each ancestral
house. 4Place them in the tent of meeting
before the covenant,[h] where I meet with
you. 5And the staff of the man whom I
choose shall sprout; thus I will put a stop
to the complaints of the Israelites that
they continually make against you. 6Mo-
ses spoke to the Israelites; and all their
leaders gave him staffs, one for each
leader, according to their ancestral
houses, twelve staffs; and the staff of
Aaron was among theirs. 7So Moses
placed the staffs before the LORD in the
tent of the covenant.[h]

8 When Moses went into the tent of
the covenant[h] on the next day, the staff
of Aaron for the house of Levi had
sprouted. It put forth buds, produced
blossoms, and bore ripe almonds. 9Then
Moses brought out all the staffs from be-
fore the LORD to all the Israelites; and
they looked, and each man took his staff.
10And the LORD said to Moses, "Put back
the staff of Aaron before the covenant,[h]
to be kept as a warning to rebels, so that
you may make an end of their complaints
against me, or else they will die." 11Moses
did so; just as the LORD commanded him,
so he did.

12 The Israelites said to Moses, "We
are perishing; we are lost, all of us are
lost! 13Everyone who approaches the tab-
ernacle of the LORD will die. Are we all to
perish?"

Responsibility of Priests and Levites

18 The LORD said to Aaron: You
and your sons and your ancestral
house with you shall bear responsibility
for offenses connected with the sanctuary,
while you and your sons alone shall bear
responsibility for offenses connected with
the priesthood. 2So bring with you also
your brothers of the tribe of Levi, your
ancestral tribe, in order that they may be
joined to you, and serve you while you
and your sons with you are in front of the
tent of the covenant.[h] 3They shall per-
form duties for you and for the whole

h Or *treaty*, or *testimony*; Heb *eduth*

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and Aaron as their leader are chosen above the rest of the community in ritual affairs, necessary because of the renewed rebellion in 16.41–50. **17.2** The *staff* referred to here is a symbol of a leader's authority (see Jer 48.17) and as the symbol of a tribal leader had come itself to mean "tribe," as in Num 1.16 and elsewhere. The double meaning of the word is appropriate here since the staff/tribe that buds is the one chosen by the Lord. *Leaders.* See 16.2, where they were part of the rebellion. **17.2–3** The command to Moses to *write each man's name on his staff* assumes Moses was literate (see also Ex 17.14; 24.4; 34.27; Num 33.2; Deut 31.9). **17.3** For Aaron's descent from *Levi*, see Ex 6.16–20. There is no hint here of the rivalry between Aaronite priests and other Levites; see 16.3, 40. **17.4** *In the tent of meeting before the covenant*, i.e., in front of the ark. See Ex 31.18; 34.29; also Ex 25.16, 21; 40.20; on the name "ark of the covenant," see, e.g., Ex 30.26; 40.3; Num 4.5; 7.89. *Where I meet with you.* See 7.89. **17.5** *The man whom I choose*, i.e., to approach the Lord in ritual; see 16.5, 7. The immediate referent for the *complaints* is 16.41–50, but see 11.1–3 for the complaint stories in general. **17.6–7** Moses carries out the Lord's commands, although the narrative does not report the writing of the names. **17.7** *Before the LORD* must mean "before the ark" here; see 17.4. **17.7–8** For *tent of the covenant*, see also 9.15; 18.2. For the tent in general, see 1.1; 2.1–34. **17.8** For other stories of Aaron's miraculous staff, see Ex 7.8–8.19. Other narratives of blossoming staffs, clubs, or spears from many cultures have been noted by folklorists. **17.10** The Hebrew word for *warning* is the same as the word translated "sign" in 16.38. *Against me.* Cf. v. 5 ("you" plural in Hebrew); Ex 16.8. **17.12–13** The Israelites are convinced that only the tribe of Levi should approach the most holy parts of the tabernacle, but they take the warning in v. 10 so seriously that they become afraid that they will always be in danger of trespassing and dying. These verses serve as an introduction to ch. 18, where the Levites are said to guard the tent from trespass by unqualified persons (18.21–22).

18.1–7 See also 1.50–53; 3.5–10, 14–38; 16. **18.1** A distinction is made in this chapter between Aaron and his descendants on the one hand and the rest of the tribe of Levi on the other. See 3.5–10; 16.3, 40; cf. Ezek 44.10–16. *Bear responsibility for offenses*, i.e., suffer the consequences for any offense. This charge is meant to allay the fears expressed in 17.12–13. For offenses connected with the priesthood, see v. 3; Ex 28.38; e.g., Ex 30.20–21; 28.42–43; Lev 10.8–9; 16.2; 21.16–23. **18.2** The Levites are *joined to* Aaron and his descendants, a pun in Hebrew on the name Levi (see Gen 29.34), and they *serve* them; see 3.5–10; 8.14–22. *Tent of the covenant.* See 17.7–8. **18.3** The *altar* is the bronze altar;

tent. But they must not approach either
the utensils of the sanctuary or the altar,
otherwise both they and you will die.
4 They are attached to you in order to per-
form the duties of the tent of meeting, for
all the service of the tent; no outsider shall
approach you. 5 You yourselves shall per-
form the duties of the sanctuary and the
duties of the altar, so that wrath may
never again come upon the Israelites. 6 It
is I who now take your brother Levites
from among the Israelites; they are now
yours as a gift, dedicated to the LORD, to
perform the service of the tent of meet-
ing. 7 But you and your sons with you
shall diligently perform your priestly du-
ties in all that concerns the altar and the
area behind the curtain. I give your
priesthood as a gift;[i] any outsider who
approaches shall be put to death.

The Priests' Portion

8 The LORD spoke to Aaron: I have
given you charge of the offerings made to
me, all the holy gifts of the Israelites; I
have given them to you and your sons as a
priestly portion due you in perpetuity.
9 This shall be yours from the most holy
things, reserved from the fire: every
offering of theirs that they render to me
as a most holy thing, whether grain offer-
ing, sin offering, or guilt offering, shall
belong to you and your sons. 10 As a most
holy thing you shall eat it; every male may
eat it; it shall be holy to you. 11 This also is
yours: I have given to you, together with
your sons and daughters, as a perpetual
due, whatever is set aside from the gifts of
all the elevation offerings of the Israelites;
everyone who is clean in your house may
eat them. 12 All the best of the oil and all
the best of the wine and of the grain, the
choice produce that they give to the LORD,
I have given to you. 13 The first fruits of
all that is in their land, which they bring to
the LORD, shall be yours; everyone who is
clean in your house may eat of it. 14 Every
devoted thing in Israel shall be yours.
15 The first issue of the womb of all crea-
tures, human and animal, which is of-
fered to the LORD, shall be yours; but the
firstborn of human beings you shall
redeem, and the firstborn of unclean
animals you shall redeem. 16 Their
redemption price, reckoned from one

i Heb *as a service of gift*

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see 3.29, 31; 4.13–14; 16.38–39. *Both they and you will die*, i.e., the priests will die along with the trespassers, because the priests did not guard the sanctuary properly. See also 4.5–15. **18.4** It is the duty of the Levites to keep non-Levitical people from the most sacred areas; see 1.51. **18.5** For ritual as a means of avoiding the Lord's *wrath*, see 16.46. **18.6** For the Levites as a *gift* to the Aaronites, see 3.9; 8.19. **18.7** The *area behind the curtain* is where the Holy of Holies is, with the ark and the gold altar; see 3.29, 31.

18.8–20 The Aaronite priests' portion. This section stipulates that the priests are to receive, except for those portions that are burned on the altar, all of the grain offerings, sin offerings, and guilt offerings, which may be eaten by any Aaronite males (vv. 9–10). Further, the contributed part of the offerings of well-being, the best of the oil, wine, and grain, the first-fruit offerings, "devoted" things, and the firstborn of clean animals can be eaten by any ritually clean member of an Aaronite household, male or female. Finally, the redemption price for firstborn human beings and unclean animals also is to go to the priests (vv. 15–16). See 1 Sam 2.12–17 for a narrative involving the misuse of this provision. **18.8** The Lord has ordained that part of the Israelites' offerings is to be a means of support for the priesthood and the sanctuary. The word translated *charge* here might also be translated "that which is kept back" from the fire, held back for the priests. **18.9–10** The *most holy things* include the offerings listed in v. 9; see Lev 6.14–17. Note the absence of the burnt offering, of which only the skin goes to the priest (Lev 7.8). For that which is not *reserved from the fire*, see, e.g., Lev 2.2, 9, 16; 3.3–5; 5.12; 6.15–16; 7.3–5. **18.11** *Whatever is set aside*, i.e., contributed to the priests. *Elevation offerings*. See 8.13. For the parts set aside from elevation offerings, see, e.g., 18.18; Lev 7.28–36; Num 6.19–20; and the offerings of well-being listed in 6.17–18. *Everyone who is clean*. See Lev 22.3–7; 1 Sam 21.1–6. *In your house*. See Lev 22.10–16. **18.12–13** See also Deut 18.4; Ex 23.19a; Num 15.17–21. **18.14** *Devoted thing*. See Lev 27.21, 28. Here it is devoted to the service of the Lord, but something "devoted" is often "devoted to destruction" or "put to the ban," including in other circumstances human beings (see, e.g., Lev 27.29; Deut 13.12–18; Josh 6.15–21). **18.15–16** On the *firstborn* and redemption of firstborn males, see 3.12, 15, 40–51. Here in Num 18 there is no specification of the sex of the firstborn human being who is to be redeemed. *Their redemption price* refers to the redemption of human beings. The redemption price of unclean animals depended on the valuation by the priest (see Lev 27.11–13, 27). *Shekel of the sanctuary*.

month of age, you shall fix at five shekels
of silver, according to the shekel of the
sanctuary (that is, twenty gerahs). 17 But
the firstborn of a cow, or the firstborn of
a sheep, or the firstborn of a goat, you
shall not redeem; they are holy. You shall
dash their blood on the altar, and shall
turn their fat into smoke as an offering by
fire for a pleasing odor to the LORD; 18 but
their flesh shall be yours, just as the breast
that is elevated and as the right thigh are
yours. 19 All the holy offerings that the Is-
raelites present to the LORD I have given
to you, together with your sons and
daughters, as a perpetual due; it is a cove-
nant of salt forever before the LORD for
you and your descendants as well. 20 Then
the LORD said to Aaron: You shall have no
allotment in their land, nor shall you have
any share among them; I am your share
and your possession among the Israelites.
21 To the Levites I have given every
tithe in Israel for a possession in return
for the service that they perform, the ser-
vice in the tent of meeting. 22 From now
on the Israelites shall no longer approach
the tent of meeting, or else they will incur
guilt and die. 23 But the Levites shall per-
form the service of the tent of meeting,
and they shall bear responsibility for their
own offenses; it shall be a perpetual stat-
ute throughout your generations. But
among the Israelites they shall have no al-
lotment, 24 because I have given to the Le-
vites as their portion the tithe of the
Israelites, which they set apart as an offer-
ing to the LORD. Therefore I have said of
them that they shall have no allotment
among the Israelites.
25 Then the LORD spoke to Moses,
saying: 26 You shall speak to the Levites,
saying: When you receive from the Israel-
ites the tithe that I have given you from
them for your portion, you shall set apart
an offering from it to the LORD, a tithe of
the tithe. 27 It shall be reckoned to you as
your gift, the same as the grain of the
threshing floor and the fullness of the
wine press. 28 Thus you also shall set apart
an offering to the LORD from all the tithes
that you receive from the Israelites; and
from them you shall give the LORD's
offering to the priest Aaron. 29 Out of all
the gifts to you, you shall set apart every
offering due to the LORD; the best of all of
them is the part to be consecrated. 30 Say
also to them: When you have set apart the
best of it, then the rest shall be reckoned
to the Levites as produce of the threshing
floor, and as produce of the wine press.
31 You may eat it in any place, you and
your households; for it is your payment
for your service in the tent of meeting.
32 You shall incur no guilt by reason of it,
when you have offered the best of it. But
you shall not profane the holy gifts of the
Israelites, on pain of death.

Ceremony of the Red Heifer

19 The LORD spoke to Moses and
Aaron, saying: 2 This is a statute
of the law that the LORD has commanded:
Tell the Israelites to bring you a red

See 3.46–48. **18.17–18.** Cf. the description of offerings of well-being in Ex 29.26–28; Lev 7.28–36; 10.14–15. The firstborn of all clean animals belong to the Lord (Lev 27.26) and they are here assigned to the priests as part of their portion. *A pleasing odor to the LORD.* See 15.3. **18.19** The phrase *covenant of salt* apparently refers to an ancient custom of sharing food as part of a covenant ceremony (see Gen 31.54; Ex 24.9–11; cf. Ezra 4.14). A covenant of salt was perhaps one that could not be broken (see 2 Chr 13.5). Salt was to be added to all sacrifices according to Lev 2.13; see also Ezek 43.18–24. **18.20** The Aaronite priests are supposed to have no tribal inheritance; see 26.62; Josh 14.3. Their only support is cultic donations. Cities are provided for all those of the tribe of Levi, however, so that they will have homes and pasture land (but no agricultural land); see 35.1–8; Josh 21.1–42; 1 Chr 6.54–81. Cf. 1 Kings 2.26.

18.21–32 Those Levites other than the Aaronite priests have as their portion the Israelites' tithes, here of agricultural products only; see also Neh 10.37; 13.5, 12. Cf. Lev 27.30–33; 2 Chr 31.6; Deut 14.22–29; 26.12–15. **18.22** *Approach.* See 17.12–13; also 1.51. **18.23–24** See 18.20. **18.25–29** The Levites themselves must tithe and pay their offering to the Aaronite priests. **18.30–32** Once the Levites have tithed, their "income" is like any other Israelite's. Even though the tithes are technically offered to the Lord and are therefore sacred, the Levites may eat their portion without incurring guilt as long as they have first offered their tithe to the priests. If, however, they have not been faithful in their treatment of their "income," its essentially sacred nature will ensure their deaths.

19.1–22 31.19–24 assumes this chapter; see also Lev 5.3–6; 21.1–4, 10–11; 22.3–7; Num 5.1–3; 6.6–12; 9.6–7, 10–11. The need for ritual

heifer without defect, in which there is no
blemish and on which no yoke has been
laid. 3 You shall give it to the priest Elea-
zar, and it shall be taken outside the camp
and slaughtered in his presence. 4 The
priest Eleazar shall take some of its blood
with his finger and sprinkle it seven times
towards the front of the tent of meeting.
5 Then the heifer shall be burned in his
sight; its skin, its flesh, and its blood, with
its dung, shall be burned. 6 The priest
shall take cedarwood, hyssop, and crim-
son material, and throw them into the fire
in which the heifer is burning. 7 Then the
priest shall wash his clothes and bathe his
body in water, and afterwards he may
come into the camp; but the priest shall
remain unclean until evening. 8 The one
who burns the heifer[j] shall wash his
clothes in water and bathe his body in wa-
ter; he shall remain unclean until evening.
9 Then someone who is clean shall gather
up the ashes of the heifer, and deposit
them outside the camp in a clean place;
and they shall be kept for the congrega-
tion of the Israelites for the water for
cleansing. It is a purification offering.
10 The one who gathers the ashes of the
heifer shall wash his clothes and be un-
clean until evening.

This shall be a perpetual statute for the
Israelites and for the alien residing
among them. 11 Those who touch the
dead body of any human being shall be
unclean seven days. 12 They shall purify

j Heb *it*

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after contact with a corpse is felt in many cultures, including other ancient Near Eastern ones. **19.2** The English meaning of *heifer* as a young cow that has not yet calved is not implied by the Hebrew word here. "Cow" is a better translation. Cf. the use of the same Hebrew word in 1 Sam 6.7, 10; Job 21.10. It is not clear why the animal should be red (or brownish-red, cf. Gen 25.29–34) unless it is the color of blood and so, like the *crimson material* in v. 6, symbolically increases the purifying blood in the ritual. Red is a common color choice for sacrificial animals in the ancient world. *Without defect ... no blemish* (see also, e.g., Lev 4.28; 14.10; 22.20; 21.17–23 for the priests themselves). The cow to be used is one *on which no yoke has been laid*; certain special animals in biblical rituals were to be those that had never been used for profane work; see Deut 15.19; 21.3–4 (a different word for "heifer," meaning a young cow); 1 Sam 6.7. **19.3** *Eleazar*, Aaron's son. See, e.g., Ex 6.23; Num 3.1–4; 16.37–40. That the entire ceremony of this cow is to take place *outside the camp* makes it something other than ordinary sacrifice, which was performed at the altar. The uniqueness of this ritual must lie in its connection with the pollution associated with corpses. *In his presence*, i.e., the priest must officiate. **19.4** *Seven times*. Seven is often a sacred number in the Bible (e.g., Gen 2.3; 7.2; Lev 4.6; 8.11; Num 23.1–2). *Towards the front of the tent of meeting*, (the eastern side), i.e., towards the Lord. **19.5** The dung and skin of a sacrificial animal are sometimes burned (Ex 29.14; Lev 4.11–12; 8.17; 16.27), but never its blood. See 19.2. **19.6** On *cedarwood, hyssop, and crimson material*, see Lev 14.4–6, 49–53; cf. Num 19.18. Cedarwood is perhaps a symbol for endurance since it preserves. "Hyssop" may not be a correct translation for the next term since hyssop is not native to Palestine, but some aromatic, climbing plant is meant (1 Kings 4.33; see also Ex 12.22; Ps 51.7). The crimson material may simply be another symbol of purifying blood; see 19.2. Similar materials (aromatic woods, crimson yarn) are used in rituals elsewhere in the ancient world. **19.7–10a** The priest, who burns the cow, and the one who gathers its ashes must cleanse themselves and remain ritually unclean until evening; see, e.g., Lev 11.24–25, 28, 40; 15; 16.26, 28; 22.3–7. **19.9** The cow's ashes have been made sacred because the cow was an offering (a *purification offering*; see 8.6–7); no one unclean may deal with the ashes and the ashes should be kept ritually clean. *Water for cleansing*, sometimes translated "water of impurity," but here correctly identified as water to *cleanse* from impurity (see 8.6–7; also 31.23; Zech 13.1). On special mixtures of water used for ritual purposes, cf. also Ex 32.20; Num 5.16–28. **19.10** Contact with the sacred can make one "unclean." See 16.26. Both pollution and holiness are outside everyday life and so both require ritual attention before the people in question are once more "clean," i.e., before they can reenter their usual, mundane life for which they must be untouched by the unusual. Holiness can be dangerous (see Ex 19.10–15, 21–24; Num 16.26) and, like pollution, can even be considered contagious, though this is rare (Lev 6.25–29; Ezek 44.19; 46.20; cf. Hag 2.12–13). See 16.37–39, where only Eleazar the priest is to touch the censers made holy by the fire. A *perpetual statute*. See also 19.21; 10.8; 15.15; 18.23. **19.11–22** Uses of the water for cleansing, for people defiled by contact with a corpse or other vestige of human death. See also 31.19–24. **19.11** For people unclean through contact with a corpse, see note on 19.1–22. For a seven-day period of "uncleanness," see also the birth of a male child, Lev 12.2; skin disease, Lev 14.9; menstruation and bodily discharges, Lev 15. **19.12** *With*

themselves with the water on the third
day and on the seventh day, and so be
clean; but if they do not purify themselves
on the third day and on the seventh day,
they will not become clean. 13 All who
touch a corpse, the body of a human be-
ing who has died, and do not purify them-
selves, defile the tabernacle of the LORD;
such persons shall be cut off from Israel.
Since water for cleansing was not dashed
on them, they remain unclean; their un-
cleanness is still on them.

14 This is the law when someone dies
in a tent: everyone who comes into the
tent, and everyone who is in the tent, shall
be unclean seven days. 15 And every open
vessel with no cover fastened on it is un-
clean. 16 Whoever in the open field
touches one who has been killed by a
sword, or who has died naturally,[k] or a
human bone, or a grave, shall be unclean
seven days. 17 For the unclean they shall
take some ashes of the burnt purification
offering, and running water shall be
added in a vessel; 18 then a clean person
shall take hyssop, dip it in the water, and
sprinkle it on the tent, on all the furnish-
ings, on the persons who were there, and
on whoever touched the bone, the slain,
the corpse, or the grave. 19 The clean per-
son shall sprinkle the unclean ones on the
third day and on the seventh day, thus
purifying them on the seventh day. Then
they shall wash their clothes and bathe
themselves in water, and at evening they
shall be clean. 20 Any who are unclean but
do not purify themselves, those persons
shall be cut off from the assembly, for
they have defiled the sanctuary of the
LORD. Since the water for cleansing has
not been dashed on them, they are
unclean.

21 It shall be a perpetual statute for
them. The one who sprinkles the water
for cleansing shall wash his clothes, and
whoever touches the water for cleansing
shall be unclean until evening. 22 What-
ever the unclean person touches shall be
unclean, and anyone who touches it shall
be unclean until evening.

The Waters of Meribah

20 The Israelites, the whole congre-
gation, came into the wilderness
of Zin in the first month, and the people
stayed in Kadesh. Miriam died there, and
was buried there.

2 Now there was no water for the con-
gregation; so they gathered together
against Moses and against Aaron. 3 The
people quarreled with Moses and said,
"Would that we had died when our kin-

k Heb lacks *naturally*

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the water, Hebrew "with it," either the water or the collection of ashes (vv. 9–10). **19.13** Such people would *defile the tabernacle* (see Lev 15.31) because, since the camp is holy (see 5.1–4), any possible contact with uncleanness could endanger the holiness of the tabernacle at the center. *Cut off*. See 9.13. **19.14–22** A repetition of information in vv. 11–13, but with more detail. **19.14–15** The uncleanness of a *tent* (or, probably, any dwelling; the Septuagint translates "house, dwelling") where someone has died is like that from contact with a corpse (see v. 11). The uncleanness is envisioned as contagion that can spread even to open containers. **19.16** This verse treats contact with human death in an environment opposite from the dwelling of vv. 14–15, an *open field*. **19.17–20** Instructions for making and using the water for cleansing (v. 9). **19.17** The *burnt purification offering* is that of the red cow, vv. 2–10, and the *ashes* are mentioned in vv. 9–10. *Running water*, Hebrew "living water," is water that flows continuously, as from a spring, and cannot become stagnant. See also the various translations in Gen 26.19; Lev 14.5, 50; 15.13; Song 4.15; Jer 2.13; 17.13; Zech 14.8. **19.18–19** For *hyssop*, see 19.6. Here the purification process is a matter of being sprinkled with the water for cleansing, of washing clothes, and of bathing. The instruction in v. 12 is less explicit. **19.20** See 19.13. **19.21–22** See 19.10.

20.1–13 This narrative takes place after the forty years of wandering. **20.1** V. 1 presents many chronological and geographical problems. *Wilderness of Zin*. See 13.21. *In the first month*, but the year is not specified. Most commentators propose the fortieth year because of the date of Aaron's death given in 33.38. *The people stayed in Kadesh*, but the length of time is not given. V. 12 indicates that forty years have passed: the Israelites in this narrative are to be allowed into the promised land, hence the conclusion that the old generation had died (see 14.21–24, 28–35); note the resumption of the march in v. 22. On *Miriam*, see ch. 12. **20.2–13** The complaint and the waters of Meribah. On complaint stories in general, see 11.1–3. Compare this story to its doublet in Ex 17.1–7. This narrative is also referred to in Deut 33.8; Pss 78.15–16, 20; 81.7; 95.8–11; 106.32–33. **20.3** *Quarreled*, from the same root as Meribah, hence the etymology in v. 13. *When*

dred died before the LORD! 4 Why have
you brought the assembly of the LORD
into this wilderness for us and our live-
stock to die here? 5 Why have you brought
us up out of Egypt, to bring us to this
wretched place? It is no place for grain, or
figs, or vines, or pomegranates; and there
is no water to drink." 6 Then Moses and
Aaron went away from the assembly to
the entrance of the tent of meeting; they
fell on their faces, and the glory of the
LORD appeared to them. 7 The LORD
spoke to Moses, saying: 8 Take the staff,
and assemble the congregation, you and
your brother Aaron, and command the
rock before their eyes to yield its water.
Thus you shall bring water out of the rock
for them; thus you shall provide drink for
the congregation and their livestock.

9 So Moses took the staff from before
the LORD, as he had commanded him.
10 Moses and Aaron gathered the assem-
bly together before the rock, and he said
to them, "Listen, you rebels, shall we
bring water for you out of this rock?"
11 Then Moses lifted up his hand and
struck the rock twice with his staff; water
came out abundantly, and the congrega-
tion and their livestock drank. 12 But the
LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because
you did not trust in me, to show my holi-
ness before the eyes of the Israelites,
therefore you shall not bring this assem-
bly into the land that I have given them."
13 These are the waters of Meribah,[l]
where the people of Israel quarreled with
the LORD, and by which he showed his
holiness.

Passage Through Edom Refused

14 Moses sent messengers from Ka-
desh to the king of Edom, "Thus says
your brother Israel: You know all the ad-
versity that has befallen us: 15 how our an-
cestors went down to Egypt, and we lived
in Egypt a long time; and the Egyptians
oppressed us and our ancestors; 16 and
when we cried to the LORD, he heard our
voice, and sent an angel and brought us
out of Egypt; and here we are in Kadesh,

l That is *Quarrel*

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our kindred died before the LORD, i.e., in the Korah, Dathan, and Abiram affair, ch. 16 (esp. vv. 32–33, 35, 49). **20.4** *Livestock*. See 11.4. **20.5** *No ... figs, or vines, or pomegranates*. Cf. 13.23. **20.6** *Fell on their faces*. See 14.5; 16.4. *Glory*. See 9.15–16. **20.8–9** The mention of *the staff* is phrased in such a way that a particular staff seems to be meant. Since it is taken *from before the LORD* it must be Aaron's staff of 17.10–11; but see v. 11. See also Ex 7.8–8.19. The reference to *the rock* also implies a known entity, perhaps a well-known feature at Kadesh. The Hebrew word for rock here, *sela*, is also the name of a city in Edom (see Judg 1.36; 2 Kings 14.7) and may be a literary link to the Edom narrative in vv. 14–21. **20.10** For Israel as *rebels*, see 17.10, also concerned with the staff. **20.12** No satisfying explanation has ever been given for the punishment of Moses and Aaron for this incident. Their "sin" is described here as unbelief; in v. 24 and 27.14 it is rebellion; in Deut 32.50–52 they are said to have "broken faith" with the Lord. Ps 106.32–33 blames Moses' "rash words" (perhaps v. 10), and yet other explanations, not always referring to this narrative at all, are given in Deut 1.37; 3.25–26; 4.21. Commentators have made many suggestions about the nature of the "sin," but none of these explanations is widely accepted. Aaron's death is reported in v. 28, Moses' in Deut 34.5. That *this assembly* will be taken into the promised land implies that this must be the new generation, grown up after the old has died during forty years in the wilderness. *To show my holiness* might also be translated "to treat me as holy." **20.13** *Quarreled*. See 20.3. For the etymologies of place-names, see, e.g., 11.1–3; 13.24; 21.3. *With the LORD*. See Ex 16.8; 17.7.

20.14–21 The relationship between Edom and Israel in the Bible is complicated: sometimes friendly, sometimes hostile (e.g., the stories of Jacob/Israel and Esau/Edom, Gen 25.27–34; 27.1–28.9; 32.3–33.17; and elsewhere, Num 24.18; 1 Sam 14.47; 2 Sam 8.13–14; 1 Kings 11.14–17; 2 Kings 3.4–27; Isa 34.5–7; Ob). **20.14** *King*. There is no archaeological evidence that Edom was an organized kingdom in the early Iron Age; probably the passages that report "chieftains" of Edom are more accurate (see text notes to Gen 36.15–19, 40–43; Ex 15.15). The message in vv. 14–17 is worded in the same way as a typical ancient Near Eastern letter: addressee, sender, message. Moses calls Israel Edom's *brother* in typical diplomatic language. Use of the term "brother" indicates that the message sender believes the two parties to be equals and allies. In this case, of course, there is a double meaning since Israel (Jacob) and Edom (Esau) are recorded as biological brothers in the stories in Genesis (e.g., 25.21–26). **20.16** *Angel*. See Ex 14.19; 23.20–33; 32.34. As in many biblical stories, the "angel" is probably meant to be in fact some aspect of the Lord (see, e.g., Gen 16.7–13; Num

a town on the edge of your territory.
17 Now let us pass through your land. We
will not pass through field or vineyard, or
drink water from any well; we will go
along the King's Highway, not turning
aside to the right hand or to the left until
we have passed through your territory."
18 But Edom said to him, "You shall
not pass through, or we will come out with
the sword against you." 19 The Israelites
said to him, "We will stay on the highway;
and if we drink of your water, we and our
livestock, then we will pay for it. It is only
a small matter; just let us pass through on
foot." 20 But he said, "You shall not pass
through." And Edom came out against
them with a large force, heavily armed.
21 Thus Edom refused to give Israel pas-
sage through their territory; so Israel
turned away from them.

The Death of Aaron

22 They set out from Kadesh, and the
Israelites, the whole congregation, came
to Mount Hor. 23 Then the LORD said to
Moses and Aaron at Mount Hor, on the
border of the land of Edom, 24 "Let Aaron
be gathered to his people. For he shall not
enter the land that I have given to the Is-
raelites, because you rebelled against my
command at the waters of Meribah.
25 Take Aaron and his son Eleazar, and
bring them up Mount Hor; 26 strip Aaron
of his vestments, and put them on his son
Eleazar. But Aaron shall be gathered to
his people,[m] and shall die there." 27 Moses
did as the LORD had commanded; they
went up Mount Hor in the sight of the
whole congregation. 28 Moses stripped
Aaron of his vestments, and put them on
his son Eleazar; and Aaron died there on
the top of the mountain. Moses and Elea-
zar came down from the mountain.
29 When all the congregation saw that
Aaron had died, all the house of Israel
mourned for Aaron thirty days.

The Defeat of Arad

21 When the Canaanite, the king of
Arad, who lived in the Negeb,
heard that Israel was coming by the way
of Atharim, he fought against Israel and
took some of them captive. 2 Then Israel
made a vow to the LORD and said, "If you
will indeed give this people into our
hands, then we will utterly destroy their
towns." 3 The LORD listened to the voice
of Israel, and handed over the Canaan-

m Heb lacks *to his people*

22.22–35). **20.17** Because their attack from the south had failed many years earlier (14.39–45), the Israelites are now planning to invade Canaan from the east. To do so they must either pass directly through Edom or make a long detour around. The *King's Highway* was the north-south Transjordanian route connecting the Gulf of Aqaba with Syria. Such a route is still in use today. **20.18** The Edomites refuse, although without explanation. See Judg 11.17–18, but cf. Deut 2.2–8, 26–29. See the similar plot in the narrative of Jacob and Esau in Gen 32–33. **20.21** See 21.4: the Israelites go south of Edom when they continue their march.

20.22–29 Aaron's successor installed; Aaron dies. **20.22** *They set out.* See 10.11–12. *Mount Hor.* Site unknown, but see v. 23; 33.37; cf. Deut 10.6; Num 33.30–31, 37. **20.24** That an Israelite is *gathered to his people* probably usually refers to burial in a family tomb; see Gen 25.8–10. *Because you rebelled.* "You" is plural; see v. 12; Deut 32.50–52. **20.26** Aaron's son *Eleazar* (see 19.3) will take Aaron's place as chief priest; see also Deut 10.6. On his *vestments,* see Ex 28; Lev 8.7–9. **20.28** Moses will also die on top of a *mountain*; see Deut 32.50; 34.1–6. Num 33.38 places Aaron's death at the first day of the fifth month, year forty. **20.29** The Israelites mourn for Aaron *thirty days,* as they do for Moses (Deut 34.8). The usual period of mourning was seven days (Gen 50.10; 1 Sam 31.13).

21.1–3 The defeat of the king of Arad. This appears to be another story of an attack on the promised land from the south (see v. 4). For other battles of Hormah, see 14.39–45; Judg 1.16–17. **21.1** For *Canaanites* in this region, see also 14.25, 45. *Arad* is approximately fifty miles north of the oases of which Kadesh was a part. For the *king of Arad,* see Josh 12.14. *Negeb.* See 13.17; Judg 1.16. The *way of Atharim.* Site unknown. **21.2–3** See Judg 11.30–31. *We will utterly destroy their towns* is a vow to wage "holy war." See Ex 17.14; Num 18.14; Deut 20.16–18. Such a practice is known also from ancient Moab. *Hormah* is from the same Hebrew root as "utterly destroy," hence this narrative provides an etymology of the place name Hormah, as does Judg 1.17. It is odd that, having achieved a victory in the Negeb, the Israelites still turn to the southeast to go through Transjordan and attack Canaan from the east (v. 4), rather than continuing northward into Canaan. Commentators have suggested, therefore, that vv. 1–3 are out of place in their current position.

ites; and they utterly destroyed them and their towns; so the place was called Hormah.[n]

The Bronze Serpent

4 From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea,[o] to go around the land of Edom; but the people became impatient on the way. 5 The people spoke against God and against Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food." 6 Then the LORD sent poisonous[p] serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. 7 The people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned by speaking against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD to take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. 8 And the LORD said to Moses, "Make a poisonous[q] serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live." 9 So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.

The Journey to Moab

10 The Israelites set out, and camped in Oboth. 11 They set out from Oboth, and camped at Iye-abarim, in the wilderness bordering Moab toward the sunrise. 12 From there they set out, and camped in the Wadi Zered. 13 From there they set out, and camped on the other side of the Arnon, in[r] the wilderness that extends from the boundary of the Amorites; for the Arnon is the boundary of Moab, between Moab and the Amorites. 14 Wherefore it is said in the Book of the Wars of the LORD,

n Heb *Destruction* *o* Or *Sea of Reeds*
p Or *fiery*; Heb *seraphim* *q* Or *fiery*; Heb *seraph*
r Gk: Heb *which is in*

21.4–9 The bronze serpent. This is the last of the complaint stories (see 11.1–3) and the most serious since the people complain directly against God as well as Moses (v. 5, although cf. Ex 16.8; Num 14.3). **21.4** *They set out.* This is part of the itinerary reported in 33.41. *By the way to the Red Sea.* The Hebrew actually says "Reed Sea," as in 14.25. In this passage, however, Red Sea makes sense, regardless of where the miracle at the sea was thought to have taken place. The Israelites have turned to the Gulf of Aqaba in order *to go around the land of Edom,* because they have been denied passage; see 20.14–21. **21.5** *Against God and against Moses.* See notes 21.4–9. This phrasing is unique. **21.6–7** *Poisonous serpents,* lit. "fiery snakes," so called perhaps because of the burning of their bites. Poisonous snakes do exist in the Sinai and the Negeb. **21.8–9** *Make a poisonous serpent,* lit. "make a fiery one," presumably a "fiery snake." In Isa 30.6 the same word (a flying "fiery one," translated as a flying "serpent") describes an animal of the Negeb. *Set it on a pole,* so that it could be held up for victims to see. Looking at the serpent cures the victims, a process here described as a sort of sympathetic magic (although see Wis 16.5–7). The phrase *serpent of bronze* is a pun in Hebrew, both words derived from the same root. Also from that root is Nehushtan, the bronze serpent King Hezekiah destroys because it has become an object of worship; see 2 Kings 18.4. This story in Numbers serves as an etiology for the serpent of Hezekiah's time. Serpent worship is attested elsewhere in the ancient world, as is the belief in a relationship between snakes and healing.

21.10–11 Cf. 33.41–44, with stops at Zalmonah and Punon not listed in ch. 21 (see v. 4). The location of *Oboth* is unknown. *Iye-abarim,* possibly "the ruins of the Abarim." Abarim, from the root that means "across," i.e., across the Jordan (from the point of view of an Israelite writer), is a word that describes an area or mountain range in Moab (see 27.12; 33.47). Here the text seems to place the Israelites to the east of Moab, below the Arnon (v. 13); cf. v. 12 where they appear to be south of Moab. **21.12** The style of the itinerary changes in this verse, and the stopping places no longer correspond to the list of "stages" in Num 33 (see 33.45), so commentators generally see a shift to the old epic sources rather than the priestly tradition (see Introduction; 10.29–36). In Deut 2.8–25, the *Wadi Zered* appears to be the southern boundary of Moab, between Moab and Edom, probably modern Wadi el-Hesa. **21.13** The *Arnon,* modern Wadi el-Mujib, was at some periods the northern boundary of Moab. A ninth-century B.C.E. Moabite inscription attributed to King Mesha (2 Kings 3.4–27) describes his regaining the territory north of the Arnon from Israel, in whose control it had been since the time of the Israelite king Omri (1 Kings 16.21–30). The inscription was indeed found north of the Arnon. The *other side* of the Arnon must refer to the north side, since the Israelites were marching from the south. **21.14–15** *The Book of the Wars of the LORD* is otherwise unknown. Cf. the Book of Jashar (Josh 10.13; 2 Sam 1.18). These fragments suggest the existence of collec-

"Waheb in Suphah and the wadis.
The Arnon 15 and the slopes of
the wadis
that extend to the seat of Ar,
and lie along the border of
Moab."[s]

16 From there they continued to
Beer;[t] that is the well of which the LORD
said to Moses, "Gather the people to-
gether, and I will give them water."
17 Then Israel sang this song:
"Spring up, O well! — Sing to it! —
18 the well that the leaders sank,
that the nobles of the people dug,
with the scepter, with the staff."
From the wilderness to Mattanah, 19 from
Mattanah to Nahaliel, from Nahaliel to
Bamoth, 20 and from Bamoth to the valley
lying in the region of Moab by the top of
Pisgah that overlooks the wasteland.[u]

King Sihon Defeated

21 Then Israel sent messengers to
King Sihon of the Amorites, saying,
22 "Let me pass through your land; we will
not turn aside into field or vineyard; we
will not drink the water of any well; we
will go by the King's Highway until
we have passed through your territory."
23 But Sihon would not allow Israel to pass
through his territory. Sihon gathered all
his people together, and went out against
Israel to the wilderness; he came to Jahaz,
and fought against Israel. 24 Israel put
him to the sword, and took possession of
his land from the Arnon to the Jabbok, as
far as to the Ammonites; for the bound-
ary of the Ammonites was strong. 25 Israel
took all these towns, and Israel settled in
all the towns of the Amorites, in Heshbon,
and in all its villages. 26 For Heshbon was
the city of King Sihon of the Amorites,
who had fought against the former king
of Moab and captured all his land as far as
the Arnon. 27 Therefore the ballad sing-
ers say,
"Come to Heshbon, let it be built;
let the city of Sihon be
established.
28 For fire came out from Heshbon,
flame from the city of Sihon.
It devoured Ar of Moab,
and swallowed up[v] the heights
of the Arnon.
29 Woe to you, O Moab!

s Meaning of Heb uncertain t That is *Well*
u Or *Jeshimon* v Gk: Heb *and the lords of*

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tions of poems about Israel's early wars of conquest. Such wars were called "the wars of the LORD" because of the Israelites' belief that the Lord led them in battle (i.e., "holy wars," see, e.g., Josh 6; Judg 4.14–16; 11.30–33; 1 Sam 14.6–10, 23; 18.17; 25.28). The translation of the poem is problematical. For *Ar* as a town in Moab, see 21.28; Deut 2.18. The name probably means "town," in fact. The *seat* of Ar could refer to its location or to some dwelling in the town. **21.16–18** An otherwise unknown miraculous provision of water; cf. Ex 17.1–7; Num 20.2–11, although the "Song of the Well" could obviously be sung about any well. **21.19** *Mattanah* and *Nahaliel* are unknown. *Bamoth*, "high places," could refer to a number of sites, e.g., Bamoth-baal, 22.41; Josh 13.17; Beth-bamoth in the Mesha inscription (see 21.13). **21.20** *Valley* here could refer to a valley within a series of hills and need not clash with *the top of Pisgah*. For Pisgah as hills, see, e.g., 23.14; Deut 3.17, 27; 34.1. Pisgah is on the Moabite plateau above the Jordan Valley (Deut 34.1), and so the march has come northwest to this point. The *wasteland* referred to in this verse must be the area north of the Dead Sea and east of the Jordan River. The same word is used of that area on the west side of the river as well.

21.21–35 The defeat of kings Sihon and Og. See the similar narratives in Deut 2.24–3.7; Judg 11.19–22; and many other mentions such as Josh 12.1–5; 13.10–12; Jer 48.45. **21.21** *Amorites*. See 13.29; Gen 10.16. **21.22** Cf. 20.17, 19. The Israelites still need to move farther north in order to press their attack on Canaan from the east, and this brings them to the border of Amorite territory. *The King's Highway*. See 20.17. **21.23** Cf. 20.18, 20–21. *Jahaz* (also mentioned in the Mesha Inscription, see 21.13) seems to be the limit of Moab's land (Isa 15.4; Jer 48.34) and was probably near Dibon (see 21.30). **21.24** In ch. 20 Israel bypassed Edom, but here the Israelites fight with the Amorites. The *Jabbok* is modern Wadi Zerqa. On the *Ammonites*, see Gen 19.38. The area of Ammon in the highlands east of the Jordan Valley was already widely settled in the middle of the second millennium B.C.E. **21.25–26** *All these towns* has no obvious referent. The site of *Heshbon* in this early period has not been certainly identified, but was probably in the highlands east of the Jordan Valley, opposite Jericho. *Villages*, lit. "daughters," i.e., dependent towns. According to these verses, the territory in question (north of the Arnon) had once been Moabite, just as in King Mesha's inscription (see 21.13). **21.27–30** The Song of Heshbon is a song in praise of an Amorite victory over Moab. **21.29** *Chemosh* is the national

You are undone, O people of
Chemosh!
He has made his sons fugitives,
and his daughters captives,
to an Amorite king, Sihon.
30 So their posterity perished
from Heshbon[w] to Dibon,
and we laid waste until fire
spread to Medeba."[x]

31 Thus Israel settled in the land of the Amorites. 32 Moses sent to spy out Jazer; and they captured its villages, and dispossessed the Amorites who were there.

King Og Defeated

33 Then they turned and went up the road to Bashan; and King Og of Bashan came out against them, he and all his people, to battle at Edrei. 34 But the LORD said to Moses, "Do not be afraid of him; for I have given him into your hand, with all his people, and all his land. You shall do to him as you did to King Sihon of the Amorites, who ruled in Heshbon." 35 So they killed him, his sons, and all his people, until there was no survivor left; and they took possession of his land.

Balak Summons Balaam to Curse Israel

22 The Israelites set out, and camped in the plains of Moab across the Jordan from Jericho. 2 Now Balak son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. 3 Moab was in great dread of the people, because they were so numerous; Moab was overcome with fear of the people of Israel. 4 And Moab said to the elders of Midian, "This horde will now lick up all that is around us, as an ox licks up the grass of the field." Now Balak son of Zippor was king of Moab at that time. 5 He sent messengers to Balaam son of Beor at Pethor, which is on the Eu-

w Gk: Heb *we have shot at them; Heshbon has perished*
x Compare Sam Gk: Meaning of MT uncertain

god of Moab, known also from the Mesha Inscription (see 21.13); see also 1 Kings 11.7, 33; 2 Kings 23.13; Jer 48.7, 13, 46; cf. Judg 11.12–24. Cf. "the people of Chemosh" here and in Jer 48.46 with Israel as "the people of the LORD" in Num 11.29; 2 Kings 9.6; Ezek 36.20; Zeph 2.10. **21.30** *Dibon*, about thirty miles southwest of Amman, and *Medeba*, about twenty miles southwest of Amman. See 33.45; Josh 13.8–9. The Hebrew of v. 30 is not at all clear. **21.32** *Jazer*. Site unknown; see 32.1–4; Josh 13.24–25. **21.33–35** The defeat of King Og, another Amorite king. *Bashan* is northern Transjordan, a plateau of volcanic origin and famous in biblical passages as a fertile land; see Ps 22.12; Isa 2.13; 33.9; Jer 50.19; Ezek 27.6; 39.18; Mic 7.14; Nah 1.4; Zech 11.2. *Edrei*, about sixty miles south of Damascus; see Deut 3.8–10. **21.34** *Do not be afraid of him; for I have given him into your hand*. Cf. Josh 10.8.

22.1 The last stage in the journey from the wilderness of Sinai, before the crossing of the Jordan River; see Num 33.48–49; 36.13; Deut 1.1–5; Josh 3.1.

22.2–24.25 The story of Balaam, son of Beor. The biblical stories of Balaam have been supplemented by the discovery at Tell Deir Alla in Jordan of a plaster inscription dating to the eighth century B.C.E. The text, which is probably non-Israelite, relates that Balaam, son of Beor, a "seer of the gods," receives an upsetting night visit from the gods and then reports to his people that he has seen a divine council meeting (see Gen 1.26) where impending disaster is apparently planned for the earth. The Balaam story in Num 22–24 combines epic and poetic sources, resulting in a few apparent contradictions: on the one hand, Balaam's journey to Balak seems rather short, with a donkey and two servants (22.21–35), while, on the other, he is said to come from upper Syria (22.5); he is outspokenly loyal to the God of Israel, but his failure to curse Israel continues to surprise Balak; he is portrayed as both prophet and diviner. The connection, if any, between Balaam and Bela son of Beor (an Edomite king, Gen 36.32–33; 1 Chr 1.43–44) is obscure. Some of the mentions of Balaam in the Bible refer to the narrative in chs. 22–24; some refer to the negative Balaam tradition in 31.8, 16; and others have slightly different traditions from either of these (see Deut 23.3–6; Josh 13.22; 24.9–10; Judg 11.25; Neh 13.1–2; Mic 6.5). **22.2** *Balak* is mentioned only in these chapters and in references to them (Josh 24.9; Judg 11.25; Mic 6.5). *All that Israel had done to the Amorites*. See 21.21–35. **22.3** *Moab was overcome with fear of the people of Israel*. Cf. Josh 2.8–11. **22.4** On the connection between Balaam and *Midian*, see 31.8, 16. **22.5** *Pethor*, possibly Pitru on the upper Euphrates, where Syrian and Mesopotamian cultures came together; see also 23.7; Deut 23.4. This identification for Pethor, however, accords badly with vv. 21–35 where a short journey seems envisioned (see notes on 22.2–24.25). *Amaw*, or "his people"; see the text note *y* and cf. 24.14. There is a place-name in northern Syria that might correspond to Hebrew Amaw. Amaw might also be a scribal error for Ammon. *They have spread over the face of the*

phrates, in the land of Amaw,[y] to summon him, saying, "A people has come out of Egypt; they have spread over the face of the earth, and they have settled next to me. 6 Come now, curse this people for me, since they are stronger than I; perhaps I shall be able to defeat them and drive them from the land; for I know that whomever you bless is blessed, and whomever you curse is cursed."

7 So the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the fees for divination in their hand; and they came to Balaam, and gave him Balak's message. 8 He said to them, "Stay here tonight, and I will bring back word to you, just as the LORD speaks to me"; so the officials of Moab stayed with Balaam. 9 God came to Balaam and said, "Who are these men with you?" 10 Balaam said to God, "King Balak son of Zippor of Moab, has sent me this message: 11 'A people has come out of Egypt and has spread over the face of the earth; now come, curse them for me; perhaps I shall be able to fight against them and drive them out.'" 12 God said to Balaam, "You shall not go with them; you shall not curse the people, for they are blessed." 13 So Balaam rose in the morning, and said to the officials of Balak, "Go to your own land, for the LORD has refused to let me go with you." 14 So the officials of Moab rose and went to Balak, and said, "Balaam refuses to come with us."

15 Once again Balak sent officials, more numerous and more distinguished than these. 16 They came to Balaam and said to him, "Thus says Balak son of Zippor: 'Do not let anything hinder you from coming to me; 17 for I will surely do you great honor, and whatever you say to me I will do; come, curse this people for me.'" 18 But Balaam replied to the servants of Balak, "Although Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the command of the LORD my God, to do less or more. 19 You remain here, as the others did, so that I may learn what more the LORD may say to me." 20 That night God came to Balaam and said to him, "If the men have come to summon you, get up and go with them; but do only what I tell you to do." 21 So Balaam got up in the morning, saddled his donkey, and went with the officials of Moab.

Balaam, the Donkey, and the Angel

22 God's anger was kindled because he was going, and the angel of the LORD took his stand in the road as his adversary. Now he was riding on the donkey, and his two servants were with him. 23 The donkey saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road, with a drawn sword in his hand; so the donkey turned off the road, and went into the field; and Balaam struck the donkey, to turn it back onto the road. 24 Then the angel of the LORD stood in a narrow path between the vineyards, with a wall on either side. 25 When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, it scraped against the wall, and scraped Balaam's foot against the wall; so he struck it again. 26 Then the angel of the LORD went

[y] Or *land of his kinsfolk*

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earth; cf. the same expression used of locusts in Ex 10.5, 15. **22.6** Balaam's role here is one who blesses and curses; cf. vv. 7, 40; 23.1–3. **22.7** *Fees for divination.* See the negative interpretation of Balaam's role as diviner in Josh 13.22; see also Deut 18.10–14. Divination was a common ancient cultic practice designed to discover information by interpretation of some object or event, such as the configuration of the entrails of a sacrificed animal or the pattern oil drops on water. Diviners learned traditional interpretations preserved in long lists of many possible configurations of the various media. **22.8** Balaam, a non-Israelite, maintains unexpectedly that he must confer with the Lord, i.e., with Yahweh, the God of Israel; see also vv. 12–13, 18; Gen 26.28. Not unexpectedly, the God of Israel does not give Balaam permission to curse Israel for Balak king of Moab (v. 6). Equally unusual, the Moabites and Midianites in the story seem to accept that Balaam is dependent on the Lord for his blessings and curses, as if the Lord were the only god Balaam could possibly call on. Cf. 21.29. Balaam here reflects a tradition in which a prophet is the mouthpiece for a deity. See Deut 18.18; also Num 22.18–20, 35, 38; 23.3, 15, 17, 26; 24.13. **22.18** *My God.* Balaam here refers to the Lord as his own god. Cf. v. 8. **22.20** Balaam is given permission to go with the men, but not to curse Israel.

22.22–35 The story of Balaam's talking donkey is a fable that perhaps pokes fun at Balaam—the seer whose donkey can see more than he can. Cf. the story of trees talking in Judg 9.7–15. **22.22** God's *anger* is unexplained in the text as we have it; cf. v. 20. **22.23a** Cf. Josh 5.13–15.

ahead, and stood in a narrow place, where there was no way to turn either to the right or to the left. 27 When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, it lay down under Balaam; and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he struck the donkey with his staff. 28 Then the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey, and it said to Balaam, "What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?" 29 Balaam said to the donkey, "Because you have made a fool of me! I wish I had a sword in my hand! I would kill you right now!" 30 But the donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your donkey, which you have ridden all your life to this day? Have I been in the habit of treating you this way?" And he said, "No."

31 Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road, with his drawn sword in his hand; and he bowed down, falling on his face. 32 The angel of the LORD said to him, "Why have you struck your donkey these three times? I have come out as an adversary, because your way is perverse[z] before me. 33 The donkey saw me, and turned away from me these three times. If it had not turned away from me, surely just now I would have killed you and let it live." 34 Then Balaam said to the angel of the LORD, "I have sinned, for I did not know that you were standing in the road to oppose me. Now therefore, if it is displeasing to you, I will return home." 35 The angel of the LORD said to Balaam, "Go with the men; but speak only what I tell you to speak." So Balaam went on with the officials of Balak.

36 When Balak heard that Balaam had come, he went out to meet him at Ir-moab, on the boundary formed by the Arnon, at the farthest point of the boundary. 37 Balak said to Balaam, "Did I not send to summon you? Why did you not come to me? Am I not able to honor you?" 38 Balaam said to Balak, "I have come to you now, but do I have power to say just anything? The word God puts in my mouth, that is what I must say." 39 Then Balaam went with Balak, and they came to Kiriath-huzoth. 40 Balak sacrificed oxen and sheep, and sent them to Balaam and to the officials who were with him.

Balaam's First Oracle

41 On the next day Balak took Balaam and brought him up to Bamoth-baal; and from there he could see part of the people

23 of Israel.[a] 1 Then Balaam said to Balak, "Build me seven altars here, and prepare seven bulls and seven rams for me." 2 Balak did as Balaam had said; and Balak and Balaam offered a bull and a ram on each altar. 3 Then Balaam said to Balak, "Stay here beside your burnt offerings while I go aside. Perhaps the LORD will come to meet me. Whatever he shows me I will tell you." And he went to a bare height.

4 Then God met Balaam; and Balaam said to him, "I have arranged the seven altars, and have offered a bull and a ram on each altar." 5 The LORD put a word in Balaam's mouth, and said, "Return to Balak, and this is what you must say." 6 So he returned to Balak,[b] who was standing beside his burnt offerings with all the officials of Moab. 7 Then Balaam[c] uttered his oracle, saying:

z Meaning of Heb uncertain a Heb lacks *of Israel* b Heb *him* c Heb *he*

22.28 *Opened the mouth of the donkey.* Cf. v. 31 (although a different Hebrew word is used for "open"). **22.31** *The LORD opened the eyes of Balaam,* so that he could see something supernatural; cf. 2 Kings 6.15–17. **22.32** The *angel* seems to be, in some sense, the Lord; see also 20.16. **22.35** *Angel.* Cf. 22.20, 32. **22.36–39** Balak comes to meet Balaam when he gets to Moab's border. **22.36** *Ir-moab,* or "the city of Moab," perhaps the same as Ar in Moab; see 21.15, 28; Deut 2.9, 18, 29; Isa 15.1. On the *Arnon* as the northern boundary of Moab, see 21.13. **22.39** *Kiriath-huzoth,* "the town of streets." Site unknown. **22.40** The sacrifices could be part of Balaam's divining; see v. 7; 23.2, 14; cf. 24.1.

22.41 *Bamoth-baal, Pisgah* (23.14), and *Peor* (23.28) are in the hills above the eastern Jordan Valley; see 21.19–20; Deut 3.27; 34.1; Josh 13.17–20. **23.1–2** See 22.40. **23.3** See 22.8. **23.5** See 22.8; the *word* is the following oracle, vv. 7–10. **23.7–10** The first of Balaam's oracles. Commentators generally consider oracles one and two separately from oracles three and four. The first and second oracles would make little sense without the prose that surrounds them, while the third and fourth have little necessary connection with the prose narrative. Many would date oracles three and four earlier than one and two, and see

"Balak has brought me from
Aram,
the king of Moab from the
eastern mountains:
'Come, curse Jacob for me;
Come, denounce Israel!'
8 How can I curse whom God has
not cursed?
How can I denounce those
whom the LORD has not
denounced?
9 For from the top of the crags I
see him,
from the hills I behold him;
Here is a people living alone,
and not reckoning itself among
the nations!
10 Who can count the dust of Jacob,
or number the dust-cloud[d] of
Israel?
Let me die the death of the
upright,
and let my end be like his!"

11 Then Balak said to Balaam, "What have you done to me? I brought you to curse my enemies, but now you have done nothing but bless them." 12 He answered, "Must I not take care to say what the LORD puts into my mouth?"

Balaam's Second Oracle

13 So Balak said to him, "Come with me to another place from which you may see them; you shall see only part of them, and shall not see them all; then curse them for me from there." 14 So he took him to the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah. He built seven altars, and offered a bull and a ram on each altar. 15 Balaam said to Balak, "Stand here beside your burnt offerings, while I meet the LORD over there." 16 The LORD met Balaam, put a word into his mouth, and said, "Return to Balak, and this is what you shall say." 17 When he came to him, he was standing beside his burnt offerings with the officials of Moab. Balak said to him, "What has the LORD said?" 18 Then Balaam uttered his oracle, saying:

"Rise, Balak, and hear;
listen to me, O son of Zippor:
19 God is not a human being, that
he should lie,
or a mortal, that he should
change his mind.
Has he promised, and will he not
do it?
Has he spoken, and will he not
fulfill it?
20 See, I received a command to
bless;
he has blessed, and I cannot
revoke it.
21 He has not beheld misfortune in
Jacob;
nor has he seen trouble in
Israel.
The LORD their God is with them,
acclaimed as a king among
them.
22 God, who brings them out of
Egypt,
is like the horns of a wild ox
for them.
23 Surely there is no enchantment
against Jacob,
no divination against Israel;
now it shall be said of Jacob and
Israel,
'See what God has done!'

d Or *fourth part*

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some deliberate literary dependence of two on three; see vv. 22, 24. See notes on 24.3–4, 8–9, 15–16, 17–18. **23.7** *Aram* (Syria). See 22.5. Jacob and Israel are equivalent terms used in parallel in this typical poetic construction; see Gen 32.27–28; 35.9–10. **23.8** See 22.8. **23.9** *Him* is Jacob/Israel. *A people living alone* is a phrase that connotes security; see Jer 49.31; Deut 33.28. **23.10** *Who can count the dust of Jacob.* See Gen 13.16; 28.14. **23.11–12** See 22.8.

23.13 *You shall see only part of them.* This phrase (see also 22.41) implies a vast number of people camped beyond them (see 22.3–6). **23.14** *The field of Zophim,* "Sentinels' Field." Site unknown. *Pisgah* (see 22.41) was not a particular mountain-top, but a highland range, so "the field of Zophim" could be a part of the Pisgah highlands. On the sacrifices, see 22.40; 23.1–2. **23.16** See v. 5. **23.18–24** The second oracle; see 23.7–10. **23.18** See 23.7. **23.19** Balaam and Balak's petitions (and, by implication, all such petitions) are not effective with God who, not being a human being, is not swayed from a course already chosen. See also vv. 20, 23; but cf., e.g., Gen 18.22–33, and Moses' many acts of intercession (see 11.10–15). **23.21** Here the Lord is referred to specifically as the *God* of Israel; see 22.8, 18. **23.22** *Horns of a wild ox.* See 24.8. **23.23** Israel's success as a nation reflects well on the Lord. Cf. Moses' suggestion that the opposite is also true

24 Look, a people rising up like a lioness,
and rousing itself like a lion!
It does not lie down until it has eaten the prey
and drunk the blood of the slain."

25 Then Balak said to Balaam, "Do not curse them at all, and do not bless them at all." 26 But Balaam answered Balak, "Did I not tell you, 'Whatever the LORD says, that is what I must do'?"

27 So Balak said to Balaam, "Come now, I will take you to another place; perhaps it will please God that you may curse them for me from there." 28 So Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor, which overlooks the wasteland.[e] 29 Balaam said to Balak, "Build me seven altars here, and prepare seven bulls and seven rams for me." 30 So Balak did as Balaam had said, and offered a bull and a ram on each altar.

Balaam's Third Oracle

24 Now Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD to bless Israel, so he did not go, as at other times, to look for omens, but set his face toward the wilderness. 2 Balaam looked up and saw Israel camping tribe by tribe. Then the spirit of God came upon him, 3 and he uttered his oracle, saying:

"The oracle of Balaam son of Beor,
the oracle of the man whose eye is clear,[f]
4 the oracle of one who hears the words of God,
who sees the vision of the Almighty,[g]
who falls down, but with eyes uncovered:
5 how fair are your tents, O Jacob,
your encampments, O Israel!
6 Like palm groves that stretch far away,
like gardens beside a river,
like aloes that the LORD has planted,
like cedar trees beside the waters.
7 Water shall flow from his buckets,
and his seed shall have abundant water,
his king shall be higher than Agag,
and his kingdom shall be exalted.
8 God who brings him out of Egypt,
is like the horns of a wild ox for him;

e Or *overlooks Jeshimon* *f* Or *closed* or *open*
g Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

(14.13–19). **23.24** For a fierce people portrayed as a *lion*, see 24.9; Gen 49.9; Deut 33.20, 22; Isa 5.29; Ezek 19.1–9; Joel 1.6; Nah 2.11–12. **23.25–26** See 22.8. **23.28** *Peor.* See 22.41. *Which overlooks the wasteland.* Cf. 21.20. **23.29–30** See 23.1–2.

24.1–14 Balaam's third oracle. The third and fourth oracles are generally considered older than the first two (see 23.7–10), with very little connection to the narrative context, although see v. 9. **24.1–2** The preparation for the third oracle is different from that for the first two. *As at other times, to look for omens.* See 22.40. *The spirit of God came upon him.* See 11.17. **24.3–9** The third oracle itself is a general blessing of Israel and, along with the fourth oracle, has literary connections to other poetry thought by many to be quite early—not from the time of Balaam and Moses, but perhaps from the early monarchy (see 24.7, 17–18). **24.3–4** That Balaam seems to be introduced here and in vv. 15–16 is one reason commentators have suggested this Balak narrative is not the original context for oracles three and four. *The oracle of the man whose eye is clear.* See text note *f*. The translation is uncertain. See also 2 Sam 23.1; Prov 30.1 (similar in Hebrew). *The Almighty.* See text note *g*. One group of gods in the Deir Alla inscription (see 22.2–24.25), to whose council meeting Balaam was privy, is called the "Shaddai gods." *Who falls down,* perhaps a reference to ecstatic behavior; see also 11.24–29; 1 Sam 10.5–13; 19.20–24. **24.7** *Agag.* Those who would like to date oracles three and four during the early monarchy compare this verse to the story of Saul's victory over the Amalekites and their king Agag in 1 Sam 15. Amalek is also mentioned in Num 24.20. **24.8–9** Some verses in oracles three and four are often compared to other early poetry, particularly the tribal lists in Gen 49 and Deut 33. *Horns of a wild ox.* See 23.22; Deut 33.17. The Hebrew word translated "horns" here and in 23.22 is not entirely clear. For lion imagery, see 23.24; note especially Gen 49.9; Deut 33.20, 22. The theme of blessing and cursing (see the blessing of Jacob in Gen 27.29) is the suggested literary link that ties oracles three and four

he shall devour the nations that
are his foes
and break their bones.
He shall strike with his
arrows.[h]
9 He crouched, he lay down like a
lion,
and like a lioness; who will
rouse him up?
Blessed is everyone who
blesses you,
and cursed is everyone who
curses you."

10 Then Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he struck his hands together. Balak said to Balaam, "I summoned you to curse my enemies, but instead you have blessed them these three times. 11 Now be off with you! Go home! I said, 'I will reward you richly,' but the LORD has denied you any reward." 12 And Balaam said to Balak, "Did I not tell your messengers whom you sent to me, 13 'If Balak should give me his house full of silver and gold, I would not be able to go beyond the word of the LORD, to do either good or bad of my own will; what the LORD says, that is what I will say'? 14 So now, I am going to my people; let me advise you what this people will do to your people in days to come."

Balaam's Fourth Oracle

15 So he uttered his oracle, saying:
"The oracle of Balaam son of
Beor,
the oracle of the man whose
eye is clear,[i]
16 the oracle of one who hears the
words of God,
and knows the knowledge of
the Most High,[j]
who sees the vision of the
Almighty,[k]
who falls down, but with his
eyes uncovered:
17 I see him, but not now;
I behold him, but not near—
a star shall come out of Jacob,
and a scepter shall rise out of
Israel;
it shall crush the borderlands[l] of
Moab,
and the territory[m] of all the
Shethites.
18 Edom will become a possession,
Seir a possession of its
enemies,[n]
while Israel does valiantly.
19 One out of Jacob shall rule,
and destroy the survivors
of Ir."

20 Then he looked on Amalek, and uttered his oracle, saying:
"First among the nations was
Amalek,
but its end is to perish forever."

21 Then he looked on the Kenite, and uttered his oracle, saying:
"Enduring is your dwelling place,
and your nest is set in the rock;
22 yet Kain is destined for burning.
How long shall Asshur take you
away captive?"

23 Again he uttered his oracle, saying:
"Alas, who shall live when God
does this?

h Meaning of Heb uncertain *i* Or *closed* or *open* *j* Or *of Elyon* *k* Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai* *l* Or *forehead* *m* Some Mss read *skull* *n* Heb *Seir, its enemies, a possession*

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to an otherwise unrelated narrative context; see 24.1–14. **24.10** Balak *struck his hands together* in contempt. See Job 27.23; Lam 2.15. **24.11** *I said, 'I will reward you richly.'* See 22.17–18, 37. **24.12–13** See 22.8, 18; 23.3, 5, 8, 11–12, 21, 25–26. **24.14** *My people.* See 22.5.

24.15–24 The fourth oracle is a prediction that Israel will rule over the Transjordanian kingdoms (see 2 Sam 8–12). Many commentators believe that vv. 21–24 are later additions, some that v. 20 is not original to this oracle. **24.15–16** Slightly expanded over vv. 3–4. *The Most High.* See Gen 14.18–24; Deut 32.8. **24.17–18** These verses have been read as referring to King David's victories over Moab and Edom (2 Sam 8.2, 11–14), again pointing to the early monarchy as a setting for these two oracles. *I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near.* See 23.9. *Scepter.* See Gen 49.10. *Shethites*, perhaps a reference to the nomadic Sutu, a people known from second-millennium B.C.E. documents. On *Seir* for Edom, see Gen 32.3; Judg 5.4. **24.19** *Ir.* See 22.36. **24.20** On *Amalek*, see 13.29; see also 24.7, 15–24. **24.21–22** *Kenite.* See 10.29–32. *Kain*, the eponymous ancestor of the Kenites, is the same in Hebrew as Cain in Gen 4.1–17 and Tubal-cain in Gen 4.22. *Your nest is set in the rock* contains a pun in Hebrew: the Hebrew word for "nest" is very similar to "Kain." *Asshur* is Assyria, and the Neo-Assyrian Empire was especially fa-

24 But ships shall come from
Kittim
and shall afflict Asshur and Eber;
and he also shall perish
forever."
25 Then Balaam got up and went
back to his place, and Balak also went
his way.

Worship of Baal of Peor and the Incident of the Midianite Woman

25 While Israel was staying at
Shittim, the people began to have
sexual relations with the women of Moab.
2 These invited the people to the sacrifices
of their gods, and the people ate and
bowed down to their gods. 3 Thus Israel
yoked itself to the Baal of Peor, and the
LORD's anger was kindled against Israel.
4 The LORD said to Moses, "Take all the
chiefs of the people, and impale them in
the sun before the LORD, in order that the
fierce anger of the LORD may turn away
from Israel." 5 And Moses said to the
judges of Israel, "Each of you shall kill
any of your people who have yoked them-
selves to the Baal of Peor."
6 Just then one of the Israelites came
and brought a Midianite woman into his
family, in the sight of Moses and in the
sight of the whole congregation of the Is-
raelites, while they were weeping at the
entrance of the tent of meeting. 7 When
Phinehas son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the
priest, saw it, he got up and left the con-

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mous for deporting conquered populations (see 2 Kings 17.5–41). **24.24** The term *Kittim* refers to Cyprus in Jer 2.10; Ezek 27.6 and is used elsewhere to represent the Greeks (Gen 10.4; 1 Macc 1.1; 8.5) and even the Romans (Dan 11.30 and in the Dead Sea Scrolls). *Asshur*. See v. 22. *Eber*, perhaps the eponymous ancestor of the Hebrews (Gen 10.21–25; 11.10–16), more likely a land "beyond" the river (as in Josh 24.3; Isa 7.20), i.e., Mesopotamia or specifically Babylonia, used here along with Assyria. *He also shall perish forever*. See v. 20.

25.1–18 This chapter is a combination of two different stories about Israelite men and foreign women: one in vv. 1–5 involving Moabite women, sacrifices, and Baal of Peor and another in vv. 6–15 involving an apparent marriage between a Midianite woman and a Simeonite man. The two are combined by vv. 16–18, and the combined narrative is known to 31.8, 15–16; Josh 22.17; Ps 106.28–31. **25.1–5** See also Deut 4.3–4; Hos 9.10. **25.1–2** *Shittim*, "the acacias." Site unknown. See the full name Abel-shittim in 33.49, there located in the plains of Moab where the Israelites have camped since 22.1. See also Josh 2.1; 3.1; Mic 6.5 (for Gilgal, see Josh 4.19–24): Shittim is the place where the conquest of the land west of the Jordan begins. *Began*. By a change in the vowels this word could read "defiled themselves." *To have sexual relations with*, lit. "to prostitute themselves with," which phrase can be used of sexual relations or of religious apostasy. *The women of Moab*. Cf. vv. 17–18; 31.15–16. *Sacrifices of their gods*, or "god" (the same Hebrew word can be used for both singular and plural) since only one god is mentioned in v. 3; see Ps 106.28–31, where these sacrifices are said to be part of a cult of the dead. *The people ate*, i.e., they participated in the sacrifices; see, e.g., Ex 32.6; Lev 7.11–18; 1 Sam 1.4, 9. Cf. vv. 1–2; Ex 34.15–16. **25.3** *Baal*, lit. "lord," originally an epithet that came to be used as the equivalent of a personal name for the Syrian storm god Hadad (cf. the Aramean king's name Hadadezer, "Hadad is help," 2 Sam 8.3–12). *Peor* is a place-name; see 23.28. **25.4** *Impale*, sometimes translated "crucify" or "expose." The narrative nowhere states that the execution of the *chiefs of the people* takes place, unless v. 8 is the equivalent. **25.5** Moses' command to the *judges of Israel* (some ancient translations have "tribes of Israel") is not the same as the Lord's command in v. 4. Here Moses asks only that the guilty parties be executed. Again, there is no indication in the narrative that this was done. **25.6–15** See also Josh 22.17–18; Ps 106.28–31. **25.6** *Into his family*, lit. "to his brothers." For "brother" as kin in general, see, e.g., 16.10; Gen 13.8; 29.12. What was the offense involved in this story? Perhaps simply bringing home, i.e., marrying, a Midianite woman. That it was done *in the sight of Moses* takes on a special significance then. Even though Moses was aware of the offense, he did nothing about it. Vv. 6–18 are an anti-Midianite story used also to elevate Aaron's family over Moses'; see 12.2; 16.3, 40. Moses could hardly punish an Israelite man for marrying a Midianite woman when he had done so himself (see 10.29–32); there is more than one attitude toward intermarriage in the Hebrew Bible; cf. Ex 34.15–16; Deut 7.2–4; Josh 23.12–13. Although the reason is not given until v. 8, the people were apparently *weeping at the entrance of the tent of meeting* because of a plague. Once the two stories in this chapter are combined, the plague becomes a punishment for the worship of Baal of Peor (see v. 18 [a third punishment, the ones in vv. 4–5 apparently not having been carried out]), and the people are weeping before the tent in supplication to the Lord (see 7.89; 16.16–18). **25.7** *Phinehas son of Eleazar*. See Ex

gregation. Taking a spear in his hand,
8 he went after the Israelite man into the
tent, and pierced the two of them, the Is-
raelite and the woman, through the belly.
So the plague was stopped among the
people of Israel. 9 Nevertheless those that
died by the plague were twenty-four
thousand.

10 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:
11 "Phinehas son of Eleazar, son of Aaron
the priest, has turned back my wrath from
the Israelites by manifesting such zeal
among them on my behalf that in my jeal-
ousy I did not consume the Israelites.
12 Therefore say, 'I hereby grant him my
covenant of peace. 13 It shall be for him
and for his descendants after him a cove-
nant of perpetual priesthood, because he
was zealous for his God, and made atone-
ment for the Israelites.' "

14 The name of the slain Israelite
man, who was killed with the Midianite
woman, was Zimri son of Salu, head of an
ancestral house belonging to the Simeon-
ites. 15 The name of the Midianite woman
who was killed was Cozbi daughter of Zur,
who was the head of a clan, an ancestral
house in Midian.

16 The LORD said to Moses, 17 "Harass
the Midianites, and defeat them; 18 for
they have harassed you by the trickery
with which they deceived you in the affair
of Peor, and in the affair of Cozbi, the
daughter of a leader of Midian, their sis-
ter; she was killed on the day of the
plague that resulted from Peor."

A Census of the New Generation

26 After the plague the LORD said to
Moses and to Eleazar son of
Aaron the priest, 2 "Take a census of the
whole congregation of the Israelites, from
twenty years old and upward, by their an-
cestral houses, everyone in Israel able to
go to war." 3 Moses and Eleazar the priest
spoke with them in the plains of Moab by
the Jordan opposite Jericho, saying,
4 "Take a census of the people,[o] from
twenty years old and upward," as the
LORD commanded Moses.

The Israelites, who came out of the
land of Egypt, were:

5 Reuben, the firstborn of Israel. The
descendants of Reuben: of Hanoch, the

o Heb lacks *take a census of the people*: Compare verse 2

6.23–25; Num 20.22–29. **25.8** The Hebrew word for *tent* here is not the usual one. In fact, this word is used in the Hebrew Bible only here. The meaning is uncertain, but it was probably a domed tent; it has been suggested that this term is an alternate word for the tabernacle. *Pierced the two of them*, i.e., at once, implying sexual intercourse or some positioning in which the two bodies could be pierced with one thrust of the spear. *Through the belly*. The Hebrew is difficult but seems to mean "through *her* belly." The Hebrew word for "belly" here, though, is very similar to the word for a special tent earlier in this verse, and one ancient translation has "in the tent" at this point. **25.8–9** *Plague*. See v. 6. **25.10–13** The event becomes the grounds for praise of the Aaronite priestly family (see 1 Chr 6.3–15, 49–53), and an indirect criticism of Moses, who apparently failed to carry out either form of punishment in vv. 4–5 and did nothing about the trespass in v. 6. **25.12** *My covenant of peace*. See Isa 54.10; Ezek 34.25; 37.26; Mal 2.4–5. **25.13** *Perpetual priesthood*. See also Ex 29.9; 40.15. **25.14–15** Both the Israelite man and the Midianite woman were important people in their own groups; see also v. 18 and *Zur* in 31.8. **25.16–18** See ch. 31. **25.18** This verse ties together the two stories in this chapter by pairing the Midianites with the Moabites in the *affair of Peor* and by asserting that the plague mentioned in vv. 8–9 was the result of the same Peor incident. *Trickery*, presumably the women's use of sexual contact to draw the Israelite men to sacrifices to a god other than the Lord; see 31.16.

26.1–65 The last obstacle to the conquest is overcome when the plague of ch. 25 apparently kills the remaining Israelites of the wilderness generation (see 26.64), those who were condemned to die because of the incident of the spies in chs. 13–14 (see 14.20–25, 28–35). At this point a new military census is taken, parallel to the census in ch. 1, and from this point the people of Israel are not the condemned generation of the forty years' wandering but rather a new generation that will live to conquer the promised land. **26.1** *After the plague* is v. 19 of ch. 25 in Hebrew. The plague is the one in 25.8–9, 18. *To Moses and to Eleazar son of Aaron*. Cf. 1.3; 20.22–29. **26.2** Cf. 1.2–3. **26.4** *Who came out of the land of Egypt* is an odd introduction to the following list since these are precisely not those people (vv. 64–65). The phrase may simply mean those who were on the way from Egypt to Canaan. **26.5–50** Cf. 1.20–43. The ordering of the tribes here is different from that in ch. 1, but similar to that in ch. 2; the eastern and southern threesomes have traded places so that Reuben, the traditional firstborn, is first, and Manasseh and Ephraim are

clan of the Hanochites; of Pallu, the clan
of the Palluites; 6of Hezron, the clan of
the Hezronites; of Carmi, the clan of the
Carmites. 7These are the clans of the
Reubenites; the number of those enrolled
was forty-three thousand seven hundred
thirty. 8And the descendants of Pallu:
Eliab. 9The descendants of Eliab: Nem-
uel, Dathan, and Abiram. These are the
same Dathan and Abiram, chosen from
the congregation, who rebelled against
Moses and Aaron in the company of Ko-
rah, when they rebelled against the LORD,
10and the earth opened its mouth and
swallowed them up along with Korah,
when that company died, when the fire
devoured two hundred fifty men; and
they became a warning. 11Notwithstand-
ing, the sons of Korah did not die.

12 The descendants of Simeon by
their clans: of Nemuel, the clan of the
Nemuelites; of Jamin, the clan of the Ja-
minites; of Jachin, the clan of the Jachin-
ites; 13of Zerah, the clan of the Zerahites;
of Shaul, the clan of the Shaulites.*p*
14These are the clans of the Simeonites,
twenty-two thousand two hundred.

15 The children of Gad by their clans:
of Zephon, the clan of the Zephonites; of
Haggi, the clan of the Haggites; of Shuni,
the clan of the Shunites; 16of Ozni, the
clan of the Oznites; of Eri, the clan of the
Erites; 17of Arod, the clan of the Aro-
dites; of Areli, the clan of the Arelites.
18These are the clans of the Gadites: the
number of those enrolled was forty thou-
sand five hundred.

19 The sons of Judah: Er and Onan;
Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan.
20The descendants of Judah by their
clans were: of Shelah, the clan of the She-
lanites; of Perez, the clan of the Perezites;
of Zerah, the clan of the Zerahites. 21The
descendants of Perez were: of Hezron,
the clan of the Hezronites; of Hamul, the
clan of the Hamulites. 22These are the
clans of Judah: the number of those en-
rolled was seventy-six thousand five
hundred.

23 The descendants of Issachar by
their clans: of Tola, the clan of the Tola-
ites; of Puvah, the clan of the Punites;
24of Jashub, the clan of the Jashubites; of
Shimron, the clan of the Shimronites.
25These are the clans of Issachar: sixty-
four thousand three hundred enrolled.

26 The descendants of Zebulun by
their clans: of Sered, the clan of the Sere-
dites; of Elon, the clan of the Elonites; of
Jahleel, the clan of the Jahleelites.
27These are the clans of the Zebulunites;
the number of those enrolled was sixty
thousand five hundred.

28 The sons of Joseph by their clans:
Manasseh and Ephraim. 29The descen-
dants of Manasseh: of Machir, the clan of
the Machirites; and Machir was the father
of Gilead; of Gilead, the clan of the Gile-
adites. 30These are the descendants of
Gilead: of Iezer, the clan of the Iezerites;
of Helek, the clan of the Helekites; 31and
of Asriel, the clan of the Asrielites; and of
Shechem, the clan of the Shechemites;
32and of Shemida, the clan of the Shemi-
daites; and of Hepher, the clan of the He-
pherites. 33Now Zelophehad son of
Hepher had no sons, but daughters: and
the names of the daughters of Zelophe-
had were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah,
and Tirzah. 34These are the clans of Ma-
nasseh; the number of those enrolled was
fifty-two thousand seven hundred.

35 These are the descendants of
Ephraim according to their clans: of Shu-
thelah, the clan of the Shuthelahites; of
Becher, the clan of the Becherites; of Ta-
han, the clan of the Tahanites. 36And
these are the descendants of Shuthelah:
of Eran, the clan of the Eranites. 37These
are the clans of the Ephraimites: the num-
ber of those enrolled was thirty-two thou-
sand five hundred. These are the
descendants of Joseph by their clans.

38 The descendants of Benjamin by
their clans: of Bela, the clan of the Bela-
ites; of Ashbel, the clan of the Ashbelites;
of Ahiram, the clan of the Ahiramites;
39of Shephupham, the clan of the Shu-
phamites; of Hupham, the clan of the
Huphamites. 40And the sons of Bela were
Ard and Naaman: of Ard, the clan of the
Ardites; of Naaman, the clan of the Naa-
mites. 41These are the descendants of

p Or *Saul . . . Saulites*

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switched within the western threesome (cf. Gen 41.50–52; 48.8–20). In this second military census in Numbers, furthermore, the clans of each tribe are listed along with the tribe's totals (cf. Gen 46.8–27). The totals in this list differ from the totals in ch. 1, clan by clan and for Israel as a whole. **26.9–10** *Dathan and Abiram.* See ch. 16. **26.11** On the Korahites, see 16.1. **26.19** See

Benjamin by their clans; the number of those enrolled was forty-five thousand six hundred.

42 These are the descendants of Dan by their clans: of Shuham, the clan of the Shuhamites. These are the clans of Dan by their clans. 43 All the clans of the Shuhamites: sixty-four thousand four hundred enrolled.

44 The descendants of Asher by their families: of Imnah, the clan of the Imnites; of Ishvi, the clan of the Ishvites; of Beriah, the clan of the Beriites. 45 Of the descendants of Beriah: of Heber, the clan of the Heberites; of Malchiel, the clan of the Malchielites. 46 And the name of the daughter of Asher was Serah. 47 These are the clans of the Asherites: the number of those enrolled was fifty-three thousand four hundred.

48 The descendants of Naphtali by their clans: of Jahzeel, the clan of the Jahzeelites; of Guni, the clan of the Gunites; 49 of Jezer, the clan of the Jezerites; of Shillem, the clan of the Shillemites. 50 These are the Naphtalites[q] by their clans: the number of those enrolled was forty-five thousand four hundred.

51 This was the number of the Israelites enrolled: six hundred and one thousand seven hundred thirty.

52 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 53 To these the land shall be apportioned for inheritance according to the number of names. 54 To a large tribe you shall give a large inheritance, and to a small tribe you shall give a small inheritance; every tribe shall be given its inheritance according to its enrollment. 55 But the land shall be apportioned by lot; according to the names of their ancestral tribes they shall inherit. 56 Their inheritance shall be apportioned according to lot between the larger and the smaller.

57 This is the enrollment of the Levites by their clans: of Gershon, the clan of the Gershonites; of Kohath, the clan of the Kohathites; of Merari, the clan of the Merarites. 58 These are the clans of Levi: the clan of the Libnites, the clan of the Hebronites, the clan of the Mahlites, the clan of the Mushites, the clan of the Korahites. Now Kohath was the father of Amram. 59 The name of Amram's wife was Jochebed daughter of Levi, who was born to Levi in Egypt; and she bore to Amram: Aaron, Moses, and their sister Miriam. 60 To Aaron were born Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. 61 But Nadab and Abihu died when they offered unholy fire before the LORD. 62 The number of those enrolled was twenty-three thousand, every male one month old and upward; for they were not enrolled among the Israelites because there was no allotment given to them among the Israelites.

63 These were those enrolled by Moses and Eleazar the priest, who enrolled the Israelites in the plains of Moab by the Jordan opposite Jericho. 64 Among these there was not one of those enrolled by Moses and Aaron the priest, who had enrolled the Israelites in the wilderness of Sinai. 65 For the LORD had said of them, "They shall die in the wilderness." Not one of them was left, except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun.

The Daughters of Zelophehad

27 Then the daughters of Zelophehad came forward. Zelophehad was son of Hepher son of Gilead son of Machir son of Manasseh son of Joseph, a member of the Manassite clans. The names of his daughters were: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. 2 They stood before Moses, Eleazar the priest, the leaders, and all the congrega-

[q] Heb *clans of Naphtali*

Gen 38. **26.33** See 27.1–11; 36.1–12. **26.51** See 1.46. **26.52–56** A new reason for taking a census is given here, in addition to the need for knowing military power (v. 2), i.e., that after the conquest of Canaan, land will be apportioned based on the size of the tribes. **26.57–62** Cf. 3.14–39. **26.61** See Lev 10.1–2. **26.62** *Every male one month old and up.* See 3.15, 40–41. *Not enrolled among the Israelites.* See 1.48–49. *No allotment given to them.* See, e.g., 18.23–24. **26.64–65** See 14.20–25, 28–35.

27.1–11 In Israel, property was passed from father to son, but any patrilineal system must have alternative inheritance arrangements for a man who has no sons (ancestral land is not to be sold; see 1 Kings 21.1–19; Mic 2.1–5). One such arrangement, known also from other ancient Near Eastern documents, is that daughters may inherit, and that solution is here given Mosaic sanction. A restriction is added in 36.1–12, and the decision is carried out in Josh 17.3–6. For alternative solutions, see Deut 25.5–10 (cf. Gen 38.6–11; Ruth); Jer 32.6–15; Lev 25.8–31. **27.1** See 26.33.

tion, at the entrance of the tent of meeting, and they said, 3"Our father died in the wilderness; he was not among the company of those who gathered themselves together against the LORD in the company of Korah, but died for his own sin; and he had no sons. 4Why should the name of our father be taken away from his clan because he had no son? Give to us a possession among our father's brothers."

5 Moses brought their case before the LORD. 6And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 7The daughters of Zelophehad are right in what they are saying; you shall indeed let them possess an inheritance among their father's brothers and pass the inheritance of their father on to them. 8You shall also say to the Israelites, "If a man dies, and has no son, then you shall pass his inheritance on to his daughter. 9If he has no daughter, then you shall give his inheritance to his brothers. 10If he has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to his father's brothers. 11And if his father has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to the nearest kinsman of his clan, and he shall possess it. It shall be for the Israelites a statute and ordinance, as the LORD commanded Moses."

Joshua Appointed Moses' Successor

12 The LORD said to Moses, "Go up this mountain of the Abarim range, and see the land that I have given to the Israelites. 13When you have seen it, you also shall be gathered to your people, as your brother Aaron was, 14because you rebelled against my word in the wilderness of Zin when the congregation quarreled with me.[r] You did not show my holiness before their eyes at the waters." (These are the waters of Meribath-kadesh in the wilderness of Zin.) 15Moses spoke to the LORD, saying, 16"Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint someone over the congregation 17who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, so that the congregation of the LORD may not be like sheep without a shepherd." 18So the LORD said to Moses, "Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay your hand upon him; 19have him stand before Eleazar the priest and all the congregation, and commission him in their sight. 20You shall give him some of your authority, so that all the congregation of the Israelites may obey. 21But he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the decision of the Urim before the LORD; at his word they shall go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he and all the Israelites with him, the whole congregation." 22So Moses did as the LORD commanded him. He took Joshua and had him stand before Eleazar the priest and the whole congregation; 23he laid his hands on him and commissioned him—as the LORD had directed through Moses.

r Heb lacks *with me*

27.3 See ch. 16. That Zelophehad, a Manassite, might have been part of Korah's rebellion marks this mention as dependent on the strand of tradition in which Korah and his group are not Levites (see 16.3). *For his own sin,* perhaps simply a reference to chs. 13–14. **27.4** On the *name,* cf. Deut 25.5–7. The son perpetuates the father's name in his genealogy. Presumably in the case of Zelophehad's daughters, the daughters' sons would carry on as Zelophehad's descendants and would inherit his property, an arrangement also known from other ancient Near Eastern documents; see also 1 Chr 2.34–36; Ezra 2.61; Neh 7.63. The complication that the sons will be part of their fathers' lineages as well is resolved in ch. 36, again in typical fashion. *Father's brothers,* i.e., male members of his clan. **27.5** *Before the LORD,* i.e., at the tent of meeting; see v. 2. **27.8–11** The line of inheritance approved here favors direct descendants, male or female, over other relatives, then moves from near to more distant male relatives. **27.12** See 21.11. **27.13** See 20.22–29. **27.14** See 20.12. **27.16** *The God of the spirits of all flesh.* See 16.22. **27.17** *Go out before them and come in before them* is a phrase often used as a technical military term for the battle march; see v. 21; Josh 14.11; 1 Sam 18.13, 16; 29.6. *Sheep without a shepherd.* See 1 Kings 22.17; Ezek 34.1–10; Zech 11. **27.18** On *Joshua,* besides the book of Joshua, see especially Ex 17.8–14; 24.13; 33.11; Num 11.28; 13.8, 16; 14.6, 30, 38. *A man in whom is the spirit.* See 11.16–30. *Lay your hand upon him,* a form of transfer, in this case, of Moses' authority (v. 20). See also 8.10–11; Deut 34.9. **27.21** *Eleazar,* not Joshua, is to perform the role of intermediary, using the Urim to determine the Lord's will; see Ex 28.29–30; 1 Sam 14.41; 28.6; Ezra 2.63. *Go out, and ... come in.* See v. 17. **27.23** See v. 18.

Daily Offerings

28 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 2 Command the Israelites, and say to them: My offering, the food for my offerings by fire, my pleasing odor, you shall take care to offer to me at its appointed time. 3 And you shall say to them, This is the offering by fire that you shall offer to the LORD: two male lambs a year old without blemish, daily, as a regular offering. 4 One lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight;[s] 5 also one-tenth of an ephah of choice flour for a grain offering, mixed with one-fourth of a hin of beaten oil. 6 It is a regular burnt offering, ordained at Mount Sinai for a pleasing odor, an offering by fire to the LORD. 7 Its drink offering shall be one-fourth of a hin for each lamb; in the sanctuary you shall pour out a drink offering of strong drink to the LORD. 8 The other lamb you shall offer at twilight[s] with a grain offering and a drink offering like the one in the morning; you shall offer it as an offering by fire, a pleasing odor to the LORD.

Sabbath Offerings

9 On the sabbath day: two male lambs a year old without blemish, and two-tenths of an ephah of choice flour for a grain offering, mixed with oil, and its drink offering— 10 this is the burnt offering for every sabbath, in addition to the regular burnt offering and its drink offering.

Monthly Offerings

11 At the beginnings of your months you shall offer a burnt offering to the LORD: two young bulls, one ram, seven male lambs a year old without blemish; 12 also three-tenths of an ephah of choice flour for a grain offering, mixed with oil, for each bull; and two-tenths of choice flour for a grain offering, mixed with oil, for the one ram; 13 and one-tenth of choice flour mixed with oil as a grain offering for every lamb—a burnt offering of pleasing odor, an offering by fire to the LORD. 14 Their drink offerings shall be half a hin of wine for a bull, one-third of a hin for a ram, and one-fourth of a hin for a lamb. This is the burnt offering of every month throughout the months of the year. 15 And there shall be one male goat for a sin offering to the LORD; it shall be offered in addition to the regular burnt offering and its drink offering.

Offerings at Passover

16 On the fourteenth day of the first month there shall be a passover offering to the LORD. 17 And on the fifteenth day of this month is a festival; seven days shall unleavened bread be eaten. 18 On the first day there shall be a holy convocation. You shall not work at your occupations. 19 You shall offer an offering by fire, a burnt offering to the LORD: two young bulls, one ram, and seven male lambs a year old; see that they are without blemish. 20 Their grain offering shall be of choice flour mixed with oil: three-tenths of an ephah shall you offer for a bull, and two-tenths for a ram; 21 one-tenth shall you offer for each of the seven lambs; 22 also one male goat for a sin offering, to make atonement for you. 23 You shall offer these in addition to the burnt offering of the morning, which belongs to the regular burnt offering. 24 In the same way you shall offer daily, for seven days, the food of an offering by fire, a pleasing odor to the LORD; it shall be offered in addition to the regular burnt offering and its drink offering. 25 And on the seventh day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall not work at your occupations.

Offerings at the Festival of Weeks

26 On the day of the first fruits, when you offer a grain offering of new grain to the LORD at your festival of weeks, you

[s] Heb *between the two evenings*

28.1–29.40 Offerings are described for a number of occasions. Lev 23 has a similar cultic calendar; cf. also Ex 23.14–17; 34.18–24; Deut 16.1–17; Ezek 45.17–46.15. **28.2** *Offerings by fire* and *my pleasing odor*. See 15.3. **28.3–8** Cf. Ex 29.38–42. **28.11** *Beginnings of your months*. See 10.10; 1 Sam 20.5, 24; 2 Kings 4.23; Isa 1.14; Hos 2.11; Am 8.5. **28.16** On the *passover*, see 9.1–14; Ex 12.1–27. No offerings are described here; the celebration is described elsewhere and assumed here. **28.17–25** The festival of *unleavened bread* (Ex 13.3–10), originally a separate festival, is combined with the Passover. **28.26** Fifty days after the Festival of

shall have a holy convocation; you shall
not work at your occupations. 27 You shall
offer a burnt offering, a pleasing odor to
the LORD: two young bulls, one ram,
seven male lambs a year old. 28 Their
grain offering shall be of choice flour
mixed with oil, three-tenths of an ephah
for each bull, two-tenths for one ram,
29 one-tenth for each of the seven lambs;
30 with one male goat, to make atonement
for you. 31 In addition to the regular
burnt offering with its grain offering, you
shall offer them and their drink offering.
They shall be without blemish.

Offerings at the Festival of Trumpets

29 On the first day of the seventh
month you shall have a holy con-
vocation; you shall not work at your occu-
pations. It is a day for you to blow the
trumpets, 2 and you shall offer a burnt
offering, a pleasing odor to the LORD: one
young bull, one ram, seven male lambs a
year old without blemish. 3 Their grain
offering shall be of choice flour mixed
with oil, three-tenths of one ephah for the
bull, two-tenths for the ram, 4 and one-
tenth for each of the seven lambs; 5 with
one male goat for a sin offering, to make
atonement for you. 6 These are in addi-
tion to the burnt offering of the new
moon and its grain offering, and the reg-
ular burnt offering and its grain offering,
and their drink offerings, according to
the ordinance for them, a pleasing odor,
an offering by fire to the LORD.

Offerings on the Day of Atonement

7 On the tenth day of this seventh
month you shall have a holy convocation,
and deny yourselves;[t] you shall do no
work. 8 You shall offer a burnt offering to
the LORD, a pleasing odor: one young
bull, one ram, seven male lambs a year
old. They shall be without blemish.
9 Their grain offering shall be of choice
flour mixed with oil, three-tenths of an
ephah for the bull, two-tenths for the one
ram, 10 one-tenth for each of the seven
lambs; 11 with one male goat for a sin
offering, in addition to the sin offering of
atonement, and the regular burnt offer-
ing and its grain offering, and their drink
offerings.

Offerings at the Festival of Booths

12 On the fifteenth day of the seventh
month you shall have a holy convocation;
you shall not work at your occupations.
You shall celebrate a festival to the LORD
seven days. 13 You shall offer a burnt
offering, an offering by fire, a pleasing
odor to the LORD: thirteen young bulls,
two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old.
They shall be without blemish. 14 Their
grain offering shall be of choice flour
mixed with oil, three-tenths of an ephah
for each of the thirteen bulls, two-tenths
for each of the two rams, 15 and one-tenth
for each of the fourteen lambs; 16 also one
male goat for a sin offering, in addition to
the regular burnt offering, its grain offer-
ing and its drink offering.

17 On the second day: twelve young
bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs a
year old without blemish, 18 with the grain
offering and the drink offerings for the
bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, as
prescribed in accordance with their num-
ber; 19 also one male goat for a sin offer-
ing, in addition to the regular burnt
offering and its grain offering, and their
drink offerings.

20 On the third day: eleven bulls, two
rams, fourteen male lambs a year old
without blemish, 21 with the grain offering
and the drink offerings for the bulls, for
the rams, and for the lambs, as prescribed
in accordance with their number; 22 also
one male goat for a sin offering, in addi-
tion to the regular burnt offering and its
grain offering and its drink offering.

23 On the fourth day: ten bulls, two

t Or *and fast*

Unleavened Bread, at the beginning of the wheat harvest (June), is the *festival of weeks*, Shavuoth (Lev 23.15–21), or the festival of harvest (Ex 23.16). **29.1** *The first day of the seventh month* is traditionally New Year's Day (Rosh Hashanah; see Ex 23.16; 34.22 for the end of the year); many commentators have argued that Israel once had an "agricultural year" calendar in which the first month came in the autumn, following the harvest thanksgiving festival (see v. 12). *To blow the trumpets.* See 10.1–10. **29.6** See 28.2. **29.7–11** The Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur; see Lev 16.29–34; 23.26–32. **29.12–34** The Festival of Booths, Sukkoth (Lev 23.33–36; Deut 16.13–15), or Festival of Ingathering (Ex 23.16; 34.22), is the harvest thanksgiving festival.

rams, fourteen male lambs a year old
without blemish, 24 with the grain offering
and the drink offerings for the bulls, for
the rams, and for the lambs, as prescribed
in accordance with their number; 25 also
one male goat for a sin offering, in addi-
tion to the regular burnt offering, its
grain offering and its drink offering.
26 On the fifth day: nine bulls, two
rams, fourteen male lambs a year old
without blemish, 27 with the grain offering
and the drink offerings for the bulls, for
the rams, and for the lambs, as prescribed
in accordance with their number; 28 also
one male goat for a sin offering, in addi-
tion to the regular burnt offering and its
grain offering and its drink offering.
29 On the sixth day: eight bulls, two
rams, fourteen male lambs a year old
without blemish, 30 with the grain offering
and the drink offerings for the bulls, for
the rams, and for the lambs, as prescribed
in accordance with their number; 31 also
one male goat for a sin offering, in addi-
tion to the regular burnt offering, its
grain offering, and its drink offerings.
32 On the seventh day: seven bulls,
two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old
without blemish, 33 with the grain offering
and the drink offerings for the bulls, for
the rams, and for the lambs, as prescribed
in accordance with their number; 34 also
one male goat for a sin offering, besides
the regular burnt offering, its grain offer-
ing, and its drink offering.
35 On the eighth day you shall have a
solemn assembly; you shall not work at
your occupations. 36 You shall offer a
burnt offering, an offering by fire, a
pleasing odor to the LORD: one bull, one
ram, seven male lambs a year old without
blemish, 37 and the grain offering and the
drink offerings for the bull, for the ram,
and for the lambs, as prescribed in accor-
dance with their number; 38 also one male
goat for a sin offering, in addition to the
regular burnt offering and its grain offer-
ing and its drink offering.
39 These you shall offer to the LORD
at your appointed festivals, in addition to
your votive offerings and your freewill
offerings, as your burnt offerings, your
grain offerings, your drink offerings, and
your offerings of well-being.
40[u] So Moses told the Israelites every-
thing just as the LORD had commanded
Moses.

Vows Made by Women

30 Then Moses said to the heads of
the tribes of the Israelites: This is
what the LORD has commanded. 2 When a
man makes a vow to the LORD, or swears
an oath to bind himself by a pledge, he
shall not break his word; he shall do ac-
cording to all that proceeds out of his
mouth.
3 When a woman makes a vow to the
LORD, or binds herself by a pledge, while
within her father's house, in her youth,
4 and her father hears of her vow or her
pledge by which she has bound herself,
and says nothing to her; then all her vows
shall stand, and any pledge by which she
has bound herself shall stand. 5 But if her
father expresses disapproval to her at the
time that he hears of it, no vow of hers,
and no pledge by which she has bound
herself, shall stand; and the LORD will for-
give her, because her father had ex-
pressed to her his disapproval.
6 If she marries, while obligated by
her vows or any thoughtless utterance of
her lips by which she has bound herself,
7 and her husband hears of it and says
nothing to her at the time that he hears,
then her vows shall stand, and her
pledges by which she has bound herself
shall stand. 8 But if, at the time that her
husband hears of it, he expresses disap-
proval to her, then he shall nullify the vow

u Ch 30.1 in Heb

29.35–38 Although the Feast of Booths is a grand seven-day festival (see v. 12), these regulations add still an eighth day, with far fewer offerings.

30.1–16 Ch. 30 focuses on vows made by women and the limits that husbands and fathers may place on those vows (note the mention of vows in 29.39). **30.3–5** Vows made while a woman is under her father's authority. **30.4–5** The father must speak up as soon as he hears of his daughter's vow, if he disapproves. *The LORD will forgive her*, i.e., will not punish her or require atonement from her for breaking her vow. **30.6–8** A woman under a vow at the time of her marriage, one that, presumably, her father did not annul. *Thoughtless*, perhaps "impulsive" or "rash" would be a better translation; cf. the same root in Lev 5.4; Ps 106.33.

by which she was obligated, or the
thoughtless utterance of her lips, by which
she bound herself; and the LORD will for-
give her. 9(But every vow of a widow or of
a divorced woman, by which she has
bound herself, shall be binding upon her.)
10And if she made a vow in her husband's
house, or bound herself by a pledge with
an oath, 11and her husband heard it and
said nothing to her, and did not express
disapproval to her, then all her vows shall
stand, and any pledge by which she
bound herself shall stand. 12But if her
husband nullifies them at the time that he
hears them, then whatever proceeds out
of her lips concerning her vows, or con-
cerning her pledge of herself, shall not
stand. Her husband has nullified them,
and the LORD will forgive her. 13Any vow
or any binding oath to deny herself,[v] her
husband may allow to stand, or her hus-
band may nullify. 14But if her husband
says nothing to her from day to day,[w]
then he validates all her vows, or all her
pledges, by which she is obligated; he has
validated them, because he said nothing
to her at the time that he heard of them.
15But if he nullifies them some time after
he has heard of them, then he shall bear
her guilt.

16 These are the statutes that the
LORD commanded Moses concerning a
husband and his wife, and a father and
his daughter while she is still young and in
her father's house.

War Against Midian

31 The LORD spoke to Moses, say-
ing, 2"Avenge the Israelites on
the Midianites; afterward you shall be
gathered to your people." 3So Moses said
to the people, "Arm some of your number
for the war, so that they may go against
Midian, to execute the LORD's vengeance
on Midian. 4You shall send a thousand
from each of the tribes of Israel to the
war." 5So out of the thousands of Israel, a
thousand from each tribe were con-
scripted, twelve thousand armed for bat-
tle. 6Moses sent them to the war, a
thousand from each tribe, along with
Phinehas son of Eleazar the priest,[x] with
the vessels of the sanctuary and the trum-
pets for sounding the alarm in his hand.
7They did battle against Midian, as the
LORD had commanded Moses, and killed
every male. 8They killed the kings of
Midian: Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba,
the five kings of Midian, in addition to
others who were slain by them; and they
also killed Balaam son of Beor with the
sword. 9The Israelites took the women of
Midian and their little ones captive; and
they took all their cattle, their flocks, and
all their goods as booty. 10All their towns
where they had settled, and all their en-
campments, they burned, 11but they took
all the spoil and all the booty, both people
and animals. 12Then they brought the
captives and the booty and the spoil to
Moses, to Eleazar the priest, and to the
congregation of the Israelites, at the camp
on the plains of Moab by the Jordan at
Jericho.

Return from the War

13 Moses, Eleazar the priest, and all
the leaders of the congregation went to
meet them outside the camp. 14Moses be-
came angry with the officers of the army,
the commanders of thousands and the
commanders of hundreds, who had come

v Or *to fast* w Or *from that day to the next*
x Gk: Heb adds *to the war*

30.7–8 See 30.4–5. **30.9** A *widow* or *divorced woman* is presumably not under any man's authority. **30.10–15** Vows made while under a husband's authority. **30.11–12** See 30.4–5. **30.13** A specific instance, in which a woman vows to *deny herself* or to fast (see text note *v*; cf. the same phrase in 29.7). **30.14–15** *He shall bear her guilt.* See 30.4–5. The husband may change his mind at a later date and keep her from carrying out her vow, but the Lord will hold him responsible, not her (see Deut 23.21–23).

31.2 *Avenge the Israelites* because of the incident at Peor (25.6–18). Moses' death is predicted (see also 27.13). **31.3–12** The war against Midian is described in holy-war terms (see, e.g., Deut 20; 21.10–14; 23.9–14; 24.5; Josh 6.1–21). **31.5** Compared to 26.2, 51, *twelve thousand* is a very small number. Cf. Deut 20.5–8; Judg 7.2–8; 1 Sam 14.6–15; 2 Sam 17.1; 1 Kings 10.26. **31.6** *Phinehas* instead of Eleazar. See 16.37–39; 25.7. *Trumpets.* See 10.9. The presence of the priest and items from the sanctuary indicates holy war; see Deut 20.2–4. **31.7** *Killed every male.* See Deut 20.12–13. **31.8** The five kings. See also Josh 13.21. *Zur.* See 25.15. *Balaam.* See 31.16; chs. 22–25. **31.9–12** See Deut 20.14–15; 21.10–14; but cf. Num 31.14–18. **31.14** See

from service in the war. 15 Moses said to
them, "Have you allowed all the women to
live? 16 These women here, on Balaam's
advice, made the Israelites act treacher-
ously against the LORD in the affair of
Peor, so that the plague came among the
congregation of the LORD. 17 Now there-
fore, kill every male among the little ones,
and kill every woman who has known a
man by sleeping with him. 18 But all the
young girls who have not known a man by
sleeping with him, keep alive for your-
selves. 19 Camp outside the camp seven
days; whoever of you has killed any per-
son or touched a corpse, purify yourselves
and your captives on the third and on the
seventh day. 20 You shall purify every gar-
ment, every article of skin, everything
made of goats' hair, and every article of
wood."

21 Eleazar the priest said to the troops
who had gone to battle: "This is the stat-
ute of the law that the LORD has com-
manded Moses: 22 gold, silver, bronze,
iron, tin, and lead— 23 everything that
can withstand fire, shall be passed
through fire, and it shall be clean. Never-
theless it shall also be purified with the
water for purification; and whatever can-
not withstand fire, shall be passed
through the water. 24 You must wash your
clothes on the seventh day, and you shall
be clean; afterward you may come into
the camp."

Disposition of Captives and Booty

25 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying,
26 "You and Eleazar the priest and the
heads of the ancestral houses of the con-
gregation make an inventory of the booty
captured, both human and animal. 27 Di-
vide the booty into two parts, between the
warriors who went out to battle and all the
congregation. 28 From the share of the
warriors who went out to battle, set aside
as tribute for the LORD, one item out of
every five hundred, whether persons,
oxen, donkeys, sheep, or goats. 29 Take it
from their half and give it to Eleazar the
priest as an offering to the LORD. 30 But
from the Israelites' half you shall take one
out of every fifty, whether persons, oxen,
donkeys, sheep, or goats—all the animals
—and give them to the Levites who have
charge of the tabernacle of the LORD."

31 Then Moses and Eleazar the priest
did as the LORD had commanded Moses:

32 The booty remaining from the
spoil that the troops had taken totaled six
hundred seventy-five thousand sheep,
33 seventy-two thousand oxen, 34 sixty-one
thousand donkeys, 35 and thirty-two thou-
sand persons in all, women who had not
known a man by sleeping with him.

36 The half-share, the portion of
those who had gone out to war, was in
number three hundred thirty-seven thou-
sand five hundred sheep and goats, 37 and
the LORD's tribute of sheep and goats was
six hundred seventy-five. 38 The oxen
were thirty-six thousand, of which the
LORD's tribute was seventy-two. 39 The
donkeys were thirty thousand five hun-
dred, of which the LORD's tribute was
sixty-one. 40 The persons were sixteen
thousand, of which the LORD's tribute was
thirty-two persons. 41 Moses gave the trib-
ute, the offering for the LORD, to Eleazar
the priest, as the LORD had commanded
Moses.

42 As for the Israelites' half, which
Moses separated from that of the troops,
43 the congregation's half was three hun-
dred thirty-seven thousand five hundred
sheep and goats, 44 thirty-six thousand
oxen, 45 thirty thousand five hundred
donkeys, 46 and sixteen thousand persons.
47 From the Israelites' half Moses took one
of every fifty, both of persons and of ani-
mals, and gave them to the Levites who
had charge of the tabernacle of the LORD;
as the LORD had commanded Moses.

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also 1 Sam 15.10–19. **31.15** See 31.9. **31.16** Cf. ch. 25. Although Balaam is not mentioned there, ch. 25 is juxtaposed to the Balaam narrative, and Balaam is said to be at Peor in 23.28. See also Josh 13.21–22. Midianite women, plural, seem here to be merged with Moabite women (Num 25.1–5, 16–18). **31.17–18** Even male children are killed, presumably to ensure the extermination of Midian, but cf. Judg 6–8. The women who are to be killed are all those who might have been involved in sexual relations with Israelite men; see 31.16; 25.1. **31.19–24** See 19.1–22. **31.19** *On the third and on the seventh day.* See 19.12, 19. **31.20** See Lev 11.29–32. **31.23** *Water for purification.* See 19.9, 11–22. **31.27–30** Provision for the sanctuary from the living booty (see also 18.8–32), a smaller amount taken from the warriors' share for the priests and a larger amount taken from the rest for the Levites; see also 1 Sam 30.21–25. **31.35** See 31.14–18.

48 Then the officers who were over
the thousands of the army, the commanders of thousands and the commanders of hundreds, approached Moses, 49 and said to Moses, "Your servants have counted the warriors who are under our command, and not one of us is missing. 50 And we have brought the LORD's offering, what each of us found, articles of gold, armlets and bracelets, signet rings, earrings, and pendants, to make atonement for ourselves before the LORD." 51 Moses and Eleazar the priest received the gold from them, all in the form of crafted articles. 52 And all the gold of the offering that they offered to the LORD, from the commanders of thousands and the commanders of hundreds, was sixteen thousand seven hundred fifty shekels. 53 (The troops had all taken plunder for themselves.) 54 So Moses and Eleazar the priest received the gold from the commanders of thousands and of hundreds, and brought it into the tent of meeting as a memorial for the Israelites before the LORD.

Conquest and Division of Transjordan

32 Now the Reubenites and the Gadites owned a very great number of cattle. When they saw that the land of Jazer and the land of Gilead was a good place for cattle, 2 the Gadites and the Reubenites came and spoke to Moses, to Eleazar the priest, and to the leaders of the congregation, saying, 3 "Ataroth, Dibon, Jazer, Nimrah, Heshbon, Elealeh, Sebam, Nebo, and Beon— 4 the land that the LORD subdued before the congregation of Israel—is a land for cattle; and your servants have cattle." 5 They continued, "If we have found favor in your sight, let this land be given to your servants for a possession; do not make us cross the Jordan."

6 But Moses said to the Gadites and to the Reubenites, "Shall your brothers go to war while you sit here? 7 Why will you discourage the hearts of the Israelites from going over into the land that the LORD has given them? 8 Your fathers did this, when I sent them from Kadesh-barnea to see the land. 9 When they went up to the Wadi Eshcol and saw the land, they discouraged the hearts of the Israelites from going into the land that the LORD had given them. 10 The LORD's anger was kindled on that day and he swore, saying, 11 'Surely none of the people who came up out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, because they have not unreservedly followed me— 12 none except Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite and Joshua son of Nun, for they have unreservedly followed the LORD.' 13 And the LORD's anger was kindled against Israel, and he made them wander in the wilderness for forty years, until all the generation that had done evil in the sight of the LORD had disappeared. 14 And now you, a brood of sinners, have risen in place of your fathers, to increase the LORD's fierce anger against Israel! 15 If you turn away from following him, he will again abandon them in the wilderness; and you will destroy all this people."

16 Then they came up to him and said, "We will build sheepfolds here for our flocks, and towns for our little ones, 17 but we will take up arms as a vanguard[y] before the Israelites, until we have brought them to their place. Mean-

y Cn: Heb *hurrying*

31.49 The Israelite officers inform Moses that they lost no one in the battle. **31.50** For a possible explanation for the officers' need for *atonement*, see Ex 30.11–16. On the Midianites' *gold*, see Judg 8.24–26. **31.53** The *troops*, i.e., as opposed to the officers. **31.54** *As a memorial* in the tent of meeting; see also 16.39–40; Ex 30.11–16.

32.1–42 See also Deut 3.12–20; Josh 13.8–32; 22. **32.1–5** The Reubenites and the Gadites have cattle and they point out that Israel has already won good cattle land. **32.1** *Jazer*. See 21.32. *Gilead*, the fertile highland east of the Jordan River; see Gen 31.21, 47–48. **32.2** *Eleazar*. See 19.3; 20.22–29. **32.6** See Judg 5.16–17, 23. **32.8–15** Moses interprets the request of the Reubenites and Gadites as a fear of failure in war, as in the disastrous earlier incident of the spies, chs. 13–14. This passage is one of several that are negative toward the tribes east of the Jordan. See also 16.1; Gen 35.22a; 49.3–4; Josh 22.10–34; Judg 11.29–40; 1 Chr 5.1, 23–26. **32.16–27** The parties reach a compromise: the Reubenites and Gadites will both inherit the land they want and fight in the remaining battles of conquest on the west side of the Jordan. **32.17** *Before the Israelites*, as if these people are not

while our little ones will stay in the fortified towns because of the inhabitants of the land. 18 We will not return to our homes until all the Israelites have obtained their inheritance. 19 We will not inherit with them on the other side of the Jordan and beyond, because our inheritance has come to us on this side of the Jordan to the east."

20 So Moses said to them, "If you do this—if you take up arms to go before the LORD for the war, 21 and all those of you who bear arms cross the Jordan before the LORD, until he has driven out his enemies from before him 22 and the land is subdued before the LORD—then after that you may return and be free of obligation to the LORD and to Israel, and this land shall be your possession before the LORD. 23 But if you do not do this, you have sinned against the LORD; and be sure your sin will find you out. 24 Build towns for your little ones, and folds for your flocks; but do what you have promised."

25 Then the Gadites and the Reubenites said to Moses, "Your servants will do as my lord commands. 26 Our little ones, our wives, our flocks, and all our livestock shall remain there in the towns of Gilead; 27 but your servants will cross over, everyone armed for war, to do battle for the LORD, just as my lord orders."

28 So Moses gave command concerning them to Eleazar the priest, to Joshua son of Nun, and to the heads of the ancestral houses of the Israelite tribes. 29 And Moses said to them, "If the Gadites and the Reubenites, everyone armed for battle before the LORD, will cross over the Jordan with you and the land shall be subdued before you, then you shall give them the land of Gilead for a possession; 30 but if they will not cross over with you armed, they shall have possessions among you in the land of Canaan." 31 The Gadites and the Reubenites answered, "As the LORD has spoken to your servants, so we will do. 32 We will cross over armed before the LORD into the land of Canaan, but the possession of our inheritance shall remain with us on this side of[z] the Jordan."

33 Moses gave to them—to the Gadites and to the Reubenites and to the half-tribe of Manasseh son of Joseph—the kingdom of King Sihon of the Amorites and the kingdom of King Og of Bashan, the land and its towns, with the territories of the surrounding towns. 34 And the Gadites rebuilt Dibon, Ataroth, Aroer, 35 Atroth-shophan, Jazer, Jogbehah, 36 Beth-nimrah, and Beth-haran, fortified cities, and folds for sheep. 37 And the Reubenites rebuilt Heshbon, Elealeh, Kiriathaim, 38 Nebo, and Baal-meon (some names being changed), and Sibmah; and they gave names to the towns that they rebuilt. 39 The descendants of Machir son of Manasseh went to Gilead, captured it, and dispossessed the Amorites who were there; 40 so Moses gave Gilead to Machir son of Manasseh, and he settled there. 41 Jair son of Manasseh went and captured their villages, and renamed them Havvoth-jair.[a] 42 And Nobah went and captured Kenath and its villages, and renamed it Nobah after himself.

The Stages of Israel's Journey from Egypt

33 These are the stages by which the Israelites went out of the land of Egypt in military formation under the leadership of Moses and Aaron. 2 Moses wrote down their starting points, stage by stage, by command of the LORD; and these are their stages according to their starting places. 3 They set out from Rame-

z Heb *beyond* a That is *the villages of Jair*

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part of Israel (see v. 22). **32.22** *Free of obligation to the LORD and to Israel* reads almost as if they will no longer be part of the tribal federation. See also 34.1–2, 10–12; Josh 22.9, 21–29. It is also possible that "free of obligation" simply means that they will have participated fully in the holy war of conquest. **32.28** See 32.2. Moses must *give a command* because he will not be with the Israelites (see 20.12; 27.13–14). *Joshua.* See 27.12–23. **32.30** *They shall have possessions among you in the land of Canaan,* i.e., they will not be given the choice land they desire. **32.33** Note the addition of half of *Manasseh. Sihon.* See 21.21–32. *Og.* See 21.33–35. **32.34–38** Cf. Josh 13.15–28. As described here in Numbers, the boundary between Reuben and Gad is not clear-cut. **32.39–42** Not only Reuben and Gad but also half the tribe of *Manasseh* lived east of the Jordan (see v. 33; Josh 13.29–32, and cf. Josh 17.1–13. On Manasseh's descendants, see Num 26.29–34; 1 Chr 7.14–19; Gen 50.23. These verses are similar to the descriptions of tribal conquests in Judg 1. **32.39** *Gilead.* Cf. 32.1–4. **32.41** *Havvoth-jair.* See Deut 3.14; Judg 10.3–4; 1 Chr 2.21–23. **32.42** On *Nobah* and *Kenath,* see Judg 8.11; 1 Chr 2.23.

ses in the first month, on the fifteenth day
of the first month; on the day after the
passover the Israelites went out boldly in
the sight of all the Egyptians, 4while the
Egyptians were burying all their firstborn,
whom the LORD had struck down among
them. The LORD executed judgments
even against their gods.

5 So the Israelites set out from Rame-
ses, and camped at Succoth. 6They set out
from Succoth, and camped at Etham,
which is on the edge of the wilderness.
7They set out from Etham, and turned
back to Pi-hahiroth, which faces Baal-
zephon; and they camped before Migdol.
8They set out from Pi-hahiroth, passed
through the sea into the wilderness, went
a three days' journey in the wilderness of
Etham, and camped at Marah. 9They set
out from Marah and came to Elim; at
Elim there were twelve springs of water
and seventy palm trees, and they camped
there. 10They set out from Elim and
camped by the Red Sea.[b] 11They set out
from the Red Sea[b] and camped in the
wilderness of Sin. 12They set out from the
wilderness of Sin and camped at Doph-
kah. 13They set out from Dophkah and
camped at Alush. 14They set out from
Alush and camped at Rephidim, where
there was no water for the people to
drink. 15They set out from Rephidim and
camped in the wilderness of Sinai. 16They
set out from the wilderness of Sinai and
camped at Kibroth-hattaavah. 17They set
out from Kibroth-hattaavah and camped
at Hazeroth. 18They set out from Haze-
roth and camped at Rithmah. 19They set
out from Rithmah and camped at
Rimmon-perez. 20They set out from
Rimmon-perez and camped at Libnah.
21They set out from Libnah and camped
at Rissah. 22They set out from Rissah and
camped at Kehelathah. 23They set out
from Kehelathah and camped at Mount
Shepher. 24They set out from Mount
Shepher and camped at Haradah. 25They
set out from Haradah and camped at
Makheloth. 26They set out from Makhe-
loth and camped at Tahath. 27They set
out from Tahath and camped at Terah.
28They set out from Terah and camped
at Mithkah. 29They set out from Mithkah
and camped at Hashmonah. 30They set
out from Hashmonah and camped at Mo-
seroth. 31They set out from Moseroth
and camped at Bene-jaakan. 32They set
out from Bene-jaakan and camped at
Hor-haggidgad. 33They set out from
Hor-haggidgad and camped at Jotbathah.
34They set out from Jotbathah and
camped at Abronah. 35They set out from
Abronah and camped at Ezion-geber.
36They set out from Ezion-geber and
camped in the wilderness of Zin (that is,
Kadesh). 37They set out from Kadesh and
camped at Mount Hor, on the edge of the
land of Edom.

38 Aaron the priest went up Mount
Hor at the command of the LORD and
died there in the fortieth year after the
Israelites had come out of the land of
Egypt, on the first day of the fifth month.
39Aaron was one hundred twenty-three
years old when he died on Mount Hor.

40 The Canaanite, the king of Arad,
who lived in the Negeb in the land of Ca-
naan, heard of the coming of the Is-
raelites.

41 They set out from Mount Hor and
camped at Zalmonah. 42They set out
from Zalmonah and camped at Punon.
43They set out from Punon and camped
at Oboth. 44They set out from Oboth and
camped at Iye-abarim, in the territory of
Moab. 45They set out from Iyim and
camped at Dibon-gad. 46They set out
from Dibon-gad and camped at Almon-
diblathaim. 47They set out from Almon-
diblathaim and camped in the mountains
of Abarim, before Nebo. 48They set out
from the mountains of Abarim and
camped in the plains of Moab by the Jor-
dan at Jericho; 49they camped by the Jor-
dan from Beth-jeshimoth as far as
Abel-shittim in the plains of Moab.

Directions for the Conquest of Canaan

50 In the plains of Moab by the Jor-
dan at Jericho, the LORD spoke to Moses,
saying: 51Speak to the Israelites, and say
to them: When you cross over the Jordan

b Or *Sea of Reeds*

33.3–5 See Ex 12.37. **33.6–15** From Succoth to the wilderness of Sinai. See Ex 13.17–19.1. **33.16–49** From the wilderness of Sinai to the plains of Moab. See 10.11–22.1. **33.38–39** See 20.22–29.

33.50–56 See also, e.g., Ex 23.23–33; 34.11–16; Deut 7.1–6; 12.2–4; cf. Josh 23.4–8; Judg 1.1–2.5; 2.11–3.6.

into the land of Canaan, 52you shall drive
out all the inhabitants of the land from
before you, destroy all their figured
stones, destroy all their cast images, and
demolish all their high places. 53You shall
take possession of the land and settle in it,
for I have given you the land to possess.
54You shall apportion the land by lot ac-
cording to your clans; to a large one you
shall give a large inheritance, and to a
small one you shall give a small inheri-
tance; the inheritance shall belong to the
person on whom the lot falls; according to
your ancestral tribes you shall inherit.
55But if you do not drive out the inhabi-
tants of the land from before you, then
those whom you let remain shall be as
barbs in your eyes and thorns in your
sides; they shall trouble you in the land
where you are settling. 56And I will do to
you as I thought to do to them.

The Boundaries of the Land

34 The LORD spoke to Moses, say-
ing: 2Command the Israelites,
and say to them: When you enter the land
of Canaan (this is the land that shall fall to
you for an inheritance, the land of Ca-
naan, defined by its boundaries), 3your
south sector shall extend from the wilder-
ness of Zin along the side of Edom. Your
southern boundary shall begin from the
end of the Dead Sea[c] on the east; 4your
boundary shall turn south of the ascent of
Akrabbim, and cross to Zin, and its outer
limit shall be south of Kadesh-barnea;
then it shall go on to Hazar-addar, and
cross to Azmon; 5the boundary shall turn
from Azmon to the Wadi of Egypt, and its
termination shall be at the Sea.
6 For the western boundary, you shall
have the Great Sea and its[d] coast; this
shall be your western boundary.
7 This shall be your northern bound-
ary: from the Great Sea you shall mark
out your line to Mount Hor; 8from
Mount Hor you shall mark it out to Lebo-
hamath, and the outer limit of the bound-
ary shall be at Zedad; 9then the boundary
shall extend to Ziphron, and its end shall
be at Hazar-enan; this shall be your
northern boundary.
10 You shall mark out your eastern
boundary from Hazar-enan to Shepham;
11and the boundary shall continue down
from Shepham to Riblah on the east side
of Ain; and the boundary shall go down,
and reach the eastern slope of the sea of
Chinnereth; 12and the boundary shall go
down to the Jordan, and its end shall be at
the Dead Sea.[c] This shall be your land
with its boundaries all around.
13 Moses commanded the Israelites,
saying: This is the land that you shall in-
herit by lot, which the LORD has com-
manded to give to the nine tribes and to
the half-tribe; 14for the tribe of the Reu-
benites by their ancestral houses and the
tribe of the Gadites by their ancestral
houses have taken their inheritance, and
also the half-tribe of Manasseh; 15the two
tribes and the half-tribe have taken their
inheritance beyond the Jordan at Jericho
eastward, toward the sunrise.

Tribal Leaders

16 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:
17These are the names of the men who
shall apportion the land to you for inheri-

c Heb *Salt Sea* d Syr: Heb lacks *its*

34.1–15 The boundaries of the promised land given here are ideal and do not correspond to Israel's actual boundaries at any time, especially in the case of the western border. They do, however, correspond to the territory "Canaan" as ruled by Egypt in the second half of the second millennium B.C.E. Cf. Josh 13–19; Ezek 47.13–20; 48.1–7, 23–29. **34.1–2** The "promised land" here is the land west of the Jordan only; see vv. 10–12; 32.22. **34.3** *Wilderness of Zin.* See 13.21, 26; 20.1. **34.4** *Ascent of Akrabbim,* "ascent of scorpions." Site unknown. *Kadesh-barnea.* See 13.26. *Hazar-addar.* Cf. Hezron and Addar in Josh 15.3. **34.4–5** *Azmon.* Site unknown. The *Wadi of Egypt* is modern Wadi el-Arish, south of Gaza, between the Negeb and the Sinai. **34.6–7** The *Great Sea* is the Mediterranean. **34.7–8** *Mount Hor* here cannot be the southern mountain where Aaron died (20.22–29). *Lebo-hamath.* See 13.21. *Zedad,* probably a site northeast of Damascus and east of Byblos. **34.9** *Ziphron* and *Hazar-enan.* Sites unknown. **34.10–11** *Shepham, Riblah,* and *Ain.* Sites unknown. The *sea of Chinnereth* is the Sea of Galilee. **34.11–12** These verses exclude the Transjordanian holdings (see also vv. 13–15; 32.17, 22; 35.14). **34.13–15** See 32.33–42. **34.16–29** Other than Caleb and Joshua, these leaders have not been mentioned before. The tribes are listed south to north, except for Manasseh, which is listed before the more southern Ephraim because Manasseh was the firstborn

tance: the priest Eleazar and Joshua son
of Nun. 18 You shall take one leader of
every tribe to apportion the land for in-
heritance. 19 These are the names of the
men: Of the tribe of Judah, Caleb son of
Jephunneh. 20 Of the tribe of the Simeon-
ites, Shemuel son of Ammihud. 21 Of the
tribe of Benjamin, Elidad son of Chislon.
22 Of the tribe of the Danites a leader,
Bukki son of Jogli. 23 Of the Josephites: of
the tribe of the Manassites a leader, Han-
niel son of Ephod, 24 and of the tribe of
the Ephraimites a leader, Kemuel son of
Shiphtan. 25 Of the tribe of the Zebulun-
ites a leader, Eli-zaphan son of Parnach.
26 Of the tribe of the Issacharites a leader,
Paltiel son of Azzan. 27 And of the tribe of
the Asherites a leader, Ahihud son of
Shelomi. 28 Of the tribe of the Naphtalites
a leader, Pedahel son of Ammihud.
29 These were the ones whom the LORD
commanded to apportion the inheritance
for the Israelites in the land of Canaan.

Cities for the Levites

35 In the plains of Moab by the Jor-
dan at Jericho, the LORD spoke to
Moses, saying: 2 Command the Israelites
to give, from the inheritance that they
possess, towns for the Levites to live in;
you shall also give to the Levites pasture
lands surrounding the towns. 3 The towns
shall be theirs to live in, and their pasture
lands shall be for their cattle, for their
livestock, and for all their animals. 4 The
pasture lands of the towns, which you
shall give to the Levites, shall reach from
the wall of the town outward a thou-
sand cubits all around. 5 You shall mea-
sure, outside the town, for the east side
two thousand cubits, for the south side
two thousand cubits, for the west side two
thousand cubits, and for the north side
two thousand cubits, with the town in the
middle; this shall belong to them as pas-
ture land for their towns.
6 The towns that you give to the Le-
vites shall include the six cities of refuge,
where you shall permit a slayer to flee,
and in addition to them you shall give
forty-two towns. 7 The towns that you give
to the Levites shall total forty-eight, with
their pasture lands. 8 And as for the towns
that you shall give from the possession of
the Israelites, from the larger tribes you
shall take many, and from the smaller
tribes you shall take few; each, in propor-
tion to the inheritance that it obtains, shall
give of its towns to the Levites.

Cities of Refuge

9 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:
10 Speak to the Israelites, and say to them:
When you cross the Jordan into the land
of Canaan, 11 then you shall select cities to
be cities of refuge for you, so that a slayer
who kills a person without intent may flee
there. 12 The cities shall be for you a ref-
uge from the avenger, so that the slayer
may not die until there is a trial before the
congregation.
13 The cities that you designate shall
be six cities of refuge for you: 14 you shall
designate three cities beyond the Jordan,
and three cities in the land of Canaan, to
be cities of refuge. 15 These six cities shall
serve as refuge for the Israelites, for the
resident or transient alien among them, so
that anyone who kills a person without in-
tent may flee there.

Concerning Murder and Blood Revenge

16 But anyone who strikes another
with an iron object, and death ensues, is a
murderer; the murderer shall be put to
death. 17 Or anyone who strikes another
with a stone in hand that could cause
death, and death ensues, is a murderer;

(Gen 41.50–52). **34.17** *Eleazar* has replaced Aaron (20.22–29), and *Joshua* will replace Moses when the people cross over into Canaan (27.12–23).

35.1–8 See also Josh 21; 1 Chr 6.54–81. The Levites were not allotted land as the other tribes were (see 18.20–24). **35.4–5** *A thousand cubits* and *two thousand cubits*, about 500 yards and 1000 yards. **35.6** *Cities of refuge*. See 35.9–15. **35.8** See 26.52–56. **35.9–15** Cities of refuge were necessary to protect a killer from blood vengeance before a trial could be held; see Ex 21.12–14; Deut 4.41–43; 19.1–13; Josh 20. **35.12** On the *avenger*, see the order of those who "redeem" (the same Hebrew verb) in Lev 25.25, 47–49 ("uncle" here is father's brother); see also Num 5.8. **35.14** The area *beyond the Jordan* is Transjordan, the term "beyond" betraying the point of view of a narrator from the west. **35.16–34** The distinction is made between murder (including negligence resulting in death) and unintentional killing; see also Ex 21.13–14, but cf.

the murderer shall be put to death. 18 Or
anyone who strikes another with a
weapon of wood in hand that could cause
death, and death ensues, is a murderer;
the murderer shall be put to death. 19 The
avenger of blood is the one who shall put
the murderer to death; when they meet,
the avenger of blood shall execute the
sentence. 20 Likewise, if someone pushes
another from hatred, or hurls something
at another, lying in wait, and death en-
sues, 21 or in enmity strikes another with
the hand, and death ensues, then the one
who struck the blow shall be put to death;
that person is a murderer; the avenger of
blood shall put the murderer to death,
when they meet.

22 But if someone pushes another
suddenly without enmity, or hurls any ob-
ject without lying in wait, 23 or, while han-
dling any stone that could cause death,
unintentionally[e] drops it on another and
death ensues, though they were not ene-
mies, and no harm was intended, 24 then
the congregation shall judge between the
slayer and the avenger of blood, in accor-
dance with these ordinances; 25 and the
congregation shall rescue the slayer from
the avenger of blood. Then the congrega-
tion shall send the slayer back to the origi-
nal city of refuge. The slayer shall live in
it until the death of the high priest who
was anointed with the holy oil. 26 But if
the slayer shall at any time go outside the
bounds of the original city of refuge,
27 and is found by the avenger of blood
outside the bounds of the city of refuge,
and is killed by the avenger, no bloodguilt
shall be incurred. 28 For the slayer must
remain in the city of refuge until the
death of the high priest; but after the
death of the high priest the slayer may
return home.

29 These things shall be a statute and
ordinance for you throughout your gen-
erations wherever you live.

30 If anyone kills another, the mur-
derer shall be put to death on the evi-
dence of witnesses; but no one shall be
put to death on the testimony of a single
witness. 31 Moreover you shall accept no
ransom for the life of a murderer who is
subject to the death penalty; a murderer
must be put to death. 32 Nor shall you ac-
cept ransom for one who has fled to a city
of refuge, enabling the fugitive to return
to live in the land before the death of the
high priest. 33 You shall not pollute the
land in which you live; for blood pollutes
the land, and no expiation can be made
for the land, for the blood that is shed in
it, except by the blood of the one who
shed it. 34 You shall not defile the land in
which you live, in which I also dwell; for I
the LORD dwell among the Israelites.

Marriage of Female Heirs

36 The heads of the ancestral houses
of the clans of the descendants of
Gilead son of Machir son of Manasseh, of
the Josephite clans, came forward and
spoke in the presence of Moses and the
leaders, the heads of the ancestral houses
of the Israelites; 2 they said, "The LORD
commanded my lord to give the land for
inheritance by lot to the Israelites; and my
lord was commanded by the LORD to give
the inheritance of our brother Zelophe-
had to his daughters. 3 But if they are
married into another Israelite tribe, then
their inheritance will be taken from the
inheritance of our ancestors and added to
the inheritance of the tribe into which
they marry; so it will be taken away from
the allotted portion of our inheritance.

e Heb *without seeing*

Ex 21.20–21; Deut 4.42; 19.4–6. **35.19, 21** The execution of the murderer is by the *avenger*; see v. 12. **35.20–23** The concern with whether there was *hatred* or *enmity* between the killer and victim helps to establish intention; see also Deut 4.42; 19.4; Josh 20.3–5. **35.25–28** The blood of the victim *pollutes the land* (v. 33) and that pollution, in the case of unintentional killing, is only masked by the exile of the killer to a city of refuge until the high priest's death atones for the victim's blood; see also Josh 20.6. If the killer steps outside the city of refuge, the pollution is released again and the avenger is justified in destroying the cause of pollution; cf. 2 Sam 19.18–23; 1 Kings 2.36–46. **35.33** *Pollutes the land.* See 35.25–28; Gen 4.10–11. **35.34** The land is holy because the Lord dwells there. See 5.1–4.

36.1–12 See 27.1–11. **36.1** See 27.1. **36.2** *Brother.* See 25.6; 27.4. **36.3** The complaint in this verse assumes that a wife's property became her husband's upon marriage. In such a case, the solution in 27.7–8 that daughters could inherit might mean that ancestral land would be moved from one tribe to another, a possibility not considered in framing that earlier solution

4 And when the jubilee of the Israelites
comes, then their inheritance will be
added to the inheritance of the tribe into
which they have married; and their inher-
itance will be taken from the inheritance
of our ancestral tribe."
5 Then Moses commanded the Israel-
ites according to the word of the LORD,
saying, "The descendants of the tribe of
Joseph are right in what they are saying.
6 This is what the LORD commands con-
cerning the daughters of Zelophehad,
'Let them marry whom they think best;
only it must be into a clan of their father's
tribe that they are married, 7 so that no
inheritance of the Israelites shall be trans-
ferred from one tribe to another; for all
Israelites shall retain the inheritance of
their ancestral tribes. 8 Every daughter
who possesses an inheritance in any tribe
of the Israelites shall marry one from the
clan of her father's tribe, so that all Israel-
ites may continue to possess their ances-
tral inheritance. 9 No inheritance shall be
transferred from one tribe to another; for
each of the tribes of the Israelites shall re-
tain its own inheritance.' "
10 The daughters of Zelophehad did
as the LORD had commanded Moses.
11 Mahlah, Tirzah, Hoglah, Milcah, and
Noah, the daughters of Zelophehad, mar-
ried sons of their father's brothers.
12 They were married into the clans of the
descendants of Manasseh son of Joseph,
and their inheritance remained in the
tribe of their father's clan.
13 These are the commandments and
the ordinances that the LORD commanded
through Moses to the Israelites in the
plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho.

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and one that was to be avoided (see 27.1–11). **36.4** On *the jubilee of the Israelites*, see Lev 25.8–55; 27.16–25. Since the land was not sold, even the jubilee regulations would not bring it back to its original owners; cf. Lev 25.13–17, 28, 31, 33. **36.6–9** A regulation that women who inherit must marry within a specific family group (or else forfeit their property) is common among societies with patrilineal inheritance laws, including other ancient Near Eastern societies. **36.13** See 22.1; 26.3, 63; 33.48–50; 35.1; Deut 34.1, 8.

DEUTERONOMY

Name and Canonical Significance

DEUTERONOMY IS THE NAME FOR THE FIFTH BOOK of the Hebrew Bible and the last of those traditionally ascribed to Moses comprising the Torah or Pentateuch. The name reflects the Greek word *deuteronomion* (meaning "second law" or "repeated law"), which is a somewhat erroneous and misleading translation of a Hebrew phrase in Deut 17.18, *mishneh hattorah hazzot*, meaning "copy of this law." In Jewish tradition, the book is generally known by its opening words, *'elleh haddevarim* ("these are the words"), frequently shortened to *devarim* ("words").

Deuteronomy is the only book of the Pentateuch to identify itself explicitly and repeatedly as a record of Mosaic torah (see 1.5; 4.8, 44; 17.18–19; 27.3, 8, 26; 28.58, 61; 29.21; 30.10; 31.9, 11, 12, 24, 26; 32.46). *Torah* here has the sense of comprehensive and divinely sanctioned instruction. In the context of the book, it may be characterized as the authoritative, inspired "polity" (or, "political constitution") that Moses, unable himself to lead Israel across the Jordan, enacts for the people as a normative guide to their corporate existence in the land they are about to occupy. In short, this authoritative instruction is a virtual surrogate for Moses himself in his capacity as the preeminent mediator of the divine word to Israel (see 5.4–5, 23–31). From the perspective of the Jewish canon, Deuteronomy is not merely a parenetic appendix to the pentateuchal narrative of Israel's prehistory and religious formation under the leadership of Moses. Rather, as Mosaic instruction par excellence Deuteronomy is the interpretative key to the Pentateuch understood as a whole to mediate the abiding revelation of God's will for the ongoing life of the covenant people.

In similar fashion Deuteronomy also provides the crucial point of reference for an understanding of the canonical unity of the following collection of "the Prophets" in Jewish scripture. Significantly, affirmations of the Mosaic torah in its characteristically Deuteronomic form bracket the collection as a whole (see Josh 1.7–8; Mal 3.22). Deuteronomic influence and perspectives are especially evident in the "Former Prophets," consisting of the books of Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings (see, e.g., Josh 1.1–9; 23; Judg 2.11–23;

1 Sam 7.3–14; 12.1–25; 2 Sam 7.1–29; 1 Kings 9.1–9; 11.1–13, 29–39; 14.1–16; 2 Kings 17.7–23; 21.1–23.27). For this reason these books are also known as the "Deuteronomistic History" in contemporary biblical scholarship. Many believe that the book of Deuteronomy at one stage during its literary history was part of the Deuteronomistic History, before it was detached and incorporated into the Pentateuch. In its dual character of both remembering Israel's past and anticipating its future, the book occupies a pivotal position, both literarily and theologically, in the canon of the Hebrew Bible.

Literary Character, Structure, and Content

Deuteronomy is cast in the form of a series of testamentary speeches and acts of Moses. Four editorial superscriptions (1.1–5; 4.44–49; 29.1; 33.1) introduce the coordinated segments of the work, and describe the particular character and content of each major part. The first part (1.1–4.43) consists chiefly of Mosaic memoirs on Israel's journey from Horeb/Sinai to Transjordan (1.6–3.29), followed by a hortatory discourse on Israel's destiny as God's people (4.1–40) and a brief narrative appendix concerning designated cities of refuge (4.41–43). The second and central part of the book (4.44–28.68) is the most significant section around which the entire book is constructed. It contains the authoritative law (*torah*) mediated through Moses to Israel. *Torah* here may be defined as covenantal law or the divinely authorized social order that Israel must implement in order to secure its collective political existence as the people of God. Three further subdivisions making up this central section are sermonic reflections and admonitions elaborating the basic terms of the Horeb covenant (5.1–11.30); promulgation of the statutory rulings (11.31–26.15); and covenantal ratification, rites, and sanctions (26.16–28.68). The third part of the book (29.1–32.52) alludes to another covenant Moses was to make with Israel in Moab. It also relates the commissioning of Joshua, the written consignment of the law, and the recitation of a song. The fourth and final part of the book (33.1–34.12) contains a testamentary blessing of the tribes of Israel and a prose narrative about Moses' death and burial, along with a concluding epitaph.

Composition

While Deuteronomy exhibits a remarkable coherence in comparison with the preceding books of the Pentateuch, it cannot be considered a unitary literary product. The internal evidence of the book points to a lengthy and complex growth process over several centuries. Among the sources utilized are the Decalogue (which appears in a form different from that of Ex 20), legislation in the Book of the Covenant (Ex 20–23) together with the supplement in Ex 33–34, narrative traditions of earlier pentateuchal books, and the poems in chs. 32–33. While some of the antecedent traditions of Deuteronomy may well be older, the major stages in the compositional history of the book can with some confidence be dated to the two centuries between the fall of Samaria (721 B.C.E.) and the

beginning of the Judean restoration (ca. 535 B.C.E.) after the exile to Babylonia. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, critical scholarship has built a convincing case for relating at least a central portion of the book to the document recovered from the Jerusalem temple archives during the reign of King Josiah (621 B.C.E.). Many of the characteristic provisions of the book find a close correspondence in the reforms instituted by that king. Yet in its received form the editing of the traditions points to an exilic setting—when the older Mosaic constitution may have been set within an expanded frame of Moses' valedictory addresses to Israel. Authors must be sought among those who bore particular responsibility for the transmission, interpretation, and implementation of the Mosaic legacy of covenantal law. While arguments have been set forth on behalf of royal scribes, prophets, or elders, most likely are those identified in the book itself as "levitical priests," whose functions included judicial decision making as well as officiating in worship. Maintenance of the covenant relationship between Israel and its divine sovereign through the rule of faith and law within the community is the principal concern of Deuteronomy. *S. Dean McBride, Jr.*

Editorial Preface

1 These are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel beyond the Jordan —in the wilderness, on the plain opposite Suph, between Paran and Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Di-zahab. 2 (By the way of Mount Seir it takes eleven days to reach Kadesh-barnea from Horeb.) 3 In the fortieth year, on the first day of the eleventh month, Moses spoke to the Israelites just as the LORD had commanded him to speak to them. 4 This was after he had defeated King Sihon of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon, and King Og of Bashan, who reigned in Ashtaroth and[a] in Edrei. 5 Beyond the Jordan in the land of Moab, Moses undertook to expound this law as follows:

Israel's Marching Orders

6 The LORD our God spoke to us at Horeb, saying, "You have stayed long enough at this mountain. 7 Resume your journey, and go into the hill country of the Amorites as well as into the neighbor-

a Gk Syr Vg Compare Josh 12.4: Heb lacks *and*

1.1–5 The preface understands Moses' address in 1.6–4.40 to be an expository introduction to the Deuteronomic *law* (v. 5); see 4.44. **1.1** *These are the words* constitutes the book's title in Jewish tradition (see Introduction). *The plain opposite Suph* and following toponymns may define a natural amphitheater in the valley near Bethpeor; see 3.29. **1.2** Perhaps a comment on 1.19. *Mount Seir*, the Edomite highlands flanking the rift valley from the Dead Sea southward. Once thought to be the mountain refuge of Petra, *Kadesh-barnea* is now usually identified with the oases of 'Ain al-Qudeirat in northern Sinai. In Deuteronomy and some other sources (cf. Ex 3.1) *Horeb* is preferred over "Sinai" as the name for the wilderness mount of revelation. **1.3** The date, counting from the first Passover (Ex 12.2), when Moses completed his word as God's spokesman. **1.4** As prelude to the campaign west of the Jordan, these victories vindicate Israel's trust in divine providence; see 2.26–3.22; 4.46–48; cf. Ps 135.10–12.

1.6–3.29 A review of what happened to Israel and why during the post-Horeb epoch of Moses' career. The chief lesson is that Israel's national well-being requires strict observance of all that God commands. **1.6–8** The order to depart from Horeb was an oracular summons to invade and occupy the promised homeland west of the Jordan. **1.7** *The hill country of the Amorites* (also 1.19–20) and *the land of the Canaanites* (cf. Ex 13.11; Ezek 16.3) are comprehensive terms for western Palestine, using general designations for the land's pre-Israelite occupants. Component re-

ing regions—the Arabah, the hill country,
the Shephelah, the Negeb, and the
seacoast—the land of the Canaanites and
the Lebanon, as far as the great river, the
river Euphrates. 8 See, I have set the land
before you; go in and take possession of
the land that I[b] swore to your ancestors,
to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give
to them and to their descendants after
them."

9 At that time I said to you, "I am unable by myself to bear you. 10 The LORD your God has multiplied you, so that today you are as numerous as the stars of heaven. 11 May the LORD, the God of your ancestors, increase you a thousand times more and bless you, as he has promised you! 12 But how can I bear the heavy burden of your disputes all by myself? 13 Choose for each of your tribes individuals who are wise, discerning, and reputable to be your leaders." 14 You answered me, "The plan you have proposed is a good one." 15 So I took the leaders of your tribes, wise and reputable individuals, and installed them as leaders over you, commanders of thousands, commanders of hundreds, commanders of fifties, commanders of tens, and officials, throughout your tribes. 16 I charged your judges at that time: "Give the members of your community a fair hearing, and judge rightly between one person and another, whether citizen or resident alien. 17 You must not be partial in judging: hear out the small and the great alike; you shall not be intimidated by anyone, for the judgment is God's. Any case that is too hard for you, bring to me, and I will hear it." 18 So I charged you at that time with all the things that you should do.

Rebellion and Defeat

19 Then, just as the LORD our God had ordered us, we set out from Horeb and went through all that great and terrible wilderness that you saw, on the way to the hill country of the Amorites, until we reached Kadesh-barnea. 20 I said to you, "You have reached the hill country of the Amorites, which the LORD our God is giving us. 21 See, the LORD your God has given the land to you; go up, take possession, as the LORD, the God of your ancestors, has promised you; do not fear or be dismayed."

22 All of you came to me and said, "Let us send men ahead of us to explore the land for us and bring back a report to us regarding the route by which we should go up and the cities we will come to." 23 The plan seemed good to me, and I selected twelve of you, one from each tribe. 24 They set out and went up into the hill country, and when they reached the Valley of Eshcol they spied it out 25 and gathered some of the land's produce, which they brought down to us. They brought back a report to us, and said, "It

b Sam Gk: MT *the* LORD

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gions are the *Arabah* (the Jordan rift valley), the central highland ridge, the western hills of the *Shephelah*, the *Negeb* slope of southern Judah, and the Mediterranean coastal plain. Territory to the northeast, called *the Lebanon* range, which extends into Syria toward the upper reach of the *Euphrates*, was controlled by Aramaean states during most of the earlier Iron Age; Israel claimed hegemony over the region in the era of Davidic-Solomonic empire (2 Sam 8.3–12; 1 Kings 4.21, 24) and briefly again in the heyday of Jeroboam II's reign (2 Kings 14.25). **1.8** See Gen 15.12–21; 17.8; 26.4–5; 28.13–14. **1.9–18** Before setting out, a plan of military command and tribal judiciary was implemented to lighten Moses' burden of governance (cf. Ex 18.13–26; Num 11.10–30). **1.10–11** See Gen 15.5; 22.17; 26.4; Ex 32.13. **1.16–17** Because the judges act on God's behalf, all who participate in the life of the community, including alien sojourners, must be given equal access to justice (cf. 10.17–19; 16.18–20). On Moses' role as arbiter in cases *too hard* for tribal courts to resolve, see 17.8–11. **1.18** Perhaps an allusion to Ex 24.3–8.

1.19–45 This review (see Num 13–14) highlights how Israel's countermanding of divine orders (vv. 26, 43) reversed the expected outcome of the initial march of conquest. **1.21** A war oracle reiterating the earlier command (vv. 7–8) and urging bold compliance as the requisite response (cf. 20.2–4; Ex 14.13–14). **1.22–33** The communal decision to reconnoiter the route of attack is not faulted here, nor is the spies' report (cf. Num 13.32). The fertile *Valley of Eshcol* (v. 24) lies in the Judean hill country near Hebron, a region whose aborigines were the formidable *Anakim* (v. 28; cf. 2.10–11, 21; 9.2; Num 13.22–33; Josh 14.15). Dread of this foe fueled a grass-roots revolt that imputed malice to the Lord, whose salvific presence had been amply shown to the generation that experienced the exodus from Egypt and swift passage through the wilderness

is a good land that the LORD our God is
giving us."
26 But you were unwilling to go up.
You rebelled against the command of the
LORD your God; 27 you grumbled in your
tents and said, "It is because the LORD
hates us that he has brought us out of the
land of Egypt, to hand us over to the Am-
orites to destroy us. 28 Where are we
headed? Our kindred have made our
hearts melt by reporting, 'The people are
stronger and taller than we; the cities are
large and fortified up to heaven! We actu-
ally saw there the offspring of the Ana-
kim!' " 29 I said to you, "Have no dread or
fear of them. 30 The LORD your God, who
goes before you, is the one who will fight
for you, just as he did for you in Egypt
before your very eyes, 31 and in the wil-
derness, where you saw how the LORD
your God carried you, just as one carries a
child, all the way that you traveled until
you reached this place. 32 But in spite of
this, you have no trust in the LORD your
God, 33 who goes before you on the way to
seek out a place for you to camp, in fire by
night, and in the cloud by day, to show
you the route you should take."
34 When the LORD heard your words,
he was wrathful and swore: 35 "Not one of
these—not one of this evil generation—
shall see the good land that I swore to give
to your ancestors, 36 except Caleb son of
Jephunneh. He shall see it, and to him
and to his descendants I will give the land
on which he set foot, because of his com-
plete fidelity to the LORD." 37 Even with
me the LORD was angry on your account,
saying, "You also shall not enter there.
38 Joshua son of Nun, your assistant, shall
enter there; encourage him, for he is the
one who will secure Israel's possession of
it. 39 And as for your little ones, who you
thought would become booty, your chil-
dren, who today do not yet know right
from wrong, they shall enter there; to
them I will give it, and they shall take pos-
session of it. 40 But as for you, journey
back into the wilderness, in the direction
of the Red Sea."[c]
41 You answered me, "We have
sinned against the LORD! We are ready to
go up and fight, just as the LORD our God
commanded us." So all of you strapped
on your battle gear, and thought it easy to
go up into the hill country. 42 The LORD
said to me, "Say to them, 'Do not go up
and do not fight, for I am not in the midst
of you; otherwise you will be defeated by
your enemies.' " 43 Although I told you,
you would not listen. You rebelled against
the command of the LORD and presump-
tuously went up into the hill country.
44 The Amorites who lived in that hill
country then came out against you and
chased you as bees do. They beat you
down in Seir as far as Hormah. 45 When
you returned and wept before the LORD,
the LORD would neither heed your voice
nor pay you any attention.

Starting Over

2 46 After you had stayed at Kadesh as
many days as you did, 1 we jour-
neyed back into the wilderness, in
the direction of the Red Sea,[c] as the
LORD had told me and skirted Mount Seir
for many days. 2 Then the LORD said to
me: 3 "You have been skirting this hill
country long enough. Head north, 4 and
charge the people as follows: You are
about to pass through the territory of
your kindred, the descendants of Esau,
who live in Seir. They will be afraid of
you, so, be very careful 5 not to engage in
battle with them, for I will not give you

c Or *Sea of Reeds*

(vv. 19, 30–33; cf. Ex 13.21–22). **1.36** Among seniors, *Caleb* alone modeled the zeal demanded of the Lord's warriors; for his reward, see Josh 14.6–14; 15.13–14. **1.39** *Know right from wrong.* The age of accountable discretion (cf. Isa 7.15) was twenty years according to Num 14.29–30. **1.40** *Red Sea,* here the Gulf of Aqaba; cf. 2.8. **1.41–44** Attack on Canaan from the south was not only a foolhardy initiative, resulting in the militia's rout, but another act of brazen rebellion against divine orders. **1.44** *Hormah,* a site in the southeastern Negeb near Arad (cf. Num 21.1–3; Judg 1.16–17).

1.46–2.25 Full renewal of the mandate for conquest accompanied the demise of the rebellious generation. **2.1** Reversing direction away from Canaan and toward Egypt was at least a return to obedience (1.40). **2.3** *Head north,* apparently along the desert route east of the Arabah (see 2.8). **2.4–8** Esau, elder brother of Jacob (Israel) and forefather of the Edomites (Gen 25.21–26; 36.1–19), had title to the Seir hill country by grant from the Lord; hence Israel had neither right (vv. 5–6) nor reason (v. 7) to challenge Edom's sovereignty. (Num 20.14–21 gives a different account of the passage.) **2.8** *Elath and*

even so much as a foot's length of their
land, since I have given Mount Seir to
Esau as a possession. 6 You shall purchase
food from them for money, so that you
may eat; and you shall also buy water
from them for money, so that you may
drink. 7 Surely the LORD your God has
blessed you in all your undertakings; he
knows your going through this great wil-
derness. These forty years the LORD your
God has been with you; you have lacked
nothing." 8 So we passed by our kin, the
descendants of Esau who live in Seir, leav-
ing behind the route of the Arabah, and
leaving behind Elath and Ezion-geber.

When we had headed out along the
route of the wilderness of Moab, 9 the
LORD said to me: "Do not harass Moab or
engage them in battle, for I will not give
you any of its land as a possession, since I
have given Ar as a possession to the de-
scendants of Lot." 10 (The Emim—a large
and numerous people, as tall as the
Anakim—had formerly inhabited it.
11 Like the Anakim, they are usually reck-
oned as Rephaim, though the Moabites
call them Emim. 12 Moreover, the Horim
had formerly inhabited Seir, but the de-
scendants of Esau dispossessed them, de-
stroying them and settling in their place,
as Israel has done in the land that the
LORD gave them as a possession.) 13 "Now
then, proceed to cross over the Wadi
Zered."

So we crossed over the Wadi Zered.
14 And the length of time we had traveled
from Kadesh-barnea until we crossed the
Wadi Zered was thirty-eight years, until
the entire generation of warriors had per-
ished from the camp, as the LORD had
sworn concerning them. 15 Indeed, the
LORD's own hand was against them, to
root them out from the camp, until all
had perished.

16 Just as soon as all the warriors had
died off from among the people, 17 the
LORD spoke to me, saying, 18 "Today you
are going to cross the boundary of Moab
at Ar. 19 When you approach the frontier
of the Ammonites, do not harass them or
engage them in battle, for I will not give
the land of the Ammonites to you as a
possession, because I have given it to the
descendants of Lot." 20 (It also is usually
reckoned as a land of Rephaim. Rephaim
formerly inhabited it, though the Am-
monites call them Zamzummim, 21 a
strong and numerous people, as tall as the
Anakim. But the LORD destroyed them
from before the Ammonites so that they
could dispossess them and settle in their
place. 22 He did the same for the descen-
dants of Esau, who live in Seir, by destroy-
ing the Horim before them so that they
could dispossess them and settle in their
place even to this day. 23 As for the Av-
vim, who had lived in settlements in the
vicinity of Gaza, the Caphtorim, who
came from Caphtor, destroyed them and
settled in their place.) 24 "Proceed on your
journey and cross the Wadi Arnon. See, I
have handed over to you King Sihon the
Amorite of Heshbon, and his land. Begin
to take possession by engaging him in bat-
tle. 25 This day I will begin to put the
dread and fear of you upon the peoples

Ezion-geber, ports on the Gulf of Aqaba; cf. 1 Kings 9.26. **2.9** *Ar*, the portion of greater Moab between the Zered (2.13) and the Arnon (2.24) which the Lord granted to Lot's Moabite lineage (also 2.18, 29; cf. Gen 19.36–38; Num 21.13–15, 28). **2.10–12** An editorial comment on aboriginal folk dispossessed by Moab and Edom (cf. 2.20–23; 3.11). Both *Emim* (Hebrew, "Frighteners") and Anakim (cf. 1.28) are identified as *Rephaim*, giant warriors of yore who are variously implicated in Israelite and Ugaritic folklore with the antediluvian Nephilim and other defunct heroes (cf. Gen 6.4; 14.5; Num 13.33). On the *Horim* of Seir (perhaps "Troglodytes" rather than ethnic "Hurrians"), see Gen 14.6; 36.20–30. **2.13–15** *Zered*, the Wadi el-Hesa, which flows westward into the southern end of the Dead Sea. Crossing of this physical boundary between Edom and Moab marked Israel's communal passage, hastened by divine agency, to a new generation of warriors. **2.19** Lot's Ammonite descendants also (cf. 2.9) received by divine grant their homeland on the plateau northeast of Moabite Ar (cf. 2.37). **2.20–23** Folklore with theological commentary continuing vv. 10–12. *Zamzummim* (Hebrew, "Mumblers"?), another subset of Rephaim; cf. "Zuzim" in Gen 14.5. *Avvim* (Hebrew, "Ruiners"?). Cf. Josh 13.3. *Caphtorim ... from Caphtor*, Philistines or a related people from Crete; cf. Gen 10.14; Jer 47.4; Am 9.7. **2.24** Consignment of *Sihon*'s realm to Israel renewed the Lord's war against the Amorites (cf. Gen 15.16; Am 2.9–10). Other ancient claimants to the rich tableland north of the *Arnon* gorge (Wadi el-Mujib) included Ammon (Judg 11.4–33; cf. 1 Sam 11.1–11) and Moab (Num 21.13–15; Jer 48; cf. the Mesha Inscription). **2.25** Cf. Ex 15.14–16.

everywhere under heaven; when they hear report of you, they will tremble and be in anguish because of you."

Conquests in Transjordan

26 So I sent messengers from the wilderness of Kedemoth to King Sihon of Heshbon with the following terms of peace: 27"If you let me pass through your land, I will travel only along the road; I will turn aside neither to the right nor to the left. 28You shall sell me food for money, so that I may eat, and supply me water for money, so that I may drink. Only allow me to pass through on foot— 29just as the descendants of Esau who live in Seir have done for me and likewise the Moabites who live in Ar—until I cross the Jordan into the land that the LORD our God is giving us." 30But King Sihon of Heshbon was not willing to let us pass through, for the LORD your God had hardened his spirit and made his heart defiant in order to hand him over to you, as he has now done.

31 The LORD said to me, "See, I have begun to give Sihon and his land over to you. Begin now to take possession of his land." 32So when Sihon came out against us, he and all his people for battle at Jahaz, 33the LORD our God gave him over to us; and we struck him down, along with his offspring and all his people. 34At that time we captured all his towns, and in each town we utterly destroyed men, women, and children. We left not a single survivor. 35Only the livestock we kept as spoil for ourselves, as well as the plunder of the towns that we had captured. 36From Aroer on the edge of the Wadi Arnon (including the town that is in the wadi itself) as far as Gilead, there was no citadel too high for us. The LORD our God gave everything to us. 37You did not encroach, however, on the land of the Ammonites, avoiding the whole upper region of the Wadi Jabbok as well as the towns of the hill country, just as[d] the LORD our God had charged.

3 When we headed up the road to Bashan, King Og of Bashan came out against us, he and all his people, for battle at Edrei. 2The LORD said to me, "Do not fear him, for I have handed him over to you, along with his people and his land. Do to him as you did to King Sihon of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon." 3So the LORD our God also handed over to us King Og of Bashan and all his people. We struck him down until not a single survivor was left. 4At that time we captured all his towns; there was no citadel that we did not take from them—sixty towns, the whole region of Argob, the kingdom of Og in Bashan. 5All these were fortress towns with high walls, double gates, and bars, besides a great many villages. 6And

d Gk Tg: Heb *and all*

2.26–3.7 The era of Israel's conquests began under Moses' command (as promised, Ex 34.10), with model holy-war campaigns against the forces of Sihon and Og in Transjordan (cf. Num 21.13–35). **2.26** *Kedemoth*, at the desert's edge east of Ar, near the Arnon's upper reach; cf. Josh 13.18. *Heshbon*, Sihon's capital, near mid-point on the plateau stretching north from the Arnon to Gilead; cf. Josh 12.2; Jer 48.45; Song 7.4. **2.27–29** Though a bit puzzling, the request for peaceful passage may be understood in context (vv. 24–25, 30–31) as the means to draw Sihon into battle (cf. 2.6; 23.3–4). **2.30** Divine action to promote Sihon's bellicose obstinacy and downfall recalls the "hardening of Pharaoh's heart" theme of the exodus drama (e.g. Ex 4.21; 7.3; 14.4; cf. 1 Sam 16.14; 1 Kings 22.20–23; Isa 6.10). **2.32** *Jahaz*, a fortified town on the plateau south of Heshbon; cf. Josh 13.17–18; Isa 15.4. **2.33–35** The "ban" (Hebrew *cherem*) enforced here and against Bashan (3.6–7) straddles the rules of war given in 20.10–17: the human populations are totally annihilated (20.16–17) but livestock as well as goods are exempted (20.13–15); cf. Josh 8.2, 26–27; 11.10–15; Josh 6.17–19; 7.1; 1 Sam 15.3–9. **2.36–37** *Aroer* (the place now called in Arabic 'Ara'ir), a fortress commanding the Arnon's north rim; cf. Josh 13.9. *Gilead*, the fertile hill country of central Transjordan; it is bisected by the *Jabbok* (now Arabic Nahr ez-Zerqa), a major eastern tributary of the Jordan, which descends from the heights of Ammon; cf. Gen 32.22; Josh 12.2. **3.1** *Bashan*, a region of rich highland forests, pastures, and fields in northern Transjordan, reaching beyond Gilead across the Yarmuk River into Syria; cf. 32.13–14; Ezek 27.6; 39.18. *Edrei* (modern Dar'a). The battle site, near the upper reach of the Yarmuk's southern tributary, was apparently one of Og's two royal cities (the other was Ashtaroth); cf. 1.4; Josh 9.10; 12.4. **3.4** *Argob* seems here to designate the broad expanse of south-central Bashan, from the Golan Heights eastward to the Hauran massif (modern Jebel Druze); cf. 3.13–14.

we utterly destroyed them, as we had
done to King Sihon of Heshbon, in each
city utterly destroying men, women, and
children. 7 But all the livestock and the
plunder of the towns we kept as spoil for
ourselves.

Allotment of the Territories

8 So at that time we took from the two
kings of the Amorites the land beyond the
Jordan, from the Wadi Arnon to Mount
Hermon 9 (the Sidonians call Hermon Sir-
ion, while the Amorites call it Senir), 10 all
the towns of the tableland, the whole of
Gilead, and all of Bashan, as far as Sale-
cah and Edrei, towns of Og's kingdom in
Bashan. 11 (Now only King Og of Bashan
was left of the remnant of the Rephaim.
In fact his bed, an iron bed, can still be
seen in Rabbah of the Ammonites. By the
common cubit it is nine cubits long and
four cubits wide.) 12 As for the land that
we took possession of at that time, I gave
to the Reubenites and Gadites the terri-
tory north of Aroer,[e] that is on the edge
of the Wadi Arnon, as well as half the hill
country of Gilead with its towns, 13 and I
gave to the half-tribe of Manasseh the rest
of Gilead and all of Bashan, Og's king-
dom. (The whole region of Argob: all that
portion of Bashan used to be called a land
of Rephaim; 14 Jair the Manassite ac-
quired the whole region of Argob as far as
the border of the Geshurites and the Ma-
acathites, and he named them—that is,
Bashan—after himself, Havvoth-jair,[f] as
it is to this day.) 15 To Machir I gave Gil-
ead. 16 And to the Reubenites and the
Gadites I gave the territory from Gilead
as far as the Wadi Arnon, with the middle
of the wadi as a boundary, and up to the
Jabbok, the wadi being boundary of the
Ammonites; 17 the Arabah also, with the
Jordan and its banks, from Chinnereth
down to the sea of the Arabah, the Dead
Sea,[g] with the lower slopes of Pisgah on
the east.

18 At that time, I charged you as fol-
lows: "Although the LORD your God has
given you this land to occupy, all your
troops shall cross over armed as the van-
guard of your Israelite kin. 19 Only your
wives, your children, and your livestock—
I know that you have much livestock—
shall stay behind in the towns that I have
given to you. 20 When the LORD gives rest
to your kindred, as to you, and they too
have occupied the land that the LORD
your God is giving them beyond the Jor-
dan, then each of you may return to the
property that I have given to you." 21 And
I charged Joshua as well at that time, say-
ing: "Your own eyes have seen everything
that the LORD your God has done to these
two kings; so the LORD will do to all the
kingdoms into which you are about to
cross. 22 Do not fear them, for it is the
LORD your God who fights for you."

A Personal Entreaty

23 At that time, too, I entreated the
LORD, saying: 24 "O Lord GOD, you have

e Heb *territory from Aroer* f That is *Settlement of Jair* g Heb *Salt Sea*

3.8–22 A brief report on the apportionment of conquered regions among the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh (cf. Num 32; Josh 13.8–32) plus instructions concerning participation of their militias in the invasion of the land west of the Jordan. **3.8–9** *Mount Hermon* (now in Arabic Jebel esh-Sheikh), the towering southern spur of the Anti-Lebanon range, known also as *Sirion* and *Senir*, marks the northern limit of Israel's primary territorial claims; cf. 4.48; Josh 11.16–17; Ps 29.6; Song 4.8. **3.10** *Salecah*, a town at the eastern boundary of Bashan; cf. Josh 12.5; 13.11. **3.11** The note offers an intriguing glimpse into lore about Og, here not an "Amorite" (cf. v. 8) but last of the giant Rephaim (cf. Josh 12.4; 13.12). His massive *iron bed* (about 13 by 6 feet) may have been a megalith or sarcophagus of black basalt. *Rabbah* (modern Amman), the Ammonite royal citadel. **3.13–15** Major clans of eastern *Manasseh* (*half* [of the] *tribe*) include *Jair*, here allotted most of Bashan (cf. Num 32.41; Judg 10.3–5; 1 Kings 4.13), and *Machir*, receiving Gilead (cf. Num 26.29; 32.39–40; Josh 17.1). *Geshurites and the Maacathites*, Aramaean clans occupying the Golan Heights; cf. Gen 22.24; Josh 13.13; 2 Sam 3.3; 15.8. **3.17** *Chinnereth*, the Sea of Galilee or Gennesaret. *Pisgah*, the northwestern flank of Mount Nebo; cf. 3.27; 32.49; 34.1. **3.18–20** For the outcome, see Josh 1.12–18; 4.12; 22.1–6. The promised *rest* means not only relief from the urgency of war but the Lord's gift to Israel of a stable life in a secure homeland, thus bringing to completion the plan that began to unfold with the exodus (cf. 12.8–9; Ex 3.7–8; 15.17; 33.14; Josh 21.43–45; 1 Kings 8.56). **3.21–22** See note on 1.4; cf. 2.25; 31.3–8.

3.23–29 Moses, who so often had interceded

only begun to show your servant your
greatness and your might; what god in
heaven or on earth can perform deeds
and mighty acts like yours! 25 Let me cross
over to see the good land beyond the Jor-
dan, that good hill country and the Leba-
non." 26 But the LORD was angry with me
on your account and would not heed me.
The LORD said to me, "Enough from you!
Never speak to me of this matter again!
27 Go up to the top of Pisgah and look
around you to the west, to the north, to
the south, and to the east. Look well, for
you shall not cross over this Jordan. 28 But
charge Joshua, and encourage and
strengthen him, because it is he who shall
cross over at the head of this people and
who shall secure their possession of the
land that you will see." 29 So we remained
in the valley opposite Beth-peor.

The Discipline of Faith

4 So now, Israel, give heed to the stat-
utes and ordinances that I am teach-
ing you to observe, so that you may live to
enter and occupy the land that the LORD,
the God of your ancestors, is giving you.
2 You must neither add anything to what I
command you nor take away anything
from it, but keep the commandments of
the LORD your God with which I am
charging you. 3 You have seen for your-
selves what the LORD did with regard to
the Baal of Peor—how the LORD your
God destroyed from among you everyone
who followed the Baal of Peor, 4 while
those of you who held fast to the LORD
your God are all alive today.

5 See, just as the LORD my God has
charged me, I now teach you statutes and
ordinances for you to observe in the land
that you are about to enter and occupy.
6 You must observe them diligently, for
this will show your wisdom and discern-
ment to the peoples, who, when they hear
all these statutes, will say, "Surely this
great nation is a wise and discerning peo-
ple!" 7 For what other great nation has a
god so near to it as the LORD our God is
whenever we call to him? 8 And what
other great nation has statutes and ordi-
nances as just as this entire law that I am
setting before you today?

9 But take care and watch yourselves
closely, so as neither to forget the things
that your eyes have seen nor to let them
slip from your mind all the days of your
life; make them known to your children
and your children's children— 10 how you
once stood before the LORD your God at
Horeb, when the LORD said to me, "As-
semble the people for me, and I will let
them hear my words, so that they may
learn to fear me as long as they live on the
earth, and may teach their children so";
11 you approached and stood at the foot of

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successfully on behalf of others (e.g., 9.20, 25–29; Ex 32.11–14; Num 11.2; 21.7), could not secure divine permission to cross with the new generation of Israel into the land beyond the Jordan. **3.24** Moses' plea begins with hymnic praise extolling the Lord's incomparability (cf. Ex 15.11, 16; 2 Sam 7.22–24; Pss 89.5–8; 113.5–6). **3.26–27** The Lord's rebuke is softened by allowing Moses to survey visually the full expanse of Israel's national homeland (see 32.48–52; 34.1–4). **3.28** See 31.7–8. **3.29** The *valley* (now in Arabic Wadi 'Ayun Musa) lies beneath the northwest slope of Pisgah, where Moses is addressing the people (see 1.1, 5; cf. Num 21.20). *Beth-peor*, the "house" or sanctuary of the Baal of Peor; see 4.3–4.

4.1–40 This grand peroration advances the claim that diligent observance of God's law, as taught by Moses, is the wellspring of Israel's life and hence also the discipline that shapes its unique theological witness. **4.1–8** The thesis stated. **4.1** *So now* is a rhetorical device (cf. 10.12; 26.10), here marking a shift in Moses' address from the foregoing memoirs to climactic exhortation and admonition. **4.2–4** *Neither add . . . nor take away*. Because Moses' instruction in what God demands is both authoritative and complete, it is the only guide to life that Israel ever need or should follow (see 12.32; cf. 30.11–14; Prov 30.5–6; Eccl 3.14). The consequences of conflicting claims on Israel's loyalty were demonstrated by the Lord's discriminating judgment in *the Baal of Peor* affair (cf. Num 25.1–13; Ps 106.28; Hos 9.10). **4.5–8** Israel will be counted as a *great nation* (cf. 26.5; Gen 12.2; 18.18; 46.3; Ex 32.10) by virtue of its ethical character and the responsive nearness of its divine sovereign (cf. Ex 3.7; Judg 3.9, 15; 4.3; Ps 145.18; Isa 55.6–7). *This entire law*, whose just provisions and prudent observance by Israel will gain acclaim from other nations (cf. Ezra 7.25; Pss 19.7–10; 147.19–20), is the Mosaic law preserved in Deuteronomy; see 4.44–45. **4.9–31** The case against idolatry. **4.9** Transmission through the generations of Israel's normative experience and polity is a major Deuteronomic concern (e.g., 6.7, 20–25; 11.19–21; 29.29; 31.12–13). **4.10–11** Cf.

the mountain while the mountain was
blazing up to the very heavens, shrouded
in dark clouds. 12 Then the LORD spoke to
you out of the fire. You heard the sound
of words but saw no form; there was only
a voice. 13 He declared to you his cove-
nant, which he charged you to observe,
that is, the ten commandments;[h] and he
wrote them on two stone tablets. 14 And
the LORD charged me at that time to teach
you statutes and ordinances for you to ob-
serve in the land that you are about to
cross into and occupy.

15 Since you saw no form when the
LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the
fire, take care and watch yourselves
closely, 16 so that you do not act corruptly
by making an idol for yourselves, in the
form of any figure—the likeness of male
or female, 17 the likeness of any animal
that is on the earth, the likeness of any
winged bird that flies in the air, 18 the like-
ness of anything that creeps on the
ground, the likeness of any fish that is in
the water under the earth. 19 And when
you look up to the heavens and see the
sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host
of heaven, do not be led astray and bow
down to them and serve them, things that
the LORD your God has allotted to all the
peoples everywhere under heaven. 20 But
the LORD has taken you and brought you
out of the iron-smelter, out of Egypt, to
become a people of his very own posses-
sion, as you are now.

21 The LORD was angry with me be-
cause of you, and he vowed that I should
not cross the Jordan and that I should not
enter the good land that the LORD your
God is giving for your possession. 22 For I
am going to die in this land without cross-
ing over the Jordan, but you are going to
cross over to take possession of that good
land. 23 So be careful not to forget the
covenant that the LORD your God made
with you, and not to make for yourselves
an idol in the form of anything that the
LORD your God has forbidden you. 24 For
the LORD your God is a devouring fire, a
jealous God.

25 When you have had children and
children's children, and become compla-
cent in the land, if you act corruptly by
making an idol in the form of anything,
thus doing what is evil in the sight of the
LORD your God, and provoking him to
anger, 26 I call heaven and earth to witness
against you today that you will soon ut-
terly perish from the land that you are
crossing the Jordan to occupy; you will
not live long on it, but will be utterly de-
stroyed. 27 The LORD will scatter you
among the peoples; only a few of you will
be left among the nations where the LORD
will lead you. 28 There you will serve other
gods made by human hands, objects of
wood and stone that neither see, nor hear,
nor eat, nor smell. 29 From there you will
seek the LORD your God, and you will find
him if you search after him with all your
heart and soul. 30 In your distress, when
all these things have happened to you in
time to come, you will return to the LORD

h Heb *the ten words*

5.4–5; Ex 19.7–25; 20.18–21. **4.12** Key motifs in the expository argument are *fire . . . no form . . . voice* (see vv. 15–16, 23–25, 33, 36). **4.13–14** The Horeb *covenant* was essentially defined by the stipulations of the Decalogue; teaching Israel how to implement them in its national life was Moses' charge. Cf. 5.2–31; 10.4; Ex 34.27–28. **4.15–19** An exposition of 5.8 (Ex 20.4) argues that Israel's imageless worship (cf. Ex 20.23; 34.17; Lev 19.4; 26.1) is a consequence of the visual formlessness of the Lord's presence at Horeb. **4.20** By *iron-smelter* is meant the harshness of servitude in Egypt (cf. 1 Kings 8.51; Isa 48.10; Jer 11.4). In the exodus, Israel became the Lord's *very own possession* or "heritage" (cf. 32.8–9; 9.26, 29; 1 Sam 10.1; 1 Kings 8.53; Ps 33.12). **4.21–23** The fact of Moses' absence ought never again give rise to idolatry, as happened in the golden calf episode (cf. 9.12–14; Ex 32.1–10). **4.24** Especially in combination, the epithets *devouring fire* (9.3; Ex 24.17) and *jealous God* (5.9; 6.15; Ex 34.14) express the vehement passion of the Lord's self-defense against idolatry and other acts of profanation (cf. 32.19–22; Lev 10.1–3; Num 16.35; 25.11). **4.25–27** In view here is the exilic Dispersion as an actualization of curses due to Israel's breach of covenant (cf. 28.64–67; Lev 26.30–39). *Heaven and earth* are invoked as enduring witnesses that Moses had foreseen this fate (cf. 30.19; 31.28; 32.1; Isa 1.2). **4.28** Cf. 29.17; Pss 115.4–8; 135.15–18; Isa 44.9–20. **4.29–31** In view too is a renewal of covenant, predicated on Israel's genuinely remorseful seeking of the Lord (on *all your heart and soul*; see 6.5) and the Lord's perennial graciousness (cf. 5.10; 30.1–5; Lev 26.40–45; 1 Kings 8.46–51; Jer 29.10–14; Hos 14.1–7). The latter attribute is invoked by the liturgical epithet *merciful God* (Ex 34.6–7; cf. Neh 9.17, 31; Pss 103.8–14; 145.8–9; Jon 4.2).

your God and heed him. 31 Because the LORD your God is a merciful God, he will neither abandon you nor destroy you; he will not forget the covenant with your ancestors that he swore to them.

32 For ask now about former ages, long before your own, ever since the day that God created human beings on the earth; ask from one end of heaven to the other: has anything so great as this ever happened or has its like ever been heard of? 33 Has any people ever heard the voice of a god speaking out of a fire, as you have heard, and lived? 34 Or has any god ever attempted to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by terrifying displays of power, as the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes? 35 To you it was shown so that you would acknowledge that the LORD is God; there is no other besides him. 36 From heaven he made you hear his voice to discipline you. On earth he showed you his great fire, while you heard his words coming out of the fire. 37 And because he loved your ancestors, he chose their descendants after them. He brought you out of Egypt with his own presence, by his great power, 38 driving out before you nations greater and mightier than yourselves, to bring you in, giving you their land for a possession, as it is still today. 39 So acknowledge today and take to heart that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other. 40 Keep his statutes and his commandments, which I am commanding you today for your own well-being and that of your descendants after you, so that you may long remain in the land that the LORD your God is giving you for all time.

Cities of Refuge in the Transjordan

41 Then Moses set apart on the east side of the Jordan three cities 42 to which a homicide could flee, someone who unintentionally kills another person, the two not having been at enmity before; the homicide could flee to one of these cities and live: 43 Bezer in the wilderness on the tableland belonging to the Reubenites, Ramoth in Gilead belonging to the Gadites, and Golan in Bashan belonging to the Manassites.

Preface to the Articles of the Horeb Covenant

44 This is the law that Moses set before the Israelites. 45 These are the decrees and the statutes and ordinances that Moses spoke to the Israelites when they had come out of Egypt, 46 beyond the Jordan in the valley opposite Beth-peor, in the land of King Sihon of the Amorites, who reigned at Heshbon, whom Moses and the Israelites defeated when they came out of Egypt. 47 They occupied his land and the land of King Og of Bashan, the two kings of the Amorites on the eastern side of the Jordan: 48 from Aroer, which is on the edge of the Wadi Arnon, as far as Mount Sirion[i] (that is, Hermon), 49 together with all the Arabah on the east side of the Jordan as far as the Sea of the Arabah, under the slopes of Pisgah.

Initiation of the Covenant

5 Moses convened all Israel, and said to them:

Hear, O Israel, the statutes and ordinances that I am addressing to you today; you shall learn them and observe them

i Syr: Heb *Sion*

4.32–40 The Lord's incomparability (see note on 3.24) has its counterpart in Israel's unique experiences of divine providence. The unprecedented events of the exodus (vv. 34, 37–38) and the revelation at Horeb (vv. 33, 36) give empirical support to Israel's monotheistic creed: the Lord (Yahweh) is God and there is *no other* (vv. 35, 39). Cf. 32.39; 1 Kings 8.60; Isa 43.10–13; 44.6; Joel 2.27.

4.41–43 An appended note reports that Moses himself designated three cities in the Transjordan to serve as places of refuge for persons who commit unintentional homicide (19.1–13; cf. Num 35.10–28; Josh 20).

4.44–48 A second preface (cf. 1.1–5) introduces the covenantal traditions promulgated through Moses. **4.44–45** The comprehensive Hebrew term for this corpus is *Torah* (always translated *law* in the NRSV of Deuteronomy, e.g., 4.8; 17.18–19; 30.10; 31.11–12). Primary components of the law are the *decrees* (also 6.17, 20; cf. Ps 25.10), the basic "terms" of the covenant, i.e., the Ten Commandments, and the *statutes and ordinances* (e.g., 5.1; 11.32–12.1; 26.16), a compound designation for the constitutional rules, procedures, and precedents set forth in 12.2–26.15. **4.46–48** See 2.26–3.29.

5.1–12.1 This first major section of Mosaic torah consists of a series of hortatory keynotes

diligently. 2The LORD our God made a
covenant with us at Horeb. 3Not with our
ancestors did the LORD make this cove-
nant, but with us, who are all of us here
alive today. 4The LORD spoke with you
face to face at the mountain, out of the
fire. 5(At that time I was standing be-
tween the LORD and you to declare to you
the words[j] of the LORD; for you were
afraid because of the fire and did not go
up the mountain.) And he said:

6 I am the LORD your God, who
brought you out of the land of Egypt, out
of the house of slavery; 7you shall have no
other gods before[k] me.

8 You shall not make for yourself an
idol, whether in the form of anything that
is in heaven above, or that is on the earth
beneath, or that is in the water under the
earth. 9You shall not bow down to them
or worship them; for I the LORD your
God am a jealous God, punishing children
for the iniquity of parents, to the third
and fourth generation of those who reject
me, 10but showing steadfast love to the
thousandth generation[l] of those who
love me and keep my commandments.

11 You shall not make wrongful use
of the name of the LORD your God, for
the LORD will not acquit anyone who mis-
uses his name.

12 Observe the sabbath day and keep
it holy, as the LORD your God com-
manded you. 13Six days you shall labor
and do all your work. 14But the seventh
day is a sabbath to the LORD your God;
you shall not do any work—you, or your
son or your daughter, or your male or fe-
male slave, or your ox or your donkey, or
any of your livestock, or the resident alien
in your towns, so that your male and fe-
male slave may rest as well as you. 15Re-
member that you were a slave in the land
of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought
you out from there with a mighty hand
and an outstretched arm; therefore the
LORD your God commanded you to keep
the sabbath day.

16 Honor your father and your
mother, as the LORD your God com-
manded you, so that your days may be
long and that it may go well with you in
the land that the LORD your God is giv-
ing you.

17 You shall not murder.[m]

18 Neither shall you commit adultery.

19 Neither shall you steal.

j Q Mss Sam Gk Syr Vg Tg: MT *word*
k Or *besides* *l* Or *to thousands* *m* Or *kill*

(5.1–6.3; 6.4–8.20; 9.1–10.11; 10.12–12.1) treating fundamental aspects of the covenant relationship, especially the demand that Israel give undivided allegiance to the Lord. **5.1–6.3** The Israelites at Horeb heard only the Decalogue communicated directly by the Lord; they authorized Moses to receive and transmit to them the rest of the Lord's covenantal instructions. See, in brief, 4.13–14. **5.1–5** The assembly at Horeb. **5.1–3** Moses' audience *today* and their *ancestors* who had originally assembled at Horeb are generational manifestations of the corporate "Israel" with whom the Lord enacts this covenant (cf. 26.16–19; 29.10–15). **5.4** *Face to face.* The Lord's presence was articulate and direct (cf. 34.10; Num 12.8). **5.5** *At that time . . . mountain* anticipating Moses' appointment as intermediary probably alludes to Ex 19.3–25. **5.6–21** There are some substantive as well as minor differences between this version of the Decalogue ("the ten words") and the one in Ex 20.2–17. **5.6–10** These verses, cast in the divine first person, form a coherent "word" and comprise a single paragraph in the Hebrew Masoretic Text. The Lord's assertion of sovereignty over Israel (v. 6) introduces a series of three injunctions that prohibit association of *other gods* or any form of idolatry with worship of the Lord (vv. 7–9a); the final clauses proclaim the chief dimensions of the Lord's steadfastness, which should motivate Israel's fidelity to the bond of covenant (vv. 9b–10; cf. 4.24, 31; 7.9–10). **5.9** *Punishing children . . . parents.* See note on 7.10. **5.11** *Wrongful use,* invocation of the divine name in false oaths or for any magical, malicious, or blasphemous purpose (cf. Lev 19.12; 24.10–23; Ps 24.4; Jer 29.23; Hos 4.2). **5.12–15** The command to hallow the *sabbath day* through observance of broadly inclusive communal rest is connected here with remembrance of the Lord's intervention to free Israel from slavery in Egypt (cf. Ex 20.8–11; 23.12; 31.12–17; 34.21; Isa 58.13–14; Jer 17.21–27). **5.16** *Honor,* respect for parental authority and dignity (cf. 21.18–21; 27.16; Ex 21.15, 17) and faithful performance of filial duties, such as care for aging parents (cf. Sir 3.1–16). **5.17** *Murder,* negligent or premeditated homicide (cf. Ex 21.12–14, 29; Num 35.16–34). **5.18–21** *Neither,* lit. "and not"; i.e., the final terse prohibitions are linked in series. **5.18** *Adultery.* Cf. Lev 18.20; 20.10; Prov 6.23–29; Jer 7.9. **5.19** *Steal,* whether persons or property (cf. 24.7; Ex 21.16;

20 Neither shall you bear false witness
against your neighbor.
21 Neither shall you covet your neigh-
bor's wife.
Neither shall you desire your neighbor's
house, or field, or male or female slave, or
ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to
your neighbor.

Moses' Mandate

22 These words the LORD spoke with a
loud voice to your whole assembly at the
mountain, out of the fire, the cloud, and
the thick darkness, and he added no
more. He wrote them on two stone tab-
lets, and gave them to me. 23 When you
heard the voice out of the darkness, while
the mountain was burning with fire, you
approached me, all the heads of your
tribes and your elders; 24 and you said,
"Look, the LORD our God has shown us
his glory and greatness, and we have
heard his voice out of the fire. Today we
have seen that God may speak to someone
and the person may still live. 25 So now
why should we die? For this great fire will
consume us; if we hear the voice of the
LORD our God any longer, we shall die.
26 For who is there of all flesh that has
heard the voice of the living God speaking
out of fire, as we have, and remained
alive? 27 Go near, you yourself, and hear
all that the LORD our God will say. Then
tell us everything that the LORD our God
tells you, and we will listen and do it."
28 The LORD heard your words when
you spoke to me, and the LORD said to
me: "I have heard the words of this peo-
ple, which they have spoken to you; they
are right in all that they have spoken. 29 If
only they had such a mind as this, to fear
me and to keep all my commandments al-
ways, so that it might go well with them
and with their children forever! 30 Go say
to them, 'Return to your tents.' 31 But you,
stand here by me, and I will tell you all the
commandments, the statutes and the ordi-
nances, that you shall teach them, so that
they may do them in the land that I am
giving them to possess." 32 You must
therefore be careful to do as the LORD
your God has commanded you; you shall
not turn to the right or to the left. 33 You
must follow exactly the path that the
LORD your God has commanded you, so
that you may live, and that it may go well
with you, and that you may live long in
the land that you are to possess.
6 Now this is the commandment—the
statutes and the ordinances—that
the LORD your God charged me to teach
you to observe in the land that you are
about to cross into and occupy, 2 so that
you and your children and your children's
children may fear the LORD your God all
the days of your life, and keep all his de-
crees and his commandments that I am
commanding you, so that your days may
be long. 3 Hear therefore, O Israel, and
observe them diligently, so that it may go
well with you, and so that you may multi-
ply greatly in a land flowing with milk and
honey, as the LORD, the God of your an-
cestors, has promised you.

22.1). **5.20** *False witness.* Cf. 19.15–19; Ex 23.1–3; 1 Kings 21.5–14; Prov 25.18. **5.21** The ninth and tenth "words" both prohibit covetousness but distinguish lust to possess a neighbor's *wife* (cf. Prov 6.25) from compulsive desire to alienate a neighbor's *house* or other properties (cf. Isa 5.8; Mic 2.2).

5.22–6.3 Moses' authority to legislate and instruct in matters of the covenant was established through formal agreement at Horeb. **5.22** Like *all Israel* in developed Deuteronomic usage (cf. 5.1; 12.7, 12, 18; 29.2, 10–13), *whole assembly* seems to mean the full constituency of the covenant people, inclusive of women and children (cf. 31.12–13, 30; 16.16; 23.1–8; Ex 19.15; cf. Josh 8.35; 2 Kings 23.1–3). The *tablets* document Israel's receipt of the Decalogue as the basic terms of the covenant (see 4.13; 9.9–11, 17; 10.1–5; cf. 31.9, 26). **5.24** *Glory and greatness,* the awesome visual display of the Lord's presence, which served as accompaniment to the divine speaking (cf. 4.10–12; Ex 19.9, 16–18; 24.9, 15–18; Num 16.19; cf. also Ex 33.18–23; 1 Kings 19.11–13). **5.26** *Living God,* the God whose rule is manifest through word and deed (e.g., Josh 3.10; 1 Sam 17.26; 2 Kings 19.4, 16; Jer 10.10; 23.36). **5.27** *Listen and do it.* Israel agreed to heed Moses' voice as God's own. **5.28–31** The Lord ratified Israel's choice of Moses as intermediary, empowering him not only to transmit divine commandments but to teach their application. **5.32–6.1** *Now,* a generation later, Moses is about to fulfill his commission, by providing Israel with the divinely sanctioned charter for its life in the land. **6.2** *Fear the LORD* means to revere and obey the Lord as trustworthy sovereign (e.g., 4.10; 5.29; 6.13, 24; 10.12). **6.3** See Ex 3.8.

The Lord Alone Is Israel's God

4 Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our
God, the Lord alone.[n] 5 You shall love
the Lord your God with all your heart,
and with all your soul, and with all your
might. 6 Keep these words that I am com-
manding you today in your heart. 7 Recite
them to your children and talk about
them when you are at home and when
you are away, when you lie down and
when you rise. 8 Bind them as a sign on
your hand, fix them as an emblem[o] on
your forehead, 9 and write them on the
doorposts of your house and on your
gates.

10 When the Lord your God has
brought you into the land that he swore to
your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and
to Jacob, to give you—a land with fine,
large cities that you did not build,
11 houses filled with all sorts of goods that
you did not fill, hewn cisterns that you did
not hew, vineyards and olive groves that
you did not plant—and when you have
eaten your fill, 12 take care that you do not
forget the Lord, who brought you out of
the land of Egypt, out of the house of
slavery. 13 The Lord your God you shall
fear; him you shall serve, and by his name
alone you shall swear. 14 Do not follow
other gods, any of the gods of the peoples
who are all around you, 15 because the
Lord your God, who is present with you,
is a jealous God. The anger of the Lord
your God would be kindled against you
and he would destroy you from the face
of the earth.

16 Do not put the Lord your God to
the test, as you tested him at Massah.
17 You must diligently keep the com-
mandments of the Lord your God, and
his decrees, and his statutes that he has
commanded you. 18 Do what is right and
good in the sight of the Lord, so that it
may go well with you, and so that you may
go in and occupy the good land that the
Lord swore to your ancestors to give you,
19 thrusting out all your enemies from be-
fore you, as the Lord has promised.

20 When your children ask you in
time to come, "What is the meaning of the
decrees and the statutes and the ordi-
nances that the Lord our God has com-
manded you?" 21 then you shall say to
your children, "We were Pharaoh's slaves
in Egypt, but the Lord brought us out of
Egypt with a mighty hand. 22 The Lord
displayed before our eyes great and awe-
some signs and wonders against Egypt,
against Pharaoh and all his household.

n Or *The Lord our God is one Lord,* or *The Lord our God, the Lord is one,* or *The Lord is our God, the Lord is one* *o* Or *as a frontlet*

6.4–8.20 This section offers Moses' instruction in how Israel, when it comes into possession of a national homeland, must conduct its life by disciplined devotion to the Lord. **6.4–9** In Jewish liturgy, this is the lead paragraph of the Shema (which means *Hear,* the unit's initial word, in Hebrew), which the faithful are instructed to recite twice daily (cf. *Mishnah Berakot* 1.1–3.6). In the synoptic Gospels, the creedal injunction of vv. 4–5 is affirmed as the "Great Commandment," which, together with the requirement to love one's neighbor (Lev 19.18), epitomizes the Mosaic law (Mt 22.36–40; Mk 12.28–34; cf. Lk 10.25–28). **6.4–5** *Love* is commanded as the fullest measure of the loyalty that Israel owes the Lord (Yahweh), its only divine sovereign (cf. 5.6–10). *Heart,* connoting the human intellect and will, and *soul,* meaning the vitality of selfhood, are often so conjoined in Deuteronomic rhetoric (e.g., 4.29; 10.12; 26.16; Josh 23.14; 2 Kings 23.3); the final item, *might,* or "capacity," appears only here and in a tribute to King Josiah (2 Kings 23.25). **6.6–9** Moses' instruction is to be internalized by the faithful (cf. Ps 37.31; Prov 3.3; Isa 51.7; Jer 31.33) and outwardly displayed in witness to personal and communal identity among the Lord's people. **6.10–19** A concise exposition of 5.6–9, framed as a warning that Israel must never compromise its reliance on the Lord's providence. **6.10–11** Cf. 8.7–14; 32.11–15; Neh 9.25. **6.13** A summary of positive duties; see also 10.20. *Swear.* Cf. Josh 23.6–8; Isa 48.1; Jer 4.2; 5.7; 12.16. **6.14–15** The perennial injunction and threat; see, e.g., 4.23–26; 8.19–20; 11.16–17; 13.12–18; 29.24–28; 30.17–18; Josh 24.14; Judg 2.11–15; 2 Kings 17.7–18. **6.16** *Test,* by questioning God's presence with or benevolent intentions toward Israel, as exemplified by the incident at *Massah*; see Ex 17.1–7; cf. 1.26–33; Num 14.22; Ps 95.8–9. **6.19** For the divine promise, see Ex 23.27; 34.11–12 (cf. Josh 2.22–24). **6.20–25** This catechesis illustrates observance of the instruction in 6.6–9, i.e., how a new generation should be led to acknowledgment of Mosaic statutes and ordinances as central to God's gracious design for Israel's well-being (cf. Ex 12.26; 13.14–15; Josh 4.6–7, 21–22). **6.21–23** *We.* The response is succinct, confessional, and experiential; see also 26.5–10 (cf. 5.3;

23 He brought us out from there in order
to bring us in, to give us the land that he
promised on oath to our ancestors.
24 Then the LORD commanded us to ob-
serve all these statutes, to fear the LORD
our God, for our lasting good, so as to
keep us alive, as is now the case. 25 If we
diligently observe this entire command-
ment before the LORD our God, as he has
commanded us, we will be in the right."

Israel and the Peoples of Canaan

7 When the LORD your God brings
you into the land that you are about
to enter and occupy, and he clears away
many nations before you—the Hittites,
the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Ca-
naanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and
the Jebusites, seven nations mightier and
more numerous than you— 2 and when
the LORD your God gives them over to
you and you defeat them, then you must
utterly destroy them. Make no covenant
with them and show them no mercy. 3 Do
not intermarry with them, giving your
daughters to their sons or taking their
daughters for your sons, 4 for that would
turn away your children from following
me, to serve other gods. Then the anger
of the LORD would be kindled against you,
and he would destroy you quickly. 5 But
this is how you must deal with them:
break down their altars, smash their pil-
lars, hew down their sacred poles,[p] and
burn their idols with fire. 6 For you are a
people holy to the LORD your God; the
LORD your God has chosen you out of all
the peoples on earth to be his people, his
treasured possession.
7 It was not because you were more
numerous than any other people that the
LORD set his heart on you and chose you
—for you were the fewest of all peoples.
8 It was because the LORD loved you and
kept the oath that he swore to your ances-
tors, that the LORD has brought you out
with a mighty hand, and redeemed you
from the house of slavery, from the hand
of Pharaoh king of Egypt. 9 Know there-
fore that the LORD your God is God, the
faithful God who maintains covenant loy-
alty with those who love him and keep his
commandments, to a thousand genera-
tions, 10 and who repays in their own per-
son those who reject him. He does not

p Heb *Asherim*

6.4). **6.24–25** The chief aim of the law is to secure life (cf. 4.1–4; 30.15–20). *Be in the right,* a verdict of acquittal, anticipated here because of meritorious discharge of covenantal obligations (cf. 24.13; Gen 15.6; Ezek 18.5–9).

7.1–26 In order to safeguard its allegiance to the Lord, Israel must extirpate the nations of Canaan along with their idolatrous cults (cf. Ex 23.23–33; 34.11–16; Num 33.51–56). **7.1–6** Prescription. **7.1** Like *Canaanites* and *Amorites* (see 1.7), *Hittites* may be a generic label for Israel's predecessors (cf. Gen 10.15; 23.3–20; 49.29–30; Num 13.29; Josh 1.4; Ezek 16.3, 45). Anatolian antecedents are possible for the *Girgashites* (cf. Gen 10.16), the *Perizzites* (cf. Gen 13.7; 34.30; Josh 17.15; Judg 1.4–5), and Jerusalem's *Jebusites* (cf. Josh 15.63; 2 Sam 5.6–8). *Hivites,* perhaps from north Syria, are associated with Shechem and the Gibeonite cities (cf. Gen 34.2; Josh 9.1–7; Judg 3.3; 2 Sam 21.2). *Seven nations* appear also in Josh 3.10; 24.11; such lists most often have six of the names (e.g., Ex 3.8; Josh 9.1; Judg 3.5; cf. Gen 15.19–21; 1 Kings 9.20). **7.2** *Utterly destroy.* The ban is a radical solution (cf. 20.16–18; Josh 10.40; 11.11–12) that, if enforced, would make the commands of vv. 2b–5 superfluous. *No covenant.* Cf. Ex 23.32–33; 34.12, 15; Josh 9.3–27; 11.19; Judg 2.2–3. **7.3–4** See Ex 34.16; Josh 23.12–13; Judg 3.5–6 (cf. Gen 34.9–10; 1 Kings 11.1–6). *Me,* apparently Moses, speaking as the Lord's surrogate; see 5.27 (cf. 11.13–15; 17.3; 28.20; 29.5). **7.5** Eradication of Canaanizing cult places and practices is a Deuteronomic priority (12.2–4, 29–31; 16.21–22; 18.9–14; cf. the measures attributed to kings Hezekiah and Josiah in 2 Kings 18.4; 23.4–24). *Pillars,* commemorative steles (cf. Gen 28.18; 35.14; Ex 24.4; Lev 26.1; 2 Kings 10.26–27). *Asherim* (see text note *p*) were probably *poles* or trees symbolizing fertility and associated with the goddess Asherah, who was sometimes venerated as the Lord's consort (cf. Judg 6.25–30; 1 Kings 14.22–24; 2 Kings 17.16; Isa 27.9; Jer 17.2; Mic 5.14). **7.6** See 14.2, 21; 26.18–19; 32.8–12. Cf. Ex 19.5–6; Ps 135.4; Mal 3.17. **7.7–16** God's election of Israel is motivated solely by God's love and faithfulness and not by the nation's intrinsic value (variations on 5.6–10). **7.7** *Set his heart,* was smitten with love (10.14–15; cf. 21.11; Gen 34.8; Hos 11.1). **7.8** See 5.6. *Redeemed,* emancipated or ransomed (also 9.26; 13.5; 15.15; 21.8; 24.18; cf. Num 18.15–17; Ps 78.42; Hos 13.14). **7.9** See 5.10 (cf. Neh 1.5; 9.32; Dan 9.4; Jon 4.2). *Faithful,* trustworthy, consistent, diligent (cf. 32.4; Pss 89.1–2; 98.3; Isa 49.7). *Covenant loyalty,* lit. "the covenant and the steadfast love" (also v. 12; cf. 1 Kings 8.23–24; Ps 89.24, 28, 33–34; Isa 54.10; 55.3; Mic 7.20). **7.10** An emphatic revi-

delay but repays in their own person those who reject him. 11 Therefore, observe diligently the commandment—the statutes and the ordinances—that I am commanding you today.

12 If you heed these ordinances, by diligently observing them, the LORD your God will maintain with you the covenant loyalty that he swore to your ancestors; 13 he will love you, bless you, and multiply you; he will bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your wine and your oil, the increase of your cattle and the issue of your flock, in the land that he swore to your ancestors to give you. 14 You shall be the most blessed of peoples, with neither sterility nor barrenness among you or your livestock. 15 The LORD will turn away from you every illness; all the dread diseases of Egypt that you experienced, he will not inflict on you, but he will lay them on all who hate you. 16 You shall devour all the peoples that the LORD your God is giving over to you, showing them no pity; you shall not serve their gods, for that would be a snare to you.

17 If you say to yourself, "These nations are more numerous than I; how can I dispossess them?" 18 do not be afraid of them. Just remember what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt, 19 the great trials that your eyes saw, the signs and wonders, the mighty hand and the outstretched arm by which the LORD your God brought you out. The LORD your God will do the same to all the peoples of whom you are afraid. 20 Moreover, the LORD your God will send the pestilence[q] against them, until even the survivors and the fugitives are destroyed. 21 Have no dread of them, for the LORD your God, who is present with you, is a great and awesome God. 22 The LORD your God will clear away these nations before you little by little; you will not be able to make a quick end of them, otherwise the wild animals would become too numerous for you. 23 But the LORD your God will give them over to you, and throw them into great panic, until they are destroyed. 24 He will hand their kings over to you and you shall blot out their name from under heaven; no one will be able to stand against you, until you have destroyed them. 25 The images of their gods you shall burn with fire. Do not covet the silver or the gold that is on them and take it for yourself, because you could be ensnared by it; for it is abhorrent to the LORD your God. 26 Do not bring an abhorrent thing into your house, or you will be set apart for destruction like it. You must utterly detest and abhor it, for it is set apart for destruction.

The LORD Provides

8 This entire commandment that I command you today you must diligently observe, so that you may live and increase, and go in and occupy the land that the LORD promised on oath to your

q Or *hornets*: Meaning of Heb uncertain

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sion of 5.9b (cf. Ex 34.6–7; Num 14.18). Instead of corporate punishment, which might affect several generations, retribution for breach of covenant is now targeted against individual offenders (cf. 24.16; Jer 31.29–30; 32.18–19; Ezek 18.1–24). **7.13–14** Cf. 15.6; 28.4–14; Ex 23.25–26. *Grain . . . wine . . . oil,* the chief agricultural products of Canaan (11.14; 12.17; 14.23; 18.4; 28.51; cf. Hos 2.8, 22). **7.15** *Diseases of Egypt,* presumably exemplified by the plagues of Ex 9.3, 9 (cf. Deut 28.27, 60; Ex 15.26; Am 4.10). **7.16** Cf. 5.7–9a; Ex 23.32–33; 34.14. **7.17–26** Implementation (the conquest theme). **7.17–19** Cf. 1.28–30; 3.22; 4.34, 37–38; 9.1–3; 20.1; 29.2–3; Josh 23.3, 9–10. **7.20** *Pestilence,* perhaps a metaphor for terror as a weapon of divine warfare (cf. 2.25; 32.23–24; Ex 15.14–16; 23.27–28; Josh 24.12; Hab 3.5). **7.22** *Little by little.* Cf. Ex 23.29–30; Judg 2.3, 20–23; 3.1–6. **7.23** *Panic.* Cf. 28.20; 1 Sam 5.9–11; 14.18–20. **7.24** Cf. 11.25; Josh 13. **7.25–26** *Images . . . you shall burn.* See 9.21; 1 Kings 15.13; 2 Kings 10.26–27; 23.4, 11, 15. *Do not covet.* This and the following provisions foreshadow Josh 6.18–19 and the aftermath in Josh 7; cf. Judg 8.24–27; 17.2–4. *Abhorrent to the LORD* is a label used to proscribe things, practices, and persons deemed fraudulent, idolatrous, or otherwise morally repugnant (e.g., 12.31; 17.1; 18.12; 22.5; 23.18; 24.4; 25.16; Prov 3.32; 6.16; 15.8–9, 26; cf. Gen 43.32; Ex 8.26).

8.1–20 The theme of affluent life in Canaan encouraging haughtiness and apostasy is a familiar one in prophetic as well as Deuteronomic sources (cf. 4.25; 31.20; 32.13–18; Isa 5.1–7; Jer 2.1–13; Hos 13.4–6; Am 6.1–8). Here the issue is addressed in light of Israel's experience of divine providence during the wilderness era. **8.1–10** Exhortation (*remember,* v. 2; *know,* v. 5;

ancestors. 2 Remember the long way that
the LORD your God has led you these
forty years in the wilderness, in order to
humble you, testing you to know what was
in your heart, whether or not you would
keep his commandments. 3 He humbled
you by letting you hunger, then by feed-
ing you with manna, with which neither
you nor your ancestors were acquainted,
in order to make you understand that one
does not live by bread alone, but by every
word that comes from the mouth of the
LORD.[r] 4 The clothes on your back did
not wear out and your feet did not swell
these forty years. 5 Know then in your
heart that as a parent disciplines a child so
the LORD your God disciplines you.
6 Therefore keep the commandments of
the LORD your God, by walking in his
ways and by fearing him. 7 For the LORD
your God is bringing you into a good
land, a land with flowing streams, with
springs and underground waters welling
up in valleys and hills, 8 a land of wheat
and barley, of vines and fig trees and
pomegranates, a land of olive trees and
honey, 9 a land where you may eat bread
without scarcity, where you will lack noth-
ing, a land whose stones are iron and
from whose hills you may mine copper.
10 You shall eat your fill and bless the
LORD your God for the good land that he
has given you.

11 Take care that you do not forget
the LORD your God, by failing to keep his
commandments, his ordinances, and his
statutes, which I am commanding you to-
day. 12 When you have eaten your fill and
have built fine houses and live in them,
13 and when your herds and flocks have
multiplied, and your silver and gold is
multiplied, and all that you have is multi-
plied, 14 then do not exalt yourself, forget-
ting the LORD your God, who brought you
out of the land of Egypt, out of the house
of slavery, 15 who led you through the
great and terrible wilderness, an arid
wasteland with poisonous[s] snakes and
scorpions. He made water flow for you
from flint rock, 16 and fed you in the wil-
derness with manna that your ancestors
did not know, to humble you and to test
you, and in the end to do you good. 17 Do
not say to yourself, "My power and the
might of my own hand have gotten me
this wealth." 18 But remember the LORD
your God, for it is he who gives you power
to get wealth, so that he may confirm his
covenant that he swore to your ancestors,
as he is doing today. 19 If you do forget
the LORD your God and follow other gods
to serve and worship them, I solemnly
warn you today that you shall surely per-
ish. 20 Like the nations that the LORD is
destroying before you, so shall you perish,
because you would not obey the voice of
the LORD your God.

The Covenant Broken and Restored

9 Hear, O Israel! You are about to
cross the Jordan today, to go in and
dispossess nations larger and mightier
than you, great cities, fortified to the

r Or *by anything that the* LORD *decrees*
s Or *fiery*; Heb *seraph*

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keep, v. 6). **8.2** *Forty years.* Cf. 1.3; 29.5; Ps 95.10; Am 2.10. The Israelites were *humbled* in the wilderness, treated in an abusive and humiliating manner (e.g., 21.14; 22.24; 26.6; Ex 22.22–23; Ps 90.15), to test their willingness to obey. **8.3** Israel survived on *manna* (cf. Ex 16; Num 11.5–9; Josh 5.12), which was "miserable food" (Num 21.5), because that is what the Lord provided. The lesson: life is ordered and sustained not by human preferences but by anything and everything that the Lord alone decrees (cf. Ps 104; Prov 30.8). **8.4** Cf. 29.5; Neh 9.21. **8.5** On divine and parental discipline, see, e.g., 4.36; 11.2; 21.18; Jer 31.18; Ps 94.12; Prov 3.11–12; 19.18; 29.17; Hos 11.1–4. **8.7–9** An encomium on Canaan's bounties (cf. 1.25; 11.9–12; 32.13–14; 33.28; Num 20.5; also the Egyptian "Tale of Sinuhe" 81–84). **8.10** *Eat . . . bless*, return praise to the Lord for the blessings received (cf. Gen 24.48; Neh 9.5; Pss 34.1; 145.1–2; also *Mishnah Berakot* 6). **8.11–20** Admonition (*Do not forget*, v. 11; *Do not say*, v. 17). **8.11–14** See 6.10–12. **8.15** *Snakes.* Cf. Num 21.6–9. *Flint rock.* See 32.13; cf. Ex 17.6; Num 20.8–11; Ps 114.8. **8.17–18** Because the Lord provides the means to acquire *wealth* (cf. Gen 34.29; Job 5.5; Prov 13.22; Ezek 28.4–5), prosperity must always be acknowledged as a divine gift and never claimed as a personal right (see also 9.4–5; 12.5–7; 14.28–29; 15.4–18; 26.1–15). **8.19** *Solemnly warn*, testify against or threaten (cf. 4.26; 30.19; 32.46; 1 Sam 8.9; 2 Kings 17.13).

9.1–10.11 This section offers a preemptive challenge to national self-righteousness and triumphalism by reviewing Israel's history of rebelliousness during the wilderness era. **9.1–7** Introduction (continuing the conquest theme). **9.1–2** A new generation of Israel must

heavens, 2a strong and tall people, the
offspring of the Anakim, whom you
know. You have heard it said of them,
"Who can stand up to the Anakim?"
3 Know then today that the LORD your
God is the one who crosses over before
you as a devouring fire; he will defeat
them and subdue them before you, so
that you may dispossess and destroy them
quickly, as the LORD has promised you.

4 When the LORD your God thrusts
them out before you, do not say to your-
self, "It is because of my righteousness
that the LORD has brought me in to oc-
cupy this land"; it is rather because of the
wickedness of these nations that the LORD
is dispossessing them before you. 5 It is
not because of your righteousness or the
uprightness of your heart that you are go-
ing in to occupy their land; but because of
the wickedness of these nations the LORD
your God is dispossessing them before
you, in order to fulfill the promise that
the LORD made on oath to your ancestors,
to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

6 Know, then, that the LORD your God
is not giving you this good land to occupy
because of your righteousness; for you
are a stubborn people. 7 Remember and
do not forget how you provoked the LORD
your God to wrath in the wilderness; you
have been rebellious against the LORD
from the day you came out of the land of
Egypt until you came to this place.

8 Even at Horeb you provoked the
LORD to wrath, and the LORD was so angry
with you that he was ready to destroy you.
9 When I went up the mountain to receive
the stone tablets, the tablets of the cove-
nant that the LORD made with you, I re-
mained on the mountain forty days and
forty nights; I neither ate bread nor
drank water. 10 And the LORD gave me the
two stone tablets written with the finger of
God; on them were all the words that the
LORD had spoken to you at the mountain
out of the fire on the day of the assembly.
11 At the end of forty days and forty
nights the LORD gave me the two stone
tablets, the tablets of the covenant.
12 Then the LORD said to me, "Get up, go
down quickly from here, for your people
whom you have brought from Egypt have
acted corruptly. They have been quick to
turn from the way that I commanded
them; they have cast an image for them-
selves." 13 Furthermore the LORD said to
me, "I have seen that this people is indeed
a stubborn people. 14 Let me alone that I
may destroy them and blot out their name
from under heaven; and I will make of
you a nation mightier and more numer-
ous than they."

15 So I turned and went down from
the mountain, while the mountain was
ablaze; the two tablets of the covenant
were in my two hands. 16 Then I saw that
you had indeed sinned against the LORD
your God, by casting for yourselves an im-
age of a calf; you had been quick to turn
from the way that the LORD had com-
manded you. 17 So I took hold of the two
tablets and flung them from my two
hands, smashing them before your eyes.

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face the threats that undid its predecessor; see 1.28, 41–45; 2.10–11; Num 13.28. **9.3** A reply to the preceding adage: the Lord, leading as a *devouring fire* (see 4.24), will defeat the formidable enemy on Israel's behalf (cf. 31.3–6). *Quickly.* See notes on 6.19; 7.22. **9.4–5** Were the issue to be litigated (cf. 25.1), Israel could not gain title to its homeland on grounds of its own "innocence," *righteousness*, or "integrity," *uprightness of heart* (cf. Pss 32.11; 97.11). The Lord is evicting the nations because of their "guilt," *wickedness* (see 20.18; Gen 15.16; Lev 18.24; 2 Kings 17.8; 21.2); the land only passes to Israel in fulfillment of the divine promise to the patriarchs (see 1.8). **9.6** *Stubborn* or "stiff-necked," indicates an obstinate refusal to heed orders (cf. also 9.13; 10.16; 31.27; Ex 32.9; 33.3; 34.9; Isa 48.4; Jer 17.23; 19.15). **9.7** *From . . . Egypt.* Cf. Ex 14.10–14; 15.22–26; Jer 7.25–26; 2 Kings 21.15. **9.8–24** Rebellions of the wilderness era. **9.8–9** The apostasy at *Horeb*, passed over in Moses' earlier reviews (chs. 1, 4–5), is now introduced as the paradigm case of Israel's unfaithfulness. **9.9** *Tablets of the covenant.* See notes on 4.13–14; 5.22; cf. Ex 24.12. *Forty days . . . nights* is a leitmotif; see also 9.11, 18, 25; 10.10; 1 Kings 19.8; Jon 3.4. **9.10** Cf. Ex 31.18. *The day of the assembly*; when the full convocation heard the Lord speak directly (also 10.4; 18.16; see note on 5.22). **9.12–14** *Your people whom you have brought.* Israel, already in violation of the chief commandment (5.6–10), was disclaimed by the Lord, who proposed to start over with Moses; see Ex 32.7–10 (cf. Num 14.12). **9.15–17** The metallic *calf*, whether meant to represent the Lord or some other deity, made the case prima facie against Israel for breach of covenant (cf. Ex 32.1–8; 1 Kings 12.28–30; Ps 106.19–22; Hos 8.4–6; 10.5–6; 13.1–2). Moses signaled annulment of the treaty by *smashing* the

18 Then I lay prostrate before the LORD as
before, forty days and forty nights; I nei-
ther ate bread nor drank water, because
of all the sin you had committed, provok-
ing the LORD by doing what was evil in his
sight. 19 For I was afraid that the anger
that the LORD bore against you was so
fierce that he would destroy you. But the
LORD listened to me that time also. 20 The
LORD was so angry with Aaron that he was
ready to destroy him, but I interceded
also on behalf of Aaron at that same time.
21 Then I took the sinful thing you had
made, the calf, and burned it with fire
and crushed it, grinding it thoroughly,
until it was reduced to dust; and I threw
the dust of it into the stream that runs
down the mountain.

22 At Taberah also, and at Massah,
and at Kibroth-hattaavah, you provoked
the LORD to wrath. 23 And when the LORD
sent you from Kadesh-barnea, saying,
"Go up and occupy the land that I have
given you," you rebelled against the com-
mand of the LORD your God, neither
trusting him nor obeying him. 24 You
have been rebellious against the LORD as
long as he has[t] known you.

25 Throughout the forty days and
forty nights that I lay prostrate before the
LORD when the LORD intended to destroy
you, 26 I prayed to the LORD and said,
"Lord GOD, do not destroy the people
who are your very own possession, whom
you redeemed in your greatness, whom
you brought out of Egypt with a mighty
hand. 27 Remember your servants, Abra-
ham, Isaac, and Jacob; pay no attention to
the stubbornness of this people, their
wickedness and their sin, 28 otherwise the
land from which you have brought us
might say, 'Because the LORD was not able
to bring them into the land that he prom-
ised them, and because he hated them, he
has brought them out to let them die in
the wilderness.' 29 For they are the people
of your very own possession, whom you
brought out by your great power and by
your outstretched arm."

10 At that time the LORD said to me,
"Carve out two tablets of stone
like the former ones, and come up to me
on the mountain, and make an ark of
wood. 2 I will write on the tablets the
words that were on the former tablets,
which you smashed, and you shall put
them in the ark." 3 So I made an ark of
acacia wood, cut two tablets of stone like
the former ones, and went up the moun-
tain with the two tablets in my hand.
4 Then he wrote on the tablets the same
words as before, the ten commandments[u]
that the LORD had spoken to you on the
mountain out of the fire on the day of the
assembly; and the LORD gave them to me.
5 So I turned and came down from the
mountain, and put the tablets in the ark
that I had made; and there they are, as
the LORD commanded me.

6 (The Israelites journeyed from

t Sam Gk: MT *I have* *u* Heb *the ten words*

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tablets. **9.18–19** *Prostrate*, the posture of supplication (cf. Num 16.22). *As before* and *that time also* suppose this to be Moses' second successful intercession in the affair (cf. vv. 25–29; Ex 32.11–14, 30–34). **9.20** The exodus account recognizes *Aaron*'s guilt (32.1–6, 21–25, 35) but says nothing about special pleading on his behalf. **9.21** Cf. Ex 32.20; see note on 7.25–26. **9.22–24** Other incidents are tersely noted by toponyms to establish a pattern of rebelliousness (cf. 31.27): *Taberah* (Num 11.1–3); *Massah* (see Deut 6.16); *Kibroth-hattaavah* (Num 11.31–34; 33.16); and *Kadesh-barnea* (see 1.19–33). **9.25–10.11** Restoration of the covenant. **9.25–29** Moses' intercessory prayer boldly responded to the Lord's disowning of and threats against Israel in vv. 12–14 (cf. Ex 32.11–14). **9.26** *Your very own possession*; lit. "your people and your possession" (also v. 29; cf. 4.20); i.e., the people belong not to Moses (9.12) but to the Lord who *redeemed* them from slavery in Egypt (see 7.8). **9.27–28** Despite Israel's obstinacy (9.13–14) there are reasons for divine restraint: the merit of the ancestors (cf. 7.8) and the Lord's own reputation (cf. 32.26–27; Num 14.13–16; Josh 7.7–9; Ps 115.1–2). **10.1–5** The covenant was reconstituted, on its original terms (the Decalogue, vv. 2, 4), when a duplicate set of *tablets* was inscribed by the Lord and transmitted to Israel through Moses (cf. 4.13; 5.22; Ex 34.1–4, 27–29). **10.1** In the tradition represented here, the *ark* was a wooden "chest" (cf. Gen 50.26, "coffin"; 2 Kings 12.9–10) built by Moses for the specific purpose of transporting the stone tablets of the covenant (cf. 10.8; 31.9, 24–26; 1 Kings 8.9 with various views in, e.g., Ex 25.10–22; 37.1–9; Num 10.35–36; 1 Sam 4.3–11; Ps 132.8). **10.6–9** Two appended notes supply data on priestly personnel. **10.6–7** Segments of a wilderness itinerary (with another version in Num 33.31–33) frame a notice on Aaron's death and the succession of his son *Eleazar* to priestly leadership (cf. Num 3.1–4, 32; 20.22–29;

Beeroth-bene-jaakan[v] to Moserah. There
Aaron died, and there he was buried; his
son Eleazar succeeded him as priest.
7 From there they journeyed to Gudgo-
dah, and from Gudgodah to Jotbathah, a
land with flowing streams. 8 At that time
the LORD set apart the tribe of Levi to
carry the ark of the covenant of the LORD,
to stand before the LORD to minister to
him, and to bless in his name, to this day.
9 Therefore Levi has no allotment or in-
heritance with his kindred; the LORD is his
inheritance, as the LORD your God prom-
ised him.)

10 I stayed on the mountain forty
days and forty nights, as I had done the
first time. And once again the LORD lis-
tened to me. The LORD was unwilling to
destroy you. 11 The LORD said to me, "Get
up, go on your journey at the head of the
people, that they may go in and occupy
the land that I swore to their ancestors to
give them."

The Essence of the Covenant

12 So now, O Israel, what does the
LORD your God require of you? Only to
fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his
ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your
God with all your heart and with all your
soul, 13 and to keep the commandments of
the LORD your God[w] and his decrees that
I am commanding you today, for your
own well-being. 14 Although heaven and
the heaven of heavens belong to the LORD
your God, the earth with all that is in it,
15 yet the LORD set his heart in love on
your ancestors alone and chose you, their
descendants after them, out of all the peo-
ples, as it is today. 16 Circumcise, then, the
foreskin of your heart, and do not be
stubborn any longer. 17 For the LORD your
God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the
great God, mighty and awesome, who is
not partial and takes no bribe, 18 who exe-
cutes justice for the orphan and the
widow, and who loves the strangers, pro-
viding them food and clothing. 19 You
shall also love the stranger, for you were
strangers in the land of Egypt. 20 You
shall fear the LORD your God; him alone
you shall worship; to him you shall hold
fast, and by his name you shall swear.
21 He is your praise; he is your God, who
has done for you these great and awe-
some things that your own eyes have seen.
22 Your ancestors went down to Egypt sev-
enty persons; and now the LORD your
God has made you as numerous as the
stars in heaven.

11 You shall love the LORD your
God, therefore, and keep his
charge, his decrees, his ordinances, and
his commandments always. 2 Remember
today that it was not your children (who
have not known or seen the discipline of

v Or *the wells of the Bene-jaakan* w Q Ms Gk Syr: MT lacks *your God*

26.63–64; 24.33). **10.8–9** Another supplement reports the commissioning of the *tribe of Levi* to perform ritual service. For their duties and prebends, see notes on 18.1–8; 21.5; 33.8–11 (cf. Ex 32.25–29; Num 6.23–27; 8.5–26). **10.10–11** The review ends at the point where Moses' memoirs begin in 1.6 (cf. Ex 33.1).

10.12–12.1 In this finale to Moses' preliminary instruction, primary themes of the preceding sections (5.1–6.3; 6.4–8.20; 9.1–10.11) are rhetorically highlighted, with particular emphasis on love of the Lord as the crux of covenantal obedience (cf. 5.10; 6.5; 7.9; 10.12; 11.1, 13, 22). **10.12–22** The Lord's requirements epitomized. **10.12–13** *So now.* See note on 4.1. The question and answer scheme suggests liturgical usage (cf. Pss 15; 24.3–5, 8, 10; Mic 6.8); here the terms of response are thoroughly Deuteronomic (e.g., 5.29–33; 6.2, 13, 24; 8.6; 11.13, 22). **10.14–15** Cf. 7.7–8; Ex 19.5–6. *Heaven of heavens* or "the highest heaven" (cf. 1 Kings 8.27; Neh 9.6; Ps 148.4). **10.16** *Circumcise . . . the foreskin of your heart,* a call to conversion that identifies recalcitrant human minds or individual wills as the barrier to knowing and doing what the Lord requires (cf. 30.6; Lev 26.41; Jer 4.4; 6.10; 9.26; Ezek 44.7, 9). **10.17–18** Both the hymnic titles (cf. Ex 15.3, 11; Ps 47.2; Dan 2.47) and the social agenda of resolute justice (cf. 1.16–17; 16.19; Pss 68.5–6; 99.1–5; 146.5–9) are prerogatives of the Lord's universal suzerainty. **10.19** *You shall also love.* Israel is to imitate the Lord's zeal for egalitarian justice (cf. 24.17–22; Ex 22.21–24; 23.6–9; Lev 19.33–34; also Isa 61.1–9). **10.21** *Your praise,* the one to whom you give praise (cf. Ps 109.1; Jer 17.14). **10.22** *Seventy persons.* See Gen 46.8–27; Ex 1.5; cf. Deut 1.10. **11.1–17** The Lord's providential care. **11.1** *Keep his charge,* perform loyal service as prescribed (cf. Gen 26.5; Lev 8.35; Josh 22.3; 1 Kings 2.3). **11.2** By *discipline* is meant here lessons learned through normative experience of the Lord's sovereign presence (cf. 4.9, 33–39; 5.29; 8.5), i.e., the creedal lore that each generation must assimilate and faithfully transmit to the next (cf.

the LORD your God), but it is you who
must acknowledge his greatness, his
mighty hand and his outstretched arm,
3his signs and his deeds that he did in
Egypt to Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, and
to all his land; 4what he did to the Egyp-
tian army, to their horses and chariots,
how he made the water of the Red Sea[x]
flow over them as they pursued you, so
that the LORD has destroyed them to this
day; 5what he did to you in the wilder-
ness, until you came to this place; 6and
what he did to Dathan and Abiram, sons
of Eliab son of Reuben, how in the midst
of all Israel the earth opened its mouth
and swallowed them up, along with their
households, their tents, and every living
being in their company; 7for it is your
own eyes that have seen every great deed
that the LORD did.

8 Keep, then, this entire command-
ment that I am commanding you today,
so that you may have strength to go in and
occupy the land that you are crossing over
to occupy, 9and so that you may live long
in the land that the LORD swore to your
ancestors to give them and to their de-
scendants, a land flowing with milk and
honey. 10For the land that you are about
to enter to occupy is not like the land of
Egypt, from which you have come, where
you sow your seed and irrigate by foot like
a vegetable garden. 11But the land that
you are crossing over to occupy is a land
of hills and valleys, watered by rain from
the sky, 12a land that the LORD your God
looks after. The eyes of the LORD your
God are always on it, from the beginning
of the year to the end of the year.

13 If you will only heed his every com-
mandment[y] that I am commanding you
today—loving the LORD your God, and
serving him with all your heart and with
all your soul— 14then he[z] will give the
rain for your land in its season, the early
rain and the later rain, and you will
gather in your grain, your wine, and your
oil; 15and he[z] will give grass in your
fields for your livestock, and you will eat
your fill. 16Take care, or you will be se-
duced into turning away, serving other
gods and worshiping them, 17for then the
anger of the LORD will be kindled against
you and he will shut up the heavens, so
that there will be no rain and the land will
yield no fruit; then you will perish quickly
off the good land that the LORD is giv-
ing you.

18 You shall put these words of mine
in your heart and soul, and you shall bind
them as a sign on your hand, and fix them
as an emblem[a] on your forehead.
19Teach them to your children, talking
about them when you are at home and
when you are away, when you lie down
and when you rise. 20Write them on the
doorposts of your house and on your
gates, 21so that your days and the days of
your children may be multiplied in the
land that the LORD swore to your ances-
tors to give them, as long as the heavens
are above the earth.

22 If you will diligently observe this
entire commandment that I am com-
manding you, loving the LORD your God,
walking in all his ways, and holding fast to
him, 23then the LORD will drive out all
these nations before you, and you will dis-
possess nations larger and mightier than
yourselves. 24Every place on which you
set foot shall be yours; your territory shall

x Or *Sea of Reeds* y Compare Gk: Heb *my commandments* z Sam Gk Vg: MT *I* a Or *as a frontlet*

6.20–25). **11.3–4** The emphasis here on the Lord's victory at the *Red Sea* is singular among the book's witnesses to the exodus (cf. 6.21–22; 7.18–19; 26.8; 29.2–3; 34.11; Josh 24.5–7; Ps 106.7–12). **11.6** In the expansive version of Num 16 (usually ascribed to the "priestly" tradition, or "P"), the insurrectionist party of the Reubenites *Dathan and Abiram* is subordinated to the ecclesial revolt led by the Levite Korah, unmentioned here (cf. Ps 106.16–18). **11.8–9** Cf. 5.32–6.3. **11.10–12** While Egypt's agricultural productivity (cf. Gen 13.10; 41.53–57; Num 11.5) is based on irrigation, exploiting the regularity of the Nile, Canaan's prosperity requires seasonal rains that attest the Lord's special care. **11.13–15** Rainfall in autumn and spring (*the early rain and the later rain*; see Jer 3.3; 5.24; Job 29.23) and the fertility it creates are divine blessings, granted to reward performance of covenantal duties (cf. 7.12–14; 28.12; Lev 26.4–5; Isa 30.23–24; Jer 14.21–22). **11.16** On the danger of entrapment in idolatry (*seduced*), see 7.1–6; 13.1–15. **11.17** *Shut up the heavens*, to withhold rain (cf. 28.23–24; Gen 7.11; Lev 26.19; 1 Kings 8.35–36; Job 38.25–27). **11.18–12.1** Transition to the Mosaic legislation. **11.18–21** Rhetorical echoes of 6.6–9; 6.1–3 recall attention to the chief aim of the address. **11.21** *As long as the heavens are above the earth*, i.e., forever (cf. Ps 89.29; Jer 31.36–37; 33.25–26). **11.22–23** Cf.

extend from the wilderness to the Lebanon and from the River, the river Euphrates, to the Western Sea. 25 No one will be able to stand against you; the LORD your God will put the fear and dread of you on all the land on which you set foot, as he promised you.

26 See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: 27 the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I am commanding you today; 28 and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn from the way that I am commanding you today, to follow other gods that you have not known.

29 When the LORD your God has brought you into the land that you are entering to occupy, you shall set the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal. 30 As you know, they are beyond the Jordan, some distance to the west, in the land of the Canaanites who live in the Arabah, opposite Gilgal, beside the oak[b] of Moreh.

31 When you cross the Jordan to go in to occupy the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and when you occupy it and live in it, 32 you must diligently observe all the statutes and ordinances that I am setting before you today.

12 These are the statutes and ordinances that you must diligently observe in the land that the LORD, the God of your ancestors, has given you to occupy all the days that you live on the earth.

The Place the LORD Will Choose

2 You must demolish completely all the places where the nations whom you are about to dispossess served their gods, on the mountain heights, on the hills, and under every leafy tree. 3 Break down their altars, smash their pillars, burn their sacred poles[c] with fire, and hew down the idols of their gods, and thus blot out their name from their places. 4 You shall not worship the LORD your God in such ways.

b Gk Syr: Compare Gen 12.6; Heb *oaks* or *terebinths*
c Heb *Asherim*

10.12–13, 20; 9.1. **11.24** *Every place . . . yours.* Josh 1.3 cites this promise. *Your territory.* The boundaries encompass the broad expanse of Syro-Palestine and correspond approximately to the scope of Davidic hegemony in the early tenth century B.C.E. (see note on 1.7; cf. Ex 23.31). *The Western Sea,* the Mediterranean. **11.25** For the promise, see 2.25. **11.26–28** *A blessing and a curse* are the alternatives of weal and woe posed by the constant choice that Israel must make between fidelity to the Lord and apostasy (cf. 30.15–20; Josh 24.14–28). These fundamental options are sanctioned by the specific lists of conditional "blessings" and "curses" in ch. 28 (see also Lev 26). **11.28** *Gods that you have not known,* gods whose effective presence you have not experienced (cf. 4.32–39; 32.16–17; Judg 2.11–13; 5.8). **11.29** This anticipates the rites prescribed in ch. 27 (cf. Josh 8.30–35). Ancient Shechem was situated in the valley between *Mount Gerizim* on the south and *Mount Ebal* on the north. **11.30** Geographical sense is not evident in the association of Canaanite inhabitants of the *Arabah* (cf. Num 13.29) with the site of *Gilgal* near Jericho (see Josh 4–5) and the distant *oak of Moreh* at Shechem (Gen 12.6; 35.4; cf. Josh 24.26). **11.31–12.1** These verses form a rhetorical seam between the general instructions, now completed, and the following promulgation of *the statutes and ordinances*; see note on 4.44–45.

12.2–26.15 Articles of the covenantal polity are arranged in five broad topical divisions: the single sanctuary (12.2–28); communal service of the Lord (12.29–17.13); constitutional offices (17.14–18.22); major juridical principles and precedents (19.1–25.19); and liturgical reaffirmations of fidelity (26.1–15). **12.2–28** In this initial division, four complementary articles (vv. 2–7, 8–12, 13–19, 20–28) develop a bold reinterpretation of the sanctuary law in Ex 20.24–26. The revision's chief concern correlates closely with reforms attributed to the Judean kings Hezekiah at the end of the eighth century B.C.E. (2 Kings 18.3–6, 22) and Josiah in the later seventh (2 Kings 23.4–19): suppression of apostasy and cultic pluralism by restricting Israel's performance of sacrificial rites and related ceremonies to the temple in Jerusalem. **12.2–7** A categorical distinction is drawn between the manifold cultic installations that Israel must destroy while conquering its homeland and the single, divinely designated place where Israel's own national worship center will be established. **12.2–3** Antecedent injunctions are Ex 23.23–24; 34.11–14 (cf. also Deut 7.5; Num 33.51–52). *Heights . . . leafy tree.* See, e.g., 2 Kings 16.4; Jer 2.20. *Their name,* the sovereignty claimed by the defunct nations but also the immanence of putative gods associated with the installations (cf. 7.24–25; 25.19; Gen 35.14–15; Ex 20.24; Josh 23.7). **12.4** According to many witnesses, this is just what happened. See, e.g., Judg 17.3–5; 1 Kings 12.28–30; 14.22–24; 2 Kings 17.8–12; Jer 3.6–10; 17.1–3; Ezek 6.2–7; 18.6; Hos

5 But you shall seek the place that the
LORD your God will choose out of all your
tribes as his habitation to put his name
there. You shall go there, 6 bringing there
your burnt offerings and your sacrifices,
your tithes and your donations, your vo-
tive gifts, your freewill offerings, and the
firstlings of your herds and flocks. 7 And
you shall eat there in the presence of the
LORD your God, you and your households
together, rejoicing in all the undertakings
in which the LORD your God has
blessed you.

8 You shall not act as we are acting
here today, all of us according to our own
desires, 9 for you have not yet come into
the rest and the possession that the LORD
your God is giving you. 10 When you cross
over the Jordan and live in the land that
the LORD your God is allotting to you, and
when he gives you rest from your enemies
all around so that you live in safety,
11 then you shall bring everything that I
command you to the place that the LORD
your God will choose as a dwelling for his
name: your burnt offerings and your sac-
rifices, your tithes and your donations,
and all your choice votive gifts that you
vow to the LORD. 12 And you shall rejoice
before the LORD your God, you together
with your sons and your daughters, your
male and female slaves, and the Levites
who reside in your towns (since they have
no allotment or inheritance with you).

13 Take care that you do not offer
your burnt offerings at any place you
happen to see. 14 But only at the place that
the LORD will choose in one of your tribes
—there you shall offer your burnt offer-
ings and there you shall do everything I
command you.

15 Yet whenever you desire you may
slaughter and eat meat within any of your
towns, according to the blessing that the
LORD your God has given you; the un-
clean and the clean may eat of it, as they
would of gazelle or deer. 16 The blood,
however, you must not eat; you shall pour
it out on the ground like water. 17 Nor
may you eat within your towns the tithe of

4.12–13; 10.8. **12.5** Israel should seek the Lord in worship not at "every place" commemorating the divine name (Ex 20.24) but only at the one *place* chosen *out of all your tribes*, i.e., Jerusalem's acropolis, where David's tent shrine for the ark was soon replaced by the Solomonic temple (cf. 2 Sam 6.17; 7.6–7, 13; 24.18–25; 1 Kings 8.16–21; 11.32; 14.21; 2 Kings 21.7; Ps 132). While in Deuteronomic theology the transcendent God does not "reside" in any earthly abode, the Lord's *name* is localized at the one sanctuary as a manifestation of divine presence and cosmic attentiveness (26.15; 1 Kings 8.27–30, 43, 48–49; cf. Ex 23.20; Ps 74.7; Isa 18.7; Jer 3.17; 7.12–14; Tob 13.11). Hence *as his habitation* is a dubious rendering; the Hebrew may be translated instead "to establish it (the divine name)," similarly in 12.11; 14.23; 16.2, 6, 11; 26.2. **12.6** *Burnt offerings*, "holocausts" in which flayed animal carcasses were wholly consumed by fire on the altar, sustained the system of expiatory sacrifices (cf. Lev 1.3–17; 6.9–13; Num 28.2–8, 23–24; Am 5.22). Other *sacrifices* were usually consumed in part by the worshipers who presented them and also by priestly officiants (cf. 18.1–3; Lev 3; 7.29–36). *Tithes . . . firstlings*, i.e., all types of sacred dues (14.22–27; 15.19–23; 23.21–23; 26.12–15; cf. Lev 27.1–8; Num 15.18–21; 30.2–15; Am 4.4–5). **12.7** Emphasis on inclusive religious celebrations is characteristic of the Deuteronomic legislation (cf. 12.12, 18–19; 14.26–27; 15.20; 16.11, 14; 26.11).

12.8–12 A temporal distinction is made between divergent practices *today* and the centralization of worship that will become normative for Israel. **12.8** *We are acting . . . all of us according to our own desires*, lit. "each person (doing) what is right in his own sight": individual willfulness reigns (cf. Judg 17.6; 21.25) rather than divine authority (*what is right in the sight of the LORD*; cf. 6.18; 12.25, 28). **12.9–10** *Rest and possession*, secure territorial dominion (see notes on 3.18–20; 11.24; cf. 33.28–29). According to developed Deuteronomic tradition, the conditions were only met with the creation of David's empire (cf. Josh 23.1–5; 2 Sam 7.1–16; 1 Kings 5.3–5; 8.56). **12.11** *As a dwelling for his name*, better "to establish his name"; see note on 12.5. **12.12** *Levites*. See notes on 10.8–9; 18.1–8. **12.13–19** Two key functional distinctions are made here, one between extant cultic "places" (cf. Ex 20.24; 1 Sam 7.16; Josh 22.10–34), which are not or no longer to be used for sacrificial worship, and the chosen *place* and the other between altar sacrifices and animals slaughtered for food. **12.15** *Whenever you desire*, as your appetite dictates (cf. 18.6; Prov 23.2) and the Lord's *blessing* permits (cf. 7.13). *The unclean and the clean may eat of it.* Since domestic slaughter of livestock is no different than the killing of game (*gazelle or deer*) for edible meat, rules of purity that pertain to the consumption of sacrificial offerings and other sacral dues are not applicable (cf. also 12.20–22; 15.22; Lev 7.19–21; 17.3–9). **12.16** *Blood* is the essence of animal "life" and must not be consumed (cf. 12.23; 15.23; Gen 9.4–5; Lev 17.10–14; 19.26; 1 Sam

your grain, your wine, and your oil, the
firstlings of your herds and your flocks,
any of your votive gifts that you vow, your
freewill offerings, or your donations;
18 these you shall eat in the presence of
the LORD your God at the place that the
LORD your God will choose, you together
with your son and your daughter, your
male and female slaves, and the Levites
resident in your towns, rejoicing in the
presence of the LORD your God in all your
undertakings. 19 Take care that you do
not neglect the Levite as long as you live
in your land.

20 When the LORD your God enlarges
your territory, as he has promised you,
and you say, "I am going to eat some
meat," because you wish to eat meat, you
may eat meat whenever you have the de-
sire. 21 If the place where the LORD your
God will choose to put his name is too far
from you, and you slaughter as I have
commanded you any of your herd or
flock that the LORD has given you, then
you may eat within your towns whenever
you desire. 22 Indeed, just as gazelle or
deer is eaten, so you may eat it; the un-
clean and the clean alike may eat it.
23 Only be sure that you do not eat the
blood; for the blood is the life, and you
shall not eat the life with the meat. 24 Do
not eat it; you shall pour it out on the
ground like water. 25 Do not eat it, so that
all may go well with you and your chil-
dren after you, because you do what is
right in the sight of the LORD. 26 But the
sacred donations that are due from you,
and your votive gifts, you shall bring to
the place that the LORD will choose. 27 You
shall present your burnt offerings, both
the meat and the blood, on the altar of the
LORD your God; the blood of your other
sacrifices shall be poured out beside[d] the
altar of the LORD your God, but the meat
you may eat.

28 Be careful to obey all these words
that I command you today,[e] so that it
may go well with you and with your chil-
dren after you forever, because you will
be doing what is good and right in the
sight of the LORD your God.

Warning Against Apostasy

29 When the LORD your God has cut
off before you the nations whom you are
about to enter to dispossess them, when
you have dispossessed them and live in
their land, 30 take care that you are not
snared into imitating them, after they
have been destroyed before you: do not
inquire concerning their gods, saying,
"How did these nations worship their
gods? I also want to do the same." 31 You
must not do the same for the LORD your
God, because every abhorrent thing that
the LORD hates they have done for their
gods. They would even burn their sons
and their daughters in the fire to their
gods. 32[f] You must diligently observe ev-
erything that I command you; do not add
to it or take anything from it.

d Or *on* *e* Gk Sam Syr: MT lacks *today*
f Ch 13.1 in Heb

14.31–35). **12.20–28** A summary paragraph emphasizes orthopraxy and its motives: though nonsacrificial slaughter is permitted as a geographical necessity (*When the LORD . . . enlarges your territory*; cf. 14.24; 19.8–9; Ex 34.24), sacrificial slaughter remains preferable whenever the altar of the single sanctuary is near enough for use (vv. 20–22, 27; cf. Lev 17.3–9). **12.23** The restriction on eating *blood* must never be relaxed (vv. 23–25; cf. 12.16; Lev 17.10–14); requisite offerings and sacral dues must be presented regularly at the sanctuary (vv. 26–27; cf. 14.22–27; 15.19–20; 16.16–17; 26.1–15). **12.28** The paragraph and pericope conclude with an exhortation composed of familiar phrases (e.g., 4.40; 5.29; 6.3, 17–18; 12.25).

12.29–17.13 This division treats corporate obligations and institutional structures designed to maintain Israel's national identity as the covenant people of God. **12.29–32** Specific provisions are introduced by another warning against any compromise of Israel's distinctiveness as defined by the Mosaic legislation (cf. 4.1–2; 5.32–6.3; 11.31–12.1). **12.30** *Snared,* here through attraction to aboriginal religious culture rather than by political or nuptial alliance with the condemned nations (cf. 7.1–5, 25; Ex 23.33; 34.12; Judg 2.3). **12.31** *Abhorrent.* See note on 7.25–26. Immolation of children by *fire* is particularly associated with the cult of Molech, practiced during the monarchical era in the Hinnom Valley southwest of Jerusalem (Lev 18.21; 20.2–5; 2 Kings 23.10; Jer 7.31; 19.5; cf. also 18.10; 2 Kings 3.27; 16.3; 21.6). **12.32** *Everything,* neither less nor more, because worship of the Lord augmented with pagan practices becomes paganism (cf. 2 Kings 17.7–41).

Counteracting Sedition

13 [g] If prophets or those who divine
by dreams appear among you
and promise you omens or portents, 2 and
the omens or the portents declared by
them take place, and they say, "Let us follow other gods" (whom you have not
known) "and let us serve them," 3 you
must not heed the words of those prophets or those who divine by dreams; for the
LORD your God is testing you, to know
whether you indeed love the LORD your
God with all your heart and soul. 4 The
LORD your God you shall follow, him
alone you shall fear, his commandments
you shall keep, his voice you shall obey,
him you shall serve, and to him you shall
hold fast. 5 But those prophets or those
who divine by dreams shall be put to
death for having spoken treason against
the LORD your God—who brought you
out of the land of Egypt and redeemed
you from the house of slavery—to turn
you from the way in which the LORD your
God commanded you to walk. So you
shall purge the evil from your midst.

6 If anyone secretly entices you—even
if it is your brother, your father's son or [h]
your mother's son, or your own son or
daughter, or the wife you embrace, or
your most intimate friend—saying, "Let
us go worship other gods," whom neither
you nor your ancestors have known, 7 any
of the gods of the peoples that are around
you, whether near you or far away from
you, from one end of the earth to the
other, 8 you must not yield to or heed any
such persons. Show them no pity or compassion and do not shield them. 9 But you
shall surely kill them; your own hand shall
be first against them to execute them, and
afterwards the hand of all the people.
10 Stone them to death for trying to turn
you away from the LORD your God, who
brought you out of the land of Egypt, out
of the house of slavery. 11 Then all Israel
shall hear and be afraid, and never again
do any such wickedness.

12 If you hear it said about one of the
towns that the LORD your God is giving
you to live in, 13 that scoundrels from
among you have gone out and led the inhabitants of the town astray, saying, "Let
us go and worship other gods," whom you
have not known, 14 then you shall inquire
and make a thorough investigation. If the
charge is established that such an abhorrent thing has been done among you,
15 you shall put the inhabitants of that

g Ch 13.2 in Heb h Sam Gk Compare Tg: MT lacks *your father's son or*

13.1–18 Three cases are summarized to prescribe severe, unyielding retribution against instigators of sedition. **13.1–5** Mantic incitement to apostasy is a criminal offense, never credible even when supported by accurate prognostication. **13.1–3** *Divine by dreams.* See, e.g., Gen 37.5–10; Num 12.6; Judg 7.13–14; Jer 23.25; 27.9; Joel 2.28. *Omens or portents,* any forecasts or signs offered to authenticate claims of divine empowerment (see 34.11; Ex 4.1–9, 21; 7.9; Judg 6.17–21, 36–40). *Testing.* See 8.2, 16. **13.4** An emphatic restatement of allegiance to the Lord alone (cf. 10.20; 11.22). **13.5** *Spoken treason* also describes prophetic duplicity in Jer 28.16; 29.32. *So you shall purge the evil from your midst.* The formula emphasizes communal responsibility to eradicate perpetrators of virulent evil from Israel's midst (also 17.7, 12; 19.19; 21.21; 22.21, 22, 24; 24.7). **13.6–11** Clandestine enticement to apostasy must be confronted with equal resolve and severe punishment. **13.6–8** Loyalty to Israel's divine sovereign takes precedence over even the closest human bonds of kinship, marriage, and collegiality. **13.6** *Intimate friend,* one as beloved as one's own self; cf. 1 Sam 18.3. **13.8** *No pity.* Cf. 7.16; 19.13, 21; 25.12. **13.9–10** To *kill* offenders by stoning on presumption of guilt legitimates communal lynching (cf. 1 Sam 30.6; 1 Kings 12.18). But the Septuagint may preserve the preferable reading, that an accuser must first "decry" or "publicly charge" a culprit, thereby initiating judicial proceedings that may result in capital punishment carried out by accuser and communal court (cf. 17.4–7; 21.18–21; 22.20–24; Josh 7.10–26; 1 Kings 21.8–14). **13.11** Publicized execution in such circumstances is meant as a deterrent (cf. 17.12–13; 21.21). **13.12–18** This case outlines judicial procedure and martial retribution in the event that an entire town in Israel becomes contaminated by apostasy. **13.13** *Scoundrels,* lit. "sons without worth," "outlaws" who defy legitimate authority (cf. Judg 19.22; 20.13; 1 Sam 2.12). **13.14** *Inquire* could connote oracular consultation (cf. Judg 20.18, 23; Josh 7.13–21) but the clear purport of this Deuteronomic usage is judicial initiative to gather empirical evidence (see 17.4, 9; 19.18; cf. Josh 22.10–34). **13.15–17** The apostate town becomes anathema, like the former nations whose practices it assimilated (12.29–30); thus a comprehensive ban must be implemented against it,

town to the sword, utterly destroying it
and everything in it—even putting its
livestock to the sword. 16 All of its spoil
you shall gather into its public square;
then burn the town and all its spoil with
fire, as a whole burnt offering to the LORD
your God. It shall remain a perpetual
ruin, never to be rebuilt. 17 Do not let any-
thing devoted to destruction stick to your
hand, so that the LORD may turn from his
fierce anger and show you compassion,
and in his compassion multiply you, as he
swore to your ancestors, 18 if you obey the
voice of the LORD your God by keeping all
his commandments that I am command-
ing you today, doing what is right in the
sight of the LORD your God.

Avoiding Defilement

14 You are children of the LORD
your God. You must not lacerate
yourselves or shave your forelocks for the
dead. 2 For you are a people holy to the
LORD your God; it is you the LORD has
chosen out of all the peoples on earth to
be his people, his treasured possession.

3 You shall not eat any abhorrent
thing. 4 These are the animals you may
eat: the ox, the sheep, the goat, 5 the deer,
the gazelle, the roebuck, the wild goat, the
ibex, the antelope, and the mountain-
sheep. 6 Any animal that divides the hoof
and has the hoof cleft in two, and chews
the cud, among the animals, you may eat.
7 Yet of those that chew the cud or have
the hoof cleft you shall not eat these: the
camel, the hare, and the rock badger, be-
cause they chew the cud but do not divide
the hoof; they are unclean for you. 8 And
the pig, because it divides the hoof but
does not chew the cud, is unclean for you.
You shall not eat their meat, and you shall
not touch their carcasses.

9 Of all that live in water you may eat
these: whatever has fins and scales you
may eat. 10 And whatever does not have
fins and scales you shall not eat; it is un-
clean for you.

11 You may eat any clean birds. 12 But
these are the ones that you shall not eat:
the eagle, the vulture, the osprey, 13 the
buzzard, the kite of any kind; 14 every ra-
ven of any kind; 15 the ostrich, the night-
hawk, the sea gull, the hawk of any kind;
16 the little owl and the great owl, the wa-
ter hen 17 and the desert owl,[i] the carrion
vulture and the cormorant, 18 the stork,
the heron of any kind; the hoopoe and
the bat.[j] 19 And all winged insects are un-
clean for you; they shall not be eaten.
20 You may eat any clean winged creature.

21 You shall not eat anything that dies
of itself; you may give it to aliens residing
in your towns for them to eat, or you may

i Or *pelican* *j* Identification of several of the birds in verses 12-18 is uncertain

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lest Israel as a whole incur the wrath of God (20.16–18; cf. 7.25–26). **13.16** *Whole burnt offering*; a sacrificial conflagration (33.10; Lev 6.22–23; 1 Sam 7.9; cf. Isa 34.6–7). *Perpetual ruin*, like Ai (Josh 8.28; cf. Jer 49.2).

14.1–21 Select rules pertaining to Israel's comportment as the Lord's holy people. **14.1** *Children of the LORD*, referring to the covenant community, is language elsewhere attested especially in prophetic contexts treating Israel's filial waywardness (32.5–6, 19–20; Ps 103.13; Isa 1.2, 4; 30.1; Jer 3.14, 19, 22; cf. Jer 31.9, 20; Hos 1.10; 11.1–4). *Lacerate, shave . . . forelocks*. Self-laceration and tonsure are perhaps prohibited because they were associated with pagan rites (cf. Lev 19.27–28; 21.5; 1 Kings 18.28; Jer 16.6–7; 41.4–5; 47.5; Am 8.10). **14.2** A restatement of covenantal integrity based on Ex 19.5–6 (cf. 7.6) introduces a series of dietary rules. **14.3** *Abhorrent* in the general prohibition makes foods excluded from Israel's diet a matter of the Lord's discretion (see note on 7.25–26; cf. Ex 8.26). **14.4–20** The basic categories of land animals (vv. 4–8), fish (vv. 9–10), and flying creatures (vv. 11–20) reflect the familiar taxonomy of the created order (Gen 1.20–25; 9.2–3). A common antecedent tradition as well as some mutual influence at a late stage of textual formation best account for the detailed similarities and differences between this classification of clean and unclean creatures and its counterpart in Lev 11.2–23. Some of the species identifications, especially of the birds, remain uncertain. **14.21** *Anything that dies of itself*, i.e., carrion or the carcass of an otherwise edible animal from which the blood was not drained (cf. 12.16, 22–27; with Ex 22.31; Lev 17.15; 22.8; Ezek 44.31). The issue is ritual purity, not health per se; hence the affected meat could be eaten by those who did not belong to the sacral community (resident *aliens* or a *foreigner*). The old prohibition against cooking *a kid in its mother's milk* (Ex 23.19; 34.26) concludes the series of rules. The original significance of this prohibition is a matter of some dispute. Some see it as proscribing Canaanite religious practices, others as being directed against the unnatural and callous treatment of animals. The later Jewish dietary practice of not mixing meat and dairy

sell it to a foreigner. For you are a people holy to the LORD your God.

You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk.

Tithes

22 Set apart a tithe of all the yield of your seed that is brought in yearly from the field. 23 In the presence of the LORD your God, in the place that he will choose as a dwelling for his name, you shall eat the tithe of your grain, your wine, and your oil, as well as the firstlings of your herd and flock, so that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always. 24 But if, when the LORD your God has blessed you, the distance is so great that you are unable to transport it, because the place where the LORD your God will choose to set his name is too far away from you, 25 then you may turn it into money. With the money secure in hand, go to the place that the LORD your God will choose; 26 spend the money for whatever you wish—oxen, sheep, wine, strong drink, or whatever you desire. And you shall eat there in the presence of the LORD your God, you and your household rejoicing together. 27 As for the Levites resident in your towns, do not neglect them, because they have no allotment or inheritance with you.

28 Every third year you shall bring out the full tithe of your produce for that year, and store it within your towns; 29 the Levites, because they have no allotment or inheritance with you, as well as the resident aliens, the orphans, and the widows in your towns, may come and eat their fill so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work that you undertake.

The Sabbatical Year of Remission

15 Every seventh year you shall grant a remission of debts. 2 And this is the manner of the remission: every creditor shall remit the claim that is held against a neighbor, not exacting it of a neighbor who is a member of the community, because the LORD's remission has been proclaimed. 3 Of a foreigner you may exact it, but you must remit your claim on whatever any member of your community owes you. 4 There will, however, be no one in need among you, because the LORD is sure to bless you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you as a possession to occupy, 5 if only you will obey the LORD your God by diligently observing this entire commandment that I command you today. 6 When the LORD your God has blessed you, as he promised you, you will lend to many nations, but you will not borrow; you will rule over many nations, but they will not rule over you.

7 If there is among you anyone in

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products is based on this law. **14.22–29** The *tithe* probably originated as a 10 percent tax on agricultural produce (*all the yield of your seed*), usually paid in kind to the land's sovereign or designated government officials (cf. Gen 14.20; 28.22; Lev 27.30–33; Num 18.21–32; 1 Sam 8.15, 17; Am 4.4). Here the ancient practice is roughly adapted to the circumstances of centralization of worship. **14.23** *As a dwelling for his name.* See notes on 12.5; 12.11. The three annual pilgrimage festivals (see 16.16–17) are presumably meant as primary occasions for presentation of both agricultural tithes and *firstlings* of livestock (see also 12.17; 15.19–23). **14.24–27** Emphasis again falls on promoting inclusive celebrations (cf. note on 12.7); important social, economic, and administrative implications are ignored (cf. 2 Chr 31.2–19; Neh 12.44; Mk 11.15; Jn 2.13–14). **14.28–29** However, provision is added for local storage and distribution of tithes from produce harvested *every third year,* to sustain dispersed Levitical clans as well as to provide for others in need of charity (cf. 26.12–15; Ex 22.21–24).

15.1–18 This remarkable revision of older laws (Ex 21.2–11; 22.25; 23.10–11) seeks to strengthen procedures for redressing economic imbalances within Israelite society resulting from usury and debt slavery. (For the abusive practices at issue, see Neh 5.1–13; Job 24.9; Ezek 18.16–18; Am 2.6–8.) **15.1–3** Sabbatical *remission of debts* (Hebrew *shemitta,* only in 15.1, 2, 9; 31.10) regularizes proclamation on the Lord's behalf of "liberty" for Israel's oppressed from burdens of indebtedness (cf. 10.17–18; Lev 25; Isa 61.1–2; Jer 34.8–22). **15.2** *Claim,* the debt itself, but also the surety pledged for a loan or taken as distraint after default (cf. 2 Kings 4.1; Prov 6.1–5; 17.18; 22.26–27). **15.3** Debts of a *foreigner* are unaffected (cf. Prov 20.16; 27.13). **15.4–6** Homiletical motivation: fidelity to the covenant will assure ample blessings for all citizens to share, making Israel preeminent among nations (cf. 7.12–14; 26.15; 28.1–14). **15.7–11** These exhortations anticipate that periodic cancellation of debts could seriously curtail lending, thus aggravating the plight of those in need (cf. *Mishnah Shebi'it* 10). Enforcement must be left to the Lord's devices of reward and punish-

need, a member of your community in
any of your towns within the land that the
LORD your God is giving you, do not be
hard-hearted or tight-fisted toward your
needy neighbor. 8 You should rather open
your hand, willingly lending enough to
meet the need, whatever it may be. 9 Be
careful that you do not entertain a mean
thought, thinking, "The seventh year, the
year of remission, is near," and therefore
view your needy neighbor with hostility
and give nothing; your neighbor might
cry to the LORD against you, and you
would incur guilt. 10 Give liberally and be
ungrudging when you do so, for on this
account the LORD your God will bless you
in all your work and in all that you undertake. 11 Since there will never cease to be
some in need on the earth, I therefore
command you, "Open your hand to the
poor and needy neighbor in your land."

12 If a member of your community,
whether a Hebrew man or a Hebrew
woman, is sold[k] to you and works for you
six years, in the seventh year you shall set
that person free. 13 And when you send a
male slave[l] out from you a free person,
you shall not send him out empty-handed.
14 Provide liberally out of your flock, your
threshing floor, and your wine press, thus
giving to him some of the bounty with
which the LORD your God has blessed
you. 15 Remember that you were a slave in
the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God
redeemed you; for this reason I lay this
command upon you today. 16 But if he
says to you, "I will not go out from you,"
because he loves you and your household,
since he is well off with you, 17 then you
shall take an awl and thrust it through his
earlobe into the door, and he shall be
your slave[m] forever.

You shall do the same with regard to
your female slave.[n]

18 Do not consider it a hardship when
you send them out from you free persons,
because for six years they have given you
services worth the wages of hired laborers; and the LORD your God will bless you
in all that you do.

The Firstborn of Livestock

19 Every firstling male born of your
herd and flock you shall consecrate to the
LORD your God; you shall not do work
with your firstling ox nor shear the firstling of your flock. 20 You shall eat it, you
together with your household, in the presence of the LORD your God year by year at
the place that the LORD will choose. 21 But
if it has any defect—any serious defect,
such as lameness or blindness—you shall
not sacrifice it to the LORD your God;
22 within your towns you may eat it, the
unclean and the clean alike, as you would
a gazelle or deer. 23 Its blood, however,
you must not eat; you shall pour it out on
the ground like water.

Pilgrimage Festivals

16 Observe the month[o] of Abib by
keeping the passover to the
LORD your God, for in the month of Abib
the LORD your God brought you out of

k Or *sells himself or herself* *l* Heb *him*
m Or *bondman* *n* Or *bondwoman* *o* Or *new moon*

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ment (cf. 24.19; Ps 37.21–22; Prov 19.17). **15.9** *Cry.* An appeal to the divine judge for redress (24.15; cf. Ex 2.23–24; 22.23–24, 27). **15.12–18** In context, this reworking of older laws of manumission (Ex 21.2–11) apparently favors a collective release of both male and female bondslaves in the fixed sabbatical year of remission (cf. 31.10–13; Jer 34.8–14). **15.12** *Hebrew,* which seems to mean client status in Ex 21.2, here simply denotes a fellow Israelite; *member of your community,* lit. "your brother," rendered inclusively as sense requires. *Sold,* e.g., as a debtor or distrainee, or indentured by judicial authority to make restitution for a theft (cf. Ex 22.3). **15.13–15** Generous provision for those released is urged as appropriate imitation of the Lord's liberality in redeeming Israel from Egyptian slavery (cf. 5.14–15; 10.17–22; 16.12; 24.18, 22; 26.6–10). *Empty-handed.* Cf. 16.16; also Ex 3.21–22. **15.16–18** A noteworthy revision of Ex 21.2–11 includes the general presumption against permanent enslavement of Israelites as well as the equal treatment now accorded a bondwoman. **15.19–23** Provision is made here for disposal of firstlings in accord with the requirements of the single sanctuary. (For antecedent and alternate rulings, see Ex 13.2, 11–16; 22.29–30; 34.19–20; Lev 22.26–27; 27.26–27; Num 18.15–18.) **15.19–20** Though male *firstlings* of livestock must not be used productively, a flexible schedule (*year by year*) is allowed for sacrificial presentation (cf. 12.6–7, 17–18; 14.23; 16.16; Ex 22.30). **15.21–22** Rules of local slaughter (12.15–16, 22–24) apply to any firstling unacceptable for sacrifice because of *serious defect* (cf. 17.1; Lev 22.17–25; Mal 1.8).

Egypt by night. 2 You shall offer the passover sacrifice to the LORD your God, from the flock and the herd, at the place that the LORD will choose as a dwelling for his name. 3 You must not eat with it anything leavened. For seven days you shall eat unleavened bread with it—the bread of affliction—because you came out of the land of Egypt in great haste, so that all the days of your life you may remember the day of your departure from the land of Egypt. 4 No leaven shall be seen with you in all your territory for seven days; and none of the meat of what you slaughter on the evening of the first day shall remain until morning. 5 You are not permitted to offer the passover sacrifice within any of your towns that the LORD your God is giving you. 6 But at the place that the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his name, only there shall you offer the passover sacrifice, in the evening at sunset, the time of day when you departed from Egypt. 7 You shall cook it and eat it at the place that the LORD your God will choose; the next morning you may go back to your tents. 8 For six days you shall continue to eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a solemn assembly for the LORD your God, when you shall do no work.

9 You shall count seven weeks; begin to count the seven weeks from the time the sickle is first put to the standing grain. 10 Then you shall keep the festival of weeks to the LORD your God, contributing a freewill offering in proportion to the blessing that you have received from the LORD your God. 11 Rejoice before the LORD your God—you and your sons and your daughters, your male and female slaves, the Levites resident in your towns, as well as the strangers, the orphans, and the widows who are among you—at the place that the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his name. 12 Remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and diligently observe these statutes.

13 You shall keep the festival of booths[p] for seven days, when you have gathered in the produce from your threshing floor and your wine press. 14 Rejoice during your festival, you and your sons and your daughters, your male and female slaves, as well as the Levites, the strangers, the orphans, and the widows resident in your towns. 15 Seven days you shall keep the festival to the LORD your God at the place that the LORD will choose; for the LORD your God will bless you in all your produce and in all your undertakings, and you shall surely celebrate.

16 Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God at the place that he will choose: at the festi-

p Or *tabernacles*; Heb *succoth*

16.1–17 Deuteronomic restriction of Israel's ritual sacrifices and related ceremonies to a single sanctuary (12.5) culminates in this sketch of a revised liturgical calendar (see Ex 23.14–18; 34.18–24; cf. Lev 23.4–44; Num 28.11–29.39; Ezek 45.18–25). **16.1–8** Communal celebration of the Passover sacrifice (vv. 1–2, 4b–7) is closely correlated with the week-long consumption of unleavened bread (vv. 3–4a, 8) to commemorate the exodus from Egypt (see Ex 12–13; 23.15; 34.18; cf. Josh 5.10–12; 2 Kings 23.21–23; 2 Chr 30; 35.1–19). **16.1** According to the oldest traditions, the nocturnal escape from Egypt occurred on the "new moon" (preferable to *month*) of *Abib*, the season in early spring when ears of barley began to ripen (cf. Ex 12.29–32, 41–42; 13.3–4; Num 29.6; 1 Sam 20.5, 18; Isa 1.13; Am 8.5). **16.2** Presumably firstlings of livestock (*flock* and *herd*) were to provide the sacrificial meals during the full term of festivities (cf. Ex 12.5; 2 Chr 30.17–24; 35.7–13). **16.2, 6** *As a dwelling for his name*. See notes on 12.5; 12.11. **16.7** *Cook*, or "boil" (1 Sam 2.13, 15); cf. Ex 12.9; 2 Chr 35.13. **16.8** *Solemn assembly*. A sacral convocation concludes the festivities (cf. Ex 13.6; Lev 23.36; Num 29.35; Isa 1.13; Am 5.21). **16.9–12** *Weeks*, later known as Pentecost (e.g., Acts 2.1), is the "harvest" festival of early summer, when first fruits of grain were to be presented at the sanctuary (cf. Ex 23.16; 34.22; Num 28.26). **16.10** *Freewill offering*, apparently in addition to the mandatory tithe of agricultural produce (cf. 12.6, 17). **16.11** *As a dwelling for his name*. See notes on 12.5; 12.11. **16.13–15** *Booths* (cf. Lev 23.34, 42–43; Ezra 3.4; Neh 8.14) is the old autumn festival of "ingathering" at the end of the agricultural year (Ex 23.16; 34.22). It seems to have been the occasion for King Josiah's renewal of the covenant (cf. 31.10–13; 2 Kings 23.1–3) as well as Solomon's dedication of the temple two centuries earlier (1 Kings 8.2, 62–66). **16.16–17** In this summary, the spring pilgrimage is designated only as *unleavened bread*; specification of *males* as participants reflects older practice (Ex 23.17; 34.23) rather than the Deuteronomic emphasis on inclusivity (vv. 11, 14; see note on 12.7).

val of unleavened bread, at the festival of
weeks, and at the festival of booths.[q]
They shall not appear before the LORD
empty-handed; 17 all shall give as they are
able, according to the blessing of the
LORD your God that he has given you.

Administration of Justice

18 You shall appoint judges and offi-
cials throughout your tribes, in all your
towns that the LORD your God is giving
you, and they shall render just decisions
for the people. 19 You must not distort
justice; you must not show partiality; and
you must not accept bribes, for a bribe
blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts
the cause of those who are in the right.
20 Justice, and only justice, you shall pur-
sue, so that you may live and occupy the
land that the LORD your God is giv-
ing you.

21 You shall not plant any tree as a
sacred pole[r] beside the altar that you
make for the LORD your God; 22 nor shall
you set up a stone pillar—things that the
LORD your God hates.

17 You must not sacrifice to the
LORD your God an ox or a sheep
that has a defect, anything seriously
wrong; for that is abhorrent to the LORD
your God.

2 If there is found among you, in one
of your towns that the LORD your God is
giving you, a man or woman who does
what is evil in the sight of the LORD your
God, and transgresses his covenant 3 by
going to serve other gods and worshiping
them—whether the sun or the moon or
any of the host of heaven, which I have
forbidden— 4 and if it is reported to you
or you hear of it, and you make a thor-
ough inquiry, and the charge is proved
true that such an abhorrent thing has oc-
curred in Israel, 5 then you shall bring out
to your gates that man or that woman who
has committed this crime and you shall
stone the man or woman to death. 6 On
the evidence of two or three witnesses the
death sentence shall be executed; a per-
son must not be put to death on the evi-
dence of only one witness. 7 The hands of
the witnesses shall be the first raised
against the person to execute the death
penalty, and afterward the hands of all
the people. So you shall purge the evil
from your midst.

8 If a judicial decision is too difficult
for you to make between one kind of
bloodshed and another, one kind of legal
right and another, or one kind of assault
and another—any such matters of dispute
in your towns—then you shall immedi-
ately go up to the place that the LORD
your God will choose, 9 where you shall
consult with the levitical priests and the
judge who is in office in those days; they
shall announce to you the decision in the
case. 10 Carry out exactly the decision that
they announce to you from the place that
the LORD will choose, diligently observing

q Or *tabernacles*; Heb *succoth* r Heb *Asherah*

16.18–17.13 The burden of theocratic governance within Israel is to be born by a two-tiered judiciary comprised of city courts in tribal jurisdictions and a consultative council associated with the single sanctuary. **16.18–20** The whole community (*you*) authorizes judicial administration by a corps of professional *judges and officials*, probably consisting in large part of dispersed Levitical personnel (cf. 1.13–17; 19.17; 21.5; Ex 32.26–29; Josh 21.1–42; 1 Chr 23.2–6; 26.29; 2 Chr 17.7–9; 19.5–11). **16.19** On the injunctions against *partiality* and taking *bribes*, see 1.16–17; 10.17–18 (cf. Ex 23.2–3, 6–8; Lev 19.15; Prov 17.23; 18.5; Isa 1.23; Mic 7.3). **16.21–17.1** In context, these prohibitions suggest that maintenance of ritual purity is to be a primary judicial concern. For the themes, see 7.5; 15.21 (cf. 2 Kings 23.6, 15). **17.2–7** Due process in adjudicating capital offenses is illustrated by reviewing prosecution of a case of apostasy (cf. 13.1–11). **17.2–3** *Transgresses his covenant.* Cf. Josh 7.11, 15; 23.16; Judg 2.20; 2 Kings 18.12; Jer 34.18; Hos 6.7; 8.1. *Sun ... moon ... host of heaven.* Cf. 4.19; 2 Kings 17.16; 21.3; 23.5; Jer 8.2; Ezek 8.16. **17.4–5** See 13.10. **17.6** See 19.15–21; cf. Num 35.30. **17.7** See 13.5, 9; note on 13.5. **17.8–13** Moses' authority to arbitrate in cases *too difficult* for resolution by local courts (cf. 1.17; Ex 18.22, 26) is institutionalized in a judicial council consisting mainly of Levitical priests. (This tribunal resembles the one attributed to King Jehoshaphat in 2 Chr 19.8–11.) **17.8** *One kind of bloodshed and another*, e.g., between murder and accidental homicide (cf. 19.4–13). **17.9–12** Levitical competence in judicial affairs seems here to be associated with transmission and authoritative application of Mosaic law (*the law that they interpret*); cf. 17.18; 31.9; 33.10; 2 Kings 17.27–28; Ezra 7.25–26. *Judge*, perhaps the king or civil governor (cf. 2 Sam

everything they instruct you. 11 You must carry out fully the law that they interpret for you or the ruling that they announce to you; do not turn aside from the decision that they announce to you, either to the right or to the left. 12 As for anyone who presumes to disobey the priest appointed to minister there to the LORD your God, or the judge, that person shall die. So you shall purge the evil from Israel. 13 All the people will hear and be afraid, and will not act presumptuously again.

Kingship

14 When you have come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and have taken possession of it and settled in it, and you say, "I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are around me," 15 you may indeed set over you a king whom the LORD your God will choose. One of your own community you may set as king over you; you are not permitted to put a foreigner over you, who is not of your own community. 16 Even so, he must not acquire many horses for himself, or return the people to Egypt in order to acquire more horses, since the LORD has said to you, "You must never return that way again." 17 And he must not acquire many wives for himself, or else his heart will turn away; also silver and gold he must not acquire in great quantity for himself. 18 When he has taken the throne of his kingdom, he shall have a copy of this law written for him in the presence of the levitical priests. 19 It shall remain with him and he shall read in it all the days of his life, so that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, diligently observing all the words of this law and these statutes, 20 neither exalting himself above other members of the community nor turning aside from the commandment, either to the right or to the left, so that he and his descendants may reign long over his kingdom in Israel.

The Levitical Priesthood

18 The levitical priests, the whole tribe of Levi, shall have no allotment or inheritance within Israel. They may eat the sacrifices that are the LORD's portion[s] 2 but they shall have no inheritance among the other members of the community; the LORD is their inheritance, as he promised them.

3 This shall be the priests' due from the people, from those offering a sacrifice, whether an ox or a sheep: they shall give to the priest the shoulder, the two jowls, and the stomach. 4 The first fruits of your grain, your wine, and your oil, as well as the first of the fleece of your sheep, you shall give him. 5 For the LORD your God has chosen Levi[t] out of all your

s Meaning of Heb uncertain t Heb *him*

14.3–20; 1 Kings 3.9; Prov 16.10). **17.13** See 13.11.

17.14–18.22 Offices held by virtue of divine election rather than communal empowerment are treated in this central section of the polity. **17.14–20** While monarchy is a permissible instrument of theocratic governance, major restrictions are placed on the exercise of royal authority (cf. 1 Sam 10.25). **17.14** *When . . . and settled in it*, a formulaic introduction; cf. 26.1. *Like all the nations*. Cf. 1 Sam 8.5, 20. **17.15** On divine designation of kings, usually through prophetic agency, see, e.g., 1 Sam 10.24; 16.1–13; 1 Kings 19.15–16; 2 Kings 9.1–13 (cf. Hos 8.4). *One of your own community*, lit. "from among your brothers," i.e., a fellow Israelite (cf. 18.15, 18). **17.16–17** These injunctions against abuse of royal power seem to have Solomon's excesses in specific view (1 Kings 10.6–11.8; cf. 1 Sam 8.10–18; Isa 2.7). **17.18** *A copy of this law* (see 4.44–45). The interpretive rendering in the Septuagint, Greek *to deuteronomion touto* ("this reiterated law"; cf. Josh 8.32), underlies the familiar name "Deuteronomy." **17.19–20** The king's only stated task is to model obedience to the covenantal law incumbent on Israel as a whole; so too, dynastic succession and national tenure in the land are parallel rewards for fidelity (cf. 5.32–6.2; 2 Sam 7.10–16; 1 Kings 2.4; Ps 132.11–18).

18.1–8 Other texts sketch the broader scope of work performed by the Levitical bureaucracy (cf. 10.8–9; 17.8–12, 18; 20.2–9; 21.5; 31.9; 33.8–11). Here the concern is to establish the perquisites of Levites who serve at the single sanctuary. **18.1–2** The sacerdotal profession, supported chiefly by sacral prebends, is a prerogative distinguishing the clans or guilds that comprise *the whole tribe of Levi* from Israelite tribes granted territorial dominion (cf. Josh 13.14, 33; 18.7; 21.1–42; 2 Chr 31.2–19). **18.3** *The priests' due*. Cf. Lev 7.28–36; Num 18.8–20. **18.4** *First fruits*, "choice" portions representing the tithes of agricultural produce (cf. 14.22–29; 26.1–15; Num 18.21–32; Neh 13.10–13). **18.5** See 10.8;

tribes, to stand and minister in the name
of the LORD, him and his sons for all time.
6 If a Levite leaves any of your towns,
from wherever he has been residing in Is-
rael, and comes to the place that the LORD
will choose (and he may come whenever
he wishes), 7 then he may minister in the
name of the LORD his God, like all his
fellow-Levites who stand to minister there
before the LORD. 8 They shall have equal
portions to eat, even though they have in-
come from the sale of family pos-
sessions.[u]

Israel's Prophets

9 When you come into the land that
the LORD your God is giving you, you
must not learn to imitate the abhorrent
practices of those nations. 10 No one shall
be found among you who makes a son or
daughter pass through fire, or who prac-
tices divination, or is a soothsayer, or an
augur, or a sorcerer, 11 or one who casts
spells, or who consults ghosts or spirits, or
who seeks oracles from the dead. 12 For
whoever does these things is abhorrent to
the LORD; it is because of such abhorrent
practices that the LORD your God is driv-
ing them out before you. 13 You must re-
main completely loyal to the LORD your
God. 14 Although these nations that you
are about to dispossess do give heed to
soothsayers and diviners, as for you, the
LORD your God does not permit you to
do so.

15 The LORD your God will raise up
for you a prophet[v] like me from among
your own people; you shall heed such a
prophet.[w] 16 This is what you requested
of the LORD your God at Horeb on the
day of the assembly when you said: "If I
hear the voice of the LORD my God any
more, or ever again see this great fire, I
will die." 17 Then the LORD replied to me:
"They are right in what they have said.
18 I will raise up for them a prophet[v] like
you from among their own people; I will
put my words in the mouth of the
prophet,[x] who shall speak to them every-
thing that I command. 19 Anyone who
does not heed the words that the
prophet[y] shall speak in my name, I my-
self will hold accountable. 20 But any
prophet who speaks in the name of other
gods, or who presumes to speak in my
name a word that I have not commanded
the prophet to speak—that prophet shall
die." 21 You may say to yourself, "How can
we recognize a word that the LORD has
not spoken?" 22 If a prophet speaks in the
name of the LORD but the thing does not
take place or prove true, it is a word that
the LORD has not spoken. The prophet
has spoken it presumptuously; do not be
frightened by it.

u Meaning of Heb uncertain v Or *prophets*
w Or *such prophets* x Or *mouths of the prophets*
y Heb *he*

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cf. Ex 32.25–29; 1 Sam 2.27–28; Jer 33.17–22; Mal 2.2–7. **18.6–7** *Residing.* Lacking their own tribal territory, Levites "sojourn" among the land-holding tribes (cf. Judg 17.7; 19.1). Eligible Levites retain the right to officiate at the single sanctuary (cf. 2 Kings 23.8–9; 2 Chr 11.13–15). **18.8** *Income,* apparently, e.g., from the sale or lease of family fields and homes (cf. Lev 25.32–34; Num 35.1–8; Jer 32.6–15).

18.9–22 Although prophecy, in contrast to pagan divinatory practices, is a legitimate medium of revelation, individual prophetic claims to speak on the Lord's behalf must be rigorously assessed. **18.9–12** Polemic against *abhorrent practices* of the erstwhile nations (see 12.29–31; 20.17–18; note on 7.25–26) frames proscription of various types of occultism (cf. Ex 22.18; Lev 19.31; 20.6, 27; 1 Sam 28.3–19; Isa 8.19–20; Ezek 21.21). **18.10** Child sacrifice (*pass through fire*; see note on 12.31) is also associated with mantic practices in Deuteronomic indictments of both the Northern Kingdom, Israel, and King Manasseh of Judah (2 Kings 17.17; 21.6), while Josiah is credited with implementing the prohibitions (2 Kings 23.10, 24). **18.13** *Completely loyal* connotes personal "integrity" or "blamelessness" (e.g., Gen 6.9; 17.1; Job 12.4; Ps 18.23; Prov 11.5). **18.15–18** Prophecy, manifest as an authoritative role rather than in a fixed office, is legitimated on the model of Moses' mediation between God and Israel at Horeb (5.23–33; Ex 20.18–21; cf. 2 Kings 17.13; Jer 7.25–26). **18.15** *Like me,* i.e., a fellow Israelite (cf. 17.15; 34.10 is different). **18.18** *I will put my words in the mouth of the prophet.* Cf. Ex 4.12–16; Jer 1.9; 15.19; Ezek 3.1–4. **18.19** Cf. Jer 11.21–23; Am 7.10–17. **18.20** Unauthorized prophesying, whether in *the name of other gods* or the Lord, is a capital offense; see 13.1–5 (cf. Jer 14.13–16; 23.9–40; 28.12–17; Ezek 13). **18.21–22** On the criterion's utility, cf. 1 Kings 22.5–28; Jer 18.5–12; 28; Ezek 12.21–28; 33.30–33; Jon 3.10–4.5; Hab 2.1–3.

Cities of Refuge

19 When the LORD your God has cut off the nations whose land the LORD your God is giving you, and you have dispossessed them and settled in their towns and in their houses, 2 you shall set apart three cities in the land that the LORD your God is giving you to possess. 3 You shall calculate the distances[z] and divide into three regions the land that the LORD your God gives you as a possession, so that any homicide can flee to one of them.

4 Now this is the case of a homicide who might flee there and live, that is, someone who has killed another person unintentionally when the two had not been at enmity before: 5 Suppose someone goes into the forest with another to cut wood, and when one of them swings the ax to cut down a tree, the head slips from the handle and strikes the other person who then dies; the killer may flee to one of these cities and live. 6 But if the distance is too great, the avenger of blood in hot anger might pursue and overtake and put the killer to death, although a death sentence was not deserved, since the two had not been at enmity before. 7 Therefore I command you: You shall set apart three cities.

8 If the LORD your God enlarges your territory, as he swore to your ancestors—and he will give you all the land that he promised your ancestors to give you, 9 provided you diligently observe this entire commandment that I command you today, by loving the LORD your God and walking always in his ways—then you shall add three more cities to these three, 10 so that the blood of an innocent person may not be shed in the land that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, thereby bringing bloodguilt upon you.

11 But if someone at enmity with another lies in wait and attacks and takes the life of that person, and flees into one of these cities, 12 then the elders of the killer's city shall send to have the culprit taken from there and handed over to the avenger of blood to be put to death. 13 Show no pity; you shall purge the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, so that it may go well with you.

Proscription of Encroachment

14 You must not move your neighbor's boundary marker, set up by former generations, on the property that will be allotted to you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you to possess.

Witnesses

15 A single witness shall not suffice to convict a person of any crime or wrongdoing in connection with any offense that may be committed. Only on the evidence of two or three witnesses shall a charge be sustained. 16 If a malicious witness comes

z Or *prepare roads to them*

19.1–25.19 The diverse articles of this division exemplify principles of social justice and practices meant to protect individual life and livelihood within the covenant community. **19.1–13** This adaptation of Ex 21.12–14 emphasizes communal responsibility to facilitate legitimate asylum in cases of accidental homicide without compromising either prosecution of those guilty of premeditated murder or, implicitly, the ban on local altars (cf. 4.41–43; Num 35.9–28; Josh 20). **19.1–3** A formulaic introduction to the division echoing 12.29 is followed by prescriptions for establishment of *three cities* that provide regionally accessible places of refuge. **19.4–7** Rationale for the institution is given in the form of an illustrative case. **19.4** *Unintentionally*, not premeditated (lit. "without knowledge"; cf. Job 35.16; 36.12; 38.2). **19.6** *Avenger of blood*, the agent designated (by the family of the deceased or a city court?) to inflict retaliatory punishment on the murderer (cf. 2 Sam 14.11). *In hot anger*, impetuously (lit. "because his heart is hot"; cf. Ps 39.3). **19.8–9** Provision for an additional three cities when *the LORD . . . enlarges your territory*; cf. 12.20; also 11.22–25. **19.10** *Bloodguilt*, the onus or pollution of illegitimate "bloodshed"; cf. 21.8–9; Ex 22.2; 1 Sam 25.26, 33; 2 Sam 21.1; Ps 51.14; Hos 4.2. **19.11–12** Cf. Josh 20.4–6. **19.12** On the jurisdiction of city *elders*, cf. 21.1–9, 19–20; 22.15–19; 25.7–9. **19.13** *No pity*. See 13.5, 8. **19.14** Concern for the integrity of cairns and the like delimiting familial plots of arable land is widely attested in biblical and other ancient sources (see 27.17; Job 24.2; Prov 22.28; Hos 5.10; cf. *Instruction of Amenemope* 7.11–19).

19.15–21 In view here is protection of individuals from pernicious accusation and perjured witness (cf. 5.20; Ex 20.16; 23.1). **19.15** The requirement of corroborative testimony to sustain a guilty verdict in capital cases (17.6; Num 35.30) is restated as a general rule of judicial evidence.

forward to accuse someone of wrongdoing, 17then both parties to the dispute shall appear before the LORD, before the priests and the judges who are in office in those days, 18and the judges shall make a thorough inquiry. If the witness is a false witness, having testified falsely against another, 19then you shall do to the false witness just as the false witness had meant to do to the other. So you shall purge the evil from your midst. 20The rest shall hear and be afraid, and a crime such as this shall never again be committed among you. 21Show no pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

Conduct of Warfare

20 When you go out to war against your enemies, and see horses and chariots, an army larger than your own, you shall not be afraid of them; for the LORD your God is with you, who brought you up from the land of Egypt. 2Before you engage in battle, the priest shall come forward and speak to the troops, 3and shall say to them: "Hear, O Israel! Today you are drawing near to do battle against your enemies. Do not lose heart, or be afraid, or panic, or be in dread of them; 4for it is the LORD your God who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to give you victory." 5Then the officials shall address the troops, saying, "Has anyone built a new house but not dedicated it? He should go back to his house, or he might die in the battle and another dedicate it. 6Has anyone planted a vineyard but not yet enjoyed its fruit? He should go back to his house, or he might die in the battle and another be first to enjoy its fruit. 7Has anyone become engaged to a woman but not yet married her? He should go back to his house, or he might die in the battle and another marry her." 8The officials shall continue to address the troops, saying, "Is anyone afraid or disheartened? He should go back to his house, or he might cause the heart of his comrades to melt like his own." 9When the officials have finished addressing the troops, then the commanders shall take charge of them.

10 When you draw near to a town to fight against it, offer it terms of peace. 11If it accepts your terms of peace and surrenders to you, then all the people in it shall serve you at forced labor. 12If it does not submit to you peacefully, but makes war against you, then you shall besiege it; 13and when the LORD your God gives it into your hand, you shall put all its males to the sword. 14You may, however, take as your booty the women, the children, livestock, and everything else in the town, all its spoil. You may enjoy the spoil of your

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19.16 *Malicious witness*, one intent on doing injury or "violence" to another (cf. Gen 6.13; Job 19.7; Ps 35.11). *Wrongdoing* is the capital offense of incitement to "treason" in 13.5 (cf. Isa 59.13). **19.17** *Both parties*, accuser and accused. *Before the LORD* refers to divine presence at the (single) sanctuary (e.g., 12.18; 14.23), here represented by the judicial council (17.8–12; cf. 1.17). **19.18** Cf. 13.14; 17.4. **19.19–21** Just retribution as well as effective deterrence (cf. 13.11) commend punishment corresponding to the harm that the culprit intended to do to the victim. The talion formula *life for life . . . foot for foot* (cf. Ex 21.23–25) is invoked to underscore the principle of reciprocity.

20.1–20 Protocols of holy war, sketched in this and subsequent units (21.10–14; 23.9–14; 24.5), are one of the features distinguishing the Deuteronomic polity from other bodies of biblical law. The martial program of the later Judean monarchy (cf. 2 Kings 18.7–19.35; 23.29) as well as the ideology of the conquest era (e.g., 7.1–2, 17–26; 9.1–3; 31.3–8) seem to be reflected in these texts. **20.1** Because the Lord is present as warrior with Israel to give victory (cf. 1.30; 3.22; Ex 14.14; 15.1–4; Judg 4.14), the militia should not be intimidated by a foe's superior numbers and weaponry. *Horses and chariots*. Cf. Josh 11.4; 1 Kings 20.25; Isa 31.1. **20.2–9** The levy. **20.2–4** The only stated task of the *priest* is to deliver a vestigial war oracle (cf. 1.20–21, 29–31; 9.1–3); cf., e.g., Num 31.6; Judg 20.25–28; 1 Sam 7.7–11; 14.36–42. **20.5–8** On the administrative role of the *officials*, see 16.18 (cf. 1.15; Josh 1.10). Implementation of these provisions for exemption is specifically noted in 1 Macc 3.56 (cf. Deut 24.5; Judg 7.3). *Dedicated*, or "inaugurated"; cf. 1 Kings 8.63 (of the temple); also cf. Deut 28.30 (*live in*). **20.6** *Enjoyed its fruit*, made "profane" or ordinary use of the harvest (Jer 31.5; cf. Lev 19.23–25). **20.7** *Engaged*, formally betrothed; cf. 2 Sam 3.14. **20.9** *Commanders*, lit. "officers of hosts" (cf. 1.15; 1 Kings 2.5). **20.10–20** Rules of engagement. **20.10–11** *Terms of peace*, surrender followed by vassalage (cf. 2.26; Josh 9.3–27; 11.19; Judg 21.13; 2 Sam 10.19). **20.12–15** A mitigated ban is applicable

enemies, which the LORD your God has
given you. 15 Thus you shall treat all the
towns that are very far from you, which
are not towns of the nations here. 16 But
as for the towns of these peoples that the
LORD your God is giving you as an inheri-
tance, you must not let anything that
breathes remain alive. 17 You shall annihi-
late them—the Hittites and the Amorites,
the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hi-
vites and the Jebusites—just as the LORD
your God has commanded, 18 so that they
may not teach you to do all the abhorrent
things that they do for their gods, and you
thus sin against the LORD your God.

19 If you besiege a town for a long
time, making war against it in order to
take it, you must not destroy its trees by
wielding an ax against them. Although
you may take food from them, you must
not cut them down. Are trees in the field
human beings that they should come un-
der siege from you? 20 You may destroy
only the trees that you know do not pro-
duce food; you may cut them down for
use in building siegeworks against the
town that makes war with you, until it
falls.

Purgation of Bloodguilt

21 If, in the land that the LORD your
God is giving you to possess, a
body is found lying in open country, and
it is not known who struck the person
down, 2 then your elders and your judges
shall come out to measure the distances to
the towns that are near the body. 3 The
elders of the town nearest the body shall
take a heifer that has never been worked,
one that has not pulled in the yoke; 4 the
elders of that town shall bring the heifer
down to a wadi with running water, which
is neither plowed nor sown, and shall
break the heifer's neck there in the wadi.
5 Then the priests, the sons of Levi, shall
come forward, for the LORD your God has
chosen them to minister to him and to
pronounce blessings in the name of the
LORD, and by their decision all cases of
dispute and assault shall be settled. 6 All
the elders of that town nearest the body
shall wash their hands over the heifer
whose neck was broken in the wadi, 7 and
they shall declare: "Our hands did not
shed this blood, nor were we witnesses to
it. 8 Absolve, O LORD, your people Israel,
whom you redeemed; do not let the guilt
of innocent blood remain in the midst of
your people Israel." Then they will be ab-
solved of bloodguilt. 9 So you shall purge
the guilt of innocent blood from your
midst, because you must do what is right
in the sight of the LORD.

Treatment of Female Captives

10 When you go out to war against
your enemies, and the LORD your God
hands them over to you and you take
them captive, 11 suppose you see among
the captives a beautiful woman whom you
desire and want to marry, 12 and so you
bring her home to your house: she shall

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against distant or external foes (cf. 2.33–35; 3.6–7; Num 31.7–54). **20.16–18** A total ban must be inflicted upon the proscribed nations of Canaan (see 7.1–2; cf. 12.29–31). *Anything that breathes*, livestock as well as the human populations (cf. Gen 7.22; Josh 10.40; 11.11, 14; 1 Kings 15.29). **20.19–20** For the tactics called into question, cf. 2 Kings 3.19, 25; Josephus *Jewish War* 5.523; 6.5–6.

21.1–9 This case sketches procedures for restricting communal liability and exculpating bloodguilt in event of a rural homicide in which the culprit cannot be found and prosecuted (cf. 19.4–13; Num 35.30–34). **21.2** Appointed *judges* (cf. 16.18) exercise concurrent jurisdiction with local *elders* (cf. 19.12) in determining the town nearest the scene of the crime. **21.3–4** Transfer or expurgation of liability is enacted by nonsacrificial slaughter (*break the ... neck*; cf. Ex 13.13; 34.20) of an unworked *heifer* (cf. Num 19.2; 1 Sam 6.7) in a pristine locale. *Running water*. The "constant flow" (cf. Ps 74.15; Am 5.24) presumably effects the removal of bloodguilt. **21.5** For the jurisdiction of *the priests, the sons of Levi* (also 31.9; cf. 18.1), see 17.8–13. **21.6–8** An exculpatory act (hand washing) and declaration of innocence accompany petitionary prayer for removal of bloodguilt. **21.8** *Absolve*, "cleanse," "forgive," or "expiate" (e.g., 32.43; Ex 32.30; 2 Sam 21.3). **21.9** Cf. 13.5, 18; 19.13.

21.10–21 These three articles (vv. 10–14, 15–17, 18–21) impose restraints on the exercise of authority by male heads of household. **21.10–14** Here a foreign woman acquired as a spoil of war (cf. 20.14) who then becomes a man's slave-wife or concubine may not later be sold for profit by the husband (cf. Ex 21.7–11). **21.12–13** The rites mark a transition, separating the woman from her former identity and captive

shave her head, pare her nails, 13 discard
her captive's garb, and shall remain in
your house a full month, mourning for
her father and mother; after that you may
go in to her and be her husband, and she
shall be your wife. 14 But if you are not
satisfied with her, you shall let her go free
and not sell her for money. You must not
treat her as a slave, since you have dishon-
ored her.

Primogeniture

15 If a man has two wives, one of
them loved and the other disliked, and if
both the loved and the disliked have
borne him sons, the firstborn being the
son of the one who is disliked, 16 then on
the day when he wills his possessions to
his sons, he is not permitted to treat the
son of the loved as the firstborn in prefer-
ence to the son of the disliked, who is the
firstborn. 17 He must acknowledge as
firstborn the son of the one who is dis-
liked, giving him a double portion[a] of all
that he has; since he is the first issue of his
virility, the right of the firstborn is his.

Prosecution of an Incorrigible Son

18 If someone has a stubborn and re-
bellious son who will not obey his father
and mother, who does not heed them
when they discipline him, 19 then his fa-
ther and his mother shall take hold of him
and bring him out to the elders of his
town at the gate of that place. 20 They
shall say to the elders of his town, "This
son of ours is stubborn and rebellious. He
will not obey us. He is a glutton and a
drunkard." 21 Then all the men of the
town shall stone him to death. So you shall
purge the evil from your midst; and all
Israel will hear, and be afraid.

Burial of a Criminal's Corpse

22 When someone is convicted of a
crime punishable by death and is exe-
cuted, and you hang him on a tree, 23 his
corpse must not remain all night upon the
tree; you shall bury him that same day,
for anyone hung on a tree is under God's
curse. You must not defile the land that
the LORD your God is giving you for pos-
session.

Return of Lost Property

22 You shall not watch your neigh-
bor's ox or sheep straying away
and ignore them; you shall take them
back to their owner. 2 If the owner does
not reside near you or you do not know
who the owner is, you shall bring it to
your own house, and it shall remain with
you until the owner claims it; then you
shall return it. 3 You shall do the same
with a neighbor's donkey; you shall do the
same with a neighbor's garment; and you
shall do the same with anything else that
your neighbor loses and you find. You
may not withhold your help.

a Heb *two-thirds*

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status in preparation for her role as bride. **21.14** *Go free* may denote manumission rather than divorce (cf. 15.12–13; Jer 34.16; cf. 22.19, 29; 24.1–3). *As a slave*; i.e., as chattel. *Dishonored* or "violated" often refers to coerced sexual intercourse (e.g., 22.24, 29; Gen 34.2; Judg 19.24; 2 Sam 13.12). **21.15–17** The legal status of *firstborn* son, with an attendant share of inheritance, is fixed by priority of birth rather than paternal decision. (Cf., e.g., Gen 21.9–13; 27.1–40; 48.13–49.4; 1 Kings 1.15–21; 1 Chr 5.1–2; *Code of Hammurabi* 165–170.) **21.15** *Disliked*. Cf. Gen 29.31–33. **21.17** *Double portion*, "two-thirds" of the total estate (cf. 2 Kings 2.9; Zech 13.8). *Virility*. Cf. Gen 49.3; Ps 105.36. **21.18–21** The local community, represented by its elders, has jurisdiction in the capital case of a son charged with chronically dishonorable conduct in defiance of parental authority (cf. 5.16; 27.16; Ex 21.15, 17; Lev 20.9). **21.19** Both parents must appear as plaintiffs before the court (at the *town gate*; cf. Isa 29.21; Am 5.10, 12, 15). **21.20** *Stubborn and rebellious*, obstinately unruly (cf. Jer 5.23; Ps 78.8). *A glutton and a drunkard*, dissolute (cf. Prov 23.20–21; 28.7; see also Mt 11.19; Lk 7.34). **21.21** Public execution by stoning treats the offense as comparable to treason; cf. 13.5, 10–11; 22.21, 24; Lev 20.2; 24.14–16.

21.22–23 Limitation on public display of the corpse of an executed criminal; cf. Josh 8.29; 10.26–27; 1 Sam 31.10; 2 Sam 4.12. Exposure of the body (*hang on a tree*) was presumably meant to revile the crime by degrading its perpetrator, supposed to be *under God's curse*. Same-day burial prevented the corpse from becoming carrion (cf. 2 Sam 21.10; Ezek 39.17–20).

22.1–3 This redraft of Ex 23.4 prescribes initiatives to aid fellow Israelites in the recovery of straying livestock (cf. 1 Sam 9.3) and, by extension, any other lost property.

Assorted Duties and Restrictions

4 You shall not see your neighbor's
donkey or ox fallen on the road and ignore it; you shall help to lift it up.
5 A woman shall not wear a man's apparel, nor shall a man put on a woman's
garment; for whoever does such things is
abhorrent to the LORD your God.
6 If you come on a bird's nest, in any
tree or on the ground, with fledglings or
eggs, with the mother sitting on the fledglings or on the eggs, you shall not take the
mother with the young. 7 Let the mother
go, taking only the young for yourself, in
order that it may go well with you and you
may live long.
8 When you build a new house, you
shall make a parapet for your roof; otherwise you might have bloodguilt on your
house, if anyone should fall from it.
9 You shall not sow your vineyard
with a second kind of seed, or the whole
yield will have to be forfeited, both the
crop that you have sown and the yield of
the vineyard itself.
10 You shall not plow with an ox and
a donkey yoked together.
11 You shall not wear clothes made of
wool and linen woven together.
12 You shall make tassels on the four
corners of the cloak with which you cover
yourself.

The Accused Bride

13 Suppose a man marries a woman,
but after going in to her, he dislikes her
14 and makes up charges against her, slandering her by saying, "I married this
woman; but when I lay with her, I did not
find evidence of her virginity." 15 The father of the young woman and her mother
shall then submit the evidence of the
young woman's virginity to the elders of
the city at the gate. 16 The father of the
young woman shall say to the elders: "I
gave my daughter in marriage to this man
but he dislikes her; 17 now he has made up
charges against her, saying, 'I did not find
evidence of your daughter's virginity.' But
here is the evidence of my daughter's virginity." Then they shall spread out the
cloth before the elders of the town. 18 The
elders of that town shall take the man and
punish him; 19 they shall fine him one
hundred shekels of silver (which they
shall give to the young woman's father)
because he has slandered a virgin of Israel. She shall remain his wife; he shall
not be permitted to divorce her as long as
he lives.
20 If, however, this charge is true,
that evidence of the young woman's virginity was not found, 21 then they shall
bring the young woman out to the entrance of her father's house and the men

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22.4 A reformulation of Ex 23.5. **22.5** Classification of cross-dressing as *abhorrent to the LORD* (cf. note on 7.25–26; 12.31) suggests that the prohibition has in view pagan cultic practices (associated, e.g., with worship of the Mesopotamian goddess Ishtar). **22.6–7** The article urges self-interest (well-being, longevity) as ample motive for ecological sensitivity (cf. 20.19–20; Lev 22.28). **22.8** Flat *roofs* of houses functioned as domestic space (e.g., Josh 2.6). *Bloodguilt* (cf. 19.10). The homeowner was liable for injury or death resulting from negligent construction. **22.9–11** Traditional interpretation understood these and related provisions (Lev 19.19) to exemplify distinctions in the created order that were not to be blurred by human agency; e.g., "nature does not delight in the combination of dissimilar things" (Josephus *Antiquities* 4.228–29; cf. Philo *Special Laws* 4.203–12; *Mishnah Kilayim*). **22.9** *Forfeited* or "hallowed"; i.e., treated like tithed produce (cf. 26.13; Lev 27.10, 21; Josh 6.19). **22.12** Cf. Num 15.38–41 (which develops a theological rationale for the practice).

22.13–21 Emphasis in this case as drafted falls on constraining a husband who falsely accuses his bride of losing her virginity prior to marital consummation; a codicil sketches punitive response, should the accusation be unrefuted (vv. 20–21). The litigants in contention before the town elders (cf. 21.19–20) are the bride's parents and the husband, whose charges have implicitly defamed them as well as their daughter. **22.13–14** Motive for the slander is not stated; that the husband *dislikes* or "hates" his wife would suffice as grounds for formal divorce (cf. 21.15; 24.1). *Evidence of her virginity*, a sign of blood from a rupture of the hymen (see v. 17). **22.18–19** While *punishment* could include flogging (cf. 21.18; 25.1–3), it most clearly refers to monetary damages awarded the bride's father, which are double the amount specified for rape (22.29; cf. Ex 22.7). Since the husband accused his wife of a capital offense comparable to adultery (cf. vv. 21–24), the preclusion of divorce falls well short of talion in severity (see note on 19.19–21); the woman's wishes are not considered. **22.21** *Disgraceful act*, an "outrage," usually of sexual nature (e.g., Gen 34.7; Judg 19.23–24; 2 Sam

of her town shall stone her to death, because she committed a disgraceful act in Israel by prostituting herself in her father's house. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

Adultery and Related Offenses

22 If a man is caught lying with the wife of another man, both of them shall die, the man who lay with the woman as well as the woman. So you shall purge the evil from Israel.

23 If there is a young woman, a virgin already engaged to be married, and a man meets her in the town and lies with her, 24 you shall bring both of them to the gate of that town and stone them to death, the young woman because she did not cry for help in the town and the man because he violated his neighbor's wife. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

25 But if the man meets the engaged woman in the open country, and the man seizes her and lies with her, then only the man who lay with her shall die. 26 You shall do nothing to the young woman; the young woman has not committed an offense punishable by death, because this case is like that of someone who attacks and murders a neighbor. 27 Since he found her in the open country, the engaged woman may have cried for help, but there was no one to rescue her.

28 If a man meets a virgin who is not engaged, and seizes her and lies with her, and they are caught in the act, 29 the man who lay with her shall give fifty shekels of silver to the young woman's father, and she shall become his wife. Because he violated her he shall not be permitted to divorce her as long as he lives.

30[b] A man shall not marry his father's wife, thereby violating his father's rights.[c]

Membership in the Assembly

23 No one whose testicles are crushed or whose penis is cut off shall be admitted to the assembly of the LORD.

2 Those born of an illicit union shall not be admitted to the assembly of the LORD. Even to the tenth generation, none of their descendants shall be admitted to the assembly of the LORD.

3 No Ammonite or Moabite shall be admitted to the assembly of the LORD. Even to the tenth generation, none of their descendants shall be admitted to the assembly of the LORD, 4 because they did not meet you with food and water on your journey out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam son of Beor, from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you. 5 (Yet the LORD your God refused to heed Balaam; the LORD your God turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the LORD your God loved you.) 6 You shall never promote their welfare or their prosperity as long as you live.

b Ch 23.1 in Heb *c* Heb *uncovering his father's skirt*

13.12), threatening to the integrity of the social order. *Purge.* See note on 13.5.

22.22–30 The series of sexual offenses continues, first by prescribing the death penalty in the case of a man caught in adultery with another's wife (cf. 5.18; Ex 20.14; Lev 20.10) and then by reviewing related cases complicated by circumstances or rules of evidence. **22.22** *Both ... shall die,* execution of the pair, presumably by stoning (cf. vv. 21, 24; Lev 20.10; Ezek 16.38–40; Jn 8.5). **22.23–27** Intercourse with an *engaged* or formally betrothed woman is equated with the crime of adultery. The question of the woman's culpability distinguishes the two outcomes: she is punished when there is reason, because of locale, to charge her with complicity. **22.26** *This case is like,* reasoning by analogy to accidental homicide (see 19.4–10). **22.28–29** *Seizes, violated* (cf. 21.14). The wording indicates coercion, but biblical law does not sharply distinguish between rape and seduction of an unbetrothed woman (cf. Ex 22.16–17). Preclusion of *divorce.* See 22.19. **22.30** *Violating his father's rights.* The categorical prohibition of a son marrying his widowed or divorced step-mother (*father's wife*) is a matter of decency and respect for paternal privilege (cf. 27.20; Gen 49.4; Lev 18.8; 20.11; Ezek 22.10).

23.1–8 These rules understand the Lord's *assembly* to be a cohort of adult male Israelites, i.e., the covenant community functioning as a restricted religious, military, and political association (cf. 16.16; 20.1–9; 33.5 with, e.g., 5.22; 31.30; Isa 56.3–8. Cf. also Judg 20.2; 1 Kings 12.3, 20). **23.1** Exclusion by reason of genital impairment; cf. Lev 21.17–23. **23.2** *Illicit union* was traditionally understood to mean incest (*Mishnah Yebamot* 4.13; cf. Gen 19.30–38; Lev 18.6–18). **23.3–6** Ethnic disqualifications. Cf. Ezra 10.10–44; Neh 13.1–3, 23–27. **23.4** *Ba-*

7 You shall not abhor any of the Edomites, for they are your kin. You shall not abhor any of the Egyptians, because you were an alien residing in their land. 8 The children of the third generation that are born to them may be admitted to the assembly of the LORD.

Purity of the Military Camp

9 When you are encamped against your enemies you shall guard against any impropriety.

10 If one of you becomes unclean because of a nocturnal emission, then he shall go outside the camp; he must not come within the camp. 11 When evening comes, he shall wash himself with water, and when the sun has set, he may come back into the camp.

12 You shall have a designated area outside the camp to which you shall go. 13 With your utensils you shall have a trowel; when you relieve yourself outside, you shall dig a hole with it and then cover up your excrement. 14 Because the LORD your God travels along with your camp, to save you and to hand over your enemies to you, therefore your camp must be holy, so that he may not see anything indecent among you and turn away from you.

Fugitive Slaves

15 Slaves who have escaped to you from their owners shall not be given back to them. 16 They shall reside with you, in your midst, in any place they choose in any one of your towns, wherever they please; you shall not oppress them.

Cultic Exclusions

17 None of the daughters of Israel shall be a temple prostitute; none of the sons of Israel shall be a temple prostitute. 18 You shall not bring the fee of a prostitute or the wages of a male prostitute[d] into the house of the LORD your God in payment for any vow, for both of these are abhorrent to the LORD your God.

Usury

19 You shall not charge interest on loans to another Israelite, interest on money, interest on provisions, interest on anything that is lent. 20 On loans to a foreigner you may charge interest, but on loans to another Israelite you may not charge interest, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all your undertakings in the land that you are about to enter and possess.

Vows

21 If you make a vow to the LORD your God, do not postpone fulfilling it; for the LORD your God will surely require it of you, and you would incur guilt. 22 But if you refrain from vowing, you will not incur guilt. 23 Whatever your lips utter

d Heb *a dog*

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laam. See Num 22–24. **23.6** *Welfare* ("peace") and *prosperity* may connote political alliance or treaty (cf. Ezra 9.12; Jer 29.7; 38.4); cf. this injunction with 2.9, 19; Isa 16.4. **23.7–8** *Abhor*. Cf. 7.26. *Edomites*. Cf. 2.4–8; Gen 36; Am 1.11. Benevolence toward *Egyptians* is remarkable in view of 24.22; 26.5, 6; 28.60, 68 (but see Gen 12.10–20). *Children*, apparently the descendants of intermarriage.

23.9–14 Specific rules together with theological rationale for maintenance of personal hygiene during holy-war campaigns (cf. 20.1–20; 2 Sam 11.11). **23.10–11** Cf. Lev 15.16–17; also the Dead Sea Scrolls *Temple Scroll* (11QTemple) 45.7–12; 46.18. **23.12** *Designated areas*, privy (lit. "hand"); cf. *Temple Scroll* (11QTemple) 46.13–16. **23.14** *Travels along*. Cf. 1.30; 20.4; 31.6, 8; 2 Sam 7.6–7. *Indecent*, repugnant or "objectionable" (cf. 24.1).

23.15–16 Extradition of *slaves* who seek asylum in Israel is prohibited (cf. 1 Kings 2.39–40; *Code of Hammurabi* 15–20).

23.17–18 Proscriptions in defense of Israel's sacral integrity. *Temple prostitute*. The terms refer to "consecrated" persons, associated in biblical usage with Canaanite or otherwise pagan rites (cf. Gen 38.21–22; 1 Kings 14.24; 15.12; 22.46; 2 Kings 23.7; Hos 4.14). On a harlot's "wages" or *fee*, cf. Isa 23.17–18; Ezek 16.31, 34, 41; Hos 9.1; Mic 1.7. *Abhorrent to the LORD*. See note on 7.25–26.

23.19–20 In accord with 15.1–11, distinction is made between interest-free welfare loans to fellow Israelites (cf. 24.10–13; Ex 22.25; Lev 25.35–38) and profit-making commercial loans to foreigners (cf. 15.6; 28.12). *Interest*, increment, lit. "bite," usually taken by the creditor when making the loan (cf. Ezek 18.8, 13, 17; 22.12).

23.21–23 The closely comparable admonitions in Eccl 5.4–6 are derivative. *Vow*, a form of promissory oath, sworn in anticipation of divine favor (e.g., Gen 28.20–22; Num 21.2–3; 1 Sam

you must diligently perform, just as you
have freely vowed to the LORD your God
with your own mouth.

Limitations on Foraging

24 If you go into your neighbor's vine-
yard, you may eat your fill of grapes, as
many as you wish, but you shall not put
any in a container.
25 If you go into your neighbor's
standing grain, you may pluck the ears
with your hand, but you shall not put a
sickle to your neighbor's standing grain.

Restriction of Remarriage

24 Suppose a man enters into mar-
riage with a woman, but she does
not please him because he finds some-
thing objectionable about her, and so he
writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it
in her hand, and sends her out of his
house; she then leaves his house 2and
goes off to become another man's wife.
3Then suppose the second man dislikes
her, writes her a bill of divorce, puts it in
her hand, and sends her out of his house
(or the second man who married her
dies); 4her first husband, who sent her
away, is not permitted to take her again to
be his wife after she has been defiled; for
that would be abhorrent to the LORD, and
you shall not bring guilt on the land that
the LORD your God is giving you as a pos-
session.

Exemption for the Newlywed

5 When a man is newly married, he
shall not go out with the army or be
charged with any related duty. He shall be
free at home one year, to be happy with
the wife whom he has married.

Personal Dignity and Welfare

6 No one shall take a mill or an upper
millstone in pledge, for that would be tak-
ing a life in pledge.
7 If someone is caught kidnaping an-
other Israelite, enslaving or selling the Is-
raelite, then that kidnaper shall die. So
you shall purge the evil from your midst.
8 Guard against an outbreak of a lep-
rous[e] skin disease by being very careful;
you shall carefully observe whatever the
levitical priests instruct you, just as I have
commanded them. 9Remember what the
LORD your God did to Miriam on your
journey out of Egypt.
10 When you make your neighbor a
loan of any kind, you shall not go into the
house to take the pledge. 11You shall wait
outside, while the person to whom you
are making the loan brings the pledge out
to you. 12If the person is poor, you shall

e A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain

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1.11; Ps 132.1–5). **23.23** *Whatever*, usually a sacrifice or equivalent monetary payment (cf. Lev 27.2–29; Num 30.2–15; Pss 56.12–13; 66.13–15).

23.24–25 These rulings cogently define the limits of traditional hospitality extended to hungry wayfarers as well as to fieldhands (cf. 25.4; Josephus *Antiquities* 4.234–37).

24.1–4 Unlike the exceptional cases of 22.19, 29, divorce is here left to a husband's discretion (*does not please*, v. 1; *dislikes*, v. 3). But he is prohibited from remarrying a former spouse after she has become another man's wife, thus preventing interpretation of her second marriage as harlotry or wife swapping (so Nachmanides, medieval Jewish Bible commentator). **24.1** *Something objectionable* (*indecent*, 23.14) apparently means for any cause, though the sense was already disputed in antiquity (cf. Sir 7.26; 25.25–26; Mt 19.3–9; Josephus *Antiquities* 4.253). *Certificate of divorce*, a writ proving the husband had relinquished claim on the woman, freeing her to remarry (cf. Isa 50.1; Jer 3.8; Mt. 5.31; *Mishnah Gitin*). **24.4** *Been defiled*, by the husband, who had enabled or caused her to seek another marriage. *Abhorrent*. See note on 7.25–26. *Guilt on the land*, pollution comparable to that caused by homicide (19.13; 21.9; cf. Jer 3.1–3; Hos 4.2–3). **24.5** A supplement to 20.7. *Related duty*, e.g., conscripted labor or government service (cf. 1 Sam 8.11–13; 1 Kings 5.13–18; 9.15–21).

24.6–25.4 Most of these otherwise diverse provisions exemplify concern for humane, charitable treatment of persons, especially the economically disadvantaged; together with parallels in other bodies of biblical law, they form the bedrock of biblical social ethics. **24.6** Legitimate surety for creditors must not compromise the means of debtors to subsist. **24.7** A redraft of Ex 21.16. *Enslaving or selling*, e.g., abuse of distrainees (cf. 2 Kings 4.1; Job 24.9; Am 2.6). *Purge*. See note on 13.5. **24.8–9** On priestly dermatology, see Lev 13–14. For the judgment on *Miriam*, see Num 12.10–15. **24.10–13** Additional restrictions on distraint (see vv. 6, 17), including a redraft of Ex 22.26–27 (cf. Job 22.6;

not sleep in the garment given you as[f]
the pledge. 13 You shall give the pledge
back by sunset, so that your neighbor may
sleep in the cloak and bless you; and it will
be to your credit before the LORD
your God.

14 You shall not withhold the wages
of poor and needy laborers, whether
other Israelites or aliens who reside in
your land in one of your towns. 15 You
shall pay them their wages daily before
sunset, because they are poor and their
livelihood depends on them; otherwise
they might cry to the LORD against you,
and you would incur guilt.

16 Parents shall not be put to death
for their children, nor shall children be
put to death for their parents; only for
their own crimes may persons be put to
death.

17 You shall not deprive a resident
alien or an orphan of justice; you shall not
take a widow's garment in pledge. 18 Remember that you were a slave in Egypt
and the LORD your God redeemed you
from there; therefore I command you to
do this.

19 When you reap your harvest in
your field and forget a sheaf in the field,
you shall not go back to get it; it shall be
left for the alien, the orphan, and the
widow, so that the LORD your God may
bless you in all your undertakings.
20 When you beat your olive trees, do not
strip what is left; it shall be for the alien,
the orphan, and the widow.

21 When you gather the grapes of
your vineyard, do not glean what is left; it
shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the
widow. 22 Remember that you were a slave
in the land of Egypt; therefore I am commanding you to do this.

25 Suppose two persons have a dispute and enter into litigation, and
the judges decide between them, declaring one to be in the right and the other to
be in the wrong. 2 If the one in the wrong
deserves to be flogged, the judge shall
make that person lie down and be beaten
in his presence with the number of lashes
proportionate to the offense. 3 Forty
lashes may be given but not more; if more
lashes than these are given, your neighbor
will be degraded in your sight.

4 You shall not muzzle an ox while it is
treading out the grain.

Levirate Marriage

5 When brothers reside together, and
one of them dies and has no son, the wife
of the deceased shall not be married outside the family to a stranger. Her husband's brother shall go in to her, taking
her in marriage, and performing the duty
of a husband's brother to her, 6 and the
firstborn whom she bears shall succeed to
the name of the deceased brother, so that
his name may not be blotted out of Israel.
7 But if the man has no desire to marry his
brother's widow, then his brother's widow

f Heb lacks *the garment given you as*

Prov 20.16; 27.13; Am 2.8). **24.13** *Be to your credit*, counted as "merit" (cf. 6.25), the converse of 15.9; 24.15. **24.14–15** Daily receipt of wages is a laborer's right (cf. Lev 19.13; Jer 22.13; Mt 20.2–15). On equal treatment for *aliens* ("sojourners"), cf. vv. 17–22; 1.16; 10.17–19; Lev 19.33–34; Ezek 47.22–23. **24.15** *Cry to the LORD*. See note on 15.9. **24.16** This juridical principle limiting liability for capital offenses to the actual perpetrators of crimes is cited in 2 Kings 14.6. (For theological reverberations, cf. Deut 7.10; Jer 31.29, 30; Ezek 18.) **24.17–18** For the theological rationale, see 10.17–19; 15.15; 24.22 (cf. also 27.19; Ex 22.21–24; 23.6, 9). **24.19–22** Provisions on gleaning. Cf. Ex 23.10–11; Lev 19.9–10; 23.22; Ruth 2; *Mishnah Pe'a*. **25.1–3** Flogging, administered as punishment by a court, should be *proportionate to the offense* (cf. the rule of talion, note on 19.19–21), with *forty* stripes fixed as a maximum in order to protect the culprit from cruel humiliation (cf. 2 Cor 11.24; Josephus *Antiquities* 4.238; *Mishnah Makkot* 3). **25.4** Social equity is exemplified by humane treatment of a working ox; cf. 5.14; Prov 12.10; also 1 Cor 9.9; 1 Tim 5.18.

25.5–10 As drafted, this legislation is concerned with resolving the anomalous relationship between a childless but still youthful widow and her deceased husband's family. Custom preferred an endogamous remarriage of the woman to her *husband's brother*, *levir* in Latin, whence the practice is commonly called "levirate marriage." (Cf. the related practices in Gen 38.6–26; Ruth 3–4; also cf. Lev 18.16; 20.21.) **25.5** Though context supports the literal rendering *son*, the sense was later understood to include female offspring (e.g., Septuagint; Josephus *Antiquities* 4.254; Lk 20.28; cf. Num 27.8–11). **25.6** Lineage succession of the male *firstborn* to the *name of the deceased brother* implicitly includes claim to patrimony (cf. 21.15–17; Num 27.4; Ruth 4.5, 10; also 2 Sam 14.7). **25.7–8** Jurisdiction of *elders* in familial

shall go up to the elders at the gate and say, "My husband's brother refuses to perpetuate his brother's name in Israel; he will not perform the duty of a husband's brother to me." 8 Then the elders of his town shall summon him and speak to him. If he persists, saying, "I have no desire to marry her," 9 then his brother's wife shall go up to him in the presence of the elders, pull his sandal off his foot, spit in his face, and declare, "This is what is done to the man who does not build up his brother's house." 10 Throughout Israel his family shall be known as "the house of him whose sandal was pulled off."

Immodest Assault

11 If men get into a fight with one another, and the wife of one intervenes to rescue her husband from the grip of his opponent by reaching out and seizing his genitals, 12 you shall cut off her hand; show no pity.

Honest Weights and Measures

13 You shall not have in your bag two kinds of weights, large and small. 14 You shall not have in your house two kinds of measures, large and small. 15 You shall have only a full and honest weight; you shall have only a full and honest measure, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you. 16 For all who do such things, all who act dishonestly, are abhorrent to the LORD your God.

Extirpation of Amalek

17 Remember what Amalek did to you on your journey out of Egypt, 18 how he attacked you on the way, when you were faint and weary, and struck down all who lagged behind you; he did not fear God. 19 Therefore when the LORD your God has given you rest from all your enemies on every hand, in the land that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, you shall blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; do not forget.

Liturgical Declarations

26 When you have come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, and you possess it, and settle in it, 2 you shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground, which you harvest from the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you shall put it in a basket and go to the place that the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his name. 3 You shall go to the priest who is in office at that time, and say to him, "Today I declare to the LORD your God that I have come into the land that the LORD swore to our ancestors to give us." 4 When the priest takes the basket from your hand

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disputes; cf. 19.12; 21.19–20; 22.17–19. **25.9–10** Public degradation of the unwilling levir (husband's brother); *spitting* is an act of contempt (cf. Num 12.14; Job 17.6; 30.10; Isa 50.6); removal of his *sandal* is a rite of quittance, freeing the widow from further obligation to the husband's family (*house*).

25.11–12 The severe penalty, comparable to talion (see note on 19.19–21), presumes the woman has recklessly endangered the man's procreative capacity (cf. 19.21; Ex 21.22–25; *Mishnah Bava Kamma* 8.1).

25.13–16 Such injunctions and the commercial abuses they address are well attested; e.g., Lev 19.35–36; Prov 16.11; 20.23; Ezek 45.10–12; Hos 12.7; Mic 6.10–11; *Instruction of Amenemope* 17.17–19; 18.14–19.2. **25.16** *Abhorrent.* See note on 7.25–26.

25.17–19 A codicil to 23.3–6 reflecting Ex 17.14–15. On the tradition of enmity between Israel and the Amalekites of northern Sinai, cf. Num 24.20; Judg 6.3; 10.12; 1 Sam 15.2–33. **25.18** This perfidy goes unreported in Ex 17.8–13. **25.19** *Rest.* Cf. 3.20; 12.9. *Blot out the remembrance.* Cf. 9.14; 25.6; 29.20; 1 Sam 24.21; Pss 9.5–6; 109.13.

26.1–15 This brief concluding section of the polity, which is a counterpart of 12.2–28, prescribes affirmations of covenantal identity that worshipers are to make on particular occasions of pilgrimage to the single sanctuary. **26.1–11** Creedal declarations associated with presentations of first fruits (cf. Lev 23.9–21; Num 28.26–31; *Mishnah Bikkurim*). **26.2** *First* (or "choicest"; cf. Ex 23.19; 34.26) *of all the fruit*, token presentation of each agricultural crop at the sanctuary (*the place*; see 12.5), apparently in conjunction with the annual pilgrimage feasts and as pledge on full payment of tithes (cf. 14.22–23; 16.1–17; 18.4; Ex 22.29; Tob 1.6–7; Philo *Special Laws* 2.216–20). *As a dwelling for his name.* See notes on 12.5; 12.11. **26.3** *Priest.* Cf. 17.9, 12; 18.3–5;

and sets it down before the altar of the
LORD your God, 5 you shall make this re-
sponse before the LORD your God: "A
wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he
went down into Egypt and lived there as
an alien, few in number, and there he be-
came a great nation, mighty and popu-
lous. 6 When the Egyptians treated us
harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard
labor on us, 7 we cried to the LORD, the
God of our ancestors; the LORD heard our
voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and
our oppression. 8 The LORD brought us
out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an
outstretched arm, with a terrifying display
of power, and with signs and wonders;
9 and he brought us into this place and
gave us this land, a land flowing with milk
and honey. 10 So now I bring the first of
the fruit of the ground that you, O LORD,
have given me." You shall set it down be-
fore the LORD your God and bow down
before the LORD your God. 11 Then you,
together with the Levites and the aliens
who reside among you, shall celebrate
with all the bounty that the LORD your
God has given to you and to your house.

12 When you have finished paying all
the tithe of your produce in the third year
(which is the year of the tithe), giving it to
the Levites, the aliens, the orphans, and
the widows, so that they may eat their fill
within your towns, 13 then you shall say
before the LORD your God: "I have re-
moved the sacred portion from the house,
and I have given it to the Levites, the resi-
dent aliens, the orphans, and the widows,
in accordance with your entire command-
ment that you commanded me; I have
neither transgressed nor forgotten any of
your commandments: 14 I have not eaten
of it while in mourning; I have not re-
moved any of it while I was unclean; and
I have not offered any of it to the dead. I
have obeyed the LORD my God, doing just
as you commanded me. 15 Look down
from your holy habitation, from heaven,
and bless your people Israel and the
ground that you have given us, as you
swore to our ancestors—a land flowing
with milk and honey."

Ratification of the Covenant

16 This very day the LORD your God is
commanding you to observe these statutes
and ordinances; so observe them dili-
gently with all your heart and with all
your soul. 17 Today you have obtained the
LORD's agreement: to be your God; and
for you to walk in his ways, to keep his
statutes, his commandments, and his ordi-
nances, and to obey him. 18 Today the
LORD has obtained your agreement: to be
his treasured people, as he promised you,
and to keep his commandments; 19 for
him to set you high above all nations that
he has made, in praise and in fame and in
honor; and for you to be a people holy to
the LORD your God, as he promised.

19.17; 20.2. *Swore to our ancestors.* See 1.8, 20–21. **26.5** *Wandering Aramean* refers to Israel's north Syrian ancestry, traced through Abram (Abraham) (cf. Gen 11.31; 12.1–9; 20.13) as well as Jacob (Israel), who is probably meant here (cf. Gen 29–32). *Few in number.* See 28.62; Ps 105.12 (cf. Gen 34.30; 46.8–27). *Great nation.* See 4.6–8 (cf. Ex 1.7, 9). **26.6** *Hard labor.* See Ex 1.13–14; 6.9 (cf. 1 Kings 12.4). **26.7** *Cried to the LORD.* See Ex 14.10, 15; Num 20.16; Josh 24.7. *God of our ancestors.* See, e.g., 1.11; 6.3; 12.1 (cf. Ex 3.15–16). **26.8** Cf. 4.34; 6.21. **26.9** *This place.* Cf. Ex 15.17. **26.11** Cf. 12.7. **26.12–15** The worshiper's positive and negative declarations of compliance with the rules of triennial tithing (see 14.28–29; cf. *Mishnah Ma'aser Sheni* 5.10–13) are followed by a prayer for continuance of divine blessing on Israel. **26.13** *Before the LORD,* at the single sanctuary (see, e.g., 14.23; 16.16). **26.14** Protestations of innocence (cf. Job 31.5–40; Ps 26.4–7) regarding misuse of tithed produce in mortuary rites. *Mourning.* Cf. Jer 16.7; Ezek 24.17, 22. *Unclean.* Cf. Lev 11.24–25; 22.3; Num 19.11–22; Hos 9.4; Hag 2.13. *To the dead* may refer to a cult of ancestors (cf. 14.1; Tob 4.17; Sir 30.18–20). **26.15** *Holy habitation . . . heaven.* See, e.g., 1 Kings 8.39, 43, 49; Jer 25.30; Ps 102.19.

26.16–28.68 An archival collection of covenant rites and sanctions concludes the primary corpus of Deuteronomic law (see 4.44–45). **26.16–19** The alliance between God and Israel is formally joined or reaffirmed when each party declares its acceptance of reciprocal roles and obligations. (Cf. the succinct formulation of covenantal identities in, e.g., 29.13; Ex 6.7; Lev 26.12; 2 Sam 7.24; Jer 7.23; 31.33; Ezek 11.20; Hos 2.23.) **26.16** *This very day,* the liturgical present, or anytime the Israel of subsequent generations is gathered in solemn assembly to hear and recommit itself to this Deuteronomic legislation (cf. 4.4; 5.1–3; 11.32; 27.9). **26.17** Cf. 8.6; 10.12; 11.22. **26.18–19** Cf. 7.6; 14.2; 28.9; Ex 19.5–6; Jer 13.11; 33.9.

Rites of Reaffirmation

27 Then Moses and the elders of Israel charged all the people as follows: Keep the entire commandment that
I am commanding you today. 2 On the
day that you cross over the Jordan into
the land that the LORD your God is giving
you, you shall set up large stones and
cover them with plaster. 3 You shall write
on them all the words of this law when
you have crossed over, to enter the land
that the LORD your God is giving you, a
land flowing with milk and honey, as the
LORD, the God of your ancestors, promised you. 4 So when you have crossed over
the Jordan, you shall set up these stones,
about which I am commanding you today,
on Mount Ebal, and you shall cover them
with plaster. 5 And you shall build an altar
there to the LORD your God, an altar of
stones on which you have not used an iron
tool. 6 You must build the altar of the
LORD your God of unhewn[g] stones. Then
offer up burnt offerings on it to the LORD
your God, 7 make sacrifices of well-being,
and eat them there, rejoicing before the
LORD your God. 8 You shall write on the
stones all the words of this law very
clearly.

9 Then Moses and the levitical priests
spoke to all Israel, saying: Keep silence
and hear, O Israel! This very day you
have become the people of the LORD your
God. 10 Therefore obey the LORD your
God, observing his commandments and
his statutes that I am commanding you
today.

11 The same day Moses charged the
people as follows: 12 When you have
crossed over the Jordan, these shall stand
on Mount Gerizim for the blessing of the
people: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin. 13 And these shall
stand on Mount Ebal for the curse: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and
Naphtali. 14 Then the Levites shall declare
in a loud voice to all the Israelites:

15 "Cursed be anyone who makes an
idol or casts an image, anything abhorrent
to the LORD, the work of an artisan, and
sets it up in secret." All the people shall
respond, saying, "Amen!"

16 "Cursed be anyone who dishonors
father or mother." All the people shall
say, "Amen!"

17 "Cursed be anyone who moves a
neighbor's boundary marker." All the
people shall say, "Amen!"

18 "Cursed be anyone who misleads a
blind person on the road." All the people
shall say, "Amen!"

19 "Cursed be anyone who deprives

g Heb *whole*

27.1–26 The narrative transition to the blessings and curses in ch. 28 is augmented with ceremonial lore, apparently gleaned from various sources and loosely conflated to encourage observance of covenant obligations. **27.1** The consortium of *Moses and the elders of Israel* (cf. 31.9) may attest a tradition stratum (the Yahwist or "J" source; see Introduction to *The HarperCollins Study Bible*) also evident in Ex 3.16–18; 17.5–6; 19.7; 24.1, 9–14; Num 11.16–30. **27.2–3, 8** Memorial *stones*, erected after crossing the Jordan, suggest the shrine at Gilgal (cf. 11.30; Josh 4). *Cover them with plaster*, i.e., to produce a stuccoed writing surface. *All the words of this law* (vv. 3, 8): the articles of Deuteronomic legislation (cf. 17.19; 27.26; 28.58; 29.29; 31.12). **27.4** The location at *Mount Ebal* (see 11.29) promotes linkage of vv. 2–3 with vv. 5–7, 12–13 (cf. Josh 8.30–32). **27.5–7** Cf. the covenant-making rites depicted in Ex 24.3–8. **27.5** *Altar of [unhewn] stones*. Cf. Ex 20.24–26; *Mishnah Middot* 3.4. **27.7** The term rendered *sacrifices of well-being* (e.g., Ex 20.24; 24.5; 32.6; Lev 3.1–5) is otherwise unattested in the book of Deuteronomy (cf. 12.6, 11, 26–27). **27.9–10** Rhetorical connection is made between 26.16–19 and 28.1. (Cf. 5.32–6.1; 11.31–12.1.) **27.11–13** Further instruction on promulgation of covenant sanctions in the region of Shechem (see 11.26–30; cf. Josephus *Antiquities* 4.305–308; *Mishnah Sota* 7.5). Implementation, as reported in Josh 8.33–35, relates *the blessing* and *the curse* to the contents of ch. 28. **27.14–26** The liturgy of imprecations and antiphonal responses recorded here comprises a loyalty oath, apparently administered by officiating *Levites* to the membership of Israel's tribal "assembly" (cf. 10.8; 23.1–8; 33.4–5, 8–10). By anathematizing any member who commits one of these clandestine offenses (*in secret*, vv. 15, 24; cf. 13.6; 29.17–21), the list reinforces the basic communal ethos. Specific items are paralleled in the Decalogue and other biblical codes of law; the whole Deuteronomic polity is encompassed by the final curse (cf. vv. 3, 8). **27.15** Cf., e.g., 4.15–20; 5.8–9; Ex 20.23; 34.17; Lev 19.4; 26.1; Hos 13.2. On secretive idolatry, cf. Job 31.26–27; Pss 64.5–6; 115.4–8. *Amen*, or "so be it" (cf. Num 5.22; Jer 11.5; Neh 5.13). **27.16** Cf. 5.16; 21.18–20; Ex 21.17; Lev 20.9. **27.17** See 19.14. **27.18** Cf. Lev 19.14. **27.19** See 24.17 (cf. Ex 22.21–22; 23.9; Lev

the alien, the orphan, and the widow of justice." All the people shall say, "Amen!"

20 "Cursed be anyone who lies with his father's wife, because he has violated his father's rights."[h] All the people shall say, "Amen!"

21 "Cursed be anyone who lies with any animal." All the people shall say, "Amen!"

22 "Cursed be anyone who lies with his sister, whether the daughter of his father or the daughter of his mother." All the people shall say, "Amen!"

23 "Cursed be anyone who lies with his mother-in-law." All the people shall say, "Amen!"

24 "Cursed be anyone who strikes down a neighbor in secret." All the people shall say, "Amen!"

25 "Cursed be anyone who takes a bribe to shed innocent blood." All the people shall say, "Amen!"

26 "Cursed be anyone who does not uphold the words of this law by observing them." All the people shall say, "Amen!"

Covenantal Blessings and Curses

28 If you will only obey the LORD your God, by diligently observing all his commandments that I am commanding you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth; 2 all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the LORD your God:

3 Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field.

4 Blessed shall be the fruit of your womb, the fruit of your ground, and the fruit of your livestock, both the increase of your cattle and the issue of your flock.

5 Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl.

6 Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out.

7 The LORD will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before you; they shall come out against you one way, and flee before you seven ways. 8 The LORD will command the blessing upon you in your barns, and in all that you undertake; he will bless you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you. 9 The LORD will establish you as his holy people, as he has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in his ways. 10 All the peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they shall be afraid of you. 11 The LORD will make you abound in prosperity, in the fruit of your womb, in the fruit of your livestock, and in the fruit of your ground in the land that the LORD swore to your ancestors to give you. 12 The LORD will open for you his rich storehouse, the heavens, to give the rain of your land in its season and to bless all your undertakings. You will lend to many nations, but you will not borrow. 13 The LORD will make you the head, and not the tail; you shall be only at the top, and not at the

h Heb *uncovered his father's skirt*

19.33–34). **27.20–23** Proscribed sexual relations; cf. 22.30; Ex 22.19; Lev 18.7–9, 17, 23; 20.11, 14–17. **27.24** Surreptitious homicide; cf. 21.1; Ex 21.12. **27.25** Abuse of judicial power; cf. 1.16–17; 16.19; Ex 23.6–8. **27.26** Cf. Jer 11.3; also Gal 3.10.

28.1–46 Covenantal blessings and curses. **28.1–14** The blessings affirm that national security, prosperity, and political preeminence are intrinsic consequences of Israel's fidelity to the covenant relationship (see 26.18–19; cf. also 7.12–16; 11.13–15; Lev 26.1–13). **28.1** *Set you high.* The language of royal apotheosis (cf. 2 Sam 7.22–29; Ps 89.27–37; Isa 55.3–5) directly echoes 26.19. **28.3–6** This sixfold benediction, together with its imprecatory counterpart in vv. 16–19, may represent an ancient liturgy (cf. 27.12–13). The paired antonyms in vv. 3, 6 (cf. 6.7) express the fullness of productive labors: *city* and *field*, i.e., wherever you work (e.g., Gen 34.28; 1 Kings 14.11; Jer 14.18); *come in* and *go out*, whatever you do (e.g., 31.2; Ps 121.8). Similarly, the central blessings (vv. 4–5) invoke comprehensive fertility for livestock, fields, and their human caretakers (cf. 7.13–14; 32.13–14; Ex 23.26; Lev 26.4–5, 9). **28.7–14** Emphasized here is divine agency in providing the benefactions that will ensure well-being and exaltation for Israel, contingent upon its continuing observance of the Lord's commands. **28.7** Defeat of *enemies*. Cf. 9.1–3; Ex 23.27–28; Lev 26.6–8. **28.8** Cf. 8.7–10; 11.10–12; Lev 26.10. **28.9** See 26.18–19. **28.10** *Called by the name of the LORD* denotes the Lord's active conservatorship of Israel (cf. 2 Chr 7.14; Isa 61.9; 63.19; Jer 14.9; Am 9.12). **28.11** See v. 4. **28.12** Heavenly *storehouse* of sea-

bottom—if you obey the commandments
of the LORD your God, which I am com-
manding you today, by diligently observ-
ing them, 14 and if you do not turn aside
from any of the words that I am com-
manding you today, either to the right or
to the left, following other gods to serve
them.

15 But if you will not obey the LORD
your God by diligently observing all his
commandments and decrees, which I am
commanding you today, then all these
curses shall come upon you and over-
take you:

16 Cursed shall you be in the city, and
cursed shall you be in the field.

17 Cursed shall be your basket and
your kneading bowl.

18 Cursed shall be the fruit of your
womb, the fruit of your ground, the in-
crease of your cattle and the issue of your
flock.

19 Cursed shall you be when you
come in, and cursed shall you be when
you go out.

20 The LORD will send upon you di-
saster, panic, and frustration in every-
thing you attempt to do, until you are
destroyed and perish quickly, on account
of the evil of your deeds, because you
have forsaken me. 21 The LORD will make
the pestilence cling to you until it has con-
sumed you off the land that you are en-
tering to possess. 22 The LORD will afflict
you with consumption, fever, inflamma-
tion, with fiery heat and drought, and
with blight and mildew; they shall pursue
you until you perish. 23 The sky over your
head shall be bronze, and the earth under
you iron. 24 The LORD will change the rain
of your land into powder, and only dust
shall come down upon you from the sky
until you are destroyed.

25 The LORD will cause you to be de-
feated before your enemies; you shall go
out against them one way and flee before
them seven ways. You shall become an ob-
ject of horror to all the kingdoms of the
earth. 26 Your corpses shall be food for ev-
ery bird of the air and animal of the earth,
and there shall be no one to frighten them
away. 27 The LORD will afflict you with the
boils of Egypt, with ulcers, scurvy, and
itch, of which you cannot be healed.
28 The LORD will afflict you with madness,
blindness, and confusion of mind; 29 you
shall grope about at noon as blind people
grope in darkness, but you shall be unable
to find your way; and you shall be contin-
ually abused and robbed, without anyone
to help. 30 You shall become engaged to a
woman, but another man shall lie with
her. You shall build a house, but not live
in it. You shall plant a vineyard, but not
enjoy its fruit. 31 Your ox shall be butch-
ered before your eyes, but you shall not
eat of it. Your donkey shall be stolen in
front of you, and shall not be restored to
you. Your sheep shall be given to your en-
emies, without anyone to help you.
32 Your sons and daughters shall be given
to another people, while you look on; you
will strain your eyes looking for them all
day but be powerless to do anything. 33 A
people whom you do not know shall eat
up the fruit of your ground and of all
your labors; you shall be continually
abused and crushed, 34 and driven mad by
the sight that your eyes shall see. 35 The
LORD will strike you on the knees and on
the legs with grievous boils of which you
cannot be healed, from the sole of your
foot to the crown of your head. 36 The
LORD will bring you, and the king whom
you set over you, to a nation that neither
you nor your ancestors have known,
where you shall serve other gods, of wood
and stone. 37 You shall become an object
of horror, a proverb, and a byword

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sonal rains. Cf. Job 38.22; Ps 135.7; Jer 10.13. *Lend, but not borrow.* Cf. 15.6. **28.14** See 5.32. **28.15–19** Introductory threat plus the initial series of curses forms a close antithesis to 28.1–6. **28.20–46** This is an expansive counterpart to 28.7–14. **28.20** The terms *disaster, panic, and frustration* broadly categorize effects of the following curses (vv. 21–44). *Me.* See 7.4. **28.21–22** Debilitation. Cf., e.g., Lev 26.16, 25; 1 Kings 8.37; Jer 14.12; Am 4.9–10; Hag 2.17. **28.23–24** Strikingly parallel curses appear in *Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon* 526–33. For the imagery, cf. also Lev 26.19; Job 37.18; 38.38. **28.25** Military rout. Cf. 1.44; 28.7; Lev 26.17–18. *Object of horror* or "revulsion." Cf. 2 Chr 29.8; Jer 15.4; 34.17; Ezek 23.46. **28.26** See Jer 7.33; 34.20; cf. 2 Sam 21.10; Ps 79.2; Ezek 39.17–20. **28.27** *Boils of Egypt.* Cf. 7.15; 28.60; Ex 9.9–11. **28.28–29** Derangement. Cf. Job 5.14; 12.25; Isa 19.14; 59.10; Zech 12.4. **28.30** Cf. 20.5–7; Am 5.11. **28.31–34** Spoliation. Cf., e.g., Jer 5.17; 38.21–23; Lam 5.2–18; Am 7.17. **28.35** Cf. v. 27; Job 2.7. **28.36–37** Captivity. Cf., e.g., 4.27–28; 2 Kings 25.7, 11; Jer 16.13; 24.8–9;

among all the peoples where the LORD
will lead you.
38 You shall carry much seed into the
field but shall gather little in, for the locust shall consume it. 39 You shall plant
vineyards and dress them, but you shall
neither drink the wine nor gather the
grapes, for the worm shall eat them.
40 You shall have olive trees throughout
all your territory, but you shall not anoint
yourself with the oil, for your olives shall
drop off. 41 You shall have sons and
daughters, but they shall not remain
yours, for they shall go into captivity.
42 All your trees and the fruit of your
ground the cicada shall take over.
43 Aliens residing among you shall ascend
above you higher and higher, while you
shall descend lower and lower. 44 They
shall lend to you but you shall not lend to
them; they shall be the head and you shall
be the tail.
45 All these curses shall come upon
you, pursuing and overtaking you until
you are destroyed, because you did not
obey the LORD your God, by observing the
commandments and the decrees that he
commanded you. 46 They shall be among
you and your descendants as a sign and a
portent forever.

Scenarios of Curse

47 Because you did not serve the
LORD your God joyfully and with gladness
of heart for the abundance of everything,
48 therefore you shall serve your enemies
whom the LORD will send against you, in
hunger and thirst, in nakedness and lack
of everything. He will put an iron yoke on
your neck until he has destroyed you.
49 The LORD will bring a nation from far
away, from the end of the earth, to swoop
down on you like an eagle, a nation whose
language you do not understand, 50 a
grim-faced nation showing no respect to
the old or favor to the young. 51 It shall
consume the fruit of your livestock and
the fruit of your ground until you are destroyed, leaving you neither grain, wine,
and oil, nor the increase of your cattle and
the issue of your flock, until it has made
you perish. 52 It shall besiege you in all
your towns until your high and fortified
walls, in which you trusted, come down
throughout your land; it shall besiege you
in all your towns throughout the land that
the LORD your God has given you. 53 In
the desperate straits to which the enemy
siege reduces you, you will eat the fruit of
your womb, the flesh of your own sons
and daughters whom the LORD your God
has given you. 54 Even the most refined
and gentle of men among you will begrudge food to his own brother, to the
wife whom he embraces, and to the last of
his remaining children, 55 giving to none
of them any of the flesh of his children
whom he is eating, because nothing else
remains to him, in the desperate straits to
which the enemy siege will reduce you in
all your towns. 56 She who is the most refined and gentle among you, so gentle
and refined that she does not venture to
set the sole of her foot on the ground, will
begrudge food to the husband whom she
embraces, to her own son, and to her own
daughter, 57 begrudging even the afterbirth that comes out from between her
thighs, and the children that she bears,
because she is eating them in secret for
lack of anything else, in the desperate
straits to which the enemy siege will reduce you in your towns.
58 If you do not diligently observe all
the words of this law that are written in

25.9–10; Ezek 17.12. **28.38–42** Futility of labors. Cf. v. 18; Lev 26.20; Hos 2.8–13; Mic 6.15. **28.43–44** Reversal of roles. Cf. 15.6; 28.12–13. **28.45** Inclusion (a repetition signaling the beginning and end of a unit), echoing 28.15. **28.46** Perduring effects of curse. Cf. v. 37; also 29.22–28.

28.47–68 Divine retaliation against Israel for breach of covenant is portrayed in scenes (vv. 47–57, 58–68) that threaten reversal of the conquest and even the exodus from Egypt (cf. 6.21–23; 8.11–20; 26.5–9). **28.47–48** Rejection of the Lord's benevolent sovereignty will result in Israel's subjugation to its enemies (cf. Judg 2.11–15). *Joyfully and with gladness of heart* connotes cheerful alacrity (cf. 1 Kings 1.40; 8.66; Esth 5.9). **28.48** *Iron yoke*, heavy, infrangible vassalage (cf. Jer 28.13–14; Mt 11.28–30; *Mishnah Avot* 3.5). **28.49–50** Portrait of the merciless foe wielded by the Lord as a weapon against Israel is conventional (cf. Jer 5.14–17; 6.22–26; Joel 1.6; 2.3–11; Hab 1.6–11). *Grim-faced*, imperious, brazen (cf. Prov 7.13; 21.29; Eccl 8.1; Dan 8.23). **28.51** Cf. 28.4, 18, 33. **28.53–57** Cannibalistic themes epitomize *the desperate straits* of people under prolonged *siege* in Assyrian sources (e.g., *Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon* 448–50) as well as biblical texts (e.g., Lev 26.29; 2 Kings 6.28–29; Jer 19.9;

this book, fearing this glorious and awe-
some name, the LORD your God, 59 then
the LORD will overwhelm both you and
your offspring with severe and lasting af-
flictions and grievous and lasting mala-
dies. 60 He will bring back upon you all
the diseases of Egypt, of which you were
in dread, and they shall cling to you.
61 Every other malady and affliction, even
though not recorded in the book of this
law, the LORD will inflict on you until you
are destroyed. 62 Although once you were
as numerous as the stars in heaven, you
shall be left few in number, because you
did not obey the LORD your God. 63 And
just as the LORD took delight in making
you prosperous and numerous, so the
LORD will take delight in bringing you to
ruin and destruction; you shall be plucked
off the land that you are entering to pos-
sess. 64 The LORD will scatter you among
all peoples, from one end of the earth to
the other; and there you shall serve other
gods, of wood and stone, which neither
you nor your ancestors have known.
65 Among those nations you shall find no
ease, no resting place for the sole of your
foot. There the LORD will give you a trem-
bling heart, failing eyes, and a languishing
spirit. 66 Your life shall hang in doubt be-
fore you; night and day you shall be in
dread, with no assurance of your life. 67 In
the morning you shall say, "If only it were
evening!" and at evening you shall say, "If
only it were morning!"—because of the
dread that your heart shall feel and the
sights that your eyes shall see. 68 The
LORD will bring you back in ships to
Egypt, by a route that I promised you
would never see again; and there you
shall offer yourselves for sale to your ene-
mies as male and female slaves, but there
will be no buyer.

The Covenant Enacted in Moab

29 [i] These are the words of the cove-
nant that the LORD commanded
Moses to make with the Israelites in the
land of Moab, in addition to the covenant
that he had made with them at Horeb.
2 [j] Moses summoned all Israel and said
to them: You have seen all that the LORD
did before your eyes in the land of Egypt,
to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to
all his land, 3 the great trials that your eyes
saw, the signs, and those great wonders.
4 But to this day the LORD has not given
you a mind to understand, or eyes to see,
or ears to hear. 5 I have led you forty years
in the wilderness. The clothes on your
back have not worn out, and the sandals
on your feet have not worn out; 6 you
have not eaten bread, and you have not
drunk wine or strong drink—so that you
may know that I am the LORD your God.
7 When you came to this place, King Sihon
of Heshbon and King Og of Bashan came
out against us for battle, but we defeated
them. 8 We took their land and gave it as
an inheritance to the Reubenites, the Gad-
ites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh.
9 Therefore diligently observe the words

i Ch 28.69 in Heb *j* Ch 29.1 in Heb

Lam 2.20; 4.10). **28.58** *All the words of this law . . . written in this book*, the whole Deuteronomic polity, recorded and textually transmitted (cf. 17.18–19; 29.20–21, 27; 30.10; 31.9, 24–26). *Fearing this . . . name* means fidelity to the covenantal oath, sworn in acknowledgment of *the LORD* (Yahweh) as Israel's sole divine sovereign (see 5.6; 6.4, 13; 29.12–13; cf. Ex 6.2–3, 7; Josh 24.14–24). **28.59–61** Cf. 7.15; 28.21–22, 27. **28.62** Reversal of proliferation. Cf. 1.10; 10.22; 26.5. **28.63–67** Dispersion. Cf. 4.26–28; 29.28; Lev 26.33–39. **28.68** Displacement to *Egypt*. Cf. Jer 42–44; also Hos 8.13; 9.3, 6; 11.5. The sense of *in ships . . . by a route that I promised you would never see again* is obscure (cf. 17.16).

29.1–30.20 Principal features of a covenant rite are profiled in this hortatory epilogue to Moses' promulgation of the law. **29.1** The book's third editorial heading (cf. 1.1–5; 4.44–49) introduces the concluding portion of Moses' valedictory address and apparently also introduces the supplemental depositions that follow in chs. 31–32. These varied contents, designated covenantal *words* or "provisions," respond to the crisis of continuity posed by Moses' imminent demise. For the setting near Beth-peor in *Moab*, see 3.29; 4.46. For the *covenant* initiated *at Horeb*, see 4.10–13; 5.1–3 (cf. 1.2). **29.2–9** The retrospect encompasses the era from the exodus through the conquests in the Transjordan (cf. 4.37–38; 6.21–23; 26.5–10). **29.3** *Great trials*, the plagues (cf. 4.34; 7.19). **29.4** *Mind to understand* (lit. "heart to know"), the personal capacity to discern providence (cf. Isa 6.9–10; Jer 5.21; 24.7; Ezek 12.2–3). **29.5–6** Cf. 8.2–5. On the apparent shift from Mosaic to divine speech, cf. note on 7.3–4. **29.7–8** *Sihon* and *Og*. See 1.4; 2.26–3.22. **29.9** *Succeed*, or "prosper," contingent upon obedience; cf. Josh 1.7–8; 1 Kings 2.3.

of this covenant, in order that you may
succeed[k] in everything that you do.
10 You stand assembled today, all of
you, before the LORD your God—the
leaders of your tribes,[l] your elders, and
your officials, all the men of Israel, 11 your
children, your women, and the aliens who
are in your camp, both those who cut your
wood and those who draw your water—
12 to enter into the covenant of the LORD
your God, sworn by an oath, which the
LORD your God is making with you today;
13 in order that he may establish you today
as his people, and that he may be your
God, as he promised you and as he swore
to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac,
and to Jacob. 14 I am making this cove-
nant, sworn by an oath, not only with you
who stand here with us today before the
LORD our God, 15 but also with those who
are not here with us today. 16 You know
how we lived in the land of Egypt, and
how we came through the midst of the
nations through which you passed. 17 You
have seen their detestable things, the
filthy idols of wood and stone, of silver
and gold, that were among them. 18 It
may be that there is among you a man or
woman, or a family or tribe, whose heart
is already turning away from the LORD
our God to serve the gods of those na-
tions. It may be that there is among you a
root sprouting poisonous and bitter
growth. 19 All who hear the words of this
oath and bless themselves, thinking in
their hearts, "We are safe even though we
go our own stubborn ways" (thus bringing
disaster on moist and dry alike)[m]— 20 the
LORD will be unwilling to pardon them,
for the LORD's anger and passion will
smoke against them. All the curses written
in this book will descend on them, and the
LORD will blot out their names from un-
der heaven. 21 The LORD will single them
out from all the tribes of Israel for calam-
ity, in accordance with all the curses of the
covenant written in this book of the law.
22 The next generation, your children
who rise up after you, as well as the for-
eigner who comes from a distant country,
will see the devastation of that land and
the afflictions with which the LORD has af-
flicted it— 23 all its soil burned out by sul-
fur and salt, nothing planted, nothing
sprouting, unable to support any vegeta-
tion, like the destruction of Sodom and
Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, which
the LORD destroyed in his fierce anger—
24 they and indeed all the nations will
wonder, "Why has the LORD done thus to
this land? What caused this great display
of anger?" 25 They will conclude, "It is be-
cause they abandoned the covenant of the
LORD, the God of their ancestors, which
he made with them when he brought
them out of the land of Egypt. 26 They
turned and served other gods, worshiping
them, gods whom they had not known
and whom he had not allotted to them;
27 so the anger of the LORD was kindled
against that land, bringing on it every
curse written in this book. 28 The LORD
uprooted them from their land in anger,
fury, and great wrath, and cast them into
another land, as is now the case." 29 The
secret things belong to the LORD our God,

k Or *deal wisely* *l* Gk Syr: Heb *your leaders, your tribes* *m* Meaning of Heb uncertain

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29.10–29 Emphasized here is the individual's accountability as well as the social and multi-generational inclusiveness of Israel's covenant community. **29.10–11** See note on 5.22. Cf. 31.12; Josh 8.33, 35; 9.27; 23.2; 2 Kings 23.2–3. **29.12–13** *Covenant . . . sworn by an oath.* Cf. Gen 26.28; Ezek 17.13–14, 18. See also Deut 26.16–19. **29.14–15** Cf. 5.3. **29.16–17** *Detestable things* (or "abominations"), *filthy idols.* Cf., e.g., Lev 26.30; 1 Kings 11.5–7; 21.26; 2 Kings 23.13, 24; Ezek 6.4–6; 20.7–8. **29.18–21** On the threat of secret apostasy, cf. 13.6–11; 27.15. **29.18** *Poisonous and bitter growth.* Cf., e.g., Jer 9.15; 23.15; Hos 10.4; Am 6.12. **29.19** *Our own stubborn ways,* individual willfulness (cf. 12.8), lit. "the stubbornness of my own heart" (e.g., Ps 81.11–13; Jer 3.17; 7.24). Obstinate idiosyncrasy may threaten the survival of the whole community (*moist and dry alike,* apparently an agricultural metaphor; cf. Ps 107.4–9, 33–37; Isa 58.11). **29.20** Divine *anger and passion.* Cf. v. 27; 4.24; 32.19–22. *Blot out their names.* Cf. 9.14; 25.19. **29.22–28** Purview shifts to the aftermath of national disaster (cf. 4.25–28). **29.23** *Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim,* infamous cities of the Jordan plain (cf., e.g., Gen 10.19; 19.24–25; Isa 1.9–10; Jer 49.18; Hos 11.8). **29.24–28** Cf. the interrogation schema in 1 Kings 9.8–9; Jer 5.19; 9.12–16; 16.10–13; 22.8–9. **29.26** *Other gods . . . not allotted to them.* Cf. 4.19; 32.8–9. **29.27–28** Cf. vv. 20–21; Jer 21.5; 32.37. **29.29** The maxim apparently affirms that faithful observance of the instruction received through Moses (*revealed things*) is sufficient to assure Israel's continuance in covenant relationship with God (see 4.2; cf. 6.25; 30.11–14).

but the revealed things belong to us and
to our children forever, to observe all the
words of this law.

Prescriptions for Renewal of Covenant

30 When all these things have happened to you, the blessings and
the curses that I have set before you, if
you call them to mind among all the na-
tions where the LORD your God has
driven you, 2 and return to the LORD your
God, and you and your children obey him
with all your heart and with all your soul,
just as I am commanding you today,
3 then the LORD your God will restore
your fortunes and have compassion on
you, gathering you again from all the peo-
ples among whom the LORD your God has
scattered you. 4 Even if you are exiled to
the ends of the world,[n] from there the
LORD your God will gather you, and from
there he will bring you back. 5 The LORD
your God will bring you into the land that
your ancestors possessed, and you will
possess it; he will make you more prosper-
ous and numerous than your ancestors.
6 Moreover, the LORD your God will
circumcise your heart and the heart of
your descendants, so that you will love the
LORD your God with all your heart and
with all your soul, in order that you may
live. 7 The LORD your God will put all
these curses on your enemies and on the
adversaries who took advantage of you.
8 Then you shall again obey the LORD, ob-
serving all his commandments that I am
commanding you today, 9 and the LORD
your God will make you abundantly pros-
perous in all your undertakings, in the
fruit of your body, in the fruit of your
livestock, and in the fruit of your soil. For
the LORD will again take delight in pros-
pering you, just as he delighted in pros-
pering your ancestors, 10 when you obey
the LORD your God by observing his com-
mandments and decrees that are written
in this book of the law, because you turn
to the LORD your God with all your heart
and with all your soul.
11 Surely, this commandment that I
am commanding you today is not too
hard for you, nor is it too far away. 12 It is
not in heaven, that you should say, "Who
will go up to heaven for us, and get it for
us so that we may hear it and observe it?"
13 Neither is it beyond the sea, that you
should say, "Who will cross to the other
side of the sea for us, and get it for us so
that we may hear it and observe it?" 14 No,
the word is very near to you; it is in your
mouth and in your heart for you to
observe.
15 See, I have set before you today life
and prosperity, death and adversity. 16 If
you obey the commandments of the LORD
your God[o] that I am commanding you
today, by loving the LORD your God, walk-
ing in his ways, and observing his com-
mandments, decrees, and ordinances,
then you shall live and become numerous,
and the LORD your God will bless you in

n Heb *of heaven* *o* Gk: Heb lacks *If you obey the commandments of the* LORD *your God*

30.1–10 The witness of 4.29–31 to the future of covenant beyond the devastation of curse is now developed as a promise of restoration for those in exile who penitently renew their commitment to the Lord (cf. Lev 26.40–45). **30.1** *Call them to mind* (lit. "return [them] to your heart"). Continuing reflection on experience yields theological insight; see 4.39 (cf. 1 Kings 8.47; Isa 46.8; Lam 3.21). **30.2** *Return . . . with all your heart and . . . soul.* Cf. v. 10; also 4.29–30; 1 Kings 8.48; 2 Kings 23.25; Jer 3.10; 24.7. **30.3** *Restore your fortunes.* See, e.g., Jer 29.14; 33.26; Ezek 39.25; Am 9.14; Zeph 3.20. **30.4** Neh 1.8–9 cites this promise of ingathering, together with the threat of 28.64. For the theme in prophetic sources, see, e.g., Isa 43.5–7; Jer 31.10; 32.37; Ezek 36.24; 37.21. **30.5** Cf. 28.62–63; Jer 23.3; 30.3. **30.6** Divine initiative to overcome human recalcitrance and spiritual fatuity (*circumcise your heart*; cf. 10.16) accords with the "new covenant" emphases of Jer 31.31–34; 32.37–41; Ezek 11.19–20; 36.26–28 (cf. Ps 51.10). *Love the* LORD. See 6.5. **30.7** Cf. 7.15. **30.9–10** Cf. 28.4, 11–12, 18; 30.2. *This book of the law*, the scroll of Deuteronomic legislation (cf. 29.20–21; 31.9, 24–26). **30.11–14** What the Lord requires of Israel is both perspicuous and practicable (cf. 4.5–8; 10.12–13). **30.11** *This commandment*, the basic protocol of covenantal fidelity, elaborated by Moses (cf. 5.31–6.2; 11.22; 19.9). *Not too hard*, neither infeasible nor esoteric (cf. Ps 139.6). **30.12–13** Cf. the quest after cosmic "wisdom" portrayed in Bar 3.29–31 (cf. Job 28.12–28). **30.14** Internalization of the *word*. Cf. 6.6–7; 11.18–19; cf. Jer 1.9. **30.15–20** A climatic appeal for allegiance resounds with familiar expressions. **30.15** The options posed for Israel's decision are "blessing" (*life and prosperity*) and "curse" (*death and adversity*); see 11.26–28 (cf. Jer 21.8; Prov 11.19; 14.27). **30.16** Cf. 4.1; 8.1;

the land that you are entering to possess.
17 But if your heart turns away and you do
not hear, but are led astray to bow down
to other gods and serve them, 18 I declare
to you today that you shall perish; you
shall not live long in the land that you are
crossing the Jordan to enter and possess.
19 I call heaven and earth to witness
against you today that I have set before
you life and death, blessings and curses.
Choose life so that you and your descen-
dants may live, 20 loving the LORD your
God, obeying him, and holding fast to
him; for that means life to you and length
of days, so that you may live in the land
that the LORD swore to give to your ances-
tors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

Acts of Conveyance and Investiture

31 When Moses had finished speak-
ing all[p] these words to all Israel,
2 he said to them: "I am now one hundred
twenty years old. I am no longer able to
get about, and the LORD has told me, 'You
shall not cross over this Jordan.' 3 The
LORD your God himself will cross over be-
fore you. He will destroy these nations be-
fore you, and you shall dispossess them.
Joshua also will cross over before you, as
the LORD promised. 4 The LORD will do to
them as he did to Sihon and Og, the kings
of the Amorites, and to their land, when
he destroyed them. 5 The LORD will give
them over to you and you shall deal with
them in full accord with the command
that I have given to you. 6 Be strong and
bold; have no fear or dread of them, be-
cause it is the LORD your God who goes
with you; he will not fail you or for-
sake you."
7 Then Moses summoned Joshua and
said to him in the sight of all Israel: "Be
strong and bold, for you are the one who
will go with this people into the land that
the LORD has sworn to their ancestors to
give them; and you will put them in pos-
session of it. 8 It is the LORD who goes be-
fore you. He will be with you; he will not
fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be
dismayed."
9 Then Moses wrote down this law,
and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi,
who carried the ark of the covenant of the
LORD, and to all the elders of Israel.
10 Moses commanded them: "Every sev-
enth year, in the scheduled year of remis-
sion, during the festival of booths,[q]
11 when all Israel comes to appear before
the LORD your God at the place that he
will choose, you shall read this law before
all Israel in their hearing. 12 Assemble the
people—men, women, and children, as
well as the aliens residing in your towns—
so that they may hear and learn to fear
the LORD your God and to observe dili-
gently all the words of this law, 13 and so
that their children, who have not known
it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD
your God, as long as you live in the land

p Q Ms Gk: MT *Moses went and spoke*
q Or *tabernacles*; Heb *succoth*

11.22; cf. Lev 18.4–5. **30.17–18** Cf. 4.19, 25–26; 8.19–20. **30.19** *Heaven and earth* as witnesses. See 4.26; 31.28; Ps 50.4. **30.20** See 1.8; 4.1, 40; 10.20; 11.22.

31.1–32.52 With Moses' death again in immediate view (cf. 3.23–28; 4.21–24), the narrative conjoins the provisions for transition in leadership and preservation of the Mosaic legacy of covenantal lore. **31.1–8** Parallel charges reassure the Israelite militia and Joshua of the Lord's own presence as vanguard in the impending conquest west of the Jordan. **31.1** In context, *all these words* should mean the several preceding portions of Moses' valedictory address (see 1.1). **31.2** Moses' age of *one hundred twenty years* spans three normal forty-year generations (cf. 34.7; Ex 7.7; Acts 7.23, 30); according to Gen 6.3 this is the maximum lifetime allowed to any human being (cf. Job 42.16). *To get about*, lit. "to go out and to come in," refers to active leadership, especially exercise of military command (cf. 28.6, 19; Num 27.17, 21; Josh 14.11; 1 Sam 18.16). *You shall not cross*. See 3.27 (cf. 1.37; 4.21–22). **31.3–5** On the vanguard and conquest themes, cf. 1.29–33; 3.21–22, 28; 7.1–5; 9.1–3; 20.16–18. **31.6–8** For the formulaic exhortations to steadfastness and valor, see, e.g., 1.21, 29; Josh 1.6–9; 10.25 (cf. Pss 27.14; 31.24; Isa 7.4). **31.8** *He will be with you*. Reassurance invokes the Lord's accompanying presence (cf. v. 23; Ex 3.12; Josh 1.5, 17; 3.7; 2 Sam 7.9; cf. Ex 33.12–16). **31.9–13** Disposition and periodic proclamation of the written Mosaic law; see also vv. 24–27. **31.9** *This law*, the Deuteronomic polity (see 4.44). *Priests, the sons of Levi*. See 21.5 (cf. 10.8–9; 17.18). *Ark of the covenant*. Cf. 10.1–5, 8; Josh 8.33. *All the elders of Israel*. Cf. note on 27.1. **31.10–11** *Year of remission*. See 15.1–11. *Festival of booths*. See 16.13–15. *The place that he will choose*. See 12.5. On public reading of the polity in the liturgical setting of covenant renewal, see 2 Kings 23.2; Neh 8; cf. *Mishnah Sota* 7.8. **31.12–13** Cf. 29.10–15; cf.

that you are crossing over the Jordan to possess."

14 The LORD said to Moses, "Your time to die is near; call Joshua and present yourselves in the tent of meeting, so that I may commission him." So Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves in the tent of meeting, 15 and the LORD appeared at the tent in a pillar of cloud; the pillar of cloud stood at the entrance to the tent.

16 The LORD said to Moses, "Soon you will lie down with your ancestors. Then this people will begin to prostitute themselves to the foreign gods in their midst, the gods of the land into which they are going; they will forsake me, breaking my covenant that I have made with them. 17 My anger will be kindled against them in that day. I will forsake them and hide my face from them; they will become easy prey, and many terrible troubles will come upon them. In that day they will say, 'Have not these troubles come upon us because our God is not in our midst?' 18 On that day I will surely hide my face on account of all the evil they have done by turning to other gods. 19 Now therefore write this song, and teach it to the Israelites; put it in their mouths, in order that this song may be a witness for me against the Israelites. 20 For when I have brought them into the land flowing with milk and honey, which I promised on oath to their ancestors, and they have eaten their fill and grown fat, they will turn to other gods and serve them, despising me and breaking my covenant. 21 And when many terrible troubles come upon them, this song will confront them as a witness, because it will not be lost from the mouths of their descendants. For I know what they are inclined to do even now, before I have brought them into the land that I promised them on oath." 22 That very day Moses wrote this song and taught it to the Israelites.

23 Then the LORD commissioned Joshua son of Nun and said, "Be strong and bold, for you shall bring the Israelites into the land that I promised them; I will be with you."

24 When Moses had finished writing down in a book the words of this law to the very end, 25 Moses commanded the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, saying, 26 "Take this book of the law and put it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God; let it remain there as a witness against you. 27 For I know well how rebellious and stubborn you are. If you already have been so rebellious toward the LORD while I am still alive among you, how much more after my death! 28 Assemble to me all the elders of your tribes and your officials, so that I may recite these words in their hearing and call heaven and earth to witness against them. 29 For I know that after my death you will surely act corruptly, turning aside from the way that I have commanded you. In time to come

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also 4.9–14; 5.29–6.2. **31.14–23** A brief account of Joshua's installation to succeed Moses as war leader (vv. 14–15; 23) frames a divine charge introducing the Song of Moses as an oracular witness against Israel (vv. 16–22; see also 31.28–32.44). **31.14** *Your time to die is near.* Cf. Gen 47.29; 1 Kings 2.1. *Tent of meeting.* Cf. Ex 25.22; 29.42–45; 33.7–11; Num 11.16–25. **31.15** On *the pillar of cloud* manifesting divine presence at the tent, see Ex 33.9–10; Num 12.5. **31.16** *Lie down with your ancestors.* Cf., e.g., Gen 47.30; 2 Sam 7.12; 1 Kings 2.10; 11.43. Prostitution is frequently used as a metaphor for apostasy, e.g., Ex 34.15–16; Judg 8.27, 33; Hos 4.12; 9.1. Though identified here with *the gods of the land* (Canaan), *foreign gods* most often refers to cultic imports or innovations that compromise Israel's allegiance to the Lord alone (cf. 32.12, 16–17; Gen 35.2–4; Josh 24.2, 20–23; Judg 5.8; 10.16; 1 Kings 11.1–10; 2 Kings 17.29–41). *Breaking my covenant* (also v. 20). Cf. Jer 11.9–10. **31.17–18** Anticipation of 32.19–22. *God is not in our midst.* See 1.42; cf. Ex 17.7; Num 14.14, 42; Jer 14.9. **31.19–22** The written text of the song has a mnemonic function (cf. 6.6–9; Ex 17.14) while also documenting divine prescience of Israel's dire fate (cf. Jer 36). **31.20** *Despising me,* neglect or renunciation of the Lord's sovereignty (see Num 14.11, 23; 2 Sam 12.14; Ps 10.3, 13; Isa 1.4). **31.23** See vv. 7–8; cf. Num 27.15–23 (in the "priestly" tradition). **31.24–29** Preceding themes of the written law (vv. 9–13) and of the Song of Moses as witness (vv. 16–22) are here resumed and conflated; see also 32.44–47. **31.26** The scroll (*this book of the law,* cf. 29.20–21; 30.10) is to be preserved *beside the ark,* i.e., as an authoritative and accessible complement to the tablets of the Decalogue deposited within (cf. 4.13–14; 10.1–5; Ex 40.20; 1 Kings 8.9). **31.27** See 9.6–7, 23–24. **31.28–29** Cf. vv. 12–13, 19–22; cf. also 4.25–26; 11.26–28; 30.17–19.

trouble will befall you, because you will do what is evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger through the work of your hands."

The Song of Moses

30 Then Moses recited the words of this song, to the very end, in the hearing of the whole assembly of Israel:

32 Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak;
let the earth hear the words of my mouth.
2 May my teaching drop like the rain,
my speech condense like the dew;
like gentle rain on grass,
like showers on new growth.
3 For I will proclaim the name of the LORD;
ascribe greatness to our God!

4 The Rock, his work is perfect,
and all his ways are just.
A faithful God, without deceit,
just and upright is he;
5 yet his degenerate children have dealt falsely with him,[r]
a perverse and crooked generation.
6 Do you thus repay the LORD,
O foolish and senseless people?
Is not he your father, who created you,
who made you and established you?
7 Remember the days of old,
consider the years long past;
ask your father, and he will inform you;
your elders, and they will tell you.
8 When the Most High[s] apportioned the nations,
when he divided humankind,
he fixed the boundaries of the peoples
according to the number of the gods;[t]
9 the LORD's own portion was his people,
Jacob his allotted share.

10 He sustained[u] him in a desert land,
in a howling wilderness waste;
he shielded him, cared for him,
guarded him as the apple of his eye.

r Meaning of Heb uncertain s Traditional rendering of Heb *Elyon* t Q Ms Compare Gk Tg: MT *the Israelites* u Sam Gk Compare Tg: MT *found*

31.30 On Israel's plenary *assembly*, see note on 5.22. **32.1–43** The valedictory canticle ascribed to Moses is an eloquent poetic homily on the vicissitudes of the filial relationship between the Lord and Jacob (Israel). While origin and date of composition are disputed, forensic themes and the vivid imagery of divine pathos associate the work closely with traditions of classical Israelite prophecy. Cf. especially Isa 30.1–18; Jer 2–3; Ezek 20.1–44; Hos 13–14; Mic 6.1–5; cf. also Pss 50; 78. **32.1–3** The introductory idiom is both didactic and hymnic. **32.1** On the appeal for *heavens* and *earth* to attend the poet's discourse, cf. 4.26; 30.19; 31.28; Ps 50.4; Isa 1.2. **32.2** *Teaching* or "lore." Cf., e.g., Isa 29.24; Job 11.4; Prov 1.5; 4.2. **32.3** Proclamation of the *name of the LORD* here means public defense of divine providence and honor (cf., e.g., Josh 7.7–9; Ps 96.8; Jer 14.21; 32.20). **32.4–18** Poignant contrast between God's superlative character and the waywardness of God's people (vv. 4–5) is developed through narrative retrospect into an indictment of the poet's audience (*you*, vv. 6–7, 15, 18). **32.4** The Lord's stalwart integrity and trustworthiness are underscored by the epithets *Rock* (also vv. 15, 18, 30–31; elsewhere, e.g., 2 Sam 22.3; Ps 18.2, 31, 46; Isa 17.10; Hab 1.12) and *faithful God* (cf. 7.9; Pss 33.4; 89.1–2; Isa 25.1; Hos 2.20). **32.5** *Children*. See 14.1. *Dealt falsely* (*acted corruptly* in 9.12). Cf. Isa 1.2–4; Hos 9.9; Mal 2.8. **32.6** *You*. Accusation stresses the Lord's paternal claim on Israel. *Your father, who created you*. Cf. Ex 4.21–23; Jer 31.8–9; Hos 11.1–3. **32.7** On the appeal for remembrance of primal events (*days of old*, Isa 51.9–10; 63.11; Mic 7.14–15), cf. Deut 4.32–34; Job 8.8–10; Isa 46.8–11; 63.11. **32.8** *Most High* (Hebrew *Elyon*) is an appellation generally expressing the Lord's universal sovereignty (e.g., Gen 14.18–22; Num 24.16; Pss 47.2; 83.18); here and occasionally elsewhere (Isa 14.14; Ps 82) it denotes the executive of the divine assembly, comprising subordinate *gods* (lit., "sons of God," as in Job 1.6; 2.1; Pss 29.1; 89.5–7). **32.9** Cf. 7.6; Jer 10.16; Zech 2.12; Sir 17.17. **32.10–12** For the motives in this portrait of divine providence during the exodus-wilderness era, cf. especially Jer 2.2–3, 6; Hos 2.14–15; 9.10; 13.4–6 (also Deut 1.31; 2.7; Ex 15.13; 19.4; Isa 43.10–21). *Apple of his eye*. Cf. Ps 17.8; Prov 7.2.

11 As an eagle stirs up its nest,
and hovers over its young;
as it spreads its wings, takes them up,
and bears them aloft on its pinions,
12 the LORD alone guided him;
no foreign god was with him.
13 He set him atop the heights of the land,
and fed him with[v] produce of the field;
he nursed him with honey from the crags,
with oil from flinty rock;
14 curds from the herd, and milk from the flock,
with fat of lambs and rams;
Bashan bulls and goats,
together with the choicest wheat—
you drank fine wine from the blood of grapes.
15 Jacob ate his fill;[w]
Jeshurun grew fat, and kicked.
You grew fat, bloated, and gorged!
He abandoned God who made him,
and scoffed at the Rock of his salvation.
16 They made him jealous with strange gods,
with abhorrent things they provoked him.
17 They sacrificed to demons, not God,
to deities they had never known,
to new ones recently arrived,
whom your ancestors had not feared.
18 You were unmindful of the Rock that bore you;[x]
you forgot the God who gave you birth.

19 The LORD saw it, and was jealous;[y]
he spurned[z] his sons and daughters.
20 He said: I will hide my face from them,
I will see what their end will be;
for they are a perverse generation,
children in whom there is no faithfulness.
21 They made me jealous with what is no god,
provoked me with their idols.
So I will make them jealous with what is no people,
provoke them with a foolish nation.
22 For a fire is kindled by my anger,
and burns to the depths of Sheol;
it devours the earth and its increase,

v Sam Gk Syr Tg: MT *he ate* w Q Mss Sam Gk: MT lacks *Jacob ate his fill* x Or *that begot you* y Q Mss Gk: MT lacks *was jealous* z Cn: Heb *he spurned because of provocation*

32.13–14 Cf. 8.7–9; Ex 15.17; Ps 81.16. **32.13** *Heights of the land*, connoting mountains (cf. Isa 58.14; Am 4.13; Mic 1.3), refers here to the highlands of Canaan (see 1.7). **32.14** *Bashan*. See note on 3.1. **32.15** Cf. 8.12–17; 31.20; Neh 9.25. The appellations *Jacob* and *Jeshurun* are also paralleled in Isa 44.2; the latter designation (rendered "beloved one, darling" in the Septuagint) is otherwise attested only in Deut 33.5, 26. **32.16–17** Cf. 31.16; cf. Judg 5.8. **32.16** *Strange gods*. See Pss 44.20; 81.9; Isa 43.12; cf. note on Deut 31.16. **32.17** *Demons* are associated with abhorrent Canaanite rites in Ps 106.34–39. **32.18** For the imagery of divine maternity, complementing vv. 6–7, cf. Isa 49.15.

32.19–42 Divine soliloquy, contemplating appropriate punishment of Israel's apostasy, alternates with the narrator's voice (vv. 19, 28–33, 36). **32.19–21** The judgment announced is retaliatory, corresponding to the form of the crime (see note on 19.19–21 on talion). On jealousy as a divine attribute, see 4.24. **32.20** *Hide my face*, withdrawal of divine favor and protective presence, i.e., the converse of Num 6.25–26; see 31.17–18 (cf., e.g., Ps 13.1; Isa 8.17; Jer 33.5; Ezek 39.23–24). **32.21** *No god* is a categorical negation of the anonymous deities referred to in vv. 16–17. So too the anonymous adversary selected as the Lord's instrument of revenge (*no people, foolish nation*) may be intentionally generic; cf. 28.49–50 (cf. Judg 2.14–15; Ps 79.1–7; Isa 9.11–12). **32.22–25** The onslaught of the Lord's wrath is graphically plotted. **32.22** On *fire* as a weapon of divine warfare, see, e.g., Job 31.12; Ps 50.3; Am 1.4; cf. Deut 4.24. For portrayal of the catastrophic cosmic effects (consuming the *depths of Sheol*, i.e., the netherworld, the earth's surface, and *foundations of the mountains*),

and sets on fire the foundations
of the mountains.
23 I will heap disasters upon them,
spend my arrows against them:
24 wasting hunger,
burning consumption,
bitter pestilence.
The teeth of beasts I will send
against them,
with venom of things crawling
in the dust.
25 In the street the sword shall
bereave,
and in the chambers terror,
for young man and woman alike,
nursing child and old gray
head.
26 I thought to scatter them[a]
and blot out the memory of
them from humankind;
27 but I feared provocation by the
enemy,
for their adversaries might
misunderstand
and say, "Our hand is
triumphant;
it was not the LORD who did all
this."

28 They are a nation void of sense;
there is no understanding in
them.
29 If they were wise, they would
understand this;
they would discern what the
end would be.
30 How could one have routed a
thousand,
and two put a myriad to flight,
unless their Rock had sold them,
the LORD had given them up?
31 Indeed their rock is not like our
Rock;
our enemies are fools.[a]
32 Their vine comes from the
vinestock of Sodom,
from the vineyards of
Gomorrah;
their grapes are grapes of poison,
their clusters are bitter;
33 their wine is the poison of
serpents,
the cruel venom of asps.

34 Is not this laid up in store
with me,
sealed up in my treasuries?
35 Vengeance is mine, and
recompense,
for the time when their foot
shall slip;
because the day of their calamity
is at hand,
their doom comes swiftly.

36 Indeed the LORD will vindicate
his people,
have compassion on his
servants,
when he sees that their power is
gone,
neither bond nor free
remaining.
37 Then he will say: Where are their
gods,

a Gk: Meaning of Heb uncertain

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see especially Ps 18.7–8; Am 7.4. **32.23** Pestilential *arrows* in the Lord's arsenal (cf. also v. 42; Job 6.4; Pss 7.12–13; 18.14; Lam 3.12–13; Ezek 5.16; Hab 3.9) approximate covenantal curses (cf. Deut 28.21–22; Ps 78.49). **32.25** Cf. Jer 6.11; 9.20–22; Lam 1.20; 2.21; Ezek 7.15. **32.26–27** Divine wrath is restrained, short of Israel's extinction, to thwart the foe's triumphalism. **32.26** *Blot out the memory.* Cf. 25.19. *Provocation,* vainglory (cf. Isa 10.5–15). On the implied threat to the Lord's reputation, cf., e.g., 9.26–29; Ex 32.11–14; Ps 74.18; Isa 48.9–11. **32.28–33** Descanting on the Lord's deliberations, the poet or prophetic narrator here reproaches the arrogance and brutish character of the enemy. **32.28** *Void of sense* or "lacking counsel"; cf. Isa 10.13 (boast of Assyria's king) and the ironical interrogation of Edom in Jer 49.7. **32.32** On *Sodom* and *Gomorrah.* See Deut 29.23. **32.34–35** The agent of chastisement will not itself escape judgment; cf. Isa 10.15–16 (Assyria); Jer 49.12–22 (Edom). **32.34** *This,* the foe's transgression, which awaits divine requital (cf. Job 14.17; Hos 13.12). **32.35** *Vengeance,* retribution, vindication (cf., e.g., Judg 16.28; Ps 94.1–3; Isa 61.2). *Recompense,* equitable redress (Isa 59.18; cf. Hos 9.7). *Day of their calamity.* See, e.g., Job 21.30; Ps 18.18; Jer 18.17; Ob 12–13. **32.36–42** Promise of the Lord's intervention as judge and warrior to exact retributive justice. **32.36** Prophetic proclamation of divine intent. *Vindicate* or "judge" refers to judicial review, here divine prosecution on Israel's behalf (cf., e.g., Gen 15.14; Pss 7.8; 9.8; Isa 3.13); note the parallel in Ps 135.14. The sense of *neither bond nor free* seems to be "(almost) no one" (cf. 1 Kings 14.10; 21.21;

the rock in which they took
refuge,
38 who ate the fat of their sacrifices,
and drank the wine of their
libations?
Let them rise up and help you,
let them be your protection!

39 See now that I, even I, am he;
there is no god besides me.
I kill and I make alive;
I wound and I heal;
and no one can deliver from
my hand.
40 For I lift up my hand to heaven,
and swear: As I live forever,
41 when I whet my flashing sword,
and my hand takes hold on
judgment;
I will take vengeance on my
adversaries,
and will repay those who
hate me.
42 I will make my arrows drunk with
blood,
and my sword shall devour
flesh—
with the blood of the slain and
the captives,
from the long-haired enemy.

43 Praise, O heavens,[b] his people,
worship him, all you gods![c]
For he will avenge the blood of
his children,[d]
and take vengeance on his
adversaries;
he will repay those who
hate him,[c]
and cleanse the land for his
people.[e]

44 Moses came and recited all the words of this song in the hearing of the people, he and Joshua[f] son of Nun. 45 When Moses had finished reciting all these words to all Israel, 46 he said to them: "Take to heart all the words that I am giving in witness against you today; give them as a command to your children, so that they may diligently observe all the words of this law. 47 This is no trifling matter for you, but rather your very life; through it you may live long in the land that you are crossing over the Jordan to possess."

48 On that very day the LORD addressed Moses as follows: 49 "Ascend this mountain of the Abarim, Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, across from Jericho, and view the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites for a possession; 50 you shall die there on the mountain that you ascend and shall be gathered to your kin, as your brother Aaron died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his kin; 51 because both of you

b Q Ms Gk: MT *nations* *c* Q Ms Gk: MT lacks this line *d* Q Ms Gk: MT *his servants* *e* Q Ms Sam Gk Vg: MT *his land his people* *f* Sam Gk Syr Vg: MT *Hoshea*

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2 Kings 9.8; 14.26). **32.37–38** Interrogation of Israel (cf. Isa 40.25–31) or its adversaries (cf. Isa 41.1–4) or both (cf. Isa 43.8–13; 44.6–8). On mockery of impotent *gods* and those who foolishly profess them, cf. Judg 10.10–14; 1 Kings 18.27; Isa 46.1–2; Jer 2.26–28. **32.39** The unanswered queries support the Lord's assertion of exclusive sovereignty, as often in the trial scenes of Second Isaiah (Isa 40.28–31; 41.4; 43.10–13; 44.6); cf. 4.32–40. *Kill and ... make alive.* Cf. 1 Sam 2.6–8; Tob 13.2; Wis 16.13. *I wound and I heal.* Cf. Job 5.18; Isa 30.26; Hos 6.1–2; cf. Ex 15.26. **32.40–42** Promissory oath of the Divine Warrior. *As I live forever.* Cf. Isa 49.18; Jer 22.24; Ezek 5.11; Zeph 2.9. For the themes and carnage depicted, cf. Isa 1.24; Jer 46.10; Nah 1.2. Portraits of the Lord's retribution against Edom are noteworthy: Isa 34.5–7; 63.1–6; Ezek 25.12–14. **32.43** Concluding summons of the *heavens* to celebrate redemption of the Lord's people (cf. Isa 49.13) forms an inclusion (a repetition signaling the beginning and end of a unit) with the appeal of v. 1. Subordination of the *gods* echoes vv. 8, 37. *Cleanse,* or "purify, expiate"; see 21.8. **32.44–47** Principal strands of chs. 30–31 especially are woven together in this conclusion to the "Moab Covenant." For the multiple, overlapping connotations of the leitmotif *word(s),* cf. 29.1, 9, 19, 29; 30.1 (*things*), 14; 31.1, 12, 24, 28, 30. **32.44** *Joshua* (or *Hoshea*; see text note *f*; cf. Num 13.8, 16) is now in place as Moses' successor; see 31.14–15, 23. **32.47** A final admonition recalls the exhortations of 30.11–20 (cf. 4.26, 40; 6.1–2; Lev 18.5). *No trifling matter,* lit. "no empty word." *Through it,* lit. "by this word." **32.48–52** Transition to the pentateuchal account of Moses' death in ch. 34. With this resumptive paraphrase of Num 27.12–14 (priestly tradition), cf. 3.23–27. **32.49** *Nebo* is a northern promontory of the *Abarim* range that flanks the eastern shore of the Dead Sea (cf. 3.17, 27; 34.1; Num 33.47–48). **32.50** For Aaron's death *on Mount Hor,* see the priestly account of Num 20.22–29; 33.38–39; cf. 10.6. **32.51** *Broke faith.* Cf. Ex

broke faith with me among the Israelites
at the waters of Meribath-kadesh in the
wilderness of Zin, by failing to maintain
my holiness among the Israelites. 52 Al-
though you may view the land from a dis-
tance, you shall not enter it—the land that
I am giving to the Israelites."

Moses' Testamentary Blessing

33 This is the blessing with which
Moses, the man of God, blessed
the Israelites before his death. 2 He said:
The LORD came from Sinai,
and dawned from Seir
upon us;[g]
he shone forth from Mount
Paran.
With him were myriads of holy
ones;[h]
at his right, a host of his own.[i]
3 Indeed, O favorite among[j]
peoples,
all his holy ones were in your
charge;
they marched at your heels,
accepted direction from you.
4 Moses charged us with the law,
as a possession for the assembly
of Jacob.
5 There arose a king in Jeshurun,
when the leaders of the people
assembled—
the united tribes of Israel.

6 May Reuben live, and not die out,
even though his numbers
are few.

7 And this he said of Judah:
O LORD, give heed to Judah,
and bring him to his people;
strengthen his hands for him,[k]
and be a help against his
adversaries.

8 And of Levi he said:

g Gk Syr Vg Compare Tg: Heb *upon them* *h* Cn Compare Gk Sam Syr Vg: MT *He came from Ribeboth-kodesh,* *i* Cn Compare Gk: meaning of Heb uncertain *j* Or *O lover of the* *k* Cn: Heb *with his hands he contended*

17.1–7; Ps 106.32; Num 20.1–13 (priestly tradition). *Meribath-kadesh in the wilderness of Zin* is apparently identical with the oasis of Kadesh-barnea in northern Sinai (see note on 1.2; cf. Josh 15.1–3; Ezek 47.19; 48.28).

33.1 The last of the book's four editorial headings (cf. 1.1–5; 4.44–49; 29.1) anticipates ch. 34 while specifically introducing Moses' oracular benedictions on the assembled tribes. (For the genre of testamentary blessings, cf. Gen 27.27–29; 49.1–28.) On the prophetic appellation *the man of God,* also used of Moses in Josh 14.6; Ps 90 (heading), cf., e.g., Judg 13.6, 8; 1 Sam 2.27; 9.6–9; 1 Kings 12.22; 13.1; 17.8. **33.2–29** The composition, which may ultimately derive from a liturgical celebration of the Israelite confederacy, perhaps during the era of Saulide rule (ca. 1000 B.C.E.), is a collocation of tribal epigrams set within the frame of a victory hymn (vv. 2–5, 26–29). **33.2–5** Hymnic poem. **33.2–3** The introit rehearses the Lord's epiphany, advancing into Canaan from *Sinai* across the southeastern highlands of Edom (*Seir, Mount Paran*; see 1.2), accompanied by a vast heavenly cohort and its mundane counterpart, Israel's tribal militia. Variations on this hymnal epic theme are attested also in Judg 5.4–5; Ps 68.7–8, 17; Hab 3.3–7; cf. Ex 15.13–18. *Dawned, shown forth* suggest a solar epiphany: cf. Pss 50.1–2; 80.1–2; 94.1; Job 37.15 (lightning). *Myriads of holy ones, host.* Cf. Num 10.36; 1 Kings 22.19; Pss 68.17; 89.7; Zech 14.5; cf. also Mt 26.53; Rev 5.11. **33.4–5** Though formed in response to divine initiative, the confederation of Jacob (Israel) (*assembly*; cf. Neh 5.7; *united tribes*) was formally constituted through Moses' promulgation of law (Hebrew *torah*; see 4.44). **33.5** *There arose a king* is perhaps an oblique reference to inauguration of monarchical governance under Saul (cf. 1 Sam 10.20–25; 11.14–15). The phrase could also be rendered "let there be a king" or "he became king"; the latter has traditionally been understood to mean either the Lord's (so, e.g., RSV; cf. Ex 15.18; Num 23.21; Judg 8.23; Isa 33.17, 22) or Moses' exaltation to sovereignty over tribal Israel (cf. Ex 14.31; 34.10). *Jeshurun.* See note on 32.15. **33.6–25** Benedictory pronouncements about or petitions on behalf of the individual tribes. Among the traditional twelve tribes, only Simeon is conspicuously missing; cf., e.g., Gen 35.23; 49.5; Ex 1.2. Cf. Josh 19.1–9. **33.6** Attrition of *Reuben* may be the outcome of warfare with its Transjordanian neighbors during the eleventh century B.C.E. (cf. 3.12, 16; Judg 10.7–11.33; 1 Sam 10.27–11.11). **33.7** The petition on behalf of *Judah* perhaps alludes to Philistine hegemony in the central hill country of Palestine after the defeat of Saul (cf. 1 Sam 31). **33.8–11** This expansive encomium on *Levi* suggests the charter of a clerical guild; see 10.8–9; 18.1–8. *Thummim* and *Urim,* sacred lots; cf. Ex 28.30; Lev 8.8; 1 Sam 14.41–42. The *loyal one* is presumably Moses himself, *tested at Massah* and

Give to Levi[l] your Thummim,
and your Urim to your
loyal one,
whom you tested at Massah,
with whom you contended at
the waters of Meribah;
9 who said of his father and
mother,
"I regard them not";
he ignored his kin,
and did not acknowledge his
children.
For they observed your word,
and kept your covenant.
10 They teach Jacob your
ordinances,
and Israel your law;
they place incense before you,
and whole burnt offerings on
your altar.
11 Bless, O LORD, his substance,
and accept the work of his
hands;
crush the loins of his adversaries,
of those that hate him, so that
they do not rise again.

12 Of Benjamin he said:
The beloved of the LORD rests in
safety—
the High God[m] surrounds him all
day long—
the beloved[n] rests between his
shoulders.

13 And of Joseph he said:
Blessed by the LORD be his land,
with the choice gifts of heaven
above,
and of the deep that lies
beneath;
14 with the choice fruits of the sun,
and the rich yield of the
months;
15 with the finest produce of the
ancient mountains,
and the abundance of the
everlasting hills;
16 with the choice gifts of the earth
and its fullness,
and the favor of the one who
dwells on Sinai.[o]
Let these come on the head of
Joseph,
on the brow of the prince
among his brothers.
17 A firstborn[p] bull—majesty is his!
His horns are the horns of a
wild ox;
with them he gores the peoples,
driving them to[q] the ends of
the earth;
such are the myriads of Ephraim,
such the thousands of
Manasseh.

18 And of Zebulun he said:
Rejoice, Zebulun, in your
going out;
and Issachar, in your tents.
19 They call peoples to the
mountain;
there they offer the right
sacrifices;
for they suck the affluence of the
seas
and the hidden treasures of the
sand.

l Q Ms Gk: MT lacks *Give to Levi* *m* Heb *above him* *n* Heb *he* *o* Cn: Heb *in the bush* *p* Q Ms Gk Syr Vg: MT *His firstborn* *q* Cn: Heb *the peoples, together*

Meribah; cf. 6.16; 9.22; 32.51; Ex 17.1–7; Num 20.1–13 (cf. also 1 Sam 2.27–28; Pss 77.20; 99.6; Sir 45.1–5). **33.9** On the declaration *I regard them not*, cf. Ex 32.25–29; cf. also Lk 14.26. **33.10** *Teach*, or "interpret for" (cognate with the Hebrew noun *torah*); cf. 17.10–11; cf. Lev 10.10–11; 2 Kings 17.27–28; Jer 18.18; Ezek 7.26; Hos 4.6; Mic 3.11; Mal 2.4–9. **33.12** This cryptic saying may refer to the location of *Benjamin*'s tribal allotment in the central Palestinian hill country between the major sanctuaries of Bethel and Jerusalem; cf. Josh 18.11–28. *Beloved of the LORD*. Cf. 2 Sam 12.25 (Solomon); Jer 11.15 (Israel). *Rests* (or "tents") *in safety*. Cf. v. 28; 12.10; cf. Prov 1.33; 2.21. *The High God*, Hebrew *'Alu* (also in 1 Sam 2.10), a variant form of the divine appellation *Elyon*; see 32.8. **33.13–17** This expansive encomium indicates the prominence of *Joseph* among the tribes. *Heaven, deep*. See Gen 7.11; 8.2; 49.25; cf. Ps 107.26; Prov 8.27. **33.15** *Mountains, hills*. Cf. Gen 49.26; Hab 3.6. **33.16** *Who dwells* (or "tabernacles") *on Sinai*; cf. Ex 24.16. **33.17** *Horns of a wild ox*. Cf. Num 23.22; 24.8. *Ephraim, Manasseh*. Cf. 3.13–14. **33.18–19** *Zebulun* and *Issachar* are linked as neighboring tribes occupying the hills of southern Galilee and the fertile Esdraelon plain; cf. Josh 19.10–23. **33.19** The *mountain* is probably Tabor, in the central Esdraelon (cf. Judg 4.6, 12–14), though Mount Carmel on the coast is also possible. *Seas* should mean the Mediterranean and the Sea of Galilee (Chinnereth); cf. Gen 49.13.

20 And of Gad he said:
Blessed be the enlargement
of Gad!
Gad lives like a lion;
he tears at arm and scalp.
21 He chose the best for himself,
for there a commander's
allotment was reserved;
he came at the head of the
people,
he executed the justice of the
LORD,
and his ordinances for Israel.

22 And of Dan he said:
Dan is a lion's whelp
that leaps forth from Bashan.

23 And of Naphtali he said:
O Naphtali, sated with favor,
full of the blessing of the
LORD,
possess the west and the
south.

24 And of Asher he said:
Most blessed of sons be Asher;
may he be the favorite of his
brothers,
and may he dip his foot in oil.
25 Your bars are iron and bronze;
and as your days, so is your
strength.
26 There is none like God,
O Jeshurun,
who rides through the heavens
to your help,
majestic through the skies.
27 He subdues the ancient gods,[r]
shatters[s] the forces of old;[t]
he drove out the enemy
before you,
and said, "Destroy!"
28 So Israel lives in safety,
untroubled is Jacob's abode[u]
in a land of grain and wine,
where the heavens drop
down dew.
29 Happy are you, O Israel! Who is
like you,
a people saved by the LORD,
the shield of your help,
and the sword of your triumph!
Your enemies shall come fawning
to you,
and you shall tread on their
backs.

Moses' Departure and Epitaph

34 Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jeri-

r Or *The eternal God is a dwelling place*
s Cn: Heb *from underneath* *t* Or *the everlasting arms* *u* Or *fountain*

33.20–21 Territorial expansion of *Gad* in the Transjordan contrasts sharply with Reuben's diminished condition (v. 6). **33.21** *Chose the best.* See Num 32.1–5. *Commander's allotment* was understood in early rabbinic tradition to refer to Moses' burial place; Mahanaim, which served as royal refuge for Ishbaal after the death of his father, Saul, may be a more likely possibility (cf. 2 Sam 2.8–10). On Gad's military prowess (*like a lion*, v. 18; *head of the people*), cf. 3.18–20; Josh 1.12–14; 1 Chr 12.8–15. *Executed . . . justice* is another royal theme. Cf. 2 Sam 8.15 (David); Ps 72.1–4; Jer 22.15–16; 23.5–6. **33.22** Judah receives the epithet *lion's whelp* in Gen 49.9. *Bashan.* See note on 3.1. On *Dan*'s northern provenance, cf. 34.1; Josh 19.47; Judg 18. **33.23** *Naphtali*, situated in the Galilean highlands, is encouraged to expand its holdings. **33.24–25** The territory of *Asher* on the slopes of western Galilee was renowned for its orchards that yielded fine-quality olive *oil*. **33.25** Metallic *bars* perhaps alludes to well-fortified settlements. **33.26–29** The postlude resumes the hymnal epic themes of the Lord's advent and incomparability as warrior, empowering Israel to achieve victories against its enemies. Cf. 3.24; 4.32–40. **33.26** *Jeshurun.* See note on 32.15. *Who rides*, on the cloud-chariot of the Divine Warrior; cf. Isa 19.1; Pss 18.10; 68.4, 33; 104.3. **33.27** On the theme of the Lord's triumph over otiose gods of Canaan (*ancient gods, forces of old*), cf., e.g., 7.4, 25; Ex 23.23–24; 1 Sam 5.1–7; 2 Sam 7.22–24; Isa 51.9–10. **33.28–29** Cf. 7.12–24; Gen 27.28. **33.29** *Shield of your help.* Cf. Gen 15.1; 2 Sam 22.3; Pss 28.7; 119.114.

34.1–12 This final act of Moses' career, concluding the broad pentateuchal story of Israel's formation, seems perfunctory and impassive in the telling here. That may be the result of editorial design, abridging the extant traditions (some of which may resurface later in Jewish folklore; cf. *Midrash Rabbah*). What took precedence in Israel's memory was not the grave site of the great leader (whether secret or simply forgotten) but his legacy of torah (29.29; 31.9–13; 33.4, 10) and the superlative character of his leadership, handed on through Joshua, even if only in diminished form (vv. 9–12; cf. Josh 1.1–9). **34.1–3** A

cho, and the LORD showed him the whole
land: Gilead as far as Dan, 2 all Naphtali,
the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all
the land of Judah as far as the Western
Sea, 3 the Negeb, and the Plain—that is,
the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees
—as far as Zoar. 4 The LORD said to him,
"This is the land of which I swore to Abra-
ham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, 'I will
give it to your descendants'; I have let you
see it with your eyes, but you shall not
cross over there." 5 Then Moses, the ser-
vant of the LORD, died there in the land of
Moab, at the LORD's command. 6 He was
buried in a valley in the land of Moab,
opposite Beth-peor, but no one knows his
burial place to this day. 7 Moses was one
hundred twenty years old when he died;
his sight was unimpaired and his vigor
had not abated. 8 The Israelites wept for
Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days;
then the period of mourning for Moses
was ended.

9 Joshua son of Nun was full of the
spirit of wisdom, because Moses had laid
his hands on him; and the Israelites
obeyed him, doing as the LORD had com-
manded Moses.

10 Never since has there arisen a
prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the
LORD knew face to face. 11 He was un-
equaled for all the signs and wonders that
the LORD sent him to perform in the land
of Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his ser-
vants and his entire land, 12 and for all the
mighty deeds and all the terrifying dis-
plays of power that Moses performed in
the sight of all Israel.

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panoramic view of the promised land. *Plains of Moab to Mount Nebo.* Cf. 32.49; Num 22.1. *Pisgah.* See 3.17. The view northward extends beyond *Gilead* (see 2.36) to Danite territory on the lower slopes of Mount Hermon (see 3.8; 33.22). **34.2** *Western Sea.* See 11.24. **34.3** *Negeb.* See 1.7. *Plain,* the basin of the Dead Sea, extending from *Jericho* in the northwest to *Zoar* in the southeast (cf. Gen 13.10–11; 14.2, 8). **34.4** Cf. 1.8; 3.27. **34.5–8** Death, burial, and mourning for Moses. *Servant of the LORD.* Cf. Ex 14.31; Num 12.7–8; Josh 1.1–2, 7, 13, 15; 1 Kings 8.53, 56; Mal 4.4. *Valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor.* See 3.29. **34.7** On Moses' ripe old age, see 31.2; cf. this, together with 1.31, to the notice on Aaron's death report in Num 33.38–39. **34.8** *Thirty days* of mourning for a deceased leader was apparently traditional; cf. Num 20.29. **34.9** Joshua's initial exaltation. *Full of the spirit of wisdom.* Cf. Ex 28.3; 35.31; 31.3; Num 27.18–23. **34.10–12** The epitaph affirms, from an apparent distance, the preeminence of Moses' work as deliverer; it serves as a colophon to the completed Pentateuch (cf. 18.15–18; Mal 4.4–5). **34.10** *Face to face* indicates God's intimate knowledge of Moses: cf. 5.4; Ex 33.11; Num 12.8 (lit. "mouth to mouth"); Sir 45.5. **34.11** On *Signs and wonders,* see, e.g., Ex 7.8–12. **34.12** *Mighty deeds, terrifying displays of power.* Moses performed God's own work; cf. 4.34, 37; 26.8; Ps 77.11–15; see also Ex 4.16, 21; 7.1; 34.10.

JOSHUA

THE BOOK OF JOSHUA is eloquent testimony to the grace and power of Yahweh, whom ancient Israel acknowledged to be sovereign Lord of all. ("Yahweh" is the personal name of the God of Israel, for which Jewish tradition respectfully substitutes the title "LORD.") This book tells the story of the Israelites who, under Joshua's leadership and with benefit of divine intervention, crossed the Jordan River to take control of the land of Canaan. The land was the Lord's gift, as promised to the ancestors in the stories of Gen 12–50, to be held in return for the promise of service to the divine Lord.

Structure

The body of the book shows two main divisions, the "conquest" of the land (chs. 6–12) and its "settlement," the apportionment and redistribution of the land by sacred lot to the tribes of Israel (chs. 13–19). This body of the book is bracketed by specially chosen introductory and concluding material (chs. 1–5 and 20–24, respectively).

Content and Message

At the outset Israel is depicted as a mighty, populous twelve-tribe army. The people are encamped east of the Jordan River in a region known as the "Plains of Moab." There, from a position directly overlooking the northern end of the Dead Sea and the southern Jordan Valley, one commands a sweeping view of the western hill country, the land toward which Moses had led the people in their wanderings for forty years since departure from Mount Sinai/Horeb. In the concluding chapter, Joshua assembles all the tribes of Israel at the city of Shechem in the heart of the northcentral hill country. There Joshua presides at a covenant ceremony in which ancestral gods are repudiated and allegiance to Yahweh alone is affirmed.

Between those first and final chapters, discerning readers will note a tension between sweeping editorial claims for military conquest of "all" the land (11.16, 23) and the few stories of actual warfare (6.1–11.15). To these stories is prefixed a leisurely account of preparations for entrance into the land (ch. 1), the recon-

naissance of Jericho (ch. 2), the crossing of the Jordan River and establishment of the camp and religious sanctuary at Gilgal (chs. 3–4), and finally circumcision of all the males (5.2–9) and celebration of the first Passover west of the Jordan (5.10–12). The narrator explains that the entire exodus generation had died out and the rite of circumcision was not practiced during the wilderness wanderings. With the circumcision of the militiamen and celebration of the Passover, all was at last in readiness for the warfare, as signaled by Joshua's encounter, in a vision, with the heavenly commander (5.13–15). In sum, the so-called conquest was interpreted as God's enabling action, for which Israel could claim no credit, graciously reestablishing the ancient people in their homeland.

Throughout these introductory chapters, Israel takes its orders from Joshua, who gets his orders directly from Yahweh. In Canaan Israel is supposed to live as a model theocracy, that is, a people governed directly by the divine Lord.

Concluding chapters share the same perspective. To facilitate justice in cases of homicide while at the same time curbing the practice of blood vengeance within Israel, asylum towns ("cities of refuge") are designated, three on each side of the Jordan (ch. 20). These and other towns are designated in each of the tribes to provide residential and grazing rights for the priestly tribe of Levi (ch. 21).

The Levites are thus dispersed throughout the territorial tribes. It was their responsibility to teach the distinctive ethic, represented by the Decalogue, for example, that shaped the common allegiance of the tribes. That there were deep rifts and rivalries, however, between priestly factions is vividly displayed when the story line resumes. The building of an altar "near the Jordan" (ch. 22) nearly results in intertribal warfare. This is precisely the reverse of intentions for Gilgal near the Jordan at the outset of the era! Joshua's concluding address spirals downward to a stern warning (ch. 23), followed by a great covenanting ceremony at Shechem (ch. 24). The stage is at last set for the story of Israel's life in the land from start (Judges) to finish (2 Kings).

Canonical Context, Sources, and Redaction

A widely accepted hypothesis regards the book of Joshua as part of a historical work that includes also the books of Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings, with the book of Deuteronomy as theological preface or introduction—thus a "Deuteronomistic History." The main edition of the work probably comes from the reign of the reforming King Josiah and the discovery of a long lost Book of the Law during repairs at the Jerusalem temple (ca. 622 B.C.E.; see 2 Kings 22–23). For the era of Joshua, the historian(s) had a collection of stories, lists, and poetic fragments (all of varying antiquity) which they used to present Joshua as military ideal for the Jerusalem king. But Josiah's successes were short-lived. Babylonian armies destroyed Jerusalem in 587 B.C.E., and the History was updated for the last time. The hypothesis may be summarized in the following symbols. *Dtn* stands for Josiah's "Book of the Law," nuclear contents of the canonical book of Deuteronomy (4.44–30.20). Its roots are traceable to older,

reform-minded Levites claiming authority by descent from Moses. *Dtr 1* is the bulk of canonical Deut 4.44–2 Kings from the era of King Josiah. It was produced by a historian of the monarchy in Levitical circles close to the Jerusalem throne. *Dtr 2* is the final edition, supplemented by a "loyal opposition," so as to be, ironically, supportive of life in exile.

The details given in stories and archival materials taken up in Joshua may have varying degrees of historicity. The stories were told and the lists preserved to serve the pedagogical interests of earlier Levitical teachers and later editors. Archaeological data frequently provide illustrative light, but rarely decisive evidence. When studied with the aid of social science perspectives, the texts and excavation data combine to yield a clearer picture of the emergence of ancient Israel as Yahweh's alternative kingdom, wherein Joshua was remembered as playing a decisive role, originally as much "diplomatic," it now appears, as military.
Robert G. Boling

God's Commission to Joshua

1 After the death of Moses the servant
of the LORD, the LORD spoke to
Joshua son of Nun, Moses' assistant, saying, 2 "My servant Moses is dead. Now
proceed to cross the Jordan, you and all
this people, into the land that I am giving
to them, to the Israelites. 3 Every place
that the sole of your foot will tread upon
I have given to you, as I promised to Moses. 4 From the wilderness and the Lebanon as far as the great river, the river
Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, to
the Great Sea in the west shall be your
territory. 5 No one shall be able to stand
against you all the days of your life. As I
was with Moses, so I will be with you; I
will not fail you or forsake you. 6 Be
strong and courageous; for you shall put
this people in possession of the land that I
swore to their ancestors to give them.
7 Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to act in accordance with all
the law that my servant Moses commanded you; do not turn from it to the
right hand or to the left, so that you may
be successful wherever you go. 8 This
book of the law shall not depart out of
your mouth; you shall meditate on it day
and night, so that you may be careful to
act in accordance with all that is written in
it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall be successful.
9 I hereby command you: Be strong and
courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you
wherever you go."
10 Then Joshua commanded the offi-
cers of the people, 11 "Pass through the

1.1–11 God's commission to Joshua. Vv. 1–9 emphasize qualities required of Joshua and leadership he must provide in taking over the land. The Lord speaks as commander in chief to his field commander Joshua, who in turn is introduced in terms appropriate as a role model in military matters for later kings. **1.1** Action begins *after the death of Moses*, who had been denied entrance into the land (Num 20.12). *Assistant* ("minister" in older translations), better "lieutenant" in this context. **1.4** Canaan lay west of the Jordan, *the great river*, stretching from the *wilderness* (possibly the southern Negeb desert) to a line running east from Lebanon's mountains to the upper Euphrates. The latter describes the southeastern portion of the once-mighty empire of the *Hittites*. **1.6** *Strong and courageous* (repeated in vv. 7, 9, 18). Cf. Deut 31.7, 23. The rhetoric of speeches in Joshua frequently echoes Deuteronomy. **1.8** *This book of the law* (cf. 2 Kings 22.8) refers to an earlier edition of Deuteronomy (hypothetical Dtn; see Introduction) containing legal lore such as is found in Deut 12–28. As in Deuteronomy, so also here is emphasized how important the keeping of this teaching is for continuing life in the promised land. **1.11** *In three days,*

camp, and command the people: 'Prepare your provisions; for in three days you are to cross over the Jordan, to go in to take possession of the land that the LORD your God gives you to possess.' "

Address to the Transjordanian Tribes

12 To the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh Joshua said, 13 "Remember the word that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, 'The LORD your God is providing you a place of rest, and will give you this land.' 14 Your wives, your little ones, and your livestock shall remain in the land that Moses gave you beyond the Jordan. But all the warriors among you shall cross over armed before your kindred and shall help them, 15 until the LORD gives rest to your kindred as well as to you, and they too take possession of the land that the LORD your God is giving them. Then you shall return to your own land and take possession of it, the land that Moses the servant of the LORD gave you beyond the Jordan to the east."

16 They answered Joshua: "All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. 17 Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you. Only may the LORD your God be with you, as he was with Moses! 18 Whoever rebels against your orders and disobeys your words, whatever you command, shall be put to death. Only be strong and courageous."

Spies Sent to Jericho

2 Then Joshua son of Nun sent two men secretly from Shittim as spies, saying, "Go, view the land, especially Jericho." So they went, and entered the house of a prostitute whose name was Rahab, and spent the night there. 2 The king of Jericho was told, "Some Israelites have come here tonight to search out the land." 3 Then the king of Jericho sent orders to Rahab, "Bring out the men who have come to you, who entered your house, for they have come only to search out the whole land." 4 But the woman took the two men and hid them. Then she said, "True, the men came to me, but I did not know where they came from. 5 And when it was time to close the gate at dark, the men went out. Where the men went I do not know. Pursue them quickly, for you can overtake them." 6 She had, however, brought them up to the roof and hidden them with the stalks of flax that she had laid out on the roof. 7 So the men pursued them on the way to the Jordan as far as the fords. As soon as the pursuers had gone out, the gate was shut.

8 Before they went to sleep, she came up to them on the roof 9 and said to the men: "I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that dread of you has fallen

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i.e., "the day after tomorrow," reflects liturgical celebration and dramatic reenactment.

1.12–18 It was in territory east of the Jordan, settled by Reuben, Gad, and half of the tribe of Manasseh, that the followers of Moses scored their first successes. The Transjordanian militiamen are now commanded to participate in seizure of land in Canaan, where the other half of Manasseh will settle along with the remainder of the territorial tribes. **1.16–18** The Transjordanian tribes here respond eagerly and exhort Joshua in words echoing his own usage in vv. 7, 9. Their eagerness will turn to reluctance and suspicion in ch. 22 (dispute over an altar near the Jordan), which is a companion framework piece.

2.1–24 This story of spies sent to *view the land* (v. 1), their visit to Rahab's house, her protection of them, and their promise of future protection for her was secondarily connected with Jericho. The story abruptly resumes (6.22–25) after the capture of Jericho. **2.1–3** *Jericho* is named three times in three verses, but not again in this story. The location of OT Jericho is the heavily excavated mound Tell es-Sultan, some twenty-three miles east of Jerusalem. The only major west-bank oasis in the southern half of the Jordan Valley, Jericho had for millennia controlled several fords and routes of access to the hill country. Archaeology has shown that by the late thirteenth and early twelfth centuries B.C.E. Jericho had fallen on hard times, to become at most a small unfortified village sitting atop the imposing ruins of the formerly walled town. **2.1** *Shittim*, in Hebrew "Acacias." Trees characteristic of desert terrain gave this name to the final desert encampment (Num 25.1) in the eastern Jordan Valley. Other stories of *spies* are found in Num 13; Josh 7.2–5; Judg 18.2–10. *Rahab* is later reckoned among the ancestors of Jesus (Mt 1.5), lauded as an example of living faith (Heb 11.31), and justified by her works (Jas 2.25). Here she uses rhetoric characteristic of Deuteronomy. **2.9** *Inhabitants*, better understood as "rulers" in this passage, represented in negotiations by one of their number.

on us, and that all the inhabitants of the
land melt in fear before you. 10 For we
have heard how the LORD dried up the
water of the Red Sea[a] before you when
you came out of Egypt, and what you did
to the two kings of the Amorites that were
beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og,
whom you utterly destroyed. 11 As soon as
we heard it, our hearts melted, and there
was no courage left in any of us because of
you. The LORD your God is indeed God in
heaven above and on earth below. 12 Now
then, since I have dealt kindly with you,
swear to me by the LORD that you in turn
will deal kindly with my family. Give me a
sign of good faith 13 that you will spare my
father and mother, my brothers and sis-
ters, and all who belong to them, and de-
liver our lives from death." 14 The men
said to her, "Our life for yours! If you do
not tell this business of ours, then we will
deal kindly and faithfully with you when
the LORD gives us the land."

15 Then she let them down by a rope
through the window, for her house was
on the outer side of the city wall and she
resided within the wall itself. 16 She said to
them, "Go toward the hill country, so that
the pursuers may not come upon you.
Hide yourselves there three days, until
the pursuers have returned; then after-
ward you may go your way." 17 The men
said to her, "We will be released from this
oath that you have made us swear to you
18 if we invade the land and you do not tie
this crimson cord in the window through
which you let us down, and you do not
gather into your house your father and
mother, your brothers, and all your fam-
ily. 19 If any of you go out of the doors of
your house into the street, they shall be
responsible for their own death, and we
shall be innocent; but if a hand is laid
upon any who are with you in the house,
we shall bear the responsibility for their
death. 20 But if you tell this business of
ours, then we shall be released from this
oath that you made us swear to you."
21 She said, "According to your words, so
be it." She sent them away and they de-
parted. Then she tied the crimson cord in
the window.

22 They departed and went into the
hill country and stayed there three days,
until the pursuers returned. The pursu-
ers had searched all along the way and
found nothing. 23 Then the two men came
down again from the hill country. They
crossed over, came to Joshua son of Nun,
and told him all that had happened to
them. 24 They said to Joshua, "Truly the
LORD has given all the land into our
hands; moreover all the inhabitants of the
land melt in fear before us."

Israel Crosses the Jordan

3 Early in the morning Joshua rose
and set out from Shittim with all the
Israelites, and they came to the Jordan.
They camped there before crossing over.
2 At the end of three days the officers
went through the camp 3 and commanded
the people, "When you see the ark of the
covenant of the LORD your God being car-

a Or *Sea of Reeds*

2.10 The kingdoms of *Sihon and Og*, in central and northern Transjordan, had been conquered under Moses' leadership (Num 21; Deut 1–2); they are the only kings mentioned by name in Josh 1–9. **2.12** *Deal kindly*, i.e., show *chesed*. The Hebrew word stands for the exercise of responsible caring such as grounds a covenant relationship. **2.15** That *she resided within the wall* suggests defensive fortifications of the casemate type, parallel walls divided by cross walls creating chambers that might be used for residence. This may be a standard narrative motif; no such wall system has been found at Tell es-Sultan in Middle or Late Bronze levels (ca. 1900–1200 B.C.E.). **2.16** *Toward the hill country*. Having sent the posse eastward toward the river, Rahab directs the spies westward into the high country to hide out for a few days. Clearly intended as a prime example of negotiating and keeping treaty faith, the story is flatly at odds with the authoritative teaching (Deut 20.10–20). **2.24** *All the land, all the inhabitants*. At Rahab's place the spies found their entire mission crowned with success.

3.1–17 The opening of the waters. The "invasion" of the promised land is told in ways suggestive of a solemn liturgical procession and probably reflects dramatic reenactments in festival celebrations at Gilgal. Israelites in a later time would be exhorted to "remember ... what happened from Shittim to Gilgal" (Mic 6.5). **3.2** *Three days*, the same time interval as in the spy story (2.22). **3.3** *The ark of the covenant* contained the tablets of the Sinai covenant and was conceptualized as the portable throne of the Divine Sovereign, the place of most reliable oracle seeking. The *levitical priests* here comprise a militant cadre

ried by the levitical priests, then you shall
set out from your place. Follow it, 4 so that
you may know the way you should go, for
you have not passed this way before. Yet
there shall be a space between you and it,
a distance of about two thousand cubits;
do not come any nearer to it." 5 Then
Joshua said to the people, "Sanctify your-
selves; for tomorrow the LORD will do
wonders among you." 6 To the priests
Joshua said, "Take up the ark of the cove-
nant, and pass on in front of the people."
So they took up the ark of the covenant
and went in front of the people.

7 The LORD said to Joshua, "This day
I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all
Israel, so that they may know that I will be
with you as I was with Moses. 8 You are
the one who shall command the priests
who bear the ark of the covenant, 'When
you come to the edge of the waters of the
Jordan, you shall stand still in the Jor-
dan.'" 9 Joshua then said to the Israelites,
"Draw near and hear the words of the
LORD your God." 10 Joshua said, "By this
you shall know that among you is the liv-
ing God who without fail will drive out
from before you the Canaanites, Hittites,
Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites,
and Jebusites: 11 the ark of the covenant
of the Lord of all the earth is going to pass
before you into the Jordan. 12 So now se-
lect twelve men from the tribes of Israel,
one from each tribe. 13 When the soles of
the feet of the priests who bear the ark of
the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, rest
in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of
the Jordan flowing from above shall be
cut off; they shall stand in a single heap."

14 When the people set out from their
tents to cross over the Jordan, the priests
bearing the ark of the covenant were in
front of the people. 15 Now the Jordan
overflows all its banks throughout the
time of harvest. So when those who bore
the ark had come to the Jordan, and the
feet of the priests bearing the ark were
dipped in the edge of the water, 16 the wa-
ters flowing from above stood still, rising
up in a single heap far off at Adam, the
city that is beside Zarethan, while those
flowing toward the sea of the Arabah, the
Dead Sea,[b] were wholly cut off. Then the
people crossed over opposite Jericho.
17 While all Israel were crossing over on
dry ground, the priests who bore the ark
of the covenant of the LORD stood on dry
ground in the middle of the Jordan, until
the entire nation finished crossing over
the Jordan.

Israel at Gilgal

4 When the entire nation had finished
crossing over the Jordan, the LORD
said to Joshua: 2 "Select twelve men from

b Heb *Salt Sea*

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having responsibility for transport and care of the sacred ark. **3.4** *Two thousand cubits*, roughly one kilometer. **3.5** *Sanctify yourselves*. A variety of prohibitions and ritual purifications were in force as preparation for warfare under Yahweh's command (Deut 20.1–9; 1 Sam 21.4–5). **3.6** The story evokes the image of a commander reviewing troops. **3.7–8** Joshua hears both promise (cf. Ex 3.12) and command. **3.10** *The living God*, better "El the Living" as the descriptive name of the ancestors' God. That there are seven peoples named is an aid to memory; there are twenty-one such lists in the OT, more or less stereotyped. Cf., on the other hand, the list of thirty-one conquered kings in 12.9–24. **3.12** *Twelve ... one from each tribe*, apparently counting two "Joseph" tribes (Ephraim and Manasseh) but not Levi. **3.13–17** The crossing is told as providential. The normally fordable river was at flood stage, but temporarily dammed, as is known to happen there by collapse of soft limestone banks. **3.16** *Adam ... Zarethan*, Tell ed-Damiyeh (twenty-seven kilometers north of Jericho) and Tell es-Saidiyeh (eighteen kilometers farther north). **3.17** *Middle of the Jordan*. This precise specification seems to have structural significance in relation to the story in 22.10–34.

4.1–5.12 Israel at Gilgal; establishing a foothold. *Gilgal* (v. 19) was a major political and religious center in the premonarchical period; it was where Saul was made king (1 Sam 11.15) and where David's relations with Judah were later repaired (2 Sam 19.15, 40). Gilgal flourished also in the eighth century B.C.E. when it was roundly denounced by prophets (Hos 4.15; 9.15; 12.11; Am 4.4; 5.5). It is perhaps to be identified with the very small site Khirbet el-Mefjir, about one mile north of OT Jericho. **4.1–5.1** These verses appear to describe two sets of twelve stones. The first set, carried from the east bank to midstream, would be underwater and not visible but would provide firm footing for Levites carrying the sacred ark. The second set, taken from midstream, would become a memorial to the crossing, that is, the shrine at Gilgal, which means "Circle." The story highlights responsibilities of the custodians

the people, one from each tribe, 3 and
command them, 'Take twelve stones from
here out of the middle of the Jordan,
from the place where the priests' feet
stood, carry them over with you, and lay
them down in the place where you camp
tonight.' " 4 Then Joshua summoned the
twelve men from the Israelites, whom he
had appointed, one from each tribe.
5 Joshua said to them, "Pass on before the
ark of the LORD your God into the middle
of the Jordan, and each of you take up a
stone on his shoulder, one for each of the
tribes of the Israelites, 6 so that this may
be a sign among you. When your children
ask in time to come, 'What do those stones
mean to you?' 7 then you shall tell them
that the waters of the Jordan were cut off
in front of the ark of the covenant of the
LORD. When it crossed over the Jordan,
the waters of the Jordan were cut off. So
these stones shall be to the Israelites a memorial forever."

8 The Israelites did as Joshua commanded. They took up twelve stones out
of the middle of the Jordan, according to
the number of the tribes of the Israelites,
as the LORD told Joshua, carried them
over with them to the place where they
camped, and laid them down there.
9 (Joshua set up twelve stones in the middle of the Jordan, in the place where the
feet of the priests bearing the ark of the
covenant had stood; and they are there to
this day.)

10 The priests who bore the ark remained standing in the middle of the Jordan, until everything was finished that the
LORD commanded Joshua to tell the people, according to all that Moses had commanded Joshua. The people crossed over
in haste. 11 As soon as all the people had
finished crossing over, the ark of the
LORD, and the priests, crossed over in
front of the people. 12 The Reubenites,
the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh crossed over armed before the Israelites, as Moses had ordered them. 13 About
forty thousand armed for war crossed
over before the LORD to the plains of Jericho for battle.

14 On that day the LORD exalted
Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they
stood in awe of him, as they had stood in
awe of Moses, all the days of his life.

15 The LORD said to Joshua, 16 "Command the priests who bear the ark of the
covenant,[c] to come up out of the Jordan." 17 Joshua therefore commanded the
priests, "Come up out of the Jordan."
18 When the priests bearing the ark of the
covenant of the LORD came up from the
middle of the Jordan, and the soles of
the priests' feet touched dry ground, the
waters of the Jordan returned to their place
and overflowed all its banks, as before.

19 The people came up out of the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month,
and they camped in Gilgal on the east border of Jericho. 20 Those twelve stones,
which they had taken out of the Jordan,
Joshua set up in Gilgal, 21 saying to the
Israelites, "When your children ask their
parents in time to come, 'What do these
stones mean?' 22 then you shall let your
children know, 'Israel crossed over the Jordan here on dry ground.' 23 For the LORD
your God dried up the waters of the
Jordan for you until you crossed over, as
the LORD your God did to the Red Sea,[d]
which he dried up for us until we crossed
over, 24 so that all the peoples of the earth
may know that the hand of the LORD is
mighty, and so that you may fear the
LORD your God forever."

5 When all the kings of the Amorites
beyond the Jordan to the west, and
all the kings of the Canaanites by the sea,
heard that the LORD had dried up the waters of the Jordan for the Israelites until
they had crossed over, their hearts
melted, and there was no longer any spirit
in them, because of the Israelites.

c Or *treaty*, or *testimony*; Heb *eduth* d Or *Sea of Reeds*

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of the ark of the covenant. **4.12** As in ch. 1, the Transjordanian tribes are the only ones specified. **4.13** *Forty thousand*, better "forty muster units" (approximating perhaps four hundred as a more probable total). **4.19** *The first month*, Abib, i.e., March-April, later called Nisan. **4.24** This etiological story has dual purpose: that *all peoples of the earth* will acknowledge the power of Yahweh and that Israel's descendants *fear* (hold in reverent awe) *the LORD . . . forever*. **5.1** Validity of the teaching is illustrated by reaction of neighboring *kings*, whose loss of courage made it possible for Israel to engage in the action described in the next section.

Circumcision and Passover

2 At that time the LORD said to
Joshua, "Make flint knives and circumcise
the Israelites a second time." 3 So Joshua
made flint knives, and circumcised the Is-
raelites at Gibeath-haaraloth.[e] 4 This is
the reason why Joshua circumcised them:
all the males of the people who came out
of Egypt, all the warriors, had died dur-
ing the journey through the wilderness
after they had come out of Egypt.
5 Although all the people who came out
had been circumcised, yet all the people
born on the journey through the wilder-
ness after they had come out of Egypt had
not been circumcised. 6 For the Israelites
traveled forty years in the wilderness, un-
til all the nation, the warriors who came
out of Egypt, perished, not having lis-
tened to the voice of the LORD. To them
the LORD swore that he would not let
them see the land that he had sworn to
their ancestors to give us, a land flowing
with milk and honey. 7 So it was their chil-
dren, whom he raised up in their place,
that Joshua circumcised; for they were
uncircumcised, because they had not been
circumcised on the way.
8 When the circumcising of all the na-
tion was done, they remained in their
places in the camp until they were healed.
9 The LORD said to Joshua, "Today I have
rolled away from you the disgrace of
Egypt." And so that place is called Gilgal[f]
to this day.
10 While the Israelites were camped
in Gilgal they kept the passover in the eve-
ning on the fourteenth day of the month
in the plains of Jericho. 11 On the day af-
ter the passover, on that very day, they ate
the produce of the land, unleavened cakes
and parched grain. 12 The manna ceased
on the day they ate the produce of the
land, and the Israelites no longer had
manna; they ate the crops of the land of
Canaan that year.

Joshua's Vision

13 Once when Joshua was by Jericho,
he looked up and saw a man standing be-
fore him with a drawn sword in his hand.
Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are
you one of us, or one of our adversaries?"
14 He replied, "Neither; but as com-
mander of the army of the LORD I have
now come." And Joshua fell on his face to
the earth and worshiped, and he said to
him, "What do you command your ser-
vant, my lord?" 15 The commander of the
army of the LORD said to Joshua, "Re-
move the sandals from your feet, for the
place where you stand is holy." And
Joshua did so.

Jericho Taken and Destroyed

6 Now Jericho was shut up inside and
out because of the Israelites; no one
came out and no one went in. 2 The LORD
said to Joshua, "See, I have handed Jeri-

e That is *the Hill of the Foreskins* f Related to Heb *galal* to roll

5.2–12 Circumcision and Passover became especially significant in Judaism as it consolidated during the exile and in the postexilic period. While circumcision was not a uniquely Israelite practice, it became an indispensable sign of Israel's relationship with the Lord; all males participating in the Passover must be circumcised (Ex 12.48). The practice had not been followed during the wilderness period. **5.12** With the militiamen thus prepared and the first Passover celebrated in the land, all was in readiness for life in the land; and so *the manna* was replaced by *the crops of the land of Canaan.*

5.13–15 Somewhere near Jericho, Joshua is granted a theophany—the appearance of a divine being—much in the manner of Gideon (Judg 6.11–12). **5.15** Direct quotation of Ex 3.5 elevates Joshua as direct successor of Moses. With the arrival of Joshua's heavenly counterpart, the chain of command is complete. The warfare sequence may now begin.

6.1–10.43 In this long and major segment of the book everything turns upon the interventions of Yahweh to produce three decisive demonstrations of divine power: at Jericho (ch. 6), at Ai (chs. 7–8), and at Gibeon (chs. 9–10). These three stories embody the idea of the miraculous sign. **6.1–27** Jericho is captured first and placed off-limits for Israelites. The story may reflect a combination of two traditions. In vv. 3–21, the core of the chapter, where the walls collapse at the climax on the seventh day after six days of ceremonial preparation, there is no mention of the city by name, of the king, or of resistance by the inhabitants. This account of ceremonial siege and ritual victory is framed by verses that connect with the Rahab story: vv. 1–2, mentioning the king and soldiers, and vv. 22–25, representing the sequel to ch. 2, the deliverance of Rahab and her household. The frame story thus seems to present the

cho over to you, along with its king and
soldiers. 3 You shall march around the
city, all the warriors circling the city once.
Thus you shall do for six days, 4 with
seven priests bearing seven trumpets of
rams' horns before the ark. On the sev-
enth day you shall march around the city
seven times, the priests blowing the trum-
pets. 5 When they make a long blast with
the ram's horn, as soon as you hear the
sound of the trumpet, then all the people
shall shout with a great shout; and the
wall of the city will fall down flat, and all
the people shall charge straight ahead."
6 So Joshua son of Nun summoned the
priests and said to them, "Take up the ark
of the covenant, and have seven priests
carry seven trumpets of rams' horns in
front of the ark of the LORD." 7 To the
people he said, "Go forward and march
around the city; have the armed men pass
on before the ark of the LORD."

8 As Joshua had commanded the peo-
ple, the seven priests carrying the seven
trumpets of rams' horns before the LORD
went forward, blowing the trumpets, with
the ark of the covenant of the LORD fol-
lowing them. 9 And the armed men went
before the priests who blew the trumpets;
the rear guard came after the ark, while
the trumpets blew continually. 10 To the
people Joshua gave this command: "You
shall not shout or let your voice be heard,
nor shall you utter a word, until the day I
tell you to shout. Then you shall shout."
11 So the ark of the LORD went around
the city, circling it once; and they came
into the camp, and spent the night in the
camp.

12 Then Joshua rose early in the
morning, and the priests took up the ark
of the LORD. 13 The seven priests carrying
the seven trumpets of rams' horns before
the ark of the LORD passed on, blowing
the trumpets continually. The armed men
went before them, and the rear guard
came after the ark of the LORD, while the
trumpets blew continually. 14 On the sec-
ond day they marched around the city
once and then returned to the camp.
They did this for six days.

15 On the seventh day they rose early,
at dawn, and marched around the city in
the same manner seven times. It was only
on that day that they marched around the
city seven times. 16 And at the seventh
time, when the priests had blown the
trumpets, Joshua said to the people,
"Shout! For the LORD has given you the
city. 17 The city and all that is in it shall be
devoted to the LORD for destruction. Only
Rahab the prostitute and all who are with
her in her house shall live because she hid
the messengers we sent. 18 As for you,
keep away from the things devoted to de-
struction, so as not to covet[g] and take any
of the devoted things and make the camp
of Israel an object for destruction, bring-
ing trouble upon it. 19 But all silver and
gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, are
sacred to the LORD; they shall go into the
treasury of the LORD." 20 So the people

[g] Gk: Heb *devote to destruction* Compare 7.21

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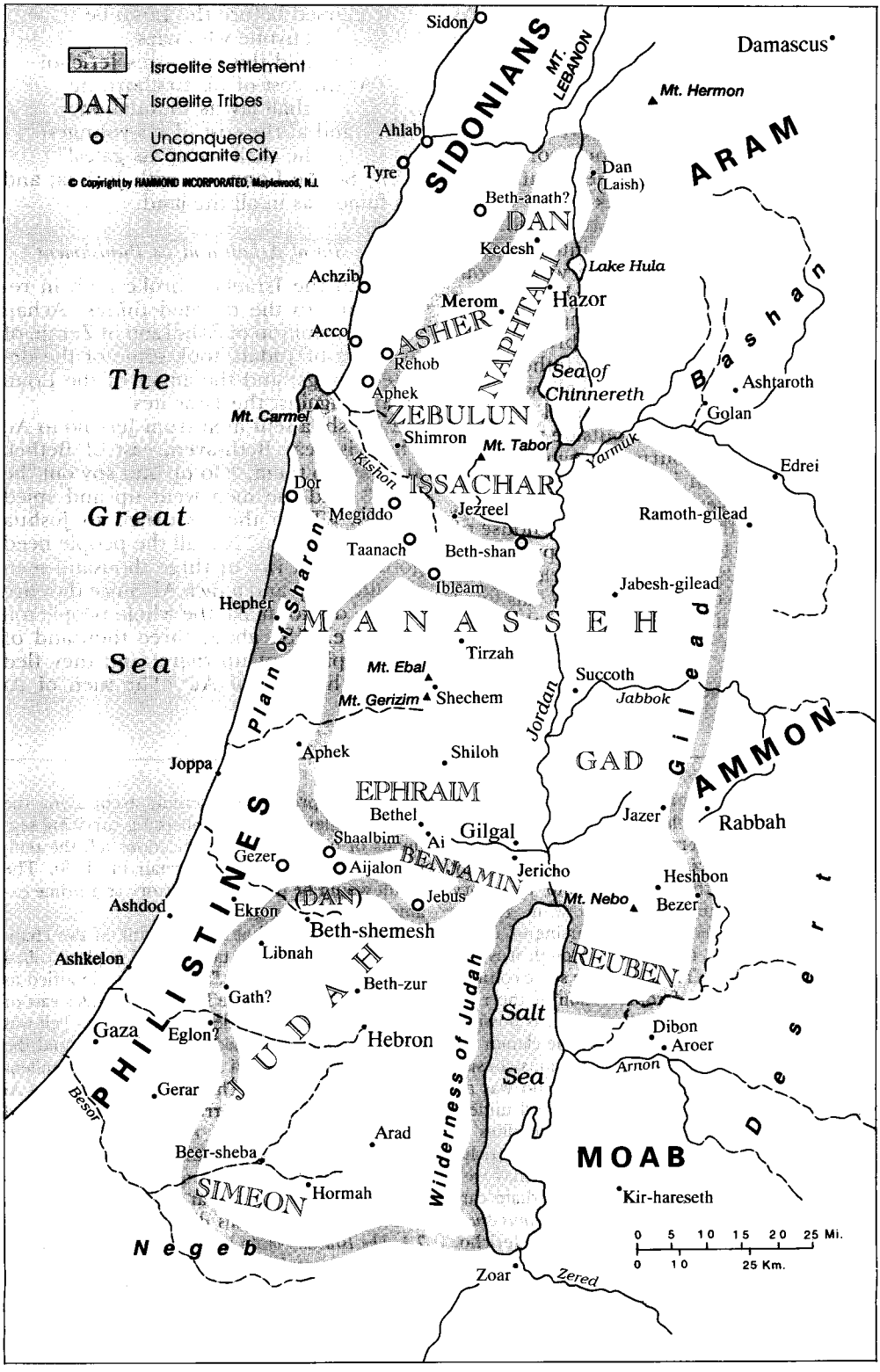
takeover of the city as an inside job in response to military siege. Cf. the story of Bethel's capture in Judg 1.22–26. Joshua's instruction to spare Rahab and her household (v. 17) splices the two traditions together. **6.1** That *Jericho was shut up inside and out* clearly describes a military siege. Regulations for siege warfare distinguish between cities that lie outside Israel's inheritance (Deut 20.10–15) and those that have belonged to one of the "seven nations" (Deut 20.17 in the Septuagint and Samaritan Pentateuch). This story ostensibly concerns one of the latter. **6.4** *Seven priests bearing seven trumpets.* Repeated use of the sacred number seven and the role of the priests suggest that the story is based in part on liturgical action. **6.15** *Around the city seven times* on one day presupposes a city mostly in ruins, thus putting no obstructions in the path of the marchers. **6.17** *Devoted to the LORD for destruction.* The Hebrew term *cherem* refers to an ad hoc decree (cf. Lev 27.28–29) and was not an exclusively Israelite word or practice. In Israel, it has been suggested, the *cherem* may be understood in connection with efforts at disease control. Epidemic disease, especially bubonic plague, was not uncommon in the aftermath of warfare. **6.19** At Jericho no private spoils were to be taken. Except for valuable metal items, which would go into *the treasury of the LORD* (the common coffers?), the city and everything in it was to be destroyed. Only one other town mentioned in the Joshua stories, Hazor in ch. 11, is consecrated, placed under the *cherem.*

Map opposite: *The conquest of Canaan according to the narratives in Joshua. Other sources and archaeological evidence show different patterns of early Israelite settlement.*


Israelite Settlement
DAN Israelite Tribes
Unconquered Canaanite City
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Sidon
SIDONIANS
MT. LEBANON
Damascus
Mt. Hermon
ARAM
Ahlab
Tyre
Dan (Laish)
Beth-anath?
DAN
Kedesh
Lake Hula
Achzib
Merom
Hazor
Acco
ASHER
NAPHTALI
Rehob
Sea of Chinnereth
Bashan
Ashtaroth
The
Aphek
ZEBULUN
Golan
Mt. Carmel
Shimron
Mt. Tabor
Yarmuk
Edrei
Kishon
Dor
ISSACHAR
Great
Megiddo
Jezreel
Ramoth-gilead
Taanach
Beth-shan
Ibleam
Jabesh-gilead
Hepher
Plain of Sharon
MANASSEH
Tirzah
Sea
Mt. Ebal
Succoth
Mt. Gerizim
Shechem
Jabbok
Gilead
Jordan
Joppa
Aphek
Shiloh
GAD
AMMON
EPHRAIM
Bethel
Jazer
Rabbah
Gilgal
Shaalbim
Ai
Gezer
Aijalon
BENJAMIN
Jericho
Heshbon
PHILISTINES
Ashdod
Ekron
(DAN)
Jebus
Mt. Nebo
Bezer
Beth-shemesh
Ashkelon
Libnah
REUBEN
JUDAH
Beth-zur
Gath?
Salt
Gaza
Eglon?
Hebron
Dibon
Aroer
Sea
Arnon
Gerar
Besor
Arad
Wilderness of Judah
Desert
Beer-sheba
MOAB
SIMEON
Hormah
Kir-hareseth
Negeb
0 5 10 15 20 25 Mi.
0 10 25 Km.
Zoar
Zered

shouted, and the trumpets were blown. As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpets, they raised a great shout, and the wall fell down flat; so the people charged straight ahead into the city and captured it. 21 Then they devoted to destruction by the edge of the sword all in the city, both men and women, young and old, oxen, sheep, and donkeys.

22 Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, "Go into the prostitute's house, and bring the woman out of it and all who belong to her, as you swore to her." 23 So the young men who had been spies went in and brought Rahab out, along with her father, her mother, her brothers, and all who belonged to her—they brought all her kindred out—and set them outside the camp of Israel. 24 They burned down the city, and everything in it; only the silver and gold, and the vessels of bronze and iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD. 25 But Rahab the prostitute, with her family and all who belonged to her, Joshua spared. Her family[h] has lived in Israel ever since. For she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

26 Joshua then pronounced this oath, saying,

"Cursed before the LORD be
anyone who tries
to build this city—this Jericho!
At the cost of his firstborn he
shall lay its foundation,
and at the cost of his youngest
he shall set up its gates!"

27 So the LORD was with Joshua; and his fame was in all the land.

The Sin of Achan and Its Punishment

7 But the Israelites broke faith in regard to the devoted things: Achan son of Carmi son of Zabdi son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of the devoted things; and the anger of the LORD burned against the Israelites.

2 Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth-aven, east of Bethel, and said to them, "Go up and spy out the land." And the men went up and spied out Ai. 3 Then they returned to Joshua and said to him, "Not all the people need go up; about two or three thousand men should go up and attack Ai. Since they are so few, do not make the whole people toil up there." 4 So about three thousand of the people went up there; and they fled before the men of Ai. 5 The men of Ai

h Heb *She*

6.24 *They burned down the city*, like the treatment of Hazor (11.11), which itself is presented as an exception to the general rule (11.13). **6.25** *Has lived in Israel ever since.* This note shifts focus away from the fall of the city and onto the story of covenant keeping by and with Rahab. **6.26** *Cursed before the LORD.* This cursing of a captured city is unique in the OT, although it is not unknown elsewhere. There must be some connection between the act of consecration of the ruin and the prohibition of resettlement. It is possible that the six days of "practice" and the clamor on the seventh day were directed at demons considered responsible for disease, for Jericho was an oasis long since fallen on hard times and understood to be an unhealthy place for Israelites to live. See Elisha's complaint about water at Jericho (2 Kings 2.19). The disease in question may well have been schistosomiasis, the intermediate carrier of which is a fresh-water snail, *bulinus truncatus*, found in excavations at the site of Jericho. The snail flourishes in water contaminated by human waste, such as the Jericho spring, so positioned as to receive all the runoff from the eastern slope of the mound. It is also possible that the protective clamor was accompanied or soon followed by a providential seismic event along the Jordan Valley fault line, collapsing surviving segments of once-mighty fortifications (cf. the temporary damming of the Jordan in ch. 3). The result would be the surviving story as a prime example of amazing grace.

7.1–8.29 Israel at Ai. The bulk of two chapters is devoted to the takeover of a place called "the *Ai*," lit. "The Ruin." The site is identified as et-Tell (Arabic for "The Ruin"), two miles east of Bethel. During the settlement period, et-Tell was at most a small unwalled village nestled amid the ruins of a major walled city from the third millennium B.C.E. **7.1–26** The first of two attacks at Ai is repulsed. The embarrassing defeat is traced to one man's violation of the *cherem* decree (6.17–18). The narrative units in ch. 7 are spliced in such a way that the story of Achan (vv. 1, 6–26) is interrupted and defeat at The Ruin (vv. 2–5) is told as the cause of his discovery and undoing. **7.1** *The Israelites broke faith* diverts attention away from Joshua and onto the violation of the *cherem* decree. **7.3** *Not all the people need go up.* As in the first reconnaissance (2.24), spies bring an optimistic report. *Two or three thousand*, probably "two or three muster units"; see note on 4.13.

killed about thirty-six of them, chasing
them from outside the gate as far as Sheb-
arim and killing them on the slope. The
hearts of the people melted and turned to
water.

6 Then Joshua tore his clothes, and
fell to the ground on his face before the
ark of the LORD until the evening, he and
the elders of Israel; and they put dust on
their heads. 7 Joshua said, "Ah, Lord GOD!
Why have you brought this people across
the Jordan at all, to hand us over to the
Amorites so as to destroy us? Would that
we had been content to settle beyond the
Jordan! 8 O Lord, what can I say, now
that Israel has turned their backs to their
enemies! 9 The Canaanites and all the in-
habitants of the land will hear of it, and
surround us, and cut off our name from
the earth. Then what will you do for your
great name?"

10 The LORD said to Joshua, "Stand
up! Why have you fallen upon your face?
11 Israel has sinned; they have trans-
gressed my covenant that I imposed on
them. They have taken some of the de-
voted things; they have stolen, they have
acted deceitfully, and they have put them
among their own belongings. 12 There-
fore the Israelites are unable to stand be-
fore their enemies; they turn their backs
to their enemies, because they have be-
come a thing devoted for destruction
themselves. I will be with you no more,
unless you destroy the devoted things
from among you. 13 Proceed to sanctify
the people, and say, 'Sanctify yourselves
for tomorrow; for thus says the LORD, the
God of Israel, "There are devoted things
among you, O Israel; you will be unable
to stand before your enemies until you
take away the devoted things from among
you." 14 In the morning therefore you
shall come forward tribe by tribe. The
tribe that the LORD takes shall come near
by clans, the clan that the LORD takes shall
come near by households, and the house-
hold that the LORD takes shall come near
one by one. 15 And the one who is taken as
having the devoted things shall be burned
with fire, together with all that he has, for
having transgressed the covenant of the
LORD, and for having done an outrageous
thing in Israel.' "

16 So Joshua rose early in the morn-
ing, and brought Israel near tribe by
tribe, and the tribe of Judah was taken.
17 He brought near the clans of Judah,
and the clan of the Zerahites was taken;
and he brought near the clan of the Zera-
hites, family by family,[i] and Zabdi was
taken. 18 And he brought near his house-
hold one by one, and Achan son of Carmi
son of Zabdi son of Zerah, of the tribe of
Judah, was taken. 19 Then Joshua said to
Achan, "My son, give glory to the LORD
God of Israel and make confession to
him. Tell me now what you have done; do
not hide it from me." 20 And Achan an-
swered Joshua, "It is true; I am the one
who sinned against the LORD God of Is-
rael. This is what I did: 21 when I saw
among the spoil a beautiful mantle from
Shinar, and two hundred shekels of silver,
and a bar of gold weighing fifty shekels,
then I coveted them and took them. They
now lie hidden in the ground inside my
tent, with the silver underneath."

22 So Joshua sent messengers, and
they ran to the tent; and there it was, hid-
den in his tent with the silver underneath.
23 They took them out of the tent and
brought them to Joshua and all the Israel-
ites; and they spread them out before the
LORD. 24 Then Joshua and all Israel with
him took Achan son of Zerah, with the

i Mss Syr: MT *man by man*

7.5 A loss of *about thirty-six* was truly disastrous. **7.6–26** Achan as explanation. **7.6** Exposure of the guilty one begins with rituals of mourning and penitence (cf. 2 Sam 12.15–16; Job 1.20; Jer 16.6–7; Joel 1.8–14) *before the ark of the LORD*. This is the first indication in Joshua of the ark's oracular function. As the portable throne of the Divine King, it was the place of highest legitimate inquiry (see Judg 20.27). **7.13** *Proceed to sanctify . . . Sanctify yourselves*. Here the "holiness" root (Hebrew *qdsh*) is used twice. In contrast to 3.5, where all was going smoothly, here Joshua must be prompted. **7.14–18** The elimination proceeds, most likely, by sacred lot, which is explicitly mentioned in the determination of tribal territories (14.2; 18.6). Three concentric circles within which individual identity was established—house, clan, tribe—are the basis of the proceedings. Cf. 1 Sam 10.17–24; 14.37–42. **7.15** The death penalty for breach of covenant is known from other texts (Ex 21.12, 15–17; 22.18–20). Here not only the guilty individual, but also the physically contaminated and disease-laden booty, with all and everything that it has touched, are burned. **7.24** A stone cairn in the *Valley of Achor* (Hebrew, "Trouble"), on the border between Benjamin and

silver, the mantle, and the bar of gold,
with his sons and daughters, with his
oxen, donkeys, and sheep, and his tent
and all that he had; and they brought
them up to the Valley of Achor. 25 Joshua
said, "Why did you bring trouble on us?
The LORD is bringing trouble on you to-
day." And all Israel stoned him to death;
they burned them with fire, cast stones on
them, 26 and raised over him a great heap
of stones that remains to this day. Then
the LORD turned from his burning anger.
Therefore that place to this day is called
the Valley of Achor.[j]

Ai Captured by a Stratagem and Destroyed

8 Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Do
not fear or be dismayed; take all the
fighting men with you, and go up now to
Ai. See, I have handed over to you the
king of Ai with his people, his city, and his
land. 2 You shall do to Ai and its king as
you did to Jericho and its king; only its
spoil and its livestock you may take as
booty for yourselves. Set an ambush
against the city, behind it."
3 So Joshua and all the fighting men
set out to go up against Ai. Joshua chose
thirty thousand warriors and sent them
out by night 4 with the command, "You
shall lie in ambush against the city, behind
it; do not go very far from the city, but all
of you stay alert. 5 I and all the people
who are with me will approach the city.
When they come out against us, as before,
we shall flee from them. 6 They will come
out after us until we have drawn them
away from the city; for they will say, 'They
are fleeing from us, as before.' While we
flee from them, 7 you shall rise up from
the ambush and seize the city; for the
LORD your God will give it into your hand.
8 And when you have taken the city, you
shall set the city on fire, doing as the LORD
has ordered; see, I have commanded
you." 9 So Joshua sent them out; and they
went to the place of ambush, and lay be-
tween Bethel and Ai, to the west of Ai; but
Joshua spent that night in the camp.[k]
10 In the morning Joshua rose early
and mustered the people, and went up,
with the elders of Israel, before the peo-
ple to Ai. 11 All the fighting men who
were with him went up, and drew near
before the city, and camped on the north
side of Ai, with a ravine between them
and Ai. 12 Taking about five thousand
men, he set them in ambush between
Bethel and Ai, to the west of the city. 13 So
they stationed the forces, the main en-
campment that was north of the city and
its rear guard west of the city. But Joshua
spent that night in the valley. 14 When the
king of Ai saw this, he and all his people,
the inhabitants of the city, hurried out
early in the morning to the meeting place
facing the Arabah to meet Israel in battle;
but he did not know that there was an am-
bush against him behind the city. 15 And
Joshua and all Israel made a pretense of

j That is *Trouble* *k* Heb *among the people*

Judah, marked the place of execution.

8.1–29 Ambush and victory at Ai. Here Yahweh takes charge, Joshua and Israel strictly obey orders, and victory is secured. The clustering of references to Ai (twenty-two occurrences in the chapter) suggests that two narratives have been combined. Three segments that together mention Ai exactly eleven times (vv. 1–2, 12–19, 26–29) alternate with two other units (vv. 3–11, 20–25). The set of three scans in Hebrew as continuous narrative. Inclusion of vv. 3–11 and 20–25 turned the story of the victory at Ai into a preview of the victory at Gibeah in civil war at the end of the wider era (Judg 20). The terrain around Ai and the terrain around Gibeah are similar enough that it would not be surprising to have the ambush at one place sound so much like the one at the other. **8.1** *Do not fear or be dismayed,* recurring encouragement in Yahweh's war (Ex 14.13; Deut 1.21; 3.2; 7.18; 20.1; 31.8). Archaeology has shown that *the king of Ai* ruled at most a small village. It is conceivable that he was the suzerain of kings rallying at The Ruin to oppose Joshua and his followers. **8.2** *Set an ambush.* The ambush is Yahweh's strategy (cf. Judg 20.29–34). **8.3** There is no place on the watershed ridge in the vicinity of Ai to hide a force of *thirty thousand*; "thirty muster units" would be more like it (see note on 4.13). To move *by night* from the Jordan Valley near Jericho into position near Ai is not implausible. **8.10** *The elders,* elsewhere in Joshua only in 7.6; 20.4; 23.2; 24.1, 31. In village and countryside as well as in smaller cities, the elders were responsible for law and order and for maintaining the convenantal ethic. Their relative absence from this book reflects the dominant interest in presenting the leadership of Joshua as model for the later kings (Dtr 1; see Introduction). **8.12** *Five thousand* (better "five muster units"; see note on 4.13) is a still more plausible

being beaten before them, and fled in the
direction of the wilderness. 16 So all the
people who were in the city were called
together to pursue them, and as they pur-
sued Joshua they were drawn away from
the city. 17 There was not a man left in Ai
or Bethel who did not go out after Israel;
they left the city open, and pursued
Israel.

18 Then the LORD said to Joshua,
"Stretch out the sword that is in your
hand toward Ai; for I will give it into your
hand." And Joshua stretched out the
sword that was in his hand toward the
city. 19 As soon as he stretched out his
hand, the troops in ambush rose quickly
out of their place and rushed forward.
They entered the city, took it, and at once
set the city on fire. 20 So when the men of
Ai looked back, the smoke of the city was
rising to the sky. They had no power to
flee this way or that, for the people who
fled to the wilderness turned back against
the pursuers. 21 When Joshua and all Is-
rael saw that the ambush had taken the
city and that the smoke of the city was ris-
ing, then they turned back and struck
down the men of Ai. 22 And the others
came out from the city against them; so
they were surrounded by Israelites, some
on one side, and some on the other; and
Israel struck them down until no one was
left who survived or escaped. 23 But the
king of Ai was taken alive and brought to
Joshua.

24 When Israel had finished slaugh-
tering all the inhabitants of Ai in the open
wilderness where they pursued them, and
when all of them to the very last had
fallen by the edge of the sword, all Israel
returned to Ai, and attacked it with the
edge of the sword. 25 The total of those
who fell that day, both men and women,
was twelve thousand—all the people of
Ai. 26 For Joshua did not draw back his
hand, with which he stretched out the
sword, until he had utterly destroyed all
the inhabitants of Ai. 27 Only the livestock
and the spoil of that city Israel took as
their booty, according to the word of the
LORD that he had issued to Joshua. 28 So
Joshua burned Ai, and made it forever a
heap of ruins, as it is to this day. 29 And he
hanged the king of Ai on a tree until eve-
ning; and at sunset Joshua commanded,
and they took his body down from the
tree, threw it down at the entrance of the
gate of the city, and raised over it a great
heap of stones, which stands there to
this day.

Joshua Renews the Covenant

30 Then Joshua built on Mount Ebal
an altar to the LORD, the God of Israel,

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number for an ambush than the previously mentioned "thirty" (v. 3). **8.17** *Bethel* is mentioned elsewhere in the story only as a geographical reference point (7.2; 8.9, 12). It may rather refer to the sanctuary (*beth'el*, Hebrew, "house of God") at Ai, left unattended. **8.18** The Hebrew uses a very rare word for the *sword* that Joshua holds high at Yahweh's command. It may refer to the sickle-sword, ubiquitous in Mesopotamian and Egyptian art over two millennia prior to the emergence of Israel as symbol of sovereignty. Cf. the outstretched arms of Moses at the battle with Amalek (Ex 17.11) and reference to the "arm" of Yahweh at Israel's deliverance (Deut 26.8; Ps 44.3; Isa 51.9–11). **8.25** *The total . . . twelve thousand*, more likely "twelve muster units" (see note on 4.13). The losses of Israel in the first battle ("thirty-six" in 7.5) probably set the limits for a total loss of seventy-five to one hundred and fifty in the Israelite victory. Extremely modest proportions of the Iron I occupation at et-Tell (see note on 7.1–8.29) belong to a pattern developing north and south along the watershed ridge in the early twelfth century B.C.E. **8.26–27** The taking of plunder was strictly regulated this time (v. 2). Here it is explicit that there was a clear distinction between *cherem* and booty.

8.30–35 Covenant renewal at Mount Ebal. Ebal is located about twenty miles north of Ai. This unit fits loosely in its context; in the Greek version it is placed after 9.1–2. In fact the coalescence of Israel and the formation of opposing coalitions may have given reciprocal impetus to each other. Vv. 30–31 show Joshua carrying out Yahweh's command to Moses (Deut 27.4–5). **8.30** *Then*. The same distinctive introduction in the Hebrew in 22.1, beginning the story of the altar near the Jordan, indicates a rhetorical relationship. *Mount Ebal* on the north and Mount Gerizim on the south flank the pass controlled by the great site of Shechem. Whoever commanded the pass below Ebal could control all the hill country from a point not far north of Jerusalem almost to the plain of Esdraelon (or Jezreel). For most of that extensive territory centering in the neighborhood of Shechem, however, there is no conquest tradition. The implication is that it became a part of Yahwist Israel by negotiation, as represented here in liturgical, covenantal dress. The curious fact that Shechem is not mentioned may be due to

31 just as Moses the servant of the LORD
had commanded the Israelites, as it is
written in the book of the law of Moses,
"an altar of unhewn[l] stones, on which no
iron tool has been used"; and they offered
on it burnt offerings to the LORD, and sac-
rificed offerings of well-being. 32 And
there, in the presence of the Israelites,
Joshua[m] wrote on the stones a copy of the
law of Moses, which he had written. 33 All
Israel, alien as well as citizen, with their
elders and officers and their judges, stood
on opposite sides of the ark in front of the
levitical priests who carried the ark of the
covenant of the LORD, half of them in
front of Mount Gerizim and half of them
in front of Mount Ebal, as Moses the ser-
vant of the LORD had commanded at the
first, that they should bless the people of
Israel. 34 And afterward he read all the
words of the law, blessings and curses, ac-
cording to all that is written in the book of
the law. 35 There was not a word of all that
Moses commanded that Joshua did not
read before all the assembly of Israel, and
the women, and the little ones, and the
aliens who resided among them.

The Gibeonites Save Themselves by Trickery

9 Now when all the kings who were be-
yond the Jordan in the hill country
and in the lowland all along the coast of
the Great Sea toward Lebanon—the Hit-
tites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the
Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites—
heard of this, 2 they gathered together
with one accord to fight Joshua and
Israel.

3 But when the inhabitants of Gibeon
heard what Joshua had done to Jericho
and to Ai, 4 they on their part acted with
cunning: they went and prepared provi-
sions,[n] and took worn-out sacks for their

l Heb *whole* *m* Heb *he* *n* Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain

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the fact that the city was destroyed in the mid-twelfth century B.C.E. (see the story of Abimelech in Judg 9), while the celebrations of covenant renewal at Ebal presumably lived on. It has been proposed but is far from certain that a recently excavated Iron I "sanctuary" at el-Barnat on Ebal marks the site. **8.31** *Moses*, with the distinctive title *servant of the LORD*, is mentioned five times in this brief unit. The *book of the law of Moses* is very likely the hypothetical Dtn rediscovered during King Josiah's reign (2 Kings 22) and finally edited as the book Deuteronomy (see Introduction). The *burnt offerings* were consumed entirely by the fire on the altar, while *offerings of well-being* were partially consumed by the worshipers as sacrifices establishing or maintaining friendship with God. **8.32** He, presumably Joshua, *wrote on the stones*, i.e., probably on standing stone pillars. Treaty inscriptions might characteristically be written on plastered stone surfaces (cf. 24.26–27). **8.33** *Alien as well as citizen*. Teaching, which set forth an egalitarian standard for public policy, was the special responsibility of *levitical priests who carried the ark of the covenant*. **8.34** *Blessings and curses*, standard elements in the suzerainty treaty form as appropriated in Yahwism. See especially Deut 27–28. **8.35** The *assembly* (Hebrew *kahal*) in the era before the monarchy was the totality of those gathered for one of the pilgrimage feasts. The assembly was eclipsed by the splendors of the Jerusalem temple festivities but was revived in the theology of the postmonarchical period to designate the worshiping congregation.

9.1–27 Royal alliance and special status for Gibeonites. The sequel to the victory at Ai and the Ebal covenant is presented in two aspects: formation of a wide-ranging coalition of kings and peoples (vv. 1–2) and a treaty with the people of Gibeon (vv. 3–27). **9.1** *Hittites . . . Jebusites*. To this list should probably be added a seventh ("Girgashites") as in 3.10. Initial successes, facilitated by one or two unusual events in the natural order, polarized the power elite and existing population groups. Except for the area dominated by Shechem, the number of independent city-states in Canaan seems nearly to have doubled between the fourteenth and twelfth centuries B.C.E. There is no direct correlation between this list and the account of six cities (and seven kings) defeated in 10.28–39. **9.2** *With one accord*, under one command. The abrupt conclusion suggests that another battle story once followed at this point, perhaps something relating to the area west and north of Shechem (see towns listed in 12.17–18). **9.3–27** The treaty with Gibeon. Vv. 3–15 deal with the protection of Gibeon, vv. 16–27 with the exploitation of Gibeon and its allied towns. The treaty was highly problematical from Israel's side in view of the prohibitions set forth in Deut 20.10–18. The tradition's essential historicity is undergirded by the account of a famine during David's reign that was traced to Saul's bloodguilt "because he put the Gibeonites to death" (2 Sam 21.1). **9.3** Deliberations are initiated by the *inhabitants* of a town that has no king. *Gibeon* lies on an important east-west road from Jericho that descends to the coastal plain through the Valley of Aijalon. It was at most a small village in the twelfth century B.C.E., like Jericho, Ai, and the other towns in this story (v. 17).

donkeys, and wineskins, worn-out and
torn and mended, 5 with worn-out,
patched sandals on their feet, and worn-
out clothes; and all their provisions were
dry and moldy. 6 They went to Joshua in
the camp at Gilgal, and said to him and to
the Israelites, "We have come from a far
country; so now make a treaty with us."
7 But the Israelites said to the Hivites,
"Perhaps you live among us; then how
can we make a treaty with you?" 8 They
said to Joshua, "We are your servants."
And Joshua said to them, "Who are you?
And where do you come from?" 9 They
said to him, "Your servants have come
from a very far country, because of the
name of the LORD your God; for we have
heard a report of him, of all that he did in
Egypt, 10 and of all that he did to the two
kings of the Amorites who were beyond
the Jordan, King Sihon of Heshbon, and
King Og of Bashan who lived in Ashta-
roth. 11 So our elders and all the inhabi-
tants of our country said to us, 'Take
provisions in your hand for the journey;
go to meet them, and say to them, "We
are your servants; come now, make a
treaty with us."' 12 Here is our bread; it
was still warm when we took it from our
houses as our food for the journey, on the
day we set out to come to you, but now,
see, it is dry and moldy; 13 these wineskins
were new when we filled them, and see,
they are burst; and these garments and
sandals of ours are worn out from the
very long journey." 14 So the leaders[o]
partook of their provisions, and did not
ask direction from the LORD. 15 And
Joshua made peace with them, guarantee-
ing their lives by a treaty; and the leaders
of the congregation swore an oath to
them.

16 But when three days had passed af-
ter they had made a treaty with them,
they heard that they were their neighbors
and were living among them. 17 So the Is-
raelites set out and reached their cities on
the third day. Now their cities were Gib-
eon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kiriath-
jearim. 18 But the Israelites did not attack
them, because the leaders of the congre-
gation had sworn to them by the LORD,
the God of Israel. Then all the congrega-
tion murmured against the leaders. 19 But
all the leaders said to all the congregation,
"We have sworn to them by the LORD, the
God of Israel, and now we must not touch
them. 20 This is what we will do to them:
We will let them live, so that wrath may
not come upon us, because of the oath
that we swore to them." 21 The leaders
said to them, "Let them live." So they be-
came hewers of wood and drawers of

o Gk: Heb *men*

9.6–7 Abrupt mention of *Gilgal* is jarring. That the people of Gibeon are *Hivites* suggests ancestral origin in Cilicia, in which case they tell a half-truth; they have come *from a far country*, but not recently. **9.9–10** Their argument echoes Rahab's speech (2.10–11), based on Deut 2.26–3.17 (cf. Josh 12.1–6) and epic tradition (Num 21.21–35). **9.14** They *did not ask direction from the LORD*. Joshua finds himself having to ratify negotiations undertaken by anonymous Israelites and for which he was not originally responsible. The reading in the Greek, which specifies "the leaders" in this verse, is to be rejected. The "leaders" are those who will propose a way out of the predicament in vv. 16–27. Epic tradition explicitly associates Joshua with the divinatory technique "decision of the Urim" (Num 27.18–21). **9.15b** This half verse is the compiler's splice. **9.16–27** This supplement and sequel is from an independent and very possibly older account. **9.17** Mention of *their cities* is the first hint in the chapter that more than one settlement might be involved. The four named (all very small villages in the twelfth century B.C.E.) controlled the entire northwest quadrant of approaches to Jerusalem. **9.18** *The leaders* appear ten times in Joshua, always in contexts that may be considered contributions of the final redactor (9.15, 18 [twice], 19, 21; 13.21; 17.4; 22.14, 30, 32 ["chiefs"]). There is a strong rhetorical relationship between this story and the altar narrative in ch. 22. *Congregation* (Hebrew *'edah*), like the word for "assembly" (Hebrew *kahal* as in 8.35), is nearly nonexistent in texts of Samuel and Kings referring to the monarchical era. Used in this story for the first time in Joshua (vv. 15, 18 [twice], 19, 21, 27), it occurs another six times in the Hebrew text of the altar story (22.12, 16, 17, 18, 20, 30). The words for "assembly" and "congregation" reflect the parallel cultivation of the tradition by different Levitical (priestly) families. With the transition to monarchy the old deliberative "assembly/congregation" was displaced by royally appointed officials, only to come into prominence again as a term for the worshiping community after destruction of the state and demise of the royal festivals (post 587 B.C.E.). **9.18–20** The phrase *sworn to them by the LORD/swore to them* is stated three times in quick succession, emphatically locating responsibility. **9.21** Negotiation of status as *hewers of wood and*

water for all the congregation, as the leaders had decided concerning them.

22 Joshua summoned them, and said to them, "Why did you deceive us, saying, 'We are very far from you,' while in fact you are living among us? 23 Now therefore you are cursed, and some of you shall always be slaves, hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God." 24 They answered Joshua, "Because it was told to your servants for a certainty that the LORD your God had commanded his servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land before you; so we were in great fear for our lives because of you, and did this thing. 25 And now we are in your hand: do as it seems good and right in your sight to do to us." 26 This is what he did for them: he saved them from the Israelites; and they did not kill them. 27 But on that day Joshua made them hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation and for the altar of the LORD, to continue to this day, in the place that he should choose.

Joshua's Defense of Gibeon

10 When King Adoni-zedek of Jerusalem heard how Joshua had taken Ai, and had utterly destroyed it, doing to Ai and its king as he had done to Jericho and its king, and how the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel and were among them, 2 he[p] became greatly frightened, because Gibeon was a large city, like one of the royal cities, and was larger than Ai, and all its men were

p Heb *they*

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drawers of water is an ironic inversion of covenantal equality, for in Deut 29.11, which uses exactly these descriptions for the sojourner, the implication of the covenant is precisely to erase distinctions of status that otherwise attach to various subgroups. **9.23** They are *cursed.* For bearing false witness? The *house of my God.* There was almost certainly a Yahwist temple at Shiloh and very possibly one at Gilgal. **9.27** The etiological formula *to continue to this day* signals narrative motivation, providing ironic legitimation for exploitation of Gibeonites. Very likely *the place that he* (Yahweh) *should choose* (Deut 12.5, 11, 14, 18, 21, 26 and repeatedly) was so designated by the presence of the ark of the covenant, as on Mount Ebal in the preceding unit (8.33). The effect is to startle readers by clearing the air for a fresh look at what comes next. Yahweh will honor the problematical treaty.

10.1–39 Defense of Gibeon and a southern campaign. Gibeon is faced with the threat of a coalition headed by the king of Jerusalem (vv. 1–5); Joshua and Israel fulfill their treaty obligation and repel the attackers, thanks to another intervention by the divine commander (vv. 6–11). The latter point is emphasized in a flashback (vv. 12–14). The primary story line then resumes, with the capture of the allied kings (vv. 16–27). To all of this is appended another older unit (vv. 28–39), which focuses on towns destroyed in the south. The units are strung together in a logical sequence without any attempt to harmonize differences. Description of the "southern campaign" seems to make sense militarily. The redactional effect is to present the victories in the south as an unplanned offshoot of Yahweh's third intervention since the crossing of the Jordan (see note on 6.1–10.43). **10.1–15** The treaty with Gibeon and the combined might of five city-states posed the greatest of odds against Israel. **10.1** *Jerusalem,* by this name mentioned here for the first time in the Bible. It is the only member of the coalition that escapes a raid even though its king is eliminated in the defeat of the coalition. Jerusalem remained a Canaanite town until its takeover by King David. **10.2** Gibeon as *a large city* is an exaggeration, but in keeping with the monarchical proportions of Israel that are assumed by the editors (Dtr 1, Dtr 2; see Introduction). Thirty-one *royal cities* in western Palestine alone are listed in 12.7–24. *Warriors.* The Hebrew refers to men trained in combat and prosperous enough to be able to afford such activity, in effect, "knights." Gideon was a notable Israelite example (Judg 6.12). **10.3** In Judg 1.10 capture of *Hebron* is credited to Judah. Hebron, with a monarchical tradition going back to the seventeenth century B.C.E., figures prominently in the stories of Israel's ancestors, especially Abraham and Sarah (see Gen 13.18; 18.1; 23.19). Hebron too had a heavy concentration of non-Semitic people. The local kingdoms dismantled by early Israel were mostly of recent and alien origin. *Jarmuth,* the first of three towns situated in a north-south line in the foothills separating the central mountain range from the coastal road. *Lachish* was a fortified town already half a millennium old when it was destroyed in the mid-twelfth century B.C.E. It is hard to comprehend this date and a thirteenth-century destruction at Hazor (ch. 11) as both falling within one man's lifetime. It appears that the emergence of Israel, out of prolonged struggle for better life in Canaan, has been stylized as occurring all under Joshua's exemplary leadership. Regarding

warriors. 3 So King Adoni-zedek of Jerusalem sent a message to King Hoham of Hebron, to King Piram of Jarmuth, to King Japhia of Lachish, and to King Debir of Eglon, saying, 4 "Come up and help me, and let us attack Gibeon; for it has made peace with Joshua and with the Israelites." 5 Then the five kings of the Amorites—the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon—gathered their forces, and went up with all their armies and camped against Gibeon, and made war against it.

6 And the Gibeonites sent to Joshua at the camp in Gilgal, saying, "Do not abandon your servants; come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us; for all the kings of the Amorites who live in the hill country are gathered against us." 7 So Joshua went up from Gilgal, he and all the fighting force with him, all the mighty warriors. 8 The LORD said to Joshua, "Do not fear them, for I have handed them over to you; not one of them shall stand before you." 9 So Joshua came upon them suddenly, having marched up all night from Gilgal. 10 And the LORD threw them into a panic before Israel, who inflicted a great slaughter on them at Gibeon, chased them by the way of the ascent of Beth-horon, and struck them down as far as Azekah and Makkedah. 11 As they fled before Israel, while they were going down the slope of Beth-horon, the LORD threw down huge stones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died; there were more who died because of the hailstones than the Israelites killed with the sword.

12 On the day when the LORD gave the Amorites over to the Israelites, Joshua spoke to the LORD; and he said in the sight of Israel,

"Sun, stand still at Gibeon,
and Moon, in the valley of
Aijalon."

13 And the sun stood still, and the
moon stopped,
until the nation took vengeance
on their enemies.

Is this not written in the Book of Jashar? The sun stopped in midheaven, and did not hurry to set for about a whole day. 14 There has been no day like it before or

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King Debir of Eglon, the tradition may be garbled. *Debir* is a place name in vv. 38–39; 15.7; 21.15. Location of *Eglon* is unknown, possibly Tell Aitun. **10.5** *Amorites*, often a synonym for "Canaanites," may here retain its etymological sense, "westerners." **10.8** *The LORD said* presupposes oracular consultation, presumably by some such means as the sacred dice, Urim and Thummim. Here the Israelites do not repeat the mistake for which they are faulted earlier (9.14). **10.9** A forced march *all night* is plausible (as in the siege of Ai), a straight-line distance of about thirty-two kilometers, but a strenuous, twisting climb mostly uphill, out of the Jordan Valley. **10.10** *And the LORD threw . . . chased . . . and struck.* It was Yahweh's victory, not Joshua's or Israel's. The *ascent of Beth-horon*, also known as Valley of Aijalon, was a major access route from the northern Shephelah to the hill country. *Azekah* is identified with Tell-Zakariyeh. The location of *Makkedah*, somewhere in the northern Shephelah, is unknown. **10.11** *Stones from heaven* seems to be an unusually severe and unseasonable hailstorm. The coastal plain receives five to eight days of hail per year, mostly in midwinter. **10.12–14** The main thought here is of Yahweh's responsiveness to a human voice. The narrative incorporates an old poetic fragment in which sun and moon are collaborators rather than subordinates serving in the heavenly army, as in Hab 3.11. Cf. how "the stars fought from heaven" against Sisera (Judg 5.20), probably being regarded as the source of rain that produced a providential flash flood. **10.12** With a restoration from the Greek version, the introduction to the poem becomes chiastic, i.e., successive lines repeat ideas in reverse order: "Then Joshua appealed to the LORD, on the day God gave the Amorites over to the Israelites" parallels "When he (that is, the LORD) attacked them at Gibeon, they were smitten before Israel." Thus the next line, *he* (that is, the LORD) *said in the sight of Israel*, begins the poetic fragment. **10.13** Perhaps sun and moon were ordered to cover opposite escape routes from the pass. *Until the nation took vengeance on their enemies* is better translated: "until he (the LORD) defeated his enemies' force." "To take vengeance," which in the human scene means taking the law into one's own hands, is far from the meaning of the Hebrew here. The same consonants for "the nation," in Hebrew, also spell the military word for a fighting force. *The Book of Jashar* is also quoted in 2 Sam 1.18–27, King David's poetic lament over the deaths of Saul and Jonathan. That the sun did not set *for about a whole day* represents a literal misreading of the poem. **10.14** That *the LORD fought for Israel* may thus be understood in terms of a providential hailstorm seriously impeding the retreat of coali-

since, when the LORD heeded a human
voice; for the LORD fought for Israel.
15 Then Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to the camp at Gilgal.

Five Kings Defeated

16 Meanwhile, these five kings fled
and hid themselves in the cave at Makkedah. 17 And it was told Joshua, "The five
kings have been found, hidden in the cave
at Makkedah." 18 Joshua said, "Roll large
stones against the mouth of the cave, and
set men by it to guard them; 19 but do not
stay there yourselves; pursue your enemies, and attack them from the rear. Do
not let them enter their towns, for the
LORD your God has given them into your
hand." 20 When Joshua and the Israelites
had finished inflicting a very great slaughter on them, until they were wiped out,
and when the survivors had entered into
the fortified towns, 21 all the people returned safe to Joshua in the camp at Makkedah; no one dared to speak[q] against
any of the Israelites.
22 Then Joshua said, "Open the
mouth of the cave, and bring those five
kings out to me from the cave." 23 They
did so, and brought the five kings out to
him from the cave, the king of Jerusalem,
the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth,
the king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon. 24 When they brought the kings out to
Joshua, Joshua summoned all the Israelites, and said to the chiefs of the warriors
who had gone with him, "Come near, put
your feet on the necks of these kings."
Then they came near and put their feet
on their necks. 25 And Joshua said to
them, "Do not be afraid or dismayed; be
strong and courageous; for thus the LORD
will do to all the enemies against whom
you fight." 26 Afterward Joshua struck
them down and put them to death, and he
hung them on five trees. And they hung
on the trees until evening. 27 At sunset
Joshua commanded, and they took them
down from the trees and threw them into
the cave where they had hidden themselves; they set large stones against the
mouth of the cave, which remain to this
very day.

Victories in the South

28 Joshua took Makkedah on that day,
and struck it and its king with the edge of
the sword; he utterly destroyed every person in it; he left no one remaining. And
he did to the king of Makkedah as he had
done to the king of Jericho.
29 Then Joshua passed on from Makkedah, and all Israel with him, to Libnah,
and fought against Libnah. 30 The LORD
gave it also and its king into the hand of
Israel; and he struck it with the edge of
the sword, and every person in it; he left
no one remaining in it; and he did to its
king as he had done to the king of
Jericho.
31 Next Joshua passed on from Libnah, and all Israel with him, to Lachish,
and laid siege to it, and assaulted it. 32 The
LORD gave Lachish into the hand of Israel, and he took it on the second day, and
struck it with the edge of the sword, and
every person in it, as he had done to
Libnah.
33 Then King Horam of Gezer came
up to help Lachish; and Joshua struck

q Heb *moved his tongue*

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tion forces, giving the advantage to Joshua's force. **10.15** This verse is probably a gloss, supplied by a scribe who did not recognize vv. 12–14 as a digression or flashback.

10.16–27 The sequel to the prose account of the rout of the southern confederacy. The emphasis shifts, ironically, away from Yahweh's salvific action and onto Israel's military achievement. **10.17–21** With *the five kings . . . hidden in the cave at Makkedah*, the opposing forces were in leaderless rout and failed, for the most part, to find refuge inside *the fortified towns*. **10.21** The emphasis is on Israel's increasing military prowess. **10.24** For the manner of execution *feet on their necks*, cf. figurative use in Ps 110.1; 1 Cor 15.25–28. **10.25** *Do not be afraid*, an inclusion with v. 8. Cf. 1.7, 9. **10.26** This is not death by hanging, but public exposure of corpses after execution so as to inspire fear. **10.28–39** It is impossible to fully harmonize this account of the campaign in the south with the description of the coalition in vv. 1–5, because of the way the compiler chose to work by putting together preformed literary units. **10.28** *Destroyed*, i.e., "devoted" (Hebrew root *chrm*); see note on 6.17. **10.29** In the case of *Libnah*, there is no mention of the *cherem* (see note on 6.17). **10.30** Skipping over "the king of Ai" to get to *the king of Jericho* (whose fate is otherwise not described) contributes to closure on the account of warfare in the south. **10.33** *King Horam of Gezer* only now joins the action and is the only one mentioned by name

him and his people, leaving him no survivors.

34 From Lachish Joshua passed on with all Israel to Eglon; and they laid siege to it, and assaulted it; 35and they took it that day, and struck it with the edge of the sword; and every person in it he utterly destroyed that day, as he had done to Lachish.

36 Then Joshua went up with all Israel from Eglon to Hebron; they assaulted it, 37and took it, and struck it with the edge of the sword, and its king and its towns, and every person in it; he left no one remaining, just as he had done to Eglon, and utterly destroyed it with every person in it.

38 Then Joshua, with all Israel, turned back to Debir and assaulted it, 39and he took it with its king and all its towns; they struck them with the edge of the sword, and utterly destroyed every person in it; he left no one remaining; just as he had done to Hebron, and, as he had done to Libnah and its king, so he did to Debir and its king.

40 So Joshua defeated the whole land, the hill country and the Negeb and the lowland and the slopes, and all their kings; he left no one remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the LORD God of Israel commanded. 41And Joshua defeated them from Kadesh-barnea to Gaza, and all the country of Goshen, as far as Gibeon. 42Joshua took all these kings and their land at one time, because the LORD God of Israel fought for Israel. 43Then Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to the camp at Gilgal.

The United Kings of Northern Canaan Defeated

11 When King Jabin of Hazor heard of this, he sent to King Jobab of Madon, to the king of Shimron, to the king of Achshaph, 2and to the kings who were in the northern hill country, and in the Arabah south of Chinneroth, and in the lowland, and in Naphoth-dor on the west, 3to the Canaanites in the east and the west, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, and the Jebusites in the hill

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in this recapping of successes in the south. There is a tension, but no necessary contradiction, between this text and other passages in 16.10 and Judg 1.29 (which fault the tribe of Ephraim for failure to oust the Canaanites from Gezer). *Gezer* only became Israelite in Solomon's reign, as a dowry that came with Pharaoh's daughter. **10.34** Location of *Eglon* is uncertain, perhaps Tell Aitun. **10.36–39** In 14.6–15 Caleb is credited with victory at *Hebron* (see also 15.13–14), but "Judah" in general gets the credit in Judg 1.10. It is likely that towns changed hands more than once. The specification *its towns* (satellite villages) is made only for Hebron and Debir. The former remains archaeologically little known due to continuous modern occupation. The name of *Debir* "was formerly Kiriath-sepher" (Judg 1.11), which may be read as "Town of the Treaty Stele," suggesting something of a southern counterpart to the role of Shechem in the north (8.30–35; ch. 24). Debir is probably the small hill country site of Khirbet Rabud, where, again, only restricted areas could be excavated, but no pertinent destruction stratum has been found.

10.40–43 An editorial summary that, like 9.1–2, with which it frames the story about the Gibeonites, covers both more and less than what is reported in the enclosed narrative. **10.40** The *Negeb* is the southern desert stretching from the foot of the Judean hill country into the northern Sinai peninsula. That he *utterly destroyed all that breathed* is rhetorical exaggeration characteristic of the monarchical edition (Dtr 1; see Introduction); it overlooks previous statements to the contrary in various units.

11.1–15 Victory in the far north. Defeat of the Galilean coalition headed by Hazor is the last of the stories of Joshua's military leadership to be highlighted by the monarchy's historian (Dtr 1; see Introduction). **11.1** *Jabin* was a dynastic name at Hazor. In Judg 4.2, 23, 24 another(?) "Jabin" is "king of Canaan." By the thirteenth century B.C.E., Hazor was greatly reduced in size. What the king of Hazor *heard* was (1) the news of the Ebal covenant, (2) news from the southern hill country, or (3) some combination of the two. Moreover, northern Galilee in the thirteenth century B.C.E. was, for the first time in history, the scene of many new settlements, open and unfortified, occupied by families practicing subsistence farming. This pattern cannot be unrelated to the migrations of groups called Habiru in ancient sources and the Yahwist movement in particular. The hasty formation of a defensive coalition of local elites in Galilee is entirely plausible. *Jobab* and *Madon*, non-Semitic names, traceable to an Anatolian origin. Precise locations of Madon, *Shimron*, and *Achshaph* are uncertain. **11.3** *Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Hivites,* four "nations" with non-Semitic names and backgrounds. *Mizpah*, Hebrew "Watchtower" or "Lookout." *Land of Mizpah* may be a general term for the area overlooked by

country, and the Hivites under Hermon
in the land of Mizpah. 4 They came out,
with all their troops, a great army, in
number like the sand on the seashore,
with very many horses and chariots. 5 All
these kings joined their forces, and came
and camped together at the waters of Me-
rom, to fight with Israel.

6 And the LORD said to Joshua, "Do
not be afraid of them, for tomorrow at
this time I will hand over all of them,
slain, to Israel; you shall hamstring their
horses, and burn their chariots with fire."
7 So Joshua came suddenly upon them
with all his fighting force, by the waters of
Merom, and fell upon them. 8 And the
LORD handed them over to Israel, who at-
tacked them and chased them as far as
Great Sidon and Misrephoth-maim, and
eastward as far as the valley of Mizpeh.
They struck them down, until they had
left no one remaining. 9 And Joshua did
to them as the LORD commanded him; he
hamstrung their horses, and burned their
chariots with fire.

10 Joshua turned back at that time,
and took Hazor, and struck its king down
with the sword. Before that time Hazor
was the head of all those kingdoms.
11 And they put to the sword all who were
in it, utterly destroying them; there was
no one left who breathed, and he burned
Hazor with fire. 12 And all the towns of
those kings, and all their kings, Joshua
took, and struck them with the edge of
the sword, utterly destroying them, as
Moses the servant of the LORD had com-
manded. 13 But Israel burned none of the
towns that stood on mounds except Hazor,
which Joshua did burn. 14 All the spoil
of these towns, and the livestock, the Israel-
ites took for their booty; but all the
people they struck down with the edge of
the sword, until they had destroyed them,
and they did not leave any who breathed.
15 As the LORD had commanded his ser-
vant Moses, so Moses commanded Joshua,
and so Joshua did; he left nothing un-
done of all that the LORD had com-
manded Moses.

Summary of Joshua's Conquests

16 So Joshua took all that land: the hill
country and all the Negeb and all the
land of Goshen and the lowland and the
Arabah and the hill country of Israel and
its lowland, 17 from Mount Halak, which
rises toward Seir, as far as Baal-gad in the

Mount Hermon. **11.4** Hazor in the Middle Bronze Age was adjacent to the land of Amurru, which was notable for its export of *horses*. The *chariots*, here mentioned for the first time in Joshua, are probably the lighter two-man variety (carrying a driver and a warrior), which were easily dismantled and transported for assembly in suitable terrain, in contrast to the heavier Hittite chariots which also carried a shieldbearer (and thus a three-man team). **11.5** *Waters of Merom*, possibly the pond Birket el-Jish roughly four kilometers northeast of Meron. The Wadi Meron is too deep and rugged for a rendezvous involving chariotry. **11.6** *Do not be afraid of them*, standard Deuteronomic encouragement (8.1; 10.8, 25). As at the "siege" of Jericho (6.3–5) and again at the second battle for Ai (8.18), Yahweh takes direct command to *hamstring their horses* (beginning of the action) *and burn their chariots* (conclusion of the action). Israel would not be in a position to use such newfangled equipment and organization until the imperial days of David and Solomon (2 Sam 8.4; 1 Chr 18.4; 2 Sam 15.1; 1 Kings 1.5; 9.19–22). **11.8** This verse describes more of a panicked rout than a slaughter. The allied forces seem to have split, some fleeing northwest toward the coastal cities, Sidon and *Misrephoth-maim*. The latter is most likely Khirbet el-Musheirifeh, just south of Rosh ha-Niqra near the modern Israeli-Lebanese border. **11.10** As former *head of all those kingdoms*, Hazor had ranked among the most prominent city-state kingdoms of Middle Bronze Age Canaan. **11.13** The treatment of Hazor was remembered as an exception among towns occupying tells (and thus preferable sites for resettling). Apparently opposition to the Yahwist movement in Galilee was strongest at Hazor. **11.15** *As the LORD had commanded his servant Moses.* This verse forms a strong inclusion with v. 12 and echoes introductory rhetoric (1.7). There is no indication, however, that Moses had any interest in Galilee. The intervening stories thus serve as examples of how Moses' teaching had been followed.

11.16–23 Summary of the warfare. This is the second such summary. The first one covers the south (10.40–42). The result is a two-phase presentation of the "conquest," which is now to be followed by a two-phase portrayal of the "settlement" era, described respectively in 13.1–17.18 and 18.1–19.53. The first phase may have been based at Shechem (cf. 8.30–35) or perhaps Gilgal (cf. 10.15, 43). The second phase was based at Shiloh (18.1). **11.17** *Mount Halak*, "Mount Baldy," lies far to the southeast of Beer-sheba. *Seir* refers to the mountains of Edom. The location of

valley of Lebanon below Mount Hermon.
He took all their kings, struck them down,
and put them to death. 18 Joshua made
war a long time with all those kings.
19 There was not a town that made peace
with the Israelites, except the Hivites, the
inhabitants of Gibeon; all were taken in
battle. 20 For it was the LORD's doing to
harden their hearts so that they would
come against Israel in battle, in order that
they might be utterly destroyed, and
might receive no mercy, but be exterminated, just as the LORD had commanded
Moses.

21 At that time Joshua came and
wiped out the Anakim from the hill country, from Hebron, from Debir, from
Anab, and from all the hill country of Judah, and from all the hill country of Israel; Joshua utterly destroyed them with
their towns. 22 None of the Anakim was
left in the land of the Israelites; some remained only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod. 23 So Joshua took the whole land,
according to all that the LORD had spoken
to Moses; and Joshua gave it for an inheritance to Israel according to their tribal allotments. And the land had rest
from war.

The Kings Conquered by Moses

12 Now these are the kings of the
land, whom the Israelites defeated, whose land they occupied beyond
the Jordan toward the east, from the
Wadi Arnon to Mount Hermon, with all
the Arabah eastward: 2 King Sihon of the
Amorites who lived at Heshbon, and
ruled from Aroer, which is on the edge of
the Wadi Arnon, and from the middle of
the valley as far as the river Jabbok, the
boundary of the Ammonites, that is, half
of Gilead, 3 and the Arabah to the Sea of
Chinneroth eastward, and in the direction
of Beth-jeshimoth, to the sea of the Arabah, the Dead Sea,[r] southward to the
foot of the slopes of Pisgah; 4 and King
Og[s] of Bashan, one of the last of the
Rephaim, who lived at Ashtaroth and at

r Heb *Salt Sea* s Gk: Heb *the boundary of King Og*

Baal-gad is uncertain, possibly Banias near the lower slopes of Mount Hermon. Canaanite Laish (later Israelite Dan) is very near. **11.19** That *all were taken in battle* was the understanding of the historian of the monarchy; it is consistent with the exhortations to faithful service found in Deuteronomy. **11.20** *For it was the LORD's doing . . . be exterminated.* This most extreme statement reflects the nationalistic perspective of the royal historian (Dtr 1; see Introduction). **11.21–22** These verses interrupt the sweeping claim for "all the land." There were areas of continuing resistance, where Israelite constituencies were variously involved. **11.21** *Anakim,* opponents of Israel from the days of Moses (Num 13). They were probably of far northern (Sea Peoples) origin, found in company with Gaza and Ashkelon (both early Philistine settlements) in Jer 47.5. **11.22** *Gaza, Gath, Ashdod,* three Sea People towns. Elimination of the *Anakim* from the southern hills seems to have been overlooked by the royal historian in 10.36–39. The later insertion (Dtr 2; see Introduction) indicates that the actual process was more complex and with more mixed results than previously indicated. **11.23** The summary concludes by emphasizing the obedient chain of command—*Joshua* obeys *Moses,* who obeys *the LORD.* The word for *inheritance* had for a long time in ancient feudal society referred to a peasant's plot of land given for promise of services to be rendered. Here *tribal allotments* are to be impartially determined no doubt by use of the sacred dice called Urim and Thummim. A *land* at *rest from war* was the goal of the Yahwist reformation/revolution.

12.1–24 A supplemental summary of the former kingdoms based on an older document, probably added by the later editor (Dtr 2; see Introduction), including towns and kings not otherwise mentioned in the book. It also calls attention to the larger Israel which included tribes settled in Transjordan. **12.1–6** Summary of the Transjordanian victories under Moses' leadership. **12.1** *Wadi Arnon,* the immense canyon forming a natural and acknowledged northern border of the kingdom of Moab and the southern limit of Israel's territorial claim in Transjordan prior to the reign of King David. **12.2** The story of *King Sihon* is told in Num 21.21–31. The label *Amorites* here perhaps relates to the great state of Amurru, which early in the thirteenth century B.C.E. became subject to the Hittite king. The exact location of Sihon's capital remains unclear. Occupation at Tell Hesban, which preserves the old name, began in the eleventh century B.C.E. The *Ammonites,* like the Israelites, could not yet be called a "kingdom." *Gilead,* probably a geographical term for the wooded hill country of Transjordan, cut by the deep and winding gorge of the *Jabbok,* the northern limit of Sihon's realm. **12.4** The non-Semitic name of *Og,* who required an exceptionally large bedstead (Deut 3.11), can be explained as Anatolian in origin. *Bashan,* the very productive land centering on the Golan

Edrei 5and ruled over Mount Hermon
and Salecah and all Bashan to the boundary of the Geshurites and the Maacathites,
and over half of Gilead to the boundary
of King Sihon of Heshbon. 6Moses, the
servant of the LORD, and the Israelites defeated them; and Moses the servant of the
LORD gave their land for a possession to
the Reubenites and the Gadites and the
half-tribe of Manasseh.

The Kings Conquered by Joshua

7 The following are the kings of the
land whom Joshua and the Israelites defeated on the west side of the Jordan,
from Baal-gad in the valley of Lebanon to
Mount Halak, that rises toward Seir (and
Joshua gave their land to the tribes of Israel as a possession according to their allotments, 8in the hill country, in the
lowland, in the Arabah, in the slopes, in
the wilderness, and in the Negeb, the land
of the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites):

9	the king of Jericho	one
	the king of Ai, which is next to Bethel	one
10	the king of Jerusalem	one
	the king of Hebron	one
11	the king of Jarmuth	one
	the king of Lachish	one
12	the king of Eglon	one
	the king of Gezer	one
13	the king of Debir	one
	the king of Geder	one
14	the king of Hormah	one
	the king of Arad	one
15	the king of Libnah	one
	the king of Adullam	one
16	the king of Makkedah	one
	the king of Bethel	one
17	the king of Tappuah	one
	the king of Hepher	one
18	the king of Aphek	one
	the king of Lasharon	one
19	the king of Madon	one
	the king of Hazor	one
20	the king of Shimron-meron	one
	the king of Achshaph	one
21	the king of Taanach	one
	the king of Megiddo	one
22	the king of Kedesh	one
	the king of Jokneam in Carmel	one
23	the king of Dor in Naphath-dor	one

Heights. *Rephaim* referred originally to an aristocracy of professional chariot warriors, from whose ranks came many of the Canaanite kings. It acquired a secondary sense of "giants," and yet another sense referring to "shades of the dead." **12.5** *Geshurites* and *Maacathites*, two Aramaean (Syrian) groups who were sources of continuing resistance to Israel (13.13) until the time of David, one of whose wives was a Geshurite princess (2 Sam 3.3).

12.7–24 A list of kings dethroned in the era of Joshua making no specific claim to occupation or destruction of towns. **12.9–13a** These verses are closely related to the sequence of stories in 6.1–10.43; every one of these kings has been previously mentioned in those chapters. **12.13b–16a** A passage related in part to ch. 10, but supplying several names in the deep south not previously mentioned—*Geder, Hormah, Arad.* There were no fortified cities in the Negeb, but there were imposing ruins of strong Middle Bronze cities. It is likely that opposing forces, when Israel was based at Kadesh-barnea, were small enough to leave scant artifactual evidence of confrontation. **12.16b–24** Kings from the central and northern regions. **12.16b** *Bethel.* See Judg 1.22–26. **12.17–18** These verses indicate that the takeover of northcentral Canaan did not proceed entirely without violence. **12.17** *Tappuah* was an important town on the border between Ephraim and Manasseh. *Hepher*, a clan of Manasseh situated north of Shechem. **12.18** *Aphek* was never included in any of the tribal claims. *Lasharon*, lit. "to/for the Sharon(-plain)," perhaps intended to cover the entire region which was sparsely settled due to swampy and malarial conditions. **12.19–23** Most of these kings are either mentioned as part of Jabin's coalition (ch. 11) or belong to the coalition's homeland. **12.21** Excavations at *Taanach* suggest a situation in the twelfth-century B.C.E. town where richer Canaanite citizens and poorer Israelite residents were living in distinct residential quarters. Cf. Judg 5.19. *Megiddo* (Hebrew, "Stronghold") controlled the southern flank of the Esdraelon plain and the most heavily traveled route through the Mount Carmel range to the Sharon plain. **12.22** *Kedesh*, probably not the great sanctuary town in the far north (19.37) but a smaller site between Megiddo and Taanach. *Jokneam*, at the tip of Zebulun's southwestern wedge, may have become Israelite at a very early period since there is no mention of it among the unconquered towns in 17.11; Judg 1.27. **12.23** *Goiim in Galilee* suggests the name of Sisera's hometown. "Harosheth-ha-goiim" (Judg

the king of Goiim in
Galilee,[t] one
24 the king of Tirzah one
thirty-one kings in all.

The Parts of Canaan Still Unconquered

13 Now Joshua was old and advanced in years; and the LORD said to him, "You are old and advanced in years, and very much of the land still remains to be possessed. 2 This is the land that still remains: all the regions of the Philistines, and all those of the Geshurites 3 (from the Shihor, which is east of Egypt, northward to the boundary of Ekron, it is reckoned as Canaanite; there are five rulers of the Philistines, those of Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron), and those of the Avvim 4 in the south; all the land of the Canaanites, and Mearah that belongs to the Sidonians, to Aphek, to the boundary of the Amorites, 5 and the land of the Gebalites, and all Lebanon, toward the east, from Baal-gad below Mount Hermon to Lebo-hamath, 6 all the inhabitants of the hill country from Lebanon to Misrephoth-maim, even all the Sidonians. I will myself drive them out from before the Israelites; only allot the land to Israel for an inheritance, as I have commanded you. 7 Now therefore divide this land for an inheritance to the nine tribes and the half-tribe of Manasseh."

The Territory East of the Jordan

8 With the other half-tribe of Manasseh[u] the Reubenites and the Gadites received their inheritance, which Moses gave them, beyond the Jordan eastward, as Moses the servant of the LORD gave them: 9 from Aroer, which is on the edge of the Wadi Arnon, and the town that is in the middle of the valley, and all the tableland from[v] Medeba as far as Dibon; 10 and all the cities of King Sihon of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon, as far as the boundary of the Ammonites; 11 and Gilead, and the region of the Geshurites and Maacathites, and all Mount Hermon, and all Bashan to Salecah; 12 all the kingdom of Og in Bashan, who reigned in Ashtaroth and in Edrei (he alone was left of the survivors of the Rephaim); these Moses had defeated and driven out. 13 Yet the Israelites did not drive out the Geshurites or the Maacathites; but Geshur and Maacath live within Israel to this day.

14 To the tribe of Levi alone Moses gave no inheritance; the offerings by fire to the LORD God of Israel are their inheritance, as he said to them.

The Territory of Reuben

15 Moses gave an inheritance to the tribe of the Reubenites according to their

t Gk: Heb *Gilgal* u Cn: Heb *With it*
v Compare Gk: Heb lacks *from*

4.2). **12.24** *Tirzah*, probably Tell el-Far'ah (ca. ten kilometers northeast of Shechem), which was first favored as capital of the northern throne (1 Kings 14–16) when it moved the seat of government away from Shechem. *Thirty-one*, the number of nominally independent "kingdoms" in an area roughly the size of Vermont.

13.1–19.51 The territorial allotments, with bits of narrative interspersed. **13.1–7** The territory in western Palestine remaining to be conquered. **13.1** *Now Joshua was old and advanced in years*, in Hebrew a distinctive idiom, occurring again in 23.1 (another Dtr 2 chapter; see Introduction). **13.2** *Philistines*, mentioned only here in the book. Philistia only came under Israelite control, briefly, during the reigns of David and Solomon. **13.4–7** This part of the ancient ideal, control of Phoenicia, was never realized.

13.8–13 This flashback describing the extent of the Transjordanian conquest and tribal allotments made by Moses, clearly related to 12.1–5 (and Deut 3.8, 10a, more Dtr 2; see Introduction), begins abruptly. Archaeological evidence and biblical texts combine to indicate that the success of the Yahwist movement in Transjordan was real but short-lived. **13.9** *The town . . . in the middle of the valley* (lit. "of the wadi") perhaps refers to the general habitable area between two main courses of the Arnon, which flow together on the west and also meet twice in the east. **13.13** The first of a series of explanatory statements faulting various tribes for failure to achieve total "conquest" (15.63; 16.10; 17.12–13; Judg 1.19, 21, 27–35), contrary to the summary claims found elsewhere. **13.14** References to Levi here and in v. 33 frame the description of allotments in Transjordan. *The tribe of Levi* formed the one exception to all tribes sharing equally in the apportionment of the land. As carriers of the Mosaic teaching, the Levites were dispersed with residential and grazing rights in designated towns throughout the land allotted to other tribes (ch. 21).

13.15–31 Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of

clans. 16 Their territory was from Aroer,
which is on the edge of the Wadi Arnon,
and the town that is in the middle of the
valley, and all the tableland by Medeba;
17 with Heshbon, and all its towns that are
in the tableland; Dibon, and Bamoth-baal,
and Beth-baal-meon, 18 and Jahaz, and
Kedemoth, and Mephaath, 19 and Kiria-
thaim, and Sibmah, and Zereth-shahar on
the hill of the valley, 20 and Beth-peor,
and the slopes of Pisgah, and Beth-
jeshimoth, 21 that is, all the towns of the
tableland, and all the kingdom of King Si-
hon of the Amorites, who reigned in
Heshbon, whom Moses defeated with the
leaders of Midian, Evi and Rekem and
Zur and Hur and Reba, as princes of Si-
hon, who lived in the land. 22 Along with
the rest of those they put to death, the
Israelites also put to the sword Balaam
son of Beor, who practiced divination.
23 And the border of the Reubenites was
the Jordan and its banks. This was the in-
heritance of the Reubenites according to
their families, with their towns and
villages.

The Territory of Gad

24 Moses gave an inheritance also to
the tribe of the Gadites, according to their
families. 25 Their territory was Jazer, and
all the towns of Gilead, and half the land
of the Ammonites, to Aroer, which is east
of Rabbah, 26 and from Heshbon to
Ramath-mizpeh and Betonim, and from
Mahanaim to the territory of Debir,[w]
27 and in the valley Beth-haram, Beth-
nimrah, Succoth, and Zaphon, the rest of
the kingdom of King Sihon of Heshbon,
the Jordan and its banks, as far as the
lower end of the Sea of Chinnereth, east-
ward beyond the Jordan. 28 This is the in-
heritance of the Gadites according to their
clans, with their towns and villages.

The Territory of the Half-Tribe of Manasseh (East)

29 Moses gave an inheritance to the
half-tribe of Manasseh; it was allotted to
the half-tribe of the Manassites according
to their families. 30 Their territory ex-
tended from Mahanaim, through all Ba-
shan, the whole kingdom of King Og of
Bashan, and all the settlements of Jair,
which are in Bashan, sixty towns, 31 and
half of Gilead, and Ashtaroth, and Edrei,
the towns of the kingdom of Og in Ba-
shan; these were allotted to the people of
Machir son of Manasseh according to
their clans—for half the Machirites.
32 These are the inheritances that
Moses distributed in the plains of Moab,
beyond the Jordan east of Jericho. 33 But
to the tribe of Levi Moses gave no inheri-
tance; the LORD God of Israel is their in-
heritance, as he said to them.

The Distribution of Territory West of the Jordan

14 These are the inheritances that
the Israelites received in the land
of Canaan, which the priest Eleazar, and
Joshua son of Nun, and the heads of the
families of the tribes of the Israelites dis-
tributed to them. 2 Their inheritance was
by lot, as the LORD had commanded Mo-
ses for the nine and one-half tribes. 3 For
Moses had given an inheritance to the two
and one-half tribes beyond the Jordan;
but to the Levites he gave no inheritance
among them. 4 For the people of Joseph
were two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim;

w Gk Syr Vg: Heb *Lidebir*

Manasseh. **13.15–28** The geographical arrangement here (Reuben in the south, Gad in the north) is at odds with the story line in Num 32.34–38. **13.15** The *Reubenites* receive the larger southern segment of Sihon's realm. **13.16** The *Wadi Arnon*, the southern limit of early Israel's claim. **13.21** *Tableland*, or "plateau," must refer to an administrative unit that includes major western approaches from the Jordan Valley. *Leaders of Midian*, another coalition, evidence that an earlier amity created in the days of Moses and Jethro had collapsed (cf. Judg 7–8). **13.22** *Balaam son of Beor*. Cf. Num 22–24. Texts referring to Balaam were found in 1967 at Tell Deir Alla in Transjordan. **13.24** To the *Gadites* is allotted the southern half of Gilead, overlapping the northern stretch of Sihon's turf while reducing the reach of Ammonite sovereignty by half. **13.30** *Bashan*, the Golan Heights, lies north of the Yarmuk River. *Jair*. See Num 32.41 (Deut 3.14). **13.31** This *half of Gilead* is territory north of the Jabbok.

14.1–5 Introduction to the western allotments. **14.1** *Land of Canaan* sounds ironic, occurring elsewhere in 21.2; 22.9, 10, 11, 32—all contributions of the later redactor. *Eleazar*'s role as keeper of the sacred lot (Urim and Thummim, Deut 33.8) is stipulated at the commissioning of

and no portion was given to the Levites in the land, but only towns to live in, with their pasture lands for their flocks and herds. 5 The Israelites did as the LORD commanded Moses; they allotted the land.

Hebron Allotted to Caleb

6 Then the people of Judah came to Joshua at Gilgal; and Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him, "You know what the LORD said to Moses the man of God in Kadesh-barnea concerning you and me. 7 I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh-barnea to spy out the land; and I brought him an honest report. 8 But my companions who went up with me made the heart of the people melt; yet I wholeheartedly followed the LORD my God. 9 And Moses swore on that day, saying, 'Surely the land on which your foot has trodden shall be an inheritance for you and your children forever, because you have wholeheartedly followed the LORD my God.' 10 And now, as you see, the LORD has kept me alive, as he said, these forty-five years since the time that the LORD spoke this word to Moses, while Israel was journeying through the wilderness; and here I am today, eighty-five years old. 11 I am still as strong today as I was on the day that Moses sent me; my strength now is as my strength was then, for war, and for going and coming. 12 So now give me this hill country of which the LORD spoke on that day; for you heard on that day how the Anakim were there, with great fortified cities; it may be that the LORD will be with me, and I shall drive them out, as the LORD said."

13 Then Joshua blessed him, and gave Hebron to Caleb son of Jephunneh for an inheritance. 14 So Hebron became the inheritance of Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite to this day, because he wholeheartedly followed the LORD, the God of Israel. 15 Now the name of Hebron formerly was Kiriath-arba;[x] this Arba was[y] the greatest man among the Anakim. And the land had rest from war.

The Territory of Judah

15 The lot for the tribe of the people of Judah according to their families reached southward to the boundary of Edom, to the wilderness of Zin at the farthest south. 2 And their south boundary ran from the end of the Dead Sea,[z] from the bay that faces southward; 3 it goes out southward of the ascent of Akrabbim, passes along to Zin, and goes up south of Kadesh-barnea, along by Hezron, up to Addar, makes a turn to Karka, 4 passes along to Azmon, goes out by the Wadi of Egypt, and comes to its end at the sea. This shall be your south boundary. 5 And the east boundary is the Dead Sea,[z] to the mouth of the Jordan. And the boundary on the north side runs from the bay of the sea at the mouth of the Jordan; 6 and the boundary goes up to Beth-hoglah, and passes along north of Beth-arabah; and the boundary goes up to the Stone of Bohan, Reuben's son; 7 and the boundary goes up to Debir from the Valley of Achor, and so northward, turning toward Gilgal, which is opposite the ascent of Adummim, which is on the south side of the valley; and the boundary passes along to the waters of En-shemesh, and ends at En-rogel; 8 then the boundary goes up by

x That is *the city of Arba was* y Heb lacks *this Arba* z Heb *Salt Sea*

Joshua (Num 27.21). **14.4** The *Levites* have no territorial identity, and so *the people of Joseph were two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim,* to make twelve.

14.6–15 Allotment to Caleb in the south, invoking a promise by Moses, is a special case structurally balanced by the example of Zelophehad's daughters in the north (17.1–6). **14.6** *Came,* or "had come," thus setting the scene at *Gilgal* prior to the hill country warfare. **14.7** *The LORD sent me from Kadesh-barnea to spy.* See Num 13. **14.12** That Joshua has already settled accounts with the *Anakim* (11.21–22) confirms the reading of this chapter as a flashback. Tradition described the Anakim as of awesome stature (Num 13.28; Deut 2.21; 9.2), descended from a union of divine and human beings (Gen 6.4; Num 13.33). **14.13** *Hebron,* twenty miles south of Jerusalem, figures prominently in stories of the ancestors, especially Sarah and Abraham (see Gen 13.18; 18.1; 23.19). It was the hub of the powerful tribe of Judah, where David first became king (2 Sam 2.1–5). The story of Caleb resumes in 15.13–19. **14.15** *And the land had rest from war* echoes the identical statement at the end of ch. 11, framing the lengthy explanatory additions, chs. 12–14.

15.1–63 Judah gets pride of place in description of the territories in Canaan. **15.1–12** Judah's boundaries. **15.8–9** Description of the

the valley of the son of Hinnom at the
southern slope of the Jebusites (that is, Je-
rusalem); and the boundary goes up to
the top of the mountain that lies over
against the valley of Hinnom, on the west,
at the northern end of the valley of Reph-
aim; 9 then the boundary extends from
the top of the mountain to the spring of
the Waters of Nephtoah, and from there
to the towns of Mount Ephron; then the
boundary bends around to Baalah (that is,
Kiriath-jearim); 10 and the boundary cir-
cles west of Baalah to Mount Seir, passes
along to the northern slope of Mount Jea-
rim (that is, Chesalon), and goes down to
Beth-shemesh, and passes along by Tim-
nah; 11 the boundary goes out to the slope
of the hill north of Ekron, then the
boundary bends around to Shikkeron,
and passes along to Mount Baalah, and
goes out to Jabneel; then the boundary
comes to an end at the sea. 12 And the
west boundary was the Mediterranean
with its coast. This is the boundary sur-
rounding the people of Judah according
to their families.

Caleb Occupies His Portion

13 According to the commandment of
the LORD to Joshua, he gave to Caleb son
of Jephunneh a portion among the peo-
ple of Judah, Kiriath-arba,[a] that is, He-
bron (Arba was the father of Anak).
14 And Caleb drove out from there the
three sons of Anak: Sheshai, Ahiman, and
Talmai, the descendants of Anak. 15 From
there he went up against the inhabitants
of Debir; now the name of Debir formerly
was Kiriath-sepher. 16 And Caleb said,
"Whoever attacks Kiriath-sepher and
takes it, to him I will give my daughter
Achsah as wife." 17 Othniel son of Kenaz,
the brother of Caleb, took it; and he gave
him his daughter Achsah as wife. 18 When
she came to him, she urged him to ask her
father for a field. As she dismounted
from her donkey, Caleb said to her,
"What do you wish?" 19 She said to him,
"Give me a present; since you have set me
in the land of the Negeb, give me springs
of water as well." So Caleb gave her the
upper springs and the lower springs.

The Towns of Judah

20 This is the inheritance of the tribe
of the people of Judah according to their
families. 21 The towns belonging to the
tribe of the people of Judah in the ex-
treme south, toward the boundary of
Edom, were Kabzeel, Eder, Jagur, 22 Ki-
nah, Dimonah, Adadah, 23 Kedesh, Ha-
zor, Ithnan, 24 Ziph, Telem, Bealoth,
25 Hazor-hadattah, Kerioth-hezron (that
is, Hazor), 26 Amam, Shema, Moladah,
27 Hazar-gaddah, Heshmon, Beth-pelet,
28 Hazar-shual, Beer-sheba, Biziothiah,
29 Baalah, Iim, Ezem, 30 Eltolad, Chesil,
Hormah, 31 Ziklag, Madmannah, Sansan-
nah, 32 Lebaoth, Shilhim, Ain, and Rim-
mon: in all, twenty-nine towns, with their
villages.

33 And in the lowland, Eshtaol, Zo-
rah, Ashnah, 34 Zanoah, En-gannim, Tap-
puah, Enam, 35 Jarmuth, Adullam, Socoh,
Azekah, 36 Shaaraim, Adithaim, Gederah,
Gederothaim: fourteen towns with their
villages.

37 Zenan, Hadashah, Migdal-gad,
38 Dilan, Mizpeh, Jokthe-el, 39 Lachish,
Bozkath, Eglon, 40 Cabbon, Lahmam,
Chitlish, 41 Gederoth, Beth-dagon, Naa-
mah, and Makkedah: sixteen towns with
their villages.

42 Libnah, Ether, Ashan, 43 Iphtah,
Ashnah, Nezib, 44 Keilah, Achzib, and
Mareshah: nine towns with their villages.

45 Ekron, with its dependencies and
its villages; 46 from Ekron to the sea, all
that were near Ashdod, with their villages.

47 Ashdod, its towns and its villages;
Gaza, its towns and its villages; to the

a That is *the city of Arba*

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northern border carefully skirts *Jerusalem* on the south.

15.13–19 This resumption and partial repetition of Caleb's acquisition of Hebron (14.6–12) and its sequel interrupts the cartographic description. **15.14** *Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai.* Not clearly Semitic, these names probably came to Canaan with an early wave of Sea Peoples. **15.15** *Debir.* See note on 10.36–39. **15.16–19** The story of Othniel and Achsah is repeated nearly verbatim in Judg 1.12–15 (Dtr 2; see Introduction).

15.20–63 This list of towns belonging to Judah, organized into districts, is probably based on later administrative organization in the kingdom of Judah. 1 Kings 4.7–19 has a similar list covering the entire country from the reign of Solomon. **15.63** *Jebusites.* The pre-Israelite name of

Wadi of Egypt, and the Great Sea with its coast.

48 And in the hill country, Shamir, Jattir, Socoh, 49 Dannah, Kiriath-sannah (that is, Debir), 50 Anab, Eshtemoh, Anim, 51 Goshen, Holon, and Giloh: eleven towns with their villages.

52 Arab, Dumah, Eshan, 53 Janim, Beth-tappuah, Aphekah, 54 Humtah, Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), and Zior: nine towns with their villages.

55 Maon, Carmel, Ziph, Juttah, 56 Jezreel, Jokdeam, Zanoah, 57 Kain, Gibeah, and Timnah: ten towns with their villages.

58 Halhul, Beth-zur, Gedor, 59 Maarath, Beth-anoth, and Eltekon: six towns with their villages.

60 Kiriath-baal (that is, Kiriath-jearim) and Rabbah: two towns with their villages.

61 In the wilderness, Beth-arabah, Middin, Secacah, 62 Nibshan, the City of Salt, and En-gedi: six towns with their villages.

63 But the people of Judah could not drive out the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem; so the Jebusites live with the people of Judah in Jerusalem to this day.

The Territory of Ephraim

16 The allotment of the Josephites went from the Jordan by Jericho, east of the waters of Jericho, into the wilderness, going up from Jericho into the hill country to Bethel; 2 then going from Bethel to Luz, it passes along to Ataroth, the territory of the Archites; 3 then it goes down westward to the territory of the Japhletites, as far as the territory of Lower Beth-horon, then to Gezer, and it ends at the sea.

4 The Josephites—Manasseh and Ephraim—received their inheritance.

5 The territory of the Ephraimites by their families was as follows: the boundary of their inheritance on the east was Ataroth-addar as far as Upper Beth-horon, 6 and the boundary goes from there to the sea; on the north is Michmethath; then on the east the boundary makes a turn toward Taanath-shiloh, and passes along beyond it on the east to Janoah, 7 then it goes down from Janoah to Ataroth and to Naarah, and touches Jericho, ending at the Jordan. 8 From Tappuah the boundary goes westward to the Wadi Kanah, and ends at the sea. Such is the inheritance of the tribe of the Ephraimites by their families, 9 together with the towns that were set apart for the Ephraimites within the inheritance of the Manassites, all those towns with their villages. 10 They did not, however, drive out the Canaanites who lived in Gezer: so the Canaanites have lived within Ephraim to this day but have been made to do forced labor.

The Other Half-Tribe of Manasseh (West)

17 Then allotment was made to the tribe of Manasseh, for he was the firstborn of Joseph. To Machir the firstborn of Manasseh, the father of Gilead, were allotted Gilead and Bashan, because he was a warrior. 2 And allotments were made to the rest of the tribe of Manasseh,

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Jerusalem was "Jebus." See also note on 13.13.

16.1–10 The Ephraimites named after one of the two sons of Joseph who take the place of "Levi" in a roster of twelve territorial units. **16.1–4** Ephraim's border with Benjamin and Dan is given in very general terms. **16.2** *Bethel* and *Luz* are the same place in Judg 1.22–26. The change of name to Bethel was credited to Jacob (Gen 28.19; 35.6; 48.3). *Archites* refers to a clan or village population that became part of Benjamin. One of David's most loyal advisers, Hushai, was recruited from them (2 Sam 15.32; 16.16; 17.5). **16.3** *Gezer.* See 10.33. **16.5–10** The fragmentary description of borders for the great northern tribe contrasts sharply with the description of Judah in ch. 15. **16.10** *Canaanites . . . forced labor.* The chapter concludes on a note of partial failure, which appears sporadically throughout the description of the northern tribes (cf. note on 13.13).

17.1–13 Western Manasseh. Description of Manasseh west of the Jordan, unlike the preceding tribal descriptions, falls into two parts, one concerned with subgroups (vv. 1–6), one with borders (vv. 7–13). **17.1–2** *Tribe of Manasseh.* The families, or "clans," of Manasseh here constitute a tribe, in contrast to the eastern "half-tribe" in 13.29 and elsewhere. **17.1** *Firstborn of Joseph.* See Gen 41.51; 46.20. *Machir* as "eldest son" of Manasseh appears to have been a constituency that was originally at home in the west (Judg 5.14) and then in part shifted to Transjordan. *Father of Gilead.* Genealogy adjusts to reflect changing socio-political realities (cf. Num 26.28–34; 1 Chr 7.14–19). Gilead was originally a geographical term (12.2, 5; 13.11, 25, 31). **17.2** *The rest of the*

by their families, Abiezer, Helek, Asriel, Shechem, Hepher, and Shemida; these were the male descendants of Manasseh son of Joseph, by their families.

3 Now Zelophehad son of Hepher son of Gilead son of Machir son of Manasseh had no sons, but only daughters; and these are the names of his daughters: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. 4 They came before the priest Eleazar and Joshua son of Nun and the leaders, and said, "The LORD commanded Moses to give us an inheritance along with our male kin." So according to the commandment of the LORD he gave them an inheritance among the kinsmen of their father. 5 Thus there fell to Manasseh ten portions, besides the land of Gilead and Bashan, which is on the other side of the Jordan, 6 because the daughters of Manasseh received an inheritance along with his sons. The land of Gilead was allotted to the rest of the Manassites.

7 The territory of Manasseh reached from Asher to Michmethath, which is east of Shechem; then the boundary goes along southward to the inhabitants of En-tappuah. 8 The land of Tappuah belonged to Manasseh, but the town of Tappuah on the boundary of Manasseh belonged to the Ephraimites. 9 Then the boundary went down to the Wadi Kanah. The towns here, to the south of the wadi, among the towns of Manasseh, belong to Ephraim. Then the boundary of Manasseh goes along the north side of the wadi and ends at the sea. 10 The land to the south is Ephraim's and that to the north is Manasseh's, with the sea forming its boundary; on the north Asher is reached, and on the east Issachar. 11 Within Issachar and Asher, Manasseh had Beth-shean and its villages, Ibleam and its villages, the inhabitants of Dor and its villages, the inhabitants of En-dor and its villages, the inhabitants of Taanach and its villages, and the inhabitants of Megiddo and its villages (the third is Naphath).[b] 12 Yet the Manassites could not take possession of those towns; but the Canaanites continued to live in that land. 13 But when the Israelites grew strong, they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but did not utterly drive them out.

The Tribe of Joseph Protests

14 The tribe of Joseph spoke to Joshua, saying, "Why have you given me but one lot and one portion as an inheritance, since we are a numerous people, whom all along the LORD has blessed?" 15 And Joshua said to them, "If you are a

b Meaning of Heb uncertain

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tribe of Manasseh were those who had not already settled in Transjordan. *Abiezer* ("Iezer" in Num 26.30), Gideon's hometown (Judg 6.11, 24, 34). *Helek* is the area to the northwest of Shechem. *Asriel* (1 Chr 7.14) is located northwest of Helek. *Shechem* in the perspective of the first edition (Dtr 1; see Introduction) figures merely as one of the clans of Manasseh and is otherwise not mentioned until the end of the era (ch. 24). *Hepher* is the area north of Shechem, but see also "Epher" in 1 Chr 5.24. *Shemida.* Shechem is one of his sons in 1 Chr 7.19. **17.3–6** Special provision for the daughters of Zelophehad in the north balances the special treatment of Caleb in the south (14.6–15; 15.13–14). Both are based on appeal to a prior ruling from Moses. Location of the areas identified by the names *Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah,* and *Milcah* are unknown. *Tirzah* is probably the impressive site of Tell el-Far'ah, north of Shechem. **17.4** *Eleazar* is always mentioned before Joshua when they are found together (14.1; 21.1). *The LORD commanded Moses.* See Num 27.1–11. **17.5** Six clans, one of which is "grandfather" of the five daughters, account for *ten portions* for Manasseh west of the river. **17.7–13** The boundaries of western Manasseh were sketchy and presented questions about the tribal "ownership" of certain towns (v. 9). For the allotments to the northern tribes there was apparently no archival source comparable to that for Judah and Benjamin in the south. **17.11–13** The plain of Esdraelon (or Jezreel), supporting a number of well-fortified city-states, separated Manasseh from the Galilean tribes. With the exception of *Dor* and *En-dor*, the same towns mentioned here are listed as Manasseh's responsibility, unfulfilled, in Judg 1.27. **17.11** *Beth-shean* was a strongly fortified city controlling the southeast corner of Jezreel Valley. *Taanach* and *Megiddo* controlled access from the Plain of Sharon to Jezreel Valley.

17.14–18 These verses show Joshua functioning as "judge," dealing with a petition of *the tribe of Joseph* (lit. "the sons of Joseph," v. 14), presumably as a single constituency. This is another older story inserted here as the last thing to be said about the pre-Shiloh phase of settlement. **17.15** *Perizzites.* See 3.10; 9.1; 11.3; 12.8; 24.11. *Rephaim.* See note on 12.4. *The hill country of*

numerous people, go up to the forest, and clear ground there for yourselves in the land of the Perizzites and the Rephaim, since the hill country of Ephraim is too narrow for you." 16 The tribe of Joseph said, "The hill country is not enough for us; yet all the Canaanites who live in the plain have chariots of iron, both those in Beth-shean and its villages and those in the Valley of Jezreel." 17 Then Joshua said to the house of Joseph, to Ephraim and Manasseh, "You are indeed a numerous people, and have great power; you shall not have one lot only, 18 but the hill country shall be yours, for though it is a forest, you shall clear it and possess it to its farthest borders; for you shall drive out the Canaanites, though they have chariots of iron, and though they are strong."

The Territories of the Remaining Tribes

18 Then the whole congregation of the Israelites assembled at Shiloh, and set up the tent of meeting there. The land lay subdued before them.

2 There remained among the Israelites seven tribes whose inheritance had not yet been apportioned. 3 So Joshua said to the Israelites, "How long will you be slack about going in and taking possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your ancestors, has given you? 4 Provide three men from each tribe, and I will send them out that they may begin to go throughout the land, writing a description of it with a view to their inheritances. Then come back to me. 5 They shall divide it into seven portions, Judah continuing in its territory on the south, and the house of Joseph in their territory on the north. 6 You shall describe the land in seven divisions and bring the description here to me; and I will cast lots for you here before the LORD our God. 7 The Levites have no portion among you, for the priesthood of the LORD is their heritage; and Gad and Reuben and the half-tribe of Manasseh have received their inheritance beyond the Jordan eastward, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave them."

8 So the men started on their way; and Joshua charged those who went to write the description of the land, saying, "Go throughout the land and write a description of it, and come back to me; and I will cast lots for you here before the LORD in Shiloh." 9 So the men went and traversed the land and set down in a book a description of it by towns in seven divisions; then they came back to Joshua in the camp at Shiloh, 10 and Joshua cast lots for them in Shiloh before the LORD; and there Joshua apportioned the land to the Israelites, to each a portion.

The Territory of Benjamin

11 The lot of the tribe of Benjamin according to its families came up, and the territory allotted to it fell between the tribe of Judah and the tribe of Joseph. 12 On the north side their boundary began at the Jordan; then the boundary goes up

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Ephraim is most likely the region immediately surrounding the town (2 Sam 13.23) that gave its name to the tribe. **17.16** *Not enough.* It was not merely the heavily forested condition of the hill country that posed the problem, but its extent, hemmed in by Canaanite chariotry of the plains. **17.18** *You shall clear it.* Originally forests covered much of the watershed ridge and western slopes of the hill country. The clearing of forest land required enormous amounts of cooperative labor.

18.1–10 A regional survey of western Palestine is the basis for the remaining allotments. **18.1** *Congregation.* See 9.15–21. See note on 9.18. *Shiloh,* twenty miles north of Jerusalem, has succeeded Gilgal and Shechem as a major sanctuary site and rallying point for the tribes of Israel. It may have been the destruction of Shechem by Abimelech (Judg 9) that brought Shiloh to the fore as the place of tribal assembly. The *tent of meeting* was the portable sanctuary of the wilderness period (Ex 33.7; Num 11.16; 12.4; Deut 31.14). **18.6** *I will cast lots.* Readers are totally unprepared to find Joshua (and not Eleazar; Num 27.21) doing this. **18.7** *Levites.* See 13.14, 33; note on 13.14. *Gad and Reuben and the half-tribe of Manasseh.* See 13.8–32.

18.11–28 Benjamin, immediately to the north of Judah, is the first of seven tribes whose land apportionment is determined at Shiloh. This section returns to the pattern displayed in describing Judah (15.1–63): borders (18.11–20) followed by town list (18.21–28). It may be derived from the same source document. The towns are numerous and close together, concentrated in the area that was the center of action in the warfare recounted in chs. 2–9. The towns are listed in two groups, one crowded onto the watershed ridge north and west of Jerusalem (vv. 25–28), the other on the less desirable eastern ridge and falling away to Jericho and the Jordan.

to the slope of Jericho on the north, then
up through the hill country westward;
and it ends at the wilderness of Beth-
aven. 13 From there the boundary passes
along southward in the direction of Luz,
to the slope of Luz (that is, Bethel), then
the boundary goes down to Ataroth-
addar, on the mountain that lies south of
Lower Beth-horon. 14 Then the boundary
goes in another direction, turning on the
western side southward from the moun-
tain that lies to the south, opposite Beth-
horon, and it ends at Kiriath-baal (that is,
Kiriath-jearim), a town belonging to the
tribe of Judah. This forms the western
side. 15 The southern side begins at the
outskirts of Kiriath-jearim; and the boun-
dary goes from there to Ephron,[c] to
the spring of the Waters of Nephtoah;
16 then the boundary goes down to the
border of the mountain that overlooks the
valley of the son of Hinnom, which is at
the north end of the valley of Rephaim;
and it then goes down the valley of Hin-
nom, south of the slope of the Jebusites,
and downward to En-rogel; 17 then it
bends in a northerly direction going on to
En-shemesh, and from there goes to Geli-
loth, which is opposite the ascent of
Adummim; then it goes down to the
Stone of Bohan, Reuben's son; 18 and
passing on to the north of the slope of
Beth-arabah[d] it goes down to the Ara-
bah; 19 then the boundary passes on to the
north of the slope of Beth-hoglah; and
the boundary ends at the northern bay of
the Dead Sea,[e] at the south end of the
Jordan: this is the southern border.
20 The Jordan forms its boundary on the
eastern side. This is the inheritance of the
tribe of Benjamin, according to its fami-
lies, boundary by boundary all around.

21 Now the towns of the tribe of
Benjamin according to their families
were Jericho, Beth-hoglah, Emek-keziz,
22 Beth-arabah, Zemaraim, Bethel, 23 Av-
vim, Parah, Ophrah, 24 Chephar-ammoni,
Ophni, and Geba — twelve towns with their
villages: 25 Gibeon, Ramah, Beeroth,
26 Mizpeh, Chephirah, Mozah, 27 Rekem,
Irpeel, Taralah, 28 Zela, Haeleph, Jebus[f]
(that is, Jerusalem), Gibeah[g] and Kiriath-
jearim[h] — fourteen towns with their vil-
lages. This is the inheritance of the tribe
of Benjamin according to its families.

The Territory of Simeon

19 The second lot came out for Sim-
eon, for the tribe of Simeon, ac-
cording to its families; its inheritance lay
within the inheritance of the tribe of Ju-
dah. 2 It had for its inheritance Beer-
sheba, Sheba, Moladah, 3 Hazar-shual,
Balah, Ezem, 4 Eltolad, Bethul, Hormah,
5 Ziklag, Beth-marcaboth, Hazar-susah,
6 Beth-lebaoth, and Sharuhen — thirteen
towns with their villages; 7 Ain, Rimmon,
Ether, and Ashan — four towns with their
villages; 8 together with all the villages all
around these towns as far as Baalath-beer,
Ramah of the Negeb. This was the inheri-
tance of the tribe of Simeon according to
its families. 9 The inheritance of the tribe
of Simeon formed part of the territory of
Judah; because the portion of the tribe of
Judah was too large for them, the tribe
of Simeon obtained an inheritance within
their inheritance.

The Territory of Zebulun

10 The third lot came up for the tribe
of Zebulun, according to its families. The

c Cn See 15.9. Heb *westward slope over against the Arabah*
d Gk: Heb *to the*
e Heb *Salt Sea*
f Gk Syr Vg: Heb *the Jebusite*
g Heb *Gibeath*
h Gk: Heb *Kiriath*

19.1–9 In the case of Simeon, situated at the brink of the Negeb desert and entirely surrounded by Judah, there is no trace of boundary descriptions, only a list of towns. The situation is explained in terms of Judah's magnanimity for a near destitute brother (v. 9). Simeon had once ranged much farther north (Gen 34; 49.5–6).
19.2–8a This list of towns is very closely related to the second part of Judah's first district, the northern Negeb around Beer-sheba (15.26–32), and even more closely related to the Simeonite towns in 1 Chr 4.28–32. Differences between Simeon's area here and Judah's first district reflect political and demographic changes that came with consolidation of the large tribe of Judah, as implicitly acknowledged in v. 9. Rapid, if short-lived, development of the region — a pattern of permanent unwalled villages all across the northern Negeb at the beginning of the Iron Age — provides archaeological illustration. The rapid demise of the villages (early tenth century B.C.E.) is readily attributed to Philistine and Amalekite pressures.
19.10–16 Zebulun's territory was the poorer southern flank of the Galilean mountains together with a contiguous wedge out of the Jezreel

boundary of its inheritance reached as far
as Sarid; 11 then its boundary goes up
westward, and on to Maralah, and touches
Dabbesheth, then the wadi that is east of
Jokneam; 12 from Sarid it goes in the
other direction eastward toward the sun-
rise to the boundary of Chisloth-tabor;
from there it goes to Daberath, then up to
Japhia; 13 from there it passes along on
the east toward the sunrise to Gath-
hepher, to Eth-kazin, and going on to
Rimmon it bends toward Neah; 14 then
on the north the boundary makes a turn
to Hannathon, and it ends at the valley
of Iphtah-el; 15 and Kattath, Nahalal,
Shimron, Idalah, and Bethlehem—twelve
towns with their villages. 16 This is the in-
heritance of the tribe of Zebulun, accord-
ing to its families—these towns with their
villages.

The Territory of Issachar

17 The fourth lot came out for Issa-
char, for the tribe of Issachar, according
to its families. 18 Its territory included Jez-
reel, Chesulloth, Shunem, 19 Hapharaim,
Shion, Anaharath, 20 Rabbith, Kishion,
Ebez, 21 Remeth, En-gannim, En-haddah,
Beth-pazzez; 22 the boundary also touches
Tabor, Shahazumah, and Beth-shemesh,
and its boundary ends at the Jordan—
sixteen towns with their villages. 23 This is
the inheritance of the tribe of Issachar,
according to its families—the towns with
their villages.

The Territory of Asher

24 The fifth lot came out for the tribe
of Asher according to its families. 25 Its
boundary included Helkath, Hali, Beten,
Achshaph, 26 Allammelech, Amad, and
Mishal; on the west it touches Carmel and
Shihor-libnath, 27 then it turns eastward,
goes to Beth-dagon, and touches Zebulun
and the valley of Iphtah-el northward to
Beth-emek and Neiel; then it continues in
the north to Cabul, 28 Ebron, Rehob,
Hammon, Kanah, as far as Great Sidon;
29 then the boundary turns to Ramah,
reaching to the fortified city of Tyre; then
the boundary turns to Hosah, and it ends
at the sea; Mahalab,[i] Achzib, 30 Ummah,
Aphek, and Rehob—twenty-two towns
with their villages. 31 This is the inheri-
tance of the tribe of Asher according to its
families—these towns with their villages.

The Territory of Naphtali

32 The sixth lot came out for the tribe
of Naphtali, for the tribe of Naphtali, ac-
cording to its families. 33 And its bound-
ary ran from Heleph, from the oak in
Zaanannim, and Adami-nekeb, and Jab-
neel, as far as Lakkum; and it ended at
the Jordan; 34 then the boundary turns
westward to Aznoth-tabor, and goes from
there to Hukkok, touching Zebulun at the
south, and Asher on the west, and Judah

i Cn Compare Gk: Heb *Mehebel*

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plain. The boundary descriptions in this chapter look like fragments that vary greatly in their state of preservation.

19.17–23 Issachar's territory was the center of a continuing struggle to control the fertile fields and strategic crossroads of the Jezreel Valley. Here there is no effort to describe a border. Instead, three fixed reference points (Jezreel, Tabor, and the Jordan) are given with two segments of a town list intervening. **19.17** *Issachar*, lit. "hired man," which may refer to forced labor at one time supplied by this tribe in the fields and caravans of Jezreel. **19.18** *Jezreel.* The village (modern Zer'in), at the foot of Mount Gilboa, looks out upon the entire fertile plain of Jezreel. **19.22** The isolated round dome of Mount *Tabor*, at the southern limit of the Galilean mountains and five miles east of Nazareth, is the most conspicuous landmark in the entire region.

19.24–31 The tribe of Asher claimed one of the most prosperous areas, the lush plain of Acco and its narrowing northern extension as far as Rosh ha-Niqra (the ancient Ladder of Tyre). It is not clear that Sidon (v. 28) and Tyre (v. 29) were counted as part of Israelite territory. **19.25** The king of *Achshaph* was in league with Jabin of Hazor (11.1) and was removed by Israel (12.20). The Mount *Carmel* spur juts to the coast just south of Haifa Bay, presenting steep and precipitous slopes, a decisive natural boundary. **19.27** *Cabul* lies about fourteen kilometers east-southeast of Acco, the center of a district of twenty towns that Solomon traded to Hiram of Tyre in exchange for building supplies (1 Kings 9.13).

19.32–39 The territory described for Naphtali is the heartland of Galilee. Major trade routes connecting the port of Acco and the coastal plains with all points north and northeast passed through this corridor. **19.33** For the *boundary* this verse projects a line running for the most part along the eastern crests of Galilee (but including the little plain of Chinnereth). The *oak in Zaanan-*

on the east at the Jordan. 35 The fortified towns are Ziddim, Zer, Hammath,
Rakkath, Chinnereth, 36 Adamah, Ramah, Hazor, 37 Kedesh, Edrei, En-hazor,
38 Iron, Migdal-el, Horem, Beth-anath,
and Beth-shemesh—nineteen towns with
their villages. 39 This is the inheritance of
the tribe of Naphtali according to its
families—the towns with their villages.

The Territory of Dan

40 The seventh lot came out for the
tribe of Dan, according to its families.
41 The territory of its inheritance included
Zorah, Eshtaol, Ir-shemesh, 42 Shaalabbin,
Aijalon, Ithlah, 43 Elon, Timnah, Ekron,
44 Eltekeh, Gibbethon, Baalath, 45 Jehud,
Bene-berak, Gath-rimmon, 46 Me-jarkon,
and Rakkon at the border opposite Joppa.
47 When the territory of the Danites was
lost to them, the Danites went up and
fought against Leshem, and after capturing it and putting it to the sword, they
took possession of it and settled in it, calling Leshem, Dan, after their ancestor
Dan. 48 This is the inheritance of the tribe
of Dan, according to their families—these
towns with their villages.

Joshua's Inheritance

49 When they had finished distributing the several territories of the land as
inheritances, the Israelites gave an inheritance among them to Joshua son of Nun.
50 By command of the LORD they gave
him the town that he asked for, Timnath-
serah in the hill country of Ephraim; he
rebuilt the town, and settled in it.
51 These are the inheritances that the
priest Eleazar and Joshua son of Nun and
the heads of the families of the tribes of
the Israelites distributed by lot at Shiloh
before the LORD, at the entrance of the
tent of meeting. So they finished dividing
the land.

The Cities of Refuge

20 Then the LORD spoke to Joshua,
saying, 2 "Say to the Israelites,
'Appoint the cities of refuge, of which I
spoke to you through Moses, 3 so that anyone who kills a person without intent or
by mistake may flee there; they shall be
for you a refuge from the avenger of
blood. 4 The slayer shall flee to one of
these cities and shall stand at the entrance

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nim figures in the story of Deborah (Judg 4.11). **19.35** *Fortified towns.* Naphtali was remembered as especially formidable. **19.37** *Kedesh.* Tell Qades, in the hills approximately eleven kilometers northwest of Hazor, is perhaps the most impressive archaeological site in the entire land. There was also a Kedesh in Issachar (1 Chr 6.72) and another one in southern Naphtali (Khirbet Kedesh near the southwestern tip of the Sea of Galilee). Despite the presence of walled towns controlling the valleys, the highlands of Galilee in the twelfth century B.C.E. saw a rapid multiplication of unwalled villages whose inhabitants practiced a satisfactory subsistence farming, thanks to the construction of agricultural terraces. These villages can be plausibly recognized as part of a withdrawal from Canaanite society and expansion of the Israelite movement.

19.40–48 While the tradition located Dan originally in the south, as described here, it also remembered Dan's relocation in the far north. **19.40–46** These verses resemble the form that has been used throughout, a combination of border elements and lists. Dan's territory is a wedge of coastal region bordering Judah on the south, Ephraim on the north, and Benjamin to the east. **19.47–48** See Judg 18 for the story of Dan's migration. *Leshem* is "Laish" in Judg 18.27.

19.49–51 Conclusion to the redistribution of the land. Joshua receives a personal inheritance. **19.50** *Timnath-serah in the hill country of Ephraim,* Khirbet Tibnah, some twenty-four kilometers southwest of Shechem. **19.51** This verse and 14.1, especially in the mention of leaders Eleazar and Joshua, form a strong inclusion. At the same time, this verse echoes 18.1 at the beginning of the Shiloh phase. From this point on, *Eleazar* will be mentioned with surprising frequency (21.1; 22.13, 31, 32; 24.33). Mention of *the heads of the families* turns back on 14.1. They will appear again in 21.1.

20.1–9 Introduction of the first of two institutions with high symbolic value in the final edition (Dtr 2; see Introduction), *cities of refuge* (v. 2). Six towns were so designated as a means of curbing the blood feud. They provided right of asylum for one accused of murder until the case was properly tried. **20.2** This setting up of the cities of refuge completed what God had commanded *Moses* (Num 35.9–34), who so designated three towns in Transjordan (Deut 4.41–43) and commanded Joshua to do the same west of the river (Deut 19.1–13). **20.3** The *avenger* (Hebrew, "redeemer") *of blood* was the nearest relative of the deceased. **20.4** The *gate of the city* was an elaborate structure, often two stories high with guardrooms and bench-lined courts and towers, where *the elders* met to hear cases and to conduct other

of the gate of the city, and explain the case to the elders of that city; then the fugitive shall be taken into the city, and given a place, and shall remain with them. 5And if the avenger of blood is in pursuit, they shall not give up the slayer, because the neighbor was killed by mistake, there having been no enmity between them before. 6The slayer shall remain in that city until there is a trial before the congregation, until the death of the one who is high priest at the time: then the slayer may return home, to the town in which the deed was done.' "

7 So they set apart Kedesh in Galilee in the hill country of Naphtali, and Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the hill country of Judah. 8And beyond the Jordan east of Jericho, they appointed Bezer in the wilderness on the tableland, from the tribe of Reuben, and Ramoth in Gilead, from the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan, from the tribe of Manasseh. 9These were the cities designated for all the Israelites, and for the aliens residing among them, that anyone who killed a person without intent could flee there, so as not to die by the hand of the avenger of blood, until there was a trial before the congregation.

Cities Allotted to the Levites

21 Then the heads of the families of the Levites came to the priest Eleazar and to Joshua son of Nun and to the heads of the families of the tribes of the Israelites; 2they said to them at Shiloh in the land of Canaan, "The LORD commanded through Moses that we be given towns to live in, along with their pasture lands for our livestock." 3So by command of the LORD the Israelites gave to the Levites the following towns and pasture lands out of their inheritance.

4 The lot came out for the families of the Kohathites. So those Levites who were descendants of Aaron the priest received by lot thirteen towns from the tribes of Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin.

5 The rest of the Kohathites received by lot ten towns from the families of the tribe of Ephraim, from the tribe of Dan, and the half-tribe of Manasseh.

6 The Gershonites received by lot thirteen towns from the families of the tribe of Issachar, from the tribe of Asher, from the tribe of Naphtali, and from the half-tribe of Manasseh in Bashan.

7 The Merarites according to their families received twelve towns from the tribe of Reuben, the tribe of Gad, and the tribe of Zebulun.

8 These towns and their pasture lands the Israelites gave by lot to the Levites, as the LORD had commanded through Moses.

9 Out of the tribe of Judah and the tribe of Simeon they gave the following towns mentioned by name, 10which went to the descendants of Aaron, one of the families of the Kohathites who belonged to the Levites, since the lot fell to them first. 11They gave them Kiriath-arba

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public business. The elders, infrequently mentioned in the body of the book (7.6; 8.10, 33; 9.11), are especially important in these concluding chapters (23.2; 24.1, 31). **20.6** The *death of the . . . high priest* was apparently occasion for a general amnesty (Num 35.25, 28). **20.7** The three towns designated by Joshua were *Kedesh* (probably the great mound of Tell Qades in upper Galilee), *Shechem,* in the north central hill country, and *Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron),* in the south. **20.8** The three in Transjordan were *Bezer,* on the southern plateau opposite Hebron, *Ramoth in Gilead,* opposite Shechem, and *Golan in Bashan,* opposite Kedesh. Each of these is also included in the list of Levitical cities (ch. 21). **20.9** There is no trace of the cities of refuge system functioning during the monarchical period, when it was probably displaced by a more elaborate system of law courts. It was revived by the later redactor (Dtr 2; see Introduction) because of its symbolic value in relation to responsibilities of the *congregation* (cf. 9.15, 18, 19, 21, 27), which survived in the Babylonian exile.

21.1–42 In Num 35.1–8, Moses is commanded to establish a system of Levitical cities, so designated to provide residential and grazing rights for families of this tribe which had no territorial inheritance. The Levites were dispersed throughout Israel as bearers and teachers of the covenant tradition. The roster of towns (mostly paralleled in 1 Chr 6.54–81) must have fluctuated over time. The earliest period in which all of the towns on the list were occupied, judging from the evidence of archaeology, was the eighth century B.C.E. **21.1** *Heads of families, Eleazar, Joshua.* See 14.1; 17.4; 19.51. **21.2** That *Shiloh* is *in the land of Canaan* (see also 22.9; Judg 21.12) provides

(Arba being the father of Anak), that is
Hebron, in the hill country of Judah,
along with the pasture lands around it.
12 But the fields of the town and its vil-
lages had been given to Caleb son of Je-
phunneh as his holding.

13 To the descendants of Aaron the
priest they gave Hebron, the city of ref-
uge for the slayer, with its pasture lands,
Libnah with its pasture lands, 14 Jattir with
its pasture lands, Eshtemoa with its pas-
ture lands, 15 Holon with its pasture lands,
Debir with its pasture lands, 16 Ain with its
pasture lands, Juttah with its pasture
lands, and Beth-shemesh with its pasture
lands—nine towns out of these two tribes.
17 Out of the tribe of Benjamin: Gibeon
with its pasture lands, Geba with its pas-
ture lands, 18 Anathoth with its pasture
lands, and Almon with its pasture lands—
four towns. 19 The towns of the de-
scendants of Aaron—the priests—
were thirteen in all, with their pasture
lands.

20 As to the rest of the Kohathites be-
longing to the Kohathite families of the
Levites, the towns allotted to them were
out of the tribe of Ephraim. 21 To them
were given Shechem, the city of refuge
for the slayer, with its pasture lands in the
hill country of Ephraim, Gezer with its
pasture lands, 22 Kibzaim with its pasture
lands, and Beth-horon with its pasture
lands—four towns. 23 Out of the tribe of
Dan: Elteke with its pasture lands, Gibbe-
thon with its pasture lands, 24 Aijalon with
its pasture lands, Gath-rimmon with its
pasture lands—four towns. 25 Out of the
half-tribe of Manasseh: Taanach with its
pasture lands, and Gath-rimmon with its
pasture lands—two towns. 26 The towns
of the families of the rest of the Kohath-
ites were ten in all, with their pasture
lands.

27 To the Gershonites, one of the
families of the Levites, were given out of
the half-tribe of Manasseh, Golan in Ba-
shan with its pasture lands, the city of ref-
uge for the slayer, and Beeshterah with its
pasture lands—two towns. 28 Out of the
tribe of Issachar: Kishion with its pasture
lands, Daberath with its pasture lands,
29 Jarmuth with its pasture lands, En-
gannim with its pasture lands—four
towns. 30 Out of the tribe of Asher: Mishal
with its pasture lands, Abdon with its pas-
ture lands, 31 Helkath with its pasture
lands, and Rehob with its pasture lands—
four towns. 32 Out of the tribe of Naph-
tali: Kedesh in Galilee with its pasture
lands, the city of refuge for the slayer,
Hammoth-dor with its pasture lands, and
Kartan with its pasture lands—three
towns. 33 The towns of the several families
of the Gershonites were in all thirteen,
with their pasture lands.

34 To the rest of the Levites—the Me-
rarite families—were given out of the
tribe of Zebulun: Jokneam with its pas-
ture lands, Kartah with its pasture lands,
35 Dimnah with its pasture lands, Nahalal
with its pasture lands—four towns. 36 Out
of the tribe of Reuben: Bezer with its pas-
ture lands, Jahzah with its pasture lands,
37 Kedemoth with its pasture lands, and
Mephaath with its pasture lands—four
towns. 38 Out of the tribe of Gad: Ramoth
in Gilead with its pasture lands, the city of
refuge for the slayer, Mahanaim with its
pasture lands, 39 Heshbon with its pasture
lands, Jazer with its pasture lands—four
towns in all. 40 As for the towns of the sev-
eral Merarite families, that is, the remain-
der of the families of the Levites, those
allotted to them were twelve in all.

41 The towns of the Levites within the
holdings of the Israelites were in all forty-
eight towns with their pasture lands.
42 Each of these towns had its pasture
lands around it; so it was with all these
towns.

43 Thus the LORD gave to Israel all
the land that he swore to their ancestors
that he would give them; and having
taken possession of it, they settled there.
44 And the LORD gave them rest on every
side just as he had sworn to their ances-
tors; not one of all their enemies had
withstood them, for the LORD had given
all their enemies into their hands. 45 Not
one of all the good promises that the
LORD had made to the house of Israel had
failed; all came to pass.

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a touch of irony in the final edition (Dtr 2; see Introduction), where Israel in the next chapter narrowly averts intertribal war. **21.43–45** This summary makes no reference, direct or indirect, to the cities of refuge and Levitical cities, but follows coherently the end of ch. 19. The rhetoric is thoroughly Deuteronomic. This emphasis on the faithfulness of Yahweh casts in comic relief the squabbling over an altar that follows.

The Eastern Tribes Return to Their Territory

22 Then Joshua summoned the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, 2 and said to them, "You have observed all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, and have obeyed me in all that I have commanded you; 3 you have not forsaken your kindred these many days, down to this day, but have been careful to keep the charge of the LORD your God. 4 And now the LORD your God has given rest to your kindred, as he promised them; therefore turn and go to your tents in the land where your possession lies, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you on the other side of the Jordan. 5 Take good care to observe the commandment and instruction that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to keep his commandments, and to hold fast to him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul." 6 So Joshua blessed them and sent them away, and they went to their tents.

7 Now to the one half of the tribe of Manasseh Moses had given a possession in Bashan; but to the other half Joshua had given a possession beside their fellow Israelites in the land west of the Jordan. And when Joshua sent them away to their tents and blessed them, 8 he said to them, "Go back to your tents with much wealth, and with very much livestock, with silver, gold, bronze, and iron, and with a great quantity of clothing; divide the spoil of your enemies with your kindred." 9 So the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh returned home, parting from the Israelites at Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan, to go to the land of Gilead, their own land of which they had taken possession by command of the LORD through Moses.

10 When they came to the region[j] near the Jordan that lies in the land of Canaan, the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh built there an altar by the Jordan, an altar of great size. 11 The Israelites heard that the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh had built an altar at the frontier of the land of Canaan, in the region[k] near the Jordan, on the side that belongs to the Israelites. 12 And when the people of Israel heard of it, the whole assembly of the Israelites gathered at Shiloh, to make war against them.

13 Then the Israelites sent the priest Phinehas son of Eleazar to the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh, in the land of Gilead, 14 and with him ten chiefs, one from each of the tribal families of Israel, every one of them the head of a family among the clans of Israel. 15 They came to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, in the land of Gilead, and they said to them, 16 "Thus says the whole congregation of the LORD, 'What is this treachery that you have committed against the God of Israel in turning away today from following the LORD, by building yourselves an altar today in rebellion against the LORD? 17 Have we not had enough of the sin at Peor from which even yet we have

j Or *to Geliloth* *k* Or *at Geliloth*

22.1–34 This chapter has three parts. Vv. 1–5 are Joshua's farewell exhortation to the Transjordanian militiamen, structurally balancing the introduction to these tribes in 1.12–18. Vv. 6–8 are a redactional transition to the older story about the altar near the Jordan (vv. 9–34). **22.2** *Moses the servant of the LORD*, an inclusion with 1.1 (cf. 1.2, 7). **22.5** The *commandment and instruction*. The singular form can stand for the entire covenant relationship in Dtn/Dtr (see Introduction). To *love the LORD* (again in address to all the tribes, 23.11) evokes the prime covenant stipulation (Deut 6.5 and repeatedly). **22.6–8** This transition indicates that the warriors, richly laden with booty, might look forward to a splendid homecoming.

22.9–34 The story caricatures some major "priestly" preoccupations. Cf. the story of events at Gilgal (circumcision and Passover) early in the era (ch. 5), which is the introductory counterpart to this altar story. The unilateral action by the Transjordanian tribes of building a Jordan Valley altar poses a problem of "all-Israel" proportions. **22.10** The referent of *the region near the Jordan* is unclear (intentionally so?). **22.11** *On the side that belongs to the Israelites*. Which side was that? **22.12** *The whole assembly . . . gathered* is wording almost identical to 18.1 (peaceful partitioning of the land), but the situation is inverted (as in the story of full-blown civil war that unfolds in Judg 20). **22.13** *Phinehas son of Eleazar*, probably a predecessor of the ranking priest at Bethel whom the Israelites will tardily consult in warfare against Benjamin (Judg 20.27–29). **22.17** *The sin at*

not cleansed ourselves, and for which a
plague came upon the congregation of
the LORD, 18 that you must turn away to-
day from following the LORD! If you rebel
against the LORD today, he will be angry
with the whole congregation of Israel to-
morrow. 19 But now, if your land is un-
clean, cross over into the LORD's land
where the LORD's tabernacle now stands,
and take for yourselves a possession
among us; only do not rebel against the
LORD, or rebel against us[l] by building
yourselves an altar other than the altar of
the LORD our God. 20 Did not Achan son
of Zerah break faith in the matter of the
devoted things, and wrath fell upon all
the congregation of Israel? And he did
not perish alone for his iniquity!' "

21 Then the Reubenites, the Gadites,
and the half-tribe of Manasseh said in an-
swer to the heads of the families of Israel,
22 "The LORD, God of gods! The LORD,
God of gods! He knows; and let Israel it-
self know! If it was in rebellion or in
breach of faith toward the LORD, do not
spare us today 23 for building an altar to
turn away from following the LORD; or if
we did so to offer burnt offerings or grain
offerings or offerings of well-being on it,
may the LORD himself take vengeance.
24 No! We did it from fear that in time to
come your children might say to our chil-
dren, 'What have you to do with the
LORD, the God of Israel? 25 For the LORD
has made the Jordan a boundary between
us and you, you Reubenites and Gadites;
you have no portion in the LORD.' So your
children might make our children cease to
worship the LORD. 26 Therefore we said,
'Let us now build an altar, not for burnt
offering, nor for sacrifice, 27 but to be a
witness between us and you, and between
the generations after us, that we do per-
form the service of the LORD in his pres-
ence with our burnt offerings and
sacrifices and offerings of well-being; so
that your children may never say to our
children in time to come, "You have no
portion in the LORD." ' 28 And we thought,
If this should be said to us or to our de-
scendants in time to come, we could say,
'Look at this copy of the altar of the LORD,
which our ancestors made, not for burnt
offerings, nor for sacrifice, but to be a wit-
ness between us and you.' 29 Far be it from
us that we should rebel against the LORD,
and turn away this day from following the
LORD by building an altar for burnt offer-
ing, grain offering, or sacrifice, other
than the altar of the LORD our God that
stands before his tabernacle!"

30 When the priest Phinehas and the
chiefs of the congregation, the heads of
the families of Israel who were with him,
heard the words that the Reubenites and
the Gadites and the Manassites spoke,
they were satisfied. 31 The priest Phinehas
son of Eleazar said to the Reubenites and
the Gadites and the Manassites, "Today
we know that the LORD is among us, be-
cause you have not committed this treach-
ery against the LORD; now you have saved
the Israelites from the hand of the LORD."

32 Then the priest Phinehas son of El-
eazar and the chiefs returned from the
Reubenites and the Gadites in the land of
Gilead to the land of Canaan, to the Isra-
elites, and brought back word to them.
33 The report pleased the Israelites; and
the Israelites blessed God and spoke no
more of making war against them, to de-
stroy the land where the Reubenites and
the Gadites were settled. 34 The Reuben-
ites and the Gadites called the altar Wit-
ness;[m] "For," said they, "it is a witness
between us that the LORD is God."

Joshua's Farewell Address

23 A long time afterward, when the
LORD had given rest to Israel
from all their enemies all around, and
Joshua was old and well advanced in

l Or *make rebels of us* *m* Cn Compare Syr: Heb lacks *Witness*

Peor. See Num 25. **22.20** *Achan* is mentioned only here and in 1 Chr 2.7 outside the story in ch. 7. **22.27** That the altar will *be a witness* anticipates 24.27. The crowning irony is that the location of the one near the Jordan given such expansive legitimation remained entirely unspecified. **22.34** *Witness*. Cf. the struggle and truce between Jacob and Laban, also marked by a stone "Witness" (Gen 31.43–54). The tribes all agree, at last, that *the LORD is God*.

23.1–16 Joshua's farewell address is another of the edifying discourses made by great leaders that give structure to the historical work Deuteronomy–2 Kings. See speeches by Moses (Deut 29–31), Samuel (1 Sam 12), and David (1 Kings 2.1–9). Here Joshua uses the same Deuteronomic rhetoric as at the outset in ch. 1. **23.1** *A long time afterward* introduces a period, however brief,

years, 2 Joshua summoned all Israel, their
elders and heads, their judges and offi-
cers, and said to them, "I am now old and
well advanced in years; 3 and you have
seen all that the LORD your God has done
to all these nations for your sake, for it is
the LORD your God who has fought for
you. 4 I have allotted to you as an inheri-
tance for your tribes those nations that re-
main, along with all the nations that I
have already cut off, from the Jordan to
the Great Sea in the west. 5 The LORD
your God will push them back before you,
and drive them out of your sight; and you
shall possess their land, as the LORD your
God promised you. 6 Therefore be very
steadfast to observe and do all that is writ-
ten in the book of the law of Moses, turn-
ing aside from it neither to the right nor
to the left, 7 so that you may not be mixed
with these nations left here among you, or
make mention of the names of their gods,
or swear by them, or serve them, or bow
yourselves down to them, 8 but hold fast
to the LORD your God, as you have done
to this day. 9 For the LORD has driven out
before you great and strong nations; and
as for you, no one has been able to with-
stand you to this day. 10 One of you puts
to flight a thousand, since it is the LORD
your God who fights for you, as he prom-
ised you. 11 Be very careful, therefore, to
love the LORD your God. 12 For if you turn
back, and join the survivors of these na-
tions left here among you, and intermarry
with them, so that you marry their women
and they yours, 13 know assuredly that the
LORD your God will not continue to drive
out these nations before you; but they
shall be a snare and a trap for you, a
scourge on your sides, and thorns in your
eyes, until you perish from this good land
that the LORD your God has given you.
14 "And now I am about to go the way
of all the earth, and you know in your
hearts and souls, all of you, that not one
thing has failed of all the good things that
the LORD your God promised concerning
you; all have come to pass for you, not
one of them has failed. 15 But just as all
the good things that the LORD your God
promised concerning you have been ful-
filled for you, so the LORD will bring upon
you all the bad things, until he has de-
stroyed you from this good land that the
LORD your God has given you. 16 If you
transgress the covenant of the LORD your
God, which he enjoined on you, and go
and serve other gods and bow down to
them, then the anger of the LORD will be
kindled against you, and you shall perish
quickly from the good land that he has
given to you."

The Covenant at Shechem

24 Then Joshua gathered all the
tribes of Israel to Shechem, and
summoned the elders, the heads, the
judges, and the officers of Israel; and
they presented themselves before God.

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when Israelite control of the land is far from complete, but hostilities have pretty much ceased, and Joshua has grown old. *The LORD had given rest,* fifth and final occurrence of this idiom in Joshua (1.13, 15; 21.44; 22.4), all of which are recognized on other grounds as belonging to the later edition (Dtr 2; see Introduction). *Joshua . . . advanced in years,* exactly as in 13.1, the introduction to the Transjordanian allotments and the unconquered land. **23.2a** *Joshua summoned.* The location is unclear; presumably the tent-sanctuary, still at Shiloh, is intended. *All Israel,* the larger definition of Israel in former days, tribes on both sides of the river interacting and interdependent, is a special concern of the final redactor. **23.2b–16** Joshua's speech is in two parts (vv. 2b–10, 11–16), each displaying a form of envelope construction. **23.3–10** The first part of the speech is framed by a description of the Divine Warrior (vv. 3, 9–10) focusing on the recent past and emphasizing that Yahweh has indeed kept his promises (vv. 4–5). **23.5** *The LORD your God* will complete the "conquest," unassisted. With the death of Joshua, Israel's expansionist warfare is all in the past (Judg 2.1–5). **23.6** *Be very steadfast.* The Hebrew echoes the exhortation in 1.6, 9. *The book of the law of Moses.* Cf. 1.7–8. **23.11–16** The second half of the speech turns the envelope inside out, thunderous warnings (vv. 11–13, 15–16) framing a compact echo of the first half (v. 14). **23.16** *You shall perish quickly.* The distinctive concluding emphasis on the threat of national destruction and expulsion from the land as just punishment for failure of covenant suggests a time when the covenantal curses were coming to frightful fulfillment, in the sequel to Josiah's reign.

24.1–28 The major section of ch. 24 describes the Shechem covenant on the basis of an older source document that shows scant signs of editorial revision and that the historian (Dtr 1?; see Introduction) simply placed at the end of the era. It gives a fuller description of events first reported in 8.30–35, which we assigned to the later

2 And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus
says the LORD, the God of Israel: Long
ago your ancestors—Terah and his sons
Abraham and Nahor—lived beyond the
Euphrates and served other gods. 3 Then
I took your father Abraham from beyond
the River and led him through all the land
of Canaan and made his offspring many.
I gave him Isaac; 4 and to Isaac I gave Ja-
cob and Esau. I gave Esau the hill country
of Seir to possess, but Jacob and his chil-
dren went down to Egypt. 5 Then I sent
Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt
with what I did in its midst; and after-
wards I brought you out. 6 When I
brought your ancestors out of Egypt, you
came to the sea; and the Egyptians pur-
sued your ancestors with chariots and
horsemen to the Red Sea.[n] 7 When they
cried out to the LORD, he put darkness
between you and the Egyptians, and made
the sea come upon them and cover them;
and your eyes saw what I did to Egypt.
Afterwards you lived in the wilderness a
long time. 8 Then I brought you to the
land of the Amorites, who lived on the
other side of the Jordan; they fought with
you, and I handed them over to you, and
you took possession of their land, and I
destroyed them before you. 9 Then King
Balak son of Zippor of Moab, set out to
fight against Israel. He sent and invited
Balaam son of Beor to curse you, 10 but I
would not listen to Balaam; therefore he
blessed you; so I rescued you out of his
hand. 11 When you went over the Jordan
and came to Jericho, the citizens of Jeri-
cho fought against you, and also the Amo-
rites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the
Hittites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, and
the Jebusites; and I handed them over to
you. 12 I sent the hornet[o] ahead of you,
which drove out before you the two kings
of the Amorites; it was not by your sword
or by your bow. 13 I gave you a land on
which you had not labored, and towns
that you had not built, and you live in
them; you eat the fruit of vineyards and
oliveyards that you did not plant.

14 "Now therefore revere the LORD,
and serve him in sincerity and in faithful-
ness; put away the gods that your ances-
tors served beyond the River and in
Egypt, and serve the LORD. 15 Now if you
are unwilling to serve the LORD, choose
this day whom you will serve, whether the
gods your ancestors served in the region
beyond the River or the gods of the Amo-
rites in whose land you are living; but as
for me and my household, we will serve
the LORD."

16 Then the people answered, "Far be
it from us that we should forsake the
LORD to serve other gods; 17 for it is the
LORD our God who brought us and our
ancestors up from the land of Egypt, out
of the house of slavery, and who did those
great signs in our sight. He protected us

n Or *Sea of Reeds* *o* Meaning of Heb uncertain

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editor who wanted to make it clear that the Shechem Valley negotiations came early in the era. **24.2–13** A number of parallel recitals of God's acts are also clearly related to covenant ceremonies (Ex 19.3b–6; Deut 6.20–25; 26.5–9). The covenant is grounded in the prior benevolent acts of the divine Lord and thus there is no mention of Sinai in the recital itself. **24.3** The description *through all the land of Canaan* reflects a wide-ranging network of effective control—not the life and seasonal movements of pastoral nomads. *Made his offspring many.* This way of fulfilling promises to the ancestors (Gen 12.1–3; 15.4–5) is not stressed in the book of Joshua. **24.6–7** A compact paraphrase of Ex 14. **24.9** *Balak . . . set out to fight.* See also 13.22. The text here seems to be in sharp contradiction to Judg 11.25. Or does it intend to show Balak's belligerence simply exhausted and frustrated in his employment of a famous diviner? **24.11** The Israelite takeover west of the Jordan is here represented entirely by the capture of *Jericho* (a variant tradition from those in chs. 2, 6?). **24.12** The referent of *the hornet* (see also Deut 7.20) is unclear. *Two kings of the Amorites* refers to Sihon (12.2; 13.10, 27) and Og (12.4; 13.12, 30–31). **24.14** *Now therefore revere.* See also 4.14, 24. There was precedent in ancestral tradition for the renunciation of old *gods* at Shechem (Gen 35.2–4). **24.15** *Choose.* The issue is not monotheism in the abstract but allegiance in concrete particularity. *Living.* The same word can mean "sitting." Many Israelites were in fact squatters in the perspective of the local elites. **24.16–18** The people indicate that they have already made up their minds. **24.16** *Forsake the LORD to serve other gods.* The final redactor would not leave anyone with excuse for saying "I told you so." In the Babylonian exile it was time for a new covenant. **24.17–18** The bulk of the people's response is a polished rhetorical piece, the irreducible minimum of Joshua's recital in vv. 2b–13. **24.17** *The LORD our God.* Cf. 22.34; 23.3, 10. An introductory particle in Hebrew gives exclamatory force to the statement.

along all the way that we went, and among
all the peoples through whom we passed;
18 and the LORD drove out before us all
the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the
land. Therefore we also will serve the
LORD, for he is our God."
19 But Joshua said to the people,
"You cannot serve the LORD, for he is a
holy God. He is a jealous God; he will not
forgive your transgressions or your sins.
20 If you forsake the LORD and serve for-
eign gods, then he will turn and do you
harm, and consume you, after having
done you good." 21 And the people said to
Joshua, "No, we will serve the LORD!"
22 Then Joshua said to the people, "You
are witnesses against yourselves that you
have chosen the LORD, to serve him." And
they said, "We are witnesses." 23 He said,
"Then put away the foreign gods that are
among you, and incline your hearts to the
LORD, the God of Israel." 24 The people
said to Joshua, "The LORD our God we
will serve, and him we will obey." 25 So
Joshua made a covenant with the people
that day, and made statutes and ordi-
nances for them at Shechem. 26 Joshua
wrote these words in the book of the law
of God; and he took a large stone, and set
it up there under the oak in the sanctuary
of the LORD. 27 Joshua said to all the peo-
ple, "See, this stone shall be a witness
against us; for it has heard all the words
of the LORD that he spoke to us; therefore
it shall be a witness against you, if you deal
falsely with your God." 28 So Joshua sent
the people away to their inheritances.

Concluding Notices

29 After these things Joshua son of
Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being
one hundred ten years old. 30 They bur-
ied him in his own inheritance at
Timnath-serah, which is in the hill coun-
try of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash.
31 Israel served the LORD all the days
of Joshua, and all the days of the elders
who outlived Joshua and had known all
the work that the LORD did for Israel.
32 The bones of Joseph, which the Is-
raelites had brought up from Egypt, were
buried at Shechem, in the portion of
ground that Jacob had bought from the

24.19 The word for *jealous* is here better rendered "zealous." The construction may preserve a pre-Yahwist name for God as "El the Zealous," now identified with Yahweh. See "the living God" in 3.10, which may also be rendered as "El the Living One." **24.20, 23** *Foreign gods* seems to assume that the God of Israel has national or tribal identity. The expression continues the caricature of the Yahwist ideal, with which the book now concludes. **24.22** *To serve him.* Joshua rules out any other possible motive for choosing Yahweh. *We are witnesses.* Cf. Ruth 4.9–11. **24.23** *Incline your hearts.* The heart was understood to be the decision-making center, seat of mind and will. **24.25–27** Joshua makes final arrangements for the future of relationships among the people, chief of which is a large stone at Shechem that will betoken the internal surveillance function. The stone in question was perhaps first coated with a plaster into which were carved the covenant stipulations. Excavations at Tell Balata, ancient site of Shechem, have uncovered a cultic tradition of large sacred pillars, in use there for centuries in the pre-Yahwist period. **24.26** The *book of the law of God,* the text of the covenant or digest thereof. Since the Hebrew root of *law* means "to teach," we might better render "text of the covenant-teaching." *The oak in the sanctuary.* Cf. "the oak of the pillar at Shechem" (Judg 9.6). For another sacred tree, cf. "the oak of Moreh" (Gen 12.6). Excavations at Tell Balata have shown that there can scarcely be any location for this other than the temenos (sacred precinct) in front of the old fortress-temple. **24.27** The inscribed stone would be a *witness* to worshipers and pilgrims. **24.28** *Joshua sent the people away.* His work was satisfactorily finished (first edition, Dtr 1) if curiously so (second edition, Dtr 2; see Introduction). In the first edition Joshua provides a model for the two great achievements of King Josiah, military conquest and covenant renewal. In the final edition he offers a perspective indispensable for life in exile.

24.29–33 The book now concludes with a variety of notices. **24.29** Given the frequency of the title *servant of the LORD* in reference to Moses (1.1, 2, 13; 8.31, 33; 11.12, 15; 12.6; 13.8; 14.7; 18.7; 22.2, 4, 5), it is somewhat surprising that it is not applied to Joshua until now. *One hundred ten years* was considered an ideal lifetime. Joseph too lived one hundred and ten years (Gen 50.23). **24.30** *Timnath-serah.* See 19.50. **24.32** Reference to *the bones of Joseph* forms an envelope construction with Gen 50.25, tying the end of the Joshua book to the end of Genesis and showing that the Tetrateuch is presupposed as one long epic preface to the historical work Deuteronomy–2 Kings. *Jacob had bought.* See Gen 33.18–20. *Hamor, the father of Shechem.* See Gen 34, where he is identified as a "Hivite" (Greek OT "Horite"), i.e.,

children of Hamor, the father of Shechem, for one hundred pieces of money;[p] it became an inheritance of the descendants of Joseph.

33 Eleazar son of Aaron died; and they buried him at Gibeah, the town of his son Phinehas, which had been given him in the hill country of Ephraim.

p Heb *one hundred qesitah*

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not from the indigenous population. *One hundred pieces of money.* The value (weight) of the unit is unknown. **24.33** *Eleazar* and his son *Phinehas* are encountered in Joshua only in contexts supplied by Dtr 2 (17.4; 21.1; 22.13, 30–32; cf. Judg 20.28; see Introduction).

JUDGES

Historical Context

THE BOOK OF JUDGES SPANS A CRITICAL PERIOD in Israelite history from the death of Joshua to a tragically costly and unholy civil war (chs. 19–20) in which total liquidation of the tribe of Benjamin is narrowly averted (ch. 21). The period that is the book's background extends from the closing decades of the Late Bronze Age through the Iron I period (ca. 1200–1020 B.C.E.). The 410-year span that results from adding up the periods of oppression, the tenures of the judges, and the periods of "rest" mentioned in the book assumes that the judges governed "all Israel" sequentially. In fact, leadership was more likely local and overlapping.

Despite sweeping claims in the book of Joshua of conquest of all the land, Judges describes continued warfare with Canaanites, plus challenges to Israel's hegemony posed by various tribal groups (Midianites, Amalekites, and other Easterners), by emerging territorial states (Moab and Ammon), and by the arrival of the Philistines on the coast. Equally serious was the threat posed by aspirants to kingship within Israel (e.g., Abimelech, ch. 9). The historical situation described by Judges continues into the narrative of 1 Samuel, named after the prophet who is also remembered as an itinerating "judge" and who legitimated the establishment of the monarchy, anointing first Saul, then David.

Protagonists and Terminology

The book presents twelve leaders: Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah, Gideon, Tola, Jair, Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, and Samson. The English title Judges (Latin *Liber Judicum*, Greek *kritai*) reflects the fact that a majority of the book's protagonists are said to have "judged" (Hebrew *shafat*) Israel. The verb is not limited in suggesting a strictly judicial function, however; it connotes a general exercise of legitimate "rule." Though scholars often describe the judges' leadership sociologically as "charismatic," it is with very mixed results that "the spirit of the LORD" activates the various leaders. Scholars distinguish between "major judges," military chiefs whose exploits are recounted in stories, and "minor

judges," about whom very little is known apart from their being listed in 10.1–5; 12.7–15. There are two exceptions: Jephthah, who is a "major judge" (11.1–12.6) but is also listed in the group of "minor judges" (12.7), and Samson, who belongs in neither category (he was not a military chief).

Apart from the introduction (2.16–19), the noun "judge" (Hebrew *shofēt*) occurs only once in this book, as a title of the Lord (11.27). As universal Judge, the Lord retains a prerogative that had been attributed to various deities in other ancient Near Eastern societies.

As striking as the absence of the noun "judge" from this book is the presence of the noun "deliverer," or "savior" (Hebrew *moshia'*), or its related verb (Hebrew *yasha'*) in reference to four characters (Othniel, Ehud, Tola, and Samson). There are numerous similarities between these judges' stories and the accounts of the birth, enlistment, and diplomatic functioning of Moses in Ex 1–13. Most puzzling, therefore, is the uniform absence of the language of deliverance regarding those leaders about whom popular lore was most prolific (Deborah, Gideon, and Jephthah). In the case of Gideon, neither the "judicial" nor the "deliverance" language is used. What, then, did Gideon do? Perhaps that is precisely the question. The discerning reader will be alert to a sense of irony throughout the depiction of the judges.

Sources and Development

Judges is part of one long historical work extending from Joshua through 2 Kings and prefaced by the farewell addresses of Moses in Deuteronomy, which serve as a theological introduction. It is therefore part of the Deuteronomistic History. (See also the Introduction to Joshua.) Four stages of development may be discerned in the book. First were various stories of local crises and leaders, classic examples of narrative artistry. The stories, rarely involving more than a few tribes, originated in highland villages that comprised immediate and extended families, the so-called fathers' houses and clans. Israel had begun as a lineage system and developed over time to become an agrarian territorial state. An older alignment of tribes worshiping God as "El" ("Israel" is Hebrew for "El governs"), mentioned in the Egyptian pharaoh Merneptah's inscription (ca. 1207 B.C.E.) and probably represented by the tribal roster in Gen 49, had fallen on hard times. But the tribal alignment had then been revived and reformed under the influence of those who brought the Sinai traditions into Canaan. Stories of the judges preserve memories of that tumultuous epoch. Scholars generally think that in the second stage these stories were collected for didactic purposes, perhaps by the mid-eighth century B.C.E., when both Israel and Judah were at a peak of national revival. The stories are arranged so that good examples of leadership (Othniel, Deborah, Jephthah) alternate with not-so-good examples (Ehud, Gideon, Samson), with the whole book centering on Abimelech's abortive reign at Shechem. In the third stage these stories were incorporated into the Deuteronomistic History. The hypothesis of such a history is well establish-

ed. Stemming probably from the reign of the reforming king Josiah (640–609 B.C.E.), the Deuteronomistic History (Dtr 1) was composed to tell the story of life in the land. It comprises the bulk of the OT from Joshua through 2 Kings 23 and originally used an older form of Deuteronomy (Dtn) as a theological preface. In contrast to Joshua, cast as role model for kings, the judges are depicted with rough edges so as to highlight the instability of Israel without a king (see esp. chs. 17–18). Finally, after the short-lived Judahite reform and revival under Josiah and the destruction of the nation, the historical work was updated for life in exile (Dtr 2). The era of the judges was set finally within a grimly tragicomic framework (see esp. 1.1–2.5; chs. 19–21). *Robert G. Boling*

Israel's Failure to Complete the Conquest of Canaan

1 After the death of Joshua, the Israelites inquired of the LORD, "Who shall go up first for us against the Canaanites, to fight against them?" 2 The LORD said, "Judah shall go up. I hereby give the land into his hand." 3 Judah said to his brother Simeon, "Come up with me into the territory allotted to me, that we may fight against the Canaanites; then I too will go with you into the territory allotted to you." So Simeon went with him. 4 Then Judah went up and the LORD gave the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand; and they defeated ten thousand of them at Bezek. 5 They came upon Adonibezek at Bezek, and fought against him, and defeated the Canaanites and the Perizzites. 6 Adoni-bezek fled; but they pursued him, and caught him, and cut off his thumbs and big toes. 7 Adoni-bezek said, "Seventy kings with their thumbs and big toes cut off used to pick up scraps under my table; as I have done, so God has paid me back." They brought him to Jerusalem, and he died there.

8 Then the people of Judah fought against Jerusalem and took it. They put it to the sword and set the city on fire. 9 Afterward the people of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites who lived in the hill country, in the Negeb, and in the lowland. 10 Judah went against the Canaanites who lived in Hebron (the name

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1.1–36 This introduction to the final edition of the Deuteronomistic History (Dtr 2; see Introduction) reviews the performance of the generation that outlived Joshua. It affirms the Lord's preservation of Israel in a tumultuous period. Stories, archival information, and various notices report tribal activities roughly from south to north, beginning with Judah eager for the offensive but ending with Dan at a stalemate and Israel's back against the wall. The chapter complements a telling of the "conquest" in the book of Joshua that gives prominence to northern tribes. Its purpose is to contrast the situation under Joshua's leadership with the subsequent deterioration of tribal and individual achievements. **1.1–2** The context suggests that *inquired* should be read as "had inquired," making 1.1–2.10 a flashback to the generation that outlived Joshua. *Who shall go up first?* That the question and its answer, *Judah*, recur in 20.18 regarding civil warfare suggests editorial irony. **1.3** The tribe of *Simeon* once ranged into the north-central highlands (Gen 34.25, 30–31) but finally settled in the south, entirely surrounded by *Judah*. **1.4** The precise meaning of *Perizzites* is uncertain; it is perhaps related to a word for peasantry. The word for *thousand* may also refer to the clan or village muster unit. The number in each such unit is unspecified here but is said to be five to fourteen men in the "census" lists of Num 1; 26. **1.5** *Adoni-bezek*, or "Lord of Bezek" in Hebrew. *Bezek*, Khirbet Bezka, near Gezer, is on the outskirts of Judah. Another Bezek lies northeast of Shechem (1 Sam 11.8). **1.8** *Jerusalem* came finally under Israelite control in the time of King David (2 Sam 5.6–9). **1.10** *Hebron* lies twenty miles south of Jerusalem. *Kiriath-arba*, Hebrew, "Town of Arba." Arba was the legendary father of Anak, who gave rise to a lineage of giants (Josh 15.13–14). *Sheshai and Ahiman and Talmai*, sons of

of Hebron was formerly Kiriath-arba);
and they defeated Sheshai and Ahiman
and Talmai.
11 From there they went against the
inhabitants of Debir (the name of Debir
was formerly Kiriath-sepher). 12 Then Ca-
leb said, "Whoever attacks Kiriath-sepher
and takes it, I will give him my daughter
Achsah as wife." 13 And Othniel son of
Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, took it;
and he gave him his daughter Achsah as
wife. 14 When she came to him, she urged
him to ask her father for a field. As she
dismounted from her donkey, Caleb said
to her, "What do you wish?" 15 She said to
him, "Give me a present; since you have
set me in the land of the Negeb, give me
also Gulloth-mayim."[a] So Caleb gave her
Upper Gulloth and Lower Gulloth.
16 The descendants of Hobab[b] the
Kenite, Moses' father-in-law, went up with
the people of Judah from the city of
palms into the wilderness of Judah, which
lies in the Negeb near Arad. Then they
went and settled with the Amalekites.[c]
17 Judah went with his brother Simeon,
and they defeated the Canaanites who in-
habited Zephath, and devoted it to de-
struction. So the city was called Hormah.
18 Judah took Gaza with its territory, Ash-
kelon with its territory, and Ekron with its
territory. 19 The LORD was with Judah,
and he took possession of the hill country,
but could not drive out the inhabitants of
the plain, because they had chariots of
iron. 20 Hebron was given to Caleb, as Mo-
ses had said; and he drove out from it the
three sons of Anak. 21 But the Benjamin-
ites did not drive out the Jebusites who
lived in Jerusalem; so the Jebusites have
lived in Jerusalem among the Benjamin-
ites to this day.
22 The house of Joseph also went up
against Bethel; and the LORD was with
them. 23 The house of Joseph sent out
spies to Bethel (the name of the city was
formerly Luz). 24 When the spies saw a
man coming out of the city, they said to
him, "Show us the way into the city, and
we will deal kindly with you." 25 So he
showed them the way into the city; and
they put the city to the sword, but they let
the man and all his family go. 26 So the
man went to the land of the Hittites and
built a city, and named it Luz; that is its
name to this day.
27 Manasseh did not drive out the in-
habitants of Beth-shean and its villages, or
Taanach and its villages, or the inhabi-
tants of Dor and its villages, or the inhabi-
tants of Ibleam and its villages, or the
inhabitants of Megiddo and its villages;
but the Canaanites continued to live in
that land. 28 When Israel grew strong,
they put the Canaanites to forced labor,
but did not in fact drive them out.
29 And Ephraim did not drive out the

a That is *Basins of Water* b Gk: Heb lacks *Hobab*
c See 1 Sam 15.6: Heb *people*

Anak defeated by Caleb, according to v. 20; Josh 15.14. **1.11–15** These verses are nearly identical to Josh 15.13–19. **1.11** *Debir*, long identified with Tell Beit Mirsim, is perhaps better located at Tell Rabud, south of Hebron. *Kiriath-sepher*, Hebrew, "Booktown" or "Town of the Treaty-Stele," suggests a covenanting role for the town comparable to that of Shechem (Josh 24; cf. Josh 8.30–35) in the north. **1.12** *Caleb*, Hebrew, "Dog." **1.13** *Othniel*, first and model "savior-judge" in Dtr 1 (see Introduction; 3.7–11). **1.14** *Urged*, "nagged." **1.15** The referent of *Gulloth*, which may mean "basins," is unclear. **1.16** *Hobab*, probably not *Moses' father-in-law* (Hebrew *chotēn*) but his son-in-law (*chatan*). *Kenite* identifies him as a traveling metalworker. The smiths were probably also Midianites in political affiliation. *City of palms*, probably Jericho. Tell *Arad* was only lightly occupied throughout the second millennium. Late Bronze Age Arad may be at Tell el-Milh, seven miles southwest of Tell Arad. **1.17** *Hormah*, Hebrew, "Bantown" (related to Hebrew *cherem*, the ad hoc decree of total destruction) may be Tell Meshash, four miles west of Tell el-Milh. **1.18–19** These verses, claiming conquest of certain cities but not their surroundings, cannot be harmonized. **1.18** *Gaza . . . Ashkelon . . . and Ekron*, three cities of the Philistine Pentapolis. **1.19** That *the LORD was with Judah* sounds ironic in light of the following disclaimer. *Chariots of iron*. Chariots were made of wood and leather, with iron introduced for assemblage and fittings. **1.22–26** The capture of *Bethel* (Hebrew, "House of God") formerly *Luz* ("Deception") and later a royal sanctuary of the Northern Kingdom, is presented as exemplary of covenant faithfulness and is ironically reminiscent of the story of Rahab at Jericho (Josh 2.1–24; 6.22–25). **1.27–33** The failure of five northern tribes (*Manasseh*, *Ephraim*, *Zebulun*, *Asher*, and *Naphtali*) to drive out the Canaanites results in a complex mix of land tenure and inverted social hierarchy, with Israelites lording it over non-Israelite labor in various neighborhoods.

Canaanites who lived in Gezer; but the
Canaanites lived among them in Gezer.
30 Zebulun did not drive out the in-
habitants of Kitron, or the inhabitants of
Nahalol; but the Canaanites lived among
them, and became subject to forced labor.
31 Asher did not drive out the inhabi-
tants of Acco, or the inhabitants of Sidon,
or of Ahlab, or of Achzib, or of Helbah,
or of Aphik, or of Rehob; 32 but the Ash-
erites lived among the Canaanites, the in-
habitants of the land; for they did not
drive them out.
33 Naphtali did not drive out the in-
habitants of Beth-shemesh, or the inhabi-
tants of Beth-anath, but lived among the
Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land;
nevertheless the inhabitants of Beth-
shemesh and of Beth-anath became sub-
ject to forced labor for them.
34 The Amorites pressed the Danites
back into the hill country; they did not
allow them to come down to the plain.
35 The Amorites continued to live in Har-
heres, in Aijalon, and in Shaalbim, but the
hand of the house of Joseph rested heav-
ily on them, and they became subject to
forced labor. 36 The border of the Amo-
rites ran from the ascent of Akrabbim,
from Sela and upward.

Israel's Disobedience

2 Now the angel of the LORD went up
from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, "I
brought you up from Egypt, and brought
you into the land that I had promised to
your ancestors. I said, 'I will never break
my covenant with you. 2 For your part, do
not make a covenant with the inhabitants
of this land; tear down their altars.' But
you have not obeyed my command. See
what you have done! 3 So now I say, I will
not drive them out before you; but they
shall become adversaries[d] to you, and
their gods shall be a snare to you." 4 When
the angel of the LORD spoke these words
to all the Israelites, the people lifted up
their voices and wept. 5 So they named
that place Bochim,[e] and there they sacri-
ficed to the LORD.

Death of Joshua

6 When Joshua dismissed the people,
the Israelites all went to their own inheri-
tances to take possession of the land.
7 The people worshiped the LORD all the
days of Joshua, and all the days of the el-
ders who outlived Joshua, who had seen
all the great work that the LORD had done
for Israel. 8 Joshua son of Nun, the ser-
vant of the LORD, died at the age of one
hundred ten years. 9 So they buried him
within the bounds of his inheritance in
Timnath-heres, in the hill country of
Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash. 10 More-
over, that whole generation was gathered
to their ancestors, and another generation
grew up after them, who did not know the
LORD or the work that he had done for
Israel.

d OL Vg Compare Gk: Heb *sides* *e* That is *Weepers*

1.34–35 The *Danites* were the least successful of the tribes, failing in their attempt to control the foothills between the coastal plain and the Judean highlands. This failure led ultimately to their resettlement in the north (chs. 17–18).

2.1–5 Israel's covenantal failure leads to revision of the Lord's strategy. There will be no more expansionist warfare. The polemical story explains how a place of tribal assembly (probably Bethel) acquired a nickname. **2.1** *The angel of the LORD* is a diplomatic envoy from the heavenly court, often preparing the way for God's direct appearance and here speaking in unmistakably Deuteronomistic style. Cf. also the speeches of the anonymous prophet (6.8–10) and of the Lord (10.11–14). *Gilgal,* base camp in Joshua (see esp. Josh 4.19–20; 5.9–10; 9.6). **2.4** The Israelites *wept,* as they would again at Bethel on the eve of the solution to the problem of finding wives for Benjamin (21.2). **2.5** *Bochim,* Hebrew, meaning "weepers."

2.6–10 In another flashback, these verses describe a generation gap, repeating Josh 24.28–31 in a sequence more appropriate to the beginning of an era. **2.6** *Joshua dismissed,* better "Joshua had dismissed," indicates another flashback. **2.8** The title *servant of the LORD* was first borne by Moses (Josh 1.1), then by Joshua, who left no designated successor. Samson applies the title to himself in 15.18. Elsewhere, among figures mentioned from the Judges era, only Caleb is called "servant" (Num 14.24). The title is applied honorifically to patriarchs, kings, and prophets—several in each category. *Died,* better "had died." **2.9** *Timnath-heres,* "Portion of the Sun" in Hebrew lies some fifteen miles southwest of Shechem. A transposition of letters makes the name "Timnath-serah" ("Leftover Portion") in Josh 19.50; 24.30. **2.10** The statement that the generation after Joshua *did not know the LORD* does not

Israel's Unfaithfulness

11 Then the Israelites did what was
evil in the sight of the LORD and wor-
shiped the Baals; 12 and they abandoned
the LORD, the God of their ancestors, who
had brought them out of the land of
Egypt; they followed other gods, from
among the gods of the peoples who were
all around them, and bowed down to
them; and they provoked the LORD to an-
ger. 13 They abandoned the LORD, and
worshiped Baal and the Astartes. 14 So the
anger of the LORD was kindled against Is-
rael, and he gave them over to plunderers
who plundered them, and he sold them
into the power of their enemies all
around, so that they could no longer with-
stand their enemies. 15 Whenever they
marched out, the hand of the LORD was
against them to bring misfortune, as the
LORD had warned them and sworn to
them; and they were in great distress.
16 Then the LORD raised up judges,
who delivered them out of the power of
those who plundered them. 17 Yet they
did not listen even to their judges; for
they lusted after other gods and bowed
down to them. They soon turned aside
from the way in which their ancestors had
walked, who had obeyed the command-
ments of the LORD; they did not follow
their example. 18 Whenever the LORD
raised up judges for them, the LORD was
with the judge, and he delivered them
from the hand of their enemies all the
days of the judge; for the LORD would be
moved to pity by their groaning because
of those who persecuted and oppressed
them. 19 But whenever the judge died,
they would relapse and behave worse than
their ancestors, following other gods, wor-
shiping them and bowing down to them.
They would not drop any of their prac-
tices or their stubborn ways. 20 So the an-
ger of the LORD was kindled against
Israel; and he said, "Because this people
have transgressed my covenant that I
commanded their ancestors, and have not
obeyed my voice, 21 I will no longer drive
out before them any of the nations that
Joshua left when he died." 22 In order to
test Israel, whether or not they would take
care to walk in the way of the LORD as
their ancestors did, 23 the LORD had left
those nations, not driving them out at
once, and had not handed them over to
Joshua.

Nations Remaining in the Land

3 Now these are the nations that the
LORD left to test all those in Israel
who had no experience of any war in Ca-
naan 2 (it was only that successive gene-
rations of Israelites might know war, to
teach those who had no experience of it
before): 3 the five lords of the Philistines,
and all the Canaanites, and the Sidonians,

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offer an excuse for ignorance. It may report an experiential lack or may fault lack of acknowledgment of the Lord. This observation marks the turn of an era, a basic change in situation and relationships.

2.11–23 These verses set forth a recurring pattern—apostasy, hardship, moaning (crying out to the Lord), and rescue—that provides a framework for the stories of the "major" judges. **2.11–13** *Baal* was the Canaanite storm god, divine warrior, and "king of the city." *Astarte* was the popular fertility goddess, consort of Baal. In scripture these names are used in the plural to refer to the entire pantheon of deities. The Baals and the Astartes, mentioned again in 10.6 provide a rubric of sorts that emphasizes the pattern of apostasy and deliverance. See also 3.7. **2.14** *Enemies all around.* The earliest judges have to deal with threats posed by neighbors in the immediate vicinity: southern highlanders (3.7–11); Moabite invaders from Transjordan (3.12–30); Philistines along the coastal plain (3.31); and a Canaanite coalition (4.1–5.31). Thereafter the enemy comes from farther afield (Midianites in chs. 6–8, Ammonites in ch. 11) or arises within Israel itself (Abimelech in ch. 9). **2.16–19** The *judges* are tribal chiefs whose military victories (presented generally as results of the Lord's gracious intervention) earn them continuing preeminence in local tribal governance. Israel experiences both divine justice and compassion, discipline and deliverance. **2.20–23** These verses, from a Deuteronomistic editor, restate the theme of 2.1–5 and the pattern of the period. Repeated covenantal failure on Israel's part at last brings a change of strategy from the Lord. The remnants of the "nations" formerly occupying Canaan will survive to test the faithfulness of Israel.

3.1–6 Two lists of peoples (vv. 3, 5) in the midst of whom Israel will be tested are introduced by the explanation that Israel has had inadequate experience of warfare. Divine discipline through the experience of warfare is a major theme toward the end of the book (ch. 20). **3.3** *Lords,* better "tyrants," a reference to the political organization newly introduced to the southern coastal

and the Hivites who lived on Mount Lebanon, from Mount Baal-hermon as far as
Lebo-hamath. 4 They were for the testing
of Israel, to know whether Israel would
obey the commandments of the LORD,
which he commanded their ancestors by
Moses. 5 So the Israelites lived among the
Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the
Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites;
6 and they took their daughters as wives
for themselves, and their own daughters
they gave to their sons; and they worshiped their gods.

Othniel

7 The Israelites did what was evil in
the sight of the LORD, forgetting the LORD
their God, and worshiping the Baals and
the Asherahs. 8 Therefore the anger of
the LORD was kindled against Israel, and
he sold them into the hand of King
Cushan-rishathaim of Aram-naharaim;
and the Israelites served Cushan-
rishathaim eight years. 9 But when the Israelites cried out to the LORD, the LORD
raised up a deliverer for the Israelites,
who delivered them, Othniel son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. 10 The spirit
of the LORD came upon him, and he
judged Israel; he went out to war, and the
LORD gave King Cushan-rishathaim of
Aram into his hand; and his hand prevailed over Cushan-rishathaim. 11 So the
land had rest forty years. Then Othniel
son of Kenaz died.

Ehud

12 The Israelites again did what was
evil in the sight of the LORD; and the
LORD strengthened King Eglon of Moab
against Israel, because they had done
what was evil in the sight of the LORD.
13 In alliance with the Ammonites and the
Amalekites, he went and defeated Israel;
and they took possession of the city of
palms. 14 So the Israelites served King Eglon of Moab eighteen years.

15 But when the Israelites cried out to
the LORD, the LORD raised up for them a
deliverer, Ehud son of Gera, the Benjaminite, a left-handed man. The Israelites
sent tribute by him to King Eglon of
Moab. 16 Ehud made for himself a sword
with two edges, a cubit in length; and he

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cities by the Philistines. *Hivites,* also relative newcomers, probably from southeastern Asia Minor. **3.4** This verse echoes the note on which the preceding section ends (2.23) and gives the issue of continued resistance by "the nations" a covenantal setting in terms of the commandments. The presence of these communities makes possible the alternation of times of crisis and peace, depending upon Israel's behavior. **3.5** The list of peoples living among the Israelites includes not only near neighbors (from the geographical perspective of the later nation of Israel) but those living in enclaves in the heart of contested territory. The list is related to Deut 7.1, which mentions seven "nations." *Hittites,* descendants of small kingdoms left behind by the once-mighty Anatolian empire. *Amorites,* originally "Westerners" (from the Mesopotamian perspective), appear often in scripture as synonymous with *Canaanites. Perizzites.* See note on 1.4. *Hivites.* See note on 3.4. *Jebusites.* "Jebus" was a pre-Israelite name of Jerusalem. **3.6** Intermarriage was frowned upon not because it threatened genealogical purity but because it challenged Israel's covenantal loyalty.

3.7–11 The brief career notice for Othniel, conqueror of Debir (1.13), employs elements of the framework described in the note on 2.11–23. Information about the first judge is minimal; his story is offered as exemplary of the Deuteronomic ideal. **3.7** *The Baals and the Asherahs.* Asherah was a Canaanite goddess. See note on 2.11–13. **3.8** *Cushan-rishathaim,* in Hebrew "Cushan Double-Wickedness," looks like a distorted name. *Aram-naharaim* is presumably Syria-Mesopotamia, an unlikely threat to the Judean highlands. Redivision of the Hebrew consonants would make him king of "a mountain fortress." **3.10** *The spirit of the LORD* in Judges stands for an impersonal power or force in which a person might be so absorbed or enveloped as to become capable of extraordinary deeds. *Judged,* i.e., mobilized Israel for successful defensive warfare. **3.11** *Forty years* may mean a generation.

3.12–30 The swashbuckling story of Ehud, a Benjaminite, unfolds within the familiar editorial framework (vv. 12–15, 30; see note on 2.11–23). **3.12–13** The agent of the Lord's discipline is *Eglon* ("Young Bull," "Fat Calf" in Hebrew), king of *Moab* in Transjordan, with support from his northern neighbors, the *Ammonites,* and from Israel's traditional enemies of the wilderness era, the *Amalekites* (Ex 17.8–16). *City of palms,* Jericho, as in 1.16. **3.15–25** *Ehud,* the *deliverer,* is remembered as a *left-handed man.* Left-handedness was unusually common in the tribe of Benjamin (see 20.16). Ehud was also famous for his murderous diplomacy; cf. Jephthah's exemplary diplomacy in ch. 11. Regarding Ehud, there is no mention of *the spirit of the LORD* (cf. 3.10).

fastened it on his right thigh under his
clothes. 17 Then he presented the tribute
to King Eglon of Moab. Now Eglon was a
very fat man. 18 When Ehud had finished
presenting the tribute, he sent the people
who carried the tribute on their way.
19 But he himself turned back at the sculp-
tured stones near Gilgal, and said, "I have
a secret message for you, O king." So the
king said,[f] "Silence!" and all his atten-
dants went out from his presence. 20 Ehud
came to him, while he was sitting alone in
his cool roof chamber, and said, "I have a
message from God for you." So he rose
from his seat. 21 Then Ehud reached with
his left hand, took the sword from his
right thigh, and thrust it into Eglon's[g]
belly; 22 the hilt also went in after the
blade, and the fat closed over the blade,
for he did not draw the sword out of his
belly; and the dirt came out.[h] 23 Then
Ehud went out into the vestibule,[i] and
closed the doors of the roof chamber on
him, and locked them.

24 After he had gone, the servants
came. When they saw that the doors of
the roof chamber were locked, they
thought, "He must be relieving himself[j]
in the cool chamber." 25 So they waited
until they were embarrassed. When he
still did not open the doors of the roof
chamber, they took the key and opened
them. There was their lord lying dead on
the floor.

26 Ehud escaped while they delayed,
and passed beyond the sculptured stones,
and escaped to Seirah. 27 When he ar-
rived, he sounded the trumpet in the hill
country of Ephraim; and the Israelites
went down with him from the hill coun-
try, having him at their head. 28 He said to
them, "Follow after me; for the LORD has
given your enemies the Moabites into
your hand." So they went down after him,
and seized the fords of the Jordan against
the Moabites, and allowed no one to cross
over. 29 At that time they killed about ten
thousand of the Moabites, all strong, able-
bodied men; no one escaped. 30 So Moab
was subdued that day under the hand of
Israel. And the land had rest eighty years.

Shamgar

31 After him came Shamgar son of
Anath, who killed six hundred of the Phil-
istines with an oxgoad. He too delivered
Israel.

Deborah and Barak

4 The Israelites again did what was
evil in the sight of the LORD, after
Ehud died. 2 So the LORD sold them into
the hand of King Jabin of Canaan, who
reigned in Hazor; the commander of his
army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-
ha-goiim. 3 Then the Israelites cried out to

f Heb *he said* *g* Heb *his* *h* With Tg Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain *i* Meaning of Heb uncertain *j* Heb *covering his feet*

3.19 *Stones near Gilgal.* The referent is unclear, but cf. Josh 4.20. Ehud acts alone; he is balanced structurally by another "loner," the tragicomic figure of Samson (chs. 13–16). **3.21–22** The assassination is told with obscene humor. **3.26–30** His Samson-like exploits over, Ehud now functions as Deborah does in ch. 4, rallying forces from the *hill country of Ephraim* to expel invaders and take control of the Jordan crossings. **3.26** The location of *Seirah* is unknown. **3.27** The ram's-horn *trumpet* was simultaneously a military and liturgical piece of equipment (Num 10.9; 31.6). When Saul sounded it, the accompanying shout was, "Let the Hebrews [i.e., the Israelite resistance] hear" (1 Sam 13.3). **3.29** *Ten thousand,* more likely "ten (village) muster units." See note on 1.4. **3.30** *Eighty years.* The chronology is an editorial construct.

3.31 *Shamgar* is a non-Semitic (perhaps a Hurrian) name. Lacking editorial framework, this notice was inserted in anticipation of 5.6. In some Greek manuscripts it occurs instead of 16.31, after the stories of Samson, who also fights *Philistines.* Shamgar may have been a mercenary (perhaps a convert) who engineered a victory against northern Philistines, i.e., early Sea Peoples migrating south from bases along the Syrian-Lebanese coast.

4.1–5.31 Deborah outshines Barak as the Israelites oppose a superior Canaanite force in the north. The memory is told in classical prose (ch. 4) and celebrated in archaic poetry, the "Song of Deborah" (ch. 5). Editorial notices (4.1–3; 5.31b) frame the two chapters.

4.1–24 The exploits of Deborah and Barak. **4.1–3** This editorial notice of events before Deborah's time does not mention Shamgar. **4.2** *King Jabin of Canaan,* an unusual title in an area of many city-states. Jabin is king of Hazor in Josh 11. *Sisera* is a non-Semitic name; he probably belonged to one of the immigrating Sea Peoples. **4.3** *Chariots of iron.* See note on 1.19. The Philis-

the LORD for help; for he had nine hundred chariots of iron, and had oppressed the Israelites cruelly twenty years.

4 At that time Deborah, a prophetess, wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel. 5 She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim; and the Israelites came up to her for judgment. 6 She sent and summoned Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali, and said to him, "The LORD, the God of Israel, commands you, 'Go, take position at Mount Tabor, bringing ten thousand from the tribe of Naphtali and the tribe of Zebulun. 7 I will draw out Sisera, the general of Jabin's army, to meet you by the Wadi Kishon with his chariots and his troops; and I will give him into your hand.' " 8 Barak said to her, "If you will go with me, I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go." 9 And she said, "I will surely go with you; nevertheless, the road on which you are going will not lead to your glory, for the LORD will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman." Then Deborah got up and went with Barak to Kedesh. 10 Barak summoned Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh; and ten thousand warriors went up behind him; and Deborah went up with him.

11 Now Heber the Kenite had separated from the other Kenites,[k] that is, the descendants of Hobab the father-in-law of Moses, and had encamped as far away as Elon-bezaanannim, which is near Kedesh.

12 When Sisera was told that Barak son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor, 13 Sisera called out all his chariots, nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the troops who were with him, from Harosheth-ha-goiim to the Wadi Kishon. 14 Then Deborah said to Barak, "Up! For this is the day on which the LORD has given Sisera into your hand. The LORD is indeed going out before you." So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with ten thousand warriors following him. 15 And the LORD threw Sisera and all his chariots and all his army into a panic[l] before Barak; Sisera got down from his chariot and fled away on foot, 16 while Barak pursued the chariots and the army to Harosheth-ha-goiim. All the army of Sisera fell by the sword; no one was left.

17 Now Sisera had fled away on foot

k Heb *from the Kain* *l* Heb adds *to the sword*; compare verse 16

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tines brought superior knowledge of ironworking to Canaan, enjoying monopolistic control until the time of Saul and David. **4.4–5** *Deborah* ("Bee" in Hebrew) was *a prophetess* at a holy site near Bethel with a *palm* tree named in her honor. *Lappidoth.* The Hebrew can mean "torches," as in 15.4. *Was judging*, i.e., giving oracular response to inquiries on various concerns.

4.6–8 Reluctant *Barak* ("Lightning" in Hebrew), not Deborah, is the recognized military commander, remembered as praiseworthy in Heb 11.32. **4.6** *Kedesh*, "Holy Place," is a common place-name. This Kedesh is probably a site in southern Galilee, not to be confused with the great site of Tell Qades, eleven kilometers northwest of Hazor. *Mount Tabor*, at the northern edge of the Esdraelon plain, was ideally suited for muster of troops from Galilee. *Naphtali and ... Zebulun* are the only tribes mentioned in this account. **4.7** The battleground lies where the pass between Megiddo and Taanach opens into Esdraelon, near the confluence of streams that flow together to form the *Kishon* river. The battle is for control of the rich Esdraelon, Acco, and northern Sharon plains, and it marks the first time that Israelites from the highlands are able successfully to challenge the occupants of the plains. **4.8** There is irony in Barak's conditional acceptance of Deborah's unconditional command. Barak's hesitancy is further developed in the Greek text which adds, "for I never know what day the angel of the LORD will give me success." **4.9** *Into the hand of a woman* sets the audience up for an ironic fulfillment—the woman is not Deborah but Jael. **4.10** *Ten thousand*, more likely ten "muster units." See note on 1.4. **4.11** This verse explains why some *Kenites*, "smiths," descended from *Hobab* in the south (see note on 1.16) are encamped in the far north, on the line of Sisera's flight after the battle. *Elon-bezaanannim* (Hebrew, "Oak in Zaanannim") may have been another sacred tree or perhaps it served to distinguish the northern *Kedesh*, which is different from the Kedesh where the muster took place (vv. 6–10). **4.12–16** *Barak* leads the warriors; there is no mention of *Deborah*, except for her proclamation of the *day* of the Lord's victory (v. 14). **4.15** The account is strikingly similar to that of the victory at the Reed Sea (Ex 14.24). The prose gives no details of how *the LORD* created the *panic*, but no Israelite could take the credit. **4.17–22** The humiliation and assassination of Sisera are told with an ironic twist—*Jael* offers hospitality. **4.17** A *Kenite* clan had migrated and changed sides in the time of *Jabin*. Providentially, the Kenite chief had a wife who remained loyal to the cause of the Lord,

to the tent of Jael wife of Heber the Kenite; for there was peace between King Jabin of Hazor and the clan of Heber the Kenite. 18 Jael came out to meet Sisera, and said to him, "Turn aside, my lord, turn aside to me; have no fear." So he turned aside to her into the tent, and she covered him with a rug. 19 Then he said to her, "Please give me a little water to drink; for I am thirsty." So she opened a skin of milk and gave him a drink and covered him. 20 He said to her, "Stand at the entrance of the tent, and if anybody comes and asks you, 'Is anyone here?' say, 'No.' " 21 But Jael wife of Heber took a tent peg, and took a hammer in her hand, and went softly to him and drove the peg into his temple, until it went down into the ground—he was lying fast asleep from weariness—and he died. 22 Then, as Barak came in pursuit of Sisera, Jael went out to meet him, and said to him, "Come, and I will show you the man whom you are seeking." So he went into her tent; and there was Sisera lying dead, with the tent peg in his temple.

23 So on that day God subdued King Jabin of Canaan before the Israelites. 24 Then the hand of the Israelites bore harder and harder on King Jabin of Canaan, until they destroyed King Jabin of Canaan.

The Song of Deborah

5 Then Deborah and Barak son of Abinoam sang on that day, saying:

2 "When locks are long in Israel,
when the people offer
themselves willingly—
bless[m] the LORD!

3 "Hear, O kings; give ear,
O princes;
to the LORD I will sing,
I will make melody to the
LORD, the God of
Israel.

4 "LORD, when you went out from
Seir,
when you marched from the
region of Edom,
the earth trembled,
and the heavens poured,
the clouds indeed poured
water.

5 The mountains quaked before
the LORD, the One of
Sinai,
before the LORD, the God of
Israel.

6 "In the days of Shamgar son of
Anath,
in the days of Jael, caravans
ceased
and travelers kept to the
byways.

7 The peasantry prospered in
Israel,
they grew fat on plunder,
because you arose, Deborah,
arose as a mother in Israel.

8 When new gods were chosen,
then war was in the gates.
Was shield or spear to be seen
among forty thousand in
Israel?

m Or *You who offer yourselves willingly among the people, bless*

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to the point of murderously exploiting the obligation of hospitality. **4.19** Certain goat *milk* products have a strong sleep-inducing effect. **4.23–24** These verses are editorial wrap-up. *King Jabin of Canaan* remains obscure.

5.1–31 The Song of Deborah (and Barak, but the verb in v. 1 is singular) is datable to the twelfth century B.C.E., not far removed from the events being celebrated. There are a number of obscurities in the text. The genre (victory hymn) is well known from Egypt and Assyria in the fifteenth to twelfth centuries B.C.E. The Song exhibits repetitive parallelism familiar from fourteenth-century B.C.E. Ugaritic texts. **5.1** This is the narrator's link, which, prior to insertion of the poem, was probably followed by the exclamation and concluding framework note (v. 31). **5.3** *Hear, O kings* announces the general theme: praise of the Divine King in Israel as testimony to kings such as those recently defeated by the forces of Deborah and Barak. **5.4–5** The singer describes a theophany of Israel's Divine Warrior, *the One of Sinai,* arriving in Canaan via *Seir, . . . region of Edom,* in southern Transjordan. **5.6–7** The crisis is framed by the exploits of *Shamgar* at its beginning and *Jael* at its end. Mobilization of the hill-country *peasantry* to hijack trade *caravans* brought unprecedented prosperity to Israelites. The title *mother in Israel* recognizes Deborah's prophetic leadership, as does the title "father" for a male prophet (see 2 Kings 2.1–2; 13.14). **5.8** A choice of *new gods* is appropriate mythologically to the collapse of trade-route agreements and general security that brought on the warfare. Deities

9 My heart goes out to the
commanders of Israel
who offered themselves
willingly among the people.
Bless the LORD.

10 "Tell of it, you who ride on white
donkeys,
you who sit on rich carpets[n]
and you who walk by the way.
11 To the sound of musicians[n] at
the watering places,
there they repeat the triumphs
of the LORD,
the triumphs of his peasantry
in Israel.

"Then down to the gates
marched the people of the
LORD.

12 "Awake, awake, Deborah!
Awake, awake, utter a song!
Arise, Barak, lead away your
captives,
O son of Abinoam.
13 Then down marched the remnant
of the noble;
the people of the LORD
marched down for him[o]
against the mighty.
14 From Ephraim they set out[p] into
the valley,[q]
following you, Benjamin, with
your kin;
from Machir marched down the
commanders,
and from Zebulun those who
bear the marshal's staff;
15 the chiefs of Issachar came with
Deborah,
and Issachar faithful to Barak;
into the valley they rushed out
at his heels.
Among the clans of Reuben
there were great searchings of
heart.
16 Why did you tarry among the
sheepfolds,
to hear the piping for the
flocks?
Among the clans of Reuben
there were great searchings of
heart.
17 Gilead stayed beyond the Jordan;
and Dan, why did he abide with
the ships?
Asher sat still at the coast of
the sea,
settling down by his landings.
18 Zebulun is a people that scorned
death;
Naphtali too, on the heights of
the field.

19 "The kings came, they fought;
then fought the kings of
Canaan,
at Taanach, by the waters of
Megiddo;
they got no spoils of silver.
20 The stars fought from heaven,
from their courses they fought
against Sisera.
21 The torrent Kishon swept them
away,
the onrushing torrent, the
torrent Kishon.
March on, my soul, with might!

n Meaning of Heb uncertain *o* Gk: Heb *me*
p Cn: Heb *From Ephraim their root* *q* Gk: Heb *in Amalek*

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were regularly listed as witnesses and guarantors of treaties. *Shield* and *spear* were aristocratic weapons belonging to professional military men. *Forty thousand.* Forty "muster units" (see note on 1.4) would be more in keeping with the description in vv. 6–7. **5.10** Appeal is made to the entire citizenry: the chiefs, *who ride,* and the general populace, *who walk.* **5.11–13** The focus shifts to town and village wells, describing public response to the appeal. **5.14–18** In the setting of the victory celebration, the poet reviews the performance of tribal contingents. Six tribes had responded: *Ephraim, Benjamin, Machir* (western Manasseh), *Zebulun, Issachar,* and *Naphtali.* Four or five are censured for not responding: *Reuben, Gilead* (possibly Gad), *Dan, Asher,* and *Meroz* (v. 23, Meroz may be either a town or a clan). Passed over in silence are Judah, Simeon, and Levi. The former two may already have been under Philistine domination. Levi was a specialist tribe without territorial definition, its families dispersed throughout the territory as carriers of the covenantal lore. **5.15** *At his heels,* idiomatic for "under his command" (the term is translated *behind him* in 4.10). **5.19–23** These verses recount the battle and Israel's victory thanks to a timely maneuver by the Lord—a cloudburst and flash flood—that gave the advantage to foot soldiers. **5.19** The opposition is described as a coalition of *kings of Canaan*; Jabin is not mentioned. **5.20** *The stars fought* as the source of rain. Cf. the performance of the sun and moon at the defense

22 "Then loud beat the horses' hoofs
with the galloping, galloping of
his steeds.

23 "Curse Meroz, says the angel of
the LORD,
curse bitterly its inhabitants,
because they did not come to the
help of the LORD,
to the help of the LORD against
the mighty.

24 "Most blessed of women be Jael,
the wife of Heber the Kenite,
of tent-dwelling women most
blessed.
25 He asked water and she gave him
milk,
she brought him curds in a
lordly bowl.
26 She put her hand to the tent peg
and her right hand to the
workmen's mallet;
she struck Sisera a blow,
she crushed his head,
she shattered and pierced his
temple.
27 He sank, he fell,
he lay still at her feet;
at her feet he sank, he fell;
where he sank, there he fell
dead.

28 "Out of the window she peered,
the mother of Sisera gazed[r]
through the lattice:
'Why is his chariot so long in
coming?
Why tarry the hoofbeats of his
chariots?'
29 Her wisest ladies make answer,
indeed, she answers the
question herself:
30 'Are they not finding and
dividing the spoil?—
A girl or two for every man;
spoil of dyed stuffs for Sisera,
spoil of dyed stuffs
embroidered,
two pieces of dyed work
embroidered for my neck
as spoil?'

31 "So perish all your enemies,
O LORD!
But may your friends be like
the sun as it rises in its
might."

And the land had rest forty years.

The Midianite Oppression

6 The Israelites did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD gave them into the hand of Midian seven years. 2 The hand of Midian prevailed over Israel; and because of Midian the Israelites provided for themselves hiding places in the mountains, caves and strongholds. 3 For whenever the Israelites put in seed, the Midianites and the Amalekites

r Gk Compare Tg: Heb *exclaimed*

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of Gibeon (Josh 10.11–14). **5.23** *Meroz* is otherwise unknown; see note on 5.14–18. The *angel of the LORD* may here be a human being, the professional diviner (prophet or prophetess) regularly consulted in the conduct of warfare. **5.24–27** This description of the demise of Sisera heaps praise upon Jael. **5.25** *Milk.* See note on 4.19. **5.26** A *tent peg and . . . mallet* were handy because pitching the tent was woman's work, as it is today among Bedouin. **5.27** *At her feet,* or "under her command," ironically echoes the usage in v. 15; 4.10. **5.28** The final scene begins with another woman, the *mother of Sisera* (cf. Deborah as a *mother in Israel,* v. 7), in a poetically inverted vantage point, awaiting Sisera's triumphant return. **5.30** The final irony attributes to Canaanite warriors a license with captive women that Mosaic tradition sought to outlaw (Deut 21.10–14). **5.31** *So perish . . . its might.* In the original Hebrew, v. 31 is strikingly more proselike in style than vv. 2–30 (cf. note on 5.1). *Your friends,* or "those who love you." *Forty years,* twice as long as the oppression (4.3), half as long as the *rest* following Ehud (3.30).

6.1–8.35 Gideon (also identified in ch. 7 as *Jerubbaal*) mobilizes several central hill-country and Galilean tribes against annual raiding parties from Transjordan (Midianites, Amalekites, and other easterners). **6.1–10** This introduction uses the now-familiar framework (apostasy, oppression, appeal for help; see note on 2.11–23) in vv. 1–6. Economic exploitation originating from distant oases was made possible by the recent domestication of the camel. **6.2** *Midian* was a desert confederation alternately in alliance (Ex 2.15–4.31; 18.1–27) and at war (Num 25–31) with Israel. Midian's revival, with newly superior mobility for annual collection of taxes, crowds peasant agrarians once again into the highlands.

and the people of the east would come up
against them. 4 They would encamp
against them and destroy the produce of
the land, as far as the neighborhood of
Gaza, and leave no sustenance in Israel,
and no sheep or ox or donkey. 5 For they
and their livestock would come up, and
they would even bring their tents, as thick
as locusts; neither they nor their camels
could be counted; so they wasted the land
as they came in. 6 Thus Israel was greatly
impoverished because of Midian; and the
Israelites cried out to the LORD for help.

7 When the Israelites cried to the
LORD on account of the Midianites, 8 the
LORD sent a prophet to the Israelites; and
he said to them, "Thus says the LORD, the
God of Israel: I led you up from Egypt,
and brought you out of the house of slav-
ery; 9 and I delivered you from the hand
of the Egyptians, and from the hand of all
who oppressed you, and drove them out
before you, and gave you their land;
10 and I said to you, 'I am the LORD your
God; you shall not pay reverence to the
gods of the Amorites, in whose land you
live.' But you have not given heed to my
voice."

The Call of Gideon

11 Now the angel of the LORD came
and sat under the oak at Ophrah, which
belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, as his son
Gideon was beating out wheat in the wine
press, to hide it from the Midianites.
12 The angel of the LORD appeared to him
and said to him, "The LORD is with you,
you mighty warrior." 13 Gideon answered
him, "But sir, if the LORD is with us, why
then has all this happened to us? And
where are all his wonderful deeds that
our ancestors recounted to us, saying,
'Did not the LORD bring us up from
Egypt?' But now the LORD has cast us off,
and given us into the hand of Midian."
14 Then the LORD turned to him and said,
"Go in this might of yours and deliver Is-
rael from the hand of Midian; I hereby
commission you." 15 He responded, "But
sir, how can I deliver Israel? My clan is the
weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in
my family." 16 The LORD said to him, "But
I will be with you, and you shall strike
down the Midianites, every one of them."
17 Then he said to him, "If now I have
found favor with you, then show me a
sign that it is you who speak with me.
18 Do not depart from here until I come to
you, and bring out my present, and set it
before you." And he said, "I will stay until
you return."

19 So Gideon went into his house and
prepared a kid, and unleavened cakes
from an ephah of flour; the meat he put
in a basket, and the broth he put in a pot,
and brought them to him under the oak
and presented them. 20 The angel of God
said to him, "Take the meat and the

6.3 *Amalekites*. See note on 3.13. **6.7–10** This time, when *Israelites cry*, instead of the expected deliverer the Lord sends a *prophet* who delivers an indictment, as the angel of the Lord did in 2.1–5. The warning in 2.3 that other gods would be a *snare* is coming true.

6.11–32 The only early narrative in the book where the Lord speaks directly to a protagonist or to Israel. The Lord receives a new altar (vv. 11–24), and an old altar is destroyed (vv. 25–32). Gideon is slow to recognize the voice of the Lord, foreshadowing Israel's problem in ch. 10. **6.11–24** Gideon (in contrast to Othniel, Ehud, and Deborah) is first approached by an angel, who appears in human form and prepares the way for direct conversation between Gideon and the Lord. **6.11** *Ophrah*, a village of Manasseh not far from Shechem. *Joash*, lit. "the LORD has given," presides over a pagan shrine. *Abiezrite*. See Josh 17.2. *Gideon* means "Hewer" or "Hacker" in Hebrew; it is probably a nickname based on his reforming activities. **6.12–13** The pronoun *you* is singular. Gideon misses the point and replies about the plight of *us*. **6.12** Relatively aristocratic status is suggested by the designation *mighty warrior*, which otherwise does not well describe Gideon in the bulk of chs. 6–7. **6.13** *Did not . . . up from Egypt*, an unshakable element in the Israelite credo, might also be a liturgical cliché. **6.14** *The LORD* and the angel are not identical. Gideon is unknowingly involved in a three-way conversation. **6.15** *Family*, lit. "father's house," can also designate the smallest military unit. Saul uses similar overly modest language (1 Sam 9.21; cf. 1 Sam 15.17). Cf. the recruitment of Moses (Ex 3.1–4.23), where vastly disproportionate space is given to eliciting the dutiful response. **6.16–17** *I will be with you* is directly reminiscent of Ex 3, as is the request for *a sign* to certify the Lord's credentials. **6.19** An *ephah of flour*, more than a bushel, seems disproportionately large. **6.20–23** The story has Gideon seeing the Lord's angel face-to-face so that the invisible Lord may enter into direct negotiations with Gideon, as he had with Moses. Gideon's exclamation indicates that his encounter with the envoy was a traumatic

unleavened cakes, and put them on this
rock, and pour out the broth." And he did
so. 21 Then the angel of the LORD reached
out the tip of the staff that was in his
hand, and touched the meat and the un-
leavened cakes; and fire sprang up from
the rock and consumed the meat and the
unleavened cakes; and the angel of the
LORD vanished from his sight. 22 Then
Gideon perceived that it was the angel of
the LORD; and Gideon said, "Help me,
Lord GOD! For I have seen the angel of
the LORD face to face." 23 But the LORD
said to him, "Peace be to you; do not fear,
you shall not die." 24 Then Gideon built
an altar there to the LORD, and called it,
The LORD is peace. To this day it still
stands at Ophrah, which belongs to the
Abiezrites.

25 That night the LORD said to him,
"Take your father's bull, the second bull
seven years old, and pull down the altar of
Baal that belongs to your father, and cut
down the sacred pole[s] that is beside it;
26 and build an altar to the LORD your
God on the top of the stronghold here, in
proper order; then take the second bull,
and offer it as a burnt offering with the
wood of the sacred pole[s] that you shall
cut down." 27 So Gideon took ten of his
servants, and did as the LORD had told
him; but because he was too afraid of his
family and the townspeople to do it by
day, he did it by night.

Gideon Destroys the Altar of Baal

28 When the townspeople rose early
in the morning, the altar of Baal was bro-
ken down, and the sacred pole[s] beside it
was cut down, and the second bull was of-
fered on the altar that had been built.
29 So they said to one another, "Who has
done this?" After searching and inquir-
ing, they were told, "Gideon son of Joash
did it." 30 Then the townspeople said to
Joash, "Bring out your son, so that he may
die, for he has pulled down the altar of
Baal and cut down the sacred pole[s] be-
side it." 31 But Joash said to all who were
arrayed against him, "Will you contend
for Baal? Or will you defend his cause?
Whoever contends for him shall be put to
death by morning. If he is a god, let him
contend for himself, because his altar has
been pulled down." 32 Therefore on that
day Gideon[t] was called Jerubbaal, that is
to say, "Let Baal contend against him," be-
cause he pulled down his altar.

33 Then all the Midianites and the
Amalekites and the people of the east
came together, and crossing the Jordan
they encamped in the Valley of Jezreel.
34 But the spirit of the LORD took posses-
sion of Gideon; and he sounded the trum-
pet, and the Abiezrites were called out
to follow him. 35 He sent messengers
throughout all Manasseh, and they too
were called out to follow him. He also sent
messengers to Asher, Zebulun, and Naph-
tali, and they went up to meet them.

The Sign of the Fleece

36 Then Gideon said to God, "In or-
der to see whether you will deliver Israel
by my hand, as you have said, 37 I am go-
ing to lay a fleece of wool on the threshing
floor; if there is dew on the fleece alone,
and it is dry on all the ground, then I shall
know that you will deliver Israel by my
hand, as you have said." 38 And it was so.
When he rose early next morning and
squeezed the fleece, he wrung enough
dew from the fleece to fill a bowl with wa-

s Heb *Asherah* t Heb *he*

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experience, but the Lord is shown to be compassionate and gracious, as promised to Moses (Ex 33.19). **6.24** *Peace* (Hebrew *shalom*), comprehensive well-being, individual and communal. **6.25–32** The dismantling of Joash's *altar* and the hacking down of the *sacred pole,* an invariable feature of the fertility cult that supported the feudal hierarchy in Canaanite society, provide ironic legitimacy for the given name *Jerubbaal* (v. 32), Hebrew, "Let Baal Contend" (Hebrew *riv* is the root of the part of name that can be translated "contend"; see note on 11.12–28). **6.25–27** Gideon is prosperous enough to command the assistance of *ten . . . servants* but is only brave enough to act *by night.* **6.30–32** Apostate Joash, facing the zeal of Jerubbaal, is no longer an avid supporter of Baal. **6.35** Gideon rallies warriors from his own tribe, *Manasseh,* and from three Galilean tribes: *Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali.* **6.36–40** Gideon demands further proof that *God* (never "the LORD" in these verses) really meant what was said in the recruitment scene (vv. 11–24). Fishermen living on one of the streamless and springless desert islands have obtained sufficient water by spreading out fleece in the evening and wringing dew from it in the morning. The true miracle is the reverse, and that is what Gideon requires.

ter. 39 Then Gideon said to God, "Do not
let your anger burn against me, let me
speak one more time; let me, please, make
trial with the fleece just once more; let it
be dry only on the fleece, and on all the
ground let there be dew." 40 And God did
so that night. It was dry on the fleece only,
and on all the ground there was dew.

Gideon Surprises and Routs the Midianites

7 Then Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) and
all the troops that were with him
rose early and encamped beside the
spring of Harod; and the camp of Midian
was north of them, below[u] the hill of Mo-
reh, in the valley.
2 The LORD said to Gideon, "The
troops with you are too many for me to
give the Midianites into their hand. Israel
would only take the credit away from me,
saying, 'My own hand has delivered me.'
3 Now therefore proclaim this in the hear-
ing of the troops, 'Whoever is fearful and
trembling, let him return home.'" Thus
Gideon sifted them out;[v] twenty-two
thousand returned, and ten thousand
remained.
4 Then the LORD said to Gideon, "The
troops are still too many; take them down
to the water and I will sift them out for
you there. When I say, 'This one shall go
with you,' he shall go with you; and when
I say, 'This one shall not go with you,' he
shall not go." 5 So he brought the troops
down to the water; and the LORD said to
Gideon, "All those who lap the water with
their tongues, as a dog laps, you shall put
to one side; all those who kneel down
to drink, putting their hands to their
mouths,[w] you shall put to the other side."
6 The number of those that lapped was
three hundred; but all the rest of the
troops knelt down to drink water. 7 Then
the LORD said to Gideon, "With the three
hundred that lapped I will deliver you,
and give the Midianites into your hand.
Let all the others go to their homes." 8 So
he took the jars of the troops from their
hands,[x] and their trumpets; and he sent
all the rest of Israel back to their own
tents, but retained the three hundred.
The camp of Midian was below him in the
valley.
9 That same night the LORD said to
him, "Get up, attack the camp; for I have
given it into your hand. 10 But if you fear
to attack, go down to the camp with your
servant Purah; 11 and you shall hear what
they say, and afterward your hands shall
be strengthened to attack the camp."
Then he went down with his servant Pu-
rah to the outposts of the armed men that
were in the camp. 12 The Midianites and
the Amalekites and all the people of the
east lay along the valley as thick as locusts;
and their camels were without number,
countless as the sand on the seashore.
13 When Gideon arrived, there was a man

u Heb *from* *v* Cn: Heb *home, and depart from Mount Gilead'* " *w* Heb places the words *putting their hands to their mouths* after the word *lapped* in verse 6 *x* Cn: Heb *So the people took provisions in their hands*

7.1–23 The Lord's rout of the Midianites comprises three scenes: the reduction of the Israelite force (vv. 1–8); an enemy sentry's dream (vv. 9–15); and the rout and retreat of the Midianites (vv. 16–22). **7.1** *Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon).* It is improbable that memories of two different figures have merged. The name Jerubbaal (Hebrew, "Let Baal Contend") stands for God's accomplishment through one historical savior. The name Gideon ("Hacker") stands for the man in all his fearful, heavy-handed individuality. The *spring of Harod* is near the foot of Mount Gilboa in the southeastern Jezreel Valley. The *hill of Moreh* (Hebrew, "Teacher's Hill") in the Jezreel Valley is presumably another place of oracular inquiry, like Deborah's palm (4.5). **7.3** *Whoever is fearful and trembling.* See list of exemptions in Deut 20.5–8. Instead of *thousand* we should again recognize the local unit for the military muster (see note on 1.4). Num 1; 26 indicate that Manasseh's muster quota at one time was thirty-two units totaling approximately three hundred men, a sizable army in the premonarchical period. **7.5–7** The text is obscure. It is not clear whether the Lord chooses the more alert or the less cautious. The latter would serve to make it plain that victory is due to God's action, not to human initiative or prowess. If the numbers in the story originate in the muster of Gideon's tribe alone, his force would have been *three hundred* before the reductions in vv. 2, 6, so the final force is much smaller, perhaps fifty or so. **7.8** The abrupt mention of *jars . . . and . . . trumpets* appears to anticipate vv. 16–17. **7.9–14** The story continues to emphasize Gideon's fearful hesitancy and the Lord's providential response, this time via a pagan sentry's dream. **7.10** The *servant* (Hebrew *na'ar*, generally translated "young man") is Gideon's squire, personal attendant, handyman, and armor bearer (see 9.54; 1 Sam 14.1, 6). **7.13** *The tent,* pre-

telling a dream to his comrade; and he said, "I had a dream, and in it a cake of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian, and came to the tent, and struck it so that it fell; it turned upside down, and the tent collapsed." 14 And his comrade answered, "This is no other than the sword of Gideon son of Joash, a man of Israel; into his hand God has given Midian and all the army."

15 When Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, he worshiped; and he returned to the camp of Israel, and said, "Get up; for the LORD has given the army of Midian into your hand." 16 After he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and put trumpets into the hands of all of them, and empty jars, with torches inside the jars, 17 he said to them, "Look at me, and do the same; when I come to the outskirts of the camp, do as I do. 18 When I blow the trumpet, I and all who are with me, then you also blow the trumpets around the whole camp, and shout, 'For the LORD and for Gideon!' "

19 So Gideon and the hundred who were with him came to the outskirts of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, when they had just set the watch; and they blew the trumpets and smashed the jars that were in their hands. 20 So the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the jars, holding in their left hands the torches, and in their right hands the trumpets to blow; and they cried, "A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!" 21 Every man stood in his place all around the camp, and all the men in camp ran; they cried out and fled. 22 When they blew the three hundred trumpets, the LORD set every man's sword against his fellow and against all the army; and the army fled as far as Beth-shittah toward Zererah,[y] as far as the border of Abel-meholah, by Tabbath. 23 And the men of Israel were called out from Naphtali and from Asher and from all Manasseh, and they pursued after the Midianites.

24 Then Gideon sent messengers throughout all the hill country of Ephraim, saying, "Come down against the Midianites and seize the waters against them, as far as Beth-barah, and also the Jordan." So all the men of Ephraim were called out, and they seized the waters as far as Beth-barah, and also the Jordan. 25 They captured the two captains of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb; they killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and Zeeb they killed at the wine press of Zeeb, as they pursued the Midianites. They brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon beyond the Jordan.

Gideon's Triumph and Vengeance

8 Then the Ephraimites said to him, "What have you done to us, not to call us when you went to fight against the Midianites?" And they upbraided him violently. 2 So he said to them, "What have I done now in comparison with you? Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer? 3 God has given into your hands the captains of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb; what have I been able to do in comparison with you?" When he said this, their anger against him subsided.

4 Then Gideon came to the Jordan

y Another reading is *Zeredah*

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sumably the sheik's tent, the command center. **7.15** Gideon *worshipped*, i.e., fell prostrate. **7.16** With *trumpets, empty jars*, and *torches*, the Israelites are heavily laden for a spectacular demonstration. There is no mention of weapons. **7.22** The verse describes a splintered force in leaderless retreat to Transjordan. **7.23** This verse harks back to 6.35, where *Manasseh* was mobilized and *Asher*, Zebulun, and *Naphtali* were placed on alert. All except Zebulun now take the field.

7.24–8.3 These verses are transitional. Gideon advocates total mobilization against the desert confederation, whereas the Lord, it appears, had intended a noncombative stampede of the superstitious nomads (7.18–21). Gideon will now take the militia into the field, east of the Jordan, pursuing private vengeance (as becomes clear in 8.19). **7.24** Troops from *Ephraim* arrive uninvited in 12.1. **7.25** *Oreb and Zeeb*, Hebrew, "Raven" and "Wolf." See Ps 83.9–12; Isa 10.26. **8.1** *Ephraimites* complain about not having been included in the original summons. **8.2** *Is not the gleaning . . . of Abiezer?* Gideon is either coining a proverb or adapting one. The story may preserve the memory of an attempt by Manasseh's southern neighbor to put a stop to Gideon's retaliatory raiding. The Ephraimites are talked out of their resentment of Gideon's preferential treatment of other tribes. **8.4–21** The focus shifts from the somewhat miraculous recruitment of Gideon to scenes of Gideon in action. The Lord does not

and crossed over, he and the three hundred who were with him, exhausted and famished.[z] 5 So he said to the people of Succoth, "Please give some loaves of bread to my followers, for they are exhausted, and I am pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian." 6 But the officials of Succoth said, "Do you already have in your possession the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna, that we should give bread to your army?" 7 Gideon replied, "Well then, when the LORD has given Zebah and Zalmunna into my hand, I will trample your flesh on the thorns of the wilderness and on briers." 8 From there he went up to Penuel, and made the same request of them; and the people of Penuel answered him as the people of Succoth had answered. 9 So he said to the people of Penuel, "When I come back victorious, I will break down this tower."

10 Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor with their army, about fifteen thousand men, all who were left of all the army of the people of the east; for one hundred twenty thousand men bearing arms had fallen. 11 So Gideon went up by the caravan route east of Nobah and Jogbehah, and attacked the army; for the army was off its guard. 12 Zebah and Zalmunna fled; and he pursued them and took the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and threw all the army into a panic.

13 When Gideon son of Joash returned from the battle by the ascent of Heres, 14 he caught a young man, one of the people of Succoth, and questioned him; and he listed for him the officials and elders of Succoth, seventy-seven people. 15 Then he came to the people of Succoth, and said, "Here are Zebah and Zalmunna, about whom you taunted me, saying, 'Do you already have in your possession the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna, that we should give bread to your troops who are exhausted?' " 16 So he took the elders of the city and he took thorns of the wilderness and briers and with them he trampled[a] the people of Succoth. 17 He also broke down the tower of Penuel, and killed the men of the city.

18 Then he said to Zebah and Zalmunna, "What about the men whom you killed at Tabor?" They answered, "As you are, so were they, every one of them; they resembled the sons of a king." 19 And he replied, "They were my brothers, the sons of my mother; as the LORD lives, if you had saved them alive, I would not kill you." 20 So he said to Jether his firstborn, "Go kill them!" But the boy did not draw his sword, for he was afraid, because he was still a boy. 21 Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, "You come and kill us; for as the man is, so is his strength." So Gideon proceeded to kill Zebah and Zalmunna; and he took the crescents that were on the necks of their camels.

Gideon's Idolatry

22 Then the Israelites said to Gideon, "Rule over us, you and your son and your

z Gk: Heb *pursuing* a With verse 7, Compare Gk: Heb *he taught*

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participate apart from being referred to by Gideon (vv. 7, 19). The purpose of this section is to show what becomes of the young reformer who has become a commander. **8.4** *Three hundred* may mean the full strength of Manasseh's militia. See notes on 7.3; 7.5–7. **8.5** *Succoth* ("huts"), probably Tell Deir 'Alla in the Jordan Valley, a sanctuary site that continued in use as such after the settlement there was destroyed by earthquake ca. 1180 B.C.E. (plus or minus sixty years). **8.6** The commandeering of provisions is frustrated by distrust of Gideon's capability, despite his threats. *Hands* refers to mutilation of prisoners, a gruesome reality (1.6–7). *Zebah* (Hebrew, "Victim") and *Zalmunna* ("Protection Refused") were *kings* (v. 5), in contrast to *captains* Oreb and Zeeb (v. 3). **8.7** *Thorns* and *briars* recall treaty curses involving weeds and various domestic plants. Is Gideon taking the law into his own hands? **8.8** *Penuel*, Hebrew, "Face of God" (Gen 32.24–32; Hos 12.4), perhaps Tulūl edh-Dhahab, not far from Succoth. **8.10** *Karkor* lay in Wadi Sirhan, east of the Dead Sea. *Fifteen thousand*, is an improbable number for the oasis setting; "tribal units" may be more accurate (cf. note on 7.3). **8.12** The Midianite army is stampeded in the desert terrain by the loss of two kings. **8.13–17** Gideon is as good as his word. **8.18–21** These verses would follow well after v. 12. **8.18** *Tabor*. Nothing has prepared for this reference. **8.19** Gideon is pursuing a blood feud. Private vengeance usurps a prerogative of the Lord (Deut 32.35; cf. Rom 12.19). *As the LORD lives*, or "By the life of the LORD." Gideon rides roughshod over a basic covenant stipulation (Ex 20.7; Deut 5.11). **8.20** *Jether . . . a boy*. Similar narrative sympathy is accorded Jotham, the youngest son of Gideon, in 9.7–21.

grandson also; for you have delivered us
out of the hand of Midian." 23 Gideon said
to them, "I will not rule over you, and my
son will not rule over you; the LORD will
rule over you." 24 Then Gideon said to
them, "Let me make a request of you;
each of you give me an earring he has
taken as booty." (For the enemy[b] had
golden earrings, because they were Ish-
maelites.) 25 "We will willingly give them,"
they answered. So they spread a garment,
and each threw into it an earring he had
taken as booty. 26 The weight of the
golden earrings that he requested was one
thousand seven hundred shekels of gold
(apart from the crescents and the pen-
dants and the purple garments worn by
the kings of Midian, and the collars that
were on the necks of their camels). 27 Gid-
eon made an ephod of it and put it in his
town, in Ophrah; and all Israel prosti-
tuted themselves to it there, and it became
a snare to Gideon and to his family. 28 So
Midian was subdued before the Israelites,
and they lifted up their heads no more. So
the land had rest forty years in the days of
Gideon.

Death of Gideon

29 Jerubbaal son of Joash went to live
in his own house. 30 Now Gideon had sev-
enty sons, his own offspring, for he had
many wives. 31 His concubine who was in
Shechem also bore him a son, and he
named him Abimelech. 32 Then Gideon
son of Joash died at a good old age, and
was buried in the tomb of his father Joash
at Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

33 As soon as Gideon died, the Israel-
ites relapsed and prostituted themselves
with the Baals, making Baal-berith their
god. 34 The Israelites did not remember
the LORD their God, who had rescued
them from the hand of all their enemies
on every side; 35 and they did not exhibit
loyalty to the house of Jerubbaal (that is,
Gideon) in return for all the good that he
had done to Israel.

Abimelech Attempts to Establish a Monarchy

9 Now Abimelech son of Jerubbaal
went to Shechem to his mother's
kinsfolk and said to them and to the
whole clan of his mother's family, 2 "Say in
the hearing of all the lords of Shechem,
'Which is better for you, that all seventy of
the sons of Jerubbaal rule over you, or
that one rule over you?' Remember also
that I am your bone and your flesh." 3 So
his mother's kinsfolk spoke all these

b Heb *they*

8.22–28 Declining an offer to rule the Israelites, Gideon requests contributions of booty to make an elaborate divinatory device. **8.22** *Rule over us*, Hebrew *mashal* (not *malak*, "be king"). The rule was to be dynastic: *you and your son and your grandson*. **8.24** *Ishmaelites* were "related" to Israel through Abraham's son by Hagar (Gen 16). Midianites were related to Israel through Abraham's second wife, Keturah (Gen 25.1–4). **8.27** *Ephod*, an elaborate vestment worn only by the chief priest. It had a "breastpiece of judgment" with a pocket for the sacred dice, Urim and Thummim (Ex 28; 39). Gideon's ephod may have cloaked an idol (cf. 17.4–5) used in oracle seeking (1 Sam 23.9–12; 30.7–8). *Israel prostituted themselves* echoes 2.17; *snare* echoes 2.3. In contrast with preceding judges, Gideon is still alive when apostasy resumes and is faulted for it. Allegedly rejecting the idea of dynastic rule, he covets the means of religiopolitical control over Israel. **8.28** The *rest* formula (3.11, 30; 5.31) occurs here for the last time. **8.29–32** Transition describing the political "family" of Gideon, *seventy sons* and *many wives*. **8.31** *Concubine*, a legitimate wife of secondary rank. **8.33–35** Compiler's introduction to the story of Abimelech's reign at Shechem, which interrupts the familiar framework pattern (apostasy; punishment; crying out; deliverance; see note on 2.11–23). **8.33** *Baal-berith*, Hebrew, "Lord of the Covenant," more likely "Covenant Baal," standing for the exploitative misuse of religion at Shechem, where the deity also has the name El-berith ("Covenant God") in 9.46.

9.1–57 Abimelech becomes commander in Israel, king of the Shechem city-state, and agent of Shechem's destruction. This story is the centerpiece of the Josian edition of the Deuteronomistic History (Dtr 1; see Introduction), which begins with polemic against Bethel (2.1–5) and ends with polemic against Dan (chs. 17–18), thus eliminating all strong contenders with Jerusalem for domination of Israel. **9.1** *Abimelech*, in Hebrew means "My Father is King," perhaps referring to God as Father. The name occurs thirty-one times in the chapter, strongly implying the narrator's contempt for its bearer. **9.2** *Lords of Shechem*, local elite, evoking a political system common to the Bronze Age. *Seventy* is a politically symbolic number; cf. Abdon's seventy sons and grandsons (12.14). Many of Gideon's *sons* would be brothers or half brothers. Appeal to *bone and ... flesh* manipulates a covenantal metaphor (Gen 2.23).

words on his behalf in the hearing of all
the lords of Shechem; and their hearts in-
clined to follow Abimelech, for they said,
"He is our brother." 4 They gave him sev-
enty pieces of silver out of the temple of
Baal-berith with which Abimelech hired
worthless and reckless fellows, who fol-
lowed him. 5 He went to his father's house
at Ophrah, and killed his brothers the
sons of Jerubbaal, seventy men, on one
stone; but Jotham, the youngest son of
Jerubbaal, survived, for he hid himself.
6 Then all the lords of Shechem and all
Beth-millo came together, and they went
and made Abimelech king, by the oak of
the pillar[c] at Shechem.

The Parable of the Trees

7 When it was told to Jotham, he went
and stood on the top of Mount Gerizim,
and cried aloud and said to them, "Listen
to me, you lords of Shechem, so that God
may listen to you.

8 The trees once went out
to anoint a king over
themselves.
So they said to the olive tree,
'Reign over us.'
9 The olive tree answered them,
'Shall I stop producing my
rich oil
by which gods and mortals
are honored,
and go to sway over the
trees?'
10 Then the trees said to the fig
tree,
'You come and reign over us.'
11 But the fig tree answered them,
'Shall I stop producing my
sweetness
and my delicious fruit,
and go to sway over the
trees?'
12 Then the trees said to the vine,
'You come and reign over us.'
13 But the vine said to them,
'Shall I stop producing my wine
that cheers gods and mortals,
and go to sway over the
trees?'
14 So all the trees said to the
bramble,
'You come and reign over us.'
15 And the bramble said to the
trees,
'If in good faith you are
anointing me king
over you,
then come and take refuge in
my shade;
but if not, let fire come out of
the bramble
and devour the cedars of
Lebanon.'

16 "Now therefore, if you acted in
good faith and honor when you made
Abimelech king, and if you have dealt
well with Jerubbaal and his house, and
have done to him as his actions deserved
— 17 for my father fought for you, and
risked his life, and rescued you from the
hand of Midian; 18 but you have risen up
against my father's house this day, and
have killed his sons, seventy men on one
stone, and have made Abimelech, the son
of his slave woman, king over the lords of
Shechem, because he is your kinsman —
19 if, I say, you have acted in good faith
and honor with Jerubbaal and with his
house this day, then rejoice in Abimelech,
and let him also rejoice in you; 20 but if
not, let fire come out from Abimelech,
and devour the lords of Shechem, and
Beth-millo; and let fire come out from the
lords of Shechem, and from Beth-millo,
and devour Abimelech." 21 Then Jotham
ran away and fled, going to Beer, where

c Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain

9.4 The massive *temple* at Shechem would double as a fortress. **9.5** Jotham survived in hiding, like the young Gideon (6.11). **9.6** *Beth-millo*, Hebrew, possibly "House of the Fill," may be named for a huge earthen platform supporting Shechem's fortress-temple. Jerusalem also had a "Millo" (2 Sam 5.9; 1 Kings 9.15). *The oak of the pillar*. The Hebrew text is problematical. Cf. Gen 35.4; Josh 24.26.

9.7–21 From a promontory on Mount Gerizim, Jotham denounces the deal with a scathing antimonarchical allegory or parable (vv. 8–15) and a curse (vv. 16–20). **9.8–15** Cf. the imagery and literary form of 2 Kings 14.9; 2 Chr 25.18. The *olive*, *fig*, and *vine* are all content to be themselves, for the benefit and enjoyment of humankind. Only the worthless *bramble*, good only for burning, aspires to power. **9.16–20** It is perhaps not monarchy in principle, but monarchy founded on theft and murder, that Jotham denounces. **9.21** *Beer*, Hebrew "well," a common place-name.

he remained for fear of his brother
Abimelech.

The Downfall of Abimelech

22 Abimelech ruled over Israel three
years. 23 But God sent an evil spirit be-
tween Abimelech and the lords of She-
chem; and the lords of Shechem dealt
treacherously with Abimelech. 24 This
happened so that the violence done to the
seventy sons of Jerubbaal might be
avenged[d] and their blood be laid on their
brother Abimelech, who killed them, and
on the lords of Shechem, who strength-
ened his hands to kill his brothers. 25 So,
out of hostility to him, the lords of She-
chem set ambushes on the mountain tops.
They robbed all who passed by them
along that way; and it was reported to
Abimelech.

26 When Gaal son of Ebed moved into
Shechem with his kinsfolk, the lords of
Shechem put confidence in him. 27 They
went out into the field and gathered the
grapes from their vineyards, trod them,
and celebrated. Then they went into the
temple of their god, ate and drank, and
ridiculed Abimelech. 28 Gaal son of Ebed
said, "Who is Abimelech, and who are we
of Shechem, that we should serve him?
Did not the son of Jerubbaal and Zebul
his officer serve the men of Hamor father
of Shechem? Why then should we serve
him? 29 If only this people were under my
command! Then I would remove Abime-
lech; I would say[e] to him, 'Increase your
army, and come out.' "

30 When Zebul the ruler of the city
heard the words of Gaal son of Ebed, his
anger was kindled. 31 He sent messengers
to Abimelech at Arumah,[f] saying, "Look,
Gaal son of Ebed and his kinsfolk have
come to Shechem, and they are stirring
up[g] the city against you. 32 Now there-
fore, go by night, you and the troops that
are with you, and lie in wait in the fields.
33 Then early in the morning, as soon as
the sun rises, get up and rush on the city;
and when he and the troops that are with
him come out against you, you may deal
with them as best you can."

34 So Abimelech and all the troops
with him got up by night and lay in wait
against Shechem in four companies.
35 When Gaal son of Ebed went out and
stood in the entrance of the gate of the
city, Abimelech and the troops with him
rose from the ambush. 36 And when Gaal
saw them, he said to Zebul, "Look, people
are coming down from the mountain
tops!" And Zebul said to him, "The shad-
ows on the mountains look like people to
you." 37 Gaal spoke again and said, "Look,
people are coming down from Tabbur-
erez, and one company is coming from
the direction of Elon-meonenim."[h]
38 Then Zebul said to him, "Where is your
boast[i] now, you who said, 'Who is Abim-
elech, that we should serve him?' Are not
these the troops you made light of?
Go out now and fight with them." 39 So
Gaal went out at the head of the lords of

d Heb *might come* *e* Gk: Heb *and he said*
f Cn See 9.41. Heb *Tormah* *g* Cn: Heb *are besieging* *h* That is *Diviners' Oak* *i* Heb *mouth*

9.22–33 Abimelech's downfall begins with dissension in the city, God's way of bringing Abimelech and his collaborators to justice (vv. 22–25), followed by the return of Gaal, a native Shechemite, who arouses the citizenry to an older loyalty to the city-state (vv. 26–33). **9.22** *Abimelech ruled*, as military commander (the Hebrew verb *sarar* is used rather than one based on the root *mlk*, "rule-as-king"), *over Israel*. Israel and Israelites are mentioned elsewhere in connection with Abimelech only in 8.33–35; 9.55. Abimelech's rule is a local affair, lasting *three years*. **9.23** Split loyalty is Abimelech's undoing. *Evil spirits* from God, rare in scripture, stand generally for the unexplainable, such as Saul's mental breakdown (1 Sam 16.14). **9.24** God's purpose is to bring the appropriate consequences upon both parties to the crime. **9.25** With lookouts for Abimelech posted, the Shechem elite take to plundering the caravans in a striking inversion of the situation in the Song of Deborah (5.6–8). **9.26–33** Conspiracy in the city during the vintage festival centers in the temple. **9.26** *Gaal son of Ebed*, in Hebrew possibly "loathsome son of a slave," an obviously distorted name. **9.28** The NRSV obscures the particulars of Gaal's speech, which objects to Abimelech's half-breed Shechemite status and appears to base its appeal on genealogical purity. The Shechemites are urged to *serve the men of Hamor father of Shechem* (see Gen 33.19; 34.6). **9.30** *Zebul*, Hebrew "Exalted (One)," or "Big Shot." **9.34–41** A surprise attack puts Gaal to flight. **9.37** *Tabbur-erez*, Hebrew, "The Navel of the Land," is a mythic designation for the temple location, a narrow east-west pass between Mounts Gerizim and Ebal emptying into the broader north-south plain. *Elon-meonenim*, Hebrew, "Diviner's Oak," possibly

Shechem, and fought with Abimelech.
40 Abimelech chased him, and he fled be-
fore him. Many fell wounded, up to the
entrance of the gate. 41 So Abimelech re-
sided at Arumah; and Zebul drove out
Gaal and his kinsfolk, so that they could
not live on at Shechem.

42 On the following day the people
went out into the fields. When Abimelech
was told, 43 he took his troops and divided
them into three companies, and lay in
wait in the fields. When he looked and
saw the people coming out of the city, he
rose against them and killed them.
44 Abimelech and the company that was[j]
with him rushed forward and stood at the
entrance of the gate of the city, while the
two companies rushed on all who were in
the fields and killed them. 45 Abimelech
fought against the city all that day; he
took the city, and killed the people that
were in it; and he razed the city and
sowed it with salt.

46 When all the lords of the Tower of
Shechem heard of it, they entered the
stronghold of the temple of El-berith.
47 Abimelech was told that all the lords of
the Tower of Shechem were gathered to-
gether. 48 So Abimelech went up to Mount
Zalmon, he and all the troops that were
with him. Abimelech took an ax in his
hand, cut down a bundle of brushwood,
and took it up and laid it on his shoulder.
Then he said to the troops with him,
"What you have seen me do, do quickly,
as I have done." 49 So every one of the
troops cut down a bundle and following
Abimelech put it against the stronghold,
and they set the stronghold on fire over
them, so that all the people of the Tower
of Shechem also died, about a thousand
men and women.

50 Then Abimelech went to Thebez,
and encamped against Thebez, and took
it. 51 But there was a strong tower within
the city, and all the men and women and
all the lords of the city fled to it and shut
themselves in; and they went to the roof
of the tower. 52 Abimelech came to the
tower, and fought against it, and came
near to the entrance of the tower to burn
it with fire. 53 But a certain woman threw
an upper millstone on Abimelech's head,
and crushed his skull. 54 Immediately he
called to the young man who carried his
armor and said to him, "Draw your sword
and kill me, so people will not say about
me, 'A woman killed him.'" So the young
man thrust him through, and he died.
55 When the Israelites saw that Abimelech
was dead, they all went home. 56 Thus
God repaid Abimelech for the crime he
committed against his father in killing his
seventy brothers; 57 and God also made all
the wickedness of the people of Shechem
fall back on their heads, and on them
came the curse of Jotham son of
Jerubbaal.

Tola and Jair

10 After Abimelech, Tola son of
Puah son of Dodo, a man of Issa-
char, who lived at Shamir in the hill coun-
try of Ephraim, rose to deliver Israel. 2 He

j Vg and some Gk Mss: Heb *companies that were*

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the *oak of the pillar* in v. 6. **9.42–45** An ambush of farm families at work and Shechem's demise. Excavations have uncovered a massive destruction of the city dating from the early to mid-twelfth century B.C.E. **9.45** *Sowed it with salt,* perhaps put it under a curse. **9.46–49** Another account emphasizes the destruction of the temple and conspirators. **9.46** The *Tower of Shechem,* probably an alternative designation for *Beth-millo* (v. 6) and *temple of El-berith.* **9.48** *Zalmon,* Hebrew, "Dark One," probably Ebal, mountain of the covenantal curses (Deut 27.11–26; Josh 8.30–35). **9.49** *Stronghold,* some part of the temple, perhaps a tower. **9.50–57** Abimelech's demise. **9.50** No offense of *Thebez* is specified. **9.51** *A strong tower,* apparently another fortress-temple, like the one at Shechem destroyed by Abimelech and the one at Penuel destroyed by Gideon (8.9, 17). **9.53** The tactic that worked at Shechem is foiled at Thebez by an anonymous woman, whose achievement is ironically in light of v. 54, the one thing elsewhere remembered about Abimelech (see 2 Sam 11.21). **9.54** *Draw your sword . . . killed him.* Cf. Saul's orders to his armor bearer (1 Sam 31.4). **9.56–57** Editor's confessional conclusion, corresponding to the theological introduction to Abimelech in 8.33–35. **9.57** *Curse of Jotham,* i.e., the covenantal curse as expounded by Jotham.

10.1–5 These verses describe two "minor" judges. Like those in 12.7–15 (with the exception of Jephthah), they are said to have *judged Israel,* but no narratives survive about them. **10.1–2** *Tola,* possibly meaning "Worm" in Hebrew. *Shamir,* a reference to Samaria? In what sense Tola *delivered Israel* is unclear. Perhaps, *after Abimelech,* what was needed was *twenty-three years* of continuously effective intertribal leadership.

judged Israel twenty-three years. Then he
died, and was buried at Shamir.
3 After him came Jair the Gileadite,
who judged Israel twenty-two years. 4 He
had thirty sons who rode on thirty don-
keys; and they had thirty towns, which are
in the land of Gilead, and are called
Havvoth-jair to this day. 5 Jair died, and
was buried in Kamon.

Oppression by the Ammonites

6 The Israelites again did what was
evil in the sight of the LORD, worshiping
the Baals and the Astartes, the gods of
Aram, the gods of Sidon, the gods of
Moab, the gods of the Ammonites, and
the gods of the Philistines. Thus they
abandoned the LORD, and did not wor-
ship him. 7 So the anger of the LORD was
kindled against Israel, and he sold them
into the hand of the Philistines and into
the hand of the Ammonites, 8 and they
crushed and oppressed the Israelites that
year. For eighteen years they oppressed
all the Israelites that were beyond the Jor-
dan in the land of the Amorites, which is
in Gilead. 9 The Ammonites also crossed
the Jordan to fight against Judah and
against Benjamin and against the house
of Ephraim; so that Israel was greatly
distressed.
10 So the Israelites cried to the LORD,
saying, "We have sinned against you, be-
cause we have abandoned our God and
have worshiped the Baals." 11 And the
LORD said to the Israelites, "Did I not de-
liver you[k] from the Egyptians and from
the Amorites, from the Ammonites and
from the Philistines? 12 The Sidonians
also, and the Amalekites, and the Maon-
ites, oppressed you; and you cried to me,
and I delivered you out of their hand.
13 Yet you have abandoned me and wor-
shiped other gods; therefore I will deliver
you no more. 14 Go and cry to the gods
whom you have chosen; let them deliver
you in the time of your distress." 15 And
the Israelites said to the LORD, "We have
sinned; do to us whatever seems good to
you; but deliver us this day!" 16 So they
put away the foreign gods from among
them and worshiped the LORD; and he
could no longer bear to see Israel suffer.
17 Then the Ammonites were called
to arms, and they encamped in Gilead;
and the Israelites came together, and they
encamped at Mizpah. 18 The commanders
of the people of Gilead said to one an-
other, "Who will begin the fight against
the Ammonites? He shall be head over all
the inhabitants of Gilead."

k Heb lacks *Did I not deliver you*

The years of service of the "minor judges" are stated precisely, not in round numbers as in the preceding chronological notices. **10.3–5** *Jair*, in Hebrew "He Enlightens," was a powerful chief in *Gilead* (north-central Transjordan). Kinship language, *thirty sons*, denotes subtribal alignments, which fluctuated over time. The Greek text credits Jair with thirty-two sons, while 1 Chr 2.22 credits him with twenty-three towns. Elsewhere the *Havvoth-jair*, "Villages of Jair," are located with reference to either Gilead (1 Kings 4.13) or Bashan (Josh 13.30).

10.6–18 These verses resume the framework cycle (see note on 2.11–23). Oppression by the Ammonites in Transjordan is the setting for Jephthah's career, here given an elaborate and ironic introduction by a Deuteronomistic narrator (see Introduction). **10.6** *The Baals and the Astartes*. See note on 2.11–13. Among the states and peoples named, only *Sidon* has not already been mentioned, unless it is a parallel for *Canaan* in 4.2. *Ammonites*. See 3.13. **10.7** *Philistines* recalls Shamgar (3.31) and the probable opposition of Sea Peoples to Deborah and Barak (chs. 4–5). The link between the two groups is probably political; archaeological evidence indicates that Philistines extended their influence into Transjordan. **10.8** Oppression centers in contested territory that Israel had acquired from Sihon of the *Amorites* (11.8–22; cf. Deut 2.24–37; Num 21.21–30). **10.9** *Ammonites* also invaded the western highlands of *Judah*, *Benjamin*, and *Ephraim*. **10.10–14** The pattern described by 2.11–23 is here interrupted for a third dramatic confrontation between Israel and the deity; see *the angel of the LORD* (2.1–5) and *a prophet* (6.7–10). Israel's appeal has become a conditioned reflex. Now *the LORD* deals directly. The response, *let them deliver you*, ironically recalls the urging of Joash that Baal be allowed to fend for himself (6.31). **10.15–16** Genuine repentance, nowhere else explicit in Judges, evokes the Lord's compassion for Israel's suffering. **10.17–18** *Ammonites were called to arms*, technical language, as in Barak's muster (4.10) and Gideon's muster (6.35; 7.23–24). The *Israelites* merely *came together*. **10.18** The *commanders* offer a new title, *head over all*, to whoever will assume leadership.

Jephthah

11 Now Jephthah the Gileadite, the
son of a prostitute, was a mighty
warrior. Gilead was the father of Jeph-
thah. 2 Gilead's wife also bore him sons;
and when his wife's sons grew up, they
drove Jephthah away, saying to him, "You
shall not inherit anything in our father's
house; for you are the son of another
woman." 3 Then Jephthah fled from his
brothers and lived in the land of Tob.
Outlaws collected around Jephthah and
went raiding with him.

4 After a time the Ammonites made
war against Israel. 5 And when the Am-
monites made war against Israel, the el-
ders of Gilead went to bring Jephthah
from the land of Tob. 6 They said to Jeph-
thah, "Come and be our commander, so
that we may fight with the Ammonites."
7 But Jephthah said to the elders of Gil-
ead, "Are you not the very ones who re-
jected me and drove me out of my father's
house? So why do you come to me now
when you are in trouble?" 8 The elders of
Gilead said to Jephthah, "Nevertheless,
we have now turned back to you, so that
you may go with us and fight with the
Ammonites, and become head over us,
over all the inhabitants of Gilead." 9 Jeph-
thah said to the elders of Gilead, "If you
bring me home again to fight with the
Ammonites, and the LORD gives them
over to me, I will be your head." 10 And
the elders of Gilead said to Jephthah,
"The LORD will be witness between us; we
will surely do as you say." 11 So Jephthah
went with the elders of Gilead, and the
people made him head and commander
over them; and Jephthah spoke all his
words before the LORD at Mizpah.

12 Then Jephthah sent messengers to
the king of the Ammonites and said,
"What is there between you and me, that
you have come to me to fight against my
land?" 13 The king of the Ammonites an-
swered the messengers of Jephthah, "Be-
cause Israel, on coming from Egypt, took
away my land from the Arnon to the
Jabbok and to the Jordan; now there-
fore restore it peaceably." 14 Once again
Jephthah sent messengers to the king of
the Ammonites 15 and said to him: "Thus
says Jephthah: Israel did not take away
the land of Moab or the land of the Am-
monites, 16 but when they came up from
Egypt, Israel went through the wilderness
to the Red Sea[l] and came to Kadesh.
17 Israel then sent messengers to the king
of Edom, saying, 'Let us pass through
your land'; but the king of Edom would
not listen. They also sent to the king of
Moab, but he would not consent. So Is-
rael remained at Kadesh. 18 Then they

l Or *Sea of Reeds*

11.1–11 Jephthah is presented in contrast to Gideon and Abimelech by the circumstances of his birth, his expulsion by his half brothers, and his mercenary associates. Kinship language is used literally in vv. 1–3 but reflects political and military reality in the old story that follows (vv. 4–11). **11.1** *Jephthah is a mighty warrior*, like Gideon (6.11–12); but Jephthah's wealth is uninherited. **11.3** *Tob*, a Syrian town (2 Sam 10.6–8). *Outlaws* echoes 9.4. **11.6** *Commander*, not Hebrew *sar* (10.18) but *gasin*, a ranking officer (Josh 10.24). **11.7–8** Elders increase the ante by using the term *head* (Hebrew *ro'sh*). Perhaps *gasin* (see note on 11.6) refers to a temporary role, field commander, while *ro'sh* refers to a permanent post, tribal chief. **11.9–11** To conclude the negotiations, Jephthah speaks *words before the LORD*. Effective bestowal of the office awaits the Lord's ratification of the proceedings. *The LORD will be witness* echoes the Hebrew of the opening to Jotham's parable concerning Abimelech's leadership (9.7). The *Mizpah* (Hebrew, "Lookout," or "Watchtower") of Transjordan lay somewhere not far south of the Jabbok. **11.12–28** This is the only narrative of Israelite diplomacy in Judges and is one of the clearest examples of the genre of the sovereign's indictment (Hebrew *riv*, a root meaning "strive," "contend," or more technically "to conduct a lawsuit," as in the name "Jerubbaal," lit. "Let Baal Contend"). Two delegations are sent. The first (vv. 12–13) addresses a brief, direct question, receives an equally brief, direct answer, and goes home. The second (vv. 14–27) makes elaborate appeal to historical precedent in response to the answer given to the first delegation and receives no reply. **11.12** *Ammon* was a small territorial state at the desert fringe; it first emerged in the twelfth century B.C.E. and expanded westward into territory in which Moab on the south and Sihon on the north had also vied for control. **11.15–27** For the epic tradition of Israel's journey from Egypt, see Num 21. **11.15** *The land of Moab* and *the land of the Ammonites*, land once occupied by Moab and here claimed by Ammon. The king of Ammon apparently makes his claim in the name of Moabite sovereignty, since Israelite claims would antedate his own. **11.18** Texts referring to the

journeyed through the wilderness, went
around the land of Edom and the land of
Moab, arrived on the east side of the land
of Moab, and camped on the other side of
the Arnon. They did not enter the terri-
tory of Moab, for the Arnon was the
boundary of Moab. 19 Israel then sent
messengers to King Sihon of the Amo-
rites, king of Heshbon; and Israel said to
him, 'Let us pass through your land to our
country.' 20 But Sihon did not trust Israel
to pass through his territory; so Sihon
gathered all his people together, and en-
camped at Jahaz, and fought with Israel.
21 Then the LORD, the God of Israel, gave
Sihon and all his people into the hand of
Israel, and they defeated them; so Israel
occupied all the land of the Amorites,
who inhabited that country. 22 They occu-
pied all the territory of the Amorites from
the Arnon to the Jabbok and from the wil-
derness to the Jordan. 23 So now the
LORD, the God of Israel, has conquered
the Amorites for the benefit of his people
Israel. Do you intend to take their place?
24 Should you not possess what your god
Chemosh gives you to possess? And
should we not be the ones to possess ev-
erything that the LORD our God has con-
quered for our benefit? 25 Now are you
any better than King Balak son of Zippor
of Moab? Did he ever enter into conflict
with Israel, or did he ever go to war with
them? 26 While Israel lived in Heshbon
and its villages, and in Aroer and its vil-
lages, and in all the towns that are along
the Arnon, three hundred years, why did
you not recover them within that time?
27 It is not I who have sinned against you,
but you are the one who does me wrong
by making war on me. Let the LORD, who
is judge, decide today for the Israelites or
for the Ammonites." 28 But the king of the
Ammonites did not heed the message that
Jephthah sent him.

Jephthah's Vow

29 Then the spirit of the LORD came
upon Jephthah, and he passed through
Gilead and Manasseh. He passed on to
Mizpah of Gilead, and from Mizpah of
Gilead he passed on to the Ammonites.
30 And Jephthah made a vow to the LORD,
and said, "If you will give the Ammonites
into my hand, 31 then whoever comes out
of the doors of my house to meet me,
when I return victorious from the Am-
monites, shall be the LORD's, to be offered
up by me as a burnt offering." 32 So Jeph-
thah crossed over to the Ammonites to
fight against them; and the LORD gave
them into his hand. 33 He inflicted a mas-
sive defeat on them from Aroer to the
neighborhood of Minnith, twenty towns,
and as far as Abel-keramim. So the Am-
monites were subdued before the people
of Israel.

Jephthah's Daughter

34 Then Jephthah came to his home
at Mizpah; and there was his daughter

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premonarchical period agree that *the Arnon was the boundary of Moab*; contested territory lay north of the Arnon. **11.19–21** See Num 21.21–24. **11.19** *Heshbon*. Excavations at Tell Hesban found no evidence for a town of the thirteenth to twelfth century B.C.E. *Sihon*'s capital may have been elsewhere. **11.20** Jephthah cites how, in connection with another area, Israel fought only when negotiations failed. **11.24** *Chemosh* was god of Moab, not Ammon, suggesting to some scholars that an account of a conflict against Moab has been clumsily redrafted as one against Ammon. **11.25** In Num 22–24 a major theme is the great labor exerted to communicate with *King Balak son of Zippor of Moab. Enter into conflict*, i.e., "contend" through diplomacy (Hebrew *riv*; cf. note on 11.12–28). **11.26** *Three hundred years* may reflect the book's chronology. The years of oppression and successive judges thus far, excluding eighteen Ammonite and Philistine years (10.8), total 301. **11.27** Both the noun *judge* (used only here in Judges) and the verb *decide* share the Hebrew root *shpt*. Cf. 1 Sam 24.15. **11.29** The influence of *the spirit of the LORD* here, as in 3.10, contrasts with its influence in 6.34, where Gideon overreacts. **11.30–31** Though Jephthah is respected as one who exhausted all diplomatic channels before taking the field, he has a tragic flaw: a penchant for making deals, even with the Lord. Is his vow hastily worded? Instead of *whoever*, Jephthah may have intended "whatever." Standard plans of Iron Age houses accommodated livestock as well as family. **11.33** *Aroer*, *Minnith*, and *Abel-keramim* were all located in the district west of Rabbah Ammon. **11.34–40** Human sacrifice was known but not condoned in Israel (2 Kings 16.3; Ezek 20.25–26.31; cf. Gen 22). **11.34** This verse describes a traditional role of women, singing after victory (Ex 15.20–21) to welcome the victors home (1 Sam 18.6–7). Cf. the Song of Deborah,

coming out to meet him with timbrels and
with dancing. She was his only child; he
had no son or daughter except her.
35 When he saw her, he tore his clothes,
and said, "Alas, my daughter! You have
brought me very low; you have become
the cause of great trouble to me. For I
have opened my mouth to the LORD, and
I cannot take back my vow." 36 She said to
him, "My father, if you have opened your
mouth to the LORD, do to me according to
what has gone out of your mouth, now
that the LORD has given you vengeance
against your enemies, the Ammonites."
37 And she said to her father, "Let this
thing be done for me: Grant me two
months, so that I may go and wander[m] on
the mountains, and bewail my virginity,
my companions and I." 38 "Go," he said
and sent her away for two months. So she
departed, she and her companions, and
bewailed her virginity on the mountains.
39 At the end of two months, she returned
to her father, who did with her according
to the vow he had made. She had never
slept with a man. So there arose an Israel-
ite custom that 40 for four days every year
the daughters of Israel would go out to
lament the daughter of Jephthah the
Gileadite.

Intertribal Dissension

12 The men of Ephraim were called
to arms, and they crossed to Za-
phon and said to Jephthah, "Why did you
cross over to fight against the Ammonites,
and did not call us to go with you? We will
burn your house down over you!" 2 Jeph-
thah said to them, "My people and I were
engaged in conflict with the Ammonites
who oppressed us[n] severely. But when I
called you, you did not deliver me from
their hand. 3 When I saw that you would
not deliver me, I took my life in my hand,
and crossed over against the Ammonites,
and the LORD gave them into my hand.
Why then have you come up to me this
day, to fight against me?" 4 Then Jeph-
thah gathered all the men of Gilead and
fought with Ephraim; and the men of Gil-
ead defeated Ephraim, because they said,
"You are fugitives from Ephraim, you
Gileadites—in the heart of Ephraim and
Manasseh."[o] 5 Then the Gileadites took
the fords of the Jordan against the Ephra-
imites. Whenever one of the fugitives of
Ephraim said, "Let me go over," the men
of Gilead would say to him, "Are you an
Ephraimite?" When he said, "No," 6 they
said to him, "Then say Shibboleth," and
he said, "Sibboleth," for he could not pro-
nounce it right. Then they seized him and
killed him at the fords of the Jordan.
Forty-two thousand of the Ephraimites
fell at that time.
7 Jephthah judged Israel six years.

m Cn: Heb *go down* *n* Gk OL, Syr H: Heb lacks *who oppressed us* *o* Meaning of Heb uncertain: Gk omits *because . . . Manasseh*

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especially 5.28–30. **11.36** The vow once made is irrevocable. Jephthah's daughter speaks wisdom. **11.37–40** To die a virgin was to die childless. Women friends grieve with Jephthah's daughter, establishing precedent for an annual ritual of remembrance, otherwise unknown.

12.1–7 Final episodes from the career of Jephthah were added as a sequel, loosely joined to the preceding sections. **12.1–4** The powerful West Bank tribe of *Ephraim* initiates hostilities with Gilead. Jephthah reacts vigorously. **12.1** The editor understood the Ephraimites to have raised their objection at least two months after Jephthah's victory (see 11.37–39). The Ephraimites claim to have been excluded from the muster of forces against the Ammonites; this is essentially the same complaint they made to Gideon in the Midianite crisis (8.1). **12.2** Jephthah more literally responds, "I was a *riv* man," i.e., one using diplomacy (Hebrew *riv*; see note on 11.12–28). The translation *engaged in conflict* obscures the referent. *I called you.* The stories offer no clear support for Jephthah's counterclaim. **12.3** The argument ends with a question, *Why . . . fight against me?*, as did the unsuccessful negotiations with the Ammonite king (11.26). **12.4** The taunt presented as the cause of war is unclear. **12.5–6** Jephthah is not mentioned in this puzzling conclusion to his story. **12.5** The *fugitives* were presumably escapees from the battle in v. 4. **12.6** The test does not turn on the uncertain meaning of the word *Shibboleth* but on regional differences in pronunciation. *Forty-two thousand* is better understood as forty-two "military units" (see note on 1.4).

12.7 This information links Jephthah with the list of "minor judges" (10.1–5; 12.7–15) into which the stories of the Ammonite crisis were inserted.

Then Jephthah the Gileadite died, and was buried in his town in Gilead.[p]

Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon

8 After him Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel. 9 He had thirty sons. He gave his thirty daughters in marriage outside his clan and brought in thirty young women from outside for his sons. He judged Israel seven years. 10 Then Ibzan died, and was buried at Bethlehem.

11 After him Elon the Zebulunite judged Israel; and he judged Israel ten years. 12 Then Elon the Zebulunite died, and was buried at Aijalon in the land of Zebulun.

13 After him Abdon son of Hillel the Pirathonite judged Israel. 14 He had forty sons and thirty grandsons, who rode on seventy donkeys; he judged Israel eight years. 15 Then Abdon son of Hillel the Pirathonite died, and was buried at Pirathon in the land of Ephraim, in the hill country of the Amalekites.

The Birth of Samson

13 The Israelites again did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD gave them into the hand of the Philistines forty years.

2 There was a certain man of Zorah, of the tribe of the Danites, whose name was Manoah. His wife was barren, having borne no children. 3 And the angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, "Although you are barren, having borne no children, you shall conceive and bear a son. 4 Now be careful not to drink wine or strong drink, or to eat anything unclean, 5 for you shall conceive and bear a son. No razor is to come on his head, for the boy shall be a nazirite[q] to God from birth. It is he who shall begin to deliver Israel from the hand of the Philistines." 6 Then the woman came and told her husband, "A man of God came to me, and his appearance was like that of an angel[r] of God, most awe-inspiring; I did not ask

p Gk: Heb *in the towns of Gilead* q That is *one separated* or *one consecrated* r Or *the angel*

12.8 *Ibzan*, Hebrew, "Swift." The name is otherwise unknown. If the book is organized around twelve judges (one per tribe), *Bethlehem* may be not the famous little town south of Jerusalem but one located in Lower Galilee, about seven miles northwest of Nazareth, near Zebulun's border with Asher (Josh 19.15). **12.9** *Thirty* is a political number, as in 10.4. Numerous "progeny" stand for effective, wide-ranging control as tribal chief. **12.11–12** *Elon*, "Oak" or "Terebinth," a "son" of Zebulun in epic tradition (Gen 46.14; Num 26.26). These verses may be etymological, explaining Elon's name as derived from that of the town where he resided, *Aijalon* (spelled identically to Elon in the early Hebrew script). **12.13** *Abdon* is otherwise unknown. **12.14** *Forty sons and thirty grandsons* is a surprising regression, unless the numbers stand for declining political effectiveness, thus anticipating the need for another deliverer-judge. *Pirathon in ... Ephraim* is probably modern Far'ata, about five miles west-southwest of Shechem, near the border with Manasseh.

13.1–16.31 The Samson stories have no close parallel in Judges. They are rowdy tales from the old frontier with Philistia, reflecting Dan's inability to take control of the coastal plain (see 1.34; ch. 18). Samson's primary pursuits, however, are amorous. For injuries to his vanity he kills many Philistines, but he is not a deliverer of Israel or any Israelite tribe. He is presented as a tragicomic example of selfishly wasted brute strength and, ironically, as an unwitting instrument of God.

13.1–25 The birth story focuses on Samson's unnamed mother's perceptiveness and her collaboration with the Lord. **13.1** *Philistines* were Sea Peoples from the Aegean and Asia Minor who settled the southern coast of Canaan in the twelfth century B.C.E., not long after the reconstitution of Israel in the highlands. **13.2** *Zorah* is in the Shephelah, the foothills near Dan's border with Judah. The *Danites* here are a "clan" (Hebrew *mishpacha*), not yet (or perhaps no longer) having the dimensions of a *tribe*. *Manoah*, "Rest," a root also found in the name Noah, is head of his village sodality. **13.3** *The angel of the LORD* was last met in 6.11–24, engaged in another recruitment mission. There are many echoes of the Gideon and Jephthah materials in the Samson stories. **13.4–5** *Nazirite*, any Israelite man or woman taking special vows of consecration to God according to rules such as those in Num 6.1–21. The highly militant Nazirites were known in later years as tenaciously conservative proponents of the early Israelite life-style. Here the rule of the Nazirite volunteer is delightfully adapted and urged as prenatal care for Samson, who would begin the liberation of Israel from the Philistines. Cf. 1 Sam 1.11, where Hannah initiates the proposal and promises that her son will be both priest and Nazirite. **13.6** *A man of God ... angel of God*. As repeatedly happens in 6.11–24, participants speak

him where he came from, and he did not
tell me his name; 7 but he said to me, 'You
shall conceive and bear a son. So then
drink no wine or strong drink, and eat
nothing unclean, for the boy shall be a
nazirite[s] to God from birth to the day of
his death.' "

8 Then Manoah entreated the LORD,
and said, "O LORD, I pray, let the man of
God whom you sent come to us again and
teach us what we are to do concerning the
boy who will be born." 9 God listened to
Manoah, and the angel of God came
again to the woman as she sat in the field;
but her husband Manoah was not with
her. 10 So the woman ran quickly and told
her husband, "The man who came to me
the other day has appeared to me." 11 Manoah got up and followed his wife, and
came to the man and said to him, "Are
you the man who spoke to this woman?"
And he said, "I am." 12 Then Manoah
said, "Now when your words come true,
what is to be the boy's rule of life; what is
he to do?" 13 The angel of the LORD said
to Manoah, "Let the woman give heed to
all that I said to her. 14 She may not eat of
anything that comes from the vine. She is
not to drink wine or strong drink, or eat
any unclean thing. She is to observe everything that I commanded her."

15 Manoah said to the angel of the
LORD, "Allow us to detain you, and prepare a kid for you." 16 The angel of the
LORD said to Manoah, "If you detain me,
I will not eat your food; but if you want to
prepare a burnt offering, then offer it to
the LORD." (For Manoah did not know
that he was the angel of the LORD.)
17 Then Manoah said to the angel of the
LORD, "What is your name, so that we may
honor you when your words come true?"
18 But the angel of the LORD said to him,
"Why do you ask my name? It is too
wonderful."

19 So Manoah took the kid with the
grain offering, and offered it on the rock
to the LORD, to him who works[t] wonders.[u] 20 When the flame went up toward
heaven from the altar, the angel of the
LORD ascended in the flame of the altar
while Manoah and his wife looked on;
and they fell on their faces to the ground.
21 The angel of the LORD did not appear
again to Manoah and his wife. Then Manoah realized that it was the angel of the
LORD. 22 And Manoah said to his wife,
"We shall surely die, for we have seen
God." 23 But his wife said to him, "If the
LORD had meant to kill us, he would not
have accepted a burnt offering and a
grain offering at our hands, or shown us
all these things, or now announced to us
such things as these."

24 The woman bore a son, and named
him Samson. The boy grew, and the LORD
blessed him. 25 The spirit of the LORD began to stir him in Mahaneh-dan, between
Zorah and Eshtaol.

Samson's Marriage

14 Once Samson went down to Timnah, and at Timnah he saw a
Philistine woman. 2 Then he came up, and
told his father and mother, "I saw a Philistine woman at Timnah; now get her for

s That is *one separated* or *one consecrated*
t Gk Vg: Heb *and working* u Heb *wonders, while Manoah and his wife looked on*

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more truly than they know. **13.7** The mother's breathless recounting of the interview makes no mention of the prohibition of haircuts. A Nazirite's hair was cut when the consecration was complete and the Nazirite returned to secular life. **13.8–14** Manoah requires a second visit from God's envoy but learns nothing more. **13.15–23** See Gideon's similar hospitality to God's envoy (6.19–21). Like Gideon (6.36–40), Manoah requires a sign. **13.18** *Too wonderful*, i.e., beyond comprehension. **13.19** *Works wonders*. The Lord is known for "doing wonders" (Ex 15.11). **13.22** *We shall surely die*. Cf. Gideon's exclamation in 6.22. **13.23** Again, not the panicky Manoah but the unnamed wife speaks common sense. **13.24** *Samson*'s name is related to the Hebrew *shemesh* ("sun"), meaning something like "man of Shamash." The ending may be diminutive: "Little Sun," or "Sunny." *The boy grew, and the Lord blessed him*. Cf. 1 Sam 2.26; Lk 2.52. **13.25** Mention of *the spirit of the LORD* is anticipatory. It will be substantiated by the incidents in ch. 14 displaying Samson's physical prowess. *Mahaneh-dan*, Hebrew, "Camp of Dan."

14.1–20 These verses tell the story of Samson's first love. **14.1–3** These verses come to a peak with Samson's point-blank directive: *get her for me*. **14.1** *Timnah*, Hebrew, "Allotted Portion," is probably Tell el-Batashi, four miles north of Beth-shemesh, "House/Temple of the Sun-god." The Alexandrian Greek text continues: "and she was the right one in his eyes." The concept of acting rightly in one's own eyes is reiterated in 17.6 and 21.25 as the book draws to a

me as my wife." 3 But his father and
mother said to him, "Is there not a woman
among your kin, or among all our[v] people,
that you must go to take a wife from
the uncircumcised Philistines?" But Sam-
son said to his father, "Get her for me,
because she pleases me." 4 His father and
mother did not know that this was from
the LORD; for he was seeking a pretext to
act against the Philistines. At that time the
Philistines had dominion over Israel.

5 Then Samson went down with his
father and mother to Timnah. When he
came to the vineyards of Timnah, sud-
denly a young lion roared at him. 6 The
spirit of the LORD rushed on him, and he
tore the lion apart barehanded as one
might tear apart a kid. But he did not tell
his father or his mother what he had
done. 7 Then he went down and talked
with the woman, and she pleased Samson.
8 After a while he returned to marry her,
and he turned aside to see the carcass of
the lion, and there was a swarm of bees in
the body of the lion, and honey. 9 He
scraped it out into his hands, and went on,
eating as he went. When he came to his
father and mother, he gave some to them,
and they ate it. But he did not tell them
that he had taken the honey from the car-
cass of the lion.

10 His father went down to the
woman, and Samson made a feast there as
the young men were accustomed to do.
11 When the people saw him, they brought
thirty companions to be with him. 12 Sam-
son said to them, "Let me now put a rid-
dle to you. If you can explain it to me
within the seven days of the feast, and
find it out, then I will give you thirty linen
garments and thirty festal garments.
13 But if you cannot explain it to me, then
you shall give me thirty linen garments
and thirty festal garments." So they said
to him, "Ask your riddle; let us hear it."
14 He said to them,

"Out of the eater came something
to eat.
Out of the strong came
something sweet."

But for three days they could not explain
the riddle.

15 On the fourth[w] day they said to
Samson's wife, "Coax your husband to ex-
plain the riddle to us, or we will burn you
and your father's house with fire. Have
you invited us here to impoverish us?"
16 So Samson's wife wept before him, say-
ing, "You hate me; you do not really love
me. You have asked a riddle of my peo-
ple, but you have not explained it to me."
He said to her, "Look, I have not told my
father or my mother. Why should I tell
you?" 17 She wept before him the seven
days that their feast lasted; and because
she nagged him, on the seventh day he
told her. Then she explained the riddle to
her people. 18 The men of the town said
to him on the seventh day before the sun
went down,

"What is sweeter than honey?

v Cn: Heb *my* w Gk Syr: Heb *seventh*

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close. **14.3** Philistines, so far as we know, were the only *uncircumcised* people in Israel's near vicinity. The reason for disapproval here is not simply the absence of the rite but the dual loyalty portended. **14.4** This verse is an explanation inserted between story segments. In this case, an action contrary to basic Israelite standards is actually part of the divine plan. **14.5–10a** These verses are framed by an *inclusio* (a repetition signaling the beginning and end of a unit): first Samson and later his father *went down*. **14.6** *The spirit of the LORD* could equip Samson to face any physical threat. **14.8–9** *Bees*, Hebrew *deborim*, evokes comparison with Deborah. *Honey* was regarded as having the potential to enlighten and to give courage (1 Sam 14.24–30). **14.10a** *His father went down*, presumably to negotiate the marriage agreement. Ancient Near Eastern evidence describes a type of marriage in which the bride continued to live with her parents rather than join her husband at his family or clan location. Perhaps the tale of Samson suggests such a marital arrangement. **14.10b–20** These verses show how the marriage is providentially annulled. **14.10b–14** Samson's lavish style of entertainment was not characteristic of all Israelite *young men* (Hebrew *bachurim*, "chosen" or "choice" ones who composed a military elite). Few families could afford it. **14.11** The combination of Samson's social position and physical stature was apparently enough to arouse suspicion and to recommend surveillance. **14.15** *Wife*. Hebrew makes no distinction between "wife" and "woman." It was a legal marriage, for when Samson abandoned the woman they were legally divorced, as becomes clear in the next scene. At this point, however, the divine plan for Samson to defeat the Philistines (13.5) is nearly foiled by the liberal allowance in Israelite law for exemptions from military service for the newly betrothed (Deut 20.7) or newly married (Deut 24.5). **14.18** The text uses a rare word for *sun*, Hebrew *charsah*, apparently to avoid

What is stronger than a lion?"
And he said to them,
"If you had not plowed with my heifer,
you would not have found out my riddle."
19 Then the spirit of the LORD rushed on him, and he went down to Ashkelon. He killed thirty men of the town, took their spoil, and gave the festal garments to those who had explained the riddle. In hot anger he went back to his father's house. 20 And Samson's wife was given to his companion, who had been his best man.

Samson Defeats the Philistines

15 After a while, at the time of the wheat harvest, Samson went to visit his wife, bringing along a kid. He said, "I want to go into my wife's room." But her father would not allow him to go in. 2 Her father said, "I was sure that you had rejected her; so I gave her to your companion. Is not her younger sister prettier than she? Why not take her instead?" 3 Samson said to them, "This time, when I do mischief to the Philistines, I will be without blame." 4 So Samson went and caught three hundred foxes, and took some torches; and he turned the foxes[x] tail to tail, and put a torch between each pair of tails. 5 When he had set fire to the torches, he let the foxes go into the standing grain of the Philistines, and burned up the shocks and the standing grain, as well as the vineyards and[y] olive groves. 6 Then the Philistines asked, "Who has done this?" And they said, "Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he has taken Samson's wife and given her to his companion." So the Philistines came up, and burned her and her father. 7 Samson said to them, "If this is what you do, I swear I will not stop until I have taken revenge on you." 8 He struck them down hip and thigh with great slaughter; and he went down and stayed in the cleft of the rock of Etam.

9 Then the Philistines came up and encamped in Judah, and made a raid on Lehi. 10 The men of Judah said, "Why have you come up against us?" They said, "We have come up to bind Samson, to do to him as he did to us." 11 Then three thousand men of Judah went down to the cleft of the rock of Etam, and they said to Samson, "Do you not know that the Philistines are rulers over us? What then have you done to us?" He replied, "As they did to me, so I have done to them." 12 They said to him, "We have come down to bind you, so that we may give you into the hands of the Philistines." Samson answered them, "Swear to me that you yourselves will not attack me." 13 They said to

x Heb *them* y Gk Tg Vg: Heb lacks *and*

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confusion with the common word *shemesh* in Samson's name (see note on 13.24). **14.20** The *best man*, Samson's *companion*, was presumably another Timnite, but not one of the thirty who had been chosen for him.

15.1–8 Some time later, Samson is in Timnah once again. The outraged father of the young woman explains that it had looked like divorce to him, but he tries to make the best of a bad situation by suggesting that the younger sister is better anyway. **15.1** A *kid* is a prostitute's negotiated fee in Gen 38.17. **15.2** The father has performed an irreparable act in giving his daughter to another; she cannot return to Samson under any conditions (Deut 24.1–4). For Samson to deny that he has divorced her would only compound the hopelessness of the situation by making her an adulteress. **15.7** Samson will have *revenge*. The Hebrew root used here, *nqm*, long stood exclusively for divine prerogative (Deut 32.35), the idea being to remove vengeance (self-help, taking the law into one's own hands) from the human scene. **15.8** *Hip and thigh* may be a wrestler's term. There were probably feats of strength to be witnessed when the people gathered to be entertained and edified by such material as the Samson cycle. *Etam*, in Hebrew possibly "Place of Birds of Prey." The meaning of the name may be more important than the location of the place, which is uncertain.

15.9–20 Samson's single-handed victory against an entire Philistine military unit and his extreme thirst afterwards precipitate a direct confrontation with the Lord. **15.9** *Lehi*, Hebrew, "Jawbone," was probably in the vicinity of Bethshemesh. **15.10** *Men of Judah*. This is the first hint given in the exploits of Samson that more is at stake than the situation of one man's family. Samson has left home, plundered Philistines, and found a hideout in territory controlled by the tribe of Judah, which must handle the extradition. **15.11–13** At last Samson is the man in the middle, contending with Philistine belligerence and Judahite servility. He is willing to take his

him, "No, we will only bind you and give you into their hands; we will not kill you." So they bound him with two new ropes, and brought him up from the rock.

14 When he came to Lehi, the Philistines came shouting to meet him; and the spirit of the LORD rushed on him, and the ropes that were on his arms became like flax that has caught fire, and his bonds melted off his hands. 15 Then he found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, reached down and took it, and with it he killed a thousand men. 16 And Samson said,

"With the jawbone of a donkey,
heaps upon heaps,
with the jawbone of a donkey
I have slain a thousand men."

17 When he had finished speaking, he threw away the jawbone; and that place was called Ramath-lehi.[z]

18 By then he was very thirsty, and he called on the LORD, saying, "You have granted this great victory by the hand of your servant. Am I now to die of thirst, and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised?" 19 So God split open the hollow place that is at Lehi, and water came from it. When he drank, his spirit returned, and he revived. Therefore it was named En-hakkore,[a] which is at Lehi to this day. 20 And he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years.

Samson and Delilah

16 Once Samson went to Gaza, where he saw a prostitute and went in to her. 2 The Gazites were told,[b] "Samson has come here." So they circled around and lay in wait for him all night at the city gate. They kept quiet all night, thinking, "Let us wait until the light of the morning; then we will kill him." 3 But Samson lay only until midnight. Then at midnight he rose up, took hold of the doors of the city gate and the two posts, pulled them up, bar and all, put them on his shoulders, and carried them to the top of the hill that is in front of Hebron.

4 After this he fell in love with a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. 5 The lords of the Philistines came to her and said to her, "Coax him, and find out what makes his strength so great, and how we may overpower him,

z That is *The Hill of the Jawbone* *a* That is *The Spring of the One who Called* *b* Gk: Heb lacks *were told*

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chances with the Philistines rather than exercise his great strength against his Israelite brothers. **15.14** We are to picture Samson with his hands tied, walking straight into a pack of Philistines clamoring for revenge and suddenly manifesting *the spirit of the LORD*, as in 14.6. There the demonstration of the spirit was providential; here it is salvific, to keep Samson alive. **15.15** A sickle made of an animal *jawbone* fitted with flint teeth might double as a formidable weapon, enabling Samson to disable an entire posse. A *thousand* is most implausible (see note on 1.4). **15.16** This Song of Samson is an archaic poetic fragment, with repetitive parallelism, and is much older than the prose story. **15.17** *Ramath-lehi*, Hebrew, "Jawbone's Height." Samson's story explains the name of the Lehi area, where the fight occurred. **15.18** *He called on the LORD*. The verb is not the recurring technical one of the framework (Hebrew root *tz/z'q*, translated *cried out/cried* in 3.9, 15; 4.3; 6.7; 10.10), but *qr'*, the ordinary word for "called." It is, at last, a direct address to the deity, and it has impressive results. *Your servant* is not merely a polite form of address; see note on 2.8. Samson is the only one in the book to speak this way. *Uncircumcised* echoes the usage of his father and mother (14.3), as he repays the Philistines, insult for insult (15.6). But here he is, in a way, pleading for life. That is what he gets. **15.19** *The hollow place*, apparently a rocky spring. *Revived*, better translated "came alive." En-hakkore, lit. "Spring of the Caller," thus receives a new etymology. **15.20** Having shown Samson at last in direct communication with the LORD, the narrator can now say that he *judged Israel ... twenty years* (possibly a round number for a generation). The repetition of this formula in 16.31 suggests that an early rendition of the Samson cycle (pre-Deuteronomistic; see Introduction) probably ended here.

16.1–31 Three stories answer the question: What became of Samson the Israelite judge? **16.1–3** Another tale of lusty Samson's enormous strength. **16.1** *Gaza*, one of five major Philistine cities on the southern coastal plain. **16.3** Exaggeration underscores Samson's brute strength. It is forty miles uphill from Gaza to *Hebron*, where David was later elevated as king. **16.4–22** These verses show many similarities with the story of Samson's first love (ch. 14). **16.4** The *valley of Sorek*, Hebrew, "Vineyard Valley," begins about thirteen miles southwest of Jerusalem. We are not told whether *Delilah* (possibly "Flirtatious" in Hebrew) is Philistine or Israelite. **16.5** *The lords*

so that we may bind him in order to subdue him; and we will each give you eleven hundred pieces of silver." 6 So Delilah said to Samson, "Please tell me what makes your strength so great, and how you could be bound, so that one could subdue you." 7 Samson said to her, "If they bind me with seven fresh bowstrings that are not dried out, then I shall become weak, and be like anyone else." 8 Then the lords of the Philistines brought her seven fresh bowstrings that had not dried out, and she bound him with them. 9 While men were lying in wait in an inner chamber, she said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" But he snapped the bowstrings, as a strand of fiber snaps when it touches the fire. So the secret of his strength was not known.

10 Then Delilah said to Samson, "You have mocked me and told me lies; please tell me how you could be bound." 11 He said to her, "If they bind me with new ropes that have not been used, then I shall become weak, and be like anyone else." 12 So Delilah took new ropes and bound him with them, and said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" (The men lying in wait were in an inner chamber.) But he snapped the ropes off his arms like a thread.

13 Then Delilah said to Samson, "Until now you have mocked me and told me lies; tell me how you could be bound." He said to her, "If you weave the seven locks of my head with the web and make it tight with the pin, then I shall become weak, and be like anyone else." 14 So while he slept, Delilah took the seven locks of his head and wove them into the web,[c] and made them tight with the pin. Then she said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" But he awoke from his sleep, and pulled away the pin, the loom, and the web.

15 Then she said to him, "How can you say, 'I love you,' when your heart is not with me? You have mocked me three times now and have not told me what makes your strength so great." 16 Finally, after she had nagged him with her words day after day, and pestered him, he was tired to death. 17 So he told her his whole secret, and said to her, "A razor has never come upon my head; for I have been a nazirite[d] to God from my mother's womb. If my head were shaved, then my strength would leave me; I would become weak, and be like anyone else."

18 When Delilah realized that he had told her his whole secret, she sent and called the lords of the Philistines, saying, "This time come up, for he has told his whole secret to me." Then the lords of the Philistines came up to her, and brought the money in their hands. 19 She let him fall asleep on her lap; and she called a man, and had him shave off the seven locks of his head. He began to weaken,[e] and his strength left him. 20 Then she said, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" When he awoke from his sleep, he thought, "I will go out as at other times, and shake myself free." But he did not know that the LORD had left him. 21 So the Philistines seized him and gouged out his eyes. They brought him down to Gaza and bound him with bronze shackles; and he ground at the mill in the prison. 22 But the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaved.

c Compare Gk: in verses 13-14, Heb lacks *and make it tight . . . into the web* d That is *one separated* or *one consecrated* e Gk: Heb *She began to torment him*

(better "tyrants") *of the Philistines*, a title imported from their Aegean homeland. **16.6–17** While Samson teases, Delilah pouts and pesters. Samson is trapped into squandering his great strength, unable to believe that she would betray him. Samson's "explanation" of his strength is not always clear. **16.7** Naming *fresh bowstrings*, i.e., inferior unprocessed gut, may be an appeal to belief in the efficacy of magic. **16.11** *New ropes* is anticipated by the extradition scene (15.13). **16.13–14** In the most curious of the efforts to destroy Samson's strength, Delilah weaves his hair into the warp on her loom. This may represent a resort to stronger magic. **16.15–17** Return to the truth. **16.15** The *heart*, very important for emotional matters, was also the seat of mind and will. Delilah accuses Samson of not trusting her. **16.16** *He was tired to death*. Cf. the feelings of Elijah (1 Kings 19.4) and Jonah (Jon 4.8); those prophets were so exasperated with God that each requested death, using the same idiom. **16.17** Cf. 13.5, 7. The plot revolves around a vow that had never been taken seriously. Nazirite status was voluntary, but the Nazirite rule means so little to Samson that he can put it in the same category with the other superstitions. The cutting of the Nazirite's hair symbolized discharge from the duties of the vow (Num 6.13–20). **16.22** With a new head of hair,

Samson's Death

23 Now the lords of the Philistines
gathered to offer a great sacrifice to their
god Dagon, and to rejoice; for they said,
"Our god has given Samson our enemy
into our hand." 24 When the people saw
him, they praised their god; for they said,
"Our god has given our enemy into our
hand, the ravager of our country, who has
killed many of us." 25 And when their
hearts were merry, they said, "Call Sam-
son, and let him entertain us." So they
called Samson out of the prison, and he
performed for them. They made him
stand between the pillars; 26 and Samson
said to the attendant who held him by the
hand, "Let me feel the pillars on which
the house rests, so that I may lean against
them." 27 Now the house was full of men
and women; all the lords of the Philistines
were there, and on the roof there were
about three thousand men and women,
who looked on while Samson performed.
28 Then Samson called to the LORD
and said, "Lord GOD, remember me and
strengthen me only this once, O God, so
that with this one act of revenge I may pay
back the Philistines for my two eyes."[f]
29 And Samson grasped the two middle
pillars on which the house rested, and he
leaned his weight against them, his right
hand on the one and his left hand on the
other. 30 Then Samson said, "Let me die
with the Philistines." He strained with all
his might; and the house fell on the lords
and all the people who were in it. So those
he killed at his death were more than
those he had killed during his life.
31 Then his brothers and all his family
came down and took him and brought
him up and buried him between Zorah
and Eshtaol in the tomb of his father Ma-
noah. He had judged Israel twenty years.

Micah and the Levite

17 There was a man in the hill coun-
try of Ephraim whose name was
Micah. 2 He said to his mother, "The
eleven hundred pieces of silver that were
taken from you, about which you uttered
a curse, and even spoke it in my hearing,
—that silver is in my possession; I took it;
but now I will return it to you."[g] And his
mother said, "May my son be blessed by
the LORD!" 3 Then he returned the eleven
hundred pieces of silver to his mother;
and his mother said, "I consecrate the sil-
ver to the LORD from my hand for my
son, to make an idol of cast metal." 4 So
when he returned the money to his

f Or *so that I may be avenged upon the Philistines for one of my two eyes* g The words *but now I will return it to you* are transposed from the end of verse 3 in Heb

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Samson might reenlist. **16.23–31** The final Samson story centers on his last-minute reenlistment and momentary settling of accounts during festival time at a Philistine temple. **16.23** *Dagon*, sometimes known as the father of Baal, was a Canaanite god of rain and fertility, especially of grain, with temples at two Philistine cities, Gaza and Ashdod (see 1 Sam 5.1–5). **16.26** *Attendant* (Hebrew *na'ar*, "young man") evokes an image of the elite warrior's squire who appeared in the stories of Gideon (7.10) and Abimelech (9.54) and who, upon the latter's request, assisted him to an honorable death. **16.27** The *roof* may refer to some neighboring structure, or even a nearby hill, from which most of the spectators watched the proceedings. **16.28** *Lord GOD*. See 6.22. *O God*. Samson pleads with God, in contrast to his sarcastic outburst at Ramath-lehi (15.18). He seeks retribution, which he will achieve in his death. **16.29** The main hall of a Philistine temple excavated at Tell Qasile was a long room with two wooden *pillars* set on round stone bases along the center axis. **16.31** *He had judged*, perfect tense, in contrast to the past tense in 15.20, is the mark of an ancient editor's insertion of material. King Josiah's historian (Dtr 1; see Introduction) doubtless drew a moral from the story: Israel would be safe as long as Israel's leaders truly turned to the Lord.

17.1–18.31 These chapters resume the polemic against northern sanctuaries; see note on 9.1–57. Ch. 17 preserves two background stories about the migration of Dan and the origin of its priesthood. **17.1–5** Ironic portrayal of *Micah*, a maker of images whose name means "Who Is Like Yahweh?" **17.1** The *hill country of Ephraim*, the north-central highlands. **17.2** *Eleven hundred pieces of silver*, the same amount that each individual gave Delilah to betray Samson (16.5). Micah's mother forgets the crime in her response to the confession. The narrative style here is complex, because the narrator begins well past the midpoint in the action in order to highlight a discrepancy between the mother's pledge and her payment. **17.3** Images of any sort were outlawed by covenant stipulation (Ex 20.4–6; Deut

mother, his mother took two hundred
pieces of silver, and gave it to the silver-
smith, who made it into an idol of cast
metal; and it was in the house of Micah.
5 This man Micah had a shrine, and he
made an ephod and teraphim, and in-
stalled one of his sons, who became his
priest. 6 In those days there was no king in
Israel; all the people did what was right in
their own eyes.

7 Now there was a young man of
Bethlehem in Judah, of the clan of Judah.
He was a Levite residing there. 8 This man
left the town of Bethlehem in Judah, to
live wherever he could find a place. He
came to the house of Micah in the hill
country of Ephraim to carry on his
work.[h] 9 Micah said to him, "From where
do you come?" He replied, "I am a Levite
of Bethlehem in Judah, and I am going to
live wherever I can find a place." 10 Then
Micah said to him, "Stay with me, and be
to me a father and a priest, and I will give
you ten pieces of silver a year, a set of
clothes, and your living."[i] 11 The Levite
agreed to stay with the man; and the
young man became to him like one of his
sons. 12 So Micah installed the Levite, and
the young man became his priest, and was
in the house of Micah. 13 Then Micah
said, "Now I know that the LORD will
prosper me, because the Levite has be-
come my priest."

The Migration of Dan

18 In those days there was no king in
Israel. And in those days the tribe
of the Danites was seeking for itself a ter-
ritory to live in; for until then no territory
among the tribes of Israel had been allot-
ted to them. 2 So the Danites sent five val-
iant men from the whole number of their
clan, from Zorah and from Eshtaol, to spy
out the land and to explore it; and they
said to them, "Go, explore the land."
When they came to the hill country of
Ephraim, to the house of Micah, they
stayed there. 3 While they were at Micah's
house, they recognized the voice of the
young Levite; so they went over and
asked him, "Who brought you here? What
are you doing in this place? What is your
business here?" 4 He said to them, "Micah
did such and such for me, and he hired
me, and I have become his priest." 5 Then
they said to him, "Inquire of God that we
may know whether the mission we are un-
dertaking will succeed." 6 The priest re-
plied, "Go in peace. The mission you are
on is under the eye of the LORD."

7 The five men went on, and when
they came to Laish, they observed the
people who were there living securely, af-
ter the manner of the Sidonians, quiet

h Or *Ephraim, continuing his journey* *i* Heb *living, and the Levite went*

5.8–10). **17.5** *Ephod*, a priestly vestment. See 8.27. *Teraphim*, plural (see note on Gen 31.19), were used in divination, but here they are apparently identified with the *idol of cast metal* (v. 3). *One of his sons* looks ahead to the next unit, where a Levite becomes *like one of his sons* (v. 11) by contractual arrangement. **17.6** This transitional verse is repeated twice in part (18.1; 19.1) and once in its entirety, as the last word on the era (21.25). Here it describes an ominous situation involving a cultic opportunist and an exploitable careerist. **17.7–13** Dissatisfied with prospects at Bethlehem in Judah, a young Levite finds employment in the north as Micah's priest. **17.7** *Clan of Judah*. That Judah is a clan, not a "tribe," suggests a very early period, prior to Judah's consolidation. Though any Israelite male might exercise priestly functions, *Levites* were members of the priestly tribe, which had no territorial definition (see note on 5.14–18). Only much later did "Levite" become a designation for lower-ranking clergy. **17.10** The title *father* implies a priestly role as diviner (see 18.4–6). **17.13** *Now I know*. Micah clinches the deal, believing that he has, in effect, hired the Lord.

18.1–31 Resuming the subject of the final introductory note (1.34), this polemical story of Dan's northern migration and rival temple is much older than the Deuteronomistic framework. **18.1** A connectional verse implies how providential it was, in the premonarchical era, that the tribe of *Dan* (whose name in Hebrew means "He Judged") was ready to relocate. **18.2–10** The reconnaissance of the north is reminiscent of the Jericho spy story (Josh 2). **18.2** *Valiant men*, elite warriors. **18.3** The *voice* has a recognizable southern accent. **18.5** To *inquire of God* was to seek an oracle by consulting a diviner. **18.6** The answer assures a successful mission. **18.7** The people of *Laish* ("Lion") are *living securely*, i.e., "without defenses." Excavations have shown that the early Iron Age site of Dan was unwalled. Far from the *Sidonians* on the Phoenician coast, nonaligned with *Aram* on the north, the Laishans are minding their own business (v. 10). Laish looks like the ideal community Israel

and unsuspecting, lacking[j] nothing on
earth, and possessing wealth.[k] Further-
more, they were far from the Sidonians
and had no dealings with Aram.[l] 8When
they came to their kinsfolk at Zorah and
Eshtaol, they said to them, "What do you
report?" 9They said, "Come, let us go up
against them; for we have seen the land,
and it is very good. Will you do nothing?
Do not be slow to go, but enter in and
possess the land. 10When you go, you will
come to an unsuspecting people. The
land is broad—God has indeed given it
into your hands—a place where there is
no lack of anything on earth."

11 Six hundred men of the Danite
clan, armed with weapons of war, set out
from Zorah and Eshtaol, 12and went up
and encamped at Kiriath-jearim in Judah.
On this account that place is called
Mahaneh-dan[m] to this day; it is west of
Kiriath-jearim. 13From there they passed
on to the hill country of Ephraim, and
came to the house of Micah.

14 Then the five men who had gone
to spy out the land (that is, Laish) said to
their comrades, "Do you know that in
these buildings there are an ephod, tera-
phim, and an idol of cast metal? Now
therefore consider what you will do." 15So
they turned in that direction and came to
the house of the young Levite, at the
home of Micah, and greeted him. 16While
the six hundred men of the Danites,
armed with their weapons of war, stood
by the entrance of the gate, 17the five
men who had gone to spy out the land
proceeded to enter and take the idol of
cast metal, the ephod, and the teraphim.[n]
The priest was standing by the entrance
of the gate with the six hundred men
armed with weapons of war. 18When the
men went into Micah's house and took the
idol of cast metal, the ephod, and the tera-
phim, the priest said to them, "What are
you doing?" 19They said to him, "Keep
quiet! Put your hand over your mouth,
and come with us, and be to us a father
and a priest. Is it better for you to be
priest to the house of one person, or to be
priest to a tribe and clan in Israel?"
20Then the priest accepted the offer. He
took the ephod, the teraphim, and the
idol, and went along with the people.

21 So they resumed their journey,
putting the little ones, the livestock, and
the goods in front of them. 22When they
were some distance from the home of Mi-
cah, the men who were in the houses near
Micah's house were called out, and they
overtook the Danites. 23They shouted to
the Danites, who turned around and said
to Micah, "What is the matter that you
come with such a company?" 24He re-
plied, "You take my gods that I made, and
the priest, and go away, and what have I
left? How then can you ask me, 'What is
the matter?'" 25And the Danites said to
him, "You had better not let your voice
be heard among us or else hot-tempered
fellows will attack you, and you will lose
your life and the lives of your house-
hold." 26Then the Danites went their way.
When Micah saw that they were too strong
for him, he turned and went back to
his home.

j Cn Compare 18.10: Meaning of Heb uncertain
k Meaning of Heb uncertain *l* Symmachus: Heb *with anyone* *m* That is *Camp of Dan*
n Compare 17.4, 5; 18.14: Heb *teraphim and the cast metal*

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was meant to be. **18.9–10** The Danite assembly is spurred on by the report of the spies, so that what began as the prospect of peaceful resettlement in the north becomes the Lord's conquest of Micah's place (without bloodshed), followed by the Danites' unnecessary slaughter of the peaceable folk of Laish. **18.11–13** These verses explain the existence and location of *Mahaneh-dan*. *Six hundred* reads like an exaggeration, given that Dan is regarded as a *clan* (as is Judah in 17.7). **18.12** *Kiriath-jearim*, Hebrew, "Forestville," was a border town of the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Dan, lying northeast of Zorah and Eshtaol, and about eight miles northwest of Jerusalem. *On this account*, a late etymological note, perhaps meant to distinguish this "Camp of Dan" from the one in 13.25. **18.14–26** The Danites steal Micah's cult objects and entice away the priest. **18.14** The *teraphim* and *idol* are here distinct objects (cf. note on 17.5). **18.15** They *greeted him*, i.e., "asked about his well-being" (Hebrew *shalom*). **18.19** A *father and a priest*. See note on 17.10. In Num 26.42 the *tribe* of Dan consists of a single *clan*, which might consist of a town and its satellite villages. **18.25** Danites are caricatured as *hot-tempered*, lit. "bitter of soul," like a bear robbed of her cubs (2 Sam 17.8). **18.26** Micah went *back to his home*, like the Israelites after the "providential" demise of Abimelech (9.55).

The Danites Settle in Laish

27 The Danites, having taken what
Micah had made, and the priest who be-
longed to him, came to Laish, to a people
quiet and unsuspecting, put them to the
sword, and burned down the city.
28 There was no deliverer, because it was
far from Sidon and they had no dealings
with Aram.[o] It was in the valley that be-
longs to Beth-rehob. They rebuilt the city,
and lived in it. 29 They named the city
Dan, after their ancestor Dan, who was
born to Israel; but the name of the city
was formerly Laish. 30 Then the Danites
set up the idol for themselves. Jonathan
son of Gershom, son of Moses,[p] and his
sons were priests to the tribe of the Dan-
ites until the time the land went into cap-
tivity. 31 So they maintained as their own
Micah's idol that he had made, as long as
the house of God was at Shiloh.

The Levite's Concubine

19 In those days, when there was no
king in Israel, a certain Levite, re-
siding in the remote parts of the hill coun-
try of Ephraim, took to himself a
concubine from Bethlehem in Judah.
2 But his concubine became angry with[q]
him, and she went away from him to her
father's house at Bethlehem in Judah, and
was there some four months. 3 Then her
husband set out after her, to speak ten-
derly to her and bring her back. He had
with him his servant and a couple of don-
keys. When he reached[r] her father's
house, the girl's father saw him and came
with joy to meet him. 4 His father-in-law,
the girl's father, made him stay, and he
remained with him three days; so they ate
and drank, and he[s] stayed there. 5 On
the fourth day they got up early in the
morning, and he prepared to go; but the
girl's father said to his son-in-law, "Fortify
yourself with a bit of food, and after that
you may go." 6 So the two men sat and ate
and drank together; and the girl's father
said to the man, "Why not spend the night
and enjoy yourself?" 7 When the man got
up to go, his father-in-law kept urging
him until he spent the night there again.
8 On the fifth day he got up early in the
morning to leave; and the girl's father
said, "Fortify yourself." So they lingered[t]
until the day declined, and the two of
them ate and drank.[u] 9 When the man
with his concubine and his servant got up
to leave, his father-in-law, the girl's father,

o Cn Compare verse 7: Heb *with anyone* *p* Another reading is *son of Manasseh* *q* Gk OL: Heb *prostituted herself against* *r* Gk: Heb *she brought him* *s* Compare verse 7 and Gk: Heb *they* *t* Cn: Heb *Linger* *u* Gk: Heb lacks *and drank*

18.27–31 Dan's atrocious conquest of Laish and establishment of the notorious cult center. Micah's unholy cult was dismantled and intentionally exploited by the Danites on their way to the massacre of Laish's inhabitants. **18.28** *Far from Sidon . . . no dealings with Aram* echoes v. 7 for emphasis. **18.30** *Jonathan . . . Moses.* At last the priestly family is identified. In the Hebrew text a letter has been inserted to spell "Manasseh," avoiding the reference to Moses that implies idol worship on the part of his descendants. *Captivity* probably refers to the end of the Northern Kingdom and the removal of the Danites from that location after 721 B.C.E. **18.31** The Danite sanctuary is ironically devalued by reference to *Shiloh,* some ten miles north of Bethel, east of the main highway, regarded by King Josiah's historians as the one legitimate sanctuary in the premonarchical period. The Josian edition of Judges (Dtr 1; see Introduction) perhaps ended here.

19.1–21.25 Tragically misled, Israel reacts to the unspeakable outrage of gang rape and murder (ch. 19) in such a way as to compound the tragedy many times over. Civil war nearly obliterates the tribe of Benjamin (ch. 20). The final scenes, an ancient counterpart to modern theater of the absurd, show Israel maneuvering to recover from disastrous consequences of slavish reliance upon archaic institutions (ch. 21). These were old and painful memories, reworked by editors in exile (Dtr 2; see Introduction) when, once again, it was time for Israel to make a new start. **19.1** *No king in Israel* laments the lack of human kingship (17.6; 18.1) but also, by implication, Israel's dysfunctional confession of the Lord's sovereignty and governance by covenantal ethic. The story of a *Levite* from the *hill country of Ephraim* is a narrative inversion of the preceding story of a Levite from Bethlehem in the south (17.7). This northern Levite appears to be well established. He has a *concubine,* or wife of secondary rank, from Bethlehem. **19.2** Israelite law did not allow for divorce by the wife. She became an adulteress by walking out. **19.3** The husband seeks reconciliation, suggesting that she is the offended party. A *servant and a couple of donkeys* give the appearance of prosperous self-sufficiency, in contrast to the circumstances of the young Levite in ch. 17. **19.4–9** The father-in-law will be pleased to see his daughter return with her husband, but his

said to him, "Look, the day has worn on
until it is almost evening. Spend the night.
See, the day has drawn to a close. Spend
the night here and enjoy yourself. To-
morrow you can get up early in the morn-
ing for your journey, and go home."
10 But the man would not spend the
night; he got up and departed, and ar-
rived opposite Jebus (that is, Jerusalem).
He had with him a couple of saddled don-
keys, and his concubine was with him.
11 When they were near Jebus, the day
was far spent, and the servant said to his
master, "Come now, let us turn aside to
this city of the Jebusites, and spend the
night in it." 12 But his master said to him,
"We will not turn aside into a city of for-
eigners, who do not belong to the people
of Israel; but we will continue on to Gib-
eah." 13 Then he said to his servant,
"Come, let us try to reach one of these
places, and spend the night at Gibeah or
at Ramah." 14 So they passed on and went
their way; and the sun went down on
them near Gibeah, which belongs to Ben-
jamin. 15 They turned aside there, to go in
and spend the night at Gibeah. He went
in and sat down in the open square of the
city, but no one took them in to spend the
night.
16 Then at evening there was an old
man coming from his work in the field.
The man was from the hill country of
Ephraim, and he was residing in Gibeah.
(The people of the place were Benjamin-
ites.) 17 When the old man looked up and
saw the wayfarer in the open square of
the city, he said, "Where are you going
and where do you come from?" 18 He an-
swered him, "We are passing from Bethle-
hem in Judah to the remote parts of the
hill country of Ephraim, from which I
come. I went to Bethlehem in Judah; and
I am going to my home.[v] Nobody has of-
fered to take me in. 19 We your servants
have straw and fodder for our donkeys,
with bread and wine for me and the
woman and the young man along with us.
We need nothing more." 20 The old man
said, "Peace be to you. I will care for all
your wants; only do not spend the night
in the square." 21 So he brought him into
his house, and fed the donkeys; they
washed their feet, and ate and drank.

Gibeah's Crime

22 While they were enjoying them-
selves, the men of the city, a perverse lot,
surrounded the house, and started
pounding on the door. They said to the
old man, the master of the house, "Bring
out the man who came into your house, so
that we may have intercourse with him."
23 And the man, the master of the house,
went out to them and said to them, "No,
my brothers, do not act so wickedly. Since
this man is my guest, do not do this vile
thing. 24 Here are my virgin daughter and
his concubine; let me bring them out now.
Ravish them and do whatever you want to
them; but against this man do not do such
a vile thing." 25 But the men would not
listen to him. So the man seized his concu-
bine, and put her out to them. They wan-
tonly raped her, and abused her all
through the night until the morning. And

v Gk Compare 19.29. Heb *to the house of the* LORD

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hospitality will create a new crisis. **19.9** *Go home*, lit. "go to your tent." This term perhaps explains the Levite's reluctance to leave the lavish setting. **19.10** The narrator implies that they might have been safe and atrocity avoided at Canaanite *Jebus* (the pre-Israelite name for Jerusalem; see 1.21). **19.12** *Gibeah*, King Saul's hometown, a few miles north of Jerusalem. **19.16–21** The only resident of Gibeah to take up the obligation of hospitality is likewise from the Ephraimite hill country. The Levite meets with the same hospitality from the elderly Levite as he had received from his father-in-law in Bethlehem. **19.18** *Home*, possibly not a "tent" (see note on 19.9). **19.19** The Levite has feed for his donkeys and food and wine for his entire party. All he needs is a roof. **19.21** The traveler lets the old man do the foddering. **19.22–30** This story has striking similarities to that of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19.4–11). Both stories hinge on a breakdown or misuse of the obligation of hospitality. Also, the locals complain of Lot, "This fellow came here as an alien, and he would play the judge!" (Gen 19.9). Here the Levite will self-righteously elevate himself to the leadership role. **19.22** *They were enjoying themselves* verbally echoes 16.25, where the Philistine crowd demands that Samson entertain them. *Perverse lot*, hell-raisers, lit. "sons of Belial," a malicious character of the mythic underworld ("perdition" in Ps 18.4; 2 Sam 22.5–6). *Have intercourse*. The Hebrew root is *yd'*, "to know." With the offer of the young women (v. 24), the ambiguity disappears. **19.23–25** Here the obligation of hospitality is grotesquely acted out by the men for their own protection. **19.25** It is not clear which

as the dawn began to break, they let her
go. 26 As morning appeared, the woman
came and fell down at the door of the
man's house where her master was, until
it was light.
27 In the morning her master got up,
opened the doors of the house, and when
he went out to go on his way, there was his
concubine lying at the door of the house,
with her hands on the threshold. 28 "Get
up," he said to her, "we are going." But
there was no answer. Then he put her on
the donkey; and the man set out for his
home. 29 When he had entered his house,
he took a knife, and grasping his concu-
bine he cut her into twelve pieces, limb by
limb, and sent her throughout all the ter-
ritory of Israel. 30 Then he commanded
the men whom he sent, saying, "Thus
shall you say to all the Israelites, 'Has such
a thing ever happened[w] since the day that
the Israelites came up from the land of
Egypt until this day? Consider it, take
counsel, and speak out.' "

The Other Tribes Attack Benjamin

20 Then all the Israelites came out,
from Dan to Beer-sheba, includ-
ing the land of Gilead, and the congrega-
tion assembled in one body before the
LORD at Mizpah. 2 The chiefs of all the
people, of all the tribes of Israel, pre-
sented themselves in the assembly of the
people of God, four hundred thousand
foot-soldiers bearing arms. 3 (Now the
Benjaminites heard that the people of Is-
rael had gone up to Mizpah.) And the Is-
raelites said, "Tell us, how did this
criminal act come about?" 4 The Levite,
the husband of the woman who was mur-
dered, answered, "I came to Gibeah that
belongs to Benjamin, I and my concubine,
to spend the night. 5 The lords of Gibeah
rose up against me, and surrounded the
house at night. They intended to kill me,
and they raped my concubine until she
died. 6 Then I took my concubine and cut
her into pieces, and sent her throughout
the whole extent of Israel's territory; for
they have committed a vile outrage in Is-
rael. 7 So now, you Israelites, all of you,
give your advice and counsel here."
8 All the people got up as one, saying,
"We will not any of us go to our tents, nor
will any of us return to our houses. 9 But
now this is what we will do to Gibeah: we
will go up[x] against it by lot. 10 We will
take ten men of a hundred throughout all
the tribes of Israel, and a hundred of a
thousand, and a thousand of ten thou-
sand, to bring provisions for the troops,
who are going to repay[y] Gibeah of Benja-
min for all the disgrace that they have
done in Israel." 11 So all the men of Israel
gathered against the city, united as one.
12 The tribes of Israel sent men
through all the tribe of Benjamin, saying,
"What crime is this that has been commit-
ted among you? 13 Now then, hand over
those scoundrels in Gibeah, so that we
may put them to death, and purge the evil

w Compare Gk: Heb *30 And all who saw it said, "Such a thing has not happened or been seen* x Gk: Heb lacks *we will go up* y Compare Gk: Meaning of Heb uncertain

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man *seized his concubine, and put her out.* **19.28** *No answer.* The Greek text continues, "for she was dead," resolving the ambiguity. **19.29** *House* may be used sarcastically, to judge from the father-in-law's usage in v. 9, "tent"; see note on 19.9. The man's actions are a gross caricature of practices for raising an emergency force that appear elsewhere in the OT and other texts of the ancient Near East. Cf. Saul summoning the militia (with twelve parts of an ox; 1 Sam 11.7) and the prophet Ahijah dramatically announcing division of the kingdom (with twelve pieces of a garment; 1 Kings 11.30–39). This story will get worse before it gets better.

20.1–48 Cf. the assembly at Shechem (Josh 24) and the promissory oath of the tribes there. Here the assembly is stampeded into wrathful indignation by one man telling half of the truth. **20.1** *All the Israelites.* This phrase is used in the indictment at the outset (2.1–5) but nowhere else in Judges. In 8.27, after Gideon had likewise used the militia to pursue private vengeance, *all Israel* prostituted itself at his ephod. *From Dan to Beer-sheba,* from the northern to the southern limits of Israel. *Mizpah,* Hebrew, "Lookout" or "Watchtower," probably Tell en-Nasbeh, eight miles north of Jerusalem. **20.5** The Levite's testimony, enlarging the threat to himself, passes over his own culpability in surrendering the concubine. **20.10** *Ten men . . . the troops.* A 10 percent quota of eligible men, anticipating that one-tenth will be needed as a quartermaster corps, is plausible. In Num 1.36–37 Benjamin counted thirty-five units totaling four hundred. On another occasion Benjamin's quota was forty-five units totaling six hundred (Num 26.38–41). **20.11** *All the men of Israel* are *united* as never before in the book, except at Gideon's ephod (8.27).

from Israel." But the Benjaminites would
not listen to their kinsfolk, the Israelites.
14 The Benjaminites came together out of
the towns to Gibeah, to go out to battle
against the Israelites. 15 On that day the
Benjaminites mustered twenty-six thou-
sand armed men from their towns, be-
sides the inhabitants of Gibeah. 16 Of all
this force, there were seven hundred
picked men who were left-handed; every
one could sling a stone at a hair, and not
miss. 17 And the Israelites, apart from
Benjamin, mustered four hundred thou-
sand armed men, all of them warriors.

18 The Israelites proceeded to go up
to Bethel, where they inquired of God,
"Which of us shall go up first to battle
against the Benjaminites?" And the LORD
answered, "Judah shall go up first."

19 Then the Israelites got up in the
morning, and encamped against Gibeah.
20 The Israelites went out to battle against
Benjamin; and the Israelites drew up the
battle line against them at Gibeah. 21 The
Benjaminites came out of Gibeah, and
struck down on that day twenty-two thou-
sand of the Israelites. 23[z] The Israelites
went up and wept before the LORD until
the evening; and they inquired of the
LORD, "Shall we again draw near to battle
against our kinsfolk the Benjaminites?"
And the LORD said, "Go up against them."
22 The Israelites took courage, and again
formed the battle line in the same place
where they had formed it on the first day.

24 So the Israelites advanced against
the Benjaminites the second day. 25 Benja-
min moved out against them from Gibeah
the second day, and struck down eighteen
thousand of the Israelites, all of them
armed men. 26 Then all the Israelites, the
whole army, went back to Bethel and
wept, sitting there before the LORD; they
fasted that day until evening. Then they
offered burnt offerings and sacrifices of
well-being before the LORD. 27 And the Is-
raelites inquired of the LORD (for the ark
of the covenant of God was there in those
days, 28 and Phinehas son of Eleazar, son
of Aaron, ministered before it in those
days), saying, "Shall we go out once more
to battle against our kinsfolk the Benja-
minites, or shall we desist?" The LORD an-
swered, "Go up, for tomorrow I will give
them into your hand."

29 So Israel stationed men in ambush
around Gibeah. 30 Then the Israelites
went up against the Benjaminites on the
third day, and set themselves in array
against Gibeah, as before. 31 When the
Benjaminites went out against the army,
they were drawn away from the city. As
before they began to inflict casualties on
the troops, along the main roads, one of
which goes up to Bethel and the other to
Gibeah, as well as in the open country,
killing about thirty men of Israel. 32 The
Benjaminites thought, "They are being
routed before us, as previously." But the
Israelites said, "Let us retreat and draw
them away from the city toward the
roads." 33 The main body of the Israelites
drew back its battle line to Baal-tamar,
while those Israelites who were in ambush

z Verses 22 and 23 are transposed

20.15–16 Considering the odds against Benjamin, we should probably understand *twenty-six thousand* as twenty-six military units, totaling *seven hundred* individuals (see notes on 1.4; 20.10), who were able to hold out against the entire militia because they were all superb marksmen. **20.18** *Bethel*, Hebrew, "House of God," may refer instead to a sanctuary at Mizpah (see v. 23). *Which of us . . . first* is the same question as in 1.1. *Judah* is chosen, as in 1.2, but here it is chosen for civil war. **20.21** *Struck down*, lit., "ruined on the ground," "made ineffective." The same idiom describes Onan's action (Gen 38.9). It does not describe the total loss of *twenty-two* units but indicates enough damage to force their retreat. **20.22–23** If the location is a sanctuary at Mizpah, these verses should not be transposed as the NRSV suggests (see text note *z*). **20.22** *Place*, or "holy place," as in 2.5. **20.25** The collapse of another *eighteen* units (a total of forty in two battles) appears nearly catastrophic. Like Gideon's force against the Midianites (7.2–8), the Israelite army is reduced to a decimated level so that victory can only be attributed to the Lord. **20.26–28** *Bethel* is the proper place of inquiry because *the ark of the covenant of God was there*, ironically in the keeping of a northern *Aaronite* priest. *Phinehas* is an Egyptian name meaning "The Black Man." Only here do the Israelites ask the prior question, *Shall we go*, and only here is the response reliable: *tomorrow I will give them into your hand.* **20.29–43** Two accounts of the victory are given (vv. 29–36; 37–43). There are strong resemblances to the takeover of Ai (Josh 8), where ambush was the Lord's strategy. **20.31** *About thirty men*. This figure, the actual casualties on one occasion, is important for perspective on the numbers elsewhere in the chapter. **20.33** *Baal-tamar*, somewhere

rushed out of their place west[a] of Geba.
34 There came against Gibeah ten thousand picked men out of all Israel, and the battle was fierce. But the Benjaminites did not realize that disaster was close upon them.
35 The LORD defeated Benjamin before Israel; and the Israelites destroyed twenty-five thousand one hundred men of Benjamin that day, all of them armed.
36 Then the Benjaminites saw that they were defeated.[b]

The Israelites gave ground to Benjamin, because they trusted to the troops in ambush that they had stationed against Gibeah. 37 The troops in ambush rushed quickly upon Gibeah. Then they put the whole city to the sword. 38 Now the agreement between the main body of Israel and the men in ambush was that when they sent up a cloud of smoke out of the city 39 the main body of Israel should turn in battle. But Benjamin had begun to inflict casualties on the Israelites, killing about thirty of them; so they thought, "Surely they are defeated before us, as in the first battle." 40 But when the cloud, a column of smoke, began to rise out of the city, the Benjaminites looked behind them—and there was the whole city going up in smoke toward the sky! 41 Then the main body of Israel turned, and the Benjaminites were dismayed, for they saw that disaster was close upon them. 42 Therefore they turned away from the Israelites in the direction of the wilderness; but the battle overtook them, and those who came out of the city[c] were slaughtering them in between.[d] 43 Cutting down[e] the Benjaminites, they pursued them from Nohah[f] and trod them down as far as a place east of Gibeah. 44 Eighteen thousand Benjaminites fell, all of them courageous fighters. 45 When they turned and fled toward the wilderness to the rock of Rimmon, five thousand of them were cut down on the main roads, and they were pursued as far as Gidom, and two thousand of them were slain. 46 So all who fell that day of Benjamin were twenty-five thousand arms-bearing men, all of them courageous fighters. 47 But six hundred turned and fled toward the wilderness to the rock of Rimmon, and remained at the rock of Rimmon for four months. 48 Meanwhile, the Israelites turned back against the Benjaminites, and put them to the sword—the city, the people, the animals, and all that remained. Also the remaining towns they set on fire.

The Benjaminites Saved from Extinction

21 Now the Israelites had sworn at Mizpah, "No one of us shall give his daughter in marriage to Benjamin."
2 And the people came to Bethel, and sat there until evening before God, and they lifted up their voices and wept bitterly.
3 They said, "O LORD, the God of Israel, why has it come to pass that today there should be one tribe lacking in Israel?"
4 On the next day, the people got up early, and built an altar there, and offered burnt offerings and sacrifices of well-being. 5 Then the Israelites said, "Which

a Gk Vg: Heb *in the plain* b This sentence is continued by verse 45. c Compare Vg and some Gk Mss: Heb *cities* d Compare Syr: Meaning of Heb uncertain e Gk: Heb *Surrounding* f Gk: Heb *pursued them at their resting place*

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near Gibeah, is otherwise unknown. **20.35** *The LORD* was not explicitly credited with Benjamin's earlier victories. *Twenty-five thousand one hundred,* more likely "twenty-five military units, one hundred men." See note on 1.4. If the total of Benjamin's force is seven hundred (see note on 20.15–16), a loss of 14 percent would be extremely costly. **20.43** *Nohah* is elsewhere a "son" of Benjamin (1 Chr 8.2). **20.46** *Courageous fighters* is an *inclusio* (see note on 14.5–10a) with *valiant men* (18.2). **20.47–48** The bulk of the force, *six hundred,* fled and went into hiding, to become the only Benjaminite survivors in the story.

21.1–25 This concluding chapter brings together two distinct stories: one concerning a punitive expedition against Jabesh-gilead, the other a most obscure abduction of young women during a vintage festival at Shiloh. **21.1–5** The problem of finding wives for the Benjaminites is emphasized in the *inclusio* (see note on 14.5–10a) formed by references to the oath (vv. 1, 5). **21.1** The prohibition of marriage with Benjaminites is previously unmentioned. **21.2** The Israelites *wept,* as in 2.4, but now *bitterly.* **21.3** *Lacking,* lit. "counted out." The Hebrew root *pqd* has to do with setting quotas for military service. **21.4** *Got up early,* better "busied themselves." Receiving no oracular response to their *offerings,* however, they must rely on their own wits. **21.5** One more small-scale civil war will be necessary.

of all the tribes of Israel did not come
up in the assembly to the LORD?" For a
solemn oath had been taken concerning
whoever did not come up to the LORD to
Mizpah, saying, "That one shall be put to
death." 6 But the Israelites had compas-
sion for Benjamin their kin, and said,
"One tribe is cut off from Israel this day.
7 What shall we do for wives for those who
are left, since we have sworn by the LORD
that we will not give them any of our
daughters as wives?"

8 Then they said, "Is there anyone
from the tribes of Israel who did not come
up to the LORD to Mizpah?" It turned out
that no one from Jabesh-gilead had come
to the camp, to the assembly. 9 For when
the roll was called among the people, not
one of the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead
was there. 10 So the congregation sent
twelve thousand soldiers there and com-
manded them, "Go, put the inhabitants of
Jabesh-gilead to the sword, including the
women and the little ones. 11 This is what
you shall do; every male and every
woman that has lain with a male you shall
devote to destruction." 12 And they found
among the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead
four hundred young virgins who had
never slept with a man and brought them
to the camp at Shiloh, which is in the land
of Canaan.

13 Then the whole congregation sent
word to the Benjaminites who were at the
rock of Rimmon, and proclaimed peace
to them. 14 Benjamin returned at that
time; and they gave them the women
whom they had saved alive of the women
of Jabesh-gilead; but they did not suffice
for them.

15 The people had compassion on
Benjamin because the LORD had made a
breach in the tribes of Israel. 16 So the el-
ders of the congregation said, "What shall
we do for wives for those who are left,
since there are no women left in Benja-
min?" 17 And they said, "There must be
heirs for the survivors of Benjamin, in or-
der that a tribe may not be blotted out
from Israel. 18 Yet we cannot give any of
our daughters to them as wives." For the
Israelites had sworn, "Cursed be anyone
who gives a wife to Benjamin." 19 So they
said, "Look, the yearly festival of the
LORD is taking place at Shiloh, which is
north of Bethel, on the east of the high-
way that goes up from Bethel to Shechem,
and south of Lebonah." 20 And they in-
structed the Benjaminites, saying, "Go
and lie in wait in the vineyards, 21 and
watch; when the young women of Shiloh
come out to dance in the dances, then
come out of the vineyards and each of you
carry off a wife for himself from the
young women of Shiloh, and go to the
land of Benjamin. 22 Then if their fathers
or their brothers come to complain to us,
we will say to them, 'Be generous and al-
low us to have them; because we did not
capture in battle a wife for each man. But
neither did you incur guilt by giving your
daughters to them.' " 23 The Benjaminites
did so; they took wives for each of them
from the dancers whom they abducted.
Then they went and returned to their ter-
ritory, and rebuilt the towns, and lived in

21.6–12 These verses restate the problem and describe the proposal and implementation of a solution. **21.6** *Cut off.* The Hebrew root, *gd'*, is otherwise not used in the book, except in the name Gideon, "Hacker." **21.8** *Jabesh-gilead* lay in Transjordan. It is probably either Tell Abu Kharaz or Tell el-Meqbereh. The narrative elicits sympathy for a city later friendly and faithful to Saul. **21.11** *Devote to destruction*, or put under the ban (Hebrew *cherem*). After their tragic use of the ban against the Benjaminites (strongly suggested by 20.48), the Israelites now exercise compassion for the survivors by condemning another constituency. **21.12** *Shiloh*, situated at a respectable distance from both Mizpah and Bethel, is *in the land of Canaan*, a curious designation, signaling the irony of the situation. Conditions in the land, as the next scene will show, had not changed very much under Israelite control. **21.14–15** That there are not enough captive women to go around reinforces the ironic truth that *the LORD had made a breach in the tribes of Israel.* **21.16–23** The story assumes that the venerable covenant sanctuary at Shiloh had reverted to pre-Israelite patterns of cultic revelry. The theme of the rape of maidens in comparable circumstances recurs in Greek poetry. **21.16** *Elders of the congregation* suggests exilic editing. **21.19** The elders seem to be thinking out loud, recalling the yearly festival at Shiloh (1 Sam 1.3) and struggling to fix its location precisely. **21.22** *To complain*, or "contend," Hebrew *riv*, as in Gideon's name Jerubbaal (see note on 6.25–32) and in Jephthah's negotiations (see note on 11.12–28). The rationalization here makes acceding to the abduction appear as a matter of do-it-yourself grace. **21.25** The cliché that

them. [24]So the Israelites departed from
there at that time by tribes and families,
and they went out from there to their own
territories.

25 In those days there was no king in
Israel; all the people did what was right in
their own eyes.

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first appears in 17.6, where it definitely delivers a negative judgment in the era of King Josiah, sounds a bit different at the end of the book. Far from approving of the atrocious behaviors in these stories, it commends a manner of decision making, in fact encouraging survivors in exile to "do what is right in their own eyes," i.e., be governed by internal ethical control, as the people were in the presettlement era of Moses (Deut 12.8).

RUTH

THE BOOK OF RUTH, a short narrative with a pastoral tone, is one of the most beautiful pieces of literature in the Bible. The few characters in the story, with the exception of Boaz, are unmentioned elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, and, in contrast to most other biblical narratives, the concern seems to be with a private family rather than national or international affairs. The plot revolves around family relationships—between husbands, wives, children, in-laws, and kinsmen—and the role each member plays in filling the needs of other members and hence the family as a whole. The characters' names seem highly symbolic of their roles. Elimelech, "My God is King," suggests the period before human kings ruled Israel—the time of the judges in which the story is set. The epilogue ends with the human king *par excellence,* King David. Mahlon and Chilion mean "Sickness" and "Spent"; Orpah, "Back of the Neck," turns her back to Naomi. Naomi, whose name means "Pleasant," calls herself Mara, "Bitter," when she returns bereaved and impoverished to Bethlehem. Ruth has been interpreted as deriving from the word meaning "Friend, Companion," and Boaz from two words meaning "In Him is Strength." But the apparent simplicity of the plot and characters belie the seriousness of the book's themes.

Major Themes

According to rabbinic tradition, the main theme is *chesed* (Hebrew), loyalty or faithfulness arising from commitment. *Chesed* may pertain between God and a human community and between members of a family or community. The main characters, Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz, all manifest acts of *chesed.* Naomi shows concern for the welfare of her widowed daughters-in-law, especially Ruth, although technically she has no obligation toward them. Ruth's *chesed* in cleaving to Naomi goes beyond all expectation, and her seeking marriage with Boaz, the family protector, underlines her loyalty to the family. Boaz, too, acts with *chesed* when he accepts the double responsibility of land purchase and marriage, thereby preserving the lineage and inheritance of a family that were almost lost.

The idea of family continuity, which motivates all the characters and is present in all the acts of *chesed*, is clearly central to the story. Moreover, the continuity is achieved largely by women. In this, Ruth echoes the stories of the matriarchs and the story of Judah and Tamar (Gen 38); it is no accident that Boaz is blessed with the words, "May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your house like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. . . . May your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah" (4.11–12). But the book of Ruth goes even further, for here the family is preserved not by the wives of patriarchs, but by an elderly widow and her non-Israelite daughter-in-law.

The preservation and continuity of the family is closely related to the preservation and continuity of the nation (cf. Ex 1–2, where the fertility and quick action of women ensure the survival and growth of Israel). Although the plot does not operate on the national level, the culmination of the epilogue with the name of David suggests that a royal or quasi-national interest may lie below the surface. The Judean elements of the story are strong: a Judean family from Bethlehem; the mention of Judah, Perez, and Tamar; and the genealogy of David. This suggests that the book may have been intended as a glorification of David through a glorification of his ancestors or perhaps a kind of "prologue" to the royal dynasty that began with David and remained so crucial in the history of the kingdom of Judah.

Date and Placement in the Bible

The date of composition is difficult to ascertain. Basing their assertions on linguistic criteria, most modern scholars place it between 950 and 700 B.C.E., that is, between the time of David (it could not be earlier) and the end of the Northern Kingdom, Israel (722 B.C.E.). It would then be the product of the cultural flourishing of the United Monarchy or a glorification of the Judean dynasty during the Divided Monarchy. A few scholars, noting certain late linguistic features, especially Aramaisms, date the book to the exilic or postexilic period. Concern with national continuity and the preservation of the Davidic dynasty would naturally have been high when Judah lost its political autonomy and the existence of its community was in danger.

In Christian Bibles, which derive their order from the Septuagint and Vulgate, the book of Ruth is found after Judges, for the story is set in the period of the judges. The placement is thus a chronological one. The placement in Jewish Bibles is a liturgical one; Ruth is located in the Writings, among the Five Scrolls, each of which is read publicly on a specific festival or day of commemoration. Ruth is associated with the festival of Shavuoth, "Weeks," or "Pentecost," which marks the end of the barley harvest and the beginning of the wheat harvest.

Adele Berlin

Naomi and Her Family

1 In the days when the judges ruled,
there was a famine in the land, and a
certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went
to live in the country of Moab, he and his
wife and two sons. 2 The name of the man
was Elimelech and the name of his wife
Naomi, and the names of his two sons
were Mahlon and Chilion; they were Eph-
rathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They
went into the country of Moab and re-
mained there. 3 But Elimelech, the hus-
band of Naomi, died, and she was left
with her two sons. 4 These took Moabite
wives; the name of the one was Orpah
and the name of the other Ruth. When
they had lived there about ten years,
5 both Mahlon and Chilion also died, so
that the woman was left without her two
sons and her husband.

Naomi and Her Moabite Daughters-in-Law

6 Then she started to return with her
daughters-in-law from the country of
Moab, for she had heard in the country of
Moab that the LORD had considered his
people and given them food. 7 So she set
out from the place where she had been
living, she and her two daughters-in-law,
and they went on their way to go back to
the land of Judah. 8 But Naomi said to her
two daughters-in-law, "Go back each of
you to your mother's house. May the
LORD deal kindly with you, as you have
dealt with the dead and with me. 9 The
LORD grant that you may find security,
each of you in the house of your hus-
band." Then she kissed them, and they
wept aloud. 10 They said to her, "No, we
will return with you to your people."
11 But Naomi said, "Turn back, my
daughters, why will you go with me? Do I
still have sons in my womb that they may
become your husbands? 12 Turn back, my
daughters, go your way, for I am too old
to have a husband. Even if I thought
there was hope for me, even if I should
have a husband tonight and bear sons,
13 would you then wait until they were
grown? Would you then refrain from
marrying? No, my daughters, it has been
far more bitter for me than for you, be-
cause the hand of the LORD has turned
against me." 14 Then they wept aloud
again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law,
but Ruth clung to her.

15 So she said, "See, your sister-in-law
has gone back to her people and to her
gods; return after your sister-in-law."
16 But Ruth said,

"Do not press me to leave you

1.1–5 Naomi gradually emerges as the focus of the story. She is left without male relatives; all that remains of her family are her two Moabite daughters-in-law. Famine, dislocation, and death mark the beginning of the story. These will all be reversed with the return to Bethlehem, the harvest seasons, marriage, and birth. **1.1** *The judges ruled.* The narrative is set in the period of the judges, after the settlement in Canaan and before the monarchy. The judges are portrayed as local or tribal leaders who arose in times of crisis. *Moab* is the country east of the Dead Sea, between Ammon and Edom, on approximately the same latitude as Judah. There was apparently no famine there. The motif of migration to a foreign land in time of famine occurs in reference to Abraham (Gen 12.10) and Jacob (Gen 42.1). **1.2** *Elimelech.* On the characters' names see the Introduction. *Ephrathites.* Ephrath or Ephratah is associated with Bethlehem and Judah in several biblical passages (e.g., Gen 35.16, 19; 1 Sam 17.12; 1 Chr 2.18–24, 42–50; Mic 5.2). "Ephrathites" may designate residents of a geographical area or a subgroup of the Judean populace. Its mention here presumably underlines the family's long-standing connection with Bethlehem.

1.6–22 Both Orpah and Ruth initially show concern for Naomi, even as she, out of her own concern for them, attempts to persuade them to return to their own families. Ruth's loyalty to Naomi proves unshakable, and she returns to Bethlehem along with her mother-in-law. The key words in this section are *return* (vv. 6, 10, 15, 22) and *turn back* (vv. 11, 12, 16); see also *go/gone back* (vv. 7, 8, 15); all from the same Hebrew root. They are used in the sense of parting and in the sense of rejoining. The issue is: how can these widows find security, that is, a husband and family? **1.11** *Sons in my womb.* Naomi despairs of being able to provide her daughters-in-law with new husbands. This passage is often seen as exemplifying the levirate law in Deut 25.5–10, but it is not a true levirate because these husbands, if they could be born, would not have the same father as Mahlon and Chilion. **1.16** *Your people . . . my God,* a stirring declaration of loyalty. There was as yet no formal procedure for religious conversion, nor was it even conceived of. One's ethnic identity determined for all time one's religious persuasion. Therefore, Ruth mentions "people" and "God" together. Each people had its own god; or, as it

or to turn back from
following you!
Where you go, I will go;
where you lodge, I will lodge;
your people shall be my people,
and your God my God.
17 Where you die, I will die—
there will I be buried.
May the LORD do thus and so
to me,
and more as well,
if even death parts me
from you!"
18 When Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her.

19 So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem. When they came to Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them; and the women said, "Is this Naomi?" 20 She said to them,

"Call me no longer Naomi,[a]
call me Mara,[b]
for the Almighty[c] has dealt
bitterly with me.
21 I went away full,
but the LORD has brought me
back empty;
why call me Naomi
when the LORD has dealt
harshly with[d] me,
and the Almighty[c] has brought
calamity upon me?"

22 So Naomi returned together with Ruth the Moabite, her daughter-in-law, who came back with her from the country of Moab. They came to Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.

Ruth Meets Boaz

2 Now Naomi had a kinsman on her husband's side, a prominent rich man, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz. 2 And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain, behind someone in whose sight I may find favor." She said to her, "Go, my daughter." 3 So she went. She came and gleaned in the field behind the reapers. As it happened, she came to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech. 4 Just then Boaz came from Bethlehem. He said to the reapers, "The LORD be with you." They answered, "The LORD bless you." 5 Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, "To whom does this young woman belong?" 6 The servant who was in charge of the reapers answered, "She is the Moabite who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. 7 She said, 'Please, let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the reapers.' So she came, and she has been on her feet from early this morning until now, without resting even for a moment."[e]

8 Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Now listen, my daughter, do not go to glean in another field or leave this one, but keep close to my young women. 9 Keep your eyes on the field that is being reaped, and follow behind them. I have ordered the

a That is *Pleasant* b That is *Bitter*
c Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*
d Or *has testified against* e Compare Gk Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain

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was viewed in the ancient Near East, each god had its own people. Ruth is adopting a new people, a new ethnic identity, along with a new faith.

2.1–23 The fortuitous coming of Ruth to glean in Boaz's field has the ring of divine guidance. Boaz shows her special favors—providing food and drink for her, guaranteeing protection from the workers' taunts, and inviting her to glean on his estate throughout the harvest. Although readers learn in the first verse that Boaz is a relative of Naomi's deceased husband, Ruth does not learn this fact until the end of the chapter when she returns in the evening to Naomi. But even the readers are unaware until Naomi's speech that Boaz is a near kinsman, a *go'el* (Hebrew), a family protector. The appearance of this male kinsman and the plentiful food that he makes available bode well for the two impoverished, husbandless women. **2.2** *Glean.* Gleaning is a form of charity in which the poor are permitted to gather the grain left by the harvesters (cf. Lev 19.9; 23.22; Deut 24.19). Naomi and Ruth, having no other source of income, must resort to this. Notice that Ruth takes the initiative here in providing for Naomi. **2.5** Boaz, noticing Ruth, whom he presumably had not seen before, inquires into her family background. It was family connection, rather than an individual's name, that served as identification. The foreman's answer stresses Ruth's Moabite ancestry and her attachment to Naomi. **2.8** *My daughter,* the same term used by Naomi for Ruth (2.2). It suggests a familial relationship and a protective stance. Boaz deemphasizes Ruth's foreignness, although the foreman and Ruth herself emphasize it (cf. v. 10), and he begins to assume the role of provider and

young men not to bother you. If you get
thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from
what the young men have drawn."
10 Then she fell prostrate, with her face to
the ground, and said to him, "Why have I
found favor in your sight, that you should
take notice of me, when I am a for-
eigner?" 11 But Boaz answered her, "All
that you have done for your mother-in-
law since the death of your husband has
been fully told me, and how you left your
father and mother and your native land
and came to a people that you did not
know before. 12 May the LORD reward you
for your deeds, and may you have a full
reward from the LORD, the God of Israel,
under whose wings you have come for
refuge!" 13 Then she said, "May I con-
tinue to find favor in your sight, my lord,
for you have comforted me and spoken
kindly to your servant, even though I am
not one of your servants."

14 At mealtime Boaz said to her,
"Come here, and eat some of this bread,
and dip your morsel in the sour wine." So
she sat beside the reapers, and he heaped
up for her some parched grain. She ate
until she was satisfied, and she had some
left over. 15 When she got up to glean,
Boaz instructed his young men, "Let her
glean even among the standing sheaves,
and do not reproach her. 16 You must also
pull out some handfuls for her from the
bundles, and leave them for her to glean,
and do not rebuke her."

17 So she gleaned in the field until
evening. Then she beat out what she had
gleaned, and it was about an ephah of
barley. 18 She picked it up and came into
the town, and her mother-in-law saw how
much she had gleaned. Then she took out
and gave her what was left over after she
herself had been satisfied. 19 Her mother-
in-law said to her, "Where did you glean
today? And where have you worked?
Blessed be the man who took notice of
you." So she told her mother-in-law with
whom she had worked, and said, "The
name of the man with whom I worked to-
day is Boaz." 20 Then Naomi said to her
daughter-in-law, "Blessed be he by the
LORD, whose kindness has not forsaken
the living or the dead!" Naomi also said to
her, "The man is a relative of ours, one of
our nearest kin."[f] 21 Then Ruth the Mo-
abite said, "He even said to me, 'Stay close
by my servants, until they have finished
all my harvest.'" 22 Naomi said to Ruth,
her daughter-in-law, "It is better, my
daughter, that you go out with his young
women, otherwise you might be bothered
in another field." 23 So she stayed close to
the young women of Boaz, gleaning until
the end of the barley and wheat harvests;
and she lived with her mother-in-law.

Ruth and Boaz at the Threshing Floor

3 Naomi her mother-in-law said to
her, "My daughter, I need to seek
some security for you, so that it may be
well with you. 2 Now here is our kinsman
Boaz, with whose young women you have
been working. See, he is winnowing barley
tonight at the threshing floor. 3 Now wash

f Or *one with the right to redeem*

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protector. **2.14** *Sour wine*, a vinegar-based substance into which bread was dipped. **2.15** *Standing sheaves.* Normally the gleaners worked in areas where the grain had been cut, picking up what the harvesters left behind. Ruth is permitted to glean where the cut grain was tied into the sheaves, thereby gaining access to additional grain that fell out of the bundles. Moreover, in the next verse the workers are bidden to actually pull out grain from the bound sheaves for her. This goes beyond the privileges she was initially granted. **2.17** *Ephah*, approximately two-thirds of a bushel, a substantial amount for one day's gleaning. **2.20** *Nearest kin*, Hebrew *go'el*, "one with the right to redeem," a close relative who takes responsibility for protecting the rights of a family in the absence of the head of the household. This usually involves the buying back of property, the redeeming of slaves, or the avenging of murder. Ruth later turns to Boaz as the *go'el* (3.9) but he informs her that there is a *go'el* with prior rights (3.12).

3.1–18 Ruth's initiative in providing for her mother-in-law in ch. 2 is reciprocated by Naomi's initiative in seeking a husband for Ruth. This has been Naomi's concern since ch. 1. Readers have long speculated on what actually transpired between Ruth and Boaz at the threshing floor that night. One senses a romantic attraction, but more important in the eyes of the Bible is the loyalty to family manifested by both Ruth and Boaz. **3.1** As in 1.9, *security* implies finding a husband, as a woman on her own in ancient times had little standing and no protection. **3.2** *Threshing floor*, an elevated open space where the kernels of grain would be separated from the chaff (winnowing). This was done in the evening, when the wind

and anoint yourself, and put on your best
clothes and go down to the threshing
floor; but do not make yourself known to
the man until he has finished eating and
drinking. 4 When he lies down, observe
the place where he lies; then, go and un-
cover his feet and lie down; and he will
tell you what to do." 5 She said to her, "All
that you tell me I will do."

6 So she went down to the threshing
floor and did just as her mother-in-law
had instructed her. 7 When Boaz had
eaten and drunk, and he was in a con-
tented mood, he went to lie down at the
end of the heap of grain. Then she came
stealthily and uncovered his feet, and lay
down. 8 At midnight the man was startled,
and turned over, and there, lying at his
feet, was a woman! 9 He said, "Who are
you?" And she answered, "I am Ruth,
your servant; spread your cloak over your
servant, for you are next-of-kin."[g] 10 He
said, "May you be blessed by the LORD, my
daughter; this last instance of your loyalty
is better than the first; you have not gone
after young men, whether poor or rich.
11 And now, my daughter, do not be
afraid, I will do for you all that you ask,
for all the assembly of my people know
that you are a worthy woman. 12 But now,
though it is true that I am a near kinsman,
there is another kinsman more closely re-
lated than I. 13 Remain this night, and in
the morning, if he will act as next-of-kin[g]
for you, good; let him do it. If he is not
willing to act as next-of-kin[g] for you,
then, as the LORD lives, I will act as next-
of-kin[g] for you. Lie down until the
morning."

14 So she lay at his feet until morning,
but got up before one person could recog-
nize another; for he said, "It must not be
known that the woman came to the
threshing floor." 15 Then he said, "Bring
the cloak you are wearing and hold it
out." So she held it, and he measured out
six measures of barley, and put it on her
back; then he went into the city. 16 She
came to her mother-in-law, who said,
"How did things go with you,[h] my
daughter?" Then she told her all that the
man had done for her, 17 saying, "He gave
me these six measures of barley, for he
said, 'Do not go back to your mother-
in-law empty-handed.'" 18 She replied,
"Wait, my daughter, until you learn how
the matter turns out, for the man will not
rest, but will settle the matter today."

The Marriage of Boaz and Ruth

4 No sooner had Boaz gone up to the
gate and sat down there than the
next-of-kin,[g] of whom Boaz had spoken,
came passing by. So Boaz said, "Come
over, friend; sit down here." And he went
over and sat down. 2 Then Boaz took ten
men of the elders of the city, and said, "Sit
down here"; so they sat down. 3 He then
said to the next-of-kin,[g] "Naomi, who has

g Or *one with the right to redeem* h Or "*Who are you,*

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picked up, by beating the grain and tossing it up in the air so that the wind would carry the chaff a distance away. **3.3** *Anoint,* put on perfumed oil; this is equivalent to putting on cosmetics. **3.9** *Spread your cloak.* Ruth is asking for marriage; spreading a garment over a woman signifies acquiring her (cf. Ezek 16.8). This phrase echoes 2.12 in which Boaz speaks of Ruth's finding refuge under God's wings (the Hebrew uses the same word for "wings" and "cloak"). **3.10** *Last instance of your loyalty.* Boaz recognizes that Ruth is motivated by *chesed* (Hebrew), "loyalty," i.e., loyalty to the family of Naomi. She did not seek a husband far and wide but chose Boaz because he was the *go'el* (3.9). This is her second act of loyalty; her first was her steadfast cleaving to Naomi (cf. 2.11). **3.11** *Worthy woman,* Hebrew *'ēshet chayil* (cf. Prov 31.10). By using this term Boaz equates Ruth's status with his own. He is an *'ish gibbor chayil,* "a prominent rich man" (2.1). Ruth is no longer to be perceived as a servant or a foreigner (cf. 2.10, 13), but as an appropriate wife for Boaz. **3.12** Just as the agreement of marriage between Boaz and Ruth seems assured, we learn that there is a man who has a prior claim to marry Ruth.

4.1–17 Tension mounts as we wait to see whether the closer kinsman will accept the responsibility of purchasing the land and marrying Ruth. He declines, leaving the way open for Boaz. Boaz and Ruth are married and receive the blessing of the community for progeny. The blessing is realized; a son is born. He is a comfort to Naomi and a fulfillment of the hope for family continuity. He is to become an ancestor of David. **4.1** The city *gate* was the commercial center. Various business and legal transactions took place there. *Friend.* The closer kinsman is not named. In Hebrew he is called *peloni 'almoni,* "So-and-So." **4.3** *Parcel of land.* This is the first we hear

come back from the country of Moab, is
selling the parcel of land that belonged to
our kinsman Elimelech. 4 So I thought I
would tell you of it, and say: Buy it in the
presence of those sitting here, and in the
presence of the elders of my people. If
you will redeem it, redeem it; but if you
will not, tell me, so that I may know; for
there is no one prior to you to redeem it,
and I come after you." So he said, "I will
redeem it." 5 Then Boaz said, "The day
you acquire the field from the hand of
Naomi, you are also acquiring Ruth[i] the
Moabite, the widow of the dead man, to
maintain the dead man's name on his
inheritance." 6 At this, the next-of-kin[j]
said, "I cannot redeem it for myself with-
out damaging my own inheritance. Take
my right of redemption yourself, for I
cannot redeem it."

7 Now this was the custom in former
times in Israel concerning redeeming and
exchanging: to confirm a transaction, the
one took off a sandal and gave it to the
other; this was the manner of attesting in
Israel. 8 So when the next-of-kin[j] said to
Boaz, "Acquire it for yourself," he took
off his sandal. 9 Then Boaz said to the el-
ders and all the people, "Today you are
witnesses that I have acquired from the
hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elime-
lech and all that belonged to Chilion and
Mahlon. 10 I have also acquired Ruth the
Moabite, the wife of Mahlon, to be my
wife, to maintain the dead man's name on
his inheritance, in order that the name of
the dead may not be cut off from his kin-
dred and from the gate of his native
place; today you are witnesses." 11 Then
all the people who were at the gate, along
with the elders, said, "We are witnesses.
May the LORD make the woman who is
coming into your house like Rachel and
Leah, who together built up the house of
Israel. May you produce children in Eph-
rathah and bestow a name in Bethlehem;
12 and, through the children that the
LORD will give you by this young woman,
may your house be like the house of Pe-
rez, whom Tamar bore to Judah."

13 So Boaz took Ruth and she became
his wife. When they came together, the
LORD made her conceive, and she bore a
son. 14 Then the women said to Naomi,
"Blessed be the LORD, who has not left
you this day without next-of-kin;[j] and
may his name be renowned in Israel!
15 He shall be to you a restorer of life and
a nourisher of your old age; for your
daughter-in-law who loves you, who is
more to you than seven sons, has borne
him." 16 Then Naomi took the child and
laid him in her bosom, and became his
nurse. 17 The women of the neighbor-
hood gave him a name, saying, "A son has
been born to Naomi." They named him
Obed; he became the father of Jesse, the
father of David.

The Genealogy of David

18 Now these are the descendants of
Perez: Perez became the father of Hez-

i OL Vg: Heb *from the hand of Naomi and from Ruth*
j Or *one with the right to redeem*

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that Naomi owned real estate. It is not clear whether it has already been sold or whether it is now up for sale for the first time. The redeeming of land would fall within the duties of the *go'el* and keep the land in the family. **4.5** *Acquiring Ruth.* It is less clear that a *go'el* would be obligated to marry the widow of the deceased landowner. This may be an early form of levirate marriage, which in Deut 25.5–10 is limited to the brother of the deceased (cf. also Gen 38). Or it may be a ploy by Boaz to protect the interests of Naomi and Ruth by ensuring that Ruth and her children would not be separated from this landholding, as would happen if the kinsman redeemed the land but did not marry Ruth. Boaz accepts the double obligation of acquiring the land and Ruth, in order *to maintain the dead man's name on his inheritance* (4.9–10). This echoes the language of the levirate in Deuteronomy. Regardless of the exact legal obligation (which is disputed), Boaz's loyalty to family emerges strongly. In this his loyalty mirrors that of Ruth. **4.7** *Took off a sandal.* This ancient practice, which needed to be explained even to biblical readers, is not to be confused with the pulling off of the sandal in the case of a levir who declines to marry the widow (Deut 25.9). The sandal is a physical representation of the conveying of goods or rights from one party to another. **4.12** *Tamar . . . Judah.* See Gen 38. **4.17** *A son has been born to Naomi,* not a biological son or even a biological grandson, but a son in that he replaces the family that Naomi has lost. The son represents the continuation of the family. Naomi is the central focus at the end of the story, even as she was at the beginning.

4.18–22 The genealogy begins with Perez,

ron, 19 Hezron of Ram, Ram of Amminadab, 20 Amminadab of Nahshon, Nahshon of Salmon, 21 Salmon of Boaz, Boaz of Obed, 22 Obed of Jesse, and Jesse of David.

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the first of the twins born to Judah by Tamar (Gen 38.29). The places of honor in the list, seventh and tenth, are occupied by Boaz, the hero of our story, and David, the preeminent king of Israel and founder of the dynasty of Judah. The genealogy turns the story into a chapter in the ancestry of David and raises the theme of family continuity to a theme of national continuity. The story of a family becomes the story of the royal family and hence the nation.

1 SAMUEL

Content

THE BOOKS OF SAMUEL describe the inauguration of kingship for Israel and give accounts of the reigns of the first two kings, Saul and David. The two books divide roughly into five narrative sections followed by a miscellany of assorted materials. First is the story of Samuel (1 Sam 1.1–7.17), which provides a transition between the period of the judges and the monarchy. This section is dominated by a view of the prophet as a divinely appointed leader capable of functioning as priest, seer, war leader, and judge. It contains as a strong background theme the condemnation of the priestly house of Eli and rejection of the priesthood at Shiloh.

The second section describes the advent of kingship in Israel (1 Sam 8.1–15.34). The central figure is Saul, Israel's first king, who is introduced in auspicious terms as a tall, earnest young man capable of leading Israel on the battlefield. Saul continues to share the stage with Samuel, however, and the predominant atmosphere is suspicious of monarchy in general and of Saul's kingship in particular. As soon as Saul has proven himself in battle, his life begins to unravel, and he is soon condemned for failing to obey the prophetically mediated divine word.

The third section is the story of David's rise to power (1 Sam 15.35–2 Sam 5.10). It is animated by the conflict between the young David, to whom the Lord has promised Saul's throne, and the increasingly jealous and often irrational old king. David is depicted in the most favorable terms as handsome and charismatic, endowed with extraordinary skills as a musician and soldier, and consistently successful in everything he undertakes because, as the narrator repeatedly reminds us, "The LORD is with him."

The fourth section records a number of events from the reign of David (2 Sam 5.11–12.31). It centers upon the oracle of Nathan in ch. 7 in which David is promised that his descendants will rule after him in an unending dynasty in Jerusalem and that his son will build a temple for the Lord. The fifth section describes the unsuccessful revolt of David's son Absalom (2 Sam 13.1–20.22).

David is now a mature and tragic figure who is obliged to flee Jerusalem for fear of his life and very nearly loses his throne while witnessing the death of two of his sons. At the end of 2 Samuel is a miscellany (2 Sam 20.23–24.25) containing poetry attributed to David, lists of his various officers and warriors, and a variety of narrative materials loosely related to other parts of Samuel and Kings.

Literary History

The literary foundation of 1 and 2 Samuel is a group of early narrative sources upon which later editors and compilers drew. At least four of these can be specifically identified. The first is the ark narrative, which is found in 1 Sam 4.1–7.1 and parts of ch. 2 (some scholars would also include parts of 2 Sam 6). This narrative explains the capture of the ark as a consequence of the Lord's anger over the corruption of the priesthood of Shiloh (see 2.12–17, 22–25) and shows how he used the occasion to afflict the Philistines with plague. The second early source, which is much less well defined, is a cycle of stories about Saul. These underlie various passages in 1 Samuel, including the story of Saul's anointing in chs. 9–10, the story of his liberation of Jabesh-gilead in ch. 11, and the account of his Philistine wars in chs. 13–14. The third early source is the story of David's rise to power (1 Sam 16.14–2 Sam 5.10), which shows David's innocence of wrongdoing in his conflict with the house of Saul and explains his dramatic ascent to the throne as a consequence of divine favor. The fourth early source is the story of Absalom's revolt in 2 Sam 13–20. It explains the private circumstances leading to the civil war that forced David temporarily into exile. Because the account explains the death of both Absalom and Amnon, David's firstborn, it seems to have been attached to the story of David's death and the accession of Solomon in 1 Kings 1–2 as a succession narrative, explaining how Solomon came to the throne instead of one of his several older brothers.

Many of the stories in 1 Samuel and to a lesser extent 2 Samuel have been influenced editorially by a point of view that regards the institution of kingship with suspicion while looking to the prophet as the one who can provide a check on royal abuses of power and serve as an avenue through which the divine will can be expressed. Some scholars date this material to the time of the monarchy and see it as underlying the final Deuteronomistic editing of 1 and 2 Samuel. Others date it to the exile, when some may have looked back at this institution of kingship as a failure. In certain parts of Samuel this prophetic viewpoint has given the narrative its primary shape. These include the story of Samuel's birth and childhood in 1 Sam 1–3, the story of Samuel as judge and the people's demand for a king in 1 Sam 7–8, the story of Samuel's farewell and the two accounts of the rejection of Saul in 1 Sam 12–15, the story of the anointing of David in 1 Sam 16.1–13, and the story of Nathan's condemnation of the house of David in 2 Sam 12.

In their final form 1 and 2 Samuel are part of the Deuteronomistic History that extends from Deuteronomy through 2 Kings (see also the Introduction to

Joshua). It recounts the history of the Israelites from the time of their arrival on the plains of Moab and entry into the promised land until the time of their deportation to exile in Babylon after the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. The intervening events are reported and evaluated according to principles derived from the Deuteronomic law code (Deut 12–26). Deuteronomistic editing is light in 1 and 2 Samuel, especially in contrast to Judges or 2 Kings. The only major passages that can be attributed to the historian are the oracle against the house of Eli in 1 Sam 2.27–36 establishing the ascendancy of the Zadokite priesthood, the historical retrospective in Samuel's farewell address in 1 Sam 12.6–15, which belongs to a series of such speeches by major figures in the history, and the oracle of Nathan in 2 Sam 7 proclaiming the David dynasty and the erection of the temple in Jerusalem.

The Text

For a variety of reasons, not all of them clear, the Hebrew text of 1 and 2 Samuel has come down to us in defective form. For this reason, translators must rely heavily on the Septuagint and other ancient versions. The contribution of three fragmentary Samuel manuscripts from Qumran (4QSam^{a,b,c}) is also important.
P. Kyle McCarter, Jr.

Samuel's Birth and Dedication

1 There was a certain man of Ramathaim, a Zuphite[a] from the hill
country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah son of Jeroham son of Elihu son of
Tohu son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. 2 He
had two wives; the name of the one was
Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.
3 Now this man used to go up year by
year from his town to worship and to sacrifice to the LORD of hosts at Shiloh,
where the two sons of Eli, Hophni and
Phinehas, were priests of the LORD. 4 On
the day when Elkanah sacrificed, he
would give portions to his wife Peninnah
and to all her sons and daughters; 5 but to
Hannah he gave a double portion,[b] because he loved her, though the LORD had
closed her womb. 6 Her rival used to provoke her severely, to irritate her, because
the LORD had closed her womb. 7 So it
went on year by year; as often as she went
up to the house of the LORD, she used to
provoke her. Therefore Hannah wept

a Compare Gk and 1 Chr 6.35-36: Heb *Ramathaim-zophim* *b* Syr: Meaning of Heb uncertain

1.1–28 This section recounts the auspicious story of the birth of Samuel, who dominates the first half of 1 Samuel, and of his dedication as a Nazirite (see vv. 11, 22). **1.1** *Ramathaim*, NT Arimathea, may have been near Timnah, northwest of Bethel. *Elkanah*, though called an Ephraimite here, is given a Levitical genealogy in 1 Chr 6.26, where he is listed as a member of the clan of Kohath, which had special responsibility for the ark (see Num 3.29–31); this qualifies his son Samuel for the duties he carries out in chs. 2–3. On Elkanah's designation as a *Zuphite*, see note on 9.5. **1.3** *Shiloh*, about twenty miles north-northeast of Jerusalem, was the central sanctuary of the Israelites at the time of Samuel's birth. **1.6** *Her rival*, i.e., Peninnah. The Hebrew word became a technical term for a second wife or co-wife in the rabbinic period. **1.7** The references to *the house of the LORD* in this story are surprising in view of the biblical tradition that no temple existed before the one in Jerusalem (see 2 Sam 7.6; 1 Kings 8.16), but the Shilonite temple was known to Jeremiah

and would not eat. 8 Her husband Elkanah said to her, "Hannah, why do you
weep? Why do you not eat? Why is your
heart sad? Am I not more to you than
ten sons?"

9 After they had eaten and drunk at
Shiloh, Hannah rose and presented her-
self before the LORD.[c] Now Eli the priest
was sitting on the seat beside the doorpost
of the temple of the LORD. 10 She was
deeply distressed and prayed to the LORD,
and wept bitterly. 11 She made this vow:
"O LORD of hosts, if only you will look on
the misery of your servant, and remember
me, and not forget your servant, but will
give to your servant a male child, then I
will set him before you as a nazirite[d] until
the day of his death. He shall drink nei-
ther wine nor intoxicants,[e] and no razor
shall touch his head."

12 As she continued praying before
the LORD, Eli observed her mouth.
13 Hannah was praying silently; only her
lips moved, but her voice was not heard;
therefore Eli thought she was drunk. 14 So
Eli said to her, "How long will you make a
drunken spectacle of yourself? Put away
your wine." 15 But Hannah answered,
"No, my lord, I am a woman deeply trou-
bled; I have drunk neither wine nor
strong drink, but I have been pouring out
my soul before the LORD. 16 Do not regard
your servant as a worthless woman, for I
have been speaking out of my great anxi-
ety and vexation all this time." 17 Then Eli
answered, "Go in peace; the God of Israel
grant the petition you have made to him."
18 And she said, "Let your servant find fa-
vor in your sight." Then the woman went
to her quarters,[f] ate and drank with her
husband,[g] and her countenance was sad
no longer.[h]

19 They rose early in the morning
and worshiped before the LORD; then
they went back to their house at Ramah.
Elkanah knew his wife Hannah, and the
LORD remembered her. 20 In due time
Hannah conceived and bore a son. She
named him Samuel, for she said, "I have
asked him of the LORD."

21 The man Elkanah and all his
household went up to offer to the LORD
the yearly sacrifice, and to pay his vow.
22 But Hannah did not go up, for she said
to her husband, "As soon as the child is
weaned, I will bring him, that he may ap-
pear in the presence of the LORD, and re-
main there forever; I will offer him as a
nazirite[d] for all time."[i] 23 Her husband
Elkanah said to her, "Do what seems
best to you, wait until you have weaned
him; only—may the LORD establish his
word."[j] So the woman remained and
nursed her son, until she weaned him.
24 When she had weaned him, she took
him up with her, along with a three-year-
old bull,[k] an ephah of flour, and a skin of
wine. She brought him to the house of the
LORD at Shiloh; and the child was young.
25 Then they slaughtered the bull, and
they brought the child to Eli. 26 And she
said, "Oh, my lord! As you live, my lord,
I am the woman who was standing here
in your presence, praying to the LORD.
27 For this child I prayed; and the LORD
has granted me the petition that I made
to him. 28 Therefore I have lent him to
the LORD; as long as he lives, he is given to
the LORD."

She left him there for[l] the LORD.

c Gk: Heb lacks *and presented herself before the* LORD
d That is *one separated* or *one consecrated*
e Cn Compare Gk Q Ms 1.22: MT *then I will give him to the* LORD *all the days of his life* *f* Gk: Heb *went her way* *g* Gk: Heb lacks *and drank with her husband* *h* Gk: Meaning of Heb uncertain
i Cn Compare Q Ms: MT lacks *I will offer him as a nazirite for all time* *j* MT: Q Ms Gk Compare Syr *that which goes out of your mouth* *k* Q Ms Gk Syr: MT *three bulls* *l* Gk (Compare Q Ms) and Gk at 2.11: MT *And he* (that is, Elkanah) *worshiped there before*

(Jer 7.12–14). **1.11** According to the regulations in Num 6.1–21, a *nazirite* was a person designated to the service of the Lord by vows of separation and abstention from wine and cutting the hair. Samson is the chief example (see Judg 13.5, 7). **1.19** *Ramah,* a short form of Ramathaim (v. 1), becomes confused in the story of Samuel and Saul with the better known Ramah of Benjamin, about five miles north of Jerusalem. **1.20** By saying *"I have asked him of the* LORD*"* Hannah is explaining the name Samuel (Hebrew *shemu'el*) as if it meant "He who is from God" (*sheme'el*). **1.28** The expression *he is given to the* LORD continues the wordplay on Samuel's name begun in v. 20; but the Hebrew word translated *given* is *sha'ul,* and some scholars think this statement originally referred to the birth of Saul (*sha'ul*).

The Song of Hannah

2 Hannah prayed and said,
"My heart exults in the LORD;
my strength is exalted in
my God.[m]
My mouth derides my enemies,
because I rejoice in my[n]
victory.

2 "There is no Holy One like the
LORD,
no one besides you;
there is no Rock like our God.
3 Talk no more so very proudly,
let not arrogance come from
your mouth;
for the LORD is a God of
knowledge,
and by him actions are
weighed.
4 The bows of the mighty are
broken,
but the feeble gird on strength.
5 Those who were full have hired
themselves out for bread,
but those who were hungry are
fat with spoil.
The barren has borne seven,
but she who has many children
is forlorn.
6 The LORD kills and brings to life;
he brings down to Sheol and
raises up.
7 The LORD makes poor and makes
rich;
he brings low, he also exalts.
8 He raises up the poor from the
dust;
he lifts the needy from the ash
heap,
to make them sit with princes
and inherit a seat of honor.[o]
For the pillars of the earth are
the LORD's,
and on them he has set the
world.

9 "He will guard the feet of his
faithful ones,
but the wicked shall be cut off
in darkness;
for not by might does one
prevail.
10 The LORD! His adversaries shall
be shattered;
the Most High[p] will thunder in
heaven.
The LORD will judge the ends of
the earth;
he will give strength to his king,
and exalt the power of his
anointed."

The Corruption of the Sons of Eli

11 Then Elkanah went home to Ramah, while the boy remained to minister to the LORD, in the presence of the priest Eli.

12 Now the sons of Eli were scoundrels; they had no regard for the LORD 13 or for the duties of the priests to the people. When anyone offered sacrifice, the priest's servant would come, while the meat was boiling, with a three-pronged fork in his hand, 14 and he would thrust it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot;

m Gk: Heb *the* LORD *n* Q Ms: MT *your*
o Gk (Compare Q Ms) adds *He grants the vow of the one who vows, and blesses the years of the just*
p Cn Heb *against him he*

2.1–10 Though it is not likely to have had anything to do with the story of Hannah and Samuel originally, this very ancient poem of thanksgiving is appropriate to this context because of its theme of a divinely initiated change of fortune, something that the barren Hannah experienced, and its closing reference to the king, the anointed of the Lord. **2.2** Both *Holy One* and *Rock* are terms for a deity; the latter could also be translated "Mountain." **2.3** The meaning of the second half of the verse is that the Lord pays attention to human circumstances, weighs them, and, when necessary, sets them in balance. The five verses that follow contain a series of examples of divinely contrived reversals of human fortune. **2.6** *Sheol* is the dark, dank residence of the dead in the OT. **2.8–10** This passage is much longer in the Septuagint and in a Samuel scroll from Qumran (4QSam[a]), both of which append a long passage equivalent to the Greek version of Jer 9.23–24. **2.10** *The Most High* (Hebrew *'eli*) is a rare divine epithet meaning "the exalted one." It is similar in form, but not necessarily in meaning, to the personal name Eli (see v. 11), borne by the priest of Shiloh. The references to the *king* and the Lord's *anointed* (see 9.16) suggest that the original occasion for the composition of this song may have been the celebration of a royal birth.

2.11–17 The sons of Eli, the chief priest of Shiloh, are shown to have corrupted the sacrificial cult there and, therefore, to have proved them-

all that the fork brought up the priest
would take for himself.[q] This is what
they did at Shiloh to all the Israelites who
came there. 15 Moreover, before the fat
was burned, the priest's servant would
come and say to the one who was sacrificing, "Give meat for the priest to roast; for
he will not accept boiled meat from you,
but only raw." 16 And if the man said to
him, "Let them burn the fat first, and
then take whatever you wish," he would
say, "No, you must give it now; if not, I
will take it by force." 17 Thus the sin of the
young men was very great in the sight of
the LORD; for they treated the offerings
of the LORD with contempt.

The Boy Samuel at Shiloh

18 Samuel was ministering before the
LORD, a boy wearing a linen ephod. 19 His
mother used to make for him a little robe
and take it to him each year, when she
went up with her husband to offer the
yearly sacrifice. 20 Then Eli would bless
Elkanah and his wife, and say, "May the
LORD repay[r] you with children by this
woman for the gift that she made to[s] the
LORD"; and then they would return to
their home.
21 And[t] the LORD took note of Hannah; she conceived and bore three sons
and two daughters. And the boy Samuel
grew up in the presence of the LORD.

The Oracle Against the House of Eli

22 Now Eli was very old. He heard all
that his sons were doing to all Israel, and
how they lay with the women who served
at the entrance to the tent of meeting.
23 He said to them, "Why do you do such
things? For I hear of your evil dealings
from all these people. 24 No, my sons; it is
not a good report that I hear the people
of the LORD spreading abroad. 25 If one
person sins against another, someone can
intercede for the sinner with the LORD;[u]
but if someone sins against the LORD, who
can make intercession?" But they would
not listen to the voice of their father; for it
was the will of the LORD to kill them.
26 Now the boy Samuel continued to
grow both in stature and in favor with the
LORD and with the people.
27 A man of God came to Eli and said
to him, "Thus the LORD has said, 'I revealed[v] myself to the family of your ancestor in Egypt when they were slaves[w] to
the house of Pharaoh. 28 I chose him out
of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to
go up to my altar, to offer incense, to wear
an ephod before me; and I gave to the
family of your ancestor all my offerings
by fire from the people of Israel. 29 Why
then look with greedy eye[x] at my sacrifices and my offerings that I commanded,
and honor your sons more than me by fattening yourselves on the choicest parts of
every offering of my people Israel?'
30 Therefore the LORD the God of Israel
declares: 'I promised that your family and
the family of your ancestor should go in
and out before me forever'; but now the
LORD declares: 'Far be it from me; for
those who honor me I will honor, and
those who despise me shall be treated with
contempt. 31 See, a time is coming when I
will cut off your strength and the strength
of your ancestor's family, so that no one in
your family will live to old age. 32 Then in

q Gk Syr Vg: Heb *with it* *r* Q Ms Gk: MT *give* *s* Q Ms Gk: MT *for the petition that she asked of* *t* Q Ms Gk: MT *When* *u* Gk Compare Q Ms: MT *another, God will mediate for him* *v* Gk Tg Syr: Heb *Did I reveal* *w* Q Ms Gk: MT lacks *slaves* *x* Q Ms Gk: MT *then kick*

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selves unfit to succeed their father. **2.16** By asking that they *burn the fat first*, the man is appealing to the rules that forbid the priests to take the fat for themselves (see Lev 3.16–17; Num 18.17).

2.18–21 In sharp contrast to the sons of Eli, the young Samuel earns both divine and human favor (see v. 26) in carrying out his duties at Shiloh. **2.18** Samuel's *linen ephod* is a simple loincloth that signifies priestly status (cf. 22.18) but does not resemble the ornate ephod of the high priest described in Ex. 28; 39.

2.22–36 An anonymous holy man comes to Shiloh and denounces the house of Eli because of the corruption of his sons. The passage comes from the hand of the Deuteronomistic historian (see Introduction) and is chiefly concerned with establishing the ascendancy of the Zadokite priesthood (see vv. 35–36). **2.25** The original reading of *someone can intercede . . . with the LORD* was probably "gods can intercede for him," a reference to the traditional adjudicatory function of household gods or idols. **2.27** *A man of God* is a holy man, most often a soothsayer, as in this case. By *the family of your ancestor* the seer means the Levites and perhaps Moses in particular, from whom Eli seems to have been descended. **2.31–33** The prophecy refers to Saul's massacre of the Shilonite priesthood, described in 22.16–19.

distress you will look with greedy eyes on
all the prosperity that shall be bestowed
upon Israel; and no one in your family
shall ever live to old age. 33 The only one
of you whom I shall not cut off from my
altar shall be spared to weep out his[z] eyes
and grieve his[a] heart; all the members of
your household shall die by the sword.[b]
34 The fate of your two sons, Hophni and
Phinehas, shall be the sign to you—both
of them shall die on the same day. 35 I will
raise up for myself a faithful priest, who
shall do according to what is in my heart
and in my mind. I will build him a sure
house, and he shall go in and out before
my anointed one forever. 36 Everyone
who is left in your family shall come to
implore him for a piece of silver or a loaf
of bread, and shall say, Please put me in
one of the priest's places, that I may eat a
morsel of bread.' "

The Call of Samuel

3 Now the boy Samuel was ministering
to the LORD under Eli. The word of
the LORD was rare in those days; visions
were not widespread.
2 At that time Eli, whose eyesight had
begun to grow dim so that he could not
see, was lying down in his room; 3 the
lamp of God had not yet gone out, and
Samuel was lying down in the temple of
the LORD, where the ark of God was.
4 Then the LORD called, "Samuel! Sam-
uel!"[c] and he said, "Here I am!" 5 and
ran to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you
called me." But he said, "I did not call; lie
down again." So he went and lay down.
6 The LORD called again, "Samuel!" Sam-
uel got up and went to Eli, and said,
"Here I am, for you called me." But he
said, "I did not call, my son; lie down
again." 7 Now Samuel did not yet know
the LORD, and the word of the LORD had
not yet been revealed to him. 8 The LORD
called Samuel again, a third time. And he
got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I
am, for you called me." Then Eli per-
ceived that the LORD was calling the boy.
9 Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie
down; and if he calls you, you shall say,
'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listen-
ing.' " So Samuel went and lay down in his
place.
10 Now the LORD came and stood
there, calling as before, "Samuel! Sam-
uel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your
servant is listening." 11 Then the LORD
said to Samuel, "See, I am about to do
something in Israel that will make both
ears of anyone who hears of it tingle.
12 On that day I will fulfill against Eli all
that I have spoken concerning his house,
from beginning to end. 13 For I have told
him that I am about to punish his house
forever, for the iniquity that he knew, be-
cause his sons were blaspheming God,[d]
and he did not restrain them. 14 There-
fore I swear to the house of Eli that the
iniquity of Eli's house shall not be expi-
ated by sacrifice or offering forever."
15 Samuel lay there until morning;
then he opened the doors of the house of
the LORD. Samuel was afraid to tell the
vision to Eli. 16 But Eli called Samuel and
said, "Samuel, my son." He said, "Here I
am." 17 Eli said, "What was it that he told
you? Do not hide it from me. May God do
so to you and more also, if you hide any-
thing from me of all that he told you."
18 So Samuel told him everything and hid
nothing from him. Then he said, "It is

[y] Q Ms Gk: MT *will kick* [z] Q Ms Gk: MT *your*
[a] Q Ms Gk: Heb *your* [b] Q Ms See Gk: MT *die like mortals* [c] Q Ms Gk See 3.10: MT *the LORD called Samuel* [d] Another reading is *for themselves*

2.33 *The only one* to survive will be Abiathar (see 22.20–23; 1 Kings 2.26). **2.35** Though in the present context the *faithful priest* might seem to be Samuel himself, he will turn out to be Zadok, who shared the high-priesthood with Abiathar during David's reign and succeeded him during Solomon's. Subsequently, membership in the *sure house* of Zadok was required for priestly service in the Jerusalem temple. **2.36** Non-Zadokite priests were relegated to menial roles (see 2 Kings 23.9; Ezek 44.10–16).

3.1–4.1a Samuel's vocation as a prophet formally begins when for the first time he becomes a channel for a message from the Lord, in this case a confirmation of the oracle in 2.27–36. **3.3** The *lamp of God* burned in the sanctuary from evening to morning (see Ex 27.20–21). Samuel must have slept in the nave of the temple near the inner sanctuary where the *ark of God*, the most sacred object in Israelite worship, marked the presence of the Lord. **3.11–14** Samuel's first vision is a confirmation of the oracle of the anonymous man of God in 2.27–36. **3.14** The statement that the sin *shall not be expiated by sacrifice*

the LORD; let him do what seems good
to him."
19 As Samuel grew up, the LORD was
with him and let none of his words fall to
the ground. 20 And all Israel from Dan to
Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was a trust-
worthy prophet of the LORD. 21 The LORD
continued to appear at Shiloh, for the
LORD revealed himself to Samuel at Shi-
4 loh by the word of the LORD. 1 And
the word of Samuel came to all
Israel.

The Capture of the Ark

In those days the Philistines mustered
for war against Israel,[e] and Israel went
out to battle against them;[f] they en-
camped at Ebenezer, and the Philistines
encamped at Aphek. 2 The Philistines
drew up in line against Israel, and when
the battle was joined,[g] Israel was de-
feated by the Philistines, who killed about
four thousand men on the field of battle.
3 When the troops came to the camp, the
elders of Israel said, "Why has the LORD
put us to rout today before the Philis-
tines? Let us bring the ark of the covenant
of the LORD here from Shiloh, so that he
may come among us and save us from the
power of our enemies." 4 So the people
sent to Shiloh, and brought from there
the ark of the covenant of the LORD of
hosts, who is enthroned on the cherubim.
The two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phine-
has, were there with the ark of the cove-
nant of God.
5 When the ark of the covenant of the
LORD came into the camp, all Israel gave a
mighty shout, so that the earth re-
sounded. 6 When the Philistines heard the
noise of the shouting, they said, "What
does this great shouting in the camp of
the Hebrews mean?" When they learned
that the ark of the LORD had come to the
camp, 7 the Philistines were afraid; for
they said, "Gods have[h] come into the
camp." They also said, "Woe to us! For
nothing like this has happened before.
8 Woe to us! Who can deliver us from the
power of these mighty gods? These are
the gods who struck the Egyptians with
every sort of plague in the wilderness.
9 Take courage, and be men, O Phil-
istines, in order not to become slaves
to the Hebrews as they have been to you;
be men and fight."
10 So the Philistines fought; Israel was
defeated, and they fled, everyone to his
home. There was a very great slaughter,
for there fell of Israel thirty thousand
foot soldiers. 11 The ark of God was cap-
tured; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni
and Phinehas, died.

e Gk: Heb lacks *In those days the Philistines mustered for war against Israel* *f* Gk: Heb *against the Philistines* *g* Meaning of Heb uncertain
h Or *A god has*

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or offering sets aside the possibility of ritual expiation (see Lev 4.3–12). **3.19–4.1a** Now that he has received his first oracle, Samuel is established as a prophet, the vehicle through which the Lord communicates with Israel.

4.1b–11 In a major battle on the Philistine frontier the ark of the Lord is brought from Shiloh to rally the faltering Israelite troops, but the Philistines prove too strong, Israel is routed, and the ark is captured. When the account is read in conjunction with the materials that precede it, it becomes clear that the Lord's purpose in permitting the capture of the ark is to remove it from Shiloh, whose priesthood he has just condemned. **4.1b** The *Philistines* had arrived on the coast of Palestine at about the same time the Israelites settled in the hills, and the Israelite monarchy arose amid a struggle between the two peoples for supremacy in the country. The exact location of *Ebenezer* is uncertain, but *Aphek* was just east of modern Tel Aviv, guarding a strategically important highway from the coastal plain into the hill country. **4.3** The *elders of Israel*, tribal elders with responsibility for important decisions, attribute the rout to the absence of the ark, which marked the presence of the Divine Warrior in the midst of the army. **4.4** The *LORD of hosts, who is enthroned on the cherubim* is an epithet signifying the presence of the Lord above the cherubim, carvings of winged sphinxlike creatures. The ark is here envisioned as a portable cherub-throne, an important element in the royal iconography of Canaan. **4.5** The Israelite battle cry, here called *a mighty shout*, was a continuous threatening roar that made the earth seem to shake. **4.8** The Philistines seem to think that Israel has more than one god. They fear *these mighty gods* because they *struck the Egyptians with every sort of plague* (see Ex 7–12), and in fact plague will be the weapon with which the Lord strikes them in ch. 5. The plagues of Exodus were not *in the wilderness*, and the original reading here is likely to have been "and pestilence." **4.11** The death of *Hophni and Phinehas* fulfills the prediction of 2.34.

The Death of Eli

12 A man of Benjamin ran from the battle line, and came to Shiloh the same day, with his clothes torn and with earth upon his head. 13 When he arrived, Eli was sitting upon his seat by the road watching, for his heart trembled for the ark of God. When the man came into the city and told the news, all the city cried out. 14 When Eli heard the sound of the outcry, he said, "What is this uproar?" Then the man came quickly and told Eli. 15 Now Eli was ninety-eight years old and his eyes were set, so that he could not see. 16 The man said to Eli, "I have just come from the battle; I fled from the battle today." He said, "How did it go, my son?" 17 The messenger replied, "Israel has fled before the Philistines, and there has also been a great slaughter among the troops; your two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God has been captured." 18 When he mentioned the ark of God, Eli[i] fell over backward from his seat by the side of the gate; and his neck was broken and he died, for he was an old man, and heavy. He had judged Israel forty years.

19 Now his daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, was pregnant, about to give birth. When she heard the news that the ark of God was captured, and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she bowed and gave birth; for her labor pains overwhelmed her. 20 As she was about to die, the women attending her said to her, "Do not be afraid, for you have borne a son." But she did not answer or give heed. 21 She named the child Ichabod, meaning, "The glory has departed from Israel," because the ark of God had been captured and because of her father-in-law and her husband. 22 She said, "The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured."

The Philistines and the Ark

5 When the Philistines captured the ark of God, they brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod; 2 then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it into the house of Dagon and placed it beside Dagon. 3 When the people of Ashdod rose early the next day, there was Dagon, fallen on his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD. So they took Dagon and put him back in his place. 4 But when they rose early on the next morning, Dagon had fallen on his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD, and the head of Dagon and both his hands were lying cut off upon the threshold; only the trunk of[j] Dagon was left to him. 5 This is why the priests of Dagon and all who enter the house of Dagon do not step on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day.

6 The hand of the LORD was heavy upon the people of Ashdod, and he terrified and struck them with tumors, both in Ashdod and in its territory. 7 And when the inhabitants of Ashdod saw how things

i Heb *he* *j* Heb lacks *the trunk of*

4.12–22 When word of the capture of the ark is brought to Eli, the old priest collapses and breaks his neck. **4.12** The messenger is a native of *Benjamin*, the small tribal territory immediately north of Jerusalem. **4.18** The notice indicating that Eli *had judged Israel forty years* incorporates him into the succession of "judges" who ruled Israel between Joshua and Saul (see Judg 10.2, 3; 12.7, 9, 11, 14; 16.31; 1 Sam 7.6). **4.19** Shocked by the death of Phinehas, his wife *bowed and gave birth*, assuming the usual crouched position of Israelite women in childbirth. **4.21** The interpretation of the name *Ichabod* given here is close to its literal meaning, "Alas for the Glory!" or "Where is the Glory?" Such names were probably taken from liturgical laments over the departure of the discernible cultic presence—the "Glory"—of a deity.

5.1–12 As the ark is moved around Philistia, pestilence breaks out in one city after another. The story shows that the Lord permitted the capture of the ark to provide an occasion for slaying enemies. **5.1** *Ashdod*, one of the five principal Philistine cities (see note on 5.8), was located on the coastal highway, a few miles from the sea and almost due west of Jerusalem. **5.2** The *house of Dagon* was Ashdod's temple of the god Dagon, a Syro-Palestinian deity of great antiquity who was adopted as the god of the Philistines after their arrival. **5.5** The writer uses the events of the story to explain a contemporary taboo against treading on *the threshold* of Dagon's temple in Ashdod. **5.6** *The hand of the LORD* refers to plague, a weapon commonly used by the God of Israel against enemies. The specific disease that ravages the Philistines is probably bubonic plague, an epidemic common in coastal cities; it was characterized by *tumors*, nodal swellings or "buboes," and

were, they said, "The ark of the God of
Israel must not remain with us; for his
hand is heavy on us and on our god Da-
gon." 8 So they sent and gathered together
all the lords of the Philistines, and said,
"What shall we do with the ark of the God
of Israel?" The inhabitants of Gath re-
plied, "Let the ark of God be moved on to
us."[k] So they moved the ark of the God
of Israel to Gath.[l] 9 But after they had
brought it to Gath,[m] the hand of the
LORD was against the city, causing a very
great panic; he struck the inhabitants of
the city, both young and old, so that tu-
mors broke out on them. 10 So they sent
the ark of the God of Israel[n] to Ekron.
But when the ark of God came to Ekron,
the people of Ekron cried out, "Why[o]
have they brought around to us[p] the ark
of the God of Israel to kill us[p] and our[q]
people?" 11 They sent therefore and gath-
ered together all the lords of the Philis-
tines, and said, "Send away the ark of the
God of Israel, and let it return to its own
place, that it may not kill us and our peo-
ple." For there was a deathly panic[r]
throughout the whole city. The hand of
God was very heavy there; 12 those who
did not die were stricken with tumors,
and the cry of the city went up to heaven.

The Ark Returned to Israel

6 The ark of the LORD was in the
country of the Philistines seven
months. 2 Then the Philistines called for
the priests and the diviners and said,
"What shall we do with the ark of the
LORD? Tell us what we should send with it
to its place." 3 They said, "If you send
away the ark of the God of Israel, do not
send it empty, but by all means return
him a guilt offering. Then you will be
healed and will be ransomed;[s] will not
his hand then turn from you?" 4 And they
said, "What is the guilt offering that we
shall return to him?" They answered,
"Five gold tumors and five gold mice, ac-
cording to the number of the lords of the
Philistines; for the same plague was upon
all of you and upon your lords. 5 So you
must make images of your tumors and
images of your mice that ravage the land,
and give glory to the God of Israel; per-
haps he will lighten his hand on you and
your gods and your land. 6 Why should
you harden your hearts as the Egyptians
and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? Af-
ter he had made fools of them, did they
not let the people go, and they departed?
7 Now then, get ready a new cart and two
milch cows that have never borne a yoke,
and yoke the cows to the cart, but take
their calves home, away from them.
8 Take the ark of the LORD and place it on
the cart, and put in a box at its side the
figures of gold, which you are returning
to him as a guilt offering. Then send it
off, and let it go its way. 9 And watch; if it
goes up on the way to its own land, to
Beth-shemesh, then it is he who has done
us this great harm; but if not, then we

k Gk Compare Q Ms: MT *They answered, "Let the ark of the God of Israel be brought around to Gath."* *l* Gk: Heb lacks *to Gath* *m* Q Ms: MT lacks *to Gath* *n* Q Ms Gk: MT lacks *of Israel* *o* Q Ms Gk: MT lacks *Why* *p* Heb *me* *q* Heb *my* *r* Q Ms reads *a panic from the LORD* *s* Q Ms Gk: MT *and it will be known to you*

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transmitted by fleas borne on rats or mice (see 6.4). **5.8** The *lords of the Philistines* were five in number, one from each of the principal cities of Ashdod, Ekron, Gath, Ashkelon, and Gaza. The site of ancient *Gath* is disputed. **5.10** The location of *Ekron* is uncertain, but Tel Miqneh, about twenty miles inland at the northern frontier of Philistine territory, is a strong candidate. **5.11** By *its own place* the people of Ekron mean the particular pedestal or alcove where the sacred object used to reside in its native shrine.

6.1–7.2 The Philistines send the ark back to Israelite territory, and it comes to rest in Kiriath-jearim. **6.3** A *guilt offering*, or compensation paid to the God of Israel, to atone for defiling the ark and to prevent further suffering. **6.4** *Five gold tumors and five gold mice* constitute a strange but appropriate offering. The number five corresponds to the number of the Philistine lords or cities (see vv. 17–18), and the Hebrew word for *tumor* also has the meaning "acropolis." Gold suggests that the offerings can also be thought of as spoils of war. Tumors and mice are characteristic of the plague (see note on 5.6). **6.6** *As the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts*, an allusion to Pharaoh's repeated resistance to releasing the Israelites during the plagues preceding the exodus (e.g., Ex 10.1–2). **6.7** The ceremony requires *a new cart and two milch cows that have never borne a yoke* because a previously used cart or previously yoked cows would not be ritually pure (see Num 19.2; Deut 21.3) and both are to be used for sacrifice (see v. 15). **6.9** *Beth-shemesh*, about twenty miles west of Jerusalem, was at the southwestern end of the Valley of Sorek, the most direct route back from Philistia to Israelite

shall know that it is not his hand that struck us; it happened to us by chance."

10 The men did so; they took two milch cows and yoked them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home. 11 They put the ark of the LORD on the cart, and the box with the gold mice and the images of their tumors. 12 The cows went straight in the direction of Beth-shemesh along one highway, lowing as they went; they turned neither to the right nor to the left, and the lords of the Philistines went after them as far as the border of Beth-shemesh.

13 Now the people of Beth-shemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley. When they looked up and saw the ark, they went with rejoicing to meet it.[t] 14 The cart came into the field of Joshua of Beth-shemesh, and stopped there. A large stone was there; so they split up the wood of the cart and offered the cows as a burnt offering to the LORD. 15 The Levites took down the ark of the LORD and the box that was beside it, in which were the gold objects, and set them upon the large stone. Then the people of Beth-shemesh offered burnt offerings and presented sacrifices on that day to the LORD. 16 When the five lords of the Philistines saw it, they returned that day to Ekron.

17 These are the gold tumors, which the Philistines returned as a guilt offering to the LORD: one for Ashdod, one for Gaza, one for Ashkelon, one for Gath, one for Ekron; 18 also the gold mice, according to the number of all the cities of the Philistines belonging to the five lords, both fortified cities and unwalled villages. The great stone, beside which they set down the ark of the LORD, is a witness to this day in the field of Joshua of Beth-shemesh.

19 The descendants of Jeconiah did not rejoice with the people of Beth-shemesh when they greeted[u] the ark of the LORD; and he killed seventy men of them.[v] The people mourned because the LORD had made a great slaughter among the people. 20 Then the people of Beth-shemesh said, "Who is able to stand before the LORD, this holy God? To whom shall he go so that we may be rid of him?" 21 So they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kiriath-jearim, saying, "The Philistines have returned the ark of the LORD. Come down and take it up to you."

7 1 And the people of Kiriath-jearim came and took up the ark of the LORD, and brought it to the house of Abinadab on the hill. They consecrated his son, Eleazar, to have charge of the ark of the LORD.

2 From the day that the ark was lodged at Kiriath-jearim, a long time passed, some twenty years, and all the house of Israel lamented[w] after the LORD.

Samuel as Judge

3 Then Samuel said to all the house of Israel, "If you are returning to the LORD with all your heart, then put away the for-

t Gk: Heb *rejoiced to see it* *u* Gk: Heb *And he killed some of the people of Beth-shemesh, because they looked into* *v* Heb *killed seventy men, fifty thousand men* *w* Meaning of Heb uncertain

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territory. **6.12** The unswerving route of the untrained cows shows the Philistines that their progress is being divinely guided (see v. 9). **6.14** *Joshua of Beth-shemesh* is not mentioned elsewhere, but the field where the sacrifice was made was identified as his in the time of the writer (see v. 18). Both *the wood of the cart* and *the cows* are used in the sacrifice, which was a *burnt offering*, the highest form of sacrifice, in which the entire victim was consumed on the altar. **6.15** The mention of *Levites* may have been added by a scribe to avoid the implication in v. 14 that the sacrifice was made without the participation of the official priestly tribe. **6.19** The beginning of this section is very uncertain textually. The Septuagint gives us *the descendants of Jeconiah*, but we do not know who they were or why their failure to celebrate would have provoked the Lord to punish Beth-shemesh. The Masoretic Text says that the people angered the Lord by looking into the ark (see Num 4.15, 20). **6.20** The expression *stand before* often connotes "attend upon (as a priest)," (see Deut 10.8; Judg 20.27–28), and it may be that the people of Beth-shemesh sent the ark to Kiriath-jearim in the hope that a priest might be found there who could safely and properly manage the service of this powerful and dangerous sacred object. In any case, this is apparently what happened (see 7.1–2). **6.21** *Kiriath-jearim* was about fifteen miles east-northeast of Beth-shemesh and eight miles northwest of Jerusalem. It was situated on the border of Benjamin and Judah, and *the hill* (see 7.1) may have been the Benjaminite district. **7.1** We know about *Abinadab* and *Eleazar* only from this passage and 2 Sam 6, but both names are prominent in the Levitical genealogies.

7.3–17 Samuel, who has already been presented as both priest and prophet, now becomes a

eign gods and the Astartes from among you. Direct your heart to the LORD, and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines." 4 So Israel put away the Baals and the Astartes, and they served the LORD only.

5 Then Samuel said, "Gather all Israel at Mizpah, and I will pray to the LORD for you." 6 So they gathered at Mizpah, and drew water and poured it out before the LORD. They fasted that day, and said, "We have sinned against the LORD." And Samuel judged the people of Israel at Mizpah.

7 When the Philistines heard that the people of Israel had gathered at Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the people of Israel heard of it they were afraid of the Philistines. 8 The people of Israel said to Samuel, "Do not cease to cry out to the LORD our God for us, and pray that he may save us from the hand of the Philistines." 9 So Samuel took a sucking lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering to the LORD; Samuel cried out to the LORD for Israel, and the LORD answered him. 10 As Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to attack Israel; but the LORD thundered with a mighty voice that day against the Philistines and threw them into confusion; and they were routed before Israel. 11 And the men of Israel went out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, and struck them down as far as beyond Beth-car.

12 Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Jeshanah,[x] and named it Ebenezer;[y] for he said, "Thus far the LORD has helped us." 13 So the Philistines were subdued and did not again enter the territory of Israel; the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel. 14 The towns that the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron to Gath; and Israel recovered their territory from the hand of the Philistines. There was peace also between Israel and the Amorites.

15 Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. 16 He went on a circuit year by year to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah; and he judged Israel in all these places. 17 Then he would come back to Ramah, for his home was there; he administered justice there to Israel, and built there an altar to the LORD.

Israel Demands a King

8 When Samuel became old, he made his sons judges over Israel. 2 The name of his firstborn son was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beer-sheba. 3 Yet his sons did

x Gk Syr: Heb *Shen* y That is *Stone of Help*

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military commander and a judge. **7.4** The *Baals* and *Astartes* were foreign deities, male and female. **7.5** *Mizpah* was a hilltop town, probably located about five miles north of Jerusalem; during the Babylonian exile, when Jerusalem lay in ruins, it served as the provincial capital of Judah (see 2 Kings 25.23). **7.6** We know of no ritual in the biblical period in which people *drew water, poured it out before the LORD,* and *fasted,* but in many respects the ritual anticipates the later observance of the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). The notice that *Samuel judged the people of Israel* (see also v. 15) incorporates his career into the chronological framework of the book of Judges (see note on 4.18). **7.10** In response to Samuel's petition *the LORD thundered with a mighty voice.* The intervention of the Divine Warrior is often expressed in the language of the thunderstorm, especially in early poetry (1 Sam 2.10; 2 Sam 22.14; Pss 18.13; 29). **7.11** *Beth-car* is mentioned nowhere else, and its location is unknown. **7.12** *Jeshanah,* about seventeen miles north of Jerusalem, was later a border town disputed by the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah (2 Chr 13.9). The Israelites were encamped at *Ebenezer* (see 4.1) when the Philistines attacked them earlier, so that Samuel's victory restores the boundaries that existed at the beginning of ch. 4. **7.14** Israel recovers *Ekron* and *Gath* (see 5.8, 10), the Philistines are driven out, and Israel's internal enemies, here called *the Amorites,* are also pacified. **7.16–17** *Bethel,* about ten miles north of Jerusalem, was an important religious center throughout the history of Israel. Along with *Gilgal* (see 11.14), *Mizpah* (see 7.5), and *Ramah* (see 1.19), it was one of the chief cities of the central hill country where Samuel dispensed justice.

8.1–22 A long time has passed, and Samuel is an old man. Despite the security the Israelites enjoyed under his leadership, they approach him and demand a king. **8.2** Samuel's sons, like Eli's, are unqualified to succeed their father, a detail that carries an implicit warning about dynastic succession in a narrative in which Israel is about to get its first king. According to 1 Chr 6.33, *Joel* was the father of Heman, the chief temple musician appointed by David. Up to this point events have been confined to the central hills, but the sons of

not follow in his ways, but turned aside
after gain; they took bribes and perverted
justice.
4 Then all the elders of Israel gath-
ered together and came to Samuel at Ra-
mah, 5 and said to him, "You are old and
your sons do not follow in your ways; ap-
point for us, then, a king to govern us,
like other nations." 6 But the thing dis-
pleased Samuel when they said, "Give us a
king to govern us." Samuel prayed to the
LORD, 7 and the LORD said to Samuel,
"Listen to the voice of the people in all
that they say to you; for they have not re-
jected you, but they have rejected me
from being king over them. 8 Just as they
have done to me,[z] from the day I
brought them up out of Egypt to this day,
forsaking me and serving other gods, so
also they are doing to you. 9 Now then,
listen to their voice; only—you shall sol-
emnly warn them, and show them the
ways of the king who shall reign over
them."
10 So Samuel reported all the words
of the LORD to the people who were ask-
ing him for a king. 11 He said, "These will
be the ways of the king who will reign
over you: he will take your sons and ap-
point them to his chariots and to be his
horsemen, and to run before his chariots;
12 and he will appoint for himself com-
manders of thousands and commanders
of fifties, and some to plow his ground
and to reap his harvest, and to make his
implements of war and the equipment of
his chariots. 13 He will take your daugh-
ters to be perfumers and cooks and bak-
ers. 14 He will take the best of your fields
and vineyards and olive orchards and give
them to his courtiers. 15 He will take one-
tenth of your grain and of your vineyards
and give it to his officers and his courtiers.
16 He will take your male and female
slaves, and the best of your cattle[a] and
donkeys, and put them to his work. 17 He
will take one-tenth of your flocks, and you
shall be his slaves. 18 And in that day you
will cry out because of your king, whom
you have chosen for yourselves; but the
LORD will not answer you in that day."
19 But the people refused to listen to
the voice of Samuel; they said, "No! but
we are determined to have a king over us,
20 so that we also may be like other na-
tions, and that our king may govern us
and go out before us and fight our bat-
tles." 21 When Samuel had heard all the
words of the people, he repeated them in
the ears of the LORD. 22 The LORD said to
Samuel, "Listen to their voice and set a
king over them." Samuel then said to the
people of Israel, "Each of you return
home."

Saul Identified as King

9 There was a man of Benjamin whose
name was Kish son of Abiel son of
Zeror son of Becorath son of Aphiah, a
Benjaminite, a man of wealth. 2 He had a
son whose name was Saul, a handsome
young man. There was not a man among
the people of Israel more handsome than
he; he stood head and shoulders above
everyone else.
3 Now the donkeys of Kish, Saul's fa-

z Gk: Heb lacks *to me* a Gk: Heb *young men*

Samuel have their headquarters in *Beer-sheba* at the traditional southern boundary of the country. **8.5** Cf. Moses' anticipation of this request in Deut 17.14. **8.6–7** Samuel feels personally insulted, but the Lord reminds him that the people's demand is a rejection not of Samuel, but of the Lord, Israel's true king. The judges were divinely chosen and appointed, but a king will expect his son to succeed him, taking the choice away from the Lord. **8.8** This verse interprets these events in terms of the Deuteronomistic understanding (see Introduction) of Israel's past as a history of repeated apostasy. **8.11–18** In warning the people what to expect from a king, Samuel uses the words *he will take* six times. **8.12** The *commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties* were the ranking officers of military units of various size. **8.15** In addition to the religious tithes that supported the temple and priesthood (see Deut 14.22–29; 26.12–15), there apparently were also tithes on agricultural products and livestock (v. 17) that supported the royal estates. **8.19–22** Undeterred by Samuel's warning, the people renew their demand and the Lord acquiesces.

9.1–26 In a story with an atmosphere like a folktale, the young Saul goes on a search for some strayed donkeys and finds a kingdom. **9.1** Saul's home in *Benjamin* (see 4.12) was Gibeah (10.26), also known as Gibeah of Saul (11.4) or Gibeah of Benjamin (13.2), a city atop an imposing hill about four miles north of Jerusalem in the direction of Ramah. **9.3** We might suppose that if *the donkeys of Kish* were lost, he faced economic ruin. But a more accurate translation is "some of the donkeys of Kish." The ostensible purpose of

ther, had strayed. So Kish said to his son
Saul, "Take one of the boys with you; go
and look for the donkeys." 4 He passed
through the hill country of Ephraim and
passed through the land of Shalishah, but
they did not find them. And they passed
through the land of Shaalim, but they
were not there. Then he passed through
the land of Benjamin, but they did not
find them.

5 When they came to the land of
Zuph, Saul said to the boy who was with
him, "Let us turn back, or my father will
stop worrying about the donkeys and
worry about us." 6 But he said to him,
"There is a man of God in this town; he is
a man held in honor. Whatever he says
always comes true. Let us go there now;
perhaps he will tell us about the journey
on which we have set out." 7 Then Saul
replied to the boy, "But if we go, what can
we bring the man? For the bread in our
sacks is gone, and there is no present to
bring to the man of God. What have we?"
8 The boy answered Saul again, "Here, I
have with me a quarter shekel of silver; I
will give it to the man of God, to tell us
our way." 9 (Formerly in Israel, anyone
who went to inquire of God would say,
"Come, let us go to the seer"; for the one
who is now called a prophet was formerly
called a seer.) 10 Saul said to the boy,
"Good; come, let us go." So they went to
the town where the man of God was.

11 As they went up the hill to the
town, they met some girls coming out to
draw water, and said to them, "Is the seer
here?" 12 They answered, "Yes, there he is
just ahead of you. Hurry; he has come
just now to the town, because the people
have a sacrifice today at the shrine. 13 As
soon as you enter the town, you will find
him, before he goes up to the shrine to
eat. For the people will not eat until he
comes, since he must bless the sacrifice;
afterward those eat who are invited. Now
go up, for you will meet him immediately." 14 So they went up to the town. As
they were entering the town, they saw
Samuel coming out toward them on his
way up to the shrine.

15 Now the day before Saul came, the
LORD had revealed to Samuel: 16 "Tomorrow about this time I will send to you a
man from the land of Benjamin, and you
shall anoint him to be ruler over my people Israel. He shall save my people from
the hand of the Philistines; for I have seen
the suffering of[b] my people, because
their outcry has come to me." 17 When
Samuel saw Saul, the LORD told him,
"Here is the man of whom I spoke to you.
He it is who shall rule over my people."
18 Then Saul approached Samuel inside
the gate, and said, "Tell me, please, where
is the house of the seer?" 19 Samuel answered Saul, "I am the seer; go up before
me to the shrine, for today you shall eat
with me, and in the morning I will let you
go and will tell you all that is on your
mind. 20 As for your donkeys that were

b Gk: Heb lacks *the suffering of*

Saul's mission is not of vital importance, a fact that heightens the dramatic irony of the higher purpose the mission does turn out to have. **9.4** The *hill country of Ephraim* is a general designation for the highlands north of Benjamin. The location of *the land of Shalishah* is uncertain, but there was a Baal-shalishah (see 2 Kings 4.42) not far from Gilgal (see note on 10.8) in the southeast corner of Ephraim. The *land of Shaalim* is probably the same as *the land of Shual* (see 13.17), a designation of the hill country north of Bethel. The *land of Benjamin* can hardly be correct, since Saul is traveling north and will soon reach Ramathaim. **9.5** Samuel's father is called a Zuphite in 1.1, and *the land of Zuph* is his home district. **9.9** This antiquarian notice, which explains the word *seer* in v. 11, has become misplaced. **9.12** The *shrine* a Ramathaim was the sort of local place of sacrifice later condemned (see 2 Kings 23.8–9, 19–20). It is acceptable here because the temple has not yet been built in Jerusalem. **9.13** In this type of sacrifice portions not set aside for the deity were given to the worshipers to "eat in the presence of the LORD" (Deut 12.18). **9.14** *Samuel* is mentioned by name for the first time in the story. The seer may have been anonymous in an older version. **9.16** To *anoint* someone was to smear the head with fat or, as in this case (10.1), oil. The rite sanctified a person for some sacral office (see also 10.6). The term translated *ruler* (Hebrew *nagid*) here refers to an individual who has been selected to become king either by the reigning king (1 Kings 1.35; 2 Chr 11.22) or, as in this case, by the Lord. From the perspective of ch. 7 *the Philistines* have been driven to a safe distance, but the author of the present, older story knows nothing of that tradition (see 10.5). **9.20** The correct translation of the second sentence is, "And to whom does all of Israel's wealth belong, if not to you and to all your ancestral house?" The point Samuel is making is that Saul need not worry about a few lost donkeys, since all the riches of

lost three days ago, give no further thought to them, for they have been found. And on whom is all Israel's desire fixed, if not on you and on all your ancestral house?" 21 Saul answered, "I am only a Benjaminite, from the least of the tribes of Israel, and my family is the humblest of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin. Why then have you spoken to me in this way?"

22 Then Samuel took Saul and his servant-boy and brought them into the hall, and gave them a place at the head of those who had been invited, of whom there were about thirty. 23 And Samuel said to the cook, "Bring the portion I gave you, the one I asked you to put aside." 24 The cook took up the thigh and what went with it[c] and set them before Saul. Samuel said, "See, what was kept is set before you. Eat; for it is set[d] before you at the appointed time, so that you might eat with the guests."[e]

So Saul ate with Samuel that day. 25 When they came down from the shrine into the town, a bed was spread for Saul[f] on the roof, and he lay down to sleep.[g] 26 Then at the break of dawn[h] Samuel called to Saul upon the roof, "Get up, so that I may send you on your way." Saul got up, and both he and Samuel went out into the street.

Samuel Anoints Saul

27 As they were going down to the outskirts of the town, Samuel said to Saul, "Tell the boy to go on before us, and when he has passed on, stop here yourself for a while, that I may make known to you

10 the word of God." 1 Samuel took a vial of oil and poured it on his head, and kissed him; he said, "The LORD has anointed you ruler over his people Israel. You shall reign over the people of the LORD and you will save them from the hand of their enemies all around. Now this shall be the sign to you that the LORD has anointed you ruler[i] over his heritage: 2 When you depart from me today you will meet two men by Rachel's tomb in the territory of Benjamin at Zelzah; they will say to you, 'The donkeys that you went to seek are found, and now your father has stopped worrying about them and is worrying about you, saying: What shall I do about my son?' 3 Then you shall go on from there further and come to the oak of Tabor; three men going up to God at Bethel will meet you there, one carrying three kids, another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a skin of wine. 4 They will greet you and give you two loaves of bread, which you

c Meaning of Heb uncertain d Q Ms Gk: MT *it was kept* e Cn: Heb *it was kept for you, saying, I have invited the people* f Gk: Heb *and he spoke with Saul* g Gk: Heb lacks *and he lay down to sleep* h Gk: Heb *and they arose early and at break of dawn* i Gk: Heb lacks *over his people Israel. You shall . . . anointed you ruler*

Israel will soon be his. **9.21** Saul is mystified by Samuel's remarks. As *a Benjaminite*, he belongs to the small tribe descended from the youngest son of Jacob. We learn in 10.21 that Saul's family or clan, which he says is the humblest in Benjamin, is called Matri. **9.24** The verb here translated *took up* indicates not that the cook raised up the *thigh* or simply lifted it, but rather that he set it apart or reserved it for a special use. This is the "thigh that is raised" of Lev 10.14, 15 (cf. Ex 29.27; Num 6.20), which was ordinarily reserved for the priests. As when he receives consecrated loaves of bread in 10.4, Saul is being treated as if he were a priest, an indication of the sacral character of kingship. **9.25** As an honored guest, Saul sleeps on the *roof*, where the air is fresh and cool.

9.27–10.8 Samuel anoints Saul king and sends him home with special instructions. **10.1** Samuel anoints Saul (see 9.16) with *a vial of oil*, probably a small ceramic flask containing olive oil impregnated with spices (cf. Ex 30.22–25). Someone's *heritage* was inalienably held, landed property acquired as a gift, by inheritance, or as a result of a military victory. The Lord's heritage was Israel. **10.2** *Rachel's tomb* was near Ephrathah, where she was going when she died in childbirth with Benjamin (Gen 35.16–20; 48.7). There were two towns with that name, one near Bethlehem (cf. 17.12) and one near Kiriath-jearim (see 6.21). Though erroneous glosses in Genesis connect the site with Bethlehem, scholars agree that the northern Ephrathah is correct. Nothing is known of *Zelzah*, and the text may have sustained errors in transmission. **10.3** The *oak of Tabor*, evidently near Bethel, is otherwise unknown. The *three men going up to God at Bethel* are carrying goods for sacrifice at the shrine. **10.4** By being given *two loaves of bread* from the sacrificial goods, Saul is again being treated like a priest (see 9.24). The word *loaves* actually appears in no version of the text. The Masoretic Text is defective, reading "two of bread," but both the Septuagint and a

shall accept from them. 5 After that you
shall come to Gibeath-elohim,[j] at the
place where the Philistine garrison is;
there, as you come to the town, you will
meet a band of prophets coming down
from the shrine with harp, tambourine,
flute, and lyre playing in front of them;
they will be in a prophetic frenzy. 6 Then
the spirit of the LORD will possess you,
and you will be in a prophetic frenzy
along with them and be turned into a dif-
ferent person. 7 Now when these signs
meet you, do whatever you see fit to do,
for God is with you. 8 And you shall go
down to Gilgal ahead of me; then I will
come down to you to present burnt offer-
ings and offer sacrifices of well-being.
Seven days you shall wait, until I come to
you and show you what you shall do."

Saul Among the Prophets

9 As he turned away to leave Samuel,
God gave him another heart; and all these
signs were fulfilled that day. 10 When they
were going from there[k] to Gibeah,[l] a
band of prophets met him; and the spirit
of God possessed him, and he fell into
a prophetic frenzy along with them.
11 When all who knew him before saw how
he prophesied with the prophets, the peo-
ple said to one another, "What has come
over the son of Kish? Is Saul also among
the prophets?" 12 A man of the place an-
swered, "And who is their father?" There-
fore it became a proverb, "Is Saul also
among the prophets?" 13 When his pro-
phetic frenzy had ended, he went home.[m]
14 Saul's uncle said to him and to the
boy, "Where did you go?" And he replied,
"To seek the donkeys; and when we saw
they were not to be found, we went to
Samuel." 15 Saul's uncle said, "Tell me
what Samuel said to you." 16 Saul said to
his uncle, "He told us that the donkeys
had been found." But about the matter of
the kingship, of which Samuel had spo-
ken, he did not tell him anything.

Saul Proclaimed King

17 Samuel summoned the people to
the LORD at Mizpah 18 and said to them,[n]
"Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'I
brought up Israel out of Egypt, and I res-
cued you from the hand of the Egyptians
and from the hand of all the kingdoms
that were oppressing you.' 19 But today
you have rejected your God, who saves
you from all your calamities and your dis-
tresses; and you have said, 'No! but set a
king over us.' Now therefore present
yourselves before the LORD by your tribes
and by your clans."
20 Then Samuel brought all the tribes
of Israel near, and the tribe of Benjamin

j Or *the Hill of God* *k* Gk: Heb *they came there*
l Or *the hill* *m* Cn: Heb *he came to the shrine*
n Heb *to the people of Israel*

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scroll from Qumran (4QSam[a]) supply the missing term, "elevation offerings," bread ceremonially reserved for priestly use (Num 18.11). **10.5** *Gibeath-elohim* was evidently another name for Gibeah of Saul (see note on 9.1), since people *who knew him before* (v. 11) are there; for the *Philistine garrison*, see 13.3. The psychology of prophetic behavior sometimes expressed itself in *a prophetic frenzy*, an experience involving music, dancing, group trances, and even more extreme forms of ecstatic behavior such as self-flagellation or self-mutilation. This kind of activity was often regarded as madness by the unaffected (see, e.g., 2 Kings 9.11). **10.6** The chief characteristic of prophetic frenzy was possession by *the spirit of the LORD*, the inspirational power of the God of Israel. The experience involved a loss of self, or rather transformation into *a different person*. **10.8** Samuel's instructions look ahead to 11.14–15. *Gilgal* (see 7.16; 11.14; 13.4) was an important Benjaminite town and place of sacrifice near Jericho; its location is unknown.

10.9–16 On his way home Saul meets a band of prophets and is possessed by the spirit of the Lord. **10.11** The proverb *"Is Saul also among the prophets?"* is explained differently in 19.19–24. Because of the tradition of prophetic antagonism to Saul, the saying may have originated as a way of remarking on a group that has absorbed or accepted the least likely candidate for membership. **10.12** *"And who is their father?"* is obscure. Does it mean "Saul is not only among the prophets; he is their leader (father)!"? **10.14** Surprisingly, on his arrival home Saul meets not his father, Kish, but his *uncle*. Is this Ner (14.50)?

10.17–27 Saul's secret anointing becomes public knowledge when a lottery identifies him as the chosen king. **10.17** On *Mizpah*, see note on 7.5. **10.18** *Kingdoms*, better "kings." **10.19** The meaning of *today* is "now"; the point is not that the assembly at Mizpah took place on the same day that the demand for a king was brought to Samuel. The complaint that *you have rejected your God* calls attention to 8.7 and the events

was taken by lot. 21 He brought the tribe
of Benjamin near by its families, and the
family of the Matrites was taken by lot.
Finally he brought the family of the Ma-
trites near man by man,[o] and Saul the
son of Kish was taken by lot. But when
they sought him, he could not be found.
22 So they inquired again of the LORD,
"Did the man come here?"[p] and the
LORD said, "See, he has hidden himself
among the baggage." 23 Then they ran
and brought him from there. When he
took his stand among the people, he was
head and shoulders taller than any of
them. 24 Samuel said to all the people, "Do
you see the one whom the LORD has cho-
sen? There is no one like him among all
the people." And all the people shouted,
"Long live the king!"

25 Samuel told the people the rights
and duties of the kingship; and he wrote
them in a book and laid it up before the
LORD. Then Samuel sent all the people
back to their homes. 26 Saul also went to
his home at Gibeah, and with him went
warriors whose hearts God had touched.
27 But some worthless fellows said, "How
can this man save us?" They despised him
and brought him no present. But he held
his peace.

Saul Defeats the Ammonites

Now Nahash, king of the Ammonites,
had been grievously oppressing the Gad-
ites and the Reubenites. He would gouge
out the right eye of each of them and
would not grant Israel a deliverer. No one
was left of the Israelites across the Jordan
whose right eye Nahash, king of the Am-
monites, had not gouged out. But there
were seven thousand men who had es-
caped from the Ammonites and had en-
tered Jabesh-gilead.[q]

11 About a month later,[r] Nahash
the Ammonite went up and be-
sieged Jabesh-gilead; and all the men of
Jabesh said to Nahash, "Make a treaty
with us, and we will serve you." 2 But Na-
hash the Ammonite said to them, "On this
condition I will make a treaty with you,
namely that I gouge out everyone's right
eye, and thus put disgrace upon all Is-
rael." 3 The elders of Jabesh said to him,
"Give us seven days' respite that we may
send messengers through all the territory
of Israel. Then, if there is no one to save
us, we will give ourselves up to you."
4 When the messengers came to Gibeah of
Saul, they reported the matter in the
hearing of the people; and all the people
wept aloud.

5 Now Saul was coming from the field
behind the oxen; and Saul said, "What is
the matter with the people, that they are
weeping?" So they told him the message
from the inhabitants of Jabesh. 6 And the
spirit of God came upon Saul in power
when he heard these words, and his anger
was greatly kindled. 7 He took a yoke of

o Gk: Heb lacks *Finally . . . man by man*
p Gk: Heb *Is there yet a man to come here?*
q Q Ms Compare Josephus, *Antiquities* VI.v.1 (68-71): MT lacks *Now Nahash . . . entered Jabesh-gilead.*
r Q Ms Gk: MT lacks *About a month later*

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reported there. **10.21** Saul's clan or family, *the family of the Matrites,* is identified nowhere else (see 9.21). **10.25** To *the rights and duties of the kingship,* cf. 8.11–18; Deut 17.18. **10.27** The missing *present* was tribute ordinarily paid to a king by his subjects as a gesture of fealty (see, e.g., Judg 3.15).

10.27–11.15 Saul demonstrates his ability to lead Israel in battle by liberating a Gileadite city from a siege by an Ammonite army. **10.27** The paragraph beginning *Now Nahash* has been lost in all the existing witnesses to the text except a manuscript from Qumran (4QSam[a]) and the account of the Jewish historian Josephus. The *Gadites and the Reubenites* were the Israelite tribes that lived east of the Jordan River. *Jabesh-gilead* was a stronghold in Gilead (Transjordanian Israel) on the east bank of the Jordan about twenty miles south of the Sea of Galilee. Instead of *and would not grant Israel a deliverer,* the text should be reconstructed as "and would put the dread of him on Israel" (cf. Josh 2.9). **11.1** The phrase *About a month later* may have been removed from the Masoretic Text because it is inconsistent with the chronology of the larger narrative, which permits only seven days to elapse between Saul's departure from Samuel in 10.8 and Samuel's arrival at Gilgal in 14.8–10. **11.4** *Gibeah of Saul* (see note on 9.1) lay across the Jordan a bit more than forty miles away. **11.7** The Israelites were bound in covenant by an oath, sanctioned by the slaughter of an animal, to join in any military action needed for the defense of their fellow Israelites. Saul's summons of the tribes appeals to this

oxen, and cut them in pieces and sent them throughout all the territory of Israel by messengers, saying, "Whoever does not come out after Saul and Samuel, so shall it be done to his oxen!" Then the dread of the LORD fell upon the people, and they came out as one. 8 When he mustered them at Bezek, those from Israel were three hundred thousand, and those from Judah seventy[s] thousand. 9 They said to the messengers who had come, "Thus shall you say to the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead: 'Tomorrow, by the time the sun is hot, you shall have deliverance.'" When the messengers came and told the inhabitants of Jabesh, they rejoiced. 10 So the inhabitants of Jabesh said, "Tomorrow we will give ourselves up to you, and you may do to us whatever seems good to you." 11 The next day Saul put the people in three companies. At the morning watch they came into the camp and cut down the Ammonites until the heat of the day; and those who survived were scattered, so that no two of them were left together.

12 The people said to Samuel, "Who is it that said, 'Shall Saul reign over us?' Give them to us so that we may put them to death." 13 But Saul said, "No one shall be put to death this day, for today the LORD has brought deliverance to Israel."

14 Samuel said to the people, "Come, let us go to Gilgal and there renew the kingship." 15 So all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal. There they sacrificed offerings of well-being before the LORD, and there Saul and all the Israelites rejoiced greatly.

Samuel's Farewell

12 Samuel said to all Israel, "I have listened to you in all that you have said to me, and have set a king over you. 2 See, it is the king who leads you now; I am old and gray, but my sons are with you. I have led you from my youth until this day. 3 Here I am; testify against me before the LORD and before his anointed. Whose ox have I taken? Or whose donkey have I taken? Or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed? Or from whose hand have I taken a bribe to blind my eyes with it? Testify against me[t] and I will restore it to you." 4 They said, "You have not defrauded us or oppressed us or taken anything from the hand of anyone." 5 He said to them, "The LORD is witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, that you have not found anything in my hand." And they said, "He is witness."

6 Samuel said to the people, "The LORD is witness, who[u] appointed Moses and Aaron and brought your ancestors up out of the land of Egypt. 7 Now therefore take your stand, so that I may enter into judgment with you before the LORD, and I will declare to you[v] all the saving deeds of the LORD that he performed for you and for your ancestors. 8 When Jacob went into Egypt and the Egyptians oppressed them,[w] then your ancestors cried to the LORD and the LORD sent Moses and Aaron, who brought forth your ancestors out of Egypt, and settled them in this place. 9 But they forgot the LORD their God; and he sold them into the hand of

s Q Ms Gk: MT *thirty* t Gk: Heb lacks *Testify against me* u Gk: Heb lacks *is witness, who*
v Gk: Heb lacks *and I will declare to you*
w Gk: Heb lacks *and the Egyptians oppressed them*

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oath: If you do not respond, may you suffer the fate of this *yoke of oxen*! **11.8** *Bezek*, mentioned nowhere else in the OT, was probably a town west of Jordan facing Jabesh; it has been identified with the modern village of Khirbet Ibzig about twelve miles northeast of Shechem. **11.11** To Saul's strategy of *three companies*, cf. Judg 7; 9, where Gideon and Abimelech employ similar battle plans. **11.14** *Gilgal*. See note on 10.8.

12.1–25 Samuel formally turns responsibility for leading Israel over to Saul. His farewell address is punctuated with a fresh demonstration of his prophetic power and a pledge to continue to perform certain duties in the future. **12.1** See 8.22. Samuel is saying that he has been obedient to his instructions. **12.3–5** Samuel reminds the people that he dispensed justice without corruption. **12.6–15** This is one of a series of long retrospective speeches inserted in the biblical narrative at crucial junctures to express the views of the Deuteronomistic historian (cf. Josh 23–24; 1 Kings 8.12–61; see Introduction). **12.6** The appointment of *Moses and Aaron* is described in Ex 2–4. **12.9–11** These verses review the events recorded in Judges. **12.9** For *Sisera*, see Judg 4–5. The *Philistines* are prominent enemies in Judges (see Judg 3.31; 13–16). Eglon, *the king of Moab*, is the oppressor of Israel in Judg

Sisera, commander of the army of King
Jabin of[x] Hazor, and into the hand of the
Philistines, and into the hand of the king
of Moab; and they fought against them.
10 Then they cried to the LORD, and said,
'We have sinned, because we have for-
saken the LORD, and have served the Ba-
als and the Astartes; but now rescue us
out of the hand of our enemies, and we
will serve you.' 11 And the LORD sent Jer-
ubbaal and Barak,[y] and Jephthah, and
Samson,[z] and rescued you out of the
hand of your enemies on every side; and
you lived in safety. 12 But when you saw
that King Nahash of the Ammonites came
against you, you said to me, 'No, but a
king shall reign over us,' though the LORD
your God was your king. 13 See, here is
the king whom you have chosen, for
whom you have asked; see, the LORD has
set a king over you. 14 If you will fear the
LORD and serve him and heed his voice
and not rebel against the commandment
of the LORD, and if both you and the king
who reigns over you will follow the LORD
your God, it will be well; 15 but if you will
not heed the voice of the LORD, but rebel
against the commandment of the LORD,
then the hand of the LORD will be against
you and your king.[a] 16 Now therefore
take your stand and see this great thing
that the LORD will do before your eyes.
17 Is it not the wheat harvest today? I will
call upon the LORD, that he may send
thunder and rain; and you shall know and
see that the wickedness that you have
done in the sight of the LORD is great in
demanding a king for yourselves." 18 So
Samuel called upon the LORD, and the
LORD sent thunder and rain that day; and
all the people greatly feared the LORD and
Samuel.
19 All the people said to Samuel,
"Pray to the LORD your God for your ser-
vants, so that we may not die; for we have
added to all our sins the evil of demand-
ing a king for ourselves." 20 And Samuel
said to the people, "Do not be afraid; you
have done all this evil, yet do not turn
aside from following the LORD, but serve
the LORD with all your heart; 21 and do
not turn aside after useless things that
cannot profit or save, for they are useless.
22 For the LORD will not cast away his peo-
ple, for his great name's sake, because it
has pleased the LORD to make you a peo-
ple for himself. 23 Moreover as for me, far
be it from me that I should sin against the
LORD by ceasing to pray for you; and I
will instruct you in the good and the right
way. 24 Only fear the LORD, and serve him
faithfully with all your heart; for consider
what great things he has done for you.
25 But if you still do wickedly, you shall be
swept away, both you and your king."

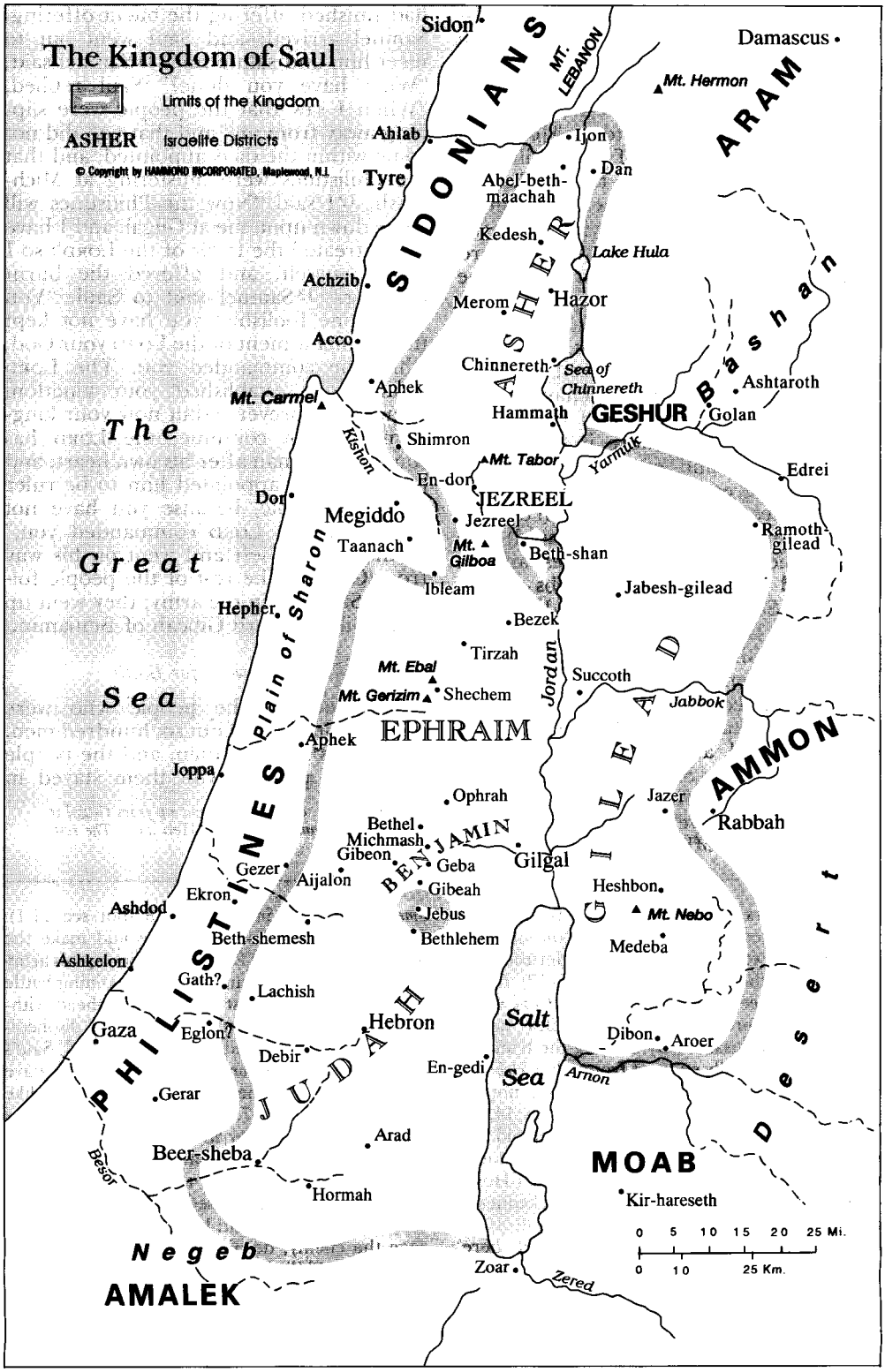
Saul's Unlawful Sacrifice

13 Saul was . . .[b] years old when he
began to reign; and he reigned
. . . and two[c] years over Israel.

x Gk: Heb lacks *King Jabin of* y Gk Syr: Heb *Bedan* z Gk: Heb *Samuel* a Gk: Heb *and your ancestors* b The number is lacking in the Heb text (the verse is lacking in the Septuagint). c *Two* is not the entire number; something has dropped out.

3.12–30. **12.10** By *the Baals and the Astartes* the author means illicit or foreign gods and goddesses in general. **12.11** *Jerubbaal* was another name for Gideon (see Judg 6–8). The reference to *Barak*, Deborah's colleague in Judg 4–5, is textually doubtful. *Jephthah* is the Gileadite hero of Judg 11. The story of *Samson* is told in Judg 13–16. **12.12** This verse relates the people's demand for a king in 8.1–18 to the threat posed by *King Nahash of the Ammonites* (see 11.1–15). **12.17** The *wheat harvest* took place in early summer when *thunder and rain* were unnatural (Prov 26.1) and unexpected, a fact that underscores Samuel's special ability to invoke the Lord. **12.18–19** Shocked out of their refusal to see reality by the miracle of the thunderstorm, the people finally acknowledge their mistake and call on Samuel for help. **12.21** The *useless things* are idols, as in Isa 41.29, where the same word is translated "empty wind," and 44.9, where it is rendered "nothing." **12.23** Samuel promises to continue to do two things: he will *pray for* (a better translation is "intercede on behalf of") the people and he will instruct them *in the good and the right way*. With the advent of kingship, the role of the prophet in the new age is defined as twofold: the prophet will be an intercessor between Israel and the Lord and an advocate of morality and justice.

13.1–15a Anxious about the onset of a battle with the Philistines, Saul offers a sacrifice without waiting for Samuel to arrive. For this act of disobedience his kingship is repudiated. **13.1** The same formula introduces the reigns of other kings in the Deuteronomistic History (see, e.g., 2 Sam 2.10; 5.4; 1 Kings 14.21; 22.42), but the historian does not seem to have had the necessary chronological data for Saul's reign. Contemporary


The Kingdom of Saul
Limits of the Kingdom
ASHER Israelite Districts
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Sidon
SIDONIANS
MT. LEBANON
Damascus
Mt. Hermon
ARAM
Ahlab
Ijon
Tyre
Dan
Abel-beth-maachah
Kedesh
ASHER
Lake Hula
Achzib
Merom
Hazor
Bashan
Acco
Chinnereth
Sea of Chinnereth
Ashtaroth
Aphek
Mt. Carmel
Hammath
GESHUR
Golan
The
Kishon
Shimron
Mt. Tabor
Yarmuk
Edrei
En-dor
Dor
JEZREEL
Megiddo
Jezreel
Ramoth-gilead
Taanach
Mt. Gilboa
Beth-shan
Great
Ibleam
Jabesh-gilead
Hepher
Plain of Sharon
Bezek
Tirzah
Mt. Ebal
Jordan
Succoth
Sea
Mt. Gerizim
Shechem
GILEAD
Jabbok
EPHRAIM
Aphek
AMMON
Joppa
Ophrah
Jazer
Rabbah
Bethel
Michmash
BENJAMIN
Gibeon
Gilgal
Gezer
Aijalon
Geba
Gibeah
Heshbon
Ekron
Ashdod
Jebus
Mt. Nebo
Beth-shemesh
Bethlehem
Medeba
Ashkelon
PHILISTINES
Gath?
Lachish
Desert
Gaza
Eglon?
Hebron
Salt
Dibon
Aroer
Debir
En-gedi
Sea
Arnon
JUDAH
Gerar
Arad
Beer-sheba
Besor
MOAB
Hormah
Kir-hareseth
0 5 10 15 20 25 Mi.
0 10 25 Km.
Negeb
Zoar
Zered
AMALEK

2 Saul chose three thousand out of Israel; two thousand were with Saul in
Michmash and the hill country of Bethel,
and a thousand were with Jonathan in
Gibeah of Benjamin; the rest of the people he sent home to their tents. 3 Jonathan
defeated the garrison of the Philistines
that was at Geba; and the Philistines
heard of it. And Saul blew the trumpet
throughout all the land, saying, "Let the
Hebrews hear!" 4 When all Israel heard
that Saul had defeated the garrison of the
Philistines, and also that Israel had become odious to the Philistines, the people
were called out to join Saul at Gilgal.
5 The Philistines mustered to fight
with Israel, thirty thousand chariots, and
six thousand horsemen, and troops like
the sand on the seashore in multitude;
they came up and encamped at Michmash, to the east of Beth-aven. 6 When
the Israelites saw that they were in distress
(for the troops were hard pressed), the
people hid themselves in caves and in
holes and in rocks and in tombs and in
cisterns. 7 Some Hebrews crossed the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. Saul
was still at Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling.
8 He waited seven days, the time appointed by Samuel; but Samuel did not
come to Gilgal, and the people began to
slip away from Saul.[d] 9 So Saul said,
"Bring the burnt offering here to me, and
the offerings of well-being." And he offered the burnt offering. 10 As soon as he
had finished offering the burnt offering,
Samuel arrived; and Saul went out to
meet him and salute him. 11 Samuel said,
"What have you done?" Saul replied,
"When I saw that the people were slipping away from me, and that you did not
come within the days appointed, and that
the Philistines were mustering at Michmash, 12 I said, 'Now the Philistines will
come down upon me at Gilgal, and I have
not entreated the favor of the LORD'; so I
forced myself, and offered the burnt
offering." 13 Samuel said to Saul, "You
have done foolishly; you have not kept
the commandment of the LORD your God,
which he commanded you. The LORD
would have established your kingdom
over Israel forever, 14 but now your kingdom will not continue; the LORD has
sought out a man after his own heart; and
the LORD has appointed him to be ruler
over his people, because you have not
kept what the LORD commanded you."
15 And Samuel left and went on his way
from Gilgal.[e] The rest of the people followed Saul to join the army; they went up
from Gilgal toward Gibeah of Benjamin.[f]

Preparations for Battle

Saul counted the people who were
present with him, about six hundred men.
16 Saul, his son Jonathan, and the people
who were present with them stayed in

d Heb *him* *e* Gk: Heb *went up from Gilgal to Gibeah of Benjamin* *f* Gk: Heb lacks *The rest . . . of Benjamin*

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biblical scholars tend to place Saul's reign late in the eleventh century B.C.E. **13.2** *Michmash* was a town about seven miles northeast of Jerusalem, a few miles southeast of *Bethel* (see 7.16–17). *Gibeah of Benjamin.* See note on 9.1. **13.3** *Geba* was a Benjaminite fortress about six miles north-northeast of Jerusalem. By blowing the trumpet, Saul is trying to rally support from other *Hebrews,* who, though kin to the Israelites, have not yet allied themselves politically (see note on 14.21). **13.4** Saul is now in *Gilgal,* where Samuel told him to wait for him in 10.8. **13.5** In his oracles against Bethel (Hebrew, "House of God") Hosea uses the name *Beth-aven* ("House of Wickedness") as a pejorative substitute (Hos 4.15; 5.8; 10.5), and Bethel is probably also intended here. **13.7** The tribal claim of *Gad* included most of modern Jordan north of the Dead Sea (see Josh 13.24–28). All but the southern portion of this was *Gilead,* a common designation for Transjordanian Israel. **13.8** Saul waits *seven days, the time appointed by Samuel* in 10.8 (but see 11.1). **13.9** Samuel told Saul that he would make the offerings himself (10.8); but Saul, seeing his army begin to desert (v. 8) and fearful of joining battle without sacrificing first (v. 12), goes ahead without him. **13.13** If not for this act of disobedience, the Lord would have established Saul's *kingdom over Israel forever,* i.e., he would have given Saul an enduring dynasty ("kingdom") like David's (see 2 Sam 7.15–16). **13.14** The *LORD has sought out a man after his own heart,* i.e., a man of his own choosing, rather than permit one of Saul's sons to succeed him. For the term *ruler,* which means "king-designate," see note on 9.16.

13.15b–22 Saul and his army prepare to engage the enemy, despite a shortage of weapons caused by Philistine control of metalworking. **13.16** *Geba* and *Michmash* were only a couple of miles apart (see note on 13.2), separated by a steep ravine, part of a strategically important wadi system that drains the Ephraimite hills into the

Geba of Benjamin; but the Philistines encamped at Michmash. 17And raiders
came out of the camp of the Philistines in
three companies; one company turned
toward Ophrah, to the land of Shual,
18another company turned toward Beth-
horon, and another company turned
toward the mountain[g] that looks down
upon the valley of Zeboim toward the
wilderness.

19 Now there was no smith to be
found throughout all the land of Israel;
for the Philistines said, "The Hebrews
must not make swords or spears for them-
selves"; 20so all the Israelites went down
to the Philistines to sharpen their plow-
shares, mattocks, axes, or sickles;[h] 21The
charge was two-thirds of a shekel[i] for the
plowshares and for the mattocks, and
one-third of a shekel for sharpening the
axes and for setting the goads.[j] 22So on
the day of the battle neither sword nor
spear was to be found in the possession of
any of the people with Saul and Jonathan;
but Saul and his son Jonathan had them.

Jonathan Routs the Philistines

23 Now a garrison of the Philistines
had gone out to the pass of Michmash.

14 1One day Jonathan son of Saul
said to the young man who car-
ried his armor, "Come, let us go over to
the Philistine garrison on the other side."
But he did not tell his father. 2Saul was
staying in the outskirts of Gibeah under
the pomegranate tree that is at Migron;
the troops that were with him were about
six hundred men, 3along with Ahijah son
of Ahitub, Ichabod's brother, son of Phin-
ehas son of Eli, the priest of the LORD in
Shiloh, carrying an ephod. Now the peo-
ple did not know that Jonathan had gone.
4In the pass,[k] by which Jonathan tried to
go over to the Philistine garrison, there
was a rocky crag on one side and a rocky
crag on the other; the name of the one
was Bozez, and the name of the other Se-
neh. 5One crag rose on the north in front
of Michmash, and the other on the south
in front of Geba.

6 Jonathan said to the young man who
carried his armor, "Come, let us go over
to the garrison of these uncircumcised; it
may be that the LORD will act for us; for
nothing can hinder the LORD from saving
by many or by few." 7His armor-bearer
said to him, "Do all that your mind in-
clines to.[l] I am with you; as your mind is,
so is mine."[m] 8Then Jonathan said, "Now
we will cross over to those men and will
show ourselves to them. 9If they say to us,
'Wait until we come to you,' then we will
stand still in our place, and we will not go
up to them. 10But if they say, 'Come up to
us,' then we will go up; for the LORD has
given them into our hand. That will be
the sign for us." 11So both of them
showed themselves to the garrison of the
Philistines; and the Philistines said, "Look,
Hebrews are coming out of the holes
where they have hidden themselves."
12The men of the garrison hailed Jona-

g Cn Compare Gk: Heb *toward the border*
h Gk: Heb *plowshare* *i* Heb *was a pim*
j Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain *k* Heb *Between the passes* *l* Gk: Heb *Do all that is in your mind. Turn* *m* Gk: Heb lacks *so is mine*

Jordan. **13.17** *Ophrah* (Josh 18.23) was north of Michmash. The *land of Shual* was probably another name for the *land of Shaalim* (see note on 9.4). **13.18** There were two towns named *Beth-horon,* Upper and Lower. Upper Beth-horon was about ten miles west of Michmash. The *valley of Zeboim* (Hebrew, "Valley of Hyenas") was southeast of Michmash. **13.19–22** The Philistines strictly controlled access to metalworking so that the Israelites could not arm themselves. **13.21** The word translated *two-thirds of a shekel* (*pim*) occurs nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible, but it has been found inscribed on ancient stone weights averaging about what is indicated in the present translation.

13.23–14.23 With only a single companion Jonathan makes his way into the Philistine camp and starts a panic that leads to a rout and a major Israelite victory. **14.2** Geba and *Gibeah* are often confused in the text, and the former is likely to be correct here. *Migron* is a town associated with Michmash and Geba in Isa 10.28. **14.3** Saul's priest, *Ahijah son of Ahitub,* is one of the Shilonite priests, who are condemned in 2.27–36 and slaughtered in 22.6–23, with Ahijah's nephew, Abiathar, the only survivor. The *ephod* or priestly garment that Ahijah is wearing (rather than carrying) is probably more elaborate than Samuel's linen loincloth. It probably contains a pouch containing the Urim and Thummim used by Saul in v. 41. **14.4** The pass by which Jonathan and his companion cross the deep ravine that separates the two battle camps (see v. 16) is flanked by two outcroppings of rock with names that suggest that the passage is treacherous, *Bozez* (Hebrew, "Swampy" or "Gleaming") and *Seneh*

than and his armor-bearer, saying, "Come
up to us, and we will show you some-
thing." Jonathan said to his armor-bearer,
"Come up after me; for the LORD has
given them into the hand of Israel."
13 Then Jonathan climbed up on his
hands and feet, with his armor-bearer fol-
lowing after him. The Philistines[n] fell be-
fore Jonathan, and his armor-bearer,
coming after him, killed them. 14 In that
first slaughter Jonathan and his armor-
bearer killed about twenty men within an
area about half a furrow long in an acre[o]
of land. 15 There was a panic in the camp,
in the field, and among all the people; the
garrison and even the raiders trembled;
the earth quaked; and it became a very
great panic.

16 Saul's lookouts in Gibeah of Benja-
min were watching as the multitude was
surging back and forth.[p] 17 Then Saul
said to the troops that were with him, "Call
the roll and see who has gone from
us." When they had called the roll, Jona-
than and his armor-bearer were not there.
18 Saul said to Ahijah, "Bring the ark[q]
of God here." For at that time the ark[q]
of God went with the Israelites. 19 While Saul
was talking to the priest, the tumult in the
camp of the Philistines increased more
and more; and Saul said to the priest,
"Withdraw your hand." 20 Then Saul and
all the people who were with him rallied
and went into the battle; and every sword
was against the other, so that there was
very great confusion. 21 Now the Hebrews
who previously had been with the Philis-
tines and had gone up with them into the
camp turned and joined the Israelites who
were with Saul and Jonathan. 22 Likewise,
when all the Israelites who had gone into
hiding in the hill country of Ephraim
heard that the Philistines were fleeing,
they too followed closely after them in the
battle. 23 So the LORD gave Israel the vic-
tory that day.

The battle passed beyond Beth-aven,
and the troops with Saul numbered alto-
gether about ten thousand men. The bat-
tle spread out over the hill country of
Ephraim.

Saul's Rash Oath

24 Now Saul committed a very rash
act on that day.[r] He had laid an oath on
the troops, saying, "Cursed be anyone
who eats food before it is evening and I
have been avenged on my enemies." So
none of the troops tasted food. 25 All the
troops[s] came upon a honeycomb; and
there was honey on the ground. 26 When
the troops came upon the honeycomb, the
honey was dripping out; but they did not
put their hands to their mouths, for they
feared the oath. 27 But Jonathan had not
heard his father charge the troops with
the oath; so he extended the staff that was
in his hand, and dipped the tip of it in the
honeycomb, and put his hand to his
mouth; and his eyes brightened. 28 Then
one of the soldiers said, "Your father
strictly charged the troops with an oath,
saying, 'Cursed be anyone who eats food
this day.' And so the troops are faint."
29 Then Jonathan said, "My father has
troubled the land; see how my eyes have
brightened because I tasted a little of this
honey. 30 How much better if today the
troops had eaten freely of the spoil taken
from their enemies; for now the slaughter
among the Philistines has not been great."

31 After they had struck down the

n Heb *They* *o* Heb *yoke* *p* Gk: Heb *they went and there* *q* Gk *the ephod* *r* Gk: Heb *The Israelites were distressed that day* *s* Heb *land*

("Thorny"). **14.16** As in v. 2, Geba should probably be read in place of *Gibeah*. **14.18** The Septuagint preserves the text of this verse more accurately: "Saul said to Ahijah, 'Bring the ephod here.' For at that time he wore the ephod before Israel." Saul wants to consult the Urim and Thummim (see note on 14.3) to discover the source of the turmoil in the Philistine camp. **14.21** The term *Hebrews* is an ethnic, not a political designation. These Hebrews are people with a recognized kinship to the Israelites who have not yet joined Israel politically (see 13.3). Jonathan's heroism has inspired them to side with their kin. **14.23** *Beth-aven*, probably a reference to Bethel; see note on 13.5.

14.24–35 Saul impetuously makes an oath condemning anyone who eats before sundown, and Jonathan, who knows nothing of the oath, eats honey and finds himself in mortal danger. **14.27** The meaning of the statement that Jonathan's *eyes brightened* is that he was refreshed or invigorated (see, e.g., Ezra 9.8). **14.31–35** This episode, which blurs the main story's focus on Jonathan, may have originated as an independent tradition about Saul's *first altar* (v. 35). **14.31** *Aijalon* was a few miles southwest of Beth-horon, so that the direction of the rout was to the west (see 13.18) toward Philistine territory.

Philistines that day from Michmash to Aijalon, the troops were very faint; 32 so the troops flew upon the spoil, and took sheep and oxen and calves, and slaughtered them on the ground; and the troops ate them with the blood. 33 Then it was reported to Saul, "Look, the troops are sinning against the LORD by eating with the blood." And he said, "You have dealt treacherously; roll a large stone before me here."[t] 34 Saul said, "Disperse yourselves among the troops, and say to them, 'Let all bring their oxen or their sheep, and slaughter them here, and eat; and do not sin against the LORD by eating with the blood.'" So all of the troops brought their oxen with them that night, and slaughtered them there. 35 And Saul built an altar to the LORD; it was the first altar that he built to the LORD.

Jonathan in Danger of Death

36 Then Saul said, "Let us go down after the Philistines by night and despoil them until the morning light; let us not leave one of them." They said, "Do whatever seems good to you." But the priest said, "Let us draw near to God here." 37 So Saul inquired of God, "Shall I go down after the Philistines? Will you give them into the hand of Israel?" But he did not answer him that day. 38 Saul said, "Come here, all you leaders of the people; and let us find out how this sin has arisen today. 39 For as the LORD lives who saves Israel, even if it is in my son Jonathan, he shall surely die!" But there was no one among all the people who answered him. 40 He said to all Israel, "You shall be on one side, and I and my son Jonathan will be on the other side." The people said to Saul, "Do what seems good to you." 41 Then Saul said, "O LORD God of Israel, why have you not answered your servant today? If this guilt is in me or in my son Jonathan, O LORD God of Israel, give Urim; but if this guilt is in your people Israel,[u] give Thummim." And Jonathan and Saul were indicated by the lot, but the people were cleared. 42 Then Saul said, "Cast the lot between me and my son Jonathan." And Jonathan was taken.

43 Then Saul said to Jonathan, "Tell me what you have done." Jonathan told him, "I tasted a little honey with the tip of the staff that was in my hand; here I am, I will die." 44 Saul said, "God do so to me and more also; you shall surely die, Jonathan!" 45 Then the people said to Saul, "Shall Jonathan die, who has accomplished this great victory in Israel? Far from it! As the LORD lives, not one hair of his head shall fall to the ground; for he has worked with God today." So the people ransomed Jonathan, and he did not die. 46 Then Saul withdrew from pursuing the Philistines; and the Philistines went to their own place.

Further Notices About Saul's Reign

47 When Saul had taken the kingship over Israel, he fought against all his enemies on every side—against Moab, against the Ammonites, against Edom, against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines; wherever he turned he routed

t Gk: Heb *me this day* u Vg Compare Gk: Heb *41 Saul said to the LORD, the God of Israel*

14.32 When victory is assured, Saul's oath is no longer in effect, and the famished troops slaughter captured livestock for food; but they sin by eating the meat *with the blood*, which was reserved for the deity, thereby violating the prohibition recorded in Lev 19.26; Deut 12.23–27. **14.33–34** Slaughtering the livestock on the *large stone*, rather than the ground (v. 32), will permit the blood to drain.

14.36–46 Jonathan's violation of Saul's oath is discovered by casting lots. Saul condemns his son to death, but the people intervene and ransom Jonathan. **14.38** Saul assumes, correctly, that the failure of the divination attempted in v. 37 was a result of some *sin*, but he does not yet know that Jonathan has violated his oath. **14.40–42** As in the lottery that selected Saul king (10.20–21), the lots are cast repeatedly until a particular individual is identified. **14.41** The *Urim* and *Thummim* were the names of the objects cast in the lottery, probably dice or something similar inscribed with the first letter of each name, *'aleph* and *taw*, the first and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet. The meanings of the names, "cursed" (i.e., condemned) and "accounted whole" (i.e., acquitted), refer to the two possible outcomes of each cast.

14.47–52 A miscellany of notes regarding Saul's reign. **14.47** *Moab, the Ammonites,* and *Edom* were Israel's neighbors east of the Jordan and the Dead Sea. *Zobah* was an Aramean kingdom on the western slope of the Anti-Lebanon Mountain range north of Israel, against which David fights a war in 2 Sam 8.3–12; 10.6–8.

them. 48 He did valiantly, and struck
down the Amalekites, and rescued Israel
out of the hands of those who plundered
them.

49 Now the sons of Saul were Jona-
than, Ishvi, and Malchishua; and the
names of his two daughters were these:
the name of the firstborn was Merab, and
the name of the younger, Michal. 50 The
name of Saul's wife was Ahinoam daugh-
ter of Ahimaaz. And the name of the
commander of his army was Abner son of
Ner, Saul's uncle; 51 Kish was the father of
Saul, and Ner the father of Abner was the
son of Abiel.

52 There was hard fighting against
the Philistines all the days of Saul; and
when Saul saw any strong or valiant war-
rior, he took him into his service.

Saul Defeats the Amalekites

15 Samuel said to Saul, "The LORD
sent me to anoint you king over
his people Israel; now therefore listen to
the words of the LORD. 2 Thus says the
LORD of hosts, 'I will punish the Amalek-
ites for what they did in opposing the Is-
raelites when they came up out of Egypt.
3 Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly
destroy all that they have; do not spare
them, but kill both man and woman, child
and infant, ox and sheep, camel and
donkey.' "

4 So Saul summoned the people, and
numbered them in Telaim, two hundred
thousand foot soldiers, and ten thousand
soldiers of Judah. 5 Saul came to the city
of the Amalekites and lay in wait in the
valley. 6 Saul said to the Kenites, "Go!
Leave! Withdraw from among the Ama-
lekites, or I will destroy you with them;
for you showed kindness to all the people
of Israel when they came up out of
Egypt." So the Kenites withdrew from the
Amalekites. 7 Saul defeated the Amalek-
ites, from Havilah as far as Shur, which is
east of Egypt. 8 He took King Agag of the
Amalekites alive, but utterly destroyed all
the people with the edge of the sword.
9 Saul and the people spared Agag, and
the best of the sheep and of the cattle and
of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that
was valuable, and would not utterly de-
stroy them; all that was despised and
worthless they utterly destroyed.

The Rejection of Saul

10 The word of the LORD came to
Samuel: 11 "I regret that I made Saul king,
for he has turned back from following

14.48 The statement that Saul *did valiantly* implies that he acquired territorial gains, restoring lands lost in previous wars and extending Israel's borders. His victory over *the Amalekites* is described in the next chapter in less complimentary terms. **14.49** Of *the sons of Saul* listed here only Jonathan has a role in the biblical narrative. Ishvi, however, may be the same as Ishbaal (see 2 Sam 2.8); the list of Saul's sons who died with him on Mount Gilboa does not mention Ishvi and adds another name, Abinadab (1 Sam 31.2). For *Merab* and *Michal*, see 18.17–30. **14.50** *Ahinoam daughter of Ahimaaz* is mentioned nowhere else. *Abner* remained Saul's chief military officer throughout his reign and set Ishbaal on the throne after Saul's death (2 Sam 2.8). **14.51** *Abiel* was Kish's father (9.1). Cf. 1 Chr 8.33; 9.39.

15.1–9 Saul is called upon to avenge an ancient grievance against the Amalekites. **15.2** The *Amalekites* were a nomadic tribe who lived in the desert south of Judah. Saul is told to avenge their attack on the Israelites at the oasis of Rephidim during the journey from Egypt to Canaan (Ex 17.8–13). At the time the Lord swore to "utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven," and Moses vowed "war with Amalek from generation to generation" (Ex 17.14–16). **15.3** The rules of Israel's holy war required that everything captured in battle be consecrated to the Lord. This meant that the soldiers could not take spoils and that any person or animal captured alive had to be put to death (see Deut 20.10–18). Though this fate was normally reserved for enemies living within the promised land, the Amalekites are subject to a special directive (see Deut 25.17–19). **15.4** *Telaim* was probably another name for Telem, a town in the extreme southern portion of Judah (see Josh 15.24). **15.5** It is surprising that there should be a *city of the Amalekites*, who were camel-riding nomads. **15.6** The *Kenites* were desert-dwelling, nomadic metalworkers or smiths, who had settled among the Amalekites (see Judg 1.16). **15.7** The wording of this verse may have been influenced by the description of the Ishmaelite homeland in Gen 25.18. *Havilah*, which was somewhere on the western edge of the Arabian Peninsula, seems out of place. The wilderness of *Shur* lay northeast of Egypt. **15.9** *Agag* is known only from this episode, but the reference to him in Num 24.7 suggests that he was a famous enough king to be a standard of comparison.

15.10–34 By violating the ban on leaving any of the Amalekites alive, Saul incurs the anger of

me, and has not carried out my commands." Samuel was angry; and he cried out to the LORD all night. 12 Samuel rose early in the morning to meet Saul, and Samuel was told, "Saul went to Carmel, where he set up a monument for himself, and on returning he passed on down to Gilgal." 13 When Samuel came to Saul, Saul said to him, "May you be blessed by the LORD; I have carried out the command of the LORD." 14 But Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears, and the lowing of cattle that I hear?" 15 Saul said, "They have brought them from the Amalekites; for the people spared the best of the sheep and the cattle, to sacrifice to the LORD your God; but the rest we have utterly destroyed." 16 Then Samuel said to Saul, "Stop! I will tell you what the LORD said to me last night." He replied, "Speak."

17 Samuel said, "Though you are little in your own eyes, are you not the head of the tribes of Israel? The LORD anointed you king over Israel. 18 And the LORD sent you on a mission, and said, 'Go, utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed.' 19 Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD? Why did you swoop down on the spoil, and do what was evil in the sight of the LORD?" 20 Saul said to Samuel, "I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, I have gone on the mission on which the LORD sent me, I have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and I have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. 21 But from the spoil the people took sheep and cattle, the best of the things devoted to destruction, to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal." 22 And Samuel said,

"Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices,
as in obedience to the voice of the LORD?
Surely, to obey is better than sacrifice,
and to heed than the fat of rams.
23 For rebellion is no less a sin than divination,
and stubbornness is like iniquity and idolatry.
Because you have rejected the word of the LORD,
he has also rejected you from being king."

24 Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned; for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice. 25 Now therefore, I pray, pardon my sin, and return with me, so that I may worship the LORD." 26 Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return with you; for you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel." 27 As Samuel turned to go away, Saul caught hold of the hem of his robe, and it tore. 28 And Samuel said to him, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this very day, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you. 29 Moreover the Glory of Israel will not recant[v] or change his mind; for he is not a mortal, that he should change his mind." 30 Then Saul[w] said, "I have sinned; yet honor me now before the elders of my people and before Israel, and return with me, so that I may worship the LORD your God." 31 So Samuel turned

v Q Ms Gk: MT *deceive* w Heb *he*

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the Lord, who rejects him as king. **15.12** *Carmel*, about seven miles south of Hebron (Josh 15.55), is the village where David meets his wife Abigail (see 1 Sam 25.2–42). **15.15** Saul defends himself by claiming that the animals were spared so that they could be sacrificed to the Lord. **15.22–23** Samuel's poetic censure of Saul is reminiscent of the oracles against empty cultic practice that abound in the prophetic writings (see, e.g., Isa 66.2b–4; Hos 6.6; Am 5.21–24; Mic 6.6–8). **15.23** The term for *divination* used here implies foreign practices (Num 22.7) and false prophecy (Jer 14.14), not the permitted form utilizing the Urim and Thummim (see note on 14.41). The Hebrew term rendered *idolatry* here is *terapim* (English *teraphim* in 19.13, text note *h*), used here as a term for idol worship in general. **15.27** By grasping *the hem of his robe* Saul is appealing to Samuel with a traditional gesture of supplication that was widespread in the ancient Near East. **15.28** Samuel turns the accidental tear into a symbolic prophetic act. The prophet Ahijah denounces Jeroboam with a similar gesture in 1 Kings 11.29–32. **15.29** Cf. Num 23.19, but also cf. 1 Sam 15.35; Jon 3.9–10. **15.30–31** These verses seem to represent an alternate ending to the episode. Samuel is now willing to return with Saul without question or comment, after angrily refusing to do

back after Saul; and Saul worshiped the LORD.

32 Then Samuel said, "Bring Agag king of the Amalekites here to me." And Agag came to him haltingly.[x] Agag said, "Surely this is the bitterness of death."[y] 33 But Samuel said,

"As your sword has made women
childless,
so your mother shall be
childless among women."

And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal.

The Anointing of David

34 Then Samuel went to Ramah; and Saul went up to his house in Gibeah of Saul. 35 Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death, but Samuel grieved over Saul. And the LORD was sorry that he had made Saul king over Israel.

16 The LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul? I have rejected him from being king over Israel. Fill your horn with oil and set out; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons." 2 Samuel said, "How can I go? If Saul hears of it, he will kill me." And the LORD said, "Take a heifer with you, and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.' 3 Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; and you shall anoint for me the one whom I name to you." 4 Samuel did what the LORD commanded, and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, "Do you come peaceably?" 5 He said, "Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD; sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice." And he sanctified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

6 When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, "Surely the LORD's anointed is now before the LORD."[z] 7 But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the LORD does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart." 8 Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. He said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one." 9 Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one." 10 Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD has not chosen any of these." 11 Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here." 12 He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. The LORD said, "Rise and anoint him; for this is the one." 13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward. Samuel then set out and went to Ramah.

x Cn Compare Gk: Meaning of Heb uncertain
y Q Ms Gk: MT *Surely the bitterness of death is past*
z Heb *him*

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so in vv. 24–29. **15.32** The obscure Hebrew word rendered *haltingly* more likely means "in chains" (see Job 38.31). The statement that *Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the LORD* indicates that the execution is a ritual dismemberment of the kind associated with covenant violations (see 11.7).

15.35–16.13 Samuel is sent to Bethlehem to anoint a new king. **16.1** The Lord tells Samuel, *"Fill your horn with oil"* in preparation for anointing a new king (v. 13); see 9.16; 10.1; for the horn, see 1 Kings 1.39. *Jesse*, a member of the tribe of Judah and the clan of Perez (Ruth 4.12, 17–22; 1 Chr 2.3–12), was the grandson of Ruth and Boaz. As a *Bethlehemite*, he lived in Judah about six miles south of Jerusalem. **16.6** Samuel mistakenly assumes that *Eliab*, Jesse's firstborn (1 Chr 2.13), is the *LORD's anointed*, i.e., the *mashiach*, Hebrew, "anointed one" or "messiah" of the Lord. **16.8** *Abinadab* is Jesse's second son (1 Chr 2.13). **16.9** Jesse's third son, *Shammah*, is called Shimeah (2 Sam 13.3, 32), Shimei (2 Sam 21.21), or Shimea (1 Chr 2.13; 20.7) elsewhere. **16.10** Jesse shows Samuel *seven of his sons* before mentioning David, and 17.12 indicates that he had eight sons. According to 1 Chr 2.13–15, however, David was the seventh of seven sons, and the motif of the seventh son who surpasses his brothers is widespread in world folklore. **16.11** The verb *sit down* probably implies sitting down to eat the part of the sacrifice (v. 5; cf. 9.13) not reserved for the Lord (see Sir 32.1). **16.13** The *spirit of the LORD* possesses David as it did Saul (see 10.6; 11.6).

David's Arrival at the Court of Saul

14 Now the spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from
the LORD tormented him. 15 And Saul's
servants said to him, "See now, an evil
spirit from God is tormenting you. 16 Let
our lord now command the servants who
attend you to look for someone who is
skillful in playing the lyre; and when the
evil spirit from God is upon you, he will
play it, and you will feel better." 17 So Saul
said to his servants, "Provide for me
someone who can play well, and bring
him to me." 18 One of the young men answered, "I have seen a son of Jesse the
Bethlehemite who is skillful in playing, a
man of valor, a warrior, prudent in
speech, and a man of good presence; and
the LORD is with him." 19 So Saul sent messengers to Jesse, and said, "Send me your
son David who is with the sheep." 20 Jesse
took a donkey loaded with bread, a skin of
wine, and a kid, and sent them by his son
David to Saul. 21 And David came to Saul,
and entered his service. Saul loved him
greatly, and he became his armor-bearer.
22 Saul sent to Jesse, saying, "Let David remain in my service, for he has found favor in my sight." 23 And whenever the evil
spirit from God came upon Saul, David
took the lyre and played it with his hand,
and Saul would be relieved and feel better, and the evil spirit would depart
from him.

David and Goliath

17 Now the Philistines gathered
their armies for battle; they were
gathered at Socoh, which belongs to Judah, and encamped between Socoh and
Azekah, in Ephes-dammim. 2 Saul and the
Israelites gathered and encamped in the
valley of Elah, and formed ranks against
the Philistines. 3 The Philistines stood on
the mountain on the one side, and Israel
stood on the mountain on the other side,
with a valley between them. 4 And there
came out from the camp of the Philistines
a champion named Goliath, of Gath,
whose height was six[a] cubits and a span.
5 He had a helmet of bronze on his head,
and he was armed with a coat of mail; the
weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of bronze. 6 He had greaves of bronze
on his legs and a javelin of bronze slung

a MT: Q Ms Gk *four*

16.14–23 David is summoned to court as a musician. **16.14** The *spirit of the LORD* that empowered Saul to prophesy and rule (see 10.6; 11.6) is now replaced by *an evil spirit from the LORD* that will torment him. **16.15** *Saul's servants* are the ranking members of his court. **16.16** The notion that music can tame or banish evil spirits is widespread in world folklore. **16.18** In the tradition underlying this account, David was *a warrior* when he came to Saul's court, not an inexperienced shepherd boy as in the chapter that follows (see 17.33, 39). Whatever personal assets David has, however, none is as important as the fact that *the LORD is with him*, a theme echoed throughout the story of David's rise to power (see 18.14). **16.21–22** Though subsequent events will poison their relationship, David at first inspires affection and loyalty in Saul.

17.1–58 The familiar story of David and Goliath is actually a composite of two accounts of David's victory over a Philistine champion. The first account begins in v. 1. The second, which was added late enough to be completely missing from the oldest Greek manuscripts, begins in v. 12. **17.1** *Socoh* was a small town in the hills about fourteen miles west of Bethlehem; Israel regarded it as a part of Judah (Josh 15.35), but because of its border location it was disputed with Philistia (see 2 Chr 11.7; 28.18). *Azekah*, a few miles northwest of Socoh, was a fortress that guarded the main road across the valley of Elah (v. 2). *Ephes-dammim*, called Pas-dammim in 1 Chr 11.13, was probably about four miles northeast of Socoh. **17.2** The *valley of Elah* was one of the principal wadis, the next south of Sorek (see note on 6.9), in the western watershed of the Judean hills. **17.4** The term rendered *a champion* here is used in the *War Scroll* of Qumran (1QM) to mean "an infantryman." The name *Goliath* is at home in Anatolia, one of the places from which the Philistines and other Sea Peoples came; it occurs only here in the older version of David's fight with the Philistine champion, and it may have been borrowed from 2 Sam 21.19, where the slayer of Goliath the Gittite is not David but Elhanan, one of his heroes. The Masoretic Text's *six cubits and a span* make the Philistine champion almost 10 feet tall. According to the Septuagint and a scroll from Qumran (4QSam[a]), which probably preserve a superior reading here, he was "four cubits and a span," or about 6 feet, 9 inches tall—a true giant but not a fairy-tale monster. **17.5–6** The description of the Philistine's armor prepares readers for v. 49 by showing that he had no vulnerable spot except his forehead. **17.6** The term rendered *javelin* (Hebrew *kidon*) refers more likely

between his shoulders. 7 The shaft of his
spear was like a weaver's beam, and his
spear's head weighed six hundred shekels
of iron; and his shield-bearer went before
him. 8 He stood and shouted to the ranks
of Israel, "Why have you come out to
draw up for battle? Am I not a Philistine,
and are you not servants of Saul? Choose
a man for yourselves, and let him come
down to me. 9 If he is able to fight with me
and kill me, then we will be your servants;
but if I prevail against him and kill him,
then you shall be our servants and serve
us." 10 And the Philistine said, "Today I
defy the ranks of Israel! Give me a man,
that we may fight together." 11 When Saul
and all Israel heard these words of the
Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly
afraid.

12 Now David was the son of an Eph-
rathite of Bethlehem in Judah, named
Jesse, who had eight sons. In the days of
Saul the man was already old and ad-
vanced in years.[b] 13 The three eldest sons
of Jesse had followed Saul to the battle;
the names of his three sons who went to
the battle were Eliab the firstborn, and
next to him Abinadab, and the third
Shammah. 14 David was the youngest; the
three eldest followed Saul, 15 but David
went back and forth from Saul to feed his
father's sheep at Bethlehem. 16 For forty
days the Philistine came forward and took
his stand, morning and evening.

17 Jesse said to his son David, "Take
for your brothers an ephah of this
parched grain and these ten loaves, and
carry them quickly to the camp to your
brothers; 18 also take these ten cheeses to
the commander of their thousand. See
how your brothers fare, and bring some
token from them."

19 Now Saul, and they, and all the
men of Israel, were in the valley of Elah,
fighting with the Philistines. 20 David rose
early in the morning, left the sheep with a
keeper, took the provisions, and went as
Jesse had commanded him. He came to
the encampment as the army was going
forth to the battle line, shouting the war
cry. 21 Israel and the Philistines drew up
for battle, army against army. 22 David left
the things in charge of the keeper of the
baggage, ran to the ranks, and went and
greeted his brothers. 23 As he talked with
them, the champion, the Philistine of
Gath, Goliath by name, came up out of
the ranks of the Philistines, and spoke
the same words as before. And David
heard him.

24 All the Israelites, when they saw
the man, fled from him and were very
much afraid. 25 The Israelites said, "Have
you seen this man who has come up?
Surely he has come up to defy Israel. The
king will greatly enrich the man who kills
him, and will give him his daughter and
make his family free in Israel." 26 David
said to the men who stood by him, "What
shall be done for the man who kills this
Philistine, and takes away the reproach
from Israel? For who is this uncircum-
cised Philistine that he should defy the ar-
mies of the living God?" 27 The people
answered him in the same way, "So shall it
be done for the man who kills him."

28 His eldest brother Eliab heard him
talking to the men; and Eliab's anger was
kindled against David. He said, "Why

b Gk Syr: Heb *among men*

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to a curved and flat-bladed sword or scimitar (see v. 51). **17.7** The expression *like a weaver's beam* derives from 2 Sam 21.19; it probably means that the spear had a thong attached to a ring, similar to the rod and ring of a weaver's heddle rod, by which the spear could be slung in battle. The spearhead is *iron*, a metal harder than bronze that was available because of new metalworking techniques being introduced in the region at the time; according to biblical tradition, the Philistines carefully controlled the new technology (see 13.19–22). **17.12** This is the beginning of the second version of the story of David and the Philistine champion, which has been combined with the first by an editor. Jesse and his sons are introduced as if for the first time (see 16.1–13). Jesse was *an Ephrathite*, a member of clan that settled in Benjamin near Kiriath-jearim (see 10.2) and in Judah near Bethlehem. **17.25** On the promise of marriage to Saul's *daughter*, see 18.17–30. To be *free in Israel* probably means to be exempt from taxation and the obligations of palace service because of a brave deed at arms. **17.26** David's remarks in this verse, still part of the secondarily added alternate version of the story, seem influenced by the language of v. 36, which belongs to the primary version. In both verses David refers to the Lord as *the living God*, an epithet that stresses the reality and power of the God of Israel (see Jer 10.10) while implying that anyone who would challenge the authority of

have you come down? With whom have
you left those few sheep in the wilder-
ness? I know your presumption and the
evil of your heart; for you have come
down just to see the battle." 29 David said,
"What have I done now? It was only a
question." 30 He turned away from him
toward another and spoke in the same
way; and the people answered him again
as before.

31 When the words that David spoke
were heard, they repeated them before
Saul; and he sent for him. 32 David said to
Saul, "Let no one's heart fail because of
him; your servant will go and fight with
this Philistine." 33 Saul said to David, "You
are not able to go against this Philistine to
fight with him; for you are just a boy, and
he has been a warrior from his youth."
34 But David said to Saul, "Your servant
used to keep sheep for his father; and
whenever a lion or a bear came, and took
a lamb from the flock, 35 I went after it
and struck it down, rescuing the lamb
from its mouth; and if it turned against
me, I would catch it by the jaw, strike it
down, and kill it. 36 Your servant has
killed both lions and bears; and this uncir-
cumcised Philistine shall be like one of
them, since he has defied the armies of
the living God." 37 David said, "The LORD,
who saved me from the paw of the lion
and from the paw of the bear, will save me
from the hand of this Philistine." So Saul
said to David, "Go, and may the LORD be
with you!"

38 Saul clothed David with his armor;
he put a bronze helmet on his head and
clothed him with a coat of mail. 39 David
strapped Saul's sword over the armor,
and he tried in vain to walk, for he was
not used to them. Then David said to
Saul, "I cannot walk with these; for I am
not used to them." So David removed
them. 40 Then he took his staff in his
hand, and chose five smooth stones from
the wadi, and put them in his shepherd's
bag, in the pouch; his sling was in his
hand, and he drew near to the Philistine.

41 The Philistine came on and drew
near to David, with his shield-bearer in
front of him. 42 When the Philistine
looked and saw David, he disdained him,
for he was only a youth, ruddy and hand-
some in appearance. 43 The Philistine said
to David, "Am I a dog, that you come to
me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed
David by his gods. 44 The Philistine said to
David, "Come to me, and I will give your
flesh to the birds of the air and to the wild
animals of the field." 45 But David said to
the Philistine, "You come to me with
sword and spear and javelin; but I come
to you in the name of the LORD of hosts,
the God of the armies of Israel, whom you
have defied. 46 This very day the LORD
will deliver you into my hand, and I will
strike you down and cut off your head;
and I will give the dead bodies of the Phil-
istine army this very day to the birds of
the air and to the wild animals of the
earth, so that all the earth may know that
there is a God in Israel, 47 and that all this
assembly may know that the LORD does
not save by sword and spear; for the battle
is the LORD's and he will give you into
our hand."

48 When the Philistine drew nearer to
meet David, David ran quickly toward the
battle line to meet the Philistine. 49 David
put his hand in his bag, took out a stone,
slung it, and struck the Philistine on his
forehead; the stone sank into his fore-
head, and he fell face down on the
ground.

50 So David prevailed over the Philis-
tine with a sling and a stone, striking
down the Philistine and killing him; there
was no sword in David's hand. 51 Then
David ran and stood over the Philistine;

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the Lord will fail (see 2 Kings 19.4, 16; Isa 37.4, 17; Jer 23.36). **17.33–37** Saul argues that David is unfit to take on the Philistine champion because he is *just a boy*. David's rejoinder is that his experience as a shepherd with lions and bears has prepared him to deal with the Philistine. **17.38–39** Saul lends David his own armor, but when fully dressed, David, who is depicted in this episode as a shepherd without military training, is unable to walk. **17.40** Instead, David chooses *his staff* and *his sling*, the weapons he is comfortable with. The *wadi* that provides the sling stones is the valley (i.e., wadi) of Elah of v. 2. **17.42** The words *ruddy and handsome in appearance*, which are out of place here, were probably added by a scribe who was remembering 16.12. **17.44–45** The Philistine expresses contempt for David's rude weapons, but David's retort expresses the true contrast between the two champions (see v. 47). The Philistine relies on *sword and spear and javelin*, ordinary weapons, but David is armed with *the name of the LORD*, drawing upon the spiritual power

he grasped his sword, drew it out of its sheath, and killed him; then he cut off his head with it.

When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled. 52 The troops of Israel and Judah rose up with a shout and pursued the Philistines as far as Gath[c] and the gates of Ekron, so that the wounded Philistines fell on the way from Shaaraim as far as Gath and Ekron. 53 The Israelites came back from chasing the Philistines, and they plundered their camp. 54 David took the head of the Philistine and brought it to Jerusalem; but he put his armor in his tent.

55 When Saul saw David go out against the Philistine, he said to Abner, the commander of the army, "Abner, whose son is this young man?" Abner said, "As your soul lives, O king, I do not know." 56 The king said, "Inquire whose son the stripling is." 57 On David's return from killing the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul, with the head of the Philistine in his hand. 58 Saul said to him, "Whose son are you, young man?" And David answered, "I am the son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite."

Jonathan's Covenant with David

18 When David[d] had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was bound to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. 2 Saul took him that day and would not let him return to his father's house. 3 Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul. 4 Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that he was wearing, and gave it to David, and his armor, and even his sword and his bow and his belt. 5 David went out and was successful wherever Saul sent him; as a result, Saul set him over the army. And all the people, even the servants of Saul, approved.

6 As they were coming home, when David returned from killing the Philistine, the women came out of all the towns of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with songs of joy, and with musical instruments.[e] 7 And the women sang to one another as they made merry,

"Saul has killed his thousands,
and David his ten thousands."

8 Saul was very angry, for this saying displeased him. He said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed thousands; what more can he have but the kingdom?" 9 So Saul eyed David from that day on.

Saul's Fear of David

10 The next day an evil spirit from God rushed upon Saul, and he raved within his house, while David was playing the lyre, as he did day by day. Saul had his spear in his hand; 11 and Saul threw the spear, for he thought, "I will pin David to the wall." But David eluded him twice.

12 Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him but had departed from Saul. 13 So Saul removed him from his presence, and made him a commander of a thousand; and David marched out and came in, leading the army. 14 David

c Gk Syr: Heb *Gai* d Heb *he* e Or *triangles*, or *three-stringed instruments*

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of the God of Israel. **17.52** *Shaaraim* was a town in Judah (Josh 15.36) near Socoh and Azekah (see note on 17.1); it apparently lay to the west in the direction of *Gath and Ekron* (see 5.8, 10). **17.54** The mention of *Jerusalem* is surprising, since it did not become an Israelite city until after David became king (see 2 Sam 5.6–9). Although David puts Goliath's *armor in his tent*, he acquires his sword at the shrine of Nob in 21.9. **17.55** On *Abner*, see note on 14.50.

18.1–9 David receives Jonathan's loyalty, and as David's success on the battlefield grows, Saul begins to look on him with suspicion. **18.1** To say that *the soul of Jonathan was bound to the soul of David* is to describe inseparable devotion, like that of Jacob for his son Benjamin (see Gen 44.30–31). For the political overtones of the statement that Jonathan loved David *as his own soul* (also v. 3), see note on 20.17. **18.3** Jonathan and David enter into a *covenant*, a formal agreement of friendship and mutual loyalty. **18.4** It has been suggested that by giving David his *robe* and other apparel, Jonathan is formally transferring his claim on Saul's throne to David. **18.6–9** Saul's jealousy of David begins when David's military exploits become the subject of public celebration.

18.10–16 Saul takes measures to rid himself of David. **18.10–11** This episode is not in the Septuagint; it may have been added in anticipation of 19.9–10. For the *evil spirit from God*, see 16.14–15. **18.14** Here and throughout the story of his rise to power David's extraordinary

had success in all his undertakings; for
the LORD was with him. 15 When Saul saw
that he had great success, he stood in awe
of him. 16 But all Israel and Judah loved
David; for it was he who marched out and
came in leading them.

David's Marriage to Michal

17 Then Saul said to David, "Here is
my elder daughter Merab; I will give her
to you as a wife; only be valiant for me
and fight the LORD's battles." For Saul
thought, "I will not raise a hand against
him; let the Philistines deal with him."
18 David said to Saul, "Who am I and who
are my kinsfolk, my father's family in Is-
rael, that I should be son-in-law to the
king?" 19 But at the time when Saul's
daughter Merab should have been given
to David, she was given to Adriel the Me-
holathite as a wife.

20 Now Saul's daughter Michal loved
David. Saul was told, and the thing
pleased him. 21 Saul thought, "Let me give
her to him that she may be a snare for
him and that the hand of the Philistines
may be against him." Therefore Saul said
to David a second time,[f] "You shall now
be my son-in-law." 22 Saul commanded his
servants, "Speak to David in private and
say, 'See, the king is delighted with you,
and all his servants love you; now then,
become the king's son-in-law.'" 23 So
Saul's servants reported these words to
David in private. And David said, "Does it
seem to you a little thing to become the
king's son-in-law, seeing that I am a poor
man and of no repute?" 24 The servants of
Saul told him, "This is what David said."
25 Then Saul said, "Thus shall you say to
David, 'The king desires no marriage
present except a hundred foreskins of the
Philistines, that he may be avenged on the
king's enemies.'" Now Saul planned to
make David fall by the hand of the Philis-
tines. 26 When his servants told David
these words, David was well pleased to be
the king's son-in-law. Before the time had
expired, 27 David rose and went, along
with his men, and killed one hundred[g] of
the Philistines; and David brought their
foreskins, which were given in full num-
ber to the king, that he might become the
king's son-in-law. Saul gave him his
daughter Michal as a wife. 28 But when
Saul realized that the LORD was with Da-
vid, and that Saul's daughter Michal loved
him, 29 Saul was still more afraid of David.
So Saul was David's enemy from that time
forward.

30 Then the commanders of the Phil-
istines came out to battle; and as often as
they came out, David had more success
than all the servants of Saul, so that his
fame became very great.

Jonathan Intercedes for David

19 Saul spoke with his son Jonathan
and with all his servants about
killing David. But Saul's son Jonathan
took great delight in David. 2 Jonathan
told David, "My father Saul is trying to kill
you; therefore be on guard tomorrow
morning; stay in a secret place and hide
yourself. 3 I will go out and stand beside
my father in the field where you are, and
I will speak to my father about you; if I
learn anything I will tell you." 4 Jonathan
spoke well of David to his father Saul, say-
ing to him, "The king should not sin
against his servant David, because he has
not sinned against you, and because his
deeds have been of good service to you;
5 for he took his life in his hand when he
attacked the Philistine, and the LORD
brought about a great victory for all Is-
rael. You saw it, and rejoiced; why then
will you sin against an innocent person by

f Heb *by two* g Gk Compare 2 Sam 3.14: Heb *two hundred*

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success is attributed to the fact that *the LORD was with him* (see v. 13; 16.18; 17.37; 18.28–29a; 2 Sam 5.10). **18.16** Saul's attempt to protect himself against David's growing popularity by sending him to war (v. 13) proves counterproductive; as a military leader David earns the loyalty of *all Israel and Judah.*

18.17–30 In 17.25 Saul's daughter was promised to the man who slew the Philistine champion. In this section, however, each of Saul's daughters is offered to David as a ruse to get him slain by the Philistines. **18.17** *Merab* was introduced in 14.49. **18.19** *Adriel the Meholathite* was from the town of Abel-meholah, which was east of the Jordan, not far from Jabesh-gilead (see 10.27). **18.25** The unusual *marriage present* or bride-price is calculated both to tempt David, who would otherwise be too poor (v. 23) to marry a king's daughter, and to put him in harm's way.

19.1–7 After learning that Saul is plotting to kill David, Jonathan intervenes and persuades his father to spare David's life.

killing David without cause?" 6 Saul
heeded the voice of Jonathan; Saul swore,
"As the LORD lives, he shall not be put to
death." 7 So Jonathan called David and re-
lated all these things to him. Jonathan
then brought David to Saul, and he was in
his presence as before.

David's Flight from the Court of Saul

8 Again there was war, and David
went out to fight the Philistines. He
launched a heavy attack on them, so that
they fled before him. 9 Then an evil spirit
from the LORD came upon Saul, as he sat
in his house with his spear in his hand,
while David was playing music. 10 Saul
sought to pin David to the wall with the
spear; but he eluded Saul, so that he
struck the spear into the wall. David fled
and escaped that night.

11 Saul sent messengers to David's
house to keep watch over him, planning
to kill him in the morning. David's wife
Michal told him, "If you do not save your
life tonight, tomorrow you will be killed."
12 So Michal let David down through the
window; he fled away and escaped. 13 Mi-
chal took an idol[h] and laid it on the bed;
she put a net[i] of goats' hair on its head,
and covered it with the clothes. 14 When
Saul sent messengers to take David, she
said, "He is sick." 15 Then Saul sent the
messengers to see David for themselves.
He said, "Bring him up to me in the bed,
that I may kill him." 16 When the messen-
gers came in, the idol[j] was in the bed,
with the covering[i] of goats' hair on its
head. 17 Saul said to Michal, "Why have
you deceived me like this, and let my en-
emy go, so that he has escaped?" Michal
answered Saul, "He said to me, 'Let me
go; why should I kill you?' "

Saul Among the Prophets

18 Now David fled and escaped; he
came to Samuel at Ramah, and told him
all that Saul had done to him. He and
Samuel went and settled at Naioth. 19 Saul
was told, "David is at Naioth in Ramah."
20 Then Saul sent messengers to take Da-
vid. When they saw the company of the
prophets in a frenzy, with Samuel stand-
ing in charge of[i] them, the spirit of God
came upon the messengers of Saul, and
they also fell into a prophetic frenzy.
21 When Saul was told, he sent other mes-
sengers, and they also fell into a frenzy.
Saul sent messengers again the third time,
and they also fell into a frenzy. 22 Then he
himself went to Ramah. He came to the
great well that is in Secu;[k] he asked,
"Where are Samuel and David?" And
someone said, "They are at Naioth in Ra-
mah." 23 He went there, toward Naioth in
Ramah; and the spirit of God came upon
him. As he was going, he fell into a pro-
phetic frenzy, until he came to Naioth in
Ramah. 24 He too stripped off his clothes,
and he too fell into a frenzy before Sam-
uel. He lay naked all that day and all that
night. Therefore it is said, "Is Saul also
among the prophets?"

h Heb *took the teraphim* *i* Meaning of Heb uncertain *j* Heb *the teraphim* *k* Gk reads *to the well of the threshing floor on the bare height*

19.8–17 Despite his oath in v. 6, Saul resumes his plans to kill David, but with Michal's help David is able to escape. **19.9–10** See 18.10–11, where a duplicate of this incident has been added, probably secondarily, to the story. **19.12** Perhaps Michal's house, like Rahab's (Josh 2.15), was built into the city wall, so that by letting *David down through the window* she made it possible for him to escape the city without risking the gate. **19.13** The *idol* or *teraphim* Michal uses to simulate her sleeping husband is a household god like those Rachel steals from Laban in Gen 31.19. The same word is rendered *idolatry* in 15.23. **19.17** Michal lies to her father, claiming that David threatened her life.

19.18–24 This episode is almost certainly a secondary addition to the story. It was obviously unknown to the author of the statement in 15.35 that Samuel would not see Saul again alive, and it offers an alternate explanation of the saying, *Is Saul also among the prophets?* (see note on 10.11). **19.18** *Ramah* of Benjamin, here apparently confused with Samuel's hometown of Ramathaim (see 1.1, 19), was only a few miles north of Gibeah. *Naioth* seems to mean "encampments" and may refer to camps where groups of prophets lived communally. **19.20–21** Each group of Saul's messengers is caught up in the contagious *prophetic frenzy* (see 10.5) as soon as it arrives. **19.22** No such place as *Secu* is known, and the Septuagint reading (see text note *k*) may be correct, especially since both threshing floors (Hos 9.1) and bare heights (Jer 3.2) were customary places of religious ritual. **19.24** By stripping *off his clothes* and lying *naked* Saul is indulging in another form of ecstatic behavior (see 10.5).

The Friendship of David and Jonathan

20 David fled from Naioth in Ramah. He came before Jonathan
and said, "What have I done? What is my
guilt? And what is my sin against your fa-
ther that he is trying to take my life?" 2 He
said to him, "Far from it! You shall not
die. My father does nothing either great
or small without disclosing it to me; and
why should my father hide this from me?
Never!" 3 But David also swore, "Your fa-
ther knows well that you like me; and he
thinks, 'Do not let Jonathan know this, or
he will be grieved.' But truly, as the LORD
lives and as you yourself live, there is but
a step between me and death." 4 Then
Jonathan said to David, "Whatever you
say, I will do for you." 5 David said to Jon-
athan, "Tomorrow is the new moon, and I
should not fail to sit with the king at the
meal; but let me go, so that I may hide in
the field until the third evening. 6 If your
father misses me at all, then say, 'David
earnestly asked leave of me to run to
Bethlehem his city; for there is a yearly
sacrifice there for all the family.' 7 If he
says, 'Good!' it will be well with your ser-
vant; but if he is angry, then know that
evil has been determined by him. 8 There-
fore deal kindly with your servant, for
you have brought your servant into a sa-
cred covenant[l] with you. But if there is
guilt in me, kill me yourself; why should
you bring me to your father?" 9 Jonathan
said, "Far be it from you! If I knew that it
was decided by my father that evil should
come upon you, would I not tell you?"
10 Then David said to Jonathan, "Who will
tell me if your father answers you
harshly?" 11 Jonathan replied to David,
"Come, let us go out into the field." So
they both went out into the field.

12 Jonathan said to David, "By the
LORD, the God of Israel! When I have
sounded out my father, about this time
tomorrow, or on the third day, if he is well
disposed toward David, shall I not then
send and disclose it to you? 13 But if my
father intends to do you harm, the LORD
do so to Jonathan, and more also, if I do
not disclose it to you, and send you away,
so that you may go in safety. May the
LORD be with you, as he has been with my
father. 14 If I am still alive, show me the
faithful love of the LORD; but if I die,[m]
15 never cut off your faithful love from my
house, even if the LORD were to cut off
every one of the enemies of David from
the face of the earth." 16 Thus Jonathan
made a covenant with the house of David,
saying, "May the LORD seek out the ene-
mies of David." 17 Jonathan made David
swear again by his love for him; for he
loved him as he loved his own life.

18 Jonathan said to him, "Tomorrow
is the new moon; you will be missed, be-
cause your place will be empty. 19 On the
day after tomorrow, you shall go a long
way down; go to the place where you hid
yourself earlier, and remain beside the
stone there.[m] 20 I will shoot three arrows
to the side of it, as though I shot at a
mark. 21 Then I will send the boy, saying,
'Go, find the arrows.' If I say to the boy,
'Look, the arrows are on this side of you,
collect them,' then you are to come, for, as
the LORD lives, it is safe for you and there
is no danger. 22 But if I say to the young
man, 'Look, the arrows are beyond you,'
then go; for the LORD has sent you away.
23 As for the matter about which you and
I have spoken, the LORD is witness[n] be-
tween you and me forever."

24 So David hid himself in the field.
When the new moon came, the king sat at
the feast to eat. 25 The king sat upon his

l Heb *a covenant of the* LORD *m* Meaning of Heb uncertain *n* Gk: Heb lacks *witness*

20.1–42 David goes to Jonathan to ask his help again. Jonathan finds it hard to believe that Saul is really plotting to take David's life, but after an elaborate investigation he finds that it is true and passes the word to David. **20.5** The *new moon* was celebrated with special offerings (see Num 28.11–15) and a festival lasting at least three days. **20.8** The *sacred covenant* that binds Jonathan to David is mentioned in 18.3. **20.10** Jonathan's answer to David's question is found in vv. 18–23. **20.16** *Thus Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David* probably originally read "And if the name of Jonathan is cut off from the house of David." *The enemies of David* is probably a scribal euphemism; in the original version Jonathan invoked the Lord's punishment of David himself, but in view of Jonathan's fate a scribe inserted "the enemies of" to protect David from the curse. **20.17** The statement that Jonathan loved David *as he loved his own life* is an indication not only of personal affection but also of political loyalty; it evokes the traditional language of ancient Near Eastern fealty oaths (see also 18.3).

seat, as at other times, upon the seat by
the wall. Jonathan stood, while Abner sat
by Saul's side; but David's place was
empty.
26 Saul did not say anything that day;
for he thought, "Something has befallen
him; he is not clean, surely he is not
clean." 27 But on the second day, the day
after the new moon, David's place was
empty. And Saul said to his son Jonathan,
"Why has the son of Jesse not come to the
feast, either yesterday or today?" 28 Jona-
than answered Saul, "David earnestly
asked leave of me to go to Bethlehem;
29 he said, 'Let me go; for our family is
holding a sacrifice in the city, and my
brother has commanded me to be there.
So now, if I have found favor in your
sight, let me get away, and see my broth-
ers.' For this reason he has not come to
the king's table."
30 Then Saul's anger was kindled
against Jonathan. He said to him, "You
son of a perverse, rebellious woman! Do I
not know that you have chosen the son of
Jesse to your own shame, and to the
shame of your mother's nakedness? 31 For
as long as the son of Jesse lives upon the
earth, neither you nor your kingdom shall
be established. Now send and bring him
to me, for he shall surely die." 32 Then
Jonathan answered his father Saul, "Why
should he be put to death? What has he
done?" 33 But Saul threw his spear at him
to strike him; so Jonathan knew that it was
the decision of his father to put David to
death. 34 Jonathan rose from the table in
fierce anger and ate no food on the sec-
ond day of the month, for he was grieved
for David, and because his father had dis-
graced him.
35 In the morning Jonathan went out
into the field to the appointment with Da-
vid, and with him was a little boy. 36 He
said to the boy, "Run and find the arrows
that I shoot." As the boy ran, he shot an
arrow beyond him. 37 When the boy came
to the place where Jonathan's arrow had
fallen, Jonathan called after the boy and
said, "Is the arrow not beyond you?"
38 Jonathan called after the boy, "Hurry,
be quick, do not linger." So Jonathan's
boy gathered up the arrows and came to
his master. 39 But the boy knew nothing;
only Jonathan and David knew the ar-
rangement. 40 Jonathan gave his weapons
to the boy and said to him, "Go and carry
them to the city." 41 As soon as the boy
had gone, David rose from beside the
stone heap[o] and prostrated himself with
his face to the ground. He bowed three
times, and they kissed each other, and
wept with each other; David wept the
more.[p] 42 Then Jonathan said to David,
"Go in peace, since both of us have sworn
in the name of the LORD, saying, 'The
LORD shall be between me and you, and
between my descendants and your de-
scendants, forever.'" He got up and left;
and Jonathan went into the city.[q]

David and the Priest of Nob

21 [r] David came to Nob to the priest
Ahimelech. Ahimelech came
trembling to meet David, and said to him,
"Why are you alone, and no one with
you?" 2 David said to the priest Ahime-
lech, "The king has charged me with a

o Gk: Heb *from beside the south* p Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain q This sentence is 21.1 in Heb r Ch 21.2 in Heb

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20.26 David's absence on the first day does not arouse Saul's suspicion, because he assumes that David *is not clean*, i.e., that some minor accident has rendered David ritually ineligible to participate in the festival of the new moon (v. 5). **20.30** By calling Jonathan the *son of a perverse, rebellious woman* Saul means to brand Jonathan as genetically disloyal, but the choice of words points the insult at Jonathan's mother; his *mother's nakedness* refers euphemistically to her pudenda, which are shamed by his having entered the world thereby. **20.31** Saul reminds Jonathan that David stands between him and the throne. **20.42** Jonathan again reminds David of the covenantal oath that binds them together (see 18.3; 20.5).

21.1–9 David requests provisions from Ahimelech, the chief priest of Nob. Although he is suspicious, Ahimelech is persuaded by David's dissembling assurances to give him bread and a sword. **21.1** *Nob*, called *the city of the priests* in 22.19, was near Gibeah in Benjamin (see Neh 11.31–32; Isa 10.32); it seems to have been the seat of the house of Eli after the fall of Shiloh (see 1.3; 2.31–33; 4.4, 17). *Ahimelech*, the great-grandson of Eli and chief priest at Nob, is the son of Ahitub (22.9) and the brother of Ahijah (14.3); his anxiety at seeing David alone is probably caused by a suspicion that he is harboring a refugee. **21.2** David's facile lie is intended to allay the priest's concern; *the young men* are David's

matter, and said to me, 'No one must
know anything of the matter about which
I send you, and with which I have
charged you.' I have made an appoint-
ment[s] with the young men for such and
such a place. 3 Now then, what have you at
hand? Give me five loaves of bread, or
whatever is here." 4 The priest answered
David, "I have no ordinary bread at hand,
only holy bread—provided that the
young men have kept themselves from
women." 5 David answered the priest, "In-
deed women have been kept from us as
always when I go on an expedition; the
vessels of the young men are holy even
when it is a common journey; how much
more today will their vessels be holy?" 6 So
the priest gave him the holy bread; for
there was no bread there except the bread
of the Presence, which is removed from
before the LORD, to be replaced by hot
bread on the day it is taken away.

7 Now a certain man of the servants of
Saul was there that day, detained before
the LORD; his name was Doeg the Edom-
ite, the chief of Saul's shepherds.

8 David said to Ahimelech, "Is there
no spear or sword here with you? I did
not bring my sword or my weapons with
me, because the king's business required
haste." 9 The priest said, "The sword of
Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed in
the valley of Elah, is here wrapped in a
cloth behind the ephod; if you will take
that, take it, for there is none here except
that one." David said, "There is none like
it; give it to me."

David Flees to Gath

10 David rose and fled that day from
Saul; he went to King Achish of Gath.
11 The servants of Achish said to him, "Is
this not David the king of the land? Did
they not sing to one another of him in
dances,

'Saul has killed his thousands,
and David his ten thousands'?"

12 David took these words to heart and
was very much afraid of King Achish of
Gath. 13 So he changed his behavior be-
fore them; he pretended to be mad when
in their presence.[t] He scratched marks
on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle
run down his beard. 14 Achish said to his
servants, "Look, you see the man is mad;
why then have you brought him to me?
15 Do I lack madmen, that you have
brought this fellow to play the madman in
my presence? Shall this fellow come into
my house?"

David the Fugitive

22 David left there and escaped to
the cave of Adullam; when his
brothers and all his father's house heard

s Q Ms Vg Compare Gk: Meaning of MT uncertain t Heb *in their hands*

usual retinue of soldiers. **21.3–6** David solicits food and receives the ceremonial bread used in the rites of the shrine of Nob; this incident is cited in the NT as an instance of an excusable violation of ritual rules (see Mt 12.3–4; Mk 2.25–26; Lk 6.3–4). **21.4** Although Ahimelech has no *ordinary bread*, he does have *holy bread* (see v. 6); but he will make this available to David's men only if they meet the ritual qualification of abstinence from sexual activity (cf. Ex 19.15). **21.5** David insists that his troops routinely maintain ritual purity when on active duty; the term *vessels*, if the text is sound, is probably a euphemism. **21.6** For *the bread of the Presence*, see Ex 25.30; Lev 24.5–9. **21.7** *Doeg*, probably a mercenary from Edom (see 14.47), will inform on David and Ahimelech (22.9–10) and serve as the executioner of the priests of Nob (22.18–19); his title, *chief of Saul's shepherds*, is doubtful, and many scholars prefer "chief of Saul's guard" on the basis of 22.17. The phrase *detained before the LORD*, which occurs nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible, suggests some kind of ritual confinement at the shrine. **21.9** For the *sword of Goliath*, see 17.54; here it is kept behind an *ephod*, a term that usually designates a priestly garment (see 2.18; 14.3) but sometimes seems to denote an idol or some similar cultic object (see cf. Ex 32.2–4; Judg 8.27).

21.10–15 This episode, probably a late addition to the story, anticipates David's subsequent decision to expatriate and live among the Philistines (see 27.1). **21.10** David later serves as a mercenary of *King Achish* (see chs. 28–30), whose west Anatolian name is probably the same as that of Anchises of Troy, the father of Aeneas. *Gath*. See note on 5.8. **21.11** We do not know why David should be called *the king of the land* at this point; perhaps it simply means that he is a powerful and successful military leader. What is clear is that the Philistines recognize him. This puts him in danger, and he feigns madness to protect himself.

22.1–5 David becomes a leader of a band of outlaws recruited from those who, like David himself, have been discredited or disenfranchised by Saul's regime. **22.1** In vv. 4–5 *the cave* to which

of it, they went down there to him. 2 Everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented gathered to him; and he became captain over them. Those who were with him numbered about four hundred.

3 David went from there to Mizpeh of Moab. He said to the king of Moab, "Please let my father and mother come[u] to you, until I know what God will do for me." 4 He left them with the king of Moab, and they stayed with him all the time that David was in the stronghold. 5 Then the prophet Gad said to David, "Do not remain in the stronghold; leave, and go into the land of Judah." So David left, and went into the forest of Hereth.

Saul Slaughters the Priests at Nob

6 Saul heard that David and those who were with him had been located. Saul was sitting at Gibeah, under the tamarisk tree on the height, with his spear in his hand, and all his servants were standing around him. 7 Saul said to his servants who stood around him, "Hear now, you Benjaminites; will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, will he make you all commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds? 8 Is that why all of you have conspired against me? No one discloses to me when my son makes a league with the son of Jesse, none of you is sorry for me or discloses to me that my son has stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait, as he is doing today." 9 Doeg the Edomite, who was in charge of Saul's servants, answered, "I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech son of Ahitub; 10 he inquired of the LORD for him, gave him provisions, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine."

11 The king sent for the priest Ahimelech son of Ahitub and for all his father's house, the priests who were at Nob; and all of them came to the king. 12 Saul said, "Listen now, son of Ahitub." He answered, "Here I am, my lord." 13 Saul said to him, "Why have you conspired against me, you and the son of Jesse, by giving him bread and a sword, and by inquiring of God for him, so that he has risen against me, to lie in wait, as he is doing today?"

14 Then Ahimelech answered the king, "Who among all your servants is so faithful as David? He is the king's son-in-law, and is quick[v] to do your bidding, and is honored in your house. 15 Is today the first time that I have inquired of God for him? By no means! Do not let the king impute anything to his servant or to any member of my father's house; for your servant has known nothing of all this, much or little." 16 The king said, "You shall surely die, Ahimelech, you and all

u Syr Vg: Heb *come out* *v* Heb *and turns aside*

David flees is described as his *stronghold*, and many scholars prefer to emend the word *cave* to *stronghold* in this verse. *Adullam* was a fortress of Judah about sixteen miles southwest of Jerusalem (see 2 Sam 23.13–14). **22.2** David, now a fugitive from Saul's justice, becomes the champion and leader of everyone in the region who is disfranchised, disenchanted, and embittered. **22.3** Although *Mizpeh* is mentioned nowhere else, we assume it was an important city in *Moab*, which lay east of the Dead Sea (see 14.47); David traced his connections with Moab to his great-grandmother Ruth (see Ruth 4.13–22). **22.5** For *the prophet Gad*, whose appearance at this point is a surprise, see 2 Sam 24.11–19; 1 Chr 21.9–19; 29.29; 2 Chr 29.25. The *forest of Hereth*, mentioned nowhere else, was probably in the vicinity of Keilah (see 23.1).

22.6–23 Enraged by his discovery that Ahimelech gave David provisions and unimpressed by the priest's explanation that he believed David a loyal servant of Saul, the desperate king orders the massacre of the priests of Nob. **22.6** This description of Saul corresponds to the classic depiction of a ruler sitting under a sacred tree (here a *tamarisk*) judging the people. In this case, Saul's seat of judgment is located at *the height* or "high place," i.e., the local place of sacrifice, at *Gibeah*, Saul's hometown and capital (see note on 9.1). **22.7–8** Saul's angry words to *his servants* (the ranking members of his court) accuse them of hoping for favors from David, while implicitly reminding them that as *Benjaminites* they cannot expect such favors from a Judahite. **22.9** *Doeg*. See note on 21.7. **22.10** Our account of David's visit to Nob (21.1–9) does not mention the fact that Ahimelech *inquired of the LORD for him*. **22.14–15** Ahimelech's excuse is true and honest: he believed David to be a fully trusted servant of Saul and knew nothing of the animosity that had developed between the two men. Instead of *quick to do your bidding* the translation should read "commander of your bodyguard," the position that Benaiah son of Jehoiada held in David's own administration (see 2 Sam 23.20–23).

your father's house." 17 The king said to
the guard who stood around him, "Turn
and kill the priests of the LORD, because
their hand also is with David; they knew
that he fled, and did not disclose it to me."
But the servants of the king would not
raise their hand to attack the priests of the
LORD. 18 Then the king said to Doeg,
"You, Doeg, turn and attack the priests."
Doeg the Edomite turned and attacked
the priests; on that day he killed eighty-
five who wore the linen ephod. 19 Nob,
the city of the priests, he put to the sword;
men and women, children and infants,
oxen, donkeys, and sheep, he put to the
sword.

20 But one of the sons of Ahimelech
son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped
and fled after David. 21 Abiathar told Da-
vid that Saul had killed the priests of the
LORD. 22 David said to Abiathar, "I knew
on that day, when Doeg the Edomite was
there, that he would surely tell Saul. I am
responsible[w] for the lives of all your fa-
ther's house. 23 Stay with me, and do not
be afraid; for the one who seeks my life
seeks your life; you will be safe with me."

David Saves the City of Keilah

23 Now they told David, "The Philis-
tines are fighting against Keilah,
and are robbing the threshing floors."
2 David inquired of the LORD, "Shall I go
and attack these Philistines?" The LORD
said to David, "Go and attack the Philis-
tines and save Keilah." 3 But David's men
said to him, "Look, we are afraid here in
Judah; how much more then if we go to
Keilah against the armies of the Philis-
tines?" 4 Then David inquired of the LORD
again. The LORD answered him, "Yes, go
down to Keilah; for I will give the Philis-
tines into your hand." 5 So David and his
men went to Keilah, fought with the Phil-
istines, brought away their livestock, and
dealt them a heavy defeat. Thus David
rescued the inhabitants of Keilah.

6 When Abiathar son of Ahimelech
fled to David at Keilah, he came down
with an ephod in his hand. 7 Now it was
told Saul that David had come to Keilah.
And Saul said, "God has given[x] him into
my hand; for he has shut himself in by
entering a town that has gates and bars."
8 Saul summoned all the people to war, to
go down to Keilah, to besiege David and
his men. 9 When David learned that Saul
was plotting evil against him, he said to
the priest Abiathar, "Bring the ephod
here." 10 David said, "O LORD, the God of
Israel, your servant has heard that Saul
seeks to come to Keilah, to destroy the city
on my account. 11 And now, will[y] Saul
come down as your servant has heard?
O LORD, the God of Israel, I beseech you,
tell your servant." The LORD said, "He
will come down." 12 Then David said,
"Will the men of Keilah surrender me
and my men into the hand of Saul?" The
LORD said, "They will surrender you."
13 Then David and his men, who were
about six hundred, set out and left Kei-
lah; they wandered wherever they could
go. When Saul was told that David had
escaped from Keilah, he gave up the ex-
pedition. 14 David remained in the strong-

w Gk Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain x Gk Tg: Heb *made a stranger of* y Q Ms Compare Gk: MT *Will the men of Keilah surrender me into his hand? Will*

22.17 The expression *their hand also is with David* means "they, too, are in collusion with David" (cf. 2 Sam 14.19; Jer 26.24). **22.18** As an *Edomite* (and as a scoundrel) Doeg is not as scrupulous as Saul's Israelite servants about doing violence to the priests of the God of Israel. The *linen ephod* is the livery of priesthood (see 2.18; 14.3, 18). **22.20** The only survivor of the massacre at Nob and, therefore, of the Shilonite priesthood (see note on 21.1) is *Abiathar*, a son of Ahimelech (see notes on 2.31–33; 2.33). **22.22–23** Admitting that by deceiving Ahimelech (see 21.1–8) he put the priesthood of Nob in mortal danger, David offers its only survivor his patronage. Abiathar will share the high priesthood with Zadok during David's reign (see, e.g., 2 Sam 20.25) only to be banished by Solomon (1 Kings 2.26–27) for having supported the succession of Adonijah (1 Kings 1.7).

23.1–14 This episode illustrates the value of David's newly acquired priest. Guided by oracles obtained by Abiathar, David liberates a besieged town and successfully eludes Saul again. **23.1** *Keilah* was just south of Adullam (see 22.1) on the border of Philistine territory. Though it was formally claimed by Judah (Josh 15.44), it seems to have been an independent city at the time of the events described here. **23.6** In this verse, *an ephod* seems to be an instrument of divination or a container for such instruments, perhaps the Urim and Thummim (see 14.3; 21.9). **23.14** David has fled to *the hill country of the*

holds in the wilderness, in the hill country
of the Wilderness of Ziph. Saul sought
him every day, but the LORD[z] did not
give him into his hand.

David Eludes Saul in the Wilderness

15 David was in the Wilderness of
Ziph at Horesh when he learned that[a]
Saul had come out to seek his life. 16 Saul's
son Jonathan set out and came to David at
Horesh; there he strengthened his hand
through the LORD.[b] 17 He said to him,
"Do not be afraid; for the hand of my father Saul shall not find you; you shall be
king over Israel, and I shall be second to
you; my father Saul also knows that this is
so." 18 Then the two of them made a covenant before the LORD; David remained at
Horesh, and Jonathan went home.

19 Then some Ziphites went up to
Saul at Gibeah and said, "David is hiding
among us in the strongholds of Horesh,
on the hill of Hachilah, which is south of
Jeshimon. 20 Now, O king, whenever you
wish to come down, do so; and our part
will be to surrender him into the king's
hand." 21 Saul said, "May you be blessed
by the LORD for showing me compassion!
22 Go and make sure once more; find out
exactly where he is, and who has seen him
there; for I am told that he is very cunning. 23 Look around and learn all the
hiding places where he lurks, and come
back to me with sure information. Then I
will go with you; and if he is in the land, I
will search him out among all the thousands of Judah." 24 So they set out and
went to Ziph ahead of Saul.

David and his men were in the wilderness of Maon, in the Arabah to the south
of Jeshimon. 25 Saul and his men went to
search for him. When David was told, he
went down to the rock and stayed in the
wilderness of Maon. When Saul heard
that, he pursued David into the wilderness of Maon. 26 Saul went on one side of
the mountain, and David and his men on
the other side of the mountain. David was
hurrying to get away from Saul, while
Saul and his men were closing in on David
and his men to capture them. 27 Then a
messenger came to Saul, saying, "Hurry
and come; for the Philistines have made a
raid on the land." 28 So Saul stopped pursuing David, and went against the Philistines; therefore that place was called the
Rock of Escape.[c] 29[d] David then went up
from there, and lived in the strongholds
of En-gedi.

z Q Ms Gk: MT *God* a Or *saw that*
b Compare Q Ms Gk: MT *God* c Or *Rock of Division*; Meaning of Heb uncertain d Ch 24.1 in Heb

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Wilderness of Ziph, a part of the Judean hills that lay several miles southeast of Keilah. The town of Ziph was on a hilltop about five miles south-southeast of Hebron.

23.15–29 Another narrow escape for David. **23.15** *Horesh* means "Forest" in Hebrew, and there is a ruin with a similar name near the site of ancient Ziph. **23.16** The expression *strengthened his hand through the LORD* means not only that Jonathan offered David encouragement and reassurance (cf. Neh 6.9), but also that he gave him tangible support (cf. Judg 9.24). **23.17** Jonathan's pledge of loyalty to David echoes the language of 20.12–17, where he sought David's protection for his family. Here he acknowledges that David will become king. By saying *I shall be second to you* Jonathan may simply mean that he will be subordinate to David, but there is some evidence to suggest that "the second to the king" or "the next in authority to the king" was the name of an office Jonathan hoped to fill in David's administration (see 2 Chr 28.7). **23.18** In the present form of the narrative Jonathan and David have *made a covenant* before (see 18.3; 20.8), but this may have been the first time in an earlier version of the story. **23.19** A group of *Ziphites*, residents of the Wilderness of Ziph, seek to curry favor with Saul by betraying David. Except that they must be near *Horesh* (see v. 15) and Maon (v. 24) the locations of *the hill of Hachilah* and *Jeshimon* are unknown. **23.24** *Maon* was on a hilltop ca. eight miles south of Hebron; David's camp is in *the Arabah* or rift valley east of the town. **23.26** Saul's troops have David trapped on the other side of the mountain; they are *closing in on* him, i.e., circling around the mountain from both directions. **23.27** Saul's army is called away by other duties, affording David a last minute escape. **23.28** If the name *Rock of Escape* is understood as *Rock of Division* (see text note *c*), the point of the wordplay may be that two hostile parties were divided here and went their separate ways. **23.29** David retreats farther into the Judean wilderness, finding shelter near the oasis of *En-gedi*, about eighteen miles east-southeast of Hebron on the western shore of the Dead Sea (see Josh 15.62).

David Spares Saul's Life

24 When Saul returned from following the Philistines, he was told, "David is in the wilderness of En-gedi." 2 Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to look for David and his men in the direction of the Rocks of the Wild Goats. 3 He came to the sheepfolds beside the road, where there was a cave; and Saul went in to relieve himself.[e] Now David and his men were sitting in the innermost parts of the cave. 4 The men of David said to him, "Here is the day of which the LORD said to you, 'I will give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as it seems good to you.'" Then David went and stealthily cut off a corner of Saul's cloak. 5 Afterward David was stricken to the heart because he had cut off a corner of Saul's cloak. 6 He said to his men, "The LORD forbid that I should do this thing to my lord, the LORD's anointed, to raise my hand against him; for he is the LORD's anointed." 7 So David scolded his men severely and did not permit them to attack Saul. Then Saul got up and left the cave, and went on his way.

8 Afterwards David also rose up and went out of the cave and called after Saul, "My lord the king!" When Saul looked behind him, David bowed with his face to the ground, and did obeisance. 9 David said to Saul, "Why do you listen to the words of those who say, 'David seeks to do you harm'? 10 This very day your eyes have seen how the LORD gave you into my hand in the cave; and some urged me to kill you, but I spared[f] you. I said, 'I will not raise my hand against my lord; for he is the LORD's anointed.' 11 See, my father, see the corner of your cloak in my hand; for by the fact that I cut off the corner of your cloak, and did not kill you, you may know for certain that there is no wrong or treason in my hands. I have not sinned against you, though you are hunting me to take my life. 12 May the LORD judge between me and you! May the LORD avenge me on you; but my hand shall not be against you. 13 As the ancient proverb says, 'Out of the wicked comes forth wickedness'; but my hand shall not be against you. 14 Against whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom do you pursue? A dead dog? A single flea? 15 May the LORD therefore be judge, and give sentence between me and you. May he see to it, and plead my cause, and vindicate me against you."

16 When David had finished speaking these words to Saul, Saul said, "Is this your voice, my son David?" Saul lifted up his voice and wept. 17 He said to David, "You are more righteous than I; for you have repaid me good, whereas I have repaid you evil. 18 Today you have explained how you have dealt well with me, in that you did not kill me when the LORD put me into your hands. 19 For who has ever found an enemy, and sent the enemy safely away? So may the LORD reward you with good for what you have done to me this day. 20 Now I know that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand. 21 Swear to me therefore by the LORD that you will not cut off my descendants after me, and that you will not wipe out my name from my father's house." 22 So

e Heb *to cover his feet* f Gk Syr Tg Vg: Heb *it* (my eye) *spared*

24.1–22 In the first of two very similar episodes (see ch. 26), David passes up an opportunity to kill his pursuer, and Saul is moved to a sincere but fleeting change of heart. **24.2** The exact location of *the Rocks of the Wild Goats* is unknown, but ibexes remain plentiful in the vicinity of En-gedi today. **24.4** We were not told previously that the Lord has promised to deliver his *enemy* to him, and the words of David's men should probably be understood as a traditional saying. David's reason for cutting off *a corner of Saul's cloak* is to use it later (v. 11) as visible evidence that he had an opportunity to harm Saul and declined to do so; in 26.12, 16 he will use a spear and a water jar for the same purpose. **24.6–7** David refuses to permit his men to harm Saul, who, as *the LORD's anointed* (see 9.16), is a sacrosanct individual whose slaying would be a sacrilege (see also 26.9, 11, 16, 23; 2 Sam 1.14, 16). **24.14** In this highly rhetorical self-abasement David compares himself to a *dead dog* (see 2 Sam 9.8; 2 Kings 8.13, Septuagint) and even a *single flea* on a dead dog. **24.16–19** Confronted with irrefutable evidence of David's loyalty, Saul admits that David's case is just, but this change of heart will be only temporary. **24.20** Saul acknowledges what Jonathan has already said (23.17), that David will be king. **24.21** Saul's plea for the safety of his family echoes that of Jonathan (see 20.15). **24.22** The *stronghold* to which David returns is probably

David swore this to Saul. Then Saul went home; but David and his men went up to the stronghold.

The Death of Samuel

25 Now Samuel died; and all Israel assembled and mourned for him. They buried him at his home in Ramah.

Then David got up and went down to the wilderness of Paran.

David, Nabal, and Abigail

2 There was a man in Maon, whose property was in Carmel. The man was very rich; he had three thousand sheep and a thousand goats. He was shearing his sheep in Carmel. 3 Now the name of the man was Nabal, and the name of his wife Abigail. The woman was clever and beautiful, but the man was surly and mean; he was a Calebite. 4 David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his sheep. 5 So David sent ten young men; and David said to the young men, "Go up to Carmel, and go to Nabal, and greet him in my name. 6 Thus you shall salute him: 'Peace be to you, and peace be to your house, and peace be to all that you have. 7 I hear that you have shearers; now your shepherds have been with us, and we did them no harm, and they missed nothing, all the time they were in Carmel. 8 Ask your young men, and they will tell you. Therefore let my young men find favor in your sight; for we have come on a feast day. Please give whatever you have at hand to your servants and to your son David.'"

9 When David's young men came, they said all this to Nabal in the name of David; and then they waited. 10 But Nabal answered David's servants, "Who is David? Who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants today who are breaking away from their masters. 11 Shall I take my bread and my water and the meat that I have butchered for my shearers, and give it to men who come from I do not know where?" 12 So David's young men turned away, and came back and told him all this. 13 David said to his men, "Every man strap on his sword!" And every one of them strapped on his sword; David also strapped on his sword; and about four hundred men went up after David, while two hundred remained with the baggage.

14 But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, "David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master; and he shouted insults at them. 15 Yet the men were very good to us, and we suffered no harm, and we never missed anything when we were in the fields, as long as we were with them; 16 they were a wall to us both by night and by day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep. 17 Now therefore know this and consider what you should do; for evil has been decided against our master and against all his house; he is so ill-natured that no one can speak to him."

18 Then Abigail hurried and took two hundred loaves, two skins of wine, five

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Adullam (see note on 22.1).

25.1 Samuel's obituary prepares readers for the story of the evocation of his ghost in 28.3–25. *Ramah.* See notes on 1.1; 1.19. The *wilderness of Paran* was south of Canaan in the northeastern part of the Sinai Peninsula, too far away to fit here, and most scholars prefer to follow the Septuagint and read "wilderness of Maon."

25.2–44 When David seeks help from a prosperous Judahite and is rudely rejected, he angrily marches out to seek revenge but is prevented from incurring bloodguilt by the timely intervention of Abigail, the wife of his offender. **25.2** The towns of *Maon* (see note on 23.24) and *Carmel* (see note on 15.12) were not far apart. **25.3** *Nabal*'s name is the Hebrew word traditionally rendered "fool" in most English Bibles. It refers to someone whose behavior violates the social norms of etiquette or law, so that it is a very apt name for Abigail's churlish husband. As *a Calebite* he traced his ancestry to Caleb, one of the heroes of the conquest tradition (see Num 13–14). Calebite territory was the region around the city of Hebron (see Josh 14.13–15), a district that included the town where the present story takes place. **25.7** The time of *shearers* or sheepshearing was a time of work, but also merrymaking (cf. 2 Sam 13.23–29). **25.8** The phrase rendered here as *a feast day* (lit. "a good day") came to be a general designation for a legal holiday in postbiblical times. Here, however, it simply refers to an occasion of celebration, eating, and drinking—in this case, shearing time. In addressing Nabal, who is probably much older and certainly much wealthier, David refers to himself as *your son*, a gesture of courtesy. **25.13** Enraged by the report of Nabal's stingy response to his request, David precipitately orders his men to arm themselves and march off to avenge the insult. **25.18** Abigail, determined to prevent a confrontation that would

sheep ready dressed, five measures of
parched grain, one hundred clusters of
raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs.
She loaded them on donkeys 19 and said
to her young men, "Go on ahead of me; I
am coming after you." But she did not tell
her husband Nabal. 20 As she rode on the
donkey and came down under cover of
the mountain, David and his men came
down toward her; and she met them.
21 Now David had said, "Surely it was in
vain that I protected all that this fellow
has in the wilderness, so that nothing was
missed of all that belonged to him; but he
has returned me evil for good. 22 God do
so to David[g] and more also, if by morn-
ing I leave so much as one male of all who
belong to him."

23 When Abigail saw David, she hur-
ried and alighted from the donkey, and
fell before David on her face, bowing to
the ground. 24 She fell at his feet and said,
"Upon me alone, my lord, be the guilt;
please let your servant speak in your ears,
and hear the words of your servant. 25 My
lord, do not take seriously this ill-natured
fellow, Nabal; for as his name is, so is he;
Nabal[h] is his name, and folly is with him;
but I, your servant, did not see the young
men of my lord, whom you sent.

26 "Now then, my lord, as the LORD
lives, and as you yourself live, since the
LORD has restrained you from bloodguilt
and from taking vengeance with your own
hand, now let your enemies and those
who seek to do evil to my lord be like Na-
bal. 27 And now let this present that your
servant has brought to my lord be given to
the young men who follow my lord.
28 Please forgive the trespass of your ser-
vant; for the LORD will certainly make my
lord a sure house, because my lord is
fighting the battles of the LORD; and evil
shall not be found in you so long as you
live. 29 If anyone should rise up to pursue
you and to seek your life, the life of my
lord shall be bound in the bundle of the
living under the care of the LORD your
God; but the lives of your enemies he
shall sling out as from the hollow of a
sling. 30 When the LORD has done to my
lord according to all the good that he has
spoken concerning you, and has ap-
pointed you prince over Israel, 31 my lord
shall have no cause of grief, or pangs of
conscience, for having shed blood without
cause or for having saved himself. And
when the LORD has dealt well with my
lord, then remember your servant."

32 David said to Abigail, "Blessed be
the LORD, the God of Israel, who sent you
to meet me today! 33 Blessed be your good
sense, and blessed be you, who have kept
me today from bloodguilt and from
avenging myself by my own hand! 34 For
as surely as the LORD the God of Israel
lives, who has restrained me from hurting
you, unless you had hurried and come to
meet me, truly by morning there would
not have been left to Nabal so much as

g Gk Compare Syr: Heb *the enemies of David*
h That is *Fool*

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be disastrous for both David and Nabal, assembles the provisions her husband refused to provide. **25.22** David says, *God do so to David and more also*, if he does not massacre the males of Nabal's family. The threat is never carried out, and a scribe who was concerned about the consequences of the oath changed the Hebrew text to *the enemies of David* (see text note *g*). In the KJV the expression *one male* is rendered more literally and less euphemistically as "any that pisseth against the wall." **25.24** To Abigail's words *Upon me alone, my lord, be the guilt*, cf. the words of the woman of Tekoa in 2 Sam 14.9. The expression is a formulaic courtesy meaning, "Please hear me out, and if anything harmful should arise from our conversation, I shall accept responsibility for it." **25.25** Nabal means "Fool" (see note on 25.3), so that Abigail is saying, "*[Fool] is his name, and folly is with him.*" Cf. Isa 32.6. **25.28–30** This part of Abigail's speech seems to have been inserted secondarily as an expression of the Deuteronomistic historian's theme (see Introduction) of David's *sure house* (see 2 Sam 7.16; 1 Kings 11.38), the same phrase that was used to forecast the *sure house* of the priest Zadok in 2.35. **25.29** The term rendered *bundle* here refers to a tied document (cf. Isa 8.16), so that *the bundle of the living* is the same as "the book of the living" (Ps 69.28), a heavenly book in which the name of every living person is recorded and exclusion from which means death (see Ex 32.32–33). In later Judeo-Christian thought "the book of life" was a record of all those people throughout history who were destined for salvation and eternal life (see Dan 12.1; Rev 3.5; 13.8; 17.8; 20.12; 21.27). **25.30** For the term *prince* (Hebrew *nagid*, which is the same as that rendered *ruler* in 9.16; 10.1; and 13.14), see note on 9.16. **25.33** David acknowledges that Abigail's intervention has prevented his incurring *bloodguilt* by avenging himself rather

one male." 35 Then David received from
her hand what she had brought him; he
said to her, "Go up to your house in
peace; see, I have heeded your voice, and
I have granted your petition."
36 Abigail came to Nabal; he was
holding a feast in his house, like the feast
of a king. Nabal's heart was merry within
him, for he was very drunk; so she told
him nothing at all until the morning light.
37 In the morning, when the wine had
gone out of Nabal, his wife told him these
things, and his heart died within him; he
became like a stone. 38 About ten days
later the LORD struck Nabal, and he died.
39 When David heard that Nabal was
dead, he said, "Blessed be the LORD who
has judged the case of Nabal's insult to
me, and has kept back his servant from
evil; the LORD has returned the evildoing
of Nabal upon his own head." Then David sent and wooed Abigail, to make her
his wife. 40 When David's servants came to
Abigail at Carmel, they said to her, "David
has sent us to you to take you to him as his
wife." 41 She rose and bowed down, with
her face to the ground, and said, "Your
servant is a slave to wash the feet of the
servants of my lord." 42 Abigail got up
hurriedly and rode away on a donkey; her
five maids attended her. She went after
the messengers of David and became
his wife.
43 David also married Ahinoam of
Jezreel; both of them became his wives.
44 Saul had given his daughter Michal, David's wife, to Palti son of Laish, who was
from Gallim.

David Spares Saul's Life Again

26 Then the Ziphites came to Saul at
Gibeah, saying, "David is in hiding on the hill of Hachilah, which is opposite Jeshimon."[i] 2 So Saul rose and went
down to the Wilderness of Ziph, with
three thousand chosen men of Israel, to
seek David in the Wilderness of Ziph.
3 Saul encamped on the hill of Hachilah,
which is opposite Jeshimon[i] beside the
road. But David remained in the wilderness. When he learned that Saul had come
after him into the wilderness, 4 David sent
out spies, and learned that Saul had indeed arrived. 5 Then David set out and
came to the place where Saul had encamped; and David saw the place where
Saul lay, with Abner son of Ner, the commander of his army. Saul was lying within
the encampment, while the army was encamped around him.
6 Then David said to Ahimelech the
Hittite, and to Joab's brother Abishai son
of Zeruiah, "Who will go down with me
into the camp to Saul?" Abishai said, "I
will go down with you." 7 So David and
Abishai went to the army by night; there
Saul lay sleeping within the encampment,
with his spear stuck in the ground at his
head; and Abner and the army lay
around him. 8 Abishai said to David, "God
has given your enemy into your hand today; now therefore let me pin him to the
ground with one stroke of the spear; I will
not strike him twice." 9 But David said to

i Or *opposite the wasteland*

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than leaving vengeance to the Lord, whose justice can be relied upon (see v. 38). **25.35** The expression *and I have granted your petition*, lit. "and I have lifted up your face," also occurs in Gen 19.21 ("I grant you this favor"); Job 42.8 ("I will accept his prayer"); 42.9 ("and the LORD accepted Job's prayer"). **25.39** For the words *the LORD has returned the evildoing of Nabal upon his own head*, cf. 1 Kings 2.44. **25.43–44** This notice is of the type also found in 14.47–52. **25.43** *Ahinoam of Jezreel* became the mother of Amnon, David's firstborn (see 2 Sam 3.2; 1 Chr 3.1); her home was not the well-known Jezreel near the Sea of Galilee but a small Judahite town of the same name near Maon, Ziph, and Carmel (see Josh 15.55–56). Because Ahinoam's name is the same as that of Saul's wife (see 14.50) some scholars have speculated that David married not only Saul's daughters but also his wife (cf. 2 Sam 12.8). **25.44** Saul's annulment of David's marriage to Michal was intended to thwart any claim to the throne David might make on the basis of the marriage; she will be returned to David just before he becomes king of Israel (see 2 Sam 3.13–16). *Palti son of Laish* is called by a longer form of his name, "Paltiel," in 2 Sam 3.15; for *Gallim*, his hometown, see Isa 10.30.

26.1–25 As in ch. 24, David, while fleeing from Saul, is given an opportunity to take his pursuer's life. Once again, he spares the king and asks for reconciliation. **26.1** Cf. the details of this verse to those of 23.19. **26.5** *Abner son of Ner* is Saul's uncle (see 14.50–51). **26.6** *Ahimelech the Hittite* is mentioned only here. *Abishai* was one of the three sons of David's sister *Zeruiah* (see 1 Chr 2.16), the others being *Joab* (see 2 Sam 2.13) and Asahel (see 2 Sam 2.18–23); all three are fiercely loyal partisans of David. **26.9** David's command

Abishai, "Do not destroy him; for who can
raise his hand against the LORD's
anointed, and be guiltless?" 10 David said,
"As the LORD lives, the LORD will strike
him down; or his day will come to die; or
he will go down into battle and perish.
11 The LORD forbid that I should raise my
hand against the LORD's anointed; but
now take the spear that is at his head, and
the water jar, and let us go." 12 So David
took the spear that was at Saul's head and
the water jar, and they went away. No one
saw it, or knew it, nor did anyone awake;
for they were all asleep, because a deep
sleep from the LORD had fallen upon
them.

13 Then David went over to the other
side, and stood on top of a hill far away,
with a great distance between them. 14 David called to the army and to Abner son of
Ner, saying, "Abner! Will you not answer?" Then Abner replied, "Who are
you that calls to the king?" 15 David said to
Abner, "Are you not a man? Who is like
you in Israel? Why then have you not kept
watch over your lord the king? For one of
the people came in to destroy your lord
the king. 16 This thing that you have
done is not good. As the LORD lives, you
deserve to die, because you have not
kept watch over your lord, the LORD's
anointed. See now, where is the king's
spear, or the water jar that was at his
head?"

17 Saul recognized David's voice, and
said, "Is this your voice, my son David?"
David said, "It is my voice, my lord,
O king." 18 And he added, "Why does my
lord pursue his servant? For what have I
done? What guilt is on my hands? 19 Now
therefore let my lord the king hear the
words of his servant. If it is the LORD who
has stirred you up against me, may he accept an offering; but if it is mortals, may
they be cursed before the LORD, for they
have driven me out today from my share
in the heritage of the LORD, saying, 'Go,
serve other gods.' 20 Now therefore, do
not let my blood fall to the ground, away
from the presence of the LORD; for the
king of Israel has come out to seek a single flea, like one who hunts a partridge in
the mountains."

21 Then Saul said, "I have done
wrong; come back, my son David, for I
will never harm you again, because my
life was precious in your sight today; I
have been a fool, and have made a great
mistake." 22 David replied, "Here is the
spear, O king! Let one of the young men
come over and get it. 23 The LORD rewards everyone for his righteousness and
his faithfulness; for the LORD gave you
into my hand today, but I would not raise
my hand against the LORD's anointed.
24 As your life was precious today in my
sight, so may my life be precious in the
sight of the LORD, and may he rescue me
from all tribulation." 25 Then Saul said to
David, "Blessed be you, my son David!
You will do many things and will succeed
in them." So David went his way, and Saul
returned to his place.

David in the Service of the King of Gath

27 David said in his heart, "I shall
now perish one day by the hand
of Saul; there is nothing better for me
than to escape to the land of the Philistines; then Saul will despair of seeking me
any longer within the borders of Israel,
and I shall escape out of his hand." 2 So
David set out and went over, he and the

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to Abishai is more specific than an admonition not to strike or kill Saul. The verb rendered *destroy* implies mutilation or disfigurement, and as in 24.6, David's concern is with violence done to the sacrosanct body of *the LORD's anointed*. **26.12** The *spear* and *the water jar* are taken as proof that David was there, exactly as in the case of the corner of Saul's cloak in 24.4. The *deep sleep from the LORD* (cf. Gen 2.21; 15.12; Isa 29.10) shows that David is receiving divine help. **26.19** The statement *may he accept an offering* is lit. "may he smell an offering," as in Gen 8.21. By excluding him from *the heritage of the LORD*, i.e., from Israel, David's enemies would prevent him from worshiping the God of Israel. **26.20** *A single flea*. See 24.14. David's simile comparing Saul to *one who hunts partridge in the mountains* is particularly fitting for two reasons; first, the partridge was hunted by relentless pursuit, and second, its Hebrew name meant "the caller" and David is in fact calling in the mountains (see v. 14). **26.21** Once again (see 24.16–19) Saul acknowledges the justice of David's cause.

27.1–28.2 Despite Saul's apparent change of heart in 26.21–25, David despairs any hope of reconciliation and decides that if he is to stay alive he must flee Israel. He enters the service of the king of the Philistine city of Gath. **27.2** For *King Achish* and his city, *Gath*, see note on 21.10. We now learn that his father's name was *Maoch*; he is

six hundred men who were with him, to
King Achish son of Maoch of Gath. 3 David stayed with Achish at Gath, he and his
troops, every man with his household,
and David with his two wives, Ahinoam of
Jezreel, and Abigail of Carmel, Nabal's
widow. 4 When Saul was told that David
had fled to Gath, he no longer sought
for him.

5 Then David said to Achish, "If I
have found favor in your sight, let a place
be given me in one of the country towns,
so that I may live there; for why should
your servant live in the royal city with
you?" 6 So that day Achish gave him Zik-
lag; therefore Ziklag has belonged to the
kings of Judah to this day. 7 The length of
time that David lived in the country of the
Philistines was one year and four months.

8 Now David and his men went up
and made raids on the Geshurites, the
Girzites, and the Amalekites; for these
were the landed settlements from Te-
lam[j] on the way to Shur and on to the
land of Egypt. 9 David struck the land,
leaving neither man nor woman alive, but
took away the sheep, the oxen, the don-
keys, the camels, and the clothing, and
came back to Achish. 10 When Achish
asked, "Against whom[k] have you made a
raid today?" David would say, "Against
the Negeb of Judah," or "Against the
Negeb of the Jerahmeelites," or, "Against
the Negeb of the Kenites." 11 David left
neither man nor woman alive to be
brought back to Gath, thinking, "They
might tell about us, and say, 'David has
done so and so.' " Such was his practice all
the time he lived in the country of the
Philistines. 12 Achish trusted David, think-
ing, "He has made himself utterly abhor-
rent to his people Israel; therefore he
shall always be my servant."

28 In those days the Philistines gath-
ered their forces for war, to fight
against Israel. Achish said to David, "You
know, of course, that you and your men
are to go out with me in the army." 2 Da-
vid said to Achish, "Very well, then you
shall know what your servant can do."
Achish said to David, "Very well, I will
make you my bodyguard for life."

Saul Consults a Medium at Endor

3 Now Samuel had died, and all Israel
had mourned for him and buried him in
Ramah, his own city. Saul had expelled
the mediums and the wizards from the
land. 4 The Philistines assembled, and
came and encamped at Shunem. Saul
gathered all Israel, and they encamped at
Gilboa. 5 When Saul saw the army of the
Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart
trembled greatly. 6 When Saul inquired of
the LORD, the LORD did not answer him,

j Compare Gk 15.4: Heb *from of old* *k* Q Ms Gk Vg: MT lacks *whom*

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called Maacah in 1 Kings 2.39. **27.3** For David's *two wives*, see 25.42–43. **27.5–6** David requests and receives a military fiefdom, a grant of landed property in return for service at arms. *Ziklag*, a stronghold in the southwestern Judean hills controlled at this time by Gath, was claimed by the tribe of Simeon (Josh 19.5) and listed among the Judahite cities (Josh 15.31). **27.8–12** David deludes Achish by pretending to raid and plunder Israel and its allies while really fighting against Israel's enemies. **27.8** The *Geshurites* were obscure neighbors of the Philistines (see Josh 13.2–3) with no apparent connection to the land of Geshur in the southern Golan (see 2 Sam 3.3). The *Girzites* are otherwise unknown, and the Hebrew text is vocalized as if the reading were "Gezerites," i.e., people of Gezer, the Israelite-Philistine border city west-northwest of Jerusalem; but Gezer is much too far away. For *the Amalekites*, see note on 15.2. *Telam* is probably another name for the town called Telaim in 15.4 and Telem in Josh 15.24. The *way to Shur* (cf. 15.7) was the central east-west route through the Sinai Peninsula. **27.10** The term *Negeb* meant "Southland" and referred to the southern desert of Judah. Specifically, *the Negeb of Judah* was the region around Beer-sheba (see 2 Sam 24.7; 2 Chr 28.18), and *the Negeb of the Jerahmeelites* (cf. 30.29) probably lay farther south. Instead of *the Negeb of the Kenites* we should read "the Negeb of the Kenizzites" with the Septuagint; the territory of the Kenizzites, parent tribe of the Calebites (see 25.3), was in the region around and south of Hebron.

28.3–25 Anxious about the impending battle with the Philistines, Saul engages a medium to bring up Samuel from the dead and seek his advice. **28.3** That *Samuel had died* was reported in 25.1. The *mediums and the wizards* are practitioners of black magic through whom the dead speak to the living (2 Kings 23.24); their craft was prohibited by priestly law (Lev 19.31; 20.6, 27). **28.4** *Shunem* was a town on the southern slope of the Hill of Moreh, which stood opposite Mount *Gilboa* in the Valley of Jezreel (see 29.1). **28.6** Saul is now estranged from the Lord, and the standard methods of divination are un-

not by dreams, or by Urim, or by prophets. 7 Then Saul said to his servants, "Seek out for me a woman who is a medium, so that I may go to her and inquire of her." His servants said to him, "There is a medium at Endor."

8 So Saul disguised himself and put on other clothes and went there, he and two men with him. They came to the woman by night. And he said, "Consult a spirit for me, and bring up for me the one whom I name to you." 9 The woman said to him, "Surely you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off the mediums and the wizards from the land. Why then are you laying a snare for my life to bring about my death?" 10 But Saul swore to her by the LORD, "As the LORD lives, no punishment shall come upon you for this thing." 11 Then the woman said, "Whom shall I bring up for you?" He answered, "Bring up Samuel for me." 12 When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice; and the woman said to Saul, "Why have you deceived me? You are Saul!" 13 The king said to her, "Have no fear; what do you see?" The woman said to Saul, "I see a divine being[l] coming up out of the ground." 14 He said to her, "What is his appearance?" She said, "An old man is coming up; he is wrapped in a robe." So Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground, and did obeisance.

15 Then Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?" Saul answered, "I am in great distress, for the Philistines are warring against me, and God has turned away from me and answers me no more, either by prophets or by dreams; so I have summoned you to tell me what I should do." 16 Samuel said, "Why then do you ask me, since the LORD has turned from you and become your enemy? 17 The LORD has done to you just as he spoke by me; for the LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hand, and given it to your neighbor, David. 18 Because you did not obey the voice of the LORD, and did not carry out his fierce wrath against Amalek, therefore the LORD has done this thing to you today. 19 Moreover the LORD will give Israel along with you into the hands of the Philistines; and tomorrow you and your sons shall be with me; the LORD will also give the army of Israel into the hands of the Philistines."

20 Immediately Saul fell full length on the ground, filled with fear because of the words of Samuel; and there was no strength in him, for he had eaten nothing all day and all night. 21 The woman came to Saul, and when she saw that he was terrified, she said to him, "Your servant has listened to you; I have taken my life in my hand, and have listened to what you have said to me. 22 Now therefore, you also listen to your servant; let me set a morsel of bread before you. Eat, that you may have strength when you go on your way." 23 He refused, and said, "I will not eat." But his servants, together with the woman, urged him; and he listened to their words. So he got up from the ground and sat on the bed. 24 Now the woman had a fatted calf in the house. She quickly slaughtered it, and she took flour, kneaded it, and baked unleavened cakes. 25 She put them before Saul and his servants, and they ate. Then they rose and went away that night.

l Or *a god*; or *gods*

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available to him; for *Urim*, divinatory lots, see notes on 14.3; 14.41. **28.7** In his frustration Saul seeks out *a medium*, whose activities he has personally prohibited (v. 3). *Endor* was a town of the tribe of Manasseh (Josh 17.11) located a few miles northeast of the Philistine camp at Shunem on the northern slope of the Hill of Moreh (see v. 4). **28.14** The woman's description of *An old man . . . wrapped in a robe*, Samuel's characteristic garment (see 15.27), is enough for Saul to recognize Samuel. **28.15** The verb rendered *disturbed* here refers specifically to the interruption of the rest of the dead (cf. "Sheol beneath is stirred up" in Isa 14.9); it occurs in ancient tomb inscriptions as a description of the activity of graverobbers. **28.17–18** Samuel is alluding to the story of the rejection of Saul's kingship in 15.10–35. The statement that *the LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hand, and given it to your neighbor* is a direct reference to 15.28; for the Lord's *fierce wrath against Amalek*, see ch. 15 in general. **28.20** The reason Saul *had eaten nothing all day and all night* was probably that he had fasted to purify himself ritually in preparation for the evocation of the ghost of Samuel. **28.24** The familiar NT image of the *fatted calf* (see Lk 15.23) appears elsewhere in the OT only as a metaphor, in Jer. 46.21; Mal 4.2 ("calves from the stall").

The Philistines Dismiss David

29 Now the Philistines gathered all
their forces at Aphek, while the
Israelites were encamped by the fountain
that is in Jezreel. 2 As the lords of the Philistines were passing on by hundreds and
by thousands, and David and his men
were passing on in the rear with Achish,
3 the commanders of the Philistines said,
"What are these Hebrews doing here?"
Achish said to the commanders of the
Philistines, "Is this not David, the servant
of King Saul of Israel, who has been with
me now for days and years? Since he deserted to me I have found no fault in him
to this day." 4 But the commanders of the
Philistines were angry with him; and the
commanders of the Philistines said to him,
"Send the man back, so that he may return to the place that you have assigned to
him; he shall not go down with us to battle, or else he may become an adversary to
us in the battle. For how could this fellow
reconcile himself to his lord? Would it not
be with the heads of the men here? 5 Is
this not David, of whom they sing to one
another in dances,

'Saul has killed his thousands,
and David his ten thousands'?"

6 Then Achish called David and said
to him, "As the LORD lives, you have been
honest, and to me it seems right that you
should march out and in with me in the
campaign; for I have found nothing
wrong in you from the day of your coming to me until today. Nevertheless the
lords do not approve of you. 7 So go back
now; and go peaceably; do nothing to displease the lords of the Philistines." 8 David
said to Achish, "But what have I done?
What have you found in your servant
from the day I entered your service until
now, that I should not go and fight
against the enemies of my lord the king?"
9 Achish replied to David, "I know that
you are as blameless in my sight as an angel of God; nevertheless, the commanders
of the Philistines have said, 'He shall not
go up with us to the battle.' 10 Now then
rise early in the morning, you and the servants of your lord who came with you,
and go to the place that I appointed for
you. As for the evil report, do not take it
to heart, for you have done well before
me.[m] Start early in the morning, and
leave as soon as you have light." 11 So
David set out with his men early in the
morning, to return to the land of the
Philistines. But the Philistines went up to
Jezreel.

David Avenges the Destruction of Ziklag

30 Now when David and his men
came to Ziklag on the third day,
the Amalekites had made a raid on the
Negeb and on Ziklag. They had attacked
Ziklag, burned it down, 2 and taken captive the women and all[n] who were in it,
both small and great; they killed none of
them, but carried them off, and went
their way. 3 When David and his men
came to the city, they found it burned
down, and their wives and sons and
daughters taken captive. 4 Then David

m Gk: Heb lacks *and go to the place . . . done well before me* *n* Gk: Heb lacks *and all*

29.1–11 Although Achish is convinced of his loyalty, the other Philistine lords are suspicious of David and send him home before the impending battle. **29.1** This episode occurs at *Aphek* (see note on 4.1b), far to the south of Shunem, where the Philistines are currently mustering (see 28.4). The town of *Jezreel* was on the northwestern slope of Mount Gilboa (see 28.4), about thirty-five to forty miles northeast of Aphek. **29.3** The Philistine leaders refer to David and his companions not by the political designation Israelites but by the ethnic term *Hebrews* (see 13.3; 14.21). Achish, who has been completely duped by David (see note on 27.8–12), tries to defend his vassal. **29.4** By *the place that you have assigned to him* the Philistine leaders mean Ziklag. **29.5** Cf. 18.7; 21.11. **29.6** Achish swears *As the LORD lives*, as if he were a worshiper of the God of Israel; perhaps this is a courteous gesture to David. **29.8** Although Achish hears only the surface meaning of David's wish to *fight against the enemies of my lord the king*, i.e., the enemies of Achish, readers, who know David's true loyalties, understand that what he really wants is to fight against the enemies of Saul. **29.9** Elsewhere David is given credit for having the juridical insight of *an angel of God* (see 2 Sam 14.17; 19.27), but the Septuagint is probably correct in omitting the phrase in this passage.

30.1–31 David defeats a band of brigands who have plundered his stronghold in his absence and distributes the booty he takes from them to the towns of Judah. **30.1** The *Amalekites*, ancient enemies of Israel (see note on 15.2) against whom David has recently gone raiding (see 27.8), have

and the people who were with him raised
their voices and wept, until they had no
more strength to weep. 5 David's two wives
also had been taken captive, Ahinoam of
Jezreel, and Abigail the widow of Nabal of
Carmel. 6 David was in great danger; for
the people spoke of stoning him, because
all the people were bitter in spirit for their
sons and daughters. But David strength-
ened himself in the LORD his God.

7 David said to the priest Abiathar son
of Ahimelech, "Bring me the ephod." So
Abiathar brought the ephod to David.
8 David inquired of the LORD, "Shall I
pursue this band? Shall I overtake them?"
He answered him, "Pursue; for you shall
surely overtake and shall surely rescue."
9 So David set out, he and the six hundred
men who were with him. They came to
the Wadi Besor, where those stayed who
were left behind. 10 But David went on
with the pursuit, he and four hundred
men; two hundred stayed behind, too ex-
hausted to cross the Wadi Besor.

11 In the open country they found an
Egyptian, and brought him to David.
They gave him bread and he ate; they
gave him water to drink; 12 they also gave
him a piece of fig cake and two clusters of
raisins. When he had eaten, his spirit re-
vived; for he had not eaten bread or
drunk water for three days and three
nights. 13 Then David said to him, "To
whom do you belong? Where are you
from?" He said, "I am a young man of
Egypt, servant to an Amalekite. My mas-
ter left me behind because I fell sick three
days ago. 14 We had made a raid on the
Negeb of the Cherethites and on that
which belongs to Judah and on the Negeb
of Caleb; and we burned Ziklag down."
15 David said to him, "Will you take me
down to this raiding party?" He said,
"Swear to me by God that you will not kill
me, or hand me over to my master, and I
will take you down to them."

16 When he had taken him down,
they were spread out all over the ground,
eating and drinking and dancing, because
of the great amount of spoil they had
taken from the land of the Philistines and
from the land of Judah. 17 David attacked
them from twilight until the evening of
the next day. Not one of them escaped,
except four hundred young men, who
mounted camels and fled. 18 David recov-
ered all that the Amalekites had taken;
and David rescued his two wives. 19 Noth-
ing was missing, whether small or great,
sons or daughters, spoil or anything that
had been taken; David brought back ev-
erything. 20 David also captured all the
flocks and herds, which were driven
ahead of the other cattle; people said,
"This is David's spoil."

21 Then David came to the two hun-
dred men who had been too exhausted to
follow David, and who had been left at the
Wadi Besor. They went out to meet David
and to meet the people who were with
him. When David drew near to the people
he saluted them. 22 Then all the corrupt
and worthless fellows among the men who
had gone with David said, "Because they
did not go with us, we will not give them
any of the spoil that we have recovered,
except that each man may take his wife
and children, and leave." 23 But David
said, "You shall not do so, my brothers,
with what the LORD has given us; he has
preserved us and handed over to us the
raiding party that attacked us. 24 Who
would listen to you in this matter? For the
share of the one who goes down into the
battle shall be the same as the share of
the one who stays by the baggage; they
shall share alike." 25 From that day forward
he made it a statute and an ordinance for
Israel; it continues to the present day.

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used the opportunity of David's absence to attack *Ziklag*. **30.5** For *David's two wives*, see 25.42–43; 27.3. **30.7** As he did after the liberation of Keilah (see 23.6–12) David calls upon *Abiathar* (see 22.20–23) to seek an oracle using *the ephod*, which here, as in 23.6, is an instrument of divination. **30.9** Although *the Wadi Besor* is not mentioned outside of this episode, it must have been one of the prominent wadi systems that drain the Negeb into the Mediterranean. **30.14** On the *Negeb* and its districts, see note on 27.10. The *Cherethites* probably traced their ancestry to Crete or Caphtor, also the place of origin of the Philistines (see Jer 47.4; Am 9.7), and the two peoples are closely associated in the Bible (see Ezek 25.16; Zeph 2.5); when he is king, David's bodyguard will include staunchly loyal Cherethites (see 2 Sam 8.18). The *Negeb of Caleb* must have been a subdistrict of the Negeb of the Kenizzites (see note on 27.10). **30.17** Rather than *twilight* the word probably has its less common meaning here of "dawn," as in Job 7.4; Ps 119.147; and postbiblical Hebrew. **30.21–25** The policy David establishes here for the distribution of booty is reminiscent of

26 When David came to Ziklag, he
sent part of the spoil to his friends, the
elders of Judah, saying, "Here is a present
for you from the spoil of the enemies of
the LORD"; 27 it was for those in Bethel, in
Ramoth of the Negeb, in Jattir, 28 in
Aroer, in Siphmoth, in Eshtemoa, 29 in
Racal, in the towns of the Jerahmeelites,
in the towns of the Kenites, 30 in Hormah,
in Bor-ashan, in Athach, 31 in Hebron, all
the places where David and his men had
roamed.

The Death of Saul and His Sons

31 Now the Philistines fought
against Israel; and the men of Is-
rael fled before the Philistines, and many
fell[o] on Mount Gilboa. 2 The Philistines
overtook Saul and his sons; and the Phili-
stines killed Jonathan and Abinadab and
Malchishua, the sons of Saul. 3 The battle
pressed hard upon Saul; the archers
found him, and he was badly wounded by
them. 4 Then Saul said to his armor-
bearer, "Draw your sword and thrust me
through with it, so that these uncircum-
cised may not come and thrust me
through, and make sport of me." But his
armor-bearer was unwilling; for he was
terrified. So Saul took his own sword and
fell upon it. 5 When his armor-bearer saw
that Saul was dead, he also fell upon his
sword and died with him. 6 So Saul and
his three sons and his armor-bearer and
all his men died together on the same day.
7 When the men of Israel who were on the
other side of the valley and those beyond
the Jordan saw that the men of Israel had
fled and that Saul and his sons were dead,
they forsook their towns and fled; and the
Philistines came and occupied them.
8 The next day, when the Philistines
came to strip the dead, they found Saul
and his three sons fallen on Mount Gil-
boa. 9 They cut off his head, stripped off
his armor, and sent messengers through-
out the land of the Philistines to carry the
good news to the houses of their idols and
to the people. 10 They put his armor in

o Heb *and they fell slain*

that in Deut 20.14. **30.26–31** David parcels out *the spoil of the enemies of the LORD* among the towns of Judah. The redistribution of booty is a common way in which a military chieftain earns the loyalty of his followers, and we can see that David is preparing the way for his assumption of the kingship of Judah (see 2 Sam 2.4). **30.27** *Bethel* was not in Judah, and we should follow the Septuagint in reading Beth-zur, a Calebite town in the Judean hills a few miles north of Hebron (see Josh 15.58). The location of *Ramoth of the Negeb,* called Baalath-beer in Josh 19.8, is unknown. *Jattir* was a Levitical city in the Judean hills about twelve miles south-southwest of Hebron (see Josh 15.48; 21.14). **30.28** The Transjordanian city of *Aroer* (see Num 32.34) is less likely to have been intended here than Ararah, a town in the Negeb of Judah about twelve miles southeast of Beer-sheba (see Josh 15.22, where Ararah should be read for Adadah). *Siphmoth* is otherwise unknown. *Eshtemoa* was a Levitical city in the Judean hills about eight miles south of Hebron (see Josh 15.50; 21.14). **30.29** *Racal* is probably a corruption of Carmel, which the Septuagint preserves (see note on 15.12). Though *the Jerahmeelites* may have once been an independent tribe, they were eventually incorporated into Judah (see 1 Chr 2.9, 25–27); the location of their territory is unknown, but it may have been south of Beer-sheba (see 27.10). As in 27.10 *the Kenites* should be corrected to the Kenizzites as found in the Septuagint and, in this case, a manuscript from Qumran (4QSam[a]). **30.30** *Hormah* must have been close to Ziklag (see note on 27.5–6); it, too, was formally claimed by Simeon (Josh 19.4) but included in the list of the cities of Judah (Josh 15.30). *Bor-ashan,* or Ashan, was a Levitical city in the Judean hills a few miles northwest of Beer-sheba (see Josh 15.42; 19.7; 21.16, where Ain should probably be corrected to Ashan). *Athach* should probably be corrected to Ether, which is paired with Ashan in Josh 15.42; 19.7; it was about fifteen miles northwest of Hebron. **30.31** *Hebron* was the principal city of the region, the traditional capital of Judah, where David was first proclaimed king (see 2 Sam 2.4). It was about nineteen miles south-southwest of Jerusalem in the Judean hills.

31.1–13 Saul, Jonathan, and his brothers lose their lives in a battle with the Philistines on Mount Gilboa. **31.1** For *Mount Gilboa,* see note on 28.4. **31.2** For *the sons of Saul,* see note on 14.49. **31.4** The armor-bearer's fear of delivering the coup de grace is probably based on his awareness of Saul's status as the sacrosanct anointed of the Lord (see 24.6; 26.9). **31.7** The Israelites *who were on the other side of the valley* are probably those who lived north of the Valley of Jezreel where the battle occurred, but *those beyond the Jordan* may be a secondary expansion; the parallel account in 1 Chr 10.7 mentions only the Israelites "who were in the valley." **31.10** Saul's armor, like Goliath's (see 21.9–10), is deposited in a temple. *Astarte,* the name of a prominent Canaanite goddess, is used by the biblical writers as a

the temple of Astarte;[p] and they fastened
his body to the wall of Beth-shan. [11] But
when the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead
heard what the Philistines had done to
Saul, [12] all the valiant men set out, trav-
eled all night long, and took the body of
Saul and the bodies of his sons from the
wall of Beth-shan. They came to Jabesh
and burned them there. [13] Then they took
their bones and buried them under the
tamarisk tree in Jabesh, and fasted seven
days.

p Heb plural

generic designation for a goddess (see 7.4), and here it probably refers to the goddess of Beth-shan, whose name was Antit. *Beth-shan* was a major Egyptian and Canaanite fortress that guarded the eastern end of the Valley of Jezreel; it seems now to be under Philistine control. **31.11–13** *Jabesh-gilead* was not far south of Beth-shan on the other side of the Jordan (see 10.27). The people of Jabesh have a long-standing debt to Saul for rescuing them from Nahash the Ammonite (see 10.27–11.15). David will eventually return the bones of Saul and Jonathan to their family tomb in Benjamin (see 2 Sam 21.12–14).

2 SAMUEL

Saul's Death Reported to David

1 After the death of Saul, when David
had returned from defeating the
Amalekites, David remained two days in
Ziklag. 2 On the third day, a man came
from Saul's camp, with his clothes torn
and dirt on his head. When he came to
David, he fell to the ground and did obei-
sance. 3 David said to him, "Where have
you come from?" He said to him, "I have
escaped from the camp of Israel." 4 David
said to him, "How did things go? Tell
me!" He answered, "The army fled from
the battle, but also many of the army fell
and died; and Saul and his son Jonathan
also died." 5 Then David asked the young
man who was reporting to him, "How do
you know that Saul and his son Jonathan
died?" 6 The young man reporting to him
said, "I happened to be on Mount Gilboa;
and there was Saul leaning on his spear,
while the chariots and the horsemen drew
close to him. 7 When he looked behind
him, he saw me, and called to me. I an-
swered, 'Here sir.' 8 And he said to me,
'Who are you?' I answered him, 'I am an
Amalekite.' 9 He said to me, 'Come, stand
over me and kill me; for convulsions have
seized me, and yet my life still lingers.'
10 So I stood over him, and killed him, for
I knew that he could not live after he had
fallen. I took the crown that was on his
head and the armlet that was on his arm,
and I have brought them here to my
lord."

11 Then David took hold of his
clothes and tore them; and all the men
who were with him did the same. 12 They
mourned and wept, and fasted until eve-
ning for Saul and for his son Jonathan,
and for the army of the LORD and for the

[Introductory material to 2 Samuel is contained in the Introduction to 1 Samuel.]

1.1–16 David responds to the news of the death of Saul and Jonathan with genuine sorrow. **1.1** 2 Samuel begins *After the death of Saul* just as Joshua begins "After the death of Moses . . ." and Judges "After the death of Joshua . . ." For the *Amalekites* in general, see note on 1 Sam 15.2; the present reference is to David's punitive raid, described in 1 Sam 30, against a band of Amalekites who had attacked his personal fortress of *Ziklag* (see 1 Sam 27.6). **1.2** An Amalekite (see v. 8) arrives in David's camp *with his clothes torn and dirt on his head*, the conventional gestures of grief (see 1 Sam 4.12; 2 Sam 15.32), but he may be dissembling (cf. Josh 9.3–15). **1.6–10** The Amalekite's account of the death of Saul is quite different from that given in 1 Sam 31.3–5. The simplest explanation of the contradiction is that the Amalekite is lying on the very false assumption that David would reward him for having taken Saul's life. Readers are probably to understand that the Amalekite came upon the body of Saul, stripped off his crown and armlet, then conceived of the idea that they might be most valuable to him if he brought them to David. **1.6** *Mount Gilboa*, the scene of the fatal battle (see 1 Sam 31.1), stood at the northern limit of the Samarian hills overlooking the Valley of Jezreel. It has been suggested that Saul was *leaning on his spear* in an attempt to commit suicide (cf. 1 Sam 31.4), but it is more likely that he was supporting himself with the spear after receiving mortal wounds. **1.9** The word translated *convulsions* here is obscure; it might refer to giddiness or dizziness. **1.10** The *crown* and *armlet* are royal insignia. The former is more likely to have been a diadem worn on the forehead than a crown; the king received it at the time of his investiture (see 2 Kings 11.12). The armlet is mentioned nowhere else in the Bible (though some would restore it in

house of Israel, because they had fallen by
the sword. 13 David said to the young man
who had reported to him, "Where do you
come from?" He answered, "I am the son
of a resident alien, an Amalekite." 14 David said to him, "Were you not afraid to
lift your hand to destroy the LORD's
anointed?" 15 Then David called one of
the young men and said, "Come here and
strike him down." So he struck him down
and he died. 16 David said to him, "Your
blood be on your head; for your own
mouth has testified against you, saying, 'I
have killed the LORD's anointed.' "

David's Lament over Saul and Jonathan

17 David intoned this lamentation
over Saul and his son Jonathan. 18 (He ordered that The Song of the Bow[a] be
taught to the people of Judah; it is written
in the Book of Jashar.) He said:

19 Your glory, O Israel, lies slain
upon your high places!
How the mighty have fallen!
20 Tell it not in Gath,
proclaim it not in the streets of
Ashkelon;
or the daughters of the Philistines
will rejoice,
the daughters of the
uncircumcised will exult.

21 You mountains of Gilboa,
let there be no dew or rain
upon you,
nor bounteous fields![b]
For there the shield of the mighty
was defiled,
the shield of Saul, anointed
with oil no more.

22 From the blood of the slain,
from the fat of the mighty,
the bow of Jonathan did not turn
back,
nor the sword of Saul return
empty.

23 Saul and Jonathan, beloved and
lovely!
In life and in death they were
not divided;
they were swifter than eagles,
they were stronger than lions.

24 O daughters of Israel, weep over
Saul,

a Heb *that The Bow* b Meaning of Heb uncertain

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2 Kings 11.12). **1.13–16** The status of *resident alien* means that the Amalekite was a foreigner living legally and permanently in Israel; he was entitled to protection and most of the same privileges as native-born Israelites, but he was also subject to most of the same rules of behavior, including respect for the sanctity of *the LORD's anointed.* David, who has always been scrupulous with regard to this last point where Saul was concerned (see 1 Sam 24.6; 26.9), decides that the Amalekite's own testimony warrants a sentence of death.

1.17–27 This is one of the Bible's earliest poems, and its attribution to David is likely to be authentic. **1.17** *The Song of the Bow* may be the ancient name of David's lament, but it seems unlikely and appears in no ancient manuscripts of the text. The Masoretic Text has simply "a bow," and some have interpreted this to mean that David commanded that the people should be trained in archery. The Septuagint has nothing at all, understanding *the lamentation* of v. 17 to be what David wanted taught to the people. We know of at least two and possibly three poems that were included in the lost *Book of Jashar,* or "Book of the Upright": David's lament, the command to sun and moon to stand still in Josh 10.12–13, and possibly Solomon's verses about the temple of the Lord in 1 Kings 8.12–13, which are assigned to "the Book of Hashir (the Song)" in the Septuagint. **1.19** If this rendering of this difficult passage is correct, Israel's *glory* is Saul; another interpretation is to understand the word to mean "gazelle," an example of the common practice of referring to military commanders with the names of strong male animals. Presumably the *high places* mentioned here are the heights of Gilboa, but the same expression is used in the Qumran *War Scroll* (1QM 12.10) to mean "backs of the slain." *How the mighty have fallen!* (also in vv. 25, 27) is the refrain that unifies this elegant poem. **1.20** *Gath* and *Ashkelon* are two of the principal cities of the Philistines (see note on 1 Sam 5.8). **1.21** The expression rendered *bounteous fields* is an old crux; other interpretations and emendations include "fields of offerings" and "upwellings of the deeps." The translation, like the Hebrew text, is ambiguous as to whether it is Saul or his shield that is *anointed with oil no more.* Although Saul was the anointed of the Lord (see 1 Sam 9.16; 24.6–7; 26.9), it is probably the shield that is meant; a leather shield was rubbed with oil to keep it supple and ready for battle (see Isa 21.5). **1.24** The dried bodies of "kermes" insects produced the

who clothed you with crimson,
in luxury,
who put ornaments of gold on
your apparel.

25 How the mighty have fallen
in the midst of the battle!

Jonathan lies slain upon your
high places.
26 I am distressed for you, my
brother Jonathan;
greatly beloved were you to me;
your love to me was wonderful,
passing the love of women.

27 How the mighty have fallen,
and the weapons of war
perished!

David Anointed King of Judah

2 After this David inquired of the LORD, "Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?" The LORD said to him, "Go up." David said, "To which shall I go up?" He said, "To Hebron." 2 So David went up there, along with his two wives, Ahinoam of Jezreel, and Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel. 3 David brought up the men who were with him, every one with his household; and they settled in the towns of Hebron. 4 Then the people of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah.

When they told David, "It was the people of Jabesh-gilead who buried Saul," 5 David sent messengers to the people of Jabesh-gilead, and said to them, "May you be blessed by the LORD, because you showed this loyalty to Saul your lord, and buried him! 6 Now may the LORD show steadfast love and faithfulness to you! And I too will reward you because you have done this thing. 7 Therefore let your hands be strong, and be valiant; for Saul your lord is dead, and the house of Judah has anointed me king over them."

Ishbaal King of Israel

8 But Abner son of Ner, commander of Saul's army, had taken Ishbaal[c] son of Saul, and brought him over to Mahanaim. 9 He made him king over Gilead, the Ash-

c Gk Compare 1 Chr 8.33; 9.39: Heb *Ish-bosheth*, "man of shame"

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brilliant red dye called *crimson* that was a sign of luxury (see Prov 31.21). **1.25–26** David's lament is most personal when he expresses his grief over his friend Jonathan; on Jonathan's love for David, see 1 Sam 18.1; 20.17.

2.1–7 David's kin, the people of Judah, are the first to embrace him as king. **2.1** *Hebron*. See note on 1 Sam 30.31. **2.2** For David's *two wives*, see 1 Sam 25.42–43; 27.3; 30.5. *Jezreel* and *Carmel* were both towns in the vicinity of Hebron (see notes on 1 Sam 15.12; 25.43). **2.4** The *people of Judah* are probably the same as the elders of Judah in 1 Sam 30.26–31 to whom David distributed the booty from his raid against the Amalekites (cf. 2 Sam 19.11, 14). In the present form of the story, which has been shaped by a prophetic view of kingship (see Introduction), David has already been anointed in private by Samuel. Here, in an early part of the narrative, he is *anointed* by the leading citizens of Judah in a public ceremony. Saul's burial by *the people of Jabesh-gilead* is reported in 1 Sam 31.11–13. **2.5–7** David's message to the people of Jabesh-gilead is an overture to an alliance with one of Saul's principal constituencies; it will lead to conflict with Saul's heir, as the rest of the chapter shows.

2.8–11 Abner sets up a rump government in Transjordan with Saul's son Ishbaal as king. **2.8** *Abner*, Saul's uncle and chief military officer (see 1 Sam 14.50–51), installs Saul's only surviving son on the throne of Israel. *Ishbaal*'s name in Hebrew means "Man of Baal," but this does not mean that the family of Saul worshiped the god Baal (Jonathan's name contains the name of the God of Israel). The word *baal* meant "lord" or "master" and was an acceptable way of referring to the God of Israel in Saul's day. In later times the strong association of the word with the Canaanite god Baal caused it to be avoided. Scribes who hated the word *baal* often replaced it with *bosheth*, "shame," so that Saul's heir seems to be called "Man of Shame" (see text note *c*). *Mahanaim* was a town in the Transjordanian tribal territory of Gad (see Josh 13.26, 30); its exact location is uncertain. Abner probably moved the government of Israel to Transjordan because of Philistine domination of the central hills in the aftermath of the battle of Mount Gilboa; it was too dangerous to place a son of Saul on the throne in Saul's capital of Gibeah. **2.9** *Gilead*, a common designation for Transjordanian Israel in general, is here used in its stricter sense as the territory of the tribes of Gad and Reuben, which Saul ruled as a result of his victory over Nahash the Ammonite (see 1 Sam 10.27–11.15). The *Ashurites* of the Masoretic Text ought to be the Assyrians, who are wholly out of place here. Some emend the text to

urites, Jezreel, Ephraim, Benjamin, and over all Israel. 10 Ishbaal,[d] Saul's son, was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and he reigned two years. But the house of Judah followed David. 11 The time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months.

The Battle of Gibeon

12 Abner son of Ner, and the servants of Ishbaal[d] son of Saul, went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon. 13 Joab son of Zeruiah, and the servants of David, went out and met them at the pool of Gibeon. One group sat on one side of the pool, while the other sat on the other side of the pool. 14 Abner said to Joab, "Let the young men come forward and have a contest before us." Joab said, "Let them come forward." 15 So they came forward and were counted as they passed by, twelve for Benjamin and Ishbaal[d] son of Saul, and twelve of the servants of David. 16 Each grasped his opponent by the head, and thrust his sword in his opponent's side; so they fell down together. Therefore that place was called Helkath-hazzurim,[e] which is at Gibeon. 17 The battle was very fierce that day; and Abner and the men of Israel were beaten by the servants of David.

18 The three sons of Zeruiah were there, Joab, Abishai, and Asahel. Now Asahel was as swift of foot as a wild gazelle. 19 Asahel pursued Abner, turning neither to the right nor to the left as he followed him. 20 Then Abner looked back and said, "Is it you, Asahel?" He answered, "Yes, it is." 21 Abner said to him, "Turn to your right or to your left, and seize one of the young men, and take his spoil." But Asahel would not turn away from following him. 22 Abner said again to Asahel, "Turn away from following me; why should I strike you to the ground? How then could I show my face to your brother Joab?" 23 But he refused to turn away. So Abner struck him in the stomach with the butt of his spear, so that the spear came out at his back. He fell there, and died where he lay. And all those who came to the place where Asahel had fallen and died, stood still.

24 But Joab and Abishai pursued Abner. As the sun was going down they came to the hill of Ammah, which lies before Giah on the way to the wilderness of Gibeon. 25 The Benjaminites rallied around Abner and formed a single band; they took their stand on the top of a hill. 26 Then Abner called to Joab, "Is the

d Gk Compare 1 Chr 8.33; 9.39: Heb *Ish-bosheth*, "man of shame" *e* That is *Field of Sword-edges*

"Asherites," i.e., people of the tribe of north Galilean tribe of Asher, but they, too, are too far away. The Peshitta and Vulgate reflect "Geshurites," who lived north of Gilead and east of Jezreel, which fits perfectly into the present list. *Jezreel* was the eastern section of the fertile valley that separated the Galilee from the Ephraimite hills. *Ephraim* here probably refers to the Samarian hill country in general, including the hills of both Ephraim and Manasseh. *Benjamin*, located to the south, was the home base of the house of Saul. The expression *all Israel* (cf. 3.12, 21) is probably intended as a summary reference to the territories just listed. **2.10–11** The chronological notices that conclude this section derive from the hand of the Deuteronomistic historian (see Introduction; note on 1 Sam 13.1).

2.12–32 The conflict between David's army and that of Ishbaal erupts in open hostility. **2.12** Abner's expedition should probably be interpreted as a show of force in response to David's overture to the people of Jabesh-gilead. *Gibeon* was about six miles north-northwest of Jerusalem. **2.13** *Joab*, the most prominent of the three sons of David's sister Zeruiah (see 1 Sam 26.6), was the commander of David's army (see 8.16; 20.23). The *pool of Gibeon* was a well-known landmark (see Jer 41.12); it has been identified with the Iron Age water system of the city, a very deep and wide circular cavity carved out of the rock on the northern part of the site. **2.14–16** This event is sometimes interpreted as a sporting contest that went out of control, but the term translated *young men* can be used to refer to seasoned soldiers, and the engagement is more likely to be a battle by representatives similar to the famous contest between the Roman Horatii and Curiatii. Apparently, however, everyone on both sides was slain, so that the contest was inconclusive and a general battle ensued. **2.18** For *Abishai*, see 1 Sam 26.6. *Asahel*, the youngest of the sons of Zeruiah and a member of David's elite corps of the Thirty (see 2 Sam 23.24), shares the fierce impetuosity of his older brothers. *Wild gazelle*. Cf. 1 Chr 12.8. **2.24** *Ammah* probably means "water channel" and *Giah* probably means "spring," so that the pursuit that began at one water system (v. 13) seems to end at another; the general direction is to the east toward *the wilderness of Gibeon*.

sword to keep devouring forever? Do you
not know that the end will be bitter? How
long will it be before you order your peo-
ple to turn from the pursuit of their kins-
men?" 27 Joab said, "As God lives, if you
had not spoken, the people would have
continued to pursue their kinsmen, not
stopping until morning." 28 Joab sounded
the trumpet and all the people stopped;
they no longer pursued Israel or engaged
in battle any further.

29 Abner and his men traveled all that
night through the Arabah; they crossed
the Jordan, and, marching the whole
forenoon,[f] they came to Mahanaim.
30 Joab returned from the pursuit of Ab-
ner; and when he had gathered all the
people together, there were missing of
David's servants nineteen men besides As-
ahel. 31 But the servants of David had
killed of Benjamin three hundred sixty of
Abner's men. 32 They took up Asahel and
buried him in the tomb of his father,
which was at Bethlehem. Joab and his
men marched all night, and the day broke
upon them at Hebron.

The Sons of David

3 There was a long war between the
house of Saul and the house of Da-
vid; David grew stronger and stronger,
while the house of Saul became weaker
and weaker.

2 Sons were born to David at Hebron:
his firstborn was Amnon, of Ahinoam of
Jezreel; 3 his second, Chileab, of Abigail
the widow of Nabal of Carmel; the third,
Absalom son of Maacah, daughter of
King Talmai of Geshur; 4 the fourth, Ad-
onijah son of Haggith; the fifth, Shepha-
tiah son of Abital; 5 and the sixth,
Ithream, of David's wife Eglah. These
were born to David in Hebron.

The Death of Abner

6 While there was war between the
house of Saul and the house of David, Ab-
ner was making himself strong in the
house of Saul. 7 Now Saul had a concu-
bine whose name was Rizpah daughter of
Aiah. And Ishbaal[g] said to Abner, "Why
have you gone in to my father's concu-
bine?" 8 The words of Ishbaal[h] made Ab-
ner very angry; he said, "Am I a dog's
head for Judah? Today I keep showing
loyalty to the house of your father Saul, to
his brothers, and to his friends, and have
not given you into the hand of David; and
yet you charge me now with a crime con-
cerning this woman. 9 So may God do to
Abner and so may he add to it! For just
what the LORD has sworn to David, that
will I accomplish for him, 10 to transfer

f Meaning of Heb uncertain *g* Heb *And he*
h Gk Compare 1 Chr 8.33; 9.39: Heb *Ish-bosheth*, "man of shame"

2.29 Abner's troops return by marching northwest through *the Arabah* or rift valley south of the Sea of Galilee.

3.1–5 The story is interrupted by a list of the sons of David who were born while he was living in Hebron. **3.2** For the story of *Amnon*, David's ill-fated firstborn, see ch. 13; for Amnon's mother, Ahinoam, see 1 Sam 25.43. **3.3** David's second son is called *Chileab* in the Masoretic Text, but the reading is probably incorrect; it should be corrected to "Daluiah" with the Septuagint and a scroll from Qumran (4QSam[a]; cf. "Daniel" in 1 Chr 3.1). Whatever his name was, he does not figure in the story elsewhere; for his mother, *Abigail*, and her first husband *Nabal*, see 1 Sam 25.2–43. For the story of *Absalom*, see chs. 13–19; in 13.37 he will seek refuge in the Transjordanian kingdom of *Geshur* (see 2.9) with his grandfather *Talmai*. **3.4–5** For the story of *Adonijah*, see 1 Kings 1–2; nothing else is known of his mother, *Haggith*. *Shephatiah* and *Ithream* are mentioned only here and in a similar list in 1 Chr 3.3.

3.6–39 After attempting to reach an agreement with David, Abner is slain by Joab for personal reasons. **3.6** This verse repeats the essence of v. 1 after the interruption of the list of David's sons, adding now the news of *Abner*'s increasing power. **3.7** *Rizpah daughter of Aiah* plays an important role in the grim story in 21.1–14, where we are told that she had borne two sons to Saul. This gave her considerable status, despite the fact that she was only *a concubine*, a slave woman attached to the house of Saul, so that Ishbaal's sensitivity about her relationship with Abner is understandable. If Abner has made a claim on Saul's harem, as Ishbaal charges, he is only a step away from seizing the throne (see 16.20–22; 1 Kings 2.13–25). **3.8** Dogs are often mentioned in expressions of self-abasement (see 9.8), and by using the expression *a dog's head* Abner may be euphemistically suggesting that he is being treated like a dog's rear end. It has also been suggested that the expression refers to the dog-faced baboon, so that he may be claiming that he is being treated like an ape. **3.9–10** These two verses, in which Abner justifies his actions in terms that reflect the editorial viewpoint of the Deuteronomistic historian (see Introduction), are

the kingdom from the house of Saul, and
set up the throne of David over Israel and
over Judah, from Dan to Beer-sheba."
11 And Ishbaal[i] could not answer Abner
another word, because he feared him.
12 Abner sent messengers to David at
Hebron,[j] saying, "To whom does the
land belong? Make your covenant with
me, and I will give you my support to
bring all Israel over to you." 13 He said,
"Good; I will make a covenant with you.
But one thing I require of you: you shall
never appear in my presence unless you
bring Saul's daughter Michal when you
come to see me." 14 Then David sent mes-
sengers to Saul's son Ishbaal,[k] saying,
"Give me my wife Michal, to whom I be-
came engaged at the price of one hun-
dred foreskins of the Philistines."
15 Ishbaal[k] sent and took her from her
husband Paltiel the son of Laish. 16 But
her husband went with her, weeping as he
walked behind her all the way to Bahu-
rim. Then Abner said to him, "Go back
home!" So he went back.
17 Abner sent word to the elders of
Israel, saying, "For some time past you
have been seeking David as king over you.
18 Now then bring it about; for the LORD
has promised David: Through my servant
David I will save my people Israel from
the hand of the Philistines, and from all
their enemies." 19 Abner also spoke di-
rectly to the Benjaminites; then Abner
went to tell David at Hebron all that Israel
and the whole house of Benjamin were
ready to do.
20 When Abner came with twenty
men to David at Hebron, David made a
feast for Abner and the men who were
with him. 21 Abner said to David, "Let me
go and rally all Israel to my lord the king,
in order that they may make a covenant
with you, and that you may reign over all
that your heart desires." So David dis-
missed Abner, and he went away in peace.
22 Just then the servants of David ar-
rived with Joab from a raid, bringing
much spoil with them. But Abner was not
with David at Hebron, for David[l] had
dismissed him, and he had gone away in
peace. 23 When Joab and all the army that
was with him came, it was told Joab, "Ab-
ner son of Ner came to the king, and he
has dismissed him, and he has gone away
in peace." 24 Then Joab went to the king
and said, "What have you done? Abner
came to you; why did you dismiss him, so
that he got away? 25 You know that Abner
son of Ner came to deceive you, and to
learn your comings and goings and to
learn all that you are doing."
26 When Joab came out from David's
presence, he sent messengers after Abner,

i Heb *And he* *j* Gk: Heb *where he was*
k Heb *Ish-bosheth* *l* Heb *he*

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probably a secondary addition to the older story. The expression *from Dan to Beer-sheba* is a conventional way of describing the totality of ancient Israel, from the city of Dan on the southern slope of Mount Hermon to Beer-sheba, about twenty-three miles southwest of Hebron. **3.12** Having fallen out with Ishbaal, Abner now offers to swing his support to David. **3.13** David agrees, on the condition that Abner return *Saul's daughter Michal* to David; their marriage (see 1 Sam 18.20–28), which Saul annulled (1 Sam 25.44) after Michal helped David escape from Saul (1 Sam 19.8–17), provided David with a claim on the throne of Israel. **3.14** By citing the bride-*price of one hundred foreskins of the Philistines* (see 1 Sam 18.25, 27) David is stating a legal claim to Michal. **3.15** For *Paltiel*, see note on 1 Sam 25.44. **3.16** *Bahurim* was a Benjaminite town just north of Jerusalem on the main road connecting Israel and Judah; it was the home of Shimei, David's nemesis at the time of Absalom's revolt (see 16.5; 19.16; 1 Kings 2.8), and Azmaveth, a member of David's elite corps of the Thirty (23.31). **3.17** We have not been told explicitly that the Israelite leaders wanted David as their king, but it has been implicit in the references to their loyalty to him and his military leadership (see 1 Sam 18.16). **3.18** The second part of this verse probably stems from the hand of the Deuteronomistic historian (see Introduction); it looks forward to the Lord's dynastic promise to David in ch. 7, in which the new king is also referred to as *my servant David* (vv. 5, 8; cf. v. 26), and to the synopsis in ch. 8 of his victories over the Philistines (8.1; cf. 5.17–25; 21.15–22; 23.8–17) and Israel's other enemies. **3.19** The narrator reminds the *Benjaminites* in his audience, who may have been suspicious of David's complicity in Abner's assassination, that Abner was negotiating on David's behalf just before his death. **3.21** Here and at the end of the next two verses the narrator stresses that Abner left David *in peace*. **3.25** Joab tries to convince David that Abner came to Jerusalem as a spy to discover his military plans or *comings and goings* (see, e.g., 1 Sam 18.13, 16; 29.6). **3.26** Abner traveled two or three miles north from Hebron, where *the cistern of Sirah* was located, before being summoned back by Joab. Again, the narrator insists that

and they brought him back from the cistern of Sirah; but David did not know
about it. 27 When Abner returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gateway
to speak with him privately, and there he
stabbed him in the stomach. So he died
for shedding[m] the blood of Asahel,
Joab's[n] brother. 28 Afterward, when David heard of it, he said, "I and my kingdom are forever guiltless before the LORD
for the blood of Abner son of Ner. 29 May
the guilt[o] fall on the head of Joab, and on
all his father's house; and may the house
of Joab never be without one who has a
discharge, or who is leprous,[p] or who
holds a spindle, or who falls by the sword,
or who lacks food!" 30 So Joab and his
brother Abishai murdered Abner because
he had killed their brother Asahel in the
battle at Gibeon.

31 Then David said to Joab and to all
the people who were with him, "Tear
your clothes, and put on sackcloth, and
mourn over Abner." And King David followed the bier. 32 They buried Abner at
Hebron. The king lifted up his voice and
wept at the grave of Abner, and all the
people wept. 33 The king lamented for
Abner, saying,

"Should Abner die as a fool dies?
34 Your hands were not bound,
your feet were not fettered;
as one falls before the wicked
you have fallen."

And all the people wept over him again.
35 Then all the people came to persuade
David to eat something while it was still
day; but David swore, saying, "So may
God do to me, and more, if I taste bread
or anything else before the sun goes
down!" 36 All the people took notice of it,
and it pleased them; just as everything the
king did pleased all the people. 37 So all
the people and all Israel understood that
day that the king had no part in the killing
of Abner son of Ner. 38 And the king said
to his servants, "Do you not know that a
prince and a great man has fallen this day
in Israel? 39 Today I am powerless, even
though anointed king; these men, the
sons of Zeruiah, are too violent for me.
The LORD pay back the one who does
wickedly in accordance with his
wickedness!"

Ishbaal Assassinated

4 When Saul's son Ishbaal[q] heard that
Abner had died at Hebron, his cour-
age failed, and all Israel was dismayed.
2 Saul's son had two captains of raiding
bands; the name of the one was Baanah,
and the name of the other Rechab. They
were sons of Rimmon a Benjaminite from
Beeroth—for Beeroth is considered to be-

m Heb lacks *shedding* *n* Heb *his* *o* Heb *May it* *p* A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain *q* Heb lacks *Ishbaal*

David did not know about it. **3.27** Joab kills Abner to avenge *the blood of Asahel* (see 2.17–28). **3.28–29** These verses show expansion by a Deuteronomistic editor (see Introduction), who was concerned not only about David's guilt but also that of his *kingdom* or dynasty (cf. 7.12, 16). The oath against Joab anticipates the language of Solomon when he condemns Joab to death in 1 Kings 2.31–33. If *holds a spindle* is the correct translation, the meaning must be "a man who holds the distaff," i.e., an effeminate male; but another possible rendering is "clings to a crutch." **3.30** For *Abishai*, see 2.18; 1 Sam 26.6. The statement that he, too, *murdered Abner* contradicts v. 27, which indicates that Joab did it *privately*, but the original text, preserved by the Septuagint and a scroll from Qumran (4QSam[a]), read "Joab and his brother Abishai had been setting an ambush for Abner" (cf. Prov 1.11, 18). **3.32** Though a Benjaminite, Abner, like Ishbaal (4.12), is buried at *Hebron*. **3.33** The Hebrew term rendered *fool* in English Bibles refers to someone who commits a serious breach of society's norms (see 13.13; 1 Sam 25.3); David's point is that Abner is *a prince and a great man* (v. 38) and should not have suffered the ignominious death of an outcast lacking the protection of society. **3.36–37** The narrator stresses the popular approval of David's behavior, adding that David's innocence of complicity in the murder was acknowledged by everyone, including not only Judah but *all Israel*, Abner's own kin. **3.39** David says that he cannot control his nephews, *the sons of Zeruiah*, who, though fiercely loyal to him, are consistently ruthless and impetuous, as we have already seen (1 Sam 26.8; 2 Sam 2.18–23). *The LORD pay back . . . wickedness* is lacking in a scroll from Qumran (4QSam[a]); it probably arose as the comment of a pious scribe.

4.1–12 Seeking to gain favor with David, two Benjaminites murder Ishbaal. **4.2** *Beeroth*, four to five miles northwest of Jerusalem, was one of the four Gibeonite cities that survived destruction during the conquest by tricking Joshua into making a treaty with them (see Josh 9, esp. v. 17); it was subsequently assigned to Benjamin by lot

long to Benjamin. 3(Now the people of
Beeroth had fled to Gittaim and are there
as resident aliens to this day).
4 Saul's son Jonathan had a son who
was crippled in his feet. He was five years
old when the news about Saul and Jona-
than came from Jezreel. His nurse picked
him up and fled; and, in her haste to flee,
it happened that he fell and became lame.
His name was Mephibosheth.[r]
5 Now the sons of Rimmon the Bee-
rothite, Rechab and Baanah, set out, and
about the heat of the day they came to the
house of Ishbaal,[s] while he was taking his
noonday rest. 6They came inside the
house as though to take wheat, and they
struck him in the stomach; then Rechab
and his brother Baanah escaped.[t] 7Now
they had come into the house while he
was lying on his couch in his bedchamber;
they attacked him, killed him, and be-
headed him. Then they took his head and
traveled by way of the Arabah all night
long. 8They brought the head of Ish-
baal[s] to David at Hebron and said to the
king, "Here is the head of Ishbaal,[s] son
of Saul, your enemy, who sought your
life; the LORD has avenged my lord the
king this day on Saul and on his
offspring."
9 David answered Rechab and his
brother Baanah, the sons of Rimmon the
Beerothite, "As the LORD lives, who has
redeemed my life out of every adversity,
10when the one who told me, 'See, Saul is
dead,' thought he was bringing good
news, I seized him and killed him at
Ziklag—this was the reward I gave him
for his news. 11How much more then,
when wicked men have killed a righteous
man on his bed in his own house! And
now shall I not require his blood at your
hand, and destroy you from the earth?"
12So David commanded the young men,
and they killed them; they cut off their
hands and feet, and hung their bodies be-
side the pool at Hebron. But the head of
Ishbaal[s] they took and buried in the
tomb of Abner at Hebron.

David Anointed King of All Israel

5 Then all the tribes of Israel came to
David at Hebron, and said, "Look,
we are your bone and flesh. 2For some
time, while Saul was king over us, it was
you who led out Israel and brought it in.
The LORD said to you: It is you who shall
be shepherd of my people Israel, you who
shall be ruler over Israel." 3So all the el-
ders of Israel came to the king at Hebron;
and King David made a covenant with
them at Hebron before the LORD, and
they anointed David king over Israel.
4David was thirty years old when he be-
gan to reign, and he reigned forty years.

r In 1 Chr 8.34 and 9.40, *Merib-baal*
s Heb *Ish-bosheth* t Meaning of Heb of verse 6 uncertain

(Josh 18.25). **4.3** The location of *Gittaim*, Hebrew, "the Double Gath (Winepress)," is unknown; it is mentioned elsewhere only in Neh 11.33. We are not told why the people of Beeroth fled to Gittaim, but it probably had something to do with Saul's hostility toward the Gibeonites (see 21.2). *Resident aliens*. See note on 1.13–16. **4.4** The flow of the narrative is interrupted for the introduction of *Mephibosheth*. The name was originally Mephibaal ("Out of the Mouth of the Lord") before the substitution of *bosheth*, "shame," for *baal*, "lord, Baal" (see note on 2.8). The name is confused in the biblical text with another similar name, Merib-baal ("The Lord is Advocate"); Mephibaal was probably the name of a son of Saul by his concubine Rizpah (see 21.8), while Merib-baal was the name of Jonathan's crippled son (see 1 Chr 8.34; 9.40). **4.7** As in 2.29, the journey to Mahanaim, Ishbaal's capital (see 2.8), passes through *the Arabah*. **4.10** David recalls events of 1.2–16. **4.12** For *the tomb of Abner*, see 3.32.

5.1–5 David becomes king a second time, now of the northern tribes. **5.1–2** These two verses, which have a number of verbal parallels with the oracle of Nathan in ch. 7, were inserted by a Deuteronomistic editor in whose time it was natural for the Israelites to describe themselves in relation to David, a Judahite, as *your bone and flesh*; in the older narrative (19.13) David uses the same expression to signify his kinship to the people of Judah in contrast to the people of Israel. David *led out Israel and brought it in*, i.e., he led the army (for the expression, see Num 27.17; 1 Chr 2.11; cf. 1 Sam 18.13, 16; 29.6). For David as Israel's *shepherd*, see 2 Sam 7.7; *ruler* (Hebrew *nagid*) translates the same word as *prince* in 7.8 (cf. note on 1 Sam 9.16). **5.3** A second, older account of David's appointment as king. By making *a covenant* with the Israelite elders David is binding himself to certain obligations in return for fealty. **5.4–5** These chronological notices belong to the Deuteronomistic framework of the narrative (see Introduction; 2.10–11; note on 1 Sam 13.1). Contemporary biblical scholars generally date David's reign to the first half of the tenth century, or approximately 1000–960 B.C.E.

5 At Hebron he reigned over Judah seven
years and six months; and at Jerusalem he
reigned over all Israel and Judah thirty-
three years.

Jerusalem Becomes David's Capital

6 The king and his men marched to
Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the in-
habitants of the land, who said to David,
"You will not come in here, even the blind
and the lame will turn you back"—
thinking, "David cannot come in here."
7 Nevertheless David took the stronghold
of Zion, which is now the city of David.
8 David had said on that day, "Whoever
would strike down the Jebusites, let him
get up the water shaft to attack the lame
and the blind, those whom David hates."[u]
Therefore it is said, "The blind and the
lame shall not come into the house." 9 Da-
vid occupied the stronghold, and named
it the city of David. David built the city all
around from the Millo inward. 10 And Da-
vid became greater and greater, for the
LORD, the God of hosts, was with him.
11 King Hiram of Tyre sent messen-
gers to David, along with cedar trees, and
carpenters and masons who built David a
house. 12 David then perceived that the
LORD had established him king over Is-
rael, and that he had exalted his kingdom
for the sake of his people Israel.
13 In Jerusalem, after he came from
Hebron, David took more concubines and
wives; and more sons and daughters were
born to David. 14 These are the names
of those who were born to him in Jeru-
salem: Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solo-
mon, 15 Ibhar, Elishua, Nepheg, Japhia,
16 Elishama, Eliada, and Eliphelet.

Victories over the Philistines

17 When the Philistines heard that
David had been anointed king over Israel,

u Another reading is *those who hate David*

5.6–16 David's private army successfully besieges the city of the Jebusites. **5.6** In biblical tradition *the Jebusites* were the indigenous inhabitants of Jerusalem whom Joshua failed to drive away (Josh 15.63; Judg 1.21). There have been many attempts to explain the role of *the blind and the lame* in this account. The present translation reflects the interpretation that the Jebusites are taunting David: "We are so much stronger than you that even our blind and lame can keep you out." **5.7** The *stronghold of Zion* was a fortified hilltop on the southeast corner of the later city. In the strict sense, then, *Zion* and *the city of David* refer only to this hill (see 1 Kings 8.1), but both terms were extended to mean the city as a whole. **5.8** At this point in the Chronicler's version of the capture of Jerusalem (1 Chr 11.6) Joab wins the position as commander-in-chief of David's army by leading the attack on the city. The present translation assumes that *the water shaft* was a vertical passage used by the Jebusites to have access to the Gihon, Jerusalem's primary water source, from within the city walls. Another possible meaning is "the windpipe"; if this is correct, David is telling his troops to strike at the windpipe, dealing only fatal blows so as not to leave the city full of maimed people (*the lame and the blind*). The narrator uses the story to explain a rule excluding the lame and blind from *the house*, i.e., the temple (cf. Lev 21.16–23; Deut 23.1). **5.9** *Named.* Ancient Near Eastern conquerors often renamed cities in their own honor. The *Millo*, which in Hebrew seems to mean "the Fill," ought to be an earthwork of some kind, perhaps a building platform created by filling a ravine; Solomon amplified or rebuilt it (1 Kings 9.15, 24; 11.27). **5.10** The old story of David's rise to power (see Introduction) probably ended here, with a final recapitulation of its central motif (see 1 Sam 16.18; 18.14, 28). **5.11** *King Hiram* will later supply Solomon with the skilled workers and materials necessary for the construction of the temple (see 1 Kings 5.1–10); extrabiblical sources indicate that his reign was long and productive. The port of *Tyre* was the chief city of Phoenicia, ancient Lebanon; it was about fifty miles south of Beirut. For millennia, the cedars of Lebanon were prized for use in the building of temples and royal residences; for David's house of *cedar*, see also 7.2. **5.12** The language of this verse anticipates that of the dynastic promise in ch. 7 (see esp. 7.12). **5.13–15** Cf. 3.2–5, where David's sons born in Hebron are listed. The present list names those born in Jerusalem (see also 1 Chr 14.3–4); there is a composite listing in 1 Chr 3.1–9. Of the sons mentioned here, only *Solomon* will play a significant role in the story.

5.17–25 A miscellany detailing David's success in the Philistine wars. **5.17** The *stronghold* to which David retreats is probably not Zion (vv. 7, 9) but Adullam, a Judahite fortress ca. sixteen miles to the southwest where he has sought refuge in the past (see 1 Sam 22.1, 4; 24.22) and where he will be in another encounter with Philistines in the valley of Rephaim (see 2 Sam 23.13, 14).

all the Philistines went up in search of David; but David heard about it and went
down to the stronghold. 18 Now the Philistines had come and spread out in the valley of Rephaim. 19 David inquired of the
LORD, "Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will you give them into my hand?"
The LORD said to David, "Go up; for I will
certainly give the Philistines into your hand." 20 So David came to Baal-perazim,
and David defeated them there. He said,
"The LORD has burst forth against[v] my enemies before me, like a bursting flood."
Therefore that place is called Baal-perazim.[w] 21 The Philistines abandoned
their idols there, and David and his men carried them away.

22 Once again the Philistines came up,
and were spread out in the valley of Rephaim. 23 When David inquired of the
LORD, he said, "You shall not go up; go
around to their rear, and come upon them opposite the balsam trees. 24 When
you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, then be on the
alert; for then the LORD has gone out before you to strike down the army of the
Philistines." 25 David did just as the LORD
had commanded him; and he struck down the Philistines from Geba all the way to Gezer.

David Brings the Ark to Jerusalem

6 David again gathered all the chosen
men of Israel, thirty thousand. 2 David and all the people with him set out
and went from Baale-judah, to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called
by the name of the LORD of hosts who is
enthroned on the cherubim. 3 They carried the ark of God on a new cart, and
brought it out of the house of Abinadab,
which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio,[x]
the sons of Abinadab, were driving the new cart 4 with the ark of God;[y] and
Ahio[x] went in front of the ark. 5 David
and all the house of Israel were dancing before the LORD with all their might, with
songs[z] and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals.

6 When they came to the threshing
floor of Nacon, Uzzah reached out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of
it, for the oxen shook it. 7 The anger of
the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and
God struck him there because he reached out his hand to the ark;[a] and he died
there beside the ark of God. 8 David was

v Heb *paraz* w That is *Lord of Bursting Forth*
x Or *and his brother* y Compare Gk: Heb *and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill with the ark of God* z Q Ms Gk 1 Chr 13.8: Heb *fir trees* a 1 Chr 13.10 Compare Q Ms: Meaning of Heb uncertain

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5.18 The *valley of Rephaim* (see Josh 15.8; 18.16) is usually identified with a plain southwest of Jerusalem. **5.20** *Baal-perazim* ("the lord of Perazim") must have been a sanctuary on or near Mount Perazim (see Isa 28.21); here, its name is playfully traced to David's victory. **5.21** Just as the Philistines carried off the ark after their victory in 1 Sam 4.1–11, David and his men carry away *their idols* (lit. "gods") now. **5.23** The term rendered *balsam trees* is obscure; it might refer to some kind of tree or bush, but it might also be a place-name, "Bachaim." **5.24** The *sound of marching* will indicate that *the LORD has gone out* as the Divine Warrior to fight on David's behalf. **5.25** Most scholars prefer to emend *Geba*, which was northeast of Jerusalem (see 1 Sam 13.3), to Gibeon, which was northwest of the city (see 2.12 above) and therefore more suited to the geography of the present passage. *Gezer* was about fifteen miles west of Gibeon in the direction of the Philistine plain.

6.1–23 David installs the chief symbol of the religion of Israel in his new capital city. **6.1** *Baale-judah* is evidently another name for Kiriath-jearim (cf. Josh 15.9), where the ark has been since its return from Philistia (see 1 Sam 7.2). **6.2** The *ark of God*, the most sacred object in Israelite worship, marks the presence of the Lord. For the epithet *the LORD of hosts who is enthroned on the cherubim*, see note on 1 Sam 4.4. **6.3** The cart in which the ark returned from Philistia was burned in a sacrifice (1 Sam 6.14), and in any case *a new cart* is necessary for ritual purposes; see note at 1 Sam 6.7. For *the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill*, see 1 Sam 6.21; 7.1. *Uzzah and Ahio* were not mentioned in 1 Sam 7.1, where we were told that Abinadab's son Eleazar was consecrated for service with the ark; it is possible that Eleazar and Uzzah are the same person. **6.6–7** Because of its great sacredness the ark is potentially very dangerous (cf. 1 Sam 6.19), and it must be treated with great care. Although Uzzah's purpose in reaching for the ark was probably only to steady it, he was not ritually prepared to touch it, and his lapse proves fatal. **6.8** The meaning of *Perez-uzzah*, as the threshing floor of Nacon was known in the time of the author of this verse, is explained by a reference to the events just

angry because the LORD had burst forth
with an outburst upon Uzzah; so that
place is called Perez-uzzah,[b] to this day.
9 David was afraid of the LORD that day;
he said, "How can the ark of the LORD
come into my care?" 10 So David was un-
willing to take the ark of the LORD into his
care in the city of David; instead David
took it to the house of Obed-edom the
Gittite. 11 The ark of the LORD remained
in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite
three months; and the LORD blessed
Obed-edom and all his household.

12 It was told King David, "The LORD
has blessed the household of Obed-edom
and all that belongs to him, because of the
ark of God." So David went and brought
up the ark of God from the house of
Obed-edom to the city of David with re-
joicing; 13 and when those who bore the
ark of the LORD had gone six paces, he
sacrificed an ox and a fatling. 14 David
danced before the LORD with all his
might; David was girded with a linen
ephod. 15 So David and all the house of
Israel brought up the ark of the LORD
with shouting, and with the sound of the
trumpet.

16 As the ark of the LORD came into
the city of David, Michal daughter of Saul
looked out of the window, and saw King
David leaping and dancing before the
LORD; and she despised him in her heart.

17 They brought in the ark of the
LORD, and set it in its place, inside the tent
that David had pitched for it; and David
offered burnt offerings and offerings of
well-being before the LORD. 18 When Da-
vid had finished offering the burnt offer-
ings and the offerings of well-being, he
blessed the people in the name of the
LORD of hosts, 19 and distributed food
among all the people, the whole multitude
of Israel, both men and women, to each a
cake of bread, a portion of meat,[c] and
a cake of raisins. Then all the people went
back to their homes.

20 David returned to bless his house-
hold. But Michal the daughter of Saul
came out to meet David, and said, "How
the king of Israel honored himself today,
uncovering himself today before the eyes
of his servants' maids, as any vulgar fellow
might shamelessly uncover himself!"
21 David said to Michal, "It was before the
LORD, who chose me in place of your fa-
ther and all his household, to appoint me
as prince over Israel, the people of the
LORD, that I have danced before the
LORD. 22 I will make myself yet more con-
temptible than this, and I will be abased
in my own eyes; but by the maids of
whom you have spoken, by them I shall
be held in honor." 23 And Michal the
daughter of Saul had no child to the day
of her death.

b That is *Bursting Out Against Uzzah* c Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain

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described. **6.9–10** David becomes fearful of the holy object and temporarily abandons his plan to bring it into the city. *Obed-edom the Gittite* may have been one of the soldiers whose loyalty David won when he served in the army of the king of Gath (see 1 Sam 27) and who followed him when he returned to Israel (see 15.18); because of his association with the ark he had been given a Levitical genealogy by the time of the Chronicler (1 Chr 15.18, 21, 24; 16.5, 38). **6.12–19** The ceremony described in these verses is typical of ancient Near Eastern rituals involving the introduction of the statue of the national god (to which the ark corresponds in Israel's aniconic religion) to a newly built or newly captured royal city. These rites typically involve a ceremonial march in which the god is borne into the city with numerous sacrifices along the way (v. 13) and which ends with the installation of the god in the sanctuary (v. 17) followed by the distribution of food and drink to the populace (v. 19). **6.13** The meaning of this verse may be that for every six paces the ark bearers advance David sacrifices *an ox and a fatling* (i.e., "a fatted ox"); he is progressively sanctifying the city of David so that it will be ritually suitable to house the ark. **6.14** David's ritual dance has a sacerdotal aspect, as indicated by his garment, *a linen ephod* (see 1 Sam 2.18; 22.18). **6.16** For *Michal daughter of Saul*, see 3.13–16; her displeasure is apparently a reaction to David's scant clothing (see v. 20). **6.17** The ark customarily resides in a *tent* (see 7.6), so that David has prepared one for it here. **6.21** This verse, part of which looks ahead to 7.8, may have been expanded by a Deuteronomistic editor (see Introduction). **6.22** David's retort to Michal's accusation is that what seems vulgar behavior to her is actually pious self-humiliation in the presence of the Lord. **6.23** The principal purpose of vv. 20–23 is to explain Michal's childlessness and to show that the blood of the house of Saul was never mixed with that of the house of David.

Nathan's Oracle

7 Now when the king was settled in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, 2 the king said to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent." 3 Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the LORD is with you."

4 But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan: 5 Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the LORD: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? 6 I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. 7 Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders[d] of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?" 8 Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the LORD of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; 9 and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. 10 And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, 11 from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. 12 When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14 I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. When

d Or *any of the tribes*

7.1–17 This passage expresses in prophetic form the royal theology of the Davidic dynasty. **7.2** The *prophet Nathan* has not been mentioned previously; he figures prominently here, in the story of David and Bathsheba (ch. 12), and in the account of the accession of Solomon (1 Kings 1). The contrast David draws between his own *house of cedar* and the *tent* in which the ark is lodged points to 5.11; 6.17; though he does not say so explicitly, David's words clearly imply a wish to build a temple for the Lord. **7.5** The Lord's rhetorical question (*Are you the one . . . ?*) implies that it is not David but someone else who will build the temple, and we soon learn that it will be David's son (v. 13). **7.6–7** In its present, Deuteronomistically edited form (see Introduction), Nathan's oracle merely defers the erection of a temple to the next generation. These two verses, however, reflect the idea that the ark should be housed in a tent, a portable shrine, and seem hostile to a temple under any circumstances; they may represent the core of an older oracle prohibiting rather than postponing the construction of a temple. The phrase *since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt* refers to the exodus, as in 1 Sam 8.8; 2 Kings 21.15, and numerous other passages. The expressions *I have been moving about, Wherever I have moved about* use language that stresses the freedom the Lord has to go where he pleases. For *a house of cedar*, i.e., a temple, see notes on 5.11; 7.2. **7.8** *I took you from the pasture* alludes to 1 Sam 16.11. For the term *prince*, elsewhere translated *ruler*, see note on 1 Sam 9.16. **7.10** The *place* prophesied here is not the promised land, in which Israel is already living, but the place where the Lord chooses to be worshiped (see Deut 12.5, 11, 14, 18, 21, 26), i.e., the temple in Jerusalem. The *evildoers* mentioned here are probably Hophni and Phinehas (see 1 Sam 2.12–26). **7.11** The expression *I will give you rest* connects the present events with the Deuteronomistic theme of the promise of rest from their enemies that the Israelites were given by Moses in Deut 12.9–10; the promise was fulfilled in preliminary form by the conquest of Canaan (see Josh 21.44), but its final realization awaits the erection of the temple (see 1 Kings 8.56). The Lord promises David *a house*, i.e., a dynasty. **7.12** This verse refers to Solomon, as v. 13 makes clear, but also to the Davidic dynasty in general. **7.13** The *house* that David's offspring will build is the house or temple of v. 5; the author of this passage is playing on two meanings of the word *house* in Hebrew—David's *house* or dynasty and the LORD's *house* or temple. The Lord's *name* refers to his presence in the temple in a way that avoids the theological objection that no earthly dwelling could serve as a dwelling for such a great transcendent deity (see esp. 1 Kings 8.27–30). **7.14** In Israel and contemporary societies, the relationship between *father* and *son* was used to express the special relationship between the dynastic deity and the king, who was regarded the adoptive son of the national god; for David as

he commits iniquity, I will punish him
with a rod such as mortals use, with blows
inflicted by human beings. 15 But I will
not take[e] my steadfast love from him, as
I took it from Saul, whom I put away
from before you. 16 Your house and your
kingdom shall be made sure forever be-
fore me;[f] your throne shall be estab-
lished forever. 17 In accordance with all
these words and with all this vision, Na-
than spoke to David.

David's Prayer

18 Then King David went in and sat
before the LORD, and said, "Who am I,
O Lord GOD, and what is my house, that
you have brought me thus far? 19 And yet
this was a small thing in your eyes,
O Lord GOD; you have spoken also of
your servant's house for a great while to
come. May this be instruction for the peo-
ple,[g] O Lord GOD! 20 And what more can
David say to you? For you know your ser-
vant, O Lord GOD! 21 Because of your
promise, and according to your own
heart, you have wrought all this greatness,
so that your servant may know it.
22 Therefore you are great, O LORD God;
for there is no one like you, and there is
no God besides you, according to all that
we have heard with our ears. 23 Who is
like your people, like Israel? Is there an-
other[h] nation on earth whose God went
to redeem it as a people, and to make a
name for himself, doing great and awe-
some things for them,[i] by driving out[j]
before his people nations and their
gods?[k] 24 And you established your peo-
ple Israel for yourself to be your people
forever; and you, O LORD, became their
God. 25 And now, O LORD God, as for the
word that you have spoken concerning
your servant and concerning his house,
confirm it forever; do as you have prom-
ised. 26 Thus your name will be magnified
forever in the saying, 'The LORD of hosts
is God over Israel'; and the house of your
servant David will be established before
you. 27 For you, O LORD of hosts, the God
of Israel, have made this revelation to
your servant, saying, 'I will build you a
house'; therefore your servant has found
courage to pray this prayer to you. 28 And
now, O Lord GOD, you are God, and your
words are true, and you have promised
this good thing to your servant; 29 now
therefore may it please you to bless the
house of your servant, so that it may con-
tinue forever before you; for you, O Lord
GOD, have spoken, and with your blessing
shall the house of your servant be blessed
forever."

David's Wars

8 Some time afterward, David at-
tacked the Philistines and subdued
them; David took Metheg-ammah out of
the hand of the Philistines.

e Gk Syr Vg 1 Chr 17.13: Heb *shall not depart*
f Gk Heb Mss: MT *before you*; Compare 2 Sam 7.26, 29 *g* Meaning of Heb uncertain
h Gk: Heb *one* *i* Heb *you* *j* Gk 1 Chr 17.21: Heb *for your land* *k* Cn: Heb *before your people, whom you redeemed for yourself from Egypt, nations and its gods*

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the son of the Lord, see also Pss 2.7; 89.26–27. **7.15** As the son of the Lord, the David king will be subject to punishment (v. 14) but not rejection; the pledge of adoption is irrevocable. This means that neither David nor one of his successors will become another *Saul* (see 1 Sam 13.13–14; 15.26–28).

7.18–29 David's response to Nathan's oracle. **7.18** We are told that *David went in* (i.e., into the tent, 6.17; 7.2) *and sat before the LORD* (i.e., in front of the ark), but it was not customary to sit during prayer, and the meaning may be that "David remained before the LORD" after others departed. **7.19** On the basis of the Hebrew and Greek texts of 1 Chr 17.17 it is possible to show that the obscure sentence here translated *May this be instruction for the people* may have originally read "and you have shown me the generation to come." **7.21** For the expression *according to your own heart*, see 1 Sam 13.14; the point is that the Lord has acted at his own initiative and not in response to some gesture by David, such as his offer to build a temple (see 7.2). **7.22–26** This passage, which is replete with stereotypical Deuteronomistic language, is regarded by scholars as partly or wholly an expansion of David's prayer by the Deuteronomistic historian (see Introduction), whose purpose was to incorporate the Lord's benefaction toward the house of David into the larger context of his graciousness towards Israel as a whole. **7.23** On the question beginning *Is there another nation*, cf. Deut 4.7, 8, 32–40. **7.24** This verse refers to the covenant between Israel and the Lord (cf. Deut 29.10–13), which in Deuteronomistic thought was linked to the special relationship between the Davidic king and the Lord (see v. 14).

8.1–14 A summary of David's military

2 He also defeated the Moabites and,
making them lie down on the ground,
measured them off with a cord; he mea-
sured two lengths of cord for those who
were to be put to death, and one length[l]
for those who were to be spared. And the
Moabites became servants to David and
brought tribute.
3 David also struck down King Had-
adezer son of Rehob of Zobah, as he went
to restore his monument[m] at the river Eu-
phrates. 4 David took from him one thou-
sand seven hundred horsemen, and
twenty thousand foot soldiers. David
hamstrung all the chariot horses, but left
enough for a hundred chariots. 5 When
the Arameans of Damascus came to help
King Hadadezer of Zobah, David killed
twenty-two thousand men of the Arame-
ans. 6 Then David put garrisons among
the Arameans of Damascus; and the Ara-
means became servants to David and
brought tribute. The LORD gave victory to
David wherever he went. 7 David took the
gold shields that were carried by the ser-
vants of Hadadezer, and brought them to
Jerusalem. 8 From Betah and from Bero-
thai, towns of Hadadezer, King David
took a great amount of bronze.
9 When King Toi of Hamath heard
that David had defeated the whole army
of Hadadezer, 10 Toi sent his son Joram to
King David, to greet him and to congratu-
late him because he had fought against
Hadadezer and defeated him. Now Had-
adezer had often been at war with Toi.
Joram brought with him articles of silver,
gold, and bronze; 11 these also King David
dedicated to the LORD, together with the
silver and gold that he dedicated from all
the nations he subdued, 12 from Edom,
Moab, the Ammonites, the Philistines,
Amalek, and from the spoil of King Had-
adezer son of Rehob of Zobah.
13 David won a name for himself.
When he returned, he killed eighteen
thousand Edomites[n] in the Valley of Salt.
14 He put garrisons in Edom; throughout
all Edom he put garrisons, and all the
Edomites became David's servants. And
the LORD gave victory to David wherever
he went.

l Heb *one full length* *m* Compare 1 Sam 15.12 and 2 Sam 18.18 *n* Gk: Heb *returned from striking down eighteen thousand Arameans*

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achievements. **8.1** *Metheg-ammah,* which in Hebrew seems to mean something like "the Bridle of the Aqueduct" occurs nowhere else; the Septuagint has "the common land," which some translators adopt. **8.2** David seems to have had an amicable relationship with *the Moabites* before he became king (see 1 Sam 22.3–4). *Measuring* lines of prisoners for execution is unique to this passage. **8.3–12** This passage can be read as a sequel to David's Ammonite and Aramean war in ch. 10. **8.3** *Hadadezer.* The patronymic *son of Rehob* suggests that he may have been a native of Beth-rehob, an Aramean state that fought against David (see 10.6); he may have united Beth-rehob and Zobah under his rule just as David did with Judah and Israel. *Zobah,* which was located on the western slope of Mount Hermon, was the leading Aramean state before the rise of Damascus. If Hadadezer had been marching north *to restore his monument* at the Euphrates, he would not have been likely to encounter David, who lived far to the south. It seems more likely that it was David who marched north "to leave his monument" at the Euphrates after his victory at Helam (see 10.15–18). **8.4** Apparently David had use for only a hundred *chariot horses* and hamstrung the rest so that they could not be used against him; but Josh 11.6–9 suggests that David might have been following some kind of ritual requirement. **8.5** *Damascus,* at this point an ally and probably a vassal of Zobah, will rise to preeminence late in the reign of Solomon under the leadership of a survivor of the present conflict (see 1 Kings 11.23–25). **8.7** The *gold shields* were actually ceremonial gold bow cases that were carried by royal officials on formal occasions. **8.8** *Betah* should probably be read "Tebah" as in certain Greek and Syriac manuscripts (cf. "Tibhath" in 1 Chr 18.8); it was in the Bekaa Valley south of modern Homs. *Berothai* (cf. "Berothah" in Ezek 47.16) was also in the Bekaa a few miles south of Baalbek. **8.9** *Hamath,* modern Hama on the middle Orontes, was a Neo-Hittite city-state that bordered on Zobah to the north. **8.10** Surprisingly, Toi's son *Joram* has a name that means "Yahweh is exalted" in Hebrew. His name in 1 Chr 18.10 is Hadoram, which means "(the Aramean god) Hadad is exalted," and many scholars would replace Joram with Hadoram in the present passage; but it has also been suggested that Hadoram's name was changed to Joram as a gesture of fealty to David. **8.13** The *Valley of Salt* probably ran from somewhere in Edom into the Dead Sea; in the Septuagint David's victory there is credited to Abishai son of Zeruiah (see 2.18, 30; 1 Sam 26.6).

David's Officers

15 So David reigned over all Israel;
and David administered justice and equity
to all his people. 16 Joab son of Zeruiah
was over the army; Jehoshaphat son of
Ahilud was recorder; 17 Zadok son of Ahi-
tub and Ahimelech son of Abiathar were
priests; Seraiah was secretary; 18 Benaiah
son of Jehoiada was over[o] the Chereth-
ites and the Pelethites; and David's sons
were priests.

David's Kindness to Mephibosheth

9 David asked, "Is there still anyone
left of the house of Saul to whom I
may show kindness for Jonathan's sake?"
2 Now there was a servant of the house of
Saul whose name was Ziba, and he was
summoned to David. The king said to
him, "Are you Ziba?" And he said, "At
your service!" 3 The king said, "Is there
anyone remaining of the house of Saul to
whom I may show the kindness of God?"
Ziba said to the king, "There remains a
son of Jonathan; he is crippled in his
feet." 4 The king said to him, "Where is
he?" Ziba said to the king, "He is in the
house of Machir son of Ammiel, at Lo-
debar." 5 Then King David sent and
brought him from the house of Machir
son of Ammiel, at Lo-debar. 6 Mephibo-
sheth[p] son of Jonathan son of Saul came
to David, and fell on his face and did obei-
sance. David said, "Mephibosheth!"[p] He
answered, "I am your servant." 7 David
said to him, "Do not be afraid, for I will
show you kindness for the sake of your
father Jonathan; I will restore to you all
the land of your grandfather Saul, and
you yourself shall eat at my table always."
8 He did obeisance and said, "What is your

o Syr Tg Vg 20.23; 1 Chr 18.17: Heb lacks *was over*
p Or *Merib-baal*: See 4.4 note

8.15–18 This is the first of two lists of the members of David's administration. The second is in 20.23–26. **8.16** *Joab* (see 2.13) may have received the command of the army as a result of his role in the siege of Jerusalem (see note on 5.8). *Jehoshaphat* will remain in office under Solomon (see 1 Kings 4.3); as *recorder* he was probably responsible for keeping public records, but the title has been compared to that of an Egyptian officer whose chief responsibility was to communicate between the king and the public. **8.17** Two high priests served simultaneously during David's reign. One was *Zadok*, who survived Solomon's purge and became the ancestor of the dominant priestly family in Jerusalem, as forecast in the oracle in 1 Sam 2.27–36. The other was not *Ahimelech son of Abiathar* but Abiathar son of Ahimelech, as shown clearly by 15.24, 29, 35; 17.15; 19.11; the mistake in the present passage is replicated in 1 Chr 18.16 but not in 2 Sam 20.25. Abiathar, the only survivor of Saul's massacre of the Shilonite priesthood (see 1 Sam 22.6–23), became David's personal priest (1 Sam 22.20–23) and remained at court until he was banished by Solomon for having sided against his succession (see 1 Kings 1.7; 2.26–27). The name *Seraiah* is doubtful; the Septuagint points to Shausha, and the name in 20.25 is Sheva. Like recorder, the title of *secretary* has been compared to that of an Egyptian officer who served as the personal secretary of the king. **8.18** For *Benaiah*, see 23.20–23. The *Cherethites and the Pelethites* were David's personal bodyguard (cf. 23.23); like the Philistines, near whose territory they settled, they were probably Aegean in origin. David probably earned their loyalty while he was in the service of the king of Gath (1 Sam 27–30). If the assertion that *David's sons were priests* is correct (the textual evidence is confused), then we must suppose that membership in the priesthood was not limited to Levites in the time of David.

9.1–13 David finds the surviving heir to the house of Saul and invites him to live at court. If there was any suspicion that David's hospitality was actually a form of house arrest, intended to keep an eye on Mephibosheth, the narrator refutes this by insisting David's only motive was loyalty to the memory of Jonathan (vv. 1, 3, 7). **9.1** Note the connection between this verse and 21.7; the account of the execution of the family of Saul in 21.1–14 probably once stood as an introduction to ch. 9. **9.2** *Ziba*, though a *servant of the house of Saul*, i.e., a ranking officer at Saul's court, becomes a valuable supporter of David (see 16.1–4; cf. 19.24–30). **9.4** Like Ziba, *Machir* will prove helpful to David during the crisis provoked by Absalom's revolt (see 17.27). *Lo-debar* was a town in northern Transjordan (see "the territory of Debir" in Josh 13.26), not far from Mahanaim (see 2.8) and Jabesh-gilead (see 2.4b–7) in the territory settled by a clan of Manasseh also known as Machir (see Num 32.39–40; Deut 3.15); the house of Saul always had its staunchest support in this region as a result of Saul's liberation of Jabesh (see 1 Sam 10.27–11.11). **9.6** *Mephibosheth*. See note on 4.4. **9.7** To eat at the king's *table* was a special privilege (see 1 Kings 2.7; 18.19; 2 Kings 25.27–29; Jer 52.31–33; cf. Ps 23.5). **9.8** For the self-abasing expression *dead dog*, see note on

servant, that you should look upon a dead
dog such as I?"
9 Then the king summoned Saul's ser-
vant Ziba, and said to him, "All that be-
longed to Saul and to all his house I have
given to your master's grandson. 10 You
and your sons and your servants shall till
the land for him, and shall bring in the
produce, so that your master's grandson
may have food to eat; but your master's
grandson Mephibosheth[q] shall always eat
at my table." Now Ziba had fifteen sons
and twenty servants. 11 Then Ziba said to
the king, "According to all that my lord
the king commands his servant, so your
servant will do." Mephibosheth[q] ate at
David's[r] table, like one of the king's sons.
12 Mephibosheth[q] had a young son whose
name was Mica. And all who lived in
Ziba's house became Mephibosheth's[s]
servants. 13 Mephibosheth[q] lived in Jeru-
salem, for he always ate at the king's table.
Now he was lame in both his feet.

The War with the Aramean Coalition

10 Some time afterward, the king of
the Ammonites died, and his son
Hanun succeeded him. 2 David said, "I
will deal loyally with Hanun son of Na-
hash, just as his father dealt loyally with
me." So David sent envoys to console him
concerning his father. When David's en-
voys came into the land of the Ammon-
ites, 3 the princes of the Ammonites said
to their lord Hanun, "Do you really think
that David is honoring your father just be-
cause he has sent messengers with condo-
lences to you? Has not David sent his
envoys to you to search the city, to spy it
out, and to overthrow it?" 4 So Hanun
seized David's envoys, shaved off half the
beard of each, cut off their garments in
the middle at their hips, and sent them
away. 5 When David was told, he sent to
meet them, for the men were greatly
ashamed. The king said, "Remain at Jeri-
cho until your beards have grown, and
then return."
6 When the Ammonites saw that they
had become odious to David, the Ammon-
ites sent and hired the Arameans of Beth-
rehob and the Arameans of Zobah, twenty
thousand foot soldiers, as well as the king
of Maacah, one thousand men, and the
men of Tob, twelve thousand men.
7 When David heard of it, he sent Joab
and all the army with the warriors. 8 The
Ammonites came out and drew up in bat-
tle array at the entrance of the gate; but
the Arameans of Zobah and of Rehob,
and the men of Tob and Maacah, were by
themselves in the open country.
9 When Joab saw that the battle was
set against him both in front and in the
rear, he chose some of the picked men of
Israel, and arrayed them against the Ara-
means; 10 the rest of his men he put in the
charge of his brother Abishai, and he ar-
rayed them against the Ammonites. 11 He
said, "If the Arameans are too strong for
me, then you shall help me; but if the Am-
monites are too strong for you, then I will
come and help you. 12 Be strong, and let

q Or *Merib-baal*: See 4.4 note
r Gk: Heb *my*
s Or *Merib-baal's*: See 4.4 note

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1 Sam 24.14. **9.10** The original point of David's remarks in this verse, better preserved in the Greek version, was that Ziba and his household would be supported by the income from Mephibosheth's estate, but that Mephibosheth himself would be supported at David's expense. **9.12** According to 1 Chr 8.34–35; 9.40–41, *Mica* had four sons, thus ensuring the posterity of the house of Saul (cf. 1 Sam 20.14–16; 24.21–22). **9.13** The fact that Mephibosheth, the heir to the house of Saul, is *lame in both his feet* is important; as a cripple he is unlikely to be able to make a successful attempt to revive his line's claim to the throne.

10.1–19 Chronologically, this section seems to be prior to 8.3–14. **10.2** *Nahash* was an enemy of Saul (1 Sam 10.27–11.11) and may have regarded David, after his split with Saul, as an ally. The only occasion on which he is reported to have *dealt loyally* with David was when his son Shobi supplied provisions to him after he fled Jerusalem during Absalom's revolt (17.27); if this is what David is referring to here, the revolt must have preceded the events described here. **10.5** *Jericho* was on the west bank of the Jordan at a point intermediate between Jerusalem and the Ammonite capital. **10.6** For *the Arameans of Beth-rehob* and *Zobah*, see note on 8.3. *Maacah* was north of Geshur (see 2.9) in the Golan Heights. *Tob* was a small state southeast of the Sea of Galilee. **10.8** The Ammonites confront Joab's army at *the entrance of the gate*, i.e., of Rabbah, their capital city (see 11.1). **10.10** For *Abishai*, see 2.18; 1 Sam 26.6. **10.12** The *cities of our God* to which Joab refers may be old Israelite centers and sanctuaries of Yahweh in southern Transjordan, a region with strong associations in early Israelite

us be courageous for the sake of our people, and for the cities of our God; and may the LORD do what seems good to him." 13 So Joab and the people who were with him moved forward into battle against the Arameans; and they fled before him. 14 When the Ammonites saw that the Arameans fled, they likewise fled before Abishai, and entered the city. Then Joab returned from fighting against the Ammonites, and came to Jerusalem.

15 But when the Arameans saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they gathered themselves together. 16 Hadadezer sent and brought out the Arameans who were beyond the Euphrates; and they came to Helam, with Shobach the commander of the army of Hadadezer at their head. 17 When it was told David, he gathered all Israel together, and crossed the Jordan, and came to Helam. The Arameans arrayed themselves against David and fought with him. 18 The Arameans fled before Israel; and David killed of the Arameans seven hundred chariot teams, and forty thousand horsemen,[t] and wounded Shobach the commander of their army, so that he died there. 19 When all the kings who were servants of Hadadezer saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they made peace with Israel, and became subject to them. So the Arameans were afraid to help the Ammonites any more.

David Commits Adultery with Bathsheba

11 In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab with his officers and all Israel with him; they ravaged the Ammonites, and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem.

2 It happened, late one afternoon, when David rose from his couch and was walking about on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; the woman was very beautiful. 3 David sent someone to inquire about the woman. It was reported, "This is Bathsheba daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite." 4 So David sent messengers to get her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she was purifying herself after her period.) Then she returned to her house. 5 The woman conceived; and she sent and told David, "I am pregnant."

6 So David sent word to Joab, "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent Uriah to David. 7 When Uriah came to him, David asked how Joab and the people fared, and how the war was going. 8 Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house, and wash your feet." Uriah went out of the king's house, and there followed him a present from the king. 9 But Uriah slept at the entrance of the king's house with all the servants of his

t 1 Chr 19.18 and some Gk Mss read *foot soldiers*

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tradition. **10.16** For *Hadadezer*, king of Zobah and leader of the Aramean coalition, see note on 8.3. The *Arameans who were beyond the Euphrates* were people living in northwestern Mesopotamia in the central and upper Euphrates region. *Helam* was probably the same town or region that is called "Alema" in 1 Macc 5.26; it lay east of the Sea of Galilee on the Transjordanian plateau. *Shobach* is called "Shopach" in 1 Chr 19.16, 18.

11.1–13 The incident related here took place during David's Ammonite wars and portrays Israel's greatest king as a sinful human being. **11.1** *Rabbah*, modern Amman, was the Ammonite capital. **11.2** The story begins as David awakens from an afternoon nap *on the roof* of his palace, the best place to sleep (see note on 1 Sam 9.25). **11.3** *Eliam*, Bathsheba's father, is sometimes identified with Eliam son of Ahithophel, a member of David's elite corps of the Thirty (23.34). *Uriah the Hittite* was also a member (23.39); although his name (Hebrew, "Yahweh is my light") shows that he was probably a native-born Israelite, his title suggests that he was descended from the Hittites, an Anatolian people of the second millennium B.C.E. whose descendants populated a number of Syrian cities in the time of David. **11.4** The purpose of the parenthetical remark that *she was purifying herself after her period* is to indicate both that her intercourse with David occurred at a time that was propitious for conception and that Uriah cannot have been the father of the child she conceives. **11.6–12** David brings Uriah home on furlough in the hope that he will have intercourse with Bathsheba and the child she is carrying will be thought to be his; but, ironically, Uriah's loyalty to David and sense of duty as a soldier prevents this scheme from succeeding. **11.8** The expression *wash your feet* is probably a euphemism for sexual intercourse. The translation *and there followed him a present from the king* is based on a very doubtful Hebrew text. **11.11** Uriah rejects David's suggestion that he go home and lie with

lord, and did not go down to his house.
10 When they told David, "Uriah did not
go down to his house," David said to
Uriah, "You have just come from a jour-
ney. Why did you not go down to your
house?" 11 Uriah said to David, "The ark
and Israel and Judah remain in booths;[u]
and my lord Joab and the servants of my
lord are camping in the open field; shall I
then go to my house, to eat and to drink,
and to lie with my wife? As you live, and
as your soul lives, I will not do such a
thing." 12 Then David said to Uriah, "Re-
main here today also, and tomorrow I will
send you back." So Uriah remained in Je-
rusalem that day. On the next day, 13 Da-
vid invited him to eat and drink in his
presence and made him drunk; and in the
evening he went out to lie on his couch
with the servants of his lord, but he did
not go down to his house.

The Death of Uriah

14 In the morning David wrote a let-
ter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of
Uriah. 15 In the letter he wrote, "Set Uriah
in the forefront of the hardest fighting,
and then draw back from him, so that he
may be struck down and die." 16 As Joab
was besieging the city, he assigned Uriah
to the place where he knew there were
valiant warriors. 17 The men of the city
came out and fought with Joab; and some
of the servants of David among the peo-
ple fell. Uriah the Hittite was killed as
well. 18 Then Joab sent and told David all
the news about the fighting; 19 and he in-
structed the messenger, "When you have
finished telling the king all the news about
the fighting, 20 then, if the king's anger
rises, and if he says to you, 'Why did you
go so near the city to fight? Did you not
know that they would shoot from the
wall? 21 Who killed Abimelech son of Jer-
ubbaal?[v] Did not a woman throw an up-
per millstone on him from the wall, so
that he died at Thebez? Why did you go
so near the wall?' then you shall say, 'Your
servant Uriah the Hittite is dead too.' "

22 So the messenger went, and came
and told David all that Joab had sent him
to tell. 23 The messenger said to David,
"The men gained an advantage over us,
and came out against us in the field; but
we drove them back to the entrance of the
gate. 24 Then the archers shot at your ser-
vants from the wall; some of the king's
servants are dead; and your servant Uriah
the Hittite is dead also." 25 David said to
the messenger, "Thus you shall say to
Joab, 'Do not let this matter trouble you,
for the sword devours now one and now
another; press your attack on the city, and
overthrow it.' And encourage him."

26 When the wife of Uriah heard that
her husband was dead, she made lamenta-
tion for him. 27 When the mourning was
over, David sent and brought her to his
house, and she became his wife, and bore
him a son.

Nathan's Parable

12 But the thing that David had done dis-
pleased the LORD, 1 and the LORD
sent Nathan to David. He came to
him, and said to him, "There were two
men in a certain city, the one rich and the
other poor. 2 The rich man had very
many flocks and herds; 3 but the poor
man had nothing but one little ewe lamb,
which he had bought. He brought it up,
and it grew up with him and with his chil-

u Or *at Succoth* *v* Gk Syr Judg 7.1: Heb *Jerubbesheth*

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his wife; he is a pious soldier, careful to observe the ritual regulations of the battle camp (Deut 23.9–14), which forbade intimate relations with women (cf. note on 1 Sam 21.5). When in the field, the army lived in tents, not *in booths*, and the correct translation here is probably *at Succoth* (see text note *u*), a town east of the Jordan and roughly midway between Jerusalem and Rabbah.

11.14–27a Having failed to induce the pious Uriah to violate the ritual regulations of the battle camp, David now plots to have him killed. **11.14–15** Uriah carries his own death sentence to Joab. **11.21** The death of *Abimelech son of Jerubbaal* is reported in Judg 9.50–55; he was killed by *an upper millstone* thrown by a woman as a result of venturing too close to the city wall during his siege of *Thebez*. **11.27** According to custom, the period of *mourning* was seven days (see Gen 50.10; Jdt 16.24).

11.27b–12.15a Nathan tells David a story as if it were a current court case; but in fact it is a parable. The basis of the parable is tribal law, which permitted someone to slaughter an animal from a neighbor's livestock when the rules of hospitality made it absolutely necessary to do so; but this privilege was forbidden to anyone whose own property included available livestock, and it was strictly forbidden when the neighbor's animal was

dren; it used to eat of his meager fare,
and drink from his cup, and lie in his bo-
som, and it was like a daughter to him.
4 Now there came a traveler to the rich
man, and he was loath to take one of his
own flock or herd to prepare for the way-
farer who had come to him, but he took
the poor man's lamb, and prepared that
for the guest who had come to him."
5 Then David's anger was greatly kindled
against the man. He said to Nathan, "As
the LORD lives, the man who has done this
deserves to die; 6 he shall restore the lamb
fourfold, because he did this thing, and
because he had no pity."

7 Nathan said to David, "You are the
man! Thus says the LORD, the God of Is-
rael: I anointed you king over Israel, and
I rescued you from the hand of Saul; 8 I
gave you your master's house, and your
master's wives into your bosom, and gave
you the house of Israel and of Judah; and
if that had been too little, I would have
added as much more. 9 Why have you de-
spised the word of the LORD, to do what is
evil in his sight? You have struck down
Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and
have taken his wife to be your wife, and
have killed him with the sword of the Am-
monites. 10 Now therefore the sword shall
never depart from your house, for you
have despised me, and have taken the
wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.
11 Thus says the LORD: I will raise up trou-
ble against you from within your own
house; and I will take your wives before
your eyes, and give them to your neigh-
bor, and he shall lie with your wives in the
sight of this very sun. 12 For you did it se-
cretly; but I will do this thing before all
Israel, and before the sun." 13 David said
to Nathan, "I have sinned against the
LORD." Nathan said to David, "Now the
LORD has put away your sin; you shall not
die. 14 Nevertheless, because by this deed
you have utterly scorned the LORD,[w] the
child that is born to you shall die."
15 Then Nathan went to his house.

The First Child of David and Bathsheba Dies

The LORD struck the child that Uriah's
wife bore to David, and it became very ill.
16 David therefore pleaded with God for
the child; David fasted, and went in and
lay all night on the ground. 17 The elders
of his house stood beside him, urging him
to rise from the ground; but he would

w Ancient scribal tradition: Compare 1 Sam 25.22 note: Heb *scorned the enemies of the LORD*

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a personal pet. **12.4** The statement that the rich man *took the poor man's lamb* invokes the theme of royal abuse of power as expressed in 1 Sam 8.11–18, where the verb *take* is used repeatedly with the king as subject. **12.6** The stipulation of *fourfold* restitution comes from Ex 22.1, but in the original text of the present passage, preserved in most Greek manuscripts, David demanded that the lamb be restored sevenfold (cf. Prov 6.31). **12.7** The account of the time when the Lord anointed David *king over Israel* is in 1 Sam 16.1–13. **12.8** Errors in transmission of this verse have obscured its main point. Instead of *your master's house*, we should read "your master's daughter," the reference here being to Michal (see 3.13–16). The phrase *your master's wives* must refer to Saul's wives, and entry into a king's harem was a way of claiming his throne (see 16.21–22). We have no direct report that David took any of Saul's wives; but the Talmud (*Sanhedrin 18a*) and a few modern scholars have speculated that David's wife Ahinoam, the mother of Amnon (see 3.2; 1 Sam 25.43), was the same as Saul's wife, Ahinoam daughter of Ahimaaz (1 Sam 14.50). Rather than *the house of Israel and of Judah*, the Lord says he gave David "the daughters of Israel and Judah"; the point being made is that David was given as many women as he could possibly want, but, like the rich man in the parable, he wantonly took something that belonged to someone who had been less generously treated. **12.10** The statement *the sword shall never depart from your house* interprets events to come in terms of David's contrivance of the death of Uriah; the author is thinking specifically of the violent deaths of David's sons Amnon (13.23–29), Absalom (18.15), and Adonijah (1 Kings 2.25). **12.11** Again, the statement *I will raise up trouble against you from within your own house* interprets the grievous events of Absalom's revolt as a consequence of David's sin against Uriah. Specifically, someone (Absalom) will enter David's harem *in the sight of this very sun* (see 16.21–22). **12.13–14** David is told that *the LORD has put away your sin* or rather that "the LORD has transferred your sin"; David will not die but someone must, and David is told that *the child that is born to you shall die*.

12.15b–23 David fasts, lies in the dirt, and implores the Lord to spare the condemned infant. When the child dies, David bathes and eats. His astonished servants see all this as a reversal of normal behavior, since fasting and self-abasement usually followed a death as gestures of mourn-

not, nor did he eat food with them. 18 On
the seventh day the child died. And the
servants of David were afraid to tell him
that the child was dead; for they said,
"While the child was still alive, we spoke to
him, and he did not listen to us; how then
can we tell him the child is dead? He may
do himself some harm." 19 But when Da-
vid saw that his servants were whispering
together, he perceived that the child was
dead; and David said to his servants, "Is
the child dead?" They said, "He is dead."
20 Then David rose from the ground,
washed, anointed himself, and changed
his clothes. He went into the house of the
LORD, and worshiped; he then went to his
own house; and when he asked, they set
food before him and he ate. 21 Then his
servants said to him, "What is this thing
that you have done? You fasted and wept
for the child while it was alive; but when
the child died, you rose and ate food."
22 He said, "While the child was still alive,
I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who knows?
The LORD may be gracious to me, and the
child may live.' 23 But now he is dead; why
should I fast? Can I bring him back again?
I shall go to him, but he will not return
to me."

The Birth of Solomon

24 Then David consoled his wife
Bathsheba, and went to her, and lay with
her; and she bore a son, and he named
him Solomon. The LORD loved him,
25 and sent a message by the prophet Na-
than; so he named him Jedidiah,[x] be-
cause of the LORD.

The Sack of Rabbah

26 Now Joab fought against Rabbah
of the Ammonites, and took the royal city.
27 Joab sent messengers to David, and
said, "I have fought against Rabbah;
moreover, I have taken the water city.
28 Now, then, gather the rest of the people
together, and encamp against the city,
and take it; or I myself will take the city,
and it will be called by my name." 29 So
David gathered all the people together
and went to Rabbah, and fought against it
and took it. 30 He took the crown of Mil-
com[y] from his head; the weight of it was
a talent of gold, and in it was a precious
stone; and it was placed on David's head.
He also brought forth the spoil of the city,
a very great amount. 31 He brought out
the people who were in it, and set them to
work with saws and iron picks and iron
axes, or sent them to the brickworks.
Thus he did to all the cities of the Am-
monites. Then David and all the people
returned to Jerusalem.

The Rape of Tamar

13 Some time passed. David's son
Absalom had a beautiful sister
whose name was Tamar; and David's son
Amnon fell in love with her. 2 Amnon was
so tormented that he made himself ill be-
cause of his sister Tamar, for she was a
virgin and it seemed impossible to Amnon
to do anything to her. 3 But Amnon had a
friend whose name was Jonadab, the son
of David's brother Shimeah; and Jonadab

x That is *Beloved of the LORD* y Gk See 1 Kings 11.5, 33: Heb *their kings*

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ing. **12.20** The reference to *the house of the LORD* is anachronistic; the temple will be built in the time of Solomon (see 7.13).

12.24–25 Though explained differently in 1 Chr 22.9, the name *Solomon*, Hebrew *shelomoh*, means "his replacement," referring to the child who died in v. 18. The name *Jedidiah*, which is mentioned nowhere else in the Bible, may have been an official throne name used alongside the personal name Solomon.

12.26–31 The continuation and completion of the siege begun in 11.1. **12.26–27** Evidently *the royal city* and *the water city* were two designations for the same place; it may have been a royal fortress that stood on the high citadel and guarded the spring that provided the city's water supply. **12.30** *Milcom* was the national god of the Ammonites. His crown with its single jewel (cf. Zech 9.16) would have been worn by his cult statue, which to judge by the size of the crown (*a talent of gold* or about 75 pounds) was larger than the size of a man. **12.31** The work assigned to Ammonites *with saws and iron picks and iron axes* is probably the dismantling of the city's fortifications.

13.1–22 This story may be viewed as a prologue to the account of Absalom's rebellion in chs. 15–20. **13.1** *Tamar* is Absalom's full sister, the daughter of David and Maacah (see 3.3), and Amnon's half sister. **13.2** For Amnon's lovesickness, cf. Song 2.5; 5.8. Amnon knows that as *a virgin* and a member of the royal family Tamar would be closely guarded. **13.3** Elsewhere *Shimeah* is called Shimea (1 Chr 2.13; 20.7), Shimei (21.21), and Shammah (1 Sam 16.9; 17.13).

was a very crafty man. 4 He said to him,
"O son of the king, why are you so hag-
gard morning after morning? Will you
not tell me?" Amnon said to him, "I love
Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister."
5 Jonadab said to him, "Lie down on your
bed, and pretend to be ill; and when your
father comes to see you, say to him, 'Let
my sister Tamar come and give me some-
thing to eat, and prepare the food in my
sight, so that I may see it and eat it from
her hand.'" 6 So Amnon lay down, and
pretended to be ill; and when the king
came to see him, Amnon said to the king,
"Please let my sister Tamar come and
make a couple of cakes in my sight, so that
I may eat from her hand."

7 Then David sent home to Tamar,
saying, "Go to your brother Amnon's
house, and prepare food for him." 8 So
Tamar went to her brother Amnon's
house, where he was lying down. She took
dough, kneaded it, made cakes in his
sight, and baked the cakes. 9 Then she
took the pan and set them[z] out before
him, but he refused to eat. Amnon said,
"Send out everyone from me." So every-
one went out from him. 10 Then Amnon
said to Tamar, "Bring the food into the
chamber, so that I may eat from your
hand." So Tamar took the cakes she had
made, and brought them into the cham-
ber to Amnon her brother. 11 But when
she brought them near him to eat, he took
hold of her, and said to her, "Come, lie
with me, my sister." 12 She answered him,
"No, my brother, do not force me; for
such a thing is not done in Israel; do not
do anything so vile! 13 As for me, where
could I carry my shame? And as for you,
you would be as one of the scoundrels in
Israel. Now therefore, I beg you, speak to
the king; for he will not withhold me from
you." 14 But he would not listen to her;
and being stronger than she, he forced
her and lay with her.

15 Then Amnon was seized with a
very great loathing for her; indeed, his
loathing was even greater than the lust he
had felt for her. Amnon said to her, "Get
out!" 16 But she said to him, "No, my
brother;[a] for this wrong in sending me
away is greater than the other that you
did to me." But he would not listen to her.
17 He called the young man who served
him and said, "Put this woman out of my
presence, and bolt the door after her."
18 (Now she was wearing a long robe with
sleeves; for this is how the virgin daugh-
ters of the king were clothed in earlier
times.[b]) So his servant put her out, and
bolted the door after her. 19 But Tamar
put ashes on her head, and tore the long
robe that she was wearing; she put her
hand on her head, and went away, crying
aloud as she went.

20 Her brother Absalom said to her,
"Has Amnon your brother been with you?
Be quiet for now, my sister; he is your
brother; do not take this to heart." So Ta-
mar remained, a desolate woman, in her
brother Absalom's house. 21 When King
David heard of all these things, he became

z Heb *and poured* a Cn Compare Gk Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain b Cn: Heb *were clothed in robes*

13.6 The dish Tamar prepares, which is made from dough that is kneaded and boiled (v. 8), seems to be dumplings or puddings of some kind rather than *cakes*. **13.8** The word *baked* should be translated "boiled" (cf. v. 6). **13.12** The word here translated *anything so vile* refers to behavior that seriously violates the norms of etiquette or law; cf. 1 Sam 25.25, where the same word is translated *folly*; see also note on 13.13 (*scoundrels*). **13.13** The word translated *scoundrels* is the plural of Hebrew *nabal* (see note on 1 Sam 25.3); by flouting the norms of Israelite society Amnon will, says Tamar, become an outcast. Intercourse with a man's sister or half sister is prohibited by biblical law (Lev 18.9, 11; 20.17; Deut 27.22), so that Tamar's statement that David *will not withhold me from you*, unless she is lying to buy time, must mean that these laws were not in effect at the time, or that the royal family was exempt from them, or that David would be willing to act in disregard of them. **13.16** According to Deut 22.28–29 (cf. Ex 22.16) a man who rapes a virgin is required to marry her and is forbidden to send her away; Tamar is appealing to some such regulation as this when she protests *this wrong in sending me away*. **13.18** The exact appearance or significance of *a long robe with sleeves* (see also Gen 37.3) is unknown; it may have been a robe that reached the extremities (the wrists and ankles). **13.19** The ashes, the tearing of the robe, the hand on the head, and the crying are all customary gestures of grief. **13.20** Rejected by Amnon, her virginity lost, Tamar has become *a desolate woman*, i.e., childless and without hope of marriage (see, ironically, Isa 54.1). **13.21** David is depicted as acting too leniently out of love for his son; the same weakness will affect his dealings with Absalom at the time of his revolt (see 13.37–39; 18.5).

very angry, but he would not punish his
son Amnon, because he loved him, for he
was his firstborn.[c] 22 But Absalom spoke
to Amnon neither good nor bad; for Ab-
salom hated Amnon, because he had
raped his sister Tamar.

The Death of Amnon

23 After two full years Absalom had
sheepshearers at Baal-hazor, which is
near Ephraim, and Absalom invited all
the king's sons. 24 Absalom came to the
king, and said, "Your servant has sheep-
shearers; will the king and his servants
please go with your servant?" 25 But the
king said to Absalom, "No, my son, let us
not all go, or else we will be burdensome
to you." He pressed him, but he would
not go but gave him his blessing. 26 Then
Absalom said, "If not, please let my
brother Amnon go with us." The king
said to him, "Why should he go with
you?" 27 But Absalom pressed him until
he let Amnon and all the king's sons go
with him. Absalom made a feast like a
king's feast.[d] 28 Then Absalom com-
manded his servants, "Watch when Am-
non's heart is merry with wine, and when
I say to you, 'Strike Amnon,' then kill him.
Do not be afraid; have I not myself com-
manded you? Be courageous and valiant."
29 So the servants of Absalom did to Am-
non as Absalom had commanded. Then
all the king's sons rose, and each mounted
his mule and fled.

30 While they were on the way, the re-
port came to David that Absalom had
killed all the king's sons, and not one of
them was left. 31 The king rose, tore his
garments, and lay on the ground; and all
his servants who were standing by tore
their garments. 32 But Jonadab, the son of
David's brother Shimeah, said, "Let not
my lord suppose that they have killed all
the young men the king's sons; Amnon
alone is dead. This has been determined
by Absalom from the day Amnon[e] raped
his sister Tamar. 33 Now therefore, do not
let my lord the king take it to heart, as if
all the king's sons were dead; for Amnon
alone is dead."

34 But Absalom fled. When the young
man who kept watch looked up, he saw
many people coming from the Horonaim
road[f] by the side of the mountain. 35 Jon-
adab said to the king, "See, the king's sons
have come; as your servant said, so it has
come about." 36 As soon as he had fin-
ished speaking, the king's sons arrived,
and raised their voices and wept; and the
king and all his servants also wept very
bitterly.

37 But Absalom fled, and went to Tal-
mai son of Ammihud, king of Geshur.
David mourned for his son day after day.
38 Absalom, having fled to Geshur, stayed
there three years. 39 And the heart of[g]
the king went out, yearning for Absalom;
for he was now consoled over the death of
Amnon.

Absalom Returns to Jerusalem

14 Now Joab son of Zeruiah per-
ceived that the king's mind was
on Absalom. 2 Joab sent to Tekoa and
brought from there a wise woman. He

c Q Ms Gk: MT lacks *but he would not punish . . . firstborn* d Gk Compare Q Ms: MT lacks *Absalom made a feast like a king's feast* e Heb *he*
f Cn Compare Gk: Heb *the road behind him*
g Q Ms Gk: MT *And David*

13.23–39 Absalom avenges the violence done to his sister by killing his brother. **13.23** For the festival of *sheepshearers*, see 1 Sam 25.7. *Baal-hazor* was a town in the central hills about twenty miles north of Jerusalem; about two miles to the southeast was *Ephraim* (see Jn 11.54), also known as Ophrah (see Josh 18.23) and Ephron (2 Chr 13.19). **13.27** As in 1 Sam 25.36, *a king's feast* would be expected to include a lot of drinking, which is, as the next verse shows, an important part of Absalom's plot. **13.29** It seems to have been customary for a king or prince to ride a *mule* rather than a donkey or a horse at this time (see 18.9; 1 Kings 1.33, 38, 44); if Israelites were forbidden to hybridize horses at this time (cf. Lev 19.19), the royal mules must have been imported. **13.32** It is *Jonadab*, Amnon's friend (v. 3), who reports the true state of affairs to the king. **13.34** The royal party approaches the city along *the Horonaim road*, which ran northwest in the direction of "the two Horons" (Hebrew *horonaim*), i.e., Upper and Lower Beth-horon (see Josh 16.3, 5). **13.37** Absalom finds sanctuary with *Talmai son of Ammihud*, his maternal grandfather (see 3.3); for *Geshur*, see notes on 2.9; 3.3.

14.1–24 Joab persuades David to allow Absalom to return to Jerusalem. **14.2** *Tekoa*, the home of the prophet Amos (Am 1.1), was a village in the Judean hills about ten miles south of Jerusalem. Joab arranges for the services of *a wise woman*, an expression that in this case, as in

said to her, "Pretend to be a mourner; put
on mourning garments, do not anoint
yourself with oil, but behave like a woman
who has been mourning many days for
the dead. 3 Go to the king and speak to
him as follows." And Joab put the words
into her mouth.

4 When the woman of Tekoa came to
the king, she fell on her face to the
ground and did obeisance, and said,
"Help, O king!" 5 The king asked her,
"What is your trouble?" She answered,
"Alas, I am a widow; my husband is dead.
6 Your servant had two sons, and they
fought with one another in the field;
there was no one to part them, and one
struck the other and killed him. 7 Now the
whole family has risen against your ser-
vant. They say, 'Give up the man who
struck his brother, so that we may kill him
for the life of his brother whom he mur-
dered, even if we destroy the heir as well.'
Thus they would quench my one remain-
ing ember, and leave to my husband nei-
ther name nor remnant on the face of the
earth."

8 Then the king said to the woman,
"Go to your house, and I will give orders
concerning you." 9 The woman of Tekoa
said to the king, "On me be the guilt, my
lord the king, and on my father's house;
let the king and his throne be guiltless."
10 The king said, "If anyone says anything
to you, bring him to me, and he shall
never touch you again." 11 Then she said,
"Please, may the king keep the LORD your
God in mind, so that the avenger of blood
may kill no more, and my son not be de-
stroyed." He said, "As the LORD lives, not
one hair of your son shall fall to the
ground."

12 Then the woman said, "Please let
your servant speak a word to my lord the
king." He said, "Speak." 13 The woman
said, "Why then have you planned such a
thing against the people of God? For in
giving this decision the king convicts him-
self, inasmuch as the king does not bring
his banished one home again. 14 We must
all die; we are like water spilled on the
ground, which cannot be gathered up.
But God will not take away a life; he will
devise plans so as not to keep an outcast
banished forever from his presence.[h]
15 Now I have come to say this to my lord
the king because the people have made
me afraid; your servant thought, 'I will
speak to the king; it may be that the king
will perform the request of his servant.
16 For the king will hear, and deliver his
servant from the hand of the man who
would cut both me and my son off from
the heritage of God.' 17 Your servant
thought, 'The word of my lord the king
will set me at rest'; for my lord the king is
like the angel of God, discerning good
and evil. The LORD your God be
with you!"

18 Then the king answered the
woman, "Do not withhold from me any-
thing I ask you." The woman said, "Let
my lord the king speak." 19 The king said,
"Is the hand of Joab with you in all this?"
The woman answered and said, "As
surely as you live, my lord the king, one
cannot turn right or left from anything
that my lord the king has said. For it was
your servant Joab who commanded me; it
was he who put all these words into the
mouth of your servant. 20 In order to
change the course of affairs your servant
Joab did this. But my lord has wisdom like
the wisdom of the angel of God to know
all things that are on the earth."

21 Then the king said to Joab, "Very
well, I grant this; go, bring back the

h Meaning of Heb uncertain

20.16, refers to a woman skilled in rhetoric. **14.5–7** The normal procedures of justice would require that the woman's son, who is guilty of manslaughter, be turned over to the family so that blood vengeance could be exacted; but the king has the power to free the slayer (see v. 16), and she petitions him to do so on the grounds that she is a widow and her son is her late husband's only heir. **14.11** The woman asks David to *keep the LORD your God in mind* or rather to mention or utter the name of the Lord; she is asking David to swear a binding oath, and he does (*As the LORD lives*). The *avenger of blood*, the man mentioned in v. 16, is the kinsman who has the responsibility of avenging the death of the woman's son according to the customs of family blood vengeance (see Num 35.16–28; Deut 19.4–13). **14.16** Here *the heritage of God*, a common way of referring to the promised land, designates the people of Israel. **14.17** By saying that David's decision *will set me at rest* the woman is not expressing confidence in a favorable judgment; instead, she is flattering the king by expressing the conviction that whatever he decides will be just. Her comparison of the king's wisdom to that of an *angel of God* is also rhetorical adulation, as in v. 20; 19.27.

young man Absalom." 22 Joab prostrated
himself with his face to the ground and
did obeisance, and blessed the king; and
Joab said, "Today your servant knows that
I have found favor in your sight, my lord
the king, in that the king has granted the
request of his servant." 23 So Joab set off,
went to Geshur, and brought Absalom to
Jerusalem. 24 The king said, "Let him go
to his own house; he is not to come into
my presence." So Absalom went to his
own house, and did not come into the
king's presence.

David Forgives Absalom

25 Now in all Israel there was no one
to be praised so much for his beauty as
Absalom; from the sole of his foot to the
crown of his head there was no blemish in
him. 26 When he cut the hair of his head
(for at the end of every year he used to
cut it; when it was heavy on him, he cut
it), he weighed the hair of his head, two
hundred shekels by the king's weight.
27 There were born to Absalom three
sons, and one daughter whose name was
Tamar; she was a beautiful woman.

28 So Absalom lived two full years in
Jerusalem, without coming into the king's
presence. 29 Then Absalom sent for Joab
to send him to the king; but Joab would
not come to him. He sent a second time,
but Joab would not come. 30 Then he said
to his servants, "Look, Joab's field is next
to mine, and he has barley there; go and
set it on fire." So Absalom's servants set
the field on fire. 31 Then Joab rose and
went to Absalom at his house, and said to
him, "Why have your servants set my field
on fire?" 32 Absalom answered Joab,
"Look, I sent word to you: Come here,
that I may send you to the king with the
question, 'Why have I come from Geshur?
It would be better for me to be there still.'
Now let me go into the king's presence; if
there is guilt in me, let him kill me!"
33 Then Joab went to the king and told
him; and he summoned Absalom. So he
came to the king and prostrated himself
with his face to the ground before the
king; and the king kissed Absalom.

Absalom Usurps the Throne

15 After this Absalom got himself a
chariot and horses, and fifty men
to run ahead of him. 2 Absalom used to
rise early and stand beside the road into
the gate; and when anyone brought a suit
before the king for judgment, Absalom
would call out and say, "From what city
are you?" When the person said, "Your
servant is of such and such a tribe in Is-
rael," 3 Absalom would say, "See, your
claims are good and right; but there is no
one deputed by the king to hear you."
4 Absalom said moreover, "If only I were
judge in the land! Then all who had a suit
or cause might come to me, and I would
give them justice." 5 Whenever people
came near to do obeisance to him, he
would put out his hand and take hold of
them, and kiss them. 6 Thus Absalom did
to every Israelite who came to the king for
judgment; so Absalom stole the hearts of
the people of Israel.

7 At the end of four[i] years Absalom
said to the king, "Please let me go to He-
bron and pay the vow that I have made to
the LORD. 8 For your servant made a vow

i Gk Syr: Heb *forty*

14.25–33 Through Joab's mediation, David and Absalom are reconciled. **14.25** Absalom's *beauty* partially explains how he *stole the hearts of the people of Israel* (15.6) and why David loved him so deeply that he was unable to discipline him. **14.26** The reference to Absalom's *hair* prepares readers for the bizarre calamity that occurs later in 18.9; *two hundred shekels* would be about 6 pounds. **14.27** This notice that Absalom had *three sons* seems to be contradicted by 18.18; his *one daughter* is named for her aunt (13.1). **14.28–33** Although he has to set his field on fire to get his attention, Absalom persuades Joab to intervene with his father and a reconciliation of David and Absalom takes place.

15.1–12 Now that he is back at court, Absalom uses his position to ingratiate himself with the people of Israel. Eventually he claims the throne at Hebron. **15.1** Absalom's *chariot and horses, and fifty men to run ahead of him* are a flamboyant way of claiming to be king, as 1 Kings 1.5 shows. **15.6** The statement that Absalom *stole the hearts of the people* means not so much that he won their affection as that he beguiled them; cf. Gen 31.20, where the same expression is translated "deceived." **15.7–8** Absalom must go to Hebron, he says, because he promised to worship *the LORD in Hebron*, i.e., the God of Israel in his local Hebronite manifestation, so that the vow cannot be fulfilled by worshiping the Lord in Jerusalem. For

while I lived at Geshur in Aram: If the LORD will indeed bring me back to Jerusalem, then I will worship the LORD in Hebron."[j] 9 The king said to him, "Go in peace." So he got up, and went to Hebron. 10 But Absalom sent secret messengers throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, "As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then shout: Absalom has become king at Hebron!" 11 Two hundred men from Jerusalem went with Absalom; they were invited guests, and they went in their innocence, knowing nothing of the matter. 12 While Absalom was offering the sacrifices, he sent for[k] Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor, from his city Giloh. The conspiracy grew in strength, and the people with Absalom kept increasing.

David Flees Jerusalem

13 A messenger came to David, saying, "The hearts of the Israelites have gone after Absalom." 14 Then David said to all his officials who were with him at Jerusalem, "Get up! Let us flee, or there will be no escape for us from Absalom. Hurry, or he will soon overtake us, and bring disaster down upon us, and attack the city with the edge of the sword." 15 The king's officials said to the king, "Your servants are ready to do whatever our lord the king decides." 16 So the king left, followed by all his household, except ten concubines whom he left behind to look after the house. 17 The king left, followed by all the people; and they stopped at the last house. 18 All his officials passed by him; and all the Cherethites, and all the Pelethites, and all the six hundred Gittites who had followed him from Gath, passed on before the king.

19 Then the king said to Ittai the Gittite, "Why are you also coming with us? Go back, and stay with the king; for you are a foreigner, and also an exile from your home. 20 You came only yesterday, and shall I today make you wander about with us, while I go wherever I can? Go back, and take your kinsfolk with you; and may the LORD show[l] steadfast love and faithfulness to you." 21 But Ittai answered the king, "As the LORD lives, and as my lord the king lives, wherever my lord the king may be, whether for death or for life, there also your servant will be." 22 David said to Ittai, "Go then, march on." So Ittai the Gittite marched on, with all his men and all the little ones who were with him. 23 The whole country wept aloud as all the people passed by; the king crossed the Wadi Kidron, and all the people moved on toward the wilderness.

24 Abiathar came up, and Zadok also, with all the Levites, carrying the ark of the covenant of God. They set down the ark of God, until the people had all passed out of the city. 25 Then the king said to Zadok, "Carry the ark of God back into the city. If I find favor in the eyes of the LORD, he will bring me back and let me see both it and the place where it stays. 26 But if he says, 'I take no pleasure in you,' here I am, let him do to me what seems good to him." 27 The king also said to the priest Zadok, "Look,[m] go back to

j Gk Mss: Heb lacks *in Hebron* *k* Or *he sent*
l Gk Compare 2.6: Heb lacks *may the LORD show*
m Gk: Heb *Are you a seer* or *Do you see?*

Absalom's term in exile *at Geshur in Aram*, see 13.38. **15.10** Absalom chooses *Hebron* as the site from which to launch his rebellion; it was his birthplace (see 3.3) and the traditional capital of Judah. **15.12** *Ahithophel* was a Judahite; his hometown of *Giloh* was at an unknown location in the hill country of Judah (see Josh 15.51).

15.13–31 The news of Absalom's successful rebellion forces David to abandon the city. **15.16** The mention of the *ten concubines* looks ahead to 16.21–22. **15.18** The soldiers who remain loyal to David are those in his personal retinue who have been with him since his days as a fugitive from Saul's justice and a mercenary in the Philistine army. For *the Cherethites* and *Pelethites*, see note on 8.18; David won their loyalty and that of *the six hundred Gittites* when he lived in Ziklag and served the king of the Philistine city of *Gath* (see 1 Sam 27; 29–30). **15.19–21** Cf. the language of this passage to that of Ruth 1.8–17. *Ittai*, who is probably the commander of David's Gittite forces, will command a third of David's troops in the battle against Absalom's army (see 18.2). **15.23** David leaves Jerusalem by crossing *the Wadi Kidron*, the valley separating the City of David from the Mount of Olives to the east that was regarded as the boundary of the city in the time of David (cf. 1 Kings 2.37). **15.24** For *Abiathar* and *Zadok*, David's two chief priests, see note on 8.17; the mention of *the Levites*, the official priestly tribe, may be a secondary addition (cf. 1 Sam 6.15). **15.25** The Hebrew underlying the expression *the place where it stays* suggests a tent shrine (see 6.17; 7.6), in contrast to 12.20.

the city in peace, you and Abiathar,[n] with
your two sons, Ahimaaz your son, and
Jonathan son of Abiathar. 28 See, I will
wait at the fords of the wilderness until
word comes from you to inform me."
29 So Zadok and Abiathar carried the ark
of God back to Jerusalem, and they re-
mained there.

30 But David went up the ascent of
the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went,
with his head covered and walking bare-
foot; and all the people who were with
him covered their heads and went up,
weeping as they went. 31 David was told
that Ahithophel was among the conspira-
tors with Absalom. And David said,
"O LORD, I pray you, turn the counsel of
Ahithophel into foolishness."

The Mission of Hushai the Archite

32 When David came to the summit,
where God was worshiped, Hushai the
Archite came to meet him with his coat
torn and earth on his head. 33 David said
to him, "If you go on with me, you will be
a burden to me. 34 But if you return to the
city and say to Absalom, 'I will be your
servant, O king; as I have been your fa-
ther's servant in time past, so now I will be
your servant,' then you will defeat for me
the counsel of Ahithophel. 35 The priests
Zadok and Abiathar will be with you
there. So whatever you hear from the
king's house, tell it to the priests Zadok
and Abiathar. 36 Their two sons are with
them there, Zadok's son Ahimaaz and
Abiathar's son Jonathan; and by them you
shall report to me everything you hear."
37 So Hushai, David's friend, came into
the city, just as Absalom was entering
Jerusalem.

Ziba's Report

16 When David had passed a little
beyond the summit, Ziba the ser-
vant of Mephibosheth[o] met him, with a
couple of donkeys saddled, carrying two
hundred loaves of bread, one hundred
bunches of raisins, one hundred of sum-
mer fruits, and one skin of wine. 2 The
king said to Ziba, "Why have you brought
these?" Ziba answered, "The donkeys are
for the king's household to ride, the bread
and summer fruit for the young men to
eat, and the wine is for those to drink who
faint in the wilderness." 3 The king said,
"And where is your master's son?" Ziba
said to the king, "He remains in Jerusa-
lem; for he said, 'Today the house of Is-
rael will give me back my grandfather's
kingdom.'" 4 Then the king said to Ziba,
"All that belonged to Mephibosheth[o] is
now yours." Ziba said, "I do obeisance;
let me find favor in your sight, my lord
the king."

Shimei Curses David

5 When King David came to Bahurim,
a man of the family of the house of Saul
came out whose name was Shimei son of
Gera; he came out cursing. 6 He threw
stones at David and at all the servants of
King David; now all the people and all the
warriors were on his right and on his left.

n Cn: Heb lacks *and Abiathar* *o* Or *Merib-baal*: See 4.4 note

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15.28 David's plan is to camp *at the fords of the wilderness*, i.e., on the west bank of the Jordan, until he receives information from Zadok (see 15.27–29; 17.16). **15.31** David's wish for a way to subvert *the counsel of Ahithophel* (see v. 12) will be fulfilled in 17.5–14 through the efforts of the man David will meet at the top of the mountain.

15.32–37 David meets Hushai and asks him to counteract Ahithophel's counsel at Absalom's court. **15.32** We know of no place *where God was worshiped* atop the Mount of Olives except the so-called Mount of Destruction (see 2 Kings 23.13), which was probably farther south than the place where David meets Hushai. *Hushai* may be the same man who is identified in 1 Kings 4.16 as the father of Baana, one of Solomon's twelve supply officers; but Baana has responsibility for Asher, whereas the *Archite* clan was Benjaminite and inhabited the region southwest of Bethel (Josh 16.2). **15.37** *David's friend.* In a list of civic officials in 1 Chr 27.33 Hushai is called "the king's friend," and in all probability this description is an official title; the title, which had parallels in Egyptian administrative language, probably meant something like "privy counselor."

16.1–4 David receives the support of Ziba, Mephibosheth's steward. **16.1** *Ziba* was introduced in 9.2 and *Mephibosheth* in 4.4. **16.3** When he and David meet after the revolt has been quelled, Mephibosheth will deny Ziba's accusation and accuse him of slander (see 19.24–30).

16.5–14 David endures Shimei's curses with penitential submission to the Lord. **16.5** For the village of *Bahurim*, see note on 3.16. The *family of the house of Saul* was Matri (see 1 Sam 10.21).

7 Shimei shouted while he cursed, "Out!
Out! Murderer! Scoundrel! 8 The LORD
has avenged on all of you the blood of the
house of Saul, in whose place you have
reigned; and the LORD has given the king-
dom into the hand of your son Absalom.
See, disaster has overtaken you; for you
are a man of blood."
9 Then Abishai son of Zeruiah said to
the king, "Why should this dead dog
curse my lord the king? Let me go over
and take off his head." 10 But the king
said, "What have I to do with you, you
sons of Zeruiah? If he is cursing because
the LORD has said to him, 'Curse David,'
who then shall say, 'Why have you done
so?' " 11 David said to Abishai and to all his
servants, "My own son seeks my life; how
much more now may this Benjaminite!
Let him alone, and let him curse; for the
LORD has bidden him. 12 It may be that
the LORD will look on my distress,[p] and
the LORD will repay me with good for this
cursing of me today." 13 So David and his
men went on the road, while Shimei went
along on the hillside opposite him and
cursed as he went, throwing stones and
flinging dust at him. 14 The king and all
the people who were with him arrived
weary at the Jordan;[q] and there he re-
freshed himself.

The Counsel of Ahithophel

15 Now Absalom and all the Israel-
ites[r] came to Jerusalem; Ahithophel was
with him. 16 When Hushai the Archite,
David's friend, came to Absalom, Hushai
said to Absalom, "Long live the king!
Long live the king!" 17 Absalom said to
Hushai, "Is this your loyalty to your
friend? Why did you not go with your
friend?" 18 Hushai said to Absalom, "No;
but the one whom the LORD and this peo-
ple and all the Israelites have chosen, his I
will be, and with him I will remain.
19 Moreover, whom should I serve?
Should it not be his son? Just as I have
served your father, so I will serve you."
20 Then Absalom said to Ahithophel,
"Give us your counsel; what shall we do?"
21 Ahithophel said to Absalom, "Go in to
your father's concubines, the ones he has
left to look after the house; and all Israel
will hear that you have made yourself odi-
ous to your father, and the hands of all
who are with you will be strengthened."
22 So they pitched a tent for Absalom
upon the roof; and Absalom went in to his
father's concubines in the sight of all Is-
rael. 23 Now in those days the counsel that
Ahithophel gave was as if one consulted
the oracle[s] of God; so all the counsel of
Ahithophel was esteemed, both by David
and by Absalom.

17 Moreover Ahithophel said to Ab-
salom, "Let me choose twelve
thousand men, and I will set out and pur-
sue David tonight. 2 I will come upon him
while he is weary and discouraged, and
throw him into a panic; and all the people

p Gk Vg: Heb *iniquity* q Gk: Heb lacks *at the Jordan* r Gk: Heb *all the people, the men of Israel* s Heb *word*

16.7–8 Shimei's words show that he holds David responsible for *the blood of the house of Saul*, i.e., for the death of many of his kin; these included at least the seven sons and grandsons of Saul whom David executed at Gibeon (see ch. 21), but probably also Abner (see ch. 3) and Ishbaal (see ch. 4), and maybe Saul and Jonathan, too (see 1 Sam 31; 2 Sam 2). **16.9** It is characteristic of *Abishai* (see 2.18) to think of a quick and violent solution to one of David's problems; cf. 1 Sam 26.8. On the expression *dead dog*, see 9.8; 1 Sam 24.14. **16.10–12** David's attitude toward Abishai and the other ruthless *sons of Zeruiah* is expressed more fully in 3.29. Here as elsewhere, David is depicted as restrained and lenient in dealing with the kin and partisans of Saul—a depiction that protects him against charges like those made by Shimei in vv. 7–8; but according to 1 Kings 2.8–9, where the narrator's concern is to defend Solomon's actions rather than David's, it was David's death-bed wish that Shimei be executed for this "terrible curse."

16.15–17.4 Meanwhile back in Jerusalem, Hushai undermines the counsel of Ahithophel. **16.16–19** Hushai's dissembling pledge of allegiance to Absalom is filled with irony and double entendre; for example, his acclamation *Long live the king!* is sincere, but he is not thinking of Absalom. For the title *David's friend*, see note on 15.37. **16.21–22** Absalom's public arrogation of his *father's concubines*, anticipated in Nathan's warning (see 12.11), constitutes a claim to the throne (see 3.7; 12.8). **17.1–3** Although Hushai will mislead Absalom into believing otherwise, Ahithophel's plan is sound; the best chance of defeating David is to attack *while he is weary and discouraged*, but if he is given time he will be able to draw on his extensive experience as a guerrilla warrior and organize a formidable resistance.

who are with him will flee. I will strike
down only the king, 3and I will bring all
the people back to you as a bride comes
home to her husband. You seek the life of
only one man,[t] and all the people will be
at peace." 4The advice pleased Absalom
and all the elders of Israel.

The Counsel of Hushai

5 Then Absalom said, "Call Hushai
the Archite also, and let us hear too what
he has to say." 6When Hushai came to
Absalom, Absalom said to him, "This is
what Ahithophel has said; shall we do as
he advises? If not, you tell us." 7Then Hu-
shai said to Absalom, "This time the coun-
sel that Ahithophel has given is not good."
8Hushai continued, "You know that your
father and his men are warriors, and that
they are enraged, like a bear robbed of
her cubs in the field. Besides, your father
is expert in war; he will not spend the
night with the troops. 9Even now he has
hidden himself in one of the pits, or in
some other place. And when some of our
troops[u] fall at the first attack, whoever
hears it will say, 'There has been a slaugh-
ter among the troops who follow Absa-
lom.' 10Then even the valiant warrior,
whose heart is like the heart of a lion, will
utterly melt with fear; for all Israel knows
that your father is a warrior, and that
those who are with him are valiant war-
riors. 11But my counsel is that all Israel be
gathered to you, from Dan to Beer-sheba,
like the sand by the sea for multitude, and
that you go to battle in person. 12So we
shall come upon him in whatever place he
may be found, and we shall light on him
as the dew falls on the ground; and he will
not survive, nor will any of those with
him. 13If he withdraws into a city, then all
Israel will bring ropes to that city, and we
shall drag it into the valley, until not even
a pebble is to be found there." 14Absalom
and all the men of Israel said, "The coun-
sel of Hushai the Archite is better than
the counsel of Ahithophel." For the LORD
had ordained to defeat the good counsel
of Ahithophel, so that the LORD might
bring ruin on Absalom.

Hushai Warns David to Escape

15 Then Hushai said to the priests Za-
dok and Abiathar, "Thus and so did
Ahithophel counsel Absalom and the el-
ders of Israel; and thus and so I have
counseled. 16Therefore send quickly and
tell David, 'Do not lodge tonight at the
fords of the wilderness, but by all means
cross over; otherwise the king and all the
people who are with him will be swal-
lowed up.'" 17Jonathan and Ahimaaz
were waiting at En-rogel; a servant-girl
used to go and tell them, and they would
go and tell King David; for they could not
risk being seen entering the city. 18But a
boy saw them, and told Absalom; so both
of them went away quickly, and came to
the house of a man at Bahurim, who had
a well in his courtyard; and they went
down into it. 19The man's wife took a cov-
ering, stretched it over the well's mouth,
and spread out grain on it; and nothing
was known of it. 20When Absalom's ser-
vants came to the woman at the house,
they said, "Where are Ahimaaz and Jona-
than?" The woman said to them, "They
have crossed over the brook[v] of water."
And when they had searched and could
not find them, they returned to Je-
rusalem.
21 After they had gone, the men came
up out of the well, and went and told King

t Gk: Heb *like the return of the whole (is) the man whom you seek* *u* Gk Mss: Heb *some of them*
v Meaning of Heb uncertain

17.5–14 Using specious arguments Hushai persuades Absalom and his supporters to reject the plan of Ahithophel. **17.11** The key to Hushai's strategy is to buy time for David; the size of Absalom's army will not matter if David is able to deploy his expert warriors in rugged terrain. For the expression *from Dan to Beer-sheba,* see note on 3.9–10. **17.14** It was the narrator's conviction that the shaping force in these events was the Lord's determination to *bring ruin on Absalom.*

17.15–29 Absalom prefers Hushai's counsel over that of Ahithophel, thus allowing David to escape and regroup. **17.15** David left *Zadok and Abiathar* behind in Jerusalem for the specific purpose of sending messages like this one (see 15.27–29). **17.16** For *the fords of the wilderness,* see 15.28. **17.17** *Jonathan and Ahimaaz,* the sons of Zadok and Abiathar (see 15.27), carry the actual messages. *En-rogel* is the spring in the Wadi Kidron (see note on 15.23) southwest of the City of David. **17.18** For *Bahurim* see note on 3.16; 16.5. **17.20** The obscure expression translated *the brook of water* may suggest that the woman is saying that Ahimaaz and Jonathan have crossed

David. They said to David, "Go and cross
the water quickly; for thus and so has
Ahithophel counseled against you." 22 So
David and all the people who were with
him set out and crossed the Jordan; by
daybreak not one was left who had not
crossed the Jordan.
23 When Ahithophel saw that his
counsel was not followed, he saddled his
donkey and went off home to his own city.
He set his house in order, and hanged
himself; he died and was buried in the
tomb of his father.
24 Then David came to Mahanaim,
while Absalom crossed the Jordan with all
the men of Israel. 25 Now Absalom had
set Amasa over the army in the place of
Joab. Amasa was the son of a man named
Ithra the Ishmaelite,[w] who had married
Abigal daughter of Nahash, sister of
Zeruiah, Joab's mother. 26 The Israelites
and Absalom encamped in the land of
Gilead.
27 When David came to Mahanaim,
Shobi son of Nahash from Rabbah of the
Ammonites, and Machir son of Ammiel
from Lo-debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite
from Rogelim, 28 brought beds, basins,
and earthen vessels, wheat, barley, meal,
parched grain, beans and lentils,[x]
29 honey and curds, sheep, and cheese
from the herd, for David and the people
with him to eat; for they said, "The troops
are hungry and weary and thirsty in the
wilderness."

The Defeat of Absalom's Army

18 Then David mustered the men
who were with him, and set over
them commanders of thousands and com-
manders of hundreds. 2 And David di-
vided the army into three groups:[y] one
third under the command of Joab, one
third under the command of Abishai son
of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, and one third
under the command of Ittai the Gittite.
The king said to the men, "I myself will
also go out with you." 3 But the men said,
"You shall not go out. For if we flee, they
will not care about us. If half of us die,
they will not care about us. But you are
worth ten thousand of us;[z] therefore it is
better that you send us help from the
city." 4 The king said to them, "Whatever
seems best to you I will do." So the king
stood at the side of the gate, while all the
army marched out by hundreds and by
thousands. 5 The king ordered Joab and
Abishai and Ittai, saying, "Deal gently for
my sake with the young man Absalom."
And all the people heard when the king
gave orders to all the commanders con-
cerning Absalom.
6 So the army went out into the field
against Israel; and the battle was fought
in the forest of Ephraim. 7 The men of
Israel were defeated there by the servants

w 1 Chr 2.17: Heb *Israelite* *x* Heb *and lentils and parched grain* *y* Gk: Heb *sent forth the army* *z* Gk Vg Symmachus: Heb *for now there are ten thousand such as we*

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the Jordan. **17.23** Ahithophel's *own city* was Giloh (see 15.12); this report of his death may have had a shaping effect on Matthew's account of the suicide of Judas, who also *hanged himself* (see Mt 27.5). **17.24** *Mahanaim*, once the capital of his enemy, Ishbaal (see 2.8), is now a place of refuge for David. **17.25** *Amasa* was a kinsman of David by marriage and therefore a Judahite; after the revolt David will attempt to placate Absalom's Judahite supporters by putting Amasa in charge of the army (see 19.13). The information about Amasa's parentage is textually uncertain; evidently he was the child of an *Ishmaelite*, i.e., a nomad, and a niece of David's sister *Zeruiah* (see 1 Sam 26.6). **17.26** For *the land of Gilead*, which here simply refers to the east bank of the Jordan, see 2.9. **17.27** *Shobi son of Nahash*, the Ammonite king introduced in 1 Sam 10.27, is mentioned nowhere else; it is possible that the help he gives David here is the act of loyalty David refers to at the time of Nahash's death, which may have occurred after Absalom's revolt (see note on 10.2). For *Machir* and his hometown of *Lo-debar*, see note on 9.4. In return for his help here, *Barzillai* will receive an invitation to live at court in Jerusalem (see 19.33); although he will decline, his sons will become houseguests of Solomon (see 1 Kings 2.7). The location of *Rogelim* is unknown.

18.1–18 In the ensuing battle, troops loyal to David defeat the followers of Absalom, who is killed by Joab. **18.2** For *Abishai*, see 2.18. For *Ittai the Gittite*, see 15.19–21. **18.3** David receives similar advice in 21.17. **18.5** This narrative seems to be addressed to citizens of Israel and especially Judah who were outraged by the battlefield execution of Absalom; in order to shield David from blame, the author gives special stress not only to his absence from the battle (vv. 3–5) but also to his insistence on the lenient treatment of Absalom. **18.6** The *forest of Ephraim* seems to have been a wooded region in Transjordan; it may have been settled by Ephraimites moving east

of David, and the slaughter there was
great on that day, twenty thousand men.
8 The battle spread over the face of all the
country; and the forest claimed more vic-
tims that day than the sword.

9 Absalom happened to meet the ser-
vants of David. Absalom was riding on his
mule, and the mule went under the thick
branches of a great oak. His head caught
fast in the oak, and he was left hanging[a]
between heaven and earth, while the mule
that was under him went on. 10 A man saw
it, and told Joab, "I saw Absalom hanging
in an oak." 11 Joab said to the man who
told him, "What, you saw him! Why then
did you not strike him there to the
ground? I would have been glad to give
you ten pieces of silver and a belt." 12 But
the man said to Joab, "Even if I felt in my
hand the weight of a thousand pieces of
silver, I would not raise my hand against
the king's son; for in our hearing the king
commanded you and Abishai and Ittai,
saying: For my sake protect the young
man Absalom! 13 On the other hand, if I
had dealt treacherously against his life[b]
(and there is nothing hidden from the
king), then you yourself would have stood
aloof." 14 Joab said, "I will not waste time
like this with you." He took three spears
in his hand, and thrust them into the
heart of Absalom, while he was still alive
in the oak. 15 And ten young men, Joab's
armor-bearers, surrounded Absalom and
struck him, and killed him.

16 Then Joab sounded the trumpet,
and the troops came back from pursuing
Israel, for Joab restrained the troops.
17 They took Absalom, threw him into a
great pit in the forest, and raised over him
a very great heap of stones. Meanwhile all
the Israelites fled to their homes. 18 Now
Absalom in his lifetime had taken and set
up for himself a pillar that is in the King's
Valley, for he said, "I have no son to keep
my name in remembrance"; he called the
pillar by his own name. It is called Absa-
lom's Monument to this day.

David Hears of Absalom's Death

19 Then Ahimaaz son of Zadok said,
"Let me run, and carry tidings to the king
that the LORD has delivered him from the
power of his enemies." 20 Joab said to him,
"You are not to carry tidings today; you
may carry tidings another day, but today
you shall not do so, because the king's son
is dead." 21 Then Joab said to a Cushite,
"Go, tell the king what you have seen."
The Cushite bowed before Joab, and ran.
22 Then Ahimaaz son of Zadok said again
to Joab, "Come what may, let me also run
after the Cushite." And Joab said, "Why
will you run, my son, seeing that you have
no reward[c] for the tidings?" 23 "Come
what may," he said, "I will run." So he said
to him, "Run." Then Ahimaaz ran by the
way of the Plain, and outran the Cushite.

24 Now David was sitting between the
two gates. The sentinel went up to the
roof of the gate by the wall, and when he

a Gk Syr Tg: Heb *was put* b Another reading is *at the risk of my life* c Meaning of Heb uncertain

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from their home in the central hills. **18.8** A battle in which *the forest claimed more victims . . . than the sword* would be greatly to the advantage of David's army, which in contrast to Absalom's conscript militia was a professional fighting force with extensive experience of guerrilla warfare; this situation shows the cleverness of Hushai's disingenuous advice to Absalom (see 17.5–14). **18.9** The *mule* was the customary mount of royalty (see 13.29). The traditional interpretation of Absalom's accident, which is maintained by many modern scholars, is that he is caught in the tree by his remarkable hair (see 14.26), the cause of his pride now becoming the cause of his ruin. **18.18** This verse was added by an editor to identify a monument known in his time (*to this day*). Elsewhere (Gen 14.17) *the King's Valley* is called "the Valley of Shaveh," and it may have been the name of a broad section of the Wadi Kidron (see note on 15.23) or the place of its confluence with the Valley of Hinnom. Absalom's assertion that he has *no son* conflicts with 14.27. The reference to *Absalom's Monument* here has led to the designation of a spectacular tomb from the Hellenistic or Roman period in the Wadi Kidron as "Absalom's Tomb."

18.19–32 Two messengers inform David of the outcome of the battle. **18.19** *Ahimaaz son of Zadok* (see 15.27; 17.17) is unaware of the death of Absalom (see v. 29). **18.20–21** Joab knows that if he tells Ahimaaz, who has always been loyal to David's wishes, that Absalom has been slain despite David's request to the contrary (see 18.5), Ahimaaz will make an unfavorable report to the king. So Joab declines Ahimaaz's offer to report the news to David and gives the assignment to a *Cushite*, probably an Ethiopian or Nubian. **18.23** The *way of the Plain* is the lower Jordan Valley—the rougher but the shorter route to Jerusalem.

looked up, he saw a man running alone.
25 The sentinel shouted and told the king.
The king said, "If he is alone, there are
tidings in his mouth." He kept coming,
and drew near. 26 Then the sentinel saw
another man running; and the sentinel
called to the gatekeeper and said, "See,
another man running alone!" The king
said, "He also is bringing tidings." 27 The
sentinel said, "I think the running of the
first one is like the running of Ahimaaz
son of Zadok." The king said, "He is a
good man, and comes with good tidings."
28 Then Ahimaaz cried out to the
king, "All is well!" He prostrated himself
before the king with his face to the
ground, and said, "Blessed be the LORD
your God, who has delivered up the men
who raised their hand against my lord the
king." 29 The king said, "Is it well with the
young man Absalom?" Ahimaaz answered, "When Joab sent your servant,[d] I
saw a great tumult, but I do not know
what it was." 30 The king said, "Turn
aside, and stand here." So he turned
aside, and stood still.
31 Then the Cushite came; and the
Cushite said, "Good tidings for my lord
the king! For the LORD has vindicated you
this day, delivering you from the power of
all who rose up against you." 32 The king
said to the Cushite, "Is it well with the
young man Absalom?" The Cushite answered, "May the enemies of my lord the
king, and all who rise up to do you harm,
be like that young man."

David Mourns for Absalom

33[e] The king was deeply moved, and
went up to the chamber over the gate, and
wept; and as he went, he said, "O my son
Absalom, my son, my son Absalom!
Would I had died instead of you,
O Absalom, my son, my son!"
19 It was told Joab, "The king is
weeping and mourning for Absalom." 2 So the victory that day was turned
into mourning for all the troops; for the
troops heard that day, "The king is grieving for his son." 3 The troops stole into the
city that day as soldiers steal in who are
ashamed when they flee in battle. 4 The
king covered his face, and the king cried
with a loud voice, "O my son Absalom,
O Absalom, my son, my son!" 5 Then Joab
came into the house to the king, and said,
"Today you have covered with shame the
faces of all your officers who have saved
your life today, and the lives of your sons
and your daughters, and the lives of your
wives and your concubines, 6 for love
of those who hate you and for hatred of
those who love you. You have made it
clear today that commanders and officers
are nothing to you; for I perceive that if
Absalom were alive and all of us were
dead today, then you would be pleased.
7 So go out at once and speak kindly to
your servants; for I swear by the LORD,
if you do not go, not a man will stay
with you this night; and this will be worse
for you than any disaster that has come
upon you from your youth until now."
8 Then the king got up and took his seat
in the gate. The troops were all told, "See,
the king is sitting in the gate"; and all
the troops came before the king.

David Returns to Jerusalem

Meanwhile, all the Israelites had fled to
their homes. 9 All the people were disputing throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, "The king delivered us from the
hand of our enemies, and saved us from
the hand of the Philistines; and now he
has fled out of the land because of Absalom. 10 But Absalom, whom we anointed
over us, is dead in battle. Now therefore
why do you say nothing about bringing
the king back?"
11 King David sent this message to the
priests Zadok and Abiathar, "Say to the
elders of Judah, 'Why should you be the
last to bring the king back to his house?
The talk of all Israel has come to the
king.[f] 12 You are my kin, you are my
bone and my flesh; why then should you
be the last to bring back the king?' 13 And

d Heb *the king's servant, your servant* *e* Ch 19.1 in Heb *f* Gk: Heb *to the king, to his house*

18.33–19.8a Joab chides David for his excessive grief over Absalom. **19.6** The terms *love* and *hatred* refer to political loyalty. **19.8** David, by *sitting in the gate*, is assuming the traditional role of judge in Israel (cf. 1 Sam 4.12–18), thus symbolically reclaiming his sovereignty.

19.8b–15 David and the people of Judah are reconciled. **19.12** For the expression *my bone and my flesh*, see note on 5.1; David's point is that the people of Judah, his kin, should be the first to restore his rule. **19.13** To conciliate the people of Judah, who must have represented Absalom's

say to Amasa, 'Are you not my bone and
my flesh? So may God do to me, and
more, if you are not the commander of
my army from now on, in place of Joab.' "
14 Amasa[g] swayed the hearts of all the
people of Judah as one, and they sent
word to the king, "Return, both you and
all your servants." 15 So the king came
back to the Jordan; and Judah came to
Gilgal to meet the king and to bring him
over the Jordan.

David Pardons Shimei

16 Shimei son of Gera, the Benjamin-
ite, from Bahurim, hurried to come down
with the people of Judah to meet King
David; 17 with him were a thousand peo-
ple from Benjamin. And Ziba, the servant
of the house of Saul, with his fifteen sons
and his twenty servants, rushed down to
the Jordan ahead of the king, 18 while the
crossing was taking place,[h] to bring over
the king's household, and to do his
pleasure.

Shimei son of Gera fell down before the
king, as he was about to cross the Jordan,
19 and said to the king, "May my lord not
hold me guilty or remember how your
servant did wrong on the day my lord the
king left Jerusalem; may the king not bear
it in mind. 20 For your servant knows that
I have sinned; therefore, see, I have come
this day, the first of all the house of Jo-
seph to come down to meet my lord the
king." 21 Abishai son of Zeruiah answered,
"Shall not Shimei be put to death for this,
because he cursed the LORD's anointed?"
22 But David said, "What have I to do with
you, you sons of Zeruiah, that you should
today become an adversary to me? Shall
anyone be put to death in Israel this day?
For do I not know that I am this day king
over Israel?" 23 The king said to Shimei,
"You shall not die." And the king gave
him his oath.

David Meets with Mephibosheth

24 Mephibosheth[i] grandson of Saul
came down to meet the king; he had not
taken care of his feet, or trimmed his
beard, or washed his clothes, from the day
the king left until the day he came back in
safety. 25 When he came from Jerusalem
to meet the king, the king said to him,
"Why did you not go with me, Mephibo-
sheth?"[i] 26 He answered, "My lord,
O king, my servant deceived me; for your
servant said to him, 'Saddle a donkey for
me,[j] so that I may ride on it and go with
the king.' For your servant is lame. 27 He
has slandered your servant to my lord the
king. But my lord the king is like the an-
gel of God; do therefore what seems good
to you. 28 For all my father's house were
doomed to death before my lord the king;
but you set your servant among those who
eat at your table. What further right have
I, then, to appeal to the king?" 29 The
king said to him, "Why speak any more of
your affairs? I have decided: you and Ziba
shall divide the land." 30 Mephibosheth[i]
said to the king, "Let him take it all, since
my lord the king has arrived home
safely."

g Heb *He* *h* Cn: Heb *the ford crossed*
i Or *Merib-baal*: See 4.4 note *j* Gk Syr Vg: Heb *said, 'I will saddle a donkey for myself*

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chief support, David appoints his kinsman *Amasa* (see 17.25) as commander of the army *in place of Joab*, who executed Absalom. **19.15** The ancient shrine of *Gilgal* had special associations with kingship; see note on 1 Sam 10.8.

19.16–23 Shimei asks for David's forgiveness. **19.16** The account of David's hostile encounter with *Shimei* is found in 16.5–14. **19.17** For *Ziba*, the servant of Mephibosheth, see 9.2; 16.1–4. **19.20** Knowing that his life is in jeopardy, Shimei pleads that he is *the first of all the house of Joseph*, i.e., the first non-Judahite, to welcome the king on his return. **19.21** True to his character (see 2.18; 1 Sam 26.8) and consistent with his role in the earlier Shimei incident (see 16.9), *Abishai* proposes a violent reaction to Shimei's reappearance; he believes that Shimei has committed a capital crime *because he cursed the LORD's anointed*, who is sacrosanct (see 1 Sam 24.6–7). **19.23** David grants Shimei a royal pardon now, but at the end of his own life he will consign the Benjaminite to death (see 1 Kings 2.8–9, 36–46).

19.24–30 The background to this section is the dispute between Mephibosheth and Ziba, described in 9.1–13; 16.1–4. **19.24** The statement that Mephibosheth had not *taken care of his feet* is obscure; it may relate to his crippled condition (see 9.13). **19.27** For the comparison of the king's wisdom to that of *the angel of God*, see 14.17. **19.28** By *my father's house*, Mephibosheth means the house of Saul. *Those who eat at your table*. See note on 9.7.

David's Kindness to Barzillai

31 Now Barzillai the Gileadite had
come down from Rogelim; he went on
with the king to the Jordan, to escort him
over the Jordan. 32 Barzillai was a very
aged man, eighty years old. He had pro-
vided the king with food while he stayed
at Mahanaim, for he was a very wealthy
man. 33 The king said to Barzillai, "Come
over with me, and I will provide for you in
Jerusalem at my side." 34 But Barzillai said
to the king, "How many years have I still
to live, that I should go up with the king
to Jerusalem? 35 Today I am eighty years
old; can I discern what is pleasant and
what is not? Can your servant taste what
he eats or what he drinks? Can I still listen
to the voice of singing men and singing
women? Why then should your servant be
an added burden to my lord the king?
36 Your servant will go a little way over the
Jordan with the king. Why should the
king recompense me with such a reward?
37 Please let your servant return, so that I
may die in my own town, near the graves
of my father and my mother. But here is
your servant Chimham; let him go over
with my lord the king; and do for him
whatever seems good to you." 38 The king
answered, "Chimham shall go over with
me, and I will do for him whatever seems
good to you; and all that you desire of me
I will do for you." 39 Then all the people
crossed over the Jordan, and the king
crossed over; the king kissed Barzillai and
blessed him, and he returned to his own
home. 40 The king went on to Gilgal, and
Chimham went on with him; all the peo-
ple of Judah, and also half the people of
Israel, brought the king on his way.

41 Then all the people of Israel came
to the king, and said to him, "Why have
our kindred the people of Judah stolen
you away, and brought the king and his
household over the Jordan, and all Da-
vid's men with him?" 42 All the people of
Judah answered the people of Israel, "Be-
cause the king is near of kin to us. Why
then are you angry over this matter? Have
we eaten at all at the king's expense? Or
has he given us any gift?" 43 But the peo-
ple of Israel answered the people of Ju-
dah, "We have ten shares in the king, and
in David also we have more than you.
Why then did you despise us? Were we
not the first to speak of bringing back our
king?" But the words of the people of Ju-
dah were fiercer than the words of the
people of Israel.

The Rebellion of Sheba

20 Now a scoundrel named Sheba
son of Bichri, a Benjaminite, hap-
pened to be there. He sounded the trum-
pet and cried out,

"We have no portion in David,
no share in the son of Jesse!
Everyone to your tents, O Israel!"

2 So all the people of Israel withdrew
from David and followed Sheba son of
Bichri; but the people of Judah followed
their king steadfastly from the Jordan
to Jerusalem.

3 David came to his house at Jerusa-
lem; and the king took the ten concubines
whom he had left to look after the house,
and put them in a house under guard,
and provided for them, but did not go
in to them. So they were shut up until
the day of their death, living as if in
widowhood.

4 Then the king said to Amasa, "Call
the men of Judah together to me within
three days, and be here yourself." 5 So
Amasa went to summon Judah; but he de-
layed beyond the set time that had been
appointed him. 6 David said to Abishai,
"Now Sheba son of Bichri will do us more
harm than Absalom; take your lord's ser-
vants and pursue him, or he will find for-
tified cities for himself, and escape from

19.31–43 Barzillai was one of those who befriended David when he arrived in Mahanaim after his flight from Jerusalem (see 17.27–29). **19.35** Barzillai declines David's invitation on the grounds that he is too old to be able to enjoy life at court. **19.37** Many scholars think that *Chimham* was one of the sons of Barzillai commended by David on his deathbed in 1 Kings 2.6. **19.41–43** In these verses *the people* refers to the tribal militia of Judah or Israel; the issue is sectional hostility between the Judahites, to whom David is *near of kin*, and the Israelites, who claim *ten shares in the king* because of the ten northern tribes.

20.1–22 The slogan of this revolt contains an anticipation of the revolt that ends the union of Judah and Israel after the death of Solomon (see 1 Kings 12.16). **20.3** David arrests *the ten concubines* claimed by Absalom during his revolt

us." 7 Joab's men went out after him,
along with the Cherethites, the Pelethites,
and all the warriors; they went out from
Jerusalem to pursue Sheba son of Bichri.
8 When they were at the large stone that is
in Gibeon, Amasa came to meet them.
Now Joab was wearing a soldier's garment
and over it was a belt with a sword in its
sheath fastened at his waist; as he went
forward it fell out. 9 Joab said to Amasa,
"Is it well with you, my brother?" And
Joab took Amasa by the beard with his
right hand to kiss him. 10 But Amasa did
not notice the sword in Joab's hand; Joab
struck him in the belly so that his entrails
poured out on the ground, and he died.
He did not strike a second blow.

Then Joab and his brother Abishai pursued Sheba son of Bichri. 11 And one of Joab's men took his stand by Amasa, and said, "Whoever favors Joab, and whoever is for David, let him follow Joab." 12 Amasa lay wallowing in his blood on the highway, and the man saw that all the people were stopping. Since he saw that all who came by him were stopping, he carried Amasa from the highway into a field, and threw a garment over him. 13 Once he was removed from the highway, all the people went on after Joab to pursue Sheba son of Bichri.

14 Sheba[k] passed through all the tribes of Israel to Abel of Beth-maacah;[l] and all the Bichrites[m] assembled, and followed him inside. 15 Joab's forces[n] came and besieged him in Abel of Beth-maacah; they threw up a siege ramp against the city, and it stood against the rampart. Joab's forces were battering the wall to break it down. 16 Then a wise woman called from the city, "Listen! Listen! Tell Joab, 'Come here, I want to speak to you.'" 17 He came near her; and the woman said, "Are you Joab?" He answered, "I am." Then she said to him, "Listen to the words of your servant." He answered, "I am listening." 18 Then she said, "They used to say in the old days, 'Let them inquire at Abel'; and so they would settle a matter. 19 I am one of those who are peaceable and faithful in Israel; you seek to destroy a city that is a mother in Israel; why will you swallow up the heritage of the LORD?" 20 Joab answered, "Far be it from me, far be it, that I should swallow up or destroy! 21 That is not the case! But a man of the hill country of Ephraim, called Sheba son of Bichri, has lifted up his hand against King David; give him up alone, and I will withdraw from the city." The woman said to Joab, "His head shall be thrown over the wall to you." 22 Then the woman went to all the people with her wise plan. And they cut off the head of Sheba son of Bichri, and threw it out to Joab. So he blew the trumpet, and they dispersed from the city, and all went to their homes, while Joab returned to Jerusalem to the king.

David's Cabinet

23 Now Joab was in command of all the army of Israel;[o] Benaiah son of Jehoiada was in command of the Cherethites and the Pelethites; 24 Adoram was in charge of the forced labor; Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was the recorder; 25 Sheva was secretary; Zadok and Abiathar were priests; 26 and Ira the Jairite was also David's priest.

k Heb *He* *l* Compare 20.15: Heb *and Beth-maacah*
m Compare Gk Vg: Heb *Berites*
n Heb *They* *o* Cn: Heb *Joab to all the army, Israel*

(see 15.16). **20.7** For *the Cherethites* and *the Pelethites*, see note on 8.18. **20.8** The important town of *Gibeon* (see 2.12) will figure prominently in ch. 21, but the location and significance of *the large stone* is not known. **20.14** The town of *Abel of Beth-maacah* was about twelve miles north of Lake Huleh near the city of Dan. The *Bichrites* were members of the same clan as Sheba son of Bichri. **20.16** The people of Abel choose *a wise woman* to negotiate for them; her skills are the same as those of the wise woman of Tekoa employed by Joab (see 14.2). **20.18** Citing an old adage, *Let them inquire at Abel*, the woman tells Joab that he has come to a town known for its wisdom and good judgment. **20.19** With a bit of rhetorical exaggeration, the woman describes Abel as *a mother in Israel*, i.e., a principal city or metropolis.

20.23–26 Another list of David's officers appears in 8.15–18. **20.24** *Adoram* should be listed as Adoniram; he continued in office under Solomon (see 1 Kings 4.6; 5.14) and Rehoboam (1 Kings 12.18; cf. 2 Chr 10.18, "Hadoram"). He *was in charge of the forced labor*, i.e., the impressment of Israelites into work on state projects, a practice that seems to have generated strong opposition during Solomon's reign (see 1 Kings 9.21; 2 Chr 8.8). **20.26** *Ira the Jairite* was a native of Havvoth-jair in Gilead (see, e.g., Num 32.41; Deut 3.14); in contrast to later periods it seems to

David Avenges the Gibeonites

21 Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year; and David inquired of the LORD. The LORD said, "There is bloodguilt on Saul and on his house, because he put the Gibeonites to death." [2] So the king called the Gibeonites and spoke to them. (Now the Gibeonites were not of the people of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites; although the people of Israel had sworn to spare them, Saul had tried to wipe them out in his zeal for the people of Israel and Judah.) [3] David said to the Gibeonites, "What shall I do for you? How shall I make expiation, that you may bless the heritage of the LORD?" [4] The Gibeonites said to him, "It is not a matter of silver or gold between us and Saul or his house; neither is it for us to put anyone to death in Israel." He said, "What do you say that I should do for you?" [5] They said to the king, "The man who consumed us and planned to destroy us, so that we should have no place in all the territory of Israel— [6] let seven of his sons be handed over to us, and we will impale them before the LORD at Gibeon on the mountain of the LORD."[p] The king said, "I will hand them over."

7 But the king spared Mephibosheth,[q] the son of Saul's son Jonathan, because of the oath of the LORD that was between them, between David and Jonathan son of Saul. [8] The king took the two sons of Rizpah daughter of Aiah, whom she bore to Saul, Armoni and Mephibosheth;[q] and the five sons of Merab[r] daughter of Saul, whom she bore to Adriel son of Barzillai the Meholathite; [9] he gave them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they impaled them on the mountain before the LORD. The seven of them perished together. They were put to death in the first days of harvest, at the beginning of barley harvest.

10 Then Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth, and spread it on a rock for herself, from the beginning of harvest until rain fell on them from the heavens; she did not allow the birds of the air to come on the bodies[s] by day, or the wild animals by night. [11] When David was told what Rizpah daughter of Aiah, the concubine of Saul, had done, [12] David went and took the bones of Saul and the bones of his son Jonathan from the people of Jabesh-gilead, who had stolen them from the public square of Beth-shan, where the Philistines had hung them up, on the day the Philistines killed Saul on Gilboa. [13] He brought up from there the bones of Saul and the bones of his son Jonathan; and they gathered the bones of those who had been impaled. [14] They buried the bones of Saul and of his son Jonathan in the land of Benjamin in Zela, in the tomb of his father Kish; they did all that the king commanded. After that, God heeded supplications for the land.

p Cn Compare Gk and 21.9: Heb *at Gibeah of Saul, the chosen of the LORD* *q* Or *Merib-baal*: See 4.4 note *r* Two Heb Mss Syr Compare Gk: MT *Michal* *s* Heb *them*

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have been acceptable during David's reign for the king to have a private priest who was not a Levite.

21.1–14 David puts seven sons and grandsons of Saul to death to avert a famine caused by bloodguilt resulting from Saul's slaughter of the Gibeonites. **21.1** There is no account in the Bible of the crime against the Gibeonites for which Saul incurred *bloodguilt*, but there may have been a connection to his slaughter of the priesthood of Nob (see 1 Sam 22.6–23). **21.2** The story of Israel's unusual alliance with *the Gibeonites* is told in Josh 9. **21.6** The meaning of the term of execution translated *impale* here is unknown; it was probably some form of crucifixion. **21.7** For *the oath of the LORD* between David and Jonathan, see 1 Sam 20.12–17. **21.8** *Rizpah* was the concubine of Saul over whom Abner and Ishbaal quarreled in 3.7–11. For *Merab*, see 1 Sam 18.17–19; *Barzillai*, the father of *Adriel* (see 1 Sam 18.19), may be the same man who appears in 17.27; 19.31–40. **21.9** The textual witnesses suggest that instead of *in the first days of harvest*, the reading should be "in the days of Ziv," the old Canaanite month name also mentioned in 1 Kings 6.1, 37. **21.12** For the care of the people of Jabesh for *the bones of Saul and the bones of his son Jonathan*, see 1 Sam 31.12–13. **21.14** The meaning of the expression *in Zela, in the tomb of his father Kish* is probably "in a chamber in the tomb of his father Kish"; for Kish, see 1 Sam 9.1.

21.15–22 This section records a series of victories by David's men over Philistines descended from "the giants," possibly an ancient guild of warriors. **21.17** For *Abishai*, see 2.18; 1 Sam 26.6. The expression *quench the lamp of Israel* has

Exploits of David's Warriors

15 The Philistines went to war again
with Israel, and David went down to-
gether with his servants. They fought
against the Philistines, and David grew
weary. 16 Ishbi-benob, one of the descen-
dants of the giants, whose spear weighed
three hundred shekels of bronze, and
who was fitted out with new weapons,[t]
said he would kill David. 17 But Abishai
son of Zeruiah came to his aid, and at-
tacked the Philistine and killed him. Then
David's men swore to him, "You shall
not go out with us to battle any longer,
so that you do not quench the lamp of
Israel."

18 After this a battle took place with
the Philistines, at Gob; then Sibbecai the
Hushathite killed Saph, who was one of
the descendants of the giants. 19 Then
there was another battle with the Philis-
tines at Gob; and Elhanan son of Jaare-
oregim, the Bethlehemite, killed Goliath
the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was
like a weaver's beam. 20 There was again
war at Gath, where there was a man of
great size, who had six fingers on each
hand, and six toes on each foot, twenty-
four in number; he too was descended
from the giants. 21 When he taunted Is-
rael, Jonathan son of David's brother
Shimei, killed him. 22 These four were de-
scended from the giants in Gath; they fell
by the hands of David and his servants.

David's Song of Thanksgiving

22 David spoke to the LORD the
words of this song on the day
when the LORD delivered him from the
hand of all his enemies, and from the
hand of Saul. 2 He said:

The LORD is my rock, my
fortress, and my deliverer,
3 my God, my rock, in whom I
take refuge,
my shield and the horn of my
salvation,
my stronghold and my refuge,
my savior; you save me from
violence.
4 I call upon the LORD, who is
worthy to be praised,
and I am saved from my
enemies.

5 For the waves of death
encompassed me,
the torrents of perdition
assailed me;
6 the cords of Sheol entangled me,
the snares of death
confronted me.

7 In my distress I called upon the
LORD;
to my God I called.
From his temple he heard my
voice,
and my cry came to his ears.

t Heb *was belted anew*

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no clear parallel, but for the sentiment, cf. 18.3. **21.18** The town of *Gob* is mentioned only here and in the next verse. *Sibbecai* was a native of the town of Hushah, southwest of Bethlehem (cf. 1 Chr 4.4); see also 2 Sam 23.27. **21.19** In the story as we know it (see 1 Sam 17) the *Bethlehemite* warrior who slew *Goliath the Gittite* was David. This has led scholars to suggest that *Elhanan*, who is called *son of Dodo* in 23.24, was another name for David, or, as seems more likely, that the Elhanan story caused the name Goliath to become attached secondarily to the anonymous Philistine slain by David. The description of Goliath's spear as being *like a weaver's beam* is also in 1 Sam 17.7. **21.20** At Jericho and an archaeological site in Amman, Neolithic statues have been found with six fingers and toes; the Israelites may have made similar discoveries, leading them to tell the story in this verse. **21.21** For *David's brother Shimei*, see 13.3, where he is called Shimeah.

22.1–51 This magnificent poem is preserved in two very similar versions, the present passage and Ps 18. It has two clearly discernible sections: the first (vv. 2–20) praises the Lord, as revealed in the storm, for the rescue of the psalmist from his enemies; the second section (vv. 29–51) describes the psalmist as a mighty conqueror; an intervening section (vv. 21–28) connects the two major units. The theme of conquest in the second section may have led to the poem's association with David, but features of the language show that it was composed centuries after his lifetime. **22.1** The opening verse, which is not a part of the poem itself, serves to identify the psalm with the events of David's life (cf. Pss 3; 7; 34; 51; 52; 54; 56; 57; 59; 60; 63; 142). **22.2–3** The Lord is praised under the image of a mountain refuge. **22.5–6** For the watery imagery of *Sheol*, the dark abode of the dead, cf. Jon 2.5–6a; Ps 116.3. **22.7** The Lord's *temple* is, in this case, his celestial

8 Then the earth reeled and rocked;
the foundations of the heavens trembled
and quaked, because he was angry.
9 Smoke went up from his nostrils,
and devouring fire from his mouth;
glowing coals flamed forth from him.
10 He bowed the heavens, and came down;
thick darkness was under his feet.
11 He rode on a cherub, and flew;
he was seen upon the wings of the wind.
12 He made darkness around him a canopy,
thick clouds, a gathering of water.
13 Out of the brightness before him
coals of fire flamed forth.
14 The LORD thundered from heaven;
the Most High uttered his voice.
15 He sent out arrows, and scattered them
—lightning, and routed them.
16 Then the channels of the sea were seen,
the foundations of the world were laid bare
at the rebuke of the LORD,
at the blast of the breath of his nostrils.

17 He reached from on high, he took me,
he drew me out of mighty waters.
18 He delivered me from my strong enemy,
from those who hated me;
for they were too mighty for me.
19 They came upon me in the day of my calamity,
but the LORD was my stay.
20 He brought me out into a broad place;
he delivered me, because he delighted in me.

21 The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness;
according to the cleanness of my hands he recompensed me.
22 For I have kept the ways of the LORD,
and have not wickedly departed from my God.
23 For all his ordinances were before me,
and from his statutes I did not turn aside.
24 I was blameless before him,
and I kept myself from guilt.
25 Therefore the LORD has recompensed me according to my righteousness,
according to my cleanness in his sight.

26 With the loyal you show yourself loyal;
with the blameless you show yourself blameless;
27 with the pure you show yourself pure,
and with the crooked you show yourself perverse.
28 You deliver a humble people,
but your eyes are upon the haughty to bring them down.
29 Indeed, you are my lamp,
O LORD,

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abode (cf. Ps 11.4). **22.8** The image of the cosmic thunderstorm in which the deity is present is introduced at this point. **22.9** In his anger the Lord breathes fire and smoke, as in, e.g., Deut 29.20; Isa 66.15; Ezek 21.31. **22.11** A *cherub* is a mythological creature, in this case an image of the stormcloud and the celestial mount of the God of Israel. **22.12** To the image in this verse, cf. that of Job 36.29, where the word here translated *canopy* is rendered "pavilion." **22.14** The *Most High* (Hebrew *Elyon*, a variant of Hebrew *'eli*) is an ancient divine epithet for the most senior of the gods, which Israel appropriated for its own god (cf. note on 1 Sam 2.10). **22.15** The image of *arrows . . . lightning* is also found, e.g., in Pss 77.18; 97.4; 144.6; Hab 3.11. **22.16** Cf. vv. 5–6. **22.21–28** The language in these verses is reminiscent of that of Deuteronomy; the section

the LORD lightens my darkness.
30 By you I can crush a troop,
and by my God I can leap over a wall.
31 This God—his way is perfect;
the promise of the LORD proves true;
he is a shield for all who take refuge in him.

32 For who is God, but the LORD?
And who is a rock, except our God?
33 The God who has girded me with strength[u]
has opened wide my path.[v]
34 He made my[w] feet like the feet of deer,
and set me secure on the heights.
35 He trains my hands for war,
so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze.
36 You have given me the shield of your salvation,
and your help[x] has made me great.
37 You have made me stride freely,
and my feet do not slip;
38 I pursued my enemies and destroyed them,
and did not turn back until they were consumed.
39 I consumed them; I struck them down, so that they did not rise;
they fell under my feet.
40 For you girded me with strength for the battle;
you made my assailants sink under me.
41 You made my enemies turn their backs to me,
those who hated me, and I destroyed them.
42 They looked, but there was no one to save them;
they cried to the LORD, but he did not answer them.

43 I beat them fine like the dust of the earth,
I crushed them and stamped them down like the mire of the streets.

44 You delivered me from strife with the peoples;[y]
you kept me as the head of the nations;
people whom I had not known served me.
45 Foreigners came cringing to me;
as soon as they heard of me, they obeyed me.
46 Foreigners lost heart,
and came trembling out of their strongholds.

47 The LORD lives! Blessed be my rock,
and exalted be my God, the rock of my salvation,
48 the God who gave me vengeance
and brought down peoples under me,
49 who brought me out from my enemies;
you exalted me above my adversaries,
you delivered me from the violent.

50 For this I will extol you, O LORD, among the nations,
and sing praises to your name.
51 He is a tower of salvation for his king,
and shows steadfast love to his anointed,
to David and his descendants forever.

u Q Ms Gk Syr Vg Compare Ps 18.32: MT *God is my strong refuge* *v* Meaning of Heb uncertain *w* Another reading is *his* *x* Q Ms: MT *your answering* *y* Gk: Heb *from strife with my people*

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may be an editorial connection between originally distinct poems. **22.31** The term *his way* refers to the rule or dominion of God. **22.38–46** The Lord is praised for granting the psalmist victory over his foes. **22.47** *The LORD lives!* is an oath formula, establishing what follows as a solemn declaration. **22.51** To the language of this concluding verse, cf. that of the promise of dynasty to David in ch. 7.

The Last Words of David

23 Now these are the last words of David:
The oracle of David, son of Jesse,
the oracle of the man whom God exalted,[z]
the anointed of the God of Jacob,
the favorite of the Strong One of Israel:

2 The spirit of the LORD speaks through me,
his word is upon my tongue.
3 The God of Israel has spoken,
the Rock of Israel has said to me:
One who rules over people justly,
ruling in the fear of God,
4 is like the light of morning,
like the sun rising on a cloudless morning,
gleaming from the rain on the grassy land.

5 Is not my house like this with God?
For he has made with me an everlasting covenant,
ordered in all things and secure.
Will he not cause to prosper
all my help and my desire?
6 But the godless are[a] all like thorns that are thrown away;
for they cannot be picked up with the hand;
7 to touch them one uses an iron bar
or the shaft of a spear.
And they are entirely consumed in fire on the spot.[b]

A Roster of David's Warriors

8 These are the names of the warriors whom David had: Josheb-basshebeth a Tahchemonite; he was chief of the Three;[c] he wielded his spear[d] against eight hundred whom he killed at one time.

z Q Ms: MT *who was raised on high* *a* Heb *But worthlessness* *b* Heb *in sitting* *c* Gk Vg Compare 1 Chr 11.11: Meaning of Heb uncertain *d* 1 Chr 11.11: Meaning of Heb uncertain

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23.1–7 These verses are centered on the comparison in vv. 3b–4 of a just ruler to a bright morning sun. Though it touches on timeless themes and contains late elements, such as v. 2, there are some indications that this poem is quite archaic, possibly dating to the early monarchical period (tenth century B.C.E.). **23.1** Cf. the opening of the poem to the opening of the oracles of Balaam (Num 24.3, 15), which are generally regarded as very ancient. The expression *the man whom God exalted* can be used to stress the elevation of someone without royal ancestry to the throne; cf. "the LORD will raise up for himself a king," a reference to Baasha, in 1 Kings 14.14 (cf. 1 Kings 15.27–30). The divine epithet *Strong One* is probably more concrete in its meaning—thus, "Stronghold," to which cf. the use of *fortress* and *stronghold* in 22.2–3. **23.2** This verse may be a late insertion, introducing the notion that the word of God uttered in vv. 3b–4 is a message intended not just for David but for all Israel. **23.3** To *the Rock of Israel* as a divine epithet likening the Lord to a mountain refuge, cf. *my rock* in 22.2–3. A king who rules *in the fear of God* rules not only in religious awe but also in the knowledge of divine commandments. **23.4** The just ruler is compared to a bright sun that causes vegetation to sprout after rainfall. **23.5** David says that his house is *like this*, i.e., members of his family are like the just rulers described in the previous verses; the expression *with God* means "in the opinion of God" (cf. 1 Sam 2.26). God's *everlasting covenant* with David refers to the dynastic promise made in ch. 7; see also 2 Chr 13.5; 21.7; Pss 89.19–37; 132.12; Isa 55.3; Jer 33.17, 20–22. The expression *ordered in all things and secure* draws on formal legal terminology, indicating that the covenant is clearly articulated on all points and irrevocable. **23.6–7** The text of these two verses is obscure, but they seem to draw on the metaphor of vv. 3b–4: when the bright light of the just ruler shines on those who are disloyal, they are *consumed in fire* like uprooted thorns.

23.8–39 This section is an archival relic with three sections: a report on the Three, who were distinguished warriors in David's army (vv. 8–12), an account of the exploits of Abishai and Benaiah (vv. 18–23), and a list of the Thirty, David's elite corps (vv. 24–39). **23.8** *Josheb-basshebeth* is a euphemism for "Jeshbaal," which was altered by a scribe who believed it meant "Baal exists," though it might have meant "The Lord (i.e., Yahweh) exists" (see note on 2.8); more information about him is given in 1 Chr 11.11, where he is called "Jashobeam." *Tahchemonite* is a mistake for "Hachmonite" or "son of Hachmoni" (see 1 Chr

9 Next to him among the three warriors was Eleazar son of Dodo son of Ahohi. He was with David when they defied the Philistines who were gathered there for battle. The Israelites withdrew, 10 but he stood his ground. He struck down the Philistines until his arm grew weary, though his hand clung to the sword. The LORD brought about a great victory that day. Then the people came back to him—but only to strip the dead.

11 Next to him was Shammah son of Agee, the Hararite. The Philistines gathered together at Lehi, where there was a plot of ground full of lentils; and the army fled from the Philistines. 12 But he took his stand in the middle of the plot, defended it, and killed the Philistines; and the LORD brought about a great victory.

13 Towards the beginning of harvest three of the thirty[e] chiefs went down to join David at the cave of Adullam, while a band of Philistines was encamped in the valley of Rephaim. 14 David was then in the stronghold; and the garrison of the Philistines was then at Bethlehem. 15 David said longingly, "O that someone would give me water to drink from the well of Bethlehem that is by the gate!" 16 Then the three warriors broke through the camp of the Philistines, drew water from the well of Bethlehem that was by the gate, and brought it to David. But he would not drink of it; he poured it out to the LORD, 17 for he said, "The LORD forbid that I should do this. Can I drink the blood of the men who went at the risk of their lives?" Therefore he would not drink it. The three warriors did these things.

18 Now Abishai son of Zeruiah, the brother of Joab, was chief of the Thirty.[f] With his spear he fought against three hundred men and killed them, and won a name beside the Three. 19 He was the most renowned of the Thirty,[g] and became their commander; but he did not attain to the Three.

20 Benaiah son of Jehoiada was a valiant warrior[h] from Kabzeel, a doer of great deeds; he struck down two sons of Ariel[i] of Moab. He also went down and killed a lion in a pit on a day when snow had fallen. 21 And he killed an Egyptian, a handsome man. The Egyptian had a spear in his hand; but Benaiah went against him with a staff, snatched the spear out of the Egyptian's hand, and killed him with his own spear. 22 Such were the things Benaiah son of Jehoiada did, and won a name beside the three warriors. 23 He was renowned among the Thirty, but he did not attain to the Three. And David put him in charge of his bodyguard.

24 Among the Thirty were Asahel brother of Joab; Elhanan son of Dodo of Bethlehem; 25 Shammah of Harod; Elika

e Heb adds *head* f Two Heb Mss Syr: MT *Three* g Syr Compare 1 Chr 11.25: Heb *Was he the most renowned of the Three?* h Another reading is *the son of Ish-hai* i Gk: Heb lacks *sons of*

11.11). **23.9** The Hebrew text here rendered *when they defied the Philistines who* is defective; it should be corrected to "when the Philistines defied them at Pas-dammim, and the Philistines" (cf. 1 Chr 11.13; 1 Sam 17.1). **23.11** *Lehi* was the place in Judah where Samson slew a thousand Philistines with the jawbone (Hebrew *lechi*) of an ass (see Judg 15.9–19). **23.13** The *cave of Adullam* was David's private stronghold during his days as a leader of outlaws and a refugee from Saul's justice (see 1 Sam 22.1), and the episode reported here in vv. 13–17 probably belongs to that period. For *the valley of Rephaim*, see note on 5.18. **23.15** David's remark is probably motivated more by nostalgia for his hometown of *Bethlehem* than by thirst, hence his angry reaction in vv. 16b–17 when he learns that his men have risked their lives unnecessarily. **23.16b–17** Because David regards the water as *the blood of the men who went* he pours it out on the ground in accordance with religious law (cf. Lev 17.10–13; Deut 12.23–24). **23.18** For *Abishai*, see 2.18. **23.20** For *Benaiah*, see 8.18; 20.23. *Kabzeel* was a town in southern Judah near Beersheba (Josh 15.21). The meaning of *Ariel* is unknown; if it is not a personal name (cf. Ezra 8.16) or a place name (cf. Isa 29.1–2), it might mean "altar hearth" (cf. Ezek 43.15–16). **23.21** The correct description of the Egyptian is less likely to be *a handsome man* than "a man of great stature," as in 1 Chr 11.23. **23.24** This list must predate the battle of Gibeon, in which *Asahel* was slain by Abner (see 2.18–23). *Elhanan* was the slayer of Goliath (see 21.19). **23.25** The home of these two warriors is less likely to have been the Spring of Herod near Jezreel (see Judg 7.1) than a less well known town southeast of Jerusalem. **23.26** *Helez the Paltite* was a member of the Calebite clan of Pelet (1 Chr 2.47) or a native of the town of Beth-pelet in southern Judah (Josh 15.27)

of Harod; 26 Helez the Paltite; Ira son of
Ikkesh of Tekoa; 27 Abiezer of Anathoth;
Mebunnai the Hushathite; 28 Zalmon the
Ahohite; Maharai of Netophah; 29 Heleb
son of Baanah of Netophah; Ittai son of
Ribai of Gibeah of the Benjaminites;
30 Benaiah of Pirathon; Hiddai of the tor-
rents of Gaash; 31 Abi-albon the Arba-
thite; Azmaveth of Bahurim; 32 Eliahba of
Shaalbon; the sons of Jashen: Jonathan
33 son of[j] Shammah the Hararite; Ahiam
son of Sharar the Hararite; 34 Eliphelet
son of Ahasbai of Maacah; Eliam son of
Ahithophel the Gilonite; 35 Hezro[k] of
Carmel; Paarai the Arbite; 36 Igal son
of Nathan of Zobah; Bani the Gadite;
37 Zelek the Ammonite; Naharai of Bee-
roth, the armor-bearer of Joab son of
Zeruiah; 38 Ira the Ithrite; Gareb the
Ithrite; 39 Uriah the Hittite—thirty-seven
in all.

David's Census of Israel and Judah

24 Again the anger of the LORD was
kindled against Israel, and he in-
cited David against them, saying, "Go,
count the people of Israel and Judah."
2 So the king said to Joab and the com-
manders of the army,[l] who were with
him, "Go through all the tribes of Israel,
from Dan to Beer-sheba, and take a cen-
sus of the people, so that I may know how
many there are." 3 But Joab said to the
king, "May the LORD your God increase
the number of the people a hundredfold,
while the eyes of my lord the king can still
see it! But why does my lord the king want
to do this?" 4 But the king's word pre-
vailed against Joab and the commanders

j Gk: Heb lacks *son of* *k* Another reading is *Hezrai* *l* 1 Chr 21.2 Gk: Heb *to Joab the commander of the army*

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or perhaps both. For *Tekoa*, see 14.2. **23.27** *Anathoth*, also the home of the prophet Jeremiah (see Jer 1.1), was the priestly town in Benjamin to which Abiathar was banished (1 Kings 2.26). *Mebunnai* is probably a mistake for Sibbecai (see 21.18; 1 Chr 11.29). **23.28** *Netophah* was a town southeast of Bethlehem. **23.29** *Heleb* is probably Hildai of 1 Chr 27.15, where we learn that he was descended from the judge Othniel (cf. Judg 3.7–11). *Gibeah of the Benjaminites* was Saul's home (see note on 1 Sam 9.1). **23.30** *Pirathon*. Home of the minor judge Abdon (Judg 12.13–15), may have been southwest of Shechem in Ephraim in the direction of Mount *Gaash* (Josh 24.30; Judg 2.9). **23.31** *Abi-albon the Arbathite* is probably a corruption of Abial the Beth-arabathite; the town of Beth-arabah was on the border between Judah and Benjamin (Josh 15.6; 18.18). For *Bahurim*, the home of *Azmaveth*, whose name means "The (god) Death is strong," see note on 3.16. **23.32** *Eliahba*'s hometown is called "Shaalabbin" in Josh 19.42 and "Shaalbim" in Judg 1.35; 1 Kings 4.9; it was northwest of Jerusalem in the territory of Dan. The best Greek manuscript lacks *the sons of* and calls Jashen "the Gunite" (cf. "the Gizonite" in 1 Chr 11.34); perhaps his home was Gimzo, which was not far from Shaalbim (cf. 2 Chr 28.18). **23.33** For *Shammah the Hararite*, see v. 11. **23.34** *Eliphelet*'s home is less likely to be the Aramean kingdom of *Maacah* (see 10.6) or Beth-maacah near Dan (see 20.14–15) than the territory of the Judahite clan of Maacah near Eshtemoa south of Hebron (1 Chr 4.19). For *Ahithophel the Gilonite* see 15.12; *Eliam* might be the same as the Eliam who was Bathsheba's father (see 11.3). **23.35** For *Carmel*, see note on 1 Sam 25.2. If *Paarai* was really an *Arbite*, he might have come from the town of Arab near Hebron (Josh 15.52), though we would have expected "Arabite"; but some manuscripts call him an Archite (cf. 15.32). **23.36** The original reading of this verse, partially preserved in the Septuagint and 1 Chr 11.37, was probably "Igal son of Nathan, the commander of the army of the Hagrites," a group of nomadic tribes living east of Gilead on the Transjordanian plateau (see 1 Chr 5.10, 19–22). **23.37** David must have won the loyalty of *Zelek the Ammonite* in the days before the incident described in 10.1–5 brought his friendly relations with the Ammonites to an end. For *Beeroth*, see 4.2–3. **23.38** The Ithrites were one of the leading families of Kiriath-jearim (1 Chr 2.53; cf. 1 Sam 7.1; 2 Sam 6.1). **23.39** *Uriah the Hittite* was the first husband of Bathsheba (see chs. 11–12). We can only guess how the number *thirty-seven* was arrived at; in our list there are only thirty or thirty-one.

24.1–9 David takes a census of Israel and Judah, and the Lord is displeased. **24.1** The *anger of the LORD* seems to function independently of the Lord himself in this passage, inciting David to do something that the Lord condemns; in this regard, note that the Chronicler, in his version of the story, replaces *the anger of the LORD* with "Satan" (see 1 Chr 21.1). **24.2** *From Dan to Beer-sheba*. See note on 3.9–10. **24.3** Joab's counsel (cf. 19.5–8) about the prospect of a census is rooted in the notion that its primary purpose is to determine the number of men eligible for military service and soldiers on active duty are subject to a strict regimen of ritual procedures and are especially vulnerable, therefore, to cultic dangers (see Ex 30.11); thus the plague that results is no sur-

of the army. So Joab and the commanders of the army went out from the presence of the king to take a census of the people of Israel. 5 They crossed the Jordan, and began from[m] Aroer and from the city that is in the middle of the valley, toward Gad and on to Jazer. 6 Then they came to Gilead, and to Kadesh in the land of the Hittites;[n] and they came to Dan, and from Dan[o] they went around to Sidon, 7 and came to the fortress of Tyre and to all the cities of the Hivites and Canaanites; and they went out to the Negeb of Judah at Beer-sheba. 8 So when they had gone through all the land, they came back to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days. 9 Joab reported to the king the number of those who had been recorded: in Israel there were eight hundred thousand soldiers able to draw the sword, and those of Judah were five hundred thousand.

The Census Plague

10 But afterward, David was stricken to the heart because he had numbered the people. David said to the LORD, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done. But now, O LORD, I pray you, take away the guilt of your servant; for I have done very foolishly." 11 When David rose in the morning, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying, 12 "Go and say to David: Thus says the LORD: Three things I offer[p] you; choose one of them, and I will do it to you." 13 So Gad came to David and told him; he asked him, "Shall three[q] years of famine come to you on your land? Or will you flee three months before your foes while they pursue you? Or shall there be three days' pestilence in your land? Now consider, and decide what answer I shall return to the one who sent me." 14 Then David said to Gad, "I am in great distress; let us fall into the hand of the LORD, for his mercy is great; but let me not fall into human hands."

15 So the LORD sent a pestilence on Israel from that morning until the appointed time; and seventy thousand of the people died, from Dan to Beer-sheba. 16 But when the angel stretched out his hand toward Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD relented concerning the evil, and said to the angel who was bringing destruction among the people, "It is enough; now stay your hand." The angel of the LORD was then by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. 17 When David saw the angel who was destroying

m Gk Mss: Heb *encamped in Aroer south of*
n Gk: Heb *to the land of Tahtim-hodshi*
o Cn Compare Gk: Heb *they came to Dan-jaan and*
p Or *hold over* *q* 1 Chr 21.12 Gk: Heb *seven*

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prise. **24.5–7** The census itinerary seems to surround the kingdom, but perhaps we are to understand that it includes the interior areas as well. *Aroer* was in southern Transjordan at the southeast corner of David's kingdom (see Deut 4.48; Josh 12.2); *Gad* was the Israelite tribe that inhabited this region (see Josh 13.8–13, 24–28; notes on 1 Sam 10.27; 13.7); *Jazer* was situated on the Israelite-Ammonite boundary. **24.6** For *Gilead*, see note on 2.9. *Kadesh in the land of the Hittites* ought to be Kadesh on the Orontes in Syria, but this is much too far north and Kadesh of Naphtali, near Lake Huleh, seems more likely; in any case, the text is suspicious. *Dan* was the traditional northern border of the promised land (cf. v. 2); *Sidon* was an important Phoenician city, but in this case it probably designates Phoenicia as a whole, modern Lebanon. **24.7** The *fortress of Tyre* was the northwest turning point in the census; it seems to refer to the Phoenician capital, but it is more likely to be an Israelite-Phoenician border fortification. The *cities of the Hivites and Canaanites* were probably the towns along the coastal plain west of Israel and Judah; the census is now proceeding southward. The *Negeb of Judah* was the southern desert, and *Beer-sheba* was the traditional southern border corresponding to Dan in v. 6. **24.9** Modern scholarship has still not learned how to interpret population statistics of the kind expressed here; they are much too high to correspond to historical reality.

24.10–17 David's census provokes divine punishment in the form of a pestilence sent against Israel. **24.10** David's change of heart is probably a result of his realization of the ritual danger in which he has placed his subjects, something Joab understood from the beginning. **24.11** The *prophet Gad*, about whom we know very little, made his first appearance in 1 Sam 22.5; he may have been David's personal seer. **24.14** The *hand of the LORD* is plague, as in, e.g., 1 Sam 5.6. **24.15** The cause of the *pestilence* is probably the ritual jeopardy brought on by a census (see note on 24.3); the cause is explained differently in 1 Chr 21.6–7. **24.16** The direct agent of the plague, *the angel*, is restrained by the Lord in order to protect Jerusalem; for *Araunah the Jebusite*, see the section that follows.

the people, he said to the LORD, "I alone
have sinned, and I alone have done wick-
edly; but these sheep, what have they
done? Let your hand, I pray, be against
me and against my father's house."

The Threshing Floor of Araunah the Jebusite

18 That day Gad came to David and
said to him, "Go up and erect an altar to
the LORD on the threshing floor of Arau-
nah the Jebusite." 19 Following Gad's in-
structions, David went up, as the LORD
had commanded. 20 When Araunah
looked down, he saw the king and his ser-
vants coming toward him; and Araunah
went out and prostrated himself before
the king with his face to the ground.
21 Araunah said, "Why has my lord the
king come to his servant?" David said, "To
buy the threshing floor from you in order
to build an altar to the LORD, so that the
plague may be averted from the people."
22 Then Araunah said to David, "Let my
lord the king take and offer up what
seems good to him; here are the oxen for
the burnt offering, and the threshing
sledges and the yokes of the oxen for the
wood. 23 All this, O king, Araunah gives
to the king." And Araunah said to the
king, "May the LORD your God respond
favorably to you."

24 But the king said to Araunah, "No,
but I will buy them from you for a price;
I will not offer burnt offerings to the
LORD my God that cost me nothing." So
David bought the threshing floor and the
oxen for fifty shekels of silver. 25 David
built there an altar to the LORD, and of-
fered burnt offerings and offerings of
well-being. So the LORD answered his sup-
plication for the land, and the plague was
averted from Israel.

24.18–25 David purchases a piece of land that will become the site of the altar of the Jerusalem temple; cf. the more detailed account in 1 Chr 21–22. **24.18** In the ancient world *the threshing floor* was thought of as a place where divine power might manifest itself; cf. 6.6; Judg 6.37; 1 Kings 22.10. The name *Araunah* is not Semitic, and scholars have proposed that his ancestry was Hurrian or Hittite; the pertinent fact for this account, however, is that he is a *Jebusite,* a member of the pre-Israelite population of Jerusalem (see note on 5.6). **24.21–24** Cf. Abraham's negotiations with the people of Hebron in Gen 23.3–16.

1 KINGS

Content

THE BOOKS OF 1 AND 2 KINGS were originally a single literary work that provided a continuous account of Israel's history from the death of David and the accession of Solomon (ca. 970 B.C.E.) to the release of the exiled King Jehoiachin from prison in Babylon (561/60 B.C.E.). Within this larger work, 1 Kings covers the end of David's reign and the reign of Solomon (1 Kings 1–11), the division of Israel into the two separate kingdoms of Israel and Judah (1 Kings 12), and the history of the two kingdoms to the death of the Israelite king Ahab and the succession of his son Ahaziah (1 Kings 13–22).

Name and Canonical Position

The division of Kings into two separate books took place in Hebrew texts in the Middle Ages under the influence of much earlier Greek and Latin translations, which saw Kings as the continuation of a history of Israelite kingship beginning in 1 Samuel with an account of Saul's accession. Within this larger history, 1 and 2 Kings constituted the third and fourth books of Reigns or Kingdoms. In Jewish tradition 1 and 2 Kings are part of the division of the Bible known as the Former Prophets, which consists of the books of Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings. Together these books recount Israel's history from the conquest of Canaan to the end of the monarchy and the beginning of the exile. Modern scholars usually refer to them as the Deuteronomistic History because they share similar literary styles and theological outlooks and appear to be heavily influenced by the book of Deuteronomy.

Literary Character

The books of Kings trace a continuous history of the period that they cover, but they make no claim to be completely original or comprehensive. At a number of points in the narrative readers are referred to external sources, such as the Book

of the Acts of Solomon (1 Kings 11.41), the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah (e.g., 1 Kings 14.29; 15.7, 23; 22.45), and the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel (e.g., 1 Kings 14.19; 15.31; 16.5, 14). These works, none of which has survived, presumably contained additional information on the reigns of the kings being discussed and may have provided some of the information incorporated in Kings. Scholars also suspect that other sources, both written and oral, may have been used during the process of composition. Additional records from temple or palace archives may lie behind the account of Solomon's court and building activities (1 Kings 4–7), while traditional collections of prophetic stories may form the basis of the history of the Northern Kingdom (Israel) from Ahab to Jehu (1 Kings 17–2 Kings 10).

Although Kings presents readers with a coherent history of Israel, the work contains enough shifts in literary style and point of view to make scholars suspect that it has had a complex literary history. While some specialists maintain that Kings is basically the work of a single author and attribute the shifts to the various sources that were employed in the composition, others have suggested that Kings was originally written in the preexilic period and then revised one or more times. There is still much disagreement about the details of the book's editorial history, but many scholars advocate an original edition in the time of Hezekiah (ca. 715–687/6 B.C.E.) or Josiah (ca. 640–609 B.C.E.), with final editing taking place sometime early in the exile (586–539 B.C.E.).

In addition to creating an impression of literary unity by presenting events in rough chronological sequence, Kings also uses other devices to give a coherent structure to the whole work. The most obvious of these devices are the formulaic introductions and conclusions that are used to frame the stories of individual rulers. The reign of each king is introduced with a note on the date of his accession, calculated according to the regnal year of the king in the neighboring kingdom (e.g., 1 Kings 15.1, 25). This system of correlative dating creates insoluble chronological problems within the whole work, but it has the effect of stressing the fundamental unity of Israel and Judah, even though the two kingdoms were technically separate political entities throughout much of their history. (On the problems of chronology in 1 and 2 Kings, see the table, "Chronology of the Kings of the Divided Monarchy," at 1 Kings 12.) The note of the king's accession is followed by an indication of the length of his reign (1 Kings 15.2, 25) and, in the case of Judean kings, by a record of his age at accession and the name of his mother (1 Kings 15.2; 22.42). The king's reign is then evaluated by the historian, and sometimes additional information is provided (1 Kings 15.3–5, 26). At the end of the account, readers are referred to other literary works for additional data. The king's death, burial, and successor are then recorded (1 Kings 15.8, 27–28). Another feature of the literary structure of Kings is the use of the motif of prophecy and fulfillment, particularly in the history of the Northern Kingdom (1 Kings 13–2 Kings 17). Whenever the

narrative records a prophet's words concerning the fate of a king or dynasty, the fulfillment of that prophecy is usually noted (e.g., 1 Kings 14.7–11; 15.29–30).

Message

Although the books of Kings in fact contain much historical information, their overall interest is religious rather than historiographic in the modern sense. Kings clearly reflects the theological concerns of the book of Deuteronomy, although there is no unambiguous literary relationship between the two. The theology of Kings is most obvious in the evaluations made of each king and in the occasional comments on crucial historical events, such as the fall of the Northern Kingdom (2 Kings 17.1–23). Underlying this theology is the Deuteronomic principle that the Lord is Israel's only God (Deut 6.4). The worship of other gods is forbidden, and all of the Lord's covenant laws must be obeyed, including the requirement that the Lord may legitimately be worshiped in only one place (Deut 12). According to Kings, all of the Northern kings followed the evil example of their ancestor Jeroboam, who violated divine law by setting up rival sanctuaries outside of Jerusalem and by encouraging the people to worship the bull images that he had set up in them (1 Kings 12.25–33). Later Northern kings continued to worship other gods, particularly the Canaanite god Baal, and refused prophetic demands for reform. For these crimes the Northern Kingdom was eventually destroyed (2 Kings 17.1–23). In Judah Solomon's willingness to allow the worship of other gods was punished by the loss of the Northern tribes (1 Kings 11). Yet, God's promise that David would have an eternal dynasty remained firm (2 Sam 7.1–17), in spite of the fact that Judean kings allowed irregular worship at sanctuaries outside of Jerusalem until the time of Hezekiah. Eventually, however, Judah too followed the evil ways of the Northern Kingdom and was punished. Jerusalem was destroyed, its inhabitants were exiled, and the monarchy came to an end. *Robert R. Wilson*

The Struggle for the Succession

1 King David was old and advanced in years; and although they covered him with clothes, he could not get warm. 2 So his servants said to him, "Let a young virgin be sought for my lord the king, and let her wait on the king, and be his attendant; let her lie in your bosom, so that my lord the king may be warm." 3 So they searched for a beautiful girl throughout all the territory of Israel, and found Abishag the Shunammite, and brought her to the king. 4 The girl was very beautiful. She became the king's attendant and served him, but the king did not know her sexually.

5 Now Adonijah son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, "I will be king"; he prepared for himself chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him. 6 His father had never at any time displeased him by asking, "Why have you done thus and so?" He was also a very handsome man, and he was born next after Absalom. 7 He conferred with Joab son of Zeruiah and with the priest Abiathar, and they supported Adonijah. 8 But the priest Zadok, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada, and the prophet Nathan, and Shimei, and Rei, and David's own warriors did not side with Adonijah.

9 Adonijah sacrificed sheep, oxen, and fatted cattle by the stone Zoheleth, which is beside En-rogel, and he invited all his brothers, the king's sons, and all the royal officials of Judah, 10 but he did not invite the prophet Nathan or Benaiah or the warriors or his brother Solomon.

11 Then Nathan said to Bathsheba, Solomon's mother, "Have you not heard that Adonijah son of Haggith has become king and our lord David does not know it? 12 Now therefore come, let me give you advice, so that you may save your own life and the life of your son Solomon. 13 Go in at once to King David, and say to him, 'Did you not, my lord the king, swear to your servant, saying: Your son Solomon shall succeed me as king, and he shall sit on my throne? Why then is Adonijah king?' 14 Then while you are still there speaking with the king, I will come in after you and confirm your words."

15 So Bathsheba went to the king in his room. The king was very old; Abishag the Shunammite was attending the king. 16 Bathsheba bowed and did obeisance to the king, and the king said, "What do you wish?" 17 She said to him, "My lord, you swore to your servant by the LORD your

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1.1–53 1 Kings opens with an account of the political intrigue that finally led to the accession of Solomon, whose reign claims a large share of the narrator's attention (chs. 1–11). The first two chapters of the book are actually the conclusion of the "Throne Succession Narrative" (2 Sam 9–20), an originally independent literary work that scholars usually ascribe to an eyewitness to the events being described. As a whole, the narrative shows that in spite of David's character flaws and the self-destructive tendencies within the royal family itself, God was nevertheless willing to honor the promise that David's dynasty would be eternal (2 Sam 7.1–17). For the narrator the accession of Solomon is a definitive sign of the promise's fulfillment. **1.1** A considerable number of years seems to have elapsed between the events recounted in 2 Sam 20 and those recorded here, for David's health has deteriorated drastically enough to trigger various plots to ensure the continued operation of the government. **1.3** The zeal of David's servants to find a beautiful maiden leads them as far as Shunem (modern Solem), a site slightly to the north of the town of Jezreel, at the western end of the Jezreel Valley. **1.5–6** With the death of Amnon (2 Sam 13.28–29) and Absalom (2 Sam 18.14–15) and the apparent death of Chileab (2 Sam 3.2–5), *Adonijah* is David's oldest son and therefore a logical choice to be the ailing king's successor. However, the principle of primogeniture was not yet established in Israel, and the narrative hints that Adonijah's actions are treasonous, describing them in the same language used earlier to describe Absalom's failed attempt to seize the throne from his father (2 Sam 14.25; 15.1). **1.7–8** *Joab*, the veteran commander of David's regular army, and *Abiathar*, one of David's high priests, support Adonijah, but *Zadok*, the other high priest, *Benaiah*, the commander of David's private mercenary forces, and *Nathan*, the prophet, along with two otherwise unknown officials, are excluded from Adonijah's plans and ultimately support the accession of Solomon. **1.9** *En-rogel* is a spring a short distance south of Jerusalem, where the stone *Zoheleth* (Serpent's Stone) marked a sacred spot. **1.11–27** Nathan's plan to obtain the throne for Solomon involves reminding David of an oath not otherwise mentioned in Samuel or Kings. The prophet's reasons for pressing Solomon's case are never stated, but the narrative is careful to exclude Solomon himself from the plots that lead to

God, saying: Your son Solomon shall succeed me as king, and he shall sit on my throne. 18 But now suddenly Adonijah has become king, though you, my lord the king, do not know it. 19 He has sacrificed oxen, fatted cattle, and sheep in abundance, and has invited all the children of the king, the priest Abiathar, and Joab the commander of the army; but your servant Solomon he has not invited. 20 But you, my lord the king—the eyes of all Israel are on you to tell them who shall sit on the throne of my lord the king after him. 21 Otherwise it will come to pass, when my lord the king sleeps with his ancestors, that my son Solomon and I will be counted offenders."

22 While she was still speaking with the king, the prophet Nathan came in. 23 The king was told, "Here is the prophet Nathan." When he came in before the king, he did obeisance to the king, with his face to the ground. 24 Nathan said, "My lord the king, have you said, 'Adonijah shall succeed me as king, and he shall sit on my throne'? 25 For today he has gone down and has sacrificed oxen, fatted cattle, and sheep in abundance, and has invited all the king's children, Joab the commander[a] of the army, and the priest Abiathar, who are now eating and drinking before him, and saying, 'Long live King Adonijah!' 26 But he did not invite me, your servant, and the priest Zadok, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada, and your servant Solomon. 27 Has this thing been brought about by my lord the king and you have not let your servants know who should sit on the throne of my lord the king after him?"

28 King David answered, "Summon Bathsheba to me." So she came into the king's presence, and stood before the king. 29 The king swore, saying, "As the LORD lives, who has saved my life from every adversity, 30 as I swore to you by the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Your son Solomon shall succeed me as king, and he shall sit on my throne in my place,' so will I do this day." 31 Then Bathsheba bowed with her face to the ground, and did obeisance to the king, and said, "May my lord King David live forever!"

32 King David said, "Summon to me the priest Zadok, the prophet Nathan, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada." When they came before the king, 33 the king said to them, "Take with you the servants of your lord, and have my son Solomon ride on my own mule, and bring him down to Gihon. 34 There let the priest Zadok and the prophet Nathan anoint him king over Israel; then blow the trumpet, and say, 'Long live King Solomon!' 35 You shall go up following him. Let him enter and sit on my throne; he shall be king in my place; for I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and over Judah." 36 Benaiah son of Jehoiada answered the king, "Amen! May the LORD, the God of my lord the king, so ordain. 37 As the LORD has been with my lord the king, so may he be with Solomon, and make his throne greater than the throne of my lord King David."

38 So the priest Zadok, the prophet Nathan, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites and the Pelethites, went down and had Solomon ride on King David's mule, and led him to Gihon. 39 There the priest Zadok took the horn of oil from the tent and anointed Solomon. Then they blew the trumpet, and all the people said, "Long live King Solomon!" 40 And all the people went up following him, playing on pipes and rejoicing with great joy, so that the earth quaked at their noise.

41 Adonijah and all the guests who were with him heard it as they finished feasting. When Joab heard the sound of

a Gk: Heb *the commanders*

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his enthronement. **1.28** In the dialogues with David the narrator assumes that only one person at a time has an audience with the king. **1.33** In Davidic Israel horses were not yet used for riding, and the mule was a mode of transportation reserved for royalty (2 Sam 13.29; 18.9; Zech 9.9). The *Gihon* spring is located south of Jerusalem on the western side of the Kidron Valley and slightly to the north of En-rogel, well within the hearing of Adonijah and his party. **1.34–35** Solomon is appointed both David's successor and his coregent. The practice of having a king anointed by a prophet recalls the earlier consecration of Saul (1 Sam 10.1) and David (1 Sam 16.1–13) and probably represents God's direct choice of the king (cf. 1 Kings 19.15–16; 2 Kings 9.1–10). Solomon is called both king and *ruler* in v. 35, the latter title being one also given to Saul (1 Sam 9.16; 10.1) and David (1 Sam 25.30). **1.38** The *Cherethites* and *Pelethites* were units in David's private

the trumpet, he said, "Why is the city in
an uproar?" 42 While he was still speaking,
Jonathan son of the priest Abiathar ar-
rived. Adonijah said, "Come in, for you
are a worthy man and surely you bring
good news." 43 Jonathan answered Adoni-
jah, "No, for our lord King David has
made Solomon king; 44 the king has sent
with him the priest Zadok, the prophet
Nathan, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada,
and the Cherethites and the Pelethites;
and they had him ride on the king's mule;
45 the priest Zadok and the prophet Na-
than have anointed him king at Gihon;
and they have gone up from there rejoic-
ing, so that the city is in an uproar. This is
the noise that you heard. 46 Solomon now
sits on the royal throne. 47 Moreover the
king's servants came to congratulate our
lord King David, saying, 'May God make
the name of Solomon more famous than
yours, and make his throne greater than
your throne.' The king bowed in worship
on the bed 48 and went on to pray thus,
'Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,
who today has granted one of my off-
spring[b] to sit on my throne and permit-
ted me to witness it.' "

49 Then all the guests of Adonijah got
up trembling and went their own ways.
50 Adonijah, fearing Solomon, got up and
went to grasp the horns of the altar.
51 Solomon was informed, "Adonijah is
afraid of King Solomon; see, he has laid
hold of the horns of the altar, saying, 'Let
King Solomon swear to me first that he
will not kill his servant with the sword.' "
52 So Solomon responded, "If he proves to
be a worthy man, not one of his hairs shall
fall to the ground; but if wickedness is
found in him, he shall die." 53 Then King
Solomon sent to have him brought down
from the altar. He came to do obeisance
to King Solomon; and Solomon said to
him, "Go home."

David's Instruction to Solomon

2 When David's time to die drew near,
he charged his son Solomon, saying:
2 "I am about to go the way of all the
earth. Be strong, be courageous, 3 and
keep the charge of the LORD your God,
walking in his ways and keeping his stat-
utes, his commandments, his ordinances,
and his testimonies, as it is written in the
law of Moses, so that you may prosper in
all that you do and wherever you turn.
4 Then the LORD will establish his word
that he spoke concerning me: 'If your
heirs take heed to their way, to walk be-
fore me in faithfulness with all their heart
and with all their soul, there shall not fail
you a successor on the throne of Israel.'
5 "Moreover you know also what Joab
son of Zeruiah did to me, how he dealt
with the two commanders of the armies of
Israel, Abner son of Ner, and Amasa son
of Jether, whom he murdered, retaliating
in time of peace for blood that had been
shed in war, and putting the blood of war
on the belt around his waist, and on the
sandals on his feet. 6 Act therefore accord-

b Gk: Heb *one*

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mercenary army (2 Sam 8.18; 20.23). **1.48** David here recalls Nathan's earlier oracle promising the king an eternal dynasty (2 Sam 7.12). **1.49–53** The *horns of the altar* were projections attached to each of the altar's four corners (Ex 29.12; 30.10; Lev 4.7). Because of the sanctity of the altar, a person who had inadvertently committed a crime could touch the altar and claim sanctuary, but this right was not given to willful criminals (Ex 21.14; 1 Kings 2.28–35).

2.1–9 The dying David's advice to Solomon is an example of a common literary genre, the farewell speech. In the OT such speeches often serve to mark important turning points in Israel's history and to provide a theological interpretive framework for subsequent events (Gen 47.29–50.14; Josh 23–24; Deut 33–34; 1 Macc 2.49–70). **2.2–4** David's opening exhortation contains strong echoes of the book of Deuteronomy (Deut 4.29, 40; 6.5; 8.6; 10.12; 11.1, 22; cf. Josh 23.14). Solomon is urged to emulate the ideal Deuteronomic king by keeping the Mosaic law (Deut 17.14–20). Only if he is obedient will God fulfill the promise made to David that his dynasty will be eternal (2 Sam 7.12–16). This stress on the conditional character of God's promise is a hallmark of Deuteronomistic theology. **2.5–6** *Abner*, the former commander of Saul's army, killed *Joab*'s brother Asahel during the turbulent years of fighting between Israel and Judah that followed Saul's death and was subsequently slain by Joab (2 Sam 3.22–30). *Amasa* replaced Joab as commander of the army during Absalom's revolt against David and then remained in that position after the king returned to power. Amasa's delay in quelling a later rebellion provoked Joab to kill him (2 Sam 17.25; 19.11–15; 20.4–10). Both killings could have been considered justifiable under the circumstances.

ing to your wisdom, but do not let his gray
head go down to Sheol in peace. 7 Deal
loyally, however, with the sons of Barzillai
the Gileadite, and let them be among
those who eat at your table; for with such
loyalty they met me when I fled from
your brother Absalom. 8 There is also with
you Shimei son of Gera, the Benjaminite
from Bahurim, who cursed me with a ter-
rible curse on the day when I went to Ma-
hanaim; but when he came down to meet
me at the Jordan, I swore to him by the
LORD, 'I will not put you to death with the
sword.' 9 Therefore do not hold him guilt-
less, for you are a wise man; you will know
what you ought to do to him, and you
must bring his gray head down with blood
to Sheol."

Death of David

10 Then David slept with his ancestors, and was buried in the city of David.
11 The time that David reigned over Israel
was forty years; he reigned seven years in
Hebron, and thirty-three years in Jerusa-
lem. 12 So Solomon sat on the throne of
his father David; and his kingdom was
firmly established.

Solomon Consolidates His Reign

13 Then Adonijah son of Haggith
came to Bathsheba, Solomon's mother.
She asked, "Do you come peaceably?" He
said, "Peaceably." 14 Then he said, "May I
have a word with you?" She said, "Go on."
15 He said, "You know that the kingdom
was mine, and that all Israel expected me
to reign; however, the kingdom has
turned about and become my brother's,
for it was his from the LORD. 16 And now
I have one request to make of you; do not
refuse me." She said to him, "Go on."
17 He said, "Please ask King Solomon—he
will not refuse you—to give me Abishag
the Shunammite as my wife." 18 Bath-
sheba said, "Very well; I will speak to the
king on your behalf."

19 So Bathsheba went to King Solomon, to speak to him on behalf of Adonijah. The king rose to meet her, and bowed down to her; then he sat on his throne, and had a throne brought for the king's mother, and she sat on his right.
20 Then she said, "I have one small request to make of you; do not refuse me." And the king said to her, "Make your request, my mother; for I will not refuse you." 21 She said, "Let Abishag the Shunammite be given to your brother Adonijah as his wife." 22 King Solomon answered his mother, "And why do you ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? Ask for him the kingdom as well! For he is my elder brother; ask not only for him but also for the priest Abiathar and for Joab son of Zeruiah!" 23 Then King Solomon swore by the LORD, "So may God do to me, and more also, for Adonijah has devised this scheme at the risk of his life!
24 Now therefore as the LORD lives, who has established me and placed me on the throne of my father David, and who has made me a house as he promised, today Adonijah shall be put to death." 25 So King Solomon sent Benaiah son of Jehoiada; he struck him down, and he died.

2.7 *Barzillai* provided food for David and his supporters during Absalom's revolt (2 Sam 17.27–29; 19.31–40). Being invited to eat at the king's table was considered a mark of royal favor (2 Sam 9.7; 19.28; 1 Kings 18.19; 2 Kings 25.29; Neh 5.17).
2.8 When David fled from Jerusalem in the wake of Absalom's revolt, *Shimei* cursed the king for killing members of Saul's family in order to remove rivals to the throne (2 Sam 16.5–13). Although David later swore not to kill Shimei (2 Sam 19.16–23), Solomon would not have been bound by that oath.

2.10–12 In David's time Jerusalem was considered the king's personal property (2 Sam 5.9). David in fact ruled over all Israel, Judah and Israel together, for thirty-three years. In Hebron he ruled Judah alone for seven years and six months (2 Sam 5.4–5).

2.13–46 The narrator may feel that Solomon's throne was firmly established immediately after David's death (v. 12), but Solomon himself feels it necessary to secure his kingdom by eliminating anyone who might be a threat to his power. **2.13–25** *Abishag*'s status in the court was ambiguous because of her unusual relationship with David (cf. 1.1–4), but Solomon clearly considers her to be a concubine. In this period royal concubines normally became the property of the new king (2 Sam 3.6–7; 12.8; 16.21–22), so Solomon interprets Adonijah's request as a threat and uses it as a pretext to have him killed (vv. 22–25). The text is silent on the question of whether or not Bathsheba anticipated this result. However, the extraordinary deference shown to her by Solomon (vv. 19–20) is an indication of the power and status the queen mother enjoyed in the

26 The king said to the priest Abiathar, "Go to Anathoth, to your estate; for you deserve death. But I will not at this time put you to death, because you carried the ark of the Lord GOD before my father David, and because you shared in all the hardships my father endured." 27 So Solomon banished Abiathar from being priest to the LORD, thus fulfilling the word of the LORD that he had spoken concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh.

28 When the news came to Joab—for Joab had supported Adonijah though he had not supported Absalom—Joab fled to the tent of the LORD and grasped the horns of the altar. 29 When it was told King Solomon, "Joab has fled to the tent of the LORD and now is beside the altar," Solomon sent Benaiah son of Jehoiada, saying, "Go, strike him down." 30 So Benaiah came to the tent of the LORD and said to him, "The king commands, 'Come out.'" But he said, "No, I will die here." Then Benaiah brought the king word again, saying, "Thus said Joab, and thus he answered me." 31 The king replied to him, "Do as he has said, strike him down and bury him; and thus take away from me and from my father's house the guilt for the blood that Joab shed without cause. 32 The LORD will bring back his bloody deeds on his own head, because, without the knowledge of my father David, he attacked and killed with the sword two men more righteous and better than himself, Abner son of Ner, commander of the army of Israel, and Amasa son of Jether, commander of the army of Judah. 33 So shall their blood come back on the head of Joab and on the head of his descendants forever; but to David, and to his descendants, and to his house, and to his throne, there shall be peace from the LORD forevermore." 34 Then Benaiah son of Jehoiada went up and struck him down and killed him; and he was buried at his own house near the wilderness. 35 The king put Benaiah son of Jehoiada over the army in his place, and the king put the priest Zadok in the place of Abiathar.

36 Then the king sent and summoned Shimei, and said to him, "Build yourself a house in Jerusalem, and live there, and do not go out from there to any place whatever. 37 For on the day you go out, and cross the Wadi Kidron, know for certain that you shall die; your blood shall be on your own head." 38 And Shimei said to the king, "The sentence is fair; as my lord the king has said, so will your servant do." So Shimei lived in Jerusalem many days.

39 But it happened at the end of three years that two of Shimei's slaves ran away to King Achish son of Maacah of Gath. When it was told Shimei, "Your slaves are in Gath," 40 Shimei arose and saddled a donkey, and went to Achish in Gath, to search for his slaves; Shimei went and brought his slaves from Gath. 41 When Solomon was told that Shimei had gone from Jerusalem to Gath and returned, 42 the king sent and summoned Shimei, and said to him, "Did I not make you swear by the LORD, and solemnly adjure you, saying, 'Know for certain that on the day you go out and go to any place whatever, you shall die'? And you said to me, 'The sentence is fair; I accept.' 43 Why then have you not kept your oath to the LORD and the commandment with which I charged you?" 44 The king also said to Shimei, "You know in your own heart all the evil that you did to my father David; so the LORD will bring back your evil on

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Judean royal court. **2.26–27** Abiathar supported Adonijah in the struggle over the succession (see 1.7). *Anathoth* is located about three miles northeast of Jerusalem. Abiathar's descendants, some of whom were still in Anathoth at the beginning of the exile (Jer 1.1), saw his loss of priestly status in Jerusalem as a final judgment against the priestly house of Eli for their corrupt management of the old shrine at Shiloh (1 Sam 2.27–36). **2.28–35** Joab rightly suspects that Solomon is conducting a purge of Adonijah's supporters and therefore seeks sanctuary at the altar associated with the tent shrine that David had set up to house the ark of God (2 Sam 6.17). However, Solomon chooses not to consider Joab eligible to claim the protection of the altar (see note on 1 Kings 1.49–53). After Joab's death, Benaiah, who had been commander of David's private army and an early supporter of Solomon (1.8), becomes commander of the regular army as well. **2.36–46** Even though David counseled Solomon to kill Shimei (see 2.8–9), the king instead places him under house arrest in Jerusalem. **2.37** The *Wadi Kidron* is the valley to the east of Jerusalem between the Temple Mount and the Mount of Olives, so Shimei was in effect confined to the city. **2.39** Shimei's ill-considered trip to *Gath* on the coastal plain is a blatant violation of his agreement with Solomon.

your own head. 45 But King Solomon shall
be blessed, and the throne of David shall
be established before the LORD forever."
46 Then the king commanded Benaiah
son of Jehoiada; and he went out and
struck him down, and he died.

So the kingdom was established in the
hand of Solomon.

Solomon's Prayer for Wisdom

3 Solomon made a marriage alliance
with Pharaoh king of Egypt; he took
Pharaoh's daughter and brought her into
the city of David, until he had finished
building his own house and the house of
the LORD and the wall around Jerusalem.
2 The people were sacrificing at the high
places, however, because no house had yet
been built for the name of the LORD.

3 Solomon loved the LORD, walking in
the statutes of his father David; only, he
sacrificed and offered incense at the high
places. 4 The king went to Gibeon to sacri-
fice there, for that was the principal high
place; Solomon used to offer a thousand
burnt offerings on that altar. 5 At Gibeon
the LORD appeared to Solomon in a
dream by night; and God said, "Ask what
I should give you." 6 And Solomon said,
"You have shown great and steadfast love
to your servant my father David, because
he walked before you in faithfulness, in
righteousness, and in uprightness of heart
toward you; and you have kept for him
this great and steadfast love, and have
given him a son to sit on his throne today.
7 And now, O LORD my God, you have
made your servant king in place of my fa-
ther David, although I am only a little
child; I do not know how to go out or
come in. 8 And your servant is in the midst
of the people whom you have chosen, a
great people, so numerous they cannot be
numbered or counted. 9 Give your servant
therefore an understanding mind to gov-
ern your people, able to discern between
good and evil; for who can govern this
your great people?"

10 It pleased the Lord that Solomon

3.1–15 Solomon's dream at Gibeon not only provides divine legitimation for his reign but also indicates the degree to which his kingship at its best will conform to Deuteronomic theological ideals (Deut 17.14–20). **3.1–2** At the beginning of the account the narrator makes two introductory remarks that indicate both Solomon's growing power and the seeds of his eventual downfall. His political alliance with an unnamed king of Egypt indicates that Solomon is now powerful enough to be part of the world of international politics. He is also to become one of Israel's most famous builders, expanding David's original city, fortifying the walls, and building an elaborate royal palace and a splendid temple so that worship could take place appropriately at one site. However, Solomon also follows the common imperial practice of cementing political alliances with marriages (2 Sam 3.2–5; 5.13), and he participates in or at least tolerates the worship of his wives' native gods in Jerusalem, a situation that ultimately leads to his downfall (ch. 11). **3.2** The *high places* at which Israelites worshiped before the building of the temple were open-air platforms or shrines where sacrifices and other cultic activities took place. The Lord was sometimes worshiped at the high places, but other deities were worshiped there as well. The Deuteronomistic narrator considered them illegitimate after the building of the temple. **3.3** The *statutes of . . . David* that Solomon obeyed were the Mosaic laws David himself followed rather than laws David promulgated. **3.4** *Gibeon* (modern el-Jib) lies about five and a half miles northwest of Jerusalem and was a Hivite enclave well into monarchical times (Josh 9.3–10.15; 2 Sam 21.1–9). The city was an important worship center by Solomon's day, but its early connections with Israelite worship are uncertain (1 Chr 16.39; 21.29; 2 Chr 1.3, 13). **3.5** Many Israelites considered the *dream* to be a normal means of divine revelation (but see Jer 23.23–32 for a dissenting view). Revelatory dreams took various forms and sometimes contained dialogues of the sort described here (Gen 20.3–7; 26.24; 28.12–16; 1 Sam 3.1–15; 28.6). **3.6** The *steadfast love* God has shown to David refers to God's faithfulness to the demands of the covenant between God and Israel (as expressed in the Mosaic law) and between God and David (as expressed in 2 Sam 7). By invoking the covenant in this context, Solomon indicates his desire to enter into the same relationship with God that his father, David, had accepted. **3.7** Solomon's reference to himself as *a little child* [who does] *not know how to go out or come in* is not to be taken literally (see 11.42; 14.21) but is an expression of humility designed to indicate the king's willingness to be God's servant (vv. 6, 7, 8, 9) and to accept divine instruction concerning the duties of kingship. **3.9** *Understanding mind*, lit. "listening heart." The Israelite considered the heart to be both the seat of the intellect and an organ of perception, so a listening heart is one open to divine direction. Only such a heart is capable of governing God's people and distinguishing good from evil.

had asked this. 11 God said to him, "Because you have asked this, and have not
asked for yourself long life or riches, or
for the life of your enemies, but have
asked for yourself understanding to dis-
cern what is right, 12 I now do according
to your word. Indeed I give you a wise
and discerning mind; no one like you has
been before you and no one like you shall
arise after you. 13 I give you also what you
have not asked, both riches and honor all
your life; no other king shall compare
with you. 14 If you will walk in my ways,
keeping my statutes and my command-
ments, as your father David walked, then
I will lengthen your life."

15 Then Solomon awoke; it had been
a dream. He came to Jerusalem where he
stood before the ark of the covenant of
the LORD. He offered up burnt offerings
and offerings of well-being, and provided
a feast for all his servants.

Solomon's Wisdom in Judgment

16 Later, two women who were prosti-
tutes came to the king and stood before
him. 17 The one woman said, "Please, my
lord, this woman and I live in the same
house; and I gave birth while she was in
the house. 18 Then on the third day after
I gave birth, this woman also gave birth.
We were together; there was no one else
with us in the house, only the two of us
were in the house. 19 Then this woman's
son died in the night, because she lay on
him. 20 She got up in the middle of the
night and took my son from beside me
while your servant slept. She laid him at
her breast, and laid her dead son at my
breast. 21 When I rose in the morning to
nurse my son, I saw that he was dead; but
when I looked at him closely in the morn-
ing, clearly it was not the son I had
borne." 22 But the other woman said, "No,
the living son is mine, and the dead son is
yours." The first said, "No, the dead son
is yours, and the living son is mine." So
they argued before the king.

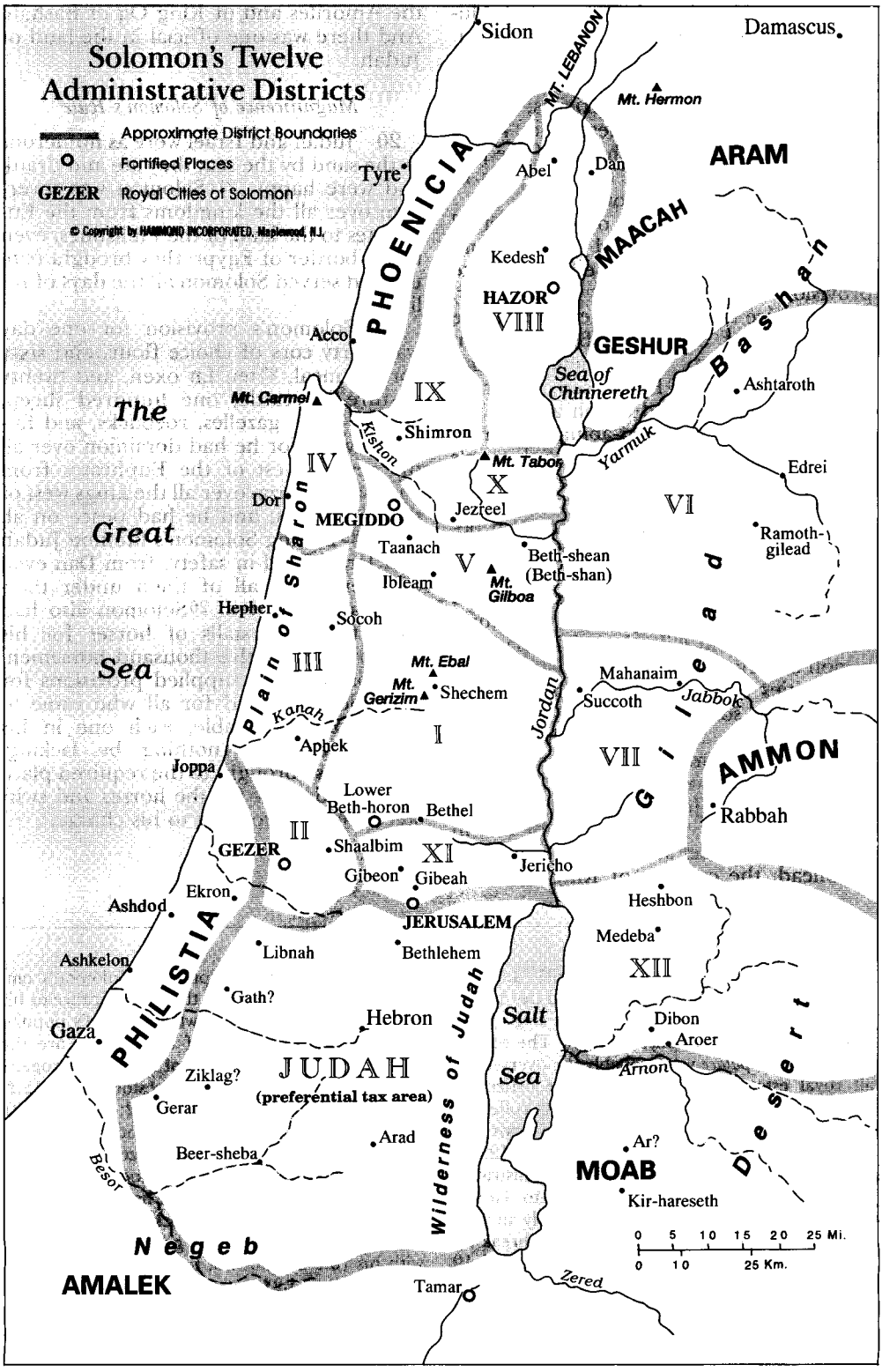
23 Then the king said, "The one says,
'This is my son that is alive, and your son
is dead'; while the other says, 'Not so!
Your son is dead, and my son is the living
one.'" 24 So the king said, "Bring me a
sword," and they brought a sword before
the king. 25 The king said, "Divide the liv-
ing boy in two; then give half to the one,
and half to the other." 26 But the woman
whose son was alive said to the king—
because compassion for her son burned
within her—"Please, my lord, give her the
living boy; certainly do not kill him!" The
other said, "It shall be neither mine nor
yours; divide it." 27 Then the king re-
sponded: "Give the first woman the living
boy; do not kill him. She is his mother."
28 All Israel heard of the judgment that
the king had rendered; and they stood in
awe of the king, because they perceived
that the wisdom of God was in him, to
execute justice.

Solomon's Administrative Officers

4 King Solomon was king over all Is-
rael, 2 and these were his high offi-
cials: Azariah son of Zadok was the priest;
3 Elihoreph and Ahijah sons of Shisha

3.16–28 The fruit of divine wisdom is immediately apparent in this story meant to illustrate Solomon's success as a judge. Stories of a similar sort are found in other cultures, and it is likely that this tale was part of an oral collection of Solomonic stories before it was incorporated into Kings.

4.1–19 These two lists of Solomon's administrative officers were probably taken from old archives or perhaps from the *Book of the Acts of Solomon* (11.41). Both lists show signs of being slightly garbled during the process of transmission. They are intended to illustrate the effectiveness of Solomon's administrative skills, but they also illustrate the degree to which his kingdom has expanded and become a typical imperial state. His tendencies in this direction run counter to Deuteronomic norms concerning kingship (Deut 17.14–20) and illustrate the dangers of which Samuel warned the Israelites when they asked for a king (1 Sam 8.11–18). **4.2–6** Some of Solomon's officials (Zadok, Benaiah, Adoniram, and Jehoshaphat) are holdovers from David's regime (2 Sam 8.16–18; 20.23–26; 1 Chr 18.15–17), while others (Azariah son of Zadok, Azariah son of Nathan, and Zabud son of Nathan) represent the beginning of a hereditary bureaucracy. The inclusion of Abiathar in the list suggests that it comes from the beginning of Solomon's reign, before the priest's banishment (2.26–27). **4.3** The *secretaries* were scribes who kept official records, but they also had major administrative responsibilities. Scholars have suggested that the *recorder* was the keeper of the royal archives or perhaps the royal herald, but in either case he functioned


Solomon's Twelve Administrative Districts
Approximate District Boundaries
Fortified Places
GEZER Royal Cities of Solomon
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Sidon
Damascus
MT. LEBANON
Mt. Hermon
ARAM
Tyre
PHOENICIA
Abel
Dan
MAACAH
Kedesh
HAZOR
VIII
Acco
GESHUR
Bashan
Sea of Chinnereth
Ashtaroth
IX
Mt. Carmel
The
Kishon
Shimron
Mt. Tabor
Yarmuk
Edrei
IV
X
Dor
MEGIDDO
Jezreel
VI
Great
Taanach
Ramoth-gilead
Beth-shean (Beth-shan)
V
Ibleam
Mt. Gilboa
Plain of Sharon
Hepher
Socoh
Gilead
Sea
III
Mt. Ebal
Mt. Gerizim
Shechem
Mahanaim
Succoth
Jabbok
Jordan
Kanah
Aphek
I
VII
AMMON
Joppa
Lower Beth-horon
Bethel
Rabbah
II
GEZER
Shaalbim
XI
Jericho
Gibeon
Gibeah
Ekron
Ashdod
JERUSALEM
Heshbon
Medeba
Libnah
Bethlehem
Ashkelon
XII
PHILISTIA
Gath?
Hebron
Salt Sea
Dibon
Aroer
Gaza
Arnon
Ziklag?
JUDAH
(preferential tax area)
Gerar
Desert
Arad
Ar?
Beer-sheba
Besor
MOAB
Kir-hareseth
Wilderness of Judah
Negeb
0 5 10 15 20 25 Mi.
0 10 25 Km.
AMALEK
Tamar
Zered

were secretaries; Jehoshaphat son of Ahi-
lud was recorder; 4 Benaiah son of Jehoi-
ada was in command of the army; Zadok
and Abiathar were priests; 5 Azariah son
of Nathan was over the officials; Zabud
son of Nathan was priest and king's
friend; 6 Ahishar was in charge of the pal-
ace; and Adoniram son of Abda was in
charge of the forced labor.

7 Solomon had twelve officials over all
Israel, who provided food for the king
and his household; each one had to make
provision for one month in the year.
8 These were their names: Ben-hur, in the
hill country of Ephraim; 9 Ben-deker, in
Makaz, Shaalbim, Beth-shemesh, and
Elon-beth-hanan; 10 Ben-hesed, in Arub-
both (to him belonged Socoh and all the
land of Hepher); 11 Ben-abinadab, in all
Naphath-dor (he had Taphath, Solomon's
daughter, as his wife); 12 Baana son of
Ahilud, in Taanach, Megiddo, and all
Beth-shean, which is beside Zarethan be-
low Jezreel, and from Beth-shean to Abel-
meholah, as far as the other side of
Jokmeam; 13 Ben-geber, in Ramoth-gilead
(he had the villages of Jair son of Manas-
seh, which are in Gilead, and he had the
region of Argob, which is in Bashan, sixty
great cities with walls and bronze bars);
14 Ahinadab son of Iddo, in Mahanaim;
15 Ahimaaz, in Naphtali (he had taken
Basemath, Solomon's daughter, as his
wife); 16 Baana son of Hushai, in Asher
and Bealoth; 17 Jehoshaphat son of Pa-
ruah, in Issachar; 18 Shimei son of Ela, in
Benjamin; 19 Geber son of Uri, in the land
of Gilead, the country of King Sihon of
the Amorites and of King Og of Bashan.
And there was one official in the land of
Judah.

Magnificence of Solomon's Rule

20 Judah and Israel were as numerous
as the sand by the sea; they ate and drank
and were happy. 21 [c] Solomon was sover-
eign over all the kingdoms from the Eu-
phrates to the land of the Philistines, even
to the border of Egypt; they brought trib-
ute and served Solomon all the days of his
life.

22 Solomon's provision for one day
was thirty cors of choice flour, and sixty
cors of meal, 23 ten fat oxen, and twenty
pasture-fed cattle, one hundred sheep,
besides deer, gazelles, roebucks, and fat-
ted fowl. 24 For he had dominion over all
the region west of the Euphrates from
Tiphsah to Gaza, over all the kings west of
the Euphrates; and he had peace on all
sides. 25 During Solomon's lifetime Judah
and Israel lived in safety, from Dan even
to Beer-sheba, all of them under their
vines and fig trees. 26 Solomon also had
forty thousand stalls of horses for his
chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen.
27 Those officials supplied provisions for
King Solomon and for all who came to
King Solomon's table, each one in his
month; they let nothing be lacking.
28 They also brought to the required place
barley and straw for the horses and swift
steeds, each according to his charge.

c Ch 5.1 in Heb

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at the highest levels of the government. **4.5** The one who *was over the officials* supervised the district administrators listed in vv. 7–19. The *king's friend* was the king's chief counselor. **4.6** The official *in charge of the palace* was probably the overseer of all royal estates and buildings. The officer *in charge of the forced labor* was the chief tax collector, who supervised the money, goods, and labor that were owed yearly to the crown (see also 12.18). **4.7–19** The list of Solomon's administrative districts does not seem to conform to Israel's traditional tribal divisions and is probably an indication that the king deliberately tried to break up the older governmental system. If vv. 13 and 19 do not refer to the same district, then Judah lies outside the list of twelve administrative units and may not have been taxed in the same way they were.

4.20–28 The description of Solomon's empire and court underlines the magnificence of his reign. **4.20–21** The growth of Israel's population and the expansion of its territory are the fulfillment of the promises of land and progeny that God gave to Israel's ancestors (Gen 12.2; 13.14–17; 15.18–19; 22.17; 32.12; Deut 1.7–8). **4.22–28** The inventory of Solomon's daily provisions shows the extraordinary size of his court, particularly since the catalog does not include perishable food that would not have been kept in royal storerooms and livestock pens. Solomon's extensive empire and the general contentment with his rule did not last to the end of his reign (see ch. 11). **4.22** As a dry measure a *cor* contains about 14 bushels. **4.23** The *fat oxen* were probably expensive grain-fed animals, in contrast to the more common *pasture-fed cattle*.

Fame of Solomon's Wisdom

29 God gave Solomon very great wisdom, discernment, and breadth of understanding as vast as the sand on the seashore, 30 so that Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east, and all the wisdom of Egypt. 31 He was wiser than anyone else, wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Calcol, and Darda, children of Mahol; his fame spread throughout all the surrounding nations. 32 He composed three thousand proverbs, and his songs numbered a thousand and five. 33 He would speak of trees, from the cedar that is in the Lebanon to the hyssop that grows in the wall; he would speak of animals, and birds, and reptiles, and fish. 34 People came from all the nations to hear the wisdom of Solomon; they came from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom.

Preparations and Materials for the Temple

5 [d] Now King Hiram of Tyre sent his servants to Solomon, when he heard that they had anointed him king in place of his father; for Hiram had always been a friend to David. 2 Solomon sent word to Hiram, saying, 3 "You know that my father David could not build a house for the name of the LORD his God because of the warfare with which his enemies surrounded him, until the LORD put them under the soles of his feet.[e] 4 But now the LORD my God has given me rest on every side; there is neither adversary nor misfortune. 5 So I intend to build a house for the name of the LORD my God, as the LORD said to my father David, 'Your son, whom I will set on your throne in your place, shall build the house for my name.' 6 Therefore command that cedars from the Lebanon be cut for me. My servants will join your servants, and I will give you whatever wages you set for your servants; for you know that there is no one among us who knows how to cut timber like the Sidonians."

7 When Hiram heard the words of Solomon, he rejoiced greatly, and said, "Blessed be the LORD today, who has given to David a wise son to be over this great people." 8 Hiram sent word to Solomon, "I have heard the message that you have sent to me; I will fulfill all your needs in the matter of cedar and cypress

d Ch 5.15 in Heb *e* Gk Tg Vg: Heb *my feet* or *his feet*

4.29–34 This description of Solomon's wisdom suggests why he is credited with producing much of the OT's wisdom literature (Prov 1.1; 25.1; Eccl 1.1; Song 1.1). **4.31** *Ethan* and *Heman* are said to have written psalms (Pss 88; 89). *Calcol* and *Darda* were perhaps musicians. **4.33** For examples of nature wisdom see Judg 9.8–15; 2 Kings 14.9; Prov 6.6; 30.15–19, 24–31.

5.1–19 Just as David had built a royal palace and had proposed to build a temple after God had given the king "rest from all his enemies around him" (2 Sam 7.1), so now Solomon turns his attention to building houses for himself and for the Lord. Throughout the ancient Near East the establishment of a new king was typically followed by palace and temple construction so that the new ruler and his god could be properly enthroned. **5.1** *Tyre* was a Phoenician city just off the coast of southern Lebanon and, along with Sidon, another Phoenician city twenty-two miles to the north, it dominated coastal trade around the Mediterranean throughout much of the first millennium B.C.E. *Hiram* is more than *a friend to David*; the Hebrew text suggests that the two were treaty partners (see also 2 Sam 5.11). Hiram's interest in continuing this treaty relationship may have prompted him to send goodwill ambassadors to Solomon (see v. 12). **5.3–5** In spite of the fact that 2 Sam 7 gives no explanation for God's forbidding David to build a temple, Solomon here suggests that David could not build a divine house because his kingdom had not been firmly established. He was still engaged in warfare with his enemies. This retrospective explanation defends David's failure to build a temple, but it contradicts 2 Sam 7.1. The phrase *until the LORD put them under the soles of his feet* may be based on 2 Sam 7.11, which seems to imply that God will give David rest from his enemies sometime in the future. The alternate reading *my feet* would suggest that only in Solomon's day was the kingdom established firmly enough to permit temple building, and this reading would provide a better transition to v. 4. Solomon clearly sees the building of the temple as a fulfillment of Nathan's prophecy (2 Sam 7.13). **5.6** *Lebanon* was famous in the ancient world as a source for *cedar*, a wood whose durability made it highly desirable as a building material. Cedar trees in Lebanon grew particularly tall and straight, characteristics that made them useful in the construction of monumental buildings. Solomon proposes to send workers to aid the Phoenicians (here called simply *Sidonians*) in cutting the timber and offers to pay the wages of the men

timber. 9 My servants shall bring it down
to the sea from the Lebanon; I will make
it into rafts to go by sea to the place you
indicate. I will have them broken up there
for you to take away. And you shall meet
my needs by providing food for my
household." 10 So Hiram supplied Solo-
mon's every need for timber of cedar and
cypress. 11 Solomon in turn gave Hiram
twenty thousand cors of wheat as food for
his household, and twenty cors of fine oil.
Solomon gave this to Hiram year by year.
12 So the LORD gave Solomon wisdom, as
he promised him. There was peace be-
tween Hiram and Solomon; and the two
of them made a treaty.

13 King Solomon conscripted forced
labor out of all Israel; the levy numbered
thirty thousand men. 14 He sent them to
the Lebanon, ten thousand a month in
shifts; they would be a month in the Leba-
non and two months at home; Adoniram
was in charge of the forced labor. 15 Solo-
mon also had seventy thousand laborers
and eighty thousand stonecutters in the
hill country, 16 besides Solomon's three
thousand three hundred supervisors who
were over the work, having charge of the
people who did the work. 17 At the king's
command, they quarried out great, costly
stones in order to lay the foundation of
the house with dressed stones. 18 So Solo-
mon's builders and Hiram's builders and
the Gebalites did the stonecutting and
prepared the timber and the stone to
build the house.

Solomon Builds the Temple

6 In the four hundred eightieth year
after the Israelites came out of the
land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solo-
mon's reign over Israel, in the month of
Ziv, which is the second month, he began
to build the house of the LORD. 2 The
house that King Solomon built for the
LORD was sixty cubits long, twenty cubits
wide, and thirty cubits high. 3 The vesti-
bule in front of the nave of the house was
twenty cubits wide, across the width of the
house. Its depth was ten cubits in front of
the house. 4 For the house he made win-
dows with recessed frames.[f] 5 He also
built a structure against the wall of the
house, running around the walls of the
house, both the nave and the inner sanc-
tuary; and he made side chambers all
around. 6 The lowest story[g] was five cu-
bits wide, the middle one was six cubits

f Gk: Meaning of Heb uncertain *g* Gk: Heb *structure*

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involved. **5.9** Hiram's counteroffer leaves all of the timber cutting and logging in the hands of the Phoenicians. In return, Solomon will provide food not just for the Phoenician loggers but for Hiram's entire royal court. **5.11** As a dry measure a *cor* is about 14 bushels; as a wet measure, it is estimated to be between 35 and 60 gallons. *Fine oil,* lit. "beaten oil," was olive oil produced by allowing the oil to drip naturally out of a basket of crushed olives. **5.13–17** Work on the temple added to the tax burden already imposed to support Solomon's court. **5.14** On *Adoniram,* see 2 Sam 20.24; notes on 4.2–6; 4.6. **5.17** The *dressed stones* for the foundation were ashlars, huge squared, finished blocks whose size made them very difficult to quarry and transport. **5.18** *Gebalites* were inhabitants of the Phoenician coastal city Gebal, later called Byblos by the Greeks.

6.1–22 This detailed description of the building of the temple is designed to impress readers with the building's magnificence and the splendor of Solomon's reign. The account is sometimes confusing because it uses a large number of rare and probably archaic architectural terms, which even the ancient Greek translators no longer understood. Most of the information in ch. 6 is taken from archival sources or from the *Book of the Acts of Solomon* (11.41). **6.1** Scholars estimate the *fourth year of Solomon's reign* to lie somewhere between 966 and 956 B.C.E. This chronology would place the exodus about the middle of the fifteenth century B.C.E., a date that most modern scholars would consider too early. The month of *Ziv* is the second month in the Canaanite calendar (April–May). The temple was built to the north of David's city on a threshing floor David acquired from Araunah the Jebusite (2 Sam 24.18–25). **6.2** A *cubit* is about 18 inches. Solomon's temple seems to have been built on Phoenician-Syrian models and was essentially a rectangular building having an overall interior length of 90 feet, a width of 30 feet, and a height of 45 feet. **6.3** To this central structure was added an unroofed *vestibule* or entrance area 15 feet long and 30 feet wide. A worshiper entering the temple passed through the vestibule and then came to the 60-foot-long *nave* (v. 17). **6.5** The nave in turn led to an *inner sanctuary* or Holy of Holies, which was a perfect 30-foot cube (v. 20). Around the outside of the nave and the inner sanctuary was a three-story *structure,* which helped to support the walls and also provided storage space. Latticed windows high in the walls let in light and provided

wide, and the third was seven cubits wide;
for around the outside of the house he
made offsets on the wall in order that the
supporting beams should not be inserted
into the walls of the house.

7 The house was built with stone fin-
ished at the quarry, so that neither ham-
mer nor ax nor any tool of iron was heard
in the temple while it was being built.

8 The entrance for the middle story
was on the south side of the house: one
went up by winding stairs to the middle
story, and from the middle story to the
third. 9 So he built the house, and finished
it; he roofed the house with beams and
planks of cedar. 10 He built the structure
against the whole house, each story[h] five
cubits high, and it was joined to the house
with timbers of cedar.

11 Now the word of the LORD came to
Solomon, 12 "Concerning this house that
you are building, if you will walk in my
statutes, obey my ordinances, and keep all
my commandments by walking in them,
then I will establish my promise with you,
which I made to your father David. 13 I
will dwell among the children of Israel,
and will not forsake my people Israel."

14 So Solomon built the house, and
finished it. 15 He lined the walls of the
house on the inside with boards of cedar;
from the floor of the house to the rafters
of the ceiling, he covered them on the in-
side with wood; and he covered the floor
of the house with boards of cypress. 16 He
built twenty cubits of the rear of the house
with boards of cedar from the floor to the
rafters, and he built this within as an in-
ner sanctuary, as the most holy place.
17 The house, that is, the nave in front of
the inner sanctuary, was forty cubits long.
18 The cedar within the house had carv-
ings of gourds and open flowers; all was
cedar, no stone was seen. 19 The inner
sanctuary he prepared in the innermost
part of the house, to set there the ark of
the covenant of the LORD. 20 The interior
of the inner sanctuary was twenty cubits
long, twenty cubits wide, and twenty cu-
bits high; he overlaid it with pure gold.
He also overlaid the altar with cedar.[i]
21 Solomon overlaid the inside of the
house with pure gold, then he drew
chains of gold across, in front of the inner
sanctuary, and overlaid it with gold.
22 Next he overlaid the whole house with
gold, in order that the whole house might
be perfect; even the whole altar that be-
longed to the inner sanctuary he overlaid
with gold.

The Furnishings of the Temple

23 In the inner sanctuary he made
two cherubim of olivewood, each ten cu-
bits high. 24 Five cubits was the length of
one wing of the cherub, and five cubits
the length of the other wing of the
cherub; it was ten cubits from the tip of
one wing to the tip of the other. 25 The
other cherub also measured ten cubits;
both cherubim had the same measure and
the same form. 26 The height of one
cherub was ten cubits, and so was that of
the other cherub. 27 He put the cherubim
in the innermost part of the house; the
wings of the cherubim were spread out so
that a wing of one was touching the one
wall, and a wing of the other cherub was
touching the other wall; their other wings
toward the center of the house were
touching wing to wing. 28 He also overlaid
the cherubim with gold.

29 He carved the walls of the house all
around about with carved engravings of
cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers,

h Heb lacks *each story* *i* Meaning of Heb uncertain

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an exit for sacrificial smoke. **6.11–13** Just as Kings understands God's dynastic promise to David to be conditional on obedience (2.4) and sees the divine promise of longevity to Solomon in a similar way (3.14), so here Kings reminds Solomon that God's willingness to dwell in the temple is also conditional. This typically Deuteronomistic perspective runs counter to the widely held belief that God had promised to dwell eternally in Jerusalem (Pss 68.16; 135.21; Jer 7.1–15). **6.18** The elaborate decorations in the temple probably had religious significance. **6.19** The *ark of the covenant* was an old religious object associated with the Lord, which David had moved to Jerusalem and installed in a tent shrine (2 Sam 6). Solomon later installs the ark in the inner sanctuary of the temple, where it is considered the throne of God (2 Kings 19.15; Pss. 80.1; 99.1; Isa 37.16). Other Israelite traditions saw it simply as the container for the Mosaic law (Ex 25.16; 1 Kings 8.9).

6.23–38 The furnishings of the temple were as elaborate and impressive as the building itself. **6.23–28** The *cherubim* (singular, *cherub*) were fantastic composite creatures on which God was sometimes thought to ride (2 Sam 22.11; Ps 18.10; Ezek 1; 10). In the temple they served

in the inner and outer rooms. 30 The floor
of the house he overlaid with gold, in the
inner and outer rooms.
31 For the entrance to the inner sanc-
tuary he made doors of olivewood; the
lintel and the doorposts were five-sided.*j*
32 He covered the two doors of olivewood
with carvings of cherubim, palm trees,
and open flowers; he overlaid them with
gold, and spread gold on the cherubim
and on the palm trees.
33 So also he made for the entrance to
the nave doorposts of olivewood, four-
sided each, 34 and two doors of cypress
wood; the two leaves of the one door were
folding, and the two leaves of the other
door were folding. 35 He carved cheru-
bim, palm trees, and open flowers, over-
laying them with gold evenly applied
upon the carved work. 36 He built the in-
ner court with three courses of dressed
stone to one course of cedar beams.
37 In the fourth year the foundation
of the house of the LORD was laid, in the
month of Ziv. 38 In the eleventh year, in
the month of Bul, which is the eighth
month, the house was finished in all its
parts, and according to all its specifica-
tions. He was seven years in building it.

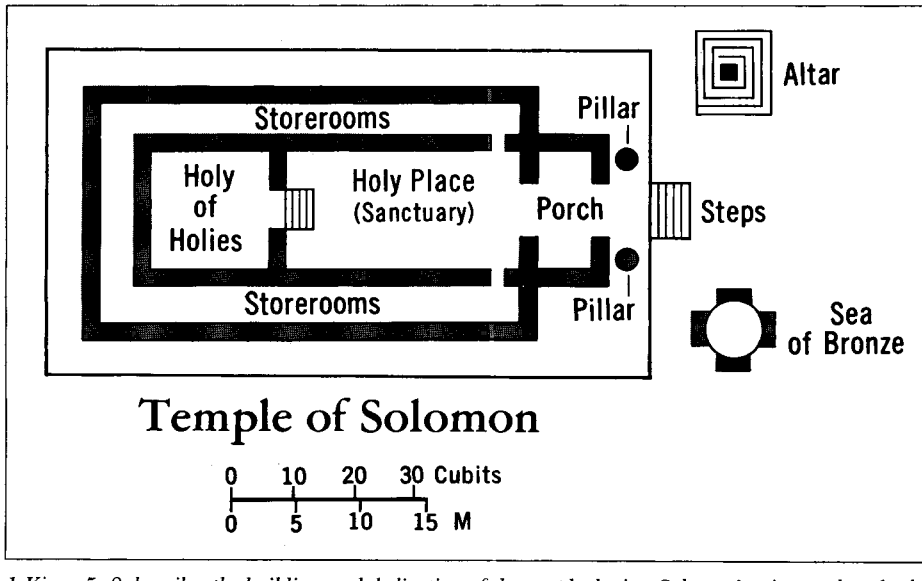
Solomon's Palace and Other Buildings

7 Solomon was building his own house
thirteen years, and he finished his
entire house.
2 He built the House of the Forest of
the Lebanon one hundred cubits long,
fifty cubits wide, and thirty cubits high,
built on four rows of cedar pillars, with

j Meaning of Heb uncertain

as guardians of the divine presence. **6.38** The month of *Bul* was the eighth month in the Canaanite calendar (October–November).

7.1–12 Like the description of the temple and its furnishings (6.1–38; 7.13–51), the account of Solomon's other building activities is probably drawn from old archives or from the *Book of the Acts of Solomon* (11.41). The king required considerably more time to build the palace than he did the temple (see 6.38). As in ch. 6, the descriptions of the buildings are sometimes unclear because of the archaic technical terms employed. **7.2–6** The *house* (v. 1) Solomon built was in fact a complex of interrelated buildings just to the south of the new temple. A *cubit* is about 18 inches. The *House of the Forest of Lebanon* took its name either from the cedar from which it was constructed or from its distinctive rows of cedar pillars, which may have given it the look of a forest. Of the five buildings in the complex, three of them were for public use, while two (the king's house and the house of his Egyptian queen) were



1 Kings 5–8 describes the building and dedication of the temple during Solomon's reign and under his direction, a rectangular structure with an overall interior length of 90 feet, a width of 30 feet, and a height of 45 feet, fronted by an unroofed vestibule ("porch") 15 feet long and 30 feet wide.

cedar beams on the pillars. [3]It was roofed
with cedar on the forty-five rafters, fif-
teen in each row, which were on the pil-
lars. [4]There were window frames in the
three rows, facing each other in the three
rows. [5]All the doorways and doorposts
had four-sided frames, opposite, facing
each other in the three rows.

6 He made the Hall of Pillars fifty cu-
bits long and thirty cubits wide. There was
a porch in front with pillars, and a canopy
in front of them.

7 He made the Hall of the Throne
where he was to pronounce judgment, the
Hall of Justice, covered with cedar from
floor to floor.

8 His own house where he would re-
side, in the other court back of the hall,
was of the same construction. Solomon
also made a house like this hall for Phar-
aoh's daughter, whom he had taken in
marriage.

9 All these were made of costly stones,
cut according to measure, sawed with
saws, back and front, from the foundation
to the coping, and from outside to the
great court. [10]The foundation was of
costly stones, huge stones, stones of eight
and ten cubits. [11]There were costly stones
above, cut to measure, and cedarwood.
[12]The great court had three courses of
dressed stone to one layer of cedar beams
all around; so had the inner court of the
house of the LORD, and the vestibule of
the house.

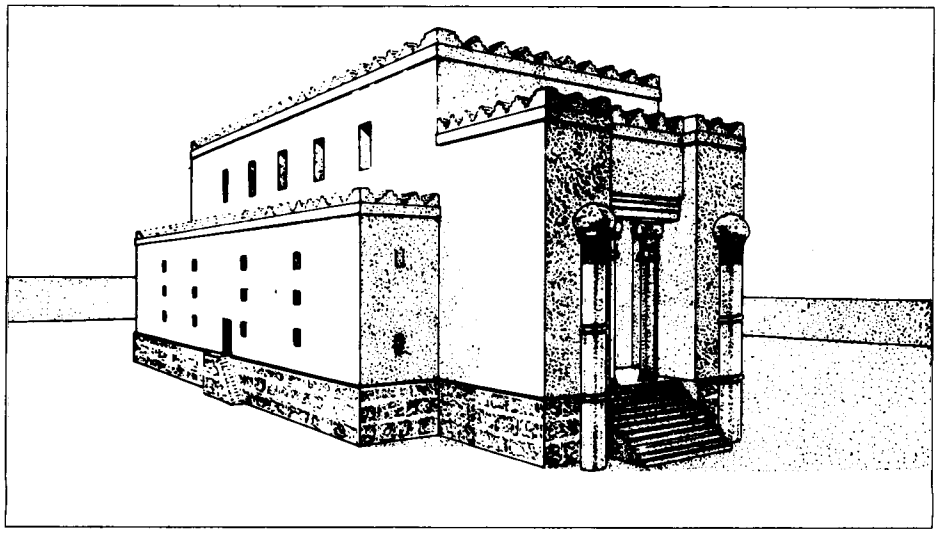
Products of Hiram the Bronzeworker

13 Now King Solomon invited and re-
ceived Hiram from Tyre. [14]He was the
son of a widow of the tribe of Naphtali,
whose father, a man of Tyre, had been an
artisan in bronze; he was full of skill, intel-
ligence, and knowledge in working
bronze. He came to King Solomon, and
did all his work.

15 He cast two pillars of bronze. Eigh-

Solomon's private domain. **7.9** *Sawed* stone has a smoother surface than stone finished with a hammer and chisel.

7.13–51 This archival account of the furnishings of the temple underscores the high quality of craftsmanship involved in Solomon's building projects. Like the temple itself, the furnishings were likely to have been inspired by Phoenician religious practices. **7.13–14** *Hiram from Tyre* is not the king who supplied Solomon with building materials (ch. 5) but an artisan skilled in working bronze. The text's reference to his Israelite mother is designed to combat the notion that work on the temple was done by a foreigner. **7.15–22** The two *pillars of bronze* flanked the entrance to the temple, where they do not seem to have had any obvious structural function.



A depiction of the temple by T. A. Busink, an authority on ancient architecture. Although the temple's interior decorations are described in detail in 1 Kings 6, little information is given about its external appearance, which may have been stark and formidable.

teen cubits was the height of the one, and
a cord of twelve cubits would encircle it;
the second pillar was the same.[k] 16 He
also made two capitals of molten bronze,
to set on the tops of the pillars; the height
of the one capital was five cubits, and the
height of the other capital was five cubits.
17 There were nets of checker work with
wreaths of chain work for the capitals on
the tops of the pillars; seven[l] for the one
capital, and seven[l] for the other capital.
18 He made the columns with two rows
around each latticework to cover the capi-
tals that were above the pomegranates; he
did the same with the other capital.
19 Now the capitals that were on the tops
of the pillars in the vestibule were of lily-
work, four cubits high. 20 The capitals
were on the two pillars and also above the
rounded projection that was beside the
latticework; there were two hundred
pomegranates in rows all around; and so
with the other capital. 21 He set up the pil-
lars at the vestibule of the temple; he set
up the pillar on the south and called it
Jachin; and he set up the pillar on the
north and called it Boaz. 22 On the tops of
the pillars was lily-work. Thus the work
of the pillars was finished.

23 Then he made the molten sea; it
was round, ten cubits from brim to brim,
and five cubits high. A line of thirty cubits
would encircle it completely. 24 Under its
brim were panels all around it, each of ten
cubits, surrounding the sea; there were
two rows of panels, cast when it was cast.
25 It stood on twelve oxen, three facing
north, three facing west, three facing
south, and three facing east; the sea was
set on them. The hindquarters of each
were toward the inside. 26 Its thickness
was a handbreadth; its brim was made like
the brim of a cup, like the flower of a lily;
it held two thousand baths.[m]

27 He also made the ten stands of
bronze; each stand was four cubits long,
four cubits wide, and three cubits high.
28 This was the construction of the stands:
they had borders; the borders were within
the frames; 29 on the borders that were set
in the frames were lions, oxen, and cheru-
bim. On the frames, both above and be-
low the lions and oxen, there were
wreaths of beveled work. 30 Each stand
had four bronze wheels and axles of
bronze; at the four corners were supports
for a basin. The supports were cast with
wreaths at the side of each. 31 Its opening
was within the crown whose height was
one cubit; its opening was round, as a
pedestal is made; it was a cubit and a half
wide. At its opening there were carvings;
its borders were four-sided, not round.
32 The four wheels were underneath the
borders; the axles of the wheels were in
the stands; and the height of a wheel was
a cubit and a half. 33 The wheels were
made like a chariot wheel; their axles,
their rims, their spokes, and their hubs
were all cast. 34 There were four supports
at the four corners of each stand; the sup-
ports were of one piece with the stands.
35 On the top of the stand there was a
round band half a cubit high; on the top
of the stand, its stays and its borders were
of one piece with it. 36 On the surfaces of
its stays and on its borders he carved cher-
ubim, lions, and palm trees, where each
had space, with wreaths all around. 37 In
this way he made the ten stands; all of
them were cast alike, with the same size
and the same form.

38 He made ten basins of bronze;
each basin held forty baths,[m] each basin
measured four cubits; there was a basin
for each of the ten stands. 39 He set five of
the stands on the south side of the house,
and five on the north side of the house; he
set the sea on the southeast corner of
the house.

40 Hiram also made the pots, the

k Cn: Heb *and a cord of twelve cubits encircled the second pillar*; Compare Jer 52.21 *l* Heb: Gk *a net* *m* A Heb measure of volume

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7.21 The names *Jachin* and *Boaz* are probably significant, but only the meaning of *Jachin* (Hebrew, "he establishes") is certain. As an architectural feature, these impressive objects may have served as symbolic markers of the sacredness of the temple enclosure. **7.23–26** The *molten sea* was a cast bronze vessel of enormous size (a *bath* is roughly the equivalent of 5.5 gallons), supported by a pedestal of twelve oxen or bulls, which are traditional Canaanite symbols of fertility. The precise function of this object is uncertain. 2 Chr 4.6 suggests that it was for the priests to wash in, but this seems questionable given the object's height off the ground. The sea may have represented the cosmic sea or had some other religious association. **7.27–39** The *ten stands* consisted of bronze wagons that served as supports for basins. **7.40–47** The *pots, the shovels, and the basins* were

shovels, and the basins. So Hiram finished
all the work that he did for King Solomon
on the house of the LORD: 41 the two pil-
lars, the two bowls of the capitals that
were on the tops of the pillars, the two
latticeworks to cover the two bowls of the
capitals that were on the tops of the pil-
lars; 42 the four hundred pomegranates
for the two latticeworks, two rows of
pomegranates for each latticework, to
cover the two bowls of the capitals that
were on the pillars; 43 the ten stands, the
ten basins on the stands; 44 the one sea,
and the twelve oxen underneath the sea.
45 The pots, the shovels, and the ba-
sins, all these vessels that Hiram made for
King Solomon for the house of the LORD
were of burnished bronze. 46 In the plain
of the Jordan the king cast them, in the
clay ground between Succoth and Zare-
than. 47 Solomon left all the vessels un-
weighed, because there were so many of
them; the weight of the bronze was not
determined.
48 So Solomon made all the vessels
that were in the house of the LORD: the
golden altar, the golden table for the
bread of the Presence, 49 the lampstands
of pure gold, five on the south side and
five on the north, in front of the inner
sanctuary; the flowers, the lamps, and the
tongs, of gold; 50 the cups, snuffers, ba-
sins, dishes for incense, and firepans, of
pure gold; the sockets for the doors of the
innermost part of the house, the most
holy place, and for the doors of the nave
of the temple, of gold.
51 Thus all the work that King Solo-
mon did on the house of the LORD was
finished. Solomon brought in the things
that his father David had dedicated, the
silver, the gold, and the vessels, and
stored them in the treasuries of the house
of the LORD.

Dedication of the Temple

8 Then Solomon assembled the elders
of Israel and all the heads of the
tribes, the leaders of the ancestral houses
of the Israelites, before King Solomon in
Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the cov-
enant of the LORD out of the city of David,
which is Zion. 2 All the people of Israel
assembled to King Solomon at the festival
in the month Ethanim, which is the sev-
enth month. 3 And all the elders of Israel
came, and the priests carried the ark. 4 So
they brought up the ark of the LORD, the
tent of meeting, and all the holy vessels
that were in the tent; the priests and the
Levites brought them up. 5 King Solomon
and all the congregation of Israel, who
had assembled before him, were with him
before the ark, sacrificing so many sheep
and oxen that they could not be counted
or numbered. 6 Then the priests brought
the ark of the covenant of the LORD to its
place, in the inner sanctuary of the house,
in the most holy place, underneath the
wings of the cherubim. 7 For the cherubim
spread out their wings over the place of
the ark, so that the cherubim made a cov-

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used during sacrificial rituals. These objects closely resemble those created earlier for use in the tabernacle (Ex 27.3). Hiram cast all of the utensils by pouring bronze into clay molds. **7.46** *Succoth* and *Zarethan* are on the plain of the Jordan River near the Jabbok. **7.48–50** This passage too echoes earlier descriptions of the tabernacle (Ex 25.23–40; 30.1–10). On *the bread of the Presence*, see Lev 24.5–9; Ex 25.23–30; 40.23; Num 4.7. Apparently the *lampstands* each supported only one lamp and are therefore not identical with the seven-branched lampstands mentioned elsewhere (Ex 25.31–40; 37.17–24; Lev 24.1–4). **7.51** For the objects *David had dedicated* to the Lord, see 2 Sam 8.9–12; 1 Chr 29.1–5.

8.1–13 Solomon's installation of the ark marks the religious climax of the new temple's construction and signifies the beginning of God's permanent residence in the building. **8.1–2** The leaders Solomon assembles are the heads of Israel's traditional kinship groups or lineages, and they join with all the people of Israel for the ceremony. The installation takes place in *Ethanim*, the seventh month of the old Canaanite calendar (September–October), so for unknown reasons Solomon delayed the event for almost a year after the completion of the temple itself (6.38). The *festival* associated with the gathering was probably Sukkoth (the Festival of Booths or Tabernacles), a seven-day fall harvest festival, which in Deuteronomic tradition was the occasion for the ritual reading of the Mosaic law every seven years (Ex 23.16; 34.22; Deut 16.13–17; 31.9–13; cf. 1 Kings 8.65–66). **8.3–4** The *priests* and the *Levites*, the traditional custodians of the ark (Deut 31.9; 2 Sam 15.24), carried it from the tent in Zion, the older part of Jerusalem which David had occupied (2 Sam 6.1–23), and moved it north to the new temple. **8.6** *Ark.* See note on

ering above the ark and its poles. 8 The
poles were so long that the ends of
the poles were seen from the holy place in
front of the inner sanctuary; but they
could not be seen from outside; they are
there to this day. 9 There was nothing in
the ark except the two tablets of stone that
Moses had placed there at Horeb, where
the LORD made a covenant with the Israel-
ites, when they came out of the land of
Egypt. 10 And when the priests came out
of the holy place, a cloud filled the house
of the LORD, 11 so that the priests could
not stand to minister because of the
cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the
house of the LORD.

12 Then Solomon said,
"The LORD has said that he
would dwell in thick
darkness.
13 I have built you an exalted house,
a place for you to dwell in
forever."

Solomon's Speech

14 Then the king turned around and
blessed all the assembly of Israel, while all
the assembly of Israel stood. 15 He said,
"Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,
who with his hand has fulfilled what he
promised with his mouth to my father Da-
vid, saying, 16 'Since the day that I
brought my people Israel out of Egypt, I
have not chosen a city from any of the
tribes of Israel in which to build a house,
that my name might be there; but I chose
David to be over my people Israel.' 17 My
father David had it in mind to build a
house for the name of the LORD, the God
of Israel. 18 But the LORD said to my fa-
ther David, 'You did well to consider
building a house for my name; 19 never-
theless you shall not build the house, but
your son who shall be born to you shall
build the house for my name.' 20 Now the
LORD has upheld the promise that he
made; for I have risen in the place of my
father David; I sit on the throne of Israel,
as the LORD promised, and have built the
house for the name of the LORD, the God
of Israel. 21 There I have provided a place
for the ark, in which is the covenant of the
LORD that he made with our ancestors
when he brought them out of the land of
Egypt."

Solomon's Prayer of Dedication

22 Then Solomon stood before the al-
tar of the LORD in the presence of all the
assembly of Israel, and spread out his
hands to heaven. 23 He said, "O LORD,
God of Israel, there is no God like you in
heaven above or on earth beneath, keep-
ing covenant and steadfast love for your
servants who walk before you with all
their heart, 24 the covenant that you kept
for your servant my father David as you
declared to him; you promised with your
mouth and have this day fulfilled with
your hand. 25 Therefore, O LORD, God of
Israel, keep for your servant my father
David that which you promised him, say-
ing, 'There shall never fail you a successor
before me to sit on the throne of Israel, if
only your children look to their way, to
walk before me as you have walked before
me.' 26 Therefore, O God of Israel, let
your word be confirmed, which you
promised to your servant my father
David.

6.19. *Cherubim.* See note on 6.23–28. **8.8** The ark's carrying *poles* extended through the veil that blocked the inner sanctuary from public view (2 Chr 3.14) and reminded visitors to the nave of the ark's presence. The remark that the poles *are there to this day* indicates that the account was written sometime after the events being narrated but before the destruction of the temple. **8.10–11** Once the ark is in its proper place, the temple is filled with a *cloud,* a traditional symbol of God's presence (Ex 13.21; 19.16), and with the *glory of the LORD,* the visible aura or radiance surrounding the deity (Ex 40.34–35; Ezek 1.1–28; 10.18–19; 11.22–23; 43.1–5). **8.12–13** The *thick darkness* in which God dwells is the dark cloud that conceals the deity.

8.14–21 Solomon's speech to the assembled people refers to the fulfillment of God's promise to David (2 Sam 7.1–17).

8.22–53 Solomon's prayer of petition to the Lord is an archetypical statement of Deuteronomistic theology and is directed to the people and to readers as much as it is to the deity. After introductory references to God's faithfulness to the covenant with David (vv. 22–30; 2 Sam 7.1–17), the king makes seven petitions (vv. 31–32, 33–34, 35–36, 37–40, 41–43, 44–45, 46–51), each of which asks God to hear the prayers of those who are righteous and truly repent of their sins. The last case deals with exile and captivity and holds out hope for the exilic audience reading the book.

27 "But will God indeed dwell on the
earth? Even heaven and the highest
heaven cannot contain you, much less this
house that I have built! 28 Regard your
servant's prayer and his plea, O LORD my
God, heeding the cry and the prayer that
your servant prays to you today; 29 that
your eyes may be open night and day to-
ward this house, the place of which you
said, 'My name shall be there,' that you
may heed the prayer that your servant
prays toward this place. 30 Hear the plea
of your servant and of your people Israel
when they pray toward this place; O hear
in heaven your dwelling place; heed and
forgive.

31 "If someone sins against a neighbor
and is given an oath to swear, and comes
and swears before your altar in this house,
32 then hear in heaven, and act, and judge
your servants, condemning the guilty by
bringing their conduct on their own head,
and vindicating the righteous by reward-
ing them according to their righteousness.

33 "When your people Israel, having
sinned against you, are defeated before
an enemy but turn again to you, confess
your name, pray and plead with you in
this house, 34 then hear in heaven, forgive
the sin of your people Israel, and bring
them again to the land that you gave to
their ancestors.

35 "When heaven is shut up and there
is no rain because they have sinned
against you, and then they pray toward
this place, confess your name, and turn
from their sin, because you punish[n]
them, 36 then hear in heaven, and forgive
the sin of your servants, your people Is-
rael, when you teach them the good way
in which they should walk; and grant rain
on your land, which you have given to
your people as an inheritance.

37 "If there is famine in the land, if
there is plague, blight, mildew, locust, or
caterpillar; if their enemy besieges them
in any[o] of their cities; whatever plague,
whatever sickness there is; 38 whatever
prayer, whatever plea there is from any
individual or from all your people Israel,
all knowing the afflictions of their own
hearts so that they stretch out their hands
toward this house; 39 then hear in heaven
your dwelling place, forgive, act, and ren-
der to all whose hearts you know—
according to all their ways, for only you
know what is in every human heart—
40 so that they may fear you all the days
that they live in the land that you gave to
our ancestors.

41 "Likewise when a foreigner, who is
not of your people Israel, comes from a
distant land because of your name
42 —for they shall hear of your great
name, your mighty hand, and your out-
stretched arm—when a foreigner comes
and prays toward this house, 43 then hear
in heaven your dwelling place, and do ac-
cording to all that the foreigner calls to
you, so that all the peoples of the earth
may know your name and fear you, as do
your people Israel, and so that they may
know that your name has been invoked
on this house that I have built.

44 "If your people go out to battle
against their enemy, by whatever way you
shall send them, and they pray to the
LORD toward the city that you have cho-
sen and the house that I have built for
your name, 45 then hear in heaven their
prayer and their plea, and maintain their
cause.

46 "If they sin against you—for there
is no one who does not sin—and you are
angry with them and give them to an en-
emy, so that they are carried away captive
to the land of the enemy, far off or near;
47 yet if they come to their senses in the
land to which they have been taken cap-
tive, and repent, and plead with you in
the land of their captors, saying, 'We have
sinned, and have done wrong; we have
acted wickedly'; 48 if they repent with all
their heart and soul in the land of their
enemies, who took them captive, and pray
to you toward their land, which you gave
to their ancestors, the city that you have
chosen, and the house that I have built for
your name; 49 then hear in heaven your
dwelling place their prayer and their plea,
maintain their cause 50 and forgive your
people who have sinned against you, and
all their transgressions that they have
committed against you; and grant them
compassion in the sight of their captors,
so that they may have compassion on
them 51 (for they are your people and her-
itage, which you brought out of Egypt,
from the midst of the iron-smelter). 52 Let
your eyes be open to the plea of your ser-
vant, and to the plea of your people Is-
rael, listening to them whenever they call
to you. 53 For you have separated them

n Or *when you answer* *o* Gk Syr: Heb *in the land*

from among all the peoples of the earth,
to be your heritage, just as you promised
through Moses, your servant, when you
brought our ancestors out of Egypt,
O Lord God."

Solomon Blesses the Assembly

54 Now when Solomon finished offer-
ing all this prayer and this plea to the
Lord, he arose from facing the altar of
the Lord, where he had knelt with hands
outstretched toward heaven; 55 he stood
and blessed all the assembly of Israel with
a loud voice:
56 "Blessed be the Lord, who has
given rest to his people Israel according to
all that he promised; not one word has
failed of all his good promise, which he
spoke through his servant Moses. 57 The
Lord our God be with us, as he was with
our ancestors; may he not leave us or
abandon us, 58 but incline our hearts to
him, to walk in all his ways, and to keep
his commandments, his statutes, and his
ordinances, which he commanded our an-
cestors. 59 Let these words of mine, with
which I pleaded before the Lord, be near
to the Lord our God day and night, and
may he maintain the cause of his servant
and the cause of his people Israel, as each
day requires; 60 so that all the peoples of
the earth may know that the Lord is God;
there is no other. 61 Therefore devote
yourselves completely to the Lord our
God, walking in his statutes and keeping
his commandments, as at this day."

Solomon Offers Sacrifices

62 Then the king, and all Israel with
him, offered sacrifice before the Lord.
63 Solomon offered as sacrifices of well-
being to the Lord twenty-two thousand
oxen and one hundred twenty thousand
sheep. So the king and all the people of
Israel dedicated the house of the Lord.
64 The same day the king consecrated the
middle of the court that was in front of
the house of the Lord; for there he of-
fered the burnt offerings and the grain
offerings and the fat pieces of the sacri-
fices of well-being, because the bronze al-
tar that was before the Lord was too small
to receive the burnt offerings and the
grain offerings and the fat pieces of the
sacrifices of well-being.
65 So Solomon held the festival at that
time, and all Israel with him—a great as-
sembly, people from Lebo-hamath to the
Wadi of Egypt—before the Lord our
God, seven days.[p] 66 On the eighth day he
sent the people away; and they blessed the
king, and went to their tents, joyful and in
good spirits because of all the goodness
that the Lord had shown to his servant
David and to his people Israel.

God Appears Again to Solomon

9 When Solomon had finished build-
ing the house of the Lord and the
king's house and all that Solomon desired
to build, 2 the Lord appeared to Solomon

p Compare Gk: Heb *seven days and seven days, fourteen days*

8.54–61 This section resumes the narrative that frames Solomon's lengthy prayer (cf. vv. 14–22). It consists chiefly of Deuteronomistic exhortation to covenant faithfulness. **8.54** *Arose . . . where he had knelt.* This contrasts with v. 22 where Solomon is said to have been praying while standing. **8.55** *Blessed all the assembly of Israel,* normally a priestly function (cf. Num 6.22–27) is here done by the king (as in v. 14). **8.56** *Who has given rest.* The author saw in this reference a fulfillment of the promise given in Deut 12.10–11.

8.62–66 Following common ancient Near Eastern practice, Israel's kings sometimes carried out priestly duties, as Solomon does here (2 Sam 6; 1 Kings 13; 2 Kings 19.14–19), even though such priestly behavior is left out of Deuteronomy's list of royal responsibilities (Deut 17.14–20). **8.65** *Lebo-hamath* (sometimes translated as "Entrance of Hamath") was the traditional northern boundary of the land promised to Israel (Num 34.7–9; Josh 13.5; Ezek 47.15). Its exact location is uncertain, but it has been identified with modern Lebweh, to the south of the city of Hamath (modern Hama) on the Orontes River in Syria. *The Wadi of Egypt* or Wadi of the Arabah (Am 6.14) was the traditional southern boundary and is usually identified with the Wadi el-Arish in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula.

9.1–9 The location of Solomon's second vision is not specified, but the divine revelation presumably comes in a dream, as it did at Gibeon. See notes on 3.1–15. God's address to Solomon is in good Deuteronomistic style and articulates the theological views that underlie the rest of Kings. The address thus provides a necessary framework for understanding both the narrative of the rest of Solomon's reign (9.10–11.43) and the account of the history of Israel and Judah to the exile.

a second time, as he had appeared to him
at Gibeon. 3 The LORD said to him, "I have
heard your prayer and your plea, which
you made before me; I have consecrated
this house that you have built, and put my
name there forever; my eyes and my
heart will be there for all time. 4 As for
you, if you will walk before me, as David
your father walked, with integrity of heart
and uprightness, doing according to all
that I have commanded you, and keeping
my statutes and my ordinances, 5 then I
will establish your royal throne over Israel
forever, as I promised your father David,
saying, 'There shall not fail you a succes-
sor on the throne of Israel.'
6 "If you turn aside from following
me, you or your children, and do not
keep my commandments and my statutes
that I have set before you, but go and
serve other gods and worship them, 7 then
I will cut Israel off from the land that I
have given them; and the house that I
have consecrated for my name I will cast
out of my sight; and Israel will become a
proverb and a taunt among all peoples.
8 This house will become a heap of ru-
ins;[q] everyone passing by it will be aston-
ished, and will hiss; and they will say,
'Why has the LORD done such a thing to
this land and to this house?' 9 Then they
will say, 'Because they have forsaken the
LORD their God, who brought their ances-
tors out of the land of Egypt, and em-
braced other gods, worshiping them and
serving them; therefore the LORD has
brought this disaster upon them.' "

Solomon's Further Dealings with Hiram

10 At the end of twenty years, in
which Solomon had built the two houses,
the house of the LORD and the king's
house, 11 King Hiram of Tyre having sup-
plied Solomon with cedar and cypress
timber and gold, as much as he desired,
King Solomon gave to Hiram twenty cities
in the land of Galilee. 12 But when Hiram
came from Tyre to see the cities that Solo-
mon had given him, they did not please
him. 13 Therefore he said, "What kind of
cities are these that you have given me,
my brother?" So they are called the land
of Cabul[r] to this day. 14 But Hiram had
sent to the king one hundred twenty tal-
ents of gold.

Other Acts of Solomon

15 This is the account of the forced
labor that King Solomon conscripted to
build the house of the LORD and his own
house, the Millo and the wall of Jerusa-
lem, Hazor, Megiddo, Gezer 16 (Pharaoh
king of Egypt had gone up and captured
Gezer and burned it down, had killed the
Canaanites who lived in the city, and had
given it as dowry to his daughter, Solo-
mon's wife; 17 so Solomon rebuilt Gezer),
Lower Beth-horon, 18 Baalath, Tamar in

q Syr Old Latin: Heb *will become high* r Perhaps meaning *a land good for nothing*

9.3 God's initial statement concerning the sanctification of the temple verbalizes what readers have already seen in 8.10–11. The temple is now holy because God has caused the divine name to dwell there forever. The promise to keep the temple always in view is a positive answer to Solomon's prayer (8.29, 52). **9.4–5** Addressing Solomon directly, God again makes the continuation of Davidic rule contingent on Solomon's obedience to the commandments associated with the covenant (cf. 2.4). **9.6–9** In these verses the *you* of the address switches from singular to plural, and God warns Solomon's descendants that they too must obey if the divine presence is to remain in the temple. If they do not obey the law, here summarized by the command to worship only the Lord (Deut 6.4), then king and people together will be punished (cf. 6.11–13). This threat is later recalled in the Deuteronomistic explanation for the destruction of the Northern Kingdom (2 Kings 17.7–8) and ultimately becomes the explanation for the fall of Jerusalem and the exile (2 Kings 21.11–15).

9.10–14 Hiram had already been paid for the building materials (see 5.9–11), so Solomon probably sells the cities in order to replenish his depleted treasury. **9.11** *Galilee* is in northern Israel between the Jezreel Valley and the Leontes River. The upper part of the region lies just to the east of Tyre. **9.13** The meaning of *Cabul* is uncertain. **9.14** Even though Hiram was displeased with the cities when he saw them, he had apparently already paid for them and was unable to cancel the sale. A *talent* weighs about 75 pounds.

9.15–25 This account of Solomon's other activities probably comes from official archives. **9.15** The *Millo* was an artificial platform or terrace of earth constructed to provide a suitable building surface. Its exact location in Jerusalem is

the wilderness, within the land, 19 as well
as all of Solomon's storage cities, the cities
for his chariots, the cities for his cavalry,
and whatever Solomon desired to build,
in Jerusalem, in Lebanon, and in all the
land of his dominion. 20 All the people
who were left of the Amorites, the Hit-
tites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the
Jebusites, who were not of the people of
Israel— 21 their descendants who were
still left in the land, whom the Israelites
were unable to destroy completely—these
Solomon conscripted for slave labor, and
so they are to this day. 22 But of the Israel-
ites Solomon made no slaves; they were
the soldiers, they were his officials, his
commanders, his captains, and the com-
manders of his chariotry and cavalry.
23 These were the chief officers who
were over Solomon's work: five hundred
fifty, who had charge of the people who
carried on the work.
24 But Pharaoh's daughter went up
from the city of David to her own house
that Solomon had built for her; then he
built the Millo.
25 Three times a year Solomon used
to offer up burnt offerings and sacrifices
of well-being on the altar that he built for
the LORD, offering incense[s] before the
LORD. So he completed the house.

Solomon's Commercial Activity

26 King Solomon built a fleet of ships
at Ezion-geber, which is near Eloth on the
shore of the Red Sea,[t] in the land of
Edom. 27 Hiram sent his servants with the
fleet, sailors who were familiar with the
sea, together with the servants of Solo-
mon. 28 They went to Ophir, and im-
ported from there four hundred twenty
talents of gold, which they delivered to
King Solomon.

Visit of the Queen of Sheba

10 When the queen of Sheba heard
of the fame of Solomon (fame
due to[u] the name of the LORD), she came
to test him with hard questions. 2 She
came to Jerusalem with a very great reti-
nue, with camels bearing spices, and very
much gold, and precious stones; and
when she came to Solomon, she told him
all that was on her mind. 3 Solomon an-
swered all her questions; there was noth-
ing hidden from the king that he could
not explain to her. 4 When the queen of
Sheba had observed all the wisdom of Sol-
omon, the house that he had built, 5 the
food of his table, the seating of his offi-

s Gk: Heb *offering incense with it that was*
t Or *Sea of Reeds* u Meaning of Heb uncertain

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unknown. **9.20–22** In addition to the Israelites who were forced to provide labor for Solomon's building activities (5.13–18), he also employed slave labor drawn from the pre-Israelite inhabitants of Canaan, the same people marked for extermination by the book of Deuteronomy (Deut 7.1–6; 20.16–18). The claim that Solomon used Israelites only as overseers does not agree with 5.13–18 or 12.4.

9.26–28 Because Israel was not known for trading by sea, the fleet represents an attempt to expand Solomon's economic base. **9.26** *Ezion-geber* is on the Gulf of Aqaba, so Solomon intends to use the Red Sea for access to ports in eastern Africa and southern Arabia. **9.28** *Ophir* was renowned as a source for gold (Job 22.24; 28.16; Ps 45.9; Isa 13.12). Its exact location is uncertain. A *talent* weighs about 75 pounds.

10.1–29 While the building and dedication of the temple mark the religious high point of Solomon's reign, the story of the queen of Sheba's visit shows him at the height of his secular power. The narrator has taken an old legend of the foreign ruler's visit and used it as an occasion to dramatize Solomon's enormous wisdom and the material rewards that wisdom can bring. References to gold and precious objects abound, and the sheer richness of the description is designed to leave readers as awestruck as the queen herself. In the context of the overall narrative, the chapter sharpens the contrast between the brilliance of the Solomonic court (chs. 3–10) and the dark side of his reign, the sins that ultimately bring judgment on the Davidic dynasty and on the nation as a whole (ch. 11). **10.1** The exact location of *Sheba* is unknown, but many scholars identify it with Saba, the home of the Sabeans, who occupied the southwestern part of the Arabian Peninsula (modern Yemen). This is precisely the area with which Solomon was anxious to establish trading relationships (9.26–28). Ancient Israelite geographers recognized their own kinship with the inhabitants of Sheba (Gen 10.28) but also associated them with Africa (Gen 10.7). This perception of the Sabeans probably reflects their crucial role in transporting spices, gold, and precious stones from Africa, India, and Arabia (Ps 72.10; Isa 60.6; Jer 6.20; Ezek 27.22–23). The queen's *hard questions* are not described in detail, but they were riddles of the sort that were the basis of Samson's contest with the Philistines (Judg 14.12–18). The ability to solve riddles was the mark of a wise per-

cials, and the attendance of his servants,
their clothing, his valets, and his burnt
offerings that he offered at the house of
the LORD, there was no more spirit in her.
6 So she said to the king, "The report
was true that I heard in my own land of
your accomplishments and of your wis-
dom, 7 but I did not believe the reports
until I came and my own eyes had seen it.
Not even half had been told me; your wis-
dom and prosperity far surpass the report
that I had heard. 8 Happy are your
wives![v] Happy are these your servants,
who continually attend you and hear your
wisdom! 9 Blessed be the LORD your God,
who has delighted in you and set you on
the throne of Israel! Because the LORD
loved Israel forever, he has made you
king to execute justice and righteous-
ness." 10 Then she gave the king one hun-
dred twenty talents of gold, a great
quantity of spices, and precious stones;
never again did spices come in such quan-
tity as that which the queen of Sheba gave
to King Solomon.
11 Moreover, the fleet of Hiram,
which carried gold from Ophir, brought
from Ophir a great quantity of almug
wood and precious stones. 12 From the al-
mug wood the king made supports for the
house of the LORD, and for the king's
house, lyres also and harps for the sing-
ers; no such almug wood has come or
been seen to this day.
13 Meanwhile King Solomon gave to
the queen of Sheba every desire that she
expressed, as well as what he gave her out
of Solomon's royal bounty. Then she re-
turned to her own land, with her servants.
14 The weight of gold that came to
Solomon in one year was six hundred
sixty-six talents of gold, 15 besides that
which came from the traders and from
the business of the merchants, and from
all the kings of Arabia and the governors
of the land. 16 King Solomon made two
hundred large shields of beaten gold; six
hundred shekels of gold went into each
large shield. 17 He made three hundred
shields of beaten gold; three minas of
gold went into each shield; and the king
put them in the House of the Forest of
Lebanon. 18 The king also made a great
ivory throne, and overlaid it with the fin-
est gold. 19 The throne had six steps. The
top of the throne was rounded in the
back, and on each side of the seat were
arm rests and two lions standing beside
the arm rests, 20 while twelve lions were
standing, one on each end of a step on the
six steps. Nothing like it was ever made in
any kingdom. 21 All King Solomon's
drinking vessels were of gold, and all the
vessels of the House of the Forest of Leba-
non were of pure gold; none were of
silver—it was not considered as anything
in the days of Solomon. 22 For the king
had a fleet of ships of Tarshish at sea with
the fleet of Hiram. Once every three years
the fleet of ships of Tarshish used to come
bringing gold, silver, ivory, apes, and
peacocks.[w]
23 Thus King Solomon excelled all
the kings of the earth in riches and in wis-
dom. 24 The whole earth sought the pres-
ence of Solomon to hear his wisdom,
which God had put into his mind. 25 Every
one of them brought a present, objects of
silver and gold, garments, weaponry,
spices, horses, and mules, so much year by
year.
26 Solomon gathered together chari-
ots and horses; he had fourteen hundred
chariots and twelve thousand horses,
which he stationed in the chariot cities
and with the king in Jerusalem. 27 The
king made silver as common in Jerusalem
as stones, and he made cedars as numer-

v Gk Syr: Heb *men* w Or *baboons*

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son (Ps 49.4; Prov 1.6). **10.6–9** The foreigner's praise of Solomon's court serves as the ultimate validation of his status in the international arena and demonstrates the superiority of Israel's God. **10.10** A *talent* weighs about 75 pounds. An exchange of gifts was customary at meetings between monarchs (cf. v. 13). **10.11** On Solomon's trading ventures with Hiram, see 9.26–28. Here Israelite participation in the voyages is not mentioned. *Ophir*. See note on 9.28. *Almug wood* is perhaps red sandalwood. **10.16** The *large shields* were probably rectangular and designed to protect the entire body. The ones mentioned here and in v. 17 are decorative rather than functional. The weight of a *shekel* varied greatly in ancient Israel, but it averaged about .4 ounce. **10.17** The *shields* referred to here were likely to have been small circular shields. A *mina* is the equivalent of fifty shekels. **10.22** The location of *Tarshish* is uncertain. Some scholars have placed it in the Mediterranean (see Gen 10.4), while others prefer a site in India, Africa, or

ous as the sycamores of the Shephelah.
28 Solomon's import of horses was from
Egypt and Kue, and the king's traders re-
ceived them from Kue at a price. 29 A
chariot could be imported from Egypt for
six hundred shekels of silver, and a horse
for one hundred fifty; so through the
king's traders they were exported to all
the kings of the Hittites and the kings of
Aram.

Solomon's Errors

11 King Solomon loved many for-
eign women along with the
daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammon-
ite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite
women, 2 from the nations concerning
which the LORD had said to the Israelites,
"You shall not enter into marriage with
them, neither shall they with you; for they
will surely incline your heart to follow
their gods"; Solomon clung to these in
love. 3 Among his wives were seven hun-
dred princesses and three hundred con-
cubines; and his wives turned away his
heart. 4 For when Solomon was old, his
wives turned away his heart after other
gods; and his heart was not true to the
LORD his God, as was the heart of his fa-
ther David. 5 For Solomon followed As-
tarte the goddess of the Sidonians, and
Milcom the abomination of the Ammon-
ites. 6 So Solomon did what was evil in the
sight of the LORD, and did not completely
follow the LORD, as his father David had
done. 7 Then Solomon built a high place
for Chemosh the abomination of Moab,
and for Molech the abomination of the
Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jeru-
salem. 8 He did the same for all his for-
eign wives, who offered incense and
sacrificed to their gods.

9 Then the LORD was angry with Solo-
mon, because his heart had turned away
from the LORD, the God of Israel, who
had appeared to him twice, 10 and had
commanded him concerning this matter,
that he should not follow other gods; but
he did not observe what the LORD com-
manded. 11 Therefore the LORD said to
Solomon, "Since this has been your mind
and you have not kept my covenant and
my statutes that I have commanded you, I
will surely tear the kingdom from you and
give it to your servant. 12 Yet for the sake
of your father David I will not do it in
your lifetime; I will tear it out of the hand
of your son. 13 I will not, however, tear

Arabia. The context suggests that the ships were capable of making long voyages. **10.28** *Kue* is located in southeastern Turkey. **10.29** The *kings of the Hittites* ruled over parts of northern Syria. Solomon's importation of war horses and chariots from Egypt is a direct violation of the prohibition in Deut 17.16.

11.1–13 These verses provide a sharp contrast with the rosy picture of Solomon's achievements in chs. 3–10. In characteristic Deuteronomistic style, the narrator provides a theological evaluation of the king's reign and concludes that in the end Solomon violated the conditions attached to God's promise of an eternal Davidic dynasty (2.4; 9.4–5). **11.1–2** Deuteronomy's prohibition against intermarriage with the original inhabitants of Canaan (Deut 7.1–6) is here expanded to include Phoenician trading partners such as Sidon and vassals such as Moab, Ammon, and Edom. The latter three nations, Israel's immediate neighbors to the east and south, had been subjugated by David and were vassals during much of Solomon's reign (2 Sam 8.2, 9–14; 12.26–31). **11.4** The reference to Solomon's old age may be an oblique attempt to blame his sins on senility. In reality the difficulties started early in his reign with his marriage to an Egyptian princess (3.1). **11.5** The note that Solomon *followed* these deities seems to imply that he actually worshiped them and did not simply tolerate their worship. *Astarte* (or Ashtoreth) was a Canaanite goddess corresponding to the Mesopotamian goddess Ishtar and later identified with Aphrodite and Venus. In extrabiblical texts, as well as in the OT, she is usually portrayed as the consort of Baal, the Canaanite storm god representing fertility. She was particularly popular among the Phoenicians and was the leading female deity in both Tyre and Sidon. The name of the Ammonite deity *Milcom* is derived from a Semitic root meaning "king" or "ruler." He is usually identified with Baal. **11.7** *High place.* See note on 3.2. *Chemosh* was the chief deity of Moab, but little is known about his characteristics. *Molech*, usually known only as a deity worshiped outside of Jerusalem in the Valley of Hinnom (Lev 18.21; 20.2–5; 2 Kings 23.10; Jer 32.35), is not otherwise associated with Ammon, and it is likely that Milcom is intended here (see v. 5). **11.9** For God's appearances to Solomon, see 3.5–14; 9.1–9. **11.13** Because of God's fidelity to the covenant with David, the Davidic line will not be terminated, even though such termination would have been justified. This gracious divine action fulfills one of the promises in Nathan's oracle to David (2 Sam 7.14–15).

away the entire kingdom; I will give one
tribe to your son, for the sake of my ser-
vant David and for the sake of Jerusalem,
which I have chosen."

Adversaries of Solomon

14 Then the LORD raised up an adver-
sary against Solomon, Hadad the Edom-
ite; he was of the royal house in Edom.
15 For when David was in Edom, and Joab
the commander of the army went up to
bury the dead, he killed every male in
Edom 16 (for Joab and all Israel remained
there six months, until he had eliminated
every male in Edom); 17 but Hadad fled to
Egypt with some Edomites who were ser-
vants of his father. He was a young boy at
that time. 18 They set out from Midian
and came to Paran; they took people with
them from Paran and came to Egypt, to
Pharaoh king of Egypt, who gave him a
house, assigned him an allowance of food,
and gave him land. 19 Hadad found great
favor in the sight of Pharaoh, so that he
gave him his sister-in-law for a wife, the
sister of Queen Tahpenes. 20 The sister of
Tahpenes gave birth by him to his son Ge-
nubath, whom Tahpenes weaned in Phar-
aoh's house; Genubath was in Pharaoh's
house among the children of Pharaoh.
21 When Hadad heard in Egypt that David
slept with his ancestors and that Joab the
commander of the army was dead, Hadad
said to Pharaoh, "Let me depart, that I
may go to my own country." 22 But Phar-
aoh said to him, "What do you lack with
me that you now seek to go to your own
country?" And he said, "No, do let
me go."

23 God raised up another adversary
against Solomon,[x] Rezon son of Eliada,
who had fled from his master, King Had-
adezer of Zobah. 24 He gathered followers
around him and became leader of a ma-
rauding band, after the slaughter by Da-
vid; they went to Damascus, settled there,
and made him king in Damascus. 25 He
was an adversary of Israel all the days of
Solomon, making trouble as Hadad did;
he despised Israel and reigned over
Aram.

Jeroboam's Rebellion

26 Jeroboam son of Nebat, an Ephra-
imite of Zeredah, a servant of Solomon,
whose mother's name was Zeruah, a
widow, rebelled against the king. 27 The
following was the reason he rebelled
against the king. Solomon built the Millo,
and closed up the gap in the wall[y] of the
city of his father David. 28 The man Jero-
boam was very able, and when Solomon
saw that the young man was industrious
he gave him charge over all the forced la-
bor of the house of Joseph. 29 About that
time, when Jeroboam was leaving Jerusa-
lem, the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite
found him on the road. Ahijah had
clothed himself with a new garment. The
two of them were alone in the open coun-
try 30 when Ahijah laid hold of the new
garment he was wearing and tore it into
twelve pieces. 31 He then said to Jero-
boam: Take for yourself ten pieces; for
thus says the LORD, the God of Israel,
"See, I am about to tear the kingdom
from the hand of Solomon, and will give
you ten tribes. 32 One tribe will remain his,
for the sake of my servant David and for
the sake of Jerusalem, the city that I have
chosen out of all the tribes of Israel.
33 This is because he has[z] forsaken me,
worshiped Astarte the goddess of the Si-
donians, Chemosh the god of Moab, and
Milcom the god of the Ammonites, and
has[z] not walked in my ways, doing what

x Heb *him* y Heb lacks *in the wall*
z Gk Syr Vg: Heb *they have*

11.14–25 Although Solomon is allowed to die before witnessing the judgment against his house, he does see the beginning of the loss of his empire. **11.15–16** For David's campaigns against Edom, see 2 Sam 8.11–14. The claim that David *killed every male in Edom* is doubtless exaggerated. **11.19** The Egyptian *Queen Tahpenes* is otherwise unknown. **11.23** On David's battles with *Hadadezer of Zobah*, see 2 Sam 8.3–8; 10.15–19.

11.26–40 The story of Jeroboam's rise to power is basically favorable toward the future king, although some early Greek translations give a more negative picture. **11.29** *Ahijah* is identified with the old Israelite shrine at Shiloh and represents a theological viewpoint similar to that of the Deuteronomistic author. For similar prophetic involvement in a change of dynasty, see 1 Sam 15.27–28. **11.31** In contrast to v. 13, this verse seems to imply that two tribes are left to the house of David. The two are presumably Judah and Benjamin (see 12.21). The early absorption of Benjamin into the much larger Judah may

is right in my sight and keeping my statutes and my ordinances, as his father David did. 34 Nevertheless I will not take the whole kingdom away from him but will make him ruler all the days of his life, for the sake of my servant David whom I chose and who did keep my commandments and my statutes; 35 but I will take the kingdom away from his son and give it to you—that is, the ten tribes. 36 Yet to his son I will give one tribe, so that my servant David may always have a lamp before me in Jerusalem, the city where I have chosen to put my name. 37 I will take you, and you shall reign over all that your soul desires; you shall be king over Israel. 38 If you will listen to all that I command you, walk in my ways, and do what is right in my sight by keeping my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did, I will be with you, and will build you an enduring house, as I built for David, and I will give Israel to you. 39 For this reason I will punish the descendants of David, but not forever." 40 Solomon sought therefore to kill Jeroboam; but Jeroboam promptly fled to Egypt, to King Shishak of Egypt, and remained in Egypt until the death of Solomon.

Death of Solomon

41 Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, all that he did as well as his wisdom, are they not written in the Book of the Acts of Solomon? 42 The time that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel was forty years. 43 Solomon slept with his ancestors and was buried in the city of his father David; and his son Rehoboam succeeded him.

The Northern Tribes Secede

12 Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had come to Shechem to make him king. 2 When Jeroboam son of Nebat heard of it (for he was still in Egypt, where he had fled from King Solomon), then Jeroboam returned from[a] Egypt. 3 And they sent and called him; and Jeroboam and all the assembly of Israel came and said to Rehoboam, 4 "Your father made our yoke heavy. Now therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke that he placed on us, and we will serve you." 5 He said to them, "Go away for three days, then come again to me." So the people went away.

6 Then King Rehoboam took counsel with the older men who had attended his father Solomon while he was still alive, saying, "How do you advise me to answer this people?" 7 They answered him, "If you will be a servant to this people today and serve them, and speak good words to them when you answer them, then they will be your servants forever." 8 But he disregarded the advice that the older men gave him, and consulted with the young men who had grown up with him and now attended him. 9 He said to them, "What do you advise that we answer this people who have said to me, 'Lighten the yoke that your father put on us'?" 10 The

a Gk Vg Compare 2 Chr 10.2: Heb *lived in*

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have led the author of v. 13 to consider them a single tribe. **11.36** The meaning of the word translated *lamp* is uncertain. If the translation is retained, the statement would seem to mean that David will always have a presence or representative before God in Jerusalem. Some scholars have suggested that the word should be translated "fief" or "dominion." **11.40** *Shishak* is the Hebrew rendering of the name of Pharaoh Shoshenq I (ca. 931–910 B.C.E.). He later invaded Palestine during the reign of Rehoboam (14.25–26).

11.41–43 This summary marks the end of Solomon's reign. **11.41** *The Book of the Acts of Solomon* is otherwise unknown but is probably the source of much of the archival data in this part of Kings.

12.1–19 As in the case of David's elevation to kingship (1 Sam 16.1–13; 2 Sam 5.1–5), divine legitimation through a prophet here precedes popular election. **12.1** *Shechem* was located about forty-one miles north of Jerusalem, between Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal. It had been an important religious center for the northern tribes (Josh 24; Deut 27), and Rehoboam's journey may have been intended to placate northern religious and political interests. **12.2–3** The Hebrew text of v. 2 (see text note *a*) seems to imply that Jeroboam remained in political exile in Egypt until the Northern tribes summon him to lead their negotiations with Rehoboam (v. 3). In the Greek text Jeroboam returns before he is summoned. **12.4** The Israelites are referring here to the taxes and forced labor required by Solomon's large court and numerous building projects (see 4.6–19; 5.13–18). **12.6–7** Throughout the ancient Near East it was customary for new monarchs to grant concessions

CHRONOLOGY OF THE KINGS OF THE DIVIDED MONARCHY

JUDAH	ISRAEL
Rehoboam (922–915 B.C.E.)	Jeroboam I (922–901 B.C.E.)
Abijam (915–913)	
Asa (913–873)	Nadab (901–900)
	Baasha (900–877)
	Elah (877–876)
	Zimri (876)
Jehoshaphat (873–849)	Omri (876–869)
	Ahab (869–850)
	Ahaziah (850–849)
Jehoram (849–843)	Jehoram (849–843/2)
Ahaziah (843/2)	
Athaliah (843–837)	
Jehoash (837–800)	Jehu (843/2–815)
	Jehoahaz (815–802)
Amaziah (800–783)	Joash (802–786)
Azariah/Uzziah (783–742)	Jeroboam II (786–746)
	Zechariah (746–745)
	Shallum (745)
Jotham (742–735)	Menahem (745–737)
	Pekahiah (737–736)
	Pekah (736–732)
Ahaz (735–715)	Hoshea (732–724)
	Fall of Samaria (722/1 B.C.E.)
Hezekiah (715–687/6)	
Manasseh (687/6–642)	
Amon (642–640)	
Josiah (640–609)	
Jehoahaz (609)	
Jehoiakim (609–598)	
Jehoiachin (598/7)	
Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem and first deportation (597 B.C.E.)	
Zedekiah (597–587/6)	
Destruction of Jerusalem and second deportation (587/6 B.C.E.)	

Dates following the kings' names are approximate years of their rule. The chronological data given in the books of 1 and 2 Kings pose insurmountable problems, however, for the construction of a firm chronology of the Divided Monarchy. The system adopted here is one of several approximations used by scholars.

young men who had grown up with him said to him, "Thus you should say to this people who spoke to you, 'Your father made our yoke heavy, but you must lighten it for us'; thus you should say to them, 'My little finger is thicker than my father's loins. 11 Now, whereas my father laid on you a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke. My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.' "

12 So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king had said, "Come to me again the third day." 13 The king answered the people harshly. He disregarded the advice that the older men had given him 14 and spoke to them according to the advice of the young men, "My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions." 15 So the king did not listen to the people, because it was a turn of affairs brought about by the LORD that he might fulfill his word, which the LORD had spoken by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam son of Nebat.

16 When all Israel saw that the king would not listen to them, the people answered the king,

"What share do we have in
David?
We have no inheritance in the
son of Jesse.
To your tents, O Israel!
Look now to your own house,
O David."

So Israel went away to their tents. 17 But Rehoboam reigned over the Israelites who were living in the towns of Judah. 18 When King Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was taskmaster over the forced labor, all Israel stoned him to death. King Rehoboam then hurriedly mounted his chariot to flee to Jerusalem. 19 So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day.

First Dynasty: Jeroboam Reigns over Israel

20 When all Israel heard that Jeroboam had returned, they sent and called him to the assembly and made him king over all Israel. There was no one who followed the house of David, except the tribe of Judah alone.

21 When Rehoboam came to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin, one hundred eighty thousand chosen troops to fight against the house of Israel, to restore the kingdom to Rehoboam son of Solomon. 22 But the word of God came to Shemaiah the man of God: 23 Say to King Rehoboam of Judah, son of Solomon, and to all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the rest of the people, 24 "Thus says the LORD, You shall not go up or fight against your kindred the people of Israel. Let everyone go home, for this thing is from me." So they heeded the word of the LORD and went home again, according to the word of the LORD.

Jeroboam's Golden Calves

25 Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and resided there; he went out from there and built Penuel. 26 Then Jeroboam said to himself, "Now the kingdom may well revert to the house of David. 27 If this people continues to go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, the heart of this people will turn again to their master, King Rehoboam of Judah; they will kill me and return to King Rehoboam of Judah." 28 So the king took counsel, and

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at the beginning of their reigns. **12.11** If the reference to *scorpions* is not simply metaphorical, it may signify a particularly painful kind of whip. **12.15** For Ahijah's oracle, see 11.29–39. **12.16** Israel's call to revolt is reminiscent of the words used by Northerners during the revolts of the Davidic period (2 Sam 20.1). The reference to *tents* evokes Israel's premonarchical past as well as the possibility of military activity. **12.18** In spite of the threats of revolt, Rehoboam apparently tries to enforce his harsher policies in the North.

12.20–24 Shemaiah's oracle underscores the divine legitimation of Jeroboam's rise to power. **12.20–21** On the problem of the number of tribes that remained faithful to the Davidic house, see note on 11.31.

12.25–33 From the standpoint of the narrator, the new king's reign is problematic from the beginning, for his first royal acts violate most of the Deuteronomistic guidelines for proper worship. **12.25** On the significance of Jeroboam's choice of *Shechem* as the first capital, see note on 12.1. *Penuel* was east of the Jordan at a ford of the Jabbok River, where Jacob wrestled with God (cf. Gen 32.30–31). **12.28** The two *calves* may have

made two calves of gold. He said to the people,[b] "You have gone up to Jerusalem long enough. Here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt." 29 He set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. 30 And this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one at Bethel and before the other as far as Dan.[c] 31 He also made houses[d] on high places, and appointed priests from among all the people, who were not Levites. 32 Jeroboam appointed a festival on the fifteenth day of the eighth month like the festival that was in Judah, and he offered sacrifices on the altar; so he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he had made. And he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places that he had made. 33 He went up to the altar that he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, in the month that he alone had devised; he appointed a festival for the people of Israel, and he went up to the altar to offer incense.

A Man of God from Judah

13 While Jeroboam was standing by the altar to offer incense, a man of God came out of Judah by the word of the LORD to Bethel 2 and proclaimed against the altar by the word of the LORD, and said, "O altar, altar, thus says the LORD: 'A son shall be born to the house of David, Josiah by name; and he shall sacrifice on you the priests of the high places who offer incense on you, and human bones shall be burned on you.'" 3 He gave a sign the same day, saying, "This is the sign that the LORD has spoken: 'The altar shall be torn down, and the ashes that are on it shall be poured out.'" 4 When the

b Gk: Heb *to them* *c* Compare Gk: Heb *went to the one as far as Dan* *d* Gk Vg Compare 13.32: Heb *a house*

been bull images, traditional ancient Near Eastern symbols of power and fertility. In Canaan they were associated both with the god El, the head of the pantheon, and with the storm god Baal. The worship of the bull or calf in Israel had ancient roots (see, e.g., Ex 32), and Jeroboam may have thought that he was reinstituting an older and more authentic form of the worship of the Lord. In any case, his actions violate Israel's traditional prohibition against making images of the deity (Ex 20.4–6; Deut 4.15–19; 5.8–10), while the manufacture of two of these objects violates the Deuteronomic ban against worshiping more than one God (Deut 5.7; 6.4). **12.29** *Bethel* lies just north of Jerusalem and therefore on the southern boundary of the newly created Northern Kingdom. It had old associations with the worship of the Lord (Gen 28.10–22; Judg 20.18–28). *Dan* is the traditional marker of Israel's northern border. **12.31** *High places.* See note on 3.2. The *houses* were for the cultic activities that took place at the high places. Deuteronomy requires that all priests be *Levites* (Deut 18.1–8). **12.32** The *festival* referred to here is the Festival of Tabernacles, a harvest festival usually held on the fifteenth day of the seventh month (Num 29.12–39). **12.33** Jeroboam's priestly activities are not part of a king's proper duties according to Deuteronomy (Deut 17.14–20).

13.1–34 This chapter continues the narrative begun in 12.33 and makes explicit the condemnation of Jeroboam's religious policies implied in the descriptions of 12.26–32. The bulk of ch. 13 is composed of two interrelated prophetic legends, that is, stories that focus on prophets and their activities. Both stories may have once circulated orally in prophetic circles. The first story (vv. 1–10) continues the theme of the prophetic condemnation of sinful rulers, a theme that will dominate the remainder of 1 Kings and extend as far as 2 Kings 13. The second story (vv. 11–32) deals with the problem of true and false prophecy and may have originally been intended as a warning to prophets about the conduct of their office. Both stories illustrate an important theological motif of this portion of Kings, the inevitable fulfillment of the word of a genuine prophet (cf. Deut 18.15–22). **13.1** The unnamed Judean is given the title *man of God,* a designation used particularly in the Elijah-Elisha stories (1 Kings 17–2 Kings 10). The title may have originally been used to identify individuals able to use divine power in miraculous ways. On the significance of Jeroboam's cultic installation at *Bethel,* see notes on 12.28; 12.29. **13.2** The judgment oracle is directed against the *altar* itself and not against the king or the dynasty. *Josiah* finally desecrated the altar at Bethel about 620 B.C.E., roughly three hundred years after the prophecy was originally delivered (2 Kings 23.15–18). Sacrificing the priests and burning their bones on the altar would have defiled it, making it unfit for religious purposes. **13.3** Because the fulfillment of a prophecy might be delayed for many years, prophets sometimes gave signs to guarantee the truth of their oracles (Isa 7.11–17). The sign became a visible proof that the prophecy was true. Here the sign, the destruction of the altar, occurs immediately (v. 5). **13.4** The withering of the king's hand demonstrates the power of the prophet and

king heard what the man of God cried out
against the altar at Bethel, Jeroboam
stretched out his hand from the altar, sa-
ying, "Seize him!" But the hand that he
stretched out against him withered so that
he could not draw it back to himself. 5 The
altar also was torn down, and the ashes
poured out from the altar, according to
the sign that the man of God had given by
the word of the LORD. 6 The king said to
the man of God, "Entreat now the favor
of the LORD your God, and pray for me,
so that my hand may be restored to me."
So the man of God entreated the LORD;
and the king's hand was restored to him,
and became as it was before. 7 Then the
king said to the man of God, "Come home
with me and dine, and I will give you a
gift." 8 But the man of God said to the
king, "If you give me half your kingdom,
I will not go in with you; nor will I eat
food or drink water in this place. 9 For
thus I was commanded by the word of the
LORD: You shall not eat food, or drink wa-
ter, or return by the way that you came."
10 So he went another way, and did not
return by the way that he had come to
Bethel.

11 Now there lived an old prophet in
Bethel. One of his sons came and told him
all that the man of God had done that day
in Bethel; the words also that he had spo-
ken to the king, they told to their father.
12 Their father said to them, "Which way
did he go?" And his sons showed him the
way that the man of God who came from
Judah had gone. 13 Then he said to his
sons, "Saddle a donkey for me." So they
saddled a donkey for him, and he
mounted it. 14 He went after the man of
God, and found him sitting under an oak
tree. He said to him, "Are you the man of
God who came from Judah?" He an-
swered, "I am." 15 Then he said to him,
"Come home with me and eat some food."
16 But he said, "I cannot return with you,
or go in with you; nor will I eat food or
drink water with you in this place; 17 for it
was said to me by the word of the LORD:
You shall not eat food or drink water
there, or return by the way that you
came." 18 Then the other[e] said to him, "I
also am a prophet as you are, and an an-
gel spoke to me by the word of the LORD:
Bring him back with you into your house
so that he may eat food and drink water."
But he was deceiving him. 19 Then the
man of God[e] went back with him, and ate
food and drank water in his house.

20 As they were sitting at the table, the
word of the LORD came to the prophet
who had brought him back; 21 and he pro-
claimed to the man of God who came
from Judah, "Thus says the LORD: Be-
cause you have disobeyed the word of the
LORD, and have not kept the command-
ment that the LORD your God com-
manded you, 22 but have come back and
have eaten food and drunk water in the
place of which he said to you, 'Eat no
food, and drink no water,' your body shall
not come to your ancestral tomb." 23 After
the man of God[e] had eaten food and had
drunk, they saddled for him a donkey be-
longing to the prophet who had brought
him back. 24 Then as he went away, a lion
met him on the road and killed him. His
body was thrown in the road, and the
donkey stood beside it; the lion also stood
beside the body. 25 People passed by and
saw the body thrown in the road, with the
lion standing by the body. And they came
and told it in the town where the old
prophet lived.

26 When the prophet who had
brought him back from the way heard of
it, he said, "It is the man of God who dis-
obeyed the word of the LORD; therefore

e Heb *he*

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the divine protection given to him. **13.6** Prophets were often thought to be particularly effective in interceding with God (see, e.g., Gen 20.7; 1 Sam 7.5; 12.19). In this case the healing becomes another sign to demonstrate the truth of the prophet's words. **13.9** To eat or drink at Bethel would have suggested the prophet's willingness to participate in the illegitimate cultic activities taking place there. **13.11** Rather than indicating actual kinship, the word *son* may indicate membership in a prophetic guild. The *father* would then have been the head of the guild. **13.18** The use of the word *angel* may be an attempt to imply that the old prophet did not receive the oracle directly from God, a situation that should have warned the man of God of the possibility that the oracle was false. Subtlety aside, readers are simply told that the old prophet lied. **13.19** Even a genuine prophet cannot determine whether another prophet's oracle is true or false. **13.24** The lion's peculiar behavior, killing the prophet but not the donkey and standing beside the body rather than eating it (cf. v. 28), is intended to dramatize the supernatural nature of

the LORD has given him to the lion, which
has torn him and killed him according to
the word that the LORD spoke to him."
27 Then he said to his sons, "Saddle a don-
key for me." So they saddled one, 28 and
he went and found the body thrown in
the road, with the donkey and the lion
standing beside the body. The lion had
not eaten the body or attacked the don-
key. 29 The prophet took up the body of
the man of God, laid it on the donkey,
and brought it back to the city,[f] to mourn
and to bury him. 30 He laid the body in his
own grave; and they mourned over him,
saying, "Alas, my brother!" 31 After he
had buried him, he said to his sons,
"When I die, bury me in the grave in
which the man of God is buried; lay my
bones beside his bones. 32 For the saying
that he proclaimed by the word of the
LORD against the altar in Bethel, and
against all the houses of the high places
that are in the cities of Samaria, shall
surely come to pass."

33 Even after this event Jeroboam did
not turn from his evil way, but made
priests for the high places again from
among all the people; any who wanted
to be priests he consecrated for the
high places. 34 This matter became sin
to the house of Jeroboam, so as to cut it
off and to destroy it from the face of the
earth.

Judgment on the House of Jeroboam

14 At that time Abijah son of Jero-
boam fell sick. 2 Jeroboam said to
his wife, "Go, disguise yourself, so that it
will not be known that you are the wife of
Jeroboam, and go to Shiloh; for the
prophet Ahijah is there, who said of me
that I should be king over this people.
3 Take with you ten loaves, some cakes,
and a jar of honey, and go to him; he will
tell you what shall happen to the child."

4 Jeroboam's wife did so; she set out
and went to Shiloh, and came to the house
of Ahijah. Now Ahijah could not see, for
his eyes were dim because of his age. 5 But
the LORD said to Ahijah, "The wife of Jer-
oboam is coming to inquire of you con-
cerning her son; for he is sick. Thus and
thus you shall say to her."

When she came, she pretended to be
another woman. 6 But when Ahijah heard
the sound of her feet, as she came in at
the door, he said, "Come in, wife of Jero-
boam; why do you pretend to be another?
For I am charged with heavy tidings for
you. 7 Go, tell Jeroboam, 'Thus says the
LORD, the God of Israel: Because I ex-
alted you from among the people, made
you leader over my people Israel, 8 and
tore the kingdom away from the house of
David to give it to you; yet you have not
been like my servant David, who kept my
commandments and followed me with all
his heart, doing only that which was right
in my sight, 9 but you have done evil above
all those who were before you and have
gone and made for yourself other gods,
and cast images, provoking me to anger,
and have thrust me behind your back;
10 therefore, I will bring evil upon the
house of Jeroboam. I will cut off from

f Gk: Heb *he came to the town of the old prophet*

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the event. **13.30** The burial of the man of God in the old prophet's grave fulfills the judgment oracle in v. 22. **13.31–32** The incident demonstrates to the old prophet the truth of the words of the man of God, and the old prophet symbolically identifies himself with his colleague's message by requesting burial in the same grave. **13.33** On Jeroboam's non-Levitical priests, see note on 12.31.

14.1–18 This old legend, originally told to demonstrate the prophet's extraordinary powers, is used by the narrator as the occasion for a judgment oracle against the house of Jeroboam. **14.2** The use of a disguise may indicate that Jeroboam wanted to avoid a confrontation with Ahijah over the question of the king's religious activities. On Ahijah's earlier contacts with Jeroboam, see 11.29–39. **14.3** The food was probably intended as a fee for the prophet's services. For examples of similar situations, see 1 Sam 9.1–21; 2 Kings 8.7–15. **14.4** The prophet's weak eyes are mentioned to demonstrate that his knowledge of his visitor's identity could only have come through divine revelation. **14.7–8** The beginning of the oracle implies that Jeroboam's kingship had been divinely instituted and that his dynasty could have been eternal if he had been obedient as David had been (see 11.29–39). **14.9** The comparison must be with Solomon, who also did what was evil in the sight of the Lord (11.6). For a description of Jeroboam's religious practices, see 12.26–32. **14.10–11** Parts of this graphic and somewhat crude judgment oracle are later reapplied to some of Jeroboam's successors

Jeroboam every male, both bond and free
in Israel, and will consume the house of
Jeroboam, just as one burns up dung until
it is all gone. 11 Anyone belonging to Jero-
boam who dies in the city, the dogs shall
eat; and anyone who dies in the open
country, the birds of the air shall eat; for
the LORD has spoken.' 12 Therefore set
out, go to your house. When your feet en-
ter the city, the child shall die. 13 All Israel
shall mourn for him and bury him; for he
alone of Jeroboam's family shall come to
the grave, because in him there is found
something pleasing to the LORD, the God
of Israel, in the house of Jeroboam.
14 Moreover the LORD will raise up for
himself a king over Israel, who shall cut
off the house of Jeroboam today, even
right now![g]

15 "The LORD will strike Israel, as a
reed is shaken in the water; he will root
up Israel out of this good land that he
gave to their ancestors, and scatter them
beyond the Euphrates, because they have
made their sacred poles,[h] provoking the
LORD to anger. 16 He will give Israel up
because of the sins of Jeroboam, which he
sinned and which he caused Israel to
commit."

17 Then Jeroboam's wife got up and
went away, and she came to Tirzah. As
she came to the threshold of the house,
the child died. 18 All Israel buried him
and mourned for him, according to the
word of the LORD, which he spoke by his
servant the prophet Ahijah.

Death of Jeroboam

19 Now the rest of the acts of Jero-
boam, how he warred and how he
reigned, are written in the Book of the
Annals of the Kings of Israel. 20 The time
that Jeroboam reigned was twenty-two
years; then he slept with his ancestors,
and his son Nadab succeeded him.

Rehoboam Reigns over Judah

21 Now Rehoboam son of Solomon
reigned in Judah. Rehoboam was forty-
one years old when he began to reign, and
he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem,
the city that the LORD had chosen out of
all the tribes of Israel, to put his name
there. His mother's name was Naamah
the Ammonite. 22 Judah did what was evil
in the sight of the LORD; they provoked
him to jealousy with their sins that they
committed, more than all that their ances-
tors had done. 23 For they also built for
themselves high places, pillars, and sacred
poles[h] on every high hill and under every
green tree; 24 there were also male temple
prostitutes in the land. They committed
all the abominations of the nations that
the LORD drove out before the people of
Israel.

25 In the fifth year of King Reho-
boam, King Shishak of Egypt came up
against Jerusalem; 26 he took away the
treasures of the house of the LORD and
the treasures of the king's house; he took

g Meaning of Heb uncertain *h* Heb *Asherim*

(16.2–4; 21.21–24). **14.15** This part of the oracle already envisions the exile and destruction of the whole Northern Kingdom (2 Kings 17.1–23), not just the end of Jeroboam's dynasty. The Asherim (here translated *sacred poles*) were wooden cult objects associated with the worship of the Canaanite goddess Asherah. They are usually thought to be poles or perhaps representations of trees (cf. Deut 16.21). In second-millennium Syro-Palestine the goddess was portrayed as the consort of the god El, the head of the pantheon. However, by the OT period she was considered the consort of the storm god Baal. In some circles in Israel she may have been part of the worship of the Lord. **14.16** By setting up illegitimate places of worship, Jeroboam provided an opportunity for Israel to sin. **14.17** Jeroboam had apparently moved his capital to *Tirzah* (cf. 12.25), located about seven miles northeast of Shechem.

14.19–20 *The Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel* has not survived, but it was probably the source of some of the chronological data included in Kings. *Jeroboam* reigned from ca. 922 to 901 B.C.E.

14.21–31 Although Rehoboam has already appeared in the narrative (ch. 12), this is a more systematic account of his reign. **14.21** *Rehoboam*'s dates are uncertain, but he probably ruled from ca. 922 to 915 B.C.E. **14.23** *High places*. See note on 3.2. The *pillars* were stones used to mark sacred spots. They were often associated with the worship of Baal. *Sacred poles*. See note on 14.15. **14.24** The *prostitutes* may have been of both sexes. They had some sort of official role in fertility rites. **14.25** *Shishak* is the Hebrew name of Pharaoh Shoshenq I (ca. 931–910 B.C.E.), who invaded a number of towns in both Israel and Judah. On his earlier political involvement with Israel, see 11.40. **14.26** On Solomon's *shields*, see notes

everything. He also took away all the
shields of gold that Solomon had made;
27 so King Rehoboam made shields of
bronze instead, and committed them to
the hands of the officers of the guard,
who kept the door of the king's house.
28 As often as the king went into the house
of the LORD, the guard carried them and
brought them back to the guardroom.

29 Now the rest of the acts of Reho-
boam, and all that he did, are they not
written in the Book of the Annals of the
Kings of Judah? 30 There was war be-
tween Rehoboam and Jeroboam continu-
ally. 31 Rehoboam slept with his ancestors
and was buried with his ancestors in the
city of David. His mother's name was Naa-
mah the Ammonite. His son Abijam suc-
ceeded him.

Abijam Reigns over Judah: Idolatry and War

15 Now in the eighteenth year of
King Jeroboam son of Nebat,
Abijam began to reign over Judah. 2 He
reigned for three years in Jerusalem. His
mother's name was Maacah daughter of
Abishalom. 3 He committed all the sins
that his father did before him; his heart
was not true to the LORD his God, like the
heart of his father David. 4 Nevertheless
for David's sake the LORD his God gave
him a lamp in Jerusalem, setting up his
son after him, and establishing Jerusalem;
5 because David did what was right in the
sight of the LORD, and did not turn aside
from anything that he commanded him
all the days of his life, except in the matter
of Uriah the Hittite. 6 The war begun be-
tween Rehoboam and Jeroboam contin-
ued all the days of his life. 7 The rest of
the acts of Abijam, and all that he did, are
they not written in the Book of the Annals
of the Kings of Judah? There was war be-
tween Abijam and Jeroboam. 8 Abijam
slept with his ancestors, and they buried
him in the city of David. Then his son Asa
succeeded him.

Asa Reigns over Judah

9 In the twentieth year of King Jero-
boam of Israel, Asa began to reign over
Judah; 10 he reigned forty-one years in Je-
rusalem. His mother's name was Maacah
daughter of Abishalom. 11 Asa did what
was right in the sight of the LORD, as his
father David had done. 12 He put away
the male temple prostitutes out of the
land, and removed all the idols that his
ancestors had made. 13 He also removed
his mother Maacah from being queen
mother, because she had made an abomi-
nable image for Asherah; Asa cut down
her image and burned it at the Wadi Kid-
ron. 14 But the high places were not taken
away. Nevertheless the heart of Asa was
true to the LORD all his days. 15 He
brought into the house of the LORD the
votive gifts of his father and his own vo-
tive gifts—silver, gold, and utensils.

Alliance with Aram against Israel

16 There was war between Asa and
King Baasha of Israel all their days.

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on 10.16; 10.17. **14.29** *The Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah* no longer exists, but it probably provided chronological information on the Judean kings (see Introduction to 1 Kings).

15.1–8 Abijam's brief reign receives a negative evaluation from the Deuteronomistic narrator, although no details of the king's crimes are mentioned. **15.1** *Abijam* reigned ca. 915–913 B.C.E. **15.4** On the meaning of the *lamp*, see note on 11.36. Because of God's fidelity to the promise to David (2 Sam 7.1–17), the Davidic dynasty is allowed to survive even though individual kings do evil. **15.5** The story of David and *Uriah the Hittite* is told in 2 Sam 11–12.

15.9–15 In contrast to his predecessor's, Asa's relatively long reign receives a positive evaluation from the Deuteronomistic narrator because of the king's religious reforms. **15.9** *Asa* reigned ca. 913–873 B.C.E. **15.10** According to this verse Asa and Abijam both had the same mother (cf. v. 2). This would make them brothers rather than father and son (v. 8). Alternatively, it may be that Maacah held the important post of queen mother but was not necessarily Asa's biological mother. 2 Chr 13.2 gives a different name for Abijam's mother, thus resolving the problem, but it is not clear which version of the genealogy is correct. **15.12** *Temple prostitutes*. See note on 14.24. **15.13** The nature of the *abominable image* is not indicated. On the goddess Asherah, see note on 14.15. *Wadi Kidron*. See note on 2.37. **15.14** *High places*. See note on 3.2.

15.16–24 The war over the secession of the Northern tribes and the subsequent struggles over borders began in the days of Jeroboam and Rehoboam (14.30) and continued during the reigns of their successors (15.6). **15.16** Because of his interactions with Asa, *Baasha* of Israel is

17 King Baasha of Israel went up against
Judah, and built Ramah, to prevent any-
one from going out or coming in to King
Asa of Judah. 18 Then Asa took all the sil-
ver and the gold that were left in the trea-
sures of the house of the LORD and the
treasures of the king's house, and gave
them into the hands of his servants. King
Asa sent them to King Ben-hadad son of
Tabrimmon son of Hezion of Aram, who
resided in Damascus, saying, 19 "Let there
be an alliance between me and you, like
that between my father and your father: I
am sending you a present of silver and
gold; go, break your alliance with King
Baasha of Israel, so that he may withdraw
from me." 20 Ben-hadad listened to King
Asa, and sent the commanders of his ar-
mies against the cities of Israel. He con-
quered Ijon, Dan, Abel-beth-maacah, and
all Chinneroth, with all the land of Naph-
tali. 21 When Baasha heard of it, he
stopped building Ramah and lived in Tir-
zah. 22 Then King Asa made a proclama-
tion to all Judah, none was exempt: they
carried away the stones of Ramah and its
timber, with which Baasha had been
building; with them King Asa built Geba
of Benjamin and Mizpah. 23 Now the rest
of all the acts of Asa, all his power, all that
he did, and the cities that he built, are
they not written in the Book of the Annals
of the Kings of Judah? But in his old age
he was diseased in his feet. 24 Then Asa
slept with his ancestors, and was buried
with his ancestors in the city of his
father David; his son Jehoshaphat suc-
ceeded him.

Nadab Reigns over Israel

25 Nadab son of Jeroboam began to
reign over Israel in the second year of
King Asa of Judah; he reigned over Israel
two years. 26 He did what was evil in the
sight of the LORD, walking in the way of
his ancestor and in the sin that he caused
Israel to commit.

27 Baasha son of Ahijah, of the house
of Issachar, conspired against him; and
Baasha struck him down at Gibbethon,
which belonged to the Philistines; for Na-
dab and all Israel were laying siege to Gib-
bethon. 28 So Baasha killed Nadab[i] in the
third year of King Asa of Judah, and suc-
ceeded him. 29 As soon as he was king, he
killed all the house of Jeroboam; he left to
the house of Jeroboam not one that
breathed, until he had destroyed it, ac-
cording to the word of the LORD that he
spoke by his servant Ahijah the Shilonite
— 30 because of the sins of Jeroboam that
he committed and that he caused Israel to
commit, and because of the anger to
which he provoked the LORD, the God of
Israel.

31 Now the rest of the acts of Nadab,
and all that he did, are they not written
in the Book of the Annals of the
Kings of Israel? 32 There was war be-
tween Asa and King Baasha of Israel all
their days.

i Heb *him*

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introduced into the narrative at this point, even though the official account of his reign does not appear until 15.33–16.7. **15.17** Baasha was able to extend his southern border to *Ramah* in the tribe of Benjamin. Ramah lay about five miles north of Jerusalem and was an ideal site for a fortress. **15.18** *Aram* was a state or confederation of states to the west of the Northern Kingdom in what is now Syria. Throughout much of the monarchical period Aram was engaged in a power struggle with Israel and Judah. Several Aramean kings bore the name *Ben-hadad*. This individual had a treaty relationship with Baasha of Israel (v. 19). **15.19** Asa is probably referring to relations between David and Solomon and the Arameans, which were certainly not peaceful (2 Sam 8.5–12; 1 Kings 11.23–25; 2 Chr 8.3–4). **15.20** These towns and the territories around them all lie on Israel's eastern border, and the Aramean encroachment represents a significant loss of territory for the Northern Kingdom. **15.21** The combined pressure from Judah and Aram forces Baasha to abandon his border outpost and withdraw to the capital (see note on 14.17).

15.25–32 The narrator has little to say about Nadab's reign except to repeat the formulaic remark that he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and walked in the ways of Jeroboam. **15.25** *Nadab* ruled from ca. 901 to 900 B.C.E. **15.27** *Gibbethon* lay slightly beyond the southwestern border of Israel, so Nadab was apparently attempting to extend his kingdom in that direction. **15.29–30** The narrator quotes part of Ahijah's judgment oracle against Jeroboam and his descendants (14.10–11) and interprets Nadab's assassination as the fulfillment of the prophetic word.

Second Dynasty: Baasha Reigns over Israel

33 In the third year of King Asa of
Judah, Baasha son of Ahijah began to
reign over all Israel at Tirzah; he reigned
twenty-four years. 34 He did what was evil
in the sight of the LORD, walking in the
way of Jeroboam and in the sin that he
caused Israel to commit.

16 The word of the LORD came to
Jehu son of Hanani against Baa-
sha, saying, 2 "Since I exalted you out of
the dust and made you leader over my
people Israel, and you have walked in the
way of Jeroboam, and have caused my
people Israel to sin, provoking me to an-
ger with their sins, 3 therefore, I will con-
sume Baasha and his house, and I will
make your house like the house of Jero-
boam son of Nebat. 4 Anyone belonging to
Baasha who dies in the city the dogs shall
eat; and anyone of his who dies in the
field the birds of the air shall eat."

5 Now the rest of the acts of Baasha,
what he did, and his power, are they not
written in the Book of the Annals of the
Kings of Israel? 6 Baasha slept with his an-
cestors, and was buried at Tirzah; and his
son Elah succeeded him. 7 Moreover the
word of the LORD came by the prophet
Jehu son of Hanani against Baasha and
his house, both because of all the evil that
he did in the sight of the LORD, provoking
him to anger with the work of his hands,
in being like the house of Jeroboam, and
also because he destroyed it.

Elah Reigns over Israel

8 In the twenty-sixth year of King Asa
of Judah, Elah son of Baasha began to
reign over Israel in Tirzah; he reigned
two years. 9 But his servant Zimri, com-
mander of half his chariots, conspired
against him. When he was at Tirzah,
drinking himself drunk in the house of
Arza, who was in charge of the palace at
Tirzah, 10 Zimri came in and struck him
down and killed him, in the twenty-
seventh year of King Asa of Judah, and
succeeded him.

11 When he began to reign, as soon as
he had seated himself on his throne, he
killed all the house of Baasha; he did not
leave him a single male of his kindred or
his friends. 12 Thus Zimri destroyed all
the house of Baasha, according to the
word of the LORD, which he spoke against
Baasha by the prophet Jehu— 13 because
of all the sins of Baasha and the sins of his
son Elah that they committed, and that
they caused Israel to commit, provoking
the LORD God of Israel to anger with their
idols. 14 Now the rest of the acts of Elah,
and all that he did, are they not written in
the Book of the Annals of the Kings of
Israel?

Third Dynasty: Zimri Reigns over Israel

15 In the twenty-seventh year of King
Asa of Judah, Zimri reigned seven days in
Tirzah. Now the troops were encamped

15.33–16.7 The formal account of Baasha's twenty-four-year reign contains no further information on his achievements. From the theological standpoint of the narrator, Baasha is simply another example of a Northern king who did evil by walking in the ways of Jeroboam. **15.33** *Baasha* reigned from ca. 900 to 877 B.C.E. **16.1** *Jehu son of Hanani* is identified by Chronicles as a prophet active in Jerusalem during this period. He is also said to have delivered an oracle to king Jehoshaphat (2 Chr 19.2–3) and is credited with having written a history of Jehoshaphat's reign (2 Chr 20.34). Jehu's father, Hanani, was also a prophet and may have been the same individual who prophesied against Baasha's Southern contemporary, Asa (2 Chr 16.7–10). **16.4** Jehu's oracle is in part virtually identical with Ahijah's prophecy against Jeroboam (14.11). **16.7** This verse, which repeats the substance of vv. 2–4, seems out of place, coming as it does after Baasha's death has already been reported (v. 6). The narrator here condemns Baasha for destroying the house of Jeroboam, even though Baasha's action carried out God's decree of judgment.

16.8–14 The introduction to Elah's reign omits the customary negative evaluation, although an oblique reference is later made to his sins, along with those of his father (v. 13). The bulk of the account concentrates on the circumstances of Elah's death, which is characteristically interpreted as a judgment on the house of Baasha. As in the case of Jeroboam (14.10–11; 15.27–30), the prophetic judgment oracle is not fulfilled against the king to whom it is delivered but against his son. **16.8** *Elah* reigned from ca. 877 to 876 B.C.E. **16.12** This is another example of the narrator's interest in noting the fulfillment of prophecies (see vv. 2–4).

16.15–20 The narrative of Zimri's brief reign is in fact simply an account of the aftermath of his coup against Elah. **16.15** On the significance of military activity at *Gibbethon*, see note on 15.27.

against Gibbethon, which belonged to the
Philistines, 16 and the troops who were en-
camped heard it said, "Zimri has con-
spired, and he has killed the king";
therefore all Israel made Omri, the com-
mander of the army, king over Israel that
day in the camp. 17 So Omri went up from
Gibbethon, and all Israel with him, and
they besieged Tirzah. 18 When Zimri saw
that the city was taken, he went into the
citadel of the king's house; he burned
down the king's house over himself with
fire, and died— 19 because of the sins that
he committed, doing evil in the sight of
the LORD, walking in the way of Jero-
boam, and for the sin that he committed,
causing Israel to sin. 20 Now the rest of the
acts of Zimri, and the conspiracy that he
made, are they not written in the Book of
the Annals of the Kings of Israel?

Fourth Dynasty: Omri Reigns over Israel

21 Then the people of Israel were di-
vided into two parts; half of the people
followed Tibni son of Ginath, to make
him king, and half followed Omri. 22 But
the people who followed Omri overcame
the people who followed Tibni son of Gi-
nath; so Tibni died, and Omri became
king. 23 In the thirty-first year of King Asa
of Judah, Omri began to reign over Is-
rael; he reigned for twelve years, six of
them in Tirzah.

Samaria the New Capital

24 He bought the hill of Samaria from
Shemer for two talents of silver; he forti-
fied the hill, and called the city that he
built, Samaria, after the name of Shemer,
the owner of the hill.

25 Omri did what was evil in the sight
of the LORD; he did more evil than all who
were before him. 26 For he walked in all
the way of Jeroboam son of Nebat, and in
the sins that he caused Israel to commit,
provoking the LORD, the God of Israel, to
anger by their idols. 27 Now the rest of the
acts of Omri that he did, and the power
that he showed, are they not written in the
Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel?
28 Omri slept with his ancestors, and was
buried in Samaria; his son Ahab suc-
ceeded him.

Ahab Reigns over Israel

29 In the thirty-eighth year of King
Asa of Judah, Ahab son of Omri began to
reign over Israel; Ahab son of Omri
reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two
years. 30 Ahab son of Omri did evil in the
sight of the LORD more than all who were
before him.

Ahab Marries Jezebel and Worships Baal

31 And as if it had been a light thing
for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam
son of Nebat, he took as his wife Jezebel
daughter of King Ethbaal of the Sidoni-
ans, and went and served Baal, and wor-
shiped him. 32 He erected an altar for
Baal in the house of Baal, which he built
in Samaria. 33 Ahab also made a sacred
pole.[j] Ahab did more to provoke the an-
ger of the LORD, the God of Israel, than
had all the kings of Israel who were be-
fore him. 34 In his days Hiel of Bethel
built Jericho; he laid its foundation at the
cost of Abiram his firstborn, and set up its

j Heb *Asherah*

16.19 The Deuteronomistic narrator formulaically attributes Zimri's death to his sins, although it is difficult to know what he could have done in seven days.

16.21–23 Omri was one of Israel's most powerful rulers and one of the few whose name has been preserved in extrabiblical sources. The Moabite Stone credits him with capturing Moabite territory, and Assyrian sources continue to call Israel "the Land of Omri" long after his death. **16.23** *Omri* reigned from ca. 876 to 869 B.C.E.

16.24–28 The only one of Omri's achievements mentioned by the narrator is the king's construction of a new capital at Samaria.

16.29–30 The narrator considers Ahab to be even more sinful than his predecessors, probably because of his introduction of the worship of Baal into Israel. **16.29** Ahab reigned from ca. 869 to 850 B.C.E.

16.31–34 Just as Solomon was led to sin because of his foreign marriages (ch. 11), so also Ahab's marriage to a Phoenician princess increases the already fatal sins of the Northern Kingdom. **16.31** *Baal* was the Canaanite storm god, who provided the rain necessary for the fertility of the land. His worship was widespread in Canaan and had probably infiltrated Israel long before the time of Ahab. However, Ahab gave the Baal cult official status in the capital. **16.33** On the *sacred pole* or Asherah (plural, Asherim), see note on 14.15. **16.34** This verse notes the working out of Joshua's curse when the Israelites

gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the LORD, which he spoke by Joshua son of Nun.

Elijah Predicts a Drought

17 Now Elijah the Tishbite, of Tishbe[k] in Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word." 2 The word of the LORD came to him, saying, 3 "Go from here and turn eastward, and hide yourself by the Wadi Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. 4 You shall drink from the wadi, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there." 5 So he went and did according to the word of the LORD; he went and lived by the Wadi Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. 6 The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening; and he drank from the wadi. 7 But after a while the wadi dried up, because there was no rain in the land.

The Widow of Zarephath

8 Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, 9 "Go now to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and live there; for I have commanded a widow there to feed you." 10 So he set out and went to Zarephath. When he came to the gate of the town, a widow was there gathering sticks; he called to her and said, "Bring me a little water in a vessel, so that I may drink." 11 As she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, "Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand." 12 But she said, "As the LORD your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of meal in a jar, and a little oil in a jug; I am now gathering a couple of sticks, so that I may go home and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die." 13 Elijah

k Gk: Heb *of the settlers*

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destroyed Jericho (Josh 6.26). The narrator apparently sees in the event an analogy to the fulfillment of prophecy.

17.1–7 This is the first of a series of stories concerning prophetic opposition to the Omride dynasty and to the worship of the Phoenician Baal, which King Ahab had introduced into Israel (1 Kings 17–2 Kings 10). Before being incorporated into the book of Kings, many of the stories probably circulated orally in Northern prophetic circles, and the Elijah and Elisha stories may have already been gathered into collections before being written down. Many of the stories focus on the miraculous deeds of the prophets and glorify both the prophets themselves and the God they represent. The writer of Kings has modified some of the stories slightly in order to dramatize a central theme of the book: the inevitable destruction of the evil Northern kings. **17.1** The opening of the first Elijah story seems abrupt, but it must be seen against the background of Ahab's introduction of Baal worship (16.31–33). According to the mythology of the Baal cult, the storm god was responsible for bringing life-giving rains at certain times of the year and thus restoring fertility to the land. After the yearly rainy season, the ground got progressively drier, and eventually all vegetation died. During this period Baal was thought to be in the power of the god of death and sterility. In this verse Elijah announces that the yearly alternation between life and death is an illusion and that Baal has nothing to do with bringing rain and fertility. In reality the Lord controls both rain and drought, fertility and sterility, and life and death. To illustrate the point, the prophet announces that God has decreed a three-year drought. The meaning of *Tishbe* is uncertain. The Greek translators understood it as the name of the otherwise unknown town from which Elijah came. The Hebrew seems to require the translation "of the settlers." *Gilead* is a mountainous region of Transjordan (modern Jordan) between Bashan and Moab (see note on 2 Kings 15.25) near the eastern boundary of the Northern Kingdom. **17.3** The exact location of the *Wadi Cherith* is unknown, but the journey east of the Jordan probably removes Elijah from Ahab's jurisdiction. **17.4** Although God denies rain to apostate Israel, the faithful prophet is provided with both water and food. **17.7** A *wadi* is a stream bed that contains water only in the rainy season.

17.8–16 This prophetic legend originally focused on the prophet's ability to perform miracles. However, in its present context it provides another example of God's care for Elijah and for all faithful Israelites who support him. Cf. the similar tale involving Elisha in 2 Kings 4.1–7. **17.9** The journey to *Zarephath* on the Phoenician coast south of *Sidon* takes the prophet into the heartland of the Baal cult (cf. 16.31). Even here God's power over sterility and fertility is evident. **17.10** *Widows* often had no means of economic support, and if they were not sustained by the king or by the religious community (cf. Deut 14.28–29), they were quickly reduced to poverty and forced to become scavengers and beggars.

said to her, "Do not be afraid; go and do
as you have said; but first make me a little
cake of it and bring it to me, and after-
wards make something for yourself and
your son. 14 For thus says the LORD the
God of Israel: The jar of meal will not be
emptied and the jug of oil will not fail un-
til the day that the LORD sends rain on the
earth." 15 She went and did as Elijah said,
so that she as well as he and her house-
hold ate for many days. 16 The jar of meal
was not emptied, neither did the jug of oil
fail, according to the word of the LORD
that he spoke by Elijah.

Elijah Revives the Widow's Son

17 After this the son of the woman,
the mistress of the house, became ill; his
illness was so severe that there was no
breath left in him. 18 She then said to Eli-
jah, "What have you against me, O man
of God? You have come to me to bring my
sin to remembrance, and to cause the
death of my son!" 19 But he said to her,
"Give me your son." He took him from
her bosom, carried him up into the upper
chamber where he was lodging, and laid
him on his own bed. 20 He cried out to the
LORD, "O LORD my God, have you
brought calamity even upon the widow
with whom I am staying, by killing her
son?" 21 Then he stretched himself upon
the child three times, and cried out to the
LORD, "O LORD my God, let this child's
life come into him again." 22 The LORD lis-
tened to the voice of Elijah; the life of the
child came into him again, and he re-
vived. 23 Elijah took the child, brought
him down from the upper chamber into
the house, and gave him to his mother;
then Elijah said, "See, your son is alive."
24 So the woman said to Elijah, "Now I
know that you are a man of God, and that
the word of the LORD in your mouth is
truth."

Elijah's Message to Ahab

18 After many days the word of the
LORD came to Elijah, in the third
year of the drought,[l] saying, "Go,
present yourself to Ahab; I will send rain
on the earth." 2 So Elijah went to present
himself to Ahab. The famine was severe
in Samaria. 3 Ahab summoned Obadiah,
who was in charge of the palace. (Now
Obadiah revered the LORD greatly; 4 when
Jezebel was killing off the prophets of the
LORD, Obadiah took a hundred prophets,
hid them fifty to a cave, and provided
them with bread and water.) 5 Then Ahab
said to Obadiah, "Go through the land to
all the springs of water and to all the wa-
dis; perhaps we may find grass to keep
the horses and mules alive, and not lose
some of the animals." 6 So they divided
the land between them to pass through it;
Ahab went in one direction by himself,
and Obadiah went in another direction by
himself.

7 As Obadiah was on the way, Elijah
met him; Obadiah recognized him, fell on
his face, and said, "Is it you, my lord Eli-
jah?" 8 He answered him, "It is I. Go, tell
your lord that Elijah is here." 9 And he
said, "How have I sinned, that you would
hand your servant over to Ahab, to kill
me? 10 As the LORD your God lives, there
is no nation or kingdom to which my lord
has not sent to seek you; and when they
would say, 'He is not here,' he would re-
quire an oath of the kingdom or nation,
that they had not found you. 11 But now
you say, 'Go, tell your lord that Elijah is
here.' 12 As soon as I have gone from you,
the spirit of the LORD will carry you I
know not where; so, when I come and tell
Ahab and he cannot find you, he will kill
me, although I your servant have revered
the LORD from my youth. 13 Has it not
been told my lord what I did when Jezebel
killed the prophets of the LORD, how I hid

l Heb lacks *of the drought*

17.17–24 Although this story of the resurrection of the widow's son serves to demonstrate Elijah's ability to mediate divine power, the account also provides a third dramatic example of God's control over life and death. A similar story is told about Elisha (2 Kings 4.18–37). **17.21** The number *three* often figures prominently in rituals.

18.1–19 This account of Ahab's efforts to cope with the drought provides an introduction to one of the most famous of the Elijah stories, the contest with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel (vv. 20–40). **18.1** This verse has its counterpart in 17.1. Just as God, not Baal, controls drought (17.1), so also God, not Baal, provides rain. According to the terms of the oath in 17.1, only Elijah's word can end the drought, and he must at last confront Ahab. **18.12** For a dramatic example of the Lord carrying Elijah away,

a hundred of the LORD's prophets fifty to
a cave, and provided them with bread and
water? 14 Yet now you say, 'Go, tell your
lord that Elijah is here'; he will surely kill
me." 15 Elijah said, "As the LORD of hosts
lives, before whom I stand, I will surely
show myself to him today." 16 So Obadiah
went to meet Ahab, and told him; and
Ahab went to meet Elijah.

17 When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said
to him, "Is it you, you troubler of Israel?"
18 He answered, "I have not troubled Is-
rael; but you have, and your father's
house, because you have forsaken the
commandments of the LORD and followed
the Baals. 19 Now therefore have all Israel
assemble for me at Mount Carmel, with
the four hundred fifty prophets of Baal
and the four hundred prophets of Ashe-
rah, who eat at Jezebel's table."

Elijah's Triumph over the Priests of Baal

20 So Ahab sent to all the Israelites,
and assembled the prophets at Mount
Carmel. 21 Elijah then came near to all the
people, and said, "How long will you go
limping with two different opinions? If
the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal,
then follow him." The people did not an-
swer him a word. 22 Then Elijah said to
the people, "I, even I only, am left a
prophet of the LORD; but Baal's prophets
number four hundred fifty. 23 Let two
bulls be given to us; let them choose one
bull for themselves, cut it in pieces, and
lay it on the wood, but put no fire to it; I
will prepare the other bull and lay it on
the wood, but put no fire to it. 24 Then
you call on the name of your god and I
will call on the name of the LORD; the god
who answers by fire is indeed God." All
the people answered, "Well spoken!"
25 Then Elijah said to the prophets of
Baal, "Choose for yourselves one bull and
prepare it first, for you are many; then
call on the name of your god, but put no
fire to it." 26 So they took the bull that was
given them, prepared it, and called on the
name of Baal from morning until noon,
crying, "O Baal, answer us!" But there
was no voice, and no answer. They limped
about the altar that they had made. 27 At
noon Elijah mocked them, saying, "Cry
aloud! Surely he is a god; either he is
meditating, or he has wandered away, or
he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep
and must be awakened." 28 Then they
cried aloud and, as was their custom, they
cut themselves with swords and lances un-
til the blood gushed out over them. 29 As
midday passed, they raved on until the
time of the offering of the oblation, but
there was no voice, no answer, and no
response.

30 Then Elijah said to all the people,
"Come closer to me"; and all the people
came closer to him. First he repaired the
altar of the LORD that had been thrown
down; 31 Elijah took twelve stones, accord-
ing to the number of the tribes of the sons

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see 2 Kings 2.11. **18.17** Ahab greets Elijah as *troubler of Israel* because he decreed the three-year drought (17.1). **18.18** The prophet's rejoinder locates the problem with Ahab's institution of Baal worship in Israel. Elijah's use of the plural, *Baals*, is due to the fact that local manifestations of the Canaanite god were sometimes considered independent deities in their own right. **18.19** *Mount Carmel* lies in western Israel at the entrance of the Jezreel Valley. The *four hundred prophets of Asherah* do not appear again in the story. For a discussion of Asherah, see note on 14.15. Both groups of prophets were part of the royal court.

18.20–40 The contest with the prophets of Baal demonstrates conclusively that there is only one true God in Israel and that that God, not Baal, is responsible for the fertility of the land. **18.21** The precise meaning of the word translated *limping* is uncertain, but there is no doubt about the sense of Elijah's question. **18.22** Elijah's claim to be the only remaining prophet of the Lord is an exaggeration for rhetorical effect (see 18.13). **18.24** As a storm god, Baal should have been able to supply fire in the form of lightening. Fire is also often associated with the Lord (see, e.g., Gen 15.17; Ex 14.24; 19.18; Deut 4.11; 5.22–24; Isa 30.27). **18.26** The word translated *limped* probably refers to some sort of ritual dance (see also v. 21). **18.27** Elijah's taunts mock various aspects of the Baal cult. The suggestion that Baal is *meditating* may simply mean that he has other things on his mind. *Wandering away* may be a euphemism for taking care of bodily functions. The reference to a *journey* may reflect the possibility that during the dry season Baal travels to the underworld. Part of the worship of Baal may have involved rituals to waken the god when he was *asleep* and in the power of death. **18.28** Mourners often *cut* themselves during funeral rites, and Baal worshipers may have done the same in an attempt to release the god from the power of death (Lev 19.28; Deut 14.1; Jer 16.6; 41.5; 47.5; Hos 7.14). **18.29** The *oblation* was an offering

of Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD
came, saying, "Israel shall be your name";
32 with the stones he built an altar in the
name of the LORD. Then he made a
trench around the altar, large enough to
contain two measures of seed. 33 Next he
put the wood in order, cut the bull in
pieces, and laid it on the wood. He said,
"Fill four jars with water and pour it on
the burnt offering and on the wood."
34 Then he said, "Do it a second time";
and they did it a second time. Again he
said, "Do it a third time"; and they did it a
third time, 35 so that the water ran all
around the altar, and filled the trench
also with water.

36 At the time of the offering of the
oblation, the prophet Elijah came near
and said, "O LORD, God of Abraham,
Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day
that you are God in Israel, that I am your
servant, and that I have done all these
things at your bidding. 37 Answer me,
O LORD, answer me, so that this people
may know that you, O LORD, are God,
and that you have turned their hearts
back." 38 Then the fire of the LORD fell
and consumed the burnt offering, the
wood, the stones, and the dust, and even
licked up the water that was in the trench.
39 When all the people saw it, they fell on
their faces and said, "The LORD indeed is
God; the LORD indeed is God." 40 Elijah
said to them, "Seize the prophets of Baal;
do not let one of them escape." Then they
seized them; and Elijah brought them
down to the Wadi Kishon, and killed
them there.

The Drought Ends

41 Elijah said to Ahab, "Go up, eat
and drink; for there is a sound of rushing
rain." 42 So Ahab went up to eat and to
drink. Elijah went up to the top of Car-
mel; there he bowed himself down upon
the earth and put his face between his
knees. 43 He said to his servant, "Go up
now, look toward the sea." He went up
and looked, and said, "There is nothing."
Then he said, "Go again seven times."
44 At the seventh time he said, "Look, a
little cloud no bigger than a person's hand
is rising out of the sea." Then he said, "Go
say to Ahab, 'Harness your chariot and go
down before the rain stops you.' " 45 In a
little while the heavens grew black with
clouds and wind; there was a heavy rain.
Ahab rode off and went to Jezreel. 46 But
the hand of the LORD was on Elijah; he
girded up his loins and ran in front of
Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

Elijah Flees to Mount Horeb

19 Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah
had done, and how he had killed
all the prophets with the sword. 2 Then
Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying,
"So may the gods do to me, and more
also, if I do not make your life like the life
of one of them by this time tomorrow."
3 Then he was afraid; he got up and fled
for his life, and came to Beer-sheba,
which belongs to Judah; he left his ser-
vant there.

4 But he himself went a day's journey

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made around sunset (Ex 29.39). **18.32** The significance of the *two measures of seed* is unclear. **18.34** Note again the number three in ritual contexts (cf. 17.21). The water probably serves both to symbolize the rain that is coming and to underscore the decisiveness of God's response. **18.40** Elijah executes the prophets in accordance with the Deuteronomic law prescribing death as the penalty for prophets who advocate the worship of other gods (Deut 13.1–5). The *Wadi Kishon* runs between Mount Carmel and the Galilean hills.

18.41–46 Now that the people have acknowledged that there is only one God in Israel (v. 39), Elijah speaks the word to end the drought (cf. 17.1). **18.41** Although there is still no sign of rain, Elijah knows that it is coming (18.1), and he instructs Ahab to begin celebrating the end of the drought. **18.42–44** The purpose of Elijah's ritual is unclear. **18.45** In addition to a palace in the capital (Samaria), Ahab also had a royal residence in the town of *Jezreel* at the foot of Mount Gilboa (21.1). **18.46** Possessed by God's spirit, Elijah runs about seventeen miles to Jezreel in front of Ahab's chariot.

19.1–18 Elijah's efforts to flee from Jezebel's wrath inadvertently lead him to reverse Israel's journey through the wilderness until he arrives at Mount Horeb (Sinai), the sacred spot where Israel's covenant with God was first made (Ex 19–34). Throughout the narrative there are a number of allusions to Moses, and it is clear that for the Deuteronomistic narrator Elijah is to be considered a prophet "like Moses" (Deut 18.9–22). **19.3** *Beer-sheba*, a city in the northern Negev desert, marks the traditional southern boundary of Judah, so Elijah is well beyond Jezebel's reach. **19.4** Like Moses before him, Elijah

into the wilderness, and came and sat
down under a solitary broom tree. He
asked that he might die: "It is enough;
now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am
no better than my ancestors." 5 Then he
lay down under the broom tree and fell
asleep. Suddenly an angel touched him
and said to him, "Get up and eat." 6 He
looked, and there at his head was a cake
baked on hot stones, and a jar of water.
He ate and drank, and lay down again.
7 The angel of the LORD came a second
time, touched him, and said, "Get up and
eat, otherwise the journey will be too
much for you." 8 He got up, and ate and
drank; then he went in the strength of
that food forty days and forty nights to
Horeb the mount of God. 9 At that place
he came to a cave, and spent the night
there.

Then the word of the LORD came to
him, saying, "What are you doing here,
Elijah?" 10 He answered, "I have been
very zealous for the LORD, the God of
hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken
your covenant, thrown down your altars,
and killed your prophets with the sword. I
alone am left, and they are seeking my
life, to take it away."

11 He said, "Go out and stand on the
mountain before the LORD, for the LORD
is about to pass by." Now there was a great
wind, so strong that it was splitting moun-
tains and breaking rocks in pieces before
the LORD, but the LORD was not in the
wind; and after the wind an earthquake,
but the LORD was not in the earthquake;
12 and after the earthquake a fire, but the
LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire
a sound of sheer silence. 13 When Elijah
heard it, he wrapped his face in his man-
tle and went out and stood at the entrance
of the cave. Then there came a voice to
him that said, "What are you doing here,
Elijah?" 14 He answered, "I have been
very zealous for the LORD, the God of
hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken
your covenant, thrown down your altars,
and killed your prophets with the sword. I
alone am left, and they are seeking my
life, to take it away." 15 Then the LORD
said to him, "Go, return on your way to
the wilderness of Damascus; when you ar-
rive, you shall anoint Hazael as king over
Aram. 16 Also you shall anoint Jehu son of
Nimshi as king over Israel; and you shall
anoint Elisha son of Shaphat of Abel-
meholah as prophet in your place.
17 Whoever escapes from the sword of
Hazael, Jehu shall kill; and whoever es-
capes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha shall
kill. 18 Yet I will leave seven thousand in
Israel, all the knees that have not bowed
to Baal, and every mouth that has not
kissed him."

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felt that he was not up to the task of providing religious leadership for Israel (cf. Num 11.11–15). **19.8** Elijah's journey of *forty days and forty nights* recalls Israel's forty-year sojourn in the wilderness and also the forty days and nights that Moses spent at Sinai, where he did not eat or drink until he had written down the words of God's covenant (Ex 34.27–28). **19.9** The narrator may understand the *cave* to be the cleft in the rock where Moses was shielded from God's glory (Ex 33.17–23). **19.10** Elijah's state of depression causes him to exaggerate the problem. There are certainly faithful worshipers of the Lord left in Israel, and Elijah is not the only remaining prophet (17.24; 18.3–4). **19.11–12** *Wind, earthquake,* and *fire* were traditionally associated with God (Ex 19.16; 20.18; Deut 4.11; 5.22–24; Judg 5.4–5; Isa 30.27; Nah 1.3–5; Ps 18.11–15; 68.7–8), but for the Deuteronomistic narrator, God is not to be identified with these natural phenomena. The translation *sound of sheer silence* is uncertain. If the translation is retained, the comment would suggest that no new revelation followed the appearance of the wind, earthquake, and fire, for the text does not indicate that God was in the silence either. Other scholars have rendered the phrase "a gentle little breeze," "the sound of a light whisper," or the traditional "still small voice." The latter two translations would suggest that some sort of verbal revelation did take place. **19.13a** This verse implies that Elijah does not leave the safety of the cave until after the storm, which he heard but did not see. **19.14** Whatever the import of the storm and the silence, the events apparently made no impression on the prophet, who simply repeats his earlier answer (v. 10). **19.15** This time God's response is to issue a new prophetic commission. The *wilderness of Damascus* is the Syrian desert. Elijah's successor, Elisha, actually legitimizes *Hazael* as ruler of *Aram* (Syria; 2 Kings 8.7–15). The command to anoint a foreign ruler indicates God's control over political affairs outside Israel. **19.16** Elisha also anoints *Jehu,* who finally overthrows the dynasty of Omri and wipes out Baal worship in Israel (2 Kings 9–10). **19.18** Kissing the image or symbol of Baal was apparently a common act of worship (Hos 13.2).

Elisha Becomes Elijah's Disciple

19 So he set out from there, and found Elisha son of Shaphat, who was plowing. There were twelve yoke of oxen ahead of him, and he was with the twelfth. Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle over him. 20 He left the oxen, ran after Elijah, and said, "Let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you." Then Elijah[m] said to him, "Go back again; for what have I done to you?" 21 He returned from following him, took the yoke of oxen, and slaughtered them; using the equipment from the oxen, he boiled their flesh, and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he set out and followed Elijah, and became his servant.

Ahab's Wars with the Arameans

20 King Ben-hadad of Aram gathered all his army together; thirty-two kings were with him, along with horses and chariots. He marched against Samaria, laid siege to it, and attacked it. 2 Then he sent messengers into the city to King Ahab of Israel, and said to him: "Thus says Ben-hadad: 3 Your silver and gold are mine; your fairest wives and children also are mine." 4 The king of Israel answered, "As you say, my lord, O king, I am yours, and all that I have." 5 The messengers came again and said: "Thus says Ben-hadad: I sent to you, saying, 'Deliver to me your silver and gold, your wives and children'; 6 nevertheless I will send my servants to you tomorrow about this time, and they shall search your house and the houses of your servants, and lay hands on whatever pleases them,[n] and take it away."

7 Then the king of Israel called all the elders of the land, and said, "Look now! See how this man is seeking trouble; for he sent to me for my wives, my children, my silver, and my gold; and I did not refuse him." 8 Then all the elders and all the people said to him, "Do not listen or consent." 9 So he said to the messengers of Ben-hadad, "Tell my lord the king: All that you first demanded of your servant I will do; but this thing I cannot do." The messengers left and brought him word again. 10 Ben-hadad sent to him and said, "The gods do so to me, and more also, if the dust of Samaria will provide a handful for each of the people who follow me." 11 The king of Israel answered, "Tell him: One who puts on armor should not brag like one who takes it off." 12 When Ben-hadad heard this message—now he had been drinking with the kings in the booths—he said to his men, "Take your positions!" And they took their positions against the city.

Prophetic Support for Ahab

13 Then a certain prophet came up to King Ahab of Israel and said, "Thus says the LORD, Have you seen all this great multitude? Look, I will give it into your hand today; and you shall know that I am the LORD." 14 Ahab said, "By whom?" He said, "Thus says the LORD, By the young men who serve the district governors." Then he said, "Who shall begin the battle?" He answered, "You." 15 Then he mustered the young men who served the district governors, two hundred thirty-two; after them he mustered all the people of Israel, seven thousand.

m Heb *he* *n* Gk Syr Vg: Heb *you*

19.19–21 Almost immediately Elijah fulfills the third of God's commands (v. 16). **19.19** Elijah does not actually anoint Elisha, but the meaning of his symbolic act is clear. **19.20** Elisha's request indicates that he does not yet have the determination to be Elijah's successor. Elijah's response suggests that he wants nothing to do with disciples who are not completely focused on the task at hand. **19.21** The slaughter of the animals is an irrevocable act indicating that Elisha is willing to make a decisive break with his past life.

20.1–12 These verses contain the first of several stories set against the background of Israel's wars with Aram (modern Syria). After being subdued by David (2 Sam 8.5–12), the Arameans began to harass Israel during Solomon's reign (11.23–25) and continued to do so intermittently thereafter. **20.1** On *Ben-hadad*'s earlier interactions with Israel, see 15.18–21. **20.6** Ben-hadad's second demand would have allowed the Arameans to take anything they wanted from the royal palace. **20.11** Ahab's reply quotes a proverb warning Ben-hadad not to be too confident about the outcome of the battle. **20.12** The *booths* were temporary shelters in which the army lived in the field.

20.13–22 This part of the narrative is unusual in that it indicates prophetic support for Ahab rather than the opposition that characterizes most of the stories about his reign.

16 They went out at noon, while Ben-
hadad was drinking himself drunk in the
booths, he and the thirty-two kings allied
with him. 17 The young men who served
the district governors went out first. Ben-
hadad had sent out scouts,[o] and they re-
ported to him, "Men have come out from
Samaria." 18 He said, "If they have come
out for peace, take them alive; if they
have come out for war, take them alive."
19 But these had already come out of
the city: the young men who served the dis-
trict governors, and the army that fol-
lowed them. 20 Each killed his man; the
Arameans fled and Israel pursued them,
but King Ben-hadad of Aram escaped on
a horse with the cavalry. 21 The king of
Israel went out, attacked the horses and
chariots, and defeated the Arameans with
a great slaughter.
22 Then the prophet approached the
king of Israel and said to him, "Come,
strengthen yourself, and consider well
what you have to do; for in the spring the
king of Aram will come up against you."

The Arameans Are Defeated

23 The servants of the king of Aram
said to him, "Their gods are gods of the
hills, and so they were stronger than we;
but let us fight against them in the plain,
and surely we shall be stronger than they.
24 Also do this: remove the kings, each
from his post, and put commanders in
place of them; 25 and muster an army like
the army that you have lost, horse for
horse, and chariot for chariot; then we
will fight against them in the plain, and
surely we shall be stronger than they." He
heeded their voice, and did so.
26 In the spring Ben-hadad mustered
the Arameans and went up to Aphek to
fight against Israel. 27 After the Israelites
had been mustered and provisioned, they
went out to engage them; the people of
Israel encamped opposite them like two
little flocks of goats, while the Arameans
filled the country. 28 A man of God ap-
proached and said to the king of Israel,
"Thus says the LORD: Because the Arame-
ans have said, 'The LORD is a god of the
hills but he is not a god of the valleys,'
therefore I will give all this great multi-
tude into your hand, and you shall know
that I am the LORD." 29 They encamped
opposite one another seven days. Then on
the seventh day the battle began; the Isra-
elites killed one hundred thousand Ara-
mean foot soldiers in one day. 30 The rest
fled into the city of Aphek; and the wall
fell on twenty-seven thousand men that
were left.
Ben-hadad also fled, and entered the
city to hide. 31 His servants said to him,
"Look, we have heard that the kings of
the house of Israel are merciful kings; let
us put sackcloth around our waists and
ropes on our heads, and go out to the
king of Israel; perhaps he will spare your
life." 32 So they tied sackcloth around
their waists, put ropes on their heads,
went to the king of Israel, and said, "Your
servant Ben-hadad says, 'Please let me
live.'" And he said, "Is he still alive? He is
my brother." 33 Now the men were watch-

o Heb lacks *scouts*

20.16 The *kings* with Ben-hadad were rulers of individual cities. **20.20–21** Israel's decisive victory against superior forces indicates that God supplied divine aid. **20.22** Spring was the traditional time for beginning a military campaign (2 Sam 11.1).

20.23–34 The second engagement between Israel and Aram is treated as an example of a religious war, which should have been conducted according to the regulations laid down in Deut 20. From the perspective of the narrator, the spoil should have been devoted to the deity, and the enemy should have been killed. **20.23** The Aramean civil servants assume that because Israel's God is often associated with mountains (Sinai), the Lord's power is restricted to mountain areas. Readers already know that God's power extends beyond Israel's national boundaries (19.15). **20.24** The *commanders* are probably Ben-hadad's own officials and are thus thought to be more professional and strongly motivated than the *kings*, who as semi-independent rulers are looking out for their own interests. **20.26** Several towns bear the name *Aphek*, but the one mentioned here probably lies about three miles east of the Sea of Galilee. **20.28** On the prophetic title *man of God*, see note on 13.1. **20.31** *Sackcloth* was a dark-colored cloth of goat's hair or camel's hair originally used to make grain sacks. Made into a garment, it was worn in times of mourning or national distress (Gen 37.34; 2 Sam 3.31; Lam 2.10). It was also worn by captives as a sign of submission. **20.32** *Brother*, a term used in treaties to indicate that the parties involved are of equal status.

ing for an omen; they quickly took it up
from him and said, "Yes, Ben-hadad is
your brother." Then he said, "Go and
bring him." So Ben-hadad came out to
him; and he had him come up into the
chariot. 34 Ben-hadad[p] said to him, "I will
restore the towns that my father took
from your father; and you may establish
bazaars for yourself in Damascus, as my
father did in Samaria." The king of Israel
responded,[q] "I will let you go on those
terms." So he made a treaty with him and
let him go.

A Prophet Condemns Ahab

35 At the command of the LORD a cer-
tain member of a company of prophets[r]
said to another, "Strike me!" But the man
refused to strike him. 36 Then he said to
him, "Because you have not obeyed the
voice of the LORD, as soon as you have left
me, a lion will kill you." And when he had
left him, a lion met him and killed him.
37 Then he found another man and said,
"Strike me!" So the man hit him, striking
and wounding him. 38 Then the prophet
departed, and waited for the king along
the road, disguising himself with a ban-
dage over his eyes. 39 As the king passed
by, he cried to the king and said, "Your
servant went out into the thick of the bat-
tle; then a soldier turned and brought a
man to me, and said, 'Guard this man; if
he is missing, your life shall be given for
his life, or else you shall pay a talent of
silver.' 40 While your servant was busy
here and there, he was gone." The king of
Israel said to him, "So shall your judg-
ment be; you yourself have decided it."
41 Then he quickly took the bandage away
from his eyes. The king of Israel recog-
nized him as one of the prophets. 42 Then
he said to him, "Thus says the LORD, 'Be-
cause you have let the man go whom I
had devoted to destruction, therefore
your life shall be for his life, and your
people for his people.' " 43 The king of Is-
rael set out toward home, resentful and
sullen, and came to Samaria.

Naboth's Vineyard

21 Later the following events took
place: Naboth the Jezreelite had a
vineyard in Jezreel, beside the palace of
King Ahab of Samaria. 2 And Ahab said to
Naboth, "Give me your vineyard, so that I
may have it for a vegetable garden, be-
cause it is near my house; I will give you a
better vineyard for it; or, if it seems good
to you, I will give you its value in money."
3 But Naboth said to Ahab, "The LORD
forbid that I should give you my ancestral
inheritance." 4 Ahab went home resentful
and sullen because of what Naboth the
Jezreelite had said to him; for he had said,
"I will not give you my ancestral inheri-
tance." He lay down on his bed, turned
away his face, and would not eat.

p Heb *He responded*
q Heb lacks *The king of Israel*
r Heb *of the sons of the prophets*

20.35–43 While Ahab may see his victory as an opportunity to regain lost territory and establish peace, the prophet in this story sees the outcome as a violation of the terms of the religious war (Deut 20). For a similar story involving Saul and Samuel, see 1 Sam 15. **20.35** The *member of a company of prophets* belonged to one of the prophetic guilds that were active in Israel during this period. The striking was apparently intended to make the prophet look as if he had been in a battle. **20.38** The bandage is sometimes thought to have covered a distinctive mark on the forehead of prophetic guild members. **20.39–40** This "juridical parable" is designed to trap the hearer into announcing the punishment for his own crime (see also 2 Sam 12.1–12). A *talent* weighs about 75 pounds.

21.1–16 Like the story of David, Uriah, and Bathsheba (2 Sam 11.1–12.25), this narrative probes the question of the limits of royal power. Unlike the other stories about Elijah and Ahab, where the underlying issue is religious apostasy, this story focuses on the king's willingness to violate individual rights. Elsewhere in the ancient Near East, monarchs had, or sought to have, absolute control over their subjects. However, as this story illustrates, such control was never an ideal in Israel, where the king was never above the law and was always subject to divine judgment. **21.1** Jeroboam had built a second palace in the town of Jezreel, where he lived when he was not in the capital in Samaria (see 18.45–46). **21.3** Israelites normally tried to prevent inherited property from passing out of the family, although there were no legal barriers against land sales. However, according to some legal traditions, land could not be sold in perpetuity but had to revert eventually to its original owner (Lev 25.8–17, 23–25; 27.16–25). **21.4** Ahab is *resentful and sullen* not just because he does not get his way but

5 His wife Jezebel came to him and said, "Why are you so depressed that you will not eat?" 6 He said to her, "Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite and said to him, 'Give me your vineyard for money; or else, if you prefer, I will give you another vineyard for it'; but he answered, 'I will not give you my vineyard.' " 7 His wife Jezebel said to him, "Do you now govern Israel? Get up, eat some food, and be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite."

8 So she wrote letters in Ahab's name and sealed them with his seal; she sent the letters to the elders and the nobles who lived with Naboth in his city. 9 She wrote in the letters, "Proclaim a fast, and seat Naboth at the head of the assembly; 10 seat two scoundrels opposite him, and have them bring a charge against him, saying, 'You have cursed God and the king.' Then take him out, and stone him to death." 11 The men of his city, the elders and the nobles who lived in his city, did as Jezebel had sent word to them. Just as it was written in the letters that she had sent to them, 12 they proclaimed a fast and seated Naboth at the head of the assembly. 13 The two scoundrels came in and sat opposite him; and the scoundrels brought a charge against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, "Naboth cursed God and the king." So they took him outside the city, and stoned him to death. 14 Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, "Naboth has been stoned; he is dead."

15 As soon as Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and was dead, Jezebel said to Ahab, "Go, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give you for money; for Naboth is not alive, but dead." 16 As soon as Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, Ahab set out to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it.

Elijah Pronounces God's Sentence

17 Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying: 18 Go down to meet King Ahab of Israel, who rules[s] in Samaria; he is now in the vineyard of Naboth, where he has gone to take possession. 19 You shall say to him, "Thus says the LORD: Have you killed, and also taken possession?" You shall say to him, "Thus says the LORD: In the place where dogs licked up the blood of Naboth, dogs will also lick up your blood."

20 Ahab said to Elijah, "Have you found me, O my enemy?" He answered, "I have found you. Because you have sold yourself to do what is evil in the sight of the LORD, 21 I will bring disaster on you; I will consume you, and will cut off from Ahab every male, bond or free, in Israel; 22 and I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha son of Ahijah, because you have provoked me to anger and have caused Israel to sin. 23 Also concerning Jezebel the LORD said, 'The dogs shall eat Jezebel within the bounds of Jezreel.' 24 Anyone belonging to Ahab who dies in the city the dogs shall eat; and anyone of

s Heb *who is*

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because Naboth's oath (v. 3) precludes the possibility of further negotiations. **21.8** This verse seems to imply that Ahab has returned to Samaria. **21.9** Naboth is to be seated with the leaders of the people, but he is not by himself their head. **21.10** In Deuteronomic law two witnesses were required for conviction (Deut 17.6–7; 19.15; cf. Num 35.30), and there were severe penalties for giving false testimony (Ex 20.16; Deut 5.20; 19.16–21). For the prohibitions against cursing God or the king, see Ex 22.28; Lev 24.14–16. **21.15** The property of executed criminals may have been forfeited to the crown, or Naboth may have had no relatives to prevent the king from taking the land.

21.17–29 Jezebel may be able to conceal her crime from Ahab and from the people, but she cannot conceal it from God. For his involvement in the murder and for his theft of Naboth's land, both the king and his house are condemned. Ironically it is not his apostasy but his willingness to exceed the limits on royal power that brings an end to his rule. **21.19** The first announcement of judgment applies to Ahab personally and not to his house. **21.21–24** The second announcement of judgment is virtually identical with the one made to Jeroboam (14.10–11) and is also similar to the one made to Baasha (16.3–4). **21.22** Ahab's crime of causing Israel to sin probably refers to his encouragement of illegitimate worship (16.32–33) rather than to his involvement in the Naboth incident. **21.23** The oracle against Ahab and his house is expanded to include Jezebel, who in the eyes of the narrator was responsible for introducing Baal worship into Israel and was directly involved in Naboth's

his who dies in the open country the birds
of the air shall eat."
25 (Indeed, there was no one like
Ahab, who sold himself to do what was
evil in the sight of the LORD, urged on by
his wife Jezebel. 26 He acted most abomi-
nably in going after idols, as the Amorites
had done, whom the LORD drove out be-
fore the Israelites.)
27 When Ahab heard those words, he
tore his clothes and put sackcloth over his
bare flesh; he fasted, lay in the sackcloth,
and went about dejectedly. 28 Then the
word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tish-
bite: 29 "Have you seen how Ahab has
humbled himself before me? Because he
has humbled himself before me, I will not
bring the disaster in his days; but in his
son's days I will bring the disaster on his
house."

Joint Campaign with Judah Against Aram

22 For three years Aram and Israel
continued without war. 2 But in
the third year King Jehoshaphat of Judah
came down to the king of Israel. 3 The
king of Israel said to his servants, "Do you
know that Ramoth-gilead belongs to us,
yet we are doing nothing to take it out of
the hand of the king of Aram?" 4 He said
to Jehoshaphat, "Will you go with me to
battle at Ramoth-gilead?" Jehoshaphat re-
plied to the king of Israel, "I am as you
are; my people are your people, my
horses are your horses."
5 But Jehoshaphat also said to the
king of Israel, "Inquire first for the word
of the LORD." 6 Then the king of Israel
gathered the prophets together, about
four hundred of them, and said to them,
"Shall I go to battle against Ramoth-
gilead, or shall I refrain?" They said, "Go
up; for the LORD will give it into the hand
of the king." 7 But Jehoshaphat said, "Is
there no other prophet of the LORD here
of whom we may inquire?" 8 The king of
Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "There is still
one other by whom we may inquire of the
LORD, Micaiah son of Imlah; but I hate
him, for he never prophesies anything fa-
vorable about me, but only disaster." Je-
hoshaphat said, "Let the king not say such
a thing." 9 Then the king of Israel sum-
moned an officer and said, "Bring quickly
Micaiah son of Imlah." 10 Now the king of
Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah
were sitting on their thrones, arrayed in
their robes, at the threshing floor at the
entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all
the prophets were prophesying before
them. 11 Zedekiah son of Chenaanah
made for himself horns of iron, and he
said, "Thus says the LORD: With these you
shall gore the Arameans until they are de-
stroyed." 12 All the prophets were proph-
esying the same and saying, "Go up to
Ramoth-gilead and triumph; the LORD
will give it into the hand of the king."

Micaiah Predicts Failure

13 The messenger who had gone to
summon Micaiah said to him, "Look, the

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murder. **21.27** In this case, *sackcloth* is a sign of mourning and penitence (see note on 20.31). **21.29** For the motif of penitence leading to a postponement or modification of judgment, see 2 Sam 12.13–14; 2 Kings 22.11–20. The oracle against Ahab's house is finally fulfilled in 2 Kings 10.17, while Jezebel's death is recorded in 2 Kings 9.30–37. The judgment against Ahab personally occurs more quickly (ch. 22).

22.1–12 After the interlude of Naboth's vineyard, the narrator returns to the subject of Israel's wars with Aram (see ch. 20). **22.1** The treaty Ahab made with Ben-hadad of Aram apparently maintained the peace (20.34). **22.2** During this period the Judean king Jehoshaphat was one of Ahab's vassals (v. 44), a relationship Ahab sealed by marrying his daughter, Athaliah, to Jehoshaphat's son, Jehoram (2 Kings 8.18, 26). **22.3** *Ramoth-gilead* was a Levitical city east of the Jordan and had been one of Solomon's administrative centers (4.13). Its precise location is unknown. **22.4** As a vassal of Ahab's, Jehoshaphat is bound to fight against Israel's enemies. **22.5** Throughout the ancient Near East, it was customary before battle to seek a divine oracle or omen to determine whether or not there would be a favorable outcome (see, e.g., 1 Sam 28.3–19; Ezek 21.21–23). **22.6–7** The four hundred prophets were part of the royal court, but the Judean king apparently doubted that they were prophets of the Lord. **22.11** Zedekiah's prophetic act with the horns was not thought to be an illustration of his prophecy but was believed to have the power to actualize his words.

22.13–28 Micaiah not only supplies a true oracle for Ahab but also provides a rare glimpse into the inner world of the prophet. The story also furnishes a clear example of the conflicts that could arise when one prophet's words disagreed with those of another. **22.13** The messenger

words of the prophets with one accord are
favorable to the king; let your word be
like the word of one of them, and speak
favorably." 14 But Micaiah said, "As the
LORD lives, whatever the LORD says to me,
that I will speak."
15 When he had come to the king, the
king said to him, "Micaiah, shall we go to
Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall we re-
frain?" He answered him, "Go up and tri-
umph; the LORD will give it into the hand
of the king." 16 But the king said to him,
"How many times must I make you swear
to tell me nothing but the truth in the
name of the LORD?" 17 Then Micaiah[t]
said, "I saw all Israel scattered on the
mountains, like sheep that have no shep-
herd; and the LORD said, 'These have no
master; let each one go home in peace.'"
18 The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat,
"Did I not tell you that he would not
prophesy anything favorable about me,
but only disaster?"
19 Then Micaiah[t] said, "Therefore hear
the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD
sitting on his throne, with all the host
of heaven standing beside him to the
right and to the left of him. 20 And the
LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab, so that
he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?'
Then one said one thing, and another
said another, 21 until a spirit came for-
ward and stood before the LORD, saying,
'I will entice him.' 22 'How?' the LORD
asked him. He replied, 'I will go out and
be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his
prophets.' Then the LORD[t] said, 'You are
to entice him, and you shall succeed; go
out and do it.' 23 So you see, the LORD has
put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these
your prophets; the LORD has decreed di-
saster for you."
24 Then Zedekiah son of Chenaanah
came up to Micaiah, slapped him on the
cheek, and said, "Which way did the spirit
of the LORD pass from me to speak to
you?" 25 Micaiah replied, "You will find
out on that day when you go in to hide in
an inner chamber." 26 The king of Israel
then ordered, "Take Micaiah, and return
him to Amon the governor of the city and
to Joash the king's son, 27 and say, 'Thus
says the king: Put this fellow in prison,
and feed him on reduced rations of bread
and water until I come in peace.'" 28 Mi-
caiah said, "If you return in peace, the
LORD has not spoken by me." And he said,
"Hear, you peoples, all of you!"

Defeat and Death of Ahab

29 So the king of Israel and King Je-
hoshaphat of Judah went up to Ramoth-
gilead. 30 The king of Israel said to
Jehoshaphat, "I will disguise myself and
go into battle, but you wear your robes."
So the king of Israel disguised himself
and went into battle. 31 Now the king of
Aram had commanded the thirty-two cap-
tains of his chariots, "Fight with no one
small or great, but only with the king of
Israel." 32 When the captains of the chari-
ots saw Jehoshaphat, they said, "It is
surely the king of Israel." So they turned
to fight against him; and Jehoshaphat
cried out. 33 When the captains of the
chariots saw that it was not the king of
Israel, they turned back from pursuing
him. 34 But a certain man drew his bow
and unknowingly struck the king of Israel
between the scale armor and the breast-
plate; so he said to the driver of his char-
iot, "Turn around, and carry me out of
the battle, for I am wounded." 35 The bat-
tle grew hot that day, and the king was

t Heb *he*

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apparently wants to avoid the confusion that would result if Micaiah were to go against the prophetic consensus. **22.15–16** Micaiah's decision to follow the majority is not credible because his oracle departs from his customary message. **22.19–23** Micaiah attempts to give more authority to his oracle by describing the circumstances in which he received it. He became an observer of the heavenly court and overheard God discussing events with supernatural advisers (cf. Isa 6.1–13). **22.22** The spirit is not described as a being who is inherently evil or as a tempter or adversary (cf. Job 1–2; Zech 3.1–2). Rather, the spirit plans to become a lying spirit temporarily in order to deceive Ahab. **22.24–25** The confrontation between the two prophets indicates that neither prophet was willing to admit that the other might be right.

22.29–40 In spite of Ahab's efforts to nullify the prophetic oracles, the words of Elijah (21.19) and Micaiah (22.17) are inevitably fulfilled. **22.30** Ahab disguises himself so that the enemy will think that the royally attired Jehoshaphat is the king of Israel. **22.32** Jehoshaphat's cry may have been a distinctive battle cry that allowed the Arameans to identify him. **22.35** The Israelites try to prevent the enemy from discovering that

propped up in his chariot facing the Arameans, until at evening he died; the blood
from the wound had flowed into the bottom of the chariot. 36 Then about sunset a
shout went through the army, "Every man to his city, and every man to his country!"
37 So the king died, and was brought to Samaria; they buried the king in Samaria. 38 They washed the chariot by the
pool of Samaria; the dogs licked up his blood, and the prostitutes washed themselves in it,[u] according to the word of the LORD that he had spoken. 39 Now the rest of the acts of Ahab, and all that he did,
and the ivory house that he built, and all the cities that he built, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel? 40 So Ahab slept with his ancestors;
and his son Ahaziah succeeded him.

Jehoshaphat Reigns over Judah

41 Jehoshaphat son of Asa began to reign over Judah in the fourth year of King Ahab of Israel. 42 Jehoshaphat was thirty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Azubah daughter of Shilhi. 43 He walked in all the way of his father Asa; he did not turn aside from it, doing what was right in the sight of the LORD; yet the high places were not taken away, and the people still sacrificed and offered incense on the high places. 44 Jehoshaphat also made peace with the king of Israel.

45 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, and his power that he showed, and how he waged war, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? 46 The remnant of the male temple prostitutes who were still in the land in the days of his father Asa, he exterminated.

47 There was no king in Edom; a deputy was king. 48 Jehoshaphat made ships of the Tarshish type to go to Ophir for gold; but they did not go, for the ships were wrecked at Ezion-geber. 49 Then Ahaziah son of Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, "Let my servants go with your servants in the ships," but Jehoshaphat was not willing. 50 Jehoshaphat slept with his ancestors and was buried with his ancestors in the city of his father David; his son Jehoram succeeded him.

Ahaziah Reigns over Israel

51 Ahaziah son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria in the seventeenth year of King Jehoshaphat of Judah; he reigned two years over Israel. 52 He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father and mother, and in the way of Jeroboam son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin. 53 He served Baal and worshiped him; he provoked the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger, just as his father had done.

u Heb lacks *in it*

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the king had been wounded. **22.36** The end of the battle fulfills Micaiah's vision of a scattered Israel (v. 17). **22.38** This verse partially fulfills Elijah's prophecy (21.19), although his original oracle called for Ahab's blood to be spilled in Jezreel. The reference to the prostitutes is a bizarre addition to the prophecy.

22.41–50 The formal account of Jehoshaphat's reign portrays him as a good king, although he too fails to remove the high places. **22.41–42** *Jehoshaphat* reigned from ca. 873 to 849 B.C.E. **22.43** *High places.* See note on 3.2. **22.46** On the *temple prostitutes*, see note on 14.24. **22.48–49** Like Solomon, Jehoshaphat tries to become involved in long-distance maritime trade, but he is not successful (see notes on 9.26; 9.28; 10.22).

22.51–53 The stereotypical introduction to Ahaziah's reign gives him the expected negative evaluation. The account of his activities is continued in 2 Kings. **22.51** *Ahaziah* ruled from ca. 850 to 849 B.C.E.

2 KINGS

THE TWO BOOKS OF KINGS were once a single work, so 2 Kings simply continues the account of Israel's history that was begun in 1 Kings. The narratives of 2 Kings cover the history of Israel from the reign of Ahaziah (ca. 850–849 B.C.E.) to the Assyrian destruction of Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom (721 B.C.E.). Interwoven with that history is the story of Judah from the reign of Jehoshaphat to the years immediately following the destruction of the Southern Kingdom, the fall of Jerusalem, and the Babylonian exile (586 B.C.E.). For a full introduction to 2 Kings, see the Introduction to 1 Kings. *Robert R. Wilson*

Elijah Denounces Ahaziah

1 After the death of Ahab, Moab rebelled against Israel.
2 Ahaziah had fallen through the lattice in his upper chamber in Samaria, and lay injured; so he sent messengers, telling them, "Go, inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, whether I shall recover from this injury." 3 But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, "Get up, go to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say to them, 'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron?' 4 Now therefore thus says the LORD, 'You shall not leave the bed to which you have gone, but you shall surely die.'" So Elijah went.
5 The messengers returned to the king, who said to them, "Why have you returned?" 6 They answered him, "There came a man to meet us, who said to us, 'Go back to the king who sent you, and say to him: Thus says the LORD: Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are sending to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you shall not leave the bed to which you have gone, but shall surely die.'" 7 He said to them, "What sort of man was he who came to meet you and told you these things?" 8 They answered him, "A hairy man, with a leather belt around his waist." He said, "It is Elijah the Tishbite."
9 Then the king sent to him a captain of fifty with his fifty men. He went up to Elijah, who was sitting on the top of a hill, and said to him, "O man of God, the king says, 'Come down.'" 10 But Elijah answered the captain of fifty, "If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty." Then fire came down from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty.
11 Again the king sent to him another captain of fifty with his fifty. He went up[a] and said to him, "O man of God, this is the king's order: Come down quickly!" 12 But Elijah answered them, "If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty." Then the fire of God came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty.
13 Again the king sent the captain of a third fifty with his fifty. So the third captain of fifty went up, and came and fell on his knees before Elijah, and entreated him, "O man of God, please let my life, and the life of these fifty servants of yours, be precious in your sight. 14 Look, fire came down from heaven and consumed the two former captains of fifty men with their fifties; but now let my life be precious in your sight." 15 Then the angel of the LORD said to Elijah, "Go down with him; do not be afraid of him." So he set out and went down with him to the king, 16 and said to him, "Thus says the

a Gk Compare verses 9, 13: Heb *He answered*

1.1–18 The story of Ahaziah's illness is used by the narrator as another illustration of the inevitable fulfillment of a prophetic judgment oracle against a corrupt Northern king. The basic narrative has been elaborated by the incorporation of legendary material illustrating the prophet's ability to wield divine power. **1.1** This note on Moab's revolt seems to be out of place, since Moab plays no role in the narrative until 3.5. On the other hand, it is possible that the narrator understands the revolt as a judgment on the evil dynasty of Ahab (see 1 Kings 22.51–53; cf. 1 Kings 11.1–26). **1.2** The word *lattice* implies a woven structure of some sort (1 Kings 7.17; Job 18.8), which probably covered a window. On the practice of consulting a deity through a prophet in times of sickness, cf. 2 Kings 8.7–15; 1 Kings 14.1–18, which is strikingly similar to the story being told here. The name *Baal-zebub* means "Baal of the Flies" or "Lord of the Flies" and is probably an intentional Israelite corruption of Baal-zebul, "Baal the Prince." The deity would have been a local manifestation of the Canaanite storm god, Baal, whose worship had been introduced into Israel by Ahaziah's father, Ahab (see note on 1 Kings 16.31). The NT preserves the name in the form Beelzebul (Mt 10.25; 12.24; Mk 3.22; Lk 11.15) and reflects the later development of the figure into the prince of demons. *Ekron* was a Philistine city that lay about twenty-two miles west of Jerusalem. Part of the tribe of Judah in David's time (1 Sam 7.14), Ekron may have been back in Philistine hands by the time this story takes place. **1.3** The message Elijah is to deliver reflects the ongoing struggle between the Lord and Baal over the issue of who is the true God in Israel. For an earlier stage of the contest, see 1 Kings 18.17–40. **1.9–16** The threefold account of attempts to summon Elijah illustrates the divine protection afforded the prophet and also his ability to control God's power. For a similar story, see 1 Sam 19.18–24. **1.9** *Man of God.* See note on 1 Kings 13.1. **1.10** *Fire* is a traditional symbol of God's active presence. See notes on

LORD: Because you have sent messengers
to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of
Ekron,—is it because there is no God in
Israel to inquire of his word?—therefore
you shall not leave the bed to which you
have gone, but you shall surely die."
17 So he died according to the word
of the LORD that Elijah had spoken. His
brother,[b] Jehoram succeeded him as king
in the second year of King Jehoram son of
Jehoshaphat of Judah, because Ahaziah
had no son. 18 Now the rest of the acts of
Ahaziah that he did, are they not written
in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of
Israel?

Elijah Ascends to Heaven

2 Now when the LORD was about to
take Elijah up to heaven by a whirl-
wind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way
from Gilgal. 2 Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay
here; for the LORD has sent me as far as
Bethel." But Elisha said, "As the LORD
lives, and as you yourself live, I will not
leave you." So they went down to Bethel.
3 The company of prophets[c] who were in
Bethel came out to Elisha, and said to
him, "Do you know that today the LORD
will take your master away from you?"
And he said, "Yes, I know; keep silent."
4 Elijah said to him, "Elisha, stay here;
for the LORD has sent me to Jericho." But
he said, "As the LORD lives, and as you
yourself live, I will not leave you." So they
came to Jericho. 5 The company of proph-
ets[c] who were at Jericho drew near to Eli-
sha, and said to him, "Do you know that
today the LORD will take your master away
from you?" And he answered, "Yes, I
know; be silent."
6 Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here;
for the LORD has sent me to the Jordan."
But he said, "As the LORD lives, and as
you yourself live, I will not leave you." So
the two of them went on. 7 Fifty men of
the company of prophets[c] also went, and
stood at some distance from them, as they
both were standing by the Jordan. 8 Then
Elijah took his mantle and rolled it up,
and struck the water; the water was
parted to the one side and to the other,
until the two of them crossed on dry
ground.
9 When they had crossed, Elijah said
to Elisha, "Tell me what I may do for you,
before I am taken from you." Elisha said,
"Please let me inherit a double share of
your spirit." 10 He responded, "You have
asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I
am being taken from you, it will be
granted you; if not, it will not." 11 As they
continued walking and talking, a chariot

b Gk Syr: Heb lacks *His brother* *c* Heb *sons of the prophets*

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1 Kings 18.24; 19.11–12. **1.17** The narrator notes the immediate fulfillment of the prophecy. *Jehoram* of Israel should not be confused with *Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat*, king of Judah. The relative chronology of this verse cannot be made to agree with the synchronisms of 3.1; 1 Kings 22.51. It is possible that in these passages the narrator used sources with conflicting chronologies or different systems of reckoning. **1.18** *The Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel.* See note on 1 Kings 14.19–20.

2.1–18 The dramatic story of Elijah's ascension to heaven in a storm constitutes the climax of the narratives about this mysterious figure. Of all of the acts of power associated with him, this is the one that has most intrigued readers and fueled speculation about the prophet's character and eventual return. By the end of the OT period he had already been connected with the coming of the "day of the LORD" (Mal 4.5), while later Jewish and Christian traditions associated him with the Messiah (Mt 11.13–14; 16.13–14; 17.10–13; Mk 6.14–15; 8.27–28; 9.11–13; Lk 1.17; 9.7–8, 18–19). **2.1** The *whirlwind* is elsewhere connected with God's presence (Job 38.1; 40.6; Ps 83.15; Jer 23.19; Zech 9.14). *Gilgal* is probably not the site on the Jordan where the Israelites first entered the land of Canaan (Josh 4.19) but a town about seven miles north of Bethel. **2.2** *Bethel.* See note on 1 Kings 12.29. **2.3** The *company of prophets* was a prophetic guild. **2.4** *Jericho* lies in the Jordan Valley about six miles north of the Dead Sea. **2.8** The *mantle* is a symbol of the prophet's power (cf. 1 Kings 19.19). Elijah's parting of the Jordan's waters recalls both the entry of Israel into Canaan (Josh 4.7–17) and Moses' parting of the sea during the exodus (Ex 14.21–22). For other attempts to portray Elijah as a prophet like Moses, see notes on 1 Kings 19.1–18. **2.9** Elisha's request for *a double share of your spirit* refers to the legal provision that a firstborn son must receive a double portion of the inheritance (Deut 21.15–17). Elisha thus asks to have the status of Elijah's firstborn and to inherit more of his spirit than any other prophetic heirs. Elisha is not requesting more of the spirit than Elijah had but only a fraction of it. **2.10** Although Elijah already knows that Elisha is to be his successor (1 Kings 19.16), the older prophet leaves the final decision to the Lord. **2.11** The Lord is often

of fire and horses of fire separated the
two of them, and Elijah ascended in a
whirlwind into heaven. 12 Elisha kept
watching and crying out, "Father, father!
The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!"
But when he could no longer see him, he
grasped his own clothes and tore them in
two pieces.
13 He picked up the mantle of Elijah
that had fallen from him, and went back
and stood on the bank of the Jordan.
14 He took the mantle of Elijah that had
fallen from him, and struck the water,
saying, "Where is the LORD, the God of
Elijah?" When he had struck the water,
the water was parted to the one side and
to the other, and Elisha went over.
15 When the company of prophets[d]
who were at Jericho saw him at a distance,
they declared, "The spirit of Elijah rests
on Elisha." They came to meet him and
bowed to the ground before him. 16 They
said to him, "See now, we have fifty strong
men among your servants; please let them
go and seek your master; it may be that
the spirit of the LORD has caught him up
and thrown him down on some mountain
or into some valley." He responded, "No,
do not send them." 17 But when they
urged him until he was ashamed, he said,
"Send them." So they sent fifty men who
searched for three days but did not find
him. 18 When they came back to him (he
had remained at Jericho), he said to them,
"Did I not say to you, Do not go?"

Elisha Performs Miracles

19 Now the people of the city said to
Elisha, "The location of this city is good,
as my lord sees; but the water is bad, and
the land is unfruitful." 20 He said, "Bring
me a new bowl, and put salt in it." So they
brought it to him. 21 Then he went to the
spring of water and threw the salt into it,
and said, "Thus says the LORD, I have
made this water wholesome; from now on
neither death nor miscarriage shall come
from it." 22 So the water has been whole-
some to this day, according to the word
that Elisha spoke.
23 He went up from there to Bethel;
and while he was going up on the way,
some small boys came out of the city and
jeered at him, saying, "Go away, bald-
head! Go away, baldhead!" 24 When he
turned around and saw them, he cursed
them in the name of the LORD. Then two
she-bears came out of the woods and
mauled forty-two of the boys. 25 From
there he went on to Mount Carmel, and
then returned to Samaria.

Jehoram Reigns over Israel

3 In the eighteenth year of King Je-
hoshaphat of Judah, Jehoram son of
Ahab became king over Israel in Samaria;
he reigned twelve years. 2 He did what
was evil in the sight of the LORD, though
not like his father and mother, for he re-

d Heb *sons of the prophets*

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associated with *fire*. See note on 1.10. **2.12** Elisha addresses Elijah as *father*, a traditional title for the head of a prophetic guild and one often used by a disciple speaking to a master. The phrase *the chariots of Israel and its horsemen* may simply describe the heavenly army that Elisha is seeing (v. 11), or the phrase may apply to Elijah and imply that he is more powerful and more valuable to Israel than all of its army. Elisha tears his clothes as a sign of mourning (Gen 37.34; 2 Sam 13.31; Job 1.20). **2.13–14** Elisha's ability to use the mantle to repeat the earlier miracle demonstrates that he has indeed become Elijah's successor. **2.16** The company of prophets did not see what happened to Elijah, and they assume that God's spirit has simply transported him to another location (see 1 Kings 18.7–16). Elisha knows that this is not the case and is reluctant to let them search.

2.19–25 Just as the Elijah narratives begin with stories designed to demonstrate the prophet's power and authority (1 Kings 17), so also the Elisha narratives include a number of prophetic legends dealing with his miraculous deeds. **2.19–22** The tale of Elisha caring for his followers by purifying the water is reminiscent of Moses sweetening the waters of Marah (Ex 15.23–25). **2.23** The small boys apparently do not want the prophet to visit the shrine at Bethel, perhaps because they know that he would disapprove of it (see 1 Kings 12.28–30; 13.1–10).

3.1–3 The formal report on Jehoram's reign indicates that he continued in the tradition of Israel's evil kings, although he did try to discourage the worship of Baal. Because for the narrator the real problem in Israel is heterodox worship generally (see 1 Kings 12.25–32), this minor reform makes little difference in the overall evaluation. **3.1** *Jehoram* ruled from about 849 to 843/2 B.C.E. On the chronological problems involved in his dates, see note on 1.17. **3.2** *Pillar*. See note on 1 Kings 14.23.

moved the pillar of Baal that his father
had made. 3 Nevertheless he clung to the
sin of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he
caused Israel to commit; he did not de-
part from it.

War with Moab

4 Now King Mesha of Moab was a
sheep breeder, who used to deliver to the
king of Israel one hundred thousand
lambs, and the wool of one hundred thou-
sand rams. 5 But when Ahab died, the
king of Moab rebelled against the king of
Israel. 6 So King Jehoram marched out of
Samaria at that time and mustered all Is-
rael. 7 As he went he sent word to King
Jehoshaphat of Judah, "The king of Moab
has rebelled against me; will you go with
me to battle against Moab?" He answered,
"I will; I am with you, my people are your
people, my horses are your horses."
8 Then he asked, "By which way shall we
march?" Jehoram answered, "By the way
of the wilderness of Edom."
9 So the king of Israel, the king of Ju-
dah, and the king of Edom set out; and
when they had made a roundabout march
of seven days, there was no water for the
army or for the animals that were with
them. 10 Then the king of Israel said,
"Alas! The LORD has summoned us, three
kings, only to be handed over to Moab."
11 But Jehoshaphat said, "Is there no
prophet of the LORD here, through whom
we may inquire of the LORD?" Then one
of the servants of the king of Israel an-
swered, "Elisha son of Shaphat, who used
to pour water on the hands of Elijah, is
here." 12 Jehoshaphat said, "The word of
the LORD is with him." So the king of Is-
rael and Jehoshaphat and the king of
Edom went down to him.
13 Elisha said to the king of Israel,
"What have I to do with you? Go to your
father's prophets or to your mother's."
But the king of Israel said to him, "No; it
is the LORD who has summoned us, three
kings, only to be handed over to Moab."
14 Elisha said, "As the LORD of hosts lives,
whom I serve, were it not that I have re-
gard for King Jehoshaphat of Judah, I
would give you neither a look nor a
glance. 15 But get me a musician." And
then, while the musician was playing, the
power of the LORD came on him. 16 And
he said, "Thus says the LORD, 'I will make
this wadi full of pools.' 17 For thus says the
LORD, 'You shall see neither wind nor
rain, but the wadi shall be filled with wa-
ter, so that you shall drink, you, your cat-
tle, and your animals.' 18 This is only a
trifle in the sight of the LORD, for he will
also hand Moab over to you. 19 You shall
conquer every fortified city and every
choice city; every good tree you shall fell,
all springs of water you shall stop up, and
every good piece of land you shall ruin
with stones." 20 The next day, about the

3.4–27 This report of Israel's war with Moab is unusual in that it portrays Elisha as actively involved in working toward a victory for Israel and its allies (see also 6.8–23; 6.24–7.2; 1 Kings 20.13–22). In this sense the account is in sharp contrast with the otherwise very similar battle report in 1 Kings 22.1–40. **3.7** *Jehoshaphat of Judah* is a vassal of the Northern king, as was also the case during Ahab's reign. The Judeans are therefore obligated to join Israel in quelling the Moabite rebellion (cf. 1 Kings 22.4). **3.8** Jehoram proposes to march south through Judah and then east across the northern part of Edom and through the northeastern desert, the *wilderness of Edom*. This route would require the cooperation of the Edomites, who at the time were vassals of Judah (8.20). The three armies then plan to march north into Moab, approaching their target from the southeast. **3.9** The *king of Edom* was in fact an official who was probably appointed by Jehoshaphat (1 Kings 22.47). **3.11** As in 1 Kings 22.7, it is Jehoshaphat who proposes to seek divine guidance through a prophet of the Lord. Elisha's reputation as Elijah's successor is already well established. The reference to *pouring water* indicates that Elisha acted as Elijah's servant. **3.13** Elisha's reference is to the prophets of Baal and the prophets of Asherah, who were part of Ahab's court (1 Kings 18.19; cf 1 Kings 22.6, 10–12). Jehoram's reply suggests that the Lord has directed Israel to fight the Moabites. **3.14** Elisha here reflects the point of view of the narrator, who sees all of the Northern kings as illegitimate and apostate but who believes in the eternal divine election of Jerusalem and the Davidic house. **3.15** Prophets sometimes used music to induce trance or possession by God's spirit (1 Sam 10.5–6). **3.16–17** The wadi would normally have contained water only during the rainy season. **3.19** The extreme destruction of Moab is a violation of the laws governing religious war (Deut 20.19–20). **3.20** The OT does not specify the precise time of the *morning offering* (Ex 29.38–42), but later Jewish sources require that it

time of the morning offering, suddenly
water began to flow from the direction of
Edom, until the country was filled with
water.
21 When all the Moabites heard that
the kings had come up to fight against
them, all who were able to put on armor,
from the youngest to the oldest, were
called out and were drawn up at the fron-
tier. 22 When they rose early in the morn-
ing, and the sun shone upon the water,
the Moabites saw the water opposite them
as red as blood. 23 They said, "This is
blood; the kings must have fought to-
gether, and killed one another. Now then,
Moab, to the spoil!" 24 But when they
came to the camp of Israel, the Israelites
rose up and attacked the Moabites, who
fled before them; as they entered Moab
they continued the attack.[e] 25 The cities
they overturned, and on every good piece
of land everyone threw a stone, until it
was covered; every spring of water they
stopped up, and every good tree they
felled. Only at Kir-hareseth did the stone
walls remain, until the slingers sur-
rounded and attacked it. 26 When the king
of Moab saw that the battle was going
against him, he took with him seven hun-
dred swordsmen to break through, oppo-
site the king of Edom; but they could not.
27 Then he took his firstborn son who
was to succeed him, and offered him as a
burnt offering on the wall. And great
wrath came upon Israel, so they with-
drew from him and returned to their
own land.

Elisha and the Widow's Oil

4 Now the wife of a member of the
company of prophets[f] cried to Eli-
sha, "Your servant my husband is dead;
and you know that your servant feared
the LORD, but a creditor has come to take
my two children as slaves." 2 Elisha said to
her, "What shall I do for you? Tell me,
what do you have in the house?" She an-
swered, "Your servant has nothing in the
house, except a jar of oil." 3 He said, "Go
outside, borrow vessels from all your
neighbors, empty vessels and not just a
few. 4 Then go in, and shut the door be-
hind you and your children, and start
pouring into all these vessels; when each
is full, set it aside." 5 So she left him and
shut the door behind her and her chil-
dren; they kept bringing vessels to her,
and she kept pouring. 6 When the vessels
were full, she said to her son, "Bring me
another vessel." But he said to her,
"There are no more." Then the oil
stopped flowing. 7 She came and told the
man of God, and he said, "Go sell the oil
and pay your debts, and you and your
children can live on the rest."

Elisha Raises the Shunammite's Son

8 One day Elisha was passing through
Shunem, where a wealthy woman lived,
who urged him to have a meal. So when-

e Compare Gk Syr: Meaning of Heb uncertain
f Heb *the sons of the prophets*

be made at dawn. **3.22** The water *red as blood* is probably intended to be a miraculous occurrence, although some scholars have suggested that the Edomites saw water colored by the rising morning sun or by the country's red sandstone. **3.25** *Kir-hareseth* was located about eleven miles east of the Dead Sea and seventeen miles south of the Arnon River. **3.27** Extrabiblical sources indicate that human sacrifices were sometimes offered in times of siege, although there are no other OT references to the practice (but cf. 16.3; 21.6). The word translated *wrath* is often associated with the wrath of a deity, and the text may be implying that the anger of Moab's god caused the Israelites to withdraw.

4.1–7 This is the first of four prophetic legends in ch. 4 and is designed to enhance the prophet's authority by demonstrating his miraculous powers. All of the stories probably circulated orally before being incorporated in Kings. For a similar story told about Elijah, see 1 Kings 17.8–16. **4.1** In the remaining Elisha stories he is portrayed as the leader of a *company of prophets*, a prophetic guild. The widow has no means of support and cannot repay the debt. The selling of people into slavery in such circumstances was apparently common (Ex 21.7; Am 2.6; 8.6; Mic 2.9). See note on 1 Kings 17.10. **4.2** Elisha's question implies that he is powerless to intervene with the creditor on her behalf. His actual response will be much more dramatic.

4.8–37 This story of the miraculous birth, death, and resurrection of a child is a gem of Hebrew narrative art and reflects careful shaping and polishing over a long period of time. For a parallel story about Elijah, see 1 Kings

ever he passed that way, he would stop
there for a meal. 9 She said to her hus-
band, "Look, I am sure that this man who
regularly passes our way is a holy man of
God. 10 Let us make a small roof chamber
with walls, and put there for him a bed, a
table, a chair, and a lamp, so that he can
stay there whenever he comes to us."

11 One day when he came there, he
went up to the chamber and lay down
there. 12 He said to his servant Gehazi,
"Call the Shunammite woman." When he
had called her, she stood before him.
13 He said to him, "Say to her, Since you
have taken all this trouble for us, what
may be done for you? Would you have a
word spoken on your behalf to the king or
to the commander of the army?" She an-
swered, "I live among my own people."
14 He said, "What then may be done for
her?" Gehazi answered, "Well, she has no
son, and her husband is old." 15 He said,
"Call her." When he had called her, she
stood at the door. 16 He said, "At this sea-
son, in due time, you shall embrace a
son." She replied, "No, my lord, O man of
God; do not deceive your servant."

17 The woman conceived and bore a
son at that season, in due time, as Elisha
had declared to her.

18 When the child was older, he went
out one day to his father among the reap-
ers. 19 He complained to his father, "Oh,
my head, my head!" The father said to his
servant, "Carry him to his mother." 20 He
carried him and brought him to his
mother; the child sat on her lap until
noon, and he died. 21 She went up and
laid him on the bed of the man of God,
closed the door on him, and left. 22 Then
she called to her husband, and said, "Send
me one of the servants and one of the
donkeys, so that I may quickly go to the
man of God and come back again." 23 He
said, "Why go to him today? It is neither
new moon nor sabbath." She said, "It will
be all right." 24 Then she saddled the don-
key and said to her servant, "Urge the ani-
mal on; do not hold back for me unless I
tell you." 25 So she set out, and came to the
man of God at Mount Carmel.

When the man of God saw her coming,
he said to Gehazi his servant, "Look, there
is the Shunammite woman; 26 run at once
to meet her, and say to her, Are you all
right? Is your husband all right? Is the
child all right?" She answered, "It is all
right." 27 When she came to the man of
God at the mountain, she caught hold of
his feet. Gehazi approached to push her
away. But the man of God said, "Let her
alone, for she is in bitter distress; the
LORD has hidden it from me and has not
told me." 28 Then she said, "Did I ask my
lord for a son? Did I not say, Do not mis-
lead me?" 29 He said to Gehazi, "Gird up
your loins, and take my staff in your
hand, and go. If you meet anyone, give no
greeting, and if anyone greets you, do not
answer; and lay my staff on the face of the
child." 30 Then the mother of the child
said, "As the LORD lives, and as you your-
self live, I will not leave without you." So
he rose up and followed her. 31 Gehazi
went on ahead and laid the staff on the
face of the child, but there was no sound
or sign of life. He came back to meet
him and told him, "The child has not
awakened."

32 When Elisha came into the house,
he saw the child lying dead on his bed.

17.17–24. **4.8** *Shunem.* See note on 1 Kings 1.3. **4.10** Because little is known about the second floor of Israelite houses, the precise nature of the structure she proposes to build is unclear. **4.13** The Shunammite's kindness is rewarded by Elisha, whose offer of aid indicates his ability to influence the highest levels of government. Her reply indicates that all of her physical needs can be met by her own family. **4.16–17** The OT has preserved several stories about the miraculous birth of a child to a barren woman, e.g., Gen 18.1–15; 30.1–24; Judg 13.2–25; 1 Sam 1.1–28. The phrase translated *in due time* probably means "next year" (Gen 18.10, 14). **4.16** The unusual phrase Elisha uses to promise the birth of the child, *you shall embrace a son*, is ironically reflected in v. 20. **4.19** The child probably suffered sunstroke. **4.22–23** The husband does not know that the child has died, so he is puzzled by his wife's desire to visit Elijah. **4.23** New moons and sabbaths were times for special rituals, so these were apparently appropriate times to visit religious figures (Ex 20.8–11; Num 28.11–15; Isa 1.14; 66.23; Hos 2.11; Am 8.5). **4.26** Because of the importance of her errand, the Shunammite wishes to speak to the prophet directly and offers only a courteous reply to Gehazi. **4.29** Without being told directly, the prophet now knows the nature of the problem. **4.30** The woman's persistence convinces Elisha to accompany her.

33 So he went in and closed the door on
the two of them, and prayed to the LORD.
34 Then he got up on the bed[g] and lay
upon the child, putting his mouth upon
his mouth, his eyes upon his eyes, and his
hands upon his hands; and while he lay
bent over him, the flesh of the child be-
came warm. 35 He got down, walked once
to and fro in the room, then got up again
and bent over him; the child sneezed
seven times, and the child opened his
eyes. 36 Elisha[h] summoned Gehazi and
said, "Call the Shunammite woman." So
he called her. When she came to him, he
said, "Take your son." 37 She came and
fell at his feet, bowing to the ground; then
she took her son and left.

Elisha Purifies the Pot of Stew

38 When Elisha returned to Gilgal,
there was a famine in the land. As the
company of prophets was[i] sitting before
him, he said to his servant, "Put the large
pot on, and make some stew for the com-
pany of prophets."[j] 39 One of them went
out into the field to gather herbs; he
found a wild vine and gathered from it a
lapful of wild gourds, and came and cut
them up into the pot of stew, not knowing
what they were. 40 They served some for
the men to eat. But while they were eating
the stew, they cried out, "O man of God,
there is death in the pot!" They could not
eat it. 41 He said, "Then bring some
flour." He threw it into the pot, and said,
"Serve the people and let them eat." And
there was nothing harmful in the pot.

Elisha Feeds One Hundred Men

42 A man came from Baal-shalishah,
bringing food from the first fruits to the
man of God: twenty loaves of barley and
fresh ears of grain in his sack. Elisha said,
"Give it to the people and let them eat."
43 But his servant said, "How can I set this
before a hundred people?" So he re-
peated, "Give it to the people and let them
eat, for thus says the LORD, 'They shall eat
and have some left.'" 44 He set it before
them, they ate, and had some left, accord-
ing to the word of the LORD.

The Healing of Naaman

5 Naaman, commander of the army of
the king of Aram, was a great man
and in high favor with his master, because
by him the LORD had given victory to
Aram. The man, though a mighty war-
rior, suffered from leprosy.[k] 2 Now the
Arameans on one of their raids had taken
a young girl captive from the land of Is-
rael, and she served Naaman's wife. 3 She
said to her mistress, "If only my lord were
with the prophet who is in Samaria! He
would cure him of his leprosy."[k] 4 So Na-
aman[h] went in and told his lord just what
the girl from the land of Israel had said.
5 And the king of Aram said, "Go then,
and I will send along a letter to the king of
Israel."

He went, taking with him ten talents of

g Heb lacks *on the bed* *h* Heb *he*
i Heb *sons of the prophets were*
j Heb *sons of the prophets* *k* A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain

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4.35 Apparently the effort exhausted the prophet so that he has to rest a bit before making a second attempt. The sneezing indicates that the child's breath has returned. The number *seven* often appears in rituals.

4.38–41 This prophetic legend illustrates the prophet's ability to care for his disciples in times of hardship. **4.38** *Gilgal.* See note on 2.1. The *company of prophets,* the prophetic guild, was probably gathered around Elisha for instruction. **4.39** The identification of the *herbs* and the *wild gourds* is uncertain.

4.42–44 This miraculous feeding of the prophetic guild is reminiscent of the accounts of Jesus feeding large crowds (Mt 14.13–21; 15.32–38; Mk 8.1–10). **4.42** *Baal-shalishah* is southwest of Shechem.

5.1–19a This account of the healing of Naaman may have once been simply a legend that focused on Elisha's miraculous healing powers. However, the story in its final form has been shaped to emphasize Naaman's conversion and his acknowledgment of the power of the one true God. The theme of the conversion of foreign officials was particularly meaningful to Israel during and after the Babylonian exile. See, e.g., Dan 2.46–47; 3.28; 4.34–37; 6.25–27. **5.1** For an account of Israel's earlier battles with *Aram* (Syria), see 1 Kings 20.1–34; 22.1–40 and notes there. The notion that the *LORD had given victory to Aram* reflects 1 Kings 22.19–23. The word translated *leprosy* is applied to a number of skin diseases, none of which is identical with modern leprosy (Hansen's disease). **5.3** Elisha already has a reputation as a healer, presumably on the basis of stories like 4.8–37. **5.5** A *talent* weighs about 75 pounds. The weight of a *shekel* varied greatly in ancient Israel, but it averaged

silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and
ten sets of garments. 6 He brought the let-
ter to the king of Israel, which read,
"When this letter reaches you, know that I
have sent to you my servant Naaman, that
you may cure him of his leprosy."[l]
7 When the king of Israel read the letter,
he tore his clothes and said, "Am I God, to
give death or life, that this man sends
word to me to cure a man of his leprosy?[l]
Just look and see how he is trying to pick
a quarrel with me."
8 But when Elisha the man of God
heard that the king of Israel had torn his
clothes, he sent a message to the king,
"Why have you torn your clothes? Let him
come to me, that he may learn that there
is a prophet in Israel." 9 So Naaman came
with his horses and chariots, and halted at
the entrance of Elisha's house. 10 Elisha
sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go,
wash in the Jordan seven times, and your
flesh shall be restored and you shall be
clean." 11 But Naaman became angry and
went away, saying, "I thought that for me
he would surely come out, and stand and
call on the name of the LORD his God,
and would wave his hand over the spot, and
cure the leprosy![l] 12 Are not Abana[m] and
Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better
than all the waters of Israel? Could I not
wash in them, and be clean?" He turned
and went away in a rage. 13 But his ser-
vants approached and said to him, "Fa-
ther, if the prophet had commanded you
to do something difficult, would you not
have done it? How much more, when all
he said to you was, 'Wash, and be clean'?"
14 So he went down and immersed himself
seven times in the Jordan, according to
the word of the man of God; his flesh was
restored like the flesh of a young boy, and
he was clean.
15 Then he returned to the man of
God, he and all his company; he came and
stood before him and said, "Now I know
that there is no God in all the earth except
in Israel; please accept a present from
your servant." 16 But he said, "As the
LORD lives, whom I serve, I will accept
nothing!" He urged him to accept, but he
refused. 17 Then Naaman said, "If not,
please let two mule-loads of earth be
given to your servant; for your servant
will no longer offer burnt offering or sac-
rifice to any god except the LORD. 18 But
may the LORD pardon your servant on
one count: when my master goes into the
house of Rimmon to worship there, lean-
ing on my arm, and I bow down in the
house of Rimmon, when I do bow down
in the house of Rimmon, may the LORD
pardon your servant on this one count."
19 He said to him, "Go in peace."

Gehazi's Greed

But when Naaman had gone from him
a short distance, 20 Gehazi, the servant of
Elisha the man of God, thought, "My mas-
ter has let that Aramean Naaman off too
lightly by not accepting from him what he
offered. As the LORD lives, I will run after
him and get something out of him." 21 So
Gehazi went after Naaman. When Naa-
man saw someone running after him, he
jumped down from the chariot to meet
him and said, "Is everything all right?"

l A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain *m* Another reading is *Amana*

.4 ounce. **5.6** The Syrian king seems to assume that Elisha is employed in the royal court and that the king of Israel will know how to interpret the request for healing. **5.7** The king of Israel does not make the connection with Elisha at all and assumes that the Syrian is making an impossible request so that the Israelite king's failure to comply will provide an excuse for another Syrian raid. Tearing clothing was a sign of mourning or distress (see, e.g., Josh 7.6; Esth 4.1–3; Job 1.20). **5.10** The number *seven* often appears in rituals. **5.11** Naaman expects Elisha to perform a ritual similar to the ones used by other healers. The Aramean does not realize that Elisha's power is so great that ritual is unnecessary. **5.12** The *Abana* (or Amana) River flows just north of Damascus, the capital of Aram. The *Pharpar* River lies to the south of the city. **5.13** The title *father* is usually used by a disciple addressing a master. It is not usually employed by servants. **5.17** Naaman assumes that Israel's God can only be worshiped in the land of Israel, so the dirt is necessary to create a "miniature Israel" in Syria. The question of how God could be worshiped in a foreign land became a serious one for Israel during the exile (cf. Ps 137.4). **5.18** *Rimmon* (probably meaning "thunderer") is an epithet of the Syrian storm god Hadad, a deity usually identified with the Canaanite god Baal (see note on 1 Kings 16.31).

5.19b–27 This epilogue to the story of Naaman's healing serves to contrast Gehazi's greed with the unselfishness of Elisha, who will not use his great powers for his own benefit (v. 16).

22 He replied, "Yes, but my master has
sent me to say, 'Two members of a com-
pany of prophets[n] have just come to me
from the hill country of Ephraim; please
give them a talent of silver and two
changes of clothing.'" 23 Naaman said,
"Please accept two talents." He urged him,
and tied up two talents of silver in two
bags, with two changes of clothing, and
gave them to two of his servants, who car-
ried them in front of Gehazi.[o] 24 When
he came to the citadel, he took the bags[p]
from them, and stored them inside; he
dismissed the men, and they left.
25 He went in and stood before his
master; and Elisha said to him, "Where
have you been, Gehazi?" He answered,
"Your servant has not gone anywhere at
all." 26 But he said to him, "Did I not go
with you in spirit when someone left his
chariot to meet you? Is this a time to ac-
cept money and to accept clothing, olive
orchards and vineyards, sheep and oxen,
and male and female slaves? 27 Therefore
the leprosy[q] of Naaman shall cling to
you, and to your descendants forever."
So he left his presence leprous,[q] as white
as snow.

The Miracle of the Ax Head

6 Now the company of prophets[n] said
to Elisha, "As you see, the place
where we live under your charge is too
small for us. 2 Let us go to the Jordan, and
let us collect logs there, one for each of us,
and build a place there for us to live." He
answered, "Do so." 3 Then one of them
said, "Please come with your servants."
And he answered, "I will." 4 So he went
with them. When they came to the Jor-
dan, they cut down trees. 5 But as one was
felling a log, his ax head fell into the wa-
ter; he cried out, "Alas, master! It was
borrowed." 6 Then the man of God said,
"Where did it fall?" When he showed him
the place, he cut off a stick, and threw it in
there, and made the iron float. 7 He said,
"Pick it up." So he reached out his hand
and took it.

The Aramean Attack Is Thwarted

8 Once when the king of Aram was at
war with Israel, he took counsel with his
officers. He said, "At such and such a
place shall be my camp." 9 But the man of
God sent word to the king of Israel, "Take
care not to pass this place, because the Ar-
ameans are going down there." 10 The
king of Israel sent word to the place of
which the man of God spoke. More than
once or twice he warned such a place[r] so
that it was on the alert.
11 The mind of the king of Aram was
greatly perturbed because of this; he
called his officers and said to them, "Now
tell me who among us sides with the king
of Israel?" 12 Then one of his officers said,
"No one, my lord king. It is Elisha, the
prophet in Israel, who tells the king of Is-
rael the words that you speak in your bed-
chamber." 13 He said, "Go and find where
he is; I will send and seize him." He was
told, "He is in Dothan." 14 So he sent
horses and chariots there and a great
army; they came by night, and sur-
rounded the city.
15 When an attendant of the man of
God rose early in the morning and went

n Heb *sons of the prophets* *o* Heb *him*
p Heb lacks *the bags* *q* A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain
r Heb *warned it*

5.22 *Company of prophets.* See notes on 4.1; 4.38. A *talent* weighs about 75 pounds. **5.26** Apparently Elisha has extrasensory perception and is able to travel *in spirit* even though his body does not move. See also 6.8–9. Elisha's question elaborates on Gehazi's greed.

6.1–7 The legend of the floating ax head is another illustration of the prophet's extraordinary powers. **6.1** The company of prophets or prophetic guild has probably outgrown its meeting space. The other stories about this group suggest that its members do not all live together but do gather periodically, probably for instruction from Elisha (see, e.g., 4.1–2, 38; 5.22). **6.6** Elisha's use of a new ax handle rather than the old one may imply that the miracle requires the use of new objects. Note, e.g., the new bowl in 2.20, and cf. the use of a new garment in Ahijah's prophetic act (1 Kings 11.29).

6.8–23 This story from the time of the Aramean wars again shows Elisha using his miraculous powers on behalf of Israel against the Syrians. For other stories in which Elisha acts for rather than against Israel, see 3.1–27; 6.24–7.2, and cf. the story of the unnamed prophet in 1 Kings 20.13–22. **6.8** For earlier episodes in the war between Israel and Aram, see 1 Kings 20.1–34; 22.1–40 and notes. **6.9** Elijah apparently got the information through extrasensory perception (cf. 5.26). **6.13** *Dothan* is about ten

out, an army with horses and chariots was
all around the city. His servant said, "Alas,
master! What shall we do?" 16 He replied,
"Do not be afraid, for there are more with
us than there are with them." 17 Then Eli-
sha prayed: "O LORD, please open his
eyes that he may see." So the LORD
opened the eyes of the servant, and he
saw; the mountain was full of horses and
chariots of fire all around Elisha. 18 When
the Arameans[s] came down against him,
Elisha prayed to the LORD, and said,
"Strike this people, please, with blind-
ness." So he struck them with blindness as
Elisha had asked. 19 Elisha said to them,
"This is not the way, and this is not the
city; follow me, and I will bring you to the
man whom you seek." And he led them to
Samaria.

20 As soon as they entered Samaria,
Elisha said, "O LORD, open the eyes of
these men so that they may see." The
LORD opened their eyes, and they saw that
they were inside Samaria. 21 When the
king of Israel saw them he said to Elisha,
"Father, shall I kill them? Shall I kill
them?" 22 He answered, "No! Did you
capture with your sword and your bow
those whom you want to kill? Set food and
water before them so that they may eat
and drink; and let them go to their mas-
ter." 23 So he prepared for them a great
feast; after they ate and drank, he sent
them on their way, and they went to their
master. And the Arameans no longer
came raiding into the land of Israel.

Ben-hadad's Siege of Samaria

24 Some time later King Ben-hadad of
Aram mustered his entire army; he
marched against Samaria and laid siege to
it. 25 As the siege continued, famine in Sa-
maria became so great that a donkey's
head was sold for eighty shekels of silver,
and one-fourth of a kab of dove's dung
for five shekels of silver. 26 Now as the
king of Israel was walking on the city wall,
a woman cried out to him, "Help, my lord
king!" 27 He said, "No! Let the LORD help
you. How can I help you? From the
threshing floor or from the wine press?"
28 But then the king asked her, "What is
your complaint?" She answered, "This
woman said to me, 'Give up your son; we

s Heb *they*

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miles north of Samaria. **6.16** The exhortation not to be afraid often introduces prophecies of salvation and deliverance (Isa 41.10; Jer 1.8). **6.17** The *horses and chariots of fire* are the heavenly army that fights for Israel in times of need (see also 2.11). On the motif of the supernatural protection of the prophet, cf. 1.9–15. *Fire* is often associated with the Lord (see note on 1 Kings 18.24). **6.21** The king of Israel here calls Elisha *father*, the traditional form of address used by a disciple speaking to a master. The use of the title here implies that the king acknowledges the authority of the prophet. **6.22** For a very different response in a similar situation, cf. 1 Kings 20.35–43. **6.23** This comment implies that the Syrians were so overwhelmed by the divine power being exercised by the prophet that they broke off hostilities.

6.24–7.20 The gripping account of the Aramean siege of Samaria is a subtle and polished piece of work. In a radical departure from the usual spareness of Hebrew narrative style, the narrator uses extensive detail to create a vivid picture of life in the besieged city. In contrast to many of the Elisha stories, this one does not credit the prophet with being the agent of the city's salvation but focuses almost entirely on God's mysterious act of deliverance. **6.24** Several Aramean kings bore the name *Ben-hadad*. This individual is probably not to be identified with the Ben-hadad of 1 Kings 15.18 or 1 Kings 20.1. The chronological relationship of the *siege* to the incident described in 6.8–23 cannot be established. The events being described here clearly do not reflect the situation of 6.23. **6.25** The extreme scarcity of food during the siege is indicated by the high price being paid even for so unappetizing an item as a *donkey's head*. *Shekel*. See note on 5.5. A *kab* is a little over a quart. Dried dung was used for fuel in the ancient Near East, although in Israel it may have been considered impure, at least by priests (Ezek 4.12–15). This quantity of *dove's dung* would probably not make much of a fire. Some scholars have suggested that dove's dung was a slang term for some sort of inedible seed pods or husks. **6.27** The king realizes that there is little that he can do to help the woman, but he does ironically point to the solution to the problem. The Lord will eventually help the city (7.6). **6.28–29** Extrabiblical sources report cases of cannibalism in times of siege, and the OT alludes to such behavior during the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem (Lam 2.20; 4.10; Ezek 5.10). Deuteronomic law includes cannibalism as one of the curses to be visited on Israel if it breaks the covenant (Deut 28.53–57). The matter-of-fact way in which the woman presents her case adds to the

will eat him today, and we will eat my son
tomorrow.' 29 So we cooked my son and
ate him. The next day I said to her, 'Give
up your son and we will eat him.' But she
has hidden her son." 30 When the king
heard the words of the woman he tore his
clothes—now since he was walking on the
city wall, the people could see that he
had sackcloth on his body underneath—
31 and he said, "So may God do to me, and
more, if the head of Elisha son of Shaphat
stays on his shoulders today." 32 So he dis-
patched a man from his presence.

Now Elisha was sitting in his house, and
the elders were sitting with him. Before
the messenger arrived, Elisha said to the
elders, "Are you aware that this murderer
has sent someone to take off my head?
When the messenger comes, see that you
shut the door and hold it closed against
him. Is not the sound of his master's feet
behind him?" 33 While he was still speak-
ing with them, the king[t] came down to
him and said, "This trouble is from the
LORD! Why should I hope in the LORD
7 any longer?" 1 But Elisha said, "Hear
the word of the LORD: thus says the
LORD, Tomorrow about this time a mea-
sure of choice meal shall be sold for a
shekel, and two measures of barley for a
shekel, at the gate of Samaria." 2 Then the
captain on whose hand the king leaned
said to the man of God, "Even if the LORD
were to make windows in the sky, could
such a thing happen?" But he said, "You
shall see it with your own eyes, but you
shall not eat from it."

3 Now there were four leprous[u] men
outside the city gate, who said to one an-
other, "Why should we sit here until we
die? 4 If we say, 'Let us enter the city,' the
famine is in the city, and we shall die
there; but if we sit here, we shall also die.
Therefore, let us desert to the Aramean
camp; if they spare our lives, we shall live;
and if they kill us, we shall but die." 5 So
they arose at twilight to go to the Ara-
mean camp; but when they came to the
edge of the Aramean camp, there was no
one there at all. 6 For the Lord had caused
the Aramean army to hear the sound of
chariots, and of horses, the sound of a
great army, so that they said to one an-
other, "The king of Israel has hired the
kings of the Hittites and the kings of
Egypt to fight against us." 7 So they fled
away in the twilight and abandoned their
tents, their horses, and their donkeys leav-
ing the camp just as it was, and fled for
their lives. 8 When these leprous[u] men
had come to the edge of the camp, they
went into a tent, ate and drank, carried
off silver, gold, and clothing, and went
and hid them. Then they came back, en-
tered another tent, carried off things
from it, and went and hid them.

9 Then they said to one another,
"What we are doing is wrong. This is a
day of good news; if we are silent and wait
until the morning light, we will be found
guilty; therefore let us go and tell the
king's household." 10 So they came and

t See 7.2: Heb *messenger* *u* A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain

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horror of it. **6.30** The tearing of clothes and the wearing of sackcloth are both signs of mourning and distress. See notes on 5.7; 1 Kings 20.31. **6.31** There is nothing specific in the story to explain why the king blamed the situation on Elisha. However, the king views the siege as the work of the Lord (v. 33), so the king may assume that the Lord's representative, the prophet, is involved as well. **6.32** *The elders*, the leaders of Israel's traditional kinship groups, have come to Elisha for instruction, just as the company of prophets regularly did (4.38). Elisha is apparently willing to speak with the king personally but not with the messenger. He therefore orders the door to be closed against the messenger until the king arrives (v. 33). **6.33** The king does not see the siege as divine punishment for past sins, which probably was the perspective of the narrator, but as an arbitrary exercise in divine power that warrants rejecting God. **7.1** Elisha's surprising reply indicates that God will soon reverse the city's fortunes. Cf. the prices listed in 6.25. The *gate* was the city's main market area. **7.2** The *captain on whose hand the king leaned* did not literally support the king but was his chief adviser. The precise meaning of the word translated *captain* is uncertain. The *windows in the sky* are the openings through which rain comes (Gen 7.11; Mal 3.10). The captain assumes that the food to which Elisha is referring could appear only as a result of new growth. **7.3** *Leprous*. See note on 5.1. People in this condition were forbidden to come within the gates of the city (Lev 13.11, 46; Num 12.14–16). **7.6** In this period the *Hittites* ruled a few city-states north of Syria, but they were hardly a major threat. The Egyptians would have represented a greater danger. **7.7** According to the narrator, the Arameans are so frightened that they even abandon their horses and donkeys, which would have has-

called to the gatekeepers of the city, and
told them, "We went to the Aramean
camp, but there was no one to be seen or
heard there, nothing but the horses tied,
the donkeys tied, and the tents as they
were." 11 Then the gatekeepers called out
and proclaimed it to the king's household.
12 The king got up in the night, and said
to his servants, "I will tell you what the
Arameans have prepared against us.
They know that we are starving; so they
have left the camp to hide themselves in
the open country, thinking, 'When they
come out of the city, we shall take them
alive and get into the city.' " 13 One of his
servants said, "Let some men take five of
the remaining horses, since those left here
will suffer the fate of the whole multitude
of Israel that have perished already;[v] let
us send and find out." 14 So they took two
mounted men, and the king sent them af-
ter the Aramean army, saying, "Go and
find out." 15 So they went after them as
far as the Jordan; the whole way was lit-
tered with garments and equipment that
the Arameans had thrown away in their
haste. So the messengers returned, and
told the king.

16 Then the people went out, and
plundered the camp of the Arameans. So
a measure of choice meal was sold for a
shekel, and two measures of barley for a
shekel, according to the word of the
LORD. 17 Now the king had appointed the
captain on whose hand he leaned to have
charge of the gate; the people trampled
him to death in the gate, just as the man
of God had said when the king came
down to him. 18 For when the man of God
had said to the king, "Two measures of
barley shall be sold for a shekel, and a
measure of choice meal for a shekel,
about this time tomorrow in the gate of
Samaria," 19 the captain had answered the
man of God, "Even if the LORD were to
make windows in the sky, could such a
thing happen?" And he had answered,
"You shall see it with your own eyes, but
you shall not eat from it." 20 It did indeed
happen to him; the people trampled him
to death in the gate.

The Shunammite Woman's Land Restored

8 Now Elisha had said to the woman
whose son he had restored to life,
"Get up and go with your household, and
settle wherever you can; for the LORD has
called for a famine, and it will come on
the land for seven years." 2 So the woman
got up and did according to the word of
the man of God; she went with her house-
hold and settled in the land of the Philis-
tines seven years. 3 At the end of the seven
years, when the woman returned from
the land of the Philistines, she set out to
appeal to the king for her house and her
land. 4 Now the king was talking with Ge-
hazi the servant of the man of God, say-
ing, "Tell me all the great things that
Elisha has done." 5 While he was telling
the king how Elisha had restored a dead
person to life, the woman whose son he
had restored to life appealed to the king
for her house and her land. Gehazi said,
"My lord king, here is the woman, and
here is her son whom Elisha restored to
life." 6 When the king questioned the
woman, she told him. So the king ap-
pointed an official for her, saying, "Re-
store all that was hers, together with all

[v] Compare Gk Syr Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain

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tened their flight. **7.13** The servant suggests risking the loss of the horses to the Arameans because the animals would be likely to starve during the siege anyway. **7.17** To be sure readers do not miss the point, the narrator clarifies it in vv. 18–20 (cf. 7.1–3).

8.1–6 This brief story about the Shunammite woman's land claim is a sequel to the account in 4.8–37. The narrative demonstrates Elisha's willingness to use his powers to aid those who support him. **8.1** The story's connection with the preceding narrative is unclear. The seven-year famine does not seem to be related to the starvation caused by the siege but is a new threat of which the Lord has warned the prophet. Famines were common occurrences in ancient Israel (4.38; 1 Kings 17.1), but sometimes people could migrate in order to escape them (Gen 12.10; 26.1). **8.2** The woman's temporary residence with the Philistines, somewhere on the west coast of Palestine, indicates that the famine was not widespread. **8.3** Apparently the Shunammite's house and lands had been taken in her absence, although the circumstances of the loss are unclear. They might have become crown property for some reason, or perhaps her neighbors simply expanded their borders. **8.4** In contrast to the preceding narrative (6.31), the king here idolizes Elisha. **8.6** The Shunammite's involvement in Elisha's powerful deed is enough to persuade the king to act favorably on her case.

the revenue of the fields from the day that she left the land until now."

Death of Ben-hadad

7 Elisha went to Damascus while King Ben-hadad of Aram was ill. When it was told him, "The man of God has come here," 8 the king said to Hazael, "Take a present with you and go to meet the man of God. Inquire of the LORD through him, whether I shall recover from this illness." 9 So Hazael went to meet him, taking a present with him, all kinds of goods of Damascus, forty camel loads. When he entered and stood before him, he said, "Your son King Ben-hadad of Aram has sent me to you, saying, 'Shall I recover from this illness?'" 10 Elisha said to him, "Go, say to him, 'You shall certainly recover'; but the LORD has shown me that he shall certainly die." 11 He fixed his gaze and stared at him, until he was ashamed. Then the man of God wept. 12 Hazael asked, "Why does my lord weep?" He answered, "Because I know the evil that you will do to the people of Israel; you will set their fortresses on fire, you will kill their young men with the sword, dash in pieces their little ones, and rip up their pregnant women." 13 Hazael said, "What is your servant, who is a mere dog, that he should do this great thing?" Elisha answered, "The LORD has shown me that you are to be king over Aram." 14 Then he left Elisha, and went to his master Ben-hadad,[w] who said to him, "What did Elisha say to you?" And he answered, "He told me that you would certainly recover." 15 But the next day he took the bed-cover and dipped it in water and spread it over the king's face, until he died. And Hazael succeeded him.

Jehoram Reigns over Judah

16 In the fifth year of King Joram son of Ahab of Israel,[x] Jehoram son of King Jehoshaphat of Judah began to reign. 17 He was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. 18 He walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as the house of Ahab had done, for the daughter of Ahab was his wife. He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD. 19 Yet the LORD would not destroy Judah, for the sake of his servant David, since he had promised to give a lamp to him and to his descendants forever.

20 In his days Edom revolted against the rule of Judah, and set up a king of their own. 21 Then Joram crossed over to Zair with all his chariots. He set out

w Heb lacks *Ben-hadad* *x* Gk Syr: Heb adds *Jehoshaphat being king of Judah,*

8.7–15 The illness of the Aramean king Ben-hadad provides Elisha with an opportunity to carry out one of the divine commands to his predecessor, Elijah. However, rather than anointing Hazael as king over Aram (1 Kings 19.15), the prophet simply plants the seeds of rebellion in the mind of the future king. **8.7** *Ben-hadad.* See note on 6.24. Elisha is portrayed here as a welcome figure in the Aramean capital. **8.8** It was a common practice to seek a prophetic oracle in cases of illness (cf. 1.2–8; 1 Kings 14.1–16). **8.9** The *present* Hazael brings to Elisha is enormous and is intended to indicate the high regard in which the Arameans hold the prophet. The term *son* is used to designate a disciple, and its use here is a sign of subservience. **8.10** The translation correctly indicates that Elisha counseled Hazael to lie, although the Hebrew text and many later commentators tried to avoid that interpretation of events. **8.11** The phrase *until he was ashamed* may simply mean "for a long time." **8.12** Hazael's attacks on Israel are described less dramatically in 10.32; 13.7.

8.16–24 The reign of Jehoshaphat's son Jehoram (Joram) receives a strong negative evaluation because of his intermarriage with the family of the Northern king Ahab, who represents for the narrator the epitome of evil and apostasy (1 Kings 16.31–33). **8.16** *Jehoram* and *Joram* are variant forms of the same name and are used interchangeably in this narrative for both the Northern and Southern kings. Jehoram of Judah reigned from ca. 849 to 843 B.C.E. **8.17** A comparison of this verse with 3.1 reveals a chronological problem usually solved by positing a four-year coregency with Jehoshaphat. **8.18** The marriage between Jehoram and Ahab's daughter Athaliah had been arranged to cement the treaty that made Jehoshaphat Ahab's vassal (see note on 1 Kings 22.2). In the eyes of the narrator, the Israelite princess introduced evil into the Judean royal house in the same way that the Phoenician princess Jezebel introduced evil into the house of Ahab (1 Kings 16.31). **8.19** The *lamp* symbolizes an eternal Davidic presence or representative before the Lord in Jerusalem. See note on 1 Kings 11.36. **8.20** Edom had been a vassal of Judah's during Jehoshaphat's reign. See notes on 3.8; 3.9. **8.21** *Zair* is an unknown location in or near

by night and attacked the Edomites and their chariot commanders who had surrounded him;[y] but his army fled home.
22 So Edom has been in revolt against the rule of Judah to this day. Libnah also revolted at the same time. 23 Now the rest of the acts of Joram, and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? 24 So Joram slept with his ancestors, and was buried with them in the city of David; his son Ahaziah succeeded him.

Ahaziah Reigns over Judah

25 In the twelfth year of King Joram son of Ahab of Israel, Ahaziah son of King Jehoram of Judah began to reign.
26 Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he began to reign; he reigned one year in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Athaliah, a granddaughter of King Omri of Israel. 27 He also walked in the way of the house of Ahab, doing what was evil in the sight of the LORD, as the house of Ahab had done, for he was son-in-law to the house of Ahab.
28 He went with Joram son of Ahab to wage war against King Hazael of Aram at Ramoth-gilead, where the Arameans wounded Joram. 29 King Joram returned to be healed in Jezreel of the wounds that the Arameans had inflicted on him at Ramah, when he fought against King Hazael of Aram. King Ahaziah son of Jehoram of Judah went down to see Joram son of Ahab in Jezreel, because he was wounded.

Anointing of Jehu

9 Then the prophet Elisha called a member of the company of prophets[z] and said to him, "Gird up your loins; take this flask of oil in your hand, and go to Ramoth-gilead. 2 When you arrive, look there for Jehu son of Jehoshaphat, son of Nimshi; go in and get him to leave his companions, and take him into an inner chamber. 3 Then take the flask of oil, pour it on his head, and say, 'Thus says the LORD: I anoint you king over Israel.' Then open the door and flee; do not linger."
4 So the young man, the young prophet, went to Ramoth-gilead. 5 He arrived while the commanders of the army were in council, and he announced, "I have a message for you, commander." "For which one of us?" asked Jehu. "For you, commander." 6 So Jehu[a] got up and went inside; the young man poured the oil on his head, saying to him, "Thus says the LORD the God of Israel: I anoint you king over the people of the LORD, over Israel. 7 You shall strike down the house of your master Ahab, so that I may avenge on Jezebel the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all

y Meaning of Heb uncertain *z* Heb *sons of the prophets* *a* Heb *he*

Edom. **8.22** *Libnah* was in western Judah near Philistine territory. **8.23** *The Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah.* See note on 1 Kings 14.29.

8.25–29 The brief reign of Ahaziah of Judah was also tainted by his kinship with the house of Ahab and receives the expected negative evaluation from the narrator. **8.25** Ahaziah reigned in 843/2 B.C.E. **8.26** *Athaliah* was also the daughter of Ahab (v. 18). **8.27** Ahaziah was in fact a blood relative of the house of Ahab, since Ahab was Ahaziah's grandfather. **8.28** For an earlier dispute between Israel and Aram over *Ramoth-gilead,* see 1 Kings 22.1–40. The precise location of the town is unknown. **8.29** *Ramah* here is not the town in Benjamin (see 1 Kings 15.17) but a shortened form of the name Ramoth-gilead.

9.1–13 The story of the prophetic anointing of Jehu introduces a series of narratives that deal with his successful revolt against the Omride dynasty and with his religious reforms (9.1–10.36). In contrast to the other prophetic narratives about Northern kings, the Jehu stories are extraordinarily favorable toward the king, and it is possible that they were originally the climax of a collection of prophetic legends dealing with the eradication of Baal worship in Israel. **9.1–3** The anointing of Jehu fulfills the last of the commands that God gave to Elijah at Mount Horeb (1 Kings 19.15–16; cf. 1 Kings 19.19–21; 2 Kings 8.7–15). **9.1** The anointing is actually performed by a member of a prophetic guild, of which Elisha is the head. **9.2** An *inner chamber* would be a private room that could be closed off to the public. **9.3** On the practice of the prophetic anointment of kings, see 1 Sam 10.1; 16.3; 1 Kings 1.34. Prophets seem to have been involved particularly in anointing the first king of a new dynasty. **9.4** *Ramoth-gilead.* See note on 8.28. **9.7** Here the death of Ahab is not grounded only in the Naboth's vineyard incident (1 Kings 21.21–24) but is related to retribution against Jezebel for killing God's prophets (1 Kings

the servants of the LORD. 8 For the whole
house of Ahab shall perish; I will cut off
from Ahab every male, bond or free, in
Israel. 9 I will make the house of Ahab like
the house of Jeroboam son of Nebat, and
like the house of Baasha son of Ahijah.
10 The dogs shall eat Jezebel in the terri-
tory of Jezreel, and no one shall bury
her." Then he opened the door and fled.
11 When Jehu came back to his mas-
ter's officers, they said to him, "Is every-
thing all right? Why did that madman
come to you?" He answered them, "You
know the sort and how they babble."
12 They said, "Liar! Come on, tell us!" So
he said, "This is just what he said to me:
'Thus says the LORD, I anoint you king
over Israel.'" 13 Then hurriedly they all
took their cloaks and spread them for him
on the bare[b] steps; and they blew the
trumpet, and proclaimed, "Jehu is king."

Joram of Israel Killed

14 Thus Jehu son of Jehoshaphat son
of Nimshi conspired against Joram. Jo-
ram with all Israel had been on guard at
Ramoth-gilead against King Hazael of
Aram; 15 but King Joram had returned to
be healed in Jezreel of the wounds that
the Arameans had inflicted on him, when
he fought against King Hazael of Aram.
So Jehu said, "If this is your wish, then let
no one slip out of the city to go and tell
the news in Jezreel." 16 Then Jehu
mounted his chariot and went to Jezreel,
where Joram was lying ill. King Ahaziah
of Judah had come down to visit Joram.
17 In Jezreel, the sentinel standing on
the tower spied the company of Jehu ar-
riving, and said, "I see a company." Joram
said, "Take a horseman; send him to meet
them, and let him say, 'Is it peace?'" 18 So
the horseman went to meet him; he
said, "Thus says the king, 'Is it peace?'"
Jehu responded, "What have you to do
with peace? Fall in behind me." The sen-
tinel reported, saying, "The messenger
reached them, but he is not coming back."
19 Then he sent out a second horseman,
who came to them and said, "Thus says
the king, 'Is it peace?'" Jehu answered,
"What have you to do with peace? Fall in
behind me." 20 Again the sentinel re-
ported, "He reached them, but he is not
coming back. It looks like the driving of
Jehu son of Nimshi; for he drives like a
maniac."
21 Joram said, "Get ready." And they
got his chariot ready. Then King Joram of
Israel and King Ahaziah of Judah set out,
each in his chariot, and went to meet
Jehu; they met him at the property of Na-
both the Jezreelite. 22 When Joram saw
Jehu, he said, "Is it peace, Jehu?" He an-
swered, "What peace can there be, so long
as the many whoredoms and sorceries of
your mother Jezebel continue?" 23 Then
Joram reined about and fled, saying to
Ahaziah, "Treason, Ahaziah!" 24 Jehu
drew his bow with all his strength, and
shot Joram between the shoulders, so that
the arrow pierced his heart; and he sank
in his chariot. 25 Jehu said to his aide Bid-
kar, "Lift him out, and throw him on the
plot of ground belonging to Naboth the
Jezreelite; for remember, when you and I
rode side by side behind his father Ahab
how the LORD uttered this oracle against
him: 26 'For the blood of Naboth and for
the blood of his children that I saw yester-
day, says the LORD, I swear I will repay
you on this very plot of ground.' Now
therefore lift him out and throw him on

b Meaning of Heb uncertain

18.4; 19.10, 14). **9.8–10** This portion of the oracle repeats in a slightly altered form the earlier prophecy of Elijah (1 Kings 21.21–24; cf. 1 Kings 14.11; 16.4). **9.11** The epithet *madman* was often applied to prophets with low credibility (Jer 29.26; Hos 9.7).

9.14–26 After the anointing (vv. 1–13), Elisha and the prophets play no further role in the narrative. Instead, Jehu himself is the center of attention, and the detailed narrative of the coup is intended to glorify him and his reign. **9.14–16** These verses repeat the essence of 8.28–29 to explain why the two kings, Joram and Ahaziah, were at the palace in Jezreel rather than at the site of the battle. **9.17** Joram's question is a general one. He probably suspects a reversal in the battle rather than a coup. **9.21** The location of the subsequent action at Naboth's property is influenced by the oracle in 1 Kings 21.19. **9.22** The reference to Jezebel's *whoredoms* is not to be taken literally. Rather the language of adultery and prostitution is often used to characterize the worship of other gods (Ex 34.16; Lev 17.7; Deut 31.16; Judg 2.17; 8.33; Jer 2.1–13; Hos 1–3). **9.26** Throwing Joram's body on Naboth's land represents a conflation of Elijah's prophecy against Ahab (1 Kings 21.19) and the prophecy against his dynasty (1 Kings 21.21–22).

the plot of ground, in accordance with the
word of the LORD."

Ahaziah of Judah Killed

27 When King Ahaziah of Judah
saw this, he fled in the direction of
Beth-haggan. Jehu pursued him, saying,
"Shoot him also!" And they shot him[c] in
the chariot at the ascent to Gur, which is
by Ibleam. Then he fled to Megiddo, and
died there. 28 His officers carried him in
a chariot to Jerusalem, and buried him
in his tomb with his ancestors in the city
of David.
29 In the eleventh year of Joram son
of Ahab, Ahaziah began to reign over
Judah.

Jezebel's Violent Death

30 When Jehu came to Jezreel, Jezebel
heard of it; she painted her eyes, and
adorned her head, and looked out of the
window. 31 As Jehu entered the gate, she
said, "Is it peace, Zimri, murderer of your
master?" 32 He looked up to the window
and said, "Who is on my side? Who?" Two
or three eunuchs looked out at him. 33 He
said, "Throw her down." So they threw
her down; some of her blood spattered on
the wall and on the horses, which tram-
pled on her. 34 Then he went in and ate
and drank; he said, "See to that cursed
woman and bury her; for she is a king's
daughter." 35 But when they went to bury
her, they found no more of her than the
skull and the feet and the palms of her
hands. 36 When they came back and told
him, he said, "This is the word of the
LORD, which he spoke by his servant Eli-
jah the Tishbite, 'In the territory of Jez-
reel the dogs shall eat the flesh of Jezebel;
37 the corpse of Jezebel shall be like dung
on the field in the territory of Jezreel, so
that no one can say, This is Jezebel.' "

Massacre of Ahab's Descendants

10 Now Ahab had seventy sons in
Samaria. So Jehu wrote letters
and sent them to Samaria, to the rulers of
Jezreel,[d] to the elders, and to the guard-
ians of the sons of[e] Ahab, saying, 2 "Since
your master's sons are with you and you
have at your disposal chariots and horses,
a fortified city, and weapons, 3 select the
son of your master who is the best quali-
fied, set him on his father's throne, and
fight for your master's house." 4 But they
were utterly terrified and said, "Look, two
kings could not withstand him; how then
can we stand?" 5 So the steward of the pal-
ace, and the governor of the city, along
with the elders and the guardians, sent
word to Jehu: "We are your servants; we
will do anything you say. We will not
make anyone king; do whatever you think
right." 6 Then he wrote them a second let-
ter, saying, "If you are on my side, and if
you are ready to obey me, take the heads
of your master's sons and come to me at
Jezreel tomorrow at this time." Now the
king's sons, seventy persons, were with
the leaders of the city, who were charged
with their upbringing. 7 When the letter
reached them, they took the king's sons
and killed them, seventy persons; they put

c Syr Vg Compare Gk: Heb lacks *and they shot him*
d Or *of the city*; Vg Compare Gk e Gk: Heb lacks *of the sons of*

9.27–29 The text does not explain why Jehu wanted to kill Ahaziah, although the latter was Joram's vassal and might have felt obligated to support one of Joram's sons as the next king of Israel. **9.27** *Beth-haggan*, probably to be identified with modern Jenin, lies on the main road southwest of Jezreel. The *ascent to Gur, which is by Ibleam* is located just south of Jenin. *Megiddo* lies west-northwest of Jezreel in the Plain of Esdraelon. **9.29** This verse repeats 8.25 but corrects the chronology to take into account the fact that Joram and Ahaziah died in the same year.

9.30–37 The death of Jezebel brings to an end the influence of the most powerful woman in the history of the Northern Kingdom. **9.30** Jezebel's formal dress and her appearance at the window give the occasion the air of a royal audience. **9.31** Jezebel's taunting greeting recalls Zimri's assassination of the Northern king Elah and the slaughter of all of Baasha's descendants (1 Kings 16.8–14). **9.36–37** Jehu's quotation elaborates Elijah's original oracle (1 Kings 21.23).

10.1–17 Jehu's slaughter of Ahab's descendants follows the familiar practice of usurpers who destroy all rivals (see 2 Sam 3–4; 1 Kings 15.28–30; 16.8–14). **10.1** The number *seventy* is probably not precise but refers to all of the possible claimants to the throne (see Judg 9.5; 12.14). **10.2–4** Jehu invites the guardians to fight to continue the royal line of Ahab, something they are afraid to do. **10.6** Jehu's letter is ambiguous, since in Hebrew, as in English, the word *heads* can refer to a part of the anatomy or to leaders of a group. The recipients of the letter will choose to

their heads in baskets and sent them to
him at Jezreel. 8 When the messenger
came and told him, "They have brought
the heads of the king's sons," he said, "Lay
them in two heaps at the entrance of the
gate until the morning." 9 Then in the
morning when he went out, he stood and
said to all the people, "You are innocent.
It was I who conspired against my master
and killed him; but who struck down all
these? 10 Know then that there shall fall to
the earth nothing of the word of the
LORD, which the LORD spoke concerning
the house of Ahab; for the LORD has done
what he said through his servant Elijah."
11 So Jehu killed all who were left of the
house of Ahab in Jezreel, all his leaders,
close friends, and priests, until he left him
no survivor.

12 Then he set out and went to Sa-
maria. On the way, when he was at Beth-
eked of the Shepherds, 13 Jehu met
relatives of King Ahaziah of Judah and
said, "Who are you?" They answered,
"We are kin of Ahaziah; we have come
down to visit the royal princes and the
sons of the queen mother." 14 He said,
"Take them alive." They took them alive,
and slaughtered them at the pit of Beth-
eked, forty-two in all; he spared none
of them.

15 When he left there, he met Jehona-
dab son of Rechab coming to meet him;
he greeted him, and said to him, "Is your
heart as true to mine as mine is to
yours?"[f] Jehonadab answered, "It is."
Jehu said,[g] "If it is, give me your hand."
So he gave him his hand. Jehu took him
up with him into the chariot. 16 He said,
"Come with me, and see my zeal for the
LORD." So he[h] had him ride in his char-
iot. 17 When he came to Samaria, he killed
all who were left to Ahab in Samaria, until
he had wiped them out, according to the
word of the LORD that he spoke to Elijah.

Slaughter of Worshipers of Baal

18 Then Jehu assembled all the peo-
ple and said to them, "Ahab offered Baal
small service; but Jehu will offer much
more. 19 Now therefore summon to me all
the prophets of Baal, all his worshipers,
and all his priests; let none be missing, for
I have a great sacrifice to offer to Baal;
whoever is missing shall not live." But
Jehu was acting with cunning in order to
destroy the worshipers of Baal. 20 Jehu
decreed, "Sanctify a solemn assembly for
Baal." So they proclaimed it. 21 Jehu sent
word throughout all Israel; all the wor-
shipers of Baal came, so that there was no
one left who did not come. They entered
the temple of Baal, until the temple of
Baal was filled from wall to wall. 22 He
said to the keeper of the wardrobe,
"Bring out the vestments for all the wor-
shipers of Baal." So he brought out the
vestments for them. 23 Then Jehu entered
the temple of Baal with Jehonadab son
of Rechab; he said to the worshipers of
Baal, "Search and see that there is no wor-
shiper of the LORD here among you, but
only worshipers of Baal." 24 Then they
proceeded to offer sacrifices and burnt
offerings.

Now Jehu had stationed eighty men

f Gk: Heb *Is it right with your heart, as my heart is with your heart?* *g* Gk: Heb lacks *Jehu said*
h Gk Syr Tg: Heb *they*

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understand the word literally. **10.8** This display is intended to discourage opposition to Jehu's plans. **10.9–11** Jehu implies that he did not intend the murder of Ahab's descendants, but he sees this turn of events as the fulfillment of Elijah's prophecy (1 Kings 21.21–22, 24). The narrator, however, is clear about Jehu's intentions. **10.12–14** By slaughtering the relatives of Ahaziah, Jehu may have thought that he was eliminating all of the remaining scions of the house of David, thus paving the way for a successful annexation of Judah. **10.12** *Beth-eked of the Shepherds* is on the road between Jezreel and Samaria, but its precise location is uncertain. **10.15** *Jehonadab son of Rechab* was associated with a group called the Rechabites, who developed a reputation as fanatical worshipers of the Lord. Like the Nazirites (Num 6.1–21), the Rechabites considered all aspects of Canaanite culture to be corrupting, and they therefore avoided cultivating land, planting vineyards, drinking wine, and building houses (Jer 35). Jehonadab presumably saw Jehu's revolt as an opportunity to restore the worship of the Lord in the Northern Kingdom. **10.17** In Samaria Jehu completes the slaughter of the house of Ahab that he began in Jezreel (see v. 11). The narrator then duly notes the fulfillment of Elijah's prophecy (1 Kings 21.21–22, 24).

10.18–31 After destroying all of the house of Ahab, Jehu removes all traces of the worship of Baal that Ahab and Jezebel had introduced into Israel (1 Kings 16.31–33). **10.19** Jehu's statement is again ambiguous (cf. v. 6), since the Hebrew word translated *sacrifice* also means

outside, saying, "Whoever allows any of those to escape whom I deliver into your hands shall forfeit his life." 25 As soon as he had finished presenting the burnt offering, Jehu said to the guards and to the officers, "Come in and kill them; let no one escape." So they put them to the sword. The guards and the officers threw them out, and then went into the citadel of the temple of Baal. 26 They brought out the pillar[i] that was in the temple of Baal, and burned it. 27 Then they demolished the pillar of Baal, and destroyed the temple of Baal, and made it a latrine to this day.

28 Thus Jehu wiped out Baal from Israel. 29 But Jehu did not turn aside from the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he caused Israel to commit—the golden calves that were in Bethel and in Dan. 30 The LORD said to Jehu, "Because you have done well in carrying out what I consider right, and in accordance with all that was in my heart have dealt with the house of Ahab, your sons of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel." 31 But Jehu was not careful to follow the law of the LORD the God of Israel with all his heart; he did not turn from the sins of Jeroboam, which he caused Israel to commit.

Death of Jehu

32 In those days the LORD began to trim off parts of Israel. Hazael defeated them throughout the territory of Israel: 33 from the Jordan eastward, all the land of Gilead, the Gadites, the Reubenites, and the Manassites, from Aroer, which is by the Wadi Arnon, that is, Gilead and Bashan. 34 Now the rest of the acts of Jehu, all that he did, and all his power, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel? 35 So Jehu slept with his ancestors, and they buried him in Samaria. His son Jehoahaz succeeded him. 36 The time that Jehu reigned over Israel in Samaria was twenty-eight years.

Athaliah Reigns over Judah

11 Now when Athaliah, Ahaziah's mother, saw that her son was dead, she set about to destroy all the royal family. 2 But Jehosheba, King Joram's daughter, Ahaziah's sister, took Joash son of Ahaziah, and stole him away from among the king's children who were about to be killed; she put[j] him and his nurse in a bedroom. Thus she[k] hid him from Athaliah, so that he was not killed; 3 he remained with her six years, hidden in the house of the LORD, while Athaliah reigned over the land.

i Gk Vg Syr Tg: Heb *pillars* *j* With 2 Chr 22.11: Heb lacks *she put* *k* Gk Syr Vg Compare 2 Chr 22.11: Heb *they*

"slaughter." **10.26–27** *Pillars.* See note on 1 Kings 14.23. Because the pillars were stone, the burning was probably part of the process of cracking the stone so that it could be demolished. **10.29** Because the narrator considers the real theological problem in the North to be the illegitimate worship of the Lord, which was introduced by Jeroboam (1 Kings 12.26–32), Jehu still receives the standard negative evaluation, in spite of his eradication of the worship of Baal.

10.32–36 The closing summary of Jehu's reign has been expanded to include further references to Hazael's successful attacks on Israelite territory. This activity was probably thought to be a fulfillment of Elisha's prophetic vision (8.12). **10.33** The *land of Gilead* and the areas occupied by the tribes of Gad, Reuben, and Manasseh all lay east of the Jordan and were traditionally Israelite territory. *Aroer* is on the *Arnon* River, which joins the Dead Sea at the midpoint of its eastern shore. The town marks the southern limit of Aramean expansion, while *Bashan*, in southern Syria, marks the northern limit. **10.36** *Jehu* reigned from ca. 843/2 to 815 B.C.E.

11.1–3 In the wake of the confusion caused by Jehu's murder of Ahaziah and his relatives (9.27–28; 10.12–14), Athaliah seizes the throne of Judah. Although she rules seven years (v. 4), the narrator does not consider her a legitimate ruler, both because as a daughter of Ahab of Israel she was not of Davidic descent and because her connections with Jezebel represent a rejection of the worship of the Lord (see notes on 8.18; 8.26). The narrator therefore omits the normal facts about her rule. **11.1** *Athaliah* reigned ca. 843–837 B.C.E. **11.2** The text does not indicate whether or not *Jehosheba* was also Athaliah's daughter. *Joash* would have been Athaliah's grandson, but his early isolation from her and his association with the priests in the house of the Lord (v. 3) seem to have left him untainted in the eyes of the narrator.

The Davidic Monarchy Is Restored

4 But in the seventh year Jehoiada
summoned the captains of the Carites and
of the guards and had them come to him
in the house of the LORD. He made a cov-
enant with them and put them under oath
in the house of the LORD; then he showed
them the king's son. 5 He commanded
them, "This is what you are to do: one-
third of you, those who go off duty on the
sabbath and guard the king's house 6 (an-
other third being at the gate Sur and a
third at the gate behind the guards), shall
guard the palace; 7 and your two divisions
that come on duty in force on the sabbath
and guard the house of the LORD [l] 8 shall
surround the king, each with weapons in
hand; and whoever approaches the ranks
is to be killed. Be with the king in his com-
ings and goings."
9 The captains did according to all
that the priest Jehoiada commanded;
each brought his men who were to go off
duty on the sabbath, with those who were
to come on duty on the sabbath, and came
to the priest Jehoiada. 10 The priest deliv-
ered to the captains the spears and shields
that had been King David's, which were in
the house of the LORD; 11 the guards
stood, every man with his weapons in his
hand, from the south side of the house to
the north side of the house, around the
altar and the house, to guard the king on
every side. 12 Then he brought out the
king's son, put the crown on him, and
gave him the covenant; [m] they proclaimed
him king, and anointed him; they clapped
their hands and shouted, "Long live the
king!"
13 When Athaliah heard the noise of
the guard and of the people, she went
into the house of the LORD to the people;
14 when she looked, there was the king
standing by the pillar, according to cus-
tom, with the captains and the trumpeters
beside the king, and all the people of the
land rejoicing and blowing trumpets. Ath-
aliah tore her clothes and cried, "Treason!
Treason!" 15 Then the priest Jehoiada
commanded the captains who were set
over the army, "Bring her out between
the ranks, and kill with the sword anyone
who follows her." For the priest said, "Let
her not be killed in the house of the
LORD." 16 So they laid hands on her; she
went through the horses' entrance to the
king's house, and there she was put to
death.
17 Jehoiada made a covenant between
the LORD and the king and people, that
they should be the LORD's people; also be-
tween the king and the people. 18 Then all
the people of the land went to the house

l Heb *the LORD to the king* *m* Or *treaty* or *testimony*; Heb *eduth*

11.4–21 The account of the restoration of the Davidic line is the only major story thus far in 2 Kings to focus completely on the affairs of Judah. The extraordinary detail in the narrative suggests that it came from temple sources in Jerusalem. **11.4** *Jehoiada* was a priest in the house of the Lord (v. 9). In 2 Chr 22.11 he is also said to have been Jehosheba's husband. The *Carites* were mercenaries charged with guarding the palace and the temple. Their origins are unknown. On the basis of the Hebrew text of 2 Sam 20.23, some scholars have equated them with the Cherethites, a foreign mercenary unit in David's private army. **11.5–8** The translation here follows closely a rather confusing Hebrew text. Apparently the troops who *guarded the king's house* were divided into three groups, each serving a week ending on the sabbath. Jehoiada took the group about to go off duty (one-third of the total guard), divided it into three subgroups, and assigned one subgroup to each of three stations. The remaining two-thirds of the total guard were brought to the house of the Lord to guard the king (Joash). **11.6** The location of the *gate Sur* is unknown. V. 19 implies that *the gate behind the guards* connected the temple with the palace. **11.10** The weapons may have been those that David captured from the Arameans (see 2 Sam 8.7). **11.12** The meaning of the word translated *covenant* is disputed. If the translation is retained, the reference may be to the book of the law that the king is supposed to copy and study (Deut 17.18–19). Some scholars have argued that the word refers to some sort of royal insignia, perhaps jewelry. **11.14** The *pillar* was probably one of the pair at the entrance to the temple (see note on 1 Kings 7.15–22; cf. 2 Kings 23.3). The *people of the land* were probably wealthy landowners. They seem to have been an important social group in Judah and enjoyed a great deal of political influence (21.23–24; 23.30; Jer 1.18; 34.19–20; 37.2). *Tore her clothes.* See note on 5.7. **11.17** The renewal of the *covenant* between the people and the Lord and between the Davidic house and the people is appropriate in the light of the disruption. Unlike the similar ceremony in 23.1–3, the terms of this covenant are not specified. **11.18** There are no earlier references to a

of Baal, and tore it down; his altars and
his images they broke in pieces, and they
killed Mattan, the priest of Baal, before
the altars. The priest posted guards over
the house of the LORD. 19 He took the cap-
tains, the Carites, the guards, and all the
people of the land; then they brought the
king down from the house of the LORD,
marching through the gate of the guards
to the king's house. He took his seat on
the throne of the kings. 20 So all the peo-
ple of the land rejoiced; and the city was
quiet after Athaliah had been killed with
the sword at the king's house.

21 [n] Jehoash[o] was seven years old when
he began to reign.

The Temple Repaired

12 In the seventh year of Jehu, Jeho-
ash began to reign; he reigned
forty years in Jerusalem. His mother's
name was Zibiah of Beer-sheba. 2 Jehoash
did what was right in the sight of the
LORD all his days, because the priest Je-
hoiada instructed him. 3 Nevertheless the
high places were not taken away; the peo-
ple continued to sacrifice and make offer-
ings on the high places.

4 Jehoash said to the priests, "All the
money offered as sacred donations that is
brought into the house of the LORD, the
money for which each person is assessed
—the money from the assessment of
persons—and the money from the volun-
tary offerings brought into the house of
the LORD, 5 let the priests receive from
each of the donors; and let them repair
the house wherever any need of repairs is
discovered." 6 But by the twenty-third
year of King Jehoash the priests had
made no repairs on the house. 7 There-
fore King Jehoash summoned the priest
Jehoiada with the other priests and said to
them, "Why are you not repairing the
house? Now therefore do not accept any
more money from your donors but hand
it over for the repair of the house." 8 So
the priests agreed that they would neither
accept more money from the people nor
repair the house.

9 Then the priest Jehoiada took a
chest, made a hole in its lid, and set it be-
side the altar on the right side as one en-
tered the house of the LORD; the priests
who guarded the threshold put in it all
the money that was brought into the
house of the LORD. 10 Whenever they saw
that there was a great deal of money in
the chest, the king's secretary and the
high priest went up, counted the money
that was found in the house of the LORD,
and tied it up in bags. 11 They would give
the money that was weighed out into the
hands of the workers who had the over-
sight of the house of the LORD; then they
paid it out to the carpenters and the
builders who worked on the house of the
LORD, 12 to the masons and the stonecut-
ters, as well as to buy timber and quarried
stone for making repairs on the house of
the LORD, as well as for any outlay for re-
pairs of the house. 13 But for the house of
the LORD no basins of silver, snuffers,

n Ch 12.1 in Heb *o* Another spelling is *Joash*; see verse 19

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temple of Baal in Jerusalem. It may have been introduced by Athaliah. **11.21** In a formal statement of a Judean king's accession, the information in this verse would normally come immediately before the statement of the length of his reign (12.1b; cf. 14.1–2).

12.1–16 The account of Jehoash's reign concentrates primarily on his provisions for the maintenance of the temple and thus illustrates his fidelity to the worship of the Lord. A similar concern for the temple will be exhibited later by Josiah, one of Judah's great kings in the opinion of the narrator (22.3–10). **12.1** *Jehoash* and Joash are variants of the same name and are used interchangeably throughout the narrative. Jehoash ruled from ca. 837 to 800 B.C.E. (cf. 13.1, 10), so the forty-year reign assigned to him here is an approximation. **12.3** *High places.* See note on 1 Kings 3.2. **12.4** The money being referred to here came from the census tax (*the money for which each person is assessed* [Ex 30.11–16]), from the valuation of an individual for the purpose of paying a vow (*the assessment of persons* [Lev 27.1–8]), and from *voluntary offerings.* **12.5** Under this arrangement, the priests were to receive all of the money but were also responsible for temple repairs when they were needed. **12.6** The priests were apparently reluctant to take money out of their own funds, so they did not repair the temple. **12.7–8** Under the new arrangement, the priests would no longer accept the money, but they would also no longer be responsible for paying for repairs. **12.10** Representatives of the crown and the temple would jointly take the money from the "bank" and turn it over to the workers. **12.13** The money had to be used to pay for repairs and could not be melted down to

bowls, trumpets, or any vessels of gold, or
of silver, were made from the money that
was brought into the house of the LORD,
14 for that was given to the workers who
were repairing the house of the LORD
with it. 15 They did not ask an accounting
from those into whose hand they deliv-
ered the money to pay out to the workers,
for they dealt honestly. 16 The money
from the guilt offerings and the money
from the sin offerings was not brought
into the house of the LORD; it belonged to
the priests.

Hazael Threatens Jerusalem

17 At that time King Hazael of Aram
went up, fought against Gath, and took it.
But when Hazael set his face to go up
against Jerusalem, 18 King Jehoash of
Judah took all the votive gifts that Je-
hoshaphat, Jehoram, and Ahaziah, his
ancestors, the kings of Judah, had dedi-
cated, as well as his own votive gifts, all the
gold that was found in the treasuries of
the house of the LORD and of the king's
house, and sent these to King Hazael of
Aram. Then Hazael withdrew from Je-
rusalem.

Death of Joash

19 Now the rest of the acts of Joash,
and all that he did, are they not written in
the Book of the Annals of the Kings of
Judah? 20 His servants arose, devised a
conspiracy, and killed Joash in the house
of Millo, on the way that goes down to
Silla. 21 It was Jozacar son of Shimeath
and Jehozabad son of Shomer, his ser-
vants, who struck him down, so that he
died. He was buried with his ancestors in
the city of David; then his son Amaziah
succeeded him.

Jehoahaz Reigns over Israel

13 In the twenty-third year of King
Joash son of Ahaziah of Judah,
Jehoahaz son of Jehu began to reign over
Israel in Samaria; he reigned seventeen
years. 2 He did what was evil in the sight
of the LORD, and followed the sins of Jer-
oboam son of Nebat, which he caused Is-
rael to sin; he did not depart from them.
3 The anger of the LORD was kindled
against Israel, so that he gave them re-
peatedly into the hand of King Hazael of
Aram, then into the hand of Ben-hadad
son of Hazael. 4 But Jehoahaz entreated
the LORD, and the LORD heeded him; for
he saw the oppression of Israel, how the
king of Aram oppressed them. 5 There-
fore the LORD gave Israel a savior, so that
they escaped from the hand of the Ara-
means; and the people of Israel lived in
their homes as formerly. 6 Nevertheless
they did not depart from the sins of the

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make ritual vessels. **12.16** The money from *guilt offerings* and *sin offerings* was distinct from the money mentioned in v. 4 and so was not subject to being banked but remained the property of the priests. On these two offerings, see Lev 4.1–6.7; Num 15.22–31.

12.17–18 Aramean raiding extends into Judah during Jehoash's reign, but the king is able to avoid the loss of territory. **12.17** On *Hazael*'s earlier raids in Israel, see 8.28–29; 10.32–33. *Gath* was a Philistine city on the coastal plain in southern Palestine. It may have briefly been part of the old Davidic empire (2 Chr 26.6). **12.18** *Votive gifts* were donated to the temple as an act of royal piety (1 Kings 7.51; 15.15). This was not the first time they were reclaimed in order to bribe a would-be attacker (see 1 Kings 15.18), nor would it be the last (see 2 Kings 18.15).

12.19–21 Kings does not give any hint about the reason for Joash's murder, although 2 Chr 24.23–27 claims that the killing was in retribution for the king's murder of the son of the priest Jehoiada. **12.20** *Millo*. See note on 1 Kings 9.15.

13.1–9 In typical Deuteronomistic style, the narrator interprets Aramean military activity during Jehoahaz's reign as a divine judgment on the king's sins. **13.1** *Jehoahaz* reigned from ca. 815 to 802 B.C.E. **13.2** On *the sins of Jeroboam*, see 1 Kings 12.26–32. **13.3–5** The motif of God using foreign rulers to punish Israel and then sending a deliverer when Israel complains is a common one in Deuteronomistic literature, particularly in the accounts of Israel's early history (Judg 2.11–23 and the formulaic introductions to the stories of most of the judges; see also 1 Kings 11.14–26). **13.3** Ben-hadad continues the military activity against Israel that was begun by his father Hazael (see 8.28–29; 10.32–33). For earlier episodes in Israel's ongoing war with the Arameans, see 1 Kings 20.1–34; 22.1–40; 2 Kings 6.8–7.20. **13.5** The *savior* is not identified. The stories in Judges usually mention a specific individual at this point in the narrative. **13.6** After the excursus on foreign oppressors (vv. 3–5), the beginning of this verse alludes to v. 2 in order to return to the subject of Jehoahaz's sins. On the *sacred pole* or Asherah, see note on 1 Kings 14.15.

house of Jeroboam, which he caused Israel to sin, but walked[p] in them; the sacred pole[q] also remained in Samaria. 7 So Jehoahaz was left with an army of not more than fifty horsemen, ten chariots and ten thousand footmen; for the king of Aram had destroyed them and made them like the dust at threshing. 8 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoahaz and all that he did, including his might, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel? 9 So Jehoahaz slept with his ancestors, and they buried him in Samaria; then his son Joash succeeded him.

Jehoash Reigns over Israel

10 In the thirty-seventh year of King Joash of Judah, Jehoash son of Jehoahaz began to reign over Israel in Samaria; he reigned sixteen years. 11 He also did what was evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he caused Israel to sin, but he walked in them. 12 Now the rest of the acts of Joash, and all that he did, as well as the might with which he fought against King Amaziah of Judah, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel? 13 So Joash slept with his ancestors, and Jeroboam sat upon his throne; Joash was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel.

Death of Elisha

14 Now when Elisha had fallen sick with the illness of which he was to die, King Joash of Israel went down to him, and wept before him, crying, "My father, my father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" 15 Elisha said to him, "Take a bow and arrows"; so he took a bow and arrows. 16 Then he said to the king of Israel, "Draw the bow"; and he drew it. Elisha laid his hands on the king's hands. 17 Then he said, "Open the window eastward"; and he opened it. Elisha said, "Shoot"; and he shot. Then he said, "The LORD's arrow of victory, the arrow of victory over Aram! For you shall fight the Arameans in Aphek until you have made an end of them." 18 He continued, "Take the arrows"; and he took them. He said to the king of Israel, "Strike the ground with them"; he struck three times, and stopped. 19 Then the man of God was angry with him, and said, "You should have struck five or six times; then you would have struck down Aram until you had made an end of it, but now you will strike down Aram only three times."

20 So Elisha died, and they buried him. Now bands of Moabites used to invade the land in the spring of the year. 21 As a man was being buried, a marauding band was seen and the man was thrown into the grave of Elisha; as soon as the man touched the bones of Elisha, he came to life and stood on his feet.

Israel Recaptures Cities from Aram

22 Now King Hazael of Aram oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz.

p Gk Syr Tg Vg: Heb *he walked* q Heb *Asherah*

13.10–13 The formal account of Jehoash's reign offers only the standard remarks about his sin, in spite of the fact that the king is treated sympathetically in the following story dealing with Elisha's death (vv. 14–21). **13.10** *Jehoash* and *Joash* are variants of the same name and are used interchangeably throughout the narrative. Jehoash/Joash of Israel should not be confused with his contemporary Jehoash/Joash of Judah. Jehoash of Israel reigned from ca. 802 to 786 B.C.E. **13.12–13** These verses are repeated in 14.15–16. Here they seem out of place, since other stories about Jehoash's reign follow in vv. 14–25. **13.12** Jehoash's war with Amaziah is described in 14.8–14.

13.14–21 Elisha first appeared in the narrative in 1 Kings 19.19–21, during the reign of Ahab, so his death marks the end of almost fifty years of prophetic activity. Even on his deathbed the prophet remains a supporter of the Jehu dynasty. **13.14** The king's words had earlier been used by Elisha himself when he witnessed Elijah's disappearance in a whirlwind (2.12). The epithet *father* would normally be used by a disciple addressing a master. The reference to *chariots* and *horsemen* may imply that the prophet's support is worth more to Israel than all of its army. **13.17** Aram (Syria) lay to the east of Israel. *Aphek.* See note on 1 Kings 20.26. **13.18–19** The number *three* often plays an important role in rituals, spells, and symbolic actions, but in this case it does not represent completeness. **13.21** For a similar resurrection brought about by the prophet's touch, see 4.32–35. Stories of this sort are often told about saints and wonder-workers.

13.22–25 The narrator clearly understands Jehoash's victories over Aram as a fulfillment of the blessings of Elisha. **13.22** On *Hazael's*

23 But the LORD was gracious to them and
had compassion on them; he turned to-
ward them, because of his covenant with
Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would
not destroy them; nor has he banished
them from his presence until now.
24 When King Hazael of Aram died,
his son Ben-hadad succeeded him.
25 Then Jehoash son of Jehoahaz took
again from Ben-hadad son of Hazael the
towns that he had taken from his father
Jehoahaz in war. Three times Joash de-
feated him and recovered the towns of
Israel.

Amaziah Reigns over Judah

14 In the second year of King Joash
son of Joahaz of Israel, King Am-
aziah son of Joash of Judah, began to
reign. 2 He was twenty-five years old when
he began to reign, and he reigned twenty-
nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's
name was Jehoaddin of Jerusalem. 3 He
did what was right in the sight of the
LORD, yet not like his ancestor David; in
all things he did as his father Joash had
done. 4 But the high places were not re-
moved; the people still sacrificed and
made offerings on the high places. 5 As
soon as the royal power was firmly in his
hand he killed his servants who had mur-
dered his father the king. 6 But he did not
put to death the children of the murder-
ers; according to what is written in the
book of the law of Moses, where the LORD
commanded, "The parents shall not be
put to death for the children, or the chil-
dren be put to death for the parents;
but all shall be put to death for their
own sins."
7 He killed ten thousand Edomites in
the Valley of Salt and took Sela by storm;
he called it Jokthe-el, which is its name to
this day.
8 Then Amaziah sent messengers to
King Jehoash son of Jehoahaz, son of
Jehu, of Israel, saying, "Come, let us look
one another in the face." 9 King Jehoash
of Israel sent word to King Amaziah of
Judah, "A thornbush on Lebanon sent to
a cedar on Lebanon, saying, 'Give your
daughter to my son for a wife'; but a wild
animal of Lebanon passed by and tram-
pled down the thornbush. 10 You have in-
deed defeated Edom, and your heart has
lifted you up. Be content with your glory,
and stay at home; for why should you
provoke trouble so that you fall, you and
Judah with you?"
11 But Amaziah would not listen. So
King Jehoash of Israel went up; he and
King Amaziah of Judah faced one an-
other in battle at Beth-shemesh, which be-
longs to Judah. 12 Judah was defeated by
Israel; everyone fled home. 13 King Jeho-
ash of Israel captured King Amaziah of

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military activities during Jehoahaz's reign, see vv. 3–5. **13.23** Here for the only time in Kings God's compassion for Israel is grounded in the covenant with Israel's ancestors (Gen 15.1–21; 26.23–25; 28.10–22). As a motive for compassion, this covenant functions in the same way that God's covenant with David serves to preserve Judah and the Davidic dynasty (2 Sam 7.1–17).

14.1–22 The narrator gives Amaziah's reign a relatively positive evaluation, but the main focus of the account is the king's military exploits. Although he was successful in fighting the Edomites, he was not able to free Judah from being Israel's vassal, a relationship that began at least as early as the reign of Ahab (1 Kings 22.4). **14.1–2** According to the synchronisms in v. 23 and 15.8, *Amaziah* could not have reigned as long as the twenty-nine years assigned to him here. Most scholars assume that he shared a coregency with his son Azariah, who was perhaps put on the throne after the disastrous Israelite invasion of Jerusalem. Amaziah's dates therefore remain uncertain; he may have reigned from ca. 800 to 783 B.C.E. **14.4** *High places.* See note on 1 Kings 3.2. **14.5** On the murder of Joash, see 12.19–21 and note. **14.6** The citation of the law is from Deut 24.16; cf. Jer 31.29–30; Ezek 18.2–4, 20. **14.7** The exact location of the *Valley of Salt* is unknown, although many scholars would locate it in Edom near the southern end of the Dead Sea. David had earlier defeated Edomites there (2 Sam 8.13). The location of *Sela* is also disputed. **14.8** Amaziah's intentions toward Jehoash are ambiguous, but the initiative of the Judean king, who was a vassal of Jehoash's, probably led the Northerner to interpret the message as a hostile act. **14.9–10** Fables of this sort were used in Israel in political and prophetic circles (Judg 9.7–15; Ezek 17.1–10). **14.9** The *thornbush* (Amaziah), an irritating and worthless plant, is seeking to become the equal of the majestic *cedar* (Jehoash), but the *wild animal* (also Jehoash) is capable of destroying the thornbush. **14.11** *Beth-shemesh* is about sixteen miles southwest of Jerusalem. **14.13** The *Ephraim Gate* was in Jerusalem's northern wall facing Ephraim. The *Corner*

Judah son of Jehoash, son of Ahaziah, at
Beth-shemesh; he came to Jerusalem, and
broke down the wall of Jerusalem from
the Ephraim Gate to the Corner Gate, a
distance of four hundred cubits. 14 He
seized all the gold and silver, and all the
vessels that were found in the house of
the LORD and in the treasuries of the
king's house, as well as hostages; then he
returned to Samaria.

15 Now the rest of the acts that Jeho-
ash did, his might, and how he fought
with King Amaziah of Judah, are they not
written in the Book of the Annals of the
Kings of Israel? 16 Jehoash slept with his
ancestors, and was buried in Samaria with
the kings of Israel; then his son Jeroboam
succeeded him.

17 King Amaziah son of Joash of Ju-
dah lived fifteen years after the death of
King Jehoash son of Jehoahaz of Israel.
18 Now the rest of the deeds of Amaziah,
are they not written in the Book of the
Annals of the Kings of Judah? 19 They
made a conspiracy against him in Jerusa-
lem, and he fled to Lachish. But they sent
after him to Lachish, and killed him
there. 20 They brought him on horses; he
was buried in Jerusalem with his ancestors
in the city of David. 21 All the people of
Judah took Azariah, who was sixteen
years old, and made him king to succeed
his father Amaziah. 22 He rebuilt Elath
and restored it to Judah, after King Ama-
ziah[r] slept with his ancestors.

Jeroboam II Reigns over Israel

23 In the fifteenth year of King Ama-
ziah son of Joash of Judah, King Jero-
boam son of Joash of Israel began to reign
in Samaria; he reigned forty-one years.
24 He did what was evil in the sight of the
LORD; he did not depart from all the sins
of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he
caused Israel to sin. 25 He restored the
border of Israel from Lebo-hamath as far
as the Sea of the Arabah, according to the
word of the LORD, the God of Israel,
which he spoke by his servant Jonah son
of Amittai, the prophet, who was from
Gath-hepher. 26 For the LORD saw that the
distress of Israel was very bitter; there was
no one left, bond or free, and no one to
help Israel. 27 But the LORD had not said
that he would blot out the name of Israel
from under heaven, so he saved them by
the hand of Jeroboam son of Joash.

28 Now the rest of the acts of Jero-
boam, and all that he did, and his might,
how he fought, and how he recovered for
Israel Damascus and Hamath, which had
belonged to Judah, are they not written in
the Book of the Annals of the Kings of
Israel? 29 Jeroboam slept with his ances-
tors, the kings of Israel; his son Zechariah
succeeded him.

r Heb *the king*

Gate was in the northwest corner of the city. A *cubit* is about 18 inches, so Jehoash tore down about 600 feet of the wall. **14.14** The *hostages* may have been taken in exchange for the captured Judean king, who was allowed to remain on the throne. **14.15–16** These verses are a duplicate of 13.12–13. **14.19** *Lachish* is about thirty miles southwest of Jerusalem. **14.22** *Elath* lies on the northern coast of the Gulf of Aqaba and is closely associated with Ezion-geber, one of Solomon's seaports (1 Kings 9.26). The reference to rebuilding Elath implies that Azariah had regained control of Edom.

14.23–29 Although Jeroboam was in fact one of Israel's most powerful and successful kings, the narrator says little about the significance of his achievements and concentrates instead on the familiar theme of the king's sins. **14.23** *Jeroboam* reigned from ca. 786 to 746 B.C.E. **14.24** On the *sins of Jeroboam*, the first king of Israel, see 1 Kings 12.26–32. **14.25** *Lebo-hamath* marked the northern border of Solomon's empire. For a discussion of the location of this site, see note on 1 Kings 8.65. The *Sea of the Arabah* is identical with the Salt Sea or the Dead Sea (Josh 3.16; 12.3). Jeroboam thus reconstituted the northern part of the old Solomonic empire. The text implies that this expansion occurred to fulfill an oracle from *Jonah the son of Amittai*, who is otherwise known as the subject of the book of Jonah. Jonah's oracle, however, has not been preserved. *Gath-hepher* is about two miles east of Sepphoris. **14.26–27** On the motif of God sending deliverers to Israel in time of distress, see 13.3–5. This is an uncharacteristically positive view of God's relationship to the Northern Kingdom. **14.28** *Damascus* was the capital of Aram (Syria). *Hamath* lies on the Orontes River in Syria between Damascus and Aleppo. This recovery of Aramean territory was possible largely because the Assyrians had broken the power of Aram.

Azariah Reigns over Judah

15 In the twenty-seventh year of
King Jeroboam of Israel King Az-
ariah son of Amaziah of Judah began to
reign. 2 He was sixteen years old when he
began to reign, and he reigned fifty-two
years in Jerusalem. His mother's name
was Jecoliah of Jerusalem. 3 He did what
was right in the sight of the LORD, just as
his father Amaziah had done. 4 Neverthe-
less the high places were not taken away;
the people still sacrificed and made offer-
ings on the high places. 5 The LORD struck
the king, so that he was leprous[s] to the
day of his death, and lived in a separate
house. Jotham the king's son was in
charge of the palace, governing the peo-
ple of the land. 6 Now the rest of the acts
of Azariah, and all that he did, are they
not written in the Book of the Annals of
the Kings of Judah? 7 Azariah slept with
his ancestors; they buried him with his an-
cestors in the city of David; his son Jo-
tham succeeded him.

Zechariah Reigns over Israel

8 In the thirty-eighth year of King Az-
ariah of Judah, Zechariah son of Jero-
boam reigned over Israel in Samaria six
months. 9 He did what was evil in the sight
of the LORD, as his ancestors had done.
He did not depart from the sins of Jero-
boam son of Nebat, which he caused Is-
rael to sin. 10 Shallum son of Jabesh
conspired against him, and struck him
down in public and killed him, and
reigned in place of him. 11 Now the rest of
the deeds of Zechariah are written in the
Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel.
12 This was the promise of the LORD that
he gave to Jehu, "Your sons shall sit on
the throne of Israel to the fourth genera-
tion." And so it happened.

Shallum Reigns over Israel

13 Shallum son of Jabesh began to
reign in the thirty-ninth year of King Uz-
ziah of Judah; he reigned one month in
Samaria. 14 Then Menahem son of Gadi
came up from Tirzah and came to Sa-
maria; he struck down Shallum son of Ja-
besh in Samaria and killed him; he
reigned in place of him. 15 Now the rest of
the deeds of Shallum, including the con-
spiracy that he made, are written in the
Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel.
16 At that time Menahem sacked Tiphsah,
all who were in it and its territory from
Tirzah on; because they did not open it to
him, he sacked it. He ripped open all the
pregnant women in it.

Menahem Reigns over Israel

17 In the thirty-ninth year of King Az-
ariah of Judah, Menahem son of Gadi be-
gan to reign over Israel; he reigned ten
years in Samaria. 18 He did what was evil
in the sight of the LORD; he did not depart
all his days from any of the sins of Jero-
boam son of Nebat, which he caused Is-
rael to sin. 19 King Pul of Assyria came

s A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain

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15.1–7 In spite of Azariah's long reign, the narrator gives no details of his activities and records only the fact of his leprosy. No explanation is given here for his disease, although 2 Chr 26.16–20 interprets the affliction as punishment for violating ritual regulations. **15.1** *Azariah* is also called Uzziah (vv. 13, 30, 32, 34; 2 Chr 26–27; Isa 1.1; 6.1). He reigned from ca. 783 to 742 B.C.E. **15.4** *High places.* See note on 1 Kings 3.2. **15.5** *Leprous.* See note on 5.1. Azariah's son *Jotham* served as overseer of all royal estates and buildings and was probably coregent during the latter part of his father's reign.

15.8–12 Zechariah's brief reign receives a typically negative evaluation from the narrator. The king's assassination marks the end of the Jehu dynasty and the beginning of a period of internal political upheaval, complicated by Assyria's increasing involvement in Israel's political affairs. **15.8** *Zechariah* ruled Israel from ca. 746 to 745 B.C.E. **15.12** For God's dynastic promise to Jehu, see 10.30.

15.13–16 Shallum's reign is so brief that the narrator does not even mention his sins. **15.13** *Shallum* ruled in 745 B.C.E. **15.14** *Tirzah.* See note on 1 Kings 14.17. **15.16** The location of *Tiphsah* is uncertain. *Ripping open pregnant women* was considered a barbarous practice and is elsewhere associated only with foreign armies (8.12; Hos 13.16; Am 1.13).

15.17–22 Menahem's reign is marked by a resurgence in Assyrian military activity that eventually leads to the fall of the Northern Kingdom. **15.17** *Menahem* reigned from ca. 745 to 737 B.C.E. **15.19** *King Pul* is Tiglath-pileser III, who was king of Assyria from 745 to 727 B.C.E. Menahem in effect becomes an Assyrian vassal. **15.19–20** *Talent, shekel.* See note on 5.5.

against the land; Menahem gave Pul a
thousand talents of silver, so that he
might help him confirm his hold on the
royal power. 20 Menahem exacted the
money from Israel, that is, from all the
wealthy, fifty shekels of silver from each
one, to give to the king of Assyria. So the
king of Assyria turned back, and did not
stay there in the land. 21 Now the rest of
the deeds of Menahem, and all that he
did, are they not written in the Book of
the Annals of the Kings of Israel? 22 Me-
nahem slept with his ancestors, and his son
Pekahiah succeeded him.

Pekahiah Reigns over Israel

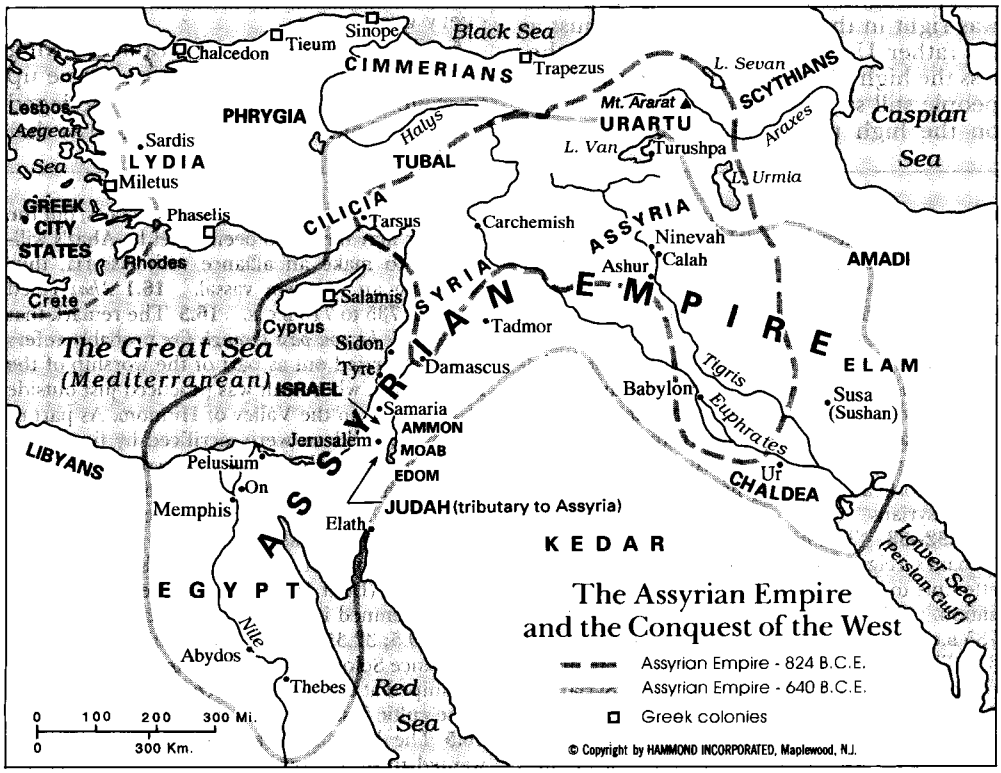
23 In the fiftieth year of King Azariah
of Judah, Pekahiah son of Menahem be-
gan to reign over Israel in Samaria; he
reigned two years. 24 He did what was evil
in the sight of the LORD; he did not turn
away from the sins of Jeroboam son of
Nebat, which he caused Israel to sin. 25 Pe-
kah son of Remaliah, his captain, con-
spired against him with fifty of the
Gileadites, and attacked him in Samaria,
in the citadel of the palace along with Ar-
gob and Arieh; he killed him, and reigned
in place of him. 26 Now the rest of the
deeds of Pekahiah, and all that he did, are
written in the Book of the Annals of the
Kings of Israel.

Pekah Reigns over Israel

27 In the fifty-second year of King
Azariah of Judah, Pekah son of Remaliah

15.23–26 The reign of Pekahiah receives the usual negative evaluation from the narrator, who mentions only the assassination that ended the king's rule. **15.23** *Pekahiah* ruled from ca. 737 to 736 B.C.E. **15.25** *Gileadites*. For Gilead, see note on 1 Kings 17.1. The interpretation of *Argob* and *Arieh* is disputed. The names are variously interpreted as warriors, as cities, and even as features of palace architecture.

15.27–31 The official account of Pekah's



Behind the events narrated in 2 Kings 15–23 are Assyria's expansion in the eighth century B.C.E. *and its collision with Egypt's sphere of influence.*

began to reign over Israel in Samaria; he
reigned twenty years. 28 He did what was
evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not
depart from the sins of Jeroboam son of
Nebat, which he caused Israel to sin.
29 In the days of King Pekah of Israel,
King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria came and
captured Ijon, Abel-beth-maacah, Janoah,
Kedesh, Hazor, Gilead, and Galilee, all
the land of Naphtali; and he carried the
people captive to Assyria. 30 Then Hoshea
son of Elah made a conspiracy against Pe-
kah son of Remaliah, attacked him, and
killed him; he reigned in place of him, in
the twentieth year of Jotham son of Uz-
ziah. 31 Now the rest of the acts of Pekah,
and all that he did, are written in the
Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel.

Jotham Reigns over Judah

32 In the second year of King Pekah
son of Remaliah of Israel, King Jotham
son of Uzziah of Judah began to reign.
33 He was twenty-five years old when he
began to reign and reigned sixteen years
in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Je-
rusha daughter of Zadok. 34 He did what
was right in the sight of the LORD, just as
his father Uzziah had done. 35 Neverthe-
less the high places were not removed; the
people still sacrificed and made offerings
on the high places. He built the upper
gate of the house of the LORD. 36 Now the
rest of the acts of Jotham, and all that he
did, are they not written in the Book of
the Annals of the Kings of Judah? 37 In
those days the LORD began to send King
Rezin of Aram and Pekah son of Rema-
liah against Judah. 38 Jotham slept with
his ancestors, and was buried with his an-
cestors in the city of David, his ancestor;
his son Ahaz succeeded him.

Ahaz Reigns over Judah

16 In the seventeenth year of Pekah
son of Remaliah, King Ahaz son
of Jotham of Judah began to reign. 2 Ahaz
was twenty years old when he began to
reign; he reigned sixteen years in Jerusa-
lem. He did not do what was right in the
sight of the LORD his God, as his ancestor
David had done, 3 but he walked in the
way of the kings of Israel. He even made
his son pass through fire, according to the
abominable practices of the nations whom
the LORD drove out before the people of
Israel. 4 He sacrificed and made offerings
on the high places, on the hills, and under
every green tree.
5 Then King Rezin of Aram and King
Pekah son of Remaliah of Israel came up
to wage war on Jerusalem; they besieged
Ahaz but could not conquer him. 6 At that

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reign notes only the loss of Israelite territory to Assyria. His extensive involvement in Judean affairs is covered in ch. 16. **15.27** Scholars agree that *Pekah* could not have ruled for the twenty years assigned to him in this verse. He may have ruled from ca. 736 to 732 B.C.E. **15.29** These overlapping references to the towns of *Ijon*, *Abel-beth-maacah*, *Janoah*, *Kedesh*, and *Hazor* and to the regions of *Gilead*, *Galilee*, and *Naphtali* indicate that Tiglath-pileser took significant portions of northcentral Israel and parts of Transjordan. **15.30** Hoshea's coup may have had support from the Assyrians.

15.32–38 The narrator gives no details about Jotham's reign except to note the beginning of attempts to force Judah into an anti-Assyrian coalition. **15.32** *Jotham* ruled from ca. 742 to 735 B.C.E. **15.35** *High places*. See note on 1 Kings 3.2. The location of the *upper gate* of the temple is unknown. **15.37** The kings of Aram (Syria) and Israel were trying to force Judah into a coalition against Assyria (cf. ch. 16; Isa 7.1–8.10).

16.1–20 Ahaz is one of the few Judean kings to receive a negative evaluation from the historian. Part of the reason for this assessment may lie in the king's heterodox religious practices, but the narrator may have also been upset by Ahaz's willingness to make an alliance with Assyria, thus becoming an Assyrian vassal. **16.1** *Ahaz* ruled from ca. 735 to 715 B.C.E. **16.3** The remark that Ahaz *made his son pass through fire* probably refers to a rite carried out as part of the worship of the god Molech, whose cult was practiced just outside of Jerusalem in the Valley of Hinnom. As part of the ritual, children were sacrificed by fire to the god, who was probably an underworld deity. The cult, which may have been designed to ensure fertility, must have had royal patronage. The worship of Molech was banned by Deuteronomy, which associated it with the abominations of the Canaanites (Deut 18.9–14), and later biblical writers condemned it as well (Lev 18.21; 20.2–5; Jer 7.31; 19.5; 32.35). **16.4** Ahaz is the first Judean king since Solomon who is said to have personally worshiped at the *high places*. On the significance of these cultic installations, see note on 1 Kings 3.2. **16.5** The kings of Aram and Israel apparently wanted to overthrow Ahaz in order to force Judah into an anti-Assyrian coalition. For a different perspective on the same incident, see Isa

time the king of Edom[t] recovered Elath
for Edom,[u] and drove the Judeans from
Elath; and the Edomites came to Elath,
where they live to this day. 7 Ahaz sent
messengers to King Tiglath-pileser of As-
syria, saying, "I am your servant and your
son. Come up, and rescue me from the
hand of the king of Aram and from the
hand of the king of Israel, who are attack-
ing me." 8 Ahaz also took the silver and
gold found in the house of the LORD and
in the treasures of the king's house,
and sent a present to the king of Assyria.
9 The king of Assyria listened to him; the
king of Assyria marched up against Da-
mascus, and took it, carrying its people
captive to Kir; then he killed Rezin.

10 When King Ahaz went to Damas-
cus to meet King Tiglath-pileser of As-
syria, he saw the altar that was at
Damascus. King Ahaz sent to the priest
Uriah a model of the altar, and its pat-
tern, exact in all its details. 11 The priest
Uriah built the altar; in accordance with
all that King Ahaz had sent from Damas-
cus, just so did the priest Uriah build it,
before King Ahaz arrived from Damas-
cus. 12 When the king came from Damas-
cus, the king viewed the altar. Then the
king drew near to the altar, went up on it,
13 and offered his burnt offering and his
grain offering, poured his drink offering,
and dashed the blood of his offerings of
well-being against the altar. 14 The bronze
altar that was before the LORD he re-
moved from the front of the house, from
the place between his altar and the house
of the LORD, and put it on the north side
of his altar. 15 King Ahaz commanded the
priest Uriah, saying, "Upon the great altar
offer the morning burnt offering, and the
evening grain offering, and the king's
burnt offering, and his grain offering,
with the burnt offering of all the people
of the land, their grain offering, and their
drink offering; then dash against it all the
blood of the burnt offering, and all the
blood of the sacrifice; but the bronze altar
shall be for me to inquire by." 16 The
priest Uriah did everything that King
Ahaz commanded.

17 Then King Ahaz cut off the frames
of the stands, and removed the laver from
them; he removed the sea from the
bronze oxen that were under it, and put it
on a pediment of stone. 18 The covered
portal for use on the sabbath that had
been built inside the palace, and the outer
entrance for the king he removed from[v]
the house of the LORD. He did this be-
cause of the king of Assyria. 19 Now the
rest of the acts of Ahaz that he did, are
they not written in the Book of the Annals
of the Kings of Judah? 20 Ahaz slept with
his ancestors, and was buried with his an-
cestors in the city of David; his son Heze-
kiah succeeded him.

Hoshea and the Exile of Israel

17 In the twelfth year of King Ahaz
of Judah, Hoshea son of Elah be-
gan to reign in Samaria over Israel; he
reigned nine years. 2 He did what was evil
in the sight of the LORD, yet not like the

t Cn: Heb *King Rezin of Aram* *u* Cn: Heb *Aram*
v Cn: Heb lacks *from*

7.1–8.10. **16.6** On Judah's rebuilding of Elath, see 14.22 and note there. **16.7** Ignoring Isaiah's counsel to trust in the Lord and to avoid foreign entanglements (Isa 7.1–9), Ahaz buys protection from Assyria. **16.9** *Kir* is said to have been the original home of the Arameans (Am 9.7), so it is appropriate that Tiglath-pileser relocates them there. The precise location of Kir is unknown. **16.10** The text does not indicate why Ahaz was attracted to the *altar* he saw in Damascus. There is nothing to indicate that it was anything other than an Aramean cult object, although it might have been a particularly large or grand one (v. 15). *Uriah* the priest appears in Isa 8.2 as one of the prophet's supporters. **16.12–13** As did his predecessors Solomon and Jeroboam (1 Kings 8.63; 1 Kings 12.32), Ahaz dedicates the altar by offering his own sacrifices. **16.17–18** Ahaz apparently takes some of the temple furnishings and uses them as part of his bribe to the king of Assyria. **16.17** The making of the *stands* is described in 1 Kings 7.27–37. The *sea* and *bronze oxen* appear in 1 Kings 7.23–26. **16.18** The meaning of the phrase translated *the covered portal for use on the sabbath* continues to be the subject of scholarly debate.

17.1–6 Hoshea was the Israelite king upon whom the punishment for the sins of the Northern Kingdom finally fell. It is therefore odd that the narrator does not judge Hoshea as harshly as some of the other Northern kings and even omits the standard reference to walking in the ways of Jeroboam. **17.1** Here *Hoshea*'s accession is synchronized with the reign of Ahaz of Judah, while in 15.30 the synchronization is with Jotham, a fact that may indicate a coregency in Judah. Hoshea

kings of Israel who were before him.
3 King Shalmaneser of Assyria came up
against him; Hoshea became his vassal,
and paid him tribute. 4 But the king of Assyria found treachery in Hoshea; for he
had sent messengers to King So of Egypt,
and offered no tribute to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year; therefore the king of Assyria confined him and
imprisoned him.

5 Then the king of Assyria invaded all
the land and came to Samaria; for three
years he besieged it. 6 In the ninth year of
Hoshea the king of Assyria captured Samaria; he carried the Israelites away to
Assyria. He placed them in Halah, on the
Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.

The Causes of Israel's Exile

7 This occurred because the people of
Israel had sinned against the LORD their
God, who had brought them up out of the
land of Egypt from under the hand of
Pharaoh king of Egypt. They had worshiped other gods 8 and walked in the customs of the nations whom the LORD drove
out before the people of Israel, and in the
customs that the kings of Israel had introduced.[w] 9 The people of Israel secretly
did things that were not right against the
LORD their God. They built for themselves high places at all their towns, from
watchtower to fortified city; 10 they set up
for themselves pillars and sacred poles[x]
on every high hill and under every green
tree; 11 there they made offerings on all
the high places, as the nations did whom
the LORD carried away before them. They
did wicked things, provoking the LORD to
anger; 12 they served idols, of which the
LORD had said to them, "You shall not do
this." 13 Yet the LORD warned Israel and
Judah by every prophet and every seer,
saying, "Turn from your evil ways and
keep my commandments and my statutes,
in accordance with all the law that I commanded your ancestors and that I sent to
you by my servants the prophets." 14 They
would not listen but were stubborn, as
their ancestors had been, who did not believe in the LORD their God. 15 They despised his statutes, and his covenant that
he made with their ancestors, and the
warnings that he gave them. They went
after false idols and became false; they
followed the nations that were around
them, concerning whom the LORD had
commanded them that they should not do

w Meaning of Heb uncertain x Heb *Asherim*

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ruled in Samaria from ca. 732 to 724 B.C.E. **17.3** *King Shalmaneser* is Shalmaneser V, who ruled Assyria from 727 to 722 B.C.E. **17.4** The phrase translated *to King So of Egypt* is controversial because no Egyptian ruler by that name can be identified. Some scholars interpret the phrase to refer to the place at which the messengers met the king of Egypt. **17.6** After a siege lasting more than two years, Samaria finally fell in 722/1 B.C.E. to the new Assyrian king, Sargon II. The relocation of populations was a characteristic of Assyrian foreign policy during this period. *Halah* is a city northeast of Nineveh. The *Habor* River is the modern Habur, a tributary of the Euphrates. The *river of Gozan* may also refer to the Habur. The *cities of the Medes* lay to the east of Assyria.

17.7–23 These verses occupy a crucial position in the book of Kings. Coming as they do immediately after the account of the fall of the Northern Kingdom, they provide a theological framework for understanding Israel's history from the narrator's Deuteronomistic point of view. At the same time, they set up the history of the North as an object lesson for the kingdom of Judah and define the theological terms that will govern the continued existence of the Southern Kingdom and the Davidic dynasty. Although the narrative of Kings up to this point focuses almost entirely on the actions of Israel's kings, here the narrator's theological assessment concentrates instead on the sins of the people and the kings play only an incidental role in the Deuteronomistic explanation of the disaster. **17.7–8** The primary cause of the exile of Israel is the people's worship of other gods, an act that violates Deuteronomy's directive to worship only the Lord and to avoid the gods of Canaan (see Deut 6.4–15; 7.1–6). **17.9** The note that the people *secretly did things that were not right* may indicate the narrator's recognition that there have been relatively few illustrations of Israel's sins up to this point. *High places.* See note on 1 Kings 3.2. Their continued use violates the commands in Deut 12.2–4, which requires that the people worship only at the sanctuary of God's choosing. **17.10** On the *pillars* and *sacred poles* (Asherim), see notes on 1 Kings 14.15; 14.23. These objects too should have been removed (Deut 7.5; 12.2–4). **17.13** Although a number of prophets are mentioned earlier in Kings, none of them are described as calling the people to repent. For later examples, see Jer 7.3,

as they did. 16 They rejected all the commandments of the LORD their God and made for themselves cast images of two calves; they made a sacred pole,[y] worshiped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. 17 They made their sons and their daughters pass through fire; they used divination and augury; and they sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger. 18 Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them out of his sight; none was left but the tribe of Judah alone.

19 Judah also did not keep the commandments of the LORD their God but walked in the customs that Israel had introduced. 20 The LORD rejected all the descendants of Israel; he punished them and gave them into the hand of plunderers, until he had banished them from his presence.

21 When he had torn Israel from the house of David, they made Jeroboam son of Nebat king. Jeroboam drove Israel from following the LORD and made them commit great sin. 22 The people of Israel continued in all the sins that Jeroboam committed; they did not depart from them 23 until the LORD removed Israel out of his sight, as he had foretold through all his servants the prophets. So Israel was exiled from their own land to Assyria until this day.

Assyria Resettles Samaria

24 The king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria in place of the people of Israel; they took possession of Samaria, and settled in its cities. 25 When they first settled there, they did not worship the LORD; therefore the LORD sent lions among them, which killed some of them. 26 So the king of Assyria was told, "The nations that you have carried away and placed in the cities of Samaria do not know the law of the god of the land; therefore he has sent lions among them; they are killing them, because they do not know the law of the god of the land." 27 Then the king of Assyria commanded, "Send there one of the priests whom you carried away from there; let him[z] go and live there, and teach them the law of the god of the land." 28 So one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and lived in Bethel; he taught them how they should worship the LORD.

29 But every nation still made gods of its own and put them in the shrines of the high places that the people of Samaria had made, every nation in the cities in which they lived; 30 the people of Babylon made Succoth-benoth, the people of Cuth made Nergal, the people of Hamath made Ashima; 31 the Avvites made Nibhaz and Tartak; the Sepharvites burned their children in the fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim. 32 They also worshiped the LORD and appointed from among themselves all sorts of people as priests of the high places, who sacrificed for them in the shrines of the high places. 33 So they worshiped the LORD but also served their own gods, after the manner of the nations from among

y Heb *Asherah* z Syr Vg: Heb *them*

5; 18.11; Ezek 33.11. **17.16** *Two calves.* See note on 1 Kings 12.28. The *host of heaven* are the sun, moon, and stars. Their worship is prohibited in Deut 4.19; 17.2–5. **17.17** Making sons and daughters *pass through fire* is banned, along with *divination and augury,* in Deut 18.9–14. On the sacrificing of children, see note on 16.3. **17.19–20** These verses are probably the work of an exilic writer who knew Judah's ultimate fate and sought to explain it the same way that the fall of Samaria was earlier explained. **17.21–23** Here the narrator finally returns to the theme of Jeroboam's sin, which has provided the literary and theological structure for Israel's history since the revolt of the Northern Kingdom (1 Kings 12.16–20).

17.24–41 These verses attempt to explain why the worship of the Lord existed alongside of the worship of other gods in the territory that was once the home of the Israelites. **17.24** All of these cities were part of the Assyrian Empire, except for *Babylon,* on the Euphrates River, and *Cuthah,* in central Babylonia; their precise location is uncertain. In keeping with Assyrian practice, the name *Samaria* is now used to refer to the entire region and not just to the old capital city. **17.25** The *lions* are agents of divine judgment (see 1 Kings 13.24; 20.36). Apparently the Lord still lays claim to the land, even though the Israelites have been removed. **17.30–31** *Nergal* was a Babylonian underworld god associated with plague. *Nibhaz* and *Tartak* were Elamite gods. The remaining deities cannot be identified with any certainty.

whom they had been carried away. 34 To
this day they continue to practice their
former customs.

They do not worship the LORD and they
do not follow the statutes or the ordi-
nances or the law or the commandment
that the LORD commanded the children of
Jacob, whom he named Israel. 35 The
LORD had made a covenant with them and
commanded them, "You shall not worship
other gods or bow yourselves to them or
serve them or sacrifice to them, 36 but you
shall worship the LORD, who brought you
out of the land of Egypt with great power
and with an outstretched arm; you shall
bow yourselves to him, and to him you
shall sacrifice. 37 The statutes and the or-
dinances and the law and the command-
ment that he wrote for you, you shall
always be careful to observe. You shall not
worship other gods; 38 you shall not forget
the covenant that I have made with you.
You shall not worship other gods, 39 but
you shall worship the LORD your God; he
will deliver you out of the hand of all your
enemies." 40 They would not listen, how-
ever, but they continued to practice their
former custom.

41 So these nations worshiped the
LORD, but also served their carved images;
to this day their children and their chil-
dren's children continue to do as their an-
cestors did.

Hezekiah's Reign over Judah

18 In the third year of King Hoshea
son of Elah of Israel, Hezekiah
son of King Ahaz of Judah began to
reign. 2 He was twenty-five years old when
he began to reign; he reigned twenty-nine
years in Jerusalem. His mother's name
was Abi daughter of Zechariah. 3 He did
what was right in the sight of the LORD
just as his ancestor David had done. 4 He
removed the high places, broke down the
pillars, and cut down the sacred pole.[a]
He broke in pieces the bronze serpent
that Moses had made, for until those days
the people of Israel had made offerings to
it; it was called Nehushtan. 5 He trusted in
the LORD the God of Israel; so that there
was no one like him among all the kings of
Judah after him, or among those who
were before him. 6 For he held fast to the
LORD; he did not depart from following
him but kept the commandments that the
LORD commanded Moses. 7 The LORD was
with him; wherever he went, he pros-
pered. He rebelled against the king of As-
syria and would not serve him. 8 He
attacked the Philistines as far as Gaza
and its territory, from watchtower to forti-
fied city.

9 In the fourth year of King Heze-
kiah, which was the seventh year of King
Hoshea son of Elah of Israel, King Shal-
maneser of Assyria came up against
Samaria, besieged it, 10 and at the end
of three years, took it. In the sixth year of
Hezekiah, which was the ninth year of
King Hoshea of Israel, Samaria was taken.
11 The king of Assyria carried the Israel-
ites away to Assyria, settled them in Ha-
lah, on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and
in the cities of the Medes, 12 because they
did not obey the voice of the LORD their
God but transgressed his covenant—all
that Moses the servant of the LORD had
commanded; they neither listened nor
obeyed.

Sennacherib Invades Judah

13 In the fourteenth year of King
Hezekiah, King Sennacherib of Assyria
came up against all the fortified cities of

a Heb *Asherah*

18.1–12 From the standpoint of the narrator, the reign of Hezekiah marks a high point in Judah's history. He is the first king to walk completely in the ways of his ancestor David, and Hezekiah's religious reforms win high praise from the historian. In fact, the stories about his deeds are so favorable that some modern scholars have concluded that 2 Kings once ended with an account of his rule. **18.1** *Hezekiah* reigned from ca. 715 to 687/6 B.C.E. **18.4** Hezekiah was the first Judean king to remove the *high places* (see note on 1 Kings 3.2). *Pillars, sacred pole* (Asherah). See notes on 1 Kings 14.15; 14.23. The *bronze serpent* attributed to Moses was a cultic object used in rituals to prevent or treat snakebite (Num 21.4–9). Serpents also played a wide variety of roles in the religions of the ancient Near East. **18.8** *Gaza* was a Philistine city near the Mediterranean coast and marked the traditional southern border of Canaan. Hezekiah seems to have tried to push his borders westward to recapture parts of the old Davidic empire. **18.9–12** Much of the material in these verses summarizes 17.5–8. See notes on 17.6; 17.7–8.

Judah and captured them. 14 King Hezekiah of Judah sent to the king of Assyria at Lachish, saying, "I have done wrong; withdraw from me; whatever you impose on me I will bear." The king of Assyria demanded of King Hezekiah of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. 15 Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the house of the LORD and in the treasuries of the king's house. 16 At that time Hezekiah stripped the gold from the doors of the temple of the LORD, and from the doorposts that King Hezekiah of Judah had overlaid and gave it to the king of Assyria. 17 The king of Assyria sent the Tartan, the Rabsaris, and the Rabshakeh with a great army from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem. They went up and came to Jerusalem. When they arrived, they came and stood by the conduit of the upper pool, which is on the highway to the Fuller's Field. 18 When they called for the king, there came out to them Eliakim son of Hilkiah, who was in charge of the palace, and Shebnah the secretary, and Joah son of Asaph, the recorder.

19 The Rabshakeh said to them, "Say to Hezekiah: Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria: On what do you base this confidence of yours? 20 Do you think that mere words are strategy and power for war? On whom do you now rely, that you have rebelled against me? 21 See, you are relying now on Egypt, that broken reed of a staff, which will pierce the hand of anyone who leans on it. Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who rely on him. 22 But if you say to me, 'We rely on the LORD our God,' is it not he whose high places and altars Hezekiah has removed, saying to Judah and to Jerusalem, 'You shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem'? 23 Come now, make a wager with my master the king of Assyria: I will give you two thousand horses, if you are able on your part to set riders on them. 24 How then can you repulse a single captain among the least of my master's servants, when you rely on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen? 25 Moreover, is it without the LORD that I have come up against this place to destroy it? The LORD said to me, Go up against this land, and destroy it."

26 Then Eliakim son of Hilkiah, and Shebnah, and Joah said to the Rabshakeh, "Please speak to your servants in the Aramaic language, for we understand it; do not speak to us in the language of Judah within the hearing of the people who are on the wall." 27 But the Rabshakeh said to them, "Has my master sent me to speak these words to your master and to you, and not to the people sitting on the wall, who are doomed with you to eat their own dung and to drink their own urine?"

28 Then the Rabshakeh stood and called out in a loud voice in the language of Judah, "Hear the word of the great

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18.13–37 These verses begin an extended account of Sennacherib's invasion of Palestine in 701 B.C.E. The account continues through 19.37 and is at least partially paralleled in 2 Chr 32; Isa 36–37. The narrative includes much traditional material and shows signs of having gone through a long editorial history. **18.13** *Sennacherib* ruled Assyria from 705 to 681 B.C.E. His invasion was in retaliation for Hezekiah's rebellion (v. 7). **18.14** *Lachish.* See note on 14.19. A *talent* weighs about 75 pounds. **18.17** The *Tartan* ("Viceroy") was the second-ranking Assyrian officer after the king. The *Rabsaris* ("Chief Eunuch") was often involved in leading the Assyrian army. The *Rabshakeh* ("Chief Butler") was usually involved in running the royal court and the personal business of the king. *Conduit . . . Field.* The site where the two delegations met is mentioned again in Isa 7.3 and seems to have been an important part of Jerusalem's water supply. The precise location is uncertain. **18.18** *Eliakim* was the overseer of royal estates and buildings. *Shebnah* kept the royal records but also had high administrative responsibilities. *Joah* was perhaps the royal herald. **18.21** Hezekiah had sought help from Egypt in his attempt to resist Assyria. This policy was firmly opposed by the prophet Isaiah (Isa 30.1–5). **18.22** In contrast to the view of the narrator, the Rabshakeh assumes that the altars and high places removed during Hezekiah's religious reforms were legitimate places for the worship of the Lord (v. 4). In fact, Hezekiah's centralization of worship in Jerusalem is in accordance with the demands of Deut 12. **18.25** The Rabshakeh here appeals to Deuteronomistic theology, which tends to explain disaster as the result of sin. **18.26** The Judeans request that the negotiations be carried out in Aramaic, a West Semitic dialect related to Hebrew. By this time Aramaic had become the language of international diplomacy and trade but was not well understood by the inhabitants of Jerusalem,

king, the king of Assyria! 29 Thus says the
king: 'Do not let Hezekiah deceive you,
for he will not be able to deliver you out
of my hand. 30 Do not let Hezekiah make
you rely on the LORD by saying, The LORD
will surely deliver us, and this city will not
be given into the hand of the king of As-
syria.' 31 Do not listen to Hezekiah; for
thus says the king of Assyria: 'Make your
peace with me and come out to me; then
every one of you will eat from your own
vine and your own fig tree, and drink wa-
ter from your own cistern, 32 until I come
and take you away to a land like your own
land, a land of grain and wine, a land of
bread and vineyards, a land of olive oil
and honey, that you may live and not die.
Do not listen to Hezekiah when he mis-
leads you by saying, The LORD will deliver
us. 33 Has any of the gods of the nations
ever delivered its land out of the hand of
the king of Assyria? 34 Where are the gods
of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the
gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah?
Have they delivered Samaria out of my
hand? 35 Who among all the gods of the
countries have delivered their countries
out of my hand, that the LORD should de-
liver Jerusalem out of my hand?' "

36 But the people were silent and an-
swered him not a word, for the king's
command was, "Do not answer him."
37 Then Eliakim son of Hilkiah, who was
in charge of the palace, and Shebna the
secretary, and Joah son of Asaph, the re-
corder, came to Hezekiah with their
clothes torn and told him the words of the
Rabshakeh.

Hezekiah Consults Isaiah

19 When King Hezekiah heard it, he
tore his clothes, covered himself
with sackcloth, and went into the house of
the LORD. 2 And he sent Eliakim, who was
in charge of the palace, and Shebna the
secretary, and the senior priests, covered
with sackcloth, to the prophet Isaiah son
of Amoz. 3 They said to him, "Thus says
Hezekiah, This day is a day of distress, of
rebuke, and of disgrace; children have
come to the birth, and there is no strength
to bring them forth. 4 It may be that the
LORD your God heard all the words of the
Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of
Assyria has sent to mock the living God,
and will rebuke the words that the LORD
your God has heard; therefore lift up
your prayer for the remnant that is left."
5 When the servants of King Hezekiah
came to Isaiah, 6 Isaiah said to them, "Say
to your master, 'Thus says the LORD: Do
not be afraid because of the words that
you have heard, with which the servants
of the king of Assyria have reviled me. 7 I
myself will put a spirit in him, so that he
shall hear a rumor and return to his own
land; I will cause him to fall by the sword
in his own land.' "

Sennacherib's Threat

8 The Rabshakeh returned, and
found the king of Assyria fighting against
Libnah; for he had heard that the king
had left Lachish. 9 When the king[b] heard

b Heb *he*

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who spoke only the local dialect of Hebrew. **18.34** All of these cities had earlier been captured by the Assyrians. **18.37** On the significance of tearing clothing, see note on 5.7.

19.1–7 Hezekiah's consultation of Isaiah during the crisis reflects the common practice of seeking divine guidance before or during military activities. See, e.g., 3.9–12; 1 Kings 22.1–12. Here the consultation is intended to be interpreted as a sign of the king's piety. **19.1** On the meaning of tearing clothing and wearing sackcloth, see notes on 5.7; 1 Kings 20.31. **19.2** *Eliakim, Shebna.* See note on 18.18. **19.3** The *distress* Hezekiah feels is due to the Assyrian threat, and the *rebuke* and *disgrace* are the result of the Rabshakeh's taunts (18.19–35). The proverb (*children . . . bring them forth*) means that the critical moment for deliverance has arrived but that the participants themselves are not able to bring it into existence. **19.6** Isaiah's oracle of salvation opens in typical style with an exhortation not to fear (see, e.g., Isa 7.4). **19.7** The spirit will deceive Sennacherib, although the oracle does not specify the nature of the rumor that he will hear (cf. 1 Kings 22.20–23).

19.8–13 This report of Sennacherib's second message to Hezekiah is taken by some scholars to be simply a variant of the report in 18.19–35. Other scholars see here evidence of a second Assyrian campaign, while still others take these verses as the second phase of the negotiations. The narrator clearly intends the latter interpretation. **19.8** *Libnah.* See note on 8.22. **19.9** *Tirhakah* ruled Egypt (here called *Ethiopia*) from ca. 690 to 664 B.C.E., so he must have been commander of the army rather than king when this incident occurred. This word of an imminent Egyptian attack may have been the rumor men-

concerning King Tirhakah of Ethiopia,[c]
"See, he has set out to fight against you,"
he sent messengers again to Hezekiah,
saying, 10 "Thus shall you speak to King
Hezekiah of Judah: Do not let your God
on whom you rely deceive you by promis-
ing that Jerusalem will not be given into
the hand of the king of Assyria. 11 See,
you have heard what the kings of Assyria
have done to all lands, destroying them
utterly. Shall you be delivered? 12 Have
the gods of the nations delivered them,
the nations that my predecessors de-
stroyed, Gozan, Haran, Rezeph, and the
people of Eden who were in Telassar?
13 Where is the king of Hamath, the king
of Arpad, the king of the city of Sephar-
vaim, the king of Hena, or the king of
Ivvah?"

Hezekiah's Prayer

14 Hezekiah received the letter from
the hand of the messengers and read it;
then Hezekiah went up to the house of
the LORD and spread it before the LORD.
15 And Hezekiah prayed before the LORD,
and said: "O LORD the God of Israel, who
are enthroned above the cherubim, you
are God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of
the earth; you have made heaven and
earth. 16 Incline your ear, O LORD, and
hear; open your eyes, O LORD, and see;
hear the words of Sennacherib, which he
has sent to mock the living God. 17 Truly,
O LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid
waste the nations and their lands, 18 and
have hurled their gods into the fire,
though they were no gods but the work of
human hands—wood and stone—and so
they were destroyed. 19 So now, O LORD
our God, save us, I pray you, from his
hand, so that all the kingdoms of the
earth may know that you, O LORD, are
God alone."

20 Then Isaiah son of Amoz sent to
Hezekiah, saying, "Thus says the LORD,
the God of Israel: I have heard your
prayer to me about King Sennacherib of
Assyria. 21 This is the word that the LORD
has spoken concerning him:

She despises you, she
scorns you—
virgin daughter Zion;
she tosses her head—behind your
back,
daughter Jerusalem.

22 "Whom have you mocked and
reviled?
Against whom have you raised
your voice
and haughtily lifted your eyes?
Against the Holy One of Israel!
23 By your messengers you have
mocked the Lord,
and you have said, 'With my
many chariots
I have gone up the heights of the
mountains,
to the far recesses of Lebanon;
I felled its tallest cedars,
its choicest cypresses;
I entered its farthest retreat,
its densest forest.
24 I dug wells
and drank foreign waters,
I dried up with the sole of my
foot
all the streams of Egypt.'

25 "Have you not heard
that I determined it long ago?
I planned from days of old

c Or *Nubia*; Heb *Cush*

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tioned in v. 7. **19.10–13** The arguments advanced here summarize those in 18.19–35. **19.12–13** The cities mentioned were all places where populations had recently been displaced. Several of the cities were connected with the exile of the Northern Kingdom (cf. 17.6, 24).

19.14–34 In contrast to Hezekiah's response to the first Assyrian visit (vv. 1–7), this time Hezekiah himself goes to the temple and prays to the Lord. The answer to the prayer then comes in the form of a second oracle from Isaiah. **19.15** The phrase *before the LORD* implies that the king was before the ark within the Holy of Holies, an area where normally only priests were allowed to enter. *Cherubim.* See note on 1 Kings 6.23–28. **19.18** The *gods* were in fact the divine statues, usually made of wood, that represented the gods in many temples. **19.25–28** God here implies that the Assyrian victories are all part of a divine plan that has been in existence since the beginning of the world. Sennacherib is simply the tool God is using to punish the nations. However, because of the Assyrian king's arrogant assumption that he is in control of the situation, God will thwart his efforts and make him return to his land. These themes are also found elsewhere

what now I bring to pass,
that you should make fortified cities
crash into heaps of ruins,
26 while their inhabitants, shorn of strength,
are dismayed and confounded;
they have become like plants of the field
and like tender grass,
like grass on the housetops,
blighted before it is grown.

27 "But I know your rising[d] and your sitting,
your going out and coming in,
and your raging against me.
28 Because you have raged against me
and your arrogance has come to my ears,
I will put my hook in your nose
and my bit in your mouth;
I will turn you back on the way
by which you came.

29 "And this shall be the sign for you: This year you shall eat what grows of itself, and in the second year what springs from that; then in the third year sow, reap, plant vineyards, and eat their fruit. 30 The surviving remnant of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward; 31 for from Jerusalem a remnant shall go out, and from Mount Zion a band of survivors. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

32 "Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the king of Assyria: He shall not come into this city, shoot an arrow there, come before it with a shield, or cast up a siege ramp against it. 33 By the way that he came, by the same he shall return; he shall not come into this city, says the LORD. 34 For I will defend this city to save it, for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David."

Sennacherib's Defeat and Death

35 That very night the angel of the LORD set out and struck down one hundred eighty-five thousand in the camp of the Assyrians; when morning dawned, they were all dead bodies. 36 Then King Sennacherib of Assyria left, went home, and lived at Nineveh. 37 As he was worshiping in the house of his god Nisroch, his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer killed him with the sword, and they escaped into the land of Ararat. His son Esar-haddon succeeded him.

Hezekiah's Illness

20 In those days Hezekiah became sick and was at the point of death. The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz came to him, and said to him, "Thus says the LORD: Set your house in order, for you shall die; you shall not recover." 2 Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD: 3 "Remember now, O LORD, I implore you, how I have walked before you in faithfulness with a whole heart, and have done what is good in your sight." Hezekiah wept bitterly.

d Gk Compare Isa 37.27 Q Ms: MT lacks *rising*

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in Isaiah's prophecies (see, e.g., Isa 10.12–19; 14.24–27). **19.28** The references to a hook in the nose and a bit in the mouth compare the king to an animal who will be led wherever its owner wants it to go. **19.29** Isaiah's sign does not indicate a rapid return to normal living conditions. It will take the land two years to recover from the ravages of the Assyrian invasion, and during that time the people will have to gather grain that grows naturally. Only in the third year will they be able to plant and reap a normal harvest.

19.35–37 In spite of many ingenious attempts from antiquity to the present day, there is no good way to rationalize the miraculous salvation of Jerusalem. The event is simply a dramatic fulfillment of Isaiah's oracle of deliverance. **19.37** The god *Nisroch* is otherwise unknown. The name is probably a corruption of the name of one of the Mesopotamian deities. The *land of Ararat* is Urartu, modern Armenia. After a struggle over the succession, *Esar-haddon* came to the Assyrian throne in 681 and ruled until 669 B.C.E.

20.1–11 The story of Hezekiah's illness also exists in an expanded version in Isa 38.1–22. The incident is not assigned a specific date, but v. 6 seems to point forward to the miraculous deliverance of Jerusalem in 701 B.C.E. It is likely, then, that the story is out of place chronologically and should have preceded the narratives of chs. 18–19. The story is probably in its present position because of its link in v. 12 with the story of the visit from the messengers of Merodach-baladan. Whatever the reasons for the displacement of 20.1–11, its present position causes the healing to appear as a special favor for the king whose piety and fidelity to the Lord had

4 Before Isaiah had gone out of the middle court, the word of the LORD came to him: 5 "Turn back, and say to Hezekiah prince of my people, Thus says the LORD, the God of your ancestor David: I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; indeed, I will heal you; on the third day you shall go up to the house of the LORD. 6 I will add fifteen years to your life. I will deliver you and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria; I will defend this city for my own sake and for my servant David's sake." 7 Then Isaiah said, "Bring a lump of figs. Let them take it and apply it to the boil, so that he may recover."

8 Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "What shall be the sign that the LORD will heal me, and that I shall go up to the house of the LORD on the third day?" 9 Isaiah said, "This is the sign to you from the LORD, that the LORD will do the thing that he has promised: the shadow has now advanced ten intervals; shall it retreat ten intervals?" 10 Hezekiah answered, "It is normal for the shadow to lengthen ten intervals; rather let the shadow retreat ten intervals." 11 The prophet Isaiah cried to the LORD; and he brought the shadow back the ten intervals, by which the sun[e] had declined on the dial of Ahaz.

Envoys from Babylon

12 At that time King Merodach-baladan son of Baladan of Babylon sent envoys with letters and a present to Hezekiah, for he had heard that Hezekiah had been sick. 13 Hezekiah welcomed them;[f] he showed them all his treasure house, the silver, the gold, the spices, the precious oil, his armory, all that was found in his storehouses; there was nothing in his house or in all his realm that Hezekiah did not show them. 14 Then the prophet Isaiah came to King Hezekiah, and said to him, "What did these men say? From where did they come to you?" Hezekiah answered, "They have come from a far country, from Babylon." 15 He said, "What have they seen in your house?" Hezekiah answered, "They have seen all that is in my house; there is nothing in my storehouses that I did not show them."

16 Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the LORD: 17 Days are coming when all that is in your house, and that which your ancestors have stored up until this day, shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left, says the LORD. 18 Some of your own sons who are born to you shall be taken away; they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon." 19 Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "The word of the LORD that you have spoken is good." For he thought, "Why not, if there will be peace and security in my days?"

e Syr See Isa 38.8 and Tg: Heb *it*
f Gk Vg Syr: Heb *When Hezekiah heard about them*

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saved Jerusalem during the Assyrian invasion. **20.4** The *middle court* must have been part of the royal palace. **20.5** The phrase *on the third day* indicates the end of a brief period of time (cf. Hos 6.1–2). **20.6** Here the king's recovery and the salvation of Jerusalem from the Assyrians are linked together in the same prophecy. **20.7** The translation follows the Greek text, which suggests that Isaiah's action set the healing process in motion but that the completion of the process still lay in the future. The Hebrew text reports that the healing took place immediately, thus rendering the following sign superfluous. In antiquity *figs* were thought to have healing properties. **20.8** The *sign* is intended to authenticate the prophecy and guarantee its fulfillment (cf. 1 Kings 13.3 and note). **20.9** For a similar sign involving the sun, see Josh 10.12–13. **20.11** The *dial of Ahaz* was a series of steps on which the movement of a shadow cast by the sun marked the hours.

20.12–19 The story of Hezekiah's encounter with the messengers of Merodach-baladan also appears to be out of place in the history of Hezekiah's reign. Merodach-baladan ruled Babylon between 722 and 710 B.C.E. and then again briefly from 704 to 703, before Sennacherib deposed him. The visit to Hezekiah must have taken place well before the Assyrian invasion of 701 B.C.E. and probably occurred during Merodach-baladan's first term on the throne. The purpose of the visit was perhaps to encourage trade between Babylon and the west and to secure allies who might be useful in the future. The prophet Isaiah, who was generally opposed to all foreign alliances, opposed any sort of contact with the Babylonians. The compiler of Kings may have placed this negative story about Hezekiah in its present position in order to detract somewhat from the king's reputation for piety. In this way Hezekiah would not overshadow the future achievements of Josiah, whom the narrator regarded as Judah's greatest king. **20.17** In Isaiah's oracle this interchange with the Babylonians becomes an explanation for the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile in 587/6 B.C.E.

Death of Hezekiah

20 The rest of the deeds of Hezekiah,
all his power, how he made the pool and
the conduit and brought water into the
city, are they not written in the Book of
the Annals of the Kings of Judah? 21 Hez-
ekiah slept with his ancestors; and his son
Manasseh succeeded him.

Manasseh Reigns over Judah

21 Manasseh was twelve years old
when he began to reign; he
reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. His
mother's name was Hephzibah. 2 He did
what was evil in the sight of the LORD, fol-
lowing the abominable practices of the na-
tions that the LORD drove out before the
people of Israel. 3 For he rebuilt the high
places that his father Hezekiah had de-
stroyed; he erected altars for Baal, made a
sacred pole,[g] as King Ahab of Israel had
done, worshiped all the host of heaven,
and served them. 4 He built altars in the
house of the LORD, of which the LORD had
said, "In Jerusalem I will put my name."
5 He built altars for all the host of heaven
in the two courts of the house of the
LORD. 6 He made his son pass through
fire; he practiced soothsaying and augury,
and dealt with mediums and with wizards.
He did much evil in the sight of the LORD,
provoking him to anger. 7 The carved im-
age of Asherah that he had made he set in
the house of which the LORD said to David
and to his son Solomon, "In this house,
and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen
out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put my
name forever; 8 I will not cause the feet of
Israel to wander any more out of the land
that I gave to their ancestors, if only they
will be careful to do according to all that I
have commanded them, and according to
all the law that my servant Moses com-
manded them." 9 But they did not listen;
Manasseh misled them to do more evil
than the nations had done that the LORD
destroyed before the people of Israel.
10 The LORD said by his servants the
prophets, 11 "Because King Manasseh of
Judah has committed these abominations,
has done things more wicked than all that
the Amorites did, who were before him,
and has caused Judah also to sin with his
idols; 12 therefore thus says the LORD, the
God of Israel, I am bringing upon Jerusa-
lem and Judah such evil that the ears of
everyone who hears of it will tingle. 13 I
will stretch over Jerusalem the measuring

g Heb *Asherah*

20.20–21 The concluding summary of Hezekiah's reign finally mentions one of his most impressive achievements, the construction of the Siloam tunnel. To provide Jerusalem with a secure water supply during a siege, the king cut a passage through 1,749 feet of solid rock to lead water from the Gihon spring outside the city to the pool of Siloam safely inside the walls. A wall inscription originally carved in the tunnel still exists to testify to his achievement.

21.1–18 In the eyes of the Deuteronomistic narrator, the long reign of Manasseh was the epitome of evil. Perhaps reacting against the religious reforms of his father, Hezekiah (18.4–6), Manasseh restored the cultic practices of Ahaz (16.2–4) and elaborated on them, in the process violating many of the provisions for worship laid down in the book of Deuteronomy. More to the point, he committed many of the same sins that led to the devastation of the Northern Kingdom and to the exile of its inhabitants (17.7–18). It is not surprising, then, that the narrator blames Manasseh for the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem and the exile. **21.1** *Manasseh* ruled from ca. 687/6 to 642 B.C.E. **21.2** Following the *abominable practices of the nations* is forbidden in Deut 12.29–31 (cf. 2 Kings 17.7). **21.3** *High places.* See note on 1 Kings 3.2. *Sacred poles.* See note on 1 Kings 14.15. The destruction of these installations is commanded in Deut 12.2–4 (cf. 2 Kings 17.9–10, 16). In the narrator's view, *Ahab* was the most sinful of all of the Northern kings because of his official encouragement of the worship of Baal and Asherah (see the assessment in 1 Kings 16.31–33). *Host of heaven.* See note on 17.16. **21.5** It is not clear exactly where these altars were placed in the temple courts. **21.6** *Made his son pass through fire.* See note on 16.3. This practice and the various types of divination mentioned here are forbidden in Deut 18.9–14 (cf. 2 Kings 17.17). **21.7** *Asherah.* See note on 1 Kings 14.15. **21.7–8** For the Deuteronomistic narrator, the promise of an eternal Davidic line and the promise of the permanent dwelling of Israel in the land were both always contingent on obedience to the divine law; see, e.g., 1 Kings 9.3–9. **21.10** The *prophets* who delivered this judgment oracle are not identified. **21.11** The *Amorites* were among the original inhabitants of Canaan and therefore one of the peoples whose practices were to be avoided. **21.13** The same standards that were applied to Israel will also be applied to Judah. The parallels between the two are already evident. For the narrator's opinions on the *house*

line for Samaria, and the plummet for the
house of Ahab; I will wipe Jerusalem as
one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it
upside down. 14 I will cast off the remnant
of my heritage, and give them into the
hand of their enemies; they shall become
a prey and a spoil to all their enemies,
15 because they have done what is evil in
my sight and have provoked me to anger,
since the day their ancestors came out of
Egypt, even to this day."

16 Moreover Manasseh shed very
much innocent blood, until he had filled
Jerusalem from one end to another, be-
sides the sin that he caused Judah to sin so
that they did what was evil in the sight of
the LORD.

17 Now the rest of the acts of Manas-
seh, all that he did, and the sin that he
committed, are they not written in the
Book of the Annals of the Kings of Ju-
dah? 18 Manasseh slept with his ancestors,
and was buried in the garden of his
house, in the garden of Uzza. His son
Amon succeeded him.

Amon Reigns over Judah

19 Amon was twenty-two years old
when he began to reign; he reigned two
years in Jerusalem. His mother's name
was Meshullemeth daughter of Haruz of
Jotbah. 20 He did what was evil in the sight
of the LORD, as his father Manasseh had
done. 21 He walked in all the way in which
his father walked, served the idols that his
father served, and worshiped them; 22 he
abandoned the LORD, the God of his an-
cestors, and did not walk in the way of the
LORD. 23 The servants of Amon conspired
against him, and killed the king in his
house. 24 But the people of the land killed
all those who had conspired against King
Amon, and the people of the land made
his son Josiah king in place of him. 25 Now
the rest of the acts of Amon that he did,
are they not written in the Book of the
Annals of the Kings of Judah? 26 He was
buried in his tomb in the garden of Uzza;
then his son Josiah succeeded him.

Josiah Reigns over Judah

22 Josiah was eight years old when
he began to reign; he reign-
ed thirty-one years in Jerusalem. His
mother's name was Jedidah daughter of
Adaiah of Bozkath. 2 He did what was
right in the sight of the LORD, and walked
in all the way of his father David; he did
not turn aside to the right or to the left.

Hilkiah Finds the Book of the Law

3 In the eighteenth year of King
Josiah, the king sent Shaphan son of

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of Ahab, see note on 21.3. One *wipes a dish* and turns it *upside down* to be sure that all of its contents have been removed. **21.14** After the destruction of the Northern Kingdom, only Judah remained as the *remnant* of God's heritage. **21.18** The location of the *garden of Uzza* is unknown.

21.19–26 The reign of Amon saw the continuation of all of the evil policies of his father, Manasseh. **21.19** *Amon* ruled from ca. 642 to 640 B.C.E. **21.24** *People of the land*. See note on 11.14. **21.26** *Garden of Uzza*. See note on 21.18.

22.1–2 The narrator of Kings views Josiah as the Judean king who most closely conformed to the Davidic model. Even more than the highly praised Hezekiah, Josiah was obedient to God's law, a fact which the historian illustrates by describing in detail the king's religious reforms. **22.1** *Josiah* reigned from ca. 640 to 609 B.C.E.

22.3–20 Josiah's pious concern for repairing the temple leads to the discovery of a lawbook, which motivates the king to make a new covenant between the people and the Lord and to carry out a religious reform throughout the land. Most scholars identify this book as an early version of the present book of Deuteronomy, an identification that is based on several factors. Like Deuteronomy, the lawbook contains dire threats against people who reject the Lord and worship other gods (vv. 16–17; cf. Deut 27–28). Similarly, the book leads to the making of a covenant (23.2–3), a concept that plays an important role throughout Deuteronomy (see, e.g., Deut 29). Finally, the reforms carried out by Josiah generally conform to the sort of worship that Deuteronomy demands. In the eyes of the narrator, then, Josiah was the ideal king precisely because his rule was guided by the Deuteronomic law (cf. Deut 17.18–20). **22.3** Josiah's *eighteenth year* was 622 B.C.E. According to 2 Chr 34.3–18, Josiah began his religious reforms in his twelfth year, even though the lawbook was not discovered in the temple until Josiah's eighteenth year. Many scholars believe the chronology of Chronicles to be correct, and if it is, then it is likely that the writer of Kings reordered events to emphasize the crucial role of the lawbook. *Shaphan* and his descendants seem to have been supporters of the Deuteronomistic theology advocated by the narrator of Kings, and they later aided the prophet Jeremiah in the final days

Azaliah, son of Meshullam, the secretary,
to the house of the LORD, saying, 4"Go
up to the high priest Hilkiah, and have him
count the entire sum of the money that
has been brought into the house of the
LORD, which the keepers of the threshold
have collected from the people; 5let it be
given into the hand of the workers who
have the oversight of the house of the
LORD; let them give it to the workers who
are at the house of the LORD, repairing
the house, 6that is, to the carpenters, to
the builders, to the masons; and let them
use it to buy timber and quarried stone to
repair the house. 7But no accounting
shall be asked from them for the money
that is delivered into their hand, for they
deal honestly."

8 The high priest Hilkiah said to Shaphan the secretary, "I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD." When Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, he read it. 9Then Shaphan the secretary came to the king, and reported to the king, "Your servants have emptied out the money that was found in the house, and have delivered it into the hand of the workers who have oversight of the house of the LORD." 10Shaphan the secretary informed the king, "The priest Hilkiah has given me a book." Shaphan then read it aloud to the king.

11 When the king heard the words of the book of the law, he tore his clothes. 12Then the king commanded the priest Hilkiah, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Achbor son of Micaiah, Shaphan the secretary, and the king's servant Asaiah, saying, 13"Go, inquire of the LORD for me, for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that has been found; for great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our ancestors did not obey the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us."

14 So the priest Hilkiah, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to the prophetess Huldah the wife of Shallum son of Tikvah, son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe; she resided in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter, where they consulted her. 15She declared to them, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Tell the man who sent you to me, 16Thus says the LORD, I will indeed bring disaster on this place and on its inhabitants—all the words of the book that the king of Judah has read. 17Because they have abandoned me and have made offerings to other gods, so that they have provoked me to anger with all the work of their hands, therefore my wrath will be kindled against this place, and it will not be quenched. 18But as to the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, thus shall you say to him, Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Regarding the words that you have heard, 19because your heart was penitent, and you humbled yourself before the LORD, when you heard how I spoke against this place, and against its inhabitants, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and because you have torn your clothes and wept before me, I also have heard you, says the LORD. 20Therefore, I will gather you to your ancestors, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace; your eyes shall not see all the disaster that I will bring on this place." They took the message back to the king.

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before the capture of Jerusalem (Jer 26.24; 29.3; 36.10–12). **22.4–7** On the arrangements for making repairs on the temple, see 12.4–16 and notes. **22.8** The *book of the law* was probably a scroll. The precise circumstances of its discovery are not related. Some scholars have speculated that the scroll had been stored in the temple or hidden away during the anti-Deuteronomic reforms of Manasseh (21.2–9). Others have suggested that the book was in fact written by Hilkiah and then conveniently "found." **22.11** *Tore his clothes*. See note on 5.7. **22.13** People inquired of a deity through a prophet in times of personal or national distress (1.2; 8.7–15; 1 Kings 14.1–18; 22.5–12). **22.14** *Huldah* is not mentioned elsewhere, but she was clearly an important figure in Jerusalemite society. The *Second Quarter* was on the western hill of Jerusalem, an area enclosed by a city wall during the reign of Hezekiah. The expansion of the city at that time was perhaps to accommodate refugees from the Assyrian invasion of Israel. **22.16–17** Huldah's judgment oracle is reminiscent of 21.12; Deut 27–28. **22.20** Huldah's prophecy to Josiah implies that the king will have a nonviolent death. In this case, the prophecy was not fulfilled (23.29–30).

Josiah's Reformation

23 Then the king directed that all
the elders of Judah and Jerusa-
lem should be gathered to him. 2 The king
went up to the house of the LORD, and
with him went all the people of Judah, all
the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the priests,
the prophets, and all the people, both
small and great; he read in their hearing
all the words of the book of the covenant
that had been found in the house of the
LORD. 3 The king stood by the pillar and
made a covenant before the LORD, to fol-
low the LORD, keeping his command-
ments, his decrees, and his statutes, with
all his heart and all his soul, to perform
the words of this covenant that were writ-
ten in this book. All the people joined in
the covenant.

4 The king commanded the high
priest Hilkiah, the priests of the second
order, and the guardians of the threshold,
to bring out of the temple of the LORD all
the vessels made for Baal, for Asherah,
and for all the host of heaven; he burned
them outside Jerusalem in the fields of
the Kidron, and carried their ashes to
Bethel. 5 He deposed the idolatrous
priests whom the kings of Judah had or-
dained to make offerings in the high
places at the cities of Judah and around
Jerusalem; those also who made offerings
to Baal, to the sun, the moon, the constel-
lations, and all the host of the heavens.
6 He brought out the image of[h] Asherah
from the house of the LORD, outside Jeru-
salem, to the Wadi Kidron, burned it at
the Wadi Kidron, beat it to dust and
threw the dust of it upon the graves of the
common people. 7 He broke down the
houses of the male temple prostitutes that
were in the house of the LORD, where the
women did weaving for Asherah. 8 He
brought all the priests out of the towns of
Judah, and defiled the high places where
the priests had made offerings, from
Geba to Beer-sheba; he broke down the
high places of the gates that were at the
entrance of the gate of Joshua the gover-
nor of the city, which were on the left at
the gate of the city. 9 The priests of the
high places, however, did not come up to
the altar of the LORD in Jerusalem, but ate
unleavened bread among their kindred.

h Heb lacks *image of*

23.1–27 Although Josiah's religious reforms were clearly inspired by Deuteronomic regulations concerning worship, some scholars have suggested that the cultic practices he curtailed were of Assyrian origin and that the reforms therefore constituted a revolt against Assyria. However, most of the practices involved seem to have been Canaanite rather than Assyrian, and many of them appear elsewhere in Kings associated with one or another of the native rulers. Yet the lack of connection with Assyrian religion does not necessarily mean that Josiah's reforms did not have political as well as religious motives. In addition to purifying worship of the Lord in Judah and Jerusalem, he also went into the North and destroyed shrines throughout Ephraim, concentrating particularly on Bethel, one of the royal sanctuaries of the old Northern Kingdom (vv. 15–20). At this time Ephraim was technically an Assyrian province, Samaria, and Josiah's activities there could certainly have been understood as hostile acts. Josiah's reforms in the North symbolically made the country fit for the worship of the Lord and may have been intended as a prelude to a political claim that would have reconstituted the old Davidic empire. **23.1–3** Strictly speaking, both the making of the covenant and the reformation of Israelite religion are an exercise in futility, since irrevocable judgment has already been decreed against the city and the people (22.16–17). In the context of the present narrative, Josiah's actions therefore can only be interpreted as a sign of his willingness to obey God's law even though obedience will not bring future benefit. **23.3** The *covenant* is an important Deuteronomic concept and it constitutes an oath of loyalty to the Lord. **23.4** On the worship of *Baal*, *Asherah*, and *the host of heaven*, which had been introduced (or reintroduced) into Judah by Manasseh, see notes on 1 Kings 14.15; 2 Kings 17.16. *Kidron*. See note on 1 Kings 2.37. Cf. 1 Kings 15.13. Carrying the ashes to *Bethel* shows Josiah's zeal to defile the old royal sanctuary of the Northern Kingdom. **23.7** On the cultic role of prostitutes, see note on 1 Kings 14.24. The women were probably weaving clothes for the statue of the goddess. **23.8** The *priests* mentioned here are priests of the Lord, in contrast to the idolatrous priests of v. 5. *High places*. See note on 1 Kings 3.2. The removal of the high places effectively centralizes worship in Jerusalem in accordance with Deut 12. *Geba* lies to the north of the Dead Sea and marks Judah's northern boundary. *Beer-sheba* is the traditional marker of the southern boundary. The location of the *gate of Joshua* is unknown. **23.9** The treatment of the *priests of the high places* contradicts

10 He defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of Ben-hinnom, so that no one would
make a son or a daughter pass through
fire as an offering to Molech. 11 He re-
moved the horses that the kings of Judah
had dedicated to the sun, at the entrance
to the house of the LORD, by the chamber
of the eunuch Nathan-melech, which was
in the precincts;[i] then he burned the
chariots of the sun with fire. 12 The altars
on the roof of the upper chamber of
Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had
made, and the altars that Manasseh had
made in the two courts of the house of the
LORD, he pulled down from there and
broke in pieces, and threw the rubble into
the Wadi Kidron. 13 The king defiled the
high places that were east of Jerusalem, to
the south of the Mount of Destruction,
which King Solomon of Israel had built
for Astarte the abomination of the Sidoni-
ans, for Chemosh the abomination of
Moab, and for Milcom the abomination of
the Ammonites. 14 He broke the pillars in
pieces, cut down the sacred poles,[j] and
covered the sites with human bones.

15 Moreover, the altar at Bethel, the
high place erected by Jeroboam son of
Nebat, who caused Israel to sin—he
pulled down that altar along with the high
place. He burned the high place, crushing
it to dust; he also burned the sacred
pole.[k] 16 As Josiah turned, he saw the
tombs there on the mount; and he sent
and took the bones out of the tombs, and
burned them on the altar, and defiled it,
according to the word of the LORD that
the man of God proclaimed,[l] when Jero-
boam stood by the altar at the festival; he
turned and looked up at the tomb of the
man of God who had predicted these
things. 17 Then he said, "What is that
monument that I see?" The people of the
city told him, "It is the tomb of the man of
God who came from Judah and predicted
these things that you have done against
the altar at Bethel." 18 He said, "Let him
rest; let no one move his bones." So they
let his bones alone, with the bones of
the prophet who came out of Samaria.
19 Moreover, Josiah removed all the
shrines of the high places that were in the
towns of Samaria, which kings of Israel
had made, provoking the LORD to anger;
he did to them just as he had done at
Bethel. 20 He slaughtered on the altars all
the priests of the high places who were
there, and burned human bones on them.
Then he returned to Jerusalem.

21 The king commanded all the peo-
ple, "Keep the passover to the LORD your
God as prescribed in this book of the cov-
enant." 22 No such passover had been kept
since the days of the judges who judged
Israel, even during all the days of the
kings of Israel and of the kings of Judah;
23 but in the eighteenth year of King
Josiah this passover was kept to the LORD
in Jerusalem.

24 Moreover Josiah put away the me-
diums, wizards, teraphim,[m] idols, and all
the abominations that were seen in the
land of Judah and in Jerusalem, so that he
established the words of the law that were
written in the book that the priest Hilkiah
had found in the house of the LORD.
25 Before him there was no king like him,
who turned to the LORD with all his heart,
with all his soul, and with all his might,
according to all the law of Moses; nor did
any like him arise after him.

i Meaning of Heb uncertain *j* Heb *Asherim*
k Heb *Asherah* *l* Gk: Heb *proclaimed, who had predicted these things* *m* Or *household gods*

Deut 18.6–8, which allows outlying priests to sacrifice at the temple in Jerusalem. **23.10** *Topheth* was an installation for the worship of Molech. See note on 16.3. **23.11** The horses and chariots of the sun were probably thought to convey the sun across the sky and must have been part of a solar cult. **23.12** On Manasseh's altars, see 21.5. **23.13** *The Mount of Destruction* is the Mount of Olives. On Solomon's altars to foreign gods, see 1 Kings 11.5–7 and notes. **23.14** On *pillars* and *sacred poles*, see notes on 1 Kings 14.15; 14.23. **23.15–18** Josiah's reforms at Bethel fulfill the prophecy against the altar in 1 Kings 13. **23.18** The old prophet referred to here came from Bethel rather than Samaria (1 Kings 13.11, 31). **23.19–20** The reforms outside of Bethel may have also been considered a fulfillment of prophecy (see 1 Kings 13.32). **23.21–23** Josiah's command resumes the narrative of vv. 1–3. According to Deuteronomic law (Deut 16.5–6), the Passover must be celebrated at the central sanctuary rather than in individual homes. The text claims that the last Passover celebrated in this way took place just after Israel entered Canaan (Josh 5.10–11). **23.24** Diviners are prohibited by Deut 18.9–14. *Teraphim* were images of household deities and may also have been used in divination. **23.25** The narrator makes the same

26 Still the LORD did not turn from
the fierceness of his great wrath, by which
his anger was kindled against Judah, be-
cause of all the provocations with which
Manasseh had provoked him. 27 The
LORD said, "I will remove Judah also out
of my sight, as I have removed Israel; and
I will reject this city that I have chosen,
Jerusalem, and the house of which I said,
My name shall be there."

Josiah Dies in Battle

28 Now the rest of the acts of Josiah,
and all that he did, are they not written in
the Book of the Annals of the Kings of
Judah? 29 In his days Pharaoh Neco king
of Egypt went up to the king of Assyria to
the river Euphrates. King Josiah went to
meet him; but when Pharaoh Neco met
him at Megiddo, he killed him. 30 His ser-
vants carried him dead in a chariot from
Megiddo, brought him to Jerusalem, and
buried him in his own tomb. The people
of the land took Jehoahaz son of Josiah,
anointed him, and made him king in
place of his father.

Reign and Captivity of Jehoahaz

31 Jehoahaz was twenty-three years
old when he began to reign; he reigned
three months in Jerusalem. His mother's
name was Hamutal daughter of Jeremiah
of Libnah. 32 He did what was evil in the
sight of the LORD, just as his ancestors had
done. 33 Pharaoh Neco confined him at
Riblah in the land of Hamath, so that he
might not reign in Jerusalem, and im-
posed tribute on the land of one hundred
talents of silver and a talent of gold.
34 Pharaoh Neco made Eliakim son of Jo-
siah king in place of his father Josiah, and
changed his name to Jehoiakim. But he
took Jehoahaz away; he came to Egypt,
and died there. 35 Jehoiakim gave the sil-
ver and the gold to Pharaoh, but he taxed
the land in order to meet Pharaoh's de-
mand for money. He exacted the silver
and the gold from the people of the land,
from all according to their assessment, to
give it to Pharaoh Neco.

Jehoiakim Reigns over Judah

36 Jehoiakim was twenty-five years
old when he began to reign; he reigned
eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother's
name was Zebidah daughter of Pedaiah of
Rumah. 37 He did what was evil in the
sight of the LORD, just as all his ancestors
had done.

Judah Overrun by Enemies

24 In his days King Nebuchadnezzar
of Babylon came up; Jehoiakim
became his servant for three years; then
he turned and rebelled against him. 2 The
LORD sent against him bands of the Chal-

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statement about Hezekiah in 18.5. **23.26–27** These verses allude to the substance of the prophetic oracle against Manasseh in 21.10–15.

23.28–30 Josiah's sudden death comes as a shock and seems to be an anticlimax after the praise the narrator lavishes on the king's reign. **23.29** *Pharaoh Neco,* who had just come to the throne in 610 B.C.E., was apparently on his way to join the Assyrians in an attempt to curb the growing power of the Babylonians. He met Josiah in 609 B.C.E. at *Megiddo,* which was strategically located in the Plain of Esdraelon in northwestern Palestine on the standard trade route between Egypt and Mesopotamia. It is usually assumed that Josiah attempted to block the Egyptian advance, but the text does not actually mention a battle. It may be that Neco simply murdered Josiah. **23.30** *People of the land.* See note on 11.14.

23.31–35 Jehoahaz's brief reign ends when Neco interferes directly in Judean affairs and places a puppet king on the throne. The text gives no details about the evil Jehoahaz is said to have done. **23.31** *Jehoahaz* ruled in 609 B.C.E. **23.33** *Riblah* lay about seven miles south of Kadesh on the Orontes River on the trade route connecting Egypt, northern Syria, and Mesopotamia. A *talent* weighs about 75 pounds.

23.36–37 Jehoiakim was the king upon whom God's judgment finally fell. Like all of the other Judean kings after Josiah, he is evaluated negatively by the narrator. **23.36** Jehoiakim ruled ca. 609–598 B.C.E.

24.1–7 Because in the mind of the narrator the fate of Judah has already been sealed, little time is spent in describing the achievements of Jehoiakim, and the text concentrates completely on his relationship with the Babylonians. **24.1** At the battle of Carchemish (605 B.C.E.), Nebuchadnezzar had won a decisive victory over the Egyptians, and he followed this triumph with a campaign in Syria and Palestine. It was during this time that Jehoiakim thought it prudent to conclude a treaty with Nebuchadnezzar, and Judah was a Babylonian vassal from 604 to 602 B.C.E. However, in 601/600 B.C.E. the Babylonians

deans, bands of the Arameans, bands of
the Moabites, and bands of the Ammon-
ites; he sent them against Judah to de-
stroy it, according to the word of the
LORD that he spoke by his servants the
prophets. 3 Surely this came upon Judah
at the command of the LORD, to remove
them out of his sight, for the sins of Ma-
nasseh, for all that he had committed,
4 and also for the innocent blood that he
had shed; for he filled Jerusalem with in-
nocent blood, and the LORD was not will-
ing to pardon. 5 Now the rest of the deeds
of Jehoiakim, and all that he did, are they
not written in the Book of the Annals of
the Kings of Judah? 6 So Jehoiakim slept
with his ancestors; then his son Jehoiachin
succeeded him. 7 The king of Egypt did
not come again out of his land, for the
king of Babylon had taken over all that
belonged to the king of Egypt from the
Wadi of Egypt to the River Euphrates.

Jehoiachin and the Siege of Jerusalem

8 Jehoiachin was eighteen years old
when he began to reign; he reigned three
months in Jerusalem. His mother's name
was Nehushta daughter of Elnathan of
Jerusalem. 9 He did what was evil in
the sight of the LORD, just as his father
had done.

10 At that time the servants of King
Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came up to
Jerusalem, and the city was besieged.
11 King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came
to the city, while his servants were besieg-
ing it; 12 King Jehoiachin of Judah gave
himself up to the king of Babylon, him-
self, his mother, his servants, his officers,
and his palace officials. The king of Ba-
bylon took him prisoner in the eighth year
of his reign.

13 He carried off all the treasures of
the house of the LORD, and the treasures
of the king's house; he cut in pieces all the
vessels of gold in the temple of the LORD,
which King Solomon of Israel had made,
all this as the LORD had foretold. 14 He
carried away all Jerusalem, all the offi-
cials, all the warriors, ten thousand cap-
tives, all the artisans and the smiths; no
one remained, except the poorest people
of the land. 15 He carried away Jehoiachin
to Babylon; the king's mother, the king's
wives, his officials, and the elite of the
land, he took into captivity from Jerusa-
lem to Babylon. 16 The king of Babylon
brought captive to Babylon all the men of
valor, seven thousand, the artisans and
the smiths, one thousand, all of them
strong and fit for war. 17 The king of Ba-
bylon made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle,
king in his place, and changed his name to
Zedekiah.

Zedekiah and the Fall of Jerusalem

18 Zedekiah was twenty-one years old
when he began to reign; he reigned

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were driven back to their homeland by the Egyptians. Jehoiakim concluded that the political tide had turned, and so he rebelled. **24.2** The rebellion was badly timed, for after resupplying his army Nebuchadnezzar again moved west and began to punish the rebels. This invasion is interpreted by the narrator as the promised punishment against Judah and Jerusalem. The OT frequently uses the name *Chaldeans* to refer to the inhabitants of Babylonia during this period. The *Arameans* (Syrians), *Moabites*, and *Ammonites* were Judah's neighbors to the east and had periodically been at war with Israel and Judah during the monarchical period. **24.3–4** On the *sins of Manasseh*, see 21.1–16. **24.7** The battle of Carchemish put an end to Egyptian power, at least temporarily (see v. 1).

24.8–17 Jehoiakim apparently died during Nebuchadnezzar's invasion of Judah, so the brunt of the Babylonian attack fell on the new king, Jehoiachin. The narrator naturally focuses the account on the Babylonian sack of Jerusalem and on the exile of the king and the royal court. **24.8** *Jehoiachin* ruled briefly in 598/7, before the Babylonians deported him. **24.12** *The eighth year* refers to the year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign in which the deportations actually began. The city was captured in March, 597 B.C.E., the seventh year of Nebuchadnezzar's kingship. **24.13** The prediction of the deportation was made by the prophet Isaiah during the reign of Hezekiah (20.12–21). **24.14** In this verse the number of exiles is set at *ten thousand*, while v. 16 sets the figure at eight thousand.

24.18–25.21 Although Zedekiah ruled for eleven years, the narrator concentrates on the last significant events of the king's reign: the fall of Jerusalem and the exile. A condensed version of this account is found in 2 Chr 36.11–21, and the whole account, with small variations, has been appended to the book of Jeremiah (Jer 52). A shortened version of 25.1–21 is also found in Jer 39.1–14. The unusually large number of accounts of the fall indicates the extraordinary political and religious significance of this traumatic event. **24.18** *Zedekiah* reigned between 597 and 587/6

eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother's
name was Hamutal daughter of Jeremiah
of Libnah. 19 He did what was evil in the
sight of the LORD, just as Jehoiakim had
done. 20 Indeed, Jerusalem and Judah so
angered the LORD that he expelled them
from his presence.

25 Zedekiah rebelled against the king of
Babylon. 1 And in the ninth year
of his reign, in the tenth month,
on the tenth day of the month, King Neb-
uchadnezzar of Babylon came with all his
army against Jerusalem, and laid siege to
it; they built siegeworks against it all
around. 2 So the city was besieged until
the eleventh year of King Zedekiah. 3 On
the ninth day of the fourth month the
famine became so severe in the city that
there was no food for the people of the
land. 4 Then a breach was made in the city
wall;[n] the king with all the soldiers fled[o]
by night by the way of the gate between
the two walls, by the king's garden,
though the Chaldeans were all around the
city. They went in the direction of the Ar-
abah. 5 But the army of the Chaldeans
pursued the king, and overtook him in
the plains of Jericho; all his army was scat-
tered, deserting him. 6 Then they cap-
tured the king and brought him up to the
king of Babylon at Riblah, who passed
sentence on him. 7 They slaughtered the
sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, then put
out the eyes of Zedekiah; they bound him
in fetters and took him to Babylon.

8 In the fifth month, on the seventh
day of the month—which was the nine-
teenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar,
king of Babylon—Nebuzaradan, the cap-
tain of the bodyguard, a servant of the
king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. 9 He
burned the house of the LORD, the king's
house, and all the houses of Jerusalem;
every great house he burned down. 10 All
the army of the Chaldeans who were with
the captain of the guard broke down the
walls around Jerusalem. 11 Nebuzaradan
the captain of the guard carried into exile
the rest of the people who were left in the
city and the deserters who had defected to
the king of Babylon—all the rest of the
population. 12 But the captain of the
guard left some of the poorest people of
the land to be vinedressers and tillers of
the soil.

13 The bronze pillars that were in the
house of the LORD, as well as the stands
and the bronze sea that were in the house
of the LORD, the Chaldeans broke in
pieces, and carried the bronze to Babylon.
14 They took away the pots, the shovels,
the snuffers, the dishes for incense, and
all the bronze vessels used in the temple
service, 15 as well as the firepans and the
basins. What was made of gold the captain
of the guard took away for the gold, and
what was made of silver, for the silver.
16 As for the two pillars, the one sea, and
the stands, which Solomon had made for
the house of the LORD, the bronze of all
these vessels was beyond weighing. 17 The
height of the one pillar was eighteen cu-
bits, and on it was a bronze capital; the
height of the capital was three cubits; lat-
ticework and pomegranates, all of bronze,
were on the capital all around. The sec-
ond pillar had the same, with the lat-
ticework.

18 The captain of the guard took the
chief priest Seraiah, the second priest
Zephaniah, and the three guardians of
the threshold; 19 from the city he took an
officer who had been in command of the

n Heb lacks *wall* *o* Gk Compare Jer 39.4; 52.7: Heb lacks *the king* and lacks *fled*

B.C.E. **24.20** Zedekiah's reign was marked by political indecision as the king struggled unsuccessfully to chart a safe course through troubled Near Eastern waters. Although Egyptian power had been broken in 605 B.C.E. (see note on 24.1), Pharaoh Psammetichus II began to extend his influence into Palestine in 592 B.C.E., and thereafter Zedekiah was torn between maintaining his status as a Babylonian vassal and seeking a new alliance with Egypt. He finally decided on the latter course, with disastrous results. **25.1–2** The siege of Jerusalem finally began in January of 587 B.C.E. and lasted for eighteen months. **25.4** The city wall was finally breached in July of 586 B.C.E. In their unsuccessful attempt to escape, the king and his court fled through a gate in the southeast wall of Jerusalem, where Hezekiah had built a second wall to protect the pool of Siloam (see note on 20.20–21). The *Arabah* refers to land in the Jordan Valley rift between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. **25.5** *Jericho.* See note on 2.4. **25.6** *Riblah.* See note on 23.33. **25.9** The temple was destroyed in August of 586 B.C.E. **25.11** This is the second deportation of Jerusalem's inhabitants. **25.13–17** On the origin of these temple furnishings, see 1 Kings 7.15–50 and notes. **25.17** A *cubit* is 18 inches.

soldiers, and five men of the king's council who were found in the city; the secretary who was the commander of the army who mustered the people of the land; and sixty men of the people of the land who were found in the city. 20 Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard took them, and brought them to the king of Babylon at Riblah. 21 The king of Babylon struck them down and put them to death at Riblah in the land of Hamath. So Judah went into exile out of its land.

Gedaliah Made Governor of Judah

22 He appointed Gedaliah son of Ahikam son of Shaphan as governor over the people who remained in the land of Judah, whom King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had left. 23 Now when all the captains of the forces and their men heard that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah as governor, they came with their men to Gedaliah at Mizpah, namely, Ishmael son of Nethaniah, Johanan son of Kareah, Seraiah son of Tanhumeth the Netophathite, and Jaazaniah son of the Maacathite. 24 Gedaliah swore to them and their men, saying, "Do not be afraid because of the Chaldean officials; live in the land, serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you." 25 But in the seventh month, Ishmael son of Nethaniah son of Elishama, of the royal family, came with ten men; they struck down Gedaliah so that he died, along with the Judeans and Chaldeans who were with him at Mizpah. 26 Then all the people, high and low,[p] and the captains of the forces set out and went to Egypt; for they were afraid of the Chaldeans.

Jehoiachin Released from Prison

27 In the thirty-seventh year of the exile of King Jehoiachin of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, King Evil-merodach of Babylon, in the year that he began to reign, released King Jehoiachin of Judah from prison; 28 he spoke kindly to him, and gave him a seat above the other seats of the kings who were with him in Babylon. 29 So Jehoiachin put aside his prison clothes. Every day of his life he dined regularly in the king's presence. 30 For his allowance, a regular allowance was given him by the king, a portion every day, as long as he lived.

p Or *young and old*

25.22–26 In an attempt to maintain political stability, Nebuchadnezzar appoints an administrator from an important Judean family. A more detailed account of Gedaliah's activities is found in Jer 40.7–41.18 **25.22** Gedaliah's grandfather, *Shaphan*, had been the scribe during the reign of Josiah (22.3). Gedaliah's father, *Ahikam*, was part of the delegation sent to Huldah (22.12) and was later a supporter of Jeremiah (Jer 26.24). **25.23** Several Israelite towns bore the name *Mizpah*. The one mentioned here probably lay on the border between Israel and Judah, about eight miles north of Jerusalem. Mizpah may have been one of the few sites left standing after the Babylonian invasion. **25.24** Gedaliah's pro-Babylonian stance was also shared by Jeremiah, who received special treatment from the Babylonians after the fall of Jerusalem (Jer 27.1–22; 39.13–14; 40.1–6). **25.26** This verse seems to imply that the remaining inhabitants fled to Egypt (cf. v. 21).

25.27–30 This brief epilogue recounting Jehoiachin's release from prison introduces a note of hope that the Davidic monarchy might not be finally destroyed. A parallel account is found in Jer 52.31–34. **25.27** *Evil-merodach* ruled Babylon from ca. 562 to 560 B.C.E.

1 CHRONICLES

IN THE HEBREW BIBLE 1 and 2 Chronicles are called "The Events of the Days." The title Chronicles can be traced back to Jerome in the fifth century C.E. The books of 1 and 2 Chronicles were written after the exile and in Jerusalem, probably in the fourth century B.C.E. The author is conventionally called the Chronicler. While these books share many themes with the nearly contemporaneous books of Ezra and Nehemiah, a growing number of scholars believe they are separate compositions. Note, however, that the first verses of Ezra (1.1–3a) are identical to the last verses of Chronicles (2 Chr 36.22–23).

Structure and Sources

The books of Chronicles consist of four sections: genealogies and lists that trace the story from Adam to the community after the exile (1 Chr 1–9); the reign of David (1 Chr 10–29); the reign of Solomon (2 Chr 1–9); and the history of the Davidic monarchy until the Babylonian captivity (2 Chr 10–36).

The books are largely parallel to the books of Samuel and Kings, which are part of the Deuteronomistic History, a portion of the Hebrew Bible running from Deuteronomy to 2 Kings, and they reached their final form in the mid-sixth century B.C.E. (2 Sam 9–20 is passed over, and the material on the Northern Kingdom is virtually ignored). In fact, Samuel and Kings served as the major source for the Chronicler, though his copy of these books differed in significant ways from the text as we now have it in the Hebrew Bible. Especially useful in establishing the earlier text of Samuel and Kings are the Greek translation of the Bible (the Septuagint) and the Dead Sea Scrolls. The genealogical notices of 1 Chr 1–8 show strong ties to Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Joshua, Samuel, and Ruth. Pss 96; 105; 106 are cited in 1 Chr 16. The Chronicler also used the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Zechariah. The Chronicler refers readers to additional sources at the end of every king's history, though most of these references are taken over or revised from the Deuteronomistic History. The genealogies in 1 Chr 1–9 came to the Chronicler from a variety of sources, as did a number of other lists of names (1 Chr 12; 23–27). Material that appears to come from other sources includes the description of the fortifications of Rehoboam (2 Chr

11.5–10), the descriptions of armies (2 Chr 14.8; 17.14–19; 25.5; 26.11–15), and the reference to Hezekiah's tunnel (2 Chr 32.30). Because of their importance, parallels in Samuel and Kings are cited at the beginning of notes wherever appropriate.

Theology

Whereas past scholarship often debated the historical value of the Chronicler's additional material, there is a greater interest today in the theological point the author was making. At the same time archaeological and form-critical judgments are reaching new levels of sophistication. Occasionally there is no hard data that justify a historical judgment. The Chronicler's magnification of an account, often for theological reasons, can be seen in his use of large numbers. Abijah, for example, accompanied by an army of 400,000, attacked the army of Jeroboam, which was 800,000 strong, and inflicted 500,000 casualties (2 Chr 13).

The author frequently expresses his own views in royal speeches and prayers that often base their appeal on an authoritative scriptural text. These compositions play a significant role in the structuring of Chronicles. The speeches (1 Chr 22; 28; 29) and a prayer of David (1 Chr 29.10–19) link David closely with Solomon and place great emphasis on the temple. The period of the Divided Monarchy is enclosed with speeches calling for repentance by Abijah (2 Chr 13.4–12) and by Hezekiah (2 Chr 30.6–9). Both speeches indicate the Chronicler's openness to the Northern Kingdom's participation in the ritual life of the Jerusalem temple. Frequent references to prophets are found in material taken from the parallel accounts in Samuel and Kings, in material added by the Chronicler, and in source references that mention prophets in connection with certain kings (2 Chr 9.29).

Other Matters of Worldview

The Chronicler shows special loyalty to the Levites and includes in their number singers, gatekeepers, and even bakers (1 Chr 9.31–32). Among the many tasks of the Levites was teaching (2 Chr 17.7–9). They were also in charge of holy objects, prepared the rows of "show" bread (1 Chr 9.28–32; 23.29–31; 2 Chr 29.18), and served as judges and scribes. In addition, they led in singing and praise (1 Chr 15.16–24; 16.4–42).

The author devotes extraordinary attention to David and Solomon and treats them as equals, often omitting negative information contained in his sources. In his presentation of events, the work of David and Solomon centered on the building of the temple and the installation of its personnel. The Chronicler calls on all Israel of his day, including especially the Northern Kingdom, to join in recognizing the Second Temple and its ritual life in Jerusalem.

The Chronicler interprets divine punishments or blessings as retribution for a king's behavior. Such retribution is immediate, with the consequences befalling the evil or righteous king during his own lifetime. Faithful royal behavior is

accompanied by many children, building projects, a well-equipped army, victory in war, cultic reforms, or tribute from the nations. A wicked king experienced God's wrath, war, defeat in battle, disease, or conspiracy.

Interpreters now find a far more open attitude to the Northern Kingdom in Chronicles than was previously recognized. Those willing to return to the Lord and come to his sanctuary were to be welcomed (2 Chr 30.7–8). Hezekiah's Passover celebration was unique in its inclusion of the North, and both he and Josiah conducted reforming activities in the North. The Chronicler seems to be inviting Northerners to acknowledge the claims of the temple in Jerusalem and to participate in its ritual life. *Ralph W. Klein*

From Adam to Abraham

1 Adam, Seth, Enosh; 2 Kenan, Mahalalel, Jared; 3 Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech; 4 Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

5 The descendants of Japheth: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras. 6 The descendants of Gomer: Ashkenaz, Diphath,[a] and Togarmah. 7 The descendants of Javan: Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Rodanim.[b]

8 The descendants of Ham: Cush, Egypt, Put, and Canaan. 9 The descendants of Cush: Seba, Havilah, Sabta, Raama, and Sabteca. The descendants of Raamah: Sheba and Dedan. 10 Cush became the father of Nimrod; he was the first to be a mighty one on the earth.

11 Egypt became the father of Ludim, Anamim, Lehabim, Naphtuhim, 12 Pathrusim, Casluhim, and Caphtorim, from whom the Philistines come.[c]

13 Canaan became the father of Sidon his firstborn, and Heth, 14 and the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, 15 the Hivites, the Arkites, the Sinites, 16 the Arvadites, the Zemarites, and the Hamathites.

17 The descendants of Shem: Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud, Aram, Uz, Hul, Gether, and Meshech.[d] 18 Arpachshad became the father of Shelah; and Shelah became the father of Eber. 19 To Eber were born two sons: the name of the one was Peleg (for in his days the earth was divided), and the name of his brother Joktan. 20 Joktan became the father of Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, 21 Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, 22 Ebal, Abimael, Sheba, 23 Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab; all these were the descendants of Joktan.

24 Shem, Arpachshad, Shelah; 25 Eber,

a Gen 10.3 *Ripath*; See Gk Vg b Gen 10.4 *Dodanim*; See Syr Vg c Heb *Casluhim, from which the Philistines come, Caphtorim*; See Am 9.7, Jer 47.4
d *Mash* in Gen 10.23

1.1–27 Cf. Gen 5.1–32; 10.1–29; 11.10–26. The author traces human history from Adam, the first ancestor of humankind, to Abraham, the ancestor of the faithful. The real goal of the genealogy in ch. 1, however, is reached with Israel (2.1–2). God's purpose for Israel began at creation. Nearly all the genealogies of Genesis are included except Gen 4.17–22 (the genealogy of Cain) and 19.30–38 (the births of Moab and Benammi [Ammonites]). **1.1–4** The list of names is derived from Gen 5, but other details of that genealogy are omitted. **1.5–23** The Table of Nations in Gen 10 divides the then-known world into geographical/cultural groups roughly as follows: the children of Shem are in Mesopotamia and Arabia; the children of Ham are in northeast Africa and Syro-Palestine; the children of Japheth are in Europe and Asia. Nations are assigned to eponymous ancestors who fit into a genealogical tree (e.g., Egypt in vv. 8, 11). **1.7** *Rodanim*, the inhabitants of Rhodes. **1.8** *Canaan*, considered a son of Ham, as in Gen 9.22. In modern discussions, Canaan and the Amorites (v. 14) are considered Semites. **1.10** *Nimrod*. Much additional information about this hunter is provided in Gen 10.8–12 (vv. 9–14 in Hebrew). **1.11** *Caphtorim*, the people of Crete (cf. Jer 47.4; Am 9.7). **1.24–27** This genealogical list is derived from Gen 11.10–26, with the omission of the details, as in vv. 1–4. There is some overlap with the materi-

Peleg, Reu; 26 Serug, Nahor, Terah;
27 Abram, that is, Abraham.

From Abraham to Jacob

28 The sons of Abraham: Isaac and
Ishmael. 29 These are their genealogies:
the firstborn of Ishmael, Nebaioth; and
Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, 30 Mishma, Du-
mah, Massa, Hadad, Tema, 31 Jetur, Na-
phish, and Kedemah. These are the sons
of Ishmael. 32 The sons of Keturah, Abra-
ham's concubine: she bore Zimran, Jok-
shan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah.
The sons of Jokshan: Sheba and Dedan.
33 The sons of Midian: Ephah, Epher, Ha-
noch, Abida, and Eldaah. All these were
the descendants of Keturah.

34 Abraham became the father of
Isaac. The sons of Isaac: Esau and Israel.
35 The sons of Esau: Eliphaz, Reuel, Je-
ush, Jalam, and Korah. 36 The sons of Eli-
phaz: Teman, Omar, Zephi, Gatam,
Kenaz, Timna, and Amalek. 37 The sons
of Reuel: Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and
Mizzah.

38 The sons of Seir: Lotan, Shobal,
Zibeon, Anah, Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan.
39 The sons of Lotan: Hori and Homam;
and Lotan's sister was Timna. 40 The sons
of Shobal: Alian, Manahath, Ebal, Shephi,
and Onam. The sons of Zibeon: Aiah and
Anah. 41 The sons of Anah: Dishon. The
sons of Dishon: Hamran, Eshban, Ithran,
and Cheran. 42 The sons of Ezer: Bilhan,
Zaavan, and Jaakan.[e] The sons of Di-
shan:[f] Uz and Aran.

43 These are the kings who reigned in
the land of Edom before any king reigned
over the Israelites: Bela son of Beor,
whose city was called Dinhabah. 44 When
Bela died, Jobab son of Zerah of Bozrah
succeeded him. 45 When Jobab died, Hu-
sham of the land of the Temanites suc-
ceeded him. 46 When Husham died,
Hadad son of Bedad, who defeated Mid-
ian in the country of Moab, succeeded
him; and the name of his city was Avith.
47 When Hadad died, Samlah of Masre-
kah succeeded him. 48 When Samlah died,
Shaul[g] of Rehoboth on the Euphrates
succeeded him. 49 When Shaul[g] died,
Baal-hanan son of Achbor succeeded him.
50 When Baal-hanan died, Hadad suc-
ceeded him; the name of his city was Pai,
and his wife's name Mehetabel daughter
of Matred, daughter of Me-zahab. 51 And
Hadad died.

The clans[h] of Edom were: clans[h]
Timna, Aliah,[i] Jetheth, 52 Oholibamah,
Elah, Pinon, 53 Kenaz, Teman, Mibzar,
54 Magdiel, and Iram; these are the clans[h]
of Edom.

The Sons of Israel and the Descendants of Judah

2 These are the sons of Israel: Reu-
ben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar,
Zebulun, 2 Dan, Joseph, Benjamin, Naph-
tali, Gad, and Asher. 3 The sons of Judah:

e Or *and Akan*; See Gen 36.27 f See 1.38: Heb *Dishon* g Or *Saul* h Or *chiefs* i Or *Alvah*; See Gen 36.40

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als in vv. 17–23. **1.25** *Eber*. Cf. Gen 10.24–25; 11.14–17. The root of the name plays on the name "Hebrews" to portray Eber as the eponymous ancestor, the namesake, of the Hebrew people. **1.27** *Abram*. His name is changed to Abraham in Gen 17.5.

1.28–54 Cf. Gen 25.1–4, 13–16, 19–26; 36.1–5, 10–13, 20–28, 31–43. Abraham's descendants through three separate women, with the subsidiary, nonelect lines reported first. **1.29–31** *Ishmael*, the son of Abraham and his Egyptian slave-girl Hagar (Gen 16; 21). **1.32–33** Perhaps a later addition to the Chronicler's account; note the summary in v. 28. *Keturah*, a concubine Abraham took after the death of Sarah. **1.34** *Israel*, the standard name for Jacob in Chronicles (except for 1 Chr 16.13, 17, both quotations from Ps 105). **1.35–54** *Esau*/Edom, the brother of Israel, is given lengthy attention. **1.36** *Timna*, in Gen 36.12 a concubine of Eliphaz and mother of Amalek. **1.38–42** The *sons of Seir* inhabited the same territory as Edom (cf. Gen 36.8). **1.43–51a** List of Edomite kings. **1.43** This verse presupposes the existence of the monarchy in Israel, so that this genealogy must be considerably later than Moses. **1.51** *Hadad*'s death is not recorded in Genesis. *Clans*. *Chiefs* (see text note *h*) is preferable.

2.1–55 Chronicles has an inclusive view of Israel and so lists all twelve tribes. For the order of the tribes in these verses, with the exception of Dan, see Gen 35.23–26. The rest of chs. 2–8 provide details of the Israelite genealogy though no details are provided for Zebulun and, perhaps, Dan (but see 7.12). The genealogy of Judah, the most important tribe in the postexilic community, extends from 2.3 to 4.23. **2.3–4** Based on Gen 38. *Judah* sires twins by his daughter-in-law Tamar. **2.3** *Bath-shua*, the daughter of Shua

Er, Onan, and Shelah; these three the Canaanite woman Bath-shua bore to him.
Now Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in
the sight of the LORD, and he put him to
death. 4His daughter-in-law Tamar also
bore him Perez and Zerah. Judah had five
sons in all.

5 The sons of Perez: Hezron and Hamul. 6The sons of Zerah: Zimri, Ethan,
Heman, Calcol, and Dara,[j] five in all.
7The sons of Carmi: Achar, the troubler
of Israel, who transgressed in the matter
of the devoted thing; 8and Ethan's son
was Azariah.

9 The sons of Hezron, who were born
to him: Jerahmeel, Ram, and Chelubai.
10Ram became the father of Amminadab,
and Amminadab became the father of
Nahshon, prince of the sons of Judah.
11Nahshon became the father of Salma,
Salma of Boaz, 12Boaz of Obed, Obed of
Jesse. 13Jesse became the father of Eliab
his firstborn, Abinadab the second,
Shimea the third, 14Nethanel the fourth,
Raddai the fifth, 15Ozem the sixth, David
the seventh; 16and their sisters were Zeruiah and Abigail. The sons of Zeruiah:
Abishai, Joab, and Asahel, three. 17Abigail bore Amasa, and the father of Amasa
was Jether the Ishmaelite.

18 Caleb son of Hezron had children
by his wife Azubah, and by Jerioth; these
were her sons: Jesher, Shobab, and Ardon. 19When Azubah died, Caleb married Ephrath, who bore him Hur. 20Hur
became the father of Uri, and Uri became
the father of Bezalel.

21 Afterward Hezron went in to the
daughter of Machir father of Gilead,
whom he married when he was sixty years
old; and she bore him Segub; 22and Segub became the father of Jair, who had
twenty-three towns in the land of Gilead.
23But Geshur and Aram took from them
Havvoth-jair, Kenath and its villages, sixty
towns. All these were descendants of Machir, father of Gilead. 24After the death
of Hezron, in Caleb-ephrathah, Abijah
wife of Hezron bore him Ashhur, father
of Tekoa.

25 The sons of Jerahmeel, the firstborn of Hezron: Ram his firstborn, Bunah, Oren, Ozem, and Ahijah. 26Jerahmeel also had another wife, whose
name was Atarah; she was the mother of
Onam. 27The sons of Ram, the firstborn
of Jerahmeel: Maaz, Jamin, and Eker.
28The sons of Onam: Shammai and Jada.
The sons of Shammai: Nadab and Abishur. 29The name of Abishur's wife was
Abihail, and she bore him Ahban and Molid. 30The sons of Nadab: Seled and Appaim; and Seled died childless. 31The
son[k] of Appaim: Ishi. The son[k] of Ishi:
Sheshan. The son[k] of Sheshan: Ahlai.
32The sons of Jada, Shammai's brother:
Jether and Jonathan; and Jether died
childless. 33The sons of Jonathan: Peleth
and Zaza. These were the descendants of
Jerahmeel. 34Now Sheshan had no sons,
only daughters; but Sheshan had an
Egyptian slave, whose name was Jarha.
35So Sheshan gave his daughter in marriage to his slave Jarha; and she bore him
Attai. 36Attai became the father of Nathan, and Nathan of Zabad. 37Zabad became the father of Ephlal, and Ephlal of
Obed. 38Obed became the father of Jehu,

j Or *Darda*; Compare Syr Tg some Gk Mss; See 1 Kings 4.31 *k* Heb *sons*

(Gen 38.2). **2.4** *Perez*, a twin, who makes a "breach" and comes out of the womb before his brother Zerah (Gen 38.27–30). **2.5** *Hezron and Hamul*, grandsons of Judah (Gen 46.12; Num 26.21). **2.6–8** Descendants of Zerah, the younger brother of Perez. **2.7** *Achar* (cf. Achan in Josh 7.1, 18; Achor in Josh 7.24, 26) violated the provisions of the holy war by taking booty from Jericho. **2.9** *Chelubai*, Caleb. The descendants of Hezron, grandson of Judah, are divided into the descendants of Ram (2.10–17; 3.1–24 [descendants of David]), Caleb (2.18–24, 42–55), and Jerahmeel (2.25–33; 2.34–41). **2.10–17** *Ram*, Hezron's second son, was the ancestor of David. **2.15** According to 1 Sam 16.10–11; 17.12–14, David is the eighth son. **2.16–17** *Abishai, Joab, Asahel*, and *Amasa*, nephews of David and his trusted military leaders. **2.17** *Ishmaelite*. The Hebrew of 2 Sam 17.25 reads "Israelite." **2.18–24** Descendants of Caleb/Chelubai, the third son of Hezron. **2.18** The verse should begin, "Caleb . . . had Jerioth by his wife Azubah." Hence Jerioth is the mother of the following three men. **2.20** *Bezalel*, a craftsman who worked on the tabernacle (Ex 31.2; 35.30). **2.24** *In . . . Ashhur*, better "Caleb went in to Ephrathah (and Hezron's wife was Abijah) and she bore him Ashhur." The parenthesis supplies the name of the daughter of Machir in v. 21. **2.25–33, 34–41** Two lists of descendants of Jerahmeel, the oldest son of Hezron. At the time of David the Jerahmeelites lived in the Negeb of Judah (1 Sam 27.10; 30.29). According to v. 31 Ahlai is the son of Sheshan, but according to v. 34 Sheshan had no sons.

and Jehu of Azariah. 39 Azariah became
the father of Helez, and Helez of Eleasah.
40 Eleasah became the father of Sismai,
and Sismai of Shallum. 41 Shallum became
the father of Jekamiah, and Jekamiah of
Elishama.

42 The sons of Caleb brother of Je-
rahmeel: Mesha[l] his firstborn, who was
father of Ziph. The sons of Mareshah fa-
ther of Hebron. 43 The sons of Hebron:
Korah, Tappuah, Rekem, and Shema.
44 Shema became father of Raham, father
of Jorkeam; and Rekem became the fa-
ther of Shammai. 45 The son of Shammai:
Maon; and Maon was the father of Beth-
zur. 46 Ephah also, Caleb's concubine,
bore Haran, Moza, and Gazez; and Haran
became the father of Gazez. 47 The sons of
Jahdai: Regem, Jotham, Geshan, Pelet,
Ephah, and Shaaph. 48 Maacah, Caleb's
concubine, bore Sheber and Tirhanah.
49 She also bore Shaaph father of Mad-
mannah, Sheva father of Machbenah and
father of Gibea; and the daughter of Ca-
leb was Achsah. 50 These were the descen-
dants of Caleb.

The sons[m] of Hur the firstborn of Eph-
rathah: Shobal father of Kiriath-jearim,
51 Salma father of Bethlehem, and Ha-
reph father of Beth-gader. 52 Shobal fa-
ther of Kiriath-jearim had other sons:
Haroeh, half of the Menuhoth. 53 And the
families of Kiriath-jearim: the Ithrites, the
Puthites, the Shumathites, and the Mish-
raites; from these came the Zorathites and
the Eshtaolites. 54 The sons of Salma:
Bethlehem, the Netophathites, Atroth-
beth-joab, and half of the Manahathites,
the Zorites. 55 The families also of the
scribes that lived at Jabez: the Tirathites,
the Shimeathites, and the Sucathites.
These are the Kenites who came from
Hammath, father of the house of Rechab.

Descendants of David and Solomon

3 These are the sons of David who
were born to him in Hebron: the
firstborn Amnon, by Ahinoam the Jezre-
elite; the second Daniel, by Abigail the
Carmelite; 2 the third Absalom, son of
Maacah, daughter of King Talmai of Ge-
shur; the fourth Adonijah, son of Hag-
gith; 3 the fifth Shephatiah, by Abital; the
sixth Ithream, by his wife Eglah; 4 six
were born to him in Hebron, where he
reigned for seven years and six months.
And he reigned thirty-three years in Jeru-
salem. 5 These were born to him in Jeru-
salem: Shimea, Shobab, Nathan, and
Solomon, four by Bath-shua, daughter of
Ammiel; 6 then Ibhar, Elishama, Eliphe-
let, 7 Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia, 8 Elishama,
Eliada, and Eliphelet, nine. 9 All these
were David's sons, besides the sons of the
concubines; and Tamar was their sister.

10 The descendants of Solomon: Re-
hoboam, Abijah his son, Asa his son, Je-
hoshaphat his son, 11 Joram his son,
Ahaziah his son, Joash his son, 12 Amaziah
his son, Azariah his son, Jotham his son,
13 Ahaz his son, Hezekiah his son, Manas-
seh his son, 14 Amon his son, Josiah his
son. 15 The sons of Josiah: Johanan the
firstborn, the second Jehoiakim, the third
Zedekiah, the fourth Shallum. 16 The de-
scendants of Jehoiakim: Jeconiah his son,
Zedekiah his son; 17 and the sons of Jeco-

l Gk reads *Mareshah* *m* Gk Vg: Heb *son*

2.41 *Elishama*'s pedigree is certified by a linear genealogy of fourteen generations (vv. 34–41), but his identity is unknown. **2.42–50a** Some of the additional descendants of Caleb are actually cities (e.g., Ziph, Mareshah, Hebron). **2.50b–55** A continuation of the genealogy of the Calebite Hur, begun in vv. 18–19.

3.1–24 Cf. 2 Sam 3.2–5; 5.5, 13–16. **3.1–4** Sons born to David in Hebron. *Daniel*, Chileab (2 Sam 3.3). *Abigail*, widow of Nabal (1 Sam 25). **3.4** 2 Sam 5.5 specifies that David's reign in Hebron was "over Judah," while his reign in Jerusalem was "over all Israel and Judah." **3.5–9** Sons born to David in Jerusalem. Cf. 1 Chr 14.3–7. **3.5** Only Solomon is identified as a son of Bath-shua elsewhere. **3.6–7** *Eliphelet, Nogah*. Cf. 1 Chr 14.5–6; lacking in 2 Sam 5.15. **3.9** This verse is an addition by the Chronicler. Cf. 2 Sam 13.1. **3.10–16** Kings in Jerusalem. **3.11** Athaliah is not included in the list because she was not a descendant of David. **3.12** *Azariah* (2 Kings 15.1), Uzziah in 2 Chr 26. **3.15** *Johanan*, otherwise unknown. *Shallum*, Jehoahaz (2 Chr 36.1; Jer 22.11). **3.16** *Jeconiah*, Jehoiachin (2 Chr 36.9); Coniah (Jer 22.24). *Zedekiah his son*. Zedekiah was the successor (son) to Jeconiah, and Jeconiah the successor (son) to Jehoiakim; Zedekiah's father was Josiah, as v. 15 attests. 2 Chr 36.10 makes Zedekiah the brother of Jehoiachin. **3.17–24** The descendants of Jeconiah, who was taken captive in 597 B.C.E. and released from Babylonian prison some thirty-seven years later (2 Kings 25.27–30). The following approximate birth dates have been proposed: Jeconiah,

niah, the captive: Shealtiel his son, 18 Malchiram, Pedaiah, Shenazzar, Jekamiah, Hoshama, and Nedabiah; 19 The sons of Pedaiah: Zerubbabel and Shimei; and the sons of Zerubbabel: Meshullam and Hananiah, and Shelomith was their sister; 20 and Hashubah, Ohel, Berechiah, Hasadiah, and Jushab-hesed, five. 21 The sons of Hananiah: Pelatiah and Jeshaiah, his son[n] Rephaiah, his son[n] Arnan, his son[n] Obadiah, his son[n] Shecaniah. 22 The son[o] of Shecaniah: Shemaiah. And the sons of Shemaiah: Hattush, Igal, Bariah, Neariah, and Shaphat, six. 23 The sons of Neariah: Elioenai, Hizkiah, and Azrikam, three. 24 The sons of Elioenai: Hodaviah, Eliashib, Pelaiah, Akkub, Johanan, Delaiah, and Anani, seven.

Descendants of Judah

4 The sons of Judah: Perez, Hezron, Carmi, Hur, and Shobal. 2 Reaiah son of Shobal became the father of Jahath, and Jahath became the father of Ahumai and Lahad. These were the families of the Zorathites. 3 These were the sons[p] of Etam: Jezreel, Ishma, and Idbash; and the name of their sister was Hazzelelponi, 4 and Penuel was the father of Gedor, and Ezer the father of Hushah. These were the sons of Hur, the firstborn of Ephrathah, the father of Bethlehem. 5 Ashhur father of Tekoa had two wives, Helah and Naarah; 6 Naarah bore him Ahuzzam, Hepher, Temeni, and Haahashtari.[q] These were the sons of Naarah. 7 The sons of Helah: Zereth, Izhar,[r] and Ethnan. 8 Koz became the father of Anub, Zobebah, and the families of Aharhel son of Harum. 9 Jabez was honored more than his brothers; and his mother named him Jabez, saying, "Because I bore him in pain." 10 Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, "Oh that you would bless me and enlarge my border, and that your hand might be with me, and that you would keep me from hurt and harm!" And God granted what he asked. 11 Chelub the brother of Shuhah became the father of Mehir, who was the father of Eshton. 12 Eshton became the father of Beth-rapha, Paseah, and Tehinnah the father of Ir-nahash. These are the men of Recah. 13 The sons of Kenaz: Othniel and Seraiah; and the sons of Othniel: Hathath and Meonothai.[s] 14 Meonothai became the father of Ophrah; and Seraiah became the father of Joab father of Geharashim,[t] so-called because they were artisans. 15 The sons of Caleb son of Jephunneh: Iru, Elah, and Naam; and the son[o] of Elah: Kenaz. 16 The sons of Jehal-

n Gk Compare Syr Vg: Heb *sons of* *o* Heb *sons*
p Gk Compare Vg: Heb *the father*
q Or *Ahashtari* *r* Another reading is *Zohar*
s Gk Vg: Heb lacks *and Meonothai* *t* That is *Valley of artisans*

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616 (cf. 2 Kings 24.8; 2 Chr 36.9 [608]); Pedaiah, 595; Zerubbabel, 570; Hananiah, 545; Shecaniah, 520; Shemaiah, 495; Neariah, 470; Elioenai, 445; Hodaviah, 420. If these proposals are correct, the present form of this list would date to about 400 B.C.E. If this list is part of the original edition of Chronicles, a date prior to 400 B.C.E. would be impossible. **3.17–18** The Babylonian Chronicle, a cuneiform historiographical source of the eighth century B.C.E., mentions five sons of the king of Judah instead of the seven named here. **3.18** *Shenazzar*, to be distinguished from Sheshbazzar (Ezra 1.8). **3.19** *Zerubbabel* and Joshua were leaders of the postexilic community at the time of Haggai. Elsewhere he is called the son of Shealtiel (Ezra 3.2). Perhaps Shealtiel died childless and Pedaiah engendered Zerubbabel in a levirate marriage (Deut 25.5–10). **3.20** The last five children of Zerubbabel may have been born after their parents' return to Palestine. The etymologies of these names express Israel's hope; e.g., Hashubah in Hebrew means "Yahweh has considered," Berechiah, "Yahweh has blessed." **3.21** *Rephaiah . . . Shecaniah*, brothers of Pelatiah and Jeshaiah. On the basis of the Septuagint, some understand them as four additional generations, as translated here. **3.22** *Six*. Only five names are given. **3.24** *Anani* is mentioned in an Aramaic letter of 407 B.C.E.

4.1–23 A miscellaneous collection of genealogies related to Judah. **4.1** *Sons*, descendants. Hezron was a grandson of Judah (2.5), Hur a great-great-grandson (2.19), etc. **4.2** *Zorathites*. Zorah (cf. 2.53) was a city fortified by Rehoboam, as were Etam (v. 3) and Tekoa (v. 5; cf. 2 Chr 11.6–10). **4.4** *Bethlehem*, a town five miles south of Jerusalem. Ephrathah is listed as its "grandmother" and either Hur or Salma (1 Chr 2.51, 54) as its "father." Cf. "Bethlehem of Ephrathah" (Mic 5.2). **4.5** *Tekoa*, home of Amos; six miles south of Bethlehem. **4.9–10** *Jabez* is linked etymologically to the word for *pain* and *harm*. **4.13** *Sons of Kenaz*. The Kenizzites were a southern tribe that joined with Judah. Caleb is a Kenizzite in Num 32.12; Josh 14.6, 14. **4.14** *Ge-harashim*, some thirty miles northwest of Jerusalem; cf. Neh 11.35. **4.16** *Ziph*, a town south of

lelel: Ziph, Ziphah, Tiria, and Asarel.
17 The sons of Ezrah: Jether, Mered,
Epher, and Jalon. These are the sons of
Bithiah, daughter of Pharaoh, whom Me-
red married;[u] and she conceived and
bore[v] Miriam, Shammai, and Ishbah fa-
ther of Eshtemoa. 18 And his Judean wife
bore Jered father of Gedor, Heber father
of Soco, and Jekuthiel father of Zanoah.
19 The sons of the wife of Hodiah, the sis-
ter of Naham, were the fathers of Keilah
the Garmite and Eshtemoa the Maaca-
thite. 20 The sons of Shimon: Amnon,
Rinnah, Ben-hanan, and Tilon. The sons
of Ishi: Zoheth and Ben-zoheth. 21 The
sons of Shelah son of Judah: Er father of
Lecah, Laadah father of Mareshah, and
the families of the guild of linen workers
at Beth-ashbea; 22 and Jokim, and the
men of Cozeba, and Joash, and Saraph,
who married into Moab but returned to
Lehem[w] (now the records[x] are ancient).
23 These were the potters and inhabitants
of Netaim and Gederah; they lived there
with the king in his service.

Descendants of Simeon

24 The sons of Simeon: Nemuel, Ja-
min, Jarib, Zerah, Shaul;[y] 25 Shallum was
his son, Mibsam his son, Mishma his son.
26 The sons of Mishma: Hammuel his son,
Zaccur his son, Shimei his son. 27 Shimei
had sixteen sons and six daughters; but
his brothers did not have many children,
nor did all their family multiply like the
Judeans. 28 They lived in Beer-sheba,
Moladah, Hazar-shual, 29 Bilhah, Ezem,
Tolad, 30 Bethuel, Hormah, Ziklag,
31 Beth-marcaboth, Hazar-susim, Beth-
biri, and Shaaraim. These were their
towns until David became king. 32 And
their villages were Etam, Ain, Rimmon,
Tochen, and Ashan, five towns, 33 along
with all their villages that were around
these towns as far as Baal. These were
their settlements. And they kept a gene-
alogical record.
34 Meshobab, Jamlech, Joshah son of
Amaziah, 35 Joel, Jehu son of Joshibiah
son of Seraiah son of Asiel, 36 Elioenai, Ja-
akobah, Jeshohaiah, Asaiah, Adiel, Jesim-
iel, Benaiah, 37 Ziza son of Shiphi son of
Allon son of Jedaiah son of Shimri son of
Shemaiah— 38 these mentioned by name
were leaders in their families, and their
clans increased greatly. 39 They journeyed
to the entrance of Gedor, to the east side
of the valley, to seek pasture for their
flocks, 40 where they found rich, good
pasture, and the land was very broad,
quiet, and peaceful; for the former inhab-
itants there belonged to Ham. 41 These,
registered by name, came in the days of
King Hezekiah of Judah, and attacked
their tents and the Meunim who were
found there, and exterminated them to
this day, and settled in their place, be-
cause there was pasture there for their
flocks. 42 And some of them, five hundred
men of the Simeonites, went to Mount
Seir, having as their leaders Pelatiah, Nea-
riah, Rephaiah, and Uzziel, sons of Ishi;
43 they destroyed the remnant of the Am-
alekites that had escaped, and they have
lived there to this day.

Descendants of Reuben

5 The sons of Reuben the firstborn of
Israel. (He was the firstborn, but be-
cause he defiled his father's bed his birth-
right was given to the sons of Joseph son
of Israel, so that he is not enrolled in the
genealogy according to the birthright;
2 though Judah became prominent among

u The clause: *These are . . . married* is transposed from verse 18 *v* Heb lacks *and bore*
w Vg Compare Gk: Heb *and Jashubi-lahem*
x Or *matters* *y* Or *Saul*

Hebron. **4.21** *Shelah*, the oldest surviving son of Judah. *Er*, named after his uncle, the oldest son of Judah. Note the mention of guilds: *linen workers* (v. 21) and *potters* (v. 23). **4.23** *King*. The list dates to preexilic times.

4.24–43 This genealogy is made up of descendants of Simeon, especially through Shaul (vv. 24–27; cf. Gen 46.10; Ex 6.15; Num 26.12–14), settlements of the Simeonites near Beer-sheba (vv. 28–33; cf. Josh 15.21–32; 19.2–8), and leaders and conquests (vv. 34–43). **4.39** *Gedor*. The Septuagint reads "Gerar," a town in the Negeb, within Simeonite territory. Attacks at the time of Hezekiah were against the Philistines in the southwest and against Edom in the southeast (vv. 39–43).

5.1–10 Ch. 5 deals with the two and a half tribes living east of the Jordan. **5.1** Reuben had sexual relations with Bilhah, his father's concubine (Gen 35.22; 49.4). The Chronicler uses this incident to explain why Judah, the fourth oldest son, is listed first. **5.2** *Ruler*, David and his dynasty. The transfer of the birthright to *Joseph* is unknown elsewhere. Both the Northern tribes

his brothers and a ruler came from him,
yet the birthright belonged to Joseph.)
3 The sons of Reuben, the firstborn of Israel: Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi.
4 The sons of Joel: Shemaiah his son, Gog
his son, Shimei his son, 5 Micah his son,
Reaiah his son, Baal his son, 6 Beerah his
son, whom King Tilgath-pilneser of Assyria carried away into exile; he was a
chieftain of the Reubenites. 7 And his kindred by their families, when the genealogy of their generations was reckoned:
the chief, Jeiel, and Zechariah, 8 and Bela
son of Azaz, son of Shema, son of Joel,
who lived in Aroer, as far as Nebo and
Baal-meon. 9 He also lived to the east as
far as the beginning of the desert this side
of the Euphrates, because their cattle had
multiplied in the land of Gilead. 10 And in
the days of Saul they made war on the
Hagrites, who fell by their hand; and they
lived in their tents throughout all the region east of Gilead.

Descendants of Gad

11 The sons of Gad lived beside them
in the land of Bashan as far as Salecah:
12 Joel the chief, Shapham the second, Ja-
nai, and Shaphat in Bashan. 13 And their
kindred according to their clans: Michael,
Meshullam, Sheba, Jorai, Jacan, Zia, and
Eber, seven. 14 These were the sons of Abihail son of Huri, son of Jaroah, son of
Gilead, son of Michael, son of Jeshishai,
son of Jahdo, son of Buz; 15 Ahi son of
Abdiel, son of Guni, was chief in their
clan; 16 and they lived in Gilead, in Bashan and in its towns, and in all the pasture lands of Sharon to their limits. 17 All
of these were enrolled by genealogies in
the days of King Jotham of Judah, and in
the days of King Jeroboam of Israel.

18 The Reubenites, the Gadites, and
the half-tribe of Manasseh had valiant
warriors, who carried shield and sword,
and drew the bow, expert in war, forty-
four thousand seven hundred sixty, ready
for service. 19 They made war on the Hagrites, Jetur, Naphish, and Nodab; 20 and
when they received help against them, the
Hagrites and all who were with them were
given into their hands, for they cried to
God in the battle, and he granted their
entreaty because they trusted in him.
21 They captured their livestock: fifty
thousand of their camels, two hundred
fifty thousand sheep, two thousand donkeys, and one hundred thousand captives.
22 Many fell slain, because the war was of
God. And they lived in their territory until the exile.

The Half-Tribe of Manasseh

23 The members of the half-tribe of
Manasseh lived in the land; they were
very numerous from Bashan to Baal-
hermon, Senir, and Mount Hermon.
24 These were the heads of their clans:
Epher,[z] Ishi, Eliel, Azriel, Jeremiah,
Hodaviah, and Jahdiel, mighty warriors,
famous men, heads of their clans. 25 But
they transgressed against the God of their
ancestors, and prostituted themselves to
the gods of the peoples of the land, whom
God had destroyed before them. 26 So the
God of Israel stirred up the spirit of King
Pul of Assyria, the spirit of King Tilgath-

z Gk Vg: Heb *and Epher*

(Joseph) and the Southern (Judah) have prominence in this verse. **5.3** Cf. Gen 46.9; Ex 6.14; Num 26.5–6. **5.4** *Joel*'s connection to the Reubenite genealogy is not stated (cf. v. 8). **5.6** *Tilgath-pilneser*. The Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III conquered Gilead in 733 B.C.E. **5.8** *Aroer . . . Nebo and Baal-meon*. Since these cities were lost to Moab in the late ninth century B.C.E., according to the Mesha Inscription, the materials in these verses must antedate this time. **5.10** Saul fought with the *Hagrites* (cf. vv. 19–20), an enemy from Transjordan (cf. 11.38; 27.30; Ps 83.6), at the end of the eleventh century B.C.E.

5.11–22 Gad was north of Reuben in Transjordan. **5.16** The Mesha Inscription mentions a people of *Sharon*. **5.17** This enrollment, from about 750 B.C.E., presupposes that Jotham and Jeroboam II were contemporaries. **5.18–22** The war against the Hagrites and others is described in terms of holy war (cf. esp. vv. 20, 22). **5.21** The enormous number of animals and captives demonstrates the size of the God-given victory.

5.23–26 The half-tribe of Manasseh lived in the northernmost part of Transjordan. **5.23** *Senir*. Cf. Deut 3.8–9. *Mount Hermon* (9,230 feet) marked the northernmost limit of Joshua's conquest (Josh 11.3). **5.25–26** A summary of the fate of the two and a half tribes, based in part on 2 Kings 17. **5.26** *Pul*, the Babylonian throne name of Tiglath-pileser. The Assyrian locales at the end of the verse are derived from 2 Kings 17.6; 18.11.

pilneser of Assyria, and he carried them
away, namely, the Reubenites, the Gad-
ites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, and
brought them to Halah, Habor, Hara, and
the river Gozan, to this day.

Descendants of Levi

6 [a] The sons of Levi: Gershom,[b] Ko-
hath, and Merari. 2 The sons of Ko-
hath: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel.
3 The children of Amram: Aaron, Moses,
and Miriam. The sons of Aaron: Nadab,
Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. 4 Eleazar be-
came the father of Phinehas, Phinehas of
Abishua, 5 Abishua of Bukki, Bukki of
Uzzi, 6 Uzzi of Zerahiah, Zerahiah of Me-
raioth, 7 Meraioth of Amariah, Amariah
of Ahitub, 8 Ahitub of Zadok, Zadok of
Ahimaaz, 9 Ahimaaz of Azariah, Azariah
of Johanan, 10 and Johanan of Azariah (it
was he who served as priest in the house
that Solomon built in Jerusalem). 11 Aza-
riah became the father of Amariah, Ama-
riah of Ahitub, 12 Ahitub of Zadok, Zadok
of Shallum, 13 Shallum of Hilkiah, Hilkiah
of Azariah, 14 Azariah of Seraiah, Seraiah
of Jehozadak; 15 and Jehozadak went into
exile when the LORD sent Judah and Jeru-
salem into exile by the hand of Nebu-
chadnezzar.

16[c] The sons of Levi: Gershom, Ko-
hath, and Merari. 17 These are the names
of the sons of Gershom: Libni and
Shimei. 18 The sons of Kohath: Amram,
Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. 19 The sons of
Merari: Mahli and Mushi. These are the
clans of the Levites according to their an-
cestry. 20 Of Gershom: Libni his son, Ja-
hath his son, Zimmah his son, 21 Joah his
son, Iddo his son, Zerah his son, Jeatherai
his son. 22 The sons of Kohath: Ammina-
dab his son, Korah his son, Assir his son,
23 Elkanah his son, Ebiasaph his son, Assir
his son, 24 Tahath his son, Uriel his son,
Uzziah his son, and Shaul his son. 25 The
sons of Elkanah: Amasai and Ahimoth,
26 Elkanah his son, Zophai his son, Nahath
his son, 27 Eliab his son, Jeroham his son,
Elkanah his son. 28 The sons of Samuel:
Joel[d] his firstborn, the second Abijah.[e]
29 The sons of Merari: Mahli, Libni his
son, Shimei his son, Uzzah his son,
30 Shimea his son, Haggiah his son, and
Asaiah his son.

Musicians Appointed by David

31 These are the men whom David
put in charge of the service of song in the
house of the LORD, after the ark came to
rest there. 32 They ministered with song
before the tabernacle of the tent of meet-
ing, until Solomon had built the house of
the LORD in Jerusalem; and they per-
formed their service in due order.
33 These are the men who served; and
their sons were: Of the Kohathites: He-
man, the singer, son of Joel, son of Sam-
uel, 34 son of Elkanah, son of Jeroham,
son of Eliel, son of Toah, 35 son of Zuph,
son of Elkanah, son of Mahath, son of

a Ch 5.27 in Heb *b* Heb *Gershon*, variant of *Gershom*; See 6.16 *c* Ch 6.1 in Heb *d* Gk Syr Compare verse 33 and 1 Sam 8.2: Heb lacks *Joel*
e Heb reads *Vashni, and Abijah* for *the second Abijah*, taking *the second* as a proper name

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6.1–30 For other genealogies of Levites, see Gen 46.11; Ex 6.16–25; Num 3.1–4, 17; 26.57–58. **6.2–15** The descendants of Aaron comprise the high priests. Cf. 6.50–53; 9.11; Ezra 7.1–5; Neh 11.10–11. **6.8** *Zadok* is made a descendant of Aaron by identifying his father as Ahitub (the grandfather of Abiathar, another high priest at the time of David; 1 Sam 20–23; 1 Kings 2.27; cf. 2 Sam 8.17). *Ahimaaz.* Cf. 2 Sam 15.27. **6.9–10** *Azariah.* Cf. 1 Kings 4.2. **6.10** The parenthesis, dating this priest to Solomon, should probably be transferred to Azariah in v. 9. **6.11–12** The sequence *Amariah* ... *Ahitub* ... *Zadok* is duplicated from vv. 7–8. **6.13** *Hilkiah.* Cf. 2 Chr 34–35. **6.14** *Azariah* ... *Seraiah*, a conflation of ancient variants. Seraiah was killed at the beginning of the Babylonian exile (2 Kings 25.18–21). **6.16–30** The genealogy of three sons of Levi. **6.17, 20–21** The genealogy of *Gershom* through Libni, his oldest son. **6.18, 22–28** This genealogy of *Kohath* proceeds to Shaul (v. 24), but then adds a second line (vv. 25–28), beginning with Elkanah (v. 23), that makes Samuel a Levite. 1 Sam 1.1 classifies him as an Ephraimite whose father was named Elkanah. **6.19, 29–30** The genealogy of *Merari* through Mahli, his oldest son. **6.28** *Joel, Abijah.* The corruption of Samuel's sons leads the elders to request a king to rule Israel like all the nations (1 Sam 8.1–6).

6.31–53 These genealogies connect the singers Heman, Asaph, and Ethan to Kohath, Gershom, and Merari, respectively, and so make the singers Levites. These genealogies begin with the sons and move "backward" to the fathers. **6.31–32** David appoints the Levitical singers; the duties of the priests go back to Moses. **6.33** *He-*

Amasai, 36 son of Elkanah, son of Joel, son
of Azariah, son of Zephaniah, 37 son of
Tahath, son of Assir, son of Ebiasaph, son
of Korah, 38 son of Izhar, son of Kohath,
son of Levi, son of Israel; 39 and his
brother Asaph, who stood on his right,
namely, Asaph son of Berechiah, son of
Shimea, 40 son of Michael, son of Baase-
iah, son of Malchijah, 41 son of Ethni, son
of Zerah, son of Adaiah, 42 son of Ethan,
son of Zimmah, son of Shimei, 43 son of
Jahath, son of Gershom, son of Levi.
44 On the left were their kindred the sons
of Merari: Ethan son of Kishi, son of
Abdi, son of Malluch, 45 son of Hasha-
biah, son of Amaziah, son of Hilkiah,
46 son of Amzi, son of Bani, son of She-
mer, 47 son of Mahli, son of Mushi, son of
Merari, son of Levi; 48 and their kindred
the Levites were appointed for all the ser-
vice of the tabernacle of the house
of God.

49 But Aaron and his sons made
offerings on the altar of burnt offering
and on the altar of incense, doing all the
work of the most holy place, to make
atonement for Israel, according to all that
Moses the servant of God had com-
manded. 50 These are the sons of Aaron:
Eleazar his son, Phinehas his son, Abishua
his son, 51 Bukki his son, Uzzi his son, Zer-
ahiah his son, 52 Meraioth his son, Ama-
riah his son, Ahitub his son, 53 Zadok his
son, Ahimaaz his son.

Settlements of the Levites

54 These are their dwelling places ac-
cording to their settlements within their
borders: to the sons of Aaron of the fami-
lies of Kohathites—for the lot fell to them
first— 55 to them they gave Hebron in the
land of Judah and its surrounding pas-
ture lands, 56 but the fields of the city and
its villages they gave to Caleb son of Je-
phunneh. 57 To the sons of Aaron they
gave the cities of refuge: Hebron, Libnah
with its pasture lands, Jattir, Eshtemoa
with its pasture lands, 58 Hilen[f] with its
pasture lands, Debir with its pasture
lands, 59 Ashan with its pasture lands, and
Beth-shemesh with its pasture lands.
60 From the tribe of Benjamin, Geba with
its pasture lands, Alemeth with its pasture
lands, and Anathoth with its pasture
lands. All their towns throughout their
families were thirteen.

61 To the rest of the Kohathites were
given by lot out of the family of the tribe,
out of the half-tribe, the half of Manas-
seh, ten towns. 62 To the Gershomites ac-
cording to their families were allotted
thirteen towns out of the tribes of Issa-
char, Asher, Naphtali, and Manasseh in
Bashan. 63 To the Merarites according to
their families were allotted twelve towns
out of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Zeb-
ulun. 64 So the people of Israel gave the
Levites the towns with their pasture lands.
65 They also gave them by lot out of the
tribes of Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin
these towns that are mentioned by name.

66 And some of the families of the
sons of Kohath had towns of their terri-
tory out of the tribe of Ephraim. 67 They
were given the cities of refuge: Shechem
with its pasture lands in the hill country of
Ephraim, Gezer with its pasture lands,
68 Jokmeam with its pasture lands, Beth-
horon with its pasture lands, 69 Aijalon
with its pasture lands, Gath-rimmon with
its pasture lands; 70 and out of the half-
tribe of Manasseh, Aner with its pasture
lands, and Bileam with its pasture lands,
for the rest of the families of the Ko-
hathites.

71 To the Gershomites: out of the
half-tribe of Manasseh: Golan in Bashan
with its pasture lands and Ashtaroth with
its pasture lands; 72 and out of the tribe of

f Other readings *Hilez, Holon*; See Josh 21.15

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man, grandson of Samuel. **6.44** *Ethan.* See 1 Chr 15.17. In 25.1, 3 Jeduthun is the head of the third family of singers. **6.48** The duties of the singers are distinguished from those of more generic Levites. **6.49–53** The duties of the Aaronite priests (sacrifices and service within the Holy of Holies) and a list of the high priests up until the time of Solomon (cf. 6.2–8).

6.54–81 Cf. Josh 21.1–42. On the basis of when these cities were under Israelite control or when they existed simultaneously, a date during the United Monarchy can be established for this list of Levitical dwelling places. They served as administrative centers for the management of the royal holdings and collected taxes. **6.55–59** Cities from the territories of Simeon and Judah. **6.60** Cities from Benjamin. **6.66–81** Cities from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, Zebulun, Reuben, and Gad. **6.69** The beginning of the verse should read: "And out of the tribe of Dan: Elteke with its pasture lands, Gibbethon with its pasture lands." Cf. Josh 21.23.

Issachar: Kedesh with its pasture lands,
Daberath[g] with its pasture lands, 73 Ra-
moth with its pasture lands, and Anem
with its pasture lands; 74 out of the tribe of
Asher: Mashal with its pasture lands, Ab-
don with its pasture lands, 75 Hukok with
its pasture lands, and Rehob with its pas-
ture lands; 76 and out of the tribe of
Naphtali: Kedesh in Galilee with its pas-
ture lands, Hammon with its pasture
lands, and Kiriathaim with its pasture
lands. 77 To the rest of the Merarites out
of the tribe of Zebulun: Rimmono with its
pasture lands, Tabor with its pasture
lands, 78 and across the Jordan from Jeri-
cho, on the east side of the Jordan, out of
the tribe of Reuben: Bezer in the steppe
with its pasture lands, Jahzah with its pas-
ture lands, 79 Kedemoth with its pasture
lands, and Mephaath with its pasture
lands; 80 and out of the tribe of Gad: Ra-
moth in Gilead with its pasture lands, Ma-
hanaim with its pasture lands, 81 Heshbon
with its pasture lands, and Jazer with its
pasture lands.

Descendants of Issachar

7 The sons[h] of Issachar: Tola, Puah,
Jashub, and Shimron, four. 2 The
sons of Tola: Uzzi, Rephaiah, Jeriel, Jah-
mai, Ibsam, and Shemuel, heads of their
ancestral houses, namely of Tola, mighty
warriors of their generations, their num-
ber in the days of David being twenty-two
thousand six hundred. 3 The son[i] of
Uzzi: Izrahiah. And the sons of Izrahiah:
Michael, Obadiah, Joel, and Isshiah, five,
all of them chiefs; 4 and along with them,
by their generations, according to their
ancestral houses, were units of the fight-
ing force, thirty-six thousand, for they
had many wives and sons. 5 Their kindred
belonging to all the families of Issachar
were in all eighty-seven thousand mighty
warriors, enrolled by genealogy.

Descendants of Benjamin

6 The sons of Benjamin: Bela, Becher,
and Jediael, three. 7 The sons of Bela: Ez-
bon, Uzzi, Uzziel, Jerimoth, and Iri, five,
heads of ancestral houses, mighty war-
riors; and their enrollment by genealogies
was twenty-two thousand thirty-four.
8 The sons of Becher: Zemirah, Joash, Eli-
ezer, Elioenai, Omri, Jeremoth, Abijah,
Anathoth, and Alemeth. All these were
the sons of Becher; 9 and their enrollment
by genealogies, according to their genera-
tions, as heads of their ancestral houses,
mighty warriors, was twenty thousand two
hundred. 10 The sons of Jediael: Bilhan.
And the sons of Bilhan: Jeush, Benjamin,
Ehud, Chenaanah, Zethan, Tarshish, and
Ahishahar. 11 All these were the sons of
Jediael according to the heads of their an-
cestral houses, mighty warriors, seventeen
thousand two hundred, ready for service
in war. 12 And Shuppim and Huppim
were the sons of Ir, Hushim the son[i] of
Aher.

Descendants of Naphtali

13 The descendants of Naphtali: Jah-
ziel, Guni, Jezer, and Shallum, the descen-
dants of Bilhah.

Descendants of Manasseh

14 The sons of Manasseh: Asriel,
whom his Aramean concubine bore; she
bore Machir the father of Gilead. 15 And
Machir took a wife for Huppim and for
Shuppim. The name of his sister was
Maacah. And the name of the second
was Zelophehad; and Zelophehad had
daughters. 16 Maacah the wife of Machir
bore a son, and she named him Peresh;
the name of his brother was Sheresh; and
his sons were Ulam and Rekem. 17 The

g Or *Dobrath* *h* Syr Compare Vg: Heb *And to the sons* *i* Heb *sons*

7.1–5 The genealogy of Issachar through his oldest son, Tola (cf. Gen 46.13; Num 26.23–25). The numbers in these verses (vv. 2, 4, 5) suggest that a military census list has been put in genealogical form (cf. 1 Chr 5.23–26). **7.2** Cf. ch. 21.

7.6–12 This genealogy also appears to be from the military census list used in 7.1–5 (note the numbers in vv. 7, 9, 11). The Chronicler returns to the genealogy of Benjamin in ch. 8. Cf. Gen 46.21; Num 26.38–41. **7.12** Some scholars emend *the sons of Ir* to read "the sons of Dan." Hence this verse may contain a fragment of the genealogy of Dan. Cf. Gen 46.23; Num 26.42. **7.13** Cf. Gen 46.24–25; Num 26.48–49. As Gen 46.25 indicates, *Bilhah* is the mother of Dan and Naphtali. **7.15** *Maacah*, identified in v. 16 as the wife of Machir. Cf. Num 26.29–34. Inheritance in the family of *Zelophehad*, in which there were only daughters, is discussed in Num 27.1–11; 36.1–12; Josh 17.3–6.

son[j] of Ulam: Bedan. These were the
sons of Gilead son of Machir, son of Ma-
nasseh. 18 And his sister Hammolecheth
bore Ishhod, Abiezer, and Mahlah. 19 The
sons of Shemida were Ahian, Shechem,
Likhi, and Aniam.

Descendants of Ephraim

20 The sons of Ephraim: Shuthelah,
and Bered his son, Tahath his son, Elea-
dah his son, Tahath his son, 21 Zabad his
son, Shuthelah his son, and Ezer and El-
ead. Now the people of Gath, who were
born in the land, killed them, because
they came down to raid their cattle.
22 And their father Ephraim mourned
many days, and his brothers came to com-
fort him. 23 Ephraim[k] went in to his wife,
and she conceived and bore a son; and he
named him Beriah, because disaster[l] had
befallen his house. 24 His daughter was
Sheerah, who built both Lower and Up-
per Beth-horon, and Uzzen-sheerah.
25 Rephah was his son, Resheph his son,
Telah his son, Tahan his son, 26 Ladan his
son, Ammihud his son, Elishama his son,
27 Nun[m] his son, Joshua his son. 28 Their
possessions and settlements were Bethel
and its towns, and eastward Naaran, and
westward Gezer and its towns, Shechem
and its towns, as far as Ayyah and its
towns; 29 also along the borders of the Ma-
nassites, Beth-shean and its towns, Taa-
nach and its towns, Megiddo and its
towns, Dor and its towns. In these lived
the sons of Joseph son of Israel.

Descendants of Asher

30 The sons of Asher: Imnah, Ishvah,
Ishvi, Beriah, and their sister Serah.
31 The sons of Beriah: Heber and Mal-
chiel, who was the father of Birzaith.
32 Heber became the father of Japhlet,
Shomer, Hotham, and their sister Shua.
33 The sons of Japhlet: Pasach, Bimhal,
and Ashvath. These are the sons of Japh-
let. 34 The sons of Shemer: Ahi, Rohgah,
Hubbah, and Aram. 35 The sons of He-
lem[n] his brother: Zophah, Imna, Shelesh,
and Amal. 36 The sons of Zophah: Suah,
Harnepher, Shual, Beri, Imrah, 37 Bezer,
Hod, Shamma, Shilshah, Ithran, and Be-
era. 38 The sons of Jether: Jephunneh,
Pispa, and Ara. 39 The sons of Ulla: Arah,
Hanniel, and Rizia. 40 All of these were
men of Asher, heads of ancestral houses,
select mighty warriors, chief of the
princes. Their number enrolled by gene-
alogies, for service in war, was twenty-six
thousand men.

Descendants of Benjamin

8 Benjamin became the father of Bela
his firstborn, Ashbel the second,
Aharah the third, 2 Nohah the fourth, and
Rapha the fifth. 3 And Bela had sons: Ad-
dar, Gera, Abihud,[o] 4 Abishua, Naaman,
Ahoah, 5 Gera, Shephuphan, and Huram.
6 These are the sons of Ehud (they were
heads of ancestral houses of the inhabi-
tants of Geba, and they were carried into
exile to Manahath): 7 Naaman,[p] Ahijah,
and Gera, that is, Heglam,[q] who became
the father of Uzza and Ahihud. 8 And
Shaharaim had sons in the country of
Moab after he had sent away his wives
Hushim and Baara. 9 He had sons by his
wife Hodesh: Jobab, Zibia, Mesha, Mal-

j Heb *sons* *k* Heb *He* *l* Heb *beraah*
m Here spelled *Non*; see Ex 33.11
n Or *Hotham*; see 7.32 *o* Or *father of Ehud*; see 8.6 *p* Heb *and Naaman* *q* Or *he carried them into exile*

7.20–21a, 25–27 A linear genealogy from Ephraim to Joshua, the leader of the conquest, for whom the Chronicler shows little interest elsewhere. **7.21b–24** This anecdote from the life of the ancestor Ephraim interrupts the genealogy. After defeat in an attack upon Gath, Ephraim sires a child, *Beriah*, the etymology of whose name points to the "disaster" that had befallen his house. The family settles farther east near *Lower and Upper Beth-horon* (twin cities in Ephraim near Benjamin that guarded a pass from the coast to Jerusalem). **7.22** *Brothers*. The only brother known in the Bible is Manasseh. **7.28–29** A list of towns representing the southern and northern boundaries of the territory settled by the sons of Joseph. Cf. Josh 16–18.

7.30–40 The genealogy of Asher (cf. Gen 46.17; Num 26.44–47) based on a military census list (1 Chr 7.40; cf. 7.1–12).

8.1–40 An extensive and obscure genealogy of Benjamin concludes the Chronicler's depiction of all Israel and demonstrates the great interest he had in this tribe. **8.1–7** Descendants of Benjamin and Ehud. **8.3** *Abihud*. Read "the father of Ehud" (Judg 3.15). In v. 6 Ehud's descendants are said to dwell in Geba, a town northwest of the Dead Sea. **8.8–12** *Moab*. David met with the king of Moab (1 Sam 22.3–4; cf. Ruth 1); perhaps

cam, 10 Jeuz, Sachia, and Mirmah. These
were his sons, heads of ancestral houses.
11 He also had sons by Hushim: Abitub
and Elpaal. 12 The sons of Elpaal: Eber,
Misham, and Shemed, who built Ono and
Lod with its towns, 13 and Beriah and
Shema (they were heads of ancestral
houses of the inhabitants of Aijalon, who
put to flight the inhabitants of Gath);
14 and Ahio, Shashak, and Jeremoth.
15 Zebadiah, Arad, Eder, 16 Michael, Ish-
pah, and Joha were sons of Beriah. 17 Zeb-
adiah, Meshullam, Hizki, Heber, 18 Ish-
merai, Izliah, and Jobab were the
sons of Elpaal. 19 Jakim, Zichri, Zabdi,
20 Elienai, Zillethai, Eliel, 21 Adaiah, Ber-
aiah, and Shimrath were the sons of
Shimei. 22 Ishpan, Eber, Eliel, 23 Abdon,
Zichri, Hanan, 24 Hananiah, Elam, Antho-
thijah, 25 Iphdeiah, and Penuel were the
sons of Shashak. 26 Shamsherai, Sheha-
riah, Athaliah, 27 Jaareshiah, Elijah, and
Zichri were the sons of Jeroham. 28 These
were the heads of ancestral houses, ac-
cording to their generations, chiefs.
These lived in Jerusalem.

29 Jeiel[r] the father of Gibeon lived in
Gibeon, and the name of his wife was Ma-
acah. 30 His firstborn son: Abdon, then
Zur, Kish, Baal,[s] Nadab, 31 Gedor, Ahio,
Zecher, 32 and Mikloth, who became the
father of Shimeah. Now these also lived
opposite their kindred in Jerusalem, with
their kindred. 33 Ner became the father of
Kish, Kish of Saul,[t] Saul[t] of Jonathan,
Malchishua, Abinadab, and Esh-baal;
34 and the son of Jonathan was Merib-
baal; and Merib-baal became the father of
Micah. 35 The sons of Micah: Pithon, Me-
lech, Tarea, and Ahaz. 36 Ahaz became
the father of Jehoaddah; and Jehoaddah
became the father of Alemeth, Azmaveth,
and Zimri; Zimri became the father of
Moza. 37 Moza became the father of
Binea; Raphah was his son, Eleasah his
son, Azel his son. 38 Azel had six sons, and
these are their names: Azrikam, Bocheru,
Ishmael, Sheariah, Obadiah, and Hanan;
all these were the sons of Azel. 39 The sons
of his brother Eshek: Ulam his firstborn,
Jeush the second, and Eliphelet the third.
40 The sons of Ulam were mighty war-
riors, archers, having many children and
grandchildren, one hundred fifty. All
these were Benjaminites.

9 So all Israel was enrolled by genealo-
gies; and these are written in the
Book of the Kings of Israel. And Judah
was taken into exile in Babylon because of
their unfaithfulness. 2 Now the first to live
again in their possessions in their towns
were Israelites, priests, Levites, and tem-
ple servants.

r Compare 9.35: Heb lacks *Jeiel* s Gk Ms adds *Ner*; Compare 8.33 and 9.36 t Or *Shaul*

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other Israelites lived in Moab in early times. **8.12** *Ono and Lod,* towns located southeast of Joppa, which were resettled in postexilic times (Ezra 2.33). **8.13** Originally assigned to Dan and later fortified by Rehoboam (2 Chr 11.10), *Aijalon* apparently became part of Benjamin after the division of the kingdom. **8.29–40** The genealogy of Saul is repeated from 9.35–44, where it provides for a transition from the genealogies in chs. 1–9 to the account of his death in ch. 10. The genealogy has its geographical focus at *Gibeon,* a Benjaminite city, five and a half miles northwest of Jerusalem. **8.30** Ner should be inserted before *Nadab,* as in Greek manuscript tradition (cf. v. 33). **8.32** Part of the family moved to Jerusalem. **8.33** *Esh-baal.* The form of this name (with the northwest Semitic divine name "Baal," familiar from the Canaanite deity of this name, cf. vv. 30, 34) indicates the antiquity of this genealogy. The same person elsewhere is called Ishvi (1 Sam 14.49) and Ish-bosheth (2 Sam 2.8). **8.34** *Merib-baal,* Mephibosheth (2 Sam 4.4). *Micah,* the last of the descendants of Saul known elsewhere in the OT (2 Sam 9.12). **8.35–38** The genealogy of Saul is traced to a point in late preexilic or exilic times. **8.39–40** These verses do not appear in the parallel genealogy of Saul in 9.35–44 and are probably later additions.

9.1–34 Cf. Neh 11.3–24. The author uses Neh 11, a list of those living in Jerusalem when Nehemiah rebuilt the walls. The nature of the Chronicler's genealogical sources is not clarified by the reference to the *Book of the Kings of Israel* (v. 1). This verse forms a conclusion to the preexilic genealogies in chs. 1–8. Vv. 2–3 anticipate the repopulation of the land and are followed by lists of Judahites (vv. 4–6), Benjaminites (vv. 7–9), priests (vv. 10–13), Levites (vv. 14–16), and gatekeepers (vv. 17–27). Israel and Judah once more live in Jerusalem, the city of the temple, where the clergy functions in accord with the Lord's ordinances. The Chronicler links the community of his day with the Israel described in chs. 1–9. **9.2** *In their towns.* Cf. Neh 11.1. 1 Chr 9, however, deals only with those living in Jerusalem. *Temple servants* are mentioned only here in Chronicles

Inhabitants of Jerusalem After the Exile

3 And some of the people of Judah,
Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh lived
in Jerusalem: 4 Uthai son of Ammihud,
son of Omri, son of Imri, son of Bani,
from the sons of Perez son of Judah.
5 And of the Shilonites: Asaiah the first-
born, and his sons. 6 Of the sons of Zerah:
Jeuel and their kin, six hundred ninety.
7 Of the Benjaminites: Sallu son of Me-
shullam, son of Hodaviah, son of Hasse-
nuah, 8 Ibneiah son of Jeroham, Elah son
of Uzzi, son of Michri, and Meshullam
son of Shephatiah, son of Reuel, son of
Ibnijah; 9 and their kindred according to
their generations, nine hundred fifty-six.
All these were heads of families according
to their ancestral houses.

Priestly Families

10 Of the priests: Jedaiah, Jehoiarib,
Jachin, 11 and Azariah son of Hilkiah, son
of Meshullam, son of Zadok, son of Mera-
ioth, son of Ahitub, the chief officer of
the house of God; 12 and Adaiah son of
Jeroham, son of Pashhur, son of Malchi-
jah, and Maasai son of Adiel, son of Jah-
zerah, son of Meshullam, son of
Meshillemith, son of Immer; 13 besides
their kindred, heads of their ancestral
houses, one thousand seven hundred
sixty, qualified for the work of the service
of the house of God.

Levitical Families

14 Of the Levites: Shemaiah son of
Hasshub, son of Azrikam, son of Hasha-
biah, of the sons of Merari; 15 and Bak-
bakkar, Heresh, Galal, and Mattaniah son
of Mica, son of Zichri, son of Asaph;
16 and Obadiah son of Shemaiah, son of
Galal, son of Jeduthun, and Berechiah
son of Asa, son of Elkanah, who lived in
the villages of the Netophathites.

Gatekeepers

17 The gatekeepers were: Shallum,
Akkub, Talmon, Ahiman; and their kin-
dred Shallum was the chief, 18 stationed
previously in the king's gate on the east
side. These were the gatekeepers of the
camp of the Levites. 19 Shallum son of
Kore, son of Ebiasaph, son of Korah, and
his kindred of his ancestral house, the Ko-
rahites, were in charge of the work of the
service, guardians of the thresholds of the
tent, as their ancestors had been in charge
of the camp of the LORD, guardians of the
entrance. 20 And Phinehas son of Eleazar
was chief over them in former times; the
LORD was with him. 21 Zechariah son of
Meshelemiah was gatekeeper at the en-
trance of the tent of meeting. 22 All these,
who were chosen as gatekeepers at the
thresholds, were two hundred twelve.
They were enrolled by genealogies in
their villages. David and the seer Samuel
established them in their office of trust.
23 So they and their descendants were in
charge of the gates of the house of the
LORD, that is, the house of the tent, as
guards. 24 The gatekeepers were on the
four sides, east, west, north, and south;
25 and their kindred who were in their vil-
lages were obliged to come in every seven
days, in turn, to be with them; 26 for the
four chief gatekeepers, who were Levites,
were in charge of the chambers and the
treasures of the house of God. 27 And they
would spend the night near the house of
God; for on them lay the duty of watch-
ing, and they had charge of opening it ev-
ery morning.

28 Some of them had charge of the
utensils of service, for they were required
to count them when they were brought in
and taken out. 29 Others of them were ap-

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but are frequent in Ezra and Nehemiah. **9.3** *Ephraim and Manasseh*, not mentioned in Neh 11.4 and probably symbolizing the whole Northern Kingdom. **9.5–6** Among the Judahites, Chronicles adds references to the descendants of Shelah (cf. Num 26.20 for an alternate vocalization of "Shilonites") and *Zerah*. **9.11** *Chief officer of the house of God*. V. 11 is in fact a list of high priests. **9.17–34** This stirring apology for the gatekeepers has no parallel in Neh 11. **9.19** The duties of the gatekeepers continue those of the Levites who had worked with the tabernacle. **9.20, 22** The prestige of *Phinehas* (Num 25.11–13) stands behind the gatekeepers at the time of Moses, and the prestige of *David and . . . Samuel* lends them authority during the United Monarchy. Since Samuel died before David became king, calling Samuel a *seer* may refer to his general influence on David and to Samuel's battles for the purity of the religious practice at Shiloh. **9.21** *Zechariah*, a gatekeeper at the time of David (26.2, 14). **9.26** The gatekeepers are

pointed over the furniture, and over all
the holy utensils, also over the choice
flour, the wine, the oil, the incense, and
the spices. 30 Others, of the sons of the
priests, prepared the mixing of the spices,
31 and Mattithiah, one of the Levites, the
firstborn of Shallum the Korahite, was in
charge of making the flat cakes. 32 Also
some of their kindred of the Kohathites
had charge of the rows of bread, to pre-
pare them for each sabbath.

33 Now these are the singers, the
heads of ancestral houses of the Levites,
living in the chambers of the temple free
from other service, for they were on duty
day and night. 34 These were heads of an-
cestral houses of the Levites, according to
their generations; these leaders lived in
Jerusalem.

The Family of King Saul

35 In Gibeon lived the father of Gib-
eon, Jeiel, and the name of his wife was
Maacah. 36 His firstborn son was Abdon,
then Zur, Kish, Baal, Ner, Nadab, 37 Ge-
dor, Ahio, Zechariah, and Mikloth; 38 and
Mikloth became the father of Shimeam;
and these also lived opposite their kin-
dred in Jerusalem, with their kindred.
39 Ner became the father of Kish, Kish of
Saul, Saul of Jonathan, Malchishua, Abin-
adab, and Esh-baal; 40 and the son of Jon-
athan was Merib-baal; and Merib-baal
became the father of Micah. 41 The sons
of Micah: Pithon, Melech, Tahrea, and
Ahaz;[u] 42 and Ahaz became the father of
Jarah, and Jarah of Alemeth, Azmaveth,
and Zimri; and Zimri became the father
of Moza. 43 Moza became the father of
Binea; and Rephaiah was his son, Eleasah
his son, Azel his son. 44 Azel had six sons,
and these are their names: Azrikam, Bo-
cheru, Ishmael, Sheariah, Obadiah, and
Hanan; these were the sons of Azel.

Death of Saul and His Sons

10 Now the Philistines fought
against Israel; and the men of Is-
rael fled before the Philistines, and fell
slain on Mount Gilboa. 2 The Philistines
overtook Saul and his sons; and the Phili-
stines killed Jonathan and Abinadab and
Malchishua, sons of Saul. 3 The battle
pressed hard on Saul; and the archers
found him, and he was wounded by the
archers. 4 Then Saul said to his armor-
bearer, "Draw your sword, and thrust me
through with it, so that these uncircum-
cised may not come and make sport of
me." But his armor-bearer was unwilling,
for he was terrified. So Saul took his own
sword and fell on it. 5 When his armor-
bearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell
on his sword and died. 6 Thus Saul died;
he and his three sons and all his house
died together. 7 When all the men of Is-
rael who were in the valley saw that the
army[v] had fled and that Saul and his sons
were dead, they abandoned their towns
and fled; and the Philistines came and oc-
cupied them.

8 The next day when the Philistines
came to strip the dead, they found Saul
and his sons fallen on Mount Gilboa.
9 They stripped him and took his head
and his armor, and sent messengers
throughout the land of the Philistines to
carry the good news to their idols and to
the people. 10 They put his armor in the
temple of their gods, and fastened his
head in the temple of Dagon. 11 But when
all Jabesh-gilead heard everything that
the Philistines had done to Saul, 12 all the

u Compare 8.35: Heb lacks *and Ahaz*
v Heb *they*

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identified as *Levites*. **9.33** The singers are considered important enough to be freed from other Levitical duties. **9.34** With v. 3 this sentence emphasizes that the list identifies those who had returned from exile and were dwelling in Jerusalem. V. 34 and vv. 35–44 were later copied to the end of ch. 8, where v. 34 (8.28) does not fit the context.

9.35–44 See note on 8.29–40.

10.1–14 Cf. 1 Sam 31.1–13. Chronicles omits the story of Saul's kingship except for his death and his defeat by the Philistines. **10.1** *Mount Gilboa* is six miles west of Beth-shan. **10.2** Chronicles does not mention another son, Ish-bosheth, who succeeded to a portion of his father's kingdom (2 Sam 2.8–10). **10.4** *Uncircumcised*, a term of derision for Israel's non-Semitic neighbors (cf. 1 Sam 17.36; 18.25–27). **10.6** *All his house* (dynasty) indicates the severity of the defeat; the battle of Gilboa marks a decisive change in Israel's history. **10.9** The *head* and *armor*, trophies signaling victory, are carried around throughout Philistine territory, giving joy to both idols and people. **10.10** *Dagon*, a fertility deity. The temple of Dagon recalls the Israelite loss of the ark at the battle of Ebenezer (1 Sam 5.1–4). **10.12** *Ja-*

valiant warriors got up and took away the
body of Saul and the bodies of his sons,
and brought them to Jabesh. Then they
buried their bones under the oak in Ja-
besh, and fasted seven days.
13 So Saul died for his unfaithfulness;
he was unfaithful to the LORD in that he
did not keep the command of the LORD;
moreover, he had consulted a medium,
seeking guidance, 14 and did not seek
guidance from the LORD. Therefore the
LORD [w] put him to death and turned the
kingdom over to David son of Jesse.

David Anointed King of All Israel

11 Then all Israel gathered together
to David at Hebron and said,
"See, we are your bone and flesh. 2 For
some time now, even while Saul was king,
it was you who commanded the army of
Israel. The LORD your God said to you: It
is you who shall be shepherd of my people
Israel, you who shall be ruler over my
people Israel." 3 So all the elders of Israel
came to the king at Hebron, and David
made a covenant with them at Hebron be-
fore the LORD. And they anointed David
king over Israel, according to the word of
the LORD by Samuel.

Jerusalem Captured

4 David and all Israel marched to Je-
rusalem, that is Jebus, where the Jebusites
were, the inhabitants of the land. 5 The
inhabitants of Jebus said to David, "You
will not come in here." Nevertheless Da-
vid took the stronghold of Zion, now the
city of David. 6 David had said, "Whoever
attacks the Jebusites first shall be chief
and commander." And Joab son of Zeru-
iah went up first, so he became chief. 7 Da-
vid resided in the stronghold; therefore it
was called the city of David. 8 He built the
city all around, from the Millo in com-
plete circuit; and Joab repaired the rest of
the city. 9 And David became greater and
greater, for the LORD of hosts was
with him.

David's Mighty Men and Their Exploits

10 Now these are the chiefs of David's
warriors, who gave him strong support in
his kingdom, together with all Israel, to
make him king, according to the word of
the LORD concerning Israel. 11 This is an
account of David's mighty warriors: Ja-
shobeam, son of Hachmoni, [x] was chief of
the Three; [y] he wielded his spear against
three hundred whom he killed at one
time.
12 And next to him among the three
warriors was Eleazar son of Dodo, the
Ahohite. 13 He was with David at Pas-
dammim when the Philistines were gath-

w Heb *he* x Or *a Hachmonite* y Compare 2 Sam 23.8: Heb *Thirty* or *captains*

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besh, a city thirteen miles southeast of Beth-shan; it was rescued by Saul from Nahash the Ammonite early in his reign (1 Sam 11). Now its army provides the king and his sons with proper burial. **10.13–14** The king, wounded by archers, actually commits suicide (v. 4). Saul did not keep the Lord's command in general, and he sought (the verb is a pun on the name Saul) a medium in order to consult with the spirit world (cf. 1 Sam 28.8–25). Thus he also did not seek the Lord in the wider sense of the word. "Seeking the LORD" in Chronicles means showing loyalty or reverence toward God. In retribution for Saul's sins, the Lord turns the kingdom over to David, just as he instigated the division of the kingdom between Rehoboam and Jeroboam (2 Chr 10.15).

11.1–9 Cf. 2 Sam 5.1–10. Chronicles omits the events of 2 Sam 1–4, many of which might be interpreted as negative events that followed the death of Saul. **11.3** *Hebron*, a city south of Jerusalem. Chronicles does not mention the separate anointings by Judah (2 Sam 2.4) and by Israel (2 Sam 5.3). David's covenant with the people is echoed by the great feast in 1 Chr 12.38–40. **11.4** *Jebus*, an alternate name for Jerusalem, apparently derived from the name of its inhabitants, the Jebusites. In 2 Sam 5.6–7 David's personal army conquers the future capital; in Chronicles the campaign is waged by David and a united Israel. **11.6** *Joab*, David's nephew, becomes chief officer because of his daring. **11.8** In Chronicles, blessed kings undertake building projects. The *Millo* was a series of terraces built on the eastern side of the city. **11.9** The Lord is with David as surely as he had departed from Saul.

11.10–47 Cf. 2 Sam 23.8–39. The individual exploits told here are not as important as the unanimous support of these chiefs for David's kingship. The Chronicler puts the list at the beginning of David's reign; in Samuel it comes near the king's death. The first twelve names are repeated in 27.2–15. **11.10** David has the support of all the tribes (ch. 12) in addition to the heroes. David's kingship also results from the divine word of promise. **11.11** *Three*. Jashobeam, Eleazar, and Shammah (2 Sam 23.11–12) make up this

ered there for battle. There was a plot of
ground full of barley. Now the people
had fled from the Philistines, 14 but he
and David took their stand in the middle
of the plot, defended it, and killed the
Philistines; and the LORD saved them by a
great victory.
15 Three of the thirty chiefs went
down to the rock to David at the cave of
Adullam, while the army of Philistines was
encamped in the valley of Rephaim. 16 David
was then in the stronghold; and the
garrison of the Philistines was then at
Bethlehem. 17 David said longingly,
"O that someone would give me water to
drink from the well of Bethlehem that is
by the gate!" 18 Then the Three broke
through the camp of the Philistines, and
drew water from the well of Bethlehem
that was by the gate, and they brought it
to David. But David would not drink of it;
he poured it out to the LORD, 19 and said,
"My God forbid that I should do this. Can
I drink the blood of these men? For at the
risk of their lives they brought it." Therefore he would not drink it. The three warriors did these things.
20 Now Abishai,[z] the brother of Joab,
was chief of the Thirty.[a] With his spear
he fought against three hundred and
killed them, and won a name beside the
Three. 21 He was the most renowned[b] of
the Thirty,[a] and became their commander; but he did not attain to the
Three.
22 Benaiah son of Jehoiada was a valiant man[c] of Kabzeel, a doer of great
deeds; he struck down two sons of[d] Ariel
of Moab. He also went down and killed a
lion in a pit on a day when snow had
fallen. 23 And he killed an Egyptian, a
man of great stature, five cubits tall. The
Egyptian had in his hand a spear like a
weaver's beam; but Benaiah went against
him with a staff, snatched the spear out of
the Egyptian's hand, and killed him with
his own spear. 24 Such were the things Benaiah son of Jehoiada did, and he won a
name beside the three warriors. 25 He was
renowned among the Thirty, but he did
not attain to the Three. And David put
him in charge of his bodyguard.
26 The warriors of the armies were
Asahel brother of Joab, Elhanan son of
Dodo of Bethlehem, 27 Shammoth of Harod,[e] Helez the Pelonite, 28 Ira son of Ikkesh of Tekoa, Abiezer of Anathoth,
29 Sibbecai the Hushathite, Ilai the Ahohite, 30 Maharai of Netophah, Heled son
of Baanah of Netophah, 31 Ithai son of Ribai of Gibeah of the Benjaminites, Benaiah of Pirathon, 32 Hurai of the wadis of
Gaash, Abiel the Arbathite, 33 Azmaveth
of Baharum, Eliahba of Shaalbon, 34 Hashem[f] the Gizonite, Jonathan son of Shagee the Hararite, 35 Ahiam son of Sachar
the Hararite, Eliphal son of Ur, 36 Hepher
the Mecherathite, Ahijah the Pelonite,
37 Hezro of Carmel, Naarai son of Ezbai,
38 Joel the brother of Nathan, Mibhar son
of Hagri, 39 Zelek the Ammonite, Naharai of Beeroth, the armor-bearer of Joab
son of Zeruiah, 40 Ira the Ithrite, Gareb the
Ithrite, 41 Uriah the Hittite, Zabad son of
Ahlai, 42 Adina son of Shiza the Reubenite, a leader of the Reubenites, and thirty
with him, 43 Hanan son of Maacah, and
Joshaphat the Mithnite, 44 Uzzia the Ashterathite, Shama and Jeiel sons of Hotham the Aroerite, 45 Jediael son of
Shimri, and his brother Joha the Tizite,
46 Eliel the Mahavite, and Jeribai and
Joshaviah sons of Elnaam, and Ithmah
the Moabite, 47 Eliel, and Obed, and Jaasiel the Mezobaite.

David's Followers in the Wilderness

12 The following are those who
came to David at Ziklag, while he
could not move about freely because of
Saul son of Kish; they were among the
mighty warriors who helped him in war.
2 They were archers, and could shoot ar-

z Gk Vg Tg Compare 2 Sam 23.18: Heb *Abshai*
a Syr: Heb *Three* *b* Compare 2 Sam 23.19: Heb *more renowned among the two* *c* Syr: Heb *the son of a valiant man* *d* See 2 Sam 23.20: Heb lacks *sons of* *e* Compare 2 Sam 23.25: Heb *the Harorite*
f Compare Gk and 2 Sam 23.32: Heb *the sons of Hashem*

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elite group of warriors. **11.15–19** David refuses to drink water gained by a daring raid on the Philistines. **11.20–25** Abishai and Benaiah, though outstanding leaders, are not included among the Three. **11.41** Uriah, husband of Bathsheba. **11.41b–47** Names without parallel in 2 Samuel.

12.1–22 A list of tribal groups who rally to David already at Hebron. **12.1–7** Twenty-three soldiers from Saul's own tribe of Benjamin support David. **12.1** *Ziklag*, a city in the southern part of Judah, given to David by Achish, King of Gath (1 Sam 27.5–12). **12.8–15** Eleven Gadites

rows and sling stones with either the right
hand or the left; they were Benjaminites,
Saul's kindred. 3 The chief was Ahiezer,
then Joash, both sons of Shemaah of Gib-
eah; also Jeziel and Pelet sons of Az-
maveth; Beracah, Jehu of Anathoth,
4 Ishmaiah of Gibeon, a warrior among
the Thirty and a leader over the Thirty;
Jeremiah,[g] Jahaziel, Johanan, Jozabad of
Gederah, 5 Eluzai,[h] Jerimoth, Bealiah,
Shemariah, Shephatiah the Haruphite;
6 Elkanah, Isshiah, Azarel, Joezer, and Ja-
shobeam, the Korahites; 7 and Joelah and
Zebadiah, sons of Jeroham of Gedor.

8 From the Gadites there went over to
David at the stronghold in the wilderness
mighty and experienced warriors, expert
with shield and spear, whose faces were
like the faces of lions, and who were swift
as gazelles on the mountains: 9 Ezer the
chief, Obadiah second, Eliab third,
10 Mishmannah fourth, Jeremiah fifth,
11 Attai sixth, Eliel seventh, 12 Johanan
eighth, Elzabad ninth, 13 Jeremiah tenth,
Machbannai eleventh. 14 These Gadites
were officers of the army, the least equal
to a hundred and the greatest to a thou-
sand. 15 These are the men who crossed
the Jordan in the first month, when it was
overflowing all its banks, and put to flight
all those in the valleys, to the east and to
the west.

16 Some Benjaminites and Judahites
came to the stronghold to David. 17 David
went out to meet them and said to them,
"If you have come to me in friendship, to
help me, then my heart will be knit to you;
but if you have come to betray me to my
adversaries, though my hands have done
no wrong, then may the God of our ances-
tors see and give judgment." 18 Then the
spirit came upon Amasai, chief of the
Thirty, and he said,

"We are yours, O David;
and with you, O son of Jesse!
Peace, peace to you,
and peace to the one who
helps you!
For your God is the one who
helps you."

Then David received them, and made
them officers of his troops.

19 Some of the Manassites deserted to
David when he came with the Philistines
for the battle against Saul. (Yet he did not
help them, for the rulers of the Philistines
took counsel and sent him away, saying,
"He will desert to his master Saul at the
cost of our heads.") 20 As he went to Zik-
lag these Manassites deserted to him: Ad-
nah, Jozabad, Jediael, Michael, Jozabad,
Elihu, and Zillethai, chiefs of the thou-
sands in Manasseh. 21 They helped David
against the band of raiders,[i] for they
were all warriors and commanders in the
army. 22 Indeed from day to day people
kept coming to David to help him, until
there was a great army, like an army
of God.

David's Army at Hebron

23 These are the numbers of the divi-
sions of the armed troops who came to
David in Hebron to turn the kingdom of
Saul over to him, according to the word of
the LORD. 24 The people of Judah bearing
shield and spear numbered six thousand

g Heb verse 5 *h* Heb verse 6 *i* Or *as officers of his troops*

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come from their tribal home on the other side of the Jordan River. **12.16–18** Benjamin and Judah are often linked in Chronicles. Clothed with the spirit, the soldier Amasai delivers a prophetic oracle supporting David. He wishes peace both to the king and to God. **12.19–22** Seven chiefs of Manasseh, a northern tribe, also join David at Ziklag. **12.19** Though David is allied with the Philistines, the enemies of Saul, he is dismissed by them before Saul's death in battle, thus clearing him of any guilt for that death (1 Sam 29). **12.22** God's help (v. 18) is matched by help offered by numerous military volunteers. *Army of God* can mean a numerous army or one that exerts the power of God's army in holy war.

12.23–40 The size of the armies that rally to David at Hebron from the southern tribes (Judah, Simeon and Benjamin) is relatively small, but the troops from the north (Ephraim, the half-tribe of Manasseh, Issachar, Zebulun, Naphtali, Dan, and Asher) are quite large, as are the volunteers from the Transjordan (Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh). The more distant tribes show their enthusiasm for David's kingship by their extremely high numbers. Judah has a mere 6,800 men; Zebulun 50,000. There are a total of 339,600 soldiers. Through large numbers the author stresses the overwhelming and unified support of all Israel for David. Ephraim and Manasseh are more enthusiastic than Judah; the remotest tribes

eight hundred armed troops. 25 Of the
Simeonites, mighty warriors, seven thou-
sand one hundred. 26 Of the Levites four
thousand six hundred. 27 Jehoiada, leader
of the house of Aaron, and with him three
thousand seven hundred. 28 Zadok, a
young warrior, and twenty-two com-
manders from his own ancestral house.
29 Of the Benjaminites, the kindred of
Saul, three thousand, of whom the major-
ity had continued to keep their allegiance
to the house of Saul. 30 Of the Ephraim-
ites, twenty thousand eight hundred,
mighty warriors, notables in their ances-
tral houses. 31 Of the half-tribe of Manas-
seh, eighteen thousand, who were
expressly named to come and make David
king. 32 Of Issachar, those who had un-
derstanding of the times, to know what
Israel ought to do, two hundred chiefs,
and all their kindred under their com-
mand. 33 Of Zebulun, fifty thousand sea-
soned troops, equipped for battle with all
the weapons of war, to help David[j] with
singleness of purpose. 34 Of Naphtali, a
thousand commanders, with whom there
were thirty-seven thousand armed with
shield and spear. 35 Of the Danites,
twenty-eight thousand six hundred
equipped for battle. 36 Of Asher, forty
thousand seasoned troops ready for bat-
tle. 37 Of the Reubenites and Gadites and
the half-tribe of Manasseh from beyond
the Jordan, one hundred twenty thou-
sand armed with all the weapons of war.
38 All these, warriors arrayed in battle
order, came to Hebron with full intent to
make David king over all Israel; likewise
all the rest of Israel were of a single mind
to make David king. 39 They were there
with David for three days, eating and
drinking, for their kindred had provided
for them. 40 And also their neighbors,
from as far away as Issachar and Zebulun
and Naphtali, came bringing food on
donkeys, camels, mules, and oxen—
abundant provisions of meal, cakes of
figs, clusters of raisins, wine, oil, oxen,
and sheep, for there was joy in Israel.

The Ark Brought from Kiriath-jearim

13 David consulted with the com-
manders of the thousands and of
the hundreds, with every leader. 2 David
said to the whole assembly of Israel, "If it
seems good to you, and if it is the will of
the LORD our God, let us send abroad to
our kindred who remain in all the land of
Israel, including the priests and Levites in
the cities that have pasture lands, that
they may come together to us. 3 Then let
us bring again the ark of our God to us;
for we did not turn to it in the days of
Saul." 4 The whole assembly agreed to do
so, for the thing pleased all the people.
5 So David assembled all Israel from
the Shihor of Egypt to Lebo-hamath, to
bring the ark of God from Kiriath-jearim.
6 And David and all Israel went up to Ba-
alah, that is, to Kiriath-jearim, which be-
longs to Judah, to bring up from there the
ark of God, the LORD, who is enthroned
on the cherubim, which is called by his[k]
name. 7 They carried the ark of God on a
new cart, from the house of Abinadab,

j Gk: Heb lacks *David* *k* Heb lacks *his*

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are the most enthusiastic of all. **12.28** *Zadok,* possibly to be identified with the high priest who served David in Jerusalem. **12.29** Saul's tribe has supported the short-lived kingdom of Ishbosheth (2 Sam 2–4). **12.38** Even those who do not participate in the army are of *a single mind* (28.9; 2 Chr 19.9; 25.2). **12.40** Three tribes from the far north bring abundant foodstuffs, as if to celebrate the king's coronation with a great banquet. Twin themes emerge: unanimity and joy.

13.1–14 Cf. 2 Sam 6.1–11. All Israel, at David's invitation, brings the ark of the covenant from its temporary home in Kiriath-jearim to Jerusalem (cf. 1 Sam 4–6, without parallel in Chronicles, which tells of the Philistine capture and return of the ark). All Israel also participates in the dedication of Solomon's temple (2 Chr 7.8) and in Hezekiah's Passover (2 Chr 30.5). The Lord's sharp punishment of Uzzah for touching the ark irritates and terrifies David, causing him not to take the ark directly to Jerusalem. Another explanation for this detour is given in 15.2, 13. **13.1–5** These verses are added in Chronicles to emphasize the people's total dedication to the ark, including the participation in the procession by priests and Levites. In 2 Sam 6.1 the ark is brought up by thirty thousand men from David's army. **13.5** *Shihor,* one of the most eastern branches of the Nile. *Lebo-hamath* (Hebrew, "Entrance of Hamath"), the traditional northern border of Israel. *Kiriath-jearim,* a city eight miles northwest of Jerusalem, where the ark was left by the Philistines. **13.6–14** There are numerous minor variations from the text of Samuel. **13.6** The epithet *enthroned on the cherubim* first ap-

and Uzzah and Ahio[l] were driving the
cart. 8 David and all Israel were dancing
before God with all their might, with song
and lyres and harps and tambourines and
cymbals and trumpets.
9 When they came to the threshing
floor of Chidon, Uzzah put out his hand
to hold the ark, for the oxen shook it.
10 The anger of the LORD was kindled
against Uzzah; he struck him down be-
cause he put out his hand to the ark; and
he died there before God. 11 David was
angry because the LORD had burst out
against Uzzah; so that place is called
Perez-uzzah[m] to this day. 12 David was
afraid of God that day; he said, "How can
I bring the ark of God into my care?" 13 So
David did not take the ark into his care
into the city of David; he took it instead
to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite.
14 The ark of God remained with the
household of Obed-edom in his house
three months, and the LORD blessed
the household of Obed-edom and all that
he had.

David Established at Jerusalem

14 King Hiram of Tyre sent messen-
gers to David, along with cedar
logs, and masons and carpenters to build
a house for him. 2 David then perceived
that the LORD had established him as king
over Israel, and that his kingdom was
highly exalted for the sake of his people
Israel.
3 David took more wives in Jerusalem,
and David became the father of more
sons and daughters. 4 These are the
names of the children whom he had in
Jerusalem: Shammua, Shobab, and Na-
than; Solomon, 5 Ibhar, Elishua, and El-
pelet; 6 Nogah, Nepheg, and Japhia;
7 Elishama, Beeliada, and Eliphelet.

Defeat of the Philistines

8 When the Philistines heard that Da-
vid had been anointed king over all Israel,
all the Philistines went up in search of Da-
vid; and David heard of it and went out
against them. 9 Now the Philistines had
come and made a raid in the valley of
Rephaim. 10 David inquired of God,
"Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will
you give them into my hand?" The LORD
said to him, "Go up, and I will give them
into your hand." 11 So he went up to Baal-
perazim, and David defeated them there.
David said, "God has burst out[n] against
my enemies by my hand, like a bursting
flood." Therefore that place is called
Baal-perazim.[o] 12 They abandoned their
gods there, and at David's command they
were burned.
13 Once again the Philistines made a

l Or *and his brother* *m* That is *Bursting Out Against Uzzah* *n* Heb *paraz* *o* That is *Lord of Bursting Out*

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pears in 1 Sam 4.4. **13.9** *Chidon*, in 2 Sam 6.6 "Nacon." **13.11** The Hebrew term translated *burst out* is derived from the same root as Perez in *Perez-uzzah*. **13.13** *Did not take*. In 2 Sam 6.10 David is "unwilling" to take the ark to Jerusalem. *Obed-edom*, a Levite (15.18, 21).

14.1–17 Cf. 2 Sam 5.11–12. Chronicles places between the first and second attempts to bring the ark to Jerusalem new materials and passages equivalent to 2 Sam 5.11–25. Hiram's provision of materials for David's building projects (14.1–2), the list of David's children born in Jerusalem (14.3–7), and the victories over the Philistines (14.8–17) appear as rewards for the loyal, though flawed and unsuccessful, attempt by David and all Israel to bring the ark to Jerusalem. **14.1–2** Cf. 2 Sam 5.11–12. **14.1** *House*. Cf. 15.1. **14.2** *And* is not in the Hebrew text. Read "because his kingdom was . . ." David knew that he himself should be king since his kingdom prospered through God's commitment to Israel. **14.3–7** Cf. 2 Sam 5.13–16. While Saul and all his sons die (10.6), David, the blessed king, has many children. An almost identical list of children is found in 3.1–9. **14.3** *More wives* and *more sons and daughters* presuppose 2 Sam 3.2–5, a list of David's sons born at Hebron to six different wives, though this list is not mentioned in Chronicles. **14.4** *Solomon*, born in Jerusalem, plays a role equal to David's in Chronicles. **14.7** *Beeliada*, appears as *Eliada* in 3.8; 2 Sam 5.16. **14.8–17** Cf. 2 Sam 5.17–25. David's victories over the Philistines reflect God's approval for his attempt to bring the ark to Jerusalem. David inquires of God, follows God's directions, and wins a decisive victory. Note the clear contrast to his predecessor, Saul. **14.11** *Burst out*, a translation of a term from the same Hebrew root that appears in *Baal-perazim*, providing an explanation for the naming of that city. Cf. note on 13.11. **14.12** In 2 Sam 5.21 David and his men take the idols as booty. In Chronicles they burn them according to the law (Deut 7.5; 12.3). Judging by one of the ancient Greek recensions of Samuel, the Lucianic recension, this correction toward the Torah may have already been made in the text of

raid in the valley. 14 When David again inquired of God, God said to him, "You shall not go up after them; go around and come on them opposite the balsam trees. 15 When you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, then go out to battle; for God has gone out before you to strike down the army of the Philistines." 16 David did as God had commanded him, and they struck down the Philistine army from Gibeon to Gezer. 17 The fame of David went out into all lands, and the LORD brought the fear of him on all nations.

The Ark Brought to Jerusalem

15 David[p] built houses for himself in the city of David, and he prepared a place for the ark of God and pitched a tent for it. 2 Then David commanded that no one but the Levites were to carry the ark of God, for the LORD had chosen them to carry the ark of the LORD and to minister to him forever. 3 David assembled all Israel in Jerusalem to bring up the ark of the LORD to its place, which he had prepared for it. 4 Then David gathered together the descendants of Aaron and the Levites: 5 of the sons of Kohath, Uriel the chief, with one hundred twenty of his kindred; 6 of the sons of Merari, Asaiah the chief, with two hundred twenty of his kindred; 7 of the sons of Gershom, Joel the chief, with one hundred thirty of his kindred; 8 of the sons of Elizaphan, Shemaiah the chief, with two hundred of his kindred; 9 of the sons of Hebron, Eliel the chief, with eighty of his kindred; 10 of the sons of Uzziel, Amminadab the chief, with one hundred twelve of his kindred.

11 David summoned the priests Zadok and Abiathar, and the Levites Uriel, Asaiah, Joel, Shemaiah, Eliel, and Amminadab. 12 He said to them, "You are the heads of families of the Levites; sanctify yourselves, you and your kindred, so that you may bring up the ark of the LORD, the God of Israel, to the place that I have prepared for it. 13 Because you did not carry it the first time,[q] the LORD our God burst out against us, because we did not give it proper care." 14 So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of the LORD, the God of Israel. 15 And the Levites carried the ark of God on their shoulders with the poles, as Moses had commanded according to the word of the LORD.

16 David also commanded the chiefs of the Levites to appoint their kindred as the singers to play on musical instruments, on harps and lyres and cymbals, to raise loud sounds of joy. 17 So the Levites appointed Heman son of Joel; and of his kindred Asaph son of Berechiah; and of the sons of Merari, their kindred, Ethan

p Heb *He* q Meaning of Heb uncertain

Samuel used by Chronicles. **14.16** The Philistines are defeated throughout Judah, from *Gibeon*, five and a half miles northwest of Jerusalem, to *Gezer*, about sixteen miles farther west (cf. Isa 28.21). **14.17** An addition in Chronicles, which records David's international fame and God's imposition of the fear of David on the nations. Note the contrast with 10.13–14, where the author summarizes his negative views on Saul.

15.1–24 Chronicles adds a series of preparations for the movement of the ark. **15.1** The *tent* David pitched for the ark in Jerusalem is different from the tabernacle, which, according to Chronicles, is still at Gibeon (16.39). **15.2** Chronicles favors the *Levites*; their duty *to carry the ark* is based on Deut 10.8; 18.5. **15.3** The participation by *all Israel* is also affirmed by v. 25. **15.4–10** This list of six Levite chiefs from six different families provides details supplementing v. 11. The numbers associated with the leaders are small and suggest the relative antiquity of this list. The families of Kohath, Merari, and Gershom are standard in lists of Levites. The fourth family is that of Elizaphan, who is identified as a grandson of Kohath through Uzziel (see Ex 6.18, 22). The families of Hebron and Uzziel are considered elsewhere as descendants of Kohath (1 Chr 6.18). **15.11** *Zadok* and *Abiathar* (cf. 2 Sam 15.24–29) serve as chief priests under David. Abiathar, a descendant of Eli, is exiled by Solomon to Anathoth, the hometown of Jeremiah, when Bathsheba asked the king to give Abishag, a concubine of David, to Solomon's rival Adonijah (1 Kings 2.26–27). 1 Kings notes that Abiathar had carried the ark in the time of David. **15.12** To *sanctify* oneself probably involved at least bathing and abstention from sexual intercourse. **15.13a** The Hebrew Bible, though the text is difficult, suggests that the Levites' failure to carry the ark (or their failure to carry it with poles, v. 15; cf. Ex 25.13–14; 37.4–5) had been the cause of the earlier aborted procession to Jerusalem. **15.16–24** The installation of Levitical musicians. **15.16** Chronicles supports many of the cultic activities of its own day by re-

son of Kushaiah; 18and with them their
kindred of the second order, Zechariah,
Jaaziel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Unni, Eliab,
Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattithiah, Eliphe-
lehu, and Mikneiah, and the gatekeepers
Obed-edom and Jeiel. 19The singers He-
man, Asaph, and Ethan were to sound
bronze cymbals; 20Zechariah, Aziel, She-
miramoth, Jehiel, Unni, Eliab, Maaseiah,
and Benaiah were to play harps according
to Alamoth; 21but Mattithiah, Eliphelehu,
Mikneiah, Obed-edom, Jeiel, and Azaziah
were to lead with lyres according to the
Sheminith. 22Chenaniah, leader of the
Levites in music, was to direct the music,
for he understood it. 23Berechiah and
Elkanah were to be gatekeepers for the
ark. 24Shebaniah, Joshaphat, Nethanel,
Amasai, Zechariah, Benaiah, and Eliezer,
the priests, were to blow the trumpets
before the ark of God. Obed-edom and
Jehiah also were to be gatekeepers for
the ark.

25 So David and the elders of Israel,
and the commanders of the thousands,
went to bring up the ark of the covenant
of the LORD from the house of Obed-
edom with rejoicing. 26And because God
helped the Levites who were carrying the
ark of the covenant of the LORD, they sac-
rificed seven bulls and seven rams. 27Da-
vid was clothed with a robe of fine linen,
as also were all the Levites who were car-
rying the ark, and the singers, and Chena-
niah the leader of the music of the
singers; and David wore a linen ephod.
28So all Israel brought up the ark of the
covenant of the LORD with shouting, to
the sound of the horn, trumpets, and
cymbals, and made loud music on harps
and lyres.

29 As the ark of the covenant of the
LORD came to the city of David, Michal
daughter of Saul looked out of the win-
dow, and saw King David leaping and
dancing; and she despised him in her
heart.

The Ark Placed in the Tent

16 They brought in the ark of God,
and set it inside the tent that Da-
vid had pitched for it; and they offered
burnt offerings and offerings of well-
being before God. 2When David had fin-
ished offering the burnt offerings and the
offerings of well-being, he blessed the
people in the name of the LORD; 3and he
distributed to every person in Israel—
man and woman alike—to each a loaf of
bread, a portion of meat,[r] and a cake of
raisins.

4 He appointed certain of the Levites
as ministers before the ark of the LORD, to
invoke, to thank, and to praise the LORD,
the God of Israel. 5Asaph was the chief,
and second to him Zechariah, Jeiel, She-
miramoth, Jehiel, Mattithiah, Eliab, Bena-
iah, Obed-edom, and Jeiel, with harps
and lyres; Asaph was to sound the cym-
bals, 6and the priests Benaiah and Jaha-
ziel were to blow trumpets regularly,
before the ark of the covenant of God.

r Compare Gk Syr Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain

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porting that they were originally commissioned by King David. **15.18** *Obed-edom,* a Levitical singer, later demoted with his family to the rank of gatekeeper (v. 24; cf. 26.1–11). **15.19–21** The singers are divided into groups according to their playing of bronze cymbals, harps, and lyres, respectively.

15.25–16.3 Cf. 2 Sam 6.12–19. All Israel now successfully brings the ark to Jerusalem and puts it in David's tent. Chronicles omits an equivalent for 2 Sam 6.12a (the Lord's blessing of the house of Obed-edom) and 2 Sam 6.20b–23 (an argument between David and his wife Michal about his dancing before the ark). Perhaps the latter verses seemed too negative for this happy occasion, or their criticism of David's wild dancing seemed inappropriate. **15.26** God's approval for the procession is shown by his support for the Levites. **15.27** Since the linen ephod was worn only by priests in the Chronicler's era, the author finds inappropriate the reference in 2 Sam 6.14 that states that David himself had worn such a garment (perhaps a loincloth). He writes instead that David and all the Levites were *clothed with a robe of fine linen.* The final words of the verse (*David wore a linen ephod*) were a later addition to Chronicles from the text of Samuel. **15.29** As a descendant of Saul's house, Michal despises David's efforts on behalf of the ark, just as her father neglected the ark with disastrous consequences for himself and his house (10.13–14).

16.4–7 Levites and priests are given specific duties in connection with the ark. The Levites are to invoke, thank, and pray until the temple is built, at which time they will also participate in the sacrificial rituals. Prior to that time, sacrifices are offered only at Gibeon (vv. 39–40). The names in this list are related to those in 15.17–18, 19–24. Their inclusion here gives a Davidic pedigree to the musical guilds of the Chronicler's day.

David's Psalm of Thanksgiving

7 Then on that day David first appointed the singing of praises to the LORD by Asaph and his kindred.

8 O give thanks to the LORD, call on his name,
make known his deeds among the peoples.
9 Sing to him, sing praises to him,
tell of all his wonderful works.
10 Glory in his holy name;
let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice.
11 Seek the LORD and his strength,
seek his presence continually.
12 Remember the wonderful works he has done,
his miracles, and the judgments he uttered,
13 O offspring of his servant Israel,[s]
children of Jacob, his chosen ones.

14 He is the LORD our God;
his judgments are in all the earth.
15 Remember his covenant forever,
the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations,
16 the covenant that he made with Abraham,
his sworn promise to Isaac,
17 which he confirmed to Jacob as a statute,
to Israel as an everlasting covenant,
18 saying, "To you I will give the land of Canaan
as your portion for an inheritance."

19 When they were few in number,
of little account, and strangers in the land,[t]
20 wandering from nation to nation,
from one kingdom to another people,
21 he allowed no one to oppress them;
he rebuked kings on their account,
22 saying, "Do not touch my anointed ones;
do my prophets no harm."

23 Sing to the LORD, all the earth.
Tell of his salvation from day to day.
24 Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvelous works among all the peoples.
25 For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised;
he is to be revered above all gods.
26 For all the gods of the peoples are idols,
but the LORD made the heavens.
27 Honor and majesty are before him;

s Another reading is *Abraham* (compare Ps 105.6)
t Heb *in it*

16.8–36 Cf. Pss 105; 95; 106. Chronicles includes three psalms illustrating how the Levites led Israel's praises. This passage also shows one way the Psalter was used in the postexilic temple. **16.8–22** Cf. Ps 105.1–15. The Levites praise God for his saving deeds for the people. The patriarchs were protected by God because of his covenant promise that they would inherit the land (vv. 16–18). **16.11** The community is to *seek the LORD* in a way Saul did not. **16.13** *Israel*, a replacement for "Abraham" in Ps 105.6. The change shows how the community in the time of the writer was identifying itself with the patriarchs and claiming for itself the promise that they would be protected in the future. **16.15** The imperative *remember* is directed at the author's community; in Ps 105.8 God is construed as the subject of the verb in the phrase "He is mindful." **16.19** *They*, as in Ps 105.12; the Hebrew of Chronicles actually reads "When you were few in number." Again, the identification of the audience with the patriarchs is exceedingly close. **16.22** *Anointed ones* and *prophets* refer in this context to kings and prophets. Or both may refer to kings, with David and his heirs being assigned a prophetic role. **16.23–33** Cf. Ps 96.1–13. The Levites urge people to tell God's wonders to the nations and to bow before the Lord, who is coming to judge. Chronicles omits Ps 96.11b, 13b, both of which refer to God's judging of the people, but that idea is present in 16.33. **16.27, 29** *His place* (v. 27) replaces "his sanctuary" in Ps 96.6, just as *before him* (v. 29) replaces "into his courts" in Ps 96.8. Without these changes the poem would refer to a temple that had not yet

strength and joy are in his
place.

28 Ascribe to the LORD, O families
of the peoples,
ascribe to the LORD glory and
strength.
29 Ascribe to the LORD the glory due
his name;
bring an offering, and come
before him.
Worship the LORD in holy
splendor;
30 tremble before him, all the
earth.
The world is firmly established;
it shall never be moved.
31 Let the heavens be glad, and let
the earth rejoice,
and let them say among the
nations, "The LORD is
king!"
32 Let the sea roar, and all that
fills it;
let the field exult, and
everything in it.
33 Then shall the trees of the forest
sing for joy
before the LORD, for he comes
to judge the earth.
34 O give thanks to the LORD, for he
is good;
for his steadfast love endures
forever.

35 Say also:
"Save us, O God of our salvation,
and gather and rescue us from
among the nations,
that we may give thanks to your
holy name,
and glory in your praise.
36 Blessed be the LORD, the God of
Israel,
from everlasting to everlasting."
Then all the people said "Amen!" and praised the LORD.

Regular Worship Maintained

37 David left Asaph and his kinsfolk there before the ark of the covenant of the LORD to minister regularly before the ark as each day required, 38 and also Obed-edom and his[u] sixty-eight kinsfolk; while Obed-edom son of Jeduthun and Hosah were to be gatekeepers. 39 And he left the priest Zadok and his kindred the priests before the tabernacle of the LORD in the high place that was at Gibeon, 40 to offer burnt offerings to the LORD on the altar of burnt offering regularly, morning and evening, according to all that is written in the law of the LORD that he commanded Israel. 41 With them were Heman and Jeduthun, and the rest of those chosen and expressly named to render thanks to the LORD, for his steadfast love endures forever. 42 Heman and Jeduthun had with them trumpets and cymbals for the music, and instruments for sacred song. The sons of Jeduthun were appointed to the gate.

43 Then all the people departed to their homes, and David went home to bless his household.

God's Covenant with David

17 Now when David settled in his house, David said to the prophet Nathan, "I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of the covenant of the LORD is

u Gk Syr Vg: Heb *their*

been built. **16.34–36** Cf. Ps 106. Most of Ps 106, which recites a long history of Israel's sinful nature and God's decision to hand Israel over to the enemy, is omitted. **16.34** This verse serves as a refrain in Chronicles (cf. v. 41 and note on 2 Chr 5.13). **16.35** *Of our salvation* and *rescue us*, added by Chronicles to the text of Ps 106.

16.37–42 Appointment of cultic personnel in Jerusalem and Gibeon. **16.39** Cf. 21.29; 2 Chr 1.3–6. **16.39–40** The *morning and evening* sacrifices, required by the Torah (Ex 29.38–42; Num 28.3–8), are practiced in the time of David at *Gibeon*. The presence of the tabernacle and altar in Gibeon makes Solomon's visit there (2 Chr 1.3) appropriate. **16.43** Cf. 2 Sam 6.19b–20a. Everyone's return home brings the ark story to an end. Chronicles omits David's altercation with his wife Michal in 2 Sam 6.20b–23.

17.1–15 Cf. 2 Sam 7.1–17. In response to David's desire to build a temple (house) for the Lord, the Lord promises to give David an everlasting dynasty (house). **17.1** The term *house* in Hebrew means both temple and dynasty. Chronicles omits "the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him" (2 Sam 7.1). Further wars of David appear in chs. 18–20 and only their successful conclusion creates a time for temple building. David is disqualified as temple builder because of his warfare (22.8). Note also the substitution of *subdue* in 1 Chr 17.10 for "give you rest"

under a tent." 2 Nathan said to David, "Do
all that you have in mind, for God is
with you."

3 But that same night the word of the
LORD came to Nathan, saying: 4 Go and
tell my servant David: Thus says the
LORD: You shall not build me a house to
live in. 5 For I have not lived in a house
since the day I brought out Israel to this
very day, but I have lived in a tent and a
tabernacle.[v] 6 Wherever I have moved
about among all Israel, did I ever speak a
word with any of the judges of Israel,
whom I commanded to shepherd my people, saying, Why have you not built me a
house of cedar? 7 Now therefore thus you
shall say to my servant David: Thus says
the LORD of hosts: I took you from the
pasture, from following the sheep, to be
ruler over my people Israel; 8 and I have
been with you wherever you went, and
have cut off all your enemies before you;
and I will make for you a name, like the
name of the great ones of the earth. 9 I
will appoint a place for my people Israel,
and will plant them, so that they may live
in their own place, and be disturbed no
more; and evildoers shall wear them
down no more, as they did formerly,
10 from the time that I appointed judges
over my people Israel; and I will subdue
all your enemies.

Moreover I declare to you that the
LORD will build you a house. 11 When your
days are fulfilled to go to be with your
ancestors, I will raise up your offspring
after you, one of your own sons, and I will
establish his kingdom. 12 He shall build a
house for me, and I will establish his
throne forever. 13 I will be a father to him,
and he shall be a son to me. I will not take
my steadfast love from him, as I took it
from him who was before you, 14 but I will
confirm him in my house and in my kingdom forever, and his throne shall be established forever. 15 In accordance with
all these words and all this vision, Nathan
spoke to David.

David's Prayer

16 Then King David went in and sat
before the LORD, and said, "Who am I,
O LORD God, and what is my house, that
you have brought me thus far? 17 And
even this was a small thing in your sight,
O God; you have also spoken of your servant's house for a great while to come.
You regard me as someone of high
rank,[w] O LORD God! 18 And what more
can David say to you for honoring your
servant? You know your servant. 19 For
your servant's sake, O LORD, and according to your own heart, you have done all
these great deeds, making known all these
great things. 20 There is no one like you,
O LORD, and there is no God besides you,
according to all that we have heard with
our ears. 21 Who is like your people Israel,
one nation on the earth whom God went
to redeem to be his people, making for
yourself a name for great and terrible

v Gk 2 Sam 7.6: Heb *but I have been from tent to tent and from tabernacle* w Meaning of Heb uncertain

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in 2 Sam 7.11. **17.4** *Not*, a change in Chronicles, although the question posed in 2 Sam 7.5 ("Are you the one to build me a house to live in?") has much the same effect. *Not* already appears in the Septuagint of Samuel. **17.6** *Judges*. The Hebrew of 2 Sam 7.7 has "tribes" although the NRSV there reads "tribal leaders," following the Septuagint. **17.9** *Wear them down*. 2 Sam 7.10 reads "afflict them." **17.10** *Subdue*. See note on 17.1. *I declare to you that the LORD will build you a house*. 2 Sam 7.11 reads "the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house." In this case *house* in Chronicles means temple; in Samuel it refers to the dynasty. **17.11** *One of your own sons*. 2 Sam 7.12 reads "who shall come forth from your body." **17.13a** Chronicles leaves out at this point materials from 2 Sam 7.14: "When he commits iniquity, I will punish him with a rod such as mortals use, with blows inflicted by human beings." This conforms to the Chronicler's omission elsewhere of negative reports about David and Solomon. **17.14** *I will confirm him in my house and in my kingdom forever, and his throne . . . forever*. 2 Sam 7.16 reads "Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne . . . forever." The focus in Chronicles is on Solomon, not David. In this case again, *house* in Chronicles means temple; in Samuel it means dynasty. The *kingdom* in Chronicles refers to God's kingdom, not David's.

17.16–27 Cf. 2 Sam 7.18–29. In David's prayer in response to Nathan's oracle, God's power, shown in the exodus, is hailed as the authority behind David's dynasty. **17.16** *House* in the prayer always refers to the dynasty. Cf. vv. 17, 23, 24, 25, 27. **17.21–23** The exodus from Egypt guarantees the promises made to David. In the accounts of Solomon, the promise to David becomes the basis for the entire relationship between God and Israel.

things, in driving out nations before your
people whom you redeemed from Egypt?
22 And you made your people Israel to be
your people forever; and you, O LORD,
became their God.
23 "And now, O LORD, as for the
word that you have spoken concerning
your servant and concerning his house, let
it be established forever, and do as you
have promised. 24 Thus your name will be
established and magnified forever in the
saying, 'The LORD of hosts, the God of
Israel, is Israel's God'; and the house of
your servant David will be established in
your presence. 25 For you, my God, have
revealed to your servant that you will
build a house for him; therefore your ser-
vant has found it possible to pray before
you. 26 And now, O LORD, you are God,
and you have promised this good thing to
your servant; 27 therefore may it please
you to bless the house of your servant,
that it may continue forever before you.
For you, O LORD, have blessed and are
blessed[x] forever."

David's Kingdom Established and Extended

18 Some time afterward, David at-
tacked the Philistines and sub-
dued them; he took Gath and its villages
from the Philistines.
2 He defeated Moab, and the Moab-
ites became subject to David and brought
tribute.
3 David also struck down King Had-
adezer of Zobah, toward Hamath,[y] as he
went to set up a monument at the river
Euphrates. 4 David took from him one
thousand chariots, seven thousand cav-
alry, and twenty thousand foot soldiers.
David hamstrung all the chariot horses,
but left one hundred of them. 5 When the
Arameans of Damascus came to help King
Hadadezer of Zobah, David killed twenty-
two thousand Arameans. 6 Then David
put garrisons[z] in Aram of Damascus; and
the Arameans became subject to David,
and brought tribute. The LORD gave vic-
tory to David wherever he went. 7 David
took the gold shields that were carried by
the servants of Hadadezer, and brought
them to Jerusalem. 8 From Tibhath and
from Cun, cities of Hadadezer, David
took a vast quantity of bronze; with it Sol-
omon made the bronze sea and the pillars
and the vessels of bronze.
9 When King Tou of Hamath heard
that David had defeated the whole army
of King Hadadezer of Zobah, 10 he sent
his son Hadoram to King David, to greet
him and to congratulate him, because he
had fought against Hadadezer and de-
feated him. Now Hadadezer had often
been at war with Tou. He sent all sorts of
articles of gold, of silver, and of bronze;
11 these also King David dedicated to the
LORD, together with the silver and gold
that he had carried off from all the na-
tions, from Edom, Moab, the Ammonites,
the Philistines, and Amalek.
12 Abishai son of Zeruiah killed eigh-
teen thousand Edomites in the Valley of
Salt. 13 He put garrisons in Edom; and all
the Edomites became subject to David.
And the LORD gave victory to David wher-
ever he went.

David's Administration

14 So David reigned over all Israel;
and he administered justice and equity to
all his people. 15 Joab son of Zeruiah was

x Or *and it is blessed* y Meaning of Heb uncertain z Gk Vg 2 Sam 8.6 Compare Syr: Heb lacks *garrisons*

18.1–13 Cf. 2 Sam 8.1–14. The wars in the following three chapters demonstrate why David was unfit to build the temple. **18.1** *Gath and its villages* replaces the obscure "Metheg-ammah" of 2 Sam 8.1. **18.2** *Moab*, a country east of the Dead Sea. David's harsh treatment of the Moabites in 2 Sam 8.2 is omitted. **18.3** *Hadadezer*, an Aramean (Syrian) king located in the Lebanese Beqaa Valley. **18.4** Since the cavalry is not yet a major factor in warfare, David destroys the captured horses. **18.6** The victories given to David fulfill the promise of 17.10. Cf. 18.13; 19.13. **18.8** David's war spoils are used by Solomon to prepare various items for the temple. Cf. v. 11. This information is lacking in the parallel Hebrew text of Samuel. **18.9–10** Another Aramean king hears of David's victories and voluntarily sends him tribute. **18.11** *Edom*. 2 Sam 8.12 reads "Aram" (Syria), though the Septuagint has "Idumea" (Edom). **18.12–13** *Abishai* is a nephew of David and commander of the "Thirty" (11.20–21). He and his brothers Asahel and Joab are courageous and, at times, foolhardy. *Edom* was located south of Judah and Moab. In 2 Sam 8.13 David is credited with these victories.

18.14–17 Cf. 2 Sam 8.15–18. This list of royal officials reveals the growing complexity of the royal administration. **18.15a** David entrusts

over the army; Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud
was recorder; 16 Zadok son of Ahitub and
Ahimelech son of Abiathar were priests;
Shavsha was secretary; 17 Benaiah son of
Jehoiada was over the Cherethites and the
Pelethites; and David's sons were the chief
officials in the service of the king.

Defeat of the Ammonites and Arameans

19 Some time afterward, King Na-
hash of the Ammonites died, and
his son succeeded him. 2 David said, "I will
deal loyally with Hanun son of Nahash,
for his father dealt loyally with me." So
David sent messengers to console him
concerning his father. When David's ser-
vants came to Hanun in the land of the
Ammonites, to console him, 3 the officials
of the Ammonites said to Hanun, "Do you
think, because David has sent consolers to
you, that he is honoring your father?
Have not his servants come to you to
search and to overthrow and to spy out
the land?" 4 So Hanun seized David's ser-
vants, shaved them, cut off their garments
in the middle at their hips, and sent them
away; 5 and they departed. When David
was told about the men, he sent messen-
gers to them, for they felt greatly humili-
ated. The king said, "Remain at Jericho
until your beards have grown, and then
return."

6 When the Ammonites saw that they
had made themselves odious to David,
Hanun and the Ammonites sent a thou-
sand talents of silver to hire chariots and
cavalry from Mesopotamia, from Aram-
maacah and from Zobah. 7 They hired
thirty-two thousand chariots and the king
of Maacah with his army, who came and
camped before Medeba. And the Am-
monites were mustered from their cities
and came to battle. 8 When David heard
of it, he sent Joab and all the army of the
warriors. 9 The Ammonites came out and
drew up in battle array at the entrance of
the city, and the kings who had come were
by themselves in the open country.

10 When Joab saw that the line of bat-
tle was set against him both in front and in
the rear, he chose some of the picked men
of Israel and arrayed them against the Ar-
ameans; 11 the rest of his troops he put in
the charge of his brother Abishai, and
they were arrayed against the Ammonites.
12 He said, "If the Arameans are too
strong for me, then you shall help me; but
if the Ammonites are too strong for you,
then I will help you. 13 Be strong, and let
us be courageous for our people and for
the cities of our God; and may the LORD
do what seems good to him." 14 So Joab
and the troops who were with him ad-
vanced toward the Arameans for battle;
and they fled before him. 15 When the
Ammonites saw that the Arameans fled,
they likewise fled before Abishai, Joab's
brother, and entered the city. Then Joab
came to Jerusalem.

16 But when the Arameans saw that

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command of the army to a nephew. **18.16** *Zadok . . . priests.* The text of Chronicles has been damaged. David has two high priests, Zadok and Abiathar. **18.17** *Behaiah* is a local commander who supported Solomon in his battle with Adonijah for the throne. He also leads foreign mercenary groups such as the *Cherethites and the Pelethites.*

19.1–20.3 Cf. 2 Sam 10.1–19; 11.1; 12.26, 30, 31. David's additional victories demonstrate God's blessing of the king, but they also show why he is barred from building the temple. The Chronicler omits David's affair with Bathsheba, which took place in the course of his Ammonite wars, as well as his murder of her husband, Uriah, and its aftermath. The Chronicler also does not include 2 Sam 9, which indicates that some members of Saul's family survived the battle of Gilboa. Similarly, 2 Sam 13.1–21.17 is omitted both because it refers to the "trouble . . . from within your own house" (2 Sam 12.10–11) that befell David because of his transgressions and because it indicates that all Israel, including the king's own sons, did *not* support him. **19.1** *Nahash,* an opponent of Saul (1 Sam 11). The *Ammonites* lived north and east of Moab; their name is echoed in the modern city of Amman. **19.2–5** A group sent by David to express official grief is shamefully treated by the Ammonites. **19.6–9** Hanun hires mercenaries to fight David. **19.7** The *thirty-two thousand chariots* are an escalation of the thirty-three thousand infantry hired according to 2 Sam 10.6. Cf. also David's destruction of seven thousand charioteers (v. 18) with the parallel account in 2 Sam 10.18 and its seven hundred chariot teams. **19.10–15** When Joab takes on the Arameans and his brother Abishai opposes the Ammonites, the two brothers pledge themselves to mutual aid. Both enemy armies flee. **19.16–19** The defeated Arameans summon more of their kin living beyond the Euphrates. David leads all Israel against them, killing some forty-seven thousand Arameans. As a result the Arameans sue David

they had been defeated by Israel, they sent messengers and brought out the Arameans who were beyond the Euphrates, with Shophach the commander of the army of Hadadezer at their head. 17 When David was informed, he gathered all Israel together, crossed the Jordan, came to them, and drew up his forces against them. When David set the battle in array against the Arameans, they fought with him. 18 The Arameans fled before Israel; and David killed seven thousand Aramean charioteers and forty thousand foot soldiers, and also killed Shophach the commander of their army. 19 When the servants of Hadadezer saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they made peace with David, and became subject to him. So the Arameans were not willing to help the Ammonites any more.

Siege and Capture of Rabbah

20 In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, Joab led out the army, ravaged the country of the Ammonites, and came and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem. Joab attacked Rabbah, and overthrew it. 2 David took the crown of Milcom[a] from his head; he found that it weighed a talent of gold, and in it was a precious stone; and it was placed on David's head. He also brought out the booty of the city, a very great amount. 3 He brought out the people who were in it, and set them to work[b] with saws and iron picks and axes.[c] Thus David did to all the cities of the Ammonites. Then David and all the people returned to Jerusalem.

Exploits Against the Philistines

4 After this, war broke out with the Philistines at Gezer; then Sibbecai the Hushathite killed Sippai, who was one of the descendants of the giants; and the Philistines were subdued. 5 Again there was war with the Philistines; and Elhanan son of Jair killed Lahmi the brother of Goliath the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam. 6 Again there was war at Gath, where there was a man of great size, who had six fingers on each hand, and six toes on each foot, twenty-four in number; he also was descended from the giants. 7 When he taunted Israel, Jonathan son of Shimea, David's brother, killed him. 8 These were descended from the giants in Gath; they fell by the hand of David and his servants.

The Census and Plague

21 Satan stood up against Israel, and incited David to count the people of Israel. 2 So David said to Joab and the commanders of the army, "Go, number Israel, from Beer-sheba to Dan, and bring me a report, so that I may know their number." 3 But Joab said, "May the LORD increase the number of his people a hundredfold! Are they not, my lord the king, all of them my lord's servants? Why then should my lord require this? Why should he bring guilt on Israel?" 4 But the king's word prevailed against Joab. So Joab departed and went throughout all Israel,

a Gk Vg See 1 Kings 11.5, 33: MT *of their king*
b Compare 2 Sam 12.31: Heb *and he sawed*
c Compare 2 Sam 12.31: Heb *saws*

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for peace and no longer assist the Ammonites. **20.1** *Jerusalem.* At this point 2 Sam 11.2–12.25 tells the story of David, Bathsheba, Uriah, and the prophetic condemnation by Nathan before reporting the conclusion of the battle with the Ammonites. Since Chronicles idealizes David's and Solomon's work for the temple and its ritual life, it would not have served its purposes to rehearse the sins of the United Monarchy. We may be sure that the Chronicler and his readers were well aware of these negative incidents. **20.2** *Milcom,* the national god of the Ammonites. *A talent of gold,* about 75 pounds.

20.4–8 Cf. 2 Sam 21.18–22. The wars end, as they had begun (18.1), with the Philistines. **20.4** The hero *Sibbecai* hails from a town near Bethlehem. *Subdued.* Cf. 17.10; 2 Chr 13.18; 28.19. **20.5** *Elhanan*'s killing of Goliath (2 Sam 21.19) is later ascribed to David. The victim in Chronicles, *Lahmi the brother of Goliath,* arose through miswriting of the letters of Elhanan's hometown, Bethlehem. **20.8** *Giants,* or Rapha, a deity.

21.1–17 Cf. 2 Sam 24.1–17. Chronicles omits the Song of David (2 Sam 22; Ps 18) and the Last Words of David (2 Sam 23.1–7). The list of mighty men in 2 Sam 23.8–39 is included in 1 Chr 11.11–41. **21.1** *Satan.* Cf. Job 1–2; Zech 3.1–10, where, however, the figure is called "the satan." In 2 Sam 24.1 the Lord incites David. **21.2** *Beer-sheba to Dan.* Chronicles describes the land from south to north. **21.3** Joab's final accusing question is not found in 2 Samuel. David's census shows reliance on numerical might rather

and came back to Jerusalem. 5 Joab gave
the total count of the people to David. In
all Israel there were one million one hun-
dred thousand men who drew the sword,
and in Judah four hundred seventy thou-
sand who drew the sword. 6 But he did
not include Levi and Benjamin in the
numbering, for the king's command was
abhorrent to Joab.

7 But God was displeased with this
thing, and he struck Israel. 8 David said to
God, "I have sinned greatly in that I have
done this thing. But now, I pray you, take
away the guilt of your servant; for I have
done very foolishly." 9 The LORD spoke to
Gad, David's seer, saying, 10 "Go and say
to David, 'Thus says the LORD: Three
things I offer you; choose one of them, so
that I may do it to you.'" 11 So Gad came
to David and said to him, "Thus says the
LORD, 'Take your choice: 12 either three
years of famine; or three months of dev-
astation by your foes, while the sword of
your enemies overtakes you; or three days
of the sword of the LORD, pestilence on
the land, and the angel of the LORD de-
stroying throughout all the territory of Is-
rael.' Now decide what answer I shall
return to the one who sent me." 13 Then
David said to Gad, "I am in great distress;
let me fall into the hand of the LORD, for
his mercy is very great; but let me not fall
into human hands."

14 So the LORD sent a pestilence on
Israel; and seventy thousand persons fell
in Israel. 15 And God sent an angel to Je-
rusalem to destroy it; but when he was
about to destroy it, the LORD took note
and relented concerning the calamity; he
said to the destroying angel, "Enough!
Stay your hand." The angel of the LORD
was then standing by the threshing floor
of Ornan the Jebusite. 16 David looked up
and saw the angel of the LORD standing
between earth and heaven, and in his
hand a drawn sword stretched out over
Jerusalem. Then David and the elders,
clothed in sackcloth, fell on their faces.
17 And David said to God, "Was it not I
who gave the command to count the peo-
ple? It is I who have sinned and done very
wickedly. But these sheep, what have they
done? Let your hand, I pray, O LORD my
God, be against me and against my fa-
ther's house; but do not let your people be
plagued!"

David's Altar and Sacrifice

18 Then the angel of the LORD com-
manded Gad to tell David that he should
go up and erect an altar to the LORD on
the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.
19 So David went up following Gad's in-
structions, which he had spoken in the
name of the LORD. 20 Ornan turned and
saw the angel; and while his four sons
who were with him hid themselves, Ornan
continued to thresh wheat. 21 As David
came to Ornan, Ornan looked and saw
David; he went out from the threshing
floor, and did obeisance to David with his
face to the ground. 22 David said to Or-
nan, "Give me the site of the threshing
floor that I may build on it an altar to the
LORD—give it to me at its full price—so
that the plague may be averted from the
people." 23 Then Ornan said to David,
"Take it; and let my lord the king do what
seems good to him; see, I present the
oxen for burnt offerings, and the thresh-
ing sledges for the wood, and the wheat
for a grain offering. I give it all." 24 But
King David said to Ornan, "No; I will buy
them for the full price. I will not take for
the LORD what is yours, nor offer burnt

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than on the Lord's help. **21.5** 2 Sam 24.9 has Israel, "eight hundred thousand," Judah, "five hundred thousand." The figure of *four hundred seventy thousand* for Judah in Chronicles may result from the exclusion of Benjamin (v. 6). It is probable that the numbers in Chronicles did not originally include Judah. **21.6** Levi's exclusion is based on Num 1.49; 2.33. Benjamin's exclusion may relate to the presence of the tabernacle in Gibeon. **21.9** *Spoke.* The Lord's address is more direct than in 2 Sam 24.11. *Gad,* a court prophet. **21.12** *Angel of the LORD.* The Chronicler worked with a text of Samuel, found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, that gives similar emphasis to this figure (cf. v. 16). **21.13** David chooses punishment by (the angel of) the Lord, known for his great mercy. God's grace leads to the choice of the temple site in 22.1. **21.15** *Ornan.* 2 Sam 24.16 reads "Araunah," a variant spelling. The punishment does not include Jerusalem.

21.18–27 Cf. 2 Sam 24.18–25. **21.20** Ornan's *sons* are not mentioned in 2 Sam 24.20 and may have arisen by a copyist's error. **21.22** David's offer to buy the threshing floor *at full price* is an addition by the Chronicler, who relates this purchase to Abraham's offer to buy the cave of Machpelah as a burial site. Cf. also v. 24;

offerings that cost me nothing." 25 So David paid Ornan six hundred shekels of
gold by weight for the site. 26 David built
there an altar to the LORD and presented
burnt offerings and offerings of well-
being. He called upon the LORD, and he
answered him with fire from heaven on
the altar of burnt offering. 27 Then the
LORD commanded the angel, and he put
his sword back into its sheath.

The Place Chosen for the Temple

28 At that time, when David saw that
the LORD had answered him at the thresh-
ing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, he made
his sacrifices there. 29 For the tabernacle
of the LORD, which Moses had made in
the wilderness, and the altar of burnt
offering were at that time in the high
place at Gibeon; 30 but David could not go
before it to inquire of God, for he was
afraid of the sword of the angel of the
22 LORD. 1 Then David said, "Here
shall be the house of the LORD
God and here the altar of burnt offering
for Israel."

David Prepares to Build the Temple

2 David gave orders to gather to-
gether the aliens who were residing in the
land of Israel, and he set stonecutters to
prepare dressed stones for building the
house of God. 3 David also provided great
stores of iron for nails for the doors of the
gates and for clamps, as well as bronze in
quantities beyond weighing, 4 and cedar
logs without number—for the Sidonians
and Tyrians brought great quantities of
cedar to David. 5 For David said, "My son
Solomon is young and inexperienced, and
the house that is to be built for the LORD
must be exceedingly magnificent, famous
and glorified throughout all lands; I will
therefore make preparation for it." So
David provided materials in great quan-
tity before his death.

David's Charge to Solomon and the Leaders

6 Then he called for his son Solomon
and charged him to build a house for the
LORD, the God of Israel. 7 David said to
Solomon, "My son, I had planned to build
a house to the name of the LORD my God.
8 But the word of the LORD came to me,
saying, 'You have shed much blood and
have waged great wars; you shall not
build a house to my name, because you
have shed so much blood in my sight on
the earth. 9 See, a son shall be born to you;
he shall be a man of peace. I will give him
peace from all his enemies on every side;

Gen 23.9. **21.25** *Six hundred shekels of gold.* 2 Sam 24.24 reads "fifty shekels of silver." The medieval Jewish commentator Rashi suggests that David paid fifty shekels for each tribe. **21.26** The second sentence in this verse is not found in 2 Samuel. The Lord's fire confirms the choice of this site, much as the fire at the first sacrifice at Sinai validated the sacrificial system (Lev 9.24). **21.27** The Lord's command to the angel does not appear in the standard text of 2 Samuel. The word translated *sheath* is a Persian loanword.

21.28–22.1 This significant addition by the Chronicler identifies Ornan's threshing floor as the site of the future temple. **21.29** Only in Chronicles do we hear that the tabernacle and the altar of burnt offering were located at Gibeon. This information explains in part why Solomon's famous dream (1 Kings 3.5) took place at Gibeon. **21.30** The angel's *sword* in 21.16 prevents David from worshiping at Gibeon (2 Chr 1.6–13). **22.1** The future site of the temple and its altar is validated by the word of David and the actions of the Lord and his angel. This site has continuity with the Mosaic institutions of tabernacle and altar. The story explains why the nation's worship center is transferred from Gibeon to Jerusalem.

22.2–5 David provides materials for the temple. **22.2** *Aliens* were used in forced labor gangs. It is unclear whether native Israelites were subject to such service (cf. 1 Kings 5.13; 9.20–22). **22.3** *Bronze* was obtained, in part, through wars (18.8, 10). Note the emphasis on quantity: *great stores* and *beyond weighing*. **22.4** *Cedar* from Lebanon was supplied by the Phoenicians for the Second Temple (Ezra 3.7). **22.5** According to the Chronicler, Solomon would have been unable to manage the building of the temple if his father had not assembled all the necessary materials. On the other hand, David was unable to build the temple himself (17.4; 22.7–8; 28.2–3; 2 Chr 6.7–9).

22.6–16 A speech addressed to Solomon based in part on Moses' commissioning of Joshua (Josh 1). **22.7** Throughout the Deuteronomistic History (see Introduction), the temple is the place for God's *name* to dwell (e.g., Deut 12.11; 1 Kings 8.16, 19, 20, 29). **22.8** David's bloodshed bars him from building the temple. **22.9** Solomon fulfills the promises in Nathan's oracle (17.11–14). The third occurrence of the word *peace* in this verse is a pun in Hebrew on the word

for his name shall be Solomon,[d] and I
will give peace[e] and quiet to Israel in his
days. 10 He shall build a house for my
name. He shall be a son to me, and I will
be a father to him, and I will establish his
royal throne in Israel forever.' 11 Now, my
son, the LORD be with you, so that you
may succeed in building the house of the
LORD your God, as he has spoken con-
cerning you. 12 Only, may the LORD grant
you discretion and understanding, so that
when he gives you charge over Israel you
may keep the law of the LORD your God.
13 Then you will prosper if you are careful
to observe the statutes and the ordinances
that the LORD commanded Moses for Is-
rael. Be strong and of good courage. Do
not be afraid or dismayed. 14 With great
pains I have provided for the house of the
LORD one hundred thousand talents of
gold, one million talents of silver, and
bronze and iron beyond weighing, for
there is so much of it; timber and stone
too I have provided. To these you must
add more. 15 You have an abundance of
workers: stonecutters, masons, carpen-
ters, and all kinds of artisans without
number, skilled in working 16 gold, silver,
bronze, and iron. Now begin the work,
and the LORD be with you."

17 David also commanded all the lead-
ers of Israel to help his son Solomon, say-
ing, 18 "Is not the LORD your God with
you? Has he not given you peace on every
side? For he has delivered the inhabitants
of the land into my hand; and the land is
subdued before the LORD and his people.
19 Now set your mind and heart to seek
the LORD your God. Go and build the
sanctuary of the LORD God so that the ark
of the covenant of the LORD and the holy
vessels of God may be brought into a
house built for the name of the LORD."

Families of the Levites and Their Functions

23 When David was old and full of
days, he made his son Solomon
king over Israel.

2 David assembled all the leaders of
Israel and the priests and the Levites.
3 The Levites, thirty years old and up-
ward, were counted, and the total was
thirty-eight thousand. 4 "Twenty-four
thousand of these," David said, "shall
have charge of the work in the house of
the LORD, six thousand shall be officers
and judges, 5 four thousand gatekeepers,
and four thousand shall offer praises to
the LORD with the instruments that I have
made for praise." 6 And David organized
them in divisions corresponding to the
sons of Levi: Gershon,[f] Kohath, and
Merari.

7 The sons of Gershon[g] were Ladan
and Shimei. 8 The sons of Ladan: Jehiel

d Heb *Shelomoh* *e* Heb *shalom* *f* Or *Gershom*; See 1 Chr 6.1, note, and 23.15 *g* Vg Compare Gk Syr: Heb *to the Gershonite*

Solomon. The other two occurrences might better be translated "rest." Deut 12.9–11 indicates that when the Lord would give the people rest from their enemies, they should gather to one central sanctuary. Only in the reign of Solomon does Israel attain rest. **22.12** Solomon's wisdom enables him to keep the Torah (Josh 1.7–8). **22.14** The amounts of the precious metals are exaggerated in order to stress the magnificence of the temple. The gold amounts to 3,750 tons, the silver to 37,500 tons! **22.16** *Begin the work.* The encouragement in David's speech is clarified by a literal translation, "Rise and act." **22.17–19** A speech addressed to the leaders of Israel. **22.18** "Rest" is again preferable to *peace* (see note on 22.9). The Chronicler seeks to suggest that God is with the people of his own period and gives them rest, just as he was with Solomon and gave him rest (vv. 9–11). **22.19** The people's *seeking of the LORD* would result in their building the *sanctuary* for the ark.

23.1–6 Introduction to the Levitical organization. It is likely that some of the materials in chs. 23–27 were a later addition to the Chronicler's work. **23.1** The transition from David to Solomon is orderly and honorable and contrasts with the intrigues in the second half of 2 Samuel and 1 Kings 1–2. David's death and Solomon's coronation are narrated in 1 Chr 29.22–30. **23.3** *Thirty years old.* Cf. Num 4.3, but in 1 Chr 23.24, 27; 2 Chr 31.17; Ezra 3.8 the beginning age for Levites is twenty. Num 8.23–26 sets the age at twenty-five. *Thirty-eight thousand.* Note by comparison the small number of Levites among the returnees in Ezra 2 and how few Levites accompany Ezra on his trip home (Ezra 8.15–20). **23.4–5** The four groups of Levites are listed in decreasing numerical order. David is credited for arranging them into four groups and assigning them their duties: those in charge of work in the temple, officers and judges, gatekeepers, and musicians. **23.6** *Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.* The three sons of Levi provide the names for the Levitical divisions.

23.7–24 A list of the fathers' houses of the Levites, who are in charge of the work of the

the chief, Zetham, and Joel, three. 9 The
sons of Shimei: Shelomoth, Haziel, and
Haran, three. These were the heads of
families of Ladan. 10 And the sons of
Shimei: Jahath, Zina, Jeush, and Beriah.
These four were the sons of Shimei. 11 Ja-
hath was the chief, and Zizah the second;
but Jeush and Beriah did not have many
sons, so they were enrolled as a single
family.

12 The sons of Kohath: Amram, Iz-
har, Hebron, and Uzziel, four. 13 The
sons of Amram: Aaron and Moses. Aaron
was set apart to consecrate the most holy
things, so that he and his sons forever
should make offerings before the LORD,
and minister to him and pronounce bless-
ings in his name forever; 14 but as for Mo-
ses the man of God, his sons were to be
reckoned among the tribe of Levi. 15 The
sons of Moses: Gershom and Eliezer.
16 The sons of Gershom: Shebuel the
chief. 17 The sons of Eliezer: Rehabiah
the chief; Eliezer had no other sons, but
the sons of Rehabiah were very numerous.
18 The sons of Izhar: Shelomith the chief.
19 The sons of Hebron: Jeriah the chief,
Amariah the second, Jahaziel the third,
and Jekameam the fourth. 20 The sons of
Uzziel: Micah the chief and Isshiah the
second.

21 The sons of Merari: Mahli and Mu-
shi. The sons of Mahli: Eleazar and Kish.
22 Eleazar died having no sons, but only
daughters; their kindred, the sons of
Kish, married them. 23 The sons of Mu-
shi: Mahli, Eder, and Jeremoth, three.

24 These were the sons of Levi by
their ancestral houses, the heads of fami-
lies as they were enrolled according to the
number of the names of the individuals
from twenty years old and upward who
were to do the work for the service of the
house of the LORD. 25 For David said,
"The LORD, the God of Israel, has given
rest to his people; and he resides in Jeru-
salem forever. 26 And so the Levites no
longer need to carry the tabernacle or any
of the things for its service"— 27 for ac-
cording to the last words of David these
were the number of the Levites from
twenty years old and upward— 28 "but
their duty shall be to assist the descen-
dants of Aaron for the service of the
house of the LORD, having the care of the
courts and the chambers, the cleansing of
all that is holy, and any work for the ser-
vice of the house of God; 29 to assist also
with the rows of bread, the choice flour
for the grain offering, the wafers of un-
leavened bread, the baked offering, the
offering mixed with oil, and all measures
of quantity or size. 30 And they shall stand
every morning, thanking and praising the
LORD, and likewise at evening, 31 and
whenever burnt offerings are offered to
the LORD on sabbaths, new moons, and
appointed festivals, according to the num-
ber required of them, regularly before the
LORD. 32 Thus they shall keep charge of
the tent of meeting and the sanctuary,
and shall attend the descendants of
Aaron, their kindred, for the service of
the house of the LORD."

Divisions of the Priests

24 The divisions of the descendants
of Aaron were these. The sons of
Aaron: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Itha-
mar. 2 But Nadab and Abihu died before

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house of the Lord. **23.7–11** Descendants of *Gershon*. The genealogy extends only three generations after Levi and hence would not have reached to David. **23.7** *Ladan*. Elsewhere the first son of Gershon is Libni (cf. Ex 6.17; Num 3.18, 21; 1 Chr 6.17, 20). **23.9** The first sentence in this verse is a later addition; its removal clarifies the genealogy. **23.12–20** Descendants of *Kohath*. **23.13** Aaron's priestly duties are defined. **23.14–17** The genealogy of Moses, not Aaron, is provided, and it is assigned to the Levites. **23.21–23** Descendants of *Merari*. **23.24** Conclusion of the list.

23.25–32 The duties of the Levites as compared to those of the priests (cf. 9.28–32). **23.25** The *rest* that is necessary for the temple to be built is already present in David's time. Cf. 17.10; 22.9. **23.26–27** The construction of the temple obviates the need for Levites to carry the tabernacle. Elsewhere the Chronicler speaks of the Levites carrying the ark. David made the Levites assistants to the Aaronite priests, thus limiting their status. **23.30** Note the role of the Levites as musicians.

24.1–19 The twenty-four priestly courses. This final, organizational development of the priesthood in the OT may have been completed by the mid-fourth century B.C.E. **24.1** For the descendants of *Aaron*, see 6.2; Ex 6.2–15; Num 3.2–4. **24.2–3** The author of this section does not mention that *Nadab and Abihu* died because they offered illicit fire (Num 3.4). *Zadok*, a leading

their father, and had no sons; so Eleazar
and Ithamar became the priests. 3 Along
with Zadok of the sons of Eleazar, and
Ahimelech of the sons of Ithamar, David
organized them according to the ap-
pointed duties in their service. 4 Since
more chief men were found among the
sons of Eleazar than among the sons of
Ithamar, they organized them under six-
teen heads of ancestral houses of the sons
of Eleazar, and eight of the sons of Itha-
mar. 5 They organized them by lot, all
alike, for there were officers of the sanc-
tuary and officers of God among both the
sons of Eleazar and the sons of Ithamar.
6 The scribe Shemaiah son of Nethanel, a
Levite, recorded them in the presence of
the king, and the officers, and Zadok the
priest, and Ahimelech son of Abiathar,
and the heads of ancestral houses of the
priests and of the Levites; one ancestral
house being chosen for Eleazar and one
chosen for Ithamar.

7 The first lot fell to Jehoiarib, the sec-
ond to Jedaiah, 8 the third to Harim, the
fourth to Seorim, 9 the fifth to Malchijah,
the sixth to Mijamin, 10 the seventh to
Hakkoz, the eighth to Abijah, 11 the ninth
to Jeshua, the tenth to Shecaniah, 12 the
eleventh to Eliashib, the twelfth to Jakim,
13 the thirteenth to Huppah, the four-
teenth to Jeshebeab, 14 the fifteenth to Bil-
gah, the sixteenth to Immer, 15 the
seventeenth to Hezir, the eighteenth to
Happizzez, 16 the nineteenth to Petha-
hiah, the twentieth to Jehezkel, 17 the
twenty-first to Jachin, the twenty-second
to Gamul, 18 the twenty-third to Delaiah,
the twenty-fourth to Maaziah. 19 These
had as their appointed duty in their ser-
vice to enter the house of the LORD ac-
cording to the procedure established for
them by their ancestor Aaron, as the
LORD God of Israel had commanded him.

Other Levites

20 And of the rest of the sons of Levi:
of the sons of Amram, Shubael; of the
sons of Shubael, Jehdeiah. 21 Of Reha-
biah: of the sons of Rehabiah, Isshiah the
chief. 22 Of the Izharites, Shelomoth; of
the sons of Shelomoth, Jahath. 23 The
sons of Hebron:[h] Jeriah the chief,[i] Am-
ariah the second, Jahaziel the third, Jeka-
meam the fourth. 24 The sons of Uzziel,
Micah; of the sons of Micah, Shamir.
25 The brother of Micah, Isshiah; of the
sons of Isshiah, Zechariah. 26 The sons of
Merari: Mahli and Mushi. The sons of Ja-
aziah: Beno.[j] 27 The sons of Merari: of
Jaaziah, Beno,[j] Shoham, Zaccur, and
Ibri. 28 Of Mahli: Eleazar, who had no
sons. 29 Of Kish, the sons of Kish: Jerah-
meel. 30 The sons of Mushi: Mahli, Eder,
and Jerimoth. These were the sons of
the Levites according to their ancestral
houses. 31 These also cast lots correspond-
ing to their kindred, the descendants of
Aaron, in the presence of King David, Za-
dok, Ahimelech, and the heads of ances-
tral houses of the priests and of the
Levites, the chief as well as the youngest
brother.

h See 23.19: Heb lacks *Hebron* *i* See 23.19: Heb lacks *the chief* *j* Or *his son*: Meaning of Heb uncertain

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priest during David's and Solomon's reigns. *Ahimelech* is Abiathar's father, not his son as in v. 6. Abiathar is the other leading priest at the time of David. Ahimelech's tie to Ithamar in this chapter is in tension with other evidence that would link him to Eleazar (18.16; 1 Sam 22.20). **24.4** The descendants of Eleazar are superior to the descendants of Ithamar in numbers and in ranking, despite the implication of v. 5. **24.5** *By lot.* In ch. 23 they are appointed by royal decree. Note also the participation of the leading priests Zadok and Abiathar. **24.7–18** A list in order of the twenty-four priestly houses. **24.7** The family of the Maccabees descend from *Jehoiarib* (1 Macc 2.1). **24.10** *Hakkoz*'s descendants are barred from the priesthood after the return because they could not find their record in the genealogies (Ezra 2.61). His inclusion in the present list may indicate that this list is later and that the family had made gains in having its claims acknowledged. *Abijah*, the priestly course to which Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, belonged (Lk 1.5). **24.19** The duties of the priests were given by God, as revealed to Aaron. The duties of the Levites in ch. 23 are assigned by David.

24.20–31 A supplementary list of Levites. This list repeats some of the information of 23.7–24, extends five families of Kohath and one of Merari by another generation, and adds another son, Jaaziah, to Merari. **24.31** The Levites, like the priests, have their positions assigned by lot.

The Temple Musicians

25 David and the officers of the
army also set apart for the service
the sons of Asaph, and of Heman, and of
Jeduthun, who should prophesy with
lyres, harps, and cymbals. The list of
those who did the work and of their du-
ties was: 2Of the sons of Asaph: Zaccur,
Joseph, Nethaniah, and Asarelah, sons of
Asaph, under the direction of Asaph, who
prophesied under the direction of the
king. 3Of Jeduthun, the sons of Jedu-
thun: Gedaliah, Zeri, Jeshaiah, Shimei,[k]
Hashabiah, and Mattithiah, six, under the
direction of their father Jeduthun, who
prophesied with the lyre in thanksgiving
and praise to the LORD. 4Of Heman, the
sons of Heman: Bukkiah, Mattaniah, Uz-
ziel, Shebuel, and Jerimoth, Hananiah,
Hanani, Eliathah, Giddalti, and Romamti-
ezer, Joshbekashah, Mallothi, Hothir, Ma-
hazioth. 5All these were the sons of
Heman the king's seer, according to the
promise of God to exalt him; for God had
given Heman fourteen sons and three
daughters. 6They were all under the di-
rection of their father for the music in the
house of the LORD with cymbals, harps,
and lyres for the service of the house of
God. Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman were
under the order of the king. 7They and
their kindred, who were trained in sing-
ing to the LORD, all of whom were skillful,
numbered two hundred eighty-eight.
8And they cast lots for their duties, small
and great, teacher and pupil alike.
9 The first lot fell for Asaph to Jo-
seph; the second to Gedaliah, to him and
his brothers and his sons, twelve; 10the
third to Zaccur, his sons and his brothers,
twelve; 11the fourth to Izri, his sons and
his brothers, twelve; 12the fifth to Netha-
niah, his sons and his brothers, twelve;
13the sixth to Bukkiah, his sons and his
brothers, twelve; 14the seventh to Jesare-
lah,[l] his sons and his brothers, twelve;
15the eighth to Jeshaiah, his sons and his
brothers, twelve; 16the ninth to Matta-
niah, his sons and his brothers, twelve;
17the tenth to Shimei, his sons and his
brothers, twelve; 18the eleventh to Azarel,
his sons and his brothers, twelve; 19the
twelfth to Hashabiah, his sons and his
brothers, twelve; 20to the thirteenth, Shu-
bael, his sons and his brothers, twelve;
21to the fourteenth, Mattithiah, his sons
and his brothers, twelve; 22to the fif-
teenth, to Jeremoth, his sons and his
brothers, twelve; 23to the sixteenth, to
Hananiah, his sons and his brothers,
twelve; 24to the seventeenth, to Joshbeka-
shah, his sons and his brothers, twelve;
25to the eighteenth, to Hanani, his sons
and his brothers, twelve; 26to the nine-
teenth, to Mallothi, his sons and his broth-

k One Ms: Gk: MT lacks *Shimei* *l* Or *Asarelah*; see 25.2

25.1–6 The families of Levitical singers. The families are listed in a traditional order of Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun in v. 1, but in vv. 2–6 the order is Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman. The fourteen people assigned to Heman indicate his increasing prominence. In even later lists of singers, Jeduthun is replaced by Ethan. The singers are said to *prophesy* (vv. 1, 2, 3), and Heman is called *the king's seer* (v. 5). Their prophetic activity may carry on the tradition of the preexilic prophets associated with ritual activities at shrines, or it may indicate that the hortatory words of Levites (and priests) are viewed as a way in which God reveals himself to his people (cf. the description of Levitical singers in prophetic terms elsewhere, 2 Chr 20.14; 29.25; 35.15). Prophetic and musical activities are combined in v. 1. **25.2** Perhaps the number "four" originally appeared after *Asarelah* but has been dropped out; cf. vv. 3, 5. **25.3** *Shimei* is restored on the basis of v. 17. **25.4** Some scholars have reconstructed a poem (or the first lines of five poems) out of the names *Hananiah . . . Mahazioth* ("Be gracious to me, O Yahweh, be gracious to me; You are my God. I exalt (you), I praise (my) helper. / Sitting in adversity I said, Clear Signals give plentifully"). The number *fourteen* in v. 5, however, presupposes that all these words in v. 4 are to be understood as proper names.

25.7–31 A supplementary list of singers that arranges the singers named in vv. 1–6 into twenty-four courses, like the priests in ch. 24. Small differences in the spelling of names suggest that the supplementary list has developed over a period of time. **25.7** The number *two hundred eighty-eight* is a product of twenty-four courses multiplied by twelve members in each course. **25.8** The assignment to the twenty-four courses was made by *lot*; cf. 24.5; 26.13. David and his officers select the families of Levitical singers in the first place without using lots. *Teacher and pupil.* Perhaps there was some kind of instructional program to train the singers. **25.9** After *Joseph* should appear "his sons and his brothers, twelve," as with the other twenty-three names.

ers, twelve; 27 to the twentieth, to
Eliathah, his sons and his brothers,
twelve; 28 to the twenty-first, to Hothir, his
sons and his brothers, twelve; 29 to the
twenty-second, to Giddalti, his sons and
his brothers, twelve; 30 to the twenty-
third, to Mahazioth, his sons and his
brothers, twelve; 31 to the twenty-fourth,
to Romamti-ezer, his sons and his broth-
ers, twelve.

The Gatekeepers

26 As for the divisions of the gate-
keepers: of the Korahites, Me-
shelemiah son of Kore, of the sons of
Asaph. 2 Meshelemiah had sons: Zecha-
riah the firstborn, Jediael the second, Zeb-
adiah the third, Jathniel the fourth,
3 Elam the fifth, Jehohanan the sixth,
Eliehoenai the seventh. 4 Obed-edom
had sons: Shemaiah the firstborn, Jehoza-
bad the second, Joah the third, Sachar
the fourth, Nethanel the fifth, 5 Ammiel the
sixth, Issachar the seventh, Peullethai the
eighth; for God blessed him. 6 Also to his
son Shemaiah sons were born who exer-
cised authority in their ancestral houses,
for they were men of great ability. 7 The
sons of Shemaiah: Othni, Rephael, Obed,
and Elzabad, whose brothers were able
men, Elihu and Semachiah. 8 All these,
sons of Obed-edom with their sons and
brothers, were able men qualified for the
service; sixty-two of Obed-edom. 9 Me-
shelemiah had sons and brothers, able
men, eighteen. 10 Hosah, of the sons of
Merari, had sons: Shimri the chief (for
though he was not the firstborn, his fa-
ther made him chief), 11 Hilkiah the sec-
ond, Tebaliah the third, Zechariah the
fourth: all the sons and brothers of Hosah
totaled thirteen.

12 These divisions of the gatekeepers,
corresponding to their leaders, had du-
ties, just as their kindred did, ministering
in the house of the LORD; 13 and they cast
lots by ancestral houses, small and great
alike, for their gates. 14 The lot for the
east fell to Shelemiah. They cast lots also
for his son Zechariah, a prudent coun-
selor, and his lot came out for the north.
15 Obed-edom's came out for the south,
and to his sons was allotted the store-
house. 16 For Shuppim and Hosah it came
out for the west, at the gate of Shallecheth
on the ascending road. Guard corre-
sponded to guard. 17 On the east there
were six Levites each day,[m] on the north
four each day, on the south four each day,
as well as two and two at the storehouse;
18 and for the colonnade[n] on the west
there were four at the road and two at the
colonnade.[n] 19 These were the divisions
of the gatekeepers among the Korahites
and the sons of Merari.

The Treasurers, Officers, and Judges

20 And of the Levites, Ahijah had
charge of the treasuries of the house of
God and the treasuries of the dedicated
gifts. 21 The sons of Ladan, the sons of
the Gershonites belonging to Ladan, the

m Gk: Heb lacks *each day* *n* Heb *parbar*: meaning uncertain

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26.1–19 A list of the gatekeepers appointed by David (23.5; gatekeepers are also mentioned in 9.17–32; 15.18, 24; 16.38). Since gatekeepers were not originally Levites, this list is relatively late. **26.1** *Korahites.* Korah was from the clan of Kohath (6.22). *Asaph* should read "Ebiasaph." Cf. the Septuagint. **26.4–8** The materials about *Obed-edom* are intrusive since he is not linked by descent to the Levites and since the total number in his family, sixty-two, is out of proportion with the rest of the chapter. Meshelemiah has eighteen in his family, Hosah thirteen. On Obed-edom, see 15.18, 24; 16.38 (where his number is given as sixty-eight). V. 9 continues the content of v. 3. If vv. 4–8 are a later addition, then vv. 12–18, which presuppose them, are also a later addition. **26.12–18** See note on 26.4–8. **26.13** *Lots.* Cf. 24.5, 31; 25.8. David is not mentioned in this chapter since gatekeepers presuppose the existence of the temple, which David did not live to see. **26.14** In order to come up with four names for the four gates, both Shelemiah (Meshelemiah of vv. 1–2) and his son Zechariah were assigned gates. **26.16** *Shuppim,* a mistaken repetition of the previous Hebrew word. *Gate of Shallecheth,* otherwise unknown. **26.18** *Colonnade.* The *Temple Scroll* from Qumran (11QTemple) describes an area full of pillars in the temple, used for offerings. The total of the number of watches in vv. 17–18 is twenty-four, corresponding to the twenty-four courses of the priests and the singers.

26.20–32 Other Levites. **26.20** Many would emend *Ahijah* to "their brothers." These brothers, or Gershonites (absent from vv. 1–19), were in charge of the temple treasuries (vv. 21–22); they (v. 20) or the Kohathites of Amram's line (v. 25) were in charge of the treasuries

heads of families belonging to Ladan the Gershonite: Jehieli.[o]

22 The sons of Jehieli, Zetham and his brother Joel, were in charge of the treasuries of the house of the LORD. 23 Of the Amramites, the Izharites, the Hebronites, and the Uzzielites: 24 Shebuel son of Gershom, son of Moses, was chief officer in charge of the treasuries. 25 His brothers: from Eliezer were his son Rehabiah, his son Jeshaiah, his son Joram, his son Zichri, and his son Shelomoth. 26 This Shelomoth and his brothers were in charge of all the treasuries of the dedicated gifts that King David, and the heads of families, and the officers of the thousands and the hundreds, and the commanders of the army, had dedicated. 27 From booty won in battles they dedicated gifts for the maintenance of the house of the LORD. 28 Also all that Samuel the seer, and Saul son of Kish, and Abner son of Ner, and Joab son of Zeruiah had dedicated—all dedicated gifts were in the care of Shelomoth[p] and his brothers.

29 Of the Izharites, Chenaniah and his sons were appointed to outside duties for Israel, as officers and judges. 30 Of the Hebronites, Hashabiah and his brothers, one thousand seven hundred men of ability, had the oversight of Israel west of the Jordan for all the work of the LORD and for the service of the king. 31 Of the Hebronites, Jerijah was chief of the Hebronites. (In the fortieth year of David's reign search was made, of whatever genealogy or family, and men of great ability among them were found at Jazer in Gilead.) 32 King David appointed him and his brothers, two thousand seven hundred men of ability, heads of families, to have the oversight of the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of the Manassites for everything pertaining to God and for the affairs of the king.

The Military Divisions

27 This is the list of the people of Israel, the heads of families, the commanders of the thousands and the hundreds, and their officers who served the king in all matters concerning the divisions that came and went, month after month throughout the year, each division numbering twenty-four thousand:

2 Jashobeam son of Zabdiel was in charge of the first division in the first month; in his division were twenty-four thousand. 3 He was a descendant of Perez, and was chief of all the commanders of the army for the first month. 4 Dodai the Ahohite was in charge of the division of the second month; Mikloth was the chief officer of his division. In his division were twenty-four thousand. 5 The third com-

o The Hebrew text of verse 21 is confused
p Gk Compare 26.28: Heb *Shelomith*

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of dedicated gifts (v. 25–28). **26.22** The *treasuries of the house of the LORD* contained things like temple vessels. **26.23** These four Levitical families are descended from Kohath. The Uzzielites are not mentioned in the rest of the chapter. **26.24** *Shebuel.* Cf. 23.12–16. A descendant of Moses' son Gershom, he is in charge of both treasuries (though cf. v. 20). **26.25–27** The treasuries of the dedicated gifts contained booty won in battles (v. 27; cf. 18.7–8, 11). **26.25** *Shelomoth* is a descendant of Moses' son Eliezer. **26.28** *Abner* is Saul's general; *Joab* is David's general. Samuel too had won military victories (1 Sam 7.3–14). The favorable mention of Saul contrasts with 10.13–14 and may indicate it is a later addition. **26.29** *Izharites* were Kohathites (v. 23). *Officers and judges.* See 23.4; Deut 17.9. **26.30** *Work of the LORD and . . . service of the king,* religious and secular responsibilities, including taxes. Cf. v. 32. Hashabiah and seventeen hundred Hebronites have oversight of Cisjordan. **26.31** David's *fortieth* is his last year (29.27; 1 Kings 2.11). **26.31–32** *Jerijah* (cf. 23.19; 24.23) and twenty-seven hundred Hebronites have oversight of the two and a half Transjordanian tribes.

27.1–15 Commanders of the monthly divisions. The twelve commanders in this list are similar to twelve of the first sixteen chiefs recorded in 11.10–47. Two hundred eighty-eight thousand men were at the king's disposal, with twenty-four thousand on duty each month. Since the list does not concern the Levites or the final acts of David, it is a later addition in this context. There is no evidence that civilians at David's time served the king for a month each year. The model for this chapter may lie in the officials who provided food for Solomon's household each month (1 Kings 4.7–19) and the priestly courses and other groups of twelve and twenty-four in the immediate context. The Davidic era is portrayed as a time of perfect order. **27.1** *Commanders of the thousands and the hundreds,* words denoting the military character of the following list. **27.4** *Mikloth was the chief officer of his division,* perhaps a marginal comment about the difference between this verse and 11.12, where Eleazar son of Dodo is called the

mander, for the third month, was Benaiah son of the priest Jehoiada, as chief; in his division were twenty-four thousand. 6This is the Benaiah who was a mighty man of the Thirty and in command of the Thirty; his son Ammizabad was in charge of his division.[q] 7Asahel brother of Joab was fourth, for the fourth month, and his son Zebadiah after him; in his division were twenty-four thousand. 8The fifth commander, for the fifth month, was Shamhuth, the Izrahite; in his division were twenty-four thousand. 9Sixth, for the sixth month, was Ira son of Ikkesh the Tekoite; in his division were twenty-four thousand. 10Seventh, for the seventh month, was Helez the Pelonite, of the Ephraimites; in his division were twenty-four thousand. 11Eighth, for the eighth month, was Sibbecai the Hushathite, of the Zerahites; in his division were twenty-four thousand. 12Ninth, for the ninth month, was Abiezer of Anathoth, a Benjaminite; in his division were twenty-four thousand. 13Tenth, for the tenth month, was Maharai of Netophah, of the Zerahites; in his division were twenty-four thousand. 14Eleventh, for the eleventh month, was Benaiah of Pirathon, of the Ephraimites; in his division were twenty-four thousand. 15Twelfth, for the twelfth month, was Heldai the Netophathite, of Othniel; in his division were twenty-four thousand.

Leaders of Tribes

16 Over the tribes of Israel, for the Reubenites, Eliezer son of Zichri was chief officer; for the Simeonites, Shephatiah son of Maacah; 17for Levi, Hashabiah son of Kemuel; for Aaron, Zadok; 18for Judah, Elihu, one of David's brothers; for Issachar, Omri son of Michael; 19for Zebulun, Ishmaiah son of Obadiah; for Naphtali, Jerimoth son of Azriel; 20for the Ephraimites, Hoshea son of Azaziah; for the half-tribe of Manasseh, Joel son of Pedaiah; 21for the half-tribe of Manasseh in Gilead, Iddo son of Zechariah; for Benjamin, Jaasiel son of Abner; 22for Dan, Azarel son of Jeroham. These were the leaders of the tribes of Israel. 23David did not count those below twenty years of age, for the LORD had promised to make Israel as numerous as the stars of heaven. 24Joab son of Zeruiah began to count them, but did not finish; yet wrath came upon Israel for this, and the number was not entered into the account of the Annals of King David.

Other Civic Officials

25 Over the king's treasuries was Azmaveth son of Adiel. Over the treasuries in the country, in the cities, in the villages and in the towers, was Jonathan son of Uzziah. 26Over those who did the work of the field, tilling the soil, was Ezri son of Chelub. 27Over the vineyards was Shimei the Ramathite. Over the produce of the vineyards for the wine cellars was Zabdi the Shiphmite. 28Over the olive and sycamore trees in the Shephelah was Baalhanan the Gederite. Over the stores of oil was Joash. 29Over the herds that pastured in Sharon was Shitrai the Sharonite. Over the herds in the valleys was Shaphat son of Adlai. 30Over the camels was Obil the

[q] Gk Vg: Heb *Ammizabad was his division*

Ahohite. **27.7** *Asahel* is killed by Abner early in David's reign (2 Sam 2.18–23), when his kingdom includes only Judah; Ashahel could not have commanded troops for a united Israel one month a year. The mention of his son *Zebadiah* is an effort to correct this error.

27.16–24 The aim of this list of tribal leaders, a later addition to the text, is to lessen the criticism of David for the census described in ch. 21. The number of tribes is kept at twelve by omitting Gad and Asher (the last of the twelve tribes in 2.2) although the tribe of Joseph is represented by three names: the Ephraimites and the two halves of Manasseh. **27.17** *Aaron* is never considered a tribe and no father's name is provided for *Zadok*. **27.18** *Elihu*. David has a brother Eliab, perhaps here misspelled, or Elihu might be an eighth son of Jesse mentioned, but not named, in 1 Sam 16.10–11; 17.12. **27.23** David's census is compared to the one taken by Moses in the wilderness, which also numbers only those who are over twenty (Num 1.1–19). *Stars of heaven*. Cf. Gen 15.5; 22.17. **27.24** *Did not finish*. Cf. 21.5. In ch. 21 Joab is the one who objects to the census. The author explains why the census numbers did not appear in the *Annals of King David*, a source document known to him (but see 21.5).

27.25–31 David's twelve administrators, who manage his treasuries (or storehouses), agricultural endeavors, and livestock. This list indicates the probable sources of the king's income. Cf. also the list of officials in 18.14–17.

Ishmaelite. Over the donkeys was Jehdeiah the Meronothite. Over the flocks was
Jaziz the Hagrite. 31 All these were stewards of King David's property.

32 Jonathan, David's uncle, was a counselor, being a man of understanding and a scribe; Jehiel son of Hachmoni attended the king's sons. 33 Ahithophel was the king's counselor, and Hushai the Architte was the king's friend. 34 After Ahithophel came Jehoiada son of Benaiah, and Abiathar. Joab was commander of the king's army.

Solomon Instructed to Build the Temple

28 David assembled at Jerusalem all the officials of Israel, the officials of the tribes, the officers of the divisions that served the king, the commanders of the thousands, the commanders of the hundreds, the stewards of all the property and cattle of the king and his sons, together with the palace officials, the mighty warriors, and all the warriors. 2 Then King David rose to his feet and said: "Hear me, my brothers and my people. I had planned to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD, for the footstool of our God; and I made preparations for building. 3 But God said to me, 'You shall not build a house for my name, for you are a warrior and have shed blood.' 4 Yet the LORD God of Israel chose me from all my ancestral house to be king over Israel forever; for he chose Judah as leader, and in the house of Judah my father's house, and among my father's sons he took delight in making me king over all Israel. 5 And of all my sons, for the LORD has given me many, he has chosen my son Solomon to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel. 6 He said to me, 'It is your son Solomon who shall build my house and my courts, for I have chosen him to be a son to me, and I will be a father to him. 7 I will establish his kingdom forever if he continues resolute in keeping my commandments and my ordinances, as he is today.' 8 Now therefore in the sight of all Israel, the assembly of the LORD, and in the hearing of our God, observe and search out all the commandments of the LORD your God; that you may possess this good land, and leave it for an inheritance to your children after you forever.

9 "And you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve him with single mind and willing heart; for the LORD searches every mind, and understands every plan and thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will abandon you forever. 10 Take heed now, for the LORD has chosen you to build a house as the sanctuary; be strong, and act."

11 Then David gave his son Solomon the plan of the vestibule of the temple, and of its houses, its treasuries, its upper rooms, and its inner chambers, and of the

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27.32–34 David's seven advisers. **27.32** *Jonathan,* not to be confused with Saul's son and David's friend with the same name. **27.33** *Ahithophel.* See 2 Sam 16.23; 17.23. He sides with Absalom and commits suicide. *Hushai.* See 2 Sam 15.32–37. **27.34** *Abiathar* is one of two high priests under David. *Joab.* Cf. 18.15.

28.1–10 David's public charge to Solomon echoes his earlier private admonition (22.6–16). **28.1** The substance of 23.2 repeated. The groups listed include many that were discussed in chs. 23–27. **28.2** *Footstool.* Cf. Ps 132.7. *Rest* in this verse and in Ps 132 refers to the ark's or to God's rest, not the rest God gives to Israel. Cf. note on 22.9. **28.3** David the *warrior* is contrasted with Solomon, the man of peace. Cf. 22.8–9. **28.4** The choice of David is made through a series of eliminations, much as in earlier lot-casting ceremonies (cf. Josh 7.16–18; 1 Sam 10.20–21). **28.5** The oracle of Nathan (17.1–15) is fulfilled first of all in Solomon. **28.6** Only in Chronicles is Solomon designated as *chosen.* Cf. vv. 5, 10; 29.1. **28.7** The promise to Solomon is made conditionally, but his current obedience indicates that compliance is attainable. **28.8** This verse is addressed to the leaders of Israel and makes presence in the land conditional upon carrying out the commandments (Deut 5.33–6.3). *Possess* and *leave.* This challenge is addressed to every generation. **28.9–10** Direct address to Solomon. **28.9** *Plan and thought.* The vocabulary is drawn from Gen 6.5; 8.21. *Seek* and *abandon,* typical words for obedience and disobedience in Chronicles (10.13–14; 2 Chr 15.2). The doctrine of retribution is affirmed here.

28.11–21 David gives Solomon instructions for the temple. **28.11** *Plan,* a technical term is also used when God gives Moses instructions about the tabernacle (Ex 25.9, 40). David's written plan comes from divine inspiration according to v. 19 (cf. "the hand of the LORD," Ezek 1.3; 3.14). Detailed plans for the Second Temple are also given in Ezek 40–48. *Room for the mercy seat,* a reference to the innermost room or Holy of

room for the mercy seat;[r] 12 and the plan
of all that he had in mind: for the courts
of the house of the LORD, all the sur-
rounding chambers, the treasuries of the
house of God, and the treasuries for dedi-
cated gifts; 13 for the divisions of the
priests and of the Levites, and all the work
of the service in the house of the LORD;
for all the vessels for the service in the
house of the LORD, 14 the weight of gold
for all golden vessels for each service, the
weight of silver vessels for each service,
15 the weight of the golden lampstands
and their lamps, the weight of gold for
each lampstand and its lamps, the weight
of silver for a lampstand and its lamps,
according to the use of each in the service,
16 the weight of gold for each table for the
rows of bread, the silver for the silver ta-
bles, 17 and pure gold for the forks, the
basins, and the cups; for the golden bowls
and the weight of each; for the silver
bowls and the weight of each; 18 for the
altar of incense made of refined gold, and
its weight; also his plan for the golden
chariot of the cherubim that spread their
wings and covered the ark of the covenant
of the LORD.

19 "All this, in writing at the LORD's direction, he made clear to me—the plan of all the works."

20 David said further to his son Solomon, "Be strong and of good courage, and act. Do not be afraid or dismayed; for the LORD God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you or forsake you, until all the work for the service of the house of the LORD is finished. 21 Here are the divisions of the priests and the Levites for all the service of the house of God; and with you in all the work will be every volunteer who has skill for any kind of service; also the officers and all the people will be wholly at your command."

Offerings for Building the Temple

29 King David said to the whole assembly, "My son Solomon, whom alone God has chosen, is young and inexperienced, and the work is great; for the temple[s] will not be for mortals but for the LORD God. 2 So I have provided for the house of my God, so far as I was able, the gold for the things of gold, the silver for the things of silver, and the bronze for the things of bronze, the iron for the things of iron, and wood for the things of wood, besides great quantities of onyx and stones for setting, antimony, colored stones, all sorts of precious stones, and marble in abundance. 3 Moreover, in addition to all that I have provided for the holy house, I have a treasure of my own of gold and silver, and because of my devotion to the house of my God I give it to the house of my God: 4 three thousand talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and seven thousand talents of refined silver, for overlaying the walls of the house, 5 and for all the work to be done by artisans, gold for the things of gold and silver for the things of silver. Who then will offer willingly, consecrating themselves today to the LORD?"

6 Then the leaders of ancestral houses made their freewill offerings, as did also

r Or *the cover* s Heb *fortress*

Holies. **28.12** On the treasuries, see 26.22–28. **28.13a** On the *divisions* of the priests and Levites, see chs. 23–24. **28.13b–18** The details about the temple vessels indicate that they serve as a source of continuity between the First and the Second temples. Cf. 2 Chr 4.1–22; 36.18; Ezra 1.7–11; 7.19; 8.25, 33. The silver vessels are not mentioned elsewhere but are presupposed in 2 Kings 25.15. **28.18** The ark is given emphasis by a repetition of the word *plan*. The reference to the *golden chariot of the cherubim* evokes the visions of Ezek 1; 10. **28.20–21** A final admonition to Solomon indicates the difficulties he faces. **28.20** *He will not fail you or forsake you.* Cf. Josh 1.5. **28.21** *Skill.* Cf. Ex 35.10. Reference to those who will assist Solomon sets the stage for ch. 29. **29.1–9** Contributions to the temple. Cf. the parallel to the tabernacle, Ex 25.1–7; 35.4–9, 20–29. **29.1–5** David's contributions. Cf. 22.2–5, 14. **29.1** The word translated *temple* occurs only in late biblical Hebrew and is a postexilic loanword. Cf. v. 19. **29.4** *Three thousand talents of gold,* 112.5 tons. *Seven thousand talents of refined silver,* 262.5 tons. *Ophir,* a source of gold, reached by ship, perhaps in Africa or Arabia. **29.5** David invites the people to contribute and is heeded; cf. the same sequence when Moses invites the people to give to the tabernacle (Ex 35.4–9; 35.20–29). **29.6–9** Contributions by others. In the wilderness period, the people make contributions and work on the tabernacle. Since only Levites are permitted in the temple, lay participation in

the leaders of the tribes, the commanders
of the thousands and of the hundreds,
and the officers over the king's work.
7 They gave for the service of the house of
God five thousand talents and ten thou-
sand darics of gold, ten thousand talents
of silver, eighteen thousand talents of
bronze, and one hundred thousand tal-
ents of iron. 8 Whoever had precious
stones gave them to the treasury of the
house of the LORD, into the care of Jehiel
the Gershonite. 9 Then the people re-
joiced because these had given willingly,
for with single mind they had offered
freely to the LORD; King David also re-
joiced greatly.

David's Praise to God

10 Then David blessed the LORD in
the presence of all the assembly; David
said: "Blessed are you, O LORD, the God
of our ancestor Israel, forever and ever.
11 Yours, O LORD, are the greatness, the
power, the glory, the victory, and the maj-
esty; for all that is in the heavens and on
the earth is yours; yours is the kingdom,
O LORD, and you are exalted as head
above all. 12 Riches and honor come from
you, and you rule over all. In your hand
are power and might; and it is in your
hand to make great and to give strength
to all. 13 And now, our God, we give
thanks to you and praise your glorious
name.
14 "But who am I, and what is my
people, that we should be able to make
this freewill offering? For all things come
from you, and of your own have we given
you. 15 For we are aliens and transients be-
fore you, as were all our ancestors; our
days on the earth are like a shadow, and
there is no hope. 16 O LORD our God, all
this abundance that we have provided for
building you a house for your holy name
comes from your hand and is all your
own. 17 I know, my God, that you search
the heart, and take pleasure in upright-
ness; in the uprightness of my heart I
have freely offered all these things, and
now I have seen your people, who are
present here, offering freely and joyously
to you. 18 O LORD, the God of Abraham,
Isaac, and Israel, our ancestors, keep for-
ever such purposes and thoughts in the
hearts of your people, and direct their
hearts toward you. 19 Grant to my son Sol-
omon that with single mind he may keep
your commandments, your decrees, and
your statutes, performing all of them, and
that he may build the temple[t] for which
I have made provision."
20 Then David said to the whole as-
sembly, "Bless the LORD your God." And
all the assembly blessed the LORD, the
God of their ancestors, and bowed their
heads and prostrated themselves before
the LORD and the king. 21 On the next day
they offered sacrifices and burnt offer-
ings to the LORD, a thousand bulls, a thou-

t Heb *fortress*

building is impossible. **29.7** *Five thousand talents* (of gold), 187.5 tons. *Ten thousand darics of gold*, 84,200 grams or 185 pounds. This coin was introduced about 515 B.C.E. by Darius I and is, hence, used anachronistically in this passage. *Ten thousand talents of silver*, 375 tons. *Eighteen thousand talents of bronze*, 675 tons. *One hundred thousand talents of iron*, 3,750 tons. All the weights, except perhaps for the darics, are exaggerations. They demonstrate all Israel's dedication to the temple. **29.8** *Jehiel*, cf. 23.8; 26.21–22. **29.9** The joy of David and the people in contributing echoes the joy of Israel in making David king (12.39–41).

29.10–19 David praises God with joy and humility. **29.11** This verse is the source of the concluding doxology to the Lord's Prayer, which appears in later manuscripts of Mt 6.13: "For the kingdom and the power and the glory are yours forever. Amen." God's kingship is a persistent theme in Chronicles (1 Chr 16.23–33; 17.14) and relativizes the upcoming kingship of Solomon. **29.14** The generous gifts of vv. 1–9 are first of all God's gifts to Israel. **29.15** David recalls that the landless *ancestors* were few, but received the promise of the land. Cf. vv. 10, 18. Even in the land the Israelites share their ancestors' vulnerability and dependency. **29.18** David asks that the people maintain their present generous *purposes and thoughts* and that their faith always be directed toward God. The building of the temple is crucial, but it is not the ultimate in religious devotion. **29.19** David prays that Solomon will obey the law and build the temple and so maintain the dynasty (cf. ch. 17). **29.20–22a** The assembly blesses the Lord. **29.21** *Sacrifices*, peace offerings in which the people would eat the sacrificial animal and contribute to the joy mentioned in v. 22. The large number of animals indicates the significance of the event. Cf. 2 Chr 7.4–5; 30.23–27.

sand rams, and a thousand lambs, with
their libations, and sacrifices in abun-
dance for all Israel; 22 and they ate and
drank before the LORD on that day with
great joy.

Solomon Anointed King

They made David's son Solomon king a
second time; they anointed him as the
LORD's prince, and Zadok as priest.
23 Then Solomon sat on the throne of the
LORD, succeeding his father David as
king; he prospered, and all Israel obeyed
him. 24 All the leaders and the mighty
warriors, and also all the sons of King
David, pledged their allegiance to King
Solomon. 25 The LORD highly exalted
Solomon in the sight of all Israel, and be-
stowed upon him such royal majesty as
had not been on any king before him in
Israel.

Summary of David's Reign

26 Thus David son of Jesse reigned
over all Israel. 27 The period that he
reigned over Israel was forty years; he
reigned seven years in Hebron, and
thirty-three years in Jerusalem. 28 He died
in a good old age, full of days, riches, and
honor; and his son Solomon succeeded
him. 29 Now the acts of King David, from
first to last, are written in the records of
the seer Samuel, and in the records of the
prophet Nathan, and in the records of the
seer Gad, 30 with accounts of all his rule
and his might and of the events that befell
him and Israel and all the kingdoms of
the earth.

29.22b–25 The anointing of Solomon. **29.22b** *A second time,* lacking in Septuagint and added by someone who did not understand that 23.1 was a heading for the whole following section. *Zadok* is already active as priest (16.39) and does not succeed Abiathar as sole priest until later (1 Kings 2.35). The present notice gives the high priest nearly equal standing with the king. **29.23** *Throne of the LORD.* The kingdom is the Lord's (cf. 17.14). **29.24** The claim that all the king's sons and all the leaders obey him is contradicted by 1 Kings 1–2. **29.25** The Lord's exaltation of *Solomon* is also mentioned in 2 Chr 1.1. Cf. Josh 3.7; 4.14.

29.26–30 Cf. 1 Kings 2.10–12. Chronicles puts the notice of David's death after the accession of Solomon and so binds the two reigns closely together. Vv. 28–30 were added by the Chronicler to the summary from 1 Kings. **29.27** David's reign in Hebron is already over all Israel. **29.28** David dies in *riches and honor.* In 1 Kings 1, the frail king has to be warmed by a young virgin and prodded by Bathsheba to prevent Adonijah from taking the throne from Solomon. **29.29** Authorship of the books of Samuel and Kings—and of other records?—is attributed to the prophetic figures of *Samuel, Nathan,* and *Gad.*

2 CHRONICLES

Solomon Requests Wisdom

1 Solomon son of David established himself in his kingdom; the LORD his God was with him and made him exceedingly great.

2 Solomon summoned all Israel, the commanders of the thousands and of the hundreds, the judges, and all the leaders of all Israel, the heads of families. 3 Then Solomon, and the whole assembly with him, went to the high place that was at Gibeon; for God's tent of meeting, which Moses the servant of the LORD had made in the wilderness, was there. 4 (But David had brought the ark of God up from Kiriath-jearim to the place that David had prepared for it; for he had pitched a tent for it in Jerusalem.) 5 Moreover the bronze altar that Bezalel son of Uri, son of Hur, had made, was there in front of the tabernacle of the LORD. And Solomon and the assembly inquired at it. 6 Solomon went up there to the bronze altar before the LORD, which was at the tent of meeting, and offered a thousand burnt offerings on it.

7 That night God appeared to Solomon, and said to him, "Ask what I should give you." 8 Solomon said to God, "You have shown great and steadfast love to my father David, and have made me succeed him as king. 9 O LORD God, let your promise to my father David now be fulfilled, for you have made me king over a people as numerous as the dust of the earth. 10 Give me now wisdom and knowledge to go out and come in before this people, for who can rule this great people of yours?" 11 God answered Solomon, "Because this was in your heart, and you have not asked for possessions, wealth, honor, or the life of those who hate you, and have not even asked for long life, but have asked for wisdom and knowledge for yourself that you may rule my people over whom I have made you king, 12 wisdom and knowledge are granted to you. I will also give you riches, possessions, and

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[Introductory material to 2 Chronicles is contained in the Introduction to 1 Chronicles.]

1.1–13 Cf. 1 Kings 3.1–15. **1.1** Chronicles omits the reference to Solomon's marriage to Pharaoh's daughter in 1 Kings 3. *Established himself* may include building projects, raising an army, and making reforms. Perhaps there is also an allusion to Solomon's mastering of the troubles that accompany his rise to power in 1 Kings 2.5–46. *Made him exceedingly great.* Cf. Josh 3.7; 4.14; 1 Chr 29.25. **1.2–3** In 1 Kings 3.4 Solomon goes to Gibeon alone; his first act as king in Chronicles is to lead a national pilgrimage to the bronze altar at Gibeon. Assemblies of *all Israel* in Chronicles always deal with the temple. **1.4** Cf. 1 Chr 13.1–16.1. **1.5** *Bezalel.* See Ex 31.2–11; 1 Chr 2.20; cf. Ex 38.1–2. *It.* The RSV translates "the LORD." The Hebrew pronoun is ambiguous. **1.6** The *tent of meeting* makes Gibeon a legitimate place of sacrifice (Lev 17.8–9). **1.7** 1 Kings 3.5 adds "in a dream" after *Solomon,* but see the criticism of dreams in Jer 23.25–28. **1.8** Chronicles omits the notice of Solomon's weakness from 1 Kings 3.7, but see 1 Chr 22.5; 29.1. **1.9** *Fulfilled.* Cf. the promise made to Jacob in Gen 28.14. **1.10** In Chronicles *wisdom* is the ability to build the temple. In 1 Kings Solomon's wisdom is shown in his judging between two prostitutes (3.16–28), his administrative magnificence (4.1–5.8), and his knowledge of nature (5.9–14), all omitted from Chronicles.

honor, such as none of the kings had who
were before you, and none after you shall
have the like." 13 So Solomon came from[a]
the high place at Gibeon, from the tent of
meeting, to Jerusalem. And he reigned
over Israel.

Solomon's Military and Commercial Activity

14 Solomon gathered together chariots and horses; he had fourteen hundred
chariots and twelve thousand horses,
which he stationed in the chariot cities
and with the king in Jerusalem. 15 The
king made silver and gold as common in
Jerusalem as stone, and he made cedar as
plentiful as the sycamore of the Shephelah. 16 Solomon's horses were imported
from Egypt and Kue; the king's traders
received them from Kue at the prevailing
price. 17 They imported from Egypt, and
then exported, a chariot for six hundred
shekels of silver, and a horse for one hundred fifty; so through them these were
exported to all the kings of the Hittites
and the kings of Aram.

Preparations for Building the Temple

2[b] Solomon decided to build a temple
for the name of the LORD, and a
royal palace for himself. 2[c] Solomon conscripted seventy thousand laborers and
eighty thousand stonecutters in the hill
country, with three thousand six hundred
to oversee them.

Alliance with Huram of Tyre

3 Solomon sent word to King Huram
of Tyre: "Once you dealt with my father
David and sent him cedar to build himself
a house to live in. 4 I am now about to
build a house for the name of the LORD
my God and dedicate it to him for offering fragrant incense before him, and for
the regular offering of the rows of bread,
and for burnt offerings morning and evening, on the sabbaths and the new moons
and the appointed festivals of the LORD
our God, as ordained forever for Israel.
5 The house that I am about to build will
be great, for our God is greater than
other gods. 6 But who is able to build him
a house, since heaven, even highest
heaven, cannot contain him? Who am I to
build a house for him, except as a place to
make offerings before him? 7 So now send
me an artisan skilled to work in gold, silver, bronze, and iron, and in purple,
crimson, and blue fabrics, trained also in
engraving, to join the skilled workers who
are with me in Judah and Jerusalem,
whom my father David provided. 8 Send
me also cedar, cypress, and algum timber
from Lebanon, for I know that your servants are skilled in cutting Lebanon timber. My servants will work with your
servants 9 to prepare timber for me in
abundance, for the house I am about to
build will be great and wonderful. 10 I will

a Gk Vg: Heb *to* b Ch 1.18 in Heb c Ch 2.1 in Heb

1.13 Chronicles omits the sacrifices performed by Solomon on his return to Jerusalem in 1 Kings 3.15 since in the view of Chronicles the only legitimate sacrificial site at this time is Gibeon.

1.14–17 Cf. 1 Kings 10.26–29. Chronicles moves this account of Solomon's riches and commercial activity from the end of Solomon's reign to a point between the revelation at Gibeon and the beginning of the temple building. At this position it fulfills v. 12 and implies that these resources were dedicated to constructing the temple. **1.15** *Gold*, not present in the Hebrew of 1 Kings 10.27. *Shephelah*, low hills in western Palestine, separating the coastal plain from the central mountain ridge. **1.16** *Kue*, Cilicia, on the southeast coast of Asia Minor. **1.17** *Hittites*, people living roughly in what is now modern Turkey. Solomon is a kind of arms merchant.

2.1–18 Cf. 1 Kings 5.1–8; 7.13–14; 5.9–18. **2.1** *Palace*. Cf. 2.12; 7.11; 8.1; 9.11. Chronicles omits details about its construction that are reported in 1 Kings 7.1–12. **2.3–10** A letter of Solomon to Huram. According to 1 Kings 5.1 Hiram initiates the correspondence with Solomon. **2.3** *Huram*, a variant spelling of Hiram found consistently in Chronicles. **2.4** Chronicles makes the obligation to sacrifice a major reason for building the temple. **2.6a** The inability of any temple to contain God is borrowed from Solomon's speech at the dedication of the temple (6.18). **2.7** The *artisan* is not mentioned until 1 Kings 7.13–14 in the parallel account, where he is skilled only in bronze work. The wider talents in Chronicles stem from a comparison of Huram-abi (v. 13) with Oholiab, who worked on the tabernacle (cf. Ex 31.1–11; 35.30–35). **2.8** The identity of *algum* is not certain, but 9.10–11 indicates that it was imported from Ophir. **2.10** A *cor* was slightly more than 6 bushels. A *bath* was 6 gallons or 22 liters. The enormous amounts of grain, wine, and oil fit a pattern of Tyrian dependence on Israel for foodstuffs (Ezek 17.17). In 1 Kings

provide for your servants, those who cut
the timber, twenty thousand cors of
crushed wheat, twenty thousand cors of
barley, twenty thousand baths[d] of wine,
and twenty thousand baths of oil."
11 Then King Huram of Tyre an-
swered in a letter that he sent to Solomon,
"Because the LORD loves his people he has
made you king over them." 12 Huram also
said, "Blessed be the LORD God of Israel,
who made heaven and earth, who has
given King David a wise son, endowed
with discretion and understanding, who
will build a temple for the LORD, and a
royal palace for himself.
13 "I have dispatched Huram-abi, a
skilled artisan, endowed with understand-
ing, 14 the son of one of the Danite
women, his father a Tyrian. He is trained
to work in gold, silver, bronze, iron, stone,
and wood, and in purple, blue, and crim-
son fabrics and fine linen, and to do all
sorts of engraving and execute any design
that may be assigned him, with your arti-
sans, the artisans of my lord, your father
David. 15 Now, as for the wheat, barley,
oil, and wine, of which my lord has spo-
ken, let him send them to his servants.
16 We will cut whatever timber you need
from Lebanon, and bring it to you as rafts
by sea to Joppa; you will take it up to Je-
rusalem."
17 Then Solomon took a census of all
the aliens who were residing in the land of
Israel, after the census that his father Da-
vid had taken; and there were found to
be one hundred fifty-three thousand six
hundred. 18 Seventy thousand of them he
assigned as laborers, eighty thousand as
stonecutters in the hill country, and three
thousand six hundred as overseers to
make the people work.

Solomon Builds the Temple

3 Solomon began to build the house of
the LORD in Jerusalem on Mount
Moriah, where the LORD had appeared to
his father David, at the place that David
had designated, on the threshing floor of
Ornan the Jebusite. 2 He began to build
on the second day of the second month of
the fourth year of his reign. 3 These are
Solomon's measurements[e] for building
the house of God: the length, in cubits of
the old standard, was sixty cubits, and the
width twenty cubits. 4 The vestibule in
front of the nave of the house was twen-
ty cubits long, across the width of the

d A Hebrew measure of volume *e* Syr: Heb *foundations*

5.11 these are annual payments. **2.11–16** Huram's reply. **2.11–12** Huram expresses piety toward the Lord and mentions the Lord's endorsement of Solomon's kingship and his gift of wisdom to him. **2.13** *Huram-abi* is a counterpart to Bezalel and Oholiab from the wilderness period (see note on 2.7). The element *abi* in his name, not attested in 1 Kings 7.13, may be a play on the name Oholiab. **2.14** *Danite.* According to 1 Kings 7.14, Hiram is the son of a widow from Naphtali. The wilderness artisan Oholiab, however, was from the tribe of Dan (Ex 31.6; 35.34). His skills correspond to those requested by Solomon in v. 7. Both Dan and Naphtali are descendants of Bilhah, the concubine of Jacob. *My lord,* a term of respect, used by Huram for both David and Solomon (cf. v. 15). **2.16** *Joppa,* an important harbor city in antiquity, today a suburb of Tel Aviv. The logs could have been carried on ships or towed as rafts. Cf. 1 Kings 5.9; Ezra 3.7. **2.17** *The land of Israel.* Cf. 1 Chr 22.2; 2 Chr 30.25; 34.7. *Census.* Cf. 1 Chr 21; 22.2. Chronicles insists that no Israelite had to do forced labor. Cf. 2 Chr 8.7–10. According to 1 Kings 5.13–18, omitted by Chronicles, Solomon sends thirty thousand workers to Lebanon, in three monthly shifts. **2.18** *Three thousand six hundred.* 1 Kings 5.16 has three thousand three hundred, but see the Septuagint of 1 Kings.

3.1–17 Cf. 1 Kings 6.1–7.21. The account of the building of the temple is shorter in Chronicles than in 1 Kings, but the Chronicler edits that earlier account to emphasize the parallels between the temple and the tabernacle. **3.1** *Mount Moriah.* The Temple Mount is identified with the place where Abraham attempted to sacrifice Isaac (Gen 22.2, 14). This site is also the place where David saw an angel with a drawn sword at the time of his census (1 Chr 21.1–22.1). **3.2** 959 B.C.E. In 1 Kings 6.1 the temple building begins on the four hundred eightieth anniversary of the exodus. Chronicles generally deemphasizes the exodus. **3.3** The short cubit was 17.4 inches and the long cubit 20.4 inches. It is not clear which of these was considered *the old standard.* According to the short cubit, the temple measures 87 by 29 feet; according to the long cubit 102 by 34 feet. The height is not given. **3.4** According to 1 Kings 6.3 the vestibule measures 20 by 10 cubits. *One hundred twenty.* Elsewhere the temple is 30 cubits high. The verse has been damaged in trans-

house;[f] and its height was one hundred
twenty cubits. He overlaid it on the inside
with pure gold. 5 The nave he lined with
cypress, covered it with fine gold, and
made palms and chains on it. 6 He
adorned the house with settings of pre-
cious stones. The gold was gold from
Parvaim. 7 So he lined the house with
gold—its beams, its thresholds, its walls,
and its doors; and he carved cherubim on
the walls.

8 He made the most holy place; its
length, corresponding to the width of the
house, was twenty cubits, and its width
was twenty cubits; he overlaid it with six
hundred talents of fine gold. 9 The weight
of the nails was fifty shekels of gold. He
overlaid the upper chambers with gold.

10 In the most holy place he made two
carved cherubim and overlaid[g] them
with gold. 11 The wings of the cherubim
together extended twenty cubits: one
wing of the one, five cubits long, touched
the wall of the house, and its other wing,
five cubits long, touched the wing of the
other cherub; 12 and of this cherub, one
wing, five cubits long, touched the wall of
the house, and the other wing, also five
cubits long, was joined to the wing of the
first cherub. 13 The wings of these cheru-
bim extended twenty cubits; the cheru-
bim[h] stood on their feet, facing the nave.
14 And Solomon[i] made the curtain of
blue and purple and crimson fabrics and
fine linen, and worked cherubim into it.

15 In front of the house he made two
pillars thirty-five cubits high, with a capi-
tal of five cubits on the top of each. 16 He
made encircling[j] chains and put them on
the tops of the pillars; and he made one
hundred pomegranates, and put them on
the chains. 17 He set up the pillars in front
of the temple, one on the right, the other
on the left; the one on the right he called
Jachin, and the one on the left, Boaz.

Furnishings of the Temple

4 He made an altar of bronze, twenty
cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and
ten cubits high. 2 Then he made the mol-
ten sea; it was round, ten cubits from rim
to rim, and five cubits high. A line of
thirty cubits would encircle it completely.
3 Under it were panels all around, each of
ten cubits, surrounding the sea; there
were two rows of panels, cast when it was
cast. 4 It stood on twelve oxen, three fac-
ing north, three facing west, three facing
south, and three facing east; the sea was
set on them. The hindquarters of each
were toward the inside. 5 Its thickness was

f Compare 1 Kings 6.3: Meaning of Heb uncertain
g Heb *they overlaid* *h* Heb *they* *i* Heb *he*
j Cn: Heb *in the inner sanctuary*

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mission. **3.5** *Nave.* The largest room in the temple, where most of the ritual activity takes place. Within it were an incense altar, ten golden lampstands, and the table for the bread of the Presence. **3.6** *Parvaim,* an unknown site. **3.8** *Six hundred talents,* 22.5 tons. David is said to have amassed 3,750 tons of gold (1 Chr 22.14). **3.9** *Fifty shekels,* 20 ounces, which is too much for one nail, too little for all the nails. **3.10** *Cherubim,* winged sphinxes, whose backs formed a throne for the invisible Lord. **3.14** Solomon's temple had doors separating the Most Holy Place from the rest of the building (1 Kings 6.31–32). The *curtain* may be a projection onto Solomon's temple from the Second Temple, with influence also from the tabernacle account (Ex 26.31–33; cf Mt 27.51). Chronicles omits at this point an equivalent to 1 Kings 6.29–7.14. 1 Kings 7.1–12 deals with the king's palace (cf. 2 Chr 2.1). **3.15–17** The *pillars,* lacking in the Second Temple, are symbolic and decorative, not structural. Their height in Chronicles is nearly double that in Kings (18 cubits; 1 Kings 7.15). The Chronicler apparently includes in his calculations the circumference (12 cubits; 1 Kings 7.15) and the height of the capital (5 cubits; 1 Kings 7.16). **3.17** *Jachin* in Hebrew means "he establishes." *Boaz,* meaning unknown (also the name of David's great-grandfather; Ruth 4.17, 21–22). Some scholars interpret these names as the first words in dynastic oracles.

4.1–5.1 Cf. 1 Kings 7.23–51. **4.1** This account of the bronze altar was omitted accidentally in the present text of 1 Kings because this verse and the following verse start the same way: *he made.* For a description of the altar from the exilic period, see Ezek 43.13–17. **4.2–5** According to Chronicles the *molten sea* serves the purposes of purification (cf. Ex 30.18–21). In the temple of Solomon, it may have symbolized the cosmic sea dragon. **4.2** The circumference should be 31.4 cubits. Either *thirty* is an approximation, or the measurement was calculated from a different place on the rim (inside versus outside). **4.4** The *twelve* animals supporting the sea face outward and look toward each of the four compass points. The number twelve implies the twelve tribes of Israel (cf. Num 2; Ezek 48.30–35). **4.5** *Three thousand baths.* 1 Kings 7.26 reads "two thousand baths," a calculation based on a hemispherical

a handbreadth; its rim was made like the rim of a cup, like the flower of a lily; it held three thousand baths.[k] 6 He also made ten basins in which to wash, and set five on the right side, and five on the left. In these they were to rinse what was used for the burnt offering. The sea was for the priests to wash in.

7 He made ten golden lampstands as prescribed, and set them in the temple, five on the south side and five on the north. 8 He also made ten tables and placed them in the temple, five on the right side and five on the left. And he made one hundred basins of gold. 9 He made the court of the priests, and the great court, and doors for the court; he overlaid their doors with bronze. 10 He set the sea at the southeast corner of the house.

11 And Huram made the pots, the shovels, and the basins. Thus Huram finished the work that he did for King Solomon on the house of God: 12 the two pillars, the bowls, and the two capitals on the top of the pillars; and the two latticeworks to cover the two bowls of the capitals that were on the top of the pillars; 13 the four hundred pomegranates for the two latticeworks, two rows of pomegranates for each latticework, to cover the two bowls of the capitals that were on the pillars. 14 He made the stands, the basins on the stands, 15 the one sea, and the twelve oxen underneath it. 16 The pots, the shovels, the forks, and all the equipment for these Huram-abi made of burnished bronze for King Solomon for the house of the LORD. 17 In the plain of the Jordan the king cast them, in the clay ground between Succoth and Zeredah. 18 Solomon made all these things in great quantities, so that the weight of the bronze was not determined.

19 So Solomon made all the things that were in the house of God: the golden altar, the tables for the bread of the Presence, 20 the lampstands and their lamps of pure gold to burn before the inner sanctuary, as prescribed; 21 the flowers, the lamps, and the tongs, of purest gold; 22 the snuffers, basins, ladles, and firepans, of pure gold. As for the entrance to the temple: the inner doors to the most holy place and the doors of the nave of the temple were of gold.

5 Thus all the work that Solomon did for the house of the LORD was finished. Solomon brought in the things that his father David had dedicated, and stored the silver, the gold, and all the vessels in the treasuries of the house of God.

The Ark Brought into the Temple

2 Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the leaders of the ancestral houses of the people of Israel, in Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the city of David, which is Zion. 3 And all the Israelites assembled before the king at the festival that is in the seventh month.

k A Hebrew measure of volume

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rather than a cylindrical shape. A *bath* was approximately 6 gallons or 22 liters. **4.6** There are ten basins in Solomon's temple, according to the Chronicler, while the tabernacle only had one. Similarly, the tabernacle had but one lampstand and one table, not ten as in Chronicles (vv. 7–8). An elaborate description of the basins and their stands in 1 Kings 7.27–38 is omitted in Chronicles. **4.7** *Golden lampstands,* perhaps symbolizing the presence of God. **4.8** In the tabernacle, a single table was used for the bread of the Presence. The function of the *ten tables* in Chronicles is not clear, though the lampstands may have been placed on them. **4.9** *Court of the priests,* called the inner court in 1 Kings 6.36; 7.12. **4.10–22** A close parallel to 1 Kings 7.39–50 that is perhaps a later addition. The mention of *inner doors* (v. 22) contradicts the Chronicler's idea that a curtain closed off the Most Holy Place (3.14). **4.11** Huram-abi from Tyre (2.13) makes other miscellaneous furnishings. **4.16** Chronicles does not tell us where Solomon discovered the great quantities of *bronze.* Recent archaeology demonstrates that the copper from Timna and the valley of Elah was not mined in Solomon's time. **4.17** Solomon makes molds for his bronze castings in the clay of the Jordan River. *Succoth and Zeredah* (better "Zarethan," following 1 Kings 7.46), cities just east of the Jordan River. **5.1** *Dedicated.* Cf. 1 Chr 18.1–13; 26.25–27; 29.1–5. Solomon stores the silver, gold, and temple vessels in the treasuries (1 Chr 28.12). There may be a pun in Hebrew on the name "Solomon" and the verb *was finished.*

5.2–14 Cf. 1 Kings 8.1–11. In Chronicles the whole nation of Israel participates in major cultic events, but in this case the idea is already present in 1 Kings. **5.3** *Festival that is in the seventh month,*

4 And all the elders of Israel came, and
the Levites carried the ark. 5 So they
brought up the ark, the tent of meeting,
and all the holy vessels that were in the
tent; the priests and the Levites brought
them up. 6 King Solomon and all the con-
gregation of Israel, who had assembled
before him, were before the ark, sacrific-
ing so many sheep and oxen that they
could not be numbered or counted.
7 Then the priests brought the ark of the
covenant of the LORD to its place, in the
inner sanctuary of the house, in the most
holy place, underneath the wings of the
cherubim. 8 For the cherubim spread out
their wings over the place of the ark, so
that the cherubim made a covering above
the ark and its poles. 9 The poles were so
long that the ends of the poles were seen
from the holy place in front of the inner
sanctuary; but they could not be seen
from outside; they are there to this day.
10 There was nothing in the ark except the
two tablets that Moses put there at Horeb,
where the LORD made a covenant[l] with
the people of Israel after they came out
of Egypt.

11 Now when the priests came out of
the holy place (for all the priests who were
present had sanctified themselves, with-
out regard to their divisions), 12 all the
levitical singers, Asaph, Heman, and Je-
duthun, their sons and kindred, arrayed
in fine linen, with cymbals, harps, and
lyres, stood east of the altar with one hun-
dred twenty priests who were trumpe-
ters. 13 It was the duty of the trumpeters
and singers to make themselves heard in
unison in praise and thanksgiving to the
LORD, and when the song was raised, with
trumpets and cymbals and other musical
instruments, in praise to the LORD,

"For he is good,
for his steadfast love endures
forever,"

the house, the house of the LORD, was
filled with a cloud, 14 so that the priests
could not stand to minister because of the
cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the
house of God.

Dedication of the Temple

6 Then Solomon said, "The LORD has
said that he would reside in thick
darkness. 2 I have built you an exalted
house, a place for you to reside in
forever."

3 Then the king turned around and
blessed all the assembly of Israel, while all
the assembly of Israel stood. 4 And he
said, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Is-
rael, who with his hand has fulfilled what
he promised with his mouth to my father
David, saying, 5 'Since the day that I
brought my people out of the land of
Egypt, I have not chosen a city from any
of the tribes of Israel in which to build a
house, so that my name might be there,
and I chose no one as ruler over my peo-
ple Israel; 6 but I have chosen Jerusalem
in order that my name may be there, and
I have chosen David to be over my people

l Heb lacks *a covenant*

Tabernacles (Booths). **5.4** The Chronicler has the *Levites* carry the ark (cf. 1 Chr 15.2, 11–15) and supports them wherever possible. In 1 Kings 8.3 the priests carry the ark. **5.5** While the ark has already been brought to Jerusalem by David (1 Chr 15–16), the *tent of meeting* (the tabernacle) is now brought from Gibeon (2 Chr 1.3) and presumably stored in the temple. *Priests and the Levites*, better "the Levitical priests." **5.7** The *priests* alone could enter the Most Holy Place. Cf. Num 4.5–20; Ezek 44.10–14. **5.9** *Holy place.* The NRSV emends, following 1 Kings 8.8; the Hebrew reads "the ark." *To this day*, taken over from 1 Kings 8.8. The ark no longer existed at the time Chronicles was written. **5.10** *Two tablets.* According to a later tradition attested by Heb 9.4, a jar of manna and Aaron's rod were also in the ark (cf. Ex 16.32–34; Num 17.10–11). *Horeb*, the preferred word for Sinai in Deuteronomy–2 Kings (see 1 Kings 8.9). **5.11–13** Almost all of these verses are an addition by the Chronicler. **5.12** *The levitical singers, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun.* Cf. 1 Chr 16.37–41. **5.13** *For he is good . . . forever* is a couplet frequently used in Chronicles (1 Chr 16.34, 41; 2 Chr 7.3, 6; 20.21). **5.13–14** The temple is filled with the *cloud* of the *glory of the LORD*, just as the tabernacle had been at its dedication (Ex 40.34–38). The marks of a theophany are seen by the priests. A second theophany, approving the temple, appears in 7.1–3, where it is visible to all the people.

6.1–11 Cf. 1 Kings 8.12–21. **6.2** Solomon builds a permanent house for the Lord, whose glory had once appeared at Sinai (Ex 20.21) and more frequently at the tabernacle. **6.5–6** Though Chronicles follows 1 Kings very closely in ch. 6, the words *my name might be there . . . and I chose no one* are missing in 1 Kings 8.16 through a scribal mistake. Solomon is portrayed celebrating the divine choice of Jerusalem and of

Israel.' 7 My father David had it in mind to
build a house for the name of the LORD,
the God of Israel. 8 But the LORD said to
my father David, 'You did well to consider
building a house for my name; 9 nevertheless you shall not build the house, but
your son who shall be born to you shall
build the house for my name.' 10 Now the
LORD has fulfilled his promise that he
made; for I have succeeded my father David, and sit on the throne of Israel, as the
LORD promised, and have built the house
for the name of the LORD, the God of Israel. 11 There I have set the ark, in which
is the covenant of the LORD that he made
with the people of Israel."

Solomon's Prayer of Dedication

12 Then Solomon[m] stood before the
altar of the LORD in the presence of the
whole assembly of Israel, and spread out
his hands. 13 Solomon had made a bronze
platform five cubits long, five cubits wide,
and three cubits high, and had set it in the
court; and he stood on it. Then he knelt
on his knees in the presence of the whole
assembly of Israel, and spread out his
hands toward heaven. 14 He said, "O
LORD, God of Israel, there is no God
like you, in heaven or on earth, keeping
covenant in steadfast love with your servants who walk before you with all their
heart— 15 you who have kept for your
servant, my father David, what you promised to him. Indeed, you promised with
your mouth and this day have fulfilled
with your hand. 16 Therefore, O LORD,
God of Israel, keep for your servant, my
father David, that which you promised
him, saying, 'There shall never fail you a
successor before me to sit on the throne of
Israel, if only your children keep to their
way, to walk in my law as you have walked
before me.' 17 Therefore, O LORD, God of
Israel, let your word be confirmed, which
you promised to your servant David.

18 "But will God indeed reside with
mortals on earth? Even heaven and the
highest heaven cannot contain you, how
much less this house that I have built!
19 Regard your servant's prayer and his
plea, O LORD my God, heeding the cry
and the prayer that your servant prays to
you. 20 May your eyes be open day and
night toward this house, the place where
you promised to set your name, and may
you heed the prayer that your servant
prays toward this place. 21 And hear the
plea of your servant and of your people
Israel, when they pray toward this place;
may you hear from heaven your dwelling
place; hear and forgive.

22 "If someone sins against another
and is required to take an oath and comes
and swears before your altar in this house,
23 may you hear from heaven, and act,
and judge your servants, repaying the
guilty by bringing their conduct on their
own head, and vindicating those who are
in the right by rewarding them in accordance with their righteousness.

24 "When your people Israel, having
sinned against you, are defeated before

m Heb *he*

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his father David. **6.9** Chronicles does not cite here David's bloodshed as the reason for banning him from temple building (cf. 1 Chr 22.8–9; 28.3). **6.10** Solomon is a double fulfillment of the promise: he succeeds his father as king and he builds the temple. **6.11** Instead of *with the people of Israel,* 1 Kings 8.21 reads: "with our ancestors when he brought them out of the land of Egypt." Chronicles stresses the contemporary validity of the covenant more than its antiquity, and it omits a reference to the exodus. (See also the note on 6.41–42; an equivalent for 1 Kings 8.51, 53 is omitted.) The exodus is mentioned in 2 Chr 6.5.

6.12–42 Cf. 1 Kings 8.22–53. Chronicles follows the text of Kings closely in this passage, except that it replaces most of 1 Kings 8.50–53 with its own conclusion in vv. 41–42. **6.13** This verse is missing in 1 Kings because of scribal error. Note how both v. 12 and v. 13 end with *spread out his hands.* **6.14–17** Solomon prays that God would fulfill the dynastic promise, just as he had fulfilled his promise to David about the temple. **6.16** *Walk in my law.* 1 Kings 8.25 reads "walk before me." The expression in Chronicles is more concrete and may refer to canonical law. **6.18–21** The prayer struggles with ideas about God's presence. While heaven is God's *dwelling place,* not earth among mortals, his *name* has been set in the earthly temple. Solomon hopes that his own prayer and that of the people will induce God to hear and forgive. **6.22–23** These verses about oath-taking procedures, even though taken from 1 Kings 8.31–32, express well the Chronicler's theory of divine retribution. **6.24–35** Solomon urges God to respond to calamities like drought, famine, sickness, and especially military defeat by hearing the people when they repent (or *turn*; vv. 24, 26) and by forgiving them.

an enemy but turn again to you, confess
your name, pray and plead with you in
this house, 25 may you hear from heaven,
and forgive the sin of your people Israel,
and bring them again to the land that you
gave to them and to their ancestors.
26 "When heaven is shut up and there
is no rain because they have sinned
against you, and then they pray toward
this place, confess your name, and turn
from their sin, because you punish them,
27 may you hear in heaven, forgive the sin
of your servants, your people Israel, when
you teach them the good way in which
they should walk; and send down rain
upon your land, which you have given to
your people as an inheritance.
28 "If there is famine in the land,
if there is plague, blight, mildew, locust,
or caterpillar; if their enemies besiege
them in any of the settlements of the
lands; whatever suffering, whatever sick-
ness there is; 29 whatever prayer, whatever
plea from any individual or from all your
people Israel, all knowing their own suf-
fering and their own sorrows so that they
stretch out their hands toward this house;
30 may you hear from heaven, your dwell-
ing place, forgive, and render to all whose
heart you know, according to all their
ways, for only you know the human heart.
31 Thus may they fear you and walk in
your ways all the days that they live in the
land that you gave to our ancestors.
32 "Likewise when foreigners, who
are not of your people Israel, come from
a distant land because of your great name,
and your mighty hand, and your out-
stretched arm, when they come and pray
toward this house, 33 may you hear from
heaven your dwelling place, and do what-
ever the foreigners ask of you, in order
that all the peoples of the earth may know
your name and fear you, as do your peo-
ple Israel, and that they may know that
your name has been invoked on this
house that I have built.
34 "If your people go out to battle
against their enemies, by whatever way
you shall send them, and they pray to you
toward this city that you have chosen and
the house that I have built for your name,
35 then hear from heaven their prayer and
their plea, and maintain their cause.
36 "If they sin against you—for there
is no one who does not sin—and you are
angry with them and give them to an en-
emy, so that they are carried away captive
to a land far or near; 37 then if they come
to their senses in the land to which they
have been taken captive, and repent, and
plead with you in the land of their captiv-
ity, saying, 'We have sinned, and have
done wrong; we have acted wickedly'; 38 if
they repent with all their heart and soul in
the land of their captivity, to which they
were taken captive, and pray toward their
land, which you gave to their ancestors,
the city that you have chosen, and the
house that I have built for your name,
39 then hear from heaven your dwelling
place their prayer and their pleas, main-
tain their cause and forgive your people
who have sinned against you. 40 Now,
O my God, let your eyes be open and
your ears attentive to prayer from this
place.

41 "Now rise up, O LORD God, and
go to your resting place,
you and the ark of your might.
Let your priests, O LORD God, be
clothed with salvation,
and let your faithful rejoice in
your goodness.
42 O LORD God, do not reject your
anointed one.

6.36–40 The focus is on the plight of Israel in exile and the belief in the effectiveness of prayer from exile reflects the main concern of the prayer in 1 Kings 8. The Chronicler also affirms elsewhere that prayers from exile are effective (33.10–13). **6.40** *To prayer from this place,* an addition to the text of 1 Kings, expressing the theological concern of the Chronicler's own day. **6.41–42** The conclusion of the prayer is made up of a quotation from Ps 132.8–10, 1. Thus, the Chronicler builds his hope on words ascribed to David, rather than those ascribed to Moses in the period of the exodus, as in 1 Kings 8.51, 53. **6.41** *Resting place,* the temple. *Ark of your might.* The ark symbolized the presence of God in military battles. *Salvation.* Ps 132.9 reads "righteousness." *In your goodness,* an addition in Chronicles. **6.42** *Steadfast love for your servant David.* Ps 132, by way of contrast, reminds God of David's hardships and the efforts he had expended for God. Chronicles asks God to keep his promises to the anointed king, indicating that the author expects something from these old promises even after the rebuilding of the temple, perhaps even some form of a messianic hope. Isa 55.3 democratizes the "steadfast, sure love for David" by saying it now applies to all Israel.

Remember your steadfast love
for your servant David."

Solomon Dedicates the Temple

7 When Solomon had ended his prayer, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the temple. 2 The priests could not enter the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD filled the LORD's house. 3 When all the people of Israel saw the fire come down and the glory of the LORD on the temple, they bowed down on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and worshiped and gave thanks to the LORD, saying,

"For he is good,
for his steadfast love endures
forever."

4 Then the king and all the people offered sacrifice before the LORD. 5 King Solomon offered as a sacrifice twenty-two thousand oxen and one hundred twenty thousand sheep. So the king and all the people dedicated the house of God. 6 The priests stood at their posts; the Levites also, with the instruments for music to the LORD that King David had made for giving thanks to the LORD—for his steadfast love endures forever—whenever David offered praises by their ministry. Opposite them the priests sounded trumpets; and all Israel stood.

7 Solomon consecrated the middle of the court that was in front of the house of the LORD; for there he offered the burnt offerings and the fat of the offerings of well-being because the bronze altar Solomon had made could not hold the burnt offering and the grain offering and the fat parts.

8 At that time Solomon held the festival for seven days, and all Israel with him, a very great congregation, from Lebo-hamath to the Wadi of Egypt. 9 On the eighth day they held a solemn assembly; for they had observed the dedication of the altar seven days and the festival seven days. 10 On the twenty-third day of the seventh month he sent the people away to their homes, joyful and in good spirits because of the goodness that the LORD had shown to David and to Solomon and to his people Israel.

11 Thus Solomon finished the house of the LORD and the king's house; all that Solomon had planned to do in the house of the LORD and in his own house he successfully accomplished.

God's Second Appearance to Solomon

12 Then the LORD appeared to Solomon in the night and said to him: "I have heard your prayer, and have chosen this place for myself as a house of sacrifice. 13 When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, 14 if my people who are

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7.1–10 Cf. 1 Kings 8.54–66. **7.1** *Fire* from heaven authenticates the first sacrifices at the new temple, as at the first sacrifices in the wilderness (Lev 9.23–24) and at David's presentation of burnt offerings (1 Chr 21.26). Cf. also Judg 6.20–22; 1 Kings 18. **7.2** A cloud theophany also occurs in 5.13. **7.3** See note on 5.13. Chronicles omits Solomon's blessing of the people in 1 Kings 8.54–61. **7.5** The large number of sacrifices is probably a hyperbole to emphasize the importance of the occasion. Cf. the similar, large figures at ceremonies in the time of Hezekiah (29.32–36) and Josiah (35.7–9). Such sacrifices were to be eaten by the people during the fifteen-day celebration to follow. **7.8** As is fitting for such a momentous event, *all Israel* celebrates the dedication of the temple. The wide geographic area represented by the participants, from *Lebo-hamath*, the traditional northern border of Israel, to the *Wadi of Egypt*, the traditional southern border, recalls the pan-Israelite celebration when David prepared to bring the ark to Jerusalem (1 Chr 13). **7.9–10** The dedication lasts from the eighth to the fourteenth day of the seventh month, followed by the Feast of Tabernacles from the fifteenth to the twenty-second day of the month, with dismissal on the twenty-third day. Hezekiah also is said to have held his great Passover for two weeks (30.23). **7.10** The Chronicler adds a reference to *Solomon* as part of his equal treatment for the two kings of the United Kingdom (cf. 1 Kings 8.66).

7.11–22 Cf. 1 Kings 9.1–9. In this second theophany to Solomon, God gives a positive response to Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple (6.14–42). **7.11** Since the building of the king's palace (*the king's house*) took thirteen years, according to 1 Kings 7.1, the second theophany occurs much later than its position in 2 Chronicles would suggest. **7.12** *In the night*, a reference to the theophany at Gibeon (1.7–13). **7.12b–15** This material, not contained in 1 Kings, affirms that God will respond to the petitions of ch. 6. **7.14** Humble repentance will

called by my name humble themselves,
pray, seek my face, and turn from their
wicked ways, then I will hear from
heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal
their land. 15 Now my eyes will be open
and my ears attentive to the prayer that is
made in this place. 16 For now I have cho-
sen and consecrated this house so that my
name may be there forever; my eyes and
my heart will be there for all time. 17 As
for you, if you walk before me, as your
father David walked, doing according to
all that I have commanded you and keep-
ing my statutes and my ordinances,
18 then I will establish your royal throne,
as I made covenant with your father Da-
vid saying, 'You shall never lack a succes-
sor to rule over Israel.'

19 "But if you[n] turn aside and for-
sake my statutes and my commandments
that I have set before you, and go and
serve other gods and worship them,
20 then I will pluck you[o] up from the land
that I have given you;[o] and this house,
which I have consecrated for my name, I
will cast out of my sight, and will make it
a proverb and a byword among all peo-
ples. 21 And regarding this house, now
exalted, everyone passing by will be
astonished, and say, 'Why has the LORD
done such a thing to this land and to this
house?' 22 Then they will say, 'Because
they abandoned the LORD the God of
their ancestors who brought them out of
the land of Egypt, and they adopted other
gods, and worshiped them and served
them; therefore he has brought all this ca-
lamity upon them.' "

Various Activities of Solomon

8 At the end of twenty years, during
which Solomon had built the house
of the LORD and his own house, 2 Solomon
rebuilt the cities that Huram had given
to him, and settled the people of Israel
in them.

3 Solomon went to Hamath-zobah,
and captured it. 4 He built Tadmor in the
wilderness and all the storage towns that
he built in Hamath. 5 He also built Upper
Beth-horon and Lower Beth-horon, forti-
fied cities, with walls, gates, and bars,
6 and Baalath, as well as all Solomon's
storage towns, and all the towns for his
chariots, the towns for his cavalry, and
whatever Solomon desired to build, in Je-
rusalem, in Lebanon, and in all the land
of his dominion. 7 All the people who
were left of the Hittites, the Amorites, the
Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites,

n The word *you* in this verse is plural
o Heb *them*

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force God to hear, forgive, and heal. Throughout the rest of 2 Chronicles this principle of immediate retribution is illustrated through the history of the Southern Kingdom. **7.18** *Made covenant with*, more specific and intense than in 1 Kings 9.5 ("promised"). *You shall never lack a successor to rule over Israel*, another indication of the low-key messianic hope of the Chronicler. **7.19–22** God's address to the people, announcing the consequences of idolatry. **7.19** *You* includes Solomon and the people since the Chronicler omits the reference to David's sons in 1 Kings 9.6. The evil behavior of the people would force God to banish all of them from the land. **7.21–22** A similar question and answer format dealing with the causes of the desolations of exile appears in Deut 29.24–25.

8.1–18 Cf. 1 Kings 9.10–28. The Chronicler, as here with Solomon, often discloses his approval of a king by recording his many building projects. **8.2** The parallel text in 1 Kings 9.11 reports that Solomon gave Hiram twenty cities, apparently in payment for help with his various building projects or because he needed money for something else. The Chronicler may have been embarrassed that Solomon disposed of some of the land of Israel or that he was in debt. As a result, the Chronicler changes the text to make the cities pass from Huram (a variant spelling of Hiram) to Solomon. **8.3–6** Solomon's military successes, otherwise unreported, also show his life under blessing, though elsewhere in Chronicles he is called a man of peace (1 Chr 22.9). **8.3** *Hamath-zobah*, an unknown city, perhaps a scribal error. David strikes down Hadadezer of Zobah, toward Hamath, according to 1 Chr 18.3. **8.4** *Tadmor*, a caravan city (Palmyra) located 140 miles northeast of Damascus. 1 Kings 9.18 reads "Tamar" (a small site in southern Judah; cf. Ezek 47.19; 48.28). *Hamath*, modern Hama, a city located between Damascus and Aleppo on the main overland route to Mesopotamia. **8.5** *Upper Beth-horon and Lower Beth-horon*, twin cities in Ephraim that guarded a major pass on the road from the coast, by way of the valley of Aijalon, to the hill country and Jerusalem. **8.6** *Baalath*, an unidentified city in Judah. **8.7–10** The nations in v. 7 are the traditional inhabitants of the land before the arrival of Israel. Only the descendants of these nations, not the

who were not of Israel, 8 from their descendants who were still left in the land, whom the people of Israel had not destroyed—these Solomon conscripted for forced labor, as is still the case today. 9 But of the people of Israel Solomon made no slaves for his work; they were soldiers, and his officers, the commanders of his chariotry and cavalry. 10 These were the chief officers of King Solomon, two hundred fifty of them, who exercised authority over the people.

11 Solomon brought Pharaoh's daughter from the city of David to the house that he had built for her, for he said, "My wife shall not live in the house of King David of Israel, for the places to which the ark of the LORD has come are holy."

12 Then Solomon offered up burnt offerings to the LORD on the altar of the LORD that he had built in front of the vestibule, 13 as the duty of each day required, offering according to the commandment of Moses for the sabbaths, the new moons, and the three annual festivals—the festival of unleavened bread, the festival of weeks, and the festival of booths. 14 According to the ordinance of his father David, he appointed the divisions of the priests for their service, and the Levites for their offices of praise and ministry alongside the priests as the duty of each day required, and the gatekeepers in their divisions for the several gates; for so David the man of God had commanded. 15 They did not turn away from what the king had commanded the priests and Levites regarding anything at all, or regarding the treasuries.

16 Thus all the work of Solomon was accomplished from[p] the day the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid until the house of the LORD was finished completely.

17 Then Solomon went to Ezion-geber and Eloth on the shore of the sea, in the land of Edom. 18 Huram sent him, in the care of his servants, ships and servants familiar with the sea. They went to Ophir, together with the servants of Solomon, and imported from there four hundred fifty talents of gold and brought it to King Solomon.

Visit of the Queen of Sheba

9 When the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, she came to Jerusalem to test him with hard questions, having a very great retinue and camels bearing spices and very much gold and precious stones. When she came to Solomon, she discussed with him all that was on her mind. 2 Solomon answered all her questions; there was nothing hidden from Solomon that he could not explain to her. 3 When the queen of Sheba had observed the wisdom of Solomon, the house that he had built, 4 the food of his table, the seating of his officials, and the attendance of his servants, and their clothing, his valets, and their clothing, and his burnt offerings[q] that he offered at the house of the LORD, there was no more spirit left in her.

5 So she said to the king, "The report was true that I heard in my own land of your accomplishments and of your wisdom,

p Gk Syr Vg: Heb *to* *q* Gk Syr Vg 1 Kings 10.5: Heb *ascent*

Israelites themselves, are conscripted into forced labor according to the Chronicler. **8.11** Solomon moves a wife who was also the daughter of Pharaoh out of Jerusalem because of the sanctifying presence of the ark in the capital city. Chronicles does not include the other references from Kings to this marriage (1 Kings 3.1; 7.8; 9.16; 11.1). **8.12** Only the priests are allowed to go beyond the vestibule. **8.13–15** These verses, added by the Chronicler, demonstrate Solomon's conformity to the law of Moses (cf. Num 28–29). His appointment of the Levites follows the precedent of David, his father. Cf. 1 Chr 23–27. **8.17–18** *Ezion-geber and Eloth* were ports on the northeast end of the Gulf of Aqaba. A joint sailing venture with Huram embarks from there and brings back with it *four hundred fifty talents* (about 33,750 pounds) *of gold. Ophir*, an unknown and presumably distant city. It took three years to get there (9.21).

9.1–12 Cf. 1 Kings 10.1–13. The queen of Sheba admires the wealth and wisdom of Solomon. Chronicles begins its account of Solomon with an account of Solomon's relationship with the king of Tyre (2.1–16). The queen's trip probably involved commercial interests since the trade routes to Tyre would pass through Israel. **9.1** *Sheba*, modern Yemen, some fourteen hundred miles from Jerusalem. The Sabeans prospered because of trade in myrrh, frankincense, gold, and precious stones. **9.4** The NRSV emendation (see text note *q*) is correct; the difference between *burnt offerings* and *ascent* involves a yod, the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet.

6 but I did not believe the[r] reports until I came and my own eyes saw it. Not
even half of the greatness of your wisdom
had been told to me; you far surpass the
report that I had heard. 7 Happy are your
people! Happy are these your servants,
who continually attend you and hear your
wisdom! 8 Blessed be the LORD your God,
who has delighted in you and set you on
his throne as king for the LORD your God.
Because your God loved Israel and would
establish them forever, he has made you
king over them, that you may execute justice and righteousness." 9 Then she gave
the king one hundred twenty talents of
gold, a very great quantity of spices, and
precious stones: there were no spices such
as those that the queen of Sheba gave to
King Solomon.

10 Moreover the servants of Huram
and the servants of Solomon who brought
gold from Ophir brought algum wood
and precious stones. 11 From the algum
wood, the king made steps[s] for the house
of the LORD and for the king's house,
lyres also and harps for the singers; there
never was seen the like of them before in
the land of Judah.

12 Meanwhile King Solomon granted
the queen of Sheba every desire that she
expressed, well beyond what she had
brought to the king. Then she returned to
her own land, with her servants.

Solomon's Great Wealth

13 The weight of gold that came to
Solomon in one year was six hundred
sixty-six talents of gold, 14 besides that
which the traders and merchants
brought; and all the kings of Arabia and
the governors of the land brought gold
and silver to Solomon. 15 King Solomon
made two hundred large shields of beaten
gold; six hundred shekels of beaten gold
went into each large shield. 16 He made
three hundred shields of beaten gold;
three hundred shekels of gold went into
each shield; and the king put them in the
House of the Forest of Lebanon. 17 The
king also made a great ivory throne, and
overlaid it with pure gold. 18 The throne
had six steps and a footstool of gold,
which were attached to the throne, and on
each side of the seat were arm rests and
two lions standing beside the arm rests,
19 while twelve lions were standing, one on
each end of a step on the six steps. The
like of it was never made in any kingdom.
20 All King Solomon's drinking vessels
were of gold, and all the vessels of the
House of the Forest of Lebanon were of
pure gold; silver was not considered as
anything in the days of Solomon. 21 For
the king's ships went to Tarshish with the
servants of Huram; once every three
years the ships of Tarshish used to come
bringing gold, silver, ivory, apes, and
peacocks.[t]

22 Thus King Solomon excelled all
the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom. 23 All the kings of the earth sought
the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put into his mind.
24 Every one of them brought a present,
objects of silver and gold, garments,
weaponry, spices, horses, and mules, so
much year by year. 25 Solomon had four
thousand stalls for horses and chariots,
and twelve thousand horses, which he stationed in the chariot cities and with the

r Heb *their* s Gk Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain
t Or *baboons*

9.8 *His* [God's] *throne.* 1 Kings 10.9 reads "the throne of Israel." In Chronicles, the throne and kingdom are God's (1 Chr 17.14; 28.5; 29.23; 2 Chr 13.8). God's rule would continue forever, even if there were no human king, as at the time when Chronicles was written. Huram affirms that God's love for Israel led him to place Solomon on the throne (2.11). **9.9** *One hundred twenty talents,* 9,000 pounds. **9.10** Chronicles goes beyond 1 Kings 10.11 by making Solomon an equal partner in Huram's gold trade. *Algum wood.* 1 Kings 10.11 reads "almug wood"; it is perhaps red sandalwood.

9.13–28 Cf. 1 Kings 10.14–29. This idealized picture of the wealth of the United Monarchy may imply that a united Israel in the future might prosper similarly. **9.13** *Six hundred sixty-six talents,* 49,950 pounds. **9.15** These *shields* will later be taken by King Shishak of Egypt (12.9–11). **9.16** *House of the Forest of Lebanon.* Cf. 1 Kings 7.1–12. **9.18** *A footstool of gold.* 1 Kings 10.19 reads "the top of the throne was rounded in the back." The Chronicler may have found the text of Kings theologically offensive. **9.21** *Tarshish,* probably a site in Spain, or a designation for any distant place. *Peacocks.* The alternate *baboons* is preferred by many. **9.25** Solomon's strength in horses is already mentioned at the beginning

king in Jerusalem. 26 He ruled over all the
kings from the Euphrates to the land of
the Philistines, and to the border of
Egypt. 27 The king made silver as com-
mon in Jerusalem as stone, and cedar as
plentiful as the sycamore of the Shephe-
lah. 28 Horses were imported for Solomon
from Egypt and from all lands.

Death of Solomon

29 Now the rest of the acts of Solo-
mon, from first to last, are they not writ-
ten in the history of the prophet Nathan,
and in the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilo-
nite, and in the visions of the seer Iddo
concerning Jeroboam son of Nebat?
30 Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all
Israel forty years. 31 Solomon slept with
his ancestors and was buried in the city of
his father David; and his son Rehoboam
succeeded him.

The Revolt Against Rehoboam

10 Rehoboam went to Shechem, for
all Israel had come to Shechem to
make him king. 2 When Jeroboam son of
Nebat heard of it (for he was in Egypt,
where he had fled from King Solomon),
then Jeroboam returned from Egypt.
3 They sent and called him; and Jeroboam
and all Israel came and said to Rehoboam,
4 "Your father made our yoke heavy. Now
therefore lighten the hard service of your
father and his heavy yoke that he placed
on us, and we will serve you." 5 He said to
them, "Come to me again in three days."
So the people went away.

6 Then King Rehoboam took counsel
with the older men who had attended his
father Solomon while he was still alive,
saying, "How do you advise me to answer
this people?" 7 They answered him, "If
you will be kind to this people and please
them, and speak good words to them,
then they will be your servants forever."
8 But he rejected the advice that the older
men gave him, and consulted the young
men who had grown up with him and
now attended him. 9 He said to them,
"What do you advise that we answer this
people who have said to me, 'Lighten the
yoke that your father put on us'?" 10 The
young men who had grown up with him
said to him, "Thus should you speak to
the people who said to you, 'Your father
made our yoke heavy, but you must
lighten it for us'; tell them, 'My little fin-
ger is thicker than my father's loins.
11 Now, whereas my father laid on you a
heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke. My

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of his reign (1.14–17; 1 Kings 10.26–29). **9.26** Chronicles adds this description of the wide extent of the kingdom to provide a positive conclusion to the reign of Solomon. The words are taken from 1 Kings 4.21.

9.29–31 Cf. 1 Kings 11.41–43. Chronicles omits 1 Kings 11.1–40, which tells of Solomon's foreign wives, the Lord's decision to give most of the kingdom to one of the king's servants, and rebellions in Edom and Aram and by Jeroboam, the first king of the Northern Kingdom. **9.29** Chronicles ascribes the Book of the Acts of Solomon (1 Kings 11.41) to a series of prophetic authors: *Nathan* (1 Chr 17), *Ahijah* (1 Kings 11–15), and *Iddo* (2 Chr 12.15; 13.22). There is no indication that the Chronicler used any other source than 1 Kings in producing the account of Solomon. Chronicles also cites three prophets in the final summary of David (1 Chr 29.29).

10.1–19 Cf. 1 Kings 12.1–20. The Northern tribes protest against Solomon's oppressive rule, rebel against Rehoboam, and set up the rival Northern Kingdom. They remain part of Israel, according to the Chronicler, but they need to repent of forsaking God. **10.1** Forty-one miles north of Jerusalem, *Shechem* was important in the patriarchal period (Abraham, Jacob) and was the site of Joshua's farewell address (Josh 24). The choice of the traditional city of Shechem as the site for Rehoboam's coronation may imply resistance to the Davidic dynasty and its capital at Jerusalem. *All Israel* in Chronicles refers to all of the tribes. In 1 Kings only the Northern tribes are meant. **10.2** *Jeroboam* is not mentioned previously in Chronicles, except for 2 Chr 9.29. Chronicles seems to assume knowledge of 1 Kings 11.26–40. Jeroboam rebels against Solomon and flees to Egypt. Solomon seeks to kill Jeroboam after he has been designated king of the ten Northern tribes by Ahijah, a prophet from Shiloh. **10.4** The *hard service* and *heavy yoke* probably include taxes and forced labor. Cf. the mention of the taskmaster over forced labor (v. 18) with the denial that Solomon really utilizes the corvée within Israel (2.17–18; 8.7–10). The elders counsel moderation and conciliation; Rehoboam's own generation urges a hard-line approach. Rehoboam is already forty-one years old. **10.10** *My little finger*, lit. "my little one," a euphemism for the penis. By using this coarse comparison Rehoboam promises a far harsher rule than his

father disciplined you with whips, but I
will discipline you with scorpions.' "
12 So Jeroboam and all the people
came to Rehoboam the third day, as the
king had said, "Come to me again the
third day." 13 The king answered them
harshly. King Rehoboam rejected the ad-
vice of the older men; 14 he spoke to them
in accordance with the advice of the
young men, "My father made your yoke
heavy, but I will add to it; my father disci-
plined you with whips, but I will discipline
you with scorpions." 15 So the king did not
listen to the people, because it was a turn
of affairs brought about by God so that
the LORD might fulfill his word, which he
had spoken by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jer-
oboam son of Nebat.
16 When all Israel saw that the king
would not listen to them, the people an-
swered the king,

"What share do we have in
David?
We have no inheritance in the
son of Jesse.
Each of you to your tents,
O Israel!
Look now to your own house,
O David."

So all Israel departed to their tents. 17 But
Rehoboam reigned over the people of Is-
rael who were living in the cities of Judah.
18 When King Rehoboam sent Hadoram,
who was taskmaster over the forced labor,
the people of Israel stoned him to death.
King Rehoboam hurriedly mounted his
chariot to flee to Jerusalem. 19 So Israel
has been in rebellion against the house of
David to this day.

Judah and Benjamin Fortified

11 When Rehoboam came to Jerusa-
lem, he assembled one hundred
eighty thousand chosen troops of the
house of Judah and Benjamin to fight
against Israel, to restore the kingdom to
Rehoboam. 2 But the word of the LORD
came to Shemaiah the man of God: 3 Say
to King Rehoboam of Judah, son of Solo-
mon, and to all Israel in Judah and Benja-
min, 4 "Thus says the LORD: You shall not
go up or fight against your kindred. Let
everyone return home, for this thing is
from me." So they heeded the word of the
LORD and turned back from the expedi-
tion against Jeroboam.
5 Rehoboam resided in Jerusalem,
and he built cities for defense in Judah.
6 He built up Bethlehem, Etam, Tekoa,
7 Beth-zur, Soco, Adullam, 8 Gath, Mare-

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father. **10.11** *Scorpions,* perhaps a type of scourge. **10.15** *Turn of affairs.* The same Hebrew root used here to refer to God's control of events is also found in 1 Chr 10.14 to speak of God's handing the kingdom from Saul to David. *Ahijah*'s word about the division of the kingdom (1 Kings 11.29–39) is not contained in 2 Chronicles. **10.16** *Saw.* The verb is lacking in the Hebrew; the NRSV here follows the text of 1 Kings 12.16. *What share . . . O David,* the poem rejecting Rehoboam's kingship forms a mirror image to Amasai's cry of support for David (1 Chr 12.18; cf. 1 Sam 25.10; 2 Sam 20.1). **10.18** *Hadoram.* 1 Kings 12.18 reads "Adoram." By sending the leader of the forced labor Rehoboam confirms his hard line and provokes strong opposition. *People of Israel.* The Chronicler includes the citizens of the Northern Kingdom in the concept "Israel." Chronicles omits an equivalent for 1 Kings 12.20, which reports that all Israel anoints Jeroboam to be their king.

11.1–4 Cf. 1 Kings 12.21–24. The prophet Shemaiah successfully warns Rehoboam not to fight against the North, and this results in a temporary truce. **11.1** *One hundred eighty thousand.* The number of troops is much larger than the size of ancient armies, but Chronicles has even bigger figures elsewhere (580,000 at the time of Asa, 2 Chr 14.8; 307,500 at the time of Uzziah, 2 Chr 26.10). **11.3** *All Israel in Judah and Benjamin.* 1 Kings 12.23 reads "all the house of Judah and Benjamin." In Chronicles both North and South may be called Israel (for the North, see 2 Chr 10.16). **11.4** *Against your kindred.* 1 Kings 12.24 reads "against your kindred the people of Israel." Note that the Northerners in Chronicles are still deemed kindred (brothers). *This thing is from me.* The Lord takes responsibility in this verse for the division of the kingdom.

11.5–12 According to this paragraph, which is unique to Chronicles, Rehoboam erected fortresses at fifteen strategic sites to protect his kingdom from the west, south, and east. A lack of fortresses in the north may imply that he intended to expand his territory in that direction. The western border is pulled back somewhat, perhaps indicating that the territory defended reflects the effects of Shishak's invasion. According to archaeology, Beth-zur (v. 7) was destroyed at the time of Rehoboam, and Lachish (v. 9) was not yet fortified. The list may, therefore, come from a later king. Theologically, Rehoboam's building project shows he was under divine favor. **11.8** *Gath,* Moresheth-gath or Tell Judeideh.

shah, Ziph, 9 Adoraim, Lachish, Azekah,
10 Zorah, Aijalon, and Hebron, fortified
cities that are in Judah and in Benjamin.
11 He made the fortresses strong, and put
commanders in them, and stores of food,
oil, and wine. 12 He also put large shields
and spears in all the cities, and made them
very strong. So he held Judah and
Benjamin.

Priests and Levites Support Rehoboam

13 The priests and the Levites who
were in all Israel presented themselves to
him from all their territories. 14 The Le-
vites had left their common lands and
their holdings and had come to Judah
and Jerusalem, because Jeroboam and his
sons had prevented them from serving as
priests of the LORD, 15 and had appointed
his own priests for the high places, and
for the goat-demons, and for the calves
that he had made. 16 Those who had set
their hearts to seek the LORD God of Is-
rael came after them from all the tribes of
Israel to Jerusalem to sacrifice to the
LORD, the God of their ancestors. 17 They
strengthened the kingdom of Judah, and
for three years they made Rehoboam son
of Solomon secure, for they walked for
three years in the way of David and
Solomon.

Rehoboam's Marriages

18 Rehoboam took as his wife Maha-
lath daughter of Jerimoth son of David,
and of Abihail daughter of Eliab son of
Jesse. 19 She bore him sons: Jeush, Shema-
riah, and Zaham. 20 After her he took Ma-
acah daughter of Absalom, who bore him
Abijah, Attai, Ziza, and Shelomith. 21 Re-
hoboam loved Maacah daughter of Absa-
lom more than all his other wives and
concubines (he took eighteen wives and
sixty concubines, and became the father
of twenty-eight sons and sixty daughters).
22 Rehoboam appointed Abijah son of
Maacah as chief prince among his broth-
ers, for he intended to make him king.
23 He dealt wisely, and distributed some of
his sons through all the districts of Judah
and Benjamin, in all the fortified cities;
he gave them abundant provisions, and
found many wives for them.

Egypt Attacks Judah

12 When the rule of Rehoboam was
established and he grew strong,
he abandoned the law of the LORD, he
and all Israel with him. 2 In the fifth year
of King Rehoboam, because they had
been unfaithful to the LORD, King Shi-
shak of Egypt came up against Jerusalem
3 with twelve hundred chariots and sixty

11.13–17 The priests and Levites, banned from liturgical service by Jeroboam, rally to Rehoboam. Laity join in this movement (cf. v. 16). **11.15** *Goat-demons.* Cf. Lev 17.7. Originally pedestals for Yahweh, statues of *calves* are interpreted in the books of Kings and in Chronicles as idolatrous. **11.16** *Seek the LORD,* a favorite phrase in Chronicles for faithfulness. **11.17** *Three years* of obedience are followed by apostasy (12.1) and the invasion of Shishak (12.2). The positive behavior in the first years of Rehoboam is compared to conduct during the reigns of David and Solomon (cf. 7.10). The end of Solomon's reign according to 1 Kings had been highly flawed.

11.18–23 Rehoboam establishes a household. **11.18** *Mahalath,* second cousin to Rehoboam. Her paternal grandfather is David (as is Rehoboam's), and her maternal grandfather is David's brother Eliab. Her parents are first cousins. **11.20** *Maacah,* granddaughter of David's rebellious son Absalom (2 Sam 13–18). She is descended from Uriel and his wife Tamar, the daughter of Absalom (cf. 2 Chr 13.2). In 1 Kings 15.10 she is the wife of Abijah. *Abijah* succeeds Rehoboam on the throne even though he is not the eldest (cf. v. 22). **11.21** Rehoboam's numerous wives and concubines are far fewer than those of his father, Solomon (1 Kings 11.17; not mentioned in Chronicles). They serve as signs of God's blessing.

12.1–14 Cf. 1 Kings 14.25–28. **12.1** *Abandoned* is one of the chief terms for disobedience in Chronicles; see v. 5. Specific misdeeds are listed in 1 Kings 14.22–24. *The law of the LORD.* The Pentateuch probably had canonical status by the time of the Chronicler. **12.2** *Unfaithful,* another common term (see note on 12.1) for disobedience in Chronicles, without parallel in 1 Kings 14.25. *Shishak* (Shoshenq I, ca. 945–924 B.C.E.) was founder of the twenty-second (Libyan) dynasty in Egypt. His own account of this battle, recorded on the walls of the Amun-Re temple at Karnak, lists more than 150 towns. **12.3** *Libyans,* people from the North African coast, just west of Egypt. *Sukkiim,* a group of Libyan forces from the western desert. *Ethiopians.* Ethiopia in biblical times was the region between the first and second cataracts of the Nile, south of Aswan, and was not identical

thousand cavalry. A countless army came
with him from Egypt—Libyans, Sukkiim,
and Ethiopians.[u] 4 He took the fortified
cities of Judah and came as far as Jerusa-
lem. 5 Then the prophet Shemaiah came
to Rehoboam and to the officers of Judah,
who had gathered at Jerusalem because of
Shishak, and said to them, "Thus says the
LORD: You abandoned me, so I have
abandoned you to the hand of Shishak."
6 Then the officers of Israel and the king
humbled themselves and said, "The LORD
is in the right." 7 When the LORD saw that
they humbled themselves, the word of the
LORD came to Shemaiah, saying: "They
have humbled themselves; I will not de-
stroy them, but I will grant them some de-
liverance, and my wrath shall not be
poured out on Jerusalem by the hand of
Shishak. 8 Nevertheless they shall be his
servants, so that they may know the dif-
ference between serving me and serving
the kingdoms of other lands."

9 So King Shishak of Egypt came up
against Jerusalem; he took away the trea-
sures of the house of the LORD and the
treasures of the king's house; he took ev-
erything. He also took away the shields of
gold that Solomon had made; 10 but King
Rehoboam made in place of them shields
of bronze, and committed them to the
hands of the officers of the guard, who
kept the door of the king's house.
11 Whenever the king went into the house
of the LORD, the guard would come along
bearing them, and would then bring them
back to the guardroom. 12 Because he
humbled himself the wrath of the LORD
turned from him, so as not to destroy
them completely; moreover, conditions
were good in Judah.

Death of Rehoboam

13 So King Rehoboam established
himself in Jerusalem and reigned. Reho-
boam was forty-one years old when he be-
gan to reign; he reigned seventeen years
in Jerusalem, the city that the LORD had
chosen out of all the tribes of Israel to put
his name there. His mother's name was
Naamah the Ammonite. 14 He did evil, for
he did not set his heart to seek the LORD.

15 Now the acts of Rehoboam, from
first to last, are they not written in the
records of the prophet Shemaiah and of
the seer Iddo, recorded by genealogy?
There were continual wars between Reho-
boam and Jeroboam. 16 Rehoboam slept
with his ancestors and was buried in the
city of David; and his son Abijah suc-
ceeded him.

u Or *Nubians*; Heb *Cushites*

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with modern Ethiopia. **12.4** *Fortified cities.* Cf. 11.6–10. Aijalon occurs in 11.10 and in Shishak's list. According to Shishak's account, his major attack was on the Negeb region in the south and on Israel in the north. At least part of his forces moved toward Gibeon, where Shishak may have received the submission and tribute of Rehoboam. This would explain why the city was spared, according to the Bible, and account for the lack of any reference to Jerusalem in Shishak's account. Thereafter, Shishak turned north and invaded Israel. **12.5–8** The speech by *Shemaiah* (cf. 11.2) does not occur in 1 Kings. **12.5** Exact retribution is described in this verse. For the word *abandon*, see 1 Chr 28.9; 2 Chr 15.2; 24.20 (where the term is translated "forsaken"). **12.6** The government's repentance takes the form of its leaders *humbling themselves* (cf. 2 Chr 7.14; 12.7, 12) and confessing the righteousness of the Lord. **12.7** The Lord's acceptance of their repentance fulfills the promise in the divine oracle delivered to Solomon in 7.14 and explains why Jerusalem escapes the full brunt of Shishak's attack. **12.8** Service to a foreign king would be more burdensome than service to the Lord. **12.9** *King Shishak . . . Jerusalem.* The first half of the verse resumes in v. 2. **12.10** Judah's diminished circumstances lead Rehoboam to replace the shields of gold with shields of *bronze*. **12.12** *Conditions were good in Judah*, better "in Judah there was some good." Positive retribution explains in part the sparing of Rehoboam from more serious attack.

12.13–16 Cf. 1 Kings 14.21–22, 29–31. **12.13–14** The summary of Rehoboam's reign appears after the Shishak invasion in Chronicles, instead of before it as in Kings. **12.13** *In Jerusalem.* 1 Kings 14.21 reads "in Judah." *Naamah the Ammonite.* Note the foreign origin of Rehoboam's mother, who is mentioned twice in 1 Kings (14.21, 31). **12.14** The effects of Rehoboam's *evil* are illustrated in this chapter. To *seek* is the opposite of to *abandon* (v. 1). **12.15** Chronicles changes the "Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah" from 1 Kings 14.29 into prophetic sources written by *Shemaiah* and *Iddo*. *Genealogy*, unclear, perhaps a reference to another source.

Abijah Reigns over Judah

13 In the eighteenth year of King Jeroboam, Abijah began to reign over Judah. 2 He reigned for three years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Micaiah daughter of Uriel of Gibeah.

Now there was war between Abijah and Jeroboam. 3 Abijah engaged in battle, having an army of valiant warriors, four hundred thousand picked men; and Jeroboam drew up his line of battle against him with eight hundred thousand picked mighty warriors. 4 Then Abijah stood on the slope of Mount Zemaraim that is in the hill country of Ephraim, and said, "Listen to me, Jeroboam and all Israel! 5 Do you not know that the LORD God of Israel gave the kingship over Israel forever to David and his sons by a covenant of salt? 6 Yet Jeroboam son of Nebat, a servant of Solomon son of David, rose up and rebelled against his lord; 7 and certain worthless scoundrels gathered around him and defied Rehoboam son of Solomon, when Rehoboam was young and irresolute and could not withstand them.

8 "And now you think that you can withstand the kingdom of the LORD in the hand of the sons of David, because you are a great multitude and have with you the golden calves that Jeroboam made as gods for you. 9 Have you not driven out the priests of the LORD, the descendants of Aaron, and the Levites, and made priests for yourselves like the peoples of other lands? Whoever comes to be consecrated with a young bull or seven rams becomes a priest of what are no gods. 10 But as for us, the LORD is our God, and we have not abandoned him. We have priests ministering to the LORD who are descendants of Aaron, and Levites for their service. 11 They offer to the LORD every morning and every evening burnt offerings and fragrant incense, set out the rows of bread on the table of pure gold, and care for the golden lampstand so that its lamps may burn every evening; for we keep the charge of the LORD our God, but you have abandoned him. 12 See, God is with us at our head, and his priests have their battle trumpets to sound the call to battle against you. O Israelites, do not fight against the LORD, the God of your ancestors; for you cannot succeed."

13 Jeroboam had sent an ambush around to come on them from behind; thus his troops[v] were in front of Judah, and the ambush was behind them. 14 When Judah turned, the battle was in front of them and behind them. They cried out to the LORD, and the priests blew the trumpets. 15 Then the people of Judah raised the battle shout. And when the people of Judah shouted, God defeated Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and

v Heb *they*

13.1–14.1 Cf. 1 Kings 15.1–8. Abijah in Chronicles wins a victory against the Northern Kingdom and preaches to his enemy; in 1 Kings 15.3–6 Abijam (note spelling) continues the sins of his ancestors and survives only because of God's loyalty to David. **13.2** *Micaiah, Uriel.* Abijah has a different mother and grandfather in 1 Kings 15.2, Maacah and Abishalom, respectively. The source for the information about constant warfare is 1 Kings 15.7. Cf. 1 Kings 15.6. **13.3** The size of the armies is enormous (cf. 2 Sam 24.9). God helps Abijah and Judah to victory despite their being outnumbered two to one. **13.4–12** The speech of Abijah was composed by the Chronicler and reflects his theology. **13.4** *Mount Zemaraim.* Cf. Josh 18.22. The territory of Benjamin served as a kind of buffer between the North and the South. **13.5** *Covenant of salt.* Cf. Lev 2.13; Num 18.19. The covenant with David is everlasting. **13.6–7** Jeroboam is criticized for rebellion and for associating with the wrong crowd; Rehoboam's fault is attributed to his youth. With the pious Abijah on the throne, there is no reason for the North to rebel. **13.8–11** The sin of the Northern Kingdom is balanced by the faithfulness of the Southern Kingdom. The North resists God's kingdom as manifested in the Davidic dynasty (1 Chr 17.14), worships the golden calves as gods (2 Chr 11.15), drives out the Aaronite priests and Levites, and makes priests out of all who step forward with a gift in their hand (cf. 11.14–15). Abijah confesses the faith of his people in the Lord (cf. v. 18) and states that the South has not abandoned him (while the North has; 12.1). The legitimate Aaronite priests and the Levites carry out the appropriate sacrifices each day. **13.12** With God on the side of Judah and the priests ready to blow their trumpets to initiate holy war, the situation of the North is hopeless. **13.13–20** A battle account. **13.13** Judah is outnumbered and trapped between two wings of Israel's army. **13.14–15** Trumpet blasts and battle cries induce God to intervene in the battle.

Judah. 16 The Israelites fled before Judah, and God gave them into their hands.
17 Abijah and his army defeated them
with great slaughter; five hundred thousand picked men of Israel fell slain.
18 Thus the Israelites were subdued at
that time, and the people of Judah prevailed, because they relied on the LORD,
the God of their ancestors. 19 Abijah pursued Jeroboam, and took cities from him:
Bethel with its villages and Jeshanah with
its villages and Ephron[w] with its villages.
20 Jeroboam did not recover his power in
the days of Abijah; the LORD struck him
down, and he died. 21 But Abijah grew
strong. He took fourteen wives, and became the father of twenty-two sons and
sixteen daughters. 22 The rest of the acts
of Abijah, his behavior and his deeds, are
written in the story of the prophet Iddo.

Asa Reigns

14[x] So Abijah slept with his ancestors,
and they buried him in the city of
David. His son Asa succeeded him. In his
days the land had rest for ten years.
2 [y] Asa did what was good and right in the
sight of the LORD his God. 3 He took away
the foreign altars and the high places,
broke down the pillars, hewed down the
sacred poles,[z] 4 and commanded Judah
to seek the LORD, the God of their ancestors, and to keep the law and the commandment. 5 He also removed from all
the cities of Judah the high places and the
incense altars. And the kingdom had rest
under him. 6 He built fortified cities in Judah while the land had rest. He had no
war in those years, for the LORD gave him
peace. 7 He said to Judah, "Let us build
these cities, and surround them with walls
and towers, gates and bars; the land is still
ours because we have sought the LORD
our God; we have sought him, and he has
given us peace on every side." So they
built and prospered. 8 Asa had an army of
three hundred thousand from Judah,
armed with large shields and spears, and
two hundred eighty thousand troops
from Benjamin who carried shields and
drew bows; all these were mighty
warriors.

Ethiopian Invasion Repulsed

9 Zerah the Ethiopian[a] came out
against them with an army of a million
men and three hundred chariots, and

w Another reading is *Ephrain* *x* Ch 13.23 in Heb *y* Ch 14.1 in Heb *z* Heb *Asherim*
a Or *Nubian*; Heb *Cushite*

13.16–17 Judah's role is to pursue a fleeing enemy. The casualties are caused by divine intervention; the action of the Judahite army seems incidental to the war itself. *Five hundred thousand.* In all of World War II the United States had about 400,000 fatal casualties. **13.19** *Bethel, Jeshanah,* and *Ephron.* Abijah expands his territory toward the north by taking these cities of Benjamin (Josh 18.21–24). **13.20** The verse implies that Jeroboam outlived Abijah (cf. 1 Kings 15.9). According to 1 Kings 14.20, Jeroboam seems to have died peacefully. **13.21** Abijah's many wives and children indicate divine favor. Cf. 11.22. Note how Abijah also *grew strong.* **13.22** *Story,* lit. "the midrash." See the *visions* of Iddo in 9.29 and his *records* in 12.15. In 1 Kings 15.7 the sources are given as the "Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah." Chronicles turns this into a prophetic record. **14.1** *Rest,* a characteristic feature of pious reigns (cf. vv. 5–6; 1 Chr 22.9). *Ten years,* proper retribution for the pious king Asa; but 1 Kings 15.16 speaks of continual warfare between Baasha and Asa.

14.2–8 Cf. 1 Kings 15.11. The Chronicler omits 1 Kings 15.12 and does not return to the Kings text until 2 Chr 15.16 (1 Kings 15.13). **14.3** The *high places* are not removed by the king according to a later summary (15.17; 1 Kings 15.14). Asa's actions in these verses correspond to the directives of Deut 7.5; 12.3; 16.21–22 and make him a reformer somewhat like Hezekiah and Josiah. **14.4** *Seek.* The same term for faithfulness occurs nine times in the three chapters dealing with Asa. **14.5** *Incense altars* or shrines; the meaning of the word in Hebrew is uncertain. **14.6–7** Asa's obedience brings peace and provides the wherewithal to build. Divine protection, however, would seem to obviate the need for additional fortified cities. **14.7** *We have sought him.* Many emend the text to read "He has sought us." **14.8** The army of 580,000 shows the divine favor that rests upon Asa. The army, which lacks horses and chariots, is roughly half the size of Zerah's.

14.9–15 Asa shows complete reliance upon the Lord. **14.9** *Zerah,* otherwise unknown. *A million men.* The number dramatizes the danger posed by Zerah and the fact that the Lord helps the weak Southern Kingdom (v. 11). *Three hundred chariots,* a more realistic number, or a small number because Zerah and the Ethiopians were seminomadic (note the camels and the tent dwell-

came as far as Mareshah. 10 Asa went out
to meet him, and they drew up their lines
of battle in the valley of Zephathah at Ma-
reshah. 11 Asa cried to the LORD his God,
"O LORD, there is no difference for you
between helping the mighty and the weak.
Help us, O LORD our God, for we rely on
you, and in your name we have come
against this multitude. O LORD, you are
our God; let no mortal prevail against
you." 12 So the LORD defeated the Ethiopi-
ans[b] before Asa and before Judah, and
the Ethiopians[b] fled. 13 Asa and the army
with him pursued them as far as Gerar,
and the Ethiopians[b] fell until no one re-
mained alive; for they were broken before
the LORD and his army. The people of Ju-
dah[c] carried away a great quantity of
booty. 14 They defeated all the cities
around Gerar, for the fear of the LORD
was on them. They plundered all the cit-
ies; for there was much plunder in them.
15 They also attacked the tents of those
who had livestock,[d] and carried away
sheep and goats in abundance, and cam-
els. Then they returned to Jerusalem.

Azariah's Prophecy and Asa's Reform

15 The spirit of God came upon Az-
ariah son of Oded. 2 He went out
to meet Asa and said to him, "Hear me,
Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: The
LORD is with you, while you are with him.
If you seek him, he will be found by you,
but if you abandon him, he will abandon
you. 3 For a long time Israel was without
the true God, and without a teaching
priest, and without law; 4 but when in
their distress they turned to the LORD, the
God of Israel, and sought him, he was
found by them. 5 In those times it was not
safe for anyone to go or come, for great
disturbances afflicted all the inhabitants
of the lands. 6 They were broken in
pieces, nation against nation and city
against city, for God troubled them with
every sort of distress. 7 But you, take cour-
age! Do not let your hands be weak, for
your work shall be rewarded."

8 When Asa heard these words, the
prophecy of Azariah son of Oded,[e] he
took courage, and put away the abomina-
ble idols from all the land of Judah and
Benjamin and from the towns that he had
taken in the hill country of Ephraim. He
repaired the altar of the LORD that was in
front of the vestibule of the house of the
LORD.[f] 9 He gathered all Judah and Ben-
jamin, and those from Ephraim, Manas-
seh, and Simeon who were residing as
aliens with them, for great numbers had
deserted to him from Israel when they

b Or *Nubians*; Heb *Cushites* *c* Heb *They*
d Meaning of Heb uncertain *e* Compare
Syr Vg: Heb *the prophecy, the prophet Obed*
f Heb *the vestibule of the* LORD

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ings in v. 15). *Mareshah*, a city near Lachish, fortified by Rehoboam (11.8). **14.10** *Zephathah*, otherwise unknown. **14.11–12** The Lord answers Asa's prayer just as Solomon had requested in his own prayer (6.34–35). **14.13** *Gerar*, Tell Abu Hureira (cf. Gen 20.1–2; 26.1), a city about thirty miles southwest of Mareshah. The divine army completely destroys the million-person Ethiopian army. All Judah has to do is collect the booty. **14.14** The *fear* instilled by the Lord makes Israel's victory over neighboring cities easy (cf. Ex 23.28; Deut 7.20, 23; Josh 24.12). **14.15** Livestock is taken even from the civilian herdsmen.

15.1–19 Cf. 1 Kings 15.13–15. **15.1** *The spirit of God* connotes prophetic inspiration and authority (cf. 20.14). *Azariah son of Oded*, otherwise unknown. **15.2–7** Azariah's sermon. **15.2** The maxims in this verse seem to be based on the victory over Zerah (cf. 14.4, 7). The Lord has been with Asa because of his early reforms (14.3–5) and because of his faith (14.11). **15.3** This verse seems to describe the period of the judges, when there was no *priest* to give authoritative direction (*law*). **15.4** Cf. Judg 2.18. **15.7** Azariah urges Asa to complete his work of reform. Readers of Chronicles are to expect the same kind of deliverance that their ancestors experienced in the past (v. 4). The Chronicler cites Jer 31.16 ("There is a reward for your work") and Zeph 3.16 ("Do not let your hands grow weak") in order to make his message compelling for his own generation. **15.8** Since the reform includes portions of *Ephraim* from the Northern Kingdom, Asa apparently engages in combat against the North before his thirty-sixth year (16.1). *Altar of the LORD*, used for burnt offerings. **15.9** *Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon.* The association of the Southern tribe Simeon with the Northern tribes Ephraim and Manasseh is unexplained. Perhaps circumstances have forced elements of Simeon to move north. Asa and other Southern kings (Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah) attempt to include the North within their control and to bring about recognition of the ritual life centered at the Jerusalem temple. The Chronicler cites these examples in support of his own desire to incorporate all Israel into the cult of the Jerusalem

saw that the LORD his God was with him.
10 They were gathered at Jerusalem in the
third month of the fifteenth year of the
reign of Asa. 11 They sacrificed to the
LORD on that day, from the booty that
they had brought, seven hundred oxen
and seven thousand sheep. 12 They en-
tered into a covenant to seek the LORD,
the God of their ancestors, with all their
heart and with all their soul. 13 Whoever
would not seek the LORD, the God of Is-
rael, should be put to death, whether
young or old, man or woman. 14 They
took an oath to the LORD with a loud
voice, and with shouting, and with trum-
pets, and with horns. 15 All Judah rejoiced
over the oath; for they had sworn with all
their heart, and had sought him with their
whole desire, and he was found by them,
and the LORD gave them rest all around.
16 King Asa even removed his mother
Maacah from being queen mother be-
cause she had made an abominable image
for Asherah. Asa cut down her image,
crushed it, and burned it at the Wadi Kid-
ron. 17 But the high places were not taken
out of Israel. Nevertheless the heart of
Asa was true all his days. 18 He brought
into the house of God the votive gifts of
his father and his own votive gifts—silver,
gold, and utensils. 19 And there was no
more war until the thirty-fifth year of the
reign of Asa.

Alliance with Aram Condemned

16 In the thirty-sixth year of the
reign of Asa, King Baasha of Is-
rael went up against Judah, and built Ra-
mah, to prevent anyone from going out
or coming into the territory of[g] King Asa
of Judah. 2 Then Asa took silver and gold
from the treasures of the house of the
LORD and the king's house, and sent them
to King Ben-hadad of Aram, who resided
in Damascus, saying, 3 "Let there be an al-
liance between me and you, like that be-
tween my father and your father; I am
sending to you silver and gold; go, break
your alliance with King Baasha of Israel,
so that he may withdraw from me." 4 Ben-
hadad listened to King Asa, and sent the
commanders of his armies against the cit-
ies of Israel. They conquered Ijon, Dan,
Abel-maim, and all the store-cities of
Naphtali. 5 When Baasha heard of it, he
stopped building Ramah, and let his work
cease. 6 Then King Asa brought all Judah,
and they carried away the stones of Ra-
mah and its timber, with which Baasha

g Heb lacks *the territory of*

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temple. **15.10** *Third month*, at or near the Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost. *Fifteenth year*. The covenant celebration may take place in the same year as the victory over Zerah. **15.11** *Booty*, from the battle against Zerah (14.13–15). **15.12** The *covenant* partners are the king and the people. **15.13** Worship of other gods is a capital crime according to Deut 13.6–10; 17.2–7. **15.15** *Rest*. Cf. 14.1. **15.16–18** Dependent on 1 Kings 15.13–15. **15.16** The authority of the position of *queen mother* is also seen in the careers of Bathsheba (1 Kings 1.15–21), Jezebel from the Northern Kingdom (1 Kings 17.21; 31–34), and Athaliah (1 Kings 11.1–3). *Asherah*, a Canaanite goddess, the wife of El, or the consort of Baal. Jezebel was also an advocate for Asherah (1 Kings 18.19). *Wadi Kidron*, a valley between the Temple Mount and the Mount of Olives. Hezekiah (2 Chr 29.16; 30.14) and Josiah (2 Kings 23.4–6) also destroy cult objects there. **15.17** *High places . . . out of Israel. Out of Israel* is added by the Chronicler. *Israel* is here a designation for the Northern Kingdom. **15.19** *No more war until the thirty-fifth year* is in tension with 1 Kings 15.16, which describes continuous warfare between Asa and Baasha. *More* is not contained in the Hebrew text. The Chronicler apparently does not consider the conflicts of 14.9–15; 15.8 to be full warfare. Some scholars believe that the *thirty-fifth year* should be calculated as dating from the division of the United Monarchy. If so, the thirty-fifth year of v. 19 and the fifteenth year of v. 10 would be the same.

16.1–10 Cf. 1 Kings 15.17–22. **16.1** According to 1 Kings 16.6, 8 Baasha dies in Asa's twenty-sixth year. The date in this verse (the *thirty-sixth year* of Asa) may be calculated historically from the division of the monarchy, making it only the sixteenth year of Asa's reign. The Chronicler dates Baasha's attack to the thirty-sixth year of Asa, making the vast majority of his reign positive. *Baasha*, the third king of the Northern Kingdom. *Ramah*, a town five miles north of Jerusalem. Baasha is trying to prevent people from deserting to the South (cf. v. 9). **16.2** *Ben-hadad*, lit. "son of Hadad" in Hebrew, the name of two or more kings. *Aram*, the ancient name for Syria. **16.3** Asa bribes Ben-hadad to open a second, northern front against Baasha. **16.4** The three cities lay in the northernmost part of Naphtali. **16.6** When Baasha retreats from Ramah, Asa uses the materials left behind to fortify two neigh-

had been building, and with them he built
up Geba and Mizpah.
7 At that time the seer Hanani came to
King Asa of Judah, and said to him, "Be-
cause you relied on the king of Aram, and
did not rely on the LORD your God, the
army of the king of Aram has escaped
you. 8 Were not the Ethiopians[h] and the
Libyans a huge army with exceedingly
many chariots and cavalry? Yet because
you relied on the LORD, he gave them into
your hand. 9 For the eyes of the LORD
range throughout the entire earth, to
strengthen those whose heart is true to
him. You have done foolishly in this; for
from now on you will have wars." 10 Then
Asa was angry with the seer, and put him
in the stocks, in prison, for he was in a
rage with him because of this. And Asa
inflicted cruelties on some of the people
at the same time.

Asa's Disease and Death

11 The acts of Asa, from first to last,
are written in the Book of the Kings of
Judah and Israel. 12 In the thirty-ninth
year of his reign Asa was diseased in his
feet, and his disease became severe; yet
even in his disease he did not seek the
LORD, but sought help from physicians.
13 Then Asa slept with his ancestors, dying
in the forty-first year of his reign. 14 They
buried him in the tomb that he had hewn
out for himself in the city of David. They
laid him on a bier that had been filled
with various kinds of spices prepared by
the perfumer's art; and they made a very
great fire in his honor.

Jehoshaphat's Reign

17 His son Jehoshaphat succeeded
him, and strengthened himself
against Israel. 2 He placed forces in all the
fortified cities of Judah, and set garrisons
in the land of Judah, and in the cities of
Ephraim that his father Asa had taken.
3 The LORD was with Jehoshaphat, be-
cause he walked in the earlier ways of his
father;[i] he did not seek the Baals, 4 but
sought the God of his father and walked
in his commandments, and not according
to the ways of Israel. 5 Therefore the
LORD established the kingdom in his
hand. All Judah brought tribute to Je-
hoshaphat, and he had great riches and
honor. 6 His heart was courageous in the
ways of the LORD; and furthermore he re-
moved the high places and the sacred
poles[j] from Judah.
7 In the third year of his reign he sent

h Or *Nubians*; Heb *Cushites* i Another reading is *his father David* j Heb *Asherim*

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boring cities. **16.7–10** The prophetic account is added by the Chronicler to express his own theological view of the faithless alliance with Ben-hadad. **16.7** *Hanani* later rebukes Jehoshaphat (19.2). Asa would have defeated Aram if he had remained faithful and is indicted for lack of faith as evidenced in his foreign alliance (cf. 14.11). **16.8** Asa's reliance on the Lord in the past led to the defeat of Zerah, the Ethiopians, and the Libyans (14.9–15). **16.9** A quotation from Zech 4.10. God will protect those who are loyal. **16.10** *Stocks.* Asa's treatment of Hanani resembles Pashhur's treatment of the prophet Jeremiah (Jer 20.2–3). *In prison* is not in the Hebrew text. Asa's anger over the prophetic oracle leads to violence against other people as well.

16.11–14 Cf. 1 Kings 15.23–24. **16.11** The Chronicler adds *and Israel* to his source reference, perhaps to indicate that Judah is part of the larger people of Israel. **16.12** A year after his treaty with Ben-hadad, Asa becomes sick with a foot disease, demonstrating the immediate effect of negative retribution (cf. 12.2; 24.23). Even then he does not demonstrate faith but seeks the help of (has faith in) doctors. **16.14** Chronicles adds additional details to the death and burial account of Asa (spices, a great fire in his honor) that underscore the positive evaluation of his life. Through his first thirty-five years he won great victories and led the nation in reform; in his last six years he showed lack of faith and he practiced cruelty. **17.1–19** The Chronicler's assessment of Jehoshaphat is positive in chs. 17 and 20, but the chapters in between criticize him for two foreign alliances. Only the first half verse in ch. 17 is dependent on 1 Kings (15.24b); the rest is from the Chronicler. **17.2** The king's military strength indicates divine favor. **17.3–4** *Earlier ways of his father*, the ways of Asa, who is described as faithful for his first thirty-five years. (The Hebrew text mistakenly identifies this ancestor with David.) Jehoshaphat did not *seek the Baals, but sought the God of his father.* Fidelity to God and his commandments is contrasted generically with the conduct of the Northern Kingdom (*the ways of Israel*). **17.5** Because of his faith and pious works, tribute and honor are paid to Jehoshaphat by the whole kingdom of Judah. **17.6** *High places.* Cf. 20.33. *Sacred poles,* dedicated to the goddess Asherah. Jehoshaphat is a reforming king. **17.7** *Third year.* The Chronicler may have believed that Jehoshaphat was a coregent with Asa during his

his officials, Ben-hail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethanel, and Micaiah, to teach in
the cities of Judah. 8 With them were the
Levites, Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zebadiah,
Asahel, Shemiramoth, Jehonathan, Ado-
nijah, Tobijah, and Tob-adonijah; and
with these Levites, the priests Elishama
and Jehoram. 9 They taught in Judah,
having the book of the law of the LORD
with them; they went around through all
the cities of Judah and taught among the
people.

10 The fear of the LORD fell on all the
kingdoms of the lands around Judah, and
they did not make war against Jehosha-
phat. 11 Some of the Philistines brought
Jehoshaphat presents, and silver for trib-
ute; and the Arabs also brought him
seven thousand seven hundred rams
and seven thousand seven hundred male
goats. 12 Jehoshaphat grew steadily great-
er. He built fortresses and storage cities
in Judah. 13 He carried out great works
in the cities of Judah. He had soldiers,
mighty warriors, in Jerusalem. 14 This
was the muster of them by ancestral
houses: Of Judah, the commanders of
the thousands: Adnah the commander,
with three hundred thousand mighty war-
riors, 15 and next to him Jehohanan the
commander, with two hundred eighty
thousand, 16 and next to him Amasiah
son of Zichri, a volunteer for the service
of the LORD, with two hundred thousand
mighty warriors. 17 Of Benjamin: Eliada, a
mighty warrior, with two hundred thou-
sand armed with bow and shield, 18 and
next to him Jehozabad with one hundred
eighty thousand armed for war. 19 These
were in the service of the king, besides
those whom the king had placed in the
fortified cities throughout all Judah.

Micaiah Predicts Failure

18 Now Jehoshaphat had great
riches and honor; and he made a
marriage alliance with Ahab. 2 After some
years he went down to Ahab in Samaria.
Ahab slaughtered an abundance of sheep
and oxen for him and for the people who
were with him, and induced him to go up
against Ramoth-gilead. 3 King Ahab of Is-
rael said to King Jehoshaphat of Judah,
"Will you go with me to Ramoth-gilead?"
He answered him, "I am with you, my
people are your people. We will be with
you in the war."

4 But Jehoshaphat also said to the
king of Israel, "Inquire first for the word
of the LORD." 5 Then the king of Israel
gathered the prophets together, four
hundred of them, and said to them, "Shall

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final two years of illness. Within a year after assuming sole power he sends out a sixteen-person teaching commission. **17.8** *Tob-adonijah* may be a mistaken duplication of the two previous names. The list probably antedates the Chronicler. Note the prominence of the laity and the listing of Levites before priests. It is not clear whether the mission of this group is related to the judicial reform in 19.4–11. **17.9** For the Chronicler, the *book of the law* is the Pentateuch. At Jehoshaphat's time, when the Pentateuch had not yet been completed, it may have been some kind of royal law code. **17.10–11** Fear induced by God prevents surrounding nations from attacking Judah and induces Philistines and Arabs to pay lavish tribute. **17.13–19** While Jehoshaphat has troops throughout Judah (vv. 2, 19), he also has an extraordinarily large army in Jerusalem: 1,160,000. The size of this army serves to indicate Jehoshaphat's high standing before God. None of the five leaders is known from other sources. An epithet of Amasiah, *a volunteer for the service of the LORD* (v. 16), gives an air of verisimilitude to the whole list.

18.1–19.3 Cf. 1 Kings 22.1–40. This is the only time in Chronicles that a lengthy text from 1 or 2 Kings dealing with a Northern king is included. Chronicles omits the bloody details of Ahab's death (1 Kings 22.35–38) and Ahab's final regnal formula (1 Kings 22.39–40). The Chronicler makes significant changes at the beginning and end; the rest is largely unchanged from 1 Kings 22. **18.1** *Now*, better "although." The information about Jehoshaphat's riches in 17.5 should have removed the need for an *alliance*. Jehoshaphat's son Jehoram marries Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab. **18.2** The context in Chronicles makes Jehoshaphat's trip to Samaria part of the marriage agreement, with Ahab preparing a banquet of sheep and cattle. Ahab plays the role of tempter: he *induced*, or "seduced," Jehoshaphat into going with him. *Ramoth-gilead*, a city in the territory of Gad, some twenty-five miles east of the Jordan River. **18.4–11** The four hundred court prophets assure the two kings that God supports the upcoming battle. At Jehoshaphat's request, Ahab agrees to send for Micaiah son of Imlah, a prophet known for his unfavorable messages. A prophet named Zedekiah performs a symbolic act, in which he compares the army to a

we go to battle against Ramoth-gilead, or
shall I refrain?" They said, "Go up; for
God will give it into the hand of the king."
6 But Jehoshaphat said, "Is there no other
prophet of the LORD here of whom we
may inquire?" 7 The king of Israel said to
Jehoshaphat, "There is still one other by
whom we may inquire of the LORD, Mica-
iah son of Imlah; but I hate him, for he
never prophesies anything favorable
about me, but only disaster." Jehoshaphat
said, "Let the king not say such a thing."
8 Then the king of Israel summoned an
officer and said, "Bring quickly Micaiah
son of Imlah." 9 Now the king of Israel
and King Jehoshaphat of Judah were sit-
ting on their thrones, arrayed in their
robes; and they were sitting at the thresh-
ing floor at the entrance of the gate of
Samaria; and all the prophets were
prophesying before them. 10 Zedekiah son
of Chenaanah made for himself horns of
iron, and he said, "Thus says the LORD:
With these you shall gore the Arameans
until they are destroyed." 11 All the
prophets were prophesying the same and
saying, "Go up to Ramoth-gilead and tri-
umph; the LORD will give it into the hand
of the king."

12 The messenger who had gone to
summon Micaiah said to him, "Look, the
words of the prophets with one accord are
favorable to the king; let your word be
like the word of one of them, and speak
favorably." 13 But Micaiah said, "As the
LORD lives, whatever my God says, that I
will speak."

14 When he had come to the king, the
king said to him, "Micaiah, shall we go to
Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I re-
frain?" He answered, "Go up and tri-
umph; they will be given into your hand."
15 But the king said to him, "How many
times must I make you swear to tell me
nothing but the truth in the name of the
LORD?" 16 Then Micaiah[k] said, "I saw all
Israel scattered on the mountains, like
sheep without a shepherd; and the LORD
said, 'These have no master; let each one
go home in peace.'" 17 The king of Israel
said to Jehoshaphat, "Did I not tell you
that he would not prophesy anything fa-
vorable about me, but only disaster?"

18 Then Micaiah[k] said, "Therefore
hear the word of the LORD: I saw the
LORD sitting on his throne, with all the
host of heaven standing to the right and
to the left of him. 19 And the LORD said,
'Who will entice King Ahab of Israel, so
that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-
gilead?' Then one said one thing, and an-
other said another, 20 until a spirit came
forward and stood before the LORD, say-
ing, 'I will entice him.' The LORD asked
him, 'How?' 21 He replied, 'I will go out
and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his
prophets.' Then the LORD[k] said, 'You are
to entice him, and you shall succeed; go
out and do it.' 22 So you see, the LORD has
put a lying spirit in the mouth of these
your prophets; the LORD has decreed dis-
aster for you."

23 Then Zedekiah son of Chenaanah
came up to Micaiah, slapped him on the
cheek, and said, "Which way did the spirit
of the LORD pass from me to speak to
you?" 24 Micaiah replied, "You will find
out on that day when you go in to hide in
an inner chamber." 25 The king of Israel
then ordered, "Take Micaiah, and return
him to Amon the governor of the city and
to Joash the king's son; 26 and say, 'Thus
says the king: Put this fellow in prison,
and feed him on reduced rations of bread
and water until I return in peace.'" 27 Mi-
caiah said, "If you return in peace, the
LORD has not spoken by me." And he said,
"Hear, you peoples, all of you!"

Defeat and Death of Ahab

28 So the king of Israel and King Je-
hoshaphat of Judah went up to Ramoth-

k Heb *he*

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goring bull, to encourage the kings to attack the Arameans. **18.12–22** After an initial and presumably insincere positive oracle, Micaiah says that Israel will in fact be scattered like sheep without a shepherd. Micaiah reports his attendance at a meeting of the divine council, where a spirit offered to be a lying spirit in the mouth of all the prophets so that Ahab would go out and fall at Ramoth-gilead. With God's encouragement, this lying spirit induces all the court prophets to urge Ahab toward disaster. **18.23–27** After a confrontation with Zedekiah, Micaiah is imprisoned by Ahab until he returns safely from battle. Micaiah charges that if Ahab were to return safely, this would prove that the Lord had not sent Micaiah. **18.28–34** The Arameans at first mistake Jehoshaphat for Ahab, but the Lord deflects the pursuers; a chance shot later wounds the real king of

gilead. 29 The king of Israel said to
Jehoshaphat, "I will disguise myself and
go into battle, but you wear your robes."
So the king of Israel disguised himself,
and they went into battle. 30 Now the king
of Aram had commanded the captains of
his chariots, "Fight with no one small or
great, but only with the king of Israel."
31 When the captains of the chariots saw
Jehoshaphat, they said, "It is the king of
Israel." So they turned to fight against
him; and Jehoshaphat cried out, and the
LORD helped him. God drew them away
from him, 32 for when the captains of the
chariots saw that it was not the king of
Israel, they turned back from pursuing
him. 33 But a certain man drew his bow
and unknowingly struck the king of Israel
between the scale armor and the breast-
plate; so he said to the driver of his char-
iot, "Turn around, and carry me out of
the battle, for I am wounded." 34 The bat-
tle grew hot that day, and the king of Is-
rael propped himself up in his chariot
facing the Arameans until evening; then
at sunset he died.

19 King Jehoshaphat of Judah re-
turned in safety to his house in
Jerusalem. 2 Jehu son of Hanani the seer
went out to meet him and said to King
Jehoshaphat, "Should you help the wick-
ed and love those who hate the LORD?
Because of this, wrath has gone out
against you from the LORD. 3 Neverthe-
less, some good is found in you, for
you destroyed the sacred poles[1] out of
the land, and have set your heart to
seek God."

The Reforms of Jehoshaphat

4 Jehoshaphat resided at Jerusalem;
then he went out again among the people,
from Beer-sheba to the hill country of
Ephraim, and brought them back to the
LORD, the God of their ancestors. 5 He ap-
pointed judges in the land in all the forti-
fied cities of Judah, city by city, 6 and said
to the judges, "Consider what you are do-
ing, for you judge not on behalf of human
beings but on the LORD's behalf; he is with
you in giving judgment. 7 Now, let the
fear of the LORD be upon you; take care
what you do, for there is no perversion of
justice with the LORD our God, or partial-
ity, or taking of bribes."

8 Moreover in Jerusalem Jehoshaphat
appointed certain Levites and priests and
heads of families of Israel, to give judg-
ment for the LORD and to decide disputed
cases. They had their seat at Jerusalem.
9 He charged them: "This is how you shall
act: in the fear of the LORD, in faithful-

1 Heb *Asheroth*

Israel. At the end of the day he dies. **18.31** Although *and the LORD helped him* is not in the Hebrew text of Kings, these words are attested in one of the ancient Greek recensions of the Bible, the Lucianic recension, and were probably in the Hebrew text known by the Chronicler. They are not a theological addition by the Chronicler. *God drew them away from him.* In this addition by the Chronicler, the words *drew them away* use the same verb as *induce* (seduce) in v. 2. **19.1–3** An addition by the Chronicler. Having ignored the warning of the prophet Micaiah (18.27), Jehoshaphat is met by a prophet of his own kingdom, Jehu, the son of Hanani (1 Kings 16.1, 7). **19.2** *The wicked,* namely, Ahab. *Love,* a reference to Jehoshaphat's marriage alliance. The campaign of Jehoshaphat against Ramoth-gilead represents the kind of unholy alliance with the North that the Chronicler bitterly opposes. **19.3** Jehoshaphat's destruction of the sacred poles dedicated to the goddess Asherah (17.6) and his seeking God mitigate the judgment against him.

19.4–11 This reform and the exemplary behavior of Jehoshaphat in a subsequent military crisis (2 Chr 20), both without parallel in Kings, illustrate the "good" found in Jehoshaphat (19.3) that helps him escape divine wrath. **19.4** *Again* presupposes the earlier teaching mission in 17.7–9. **19.5** By *appointing judges,* delegating judicial authority to officials appointed by himself throughout the kingdom, Jehoshaphat extends his own jurisdiction and restricts the influence of the local courts. *Fortified cities.* In some respects the account in Chronicles seems to be typologically older than the laws in Deuteronomy. In Deut 16.18–20, the lawgiver says that judges are to be set up in all towns and not just in the fortified cities. **19.6–7** The Lord's own sense of integrity and justice is to give form to the behavior of the local judges (Deut 10.17–18; 16.19). **19.8** Jehoshaphat establishes a central court in Jerusalem to deal with cases referred to it from local courts. These cases could be resolved by the establishment of precedents or the formulation of new law. *They had their seat at Jerusalem.* This translation results from a changed vocalization; "[To decide the disputed cases] of the inhabitants of Jerusalem" (Septuagint, Vulgate); "They returned to Jerusalem" (Hebrew). The NRSV's alternative seems

ness, and with your whole heart; 10 whenever a case comes to you from your kindred who live in their cities, concerning bloodshed, law or commandment, statutes or ordinances, then you shall instruct them, so that they may not incur guilt before the LORD and wrath may not come on you and your kindred. Do so, and you will not incur guilt. 11 See, Amariah the chief priest is over you in all matters of the LORD; and Zebadiah son of Ishmael, the governor of the house of Judah, in all the king's matters; and the Levites will serve you as officers. Deal courageously, and may the LORD be with the good!"

Invasion from the East

20 After this the Moabites and Ammonites, and with them some of the Meunites,[m] came against Jehoshaphat for battle. 2 Messengers[n] came and told Jehoshaphat, "A great multitude is coming against you from Edom,[o] from beyond the sea; already they are at Hazazon-tamar" (that is, En-gedi). 3 Jehoshaphat was afraid; he set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. 4 Judah assembled to seek help from the LORD; from all the towns of Judah they came to seek the LORD.

Jehoshaphat's Prayer and Victory

5 Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD, before the new court, 6 and said, "O LORD, God of our ancestors, are you not God in heaven? Do you not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations? In your hand are power and might, so that no one is able to withstand you. 7 Did you not, O our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel, and give it forever to the descendants of your friend Abraham? 8 They have lived in it, and in it have built you a sanctuary for your name, saying, 9 'If disaster comes upon us, the sword, judgment,[p] or pestilence, or famine, we will stand before this house, and before you, for your name is in this house, and cry to you in our distress, and you will hear and save.' 10 See now, the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, whom you would not let Israel invade when they came from the land of Egypt, and whom they avoided and did not destroy— 11 they reward us by coming to drive us out of your possession that you have given us to inherit. 12 O our God, will you not execute judgment upon them? For we are powerless against this great multitude that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you."

13 Meanwhile all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children. 14 Then the spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel son of Zechariah, son of Benaiah, son of Jeiel, son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, in the middle of the assembly. 15 He said, "Listen, all Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, and King Jehoshaphat: Thus says the LORD to you: 'Do not fear or be dismayed at this great multitude; for the battle is not yours but God's.

m Compare 26.7: Heb *Ammonites* *n* Heb *They*
o One Ms: MT *Aram* *p* Or *the sword of judgment*

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to be the least likely of the three. **19.11** *Amariah*, probably the third high priest after Solomon had built the temple (1 Chr 6.11). *Matters of the LORD*, sacral law; *the king's matters*, civil law. This differentiation of duties may not have arisen until the Persian period (beginning in 539 B.C.E.).

20.1–30 The conduct of this war is mostly liturgical, and little can be established about the historical circumstances. **20.1** *Meunites*, a people named after the town of Maon, eight and a half miles south of Hebron. Later in the chapter the enemies are identified as Ammonites, Moabites, and the people of Mount Seir or Edom. **20.2** *Hazazon-tamar*, a town between En-gedi and Bethlehem. *En-gedi*, a site on the west shore of the Dead Sea. **20.3** Though terrified, Jehoshaphat does the right thing: he *seeks the LORD* and *proclaims a fast*. **20.6–12** A prayer of national lament by Jehoshaphat. **20.9** Jehoshaphat appeals to Solomon's prayer (6.28, 34) at the dedication of the temple and to the Lord's promise to answer it (7.12–14). **20.10** *Mount Seir* is not mentioned in v. 2, but see vv. 22–23. **20.11** Ammon, Moab, and Edom should be grateful for having been spared when Israel entered the land (Deut 2.1–22), but instead they now try to take the land away from Israel. **20.12** Perplexed by the invading horde, Jehoshaphat indicates his strong trust in God. **20.14** *Jahaziel*, a Levitical singer (descendant of Asaph) who functions as a prophet and promises Israel a victory in holy war (cf. 1 Chr 25.1–8; 2 Chr 29.25; 35.15). **20.15–17** The speech of Jahaziel answers Jehoshaphat's lament and resembles the speech of a

16 Tomorrow go down against them; they
will come up by the ascent of Ziz; you will
find them at the end of the valley, before
the wilderness of Jeruel. 17 This battle is
not for you to fight; take your position,
stand still, and see the victory of the LORD
on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem.'
Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go
out against them, and the LORD will be
with you."

18 Then Jehoshaphat bowed down
with his face to the ground, and all Judah
and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell
down before the LORD, worshiping the
LORD. 19 And the Levites, of the Kohathites and the Korahites, stood up to praise
the LORD, the God of Israel, with a very
loud voice.

20 They rose early in the morning
and went out into the wilderness of Tekoa; and as they went out, Jehoshaphat
stood and said, "Listen to me, O Judah
and inhabitants of Jerusalem! Believe in
the LORD your God and you will be established; believe his prophets." 21 When he
had taken counsel with the people, he appointed those who were to sing to the
LORD and praise him in holy splendor, as
they went before the army, saying,

"Give thanks to the LORD,
for his steadfast love endures
forever."

22 As they began to sing and praise, the
LORD set an ambush against the Ammonites, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had
come against Judah, so that they were
routed. 23 For the Ammonites and Moab
attacked the inhabitants of Mount Seir,
destroying them utterly; and when they
had made an end of the inhabitants of
Seir, they all helped to destroy one
another.

24 When Judah came to the watchtower of the wilderness, they looked toward the multitude; they were corpses
lying on the ground; no one had escaped.
25 When Jehoshaphat and his people
came to take the booty from them, they
found livestock[q] in great numbers,
goods, clothing, and precious things,
which they took for themselves until they
could carry no more. They spent three
days taking the booty, because of its abundance. 26 On the fourth day they assembled in the Valley of Beracah, for there
they blessed the LORD; therefore that
place has been called the Valley of Beracah[r] to this day. 27 Then all the people of
Judah and Jerusalem, with Jehoshaphat
at their head, returned to Jerusalem with
joy, for the LORD had enabled them to rejoice over their enemies. 28 They came to
Jerusalem, with harps and lyres and trumpets, to the house of the LORD. 29 The fear
of God came on all the kingdoms of the
countries when they heard that the LORD
had fought against the enemies of Israel.
30 And the realm of Jehoshaphat was
quiet, for his God gave him rest all
around.

The End of Jehoshaphat's Reign

31 So Jehoshaphat reigned over Judah. He was thirty-five years old when he
began to reign; he reigned twenty-five
years in Jerusalem. His mother's name
was Azubah daughter of Shilhi. 32 He
walked in the way of his father Asa and
did not turn aside from it, doing what was
right in the sight of the LORD. 33 Yet the
high places were not removed; the people

q Gk: Heb *among them* r That is *Blessing*

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priest before a battle (Deut 20.2–4). **20.16** *Ascent of Ziz*, between Tekoa, a town in the highlands of Judah, and En-gedi (see note on 20.2). *Wilderness of Jeruel*, unidentified. **20.17** Despite the fact that Jehoshaphat has more than a million troops in Jerusalem alone (17.14–18), the people are reminded that they are not to fight, but to watch the victory of the Lord. **20.20** In his exhortation, Jehoshaphat would seem to refer to Isaiah ("If you do not stand firm in faith, you shall not stand at all," Isa 7.9), to Jahaziel, who had just assured them of victory, and to Jahaziel's fellow Levites who are Kohathites, more specifically Korahites. It is probable that the temple singers of the Chronicler's day claimed prophetic authority. **20.21** The appointment of (prophetic) singers is the trigger that causes the Lord to set the invading nations against one another, leading to their total destruction. **20.25** The magnitude of the victory is reflected in the overwhelming amount of booty that is taken. **20.26** The Hebrew for "blessed" has the same consonants as the word *Beracah*. This verse is an etymological etiology. **20.30** Jehoshaphat is rewarded with *rest*.

20.31–34 Cf. 1 Kings 22.41–45. **20.33** While the Chronicler repeats the notice from 1 Kings 22.43 that the *high places* are not removed, he omits a sentence from 1 Kings that says the people keep worshiping at those high places. In

had not yet set their hearts upon the God
of their ancestors.
34 Now the rest of the acts of Jehosha-
phat, from first to last, are written in the
Annals of Jehu son of Hanani, which are
recorded in the Book of the Kings of
Israel.
35 After this King Jehoshaphat of Ju-
dah joined with King Ahaziah of Israel,
who did wickedly. 36 He joined him in
building ships to go to Tarshish; they
built the ships in Ezion-geber. 37 Then
Eliezer son of Dodavahu of Mareshah
prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying,
"Because you have joined with Ahaziah,
the LORD will destroy what you have
made." And the ships were wrecked and
were not able to go to Tarshish.

Jehoram's Reign

21 Jehoshaphat slept with his ances-
tors and was buried with his an-
cestors in the city of David; his son
Jehoram succeeded him. 2 He had broth-
ers, the sons of Jehoshaphat: Azariah, Je-
hiel, Zechariah, Azariah, Michael, and
Shephatiah; all these were the sons of
King Jehoshaphat of Judah.[s] 3 Their fa-
ther gave them many gifts, of silver, gold,
and valuable possessions, together with
fortified cities in Judah; but he gave the
kingdom to Jehoram, because he was the
firstborn. 4 When Jehoram had ascended
the throne of his father and was estab-
lished, he put all his brothers to the
sword, and also some of the officials of
Israel. 5 Jehoram was thirty-two years old
when he began to reign; he reigned eight
years in Jerusalem. 6 He walked in the way
of the kings of Israel, as the house of
Ahab had done; for the daughter of Ahab
was his wife. He did what was evil in the
sight of the LORD. 7 Yet the LORD would
not destroy the house of David because of
the covenant that he had made with Da-
vid, and since he had promised to give a
lamp to him and to his descendants
forever.

Revolt of Edom

8 In his days Edom revolted against
the rule of Judah and set up a king of
their own. 9 Then Jehoram crossed over
with his commanders and all his chariots.
He set out by night and attacked the
Edomites, who had surrounded him and
his chariot commanders. 10 So Edom has
been in revolt against the rule of Judah to
this day. At that time Libnah also revolted

s Gk Syr: Heb *Israel*

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2 Chr 17.6 the Chronicler states that Jehoshaphat has in fact removed the high places. **20.34** The source reference from 1 Kings is ascribed the prophetic authority of *Jehu son of Hanani.*

20.35–37 Cf. 1 Kings 22.48–49. According to 1 Kings, Jehoshaphat makes ships to go to Ophir, but they never sail since they are destroyed at Ezion-geber. When King Ahaziah subsequently requests Jehoshaphat to allow the servants of the Northern Kingdom to go with him, Jehoshaphat refuses. In Chronicles, Jehoshaphat first makes a pact with the wicked Ahaziah, with a result that they join in building ships at Ezion-geber. The prophet Eliezer then intervenes and condemns Jehoshaphat for this alliance. As a result the Lord destroys the ships.

21.1–7 Cf. 1 Kings 22.50; 2 Kings 8.16–19. **21.2–4** These verses, which are not contained in Kings, indicate that the new king has six brothers. All the sons receive rich gifts from Jehoshaphat, but Jehoram, as the firstborn, becomes king after his father. By assigning the sons fortified cities the king scatters them throughout his realm. **21.2** *Judah.* The Hebrew reads *Israel.* The latter, as the more difficult reading, is preferred. **21.4** Solomon too eliminated rivals at the beginning of his reign (1 Kings 2). In view of the confusion in v. 2, *Israel* here may refer to the Southern Kingdom. **21.6** Jehoram's conduct is like that of the kings of the Northern Kingdom, particularly the dynasty of Ahab. Both Kings and Chronicles note that the reason for this was that *the daughter of Ahab was his wife.* Later, she will be identified as Athaliah. **21.7** Two things keep Jehoram and the dynasty from destruction in spite of the negative qualities of the king: the *covenant* the Lord made with David and the *lamp* (better "dominion") the Lord promised him forever. The term *covenant* is added by Chronicles, and *the house of David* replaces "Judah" from 2 Kings 8.19.

21.8–10 Cf. 2 Kings 8.20–22. **21.8** *Edom*'s successful revolt continues with only momentary exceptions until the end of the Southern Kingdom. David had conquered Edom, but it had rebelled already under Solomon (1 Kings 11.14–22). Perhaps Asa or Jehoshaphat regained control, but under Jehoram the breach becomes decisive. **21.10** *Libnah,* a city on the western, or Philistine, border of Judah. Since Edom was south to southeast from Judah, Jehoram is faced with conflict on two fronts. This revolt is God's retribution for the king's unfaithfulness.

against his rule, because he had forsaken the LORD, the God of his ancestors.

Elijah's Letter

11 Moreover he made high places in the hill country of Judah, and led the inhabitants of Jerusalem into unfaithfulness, and made Judah go astray. 12 A letter came to him from the prophet Elijah, saying: "Thus says the LORD, the God of your father David: Because you have not walked in the ways of your father Jehoshaphat or in the ways of King Asa of Judah, 13 but have walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and have led Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem into unfaithfulness, as the house of Ahab led Israel into unfaithfulness, and because you also have killed your brothers, members of your father's house, who were better than yourself, 14 see, the LORD will bring a great plague on your people, your children, your wives, and all your possessions, 15 and you yourself will have a severe sickness with a disease of your bowels, until your bowels come out, day after day, because of the disease."

16 The LORD aroused against Jehoram the anger of the Philistines and of the Arabs who are near the Ethiopians.[t] 17 They came up against Judah, invaded it, and carried away all the possessions they found that belonged to the king's house, along with his sons and his wives, so that no son was left to him except Jehoahaz, his youngest son.

Disease and Death of Jehoram

18 After all this the LORD struck him in his bowels with an incurable disease. 19 In course of time, at the end of two years, his bowels came out because of the disease, and he died in great agony. His people made no fire in his honor, like the fires made for his ancestors. 20 He was thirty-two years old when he began to reign; he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. He departed with no one's regret. They buried him in the city of David, but not in the tombs of the kings.

Ahaziah's Reign

22 The inhabitants of Jerusalem made his youngest son Ahaziah king as his successor; for the troops who came with the Arabs to the camp had killed all the older sons. So Ahaziah son of Jehoram reigned as king of Judah. 2 Ahaziah was forty-two years old when he began to reign; he reigned one year in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Athaliah, a granddaughter of Omri. 3 He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab, for his mother was his counselor in doing wickedly. 4 He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, as the house of Ahab

t Or *Nubians*; Heb *Cushites*

21.11–20 The lengthy Elijah narrative from 1 Kings 17–19; 2 Kings 1–2 is omitted in Chronicles. **21.11** Jehoram restores the *high places* that Asa and Jehoshaphat had torn down. **21.12–15** Chronicles supplies a letter from the Northern prophet Elijah, Ahab's constant critic, in which Jehoram, Ahab's son-in-law, is charged with following the kings of the North (v. 11) and with killing his own brothers (v. 4). Elijah announces a plague for the people and a dreadful illness for the king himself. Illness also brings immediate retribution for Asa (16.12–14) and Uzziah (26.16–21). **21.16–17** God's agents of retribution are the Philistines and the Arabs, who deprive the king of wives and children, the normal signs of blessing. **21.18–19** The identity of the *disease* cannot be determined. Colitis and dysentery have been suggested. *At the end of two years*, better "two days" (before his death). *Came out*, perhaps prolapsed. In contrast with Asa (16.14), there are no great ceremonial fires at his funeral. Jehoram is the first Davidic king whom the Chronicler judges in a totally negative way. **21.20** Cf. 2 Kings 8.23–24. Chronicles repeats chronological data from v. 5, but omits the source reference listed in 2 Kings 8.23. *Not in the tombs of the kings*. According to 2 Kings 8.24, Jehoram is buried in the tombs of his ancestors. Cf. 2 Chr. 24.25; 26.23.

22.1–9 Cf. 2 Kings 8.24b–10.14. Chronicles abbreviates the earlier account and focuses on the Southern Kingdom. **22.1** Jehoram, who has killed all his brothers, loses his own *sons* to foreign troops because of divine retribution (cf. 21.16–17). Ahaziah cannot be *forty-two years old* since his father is said to have died at forty (21.20). 2 Kings 8.26 sets his age at twenty-two. *Granddaughter*, in the Hebrew "daughter" (cf. 21.6). **22.3–4** Athaliah and other members of the Northern royal family mislead Ahaziah (cf. 21.6). **22.5** Ahab's son *Jehoram* (the brother of Athaliah) is wounded at Ramoth-gilead, a city of

had done; for after the death of his father they were his counselors, to his ruin. 5 He even followed their advice, and went with Jehoram son of King Ahab of Israel to make war against King Hazael of Aram at Ramoth-gilead. The Arameans wounded Joram, 6 and he returned to be healed in Jezreel of the wounds that he had received at Ramah, when he fought King Hazael of Aram. And Ahaziah son of King Jehoram of Judah went down to see Joram son of Ahab in Jezreel, because he was sick.

7 But it was ordained by God that the downfall of Ahaziah should come about through his going to visit Joram. For when he came there he went out with Jehoram to meet Jehu son of Nimshi, whom the LORD had anointed to destroy the house of Ahab. 8 When Jehu was executing judgment on the house of Ahab, he met the officials of Judah and the sons of Ahaziah's brothers, who attended Ahaziah, and he killed them. 9 He searched for Ahaziah, who was captured while hiding in Samaria and was brought to Jehu, and put to death. They buried him, for they said, "He is the grandson of Jehoshaphat, who sought the LORD with all his heart." And the house of Ahaziah had no one able to rule the kingdom.

Athaliah Seizes the Throne

10 Now when Athaliah, Ahaziah's mother, saw that her son was dead, she set about to destroy all the royal family of the house of Judah. 11 But Jehoshabeath, the king's daughter, took Joash son of Ahaziah, and stole him away from among the king's children who were about to be killed; she put him and his nurse in a bedroom. Thus Jehoshabeath, daughter of King Jehoram and wife of the priest Jehoiada—because she was a sister of Ahaziah—hid him from Athaliah, so that she did not kill him; 12 he remained with them six years, hidden in the house of God, while Athaliah reigned over the land.

23 But in the seventh year Jehoiada took courage, and entered into a compact with the commanders of the hundreds, Azariah son of Jeroham, Ishmael son of Jehohanan, Azariah son of Obed, Maaseiah son of Adaiah, and Elishaphat son of Zichri. 2 They went around through Judah and gathered the Levites from all the towns of Judah, and the heads of families of Israel, and they came to Jerusalem. 3 Then the whole assembly made a covenant with the king in the house of God. Jehoiada[u] said to them,

u Heb *He*

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the tribe of Gad, on the border between Aram (Syria) and the Northern Kingdom, Israel. *Hazael* had murdered Ben-hadad and then succeeded him (2 Kings 8.15). **22.6** *Jezreel*, summer palace of the kings of Israel. **22.7a** The first half of v. 7, not taken from 2 Kings, articulates the Chronicler's doctrine of retribution. The Chronicler criticizes each of the Judean kings contemporary with Ahab and his successors for making alliances with their Northern counterparts. **22.7b** After a bloody coup, *Jehu son of Nimshi* rules Israel for twenty-eight years. The Chronicler omits the introduction to his reign from 2 Kings 9.1–20. *Anointed.* See 2 Kings 9.6. **22.8** According to 2 Kings 10.12–14, the princes of Judah are killed after King Ahaziah. **22.9** In 2 Kings 9.27–28 Ahaziah is wounded near Ibleam and dies after fleeing to Megiddo. He is buried in Jerusalem. Ahaziah's burial away from Jerusalem in 2 Chr 22.9 may express the Chronicler's negative evaluation of him. *He is the grandson . . . kingdom* is not in 2 Kings. Because Ahaziah is the grandson of Jehoshaphat, it is not appropriate to leave him unburied.

22.10–12 Cf. 2 Kings 11.1–3. Athaliah's seizure of power here differs little from the account in 2 Kings. Note that Jehoshabeath (in Kings "Jehosheba") is the wife of the priest Jehoiada, who plays a prominent role in the revolution against Athaliah (v. 11). Jehoshabeath is the half sister of Ahaziah. Neither Kings nor Chronicles regards Athaliah as legitimate and so both omit the standard royal introductory and concluding notices.

23.1–7 Cf. 2 Kings 11.4–8. **23.1** *Compact*, in the Hebrew "covenant." Cf. vv. 3, 16. Chronicles adds the names of the commanders of the hundreds to materials inherited from 2 Kings. **23.2** Chronicles gives a role in the revolution to the Levites and the family heads of Israel instead of restricting the revolutionaries, with 2 Kings, to the captains of the hundreds, the Carites, and the royal household. The clergy may have been unhappy with Athaliah's fostering of Baalism (23.17). The participation of the family heads of Israel indicates that all Israel backs the revolution. **23.3** *The whole assembly* makes a covenant according to Chronicles; in 2 Kings the covenant was only with the military commanders. *King*, an addition, referring to Joash. Jehoiada, according to Chronicles, based the installation of Joash on

"Here is the king's son! Let him reign, as
the LORD promised concerning the sons
of David. 4 This is what you are to do: one-
third of you, priests and Levites, who
come on duty on the sabbath, shall be
gatekeepers, 5 one-third shall be at the
king's house, and one-third at the Gate of
the Foundation; and all the people shall
be in the courts of the house of the LORD.
6 Do not let anyone enter the house of the
LORD except the priests and ministering
Levites; they may enter, for they are holy,
but all the other[v] people shall observe the
instructions of the LORD. 7 The Levites
shall surround the king, each with his
weapons in his hand; and whoever enters
the house shall be killed. Stay with the
king in his comings and goings."

Joash Crowned King

8 The Levites and all Judah did according to all that the priest Jehoiada commanded; each brought his men, who were to come on duty on the sabbath, with those who were to go off duty on the sabbath; for the priest Jehoiada did not dismiss the divisions. 9 The priest Jehoiada delivered to the captains the spears and the large and small shields that had been King David's, which were in the house of God; 10 and he set all the people as a guard for the king, everyone with weapon in hand, from the south side of the house to the north side of the house, around the altar and the house. 11 Then he brought out the king's son, put the crown on him, and gave him the covenant;[w] they proclaimed him king, and Jehoiada and his sons anointed him; and they shouted, "Long live the king!"

Athaliah Murdered

12 When Athaliah heard the noise of the people running and praising the king, she went into the house of the LORD to the people; 13 and when she looked, there was the king standing by his pillar at the entrance, and the captains and the trumpeters beside the king, and all the people of the land rejoicing and blowing trumpets, and the singers with their musical instruments leading in the celebration. Athaliah tore her clothes, and cried, "Treason! Treason!" 14 Then the priest Jehoiada brought out the captains who were set over the army, saying to them, "Bring her out between the ranks; anyone who follows her is to be put to the sword." For the priest said, "Do not put her to death in the house of the LORD." 15 So they laid hands on her; she went into the entrance of the Horse Gate of the king's house, and there they put her to death.

16 Jehoiada made a covenant between himself and all the people and the king that they should be the LORD's people. 17 Then all the people went to the house of Baal, and tore it down; his altars and his images they broke in pieces, and they killed Mattan, the priest of Baal, in front of the altars. 18 Jehoiada assigned the care of the house of the LORD to the levitical priests whom David had organized to be in charge of the house of the LORD, to offer burnt offerings to the LORD, as it is written in the law of Moses, with rejoicing and with singing, according to the order of David. 19 He stationed the gatekeepers at the gates of the house of the LORD so

v Heb lacks *other* w Or *treaty*, or *testimony*; Heb *eduth*

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the promise to David. **23.4–5** It is difficult to identify precisely which people are stationed where. Staging the revolution at the change of shifts is a brilliant strategy. **23.5** *Gate of the Foundation.* 2 Kings 11.6 reads "gate Sur." **23.6** The addition of the first half of this verse by the Chronicler makes it clear that laypeople do not intrude on forbidden areas of the temple. **23.7** *Levites.* The identity of the king's guards is not given in 2 Kings.

23.8–11 Cf. 2 Kings 11.9–12. **23.8** *The Levites and all Judah.* 2 Kings 11.9 reads "The captains." *For the priest Jehoiada did not dismiss the divisions.* Thus they stay in the temple area to help with the revolution. **23.10** *All the people.* 2 Kings 11.11 reads "the guards."

23.12–21 Cf. 2 Kings 11.13–20. **23.12** *And praising the king,* an addition in Chronicles. **23.13** *And the singers . . . celebration,* an addition in Chronicles, underlining the writer's interest in music. **23.14** Jehoiada's own son will later die in the temple (24.21). **23.15** *Horse Gate.* Ironically, Athaliah's mother was trampled by horses (2 Kings 9.33). **23.16** Jehoiada, the people, and the king are the covenant partners; in 2 Kings 11.17 the covenant partners are the Lord, the king, and the people. **23.18** Chronicles specifies that the guards mentioned in 2 Kings were Levitical priests organized by David. Cf. 1 Chr 15–16, 23–27; 2 Chr 29.25–30. The Levitical priests offer the sacrifices required in the Pentateuch. **23.19** The Chronicler adds a reference to *gate-*

that no one should enter who was in any
way unclean. 20 And he took the captains,
the nobles, the governors of the people,
and all the people of the land, and they
brought the king down from the house of
the LORD, marching through the upper
gate to the king's house. They set the king
on the royal throne. 21 So all the people of
the land rejoiced, and the city was quiet
after Athaliah had been killed with the
sword.

Joash Repairs the Temple

24 Joash was seven years old when
he began to reign; he reigned
forty years in Jerusalem; his mother's
name was Zibiah of Beer-sheba. 2 Joash
did what was right in the sight of the
LORD all the days of the priest Jehoiada.
3 Jehoiada got two wives for him, and he
became the father of sons and daughters.
4 Some time afterward Joash decided
to restore the house of the LORD. 5 He as-
sembled the priests and the Levites and
said to them, "Go out to the cities of Ju-
dah and gather money from all Israel to
repair the house of your God, year by
year; and see that you act quickly." But
the Levites did not act quickly. 6 So the
king summoned Jehoiada the chief, and
said to him, "Why have you not required
the Levites to bring in from Judah and
Jerusalem the tax levied by Moses, the
servant of the LORD, on[x] the congrega-
tion of Israel for the tent of the cove-
nant?"[y] 7 For the children of Athaliah,
that wicked woman, had broken into the
house of God, and had even used all the
dedicated things of the house of the LORD
for the Baals.
8 So the king gave command, and
they made a chest, and set it outside the
gate of the house of the LORD. 9 A procla-
mation was made throughout Judah and
Jerusalem to bring in for the LORD the tax
that Moses the servant of God laid on Is-
rael in the wilderness. 10 All the leaders
and all the people rejoiced and brought
their tax and dropped it into the chest un-
til it was full. 11 Whenever the chest was
brought to the king's officers by the Le-
vites, when they saw that there was a large
amount of money in it, the king's secre-
tary and the officer of the chief priest
would come and empty the chest and take
it and return it to its place. So they did
day after day, and collected money in
abundance. 12 The king and Jehoiada
gave it to those who had charge of the
work of the house of the LORD, and they
hired masons and carpenters to restore
the house of the LORD, and also workers
in iron and bronze to repair the house of
the LORD. 13 So those who were engaged
in the work labored, and the repairing
went forward at their hands, and they re-
stored the house of God to its proper con-
dition and strengthened it. 14 When they

x Compare Vg: Heb *and*
y Or *treaty*, or *testimony*; Heb *eduth*

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keepers, who were to keep out all who were unclean. **23.20** *The captains, the nobles, the governors ... all the people*, a list demonstrating the wide support for Joash. *Upper gate*. 2 Kings 11.19 reads "the gate of the guards." *They set the king*. In 2 Kings the king himself takes his seat. **23.21** *Quiet*. Cf. 1 Chr 4.40; 22.9; 2 Chr 14.1 (13.23 in the Hebrew); 14.1, 6; 20.30. 2 Kings 11.20 notes that Athaliah was killed at the king's house.

24.1–14 Cf. 2 Kings 12.1–17. While both Kings and Chronicles record the restoration of the temple, their accounts diverge from one another more widely than usual. **24.2** According to 2 Kings 12.2 Joash did what was right all his days, but Chronicles records a change in Joash's life after the death of Jehoiada. The notice in 2 Kings 12.3 (v. 4 in the Hebrew) that Joash did not remove the high places is omitted since it would not conform to the Chronicler's depiction of the first part of Joash's reign. **24.3** Wives and children are signs of God's blessing for the pious Joash. **24.5** Joash requests that the priests and Levites raise a special collection, but the Levites react slowly, possibly because this collection would divert funds from their own income. The Levites play no role in 2 Kings 12. **24.6** Joash prods Jehoiada to get the Levites to collect the tax said to have been inaugurated by Moses for the building of the tabernacle (Ex 30.12–16; 38.25–26). **24.7** Chronicles provides specifics on what was wrong with the temple; 2 Kings 12.6 speaks vaguely of the need for repairs. **24.8** *Chest*. A collection box was a common feature in ancient Near Eastern temples. *Outside the gate* reflects Second Temple practice, when laity had no access to the inner court. In 2 Kings 12.9 the chest is placed beside the altar. **24.10** The joyous generosity of the people repeats the joy of the wilderness community over the tabernacle (Ex 36.4–7) and provides an example for the Chronicler's audience (cf. 1 Chr 29.9). **24.14** Funds are used for various types of temple paraphernalia, as in the construction of the tabernacle (Ex 25; 31.1–10); in

had finished, they brought the rest of the money to the king and Jehoiada, and with it were made utensils for the house of the LORD, utensils for the service and for the burnt offerings, and ladles, and vessels of gold and silver. They offered burnt offerings in the house of the LORD regularly all the days of Jehoiada.

Apostasy of Joash

15 But Jehoiada grew old and full of days, and died; he was one hundred thirty years old at his death. 16 And they buried him in the city of David among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, and for God and his house.

17 Now after the death of Jehoiada the officials of Judah came and did obeisance to the king; then the king listened to them. 18 They abandoned the house of the LORD, the God of their ancestors, and served the sacred poles[z] and the idols. And wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this guilt of theirs. 19 Yet he sent prophets among them to bring them back to the LORD; they testified against them, but they would not listen.

20 Then the spirit of God took possession of[a] Zechariah son of the priest Jehoiada; he stood above the people and said to them, "Thus says God: Why do you transgress the commandments of the LORD, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the LORD, he has also forsaken you." 21 But they conspired against him, and by command of the king they stoned him to death in the court of the house of the LORD. 22 King Joash did not remember the kindness that Jehoiada, Zechariah's father, had shown him, but killed his son. As he was dying, he said, "May the LORD see and avenge!"

Death of Joash

23 At the end of the year the army of Aram came up against Joash. They came to Judah and Jerusalem, and destroyed all the officials of the people from among them, and sent all the booty they took to the king of Damascus. 24 Although the army of Aram had come with few men, the LORD delivered into their hand a very great army, because they had abandoned the LORD, the God of their ancestors. Thus they executed judgment on Joash.

25 When they had withdrawn, leaving him severely wounded, his servants conspired against him because of the blood of the son[b] of the priest Jehoiada, and they killed him on his bed. So he died; and they buried him in the city of David, but they did not bury him in the tombs of the kings. 26 Those who conspired against him were Zabad son of Shimeath the Ammonite, and Jehozabad son of Shimrith the Moabite. 27 Accounts of his sons, and of the many oracles against him, and of the rebuilding[c] of the house of God are written in the Commentary on the Book

z Heb *Asherim* *a* Heb *clothed itself with*
b Gk Vg: Heb *sons* *c* Heb *founding*

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2 Kings 12.13–14 this is explicitly prohibited.

24.15–22 The Chronicler adds a description of Joash's apostasy after the death of Jehoiada. **24.15** Jehoiada's extremely long life testifies symbolically to his fidelity. **24.16** Jehoiada the priest is given a grave among the kings while Joash himself is not (24.25). **24.17–19** Joash heeds the bad advice of officials who worship poles and idols dedicated to the goddess Asherah and refuses the admonition of prophets. Note the immediate retribution for their abandoning of the temple. **24.20** Jehoiada's son threatens retribution in words reminiscent of Moses (Num 14.41). **24.21** The officials and the king agree to the murder of Zechariah (cf. Mt 23.35; Lk 11.50–51) and kill him in the temple where Jehoiada made Joash king and where efforts have been taken by Jehoiada to avoid violence in the temple (cf. 2 Chr 23.14). **24.22** Zechariah calls for divine retribution.

24.23–27 Cf. 2 Kings 12.19–21 (18–23 in the Hebrew). **24.23** An invasion by Aram (Syria) brings the divine retribution earned by the officials. According to 2 Kings 12.7–18 Joash buys off Hazael. **24.24** The small Aramean army was empowered by the Lord to defeat a far more numerous Judean army that had committed the fatal sin of abandoning God. Chronicles stresses elsewhere that a small Judean army could defeat a larger enemy army. **24.25** Joash's servants murder him because he has participated in the murder of Zechariah. 2 Kings provides no rationale for this murder. Joash is denied royal burial by the Chronicler in spite of evidence to the contrary in 2 Kings 12.21. **24.26** The chief conspirators are children of an Ammonite woman and a Moabite woman. While the names of the conspirators come from 2 Kings 12.21, the ethnic designations come from the Chronicler. **24.27** *Commentary on the Book of the Kings*. Cf. 2 Chr 13.22.

of the Kings. And his son Amaziah succeeded him.

Reign of Amaziah

25 Amaziah was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jehoaddan of Jerusalem. 2 He did what was right in the sight of the LORD, yet not with a true heart. 3 As soon as the royal power was firmly in his hand he killed his servants who had murdered his father the king. 4 But he did not put their children to death, according to what is written in the law, in the book of Moses, where the LORD commanded, "The parents shall not be put to death for the children, or the children be put to death for the parents; but all shall be put to death for their own sins."

Slaughter of the Edomites

5 Amaziah assembled the people of Judah, and set them by ancestral houses under commanders of the thousands and of the hundreds for all Judah and Benjamin. He mustered those twenty years old and upward, and found that they were three hundred thousand picked troops fit for war, able to handle spear and shield. 6 He also hired one hundred thousand mighty warriors from Israel for one hundred talents of silver. 7 But a man of God came to him and said, "O king, do not let the army of Israel go with you, for the LORD is not with Israel—all these Ephraimites. 8 Rather, go by yourself and act; be strong in battle, or God will fling you down before the enemy; for God has power to help or to overthrow." 9 Amaziah said to the man of God, "But what shall we do about the hundred talents that I have given to the army of Israel?" The man of God answered, "The LORD is able to give you much more than this." 10 Then Amaziah discharged the army that had come to him from Ephraim, letting them go home again. But they became very angry with Judah, and returned home in fierce anger.

11 Amaziah took courage, and led out his people; he went to the Valley of Salt, and struck down ten thousand men of Seir. 12 The people of Judah captured another ten thousand alive, took them to the top of Sela, and threw them down from the top of Sela, so that all of them were dashed to pieces. 13 But the men of the army whom Amaziah sent back, not letting them go with him to battle, fell on the cities of Judah from Samaria to Beth-horon; they killed three thousand people in them, and took much booty.

14 Now after Amaziah came from the slaughter of the Edomites, he brought the gods of the people of Seir, set them up as his gods, and worshiped them, making offerings to them. 15 The LORD was angry with Amaziah and sent to him a prophet, who said to him, "Why have you resorted to a people's gods who could not deliver their own people from your hand?" 16 But as he was speaking the king[d] said to him, "Have we made you a royal counselor?

d Heb *he*

25.1–4 Cf. 2 Kings 14.1–6. **25.2** As with Joash's, the first half of Amaziah's reign is judged favorably. *With a true heart.* 2 Kings 14.3 reads "like his ancestor David." 2 Kings also indicates that he behaves like Joash and that the high places are not removed (cf. 2 Chr 24.2; 26.4; 27.2). Amaziah's performance is half-hearted from the beginning. **25.4** Amaziah's reason for not killing the children of his father's murderers is based on Deut 24.16.

25.5–16 Cf. 2 Kings 14.7. **25.5** *Three hundred thousand.* Asa mustered 580,000 and Jehoshaphat 1,160,000. **25.6** *One hundred talents of silver,* roughly one ounce of silver for every man. **25.8** The oracle of the anonymous man of God is supplied by the Chronicler and shows his usual opposition to an alliance with the North (cf. 13.4–12; 19.1–13). **25.9** God's help would more than make up for the loss of one-fourth of his army. **25.11** This verse is based on 2 Kings 14.7. *Valley of Salt,* near the southern end of the Dead Sea (cf. 2 Sam 8.13; 1 Chr 18.12). *Seir,* a mountainous region lying southeast of Judah. **25.12** *Sela,* Hebrew, "rock, precipice." The exact location is contested. **25.13** *Samaria,* the capital of the Northern Kingdom. Another city may have originally been mentioned here. *Beth-horon,* a city in Ephraim near Benjamin. **25.14** In antiquity the gods of defeated nations were sometimes said to abandon their own nation and side with the victor. **25.15–16** Amaziah opposes a second, anonymous prophet, who repeats the inevitability of divine retribution. The king does not listen to divine counsel and follows human counsel (v. 17), to his own harm.

Stop! Why should you be put to death?"
So the prophet stopped, but said, "I know
that God has determined to destroy you,
because you have done this and have not
listened to my advice."

Israel Defeats Judah

17 Then King Amaziah of Judah took
counsel and sent to King Joash son of Je-
hoahaz son of Jehu of Israel, saying,
"Come, let us look one another in the
face." 18 King Joash of Israel sent word to
King Amaziah of Judah, "A thornbush on
Lebanon sent to a cedar on Lebanon, say-
ing, 'Give your daughter to my son for a
wife'; but a wild animal of Lebanon
passed by and trampled down the thorn-
bush. 19 You say, 'See, I have defeated
Edom,' and your heart has lifted you up
in boastfulness. Now stay at home; why
should you provoke trouble so that you
fall, you and Judah with you?"
20 But Amaziah would not listen—it
was God's doing, in order to hand them
over, because they had sought the gods of
Edom. 21 So King Joash of Israel went up;
he and King Amaziah of Judah faced one
another in battle at Beth-shemesh, which
belongs to Judah. 22 Judah was defeated
by Israel; everyone fled home. 23 King Jo-
ash of Israel captured King Amaziah of
Judah, son of Joash, son of Ahaziah, at
Beth-shemesh; he brought him to Jerusa-
lem, and broke down the wall of Jerusa-
lem from the Ephraim Gate to the Corner
Gate, a distance of four hundred cubits.
24 He seized all the gold and silver, and all
the vessels that were found in the house
of God, and Obed-edom with them; he
seized also the treasuries of the king's
house, also hostages; then he returned to
Samaria.

Death of Amaziah

25 King Amaziah son of Joash of Ju-
dah, lived fifteen years after the death of
King Joash son of Jehoahaz of Israel.
26 Now the rest of the deeds of Amaziah,
from first to last, are they not written in
the Book of the Kings of Judah and Is-
rael? 27 From the time that Amaziah
turned away from the LORD they made a
conspiracy against him in Jerusalem, and
he fled to Lachish. But they sent after him
to Lachish, and killed him there. 28 They
brought him back on horses; he was bur-
ied with his ancestors in the city of David.

Reign of Uzziah

26 Then all the people of Judah
took Uzziah, who was sixteen
years old, and made him king to succeed
his father Amaziah. 2 He rebuilt Eloth and
restored it to Judah, after the king slept
with his ancestors. 3 Uzziah was sixteen
years old when he began to reign, and he
reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem. His
mother's name was Jecoliah of Jerusalem.
4 He did what was right in the sight of the
LORD, just as his father Amaziah had

25.17–24 Cf. 2 Kings 14.8–16. **25.18** In this fable, the arrogance of the thistle in proposing a marriage alliance with a cedar is punished by a wild animal. **25.19** Joash castigates Amaziah for his arrogance after the defeat of Edom and warns him to avoid a military confrontation. **25.20** The Chronicler adds his theological interpretation. Amaziah's stubbornness is really God's doing (cf. 10.15; 22.7) to punish him for the idolatry of v. 14. **25.21** *Faced one another.* Note the pun with v. 17. *Beth-shemesh,* a town sixteen miles southwest of Jerusalem. **25.23** *Ephraim gate,* in the northern wall. *Corner gate,* in the northwestern corner of the city. **25.24** *And Obed-edom with them,* better "in the care of Obed-edom"; this is only in Chronicles. David has put this Levitical family in charge of the temple treasuries (1 Chr 13.13–14; 26.4–8, 15).

25.25–28 Cf. 2 Kings 14.17–20. **25.25** Despite his defeat by Joash, Amaziah outlives him by fifteen years. **25.27** *Turned away.* Cf. vv. 14, 20. *In Jerusalem.* The conspirators may be responding to the plunder of Jerusalem in vv. 23–24. *Lachish,* a city thirty miles southwest of Jerusalem fortified by Rehoboam (11.9). **25.28** *David,* following the Septuagint and 2 Kings 14.20; in the Hebrew "Judah." Jerusalem is called the city of Judah in the Babylonian Chronicle, a cuneiform historiographic source of the eighth century B.C.E.

26.1–15 Cf. 2 Kings 14.21–15.4. Vv. 5–15, which identify the signs of blessings in Uzziah's reign, are unique to Chronicles. In 2 Kings, which gives a brief account of his very long reign, he is usually called Azariah. **26.2** *Eloth,* alternate spelling for Elath, a port city on the northeast arm of the Red Sea, that revolted during the reign of Jehoram (21.8–10). **26.4** The Chronicler qualifies his positive assessment of Uzziah in vv. 16–21. An early good period is followed by infidelity, just as with the reign of Amaziah.

done. 5 He set himself to seek God in the
days of Zechariah, who instructed him in
the fear of God; and as long as he sought
the LORD, God made him prosper.
6 He went out and made war against
the Philistines, and broke down the wall
of Gath and the wall of Jabneh and the
wall of Ashdod; he built cities in the terri-
tory of Ashdod and elsewhere among the
Philistines. 7 God helped him against the
Philistines, against the Arabs who lived in
Gur-baal, and against the Meunites. 8 The
Ammonites paid tribute to Uzziah, and
his fame spread even to the border of
Egypt, for he became very strong. 9 More-
over Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem at
the Corner Gate, at the Valley Gate, and
at the Angle, and fortified them. 10 He
built towers in the wilderness and hewed
out many cisterns, for he had large herds,
both in the Shephelah and in the plain,
and he had farmers and vinedressers in
the hills and in the fertile lands, for he
loved the soil. 11 Moreover Uzziah had an
army of soldiers, fit for war, in divisions
according to the numbers in the muster
made by the secretary Jeiel and the officer
Maaseiah, under the direction of Hana-
niah, one of the king's commanders.
12 The whole number of the heads of an-
cestral houses of mighty warriors was two
thousand six hundred. 13 Under their
command was an army of three hundred
seven thousand five hundred, who could
make war with mighty power, to help the
king against the enemy. 14 Uzziah pro-
vided for all the army the shields, spears,
helmets, coats of mail, bows, and stones
for slinging. 15 In Jerusalem he set up ma-
chines, invented by skilled workers, on the
towers and the corners for shooting ar-
rows and large stones. And his fame
spread far, for he was marvelously helped
until he became strong.

Pride and Apostasy

16 But when he had become strong he
grew proud, to his destruction. For he was
false to the LORD his God, and entered the
temple of the LORD to make offering on
the altar of incense. 17 But the priest Aza-
riah went in after him, with eighty priests
of the LORD who were men of valor;
18 they withstood King Uzziah, and said to
him, "It is not for you, Uzziah, to make
offering to the LORD, but for the priests
the descendants of Aaron, who are conse-
crated to make offering. Go out of the
sanctuary; for you have done wrong, and
it will bring you no honor from the LORD
God." 19 Then Uzziah was angry. Now he
had a censer in his hand to make offering,
and when he became angry with the
priests a leprous[e] disease broke out on
his forehead, in the presence of the
priests in the house of the LORD, by the
altar of incense. 20 When the chief priest
Azariah, and all the priests, looked at him,
he was leprous[e] in his forehead. They
hurried him out, and he himself hurried
to get out, because the LORD had struck
him. 21 King Uzziah was leprous[e] to the
day of his death, and being leprous[e] lived
in a separate house, for he was excluded
from the house of the LORD. His son Jo-
tham was in charge of the palace of the
king, governing the people of the land.
22 Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah,
from first to last, the prophet Isaiah son

e A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain

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26.5 *Zechariah,* an unknown adviser, during whose days the king's piety leads to success. Cf. Joash and Zechariah in 2 Chr 24. *God made him prosper* refers to foreign relationships. **26.6** *Gath,* a Philistine city on the coastal plain. *Jabneh,* a city in northwest Judah identical to Jabneel and Jamnia; *Ashdod,* another Philistine city near the coast. **26.7** *Gur-baal.* Emend to "Gur and against." Gur is east of Beer-sheba. *Meunites,* see note on 20.1. Uzziah's expansion is all in a southerly direction; Jeroboam II is too strong in the North. **26.9–10** Royal building activities are a sign of blessing; numerous archaeological remains have been related to Uzziah. *Shephelah,* low hills in western Palestine. *Plain,* perhaps the plain of Sharon. *The hills,* the hill country of Judah. **26.11–13** Large armies are another sign of God's blessing (cf. 1 Chr 12.23–40; 2 Chr 12.3; 13.3, 17; 14.9; 17.12–19; 25.5–6. **26.15** *Machines,* not catapults, but defensive structures that protected the soldiers.

26.16–23 Cf. 2 Kings 15.5–7. Vv. 16–21 are found only in Chronicles. **26.16** *Grew proud.* Uzziah's sinful pride (cf. 12.1) leads to negative consequences in the second half of his reign. *Incense* offerings are to be conducted only by priests (Ex 30.1–10; Num 16.40; 18.1–7). **26.17** *Azariah,* otherwise unknown. **26.20** Because of his illness, Uzziah serves in a coregency with his son Jotham. God effects immediate retribution. **26.22** *Isaiah.* The account of Uzziah is traced to prophetic authorship (cf. 1 Chr 29.29; 2 Chr 9.29;

of Amoz wrote. 23 Uzziah slept with his
ancestors; they buried him near his ancestors in the burial field that belonged to
the kings, for they said, "He is leprous."[f]
His son Jotham succeeded him.

Reign of Jotham

27 Jotham was twenty-five years old
when he began to reign; he
reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. His
mother's name was Jerushah daughter of
Zadok. 2 He did what was right in the
sight of the LORD just as his father Uzziah
had done—only he did not invade the
temple of the LORD. But the people still
followed corrupt practices. 3 He built the
upper gate of the house of the LORD, and
did extensive building on the wall of
Ophel. 4 Moreover he built cities in the
hill country of Judah, and forts and towers on the wooded hills. 5 He fought with
the king of the Ammonites and prevailed
against them. The Ammonites gave him
that year one hundred talents of silver,
ten thousand cors of wheat and ten thousand of barley. The Ammonites paid him
the same amount in the second and the
third years. 6 So Jotham became strong
because he ordered his ways before the
LORD his God. 7 Now the rest of the acts of
Jotham, and all his wars and his ways, are
written in the Book of the Kings of Israel
and Judah. 8 He was twenty-five years old
when he began to reign; he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. 9 Jotham slept
with his ancestors, and they buried him in
the city of David; and his son Ahaz succeeded him.

Reign of Ahaz

28 Ahaz was twenty years old when
he began to reign; he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. He did not do
what was right in the sight of the LORD, as
his ancestor David had done, 2 but he
walked in the ways of the kings of Israel.
He even made cast images for the Baals;
3 and he made offerings in the valley of
the son of Hinnom, and made his sons
pass through fire, according to the abominable practices of the nations whom the
LORD drove out before the people of Israel. 4 He sacrificed and made offerings
on the high places, on the hills, and under
every green tree.

Aram and Israel Defeat Judah

5 Therefore the LORD his God gave
him into the hand of the king of Aram,
who defeated him and took captive a
great number of his people and brought
them to Damascus. He was also given into
the hand of the king of Israel, who defeated him with great slaughter. 6 Pekah
son of Remaliah killed one hundred

f A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain

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12.15; 32.32). The book of Isaiah refers to Uzziah in 1.1; 6.1; 7.1. 2 Kings 15.6 reads "Are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah?" **26.23** His grave is near, but not in, the royal cemetery. A later, Hasmonean ossuary text reads: "Herein are the bones of Uzziah, king of Judah. Do not open." The separate burial of the king may have led to the discovery and reburial of his bones in the first century B.C.E.

27.1–9 Cf. 2 Kings 15.32–38. Unlike his three predecessors, Jotham is given a totally positive judgment. **27.2** Chronicles adds a note that Jotham *did not invade the temple* because of the tradition included in 2 Chr 26.16–20 concerning Uzziah's improper use of incense. *Corrupt practices*, a paraphrase of information in 2 Kings about making sacrifices and burning incense at the high places. **27.3** In Chronicles pious kings usually carry out building projects. *Ophel*, a ridge extending south of Jerusalem that was fortified by David. See note on 33.14. Jotham's work on the temple gate and on towers echoes the activities of Uzziah. **27.5** The tribute from the Ammonites demonstrates that divine favor rests with Jotham. *One hundred talents*, 7,500 pounds. *Ten thousand cors*, somewhere between 65,000 and 140,000 bushels. **27.6** A clear statement of the doctrine of retribution. **27.7** Chronicles omits the reference to Rezin and Pekah from 2 Kings 15.37 and associates their attack with the next king, Ahaz (2 Chr 28.5–8).

28.1–4 Cf. 2 Kings 16.1–4. Chronicles follows Kings closely in this sharply negative summary of Ahaz. **28.2** *Cast images for the Baals.* Ahaz commits the same sin as Jeroboam, first king of the Northern Kingdom (13.8). **28.3** *Valley of the son of Hinnom*, a wadi south of Jerusalem where child sacrifice was practiced (33.6; Jer 7.31–32).

28.5–7 Cf. 2 Kings 16.5. **28.5** The king of *Aram* (Syria) is identified in 2 Kings as Rezin. He was allied with Pekah of the Northern Kingdom against Judah in what is known as the Syro-Ephraimitic war. Here the two enemies of Judah attack independently. According to Chronicles, the wicked king Ahaz suffers retribution through both opposing countries. **28.6** *One hundred twen-*

twenty thousand in Judah in one day, all of them valiant warriors, because they had abandoned the LORD, the God of their ancestors. 7 And Zichri, a mighty warrior of Ephraim, killed the king's son Maaseiah, Azrikam the commander of the palace, and Elkanah the next in authority to the king.

Intervention of Oded

8 The people of Israel took captive two hundred thousand of their kin, women, sons, and daughters; they also took much booty from them and brought the booty to Samaria. 9 But a prophet of the LORD was there, whose name was Oded; he went out to meet the army that came to Samaria, and said to them, "Because the LORD, the God of your ancestors, was angry with Judah, he gave them into your hand, but you have killed them in a rage that has reached up to heaven. 10 Now you intend to subjugate the people of Judah and Jerusalem, male and female, as your slaves. But what have you except sins against the LORD your God? 11 Now hear me, and send back the captives whom you have taken from your kindred, for the fierce wrath of the LORD is upon you." 12 Moreover, certain chiefs of the Ephraimites, Azariah son of Johanan, Berechiah son of Meshillemoth, Jehizkiah son of Shallum, and Amasa son of Hadlai, stood up against those who were coming from the war, 13 and said to them, "You shall not bring the captives in here, for you propose to bring on us guilt against the LORD in addition to our present sins and guilt. For our guilt is already great, and there is fierce wrath against Israel." 14 So the warriors left the captives and the booty before the officials and all the assembly. 15 Then those who were mentioned by name got up and took the captives, and with the booty they clothed all that were naked among them; they clothed them, gave them sandals, provided them with food and drink, and anointed them; and carrying all the feeble among them on donkeys, they brought them to their kindred at Jericho, the city of palm trees. Then they returned to Samaria.

Assyria Refuses to Help Judah

16 At that time King Ahaz sent to the king[g] of Assyria for help. 17 For the Edomites had again invaded and defeated Judah, and carried away captives. 18 And the Philistines had made raids on the cities in the Shephelah and the Negeb of Judah, and had taken Beth-shemesh, Aijalon, Gederoth, Soco with its villages, Timnah with its villages, and Gimzo with its villages; and they settled there. 19 For the LORD brought Judah low because of King Ahaz of Israel, for he had behaved without restraint in Judah and had been

g Gk Syr Vg Compare 2 Kings 16.7: Heb *kings*

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ty thousand. The exaggerated number of casualties—and in one day!—shows the penalty for abandoning the Lord (cf. 13.9–12). **28.7** *Next in authority.* Cf. Esth 10.3.

28.8–15 The Chronicler inserts a sermon by a prophet and an admonition by Ephraimite chiefs that lead the Northern troops to change their mind. Certain details of this narrative may have influenced the account of the good Samaritan in the NT. **28.8** *Two hundred thousand* captives plus the fatalities in v. 6 would have depopulated Judah. **28.9–10** *Oded,* otherwise unknown. This prophet concedes the wickedness of Judah but accuses the army of excesses (cf. Isa 10.5–19), the killing of some in anger and the enslaving of the rest (Lev 25.39–55). Note that the Lord (Yahweh) is still considered as the God of the North. **28.11** Citizens of the two kingdoms are *kindred* (lit. "brothers"). **28.12** The decisive action by *certain chiefs* may mean that the Northern monarchy is already a thing of the past. **28.13** The four chiefs also admonish the army not to add guilt from the present incident to their existing guilt (cf. 13.4–12). **28.14** Remarkably, the army repents. **28.15** Those *mentioned by name* in v. 12 (or "men nominated for this duty" as translated by the New English Bible) outfit the captives from the booty that has been taken and return them to Judean authorities at Jericho.

28.16–21 Cf. 2 Kings 16.6–9. In 2 Kings Ahaz appeals to the Assyrian king for relief from the Northern invaders. Since the Chronicler had already reported that the North had repented and restored their captives, he identifies the cause of Ahaz's plea as pressure from neighboring countries, the Edomites and Philistines. This additional material is historically plausible. **28.16** Ahaz should have asked God rather than a foreign king for help (cf. 26.7, 15). **28.18** The Philistines capture a number of cities between themselves and Judah. *Gimzo,* a town north of Gezer. **28.19** The Philistine attack metes

faithless to the LORD. 20 So King Tilgath-
pilneser of Assyria came against him, and
oppressed him instead of strengthening
him. 21 For Ahaz plundered the house of
the LORD and the houses of the king and
of the officials, and gave tribute to the
king of Assyria; but it did not help him.

Apostasy and Death of Ahaz

22 In the time of his distress he be-
came yet more faithless to the LORD—this
same King Ahaz. 23 For he sacrificed to
the gods of Damascus, which had de-
feated him, and said, "Because the gods
of the kings of Aram helped them, I will
sacrifice to them so that they may help
me." But they were the ruin of him, and
of all Israel. 24 Ahaz gathered together the
utensils of the house of God, and cut in
pieces the utensils of the house of God.
He shut up the doors of the house of the
LORD and made himself altars in every
corner of Jerusalem. 25 In every city of Ju-
dah he made high places to make offer-
ings to other gods, provoking to anger the
LORD, the God of his ancestors. 26 Now
the rest of his acts and all his ways, from
first to last, are written in the Book of the
Kings of Judah and Israel. 27 Ahaz slept
with his ancestors, and they buried him in
the city, in Jerusalem; but they did not
bring him into the tombs of the kings of
Israel. His son Hezekiah succeeded him.

Reign of Hezekiah

29 Hezekiah began to reign when he
was twenty-five years old; he
reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem.
His mother's name was Abijah daughter
of Zechariah. 2 He did what was right in
the sight of the LORD, just as his ancestor
David had done.

The Temple Cleansed

3 In the first year of his reign, in the
first month, he opened the doors of the
house of the LORD and repaired them.
4 He brought in the priests and the Levites
and assembled them in the square on the
east. 5 He said to them, "Listen to me, Le-
vites! Sanctify yourselves, and sanctify the
house of the LORD, the God of your ances-
tors, and carry out the filth from the holy
place. 6 For our ancestors have been un-
faithful and have done what was evil in
the sight of the LORD our God; they have
forsaken him, and have turned away their
faces from the dwelling of the LORD, and
turned their backs. 7 They also shut the
doors of the vestibule and put out the
lamps, and have not offered incense or
made burnt offerings in the holy place to
the God of Israel. 8 Therefore the wrath
of the LORD came upon Judah and Jeru-
salem, and he has made them an object of
horror, of astonishment, and of hissing, as
you see with your own eyes. 9 Our fathers
have fallen by the sword and our sons and

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out appropriate retribution to Ahaz. **28.20** *Tilgath-pilneser,* spelled Tiglath-pileser [III] in 2 Kings 16.7 (but see 1 Chr 5.6). The Assyrian king attacks the South instead of coming to its aid. According to 2 Kings 16.9 the Assyrian king listens to Ahaz and provides him relief by attacking Damascus and killing Rezin. In 733 B.C.E. Tiglath-pileser reorganized the Northern Kingdom into three Assyrian provinces. **28.21** In this added verse, Chronicles attributes Judah's defeat to the fact that Ahaz wrongly paid tribute to the Assyrians.

28.22–27 Cf. 2 Kings 16.10–20. **28.23** Ahaz compounds his guilt by worshiping the Aramean gods. According to 2 Kings 16.10–13 Ahaz copied an Aramean altar and worshiped the Lord with it. **28.24** By closing the Jerusalem temple and thus distancing himself from it, Ahaz acts in a way similar to Jeroboam. In 2 Kings 16.12–14, Ahaz makes special offerings to the temple, but in 2 Kings 16.17–18 the king plunders the temple in order to pay tribute. **28.27** Like Uzziah, Ahaz is buried in Jerusalem but not with the other kings (cf. 2 Kings 16.20; 2 Chr 21.20; 24.25; 26.23).

29.1–2 Cf. 2 Kings 18.1–3. The opening paragraph for Hezekiah is virtually identical with the material in 2 Kings, except that the Chronicler, as usual, omits the synchronism with the Northern king. The Chronicler gives great attention to Hezekiah's reform (chs. 29–31), but less attention than in 2 Kings to the Assyrian invasion (ch. 32), the delegation from Babylon (32.31), and the king's illness (32.24–26). Unity returns to all Israel under Hezekiah, who is a second David (see 29.2) and especially a second Solomon.

29.3 Like Solomon, Hezekiah is concerned with the temple right from the start of his reign (cf. chs. 1–2). The actions urged by Hezekiah would reverse those of his father, Ahaz (28.24–25; 29.19). **29.5** *Levites* is used in a broad sense that includes both priests and Levites. **29.8** This description of circumstances at the time of Hezekiah quotes Jer 29.18, which announces the exile that took place more than

our daughters and our wives are in captivity for this. 10 Now it is in my heart to make a covenant with the LORD, the God of Israel, so that his fierce anger may turn away from us. 11 My sons, do not now be negligent, for the LORD has chosen you to stand in his presence to minister to him, and to be his ministers and make offerings to him."

12 Then the Levites arose, Mahath son of Amasai, and Joel son of Azariah, of the sons of the Kohathites; and of the sons of Merari, Kish son of Abdi, and Azariah son of Jehallelel; and of the Gershonites, Joah son of Zimmah, and Eden son of Joah; 13 and of the sons of Elizaphan, Shimri and Jeuel; and of the sons of Asaph, Zechariah and Mattaniah; 14 and of the sons of Heman, Jehuel and Shimei; and of the sons of Jeduthun, Shemaiah and Uzziel. 15 They gathered their brothers, sanctified themselves, and went in as the king had commanded, by the words of the LORD, to cleanse the house of the LORD. 16 The priests went into the inner part of the house of the LORD to cleanse it, and they brought out all the unclean things that they found in the temple of the LORD into the court of the house of the LORD; and the Levites took them and carried them out to the Wadi Kidron. 17 They began to sanctify on the first day of the first month, and on the eighth day of the month they came to the vestibule of the LORD; then for eight days they sanctified the house of the LORD, and on the sixteenth day of the first month they finished. 18 Then they went inside to King Hezekiah and said, "We have cleansed all the house of the LORD, the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, and the table for the rows of bread and all its utensils. 19 All the utensils that King Ahaz repudiated during his reign when he was faithless, we have made ready and sanctified; see, they are in front of the altar of the LORD."

Temple Worship Restored

20 Then King Hezekiah rose early, assembled the officials of the city, and went up to the house of the LORD. 21 They brought seven bulls, seven rams, seven lambs, and seven male goats for a sin offering for the kingdom and for the sanctuary and for Judah. He commanded the priests the descendants of Aaron to offer them on the altar of the LORD. 22 So they slaughtered the bulls, and the priests received the blood and dashed it against the altar; they slaughtered the rams and their blood was dashed against the altar; they also slaughtered the lambs and their blood was dashed against the altar. 23 Then the male goats for the sin offering were brought to the king and the assembly; they laid their hands on them, 24 and the priests slaughtered them and made a sin offering with their blood at the altar, to make atonement for all Israel. For the king commanded that the burnt offering and the sin offering should be made for all Israel.

25 He stationed the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, harps, and lyres, according to the commandment of David and of Gad the king's seer and of the prophet Nathan, for the commandment was from the LORD through his prophets. 26 The Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with

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a century after Hezekiah. **29.10** The temple cleansing renews the *covenant* and sets an example for the postexilic audience. **29.12–14** There are two Levites from each of the families of Kohath, Merari, and Gershon, two from the family of Elizaphan (descended from Kohath), and two from each division of the singers: Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun. **29.15** *By the words of the LORD.* Hezekiah's reform is given divine sanction. **29.16–17** As prohibited items are removed from the temple, priests and Levites are active in places appropriate to them (cf. 5.4–11). *Kidron,* just east of the city, is also the place for destroying polluted vessels under Asa (15.16) and Josiah (2 Kings 23.4, 6, 12). The purification rites end two days after the normal beginning of Passover.

29.21 The *bulls, rams,* and *lambs* are for the burnt offering and the *goats* for the sin offering. The sin offering benefited the royal house (*kingdom*), the temple and its personnel (*sanctuary*), and the whole nation (*Judah*). **29.22** *They,* the king and his officials (cf. v. 20). **29.23** Through laying on of hands, the offerer identifies with the victim in the sin offering. **29.24** *All Israel.* The king's offering is explicitly inclusive (cf. v. 21). **29.25–30** The Levites accompany the sacrifices with music. Their role may reflect worship practices from the Chronicler's own time, but it also echoes their activity at the dedication of the temple (7.6). The restoration of the temple makes Hezekiah a second Solomon. **29.25** David and the prophets are credited with authorizing the

the trumpets. 27 Then Hezekiah commanded that the burnt offering be offered on the altar. When the burnt offering began, the song to the LORD began also, and the trumpets, accompanied by the instruments of King David of Israel. 28 The whole assembly worshiped, the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded; all this continued until the burnt offering was finished. 29 When the offering was finished, the king and all who were present with him bowed down and worshiped. 30 King Hezekiah and the officials commanded the Levites to sing praises to the LORD with the words of David and of the seer Asaph. They sang praises with gladness, and they bowed down and worshiped.

31 Then Hezekiah said, "You have now consecrated yourselves to the LORD; come near, bring sacrifices and thank offerings to the house of the LORD." The assembly brought sacrifices and thank offerings; and all who were of a willing heart brought burnt offerings. 32 The number of the burnt offerings that the assembly brought was seventy bulls, one hundred rams, and two hundred lambs; all these were for a burnt offering to the LORD. 33 The consecrated offerings were six hundred bulls and three thousand sheep. 34 But the priests were too few and could not skin all the burnt offerings, so, until other priests had sanctified themselves, their kindred, the Levites, helped them until the work was finished—for the Levites were more conscientious[h] than the priests in sanctifying themselves. 35 Besides the great number of burnt offerings there was the fat of the offerings of well-being, and there were the drink offerings for the burnt offerings. Thus the service of the house of the LORD was restored. 36 And Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced because of what God had done for the people; for the thing had come about suddenly.

The Great Passover

30 Hezekiah sent word to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, to keep the passover to the LORD the God of Israel. 2 For the king and his officials and all the assembly in Jerusalem had taken counsel to keep the passover in the second month 3 (for they could not keep it at its proper time because the priests had not sanctified themselves in sufficient number, nor had the people assembled in Jerusalem). 4 The plan seemed right to the king and all the assembly. 5 So they decreed to make a proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beer-sheba to Dan, that the people should come and keep the passover to the LORD the God of Israel, at Jerusalem; for they had not kept it in great numbers as prescribed. 6 So couriers went throughout all Israel and Judah with letters from the king and his officials, as the king had commanded, saying, "O people of Israel, return to the LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, so that he may turn again to the remnant of you who have escaped from the hand of the kings of Assyria. 7 Do not be like your ancestors and your kindred, who

h Heb *upright in heart*

Levitical activity. **29.31–36** The people join their leaders in bringing sacrifices and so reinaugurate regular worship practices (v. 35; cf. 8.16). Their enthusiasm harks back to popular enthusiasm for the sanctuary at the time of Moses and during the reigns of David and Solomon. **29.32** *Burnt offerings,* expressions of self-giving. **29.33** *Consecrated offerings.* Only parts of these offerings are burned; the rest are consumed by the offerers. **29.34** While the priests are not required by the law to skin the animals (Lev 1), this verse criticizes them for their delay and offers praise for the Levites. **29.36** *Suddenly.* The purification of the temple happens within three weeks in Hezekiah's first year.

30.1 In the Chronicler's reckoning, the North is already in exile when Hezekiah begins to rule. One of Hezekiah's first acts is to attempt to unite all Israel around the temple in Jerusalem. Such unification is the main agenda for the author of Chronicles in his postexilic setting. This Passover takes place at the central sanctuary (Deut 16; 2 Kings 23.21–23) and not in the Israelite homes (Ex 12.1–20). **30.2** *Second month.* Individuals who became unclean through contact with a corpse or who had been on a trip could delay the celebration of Passover one month (Num 9.9–11). Hezekiah extends this exception to those identified in v. 3. **30.5** *Beer-sheba to Dan,* the south to north description of the land, characteristic of Chronicles (cf. 1 Chr 21.2). The author uses a wide variety of terms to identify the North. See vv. 11, 12, 18. **30.6** *Israel,* Jacob (cf. 1 Chr 16.13, 17). The Chronicler demands repentance as the

were faithless to the LORD God of their
ancestors, so that he made them a desola-
tion, as you see. 8 Do not now be stiff-
necked as your ancestors were, but yield
yourselves to the LORD and come to his
sanctuary, which he has sanctified for-
ever, and serve the LORD your God, so
that his fierce anger may turn away from
you. 9 For as you return to the LORD, your
kindred and your children will find com-
passion with their captors, and return to
this land. For the LORD your God is gra-
cious and merciful, and will not turn away
his face from you, if you return to him."
10 So the couriers went from city to
city through the country of Ephraim and
Manasseh, and as far as Zebulun; but they
laughed them to scorn, and mocked them.
11 Only a few from Asher, Manasseh, and
Zebulun humbled themselves and came to
Jerusalem. 12 The hand of God was also
on Judah to give them one heart to do
what the king and the officials com-
manded by the word of the LORD.
13 Many people came together in Je-
rusalem to keep the festival of unleavened
bread in the second month, a very large
assembly. 14 They set to work and re-
moved the altars that were in Jerusalem,
and all the altars for offering incense they
took away and threw into the Wadi Kid-
ron. 15 They slaughtered the passover
lamb on the fourteenth day of the second
month. The priests and the Levites were
ashamed, and they sanctified themselves
and brought burnt offerings into the
house of the LORD. 16 They took their ac-
customed posts according to the law of
Moses the man of God; the priests dashed
the blood that they received[i] from the
hands of the Levites. 17 For there were
many in the assembly who had not sancti-
fied themselves; therefore the Levites had
to slaughter the passover lamb for every-
one who was not clean, to make it holy to
the LORD. 18 For a multitude of the peo-
ple, many of them from Ephraim, Manas-
seh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not
cleansed themselves, yet they ate the pass-
over otherwise than as prescribed. But
Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, "The
good LORD pardon all 19 who set their
hearts to seek God, the LORD the God of
their ancestors, even though not in accor-
dance with the sanctuary's rules of clean-
ness." 20 The LORD heard Hezekiah, and
healed the people. 21 The people of Israel
who were present at Jerusalem kept the
festival of unleavened bread seven days
with great gladness; and the Levites and
the priests praised the LORD day by day,
accompanied by loud instruments for the
LORD. 22 Hezekiah spoke encouragingly to
all the Levites who showed good skill in
the service of the LORD. So the people ate
the food of the festival for seven days, sac-
rificing offerings of well-being and giving
thanks to the LORD the God of their an-
cestors.
23 Then the whole assembly agreed
together to keep the festival for another
seven days; so they kept it for another
seven days with gladness. 24 For King
Hezekiah of Judah gave the assembly a
thousand bulls and seven thousand sheep
for offerings, and the officials gave the as-
sembly a thousand bulls and ten thousand
sheep. The priests sanctified themselves
in great numbers. 25 The whole assembly
of Judah, the priests and the Levites, and

i Heb lacks *that they received*

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prerequisite for restoration. **30.9** An excellent statement of the doctrine of retribution. **30.10** The Northerners show reluctance (cf. 36.16), perhaps reflecting their attitude toward the Jerusalem temple in the Chronicler's time, but Hezekiah, nevertheless, works for their incorporation in the celebration (vv. 18–20). **30.13** The agricultural *festival of unleavened bread* was originally celebrated separately from Passover (Ex 23.14–17; 34.18–23). The large attendance at the Passover is frequently mentioned in this account. **30.14** Eating of the Passover meal is preceded by reform of inappropriate installations in Jerusalem. Ahaz had built altars to alien deities (28.24). **30.16** Regulation of the cultic roles of priests and Levites is based on the Pentateuch in general. **30.17** The Levites make great efforts to make the Northerners feel welcome. **30.18–20** Hezekiah prays for the people who *set their hearts to seek God*, even if they have violated ritual regulations in the process. Their intentions and Hezekiah's prayer bring healing. The steps in this incident follow the procedures laid out in the Lord's response to Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple (7.14). **30.23** The people decide to celebrate for a second week, just as the celebration at the temple dedication lasts a fortnight (7.9). **30.24** The king and his officials generously provide animals for sacrifice, and the priests are finally ready in sufficient numbers to sacrifice them (cf. 29.34; 30.3). **30.25** Note the all-inclusive makeup of those who celebrate Pass-

the whole assembly that came out of Israel, and the resident aliens who came out of the land of Israel, and the resident aliens who lived in Judah, rejoiced. 26 There was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the time of Solomon son of King David of Israel there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem. 27 Then the priests and the Levites stood up and blessed the people, and their voice was heard; their prayer came to his holy dwelling in heaven.

Pagan Shrines Destroyed

31 Now when all this was finished, all Israel who were present went out to the cities of Judah and broke down the pillars, hewed down the sacred poles,[j] and pulled down the high places and the altars throughout all Judah and Benjamin, and in Ephraim and Manasseh, until they had destroyed them all. Then all the people of Israel returned to their cities, all to their individual properties.

2 Hezekiah appointed the divisions of the priests and of the Levites, division by division, everyone according to his service, the priests and the Levites, for burnt offerings and offerings of well-being, to minister in the gates of the camp of the LORD and to give thanks and praise. 3 The contribution of the king from his own possessions was for the burnt offerings: the burnt offerings of morning and evening, and the burnt offerings for the sabbaths, the new moons, and the appointed festivals, as it is written in the law of the LORD. 4 He commanded the people who lived in Jerusalem to give the portion due to the priests and the Levites, so that they might devote themselves to the law of the LORD. 5 As soon as the word spread, the people of Israel gave in abundance the first fruits of grain, wine, oil, honey, and of all the produce of the field; and they brought in abundantly the tithe of everything. 6 The people of Israel and Judah who lived in the cities of Judah also brought in the tithe of cattle and sheep, and the tithe of the dedicated things that had been consecrated to the LORD their God, and laid them in heaps. 7 In the third month they began to pile up the heaps, and finished them in the seventh month. 8 When Hezekiah and the officials came and saw the heaps, they blessed the LORD and his people Israel. 9 Hezekiah questioned the priests and the Levites about the heaps. 10 The chief priest Azariah, who was of the house of Zadok, answered him, "Since they began to bring the contributions into the house of the LORD, we have had enough to eat and have plenty to spare; for the LORD has blessed his people, so that we have this great supply left over."

Reorganization of Priests and Levites

11 Then Hezekiah commanded them to prepare store-chambers in the house of the LORD; and they prepared them. 12 Faithfully they brought in the contributions, the tithes and the dedicated things.

j Heb *Asherim*

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over. **30.26** Hezekiah is a kind of second Solomon, who unites the people in sacrificial worship. **30.27** Solomon too prayed that his prayer and that of the people would be heard in heaven (6.21).

31.1–10 Cf. 2 Kings 18.4–8. **31.1** The Passover results in wholesale reform, including areas of the Northern Kingdom. *Sacred poles,* named after or dedicated to the goddess Asherah. The destruction of the high places, pillars, and sacred poles is taken from Kings, but Chronicles omits the account of Nehushtan. **31.2** Hezekiah organizes the cultic personnel, as did Solomon (8.14). The priests sacrifice and the Levites are gatekeepers and singers. *Camp of the LORD,* the temple (cf. 1 Chr 9.18). **31.3** Hezekiah provides animals for sacrifices, as had many kings before him. Persian kings do the same for postexilic Judah (Ezra 6.9; 7.21–23). **31.4** The king restores the financial support system for the priests and Levites, which may have been disrupted by Ahaz. The dedication to the study of the law reflects the Chronicler's own time. Since Malachi complains that people are avoiding payments (Mal 3.8–10), the Chronicler may be dealing with a contemporary issue. **31.5** The people's generosity reflects that of the king. **31.7** The people contribute from the third month (Pentecost) through the seventh month (Tabernacles). **31.10** The chief priest affirms the doctrine of retribution: the people's generosity has led to general prosperity. The people had also contributed generously to the tabernacle (Ex 36.2–7) and to the temple (1 Chr 29.6–9). *Azariah,* perhaps the grandson of the priest mentioned in 26.17.

31.11–13 Two leading Levites and ten assistants, appointed by Hezekiah, are in charge of the temple storage chambers, where contributions to

The chief officer in charge of them was
Conaniah the Levite, with his brother
Shimei as second; 13 while Jehiel, Azaziah,
Nahath, Asahel, Jerimoth, Jozabad, Eliel,
Ismachiah, Mahath, and Benaiah were
overseers assisting Conaniah and his
brother Shimei, by the appointment of
King Hezekiah and of Azariah the chief
officer of the house of God. 14 Kore son of
Imnah the Levite, keeper of the east gate,
was in charge of the freewill offerings to
God, to apportion the contribution re-
served for the LORD and the most holy
offerings. 15 Eden, Miniamin, Jeshua, She-
maiah, Amariah, and Shecaniah were
faithfully assisting him in the cities of the
priests, to distribute the portions to their
kindred, old and young alike, by divisions,
16 except those enrolled by genealogy,
males from three years old and upwards,
all who entered the house of the LORD as
the duty of each day required, for their
service according to their offices, by their
divisions. 17 The enrollment of the priests
was according to their ancestral houses;
that of the Levites from twenty years old
and upwards was according to their of-
fices, by their divisions. 18 The priests
were enrolled with all their little children,
their wives, their sons, and their daugh-
ters, the whole multitude; for they were
faithful in keeping themselves holy.
19 And for the descendants of Aaron, the
priests, who were in the fields of common
land belonging to their towns, town by
town, the people designated by name
were to distribute portions to every male
among the priests and to everyone among
the Levites who was enrolled.

20 Hezekiah did this throughout all
Judah; he did what was good and right
and faithful before the LORD his God.
21 And every work that he undertook in
the service of the house of God, and in
accordance with the law and the com-
mandments, to seek his God, he did with
all his heart; and he prospered.

Sennacherib's Invasion

32 After these things and these acts
of faithfulness, King Sennacherib
of Assyria came and invaded Judah and
encamped against the fortified cities,
thinking to win them for himself. 2 When
Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come
and intended to fight against Jerusalem,
3 he planned with his officers and his war-
riors to stop the flow of the springs that
were outside the city; and they helped
him. 4 A great many people were gath-
ered, and they stopped all the springs and
the wadi that flowed through the land,
saying, "Why should the Assyrian kings
come and find water in abundance?"
5 Hezekiah[k] set to work resolutely and
built up the entire wall that was broken
down, and raised towers on it,[l] and out-
side it he built another wall; he also
strengthened the Millo in the city of Da-
vid, and made weapons and shields in
abundance. 6 He appointed combat com-
manders over the people, and gathered
them together to him in the square at the
gate of the city and spoke encouragingly
to them, saying, 7 "Be strong and of good
courage. Do not be afraid or dismayed be-
fore the king of Assyria and all the horde
that is with him; for there is one greater

k Heb *He* *l* Vg: Heb *and raised on the towers*

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the clergy are kept. **31.14** *Kore*, keeper of the east gate (1 Chr 9.11), and six assistants are in charge of distributing the contributions to the Levites' kindred living in outlying areas (1 Chr 6.54–60). **31.16** *Three years old and upwards*, after weaning (cf. v. 18). **31.17** The priests are enrolled by their families, the Levites according to their duties. *Twenty years old*, thirty in 1 Chr 23.3, twenty-five in Num 8.24. **31.19** *Fields of common land*, farmland belonging to the priestly cities. **31.20–21** After this summary paragraph, the Chronicler follows the text of 2 Kings more closely. *Prospered*. Cf. Solomon in 7.11.

32.1–19 Cf. 2 Kings 18.13–37. The material in Kings is often divided into three sources: 18.13–16 (*A*); 18.17–19.9a, 36–37 (B^1); 19.9b–35 (B^2), with B^1 being parallel to B^2. Chronicles omits references to the stripping of the temple, Hezekiah's trust in foreign alliances, and references to Isaiah as recipient of an oracle. In Chronicles Hezekiah is unafraid and directly receives divine messages. **32.1** *Acts of faithfulness*, Hezekiah's reform and Passover. *Sennacherib*, king of Assyria, whose third campaign took him to Judah in 701 B.C.E. **32.3–4** Hezekiah concealed the water supply and dug a famous tunnel, which can be visited in Jerusalem today. **32.5** *Built up . . . another wall*. Rebuilding the wall was a sign of rebellion against Sennacherib; in Chronicles building projects show that a king is divinely favored. *Millo*, terraces. **32.6–8** Hezekiah's speech urges trust in God and reflects standard holy war theology. In 2 Kings 18.19–25, Sennacherib's officer

with us than with him. 8 With him is an
arm of flesh; but with us is the LORD our
God, to help us and to fight our battles."
The people were encouraged by the
words of King Hezekiah of Judah.

9 After this, while King Sennacherib
of Assyria was at Lachish with all his
forces, he sent his servants to Jerusalem to
King Hezekiah of Judah and to all the
people of Judah that were in Jerusalem,
saying, 10 "Thus says King Sennacherib of
Assyria: On what are you relying, that you
undergo the siege of Jerusalem? 11 Is not
Hezekiah misleading you, handing you
over to die by famine and by thirst, when
he tells you, 'The LORD our God will save
us from the hand of the king of Assyria'?
12 Was it not this same Hezekiah who took
away his high places and his altars and
commanded Judah and Jerusalem, saying, 'Before one altar you shall worship,
and upon it you shall make your offerings'? 13 Do you not know what I and my
ancestors have done to all the peoples of
other lands? Were the gods of the nations
of those lands at all able to save their lands
out of my hand? 14 Who among all the
gods of those nations that my ancestors
utterly destroyed was able to save his people from my hand, that your God should
be able to save you from my hand? 15 Now
therefore do not let Hezekiah deceive you
or mislead you in this fashion, and do not
believe him, for no god of any nation or
kingdom has been able to save his people
from my hand or from the hand of my
ancestors. How much less will your God
save you out of my hand!"

16 His servants said still more against
the Lord GOD and against his servant
Hezekiah. 17 He also wrote letters to
throw contempt on the LORD the God of
Israel and to speak against him, saying,
"Just as the gods of the nations in other
lands did not rescue their people from my
hands, so the God of Hezekiah will not
rescue his people from my hand." 18 They
shouted it with a loud voice in the language of Judah to the people of Jerusalem who were on the wall, to frighten and
terrify them, in order that they might take
the city. 19 They spoke of the God of Jerusalem as if he were like the gods of the
peoples of the earth, which are the work
of human hands.

Sennacherib's Defeat and Death

20 Then King Hezekiah and the
prophet Isaiah son of Amoz prayed because of this and cried to heaven. 21 And
the LORD sent an angel who cut off all the
mighty warriors and commanders and officers in the camp of the king of Assyria.
So he returned in disgrace to his own
land. When he came into the house of his
god, some of his own sons struck him
down there with the sword. 22 So the LORD
saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of King Sennacherib of Assyria and from the hand of all
his enemies; he gave them rest[m] on every
side. 23 Many brought gifts to the LORD in
Jerusalem and precious things to King
Hezekiah of Judah, so that he was exalted
in the sight of all nations from that time
onward.

Hezekiah's Sickness

24 In those days Hezekiah became
sick and was at the point of death. He
prayed to the LORD, and he answered him

m Gk Vg: Heb *guided them*

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accuses Hezekiah of trusting in Egypt. **32.9** *Lachish.* See note on 25.27. **32.10–15** The message of Sennacherib is meant to terrify the people and to alienate them from Hezekiah. **32.12** The Assyrian misinterprets the reform of Hezekiah as if his destruction of high places and altars were a destruction of the Lord's own sanctuaries. **32.13–15** Since no god of any other nation has been able to stop Sennacherib, the Assyrian suggests that the Lord also could not provide help. **32.16** Cf. Ps 2.2: [The nations speak] "against the LORD and his anointed." **32.18** *The language of Judah,* Hebrew. The standard language of diplomacy was Aramaic. **32.19** In the Chronicler's view, all other gods are impotent idols.

32.20–23 Cf. 2 Kings 19.15, 35–37. **32.20** In 2 Kings 19.1–4; Isa 37.1–4, Hezekiah requests Isaiah to pray. In Chronicles they pray together. **32.21** The Lord answers Hezekiah's prayer (cf. 7.13–15) by completely destroying Sennacherib's army. Sennacherib was in fact killed by his son some twenty years later. **32.22** *Rest.* Cf. 14.1. **32.23** The acclaim of the nations demonstrates how favored Hezekiah is in God's eyes.

32.24–26 Cf. 2 Kings 20.1–11 (Isa 38.1–22). In this abbreviated account, Hezekiah is healed in answer to prayer (cf. 7.14). His subsequent pride leads to divine wrath. When he and the citizens of Jerusalem humble themselves (cf. 7.14; 12.1–12;

and gave him a sign. 25 But Hezekiah did
not respond according to the benefit done
to him, for his heart was proud. There-
fore wrath came upon him and upon Ju-
dah and Jerusalem. 26 Then Hezekiah
humbled himself for the pride of his
heart, both he and the inhabitants of Je-
rusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD did
not come upon them in the days of
Hezekiah.

Hezekiah's Prosperity and Achievements

27 Hezekiah had very great riches and
honor; and he made for himself treasur-
ies for silver, for gold, for precious stones,
for spices, for shields, and for all kinds of
costly objects; 28 storehouses also for the
yield of grain, wine, and oil; and stalls for
all kinds of cattle, and sheepfolds.[n] 29 He
likewise provided cities for himself, and
flocks and herds in abundance; for God
had given him very great possessions.
30 This same Hezekiah closed the upper
outlet of the waters of Gihon and directed
them down to the west side of the city of
David. Hezekiah prospered in all his
works. 31 So also in the matter of the en-
voys of the officials of Babylon, who had
been sent to him to inquire about the sign
that had been done in the land, God left
him to himself, in order to test him and to
know all that was in his heart.

32 Now the rest of the acts of Heze-
kiah, and his good deeds, are written in
the vision of the prophet Isaiah son of
Amoz in the Book of the Kings of Judah
and Israel. 33 Hezekiah slept with his an-
cestors, and they buried him on the ascent
to the tombs of the descendants of David;
and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jeru-
salem did him honor at his death. His son
Manasseh succeeded him.

Reign of Manasseh

33 Manasseh was twelve years old
when he began to reign; he
reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. 2 He
did what was evil in the sight of the LORD,
according to the abominable practices of
the nations whom the LORD drove out be-
fore the people of Israel. 3 For he rebuilt
the high places that his father Hezekiah
had pulled down, and erected altars to the
Baals, made sacred poles,[o] worshiped all
the host of heaven, and served them. 4 He
built altars in the house of the LORD, of
which the LORD had said, "In Jerusalem
shall my name be forever." 5 He built al-
tars for all the host of heaven in the two
courts of the house of the LORD. 6 He
made his son pass through fire in the val-
ley of the son of Hinnom, practiced sooth-
saying and augury and sorcery, and dealt
with mediums and with wizards. He did
much evil in the sight of the LORD, pro-
voking him to anger. 7 The carved image
of the idol that he had made he set in the
house of God, of which God said to David
and to his son Solomon, "In this house,
and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen
out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put my

n Gk Vg: Heb *flocks for folds* *o* Heb *Asheroth*

30.11), the effects of the divine anger are delayed to a later reign. **32.24** *Sign.* Cf. 2 Kings 20.8–11, where the shadow retreats ten intervals.

32.27–33 Cf. 2 Kings 20.12, 20–21. **32.27–30** These verses are added by the Chronicler. Hezekiah's wealth and building projects demonstrate that divine favor is upon him. **32.31** The incident with the Babylonian envoys is interpreted merely as a divine test. In 2 Kings 20.12–19 Hezekiah proudly shows the envoys all his treasures and receives from Isaiah a stern rebuke. *Sign . . . in the land.* Cf. v. 24. **32.32** The source from which Chronicles draws is given prophetic authority (cf. 1 Chr 29.29; 2 Chr 9.29). **32.33a** The location of Hezekiah's grave, added by the Chronicler, gives him special honor.

33.1–9 Cf. 2 Kings 21.1–9. While Manasseh is as wicked in Chronicles as in Kings, Chronicles reports that toward the end of his life he repents and becomes a religious reformer. **33.1** Beginning with Manasseh and continuing until the end of the monarchy, Chronicles omits the name of the queen mother. *Fifty-five.* In view of his extensive wickedness, Manasseh's long reign seems to contradict the doctrine of retribution. **33.2** In Kings this verse suggests that exile for the nation is inevitable; in Chronicles it leads to the exile of the king himself. **33.3** *Sacred poles,* dedicated to the goddess Asherah. Chronicles omits the comparison with Ahab found in 2 Kings 21.3. In Chronicles Ahaz, not Manasseh, is the most wicked of the Judean kings. *Host of heaven,* probably an old Canaanite cult and not Assyrian astral worship. **33.6** Manasseh practices child sacrifice in a valley south of Jerusalem (*the valley of the son of Hinnom*) that later became Gehenna, a name for hell or everlasting damnation (Mt 5.22, 29–30). On *soothsaying* and similar activities, see Deut 18.9–13.

name forever; 8 I will never again remove
the feet of Israel from the land that I ap-
pointed for your ancestors, if only they
will be careful to do all that I have com-
manded them, all the law, the statutes,
and the ordinances given through Mo-
ses." 9 Manasseh misled Judah and the in-
habitants of Jerusalem, so that they did
more evil than the nations whom the
LORD had destroyed before the people of
Israel.

Manasseh Restored After Repentance

10 The LORD spoke to Manasseh and
to his people, but they gave no heed.
11 Therefore the LORD brought against
them the commanders of the army of the
king of Assyria, who took Manasseh cap-
tive in manacles, bound him with fetters,
and brought him to Babylon. 12 While he
was in distress he entreated the favor of
the LORD his God and humbled himself
greatly before the God of his ancestors.
13 He prayed to him, and God received his
entreaty, heard his plea, and restored him
again to Jerusalem and to his kingdom.
Then Manasseh knew that the LORD in-
deed was God.

14 Afterward he built an outer wall
for the city of David west of Gihon, in the
valley, reaching the entrance at the Fish
Gate; he carried it around Ophel, and
raised it to a very great height. He also
put commanders of the army in all the
fortified cities in Judah. 15 He took away
the foreign gods and the idol from the
house of the LORD, and all the altars that
he had built on the mountain of the house
of the LORD and in Jerusalem, and he
threw them out of the city. 16 He also re-
stored the altar of the LORD and offered
on it sacrifices of well-being and of
thanksgiving; and he commanded Judah
to serve the LORD the God of Israel.
17 The people, however, still sacrificed at
the high places, but only to the LORD
their God.

Death of Manasseh

18 Now the rest of the acts of Manas-
seh, his prayer to his God, and the words
of the seers who spoke to him in the name
of the LORD God of Israel, these are in the
Annals of the Kings of Israel. 19 His
prayer, and how God received his en-
treaty, all his sin and his faithlessness, the
sites on which he built high places and set
up the sacred poles[p] and the images, be-
fore he humbled himself, these are writ-
ten in the records of the seers.[q] 20 So
Manasseh slept with his ancestors, and
they buried him in his house. His son
Amon succeeded him.

Amon's Reign and Death

21 Amon was twenty-two years old
when he began to reign; he reigned two
years in Jerusalem. 22 He did what was evil
in the sight of the LORD, as his father Ma-
nasseh had done. Amon sacrificed to all
the images that his father Manasseh had
made, and served them. 23 He did not
humble himself before the LORD, as his
father Manasseh had humbled himself,

p Heb *Asherim* q One Ms Gk: MT *of Hozai*

33.10–17 Cf. 2 Kings 21.10. Kings and Chronicles diverge after v. 10. In Kings, Manasseh's wickedness is the culmination of Southern apostasy and necessitates the nation's exile despite the goodness of Josiah (2 Kings 21.11–16). In Chronicles, retribution happens in one's own generation. **33.11** The exile of Manasseh to Babylon requites him for his misdeeds but is not reported in Kings. Assyrian documents refer to Manasseh as a loyal vassal. It is not clear why the exile took place in Babylon rather than in Assyria. **33.12–14** In captivity Manasseh repents and prays, and the Lord hears his prayer (cf. 7.14) and restores him to Jerusalem, thus confirming the doctrine of retribution. A prayer attributed to Manasseh is contained in the Apocrypha. **33.14** Building projects and powerful armies are signs of Manasseh's forgiven and favored status. *Ophel*, see note on 27.3. **33.15** According to 2 Kings 23.14 Josiah still has to remove from the temple *altars* erected by Manasseh. **33.17** The Chronicler concedes that the reform is not completely successful.

33.18–20 Cf. 2 Kings 21.17–18. **33.18** *Seers*. Cf. v. 10. **33.19** *Records of the seers*. Again the Chronicler's sources are ascribed prophetic authority. **33.20a** Chronicles omits from 2 Kings 21.18 a reference to "the garden of Uzza" (cf. 2 Kings 21.26, according to which Amon is also buried in this garden). Since Uzza was an Arabian astral god, this notice would not conform to the Chronicler's idea of a repentant Manasseh.

33.21–25 Cf. 2 Kings 21.19–26. **33.23** This verse adjusts the summary of Amon's reign to fit the Chronicler's version of Manasseh's reign.

but this Amon incurred more and more guilt. 24 His servants conspired against him and killed him in his house. 25 But the people of the land killed all those who had conspired against King Amon; and the people of the land made his son Josiah king to succeed him.

Reign of Josiah

34 Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign; he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. 2 He did what was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the ways of his ancestor David; he did not turn aside to the right or to the left. 3 For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was still a boy, he began to seek the God of his ancestor David, and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the sacred poles,[r] and the carved and the cast images. 4 In his presence they pulled down the altars of the Baals; he demolished the incense altars that stood above them. He broke down the sacred poles[r] and the carved and the cast images; he made dust of them and scattered it over the graves of those who had sacrificed to them. 5 He also burned the bones of the priests on their altars, and purged Judah and Jerusalem. 6 In the towns of Manasseh, Ephraim, and Simeon, and as far as Naphtali, in their ruins[s] all around, 7 he broke down the altars, beat the sacred poles[r] and the images into powder, and demolished all the incense altars throughout all the land of Israel. Then he returned to Jerusalem.

Discovery of the Book of the Law

8 In the eighteenth year of his reign, when he had purged the land and the house, he sent Shaphan son of Azaliah, Maaseiah the governor of the city, and Joah son of Joahaz, the recorder, to repair the house of the LORD his God. 9 They came to the high priest Hilkiah and delivered the money that had been brought into the house of God, which the Levites, the keepers of the threshold, had collected from Manasseh and Ephraim and from all the remnant of Israel and from all Judah and Benjamin and from the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 10 They delivered it to the workers who had the oversight of the house of the LORD, and the workers who were working in the house of the LORD gave it for repairing and restoring the house. 11 They gave it to the carpenters and the builders to buy quarried stone, and timber for binders, and beams for the buildings that the kings of Judah had let go to ruin. 12 The people did the work faithfully. Over them were appointed the Levites Jahath and Obadiah, of the sons of Merari, along with Zechariah and Meshullam, of the sons of the Kohathites, to have oversight. Other Levites, all skillful with instruments of music, 13 were over the burden bearers and directed all who did work in every kind of service; and some of the Levites

r Heb *Asherim* s Meaning of Heb uncertain

33.25 *The people of the land*, variously identified as free landowners, citizens, the population of provincial towns, a proletariat of common people, or a national council of elders.

34.1–7 Cf. 2 Kings 22.1–2; 23.4–20. **34.2** Josiah is the best of all Judean kings in following the example of David, although in Chronicles many of his activities merely repeat those of Hezekiah, who is identified as the real innovator. **34.3** According to Chronicles, Josiah begins seeking God at the age of sixteen and begins his reforming activities at twenty. Note the similar early activities of Hezekiah (29.3). Kings places his main reform in his eighteenth year, after the discovery of the law book, when he was twenty-six. A careful reading of Kings, however, shows that reforming activities (e.g., the temple repair) begin earlier. The few parallels with 2 Kings in 2 Chr 34.3–7 deal with Josiah's reforms in his eighteenth year. Chronicles antedates the purification of the temple to the reign of Manasseh (33.15–16). **34.4–5** The text implies that Josiah kills the priests of Baal (cf. 2 Kings 10; 23.17). **34.6** Because Assyria's power is rapidly deteriorating, Josiah's reform, as in Kings, extends into the Northern Kingdom. Josiah's territory in Chronicles nearly equals that of David and Solomon—from *Simeon* to *Naphtali*.

34.8–21 Cf. 2 Kings 22.3–13. **34.8** *Maaseiah* and *Joah* are added by the Chronicler, or they may have been accidentally lost from 2 Kings. **34.9** The Chronicler identifies the *Levites* as the collectors of the temple contribution and includes both Northern and Southern tribes among the contributors. **34.11** *Kings of Judah*, perhaps Ahaz, Manasseh, and Amon. **34.12–13** The Chronicler places Levites, including the Levitical

were scribes, and officials, and gatekeepers.

14 While they were bringing out the money that had been brought into the house of the LORD, the priest Hilkiah found the book of the law of the LORD given through Moses. 15 Hilkiah said to the secretary Shaphan, "I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD"; and Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan. 16 Shaphan brought the book to the king, and further reported to the king, "All that was committed to your servants they are doing. 17 They have emptied out the money that was found in the house of the LORD and have delivered it into the hand of the overseers and the workers." 18 The secretary Shaphan informed the king, "The priest Hilkiah has given me a book." Shaphan then read it aloud to the king.

19 When the king heard the words of the law he tore his clothes. 20 Then the king commanded Hilkiah, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Abdon son of Micah, the secretary Shaphan, and the king's servant Asaiah: 21 "Go, inquire of the LORD for me and for those who are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that has been found; for the wrath of the LORD that is poured out on us is great, because our ancestors did not keep the word of the LORD, to act in accordance with all that is written in this book."

The Prophet Huldah Consulted

22 So Hilkiah and those whom the king had sent went to the prophet Huldah, the wife of Shallum son of Tokhath son of Hasrah, keeper of the wardrobe (who lived in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter) and spoke to her to that effect. 23 She declared to them, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Tell the man who sent you to me, 24 Thus says the LORD: I will indeed bring disaster upon this place and upon its inhabitants, all the curses that are written in the book that was read before the king of Judah. 25 Because they have forsaken me and have made offerings to other gods, so that they have provoked me to anger with all the works of their hands, my wrath will be poured out on this place and will not be quenched. 26 But as to the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, thus shall you say to him: Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Regarding the words that you have heard, 27 because your heart was penitent and you humbled yourself before God when you heard his words against this place and its inhabitants, and you have humbled yourself before me, and have torn your clothes and wept before me, I also have heard you, says the LORD. 28 I will gather you to your ancestors and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace; your eyes shall not see all the disaster that I will bring on this place and its inhabitants." They took the message back to the king.

The Covenant Renewed

29 Then the king sent word and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. 30 The king went up to the house of the LORD, with all the people of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the priests and the Levites, all the people both great and small; he read in their hearing all the words of the book of the covenant that had been found in the house of the LORD. 31 The king stood in his place and

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singers, as supervisors and in other offices during the reform. **34.14** Hilkiah's discovery of the law book is a reward for Josiah's generosity and faithfulness to the temple. Modern scholars identify the law book as some form of Deuteronomy; the Chronicler may take it to be the whole Pentateuch. **34.15** 2 Kings 22.8 notes that Shaphan reads the book. The Chronicler may think it unlikely that the Pentateuch was read twice by Shaphan in one day (cf. 2 Chr 34.18). **34.21** *Those who are left in Israel.* The Chronicler's interest in all Israel leads him to add a reference to the remnant of the Northern Kingdom.

34.22–28 Cf. 2 Kings 22.14–20. **34.22** *Huldah,* a Jerusalemite prophetess. *Second Quarter,* a part of the city added by Hezekiah. **34.24** *Curses.* Cf. Deut 27.9–26; 28.15–68. **34.27** Josiah's repentance leads to his deliverance. **34.28** *In peace* implies a natural death even though Josiah died of wounds suffered in battle (35.23–24). Huldah predicts that Josiah will not himself experience the destruction of Jerusalem.

34.29–33 Cf. 2 Kings 23.1–3. **34.30** *Levites.* 2 Kings 23.2 reads "prophets." **34.31** In 2 Kings the *covenant* is followed by the destruction of inappropriate worship sites. In Chronicles these have been destroyed before the finding of the law book. The covenant leads in Chronicles to the celebration of Passover after a summary of

made a covenant before the LORD, to follow the LORD, keeping his commandments, his decrees, and his statutes, with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant that were written in this book. 32 Then he made all who were present in Jerusalem and in Benjamin pledge themselves to it. And the inhabitants of Jerusalem acted according to the covenant of God, the God of their ancestors. 33 Josiah took away all the abominations from all the territory that belonged to the people of Israel, and made all who were in Israel worship the LORD their God. All his days they did not turn away from following the LORD the God of their ancestors.

Celebration of the Passover

35 Josiah kept a passover to the LORD in Jerusalem; they slaughtered the passover lamb on the fourteenth day of the first month. 2 He appointed the priests to their offices and encouraged them in the service of the house of the LORD. 3 He said to the Levites who taught all Israel and who were holy to the LORD, "Put the holy ark in the house that Solomon son of David, king of Israel, built; you need no longer carry it on your shoulders. Now serve the LORD your God and his people Israel. 4 Make preparations by your ancestral houses by your divisions, following the written directions of King David of Israel and the written directions of his son Solomon. 5 Take position in the holy place according to the groupings of the ancestral houses of your kindred the people, and let there be Levites for each division of an ancestral house.[t] 6 Slaughter the passover lamb, sanctify yourselves, and on behalf of your kindred make preparations, acting according to the word of the LORD by Moses."

7 Then Josiah contributed to the people, as passover offerings for all that were present, lambs and kids from the flock to the number of thirty thousand, and three thousand bulls; these were from the king's possessions. 8 His officials contributed willingly to the people, to the priests, and to the Levites. Hilkiah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, the chief officers of the house of God, gave to the priests for the passover offerings two thousand six hundred lambs and kids and three hundred bulls. 9 Conaniah also, and his brothers Shemaiah and Nethanel, and Hashabiah and Jeiel and Jozabad, the chiefs of the Levites, gave to the Levites for the passover offerings five thousand lambs and kids and five hundred bulls.

10 When the service had been prepared for, the priests stood in their place, and the Levites in their divisions according to the king's command. 11 They slaughtered the passover lamb, and the priests dashed the blood that they received[u] from them, while the Levites did the skinning. 12 They set aside the burnt offerings so that they might distribute them according to the groupings of the ancestral houses of the people, to offer to the LORD, as it is written in the book of Moses. And they did the same with the bulls. 13 They roasted the passover lamb with fire according to the ordinance; and

t Meaning of Heb uncertain u Heb lacks *that they received*

Hezekiah's reforms throughout the land of Israel (v. 33).

35.1–19 Cf. 2 Kings 23.21–23. Chronicles greatly expands the report of Josiah's Passover and gives prominence to the Levites. **35.1** *In Jerusalem*, following the precedent of Hezekiah. *Fourteenth day of the first month.* Josiah's Passover is held at the normal time (Ex 12.6; Lev 23.5; Num 9.3; cf. 2 Chr 30.2–3). **35.3** *Taught all Israel.* Cf. 17.7–9. According to the Chronicler, the ark had actually been deposited in the temple at the time of Solomon (2 Chr 5) and the Levites had been given alternate duties since the time of David (1 Chr 16.4). **35.4** The Chronicler links David and Solomon as kings who established the duties of the Levites. See 1 Chr 23–27. Other parallels between David and Solomon are given in 2 Chr 7.10; 11.17. **35.7–9** The generosity of the king and his officials could serve as an example to the Chronicler's audience. The *bulls* are not part of the Passover ritual but may be associated with the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The number of animals contributed is 41,400 (cf. 2 Chr 30.24, where 19,000 animals were given at Hezekiah's Passover). The population of Judah is about 300,000, not counting participants from the North. **35.11** Because of the large numbers at the centralized Passover, the Levites kill and skin the lambs, while the priests manipulate the blood. **35.13** *They roasted . . . fire*, lit. "They boiled the passover lamb with fire." According to Ex 12.8–9 the Passover lamb is to be roasted; according to

they boiled the holy offerings in pots, in
caldrons, and in pans, and carried them
quickly to all the people. 14 Afterward
they made preparations for themselves
and for the priests, because the priests the
descendants of Aaron were occupied in
offering the burnt offerings and the fat
parts until night; so the Levites made
preparations for themselves and for the
priests, the descendants of Aaron. 15 The
singers, the descendants of Asaph, were
in their place according to the command
of David, and Asaph, and Heman, and
the king's seer Jeduthun. The gatekeep-
ers were at each gate; they did not need to
interrupt their service, for their kindred
the Levites made preparations for them.

16 So all the service of the LORD was
prepared that day, to keep the passover
and to offer burnt offerings on the altar
of the LORD, according to the command
of King Josiah. 17 The people of Israel
who were present kept the passover at
that time, and the festival of unleavened
bread seven days. 18 No passover like it
had been kept in Israel since the days of
the prophet Samuel; none of the kings of
Israel had kept such a passover as was
kept by Josiah, by the priests and the Le-
vites, by all Judah and Israel who were
present, and by the inhabitants of Jerusa-
lem. 19 In the eighteenth year of the reign
of Josiah this passover was kept.

Defeat by Pharaoh Neco and Death of Josiah

20 After all this, when Josiah had set
the temple in order, King Neco of Egypt
went up to fight at Carchemish on the Eu-
phrates, and Josiah went out against him.
21 But Neco[v] sent envoys to him, saying,
"What have I to do with you, king of Ju-
dah? I am not coming against you today,
but against the house with which I am at
war; and God has commanded me to
hurry. Cease opposing God, who is with
me, so that he will not destroy you." 22 But
Josiah would not turn away from him, but
disguised himself in order to fight with
him. He did not listen to the words of
Neco from the mouth of God, but joined
battle in the plain of Megiddo. 23 The
archers shot King Josiah; and the king
said to his servants, "Take me away, for I
am badly wounded." 24 So his servants
took him out of the chariot and carried
him in his second chariot[w] and brought
him to Jerusalem. There he died, and was
buried in the tombs of his ancestors. All
Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah.
25 Jeremiah also uttered a lament for Jo-
siah, and all the singing men and singing
women have spoken of Josiah in their la-
ments to this day. They made these a cus-
tom in Israel; they are recorded in the
Laments. 26 Now the rest of the acts of Jo-

v Heb *he* w Or *the chariot of his deputy*

Deut 16.7 it is to be boiled. **35.17** *The people of Israel who were present.* Josiah's Passover includes people from the North and the South. **35.18** A Passover like this has not been held since *Samuel.* 2 Kings 23.22 compares Josiah's celebration to the Passover held by the judges, the issue being centralization of worship by Josiah. Since centralization has already occurred with Hezekiah according to Chronicles, the innovation with Josiah may be the prominent role of the Levites (cf. vv. 3–6). This verse also stresses the significance of an all-Israel celebration.

35.20–27 Cf. 2 Kings 23.28–30a. Josiah's death comes thirteen years after the Passover celebration. Neco was on his way to prop up Assyria as a buffer against Babylon (2 Kings 23.29 indicates that Neco was fighting against Assyria though this point is not clear in NRSV). Josiah opposes him because he is anti-Assyrian, or because of a league with Babylon, or because he wants independence. **35.20** *Neco,* king of Egypt 610–595 B.C.E. *Carchemish,* a city sixty miles northeast of Aleppo. **35.21** Since Neco claims he has been sent by God, anyone opposing him would be opposing God. He desires safe passage through Judah. **35.22** Josiah persists in his battle plans and disobeys the word of God as revealed through Neco. Hence the death of this otherwise exemplary king corresponds with the doctrine of retribution. According to 1 Esd 1.26, Jeremiah had authenticated the message from Neco. *Disguised himself,* a detail not mentioned in 2 Kings (cf. Ahab in 1 Kings 22.30). *Megiddo,* a town located on an important pass in the Carmel range. **35.23** The Chronicler observes that the archers wounded the king, who begs his attendants to take him from the battle. **35.24** Transported in a second chariot, Josiah dies in Jerusalem. In 2 Kings 23.29–30 Josiah dies at Megiddo. **35.25** Jeremiah expresses public sorrow, and he is joined by other singers. *The Laments,* a work otherwise unknown; not the biblical book of Lamentations. **35.26** The Chronicler notes that the deeds of Josiah were in accord with what is written in *the law of the LORD,* that is, the Pentateuch. Chronicles places the summary of Josiah's reign after the account of his death, not before it as in Kings.

siah and his faithful deeds in accordance
with what is written in the law of the
LORD, 27 and his acts, first and last, are
written in the Book of the Kings of Israel
and Judah.

Reign of Jehoahaz

36 The people of the land took Je-
hoahaz son of Josiah and made
him king to succeed his father in Jerusa-
lem. 2 Jehoahaz was twenty-three years
old when he began to reign; he reigned
three months in Jerusalem. 3 Then the
king of Egypt deposed him in Jerusalem
and laid on the land a tribute of one hun-
dred talents of silver and one talent of
gold. 4 The king of Egypt made his
brother Eliakim king over Judah and Je-
rusalem, and changed his name to Jehoia-
kim; but Neco took his brother Jehoahaz
and carried him to Egypt.

Reign and Captivity of Jehoiakim

5 Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old
when he began to reign; he reigned
eleven years in Jerusalem. He did what
was evil in the sight of the LORD his God.
6 Against him King Nebuchadnezzar of
Babylon came up, and bound him with
fetters to take him to Babylon. 7 Nebu-
chadnezzar also carried some of the ves-
sels of the house of the LORD to Babylon
and put them in his palace in Babylon.
8 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim,
and the abominations that he did, and
what was found against him, are writ-
ten in the Book of the Kings of Israel
and Judah; and his son Jehoiachin suc-
ceeded him.

Reign and Captivity of Jehoiachin

9 Jehoiachin was eight years old when
he began to reign; he reigned three
months and ten days in Jerusalem. He did
what was evil in the sight of the LORD.
10 In the spring of the year King Nebu-
chadnezzar sent and brought him to Bab-
ylon, along with the precious vessels of
the house of the LORD, and made his
brother Zedekiah king over Judah and Je-
rusalem.

Reign of Zedekiah

11 Zedekiah was twenty-one years old
when he began to reign; he reigned
eleven years in Jerusalem. 12 He did what
was evil in the sight of the LORD his God.
He did not humble himself before the
prophet Jeremiah who spoke from the
mouth of the LORD. 13 He also rebelled
against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had
made him swear by God; he stiffened his
neck and hardened his heart against turn-
ing to the LORD, the God of Israel. 14 All
the leading priests and the people also
were exceedingly unfaithful, following all
the abominations of the nations; and they
polluted the house of the LORD that he
had consecrated in Jerusalem.

The Fall of Jerusalem

15 The LORD, the God of their ances-
tors, sent persistently to them by his mes-
sengers, because he had compassion on

36.1–4 Cf. 2 Kings 23.30b–34. **36.1** *The people of the land.* Cf. 33.25. **36.3** The tribute is 7500 pounds of silver and 75 pounds of gold. **36.4** Josiah is succeeded by three sons (Jehoahaz, Eliakim, and Zedekiah) and one grandson (Jehoiachin). Eliakim/Jehoiakim is actually older than Jehoahaz, but we do not know why he is not the first to succeed his father (cf. 1 Chr 3.15). Each of the last four kings winds up in exile and each pays tribute.

36.5–8 Cf. 2 Kings 23.36–24.7. **36.6** *Nebuchadnezzar* ruled Babylon from 605 to 562 B.C.E. Jehoiakim's death is reported in 2 Kings 24.6; 2 Chronicles reports his (temporary or possibly his threatened) exile. **36.7** On the temple *vessels*, see 1 Chr 28.14–17; 2 Chr 4.19–22; 36.18; Ezra 1.7–11).

36.9–10 Cf. 2 Kings 24.8–17; 25.27–30. **36.9** A child king for three months, Jehoiachin spends thirty-seven years in a Babylonian prison (2 Kings 25.27–30). According to 2 Kings 24.8, he is eighteen when he becomes king. **36.10** *Brother*, perhaps a relative. 2 Kings 24.17 reads "uncle." Cf. also 1 Chr 3.15–16.

36.11–14 Cf. 2 Kings 24.18–25.7. **36.12** Chronicles condemns Zedekiah by citing his disobedience toward the prophet Jeremiah (cf. Jer 37.2). **36.13** Zedekiah breaks an oath by rebelling against Nebuchadnezzar. **36.14** The author charges the leading priests and the people with being *unfaithful*, a favorite word for sin in Chronicles.

36.15–16 Exile results from persistent despising of the prophets (cf. Jer 26.5; 29.19). *No remedy.* Cf. 2 Chr 7.14, where God promises

his people and on his dwelling place;
16 but they kept mocking the messengers
of God, despising his words, and scoffing
at his prophets, until the wrath of the
LORD against his people became so great
that there was no remedy.
17 Therefore he brought up against
them the king of the Chaldeans, who
killed their youths with the sword in the
house of their sanctuary, and had no com-
passion on young man or young woman,
the aged or the feeble; he gave them all
into his hand. 18 All the vessels of the
house of God, large and small, and the
treasures of the house of the LORD, and
the treasures of the king and of his offi-
cials, all these he brought to Babylon.
19 They burned the house of God, broke
down the wall of Jerusalem, burned all its
palaces with fire, and destroyed all its pre-
cious vessels. 20 He took into exile in Bab-
ylon those who had escaped from the
sword, and they became servants to him
and to his sons until the establishment of
the kingdom of Persia, 21 to fulfill the
word of the LORD by the mouth of Jere-
miah, until the land had made up for its
sabbaths. All the days that it lay desolate it
kept sabbath, to fulfill seventy years.

Cyrus Proclaims Liberty for the Exiles

22 In the first year of King Cyrus of
Persia, in fulfillment of the word of the
LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD
stirred up the spirit of King Cyrus of Per-
sia so that he sent a herald throughout all
his kingdom and also declared in a writ-
ten edict: 23 "Thus says King Cyrus of Per-
sia: The LORD, the God of heaven, has
given me all the kingdoms of the earth,
and he has charged me to build him a
house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.
Whoever is among you of all his people,
may the LORD his God be with him! Let
him go up."

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to heal the people. **36.17** *Chaldeans*, the peoples who ruled Mesopotamia during the Neo-Babylonian period. **36.21** *Jeremiah*. Cf. Jer 25.11–12; 29.10. The Chronicler views Palestine as empty during the exilic period, but free to enjoy the sabbaths it had missed (perhaps since the beginning of the monarchy) and to get ready for the exiles who would return (Lev 26.34–35). *Seventy years*. The actual length of the exile was about fifty years.

36.22–23 Cf. Ezra 1.1–3a. The last verses of Chronicles are virtually identical with the first verses of Ezra. This passage views Cyrus as the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy and implicitly accepts Persian rule in the postexilic period. The Persian king authorizes the rebuilding of the temple (cf. Ezra 6.3–5) and gives his blessings to all exiles who desire to return to Palestine. **36.22** *Cyrus* ruled Babylonia from about 539 to 530 B.C.E.

EZRA

THE BOOKS OF EZRA AND NEHEMIAH are our most important source of evidence for the history of the early postexilic period, from 539 to ca. 430 B.C.E. They bear the names of the two best-known leaders of the Jewish community of those years, Ezra the priest and Nehemiah the governor, both of whom were active in the middle of the fifth century B.C.E., though their activity in Jerusalem perhaps never overlapped.

Connections with Other Books

The narrative of Ezra-Nehemiah continues directly from the end of 2 Chronicles, and the style and interests of the author are so like those of the Chronicler that most scholars have thought that the whole sequence of 1 Chronicles through Nehemiah was once a single work by one author. Even if the differences between 1 and 2 Chronicles, on the one hand, and Ezra-Nehemiah, on the other, point to different authorship, it seems that Ezra-Nehemiah was composed as a sequel to 1 and 2 Chronicles and that the authors of both works were Jerusalem clergy of the fourth century B.C.E.

1 Esdras, in the Protestant Apocrypha but not among the Catholic deuterocanonical books, is another work bearing the name of Ezra. Its narrative parallels the story from 2 Chr 35 to Neh 8, with only its last two chapters being concerned with Ezra. (See the table, "The Relation of 1 Esdras to Other Biblical Books," in the Introduction to 1 Esdras.) 2 Esdras is found in the Apocrypha of Anglo-Saxon churches but is usually assigned to the Pseudepigrapha by the Lutheran tradition, and in Catholic Bibles it is either included among the NT Apocrypha or omitted altogether. It has nothing to do with the historical Ezra; it is a set of apocalypses attributed to him.

Structure

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah are a narrative of the restoration of the Jewish people to its homeland. What drives that story are the decrees of two Persian kings, Cyrus and Artaxerxes, and what counts as restoration is the fulfillment of their demands. In Ezra 1 Cyrus commands the Jews to return to their land and

resume temple worship; in accord with that, Ezra 1–6 narrates the return and the rebuilding of the temple. In Ezra 7 Artaxerxes commands obedience to the law of Moses on the part of all the Jews; and in Neh 2 he authorizes the reestablishment of Jerusalem, which will be the focus of national identity. In accord with these initiatives, Ezra 7 through Neh 13 narrates the imposition of the Mosaic law and its effects; Ezra insists on obedience to its demands for separation from non-Jews and Nehemiah likewise creates a distinctive Jewish identity when he encloses Jerusalem with a wall and purges the community from all things foreign.

Sources

The author has drawn on various sources for the narrative, at times editing them quite heavily and at other times simply copying them. Extensive sources were an Ezra "memoir," which provided the material for Ezra 7–10 and Neh 8–9, and a Nehemiah memoir, lightly edited to form Neh 1–7; 11.1–2; 12.31–43; 13.4–31 (though it is disputed whether Neh 3, for example, was ever part of such a memoir). Use of first-person language in some of the Ezra material and all of the Nehemiah narrative does not, of course, prove that the documents are authentic, but it is very probable that in the Nehemiah memoir at least we are reading the record of a leading statesman about events in which he was personally involved.

The author has also perhaps drawn on an "Aramaic chronicle," a collection of Persian documents in Aramaic purporting to be official correspondence about Jerusalem. That would explain why Ezra 4.7–6.18 is entirely in Aramaic while the rest of Ezra-Nehemiah is mostly in Hebrew. The typical bureaucratic language of these documents suggests they are authentic, though there are evidences of editing by a Jewish author. Other Persian documents are quoted in Ezra 1.2–4 (the edict of Cyrus) and 7.12–28 (Artaxerxes' authorization to Ezra, in Aramaic).

Other sources include various Jewish lists, e.g., of inhabitants of Judea (Ezra 2.3–58; Neh 7.8–60; 11.3–9), and of priests and Levites (Neh 11.10–23; 12.1–26), and the document recording the people's pledge to keep the details of the law and the names of those who signed it (Neh 10).

Historical Background

These books have their historical setting in two distinct periods, in the sixth and in the fifth centuries B.C.E.

539–515 B.C.E.

The Persian emperor Cyrus, having gained the Babylonian Empire in 539, gave permission to the Jewish exiles in Babylonia to return to the land of Israel and to rebuild the temple. Sacrifice is said to have been resumed immediately upon their return, but repairs on the temple did not apparently progress. Only in 520,

when Zerubbabel was governor of the province of Judea, did the temple building start in earnest, and it was finished in 515 (Ezra 6.15).

458–430 B.C.E.

It is debated whether Ezra's work is to be dated to 458 or 398, but on the assumption of the earlier date, the second period begins with the commissioning of the Jewish priest Ezra by Artaxerxes I to establish pentateuchal law as state law in the province of Judea and to regulate the temple worship (Ezra 7). Ezra read the law to the people at the Festival of Booths in September, 458 (Neh 8), and his commission of enquiry into marriages of Jews with non-Jews sat from December of that year until the spring of 457 (Ezra 9–10).

A decade later, in 445, Nehemiah, a Jewish official in the service of Artaxerxes, was appointed governor of Judea (Neh 2; 5.14) with responsibility to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem and thus presumably to enhance the status of the city. Nehemiah, having completed that task (Neh 6.15), remained governor for twelve years and enlarged the city's population by resettling villagers in the capital. At some time after 433, he returned for a second term of duty and carried out reforms of the religious life of the community (Neh 13.4–31).

David J. A. Clines

End of the Babylonian Captivity

1 In the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, in order that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the LORD stirred up the spirit of King Cyrus of Persia so that he sent a herald throughout all his kingdom, and also in a written edict declared:

2 "Thus says King Cyrus of Persia: The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem in Judah. 3 Any of those among you who are of his people—may their God be with them!—are now permitted to go up to Jerusalem in Judah, and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel—he is the God who is in Jerusalem; 4 and let all survivors, in whatever place they

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1.1–11 The Persian king Cyrus authorizes the Jews in exile in Babylonia to return to the land to rebuild the temple; the returning exiles carry with them treasures earlier plundered from the temple. **1.1–2** Mostly the same wording as 2 Chr 36.22, perhaps copied into 2 Chronicles as a link to Ezra. **1.1** *The first year of King Cyrus of Persia.* The first year of the reign of Cyrus II (the Great) over the Babylonian Empire, 539–37 B.C.E. Cyrus had been king over Anshan (Elam) since 559 B.C.E.; he then conquered Persia, Media, Lydia, Assyria, and finally Babylonia. *The word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah.* Jer 25.11 predicts subjection to Babylon for seventy years, and Jer 29.10 tells Jewish exiles in Babylon that after seventy years God will bring them back to Jerusalem. The first deportation was in 597 B.C.E. (2 Kings 24.12–16), only sixty years previously; perhaps seventy is understood as a round number. Or perhaps the reference in Dan 1.1 to a deportation in 606 B.C.E. is a genuine historical reminiscence. *Herald . . . written edict.* After the public announcement of the royal edict, the herald would post a copy of it on an official notice board. **1.2–4** Another edict of Cyrus concerning the rebuilding of the temple is in 6.3–5. **1.2** A temple is often called the *house* of the deity who dwells in it. *Judah,* the Persian province known as Judea, *Yehud* in Hebrew. **1.3** *Permitted* may mean "commanded," since this is the edict of an autocrat. *Rebuild* implies knowledge of the destruction of the Jerusalem temple (587/6 B.C.E.) **1.4** *Survivors* from the destruction of Jerusalem, i.e., those exiled to Babylon. *The people of their place* are

reside, be assisted by the people of their
place with silver and gold, with goods and
with animals, besides freewill offerings
for the house of God in Jerusalem."
5 The heads of the families of Judah
and Benjamin, and the priests and the
Levites—everyone whose spirit God had
stirred—got ready to go up and rebuild
the house of the LORD in Jerusalem. 6 All
their neighbors aided them with silver
vessels, with gold, with goods, with ani-
mals, and with valuable gifts, besides all
that was freely offered. 7 King Cyrus him-
self brought out the vessels of the house
of the LORD that Nebuchadnezzar had
carried away from Jerusalem and placed
in the house of his gods. 8 King Cyrus of
Persia had them released into the charge
of Mithredath the treasurer, who counted
them out to Sheshbazzar the prince of
Judah. 9 And this was the inventory:
gold basins, thirty; silver basins, one thou-
sand; knives,[a] twenty-nine; 10 gold bowls,
thirty; other silver bowls, four hundred
ten; other vessels, one thousand; 11 the to-
tal of the gold and silver vessels was five
thousand four hundred. All these Shesh-
bazzar brought up, when the exiles were
brought up from Babylonia to Jerusalem.

List of the Returned Exiles

2 Now these were the people of the
province who came from those cap-
tive exiles whom King Nebuchadnezzar of
Babylon had carried captive to Babylonia;
they returned to Jerusalem and Judah, all
to their own towns. 2 They came with Ze-
rubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Re-
elaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai,
Rehum, and Baanah.
The number of the Israelite people:
3 the descendants of Parosh, two thousand
one hundred seventy-two. 4 Of Shepha-
tiah, three hundred seventy-two. 5 Of
Arah, seven hundred seventy-five. 6 Of
Pahath-moab, namely the descendants of
Jeshua and Joab, two thousand eight hun-
dred twelve. 7 Of Elam, one thousand
two hundred fifty-four. 8 Of Zattu, nine
hundred forty-five. 9 Of Zaccai, seven
hundred sixty. 10 Of Bani, six hun-
dred forty-two. 11 Of Bebai, six hundred
twenty-three. 12 Of Azgad, one thousand
two hundred twenty-two. 13 Of Adoni-
kam, six hundred sixty-six. 14 Of Bigvai,
two thousand fifty-six. 15 Of Adin, four
hundred fifty-four. 16 Of Ater, namely of
Hezekiah, ninety-eight. 17 Of Bezai, three
hundred twenty-three. 18 Of Jorah, one
hundred twelve. 19 Of Hashum, two hun-
dred twenty-three. 20 Of Gibbar, ninety-
five. 21 Of Bethlehem, one hundred
twenty-three. 22 The people of Netophah,
fifty-six. 23 Of Anathoth, one hundred
twenty-eight. 24 The descendants of Az-
maveth, forty-two. 25 Of Kiriatharim,
Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred
forty-three. 26 Of Ramah and Geba, six
hundred twenty-one. 27 The people of
Michmas, one hundred twenty-two. 28 Of

a Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain

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apparently gentile neighbors. **1.5** *Families*, lit. "father's houses," the extended family consisting of all descendants of a living patriarch (except women married into other families) and the family's slaves or servants. *Judah and Benjamin*, the tribes (cf. Judah the state in 1.2). *Priests* traced their ancestry to Aaron, son of Levi; *Levites* were other members of the tribe of Levi who undertook more menial duties in temple worship (cf. Num 3.5–9). **1.7** *Nebuchadnezzar had carried away*, a reference either to pillaging during the capture of Jerusalem in 597 B.C.E. (cf. 2 Kings 24.13) or to the final plundering of the temple in 587 B.C.E. (25.13–15; see also 2 Chr 36.10, 18; Jer 52.17–19). *The house of his gods*, or rather "the house of his god," the temple, called Esagila, of Nebuchadnezzar's preferred deity, Marduk of Babylon. **1.8** *Sheshbazzar*, perhaps Shenazzar, a son of Jehoiachin, the exiled king of Judah (1 Chr 3.18). Cf. note on 5.14. **1.9–11** The number of items in the inventory comes to 2499, which differs from the total given as 5400. The RSV translation emended the 30 gold basins to 1000 (as in the parallel 1 Esd 2.13), the 410 silver bowls to 2410 (as in 1 Esd 2.13), and the total to 5469 (as in 1 Esd 2.14).

2.2a Apparently a list of leaders from various periods after the return. *Zerubbabel* and *Jeshua* are the governor and the priest of 3.2; perhaps *Nehemiah* is the governor Nehemiah (Neh 1.1), *Seraiah* the father of the priest Ezra (Ezra 7.1), and *Bigvai* the governor of Judea (Hebrew *Yehud*) after Nehemiah known from the Elephantine papyri.

2.2b–58 A census of inhabitants of Judea (the province *Yehud* in Hebrew), at some unknown time after the return from exile. The list is paralleled in Neh 7 and 1 Esd 5, with many variations, especially in the numerals. **2.2b** *The Israelite people*, i.e., laypersons, as distinct from priests, Levites, and other religious professionals (2.36–58). **2.3–35** These are not the names of individuals but of clans or phratries (2.3–20) and

Bethel and Ai, two hundred twenty-three.
29 The descendants of Nebo, fifty-two.
30 Of Magbish, one hundred fifty-six.
31 Of the other Elam, one thousand two
hundred fifty-four. 32 Of Harim, three
hundred twenty. 33 Of Lod, Hadid, and
Ono, seven hundred twenty-five. 34 Of
Jericho, three hundred forty-five. 35 Of
Senaah, three thousand six hundred
thirty.

36 The priests: the descendants of Je-
daiah, of the house of Jeshua, nine hun-
dred seventy-three. 37 Of Immer, one
thousand fifty-two. 38 Of Pashhur, one
thousand two hundred forty-seven. 39 Of
Harim, one thousand seventeen.

40 The Levites: the descendants of
Jeshua and Kadmiel, of the descendants
of Hodaviah, seventy-four. 41 The singers:
the descendants of Asaph, one hundred
twenty-eight. 42 The descendants of the
gatekeepers: of Shallum, of Ater, of Tal-
mon, of Akkub, of Hatita, and of Shobai,
in all one hundred thirty-nine.

43 The temple servants: the descen-
dants of Ziha, Hasupha, Tabbaoth, 44 Ke-
ros, Siaha, Padon, 45 Lebanah, Hagabah,
Akkub, 46 Hagab, Shamlai, Hanan, 47 Gid-
del, Gahar, Reaiah, 48 Rezin, Nekoda,
Gazzam, 49 Uzza, Paseah, Besai, 50 Asnah,
Meunim, Nephisim, 51 Bakbuk, Hakupha,
Harhur, 52 Bazluth, Mehida, Harsha,
53 Barkos, Sisera, Temah, 54 Neziah, and
Hatipha.

55 The descendants of Solomon's ser-
vants: Sotai, Hassophereth, Peruda, 56 Ja-
alah, Darkon, Giddel, 57 Shephatiah,
Hattil, Pochereth-hazzebaim, and Ami.

58 All the temple servants and the de-
scendants of Solomon's servants were
three hundred ninety-two.

59 The following were those who
came up from Tel-melah, Tel-harsha,
Cherub, Addan, and Immer, though they
could not prove their families or their de-
scent, whether they belonged to Israel:
60 the descendants of Delaiah, Tobiah,
and Nekoda, six hundred fifty-two.
61 Also, of the descendants of the priests:
the descendants of Habaiah, Hakkoz, and
Barzillai (who had married one of the
daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and
was called by their name). 62 These looked
for their entries in the genealogical
records, but they were not found there,
and so they were excluded from the
priesthood as unclean; 63 the governor
told them that they were not to partake of
the most holy food, until there should be
a priest to consult Urim and Thummim.

64 The whole assembly together was
forty-two thousand three hundred sixty,
65 besides their male and female servants,
of whom there were seven thousand three
hundred thirty-seven; and they had two
hundred male and female singers.
66 They had seven hundred thirty-six
horses, two hundred forty-five mules,

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of towns (2.21–35). **2.36–39** Other lists of postexilic *priests* are in Neh 10.2–8; 12.1–7. **2.40–42** *Levites* are also listed in Neh 10.9–13; 12.8–9. The temple *singers* (cf. 1 Chr 9.33–44) and *gatekeepers* (cf. 1 Chr 9.17–27) seem also to be regarded as Levites (as in Neh 12.9, 24–25). **2.43–54** *Temple servants*, a hereditary caste of temple servitors (Hebrew *netinim*), mostly with non-Israelite names. **2.55–57** *Solomon's servants*, ostensibly the descendants of Solomon's Canaanite slaves (1 Kings 9.20–21; 2 Chr 8.7–8), now temple officials.

2.59–69 Unlike 2.2b–58, a census of inhabitants of the province, this appears to be a report of the return of the exiles from five towns in Babylonia. **2.61** *Barzillai*, a contemporary of David (2 Sam 17.27–29; 19.31–39). For a male to take the name of his wife's family is unparalleled in the OT. **2.62–63** *Unclean*, in the ritual sense, and so unable to officiate as priests or be fed from the temple revenues (*not to partake of the most holy food*). **2.63** We cannot tell which *governor* (Hebrew *tirshata*, a Persian title signifying "His Excellency") of the Persian province of Judea is intended here. *Urim and Thummim*, sacred lots enabling the answers to difficult questions to be divined. They were apparently two small objects kept in a pouch of the high priest's ephod (Ex 28.30; Lev 8.8); they could yield the responses "yes," "no," or "no answer" (cf. 1 Sam 14.36–37; 23.9–12; 30.7–8). **2.64** The figure of 42,360 members of the *assembly* differs from the total of the individual sums (29,818) in 2.2b–58. Such figures often suffer from errors in transmission. But perhaps the 42,360 are returnees, including women, and the 29,818 are inhabitants of the province at a later date including those who had not been exiled, but excluding women. **2.65** Both *male and female servants* and *male and female singers* are counted, so probably women members of the community are also included in the total of 2.64. The *singers* are secular entertainers; the temple singers have been mentioned in 2.41, and there were no female singers in the temple, as far as we know. **2.66–67** *Horses* and *mules* are for riding, *camels* and *donkeys* for carrying

67 four hundred thirty-five camels, and six thousand seven hundred twenty donkeys.

68 As soon as they came to the house of the LORD in Jerusalem, some of the heads of families made freewill offerings for the house of God, to erect it on its site. 69 According to their resources they gave to the building fund sixty-one thousand darics of gold, five thousand minas of silver, and one hundred priestly robes.

70 The priests, the Levites, and some of the people lived in Jerusalem and its vicinity;[b] and the singers, the gatekeepers, and the temple servants lived in their towns, and all Israel in their towns.

Worship Restored at Jerusalem

3 When the seventh month came, and the Israelites were in the towns, the people gathered together in Jerusalem. 2 Then Jeshua son of Jozadak, with his fellow priests, and Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel with his kin set out to build the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings on it, as prescribed in the law of Moses the man of God. 3 They set up the altar on its foundation, because they were in dread of the neighboring peoples, and they offered burnt offerings upon it to the LORD, morning and evening. 4 And they kept the festival of booths,[c] as prescribed, and offered the daily burnt offerings by number according to the ordinance, as required for each day, 5 and after that the regular burnt offerings, the offerings at the new moon and at all the sacred festivals of the LORD, and the offerings of everyone who

b 1 Esdras 5.46: Heb lacks *lived in Jerusalem and its vicinity* *c* Or *tabernacles*; Heb *succoth*

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loads; the list seems to be something like a caravan inventory. **2.68** The building and furnishing of the Second Temple is here regarded as the responsibility of the community at large rather than of a king, as it was with Solomon's temple (1 Kings 6–7). The giving of freewill offerings is reminiscent of the accounts of the construction of the tabernacle (Ex 25.2–7; 35.21–29); 1 Chr 29.6–9 also ascribes the funding of the First Temple to the donations of the people. **2.69** *Sixty-one thousand darics.* A daric was a gold coin of 8.4 grams, apparently named for Darius I (522–486 B.C.E.), who was represented on his coins half-length or kneeling with a bow and arrow. The reference to darics at a time earlier than Darius is anachronistic and suggests a composition or revision of this text later than the time it purports to describe. The total weight of gold in 61,000 darics (41,000 in Neh 7.70–72) is 1,133 pounds. *Minas* are not coins, but weights of about 570 grams (20 ounces), 50 times the weight of a shekel. 5,000 minas of silver would weigh 6,250 pounds. *Priestly robes,* i.e., tunics, of intricately embroidered linen (Ex 28.4–5; cf. 28.39; 39.27–29).

3.1–13 Sacrifices are resumed and preparations for the rebuilding are made. **3.1** *The seventh month,* Tishri (September/October) of 538 B.C.E. *The Israelites were in the towns.* The people had settled in their ancestral homes in the country towns and villages, as well, of course, as in Jerusalem. *The people gathered together in Jerusalem.* The seventh month, the most important in the liturgical year (Num 29), required in principle the presence in Jerusalem at least of all males in order to celebrate the Festival of Booths (see note on 3.4). **3.2** *Jeshua,* the high priest (cf. Neh 12.10; Hag 1.1, 14; 2.2), called Joshua in Haggai, is here named before Zerubbabel because the context concerns worship. Usually their names are given in the reverse order (e.g., Ezra 2.2; 3.8; 4.3; 5.2). Jeshua's father, *Jozadak* (Jehozadak), was high priest at the time of the exile in 587 B.C.E. (1 Chr 6.15). *Zerubbabel,* grandson of the exiled king of Judah, Jehoiachin (Jeconiah; 1 Chr 3.17–19), is the Jewish governor appointed by the Persians. *To build the altar.* The assumption is that the altar of the First Temple had been destroyed (on destroying altars, cf. 2 Kings 23.15). *As prescribed in the law of Moses,* i.e., built of unhewn stones (Ex 20.25; cf. Deut 27.6; 1 Macc 4.42–47). **3.3** *On its foundation,* i.e., on the foundation of the old altar still remaining. Continuity of tradition is deemed important for the legitimacy of the worship. *Because they were in dread.* The reestablishment of worship is the priority in the restoration of the state as a means of warding off danger from *the neighboring peoples,* lit. "the peoples of the lands," such as Edomites and Ammonites. Cf. the term *people of the land* for the inhabitants of Palestine proper (cf. note on 4.4). *Burnt offerings . . . morning and evening,* the prescribed "perpetual offering" (Hebrew *tamid*), a lamb together with flour, oil, and wine, the staple produce of the land (Ex 29.38–42; Num 28.3–8). **3.4** The *festival of booths* (Tabernacles) was held from the fifteenth to the twenty-second of the seventh month (Lev 23.33–36). The *daily burnt offerings* are detailed in Num 29.12–38, totaling in the week 71 bulls, 15 rams, 105 lambs, and 7 goats. **3.5** Throughout the year there would be offered sacrifices: the public *regular burnt offerings* daily, the *new moon* offerings monthly, the offerings at *sacred festivals* seasonally, and the private *freewill* offerings irregularly. The sacred festivals are enumerated in

made a freewill offering to the LORD.
6 From the first day of the seventh month
they began to offer burnt offerings to the
LORD. But the foundation of the temple
of the LORD was not yet laid. 7 So they
gave money to the masons and the car-
penters, and food, drink, and oil to the
Sidonians and the Tyrians to bring cedar
trees from Lebanon to the sea, to Joppa,
according to the grant that they had from
King Cyrus of Persia.

Foundation Laid for the Temple

8 In the second year after their arrival
at the house of God at Jerusalem, in the
second month, Zerubbabel son of Sheal-
tiel and Jeshua son of Jozadak made a be-
ginning, together with the rest of their
people, the priests and the Levites and all
who had come to Jerusalem from the cap-
tivity. They appointed the Levites, from
twenty years old and upward, to have the
oversight of the work on the house of the
LORD. 9 And Jeshua with his sons and his
kin, and Kadmiel and his sons, Binnui
and Hodaviah[d] along with the sons of
Henadad, the Levites, their sons and kin,
together took charge of the workers in the
house of God.

10 When the builders laid the founda-
tion of the temple of the LORD, the priests
in their vestments were stationed to praise
the LORD with trumpets, and the Levites,
the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, accord-
ing to the directions of King David of
Israel; 11 and they sang responsively,

d Compare 2.40; Neh 7.43; 1 Esdras 5.58: Heb *sons of Judah*

Lev 23. **3.6** *The first day of the seventh month.* According to the narrator's report, the date is September 17, 538 B.C.E. *The foundation of the temple . . . was not yet laid,* better "work had not yet started on the temple rebuilding." Many of the foundations must have survived from the ruins of the First Temple. The point is that sacrificial worship was resumed long before the temple building itself was repaired. **3.7** The account of the building of the Second Temple is intended to remind readers of the building of Solomon's temple (2 Chr 3; cf. 1 Chr 22.2–4), for the narrator sees the Second Temple as essentially a rebuilding and continuation of the First Temple. *Money* is probably an anachronistic translation, for coins were not yet in common use. The Hebrew is lit. "silver," which would have been weighed out as wages. *Masons,* including stonecutters (as in 1 Chr 22.2). The English word *carpenters* is too specific; the Hebrew is lit. "cutters," i.e., workers in wood, metal, and stone (cf. 1 Chr 22.15). *Food, drink, and oil to the Sidonians and the Tyrians.* Solomon too paid his workmen from Sidon and Tyre in kind (wheat and oil, 1 Kings 5.11). *Cedar trees from Lebanon.* These tall and robust trees, highly prized throughout the ancient Near East, were ideal for roof beams. Isa 60.13 speaks of the "glory of Lebanon" coming to Jerusalem to "beautify" the temple. *To the sea, to Joppa,* better "to the port at Joppa." In Solomon's time too (according to 2 Chr 2.16) logs bound together as rafts had been towed from Lebanon to Joppa, Tell Qasile, just north of modern Tel Aviv. *The grant . . . from King Cyrus,* probably not the money grant (6.4) but his permission for timber to be taken free from Lebanon, which had become a royal Persian forest.

3.8 *In the second year,* 537 B.C.E. Not much is said to have been done at this time (cf. *laid the foundation,* 3.10), for work ceases until the reign of Darius (522–486 B.C.E.; 4.5) and then is resumed and completed in his sixth year (6.15). *In the second month,* Ziv (Iyyar) (April-May). In the same month Solomon began work on his temple (1 Kings 6.1; 2 Chr 3.2); it was a suitable season for building work, after the spring rains and the early harvest of flax and barley. *Zerubbabel, Jeshua.* See note on 3.2. *All who had come . . . from the captivity.* Those who had not been in exile in Babylonia but had remained in the land seem to be studiously ignored by the author. *Twenty years old,* the minimum age for Levitical duties according to the Chronicler (cf. 1 Chr 23.24, 27; 2 Chr 31.17). **3.9** In accordance with his custom, the author lingers over the names and functions of the Levites, creating the impression that he himself was a Levite. This *Jeshua* is a Levite, not the high priest (3.2). **3.10** *Laid the foundation.* Whether there was any foundation laying we do not know (cf. note on 3.6), for the Hebrew says only that they "restored, repaired," which must mean in the context that they began to repair. 2 Kings 25.9 speaks only of the burning of the temple by the Babylonians, and the large dressed foundation stones, up to 12 or 15 feet in length (1 Kings 5.17; 7.10), would not have been much damaged by the collapse of the temple. *In their vestments.* The Hebrew has simply "clothed"; presumably a word like "in linen" has been accidentally omitted. *Trumpets* of silver (Num 10.2) blown by priests and *cymbals* of bronze (1 Chr 15.19) sounded by *the sons of Asaph,* the musicians' guild among the Levites (see Ezra 2.41; 2 Chr 29.25–26), were a rhythmical backing for the vocal music. *According to the directions of King David.* See 1 Chr 16.4–6; 25.1, 6. **3.11** *For*

praising and giving thanks to the LORD,
"For he is good,
for his steadfast love endures
forever toward Israel."
And all the people responded with a great shout when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid. 12 But many of the priests and Levites and heads of families, old people who had seen the first house on its foundations, wept with a loud voice when they saw this house, though many shouted aloud for joy, 13 so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people's weeping, for the people shouted so loudly that the sound was heard far away.

Resistance to Rebuilding the Temple

4 When the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the returned exiles were building a temple to the LORD, the God of Israel, 2 they approached Zerubbabel and the heads of families and said to them, "Let us build with you, for we worship your God as you do, and we have been sacrificing to him ever since the days of King Esar-haddon of Assyria who brought us here." 3 But Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the rest of the heads of families in Israel said to them, "You shall have no part with us in building a house to our God; but we alone will build to the LORD, the God of Israel, as King Cyrus of Persia has commanded us."

4 Then the people of the land discouraged the people of Judah, and made them afraid to build, 5 and they bribed officials to frustrate their plan throughout the reign of King Cyrus of Persia and until the reign of King Darius of Persia.

Rebuilding of Jerusalem Opposed

6 In the reign of Ahasuerus, in his accession year, they wrote an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.

7 And in the days of Artaxerxes, Bishlam and Mithredath and Tabeel and the rest of their associates wrote to King Artaxerxes of Persia; the letter was written in Aramaic and translated.[e] 8 Rehum the

[e] Heb adds *in Aramaic,* indicating that 4.8-6.18 is in Aramaic. Another interpretation is *The letter was written in the Aramaic script and set forth in the Aramaic language*

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he is good . . . toward Israel, a quotation from a psalm such as 106 (v. 1) or 136, intended for responsive singing. The theme of the praise is God's fidelity (*steadfast love*) to the nation; true to his promise, he has enabled them to return to the land. The *shout* is often associated with military victory and the return of the ark of the covenant, seat of the divine king (e.g., 1 Sam 4.5–6; Pss 47.5; 132.16), to the center of the people. *Because the foundation . . . was laid,* rather "because of the rebuilding" (cf. notes on 3.6; 3.10). **3.12** *The first house,* Solomon's temple, destroyed in 587 B.C.E., fifty years previously. *When they saw this house,* rather, with the Hebrew, "this (or that) was the temple in their eyes (i.e., as far as they were concerned)," a parenthetical phrase that follows *the first house on its foundations.*

4.1–5 The building of the temple ceases, ostensibly because of opposition from northern neighbors. **4.1** *The adversaries,* presumably the *people of the land* (4.4). *The returned exiles.* Again, there is no word of those who had stayed in the land (cf. note on 3.8). **4.2** *Esar-haddon,* king of Assyria (681–669 B.C.E.), who imported colonists from other parts of his empire to settle in northern Israel after the deportation of many inhabitants in 721 B.C.E. (cf. also note on 4.10). **4.3** *No part with us.* Perhaps it is implied that they continued worship of their national gods along with Yahweh, as former colonists are said to have done (2 Kings 17.41). **4.4** *People of the land,* non-Jewish settlers in the land of Israel (cf. note on 4.2). *Discouraged,* lit. "relaxed the hands of," i.e., "weakened the morale of." **4.5** *Until the reign of King Darius* (522–486 B.C.E.). The opposition of the non-Jewish settlers is offered as the explanation of the cessation of temple building from 537 to 520 B.C.E.

4.6–23 This section has nothing to do with the building of the temple, but with opposition to the building of Jerusalem, many years later. Apparently it has been included here to illustrate the kinds of methods that enemies of the Jews would have employed to *discourage* them (4.4). **4.6** *Ahasuerus,* the Persian king Xerxes I (486–465 B.C.E.). *In his accession year,* December 486 to April 6, 485 B.C.E. **4.7** *Artaxerxes* I, 465–424 B.C.E. *Bishlam,* perhaps Belshunu, the governor of the province Beyond the River. *Translated,* at the court into Persian (cf. 4.18). **4.8–6.18** The text is in Aramaic (as the last word of 4.7 says; see text note *e*), not Hebrew; several Aramaic documents seem to be cited here. **4.8–16** An accusation, no doubt false, by officials of the province of Samaria that the Jews intend to revolt against the Persians. It is in the name of various Persian officials (*judges . . . envoys . . .*) and ethnic groups settled there (*people of Erech . . .*).

royal deputy and Shimshai the scribe
wrote a letter against Jerusalem to King
Artaxerxes as follows 9(then Rehum the
royal deputy, Shimshai the scribe, and the
rest of their associates, the judges, the en-
voys, the officials, the Persians, the people
of Erech, the Babylonians, the people of
Susa, that is, the Elamites, 10and the rest
of the nations whom the great and noble
Osnappar deported and settled in the
cities of Samaria and in the rest of the
province Beyond the River wrote—and
now 11this is a copy of the letter that they
sent):

"To King Artaxerxes: Your servants,
the people of the province Beyond the
River, send greeting. And now 12may it
be known to the king that the Jews who
came up from you to us have gone to Je-
rusalem. They are rebuilding that rebel-
lious and wicked city; they are finishing
the walls and repairing the foundations.
13Now may it be known to the king that, if
this city is rebuilt and the walls finished,
they will not pay tribute, custom, or toll,
and the royal revenue will be reduced.
14Now because we share the salt of the
palace and it is not fitting for us to witness
the king's dishonor, therefore we send
and inform the king, 15so that a search
may be made in the annals of your ances-
tors. You will discover in the annals that
this is a rebellious city, hurtful to kings
and provinces, and that sedition was
stirred up in it from long ago. On that
account this city was laid waste. 16We
make known to the king that, if this city is
rebuilt and its walls finished, you will then
have no possession in the province Be-
yond the River."

17 The king sent an answer: "To Re-
hum the royal deputy and Shimshai the
scribe and the rest of their associates who
live in Samaria and in the rest of the prov-
ince Beyond the River, greeting. And now
18the letter that you sent to us has been
read in translation before me. 19So I
made a decree, and someone searched
and discovered that this city has risen
against kings from long ago, and that re-
bellion and sedition have been made in it.
20Jerusalem has had mighty kings who
ruled over the whole province Beyond the
River, to whom tribute, custom, and toll
were paid. 21Therefore issue an order
that these people be made to cease, and
that this city not be rebuilt, until I make a
decree. 22Moreover, take care not to be
slack in this matter; why should damage
grow to the hurt of the king?"

23 Then when the copy of King Arta-
xerxes' letter was read before Rehum and
the scribe Shimshai and their associates,
they hurried to the Jews in Jerusalem and
by force and power made them cease.
24At that time the work on the house of
God in Jerusalem stopped and was dis-
continued until the second year of the
reign of King Darius of Persia.

Restoration of the Temple Resumed

5 Now the prophets, Haggai[f] and
Zechariah son of Iddo, prophesied
to the Jews who were in Judah and Jeru-
salem, in the name of the God of Israel
who was over them. 2Then Zerubbabel
son of Shealtiel and Jeshua son of Jozadak
set out to rebuild the house of God in Je-
rusalem; and with them were the proph-
ets of God, helping them.

3 At the same time Tattenai the gover-
nor of the province Beyond the River and
Shethar-bozenai and their associates came
to them and spoke to them thus, "Who
gave you a decree to build this house and
to finish this structure?" 4They[g] also
asked them this, "What are the names of
the men who are building this building?"

f Aram adds *the prophet* *g* Gk Syr: Aram *We*

4.8–9 The repetitions can best be explained if 4.8 was the summary that typically appeared on the outside of a papyrus letter. **4.10** *Osnappar*, Ashurbanipal (669–ca. 627 B.C.E.), the last of the great Assyrian kings. *The province Beyond the River*, the satrapy Abar-Nahara, of which Samaria and Judea (in Hebrew *Yehud*) were provinces. **4.14** *Share the salt*, are partners in a covenant ratified by a meal seasoned with salt (cf. Lev 2.13; Num 18.19). **4.15** *The annals*. Cf. 6.1–2; Esth 6.1. **4.21** *Until I make a decree*. A Persian decree for rebuilding the city is mentioned in Neh 2.5–6. **4.23** *Force and power*, military strength. **4.24** This verse resumes from 4.5 the narrative about the temple, after the digression about the city. *The second year of . . . Darius*, 520 B.C.E.

5.1–17 Restoration of the temple building is resumed. Two prophets provide a new stimulus for the rebuilding (5.1–2); the provincial government investigates the work (5.3–5) and reports to the central government (5.6–17). **5.1** *Haggai and Zechariah*. See Hag 1.1; Zech 1.1. **5.2** *Zerubbabel, Jeshua*. See note on 3.2. **5.3** *The province*

5 But the eye of their God was upon the
elders of the Jews, and they did not stop
them until a report reached Darius and
then answer was returned by letter in re-
ply to it.

6 The copy of the letter that Tattenai
the governor of the province Beyond the
River and Shethar-bozenai and his associ-
ates the envoys who were in the province
Beyond the River sent to King Darius;
7 they sent him a report, in which was
written as follows: "To Darius the king, all
peace! 8 May it be known to the king that
we went to the province of Judah, to the
house of the great God. It is being built of
hewn stone, and timber is laid in the walls;
this work is being done diligently and
prospers in their hands. 9 Then we spoke
to those elders and asked them, 'Who
gave you a decree to build this house and
to finish this structure?' 10 We also asked
them their names, for your information,
so that we might write down the names of
the men at their head. 11 This was their
reply to us: 'We are the servants of the
God of heaven and earth, and we are re-
building the house that was built many
years ago, which a great king of Israel
built and finished. 12 But because our an-
cestors had angered the God of heaven,
he gave them into the hand of King Neb-
uchadnezzar of Babylon, the Chaldean,
who destroyed this house and carried
away the people to Babylonia. 13 How-
ever, King Cyrus of Babylon, in the first
year of his reign, made a decree that this
house of God should be rebuilt. 14 More-
over, the gold and silver vessels of the
house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar
had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem
and had brought into the temple of Bab-
ylon, these King Cyrus took out of the
temple of Babylon, and they were deliv-
ered to a man named Sheshbazzar, whom
he had made governor. 15 He said to him,
"Take these vessels; go and put them in
the temple in Jerusalem, and let the house
of God be rebuilt on its site." 16 Then this
Sheshbazzar came and laid the founda-
tions of the house of God in Jerusalem;
and from that time until now it has been
under construction, and it is not yet fin-
ished.' 17 And now, if it seems good to the
king, have a search made in the royal ar-
chives there in Babylon, to see whether a
decree was issued by King Cyrus for the
rebuilding of this house of God in Jerusa-
lem. Let the king send us his pleasure in
this matter."

The Decree of Darius

6 Then King Darius made a decree,
and they searched the archives
where the documents were stored in Bab-
ylon. 2 But it was in Ecbatana, the capital
in the province of Media, that a scroll was

Beyond the River. Cf. note on 4.10. **5.5** Strangely, Zerubbabel is not mentioned here or at the completion of the temple (6.14–18), despite Zechariah's assurance that "his hands shall also complete it" (Zech 4.9). Had Zerubbabel died or fallen out of favor with the Persians? *A report,* given in 5.7–17. *Answer,* given in 6.2–12. **5.8** *Timber is laid in the walls,* as in the building edict of Cyrus (6.4), as also in the account of Solomon's temple (1 Kings 6.36; 7.12), possibly to limit damage in case of an earthquake. **5.11** *A great king of Israel,* Solomon. **5.12** *King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, the Chaldean.* Nebuchadnezzar II ruled the Neo-Babylonian Empire from 605 to 562 B.C.E. and captured Jerusalem in 597 B.C.E. and again in 587 or 586 B.C.E., taking many inhabitants into captivity (2 Kings 24–25). He was by tribal affiliation a Chaldean from southern Babylonia. **5.13** *Made a decree.* The reference is to 6.3–5; cf. also 1.1. **5.14** *Vessels . . . which Nebuchadnezzar had taken.* Cf. note on 1.7. *Sheshbazzar.* Cf. note on 1.8. *A man named Sheshbazzar* is perhaps no more respectful in Aramaic than in English; the idiom is often found in Aramaic papyri in reference to slaves. The term translated *governor* may not mean "provincial ruler" (as in 5.6; Neh 5.14), but simply "commissioner" for this project. **5.16** *Foundations,* or rather the platform on which the temple was built; the term is different from that in 3.10. In all the other evidence it is Zerubbabel, not *Sheshbazzar,* who is said to have begun the rebuilding (3.2; 4.3; 5.2; Hag 1.14; Zech 4.9). Perhaps it was the commissioner Sheshbazzar who was named in the official Persian correspondence and not the governor Zerubbabel. *From that time until now it has been under construction.* But both 4.4, 24 and Hag 1.2, 4, 9 report that work ceased for about seventeen years. The leaders obviously do not want to admit this; and it is true enough that since work has not yet been completed, it could be said to be still "in progress."

6.1–12 The decree of Darius authorizing the rebuilding of the temple quotes the earlier decree of Cyrus (6.2–5). **6.2** *Ecbatana,* modern Hamadan, the former capital of Media and the summer residence of the Persian kings. *Scroll,* or "roll," a rolled piece of leather or papyrus written on in Aramaic and kept in a clay sealing shaped like a

found on which this was written: "A record. 3 In the first year of his reign, King Cyrus issued a decree: Concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, let the house be rebuilt, the place where sacrifices are offered and burnt offerings are brought;[h] its height shall be sixty cubits and its width sixty cubits, 4 with three courses of hewn stones and one course of timber; let the cost be paid from the royal treasury. 5 Moreover, let the gold and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took out of the temple in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, be restored and brought back to the temple in Jerusalem, each to its place; you shall put them in the house of God."

6 "Now you, Tattenai, governor of the province Beyond the River, Shetharbozenai, and you, their associates, the envoys in the province Beyond the River, keep away; 7 let the work on this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews rebuild this house of God on its site. 8 Moreover I make a decree regarding what you shall do for these elders of the Jews for the rebuilding of this house of God: the cost is to be paid to these people, in full and without delay, from the royal revenue, the tribute of the province Beyond the River. 9 Whatever is needed—young bulls, rams, or sheep for burnt offerings to the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, or oil, as the priests in Jerusalem require—let that be given to them day by day without fail, 10 so that they may offer pleasing sacrifices to the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king and his children. 11 Furthermore I decree that if anyone alters this edict, a beam shall be pulled out of the house of the perpetrator, who then shall be impaled on it. The house shall be made a dunghill. 12 May the God who has established his name there overthrow any king or people that shall put forth a hand to alter this, or to destroy this house of God in Jerusalem. I, Darius, make a decree; let it be done with all diligence."

Completion and Dedication of the Temple

13 Then, according to the word sent by King Darius, Tattenai, the governor of the province Beyond the River, Shetharbozenai, and their associates did with all diligence what King Darius had ordered. 14 So the elders of the Jews built and prospered, through the prophesying of the prophet Haggai and Zechariah son of Iddo. They finished their building by command of the God of Israel and by decree of Cyrus, Darius, and King Artaxerxes of Persia; 15 and this house was finished on the third day of the month of Adar, in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius.

h Meaning of Aram uncertain

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napkin ring. **6.3** *The place where sacrifices are offered.* The Persians themselves did not sacrifice. *Its height . . . and its width sixty cubits.* The length dimension is missing. Solomon's temple was 60 cubits long, 20 wide, 30 high (1 Kings 6.2). If the Second Temple was 60 cubits long, it would have been a perfect cube, 60 by 60 by 60 cubits; but it would also have been six times the volume of Solomon's temple! To fit on the same foundations (see note on 3.10), the Second Temple would most likely have had the same dimensions. A *cubit* was about 17.5 inches or, if the "royal" or "long" cubit was used (Ezek 41.8), about 20.4 inches. On the basis of the standard cubit, the temple would have been 90 by 30 by 45 feet. **6.4** *Three courses . . . timber.* Cf. note on 5.8. *Paid from the royal treasury,* hence the necessity for details of size and building materials in the edict. It is said that this is the first time in recorded history that a ruler not only approved the practice of a foreign religion in his empire but also devoted state resources to its maintenance. **6.5** *Vessels . . . Nebuchadnezzar took out of the temple.* Cf. note on 1.7. **6.8** *From . . . the tributes of the province Beyond the River,* i.e., from Tattenai's own revenues, not from central Persian funds. **6.9** *Wheat* was offered as flour, alone or mixed with olive *oil* (cf. Lev 2.1–7; 5.11). *Salt* accompanied cereal offerings (Lev 2.13), and *wine* was a libation with daily and festival burnt offerings (Ex 29.38–41; Lev 23.13, 18, 37). **6.12** *Who has established his name there,* a very Jewish, and not at all a Persian, phrase (cf., e.g., Deut 12.11).

6.13–18 The temple is finally completed and dedicated. *By command . . . by decree.* **6.14** The twin impulses, from divine and human sources, are artlessly conjoined. The reference to *King Artaxerxes* (465–424 B.C.E.) is out of place here, since he did not come to the throne until well after the temple was completed. **6.15** *On the third day . . . in the sixth year,* March 12, 515 B.C.E. Apparently that was a sabbath, in which case it was the day after the completion of the work (cf. Gen 2.2). But perhaps we should follow 1 Esd 7.5 and read "the twenty-third day," namely April 1,

16 The people of Israel, the priests
and the Levites, and the rest of the re-
turned exiles, celebrated the dedication of
this house of God with joy. 17 They of-
fered at the dedication of this house of
God one hundred bulls, two hundred
rams, four hundred lambs, and as a sin
offering for all Israel, twelve male goats,
according to the number of the tribes of
Israel. 18 Then they set the priests in their
divisions and the Levites in their courses
for the service of God at Jerusalem, as it is
written in the book of Moses.

The Passover Celebrated

19 On the fourteenth day of the first
month the returned exiles kept the pass-
over. 20 For both the priests and the Le-
vites had purified themselves; all of them
were clean. So they killed the passover
lamb for all the returned exiles, for their
fellow priests, and for themselves. 21 It
was eaten by the people of Israel who had
returned from exile, and also by all who
had joined them and separated them-
selves from the pollutions of the nations
of the land to worship the LORD, the God
of Israel. 22 With joy they celebrated the
festival of unleavened bread seven days;
for the LORD had made them joyful, and
had turned the heart of the king of As-
syria to them, so that he aided them in the
work on the house of God, the God of
Israel.

The Coming and Work of Ezra

7 After this, in the reign of King Arta-
xerxes of Persia, Ezra son of Seraiah,
son of Azariah, son of Hilkiah, 2 son of
Shallum, son of Zadok, son of Ahitub,
3 son of Amariah, son of Azariah, son of
Meraioth, 4 son of Zerahiah, son of Uzzi,
son of Bukki, 5 son of Abishua, son of
Phinehas, son of Eleazar, son of the chief
priest Aaron— 6 this Ezra went up from
Babylonia. He was a scribe skilled in the
law of Moses that the LORD the God of
Israel had given; and the king granted
him all that he asked, for the hand of the
LORD his God was upon him.
7 Some of the people of Israel, and
some of the priests and Levites, the sing-
ers and gatekeepers, and the temple ser-
vants also went up to Jerusalem, in the
seventh year of King Artaxerxes. 8 They
came to Jerusalem in the fifth month,
which was in the seventh year of the king.
9 On the first day of the first month the

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a Friday. **6.16** *The returned exiles.* Cf. notes on 3.8; 4.1. **6.17** The ceremony of dedication is modeled on that of Solomon (1 Kings 8; 2 Chr 7.4–7), though the number of animals said to have been sacrificed is very much smaller (cf. 1 Kings 8.63). *A sin offering* decontaminates the temple from impurity (cf. Ezek 43.18–27). *The number of the tribes.* Although only members of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi are said to have constituted the postexilic community, they regard themselves as the authentic Israel and as worshiping on behalf of all the tribes. **6.18** *As it is written in the book of Moses.* In the biblical tradition, however, it was not Moses but David who arranged the divisions and courses of these clergy (1 Chr 23–26); Moses simply established the two classes (Ex 29; Lev 8; Num 3; 4; 8).

6.19–22 Now that the temple is finished, it can serve its purpose as the center for the festival cult. The first festival that falls due is Passover (cf. Ex 12), some six weeks after the dedication, on April, 21, 515 B.C.E. **6.21** *All who had joined them and separated themselves.* For the first time (cf. notes on 3.8; 4.1) the presence of a wider circle of Jews than those who had returned from exile is acknowledged. *Pollutions of the nations of the land,* the worship of foreign gods practiced by non-Jews in the land of Israel. **6.22** *The festival of unleavened bread,* an extension of Passover and celebrated from the fifteenth to the twenty-first of the first month (Ex 12.15–20; Lev 23.6–8; Deut 16.1–8). Unleavened bread was a reminder of the food the Israelites ate before they made their hasty escape from Egypt (Deut 16.3). *The king of Assyria.* The Assyrian Empire was of course long since defunct when Cyrus and Darius reigned, but they were its heirs and they reversed the evil against Israel initiated by the Assyrian kings.

7.1–10 Ezra's lineage and office (7.1–6) and a brief notice of his coming to Jerusalem (7.7–10; more detail in 8.15–36). **7.1** *After this.* The narrative moves suddenly from the end of the sixth century to the middle of the fifth (or beginning of the fourth, if the king is Artaxerxes II; see note on 7.7). *Artaxerxes.* See note on 7.7. *Ezra's* genealogy shows him to be a member of the high-priestly family, though not high priest himself. **7.6** *Scribe,* doctor of the Jewish law (cf. also Sir 38.34b–39.11). *All that he asked,* to be inferred from the king's letter of 7.12–26. **7.7** *In the seventh year of King Artaxerxes,* 458 B.C.E. if the king is Artaxerxes I (465–424), 398 B.C.E. if it is Artaxerxes II (404–358). **7.9** On the assumption that Ezra's journey took place in 458 B.C.E., he left

journey up from Babylon was begun, and
on the first day of the fifth month he
came to Jerusalem, for the gracious hand
of his God was upon him. 10 For Ezra had
set his heart to study the law of the LORD,
and to do it, and to teach the statutes and
ordinances in Israel.

The Letter of Artaxerxes to Ezra

11 This is a copy of the letter that
King Artaxerxes gave to the priest Ezra,
the scribe, a scholar of the text of the com-
mandments of the LORD and his statutes
for Israel: 12 "Artaxerxes, king of kings, to
the priest Ezra, the scribe of the law of the
God of heaven: Peace.[i] And now 13 I de-
cree that any of the people of Israel or
their priests or Levites in my kingdom
who freely offers to go to Jerusalem may
go with you. 14 For you are sent by the
king and his seven counselors to make in-
quiries about Judah and Jerusalem ac-
cording to the law of your God, which is
in your hand, 15 and also to convey the
silver and gold that the king and his coun-
selors have freely offered to the God of
Israel, whose dwelling is in Jerusalem,
16 with all the silver and gold that you
shall find in the whole province of Bab-
ylonia, and with the freewill offerings of
the people and the priests, given willingly
for the house of their God in Jerusalem.
17 With this money, then, you shall with all
diligence buy bulls, rams, and lambs, and
their grain offerings and their drink
offerings, and you shall offer them on the
altar of the house of your God in Jerusa-
lem. 18 Whatever seems good to you and
your colleagues to do with the rest of the
silver and gold, you may do, according to
the will of your God. 19 The vessels that
have been given you for the service of the
house of your God, you shall deliver be-
fore the God of Jerusalem. 20 And what-
ever else is required for the house of your
God, which you are responsible for pro-
viding, you may provide out of the king's
treasury.

21 "I, King Artaxerxes, decree to all
the treasurers in the province Beyond the
River: Whatever the priest Ezra, the
scribe of the law of the God of heaven,
requires of you, let it be done with all dili-
gence, 22 up to one hundred talents of sil-
ver, one hundred cors of wheat, one
hundred baths[j] of wine, one hundred
baths[j] of oil, and unlimited salt. 23 What-
ever is commanded by the God of heaven,
let it be done with zeal for the house of
the God of heaven, or wrath will come
upon the realm of the king and his heirs.
24 We also notify you that it shall not be
lawful to impose tribute, custom, or toll
on any of the priests, the Levites, the sing-
ers, the doorkeepers, the temple servants,
or other servants of this house of God.

25 "And you, Ezra, according to the
God-given wisdom you possess, appoint
magistrates and judges who may judge all
the people in the province Beyond the
River who know the laws of your God;
and you shall teach those who do not
know them. 26 All who will not obey the
law of your God and the law of the king,
let judgment be strictly executed on them,

i Syr Vg 1 Esdras 8.9: Aram *Perfect* *j* A Heb measure of volume

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Babylonia on April 8 and arrived in Jerusalem on August 4. **7.10** To *study*, i.e., to learn and to interpret, and to *do* are the twin ideals of postexilic Judaism.

7.11–26 After an introductory verse in Hebrew (7.11), there follows a long official document in Aramaic (7.12–26), the language in which most documents of this kind are found in Ezra. This is Artaxerxes' firman or letter of authorization to Ezra. **7.12** *Peace.* The Aramaic means "perfect," which may be an abbreviation of a greeting formula or may be a scribal mark to show that the matter has been dealt with. **7.13** *People ... priests ... Levites*, the familiar threefold division of Israel into laity and two types of religious personnel (see also 2.70; 6.16). *Freely offers*, another typically Jewish term (cf. also 1.6; 2.68; 3.5; 8.28), suggesting a Jewish drafting of this letter. **7.14** *Seven counselors*, known in Greek sources as the king's advisers from the leading aristocratic families (cf. also Esth 1.14). *To make inquiries ... according to the law*, to discover how far Jewish law is being observed in Judea. *Which is in your hand*, i.e., of which you have the mastery. The law was almost certainly the Pentateuch in more or less its present form. **7.16** *Find*, as donations from fellow Jews and others (cf. 1.4). **7.21–24** Ezra's authorization includes an edict addressed to the treasurers of the province for support of the temple worship in Jerusalem. The grant seems to be an annual one, except that the amount of silver, *one hundred talents*, more than 3 tons, is hugely disproportionate. Perhaps *talents* is an error for "minas," one-sixtieth of the weight. **7.25** Ezra's authority extends only to Jews in the province, whether they already know pentateu-

whether for death or for banishment or for confiscation of their goods or for imprisonment."

27 Blessed be the LORD, the God of our ancestors, who put such a thing as this into the heart of the king to glorify the house of the LORD in Jerusalem, 28 and who extended to me steadfast love before the king and his counselors, and before all the king's mighty officers. I took courage, for the hand of the LORD my God was upon me, and I gathered leaders from Israel to go up with me.

Heads of Families Who Returned with Ezra

8 These are their family heads, and this is the genealogy of those who went up with me from Babylonia, in the reign of King Artaxerxes: 2 Of the descendants of Phinehas, Gershom. Of Ithamar, Daniel. Of David, Hattush, 3 of the descendants of Shecaniah. Of Parosh, Zechariah, with whom were registered one hundred fifty males. 4 Of the descendants of Pahath-moab, Eliehoenai son of Zerahiah, and with him two hundred males. 5 Of the descendants of Zattu,[k] Shecaniah son of Jahaziel, and with him three hundred males. 6 Of the descendants of Adin, Ebed son of Jonathan, and with him fifty males. 7 Of the descendants of Elam, Jeshaiah son of Athaliah, and with him seventy males. 8 Of the descendants of Shephatiah, Zebadiah son of Michael, and with him eighty males. 9 Of the descendants of Joab, Obadiah son of Jehiel, and with him two hundred eighteen males. 10 Of the descendants of Bani,[l] Shelomith son of Josiphiah, and with him one hundred sixty males. 11 Of the descendants of Bebai, Zechariah son of Bebai, and with him twenty-eight males. 12 Of the descendants of Azgad, Johanan son of Hakkatan, and with him one hundred ten males. 13 Of the descendants of Adonikam, those who came later, their names being Eliphelet, Jeuel, and Shemaiah, and with them sixty males. 14 Of the descendants of Bigvai, Uthai and Zaccur, and with them seventy males.

Servants for the Temple

15 I gathered them by the river that runs to Ahava, and there we camped three days. As I reviewed the people and the priests, I found there none of the descendants of Levi. 16 Then I sent for Eliezer, Ariel, Shemaiah, Elnathan, Jarib, Elnathan, Nathan, Zechariah, and Meshullam, who were leaders, and for Joiarib and Elnathan, who were wise, 17 and sent them to Iddo, the leader at the place called Casiphia, telling them what to say to Iddo and his colleagues the temple servants at Casiphia, namely, to send us ministers for the house of our God. 18 Since the gracious hand of our God was upon us, they brought us a man of discretion, of the descendants of Mahli son of Levi son of Israel, namely Sherebiah, with his sons and kin, eighteen; 19 also Hashabiah and with him Jeshaiah of the descendants of Merari, with his kin and their sons, twenty; 20 besides two hundred twenty of the temple servants, whom David and his officials had set apart to attend the Levites. These were all mentioned by name.

Fasting and Prayer for Protection

21 Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ahava, that we might deny ourselves[m] before our God, to seek from him a safe journey for ourselves, our children, and all our possessions. 22 For I was ashamed to ask the king for a band of soldiers and cavalry to protect us against the

k Gk 1 Esdras 8.32: Heb lacks *of Zattu*
l Gk 1 Esdras 8.36: Heb lacks *Bani* *m* Or *might fast*

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chal law or need to be taught it. **7.27–28** The text changes back to Hebrew at this point, and the narrator quotes a first-person account of Ezra's work.

8.1–14 Ezra's company numbered about fifteen hundred males, all from families of which some members had already returned. The twelve phratry names are to be found also in Ezra 2.3–15. Unlike in Ezra 2, here the priests are mentioned first (8.2). **8.15–20** The presence of Levites seems to have been needed for the symbolism, so that Ezra's caravan would include representatives of all Israel. The place names are unknown. **8.20** *Mentioned by name*, perhaps in the first-person Ezra memoir (see Introduction), but omitted by the editor of the present book of Ezra. **8.21** *A fast . . . that we might deny ourselves.* Fasting seems to have been a symbolic entering of a near-death state so as to represent oneself as an endangered person who is in need of divine care. *A safe journey*, lit. "a straight (or level) way," per-

enemy on our way, since we had told the
king that the hand of our God is gracious
to all who seek him, but his power and his
wrath are against all who forsake him.
23 So we fasted and petitioned our God
for this, and he listened to our entreaty.

Gifts for the Temple

24 Then I set apart twelve of the lead-
ing priests: Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and
ten of their kin with them. 25 And I
weighed out to them the silver and the
gold and the vessels, the offering for the
house of our God that the king, his coun-
selors, his lords, and all Israel there
present had offered; 26 I weighed out into
their hand six hundred fifty talents of sil-
ver, and one hundred silver vessels worth
. . . talents,[n] and one hundred talents of
gold, 27 twenty gold bowls worth a thou-
sand darics, and two vessels of fine pol-
ished bronze as precious as gold. 28 And I
said to them, "You are holy to the LORD,
and the vessels are holy; and the silver
and the gold are a freewill offering to the
LORD, the God of your ancestors.
29 Guard them and keep them until you
weigh them before the chief priests and
the Levites and the heads of families in
Israel at Jerusalem, within the chambers
of the house of the LORD." 30 So the
priests and the Levites took over the sil-
ver, the gold, and the vessels as they were
weighed out, to bring them to Jerusalem,
to the house of our God.

The Return to Jerusalem

31 Then we left the river Ahava on
the twelfth day of the first month, to go to
Jerusalem; the hand of our God was upon
us, and he delivered us from the hand of
the enemy and from ambushes along the
way. 32 We came to Jerusalem and re-
mained there three days. 33 On the fourth
day, within the house of our God, the sil-
ver, the gold, and the vessels were
weighed into the hands of the priest Mer-
emoth son of Uriah, and with him was El-
eazar son of Phinehas, and with them
were the Levites, Jozabad son of Jeshua
and Noadiah son of Binnui. 34 The total
was counted and weighed, and the weight
of everything was recorded.

35 At that time those who had come
from captivity, the returned exiles, of-
fered burnt offerings to the God of Israel,
twelve bulls for all Israel, ninety-six rams,
seventy-seven lambs, and as a sin offering
twelve male goats; all this was a burnt
offering to the LORD. 36 They also deliv-
ered the king's commissions to the king's
satraps and to the governors of the prov-
ince Beyond the River; and they sup-
ported the people and the house of God.

Denunciation of Mixed Marriages

9 After these things had been done,
the officials approached me and
said, "The people of Israel, the priests,
and the Levites have not separated them-

n The number of talents is lacking

haps recalling Isa 40.3. **8.24** *The leading priests: Sherebiah, Hashabiah* . . . , better "the leading priests, and Sherebiah, Hashabiah . . . ," for these are Levites (8.18–19); and twelve priests and twelve Levites would be a symbol of all Israel. **8.26** *Six hundred fifty talents*, about 19 tons. *Worth . . . talents*. The numeral is missing; or perhaps the word for *talents* could be read as "two talents." *One hundred talents of gold*, about 3 tons. The figures are either exaggerated or errors have been introduced in the course of copying. **8.27** *Darics*. See note on 2.69. **8.28** *Holy*, i.e. belonging to God, whether objects or persons. Any seizure of the gifts or their guardians would be an assault on God. **8.35–36** These summary verses, which probably were originally followed by the account of the law-reading ceremony of Neh 7.73b–8.18, are in third-person narrative, and so apparently not from the Ezra memoir (see Introduction). **8.36** The term *satraps* is used loosely, for there was only one satrap of the province Beyond the River, though Ezra would have encountered various "governors."

9.1–10.44 Ezra is now informed that certain Jews have broken the law by marrying non-Jews (9.1–2); he responds with mourning (9.3–5) and a prayer of repentance (9.5–15) since he feels the people as a whole have been implicated in this breach of the law. A group of rigorists then propose to Ezra the action they think he should take (10.1–5), and Ezra accedes, calling a public assembly that determines that foreign wives should be divorced (10.6–17). A list follows of the 113 men who had married non-Jews. The first-person form in ch. 9 suggests that an Ezra memoir (see Introduction) is being drawn on; in ch. 10 the third-person form resumes. It is hard to fault the desire of the beleaguered postexilic community to maintain its own distinctive way of life, its religion, and its language (cf. Neh 13.23), but

selves from the peoples of the lands with
their abominations, from the Canaanites,
the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites,
the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyp-
tians, and the Amorites. 2 For they have
taken some of their daughters as wives for
themselves and for their sons. Thus the
holy seed has mixed itself with the peo-
ples of the lands, and in this faithlessness
the officials and leaders have led the
way." 3 When I heard this, I tore my gar-
ment and my mantle, and pulled hair
from my head and beard, and sat ap-
palled. 4 Then all who trembled at the
words of the God of Israel, because of the
faithlessness of the returned exiles, gath-
ered around me while I sat appalled until
the evening sacrifice.

Ezra's Prayer

5 At the evening sacrifice I got up
from my fasting, with my garments and
my mantle torn, and fell on my knees,
spread out my hands to the LORD my
God, 6 and said,

"O my God, I am too ashamed and em-
barrassed to lift my face to you, my God,
for our iniquities have risen higher than
our heads, and our guilt has mounted up
to the heavens. 7 From the days of our an-
cestors to this day we have been deep in
guilt, and for our iniquities we, our kings,
and our priests have been handed over to
the kings of the lands, to the sword, to
captivity, to plundering, and to utter
shame, as is now the case. 8 But now for a
brief moment favor has been shown by
the LORD our God, who has left us a rem-
nant, and given us a stake in his holy
place, in order that he[o] may brighten our
eyes and grant us a little sustenance in our
slavery. 9 For we are slaves; yet our God
has not forsaken us in our slavery, but has
extended to us his steadfast love before
the kings of Persia, to give us new life to
set up the house of our God, to repair its
ruins, and to give us a wall in Judea and
Jerusalem.

10 "And now, our God, what shall
we say after this? For we have forsaken
your commandments, 11 which you com-

o Heb *our God*

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harder still for modern readers to sympathize with the drastic solution proposed in this narrative. Hints of opposition, in the presence of non-Jewish persons even in noble families in subsequent generations (Neh 6.17–18) and in Nehemiah's less rigorous response to a similar situation (Neh 13.23–27), suggest that Ezra's decision was regarded as extreme even within the post-exilic community itself. **9.1** *After these things had been done.* Most probably the account of the law reading of Neh 8 and perhaps also that of the penitential service of Neh 9 earlier came between the moment of Ezra's arrival in Jerusalem and the events of Ezra 9–10. *The peoples of the lands,* non-Jewish or part-Jewish inhabitants. There were no surviving *Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites,* or *Amorites* still in Palestine in Ezra's time. The names come from an old stereotyped list of foreign nations with whom intermarriage was forbidden (esp. in Deut 7.1–4), and they are mentioned here to invoke the ancient law as relevant to the current situation. Marriage with *Ammonites* and *Moabites,* though they were recognized as members of the Semitic family of nations, had also been strongly prohibited (Deut 23.3–6), but with *Egyptians* it was not forbidden (Deut 23.7). **9.2** *The holy seed,* a phrase from Isa 6.13, with overtones of the language of the blessings to Abraham (e.g., Gen 12.7; 13.14–16; 17.1–8). The exclusivist language expresses of course a concern with religious rather than simply ethnic identity, but whether that makes it better or worse is a matter of opinion. **9.3** *I tore my garment* (tunic or undergarment) *and my mantle* (cloak or outer garment), an act of mourning, a stylized stripping oneself naked as a symbol of death. *Pulled hair from my head and beard,* a customary modification of the forbidden practice of shaving the head in mourning (Lev 19.27; 21.5). **9.4** *All who trembled at the words of the God of Israel,* the strict adherents of the law (cf. 10.9; Isa 66.2, 5). *Appalled,* i.e., dumbfounded, the conventional shocked silence at a time of lamentation (cf. Job 2.12–13; Ezek 26.16). *Until the evening sacrifice,* until the ninth hour, about 3 P.M., an appropriate time for prayer (1 Kings 18.36; Acts 3.1). **9.5** *Spread out my hands,* palms upward, a gesture of supplication in prayer. **9.7** *Utter shame, as is now the case,* because as a people the Jews are subject to the Persians. **9.8** *A remnant,* those of the nation who remain. *A stake,* lit. "a tent peg," the rebuilt temple as a guarantee of security and God's presence. *Brighten our eyes,* revive our spirits (cf. 1 Sam 14.27). **9.9** *Slaves,* not literally, but, as Persian subjects, lacking national independence. *A wall in Judea and Jerusalem,* a metaphor (cf. Ps 80.2) for the protection of the Persian government. **9.11–12** The words quoted by Ezra come mostly from the Pentateuch, so he must regard Moses as a prophet (as does Deut 18.15; 34.10); there are allusions to Deut 7.1; Lev 18.24–30; Deut 18.9; 2 Kings 21.16; Deut 7.3; 23.6; 11.8; 6.11; 1.38–39.

manded by your servants the prophets,
saying, 'The land that you are entering to
possess is a land unclean with the pollu-
tions of the peoples of the lands, with
their abominations. They have filled it
from end to end with their uncleanness.
12 Therefore do not give your daughters
to their sons, neither take their daughters
for your sons, and never seek their peace
or prosperity, so that you may be strong
and eat the good of the land and leave it
for an inheritance to your children for-
ever.' 13 After all that has come upon us
for our evil deeds and for our great guilt,
seeing that you, our God, have punished
us less than our iniquities deserved and
have given us such a remnant as this,
14 shall we break your commandments
again and intermarry with the peoples
who practice these abominations? Would
you not be angry with us until you de-
stroy us without remnant or survivor?
15 O LORD, God of Israel, you are just,
but we have escaped as a remnant, as is
now the case. Here we are before you in
our guilt, though no one can face you be-
cause of this."

The People's Response

10 While Ezra prayed and made
confession, weeping and throw-
ing himself down before the house of
God, a very great assembly of men, wom-
en, and children gathered to him out
of Israel; the people also wept bitterly.
2 Shecaniah son of Jehiel, of the descen-
dants of Elam, addressed Ezra, saying,
"We have broken faith with our God and
have married foreign women from the
peoples of the land, but even now there is
hope for Israel in spite of this. 3 So now let
us make a covenant with our God to send
away all these wives and their children, ac-
cording to the counsel of my lord and of
those who tremble at the commandment
of our God; and let it be done according
to the law. 4 Take action, for it is your
duty, and we are with you; be strong, and
do it." 5 Then Ezra stood up and made the
leading priests, the Levites, and all Israel
swear that they would do as had been
said. So they swore.

Foreign Wives and Their Children Rejected

6 Then Ezra withdrew from before
the house of God, and went to the cham-
ber of Jehohanan son of Eliashib, where
he spent the night.[p] He did not eat bread
or drink water, for he was mourning over
the faithlessness of the exiles. 7 They
made a proclamation throughout Judah
and Jerusalem to all the returned exiles
that they should assemble at Jerusalem,
8 and that if any did not come within three
days, by order of the officials and the el-
ders all their property should be for-
feited, and they themselves banned from
the congregation of the exiles.
9 Then all the people of Judah and
Benjamin assembled at Jerusalem within
the three days; it was the ninth month, on
the twentieth day of the month. All the
people sat in the open square before the
house of God, trembling because of this
matter and because of the heavy rain.
10 Then Ezra the priest stood up and said
to them, "You have trespassed and mar-
ried foreign women, and so increased the
guilt of Israel. 11 Now make confession to
the LORD the God of your ancestors, and
do his will; separate yourselves from the

p 1 Esdras 9.2: Heb *where he went*

10.2 *Shecaniah son of Jehiel, of the descendants of Elam.* Strangely, a Jehiel of the family of Elam was among those who had married foreign wives; so, if it is the same Jehiel, Shecaniah would have been advocating his own excommunication! **10.3** *To send away all these wives,* to divorce them. *According to the law.* The law sanctions divorce in the case of a man finding some "uncleanness" in his wife (Deut 24.1–4); apparently the law is here being applied to the case of the (ritual) "uncleanness" of foreign birth. Previously, while the law forbade certain intermarriage, there was no rule about what action should be taken once it had occurred. **10.6** *The chamber.* There were rooms in the temple for accommodating priests and Levites when they were on duty. *Jehohanan* (or Johanan) *son of Eliashib,* perhaps the high priest, if the high-priestly genealogy of Neh 12.10–11 is rightly seen to have some gaps. **10.7** *Assemble at Jerusalem.* An assembly of all Israelite males was required in the law for certain festivals (Ex 23.17; Deut 16.16). **10.8** *Forfeited,* lit. "devoted" to God, and so removed from the owner's use for secular purposes. *Banned,* the earliest attestation of excommunication (cf. Jn 9.22; 12.42). **10.9** *The ninth month,* December, when the heavy winter rains, and sometimes even snow, fall in Jerusalem, which lies 2000 feet above sea level. *The open square,* the scene of Ezra's prayer (10.1) and per-

peoples of the land and from the foreign
wives." 12 Then all the assembly answered
with a loud voice, "It is so; we must do as
you have said. 13 But the people are many,
and it is a time of heavy rain; we cannot
stand in the open. Nor is this a task for
one day or for two, for many of us have
transgressed in this matter. 14 Let our offi-
cials represent the whole assembly, and let
all in our towns who have taken foreign
wives come at appointed times, and with
them the elders and judges of every town,
until the fierce wrath of our God on this
account is averted from us." 15 Only Jona-
than son of Asahel and Jahzeiah son of
Tikvah opposed this, and Meshullam and
Shabbethai the Levites supported them.

16 Then the returned exiles did so.
Ezra the priest selected men,[q] heads of
families, according to their families, each
of them designated by name. On the first
day of the tenth month they sat down to
examine the matter. 17 By the first day of
the first month they had come to the end
of all the men who had married foreign
women.

18 There were found of the descen-
dants of the priests who had married for-
eign women, of the descendants of Jeshua
son of Jozadak and his brothers: Maase-
iah, Eliezer, Jarib, and Gedaliah. 19 They
pledged themselves to send away their
wives, and their guilt offering was a ram
of the flock for their guilt. 20 Of the de-
scendants of Immer: Hanani and Zeba-
diah. 21 Of the descendants of Harim:
Maaseiah, Elijah, Shemaiah, Jehiel, and
Uzziah. 22 Of the descendants of Pashhur:
Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethanel,
Jozabad, and Elasah.

23 Of the Levites: Jozabad, Shimei,
Kelaiah (that is, Kelita), Pethahiah, Judah,
and Eliezer. 24 Of the singers: Eliashib.
Of the gatekeepers: Shallum, Telem,
and Uri.

25 And of Israel: of the descendants
of Parosh: Ramiah, Izziah, Malchijah, Mij-
amin, Eleazar, Hashabiah,[r] and Benaiah.
26 Of the descendants of Elam: Mattaniah,
Zechariah, Jehiel, Abdi, Jeremoth, and
Elijah. 27 Of the descendants of Zattu: Eli-
oenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, Jeremoth, Za-
bad, and Aziza. 28 Of the descendants of
Bebai: Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zabbai, and
Athlai. 29 Of the descendants of Bani: Me-
shullam, Malluch, Adaiah, Jashub, Sheal,
and Jeremoth. 30 Of the descendants of
Pahath-moab: Adna, Chelal, Benaiah,
Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezalel, Binnui,
and Manasseh. 31 Of the descendants of
Harim: Eliezer, Isshijah, Malchijah, She-
maiah, Shimeon, 32 Benjamin, Malluch,
and Shemariah. 33 Of the descendants
of Hashum: Mattenai, Mattattah, Za-
bad, Eliphelet, Jeremai, Manasseh, and
Shimei. 34 Of the descendants of Bani:
Maadai, Amram, Uel, 35 Benaiah, Bede-
iah, Cheluhi, 36 Vaniah, Meremoth, Elia-
shib, 37 Mattaniah, Mattenai, and Jaasu.
38 Of the descendants of Binnui:[s] Shimei,
39 Shelemiah, Nathan, Adaiah, 40 Mach-
nadebai, Shashai, Sharai, 41 Azarel, Shele-
miah, Shemariah, 42 Shallum, Amariah,
and Joseph. 43 Of the descendants of
Nebo: Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina,
Jaddai, Joel, and Benaiah. 44 All these had
married foreign women, and they sent
them away with their children.[t]

q 1 Esdra 9.16: Syr: Heb *And there were selected Ezra,* r 1 Esdras 9.26 Gk: Heb *Malchijah* s Gk: Heb *Bani, Binnui* t 1 Esdras 9.36; Meaning of Heb uncertain

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haps also of his law reading (Neh 8). **10.14** The appointment of a commission to examine the individual cases casts a veneer of propriety and legality over the proceedings, which had, however, been decided on by a popular assembly of which the vast majority had nothing to lose by the decision. **10.15** The opposition may be to the proposal to postpone the investigations, and these four men may be more rigorous, not more liberal, than the majority; the Levite *Meshullam* may well be Ezra's companion in 8.16, and *Shabbethai*'s name suggests that he came from a strictly religious family (cf. Isa 58.13). **10.16–17** A full three months (from December 29, 458, to March 27, 457 B.C.E., if the contemporary Persian king was Artaxerxes I; cf. note on 7.7) were spent on the identification of 113 offenders; it cannot have always been easy to determine the racial status of a woman who was of partly Jewish and partly non-Jewish descent. The list may of course be incomplete: it includes none of the temple servants or of the inhabitants of the towns listed in 2.20–35. **10.44** The narrative can be reasonably expected to have concluded with some such note, but the Hebrew is not intelligible, and the NRSV has recourse to the parallel in 1 Esd 9.36.

NEHEMIAH

Nehemiah Prays for His People

1 The words of Nehemiah son of Hacaliah. In the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, while I was in Susa the capital, 2 one of my brothers, Hanani, came with certain men from Judah; and I asked them about the Jews that survived, those who had escaped the captivity, and about Jerusalem. 3 They replied, "The survivors there in the province who escaped captivity are in great trouble and shame; the wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been destroyed by fire."

4 When I heard these words I sat down and wept, and mourned for days, fasting and praying before the God of heaven. 5 I said, "O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments; 6 let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Both I and my family have sinned. 7 We have offended you deeply, failing to keep the commandments, the statutes, and the ordinances that you commanded your servant Moses. 8 Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples; 9 but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are under the farthest skies, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place at which I have chosen to establish my name.' 10 They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great power and your strong hand.

[Introductory material to Nehemiah is contained in the Introduction to Ezra.]

1.1–11 Nehemiah, hearing of some recent attack upon Jerusalem, prays for the success of his planned request to the Persian king to be allowed to rebuild the city walls. The narrative is told in the first person and presumably has been only lightly edited from a memoir composed by Nehemiah himself. **1.1** *Nehemiah*, a Jew who had risen to high office in the Persian administration; cf. notes on 1.11; 5.14. *Chislev*, the ninth month, November/December. *The twentieth year*, apparently of Artaxerxes I (465–424 B.C.E.). But ch. 2 is dated in the month Nisan (the first month) of the twentieth year; since the month Nisan does not follow Chislev, the year date in 1.1 is apparently an error for "nineteenth," i.e., 446 B.C.E. *Susa*, the winter residence of the Persian kings. **1.2** *The Jews that survived, those who had escaped the captivity*, apparently both the descendants of those who had never been exiled and those who had returned from exile. **1.3** This cannot refer to the destruction of the city in 587 B.C.E., since it is presented as fresh news. Perhaps this assault on the city is the result of the military force deployed against Jerusalem according to Ezra 4.23 in the reign of Artaxerxes. **1.4** *Sat down*, a customary posture in mourning and fasting (cf. Job 2.8, 13). **1.5–11** Nehemiah's prayer uses much conventional language, taken especially from Deuteronomy. See especially Deut 5.31; 7.8, 9, 21; 9.29; 12.11; 30.1–5. **1.6** *Confessing*. This is a general confession, without reference to any specific sins (in contrast to Ezra's prayer of Ezra 9). **1.8–9** *The word that you commanded*. What follows is not a literal quotation but a free summary of

11 O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the
prayer of your servant, and to the prayer
of your servants who delight in revering
your name. Give success to your servant
today, and grant him mercy in the sight of
this man!"
At the time, I was cupbearer to the
king.

Nehemiah Sent to Judah

2 In the month of Nisan, in the twenti-
eth year of King Artaxerxes, when
wine was served him, I carried the wine
and gave it to the king. Now, I had never
been sad in his presence before. 2 So the
king said to me, "Why is your face sad,
since you are not sick? This can only be
sadness of the heart." Then I was very
much afraid. 3 I said to the king, "May the
king live forever! Why should my face not
be sad, when the city, the place of my an-
cestors' graves, lies waste, and its gates
have been destroyed by fire?" 4 Then the
king said to me, "What do you request?"
So I prayed to the God of heaven. 5 Then
I said to the king, "If it pleases the king,
and if your servant has found favor with
you, I ask that you send me to Judah, to
the city of my ancestors' graves, so that I
may rebuild it." 6 The king said to me (the
queen also was sitting beside him), "How
long will you be gone, and when will you
return?" So it pleased the king to send
me, and I set him a date. 7 Then I said to
the king, "If it pleases the king, let letters
be given me to the governors of the prov-
ince Beyond the River, that they may
grant me passage until I arrive in Judah;
8 and a letter to Asaph, the keeper of the
king's forest, directing him to give me
timber to make beams for the gates of the
temple fortress, and for the wall of the
city, and for the house that I shall oc-
cupy." And the king granted me what I
asked, for the gracious hand of my God
was upon me.
9 Then I came to the governors of the
province Beyond the River, and gave
them the king's letters. Now the king had
sent officers of the army and cavalry with
me. 10 When Sanballat the Horonite and
Tobiah the Ammonite official heard this,
it displeased them greatly that someone
had come to seek the welfare of the peo-
ple of Israel.

Nehemiah's Inspection of the Walls

11 So I came to Jerusalem and was
there for three days. 12 Then I got up
during the night, I and a few men with
me; I told no one what my God had put
into my heart to do for Jerusalem. The

Deut 30.1–5. **1.11** *This man.* Nehemiah has not yet mentioned the name of his sovereign, but God is expected to know, and readers will soon be enlightened. Perhaps Nehemiah's language gives a hint of how he regards him: he is a mere man. *Cupbearer,* an important office in the Persian court. As taster of the king's wine and guard of the royal apartment, he would no doubt have great personal influence on the king's decisions.

2.1–20 Nehemiah gains appointment from the king as (implicit) governor of Judea (2.1–8). He meets with hostility from the governors of neighboring provinces (2.9–10), arrives in Jerusalem, inspects the state of the walls (2.11–16), and determines to rebuild them regardless of the opposition (2.17–20). **2.3** *The city.* Nehemiah wisely never mentions the name of Jerusalem, since it was notorious as a rebellious city (cf. Ezra 4.12, 15). **2.4** *What do you request?* The king realizes that Nehemiah's response is no resigned sigh but itself demands a reply. **2.5** Nehemiah's rebuilding of Jerusalem would not simply be a pious act in memory of his fathers; it would, by ancient custom, imply rulership of the rebuilt city and, since it is a capital, governorship of the province as well. **2.6** *The queen* is known as Damaspia from Greek sources. **2.7–8** Perhaps it is etiquette that prevents Nehemiah asking explicitly for the governorship, but 5.14 implies that he was appointed governor of Judea at this time. Nehemiah asks only for a passport for safe conduct through the other Persian provinces and a requisition order for timber from the royal forest. **2.8** This is the first we hear of *the temple fortress*; cf. also 7.2. It may be the Tower of Hananel (3.1), and it may have been the predecessor of the Antonia tower built by Herod. *For the wall of the city,* for its gates. The city wall itself would have been entirely of stone. **2.9** *The province Beyond the River.* Cf. note on Ezra 4.10. **2.10** *Sanballat,* the governor of the province of Samaria, adjoining Judea on the north. *The Horonite* seems to be a contemptuous reference to Sanballat's humble origins; Nehemiah never accords him his official title. *Tobiah,* probably the governor of the province of Ammon, Nehemiah's eastern neighbor. *It displeased them greatly.* Nehemiah's appointment directly by the king perhaps was felt by Sanballat and Tobiah as a threat to their own political and economic status. They were probably more hostile to Nehemiah personally than to the Jews them-

only animal I took was the animal I rode.
13 I went out by night by the Valley Gate
past the Dragon's Spring and to the Dung
Gate, and I inspected the walls of Jerusa-
lem that had been broken down and its
gates that had been destroyed by fire.
14 Then I went on to the Fountain Gate
and to the King's Pool; but there was no
place for the animal I was riding to con-
tinue. 15 So I went up by way of the valley
by night and inspected the wall. Then I
turned back and entered by the Valley
Gate, and so returned. 16 The officials did
not know where I had gone or what I was
doing; I had not yet told the Jews, the
priests, the nobles, the officials, and the
rest that were to do the work.

Decision to Restore the Walls

17 Then I said to them, "You see the
trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in
ruins with its gates burned. Come, let us
rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, so that we
may no longer suffer disgrace." 18 I told
them that the hand of my God had been
gracious upon me, and also the words that
the king had spoken to me. Then they
said, "Let us start building!" So they com-
mitted themselves to the common good.
19 But when Sanballat the Horonite and
Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Ge-
shem the Arab heard of it, they mocked
and ridiculed us, saying, "What is this that
you are doing? Are you rebelling against
the king?" 20 Then I replied to them,
"The God of heaven is the one who will
give us success, and we his servants are
going to start building; but you have no
share or claim or historic right in Je-
rusalem."

Organization of the Work

3 Then the high priest Eliashib set to
work with his fellow priests and re-
built the Sheep Gate. They consecrated it
and set up its doors; they consecrated it as
far as the Tower of the Hundred and as
far as the Tower of Hananel. 2 And the
men of Jericho built next to him. And
next to them[a] Zaccur son of Imri built.
3 The sons of Hassenaah built the
Fish Gate; they laid its beams and set up
its doors, its bolts, and its bars. 4 Next to
them Meremoth son of Uriah son of Hak-
koz made repairs. Next to them Meshul-
lam son of Berechiah son of Meshezabel
made repairs. Next to them Zadok son of
Baana made repairs. 5 Next to them the
Tekoites made repairs; but their nobles
would not put their shoulders to the work
of their Lord.[b]
6 Joiada son of Paseah and Meshullam

a Heb *him* b Or *lords*

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selves. **2.13–15** Nehemiah's night ride took him in a counterclockwise direction around Jerusalem, beginning at the north or west of the city. **2.13** *Valley Gate*, in the western wall, 1000 cubits north of the Dung Gate (3.13). *Dragon's Spring*. No longer known. *Dung Gate*, or Potsherd Gate (Jer 19.2), at the southern tip of the city. **2.14** *Fountain Gate*, in the Kidron Valley on the east of the city. *King's Pool*, the Pool of Shelah (Shiloah), fed from the spring Gihon farther up the valley (cf. 3.15; Isa 8.6). *No place for the animal . . . to continue*. The elaborate system of terraces on the eastern slope had collapsed after the Babylonian destruction, and the valley floor was now a vast tumble of stones. The archaeological evidence is that Nehemiah abandoned the old line of wall on the eastern slope and built a new wall on the crest. **2.16** Perhaps Nehemiah is stressing that the rebuilding of the city walls was entirely his initiative. **2.19** *Geshem the Arab*, king of Qedar, the ruler, under nominal Persian control, of a large territory in northern Arabia, Edom, and the Negev of Judah. Cf. also 6.1–6. *Rebelling*. The fortification of the city could be seen as a preparation for revolt.

3.1–32 This list did not perhaps form part of Nehemiah's memoir (see Introduction); it views the wall building as completed (e.g., 3.1, 3, 6) but is set in the narrative between the decision to build (2.18) and the events that occurred during the building (4.1–23). **3.1–5** Gates and wall in the northern sector are mainly said to be *built* (e.g., v. 2), suggesting that they were more damaged than those that were only *repaired* (e.g., v. 6). The north wall fronts the main access road to Jerusalem and would have to bear the brunt of military attacks. The "builders" mentioned by name are no doubt those who financed the work rather than those who actually worked with their hands. **3.1** *Sheep Gate*. The name probably came from the market there. It is probably the northeast gate, the Benjamin Gate. *They consecrated it*, perhaps a special ceremony for a section of wall adjoining the temple, for the consecration of the wall as a whole occurs much later (12.27–30). **3.3** *Fish Gate*, naturally enough on the west of the city, nearest the sea. **3.5** The noncooperation of the nobles of Tekoa, in the south, may have been due to the influence of Geshem. **3.6–14** The line of wall on the west of

son of Besodeiah repaired the Old Gate;
they laid its beams and set up its doors, its
bolts, and its bars. 7 Next to them repairs
were made by Melatiah the Gibeonite and
Jadon the Meronothite—the men of Gib-
eon and of Mizpah—who were under the
jurisdiction of[c] the governor of the prov-
ince Beyond the River. 8 Next to them
Uzziel son of Harhaiah, one of the
goldsmiths, made repairs. Next to him
Hananiah, one of the perfumers, made
repairs; and they restored Jerusalem as
far as the Broad Wall. 9 Next to them Re-
phaiah son of Hur, ruler of half the dis-
trict of[d] Jerusalem, made repairs. 10 Next
to them Jedaiah son of Harumaph made
repairs opposite his house; and next to
him Hattush son of Hashabneiah made
repairs. 11 Malchijah son of Harim and
Hasshub son of Pahath-moab repaired
another section and the Tower of the
Ovens. 12 Next to him Shallum son of
Hallohesh, ruler of half the district of[d]
Jerusalem, made repairs, he and his
daughters.

13 Hanun and the inhabitants of Za-
noah repaired the Valley Gate; they re-
built it and set up its doors, its bolts, and
its bars, and repaired a thousand cubits of
the wall, as far as the Dung Gate.

14 Malchijah son of Rechab, ruler of
the district of[e] Beth-haccherem, repaired
the Dung Gate; he rebuilt it and set up its
doors, its bolts, and its bars.

15 And Shallum son of Col-hozeh,
ruler of the district of[e] Mizpah, repaired
the Fountain Gate; he rebuilt it and cov-
ered it and set up its doors, its bolts, and
its bars; and he built the wall of the Pool
of Shelah of the king's garden, as far as
the stairs that go down from the City of
David. 16 After him Nehemiah son of Az-
buk, ruler of half the district of[d] Beth-
zur, repaired from a point opposite the
graves of David, as far as the artificial
pool and the house of the warriors. 17 Af-
ter him the Levites made repairs: Rehum
son of Bani; next to him Hashabiah, ruler
of half the district of[d] Keilah, made re-
pairs for his district. 18 After him their kin
made repairs: Binnui,[f] son of Henadad,
ruler of half the district of[d] Keilah;
19 next to him Ezer son of Jeshua, ruler[g]
of Mizpah, repaired another section op-
posite the ascent to the armory at the An-
gle. 20 After him Baruch son of Zabbai
repaired another section from the Angle
to the door of the house of the high priest
Eliashib. 21 After him Meremoth son of
Uriah son of Hakkoz repaired another
section from the door of the house of Eli-
ashib to the end of the house of Eliashib.
22 After him the priests, the men of the
surrounding area, made repairs. 23 After
them Benjamin and Hasshub made re-
pairs opposite their house. After them Az-
ariah son of Maaseiah son of Ananiah
made repairs beside his own house. 24 Af-
ter him Binnui son of Henadad repaired
another section, from the house of Aza-
riah to the Angle and to the corner. 25 Pa-
lal son of Uzai repaired opposite the
Angle and the tower projecting from the
upper house of the king at the court of
the guard. After him Pedaiah son of Pa-
rosh 26 and the temple servants living[h] on
Ophel made repairs up to a point oppo-
site the Water Gate on the east and the
projecting tower. 27 After him the Teko-
ites repaired another section opposite the
great projecting tower as far as the wall of
Ophel.

28 Above the Horse Gate the priests
made repairs, each one opposite his own
house. 29 After them Zadok son of Immer

c Meaning of Heb uncertain d Or *supervisor of half the portion assigned to* e Or *supervisor of the portion assigned to* f Gk Syr Compare verse 24, 10.9: Heb *Bavvai* g Or *supervisor* h Cn: Heb *were living*

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the city cannot easily be associated with any archaeological remains. **3.6** *Old Gate.* The name should probably be emended to Mishneh Gate, the gate of the extended Second Quarter of the city (cf. 2 Kings 22.14). **3.8** *Restored Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall.* Some translate "abandoned Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall" (part of the western or Mishneh quarter of the preexilic city). **3.12** *He and his daughters* is the only reference to the participation of women in the building, but we need not assume that these were the only females involved. **3.15–32** The east wall. Especially in the southern half of this wall, the builders seem to have been working on an entirely new wall (cf. note on 2.14). This will explain the large number of gangs that worked on this stretch of wall. **3.15** *Pool of Shelah.* Cf. note on 2.14. **3.16** *The graves of David,* i.e., the graves of the Davidic kings. *The house of the warriors,* presumably an army barracks. **3.25** *The upper house of the king,* perhaps Solomon's palace, higher up the hill than David's. **3.26** *Ophel,* part or all of the southeastern hill overlooking the Kidron Valley. **3.29** *East Gate,* a gate of the temple, not of the city

made repairs opposite his own house. After him Shemaiah son of Shecaniah, the keeper of the East Gate, made repairs. 30 After him Hananiah son of Shelemiah and Hanun sixth son of Zalaph repaired another section. After him Meshullam son of Berechiah made repairs opposite his living quarters. 31 After him Malchijah, one of the goldsmiths, made repairs as far as the house of the temple servants and of the merchants, opposite the Muster Gate,[i] and to the upper room of the corner. 32 And between the upper room of the corner and the Sheep Gate the goldsmiths and the merchants made repairs.

Hostile Plots Thwarted

4[j] Now when Sanballat heard that we were building the wall, he was angry and greatly enraged, and he mocked the Jews. 2 He said in the presence of his associates and of the army of Samaria, "What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they restore things? Will they sacrifice? Will they finish it in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish—and burned ones at that?" 3 Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said, "That stone wall they are building—any fox going up on it would break it down!" 4 Hear, O our God, for we are despised; turn their taunt back on their own heads, and give them over as plunder in a land of captivity. 5 Do not cover their guilt, and do not let their sin be blotted out from your sight; for they have hurled insults in the face of the builders.

6 So we rebuilt the wall, and all the wall was joined together to half its height; for the people had a mind to work.

7[k] But when Sanballat and Tobiah and the Arabs and the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem was going forward and the gaps were beginning to be closed, they were very angry, 8 and all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause confusion in it. 9 So we prayed to our God, and set a guard as a protection against them day and night.

10 But Judah said, "The strength of the burden bearers is failing, and there is too much rubbish so that we are unable to work on the wall." 11 And our enemies said, "They will not know or see anything before we come upon them and kill them and stop the work." 12 When the Jews who lived near them came, they said to us ten times, "From all the places where they live[l] they will come up against us."[m] 13 So in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, in open places, I stationed the people according to their families,[n] with their swords, their spears, and their bows. 14 After I looked these things over, I stood up and said to the nobles and the officials and the rest of the people, "Do not be afraid of them. Remember the LORD, who is great and awesome, and fight for your kin, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes."

15 When our enemies heard that their plot was known to us, and that God had frustrated it, we all returned to the wall,

i Or *Hammiphkad Gate* *j* Ch 3.33 in Heb
k Ch 4.1 in Heb *l* Cn: Heb *you return*
m Compare Gk Syr: Meaning of Heb uncertain
n Meaning of Heb uncertain

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wall. **3.31** *Muster Gate*, probably a gate of the temple court.

4.1–23 This narrative of progress on the wall is interlaced with reports of hostility toward the Jews on the part of the Persian authorities in Samaria. **4.1** *Sanballat*. See note on 2.10. **4.2** *The army of Samaria*, Sanballat's troops as governor. *Will they restore things?* Sanballat pokes fun at what he supposes to be the incompetence of the Jews; the sentence might mean "Will they repair for themselves?" suggesting they would build a makeshift wall unlike the elegant city wall of Samaria. *Sacrifice*, perhaps a foundation or dedication sacrifice. **4.3** *Tobiah*. Cf. note on 2.10; see also 2.19. **4.4–5** Nehemiah's plea to God, though doubtless part of his written report of past events, is presented as a prayer composed at the time of Sanballat's mockery. The imprecation on enemies is a feature of several similar psalms of appeal (e.g., Pss 35; 58.6–9). **4.7** *The Arabs*, under their king, Geshem (cf. note on 2.19). *Ammonites* are on the east, *Ashdodites* on the west of Judah; on all sides Nehemiah is surrounded by enemies. **4.8** *Plotted . . . to come*. But did they come? There is no evidence that they did. **4.10** *Judah*, the Judeans. Their speech seems to have poetic form and may be a work song. **4.12** *Near them*, near the enemies. **4.13** Nehemiah's tactic seems to have been to mass armed citizens in those places where the wall could be overlooked from outside the city, so as to give to enemy spies the impression of massive defensive forces.

each to his work. 16 From that day on, half
of my servants worked on construction,
and half held the spears, shields, bows,
and body-armor; and the leaders posted
themselves behind the whole house of Ju-
dah, 17 who were building the wall. The
burden bearers carried their loads in such
a way that each labored on the work with
one hand and with the other held a
weapon. 18 And each of the builders had
his sword strapped at his side while he
built. The man who sounded the trumpet
was beside me. 19 And I said to the nobles,
the officials, and the rest of the people,
"The work is great and widely spread out,
and we are separated far from one an-
other on the wall. 20 Rally to us wherever
you hear the sound of the trumpet. Our
God will fight for us."

21 So we labored at the work, and half
of them held the spears from break of
dawn until the stars came out. 22 I also
said to the people at that time, "Let every
man and his servant pass the night inside
Jerusalem, so that they may be a guard
for us by night and may labor by day."
23 So neither I nor my brothers nor my
servants nor the men of the guard who
followed me ever took off our clothes;
each kept his weapon in his right hand.[o]

Nehemiah Deals with Oppression

5 Now there was a great outcry of the
people and of their wives against
their Jewish kin. 2 For there were those
who said, "With our sons and our daugh-
ters, we are many; we must get grain, so
that we may eat and stay alive." 3 There
were also those who said, "We are having
to pledge our fields, our vineyards, and
our houses in order to get grain during
the famine." 4 And there were those who
said, "We are having to borrow money on
our fields and vineyards to pay the king's
tax. 5 Now our flesh is the same as that of
our kindred; our children are the same as
their children; and yet we are forcing our
sons and daughters to be slaves, and some
of our daughters have been ravished; we
are powerless, and our fields and vine-
yards now belong to others."

6 I was very angry when I heard their
outcry and these complaints. 7 After
thinking it over, I brought charges against
the nobles and the officials; I said to
them, "You are all taking interest from
your own people." And I called a great
assembly to deal with them, 8 and said to
them, "As far as we were able, we have
bought back our Jewish kindred who had
been sold to other nations; but now you
are selling your own kin, who must then
be bought back by us!" They were silent,
and could not find a word to say. 9 So I
said, "The thing that you are doing is not
good. Should you not walk in the fear of
our God, to prevent the taunts of the na-
tions our enemies? 10 Moreover I and my
brothers and my servants are lending
them money and grain. Let us stop this
taking of interest. 11 Restore to them, this
very day, their fields, their vineyards,
their olive orchards, and their houses, and
the interest on money, grain, wine, and oil
that you have been exacting from them."
12 Then they said, "We will restore every-
thing and demand nothing more from
them. We will do as you say." And I called
the priests, and made them take an oath
to do as they had promised. 13 I also shook

o Cn: Heb *each his weapon the water*

4.16–23 There are various public relations and morale-boosting activities here: forming an armed guard for the builders, arming the workers themselves, appointing a trumpeter to sound an alarm in case of attack, and keeping the workers overnight in the city for security and to prevent intimidation by the enemy.

5.1–13 The threat from without is followed by a threat to the community's stability from within. A shortage of food had led to large-scale debt slavery, and Nehemiah takes measures in response to an outcry from the people. **5.2** *With our sons and our daughters, we are many,* preferably "we are giving our sons and our daughters as pledges" for borrowings. **5.4** *The king's tax,* the levy from the provinces for the central Persian government. **5.7** *The nobles and the officials,* the lenders of money. *Taking interest.* The Hebrew means rather "seizing (persons, land, and goods) given in pledge against debts." Interest on loans was illegal (Lev 25.36–37; Deut 23.19–20), but taking pledges was sanctioned by the law (Deut 24.10). Nehemiah, himself one of the moneylenders (5.10), is not confessing to any illegal act but accepts that pledge taking from kinspeople is *not good* (5.9). **5.10** *Stop this taking of interest,* rather "stop this taking in pledge," and perhaps implying also the return of pledges already taken. **5.11** *Interest on,* rather "pledge on." **5.13** *The fold of my garment,* the ancient equivalent of pock-

out the fold of my garment and said, "So may God shake out everyone from house and from property who does not perform this promise. Thus may they be shaken out and emptied." And all the assembly said, "Amen," and praised the LORD. And the people did as they had promised.

The Generosity of Nehemiah

14 Moreover from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year to the thirty-second year of King Artaxerxes, twelve years, neither I nor my brothers ate the food allowance of the governor. 15 The former governors who were before me laid heavy burdens on the people, and took food and wine from them, besides forty shekels of silver. Even their servants lorded it over the people. But I did not do so, because of the fear of God. 16 Indeed, I devoted myself to the work on this wall, and acquired no land; and all my servants were gathered there for the work. 17 Moreover there were at my table one hundred fifty people, Jews and officials, besides those who came to us from the nations around us. 18 Now that which was prepared for one day was one ox and six choice sheep; also fowls were prepared for me, and every ten days skins of wine in abundance; yet with all this I did not demand the food allowance of the governor, because of the heavy burden of labor on the people. 19 Remember for my good, O my God, all that I have done for this people.

Intrigues of Enemies Foiled

6 Now when it was reported to Sanballat and Tobiah and to Geshem the Arab and to the rest of our enemies that I had built the wall and that there was no gap left in it (though up to that time I had not set up the doors in the gates), 2 Sanballat and Geshem sent to me, saying, "Come and let us meet together in one of the villages in the plain of Ono." But they intended to do me harm. 3 So I sent messengers to them, saying, "I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it to come down to you?" 4 They sent to me four times in this way, and I answered them in the same manner. 5 In the same way Sanballat for the fifth time sent his servant to me with an open letter in his hand. 6 In it was written, "It is reported among the nations—and Geshem[p] also says it—that you and the Jews intend to rebel; that is why you are building the wall; and according to this report you wish to become their king. 7 You have also set up prophets to proclaim in Jerusalem concerning you, 'There is a king in Judah!' And now it will be reported to the king according to these words. So come, therefore, and let us confer together." 8 Then I sent to him, saying, "No such things as you say have been done; you are inventing them out of your own mind" 9—for they all wanted to frighten us, thinking, "Their hands will drop from the work, and it will not be done." But now, O God, strengthen my hands.

10 One day when I went into the

p Heb *Gashmu*

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ets. *The people,* the nobles and moneylenders.

5.14–19 The account of Nehemiah's generosity as governor now continues the theme of the benefits of his rule for the Judeans. **5.14** Nehemiah's appointment as governor was only implicit in 2.5–8. It ran from 445 to 433/2 B.C.E. As governor, he was entitled to deduct his own expenses from the taxes he collected for the central government, but he refrained from doing so. **5.15** *Forty shekels of silver* a day (about 1 pound). **5.17** *Those who came to us from the nations,* imperial and satrapal (provincial) officials.

6.1–7.4 In spite of traps for Nehemiah, the wall is finished and security arrangements made. **6.1** *Sanballat, Tobiah.* See note on 2.10. *Geshem the Arab.* See notes on 2.19; 4.7. **6.2** *The plain of Ono,* ca. twenty miles northwest of Jerusalem. *To do me harm.* Nehemiah does not know what kind of harm exactly. **6.3** It is a witty reply to make the work his excuse for refusing the invitation when the purpose of the invitation is to make him cease the work. **6.5** An *open letter,* an unsealed sheet of papyrus or an ostracon (a piece of potsherd), containing a charge of treason could be fatal for Nehemiah. **6.7** *There is a king in Judah.* It is not impossible that Nehemiah was being hailed by some as a messiah, as Haggai (2.21–23) and Zechariah (3.8; 4.6–10; 6.10–14) had hailed a former governor, Zerubbabel. **6.9** *But now . . . hands,* a prayer that suits the time of the events rather than of the writing (cf. note on 4.4–5). **6.10–13** Sanballat engineers a further attempt to

house of Shemaiah son of Delaiah son of
Mehetabel, who was confined to his
house, he said, "Let us meet together in
the house of God, within the temple, and
let us close the doors of the temple, for
they are coming to kill you; indeed, to-
night they are coming to kill you." 11 But I
said, "Should a man like me run away?
Would a man like me go into the temple
to save his life? I will not go in!" 12 Then I
perceived and saw that God had not sent
him at all, but he had pronounced the
prophecy against me because Tobiah and
Sanballat had hired him. 13 He was hired
for this purpose, to intimidate me and
make me sin by acting in this way, and so
they could give me a bad name, in order
to taunt me. 14 Remember Tobiah and
Sanballat, O my God, according to these
things that they did, and also the prophet-
ess Noadiah and the rest of the prophets
who wanted to make me afraid.

The Wall Completed

15 So the wall was finished on the
twenty-fifth day of the month Elul, in
fifty-two days. 16 And when all our ene-
mies heard of it, all the nations around us
were afraid[q] and fell greatly in their own
esteem; for they perceived that this work
had been accomplished with the help of
our God. 17 Moreover in those days the
nobles of Judah sent many letters to To-
biah, and Tobiah's letters came to them.
18 For many in Judah were bound by oath
to him, because he was the son-in-law of
Shecaniah son of Arah: and his son Jeho-
hanan had married the daughter of Me-
shullam son of Berechiah. 19 Also they
spoke of his good deeds in my presence,
and reported my words to him. And To-
biah sent letters to intimidate me.

7 Now when the wall had been built
and I had set up the doors, and the
gatekeepers, the singers, and the Levites
had been appointed, 2 I gave my brother
Hanani charge over Jerusalem, along with
Hananiah the commander of the citadel
—for he was a faithful man and feared
God more than many. 3 And I said to
them, "The gates of Jerusalem are not to
be opened until the sun is hot; while the
gatekeepers[r] are still standing guard, let
them shut and bar the doors. Appoint
guards from among the inhabitants of Je-
rusalem, some at their watch posts, and
others before their own houses." 4 The
city was wide and large, but the people
within it were few and no houses had
been built.

Lists of the Returned Exiles

5 Then my God put it into my mind to
assemble the nobles and the officials and
the people to be enrolled by genealogy.
And I found the book of the genealogy of
those who were the first to come back,
and I found the following written in it:
6 These are the people of the prov-
ince who came up out of the captivity of
those exiles whom King Nebuchadnezzar
of Babylon had carried into exile; they re-
turned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to

q Another reading is *saw* r Heb *while they*

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discredit Nehemiah and make him stop the wall building. **6.10–11** Shemaiah seems to have been inveigling Nehemiah to enter the temple, which was forbidden to him as a layman, in order to destroy his reputation. How this is connected to what Nehemiah perceived as a threat to his life is hard to tell. **6.10** *Shemaiah*, an otherwise unknown prophet apparently in league with Sanballat. *Confined to his house*, for some religious reason. **6.14** A prayer like that of 6.9 except that it belongs rather to the time of writing. *Noadiah and the rest of the prophets*, allusions to otherwise unknown events. **6.15** The wall was finished on October 2, 445 B.C.E., having been begun on August 11. **6.17–19** Instead of an account of the dedication of the wall, which will come in 12.27–43, we have a further note of hostility to Nehemiah. It is hard to see what Tobiah hoped to achieve by both threatening Nehemiah and having his friends praise him to Nehemiah. **7.1** *The singers, and the Levites*, probably to be omitted as a scribal addition. **7.2** It is likely that the text refers to only one city governor, *Hanani*, Nehemiah's brother, *Hananiah* being an alternative writing of the name. **7.3** The strict security precautions are not hard to understand, but obviously not opening the gates *until the sun is hot* was unusual. **7.4** *Wide and large*, 30 or 40 acres. *No houses*, i.e., no new houses, for there were already inhabitants of the city (cf., e.g., 3.20; 7.3).

7.5–73a Nehemiah takes a census of the people to prepare for the repopulating of the city (11.1–2). The list that follows is largely identical with Ezra 2. This old list, which Nehemiah says he found, may have been useful in establishing which families were of pure Jewish descent, for only those would have been eligible for transfer to Jerusalem.

his town. 7 They came with Zerubbabel,
Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah,
Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth,
Bigvai, Nehum, Baanah.

The number of the Israelite people:
8 the descendants of Parosh, two thousand
one hundred seventy-two. 9 Of Shepha-
tiah, three hundred seventy-two. 10 Of
Arah, six hundred fifty-two. 11 Of Pahath-
moab, namely the descendants of Jeshua
and Joab, two thousand eight hundred
eighteen. 12 Of Elam, one thousand two
hundred fifty-four. 13 Of Zattu, eight hun-
dred forty-five. 14 Of Zaccai, seven hun-
dred sixty. 15 Of Binnui, six hundred
forty-eight. 16 Of Bebai, six hundred
twenty-eight. 17 Of Azgad, two thousand
three hundred twenty-two. 18 Of Adoni-
kam, six hundred sixty-seven. 19 Of Bigvai,
two thousand sixty-seven. 20 Of Adin, six
hundred fifty-five. 21 Of Ater, namely of
Hezekiah, ninety-eight. 22 Of Hashum,
three hundred twenty-eight. 23 Of Bezai,
three hundred twenty-four. 24 Of Hariph,
one hundred twelve. 25 Of Gibeon, ninety-
five. 26 The people of Bethlehem and
Netophah, one hundred eighty-eight.
27 Of Anathoth, one hundred twenty-eight
28 Of Beth-azmaveth, forty-two. 29 Of
Kiriath-jearim, Chephirah, and Beeroth,
seven hundred forty-three. 30 Of Ramah
and Geba, six hundred twenty-one. 31 Of
Michmas, one hundred twenty-two. 32 Of
Bethel and Ai, one hundred twenty-three.
33 Of the other Nebo, fifty-two. 34 The de-
scendants of the other Elam, one thou-
sand two hundred fifty-four. 35 Of Harim,
three hundred twenty. 36 Of Jericho,
three hundred forty-five. 37 Of Lod, Ha-
did, and Ono, seven hundred twenty-one.
38 Of Senaah, three thousand nine hun-
dred thirty.

39 The priests: the descendants of Je-
daiah, namely the house of Jeshua, nine
hundred seventy-three. 40 Of Immer, one
thousand fifty-two. 41 Of Pashhur, one
thousand two hundred forty-seven. 42 Of
Harim, one thousand seventeen.

43 The Levites: the descendants of
Jeshua, namely of Kadmiel of the descen-
dants of Hodevah, seventy-four. 44 The
singers: the descendants of Asaph, one
hundred forty-eight. 45 The gatekeepers:
the descendants of Shallum, of Ater, of
Talmon, of Akkub, of Hatita, of Shobai,
one hundred thirty-eight.

46 The temple servants: the descen-
dants of Ziha, of Hasupha, of Tabbaoth,
47 of Keros, of Sia, of Padon, 48 of Lebana,
of Hagaba, of Shalmai, 49 of Hanan, of
Giddel, of Gahar, 50 of Reaiah, of Rezin,
of Nekoda, 51 of Gazzam, of Uzza, of Pa-
seah, 52 of Besai, of Meunim, of Nephush-
esim, 53 of Bakbuk, of Hakupha, of Har-
hur, 54 of Bazlith, of Mehida, of Harsha,
55 of Barkos, of Sisera, of Temah, 56 of
Neziah, of Hatipha.

57 The descendants of Solomon's
servants: of Sotai, of Sophereth, of Pe-
rida, 58 of Jaala, of Darkon, of Giddel,
59 of Shephatiah, of Hattil, of Pocheret-
hazzebaim, of Amon.

60 All the temple servants and the de-
scendants of Solomon's servants were
three hundred ninety-two.

61 The following were those who
came up from Tel-melah, Tel-harsha,
Cherub, Addon, and Immer, but they
could not prove their ancestral houses or
their descent, whether they belonged to
Israel: 62 the descendants of Delaiah, of
Tobiah, of Nekoda, six hundred forty-
two. 63 Also, of the priests: the descen-
dants of Hobaiah, of Hakkoz, of Barzillai
(who had married one of the daughters of
Barzillai the Gileadite and was called by
their name). 64 These sought their regis-
tration among those enrolled in the gene-
alogies, but it was not found there, so they
were excluded from the priesthood as un-
clean; 65 the governor told them that they
were not to partake of the most holy food,
until a priest with Urim and Thummim
should come.

66 The whole assembly together was
forty-two thousand three hundred sixty,
67 besides their male and female slaves, of
whom there were seven thousand three
hundred thirty-seven; and they had two
hundred forty-five singers, male and fe-
male. 68 They had seven hundred thirty-
six horses, two hundred forty-five
mules,[s] 69 four hundred thirty-five cam-
els, and six thousand seven hundred
twenty donkeys.

70 Now some of the heads of ancestral
houses contributed to the work. The gov-
ernor gave to the treasury one thousand
darics of gold, fifty basins, and five hun-
dred thirty priestly robes. 71 And some of
the heads of ancestral houses gave into
the building fund twenty thousand darics
of gold and two thousand two hundred
minas of silver. 72 And what the rest of the

s Ezra 2.66 and the margins of some Hebrew Mss: MT lacks *They had . . . forty-five mules*

people gave was twenty thousand darics
of gold, two thousand minas of silver, and
sixty-seven priestly robes.
73 So the priests, the Levites, the gate-
keepers, the singers, some of the people,
the temple servants, and all Israel settled
in their towns.

Ezra Summons the People to Obey the Law

When the seventh month came—the
8 towns— 1 all the people gathered to-
gether into the square before the
Water Gate. They told the scribe Ezra to
bring the book of the law of Moses, which
the LORD had given to Israel. 2 Accord-
ingly, the priest Ezra brought the law be-
fore the assembly, both men and women
and all who could hear with understand-
ing. This was on the first day of the sev-
enth month. 3 He read from it facing the
square before the Water Gate from early
morning until midday, in the presence of
the men and the women and those who
could understand; and the ears of all the
people were attentive to the book of the
law. 4 The scribe Ezra stood on a wooden
platform that had been made for the pur-
pose; and beside him stood Mattithiah,
Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and
Maaseiah on his right hand; and Peda-
iah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hash-
baddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam on
his left hand. 5 And Ezra opened the book
in the sight of all the people, for he was
standing above all the people; and when
he opened it, all the people stood up.
6 Then Ezra blessed the LORD, the great
God, and all the people answered,
"Amen, Amen," lifting up their hands.
Then they bowed their heads and wor-
shiped the LORD with their faces to the
ground. 7 Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah,
Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maa-
seiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan,
Pelaiah, the Levites,[t] helped the people
to understand the law, while the people
remained in their places. 8 So they read
from the book, from the law of God, with
interpretation. They gave the sense, so
that the people understood the reading.
9 And Nehemiah, who was the gover-
nor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and
the Levites who taught the people said to
all the people, "This day is holy to the
LORD your God; do not mourn or weep."
For all the people wept when they heard
the words of the law. 10 Then he said to
them, "Go your way, eat the fat and drink
sweet wine and send portions of them to
those for whom nothing is prepared, for
this day is holy to our LORD; and do not
be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your
strength." 11 So the Levites stilled all the
people, saying, "Be quiet, for this day is
holy; do not be grieved." 12 And all the
people went their way to eat and drink
and to send portions and to make great
rejoicing, because they had understood
the words that were declared to them.

t 1 Esdras 9.48 Vg: Heb *and the Levites*

7.73b–9.37 In these chapters Ezra is the principal figure, and it seems that they were originally integrated with the Ezra memoir of Ezra 7–10. **7.73b–8.12** Ezra summons the people to a ceremony for the reading of the law. In the present context, it occurs about a week after the finishing of the wall (cf. 6.15). But on the view that Neh 8–9 reports events of 458 B.C.E., and that that was the year of Ezra's arrival, the law reading took place two months after Ezra came to Jerusalem (cf. 8.2 with Ezra 7.9). **8.1** *The square before the Water Gate*, on the east of the city, outside the temple area, where even ritually defiled citizens could be present. *They told the scribe Ezra.* Though Ezra is plainly the initiator of the law teaching (cf. Ezra 7.25), he wants to represent it as a response to the people's request. **8.2** *The first day of the seventh month*, the new moon day introducing the most important festival month in Israel. This day (Tishri 1) later became New Year's Day (Rosh Hashanah). *All who could hear with understanding*, older children. **8.4–8** A narrative parallel to the reading of the "book of the law" in the time of Josiah (2 Chr 34.14–32). **8.4** *Mattithiah . . . Meshullam*, a representative group of thirteen laymen lending their authority; cf. the thirteen Levites in 8.7. **8.5** *Opened the book*, i.e., "unrolled the scroll." **8.6** *Amen*, Hebrew for "It is firm, established," signifying the assent of the listeners. **8.7–8** The Levites apparently moved among the people, ensuring they understood what was read by Ezra. The term translated *with interpretation*, meaning in Hebrew "distinctly" or "with pauses," perhaps implies translation from Hebrew to Aramaic. **8.9** *Nehemiah.* This is the only evidence that Ezra and Nehemiah were contemporaries; and since the verb *said* is singular it seems likely that *Nehemiah, who was the governor* should be deleted. *Mourn or weep*, in repentance for having disobeyed the law. **8.10** They should celebrate the new moon festival as they were planning to and *send portions* to the poor and for-

The Festival of Booths Celebrated

13 On the second day the heads of ancestral houses of all the people, with the priests and the Levites, came together to the scribe Ezra in order to study the words of the law. 14 And they found it written in the law, which the LORD had commanded by Moses, that the people of Israel should live in booths[u] during the festival of the seventh month, 15 and that they should publish and proclaim in all their towns and in Jerusalem as follows, "Go out to the hills and bring branches of olive, wild olive, myrtle, palm, and other leafy trees to make booths,[u] as it is written." 16 So the people went out and brought them, and made booths[u] for themselves, each on the roofs of their houses, and in their courts and in the courts of the house of God, and in the square at the Water Gate and in the square at the Gate of Ephraim. 17 And all the assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths[u] and lived in them; for from the days of Jeshua son of Nun to that day the people of Israel had not done so. And there was very great rejoicing. 18 And day by day, from the first day to the last day, he read from the book of the law of God. They kept the festival seven days; and on the eighth day there was a solemn assembly, according to the ordinance.

National Confession

9 Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month the people of Israel were assembled with fasting and in sackcloth, and with earth on their heads.[v] 2 Then those of Israelite descent separated themselves from all foreigners, and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their ancestors. 3 They stood up in their place and read from the book of the law of the LORD their God for a fourth part of the day, and for another fourth they made confession and worshiped the LORD their God. 4 Then Jeshua, Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, and Chenani stood on the stairs of the Levites and cried out with a loud voice to the LORD their God. 5 Then the Levites, Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabneiah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah, said, "Stand up and bless the LORD your God from everlasting to everlasting. Blessed be your glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise."

6 And Ezra said:[w] "You are the LORD, you alone; you have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. To all of them you give life, and the host of heaven worships you.

u Or *tabernacles*; Heb *succoth* *v* Heb *on them*
w Gk: Heb lacks *And Ezra said*

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eigners (Deut 14.29; 26.12–13). **8.13–18** The following day a smaller group, the family heads and temple officials in Jerusalem, studied with Ezra the details for exact observance of the next festival, Booths (cf. note on Ezra 3.4), to begin on the fifteenth of the month. Living for a week in huts commemorated the journeying in the wilderness (Lev 23.42). **8.17** *Jeshua*, Joshua, Moses' successor. The festival itself had been always celebrated, as far as we know (cf. Judg 21.19; 1 Sam 1.3; Ezra 3.4); the novelty now was apparently that all Israel could celebrate it together in one place, last possible when they were camped by Gilgal with Joshua (though Josh 5.10 speaks of Passover and not specifically of Booths).

9.1–37 Two days later, a day of penitence is held (9.1–4), and the prayer of the Levites is reported (9.5–37). Strangely, the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) on the tenth has not been mentioned; perhaps the ceremony of the twenty-fourth replaces it. **9.1** Rituals of mourning are often used to express penitence. Mourners and penitents alike want to depict themselves as being like the dead, so they perform a ritual of *fasting* from food, wear *sackcloth*, from which shrouds are made, and put *earth on their heads* as if they were buried. **9.2** *Separated themselves from all foreigners.* This is not the divorcing of foreign wives as in Ezra 9–10, but it reflects the same concern for religious distinctiveness. Though foreigners living in Judea could participate in the festival (Deut 16.14) and were obliged to keep the law (Num 15.15–16), they had no need to confess Israel's sins as their own. **9.5–37** The Levites first summon the people to *Stand up and bless the LORD* (9.5a). Their prayer must then begin with *Blessed be your glorious name*, addressed to God. The theme of the prayer is Israelite history viewed as a story of apostasy: there has been divine blessing (9.6–15), blessing continued despite rebellion (9.16–25), and rebellion renewed (9.26–31). It concludes with an appeal for deliverance from foreign domination (9.32–37, especially 9.32, *do not treat lightly all the hardship that has come upon us*). **9.6** There is no good reason to add to the text *And Ezra said*, for the Levitical

7 You are the LORD, the God who chose
Abram and brought him out of Ur of the
Chaldeans and gave him the name Abra-
ham; 8 and you found his heart faithful
before you, and made with him a cove-
nant to give to his descendants the land of
the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite,
the Perizzite, the Jebusite, and the Girga-
shite; and you have fulfilled your prom-
ise, for you are righteous.

9 "And you saw the distress of our an-
cestors in Egypt and heard their cry at the
Red Sea.[x] 10 You performed signs and
wonders against Pharaoh and all his ser-
vants and all the people of his land, for
you knew that they acted insolently
against our ancestors. You made a name
for yourself, which remains to this day.
11 And you divided the sea before them,
so that they passed through the sea on dry
land, but you threw their pursuers into
the depths, like a stone into mighty wa-
ters. 12 Moreover, you led them by day
with a pillar of cloud, and by night with a
pillar of fire, to give them light on the way
in which they should go. 13 You came
down also upon Mount Sinai, and spoke
with them from heaven, and gave them
right ordinances and true laws, good stat-
utes and commandments, 14 and you
made known your holy sabbath to them
and gave them commandments and stat-
utes and a law through your servant Mo-
ses. 15 For their hunger you gave them
bread from heaven, and for their thirst
you brought water for them out of the
rock, and you told them to go in to possess
the land that you swore to give them.

16 "But they and our ancestors acted
presumptuously and stiffened their necks
and did not obey your commandments;
17 they refused to obey, and were not
mindful of the wonders that you per-
formed among them; but they stiffened
their necks and determined to return to
their slavery in Egypt. But you are a God
ready to forgive, gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast
love, and you did not forsake them.
18 Even when they had cast an image of a
calf for themselves and said, 'This is your
God who brought you up out of Egypt,'
and had committed great blasphemies,
19 you in your great mercies did not for-
sake them in the wilderness; the pillar of
cloud that led them in the way did not
leave them by day, nor the pillar of fire by
night that gave them light on the way by
which they should go. 20 You gave your
good spirit to instruct them, and did not
withhold your manna from their mouths,
and gave them water for their thirst.
21 Forty years you sustained them in the
wilderness so that they lacked nothing;
their clothes did not wear out and their
feet did not swell. 22 And you gave them
kingdoms and peoples, and allotted to
them every corner,[y] so they took posses-
sion of the land of King Sihon of Hesh-
bon and the land of King Og of Bashan.
23 You multiplied their descendants like
the stars of heaven, and brought them
into the land that you had told their an-
cestors to enter and possess. 24 So the de-
scendants went in and possessed the land,
and you subdued before them the inhabi-
tants of the land, the Canaanites, and
gave them into their hands, with their
kings and the peoples of the land, to do
with them as they pleased. 25 And they
captured fortress cities and a rich land,
and took possession of houses filled with
all sorts of goods, hewn cisterns, vine-
yards, olive orchards, and fruit trees in
abundance; so they ate, and were filled
and became fat, and delighted themselves
in your great goodness.

26 "Nevertheless they were disobedi-
ent and rebelled against you and cast your
law behind their backs and killed your
prophets, who had warned them in order
to turn them back to you, and they com-
mitted great blasphemies. 27 Therefore
you gave them into the hands of their en-
emies, who made them suffer. Then in
the time of their suffering they cried out
to you and you heard them from heaven,
and according to your great mercies you
gave them saviors who saved them from
the hands of their enemies. 28 But after
they had rest, they again did evil before

x Or *Sea of Reeds* y Meaning of Heb uncertain

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prayer continues from 9.5b. **9.7** See Gen 11.31–12.3. **9.8** See Gen 15. **9.9** See Ex 3.7; 14.10. **9.10** See Deut 4.34; 29.2–3; Ex 18.11. **9.11** See Ex 14.21–23. **9.12** See Ex 13.21; Num 14.14. **9.13** See Ex 19–23. **9.14** See Ex 20.8–11. **9.15** See Ex 16.4; 17.6. **9.17** See Ex 16.2–3; cf. 34.6. **9.18** See Ex 32.4. **9.20** See Num 11.17; 11.6–9; 20.7–11. **9.21** See Deut 2.7; 8.4. **9.22** See Num 21.32–35; Deut 2.24–3.11. **9.23** See Gen 22.17. **9.27** Cf.

you, and you abandoned them to the
hands of their enemies, so that they had
dominion over them; yet when they
turned and cried to you, you heard from
heaven, and many times you rescued
them according to your mercies. 29 And
you warned them in order to turn them
back to your law. Yet they acted presump-
tuously and did not obey your com-
mandments, but sinned against your
ordinances, by the observance of which a
person shall live. They turned a stubborn
shoulder and stiffened their neck and
would not obey. 30 Many years you were
patient with them, and warned them by
your spirit through your prophets; yet
they would not listen. Therefore you
handed them over to the peoples of the
lands. 31 Nevertheless, in your great mer-
cies you did not make an end of them or
forsake them, for you are a gracious and
merciful God.

32 "Now therefore, our God—the
great and mighty and awesome God,
keeping covenant and steadfast love—do
not treat lightly all the hardship that has
come upon us, upon our kings, our offi-
cials, our priests, our prophets, our ances-
tors, and all your people, since the time of
the kings of Assyria until today. 33 You
have been just in all that has come upon
us, for you have dealt faithfully and we
have acted wickedly; 34 our kings, our of-
ficials, our priests, and our ancestors have
not kept your law or heeded the com-
mandments and the warnings that you
gave them. 35 Even in their own kingdom,
and in the great goodness you bestowed
on them, and in the large and rich land
that you set before them, they did not
serve you and did not turn from their
wicked works. 36 Here we are, slaves to
this day—slaves in the land that you gave
to our ancestors to enjoy its fruit and its
good gifts. 37 Its rich yield goes to the
kings whom you have set over us because
of our sins; they have power also over our
bodies and over our livestock at their
pleasure, and we are in great distress."

Those Who Signed the Covenant

38[z] Because of all this we make a firm
agreement in writing, and on that sealed
document are inscribed the names of our
officials, our Levites, and our priests.

10[a] Upon the sealed document are
the names of Nehemiah the gov-
ernor, son of Hacaliah, and Zedekiah;
2 Seraiah, Azariah, Jeremiah, 3 Pashhur,
Amariah, Malchijah, 4 Hattush, Sheba-
niah, Malluch, 5 Harim, Meremoth, Oba-
diah, 6 Daniel, Ginnethon, Baruch, 7 Me-
shullam, Abijah, Mijamin, 8 Maaziah,
Bilgai, Shemaiah; these are the priests.
9 And the Levites: Jeshua son of Azaniah,
Binnui of the sons of Henadad, Kadmiel;
10 and their associates, Shebaniah, Ho-
diah, Kelita, Pelaiah, Hanan, 11 Mica,
Rehob, Hashabiah, 12 Zaccur, Shere-
biah, Shebaniah, 13 Hodiah, Bani, Beninu.
14 The leaders of the people: Parosh,
Pahath-moab, Elam, Zattu, Bani, 15 Bun-
ni, Azgad, Bebai, 16 Adonijah, Bigvai,
Adin, 17 Ater, Hezekiah, Azzur, 18 Ho-
diah, Hashum, Bezai, 19 Hariph, Ana-
thoth, Nebai, 20 Magpiash, Meshullam,
Hezir, 21 Meshezabel, Zadok, Jaddua,
22 Pelatiah, Hanan, Anaiah, 23 Hoshea,
Hananiah, Hasshub, 24 Hallohesh, Pilha,
Shobek, 25 Rehum, Hashabnah, Maaseiah,
26 Ahiah, Hanan, Anan, 27 Malluch, Ha-
rim, and Baanah.

Summary of the Covenant

28 The rest of the people, the priests,
the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers,
the temple servants, and all who have sep-
arated themselves from the peoples of the
lands to adhere to the law of God, their
wives, their sons, their daughters, all who
have knowledge and understanding,
29 join with their kin, their nobles, and en-
ter into a curse and an oath to walk in

z Ch 10.1 in Heb *a* Ch 10.2 in Heb

Judg 2.11–18. **9.29** Cf. Deut 4.1.

9.38–10.39 The pledge of reform is here firmly attached to the prayer of penitence (*Because of all this*). But historically it seems more likely that it stemmed from the community of Nehemiah (probably following the events of Neh 13) rather than that of Ezra, who is not named in it. **10.1–27** The priests' names (10.2–8) are probably "course" (or duty roster) names rather than the names of individuals. The laymen's names (10.14–27) often correspond to Ezra 2 and Neh 7, suggesting that individuals signed on behalf of their families. **10.28–39** The people pledge to keep not just pentateuchal law in general but particular interpretations of it. **10.28** *All who have*

God's law, which was given by Moses the
servant of God, and to observe and do all
the commandments of the LORD our Lord
and his ordinances and his statutes. 30 We
will not give our daughters to the peoples
of the land or take their daughters for our
sons; 31 and if the peoples of the land
bring in merchandise or any grain on the
sabbath day to sell, we will not buy it from
them on the sabbath or on a holy day; and
we will forego the crops of the seventh
year and the exaction of every debt.

32 We also lay on ourselves the obligation to charge ourselves yearly one-third
of a shekel for the service of the house of
our God: 33 for the rows of bread, the regular grain offering, the regular burnt
offering, the sabbaths, the new moons,
the appointed festivals, the sacred donations, and the sin offerings to make atonement for Israel, and for all the work of
the house of our God. 34 We have also cast
lots among the priests, the Levites, and
the people, for the wood offering, to
bring it into the house of our God, by ancestral houses, at appointed times, year by
year, to burn on the altar of the LORD our
God, as it is written in the law. 35 We obligate ourselves to bring the first fruits of
our soil and the first fruits of all fruit
of every tree, year by year, to the house of
the LORD; 36 also to bring to the house of
our God, to the priests who minister in
the house of our God, the firstborn of our
sons and of our livestock, as it is written in
the law, and the firstlings of our herds
and of our flocks; 37 and to bring the first
of our dough, and our contributions, the
fruit of every tree, the wine and the oil, to
the priests, to the chambers of the house
of our God; and to bring to the Levites
the tithes from our soil, for it is the Levites who collect the tithes in all our rural
towns. 38 And the priest, the descendant
of Aaron, shall be with the Levites when
the Levites receive the tithes; and the Levites shall bring up a tithe of the tithes to
the house of our God, to the chambers of
the storehouse. 39 For the people of Israel
and the sons of Levi shall bring the contribution of grain, wine, and oil to the storerooms where the vessels of the sanctuary
are, and where the priests that minister,
and the gatekeepers and the singers are.
We will not neglect the house of our God.

Population of the City Increased

11 Now the leaders of the people
lived in Jerusalem; and the rest of
the people cast lots to bring one out of ten
to live in the holy city Jerusalem, while
nine-tenths remained in the other towns.
2 And the people blessed all those who
willingly offered to live in Jerusalem.

3 These are the leaders of the province who lived in Jerusalem; but in the
towns of Judah all lived on their property
in their towns: Israel, the priests, the Levites, the temple servants, and the descendants of Solomon's servants. 4 And in
Jerusalem lived some of the Judahites and
of the Benjaminites. Of the Judahites:
Athaiah son of Uzziah son of Zechariah
son of Amariah son of Shephatiah son of
Mahalalel, of the descendants of Perez;
5 and Maaseiah son of Baruch son of Colhozeh son of Hazaiah son of Adaiah son
of Joiarib son of Zechariah son of the Shilonite. 6 All the descendants of Perez who
lived in Jerusalem were four hundred
sixty-eight valiant warriors.

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separated themselves. Cf. Ezra 6.21. **10.30** Cf. Ex 34.11–16; Deut 7.1–4; note on Ezra 9.1–10.44. **10.31** No former *sabbath* law (e.g., Ex 20.8–11) defined buying food as work. And previously the fallow year law (Ex 23.10–11), which works to the disadvantage of the farmer, had not been combined with the remission year law (Deut 15.1–8), which works to the disadvantage of the merchant. **10.32** Previously any temple tax had been only occasional (as 2 Kings 12.4–15), not annual. **10.33** For the temple expenditures, cf. Num 28–29. **10.34** The law prescribed a continual fire on the altar (Lev 6.8–13), but not how the wood should be collected. **10.35–39** Most of these gifts for the temple personnel are prescribed in various parts of the law, but this is the first time they are all brought together. For *first fruits*, see Num 18.12–13; for *firstborn*, see Ex 22.29–30; for *the first*, or better "choice produce," manufactured rather than raw, see Num 18.12; for *tithes*, see Num 18.26–32. **10.38** Priests receive a tenth of the Levites' income (Num 18.26–28).

11.1–2 Nehemiah's memoir seems to resume from the point reached in 7.73a, though it is soon interrupted again in 11.3 by various lists, mostly from a time later than Nehemiah. Those who are forcibly removed by lot from the villages in order to repeople Jerusalem are honored by being called those who *willingly offered*. **11.3–19** These Jerusalemite family heads and clergy are contemporary with Nehemiah (another version of

7 And these are the Benjaminites:
Sallu son of Meshullam son of Joed son of
Pedaiah son of Kolaiah son of Maaseiah
son of Ithiel son of Jeshaiah. 8 And his
brothers[b] Gabbai, Sallai: nine hundred
twenty-eight. 9 Joel son of Zichri was their
overseer; and Judah son of Hassenuah
was second in charge of the city.

10 Of the priests: Jedaiah son of Joia-
rib, Jachin, 11 Seraiah son of Hilkiah son
of Meshullam son of Zadok son of Mera-
ioth son of Ahitub, officer of the house of
God, 12 and their associates who did the
work of the house, eight hundred twenty-
two; and Adaiah son of Jeroham son of
Pelaliah son of Amzi son of Zechariah son
of Pashhur son of Malchijah, 13 and his as-
sociates, heads of ancestral houses, two
hundred forty-two; and Amashsai son of
Azarel son of Ahzai son of Meshillemoth
son of Immer, 14 and their associates, val-
iant warriors, one hundred twenty-eight;
their overseer was Zabdiel son of Hag-
gedolim.

15 And of the Levites: Shemaiah son
of Hasshub son of Azrikam son of Hasha-
biah son of Bunni; 16 and Shabbethai and
Jozabad, of the leaders of the Levites, who
were over the outside work of the house
of God; 17 and Mattaniah son of Mica son
of Zabdi son of Asaph, who was the leader
to begin the thanksgiving in prayer, and
Bakbukiah, the second among his associ-
ates; and Abda son of Shammua son of
Galal son of Jeduthun. 18 All the Levites in
the holy city were two hundred eighty-
four.

19 The gatekeepers, Akkub, Talmon
and their associates, who kept watch at the
gates, were one hundred seventy-two.
20 And the rest of Israel, and of the priests
and the Levites, were in all the towns of
Judah, all of them in their inheritance.
21 But the temple servants lived on Ophel;
and Ziha and Gishpa were over the tem-
ple servants.

22 The overseer of the Levites in Je-
rusalem was Uzzi son of Bani son of
Hashabiah son of Mattaniah son of Mica,
of the descendants of Asaph, the singers,
in charge of the work of the house of
God. 23 For there was a command from
the king concerning them, and a settled
provision for the singers, as was required
every day. 24 And Pethahiah son of Me-
shezabel, of the descendants of Zerah son
of Judah, was at the king's hand in all
matters concerning the people.

Villages Outside Jerusalem

25 And as for the villages, with their
fields, some of the people of Judah lived
in Kiriath-arba and its villages, and in Di-
bon and its villages, and in Jekabzeel and
its villages, 26 and in Jeshua and in Mola-
dah and Beth-pelet, 27 in Hazar-shual, in
Beer-sheba and its villages, 28 in Ziklag,
in Meconah and its villages, 29 in En-
rimmon, in Zorah, in Jarmuth, 30 Zanoah,
Adullam, and their villages, Lachish and
its fields, and Azekah and its villages. So
they camped from Beer-sheba to the val-
ley of Hinnom. 31 The people of Benja-
min also lived from Geba onward, at
Michmash, Aija, Bethel and its villages,
32 Anathoth, Nob, Ananiah, 33 Hazor, Ra-
mah, Gittaim, 34 Hadid, Zeboim, Neballat,
35 Lod, and Ono, the valley of artisans.
36 And certain divisions of the Levites in
Judah were joined to Benjamin.

A List of Priests and Levites

12 These are the priests and the Le-
vites who came up with Zerubba-
bel son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua: Seraiah,
Jeremiah, Ezra, 2 Amariah, Malluch,
Hattush, 3 Shecaniah, Rehum, Meremoth,
4 Iddo, Ginnethoi, Abijah, 5 Mijamin,
Maadiah, Bilgah, 6 Shemaiah, Joiarib,
Jedaiah, 7 Sallu, Amok, Hilkiah, Jedaiah.
These were the leaders of the priests and
of their associates in the days of Jeshua.

8 And the Levites: Jeshua, Binnui,
Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and Matta-
niah, who with his associates was in charge
of the songs of thanksgiving. 9 And

b Gk Mss: Heb *And after him*

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the list is in 1 Chr 9). **11.20** A heading that rightly applies to 11.25–36. **11.21–24** Supplements to 11.10–19. **11.24** *Pethahiah* seems to be a governor two generations after Nehemiah. **11.25–36** This list of towns in Judah and Benjamin almost certainly does not belong to Nehemiah's time.

12.1–26 Lists of priests and Levites purportedly from ca. 520 B.C.E. (12.1–9); high priests down to Jaddua, in 323 B.C.E. (12.10–11); priests and Levites from the time of Joiakim, sometime between 520 and 445 B.C.E. (12.12–21, 24–26); and also a note about the source of these lists

Bakbukiah and Unno their associates stood
opposite them in the service. 10 Jeshua was
the father of Joiakim, Joiakim the father
of Eliashib, Eliashib the father of Joiada,
11 Joiada the father of Jonathan, and Jon-
athan the father of Jaddua.

12 In the days of Joiakim the priests,
heads of ancestral houses, were: of Sera-
iah, Meraiah; of Jeremiah, Hananiah;
13 of Ezra, Meshullam; of Amariah, Jeho-
hanan; 14 of Malluchi, Jonathan; of Sheb-
aniah, Joseph; 15 of Harim, Adna; of
Meraioth, Helkai; 16 of Iddo, Zechariah;
of Ginnethon, Meshullam; 17 of Abijah,
Zichri; of Miniamin, of Moadiah, Piltai;
18 of Bilgah, Shammua; of Shemaiah, Je-
honathan; 19 of Joiarib, Mattenai; of Jeda-
iah, Uzzi; 20 of Sallai, Kallai; of Amok,
Eber; 21 of Hilkiah, Hashabiah; of Jeda-
iah, Nethanel.

22 As for the Levites, in the days of
Eliashib, Joiada, Johanan, and Jaddua,
there were recorded the heads of ances-
tral houses; also the priests until the reign
of Darius the Persian. 23 The Levites,
heads of ancestral houses, were recorded
in the Book of the Annals until the days of
Johanan son of Eliashib. 24 And the lead-
ers of the Levites: Hashabiah, Sherebiah,
and Jeshua son of Kadmiel, with their as-
sociates over against them, to praise and
to give thanks, according to the com-
mandment of David the man of God, sec-
tion opposite to section. 25 Mattaniah,
Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Tal-
mon, and Akkub were gatekeepers stand-
ing guard at the storehouses of the gates.
26 These were in the days of Joiakim son
of Jeshua son of Jozadak, and in the days
of the governor Nehemiah and of the
priest Ezra, the scribe.

Dedication of the City Wall

27 Now at the dedication of the wall of
Jerusalem they sought out the Levites
in all their places, to bring them to Jeru-
salem to celebrate the dedication with
rejoicing, with thanksgivings and with
singing, with cymbals, harps, and lyres.
28 The companies of the singers gathered
together from the circuit around Jerusa-
lem and from the villages of the Netopha-
thites; 29 also from Beth-gilgal and from
the region of Geba and Azmaveth; for the
singers had built for themselves villages
around Jerusalem. 30 And the priests and
the Levites purified themselves; and they
purified the people and the gates and
the wall.

31 Then I brought the leaders of Ju-
dah up onto the wall, and appointed two
great companies that gave thanks and
went in procession. One went to the right
on the wall to the Dung Gate; 32 and after
them went Hoshaiah and half the officials
of Judah, 33 and Azariah, Ezra, Meshul-
lam, 34 Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah, and
Jeremiah, 35 and some of the young
priests with trumpets: Zechariah son of
Jonathan son of Shemaiah son of Matta-
niah son of Micaiah son of Zaccur son of
Asaph; 36 and his kindred, Shemaiah,
Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel,
Judah, and Hanani, with the musical
instruments of David the man of God;
and the scribe Ezra went in front of them.
37 At the Fountain Gate, in front of them,
they went straight up by the stairs of the
city of David, at the ascent of the wall,
above the house of David, to the Water
Gate on the east.

38 The other company of those who
gave thanks went to the left,[c] and I fol-
lowed them with half of the people on the
wall, above the Tower of the Ovens, to the
Broad Wall, 39 and above the Gate of
Ephraim, and by the Old Gate, and by the
Fish Gate and the Tower of Hananel and
the Tower of the Hundred, to the Sheep
Gate; and they came to a halt at the Gate
of the Guard. 40 So both companies of
those who gave thanks stood in the house
of God, and I and half of the officials with
me; 41 and the priests Eliakim, Maaseiah,
Miniamin, Micaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah,

c Cn: Heb *opposite*

(12.22–23). **12.27–43** The story of the dedication of the wall would have been an appropriate topic for Nehemiah's memoir. **12.27–30** The Levite singers, who normally came up to Jerusalem only for their tours of duty, now assemble en masse for this ceremony. **12.31–43** The circumambulation of the walls is carried out by two processions starting at the same place, walking along the top of the wall in opposite directions, and meeting finally in the temple area. Each procession has a choir, a group of lay nobles, seven priests, and eight Levite musicians. With vocal music in front and instrumental music in the rear, they must have been enveloped in stereophonic

and Hananiah, with trumpets; 42 and Maaseiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malchijah, Elam, and Ezer. And the singers sang with Jezrahiah as their leader. 43 They offered great sacrifices that day and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy; the women and children also rejoiced. The joy of Jerusalem was heard far away.

Temple Responsibilities

44 On that day men were appointed over the chambers for the stores, the contributions, the first fruits, and the tithes, to gather into them the portions required by the law for the priests and for the Levites from the fields belonging to the towns; for Judah rejoiced over the priests and the Levites who ministered. 45 They performed the service of their God and the service of purification, as did the singers and the gatekeepers, according to the command of David and his son Solomon. 46 For in the days of David and Asaph long ago there was a leader of the singers, and there were songs of praise and thanksgiving to God. 47 In the days of Zerubbabel and in the days of Nehemiah all Israel gave the daily portions for the singers and the gatekeepers. They set apart that which was for the Levites; and the Levites set apart that which was for the descendants of Aaron.

Foreigners Separated from Israel

13 On that day they read from the book of Moses in the hearing of the people; and in it was found written that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever enter the assembly of God, 2 because they did not meet the Israelites with bread and water, but hired Balaam against them to curse them—yet our God turned the curse into a blessing. 3 When the people heard the law, they separated from Israel all those of foreign descent.

The Reforms of Nehemiah

4 Now before this, the priest Eliashib, who was appointed over the chambers of the house of our God, and who was related to Tobiah, 5 prepared for Tobiah a large room where they had previously put the grain offering, the frankincense, the vessels, and the tithes of grain, wine, and oil, which were given by commandment to the Levites, singers, and gatekeepers, and the contributions for the priests. 6 While this was taking place I was not in Jerusalem, for in the thirty-second year of King Artaxerxes of Babylon I went to the king. After some time I asked leave of the king 7 and returned to Jerusalem. I then discovered the wrong that Eliashib had done on behalf of Tobiah, preparing a room for him in the courts of the house of God. 8 And I was very angry, and I threw all the household furniture of Tobiah out of the room. 9 Then I gave orders and they cleansed the chambers, and I brought back the vessels of the house of God, with the grain offering and the frankincense.

10 I also found out that the portions of the Levites had not been given to them; so that the Levites and the singers, who had conducted the service, had gone back to their fields. 11 So I remonstrated with the officials and said, "Why is the house of

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sound. The ceremony concludes with many sacrifices (12.43). **12.44–13.3** This is an idealized summary of the postexilic community: the clergy are properly maintained by the community, and they perform the worship of God as prescribed in ancient times. And the integrity of the worshiping community is secured by the exclusion of all foreigners forbidden in the law (cf. Num 21.21–23; 22–24; Deut 23.3–6).

13.4–31 The editor's glowing picture of the postexilic community (12.44–13.3) is followed immediately by Nehemiah's account of his reforms, suggesting a less rosy reality. Or is reality whatever is the best that can be said, rather than the sad exceptions to a happy norm? Nehemiah had gone back to Persia in 432 B.C.E. and on his return finds several matters amiss. **13.4–9** Nehemiah's old enemy *Tobiah* (2.10; 6.17–19) has during Nehemiah's absence installed himself in a temple apartment with the permission of *Eliashib*, the temple dean, to whom he was apparently related by marriage (13.4; cf. 6.18). Not only is Tobiah not a priest or Levite, he is an Ammonite (cf. 13.1; Deut 23.3)! This is an act of sacrilege and a defilement that must be *cleansed* (13.9). It is probably also an attack on Nehemiah's personal authority—which explains Nehemiah's reaction. **13.10–14** In reorganizing the temple storerooms Nehemiah realizes that adequate provisions for the Levites have not been given by the populace. The *portions* (tithes) of the Levites are their regular income; without them they have to leave Jerusalem and earn their living on their farms (for Levite villages with their pasturelands, see Num

God forsaken?" And I gathered them together and set them in their stations.
12 Then all Judah brought the tithe of the grain, wine, and oil into the storehouses.
13 And I appointed as treasurers over the storehouses the priest Shelemiah, the scribe Zadok, and Pedaiah of the Levites, and as their assistant Hanan son of Zaccur son of Mattaniah, for they were considered faithful; and their duty was to distribute to their associates. 14 Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and do not wipe out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God and for his service.

Sabbath Reforms Begun

15 In those days I saw in Judah people treading wine presses on the sabbath, and bringing in heaps of grain and loading them on donkeys; and also wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath day; and I warned them at that time against selling food. 16 Tyrians also, who lived in the city, brought in fish and all kinds of merchandise and sold them on the sabbath to the people of Judah, and in Jerusalem. 17 Then I remonstrated with the nobles of Judah and said to them, "What is this evil thing that you are doing, profaning the sabbath day? 18 Did not your ancestors act in this way, and did not our God bring all this disaster on us and on this city? Yet you bring more wrath on Israel by profaning the sabbath."

19 When it began to be dark at the gates of Jerusalem before the sabbath, I commanded that the doors should be shut and gave orders that they should not be opened until after the sabbath. And I set some of my servants over the gates, to prevent any burden from being brought in on the sabbath day. 20 Then the merchants and sellers of all kinds of merchandise spent the night outside Jerusalem once or twice. 21 But I warned them and said to them, "Why do you spend the night in front of the wall? If you do so again, I will lay hands on you." From that time on they did not come on the sabbath.
22 And I commanded the Levites that they should purify themselves and come and guard the gates, to keep the sabbath day holy. Remember this also in my favor, O my God, and spare me according to the greatness of your steadfast love.

Mixed Marriages Condemned

23 In those days also I saw Jews who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab; 24 and half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod, and they could not speak the language of Judah, but spoke the language of various peoples. 25 And I contended with them and cursed them and beat some of them and pulled out their hair; and I made them take an oath in the name of God, saying, "You shall not give your daughters to their sons, or take their daughters for your sons or for yourselves. 26 Did not King Solomon of Israel sin on account of such women? Among the many nations

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35.1–8). So temple worship has virtually come to a standstill. Nehemiah makes the support of the Levites the responsibility of the lay leaders (*officials*, 13.11), and appoints *treasurers* (including priests since their income derives from the Levites'; cf. note on 10.38) to supervise the delivery of the tithes. The community pledge of Neh 10 goes a step further by establishing Levitical depots across the country (10.37) to facilitate collection.
13.15–22 Nehemiah finds also that the sabbath law is being contravened: there is work (against Ex 20.8–11), harvesting (against Ex 34.21), and using animals (against Ex 23.12). And there is buying from non-Jewish merchants—which was not specifically forbidden in the law. Nehemiah makes the family heads responsible for enforcing sabbath observance (13.17) and takes direct action to prevent sabbath trading by posting guards at the city gates (13.19). The community pledge of 10.31, no doubt responding to the same situation, relies on the people's conscience rather than a show of force to ensure obedience.
13.23–29 Intermarriage with non-Jews had obviously not ceased when Ezra's community insisted on divorces of foreign wives (Ezra 9–10). That had been about thirty years previously, in a former generation (if Ezra's date is indeed 458 B.C.E.); if Ezra did not precede Nehemiah but came to Jerusalem in 398 B.C.E., it will of course have been Nehemiah's demands that had been ignored. In either case, Nehemiah, though physically more vigorous than Ezra (13.25), actually takes a more moderate line, for he only forbids intermarriage in the future and takes no action against existing marriages. The fact that the son (or grandson) of the high priest had married into

there was no king like him, and he was
beloved by his God, and God made him
king over all Israel; nevertheless, foreign
women made even him to sin. [27] Shall we
then listen to you and do all this great evil
and act treacherously against our God by
marrying foreign women?"
28 And one of the sons of Jehoiada,
son of the high priest Eliashib, was the
son-in-law of Sanballat the Horonite; I
chased him away from me. [29] Remember
them, O my God, because they have de-
filed the priesthood, the covenant of the
priests and the Levites.
30 Thus I cleansed them from every-
thing foreign, and I established the duties
of the priests and Levites, each in his
work; [31] and I provided for the wood
offering, at appointed times, and for the
first fruits. Remember me, O my God, for
good.

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the family of Nehemiah's archenemy Sanballat (13.28) shows that Nehemiah's views were far from universally accepted. **13.30–31** Nehemiah's summary of his activities shows well how he would like to be remembered: as a religious reformer rather than simply a civil governor and restorer of Jerusalem's walls.

ESTHER

Purim and Esther

THE BOOK OF ESTHER appears in the Hebrew Bible as one of Five Scrolls read on festivals or commemorative days of the Jewish year. Read at Purim, Esther legitimizes this celebration of the deliverance of Jews from a pogrom. Yet tensions exist between the theme of the festival, as set out in ch. 9, and the story in chs. 1–8. Characteristics of the few links between the story and the festival lead many to suggest this connection is a later development in the history of a story of court intrigue and conflict that once ended in triumphant celebration for the Jews, but not the massive slaughter of the enemy described in Esth 9.1–19 (seventy-five thousand in v. 16!) and the particulars of Purim in 9.20–32.

Some suggest Purim reflects a form of New Year's festivities current in the ancient Persian Empire. Diaspora Jewish communities were caught up in the celebrations, which were often linked with casting lots to determine the destinies of peoples and nations for the coming year. The story of Esther and Mordecai served to base this popular celebration (called "Mordecai's Day" in 2 Macc 15.36) in events specific to Jewish history.

Plot, Characters, Themes, and Worldview

The story represents a type found in Hebraic tradition: an account of the trials and triumphs of figures involved in intrigues in foreign courts (see Gen 39–41; Dan 1–6). Readers were naturally attracted to stories of contests and conflicts in contexts where power and wealth were rewards for those shrewd enough to gain royal favor. Moreover, the story is extremely well told, engaging readers through sustained suspense. Coincidences (or possibly providence) combine with human initiative to bring about a resolution in which good triumphs over evil.

Characters are sketched with broad strokes, appearing at times almost as types. Haman is the archetypical villain. The king is a stock figure of ancient court tales. Mordecai and Esther form a more complex duo. Characters like Vashti and Zeresh make brief and telling appearances; others, including ever-present eunuchs, are agents who keep the plot moving.

Emphasis is on plot rather than development of character. A plot laced with twists, turns, and complications joins rather stock characters, leading to rich depths of irony. Readers experience the universe as ultimately just, a satisfaction real life rarely provides. Three among many ironic elements in the story merit attention.

First, the central figure is a woman. Within postexilic Jewish communities women's roles were quite circumscribed; in public arenas they were generally marginal. It is striking that diaspora Jewish communities, themselves marginal within their larger worlds, placed a woman at the center of a story of deliverance from potential destruction (see also Judith).

Second, Esther and Mordecai seem remarkably unconstrained by Torah regulations that defined Jewish identity for many. Esther can conceal her Jewish identity, and nothing about her dress, diet, or behavior reveals her secret.

Third, absence of any direct mention of the deity in a story about Jews delivered from danger in an alien setting has provoked comment by scholars. The "other quarter" mentioned by Mordecai in 4.14 is sometimes understood as an oblique reference to the deity and providential guidance. Nevertheless, failure to mention God in any direct way lends a remarkably secular tone to the story.

The Greek Text

Greek forms of Esther contain what tradition calls "Additions" addressing these distinctive features of the story (see Esther, the Greek Version Containing the Additional Chapters, in the Apocrypha). In spite of qualities of the Greek Esther that align it with traditional Jewish piety, the shorter Hebrew form of the book was in time included in the Writings of the Hebrew Bible. Its inclusion was not accepted without debate and dissent (Esther is not represented among the Dead Sea Scrolls). This form is also preserved in the Protestant OT. Other Christian Bibles preserve fuller Greek forms of Esther, and, like the Protestant, place the story among the historical books. *W. Lee Humphreys*

1 This happened in the days of Ahasuerus, the same Ahasuerus who ruled over one hundred twenty-seven provinces from India to Ethiopia.[a] 2 In those days when King Ahasuerus sat on his royal throne in the citadel of Susa, 3 in the third year of his reign, he gave a banquet for all his officials and ministers. The army of Persia and Media and the nobles and governors of the provinces were present, 4 while he displayed the great wealth of his kingdom and the splendor and pomp of his majesty for many days, one hundred eighty days in all.

5 When these days were completed, the king gave for all the people present in the citadel of Susa, both great and small, a banquet lasting for seven days, in the court of the garden of the king's palace. 6 There were white cotton curtains and blue hangings tied with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings[b] and marble pillars. There were couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl, and colored stones. 7 Drinks were served in golden goblets, goblets of different kinds, and the royal wine was lavished according to the bounty of the king. 8 Drinking was by flagons, without restraint; for the king had given orders to all the officials of his palace to do as each one desired. 9 Furthermore, Queen Vashti gave a banquet for the women in the palace of King Ahasuerus.

King Ahasuerus Deposes Queen Vashti

10 On the seventh day, when the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha and Abagtha, Zethar and Carkas, the seven eunuchs who attended him, 11 to bring Queen Vashti before the king, wearing the royal crown, in order to show the peoples and the officials her beauty; for she was fair to behold. 12 But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command conveyed by the eunuchs. At this the king was enraged, and his anger burned within him.

13 Then the king consulted the sages who knew the laws[c] (for this was the king's procedure toward all who were versed in law and custom, 14 and those next to him were Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven officials of Persia and Media, who had access to the king, and sat first in the kingdom): 15 "According to the law, what is to be done to

a Or *Nubia*; Heb *Cush* b Or *rods* c Cn: Heb *times*

1.1–9 Descriptions of the king and his banquets, the extent of the Persian Empire, and of the royal court and its festivities set an opulent stage for a story in which power and wealth are at stake for those engaged in court intrigues. **1.1** *Ahasuerus* (Ezra 4.6; Dan 9.1), "the chief of rulers," is usually identified as Xerxes I (486–465 B.C.E.), sometimes (as in the Greek and Josephus) as Artaxerxes II (405–359 B.C.E.). At its fullest extent the Persian Empire comprised thirty-one satrapies. Xerxes had twenty according to Herodotus (*History* 3.89), each composed of several *provinces*. **1.2** As a royal and religious complex, the *citadel of Susa* was a city within the larger city of Susa, the winter residence of Persian rulers, whose capital was Persepolis. **1.3** Most of the terms for *officials, ministers, nobles, and governors* are general, hinting at the complex administrative structures that managed the vast Persian Empire. **1.5** The *king's palace* was an open-air colonnade structure. **1.6** Greek authors mention lavish Persian feasts. **1.7–8** Feasting and *drinking* mark many of the critical events in this story (see 2.18; 3.15; 5.5–8; 7.1–10; 9.22). **1.9** *Vashti* is otherwise unknown. Herodotus names Amestris, from a noble Persian family, as Xerxes' queen. While women could dine with men in Persia, Vashti's separate banquet is a necessary literary device.

1.10–22 King Ahasuerus deposes Queen Vashti. **1.10** *Eunuchs*, men who had been castrated, were functionaries in the Persian court; they appear at key points to facilitate the actions of other characters and move the story along. Lists of names (see also v. 14) give the story an air of authenticity. **1.11** Some suggest this summons meant she was to wear only the *royal crown*. **1.12** It is ironic that Vashti is rejected for disobeying the king by refusing to appear when summoned, while in 4.16–5.1 Esther, who refused to obey royal law and stay away until called, is rewarded for disobedience. The timing of events along with good fortune and the ability to capitalize on it bring success to an able courtier. **1.13** The *sages* are possibly a privy council (Ezra 7.14; Herodotus *History* 3.31). **1.14** Only the most trusted *officials* were allowed physical access to the king. **1.15** The rash decision to do something to Vashti without investigating the causes for her refusal as well as his dependence on others for advice characterize this king as cloaked in

Queen Vashti because she has not performed the command of King Ahasuerus conveyed by the eunuchs?" 16 Then Memucan said in the presence of the king and the officials, "Not only has Queen Vashti done wrong to the king, but also to all the officials and all the peoples who are in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus. 17 For this deed of the queen will be made known to all women, causing them to look with contempt on their husbands, since they will say, 'King Ahasuerus commanded Queen Vashti to be brought before him, and she did not come.' 18 This very day the noble ladies of Persia and Media who have heard of the queen's behavior will rebel against[d] the king's officials, and there will be no end of contempt and wrath! 19 If it pleases the king, let a royal order go out from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes so that it may not be altered, that Vashti is never again to come before King Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal position to another who is better than she. 20 So when the decree made by the king is proclaimed throughout all his kingdom, vast as it is, all women will give honor to their husbands, high and low alike."

21 This advice pleased the king and the officials, and the king did as Memucan proposed; 22 he sent letters to all the royal provinces, to every province in its own script and to every people in its own language, declaring that every man should be master in his own house.[e]

The Search for a New Queen

2 After these things, when the anger of King Ahasuerus had abated, he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what had been decreed against her. 2 Then the king's servants who attended him said, "Let beautiful young virgins be sought out for the king. 3 And let the king appoint commissioners in all the provinces of his kingdom to gather all the beautiful young virgins to the harem in the citadel of Susa under custody of Hegai, the king's eunuch, who is in charge of the women; let their cosmetic treatments be given them. 4 And let the girl who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti." This pleased the king, and he did so.

Esther and Mordecai

5 Now there was a Jew in the citadel of Susa whose name was Mordecai son of Jair son of Shimei son of Kish, a Benjaminite. 6 Kish[f] had been carried away from Jerusalem among the captives carried away with King Jeconiah of Judah, whom King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had carried away. 7 Mordecai[g] had

d Cn: Heb *will tell* *e* Heb adds *and speak according to the language of his people* *f* Heb *a Benjamite* 6 *who* *g* Heb *He*

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symbols of power but actually malleable and controlled by others. **1.18** These *noble ladies* included, of course, the wives of those advising the king. **1.19** The unalterable *laws of the Persians and the Medes* (see 3.12–14; 8.8–14; Dan 6.8) is a literary motif, not otherwise known and historically most improbable. Ironically, because Vashti will not come, she is forbidden ever to come before the king. **1.21–22** All official resources and protocol of state are needed to deal with the danger posed to men by one willful woman! This is the first in a series of letters and decrees sent by means of the famed Persian courier service. Vashti's banishment creates a place for Esther to enter the royal court and the story.

2.1–4 The search for a new queen. **2.1** Just what he *remembered* of Vashti is left vague; readers must determine among the many possibilities. **2.2** *Servants* are here personal pages, adept at reading the king's mind and addressing his concerns without his speaking a word. **2.3** *Harem*, lit. "the house of the women." **2.4** This is an undertaking in which it seems the king can only benefit.

2.5–7 Esther and Mordecai. **2.5** *Mordecai*, whose name is built upon "Marduk," the Babylonian deity, is introduced as a Benjaminite linked to Saul, Israel's first king. For *Shimei*, see 2 Sam 16.5–14; 19.16–23; 1 Kings 2.8, 36–46. For *Kish*, Saul's father, see 1 Sam 9.1. Generations are telescoped, as the phrase *son of* can mean "descendant of." **2.6** Others understand Mordecai, not *Kish*, to be the one exiled by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 B.C.E. with *Jeconiah*, who is elsewhere called Jehoiachin (2 Kings 24.6–17). This poses chronological problems for a story set in the reign of Xerxes; thus the NRSV has v. 6 refer to Kish as Mordecai's great-grandfather and the one exiled. **2.7** Esther, like other Jews in Diaspora, had both Jewish and non-Jewish names (Dan 1.6–7). *Hadassah* means "myrtle"; *Esther* is a form of Ishtar, the well known Babylonian deity. As beautiful, Esther clearly fits the requirements of v. 3.

brought up Hadassah, that is Esther, his
cousin, for she had neither father nor
mother; the girl was fair and beautiful,
and when her father and her mother
died, Mordecai adopted her as his own
daughter. 8 So when the king's order and
his edict were proclaimed, and when
many young women were gathered in the
citadel of Susa in custody of Hegai, Esther
also was taken into the king's palace and
put in custody of Hegai, who had charge
of the women. 9 The girl pleased him and
won his favor, and he quickly provided
her with her cosmetic treatments and her
portion of food, and with seven chosen
maids from the king's palace, and ad-
vanced her and her maids to the best
place in the harem. 10 Esther did not re-
veal her people or kindred, for Mordecai
had charged her not to tell. 11 Every day
Mordecai would walk around in front of
the court of the harem, to learn how Es-
ther was and how she fared.

12 The turn came for each girl to go
in to King Ahasuerus, after being twelve
months under the regulations for the
women, since this was the regular period
of their cosmetic treatment, six months
with oil of myrrh and six months with
perfumes and cosmetics for women.
13 When the girl went in to the king she
was given whatever she asked for to take
with her from the harem to the king's pal-
ace. 14 In the evening she went in; then in
the morning she came back to the second
harem in custody of Shaashgaz, the king's
eunuch, who was in charge of the concu-
bines; she did not go in to the king again,
unless the king delighted in her and she
was summoned by name.

15 When the turn came for Esther
daughter of Abihail the uncle of Morde-
cai, who had adopted her as his own
daughter, to go in to the king, she asked
for nothing except what Hegai the king's
eunuch, who had charge of the women,
advised. Now Esther was admired by all
who saw her. 16 When Esther was taken to
King Ahasuerus in his royal palace in the
tenth month, which is the month of Te-
beth, in the seventh year of his reign,
17 the king loved Esther more than all the
other women; of all the virgins she won
his favor and devotion, so that he set the
royal crown on her head and made her
queen instead of Vashti. 18 Then the king
gave a great banquet to all his officials and
ministers—"Esther's banquet." He also
granted a holiday[h] to the provinces, and
gave gifts with royal liberality.

Mordecai Discovers a Plot

19 When the virgins were being gath-
ered together,[i] Mordecai was sitting at
the king's gate. 20 Now Esther had not re-
vealed her kindred or her people, as Mor-
decai had charged her; for Esther obeyed
Mordecai just as when she was brought up
by him. 21 In those days, while Mordecai
was sitting at the king's gate, Bigthan and
Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, who
guarded the threshold, became angry and
conspired to assassinate[j] King Ahasue-
rus. 22 But the matter came to the knowl-
edge of Mordecai, and he told it to Queen
Esther, and Esther told the king in the
name of Mordecai. 23 When the affair was

h Or *an amnesty* *i* Heb adds *a second time*
j Heb *to lay hands on*

2.8–18 Esther becomes queen. **2.9** Esther's success with those charged with custody of the king's women anticipates her future success with the king himself. Receiving her *portion of food*, she appears not to observe Jewish dietary laws, a concern to early interpreters. In this she stands in contrast to Daniel (Dan 1.8–20). See also Addition C in the Greek version. **2.10** Secrecy regarding her kindred is necessary for the plot. **2.12** *Myrrh* was a resin used as an incense and in ointments and perfumes. **2.14** After their first evening with the king, these women became his concubines, were placed under the charge of another eunuch, and resided in a *second harem*. **2.16** *Tebeth*, December-January in the Babylonian calendar. It took four years to find a new queen. **2.17** While Esther's success is anticipated (see vv. 9, 15), the reader must wait through nine verses of information about harem protocol to be assured that she wins the favor of the man who matters most. Her beauty and charm seem enough to please him, for he inquires no further about her background. **2.18** This wedding *banquet* that includes benefits for the king's subjects is next in a series of feasts punctuating this story.

2.19–23 Mordecai discovers a plot. **2.19** Sitting in the *king's gate*, Mordecai is an official of undetermined rank. **2.20** This repetitive stress on Esther's obedience to Mordecai (v. 10) emphasizes Esther's obedience to the men controlling her (see v. 15). **2.21** Xerxes actually fell victim to a plot by his chamber guards. **2.23** *Hanged*, or "impaled on the stake." The *book of the annals*, lit. "the book of the things of the days," was the

investigated and found to be so, both the men were hanged on the gallows. It was recorded in the book of the annals in the presence of the king.

Haman Undertakes to Destroy the Jews

3 After these things King Ahasuerus promoted Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him and set his seat above all the officials who were with him. 2 And all the king's servants who were at the king's gate bowed down and did obeisance to Haman; for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai did not bow down or do obeisance. 3 Then the king's servants who were at the king's gate said to Mordecai, "Why do you disobey the king's command?" 4 When they spoke to him day after day and he would not listen to them, they told Haman, in order to see whether Mordecai's words would avail; for he had told them that he was a Jew. 5 When Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow down or do obeisance to him, Haman was infuriated. 6 But he thought it beneath him to lay hands on Mordecai alone. So, having been told who Mordecai's people were, Haman plotted to destroy all the Jews, the people of Mordecai, throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus.

7 In the first month, which is the month of Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, they cast Pur—which means "the lot"—before Haman for the day and for the month, and the lot fell on the thirteenth day[k] of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar. 8 Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, "There is a certain people scattered and separated among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws are different from those of every other people, and they do not keep the king's laws, so that it is not appropriate for the king to tolerate them. 9 If it pleases the king, let a decree be issued for their destruction, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of those who have charge of the king's business, so that they may put it into the king's treasuries." 10 So the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews. 11 The king said to Haman, "The money is given to you, and the people as well, to do with them as it seems good to you."

12 Then the king's secretaries were summoned on the thirteenth day of the first month, and an edict, according to all that Haman commanded, was written to the king's satraps and to the governors over all the provinces and to the officials of all the peoples, to every province in its own script and every people in its own language; it was written in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed with the king's ring. 13 Letters were sent by couri-

k Cn Compare Gk and verse 13 below: Heb *the twelfth month*

official record of royal actions.

3.1–15 Haman undertakes to destroy the Jews. **3.1** As an *Agagite*, Haman is an Amalekite, the natural enemy of the Jews (Ex 17.8–16; Num 24.20; Deut 25.17–19) and especially of the Benjaminite Mordecai (1 Sam 15). Ironically Haman is rewarded for no stated reason, while Mordecai is not rewarded in 2.19–23 for service to the king. **3.4** *That he was a Jew* does not explain Mordecai's refusal, for elsewhere Jews are depicted as bowing before those in authority (Gen 23.7; 42.6; 2 Sam 14.4; 1 Kings 1.16). **3.6** The verb *to destroy* occurs twenty-five times in this short book, stressing an ever-present threat of violence. **3.7** *Nisan* (March–April) is the first month in the Babylonian calendar, the time of Passover. The start of a new year was an appropriate time to cast lots to determine the future. *Pur*, an Akkadian word for *lot*, provides the name for the festival Purim (see ch. 9). *Adar* (February–March) is the twelfth month in the Babylonian calendar; the date for the pogrom is fixed well in advance. **3.8** Haman's accusation against the Jews, who are never named by him, moves from truth (*scattered and separated*) to lies (*do not keep the king's laws*). It is necessary for the story that Esther's ability to conceal her Jewish identity not be hampered by these laws that are different. **3.9** *Ten thousand talents of silver* is a huge sum. Inflated figures like this one, the height of Haman's gallows (5.14), and numbers slain by the Jews (9.5–16) give the story an air of the fantastic. **3.10** The *signet ring* gives Haman authority to author and issue the decree (see 8.8, 10; Gen 41.42). **3.11** *The money is given to you* may mean the king returns Haman's bribe, or it may mean the money is Haman's to use as he wishes. The king authorizes the pogrom with no further inquiry about the people to be destroyed. **3.12** Ironically, the *thirteenth day of the first month* is the day before Jews celebrate Passover (Lev 23.5–8), in which they remember how God delivered them in Egypt. **3.13** *Couriers* formed the heart of the famed Persian postal service (1.22;

ers to all the king's provinces, giving orders to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all Jews, young and old, women and children, in one day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods. 14 A copy of the document was to be issued as a decree in every province by proclamation, calling on all the peoples to be ready for that day. 15 The couriers went quickly by order of the king, and the decree was issued in the citadel of Susa. The king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city of Susa was thrown into confusion.

Esther Agrees to Help the Jews

4 When Mordecai learned all that had been done, Mordecai tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went through the city, wailing with a loud and bitter cry; 2 he went up to the entrance of the king's gate, for no one might enter the king's gate clothed with sackcloth. 3 In every province, wherever the king's command and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting and weeping and lamenting, and most of them lay in sackcloth and ashes.

4 When Esther's maids and her eunuchs came and told her, the queen was deeply distressed; she sent garments to clothe Mordecai, so that he might take off his sackcloth; but he would not accept them. 5 Then Esther called for Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs, who had been appointed to attend her, and ordered him to go to Mordecai to learn what was happening and why. 6 Hathach went out to Mordecai in the open square of the city in front of the king's gate, 7 and Mordecai told him all that had happened to him, and the exact sum of money that Haman had promised to pay into the king's treasuries for the destruction of the Jews. 8 Mordecai also gave him a copy of the written decree issued in Susa for their destruction, that he might show it to Esther, explain it to her, and charge her to go to the king to make supplication to him and entreat him for her people.

9 Hathach went and told Esther what Mordecai had said. 10 Then Esther spoke to Hathach and gave him a message for Mordecai, saying, 11 "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that if any man or woman goes to the king inside the inner court without being called, there is but one law—all alike are to be put to death. Only if the king holds out the golden scepter to someone, may that person live. I myself have not been called to come in to the king for thirty days." 12 When they told Mordecai what Esther had said, 13 Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, "Do not think that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. 14 For if you keep silence at such a time as this, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another quarter, but you and your father's family will perish. Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this." 15 Then Esther said in reply to Mordecai, 16 "Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and neither eat nor drink for three days, night

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8.9–14; Herodotus *History* 5.14; 8.98). The piling up of the terms *to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate* and the inclusion of all victims emulates legal language ensuring that the pogrom will be thorough. The Greek version provides a copy of the decree (Addition B). **3.14** Proclamation so far in advance also gives notice to the Jews of the danger, allowing Mordecai and Esther time to act. **3.15** A striking contrast between the leaders and populace ends the scene with another drinking feast that contrasts with those in ch. 1 and 2.18.

4.1–17 Esther agrees to help the Jews. **4.1–3** Torn clothing, *sackcloth, ashes,* and *wailing* are all traditional signs of distress and grief (Neh 9.1; Jon 3.6) and are often accompanied by fasting (Esth 4.16) and prayer, the last markedly absent from this story (cf. Addition C in the Greek version). **4.4–9** Mordecai's carefully staged demonstration and documentary evidence are designed to inform Esther and urge her to take advantage of her strategic position. **4.11** Whether this security precaution reflects actual Persian custom or not, it serves to heighten the narrative tension. **4.14** *Another quarter* is interpreted by some as an oblique reference to the deity, who is so strikingly absent from this story. Many understand Mordecai's statement as an assertion of divine providence. The reference is more allusive than direct and does not lessen the strongly secular character of the story. **4.16** From this point Esther is transformed from one who is passive and obedient to one who takes charge and directs actions to save her people. Mordecai, by contrast, now becomes passive and obedient to her. The Greek version here has prayers by both Mordecai and Esther (Addition C).

or day. I and my maids will also fast as
you do. After that I will go to the king,
though it is against the law; and if I per-
ish, I perish." 17 Mordecai then went away
and did everything as Esther had or-
dered him.

Esther's First Banquet

5 On the third day Esther put on her
royal robes and stood in the inner
court of the king's palace, opposite the
king's hall. The king was sitting on his
royal throne inside the palace opposite
the entrance to the palace. 2 As soon as the
king saw Queen Esther standing in the
court, she won his favor and he held out
to her the golden scepter that was in his
hand. Then Esther approached and
touched the top of the scepter. 3 The king
said to her, "What is it, Queen Esther?
What is your request? It shall be given
you, even to the half of my kingdom."
4 Then Esther said, "If it pleases the king,
let the king and Haman come today to a
banquet that I have prepared for the
king." 5 Then the king said, "Bring Ha-
man quickly, so that we may do as Esther
desires." So the king and Haman came to
the banquet that Esther had prepared.
6 While they were drinking wine, the king
said to Esther, "What is your petition? It
shall be granted you. And what is your
request? Even to the half of my kingdom,
it shall be fulfilled." 7 Then Esther said,
"This is my petition and request: 8 If I
have won the king's favor, and if it pleases
the king to grant my petition and fulfill
my request, let the king and Haman come
tomorrow to the banquet that I will pre-
pare for them, and then I will do as the
king has said."

Haman Plans to Have Mordecai Hanged

9 Haman went out that day happy and
in good spirits. But when Haman saw
Mordecai in the king's gate, and observed
that he neither rose nor trembled before
him, he was infuriated with Mordecai;
10 nevertheless Haman restrained himself
and went home. Then he sent and called
for his friends and his wife Zeresh, 11 and
Haman recounted to them the splendor
of his riches, the number of his sons, all
the promotions with which the king had
honored him, and how he had advanced
him above the officials and the ministers
of the king. 12 Haman added, "Even
Queen Esther let no one but myself come
with the king to the banquet that she pre-
pared. Tomorrow also I am invited by
her, together with the king. 13 Yet all this
does me no good so long as I see the Jew
Mordecai sitting at the king's gate."
14 Then his wife Zeresh and all his friends
said to him, "Let a gallows fifty cubits high
be made, and in the morning tell the king
to have Mordecai hanged on it; then go
with the king to the banquet in good spir-
its." This advice pleased Haman, and he
had the gallows made.

The King Honors Mordecai

6 On that night the king could not
sleep, and he gave orders to bring
the book of records, the annals, and they
were read to the king. 2 It was found

5.1–8 Esther's first banquet. **5.2** The Greek both makes this scene more suspenseful and overtly refers to divine providential direction of events (Addition D). **5.3** Herod makes just this exaggerated promise to Salome (Mk 6.23), and Herodotus (*History* 9.109–11) tells of a similar one that Xerxes offered his mistress Artaynte, which came to haunt him. **5.4** Many motives have been suggested for Esther's delays (see also 5.8) in interceding for her people, for example, to inflate Haman's self-assurance or to allow the king privacy to act against the man he earlier elevated. These delays heighten literary suspense, allowing additional plot complications. **5.6** See note on 5.3. **5.8** In light of what might have happened to Mordecai between Esther's first and second banquet, her second delay tempts fate.

5.9–14 Haman makes plans to have Mordecai hanged. **5.9–13** Dining alone with the king and queen confirms Haman's elevated position in his own eyes; by contrast the sight of unrepentant Mordecai calls his position into question. **5.10** *Friends*, lit. "those who love him." **5.11** *His sons* will be numbered again in their death in 9.7–10. **5.14** *Fifty cubits* is 75 feet! Haman, Zeresh, and his friends can plot to execute Mordecai, but only the king can condemn someone to death. *Hanged*, See 2.23.

6.1–11 The king honors Mordecai. **6.1** That the *king could not sleep* is the first of several coincidences, interpreted by some as providential, that make this an especially fortunate night for Esther and Mordecai. Her second delay in petitioning for deliverance (5.8) could have turned the second private banquet into a wake. The Greek version attributes the king's insomnia to

written how Mordecai had told about
Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's
eunuchs, who guarded the threshold, and
who had conspired to assassinate[l] King
Ahasuerus. 3 Then the king said, "What
honor or distinction has been bestowed on
Mordecai for this?" The king's servants
who attended him said, "Nothing has
been done for him." 4 The king said,
"Who is in the court?" Now Haman had
just entered the outer court of the king's
palace to speak to the king about having
Mordecai hanged on the gallows that he
had prepared for him. 5 So the king's ser-
vants told him, "Haman is there, standing
in the court." The king said, "Let him
come in." 6 So Haman came in, and the
king said to him, "What shall be done for
the man whom the king wishes to honor?"
Haman said to himself, "Whom would the
king wish to honor more than me?" 7 So
Haman said to the king, "For the man
whom the king wishes to honor, 8 let royal
robes be brought, which the king has
worn, and a horse that the king has rid-
den, with a royal crown on its head. 9 Let
the robes and the horse be handed over to
one of the king's most noble officials; let
him[m] robe the man whom the king wishes
to honor, and let him[m] conduct the man
on horseback through the open square of
the city, proclaiming before him: 'Thus
shall it be done for the man whom the
king wishes to honor.'" 10 Then the king
said to Haman, "Quickly, take the robes
and the horse, as you have said, and do so
to the Jew Mordecai who sits at the king's
gate. Leave out nothing that you have
mentioned." 11 So Haman took the robes
and the horse and robed Mordecai and
led him riding through the open square
of the city, proclaiming, "Thus shall it be
done for the man whom the king wishes
to honor."

Haman's Downfall and Mordecai's Advancement

12 Then Mordecai returned to the
king's gate, but Haman hurried to his
house, mourning and with his head cov-
ered. 13 When Haman told his wife Zeresh
and all his friends everything that had
happened to him, his advisers and his
wife Zeresh said to him, "If Mordecai,
before whom your downfall has begun,
is of the Jewish people, you will not pre-
vail against him, but will surely fall be-
fore him."
14 While they were still talking with
him, the king's eunuchs arrived and hur-
ried Haman off to the banquet that Es-
ther had prepared.
7 1 So the king and
Haman went in to feast with Queen
Esther. 2 On the second day, as they were
drinking wine, the king again said to Es-
ther, "What is your petition, Queen Es-
ther? It shall be granted you. And what is
your request? Even to the half of my king-
dom, it shall be fulfilled." 3 Then Queen
Esther answered, "If I have won your fa-
vor, O king, and if it pleases the king, let
my life be given me—that is my petition—
and the lives of my people—that is my
request. 4 For we have been sold, I and my
people, to be destroyed, to be killed, and
to be annihilated. If we had been sold
merely as slaves, men and women, I
would have held my peace; but no enemy

l Heb *to lay hands on* *m* Heb *them*

God. **6.2** See 2.23. **6.4–5** Ironically Haman's eagerness immediately to be rid of Mordecai brings him early to court, just at the moment the king needs advice on how to reward one who saved his life. **6.6** In his eagerness for recognition Haman fails to note that the king has not named the one he wishes to honor; his inflated self-assurance leads to a fatal assumption. **6.8** Cf. Gen 41.42–43. Horses with royal crowns are depicted in Persian reliefs. **6.9, 11** Mordecai's honor and Haman's chagrin are witnessed by all in the *open square*. **6.10** If the king really knows that Mordecai is a *Jew*, he seems not to connect him to the edict issued under his seal (3.12–15). **6.11** The substance of any conversation between Haman and Mordecai or Haman's own feelings are left to readers to supply.

6.12–8.2 Haman's downfall and Mordecai's advancement. **6.12–13** Haman's *covered* head signals grief for indignities just suffered. Unintentionally it also signals the fate awaiting him, as is clear to his wife and friends, who prove wise after the fact (cf. 5.9–14). **6.14** This escort is a sign of honor. Esther's second banquet is Haman's last hope to redeem a disastrous day. **7.2** See 6.3, 6. *Drinking wine*, lit. "at the feast of wine," recalls the extensive drinking that opens the story with Vashti's fall from royal favor. Soon a second favorite of the king will fall. **7.4** Their being *sold* refers to Haman's bribe in 3.9. The last clause of Esther's rationale for her request in v. 3 is not clear. Some follow the Greek to suggest that if they were merely sold as slaves the "problem would not have been worth bothering the king."

can compensate for this damage to the
king."[n] 5 Then King Ahasuerus said to
Queen Esther, "Who is he, and where is
he, who has presumed to do this?" 6 Es-
ther said, "A foe and enemy, this wicked
Haman!" Then Haman was terrified be-
fore the king and the queen. 7 The king
rose from the feast in wrath and went into
the palace garden, but Haman stayed to
beg his life from Queen Esther, for he saw
that the king had determined to destroy
him. 8 When the king returned from the
palace garden to the banquet hall, Haman
had thrown himself on the couch where
Esther was reclining; and the king said,
"Will he even assault the queen in my
presence, in my own house?" As the
words left the mouth of the king, they
covered Haman's face. 9 Then Harbona,
one of the eunuchs in attendance on the
king, said, "Look, the very gallows that
Haman has prepared for Mordecai,
whose word saved the king, stands at Ha-
man's house, fifty cubits high." And the
king said, "Hang him on that." 10 So they
hanged Haman on the gallows that he
had prepared for Mordecai. Then the an-
ger of the king abated.

8 On that day King Ahasuerus gave to
Queen Esther the house of Haman,
the enemy of the Jews; and Mordecai
came before the king, for Esther had told
what he was to her. 2 Then the king took
off his signet ring, which he had taken
from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai. So
Esther set Mordecai over the house of
Haman.

Esther Saves the Jews

3 Then Esther spoke again to the
king; she fell at his feet, weeping and
pleading with him to avert the evil design
of Haman the Agagite and the plot that
he had devised against the Jews. 4 The
king held out the golden scepter to Es-
ther, 5 and Esther rose and stood before
the king. She said, "If it pleases the king,
and if I have won his favor, and if the
thing seems right before the king, and I
have his approval, let an order be written
to revoke the letters devised by Haman
son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which
he wrote giving orders to destroy the Jews
who are in all the provinces of the king.
6 For how can I bear to see the calamity
that is coming on my people? Or how can
I bear to see the destruction of my kin-
dred?" 7 Then King Ahasuerus said to
Queen Esther and to the Jew Mordecai,
"See, I have given Esther the house of Ha-
man, and they have hanged him on the
gallows, because he plotted to lay hands
on the Jews. 8 You may write as you please
with regard to the Jews, in the name of
the king, and seal it with the king's ring;
for an edict written in the name of the
king and sealed with the king's ring can-
not be revoked."

9 The king's secretaries were sum-
moned at that time, in the third month,
which is the month of Sivan, on the
twenty-third day; and an edict was writ-
ten, according to all that Mordecai com-
manded, to the Jews and to the satraps

n Meaning of Heb uncertain

7.6 Esther's demonstrative *this* in identifying Haman as the enemy is the narrative equivalent of pointing an accusing finger at him. **7.7–8** The king's exit allows Haman one last plea for his life, ironically from the one whom he unknowingly sought to destroy. His attempt seals his fate, as the king mistakes his posture of supplication before the reclining Esther as an assault upon the queen. The shame foreseen in 6.12–13 is complete, as now they *covered Haman's face.* **7.9–10** The eunuch appears at just the right moment; the ironic reversal of intent and result is complete. **8.1–2** Esther indirectly secures Haman's royal office and power for Mordecai, which he receives with the *signet ring* (see 3.10). She directly provides him the wealth commensurate with his new position by transferring to him Haman's estate.

8.3–17 Esther saves the Jews. **8.3–5** It is not clear whether this is a second audience with the king or a continuation of that in 8.1–2. Esther's dramatic obeisance and courtly language allow her to imply that Haman, not the king, is responsible for the edict ordering her people's death. This helps win his encouragement to present her additional request, shown as he extends the golden scepter (see 5.2). **8.8** See 1.19. 8.8–13 closely parallels 3.9–15, since the second decree cannot simply annul the first but must allow action by the Jews to counter any who would now act on it even after Haman's fall. The king continues his hands-off administrative style and trusts Esther and Mordecai just as he once trusted Haman. **8.9** Recalling 1.1 and 3.12, this verse sets the stage for the final reversal of Haman's designs, counterbalancing his edict commanding the destruction of the Jews. *Sivan* is May-June.

and the governors and the officials of the
provinces from India to Ethiopia,[o] one
hundred twenty-seven provinces, to every
province in its own script and to every
people in its own language, and also to the
Jews in their script and their language.
10 He wrote letters in the name of King
Ahasuerus, sealed them with the king's
ring, and sent them by mounted couriers
riding on fast steeds bred from the royal
herd.[p] 11 By these letters the king allowed
the Jews who were in every city to assem-
ble and defend their lives, to destroy, to
kill, and to annihilate any armed force of
any people or province that might attack
them, with their children and women, and
to plunder their goods 12 on a single day
throughout all the provinces of King
Ahasuerus, on the thirteenth day of the
twelfth month, which is the month of
Adar. 13 A copy of the writ was to be is-
sued as a decree in every province and
published to all peoples, and the Jews
were to be ready on that day to take re-
venge on their enemies. 14 So the couriers,
mounted on their swift royal steeds, hur-
ried out, urged by the king's command.
The decree was issued in the citadel of
Susa.

15 Then Mordecai went out from the
presence of the king, wearing royal robes
of blue and white, with a great golden
crown and a mantle of fine linen and pur-
ple, while the city of Susa shouted and re-
joiced. 16 For the Jews there was light and
gladness, joy and honor. 17 In every prov-
ince and in every city, wherever the king's
command and his edict came, there was
gladness and joy among the Jews, a festi-
val and a holiday. Furthermore, many of
the peoples of the country professed to be
Jews, because the fear of the Jews had
fallen upon them.

Destruction of the Enemies of the Jews

9 Now in the twelfth month, which is
the month of Adar, on the thir-
teenth day, when the king's command and
edict were about to be executed, on the
very day when the enemies of the Jews
hoped to gain power over them, but
which had been changed to a day when
the Jews would gain power over their
foes, 2 the Jews gathered in their cities
throughout all the provinces of King
Ahasuerus to lay hands on those who had
sought their ruin; and no one could with-
stand them, because the fear of them had
fallen upon all peoples. 3 All the officials
of the provinces, the satraps and the gov-
ernors, and the royal officials were sup-
porting the Jews, because the fear of
Mordecai had fallen upon them. 4 For
Mordecai was powerful in the king's
house, and his fame spread throughout
all the provinces as the man Mordecai
grew more and more powerful. 5 So the
Jews struck down all their enemies with
the sword, slaughtering, and destroying
them, and did as they pleased to those
who hated them. 6 In the citadel of Susa

o Or *Nubia*; Heb *Cush* *p* Meaning of Heb uncertain

8.10 *Couriers.* See 1.22; 3.15. **8.11–12** The wording recalls what Haman wrote (3.13) in an exact and vengeful manner that some interpreters have found offensive. The effect is to reverse in every detail what Haman planned for the Jews. **8.12** The Greek supplies a copy of the letter (Addition E). **8.13** The distribution is like that of the earlier decree (3.14). **8.15** As the scene progresses, attention shifts from Esther to *Mordecai*, who appears in public arrayed in garb appropriate to his new position, a signal of the change in the fortunes of the Jews (cf. 4.1–2). That the city of Susa *shouted and rejoiced* contrasts with its confusion in 3.15. **8.16** A reversal of 4.3, 16. **8.17** Some interpret the professing *to be Jews* by the people of the country to mean they took sides with the Jews. Others suggest that they pretended to be Jews out of fear, while others claim they converted to Judaism (the Greek version claims they were circumcised). This is a final reversal of Haman's schemes: those he sought to set against the Jews now actually join them. The festival provides a final feast in this story punctuated with fateful feasting and drinking. The details for this annual celebration as a *holiday* or "good day," a term later used for religious celebrations, are given in ch. 9.

9.1–19 The destruction of the enemies of the Jews. **9.1** The date determined in 3.7 and mentioned in 8.12 is described now as a day of reversed expectations. **9.3** Cf. the attitude of Mordecai's colleagues in 3.3–4. **9.4** Mordecai now commands the respect that officials showed Haman (3.2); they act in unspecified ways to join him. **9.5–6** That the Jews here would treat their enemies as they would have been treated by them is found to be understandable by some in the light of other pogroms Jewish communities have faced. Others, however, are troubled by this apparent descent to the level of the brutality of the en-

the Jews killed and destroyed five hundred people. 7 They killed Parshandatha,
Dalphon, Aspatha, 8 Poratha, Adalia,
Aridatha, 9 Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai, Vaizatha, 10 the ten sons of Haman son of
Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews; but
they did not touch the plunder.

11 That very day the number of those killed in the citadel of Susa was reported to the king. 12 The king said to Queen Esther, "In the citadel of Susa the Jews have killed five hundred people and also the ten sons of Haman. What have they done in the rest of the king's provinces? Now what is your petition? It shall be granted you. And what further is your request? It shall be fulfilled." 13 Esther said, "If it pleases the king, let the Jews who are in Susa be allowed tomorrow also to do according to this day's edict, and let the ten sons of Haman be hanged on the gallows." 14 So the king commanded this to be done; a decree was issued in Susa, and the ten sons of Haman were hanged. 15 The Jews who were in Susa gathered also on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar and they killed three hundred persons in Susa; but they did not touch the plunder.

16 Now the other Jews who were in the king's provinces also gathered to defend their lives, and gained relief from their enemies, and killed seventy-five thousand of those who hated them; but they laid no hands on the plunder. 17 This was on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar, and on the fourteenth day they rested and made that a day of feasting and gladness.

18 But the Jews who were in Susa gathered on the thirteenth day and on the fourteenth, and rested on the fifteenth day, making that a day of feasting and gladness. 19 Therefore the Jews of the villages, who live in the open towns, hold the fourteenth day of the month of Adar as a day for gladness and feasting, a holiday on which they send gifts of food to one another.

The Feast of Purim Inaugurated

20 Mordecai recorded these things, and sent letters to all the Jews who were in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, both near and far, 21 enjoining them that they should keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar and also the fifteenth day of the same month, year by year, 22 as the days on which the Jews gained relief from their enemies, and as the month that had been turned for them from sorrow into gladness and from mourning into a holiday; that they should make them days of feasting and gladness, days for sending gifts of food to one another and presents to the poor. 23 So the Jews adopted as a custom what they had begun to do, as Mordecai had written to them.

24 Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast Pur—that is "the lot"—to crush and destroy them; 25 but when Esther came before the king, he gave orders in writing that the wicked plot that he had devised against the Jews should come upon his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows. 26 Therefore these days are called Purim, from the word Pur. Thus because of all that was written in this letter, and of what

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emy. **9.7–10** This numbering of Haman's many *sons*, an item in his earlier boasting (5.11), is written in Hebrew texts in a tabular form, one name beneath another and the sum totaled (cf. the list of slain kings in Josh 12.9–24). **9.10** That the Jews *did not touch the plunder* (stressed in vv. 15–16 also), although they were allowed to do so (8.11), suggests they were fighting for survival and not increased wealth. This notice recalls difficulties earlier plunder taken from Agag and the Amalekites (3.1) caused Saul (1 Sam 15). Cf. also Abraham's refusal of plunder in Gen 14.22–24. **9.12** Sensing that Esther is not satisfied, the king gives her carte blanche once again. **9.13–14** See 5.14. As they are already dead, this entails exposure of their bodies, perhaps as a deterrent to others who might attack Jews. **9.15** The second day of killing in *Susa* accounts for the difference between celebrations of Purim in city and country. **9.16** The total of those killed is huge—*seventy-five thousand*. **9.17–19** Different patterns in the celebration of Purim are provided a historical basis.

9.20–32 The feast of Purim is inaugurated. **9.20–23** Mordecai, the most powerful official in the Persian government, authorizes the annual celebration on both the fourteenth and fifteenth of Adar (cf. 9.17–19), including exchange of *gifts of food* and *presents to the poor*. **9.24–25** This terse summary stresses the theme of retributive justice. **9.26** The name *Purim* is expressly linked with the word *Pur* (see 3.7). *This letter* is presum-

they had faced in this matter, and of what
had happened to them, 27 the Jews estab-
lished and accepted as a custom for them-
selves and their descendants and all who
joined them, that without fail they would
continue to observe these two days every
year, as it was written and at the time
appointed. 28 These days should be remem-
bered and kept throughout every gen-
eration, in every family, province, and
city; and these days of Purim should
never fall into disuse among the Jews, nor
should the commemoration of these days
cease among their descendants.

29 Queen Esther daughter of Abihail,
along with the Jew Mordecai, gave full
written authority, confirming this second
letter about Purim. 30 Letters were sent
wishing peace and security to all the Jews,
to the one hundred twenty-seven prov-
inces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, 31 and
giving orders that these days of Purim
should be observed at their appointed sea-
sons, as the Jew Mordecai and Queen Es-
ther enjoined on the Jews, just as they had
laid down for themselves and for their de-
scendants regulations concerning their
fasts and their lamentations. 32 The com-
mand of Queen Esther fixed these prac-
tices of Purim, and it was recorded in
writing.

Mordecai and the King

10 King Ahasuerus laid tribute on
the land and on the islands of the
sea. 2 All the acts of his power and might,
and the full account of the high honor of
Mordecai, to which the king advanced
him, are they not written in the annals of
the kings of Media and Persia? 3 For Mor-
decai the Jew was next in rank to King
Ahasuerus, and he was powerful among
the Jews and popular with his many kin-
dred, for he sought the good of his people
and interceded for the welfare of all his
descendants.

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ably that sent by Mordecai in 9.20. **9.27–28** The emphasis on keeping the feast annually through the years and generations and the stress on written records and instructions (see 9.20, 23, 29, 32) seem designed to secure a place in the Jewish calendar for a celebration not authorized in the Torah and whose legitimacy might therefore seem in doubt. **9.29** Presumably this *second letter* is Mordecai's in 9.20. **9.30** See 1.1. **9.31** The phrase *their fasts and their lamentations*, syntactically disconnected from the rest of the verse in Hebrew, introduces an element into the observance of Purim not mentioned before and contrasting with its tone of joy and celebration.

10.1–3 Mordecai and the king. The story ends as it began, with the focus on the greatness of the king. But now the king's fortunes are firmly linked to those of Mordecai and the Jews. **10.1** The *tribute* may show the extent of the realm (1.1), including now even the *islands of the sea*, or it may be an alternative and peaceable way to enrich the royal coffers, making up the loss of Haman's ten thousand talents (3.9). **10.2** Reference to these *annals of the kings of Media and Persia* (cf. 1 Kings 11.41; 14.19; 15.23; 2 Chr 25.26) gives an air of historical veracity to the story. **10.3** Although the book bears her name, Esther is missing from this final notice of Mordecai's greatness and popularity. The Greek version begins and ends quite differently (Additions A and F).

JOB

THE CENTRAL THEME of the book of Job is the possibility of disinterested righteousness. The author asks whether virtue depends on a universe that operates by the principle of reward and punishment. At stake is the very survival of religious faith. If people will serve God without thought of the carrot or the stick, then religion will outlast any eventuality. Even innocent suffering will not quench the fires of spiritual devotion. Job's response to adversity in the prologue affirms such faith. The author also takes up the problem of undeserved suffering, suggesting how one ought and ought not to behave when calamity strikes. Answers to the problem of innocent suffering vary, indicating their inadequacy—the retributive, disciplinary, probative, eschatological, redemptive, revelatory, ineffable, and incidental.

Structure

The book's structure can be viewed from the standpoint of its diction, drama, or individual components in outline form. A frame narrative, in prose, encloses a poetic debate. The combination is found also in some other ancient wisdom texts, such as the Aramaic *Ahikar* and the Egyptian *Instruction of Ankhsheshonky*. Alternatively, three dramatic episodes take place, each introduced by brief comments in 1.1–5; 2.11–13; 32.1–5. Thus the hero is afflicted (1.1–2.10), complains, and is rebuked by three friends (2.11–31.40), and after a young enthusiast takes up the task of demonstrating Job's folly, God rebukes Job but restores him (32.1–42.17). A more natural division consists of Job's affliction (1–2), a dispute between him and three friends (3–31), a monologue by a previously unmentioned person (32–37), two divine speeches and two submissions on Job's part (38.1–42.6), and a prose "happy ending" (42.7–17).

Tensions exist between prose and poetry and even within each literary form: the story's patient hero and the defiant Job of the dialogue; a divinely commended hero in the prose and a rebuked one in the poetry; the divine name Yahweh in the folktale and El, Eloah, and Shaddai in the poetry (with one exception); a "happy ending" despite the argument of the hero that God does not deal with humans on the basis of merit; vanishing characters—the Satan and

Elihu; a hymn (ch. 28) that anticipates the answer provided by the theophany; and two divine speeches and two responses. To be sure, skilled authors can use dissonance effectively, and this technique cannot be ruled out altogether.

Setting

The date of the book and the setting for the action differ considerably. The events are set in patriarchal (or prepatriarchal) times when heroes such as Noah, Danel, and Job (cf. Ezek 14.14, 20) are thought to have lived. The possessions of Job are appropriate to that age: cattle and servants. The monetary unit in the epilogue (42.11) is mentioned elsewhere only in Gen 33.19 (and Josh 24.32, alluding to this incident). Job's three friends and the enemy marauders, Sabeans and Chaldeans, belong to clans from the patriarchal world. His sacrifice of animals accords with practice prior to the time of official priests. The life span of the restored hero is at home in patriarchal times. The name Job, which could be translated "enemy," corresponds to Akkadian names such as "Where is the divine father?" and "Inveterate Foe/Hated One."

Date

The actual date of composition cannot be determined, although many critics place the book in the late sixth or fifth century B.C.E. Several things point to this date: the linguistic evidence, the possible allusion to the Behistun Rock, the mention of caravans from Tema and Sheba, the nomenclature of officials, which seems to follow the practice during Persian times, and the development of the figure of the Satan, corresponding to the stage represented by Zechariah but less developed than that presented in Chronicles. The development of theological ideas in the book may also support this relatively late date when compared with similar literary complexes, Jeremiah's laments, the lyrical hymns in Second Isaiah (Isa 40–55, sixth century B.C.E.), hymnic fragments in the book of Amos, and Pss 37; 49; 73. In addition, the book's monotheism and monogamy may demand a reasonably late date. None of these arguments is decisive, and the date must be left open. The choice of an Edomite for the hero is strange after 587/6 B.C.E., but the patriarchal setting ruled out an Israelite, and the Edomites were celebrated for wisdom. The book's silence about the events of the exile occasions surprise, given the utility of this analogy with the miseries that befell the hero. The *Targum of Job* and the *Testament of Job*, works from the Second Temple period, prove that the biblical text of Job was in circulation by the end of the second century B.C.E. The *Testament of Job* expands the tradition considerably, exaggerating Job's charity, depicting his wife favorably, emphasizing his fight against idolatry, speculating widely about Satan, and alluding to cosmological dualism, magic, and mysticism. The Letter of James recalls the folktale about the endurance of Job (5.11).

Related Texts

Several ancient texts resemble the book of Job to some degree. From the twelfth dynasty in Egypt (1990–1785 B.C.E.) come "The Admonitions of Ipuwer," "A Dispute Between a Man and His Ba (Soul)," and "The Eloquent Peasant." Four texts from second-millennium Mesopotamia furnish closer parallels: the Sumerian "A Man and His God," "I Will Praise the Lord of Wisdom," "The Babylonian Theodicy," and "A Dialogue Between a Master and His Slave." Parallels to the Canaanite Keret legend are more remote. *James L. Crenshaw*

Job and His Family

1 There was once a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job. That man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil. 2 There were born to him seven sons and three daughters. 3 He had seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred donkeys, and very many servants; so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the east. 4 His sons used to go and hold feasts in one another's houses in turn; and they would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. 5 And when the feast days had run their course, Job would send and sanctify them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all; for Job said, "It may be that my children have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts." This is what Job always did.

Attack on Job's Character

6 One day the heavenly beings[a] came to present themselves before the LORD,

a Heb *sons of God*

1.1–2.13 The prologue. A folktale in elevated prose, akin to epic narrative, sets the stage on which the drama of Job's extreme suffering unfolds. The story's action alternates between earth and heaven (e.g., 1.1–5 describes a scene on earth, 1.6–12 one in heaven, with 1.13–22 returning to earth, 2.1–6 occurring in heaven, and 2.7–10 concluding the events on earth). Each scene ends decisively. The first has a remark about Job's habitual conduct; the second and fourth scenes comment on the Adversary's (the Satan's) departure from God's court; and the third and fifth represent the narrator's assessment of Job's innocence despite adverse circumstances. An introduction of Job's three friends (2.11–13) links this earlier story to the poetic dialogue in 3.1–42.6. **1.1** *There once was a man.* The unusual form in Hebrew ("A man there was" instead of "There was a man") emphasizes the name *Job*, well attested in ancient Egypt (letters from Tell el-Amarna and execration texts), Mesopotamia (Mari), and northern Palestine (Alalakh, Ugarit). A possible pun in 13.24 may refer to a popular etymology of the word as "enemy." Perhaps the unknown *Uz* plays on the sound of the Hebrew word for "counsel." Competing traditions place Uz in Hauran and in Edom. The prophet Ezekiel associates Job with ancient heroes Noah and Danel (Ezek 14.14, 20). According to Israel's sages responsible for the final redaction of Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, Sirach, and the Wisdom of Solomon, the fear of God was the first principle and/or chief ingredient of knowledge (cf. Prov 1.7). **1.2** The numbers *seven* and *three* were thought to indicate completion. The Canaanite god Baal had seven sons and three daughters. **1.3** Job's wealth consists of animals and slaves rather than silver and gold. The setting is patriarchal. **1.5** The Hebrew has the verb for "bless" in place of *curse* here and in 1.11; 2.5, 9, presumably a euphemism to avoid the blasphemous thought of actually cursing the Lord, although this is conceivably a literary device to stress the heinousness of the act. The word in both senses, of blessing and cursing, becomes thematic in the story, along with the Hebrew word translated *for nothing* (1.9) and *for no reason* (2.3). **1.6** The article with the word *Satan* indicates that an office is involved, something like a CIA agent. The Accuser is therefore in the Lord's imperial service. The word occurs elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible only in Zech 3.1–2; 1 Chr 21.1. It seems to represent the

and Satan[b] also came among them. 7 The
LORD said to Satan,[b] "Where have you
come from?" Satan[b] answered the LORD,
"From going to and fro on the earth, and
from walking up and down on it." 8 The
LORD said to Satan,[b] "Have you consid-
ered my servant Job? There is no one like
him on the earth, a blameless and upright
man who fears God and turns away from
evil." 9 Then Satan[b] answered the LORD,
"Does Job fear God for nothing? 10 Have
you not put a fence around him and his
house and all that he has, on every side?
You have blessed the work of his hands,
and his possessions have increased in the
land. 11 But stretch out your hand now,
and touch all that he has, and he will curse
you to your face." 12 The LORD said to Sa-
tan,[b] "Very well, all that he has is in your
power; only do not stretch out your hand
against him!" So Satan[b] went out from
the presence of the LORD.

Job Loses Property and Children

13 One day when his sons and daugh-
ters were eating and drinking wine in the
eldest brother's house, 14 a messenger
came to Job and said, "The oxen were
plowing and the donkeys were feeding be-
side them, 15 and the Sabeans fell on them
and carried them off, and killed the ser-
vants with the edge of the sword; I alone
have escaped to tell you." 16 While he was
still speaking, another came and said,
"The fire of God fell from heaven and
burned up the sheep and the servants,
and consumed them; I alone have es-
caped to tell you." 17 While he was still
speaking, another came and said, "The
Chaldeans formed three columns, made a
raid on the camels and carried them off,
and killed the servants with the edge of
the sword; I alone have escaped to tell
you." 18 While he was still speaking, an-
other came and said, "Your sons and
daughters were eating and drinking wine
in their eldest brother's house, 19 and sud-
denly a great wind came across the desert,
struck the four corners of the house, and
it fell on the young people, and they are
dead; I alone have escaped to tell you."
20 Then Job arose, tore his robe,
shaved his head, and fell on the ground
and worshiped. 21 He said, "Naked I came
from my mother's womb, and naked shall
I return there; the LORD gave, and the
LORD has taken away; blessed be the name
of the LORD."
22 In all this Job did not sin or charge
God with wrongdoing.

Attack on Job's Health

2 One day the heavenly beings[c] came
to present themselves before the
LORD, and Satan[b] also came among them
to present himself before the LORD. 2 The
LORD said to Satan,[b] "Where have you
come from?" Satan[d] answered the LORD,
"From going to and fro on the earth, and
from walking up and down on it." 3 The
LORD said to Satan,[b] "Have you consid-
ered my servant Job? There is no one like
him on the earth, a blameless and upright
man who fears God and turns away from
evil. He still persists in his integrity, al-
though you incited me against him, to de-
stroy him for no reason." 4 Then Satan[b]
answered the LORD, "Skin for skin! All
that people have they will give to save
their lives.[e] 5 But stretch out your hand
now and touch his bone and his flesh, and
he will curse you to your face." 6 The
LORD said to Satan,[b] "Very well, he is in
your power; only spare his life."
7 So Satan[b] went out from the pres-
ence of the LORD, and inflicted loathsome
sores on Job from the sole of his foot to

b Or *the Accuser*; Heb *ha-satan*
c Heb *sons of God*
d Or *The Accuser*; Heb *ha-satan*
e Or *All that the man has he will give for his life*

Lord's master spy on the road toward becoming a hostile agent. **1.8** The story uses repetition to great literary effect (e.g., 1.1, 8 and 2.3; 1.22 and 2.10; 1.15, 16, 17, 18, 19; 1.6–8 and 2.1–3). **1.13** An effective illusion of well-being, soon shattered. **1.15** *Sabeans*, perhaps northern Arabians, not southern Arabians or those living in Africa. The queen of Sheba, said in 1 Kings 10 to have visited King Solomon, traveled from a distant land. **1.17** *Chaldeans*, probably seminomadic marauders rather than citizens of the Neo-Babylonian Empire that was founded in the seventh century B.C.E. **1.21** The adverb *there* refers neither to the mother's womb nor to mother earth; rather the word is a euphemism for the realm of the dead (cf. 3.17–19). This powerful expression of fidelity takes poetic form, using both synonymous and antithetic parallelism.

2.4 *Skin for skin*, a difficult expression, probably associated with barter, although one normally gives an item in exchange for one of a

the crown of his head. 8 Job[f] took a potsherd with which to scrape himself, and sat among the ashes.

9 Then his wife said to him, "Do you still persist in your integrity? Curse[g] God, and die." 10 But he said to her, "You speak as any foolish woman would speak. Shall we receive the good at the hand of God, and not receive the bad?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

Job's Three Friends

11 Now when Job's three friends heard of all these troubles that had come upon him, each of them set out from his home—Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. They met together to go and console and comfort him. 12 When they saw him from a distance, they did not recognize him, and they raised their voices and wept aloud; they tore their robes and threw dust in the air upon their heads. 13 They sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great.

Job Curses the Day He Was Born

3 After this Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth. 2 Job said:

3 "Let the day perish in which I
was born,
and the night that said,
'A man-child is conceived.'

4 Let that day be darkness!
May God above not seek it,
or light shine on it.

5 Let gloom and deep darkness
claim it.
Let clouds settle upon it;
let the blackness of the day
terrify it.

6 That night—let thick darkness
seize it!
let it not rejoice among the
days of the year;
let it not come into the number
of the months.

7 Yes, let that night be barren;
let no joyful cry be heard[h]
in it.

8 Let those curse it who curse
the Sea,[i]
those who are skilled to rouse
up Leviathan.

9 Let the stars of its dawn be dark;
let it hope for light, but have
none;
may it not see the eyelids of the
morning—

10 because it did not shut the doors
of my mother's womb,
and hide trouble from my eyes.

11 "Why did I not die at birth,
come forth from the womb and
expire?

f Heb *He* g Heb *Bless* h Heb *come*
i Cn: Heb *day*

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different kind. **2.8** The *scraping* was either for relief of the itching or for self-mortification. **2.10** The word for *foolish* is strong, which suggests that Job did not understand his wife as sympathetically suggesting a form of euthanasia. The later pseudepigraphical *Testament of Job* depicts the wife quite favorably. Later interpreters emphasize the decisive change in the narrator's summary statement: *Job did not sin with his lips*, but his heart was a different matter. **2.11** Job's *three friends* are placed in the vicinity of Edom and Arabia. The former was famous for wisdom, according to various OT texts. The intermezzo of silence has powerful psychological force.

3.1–42.6 The poetic dialogue. A dispute between Job and three friends begins with his lament. Each of the friends addresses Job, and he responds for three cycles of speeches. The third is abbreviated by Bildad's short speech and complete silence on Zophar's part. Job's nostalgic glance backward and graphic description of his present woes is interrupted by a hymn on wisdom's inaccessibility (ch. 28). Then Job pronounces an oath of innocence, demanding that God respond. Instead, a brash Elihu challenges Job; afterward, God speaks to Job from a whirlwind. **3.1** The verb for *curse* differs from that used in the prologue. This anticosmic curse in 3.3–10 uses the language of the creation account in Gen 1.1–2.4 (cf. Jer 20.14–18). **3.3** The unusual word for *man-child* often refers to someone much older than an infant, at times even a soldier. **3.8** The Hebrew words for *day* (text note *i*) and *sea* are similar, differing only in vowel. Both Sea and Leviathan were thought to represent chaos in ancient myth (cf. Yamm and Lotan in Ugaritic myths). Professional diviners practiced magical cursing (cf. Balaam in Num 22–24).

12 Why were there knees to receive me,
or breasts for me to suck?
13 Now I would be lying down and quiet;
I would be asleep; then I would be at rest
14 with kings and counselors of the earth
who rebuild ruins for themselves,
15 or with princes who have gold,
who fill their houses with silver.
16 Or why was I not buried like a stillborn child,
like an infant that never sees the light?
17 There the wicked cease from troubling,
and there the weary are at rest.
18 There the prisoners are at ease together;
they do not hear the voice of the taskmaster.
19 The small and the great are there,
and the slaves are free from their masters.

20 "Why is light given to one in misery,
and life to the bitter in soul,
21 who long for death, but it does not come,
and dig for it more than for hidden treasures;
22 who rejoice exceedingly,
and are glad when they find the grave?
23 Why is light given to one who cannot see the way,
whom God has fenced in?
24 For my sighing comes like[j] my bread,
and my groanings are poured out like water.
25 Truly the thing that I fear comes upon me,
and what I dread befalls me.
26 I am not at ease, nor am I quiet;
I have no rest; but trouble comes."

Eliphaz Speaks: Job Has Sinned

4 Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered:
2 "If one ventures a word with you, will you be offended?
But who can keep from speaking?
3 See, you have instructed many;
you have strengthened the weak hands.
4 Your words have supported those who were stumbling,
and you have made firm the feeble knees.
5 But now it has come to you, and you are impatient;
it touches you, and you are dismayed.
6 Is not your fear of God your confidence,
and the integrity of your ways your hope?

7 "Think now, who that was innocent ever perished?
Or where were the upright cut off?
8 As I have seen, those who plow iniquity
and sow trouble reap the same.
9 By the breath of God they perish,
and by the blast of his anger they are consumed.
10 The roar of the lion, the voice of the fierce lion,
and the teeth of the young lions are broken.

j Heb *before*

3.12 An allusion to the practice of placing a newborn infant on its mother's *knees*, or on its father's, as an expression of acknowledgment (cf. Sir 15.2). **3.23** The verb for *fenced in* differs from that used in 1.10.

4.6 Two of Job's four attributes from the story (1.1, 8) recur here, although in different form (the Hebrew lacks the word "God" in *fear of God*, and *your ways* qualifies *integrity*). **4.7–8** The logic of Eliphaz's argument condemns Job's children, and the language of destruction recalls the blast of wind that struck the house in which they perished. Eliphaz appeals here to the Israelite notion of divine retribution, a teaching that raised the issue of theodicy in various quarters (cf. Ps 37.25). **4.9** *The breath of God* animated the first human couple, according to Gen 2.7, but now that life-giving force seeks destruction. **4.10–11** Five different words for *lion* occur here; a similar richness of vocabulary in Joel 1.4 mentions four

11 The strong lion perishes for lack of prey,
and the whelps of the lioness are scattered.

12 "Now a word came stealing to me,
my ear received the whisper of it.
13 Amid thoughts from visions of the night,
when deep sleep falls on mortals,
14 dread came upon me, and trembling,
which made all my bones shake.
15 A spirit glided past my face;
the hair of my flesh bristled.
16 It stood still,
but I could not discern its appearance.
A form was before my eyes;
there was silence, then I heard a voice:
17 'Can mortals be righteous before[k] God?
Can human beings be pure before[k] their Maker?
18 Even in his servants he puts no trust,
and his angels he charges with error;
19 how much more those who live in houses of clay,
whose foundation is in the dust,
who are crushed like a moth.
20 Between morning and evening they are destroyed;
they perish forever without any regarding it.
21 Their tent-cord is plucked up within them,
and they die devoid of wisdom.'

Job Is Disciplined by God

5 "Call now; is there anyone who will answer you?
To which of the holy ones will you turn?
2 Surely vexation kills the fool,
and jealousy slays the simple.
3 I have seen fools taking root,
but suddenly I cursed their dwelling.
4 Their children are far from safety,
they are crushed in the gate,
and there is no one to deliver them.
5 The hungry eat their harvest,
and they take it even out of the thorns;[l]
and the thirsty[m] pant after their wealth.
6 For misery does not come from the earth,
nor does trouble sprout from the ground;
7 but human beings are born to trouble
just as sparks[n] fly upward.

8 "As for me, I would seek God,
and to God I would commit my cause.
9 He does great things and unsearchable,
marvelous things without number.
10 He gives rain on the earth
and sends waters on the fields;
11 he sets on high those who are lowly,
and those who mourn are lifted to safety.

k Or *more than* *l* Meaning of Heb uncertain
m Aquila Symmachus Syr Vg: Heb *snare*
n Or *birds*; Heb *sons of Resheph*

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types of locusts. **4.12–21** A little theophany (self-revelation by God). Its theme, that mortals cannot be purer than their Maker, contrasts with that of the extended theophany, 38.1–42.6, which emphasizes Job's ignorance and weakness. Eliphaz's language echoes the theophanies to Abraham (Gen 15.12, "a deep sleep") and to Elijah (1 Kings 19.12, "a sound of sheer silence"). The use of the unexpected verb *steal* (v. 12) emphasizes Eliphaz's passive role in the terrifying encounter with God (Eloah, v. 17). **4.14** This description of distress resembles an ancient literary convention, the reaction to a messenger's anticipated bad news.

5.4 Eliphaz's insensitivity erupts in this cruel reference to the death of *children*. **5.6–7** The pun between the Hebrew words for *ground* and "mortal" recalls Gen 3.17. The allusion to *sparks* employs the name of a Canaanite deity, Resheph, who was responsible for plague and pestilence.

12 He frustrates the devices of the crafty,
so that their hands achieve no success.
13 He takes the wise in their own craftiness;
and the schemes of the wily are brought to a quick end.
14 They meet with darkness in the daytime,
and grope at noonday as in the night.
15 But he saves the needy from the sword of their mouth,
from the hand of the mighty.
16 So the poor have hope,
and injustice shuts its mouth.

17 "How happy is the one whom God reproves;
therefore do not despise the discipline of the Almighty.[o]
18 For he wounds, but he binds up;
he strikes, but his hands heal.
19 He will deliver you from six troubles;
in seven no harm shall touch you.
20 In famine he will redeem you from death,
and in war from the power of the sword.
21 You shall be hidden from the scourge of the tongue,
and shall not fear destruction when it comes.
22 At destruction and famine you shall laugh,
and shall not fear the wild animals of the earth.
23 For you shall be in league with the stones of the field,
and the wild animals shall be at peace with you.
24 You shall know that your tent is safe,
you shall inspect your fold and miss nothing.
25 You shall know that your descendants will be many,
and your offspring like the grass of the earth.
26 You shall come to your grave in ripe old age,
as a shock of grain comes up to the threshing floor in its season.
27 See, we have searched this out; it is true.
Hear, and know it for yourself."

Job Replies: My Complaint Is Just

6 Then Job answered:
2 "O that my vexation were weighed,
and all my calamity laid in the balances!
3 For then it would be heavier than the sand of the sea;
therefore my words have been rash.
4 For the arrows of the Almighty[o] are in me;
my spirit drinks their poison;
the terrors of God are arrayed against me.
5 Does the wild ass bray over its grass,
or the ox low over its fodder?
6 Can that which is tasteless be eaten without salt,
or is there any flavor in the juice of mallows?[p]

o Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*
p Meaning of Heb uncertain

5.8 The general names for *God*, El and Elohim, appear here. **5.17–18** These verses resemble Deut 32.39; Pss 94.12; 107.42; Prov 3.11; Hos 6.1. **5.17** The meaning of *Almighty* or *Shaddai* remains uncertain, but many interpreters think it relates to an Akkadian word for "mountain." Others think of the verb "to destroy." **5.18** An ancient tradition refers to Yahweh as Israel's *healer* (Ex 15.26). **5.19–20** *Six . . . seven.* Ascending numerals sometimes refer to a totality (all of them; cf. Am 1.3–2.16) but at other times specify an actual number, with emphasis falling on the higher of the two (cf. Prov 6.16–19; 30.15–16, 18–19, 21–31). **5.21–22** Does the allusion to *destruction* conceal a play on the divine epithet *Shaddai* (v. 17)? **5.23** This motif achieves classic expression in Isa 11.6–9. **5.25** *Like the grass.* The usual phrase is "like the stars" or "like the sands of the sea" (cf. Gen 15.5). **5.26** Eliphaz's view of *old age* and death contrasts with the dismal portrait in Eccl 11.7–12.7.

6.4 No evidence exists for use of *poison* arrows in the ancient Near East. **6.5–6** Just as Eliphaz cited traditional maxims (4.8; 5.2, 17), Job relies

7 My appetite refuses to touch them;
they are like food that is loathsome to me.[q]

8 "O that I might have my request,
and that God would grant my desire;
9 that it would please God to crush me,
that he would let loose his hand and cut me off!
10 This would be my consolation;
I would even exult[q] in unrelenting pain;
for I have not denied the words of the Holy One.
11 What is my strength, that I should wait?
And what is my end, that I should be patient?
12 Is my strength the strength of stones,
or is my flesh bronze?
13 In truth I have no help in me,
and any resource is driven from me.

14 "Those who withhold[r] kindness from a friend
forsake the fear of the Almighty.[s]
15 My companions are treacherous like a torrent-bed,
like freshets that pass away,
16 that run dark with ice,
turbid with melting snow.
17 In time of heat they disappear;
when it is hot, they vanish from their place.
18 The caravans turn aside from their course;
they go up into the waste, and perish.
19 The caravans of Tema look,
the travelers of Sheba hope.
20 They are disappointed because they were confident;
they come there and are confounded.
21 Such you have now become to me;[t]
you see my calamity, and are afraid.
22 Have I said, 'Make me a gift'?
Or, 'From your wealth offer a bribe for me'?
23 Or, 'Save me from an opponent's hand'?
Or, 'Ransom me from the hand of oppressors'?

24 "Teach me, and I will be silent;
make me understand how I have gone wrong.
25 How forceful are honest words!
But your reproof, what does it reprove?
26 Do you think that you can reprove words,
as if the speech of the desperate were wind?
27 You would even cast lots over the orphan,
and bargain over your friend.

28 "But now, be pleased to look at me;
for I will not lie to your face.
29 Turn, I pray, let no wrong be done.
Turn now, my vindication is at stake.
30 Is there any wrong on my tongue?
Cannot my taste discern calamity?

Job: My Suffering Is Without End

7 "Do not human beings have a hard service on earth,

q Meaning of Heb uncertain *r* Syr Vg Compare Tg: Meaning of Heb uncertain
s Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*
t Cn Compare Gk Syr: Meaning of Heb uncertain

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on impossible questions to command assent. **6.10** In 5.1 Eliphaz asks if Job could find protection in one of God's holy ones. The prophet Isaiah uses the epithet "The Holy One of Israel." Now Job goes beyond them to deny offense before the *Holy One*. **6.19** *Tema* was located in northern Arabia. **6.21** The similarity between the words for *see* and be *afraid* constitutes a pun in Hebrew. **6.26** Perhaps the choice of *desperate* plays on the word for humankind in Hebrew (cf. 7.17). **6.29** The friends may begin to walk away, prompting Job's plea that they *turn* around and listen.

7.1 In the Mesopotamian creation account

and are not their days like the days of a laborer?
2 Like a slave who longs for the shadow,
and like laborers who look for their wages,
3 so I am allotted months of emptiness,
and nights of misery are apportioned to me.
4 When I lie down I say, 'When shall I rise?'
But the night is long,
and I am full of tossing until dawn.
5 My flesh is clothed with worms and dirt;
my skin hardens, then breaks out again.
6 My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle,
and come to their end without hope.[u]

7 "Remember that my life is a breath;
my eye will never again see good.
8 The eye that beholds me will see me no more;
while your eyes are upon me, I shall be gone.
9 As the cloud fades and vanishes,
so those who go down to Sheol do not come up;
10 they return no more to their houses,
nor do their places know them any more.

11 "Therefore I will not restrain my mouth;
I will speak in the anguish of my spirit;
I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.
12 Am I the Sea, or the Dragon,
that you set a guard over me?
13 When I say, 'My bed will comfort me,
my couch will ease my complaint,'
14 then you scare me with dreams
and terrify me with visions,
15 so that I would choose strangling
and death rather than this body.
16 I loathe my life; I would not live forever.
Let me alone, for my days are a breath.
17 What are human beings, that you make so much of them,
that you set your mind on them,
18 visit them every morning,
test them every moment?
19 Will you not look away from me for a while,
let me alone until I swallow my spittle?
20 If I sin, what do I do to you, you watcher of humanity?
Why have you made me your target?
Why have I become a burden to you?
21 Why do you not pardon my transgression
and take away my iniquity?
For now I shall lie in the earth;
you will seek me, but I shall not be."

u Or *as the thread runs out*

Enuma Elish, human beings were created for the purpose of menial *service* to the gods. **7.5** The *Testament of Job* develops this idea, stating that the pious hero picked up a *worm* that had fallen off his skin and placed it back where it belonged. **7.6** Whereas Eliphaz thought Job—and the poor generally—had hope, Job rejected such optimism for caravaneers (6.20) and for himself. A Hebrew wordplay between *hope* and "thread" occurs here. **7.12, 15** Both *Sea* and *Dragon* echo Canaanite myths about the sea as a chaotic force. Baal, the weather god, defeated the sea god. The Hebrew word for *death* recalls the Canaanite deity Mot. **7.14** Both Sirach and the Wisdom of Solomon emphasize God's use of psychological torment through nightmares to punish the wicked. **7.16** Ecclesiastes uses the word *breath* thirty-eight times to characterize life as futile, absurd, and empty. **7.17–18** A parody of Ps 8.5. **7.20** Job accepts Eliphaz's notion that virtue and vice in human beings amount to nothing in God's sight and reverses the usual idea of divine guardianship. Job thinks the one who watches over him has evil intentions. **7.21** This verse may allude ironically to Enoch, who according to Gen 5.24 walked with God and "was no more," because God took him.

Bildad Speaks: Job Should Repent

8 Then Bildad the Shuhite answered:
2 "How long will you say these things,
and the words of your mouth be a great wind?
3 Does God pervert justice?
Or does the Almighty[v] pervert the right?
4 If your children sinned against him,
he delivered them into the power of their transgression.
5 If you will seek God
and make supplication to the Almighty,[v]
6 if you are pure and upright,
surely then he will rouse himself for you
and restore to you your rightful place.
7 Though your beginning was small,
your latter days will be very great.

8 "For inquire now of bygone generations,
and consider what their ancestors have found;
9 for we are but of yesterday, and we know nothing,
for our days on earth are but a shadow.
10 Will they not teach you and tell you
and utter words out of their understanding?

11 "Can papyrus grow where there is no marsh?
Can reeds flourish where there is no water?
12 While yet in flower and not cut down,
they wither before any other plant.
13 Such are the paths of all who forget God;
the hope of the godless shall perish.
14 Their confidence is gossamer,
a spider's house their trust.
15 If one leans against its house, it will not stand;
if one lays hold of it, it will not endure.
16 The wicked thrive[w] before the sun,
and their shoots spread over the garden.
17 Their roots twine around the stoneheap;
they live among the rocks.[x]
18 If they are destroyed from their place,
then it will deny them, saying, 'I have never seen you.'
19 See, these are their happy ways,[y]
and out of the earth still others will spring.

20 "See, God will not reject a blameless person,
nor take the hand of evildoers.
21 He will yet fill your mouth with laughter,
and your lips with shouts of joy.
22 Those who hate you will be clothed with shame,
and the tent of the wicked will be no more."

v Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*
w Heb *He thrives* x Gk Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain y Meaning of Heb uncertain

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8.3–7 Bildad addresses Job's legal challenge, denying that God bends the rules of *justice* and asserting that Job's children deserved their fate. The promise of prosperity in the end accords with conventional wisdom, but Bildad's understanding of Job's former status (v. 7, *your beginning was small*) does not coincide with the grand picture in the story. **8.8–10** Wisdom is the accumulation of past insights, according to Bildad. **8.11** Two impossible questions (cf. Prov 6.27–28). The words for *papyrus* and *reeds* derive from Egyptian terms. **8.13** In 6.8 Job had asked that his *hope*, death, be granted, but here Bildad pronounces a verdict on all evil persons, one that stretches language itself: their hope perishes. **8.14–19** The image of misplaced trust, the fragility of a spider's web, reinforces that of a wilted flower in 8.12, both of which gain force as a result of the juxtaposition alongside what—at first—appears a more promising image of well-watered roots. **8.20** Bildad cannot know that both God and the narrator attested to Job's integrity. **8.22** Bildad's speech ends with the same Hebrew word that concludes Job's complaint in 7.21.

Job Replies: There Is No Mediator

9 Then Job answered:
2 "Indeed I know that this is so;
but how can a mortal be just
before God?
3 If one wished to contend
with him,
one could not answer him once
in a thousand.
4 He is wise in heart, and mighty in
strength
—who has resisted him, and
succeeded?—
5 he who removes mountains, and
they do not know it,
when he overturns them in his
anger;
6 who shakes the earth out of its
place,
and its pillars tremble;
7 who commands the sun, and it
does not rise;
who seals up the stars;
8 who alone stretched out the
heavens
and trampled the waves of
the Sea;[z]
9 who made the Bear and Orion,
the Pleiades and the chambers
of the south;
10 who does great things beyond
understanding,
and marvelous things without
number.
11 Look, he passes by me, and I do
not see him;
he moves on, but I do not
perceive him.
12 He snatches away; who can
stop him?
Who will say to him, 'What are
you doing?'

13 "God will not turn back his
anger;
the helpers of Rahab bowed
beneath him.
14 How then can I answer him,
choosing my words with him?
15 Though I am innocent, I cannot
answer him;
I must appeal for mercy to my
accuser.[a]
16 If I summoned him and he
answered me,
I do not believe that he would
listen to my voice.
17 For he crushes me with a
tempest,
and multiplies my wounds
without cause;
18 he will not let me get my breath,
but fills me with bitterness.
19 If it is a contest of strength, he is
the strong one!
If it is a matter of justice, who
can summon him?[b]
20 Though I am innocent, my own
mouth would condemn me;
though I am blameless, he
would prove me perverse.

z Or *trampled the back of the sea dragon* *a* Or *for my right* *b* Compare Gk: Heb *me*

9.2 *Just before God.* Job takes up Eliphaz's point (4.17), using a different expression ("*just* with El" rather than "more just than Eloah"). **9.3** Morality gives way to legality here. The phrase *once in a thousand* occurs in Ecclesiastes with reference to the rarity of virtuous women (cf. Sir 16.3, where childlessness is said to be preferable to having ungodly children). **9.5–10** This hymn, reminiscent of 5.9–16, uses participles expressing chaotic might, whereas Eliphaz stressed power in its ordering capacity. With Job praise has assumed the tone of attack. God's self-manifestation was often associated with an earthquake, and the Israelites coined the epithet "Worker of wonders" to designate this majestic deity. **9.8** An allusion to a combat myth of creation similar to that of the Mesopotamian Tiamat, the biblical Tehom. The same imagery occurs in 9.13 with reference to Rahab, a mythic figure that features prominently in Psalms and Second Isaiah (chs. 40–55, sixth century B.C.E.). **9.9** Four constellations are mentioned here, two of which are also referred to in the similar hymnic fragment in Am 5.8 (perhaps two more in 5.9). **9.15** The universe is perverse when an innocent person must plead for *mercy*; guilty individuals are the ones for whom the quality of mercy comes into play. **9.16** Job has given up on any hope of obtaining justice in the presence of blind power. **9.17** The addition of the particle translated by *without cause* carries explosive force in light of its function in the story. **9.19–21** Daring to assert his own integrity against all odds, Job quickly takes it back and rejects *life*. This time, unlike 7.16, the object of the verb "reject," or *loathe* (9.21), is expressed. The cumulative testimony of the book supports Job's initial claim, for everyone has attested to his integrity—the narrator (1.1), God (1.8; 2.3), Job's wife (2.9),

21 I am blameless; I do not know myself;
I loathe my life.
22 It is all one; therefore I say,
he destroys both the blameless and the wicked.
23 When disaster brings sudden death,
he mocks at the calamity[c] of the innocent.
24 The earth is given into the hand of the wicked;
he covers the eyes of its judges—
if it is not he, who then is it?

25 "My days are swifter than a runner;
they flee away, they see no good.
26 They go by like skiffs of reed,
like an eagle swooping on the prey.
27 If I say, 'I will forget my complaint;
I will put off my sad countenance and be of good cheer,'
28 I become afraid of all my suffering,
for I know you will not hold me innocent.
29 I shall be condemned;
why then do I labor in vain?
30 If I wash myself with soap and cleanse my hands with lye,
31 yet you will plunge me into filth,
and my own clothes will abhor me.
32 For he is not a mortal, as I am, that I might answer him,
that we should come to trial together.
33 There is no umpire[d] between us,
who might lay his hand on us both.
34 If he would take his rod away from me,
and not let dread of him terrify me,
35 then I would speak without fear of him,
for I know I am not what I am thought to be.[e]

Job: I Loathe My Life

10 "I loathe my life;
I will give free utterance to my complaint;
I will speak in the bitterness of my soul.
2 I will say to God, Do not condemn me;
let me know why you contend against me.
3 Does it seem good to you to oppress,
to despise the work of your hands
and favor the schemes of the wicked?
4 Do you have eyes of flesh?
Do you see as humans see?
5 Are your days like the days of mortals,
or your years like human years,
6 that you seek out my iniquity
and search for my sin,
7 although you know that I am not guilty,
and there is no one to deliver out of your hand?
8 Your hands fashioned and made me;
and now you turn and destroy me.[f]
9 Remember that you fashioned me like clay;

c Meaning of Heb uncertain d Another reading is *Would that there were an umpire*
e Cn: Heb *for I am not so in myself*
f Cn Compare Gk Syr: Heb *made me together all around, and you destroy me*

Eliphaz (4.6, implicitly), and Bildad (8.20). **9.22** Here Job abandons belief in any positive connection between virtue and reward. **9.24** Virtual monotheism permitted Job no alternative to this disturbing conclusion about divine villainy. **9.33** If God acts as plaintiff, judge, and prosecuting attorney, Job does not stand a chance. Hence he longs for an arbiter, someone to judge between him and the deity, but promptly discards this wishful thinking.

10.1 Again Job specifies the object of his disgust, although the language differs altogether: *I loathe*, lit. "my soul feels loathing." **10.7** The phrase about an absence of anyone to *deliver* from the divine power points to Job's hopelessness. **10.9** According to ancient tradition, the human

and will you turn me to dust again?
10 Did you not pour me out like milk
and curdle me like cheese?
11 You clothed me with skin and flesh,
and knit me together with bones and sinews.
12 You have granted me life and steadfast love,
and your care has preserved my spirit.
13 Yet these things you hid in your heart;
I know that this was your purpose.
14 If I sin, you watch me,
and do not acquit me of my iniquity.
15 If I am wicked, woe to me!
If I am righteous, I cannot lift up my head,
for I am filled with disgrace
and look upon my affliction.
16 Bold as a lion you hunt me;
you repeat your exploits against me.
17 You renew your witnesses against me,
and increase your vexation toward me;
you bring fresh troops against me.[g]

18 "Why did you bring me forth from the womb?
Would that I had died before any eye had seen me,
19 and were as though I had not been,
carried from the womb to the grave.
20 Are not the days of my life few?[h]
Let me alone, that I may find a little comfort[i]
21 before I go, never to return,
to the land of gloom and deep darkness,
22 the land of gloom[j] and chaos,
where light is like darkness."

Zophar Speaks: God Is Lenient

11 Then Zophar the Naamathite answered:
2 "Should a multitude of words go unanswered,
and should one full of talk be vindicated?
3 Should your babble put others to silence,
and when you mock, shall no one shame you?
4 For you say, 'My conduct[k] is pure,
and I am clean in God's[l] sight.'
5 But O that God would speak,
and open his lips to you,
6 and that he would tell you the secrets of wisdom!
For wisdom is many-sided.[m]
Know then that God exacts of you less than your guilt deserves.

7 "Can you find out the deep things of God?
Can you find out the limit of the Almighty?[n]
8 It is higher than heaven[o]—what can you do?
Deeper than Sheol—what can you know?

g Cn Compare Gk: Heb *toward me; changes and a troop are with me* *h* Cn Compare Gk Syr: Heb *Are not my days few? Let him cease!* *i* Heb *that I may brighten up a little* *j* Heb *gloom as darkness, deep darkness* *k* Gk: Heb *teaching* *l* Heb *your* *m* Meaning of Heb uncertain *n* Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai* *o* Heb *The heights of heaven*

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dilemma after the Fall was precisely this, to return to *dust*. Does Job object to this curse, or does he think of premature death? **10.12, 14** The more common expression for divine protection returns here (cf. the irony when set alongside 2.6). In 10.14 the verb *watch* takes on a negative connotation, like *watcher of humanity* in 7.20. **10.22** An oxymoron, "it shines like *darkness*."

11.4 Zophar emphasizes purity (cf. 11.15, *blemish*), but Job had concentrated on moral integrity. **11.6** This appeal to divine compassion, a forgetting of some evil and letting Job off lightly, clashes with a strict notion of reward and punishment. The struggle to hold together both sides of the equation, justice and mercy, gave rise to the creedal statement in Ex 34.6–7, part of which occurs often in confessional literature of the Bible (cf. Neh 9.17, 31; Ps 86.15; Joel 2.13; Jon 4.2). Wisdom's hiddenness is noted in Sir 6.22: "For wisdom is like her name; she is not

9 Its measure is longer than the earth,
and broader than the sea.
10 If he passes through, and imprisons,
and assembles for judgment, who can hinder him?
11 For he knows those who are worthless;
when he sees iniquity, will he not consider it?
12 But a stupid person will get understanding,
when a wild ass is born human.[p]

13 "If you direct your heart rightly,
you will stretch out your hands toward him.
14 If iniquity is in your hand, put it far away,
and do not let wickedness reside in your tents.
15 Surely then you will lift up your face without blemish;
you will be secure, and will not fear.
16 You will forget your misery;
you will remember it as waters that have passed away.
17 And your life will be brighter than the noonday;
its darkness will be like the morning.
18 And you will have confidence, because there is hope;
you will be protected[q] and take your rest in safety.
19 You will lie down, and no one will make you afraid;
many will entreat your favor.
20 But the eyes of the wicked will fail;
all way of escape will be lost to them,
and their hope is to breathe their last."

Job Replies: I Am a Laughingstock

12 Then Job answered:
2 "No doubt you are the people,
and wisdom will die with you.
3 But I have understanding as well as you;
I am not inferior to you.
Who does not know such things as these?
4 I am a laughingstock to my friends;
I, who called upon God and he answered me,
a just and blameless man, I am a laughingstock.
5 Those at ease have contempt for misfortune,[p]
but it is ready for those whose feet are unstable.
6 The tents of robbers are at peace,
and those who provoke God are secure,
who bring their god in their hands.[r]

7 "But ask the animals, and they will teach you;
the birds of the air, and they will tell you;
8 ask the plants of the earth,[s] and they will teach you;
and the fish of the sea will declare to you.

p Meaning of Heb uncertain q Or *you will look around* r Or *whom God brought forth by his hand*; Meaning of Heb uncertain s Or *speak to the earth*

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readily perceived by many." **11.8** Cf. Sir 1.3. **11.12** A proverbial "impossible task," like Ovid's "then will the stag fly." Zophar may allude to Gen 16.12, which describes Ishmael as a *wild ass* of a man. This proverb in Job views ignorance, not morality, as the thing that separates mortals from deity. **11.13** Another discussion of divine justice that isolates the *heart* as the decisive organ in need of attention, Ps 73, clarifies the issue. The problem, according to Zophar and this psalmist, concerns wrong-headedness. **11.20** Against the background of promised *hope* for those who truly purify themselves, Zophar threatens Job with perishing refuge and empty hope, precisely what he had asked for (3.3; 10.18–22).

12.2 Sarcasm. **12.3** *Not inferior to you.* Twice in this speech Job insists on equality with the friends, here and in 13.2. **12.4** The reference to a vital relationship (*called upon . . . answered me*) with God stands in tension with Job's later description in 42.5 of that experience as derivative like a rumor. **12.6** *In their hands*, a reference to idolatry? **12.7** *Animals*, Hebrew *Behemoth*. This allusion to Behemoth, frighteningly described in 40.15–24, seems out of place. Hence the translation *animals* or "cattle," despite the singular

9 Who among all these does not know
that the hand of the LORD has done this?
10 In his hand is the life of every living thing
and the breath of every human being.
11 Does not the ear test words
as the palate tastes food?
12 Is wisdom with the aged,
and understanding in length of days?

13 "With God[t] are wisdom and strength;
he has counsel and understanding.
14 If he tears down, no one can rebuild;
if he shuts someone in, no one can open up.
15 If he withholds the waters, they dry up;
if he sends them out, they overwhelm the land.
16 With him are strength and wisdom;
the deceived and the deceiver are his.
17 He leads counselors away stripped,
and makes fools of judges.
18 He looses the sash of kings,
and binds a waistcloth on their loins.
19 He leads priests away stripped,
and overthrows the mighty.
20 He deprives of speech those who are trusted,
and takes away the discernment of the elders.
21 He pours contempt on princes,
and looses the belt of the strong.
22 He uncovers the deeps out of darkness,
and brings deep darkness to light.
23 He makes nations great, then destroys them;
he enlarges nations, then leads them away.
24 He strips understanding from the leaders[u] of the earth,
and makes them wander in a pathless waste.
25 They grope in the dark without light;
he makes them stagger like a drunkard.

13 "Look, my eye has seen all this,
my ear has heard and understood it.
2 What you know, I also know;
I am not inferior to you.
3 But I would speak to the Almighty,[v]
and I desire to argue my case with God.
4 As for you, you whitewash with lies;
all of you are worthless physicians.
5 If you would only keep silent,
that would be your wisdom!
6 Hear now my reasoning,
and listen to the pleadings of my lips.
7 Will you speak falsely for God,
and speak deceitfully for him?
8 Will you show partiality toward him,
will you plead the case for God?
9 Will it be well with you when he searches you out?
Or can you deceive him, as one person deceives another?
10 He will surely rebuke you
if in secret you show partiality.
11 Will not his majesty terrify you,
and the dread of him fall upon you?
12 Your maxims are proverbs of ashes,

t Heb *him* u Heb adds *of the people*
v Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

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verb in Hebrew (Behemoth is plural in form). **12.9** The only mention of LORD (Yahweh) in the poetic dialogue between Job and the three friends, except for the concluding observation in 28.28. **12.12** Because the next verse challenges the point of this statement, it seems that Job cites a proverb in order to refute it.

13.3 Judicial terminology becomes prominent as Job turns more and more to address God instead of the friends. **13.5** In Egypt "the *silent* one" indicated a professional sage, a person who governed the passions. **13.9** Internal

your defenses are defenses of clay.

13 "Let me have silence, and I will speak,
and let come on me what may.
14 I will take my flesh in my teeth,
and put my life in my hand.[w]
15 See, he will kill me; I have no hope;[x]
but I will defend my ways to his face.
16 This will be my salvation,
that the godless shall not come before him.
17 Listen carefully to my words,
and let my declaration be in your ears.
18 I have indeed prepared my case;
I know that I shall be vindicated.
19 Who is there that will contend with me?
For then I would be silent and die.

Job's Despondent Prayer

20 Only grant two things to me,
then I will not hide myself from your face:
21 withdraw your hand far from me,
and do not let dread of you terrify me.
22 Then call, and I will answer;
or let me speak, and you reply to me.
23 How many are my iniquities and my sins?
Make me know my transgression and my sin.
24 Why do you hide your face,
and count me as your enemy?
25 Will you frighten a windblown leaf
and pursue dry chaff?
26 For you write bitter things against me,
and make me reap[y] the iniquities of my youth.
27 You put my feet in the stocks,
and watch all my paths;
you set a bound to the soles of my feet.
28 One wastes away like a rotten thing,
like a garment that is moth-eaten.

14 "A mortal, born of woman, few of days and full of trouble,
2 comes up like a flower and withers,
flees like a shadow and does not last.
3 Do you fix your eyes on such a one?
Do you bring me into judgment with you?
4 Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?
No one can.
5 Since their days are determined,
and the number of their months is known to you,
and you have appointed the bounds that they cannot pass,
6 look away from them, and desist,[z]
that they may enjoy, like laborers, their days.

7 "For there is hope for a tree,
if it is cut down, that it will sprout again,
and that its shoots will not cease.

w Gk: Heb *Why should I take . . . in my hand?*
x Or *Though he kill me, yet I will trust in him*
y Heb *inherit* *z* Cn: Heb *that they may desist*

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irony. **13.15** *No hope*, lit. "I will not wait/hope." The qere reading (an ancient alternative to what is written in the Hebrew text) suggests that a later reader considered Job's language excessive, substituting "for him" (lit. "to him") for "not" (cf. text note *x*). This change hardly justifies a positive understanding of Job's defiant last-ditch stand. **13.16** If sinners cannot appear before God, and Job does so without harm, he achieves vindication regardless of the meaning one assigns to his words in 42.6. This verse therefore focuses the dramatic action of the book. **13.20** Agur in Prov 30.7–9 also asks *two things* of God: banish deception from me and give me neither poverty nor riches. **13.24** This reference to *enemy* contains a pun on Job's name in Hebrew. **13.26** Job does not claim to be sinless, but he does assert that he has integrity, having done nothing to deserve such foul treatment. **14.4** Does Job succumb to Eliphaz's low estimate of mortals, calling them guilty as a result of birth? This view occurs in the Sumerian parallel to Job "A Man and His God."

8 Though its root grows old in the earth,
and its stump dies in the ground,
9 yet at the scent of water it will bud
and put forth branches like a young plant.
10 But mortals die, and are laid low;
humans expire, and where are they?
11 As waters fail from a lake,
and a river wastes away and dries up,
12 so mortals lie down and do not rise again;
until the heavens are no more, they will not awake
or be roused out of their sleep.
13 O that you would hide me in Sheol,
that you would conceal me until your wrath is past,
that you would appoint me a set time, and remember me!
14 If mortals die, will they live again?
All the days of my service I would wait
until my release should come.
15 You would call, and I would answer you;
you would long for the work of your hands.
16 For then you would not[a] number my steps,
you would not keep watch over my sin;
17 my transgression would be sealed up in a bag,
and you would cover over my iniquity.

18 "But the mountain falls and crumbles away,
and the rock is removed from its place;
19 the waters wear away the stones;
the torrents wash away the soil of the earth;
so you destroy the hope of mortals.
20 You prevail forever against them, and they pass away;
you change their countenance, and send them away.
21 Their children come to honor, and they do not know it;
they are brought low, and it goes unnoticed.
22 They feel only the pain of their own bodies,
and mourn only for themselves."

Eliphaz Speaks: Job Undermines Religion

15 Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered:
2 "Should the wise answer with windy knowledge,
and fill themselves with the east wind?
3 Should they argue in unprofitable talk,
or in words with which they can do no good?
4 But you are doing away with the fear of God,
and hindering meditation before God.
5 For your iniquity teaches your mouth,
and you choose the tongue of the crafty.
6 Your own mouth condemns you, and not I;
your own lips testify against you.

7 "Are you the firstborn of the human race?
Were you brought forth before the hills?

a Syr: Heb lacks *not*

14.12 Job dismisses the daring thought of life after death, reconciling himself to future oblivion (like Ecclesiastes). Other biblical writers ventured along paths rejected by Job, particularly Dan 12.2; Isa 26.19; and possibly Ps 73.23–28.

15.2 The *wind* from the eastern desert was hot, so Eliphaz accuses Job of uttering hot air. **15.4** Although Job uses some form of this Hebrew word for *meditation* several times, only in this instance does anyone else do so. **15.7** A sarcastic response to Job's challenge that the friends consult earth's creatures in search for answers, this jibe undercuts any claim on Job's part to decisive knowledge. The paucity of biblical references outside Genesis to the primal couple is noteworthy. The situation changes with Ben Sira,

8 Have you listened in the council of God?
And do you limit wisdom to yourself?
9 What do you know that we do not know?
What do you understand that is not clear to us?
10 The gray-haired and the aged are on our side,
those older than your father.
11 Are the consolations of God too small for you,
or the word that deals gently with you?
12 Why does your heart carry you away,
and why do your eyes flash,[b]
13 so that you turn your spirit against God,
and let such words go out of your mouth?
14 What are mortals, that they can be clean?
Or those born of woman, that they can be righteous?
15 God puts no trust even in his holy ones,
and the heavens are not clean in his sight;
16 how much less one who is abominable and corrupt,
one who drinks iniquity like water!

17 "I will show you; listen to me;
what I have seen I will declare—
18 what sages have told,
and their ancestors have not hidden,
19 to whom alone the land was given,
and no stranger passed among them.
20 The wicked writhe in pain all their days,
through all the years that are laid up for the ruthless.
21 Terrifying sounds are in their ears;
in prosperity the destroyer will come upon them.
22 They despair of returning from darkness,
and they are destined for the sword.
23 They wander abroad for bread, saying, 'Where is it?'
They know that a day of darkness is ready at hand;
24 distress and anguish terrify them;
they prevail against them, like a king prepared for battle.
25 Because they stretched out their hands against God,
and bid defiance to the Almighty,[c]
26 running stubbornly against him
with a thick-bossed shield;
27 because they have covered their faces with their fat,
and gathered fat upon their loins,
28 they will live in desolate cities,
in houses that no one should inhabit,
houses destined to become heaps of ruins;
29 they will not be rich, and their wealth will not endure,
nor will they strike root in the earth;[d]
30 they will not escape from darkness;
the flame will dry up their shoots,

b Meaning of Heb uncertain *c* Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai* *d* Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain

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about 190 B.C.E. (cf. Sir 25.24; 49.16). **15.8** Some prophets, e.g., Amos and Jeremiah, claim to have listened to the divine *council* where human destiny was decided (cf. Am 3.7; Jer 23.21–22). **15.10** Eliphaz's assumption that length of years brought wisdom was not shared by Job or the youthful Elihu, but wisdom literature generally venerated old age even when conceding that some *older* people manifested folly. Suspicion about youthful rashness is best shown in 1 Kings 12.1–16. **15.14–16** Here Eliphaz links the notions of purity and morality, dismissing the human race as tainted. Such a religious system affords no rationale for Job's relentless pursuit of vindication. **15.18** The text reads lit. "which the wise have declared and have not concealed from their ancestors." **15.19** Nowhere else does wisdom literature before Sirach allude to the tradition about Israel's inheriting the *land*. The remark about an absence of strangers (cf. Joel 4.17) does not support such an association with the earlier tradition, for strangers certainly dwelt in the newly occupied land.

and their blossom[e] will be
swept away[f] by the wind.
31 Let them not trust in emptiness,
deceiving themselves;
for emptiness will be their
recompense.
32 It will be paid in full before their
time,
and their branch will not be
green.
33 They will shake off their unripe
grape, like the vine,
and cast off their blossoms, like
the olive tree.
34 For the company of the godless is
barren,
and fire consumes the tents of
bribery.
35 They conceive mischief and bring
forth evil
and their heart prepares
deceit."

Job Reaffirms His Innocence

16 Then Job answered:
2 "I have heard many such
things;
miserable comforters are
you all.
3 Have windy words no limit?
Or what provokes you that you
keep on talking?
4 I also could talk as you do,
if you were in my place;
I could join words together
against you,
and shake my head at you.
5 I could encourage you with my
mouth,
and the solace of my lips would
assuage your pain.

6 "If I speak, my pain is not
assuaged,
and if I forbear, how much of
it leaves me?
7 Surely now God has worn
me out;
he has[g] made desolate all my
company.
8 And he has[g] shriveled me up,
which is a witness against me;
my leanness has risen up
against me,
and it testifies to my face.
9 He has torn me in his wrath, and
hated me;
he has gnashed his teeth at me;
my adversary sharpens his eyes
against me.
10 They have gaped at me with their
mouths;
they have struck me insolently
on the cheek;
they mass themselves together
against me.
11 God gives me up to the ungodly,
and casts me into the hands of
the wicked.
12 I was at ease, and he broke me
in two;
he seized me by the neck and
dashed me to pieces;
he set me up as his target;
13 his archers surround me.
He slashes open my kidneys, and
shows no mercy;
he pours out my gall on the
ground.
14 He bursts upon me again and
again;
he rushes at me like a warrior.
15 I have sewed sackcloth upon my
skin,
and have laid my strength in
the dust.
16 My face is red with weeping,
and deep darkness is on my
eyelids,
17 though there is no violence in my
hands,
and my prayer is pure.

18 "O earth, do not cover my blood;
let my outcry find no resting
place.

e Gk: Heb *mouth* *f* Cn: Heb *will depart*
g Heb *you have*

16.15 *Sackcloth* was worn during mourning and in periods of intense grief connected with repentance or prayer for forgiveness. **16.17** Job insists that his supplication is *pure* despite Eliphaz's charge in 15.14. The prophets railed against people who prayed although their hands were stained by bloodguilt. **16.18** The Israelites believed that unrequited *blood* of innocent victims cried out until a vindicator acted, as in the case of the first victim of fraternal rivalry (Gen 4.10).

19 Even now, in fact, my witness is
in heaven,
and he that vouches for me is
on high.
20 My friends scorn me;
my eye pours out tears to God,
21 that he would maintain the right
of a mortal with God,
as[h] one does for a neighbor.
22 For when a few years have come,
I shall go the way from which I
shall not return.

Job Has No Hope

17 My spirit is broken, my days are
extinct,
the grave is ready for me.
2 Surely there are mockers
around me,
and my eye dwells on their
provocation.

3 "Lay down a pledge for me with
yourself;
who is there that will give
surety for me?
4 Since you have closed their minds
to understanding,
therefore you will not let them
triumph.
5 Those who denounce friends for
reward—
the eyes of their children will
fail.

6 "He has made me a byword of
the peoples,
and I am one before whom
people spit.
7 My eye has grown dim from
grief,
and all my members are like a
shadow.
8 The upright are appalled at this,
and the innocent stir
themselves up against the
godless.
9 Yet the righteous hold to
their way,
and they that have clean hands
grow stronger and
stronger.
10 But you, come back now, all
of you,
and I shall not find a sensible
person among you.
11 My days are past, my plans are
broken off,
the desires of my heart.
12 They make night into day;
'The light,' they say, 'is near to
the darkness.'[i]
13 If I look for Sheol as my house,
if I spread my couch in
darkness,
14 if I say to the Pit, 'You are my
father,'
and to the worm, 'My mother,'
or 'My sister,'
15 where then is my hope?
Who will see my hope?
16 Will it go down to the bars of
Sheol?
Shall we descend together into
the dust?"

Bildad Speaks: God Punishes the Wicked

18 Then Bildad the Shuhite an-
swered:
2 "How long will you hunt for
words?
Consider, and then we shall
speak.
3 Why are we counted as cattle?
Why are we stupid in your
sight?
4 You who tear yourself in your
anger—
shall the earth be forsaken
because of you,

h Syr Vg Tg: Heb *and* *i* Meaning of Heb uncertain

16.19 Job's *witness*, already in God's presence, is thought to be sufficiently powerful to exact justice from the deity. In 9.33 Job dismissed any such possibility of a mediator between himself and God. **16.22** Here Job anticipates the lapse of considerable time before his demise, and he registers common sentiment in the ancient Near East that none returns from the netherworld. This view can be found in the Sumerian account of Inanna's descent into the netherworld and the Akkadian "Descent of Ishtar to the Netherworld."

17.10 A bit of dramatic action. The friends appear to be walking away and must be called *back*. **18.4** Bildad's system of reward and retribution will make no exception for Job, who must be guilty. Bildad recognizes Job's egocentricity, a

or the rock be removed out of
its place?

5 "Surely the light of the wicked is
put out,
and the flame of their fire does
not shine.
6 The light is dark in their tent,
and the lamp above them is
put out.
7 Their strong steps are shortened,
and their own schemes throw
them down.
8 For they are thrust into a net by
their own feet,
and they walk into a pitfall.
9 A trap seizes them by the heel;
a snare lays hold of them.
10 A rope is hid for them in the
ground,
a trap for them in the path.
11 Terrors frighten them on every
side,
and chase them at their heels.
12 Their strength is consumed by
hunger,[j]
and calamity is ready for their
stumbling.
13 By disease their skin is
consumed,[k]
the firstborn of Death
consumes their limbs.
14 They are torn from the tent in
which they trusted,
and are brought to the king of
terrors.
15 In their tents nothing remains;
sulfur is scattered upon their
habitations.
16 Their roots dry up beneath,
and their branches wither
above.
17 Their memory perishes from the
earth,
and they have no name in the
street.
18 They are thrust from light into
darkness,
and driven out of the world.
19 They have no offspring or
descendant among their
people,
and no survivor where they
used to live.
20 They of the west are appalled at
their fate,
and horror seizes those of the
east.
21 Surely such are the dwellings of
the ungodly,
such is the place of those who
do not know God."

Job Replies: I Know That My Redeemer Lives

19 Then Job answered:
2 "How long will you
torment me,
and break me in pieces with
words?
3 These ten times you have cast
reproach upon me;
are you not ashamed to
wrong me?
4 And even if it is true that I have
erred,
my error remains with me.
5 If indeed you magnify yourselves
against me,
and make my humiliation an
argument against me,
6 know then that God has put me
in the wrong,
and closed his net around me.
7 Even when I cry out, 'Violence!' I
am not answered;
I call aloud, but there is no
justice.

j Or *Disaster is hungry for them* *k* Cn: Heb *It consumes the limbs of his skin*

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natural result of the threat to existence that sickness constitutes. **18.5–6** In the Bible a *lamp* often points metaphorically to life, as in Othello's famous speech ("Put out the light, and then put out the light"). **18.13** *Death* here is a mythical figure (see 7.15). In Canaanite mythology no record of Mot's *firstborn* has survived. Perhaps one should translate "Death, the Firstborn." **18.15** In magical practices of the ancient world, according to the *Odyssey* (22.480–81, 492–94), sulphur was sprinkled over a site to purge it. **18.17, 19** The two means of surviving death at the time of the author, *memory* and *offspring*, are denied Job. **18.20** *West, east*, perhaps former and subsequent generations rather than geographical designations.

19.3 *Ten times*, a round number (cf. Gen 31.7; Num 14.22). **19.6** *Closed his net*, perhaps an image of a fowler, one that occurs in ancient Near Eastern political treaties as a threat against treach-

8 He has walled up my way so that
I cannot pass,
and he has set darkness upon
my paths.
9 He has stripped my glory
from me,
and taken the crown from my
head.
10 He breaks me down on every
side, and I am gone,
he has uprooted my hope like a
tree.
11 He has kindled his wrath
against me,
and counts me as his adversary.
12 His troops come on together;
they have thrown up
siegeworks[l] against me,
and encamp around my tent.

13 "He has put my family far
from me,
and my acquaintances are
wholly estranged from me.
14 My relatives and my close friends
have failed me;
15 the guests in my house have
forgotten me;
my serving girls count me as a
stranger;
I have become an alien in their
eyes.
16 I call to my servant, but he gives
me no answer;
I must myself plead with him.
17 My breath is repulsive to my wife;
I am loathsome to my own
family.
18 Even young children despise me;
when I rise, they talk
against me.
19 All my intimate friends abhor me,
and those whom I loved have
turned against me.
20 My bones cling to my skin and to
my flesh,
and I have escaped by the skin
of my teeth.
21 Have pity on me, have pity on
me, O you my friends,
for the hand of God has
touched me!
22 Why do you, like God,
pursue me,
never satisfied with my flesh?

23 "O that my words were written
down!
O that they were inscribed in a
book!
24 O that with an iron pen and with
lead
they were engraved on a rock
forever!
25 For I know that my Redeemer[m]
lives,
and that at the last he[n] will
stand upon the earth;[o]
26 and after my skin has been thus
destroyed,
then in[p] my flesh I shall
see God,[q]
27 whom I shall see on my side,[r]

l Cn: Heb *their way* *m* Or *Vindicator*
n Or *that he the Last* *o* Heb *dust* *p* Or *without*
q Meaning of Heb of this verse uncertain
r Or *for myself*

erous conduct. **19.8** Job's view of the divine enclosure (*walled up*) differs from that of Satan, the Adversary, who spoke of it as protection from all harm (see 1.10). **19.9** The Hebrew word translated *glory* can also mean "wealth." **19.16** This negative view of slaves does not recur in 31.13–15. **19.17** *My own family,* lit. "children of my womb," may reflect the sexist views of the ancient Near East—a wife as a husband's property—or it may be an oblique reference to a clan. Job appears to have forgotten that his children are dead, unless his speech merely accords with conventional laments familiar from Mesopotamia, for example, "I Will Praise the Lord of Wisdom" and "The Babylonian Theodicy." **19.24** Evidence exists for use of *lead* as a filler in small tablets and in an inscription, the famous Behistun Rock that extols the achievements of the Persian king Darius. Job's eloquence notwithstanding, the written word remains highly unclear in this instance, for its meaning defies understanding in 19.25–27. The prophet Isaiah also mentions a permanent writing (30.8). **19.25–27** *Redeemer,* an avenger of blood, who, according to Num 35.19; Deut 19.6, would vindicate Job's death by punishing the guilty, in this instance, God. The issue here is revenge, for Job has abandoned any notion of justice. The similarity of Job's cry and a Ugaritic text from the Baal cycle is striking: "And I know that Aleyan Baal is alive," presumably a confession of Baal's annual revivification according to the agricultural calendar. Perhaps the Sumerian patron deity who intercedes with the High God furnishes the background for Job's language.

and my eyes shall behold, and
not another.
My heart faints within me!
28 If you say, 'How we will
persecute him!'
and, 'The root of the matter is
found in him';
29 be afraid of the sword,
for wrath brings the
punishment of the sword,
so that you may know there is a
judgment."

Zophar Speaks: Wickedness Receives Just Retribution

20 Then Zophar the Naamathite answered:
2 "Pay attention! My thoughts urge
me to answer,
because of the agitation
within me.
3 I hear censure that insults me,
and a spirit beyond my
understanding answers me.
4 Do you not know this from
of old,
ever since mortals were placed
on earth,
5 that the exulting of the wicked is
short,
and the joy of the godless is but
for a moment?
6 Even though they mount up high
as the heavens,
and their head reaches to the
clouds,
7 they will perish forever like their
own dung;
those who have seen them will
say, 'Where are they?'
8 They will fly away like a dream,
and not be found;
they will be chased away like a
vision of the night.
9 The eye that saw them will see
them no more,
nor will their place behold
them any longer.
10 Their children will seek the favor
of the poor,
and their hands will give back
their wealth.
11 Their bodies, once full of youth,
will lie down in the dust with
them.

12 "Though wickedness is sweet in
their mouth,
though they hide it under their
tongues,
13 though they are loath to let it go,
and hold it in their mouths,
14 yet their food is turned in their
stomachs;
it is the venom of asps within
them.
15 They swallow down riches and
vomit them up again;
God casts them out of their
bellies.
16 They will suck the poison of asps;
the tongue of a viper will kill
them.
17 They will not look on the rivers,
the streams flowing with honey
and curds.
18 They will give back the fruit of
their toil,
and will not swallow it down;
from the profit of their trading
they will get no enjoyment.
19 For they have crushed and
abandoned the poor,
they have seized a house that
they did not build.

20 "They knew no quiet in their
bellies;
in their greed they let nothing
escape.
21 There was nothing left after they
had eaten;
therefore their prosperity will
not endure.
22 In full sufficiency they will be in
distress;
all the force of misery will come
upon them.
23 To fill their belly to the full

20.6 Possibly an allusion to the Tower of Babel in Gen 11.1–9. **20.12** Woman Folly entices young men with the promise that "Stolen water is *sweet*, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant" (Prov 9.17). **20.17** According to ancient Yahwistic tradition, the land of promise was thought to have flowed with milk and *honey*. **20.18** Ancient futility curses spoke of fruitless effort, e.g., planting

God[s] will send his fierce anger
into them,
and rain it upon them as their
food.[t]
24 They will flee from an iron
weapon;
a bronze arrow will strike them
through.
25 It is drawn forth and comes out
of their body,
and the glittering point comes
out of their gall;
terrors come upon them.
26 Utter darkness is laid up for their
treasures;
a fire fanned by no one will
devour them;
what is left in their tent will be
consumed.
27 The heavens will reveal their
iniquity,
and the earth will rise up
against them.
28 The possessions of their house
will be carried away,
dragged off in the day of
God's[u] wrath.
29 This is the portion of the wicked
from God,
the heritage decreed for them
by God."

Job Replies: The Wicked Often Go Unpunished

21 Then Job answered:
2 "Listen carefully to my
words,
and let this be your consolation.
3 Bear with me, and I will speak;
then after I have spoken,
mock on.
4 As for me, is my complaint
addressed to mortals?
Why should I not be impatient?
5 Look at me, and be appalled,
and lay your hand upon your
mouth.
6 When I think of it I am
dismayed,
and shuddering seizes my flesh.
7 Why do the wicked live on,
reach old age, and grow mighty
in power?
8 Their children are established in
their presence,
and their offspring before their
eyes.
9 Their houses are safe from fear,
and no rod of God is upon
them.
10 Their bull breeds without fail;
their cow calves and never
miscarries.
11 They send out their little ones
like a flock,
and their children dance
around.
12 They sing to the tambourine and
the lyre,
and rejoice to the sound of the
pipe.
13 They spend their days in
prosperity,
and in peace they go down to
Sheol.
14 They say to God, 'Leave us alone!
We do not desire to know your
ways.
15 What is the Almighty,[v] that we
should serve him?
And what profit do we get if
we pray to him?'
16 Is not their prosperity indeed
their own achievement?[w]
The plans of the wicked are
repugnant to me.

17 "How often is the lamp of the
wicked put out?
How often does calamity come
upon them?
How often does God[s]
distribute pains in his
anger?
18 How often are they like straw
before the wind,
and like chaff that the storm
carries away?

s Heb *he* t Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain
u Heb *his* v Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai* w Heb *in their hand*

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without reaping, building a house without living in it. **20.24** As in Am 5.19, flight from imminent danger only results in death by another means. *Bronze arrow*, lit. "bronze bow," which may function here as synecdoche for bow and arrow. **21.5** The gesture indicates speechlessness or awe. **21.15** The sufferer in "The Babylonian Theodicy" complains that "Those who do not seek the god go the way of prosperity, while those who pray to the goddess become destitute and

19 You say, 'God stores up their
iniquity for their children.'
Let it be paid back to them, so
that they may know it.
20 Let their own eyes see their
destruction,
and let them drink of the wrath
of the Almighty.[x]
21 For what do they care for their
household after them,
when the number of their
months is cut off?
22 Will any teach God knowledge,
seeing that he judges those that
are on high?
23 One dies in full prosperity,
being wholly at ease and secure,
24 his loins full of milk
and the marrow of his bones
moist.
25 Another dies in bitterness of soul,
never having tasted of good.
26 They lie down alike in the dust,
and the worms cover them.

27 "Oh, I know your thoughts,
and your schemes to wrong me.
28 For you say, 'Where is the house
of the prince?
Where is the tent in which the
wicked lived?'
29 Have you not asked those who
travel the roads,
and do you not accept their
testimony,
30 that the wicked are spared in the
day of calamity,
and are rescued in the day of
wrath?
31 Who declares their way to their
face,
and who repays them for what
they have done?
32 When they are carried to the
grave,
a watch is kept over their tomb.
33 The clods of the valley are sweet
to them;
everyone will follow after,
and those who went before are
innumerable.
34 How then will you comfort me
with empty nothings?
There is nothing left of your
answers but falsehood."

Eliphaz Speaks: Job's Wickedness Is Great

22 Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered:
2 "Can a mortal be of use to God?
Can even the wisest be of
service to him?
3 Is it any pleasure to the
Almighty[x] if you are
righteous,
or is it gain to him if you make
your ways blameless?
4 Is it for your piety that he
reproves you,
and enters into judgment
with you?
5 Is not your wickedness great?
There is no end to your
iniquities.
6 For you have exacted pledges
from your family for no
reason,
and stripped the naked of their
clothing.
7 You have given no water to the
weary to drink,
and you have withheld bread
from the hungry.
8 The powerful possess the land,
and the favored live in it.
9 You have sent widows away
empty-handed,
and the arms of the orphans
you have crushed.[y]
10 Therefore snares are around you,
and sudden terror
overwhelms you,
11 or darkness so that you
cannot see;
a flood of water covers you.

12 "Is not God high in the heavens?
See the highest stars, how lofty
they are!
13 Therefore you say, 'What does
God know?
Can he judge through the deep
darkness?

x Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*
y Gk Syr Tg Vg: Heb *were crushed*

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impoverished" and asks, "What has it *profited* me that I have bowed down to my god?" **21.19** Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel challenge the sentiment, expressed in a proverb, that *children* suffer because of their parents' misventures (Ezek 18.2; Jer 31.29).

14 Thick clouds enwrap him, so that
he does not see,
and he walks on the dome of
heaven.'
15 Will you keep to the old way
that the wicked have trod?
16 They were snatched away before
their time;
their foundation was washed
away by a flood.
17 They said to God, 'Leave us
alone,'
and 'What can the Almighty[z]
do to us?'[a]
18 Yet he filled their houses with
good things—
but the plans of the wicked are
repugnant to me.
19 The righteous see it and are glad;
the innocent laugh them to
scorn,
20 saying, 'Surely our adversaries are
cut off,
and what they left, the fire has
consumed.'

21 "Agree with God,[b] and be at
peace;
in this way good will come
to you.
22 Receive instruction from his
mouth,
and lay up his words in your
heart.
23 If you return to the Almighty,[z]
you will be restored,
if you remove unrighteousness
from your tents,
24 if you treat gold like dust,
and gold of Ophir like the
stones of the torrent-bed,
25 and if the Almighty[z] is your gold
and your precious silver,
26 then you will delight yourself in
the Almighty,[z]
and lift up your face to God.
27 You will pray to him, and he will
hear you,
and you will pay your vows.
28 You will decide on a matter, and
it will be established
for you,
and light will shine on your
ways.
29 When others are humiliated, you
say it is pride;
for he saves the humble.
30 He will deliver even those who
are guilty;
they will escape because of the
cleanness of your hands."[c]

Job Replies: My Complaint Is Bitter

23 Then Job answered:
2 "Today also my complaint
is bitter;[d]
his[e] hand is heavy despite my
groaning.
3 Oh, that I knew where I might
find him,
that I might come even to his
dwelling!
4 I would lay my case before him,
and fill my mouth with
arguments.
5 I would learn what he would
answer me,
and understand what he would
say to me.
6 Would he contend with me in the
greatness of his power?
No; but he would give heed
to me.
7 There an upright person could
reason with him,
and I should be acquitted
forever by my judge.

8 "If I go forward, he is not there;

z Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*
a Gk Syr: Heb *them* *b* Heb *him* *c* Meaning of Heb uncertain *d* Syr Vg Tg: Heb *rebellious*
e Gk Syr: Heb *my*

22.15 Another vocalization of the Hebrew word rendered *old* yields "hidden," which would imply that the conduct is furtive rather than ancient. **22.21** *Agree with God.* The Mesopotamian parallel "I Will Praise the Lord of Wisdom" advises correct ritual and repentance as a means to restoration. **22.24** Puns accentuate the expression here, the Hebrew word for "treasure," here translated *gold,* resembling that for *like* (or among) *the stones* and *dust* echoing *Ophir.* **22.27** Neglecting to keep one's *vows* brought divine wrath, as the Canaanite hero Keret discovered. Eccl 5.4 (Masoretic Text 5.3) strongly encourages the payment of vows lest wrath break out with serious consequences.

23.8–9 Indicators for directions derive from one who stands facing the rising sun. Forward is east, backward is west; to the left is north, to

or backward, I cannot
perceive him;
9 on the left he hides, and I cannot
behold him;
I turn[f] to the right, but I
cannot see him.
10 But he knows the way that I take;
when he has tested me, I shall
come out like gold.
11 My foot has held fast to his steps;
I have kept his way and have
not turned aside.
12 I have not departed from the
commandment of his lips;
I have treasured in[g] my bosom
the words of his mouth.
13 But he stands alone and who can
dissuade him?
What he desires, that he does.
14 For he will complete what he
appoints for me;
and many such things are in his
mind.
15 Therefore I am terrified at his
presence;
when I consider, I am in dread
of him.
16 God has made my heart faint;
the Almighty[h] has
terrified me;
17 If only I could vanish in
darkness,
and thick darkness would cover
my face![i]

Job Complains of Violence on the Earth

24 "Why are times not kept by the
Almighty,[h]
and why do those who know
him never see his days?
2 The wicked[j] remove landmarks;
they seize flocks and pasture
them.
3 They drive away the donkey of
the orphan;
they take the widow's ox for a
pledge.
4 They thrust the needy off the
road;
the poor of the earth all hide
themselves.
5 Like wild asses in the desert
they go out to their toil,
scavenging in the wasteland
food for their young.
6 They reap in a field not
their own
and they glean in the vineyard
of the wicked.
7 They lie all night naked, without
clothing,
and have no covering in the
cold.
8 They are wet with the rain of the
mountains,
and cling to the rock for want
of shelter.

9 "There are those who snatch the
orphan child from the
breast,
and take as a pledge the infant
of the poor.
10 They go about naked, without
clothing;
though hungry, they carry the
sheaves;
11 between their terraces[k] they
press out oil;
they tread the wine presses, but
suffer thirst.
12 From the city the dying groan,
and the throat of the wounded
cries for help;
yet God pays no attention to
their prayer.

13 "There are those who rebel
against the light,
who are not acquainted with its
ways,
and do not stay in its paths.
14 The murderer rises at dusk
to kill the poor and needy,
and in the night is like a thief.
15 The eye of the adulterer also
waits for the twilight,
saying, 'No eye will see me';
and he disguises his face.

f Syr Vg: Heb *he turns* *g* Gk Vg: Heb *from*
h Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*
i Or *But I am not destroyed by the darkness; he has concealed the thick darkness from me* *j* Gk: Heb *they*
k Meaning of Heb uncertain

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the right is south. **24.1** *Times* of judgment. **24.9** These accusations recall Am 2.6–8, which mentions garments seized in pledge from the *poor*. **24.11** In the presence of so much, the poor suffer want—a poignant image of the hopelessness of such victims of greed. They can't even drink the *wine* they are making. **24.15** The futil-

16 In the dark they dig through houses;
by day they shut themselves up;
they do not know the light.
17 For deep darkness is morning to all of them;
for they are friends with the terrors of deep darkness.

18 "Swift are they on the face of the waters;
their portion in the land is cursed;
no treader turns toward their vineyards.
19 Drought and heat snatch away the snow waters;
so does Sheol those who have sinned.
20 The womb forgets them;
the worm finds them sweet;
they are no longer remembered;
so wickedness is broken like a tree.

21 "They harm[l] the childless woman,
and do no good to the widow.
22 Yet God[m] prolongs the life of the mighty by his power;
they rise up when they despair of life.
23 He gives them security, and they are supported;
his eyes are upon their ways.
24 They are exalted a little while, and then are gone;
they wither and fade like the mallow;[n]
they are cut off like the heads of grain.
25 If it is not so, who will prove me a liar,
and show that there is nothing in what I say?"

Bildad Speaks: How Can a Mortal Be Righteous Before God?

25 Then Bildad the Shuhite answered:
2 "Dominion and fear are with God;[o]
he makes peace in his high heaven.
3 Is there any number to his armies?
Upon whom does his light not arise?
4 How then can a mortal be righteous before God?
How can one born of woman be pure?
5 If even the moon is not bright
and the stars are not pure in his sight,
6 how much less a mortal, who is a maggot,
and a human being, who is a worm!"

Job Replies: God's Majesty Is Unsearchable

26 Then Job answered:
2 "How you have helped one who has no power!
How you have assisted the arm that has no strength!
3 How you have counseled one who has no wisdom,
and given much good advice!
4 With whose help have you uttered words,
and whose spirit has come forth from you?
5 The shades below tremble,
the waters and their inhabitants.
6 Sheol is naked before God,
and Abaddon has no covering.
7 He stretches out Zaphon[p] over the void,

l Gk Tg: Heb *feed on* or *associate with* *m* Heb *he*
n Gk: Heb *like all others* *o* Heb *him*
p Or *the North*

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ity of such clandestine behavior is the topic of a descriptive account in Prov 7.6–23.

25.1 Bildad's third speech is brief, and Zophar's missing altogether. Have the friends run out of arguments or has the text fallen into disarray? In favor of the latter alternative, Job's next speech contains sentiments not altogether in line with his previous thoughts. **26.6** This designation of Death as *Abaddon* probably comes from the Hebrew verb for "perishing." **26.7** In Canaanite mythology *Zaphon* was a mountain in the north on which the gods (especially Baal) dwelt, like Mount

and hangs the earth upon
nothing.
8 He binds up the waters in his
thick clouds,
and the cloud is not torn open
by them.
9 He covers the face of the full
moon,
and spreads over it his cloud.
10 He has described a circle on the
face of the waters,
at the boundary between light
and darkness.
11 The pillars of heaven tremble,
and are astounded at his
rebuke.
12 By his power he stilled the Sea;
by his understanding he struck
down Rahab.
13 By his wind the heavens were
made fair;
his hand pierced the fleeing
serpent.
14 These are indeed but the
outskirts of his ways;
and how small a whisper do we
hear of him!
But the thunder of his power
who can understand?"

Job Maintains His Integrity

27 Job again took up his discourse
and said:
2 "As God lives, who has taken
away my right,
and the Almighty,[q] who has
made my soul bitter,
3 as long as my breath is in me
and the spirit of God is in my
nostrils,
4 my lips will not speak falsehood,
and my tongue will not utter
deceit.
5 Far be it from me to say that you
are right;
until I die I will not put away
my integrity from me.
6 I hold fast my righteousness, and
will not let it go;
my heart does not reproach me
for any of my days.

7 "May my enemy be like the
wicked,
and may my opponent be like
the unrighteous.
8 For what is the hope of the
godless when God cuts
them off,
when God takes away their
lives?
9 Will God hear their cry
when trouble comes upon
them?
10 Will they take delight in the
Almighty?[q]
Will they call upon God at all
times?
11 I will teach you concerning the
hand of God;
that which is with the
Almighty[q] I will not
conceal.
12 All of you have seen it yourselves;
why then have you become
altogether vain?

13 "This is the portion of the wicked
with God,
and the heritage that
oppressors receive from the
Almighty:[q]
14 If their children are multiplied, it
is for the sword;
and their offspring have not
enough to eat.

[q] Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

Olympus in Greek literature. **26.9** The Hebrew has "throne" instead of *moon*. **26.13** *The fleeing serpent* occurs in Isa 27.1 with reference to Leviathan.

27.1 The introductory formula here and in 29.1 differs from the previous ones; the earlier "Then Job [Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar] answered" gives way to *Job again took up his discourse and said*. The Hebrew word translated *discourse* is the usual one for "likeness," "proverb," or "analogy," sometimes translated "parable." **27.2** *As God lives*. Curiously, the oath is in the name of the deity who has, in Job's view, demonstrated a lack of justice. Similarly, Job hopes for justice from God who does not act justly. Contradictions may result from his dire circumstances. Hence he thinks that God cannot be found yet that God attacks Job viciously from all quarters. **27.7–23** The speech, if from Job, must be fully ironical, for he does not trust in divine justice. **27.14–17** Echoes of a curse formula can be heard in these verses. **27.15** The word *pestilence* is also the

15 Those who survive them the pestilence buries,
and their widows make no lamentation.
16 Though they heap up silver like dust,
and pile up clothing like clay—
17 they may pile it up, but the just will wear it,
and the innocent will divide the silver.
18 They build their houses like nests,
like booths made by sentinels of the vineyard.
19 They go to bed with wealth, but will do so no more;
they open their eyes, and it is gone.
20 Terrors overtake them like a flood;
in the night a whirlwind carries them off.
21 The east wind lifts them up and they are gone;
it sweeps them out of their place.
22 It[r] hurls at them without pity;
they flee from its[s] power in headlong flight.
23 It[r] claps its[s] hands at them,
and hisses at them from its[s] place.

Interlude: Where Wisdom Is Found

28 "Surely there is a mine for silver,
and a place for gold to be refined.
2 Iron is taken out of the earth,
and copper is smelted from ore.
3 Miners put[t] an end to darkness,
and search out to the farthest bound
the ore in gloom and deep darkness.
4 They open shafts in a valley away from human habitation;
they are forgotten by travelers,
they sway suspended, remote from people.
5 As for the earth, out of it comes bread;
but underneath it is turned up as by fire.
6 Its stones are the place of sapphires,[u]
and its dust contains gold.

7 "That path no bird of prey knows,
and the falcon's eye has not seen it.
8 The proud wild animals have not trodden it;
the lion has not passed over it.

9 "They put their hand to the flinty rock,
and overturn mountains by the roots.
10 They cut out channels in the rocks,
and their eyes see every precious thing.
11 The sources of the rivers they probe;[v]
hidden things they bring to light.

12 "But where shall wisdom be found?
And where is the place of understanding?
13 Mortals do not know the way to it,[w]
and it is not found in the land of the living.
14 The deep says, 'It is not in me,'
and the sea says, 'It is not with me.'
15 It cannot be gotten for gold,
and silver cannot be weighed out as its price.
16 It cannot be valued in the gold of Ophir,
in precious onyx or sapphire.[u]

r Or *He* (that is God) *s* Or *his* *t* Heb *He puts*
u Or *lapis lazuli* *v* Gk Vg: Heb *bind*
w Gk: Heb *its price*

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name of a Canaanite deity. Job's reference to *widows* indicates a society in which polygyny was practiced, although the story mentions only one wife.

28.15–19 Four different words for *gold* occur in these verses, and the exact classification of gems remains unclear. Translation of flora, fauna, and the like present special difficulty. The fleeting nature of wealth is noted in an Egyptian

17 Gold and glass cannot equal it,
nor can it be exchanged for
jewels of fine gold.
18 No mention shall be made of
coral or of crystal;
the price of wisdom is above
pearls.
19 The chrysolite of Ethiopia[x]
cannot compare with it,
nor can it be valued in pure
gold.

20 "Where then does wisdom come
from?
And where is the place of
understanding?
21 It is hidden from the eyes of all
living,
and concealed from the birds
of the air.
22 Abaddon and Death say,
'We have heard a rumor of it
with our ears.'

23 "God understands the way to it,
and he knows its place.
24 For he looks to the ends of the
earth,
and sees everything under the
heavens.
25 When he gave to the wind its
weight,
and apportioned out the waters
by measure;
26 when he made a decree for the
rain,
and a way for the thunderbolt;
27 then he saw it and declared it;
he established it, and searched
it out.
28 And he said to humankind,
'Truly, the fear of the Lord, that
is wisdom;
and to depart from evil is
understanding.' "

Job Finishes His Defense

29 Job again took up his discourse
and said:
2 "O that I were as in the months
of old,
as in the days when God
watched over me;
3 when his lamp shone over my
head,
and by his light I walked
through darkness;
4 when I was in my prime,
when the friendship of God
was upon my tent;
5 when the Almighty[y] was still
with me,
when my children were
around me;
6 when my steps were washed with
milk,
and the rock poured out for
me streams of oil!
7 When I went out to the gate of
the city,
when I took my seat in the
square,
8 the young men saw me and
withdrew,
and the aged rose up and
stood;
9 the nobles refrained from talking,
and laid their hands on their
mouths;
10 the voices of princes were
hushed,
and their tongues stuck to the
roof of their mouths.
11 When the ear heard, it
commended me,
and when the eye saw, it
approved;
12 because I delivered the poor who
cried,

x Or *Nubia*; Heb *Cush*
y Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

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proverb, also found in Prov 23.4–5. **28.28** *Lord*, the only use of Adonai in the book. In Jewish tradition one reads Adonai wherever the Tetragrammaton, YHWH (Yahweh), appears. The Hebrew word *'adonay* refers to a human master but also to the Lord.

29.2–4 The Hebrew alludes to autumn *days*, which, contrary to Western notions, refer to vigor. In the Near East, summer's drought gives way to new growth as the rains during autumn and winter descend on a parched earth. The fall is therefore an appropriate season for the New Year. **29.7** Judicial decisions took place at the city *gate*; here Job represents himself as a city dweller rather than the desert sheik of the prose. **29.12–13** Wisdom literature champions the cause of these three groups: widows, orphans, and the *poor*. Kings were charged with their welfare, and neglect of these subjects was cause for abdication of the throne, according to the Canaanite "Tale of

and the orphan who had no
helper.
13 The blessing of the wretched
came upon me,
and I caused the widow's heart
to sing for joy.
14 I put on righteousness, and it
clothed me;
my justice was like a robe and a
turban.
15 I was eyes to the blind,
and feet to the lame.
16 I was a father to the needy,
and I championed the cause of
the stranger.
17 I broke the fangs of the
unrighteous,
and made them drop their prey
from their teeth.
18 Then I thought, 'I shall die in my
nest,
and I shall multiply my days
like the phoenix;[z]
19 my roots spread out to the
waters,
with the dew all night on my
branches;
20 my glory was fresh with me,
and my bow ever new in my
hand.'

21 "They listened to me, and waited,
and kept silence for my
counsel.
22 After I spoke they did not speak
again,
and my word dropped upon
them like dew.[a]
23 They waited for me as for the
rain;
they opened their mouths as
for the spring rain.
24 I smiled on them when they had
no confidence;
and the light of my
countenance they did not
extinguish.[b]
25 I chose their way, and sat as
chief,
and I lived like a king among
his troops,
like one who comforts
mourners.

30 "But now they make sport
of me,
those who are younger than I,
whose fathers I would have
disdained
to set with the dogs of my
flock.
2 What could I gain from the
strength of their hands?
All their vigor is gone.
3 Through want and hard hunger
they gnaw the dry and desolate
ground,
4 they pick mallow and the leaves
of bushes,
and to warm themselves the
roots of broom.
5 They are driven out from society;
people shout after them as
after a thief.
6 In the gullies of wadis they must
live,
in holes in the ground, and in
the rocks.
7 Among the bushes they bray;
under the nettles they huddle
together.
8 A senseless, disreputable brood,
they have been whipped out of
the land.

9 "And now they mock me in song;
I am a byword to them.
10 They abhor me, they keep aloof
from me;
they do not hesitate to spit at
the sight of me.
11 Because God has loosed my
bowstring and humbled me,
they have cast off restraint in
my presence.
12 On my right hand the rabble
rise up;

z Or *like sand* a Heb lacks *like dew*
b Meaning of Heb uncertain

Aqhat." **29.18** In Greek mythology the *phoenix* rises from its own ashes. The Hebrew text has "sand," which makes sense in context, for the Abraham tradition uses this image to indicate a countless host of descendants. The allusion to a *nest* invites, but does not demand, thought of a bird. **29.20** The warrior's *bow* has sexual overtones in the Canaanite Aqhat tale, where the goddess Anat desires a bow in the possession of the mighty warrior. **30.1–15** Job's disdain for the poor in these verses conflicts with 30.25 and his attitude expressed in 31.16–23.

they send me sprawling,
and build roads for my ruin.
13 They break up my path,
they promote my calamity;
no one restrains[c] them.
14 As through a wide breach they come;
amid the crash they roll on.
15 Terrors are turned upon me;
my honor is pursued as by the wind,
and my prosperity has passed away like a cloud.

16 "And now my soul is poured out within me;
days of affliction have taken hold of me.
17 The night racks my bones,
and the pain that gnaws me takes no rest.
18 With violence he seizes my garment;[d]
he grasps me by[e] the collar of my tunic.
19 He has cast me into the mire,
and I have become like dust and ashes.
20 I cry to you and you do not answer me;
I stand, and you merely look at me.
21 You have turned cruel to me;
with the might of your hand you persecute me.
22 You lift me up on the wind, you make me ride on it,
and you toss me about in the roar of the storm.
23 I know that you will bring me to death,
and to the house appointed for all living.

24 "Surely one does not turn against the needy,[f]
when in disaster they cry for help.[g]
25 Did I not weep for those whose day was hard?
Was not my soul grieved for the poor?
26 But when I looked for good, evil came;
and when I waited for light, darkness came.
27 My inward parts are in turmoil, and are never still;
days of affliction come to meet me.
28 I go about in sunless gloom;
I stand up in the assembly and cry for help.
29 I am a brother of jackals,
and a companion of ostriches.
30 My skin turns black and falls from me,
and my bones burn with heat.
31 My lyre is turned to mourning,
and my pipe to the voice of those who weep.

Job Challenges God

31 "I have made a covenant with my eyes;
how then could I look upon a virgin?
2 What would be my portion from God above,
and my heritage from the Almighty[h] on high?
3 Does not calamity befall the unrighteous,
and disaster the workers of iniquity?
4 Does he not see my ways,
and number all my steps?

5 "If I have walked with falsehood,
and my foot has hurried to deceit—
6 let me be weighed in a just balance,
and let God know my integrity!—
7 if my step has turned aside from the way,
and my heart has followed my eyes,

c Cn: Heb *helps* *d* Gk: Heb *my garment is disfigured* *e* Heb *like* *f* Heb *ruin*
g Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain *h* Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

31.1 This allusion to a *virgin* probably pertains to a specific one, the virgin goddess Anat of Canaanite mythology. Idolatry, not lust, is the offense. **31.5–40** Similar confessions of innocence can be found in Egyptian liturgical texts. Unlike customary curse formulas, Job's oath of innocence mentions the consequences of sinful action, thus abandoning the psychological effect of an un-

and if any spot has clung to my hands;
8 then let me sow, and another eat;
and let what grows for me be rooted out.

9 "If my heart has been enticed by a woman,
and I have lain in wait at my neighbor's door;
10 then let my wife grind for another,
and let other men kneel over her.
11 For that would be a heinous crime;
that would be a criminal offense;
12 for that would be a fire consuming down to Abaddon,
and it would burn to the root all my harvest.

13 "If I have rejected the cause of my male or female slaves,
when they brought a complaint against me;
14 what then shall I do when God rises up?
When he makes inquiry, what shall I answer him?
15 Did not he who made me in the womb make them?
And did not one fashion us in the womb?

16 "If I have withheld anything that the poor desired,
or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail,
17 or have eaten my morsel alone,
and the orphan has not eaten from it—
18 for from my youth I reared the orphan[i] like a father,
and from my mother's womb I guided the widow[j]—
19 if I have seen anyone perish for lack of clothing,
or a poor person without covering,
20 whose loins have not blessed me,
and who was not warmed with the fleece of my sheep;
21 if I have raised my hand against the orphan,
because I saw I had supporters at the gate;
22 then let my shoulder blade fall from my shoulder,
and let my arm be broken from its socket.
23 For I was in terror of calamity from God,
and I could not have faced his majesty.

24 "If I have made gold my trust,
or called fine gold my confidence;
25 if I have rejoiced because my wealth was great,
or because my hand had gotten much;
26 if I have looked at the sun[k] when it shone,
or the moon moving in splendor,
27 and my heart has been secretly enticed,
and my mouth has kissed my hand;
28 this also would be an iniquity to be punished by the judges,
for I should have been false to God above.

29 "If I have rejoiced at the ruin of those who hated me,
or exulted when evil overtook them—
30 I have not let my mouth sin
by asking for their lives with a curse—

i Heb *him* *j* Heb *her* *k* Heb *the light*

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stated curse. **31.10** That the *wife* suffers for her husband's crime accords with the ancient proprietary notion of marriage. In the *Testament of Job* (a work of the Second Temple period; see Introduction) his wife, named Sitis, works as a water carrier and even sells her hair to Satan to buy bread for herself and her ailing husband. The verb *grind* has sexual overtones (cf. the Samson narrative in rabbinic interpretation), as the parallel *kneel over* shows. **31.15** Biblical proverbs affirm this belief that rich and poor have a single maker (cf. Prov 22.2; 29.13). **31.27** *My mouth has kissed my hand,* lit. "my hand has kissed my mouth," may allude to the Babylonian expression for a liturgical

31 if those of my tent ever said,
'O that we might be sated with
his flesh!'[l]—
32 the stranger has not lodged in the
street;
I have opened my doors to the
traveler—
33 if I have concealed my
transgressions as
others do,[m]
by hiding my iniquity in my
bosom,
34 because I stood in great fear of
the multitude,
and the contempt of families
terrified me,
so that I kept silence, and did
not go out of doors—
35 O that I had one to hear
me!
(Here is my signature! Let the
Almighty[n] answer me!)
O that I had the indictment
written by my adversary!
36 Surely I would carry it on my
shoulder;
I would bind it on me like a
crown;
37 I would give him an account of
all my steps;
like a prince I would
approach him.

38 "If my land has cried out
against me,
and its furrows have wept
together;
39 if I have eaten its yield without
payment,
and caused the death of its
owners;
40 let thorns grow instead of
wheat,
and foul weeds instead of
barley."

The words of Job are ended.

Elihu Rebukes Job's Friends

32 So these three men ceased to answer Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes. 2 Then Elihu son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram, became angry. He was angry at Job because he justified himself rather than God; 3 he was angry also at Job's three friends because they had found no answer, though they had declared Job to be in the wrong.[o] 4 Now Elihu had waited to speak to Job, because they were older than he. 5 But when Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouths of these three men, he became angry.

6 Elihu son of Barachel the Buzite answered:
"I am young in years,
and you are aged;
therefore I was timid and afraid
to declare my opinion to you.
7 I said, 'Let days speak,
and many years teach wisdom.'
8 But truly it is the spirit in a
mortal,
the breath of the Almighty,[n]
that makes for
understanding.
9 It is not the old[p] that are wise,
nor the aged that understand
what is right.
10 Therefore I say, 'Listen to me;
let me also declare my opinion.'

11 "See, I waited for your words,
I listened for your wise sayings,
while you searched out what
to say.
12 I gave you my attention,
but there was in fact no one
that confuted Job,
no one among you that
answered his words.

l Meaning of Heb uncertain *m* Or *as Adam did*
n Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*
o Another ancient tradition reads *answer, and had put God in the wrong* *p* Gk Syr Vg: Heb *many*

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gesture of obeisance in which the hand touches the nose. **31.31** *Sated with his flesh*, perhaps an expression for homosexual abuse. **31.32** Hospitality to the resident alien was an important obligation in the ancient world. **31.35** *Signature*, lit. *taw*, the final letter in the Hebrew alphabet, signifying an identifying mark like our "X." Literacy was not very extensive in the ancient world. **31.36** The prophet Habakkuk speaks in 2.2 of displaying the vision for which he waits in some way that it can be read rapidly. **31.40** The Hebrew word for *ended* is cognate with that for "integrity." Despite this claim that Job will speak no more, he does so twice in 40.3–5 and 42.1–6.

32.2 Elihu has impeccable credentials; according to Gen 22.21 *Buz* was a son of Abraham's

13 Yet do not say, 'We have found wisdom;
God may vanquish him, not a human.'
14 He has not directed his words against me,
and I will not answer him with your speeches.

15 "They are dismayed, they answer no more;
they have not a word to say.
16 And am I to wait, because they do not speak,
because they stand there, and answer no more?
17 I also will give my answer;
I also will declare my opinion.
18 For I am full of words;
the spirit within me constrains me.
19 My heart is indeed like wine that has no vent;
like new wineskins, it is ready to burst.
20 I must speak, so that I may find relief;
I must open my lips and answer.
21 I will not show partiality to any person
or use flattery toward anyone.
22 For I do not know how to flatter—
or my Maker would soon put an end to me!

Elihu Rebukes Job

33 "But now, hear my speech, O Job,
and listen to all my words.
2 See, I open my mouth;
the tongue in my mouth speaks.
3 My words declare the uprightness of my heart,
and what my lips know they speak sincerely.
4 The spirit of God has made me,
and the breath of the Almighty[q] gives me life.
5 Answer me, if you can;
set your words in order before me; take your stand.
6 See, before God I am as you are;
I too was formed from a piece of clay.
7 No fear of me need terrify you;
my pressure will not be heavy on you.

8 "Surely, you have spoken in my hearing,
and I have heard the sound of your words.
9 You say, 'I am clean, without transgression;
I am pure, and there is no iniquity in me.
10 Look, he finds occasions against me,
he counts me as his enemy;
11 he puts my feet in the stocks,
and watches all my paths.'

12 "But in this you are not right. I will answer you:
God is greater than any mortal.
13 Why do you contend against him,
saying, 'He will answer none of my[r] words'?
14 For God speaks in one way,
and in two, though people do not perceive it.
15 In a dream, in a vision of the night,
when deep sleep falls on mortals,
while they slumber on their beds,
16 then he opens their ears,
and terrifies them with warnings,
17 that he may turn them aside from their deeds,
and keep them from pride,
18 to spare their souls from the Pit,
their lives from traversing the River.
19 They are also chastened with pain upon their beds,
and with continual strife in their bones,
20 so that their lives loathe bread,

q Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*
r Compare Gk: Heb *his*

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brother Nahor. Furthermore, in Hebrew the name *Barachel* means "El blesses" or "bless El," and *Elihu* means "He is my God" (cf. Isa 41.4, "I am He"). **32.14** Elihu actually quotes earlier *speeches*, showing great familiarity with them. **33.1** Only Elihu addresses *Job* by name.

and their appetites dainty food.
21 Their flesh is so wasted away that
it cannot be seen;
and their bones, once invisible,
now stick out.
22 Their souls draw near the Pit,
and their lives to those who
bring death.
23 Then, if there should be for one
of them an angel,
a mediator, one of a thousand,
one who declares a person
upright,
24 and he is gracious to that person,
and says,
'Deliver him from going down
into the Pit;
I have found a ransom;
25 let his flesh become fresh with
youth;
let him return to the days of
his youthful vigor';
26 then he prays to God, and is
accepted by him,
he comes into his presence
with joy,
and God[s] repays him for his
righteousness.
27 That person sings to others and
says,
'I sinned, and perverted what was
right,
and it was not paid back to me.
28 He has redeemed my soul from
going down to the Pit,
and my life shall see the light.'

29 "God indeed does all these things,
twice, three times, with mortals,
30 to bring back their souls from
the Pit,
so that they may see the light
of life.[t]
31 Pay heed, Job, listen to me;
be silent, and I will speak.
32 If you have anything to say,
answer me;
speak, for I desire to
justify you.
33 If not, listen to me;
be silent, and I will teach you
wisdom."

Elihu Proclaims God's Justice

34 Then Elihu continued and said:
2 "Hear my words, you
wise men,
and give ear to me, you who
know;
3 for the ear tests words
as the palate tastes food.
4 Let us choose what is right;
let us determine among
ourselves what is good.
5 For Job has said, 'I am innocent,
and God has taken away my
right;
6 in spite of being right I am
counted a liar;
my wound is incurable, though
I am without transgression.'
7 Who is there like Job,
who drinks up scoffing like
water,
8 who goes in company with
evildoers
and walks with the wicked?
9 For he has said, 'It profits one
nothing
to take delight in God.'

10 "Therefore, hear me, you who
have sense,
far be it from God that he
should do wickedness,
and from the Almighty[u] that
he should do wrong.
11 For according to their deeds he
will repay them,
and according to their ways he
will make it befall them.
12 Of a truth, God will not do
wickedly,
and the Almighty[u] will not
pervert justice.
13 Who gave him charge over the
earth
and who laid on him[v] the
whole world?
14 If he should take back his spirit[w]
to himself,

s Heb *he* t Syr: Heb *to be lighted with the light of life* u Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai* v Heb lacks *on him* w Heb *his heart his spirit*

33.23 Do these images of a kind intercessor suggest a patron deity who pleaded one's case before the great God? **34.2** Elihu uses a teacher's opening summons to get listeners to pay attention. **34.11** Despite Job's effective refutation of the retributive scheme, it persists in Elihu's thought. **34.14–15** An echo of Gen 2.7; 3.19.

and gather to himself his
breath,
15 all flesh would perish together,
and all mortals return to dust.

16 "If you have understanding, hear
this;
listen to what I say.
17 Shall one who hates justice
govern?
Will you condemn one who is
righteous and mighty,
18 who says to a king, 'You
scoundrel!'
and to princes, 'You
wicked men!';
19 who shows no partiality to nobles,
nor regards the rich more than
the poor,
for they are all the work of his
hands?
20 In a moment they die;
at midnight the people are
shaken and pass away,
and the mighty are taken away
by no human hand.

21 "For his eyes are upon the ways
of mortals,
and he sees all their steps.
22 There is no gloom or deep
darkness
where evildoers may hide
themselves.
23 For he has not appointed a time[x]
for anyone
to go before God in judgment.
24 He shatters the mighty without
investigation,
and sets others in their place.
25 Thus, knowing their works,
he overturns them in the night,
and they are crushed.
26 He strikes them for their
wickedness
while others look on,
27 because they turned aside from
following him,
and had no regard for any of
his ways,
28 so that they caused the cry of the
poor to come to him,
and he heard the cry of the
afflicted—
29 When he is quiet, who can
condemn?
When he hides his face, who
can behold him,
whether it be a nation or an
individual?—
30 so that the godless should not
reign,
or those who ensnare the
people.

31 "For has anyone said to God,
'I have endured punishment; I
will not offend any more;
32 teach me what I do not see;
if I have done iniquity, I will
do it no more'?
33 Will he then pay back to suit you,
because you reject it?
For you must choose, and not I;
therefore declare what you
know.[y]
34 Those who have sense will say
to me,
and the wise who hear me
will say,
35 'Job speaks without knowledge,
his words are without insight.'
36 Would that Job were tried to the
limit,
because his answers are those
of the wicked.
37 For he adds rebellion to his sin;
he claps his hands among us,
and multiplies his words
against God."

Elihu Condemns Self-Righteousness

35 Elihu continued and said:
2 "Do you think this to be
just?
You say, 'I am in the right
before God.'
3 If you ask, 'What advantage
have I?
How am I better off than if I
had sinned?'
4 I will answer you
and your friends with you.
5 Look at the heavens and see;
observe the clouds, which are
higher than you.
6 If you have sinned, what do you
accomplish against him?
And if your transgressions are
multiplied, what do you do
to him?

x Cn: Heb *yet* y Meaning of Heb of verses 29-33 uncertain

7 If you are righteous, what do you
give to him;
or what does he receive from
your hand?
8 Your wickedness affects others
like you,
and your righteousness, other
human beings.

9 "Because of the multitude of
oppressions people cry out;
they call for help because of the
arm of the mighty.
10 But no one says, 'Where is God
my Maker,
who gives strength in the night,
11 who teaches us more than the
animals of the earth,
and makes us wiser than the
birds of the air?'
12 There they cry out, but he does
not answer,
because of the pride of
evildoers.
13 Surely God does not hear an
empty cry,
nor does the Almighty[z]
regard it.
14 How much less when you say that
you do not see him,
that the case is before him, and
you are waiting for him!
15 And now, because his anger does
not punish,
and he does not greatly heed
transgression,[a]
16 Job opens his mouth in empty
talk,
he multiplies words without
knowledge."

Elihu Exalts God's Goodness

36 Elihu continued and said:
2 "Bear with me a little, and
I will show you,
for I have yet something to say
on God's behalf.
3 I will bring my knowledge from
far away,
and ascribe righteousness to my
Maker.
4 For truly my words are not false;
one who is perfect in
knowledge is with you.

5 "Surely God is mighty and does
not despise any;
he is mighty in strength of
understanding.
6 He does not keep the wicked
alive,
but gives the afflicted their
right.
7 He does not withdraw his eyes
from the righteous,
but with kings on the throne
he sets them forever, and they
are exalted.
8 And if they are bound in fetters
and caught in the cords of
affliction,
9 then he declares to them their
work
and their transgressions, that
they are behaving
arrogantly.
10 He opens their ears to
instruction,
and commands that they return
from iniquity.
11 If they listen, and serve him,
they complete their days in
prosperity,
and their years in pleasantness.
12 But if they do not listen, they
shall perish by the sword,
and die without knowledge.

13 "The godless in heart cherish
anger;
they do not cry for help when
he binds them.
14 They die in their youth,
and their life ends in shame.[b]
15 He delivers the afflicted by their
affliction,
and opens their ear by
adversity.

z Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*
a Theodotion Symmachus Compare Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain *b* Heb *ends among the temple prostitutes*

35.7–8 The argument resembles that of the friends, who exalted God at human expense. **35.16** God later accuses Job of obscuring counsel by *words without knowledge* (38.2). **36.4** Apparently Elihu does not subscribe to the idea of limited access to wisdom expressed in 28.21, 23–28, for he claims to possess what is there restricted to God.

16 He also allured you out of distress
into a broad place where there was no constraint,
and what was set on your table was full of fatness.

17 "But you are obsessed with the case of the wicked;
judgment and justice seize you.
18 Beware that wrath does not entice you into scoffing,
and do not let the greatness of the ransom turn you aside.
19 Will your cry avail to keep you from distress,
or will all the force of your strength?
20 Do not long for the night,
when peoples are cut off in their place.
21 Beware! Do not turn to iniquity;
because of that you have been tried by affliction.
22 See, God is exalted in his power;
who is a teacher like him?
23 Who has prescribed for him his way,
or who can say, 'You have done wrong'?

Elihu Proclaims God's Majesty

24 "Remember to extol his work,
of which mortals have sung.
25 All people have looked on it;
everyone watches it from far away.
26 Surely God is great, and we do not know him;
the number of his years is unsearchable.
27 For he draws up the drops of water;
he distills[c] his mist in rain,
28 which the skies pour down
and drop upon mortals abundantly.
29 Can anyone understand the spreading of the clouds,
the thunderings of his pavilion?
30 See, he scatters his lightning around him
and covers the roots of the sea.
31 For by these he governs peoples;
he gives food in abundance.
32 He covers his hands with the lightning,
and commands it to strike the mark.
33 Its crashing[d] tells about him;
he is jealous[d] with anger against iniquity.

37 "At this also my heart trembles,
and leaps out of its place.
2 Listen, listen to the thunder of his voice
and the rumbling that comes from his mouth.
3 Under the whole heaven he lets it loose,
and his lightning to the corners of the earth.
4 After it his voice roars;
he thunders with his majestic voice
and he does not restrain the lightnings[e] when his voice is heard.
5 God thunders wondrously with his voice;
he does great things that we cannot comprehend.
6 For to the snow he says, 'Fall on the earth';
and the shower of rain, his heavy shower of rain,
7 serves as a sign on everyone's hand,
so that all whom he has made may know it.[f]
8 Then the animals go into their lairs
and remain in their dens.
9 From its chamber comes the whirlwind,
and cold from the scattering winds.
10 By the breath of God ice is given,
and the broad waters are frozen fast.
11 He loads the thick cloud with moisture;
the clouds scatter his lightning.
12 They turn round and round by his guidance,
to accomplish all that he commands them
on the face of the habitable world.
13 Whether for correction, or for his land,

c Cn: Heb *they distill* d Meaning of Heb uncertain e Heb *them* f Meaning of Heb of verse 7 uncertain

or for love, he causes it to
happen.

14 "Hear this, O Job;
stop and consider the wondrous
works of God.
15 Do you know how God lays his
command upon them,
and causes the lightning of his
cloud to shine?
16 Do you know the balancings of
the clouds,
the wondrous works of the one
whose knowledge is perfect,
17 you whose garments are hot
when the earth is still because
of the south wind?
18 Can you, like him, spread out the
skies,
hard as a molten mirror?
19 Teach us what we shall say
to him;
we cannot draw up our case
because of darkness.
20 Should he be told that I want to
speak?
Did anyone ever wish to be
swallowed up?
21 Now, no one can look on the
light
when it is bright in the skies,
when the wind has passed and
cleared them.
22 Out of the north comes golden
splendor;
around God is awesome
majesty.
23 The Almighty[g]—we cannot
find him;
he is great in power and justice,
and abundant righteousness he
will not violate.
24 Therefore mortals fear him;
he does not regard any who are
wise in their own conceit."

The Lord Answers Job

38 Then the Lord answered Job out
of the whirlwind:
2 "Who is this that darkens counsel
by words without
knowledge?
3 Gird up your loins like a man,
I will question you, and you
shall declare to me.

4 "Where were you when I laid the
foundation of the earth?
Tell me, if you have
understanding.
5 Who determined its
measurements—surely you
know!
Or who stretched the line
upon it?
6 On what were its bases sunk,
or who laid its cornerstone
7 when the morning stars sang
together
and all the heavenly beings[h]
shouted for joy?

8 "Or who shut in the sea with
doors
when it burst out from the
womb?—
9 when I made the clouds its
garment,
and thick darkness its
swaddling band,
10 and prescribed bounds for it,
and set bars and doors,
11 and said, 'Thus far shall you
come, and no farther,
and here shall your proud
waves be stopped'?

g Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*
h Heb *sons of God*

37.18 The Hebrew word for *skies* or "firmament" implied an object that was beaten out like metal, hence *hard*. Windows allowed rain to fall. The Baal cycle has a dispute over placing a window in his temple.

38.1 The Hebrew words for the "great wind" accompanying the theophany to Elijah in 1 Kings 19.11 occur in Job 1.19 but not here, where *whirlwind* or "tempest" is used as in 40.6. **38.3** God's choice of the word *man* or "hero" recalls Job's lament in 3.3, which uses this strange word with reference to an infant (cf. 40.7). **38.5** In a context dealing with creation mythology Agur, a sage, seems to cite this brief assurance of knowledge, *surely you know* (Prov 30.4). **38.7** In Prov 8.30–31 personified Wisdom rejoices over the creative work. **38.8–11** Tiamat of Mesopotamian tradition was slain in battle, whereas the Chaos Monster in this text survives but moves

12 "Have you commanded the
morning since your days
began,
and caused the dawn to know
its place,
13 so that it might take hold of the
skirts of the earth,
and the wicked be shaken out
of it?
14 It is changed like clay under the
seal,
and it is dyed[i] like a garment.
15 Light is withheld from the
wicked,
and their uplifted arm is broken.

16 "Have you entered into the
springs of the sea,
or walked in the recesses of the
deep?
17 Have the gates of death been
revealed to you,
or have you seen the gates of
deep darkness?
18 Have you comprehended the
expanse of the earth?
Declare, if you know all this.

19 "Where is the way to the dwelling
of light,
and where is the place of
darkness,
20 that you may take it to its
territory
and that you may discern the
paths to its home?
21 Surely you know, for you were
born then,
and the number of your days is
great!

22 "Have you entered the
storehouses of the snow,
or have you seen the
storehouses of the hail,
23 which I have reserved for the
time of trouble,
for the day of battle and war?
24 What is the way to the place
where the light is
distributed,
or where the east wind is
scattered upon the earth?

25 "Who has cut a channel for the
torrents of rain,
and a way for the thunderbolt,
26 to bring rain on a land where no
one lives,
on the desert, which is empty
of human life,
27 to satisfy the waste and desolate
land,
and to make the ground put
forth grass?

28 "Has the rain a father,
or who has begotten the drops
of dew?
29 From whose womb did the ice
come forth,
and who has given birth to the
hoarfrost of heaven?
30 The waters become hard like
stone,
and the face of the deep is
frozen.

31 "Can you bind the chains of the
Pleiades,
or loose the cords of Orion?
32 Can you lead forth the Mazzaroth
in their season,
or can you guide the Bear with
its children?
33 Do you know the ordinances of
the heavens?
Can you establish their rule on
the earth?

34 "Can you lift up your voice to the
clouds,
so that a flood of waters may
cover you?
35 Can you send forth lightnings, so
that they may go
and say to you, 'Here we are'?
36 Who has put wisdom in the
inward parts,[j]
or given understanding to the
mind?[j]
37 Who has the wisdom to number
the clouds?
Or who can tilt the waterskins
of the heavens,

i Cn: Heb *and they stand forth* *j* Meaning of Heb uncertain

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about under severe constraints imposed by the victorious deity. Tiamat's body, split in half like a shellfish, formed the newly constructed universe. **38.21** The irony here and the near sarcasm in the following questions resemble the style of school questions in Egyptian literature.

38 when the dust runs into a mass
and the clods cling together?

39 "Can you hunt the prey for the lion,
or satisfy the appetite of the young lions,
40 when they crouch in their dens,
or lie in wait in their covert?
41 Who provides for the raven its prey,
when its young ones cry to God,
and wander about for lack of food?

39 "Do you know when the mountain goats give birth?
Do you observe the calving of the deer?
2 Can you number the months that they fulfill,
and do you know the time when they give birth,
3 when they crouch to give birth to their offspring,
and are delivered of their young?
4 Their young ones become strong, they grow up in the open;
they go forth, and do not return to them.

5 "Who has let the wild ass go free?
Who has loosed the bonds of the swift ass,
6 to which I have given the steppe for its home,
the salt land for its dwelling place?
7 It scorns the tumult of the city;
it does not hear the shouts of the driver.
8 It ranges the mountains as its pasture,
and it searches after every green thing.

9 "Is the wild ox willing to serve you?
Will it spend the night at your crib?
10 Can you tie it in the furrow with ropes,
or will it harrow the valleys after you?
11 Will you depend on it because its strength is great,
and will you hand over your labor to it?
12 Do you have faith in it that it will return,
and bring your grain to your threshing floor?[k]

13 "The ostrich's wings flap wildly,
though its pinions lack plumage.[l]
14 For it leaves its eggs to the earth,
and lets them be warmed on the ground,
15 forgetting that a foot may crush them,
and that a wild animal may trample them.
16 It deals cruelly with its young, as if they were not its own;
though its labor should be in vain, yet it has no fear;
17 because God has made it forget wisdom,
and given it no share in understanding.
18 When it spreads its plumes aloft,[l]
it laughs at the horse and its rider.

19 "Do you give the horse its might?
Do you clothe its neck with mane?
20 Do you make it leap like the locust?
Its majestic snorting is terrible.
21 It paws[m] violently, exults mightily;
it goes out to meet the weapons.
22 It laughs at fear, and is not dismayed;
it does not turn back from the sword.
23 Upon it rattle the quiver,
the flashing spear, and the javelin.
24 With fierceness and rage it swallows the ground;

k Heb *your grain and your threshing floor*
l Meaning of Heb uncertain *m* Gk Syr Vg: Heb *they dig*

it cannot stand still at the sound
of the trumpet.
25 When the trumpet sounds, it
says 'Aha!'
From a distance it smells the
battle,
the thunder of the captains,
and the shouting.

26 "Is it by your wisdom that the
hawk soars,
and spreads its wings toward
the south?
27 Is it at your command that the
eagle mounts up
and makes its nest on high?
28 It lives on the rock and makes its
home
in the fastness of the rocky
crag.
29 From there it spies the prey;
its eyes see it from far away.
30 Its young ones suck up blood;
and where the slain are, there
it is."

40 And the LORD said to Job:
2 "Shall a faultfinder contend
with the Almighty?[n]
Anyone who argues with God
must respond."

Job's Response to God

3 Then Job answered the LORD:
4 "See, I am of small account; what
shall I answer you?
I lay my hand on my mouth.
5 I have spoken once, and I will
not answer;
twice, but will proceed no
further."

God's Challenge to Job

6 Then the LORD answered Job out of
the whirlwind:
7 "Gird up your loins like a man;
I will question you, and you
declare to me.
8 Will you even put me in the
wrong?
Will you condemn me that you
may be justified?
9 Have you an arm like God,
and can you thunder with a
voice like his?

10 "Deck yourself with majesty and
dignity;
clothe yourself with glory and
splendor.
11 Pour out the overflowings of your
anger,
and look on all who are proud,
and abase them.
12 Look on all who are proud, and
bring them low;
tread down the wicked where
they stand.
13 Hide them all in the dust
together;
bind their faces in the world
below.[o]
14 Then I will also acknowledge
to you
that your own right hand can
give you victory.

15 "Look at Behemoth,
which I made just as I
made you;
it eats grass like an ox.
16 Its strength is in its loins,
and its power in the muscles of
its belly.
17 It makes its tail stiff like a cedar;
the sinews of its thighs are knit
together.
18 Its bones are tubes of bronze,
its limbs like bars of iron.

n Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*
o Heb *the hidden place*

39.16–17 This folk tradition about ostriches does not accord with facts about their nature. **40.4–5** Against the background of cosmic wonder, Job recognizes divine silence about human beings and perceives the futility of greatness, even moral excellence. He therefore vows to abandon his challenge of God's conduct. **40.6** A second divine speech is introduced, although Job has already conceded defeat. **40.15** *Behemoth* is often identified as a hippopotamus, with Leviathan being understood as a crocodile. Egyptian iconography of the god Horus fighting these two creatures, who represent the forces of chaos, is usually thought to confirm this reading of the biblical text. Fantasy plays a strong role, however, and these animals are largely figments of the imagina-

19 "It is the first of the great acts
of God—
only its Maker can approach it
with the sword.
20 For the mountains yield food
for it
where all the wild animals play.
21 Under the lotus plants it lies,
in the covert of the reeds and
in the marsh.
22 The lotus trees cover it for shade;
the willows of the wadi
surround it.
23 Even if the river is turbulent, it is
not frightened;
it is confident though Jordan
rushes against its mouth.
24 Can one take it with hooks[p]
or pierce its nose with a snare?

41 [q] "Can you draw out Leviathan[r]
with a fishhook,
or press down its tongue with a
cord?
2 Can you put a rope in its nose,
or pierce its jaw with a hook?
3 Will it make many supplications
to you?
Will it speak soft words to you?
4 Will it make a covenant with you
to be taken as your servant
forever?
5 Will you play with it as with a
bird,
or will you put it on leash for
your girls?
6 Will traders bargain over it?
Will they divide it up among
the merchants?
7 Can you fill its skin with
harpoons,
or its head with fishing spears?
8 Lay hands on it;
think of the battle; you will not
do it again!
9[s] Any hope of capturing it[t] will be
disappointed;
were not even the gods[u]
overwhelmed at the sight
of it?
10 No one is so fierce as to dare to
stir it up.
Who can stand before it?[v]
11 Who can confront it[v] and be
safe?[w]
—under the whole
heaven, who?[x]

12 "I will not keep silence
concerning its limbs,
or its mighty strength, or its
splendid frame.
13 Who can strip off its outer
garment?
Who can penetrate its double
coat of mail?[y]
14 Who can open the doors of its
face?
There is terror all around its
teeth.
15 Its back[z] is made of shields in
rows,
shut up closely as with a seal.
16 One is so near to another
that no air can come between
them.
17 They are joined one to another;
they clasp each other and
cannot be separated.
18 Its sneezes flash forth light,
and its eyes are like the eyelids
of the dawn.
19 From its mouth go flaming
torches;
sparks of fire leap out.
20 Out of its nostrils comes smoke,
as from a boiling pot and
burning rushes.
21 Its breath kindles coals,
and a flame comes out of its
mouth.
22 In its neck abides strength,
and terror dances before it.
23 The folds of its flesh cling
together;

p Cn: Heb *in his eyes* *q* Ch 40.25 in Heb *r* Or *the crocodile* *s* Ch 41.1 in Heb *t* Heb *of it* *u* Cn Compare Symmachus Syr: Heb *one is* *v* Heb *me* *w* Gk: Heb *that I shall repay* *x* Heb *to me* *y* Gk: Heb *bridle* *z* Cn Compare Gk Vg: Heb *pride*

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tion. If *tail* (40.17) is not a euphemism for the sexual organ, Behemoth seems in this respect to resemble a crocodile. **40.19** *Acts*, lit. "ways." According to the creation hymn in Prov 8.22, wisdom was the *first* of God's acts. A related root in Ugaritic seems to connote "sovereignty" and thus "powerful deeds" (cf. Prov 31.3). **41.1** Considerable speculation about the ultimate fate of *Leviathan* occupied the minds of later apocalyptic thinkers, some of whom envisioned this fishlike creature being served as food for the faithful. **41.18–21** Fantasy reigns in this description of a

it is firmly cast and immovable.
24 Its heart is as hard as stone,
as hard as the lower millstone.
25 When it raises itself up the gods
are afraid;
at the crashing they are beside
themselves.
26 Though the sword reaches it, it
does not avail,
nor does the spear, the dart, or
the javelin.
27 It counts iron as straw,
and bronze as rotten wood.
28 The arrow cannot make it flee;
slingstones, for it, are turned to
chaff.
29 Clubs are counted as chaff;
it laughs at the rattle of
javelins.
30 Its underparts are like sharp
potsherds;
it spreads itself like a threshing
sledge on the mire.
31 It makes the deep boil like a pot;
it makes the sea like a pot of
ointment.
32 It leaves a shining wake behind it;
one would think the deep to be
white-haired.
33 On earth it has no equal,
a creature without fear.
34 It surveys everything that is lofty;
it is king over all that are
proud."

Job Is Humbled

42 Then Job answered the LORD:
2 "I know that you can do all
things,
and that no purpose of yours
can be thwarted.
3 'Who is this that hides counsel
without knowledge?'
Therefore I have uttered what I
did not understand,
things too wonderful for me,
which I did not know.
4 'Hear, and I will speak;
I will question you, and you
declare to me.'
5 I had heard of you by the
hearing of the ear,
but now my eye sees you;
6 therefore I despise myself,
and repent in dust and ashes."

Job Prays for His Friends

7 After the LORD had spoken these words to Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite: "My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends; for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has. 8 Now therefore take seven bulls and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you, for I will accept his prayer not to deal with you according to your folly; for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has done." 9 So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did what the LORD had told them; and the LORD accepted Job's prayer.

Job's Fortunes Are Restored Twofold

10 And the LORD restored the fortunes of Job when he had prayed for his friends; and the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before. 11 Then there came to him all his brothers and sisters

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fire-eating dragon. So does poetic license.

42.5 *Hearing* was by no means denigrated in ancient pedagogy, which relied heavily on oral presentation. Egyptian instructions emphasize the importance of hearing. Nevertheless, Job elevates sight over hearing, despite an ancient tradition that none could see God and live (see Ex 33.20), one that admitted exceptions in the narratives about Israel's ancestors. **42.6** The translation and meaning of this verse are uncertain. It can be read that Job repented of dust and ashes, *i.e.*, of repentance. Perhaps Job relinquishes his conviction that guilt and innocence are taken into account by the ruler of the universe. Some scholars see irony in Job's response, a concealing of his continued defiance in the face of divine cruelty.

42.7–17 The epilogue. A prose ending affirms Job's view of God and condemns that of his friends. God restores Job's health and doubles his former wealth. **42.7** When did Job speak correctly? In the defiant speeches that denied divine justice? Or in the submission resulting from a new vision of God? The *Testament of Job* reads that the friends have not spoken correctly about Job. **42.8–10** *Job shall pray for you.* In rabbinical interpretation Job's condition changed as a direct consequence of his interceding for the friends, a point that 42.10 seems to make (cf. Gen 20.7). **42.11** *Evil . . . upon him.* The text freely acknowledges God's responsibility for Job's misfortunes.

and all who had known him before, and they ate bread with him in his house; they showed him sympathy and comforted him for all the evil that the LORD had brought upon him; and each of them gave him a piece of money[a] and a gold ring. 12 The LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; and he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand donkeys. 13 He also had seven sons and three daughters. 14 He named the first Jemimah, the second Keziah, and the third Keren-happuch. 15 In all the land there were no women so beautiful as Job's daughters; and their father gave them an inheritance along with their brothers. 16 After this Job lived one hundred and forty years, and saw his children, and his children's children, four generations. 17 And Job died, old and full of days.

a Heb *a qesitah*

The monetary unit mentioned here is appropriate for the patriarchal setting of the tale (cf. Gen 33.19; Josh 24.32). This gift was no insignificant one. The *Targum of Job*, discovered in the area of the Dead Sea, seems to have concluded with v. 11. **42.13** The Septuagint doubles the number of children also. Surprisingly, slaves are missing from this account of Job's restoration. **42.14** Like Baal's three daughters, Job's are named: *Jemimah* (Dove), *Keziah* (Cinnamon), and *Keren-happuch* (Horn of Antinomy). Neither Baal's nor Job's sons are named. Perhaps the emphasis on Job's daughters' beauty and wealth implies that he will easily find husbands for them, often a problem according to Sir 42.9–11. **42.15** Normally daughters did not inherit unless there were no sons. **42.16** *One hundred and forty years*. The customary life span, according to Ps 90.10, is doubled in Job's case, counting from the time that his calamities ended. **42.17** The same language is used of Abraham and Isaac (Gen 25.8; 35.29).

PSALMS

THE PSALMS, or the Psalter, as it is sometimes called, is a collection of prayers and songs composed throughout Israel's history. Its title, "Psalms," is derived from a Greek term meaning "song." The Hebrew title of the book, *Tehillim*, means more specifically "hymns" or "songs of praise."

Composition and Authorship

The Psalms are organized into five collections or "books," an arrangement thought to be on analogy with the five books of the Torah. While the rationale for the internal processes of organization is much debated, the book divisions are evident by the closing doxological verses in Ps 41.13; 72.18–19; 89.52; 106.48; 150.1–6.

While many of the psalms are associated in their headings with David, who may have written some of them, the authorship of the individual psalms is unknown. The headings or superscriptions of the psalms are secondary to their composition and identify persons other than David with whom the psalms are associated either because of content (e.g., Pss 72; 127) or because the individuals named had some role in the music and worship of the temple (e.g., Asaph and the Korahites). Musical notations of various sorts appear in these headings, but their meaning is often uncertain. Indications of the type of psalm (e.g., Ps 90) or of its use in worship (e.g., Ps 92) are given on occasion.

The superscriptions also serve to identify collections or groupings of psalms within—or sometimes overlapping—the five "book" divisions. At the end of Book II (72.20), for example, there is a note indicating "the prayers of David son of Jesse are ended." While, in fact, several more psalms—especially toward the end of the Psalter (Pss 138–145)—are associated with David in their headings, most of the psalms in Books I and II have some reference to David in their superscriptions, indicating a sense of these as a collection of Davidic prayers. A few have no name in the title, and there is a small collection of Korahite psalms (Pss 44–49) in their midst. Another collection of Korahite psalms appears in Pss 84–88, while one group of psalms is associated with another musician, Asaph (Pss 73–83; cf. Ps 50). The most obvious collection within the Psalter is the "Songs

of Ascents" (Pss 120–134), fifteen psalms that share various features and probably were added as a group (see note on 120.1–7).

Poetry

The poetic character of the psalms is manifest in the balance or symmetry of each line. A line of poetry, which is often identical with a numbered verse, is composed of two or three parts, usually sentences or clauses. The balance between or among the parts of the line—usually called cola (singular, colon)—is evident in three ways, often more approximate than precise: sound or rhythm (accented or stressed syllables), length of line (the number of syllables), and especially parallelism of meaning, in which members or words in one part or colon of a line or verse are seconded or paralleled in some fashion in the next part of the verse. Only the last of these poetic features is evident in the translation.

Psalm Types

The psalms fall generally into certain types or categories that reflect usage in various contexts, especially in the worship life of ancient Israel. The title of the book characterizes the psalms as *hymns* and thus identifies the praise of God in worship as their purpose. The conclusion to the first half of the Psalter (Pss 1–72), "the prayers of David are ended," indicates, however, that much of this biblical book was understood as *prayer*, often that of the individual in distress and needing help. In a number of cases, one can see that prayers and hymns that may have been originally intended for a setting in worship have become more like *instruction* in character. Such a didactic function for the psalms is confirmed by the introduction to the Psalter, Ps 1, with its focus upon the law, or instruction of the Lord, and its study (cf. Ps 119, which, it has been suggested, may have been the conclusion to an earlier form of the Psalter). Thus, prayers for help, songs of praise, and instruction for life were all joined in this book as different and changing intentions shaped its formation.

PRAYERS FOR HELP (LAMENTS)

The largest category of psalms is composed of prayers for help—often called laments—either on the part of the individual or the community as a whole. In some cases, individual prayers have been transformed into community prayers. In other cases, one can hear in the community prayers individual and representative voices. They were prayed in situations of severe distress, although the particular circumstances out of which they originated are no longer discernible except in the broadest sense. Sickness and adversity, betrayal and abandonment, sin and guilt, and slander and false accusation as well as other acts of persecution and oppression by those called "enemies" and "wicked" are aspects of suffering reflected in the individual prayers. For the community prayers, situations of national disaster and defeat are indicated, and in some instances it appears as if

the Babylonian destruction of Judah (587 B.C.E.) and the exile of the people that followed are in view (e.g., Pss 74; 79; 137). In all of these prayers, the circumstances and the effects of the distress on the ones who prayed are set forth in generalized, stylized, and metaphorical ways that have served to loosen these prayers from whatever original setting they may have had and made them more broadly applicable in the life of the community over long periods and for different situations.

The focus of the prayers is on petitions or pleas for help that incorporate lamenting descriptions of the psalmist's distress, including references to physical and emotional suffering, divine affliction, or persecution rendered by other persons. Such prayers, however, also express the petitioner's confidence or trust in God's power and willingness to help and often give reasons why the deity should help. These usually have to do with the character of the deity, the plight of the psalmist, or the sufferer's trust in God. Frequently, the one who prays makes vows to sacrifice and to offer praise to God when deliverance comes. One also may see indications in these prayers that the prayer has been heard and God has responded.

SONGS OF THANKSGIVING

The vow of praise is what evokes the song of thanksgiving, another type of psalm. Here the psalmist sings praise to God in gratitude for the help that was given, frequently giving some account of the distress and God's deliverance. Sacrifices may have accompanied these songs. They were, at least, sung in the sanctuary and before the congregation. The song of the psalmist is a testimony inviting others to praise the Lord because of the help God has shown. A few psalms may be communal songs of thanksgiving.

HYMNS

Another form of praise closely related to the song of thanksgiving is the hymn. Here the congregation is called to praise or declares its intent to praise the Lord, and reasons for that praise are then given either briefly or at length. These usually have to do with the character and power of God demonstrated in the works of creation and in God's acts of faithfulness and love toward Israel.

ROYAL PSALMS

A number of psalms center around the king and so have been called royal psalms. They are of different types, however, some, for example, being prayers and songs of thanksgiving for or by the king. Others were composed for occasions such as coronations or weddings. Sporadic references to the king occur in other psalms, and it is possible that some of the times when a voice speaks in the psalms as a representative of the people it is the voice of a king. Various psalms convey divine assurance or warning, perhaps spoken by a priest or prophet.

OTHER TYPES

Other types of psalms occur in smaller numbers, for example, liturgies of thanksgiving or liturgies for entrance into the sanctuary. Some of the other types are developments of particular aspects of the prayer or hymn, for example, the psalms of trust, the songs exalting Zion, and those hymns celebrating God's universal rule (commonly called "enthronement psalms"). There are some psalms whose didactic and instructional character is so prominent that they must have been initially composed with that aim in mind.

Setting of the Psalms

The specific relationship of all of the psalms to corporate and individual acts of worship is much debated. It is likely that a number of psalms were very much a part of public worship. Surely some of them were associated with the great annual festivals. The hymns and liturgies as well as the songs of thanksgiving had their place in the worship of the congregation. The relation of the individual prayers for help to the sanctuary and the priestly officials is less clear. There are certain indications that prayers were uttered in the sanctuary, often at night. They sometimes incorporate or allude to oracles of salvation that may have been mediated through a priest. Some interpreters, however, have claimed that the individual prayers were associated more with the family or clan setting and less with the sanctuary and its priests.

Date of Composition

The date of composition varies from psalm to psalm. In most cases it is impossible to determine. Some psalms were probably composed fairly early in Israel's history (e.g., Pss 18; 29; 68). Many may have been composed after the exile. There are also indications that some psalms have undergone a process of transmission that, in the course of time, has changed them from their original form. That process, which is difficult to reconstruct, has involved adapting individual psalms for communal use, royal motifs for a postmonarchical context, and cultic psalms for noncultic uses.

The formation of the Psalter, therefore, was a long and complex process: individual songs and prayers were composed, some of which were used repeatedly by the community; these were brought together into smaller collections first and eventually formed into the larger whole that is now the Psalter. Pss 1 and 2 were placed as an introduction to the whole, probably late in the process of formation, and Ps 150 seems to have been put at the end as a doxological conclusion. Additional psalms were added in some of the ancient versions as well as in the large Psalms manuscript from Qumran. *Patrick D. Miller*

BOOK I

(Psalms 1–41)

Psalm 1

The Two Ways

1 Happy are those
who do not follow the advice of the wicked,
or take the path that sinners tread,
or sit in the seat of scoffers;
2 but their delight is in the law of the LORD,
and on his law they meditate day and night.
3 They are like trees
planted by streams of water,
which yield their fruit in its season,
and their leaves do not wither.
In all that they do, they prosper.

4 The wicked are not so,
but are like chaff that the wind drives away.
5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;
6 for the LORD watches over the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.

Psalm 2

God's Anointed Is Established as Ruler over the Nations

1 Why do the nations conspire,
and the peoples plot in vain?
2 The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers take counsel together,
against the LORD and his anointed, saying,
3 "Let us burst their bonds asunder,
and cast their cords from us."

4 He who sits in the heavens laughs;
the LORD has them in derision.
5 Then he will speak to them in his wrath,
and terrify them in his fury, saying,
6 "I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill."

7 I will tell of the decree of the LORD:
He said to me, "You are my son;
today I have begotten you.
8 Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,
and the ends of the earth your possession.
9 You shall break them with a rod of iron,
and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

1.1–6 A psalm exalting God's instruction, or law, and the blessings of attending to it (cf. Pss 19; 119). This psalm, together with Ps 2, serves as an introduction to the Psalter as a book about the way of the righteous, who are devoted to God's instruction, and the ultimate downfall of the wicked, who do not attend to God or God's way. **1.1–3** The way of the righteous. **1.1** *Happy*, i.e., seen and envied by others as blessed. *Scoffers*, arrogant people who mock the righteous one's trust in God. **1.2** For a similar joy in God's law, see Ps 119. **1.3** Cf. Jer 17.7–8. **1.4–6** The way of the wicked is ephemeral and unproductive; they will not endure.

2.1–12 A royal psalm perhaps used on occasion of the coronation of a king. It now continues without superscription as part of the introduction to the Psalter, indicating that the ways of the king and the nations are matters to be found within the Psalms. **2.1–3** At a time of transition, subject nations may seek to overthrow the ruling nation. **2.2** *Anointed*, a term transliterated as "messiah" and referring to God's designated king. Applied to Israel's own kings in the time of the monarchy, the term came to be used in reference to an ideal king who would come in the future and inaugurate God's righteous rule. **2.4–9** The Lord's response to the plot against the king is the installation of the new king, who is given power over the nations. **2.7** *Decree*, the royal protocol legitimating the king at the time of enthronement. *You are my son; today I have begotten you* is a formula of adoption of the king, who from that point on is viewed as God's son (cf. 89.26–27; 2 Sam 7.14). **2.9** *You shall*, perhaps to be read permissively,

10 Now therefore, O kings, be wise;
be warned, O rulers of the earth.
11 Serve the LORD with fear,
with trembling 12 kiss his feet,[a]
or he will be angry, and you will perish in the way;
for his wrath is quickly kindled.

Happy are all who take refuge in him.

Psalm 3

Trust in God Under Adversity

A Psalm of David, when he fled from his son Absalom.

1 O LORD, how many are my foes!
Many are rising against me;
2 many are saying to me,
"There is no help for you[b] in God." *Selah*

3 But you, O LORD, are a shield around me,
my glory, and the one who lifts up my head.
4 I cry aloud to the LORD,
and he answers me from his holy hill. *Selah*

5 I lie down and sleep;
I wake again, for the LORD sustains me.
6 I am not afraid of ten thousands of people
who have set themselves against me all around.

7 Rise up, O LORD!
Deliver me, O my God!
For you strike all my enemies on the cheek;
you break the teeth of the wicked.

8 Deliverance belongs to the LORD;
may your blessing be on your people! *Selah*

Psalm 4

Confident Plea for Deliverance from Enemies

To the leader: with stringed instruments.
A Psalm of David.

1 Answer me when I call, O God of my right!
You gave me room when I was in distress.
Be gracious to me, and hear my prayer.

2 How long, you people, shall my honor suffer shame?
How long will you love vain words, and seek after lies? *Selah*
3 But know that the LORD has set apart the faithful for himself;
the LORD hears when I call to him.

4 When you are disturbed,[c] do not sin;

a Cn: Meaning of Heb of verses 11b and 12a is uncertain b Syr: Heb *him* c Or *are angry*

"you may." **2.10–12** A warning to rebellious rulers to submit to the rule of God's anointed or they will be destroyed. *Happy.* See note on 1.1.

3.1–8 A prayer of an individual to God for help. The superscription is not historically factual but may suggest an occasion in David's life when such words as these would have been appropriate (2 Sam 15–18). **3.1–2** The psalmist laments the threat of enemies and implicitly complains against God. **3.2** *Help,* or deliverance (see vv. 7–8). *Selah,* possibly a liturgical or musical direction of unknown meaning. **3.3–6** In contrast to the apparent abandonment by God, the psalmist expresses confidence in God's protecting care and response to the prayer. **3.4** *Holy hill,* Zion or the Temple Mount. **3.7** The prayer for the deliverance that others (v. 2) assume God will not bring. **3.8** A final expression of confidence that it is in fact God who alone can deliver from threats.

4.1–8 A prayer for help in trouble. *To the leader: with stringed instruments,* apparently musical or liturgical directions, perhaps addressed to the director of temple musicians. **4.1** The cry for help. Deliverance is seen in terms of the imagery of having room and not being hemmed in or trapped. **4.2–5** An address to those who have sought to do in the psalmist. **4.2** A claim that some have brought false accusations against or slandered the petitioner. *Selah.* See note on 3.2. **4.3** The opponents are now challenged to acknowledge the Lord's protection of the one who prays. **4.4–5** The opponents are cautioned

ponder it on your beds, and be
silent. *Selah*
5 Offer right sacrifices,
and put your trust in the LORD.

6 There are many who say, "O that
we might see some good!
Let the light of your face shine
on us, O LORD!"
7 You have put gladness in my
heart
more than when their grain
and wine abound.

8 I will both lie down and sleep in
peace;
for you alone, O LORD, make
me lie down in safety.

Psalm 5

Trust in God for Deliverance from Enemies

To the leader: for the flutes. A Psalm of David.

1 Give ear to my words, O LORD;
give heed to my sighing.
2 Listen to the sound of my cry,
my King and my God,
for to you I pray.
3 O LORD, in the morning you hear
my voice;
in the morning I plead my case
to you, and watch.

4 For you are not a God who
delights in wickedness;
evil will not sojourn with you.
5 The boastful will not stand before
your eyes;
you hate all evildoers.

6 You destroy those who speak lies;
the LORD abhors the
bloodthirsty and deceitful.

7 But I, through the abundance of
your steadfast love,
will enter your house,
I will bow down toward your holy
temple
in awe of you.
8 Lead me, O LORD, in your
righteousness
because of my enemies;
make your way straight
before me.

9 For there is no truth in their
mouths;
their hearts are destruction;
their throats are open graves;
they flatter with their tongues.
10 Make them bear their guilt,
O God;
let them fall by their own
counsels;
because of their many
transgressions cast
them out,
for they have rebelled
against you.

11 But let all who take refuge in you
rejoice;
let them ever sing for joy.
Spread your protection over
them,
so that those who love your
name may exult in you.
12 For you bless the righteous,
O LORD;
you cover them with favor as
with a shield.

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against sinful acts and urged to come into the sanctuary as those who do right and trust in the Lord. *Right sacrifices*, either those done in the right manner or, more likely, sacrifices acknowledging God's justice and righteousness manifest in the deliverance of the petitioner. **4.6–8** The fruitless longing for God's blessing of those who do not trust in God (v. 5) is contrasted with the joyous confidence of the one who trusts and is kept in safety by God. **4.6** *Let the light of your face shine*. See note on 31.16.

5.1–12 A prayer for help by an individual in trouble. *To the leader*. See note on 4.1–8. *For the flutes*, a liturgical notation of uncertain meaning. **5.1–3** The petition for God to pay attention to the prayer. *In the morning* is often the time when God comes to help (17.15; 90.14; 143.8; 1 Sam 11.9). **5.4–7** The assurance of being heard is grounded in the knowledge that God will not let the wicked appear in the divine presence, but the righteous petitioner may enter the temple and stand before God (see Pss 15; 24). **5.8** The actual petition for God's saving help, i.e., *righteousness*, and some clear direction for the future, i.e., *your way*. **5.9–10** A call for judgment upon the wicked who oppress the psalmist. *Throats* and *tongues* suggest that the oppression is some kind of slander or false accusation. **5.11–12** A final prayer for protection of the innocent and thus righteous, including the one praying.

Psalm 6

Prayer for Recovery from Grave Illness

To the leader: with stringed instruments;
according to The Sheminith.
A Psalm of David.

1 O LORD, do not rebuke me in your anger,
or discipline me in your wrath.
2 Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am languishing;
O LORD, heal me, for my bones are shaking with terror.
3 My soul also is struck with terror,
while you, O LORD—how long?

4 Turn, O LORD, save my life;
deliver me for the sake of your steadfast love.
5 For in death there is no remembrance of you;
in Sheol who can give you praise?

6 I am weary with my moaning;
every night I flood my bed with tears;
I drench my couch with my weeping.
7 My eyes waste away because of grief;
they grow weak because of all my foes.

8 Depart from me, all you workers of evil,
for the LORD has heard the sound of my weeping.
9 The LORD has heard my supplication;
the LORD accepts my prayer.
10 All my enemies shall be ashamed and struck with terror;
they shall turn back, and in a moment be put to shame.

Psalm 7

Plea for Help Against Persecutors

A Shiggaion of David, which he sang to the LORD concerning Cush, a Benjaminite.

1 O LORD my God, in you I take refuge;
save me from all my pursuers, and deliver me,
2 or like a lion they will tear me apart;
they will drag me away, with no one to rescue.

6.1–10 A prayer for help by an individual in trouble. The first of the seven "penitential psalms" (Pss 6; 32; 38; 51; 102; 130; 143), so called because the early Christian church saw in them a special note of contrition or penitence. *To the leader: with stringed instruments.* See note on 4.1–8. *According to The Sheminith,* lit. "according to the eighth." Meaning uncertain, perhaps referring to a musical instrument. **6.1–5** Petitions for deliverance by the Lord. The language suggesting physical illness may reflect an actual situation in which a sick person prays for healing or it may be metaphorical for trouble in general. **6.1** Illness or whatever has happened to the psalmist is seen as a judgment of God. **6.3** *How long?* is a typical complaint against God in the cries or prayers for help by the individual or the community. **6.5** *Sheol,* the abode of the dead. The one praying seems to be near death. Death is seen as a condition in which one is removed from God's presence and the possibility of worship and praise (cf. Job 10.21–22; Isa 38.18). That fact is given as a motivation to encourage divine assistance. **6.6–7** The psalmist's physical and emotional distress. **6.7** *Grief,* better "vexation" or "provocation." For the suffering caused by the vexation of others, see 1 Sam 1.6–7. **6.8–10** The confidence of the sufferer that God has heard and will deliver. The particular form of evil (v. 8) or enmity (v. 10) is not indicated. It may be the sort of provocation evidenced by Peninnah in the face of Hannah's personal distress of barrenness (see 1 Sam 1.6–7). **6.10** *Terror.* See vv. 2–3. The fate of the sufferer becomes the fate of those who have caused suffering.

7.1–17 A prayer for help of a person who has probably been falsely accused of some wrong. The psalm would have had its setting in the sanctuary, where an innocent person could come before God for protection and vindication when falsely accused. See 1 Kings 8.31–32; Deut 17.8–9. The accused would declare innocence before God and await a divine decision. The superscription secondarily assigns this psalm to an incident in David's life that is unknown in the OT. *Shiggaion,* a word of uncertain meaning that has been taken to mean "lament." **7.1–2** The accused invokes God's protection from those who threaten. **7.2** *Like a lion.* Enemies in Psalms are often compared to wild animals attacking (10.9;

3 O LORD my God, if I have done this,
if there is wrong in my hands,
4 if I have repaid my ally with harm
or plundered my foe without cause,
5 then let the enemy pursue and overtake me,
trample my life to the ground,
and lay my soul in the dust.
Selah

6 Rise up, O LORD, in your anger;
lift yourself up against the fury of my enemies;
awake, O my God;[d] you have appointed a judgment.
7 Let the assembly of the peoples be gathered around you,
and over it take your seat[e] on high.
8 The LORD judges the peoples;
judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness
and according to the integrity that is in me.

9 O let the evil of the wicked come to an end,
but establish the righteous,
you who test the minds and hearts,
O righteous God.
10 God is my shield,
who saves the upright in heart.
11 God is a righteous judge,
and a God who has indignation every day.

12 If one does not repent, God[f] will whet his sword;
he has bent and strung his bow;
13 he has prepared his deadly weapons,
making his arrows fiery shafts.
14 See how they conceive evil,
and are pregnant with mischief,
and bring forth lies.
15 They make a pit, digging it out,
and fall into the hole that they have made.
16 Their mischief returns upon their own heads,
and on their own heads their violence descends.

17 I will give to the LORD the thanks due to his righteousness,
and sing praise to the name of the LORD, the Most High.

Psalm 8

Divine Majesty and Human Dignity

To the leader: according to The Gittith.
A Psalm of David.

1 O LORD, our Sovereign,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory above the heavens.
2 Out of the mouths of babes and infants
you have founded a bulwark because of your foes,
to silence the enemy and the avenger.

3 When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,

d Or *awake for me* *e* Cn: Heb *return*
f Heb *he*

17.12; 22.12–13; 35.17; 57.4; 58.3–6). **7.3–5** A protestation of innocence by the sufferer (cf. Job 31). **7.3** *If I have done this.* The claim is not of a general innocence but of the alleged specific *wrong* of which the praying one is accused. **7.5** *Selah.* See note on 3.2. **7.6–11** The appeal to the Lord as righteous judge to render judgment in this case. **7.8** *My righteousness . . . integrity, i.e., "my innocence in this matter."* **7.9–11** The justice of God can be counted upon by the psalmist. **7.12–16** The psalmist now expresses confidence that the wicked who falsely accuse will suffer the fate they have sought to effect against the accused. **7.12–13** It is not altogether clear whether the subject of this sentence is God or the wicked. **7.15** *Pit.* See note on 9.15. **7.17** A vow to give thanks to God when deliverance comes.

8.1–9 A hymn of praise for God's exaltation of the human creature. *To the leader.* See note on 4.1–8. *According to The Gittith* may refer to a kind of melody. **8.1–2** The glory of God. *Out of the mouths of babes and infants* may refer to the praise that comes even from the babbling of babies (cf. Mt 21.16). *Founded a bulwark* may be better translated as "established strength" in parallel with "set your glory." **8.3–9** Human glory as a manifestation of the glory of God. **8.3–4** Awareness of

the moon and the stars that you
have established;
4 what are human beings that you
are mindful of them,
mortals[g] that you care for
them?

5 Yet you have made them a little
lower than God,[h]
and crowned them with glory
and honor.
6 You have given them dominion
over the works of your
hands;
you have put all things under
their feet,
7 all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,
8 the birds of the air, and the fish
of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths
of the seas.

9 O LORD, our Sovereign,
how majestic is your name in all
the earth!

Psalm 9

God's Power and Justice

To the leader: according to Muth-labben.
A Psalm of David.

1 I will give thanks to the LORD
with my whole heart;
I will tell of all your wonderful
deeds.
2 I will be glad and exult in you;
I will sing praise to your name,
O Most High.

3 When my enemies turned back,
they stumbled and perished
before you.
4 For you have maintained my just
cause;
you have sat on the throne
giving righteous judgment.

5 You have rebuked the nations,
you have destroyed the
wicked;
you have blotted out their
name forever and ever.
6 The enemies have vanished in
everlasting ruins;
their cities you have rooted out;
the very memory of them has
perished.

7 But the LORD sits enthroned
forever,
he has established his throne
for judgment.
8 He judges the world with
righteousness;
he judges the peoples with
equity.

g Heb *ben adam*, lit. *son of man* *h* Or *than the divine beings* or *angels*: Heb *elohim*

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the awesome universe as God's handiwork raises the question of what value human beings could possibly have in that grand cosmos. **8.3** *The moon and the stars that you have established.* The heavenly bodies are God's creation and have no independent character as deities. **8.4** For less positive responses to the same question, see 144.3; Job 7.17; cf. Heb 2.6–8. **8.5–6** A similar view of humankind is found in Gen 1.26–28. The terminology used to describe the human creature had its origin in the royal ideology of the ancient Near East. **8.5** *God.* "Divine beings" or "angels" is probably a better translation, as in text note *h* (cf. Gen 1.26 ["*our* image"]; Heb 2.7; and the Septuagint of 8.5).

9.1–10.18 Pss 9 and 10 are to be read as a unit for several reasons. The Septuagint combines them into one. In the Hebrew they generally follow an alphabetic acrostic pattern in which every other verse begins with a successive letter of the alphabet beginning with the first letter in 9.1 and ending with the final letter of the alphabet in 10.17. Note also the absence in Ps 10 of a superscription, which is usually present in most psalms in the first book of the Psalter (Pss 1–41). Furthermore, *Selah*, which concludes Ps 9, nowhere else comes at the end of a psalm. Within the unity, however, one may recognize in Ps 9 a song of thanksgiving by an individual into which has been incorporated a prayer for help in Ps 10. It is uncertain if the song of thanksgiving is meant to be anticipatory of deliverance or praise because it has happened. *To the leader.* See note on 4.1–8. *According to Muth-labben,* probably a musical notation whose meaning is uncertain. **9.1–2** A hymnic expression of personal thanksgiving and praise for God's saving activity. **9.3–10** God as righteous judge has dealt justly with the oppressed one and with the peoples of the earth generally. The imagery and activity of God as

9 The LORD is a stronghold for the oppressed,
a stronghold in times of trouble.
10 And those who know your name put their trust in you,
for you, O LORD, have not forsaken those who seek you.

11 Sing praises to the LORD, who dwells in Zion.
Declare his deeds among the peoples.
12 For he who avenges blood is mindful of them;
he does not forget the cry of the afflicted.

13 Be gracious to me, O LORD.
See what I suffer from those who hate me;
you are the one who lifts me up from the gates of death,
14 so that I may recount all your praises,
and, in the gates of daughter Zion,
rejoice in your deliverance.

15 The nations have sunk in the pit that they made;
in the net that they hid has their own foot been caught.
16 The LORD has made himself known, he has executed judgment;
the wicked are snared in the work of their own hands.
Higgaion. Selah

17 The wicked shall depart to Sheol,
all the nations that forget God.

18 For the needy shall not always be forgotten,
nor the hope of the poor perish forever.

19 Rise up, O LORD! Do not let mortals prevail;
let the nations be judged before you.
20 Put them in fear, O LORD;
let the nations know that they are only human. *Selah*

Psalm 10

1 Why, O LORD, do you stand far off?
Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?
2 In arrogance the wicked persecute the poor—
let them be caught in the schemes they have devised.

3 For the wicked boast of the desires of their heart,
those greedy for gain curse and renounce the LORD.

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ruler and judge come together as the grounds for praise and thanksgiving. **9.11–12** A call to praise (v. 11) echoes the declaration of praise at the beginning and the reason (v. 12) is a reiteration of the psalmist's experience of God's positive response to the cry of the sufferer. **9.13–14** Anticipating the extended prayer for help in Ps 10 and believing the claim of v. 12, the psalmist seeks God's gracious attention to the suffering now going on. **9.15–18** The psalmist expresses confidence because of the experience of God's delivering judgment in the nation's history. **9.15** The imagery of *pit* and *net* as weapons of enemies and evildoers is frequent in the Psalms and is often a way of speaking about the wicked being caught in their own evil schemes (7.15–16; 10.9; 25.15; 31.4; 35.7–8; 57.6; 140.5; cf. Job 18.8). **9.16** *Higgaion,* translated "melody" in 92.3, perhaps here a musical interlude of some sort. *Selah.* See note on 3.2. **9.17** *Sheol.* See note on 6.5. **9.18** The claim here anticipates the fear that is at the heart of Ps 10, that God has forgotten the weak and helpless (see 10.2–4, 11–13). **9.19–20** A concluding call to God to rise up in judgment against the nations (cf. 82.8; 96.13; 98.9). These verses also lead into the complaints and petitions for help of Ps 10. **10.1–11** The psalmist complains to God on behalf of the poor (v. 2; cf. 9.18) and helpless (vv. 8, 10). The wicked believe their successful oppression of the helpless and innocent is a reflection of God's absence or indifference to whatever they do. **10.1** *Why . . . do you stand far off?* is a frequent complaint to God in cries for help (22.1, 19; 35.22; 38.21; 71.12). *Why do you hide yourself?* is also a common form of complaint to God (see 55.1; also the related expression "to hide one's face" in 13.1; 27.9; 30.7; 44.24; 69.17; 88.14; 102.2; 143.7; and note on 27.9) as well as an assumption of the wicked (v. 11). See also note on 27.9. **10.2** Cf.

4 In the pride of their countenance
the wicked say, "God will
not seek it out";
all their thoughts are, "There is
no God."

5 Their ways prosper at all times;
your judgments are on high,
out of their sight;
as for their foes, they scoff at
them.
6 They think in their heart, "We
shall not be moved;
throughout all generations we
shall not meet adversity."

7 Their mouths are filled with
cursing and deceit and
oppression;
under their tongues are
mischief and iniquity.
8 They sit in ambush in the
villages;
in hiding places they murder
the innocent.

Their eyes stealthily watch for the
helpless;
9 they lurk in secret like a lion in
its covert;
they lurk that they may seize the
poor;
they seize the poor and drag
them off in their net.

10 They stoop, they crouch,
and the helpless fall by their
might.
11 They think in their heart, "God
has forgotten,
he has hidden his face, he will
never see it."

12 Rise up, O LORD; O God, lift up
your hand;
do not forget the oppressed.

13 Why do the wicked
renounce God,
and say in their hearts, "You
will not call us to account"?

14 But you do see! Indeed you note
trouble and grief,
that you may take it into your
hands;
the helpless commit themselves
to you;
you have been the helper of the
orphan.

15 Break the arm of the wicked and
evildoers;
seek out their wickedness until
you find none.
16 The LORD is king forever and
ever;
the nations shall perish from
his land.

17 O LORD, you will hear the desire
of the meek;
you will strengthen their heart,
you will incline your ear
18 to do justice for the orphan and
the oppressed,
so that those from earth may
strike terror no more.[i]

Psalm 11

Song of Trust in God

To the leader. Of David.

1 In the LORD I take refuge; how
can you say to me,
"Flee like a bird to the
mountains;[j]
2 for look, the wicked bend
the bow,

i Meaning of Heb uncertain *j* Gk Syr Jerome Tg: Heb *flee to your mountain, O bird*

9.15–16. **10.4** Cf. 14.1. **10.8–11** Vivid imagery to describe the scheming, plotting, and treachery by which the wicked and immoral do in the innocent and helpless. **10.12–19** Petitions for help and expressions of confidence that God will aid the helpless. The Lord will *see* (v. 14) and *hear* (v. 17). **10.14** *Grief*, possibly "provocation" or "vexation." **10.16** Victory over oppressors is a demonstration of God's sovereign rule (24.8, 10; 29.10; 47.2; Ex 15.18).

11.1–7 A psalm of confidence and trust in God by someone who knows God's protection against the wicked. It is related to the expressions of confidence in the prayers for help (3.3–6, 8; 4.6–8; 6.8–10; 7.12–16). *To the leader.* See note on 4.1–8. **11.1–3** Against the advice of friends or counselors who have recommended that the psalmist in trouble *flee like a bird to the mountains*, the psalmist claims a sufficient protection in trust-

they have fitted their arrow to
the string,
to shoot in the dark at the
upright in heart.
3 If the foundations are destroyed,
what can the righteous do?"

4 The LORD is in his holy temple;
the LORD's throne is in heaven.
His eyes behold, his gaze
examines humankind.
5 The LORD tests the righteous and
the wicked,
and his soul hates the lover of
violence.
6 On the wicked he will rain coals
of fire and sulfur;
a scorching wind shall be the
portion of their cup.
7 For the LORD is righteous;
he loves righteous deeds;
the upright shall behold his
face.

Psalm 12

Plea for Help in Evil Times

To the leader: according to The Sheminith.
A Psalm of David.

1 Help, O LORD, for there is no
longer anyone who is
godly;
the faithful have disappeared
from humankind.
2 They utter lies to each other;
with flattering lips and a double
heart they speak.
3 May the LORD cut off all
flattering lips,
the tongue that makes great
boasts,
4 those who say, "With our tongues
we will prevail;
our lips are our own—who is
our master?"

5 "Because the poor are despoiled,
because the needy groan,
I will now rise up," says the
LORD;
"I will place them in the safety
for which they long."
6 The promises of the LORD are
promises that are pure,
silver refined in a furnace on
the ground,
purified seven times.

7 You, O LORD, will protect us;
you will guard us from this
generation forever.
8 On every side the wicked prowl,
as vileness is exalted among
humankind.

Psalm 13

Prayer for Deliverance from Enemies

To the leader. A Psalm of David.

1 How long, O LORD? Will you
forget me forever?
How long will you hide your
face from me?

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ing in the Lord. **11.3** See note on 82.5. The advisers recognize the innocence or righteousness of the one who prays. **11.4–7** Confidence in God's righteous rule. **11.4** The imagery of God's throne of judgment is found also in 7.6–8; 9.4, 7; cf. 122.5; Prov 20.8. **11.5** The righteous one places trust in God's determination of who is righteous or innocent and who is wicked.

12.1–8 A general prayer for help that incorporates a divine word of deliverance. A representative figure, possibly priest or prophet, seems to speak on behalf of the community as well as on behalf of God. *To the leader.* See note on 4.1–8. *According to The Sheminith.* See note on 6.1–10. **12.1–4** Pleas to God against those who do in others by what they say—lies, flattery, arrogance, hypocrisy, and slander. **12.1** *Godly*, often translated as "faithful," refers to those who live a life faithful to the covenant and the instruction of the Lord. The sense of widespread wickedness and the absence of goodness is similar to that expressed even more sharply in 14.1–3. **12.4** *"Who is our master?"* has the same force as the quotations in 10.4, 6; 14.1. The wicked assume that God has no effective power over them. **12.5** The response of God, possibly spoken by a representative figure. *Rise up.* Cf. the petitions asking this of God in, e.g., 3.7; 7.6; 9.19; 10.12; 74.22; 82.8; 132.8. *I will place them in the safety for which they long*, possibly to be translated, "I will place in safety the witness on their behalf." **12.6–8** The confidence of the people in God even though wickedness presently prevails. **12.6** *The promises of the LORD*, or "the utterances of the LORD," such as in v. 5, have the integrity and truthfulness that are not present on the lips and tongues of the wicked (vv. 2–4).

13.1–6 The prayer of an individual for help

2 How long must I bear pain[k] in my soul,
and have sorrow in my heart all day long?
How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

3 Consider and answer me, O LORD my God!
Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death,
4 and my enemy will say, "I have prevailed";
my foes will rejoice because I am shaken.

5 But I trusted in your steadfast love;
my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.
6 I will sing to the LORD,
because he has dealt bountifully with me.

Psalm 14

Denunciation of Godlessness

To the leader. Of David.

1 Fools say in their hearts, "There is no God."
They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds;
there is no one who does good.

2 The LORD looks down from heaven on humankind
to see if there are any who are wise,
who seek after God.

3 They have all gone astray, they are all alike perverse;
there is no one who does good, no, not one.

4 Have they no knowledge, all the evildoers
who eat up my people as they eat bread,
and do not call upon the LORD?

5 There they shall be in great terror,
for God is with the company of the righteous.
6 You would confound the plans of the poor,
but the LORD is their refuge.

7 O that deliverance for Israel would come from Zion!
When the LORD restores the fortunes of his people,
Jacob will rejoice; Israel will be glad.

k Syr: Heb *hold counsels*

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in the face of unspecified trouble. *To the leader.* See note on 4.1–8. **13.1–2** The complaint to God. **13.1** *How long?* See note on 6.3. *Will you forget me forever?* For the frequency of this complaint, see 42.9; 44.24; 74.19; 77.9 (cf. 9.12, 18; 10.11–12). *Hide your face.* See notes on 10.1; 27.9. **13.3–4** The plea for God to respond. **13.3** *Give light to my eyes,* i.e., restore the power to live. **13.5** An expression of confidence in God's help. **13.6** A vow of praise (see note on 7.17).

14.1–7 A psalm expressing confidence in God's protecting help for the poor and innocent even in the face of rampant and unrelenting wickedness and evil. The psalm is repeated in almost the same fashion as Ps 53. *To the leader.* See note on 4.1–8. **14.1–3** The absence of God is experienced in the absence of good. Quoted in Rom 3.10–12. **14.1** *Fools* are the same as the wicked in the wisdom traditions of Israel (cf. *evildoers* in v. 4). The quotation of the fools in this psalm is placed on the lips of the wicked in 10.4 (cf. Isa 32.6). *There is no God,* i.e., God is not present in the world in any effective way. Cf. 10.4, 6, 13; 12.4. *There is no one who does good* echoes "there is no God." **14.2** *Who seek after God.* For the moral character of seeking after God, see Am 5.4–6, 7, 10–11, 14–15, where seeking after God is found in hating evil, loving good, and establishing justice. **14.4–6** The refuge of the poor and righteous is the downfall of the evildoers. These verses counter the empirical claim of vv. 1–3 that God is not present because evil is rampant. **14.4** *Who eat up my people as they eat bread.* The translation is uncertain. For a similar image, see Mic 3.1–3. **14.5** *God is with the company of the righteous* reflects the primary word of assurance from God to those in distress, "I am with you" (e.g., Gen 26.24; 35.3; Isa 41.10; cf. Isa 7.14 for Immanuel, a Hebrew term that means "God is with us"). **14.7** A prayer wish in hope and anticipation that God will deliver the people. When that happens, there will be great joy.

Psalm 15

Who Shall Abide in God's Sanctuary?

A Psalm of David.

1 O LORD, who may abide in your tent?
Who may dwell on your holy hill?

2 Those who walk blamelessly, and do what is right,
and speak the truth from their heart;
3 who do not slander with their tongue,
and do no evil to their friends,
nor take up a reproach against their neighbors;
4 in whose eyes the wicked are despised,
but who honor those who fear the LORD;
who stand by their oath even to their hurt;
5 who do not lend money at interest,
and do not take a bribe against the innocent.

Those who do these things shall never be moved.

Psalm 16

Song of Trust and Security in God

A Miktam of David.

1 Protect me, O God, for in you I take refuge.
2 I say to the LORD, "You are my Lord;
I have no good apart from you."[l]

3 As for the holy ones in the land, they are the noble,
in whom is all my delight.

4 Those who choose another god multiply their sorrows;[m]
their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out
or take their names upon my lips.

5 The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup;
you hold my lot.
6 The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
I have a goodly heritage.

l Jerome Tg: Meaning of Heb uncertain
m Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain

15.1–5 A liturgy for entrance into the sanctuary. See Ps 24 (cf. Isa 33.14–16; Ezek 18.5–9; Mic 6.6–8). **15.1** The question, perhaps by a priest, asks what the qualifications are for admission into the worshiping congregation and the presence of God. **15.2–5** The requirements for entry are now listed in response to the question. The general qualifications in v. 2 are given concrete specification respectively in v. 3. The characteristics of behavior involve the morality of speech and conduct toward neighbor (vv. 2–3), association (v. 4ab), integrity of oaths sworn (v. 4c), and ill-gotten gains (v. 5). **15.4** *Fear the LORD.* See note on 34.7. **15.5** For the prohibition of *interest*, see Ex 22.25; Lev 25.36; Deut 23.19. Lending money was in order to help those in need, and profit from the distress of a neighbor was wrong. For the prohibition of *bribes*, see Ex 23.8; Deut 16.19; Isa 1.23; Mic 3.11.

16.1–11 A prayer of an individual for divine help in which the primary emphasis is placed upon the confident trust in God of the one who prays. The prayer seems to be more a prayer for continual protection rather than a cry of distress arising out of a particular occasion of suffering, though the latter may have elicited the confidence expressed herein. *Miktam*, of uncertain meaning but possibly indicating that the psalm was inscribed on a stone or wall. **16.2–11** An elaborate expression of the psalmist's experience of God's guidance and protection and the blessings God has bestowed. **16.2–4** The translation of these verses is for the most part very uncertain. **16.5–6** The terms *portion, cup, lot, boundary lines*, and *heritage* express the fact that the one who prays has received much good from the Lord. All the terms except *cup* have to do with the distribution of the promised land. They may be metaphorical for the richness of life received from God or they may reflect the actual receipt of a rich and valuable allotment of land. It has also been suggested that these words are spoken by a Levite because the tribe of Levi received no portion of land but lived off the offerings of the people. Several texts speak of the Lord as the portion or heritage of the Levites (Num 18.20; Deut 10.9;

7 I bless the LORD who gives me
counsel;
in the night also my heart
instructs me.
8 I keep the LORD always
before me;
because he is at my right hand,
I shall not be moved.

9 Therefore my heart is glad, and
my soul rejoices;
my body also rests secure.
10 For you do not give me up to
Sheol,
or let your faithful one see
the Pit.

11 You show me the path of life.
In your presence there is
fullness of joy;
in your right hand are
pleasures forevermore.

Psalm 17

Prayer for Deliverance from Persecutors

A Prayer of David.

1 Hear a just cause, O LORD; attend
to my cry;
give ear to my prayer from lips
free of deceit.
2 From you let my vindication
come;
let your eyes see the right.

3 If you try my heart, if you visit
me by night,
if you test me, you will find no
wickedness in me;
my mouth does not transgress.
4 As for what others do, by the
word of your lips
I have avoided the ways of the
violent.
5 My steps have held fast to your
paths;
my feet have not slipped.

6 I call upon you, for you will
answer me, O God;
incline your ear to me, hear my
words.
7 Wondrously show your steadfast
love,
O savior of those who seek
refuge
from their adversaries at your
right hand.

8 Guard me as the apple of
the eye;
hide me in the shadow of your
wings,
9 from the wicked who despoil me,
my deadly enemies who
surround me.
10 They close their hearts to pity;
with their mouths they speak
arrogantly.
11 They track me down;[n] now they
surround me;
they set their eyes to cast me to
the ground.
12 They are like a lion eager to tear,
like a young lion lurking in
ambush.

13 Rise up, O LORD, confront them,
overthrow them!
By your sword deliver my life
from the wicked,
14 from mortals—by your hand,
O LORD—

n One Ms Compare Syr: MT *Our steps*

Josh 13.14). **16.10** Either in present distress or out of past rescue, the psalmist expresses confidence in God's power to deliver from terrible death and keep the psalmist alive. *Sheol.* See note on 6.5. *Pit,* a synonym for Sheol and the grave.

17.1–15 A cry for help of an innocent person beset by persecutors and seeking God's judgment and deliverance. See Ps 7 for a similar setting. Vv. 3, 15 suggest the petitioner may have spent the night in prayer in the sanctuary awaiting God's help, i.e., vindication in the morning. **17.1–2** The basic petition to be heard and judged. The one praying may have been falsely accused by others (vv. 9–12) and seeks vindication. The reply may have come by a divine decision through a priest. **17.3–5** The persecuted one makes a protestation of innocence and righteousness and offers to be tested in this regard. **17.6–9** The petition for God's response and protection goes up again. **17.8** *Shadow of your wings.* See notes on 91.1; 91.4. **17.10–12** The destructive character and actions of the persecutors are set forth. **17.12** *Lion, young lion.* See note on 7.2. **17.13–14** A final strong plea to God to do in the wicked who threaten the innocent petitioner. **17.13** *Rise up, O LORD.* See note on

from mortals whose portion in
life is in this world.
May their bellies be filled with
what you have stored up
for them;
may their children have more
than enough;
may they leave something over
to their little ones.

15 As for me, I shall behold your
face in righteousness;
when I awake I shall be
satisfied, beholding your
likeness.

Psalm 18

Royal Thanksgiving for Victory

To the leader. A Psalm of David the servant of the LORD, who addressed the words of this song to the LORD on the day when the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul. He said:

1 I love you, O LORD, my strength.
2 The LORD is my rock, my
fortress, and my deliverer,
my God, my rock in whom I
take refuge,
my shield, and the horn of my
salvation, my stronghold.
3 I call upon the LORD, who is
worthy to be praised,
so I shall be saved from my
enemies.

4 The cords of death
encompassed me;
the torrents of perdition
assailed me;
5 the cords of Sheol entangled me;
the snares of death
confronted me.

6 In my distress I called upon the
LORD;
to my God I cried for help.
From his temple he heard my
voice,
and my cry to him reached his
ears.

7 Then the earth reeled and
rocked;
the foundations also of the
mountains trembled
and quaked, because he was
angry.
8 Smoke went up from his nostrils,
and devouring fire from his
mouth;
glowing coals flamed forth
from him.
9 He bowed the heavens, and came
down;
thick darkness was under his
feet.
10 He rode on a cherub, and flew;
he came swiftly upon the wings
of the wind.
11 He made darkness his covering
around him,
his canopy thick clouds dark
with water.
12 Out of the brightness before
him
there broke through his
clouds
hailstones and coals of fire.
13 The LORD also thundered in the
heavens,

12.5. **17.15** The psalmist is confident of God's righteous judgment when the night is over.

18.1–50 A royal psalm of thanksgiving, presumably fulfilling a vow to give thanks and praise after God has helped (see 7.17; 13.6). While the superscription may not be historical, it suggests the circumstances in which such a song by a king would be appropriate. The psalm is found also in 2 Sam 22. *To the leader.* See note on 4.1–8. **18.1–3** Hymnic praise of God in extravagant terms that underscore God's protecting help. **18.2** *The horn of my salvation.* See note on 75.4–5. **18.4–5** An account of the near-death distress that evoked the cry to God for help and God's response. **18.5** *Sheol.* See note on 6.5. **18.6** *From his temple he heard my voice.* See 1 Kings 8.37–40. *My cry to him reached his ears.* See 2 Chr 6.40; Sir 21.5 (cf. Gen 18.21; Ex 2.23–24; 3.7). **18.7–19** The appearance of God to deliver the king in trouble. The description is in typical storm-god imagery, depicting the coming of God as a mighty warrior from the cosmic abode, represented on earth by the sanctuary. The elements of nature are both disturbed and used by the divine warrior (cf. Ex 15; Deut 33.2–3; Judg 5.4–5; Ps 68.7–8; Hab 3.15). **18.10** *Cherub,* possibly a synonym for "cloud" but also referring to the cherubim or winged figures that served as the throne of the invisible God on the ark of the

and the Most High uttered his voice.[o]
14 And he sent out his arrows, and scattered them;
he flashed forth lightnings, and routed them.
15 Then the channels of the sea were seen,
and the foundations of the world were laid bare
at your rebuke, O LORD,
at the blast of the breath of your nostrils.

16 He reached down from on high, he took me;
he drew me out of mighty waters.
17 He delivered me from my strong enemy,
and from those who hated me;
for they were too mighty for me.
18 They confronted me in the day of my calamity;
but the LORD was my support.
19 He brought me out into a broad place;
he delivered me, because he delighted in me.

20 The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness;
according to the cleanness of my hands he recompensed me.
21 For I have kept the ways of the LORD,
and have not wickedly departed from my God.
22 For all his ordinances were before me,
and his statutes I did not put away from me.
23 I was blameless before him,
and I kept myself from guilt.
24 Therefore the LORD has recompensed me according to my righteousness,
according to the cleanness of my hands in his sight.

25 With the loyal you show yourself loyal;
with the blameless you show yourself blameless;
26 with the pure you show yourself pure;
and with the crooked you show yourself perverse.
27 For you deliver a humble people,
but the haughty eyes you bring down.
28 It is you who light my lamp;
the LORD, my God, lights up my darkness.
29 By you I can crush a troop,
and by my God I can leap over a wall.
30 This God—his way is perfect;
the promise of the LORD proves true;
he is a shield for all who take refuge in him.

31 For who is God except the LORD?
And who is a rock besides our God?—
32 the God who girded me with strength,
and made my way safe.
33 He made my feet like the feet of a deer,
and set me secure on the heights.
34 He trains my hands for war,
so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze.
35 You have given me the shield of your salvation,

o Gk See 2 Sam 22.14: Heb adds *hailstones and coals of fire*

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covenant (1 Sam 4.4). **18.14** *Arrows*, i.e., flashes of lightning. **18.16** *Mighty waters*, a common image for terrible distress that threatens to overwhelm the sufferer (42.7; 69.1–2, 14–15; 144.7). **18.19** *A broad place* (cf. v. 36) is a characteristic way of describing God's gift of salvation (31.8; 66.12; 118.5; cf. Gen 26.22). **18.20–24** Because of the moral integrity of the ruler, the persecution of enemies has not been the judgment of God but rather the grounds for God's powerful help and protection (see Pss 1; 15). **18.25–29** The reason for the assertions of vv. 20–24 is that God responds appropriately to human conduct. **18.28** *Light* is an image for life. **18.30–45** The king gives thanks and praises God (vv. 30–31) by recounting how the Lord prepared him to fight against his enemies (vv. 32–34) and gave him power over them

and your right hand has
supported me;
your help[p] has made me great.
36 You gave me a wide place for my
steps under me,
and my feet did not slip.
37 I pursued my enemies and
overtook them;
and did not turn back until
they were consumed.
38 I struck them down, so that they
were not able to rise;
they fell under my feet.
39 For you girded me with strength
for the battle;
you made my assailants sink
under me.
40 You made my enemies turn their
backs to me,
and those who hated me I
destroyed.
41 They cried for help, but there
was no one to save them;
they cried to the LORD, but he
did not answer them.
42 I beat them fine, like dust before
the wind;
I cast them out like the mire of
the streets.

43 You delivered me from strife
with the peoples;[q]
you made me head of the
nations;
people whom I had not known
served me.
44 As soon as they heard of me they
obeyed me;
foreigners came cringing to me.
45 Foreigners lost heart,
and came trembling out of
their strongholds.

46 The LORD lives! Blessed be my
rock,
and exalted be the God of my
salvation,
47 the God who gave me vengeance
and subdued peoples
under me;
48 who delivered me from my
enemies;
indeed, you exalted me above
my adversaries;
you delivered me from the
violent.

49 For this I will extol you, O LORD,
among the nations,
and sing praises to your name.
50 Great triumphs he gives to his
king,
and shows steadfast love to his
anointed,
to David and his descendants
forever.

Psalm 19

God's Glory in Creation and the Law

To the leader. A Psalm of David.

1 The heavens are telling the glory
of God;
and the firmament[r] proclaims
his handiwork.
2 Day to day pours forth speech,
and night to night declares
knowledge.
3 There is no speech, nor are there
words;
their voice is not heard;
4 yet their voice[s] goes out through
all the earth,
and their words to the end of
the world.

In the heavens[t] he has set a tent
for the sun,
5 which comes out like a
bridegroom from his
wedding canopy,

p Or *gentleness* q Gk Tg: Heb *people*
r Or *dome* s Gk Jerome Compare Syr: Heb *line*
t Heb *In them*

(vv. 35–42). **18.46–50** Concluding praise and thanksgiving. **18.50** The victories over enemies described in the song are here specifically said to be those of the ruler. *Anointed.* See note on 2.2.

19.1–14 A psalm extolling God's glory as revealed in the creation and the perfection and blessings of the instruction, or law, of God (cf. Pss 1; 119). *To the leader.* See note on 4.1–8. **19.1–6** The glory of God proclaimed by the created order. **19.1–4b** In a paradoxical way the knowledge of God is passed on, but it is transmitted in a language without speech or words that can be heard in the customary way. **19.4b–6** The *sun* is a particular manifestation of the handiwork of God. The focus is upon the regular movement of the sun across the heavens.

and like a strong man runs its course with joy.
6 Its rising is from the end of the heavens,
and its circuit to the end of them;
and nothing is hid from its heat.

7 The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul;
the decrees of the LORD are sure, making wise the simple;
8 the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;
the commandment of the LORD is clear, enlightening the eyes;
9 the fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever;
the ordinances of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.
10 More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold;
sweeter also than honey, and drippings of the honeycomb.

11 Moreover by them is your servant warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.
12 But who can detect their errors?
Clear me from hidden faults.
13 Keep back your servant also from the insolent;[u]
do not let them have dominion over me.
Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression.

14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you,
O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

Psalm 20

Prayer for Victory

To the leader. A Psalm of David.

1 The LORD answer you in the day of trouble!
The name of the God of Jacob protect you!
2 May he send you help from the sanctuary,
and give you support from Zion.
3 May he remember all your offerings,
and regard with favor your burnt sacrifices. *Selah*

4 May he grant you your heart's desire,
and fulfill all your plans.
5 May we shout for joy over your victory,

u Or *from proud thoughts*

19.6 *Nothing is hid from its heat* echoes the ancient Near Eastern notion of the sun god as the god of justice, who has insight into all things, and anticipates the warning that God provides in the law. **19.7–10** God's instruction in the *law* is characterized in terms of its perfection, clarity, reliability, and truthfulness and its benefits are set forth. The latter include its enlivening (v. 7a) and illumining (vv. 7b, 8b) effects and its capacity to give joy and delight (cf. 1.2). **19.10** The desirability and value of the law are underscored. **19.11–13** Even with the benefits and warning of the law, the psalmist cannot completely avoid hidden sins and mistakes or the control that presumptuous members of the community could exercise and so needs God's forgiveness. **19.14** A concluding prayer of dedication and offering. See 104.34; 119.108.

20.1–9 A royal psalm seeking God's help for the ruler. It may have been offered as a prayer before the king and the army went out to war or at the time of enthronement. Its liturgical character is suggested by the movement from the intercession of the community to the voice of one who declares God's intention to help and back to the prayer of the people at the end (cf. Ps 12). *To the leader.* See note on 4.1–8. **20.1–5** A series of prayers all of which would be appropriate when faced by an enemy and its army but also may address more broadly the needs of the king throughout his rule. **20.1** The *name* of God was understood to be in the sanctuary; this was the way God could be present there while dwelling continually transcendent in the

and in the name of our God set
up our banners.
May the LORD fulfill all your
petitions.

6 Now I know that the LORD will
help his anointed;
he will answer him from his
holy heaven
with mighty victories by his
right hand.
7 Some take pride in chariots, and
some in horses,
but our pride is in the name of
the LORD our God.
8 They will collapse and fall,
but we shall rise and stand
upright.

9 Give victory to the king, O LORD;
answer us when we call.[v]

Psalm 21

Thanksgiving for Victory

To the leader. A Psalm of David.

1 In your strength the king
rejoices, O LORD,
and in your help how greatly
he exults!
2 You have given him his heart's
desire,
and have not withheld the
request of his lips. *Selah*
3 For you meet him with rich
blessings;
you set a crown of fine gold on
his head.
4 He asked you for life; you gave it
to him—
length of days forever and
ever.
5 His glory is great through your
help;
splendor and majesty you
bestow on him.
6 You bestow on him blessings
forever;
you make him glad with the joy
of your presence.
7 For the king trusts in the
LORD,
and through the steadfast love
of the Most High he shall
not be moved.

8 Your hand will find out all your
enemies;
your right hand will find out
those who hate you.
9 You will make them like a fiery
furnace
when you appear.
The LORD will swallow them up
in his wrath,
and fire will consume
them.
10 You will destroy their offspring
from the earth,
and their children from among
humankind.
11 If they plan evil against you,
if they devise mischief, they will
not succeed.
12 For you will put them to
flight;
you will aim at their faces with
your bows.

13 Be exalted, O LORD, in your
strength!
We will sing and praise your
power.

v Gk: Heb *give victory, O LORD; let the King answer us when we call*

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heavens (1 Kings 8.15–30; cf. Pss 44.5; 54.6; 118.10–12). **20.3** *Selah*. See note on 3.2. **20.6–8** A declaration of God's sure help is given by a representative figure, possibly a priest or prophet. It may have been preceded by an oracle of salvation, a word of assurance from God. **20.6** *Anointed*. See note on 2.2. **20.9** A final prayer specifically pointed toward God's help in battle.

21.1–13 A royal liturgy of praise and thanksgiving for God's protection of the ruler. *To the leader*. See note on 4.1–8. **21.1–6** Praise of God for all the help and blessings that the Lord has given to the king. **21.2** *Selah*. See note on 3.2. **21.7** The confidence of the king in the Lord. **21.8–12** An announcement is made to the ruler, possibly by a representative figure, that the Lord will enable the king to overcome all enemies (cf. note on 20.6–8). **21.13** The congregation sings praise to God. *Be exalted* is possibly a call to God to "rise up" in might to deliver the king and so evoke the songs of thanksgiving (cf. note on 12.5).

Psalm 22

Plea for Deliverance from Suffering and Hostility

To the leader: according to The Deer of the Dawn. A Psalm of David.

1 My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?
2 O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer;
and by night, but find no rest.

3 Yet you are holy,
enthroned on the praises of Israel.
4 In you our ancestors trusted;
they trusted, and you delivered them.
5 To you they cried, and were saved;
in you they trusted, and were not put to shame.

6 But I am a worm, and not human;
scorned by others, and despised by the people.
7 All who see me mock at me;
they make mouths at me, they shake their heads;
8 "Commit your cause to the LORD;
let him deliver—
let him rescue the one in whom he delights!"

9 Yet it was you who took me from the womb;
you kept me safe on my mother's breast.
10 On you I was cast from my birth,
and since my mother bore me you have been my God.
11 Do not be far from me,
for trouble is near
and there is no one to help.

12 Many bulls encircle me,
strong bulls of Bashan surround me;
13 they open wide their mouths at me,
like a ravening and roaring lion.

14 I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint;
my heart is like wax;
it is melted within my breast;
15 my mouth[w] is dried up like a potsherd,
and my tongue sticks to my jaws;
you lay me in the dust of death.

16 For dogs are all around me;

w Cn: Heb *strength*

22.1–31 The prayer for help of an individual in great distress and the song of thanksgiving and praise that follows the word of God's response of deliverance. *To the leader.* See note on 4.1–8. *The Deer of the Dawn* may be a note about the melody. The Septuagint gives an alternate possibility, "Concerning the help at dawn," because of the similarity of the word translated "deer" to the word for "help" in v. 19. **22.1–2** An anguished complaint to God because God is silent and absent in the petitioner's distress. **22.1** The first part of this verse is the cry that is found on Jesus' lips on the cross (Mt 27.46; Mk 15.34). *Groaning,* better "roaring." **22.3–5** The psalmist's trust in God's protection is renewed in remembering that the earlier community of faith trusted and cried out in trouble and God heard and delivered them. **22.6–8** Remembering the earlier community's deliverance, their not being shamed, makes the psalmist only more aware of the present, as those round about mock and scorn because the one who prayed suffers without release. These verses are alluded to in the passion story of Jesus (Mt 27.39–44; Mk 15.29–32; Lk 23.35–37). **22.9–11** The memory of God's care of the psalmist up to now is a claim of faith in the face of despair and leads to the plea for God to be present and to help. Cf. 71.6; 139.13. **22.12–21a** The sufferer plunges back into the depths and recounts at length the persecutions of others and the sense of being close to death. **22.12–13** *Bulls, strong bulls, lion.* See note on 7.2. *Bashan* was an area in Transjordan east of the Sea of Galilee noted for producing good cattle (cf. Ezek 39.18; Am 4.1). **22.14–15** The picture of sickness unto death may be metaphorical for severe distress or it may reflect actual illness. **22.16–18** *Dogs.* See vv. 12–13; note on 7.2. The picture here is of one wasted away by illness and the taunters and persecutors already distributing the victim's clothing as death nears (cf. Mt 27.35; Mk 15.24; Lk 23.34; Jn 19.23–24).

a company of evildoers
encircles me.
My hands and feet have
shriveled;[x]
17 I can count all my bones.
They stare and gloat over me;
18 they divide my clothes among
themselves,
and for my clothing they cast
lots.

19 But you, O LORD, do not be far
away!
O my help, come quickly to
my aid!
20 Deliver my soul from the sword,
my life[y] from the power of
the dog!
21 Save me from the mouth of the
lion!

From the horns of the wild oxen
you have rescued[z] me.
22 I will tell of your name to my
brothers and sisters;[a]
in the midst of the
congregation I will
praise you:
23 You who fear the LORD,
praise him!
All you offspring of Jacob,
glorify him;
stand in awe of him, all you
offspring of Israel!
24 For he did not despise or
abhor
the affliction of the afflicted;
he did not hide his face
from me,[b]
but heard when I[c] cried
to him.

25 From you comes my praise in the
great congregation;
my vows I will pay before those
who fear him.
26 The poor[d] shall eat and be
satisfied;
those who seek him shall praise
the LORD.
May your hearts live forever!

27 All the ends of the earth shall
remember
and turn to the LORD;
and all the families of the
nations
shall worship before him.[e]
28 For dominion belongs to the
LORD,
and he rules over the
nations.

29 To him,[f] indeed, shall all who
sleep in[g] the earth bow
down;
before him shall bow all who go
down to the dust,
and I shall live for him.[h]
30 Posterity will serve him;
future generations will be told
about the Lord,
31 and[i] proclaim his deliverance to
a people yet unborn,
saying that he has done it.

x Meaning of Heb uncertain *y* Heb *my only one* *z* Heb *answered* *a* Or *kindred* *b* Heb *him* *c* Heb *he* *d* Or *afflicted* *e* Gk Syr Jerome: Heb *you* *f* Cn: Heb *They have eaten and* *g* Cn: Heb *all the fat ones* *h* Compare Gk Syr Vg: Heb *and he who cannot keep himself alive* *i* Compare Gk: Heb *it will be told about the Lord to the generation,* 31*they will come and*

22.19–21a The final desperate petition for God to come and save the life of the sufferer. *Dog, lion.* See vv. 12–13, 16; note on 7.2. **22.21b–31** The psalmist receives a response from God and renders extravagant praise for God's delivering help. The thanksgiving may be after God's help has been received or in anticipation of its coming because the prayer has been answered. Words of praise (vv. 22–23, 25–27, 29–31a) are followed by reasons for such praise (vv. 24, 28, 31b) as the psalmist evokes an ever-widening circle of those who should praise and worship the Lord because of such a marvelous deliverance. **22.21b** *Rescued,* more accurately "answered." It is likely that this point in the psalm reflects the giving of an oracle of salvation by some priestly or representative figure that is God's promise to be with the psalmist and to help (e.g., Isa 41.8–13). **22.22–26** The community of faith in which the psalmist lives is called to praise the Lord because he has answered the prayer of the sufferer. **22.23** *Fear the LORD.* See note on 34.7. Cf. 22.25. **22.24** *Hide his face.* See notes on 10.1; 27.9. **22.27–28** The nations of the earth are called to praise. **22.29–31** Those who have died and those yet unborn are expected to serve the Lord, who has done such a marvelous deed in saving the psalmist from death.

Psalm 23

The Divine Shepherd

A Psalm of David.

1 The LORD is my shepherd, I
shall not want.
2 He makes me lie down in
green pastures;
he leads me beside still
waters;[j]
3 he restores my soul.[k]
He leads me in right paths[l]
for his name's sake.

4 Even though I walk through the
darkest valley,[m]
I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—
they comfort me.

5 You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my
enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
6 Surely[n] goodness and mercy[o]
shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of
the LORD
my whole life long.[p]

Psalm 24

Entrance into the Temple

Of David. A Psalm.

1 The earth is the LORD's and all
that is in it,
the world, and those who live
in it;
2 for he has founded it on the seas,
and established it on the rivers.

3 Who shall ascend the hill of the
LORD?
And who shall stand in his holy
place?
4 Those who have clean hands and
pure hearts,
who do not lift up their souls to
what is false,
and do not swear deceitfully.
5 They will receive blessing from
the LORD,
and vindication from the God
of their salvation.
6 Such is the company of those who
seek him,
who seek the face of the God
of Jacob.[q] *Selah*

[j] Heb *waters of rest* [k] Or *life* [l] Or *paths of righteousness* [m] Or *the valley of the shadow of death* [n] Or *Only* [o] Or *kindness* [p] Heb *for length of days* [q] Gk Syr: Heb *your face, O Jacob*

23.1–6 A song of trust that may have been evoked by an experience of deliverance such as the one described in Ps 22. **23.1–3** The imagery of the Lord as shepherd and the people as the flock is developed here in detail (cf. 95.7; 100.3; Isa 40.11; Ezek 34.11–16; Jn 10.11, 14). **23.1** *I shall not want,* as Israel lacked nothing when wandering in the wilderness (Neh 9.21). **23.4** The confidence here reflects the assuring words of the oracle of salvation that came to those in distress who cried out to God: "Do not fear. I am with you." *Darkest valley* is an image for the experience of terrible distress or suffering, the nearness of death. *Rod,* a club used to fend off wild animals. *Staff,* an instrument to keep sheep from wandering off. **23.5–6** The image of the Lord as host conveys the psalmist's experience of the goodness of God. These verses may reflect a sacrificial meal in thanksgiving for God's deliverance. **23.5** *You prepare a table before me,* as God spread a table of provision for Israel in the wilderness (78.19). *You anoint my head with oil* reflects the custom of pouring oil over the head of an honored guest. **23.6** The psalmist is now pursued by God's goodness and mercy instead of by enemies and persecutors (7.5; 71.11).

24.1–10 A liturgy for entrance into the sanctuary. See Ps 15 (cf. Isa 33.14–16; Ezek 18.5–9; Mic 6.6–8). **24.1–2** A confession that everything belongs to the Lord, who created the world and everything in it. **24.3–6** A question is asked, perhaps by a priest or representative figure, about the qualifications for admission into the sanctuary (v. 3), and those qualifications are then enumerated (v. 4). Cf. Ps 15. A final affirmation accepts these conditions as the requisites for divine blessing (vv. 5–6). **24.6** *Selah.* See note on 3.2. **24.7–10** The liturgy continues, but at this point it centers on the entrance of the Lord into the city and sanctuary presumably by means of the ark of the covenant; the invisible throne of God, the ark accompanied the people into battle against their enemies (Num 10.35–36; 1 Sam 4.4). **24.7** The call of those who bear the ark

7 Lift up your heads, O gates!
and be lifted up, O ancient doors!
that the King of glory may come in.
8 Who is the King of glory?
The LORD, strong and mighty,
the LORD, mighty in battle.
9 Lift up your heads, O gates!
and be lifted up, O ancient doors!
that the King of glory may come in.
10 Who is this King of glory?
The LORD of hosts,
he is the King of glory. *Selah*

Psalm 25

Prayer for Guidance and for Deliverance

Of David.

1 To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul.
2 O my God, in you I trust;
do not let me be put to shame;
do not let my enemies exult over me.
3 Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame;
let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.

4 Make me to know your ways, O LORD;
teach me your paths.
5 Lead me in your truth, and teach me,
for you are the God of my salvation;
for you I wait all day long.
6 Be mindful of your mercy, O LORD, and of your steadfast love,
for they have been from of old.
7 Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions;
according to your steadfast love remember me,
for your goodness' sake, O LORD!

8 Good and upright is the LORD;
therefore he instructs sinners in the way.
9 He leads the humble in what is right,
and teaches the humble his way.
10 All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness,
for those who keep his covenant and his decrees.

11 For your name's sake, O LORD,
pardon my guilt, for it is great.
12 Who are they that fear the LORD?
He will teach them the way that they should choose.

13 They will abide in prosperity,
and their children shall possess the land.
14 The friendship of the LORD is for those who fear him,
and he makes his covenant known to them.
15 My eyes are ever toward the LORD,
for he will pluck my feet out of the net.

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as they approach the gates or doors. **24.8a** The question is posed by those at the doors. **24.8b–9** The response of those with the ark. **24.10** The question and answer repeated once more (cf. 2 Sam 6.12–15).

25.1–22 An individual's prayer for help in a situation of unspecified trouble. The prayer is marked by various petitions, undergirded by reasons for God's beneficent response, and expressions of trust in God's goodness. **25.1–7** The one who trusts prays for help, direction, and forgiveness. **25.2–3** The shame of the psalmist may be in being afflicted and receiving no response from God (cf. 4.2; 22.2–8; 31.1, 17; 69.7, 19), but those *who are wantonly treacherous* have probably accused or persecuted the psalmist in some way. **25.4–5** A prayer for instruction in the Lord's way. **25.6–7** A prayer for forgiveness. **25.8–15** Affirmations of the goodness and faithfulness of the Lord, which is the ground of the petitioner's hope for help. **25.11** The realization of God's faithfulness to those who keep God's instruction (v. 10) leads the psalmist, who is mindful of failure to do that in the past, to insert a prayer for forgiveness. **25.12** *Fear the LORD.* See note on 34.7. Cf. 25.14. **25.15** *Net.*

16 Turn to me and be gracious
to me,
for I am lonely and afflicted.
17 Relieve the troubles of my heart,
and bring me[r] out of my
distress.
18 Consider my affliction and my
trouble,
and forgive all my sins.

19 Consider how many are my foes,
and with what violent hatred
they hate me.
20 O guard my life, and deliver me;
do not let me be put to shame,
for I take refuge in you.
21 May integrity and uprightness
preserve me,
for I wait for you.

22 Redeem Israel, O God,
out of all its troubles.

Psalm 26

Plea for Justice and Declaration of Righteousness

Of David.

1 Vindicate me, O LORD,
for I have walked in my
integrity,
and I have trusted in the LORD
without wavering.
2 Prove me, O LORD, and try me;
test my heart and mind.
3 For your steadfast love is before
my eyes,
and I walk in faithfulness
to you.[s]
4 I do not sit with the worthless,
nor do I consort with
hypocrites;
5 I hate the company of
evildoers,
and will not sit with the
wicked.

6 I wash my hands in innocence,
and go around your altar,
O LORD,
7 singing aloud a song of
thanksgiving,
and telling all your wondrous
deeds.

8 O LORD, I love the house in
which you dwell,
and the place where your glory
abides.
9 Do not sweep me away with
sinners,
nor my life with the
bloodthirsty,
10 those in whose hands are evil
devices,
and whose right hands are full
of bribes.

11 But as for me, I walk in my
integrity;
redeem me, and be gracious
to me.
12 My foot stands on level
ground;
in the great congregation I
will bless the LORD.

r Or *The troubles of my heart are enlarged; bring me*
s Or *in your faithfulness*

See note on 9.15. **25.16–21** Renewed and passionate pleas for deliverance and forgiveness. **25.16** For loneliness as a symptom of the suffering of those who cry for help, see 22.6; 69.8, 20; 102.7; Jer 15.17. **25.22** The prayer of an individual is concluded with a prayer for the whole community in trouble (cf. 14.7; 28.9; 130.7; 131.3).

26.1–12 An individual prayer seeking God's judgment of the psalmist's righteousness. Such a prayer may be that of one who has come before God in the sanctuary seeking vindication in the face of false accusations (vv. 9–10; cf. Ps 7; 1 Kings 8.31–32) or it may be the prayer of one who seeks entrance into the sanctuary and claims to have fulfilled the requirements of a righteous life (vv. 7–8; cf. Pss 15; 24). **26.1** The initial plea to God. *Vindicate me,* or "judge me." **26.2–8** The petitioner offers to be tested and submits the case for a righteous and faithful life. **26.4–5** See 1.1. **26.6–7** Washing the hands may have been part of a ritual in the sanctuary as a way of testifying to cleanness or innocence. **26.9–12** A concluding sharp contrast is drawn between the ways of sinners and their fate and the way and hope of the righteous one who prays to God. **26.10** *Evil devices,* a term that often refers to sexual immorality (Lev 18.17; 19.29; 20.14; Job 31.11; Jer 13.27).

Psalm 27

Triumphant Song of Confidence

Of David.

1 The LORD is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?
The LORD is the stronghold[t] of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?

2 When evildoers assail me
to devour my flesh—
my adversaries and foes—
they shall stumble and fall.

3 Though an army encamp against me,
my heart shall not fear;
though war rise up against me,
yet I will be confident.

4 One thing I asked of the LORD,
that will I seek after:
to live in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,
to behold the beauty of the LORD,
and to inquire in his temple.

5 For he will hide me in his shelter
in the day of trouble;
he will conceal me under the cover of his tent;
he will set me high on a rock.

6 Now my head is lifted up
above my enemies all around me,
and I will offer in his tent
sacrifices with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make melody to the LORD.

7 Hear, O LORD, when I cry aloud,
be gracious to me and answer me!
8 "Come," my heart says, "seek his face!"
Your face, LORD, do I seek.
9 Do not hide your face from me.

Do not turn your servant away in anger,
you who have been my help.
Do not cast me off, do not forsake me,
O God of my salvation!
10 If my father and mother forsake me,
the LORD will take me up.

11 Teach me your way, O LORD,
and lead me on a level path
because of my enemies.
12 Do not give me up to the will of my adversaries,
for false witnesses have risen against me,
and they are breathing out violence.

13 I believe that I shall see the goodness of the LORD
in the land of the living.
14 Wait for the LORD;
be strong, and let your heart take courage;
wait for the LORD!

t Or *refuge*

27.1–14 A song of trust (vv. 1–6) by one of the faithful is the basis for a prayer for help in the face of false accusations (vv. 7–14). **27.1–6** The psalmist expresses trust in the Lord against all enemies (vv. 1–3) and the joy of being in God's presence (vv. 4–6). **27.2** *Devour my flesh.* See note on 7.2. **27.4** *The beauty of the LORD,* i.e., the graciousness or favor of the Lord (cf. 90.17; 135.3). *To inquire in his temple* probably means to seek after an oracle of salvation from the Lord, though it may also have a more general reference. **27.6** Sacrifices and praise were offered in the sanctuary by the one God delivered from distress. **27.7–13** The prayer of the oppressed. **27.8** *Seek his face,* seek God's favor. **27.9** *Do not hide your face,* i.e., "do not withhold your favor"; see also note on 10.1. **27.12** At least one facet of the trouble is false accusation brought against the one praying. *They are breathing out violence,* more accurately "violent witnesses." **27.13** An expression of trust that the petitioner will be kept alive and well by the Lord. **27.14** A response of encouragement to the prayer of the preceding verses. *Wait for the LORD* means to expect the Lord's deliverance.

Psalm 28

Prayer for Help and Thanksgiving for It

Of David.

1 To you, O LORD, I call;
my rock, do not refuse to hear me,
for if you are silent to me,
I shall be like those who go down to the Pit.
2 Hear the voice of my supplication,
as I cry to you for help,
as I lift up my hands
toward your most holy sanctuary.[u]

3 Do not drag me away with the wicked,
with those who are workers of evil,
who speak peace with their neighbors,
while mischief is in their hearts.
4 Repay them according to their work,
and according to the evil of their deeds;
repay them according to the work of their hands;
render them their due reward.
5 Because they do not regard the works of the LORD,
or the work of his hands,
he will break them down and build them up no more.

6 Blessed be the LORD,
for he has heard the sound of my pleadings.
7 The LORD is my strength and my shield;
in him my heart trusts;
so I am helped, and my heart exults,
and with my song I give thanks to him.

8 The LORD is the strength of his people;
he is the saving refuge of his anointed.
9 O save your people, and bless your heritage;
be their shepherd, and carry them forever.

Psalm 29

The Voice of God in a Great Storm

A Psalm of David.

1 Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings,[v]
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.
2 Ascribe to the LORD the glory of his name;
worship the LORD in holy splendor.

3 The voice of the LORD is over the waters;

u Heb *your innermost sanctuary* v Heb *sons of gods*

28.1–9 An individual's prayer for help when beset by members of the community who are carrying out some sort of persecution or when in fear of being caught up in the judgment that God will bring against them. **28.1–2** The initial plea for God to pay attention to the prayer. **28.1** *Pit.* See note on 16.10. **28.2** For lifting up hands toward the sanctuary, see 1 Kings 8.38–39. **28.3–4** A cry to God to do in the wicked who persecute the praying one. The psalmist fears being drawn into the punishment that they rightfully deserve. **28.5** A claim that God's just judgment against the wicked will happen. It is either a response to the prayer of the petitioner by a representative figure like a priest or an expression of trust on the part of the one who prays. **28.6–7** A song of thanksgiving by the one who has cried out because God has heeded the prayer. **28.8–9** A final confession and prayer that move the prayer of the individual to one incorporating the community and its ruler. See note on 25.22. **28.8** *Anointed.* See note on 2.2.

29.1–11 A hymn of praise in honor of God's glory and power as revealed in a thunderstorm. **29.1–2** Opening call to worship God. *Heavenly beings* refers to the heavenly court of gods or semidivine beings (see 82.1, 6; Ex 15.11; Deut 32.8), who are to acknowledge the supremacy of the Lord as universal ruler. **29.3–9** Description of the thunderstorm as it rises over the Mediterranean, moves inland with devastating effects across the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon mountain ranges, and spends itself in the Syrian desert. **29.3** *Waters* and *mighty waters* refer to the Mediterranean Sea, perhaps with mythic overtones relating to the primordial waters of chaos the Lord was said to have vanquished in creating the world

the God of glory thunders,
the LORD, over mighty waters.
4 The voice of the LORD is powerful;
the voice of the LORD is full of majesty.

5 The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars;
the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon.
6 He makes Lebanon skip like a calf,
and Sirion like a young wild ox.

7 The voice of the LORD flashes forth flames of fire.
8 The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness;
the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

9 The voice of the LORD causes the oaks to whirl,[w]
and strips the forest bare;
and in his temple all say, "Glory!"

10 The LORD sits enthroned over the flood;
the LORD sits enthroned as king forever.
11 May the LORD give strength to his people!
May the LORD bless his people with peace!

Psalm 30

Thanksgiving for Recovery from Grave Illness

A Psalm. A Song at the dedication of the temple. Of David.

1 I will extol you, O LORD, for you have drawn me up,
and did not let my foes rejoice over me.
2 O LORD my God, I cried to you for help,
and you have healed me.
3 O LORD, you brought up my soul from Sheol,
restored me to life from among those gone down to the Pit.[x]

4 Sing praises to the LORD, O you his faithful ones,
and give thanks to his holy name.
5 For his anger is but for a moment;
his favor is for a lifetime.
Weeping may linger for the night,
but joy comes with the morning.

6 As for me, I said in my prosperity,

w Or *causes the deer to calve*
x Or *that I should not go down to the Pit*

(see 74.12–14; 89.9–10; Isa 51.9). **29.6** *Sirion*, Phoenician name for Mount Hermon in the Anti-Lebanon range. **29.8** *Kadesh* here refers not to the well-known oasis in Sinai (Num 20.1), but to the desert east of the Syrian city of Kadesh on the Orontes River. **29.9** The alternate reading *causes the deer to calve* is equally plausible in the light of the ancient belief that thunderstorms could induce labor. **29.10–11** Concluding affirmation of confidence, possibly with a polemic thrust. In Canaanite mythology, Baal was enthroned over the conquered flood or primordial waters of chaos. Here is affirmed the universal kingship of the Lord, who dethrones all other powers and thus is the only one able to grant security and peace.

30.1–12 A song of thanksgiving and praise by one who has gone from security and prosperity to near death and has been delivered by God. *A Song at the dedication of the temple* is a secondary superscription indicating that the psalm came to be used at the Feast of Dedication (Hanukkah) after the cleansing of the temple by Judas Maccabeus in 164 B.C.E. **30.1–3** The psalmist praises God for being healed. While the references to healing may be metaphorical, their sustained use in this psalm suggests physical illness and near death as the plight from which the psalmist was delivered. **30.1** *My foes* here probably refers to those who declare the sufferer's illness to be the proper punishment from God. **30.3** *Sheol*. See note on 6.5. *Pit*. See note on 16.10. **30.4–5** A call to the community to praise God, who is always more inclined toward favor upon the people than anger, and a declaration that the latter is a response to particular sins by the people. **30.6–12** The psalmist recounts what happened and how the Lord helped. **30.6–7** From a position of security the psalmist is thrown into some terrible personal distress. Both situations are seen

"I shall never be moved."
7 By your favor, O LORD,
you had established me as a
strong mountain;
you hid your face;
I was dismayed.

8 To you, O LORD, I cried,
and to the LORD I made
supplication:
9 "What profit is there in my death,
if I go down to the Pit?
Will the dust praise you?
Will it tell of your faithfulness?
10 Hear, O LORD, and be gracious
to me!
O LORD, be my helper!"

11 You have turned my mourning
into dancing;
you have taken off my
sackcloth
and clothed me with joy,
12 so that my soul[y] may praise you
and not be silent.
O LORD my God, I will give
thanks to you forever.

Psalm 31

Prayer and Praise for Deliverance from Enemies

To the leader. A Psalm of David.

1 In you, O LORD, I seek refuge;
do not let me ever be put to
shame;
in your righteousness
deliver me.
2 Incline your ear to me;
rescue me speedily.
Be a rock of refuge for me,
a strong fortress to save me.
3 You are indeed my rock and my
fortress;
for your name's sake lead me
and guide me,
4 take me out of the net that is
hidden for me,
for you are my refuge.
5 Into your hand I commit my
spirit;
you have redeemed me,
O LORD, faithful God.

6 You hate[z] those who pay regard
to worthless idols,
but I trust in the LORD.
7 I will exult and rejoice in your
steadfast love,
because you have seen my
affliction;
you have taken heed of my
adversities,
8 and have not delivered me into
the hand of the enemy;
you have set my feet in a broad
place.

9 Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I
am in distress;
my eye wastes away from grief,
my soul and body also.
10 For my life is spent with sorrow,
and my years with sighing;
my strength fails because of my
misery,[a]
and my bones waste away.

11 I am the scorn of all my
adversaries,
a horror[b] to my neighbors,
an object of dread to my
acquaintances;

y Heb *that glory* *z* One Heb Ms Gk Syr Jerome: MT *I hate* *a* Gk Syr: Heb *my iniquity*
b Cn: Heb *exceedingly*

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as God's activity. **30.7** *Hid your face.* See notes on 10.1; 27.9. **30.8–10** The cry to God for help. **30.9** See note on 6.5. **30.11–12** The psalmist gives thanks to God for hearing the prayer and giving the desired help. **30.11** *Sackcloth,* clothing representing mourning or penitence.

31.1–24 A prayer of a person for God's help in which petition, lament, and expressions of confidence lead into a final song of thanksgiving for the help that has been received. *To the leader.* See note on 4.1–8. **31.1–5** Prayer for deliverance. **31.1** *Shame.* See note on 25.2–3. **31.4** *Net.* See note on 9.15. **31.5** According to one of the Gospels (Lk 23.46) these are Jesus' last words on the cross. **31.6–8** Either a song of thanksgiving or a vow to express such thanksgiving in the future. **31.8** *Broad place.* See note on 18.19. **31.9–13** A petition (v. 9a) that leads into an extended lament over physical (vv. 9b–10) and social distress (vv. 11–13). The former may be actual sickness unto death or a metaphor of personal dissolution to express suffering. The latter involves both scorn by neighbors and some sort of scheming that threatens the petitioner's life. **31.9** *Grief,* or

those who see me in the street
flee from me.
12 I have passed out of mind like
one who is dead;
I have become like a broken
vessel.
13 For I hear the whispering of
many—
terror all around!—
as they scheme together
against me,
as they plot to take my life.

14 But I trust in you, O LORD;
I say, "You are my God."
15 My times are in your hand;
deliver me from the hand of
my enemies and
persecutors.
16 Let your face shine upon your
servant;
save me in your steadfast love.
17 Do not let me be put to shame,
O LORD,
for I call on you;
let the wicked be put to shame;
let them go dumbfounded to
Sheol.
18 Let the lying lips be stilled
that speak insolently against the
righteous
with pride and contempt.

19 O how abundant is your goodness
that you have laid up for those
who fear you,
and accomplished for those who
take refuge in you,
in the sight of everyone!
20 In the shelter of your presence
you hide them
from human plots;
you hold them safe under your
shelter
from contentious tongues.

21 Blessed be the LORD,
for he has wondrously shown
his steadfast love to me
when I was beset as a city
under siege.
22 I had said in my alarm,
"I am driven far[c] from your
sight."
But you heard my supplications
when I cried out to you for
help.

23 Love the LORD, all you his saints.
The LORD preserves the
faithful,
but abundantly repays the one
who acts haughtily.
24 Be strong, and let your heart take
courage,
all you who wait for the LORD.

Psalm 32

The Joy of Forgiveness

Of David. A Maskil.

1 Happy are those whose
transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered.
2 Happy are those to whom the
LORD imputes no iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no
deceit.

3 While I kept silence, my body
wasted away

c Another reading is *cut off*

"provocation." **31.12** *Like a broken vessel.* See Jer 22.28; 48.38. **31.13** Cf. Jer 11.19; 20.10. *Terror all around.* See Jer 6.25; 20.3, 10; 46.5; 49.29. **31.14–18** Further pleas for God's help (vv. 15b–18) arising out of the trust in God (vv. 14–15a). **31.16** *Let your face shine,* i.e., show favor (4.6; 67.1; 80.3, 7, 19; 119.135). **31.17** *Put to shame.* See note on 25.2–3. *Sheol.* See note on 6.5. **31.18** Slanderous accusations seem to have been made against the one praying. **31.19** *Fear.* See note on 34.7. **31.19–24** A song of thanksgiving and praise for deliverance. An oracle of salvation may have been given between vv. 18 and 19 that provided the assurance evoking these expressions. **31.23–24** The salvation of the individual is an impetus for all the community of the faithful to trust in God's help.

32.1–11 A song of thanksgiving by an individual who has been forgiven by God. One of the penitential psalms (see note on 6.1–10). *Maskil,* either an "artful song" or a "didactic song," probably the former, indicating a song that has been composed with artistic skill, though didactic elements are present also (e.g., vv. 8–9). **32.1–2** The joy of the psalmist in receiving God's forgiveness. Quoted in Rom 4.7–8. *Happy.* See note on 1.1. **32.3–5** The psalmist tells about the experience of personal disintegration and distress until the acknowledgment of sin. **32.3–4** This may be a depiction of illness understood to be the

through my groaning all day
long.
4 For day and night your hand was
heavy upon me;
my strength was dried up[d] as
by the heat of summer.
Selah

5 Then I acknowledged my sin
to you,
and I did not hide my iniquity;
I said, "I will confess my
transgressions to the LORD,"
and you forgave the guilt of
my sin. *Selah*

6 Therefore let all who are faithful
offer prayer to you;
at a time of distress,[e] the rush of
mighty waters
shall not reach them.
7 You are a hiding place for me;
you preserve me from trouble;
you surround me with glad
cries of deliverance. *Selah*

8 I will instruct you and teach you
the way you should go;
I will counsel you with my eye
upon you.
9 Do not be like a horse or a mule,
without understanding,
whose temper must be curbed
with bit and bridle,
else it will not stay near you.

10 Many are the torments of the
wicked,
but steadfast love surrounds
those who trust in the
LORD.
11 Be glad in the LORD and rejoice,
O righteous,
and shout for joy, all you
upright in heart.

Psalm 33

The Greatness and Goodness of God

1 Rejoice in the LORD, O you
righteous.
Praise befits the upright.
2 Praise the LORD with the lyre;
make melody to him with the
harp of ten strings.
3 Sing to him a new song;
play skillfully on the strings,
with loud shouts.

4 For the word of the LORD is
upright,
and all his work is done in
faithfulness.
5 He loves righteousness and
justice;
the earth is full of the steadfast
love of the LORD.

6 By the word of the LORD the
heavens were made,
and all their host by the breath
of his mouth.
7 He gathered the waters of the sea
as in a bottle;
he put the deeps in
storehouses.

8 Let all the earth fear the LORD;
let all the inhabitants of the
world stand in awe of him.
9 For he spoke, and it came to be;
he commanded, and it stood
firm.

10 The LORD brings the counsel of
the nations to nothing;
he frustrates the plans of the
peoples.

d Meaning of Heb uncertain *e* Cn: Heb *at a time of finding only*

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result of God's anger over sin or it may be a depiction of the effects of sin and guilt unconfessed. *Selah.* See note on 3.2. **32.6–7** Instruction to others to pray to God in distress as did the psalmist. *Mighty waters.* See note on 18.16. **32.8–9** Probably a divine word of instruction, reflecting the character and concerns of wisdom. **32.9** See Prov 26.3. *Else it will not stay near you,* possibly to be translated as an assurance, "Nothing will come near you." The text, however, is very uncertain. **32.10** The lesson learned by the psalmist. **32.11** A call to the faithful to trust also and join in the psalmist's joy (see 31.23–24).

33.1–22 A hymn of praise of God as creator of the world and Lord of history. **33.1–3** A call to praise. **33.4–9** The reason for praise is God's creation of the world through God's righteous and powerful word. See Gen 1. **33.6** *Host,* i.e., sun, moon, and stars. *Waters of the sea,* probably the waters above the dome of heaven (cf. Gen 1.7; Job 38.37). **33.8** *Fear the LORD.* See note on 34.7. **33.10–12** The Lord's rule of the na-

11 The counsel of the LORD stands forever,
the thoughts of his heart to all generations.
12 Happy is the nation whose God is the LORD,
the people whom he has chosen as his heritage.

13 The LORD looks down from heaven;
he sees all humankind.
14 From where he sits enthroned he watches
all the inhabitants of the earth—
15 he who fashions the hearts of them all,
and observes all their deeds.
16 A king is not saved by his great army;
a warrior is not delivered by his great strength.
17 The war horse is a vain hope for victory,
and by its great might it cannot save.

18 Truly the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him,
on those who hope in his steadfast love,
19 to deliver their soul from death,
and to keep them alive in famine.

20 Our soul waits for the LORD;
he is our help and shield.
21 Our heart is glad in him,
because we trust in his holy name.
22 Let your steadfast love, O LORD, be upon us,
even as we hope in you.

Psalm 34

Praise for Deliverance from Trouble

Of David, when he feigned madness before Abimelech, so that he drove him out, and he went away.

1 I will bless the LORD at all times;
his praise shall continually be in my mouth.
2 My soul makes its boast in the LORD;
let the humble hear and be glad.
3 O magnify the LORD with me,
and let us exalt his name together.

4 I sought the LORD, and he answered me,
and delivered me from all my fears.
5 Look to him, and be radiant;
so your[f] faces shall never be ashamed.
6 This poor soul cried, and was heard by the LORD,
and was saved from every trouble.
7 The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him,
and delivers them.
8 O taste and see that the LORD is good;
happy are those who take refuge in him.
9 O fear the LORD, you his holy ones,
for those who fear him have no want.

f Gk Syr Jerome: Heb *their*

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tions. **33.12** *Happy*. See note on 1.1. *His heritage*. See Deut 7.6–8; 32.8–9. **33.13–19** The Lord's discerning and providential watch over all the inhabitants of the earth. **33.20–22** The community of faith expresses its hope in God's steadfast love.

34.1–22 A song of thanksgiving that becomes instructional and didactic in character. The address or instruction to the community that often concludes songs of thanksgiving (see 31.2–4; 32.11) is accentuated in this psalm. The historical superscription is secondarily attached to the psalm (1 Sam 21.10–15; *Abimelech* is an error for Achish). The psalm is an alphabetic acrostic in its Hebrew text (see note on 9.1–10.18). **34.1–3** Introductory praise and thanksgiving. **34.4–10** Testimony to the goodness of God, who delivers the afflicted from their fears. The psalmist reports on God's hearing the prayer and invites others to know the goodness of the Lord through worship and trust. **34.7** *Angel of the LORD*, both a messenger of the Lord and an extension of the Lord's power (see 35.5–6; Josh 5.13–15). *Fear*, an all-encompassing term for worship and obedience, the proper relationship to God (cf. vv. 9, 11). **34.9** *His holy ones*, members of the commu-

10 The young lions suffer want and hunger,
but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.

11 Come, O children, listen to me;
I will teach you the fear of the LORD.
12 Which of you desires life,
and covets many days to enjoy good?
13 Keep your tongue from evil,
and your lips from speaking deceit.
14 Depart from evil, and do good;
seek peace, and pursue it.

15 The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous,
and his ears are open to their cry.
16 The face of the LORD is against evildoers,
to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.
17 When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears,
and rescues them from all their troubles.
18 The LORD is near to the brokenhearted,
and saves the crushed in spirit.

19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous,
but the LORD rescues them from them all.
20 He keeps all their bones;
not one of them will be broken.
21 Evil brings death to the wicked,
and those who hate the righteous will be condemned.
22 The LORD redeems the life of his servants;
none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.

Psalm 35

Prayer for Deliverance from Enemies

Of David.

1 Contend, O LORD, with those who contend with me;
fight against those who fight against me!
2 Take hold of shield and buckler,
and rise up to help me!
3 Draw the spear and javelin against my pursuers;
say to my soul,
"I am your salvation."

4 Let them be put to shame and dishonor
who seek after my life.
Let them be turned back and confounded
who devise evil against me.
5 Let them be like chaff before the wind,
with the angel of the LORD driving them on.
6 Let their way be dark and slippery,
with the angel of the LORD pursuing them.

7 For without cause they hid their net[g] for me;
without cause they dug a pit[h] for my life.
8 Let ruin come on them unawares.

g Heb *a pit, their net* *h* The word *pit* is transposed from the preceding line

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nity of faith. **34.10** Even when the most successful and self-sufficient, i.e., the *young lions*, go hungry, those who trust in the Lord do not lack (cf. 23.1). **34.11–14** The psalmist's reported deliverance leads now into wise teaching about what is involved in *the fear of the LORD* (v. 11). **34.14** Wisdom's teaching is like the prophetic exhortations. See Isa 1.16–17; Am 5.14–15; Mic 6.8; cf. Ps 37.27. **34.15–22** The teaching continues now about the Lord's actions toward the innocent and righteous and toward the wicked. The accent is on God's attention to the cries of the righteous in their sufferings. *Righteous* often refers to the innocent victims who suffer at the hands of those who do evil.

35.1–28 A prayer for God's help by a person persecuted and falsely accused. The psalm is primarily a series of petitions against the persecutors and tormentors. **35.1–8** Petitions to God to fight against and undo the power of those who pursue the psalmist. **35.3b** The persecuted one seeks an oracle of salvation, a divine word giving assurance of God's presence and help. See note on 22.21b. **35.5** *Chaff.* See 1.4. *Angel of the LORD.* See note on 34.7. **35.7–8** See note on 9.15.

And let the net that they hid
ensnare them;
let them fall in it—to their
ruin.

9 Then my soul shall rejoice in the
LORD,
exulting in his deliverance.
10 All my bones shall say,
"O LORD, who is like you?
You deliver the weak
from those too strong for them,
the weak and needy from those
who despoil them."

11 Malicious witnesses rise up;
they ask me about things I do
not know.
12 They repay me evil for good;
my soul is forlorn.
13 But as for me, when they were
sick,
I wore sackcloth;
I afflicted myself with fasting.
I prayed with head bowed[i] on
my bosom,
14 as though I grieved for a friend
or a brother;
I went about as one who laments
for a mother,
bowed down and in mourning.

15 But at my stumbling they
gathered in glee,
they gathered together
against me;
ruffians whom I did not know
tore at me without ceasing;
16 they impiously mocked more and
more,[j]
gnashing at me with their teeth.

17 How long, O LORD, will you
look on?
Rescue me from their ravages,
my life from the lions!

18 Then I will thank you in the
great congregation;
in the mighty throng I will
praise you.

19 Do not let my treacherous
enemies rejoice over me,
or those who hate me without
cause wink the eye.
20 For they do not speak peace,
but they conceive deceitful
words
against those who are quiet in
the land.
21 They open wide their mouths
against me;
they say, "Aha, Aha,
our eyes have seen it."

22 You have seen, O LORD; do not
be silent!
O Lord, do not be far
from me!
23 Wake up! Bestir yourself for my
defense,
for my cause, my God and my
Lord!
24 Vindicate me, O LORD, my God,
according to your
righteousness,
and do not let them rejoice
over me.
25 Do not let them say to
themselves,
"Aha, we have our heart's
desire."
Do not let them say, "We have
swallowed you[k] up."

26 Let all those who rejoice at my
calamity
be put to shame and confusion;

i Or *My prayer turned back* *j* Cn Compare Gk: Heb *like the profanest of mockers of a cake*
k Heb *him*

35.9–10 The afflicted one vows to praise the Lord when delivered. **35.11–16** The lament of the psalmist over the persecutions rendered by others. A comparison is drawn between the support of the afflicted one for others in their sickness and their glee over the distress of the psalmist. **35.15** In light of v. 13a, the *stumbling* may be an illness, but the primary focus of the prayer is against the tormenting activity of others. **35.17–18** The praying one complains to God (v. 17) and vows to give thanks to God when deliverance comes (v. 18). **35.17** *How long?* See note on 6.3. *Lions.* See note on 7.2. **35.19–25** Petitions lifted up once again asking for God's defense against the machinations and torments of the wicked who delight in the undoing of the psalmist. **35.26–27** A call for the downfall or shame of those who rejoice in the misfortune of the psalmist and for the joy and praise to God of those who support the psalmist in

let those who exalt themselves
against me
be clothed with shame and
dishonor.

27 Let those who desire my
vindication
shout for joy and be glad,
and say evermore,
"Great is the LORD,
who delights in the welfare of
his servant."
28 Then my tongue shall tell of your
righteousness
and of your praise all day long.

Psalm 36

Human Wickedness and Divine Goodness

To the leader. Of David, the servant
of the LORD.

1 Transgression speaks to the
wicked
deep in their hearts;
there is no fear of God
before their eyes.
2 For they flatter themselves in
their own eyes
that their iniquity cannot be
found out and hated.
3 The words of their mouths are
mischief and deceit;
they have ceased to act wisely
and do good.
4 They plot mischief while on their
beds;
they are set on a way that is
not good;
they do not reject evil.
5 Your steadfast love, O LORD,
extends to the heavens,
your faithfulness to the clouds.
6 Your righteousness is like the
mighty mountains,
your judgments are like the
great deep;
you save humans and animals
alike, O LORD.

7 How precious is your steadfast
love, O God!
All people may take refuge in
the shadow of your wings.
8 They feast on the abundance of
your house,
and you give them drink from
the river of your delights.
9 For with you is the fountain of
life;
in your light we see light.

10 O continue your steadfast love to
those who know you,
and your salvation to the
upright of heart!
11 Do not let the foot of the
arrogant tread on me,
or the hand of the wicked drive
me away.
12 There the evildoers lie prostrate;
they are thrust down, unable
to rise.

Psalm 37

Exhortation to Patience and Trust

Of David.

1 Do not fret because of the
wicked;

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trouble. **35.28** The afflicted psalmist vows to praise God for the righteousness that supports the weak and undoes the wicked.

36.1–12 An individual's prayer for help that is highly reflective in the manner of the wisdom traditions, especially vv. 1–4. *To the leader.* See note on 4.1–8. *Servant of the LORD.* See 78.70; 89.3. **36.1–4** A reflection on the character and attitude of the wicked that here serves as a generalized lament in anticipation of the prayer for help against the wicked in v. 11. **36.1** *Fear of God.* See note on 34.7. **36.4** *They plot mischief while on their beds.* Cf. Mic 2.1. **36.5–9** The psalmist now praises God as an act of trust, describing the character of God and the protecting and life-giving care of God. **36.7** *Shadow of your wings.* See notes on 91.1; 91.4. **36.10–12** The attributes of God extolled in the preceding verses, *steadfast love* (vv. 5, 7) and *salvation* (v. 6), here become the grounds for the psalmist's prayer for help in the face of the threats of the wicked described in vv. 1–4.

37.1–40 An instructional psalm in which an older, more experienced person (v. 25) instructs others, particularly about the Lord's protection of the righteous and the inevitable judgment that comes upon the wicked. The psalm is an exhortation to trust in the Lord, who will vindicate the righteous, and not to be disturbed by the wicked, who will soon pass away. This is an acrostic psalm

do not be envious of
wrongdoers,
2 for they will soon fade like the
grass,
and wither like the green herb.

3 Trust in the LORD, and do good;
so you will live in the land, and
enjoy security.
4 Take delight in the LORD,
and he will give you the desires
of your heart.

5 Commit your way to the LORD;
trust in him, and he will act.
6 He will make your vindication
shine like the light,
and the justice of your cause
like the noonday.

7 Be still before the LORD, and wait
patiently for him;
do not fret over those who
prosper in their way,
over those who carry out evil
devices.

8 Refrain from anger, and forsake
wrath.
Do not fret—it leads only to
evil.
9 For the wicked shall be cut off,
but those who wait for the
LORD shall inherit the land.

10 Yet a little while, and the wicked
will be no more;
though you look diligently for
their place, they will not
be there.
11 But the meek shall inherit the
land,
and delight themselves in
abundant prosperity.

12 The wicked plot against the
righteous,
and gnash their teeth at them;
13 but the LORD laughs at the
wicked,
for he sees that their day is
coming.

14 The wicked draw the sword and
bend their bows
to bring down the poor and
needy,
to kill those who walk
uprightly;
15 their sword shall enter their own
heart,
and their bows shall be broken.

16 Better is a little that the righteous
person has
than the abundance of many
wicked.
17 For the arms of the wicked shall
be broken,
but the LORD upholds the
righteous.

18 The LORD knows the days of the
blameless,
and their heritage will abide
forever;
19 they are not put to shame in evil
times,
in the days of famine they have
abundance.

20 But the wicked perish,
and the enemies of the LORD
are like the glory of the
pastures;
they vanish—like smoke they
vanish away.

21 The wicked borrow, and do not
pay back,
but the righteous are generous
and keep giving;
22 for those blessed by the LORD
shall inherit the land,
but those cursed by him shall
be cut off.

23 Our steps[l] are made firm by the
LORD,

l Heb *A man's steps*

(see note on 9.1–10.18). **37.1** *Do not fret* is repeated several times (vv. 7–8), suggesting the psalm is addressed to someone who may have come under some persecution or thinks that God's rule is not effective (cf. Prov 24.19–20). **37.9** *Inherit the land*, i.e., enjoy the rich blessings provided in the land God has given the people (cf. vv. 3, 11, 22, 29, 34). **37.13** *The LORD laughs.* Cf. 2.4; 59.8. **37.14–15** The language is a metaphorical way of saying that the violent

when he delights in our[m] way:
24 though we stumble,[n] we[o] shall
not fall headlong,
for the LORD holds us[p] by the
hand.

25 I have been young, and now
am old,
yet I have not seen the
righteous forsaken
or their children begging
bread.
26 They are ever giving liberally and
lending,
and their children become a
blessing.

27 Depart from evil, and do good;
so you shall abide forever.
28 For the LORD loves justice;
he will not forsake his faithful
ones.

The righteous shall be kept safe
forever,
but the children of the wicked
shall be cut off.
29 The righteous shall inherit the
land,
and live in it forever.

30 The mouths of the righteous
utter wisdom,
and their tongues speak justice.
31 The law of their God is in their
hearts;
their steps do not slip.

32 The wicked watch for the
righteous,
and seek to kill them.
33 The LORD will not abandon them
to their power,
or let them be condemned
when they are brought to
trial.

34 Wait for the LORD, and keep to
his way,
and he will exalt you to inherit
the land;
you will look on the destruction
of the wicked.

35 I have seen the wicked
oppressing,
and towering like a cedar of
Lebanon.[q]
36 Again I[r] passed by, and they
were no more;
though I sought them, they
could not be found.

37 Mark the blameless, and behold
the upright,
for there is posterity for the
peaceable.
38 But transgressors shall be
altogether destroyed;
the posterity of the wicked shall
be cut off.

39 The salvation of the righteous is
from the LORD;
he is their refuge in the time of
trouble.
40 The LORD helps them and
rescues them;
he rescues them from the
wicked, and saves them,
because they take refuge
in him.

Psalm 38

A Penitent Sufferer's Plea for Healing

A Psalm of David, for the memorial offering.

1 O LORD, do not rebuke me in
your anger,
or discipline me in your wrath.
2 For your arrows have sunk
into me,
and your hand has come down
on me.

m Heb *his* *n* Heb *he stumbles* *o* Heb *he*
p Heb *him* *q* Gk: Meaning of Heb uncertain
r Gk Syr Jerome: Heb *he*

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acts of wicked persons shall be their undoing. **37.22** See Deut 28. **37.25** The instruction given is gained from long experience. It is not meant to be absolute, but the psalmist's presentation of the way things are is borne out in life over the long haul. **37.35** *Cedar of Lebanon.* See note on 92.12. **38.1–22** A prayer for help by one who feels God's judgment for sin. One of the penitential psalms (see note on 6.1–10). While the language of sickness may be metaphorical, it is likely that the trouble in this psalm is real sickness and the taunts and rejection of others that sickness brings on. **38.1** The plea of the psalmist that God take away the effects of God's anger. **38.2–10** A de-

3 There is no soundness in my flesh
because of your indignation;
there is no health in my bones
because of my sin.
4 For my iniquities have gone over my head;
they weigh like a burden too heavy for me.

5 My wounds grow foul and fester
because of my foolishness;
6 I am utterly bowed down and prostrate;
all day long I go around mourning.
7 For my loins are filled with burning,
and there is no soundness in my flesh.
8 I am utterly spent and crushed;
I groan because of the tumult of my heart.

9 O Lord, all my longing is known to you;
my sighing is not hidden from you.
10 My heart throbs, my strength fails me;
as for the light of my eyes—it also has gone from me.
11 My friends and companions stand aloof from my affliction,
and my neighbors stand far off.

12 Those who seek my life lay their snares;
those who seek to hurt me speak of ruin,
and meditate treachery all day long.

13 But I am like the deaf, I do not hear;
like the mute, who cannot speak.
14 Truly, I am like one who does not hear,
and in whose mouth is no retort.

15 But it is for you, O LORD, that I wait;
it is you, O Lord my God, who will answer.
16 For I pray, "Only do not let them rejoice over me,
those who boast against me when my foot slips."

17 For I am ready to fall,
and my pain is ever with me.
18 I confess my iniquity;
I am sorry for my sin.
19 Those who are my foes without cause[s] are mighty,
and many are those who hate me wrongfully.
20 Those who render me evil for good
are my adversaries because I follow after good.

21 Do not forsake me, O LORD;
O my God, do not be far from me;
22 make haste to help me,
O Lord, my salvation.

Psalm 39

Prayer for Wisdom and Forgiveness

To the leader: to Jeduthun. A Psalm of David.

1 I said, "I will guard my ways
that I may not sin with my tongue;
I will keep a muzzle on my mouth
as long as the wicked are in my presence."
2 I was silent and still;
I held my peace to no avail;
my distress grew worse,

s Q Ms: MT *my living foes*

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scription of the psalmist's sickness. **38.10** *Light of my eyes,* either actual sight or one's power of life. **38.11–20** The reaction of others to the illness of the one praying. The psalmist is alienated from other human beings in various ways. **38.21–22** A final cry to God for help.

39.1–13 A prayer for help by an individual who complains to God against the divine chastisement (v. 10) and seeks release. *To the leader.* See note on 4.1–8. *To Jeduthun.* See note on 77.1–20. **39.1–3** The psalmist has held back from complaining about the distress in hopes that silence would be rewarded, but that has not happened. So now the complaint to God comes

3 my heart became hot
within me.
While I mused, the fire burned;
then I spoke with my tongue:

4 "LORD, let me know my end,
and what is the measure of my days;
let me know how fleeting my life is.
5 You have made my days a few handbreadths,
and my lifetime is as nothing in your sight.
Surely everyone stands as a mere breath. *Selah*
6 Surely everyone goes about like a shadow.
Surely for nothing they are in turmoil;
they heap up, and do not know who will gather.

7 "And now, O Lord, what do I wait for?
My hope is in you.
8 Deliver me from all my transgressions.
Do not make me the scorn of the fool.
9 I am silent; I do not open my mouth,
for it is you who have done it.
10 Remove your stroke from me;
I am worn down by the blows[t] of your hand.

11 "You chastise mortals in punishment for sin,
consuming like a moth what is dear to them;
surely everyone is a mere breath. *Selah*

12 "Hear my prayer, O LORD,
and give ear to my cry;
do not hold your peace at my tears.
For I am your passing guest,
an alien, like all my forebears.
13 Turn your gaze away from me,
that I may smile again,
before I depart and am no more."

Psalm 40

Thanksgiving for Deliverance and Prayer for Help

To the leader. Of David. A Psalm.

1 I waited patiently for the LORD;
he inclined to me and heard my cry.
2 He drew me up from the desolate pit,[u]
out of the miry bog,
and set my feet upon a rock,
making my steps secure.
3 He put a new song in my mouth,
a song of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear,
and put their trust in the LORD.

4 Happy are those who make the LORD their trust,
who do not turn to the proud,
to those who go astray after false gods.
5 You have multiplied, O LORD my God,
your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us;
none can compare with you.
Were I to proclaim and tell of them,
they would be more than can be counted.

6 Sacrifice and offering you do not desire,

t Heb *hostility* *u* Cn: Heb *pit of tumult*

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forth. **39.4–6** A strong sense of the transiency of human existence arises out of the distress. Cf. 90.9–12; 103.15–16; Isa 40.6–8. **39.5** *Selah.* See note on 3.2. **39.7–13** The petitions of the psalmist punctuated by reiterated complaint. The sense of the transiency of human life persists (vv. 11c, 12b). **39.13** *Turn your gaze away from me,* i.e., "spare me further punishment."

40.1–17 A song of thanksgiving by an individual leads into and is the ground for a prayer for help (cf. Ps 27). *To the leader.* See note on 4.1–8. **40.1–10** A song of thanksgiving by one who trusted in the Lord and was delivered. **40.1–3a** Report of how the Lord helped. **40.2** *Pit.* See note on 16.10. **40.3b–4** The deliverance of the psalmist is a lesson in trust. *Happy.* See note on 1.1. **40.5** The recounting of God's marvelous deeds is a part of the act of thanksgiving. **40.6–8** Instead of a sacrifice, the act of thanksgiving is accompanied by a commitment

but you have given me an
open ear.[v]
Burnt offering and sin offering
you have not required.
7 Then I said, "Here I am;
in the scroll of the book it is
written of me.[w]
8 I delight to do your will,
O my God;
your law is within my heart."

9 I have told the glad news of
deliverance
in the great congregation;
see, I have not restrained my lips,
as you know, O LORD.
10 I have not hidden your saving
help within my heart,
I have spoken of your
faithfulness and your
salvation;
I have not concealed your
steadfast love and your
faithfulness
from the great congregation.

11 Do not, O LORD, withhold
your mercy from me;
let your steadfast love and your
faithfulness
keep me safe forever.
12 For evils have encompassed me
without number;
my iniquities have overtaken me,
until I cannot see;
they are more than the hairs of
my head,
and my heart fails me.

13 Be pleased, O LORD, to
deliver me;
O LORD, make haste to
help me.

14 Let all those be put to shame and
confusion
who seek to snatch away my
life;
let those be turned back and
brought to dishonor
who desire my hurt.
15 Let those be appalled because of
their shame
who say to me, "Aha, Aha!"

16 But may all who seek you
rejoice and be glad in you;
may those who love your
salvation
say continually, "Great is the
LORD!"
17 As for me, I am poor and needy,
but the Lord takes thought
for me.
You are my help and my
deliverer;
do not delay, O my God.

Psalm 41

Assurance of God's Help and a Plea for Healing

To the leader. A Psalm of David.

1 Happy are those who consider
the poor;[x]
the LORD delivers them in the
day of trouble.
2 The LORD protects them and
keeps them alive;
they are called happy in the
land.
You do not give them up to the
will of their enemies.

v Heb *ears you have dug for me* w Meaning of Heb uncertain x Or *weak*

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to do God's will. Quoted in Heb 10.5–7. **40.7** *Scroll of the book* is interpreted variously. If the song is by a king, this could refer to the "law of the king" in Deut 17.14–20. More likely, it is the heavenly record of human deeds of good or ill, though some have assumed it referred to the written record of this song of thanksgiving, offered in place of a sacrifice. **40.8** *Your law is within my heart.* See Jer 31.33. **40.9–10** The one who has been delivered has borne witness to God's love and faithfulness before the community (cf. 22.22–23). **40.11–17** A cry to God for help in a new situation of distress and trouble. Vv. 13–17 are the same as Ps 70. **40.16–17** The prayer concludes with the psalmist's expression of trust and anticipated praise and joy when God's help comes (cf. 35.27).

41.1–13 An individual prayer for help and deliverance from sickness is now set before the congregation as instruction about God's care of the weak and the sick. *To the leader.* See note on 4.1–8. **41.1–3** A didactic introduction expressing the certainty of the Lord's healing of the sick. It is the ground of confidence on which the prayer that follows was uttered and the conclusion reached by the psalmist in light of the answered prayer. **41.1** *Happy.* See note on 1.1.

3 The LORD sustains them on their sickbed;
in their illness you heal all their infirmities.[y]

4 As for me, I said, "O LORD, be gracious to me;
heal me, for I have sinned against you."
5 My enemies wonder in malice when I will die, and my name perish.
6 And when they come to see me, they utter empty words,
while their hearts gather mischief;
when they go out, they tell it abroad.
7 All who hate me whisper together about me;
they imagine the worst for me.

8 They think that a deadly thing has fastened on me,
that I will not rise again from where I lie.
9 Even my bosom friend in whom I trusted,
who ate of my bread, has lifted the heel against me.
10 But you, O LORD, be gracious to me,
and raise me up, that I may repay them.

11 By this I know that you are pleased with me;
because my enemy has not triumphed over me.
12 But you have upheld me because of my integrity,
and set me in your presence forever.

13 Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,
from everlasting to everlasting.
Amen and Amen.

BOOK II

(Psalms 42–72)

Psalm 42

Longing for God's Help in Distress

To the leader. A Maskil of the Korahites.

1 As a deer longs for flowing streams,
so my soul longs for you, O God.
2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When shall I come and behold the face of God?
3 My tears have been my food day and night,
while people say to me continually,
"Where is your God?"

4 These things I remember, as I pour out my soul:
how I went with the throng,[z]

y Heb *you change all his bed* z Meaning of Heb uncertain

41.4–10 The prayer is reported, beginning and ending with petitions for the Lord to *be gracious* and *heal* (or *raise up*) the sick person (vv. 4, 10) and lamenting the malice of those, including friends, who may say kind words but really spread slanderous things and anticipate happily the death of the one who is sick. **41.4** *For I have sinned against you* reflects the understanding that the illness has also to do with God's judgment for sin and that God's healing involves forgiveness. **41.11–12** Having been healed, the one who was sick acknowledges God's vindication and providential care and the consequent defeat of the enemies. **41.13** A doxological conclusion to the first book of the Psalter (cf. 72.18–19; 89.52; 106.48; 146.1–6), which serves also as praise and thanksgiving for God's deliverance.

42.1–43.5 An individual prayer for help by one who is cut off from the presence of God and oppressed by enemies. The psalmist seeks both to be led again into the sanctuary and defended against those who have dealt unjustly. The absence of a superscription at the beginning of Ps 43, the repetition of the refrain in 42.5, 11; 43.5, the repetition of 42.9b in 43.2b, and the common theme of coming to the sanctuary all suggest that the two psalms are to be read as a single psalm. *To the leader.* See note on 4.1–8. *Maskil.* See note on 32.1–11. *Korahites,* a group of temple singers (2 Chr 20.19) who may have collected and transmitted a number of psalms. **42.1–5** The terrible longing to come again into the presence of God is tempered by remembrance of previous pilgrim-

and led them in procession to
the house of God,
with glad shouts and songs of
thanksgiving,
a multitude keeping festival.
5 Why are you cast down, O my
soul,
and why are you disquieted
within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again
praise him,
my help [6]and my God.

My soul is cast down within me;
therefore I remember you
from the land of Jordan and of
Hermon,
from Mount Mizar.
7 Deep calls to deep
at the thunder of your
cataracts;
all your waves and your billows
have gone over me.
8 By day the LORD commands his
steadfast love,
and at night his song is
with me,
a prayer to the God of my
life.

9 I say to God, my rock,
"Why have you forgotten me?
Why must I walk about
mournfully
because the enemy
oppresses me?"
10 As with a deadly wound in my
body,
my adversaries taunt me,
while they say to me continually,
"Where is your God?"

11 Why are you cast down, O my
soul,
and why are you disquieted
within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again
praise him,
my help and my God.

Psalm 43

1 Vindicate me, O God, and defend
my cause
against an ungodly people;
from those who are deceitful and
unjust
deliver me!
2 For you are the God in whom I
take refuge;
why have you cast me off?
Why must I walk about
mournfully
because of the oppression of
the enemy?

3 O send out your light and your
truth;
let them lead me;
let them bring me to your holy
hill
and to your dwelling.
4 Then I will go to the altar
of God,
to God my exceeding joy;
and I will praise you with the
harp,
O God, my God.

5 Why are you cast down, O my
soul,
and why are you disquieted
within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again
praise him,
my help and my God.

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ages to the sanctuary (cf. 84.1–2). **42.3** *"Where is your God?"* See note on 79.10. **42.4** *Festival,* one of Israel's three great pilgrimage festivals (Deut 16). **42.6–11** In despair again, the psalmist once more remembers God. But that memory makes all the sharper the present experience of distress and the absence of God's presence and power. **42.6** *From the land of Jordan and of Hermon* refers to the headwaters of the Jordan and the great Mount Hermon in the north of Syro-Palestine, suggesting that the one praying may have been in that locale. *Mount Mizar* is unknown but may have been a peak in the Hermon range. **42.10** *"Where is your God?"* See note on 79.10. **43.1–5** In the final stanza, the sufferer pleads for God's powerful defense against injustice and asks with greater confidence to be led into the sanctuary to praise and give thanks to God. **43.3** *Your holy hill,* probably the temple on Zion in Jerusalem, though some have speculated that a sanctuary in the north of Palestine may have been meant.

Psalm 44

National Lament and Prayer for Help

To the leader. Of the Korahites. A Maskil.

1 We have heard with our ears,
O God,
our ancestors have told us,
what deeds you performed in
their days,
in the days of old:
2 you with your own hand drove
out the nations,
but them you planted;
you afflicted the peoples,
but them you set free;
3 for not by their own sword did
they win the land,
nor did their own arm give
them victory;
but your right hand, and
your arm,
and the light of your
countenance,
for you delighted in them.

4 You are my King and my God;
you command[a] victories for
Jacob.
5 Through you we push down our
foes;
through your name we tread
down our assailants.
6 For not in my bow do I trust,
nor can my sword save me.
7 But you have saved us from our
foes,
and have put to confusion
those who hate us.
8 In God we have boasted
continually,
and we will give thanks to your
name forever. *Selah*

9 Yet you have rejected us and
abased us,
and have not gone out with our
armies.
10 You made us turn back from
the foe,
and our enemies have gotten
spoil.
11 You have made us like sheep for
slaughter,
and have scattered us among
the nations.
12 You have sold your people for a
trifle,
demanding no high price for
them.

13 You have made us the taunt of
our neighbors,
the derision and scorn of those
around us.
14 You have made us a byword
among the nations,
a laughingstock[b] among the
peoples.
15 All day long my disgrace is
before me,
and shame has covered my face
16 at the words of the taunters and
revilers,
at the sight of the enemy and
the avenger.

17 All this has come upon us,
yet we have not forgotten you,
or been false to your covenant.
18 Our heart has not turned back,

a Gk Syr: Heb *You are my King, O God; command*
b Heb *a shaking of the head*

44.1–26 A prayer by the community for help after having been severely defeated by its enemies (cf. Pss 74; 79). *To the leader.* See note on 4.1–8. *Korahites.* See note on 42.1–43.5. *Maskil.* See note on 32.1–11. **44.1–3** Remembrance of the mighty deeds of God in the past on behalf of Israel. The later generations have been told the story of how the Lord gave the Israelites the land and victory over their enemies. **44.3** See Deut 8.17–18. **44.4–8** An acknowledgment of God's help against the nation's enemies together with thanksgiving. The first-person voice in these verses could have been a king, though any representative voice could speak these words on behalf of the community. **44.8** *Selah.* See note on 3.2. **44.9–16** But now God has abandoned the people and they have been defeated by their enemies. **44.12** *Sold your people,* i.e., made them in effect slaves to their enemies (cf. Deut 32.30; Judg 2.14; 3.8; 1 Sam 12.9). **44.13** *Taunt* (cf. v. 10). See note on 79.10. **44.14** See 79.4; 80.6; Deut 28.37. *You have made us a byword.* The disaster was so great that it has become proverbial among other peoples. **44.17–22** The people protest their innocence and complain that God has abandoned them unjustly. **44.18** *Haunt of jackals,*

nor have our steps departed
from your way,
19 yet you have broken us in the
haunt of jackals,
and covered us with deep
darkness.

20 If we had forgotten the name of
our God,
or spread out our hands to a
strange god,
21 would not God discover this?
For he knows the secrets of the
heart.
22 Because of you we are being
killed all day long,
and accounted as sheep for the
slaughter.

23 Rouse yourself! Why do you
sleep, O Lord?
Awake, do not cast us off
forever!
24 Why do you hide your face?
Why do you forget our
affliction and oppression?
25 For we sink down to the dust;
our bodies cling to the ground.
26 Rise up, come to our help.
Redeem us for the sake of your
steadfast love.

Psalm 45

Ode for a Royal Wedding

To the leader: according to Lilies. Of the Korahites. A Maskil. A love song.

1 My heart overflows with a goodly
theme;
I address my verses to the king;
my tongue is like the pen of a
ready scribe.

2 You are the most handsome
of men;
grace is poured upon your lips;
therefore God has blessed you
forever.
3 Gird your sword on your thigh,
O mighty one,
in your glory and majesty.

4 In your majesty ride on
victoriously
for the cause of truth and to
defend[c] the right;
let your right hand teach you
dread deeds.
5 Your arrows are sharp
in the heart of the king's
enemies;
the peoples fall under you.

6 Your throne, O God,[d] endures
forever and ever.
Your royal scepter is a scepter
of equity;
7 you love righteousness and hate
wickedness.
Therefore God, your God, has
anointed you
with the oil of gladness beyond
your companions;
8 your robes are all fragrant with
myrrh and aloes and
cassia.

c Cn: Heb *and the meekness of a throne of God, it*
d Or *Your throne is*

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either the desert where jackals roam or a place of devastation where jackals eat the remains of the bodies (cf. Isa 34.13; 35.7; Jer 9.11; 10.22). **44.22** It is because of the people's faithfulness to the Lord that they are being defeated, so God's honor is at stake. Quoted in Rom 8.36. **44.23–26** The prayer of the people for God to help them rather than to reject them. **44.23** *Sleep*, an image to convey God's inactivity. Cf. 78.65; 121.4. **44.24** *Hide your face*. See notes on 10.1; 27.9. **44.26** *Rise up*. See note on 12.5.

45.1–17 A royal psalm probably composed for the wedding of the king. *To the leader*. See note on 4.1–8. *According to Lilies*. Meaning uncertain, probably referring to a particular melody. *Korahites*. See note on 42.1–43.5. *Maskil*. See note on 32.1–11. **45.1** A composer or singer addresses these words to the king in praise of him. **45.2–9** Praise of the king's appearance and strength, his love of the right and hatred of wickedness. **45.6a** The meaning of this sentence is unclear. While the king is called "my son" by God (2.7), nowhere else in the OT is the king called "God" or regarded as divine. The sentence is quoted in Heb 1.8. **45.7** The more characteristic understanding of kingship in Israel (as opposed to that in 45.6a) is found here in the notion of the king as the anointed of God. **45.8** *Ivory palaces* refers to the homes of the wealthy that contained furnishings inlaid with carved ivories.

From ivory palaces stringed
instruments make you glad;
9 daughters of kings are among
your ladies of honor;
at your right hand stands the
queen in gold of Ophir.

10 Hear, O daughter, consider and
incline your ear;
forget your people and your
father's house,
11 and the king will desire your
beauty.
Since he is your lord, bow to
him;
12 the people[e] of Tyre will seek
your favor with gifts,
the richest of the people [13]with
all kinds of wealth.

The princess is decked in her
chamber with gold-woven
robes;[f]
14 in many-colored robes she is
led to the king;
behind her the virgins, her
companions, follow.
15 With joy and gladness they are
led along
as they enter the palace of the
king.

16 In the place of ancestors you,
O king,[g] shall have
sons;
you will make them princes in
all the earth.
17 I will cause your name to be
celebrated in all
generations;
therefore the peoples will
praise you forever and
ever.

Psalm 46

God's Defense of His City and People

To the leader. Of the Korahites. According to Alamoth. A Song.

1 God is our refuge and strength,
a very present[h] help in trouble.
2 Therefore we will not fear,
though the earth should
change,
though the mountains shake in
the heart of the sea;
3 though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble
with its tumult. *Selah*

4 There is a river whose streams
make glad the city of God,
the holy habitation of the
Most High.
5 God is in the midst of the city;[i]
it shall not be moved;
God will help it when the
morning dawns.
6 The nations are in an uproar, the
kingdoms totter;
he utters his voice, the earth
melts.
7 The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our
refuge.[j] *Selah*

8 Come, behold the works of the
LORD;
see what desolations he has
brought on the earth.
9 He makes wars cease to the end
of the earth;

e Heb *daughter* *f* Or *people.* [13]*All glorious is the princess within, gold embroidery is her clothing* *g* Heb lacks *O king* *h* Or *well proved* *i* Heb *of it* *j* Or *fortress*

45.9–15 The princess or queen is now addressed and praised. **45.9** *Gold of Ophir* was probably the finest gold then known, though the location of Ophir is unknown (cf. Job 28.16; Isa 13.12). **45.10–11** These verses may actually reflect aspects of the marriage ceremony or they may describe more generally the appropriate attitude of the bride in this marital relationship. **45.16–17** A final paean of blessing and praise to the king by the singer or composer.

46.1–11 A song of Zion expressing confidence in God's protecting care in the midst of whatever trouble comes. *To the leader.* See note on 4.1–8. *Korahites.* See note on 42.1–43.5. *Alamoth,* probably a musical notation of uncertain meaning. **46.1–3** God as secure protection in the midst of cosmic and natural tumult. **46.3** *Selah.* See note on 3.2. **46.4–7** God's secure protection of the holy city in the face of historical tumult. **46.4** *River,* probably a mythological image for the source of blessing. *City of God* would have been Jerusalem when the psalm was composed (cf. 48.1, 8; 87.3). **46.7** A refrain (see v. 11) echoing the opening verse and identifying the theme of the psalm. **46.8–11** The Lord's destruction of

he breaks the bow, and shatters
the spear;
he burns the shields with fire.
10 "Be still, and know that I
am God!
I am exalted among the
nations,
I am exalted in the earth."
11 The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our
refuge.[k] *Selah*

Psalm 47

God's Rule over the Nations

To the leader. Of the Korahites. A Psalm.

1 Clap your hands, all you peoples;
shout to God with loud songs
of joy.
2 For the LORD, the Most High, is
awesome,
a great king over all the earth.
3 He subdued peoples under us,
and nations under our feet.
4 He chose our heritage for us,
the pride of Jacob whom he
loves. *Selah*

5 God has gone up with a shout,
the LORD with the sound of a
trumpet.
6 Sing praises to God, sing praises;
sing praises to our King, sing
praises.
7 For God is the king of all the
earth;
sing praises with a psalm.[l]

8 God is king over the nations;
God sits on his holy throne.
9 The princes of the peoples gather
as the people of the God of
Abraham.
For the shields of the earth
belong to God;
he is highly exalted.

Psalm 48

The Glory and Strength of Zion

A Song. A Psalm of the Korahites.

1 Great is the LORD and greatly to
be praised
in the city of our God.
His holy mountain, 2 beautiful in
elevation,
is the joy of all the earth,
Mount Zion, in the far north,
the city of the great King.
3 Within its citadels God
has shown himself a sure
defense.

4 Then the kings assembled,
they came on together.
5 As soon as they saw it, they were
astounded;
they were in panic, they took to
flight;
6 trembling took hold of them
there,
pains as of a woman in labor,
7 as when an east wind shatters
the ships of Tarshish.

k Or *fortress* *l* Heb *Maskil*

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the implements of war. **46.10** These words may have been like an oracle of salvation giving divine assurance of help against enemies.

47.1–9 A hymn of praise celebrating God's rule over the nations and belonging to a group of psalms called "enthronement psalms." See note on 93.1–5. *To the leader.* See note on 4.1–8. *Korahites.* See note on 42.1–43.5. **47.1–4** Call to the people of the earth to acclaim the Lord of Israel, who is king over all. **47.3–4** These verses may refer to the conquest of peoples when God gave the land (*heritage*) to Israel. *Selah.* See note on 3.2. **47.5** The announcement that God has gone up in victory to the sanctuary. The procession of the ark of the covenant, God's invisible throne, is probably in view. **47.6–9** A reiterated call to the peoples to praise the Lord of Israel, who is king over all. **47.8** *God is king.* See note on 93.1–2.

48.1–14 A song of Zion in praise of the Lord, whose protecting presence is found in the temple in Jerusalem. *Korahites.* See note on 42.1–43.5. **48.1–3** Extolling the glory of Zion as the habitation of Israel's God. **48.2** *The far north,* probably a reference to Mount Zaphon (Hebrew, "north"), a divine dwelling place in Canaanite mythology; Jerusalem is here identified with it. **48.4–8** Encountering Zion as described in the preceding verses, the kings of the earth were frightened and fled. Because God has established it, the city is invincible. **48.7** The meaning is debated, but *Tarshish* may refer to the Phoenician colony of Tartessus in Spain (1 Kings 10.22).

8 As we have heard, so have we
seen
in the city of the LORD of hosts,
in the city of our God,
which God establishes forever.
Selah

9 We ponder your steadfast love,
O God,
in the midst of your temple.
10 Your name, O God, like your
praise,
reaches to the ends of the
earth.
Your right hand is filled with
victory.
11 Let Mount Zion be glad,
let the towns[m] of Judah rejoice
because of your judgments.

12 Walk about Zion, go all around it,
count its towers,
13 consider well its ramparts;
go through its citadels,
that you may tell the next
generation
14 that this is God,
our God forever and ever.
He will be our guide forever.

Psalm 49

The Folly of Trust in Riches

To the leader. Of the Korahites. A Psalm.

1 Hear this, all you peoples;
give ear, all inhabitants of the
world,
2 both low and high,
rich and poor together.
3 My mouth shall speak wisdom;
the meditation of my heart
shall be understanding.
4 I will incline my ear to a proverb;
I will solve my riddle to the
music of the harp.

5 Why should I fear in times of
trouble,
when the iniquity of my
persecutors surrounds me,
6 those who trust in their wealth
and boast of the abundance of
their riches?
7 Truly, no ransom avails for one's
life,[n]
there is no price one can give
to God for it.
8 For the ransom of life is costly,
and can never suffice,
9 that one should live on forever
and never see the grave.[o]

10 When we look at the wise,
they die;
fool and dolt perish together
and leave their wealth to
others.
11 Their graves[p] are their homes
forever,
their dwelling places to all
generations,
though they named lands
their own.
12 Mortals cannot abide in their
pomp;

m Heb *daughters* *n* Another reading is *no one can ransom a brother* *o* Heb *the pit* *p* Gk Syr Compare Tg: Heb *their inward* (thought)

48.8–11 The congregation responds in praise of God and calls Zion and all its surroundings to the praise of the God, who rules and protects them. **48.8** *City of our God.* See 46.4; 87.3; Rev 3.12; 21.2, 10. *Selah.* See note on 3.2. **48.12–14** A representative figure instructs the community for solemn procession around Zion to see its greatness as a pointer to the God who dwells there and guides the people through all generations.

49.1–20 A psalm of instruction about life and death and the fact that wealth cannot save one from death or be carried beyond the grave. Lying behind this instruction is the experience of an individual who has been persecuted (v. 5) and expresses confidence in God's deliverance (v. 15). *To the leader.* See note on 4.1–8. *Korahites.* See note on 42.1–43.5. **49.1–4** A didactic introduction by the psalmist, who here functions as a teacher of wisdom. Cf. 78.1–2; Deut 32.1–2. **49.4** *Proverb, riddle,* in Hebrew the same terms as in 78.2, the former probably referring to a piece of instruction, the latter to a perplexing problem. **49.5–12** Instruction about not fearing the wealthy and their power, for rich and poor alike suffer the same fate in the end. **49.5–6** The personal concern toward which the instruction is directed is indicated here in a rhetorical question. **49.7–11** The assurance is given that wealth is to no final avail. **49.8** A parenthetic verse that interrupts the direct connection between vv. 7 and 9. **49.12** A refrain (cf. v. 20), in typical fashion stating the point of the instruction

they are like the animals that
perish.

13 Such is the fate of the foolhardy,
the end of those[q] who are
pleased with their lot. *Selah*
14 Like sheep they are appointed for
Sheol;
Death shall be their shepherd;
straight to the grave they
descend,[r]
and their form shall waste
away;
Sheol shall be their home.[s]
15 But God will ransom my soul
from the power of Sheol,
for he will receive me. *Selah*

16 Do not be afraid when some
become rich,
when the wealth of their houses
increases.
17 For when they die they will carry
nothing away;
their wealth will not go down
after them.
18 Though in their lifetime they
count themselves happy
—for you are praised when you
do well for yourself—
19 they[t] will go to the company of
their ancestors,
who will never again see the
light.
20 Mortals cannot abide in their
pomp;
they are like the animals that
perish.

Psalm 50

The Acceptable Sacrifice

A Psalm of Asaph.

1 The mighty one, God the LORD,
speaks and summons the earth
from the rising of the sun to its
setting.
2 Out of Zion, the perfection of
beauty,
God shines forth.

3 Our God comes and does not
keep silence,
before him is a devouring fire,
and a mighty tempest all
around him.
4 He calls to the heavens above
and to the earth, that he may
judge his people:
5 "Gather to me my faithful ones,
who made a covenant with me
by sacrifice!"
6 The heavens declare his
righteousness,
for God himself is judge. *Selah*

7 "Hear, O my people, and I will
speak,
O Israel, I will testify
against you.
I am God, your God.
8 Not for your sacrifices do I
rebuke you;

q Tg: Heb *after them* *r* Cn: Heb *the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning* *s* Meaning of Heb uncertain *t* Cn: Heb *you*

(e.g., 46.7, 11). **49.13–20** The destiny of the psalmist, who trusts in God, is contrasted with the *fate of the foolhardy* (v. 13) and the *rich* (v. 16). **49.13** *Selah*. See note on 3.2. **49.14** The text of this verse is very uncertain. **49.15** The assurance of the psalmist over against the fear of persecutors (v. 5) and in the knowledge that no one can ransom one's life (v. 7). It is debated as to whether the psalmist envisions a life with God beyond the grave. On *receive*, see Gen 5.24; 2 Kings 2.3, 5. **49.16–20** The instruction and its assurance are reiterated: one need not fear the rich, who lose everything in death.

50.1–23 A liturgy with priestly or prophetic admonishment of the people, probably to be sung at a festival of covenant renewal (cf. Pss 81; 95 for similar language and character). *Asaph*, one of David's chief musicians (1 Chr 6.39; 15.17; 16.5–7). The designation may refer to a psalm composed or handed down by Asaph or the guild of singers associated with him or under his leadership, as in the case of the Korahites (e.g., Ps 42). **50.1–6** The coming of God for judgment and the summons of the congregation of the faithful. **50.2** *Shines forth*. See note on 80.1. Cf. 18.8; Hab 3.3–5. **50.4** *The heavens above and . . . the earth* are probably called as witnesses to the covenant. See Deut 31.28; 32.1; Isa 1.2. **50.5** This verse suggests a covenant renewal occasion. **50.6** *Selah*. See note on 3.2. **50.7–15** God's rebuke of the people for misunderstanding the meaning of sacrifice. Its purpose is not to sustain or strengthen the deity, who does not need food, but to represent and manifest thanksgiving to

your burnt offerings are
continually before me.
9 I will not accept a bull from your
house,
or goats from your folds.
10 For every wild animal of the
forest is mine,
the cattle on a thousand hills.
11 I know all the birds of the air,[u]
and all that moves in the field
is mine.

12 "If I were hungry, I would not
tell you,
for the world and all that is in
it is mine.
13 Do I eat the flesh of bulls,
or drink the blood of goats?
14 Offer to God a sacrifice of
thanksgiving,[v]
and pay your vows to the
Most High.
15 Call on me in the day of trouble;
I will deliver you, and you shall
glorify me."

16 But to the wicked God says:
"What right have you to recite
my statutes,
or take my covenant on your
lips?
17 For you hate discipline,
and you cast my words
behind you.
18 You make friends with a thief
when you see one,
and you keep company with
adulterers.

19 "You give your mouth free rein
for evil,
and your tongue frames deceit.
20 You sit and speak against
your kin;
you slander your own mother's
child.
21 These things you have done and
I have been silent;
you thought that I was one just
like yourself.
But now I rebuke you, and lay
the charge before you.

22 "Mark this, then, you who
forget God,
or I will tear you apart, and
there will be no one to
deliver.
23 Those who bring thanksgiving as
their sacrifice honor me;
to those who go the right way[w]
I will show the salvation
of God."

Psalm 51

Prayer for Cleansing and Pardon

To the leader. A Psalm of David, when the prophet Nathan came to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

1 Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast
love;
according to your abundant
mercy
blot out my transgressions.
2 Wash me thoroughly from my
iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.

3 For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.
4 Against you, you alone, have I
sinned,

u Gk Syr Tg: Heb *mountains*
v Or *make thanksgiving your sacrifice to God*
w Heb *who set a way*

God for divine help. **50.16–21** God's rebuke of the wicked for their violation of the covenant laws, the Ten Commandments and other laws. Stealing (v. 18a), adultery (v. 18b), and false witness (vv. 19–20) are specifically in view. **50.22–23** God utters a final warning about disobedience (v. 22) and promise to those who bring thanksgiving as sacrifice (v. 23), reflecting the two primary concerns of the divine judgment in this psalm.

51.1–19 A prayer for God's help by an individual who is deeply aware of sin and guilt and needs God's forgiveness. One of the penitential psalms (see note on 6.1–10). *To the leader.* See note on 4.1–8. *A Psalm of David when the prophet Nathan came to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba* is a secondary association of the psalm with that event (2 Sam 12.1–15). Cf. v. 4a; 2 Sam 12.13. **51.1–2** A plea for mercy and God's cleansing of the guilt of the petitioner. **51.3–6** Confession of sin and acknowledgment of guilt. **51.4** The conviction of the sin against God does not mean that there is no sin against the neighbor involved, as the similar statement in 2 Sam 12.13 indicates.

and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you are justified in your sentence
and blameless when you pass judgment.
5 Indeed, I was born guilty,
a sinner when my mother conceived me.

6 You desire truth in the inward being;[x]
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.
7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
8 Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.
9 Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right[y] spirit within me.
11 Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your holy spirit from me.
12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing[z] spirit.

13 Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will return to you.
14 Deliver me from bloodshed, O God,
O God of my salvation,
and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.

15 O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare your praise.
16 For you have no delight in sacrifice;
if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased.
17 The sacrifice acceptable to God[a] is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

18 Do good to Zion in your good pleasure;
rebuild the walls of Jerusalem,
19 then you will delight in right sacrifices,
in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings;
then bulls will be offered on your altar.

Psalm 52

Judgment on the Deceitful

To the leader. A Maskil of David, when Doeg the Edomite came to Saul and said to him, "David has come to the house of Ahimelech."

1 Why do you boast, O mighty one,
of mischief done against the godly?[b]

x Meaning of Heb uncertain y Or *steadfast*
z Or *generous* a Or *My sacrifice, O God,*
b Cn Compare Syr: Heb *the kindness of God*

51.5 An expression of the depth of the sense of sin, not a statement about original sin. **51.7–12** Prayer for forgiveness and restoration. **51.7** *Purge me with hyssop* probably refers to a cleansing ceremony using the hyssop bush (cf. Lev 14.2–9, 48–53; Num 19.6, 18). The petition here may have a metaphorical sense. **51.8** *The bones that you have crushed* may refer to actual sickness or be metaphorical for any situation of distress. **51.11** *Your holy spirit*, i.e., God's sustaining, powerful presence. **51.13–15** A vow to instruct and to praise. **51.13** *Your ways* can refer both to the divine commandments and to God's merciful and forgiving way of dealing with sinners. **51.14** *Bloodshed* is an enigmatic term that may mean the death that should come either from the illness, if such is to be assumed, or from the guilt acknowledged in the psalm. **51.16–17** A recognition of the need for penitence as the necessary offering to God by the sinner. Cf. 50.7–15, 23. **51.18–19** Probably a later addition relating the prayer to the needs of the larger community and placing sacrifice in the context of proper worship in the temple and a proper spirit. **51.19** *Right sacrifices* can mean those done according to the appropriate prescriptions of the law or those offered with the right attitude and in the right relationship to God.

52.1–9 An announcement of judgment against one of the wicked and a song of thanksgiv-

All day long [2]you are plotting
destruction.
Your tongue is like a sharp razor,
you worker of treachery.
3 You love evil more than good,
and lying more than speaking
the truth. *Selah*
4 You love all words that devour,
O deceitful tongue.

5 But God will break you down
forever;
he will snatch and tear you
from your tent;
he will uproot you from the
land of the living. *Selah*
6 The righteous will see, and fear,
and will laugh at the evildoer,[c]
saying,
7 "See the one who would not take
refuge in God,
but trusted in abundant riches,
and sought refuge in wealth!"[d]

8 But I am like a green olive tree
in the house of God.
I trust in the steadfast love
of God
forever and ever.
9 I will thank you forever,
because of what you have done.
In the presence of the faithful
I will proclaim[e] your name, for
it is good.

Psalm 53

Denunciation of Godlessness

To the leader: according to Mahalath.
A Maskil of David.

1 Fools say in their hearts, "There
is no God."
They are corrupt, they commit
abominable acts;
there is no one who does
good.

2 God looks down from heaven on
humankind
to see if there are any who are
wise,
who seek after God.

3 They have all fallen away, they
are all alike perverse;
there is no one who does
good,
no, not one.

4 Have they no knowledge, those
evildoers,
who eat up my people as they
eat bread,
and do not call upon God?

5 There they shall be in great
terror,
in terror such as has not
been.
For God will scatter the bones of
the ungodly;[f]
they will be put to shame,[g] for
God has rejected them.

6 O that deliverance for Israel
would come from Zion!
When God restores the
fortunes of his people,
Jacob will rejoice; Israel will be
glad.

c Heb *him* d Syr Tg: Heb *in his destruction* e Cn: Heb *wait for* f Cn Compare Gk Syr: Heb *him who encamps against you* g Gk: Heb *you have put (them) to shame*

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ing. *To the leader.* See note on 4.1–8. *Maskil.* See note on 32.1–11. The occasion alluded to in the superscription (cf. 1 Sam 21.1–8; 22.6–19) fits only very loosely with the details of the psalm. **52.1–4** The accusation against the wicked one. For a similar use of questions as an indictment, see 50.16; Isa 22.15–19. The accusation is of scheming to do in members of the community (*the godly*), who are probably among the poor and less powerful. Vv. 1b–4 suggest that lying is the principal manifestation, slander or false accusation against others, though acts of fraud and deception to secure the wealth of others may be meant. **52.1** *Mighty one,* a term of sarcasm that points to the power and wealth (v. 7) as well as the self-image of the one accused. **52.3** *Selah.* See note on 3.2. **52.5–7** An announcement of judgment against the wicked one who believes security is found in riches rather than God. **52.8–9** A song of thanksgiving by the psalmist who, in distinction from the "mighty one," trusts in God and is delivered (v. 9a).

53.1–6 With slight variations, the psalm is the same as Ps 14. See notes on that psalm. *Mahalath.*

Psalm 54

Prayer for Vindication

To the leader: with stringed instruments. A Maskil of David, when the Ziphites went and told Saul, "David is in hiding among us."

1 Save me, O God, by your name,
and vindicate me by your might.
2 Hear my prayer, O God;
give ear to the words of my mouth.

3 For the insolent have risen against me,
the ruthless seek my life;
they do not set God before them. *Selah*

4 But surely, God is my helper;
the Lord is the upholder of[h] my life.
5 He will repay my enemies for their evil.
In your faithfulness, put an end to them.

6 With a freewill offering I will sacrifice to you;
I will give thanks to your name, O LORD, for it is good.
7 For he has delivered me from every trouble,
and my eye has looked in triumph on my enemies.

Psalm 55

Complaint About a Friend's Treachery

To the leader: with stringed instruments. A Maskil of David.

1 Give ear to my prayer, O God;
do not hide yourself from my supplication.
2 Attend to me, and answer me;
I am troubled in my complaint.
I am distraught 3by the noise of the enemy,
because of the clamor of the wicked.
For they bring[i] trouble upon me,
and in anger they cherish enmity against me.

4 My heart is in anguish within me,
the terrors of death have fallen upon me.
5 Fear and trembling come upon me,
and horror overwhelms me.
6 And I say, "O that I had wings like a dove!
I would fly away and be at rest;
7 truly, I would flee far away;
I would lodge in the wilderness; *Selah*
8 I would hurry to find a shelter for myself
from the raging wind and tempest."

9 Confuse, O Lord, confound their speech;

h Gk Syr Jerome: Heb *is of those who uphold* or *is with those who uphold* *i* Cn Compare Gk: Heb *they cause to totter*

See note on 88.1–18. *Maskil.* See note on 32.1–11. **54.1–7** A prayer by an individual for help. *To the leader: with stringed instruments.* See note on 4.1–8. *Maskil.* See note on 32.1–11. The incident alluded to in the superscription is referred to in 1 Sam 23.19. **54.1–2** Pleas for God to hear and help. **54.3** Description of the distress of the one praying. See 86.14; note. *Selah.* See note on 3.2. **54.4–5** The confidence of the psalmist in God's help against persecutors. **54.6–7** A vow of thanksgiving because God has heard and responded to the prayer (cf. 6.9–10; 22.21b–22; 28.6–7; 56.12–13).

55.1–23 The prayer of an individual for God's help when betrayed by a friend. *To the leader: with stringed instruments.* See note on 4.1–8. *Maskil.* See note on 32.1–11. **55.1–2a** Plea to God to hear the prayer. *Do not hide yourself.* See notes on 10.1; 27.9. **55.2b–5** The distress of the psalmist, who is undone and terrified by the trouble inflicted by an enemy. **55.6–8** The wish to escape the trouble. **55.7** *Selah.* See note on 3.2. **55.9–11** Further description of the trouble discerned by the petitioner, but this time it is social violence and injustice in the community. For this part and the psalm as a whole, cf. Mic 7.1–8 (cf.

for I see violence and strife in
the city.
10 Day and night they go around it
on its walls,
and iniquity and trouble are
within it;
11 ruin is in its midst;
oppression and fraud
do not depart from its
marketplace.

12 It is not enemies who taunt me—
I could bear that;
it is not adversaries who deal
insolently with me—
I could hide from them.
13 But it is you, my equal,
my companion, my familiar
friend,
14 with whom I kept pleasant
company;
we walked in the house of God
with the throng.
15 Let death come upon them;
let them go down alive to
Sheol;
for evil is in their homes and in
their hearts.

16 But I call upon God,
and the LORD will save me.
17 Evening and morning and at
noon
I utter my complaint and
moan,
and he will hear my voice.
18 He will redeem me unharmed
from the battle that I wage,
for many are arrayed
against me.
19 God, who is enthroned from of
old, *Selah*
will hear, and will humble
them—
because they do not change,
and do not fear God.

20 My companion laid hands on a
friend
and violated a covenant
with me[j]
21 with speech smoother than
butter,
but with a heart set on war;
with words that were softer
than oil,
but in fact were drawn swords.

22 Cast your burden[k] on the LORD,
and he will sustain you;
he will never permit
the righteous to be moved.

23 But you, O God, will cast them
down
into the lowest pit;
the bloodthirsty and treacherous
shall not live out half their
days.
But I will trust in you.

Psalm 56

Trust in God Under Persecution

To the leader: according to The Dove on Far-off Terebinths. Of David. A Miktam, when the Philistines seized him in Gath.

1 Be gracious to me, O God, for
people trample on me;
all day long foes oppress me;
2 my enemies trample on me all
day long,
for many fight against me.
O Most High, 3 when I am afraid,

j Heb lacks *with me* *k* Or *Cast what he has given you*

Hab 1.2–4). **55.12–15** A lament over being betrayed by a friend. **55.12** *Taunt.* See notes on 79.4, 10. **55.15** A strong petition against all the persecutors tormenting the one praying and the community. *Let them go down alive to Sheol.* Cf. Num 16.33. *Sheol.* See note on 6.5. **55.16–19** Expression of confidence in God's attention to the cries and God's deliverance. **55.19** *Fear God.* See note on 34.7. **55.20–21** The psalmist returns to the complaint against the friend who has betrayed the relationship. **55.22–23** A word of encouragement that may have been addressed to the petitioner by someone else (v. 22), followed by the psalmist's own final words of trust in God (v. 23).

56.1–13 An individual's prayer for help when persecuted by enemies. *To the leader.* See note on 4.1–8. *According to The Dove on Far-off Terebinths* may be a note about the melody or tune. *Miktam.* See note on 16.1–11. *When the Philistines seized him in Gath.* See 1 Sam 21.11–15. Gath was one of the five main cities of the Philistines. **56.1–2** A plea for help and a description of the distress that is the basis for the plea. **56.3–4** Expressions of trust and confidence in God's

I put my trust in you.
4 In God, whose word I praise,
in God I trust; I am not afraid;
what can flesh do to me?

5 All day long they seek to injure my cause;
all their thoughts are against me for evil.
6 They stir up strife, they lurk,
they watch my steps.
As they hoped to have my life,
7 so repay[l] them for their crime;
in wrath cast down the peoples, O God!

8 You have kept count of my tossings;
put my tears in your bottle.
Are they not in your record?
9 Then my enemies will retreat
in the day when I call.
This I know, that[m] God is for me.
10 In God, whose word I praise,
in the LORD, whose word I praise,
11 in God I trust; I am not afraid.
What can a mere mortal do to me?

12 My vows to you I must perform, O God;
I will render thank offerings to you.
13 For you have delivered my soul from death,
and my feet from falling,
so that I may walk before God
in the light of life.

Psalm 57

Praise and Assurance Under Persecution

To the leader: Do Not Destroy. Of David. A Miktam, when he fled from Saul, in the cave.

1 Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me,
for in you my soul takes refuge;
in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge,
until the destroying storms pass by.
2 I cry to God Most High,
to God who fulfills his purpose for me.
3 He will send from heaven and save me,
he will put to shame those who trample on me. *Selah*
God will send forth his steadfast love and his faithfulness.

4 I lie down among lions
that greedily devour[n] human prey;
their teeth are spears and arrows,
their tongues sharp swords.

5 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens.
Let your glory be over all the earth.

6 They set a net for my steps;
my soul was bowed down.
They dug a pit in my path,
but they have fallen into it themselves. *Selah*
7 My heart is steadfast, O God,

l Cn: Heb *rescue* *m* Or *because* *n* Cn: Heb *are aflame for*

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help. V. 4 is a refrain repeated in vv. 10–11. **56.5–7** A description of the distress culminating in a further petition for God's help. **56.8–11** Further assertion of confidence in God. **56.8** Two images expressing that God cares by keeping track of the afflictions of the sufferer: collecting the tears and writing the afflictions in a book. *Record.* See 40.7; 69.28; 139.16. **56.12–13** A vow of thanksgiving for help received or anticipated. *Light,* a symbol for the power of life; see 13.3; 27.1; 36.9; 38.10.

57.1–11 A prayer for help by one who has been beset by other people. *To the leader.* See note on 4.1–8. *Do Not Destroy.* Meaning uncertain. *Miktam.* See note on 16.1–11. *When he fled from Saul, in the cave.* See 1 Sam 22–24. **57.1–3** A plea for help expressed in confidence that God will save. **57.1** *Shadow of your wings.* See notes on 91.1; 91.4. **57.3** *Selah.* See note on 3.2. **57.4** The enemies of the petitioner are portrayed as lions lying in wait and devouring their prey (see note on 7.2). **57.5** A refrain expressing praise to God (cf. v. 11). **57.6** The enemies, now pictured as hunters, fall into their own trap. *Net, pit.* See note on 9.15. **57.7–11** Expressions of trust, thanksgiving, and praise in anticipation of God's

my heart is steadfast.
I will sing and make melody.
8 Awake, my soul!
Awake, O harp and lyre!
I will awake the dawn.
9 I will give thanks to you, O Lord,
among the peoples;
I will sing praises to you among
the nations.
10 For your steadfast love is as high
as the heavens;
your faithfulness extends to the
clouds.

11 Be exalted, O God, above the
heavens.
Let your glory be over all the
earth.

Psalm 58

Prayer for Vengeance

To the leader: Do Not Destroy. Of David.
A Miktam.

1 Do you indeed decree what is
right, you gods?[o]
Do you judge people fairly?
2 No, in your hearts you devise
wrongs;
your hands deal out violence on
earth.

3 The wicked go astray from the
womb;
they err from their birth,
speaking lies.
4 They have venom like the venom
of a serpent,
like the deaf adder that stops
its ear,
5 so that it does not hear the voice
of charmers
or of the cunning enchanter.

6 O God, break the teeth in their
mouths;
tear out the fangs of the young
lions, O LORD!
7 Let them vanish like water that
runs away;
like grass let them be trodden
down[p] and wither.
8 Let them be like the snail that
dissolves into slime;
like the untimely birth that
never sees the sun.
9 Sooner than your pots can feel
the heat of thorns,
whether green or ablaze, may
he sweep them away!

10 The righteous will rejoice when
they see vengeance done;
they will bathe their feet in the
blood of the wicked.
11 People will say, "Surely there is a
reward for the righteous;
surely there is a God who
judges on earth."

Psalm 59

Prayer for Deliverance from Enemies

To the leader: Do Not Destroy. Of David. A
Miktam, when Saul ordered his house to be
watched in order to kill him.

1 Deliver me from my enemies,
O my God;

o Or *mighty lords* *p* Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain

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continued faithfulness to the psalmist. Repeated in 108.1–5.

58.1–11 A call to God to do in the wicked, destroying their power. The depiction of the wicked in vv. 3–5 and the plea of v. 6 associate the psalm with the prayers for help that surround this psalm. *To the leader.* See note on 4.1–8. *Do Not Destroy.* Meaning uncertain. *Miktam.* See note on 16.1–11. **58.1–2** An indictment of the gods of the nations, who are responsible for justice on the earth (see Ps 82) but in fact support the wicked, as the next verses suggest. For the conceptual background of these verses, see note on 82.1–8. **58.3–5** A description of the wicked with particular emphasis upon their deceit (v. 3), their deadliness (v. 4a), and their uncontrollability (vv. 4a–5; cf. Jer 8.17). They are the agents of the violence perpetuated by the cosmic powers or demonic forces of vv. 1–2. **58.6–9** A series of imprecations or curses calling for God to destroy the wicked. **58.6** *Young lions.* See note on 7.2. **58.8** *Untimely birth,* i.e., miscarriage. **58.9** The text is disturbed and the meaning uncertain. **58.10–11** The confidence of the righteous or innocent in God's vindicating judgment.

59.1–17 An individual prayer for help. *To the leader.* See note on 4.1–8. *Do Not Destroy.* Meaning uncertain. *Miktam.* See note on 16.1–11. *When Saul ordered his house to be watched in order to kill him.* See 1 Sam 19.11–17. **59.1–2** Plea

protect me from those who rise
up against me.
2 Deliver me from those who work
evil;
from the bloodthirsty save
me.

3 Even now they lie in wait for my
life;
the mighty stir up strife
against me.
For no transgression or sin of
mine, O LORD,
4 for no fault of mine, they run
and make ready.

Rouse yourself, come to my help
and see!
5 You, LORD God of hosts, are
God of Israel.
Awake to punish all the
nations;
spare none of those who
treacherously plot evil.
Selah

6 Each evening they come back,
howling like dogs
and prowling about the city.
7 There they are, bellowing with
their mouths,
with sharp words[q] on their
lips—
for "Who," they think,[r] "will
hear us?"

8 But you laugh at them, O LORD;
you hold all the nations in
derision.
9 O my strength, I will watch
for you;
for you, O God, are my
fortress.
10 My God in his steadfast love will
meet me;
my God will let me look in
triumph on my enemies.

11 Do not kill them, or my people
may forget;
make them totter by your
power, and bring them
down,
O Lord, our shield.
12 For the sin of their mouths, the
words of their lips,
let them be trapped in their
pride.
For the cursing and lies that they
utter,
13 consume them in wrath;
consume them until they are no
more.
Then it will be known to the ends
of the earth
that God rules over Jacob.
Selah

14 Each evening they come
back,
howling like dogs
and prowling about the
city.
15 They roam about for food,
and growl if they do not get
their fill.

16 But I will sing of your might;
I will sing aloud of your
steadfast love in the
morning.
For you have been a fortress
for me
and a refuge in the day of my
distress.
17 O my strength, I will sing praises
to you,
for you, O God, are my
fortress,
the God who shows me
steadfast love.

q Heb *with swords* *r* Heb lacks *they think*

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for deliverance from the psalmist's enemies. **59.3–4a** Description of the persecution by the enemies and a protestation of innocence on the part of the psalmist, suggesting the persecution may be a matter of false accusations (cf. vv. 7, 12). **59.4b–5** Further plea for God's active involvement to help. *Selah*. See note on 3.2. **59.6–7** A description of the enemies as prowling and scavenging dogs (cf. vv. 14–15) who believe they will not be called to account when they persecute (cf. 10.4, 13; 14.1; 73.11; 94.7). **59.8–10** Expressions of confidence in God. **59.8** See 2.4; 37.13. **59.11–13** A final plea for God to bring down the wicked as a lesson and witness to all people that God rules in power. **59.16–17** A vow of thanksgiving and praise for God's help.

Psalm 60

Prayer for National Victory After Defeat

To the leader: according to the Lily of the Covenant. A Miktam of David; for instruction; when he struggled with Aram-naharaim and with Aram-zobah, and when Joab on his return killed twelve thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt.

1 O God, you have rejected us,
broken our defenses;
you have been angry; now
restore us!
2 You have caused the land to
quake; you have torn it
open;
repair the cracks in it, for it is
tottering.
3 You have made your people
suffer hard things;
you have given us wine to drink
that made us reel.

4 You have set up a banner for
those who fear you,
to rally to it out of bowshot.[s]
Selah
5 Give victory with your right hand,
and answer us,[t]
so that those whom you love
may be rescued.

6 God has promised in his
sanctuary:[u]
"With exultation I will divide
up Shechem,
and portion out the Vale of
Succoth.
7 Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is
mine;
Ephraim is my helmet;
Judah is my scepter.
8 Moab is my washbasin;
on Edom I hurl my shoe;
over Philistia I shout in
triumph."

9 Who will bring me to the fortified
city?
Who will lead me to Edom?
10 Have you not rejected us, O God?
You do not go out, O God,
with our armies.
11 O grant us help against the foe,
for human help is worthless.
12 With God we shall do valiantly;
it is he who will tread down our
foes.

Psalm 61

Assurance of God's Protection

To the leader: with stringed instruments. Of David.

1 Hear my cry, O God;
listen to my prayer.

s Gk Syr Jerome: Heb *because of the truth*
t Another reading is *me* *u* Or *by his holiness*

60.1–12 A prayer of the community for God's help. *To the leader.* See note on 4.1–8. *According to the Lily of the Covenant* perhaps refers to a melody. *Miktam.* See note on 16.1–11. *When he struggled with Aram-naharaim and with Aram-zobah.* See 2 Sam 8.3–8; 10.6–18. *Twelve thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt.* See 2 Sam 8.13. *Joab* was David's general. These historical allusions are probably secondary. Some event of national defeat lies behind the origin of the psalm, but it is not possible to determine which event with any certainty. **60.1–4** A complaint to God, who is seen as the ultimate source of the national suffering. **60.4** Perhaps to be understood as a request rather than a declaration, i.e., "Set up a banner." *Selah.* See note on 3.2. **60.5** Plea for help (v. 5a) and motivation offered (v. 5b). **60.5–12** Repeated in 108.6–13. **60.6–8** Divine response asserting God's power and rule over Israel and Judah and their enemies. It was probably delivered by a priest or prophet in the temple. **60.6** *I will divide up . . . and portion out* is God's claim of ownership. *Shechem* was one of the main towns in the Northern Kingdom, Israel. **60.6b–7** *Vale of Succoth, Gilead,* and *Manasseh* were areas east of the Jordan. *Ephraim* may be the hill country of the Northern Kingdom or a term for the kingdom as a whole. *Judah* is the Southern Kingdom, where the Davidic king ruled (i.e., God's *scepter*). **60.8** *Moab, Edom,* and *Philistia* were often in conflict with Israel. *Hurl my shoe* is an image indicating possession (cf. Ruth 4.7–8). **60.9–12** A plea for help on the part of the king or some representative figure. The meaning of v. 9 is unclear. The complaint of v. 10 echoes the complaint of v. 1 and leads into the final petition (v. 11) and the expression of confidence (v. 12).

61.1–8 A prayer by an individual for help. *To the leader: with stringed instruments.* See note on 4.1–8. **61.1–2a** Cry for help. *From the end of the earth* suggests the psalmist is distant from the sanctuary (cf. 42.6; 84.2). **61.2b–5** The psalmist

2 From the end of the earth I call
to you,
when my heart is faint.

Lead me to the rock
that is higher than I;
3 for you are my refuge,
a strong tower against the
enemy.

4 Let me abide in your tent
forever,
find refuge under the shelter
of your wings. *Selah*
5 For you, O God, have heard my
vows;
you have given me the heritage
of those who fear your
name.

6 Prolong the life of the king;
may his years endure to all
generations!
7 May he be enthroned forever
before God;
appoint steadfast love and
faithfulness to watch
over him!

8 So I will always sing praises to
your name,
as I pay my vows day after day.

Psalm 62

Song of Trust in God Alone

To the leader: according to Jeduthun.
A Psalm of David.

1 For God alone my soul waits in
silence;
from him comes my salvation.
2 He alone is my rock and my
salvation,
my fortress; I shall never be
shaken.

3 How long will you assail a person,
will you batter your victim, all
of you,
as you would a leaning wall, a
tottering fence?
4 Their only plan is to bring down
a person of prominence.
They take pleasure in
falsehood;
they bless with their mouths,
but inwardly they curse. *Selah*

5 For God alone my soul waits in
silence,
for my hope is from him.
6 He alone is my rock and my
salvation,
my fortress; I shall not be
shaken.
7 On God rests my deliverance and
my honor;
my mighty rock, my refuge is
in God.

8 Trust in him at all times,
O people;
pour out your heart
before him;
God is a refuge for us. *Selah*

9 Those of low estate are but a
breath,
those of high estate are a
delusion;
in the balances they go up;
they are together lighter than a
breath.
10 Put no confidence in extortion,
and set no vain hopes on
robbery;
if riches increase, do not set
your heart on them.

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seeks refuge and expresses confidence in God's protection. **61.4** *Tent*, the sanctuary or temple. *Shelter of your wings*. See notes on 91.1; 91.4. *Selah*. See note on 3.2. **61.5** *Fear*. See note on 34.7. **61.6–7** Intercession for the king (cf. 84.9). **61.6** Cf. 72.5, 15. **61.7** For *steadfast love and faithfulness* as personifications, see note on 85.10–13. **61.8** Vow of praise when the psalmist is secure in the safety of God's presence.

62.1–12 A prayer of trust in God in the face of persecution. *To the leader*. See note on 4.1–8. *According to Jeduthun*. See note on 77.1–20. **62.1–7** Expression of trust by the psalmist. The theme is set at the beginning (vv. 1–2) and then repeated at the end (vv. 5–7). In between (vv. 3–4) the psalmist laments over the oppression inflicted by others that has evoked this prayer. The psalmist has been battered for some time by the lies, curses (magical incantations), and hypocrisy of the enemies. **62.4** *Selah*. See note on 3.2. **62.8–10** Instruction to the community also to trust in God and not in immoral and oppressive

11 Once God has spoken;
twice have I heard this:
that power belongs to God,
12 and steadfast love belongs to you, O Lord.
For you repay to all
according to their work.

Psalm 63

Comfort and Assurance in God's Presence

A Psalm of David, when he was in the Wilderness of Judah.

1 O God, you are my God, I seek you,
my soul thirsts for you;
my flesh faints for you,
as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.
2 So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary,
beholding your power and glory.
3 Because your steadfast love is better than life,
my lips will praise you.
4 So I will bless you as long as I live;
I will lift up my hands and call on your name.

5 My soul is satisfied as with a rich feast,[v]
and my mouth praises you with joyful lips
6 when I think of you on my bed,
and meditate on you in the watches of the night;
7 for you have been my help,
and in the shadow of your wings I sing for joy.
8 My soul clings to you;
your right hand upholds me.

9 But those who seek to destroy my life
shall go down into the depths of the earth;
10 they shall be given over to the power of the sword,
they shall be prey for jackals.
11 But the king shall rejoice in God;
all who swear by him shall exult,
for the mouths of liars will be stopped.

Psalm 64

Prayer for Protection from Enemies

To the leader. A Psalm of David.

1 Hear my voice, O God, in my complaint;
preserve my life from the dread enemy.
2 Hide me from the secret plots of the wicked,
from the scheming of evildoers,
3 who whet their tongues like swords,
who aim bitter words like arrows,
4 shooting from ambush at the blameless;
they shoot suddenly and without fear.
5 They hold fast to their evil purpose;

v Heb *with fat and fatness*

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acts. **62.11–12** Reference to God's promise of protection, possibly an oracle of salvation, that evokes the confidence expressed in the prayer.

63.1–11 A prayer for help in the sanctuary, in which the psalmist is confident of God's overthrow of those who are persecuting. *When he was in the Wilderness of Judah* may refer to 1 Sam 23.14–15 or 24.1. This secondary historical allusion may be suggested by v. 1b. **63.1–2** The longing of the psalmist for the divine presence. **63.1** Cf. 42.1–2. **63.2** It is unclear if the psalmist is looking for or has already seen God in some way in the sanctuary (cf. 5.3; 27.4). **63.3–8** Confident of God's help, the psalmist gives praise. **63.6** Cf. 4.4; 16.7; 77.2, 6. *Watches.* See note on 90.4. There may be allusion here to waiting through the night in the sanctuary for God's help in the morning. **63.7** *Shadow of your wings.* See notes on 91.1; 91.4. **63.9–10** Confidence of the psalmist in the downfall of the oppressors. Here, as elsewhere, they may be false accusers or slanderers (see v. 11b). **63.11** A form of intercession for the king as God's representative. *By him,* i.e., by the king. For oaths sworn in the name of the king, see 1 Sam 17.55; 25.26; 2 Sam 11.11; 15.21.

64.1–10 A prayer by an individual for help. *To the leader.* See note on 4.1–8. **64.1–2** Cry for help. **64.2–6** Beginning already in the plea, the psalmist lays out the distress brought about by wicked enemies. Cf. notes on 10.1–11.

they talk of laying snares
secretly,
thinking, "Who can see us?[w]
6 Who can search out our
crimes?[x]
We have thought out a cunningly
conceived plot."
For the human heart and mind
are deep.

7 But God will shoot his arrow at
them;
they will be wounded suddenly.
8 Because of their tongue he will
bring them to ruin;[y]
all who see them will shake with
horror.
9 Then everyone will fear;
they will tell what God has
brought about,
and ponder what he has done.

10 Let the righteous rejoice in the
LORD
and take refuge in him.
Let all the upright in heart glory.

Psalm 65

Thanksgiving for the Earth's Bounty

To the leader. A Psalm of David. A Song.

1 Praise is due to you,
O God, in Zion;
and to you shall vows be
performed,
2 O you who answer prayer!
To you all flesh shall come.
3 When deeds of iniquity
overwhelm us,
you forgive our transgressions.
4 Happy are those whom you
choose and bring near
to live in your courts.
We shall be satisfied with the
goodness of your house,
your holy temple.

5 By awesome deeds you answer us
with deliverance,
O God of our salvation;
you are the hope of all the ends
of the earth
and of the farthest seas.
6 By your[z] strength you
established the mountains;
you are girded with might.
7 You silence the roaring of the
seas,
the roaring of their waves,
the tumult of the peoples.
8 Those who live at earth's farthest
bounds are awed by your
signs;
you make the gateways of the
morning and the evening
shout for joy.

9 You visit the earth and water it,
you greatly enrich it;
the river of God is full of water;
you provide the people with
grain,
for so you have prepared it.
10 You water its furrows abundantly,
settling its ridges,
softening it with showers,
and blessing its growth.
11 You crown the year with your
bounty;

w Syr: Heb *them* *x* Cn: Heb *They search out crimes* *y* Cn: Heb *They will bring him to ruin, their tongue being against them* *z* Gk Jerome: Heb *his*

64.7–9 God's destruction of the enemies. These verses are probably to be read as a past-tense report of what God did and the testimony to it by those who witnessed it. **64.7** *Shoot his arrow*, poetic justice—the judgment of God corresponds to the sins of the wicked (vv. 3–4). **64.10** Concluding call to praise.

65.1–13 A hymn of praise to God, who has redeemed the people and sustains their life on the earth. Either particular or repeated occasions in which Israel experienced a good harvest may have given rise to the singing of this hymn. *To the leader*. See note on 4.1–8. **65.1–5** The people give praise to God, who dwells in Zion and has forgiven and saved them. **65.1–2a** The praise arises out of vows made in prayers for help (cf. 22.25; 50.14; 61.4, 8; 66.13; 116.14, 18). **65.4** *Happy*. See note on 1.1. **65.6–8** Praise to God as the creator of the world. God's subduing of the waters of chaos may lie behind v. 7 (cf. 74.12–14; 89.9–10; note on 77.16). **65.9–13** Praise to God, who nourishes the earth and so provides bountiful harvest and many flocks. **65.9** *River of God*. See note on 46.4. **65.11** *Your wagon tracks*, either the imagery of God riding the clouds in a chariot (e.g., 68.4, 33) or a poetic way of speaking about God's providential presence in the land.

your wagon tracks overflow
with richness.
12 The pastures of the wilderness
overflow,
the hills gird themselves
with joy,
13 the meadows clothe themselves
with flocks,
the valleys deck themselves with
grain,
they shout and sing together
for joy.

Psalm 66

Praise for God's Goodness to Israel

To the leader. A Song. A Psalm.

1 Make a joyful noise to God, all
the earth;
2 sing the glory of his name;
give to him glorious praise.
3 Say to God, "How awesome are
your deeds!
Because of your great power,
your enemies cringe
before you.
4 All the earth worships you;
they sing praises to you,
sing praises to your name."
Selah

5 Come and see what God has
done:
he is awesome in his deeds
among mortals.
6 He turned the sea into dry land;
they passed through the river
on foot.
There we rejoiced in him,
7 who rules by his might forever,
whose eyes keep watch on the
nations—
let the rebellious not exalt
themselves. *Selah*

8 Bless our God, O peoples,
let the sound of his praise be
heard,
9 who has kept us among the
living,
and has not let our feet slip.
10 For you, O God, have tested us;
you have tried us as silver is
tried.
11 You brought us into the net;
you laid burdens on our backs;
12 you let people ride over our
heads;
we went through fire and
through water;
yet you have brought us out to a
spacious place.[a]

13 I will come into your house with
burnt offerings;
I will pay you my vows,
14 those that my lips uttered
and my mouth promised when
I was in trouble.
15 I will offer to you burnt offerings
of fatlings,
with the smoke of the sacrifice
of rams;
I will make an offering of bulls
and goats. *Selah*

16 Come and hear, all you who
fear God,
and I will tell what he has done
for me.
17 I cried aloud to him,
and he was extolled with my
tongue.
18 If I had cherished iniquity in my
heart,
the Lord would not have
listened.
19 But truly God has listened;

a Cn Compare Gk Syr Jerome Tg: Heb *to a saturation*

66.1–20 A song of thanksgiving (vv. 13–20) by an individual that is prefaced by a general hymn of praise (vv. 1–12). *To the leader.* See note on 4.1–8. **66.1–12** Hymn of praise for God's mighty deeds of salvation for the people. **66.4** *Selah.* See note on 3.2. **66.5a** See 46.8. **66.6** *He turned the sea into dry land* refers to the crossing of the sea in the exodus (Ex 14–15). *They passed through the river on foot* refers to the crossing of the Jordan into Canaan (Josh 3.14–17). These mighty acts of the Lord may have been represented in some fashion in worship (cf. 114.1–8). **66.8–12** While the people experienced God's judgment as a testing and refinement, God kept them secure and gave them the land. **66.13–20** A song of thanksgiving as one who has been helped pays vows of sacrifice (vv. 13–15; cf. 65.1–2a and note) and bears witness to God's gracious attention (vv. 17–19, 20a) and deliverance (v. 16, 20b). **66.16** *Fear God.* See note on 34.7.

he has given heed to the words
of my prayer.

20 Blessed be God,
because he has not rejected my prayer
or removed his steadfast love from me.

Psalm 67

The Nations Called to Praise God

To the leader: with stringed instruments. A Psalm. A Song.

1 May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face to shine upon us, *Selah*
2 that your way may be known upon earth,
your saving power among all nations.
3 Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.

4 Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,
for you judge the peoples with equity
and guide the nations upon earth. *Selah*
5 Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.

6 The earth has yielded its increase;
God, our God, has blessed us.
7 May God continue to bless us;
let all the ends of the earth revere him.

Psalm 68

The Coming of God in Triumph

To the leader. Of David. A Psalm. A Song.

1 Let God rise up, let his enemies be scattered;
let those who hate him flee before him.
2 As smoke is driven away, so drive them away;
as wax melts before the fire,
let the wicked perish before God.
3 But let the righteous be joyful;
let them exult before God;
let them be jubilant with joy.

4 Sing to God, sing praises to his name;
lift up a song to him who rides upon the clouds[b]—
his name is the LORD—
be exultant before him.

5 Father of orphans and protector of widows
is God in his holy habitation.

b Or *cast up a highway for him who rides through the deserts*

67.1–7 A prayer of benediction or blessing together with a call to all peoples to praise the Lord who blesses Israel. *To the leader: with stringed instruments.* See note on 4.1–8. **67.1–2** Prayer for God's blessing in the language of the Aaronite benediction (Num 6.24–26). The reason for the blessing is that Israel's experience of God's favor may be a witness to all the nations (cf. Pss 117; 126.2). **67.1** *Make his face to shine upon us.* See note on 31.16. *Selah.* See note on 3.2. **67.3–5** Call to the nations to praise the Lord who rules justly over all peoples. **67.6–7** A final prayer for God's blessing in the provision of produce from the land. V. 6 perhaps should be read like v. 1, i.e., as a prayer, "May the earth yield its increase; may God, our God, bless us."

68.1–35 A hymn of praise for God's awesome appearance to the people in power and victory. The unity and order of the hymn are difficult to discern and some have seen it as a collection of fragments. Its interpretation as a whole is problematic. It may have been associated in its origin with God's appearance at one of the sanctuaries, but in its present form it has been adapted for worship in the Jerusalem temple (v. 29). The various references to marching and procession (vv. 7–8, 17–18, 24–27) and to music (vv. 4, 25, 32) suggest use of the psalm in the festivals of Israel's worship. *To the leader.* See note on 4.1–8. **68.1–3** Call to God to go forth in victory against the enemy. The words are a form of the ancient Song of the Ark in Num 10.35. It was sung as the Lord, enthroned on the ark, went forth to war, leading the people (cf. 1 Sam 4). **68.4–6** Hymn of praise exalting God as protector of the weak. **68.4** *Rides upon the clouds* is an ancient epithet of the Canaanite storm god applied to the Lord of Israel. The *clouds* are the chariot of God, who goes

6 God gives the desolate a home to live in;
he leads out the prisoners to prosperity,
but the rebellious live in a parched land.

7 O God, when you went out before your people,
when you marched through the wilderness, *Selah*
8 the earth quaked, the heavens poured down rain
at the presence of God, the God of Sinai,
at the presence of God, the God of Israel.
9 Rain in abundance, O God, you showered abroad;
you restored your heritage when it languished;
10 your flock found a dwelling in it;
in your goodness, O God, you provided for the needy.

11 The Lord gives the command;
great is the company of those[c] who bore the tidings:
12 "The kings of the armies, they flee, they flee!"
The women at home divide the spoil,
13 though they stay among the sheepfolds—
the wings of a dove covered with silver,
its pinions with green gold.
14 When the Almighty[d] scattered kings there,
snow fell on Zalmon.

15 O mighty mountain, mountain of Bashan;
O many-peaked mountain, mountain of Bashan!
16 Why do you look with envy, O many-peaked mountain,
at the mount that God desired for his abode,
where the LORD will reside forever?

17 With mighty chariotry, twice ten thousand,
thousands upon thousands,
the Lord came from Sinai into the holy place.[e]
18 You ascended the high mount,
leading captives in your train
and receiving gifts from people,
even from those who rebel against the LORD God's abiding there.
19 Blessed be the Lord,
who daily bears us up;
God is our salvation. *Selah*
20 Our God is a God of salvation,
and to GOD, the Lord, belongs escape from death.

21 But God will shatter the heads of his enemies,
the hairy crown of those who walk in their guilty ways.
22 The Lord said,
"I will bring them back from Bashan,
I will bring them back from the depths of the sea,
23 so that you may bathe[f] your feet in blood,

c Or *company of the women* *d* Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai* *e* Cn: Heb *The Lord among them Sinai in the holy* (place) *f* Gk Syr Tg: Heb *shatter*

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forth to lead the armies (cf. 104.3–4). **68.6** *Prisoners*, or "captives." **68.7–10** The march of God before the people to lead them into the land and provide for them. Cf. vv. 7–8 with Judg 5.4–5 as well as Deut 33.2–3. The imagery again is of the Lord as storm god, marching in battle and making the land fertile through rain. **68.7** *Selah*. See note on 3.2. **68.11–14** The victory of God over the kings of Canaan. An allusion to Judg 5 may be present in these verses also (see Judg 5.19). Vv. 12b–13 are enigmatic. There may be allusion to Judg 5.16 in v. 13a. **68.13** *The wings of a dove* possibly refers to some treasure from the spoil (cf. Judg 5.19b). **68.14** *Snow fell on Zalmon*. Meaning uncertain. **68.15–18** The Lord ascends the holy mountain, which is the divine abode. Unidentified in the psalm, it came to be understood as Mount Zion. **68.15** *Bashan*, a mountain of unknown location here seen as envious of the mount of God's dwelling (cf. note on 22.12–13). **68.17** A possible reading of this difficult verse is: "The chariots of God were twice ten thousand, / A thousand the warriors of the LORD, / When he came from Sinai with the holy ones." **68.19–20** Praise to God, who has saved the people. **68.21–23** God's defeat of the enemies. V. 22 is enigmatic but prob-

so that the tongues of your
dogs may have their share
from the foe."

24 Your solemn processions are
seen,[g] O God,
the processions of my God, my
King, into the sanctuary—
25 the singers in front, the musicians
last,
between them girls playing
tambourines:
26 "Bless God in the great
congregation,
the LORD, O you who are of
Israel's fountain!"
27 There is Benjamin, the least of
them, in the lead,
the princes of Judah in a body,
the princes of Zebulun, the
princes of Naphtali.

28 Summon your might, O God;
show your strength, O God, as
you have done for us
before.
29 Because of your temple at
Jerusalem
kings bear gifts to you.
30 Rebuke the wild animals that live
among the reeds,
the herd of bulls with the calves
of the peoples.
Trample[h] under foot those who
lust after tribute;
scatter the peoples who delight
in war.[i]
31 Let bronze be brought from
Egypt;
let Ethiopia[j] hasten to stretch
out its hands to God.

32 Sing to God, O kingdoms of the
earth;
sing praises to the Lord, *Selah*
33 O rider in the heavens, the
ancient heavens;
listen, he sends out his voice,
his mighty voice.
34 Ascribe power to God,
whose majesty is over Israel;
and whose power is in the skies.
35 Awesome is God in his[k]
sanctuary,
the God of Israel;
he gives power and strength to
his people.

Blessed be God!

Psalm 69

Prayer for Deliverance from Persecution

To the leader: according to Lilies. Of David.

1 Save me, O God,
for the waters have come up to
my neck.
2 I sink in deep mire,
where there is no foothold;
I have come into deep waters,
and the flood sweeps over me.
3 I am weary with my crying;
my throat is parched.
My eyes grow dim
with waiting for my God.

4 More in number than the hairs of
my head
are those who hate me without
cause;
many are those who would
destroy me,
my enemies who accuse me
falsely.
What I did not steal
must I now restore?

g Or *have been seen* *h* Cn: Heb *Trampling*
i Meaning of Heb of verse 30 is uncertain
j Or *Nubia*; Heb *Cush* *k* Gk: Heb *from your*

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ably also has to do with conquest. **68.24–27** The procession of God, whose rule is secured in victory, into the sanctuary. **68.27** *Benjamin . . . in the lead* has been seen as suggesting an origin of the psalm in the time of Saul, who was from the tribe of Benjamin. **68.28–31** Call to God to show power over the kings and nations of the earth. **68.32–35** Concluding hymn of praise. **68.33** Cf. 18.9–13; Ps 29.

69.1–36 An individual prayer for help. *To the leader.* See note on 4.1–8. *According to Lilies.* See note on 45.1–17. **69.1–4** Plea for God's deliverance and lament over physical and emotional distress and the persecution of others. The particular situation is not described but aspects of the psalm (e.g., vv. 26, 29) suggest illness seen as God's judgment and evoking the taunts and insults of others. For the likely character of the insults and reproach, see notes on 79.4; 79.10 (cf. 42.4, 10). **69.1–2** For the imagery of *waters* and drowning to express personal distress, see vv. 14–15; 32.6; 42.7; 88.7, 17; 124.4–5;

5 O God, you know my folly;
the wrongs I have done are not hidden from you.

6 Do not let those who hope in you be put to shame because of me,
O Lord God of hosts;
do not let those who seek you be dishonored because of me,
O God of Israel.
7 It is for your sake that I have borne reproach,
that shame has covered my face.
8 I have become a stranger to my kindred,
an alien to my mother's children.

9 It is zeal for your house that has consumed me;
the insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.
10 When I humbled my soul with fasting,[1]
they insulted me for doing so.
11 When I made sackcloth my clothing,
I became a byword to them.
12 I am the subject of gossip for those who sit in the gate,
and the drunkards make songs about me.

13 But as for me, my prayer is to you, O Lord.
At an acceptable time, O God,
in the abundance of your steadfast love, answer me.
With your faithful help
14 rescue me
from sinking in the mire;
let me be delivered from my enemies
and from the deep waters.
15 Do not let the flood sweep over me,
or the deep swallow me up,
or the Pit close its mouth over me.

16 Answer me, O Lord, for your steadfast love is good;
according to your abundant mercy, turn to me.
17 Do not hide your face from your servant,
for I am in distress—make haste to answer me.
18 Draw near to me, redeem me,
set me free because of my enemies.

19 You know the insults I receive,
and my shame and dishonor;
my foes are all known to you.
20 Insults have broken my heart,
so that I am in despair.
I looked for pity, but there was none;
and for comforters, but I found none.
21 They gave me poison for food,
and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

22 Let their table be a trap for them,
a snare for their allies.
23 Let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see,
and make their loins tremble continually.
24 Pour out your indignation upon them,
and let your burning anger overtake them.

1 Gk Syr: Heb *I wept, with fasting my soul*, or *I made my soul mourn with fasting*

144.7; Jon 2.3–5. **69.5** Confession of sin. **69.6–12** Further plea for help on the basis of the fact that the sufferer has been taunted and abandoned because of enthusiasm for the service of God and the temple. **69.6** God's failure to help the petitioner will be a negative reflection on other faithful servants as well as himself. **69.9** *Zeal for your house* suggests the possibility that the psalmist was an enthusiastic supporter of the efforts to rebuild the temple (cf. vv. 35–36; also Ezra 4.1–5, 23–24; Haggai; Zech 1.16; 8.2–3). *Those who insult you*; i.e., it is God who is the ultimate object of the insults by the enemies (cf. v. 7). **69.11** *Sackcloth*. See note on 30.11. **69.12** *Gate*, the place of public assembly. **69.13–18** Further cries for help rooted in the knowledge of the love and mercy of God. **69.15** *Pit*. See note on 16.10. **69.17** *Hide your face*. See notes on 10.1; 27.9. **69.19–28** Continued recounting of the taunting insults of the oppressors and prayers for their downfall.

25 May their camp be a desolation;
let no one live in their tents.
26 For they persecute those whom
you have struck down,
and those whom you have
wounded, they attack still
more.[m]
27 Add guilt to their guilt;
may they have no acquittal
from you.
28 Let them be blotted out of the
book of the living;
let them not be enrolled among
the righteous.
29 But I am lowly and in pain;
let your salvation, O God,
protect me.

30 I will praise the name of God
with a song;
I will magnify him with
thanksgiving.
31 This will please the LORD more
than an ox
or a bull with horns and
hoofs.
32 Let the oppressed see it and be
glad;
you who seek God, let your
hearts revive.
33 For the LORD hears the needy,
and does not despise his own
that are in bonds.

34 Let heaven and earth praise him,
the seas and everything that
moves in them.
35 For God will save Zion
and rebuild the cities of Judah;
and his servants shall live[n] there
and possess it;
36 the children of his servants
shall inherit it,
and those who love his name
shall live in it.

Psalm 70

Prayer for Deliverance from Enemies

To the leader. Of David, for the memorial offering.

1 Be pleased, O God, to deliver me.
O LORD, make haste to
help me!
2 Let those be put to shame and
confusion
who seek my life.
Let those be turned back and
brought to dishonor
who desire to hurt me.
3 Let those who say, "Aha, Aha!"
turn back because of their
shame.

4 Let all who seek you
rejoice and be glad in you.
Let those who love your salvation
say evermore, "God is great!"
5 But I am poor and needy;
hasten to me, O God!
You are my help and my
deliverer;
O LORD, do not delay!

Psalm 71

Prayer for Lifelong Protection and Help

1 In you, O LORD, I take refuge;
let me never be put to shame.
2 In your righteousness deliver me
and rescue me;
incline your ear to me and
save me.
3 Be to me a rock of refuge,
a strong fortress,[o] to save me,
for you are my rock and my
fortress.

m Gk Syr: Heb *recount the pain of* *n* Syr: Heb *and they shall live* *o* Gk Compare 31.3: Heb *to come continually you have commanded*

69.28 *Book of the living,* a heavenly record of human deeds of good or ill, or a record of the righteous (cf. 40.7). **69.29** Final prayer for God's help. **69.30–36** A vow of praise and thanksgiving because God has heard the prayer. **69.31** Cf. 40.6; 50.9–14; 51.15–17. **69.35–36** The individual prayer is placed in the context of a confident expectation of God's help for a destroyed Jerusalem and exiled people.

70.1–5 An individual prayer for help in the face of oppression. This psalm also appears as vv. 13–17 of Ps 40. *To the leader.* See note on 4.1–8. **70.1** Cry for help. **70.2–3** Plea for God to put to shame the persecutors of the psalmist. **70.4** Anticipated praise by those who have been saved. **70.5** A final cry for help uttered in trust and urgency. *Poor and needy* may refer to spiritual need and humility or material poverty.

71.1–24 A prayer for help by an aged person in distress. **71.1–8** Pleas for help interspersed with expressions of trust as a basis for hope in

4 Rescue me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked,
from the grasp of the unjust and cruel.
5 For you, O Lord, are my hope,
my trust, O LORD, from my youth.
6 Upon you I have leaned from my birth;
it was you who took me from my mother's womb.
My praise is continually of you.

7 I have been like a portent to many,
but you are my strong refuge.
8 My mouth is filled with your praise,
and with your glory all day long.
9 Do not cast me off in the time of old age;
do not forsake me when my strength is spent.
10 For my enemies speak concerning me,
and those who watch for my life consult together.
11 They say, "Pursue and seize that person
whom God has forsaken,
for there is no one to deliver."

12 O God, do not be far from me;
O my God, make haste to help me!
13 Let my accusers be put to shame and consumed;
let those who seek to hurt me
be covered with scorn and disgrace.
14 But I will hope continually,
and will praise you yet more and more.
15 My mouth will tell of your righteous acts,
of your deeds of salvation all day long,
though their number is past my knowledge.
16 I will come praising the mighty deeds of the Lord GOD,
I will praise your righteousness, yours alone.

17 O God, from my youth you have taught me,
and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds.
18 So even to old age and gray hairs,
O God, do not forsake me,
until I proclaim your might
to all the generations to come.[p]
Your power 19and your righteousness, O God,
reach the high heavens.

You who have done great things,
O God, who is like you?
20 You who have made me see many troubles and calamities
will revive me again;
from the depths of the earth
you will bring me up again.
21 You will increase my honor,
and comfort me once again.

22 I will also praise you with the harp
for your faithfulness, O my God;
I will sing praises to you with the lyre,
O Holy One of Israel.
23 My lips will shout for joy
when I sing praises to you;
my soul also, which you have rescued.
24 All day long my tongue will talk of your righteous help,
for those who tried to do me harm
have been put to shame, and disgraced.

p Gk Compare Syr: Heb *to a generation, to all that come*

God's action. **71.6** Cf. 22.9–10. **71.7** *Portent*, a negative sign of God's wrath. This may refer to some ill health or distress seen by others as an affliction bestowed by God and so an opportunity (see v. 11) for the persecution mentioned in vv. 4, 10–13, 24. **71.9–13** Further cries for help in the face of those who have taken advantage of the psalmist's distress to bring accusations of some offense. **71.14–24** Vows of praise and thanksgiving in the confidence that God, who has been a refuge in earlier years, will also protect the aged sufferer.

Psalm 72

Prayer for Guidance and Support for the King

Of Solomon.

1 Give the king your justice,
O God,
and your righteousness to a
king's son.
2 May he judge your people with
righteousness,
and your poor with justice.
3 May the mountains yield
prosperity for the people,
and the hills, in righteousness.
4 May he defend the cause of the
poor of the people,
give deliverance to the needy,
and crush the oppressor.

5 May he live[q] while the sun
endures,
and as long as the moon,
throughout all generations.
6 May he be like rain that falls on
the mown grass,
like showers that water the
earth.
7 In his days may righteousness
flourish
and peace abound, until the
moon is no more.

8 May he have dominion from sea
to sea,
and from the River to the ends
of the earth.
9 May his foes[r] bow down
before him,
and his enemies lick the dust.
10 May the kings of Tarshish and of
the isles
render him tribute,
may the kings of Sheba and Seba
bring gifts.
11 May all kings fall down
before him,
all nations give him service.

12 For he delivers the needy when
they call,
the poor and those who have
no helper.
13 He has pity on the weak and the
needy,
and saves the lives of the
needy.
14 From oppression and violence he
redeems their life;
and precious is their blood in
his sight.

15 Long may he live!
May gold of Sheba be given
to him.
May prayer be made for him
continually,
and blessings invoked for him
all day long.
16 May there be abundance of grain
in the land;
may it wave on the tops of the
mountains;
may its fruit be like Lebanon;
and may people blossom in the
cities
like the grass of the field.
17 May his name endure forever,

q Gk: Heb *may they fear you* *r* Cn: Heb *those who live in the wilderness*

72.1–19 A royal psalm possibly on the occasion of the coronation of a king. Cf. the concluding doxology (vv. 17–18) with David's doxology upon hearing of the coronation of Solomon (1 Kings 1.48). The ascription to *Solomon* is suggested by several features of the psalm, including his being *a king's son* and a wise judge (v. 1), the broad extent of his rule (v. 8), and rulers coming to him from afar bearing tribute and gifts (vv. 8–11, 15; cf. 1 Kings 10). **72.1–7** A prayer for the king to live long, ruling justly. *Justice*, or "judgments" in the Hebrew, possibly refers to the specific righteous judgments of the king (cf. 2 Sam 15.1–6; 1 Kings 3.16–28). **72.4** The particular concern of the just king is the *poor* and the *needy*, who could appeal to the king when there was no other way of gaining justice. **72.8–14** The rule of this righteous king is universal (vv. 8–11) because (v. 12) he is totally committed to delivering the weak and the poor from violence and oppression (vv. 12–14). **72.15–17** A reiteration of the prayer for the long life of the king and blessings upon him and through him. **72.15** *Gold of Sheba*. Sheba, located most likely in the southwest of the Arabian peninsula, was known in the OT for its gold and legendary wealth (see 1 Kings 10.2; Isa 60.6; Ezek 27.22). **72.17** *May all nations be blessed in him* is an allusion to the blessing to the nations through Abraham (Gen 12.3; 18.18; 22.18; 28.14). It is through the righteous king that that blessing shall be effected in a kingdom of righteousness and

his fame continue as long as
the sun.
May all nations be blessed
in him;[s]
may they pronounce him
happy.

18 Blessed be the LORD, the God of
Israel,
who alone does wondrous
things.
19 Blessed be his glorious name
forever;
may his glory fill the whole
earth.
Amen and Amen.

20 The prayers of David son of Jesse
are ended.

BOOK III

(Psalms 73–89)

Psalm 73

Plea for Relief from Oppressors

A Psalm of Asaph.

1 Truly God is good to the
upright,[t]
to those who are pure in heart.
2 But as for me, my feet had
almost stumbled;
my steps had nearly slipped.
3 For I was envious of the
arrogant;
I saw the prosperity of the
wicked.

4 For they have no pain;
their bodies are sound and
sleek.
5 They are not in trouble as
others are;
they are not plagued like other
people.
6 Therefore pride is their necklace;
violence covers them like a
garment.
7 Their eyes swell out with fatness;
their hearts overflow with
follies.
8 They scoff and speak with malice;
loftily they threaten oppression.
9 They set their mouths against
heaven,
and their tongues range over
the earth.

10 Therefore the people turn and
praise them,[u]
and find no fault in them.[v]
11 And they say, "How can God
know?
Is there knowledge in the
Most High?"
12 Such are the wicked;
always at ease, they increase in
riches.
13 All in vain I have kept my heart
clean
and washed my hands in
innocence.
14 For all day long I have been
plagued,
and am punished every
morning.

15 If I had said, "I will talk on in
this way,"

s Or *bless themselves by him* *t* Or *good to Israel*
u Cn: Heb *his people return here* *v* Cn: Heb
abundant waters are drained by them

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peace. **72.18–19** A doxology marks the end of each book or section of the Psalter (cf. 41.13; 89.52; 106.48; 150). **72.20** An editorial note added to the end of the second book of the Psalter identifying the first two books as containing the prayers of David. In fact, later psalms in the Psalter are also ascribed to him.

73.1–28 A psalm of trust in God and praise for divine deliverance. Its reflective character in vv. 4–20 connects it with the wisdom and didactic tradition also. *Asaph.* See note on 50.1–23. **73.1–3** In a basic affirmation of trust, the psalmist agrees with others that God is good to the upright (Pss 1; 37; 49) but tells of almost being led astray from God and the righteous way out of envy of the prosperity of the wicked while the pure in heart are frequently in trouble (vv. 5, 13–14; cf. Job). **73.4–12** The character and prosperity of the wicked are laid out. **73.4–5** They have an easy life despite their unrighteous ways. **73.6–8** Their affluence is gained by violence and oppression against others. **73.9–11** In their arrogance, the wicked do not believe God will see or punish their wickedness. **73.12** A concluding summary of the seemingly enviable state of the wicked. **73.13–14** The contrasting state of the psalmist, who is innocent but suffers. **73.15–16** The

I would have been untrue to
the circle of your children.
16 But when I thought how to
understand this,
it seemed to me a wearisome
task,
17 until I went into the sanctuary
of God;
then I perceived their end.
18 Truly you set them in slippery
places;
you make them fall to ruin.
19 How they are destroyed in a
moment,
swept away utterly by terrors!
20 They are[w] like a dream when
one awakes;
on awaking you despise their
phantoms.

21 When my soul was embittered,
when I was pricked in heart,
22 I was stupid and ignorant;
I was like a brute beast
toward you.
23 Nevertheless I am continually
with you;
you hold my right hand.
24 You guide me with your counsel,
and afterward you will receive
me with honor.[x]
25 Whom have I in heaven but you?
And there is nothing on earth
that I desire other
than you.
26 My flesh and my heart may fail,
but God is the strength[y] of my
heart and my portion
forever.

27 Indeed, those who are far from
you will perish;
you put an end to those who
are false to you.
28 But for me it is good to be
near God;
I have made the Lord GOD my
refuge,
to tell of all your works.

Psalm 74

Plea for Help in Time of National Humiliation

A Maskil of Asaph.

1 O God, why do you cast us off
forever?
Why does your anger smoke
against the sheep of your
pasture?
2 Remember your congregation,
which you acquired
long ago,
which you redeemed to be the
tribe of your heritage.
Remember Mount Zion, where
you came to dwell.
3 Direct your steps to the perpetual
ruins;
the enemy has destroyed
everything in the sanctuary.

4 Your foes have roared within
your holy place;
they set up their emblems
there.
5 At the upper entrance they
hacked
the wooden trellis with axes.[z]
6 And then, with hatchets and
hammers,
they smashed all its carved
work.
7 They set your sanctuary on fire;
they desecrated the dwelling
place of your name,

w Cn: Heb *Lord* *x* Or *to glory* *y* Heb *rock*
z Cn Compare Gk Syr: Meaning of Heb uncertain

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temptation to think and act like the wicked is felt and resisted, but trying to comprehend is troublesome. **73.17–20** In the turning point of the psalm (v. 17), an encounter with God (cf. Job 42.1–6) in the sanctuary gives the psalmist an understanding that in the end God will deal justly with the wicked (vv. 18–20; cf. Ps 37). **73.21–28** The psalmist now sees the stupidity of focusing on the prosperity of the wicked (vv. 21–22) and expresses confidence in God's presence (vv. 23, 27–28), guidance (v. 24), and protection (vv. 26, 28).

74.1–23 A community prayer for help that seems to assume the destruction of Jerusalem and so may date between 587 and 520 B.C.E. *Maskil.* See note on 32.1–11. *Asaph.* See note on 50.1–23. **74.1–2** Address and introductory cry for help. **74.1** *Why do you cast us off forever?* anticipates the later complaint *How long?* (v. 10). **74.3–8** A description of the destruction of Jerusalem. **74.4** *Emblems,* lit. "signs" (cf. v. 9), perhaps

bringing it to the ground.
8 They said to themselves, "We will utterly subdue them";
they burned all the meeting places of God in the land.

9 We do not see our emblems;
there is no longer any prophet,
and there is no one among us who knows how long.
10 How long, O God, is the foe to scoff?
Is the enemy to revile your name forever?
11 Why do you hold back your hand;
why do you keep your hand in[a] your bosom?

12 Yet God my King is from of old,
working salvation in the earth.
13 You divided the sea by your might;
you broke the heads of the dragons in the waters.
14 You crushed the heads of Leviathan;
you gave him as food[b] for the creatures of the wilderness.
15 You cut openings for springs and torrents;
you dried up ever-flowing streams.
16 Yours is the day, yours also the night;
you established the luminaries[c] and the sun.
17 You have fixed all the bounds of the earth;
you made summer and winter.
18 Remember this, O LORD, how the enemy scoffs,
and an impious people reviles your name.
19 Do not deliver the soul of your dove to the wild animals;
do not forget the life of your poor forever.

20 Have regard for your[d] covenant,
for the dark places of the land are full of the haunts of violence.
21 Do not let the downtrodden be put to shame;
let the poor and needy praise your name.
22 Rise up, O God, plead your cause;
remember how the impious scoff at you all day long.
23 Do not forget the clamor of your foes,
the uproar of your adversaries that goes up continually.

Psalm 75

Thanksgiving for God's Wondrous Deeds

To the leader: Do Not Destroy. A Psalm of Asaph. A Song.

1 We give thanks to you, O God;
we give thanks; your name is near.

a Cn: Heb *do you consume your right hand from*
b Heb *food for the people*
c Or *moon*; Heb *light*
d Gk Syr: Heb *the*

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military standards. **74.9–11** A complaint to God over the absence of divine intervention. **74.9** *Emblems*, probably to be translated as "signs" here. It may mean that the prophetic signs that promised a quick end to suffering have not come true. *There is no longer any prophet* may mean that the speakers have lost all confidence in those prophets still around. There is no prophet who *knows how long* the suffering is to last. For prophetic signs that tell *how long* something will last, see 2 Kings 19.29; Isa 7.14–16. Such failure of contemporary prophecy may be demonstrated in Jer 28.1–4. **74.10** *How long*? See note on 6.3. **74.12–17** Expression of trust and praise of the creator. **74.13–15** The picture is of the mythological creation battle in which the watery forces of chaos, portrayed as monsters, are defeated by the Lord at the beginning of creation. See 93.3; 104.7–9; Job 38.8–11; cf. Isa 27.1. Israel associated this language with God's "creation" of the people in the crossing of the sea (cf. Ex 15.1–18; Isa 51.9–11). Both images may be in view here. **74.18–23** A series of petitions urging God to help and giving various motivations that suggest that God's cause, name, and covenant are at stake in Israel's distress.

75.1–10 A community prayer of thanksgiving. The psalm gives thanks to God and announces divine judgment on the arrogant wicked. *To the leader*. See note on 4.1–8. *Do Not Destroy*. Meaning uncertain. *Asaph*. See note on 50.1–23. **75.1** The community praises God for marvelous

People tell of your wondrous
deeds.

2 At the set time that I appoint
I will judge with equity.
3 When the earth totters, with all
its inhabitants,
it is I who keep its pillars
steady. *Selah*
4 I say to the boastful, "Do not
boast,"
and to the wicked, "Do not lift
up your horn;
5 do not lift up your horn on
high,
or speak with insolent neck."

6 For not from the east or from
the west
and not from the wilderness
comes lifting up;
7 but it is God who executes
judgment,
putting down one and lifting
up another.
8 For in the hand of the LORD
there is a cup
with foaming wine, well mixed;
he will pour a draught from it,
and all the wicked of the earth
shall drain it down to the dregs.
9 But I will rejoice[e] forever;
I will sing praises to the God of
Jacob.

10 All the horns of the wicked I will
cut off,
but the horns of the righteous
shall be exalted.

Psalm 76

Israel's God—Judge of All the Earth

To the leader: with stringed instruments.
A Psalm of Asaph. A Song.

1 In Judah God is known,
his name is great in Israel.
2 His abode has been established in
Salem,
his dwelling place in Zion.
3 There he broke the flashing
arrows,
the shield, the sword, and the
weapons of war. *Selah*

4 Glorious are you, more majestic
than the everlasting
mountains.[f]
5 The stouthearted were stripped
of their spoil;
they sank into sleep;
none of the troops
was able to lift a hand.
6 At your rebuke, O God of Jacob,
both rider and horse lay
stunned.

7 But you indeed are awesome!
Who can stand before you
when once your anger is
roused?
8 From the heavens you uttered
judgment;
the earth feared and was still
9 when God rose up to establish
judgment,

e Gk: Heb *declare* f Gk: Heb *the mountains of prey*

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acts of deliverance. **75.2–5** The Lord speaks through a prophetic or priestly voice to announce righteous judgment. **75.3** *Totters.* See 46.2–3, 6. *Selah.* See note on 3.2. **75.4–5** *Horn,* a symbol of might or power (cf. v. 10). **75.6–8** God's judgment of the wicked. **75.7** *Putting down one and lifting up another* is a frequent way of expressing God's vindication of the innocent and righteous and judgment of the wicked (see 113.7; 145.8; 146.6). **75.8** *Cup,* a symbol of divine judgment (see 11.6; Isa 51.17; Jer 25.15, 28; Hab 2.16). **75.9–10** The themes of praise and divine judgment are brought together in the conclusion. *I,* either the community or its representative in v. 9 but the Lord in v. 10.

76.1–12 A song of Zion. See Pss 46; 48; 137.3. *To the leader: with stringed instruments.* See note on 4.1–8. *Asaph.* See note on 50.1–23. **76.1–2** God's abode and place of powerful activity is Zion or Jerusalem. **76.2** *Abode,* lit. "lair" or "covert" (of a fierce animal). *Salem,* an ancient name for Jerusalem (see Gen 14.18). **76.3–6** The Lord's battle against the armies. **76.3** God's destruction of all the weapons of war is associated with the divine activity from Zion (see 46.9). *Flashing arrows,* lit. "flames of the bow," may refer to the fire arrows of besiegers. *Selah.* See note on 3.2. **76.4–6** The destruction of the weapons is matched by rendering the warriors powerless, a theme of Israel's ancient holy wars. **76.6** *Rider and horse.* See Ex 15.1. **76.7–9** The victory is an act of divine judgment against the oppressive rulers and of salvation for the weak

to save all the oppressed of the
earth. *Selah*

10 Human wrath serves only to
praise you,
when you bind the last bit of
your[g] wrath around you.
11 Make vows to the LORD your
God, and perform them;
let all who are around him
bring gifts
to the one who is awesome,
12 who cuts off the spirit of princes,
who inspires fear in the kings
of the earth.

Psalm 77

God's Mighty Deeds Recalled

To the leader: according to Jeduthun. Of Asaph. A Psalm.

1 I cry aloud to God,
aloud to God, that he may
hear me.
2 In the day of my trouble I seek
the Lord;
in the night my hand is
stretched out without
wearying;
my soul refuses to be
comforted.
3 I think of God, and I moan;
I meditate, and my spirit faints.
Selah

4 You keep my eyelids from
closing;
I am so troubled that I cannot
speak.
5 I consider the days of old,
and remember the years of
long ago.
6 I commune[h] with my heart in
the night;
I meditate and search my
spirit:[i]
7 "Will the Lord spurn forever,
and never again be favorable?
8 Has his steadfast love ceased
forever?
Are his promises at an end for
all time?
9 Has God forgotten to be
gracious?
Has he in anger shut up his
compassion?" *Selah*
10 And I say, "It is my grief
that the right hand of the Most
High has changed."

11 I will call to mind the deeds of
the LORD;
I will remember your wonders
of old.
12 I will meditate on all your work,
and muse on your mighty
deeds.
13 Your way, O God, is holy.
What god is so great as
our God?
14 You are the God who works
wonders;
you have displayed your might
among the peoples.
15 With your strong arm you
redeemed your people,
the descendants of Jacob and
Joseph. *Selah*

[g] Heb lacks *your* [h] Gk Syr: Heb *My music*
[i] Syr Jerome: Heb *my spirit searches*

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and afflicted. **76.10** The underlying Hebrew of this verse is uncertain and ambiguous. *Human wrath* could also be read as God's "wrath against humans." The meaning, at any rate, is something like, when God crushes those that rise against him, it will resound to God's praise. God's wrath in the OT is a dimension of God's righteousness and justice directed against evildoers. It is also tempered by God's love and compassion (see 103.8; Ex 34.6; Num 14.18; Isa 54.7–8; Hos 11.8–9; Jon 4.2). **76.11–12** An exhortation to the community to praise the God (v. 11), who does what the psalm has declared so vividly (v. 12).

77.1–20 A prayer for help that moves into a hymn as the psalmist recalls God's wondrous acts. *To the leader.* See note on 4.1–8. *According to Jeduthun,* i.e., in the style of one of David's musicians (1 Chr 9.16; 16.38). *Asaph.* See note on 50.1–23. **77.1–10** The prayer for help. **77.1–3** A cry to God. **77.2, 6** *In the night* is often the time of prayer. *My hand is stretched out* in prayer. **77.3** *Selah.* See note on 3.2. **77.4–10** A complaint against God that centers in questions about God's love and faithfulness. **77.11–20** The song of praise. **77.11–15** As a way of gaining confidence that God has not forgotten to be gracious (v. 9) but will give help in the present distress, the praying one recalls the wonderful redemptive acts

16 When the waters saw you, O God,
when the waters saw you, they were afraid;
the very deep trembled.
17 The clouds poured out water;
the skies thundered;
your arrows flashed on every side.
18 The crash of your thunder was in the whirlwind;
your lightnings lit up the world;
the earth trembled and shook.
19 Your way was through the sea,
your path, through the mighty waters;
yet your footprints were unseen.
20 You led your people like a flock
by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

Psalm 78

God's Goodness and Israel's Ingratitude

A Maskil of Asaph.

1 Give ear, O my people, to my teaching;
incline your ears to the words of my mouth.
2 I will open my mouth in a parable;
I will utter dark sayings from of old,
3 things that we have heard and known,
that our ancestors have told us.
4 We will not hide them from their children;
we will tell to the coming generation
the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might,
and the wonders that he has done.

5 He established a decree in Jacob,
and appointed a law in Israel,
which he commanded our ancestors
to teach to their children;
6 that the next generation might know them,
the children yet unborn,
and rise up and tell them to their children,
7 so that they should set their hope in God,
and not forget the works of God,
but keep his commandments;
8 and that they should not be like their ancestors,
a stubborn and rebellious generation,
a generation whose heart was not steadfast,
whose spirit was not faithful to God.

9 The Ephraimites, armed with[j] the bow,

j Heb *armed with shooting*

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of God for the people in the past. **77.16–20** A recollection of the powerful appearance of God at the crossing of the Red Sea by the Israelites in their escape from Egypt. **77.16** *The waters* and *the very deep* may be the primeval waters of chaos at the creation as well as the waters of the Red Sea. **77.17** *Your arrows*, i.e., lightning bolts. **77.19** *Your way was through the sea* in leading the Israelites across the Red Sea. *Yet your footprints were unseen* refers to the appearance and work of God that is without visible proof, in the present as well as in the past. **77.20** *Moses and Aaron*, the leaders of Israel during the exodus and the journey through the wilderness. See the book of Exodus.

78.1–72 A historical psalm (cf. Pss 105; 106; 136) recounting the story of God's care of Israel and the people's response of continuing sin and faithlessness. The account goes only down to the time of David (vv. 70–71). It may be compared with Deut 32. The recital is meant to be instructive. *Maskil.* See note on 32.1–11. *Asaph.* See note on 50.1–23. **78.1–8** Passing on God's instruction (vv. 1–5) so that each generation might learn to trust in God and not forget the divine teaching (vv. 6–8). **78.1** The speaker of this verse is probably some priest or teacher of wisdom. **78.2** *Parable*, a poem or song that is didactic in character. *Dark sayings*, lit. "riddles." The story is seen as having mysterious or enigmatic dimensions, possibly the puzzle of why Israel rebelled against the God who cared for them. **78.5** *Decree*, i.e., covenant. See the term "covenant" in parallel with "law" in v. 10 as "decree" is in parallel with it here. **78.8** Cf. the Deuteronomic law for punishing a "stubborn and rebellious" son in Deut 21.18–21. **78.9–16** The people forgot all that the Lord had done for them in the deliver-

turned back on the day of
battle.
10 They did not keep God's
covenant,
but refused to walk according
to his law.
11 They forgot what he had done,
and the miracles that he had
shown them.
12 In the sight of their ancestors he
worked marvels
in the land of Egypt, in the
fields of Zoan.
13 He divided the sea and let them
pass through it,
and made the waters stand like
a heap.
14 In the daytime he led them with
a cloud,
and all night long with a fiery
light.
15 He split rocks open in the
wilderness,
and gave them drink
abundantly as from the
deep.
16 He made streams come out of the
rock,
and caused waters to flow down
like rivers.

17 Yet they sinned still more
against him,
rebelling against the Most High
in the desert.
18 They tested God in their heart
by demanding the food they
craved.
19 They spoke against God, saying,
"Can God spread a table in the
wilderness?
20 Even though he struck the rock
so that water gushed out
and torrents overflowed,
can he also give bread,
or provide meat for his
people?"
21 Therefore, when the LORD heard,
he was full of rage;
a fire was kindled against
Jacob,
his anger mounted against
Israel,
22 because they had no faith in
God,
and did not trust his saving
power.
23 Yet he commanded the skies
above,
and opened the doors of
heaven;
24 he rained down on them manna
to eat,
and gave them the grain of
heaven.
25 Mortals ate of the bread of
angels;
he sent them food in
abundance.
26 He caused the east wind to blow
in the heavens,
and by his power he led out the
south wind;
27 he rained flesh upon them like
dust,
winged birds like the sand of
the seas;
28 he let them fall within their
camp,
all around their dwellings.
29 And they ate and were well
filled,
for he gave them what they
craved.
30 But before they had satisfied
their craving,
while the food was still in their
mouths,
31 the anger of God rose against
them
and he killed the strongest of
them,
and laid low the flower of
Israel.

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ance from Egypt and in guiding them through the wilderness. **78.9** It is unclear what incident is referred to here. **78.12** *Marvels in the land of Egypt*, the plagues. *Zoan*, a city in the Nile Delta, probably the "supply city" called Rameses in Ex 1.11. **78.13** The crossing of the Red Sea. *Heap*. Cf. Ex 15.8. **78.14–16** God's leading and care of the Israelites in the wilderness. Cf. Ex 17.1–6; Num 20.2–13. **78.17–31** The people continued to rebel in the wilderness despite God's provision (Ex 16–17). So God came in wrath against them. **78.18** *Tested God*. See Ex 17.7. **78.19** *Spread a table*. Cf. 23.5. **78.24** *Manna*, God's provision of food in the wilderness, possibly a natural substance from the tamarisk tree released by the actions of certain insects and hardening at night (see

32 In spite of all this they still sinned;
they did not believe in his wonders.
33 So he made their days vanish like a breath,
and their years in terror.
34 When he killed them, they sought for him;
they repented and sought God earnestly.
35 They remembered that God was their rock,
the Most High God their redeemer.
36 But they flattered him with their mouths;
they lied to him with their tongues.
37 Their heart was not steadfast toward him;
they were not true to his covenant.
38 Yet he, being compassionate,
forgave their iniquity,
and did not destroy them;
often he restrained his anger,
and did not stir up all his wrath.
39 He remembered that they were but flesh,
a wind that passes and does not come again.
40 How often they rebelled against him in the wilderness
and grieved him in the desert!
41 They tested God again and again,
and provoked the Holy One of Israel.
42 They did not keep in mind his power,
or the day when he redeemed them from the foe;
43 when he displayed his signs in Egypt,
and his miracles in the fields of Zoan.
44 He turned their rivers to blood,
so that they could not drink of their streams.
45 He sent among them swarms of flies, which devoured them,
and frogs, which destroyed them.
46 He gave their crops to the caterpillar,
and the fruit of their labor to the locust.
47 He destroyed their vines with hail,
and their sycamores with frost.
48 He gave over their cattle to the hail,
and their flocks to thunderbolts.
49 He let loose on them his fierce anger,
wrath, indignation, and distress,
a company of destroying angels.
50 He made a path for his anger;
he did not spare them from death,
but gave their lives over to the plague.
51 He struck all the firstborn in Egypt,
the first issue of their strength in the tents of Ham.
52 Then he led out his people like sheep,
and guided them in the wilderness like a flock.
53 He led them in safety, so that they were not afraid;
but the sea overwhelmed their enemies.
54 And he brought them to his holy hill,
to the mountain that his right hand had won.
55 He drove out nations before them;
he apportioned them for a possession

Num 11.7–9). **78.26–31** See Num 11.31–35. **78.32–55** The continued sin of the people is met by divine anger, but anger tempered with compassion, so that the Lord does not destroy despite the degree to which the people test God. **78.33–34** Probably the death of the wilderness generation (Num 14.22–24; Deut 1.34–36; 2.14–15). **78.42–51** A recounting of the plagues as a powerful manifestation of God's redemptive care of Israel, which the people continually forgot (Ex 7–12). **78.43** *Zoan.* See note on 78.12. **78.51** *Ham,* a son of Noah and traditionally viewed as the ancestor of the Egyptians according to Gen 10.6. **78.52–55** The journey from Egypt into Canaan as a divine leading. **78.54** *Holy hill, mountain,* probably the land of

and settled the tribes of Israel
in their tents.

56 Yet they tested the Most
High God,
and rebelled against him.
They did not observe his
decrees,
57 but turned away and were
faithless like their
ancestors;
they twisted like a
treacherous bow.
58 For they provoked him to anger
with their high places;
they moved him to jealousy
with their idols.
59 When God heard, he was full of
wrath,
and he utterly rejected Israel.
60 He abandoned his dwelling at
Shiloh,
the tent where he dwelt among
mortals,
61 and delivered his power to
captivity,
his glory to the hand of
the foe.
62 He gave his people to the sword,
and vented his wrath on his
heritage.
63 Fire devoured their young men,
and their girls had no marriage
song.
64 Their priests fell by the sword,
and their widows made no
lamentation.
65 Then the Lord awoke as from
sleep,
like a warrior shouting because
of wine.
66 He put his adversaries to rout;
he put them to everlasting
disgrace.

67 He rejected the tent of Joseph,
he did not choose the tribe of
Ephraim;
68 but he chose the tribe of Judah,
Mount Zion, which he loves.
69 He built his sanctuary like the
high heavens,
like the earth, which he has
founded forever.
70 He chose his servant David,
and took him from the
sheepfolds;
71 from tending the nursing ewes he
brought him
to be the shepherd of his
people Jacob,
of Israel, his inheritance.
72 With upright heart he tended
them,
and guided them with skillful
hand.

Psalm 79

Plea for Mercy for Jerusalem

A Psalm of Asaph.

1 O God, the nations have come
into your inheritance;
they have defiled your holy
temple;

Canaan. **78.56–66** The people's sin and God's consequent anger, now in the time of settlement in Canaan, the period of the judges. **78.56** *Decrees*, the commandments and statutes that made up the requirements of the covenant. See note on 78.5. **78.58** *High places*, sites of idolatrous worship. **78.60** *Dwelling at Shiloh*, the tent shrine at the central sanctuary of Israel during the period of the judges (Josh 18.1; 1 Sam 1.9). Its destruction is mentioned by Jeremiah in Jer 7.12–15; 26.6. **78.61** *His power* and *his glory* are references to the ark of the covenant, which was taken by the Philistines at the battle of Ebenezer (1 Sam 4.1–7.1). The Philistine conquest was an act of judgment upon Israel by the Lord. **78.65–66** The defeat of the Philistines through the victories of Saul and David. The imagery is of God as a mighty warrior roused for battle and stimulated by wine. **78.67–72** God's choice of Zion as the place of divine dwelling and of David as king. The psalm sees the culmination of the story of Israel in the rejection of the northern tribes (Ephraim) and the choice of Judah as the locus of divine dwelling and human leadership.

79.1–13 A prayer by the community for help because Jerusalem and the temple have been destroyed, probably the Babylonian destruction in 587 B.C.E. The frequent use of "your" in reference to God indicates that the community sees the destruction as in some sense an attack on God and expects a divine response as a defense of God's own reputation. *Asaph*. See note on 50.1–23. **79.1–5** A complaint to God because of the destruction of Jerusalem and its people. **79.1** *Your inheritance*. See Deut 32.8–9. Judah's loss is God's

they have laid Jerusalem in
ruins.
2 They have given the bodies of
your servants
to the birds of the air for food,
the flesh of your faithful to the
wild animals of the earth.
3 They have poured out their
blood like water
all around Jerusalem,
and there was no one to bury
them.
4 We have become a taunt to our
neighbors,
mocked and derided by those
around us.

5 How long, O LORD? Will you be
angry forever?
Will your jealous wrath burn
like fire?
6 Pour out your anger on the
nations
that do not know you,
and on the kingdoms
that do not call on your name.
7 For they have devoured Jacob
and laid waste his habitation.

8 Do not remember against us the
iniquities of our ancestors;
let your compassion come
speedily to meet us,
for we are brought very low.
9 Help us, O God of our salvation,
for the glory of your name;
deliver us, and forgive our sins,
for your name's sake.
10 Why should the nations say,
"Where is their God?"
Let the avenging of the
outpoured blood of your
servants
be known among the nations
before our eyes.

11 Let the groans of the prisoners
come before you;
according to your great power
preserve those doomed
to die.
12 Return sevenfold into the bosom
of our neighbors
the taunts with which they
taunted you, O Lord!
13 Then we your people, the flock
of your pasture,
will give thanks to you forever;
from generation to generation
we will recount your praise.

Psalm 80

The Tragedy of the Forsaken Vine

To the leader: on Lilies, a Covenant. Of
Asaph. A Psalm.

1 Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel,
you who lead Joseph like a
flock!
You who are enthroned upon the
cherubim, shine forth
2 before Ephraim and Benjamin
and Manasseh.
Stir up your might,
and come to save us!

3 Restore us, O God;

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loss as well. **79.2–3** Mass executions are reported after the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem, though not in Jerusalem itself (2 Kings 25.18–21). *There was no one to bury them.* See Deut 21.23; 28.26; Jer 7.33; 8.2. **79.4** The specific character of the *taunt* is seen in the question in v. 10. **79.5** *How long?* See note on 6.3. **79.6–12** Petitions for deliverance of the people and destruction of the enemies. **79.10** *"Where is their God?"* is the typical taunt of the enemy (cf. 42.3, 10; 115.2; Joel 2.17; Mic 7.10). **79.12** *Sevenfold* designates completeness of retaliation (Gen 4.15, 24; Lev 26.21, 24, 28). *Taunted you.* See note on 79.10. **79.13** An expression of confidence as the community anticipates its praise of and thanksgiving to the Lord.

80.1–19 A community prayer for the restoration of the people; one of the *people's prayers* (v. 4). *To the leader.* See note on 4.1–8. *On Lilies.* See note on 45.1–17. *Covenant,* sometimes translated as "testimony" (cf. Ps 60). *Asaph.* See note on Ps 50.1–23. **80.1–3** Petitions for God as shepherd and warrior to deliver the people. **80.1** *Shepherd.* See 23.1; 78.52; Isa 40.11. The image is associated with kings and rulers (e.g., Jer 23.1–6; Ezek 34). *Enthroned upon the cherubim* refers to the Lord's invisible abode upon the cherubim of the ark of the covenant (1 Sam 4.4). *Shine forth* is a way of speaking of God's appearing in might to do battle (cf. 50.2; 94.1). *Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh* may refer to all the tribes of the Northern Kingdom or to those left after other tribal groups had been exiled by the Assyrians. The tribes were understood to march in this order behind the ark in the journey through the wilderness (Num 2.32–34). **80.3** A refrain (see

let your face shine, that we may
be saved.

4 O LORD God of hosts,
how long will you be angry with
your people's prayers?
5 You have fed them with the
bread of tears,
and given them tears to drink
in full measure.
6 You make us the scorn[k] of our
neighbors;
our enemies laugh among
themselves.

7 Restore us, O God of hosts;
let your face shine, that we may
be saved.

8 You brought a vine out of Egypt;
you drove out the nations and
planted it.
9 You cleared the ground for it;
it took deep root and filled the
land.
10 The mountains were covered with
its shade,
the mighty cedars with its
branches;
11 it sent out its branches to the sea,
and its shoots to the River.
12 Why then have you broken down
its walls,
so that all who pass along the
way pluck its fruit?
13 The boar from the forest
ravages it,
and all that move in the field
feed on it.

14 Turn again, O God of hosts;
look down from heaven,
and see;
have regard for this vine,
15 the stock that your right hand
planted.[l]
16 They have burned it with fire,
they have cut it down;[m]
may they perish at the rebuke
of your countenance.
17 But let your hand be upon the
one at your right hand,
the one whom you made strong
for yourself.
18 Then we will never turn back
from you;
give us life, and we will call on
your name.

19 Restore us, O LORD God of hosts;
let your face shine, that we may
be saved.

Psalm 81

God's Appeal to Stubborn Israel

To the leader: according to The Gittith.
Of Asaph.

1 Sing aloud to God our strength;
shout for joy to the God of
Jacob.
2 Raise a song, sound the
tambourine,
the sweet lyre with the harp.
3 Blow the trumpet at the new
moon,
at the full moon, on our
festal day.

k Syr: Heb *strife* *l* Heb adds from verse 17 *and upon the one whom you made strong for yourself*
m Cn: Heb *it is cut down*

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vv. 7, 19), as in Pss 42–43; 46. *Let your face shine.* See Num 6.25; note on 31.16. **80.4–7** The complaint of the people against God. **80.4** *How long?* See note on 6.3. *People's prayers* is probably the term for the community laments or prayers for help such as are found here and in Pss 44; 74; 79. **80.6** *Scorn.* See note on 79.10. **80.8–19** The vine (Israel) that the Lord brought out of Egypt and planted is now ravaged. For vine and vineyard imagery in relation to Israel and Judah, see Isa 5.1–7; 27.2–6; Jer 2.21; 12.10; Ezek 15.1–8; Hos 10.1. **80.8** The redemption of Israel in the exodus and their settlement in the land. **80.9–11** Israel's gradual spread in and control of the land. **80.10** *Mighty cedars.* See 104.16. **80.11** The extent of the Davidic empire. *Sea,* the Mediterranean. *River,* the Euphrates River in Mesopotamia. **80.12–13** A reiteration of the complaint to God. **80.14–19** A plea to God to restore the vine of Israel to life. **80.17** *The one at your right hand,* i.e., the king.

81.1–16 A liturgy with priestly or prophetic admonishment of the people, probably to be sung at the fall Festival of Tabernacles (cf. Pss 50; 95 for similar language and character). *To the leader.* See note on 4.1–8. *According to The Gittith.* See note on 8.1–9. *Asaph.* See note on 50.1–23. **81.1–5a** A summons to worship with festival shouting and celebration. **81.3** *Our festal day* suggests one of the three major festivals, in this

4 For it is a statute for Israel,
an ordinance of the God of Jacob.
5 He made it a decree in Joseph,
when he went out over[n] the land of Egypt.

I hear a voice I had not known:
6 "I relieved your[o] shoulder of the burden;
your[o] hands were freed from the basket.
7 In distress you called, and I rescued you;
I answered you in the secret place of thunder;
I tested you at the waters of Meribah. *Selah*
8 Hear, O my people, while I admonish you;
O Israel, if you would but listen to me!
9 There shall be no strange god among you;
you shall not bow down to a foreign god.
10 I am the LORD your God,
who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.
Open your mouth wide and I will fill it.

11 "But my people did not listen to my voice;
Israel would not submit to me.
12 So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts,
to follow their own counsels.
13 O that my people would listen to me,
that Israel would walk in my ways!
14 Then I would quickly subdue their enemies,
and turn my hand against their foes.
15 Those who hate the LORD would cringe before him,
and their doom would last forever.
16 I would feed you[p] with the finest of the wheat,
and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you."

Psalm 82

Justice as the Order of the Universe

A Psalm of Asaph.

1 God has taken his place in the divine council;
in the midst of the gods he holds judgment:
2 "How long will you judge unjustly

n Or *against* *o* Heb *his* *p* Cn Compare verse 16b: Heb *he would feed him*

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case Tabernacles (or Booths). **81.4–5a** The festival has been appointed by God as a regulation of the people's life (Lev 23.33–36, 39–43; Deut 16.13–15; cf. Num 29). **81.5a** For the identification of the Festival of Tabernacles (or Booths) as a regulation from the time of the exodus out of Egypt, see Lev 23.41–43. *Joseph,* a term for Israel in Egypt. **81.5b–16** A prophetic or priestly voice speaks for God. **81.5b–10** The Lord's deliverance of Israel in the exodus is a lesson for the people. The one who redeemed the Israelites called them to an uncompromising loyalty as God's people. **81.5b** *A voice I had not known* probably refers to the mysterious voice of the Lord, thus giving authority to the words of God that are quoted in the following verses. **81.6** *Burden, basket,* referring to the labors in Egypt. **81.7** *In distress you called.* Cf. Ex 2.23; 3.7–8. *Waters of Meribah.* Cf. Ex 17.1–7; Num 20.1–13. *Selah.* See note on 3.2. **81.9–10** Allusion to the primary commandment (v. 9) and the prologue (v. 10) to the Ten Commandments (Ex 20.2–5; Deut 5.6–9). *Open your mouth wide and I will fill it* may be dislocated from an original location after v. 5b. **81.11–12** Divine judgment because of the people's failure to keep the commandment. **81.13–16** God's admonishing hope that the people will repent and be delivered. **81.15** *Hate the LORD,* a further allusion to the primary commandment to worship the Lord alone (Ex 20.5b; Deut 5.9b).

82.1–8 A call for God's rule of the nations to ensure justice for the weak. The psalm is a literary report of the action of the divine council or heavenly assembly similar to the prophetic reports recounted in 1 Kings 22.19–23; Isa 6.1–13; Jer 23.18–22. A common conception in the ancient Near East, the council of the gods was understood to be the place in which the governance of the universe was carried out. *Asaph.* See note on Ps 50.1–23. **82.1–4** The God of Israel rises in the council of the gods to accuse the gods of the nations of not having maintained the right to justice of the weak and the poor, the primary criterion of a just order in ancient Israel. **82.2** *How long?* is the typical complaint against God of the sufferer

and show partiality to the
wicked? *Selah*
3 Give justice to the weak and the
orphan;
maintain the right of the lowly
and the destitute.
4 Rescue the weak and the needy;
deliver them from the hand of
the wicked."

5 They have neither knowledge nor
understanding,
they walk around in darkness;
all the foundations of the earth
are shaken.

6 I say, "You are gods,
children of the Most High, all
of you;
7 nevertheless, you shall die like
mortals,
and fall like any prince."[q]

8 Rise up, O God, judge the earth;
for all the nations belong
to you!

Psalm 83

Prayer for Judgment on Israel's Foes

A Song. A Psalm of Asaph.

1 O God, do not keep silence;
do not hold your peace or be
still, O God!
2 Even now your enemies are in
tumult;
those who hate you have raised
their heads.
3 They lay crafty plans against your
people;
they consult together against
those you protect.
4 They say, "Come, let us wipe
them out as a nation;
let the name of Israel be
remembered no more."
5 They conspire with one accord;
against you they make a
covenant—
6 the tents of Edom and the
Ishmaelites,
Moab and the Hagrites,
7 Gebal and Ammon and Amalek,
Philistia with the inhabitants of
Tyre;
8 Assyria also has joined them;
they are the strong arm of the
children of Lot. *Selah*

9 Do to them as you did to Midian,
as to Sisera and Jabin at the
Wadi Kishon,
10 who were destroyed at En-dor,
who became dung for the
ground.
11 Make their nobles like Oreb and
Zeeb,
all their princes like Zebah and
Zalmunna,
12 who said, "Let us take the
pastures of God
for our own possession."

q Or *fall as one man, O princes*

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in prayer. Here it is taken up by God on behalf of the victims of oppression (cf. 6.3; 13.1–2; 74.10; 94.3). It also becomes a part of prophetic indictment of the wickedness of the people (Jer 4.14; 13.27; 23.26; Hos 8.5; Hab 2.6). *Selah.* See note on 3.2. **82.5** Either blindly or intentionally the gods do not know the way of justice. As a consequence, the just order of the universe is undermined. **82.6–7** The God of Israel strips the heavenly powers of their divine character and condemns the immortal gods to mortality. V. 6a is quoted in Jn 10.34. **82.8** The psalmist, perhaps a priestly or prophetic voice, calls upon God to take over the rule of the nations from all the other gods.

83.1–18 A prayer of the community for God's help against enemies. *Asaph.* See note on 50.1–23. **83.1–8** A plea to God not to be inactive and quiescent in the face of the conspiracy of the nations against Israel. In their plotting against Israel they conspire also against God (v. 5) and so are God's enemies as well (v. 2). The fate of the Lord of Israel is seen as allied to the fate of the Lord's people. **83.6–8** There is no particular historical moment with which such a grouping of nations against Israel can be associated. **83.8** *Children of Lot,* the Moabites and Ammonites (Gen 19.36–38). *Selah.* See note on 3.2. **83.9–18** Petitions for God's destruction of the enemies. **83.9** *Midian* alludes to Gideon's destruction of the Midianites (Judg 6–8). *Sisera and Jabin* were defeated by the Israelites under the leadership of Deborah and Barak (Judg 4–5). **83.11** *Oreb and Zeeb, Zebah and Zalmunna,* Midianite leaders defeated by Israel (Judg 7.25; 8.4–21).

13 O my God, make them like
whirling dust,[r]
like chaff before the wind.
14 As fire consumes the forest,
as the flame sets the mountains
ablaze,
15 so pursue them with your
tempest
and terrify them with your
hurricane.
16 Fill their faces with shame,
so that they may seek your
name, O LORD.
17 Let them be put to shame and
dismayed forever;
let them perish in disgrace.
18 Let them know that you alone,
whose name is the LORD,
are the Most High over all the
earth.

Psalm 84

The Joy of Worship in the Temple

To the leader: according to The Gittith. Of the Korahites. A Psalm.

1 How lovely is your dwelling place,
O LORD of hosts!
2 My soul longs, indeed it faints
for the courts of the LORD;
my heart and my flesh sing
for joy
to the living God.

3 Even the sparrow finds a home,
and the swallow a nest for
herself,
where she may lay her young,
at your altars, O LORD of hosts,
my King and my God.
4 Happy are those who live in your
house,
ever singing your praise. *Selah*

5 Happy are those whose strength
is in you,
in whose heart are the
highways to Zion.[s]
6 As they go through the valley of
Baca
they make it a place of springs;
the early rain also covers it with
pools.
7 They go from strength to
strength;
the God of gods will be seen
in Zion.

8 O LORD God of hosts, hear my
prayer;
give ear, O God of Jacob! *Selah*
9 Behold our shield, O God;
look on the face of your
anointed.

10 For a day in your courts is better
than a thousand elsewhere.
I would rather be a doorkeeper
in the house of my God
than live in the tents of
wickedness.
11 For the LORD God is a sun and
shield;
he bestows favor and honor.
No good thing does the LORD
withhold
from those who walk uprightly.
12 O LORD of hosts,
happy is everyone who trusts
in you.

Psalm 85

Prayer for the Restoration of God's Favor

To the leader. Of the Korahites. A Psalm.

1 LORD, you were favorable to your
land;

r Or *a tumbleweed* s Heb lacks *to Zion*

84.1–12 A song of Zion for one who makes pilgrimage to the temple, possibly at the autumn Festival of Tabernacles (Booths), and rejoices in being able to be in the presence of God. *To the leader.* See note on 4.1–8. *According to The Gittith.* See note on 8.1–9. *Korahites.* See note on 42.1–43.5. **84.1–4** Longing for the sanctuary (cf. 42.1–2). **84.4** *Selah.* See note on 3.2. **84.5–7** The joy and blessing of journeying to the sanctuary. **84.6** The *valley of Baca* is unknown but seems to be some arid place on the way to Jerusalem. *They make it a place of springs.* For the notion of God opening up springs of water for people journeying through arid desert on their way to Jerusalem, cf. 107.33; Isa 35.6–7; 41.18; 43.20; 48.21. **84.7** *From strength to strength.* Cf. Isa 40.31. **84.8–9** A prayer of intercession for the king (*our shield, your anointed*). **84.10–12** The favor and protection of God in the sanctuary.

85.1–13 A community prayer for deliverance by God. *To the leader.* See note on 4.1–8. *Korahites.*

you restored the fortunes of
Jacob.
2 You forgave the iniquity of your
people;
you pardoned all their sin.
Selah
3 You withdrew all your wrath;
you turned from your hot
anger.

4 Restore us again, O God of our
salvation,
and put away your indignation
toward us.
5 Will you be angry with us
forever?
Will you prolong your anger to
all generations?
6 Will you not revive us again,
so that your people may rejoice
in you?
7 Show us your steadfast love,
O LORD,
and grant us your salvation.

8 Let me hear what God the LORD
will speak,
for he will speak peace to his
people,
to his faithful, to those who
turn to him in their
hearts.[t]
9 Surely his salvation is at hand for
those who fear him,
that his glory may dwell in our
land.

10 Steadfast love and faithfulness
will meet;
righteousness and peace will
kiss each other.
11 Faithfulness will spring up from
the ground,
and righteousness will look
down from the sky.
12 The LORD will give what is good,
and our land will yield its
increase.
13 Righteousness will go before him,
and will make a path for his
steps.

Psalm 86

Supplication for Help Against Enemies

A Prayer of David.

1 Incline your ear, O LORD, and
answer me,
for I am poor and needy.
2 Preserve my life, for I am
devoted to you;
save your servant who trusts
in you.
You are my God; 3 be gracious to
me, O Lord,
for to you do I cry all day long.
4 Gladden the soul of your servant,
for to you, O Lord, I lift up my
soul.
5 For you, O Lord, are good and
forgiving,
abounding in steadfast love to
all who call on you.
6 Give ear, O LORD, to my prayer;
listen to my cry of supplication.
7 In the day of my trouble I call
on you,
for you will answer me.

8 There is none like you among the
gods, O Lord,
nor are there any works like
yours.

t Gk: Heb *but let them not turn back to folly*

See note on 42.1–43.5. **85.1–3** Recollection of God's forgiveness and favor in the past. The particular occasion referred to is not indicated in the psalm. It may have been the return from exile in Babylon. *Selah*. See note on 3.2. **85.4–7** The prayer itself that God may grant forgiveness and favor in the present distress. **85.8–13** The word of the Lord is declared in this situation. It is an announcement of salvation by the psalmist or possibly by a priest or prophet. The message is one of peace or well-being (v. 8), which is then elaborated in the following verses. **85.9** *Fear*. See note on 34.7. **85.10–13** *Steadfast love, faithfulness, righteousness*, and *peace* are divine attributes here personified as messengers or servants who meet in concord (v. 10), fill and cover the earth (v. 12), and go before the Lord as heralds before a king (v. 13). Cf. 89.14.

86.1–17 An individual prayer for help. **86.1–7** A series of petitions for God's attention (vv. 1, 6–7) and help (vv. 2–4) are grounded in a number of reasons justifying the prayer and God's help. The reasons have to do with the plight of the psalmist (vv. 1b, 7a), the devotion of the psalmist (vv. 2a, 2b, 3b, 4b), and the nature of God (vv. 2b, 5, 7b). **86.8–13** Praise and thanksgiving for God's help. **86.8–10** Hymnic exaltation of the power and glory of God. **86.8** See Ex

9 All the nations you have made
shall come
and bow down before you,
O Lord,
and shall glorify your name.
10 For you are great and do
wondrous things;
you alone are God.
11 Teach me your way, O LORD,
that I may walk in your truth;
give me an undivided heart to
revere your name.
12 I give thanks to you, O Lord my
God, with my whole heart,
and I will glorify your name
forever.
13 For great is your steadfast love
toward me;
you have delivered my soul
from the depths of Sheol.

14 O God, the insolent rise up
against me;
a band of ruffians seeks my
life,
and they do not set you before
them.
15 But you, O Lord, are a God
merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in
steadfast love and
faithfulness.
16 Turn to me and be gracious
to me;
give your strength to your
servant;
save the child of your serving
girl.
17 Show me a sign of your favor,
so that those who hate me may
see it and be put to shame,
because you, LORD, have helped
me and comforted me.

Psalm 87

The Joy of Living in Zion

Of the Korahites. A Psalm. A Song.

1 On the holy mount stands the city
he founded;
2 the LORD loves the gates of
Zion
more than all the dwellings of
Jacob.
3 Glorious things are spoken
of you,
O city of God. *Selah*

4 Among those who know me I
mention Rahab and
Babylon;
Philistia too, and Tyre, with
Ethiopia[u]—
"This one was born there,"
they say.

5 And of Zion it shall be said,
"This one and that one were
born in it";
for the Most High himself will
establish it.
6 The LORD records, as he registers
the peoples,

u Or *Nubia*; Heb *Cush*

15.11; Deut 33.26. **86.11** A prayer for guidance. **86.12–13** A vow of thanksgiving in anticipation of deliverance by God. **86.13** *Sheol*. See note on 6.5. **86.14–17** The prayer for help is renewed; the reasons set forth are rooted in God's gracious character (vv. 15, 17b). **86.14** The enemies of the psalmist are often characterized as arrogant and indifferent toward God. **86.15** The psalmist characterizes God in terms of the ancient confessional and liturgical formula of Ex 33.19; 34.6; Num 14.18; Pss 103.8; 145.8. Cf. 86.5. **86.16** *Child of your serving girl*, a synonym for *your servant*; cf. 116.16.

87.1–7 A song in praise of Zion. *Korahites*. See note on 42.1–43.5. **87.1–3** Praise of Zion, or Jerusalem, as God's beloved city. *Holy mount*, lit. "hills of holiness," possibly reflecting the fact that Jerusalem is built on several hills, but maybe referring to a more mythological notion of primeval mountains. *The dwellings of Jacob*, probably the other towns and cities. *City of God*. See 46.4; 48.1, 8. *Selah*. See note on 3.2. **87.4–6** Zion is the mother city of all who know the Lord, wherever they are born. **87.4** The places may represent proselytes to the worship of the God of Israel, or Israelites who have been dispersed to those countries and cities, or both. *Rahab*, the name of an ancient mythological monster defeated by the Lord, later used as a poetic name for Egypt (89.10; Job 26.12; Isa 30.7; 51.9). **87.5** *Most High*. See Deut 32.8, where this epithet is used to designate God as the one who allotted the nations. **87.6** *The LORD records* probably refers to the book of life or the book of remembrance, in which are recorded the names of the faithful worshipers of the Lord (Ex 32.32–33; Ps 69.28; Isa 4.3; Dan 12.1; Mal 3.16; Rev 3.5; 13.8; 20.12,

"This one was born there."
Selah

7 Singers and dancers alike say,
"All my springs are in you."

Psalm 88

A Complaint to God

A Song. A Psalm of the Korahites. To the leader: according to Mahalath Leannoth. A Maskil of Heman the Ezrahite.

1 O LORD, God of my salvation,
when, at night, I cry out in your presence,
2 let my prayer come before you;
incline your ear to my cry.

3 For my soul is full of troubles,
and my life draws near to Sheol.
4 I am counted among those who go down to the Pit;
I am like those who have no help,
5 like those forsaken among the dead,
like the slain that lie in the grave,
like those whom you remember no more,
for they are cut off from your hand.
6 You have put me in the depths of the Pit,
in the regions dark and deep.
7 Your wrath lies heavy upon me,
and you overwhelm me with all your waves. *Selah*

8 You have caused my companions to shun me;
you have made me a thing of horror to them.
I am shut in so that I cannot escape;
9 my eye grows dim through sorrow.
Every day I call on you, O LORD;
I spread out my hands to you.
10 Do you work wonders for the dead?
Do the shades rise up to praise you? *Selah*
11 Is your steadfast love declared in the grave,
or your faithfulness in Abaddon?
12 Are your wonders known in the darkness,
or your saving help in the land of forgetfulness?

13 But I, O LORD, cry out to you;
in the morning my prayer comes before you.
14 O LORD, why do you cast me off?
Why do you hide your face from me?
15 Wretched and close to death from my youth up,
I suffer your terrors; I am desperate.[v]
16 Your wrath has swept over me;
your dread assaults destroy me.
17 They surround me like a flood all day long;

[v] Meaning of Heb uncertain

15; 21.27). **87.7** Although the verse is unclear, the *singers and dancers* are probably worshipers or those on pilgrimage, and *springs* is an image of blessing. See 84.6 for *springs* welling up in the pilgrimage to Zion.

88.1–18 A prayer for help that is relentless in complaint against God and does not see any assurance of deliverance. *Korahites*. See note on 42.1–43.5. *To the leader*. See note on 4.1–8. *According to Mahalath Leannoth*. Meaning unknown, possibly a melody. *Maskil*. See note on 32.1–11. *Heman the Ezrahite*, a wise man (1 Kings 4.31) or leader of a guild of temple musicians (1 Chr 6.33; 15.19; 25.1–8). **88.1–9a** Near death and deserted by friends, the psalmist attributes that plight to God's wrath. **88.1–2** A plea for God to hear the persistent prayer. **88.3–6** *Sheol, Pit*. See notes on 6.5; 16.10. **88.7** *Selah*. See note on 3.2. **88.9b–12** The plea to be heard is followed again by the fear of death and questions designed to impel God's help by pointing out that in the realm of death and Sheol not only is the psalmist cut off from God but God cannot be praised and glorified. *Abaddon*, meaning "ruin" in Hebrew, a term for the netherworld. **88.13–18** Once more the petition for God to hear, followed by questions complaining against God's abandonment and the effects of God's wrath. If the plight of the psalmist is sickness, it is understood as the result of divine punishment. The psalmist is again depicted as near death and suffering the loss of community and companionship. **88.14** *Hide your face*. See notes on 10.1; 27.9.

from all sides they close in
on me.
18 You have caused friend and
neighbor to shun me;
my companions are in
darkness.

Psalm 89

God's Covenant with David

A Maskil of Ethan the Ezrahite.

1 I will sing of your steadfast love,
O LORD,[w] forever;
with my mouth I will proclaim
your faithfulness to all
generations.
2 I declare that your steadfast love
is established forever;
your faithfulness is as firm as
the heavens.

3 You said, "I have made a
covenant with my
chosen one,
I have sworn to my servant
David:
4 'I will establish your descendants
forever,
and build your throne for all
generations.' " *Selah*

5 Let the heavens praise your
wonders, O LORD,
your faithfulness in the
assembly of the holy ones.
6 For who in the skies can be
compared to the LORD?
Who among the heavenly
beings is like the LORD,
7 a God feared in the council of
the holy ones,
great and awesome[x] above all
that are around him?
8 O LORD God of hosts,
who is as mighty as you,
O LORD?
Your faithfulness
surrounds you.
9 You rule the raging of the sea;
when its waves rise, you still
them.
10 You crushed Rahab like a carcass;
you scattered your enemies
with your mighty arm.
11 The heavens are yours, the earth
also is yours;
the world and all that is in it—
you have founded them.
12 The north and the south[y]—you
created them;
Tabor and Hermon joyously
praise your name.
13 You have a mighty arm;
strong is your hand, high your
right hand.
14 Righteousness and justice are the
foundation of your throne;
steadfast love and faithfulness
go before you.

w Gk: Heb *the steadfast love of the* LORD
x Gk Syr: Heb *greatly awesome* y Or *Zaphon and Yamin*

89.1–18 A hymn of praise to God as creator and as the one who chose David and his descendants to be kings forever. *Maskil.* See note on Ps 32.1–11. *Ethan the Ezrahite,* a sage (1 Kings 4.31) or temple musician (1 Chr 15.17, 19). **89.3–4** For the choice of David and his line as a perpetual dynasty see vv. 19–37; 2 Sam 7.8–16. *Covenant with my chosen one.* Cf. 132.11–12. **89.4** This verse gives the content of the covenant or oath referred to in v. 3. *Selah.* See note on 3.2. **89.5–7** *Holy ones* refers to the host of heavenly beings (cf. v. 6) who are understood to make up the divine assembly surrounding the heavenly throne of God. They serve as a court or council in which the Lord utters the divine decrees. On this conception, see 1 Kings 22.19–23; Job 1–2; Ps 82; Jer 23.18, 21–22. **89.9–10** The creative work of God is seen in terms of a defeat of the powers of chaos. *Rahab.* See note on 87.4. **89.12** *The north and the south* may be either the directions, signifying the whole universe, or terms for mountains. The Hebrew term for "north" is *Zaphon,* also the name of a mountain that was the abode of the Canaanite god Baal. It may represent the abode of God here (cf. note on 48.2). The Hebrew term for "south" is *yamin.* It is not the name of a mountain but has been identified by some as referring to the Amanus range in Lebanon. *Tabor,* a mountain in northern Israel, south of the Sea of Galilee. *Hermon,* a mountain in Syria, frequently mentioned in the Bible because of its great height (cf. Pss 42.6; 133.3). **89.14** *Righteousness and justice* are here divine attributes that are seen as supports for the divine throne and thus as characterizing God's rule. *Steadfast love and faithfulness* are other characteristics of God here personified as companions or servants who lead the way of the

15 Happy are the people who know
the festal shout,
who walk, O LORD, in the light
of your countenance;
16 they exult in your name all day
long,
and extol[z] your righteousness.
17 For you are the glory of their
strength;
by your favor our horn is
exalted.
18 For our shield belongs to the
LORD,
our king to the Holy One of
Israel.

19 Then you spoke in a vision to
your faithful one, and said:
"I have set the crown[a] on one
who is mighty,
I have exalted one chosen from
the people.
20 I have found my servant David;
with my holy oil I have
anointed him;
21 my hand shall always remain
with him;
my arm also shall
strengthen him.
22 The enemy shall not outwit him,
the wicked shall not
humble him.
23 I will crush his foes before him
and strike down those who
hate him.
24 My faithfulness and steadfast love
shall be with him;
and in my name his horn shall
be exalted.
25 I will set his hand on the sea
and his right hand on the
rivers.
26 He shall cry to me, 'You are my
Father,
my God, and the Rock of my
salvation!'
27 I will make him the firstborn,
the highest of the kings of the
earth.
28 Forever I will keep my steadfast
love for him,
and my covenant with him will
stand firm.
29 I will establish his line forever,
and his throne as long as the
heavens endure.
30 If his children forsake my law
and do not walk according to
my ordinances,
31 if they violate my statutes
and do not keep my
commandments,
32 then I will punish their
transgression with the rod
and their iniquity with
scourges;
33 but I will not remove from him
my steadfast love,
or be false to my faithfulness.
34 I will not violate my covenant,
or alter the word that went
forth from my lips.
35 Once and for all I have sworn by
my holiness;
I will not lie to David.
36 His line shall continue forever,
and his throne endure before
me like the sun.
37 It shall be established forever like
the moon,
an enduring witness in the
skies." *Selah*

38 But now you have spurned and
rejected him;
you are full of wrath against
your anointed.
39 You have renounced the
covenant with your servant;
you have defiled his crown in
the dust.

z Cn: Heb *are exalted in* a Cn: Heb *help*

Lord (cf. 85.10–11). **89.15** *Festal shout,* shouts of the people at the festival celebration of the Lord's rule (cf. 2 Sam 6.15). **89.17** *Horn,* an image for the king. **89.19–37** An oracle of God in a vision, establishing the covenant with David and his descendants as the kings of Israel (cf. 2 Sam 7.4–17; Ps 132). **89.19** *Spoke in a vision,* probably to a prophet (cf. 2 Sam 7.4, 17). **89.24** *Faithfulness and steadfast love.* Cf. v. 14. *Horn,* i.e., strength. **89.26** *Father.* For the notion of the king as adopted by God, cf. 2.7; 2 Sam 7.14. **89.30–37** God will punish any of the Davidic kings who disobey God's will as reflected in the laws but will not take away the kingship bestowed by covenant. **89.38–51** A lament or prayer for help for a defeated king. **89.38–46** Words of complaint to and against God, which are characteristic of prayers for help and here assume that the defeat of the king represents God's abandonment of the covenant and promises to the Davidic

40 You have broken through all
his walls;
you have laid his strongholds
in ruins.
41 All who pass by plunder him;
he has become the scorn of his
neighbors.
42 You have exalted the right hand
of his foes;
you have made all his enemies
rejoice.
43 Moreover, you have turned back
the edge of his sword,
and you have not supported
him in battle.
44 You have removed the scepter
from his hand,[b]
and hurled his throne to the
ground.
45 You have cut short the days of
his youth;
you have covered him with
shame. *Selah*

46 How long, O LORD? Will you hide
yourself forever?
How long will your wrath burn
like fire?
47 Remember how short my time
is—[c]
for what vanity you have
created all mortals!
48 Who can live and never see
death?
Who can escape the power of
Sheol? *Selah*

49 Lord, where is your steadfast love
of old,
which by your faithfulness you
swore to David?
50 Remember, O Lord, how your
servant is taunted;
how I bear in my bosom the
insults of the peoples,[d]
51 with which your enemies taunt,
O LORD,
with which they taunted the
footsteps of your anointed.

52 Blessed be the LORD forever.
Amen and Amen.

BOOK IV

(Psalms 90–106)

Psalm 90

God's Eternity and Human Frailty

A Prayer of Moses, the man of God.

1 Lord, you have been our dwelling
place[e]
in all generations.
2 Before the mountains were
brought forth,
or ever you had formed the
earth and the world,
from everlasting to everlasting
you are God.

3 You turn us[f] back to dust,
and say, "Turn back, you
mortals."
4 For a thousand years in your
sight
are like yesterday when it is
past,
or like a watch in the night.

b Cn: Heb *removed his cleanness* *c* Meaning of Heb uncertain *d* Cn: Heb *bosom all of many peoples* *e* Another reading is *our refuge* *f* Heb *humankind*

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line. **89.41** *Neighbors* may refer to neighboring nations. **89.46** *How long?* See note on 6.3. **89.47–51** The petition of the king for restoration through God's *steadfast love* (vv. 1, 2, 14, 24, 28, 33) and *faithfulness* (vv. 1, 2, 5, 8, 14, 24, 33) to the covenant or oath to David. **89.48** *Sheol.* See note on 6.5. **89.50–51** The *insults* with which the king is *taunted* are probably taunts that God has abandoned him (cf. 42.3, 10; 79.10). *Anointed.* See note on 2.2. **89.52** A doxology concluding the third part or book of the Psalter (Pss 73–89; cf. 41.13; 72.18–19; 106.48; 150.1–6).

90.1–17 A prayer of the community reflecting on human frailty and seeking wisdom and God's favor. It is the only psalm attributed to *Moses.* The association may be because of the tradition that recalls Moses as the one who asked God to *turn* (so v. 13) from wrath in Ex 32.12. **90.1–6** The eternal nature of God contrasted with the transient nature of human beings. **90.1** *Dwelling place,* or "refuge" (cf. 71.3; 91.9; Deut 33.27). God has provided a place of belonging and protection for the people from the beginning of time (cf. Ps 46). **90.2** Cf. Job 38.4. **90.3** Cf. 103.14; Gen 2.7; 3.19; Job 34.14–15. **90.4** Cf. 2 Pet 3.8. *Watch,* one of the three

5 You sweep them away; they are
like a dream,
like grass that is renewed in the
morning;
6 in the morning it flourishes and
is renewed;
in the evening it fades and
withers.

7 For we are consumed by your
anger;
by your wrath we are
overwhelmed.
8 You have set our iniquities
before you,
our secret sins in the light of
your countenance.

9 For all our days pass away under
your wrath;
our years come to an end[g] like
a sigh.
10 The days of our life are seventy
years,
or perhaps eighty, if we are
strong;
even then their span[h] is only toil
and trouble;
they are soon gone, and we fly
away.

11 Who considers the power of your
anger?
Your wrath is as great as the
fear that is due you.
12 So teach us to count our days
that we may gain a wise heart.

13 Turn, O LORD! How long?
Have compassion on your
servants!
14 Satisfy us in the morning with
your steadfast love,
so that we may rejoice and be
glad all our days.
15 Make us glad as many days as
you have afflicted us,
and as many years as we have
seen evil.
16 Let your work be manifest to
your servants,
and your glorious power to
their children.
17 Let the favor of the Lord our
God be upon us,
and prosper for us the work of
our hands—
O prosper the work of our
hands!

Psalm 91

Assurance of God's Protection

1 You who live in the shelter of the
Most High,
who abide in the shadow of the
Almighty,[i]
2 will say to the LORD, "My refuge
and my fortress;
my God, in whom I trust."
3 For he will deliver you from the
snare of the fowler
and from the deadly pestilence;
4 he will cover you with his pinions,
and under his wings you will
find refuge;
his faithfulness is a shield and
buckler.

g Syr: Heb *we bring our years to an end*
h Cn Compare Gk Syr Jerome Tg: Heb *pride*
i Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

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periods into which the nighttime hours were divided. **90.5–6** Cf. 103.15–18; Isa 40.6–8. **90.7–12** Human mortality issues from the judgment of God on human sin (cf. Rom 6.23). **90.8** Cf. 19.12. **90.11** *Fear.* See note on 34.7. **90.12** Cf. 39.4–6. *Wise heart,* the ability to discern the purposes of God. In acknowledging human frailty and the certainty of death, the proper perspective with which to live in the present may be gained. **90.13–17** Prayer for God to redeem the time and deal favorably with the people. **90.13** *How long?* See note on 6.3. **90.14** Cf. 81.16; 91.16; 103.5; 107.8–9. **90.17** *Prosper,* lit. "establish." A prayer that God may give enduring value to the work of the community.

91.1–13 A didactic or wisdom psalm elaborating with many ways that God's protection from harm and danger is manifest and reliable. **91.1–2** Address to one who enters the sanctuary. **91.1** *Shelter* may be a term alluding to the protective area of the sanctuary (cf. 27.5; 31.20; 61.4). *Shadow* refers to wings (see v. 4; 17.8; 36.7; 57.1; 63.7). **91.2** The one addressed is invited to make a confession of personal trust in God. **91.3–13** The justification for that confidence is laid out in detail. The Lord's protection is against human enemies or persecutors (v. 3) as well as demonic forces or sickness (vv. 5–6, 10). **91.4** *Pinions, wings* suggest the image of God as an eagle protecting its young (cf. v. 1; Deut 32.10–11; Isa

5 You will not fear the terror of
the night,
or the arrow that flies by day,
6 or the pestilence that stalks in
darkness,
or the destruction that wastes at
noonday.

7 A thousand may fall at your side,
ten thousand at your right
hand,
but it will not come near you.
8 You will only look with your eyes
and see the punishment of the
wicked.

9 Because you have made the LORD
your refuge,*j*
the Most High your dwelling
place,
10 no evil shall befall you,
no scourge come near your
tent.

11 For he will command his angels
concerning you
to guard you in all your ways.
12 On their hands they will bear
you up,
so that you will not dash your
foot against a stone.
13 You will tread on the lion and
the adder,
the young lion and the serpent
you will trample under
foot.

14 Those who love me, I will deliver;
I will protect those who know
my name.
15 When they call to me, I will
answer them;
I will be with them in trouble,
I will rescue them and honor
them.
16 With long life I will satisfy them,
and show them my salvation.

Psalm 92

Thanksgiving for Vindication

A Psalm. A Song for the Sabbath Day.

1 It is good to give thanks to the
LORD,
to sing praises to your name,
O Most High;
2 to declare your steadfast love in
the morning,
and your faithfulness by night,
3 to the music of the lute and the
harp,
to the melody of the lyre.
4 For you, O LORD, have made me
glad by your work;
at the works of your hands I
sing for joy.

5 How great are your works,
O LORD!
Your thoughts are very deep!
6 The dullard cannot know,
the stupid cannot understand
this:
7 though the wicked sprout like
grass
and all evildoers flourish,
they are doomed to destruction
forever,
8 but you, O LORD, are on high
forever.
9 For your enemies, O LORD,
for your enemies shall perish;
all evildoers shall be scattered.

10 But you have exalted my horn
like that of the wild ox;

j Cn: Heb *Because you, LORD, are my refuge; you have made*

31.5). **91.5** *Arrow that flies by day*, possibly sunstroke. **91.11–12** Cf. Mt 4.6; Lk 4.10–11. *Bear you up*. See Ex 19.4. **91.13** *Lion, adder, serpent*, symbolic of dangers and enemies. See note on 7.2. **91.14–16** A divine oracle of salvation that typically was given, perhaps through a priest (see 1 Sam 1.17) or a prophet (e.g., Isa 41.8–13), to those who cried to God in trouble.

92.1–15 A hymn of thanksgiving for God's just order as demonstrated in the psalmist's deliverance from enemies. *A Song for the Sabbath Day*, a later designation of the psalm as part of the sabbath celebration, the only psalm so designated in the Hebrew text of the Psalter. **92.1–3** Hymnic introduction (cf. 106.1; 107.1; 118.1; 136.1). **92.2** *In the morning and . . . by night*, i.e., continually, though the psalm may also have in mind morning sacrifices and nightly praise. (134.1–2). **92.4–15** The grounds for praising and giving thanks. **92.4–11** The greatness of God's wonderful work as demonstrated in the defeat of the enemies of God and in the exaltation of the one who gives thanks. **92.10** *Horn*. See note on 75.4–5. *Oil* is a symbol of favor and well-

you have poured over me[k]
fresh oil.
11 My eyes have seen the downfall
of my enemies;
my ears have heard the doom
of my evil assailants.

12 The righteous flourish like the
palm tree,
and grow like a cedar in
Lebanon.
13 They are planted in the house of
the LORD;
they flourish in the courts of
our God.
14 In old age they still produce
fruit;
they are always green and full
of sap,
15 showing that the LORD is upright;
he is my rock, and there is no
unrighteousness in him.

Psalm 93

The Majesty of God's Rule

1 The LORD is king, he is robed in
majesty;
the LORD is robed, he is girded
with strength.
He has established the world; it
shall never be moved;
2 your throne is established from
of old;
you are from everlasting.

3 The floods have lifted up,
O LORD,
the floods have lifted up their
voice;
the floods lift up their roaring.
4 More majestic than the thunders
of mighty waters,
more majestic than the waves[l]
of the sea,
majestic on high is the LORD!

5 Your decrees are very sure;
holiness befits your house,
O LORD, forevermore.

Psalm 94

God the Avenger of the Righteous

1 O LORD, you God of vengeance,
you God of vengeance, shine
forth!
2 Rise up, O judge of the earth;
give to the proud what they
deserve!
3 O LORD, how long shall the
wicked,

k Syr: Meaning of Heb uncertain *l* Cn: Heb *majestic are the waves*

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being (23.5; 45.7; 133.2). **92.12–15** In contrast to the temporary success of the wicked (v. 7), the righteous endure and flourish in God's presence throughout their life. **92.12** *Palm tree, cedar in Lebanon,* symbols of prosperity and longevity (cf. 1.3; 52.8; Jer 17.8).

93.1–5 A hymn of praise celebrating God's rule over the world. It belongs to a group of psalms (Pss 47; 93; 95–99) that have been called "enthronement psalms" because they may have been used on festival occasions when God was declared to be king (see 93.1; 95.3; 96.10; 97.1; 98.6; 99.1). Similar language and themes are to be found in the prophecy of Isa 40–55. **93.1–2** The establishment of God's rule. *The LORD is king,* or "The LORD has become king." It is to be understood as a declaration of God's enduring kingship or, in the latter case, as the declaration that at a particular moment in the festival celebration the Lord's enthronement is formally declared. The psalm assumes that God's rule as sovereign is from eternity (v. 2; cf. 29.10), but it is possible that at one of the annual festivals, perhaps the Festival of Booths, or Tabernacles, in the fall, the Lord's victory over the forces of chaos and disorder (see vv. 3–4) was celebrated by the people as a ritual act of enthronement, the Lord's rule being declared afresh ritually and hymnically. **93.3–4** The establishment of God's eternal rule is accomplished by the defeat of the powers of chaos as represented in the floods and waters. Lying behind this notion are Mesopotamian and Canaanite conceptions of divine kingship being established by victory over the sea and the deep (cf. 74.13; 104.7–9; Job 38.8–11; Isa 27.1; 51.9–10). **93.5** Praise of the Lord is also because of the reliability of God's law and God's holy house, the temple.

94.1–23 A prayer for God's help by an individual whose present suffering at the hands of the powerful is representative of the larger community's distress. **94.1–2** The initial call for God to render judgment. **94.1** *Vengeance,* i.e., vindication and compassion for the righteous or innocent and judgment for the wicked (cf. Deut 32.35–36; Rom 12.19). *Shine forth.* See note on 80.1. **94.2** *Judge of the earth.* See 7.8; 9.8–9; 58.11; 76.8–9; 82.8; Gen 18.25. **94.3–7** The complaint

how long shall the wicked
exult?

4 They pour out their arrogant
words;
all the evildoers boast.
5 They crush your people,
O LORD,
and afflict your heritage.
6 They kill the widow and the
stranger,
they murder the orphan,
7 and they say, "The LORD does
not see;
the God of Jacob does not
perceive."

8 Understand, O dullest of the
people;
fools, when will you be wise?
9 He who planted the ear, does he
not hear?
He who formed the eye, does he
not see?
10 He who disciplines the nations,
he who teaches knowledge to
humankind,
does he not chastise?
11 The LORD knows our thoughts,[m]
that they are but an empty
breath.

12 Happy are those whom you
discipline, O LORD,
and whom you teach out of
your law,
13 giving them respite from days of
trouble,
until a pit is dug for the
wicked.
14 For the LORD will not forsake his
people;
he will not abandon his
heritage;
15 for justice will return to the
righteous,
and all the upright in heart will
follow it.

16 Who rises up for me against the
wicked?
Who stands up for me against
evildoers?
17 If the LORD had not been my
help,
my soul would soon have lived
in the land of silence.
18 When I thought, "My foot is
slipping,"
your steadfast love, O LORD,
held me up.
19 When the cares of my heart are
many,
your consolations cheer my
soul.
20 Can wicked rulers be allied
with you,
those who contrive mischief by
statute?
21 They band together against the
life of the righteous,
and condemn the innocent to
death.
22 But the LORD has become my
stronghold,
and my God the rock of my
refuge.
23 He will repay them for their
iniquity
and wipe them out for their
wickedness;
the LORD our God will wipe
them out.

m Heb *the thoughts of humankind*

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against the wicked. The power of the wicked against the people is a challenge to God's power and care. **94.3** *How long?* See note on 6.3. **94.5** *Heritage*, the property of the Lord; cf. Deut 32.8–9. **94.6** *Widow, stranger, orphan*, the dependent, whose care by the community is the mark of true justice (Ex 22.21–24; Deut 24.17, 21; 26.12; 27.19; Isa 1.17; Jer 7.6; 22.3) and for whom God has special concern (Ex 22.24; Pss 68.5; 82.3–4; 146.9). V. 20 suggests that the oppression is judicial in character, carried out by judges and rulers who use the courts to do in the weak, possibly even committing legal murder (cf. 1 Kings 21). **94.8–11** The foolishness of the wicked, who think that God does not see and care about their wickedness. Cf. 14.1; 53.1. **94.12–15** The ultimate confidence and blessing of the righteous is in God who will not forsake and will ensure that justice is done. *Happy*. See note on 1.1. **94.16–23** The psalmist proclaims God's saving help against the machinations of the wicked. **94.17** *Land of silence*, i.e., death (115.17). **94.20–21** See note on 94.6.

Psalm 95

A Call to Worship and Obedience

1 O come, let us sing to the LORD;
let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!
2 Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;
let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!
3 For the LORD is a great God,
and a great King above all gods.
4 In his hand are the depths of the earth;
the heights of the mountains are his also.
5 The sea is his, for he made it,
and the dry land, which his hands have formed.

6 O come, let us worship and bow down,
let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!
7 For he is our God,
and we are the people of his pasture,
and the sheep of his hand.

O that today you would listen to his voice!
8 Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah,
as on the day at Massah in the wilderness,
9 when your ancestors tested me,
and put me to the proof,
though they had seen my work.
10 For forty years I loathed that generation
and said, "They are a people whose hearts go astray,
and they do not regard my ways."
11 Therefore in my anger I swore,
"They shall not enter my rest."

Psalm 96

Praise to God Who Comes in Judgment

1 O sing to the LORD a new song;
sing to the LORD, all the earth.
2 Sing to the LORD, bless his name;
tell of his salvation from day to day.
3 Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvelous works among all the peoples.
4 For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised;
he is to be revered above all gods.
5 For all the gods of the peoples are idols,
but the LORD made the heavens.
6 Honor and majesty are before him;
strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.

95.1–11 A liturgy of praise and admonition. This psalm may have been a temple liturgy consisting of a procession into the sanctuary (vv. 1–5) and prostration before God's presence (vv. 6–7a), followed by words of admonition (vv. 7b–11), perhaps in preparation for the public reading of the Torah or law of God at the Festival of Booths, or Tabernacles (Deut 31.10–11). Cf. Pss 50; 81 for similar language and character. **95.1–7a** Praise of God's kingship and rule over all. **95.1–2** A call to praise. *Rock of our salvation.* See 89.26; cf. 94.22. **95.3–5** The reason for praise is God's greatness and rule (cf. 93.1–2; 96.10) *above all gods* (cf. 82; 96.4–5), the *depths* and *heights*, i.e., the whole earth, and the *sea* and the *dry land* (Gen 1.9–10; cf. Ps 24.1). **95.6–7a** A call to worship God who is not only creator and ruler of the universe (vv. 3–5) but also of the people (Isa 43.1, 15). The shepherd image is a royal one, signifying rule of the people (100.3; cf. 80.1; Isa 40.11). **95.7b–11** A word of admonition to be spoken by a priest or prophet in preparation for hearing God's law (cf. 81.8–9). On *Meribah*, "place of contention," and *Massah*, "place of testing," see Ex 17.1–7; Num 20.1–13; also Pss 78.18–20; 81.7; 106.32. **95.11** *Rest*, the divine gift of the land. For a NT quotation and elaboration of vv. 7b–11, see Heb 3–4.

96.1–13 A hymn of praise to God as ruler and judge. The Lord of Israel rules the universe (image of king) and does so in righteousness (image of judge). See note on 93.1–5. **96.1–3** A call to praise God in song. **96.1** *A new song.* See 33.3; 40.3; 98.1; 144.9; 149.1; Isa 42.10; Rev 5.9; Jdt 16.1, 13. **96.4–6** The reason for praise is God's greatness and majesty above all other claims for worship, i.e., above all other gods (95.3;

7 Ascribe to the LORD, O families
of the peoples,
ascribe to the LORD glory and
strength.
8 Ascribe to the LORD the glory due
his name;
bring an offering, and come
into his courts.
9 Worship the LORD in holy
splendor;
tremble before him, all the
earth.

10 Say among the nations, "The
LORD is king!
The world is firmly established;
it shall never be moved.
He will judge the peoples with
equity."
11 Let the heavens be glad, and let
the earth rejoice;
let the sea roar, and all that
fills it;
12 let the field exult, and
everything in it.
Then shall all the trees of the
forest sing for joy
13 before the LORD; for he is
coming,
for he is coming to judge the
earth.
He will judge the world with
righteousness,
and the peoples with his truth.

Psalm 97

The Glory of God's Reign

1 The LORD is king! Let the earth
rejoice;
let the many coastlands be glad!
2 Clouds and thick darkness are all
around him;
righteousness and justice are
the foundation of his
throne.
3 Fire goes before him,
and consumes his adversaries
on every side.
4 His lightnings light up the world;
the earth sees and trembles.
5 The mountains melt like wax
before the LORD,
before the Lord of all the
earth.

6 The heavens proclaim his
righteousness;
and all the peoples behold his
glory.
7 All worshipers of images are put
to shame,
those who make their boast in
worthless idols;
all gods bow down before him.
8 Zion hears and is glad,
and the towns[n] of Judah
rejoice,
because of your judgments,
O God.
9 For you, O LORD, are most high
over all the earth;
you are exalted far above
all gods.

10 The LORD loves those who hate[o]
evil;
he guards the lives of his
faithful;
he rescues them from the hand
of the wicked.
11 Light dawns[p] for the righteous,
and joy for the upright in
heart.

n Heb *daughters* *o* Cn: Heb *You who love the LORD hate* *p* Gk Syr Jerome: Heb *is sown*

97.7; cf. 115.3–8). **96.7–9** A call to praise the glory of God. Cf. 29.1–2. **96.10–13** The Lord is proclaimed king and judge of all the earth. **96.10** *The LORD is king.* See note on 93.1–2. For God as judge, cf. 7.11; 50.6; 82.8; Ezek 18.30; 33.17, 20. **96.11–13** See 98.7–9.

97.1–12 A hymn of praise celebrating the rule of God. One of the "enthronement psalms" (see note on 93.1–5). **97.1** The whole earth is called to rejoice in the realization of the Lord's rule. *The LORD is king.* See note on 93.1–2. **97.2–6** The divine king appears in a storm theophany (18.7–15; 50.1–3; 68.7–8; 77.18; cf. Judg 5.4–5). **97.2** On *righteousness* and *justice* as central to kingship, human and divine, see Pss 72; 82; 85.10–13; Isa 9.7; 11.3–5). **97.3** For fire in the descriptions of God's appearing, see Ex 19.18; 24.17; Deut 4.11–12, 15, 33; 5.4; 9.10, 15. **97.7–9** The effects of the Lord's appearing. **97.7** Cf. Isa 42.17; 45.16; Jer 10.14. **97.9** Cf. 47.2, 9; 83.18; 95.3; 96.4–6. **97.10–12** The justice of God is security for the righteous. **97.11** For the dawning of the light of the righteous, see 112.4; Isa 58.10; 60.1–3.

12 Rejoice in the LORD, O you
righteous,
and give thanks to his holy
name!

Psalm 98

Praise the Judge of the World

A Psalm.

1 O sing to the LORD a new song,
for he has done marvelous
things.
His right hand and his holy arm
have gotten him victory.
2 The LORD has made known his
victory;
he has revealed his vindication
in the sight of the nations.
3 He has remembered his steadfast
love and faithfulness
to the house of Israel.
All the ends of the earth have
seen
the victory of our God.

4 Make a joyful noise to the LORD,
all the earth;
break forth into joyous song
and sing praises.
5 Sing praises to the LORD with the
lyre,
with the lyre and the sound of
melody.
6 With trumpets and the sound of
the horn
make a joyful noise before the
King, the LORD.

7 Let the sea roar, and all that
fills it;
the world and those who live
in it.
8 Let the floods clap their hands;
let the hills sing together
for joy
9 at the presence of the LORD, for
he is coming
to judge the earth.
He will judge the world with
righteousness,
and the peoples with equity.

Psalm 99

Praise to God for His Holiness

1 The LORD is king; let the peoples
tremble!
He sits enthroned upon the
cherubim; let the earth
quake!
2 The LORD is great in Zion;
he is exalted over all the
peoples.
3 Let them praise your great and
awesome name.
Holy is he!
4 Mighty King,[q] lover of justice,
you have established equity;
you have executed justice
and righteousness in Jacob.
5 Extol the LORD our God;
worship at his footstool.
Holy is he!

6 Moses and Aaron were among his
priests,

q Cn: Heb *And a king's strength*

98.1–9 A hymn celebrating the salvation given by God as ruler and judge. See note on 93.1–5. **98.1–3** A call to praise the Lord for marvelous things done for Israel. The imagery of these verses is of God as a mighty warrior, victorious on behalf of the divine purposes and the care of the people. Cf. Ex 15. **98.1** *New song.* See note on 96.1. *His right hand and his holy arm* are images of God's power in battle. Cf. Ex 15.6, 12; Pss 44.2–3; 89.13; Isa 52.10; 59.16. **98.2** *Victory,* or salvation. *Vindication,* or righteousness. **98.4–8** Reiterated summons to the praise of God by the whole earth, the created order (cf. Ps 148) and its inhabitants. **98.9** The reason for all this praise is now given. It is in anticipation of the appearance of God to rule righteously over the earth and its peoples. Cf. 96.13; 97.2.

99.1–9 A hymn in praise of God's holy and righteous rule. See note on 93.1–5. Each stanza concludes with a call to praise the God who is holy. **99.1–3** Praise of God the great ruler. **99.1** *The LORD is king.* See note on 93.1–2. *Enthroned upon the cherubim.* See note on 80.1. **99.4–5** Praise for God's justice and righteousness. **99.5** *Footstool,* either the ark on Mount Zion or Mount Zion itself (1 Chr 28.2; Ps 132.7; cf. Isa 66.1). **99.6–9** Praise for God's forgiving response to the intercessors for Israel. For Moses' intercession, see Ex 32.11–14; Deut 9.26–29. Aaron is given the responsibility of praying for God's blessing upon the people (Num 6.22–26). Samuel cried out to the Lord for the people in the face of the Philistines and the Lord answered him (1 Sam 7.9). Cf. Jer 15.1.

Samuel also was among those
who called on his name.
They cried to the LORD, and he
answered them.
7 He spoke to them in the pillar of
cloud;
they kept his decrees,
and the statutes that he gave
them.

8 O LORD our God, you answered
them;
you were a forgiving God to
them,
but an avenger of their
wrongdoings.
9 Extol the LORD our God,
and worship at his holy
mountain;
for the LORD our God is holy.

Psalm 100

All Lands Summoned to Praise God

A Psalm of thanksgiving.

1 Make a joyful noise to the LORD,
all the earth.
2 Worship the LORD with
gladness;
come into his presence with
singing.

3 Know that the LORD is God.
It is he that made us, and we
are his;[r]
we are his people, and the
sheep of his pasture.

4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
and his courts with praise.
Give thanks to him, bless his
name.

5 For the LORD is good;
his steadfast love endures
forever,
and his faithfulness to all
generations.

Psalm 101

A Sovereign's Pledge of Integrity and Justice

Of David. A Psalm.

1 I will sing of loyalty and of
justice;
to you, O LORD, I will sing.
2 I will study the way that is
blameless.
When shall I attain it?

I will walk with integrity of heart
within my house;
3 I will not set before my eyes
anything that is base.

I hate the work of those who
fall away;
it shall not cling to me.
4 Perverseness of heart shall be far
from me;
I will know nothing of evil.

5 One who secretly slanders a
neighbor
I will destroy.
A haughty look and an arrogant
heart
I will not tolerate.

6 I will look with favor on the
faithful in the land,
so that they may live with me;
whoever walks in the way that is
blameless
shall minister to me.

7 No one who practices deceit
shall remain in my house;

r Another reading is *and not we ourselves*

100.1–5 A hymn of praise and thanksgiving for the goodness of the Lord. **100.1–3** A summons to worship and praise (vv. 1–2) because of God's shepherding care of the people (v. 3). **100.4–5** A further summons to thanksgiving and praise because of God's goodness and faithfulness. These verses are a reflection of the prayer of thanksgiving in its essence, quoted in some form when reference is made to the people or the priests praising or giving thanks (106.1; 107.1; 118.1, 29; 136.1; 2 Chr 5.13; 7.3, 6; 20.21; Ezra 3.10–11).

101.1–8 A royal psalm expressing the commitment of the ruler to a just rule. It may have been used at the king's coronation. **101.1** A hymnic introduction by the king. **101.2** The king's vow of integrity and blameless conduct. **101.3–8** The ruler vows to support the righteous and eliminate all such manifestations of wickedness as perversity, evil, slander, arrogance, and

no one who utters lies
shall continue in my presence.

8 Morning by morning I will destroy
all the wicked in the land,
cutting off all evildoers
from the city of the LORD.

Psalm 102

A Prayer of One Afflicted

A prayer of one afflicted, when faint and pleading before the LORD.

1 Hear my prayer, O LORD;
let my cry come to you.
2 Do not hide your face from me
in the day of my distress.
Incline your ear to me;
answer me speedily in the day when I call.

3 For my days pass away like smoke,
and my bones burn like a furnace.
4 My heart is stricken and withered like grass;
I am too wasted to eat my bread.
5 Because of my loud groaning
my bones cling to my skin.
6 I am like an owl of the wilderness,
like a little owl of the waste places.
7 I lie awake;
I am like a lonely bird on the housetop.
8 All day long my enemies taunt me;
those who deride me use my name for a curse.
9 For I eat ashes like bread,
and mingle tears with my drink,
10 because of your indignation and anger;
for you have lifted me up and thrown me aside.
11 My days are like an evening shadow;
I wither away like grass.

12 But you, O LORD, are enthroned forever;
your name endures to all generations.
13 You will rise up and have compassion on Zion,
for it is time to favor it;
the appointed time has come.
14 For your servants hold its stones dear,
and have pity on its dust.
15 The nations will fear the name of the LORD,
and all the kings of the earth your glory.
16 For the LORD will build up Zion;
he will appear in his glory.
17 He will regard the prayer of the destitute,
and will not despise their prayer.

18 Let this be recorded for a generation to come,
so that a people yet unborn may praise the LORD:
19 that he looked down from his holy height,
from heaven the LORD looked at the earth,
20 to hear the groans of the prisoners,
to set free those who were doomed to die;
21 so that the name of the LORD may be declared in Zion,
and his praise in Jerusalem,
22 when peoples gather together,

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deceit. **101.8** *Morning by morning.* The king administered justice in the morning (2 Sam 15.2; Jer 21.12; cf. 1 Kings 3.16–28; Ps 72; Isa 11.4). *The city of the LORD,* Jerusalem.

102.1–28 A prayer for help by one whose situation is well described in the superscription. One of the penitential psalms (see note on 6.1–10). **102.1–2** Plea for help. **102.2** *Hide your face.* See notes on 10.1; 27.9. **102.3–12** Lament over personal suffering including physical and emotional distress (vv. 3–7, 9, 11), the taunts of enemies (v. 8), and the affliction of God's wrath (v. 10). **102.8** *Taunt.* See note on 79.10. **102.12–22** Hymnic in form, these verses express the confidence of the psalmist in the context of anticipating and declaring that God will restore Zion. The individual suffering of the psalmist is joined with the larger suffering of an exiled

and kingdoms, to worship the
LORD.

23 He has broken my strength in
midcourse;
he has shortened my days.
24 "O my God," I say, "do not take
me away
at the midpoint of my life,
you whose years endure
throughout all generations."

25 Long ago you laid the foundation
of the earth,
and the heavens are the work
of your hands.
26 They will perish, but you endure;
they will all wear out like a
garment.
You change them like clothing,
and they pass away;
27 but you are the same, and your
years have no end.
28 The children of your servants
shall live secure;
their offspring shall be
established in your
presence.

Psalm 103

Thanksgiving for God's Goodness

Of David.

1 Bless the LORD, O my soul,
and all that is within me,
bless his holy name.
2 Bless the LORD, O my soul,
and do not forget all his
benefits—
3 who forgives all your iniquity,
who heals all your diseases,
4 who redeems your life from
the Pit,
who crowns you with steadfast
love and mercy,
5 who satisfies you with good as
long as you live[s]
so that your youth is renewed
like the eagle's.

6 The LORD works vindication
and justice for all who are
oppressed.
7 He made known his ways to
Moses,
his acts to the people of Israel.
8 The LORD is merciful and
gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in
steadfast love.
9 He will not always accuse,
nor will he keep his anger
forever.
10 He does not deal with us
according to our sins,
nor repay us according to our
iniquities.
11 For as the heavens are high above
the earth,
so great is his steadfast love
toward those who fear him;
12 as far as the east is from the west,
so far he removes our
transgressions from us.
13 As a father has compassion for
his children,
so the LORD has compassion for
those who fear him.
14 For he knows how we were made;
he remembers that we are dust.

15 As for mortals, their days are like
grass;

s Meaning of Heb uncertain

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people. **102.23–24** Return to lament over God's affliction of the sufferer. **102.25–28** The confidence of the psalmist is once again expressed in praise, here of the God who, in the midst of transiency, change, and insecurity, endures forever and does not change. **102.25–27** Quoted in Heb 1.10–12.

103.1–22 A hymn of praise that may have functioned as a song of thanksgiving for one who had been helped by God. **103.1–2** The psalmist's self-exhortation to give thanks to God. *Bless* is one of the characteristic terms for expressing gratitude to God. See, e.g., 28.6–7; 31.21; 66.20. **103.3–5** Hymnic description of the benefits (v. 2) from God. They are generalized and universalized for the whole congregation but may reflect the particular benefits the psalmist has experienced in answer to prayer. **103.4** *Pit.* See note on 16.10 but cf. note on 9.15. **103.5b** Cf. Isa 40.31. **103.6–18** Praise of God's grace and mercy showered upon the people throughout their history. **103.8** Quotation of the ancient confession of Ex 34.6. Cf. Num 14.18; Neh 9.17, 31; Jon 4.2. **103.11** *Fear him* (also vv. 13, 17). See note on 34.7. **103.15–17** Cf. 90.5–6; Isa

they flourish like a flower of
the field;
16 for the wind passes over it, and it
is gone,
and its place knows it no more.
17 But the steadfast love of the
LORD is from everlasting to
everlasting
on those who fear him,
and his righteousness to
children's children,
18 to those who keep his covenant
and remember to do his
commandments.

19 The LORD has established his
throne in the heavens,
and his kingdom rules over all.
20 Bless the LORD, O you his angels,
you mighty ones who do his
bidding,
obedient to his spoken word.
21 Bless the LORD, all his hosts,
his ministers that do his will.
22 Bless the LORD, all his works,
in all places of his dominion.
Bless the LORD, O my soul.

Psalm 104

God the Creator and Provider

1 Bless the LORD, O my soul.
O LORD my God, you are very
great.
You are clothed with honor and
majesty,
2 wrapped in light as with a
garment.
You stretch out the heavens like
a tent,
3 you set the beams of your[t]
chambers on the waters,
you make the clouds your[t]
chariot,
you ride on the wings of the
wind,
4 you make the winds your[t]
messengers,
fire and flame your[t] ministers.

5 You set the earth on its
foundations,
so that it shall never be shaken.
6 You cover it with the deep as
with a garment;
the waters stood above the
mountains.
7 At your rebuke they flee;
at the sound of your thunder
they take to flight.
8 They rose up to the mountains,
ran down to the valleys
to the place that you appointed
for them.
9 You set a boundary that they may
not pass,
so that they might not again
cover the earth.

10 You make springs gush forth in
the valleys;
they flow between the hills,
11 giving drink to every wild animal;
the wild asses quench their
thirst.
12 By the streams[u] the birds of the
air have their habitation;
they sing among the branches.
13 From your lofty abode you water
the mountains;
the earth is satisfied with the
fruit of your work.

14 You cause the grass to grow for
the cattle,
and plants for people to use,[v]
to bring forth food from the
earth,

t Heb *his* *u* Heb *By them* *v* Or *to cultivate*

40.7–8. **103.19–22** The psalmist's concluding call to all creation to give praise and thanks to the gracious ruler of all. **103.20–21** *Angels, mighty ones, hosts, ministers* refer to the heavenly hosts, the members of the divine assembly who make up the heavenly court of the Lord (see note on 82.1–8).

104.1–35 A hymn in praise of God the creator (cf. Pss 8; 19; 33). The psalm has similarities with both the Egyptian *Hymn to Aten* (Hymn to the Sun Disk) and Gen 1. **104.1–4** God the creator of the heavens. **104.1** Cf. v. 35; 103.1, 22b. **104.3–4** See note on 68.4. **104.4** Quoted in Heb 1.7. **104.5–9** God the creator of the earth. God gives stability to the earth and orders the unruly, chaotic waters. **104.6** The primeval waters covered the earth. **104.7** Echoes of the victory of God over the watery chaos are heard here; see notes on 74.12–17; 93.3–4. **104.8** *Rose up to the mountains,* i.e., became mountain streams. **104.10–18** By means of the con-

15 and wine to gladden the human heart,
oil to make the face shine,
and bread to strengthen the human heart.
16 The trees of the LORD are watered abundantly,
the cedars of Lebanon that he planted.
17 In them the birds build their nests;
the stork has its home in the fir trees.
18 The high mountains are for the wild goats;
the rocks are a refuge for the coneys.
19 You have made the moon to mark the seasons;
the sun knows its time for setting.
20 You make darkness, and it is night,
when all the animals of the forest come creeping out.
21 The young lions roar for their prey,
seeking their food from God.
22 When the sun rises, they withdraw
and lie down in their dens.
23 People go out to their work
and to their labor until the evening.

24 O LORD, how manifold are your works!
In wisdom you have made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.
25 Yonder is the sea, great and wide,
creeping things innumerable are there,
living things both small and great.
26 There go the ships,
and Leviathan that you formed to sport in it.

27 These all look to you
to give them their food in due season;
28 when you give to them, they gather it up;
when you open your hand, they are filled with good things.
29 When you hide your face, they are dismayed;
when you take away their breath, they die
and return to their dust.
30 When you send forth your spirit,[w] they are created;
and you renew the face of the ground.

31 May the glory of the LORD endure forever;
may the LORD rejoice in his works—
32 who looks on the earth and it trembles,
who touches the mountains and they smoke.
33 I will sing to the LORD as long as I live;
I will sing praise to my God while I have being.
34 May my meditation be pleasing to him,
for I rejoice in the LORD.
35 Let sinners be consumed from the earth,
and let the wicked be no more.
Bless the LORD, O my soul.
Praise the LORD!

w Or *your breath*

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trolled waters, God refreshes and sustains the earth and its creatures. **104.15** *Oil* was used to protect or heal as well as a sign of gladness (45.7). **104.16** *Cedars of Lebanon.* See note on 92.12. **104.17–18** The watered and flourishing trees and mountains are a home for the wild animals. **104.19–23** God, the provider of times and seasons, orders the lives of all creatures. **104.24–26** The many and various creatures God has put on land and sea. **104.26** *Leviathan,* elsewhere one of the monsters of chaos defeated by God (see note on 74.13–15), is here simply one of God's playful creatures. **104.27–30** The dependence upon God of everything created. **104.31–35** Concluding exultation and praise. The joy of God in the creation (v. 31) is echoed in the joy of the creatures in God (v. 34). **104.34** See 19.14; 119.108. **104.35** In God's marvelous creation there is no place for the perversion of it by the presence of sin and wickedness. The psalm sustains to its end the vision of God's good creation.

Psalm 105

God's Faithfulness to Israel

1 O give thanks to the LORD, call
on his name,
make known his deeds among
the peoples.
2 Sing to him, sing praises to him;
tell of all his wonderful works.
3 Glory in his holy name;
let the hearts of those who seek
the LORD rejoice.
4 Seek the LORD and his strength;
seek his presence continually.
5 Remember the wonderful works
he has done,
his miracles, and the judgments
he has uttered,
6 O offspring of his servant
Abraham,[x]
children of Jacob, his chosen
ones.

7 He is the LORD our God;
his judgments are in all the
earth.
8 He is mindful of his covenant
forever,
of the word that he
commanded, for a
thousand generations,
9 the covenant that he made with
Abraham,
his sworn promise to Isaac,
10 which he confirmed to Jacob as a
statute,
to Israel as an everlasting
covenant,
11 saying, "To you I will give the
land of Canaan
as your portion for an
inheritance."

12 When they were few in number,
of little account, and strangers
in it,
13 wandering from nation to nation,
from one kingdom to another
people,
14 he allowed no one to oppress
them;
he rebuked kings on their
account,
15 saying, "Do not touch my
anointed ones;
do my prophets no harm."

16 When he summoned famine
against the land,
and broke every staff of bread,
17 he had sent a man ahead of
them,
Joseph, who was sold as a slave.
18 His feet were hurt with fetters,
his neck was put in a collar of
iron;
19 until what he had said came to
pass,
the word of the LORD kept
testing him.
20 The king sent and released him;
the ruler of the peoples set
him free.
21 He made him lord of his house,
and ruler of all his possessions,

x Another reading is *Israel* (compare 1 Chr 16.13)

105.1–45 A hymn of praise for God's wonderful deeds in the history of the people Israel (cf. Ps 78). It has its negative counterpart in the history of sin and judgment in Ps 106. Part of this psalm (vv. 1–15) appears in the context of the community's worship in 1 Chr 16.8–22. **105.1–6** Call to the people to give thanks to God for the wonderful works on their behalf. Declaration of what God has done is a standard part of thanksgiving in the psalms (cf. 18.16–19; 22.22–24; 30.1–3). **105.7–11** Praise for God's faithfulness to the eternal covenant with Israel. **105.9** See Gen 15.18–21; 26.3–5. **105.10** See Gen 28.13–15; 35.11–12. **105.11** *Inheritance*, a hereditary allotment to be handed down through the generations. **105.12–45** A recounting of God's faithfulness from the time of the fathers and mothers (vv. 12–15; cf. Gen 12–36) through the story of Joseph's slavery in Egypt (vv. 16–19; cf. Gen 37; 39.1–40.36) and his leadership in time of famine (vv. 20–22; cf. Gen 40.37–50.26), the multiplication of the Hebrews in Egypt (vv. 23–25; cf. Ex 1.1–22), the calling of Moses and Aaron to lead the people out of slavery (vv. 26–27; cf. Ex 2.1–6.30), the plagues in Egypt (vv. 28–36; cf. Ex 7.8–12.32), the exodus (vv. 37–38; cf. Ex 12.33–15.21), the provision during the wandering wilderness (vv. 39–42; cf. Ex 15.22–Num 36.13), and the entry into Canaan (vv. 43–45; Josh 1.1–24.33). **105.14** *Rebuked kings*. See Gen 12.17; 20.3. **105.15** *Anointed ones* here refers to those chosen or called, specifically Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, not to kings or messianic leaders. *Prophets*. See Gen 20.7.

22 to instruct[y] his officials at his pleasure,
and to teach his elders wisdom.

23 Then Israel came to Egypt;
Jacob lived as an alien in the land of Ham.
24 And the LORD made his people very fruitful,
and made them stronger than their foes,
25 whose hearts he then turned to hate his people,
to deal craftily with his servants.

26 He sent his servant Moses,
and Aaron whom he had chosen.
27 They performed his signs among them,
and miracles in the land of Ham.
28 He sent darkness, and made the land dark;
they rebelled[z] against his words.
29 He turned their waters into blood,
and caused their fish to die.
30 Their land swarmed with frogs,
even in the chambers of their kings.
31 He spoke, and there came swarms of flies,
and gnats throughout their country.
32 He gave them hail for rain,
and lightning that flashed through their land.
33 He struck their vines and fig trees,
and shattered the trees of their country.
34 He spoke, and the locusts came,
and young locusts without number;
35 they devoured all the vegetation in their land,
and ate up the fruit of their ground.
36 He struck down all the firstborn in their land,
the first issue of all their strength.

37 Then he brought Israel[a] out with silver and gold,
and there was no one among their tribes who stumbled.
38 Egypt was glad when they departed,
for dread of them had fallen upon it.
39 He spread a cloud for a covering,
and fire to give light by night.
40 They asked, and he brought quails,
and gave them food from heaven in abundance.
41 He opened the rock, and water gushed out;
it flowed through the desert like a river.
42 For he remembered his holy promise,
and Abraham, his servant.

43 So he brought his people out with joy,
his chosen ones with singing.
44 He gave them the lands of the nations,
and they took possession of the wealth of the peoples,
45 that they might keep his statutes
and observe his laws.
Praise the LORD!

Psalm 106

A Confession of Israel's Sins

1 Praise the LORD!
O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;

y Gk Syr Jerome: Heb *to bind* Gk Syr: Heb *they did not rebel*
z Cn Compare
a Heb *them*

105.23 *Ham*, the ancestor of the Egyptians in biblical tradition (Gen 10.6). **105.37** *Silver and gold.* See Ex 3.21–22; 11.2; 12.35–36. *No one . . . stumbled*, i.e., all were kept from harm as they left by God's guidance and providence. **105.45** This is what the book of Deuteronomy is about, providing *statutes and . . . laws* for life in the land and exhorting the people to follow them.

106.1–48 A hymn of praise to the Lord who has remained faithful to God's people despite a long history of sin and apostasy (vv. 1–3, 6–46) together with petitions for God's continued help in the present distress (vv. 4–5, 47). Contrasting with the history of salvation recounted in the pre-

for his steadfast love endures
forever.
2 Who can utter the mighty doings
of the LORD,
or declare all his praise?
3 Happy are those who observe
justice,
who do righteousness at all
times.

4 Remember me, O LORD, when
you show favor to your
people;
help me when you deliver
them;
5 that I may see the prosperity of
your chosen ones,
that I may rejoice in the
gladness of your nation,
that I may glory in your
heritage.

6 Both we and our ancestors have
sinned;
we have committed iniquity,
have done wickedly.
7 Our ancestors, when they were in
Egypt,
did not consider your
wonderful works;
they did not remember the
abundance of your
steadfast love,
but rebelled against the Most
High[b] at the Red Sea.[c]
8 Yet he saved them for his name's
sake,
so that he might make known
his mighty power.
9 He rebuked the Red Sea,[c] and it
became dry;
he led them through the deep
as through a desert.
10 So he saved them from the hand
of the foe,
and delivered them from the
hand of the enemy.
11 The waters covered their
adversaries;
not one of them was left.
12 Then they believed his words;
they sang his praise.

13 But they soon forgot his works;
they did not wait for his
counsel.
14 But they had a wanton craving in
the wilderness,
and put God to the test in the
desert;
15 he gave them what they asked,
but sent a wasting disease
among them.

16 They were jealous of Moses in
the camp,
and of Aaron, the holy one of
the LORD.
17 The earth opened and swallowed
up Dathan,
and covered the faction of
Abiram.
18 Fire also broke out in their
company;
the flame burned up the
wicked.

19 They made a calf at Horeb
and worshiped a cast image.

b Cn Compare 78.17, 56: Heb *rebelled at the sea*
c Or *Sea of Reeds*

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ceding psalm, this psalm recounts, penitentially (v. 6), the story of the frequent sin of the people (vv. 6–7, 13–14, 16, 19–22, 28–29, 32–39, 43b) and the consequent judgment by God (vv. 15, 17–18, 26–27, 29, 40–42, 43c), who, nevertheless, dealt compassionately with them, protecting and delivering them time and again (vv. 8–12, 23, 30–31, 43a, 44–46) because of the covenant and the loving nature of God (vv. 44–45). That history, therefore, is the ground for continued pleas for help as well as praise and thanksgiving (vv. 47–48). Like Ps 105, parts of this psalm (vv. 1, 47–48) also appear in the context of the community's worship in 1 Chr 16.34–36. **106.1–3** The psalm begins, as it ends, in praise and thanks to God. **106.1** The paradigms of praise and thanksgiving are to be found here in the Hallelujah or "Praise the LORD" (33.2; 104.35; 105.45; 106.48; 111.1; 112.1; and *passim*; Jer 20.13; Rom 15.11) and in the rest of this verse (see 107.1; 118.1, 29; 136.1; 1 Chr 16.34; 2 Chr 5.13; 7.3; 20.21; Ezra 3.11; Jer 33.11; Sir 51 [Heb additions]). **106.3** *Happy.* See note on 1.1. **106.4–5** The plea of the psalmist for help is placed in the context of the prayer for deliverance of the community, anticipating the petitions of v. 47. **106.7** *Rebelled against the Most High at the Red Sea.* See Ex 14.10–12. **106.9** *Rebuked.* See note on 104.7. **106.13–15** See Num 11.4–6, 31–35. **106.16–18** See Num 16. **106.19–23** See Ex 32. **106.19** *Horeb* is the

20 They exchanged the glory of God[d]
for the image of an ox that eats grass.
21 They forgot God, their Savior,
who had done great things in Egypt,
22 wondrous works in the land of Ham,
and awesome deeds by the Red Sea.[e]
23 Therefore he said he would destroy them—
had not Moses, his chosen one,
stood in the breach before him,
to turn away his wrath from destroying them.

24 Then they despised the pleasant land,
having no faith in his promise.
25 They grumbled in their tents,
and did not obey the voice of the LORD.
26 Therefore he raised his hand and swore to them
that he would make them fall in the wilderness,
27 and would disperse[f] their descendants among the nations,
scattering them over the lands.

28 Then they attached themselves to the Baal of Peor,
and ate sacrifices offered to the dead;
29 they provoked the LORD to anger with their deeds,
and a plague broke out among them.
30 Then Phinehas stood up and interceded,
and the plague was stopped.
31 And that has been reckoned to him as righteousness
from generation to generation forever.

32 They angered the LORD[g] at the waters of Meribah,
and it went ill with Moses on their account;
33 for they made his spirit bitter,
and he spoke words that were rash.

34 They did not destroy the peoples,
as the LORD commanded them,
35 but they mingled with the nations
and learned to do as they did.
36 They served their idols,
which became a snare to them.
37 They sacrificed their sons
and their daughters to the demons;
38 they poured out innocent blood,
the blood of their sons and daughters,
whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan;
and the land was polluted with blood.
39 Thus they became unclean by their acts,
and prostituted themselves in their doings.

40 Then the anger of the LORD was kindled against his people,
and he abhorred his heritage;
41 he gave them into the hand of the nations,
so that those who hated them ruled over them.
42 Their enemies oppressed them,
and they were brought into subjection under their power.
43 Many times he delivered them,
but they were rebellious in their purposes,
and were brought low through their iniquity.
44 Nevertheless he regarded their distress
when he heard their cry.
45 For their sake he remembered his covenant,

d Compare Gk Mss: Heb *exchanged their glory*
e Or *Sea of Reeds*
f Syr Compare Ezek 20.23: Heb *cause to fall*
g Heb *him*

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alternate name for Mount Sinai. **106.24–27** See Num 14.1–35. **106.28–31** See Num 25.1–13. **106.32–33** See Ex 17.1–7; Num 20.2–13. **106.34–39** Israel's sins during the period of the judges and later. **106.34** *As the LORD commanded them.* See Deut 7.1–5; 20.16–18. **106.36** *Snare.* See Ex 23.32–33. **106.37–38** See 2 Kings 16.3; 21.6; 23.10. **106.41** *Gave them into the hand of the nations.* See Judg 6.1; 13.1. **106.44** *Heard their cry.* See Judg 3.9, 15; 4.3; 6.7; 10.10–16.

and showed compassion
according to the abundance
of his steadfast love.
46 He caused them to be pitied
by all who held them captive.

47 Save us, O LORD our God,
and gather us from among the nations,
that we may give thanks to your holy name
and glory in your praise.

48 Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,
from everlasting to everlasting.
And let all the people say,
"Amen."
Praise the LORD!

BOOK V

(Psalms 107–150)

Psalm 107

Thanksgiving for Deliverance from Many Troubles

1 O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
for his steadfast love endures forever.
2 Let the redeemed of the LORD say so,
those he redeemed from trouble
3 and gathered in from the lands,
from the east and from the west,
from the north and from the south.[h]

4 Some wandered in desert wastes,
finding no way to an inhabited town;
5 hungry and thirsty,
their soul fainted within them.
6 Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,
and he delivered them from their distress;
7 he led them by a straight way,
until they reached an inhabited town.
8 Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love,
for his wonderful works to humankind.
9 For he satisfies the thirsty,
and the hungry he fills with good things.

10 Some sat in darkness and in gloom,
prisoners in misery and in irons,
11 for they had rebelled against the words of God,
and spurned the counsel of the Most High.
12 Their hearts were bowed down with hard labor;
they fell down, with no one to help.
13 Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,
and he saved them from their distress;
14 he brought them out of darkness and gloom,
and broke their bonds asunder.
15 Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love,
for his wonderful works to humankind.

h Cn: Heb *sea*

106.47 *Gather us from among the nations* suggests that the psalm was composed during the time of exile or later, when the people were dispersed among different nations, for example, Babylon and Egypt. **106.48** A doxology closing the fourth book of the Psalter. See note on 41.13.

107.1–32 A liturgy of thanksgiving. Four different situations of distress are described (vv. 4–5, 10–12, 17–18, 23–27). In each case the psalmist recounts how those in peril cried out to the Lord, i.e., prayed (vv. 6a, 13a, 19a, 28a), and God delivered them (vv. 6b–7, 13b–14, 19b–20, 28b–29). Because of this they are now called to give thanks and praise (vv. 8–9, 15–16, 21–22, 31–32). **107.1–3** Introductory general call to give thanks. **107.1** This verse of the general call to give thanks is echoed in the particular calls that follow (vv. 8, 15, 21, 31). See note on 106.1. **107.2–3** These verses may have in mind the exiles who have been freed from Babylonian captivity and returned home. *Redeemed of the LORD.* See Isa 62.12. **107.4–9** Thanksgiving of those delivered from the dangers of thirst and starvation in the desert. **107.10–16** Thanksgiving of freed

16 For he shatters the doors of bronze,
and cuts in two the bars of iron.

17 Some were sick[i] through their sinful ways,
and because of their iniquities endured affliction;
18 they loathed any kind of food,
and they drew near to the gates of death.
19 Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,
and he saved them from their distress;
20 he sent out his word and healed them,
and delivered them from destruction.
21 Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love,
for his wonderful works to humankind.
22 And let them offer thanksgiving sacrifices,
and tell of his deeds with songs of joy.

23 Some went down to the sea in ships,
doing business on the mighty waters;
24 they saw the deeds of the LORD,
his wondrous works in the deep.
25 For he commanded and raised the stormy wind,
which lifted up the waves of the sea.
26 They mounted up to heaven, they went down to the depths;
their courage melted away in their calamity;
27 they reeled and staggered like drunkards,
and were at their wits' end.
28 Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,
and he brought them out from their distress;
29 he made the storm be still,
and the waves of the sea were hushed.
30 Then they were glad because they had quiet,
and he brought them to their desired haven.
31 Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love,
for his wonderful works to humankind.
32 Let them extol him in the congregation of the people,
and praise him in the assembly of the elders.

33 He turns rivers into a desert,
springs of water into thirsty ground,
34 a fruitful land into a salty waste,
because of the wickedness of its inhabitants.
35 He turns a desert into pools of water,
a parched land into springs of water.
36 And there he lets the hungry live,
and they establish a town to live in;
37 they sow fields, and plant vineyards,
and get a fruitful yield.
38 By his blessing they multiply greatly,
and he does not let their cattle decrease.

39 When they are diminished and brought low
through oppression, trouble, and sorrow,
40 he pours contempt on princes
and makes them wander in trackless wastes;

i Cn: Heb *fools*

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prisoners. **107.17–22** Thanksgiving of those healed and forgiven. **107.22** Here specific call is made to offer sacrifices of thanksgiving (66.13–15; 116.17) and bear witness to God's salvation (18.49–50; 22.22; 40.9; 66.16–19). **107.23–32** Thanksgiving of those saved from the dangers of the sea. **107.32** Thanksgiving to God was rendered in the midst of the gathered congregation (22.22–25; 40.9–10; 116.18). **107.33–43** A hymn of praise for God's provision for the hungry and needy, which forms a fitting conclusion to the liturgy of thanksgiving in vv. 1–32. **107.35** Cf. Isa 41.17–18. **107.39–41** Cf. 1 Sam 2.4–8.

41 but he raises up the needy out of distress,
and makes their families like flocks.
42 The upright see it and are glad;
and all wickedness stops its mouth.
43 Let those who are wise give heed to these things,
and consider the steadfast love of the LORD.

Psalm 108

Praise and Prayer for Victory

A Song. A Psalm of David.

1 My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast;[j]
I will sing and make melody.
Awake, my soul![k]
2 Awake, O harp and lyre!
I will awake the dawn.
3 I will give thanks to you, O LORD, among the peoples,
and I will sing praises to you among the nations.
4 For your steadfast love is higher than the heavens,
and your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.

5 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens,
and let your glory be over all the earth.
6 Give victory with your right hand, and answer me,
so that those whom you love may be rescued.

7 God has promised in his sanctuary:[l]
"With exultation I will divide up Shechem,
and portion out the Vale of Succoth.
8 Gilead is mine; Manasseh is mine;
Ephraim is my helmet;
Judah is my scepter.
9 Moab is my washbasin;
on Edom I hurl my shoe;
over Philistia I shout in triumph."

10 Who will bring me to the fortified city?
Who will lead me to Edom?
11 Have you not rejected us, O God?
You do not go out, O God, with our armies.
12 O grant us help against the foe,
for human help is worthless.
13 With God we shall do valiantly;
it is he who will tread down our foes.

Psalm 109

Prayer for Vindication and Deliverance

To the leader. Of David. A Psalm.

1 Do not be silent, O God of my praise.
2 For wicked and deceitful mouths are opened against me,
speaking against me with lying tongues.
3 They beset me with words of hate,
and attack me without cause.
4 In return for my love they accuse me,
even while I make prayer for them.[m]
5 So they reward me evil for good,
and hatred for my love.

6 They say,[n] "Appoint a wicked man against him;
let an accuser stand on his right.

j Heb Mss Gk Syr: MT lacks *my heart is steadfast* *k* Compare 57.8: Heb *also my soul* *l* Or *by his holiness* *m* Syr: Heb *I prayer* *n* Heb lacks *They say*

108.1–5 The same as (see note on) 57.7–11. **108.6–13** The same as (see notes on) 60.5–12. **109.1–31** An individual prayer for help against enemies who have uttered false accusations and pronounced curses that endanger the life of the petitioner. *To the leader.* See note on 4.1–8. **109.1** Cry for help. **109.2–5** Lament over the false accusations (cf. v. 20) and hateful curses (cf. v. 28) rendered against the psalmist, who has acted benevolently toward those who now persecute. **109.6–19** Lament continues as the accusation (v. 16) and the curses (vv. 8–15, 17–19) that have been uttered against the petitioner are now quoted. **109.6–7** The accusers have called for a judicial process against the psalmist to prove guilt and bring about a punish-

7 When he is tried, let him be
found guilty;
let his prayer be counted as sin.
8 May his days be few;
may another seize his position.
9 May his children be orphans,
and his wife a widow.
10 May his children wander about
and beg;
may they be driven out of[o] the
ruins they inhabit.
11 May the creditor seize all that
he has;
may strangers plunder the
fruits of his toil.
12 May there be no one to do him a
kindness,
nor anyone to pity his
orphaned children.
13 May his posterity be cut off;
may his name be blotted out in
the second generation.
14 May the iniquity of his father[p] be
remembered before the
LORD,
and do not let the sin of his
mother be blotted out.
15 Let them be before the LORD
continually,
and may his[q] memory be cut
off from the earth.
16 For he did not remember to show
kindness,
but pursued the poor and
needy
and the brokenhearted to their
death.
17 He loved to curse; let curses
come on him.
He did not like blessing; may it
be far from him.
18 He clothed himself with cursing
as his coat,
may it soak into his body like
water,
like oil into his bones.
19 May it be like a garment that he
wraps around himself,
like a belt that he wears
every day."

20 May that be the reward of my
accusers from the LORD,
of those who speak evil against
my life.
21 But you, O LORD my Lord,
act on my behalf for your
name's sake;
because your steadfast love is
good, deliver me.
22 For I am poor and needy,
and my heart is pierced
within me.
23 I am gone like a shadow at
evening;
I am shaken off like a locust.
24 My knees are weak through
fasting;
my body has become gaunt.
25 I am an object of scorn to my
accusers;
when they see me, they shake
their heads.

26 Help me, O LORD my God!
Save me according to your
steadfast love.
27 Let them know that this is your
hand;
you, O LORD, have done it.
28 Let them curse, but you will bless.
Let my assailants be put to
shame;[r] may your servant
be glad.
29 May my accusers be clothed with
dishonor;
may they be wrapped in their
own shame as in a mantle.

o Gk: Heb *and seek* p Cn: Heb *fathers*
q Gk: Heb *their* r Gk: Heb *They have risen up and have been put to shame*

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ment of death (v. 31). **109.15b** Better translated according to text note *q*; the reference is to the family. **109.16** The false accusation is that the psalmist oppressed the poor and needy even to their death, and so the curse is that the psalmist also shall not be treated kindly (v. 12) and be pursued to death (v. 31). **109.17–19** Here, as in v. 12 (cf. v. 16a), the curses call for a punishment corresponding to the supposed crime. **109.20–29** The petitions of the psalmist asking God to do in the persecutors. It is couched in language somewhat similar to their curses and accusations (vv. 22, 28–29, 31). **109.20** This verse has been understood by some interpreters as concluding the preceding part, i.e., "this is the work of my accusers, those who speak evil against my life." **109.22** *For I am poor and needy.* Over against the accusation of having oppressed the *poor and needy* (v. 16), the psalmist is in that state and so can claim God's help (cf. Ex 22.22–26).

30 With my mouth I will give great
thanks to the LORD;
I will praise him in the midst of
the throng.
31 For he stands at the right hand
of the needy,
to save them from those who
would condemn them to
death.

Psalm 110

Assurance of Victory for God's Priest-King

Of David. A Psalm.

1 The LORD says to my lord,
"Sit at my right hand
until I make your enemies your
footstool."

2 The LORD sends out from Zion
your mighty scepter.
Rule in the midst of your foes.
3 Your people will offer themselves
willingly
on the day you lead your forces
on the holy mountains.[s]
From the womb of the morning,
like dew, your youth[t] will
come to you.

4 The LORD has sworn and will not
change his mind,
"You are a priest forever
according to the order of
Melchizedek."[u]

5 The Lord is at your right hand;
he will shatter kings on the day
of his wrath.
6 He will execute judgment among
the nations,
filling them with corpses;
he will shatter heads
over the wide earth.
7 He will drink from the stream by
the path;
therefore he will lift up his
head.

Psalm 111

Praise for God's Wonderful Works

1 Praise the LORD!
I will give thanks to the LORD
with my whole heart,
in the company of the upright,
in the congregation.
2 Great are the works of the LORD,

s Another reading is *in holy splendor* t Cn: Heb *the dew of your youth* u Or *forever, a rightful king by my edict*

109.30–31 Vow of praise and thanksgiving. **109.31** *He stands at the right hand of the needy,* over against the efforts of the persecutors to place an accuser *on his right* (v. 6).

110.1–7 A royal psalm declaring God's establishment of the ruling and priestly office of the king. The psalm probably originally had to do with rights and traditions given to the king at his enthronement in Jerusalem. Textual problems prohibit a clear and certain reading of the text. **110.1** An oracle probably delivered by a prophetic or priestly figure. *My lord,* i.e., the king. *At my right hand* is the place of power and honor of a ruler, here the Lord (cf. 1 Kings 2.19). *Your footstool* refers to the practice of victorious kings placing their feet on the backs of captured enemies. **110.2** The *scepter* of the king is given by God as a symbol of rule over enemies. **110.3** *On the day you lead your forces* probably should be read "On the day of your power," i.e., on the day of the king's enthronement. The second half of the verse may be another oracle referring to the divine adoption of the king: "From the womb of the morning, like dew I have begotten you" (cf. 2.7). For the reference to *dew,* cf. 72.6. **110.4** A further oracle giving the king priestly functions and prerogatives (cf. 2 Sam 6.13–14, 18; 8.18; 24.25; 1 Kings 3.4; 8.14, 55). *Melchizedek,* a figure who seems to have been a king of Jerusalem; he was called "priest of God Most High" in the pre-Israelite era (Gen 14.17–20). Israel seems to have taken over traditions from the Jebusites, who inhabited Jerusalem prior to David's conquest of the city (1 Sam 5.6–10). In the Letter to the Hebrews, Jesus' priestly role is associated with Melchizedek, as this verse is cited (Heb 5.6, 10; 6.20–7.10, 15–17). **110.5–6** God's defeat of the enemies of the king. **110.7** The meaning of the verse is uncertain but it may refer to some ritual act of the king at the enthronement.

111.1–10 A hymn of praise and thanksgiving. Its conclusion and its alphabetic acrostic form (see note on 9.1–10.18) show that it was composed for instruction as well as praise. While it is an individual voice that gives thanks in the psalm, the focus is upon the wonderful deeds of God for the people rather than the particular way in which God has helped an individual, as is the case in such psalms as Pss 18; 22; 30; 116. Ps 66 gives an example of the combination of thanksgiving for the works of God on behalf of the people and the help rendered to an individual in distress.

studied by all who delight
in them.
3 Full of honor and majesty is
his work,
and his righteousness endures
forever.
4 He has gained renown by his
wonderful deeds;
the LORD is gracious and
merciful.
5 He provides food for those who
fear him;
he is ever mindful of his
covenant.
6 He has shown his people the
power of his works,
in giving them the heritage of
the nations.
7 The works of his hands are
faithful and just;
all his precepts are trustworthy.
8 They are established forever and
ever,
to be performed with
faithfulness and
uprightness.
9 He sent redemption to his
people;
he has commanded his
covenant forever.
Holy and awesome is his name.
10 The fear of the LORD is the
beginning of wisdom;
all those who practice it[v] have
a good understanding.
His praise endures forever.

Psalm 112

Blessings of the Righteous

1 Praise the LORD!
Happy are those who fear
the LORD,
who greatly delight in his
commandments.
2 Their descendants will be mighty
in the land;
the generation of the upright
will be blessed.
3 Wealth and riches are in their
houses,
and their righteousness endures
forever.
4 They rise in the darkness as a
light for the upright;
they are gracious, merciful, and
righteous.
5 It is well with those who deal
generously and lend,
who conduct their affairs with
justice.
6 For the righteous will never
be moved;
they will be remembered
forever.
7 They are not afraid of evil
tidings;
their hearts are firm, secure in
the LORD.
8 Their hearts are steady, they will
not be afraid;
in the end they will look in
triumph on their foes.
9 They have distributed freely, they
have given to the poor;
their righteousness endures
forever;
their horn is exalted in honor.
10 The wicked see it and are angry;
they gnash their teeth and melt
away;
the desire of the wicked comes
to nothing.

v Gk Syr: Heb *them*

111.4 *The LORD is gracious and merciful.* See note on 103.8. **111.5** *He is ever mindful of his covenant.* See 105.8–10; 106.45. **111.6** *The heritage of the nations,* presumably the land of Canaan, which was occupied by various nations when Israel took the land. **111.10** See Job 28.28; Prov 1.7. *Fear of the LORD.* See note on 34.7.

112.1–10 Instruction about the characteristics and benefits of righteous living. Cf. Pss 1; 19; 119. Like Ps 111, with which this psalm shares various expressions and vocabulary, Ps 112 is an alphabetic acrostic (see note on 9.1–10.18). **112.1** *Happy.* See note on 1.1. *Fear the LORD.* See note on 34.7. *Delight in his commandments.* See Ps 1.2. **112.4** *They are gracious, merciful.* The righteous are seen to imitate the attributes of God according to the ancient confession of Ex 34.6. Cf. Pss 103.8; 111.4; 116.5. **112.6** See Ps 15, especially v. 5b. **112.9** *Horn.* See note on 75.4–5. **112.10** As in Ps 1, the wicked are contrasted with the righteous but are given less attention. Like the chaff, with which they are compared, they are worthless and disappear.

Psalm 113

God the Helper of the Needy

1 Praise the LORD!
Praise, O servants of the LORD;
praise the name of the LORD.

2 Blessed be the name of the LORD
from this time on and forevermore.
3 From the rising of the sun to its setting
the name of the LORD is to be praised.
4 The LORD is high above all nations,
and his glory above the heavens.

5 Who is like the LORD our God,
who is seated on high,
6 who looks far down
on the heavens and the earth?
7 He raises the poor from the dust,
and lifts the needy from the ash heap,
8 to make them sit with princes,
with the princes of his people.
9 He gives the barren woman a home,
making her the joyous mother of children.
Praise the LORD!

Psalm 114

God's Wonders at the Exodus

1 When Israel went out from Egypt,
the house of Jacob from a people of strange language,
2 Judah became God's[w] sanctuary,
Israel his dominion.

3 The sea looked and fled;
Jordan turned back.
4 The mountains skipped like rams,
the hills like lambs.

5 Why is it, O sea, that you flee?
O Jordan, that you turn back?
6 O mountains, that you skip like rams?
O hills, like lambs?

7 Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the LORD,
at the presence of the God of Jacob,
8 who turns the rock into a pool of water,
the flint into a spring of water.

Psalm 115

The Impotence of Idols and the Greatness of God

1 Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name give glory,

w Heb *his*

113.1–9 A hymn in praise of God who does wonderful things on behalf of the weak and needy. In Jewish tradition this is one of the "Egyptian Hallel" ("praise") psalms (Pss 113–118), sung before (Pss 113–114) and after (Pss 115–118) the Passover meal (cf. Mt 26.30; Mk 14.26). Because of vv. 7–9 particularly, the song stands in a line of tradition with 1 Sam 2.1–10; Lk 1.46–55. **113.5** Cf. Ex 15.11. **113.6** Cf. 14.2; 138.6. **113.7–8** Cf. 1 Sam 2.8. **113.9** Cf. 1 Sam 2.5.

114.1–8 A hymn in praise of God's marvelous power in bringing Israel out of slavery in Egypt and across the Jordan into the promised land. One of the Hallel psalms (see note on 113.1–9). **114.2** *Judah became God's sanctuary* suggests a date of composition after Jerusalem had become the site of the central sanctuary. **114.3–6** The miraculous phenomena of nature during the exodus and the crossing of the Jordan are here given poetic interpretation as manifestations of divine power. *The sea looked and fled* refers to turning back of the waters during the exodus. *Jordan turned back.* Cf. Josh 3.14–17. **114.8** See Ex 17.6; Num 20.11.

115.1–18 A liturgical prayer of the people. The way in which the personal pronouns change suggests antiphonal or alternating speakers in the course of the prayer. One of the Hallel psalms (see note on 113.1–9). **115.1–2** While the first verse ascribes glory to God, the second is more a complaint suggesting some experience of distress on the part of the people. Their situation is understood to be a challenge to God's glory and honor. Their words are therefore praise and a call

for the sake of your steadfast
love and your faithfulness.
2 Why should the nations say,
"Where is their God?"

3 Our God is in the heavens;
he does whatever he pleases.
4 Their idols are silver and gold,
the work of human hands.
5 They have mouths, but do not
speak;
eyes, but do not see.
6 They have ears, but do not hear;
noses, but do not smell.
7 They have hands, but do not feel;
feet, but do not walk;
they make no sound in their
throats.
8 Those who make them are like
them;
so are all who trust in them.

9 O Israel, trust in the LORD!
He is their help and their
shield.
10 O house of Aaron, trust in the
LORD!
He is their help and their
shield.
11 You who fear the LORD, trust in
the LORD!
He is their help and their
shield.

12 The LORD has been mindful of
us; he will bless us;
he will bless the house of Israel;
he will bless the house of
Aaron;
13 he will bless those who fear the
LORD,
both small and great.

14 May the LORD give you increase,
both you and your children.
15 May you be blessed by the LORD,
who made heaven and earth.

16 The heavens are the LORD's
heavens,
but the earth he has given to
human beings.
17 The dead do not praise the LORD,
nor do any that go down into
silence.
18 But we will bless the LORD
from this time on and
forevermore.
Praise the LORD!

Psalm 116

Thanksgiving for Deliverance from Death

1 I love the LORD, because he has
heard
my voice and my supplications.
2 Because he inclined his ear to me,
therefore I will call on him as
long as I live.
3 The snares of death
encompassed me;
the pangs of Sheol laid hold
on me;
I suffered distress and anguish.
4 Then I called on the name of
the LORD:
"O LORD, I pray, save my life!"

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for demonstration of God's glory. **115.2** *"Where is their God?"* See note on 79.10. **115.3–8** As a response to the taunt of the nations, Israel or a representative voice declares the vitality and power of the God of Israel over against the impotent idols worshiped by the nations. **115.9–11** A voice or voices follow up this claim by calling upon priests and people to trust in the Lord, whose power over the gods of the nations has just been described. **115.11** *You who fear the LORD.* See note on 34.7 (cf. 115.13). Some would interpret this as a reference to proselytes in the postexilic community (cf. 1 Kings 8.41–45; Isa 56.6; Acts 13.16, 26) as distinct from the Israelite laity (*O Israel*, v. 9) and priests (*O house of Aaron*, v. 10). **115.12–13** The people respond, expressing their confidence in God's blessing of them. It is possible, however, to understand these verses as the voice of a representative figure announcing that God has heard the prayer and will bless the people. **115.14–15** A priestly voice (cf. Num 6.22–27) prays a blessing prayer for the people. **115.16–18** Concluding hymn of praise by the people. **115.17** See note on 6.5.

116.1–19 A song of thanksgiving for God's help in time of distress. As in most of the prayers for help, the nature of the distress is not indicated except to say that the psalmist felt close to death (vv. 3, 8, 15). One of the Hallel psalms (see note on 113.1–9). **116.1–2** The basic word of gratitude because God has heard the prayer for help and delivered the sufferer. The testimony of the psalmist before the congregation (v. 18; cf. 22.22–25; 40.9–10; 107.32) begins at this point. **116.3–11** Testimony about the distress and God's deliverance. **116.3–4** The suffering and the

5 Gracious is the LORD, and
righteous;
our God is merciful.
6 The LORD protects the simple;
when I was brought low, he
saved me.
7 Return, O my soul, to your rest,
for the LORD has dealt
bountifully with you.

8 For you have delivered my soul
from death,
my eyes from tears,
my feet from stumbling.
9 I walk before the LORD
in the land of the living.
10 I kept my faith, even when I said,
"I am greatly afflicted";
11 I said in my consternation,
"Everyone is a liar."

12 What shall I return to the LORD
for all his bounty to me?
13 I will lift up the cup of salvation
and call on the name of the
LORD,
14 I will pay my vows to the LORD
in the presence of all his
people.
15 Precious in the sight of the LORD
is the death of his faithful ones.
16 O LORD, I am your servant;
I am your servant, the child of
your serving girl.
You have loosed my bonds.
17 I will offer to you a thanksgiving
sacrifice
and call on the name of the
LORD.
18 I will pay my vows to the LORD
in the presence of all his
people,
19 in the courts of the house of
the LORD,
in your midst, O Jerusalem.
Praise the LORD!

Psalm 117

Universal Call to Worship

1 Praise the LORD, all you nations!
Extol him, all you peoples!
2 For great is his steadfast love
toward us,
and the faithfulness of the
LORD endures forever.
Praise the LORD!

Psalm 118

Thanksgiving for Deliverance from Enemies

1 O give thanks to the LORD, for he
is good;
his steadfast love endures
forever!

2 Let Israel say,
"His steadfast love endures
forever."
3 Let the house of Aaron say,
"His steadfast love endures
forever."
4 Let those who fear the LORD say,
"His steadfast love endures
forever."

5 Out of my distress I called on the
LORD;

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prayer it evoked. **116.5–9** The graciousness of God manifest in the salvation of the sufferer. **116.10–11** Looking back, the psalmist reports a continuing trust in God even when complaining and lamenting over affliction and persecution. *Everyone is a liar* may indicate the distress was due to slander or false accusation or may have been a general reaction of despair in the face of how everyone responded to the afflicted. **116.12–19** Fulfillment of the vow of thanksgiving that was part of the cry for help. **116.13** In the worship, the grateful psalmist now offers a libation and praises the name of the God who delivered. **116.15** The Lord cares about those who trust in the Lord and will seek to keep them from the defeat of death. **116.16** *Child of your serving girl.* See note on 86.16. **116.17** *Thanksgiving sacrifice.* Cf. 66.13–15; 107.22. **116.18–19** See note on vv. 1–2.

117.1–2 A hymn of praise. One of the Hallel psalms (see note on 113.1–9). **117.1** Call to praise. For the praise of the *nations*, see 67.3–5; 68.32. **117.2** The reason for praise is God's overwhelming love manifest toward Israel. Cf. 126.2–3.

118.1–29 A liturgy of thanksgiving in which an individual comes to the temple to give thanks to God in the context of the festival worship of the community. One of the Hallel psalms (see note on 113.1–9). **118.1–4** Call to praise. The short model of praise in v. 1 (cf. v. 29; note on 106.1) becomes a liturgical response in vv. 2–4 (cf. Ps 136). **118.2–4** See note on 115.11. **118.5–18** A song of thanksgiving of an individual

the LORD answered me and set
me in a broad place.
6 With the LORD on my side I do
not fear.
What can mortals do to me?
7 The LORD is on my side to
help me;
I shall look in triumph on those
who hate me.
8 It is better to take refuge in the
LORD
than to put confidence in
mortals.
9 It is better to take refuge in the
LORD
than to put confidence in
princes.

10 All nations surrounded me;
in the name of the LORD I cut
them off!
11 They surrounded me,
surrounded me on every
side;
in the name of the LORD I cut
them off!
12 They surrounded me like bees;
they blazed[x] like a fire of
thorns;
in the name of the LORD I cut
them off!
13 I was pushed hard,[y] so that I
was falling,
but the LORD helped me.
14 The LORD is my strength and my
might;
he has become my salvation.

15 There are glad songs of victory in
the tents of the righteous:
"The right hand of the LORD
does valiantly;
16 the right hand of the LORD is
exalted;
the right hand of the LORD
does valiantly."
17 I shall not die, but I shall live,
and recount the deeds of the
LORD.
18 The LORD has punished me
severely,
but he did not give me over to
death.

19 Open to me the gates of
righteousness,
that I may enter through them
and give thanks to the LORD.

20 This is the gate of the LORD;
the righteous shall enter
through it.

21 I thank you that you have
answered me
and have become my salvation.
22 The stone that the builders
rejected
has become the chief
cornerstone.
23 This is the LORD's doing;
it is marvelous in our eyes.
24 This is the day that the LORD has
made;

x Gk: Heb *were extinguished* y Gk Syr Jerome: Heb *You pushed me hard*

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who recounts the cry to the Lord in distress and how the Lord helped. Vv. 10–14, with their references to being surrounded by the nations, have suggested the possibility that the original speaker was a king. While that is possible, a composition date after the exile would require a nonroyal speaker who was either using royal motifs or in some sense being beset by people of other nationalities. Nehemiah and the community of his time would be an example of this, though there is nothing to associate the psalm with him. **118.5** A summary report of the cry for help and God's answer. *A broad place.* See note on 18.19. **118.6–9** Expressions of confidence in God. **118.6** Quoted in Heb 13.6. *I do not fear* may reflect the suppliant's receiving an oracle of salvation with the assuring words "Do not fear" (cf. note on 22.21b). **118.8–9** Cf. 60.11; 146.3. **118.10–13** Account of the situation of distress. **118.14–18** Praise and thanksgiving to God for the help that was given. **118.14** Cf. Ex 15.2; Isa 12.2. **118.15–16** Perhaps an ancient victory song. **118.19–21** These verses suggest that the previous verses are part of a processional to the gates of the temple, where the suppliant now asks for entry to continue to give thanks to the Lord before the assembled congregation. **118.19** The request for entry. **118.20** The qualifications for entry into the sanctuary (cf. Pss 15; 24), probably spoken by a priest. **118.21** The thanksgiving of the individual now in the sanctuary. **118.22–27** The voices of the congregation or singers are heard praising God for the marvelous deliverance of the one in distress. **118.22** This verse may be either the words of the particular individual or those of the congregation. Quoted in Mt 21.42; Mk 12.10; Lk 20.17; Acts 4.11; 1 Pet 2.7. **118.23** Quoted in Mt 21.42; Mk 12.11.

let us rejoice and be glad
in it.[z]
25 Save us, we beseech you, O LORD!
O LORD, we beseech you, give
us success!

26 Blessed is the one who comes in
the name of the LORD.[a]
We bless you from the house of
the LORD.
27 The LORD is God,
and he has given us light.
Bind the festal procession with
branches,
up to the horns of the altar.[b]

28 You are my God, and I will give
thanks to you;
you are my God, I will
extol you.

29 O give thanks to the LORD, for he
is good,
for his steadfast love endures
forever.

Psalm 119

The Glories of God's Law

1 Happy are those whose way is
blameless,
who walk in the law of the
LORD.
2 Happy are those who keep his
decrees,
who seek him with their whole
heart,
3 who also do no wrong,
but walk in his ways.
4 You have commanded your
precepts
to be kept diligently.
5 O that my ways may be steadfast
in keeping your statutes!
6 Then I shall not be put to shame,
having my eyes fixed on all
your commandments.
7 I will praise you with an upright
heart,
when I learn your righteous
ordinances.
8 I will observe your statutes;
do not utterly forsake me.

9 How can young people keep their
way pure?
By guarding it according to
your word.
10 With my whole heart I seek you;
do not let me stray from your
commandments.
11 I treasure your word in my heart,
so that I may not sin
against you.
12 Blessed are you, O LORD;
teach me your statutes.
13 With my lips I declare
all the ordinances of your
mouth.
14 I delight in the way of your
decrees
as much as in all riches.
15 I will meditate on your precepts,
and fix my eyes on your ways.
16 I will delight in your statutes;
I will not forget your word.

z Or *in him* *a* Or *Blessed in the name of the* LORD *is the one who comes* *b* Meaning of Heb uncertain

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118.25–26 Quoted or alluded to in Mt 21.9; Mk 11.9; Lk 19.38. *Save us* is the translation of the Hebrew expression "Hosanna." V. 26 is probably a blessing uttered upon the one who comes to give thanks. **118.27** The *horns of the altar* were four projections at the corners of the altar. **118.28** The act of thanksgiving by the individual in the sanctuary. **118.29** Concluding praise of the people or singers (cf. 2 Chr 5.13).

119.1–176 A prayer for God's help in time of trouble as well as in the keeping of the law. It may be a collection or anthology of psalm pieces. Elements of prayers for help and songs of thanksgiving intermix with exaltation of the law and expressions of commitment to it, giving the psalm the character of both instruction and prayer. It is an alphabetic acrostic psalm (see note on 9.1–10.18) made up of twenty-two stanzas of eight lines each. Following the order of the Hebrew alphabet, each stanza uses one letter of the alphabet to begin each of its eight lines. Eight different terms for the law (*commandments, statutes, ordinances, decrees, words, precepts, promise,* and *law*) are used, most of them in each stanza, and all of them in four stanzas. In its delight in the law of the Lord and commitment to it, the psalm is to be compared with Pss 1; 19. **119.1–8** Praise of the law and the benefits of keeping God's instruction. **119.1–2** *Happy.* See note on 1.1. **119.9–16** Prayer for help in keeping the law.

17 Deal bountifully with your servant,
so that I may live and observe your word.
18 Open my eyes, so that I may behold
wondrous things out of your law.
19 I live as an alien in the land;
do not hide your commandments from me.
20 My soul is consumed with longing
for your ordinances at all times.
21 You rebuke the insolent, accursed ones,
who wander from your commandments;
22 take away from me their scorn and contempt,
for I have kept your decrees.
23 Even though princes sit plotting against me,
your servant will meditate on your statutes.
24 Your decrees are my delight,
they are my counselors.

25 My soul clings to the dust;
revive me according to your word.
26 When I told of my ways, you answered me;
teach me your statutes.
27 Make me understand the way of your precepts,
and I will meditate on your wondrous works.
28 My soul melts away for sorrow;
strengthen me according to your word.
29 Put false ways far from me;
and graciously teach me your law.
30 I have chosen the way of faithfulness;
I set your ordinances before me.
31 I cling to your decrees, O LORD;
let me not be put to shame.
32 I run the way of your commandments,
for you enlarge my understanding.

33 Teach me, O LORD, the way of your statutes,
and I will observe it to the end.
34 Give me understanding, that I may keep your law
and observe it with my whole heart.
35 Lead me in the path of your commandments,
for I delight in it.
36 Turn my heart to your decrees,
and not to selfish gain.
37 Turn my eyes from looking at vanities;
give me life in your ways.
38 Confirm to your servant your promise,
which is for those who fear you.
39 Turn away the disgrace that I dread,
for your ordinances are good.
40 See, I have longed for your precepts;
in your righteousness give me life.

41 Let your steadfast love come to me, O LORD,
your salvation according to your promise.
42 Then I shall have an answer for those who taunt me,
for I trust in your word.
43 Do not take the word of truth utterly out of my mouth,
for my hope is in your ordinances.
44 I will keep your law continually,
forever and ever.
45 I shall walk at liberty,
for I have sought your precepts.
46 I will also speak of your decrees before kings,
and shall not be put to shame;
47 I find my delight in your commandments,

119.17–24 Prayer for help against enemies as the one who prays keeps all the law. **119.25–32** Prayer to be strengthened and rejuvenated through keeping the way of God's commandments. **119.33–40** Plea for understanding in order to keep God's law. **119.35** *Delight.* See 1.2. **119.38** *Fear you* (also vv. 63, 74, 79). See note on 34.7. **119.41–48** Prayer for God's deliverance so that the taunts of persecutors will be answered by the one who trusts and

because I love them.
48 I revere your commandments,
which I love,
and I will meditate on your
statutes.

49 Remember your word to your
servant,
in which you have made
me hope.
50 This is my comfort in my distress,
that your promise gives me
life.
51 The arrogant utterly deride me,
but I do not turn away from
your law.
52 When I think of your ordinances
from of old,
I take comfort, O LORD.
53 Hot indignation seizes me
because of the wicked,
those who forsake your law.
54 Your statutes have been my songs
wherever I make my home.
55 I remember your name in the
night, O LORD,
and keep your law.
56 This blessing has fallen to me,
for I have kept your precepts.

57 The LORD is my portion;
I promise to keep your words.
58 I implore your favor with all my
heart;
be gracious to me according to
your promise.
59 When I think of your ways,
I turn my feet to your decrees;
60 I hurry and do not delay
to keep your commandments.
61 Though the cords of the wicked
ensnare me,
I do not forget your law.
62 At midnight I rise to praise you,
because of your righteous
ordinances.
63 I am a companion of all who
fear you,
of those who keep your
precepts.
64 The earth, O LORD, is full of
your steadfast love;
teach me your statutes.

65 You have dealt well with your
servant,
O LORD, according to your word.
66 Teach me good judgment and
knowledge,
for I believe in your
commandments.
67 Before I was humbled I went
astray,
but now I keep your word.
68 You are good and do good;
teach me your statutes.
69 The arrogant smear me with lies,
but with my whole heart I keep
your precepts.
70 Their hearts are fat and gross,
but I delight in your law.
71 It is good for me that I was
humbled,
so that I might learn your
statutes.
72 The law of your mouth is better
to me
than thousands of gold and
silver pieces.

73 Your hands have made and
fashioned me;
give me understanding that I
may learn your
commandments.
74 Those who fear you shall see me
and rejoice,
because I have hoped in your
word.
75 I know, O LORD, that your
judgments are right,
and that in faithfulness you
have humbled me.
76 Let your steadfast love become
my comfort
according to your promise to
your servant.
77 Let your mercy come to me, that
I may live;
for your law is my delight.
78 Let the arrogant be put to shame,

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keeps God's law. **119.49–56** Prayer for help (v. 49) and expressions of confidence in the face of the arrogant and the wicked because God's *servant* (v. 49) keeps the law. **119.57–64** Prayer, praise, and commitment to God's law. **119.65–72** The psalmist has experienced God's chastening help and has learned from it the value of the law of the Lord. **119.73–80** Prayer for help and understanding of God's command-

because they have subverted me
with guile;
as for me, I will meditate on
your precepts.
79 Let those who fear you turn
to me,
so that they may know your
decrees.
80 May my heart be blameless in
your statutes,
so that I may not be put to
shame.

81 My soul languishes for your
salvation;
I hope in your word.
82 My eyes fail with watching for
your promise;
I ask, "When will you
comfort me?"
83 For I have become like a wineskin
in the smoke,
yet I have not forgotten your
statutes.
84 How long must your servant
endure?
When will you judge those who
persecute me?
85 The arrogant have dug pitfalls
for me;
they flout your law.
86 All your commandments are
enduring;
I am persecuted without cause;
help me!
87 They have almost made an end
of me on earth;
but I have not forsaken your
precepts.
88 In your steadfast love spare my
life,
so that I may keep the decrees
of your mouth.

89 The LORD exists forever;
your word is firmly fixed in
heaven.
90 Your faithfulness endures to all
generations;
you have established the earth,
and it stands fast.
91 By your appointment they stand
today,
for all things are your servants.
92 If your law had not been my
delight,
I would have perished in my
misery.
93 I will never forget your precepts,
for by them you have given
me life.
94 I am yours; save me,
for I have sought your
precepts.
95 The wicked lie in wait to
destroy me,
but I consider your decrees.
96 I have seen a limit to all
perfection,
but your commandment is
exceedingly broad.

97 Oh, how I love your law!
It is my meditation all day long.
98 Your commandment makes me
wiser than my enemies,
for it is always with me.
99 I have more understanding than
all my teachers,
for your decrees are my
meditation.
100 I understand more than the
aged,
for I keep your precepts.
101 I hold back my feet from every
evil way,
in order to keep your word.
102 I do not turn away from your
ordinances,
for you have taught me.
103 How sweet are your words to my
taste,
sweeter than honey to my
mouth!
104 Through your precepts I get
understanding;
therefore I hate every
false way.

105 Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path.
106 I have sworn an oath and
confirmed it,
to observe your righteous
ordinances.
107 I am severely afflicted;

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ments. **119.81–88** Cry for help by one who has kept the divine decrees. **119.89–96** Praise of the Lord, whose law gives life. **119.97–104** The constant devotion of the psalmist to God's law. **119.105–112** Whatever afflictions may come, the psalmist holds to God's decrees.

give me life, O LORD, according
to your word.
108 Accept my offerings of praise,
O LORD,
and teach me your ordinances.
109 I hold my life in my hand
continually,
but I do not forget your law.
110 The wicked have laid a snare
for me,
but I do not stray from your
precepts.
111 Your decrees are my heritage
forever;
they are the joy of my heart.
112 I incline my heart to perform
your statutes
forever, to the end.

113 I hate the double-minded,
but I love your law.
114 You are my hiding place and my
shield;
I hope in your word.
115 Go away from me, you evildoers,
that I may keep the
commandments of my God.
116 Uphold me according to your
promise, that I may live,
and let me not be put to shame
in my hope.
117 Hold me up, that I may be safe
and have regard for your
statutes continually.
118 You spurn all who go astray from
your statutes;
for their cunning is in vain.
119 All the wicked of the earth you
count as dross;
therefore I love your decrees.
120 My flesh trembles for fear of you,
and I am afraid of your
judgments.

121 I have done what is just and
right;
do not leave me to my
oppressors.
122 Guarantee your servant's
well-being;
do not let the godless
oppress me.
123 My eyes fail from watching for
your salvation,
and for the fulfillment of your
righteous promise.
124 Deal with your servant according
to your steadfast love,
and teach me your statutes.
125 I am your servant; give me
understanding,
so that I may know your
decrees.
126 It is time for the LORD to act,
for your law has been broken.
127 Truly I love your commandments
more than gold, more than
fine gold.
128 Truly I direct my steps by all
your precepts;[c]
I hate every false way.

129 Your decrees are wonderful;
therefore my soul keeps them.
130 The unfolding of your words
gives light;
it imparts understanding to the
simple.
131 With open mouth I pant,
because I long for your
commandments.
132 Turn to me and be gracious
to me,
as is your custom toward those
who love your name.
133 Keep my steps steady according
to your promise,
and never let iniquity have
dominion over me.
134 Redeem me from human
oppression,
that I may keep your precepts.
135 Make your face shine upon your
servant,
and teach me your statutes.
136 My eyes shed streams of tears
because your law is not kept.

137 You are righteous, O LORD,
and your judgments are right.

c Gk Jerome: Meaning of Heb uncertain

119.113–120 The psalmist's obedience to the law is contrasted with the ways of evildoers and a prayer for help is uttered. **119.121–128** Claims of righteousness and prayers for help against persecutors join with the prayer that God will instruct the psalmist. **119.129–136** Praise of God's law and prayer for help against oppression. **119.135** *Make your face shine.* See note on 31.16. **119.137–144** Praise of the Lord's righteousness

138 You have appointed your decrees
in righteousness
and in all faithfulness.
139 My zeal consumes me
because my foes forget your
words.
140 Your promise is well tried,
and your servant loves it.
141 I am small and despised,
yet I do not forget your
precepts.
142 Your righteousness is an
everlasting righteousness,
and your law is the truth.
143 Trouble and anguish have come
upon me,
but your commandments are
my delight.
144 Your decrees are righteous
forever;
give me understanding that I
may live.

145 With my whole heart I cry;
answer me, O LORD.
I will keep your statutes.
146 I cry to you; save me,
that I may observe your
decrees.
147 I rise before dawn and cry
for help;
I put my hope in your words.
148 My eyes are awake before each
watch of the night,
that I may meditate on your
promise.
149 In your steadfast love hear my
voice;
O LORD, in your justice
preserve my life.
150 Those who persecute me with evil
purpose draw near;
they are far from your law.
151 Yet you are near, O LORD,
and all your commandments
are true.
152 Long ago I learned from your
decrees
that you have established them
forever.

153 Look on my misery and
rescue me,
for I do not forget your law.
154 Plead my cause and redeem me;
give me life according to your
promise.
155 Salvation is far from the wicked,
for they do not seek your
statutes.
156 Great is your mercy, O LORD;
give me life according to your
justice.
157 Many are my persecutors and my
adversaries,
yet I do not swerve from your
decrees.
158 I look at the faithless with
disgust,
because they do not keep your
commands.
159 Consider how I love your
precepts;
preserve my life according to
your steadfast love.
160 The sum of your word is truth;
and every one of your
righteous ordinances
endures forever.

161 Princes persecute me without
cause,
but my heart stands in awe of
your words.
162 I rejoice at your word
like one who finds great spoil.
163 I hate and abhor falsehood,
but I love your law.
164 Seven times a day I praise you
for your righteous ordinances.
165 Great peace have those who love
your law;
nothing can make them
stumble.
166 I hope for your salvation,
O LORD,
and I fulfill your
commandments.
167 My soul keeps your decrees;
I love them exceedingly.
168 I keep your precepts and decrees,
for all my ways are before you.

169 Let my cry come before you,
O LORD;

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as seen in the law. **119.145–152** A cry for help and confidence in God's presence. **119.151** Cf. Deut 4.7–8; 30.14. **119.153–160** A plea for God to preserve the life of the faithful servant. **119.161–168** The devotion of the psalmist to the words of the Lord. **119.169–176** The psalmist

give me understanding
according to your word.
170 Let my supplication come
before you;
deliver me according to your
promise.
171 My lips will pour forth praise,
because you teach me your
statutes.
172 My tongue will sing of your
promise,
for all your commandments are
right.
173 Let your hand be ready to
help me,
for I have chosen your
precepts.
174 I long for your salvation,
O LORD,
and your law is my delight.
175 Let me live that I may praise you,
and let your ordinances
help me.
176 I have gone astray like a lost
sheep; seek out your
servant,
for I do not forget your
commandments.

Psalm 120

Prayer for Deliverance from Slanderers

A Song of Ascents.

1 In my distress I cry to the LORD,
that he may answer me:
2 "Deliver me, O LORD,
from lying lips,
from a deceitful tongue."

3 What shall be given to you?
And what more shall be done
to you,
you deceitful tongue?
4 A warrior's sharp arrows,
with glowing coals of the broom
tree!

5 Woe is me, that I am an alien in
Meshech,
that I must live among the tents
of Kedar.
6 Too long have I had my dwelling
among those who hate peace.
7 I am for peace;
but when I speak,
they are for war.

Psalm 121

Assurance of God's Protection

A Song of Ascents.

1 I lift up my eyes to the hills—
from where will my help come?
2 My help comes from the LORD,
who made heaven and earth.

3 He will not let your foot be
moved;
he who keeps you will not
slumber.
4 He who keeps Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.

5 The LORD is your keeper;
the LORD is your shade at your
right hand.

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asks God to hear the cry for help and to save in order that praise may come forth from God's servant.

120.1–7 A prayer by an individual for help. *A Song of Ascents*, the superscription to each psalm in the collection Pss 120–134. Most of the psalms are brief, often reflecting concerns of and images from the family and agricultural life of the common people. The meaning of the superscription is debated. It may refer to an ascending style of poetic form. More likely, it has some reference to the ascent of pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem and/or to the sanctuary there. These psalms may have been sung on such pilgrimages. **120.5** *Meshech*, listed in Gen 10.2 as a descendant of Japhet, in the OT usually refers to a distant region and its inhabitants in eastern Asia Minor near the Black Sea. *Kedar*, a descendant of Abraham and Hagar via Ishmael (see Gen 25.12–13; 1 Chr 1.29) and a general designation for certain Arab tribes inhabiting the northern regions of the Arabian peninsula (cf. Jer 49.28–33). The psalmist here uses these names symbolically, representative of warlike people among whom he is forced to live (see v. 6).

121.1–8 A song of confidence in God's providential care. *A Song of Ascents*. See note on 120.1–7. **121.1–2** The psalmist asks a question about the source of help when one is in trouble of any sort and then answers it. **121.1** *Hills*, probably those around Jerusalem. **121.3–8** A representative figure, possibly a priest, elaborates the answer, identifying the constancy of the Lord's care through all of life in every circumstance.

6 The sun shall not strike you
by day,
nor the moon by night.

7 The LORD will keep you from
all evil;
he will keep your life.
8 The LORD will keep
your going out and your
coming in
from this time on and
forevermore.

Psalm 122

Song of Praise and Prayer for Jerusalem

A Song of Ascents. Of David.

1 I was glad when they said to me,
"Let us go to the house of the
LORD!"
2 Our feet are standing
within your gates, O Jerusalem.

3 Jerusalem—built as a city
that is bound firmly together.
4 To it the tribes go up,
the tribes of the LORD,
as was decreed for Israel,
to give thanks to the name of
the LORD.
5 For there the thrones for
judgment were set up,
the thrones of the house of
David.

6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
"May they prosper who
love you.
7 Peace be within your walls,
and security within your
towers."
8 For the sake of my relatives and
friends
I will say, "Peace be
within you."
9 For the sake of the house of the
LORD our God,
I will seek your good.

Psalm 123

Supplication for Mercy

A Song of Ascents.

1 To you I lift up my eyes,
O you who are enthroned in
the heavens!
2 As the eyes of servants
look to the hand of their
master,
as the eyes of a maid
to the hand of her mistress,
so our eyes look to the LORD
our God,
until he has mercy upon
us.

3 Have mercy upon us, O LORD,
have mercy upon us,
for we have had more than
enough of contempt.
4 Our soul has had more than its
fill
of the scorn of those who are
at ease,
of the contempt of the
proud.

121.4 *Sleep.* Cf. 44.23; 78.65. **121.6** *The moon by night.* While some have seen here a belief in negative effects of the moon on human life, it is likely that the phrase is simply a poetic parallel to *the sun . . . by day,* indicating that the Lord's care is day and night, i.e., continual.

122.1–9 A song of Zion probably sung on pilgrimage to the holy city. *A Song of Ascents.* See note on 120.1–7. **122.1–2** The joy of the psalmist in anticipating the pilgrimage to Jerusalem with others and in arriving there. **122.3–5** Jerusalem is praised as a secure city (v. 3), the center of Israel's worship (v. 4), and as a place where just judgment may be found (cf. Deut 17.8–13; Isa 2.2–4; Mic 4.1–4). **122.5** See 1 Kings 7.7. On the responsibility of kings for rendering justice and judgment in Jerusalem, see 2 Sam 15.1–6; 1 Kings 3.16–28; Jer 21.12; 22.15–16. **122.6–9** Prayer for Jerusalem's peace and well-being. The Hebrew of these verses contains several instances of wordplay on the sounds of the last part of the word "Jerusalem," including the word for *peace* (*shalom*).

123.1–4 A community prayer for help. It may have been uttered by an individual on behalf of the whole community or leading them in prayer. *A Song of Ascents.* See note on 120.1–7. **123.1–2** The petitioner and the people pray in an attitude of dependence. **123.3–4** The cry for help against the taunts and ridicule of others (cf. 44.14; 79.4; and notes).

Psalm 124

Thanksgiving for Israel's Deliverance

A Song of Ascents. Of David.

1 If it had not been the LORD who
was on our side
—let Israel now say—
2 if it had not been the LORD who
was on our side,
when our enemies attacked us,
3 then they would have swallowed
us up alive,
when their anger was kindled
against us;
4 then the flood would have swept
us away,
the torrent would have gone
over us;
5 then over us would have gone
the raging waters.

6 Blessed be the LORD,
who has not given us
as prey to their teeth.
7 We have escaped like a bird
from the snare of the fowlers;
the snare is broken,
and we have escaped.

8 Our help is in the name of
the LORD,
who made heaven and earth.

Psalm 125

The Security of God's People

A Song of Ascents.

1 Those who trust in the LORD are
like Mount Zion,
which cannot be moved, but
abides forever.
2 As the mountains surround
Jerusalem,
so the LORD surrounds his
people,
from this time on and
forevermore.
3 For the scepter of wickedness
shall not rest
on the land allotted to the
righteous,
so that the righteous might not
stretch out
their hands to do wrong.
4 Do good, O LORD, to those who
are good,
and to those who are upright in
their hearts.
5 But those who turn aside to their
own crooked ways
the LORD will lead away with
evildoers.
Peace be upon Israel!

Psalm 126

A Harvest of Joy

A Song of Ascents.

1 When the LORD restored the
fortunes of Zion,[d]
we were like those who dream.
2 Then our mouth was filled with
laughter,
and our tongue with shouts
of joy;

d Or *brought back those who returned to Zion*

124.1–8 A song of thanksgiving by the community. *A Song of Ascents.* See note on 120.1–7. **124.1–7** An account of the Lord's deliverance of the people from their enemies. **124.1** *Let Israel now say,* liturgical direction. Cf. 118.2–4; 129.1. **124.4–5** See note on 69.1–2. **124.6** Exclamation of thanksgiving and praise. **124.8** A concluding confession of faith in hymnic form.

125.1–5 A community prayer for help against national enemies. *A Song of Ascents.* See note on 120.1–7. **125.1–3** Expression of confidence and trust in the Lord. **125.3** *Scepter of wickedness* probably refers to a foreign power that oppresses the people of Israel in the land. *The land allotted* refers to the Lord's granting or allotting the land of Canaan to Israel. *So that the righteous might not . . . do wrong* expresses a concern that the dominance of a foreign and ungodly power will lead those in the community to fall into immoral practices and an unfaithful way of life. **125.4–5** Prayer for help to secure the confidence expressed in v. 3. God is asked to do good to those who keep the covenant and do right and to remove the wicked power and those who are influenced by it away from the righteous way.

126.1–6 A community prayer for help. *A Song of Ascents.* See note on 120.1–7. **126.1–3** The community looks back in memory to the Lord's deliverance of Zion and its joy on that occasion. It is possible that these verses are to

then it was said among the nations,
"The LORD has done great things for them."
3 The LORD has done great things for us,
and we rejoiced.

4 Restore our fortunes, O LORD,
like the watercourses in the Negeb.
5 May those who sow in tears
reap with shouts of joy.
6 Those who go out weeping,
bearing the seed for sowing,
shall come home with shouts of joy,
carrying their sheaves.

Psalm 127

God's Blessing in the Home

A Song of Ascents. Of Solomon.

1 Unless the LORD builds the house,
those who build it labor in vain.
Unless the LORD guards the city,
the guard keeps watch in vain.
2 It is in vain that you rise up early
and go late to rest,
eating the bread of anxious toil;
for he gives sleep to his beloved.[e]

3 Sons are indeed a heritage from the LORD,
the fruit of the womb a reward.
4 Like arrows in the hand of a warrior
are the sons of one's youth.
5 Happy is the man who has
his quiver full of them.
He shall not be put to shame
when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.

Psalm 128

The Happy Home of the Faithful

A Song of Ascents.

1 Happy is everyone who fears the LORD,
who walks in his ways.
2 You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands;
you shall be happy, and it shall go well with you.

3 Your wife will be like a fruitful vine
within your house;
your children will be like olive shoots
around your table.
4 Thus shall the man be blessed
who fears the LORD.

5 The LORD bless you from Zion.
May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem
all the days of your life.

e Or *for he provides for his beloved during sleep*

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be read in a future tense as a dreaming anticipation of restoration. **126.1** *Restored the fortunes of Zion,* if in reference to the past, may have in mind the return of the exiles from captivity in Babylon and the rebuilding of Jerusalem. **126.2** The restoration of Zion evokes the joy of the people and the testimony of other nations to the Lord's marvelous work for Israel. **126.3** Israel echoes the testimony and affirms it to be true. **126.4–6** The present prayer for restoration that assumes the community is in distress again and wishes God's help so that its weeping may once again be turned into joy. **126.4** *Watercourses in the Negeb,* the dry beds in the desert that become torrential streams in times of rain and flood.

127.1–5 Instruction about the Lord as the source of security and of the gift of children. *A Song of Ascents.* See note on 120.1–7. *Solomon* was the master builder in Israel's history, building houses (1 Kings 3.1–2; 7; 8.13; 9.1) and cities (2 Chr 8.1–11). **127.1–2** Human labors to build structures and secure human communities are useless unless God is involved in these enterprises. **127.1** *House* can mean a building, such as the house of the Lord (the temple), or a human household or family line (see v. 4). **127.2** *Sleep.* The text is quite uncertain here. The reference may be to honor or prosperity—rather than sleep—as given by God rather than the fruit of driven, frantic work. **127.3–5** Many children are a gift of God to provide security for parents. The text has sons particularly in mind as able to protect against enemies.

128.1–5 Instruction about the rewards of living in obedience to the Lord. *A Song of Ascents.* See note on 120.1–7. **128.1** *Happy.* See note on 1.1. *Fears the LORD* is a way of speaking of the right relationship to God. See note on 34.7.

6 May you see your children's
children.
Peace be upon Israel!

Psalm 129

Prayer for the Downfall of Israel's Enemies

A Song of Ascents.

1 "Often have they attacked me
from my youth"
—let Israel now say—
2 "often have they attacked me
from my youth,
yet they have not prevailed
against me.
3 The plowers plowed on my
back;
they made their furrows
long."
4 The LORD is righteous;
he has cut the cords of the
wicked.
5 May all who hate Zion
be put to shame and turned
backward.
6 Let them be like the grass on the
housetops
that withers before it grows
up,
7 with which reapers do not fill
their hands
or binders of sheaves their
arms,
8 while those who pass by do
not say,
"The blessing of the LORD be
upon you!
We bless you in the name of
the LORD!"

Psalm 130

Waiting for Divine Redemption

A Song of Ascents.

1 Out of the depths I cry to you,
O LORD.
2 Lord, hear my voice!
Let your ears be attentive
to the voice of my
supplications!

3 If you, O LORD, should mark
iniquities,
Lord, who could stand?
4 But there is forgiveness with you,
so that you may be revered.

5 I wait for the LORD, my soul
waits,
and in his word I hope;
6 my soul waits for the Lord
more than those who watch for
the morning,
more than those who watch for
the morning.

7 O Israel, hope in the LORD!
For with the LORD there is
steadfast love,
and with him is great power to
redeem.
8 It is he who will redeem Israel
from all its iniquities.

Psalm 131

Song of Quiet Trust

A Song of Ascents. Of David.

1 O LORD, my heart is not
lifted up,

129.1–8 A community song of thanksgiving or trust. *A Song of Ascents.* See note on 120.1–7. **129.1–4** The people recount their long history of being oppressed and how God freed them from the wicked oppressors. **129.1** *Let Israel now say.* See note on 124.1. **129.5–8** Expression of confidence that God will put the oppressors to naught. **129.5–6** These verses may be translated as a prayer wish, "May all . . . be put to shame," or as a declaration, "They will all . . . be put to shame." **129.8** For the blessing given to reapers, see Ruth 2.4. No harvesting means no blessings exchanged during the harvest.

130.1–8 A prayer for help by one who seeks God's forgiveness and favor. One of the penitential psalms (see note on 6.1–10). *A Song of Ascents.* See note on 120.1–7. **130.1–2** The plea of the psalmist for God to hear the prayer. **130.3–6** Trust in God's forgiveness and eager expectation that it will be granted. **130.6** There may be allusion here to the fact that confirmation of God's help often came in the early morning after a night of praying and waiting (cf. 5.3; 30.5; 46.5; 88.13; 90.14). **130.7–8** The hope of the individual is now commended to the community as the ground of its confidence also (cf. 131.3).

131.1–3 A prayer of humility and trust in God. *A Song of Ascents.* See note on 120.1–7.

my eyes are not raised too high;
I do not occupy myself with things
too great and too marvelous for me.
2 But I have calmed and quieted my soul,
like a weaned child with its mother;
my soul is like the weaned child that is with me.[f]

3 O Israel, hope in the LORD
from this time on and forevermore.

Psalm 132

The Eternal Dwelling of God in Zion

A Song of Ascents.

1 O LORD, remember in David's favor
all the hardships he endured;
2 how he swore to the LORD
and vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob,
3 "I will not enter my house
or get into my bed;
4 I will not give sleep to my eyes
or slumber to my eyelids,
5 until I find a place for the LORD,
a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob."

6 We heard of it in Ephrathah;
we found it in the fields of Jaar.
7 "Let us go to his dwelling place;
let us worship at his footstool."

8 Rise up, O LORD, and go to your resting place,
you and the ark of your might.
9 Let your priests be clothed with righteousness,
and let your faithful shout for joy.
10 For your servant David's sake
do not turn away the face of your anointed one.

11 The LORD swore to David a sure oath
from which he will not turn back:
"One of the sons of your body
I will set on your throne.
12 If your sons keep my covenant
and my decrees that I shall teach them,
their sons also, forevermore,
shall sit on your throne."

13 For the LORD has chosen Zion;

f Or *my soul within me is like a weaned child*

131.1 *Great and ... marvelous* usually refers to the great and marvelous deeds of the Lord. **131.2** *Calmed and quieted* suggests some struggle of the soul. *Like the weaned child that is with me* suggests that the one speaking in the prayer is a mother. **131.3** The trust of the psalmist is commended to the larger community (cf. 130.7–8).

132.1–18 A royal psalm celebrating God's election of Zion and the sanctuary there as the divine abode on earth and the election of David and the Davidic line as God's ruling representatives. *A Song of Ascents.* See note on 120.1–7. **132.1–5** A prayer for God to remember David (and so the Davidic dynasty; cf. vv. 11–12) as the one who swore an oath to build a sanctuary for the Lord. This prayer may have been uttered by a priest or prophet or possibly by the king himself. **132.5** *A dwelling place* refers to the tent David set up as a sanctuary for the ark of the covenant (2 Sam 6.17). **132.6–10** Recollection of the bringing of the ark into the sanctuary on Zion. **132.6–7** While these verses are customarily understood as referring to David's finding the ark in the old sanctuary in Kiriath-jearim (1 Sam 7.1–2), i.e., *Jaar* (v. 6), and his bringing it to Jerusalem (2 Sam 6), they may refer to David's finding the ark (v. 6) and then worshiping before it in the old tent shrine where it had remained for some time. **132.7** *Dwelling place,* probably the tent shrine in which the ark had been situated before David brought it to Jerusalem. **132.8–10** The call to God to go forth in triumph to the place of new abode in Zion. **132.8** *Go to your resting place* is probably better translated as "Go from your resting place," i.e., from the old shrine where the ark had lodged to the new shrine David had set up in Jerusalem. The verse is reminiscent of the war song of the ark in Num 10.35 and thus signals this section as a call to God to march forth in victory into the new sanctuary (cf. Ps 24). **132.11–12** God's oath electing David and his line as rulers over the people in perpetuity. The covenant with the Davidic dynasty, however, is made explicitly conditional on the obedience of David's successors (cf. 2 Sam 7.14–15). **132.13–18** God's choice of David as

he has desired it for his
habitation:
14 "This is my resting place forever;
here I will reside, for I have
desired it.
15 I will abundantly bless its
provisions;
I will satisfy its poor with
bread.
16 Its priests I will clothe with
salvation,
and its faithful will shout
for joy.
17 There I will cause a horn to
sprout up for David;
I have prepared a lamp for my
anointed one.
18 His enemies I will clothe with
disgrace,
but on him, his crown will
gleam."

Psalm 133

The Blessedness of Unity

A Song of Ascents.

1 How very good and pleasant it is
when kindred live together in
unity!
2 It is like the precious oil on the
head,
running down upon the beard,
on the beard of Aaron,
running down over the collar
of his robes.
3 It is like the dew of Hermon,
which falls on the mountains of
Zion.
For there the LORD ordained his
blessing,
life forevermore.

Psalm 134

Praise in the Night

A Song of Ascents.

1 Come, bless the LORD, all you
servants of the LORD,
who stand by night in the
house of the LORD!
2 Lift up your hands to the holy
place,
and bless the LORD.

3 May the LORD, maker of heaven
and earth,
bless you from Zion.

Psalm 135

Praise for God's Goodness and Might

1 Praise the LORD!
Praise the name of the LORD;
give praise, O servants of
the LORD,
2 you that stand in the house of
the LORD,
in the courts of the house of
our God.
3 Praise the LORD, for the LORD
is good;
sing to his name, for he is
gracious.

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king is now paired with God's choice of Zion as the divine dwelling place on earth. It is now the permanent *resting place* (cf. v. 8) of the ark, the visible throne of the invisible God. **132.17** *Horn.* See note on 89.17.

133.1–3 A didactic or wisdom poem transformed into a song for communal worship that may have been used in connection with journeys to Jerusalem. *A Song of Ascents.* See note on 120.1–7. **133.1** *When kindred live together in unity* is to be seen in relation to such texts as Deut 25.5; Gen 13.6; 36.7 and refers to the custom of clan and family groups living in proximity to each other. **133.2** *Precious oil* refers to the custom of anointing the head of an honored guest with the finest oil. *Beard of Aaron.* See Ex 29.7; Lev 8.12. **133.3** *Hermon* was the highest mountain in Syro-Palestine.

134.1–3 A liturgy of praise and blessing. *A Song of Ascents.* See note on 120.1–7. **134.1–2** A call to the people who are gathered in the sanctuary, apparently during the night and possibly at one of the major festivals, to praise and give thanks, i.e., *bless* the Lord (see note on 103.1–2). **134.1** *Servants of the LORD* could be a reference to the priests, but in Psalms it does not ordinarily have that restricted reference. **134.3** A blessing is prayed over the people, probably by a priest or priests (cf. Num 6.22–27).

135.1–21 A hymn of praise to God. Pieces and elements from other biblical texts have been woven together into a new and unified vehicle of praise. **135.1–4** Call to praise (vv. 1–3b) and the reason for praise (vv. 3b–4). **135.1** Cf. 113.1. *Servants of the LORD.* See note on 134.1. **135.2** Cf. 134.1. **135.3** Cf. 100.4–5; 136.1.

4 For the LORD has chosen Jacob
for himself,
Israel as his own possession.

5 For I know that the LORD is
great;
our Lord is above all gods.
6 Whatever the LORD pleases he
does,
in heaven and on earth,
in the seas and all deeps.
7 He it is who makes the clouds
rise at the end of the earth;
he makes lightnings for the
rain
and brings out the wind from
his storehouses.

8 He it was who struck down the
firstborn of Egypt,
both human beings and
animals;
9 he sent signs and wonders
into your midst, O Egypt,
against Pharaoh and all his
servants.
10 He struck down many nations
and killed mighty kings—
11 Sihon, king of the Amorites,
and Og, king of Bashan,
and all the kingdoms of
Canaan—
12 and gave their land as a heritage,
a heritage to his people Israel.

13 Your name, O LORD, endures
forever,
your renown, O LORD,
throughout all ages.
14 For the LORD will vindicate his
people,
and have compassion on his
servants.

15 The idols of the nations are silver
and gold,
the work of human hands.
16 They have mouths, but they do
not speak;
they have eyes, but they do
not see;
17 they have ears, but they do not
hear,
and there is no breath in their
mouths.
18 Those who make them
and all who trust them
shall become like them.

19 O house of Israel, bless the LORD!
O house of Aaron, bless the
LORD!
20 O house of Levi, bless the LORD!
You that fear the LORD, bless
the LORD!
21 Blessed be the LORD from Zion,
he who resides in Jerusalem.
Praise the LORD!

Psalm 136

God's Work in Creation and in History

1 O give thanks to the LORD, for he
is good,
for his steadfast love endures
forever.
2 O give thanks to the God of gods,
for his steadfast love endures
forever.
3 O give thanks to the Lord of
lords,

135.4 Cf. Ex 19.5; Deut 7.6. **135.5–7** A singer praises the Lord as the creator and ruler of the natural world. **135.5** Cf. 95.3. **135.6** Cf. 115.3. **135.7** Cf. Jer 10.13; 51.16. **135.8–12** Praise continues, now for God's liberating the people from slavery in Egypt and bringing them safely into the land. The focus is upon the plagues in Egypt, the victory over the foreign kings on the way into the land, and the granting of the land to Israel. **135.8** Cf. 136.10. **135.10–12** Cf. 136.17–22. *Sihon, Og.* See Num 21.21–35; Deut 2.26–3.11. **135.13–14** Praise of God's compassionate care of the people. **135.13** Cf. Ex 3.15. **135.14** Cf. Deut 32.36. **135.15–18** Using 115.4–8, the psalmist contrasts implicitly the impotence of the idols of the nations with the God who has been praised in the preceding verses. **135.19–21** Concluding call to praise. On the enumeration of the groups in vv. 19–20, see note on 115.11; Ps 118.2–4. The *house of Levi* has been added to the list. In formal worship after the exile, the Levites were a group who assisted the Aaronite priests.

136.1–26 A hymn of praise for God's marvelous works. The second half of each verse was probably a response by the people (cf. Ps 106). **136.1–3** Call to the community to offer thankful praise of God. **136.1** See note on 106.1. The paradigm of praise and thanksgiving in v. 1 provides the vehicle of congregational response throughout the remainder of the psalm.

for his steadfast love endures
forever;

4 who alone does great wonders,
for his steadfast love endures
forever;
5 who by understanding made the
heavens,
for his steadfast love endures
forever;
6 who spread out the earth on the
waters,
for his steadfast love endures
forever;
7 who made the great lights,
for his steadfast love endures
forever;
8 the sun to rule over the day,
for his steadfast love endures
forever;
9 the moon and stars to rule over
the night,
for his steadfast love endures
forever;

10 who struck Egypt through their
firstborn,
for his steadfast love endures
forever;
11 and brought Israel out from
among them,
for his steadfast love endures
forever;
12 with a strong hand and an
outstretched arm,
for his steadfast love endures
forever;
13 who divided the Red Sea[g] in
two,
for his steadfast love endures
forever;
14 and made Israel pass through the
midst of it,
for his steadfast love endures
forever;
15 but overthrew Pharaoh and his
army in the Red Sea,[g]
for his steadfast love endures
forever;
16 who led his people through the
wilderness,
for his steadfast love endures
forever;
17 who struck down great kings,
for his steadfast love endures
forever;
18 and killed famous kings,
for his steadfast love endures
forever;
19 Sihon, king of the Amorites,
for his steadfast love endures
forever;
20 and Og, king of Bashan,
for his steadfast love endures
forever;
21 and gave their land as a
heritage,
for his steadfast love endures
forever;
22 a heritage to his servant
Israel,
for his steadfast love endures
forever.

23 It is he who remembered us in
our low estate,
for his steadfast love endures
forever;
24 and rescued us from our
foes,
for his steadfast love endures
forever;
25 who gives food to all flesh,
for his steadfast love endures
forever.

26 O give thanks to the God of
heaven,
for his steadfast love endures
forever.

g Or *Sea of Reeds*

136.4–9 Praise of God for the marvelous works of creation. **136.4** The praise begins with a general reference that incorporates all the particular wonderful deeds that follow in the rest of the hymn. **136.10–22** Praise of God for the wonderful deeds on behalf of the people at the beginning of their history. **136.10–15** The deliverance from slavery in Egypt. **136.16** God's guidance and care of the people in the wilderness. **136.17–22** The victory over opposing kings and God's allotment (*heritage*) of the land of Canaan to Israel. **136.19–20** See Num 21.21–35; Deut 2.26–3.11. **136.23–25** Summary praise of God for the mercy and protection shown to the people. **136.26** The initial call to praise and thanksgiving is reiterated at the end.

Psalm 137

Lament over the Destruction of Jerusalem

1 By the rivers of Babylon—
there we sat down and there we wept
when we remembered Zion.
2 On the willows[h] there
we hung up our harps.
3 For there our captors
asked us for songs,
and our tormentors asked for mirth, saying,
"Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"

4 How could we sing the LORD's song
in a foreign land?
5 If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
let my right hand wither!
6 Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth,
if I do not remember you,
if I do not set Jerusalem
above my highest joy.

7 Remember, O LORD, against the Edomites
the day of Jerusalem's fall,
how they said, "Tear it down! Tear it down!
Down to its foundations!"
8 O daughter Babylon, you devastator![i]
Happy shall they be who pay you back
what you have done to us!
9 Happy shall they be who take your little ones
and dash them against the rock!

Psalm 138

Thanksgiving and Praise

Of David.

1 I give you thanks, O LORD, with my whole heart;
before the gods I sing your praise;
2 I bow down toward your holy temple
and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness;
for you have exalted your name and your word
above everything.[j]
3 On the day I called, you answered me,
you increased my strength of soul.[k]

4 All the kings of the earth shall praise you, O LORD,
for they have heard the words of your mouth.
5 They shall sing of the ways of the LORD,
for great is the glory of the LORD.
6 For though the LORD is high, he regards the lowly;
but the haughty he perceives from far away.

h Or *poplars* *i* Or *you who are devastated*
j Cn: Heb *you have exalted your word above all your name* *k* Syr Compare Gk Tg: Heb *you made me arrogant in my soul with strength*

137.1–9 A prayer of the community for God to destroy its oppressors and enemies. While it refers to the exile in Babylon, it is probably a reference in recollection after the exile as the psalmist looks back on the event. **137.1–4** Lament over Jerusalem's destruction and the plight of the exiles in Babylonian captivity. **137.3** *Songs of Zion*, such as Pss 46; 48; 76; 84. **137.5–6** Glorification of Zion in the form of a self-imprecation. The psalmist vows always to remember and care about Jerusalem. **137.7–9** An imprecation or curse prayer in which the psalmist calls for God's destruction of those who destroyed Jerusalem and sent the people into captivity. **137.7** *Edomites* joined in the sacking and pillaging of Jerusalem and handed over fleeing survivors to the Babylonians (Ob 8–14; cf. Ezek 25.12–14; 35.2–9). **137.8–9** *Happy*. See note on 1.1.

138.1–8 A song of thanksgiving for deliverance by God. **138.1–3** Expression of thanksgiving (vv. 1–2) and testimony to what the Lord did to help (v. 3). *Before the gods* probably means before the heavenly assembly that surrounds the Lord of hosts, but the expression could refer to the gods of the nations, whose power is understood to be nothing in comparison to that of the Lord. **138.4–6** The kings of the nations are called to praise the ways of the Lord. Cf. 67.3–5;

7 Though I walk in the midst of trouble,
you preserve me against the wrath of my enemies;
you stretch out your hand,
and your right hand delivers me.
8 The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me;
your steadfast love, O LORD, endures forever.
Do not forsake the work of your hands.

Psalm 139

The Inescapable God

To the leader. Of David. A Psalm.

1 O LORD, you have searched me and known me.
2 You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.
3 You search out my path and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.
4 Even before a word is on my tongue,
O LORD, you know it completely.
5 You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.
6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is so high that I cannot attain it.

7 Where can I go from your spirit?
Or where can I flee from your presence?
8 If I ascend to heaven, you are there;
if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.
9 If I take the wings of the morning
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
10 even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me fast.
11 If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light around me become night,"
12 even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is as bright as the day,
for darkness is as light to you.

13 For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
14 I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works;
that I know very well.
15 My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
16 Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.
In your book were written
all the days that were formed for me,
when none of them as yet existed.
17 How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!
18 I try to count them—they are more than the sand;

68.32; 126.2. **138.6** Cf. 113.5–8. **138.7–8** An expression of confidence by the psalmist ending in a prayer for God's continued care. **138.8** *Work of your hands* can refer to any of God's works from creation to the redemption of an individual.

139.1–24 A prayer for God's help against certain enemies or persecutors by one who claims to be innocent and offers to be tested by God. *To the leader.* See note on 4.1–8. **139.1–6** Everything about the psalmist, even the innermost thoughts, are known to the Lord. Nothing the psalmist does or thinks has escaped the Lord. **139.7–12** There is nowhere that one can hide or escape from the presence of God. **139.13–19** The beginning (vv. 13–16a) and end

I come to the end[l]—I am still
with you.

19 O that you would kill the wicked,
O God,
and that the bloodthirsty would
depart from me—
20 those who speak of you
maliciously,
and lift themselves up against
you for evil![m]
21 Do I not hate those who hate
you, O LORD?
And do I not loathe those who
rise up against you?
22 I hate them with perfect hatred;
I count them my enemies.
23 Search me, O God, and know my
heart;
test me and know my thoughts.
24 See if there is any wicked[n] way
in me,
and lead me in the way
everlasting.[o]

Psalm 140

Prayer for Deliverance from Enemies

To the leader. A Psalm of David.

1 Deliver me, O LORD, from
evildoers;
protect me from those who are
violent,
2 who plan evil things in their
minds
and stir up wars continually.
3 They make their tongue sharp as
a snake's,
and under their lips is the
venom of vipers. *Selah*

4 Guard me, O LORD, from the
hands of the wicked;
protect me from the violent
who have planned my downfall.
5 The arrogant have hidden a trap
for me,
and with cords they have
spread a net,[p]
along the road they have set
snares for me. *Selah*

6 I say to the LORD, "You are
my God;
give ear, O LORD, to the voice
of my supplications."
7 O LORD, my Lord, my strong
deliverer,
you have covered my head in
the day of battle.
8 Do not grant, O LORD, the desires
of the wicked;
do not further their evil plot.[q]
Selah

9 Those who surround me lift up
their heads;[r]
let the mischief of their lips
overwhelm them!
10 Let burning coals fall on them!
Let them be flung into pits, no
more to rise!
11 Do not let the slanderer be
established in the land;
let evil speedily hunt down the
violent!

12 I know that the LORD maintains
the cause of the needy,

l Or *I awake* *m* Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain *n* Heb *hurtful* *o* Or *the ancient way*. Compare Jer 6.16 *p* Or *they have spread cords as a net* *q* Heb adds *they are exalted* *r* Cn Compare Gk: Heb *those who surround me are uplifted in head*; Heb divides verses 8 and 9 differently

(vv. 16b–18) of the psalmist are known and determined by God. **139.19–22** A prayer for the defeat of those who are hostile to the psalmist because they are also opposed to God and God's ways. **139.23–24** The psalmist submits to God's testing, confident of being judged innocent or righteous and committed to following the Lord's way.

140.1–13 An individual prayer for help against those who have slandered and falsely accused the one who prays. *To the leader*. See note on 4.1–8. **140.1–3** Cry for help and description of the persecution. **140.3** Together with vv. 9, 11, this verse indicates that the distress of the petitioner is caused by lies and slander on the part of those who would cause violence (vv. 1, 4, 11). *Selah*. See note on 3.2. **140.4–5** Another cry for help and description of the violence directed against the one who cries out. **140.6–11** Further pleas for help against the wicked intermingled with expressions of trust and confidence (vv. 6–7). **140.9–11** Explicit calls for God's judgment against the oppressors. **140.12–13** The confidence of the petitioner in God's justice for the weak (v. 12) and a vow of praise (v. 13). **140.12** Cf. Ps 82.

and executes justice for the poor.
13 Surely the righteous shall give thanks to your name;
the upright shall live in your presence.

Psalm 141

Prayer for Preservation from Evil

A Psalm of David.

1 I call upon you, O LORD; come quickly to me;
give ear to my voice when I call to you.
2 Let my prayer be counted as incense before you,
and the lifting up of my hands as an evening sacrifice.

3 Set a guard over my mouth, O LORD;
keep watch over the door of my lips.
4 Do not turn my heart to any evil,
to busy myself with wicked deeds
in company with those who work iniquity;
do not let me eat of their delicacies.

5 Let the righteous strike me;
let the faithful correct me.
Never let the oil of the wicked anoint my head,[s]
for my prayer is continually[t] against their wicked deeds.
6 When they are given over to those who shall condemn them,
then they shall learn that my words were pleasant.
7 Like a rock that one breaks apart and shatters on the land,
so shall their bones be strewn at the mouth of Sheol.[u]

8 But my eyes are turned toward you, O GOD, my Lord;
in you I seek refuge; do not leave me defenseless.
9 Keep me from the trap that they have laid for me,
and from the snares of evildoers.
10 Let the wicked fall into their own nets,
while I alone escape.

Psalm 142

Prayer for Deliverance from Persecutors

A Maskil of David. When he was in the cave. A Prayer.

1 With my voice I cry to the LORD;
with my voice I make supplication to the LORD.
2 I pour out my complaint before him;
I tell my trouble before him.
3 When my spirit is faint,
you know my way.

In the path where I walk
they have hidden a trap for me.
4 Look on my right hand and see—
there is no one who takes notice of me;

s Gk: Meaning of Heb uncertain *t* Cn: Heb *for continually and my prayer* *u* Meaning of Heb of verses 5-7 is uncertain

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141.1–10 An individual prayer for help against the danger of being drawn into association with the wicked. **141.1–2** Plea to God to hear and respond to the prayer. **141.2** *Incense.* Cf. Ex 30.8. *Evening sacrifice.* Cf. Ex 29.38–42; Num 28.3–8. Accounts are given of prayer offered at the time of the evening sacrifice and with incense in Ezra 9.4–5; Dan 9.20–21; Jdt 9.1. **141.3–7** Specific petitions whose primary content is the prayer for God to keep the psalmist from harmful speech and from association with the wicked (cf. 1.1). Vv. 5–7 are difficult to interpret because of the condition of the Hebrew text. **141.4** *Eat of their delicacies,* i.e., enjoy their fancy hospitality. **141.7** *Sheol.* See note on 6.5. **141.8–10** Further pleas for God's help to keep the petitioner from being drawn in and caught up by those who do wrong. **141.10** The prayer for help against the enticement of the wicked is also a prayer for their judgment; cf. 7.15–16; 9.15.

142.1–7 An individual prayer for help against persecutors. *Maskil.* See note on 32.1–11. *When he was in the cave.* See note on 57.1–11. **142.1–3a** Cry for help. **142.3b–4** Lament over the psalmist's distress. Enemies are plotting and there is no one who will help or pay any attention

no refuge remains to me;
no one cares for me.

5 I cry to you, O LORD;
I say, "You are my refuge,
my portion in the land of the living."
6 Give heed to my cry,
for I am brought very low.

Save me from my persecutors,
for they are too strong for me.
7 Bring me out of prison,
so that I may give thanks to your name.
The righteous will surround me,
for you will deal bountifully with me.

Psalm 143

Prayer for Deliverance from Enemies

A Psalm of David.

1 Hear my prayer, O LORD;
give ear to my supplications in your faithfulness;
answer me in your righteousness.
2 Do not enter into judgment with your servant,
for no one living is righteous before you.

3 For the enemy has pursued me,
crushing my life to the ground,
making me sit in darkness like those long dead.

4 Therefore my spirit faints within me;
my heart within me is appalled.

5 I remember the days of old,
I think about all your deeds,
I meditate on the works of your hands.
6 I stretch out my hands to you;
my soul thirsts for you like a parched land. *Selah*

7 Answer me quickly, O LORD;
my spirit fails.
Do not hide your face from me,
or I shall be like those who go down to the Pit.
8 Let me hear of your steadfast love in the morning,
for in you I put my trust.
Teach me the way I should go,
for to you I lift up my soul.

9 Save me, O LORD, from my enemies;
I have fled to you for refuge.[v]
10 Teach me to do your will,
for you are my God.
Let your good spirit lead me on a level path.

11 For your name's sake, O LORD, preserve my life.
In your righteousness bring me out of trouble.
12 In your steadfast love cut off my enemies,
and destroy all my adversaries,
for I am your servant.

[v] One Heb Ms Gk: MT *to you I have hidden*

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to the suffering of the petitioner. **142.5–7** Further cries for help (vv. 5a, 6, 7a) intermingled with expressions of trust (vv. 5b, 7b). **142.7** *Bring me out of prison* may be a metaphorical reference to the experience of distress or it may refer to an actual imprisonment or captivity of the one who cries out in the psalm; cf. 107.10–16. *So that I may give thanks to your name* is a vow of praise, which often concludes a prayer for help (cf. 7.17; 13.6; 35.28; 59.16–17; 61.8).

143.1–12 An individual prayer for help. One of the penitential psalms (see note on 6.1–10). **143.1–2** Cry for help. **143.2** The implicit acknowledgment of inadequacy before God's judgment has led to the inclusion of this psalm in the penitential psalms. **143.3–4** Description of the affliction from oppressive elements and the internal distress it has caused. **143.5–6** Recollection of God's saving works in the past is the ground for the present plea. *Selah*. See note on 3.2. **143.7–12** Urgent pleas for help are followed by laments and expressions of confidence that are submitted as grounds for God's attention. **143.7** *Hide your face*. See notes on 10.1; 27.9. *Pit*. See note on 16.10. **143.8b–10** In addition to the plea for help, these verses seek divine instruction in the proper way to go. **143.11–12** The plea for help is rooted in the character of God as the psalmist pleads for the Lord to act in accordance with God's own nature.

Psalm 144

Prayer for National Deliverance and Security

Of David.

1 Blessed be the LORD, my rock,
who trains my hands for war,
and my fingers for battle;
2 my rock[w] and my fortress,
my stronghold and my deliverer,
my shield, in whom I take refuge,
who subdues the peoples[x]
under me.

3 O LORD, what are human beings
that you regard them,
or mortals that you think of them?
4 They are like a breath;
their days are like a passing shadow.

5 Bow your heavens, O LORD, and come down;
touch the mountains so that they smoke.
6 Make the lightning flash and scatter them;
send out your arrows and rout them.
7 Stretch out your hand from on high;
set me free and rescue me from the mighty waters,
from the hand of aliens,
8 whose mouths speak lies,
and whose right hands are false.

9 I will sing a new song to you, O God;
upon a ten-stringed harp I will play to you,
10 the one who gives victory to kings,
who rescues his servant David.
11 Rescue me from the cruel sword,
and deliver me from the hand of aliens,
whose mouths speak lies,
and whose right hands are false.

12 May our sons in their youth
be like plants full grown,
our daughters like corner pillars,
cut for the building of a palace.
13 May our barns be filled,
with produce of every kind;
may our sheep increase by thousands,
by tens of thousands in our fields,
14 and may our cattle be heavy with young.
May there be no breach in the walls,[y] no exile,
and no cry of distress in our streets.

15 Happy are the people to whom such blessings fall;
happy are the people whose God is the LORD.

w With 18.2 and 2 Sam 22.2: Heb *my steadfast love*
x Heb Mss Syr Aquila Jerome: MT *my people*
y Heb lacks *in the walls*

144.1–11 A royal prayer for God's help. The psalm uses themes and traditions found in Ps 18 (2 Sam 22), a royal song of thanksgiving. **144.1–2** The king gives thanks and praise for God's instruction, protection, and victory over other nations (cf. Pss 18.2; 34; 46–47). **144.3–4** Reflection on human frailty in anticipation of the prayer that follows (cf. Job 7.17–18; Pss 8.4; 90.5–6; 103.15–16; 146.3–4). **144.5–8** Prayer for God's help couched in the theophanic language of 18.7–19; see notes there. **144.7** *Aliens,* hostile nations or peoples. *Whose right hands are false* refers to violating oaths sworn by raising the right hand. The verse may refer to nations that have broken political alliances or treaties (cf. v. 11b). **144.9–11** Vow of praise and further plea for help (cf. vv. 7–8). **144.9–10** The basis for associating the psalm with a king and particularly with David, who was a musician and also experienced God's deliverance from his enemies, is seen in these verses. *David* could refer to a member of the Davidic line (cf. Ezek 34.23; Hos 3.5). **144.12–15** A community prayer for God's blessing of the nation in prosperity and security. The relation of these verses to the royal psalm in vv. 1–11 is unclear. They may have been a prayer uttered by the king or they may have been originally a separate prayer later joined to the royal psalm. **144.15** *Happy.* See note on 1.1.

Psalm 145

The Greatness and the Goodness of God

Praise. Of David.

1 I will extol you, my God and King,
and bless your name forever and ever.
2 Every day I will bless you,
and praise your name forever and ever.
3 Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised;
his greatness is unsearchable.

4 One generation shall laud your works to another,
and shall declare your mighty acts.
5 On the glorious splendor of your majesty,
and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.
6 The might of your awesome deeds shall be proclaimed,
and I will declare your greatness.
7 They shall celebrate the fame of your abundant goodness,
and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.

8 The LORD is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
9 The LORD is good to all,
and his compassion is over all that he has made.
10 All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD,
and all your faithful shall bless you.
11 They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom,
and tell of your power,
12 to make known to all people your[z] mighty deeds,
and the glorious splendor of your[a] kingdom.
13 Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and your dominion endures throughout all generations.

The LORD is faithful in all his words,
and gracious in all his deeds.[b]
14 The LORD upholds all who are falling,
and raises up all who are bowed down.
15 The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food in due season.
16 You open your hand,
satisfying the desire of every living thing.
17 The LORD is just in all his ways,
and kind in all his doings.
18 The LORD is near to all who call on him,
to all who call on him in truth.
19 He fulfills the desire of all who fear him;
he also hears their cry, and saves them.

z Gk Jerome Syr: Heb *his* *a* Heb *his*
b These two lines supplied by Q Ms Gk Syr

145.1–21 A hymn of praise. An alphabetic acrostic psalm (so also Pss 9–10; 25; 34; 37; 111; 112; 119; Lam 1–4), each verse beginning with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet (see note on 9.1–10.18). **145.1–2** An individual makes a vow of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord that is carried out in the verses that follow (cf. 7.17; 9.1–2; 13.6; 116.12–19; 138.1–2; 144.9–10). **145.3–7** The praise of the psalmist becomes a part of a chain of praise that stretches out across the generations (cf. 22.30). **145.8–9** The substance of the praise of God is found in these verses, which draw upon the ancient confession of Ex 34.6; cf. note on 103.8 as well as the paradigm song of praise and thanksgiving (see note on 106.1). **145.10–13a** All of God's creatures as well as all the faithful members of the congregation are now called to praise the splendor of the Lord's eternal rule, the kingdom of God. **145.13b–20** These verses echo vv. 8–9, praising the faithfulness and compassion of God, especially for the weak and afflicted (vv. 13b–14, 17b), the providence of God (vv. 15–16, 20a), the justice of God (vv. 17a, 20b), and God's presence and responsiveness to those who cry out for help (vv. 18–19). The comprehensiveness and inclusiveness of these divine ways and deeds is seen in the repetition of the word *all* in these verses and vv. 10–13. **145.19** *Fear him.* See note on 34.7.

20 The LORD watches over all who
love him,
but all the wicked he will
destroy.

21 My mouth will speak the praise of
the LORD,
and all flesh will bless his holy
name forever and ever.

Psalm 146

Praise for God's Help

1 Praise the LORD!
Praise the LORD, O my soul!
2 I will praise the LORD as long as
I live;
I will sing praises to my God all
my life long.

3 Do not put your trust in
princes,
in mortals, in whom there
is no help.
4 When their breath departs, they
return to the earth;
on that very day their plans
perish.

5 Happy are those whose help is
the God of Jacob,
whose hope is in the LORD
their God,
6 who made heaven and earth,
the sea, and all that is in
them;
who keeps faith forever;
7 who executes justice for the
oppressed;
who gives food to the hungry.

The LORD sets the prisoners free;
8 the LORD opens the eyes of
the blind.
The LORD lifts up those who are
bowed down;
the LORD loves the righteous.
9 The LORD watches over the
strangers;
he upholds the orphan and the
widow,
but the way of the wicked he
brings to ruin.

10 The LORD will reign forever,
your God, O Zion, for all
generations.
Praise the LORD!

Psalm 147

Praise for God's Care for Jerusalem

1 Praise the LORD!
How good it is to sing praises to
our God;
for he is gracious, and a song
of praise is fitting.
2 The LORD builds up Jerusalem;
he gathers the outcasts of
Israel.
3 He heals the brokenhearted,
and binds up their wounds.
4 He determines the number of
the stars;

145.21 A concluding expression of the purpose of the psalm, the praise of the Lord by the psalmist (cf. vv. 1–2, 5–6) joined with the praise by *all flesh* (cf. vv. 10–13).

146.1–10 A hymn of praise. **146.1–2** Introductory call to praise as self-exhortation (cf. note on 145.1–2). **146.3–4** Reflection on the inadequacy of human help addressed as a warning to the congregation (cf. 56.11; 118.6–9). **146.5–9** Over against human inadequacy, the psalmist points out the benefits of trusting in the Lord by enumerating the many ways God cares, particularly for the weak, the suffering, and the oppressed (cf. 1 Sam 2.1–10; Ps 145.14–20). **146.5** *Happy.* See note on 1.1. *The God of Jacob,* a divine title often found in psalms that focus on Zion (v. 10; 20.1; 24.6; 46.7, 11; 76.6; 84.8). **146.6** The power of God is attested first in praise of God as creator of all that is. **146.7** Cf. Pss 82; 107.10–16; 140.12; 142.7. **146.9** *The way of the wicked.* Cf. 1.6. **146.10** Concluding praise of God's eternal rule (cf. Ex 15.18; Pss 29.10; 145.13; 93; 95–99).

147.1–20 A hymn of praise. Motifs and themes from other psalms, Job, and Isa 40–66 appear throughout the psalm. **147.1–6** Call to praise (v. 1) and the reason for praise, which is found in the Lord's power and care. The psalmist joins praise of God's power and wisdom in creation with God's attention to the lowliest and weakest creatures. **147.2** *The LORD builds up Jerusalem.* Cf. 51.18; 102.16; 127.1. *Outcasts of Israel.* Cf. Neh 1.9; Isa 11.12; 56.8; Zeph 3.19. **147.3** Cf. 6.2; 30.2; 34.18; 41.4; Isa 61.1.

he gives to all of them their
names.
5 Great is our Lord, and abundant
in power;
his understanding is beyond
measure.
6 The LORD lifts up the
downtrodden;
he casts the wicked to the
ground.

7 Sing to the LORD with
thanksgiving;
make melody to our God on
the lyre.
8 He covers the heavens with
clouds,
prepares rain for the earth,
makes grass grow on the hills.
9 He gives to the animals their
food,
and to the young ravens when
they cry.
10 His delight is not in the strength
of the horse,
nor his pleasure in the speed of
a runner;[c]
11 but the LORD takes pleasure in
those who fear him,
in those who hope in his
steadfast love.

12 Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem!
Praise your God, O Zion!
13 For he strengthens the bars of
your gates;
he blesses your children
within you.
14 He grants peace[d] within your
borders;
he fills you with the finest of
wheat.
15 He sends out his command to the
earth;
his word runs swiftly.
16 He gives snow like wool;
he scatters frost like ashes.
17 He hurls down hail like crumbs—
who can stand before his cold?
18 He sends out his word, and melts
them;
he makes his wind blow, and
the waters flow.
19 He declares his word to Jacob,
his statutes and ordinances to
Israel.
20 He has not dealt thus with any
other nation;
they do not know his
ordinances.
Praise the LORD!

Psalm 148

Praise for God's Universal Glory

1 Praise the LORD!
Praise the LORD from the
heavens;
praise him in the heights!
2 Praise him, all his angels;
praise him, all his host!

3 Praise him, sun and moon;
praise him, all you shining
stars!
4 Praise him, you highest heavens,
and you waters above the
heavens!

5 Let them praise the name of
the LORD,
for he commanded and they
were created.

c Heb *legs of a person* *d* Or *prosperity*

147.4–5 Cf. 145.3; Isa 40.26–28. **147.6** Cf. 113.7; 145.14, 20; 146.8–9. **147.7–11** Call to praise and thanksgiving (v. 7) and the reason for praise found in the Lord's provision of food for the creatures (vv. 8–9) and in God's joy in those who are faithful (vv. 10–11). **147.8–9** Cf. 104.10–14, 21. *Ravens.* Cf. Job 38.41; Lk 12.24. **147.10–11** Cf. 20.7; 33.16–18. *Fear him.* See note on 34.7. **147.12–20** Call to praise (v. 12) and the reason for praise, centering especially in the creative and effective *word* (or *command, statutes, ordinances*) of God (cf. 33.4–7; Gen 1; Isa 55.10–11). **147.13** Cf. v. 2. On the building up and strengthening of the city together with the blessing of children, cf. Ps 127. **147.14a** Cf. Isa 60.17–18. **147.14b** Cf. 81.16. **147.15–18** Cf. Job 37.1–13. **147.18** *Makes his wind blow.* Cf. Isa 40.7. **147.19–20** Cf. Deut 4.6–8, 12–13.

148.1–14 A hymn of praise consisting primarily of a long series of calls to the elements of creation and the inhabitants of the earth to praise the Lord. Its influence is felt in the apocryphal Song of the Three Jews. **148.1–6** The heavens and their natural and angelic inhabitants are called to praise the Lord because God is their creator (cf. 19.1; Job 38.7). **148.2** Cf. 29.1;

6 He established them forever
and ever;
he fixed their bounds, which
cannot be passed.[e]

7 Praise the LORD from the earth,
you sea monsters and all deeps,
8 fire and hail, snow and frost,
stormy wind fulfilling his
command!

9 Mountains and all hills,
fruit trees and all cedars!
10 Wild animals and all cattle,
creeping things and flying
birds!

11 Kings of the earth and all
peoples,
princes and all rulers of the
earth!
12 Young men and women alike,
old and young together!

13 Let them praise the name of
the LORD,
for his name alone is exalted;
his glory is above earth and
heaven.
14 He has raised up a horn for his
people,
praise for all his faithful,
for the people of Israel who are
close to him.
Praise the LORD!

Psalm 149

Praise for God's Goodness to Israel

1 Praise the LORD!
Sing to the LORD a new song,
his praise in the assembly of the
faithful.
2 Let Israel be glad in its Maker;
let the children of Zion rejoice
in their King.
3 Let them praise his name with
dancing,
making melody to him with
tambourine and lyre.
4 For the LORD takes pleasure in
his people;
he adorns the humble with
victory.
5 Let the faithful exult in glory;
let them sing for joy on their
couches.
6 Let the high praises of God be in
their throats
and two-edged swords in their
hands,
7 to execute vengeance on the
nations
and punishment on the
peoples,
8 to bind their kings with fetters
and their nobles with chains
of iron,
9 to execute on them the judgment
decreed.
This is glory for all his faithful
ones.
Praise the LORD!

Psalm 150

Praise for God's Surpassing Greatness

1 Praise the LORD!
Praise God in his sanctuary;
praise him in his mighty
firmament![f]

e Or *he set a law that cannot pass away* f Or *dome*

103.20–22. **148.6** Cf. Job 38.8–11. **148.7–14** The earth and all its natural elements, animals, and human inhabitants are called to praise the Lord because of God's glory. **148.14** *Horn.* See note on 75.4–5.

149.1–9 A hymn of praise for God's salvation. **149.1–4** Call for the congregation to praise the Lord because of God's favor seen in saving the humble, i.e., the lowly and helpless, which is how the community sees itself. **149.1** *Sing to the LORD a new song.* Cf. 33.3; 40.3; 96.1; 98.1; 144.1; Isa 42.10. **149.5–9** Call for the people to praise and go forth in battle. It is debated as to whether these verses describe a ritual occasion of martial singing and dancing during one of the religious festivals or envision an eschatological victory celebration. The opening verses of the psalm tend to suggest a liturgical event of praise and celebration of God's victory and rule over the nations. **149.5–6** Cf. Jdt 15.13. **149.7** Cf. Isa 34.8; 61.2; 62.1–2.

150.1–6 A hymn of praise in which all of creation is called to glorify God. The Psalter is thus given a doxological conclusion. Whereas in other hymns in Psalms the emphasis is often upon the reasons for praise in God's marvelous works, here the emphasis is upon the call to praise and the universality of that praise in all the earth, by every creature, and with every instrument that can make music.

2 Praise him for his mighty deeds;
praise him according to his
surpassing greatness!

3 Praise him with trumpet sound;
praise him with lute and harp!
4 Praise him with tambourine and
dance;
praise him with strings and
pipe!
5 Praise him with clanging cymbals;
praise him with loud clashing
cymbals!
6 Let everything that breathes
praise the LORD!
Praise the LORD!

PROVERBS

THE BOOK OF PROVERBS is a series of collections whose authorship was traditionally attributed to Solomon, as was the composition of Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon. Actually, the book received its final editing during the post-exilic period (sixth century B.C.E. and later), and while many of its sayings may well have originated during the earlier periods, it is clear that the ascription to Solomon is an honorary one, making sense in light of his fabled wisdom (1 Kings 3–4). The authors of these collections of (mostly) two-line sayings were the sages, a social class that served as counselors, bureaucrats, and teachers during the Divided Kingdom and as preservers of tradition in the later periods. Hence, Proverbs, like Job and Ecclesiastes, reflects the worldview of the intellectual elite, and though aspects of that outlook changed as cultural conditions altered, a few key emphases remain constant.

Leading Ideas

The sages rooted their theology in knowledge about God gained through the study of creation and human nature. Covenant, historical redemption, and the legal tradition, while known to the sages, are less important in the "wisdom" books than elsewhere. This is in part because the world of wisdom is an international one: many of the sages' writings have direct parallels from Mesopotamia and Egypt (in fact, Prov 22.17–24.22 derives in some way from the earlier Egyptian *Instruction of Amenemope*), and the bureaucracies of Judah and Israel were modeled after those of their more powerful neighbors.

One of the key concepts of the sages, "fear of the LORD," shows that whatever the origin of the wisdom teachers' cosmopolitan outlook, it had been fully hebraized. "Fear of the LORD" refers to more than simple fear; it is the awe, obedience, and proper relationship to God that necessarily undergirds all attempts at gathering knowledge or living wisely. Contrasts between the "righteous" or "wise" and the "wicked" or "foolish" show the sages' concern for Israelite morality as it was lived out on a day-to-day basis.

Concern with retribution also marks the thinking of this group, for they believe that certain actions invariably produce reliable consequences. The wise per-

son will consider these causes and effects before acting. The belief in inevitable relationships between act and consequence makes it easy to blame fools for their foolishness and related misfortunes or to recommend corporal punishment for children lest their disobedience produce worse consequences later in life. It is at such points that we become most aware that we are listening to the discourse of a privileged, elite group. However, the sages also know that life is not so easily understood, that appearances can be deceptive, and that God's purposes cannot be thwarted by mere human wisdom. The books of Job and Ecclesiastes also reflect the wisdom movement's inner debate over the nature of retribution.

Woman Wisdom

The figure of Woman Wisdom, the personification of the sages' teachings in the form of a woman who reaches out to the world of humans, is another intriguing feature of the book. The meaning of this exalted female figure in a strongly male-centered society has been the topic of much debate, for female imagery begins (chs. 1–9) and ends (ch. 31) the book, providing both the theological introduction and human postscript to the collections of individual sayings. Some find in this figure—and in her direct opposites, Woman Folly (NRSV, "foolish woman," 9.13–18), Woman Stranger (NRSV, "loose woman," 2.16–19), and the adulteress—the remnant of ancient customs of goddess worship within Israelite society or see her as suggestive of the goddesses who served as scribal patrons in ancient Near Eastern societies. Others see her as an extension of God's attributes, which have subsequently taken on independent life (i.e., a hypostasis), or as a prophet. To others she is modeled after the real roles of teacher, counselor, and household planner played by Israelite women in their homes and societies. At any rate, this intriguing figure speaks with divine authority (1.20–33), played a role in creation (ch. 8), and resists categorization as a simple literary device of personification.

Formal Characteristics

The literary forms that make up the book are as diverse as the sages' observations on life, though all conform to the canons of parallelism in Hebrew poetry. In parallelism, a poetic verse consists of two (sometimes three) lines, the second of which in some way restates the thought of the first. In synonymous parallelism, the second line agrees with the first; in antithetic parallelism, the relationship is one of contrast between the two lines; and in formal or synthetic parallelism the second line advances the thought of the first in some way, but does not directly agree or disagree. Because the sages are concerned with the inculcation of moral values, they often use antithetic parallelism to heighten the contrast between approved and disapproved behaviors.

Prov 1–9 consists primarily of lengthy "wisdom poems," which celebrate the virtues of Woman Wisdom, and "instructions." The instruction, a form borrowed

from the Egyptian wisdom tradition, is an extended poem characterized by positive and negative admonitions to youth, issued in direct address from parent to child or teacher to pupil (1.8–19; 2.1–22; 3.1–12, 21–35; 4.1–9, 10–19, 20–27; 5.1–23; 6.20–35; 7.1–27; 22.17–24.22; 31.1–9). Prov 31.1–9 is extraordinary because it purports to be an instruction by a queen mother. The acrostic poem on the Woman of Worth, or the capable wife, in 31.10–31, in which each line begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet, is another type of extended composition found within the book.

In chs. 10–30, readers encounter the highly crafted, two-line artistic proverbs of the sages. Most of these go beyond simple observation into the realm of moral teaching. Specialized forms of proverbs are the "better than" sayings (e.g., 3.14; 15.16–17), their "not right" variation (e.g., 17.26a; 18.5a), and riddles. Riddles are infrequent in Proverbs (but see 23.29–35). Admonitions and prohibitions add a motivation to the proverbial observations (4.21–22; 5.7–10). "Numerical sayings," a favorite among Israel's neighbors, use the pattern of x number in the first line followed by $x + 1$ in the next ("Three things are stately in their stride; four are stately in their gait," 30.29). The arrangement of these forms is not haphazard: the sages used wordplays, key words, alliteration, content, and other devices in their ordering and editing of diverse sayings.

Claudia V. Camp and *Carole R. Fontaine*

1 The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel:

Prologue

2 For learning about wisdom and instruction,
for understanding words of insight,
3 for gaining instruction in wise dealing,
righteousness, justice, and equity;
4 to teach shrewdness to the simple,

1.1–9.18 Using antithesis, these instructional poems identify and interrelate certain fundamental values: wisdom vs. folly, good vs. evil, life vs. death, parental instruction vs. the lure of outsiders' speech. These concepts are often presented metaphorically by means of two contrasting female figures, personified Wisdom and the *strange woman* (see 2.16; text note *b*).

1.1–7 A general introduction to the book as a whole. **1.1** In the royal ideology, the king's wisdom gave him the capacity to administer legal justice and bring righteous order to society (see also 8.14–16; 16.10, 13; 20.26, 28; 25.1–7; 28.2–3, 15–16; 29.2, 12, 14, 16, 26; 30.27–31; 31.1–9; 1 Kings 3.4–28; 4.29–34; 10.1–13). The proper nouns in this verse, *Solomon, David,* and *Israel,* have the numerical equivalent of 930. **1.2–5** The concatenation of terms related to *wisdom* (*learning, instruction, understanding, . . . skill*), hard to distinguish in meaning, show the fullness and importance of wisdom discourse (see also 2.2–11; 3.13, 21; 4.1, 5, 7; 5.1–2; 8.1, 5, 12, 14). **1.3** The association of *wise dealing* with *righteousness, justice, and equity* is typical of wisdom thought: worldly wisdom makes one right with God (see also 2.9; 3.33–35; 8.8, 18–20). *Equity,* from the Hebrew root meaning "straight, (up)right,"; the concept is common in Proverbs in both the concrete and the abstract sense and is often found with *path* or *way* (see, e.g., 2.7, 13, 15, 21; 3.6, 32; 4.11, 25–26; 5.6; 8.8–9; 9.15; 11.3, 5, 6; 28.10; 29.27; 30.20). **1.4** Proverbs has at least two categories of fool. Here the *simple* and *young* can be trained; elsewhere recalcitrant students *without sense* become the doomed *scoffers, scorners,* and *fools* [who] *hate knowledge* (see, e.g., 1.7, 22, 32;

knowledge and prudence to the
young—
5 let the wise also hear and gain in
learning,
and the discerning acquire skill,
6 to understand a proverb and a
figure,
the words of the wise and their
riddles.

7 The fear of the LORD is the
beginning of knowledge;
fools despise wisdom and
instruction.

Violent Men

8 Hear, my child, your father's
instruction,
and do not reject your mother's
teaching;
9 for they are a fair garland for
your head,
and pendants for your neck.
10 My child, if sinners entice you,
do not consent.
11 If they say, "Come with us, let us
lie in wait for blood;
let us wantonly ambush the
innocent;
12 like Sheol let us swallow them
alive
and whole, like those who go
down to the Pit.
13 We shall find all kinds of costly
things;
we shall fill our houses with
booty.
14 Throw in your lot among us;

3.34; 6.32; 7.7; 9.4, 6, 7, 12, 16; 10.1, 8; 14.9; 21.24; 27.22; 29.1, 8). The message is: wisdom leads to life, folly to death. **1.5** The search for knowledge is lifelong (see also 9.7–12). *Skill* implies the ability to trim one's sails in harmony with the winds one cannot control. **1.6** Proper and truthful speech is a central concern, both as a practical skill and as a manifestation of an orderly society; listening and speaking well can be a matter of life and death (see, e.g., 1.23; 2.1, 6, 12, 16; 4.4–5, 10, 20, 24; 5.2–3, 7, 13; 6.2, 17, 19; 7.2, 21, 24; 8.6–8, 13; 10.11, 13, 19–21, 31–32; 25.11–15; 26.4–5, 7, 9, 22–25, 28; 29.20). *Proverb, riddles,* identifiable wisdom forms of speech (cf. note on 6.16–19; Judg 14.14, 19). **1.7** *Fear of the LORD,* defined as a righteous life or the hatred of evil, i.e., the proper relationship to God, is the touchstone of wisdom (see also 1.29; 2.5; 3.7; 8.13; 9.10; 15.33; 19.23; 28.14; 29.25; 31.30; Job 28.28). On *the beginning of knowledge/wisdom,* cf. Prov 4.7. *Fools.* See note on 1.4.

1.8–19 Parental warning against men whose greed breeds violence. **1.8** *Hear, my child,* a typical formula to introduce an instruction; sometimes it appears without *hear,* sometimes in the plural, *children* (see also 1.10, 15; 2.1; 3.1, 21; 4.1, 10, 20; 5.1, 7; 6.1, 3, 20; 7.1, 24; 8.32; 27.11). Students of the time were usually male; "Hear, my son" in the RSV translation may be more accurate. Both *mother* and *father* are regularly named as teachers (see also 4.3; 6.20; 10.1; 15.20; 23.22; 28.7, 24; 29.3, 15, 17; 30.17; 31.1). *Instruction, teaching* (Hebrew *torah*), along with *discipline, reproof, counsel,* words typical of wisdom discourse (see, e.g., 1.25, 30; 3.1, 11–13; 4.1; 5.12; 6.20, 23; 7.2; 9.7–9; 10.17; 11.14; 29.1). *Torah,* elsewhere a term for covenant law, in Proverbs usually refers to more general parental instruction (cf. *commandment,* 2.1; 10.8; for exceptions, see 28.4, 7, 9; 29.18; perhaps 31.26). **1.9** *Fair garland,* also Woman Wisdom's prize (4.9); parental instruction is thus associated with Wisdom's authority. The depiction of virtue visibly worn is common; it is unclear whether it is intended literally (see also 3.3, 22; 6.21; 7.3; Job 31.35–36; Song 8.6). **1.10–19** The motif of the violent men to be avoided appears also in 2.12–15; 3.31–32; 6.11–19; 28.17, 24; 29.10. **1.10** *My child.* See note on 1.8. **1.11–14** Though the instructor purports to quote the *sinners'* speech, the rhetoric shows it to be his own construction (see also 7.14–20; 8.4–36; 9.4–6, 16–17). **1.11** *Lie in wait* is also used of the Strange Woman (7.12; 23.28). **1.12** *Sheol, Pit,* the place of the dead. In Canaanite myth, Death was depicted as having a gaping maw with which to *swallow* victims; the sinners thus equate themselves with personified Death (see also 5.5; 7.27; 9.18; 23.27; 27.20; 30.16). **1.13** *Find.* Seeking and finding is a common motif usually applied to the quest for wisdom (1.28; 2.4–5; 3.13; 4.22; 8.9, 17), though it is used once of the Strange Woman's seduction of the simple youth (7.15; see also 25.2–3; 28.11–13, 28; 29.10). *Costly things.* Wealth and treasure are among the blessings of seeking Wisdom (8.18, 21; cf. 25.11–12); only sinners quest for the things in themselves (2.1, 4; 3.14–15; 8.10–11, 19). *Houses.* The choice of which house to enter becomes important in developing the portraits of Woman Wisdom and Woman Stranger/Folly (2.18; 3.33; 5.8, 10; 7.6, 8, 11, 19, 27; 9.1, 14; 14.1; cf. 31.15). *Booty,* or *gain,* is also what the good wife brings her husband (31.11). **1.14** *One purse,* a temptingly egalitarian offer to a young man in a society where the family patriarch controlled the wealth until his death.

we will all have one purse"—
15 my child, do not walk in their way,
keep your foot from their paths;
16 for their feet run to evil,
and they hurry to shed blood.
17 For in vain is the net baited
while the bird is looking on;
18 yet they lie in wait—to kill themselves!
and set an ambush—for their own lives!
19 Such is the end[a] of all who are greedy for gain;
it takes away the life of its possessors.

Woman Wisdom

20 Wisdom cries out in the street;
in the squares she raises her voice.
21 At the busiest corner she cries out;
at the entrance of the city gates she speaks:
22 "How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple?
How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing
and fools hate knowledge?
23 Give heed to my reproof;
I will pour out my thoughts to you;
I will make my words known to you.
24 Because I have called and you refused,
have stretched out my hand and no one heeded,
25 and because you have ignored all my counsel
and would have none of my reproof,
26 I also will laugh at your calamity;
I will mock when panic strikes you,
27 when panic strikes you like a storm,
and your calamity comes like a whirlwind,
when distress and anguish come upon you.
28 Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer;
they will seek me diligently, but will not find me.
29 Because they hated knowledge
and did not choose the fear of the LORD,

a Gk: Heb *are the ways*

1.15–16 *My child.* See note on 1.8. *Way, paths,* imagery for life decisions, often concretized with images of *feet* that *run* or *walk* in one moral direction or another (see, e.g., 2.7–20; 3.6, 17, 23; 4.11–19, 26–27; 5.5–8, 21; 6.23; 7.25; 8.13, 20, 32; 9.6; 10.9; 11.5; 28.6). **1.17** An originally independent proverb included here for persuasion: greed is its own snare (see also 3.26; 5.22; 6.2, 5; 7.22–23; 12.13; 29.6, 25), though the sinners are too foolish to see it. **1.18** *Lie in wait, ambush.* The sinners' own words are repeated, but with the meaning inverted to reveal their folly. **1.19** *End,* lit. *ways.* See note on 1.15–16. *All who are greedy for gain*—especially those seeking to circumvent the patriarchal inheritance system (cf. 1.14)?

1.20–33 Female personified *Wisdom* appears first as a prophet or street teacher (see also 3.13–18; 4.5–9; 5.15–19; 7.4–5; 8.1–36; 9.1–6). Though she forms the antithesis to the Strange Woman (see 2.16–19; 5.3–14, 19–20; 6.24–35; 7.1–27), there are many similarities in their portrayals. Shared vocabulary also links her to the capable wife (31.10–31). **1.20–21** *Cries out, raises her voice.* Her approach is personal and verbal, as is the Strange Woman's (1.24; 8.1; 9.3, 15). *Street, squares, corner, city gates.* Woman Wisdom is found where the economic and juridical life of society takes place, as are the Strange Woman and the capable wife (7.8, 12; 8.2–3; 9.3, 14; 31.23, 31). **1.22** *How long* evokes prophetic as well as psalmic speech (e.g., Jer 4.14, 21; 12.4; Pss 6.3; 74.10). *Simple ones, scoffers, fools.* See note on 1.4. One relates to Wisdom in the personal terms of *love* or *hate* (see also 1.29; 4.6; 5.12; 6.16; 8.13, 17–21, 36; 9.8; 29.3). **1.23** *Pour out.* Wisdom is like a fountain or spring (see also 13.14; 16.22; 25.26). *Words.* See note on 1.6. **1.24–33** The prophet (*called, refused, stretched out my hand*; see Isa 6.9–10; 65.1–2) and the sage (*counsel, reproof*; see note on 1.8) are evoked by this vocabulary. Strikingly, Woman Wisdom speaks in her own behalf, rather than in God's. **1.26–27** *Laugh.* See 31.25. *Panic.* The effect of accepting or rejecting Wisdom is experienced internally as well as externally (see 1.33; 3.25–26; 4.16; 6.22). **1.28** *Call.* Wisdom's approach should be matched by the student's (see 1.20; 2.3). *Seek, find.* See note on 1.13; elsewhere the terms describe the worshiper's relationship to God (Hos 5.6; Am 8.12; 2 Chr 15.2). **1.29** *Hated knowledge.* See note on

30 would have none of my counsel,
and despised all my reproof,
31 therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way
and be sated with their own devices.
32 For waywardness kills the simple,
and the complacency of fools destroys them;
33 but those who listen to me will be secure
and will live at ease, without dread of disaster."

The Value of Wisdom

2 My child, if you accept my words
and treasure up my commandments within you,
2 making your ear attentive to wisdom
and inclining your heart to understanding;
3 if you indeed cry out for insight,
and raise your voice for understanding;
4 if you seek it like silver,
and search for it as for hidden treasures—
5 then you will understand the fear of the LORD
and find the knowledge of God.
6 For the LORD gives wisdom;
from his mouth come knowledge and understanding;
7 he stores up sound wisdom for the upright;
he is a shield to those who walk blamelessly,
8 guarding the paths of justice
and preserving the way of his faithful ones.
9 Then you will understand righteousness and justice
and equity, every good path;
10 for wisdom will come into your heart,
and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul;
11 prudence will watch over you;
and understanding will guard you.
12 It will save you from the way of evil,
from those who speak perversely,
13 who forsake the paths of uprightness
to walk in the ways of darkness,
14 who rejoice in doing evil
and delight in the perverseness of evil;
15 those whose paths are crooked,

1.22. *Fear of the LORD.* See note on 1.7. **1.30** *Counsel, reproof.* See note on 1.8. **1.31** *Eat the fruit, be sated.* Food is a metaphor for attitude and action (see also 4.17; 9.2, 5, 17; 18.21; 26.22; 27.7, 18; 28.7; 30.20). *Way.* See note on 1.15–16. **1.32–33** The sages' fundamental choice, between life and death, is often symbolized as the choice between two women, Wisdom and Stranger (2.18–19; 3.2, 16, 18, 22; 4.4, 10, 13, 22; 5.5–6, 11–12, 23; 6.23, 26; 7.2, 27; 8.4, 35–36; 9.6, 18). **1.32** A proverb suggesting evil brings its own reward (perhaps without God's direct action; see also 26.27–28). *Simple, fools.* See note on 1.4. **1.33** *Be secure* (lit. "dwell secure"); the same phrase describes faithful Israel's life in the land (Deut 33.28). *Dread.* See 1.26–27.

2.1–22 An instruction repeating several key themes from ch. 1 and introducing *treasure* as a symbol for wisdom (2.1, 4; see note on 1.13). **2.1** *My child.* See note on 1.8. *Words.* See note on 1.6. *Commandments,* here the words of a human teacher, elsewhere in the Bible God's commandments (see note on 1.8; also 3.1; 4.4; 6.20, 23; 7.2). **2.2–11** *Wisdom.* See note on 1.2–5. **2.2** The *heart,* the seat of the will, must be connected to the *ear* (cf. the "understanding mind," lit. "listening heart" requested by wise Solomon, 1 Kings 3.9; see, e.g., Prov 3.5; 4.20–21, 23; 5.1, 13; 6.18, 25; 7.3, 25; 15.14; 25.12). **2.3** *Cry out, raise your voice.* The same verbs describe Wisdom's call (1.20; cf. 1.28). **2.4–5** *Seek, find.* See note on 1.13. **2.5** *Fear of the LORD.* See note on 1.7. Human wisdom includes *knowledge of God* (see also 9.10). **2.6–12** The *LORD* is the source of *wisdom* and its protective power, yet *wisdom, prudence,* and *understanding* are active agents in 2.10–12 (see also 3.21–26; 4.6; 6.24). **2.6** *Mouth.* See note on 1.6. **2.7–8** *Upright, walk, paths.* See notes on 1.3; 15–16. **2.9** On wisdom and *righteousness.* See note on 1.3. **2.12–15** Cf. the portrayal of the violent men in 1.10–19. Perverse speech is as much at issue as evil actions (see note on 1.6). *Way, paths.* See note on 1.15–16. *Uprightness, crooked.* See note on 1.3. **2.13** *Darkness* suggests both evil and ignorance; cf. the light of wisdom

and who are devious in their
ways.

16 You will be saved from the
loose[b] woman,
from the adulteress with her
smooth words,
17 who forsakes the partner of her
youth
and forgets her sacred
covenant;
18 for her way[c] leads down to
death,
and her paths to the shades;
19 those who go to her never come
back,
nor do they regain the paths
of life.

20 Therefore walk in the way of the
good,
and keep to the paths of the
just.
21 For the upright will abide in the
land,
and the innocent will remain
in it;
22 but the wicked will be cut off
from the land,
and the treacherous will be
rooted out of it.

Admonition to Trust and Honor God

3 My child, do not forget my
teaching,
but let your heart keep my
commandments;
2 for length of days and years of
life
and abundant welfare they will
give you.

3 Do not let loyalty and faithfulness
forsake you;
bind them around your neck,
write them on the tablet of
your heart.
4 So you will find favor and good
repute
in the sight of God and of
people.

5 Trust in the LORD with all your
heart,
and do not rely on your own
insight.
6 In all your ways
acknowledge him,
and he will make straight your
paths.
7 Do not be wise in your own eyes;

b Heb *strange* *c* Cn: Heb *house*

(see also 4.18–19; 6.23; 7.9). **2.16–19** These verses introduce a key female figure typically described with two closely related Hebrew words. Better than *loose woman, adulteress* are the more literal translations "strange woman," "foreign (alien) woman" (cf. the masculine form, 5.10; 20.16; 27.2, 13). Extramarital sexuality functions as a metaphor for what is strange, foreign, and thus deadly (see also 5.3–14, 19–20; 6.24–35; 7.1–27). Woman Stranger is equated with Woman Folly in 9.13–18 (cf. 5.22–23). The figure, probably a response to the threat of cultural assimilation in the postexilic period (sixth century B.C.E. and later; see also 5.10), creates a patriarchal symbol of evil transcending specific social context. **2.16** The woman's *smooth words* mirror the evil men's perverse speech (see note on 1.6; 2.12). **2.17** Marital faithlessness is linked with religious deviation (cf. Mal 2.10–16; also cf. Prov 5.15–18; 7.4). **2.18–19** *Way* parallels *paths* (see note on 1.15–16), but the images of the "way" and the woman's deadly *house* (see text note *c*) are often connected (see 1.13, 15; 5.8, 10; 7.8, 11, 19, 27; 9.13–15; note on 1.13). *Death, life.* See note on 1.32–33. **2.20–22** *Land.* See note on 1.33. **2.21** *Upright.* See note on 1.3.

3.1–35 This chapter's patchwork of literary forms is stitched together with the motifs of commandments (3.1; cf. the list in 3.27–31), long life (3.2, 16), honor (3.4, 9, 16, 35), virtue imaged as adornments (3.3, 22), and material blessings (3.2, 8, 10, 16, 33; cf. 4.8, 10, 22; 5.9–11; 6.33; 8.18–20; 9.11).

3.1–12 The father's *teaching* and *commandments* (3.1) are aligned with *the LORD's discipline* (3.11–12; see notes on 1.8; 2.1). This wisdom, though human, has a status beyond the "merely" human; thus one should not *rely on your own insight* or *be wise in your own eyes* (3.5, 7; see also 12.15; 26.5, 12, 16; 28.11; 28.26). **3.1** *My child.* See note on 1.8. **3.3, 5** *Loyalty* (Hebrew *chesed*; see 31.26) and *faithfulness,* elsewhere in the Bible religious virtues; here they are linked with the command to *trust in the LORD* (see also 28.25; 29.25) *with all your heart* (see note on 2.2). **3.3** *Neck.* See 1.9. **3.4** Social approval or disapproval (often termed *honor* and *shame*) defined the relationship of the individual to society (see 3.16, 35; 4.8; 5.9, 14; 6.33–35; 8.18; 11.16; 15.33; 18.12; 20.3; 25.2–3, 7c–10, 27; 26.1, 8; 27.11; 28.7; 29.15, 23). **3.6** *Ways, paths.* See note on 1.15–16. *Straight.* See note on 1.3. **3.7** *Fear the*

fear the LORD, and turn away
from evil.
8 It will be a healing for your flesh
and a refreshment for your
body.

9 Honor the LORD with your
substance
and with the first fruits of all
your produce;
10 then your barns will be filled with
plenty,
and your vats will be bursting
with wine.

11 My child, do not despise the
LORD's discipline
or be weary of his reproof,
12 for the LORD reproves the one he
loves,
as a father the son in whom he
delights.

The True Wealth

13 Happy are those who find
wisdom,
and those who get
understanding,
14 for her income is better than
silver,
and her revenue better than
gold.
15 She is more precious than jewels,
and nothing you desire can
compare with her.
16 Long life is in her right hand;
in her left hand are riches and
honor.
17 Her ways are ways of
pleasantness,
and all her paths are peace.
18 She is a tree of life to those who
lay hold of her;
those who hold her fast are
called happy.

God's Wisdom in Creation

19 The LORD by wisdom founded
the earth;
by understanding he established
the heavens;
20 by his knowledge the deeps broke
open,
and the clouds drop down
the dew.

The True Security

21 My child, do not let these escape
from your sight:
keep sound wisdom and
prudence,
22 and they will be life for your soul
and adornment for your neck.
23 Then you will walk on your way
securely
and your foot will not stumble.
24 If you sit down,[d] you will not be
afraid;
when you lie down, your sleep
will be sweet.
25 Do not be afraid of sudden panic,
or of the storm that strikes the
wicked;

d Gk: Heb *lie down*

LORD. See note on 1.7. **3.8** On healing vs. destruction of the body, see also 4.22; 5.11; 6.33. **3.9–10** An admonition to observe ritual law (Lev 2.14; Num 28.6), rare in wisdom literature.

3.13–18 Hymn to personified Wisdom (see 1.20–33) using several conventional motifs: comparison to treasure (see 1.13); *long life, riches, honor* as Wisdom's gifts (see 3.1–12); and calling her a *tree of life* (see also 11.30; 13.12; 15.4). **3.13** *Happy are those,* a typical wisdom formula identical to that in the Beatitudes (see also 8.34; 20.7; 28.14; 29.18; 31.28). *Find.* See note on 1.13. *Wisdom, understanding.* See note on 1.2–5. **3.16** The Egyptian goddess Maat, depicted with symbols of life and wealth in her hands, is possibly a source for female Wisdom. **3.17** *Ways, paths.* See note on 1.15–16. **3.18** *Lay hold of, hold . . . fast.* Strong words of physical embrace describe the student's relationship to Woman Wisdom or the Strange Woman (see also 4.4, 8, 13; 5.2, 20; 7.13). **3.19–20** A short hymn to the creator God, unusual for its ascription of wisdom to the deity. The connection between God, Wisdom, and creation is elaborated in 8.22–36. **3.21–26** A brief poem on the inner and outer effects of wisdom and wickedness. **3.21** *My child.* See note on 1.8. *Sound wisdom, prudence.* See note on 1.2–5. **3.22** The artistry of the couplet is hard to capture in translation. *Adornment* (Hebrew *hen*) forms an alliteration with *life* (Hebrew *chayyim*). The first line (*life, soul*) seems to represent an inner state, while the second line (*adornment, neck*) its outer manifestation. But the word for soul (Hebrew *nephesh*) can also mean "throat," breaking the inner-outer distinction in typical Israelite fashion. On virtue as adornment, see 1.9. **3.23** See note on

26 for the LORD will be your confidence
and will keep your foot from being caught.

27 Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due,[e]
when it is in your power to do it.
28 Do not say to your neighbor, "Go, and come again,
tomorrow I will give it"—when you have it with you.
29 Do not plan harm against your neighbor
who lives trustingly beside you.
30 Do not quarrel with anyone without cause,
when no harm has been done to you.
31 Do not envy the violent
and do not choose any of their ways;
32 for the perverse are an abomination to the LORD,
but the upright are in his confidence.
33 The LORD's curse is on the house of the wicked,
but he blesses the abode of the righteous.
34 Toward the scorners he is scornful,
but to the humble he shows favor.
35 The wise will inherit honor,
but stubborn fools, disgrace.

Parental Advice

4 Listen, children, to a father's instruction,
and be attentive, that you may gain[f] insight:
2 for I give you good precepts:
do not forsake my teaching.
3 When I was a son with my father,
tender, and my mother's favorite,
4 he taught me, and said to me,
"Let your heart hold fast my words;
keep my commandments, and live.
5 Get wisdom; get insight: do not forget, nor turn away
from the words of my mouth.
6 Do not forsake her, and she will keep you;
love her, and she will guard you.
7 The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom,
and whatever else you get, get insight.
8 Prize her highly, and she will exalt you;
she will honor you if you embrace her.

e Heb *from its owners* f Heb *know*

1.15–16. **3.24–26** See 1.26–27. **3.26** *Caught.* See 1.17. **3.27–32** Ethical admonitions define the righteous life of the wise. The apodictic *do not* is like that of the Ten Commandments. **3.27–28** *Good.* The context suggests the connotation "payment." On the sages' concern for financial obligations, see 6.1–5; 7.19–20. **3.31–32** See 1.8–19. **3.32** *Upright.* See note on 1.3. **3.33–35** *Wicked/righteous, wise/fools,* two central word pairs, here equated (cf. 1.3; 5.21–23), elsewhere independent (see, e.g., ch. 10; 25.5). **3.33** *House.* See note on 1.13. **3.34** *Scorners.* See note on 1.4. **3.35** A proverb closes the instruction with persuasive force (see 1.17). *Honor, disgrace.* See note on 3.4.

4.1–5.23 Woman Wisdom, the Violent Men, and the Strange Woman elaborated. **4.1–9** An instruction poem focused on love of Woman Wisdom (see 1.20–33). Though the speaker's mother is mentioned, the poem presents a father's teaching of his father's instruction; thus, the children are most likely sons (see note on 1.8), Wisdom (see note on 1.2–5) the woman they should love (see note on 1.22). **4.4–6** Not *turning away* from the father's words and *not forsaking* Woman Wisdom are poetically identified, female imagery increasing the desirability and authority of male teaching. If the student *keeps* the commandments, Woman Wisdom will *keep, guard* him (see 2.7–8). **4.4** *Heart.* See 2.2. *Hold fast.* See note on 3.18. *Words, commandments.* See notes on 1.6; 2.1. *Live.* See note on 1.32–33. **4.5, 7** *Get wisdom, get insight.* The same verb describes the Lord's approach to Wisdom in (see note on) 8.22. **4.7** Note the tautology; cf. 1.7. **4.8–9** A scene of a marriage festival with the groom in kingly array (cf. Song 3.6–11), or of a ceremony in which a high-status woman confers *honor* (see note on 3.4) on her protégé? Imagery of Woman Wisdom as lover and guardian is mixed throughout Prov 1–9 (see 1.20–33; 2.10–12), perhaps merging in the idealization of the wife (5.15–18; 12.4; 31.10–31). *Embrace.* See note on 3.18. *Garland, crown.* See 1.9.

9 She will place on your head a fair garland;
she will bestow on you a beautiful crown."

Admonition to Keep to the Right Path

10 Hear, my child, and accept my words,
that the years of your life may be many.
11 I have taught you the way of wisdom;
I have led you in the paths of uprightness.
12 When you walk, your step will not be hampered;
and if you run, you will not stumble.
13 Keep hold of instruction; do not let go;
guard her, for she is your life.
14 Do not enter the path of the wicked,
and do not walk in the way of evildoers.
15 Avoid it; do not go on it;
turn away from it and pass on.
16 For they cannot sleep unless they have done wrong;
they are robbed of sleep unless they have made someone stumble.
17 For they eat the bread of wickedness
and drink the wine of violence.
18 But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn,
which shines brighter and brighter until full day.
19 The way of the wicked is like deep darkness;
they do not know what they stumble over.
20 My child, be attentive to my words;
incline your ear to my sayings.
21 Do not let them escape from your sight;
keep them within your heart.
22 For they are life to those who find them,
and healing to all their flesh.
23 Keep your heart with all vigilance,
for from it flow the springs of life.
24 Put away from you crooked speech,
and put devious talk far from you.
25 Let your eyes look directly forward,
and your gaze be straight before you.
26 Keep straight the path of your feet,
and all your ways will be sure.
27 Do not swerve to the right or to the left;
turn your foot away from evil.

Warning Against Impurity and Infidelity

5 My child, be attentive to my wisdom;
incline your ear to my understanding,
2 so that you may hold on to prudence,
and your lips may guard knowledge.

4.10–27 The motif of wisdom's path or way shapes this instruction (see note on 1.15–16). **4.10** *Hear, my child.* See note on 1.8. *Words.* See note on 1.6. On long *life*, see 3.1–12; note on 1.32–33. **4.11** *Uprightness.* See note on 1.3. **4.13** *Keep hold, do not let go.* See note on 3.18. To gain Wisdom's guardianship (see 2.7–8), the student must *guard her. Life.* See note on 1.32–33. **4.16** On the psychology of the way of evil, see 1.26–27. **4.17** See note on 1.31. **4.18–19** *Light, darkness.* See note on 2.13. **4.20–27** Perhaps originally an independent poem. It concludes with the path motif from the preceding material, but here includes the feet in a poetic list of other body parts (see also 2.2; 4.18). **4.20–21** *My child.* See note on 1.8. *Words.* See note on 1.6. *Ear, heart.* See note on 2.2. **4.22** *Life.* See note on 1.32–33. *Find.* See note on 1.13. *Healing.* See 3.8. **4.23** *Heart.* See note on 2.2. *Springs.* On water imagery for life and wisdom, see also 1.23; 5.15–18. **4.24–27** *Crooked, straight.* See note on 1.3. **4.24** *Speech, talk.* See note on 1.6; 2.12.

5.1–23 Perhaps originally three separate units (vv. 1–14; 15–19; 20–23) combined into an instruction polarizing two female figures, the Strange (*loose*) Woman (see 2.16–19) and the wife. **5.1–2** On the varied terminology for *wisdom*, see note on 1.2–5. **5.1** *My child.* See note on 1.8. *Ear.* See note on 2.2. **5.2** *Hold on.* See

3 For the lips of a loose[g] woman
drip honey,
and her speech is smoother
than oil;
4 but in the end she is bitter as
wormwood,
sharp as a two-edged
sword.
5 Her feet go down to death;
her steps follow the path to
Sheol.
6 She does not keep straight to the
path of life;
her ways wander, and she does
not know it.

7 And now, my child,[h] listen
to me,
and do not depart from the
words of my mouth.
8 Keep your way far from her,
and do not go near the door of
her house;
9 or you will give your honor to
others,
and your years to the merciless,
10 and strangers will take their fill of
your wealth,
and your labors will go to the
house of an alien;
11 and at the end of your life you
will groan,
when your flesh and body are
consumed,
12 and you say, "Oh, how I hated
discipline,
and my heart despised reproof!
13 I did not listen to the voice of my
teachers
or incline my ear to my
instructors.
14 Now I am at the point of utter
ruin
in the public assembly."

15 Drink water from your own
cistern,
flowing water from your own
well.
16 Should your springs be scattered
abroad,
streams of water in the streets?
17 Let them be for yourself alone,
and not for sharing with
strangers.
18 Let your fountain be blessed,
and rejoice in the wife of your
youth,
19 a lovely deer, a graceful doe.

g Heb *strange* *h* Gk Vg: Heb *children*

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note on 3.18. *Guard.* See 4.13. **5.3** *Lips, speech.* See note on 1.6; 2.12. *Honey,* a favorite image for a good that can go bad (see 25.16, 27; 27.7). **5.5–6** *Path, straight.* See notes on 1.3; 1.15; 2.18–19. *Sheol.* See note on 1.12. **5.7** *My child.* See note on 1.8. *Words.* See note on 1.6. **5.8** *Way, house.* See note on 2.18–19. *Door,* perhaps an allusion to the maw of Sheol (see note on 1.12; 8.34; 9.14). **5.9–14** Loss of social status is as much a form of death as bodily devastation (see 3.1–8; note on 3.4). **5.10** *Strangers, alien.* The same word pair describes the Strange Woman (see note on 2.16–19), but here in masculine form. As with the female figure, the terminology blends several connotations: outsiders to a man's household, people of foreign nationality, a metaphor for evil persons in general (i.e., anyone who is "not us"). Loss of *wealth* alludes to the threat of cultural assimilation brought about by foreign trade in the postexilic period (sixth century B.C.E. and later; (see 6.1–5; 7.19–20). *House of an alien* recalls both the violent men (see 1.13) and the Strange Woman (see notes on 1.13; 2.16–19). **5.11** *Flesh and body.* See 3.8. **5.12** *Hated.* See note on 1.22. *Discipline, reproof.* See note on 1.8. **5.13** See notes on 1.6; 2.2. **5.14** Public dishonor had more meaning in ancient times than today, implying a permanent judgment on one's personhood and social status (see note on 3.4; 6.33–35).

5.15–19 A poem in which *water* is a metaphor for the male student's sexual enjoyment of his woman. Typically in Prov 1–9, the more abstract female personification of Wisdom (see 1.20–33) is the Strange Woman's counterpart; here the imagery of female sexuality governs the discourse, and the wife replaces Woman Wisdom (see 2.17; 7.4). As elsewhere in these poems, the language of proper and improper sexuality blends with that describing wisdom vs. folly and life vs. death (see note on 1.32–33). **5.15–16** The water imagery referring to the woman in 5.15 balances that referring to the man in 5.16 (see 4.23). **5.17** A difficult verse perhaps referring to 5.10: a man's sexual pleasure with a strange woman will mean sharing his wealth with strange men. **5.18** *Fountain.* See note on 1.23. **5.19–20** *Deer, doe.* Celebrating the beloved's beauty by comparison with animals is typical of ancient love poetry, as is delight in anatomical description, here *breasts* (see Song 1.9–10, 15; 2.9; 4.1–5; 5.10–16; 6.5–7; 7.1–9; cf. Prov 7.18). *Be intoxicated.* Repeated

May her breasts satisfy you at all times;
may you be intoxicated always by her love.
20 Why should you be intoxicated, my son, by another woman
and embrace the bosom of an adulteress?
21 For human ways are under the eyes of the LORD,
and he examines all their paths.
22 The iniquities of the wicked ensnare them,
and they are caught in the toils of their sin.
23 They die for lack of discipline,
and because of their great folly they are lost.

Practical Admonitions

6 My child, if you have given your pledge to your neighbor,
if you have bound yourself to another,[i]
2 you are snared by the utterance of your lips,[j]
caught by the words of your mouth.
3 So do this, my child, and save yourself,
for you have come into your neighbor's power:
go, hurry,[k] and plead with your neighbor.
4 Give your eyes no sleep
and your eyelids no slumber;
5 save yourself like a gazelle from the hunter,[l]
like a bird from the hand of the fowler.

6 Go to the ant, you lazybones;
consider its ways, and be wise.
7 Without having any chief
or officer or ruler,
8 it prepares its food in summer,
and gathers its sustenance in harvest.
9 How long will you lie there, O lazybones?
When will you rise from your sleep?
10 A little sleep, a little slumber,
a little folding of the hands to rest,
11 and poverty will come upon you like a robber,
and want, like an armed warrior.

12 A scoundrel and a villain
goes around with crooked speech,
13 winking the eyes, shuffling the feet,
pointing the fingers,
14 with perverted mind devising evil,
continually sowing discord;
15 on such a one calamity will descend suddenly;
in a moment, damage beyond repair.

16 There are six things that the LORD hates,

i Or *a stranger* *j* Cn Compare Gk Syr: Heb *the words of your mouth* *k* Or *humble yourself*
l Cn: Heb *from the hand*

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vocabulary links the wife and the Strange Woman, even in their opposition. **5.21–23** The conclusion of the poem moves abruptly to the larger significance of the metaphor of sexual misbehavior. *Folly* is equated with the *iniquities of the wicked*; both lead to death (see note on 1.4; 2.16–19; 3.33–35; 9.13–18). **5.21** *Ways, paths.* See note on 1.15–16. **5.22** *Ensnare, caught.* See 1.17; 6.1–5.

6.1–35 These instructions lack the symbolic dimension of the preceding. **6.1–5** Control of one's financial resources is urged (cf. 3.27–28). The motif of ensnarement (6.1, 2, 5), repeated from 5.22, unites these two units with a "stitch word" (see also 1.17). Though material self-interest is strong, one's inheritance was also a sign of the Lord's blessing. **6.1** See also 11.15. *My child.* See note on 1.8. *Given your pledge, bound yourself,* offered oneself or one's resources as collateral for another's loan. *Neighbor, another.* Could be translated "associate," "stranger," possibly a (foreign?) business partner (see 5.10). **6.2** Verbal agreements were apparently binding; on wisdom and speech, see note on 1.6. **6.3** *My child.* See note on 1.8. **6.6–11** Wisdom through comparison of human life with the natural world (see also 27.8; 28.1, 15; 30.15–19, 24–31). Diligent labor is a virtue (see, e.g., 10.4–5; 22.13; 24.30–34; 26.13–16; 27.23–27; 31.13–27). **6.11** *Robber, armed warrior.* Cf. 1.10–19. **6.12–15** These verses are connected to preceding unit by the theme of the evil man. **6.13** *Winking, shuffling, pointing,* body language as a clear sign of character. **6.15b** 29.1b. **6.16–19** A numerical prov-

seven that are an abomination
to him:
17 haughty eyes, a lying tongue,
and hands that shed innocent
blood,
18 a heart that devises wicked plans,
feet that hurry to run to evil,
19 a lying witness who testifies
falsely,
and one who sows discord in a
family.

20 My child, keep your father's
commandment,
and do not forsake your
mother's teaching.
21 Bind them upon your heart
always;
tie them around your neck.
22 When you walk, they[m] will
lead you;
when you lie down, they[m] will
watch over you;
and when you awake, they[m]
will talk with you.
23 For the commandment is a lamp
and the teaching a light,
and the reproofs of discipline
are the way of life,
24 to preserve you from the wife of
another,[n]
from the smooth tongue of the
adulteress.
25 Do not desire her beauty in your
heart,
and do not let her capture you
with her eyelashes;
26 for a prostitute's fee is only a loaf
of bread,[o]
but the wife of another stalks a
man's very life.
27 Can fire be carried in the bosom
without burning one's clothes?
28 Or can one walk on hot coals
without scorching the feet?
29 So is he who sleeps with his
neighbor's wife;
no one who touches her will go
unpunished.
30 Thieves are not despised who
steal only
to satisfy their appetite when
they are hungry.
31 Yet if they are caught, they will
pay sevenfold;
they will forfeit all the goods of
their house.
32 But he who commits adultery has
no sense;
he who does it destroys himself.
33 He will get wounds and dishonor,
and his disgrace will not be
wiped away.

m Heb *it* *n* Gk: MT *the evil woman*
o Cn Compare Gk Syr Vg Tg: Heb *for because of a harlot to a piece of bread*

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erb with the typical *x*, *x* + 1 introductory formula. The last item is emphasized, perhaps originally the answer to a riddle (see 1.6; 30.15–33). The emphasis on *discord in a family* (lit. "strife between brothers") may seem surprising, but family solidarity was crucial for survival. *Lying* is named twice (see note on 1.6; 2.12). **6.16** More typically, the student is advised on what to *hate* or love (see note on 1.22), but see 8.13 for Woman Wisdom's hating. **6.17–18** On violent men, see 1.10–19. On listing of body parts, see 4.20–27.

6.20–35 A return to the theme of proper sexual behavior with a more literal focus on adultery (see 2.16–19; 7.19; 30.17–20). **6.20** *My child.* See note on 1.8. *Father's, mother's.* See note on 1.8. *Commandment, teaching.* See notes on 1.8; 2.1. **6.21** See 1.9; 2.2. **6.22–24** *Lead you, preserve you.* See 2.7–8. **6.22** *They*, or *it* (text note *m*), but "she" is also possible; cf. wisdom's female personification. **6.23** *Commandment.* See note on 2.1. *Lamp.* See note on 2.13. *Teaching, reproofs, discipline.* See note on 1.8. *Way.* See note on 1.15–16. *Life.* See note on 1.32–33. **6.24** *Wife of another, adultress*, misleading translations; although the poem's topic is adultery, this verse uses the more evocative "evil woman," "strange woman" (see 2.16). **6.25** *Heart.* See note on 2.2. **6.26** Adultery violates a man's exclusive right to his wife's sexuality, his ability to be sure his sons (inheritors) are his own; hence, it threatens the stability of the social system. As outsiders to the system, *prostitutes* were tolerated for their services, but they are not worth the instructor's consideration (see also 7.10; cf. 6.30). **6.27–28** Two proverbs, whose heat imagery makes them particularly appropriate as rhetoric against sexual promiscuity. **6.30** Like the prostitute whose fee is a mere *loaf of bread* (6.26), the hungry thief is not a major problem. **6.32** Senselessness in sexual behavior is especially deadly (see 5.21–22; 7.7; 9.16–18; see note on 1.4). **6.33–35** The exact nature of the adulterer's punishment is unclear. The law (Lev 20.10) takes it as an offense against God, thus warranting automatic execution. Here, the offended husband seems to have a choice in exacting punishment. *Wounds.* Symbolic or literal (see 3.8)? *Dishonor, disgrace.* See note on 3.4.

34 For jealousy arouses a husband's
fury,
and he shows no restraint when
he takes revenge.
35 He will accept no compensation,
and refuses a bribe no matter
how great.

The False Attractions of Adultery

7 My child, keep my words
and store up my
commandments with you;
2 keep my commandments and live,
keep my teachings as the apple
of your eye;
3 bind them on your fingers,
write them on the tablet of
your heart.
4 Say to wisdom, "You are my
sister,"
and call insight your intimate
friend,
5 that they may keep you from the
loose[p] woman,
from the adulteress with her
smooth words.

6 For at the window of my house
I looked out through my lattice,
7 and I saw among the simple ones,
I observed among the youths,
a young man without sense,
8 passing along the street near her
corner,
taking the road to her house
9 in the twilight, in the evening,
at the time of night and
darkness.

10 Then a woman comes
toward him,
decked out like a prostitute,
wily of heart.[q]
11 She is loud and wayward;
her feet do not stay at home;
12 now in the street, now in the
squares,
and at every corner she lies
in wait.
13 She seizes him and kisses him,
and with impudent face she
says to him:
14 "I had to offer sacrifices,
and today I have paid my vows;
15 so now I have come out to
meet you,
to seek you eagerly, and I have
found you!
16 I have decked my couch with
coverings,
colored spreads of Egyptian
linen;
17 I have perfumed my bed with
myrrh,

p Heb *strange* *q* Meaning of Heb uncertain

7.1–27 A return to the more symbolic dimension of the Strange Woman as an embodiment of evil (see 2.16–19). The poem's *inclusio* (a symmetrical structure in which the end repeats the beginning) is indicated by scene changes: it opens (7.1–5) and closes (7.24–27) with an instructor in a classroom; 7.6–12 and 7.21–23 describe a scene observed at a distance; in the center, in 7.13–20, a conversation is overheard at close range. **7.1–2** *My child.* See note on 1.8. *Words, commandments, teachings.* See notes on 1.6; 1.8; 2.1. *Live.* See note on 1.32–33. **7.3** See 1.9. *Heart.* See note on 2.2. **7.4** *Sister,* a term of endearment for a lover, not biological kin (see 1.20–33; 5.15–19; Song 4.9). **7.6** Could this place of concealment inside a *house* (see note on 1.13) hint at a female instructor? The "woman looking from a window" was a popular motif on Phoenician ivories (see 2 Kings 9.30; also the place of the waiting lover in Song 2.9). **7.7** See notes on 1.4; 6.32. **7.8** *Street, house.* See notes on 1.13; 1.15–16; 2.18–19. **7.9** See note on 2.13.

7.10–20 This description of the woman blends several conflicting images. A woman dressed *like a prostitute* is an ambiguous figure; adultery (see 7.19) was far worse a sin in ancient Israel, punishable by death (Lev 20.10; but cf. 6.26–35). **7.11** *Loud.* See 9.13. *Feet, home.* See notes on 1.13; 1.15–16; 2.18–19. **7.12** *Street, squares, corner,* Woman Wisdom's haunts as well (see 1.20). *Lies in wait.* See 1.11. **7.13** *Seizes.* See note on 3.18. *Impudent face.* The same Hebrew words are translated *bold face* when applied to the evil man in 21.29. **7.14–20** The woman's words are as imagined by the sage; cf. 1.11–14. **7.14–18** These verses have often been interpreted as the woman's participation in a foreign fertility cult. More likely, they use poetic hyperbole to depict her breaking several Israelite laws regulating sexual activity (cf. Ex 30.22–33; Lev 7.11–21; Deut 23.19), all punishable by death; the Strange Woman becomes a metaphor for death. Still, the poet does not flinch from the attractiveness of her offer, only adding to her danger. **7.15** *Seek you,* lit. "seek out your face"; with 7.13, this image provides a close-up of the woman's face pressed close to the man's. (See also note on 1.13). **7.17** *Myrrh, aloes, cinnamon,* the sources

aloes, and cinnamon.
18 Come, let us take our fill of love
until morning;
let us delight ourselves with
love.
19 For my husband is not at home;
he has gone on a long journey.
20 He took a bag of money
with him;
he will not come home until
full moon."

21 With much seductive speech she
persuades him;
with her smooth talk she
compels him.
22 Right away he follows her,
and goes like an ox to the
slaughter,
or bounds like a stag toward
the trap[r]
23 until an arrow pierces its
entrails.
He is like a bird rushing into a
snare,
not knowing that it will cost
him his life.

24 And now, my children, listen
to me,
and be attentive to the words of
my mouth.
25 Do not let your hearts turn aside
to her ways;
do not stray into her paths.
26 for many are those she has
laid low,
and numerous are her victims.
27 Her house is the way to Sheol,
going down to the chambers of
death.

The Gifts of Wisdom

8 Does not wisdom call,
and does not understanding
raise her voice?
2 On the heights, beside the way,
at the crossroads she takes her
stand;
3 beside the gates in front of the
town,
at the entrance of the portals
she cries out:
4 "To you, O people, I call,
and my cry is to all that live.
5 O simple ones, learn prudence;
acquire intelligence, you who
lack it.
6 Hear, for I will speak noble
things,
and from my lips will come
what is right;
7 for my mouth will utter truth;
wickedness is an abomination to
my lips.
8 All the words of my mouth are
righteous;
there is nothing twisted or
crooked in them.
9 They are all straight to one who
understands
and right to those who find
knowledge.
10 Take my instruction instead of
silver,

r Cn Compare Gk: Meaning of Heb uncertain

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of valued extracts and fragrances associated with both love (Song 4.14) and sacrifice (Ex 30.22–33). **7.18** *Fill of love*, with a change of a vowel, "fill of breasts," as in the instruction on marital satisfaction in 5.19; it foreshadows 7.19: she is no prostitute, but an adulterer. Her husband may be a foreign trader or an Israelite who engaged in such commerce (see 5.10).

7.21–23 A resumption of the more distanced perspective of 7.6–9. **7.21** See note on 1.6; 2.12. **7.22–23** Although translation is difficult, the imagery of *trap* and *snare* is unmistakable (see 1.17). *Slaughter*, also an action of Woman Wisdom in her house (see 9.2). **7.24–27** The scene returns to the classroom. **7.24** *My children*. See note on 1.8. *Words*. See note on 1.6. **7.25** *Hearts*. See note on 2.2. *Ways, paths*. See note on 1.15–16. **7.26–27** The improbable concatenation of deadly female attributes in ch. 7 (prostitute, defiler of the cult, foreigner [?], adulterer) builds to its inevitable conclusion. *House, way*. See notes on 1.13; 1.15–16; 2.18–19. *Sheol*. See note on 1.12.

8.1–36 The most fully developed poetic personification of Wisdom (see 1.20–33). On varied terms for *wisdom* (8.1, 5, 12, 14), see note on 1.2–5. **8.1–3** *Call, raise her voice, cries out*. See note on 1.20–21. *Heights, crossroads, gates, portals*. See note on 1.20–21. **8.4** *People, all that live*, lit. "men," "human beings" (see notes on 1.8; 4.1–9). **8.5** *Simple ones*. See note on 1.4. *Intelligence*, lit. "heart"; see 2.2. **8.6–9** *Speak, mouth, words*. See note on 1.6. *Wickedness, righteous*. See notes on 1.3; 3.33–35. *Crooked, straight*. See note

and knowledge rather than
choice gold;
11 for wisdom is better than jewels,
and all that you may desire
cannot compare with her.
12 I, wisdom, live with prudence,[s]
and I attain knowledge and
discretion.
13 The fear of the LORD is hatred
of evil.
Pride and arrogance and the way
of evil
and perverted speech I hate.
14 I have good advice and sound
wisdom;
I have insight, I have strength.
15 By me kings reign,
and rulers decree what is just;
16 by me rulers rule,
and nobles, all who govern
rightly.
17 I love those who love me,
and those who seek me
diligently find me.
18 Riches and honor are with me,
enduring wealth and
prosperity.
19 My fruit is better than gold, even
fine gold,
and my yield than choice silver.
20 I walk in the way of
righteousness,
along the paths of justice,
21 endowing with wealth those who
love me,
and filling their treasuries.

Wisdom's Part in Creation

22 The LORD created me at the
beginning[t] of his work,[u]
the first of his acts of long ago.
23 Ages ago I was set up,
at the first, before the
beginning of the earth.
24 When there were no depths I was
brought forth,
when there were no springs
abounding with water.
25 Before the mountains had been
shaped,
before the hills, I was brought
forth—
26 when he had not yet made earth
and fields,[s]
or the world's first bits of soil.
27 When he established the heavens,
I was there,

s Meaning of Heb uncertain t Or *me as the beginning* u Heb *way*

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on 1.3. *Find.* See note on 1.13. **8.10–11** *Silver, gold, jewels.* See note on 1.13. **8.12** *Live with, attain.* A change of one Hebrew letter in the first verb produces "seek"; the second verb is lit. "find," thus creating a favorite word pair (see note on 1.13). **8.13** *Fear of the LORD.* See note on 1.7. *Hatred, hate.* See notes on 1.22; 6.16. *Way.* See note on 1.15–16. *Perverted speech.* See note on 1.6; 2.12. **8.14–16** On wisdom and just rule, see note on 1.1. **8.14** *Good advice,* a Hebrew word designating the powerful counsel a king expected from his advisers; note *strength* in the next line; cf. qualities of the capable wife (31.17, 25–26). **8.17–21** The love of wisdom and its material blessings (see note on 1.13). *Love* can define the loyal relationship of treaty partners or royal subjects as well as the affections of lovers (see also note on 1.22). **8.17** *Seek, find.* See note on 1.13. **8.18** *Prosperity,* usually translated *righteousness* (8.20), though the moral state and its material rewards were inseparable (see note on 1.13). Through parallelism, the couplet shows *riches, enduring wealth* to be the concrete signs of *honor,* "righteousness" (see notes on 1.3; 3.4). **8.19** *Gold, silver.* See note on 1.13. **8.20** *Way, paths.* See note on 1.15–16.

8.22–31 A remarkable statement of Woman Wisdom's antiquity and authority. Depending on translation, one of two pictures emerges: Wisdom is a child born of the deity before the creation of the cosmos or she is a preexistent being who aligns herself with God; see also 3.19–20; John 1.1–4. **8.22** *Created,* usually translated "acquire" (thus in 4.5, 7 *get* describes the student's approach to wisdom). Also possible is "conceive, engender" in the biological sense, but not "create." See also note on 8.24–25. **8.23** *Set up,* used elsewhere only to refer to God's installing of the king in Zion (Ps 2.6). The Hebrew verb can also mean "to weave" and a variant form portrays the divine weaving of baby's sinews in the womb (Ps 139.13; Job 10.11). **8.24–29** Cf. the account of creation in Gen 1. **8.24–25** *Depths, springs.* Water was taken to be the original substance (Gen 1.2). *Brought forth* usually refers to the birthing of a child. If one reads "conceived/woven in the womb" for the ambiguous verbs in 8.22–23 (see notes on 8.22; 8.23), then Wisdom is portrayed as born of God as mother (see Isa 49.14–15; 42.14). *Mountains, hills,* not just features of the natural landscape, but the home of the gods, and the peaks of the pillars that supported the earth; they are lit. "sunk," not *shaped,* and they precede the *earth* (8.26). **8.27–29** God is portrayed ordering

when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,
28 when he made firm the skies above,
when he established the fountains of the deep,
29 when he assigned to the sea its limit,
so that the waters might not transgress his command,
when he marked out the foundations of the earth,
30 then I was beside him, like a master worker;[v]
and I was daily his[w] delight,
rejoicing before him always,
31 rejoicing in his inhabited world
and delighting in the human race.

32 "And now, my children, listen to me:
happy are those who keep my ways.
33 Hear instruction and be wise,
and do not neglect it.
34 Happy is the one who listens to me,
watching daily at my gates,
waiting beside my doors.
35 For whoever finds me finds life
and obtains favor from the LORD;
36 but those who miss me injure themselves;
all who hate me love death."

Wisdom's Feast

9 Wisdom has built her house,
she has hewn her seven pillars.
2 She has slaughtered her animals,
she has mixed her wine,
she has also set her table.
3 She has sent out her servant-girls, she calls
from the highest places in the town,
4 "You that are simple, turn in here!"
To those without sense she says,
5 "Come, eat of my bread
and drink of the wine I have mixed.
6 Lay aside immaturity,[x] and live,
and walk in the way of insight."

General Maxims

7 Whoever corrects a scoffer wins abuse;
whoever rebukes the wicked gets hurt.
8 A scoffer who is rebuked will only hate you;
the wise, when rebuked, will love you.
9 Give instruction[y] to the wise, and they will become wiser still;
teach the righteous and they will gain in learning.

v Another reading is *little child* *w* Gk: Heb lacks *his* *x* Or *simpleness* *y* Heb lacks *instruction*

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and regulating, rather than creating substance. **8.30–31** *Master worker.* See text note *v*; the ambiguous portrait of Wisdom persists. *Delight, rejoicing.* Repeated verbs in an inclusio, or symmetrical pattern, unite Wisdom's playful activity with God to her delight in humans on earth. **8.32–36** Woman Wisdom's discourse continues. Wisdom's *ways* lead from the public arena (8.1–3) to her *gates* and *doors* (her house; see notes on 1.13; 1.15–16; 2.18–19; 5.8; 9.1). **8.34** *Happy.* See note on 3.13. *Watching* and *waiting* outside a house recall the lover in Song 2.9. **8.35–36** Wisdom mediates *life* from the Lord (see note on 1.32–33). *Finds.* See note on 1.13. *Hate, love.* See note on 1.22.

9.1–18 Poems on Woman Wisdom (9.1–6) and Woman Folly (9.13–18) frame a central collection of sayings (9.7–12). The focus on the *houses* of the two women continues familiar themes (see note on 1.13) and also seems to expand upon the proverb in 14.1. On food as metaphor for moral perspective, see note on 1.31. **9.1** *Wisdom,* the plural form here (cf. the singular in 1.20–33) evokes 14.1a (which is lit. "The wisdom of women builds a house"); perhaps the plural is one of respect (cf. Hebrew *Elohim,* "gods/God"). Like the house of the capable wife (31.10–31; cf. 5.7–23), Wisdom's *house* is the center of the good society, though it may be hard to discern from the home of Woman Folly (see 9.13–17). *Seven pillars* may recall the mythic foundations of the earth (cf. 8.22–31). **9.2** See note on 1.31. *Slaughtered.* See 7.22. **9.3** *Calls.* See 1.20. *Highest places in the town.* See 1.20; 9.14. **9.4–6** *Simple, without sense, immaturity.* See note on 1.4; 9.16. *Bread, wine.* See 9.17. *Way.* See

10 The fear of the LORD is the
beginning of wisdom,
and the knowledge of the Holy
One is insight.
11 For by me your days will be
multiplied,
and years will be added to your
life.
12 If you are wise, you are wise for
yourself;
if you scoff, you alone will
bear it.

Folly's Invitation and Promise

13 The foolish woman is loud;
she is ignorant and knows
nothing.
14 She sits at the door of her house,
on a seat at the high places of
the town,
15 calling to those who pass by,
who are going straight on
their way,
16 "You who are simple, turn in
here!"
And to those without sense she
says,
17 "Stolen water is sweet,
and bread eaten in secret is
pleasant."
18 But they do not know that the
dead[z] are there,
that her guests are in the
depths of Sheol.

Wise Sayings of Solomon: The Antithetic Collection

10 The proverbs of Solomon.
A wise child makes a glad father,
but a foolish child is a mother's
grief.
2 Treasures gained by wickedness
do not profit,
but righteousness delivers from
death.
3 The LORD does not let the
righteous go hungry,
but he thwarts the craving of
the wicked.
4 A slack hand causes poverty,
but the hand of the diligent
makes rich.
5 A child who gathers in summer is
prudent,
but a child who sleeps in
harvest brings shame.
6 Blessings are on the head of the
righteous,
but the mouth of the wicked
conceals violence.
7 The memory of the righteous is a
blessing,
but the name of the wicked
will rot.
8 The wise of heart will heed
commandments,
but a babbling fool will come
to ruin.

z Heb *shades*

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note on 1.15–16. **9.7–12** Reflections on education for advanced students, *the wise* (see 1.5; note on 1.8). **9.7–9** *Scoffer*. See note on 1.4. *Hate, love*. See note on 1.22. **9.10** *Fear, knowledge*. See notes on 1.7; 2.5. **9.11** See 1.32–33. **9.13–18** The Woman of Folly is identical to the Strange Woman (see note on 2.16–19); both lead to death. **9.13** *Loud*. See 7.11. **9.14–15** An image perhaps drawn from the alewife, whose establishment was also often a house of prostitution; but her location and words are also similar to those of Woman Wisdom (see 1.20; 8.1–5, 34; 9.1–6). **9.15** *Straight, way*. See note on 1.3. **9.16** *Simple*. See note on 1.4. **9.17** See 9.5.

10.1–22.16 The wise sayings of Solomon (see Introduction). This section departs from the generally unified compositions of the theological introduction in chs. 1–9 but continues to take up their teachings in an explicit way in the vehicle of two-lined sayings using parallelism (see Introduction). While many of the sayings are simply observational, most are shaped to recommend a specific virtue or behavior to the students of the sages. **10.1–15.33** The antithetic collection. This section makes use of antithetic parallelisms (the second line contrasts with the first) to drive home the sages' views. Typical themes already seen in chs. 1–9 are taken up in antithetical word pairs (*father/mother*, e.g., 10.1b; *righteous/wicked*, e.g., 10.2–3, 24–25, 27–32; *wise/fool*, e.g., 10.8, 14, 23). Other common concerns of the sages appear: the power of language (e.g., 10.6, 11, 13–14, 18–21, 31–32), the doctrine of retribution (every act contains its own consequence, e.g., 10.2, 4, 16, 28, 30), and the excellence of wisdom (e.g., 10.1, 17). **10.1** *Mothers* bore the responsibility for teaching the very young (see note on 1.8). **10.3** *The righteous* are probably equivalent to "the wise." **10.7** Concern for a good reputation was

9 Whoever walks in integrity walks
securely,
but whoever follows perverse
ways will be found out.
10 Whoever winks the eye causes
trouble,
but the one who rebukes boldly
makes peace.[a]
11 The mouth of the righteous is a
fountain of life,
but the mouth of the wicked
conceals violence.
12 Hatred stirs up strife,
but love covers all offenses.
13 On the lips of one who has
understanding wisdom
is found,
but a rod is for the back of one
who lacks sense.
14 The wise lay up knowledge,
but the babbling of a fool
brings ruin near.
15 The wealth of the rich is their
fortress;
the poverty of the poor is their
ruin.
16 The wage of the righteous leads
to life,
the gain of the wicked to sin.
17 Whoever heeds instruction is on
the path to life,
but one who rejects a rebuke
goes astray.
18 Lying lips conceal hatred,
and whoever utters slander is
a fool.
19 When words are many,
transgression is not lacking,
but the prudent are restrained
in speech.
20 The tongue of the righteous is
choice silver;
the mind of the wicked is of
little worth.
21 The lips of the righteous feed
many,
but fools die for lack of sense.
22 The blessing of the LORD makes
rich,
and he adds no sorrow
with it.[b]
23 Doing wrong is like sport to a
fool,
but wise conduct is pleasure to
a person of understanding.
24 What the wicked dread will come
upon them,
but the desire of the righteous
will be granted.
25 When the tempest passes, the
wicked are no more,
but the righteous are
established forever.
26 Like vinegar to the teeth, and
smoke to the eyes,
so are the lazy to their
employers.
27 The fear of the LORD prolongs
life,
but the years of the wicked will
be short.
28 The hope of the righteous ends
in gladness,
but the expectation of the
wicked comes to nothing.
29 The way of the LORD is a
stronghold for the upright,
but destruction for evildoers.
30 The righteous will never be
removed,
but the wicked will not remain
in the land.
31 The mouth of the righteous
brings forth wisdom,
but the perverse tongue will be
cut off.
32 The lips of the righteous know
what is acceptable,
but the mouth of the wicked
what is perverse.

11 A false balance is an
abomination to the LORD,

a Gk: Heb *but a babbling fool will come to ruin*
b Or *and toil adds nothing to it*

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common with the sages (Job 18.17; Eccl 7.1; see note on 3.4). **10.10** *Winking the eye* may be a reference to malevolent (e.g., "evil eye"?) or sorcerous behavior (see 6.13; Ps 35.19). The Septuagint reading opts for an antithetic statement. **10.11, 13, 19–21, 31–32** See note on 1.6. **10.15** A purely observational saying. **10.22** See text note *b*: God's blessing is sufficient. **10.25a** Unlooked-for death was considered a punishment for sin. **10.27** *Fear of the LORD*. See note on 1.7.

11.1–31 Contrasts between the righteous, upright and gracious and the wicked, crooked, greedy, and godless bind the proverbs of this section together, as the theory of retribution is acted out in daily life. **11.1** *A false balance* is used to cheat the poor (16.11; 20.10, 23; Deut 25.13–16; Am 8.5–6; Hos 12.8; Mic 6.10–11). *Abomination* here and in v. 20 recalls the numerical saying of

but an accurate weight is his
delight.
2 When pride comes, then comes
disgrace;
but wisdom is with the humble.
3 The integrity of the upright
guides them,
but the crookedness of the
treacherous destroys
them.
4 Riches do not profit in the day
of wrath,
but righteousness delivers from
death.
5 The righteousness of the
blameless keeps their ways
straight,
but the wicked fall by their own
wickedness.
6 The righteousness of the upright
saves them,
but the treacherous are taken
captive by their schemes.
7 When the wicked die, their hope
perishes,
and the expectation of the
godless comes to nothing.
8 The righteous are delivered from
trouble,
and the wicked get into it
instead.
9 With their mouths the godless
would destroy their
neighbors,
but by knowledge the righteous
are delivered.
10 When it goes well with the
righteous, the city rejoices;
and when the wicked perish,
there is jubilation.
11 By the blessing of the upright a
city is exalted,
but it is overthrown by the
mouth of the wicked.
12 Whoever belittles another lacks
sense,
but an intelligent person
remains silent.
13 A gossip goes about telling
secrets,
but one who is trustworthy in
spirit keeps a confidence.
14 Where there is no guidance, a
nation[c] falls,
but in an abundance of
counselors there is safety.
15 To guarantee loans for a stranger
brings trouble,
but there is safety in refusing
to do so.
16 A gracious woman gets honor,
but she who hates virtue is
covered with shame.[d]
The timid become destitute,[e]
but the aggressive gain riches.
17 Those who are kind reward
themselves,
but the cruel do themselves
harm.
18 The wicked earn no real gain,
but those who sow
righteousness get a true
reward.
19 Whoever is steadfast in
righteousness will live,
but whoever pursues evil
will die.
20 Crooked minds are an
abomination to the LORD,
but those of blameless ways are
his delight.
21 Be assured, the wicked will not go
unpunished,
but those who are righteous will
escape.
22 Like a gold ring in a pig's snout
is a beautiful woman without
good sense.
23 The desire of the righteous ends
only in good;
the expectation of the wicked in
wrath.
24 Some give freely, yet grow all the
richer;
others withhold what is due,
and only suffer want.
25 A generous person will be
enriched,
and one who gives water will
get water.

c Or *an army*
d Compare Gk Syr: Heb lacks *but she . . . shame*
e Gk: Heb lacks *The timid . . . destitute*

6.16–19. **11.7** A departure from contrastive statements. **11.18–19, 21** For the sage, faith in retribution outweighs any temporary discrepancies in the good fortune gained by wickedness. **11.22** A comparative statement. *Pigs* were often associated with goddess cults. **11.24–25** The

26 The people curse those who hold
back grain,
but a blessing is on the head of
those who sell it.
27 Whoever diligently seeks good
seeks favor,
but evil comes to the one who
searches for it.
28 Those who trust in their riches
will wither,[f]
but the righteous will flourish
like green leaves.
29 Those who trouble their
households will inherit
wind,
and the fool will be servant to
the wise.
30 The fruit of the righteous is a
tree of life,
but violence[g] takes lives away.
31 If the righteous are repaid on
earth,
how much more the wicked
and the sinner!

12 Whoever loves discipline loves
knowledge,
but those who hate to be
rebuked are stupid.
2 The good obtain favor from the
LORD,
but those who devise evil he
condemns.
3 No one finds security by
wickedness,
but the root of the righteous
will never be moved.
4 A good wife is the crown of her
husband,
but she who brings shame is
like rottenness in his bones.
5 The thoughts of the righteous
are just;
the advice of the wicked is
treacherous.
6 The words of the wicked are a
deadly ambush,
but the speech of the upright
delivers them.
7 The wicked are overthrown and
are no more,
but the house of the righteous
will stand.
8 One is commended for good
sense,
but a perverse mind is
despised.
9 Better to be despised and have a
servant,
than to be self-important and
lack food.
10 The righteous know the needs of
their animals,
but the mercy of the wicked is
cruel.
11 Those who till their land will
have plenty of food,
but those who follow worthless
pursuits have no sense.
12 The wicked covet the proceeds of
wickedness,[h]
but the root of the righteous
bears fruit.
13 The evil are ensnared by the
transgression of their lips,
but the righteous escape from
trouble.
14 From the fruit of the mouth one
is filled with good things,
and manual labor has its
reward.
15 Fools think their own way is
right,
but the wise listen to advice.
16 Fools show their anger at once,
but the prudent ignore an
insult.
17 Whoever speaks the truth gives
honest evidence,
but a false witness speaks
deceitfully.
18 Rash words are like sword
thrusts,
but the tongue of the wise
brings healing.
19 Truthful lips endure forever,
but a lying tongue lasts only a
moment.

f Cn: Heb *fall* *g* Cn Compare Gk Syr: Heb *a wise man* *h* Or *covet the catch of the wicked*

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mysteries of generosity. **11.26** *Hold back grain,* waiting for higher prices. **11.28, 30** *Tree of life* imagery recalls Woman Wisdom (3.18; Pss 1.3; 52.7–8).

12.1 The wise learn from correction. **12.3** *Root,* that which holds the tree of life secure (Ps 1). **12.6a** This recalls the instruction of 1.8–19. **12.9** "Better than" sayings are popular with the sages (15.16–17; 16.8; Eccl 9.4b; Sir 10.27). **12.13–14, 17–19, 22, 25** The sages em-

20 Deceit is in the mind of those
who plan evil,
but those who counsel peace
have joy.
21 No harm happens to the
righteous,
but the wicked are filled with
trouble.
22 Lying lips are an abomination to
the LORD,
but those who act faithfully are
his delight.
23 One who is clever conceals
knowledge,
but the mind of a fool[i]
broadcasts folly.
24 The hand of the diligent will
rule,
while the lazy will be put to
forced labor.
25 Anxiety weighs down the human
heart,
but a good word cheers it up.
26 The righteous gives good advice
to friends,[j]
but the way of the wicked leads
astray.
27 The lazy do not roast[k] their
game,
but the diligent obtain precious
wealth.[k]
28 In the path of righteousness
there is life,
in walking its path there is no
death.

13 A wise child loves discipline,[l]
but a scoffer does not listen to
rebuke.
2 From the fruit of their words
good persons eat good
things,
but the desire of the
treacherous is for
wrongdoing.
3 Those who guard their mouths
preserve their lives;
those who open wide their lips
come to ruin.
4 The appetite of the lazy craves,
and gets nothing,
while the appetite of the
diligent is richly supplied.
5 The righteous hate falsehood,
but the wicked act shamefully
and disgracefully.
6 Righteousness guards one whose
way is upright,
but sin overthrows the wicked.
7 Some pretend to be rich, yet have
nothing;
others pretend to be poor, yet
have great wealth.
8 Wealth is a ransom for a person's
life,
but the poor get no threats.
9 The light of the righteous
rejoices,
but the lamp of the wicked
goes out.
10 By insolence the heedless make
strife,
but wisdom is with those who
take advice.
11 Wealth hastily gotten[m] will
dwindle,
but those who gather little by
little will increase it.
12 Hope deferred makes the heart
sick,
but a desire fulfilled is a tree
of life.
13 Those who despise the word
bring destruction on
themselves,
but those who respect the
commandment will be
rewarded.
14 The teaching of the wise is a
fountain of life,
so that one may avoid the
snares of death.

i Heb *the heart of fools* *j* Syr: Meaning of Heb uncertain *k* Meaning of Heb uncertain
l Cn: Heb *A wise child the discipline of his father*
m Gk Vg: Heb *from vanity*

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phasize the importance of using language properly (see also note on 1.6). **12.23a** Discretion is a virtue in civil servants and others. **12.25** A psychological insight. **12.27** Parallelism is forced due to uncertainties in translation.

13.1–25 Throughout this chapter, the sages stress the importance of listening to wise counsel and using language well (vv. 1–3, 13–14, 17–18; see also note on 1.6). **13.7** "Don't judge a book by its cover." **13.9** *Light, lamp,* metaphors for life. **13.11** *Hastily gotten.* The Hebrew text *from vanity* (see text note *m*) stresses impermanence or worthless pursuits. **13.12** *Tree of life.* See 3.18; 11.30; 15.4. **13.14** Formal (synthetic) parallel-

15 Good sense wins favor,
but the way of the faithless is
their ruin.[n]
16 The clever do all things
intelligently,
but the fool displays folly.
17 A bad messenger brings trouble,
but a faithful envoy, healing.
18 Poverty and disgrace are for the
one who ignores
instruction,
but one who heeds reproof is
honored.
19 A desire realized is sweet to
the soul,
but to turn away from evil is an
abomination to fools.
20 Whoever walks with the wise
becomes wise,
but the companion of fools
suffers harm.
21 Misfortune pursues sinners,
but prosperity rewards the
righteous.
22 The good leave an inheritance to
their children's children,
but the sinner's wealth is laid
up for the righteous.
23 The field of the poor may yield
much food,
but it is swept away through
injustice.
24 Those who spare the rod hate
their children,
but those who love them are
diligent to discipline them.
25 The righteous have enough to
satisfy their appetite,
but the belly of the wicked is
empty.

14 The wise woman[o] builds her
house,
but the foolish tears it down
with her own hands.
2 Those who walk uprightly fear
the LORD,
but one who is devious in
conduct despises him.
3 The talk of fools is a rod for
their backs,[p]
but the lips of the wise preserve
them.
4 Where there are no oxen, there is
no grain;
abundant crops come by the
strength of the ox.
5 A faithful witness does not lie,
but a false witness breathes
out lies.
6 A scoffer seeks wisdom in vain,
but knowledge is easy for one
who understands.
7 Leave the presence of a fool,
for there you do not find words
of knowledge.
8 It is the wisdom of the clever to
understand where they go,
but the folly of fools misleads.
9 Fools mock at the guilt offering,[q]
but the upright enjoy God's
favor.
10 The heart knows its own
bitterness,
and no stranger shares its joy.
11 The house of the wicked is
destroyed,
but the tent of the upright
flourishes.
12 There is a way that seems right to
a person,
but its end is the way to
death.[r]
13 Even in laughter the heart is sad,
and the end of joy is grief.
14 The perverse get what their ways
deserve,
and the good, what their deeds
deserve.[s]
15 The simple believe everything,
but the clever consider
their steps.
16 The wise are cautious and turn
away from evil,
but the fool throws off restraint
and is careless.

n Cn Compare Gk Syr Vg Tg: Heb *is enduring* *o* Heb *Wisdom of women* *p* Cn: Heb *a rod of pride* *q* Meaning of Heb uncertain *r* Heb *ways of death* *s* Cn: Heb *from upon him*

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ism (see Introduction). **13.17** *Bad*, "lazy" or "dishonest." **13.23** Poverty is sometimes the result of injustice rather than laziness or wickedness (cf. 13.25; 14.23; 19.15). **13.24** The sages, who condemn violence between people, recommend it to control households (see 19.18, 25; 20.30; 29.15, 17, 19, 21; see also Deut 21.18–22).

14.1a See 9.1; 24.3. *Wise woman.* The Hebrew reading (text note *o*) may refer to the important roles played by women in ancient households (see 31.10–31). **14.12** Humans are seldom omniscient (16.1–2, 25). **14.13, 30** Astute psy-

17 One who is quick-tempered acts foolishly,
and the schemer is hated.
18 The simple are adorned with[t] folly,
but the clever are crowned with knowledge.
19 The evil bow down before the good,
the wicked at the gates of the righteous.
20 The poor are disliked even by their neighbors,
but the rich have many friends.
21 Those who despise their neighbors are sinners,
but happy are those who are kind to the poor.
22 Do they not err that plan evil?
Those who plan good find loyalty and faithfulness.
23 In all toil there is profit,
but mere talk leads only to poverty.
24 The crown of the wise is their wisdom,[u]
but folly is the garland[v] of fools.
25 A truthful witness saves lives,
but one who utters lies is a betrayer.
26 In the fear of the LORD one has strong confidence,
and one's children will have a refuge.
27 The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life,
so that one may avoid the snares of death.
28 The glory of a king is a multitude of people;
without people a prince is ruined.
29 Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding,
but one who has a hasty temper exalts folly.
30 A tranquil mind gives life to the flesh,
but passion makes the bones rot.
31 Those who oppress the poor insult their Maker,
but those who are kind to the needy honor him.
32 The wicked are overthrown by their evildoing,
but the righteous find a refuge in their integrity.[w]
33 Wisdom is at home in the mind of one who has understanding,
but it is not[x] known in the heart of fools.
34 Righteousness exalts a nation,
but sin is a reproach to any people.
35 A servant who deals wisely has the king's favor,
but his wrath falls on one who acts shamefully.

15 A soft answer turns away wrath,
but a harsh word stirs up anger.
2 The tongue of the wise dispenses knowledge,[y]
but the mouths of fools pour out folly.
3 The eyes of the LORD are in every place,
keeping watch on the evil and the good.
4 A gentle tongue is a tree of life,
but perverseness in it breaks the spirit.
5 A fool despises a parent's instruction,
but the one who heeds admonition is prudent.
6 In the house of the righteous there is much treasure,
but trouble befalls the income of the wicked.
7 The lips of the wise spread knowledge;
not so the minds of fools.
8 The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD,

t Or *inherit* *u* Cn Compare Gk: Heb *riches* *v* Cn: Heb *is the folly* *w* Gk Syr: Heb *in their death* *x* Gk Syr: Heb lacks *not* *y* Cn: Heb *makes knowledge good*

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chological insights. **14.20** A simple observation. **14.21, 31** An ethical response to v. 20. **14.26–27** *Fear of the LORD.* See note on 1.7. **14.28a** Population flourishes under wise leadership.

15.1, 4, 23 Reflections on the effects of thoughtful use of language, taught by the sages (see note on 1.6). **15.3** Watchfulness is a typical attribute of sky gods (5.21; 15.11; Ps 139.1; Zech 4.10b). **15.6** Judgment of the righteous and

but the prayer of the upright is
his delight.
9 The way of the wicked is an
abomination to the LORD,
but he loves the one who
pursues righteousness.
10 There is severe discipline for one
who forsakes the way,
but one who hates a rebuke
will die.
11 Sheol and Abaddon lie open
before the LORD,
how much more human hearts!
12 Scoffers do not like to be
rebuked;
they will not go to the wise.
13 A glad heart makes a cheerful
countenance,
but by sorrow of heart the
spirit is broken.
14 The mind of one who has
understanding seeks
knowledge,
but the mouths of fools feed
on folly.
15 All the days of the poor are hard,
but a cheerful heart has a
continual feast.
16 Better is a little with the fear of
the LORD
than great treasure and trouble
with it.
17 Better is a dinner of vegetables
where love is
than a fatted ox and hatred
with it.
18 Those who are hot-tempered stir
up strife,
but those who are slow to anger
calm contention.
19 The way of the lazy is overgrown
with thorns,
but the path of the upright is a
level highway.
20 A wise child makes a glad father,
but the foolish despise their
mothers.
21 Folly is a joy to one who has no
sense,
but a person of understanding
walks straight ahead.
22 Without counsel, plans go wrong,
but with many advisers they
succeed.
23 To make an apt answer is a joy to
anyone,
and a word in season, how
good it is!
24 For the wise the path of life leads
upward,
in order to avoid Sheol below.
25 The LORD tears down the house
of the proud,
but maintains the widow's
boundaries.
26 Evil plans are an abomination to
the LORD,
but gracious words are pure.
27 Those who are greedy for unjust
gain make trouble for their
households,
but those who hate bribes
will live.
28 The mind of the righteous
ponders how to answer,
but the mouth of the wicked
pours out evil.
29 The LORD is far from the wicked,
but he hears the prayer of the
righteous.
30 The light of the eyes rejoices the
heart,
and good news refreshes
the body.
31 The ear that heeds wholesome
admonition
will lodge among the wise.
32 Those who ignore instruction
despise themselves,
but those who heed admonition
gain understanding.
33 The fear of the LORD is
instruction in wisdom,
and humility goes before
honor.

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wicked is expected in this life. **15.9** See 11.20; 12.22. **15.11** *Sheol, Abaddon,* the underworld, home of the dead (see also note on 1.12). **15.13, 30** More psychology based on careful observation. **15.16–17** "Better than" sayings that stress times when, contrary to expected appearances, little is to be preferred to much (see 16.8; 17.1; Ps 37.16). **15.20** See 10.1; 17.25; note on 1.8. **15.22** See 11.14. This proverb did not hold in the case of Absalom (2 Sam 15–18). **15.25** Widows and orphans were under God's special protection (23.10–11; see also 22.28; Deut 19.14; Hos 5.10). **15.30** *The light of the eyes,* the cheerful look of the messenger; *refreshes the body,* lit. "makes fat the bones" (see Ps 63.5). **15.33** *Fear of the LORD.* See note on 1.7.

Wise Sayings of Solomon: The "Royal" Collection

16 The plans of the mind belong to mortals,
but the answer of the tongue is from the LORD.
2 All one's ways may be pure in one's own eyes,
but the LORD weighs the spirit.
3 Commit your work to the LORD,
and your plans will be established.
4 The LORD has made everything for its purpose,
even the wicked for the day of trouble.
5 All those who are arrogant are an abomination to the LORD;
be assured, they will not go unpunished.
6 By loyalty and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for,
and by the fear of the LORD one avoids evil.
7 When the ways of people please the LORD,
he causes even their enemies to be at peace with them.
8 Better is a little with righteousness
than large income with injustice.
9 The human mind plans the way,
but the LORD directs the steps.
10 Inspired decisions are on the lips of a king;
his mouth does not sin in judgment.
11 Honest balances and scales are the LORD's;
all the weights in the bag are his work.
12 It is an abomination to kings to do evil,
for the throne is established by righteousness.
13 Righteous lips are the delight of a king,
and he loves those who speak what is right.
14 A king's wrath is a messenger of death,
and whoever is wise will appease it.
15 In the light of a king's face there is life,
and his favor is like the clouds that bring the spring rain.
16 How much better to get wisdom than gold!
To get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver.
17 The highway of the upright avoids evil;
those who guard their way preserve their lives.
18 Pride goes before destruction,
and a haughty spirit before a fall.
19 It is better to be of a lowly spirit among the poor
than to divide the spoil with the proud.

16.1–22.16 The "royal" collection. Moving into the second half of the wise sayings of Solomon, the sages depart from the mostly antithetic style of the earlier section in favor of synonymous parallelism (second line restates the first). This group of sayings also shows more attempt at thematic arrangement, as well as strong emphasis on court values and settings. It may reflect an urban rather than a rural social setting as the origin of its sayings. **16.1–7, 9, 11, 20, 33** *LORD.* A series of Yahweh ("the *LORD*") sayings forms a bridge between this collection and the previous chapters (see 14.2, 26–27; 15.3, 8–9, 11, 16, 25–26, 29, 33). **16.1** Cf. v. 9. Ultimately, the Lord is the source of all things, even though humans do have a measure of freedom in their acts. **16.2** *The LORD weighs the spirit,* an image probably drawn from the Egyptian belief that the scribal god weighs the heart of the deceased in an underworld hall of judgment. See 21.2. **16.4** The sages here suggest that perhaps negative things are also part of the divine plan; cf. Eccl 3.1–8; 7.13; Rom 9.22. **16.6** *Fear of the LORD.* See note on 1.7. **16.8** See 15.16–17. **16.10, 12–15** Placement of sayings about the ideal king after those stressing the Lord's ways enhances the idea of the king as God's worthy representative. See also note on 1.1. **16.11** *Balances and scales.* See note on 11.1. **16.12** In Egypt, wisdom or "Maat" was the foundation of Pharaoh's throne conceptually and perhaps literally, for one of the Egyptian hieroglyphs for Maat represents a sideview of the dais upon which Pharaoh's throne was placed. **16.14** Cf. Joab's counsel to the messenger he sends to David (2 Sam 11.18–24). **16.15** *Rain,* always a positive image in the arid Near East. **16.16** See 3.14; 4.5. **16.18** See 11.2; 15.33.

20 Those who are attentive to a
matter will prosper,
and happy are those who trust
in the LORD.
21 The wise of heart is called
perceptive,
and pleasant speech increases
persuasiveness.
22 Wisdom is a fountain of life to
one who has it,
but folly is the punishment of
fools.
23 The mind of the wise makes their
speech judicious,
and adds persuasiveness to
their lips.
24 Pleasant words are like a
honeycomb,
sweetness to the soul and health
to the body.
25 Sometimes there is a way that
seems to be right,
but in the end it is the way
to death.
26 The appetite of workers works
for them;
their hunger urges them on.
27 Scoundrels concoct evil,
and their speech is like a
scorching fire.
28 A perverse person spreads strife,
and a whisperer separates close
friends.
29 The violent entice their
neighbors,
and lead them in a way that is
not good.
30 One who winks the eyes plans[z]
perverse things;
one who compresses the lips
brings evil to pass.
31 Gray hair is a crown of glory;
it is gained in a righteous life.
32 One who is slow to anger is better
than the mighty,
and one whose temper is
controlled than one who
captures a city.
33 The lot is cast into the lap,
but the decision is the LORD's
alone.

17 Better is a dry morsel with quiet
than a house full of feasting
with strife.
2 A slave who deals wisely will rule
over a child who acts
shamefully,
and will share the inheritance
as one of the family.
3 The crucible is for silver, and the
furnace is for gold,
but the LORD tests the heart.
4 An evildoer listens to wicked lips;
and a liar gives heed to a
mischievous tongue.
5 Those who mock the poor insult
their Maker;
those who are glad at calamity
will not go unpunished.
6 Grandchildren are the crown of
the aged,
and the glory of children is
their parents.
7 Fine speech is not becoming to
a fool;
still less is false speech to a
ruler.[a]
8 A bribe is like a magic stone in
the eyes of those who
give it;
wherever they turn they
prosper.
9 One who forgives an affront
fosters friendship,
but one who dwells on disputes
will alienate a friend.
10 A rebuke strikes deeper into a
discerning person
than a hundred blows into a
fool.

z Gk Syr Vg Tg: Heb *to plan* a Or *a noble person*

16.19 See v. 8. **16.20** *Matter*, lit. "word." **16.22** *Fountain of life.* See 10.11; 13.14; 14.27. **16.25** See 14.12. **16.26** Bodily appetites are not always bad. **16.30** *One who winks.* See note on 10.10. **16.31** One of the benefits of wisdom and righteousness is long life (3.16; 20.29). **16.33** *Lot.* Urim and Thummim, sacred dice used in oracles.

17.1 See 15.16–17. **17.2** See Eccl 4.13–14. Reflections on role reversals of this type are also common in the Egyptian wisdom tradition. **17.3** See 16.2; 27.21; Jer 11.20. *Silver/gold* is a common proverbial word pair (22.1; 25.11; see note on 10.1–15.33). **17.5a** See 14.31. **17.8** An ethically neutral comment on the success of bribery (so too 18.16; 21.14); for condemnations, see v. 23; Ex 23.8; Deut 16.19. **17.10** See 12.1. An example of formal (synthetic) parallelism (second line advances the thought of

11 Evil people seek only rebellion,
but a cruel messenger will be sent against them.
12 Better to meet a she-bear robbed of its cubs
than to confront a fool immersed in folly.
13 Evil will not depart from the house
of one who returns evil for good.
14 The beginning of strife is like letting out water;
so stop before the quarrel breaks out.
15 One who justifies the wicked and one who condemns the righteous
are both alike an abomination to the LORD.
16 Why should fools have a price in hand
to buy wisdom, when they have no mind to learn?
17 A friend loves at all times,
and kinsfolk are born to share adversity.
18 It is senseless to give a pledge,
to become surety for a neighbor.
19 One who loves transgression loves strife;
one who builds a high threshold invites broken bones.
20 The crooked of mind do not prosper,
and the perverse of tongue fall into calamity.
21 The one who begets a fool gets trouble;
the parent of a fool has no joy.
22 A cheerful heart is a good medicine,
but a downcast spirit dries up the bones.
23 The wicked accept a concealed bribe
to pervert the ways of justice.
24 The discerning person looks to wisdom,
but the eyes of a fool to the ends of the earth.
25 Foolish children are a grief to their father
and bitterness to her who bore them.
26 To impose a fine on the innocent is not right,
or to flog the noble for their integrity.
27 One who spares words is knowledgeable;
one who is cool in spirit has understanding.
28 Even fools who keep silent are considered wise;
when they close their lips, they are deemed intelligent.

18 The one who lives alone is self-indulgent,
showing contempt for all who have sound judgment.[b]
2 A fool takes no pleasure in understanding,
but only in expressing personal opinion.
3 When wickedness comes, contempt comes also;
and with dishonor comes disgrace.
4 The words of the mouth are deep waters;
the fountain of wisdom is a gushing stream.
5 It is not right to be partial to the guilty,
or to subvert the innocent in judgment.
6 A fool's lips bring strife,
and a fool's mouth invites a flogging.
7 The mouths of fools are their ruin,

b Meaning of Heb uncertain

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the first). **17.11** Perhaps a political reference. On *messengers*, see 13.17; 16.14. **17.12** A common proverbial image (2 Sam 17.8; Hos 13.8). **17.13** Retribution theory in action. **17.14** *Like letting out water*, a poignant image (cf. 2 Sam 14.14a). **17.15** See Deut 16.18–20. **17.18** See 6.1–2; 11.15. Guaranteeing others' loans was apparently a common social problem. **17.22** See 14.30. **17.25** See 10.1. **17.27a** Sound counsel in the world of court intrigue; see also 10.19; 12.23.

18.1 The Hebrew is unclear; the RSV translation followed the Septuagint's rendering. **18.4** The relationship between the two lines is unclear (synonymous or antithetic parallelism? See Introduction). **18.5** See 17.15; 21.28.

and their lips a snare to themselves.
8 The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels;
they go down into the inner parts of the body.
9 One who is slack in work
is close kin to a vandal.
10 The name of the LORD is a strong tower;
the righteous run into it and are safe.
11 The wealth of the rich is their strong city;
in their imagination it is like a high wall.
12 Before destruction one's heart is haughty,
but humility goes before honor.
13 If one gives answer before hearing,
it is folly and shame.
14 The human spirit will endure sickness;
but a broken spirit—who can bear?
15 An intelligent mind acquires knowledge,
and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.
16 A gift opens doors;
it gives access to the great.
17 The one who first states a case seems right,
until the other comes and cross-examines.
18 Casting the lot puts an end to disputes
and decides between powerful contenders.
19 An ally offended is stronger than a city;[c]
such quarreling is like the bars of a castle.
20 From the fruit of the mouth one's stomach is satisfied;
the yield of the lips brings satisfaction.
21 Death and life are in the power of the tongue,
and those who love it will eat its fruits.
22 He who finds a wife finds a good thing,
and obtains favor from the LORD.
23 The poor use entreaties,
but the rich answer roughly.
24 Some[d] friends play at friendship[e]
but a true friend sticks closer than one's nearest kin.

19 Better the poor walking in integrity
than one perverse of speech who is a fool.
2 Desire without knowledge is not good,
and one who moves too hurriedly misses the way.
3 One's own folly leads to ruin,
yet the heart rages against the LORD.
4 Wealth brings many friends,
but the poor are left friendless.
5 A false witness will not go unpunished,
and a liar will not escape.
6 Many seek the favor of the generous,
and everyone is a friend to a giver of gifts.
7 If the poor are hated even by their kin,
how much more are they shunned by their friends!
When they call after them, they are not there.[f]
8 To get wisdom is to love oneself;

c Gk Syr Vg Tg: Meaning of Heb uncertain
d Syr Tg: Heb *A man of* e Cn Compare Syr Vg Tg: Meaning of Heb uncertain f Meaning of Heb uncertain

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18.8 Verbal abuse and slander have deadly effects. See 26.22. **18.11** See 10.15a. Note the implicit contrast to the righteous in 18.10. **18.12** See 15.33; 16.18. **18.14** See 17.22b. **18.15** In oral societies, one learns by listening. **18.16** See 17.8; 21.14. **18.17–18** Two neutral observations. **18.20** See 12.14a; 13.2a. The sages reflect on their vocation as counselors. **18.21** *Power of the tongue*, language, used aptly (see note on 1.6). **18.22** See 19.14. A nice contrast to the implicit misogyny of 19.13b, 14a. **18.23** See Sir 13.3. **18.24** See 27.10b.

19.1 See 28.6. **19.2** See 21.5b. The sages deplore hot-tempered or hasty behavior. **19.3** Fools seldom take responsibility for their own actions; see 22.13; 26.12; Sir 15.11–12. **19.4** See 14.20. No wonder the sages counsel mercy toward the poor (14.21, 31; 17.5; 21.13; 22.9, 16; 28.8, 27; 29.7, 14; 31.9, 20). **19.5** See v. 9. **19.8** *Wisdom*, lit., "heart," seat of the intel-

to keep understanding is
to prosper.
9 A false witness will not go
unpunished,
and the liar will perish.
10 It is not fitting for a fool to live
in luxury,
much less for a slave to rule
over princes.
11 Those with good sense are slow
to anger,
and it is their glory to overlook
an offense.
12 A king's anger is like the
growling of a lion,
but his favor is like dew on
the grass.
13 A stupid child is ruin to a father,
and a wife's quarreling is a
continual dripping of rain.
14 House and wealth are inherited
from parents,
but a prudent wife is from
the LORD.
15 Laziness brings on deep sleep;
an idle person will suffer
hunger.
16 Those who keep the
commandment will live;
those who are heedless of their
ways will die.
17 Whoever is kind to the poor
lends to the LORD,
and will be repaid in full.
18 Discipline your children while
there is hope;
do not set your heart on their
destruction.
19 A violent tempered person will
pay the penalty;
if you effect a rescue, you will
only have to do it again.[g]
20 Listen to advice and accept
instruction,
that you may gain wisdom for
the future.
21 The human mind may devise
many plans,
but it is the purpose of the
LORD that will be
established.
22 What is desirable in a person
is loyalty,
and it is better to be poor than
a liar.
23 The fear of the LORD is life
indeed;
filled with it one rests secure
and suffers no harm.
24 The lazy person buries a hand in
the dish,
and will not even bring it back
to the mouth.
25 Strike a scoffer, and the simple
will learn prudence;
reprove the intelligent, and
they will gain knowledge.
26 Those who do violence to their
father and chase away their
mother
are children who cause shame
and bring reproach.
27 Cease straying, my child, from
the words of knowledge,
in order that you may hear
instruction.
28 A worthless witness mocks
at justice,
and the mouth of the wicked
devours iniquity.
29 Condemnation is ready for
scoffers,
and flogging for the backs of
fools.

20 Wine is a mocker, strong drink
a brawler,
and whoever is led astray by it
is not wise.
2 The dread anger of a king is like
the growling of a lion;
anyone who provokes him to
anger forfeits life itself.
3 It is honorable to refrain
from strife,

g Meaning of Heb uncertain

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lect and the will (cf. note on 2.2). **19.10** See 30.22. **19.11** See 14.29. **19.12a** See 20.2. **19.13–14** Note the juxtaposition of good and bad examples. **19.13a** See 17.25a. **19.13b** See 27.15. This is one of the few places where water imagery is negative. **19.14** See 18.22. **19.17** See 14.31; 28.27. **19.18** *On their destruction,* lit., "to kill him." The second line could be suggesting limits on corporal punishment, but see Deut 21.18–21. **19.20** This is a positive rephrasing of 15.32. **19.21** See 16.1, 9. **19.23** See 4.27. **19.26** See 20.20; 30.17; Ex 20.12; 21.17. **19.27** A return to the instruction style (see Introduction).

20.1 See 23.29–35; 31.4–5. **20.2a** See 19.12.

but every fool is quick to
quarrel.
4 The lazy person does not plow
in season;
harvest comes, and there is
nothing to be found.
5 The purposes in the human mind
are like deep water,
but the intelligent will draw
them out.
6 Many proclaim themselves loyal,
but who can find one worthy
of trust?
7 The righteous walk in integrity—
happy are the children who
follow them!
8 A king who sits on the throne of
judgment
winnows all evil with his eyes.
9 Who can say, "I have made my
heart clean;
I am pure from my sin"?
10 Diverse weights and diverse
measures
are both alike an abomination
to the LORD.
11 Even children make themselves
known by their acts,
by whether what they do is
pure and right.
12 The hearing ear and the
seeing eye—
the LORD has made them both.
13 Do not love sleep, or else you will
come to poverty;
open your eyes, and you will
have plenty of bread.
14 "Bad, bad," says the buyer,
then goes away and boasts.
15 There is gold, and abundance of
costly stones;
but the lips informed by
knowledge are a
precious jewel.
16 Take the garment of one who has
given surety for a stranger;
seize the pledge given as surety
for foreigners.
17 Bread gained by deceit is sweet,
but afterward the mouth will be
full of gravel.
18 Plans are established by
taking advice;
wage war by following wise
guidance.
19 A gossip reveals secrets;
therefore do not associate with
a babbler.
20 If you curse father or mother,
your lamp will go out in utter
darkness.
21 An estate quickly acquired in the
beginning
will not be blessed in the end.
22 Do not say, "I will repay evil";
wait for the LORD, and he will
help you.
23 Differing weights are an
abomination to the LORD,
and false scales are not good.
24 All our steps are ordered by the
LORD;
how then can we understand
our own ways?
25 It is a snare for one to say rashly,
"It is holy,"
and begin to reflect only after
making a vow.
26 A wise king winnows the wicked,
and drives the wheel over
them.
27 The human spirit is the lamp of
the LORD,
searching every inmost part.
28 Loyalty and faithfulness preserve
the king,
and his throne is upheld by
righteousness.[h]
29 The glory of youths is their
strength,
but the beauty of the aged is
their gray hair.
30 Blows that wound cleanse
away evil;
beatings make clean the
innermost parts.

21 The king's heart is a stream of
water in the hand of
the LORD;
he turns it wherever he will.

h Gk: Heb *loyalty*

20.3 See 14.29. **20.5** See 18.4. **20.7** *Happy.* See note on 3.13. **20.8** *Winnows,* sifts. Kings normally render judgments personally (1 Kings 3.16–28). **20.9** The form of the rhetorical question implies a negative answer. **20.10** See 11.1. **20.11** "By their fruits, you shall know them." **20.13** Negative and positive admonitions. **20.15** See 3.13–15. **20.16** See 27.13; note on 2.16–19. **20.17** See Job 20.12–14. **20.18** See 24.6.

2 All deeds are right in the sight of
the doer,
but the LORD weighs the heart.
3 To do righteousness and justice
is more acceptable to the LORD
than sacrifice.
4 Haughty eyes and a proud
heart—
the lamp of the wicked—
are sin.
5 The plans of the diligent lead
surely to abundance,
but everyone who is hasty
comes only to want.
6 The getting of treasures by a
lying tongue
is a fleeting vapor and a snare[i]
of death.
7 The violence of the wicked will
sweep them away,
because they refuse to do what
is just.
8 The way of the guilty is crooked,
but the conduct of the pure
is right.
9 It is better to live in a corner of
the housetop
than in a house shared with a
contentious wife.
10 The souls of the wicked desire
evil;
their neighbors find no mercy
in their eyes.
11 When a scoffer is punished, the
simple become wiser;
when the wise are instructed,
they increase in knowledge.
12 The Righteous One observes the
house of the wicked;
he casts the wicked down to
ruin.
13 If you close your ear to the cry of
the poor,
you will cry out and not be
heard.
14 A gift in secret averts anger;
and a concealed bribe in the
bosom, strong wrath.
15 When justice is done, it is a joy to
the righteous,
but dismay to evildoers.
16 Whoever wanders from the way
of understanding
will rest in the assembly of
the dead.
17 Whoever loves pleasure will
suffer want;
whoever loves wine and oil will
not be rich.
18 The wicked is a ransom for the
righteous,
and the faithless for the
upright.
19 It is better to live in a desert land
than with a contentious and
fretful wife.
20 Precious treasure remains[j] in the
house of the wise,
but the fool devours it.
21 Whoever pursues righteousness
and kindness
will find life[k] and honor.
22 One wise person went up against
a city of warriors
and brought down the
stronghold in which they
trusted.
23 To watch over mouth and tongue
is to keep out of trouble.
24 The proud, haughty person,
named "Scoffer,"
acts with arrogant pride.
25 The craving of the lazy person
is fatal,
for lazy hands refuse to labor.
26 All day long the wicked covet,[l]
but the righteous give and do
not hold back.
27 The sacrifice of the wicked is an
abomination;
how much more when brought
with evil intent.
28 A false witness will perish,

i Gk: Heb *seekers* *j* Gk: Heb *and oil*
k Gk: Heb *life and righteousness* *l* Gk: Heb *all day long one covets covetously*

21.1 *Heart,* "mind," but cf. 25.3. **21.2** Cf. 24.12; see note on 16.2. **21.3** See Ps 50. **21.4** *Lamp of the wicked.* See note on 13.9; 24.20. **21.6** *Fleeting vapor,* the Hebrew term translated "vanity" in Ecclesiastes (see Eccl 1.2, 14). **21.9** 25.24; the Hebrew for *wife* also means "woman." **21.13** The relationship between act and consequence in action: "Do unto others . . ." **21.14** Another pure observation (see 17.8; cf. 17.23). **21.19** See v. 9. Abusive husbands are not a topic for the sages. **21.24** Sages describe here the meaning of *Scoffer.* See also note on 1.4. **21.27** This verse echoes the thought of v. 3. **21.28** *False witness.* Vicious users of language appear frequently in the sages' rhetoric (see, e.g., 6.19; 12.17; 14.15; 19.5, 9; 25.18).

but a good listener will testify
successfully.
29 The wicked put on a bold face,
but the upright give thought
to[m] their ways.
30 No wisdom, no understanding,
no counsel,
can avail against the LORD.
31 The horse is made ready for the
day of battle,
but the victory belongs to
the LORD.

22 A good name is to be chosen
rather than great riches,
and favor is better than silver
or gold.
2 The rich and the poor have this
in common:
the LORD is the maker of
them all.
3 The clever see danger and hide;
but the simple go on, and
suffer for it.
4 The reward for humility and fear
of the LORD
is riches and honor and life.
5 Thorns and snares are in the way
of the perverse;
the cautious will keep far from
them.
6 Train children in the right way,
and when old, they will not
stray.
7 The rich rule over the poor,
and the borrower is the slave of
the lender.
8 Whoever sows injustice will reap
calamity,
and the rod of anger will fail.
9 Those who are generous are
blessed,
for they share their bread with
the poor.
10 Drive out a scoffer, and strife
goes out;
quarreling and abuse will cease.
11 Those who love a pure heart and
are gracious in speech
will have the king as a friend.
12 The eyes of the LORD keep watch
over knowledge,
but he overthrows the words of
the faithless.
13 The lazy person says, "There is a
lion outside!
I shall be killed in the streets!"
14 The mouth of a loose[n] woman is
a deep pit;
he with whom the LORD is
angry falls into it.
15 Folly is bound up in the heart of
a boy,
but the rod of discipline drives
it far away.
16 Oppressing the poor in order to
enrich oneself,
and giving to the rich, will lead
only to loss.

Sayings of the Wise

17 The words of the wise:

Incline your ear and hear my
words,[o]

m Another reading is *establish* *n* Heb *strange*
o Cn Compare Gk: Heb *Incline your ear, and hear the words of the wise*

21.30–31 Though the sages praise wisdom, no human understanding can fathom God's.

22.1–16 A series of contrasts between the wise way and the fool's way. **22.1** *Good name,* "reputation." See note on 10.7. **22.2** See 29.13; Job 31.15. The same grammatical frame appears in 20.12. **22.4** *Fear of the LORD,* an ongoing concern for the sages, praised here, as in 10.27, 14.27, and 19.23, for its beneficial consequences. See note on 1.7. **22.8** *Sow, reap,* a proverbial word pair (Ps 126.5; Jer 12.13; Hos 8.7; 10.12). **22.13** Sluggards make ludicrous excuses for their behavior (26.13). **22.14** *Loose woman.* The Hebrew reads "strange woman," i.e., the repository of all the dangers the sages contrast with the figure of Woman Wisdom. See note on 2.16–19. *Deep pit,* the land of the dead is evoked here, as this major collection ends with the same imagery that shaped chs. 1–9.

22.17–24.22 The sayings of the wise. This section departs from the proverb collections of 10.1–22.16, as it makes a free adaptation from the popular Egyptian wisdom text *The Instruction of Amenemope.* Many of the topics treated seem especially suited to educating young civil servants for their roles in court life (23.1–3, 6–8; 23.20–21, 29–35), although typical wisdom themes (e.g., the poor, family relationships, fools and kings) also appear. Although inspired by the Egyptian work, sentiments have been thoroughly reworked according to the sages' Yahwistic theology and the order of topics has been altered. **22.17** *The words of the wise.* The title of this misunderstood collection has been restored from the Septuagint. Notice the use of direct address as the text reverts to the instruction style (cf. 23.19, 26).

and apply your mind to my teaching;
18 for it will be pleasant if you keep them within you,
if all of them are ready on your lips.
19 So that your trust may be in the LORD,
I have made them known to you today—yes, to you.
20 Have I not written for you thirty sayings
of admonition and knowledge,
21 to show you what is right and true,
so that you may give a true answer to those who sent you?

22 Do not rob the poor because they are poor,
or crush the afflicted at the gate;
23 for the LORD pleads their cause
and despoils of life those who despoil them.
24 Make no friends with those given to anger,
and do not associate with hotheads,
25 or you may learn their ways
and entangle yourself in a snare.
26 Do not be one of those who give pledges,
who become surety for debts.
27 If you have nothing with which to pay,
why should your bed be taken from under you?
28 Do not remove the ancient landmark
that your ancestors set up.
29 Do you see those who are skillful in their work?
They will serve kings;
they will not serve common people.

23 When you sit down to eat with a ruler,
observe carefully what[p] is before you,
2 and put a knife to your throat
if you have a big appetite.
3 Do not desire the ruler's[q] delicacies,
for they are deceptive food.
4 Do not wear yourself out to get rich;
be wise enough to desist.
5 When your eyes light upon it, it is gone;
for suddenly it takes wings to itself,
flying like an eagle toward heaven.
6 Do not eat the bread of the stingy;
do not desire their delicacies;
7 for like a hair in the throat, so are they.[r]
"Eat and drink!" they say to you;
but they do not mean it.
8 You will vomit up the little you have eaten,
and you will waste your pleasant words.
9 Do not speak in the hearing of a fool,
who will only despise the wisdom of your words.
10 Do not remove an ancient landmark
or encroach on the fields of orphans,
11 for their redeemer is strong;
he will plead their cause against you.

p Or *who* *q* Heb *his* *r* Meaning of Heb uncertain

22.20 *Thirty sayings.* The original *Amenemope* contained thirty "houses" or chapters. **22.22** *At the gate,* the place where legal matters were decided. **22.28** The moving of boundary markers was also a concern for Amenemope (see note on 22.17–24.22), but see 23.10–11; 25.25; Deut 19.14; 27.17; Isa 5.8–10 for the Hebrew context. Such standing stones established legal ownership of land, the source of life.

23.1 *What is before you.* The Hebrew reading, *who is before you* (see text note *p*), might well attest to the sages' concern for circumspect behavior in exalted company. **23.4–5** See Eccl 2 for similar reflections on the fleeting nature of material pleasures. **23.10** See 22.28; Job 24.2–3; Deut 27.19. **23.11** *Redeemer,* a blood relative charged with prosecuting legal wrongs; the sages may be thinking here of God, often pictured as redeemer to orphans and widows (see Ex 22.22–24).

12 Apply your mind to instruction
and your ear to words of
knowledge.
13 Do not withhold discipline from
your children;
if you beat them with a rod,
they will not die.
14 If you beat them with the rod,
you will save their lives from
Sheol.
15 My child, if your heart is wise,
my heart too will be glad.
16 My soul will rejoice
when your lips speak what
is right.
17 Do not let your heart envy
sinners,
but always continue in the fear
of the LORD.
18 Surely there is a future,
and your hope will not be
cut off.

19 Hear, my child, and be wise,
and direct your mind in
the way.
20 Do not be among winebibbers,
or among gluttonous eaters
of meat;
21 for the drunkard and the glutton
will come to poverty,
and drowsiness will clothe them
with rags.

22 Listen to your father who
begot you,
and do not despise your
mother when she is old.
23 Buy truth, and do not sell it;
buy wisdom, instruction, and
understanding.
24 The father of the righteous will
greatly rejoice;
he who begets a wise son will
be glad in him.
25 Let your father and mother
be glad;
let her who bore you rejoice.

26 My child, give me your heart,
and let your eyes observe[s] my
ways.
27 For a prostitute is a deep pit;
an adulteress[t] is a narrow well.
28 She lies in wait like a robber
and increases the number of
the faithless.

29 Who has woe? Who has sorrow?
Who has strife? Who has
complaining?
Who has wounds without cause?
Who has redness of eyes?
30 Those who linger late over wine,
those who keep trying
mixed wines.
31 Do not look at wine when it
is red,
when it sparkles in the cup
and goes down smoothly.
32 At the last it bites like a serpent,
and stings like an adder.
33 Your eyes will see strange things,
and your mind utter perverse
things.
34 You will be like one who lies
down in the midst of
the sea,
like one who lies on the top of
a mast.[u]
35 "They struck me," you will say,[v]
"but I was not hurt;
they beat me, but I did not
feel it.

s Another reading is *delight in* t Heb *an alien woman* u Meaning of Heb uncertain
v Gk Syr Vg Tg: Heb lacks *you will say*

23.12 *Mind, ear,* a traditional word pair in Deut 29.4; Prov 18.15; 22.17. The phrase *apply your mind* occurs also in 22.17; Eccl 1.13, 17; 8.9. **23.13–14** See 4.10; 15.10; 19.18; 22.15. Public stoning was provided as a last resort for parents who could not control their children (Deut 21.18–21). **23.17** Similar sentiments are found in two wisdom psalms, Pss 37; 73; see also Prov 3.31; 24.1; 24.19, 21. **23.18** See Ps 1, where long life belongs to those who study (cf. Prov 24.14); in Job 27.8, God cuts off the hope of the godless. **23.21** *Drunkards* (26.9–10) and *gluttons* (28.7) are favorite targets of the sages, but see Lemuel's mother's advice for a change in a different context (31.4–7). **23.23** The sages may be thinking of the tuition for their services. **23.24** See 10.1; 13.1; 15.20; 19.13; 28.7; 29.3. **23.27–28** See 22.14, where the "loose woman's" mouth is a *deep pit*; in 1.11–12 it is male sinners who lie in wait and lead the ignorant down to the Pit (Death; see note on 1.12). In 2.16–19, images of loose woman and adulteress appear together, as unwary males are led to their deaths. **23.29–30** Perhaps a disintegrated fragment of a popular old riddle. **23.32** *Serpent, adder.* See Pss 58.4; 91.13.

When shall I awake?
I will seek another drink."

24 Do not envy the wicked,
nor desire to be with them;
2 for their minds devise violence,
and their lips talk of mischief.

3 By wisdom a house is built,
and by understanding it is established;
4 by knowledge the rooms are filled
with all precious and pleasant riches.
5 Wise warriors are mightier than strong ones,[w]
and those who have knowledge than those who have strength;
6 for by wise guidance you can wage your war,
and in abundance of counselors there is victory.
7 Wisdom is too high for fools;
in the gate they do not open their mouths.

8 Whoever plans to do evil
will be called a mischief-maker.
9 The devising of folly is sin,
and the scoffer is an abomination to all.

10 If you faint in the day of adversity,
your strength being small;
11 if you hold back from rescuing those taken away to death,
those who go staggering to the slaughter;
12 if you say, "Look, we did not know this"—
does not he who weighs the heart perceive it?
Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it?
And will he not repay all according to their deeds?

13 My child, eat honey, for it is good,
and the drippings of the honeycomb are sweet to your taste.
14 Know that wisdom is such to your soul;
if you find it, you will find a future,
and your hope will not be cut off.

15 Do not lie in wait like an outlaw against the home of the righteous;
do no violence to the place where the righteous live;
16 for though they fall seven times, they will rise again;
but the wicked are overthrown by calamity.

17 Do not rejoice when your enemies fall,
and do not let your heart be glad when they stumble,
18 or else the LORD will see it and be displeased,
and turn away his anger from them.

19 Do not fret because of evildoers.
Do not envy the wicked;
20 for the evil have no future;
the lamp of the wicked will go out.

21 My child, fear the LORD and the king,
and do not disobey either of them;[x]
22 for disaster comes from them suddenly,
and who knows the ruin that both can bring?

w Gk Compare Syr Tg: Heb *A wise man is strength*
x Gk: Heb *do not associate with those who change*

24.1 See note on 23.17. **24.3a** Woman Wisdom builds her house in 9.1 and the "Woman of Worth" (or the capable wife) performs similar tasks on the human level in 31.26–27. See also 1 Kings 10.4 (2 Chr 9.3); Acts 7.10 for other examples of wisdom building "households." **24.6** See 11.14. **24.12** *Weighs the heart.* See 21.2; note on 16.2. **24.13** *Honey, honeycomb,* traditional word pair for exemplary sweetness and desirability (Ps 19.10). Too much of a good thing can become bad, however (25.16, 27; 27.7), or dangerous (5.3). **24.14** See note on 23.18. **24.15** See the instruction of 1.10–19. **24.20** The same view expressed in 13.9 (cf. 21.4), but

Further Sayings of the Wise

23 These also are sayings of
the wise:

Partiality in judging is not good.
24 Whoever says to the wicked, "You
are innocent,"
will be cursed by peoples,
abhorred by nations;
25 but those who rebuke the wicked
will have delight,
and a good blessing will come
upon them.
26 One who gives an honest answer
gives a kiss on the lips.

27 Prepare your work outside,
get everything ready for you in
the field;
and after that build your house.

28 Do not be a witness against your
neighbor without cause,
and do not deceive with your
lips.
29 Do not say, "I will do to others as
they have done to me;
I will pay them back for what
they have done."

30 I passed by the field of one who
was lazy,
by the vineyard of a stupid
person;
31 and see, it was all overgrown with
thorns;
the ground was covered with
nettles,
and its stone wall was broken
down.
32 Then I saw and considered it;
I looked and received
instruction.
33 A little sleep, a little slumber,
a little folding of the hands
to rest,
34 and poverty will come upon you
like a robber,
and want, like an armed
warrior.

Further Wise Sayings of Solomon

25 These are other proverbs of Solomon that the officials of King Hezekiah of Judah copied.

2 It is the glory of God to conceal
things,
but the glory of kings is to
search things out.
3 Like the heavens for height, like
the earth for depth,
so the mind of kings is
unsearchable.
4 Take away the dross from the
silver,
and the smith has material for
a vessel;

Job questions it in Job 21.17. **24.23–34** Further sayings of the wise. **24.23a** *These also are the sayings of the wise*, lit. "also these (belong) to the wise ones," a title linking this short collection with 22.17–22. **24.23b** An admonition against partiality in judging; see 18.5; 28.21; 31.5; Lev 19.15; Deut 1.17; 16.19. **24.29** See Mt 6.12, 14–15. **24.30–34** An example story warning against laziness. The tradition is aware that not all poverty is the victim's fault (see 28.15; 29.7; Pss 10.2; 37.14). **24.33–34** 6.10–11.

25.1–29.27 Further wise sayings of Solomon, an independent collection (see headings at 25.1; 30.1) composed of two discrete units, chs. 25–27 and 28–29 (see notes on 25.1–27.27; 27.23–27; 28.1–29.27). **25.1–27.27** One scholar argues for considerable thematic and structural unity in this section. Some of the evidence for this view will be noted. **25.1** *Solomon.* See 1.1; Introduction. The proverbs' artistry and worldview suggest education and wealth, if not the royal court itself. *Officials*, lit. "men," presumably court bureaucrats or educators. *Hezekiah* reigned 715–687 B.C.E. The numerical equivalent of one spelling of his name is 140, the number of lines in this collection. **25.2–27** A carefully constructed unit marked by a double inclusio (a symmetrical structure): *glory* (*honor*) appears twice and *search* (*seek*) once in vv. 2, 27; and the word pair *wicked, righteous* appears in vv. 5, 26. **25.2–7** These verses establish the hierarchical relationship of God, king, and subject. **25.2–3** *God* and *kings* (see 1.1) are intimately related; the *glory* of each is tied to the other. Hebrew *kabod* can be translated either "glory," a divine attribute, or "honor" a central social value, the opposite of which is shame (see note on 3.4). *Search, unsearchable.* See note on 1.13. *Heavens, earth.* The mind of kings is comparable to the whole of creation, thus, like God, not to be questioned. **25.4–5** The saying in 25.4 provides a metaphor for the main point in 25.5. Moral worth is imaged as refinement (see also 27.21–22). *Throne will be established*, formulaic language from the Davidic promise (see 29.14b;

5 take away the wicked from the
presence of the king,
and his throne will be
established in
righteousness.
6 Do not put yourself forward in
the king's presence
or stand in the place of the
great;
7 for it is better to be told, "Come
up here,"
than to be put lower in the
presence of a noble.

What your eyes have seen
8 do not hastily bring into court;
for[y] what will you do in the end,
when your neighbor puts you
to shame?
9 Argue your case with your
neighbor directly,
and do not disclose another's
secret;
10 or else someone who hears you
will bring shame upon you,
and your ill repute will have
no end.

11 A word fitly spoken
is like apples of gold in a
setting of silver.
12 Like a gold ring or an ornament
of gold
is a wise rebuke to a
listening ear.
13 Like the cold of snow in the time
of harvest
are faithful messengers to those
who send them;
they refresh the spirit of their
masters.
14 Like clouds and wind without
rain
is one who boasts of a gift
never given.
15 With patience a ruler may be
persuaded,
and a soft tongue can break
bones.
16 If you have found honey, eat
only enough for you,
or else, having too much, you
will vomit it.
17 Let your foot be seldom in your
neighbor's house,
otherwise the neighbor will
become weary of you and
hate you.
18 Like a war club, a sword, or a
sharp arrow
is one who bears false witness
against a neighbor.
19 Like a bad tooth or a lame foot
is trust in a faithless person in
time of trouble.
20 Like vinegar on a wound[z]
is one who sings songs to a
heavy heart.
Like a moth in clothing or a
worm in wood,

y Cn: Heb *or else* *z* Gk: Heb *Like one who takes off a garment on a cold day, like vinegar on lye*

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2 Sam 7.13, 16). On *righteousness* and kingship, see note on 1.1; Ps 72. **25.5** The word pair *righteous, wicked* (see note on 3.33–35) is common in chs. 25–29 (25.26; 28.1, 4–5, 10, 28; 29.6, 7, 16, 27). **25.6–7** Better to recognize one's subordinate status than to lose face, a form of shame (see note on 3.4; 25.7c–10). On the value of humility, see also 11.2; 27.1–2, 21; 29.23. References to social tensions pervade chs. 25–26. **25.7c–10** These verses are related to what precedes by the motifs of the law *court,* once under the jurisdiction of the monarchy, and of *shame* (see note on 3.4). The inability to settle one's own disputes brings loss of face, but was apparently common (see also 25.18; 26.17; 28.25; 29.9, 22, 24; 30.33).

25.11–15 Four elegant metaphors on the power of language (see note on 1.6) culminate in practical advice for the prospective courtier. **25.11–12** *Gold, silver.* See notes on 1.13; 17.3. **25.12** A *rebuke* is preferable to flattery (see also 27.5; 28.23; 29.1, 5). *Ear.* See note on 2.2. **25.13** Cf. 25.25. Weather similes also occur in 25.14, 23; 26.1; 27.15–16. **25.14** What is anticipated does not come forth; see 25.23 for the opposite problem. **25.15** Wise advisers exercise power indirectly, with well-chosen words, not weapons (see note on 1.6; cf. 25.18; 26.6–10, 18–19). **25.16–27** Except for 25.25, a series of visceral images of undesirable relationships. *Honey* (25.16; 25.27; see 4.17; note on 5.3) creates an inclusio (see note on 25.2–27) for this subsection. **25.16–17** Two admonitions, the first a metaphor to reinforce the point of the second. **25.16** *Vomit.* See 26.11. **25.17** See 27.10. **25.18** *War club, sword, sharp arrow.* See 25.15. *False witness.* Malicious speech is a cause and a symbol of social disruption (see note on 1.6; 26.19–28; 29.12), and here set in a legal

sorrow gnaws at the human
heart.[a]
21 If your enemies are hungry, give
them bread to eat;
and if they are thirsty, give
them water to drink;
22 for you will heap coals of fire on
their heads,
and the LORD will reward you.
23 The north wind produces rain,
and a backbiting tongue, angry
looks.
24 It is better to live in a corner of
the housetop
than in a house shared with a
contentious wife.
25 Like cold water to a thirsty soul,
so is good news from a far
country.
26 Like a muddied spring or a
polluted fountain
are the righteous who give way
before the wicked.
27 It is not good to eat much honey,
or to seek honor on top of
honor.
28 Like a city breached, without
walls,
is one who lacks self-control.

26 Like snow in summer or rain in
harvest,
so honor is not fitting for a
fool.
2 Like a sparrow in its flitting, like
a swallow in its flying,
an undeserved curse goes
nowhere.
3 A whip for the horse, a bridle for
the donkey,
and a rod for the back of fools.
4 Do not answer fools according to
their folly,
or you will be a fool yourself.
5 Answer fools according to their
folly,
or they will be wise in their
own eyes.
6 It is like cutting off one's foot
and drinking down
violence,
to send a message by a fool.
7 The legs of a disabled person
hang limp;
so does a proverb in the mouth
of a fool.
8 It is like binding a stone in a sling
to give honor to a fool.
9 Like a thornbush brandished by
the hand of a drunkard
is a proverb in the mouth of
a fool.
10 Like an archer who wounds
everybody
is one who hires a passing fool
or drunkard.[b]
11 Like a dog that returns to its
vomit
is a fool who reverts to his
folly.
12 Do you see persons wise in their
own eyes?
There is more hope for fools
than for them.
13 The lazy person says, "There is a
lion in the road!
There is a lion in the streets!"

a Gk Syr Tg: Heb lacks *Like a moth . . . human heart*
b Meaning of Heb uncertain

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context (see 25.7c–10; Ex 20.16; Deut 5.20). **25.21–22** "Turn the other cheek" or "vengeance is the Lord's." See also Mt 5.39; Rom 12.20. **25.23** The *north wind* brings unanticipated rain (cf. 25.14); however, the Hebrew word for "north" can also mean "hidden." *Backbiting* (lit. "hidden"), a wordplay on "hidden wind"/"hidden tongue." **25.24** *Contentious wife.* See also 27.15. **25.25** See 25.13. **25.26** *Spring, fountain,* symbols of wisdom (see 1.23), which is lacking here. **25.26–27** *Righteous, wicked, seek, honor.* See note on 25.2–27. **25.27** The unit concludes with typical advice against overreaching oneself (see 25.6–7, 16–17). *Honor.* See note on 3.4. **25.28** An odd verse in the overall composition, perhaps added for the sake of the line count (see note on 25.1). *Self-control,* a virtue of the sages (see also 29.8, 11, 22; 30.33).

26.1–12 A unit on the fool. **26.1–3** Things that "land" where they do not belong (vv. 1–2) and things that land appropriately (v. 3). On animal comparisons, see note on 6.6–11. **26.1** *Snow, rain.* See 25.13–14. *Honor.* See note on 3.4. **26.3** The trainable fool. **26.4–5** Proverbs are not timeless absolutes but must be applied in their season (see note on 1.6; cf. 26.6, 7, 9). *Wise in their own eyes.* See 3.5. **26.6–10** These verses are linked by images of violence and weapons (see 25.25). **26.6–7** "Lame" language (see 26.4–5). **26.6** See 25.13, 15. **26.8** *Honor.* See note on 3.4. **26.9** See 26.4–5. **26.10** Only a fool hires a fool (see 26.4–5). **26.11** Fools refuse instruction at the price of their own humanity (see 25.16). **26.12** Wisdom bears the seeds of its opposite (see 3.5). **26.12b** 29.20b. **26.13–16** A humorous unit on the lazy (see

14 As a door turns on its hinges,
so does a lazy person in bed.
15 The lazy person buries a hand in the dish,
and is too tired to bring it back to the mouth.
16 The lazy person is wiser in self-esteem
than seven who can answer discreetly.
17 Like somebody who takes a passing dog by the ears
is one who meddles in the quarrel of another.
18 Like a maniac who shoots deadly firebrands and arrows,
19 so is one who deceives a neighbor
and says, "I am only joking!"
20 For lack of wood the fire goes out,
and where there is no whisperer, quarreling ceases.
21 As charcoal is to hot embers and wood to fire,
so is a quarrelsome person for kindling strife.
22 The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels;
they go down into the inner parts of the body.
23 Like the glaze[c] covering an earthen vessel
are smooth[d] lips with an evil heart.
24 An enemy dissembles in speaking
while harboring deceit within;
25 when an enemy speaks graciously, do not believe it,
for there are seven abominations concealed within;
26 though hatred is covered with guile,
the enemy's wickedness will be exposed in the assembly.
27 Whoever digs a pit will fall into it,
and a stone will come back on the one who starts it rolling.
28 A lying tongue hates its victims,
and a flattering mouth works ruin.

27 Do not boast about tomorrow,
for you do not know what a day may bring.
2 Let another praise you, and not your own mouth—
a stranger, and not your own lips.
3 A stone is heavy, and sand is weighty,
but a fool's provocation is heavier than both.
4 Wrath is cruel, anger is overwhelming,
but who is able to stand before jealousy?
5 Better is open rebuke
than hidden love.
6 Well meant are the wounds a friend inflicts,
but profuse are the kisses of an enemy.
7 The sated appetite spurns honey,
but to a ravenous appetite even the bitter is sweet.
8 Like a bird that strays from its nest
is one who strays from home.

c Cn: Heb *silver of dross* d Gk: Heb *burning*

6.6–10). **26.16** *Wiser in self-esteem* (lit. "wise in his own eyes"). See 3.5. **26.17–28** Social tension and wounding speech. **26.17–19** The unit's themes (see 25.7c–10, 15, 18). **26.20–21** On "heat" and strife, see 29.8, 22. **26.22–26a** Inner intent must be distinguished from outward appearance; see also 27.6; 31.30. **26.22** *Delicious morsels.* See note on 1.31. **26.23** *Smooth* (lit. "burning"), the same imagery as in 26.20–21. **26.26** *Assembly.* See 5.14. **26.27–28** See 1.32. **26.27** Proverbial assurance of retribution (see 1.32). *Pit.* See also 28.10, 17–18.

27.1–22 A miscellany composed mostly of proverb pairs. **27.1–2** See 25.6–7. *Bring,* lit. give birth to. *Another, stranger,* the same word pair used for the Strange Woman (see note on 2.16–19), though here without negative connotation. **27.3–6** Problematic relationships. See Song 8.6–7 for a similar description of passionate love. **27.3–4** *Stone, sand, overwhelming* (the last term is lit. "a flood"). Natural weights and forces embody the experiences of folly and jealousy; cf. "waters/floods" (Song 8.7). *Jealousy,* passion; cf. Song 8.6. **27.5–6** *Rebuke, wounds.* See 25.12. **27.5** *Love.* Cf. Song 8.6–7. **27.6** Appearances deceive (see 26.22–26a). **27.7–10** Satiation and appetite provide a metaphor (27.7) for the difficulty in maintaining the proper relational distance

9 Perfume and incense make the heart glad,
but the soul is torn by trouble.[e]
10 Do not forsake your friend or the friend of your parent;
do not go to the house of your kindred in the day of your calamity.
Better is a neighbor who is nearby
than kindred who are far away.
11 Be wise, my child, and make my heart glad,
so that I may answer whoever reproaches me.
12 The clever see danger and hide;
but the simple go on, and suffer for it.
13 Take the garment of one who has given surety for a stranger;
seize the pledge given as surety for foreigners.[f]
14 Whoever blesses a neighbor with a loud voice,
rising early in the morning,
will be counted as cursing.
15 A continual dripping on a rainy day
and a contentious wife are alike;
16 to restrain her is to restrain the wind
or to grasp oil in the right hand.[g]
17 Iron sharpens iron,
and one person sharpens the wits[h] of another.
18 Anyone who tends a fig tree will eat its fruit,
and anyone who takes care of a master will be honored.
19 Just as water reflects the face,
so one human heart reflects another.
20 Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied,
and human eyes are never satisfied.
21 The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold,
so a person is tested[i] by being praised.
22 Crush a fool in a mortar with a pestle
along with crushed grain,
but the folly will not be driven out.

23 Know well the condition of your flocks,
and give attention to your herds;
24 for riches do not last forever,
nor a crown for all generations.
25 When the grass is gone, and new growth appears,
and the herbage of the mountains is gathered,
26 the lambs will provide your clothing,
and the goats the price of a field;
27 there will be enough goats' milk for your food,
for the food of your household

e Gk: Heb *the sweetness of a friend is better than one's own counsel* *f* Vg and 20.16: Heb *for a foreign woman* *g* Meaning of Heb uncertain
h Heb *face* *i* Heb lacks *is tested*

(27.8–10). **27.7** *Honey.* See note on 1.31; 5.3. **27.8** See note on 6.6–11. **27.9b** The translation in text note *e* is preferable. When one is too close to a situation, comradely advice is welcome. *Sweetness* echoes *honey* (27.7). **27.10** See 25.17. **27.11** Public honor or shame depends on success in child rearing (see notes on 1.8; 3.4). **27.13** *Garment.* See Ex 22.26–27; Am 2.8. *Given surety.* See 6.1–5. *Stranger, foreigners.* See text note *f*; note on 2.16–19. **27.15–16** *Restrain,* lit. "hide." See note on 25.23. *Wind.* See 25.13–14. The contentious wife seems to have a mind of her own. **27.17–18** The first line of each verse cites a proverb and applies it concretely in the second. **27.18** *Eat.* See 4.17; note on 1.31. The institution of slavery is assumed. **27.19** A subtle reflection on relationship. **27.20** *Sheol, Abaddon.* See notes on 1.12; 15.11. **27.21–22** *Crucible, mortar.* Two modes of testing for what is worthy (see 25.4). *Being praised.* See 25.6–7; 27.1–2; in 17.3 it is the Lord who tests. **27.22** The unteachable fool (see note on 1.4). **27.23–27** An admonitory poem. Though the imagery is largely bucolic, one scholar suggests that *riches* and *crown* (v. 24) make the poem a metaphor of proper kingly rule (on king as shepherd, people as flock, see, e.g., Jer 23.1–6; Ezek 34). *Clothing, field, food, household, servant-girls,* vocabulary and concerns identical to those of the capable wife (31.10–31); this poem may mark the end of the unit beginning in 25.1, as 31.10–31 closes the book as a whole (see note on 25.1–29.27). **27.27** *Servant-girls.* Female servants were undoubtedly often adult women (see also 31.15).

and nourishment for your
servant-girls.

28 The wicked flee when no one
pursues,
but the righteous are as bold as
a lion.

2 When a land rebels
it has many rulers;
but with an intelligent ruler
there is lasting order.[j]

3 A ruler[k] who oppresses the poor
is a beating rain that leaves
no food.

4 Those who forsake the law praise
the wicked,
but those who keep the law
struggle against them.

5 The evil do not understand
justice,
but those who seek the LORD
understand it completely.

6 Better to be poor and walk in
integrity
than to be crooked in one's
ways even though rich.

7 Those who keep the law are wise
children,
but companions of gluttons
shame their parents.

8 One who augments wealth by
exorbitant interest
gathers it for another who is
kind to the poor.

9 When one will not listen to
the law,
even one's prayers are an
abomination.

10 Those who mislead the upright
into evil ways
will fall into pits of their own
making,
but the blameless will have a
goodly inheritance.

11 The rich is wise in self-esteem,
but an intelligent poor person
sees through the pose.

12 When the righteous triumph,
there is great glory,
but when the wicked prevail,
people go into hiding.

13 No one who conceals
transgressions will prosper,
but one who confesses and
forsakes them will obtain
mercy.

14 Happy is the one who is never
without fear,
but one who is hard-hearted
will fall into calamity.

15 Like a roaring lion or a charging
bear
is a wicked ruler over a poor
people.

16 A ruler who lacks understanding
is a cruel oppressor;
but one who hates unjust gain
will enjoy a long life.

17 If someone is burdened with the
blood of another,

j Meaning of Heb uncertain *k* Cn: Heb *A poor person*

28.1–29.27 The literary style returns to the independent antithetical proverb favored in chs. 10–16. **28.1** *Wicked, righteous.* See note on 25.5. *Lion.* See note on 6.6–11. **28.2–3** Textual difficulties prevent certain translation, but observations about just rule and care for the poor are frequent in chs. 28–29 (28.8, 12, 15, 16, 27, 28; 29.2, 4, 7, 12, 13, 14, 16, 26; see also note on 1.1). *Rulers* translates a variety of Hebrew words for authority figures; here it probably refers to later foreign rulers, not the Davidic monarchs. **28.2** *Intelligent ruler.* Just rule requires wisdom (see note on 1.1). **28.4** *The law* (Hebrew *torah*). The definite article and moral tone (righteous vs. wicked) suggest Israel's covenant tradition (cf. note on 1.8); such usage is postexilic (sixth century B.C.E. or later). **28.5** A somewhat different sentiment appears in 29.26. **28.6** Poverty is not always a consequence of evil or laziness (see 15.15–16; 28.2–3, 11; cf. 6.6–10; 28.19). *Walk, ways.* See note on 1.15–16. **28.7** *Law.* See note on 28.4. *Children, parents.* See note on 1.8. *Gluttons.* A metaphor for greed (see note on 1.31). *Shame.* See note on 3.4. **28.8** *Interest.* See Ex 22.25. **28.9** *Law.* See note on 28.4. **28.10** See 1.10–19; 26.27. **28.11–13** These verses are linked by "searching"/"hiding" (see notes on 1.13; 28.11). **28.11** See 28.6. *Wise in self-esteem.* See 3.5; 26.5. *Sees through the pose,* lit. "searches him out." **28.12** See 25.5; 28.2–3. **28.12b** 28.28a. *People go into hiding,* lit. "a man is searched for." Do the people hide or do they search for a just ruler? **28.14** *Happy.* See note on 3.13. *Hard-hearted,* stubborn (see 29.1; Ex 7.3); the allusion to Pharaoh suggests that *fear* refers to fear of the Lord (see note on 1.7). **28.15–16** See 28.2–3. **28.15** *Lion, bear.* See note on 6.6–11. **28.17** *Burdened,* lit. "oppressed," a catchword tying this verse to preceding. *Let that killer . . . no one offer assistance,* lit. "let him flee to the pit; do not seize him"; bloodguilt brings its own punishment (the pit is the grave);

let that killer be a fugitive
until death;
let no one offer assistance.
18 One who walks in integrity will
be safe,
but whoever follows crooked
ways will fall into the Pit.[1]
19 Anyone who tills the land will
have plenty of bread,
but one who follows worthless
pursuits will have plenty
of poverty.
20 The faithful will abound with
blessings,
but one who is in a hurry to be
rich will not go
unpunished.
21 To show partiality is not good—
yet for a piece of bread a
person may do wrong.
22 The miser is in a hurry to get
rich
and does not know that loss is
sure to come.
23 Whoever rebukes a person will
afterward find more favor
than one who flatters with
the tongue.
24 Anyone who robs father or
mother
and says, "That is no crime,"
is partner to a thug.
25 The greedy person stirs up strife,
but whoever trusts in the LORD
will be enriched.
26 Those who trust in their own wits
are fools;
but those who walk in wisdom
come through safely.
27 Whoever gives to the poor will
lack nothing,
but one who turns a blind eye
will get many a curse.
28 When the wicked prevail, people
go into hiding;
but when they perish, the
righteous increase.

29 One who is often reproved, yet
remains stubborn,
will suddenly be broken beyond
healing.
2 When the righteous are in
authority, the people
rejoice;
but when the wicked rule, the
people groan.
3 A child who loves wisdom makes
a parent glad,
but to keep company with
prostitutes is to squander
one's substance.
4 By justice a king gives stability to
the land,
but one who makes heavy
exactions ruins it.
5 Whoever flatters a neighbor
is spreading a net for the
neighbor's feet.
6 In the transgression of the evil
there is a snare,
but the righteous sing and
rejoice.
7 The righteous know the rights of
the poor;
the wicked have no such
understanding.
8 Scoffers set a city aflame,

1 Syr: Heb *fall all at once*

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see 1.11–12; 5.22; 26.27; cf. Ex 21.13; Num 35.6–15; Deut 4.41–43; 19.1–10. **28.18** Perhaps explanatory of 28.17. *Walks, ways.* See note on 1.15–16. **28.19–22** On wealth and poverty. A clear statement of the work ethic (28.19; see 6.6–10) gets clouded: the poor thief may deserve mercy (28.21; see 28.2–3; Ex 23.3), and the greedy may (temporarily) achieve their aims (28.20b). **28.23** *Rebuke, flatter.* See note on 25.12. **28.24–25** Cf. 29.24–25. **28.24** See 1.8–14; Ex 20.12; 21.15–17; Deut 5.16; 27.16. **28.25–26** *Trust in the LORD* and *walk in wisdom* are identified via parallelism (see 1.7). **28.25** *Strife,* probably malicious lawsuits (see 25.7c–10). **28.26** *Trust in their own wits.* See 3.5. **28.27** Almsgiving was a matter of honor (see notes on 3.4; 28.2–3). **28.28** See notes on 25.5; 28.2–3. **28.28a** 28.12b.

29.1a See note on 1.4. *Stubborn,* lit. "hard-necked", cf. 28.14. **29.1b** 6.15b. **29.2** See notes on 25.5; 28.2–3. *Rejoice.* See 29.3, 6. **29.3** *Child* (lit. "man"), *parent.* See note on 1.8. *Loves wisdom.* See note on 1.22. *Prostitutes.* See 7.10–20. **29.4** Justice is defined in terms of economic equity (see notes on 1.1; 28.2–3). **29.5–6** The image of the *net* links these two sayings (see also 1.17). **29.5** *Flatters.* See note on 25.12. **29.6–7** *Evil/wicked, righteous.* See note on 25.5. **29.6** *Rejoice.* See 29.2. **29.7** See note on 28.2–3. **29.8** This translation misses the wordplay on words involving breath. Read either lit. "Scoffers set a city panting / but the wise turn aside the nose" or, completing the metaphor, "Scoffers set a city aflame / but the wise turn

but the wise turn away wrath.
9 If the wise go to law with fools,
there is ranting and ridicule
without relief.
10 The bloodthirsty hate the
blameless,
and they seek the life of the
upright.
11 A fool gives full vent to anger,
but the wise quietly holds
it back.
12 If a ruler listens to falsehood,
all his officials will be wicked.
13 The poor and the oppressor have
this in common:
the LORD gives light to the eyes
of both.
14 If a king judges the poor with
equity,
his throne will be established
forever.
15 The rod and reproof give
wisdom,
but a mother is disgraced by a
neglected child.
16 When the wicked are in
authority, transgression
increases,
but the righteous will look
upon their downfall.
17 Discipline your children, and they
will give you rest;
they will give delight to your
heart.
18 Where there is no prophecy, the
people cast off restraint,
but happy are those who keep
the law.
19 By mere words servants are not
disciplined,
for though they understand,
they will not give heed.
20 Do you see someone who is hasty
in speech?
There is more hope for a fool
than for anyone like that.
21 A slave pampered from
childhood
will come to a bad end.[m]
22 One given to anger stirs up strife,
and the hothead causes much
transgression.
23 A person's pride will bring
humiliation,
but one who is lowly in spirit
will obtain honor.
24 To be a partner of a thief is to
hate one's own life;
one hears the victim's curse, but
discloses nothing.[n]
25 The fear of others[o] lays a snare,
but one who trusts in the LORD
is secure.
26 Many seek the favor of a ruler,
but it is from the LORD that
one gets justice.
27 The unjust are an abomination to
the righteous,
but the upright are an
abomination to the wicked.

Sayings of Agur

30 The words of Agur son of Jakeh.
An oracle.

Thus says the man: I am weary,
O God,

m Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain *n* Meaning of Heb uncertain *o* Or *human fear*

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aside burning anger." A "(burning) nose" is a typical Hebrew euphemism for anger (cf. 25.28; 26.20–21; 30.33). *Scoffers.* See note on 1.4. **29.9** See 25.7c–10. **29.10** See 1.10–19. **29.11** See 25.28; 12.16. **29.12** See 25.18; 28.2–3. **29.13** Bitter realism or hope for the poor (see 22.2; note on 28.2–3)? **29.14** This verse perhaps qualifies the preceding saying (see note on 28.2–3). **29.14b** See note on 25.4–5. **29.15** *Rod, reproof.* See 13.24; cf. 29.19, 21, where similar harsh discipline is applied to slaves. *Mother is disgraced.* See notes on 1.8; 3.4. **29.16** See 29.2; see notes on 25.5; 28.2–3. **29.17** See 13.24; 29.3. **29.18** This verse perhaps suggests belief that the *law* has replaced prophetic vision; alternatively, parallelism equates the law with *prophecy* (see 28.4). *Happy.* See note on 3.13. **29.19** See 29.15. **29.20** *Hasty in speech.* See note on 1.6; 25.28. **29.20b** 26.12b. **29.21** See 29.15. **29.22** See 25.28; 26.20–21. **29.23** *Pride, humiliation.* See 25.6–7. *Honor.* See note on 3.4. **29.24–25** Imagery and message similar to those in 1.10–33 (esp. 1.17–18, 26–27, 33); 28.24–25. **29.24** Failure to testify on what one knows of a crime brings liability (see Lev 5.1). **29.25** *Snare.* See 1.17. Justice may establish a throne (see 25.5), but not all thrones are just (see 28.2–3, 5). **29.27** *Righteous, wicked.* See note on 25.5. *Upright.* See note on 1.3.

30.1–33 A series of short, independent units. **30.1–6** Questions of a skeptic and a pious response. **30.1** *The words of Agur son of Jakeh,* a title, but the extent of the original unit is uncertain, as is Agur's identity. *Oracle,* prophetic ter-

I am weary, O God. How can I
prevail?[p]
2 Surely I am too stupid to be
human;
I do not have human
understanding.
3 I have not learned wisdom,
nor have I knowledge of the
holy ones.[q]
4 Who has ascended to heaven and
come down?
Who has gathered the wind in
the hollow of the hand?
Who has wrapped up the waters
in a garment?
Who has established all the
ends of the earth?
What is the person's name?
And what is the name of the
person's child?
Surely you know!

5 Every word of God proves true;
he is a shield to those who take
refuge in him.
6 Do not add to his words,
or else he will rebuke you, and
you will be found a liar.

7 Two things I ask of you;
do not deny them to me before
I die:
8 Remove far from me falsehood
and lying;
give me neither poverty nor
riches;
feed me with the food that
I need,
9 or I shall be full, and deny you,
and say, "Who is the LORD?"
or I shall be poor, and steal,
and profane the name of
my God.

10 Do not slander a servant to a
master,
or the servant will curse you,
and you will be held guilty.

11 There are those who curse their
fathers
and do not bless their mothers.
12 There are those who are pure in
their own eyes
yet are not cleansed of their
filthiness.
13 There are those—how lofty are
their eyes,
how high their eyelids lift!—
14 there are those whose teeth are
swords,
whose teeth are knives,
to devour the poor from off the
earth,
the needy from among mortals.

15 The leech[r] has two daughters;

p Or *I am spent.* Meaning of Heb uncertain
q Or *Holy One* r Meaning of Heb uncertain

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minology (so also *thus says*), though some translate as a place-name, Massa; see also 31.1. *I am weary, O God.* Some translate "There is no God" or "I am not God," others read proper names in the beginning clauses of the oracle, "to Ithiel, to Ithiel and Ucal" (RSV). The context supplies a sense of distance from a transcendent God, not doctrinal atheism. **30.2–3** A tone more likely ironic than submissive (see Job 9.2). *Holy ones*, a plural form translated in the singular and meaning God in text note *q* and 9.10. **30.4** Perhaps a riddle whose answer is "God" (cf. Job 38.5–11); perhaps a challenge to proponents of a know-it-all piety. *Person's name . . . person's child*, lit. "his name . . . his child's (Greek, children's) name"; thus the referent could be human (sage and pupil) or divine (God and other member[s] of the heavenly realm; cf. v. 3). *Surely you know.* See Job 38.21. **30.5–6** A pious response to 30.1–4 in the mode of those of Job's friends or Eccl 12.9–14. *Word of God* possibly refers to written scripture. **30.5** Cf. Ps 18.30. **30.6a** Cf. Deut 4.2. **30.7–9** A model of pious prayer (cf. Job 13.20–21). The catchword *lying* connects the unit to v. 6. The request for neither too much nor too little assesses human nature realistically (cf. Mt 6.11; Mk 10.25). **30.10** An isolated admonition, but for the catchword *curse* (also in v. 11). Do not interfere in the affairs of other households. **30.11–14** Four reprehensible groups: the unfilial, the hypocritical, the proud, the avaricious. *In their own eyes.* See 3.5. *Fathers, mothers.* See note on 1.8; 30.17. *Poor, needy.* See note on 28.2–3.

30.15–33 A collection of five numerical sayings (30.15b–16, 18–19, 21–23, 24–28, 29–31; see 6.16–19) interspersed with sayings (30.15a, 17, 20, 33) and an admonition (30.32). On the natural world as a source of learning (30.15–16, 19, 24–31), see note on 6.6–11. **30.15a** Originally an independent saying connected to the following numerical saying by its use of the number *two* and its image of things that demand ("*give, give*") a continuous supply of life substance. **30.15b–16** *Sheol.* See note on 1.12. *Barren womb.*

"Give, give," they cry.
Three things are never satisfied;
four never say, "Enough":
16 Sheol, the barren womb,
the earth ever thirsty for water,
and the fire that never says,
"Enough."[s]

17 The eye that mocks a father
and scorns to obey a mother
will be pecked out by the ravens
of the valley
and eaten by the vultures.

18 Three things are too wonderful
for me;
four I do not understand:
19 the way of an eagle in the sky,
the way of a snake on a rock,
the way of a ship on the high
seas,
and the way of a man with a
girl.

20 This is the way of an adulteress:
she eats, and wipes her mouth,
and says, "I have done no
wrong."

21 Under three things the earth
trembles;
under four it cannot bear up:
22 a slave when he becomes king,
and a fool when glutted
with food;
23 an unloved woman when she gets
a husband,
and a maid when she succeeds
her mistress.

24 Four things on earth are small,
yet they are exceedingly wise:
25 the ants are a people without
strength,
yet they provide their food in
the summer;
26 the badgers are a people without
power,
yet they make their homes in
the rocks;
27 the locusts have no king,
yet all of them march in rank;
28 the lizard[t] can be grasped in
the hand,
yet it is found in kings' palaces.

29 Three things are stately in their
stride;
four are stately in their gait:
30 the lion, which is mightiest
among wild animals
and does not turn back
before any;
31 the strutting rooster,[u] the he-
goat,
and a king striding before[s]
his people.

32 If you have been foolish, exalting
yourself,
or if you have been devising
evil,

s Meaning of Heb uncertain t Or *spider*
u Gk Syr Tg Compare Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain

Recall Rachel's cry to Jacob, "*Give* me children, or I shall die!" (Gen 30.1). **30.17–20** The numerical saying in 30.18–19 is framed by sayings representing two major themes of chs. 1–9: obedience to parents (30.17; see 1.8) and avoidance of the adulteress (30.20; see 6.20–35). **30.17–19** These verses are linked by imagery of carnivorous birds. **30.17** See Ex 21.17; horror of lack of proper burial reinforces the message. **30.18–19** Four items lacking visible means of operation and leaving no trace when gone. **30.19** *Girl,* a young woman of marriageable age. **30.20** This verse is linked to 30.18–19 by the catchword *way* (see note on 1.15–16) and the allusion to sexual relations; to 30.15–16 by imagery of deadly appetite (see note on 1.31; 9.17). **30.21–23** Four unbearable things: the first and last are inversions of appropriate order; the middle two do not know how to use their blessings wisely; all may be prone to taunt others. **30.22a** See 29.19. **30.22b** See 4.17. **30.23a** *When she gets a husband,* or "when she is married." The problem is being married and unloved, not unloved and unmarried; see Gen 29.31–35; Deut 20.15–16; 1 Sam 1.2–6. **30.23b** See Gen 16.1–6. **30.24–28** V. 24 breaks the "three things plus a fourth" pattern. There are several messages: wisdom does not depend on size or strength; joint effort succeeds where the individual might fail; neither power nor a king is necessary for survival. The last is surely a word to the postexilic (sixth century B.C.E. or later) community. **30.29–31** If this restoration of a corrupt text is accurate, the message contrasts with 30.24–28 in its positive image of kingship. **30.32–33** Seemingly an instruction (v. 32) plus a motivation (v. 33), but the exact relationship is not

put your hand on your mouth.
33 For as pressing milk produces
curds,
and pressing the nose produces
blood,
so pressing anger produces
strife.

The Teaching of King Lemuel's Mother

31 The words of King Lemuel.
An oracle that his mother
taught him:

2 No, my son! No, son of my
womb!
No, son of my vows!
3 Do not give your strength to
women,
your ways to those who destroy
kings.
4 It is not for kings, O Lemuel,
it is not for kings to drink wine,
or for rulers to desire[v] strong
drink;
5 or else they will drink and forget
what has been decreed,
and will pervert the rights of all
the afflicted.
6 Give strong drink to one who is
perishing,
and wine to those in bitter
distress;
7 let them drink and forget their
poverty,
and remember their misery
no more.
8 Speak out for those who cannot
speak,
for the rights of all the
destitute.[w]
9 Speak out, judge righteously,
defend the rights of the poor
and needy.

Ode to a Capable Wife

10 A capable wife who can find?
She is far more precious than
jewels.
11 The heart of her husband trusts
in her,
and he will have no lack of
gain.
12 She does him good, and not
harm,
all the days of her life.
13 She seeks wool and flax,
and works with willing hands.
14 She is like the ships of the
merchant,
she brings her food from
far away.
15 She rises while it is still night
and provides food for her
household
and tasks for her servant-girls.
16 She considers a field and buys it;

v Cn: Heb *where* w Heb *all children of passing away*

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clear. **30.33** This verse contains two wordplays: the effect of *pressing anger* (line c). *Anger* is lit. "noses"; see line b and (note on) 29.8; read "lawsuit" for *strife*. The punchline relates two products of physical pressure to an undesirable outcome of social pressure (see 25.7c–10).

31.1–31 Two originally independent poems (vv. 1–9; vv. 10–31) joined here under the heading of a queen mother's instruction and sharing vocabulary, theme, and structure. **31.1** *King Lemuel* is otherwise unknown. *Oracle*. See note on 30.1. *Mother*. See note on 1.8; 31.26, 28. **31.2** *Son of my vows*. The phrase is unique in the Bible, though the idea of a child granted by God in response to a woman's vow is not (see 1 Sam 1.9–28). **31.3** *Strength*. The same Hebrew word, translated *capable* in 31.10 and *excellently* in 31.29, is used to describe the woman in the second poem, seemingly mitigating this verse's blanket condemnation. **31.4–7** The abuse and use of alcohol (see 23.29–35). While a king should not *drink* and *forget* his duty to justice (v. 5; see note on 1.1), those in distress do well to *drink and forget* their *poverty* (v. 7). **31.8–9** The capable woman also *speaks out* (31.26) and cares for the *poor and needy* (31.20).

31.10–31 An acrostic poem (see Introduction). The capable wife exemplifies wisdom in the world, thus providing a fitting conclusion to a book that begins with Woman Wisdom. Her assumption of kingly duties (see 27.23–27; 31.1–9) may suggest a social context in which the wisdom and order provided the family household replaced that of a vanished monarchy. **31.10** *Capable*. See note on 31.3. *Find, more precious than jewels*, both motifs for Woman Wisdom (see note on 1.13; 3.15; cf. Job 28). **31.11** *Trusts in her*. Elsewhere, gain comes through trust in the Lord or heeding wisdom (1.29–33; 8.17–21); 28.25b; 29.25b). *Gain*. See note on 1.13. **31.15bc** See 27.27. *Her household*, an unusual attribution in a culture that typically speaks of "the father's house"; see also 31.21, 27. *Servant-girls*. See note on 27.27. **31.16** She engages in public

with the fruit of her hands she
plants a vineyard.
17 She girds herself with strength,
and makes her arms strong.
18 She perceives that her
merchandise is profitable.
Her lamp does not go out
at night.
19 She puts her hands to the distaff,
and her hands hold the spindle.
20 She opens her hand to the poor,
and reaches out her hands to
the needy.
21 She is not afraid for her
household when it snows,
for all her household are
clothed in crimson.
22 She makes herself coverings;
her clothing is fine linen and
purple.
23 Her husband is known in the
city gates,
taking his seat among the
elders of the land.
24 She makes linen garments and
sells them;
she supplies the merchant with
sashes.
25 Strength and dignity are her
clothing,
and she laughs at the time
to come.
26 She opens her mouth with
wisdom,
and the teaching of kindness is
on her tongue.
27 She looks well to the ways of her
household,
and does not eat the bread of
idleness.
28 Her children rise up and call her
happy;
her husband too, and he
praises her:
29 "Many women have done
excellently,
but you surpass them all."
30 Charm is deceitful, and beauty
is vain,
but a woman who fears the
LORD is to be praised.
31 Give her a share in the fruit of
her hands,
and let her works praise her in
the city gates.

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economic enterprise (see 31.18, 24). **31.16b** She has the vineyard planted with profits she has made (cf. 31.31a). **31.17** Both physical and moral *strength* are implied (see 8.14; 31.25). **31.18** See v. 16. **31.19–20** *Puts her hands* (v. 19a), the same Hebrew words as *reaches out her hands* (v. 20b). The woman's ability to provide for her household linked to her care for the poor. **31.21** See 31.15. **31.23** The woman's work is publicly effaced by her husband's leadership role, though see 31.31. *City gates.* See note on 1.20–21. **31.24** See 31.16. **31.25** See 1.26; 8.14; 31.17. **31.26** See 31.8–9. *Teaching of kindness.* The combination of *torah* and *chesed* (often translated "steadfast love"), both covenantal terms, may imply specifically religious education rather than general parental instruction (see notes on 1.8; 28.4). **31.27** There is possibly a wordplay between the Hebrew *sophiyyah, she looks well to,* and the Greek *sophia* ("wisdom"); thus the beginning of the verse may be translated "the ways of her house are wisdom" (see 9.1–6). A Greek-Hebrew wordplay would date the poem sometime after the incursion of the Greeks in 333 B.C.E. **31.28a** See 3.13; 27.11. **31.29** *Excellently.* See note on 31.3. **31.30** A proverb used to clinch the argument. On deceitful appearances, see note on 26.22–26a. *Vain,* meaningless (see Eccl 1.2). *Fears the LORD.* See note on 1.7. **31.31a** See 31.16. **31.31b** See 31.23.

ECCLESIASTES

"ECCLESIASTES" STEMS FROM the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew title, *Qoheleth*, the "Teacher," who assumes the persona of King Solomon, Israel's archetypal sage (1.1; 1 Kings 4.29–34; Prov 1.1; Song 1.1). Such literary association implicitly identified the book as legitimate Israelite wisdom and lent weight to its teaching.

Date and Author

Scholars are agreed that Ecclesiastes was not written by Solomon, but by a later writer (see note on 1.12–18). The name Solomon does not appear in the book, and Qoheleth's claim to have wisdom "surpassing all who were over Jerusalem before me" (1.16) does not fit Solomon, whose only predecessor was David. In later chapters Qoheleth takes the viewpoint of a subject rather than king (4.13; 8.2; 9.14–16; 10.16–17, 20), noting conditions of oppression (4.13), injustice (4.8; 5.8), and social upheaval (10.6–7).

The language of Ecclesiastes is a late form of biblical Hebrew, coming closest of any OT book to postbiblical Mishnaic Hebrew. The presence of Persian loanwords requires a date well after Israel's release from exile in 539 B.C.E. Fragments of the book found among the Dead Sea Scrolls of the Qumran community date to the mid-second century B.C.E. Most scholars date the book's composition between 300 and 200 B.C.E.

Literary Character

A title (1.1) and an epilogue (12.9–14) frame the body of the book, which is itself framed by an "inclusio" (in which the end repeats the beginning): "Vanity of vanities . . . all is vanity" (1.2; 12.8). An ambiguous cosmological poem (1.4–11) then leads to the royal "didactic autobiography" (1.12–2.16), in which Qoheleth as "Solomon" begins "to search out by wisdom all that is done under heaven" (1.12). Thereafter, the book sets a variety of wisdom forms (proverbs, parables, admonitions) in the loose context of the Teacher's first-person address to his readers.

Attempts to find a clear structure in the book have not succeeded, and its tension-filled expression of life's contradictions gives the book a puzzlelike character. The book's unity rests on a complex consistency of language, viewpoint, and themes. Its method is to treat themes in a spiral fashion, introducing them, then dropping them only to resume them later. Key words, phrases, and thought patterns are repeated in refrainlike fashion.

Content

Ecclesiastes focuses upon the limits and contradictions of life in order to teach wisdom (see Ps 90). From the pinnacle of human success and power (1.12–2.26), Qoheleth surveys life and finds it "vanity." Even the best life is limited in knowledge, virtue, and power, troubled by evil and injustice, and ultimately ended by death. This focus on human limits and absurdity attacks those, like Job's friends, who selectively misuse traditional wisdom (see Proverbs) to argue neat connections between godly goodness and success or wickedness and failure (see notes on 7.15; 8.10–17; 9.1–12). Yet, in spite of its limits and destruction by death, Qoheleth maintains wisdom is better than folly (see notes on 2.11, 12–17; 6.8).

In the face of death and "vanity," Qoheleth repeatedly urges humans to embrace life and its goods—food, drink, love, work, and play—as gifts from God (see note on 9.7–10).

Interpretation

Ecclesiastes is not difficult to read, but its meaning as a whole is difficult. Scholars offer strongly conflicting accounts of its message. Some see it as a portrait of "life without God," for they do not see how life with God could be described as "vanity." Some call Qoheleth a skeptic or a pessimist. Some, especially in the past, have attributed the book's references to fearing God, as well as its epilogue, to a pious editor who tried to make the book seem more orthodox than it is. Many scholars have seen the book as being at odds with most expressions of the religion of the Hebrew scriptures. Many scholars now recognize that the tensions and contradictions of Ecclesiastes are precisely its point. Qoheleth is an utter realist, yet he will not let go of God.

The conflict of interpretations can be seen in such translations of the key word "vanity" (Hebrew *hevel*) as "meaningless," "absurd," "emptiness," and "useless." The literal meaning of "vanity" is "breath" or "breeze" (see note on 1.2–3). Qoheleth uses this term as a metaphor, often coupled with "striving after wind," to show the transience, futility, and irrationality of life.

In response to life's vanity, Qoheleth asks what then is good for humans? While recognizing that life has no *ultimate* or lasting "gain" (1.3), Qoheleth makes two points about the good. The first is summarized in the epilogue: "Fear God, and keep his commandments; for that is the whole duty of everyone" (12.13; see 3.9–17; 5.1–7; 7.13–14, 18; 8.12–13). The second is this: since humans are

not masters of the universe, but afflicted by vanity in all its forms, their good is simply to enjoy life—both work and play—as God's gift and the "lot" for which they are responsible (see notes on 2.10; 9.7–10; 11.9).

Raymond C. Van Leeuwen

Reflections of a Royal Philosopher

1 The words of the Teacher,[a] the son
of David, king in Jerusalem.
2 Vanity of vanities, says the
Teacher,[a]
vanity of vanities! All is vanity.
3 What do people gain from all
the toil
at which they toil under
the sun?
4 A generation goes, and a
generation comes,
but the earth remains forever.
5 The sun rises and the sun
goes down,
and hurries to the place where
it rises.
6 The wind blows to the south,
and goes around to the north;
round and round goes the wind,
and on its circuits the wind
returns.
7 All streams run to the sea,
but the sea is not full;
to the place where the streams
flow,
there they continue to flow.
8 All things[b] are wearisome;
more than one can express;
the eye is not satisfied with
seeing,
or the ear filled with hearing.
9 What has been is what will be,
and what has been done is what
will be done;
there is nothing new under
the sun.
10 Is there a thing of which it is
said,
"See, this is new"?
It has already been,
in the ages before us.
11 The people of long ago are not
remembered,
nor will there be any
remembrance

a Heb *Qoheleth*, traditionally rendered *Preacher*
b Or *words*

1.1 *Teacher*, or *Qoheleth*, of uncertain meaning, suggests one who teaches in the "assembly" (Hebrew *kahal*; Deut 31.30). *Son of David*, a nonliteral royal title to link the writer with the wise and wealthy Solomon (1.12; 2.7; see Introduction). **1.2–3** The book's theme and central problem. *Vanity* translates a metaphor meaning "breath" (Hebrew *hevel*; Isa 57.13), often parallel to "chasing after wind" (e.g., 1.14, 17). For human life as "breath," see Job 7.7; Pss 39.4–6; 62.9; 78.33; 144.4. *Vanity of vanities*, an idiom meaning "utter vanity"; cf. "Song of Songs" (Song 1.1). Ecclesiastes, excluding the epilogue, ends as it begins (12.8; see Introduction). **1.3** *What . . . gain?* (2.11; 3.9; 5.16; 6.8).

1.4–11 A cosmology as context for human existence (12.2, 7). It represents totality in the east-west journey of sun (1.5), the north-south circuit of the wind (1.6), and the four ancient elements: earth, fire (sun), air (wind), and water (Ps 148.7–8). Some read this passage negatively (both cosmos and life consist of meaningless cycles), and some positively (the cyclical world order *remains forever* [1.4], thus making life possible; Gen 8.22; Pss 104.1–30; 147.8–9, 16–18). See note on 3.15. **1.5** *Hurries*, lit. "pants" like a runner (Ps 19.5–6). **1.6** Ironically, the restless *wind* remains while humans, who come and go (1.4; 5.15–16), are mere "breath" (vanity). **1.7** *To the place*, Hebrew ambiguous, may also be translated "back to the place from which the streams flow, there they continue to go" so that the rain cycle (12.2) is described, corresponding to the cycles of sun and wind. **1.8–11** A move from cosmology to epistemology, on the limits of human knowledge. **1.8** *All things are wearisome*. The Hebrew is ambiguous; some translate positively, "All things are constantly active," though beyond human mastery (1.18; 3.11; 8.17; 12.12). *The eye is not satisfied*. See Prov 27.20. *The ear* [is not] *filled* ironically parallels *the sea is not full* (1.7). **1.9** See 6.10. **1.11** *People of long ago . . . people yet to come* may be rendered "things of long ago . . . things yet to come."

of people yet to come
by those who come after them.

The Futility of Wisdom

12 I, the Teacher,[c] when king over
Israel in Jerusalem, 13 applied my mind to
seek and to search out by wisdom all that
is done under heaven; it is an unhappy
business that God has given to human be-
ings to be busy with. 14 I saw all the deeds
that are done under the sun; and see, all is
vanity and a chasing after wind.[d]

15 What is crooked cannot be made
straight,
and what is lacking cannot
be counted.

16 I said to myself, "I have acquired
great wisdom, surpassing all who were
over Jerusalem before me; and my mind
has had great experience of wisdom and
knowledge." 17 And I applied my mind to
know wisdom and to know madness and
folly. I perceived that this also is but a
chasing after wind.[d]

18 For in much wisdom is much
vexation,
and those who increase
knowledge increase sorrow.

The Futility of Success

2 I said to myself, "Come now, I will
make a test of pleasure; enjoy your-
self." But again, this also was vanity. 2 I
said of laughter, "It is mad," and of plea-
sure, "What use is it?" 3 I searched with
my mind how to cheer my body with
wine—my mind still guiding me with
wisdom—and how to lay hold on folly, un-
til I might see what was good for mortals
to do under heaven during the few days
of their life. 4 I made great works; I built
houses and planted vineyards for myself;
5 I made myself gardens and parks, and
planted in them all kinds of fruit trees. 6 I
made myself pools from which to water
the forest of growing trees. 7 I bought
male and female slaves, and had slaves
who were born in my house; I also had
great possessions of herds and flocks,
more than any who had been before me
in Jerusalem. 8 I also gathered for myself
silver and gold and the treasure of kings
and of the provinces; I got singers, both
men and women, and delights of the
flesh, and many concubines.[e]

9 So I became great and surpassed all
who were before me in Jerusalem; also
my wisdom remained with me. 10 What-
ever my eyes desired I did not keep from
them; I kept my heart from no pleasure,
for my heart found pleasure in all my toil,
and this was my reward for all my toil.
11 Then I considered all that my hands
had done and the toil I had spent in doing
it, and again, all was vanity and a chasing
after wind,[d] and there was nothing to be
gained under the sun.

c Heb *Qoheleth*, traditionally rendered *Preacher*
d Or *a feeding on wind*. See Hos 12.1 e Meaning of Heb uncertain

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1.12–18 The writer speaks autobiographically as Solomon (1.1; 2.9), a fiction that is not maintained after ch. 2, though first-person address continues. From the pinnacle of success, Qoheleth explores the limits of the human condition and the inscrutability of God. **1.13** *Wisdom* includes knowledge, insight, and technical or artistic skills. *All . . . under heaven*, usually *under the sun* (e.g., 1.3, 9, 14). This quest, to understand all that happens on earth, is an *unhappy business* because it cannot be attained; see note on 3.11. **1.14–15** Thus, from a human viewpoint, what happens is vanity. Moreover, humans cannot straighten what God has bent (3.14; 7.13). **1.17** *Madness and folly* may be an interpreter's addition, or, as polar opposite of wisdom, the pair may indicate the universal scope of the Teacher's quest (2.2–3, 12; 7.25). **1.18** See note on 7.3.

2.1–11 The "king" explores greatness and pleasure. **2.2** See 10.19; Prov 14.13. **2.3** *Wisdom* and *folly* anticipate 2.12–17; see note on 1.17. Given death and human limits, the "king" seeks *what was good . . . to do*. **2.4–11** Mastery over nature and culture and over humans as servants and instruments of pleasure. The "king" achieves all his goals, yet this too is *vanity* (2.11). **2.5–6** In arid Palestine mastery of water is a *great work* (2.4). **2.10** *Toil* is ambiguous, denoting both the process and result of work (wealth, etc.; 2.18). *Reward*, lit. *lot* (3.22), *share* (9.6), or *portion* (9.9), is generally a positive gift of God (5.17–18; 9.9). This important term can be used of land given to heirs (Gen 31.14; Josh 19.9), who are both responsible for their portion and free to enjoy its benefits. **2.11** *Nothing . . . gained*, an answer to 1.3, but see 2.13, where (literally) "there is more gain in wisdom than in folly."

Wisdom and Joy Given to One Who Pleases God

12 So I turned to consider wisdom
and madness and folly; for what can the
one do who comes after the king? Only
what has already been done. 13 Then I saw
that wisdom excels folly as light excels
darkness.
14 The wise have eyes in their head,
but fools walk in darkness.
Yet I perceived that the same fate be-
falls all of them. 15 Then I said to myself,
"What happens to the fool will happen to
me also; why then have I been so very
wise?" And I said to myself that this also is
vanity. 16 For there is no enduring re-
membrance of the wise or of fools, seeing
that in the days to come all will have been
long forgotten. How can the wise die just
like fools? 17 So I hated life, because what
is done under the sun was grievous to me;
for all is vanity and a chasing after wind.[f]
18 I hated all my toil in which I had
toiled under the sun, seeing that I must
leave it to those who come after me
19 — and who knows whether they will be
wise or foolish? Yet they will be master of
all for which I toiled and used my wisdom
under the sun. This also is vanity. 20 So I
turned and gave my heart up to despair
concerning all the toil of my labors under
the sun, 21 because sometimes one who
has toiled with wisdom and knowledge
and skill must leave all to be enjoyed by
another who did not toil for it. This also is
vanity and a great evil. 22 What do mortals
get from all the toil and strain with which
they toil under the sun? 23 For all their
days are full of pain, and their work is a
vexation; even at night their minds do not
rest. This also is vanity.
24 There is nothing better for mortals
than to eat and drink, and find enjoyment
in their toil. This also, I saw, is from the
hand of God; 25 for apart from him[g] who
can eat or who can have enjoyment? 26 For
to the one who pleases him God gives wis-
dom and knowledge and joy; but to the
sinner he gives the work of gathering and
heaping, only to give to one who pleases
God. This also is vanity and a chasing af-
ter wind.[f]

Everything Has Its Time

3 For everything there is a season,
and a time for every matter under
heaven:
2 a time to be born, and a time
to die;
a time to plant, and a time to
pluck up what is planted;
3 a time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to break down, and a time
to build up;
4 a time to weep, and a time
to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time
to dance;
5 a time to throw away stones, and
a time to gather stones
together;

f Or *a feeding on wind.* See Hos 12.1 g Gk Syr: Heb *apart from me*

2.12–17 *Wisdom* is better than *folly* (2.12), yet death destroys both the *wise* and *fools* (6.8; Ps 49.10), and the wise are *forgotten* (Eccl 2.16; 1.11; Wis 2.4). **2.12** *Madness and folly*, a hendiadys, "senseless folly" (7.25; see note on 1.17). **2.14** The *fate* or "event" is death (3.19–20; 6.6; 9.2–3). **2.17** *I hated life*, perhaps, "I was disillusioned with life" because of its limits and vanity; "hate" in Hebrew has a range of meanings opposite to "love." Elsewhere life is positive, despite vanity (2.24–26; 9.4–6; 11.7–8).

2.18–26 Death and heirs; the royal experiment concludes. **2.18** *I hated.* See note on 2.17. *Toil.* See note on 2.10. One can leave a business ("toil" as process) or wealth ("toil" as result) to an heir (2.21; 6.2). Toil can bring *pleasure* (2.10, 24; 3.13, 22; 5.18–19; 9.9) or *despair* (2.18, 20). **2.19** *Who knows?* a rhetorical question expecting the answer "nobody," with the implicit exception of God. **2.21** *Evil*, because humans cut off by death do not reap the good they sow. **2.22–23** What advantage then for human toil? **2.24–26** A modestly positive but realistic answer to the question of 2.22. Qoheleth constantly associates *enjoyment* with both work (*toil*) and play (*to eat and drink*); see notes on 3.12–15, 16–22; 5.18–20; 9.7–10.

3.1–15 Human life in relation to God. **3.1–8** Life's good and evil conditioned by God's *time*. The contrary pairs are a literary device using opposites to represent life's totality and variety, which are also represented by their sum (twice seven). The times, which simply happen to people or which require appropriate human action (8.5–6; Am 5.13), are inscrutably in God's hands (Eccl 3.1, 11, 13; Ps 31.15; Sir 33.7–15; 39.33–34). The opposed items seem good or bad in themselves, but time or circumstance can invert

a time to embrace, and a time to
refrain from embracing;
6 a time to seek, and a time to lose;
a time to keep, and a time to
throw away;
7 a time to tear, and a time to sew;
a time to keep silence, and a time
to speak;
8 a time to love, and a time to hate;
a time for war, and a time for
peace.

The God-Given Task

9 What gain have the workers from
their toil? 10 I have seen the business that
God has given to everyone to be busy
with. 11 He has made everything suitable
for its time; moreover he has put a sense
of past and future into their minds, yet
they cannot find out what God has done
from the beginning to the end. 12 I know
that there is nothing better for them than
to be happy and enjoy themselves as long
as they live; 13 moreover, it is God's gift
that all should eat and drink and take
pleasure in all their toil. 14 I know that
whatever God does endures forever;
nothing can be added to it, nor anything
taken from it; God has done this, so that
all should stand in awe before him.
15 That which is, already has been; that
which is to be, already is; and God seeks
out what has gone by.[h]

Judgment and the Future Belong to God

16 Moreover I saw under the sun that
in the place of justice, wickedness was
there, and in the place of righteousness,
wickedness was there as well. 17 I said in
my heart, God will judge the righteous
and the wicked, for he has appointed a
time for every matter, and for every work.
18 I said in my heart with regard to human
beings that God is testing them to show
that they are but animals. 19 For the fate
of humans and the fate of animals is the
same; as one dies, so dies the other. They
all have the same breath, and humans
have no advantage over the animals; for
all is vanity. 20 All go to one place; all are
from the dust, and all turn to dust again.
21 Who knows whether the human spirit
goes upward and the spirit of animals
goes downward to the earth? 22 So I saw
that there is nothing better than that all
should enjoy their work, for that is their
lot; who can bring them to see what will be
after them?

Oppression and Toil

4 Again I saw all the oppressions that
are practiced under the sun. Look,
the tears of the oppressed—with no one
to comfort them! On the side of their op-
pressors there was power—with no one to
comfort them. 2 And I thought the dead,
who have already died, more fortunate
than the living, who are still alive; 3 but
better than both is the one who has not yet
been, and has not seen the evil deeds that
are done under the sun.
4 Then I saw that all toil and all skill in
work come from one person's envy of

h Heb *what is pursued*

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the value of actions (see 3.11; 7.1–4). **3.11** *Suitable.* Wisdom requires actions that fit their time (Prov 10.5; 26.1; 27.14; Mt 11.16–19). *A sense of past and future* (Hebrew *ha'olam*, lit. "the age" or "the world"), a difficult expression; suggested translations include "the world," "eternity," of "darkness" ("ignorance"). The quest to know all things ("the world") cannot be attained (1.12–13; 7.25; 8.17; 11.5). **3.12–15** In the face of limits, enjoy the good, both play and work (2.10, 24; 3.22; 5.17–18; but see 2.18) as God's gift. God's deeds intend to lead humans to revere him (3.14; see note on 7.18). **3.15** Not a form of "the myth of the eternal return," for humans do not know what will be (6.12; 8.7). *What has gone by.* Meaning uncertain.

3.16–22 Qoheleth sees injustice in the law court (see 8.14). He insists on God's timely justice (v. 17; see v. 1; 12.14) but is uncertain how this can be, since humans lack knowledge beyond death (vv. 21–22). It is best to enjoy one's present *work* (v. 17; the Hebrew is plural and includes both activities and their products) as divine gift or *lot* (v. 22; see 2.24–25; 3.13). **3.17** Some seek to resolve the tension concerning ultimate justice by attributing this verse to a later, more "orthodox" editor of the book. See Introduction. **3.18** *Is testing them.* Hebrew uncertain. *Animals*, as explained in v. 19. **3.20** *One place*, Sheol (9.10), the place of the dead (Isa 14.9–20). *Dust.* See 12.7; Gen 3.19. **3.21** *Who knows?* See note on 2.19. *Spirit.* See 12.7; perhaps Prov 15.24.

4.1–3 Oppression and evil can be so great that nonexistence seems better than life; see 6.1–6. **4.4–12** Negative and positive aspects of *toil.* **4.4** *All toil . . . envy of another.* Some

another. This also is vanity and a chasing
after wind.[i]
5 Fools fold their hands
and consume their own flesh.
6 Better is a handful with quiet
than two handfuls with toil,
and a chasing after wind.[i]

Solitude and Friendship

7 Again, I saw vanity under the sun:
8 the case of solitary individuals, without
sons or brothers; yet there is no end to all
their toil, and their eyes are never satis-
fied with riches. "For whom am I toiling,"
they ask, "and depriving myself of plea-
sure?" This also is vanity and an unhappy
business.

9 Two are better than one, because
they have a good reward for their toil.
10 For if they fall, one will lift up the
other; but woe to one who is alone and
falls and does not have another to help.
11 Again, if two lie together, they keep
warm; but how can one keep warm alone?
12 And though one might prevail against
another, two will withstand one. A three-
fold cord is not quickly broken.

13 Better is a poor but wise youth than
an old but foolish king, who will no longer
take advice. 14 One can indeed come out
of prison to reign, even though born poor
in the kingdom. 15 I saw all the living who,
moving about under the sun, follow that[j]
youth who replaced the king;[k] 16 there
was no end to all those people whom he
led. Yet those who come later will not re-
joice in him. Surely this also is vanity and
a chasing after wind.[i]

Reverence, Humility, and Contentment

5 [l] Guard your steps when you go to the
house of God; to draw near to listen
is better than the sacrifice offered by
fools; for they do not know how to keep
from doing evil.[m] 2 [n] Never be rash with
your mouth, nor let your heart be quick to
utter a word before God, for God is in
heaven, and you upon earth; therefore let
your words be few.

3 For dreams come with many cares,
and a fool's voice with many words.

4 When you make a vow to God, do
not delay fulfilling it; for he has no plea-
sure in fools. Fulfill what you vow. 5 It is
better that you should not vow than that
you should vow and not fulfill it. 6 Do not
let your mouth lead you into sin, and do
not say before the messenger that it was a
mistake; why should God be angry at your
words, and destroy the work of your
hands?

7 With many dreams come vanities
and a multitude of words;[o] but fear God.

8 If you see in a province the oppres-
sion of the poor and the violation of jus-
tice and right, do not be amazed at the
matter; for the high official is watched by
a higher, and there are yet higher ones
over them. 9 But all things considered, this
is an advantage for a land: a king for a
plowed field.[o]

10 The lover of money will not be

i Or *a feeding on wind.* See Hos 12.1 *j* Heb *the second* *k* Heb *him* *l* Ch 4.17 in Heb
m Cn: Heb *they do not know how to do evil*
n Ch 5.1 in Heb *o* Meaning of Heb uncertain

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translate, "all toil and all success in work are [inseparable from] human competition." **4.5–6** Proverbial sayings: neither self-destructive sloth nor frenetic toil are good. **4.7–12** Solitary toil (vv. 7–8; see 2.18–23) is pointless compared to toil and life together (vv. 9–12). **4.13–16** An obscure passage portraying paradoxical reversals of traditional expectations concerning roles and qualities (see 9.13–16; 10.5–7, 16–17; Prov 17.2; 20.29 [gray hair means wisdom]; 26.1; 30.21–23).

5.1–7 Admonitions on reverence before God. Though he wrestles with questions of God's justice and knowability, Qoheleth here affirms traditional practices and views. Right worship (including sacrifice and vows), wisdom, speech (see Jas 1.26), and living all belong together. **5.1** *Guard your steps* means care for right behavior; *to listen* means to obey (see 1 Sam 15.22; Ps 15; Isa 1.11–17). **5.4–7** *Vows* and commitments are to be kept, lest God destroy one's *work* (v. 6; see Ps 90.11, 17). **5.8** A government hierarchy may or may not be implied here. But *watched by* means that the high and mighty "look out for" one another, so the poor have no chance for justice. **5.9** There is no satisfactory explanation of this verse.

5.10–20 Wealth in negative (vv. 10–17) and positive (vv. 18–20) perspective. **5.10–12** Three proverbs argue that lust for wealth is insatiable and wealth brings on "freeloaders" and sleepless

satisfied with money; nor the lover of
wealth, with gain. This also is vanity.
11 When goods increase, those who
eat them increase; and what gain has their
owner but to see them with his eyes?
12 Sweet is the sleep of laborers,
whether they eat little or much; but the
surfeit of the rich will not let them sleep.
13 There is a grievous ill that I have
seen under the sun: riches were kept by
their owners to their hurt, 14 and those
riches were lost in a bad venture; though
they are parents of children, they have
nothing in their hands. 15 As they came
from their mother's womb, so they shall
go again, naked as they came; they shall
take nothing for their toil, which they may
carry away with their hands. 16 This also is
a grievous ill: just as they came, so shall
they go; and what gain do they have from
toiling for the wind? 17 Besides, all their
days they eat in darkness, in much vexa-
tion and sickness and resentment.
18 This is what I have seen to be good:
it is fitting to eat and drink and find en-
joyment in all the toil with which one toils
under the sun the few days of the life God
gives us; for this is our lot. 19 Likewise all
to whom God gives wealth and posses-
sions and whom he enables to enjoy them,
and to accept their lot and find enjoyment
in their toil—this is the gift of God. 20 For
they will scarcely brood over the days of
their lives, because God keeps them occu-
pied with the joy of their hearts.

The Frustration of Desires

6 There is an evil that I have seen un-
der the sun, and it lies heavy upon
humankind: 2 those to whom God gives
wealth, possessions, and honor, so that
they lack nothing of all that they desire,
yet God does not enable them to enjoy
these things, but a stranger enjoys them.
This is vanity; it is a grievous ill. 3 A man
may beget a hundred children, and live
many years; but however many are the
days of his years, if he does not enjoy life's
good things, or has no burial, I say that a
stillborn child is better off than he. 4 For it
comes into vanity and goes into darkness,
and in darkness its name is covered;
5 moreover it has not seen the sun or
known anything; yet it finds rest rather
than he. 6 Even though he should live a
thousand years twice over, yet enjoy no
good—do not all go to one place?
7 All human toil is for the mouth, yet
the appetite is not satisfied. 8 For what ad-
vantage have the wise over fools? And
what do the poor have who know how to
conduct themselves before the living?
9 Better is the sight of the eyes than the
wandering of desire; this also is vanity
and a chasing after wind.[p]
10 Whatever has come to be has al-
ready been named, and it is known what
human beings are, and that they are not
able to dispute with those who are stron-

p Or *a feeding on wind.* See Hos 12.1

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nights of worry. **5.13–17** The uncertainty of wealth. Carefully guarded (*kept,* v. 13) riches are lost in a business venture gone bad. The heirs, like all humans, "come and go" (see 1.3–4). *Naked,* empty-handed (vv. 15–16; see Job 1.21). **5.16** *They came . . . shall go . . . what gain?* an echo of 1.3–4. **5.17** Perhaps a description of miserliness, anticipating death, what one scholar has called "the long darkness yet to come." **5.18–20** On the *good,* an echo and elaboration of 2.24–26; 3.12–13, 22. While wealth is futile as an attempt to gain security (vv. 10–18), the responsible enjoyment (see 11.9) of life, *toil,* and even *wealth* (v. 19) as God's gift is *fitting.* Cf. Mt 6.25–34. **5.18** *Fitting,* "suitable" in 3.11; Qoheleth's call to responsible enjoyment, made with awareness of death and uncertainty, is not escapist or ill-timed (Isa 22.12–13), but it presupposes the principle of the right time (Eccl 3.1–15; Prov 6.6–8; 10.5; 2 Kings 5.26) and thus is a balance of play and work (see 8.15; 9.7–10). *Lot.* See note on 2.10.

6.1–6 Examples of wealth possessed but not enjoyed; see 2.18–21; 4.1–3. **6.3** *No burial,* an evil fate in ancient Israel; see 8.10; 2 Kings 9.33–37; Jer 16.5–6; 22.18–19. *A stillborn child is better off,* an inversion of the usual views (Ps 58.8); see Job 3.16–18. **6.6** *One place.* See note on 3.20.

6.7–12 A loosely connected group of sayings echoing a variety of Qoheleth's concerns and vocabulary and leading into the paradoxical proverbs of 7.1–14. **6.7** See Prov 16.26. **6.8** *What advantage?* See the positive answer in 7.11–12, 19; 2.13–14. Wisdom is better than folly, but death destroys its advantage. **6.10** See 1.9–11. *Named . . . known.* The passives indicate that God is the namer and knower. To name something is to express its "nature" or character. Some place a period after *it is known* (*it* referring to *whatever*) and continue, "*Human beings* are not able to dispute . . ." *Those who are stronger.* The Hebrew is singular and probably refers to God: "the one who is

ger. 11 The more words, the more vanity,
so how is one the better? 12 For who
knows what is good for mortals while they
live the few days of their vain life, which
they pass like a shadow? For who can tell
them what will be after them under
the sun?

Wise Sayings

7 A good name is better than
precious ointment,
and the day of death, than the
day of birth.
2 It is better to go to the house of
mourning
than to go to the house of
feasting;
for this is the end of everyone,
and the living will lay it
to heart.
3 Sorrow is better than laughter,
for by sadness of countenance
the heart is made glad.
4 The heart of the wise is in the
house of mourning;
but the heart of fools is in the
house of mirth.
5 It is better to hear the rebuke of
the wise
than to hear the song of fools.
6 For like the crackling of thorns
under a pot,
so is the laughter of fools;
this also is vanity.
7 Surely oppression makes the wise
foolish,
and a bribe corrupts the heart.
8 Better is the end of a thing than
its beginning;
the patient in spirit are better
than the proud in spirit.
9 Do not be quick to anger,
for anger lodges in the bosom
of fools.
10 Do not say, "Why were the
former days better than
these?"
For it is not from wisdom that
you ask this.
11 Wisdom is as good as an
inheritance,
an advantage to those who see
the sun.
12 For the protection of wisdom is
like the protection of
money,
and the advantage of
knowledge is that wisdom
gives life to the one who
possesses it.
13 Consider the work of God;
who can make straight what he
has made crooked?
14 In the day of prosperity be joyful,
and in the day of adversity consider; God
has made the one as well as the other, so
that mortals may not find out anything
that will come after them.

The Riddles of Life

15 In my vain life I have seen every-
thing; there are righteous people who
perish in their righteousness, and there
are wicked people who prolong their life

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stronger." **6.11** *Words.* Ironic, for Qoheleth himself trades in "words" or proverbs such as those following in 7.1–14. *How is one the better?* lit. "What gain do humans have?" See note on 1.3. **6.12** *Who knows?* See note on 2.19. *What is good* does not refer to human activity (see 5.18), but to the divine disposition of events for humans (3.11; 7.14; 8.17).

7.1–14 A series of proverbs mingling traditional wisdom with Qoheleth's critical contradictions (see Prov 26.4–5; 17.27–28), often using the "better . . . than" form. **7.1–6** These sayings encapsulate much of Qoheleth's wisdom: joy in life without awareness of vanity and death is folly. **7.1** *Good name,* a traditional judgment (Prov 22.1), with a pun on the Hebrew terms *shem* ("name") and *shemen* ("ointment"), followed by a paradox; see 7.8; Sir 11.21–28. **7.3** *Sorrow.* The same Hebrew word (*ka'as*) is translated as *vexation* in 1.18, *anger* in 7.9, and *anxiety* in 11.10, creating verbal contradictions in Hebrew concerning contrary aspects of the term. *Countenance . . . heart,* a contrast between inner and outer: a sad face may conceal a joyful heart or vice versa (Prov 14.13). **7.7** See Deut 16.19. *Oppression,* in the sense of extortion. **7.8** See 7.1–2; 1 Kings 20.11. **7.9** *Anger* may be translated *sorrow*; see note on 7.3. **7.10** See 1.11. **7.11–12** An answer to 6.8. Wisdom is as good as or better than wealth (Prov 16.16), but each has its limits (Eccl 9.15–16; Prov 19.21; 21.30–31). **7.13–14** See 1.15; 3.1–15; Sir 11.14; 33.7–15. *After them.* See 3.11; 6.12; 10.14; 11.6; Prov 27.1.

7.15 See 3.16–17; 8.5, 14; 9.1–2. The normal causal sequence of good actions leading to good consequences and evil to evil sometimes fails.

in their evildoing. 16 Do not be too righteous, and do not act too wise; why should you destroy yourself? 17 Do not be too wicked, and do not be a fool; why should you die before your time? 18 It is good that you should take hold of the one, without letting go of the other; for the one who fears God shall succeed with both.

19 Wisdom gives strength to the wise more than ten rulers that are in a city.

20 Surely there is no one on earth so righteous as to do good without ever sinning.

21 Do not give heed to everything that people say, or you may hear your servant cursing you; 22 your heart knows that many times you have yourself cursed others.

23 All this I have tested by wisdom; I said, "I will be wise," but it was far from me. 24 That which is, is far off, and deep, very deep; who can find it out? 25 I turned my mind to know and to search out and to seek wisdom and the sum of things, and to know that wickedness is folly and that foolishness is madness. 26 I found more bitter than death the woman who is a trap, whose heart is snares and nets, whose hands are fetters; one who pleases God escapes her, but the sinner is taken by her. 27 See, this is what I found, says the Teacher,[q] adding one thing to another to find the sum, 28 which my mind has sought repeatedly, but I have not found. One man among a thousand I found, but a woman among all these I have not found. 29 See, this alone I found, that God made human beings straightforward, but they have devised many schemes.

The Limits of Human Power

8 Who is like the wise man?
And who knows the
interpretation of a thing?
Wisdom makes one's face shine,
and the hardness of one's
countenance is changed.

2 Keep[r] the king's command because of your sacred oath. 3 Do not be terrified; go from his presence, do not delay when the matter is unpleasant, for he does whatever he pleases. 4 For the word of the king is powerful, and who can say to him, "What are you doing?" 5 Whoever obeys a command will meet no harm, and the wise mind will know the time and way. 6 For every matter has its time and way, although the troubles of mortals lie heavy upon them. 7 Indeed, they do not know what is to be, for who can tell them how it will be? 8 No one has power over the wind[s] to restrain the wind,[s] or power over the day of death; there is no discharge from the battle, nor does wickedness deliver those who practice it. 9 All this I observed, applying my mind to all that is done under the sun, while one person

q *Qoheleth*, traditionally rendered *Preacher*
r Heb *I keep* s Or *breath*

7.16 *Do not be too righteous . . . act too wise,* in the sense of pretending to be something one is not: very righteous and wise; cf. Prov 13.7; 25.6–7. **7.17** On the other hand, do not abandon yourself to wickedness. *Your time.* See note on 3.1–8; Prov 10.27. Qoheleth still maintains God is free to judge the wicked with an early death (3.17; 8.13). **7.18** *The one . . . the other,* the two precepts in 7.16–17. *Fears God,* includes both worship and daily life in relation to God and his will, sometimes "to stand in awe/fear" of God (3.14; 5.1–7; 8.12–13; 12.13; Gen 20.11; Deut 8.6; Prov 1.7; Job 28.28). **7.20** See 7.29; 9.3; Gen 6.5; 8.21; Ps 14.1–3; Rom 3.9–18. **7.26** Some read this (and 7.28) as misogynist stereotyping of women. More likely it echoes Proverbs' warning against adultery, in which males are responsible for sexual restraint toward women other than their wives (Prov 7.5–27; 9.13–18; 22.14; 23.27). Marital love is good (Eccl 9.9; Prov 5.15–20). **7.28** Like 7.26, this seems misogynist; yet its sense in context is unclear. Perhaps it is a hyperbolic idiom using the image of rarity to express the great value of a good man and woman. Cf. Prov 31.10, where "who can find?" expects the answer "no one" (see Prov 18.22). Cf. the numerical hyperbole in 1 Sam 18.7.

8.1–9 On the limits of human power. **8.2–5** See 10.4; Prov 24.21–22. **8.2–3** *Sacred oath . . . terrified* may be translated "Concerning an oath before God, do not be hasty." See 5.2, 4; 9.2. **8.5–6** *Time and way,* lit. "time and judgment," probably a hendiadys, "time of judgment"; see 3.1, 16–17; 11.9. **8.7** See 6.12; 7.14. **8.8** *Wind,* perhaps ironic in light of the refrains "vanity" ("breath" or "wind") and "chasing after wind" (see Jn 3.8), but it may refer to death ("wind" as "spirit" in Eccl 3.21). *Battle.* See Prov 21.30–31.

exercises authority over another to the other's hurt.

God's Ways Are Inscrutable

10 Then I saw the wicked buried; they used to go in and out of the holy place, and were praised in the city where they had done such things.[t] This also is vanity. 11 Because sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily, the human heart is fully set to do evil. 12 Though sinners do evil a hundred times and prolong their lives, yet I know that it will be well with those who fear God, because they stand in fear before him, 13 but it will not be well with the wicked, neither will they prolong their days like a shadow, because they do not stand in fear before God.

14 There is a vanity that takes place on earth, that there are righteous people who are treated according to the conduct of the wicked, and there are wicked people who are treated according to the conduct of the righteous. I said that this also is vanity. 15 So I commend enjoyment, for there is nothing better for people under the sun than to eat, and drink, and enjoy themselves, for this will go with them in their toil through the days of life that God gives them under the sun.

16 When I applied my mind to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done on earth, how one's eyes see sleep neither day nor night, 17 then I saw all the work of God, that no one can find out what is happening under the sun. However much they may toil in seeking, they will not find it out; even though those who are wise claim to know, they cannot find it out.

Take Life as It Comes

9 All this I laid to heart, examining it all, how the righteous and the wise and their deeds are in the hand of God; whether it is love or hate one does not know. Everything that confronts them 2 is vanity,[u] since the same fate comes to all, to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and the evil,[v] to the clean and the unclean, to those who sacrifice and those who do not sacrifice. As are the good, so are the sinners; those who swear are like those who shun an oath. 3 This is an evil in all that happens under the sun, that the same fate comes to everyone. Moreover, the hearts of all are full of evil; madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead. 4 But whoever is joined with all the living has hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion. 5 The living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing; they have no more reward, and even the memory of them is lost. 6 Their love and their hate and their envy have already perished; never again will they have any share in all that happens under the sun.

7 Go, eat your bread with enjoyment, and drink your wine with a merry heart; for God has long ago approved what you do. 8 Let your garments always be white; do not let oil be lacking on your head. 9 Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that are given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which

t Meaning of Heb uncertain *u* Syr Compare Gk: Heb *Everything that confronts them* 2 *is everything*
v Gk Syr Vg: Heb lacks *and the evil*

8.10–17 Human experience of God's justice is mysterious, even inverted (thus *vanity*), leading the wicked to think it does not exist. Even the wise cannot know it (8.17; 3.11), yet Qoheleth insists on its reality (3.16–17; 11.9) and commends joy (8.15). **8.17** See note on 3.11.

9.1–12 Humans cannot distinguish good and bad people by what happens to them (7.15; 8.10–17; the fallacy of Job's friends). Death, chance, and the evil in every human heart can level the distinctions between just and unjust, wise and foolish, the competent and incompetent (9.11–12). Yet life is better than death (9.4; cf. 4.2–3) and to be enjoyed (9.7–10). **9.1** *Love or hate*, of God or humans is uncertain, perhaps the sort of literary device found in 3.1–8 indicating lack of total knowledge (see 9.6; note on 9.1–12). **9.2** For the converse, see Mt 5.45. Qoheleth does not mean that the righteous and the wicked, the good and the evil, etc., are equal, but that death comes to all. **9.3** *Hearts . . . evil.* See note on 7.20. In biblical terms, the heart is the spiritual center of the self, the ultimate source of thought, will, emotion, and action. See Prov 4.23; Jer 7.24 ("will" here translates the Hebrew word usually rendered "heart"); 31.33; Ezek 18.31; 36.26–27; Mk 7.20–21. **9.7–10** The practical sum of Qoheleth's teaching, given imperative force: in the face of death and vanity, embrace the good in life—both work and play—with

you toil under the sun. 10 Whatever your
hand finds to do, do with your might; for
there is no work or thought or knowledge
or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are
going.
11 Again I saw that under the sun the
race is not to the swift, nor the battle to
the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor
riches to the intelligent, nor favor to the
skillful; but time and chance happen to
them all. 12 For no one can anticipate the
time of disaster. Like fish taken in a cruel
net, and like birds caught in a snare, so
mortals are snared at a time of calamity,
when it suddenly falls upon them.

Wisdom Superior to Folly

13 I have also seen this example of
wisdom under the sun, and it seemed
great to me. 14 There was a little city with
few people in it. A great king came
against it and besieged it, building great
siegeworks against it. 15 Now there was
found in it a poor wise man, and he by his
wisdom delivered the city. Yet no one re-
membered that poor man. 16 So I said,
"Wisdom is better than might; yet the
poor man's wisdom is despised, and his
words are not heeded."
17 The quiet words of the wise are
more to be heeded
than the shouting of a ruler
among fools.
18 Wisdom is better than weapons
of war,
but one bungler destroys much
good.

Miscellaneous Observations

10 Dead flies make the perfumer's
ointment give off a foul odor;
so a little folly outweighs
wisdom and honor.
2 The heart of the wise inclines to
the right,
but the heart of a fool to the
left.
3 Even when fools walk on the
road, they lack sense,
and show to everyone that they
are fools.
4 If the anger of the ruler rises
against you, do not leave
your post,
for calmness will undo great
offenses.
5 There is an evil that I have seen un-
der the sun, as great an error as if it pro-
ceeded from the ruler: 6 folly is set in
many high places, and the rich sit in a low
place. 7 I have seen slaves on horseback,
and princes walking on foot like slaves.
8 Whoever digs a pit will fall
into it;
and whoever breaks through a
wall will be bitten by
a snake.
9 Whoever quarries stones will be
hurt by them;
and whoever splits logs will be
endangered by them.
10 If the iron is blunt, and one does
not whet the edge,
then more strength must be
exerted;
but wisdom helps one to
succeed.
11 If the snake bites before it is
charmed,
there is no advantage in a
charmer.

12 Words spoken by the wise bring
them favor,
but the lips of fools consume
them.
13 The words of their mouths begin
in foolishness,
and their talk ends in wicked
madness;
14 yet fools talk on and on.

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passion, as God's gift (2.24–26; 3.12–14, 22; 5.18–20; 6.3, 6; 7.14; 8.14–15; 11.6–10; 12.1). **9.11** *Time and chance*, ultimately determined by God (3.1–17; 7.14).

9.13–18 A parable followed by proverbial observations (9.17–18); cf. 4.13–16. **9.15** Ambiguous in Hebrew. Poverty limits wisdom, for either the poor man delivered the city and was not honored, or he would have been able to deliver it, had he been taken seriously.

10.1–11.6 Traditional sayings of the sort found in Proverbs, mingled with observations characteristic of Qoheleth (10.5–7, 14–15; 11.2b–6). **10.2** Not a political judgment! The *right* hand symbolizes strength and competence (wisdom). **10.4** See 8.2; Prov 19.12; 20.2; 24.21–22; 25.15. **10.5–7** The social "world upside down"; see 10.16; Prov 26.1; 30.21–23; Isa 3.4–5. **10.8–9** See Prov 26.27; Pss 7.14–16; 9.15–16, which focus on judgment. **10.10** The

No one knows what is to
happen,
and who can tell anyone what
the future holds?
15 The toil of fools wears them out,
for they do not even know the
way to town.

16 Alas for you, O land, when your
king is a servant,[w]
and your princes feast in the
morning!
17 Happy are you, O land, when
your king is a nobleman,
and your princes feast at the
proper time—
for strength, and not for
drunkenness!
18 Through sloth the roof sinks in,
and through indolence the
house leaks.
19 Feasts are made for laughter;
wine gladdens life,
and money meets every need.
20 Do not curse the king, even in
your thoughts,
or curse the rich, even in your
bedroom;
for a bird of the air may carry
your voice,
or some winged creature tell
the matter.

The Value of Diligence

11 Send out your bread upon the
waters,
for after many days you will get
it back.
2 Divide your means seven ways, or
even eight,
for you do not know what
disaster may happen
on earth.
3 When clouds are full,
they empty rain on the earth;
whether a tree falls to the south
or to the north,
in the place where the tree
falls, there it will lie.
4 Whoever observes the wind will
not sow;
and whoever regards the clouds
will not reap.
5 Just as you do not know how the
breath comes to the bones in the mother's
womb, so you do not know the work of
God, who makes everything.
6 In the morning sow your seed, and
at evening do not let your hands be idle;
for you do not know which will prosper,
this or that, or whether both alike will
be good.

Youth and Death

7 Light is sweet, and it is pleasant for
the eyes to see the sun.
8 Even those who live many years
should rejoice in them all; yet let them remember that the days of darkness will be
many. All that comes is vanity.
9 Rejoice, young man, while you are
young, and let your heart cheer you in the
days of your youth. Follow the inclination
of your heart and the desire of your eyes,
but know that for all these things God will
bring you into judgment.
10 Banish anxiety from your mind,
and put away pain from your body; for
youth and the dawn of life are vanity.
12 Remember your creator in the
days of your youth, before the
days of trouble come, and the years draw
near when you will say, "I have no plea-

[w] Or *a child*

translation is uncertain. **10.16–17** See note on 10.5–7; Prov 31.4–5. **10.19** See Ps 104.15. **11.1–2** Sometimes taken as metaphorical for almsgiving; probably literal and metaphorical advice concerning sea trade in grain (*bread*, v. 1) and other endeavors; see 11.6. **11.5** See Ps 139.13–16. **11.6** *Sow*, both literal and metaphorical for every sort of human undertaking; see note on 11.1–2; Job 31.8; Prov 11.18; 22.8; Mic 6.15; Gal 6.7. **11.9** *Judgment*. See notes on 3.17; 8.5–6. **11.10** *Anxiety*. See note on 7.3.

12.1–8 A prose poem on death often read as an allegory of aging, in which images represent parts of the aging body (e.g., *women who grind* are the teeth and *those who look* the eyes, v. 3). More likely, the passage portrays a village funeral (12.5–7) to remind readers (12.1) of their own coming death. **12.1** Continuation of the advice to enjoy life in the face of death (see note on 9.7–10). *Creator*. See 12.7. **12.2** For the dead, the world is no more. For mourners, death seems the un-creation of the entire world (human as microcosm) in which the light-bearers of Gen 1 are undone (11.7–8; see Job 3.4–5, 9; Isa 13.9–10).

sure in them"; 2 before the sun and the
light and the moon and the stars are dark-
ened and the clouds return with[x] the
rain; 3 in the day when the guards of the
house tremble, and the strong men are
bent, and the women who grind cease
working because they are few, and those
who look through the windows see dimly;
4 when the doors on the street are shut,
and the sound of the grinding is low, and
one rises up at the sound of a bird, and all
the daughters of song are brought low;
5 when one is afraid of heights, and ter-
rors are in the road; the almond tree blos-
soms, the grasshopper drags itself along[y]
and desire fails; because all must go to
their eternal home, and the mourners will
go about the streets; 6 before the silver
cord is snapped,[z] and the golden bowl is
broken, and the pitcher is broken at the
fountain, and the wheel broken at the cis-
tern, 7 and the dust returns to the earth as
it was, and the breath[a] returns to God
who gave it. 8 Vanity of vanities, says the
Teacher;[b] all is vanity.

Epilogue

9 Besides being wise, the Teacher[b]
also taught the people knowledge, weigh-
ing and studying and arranging many
proverbs. 10 The Teacher[b] sought to find
pleasing words, and he wrote words of
truth plainly.

11 The sayings of the wise are like
goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the
collected sayings that are given by one
shepherd.[c] 12 Of anything beyond these,
my child, beware. Of making many books
there is no end, and much study is a wea-
riness of the flesh.

13 The end of the matter; all has been
heard. Fear God, and keep his command-
ments; for that is the whole duty of every-
one. 14 For God will bring every deed into
judgment, including[d] every secret thing,
whether good or evil.

x Or *after*; Heb *'ahar* y Or *is a burden*
z Syr Vg Compare Gk: Heb *is removed*
a Or *the spirit* b *Qoheleth*, traditionally rendered *Preacher* c Meaning of Heb uncertain
d Or *into the judgment on*

Clouds. See Ezek 32.7–8; Joel 2.2. **12.3** The effects of mourning described; people are wracked with dismay and work ceases. *Are bent*, perhaps "writhe." *See dimly*, because of grief (see Lam 5.17). **12.4** *One rises*, or "the sound of a bird rises," as the mourners grow silent. **12.5** The sense of the first part of this verse is very uncertain. **12.6** Images of death. *Wheel*, or "jar." **12.7** See Gen 2.7; 3.19. The thought of this verse seems to contradict 3.21. *Breath* does not refer to an "immortal soul," a notion foreign to Qoheleth. **12.8** *Vanity of vanities*. The body of the book ends as it began (1.2).

12.9–13 An epilogue by the author (who has created Qoheleth as a literary persona) or by an editor of the book (see 1.1; Introduction).

THE SONG OF SOLOMON

THE SONG OF SOLOMON (also known as the "Song of Songs," "Canticles," and "the Song") is a rich and sensual love song.

Purpose

The Song of Solomon has been understood in radically different ways. In the traditional Jewish understanding, the Song is a *religious allegory* recounting God's love for Israel and the history of their relationship. For Christians it is an allegory of Christ's love for the church. These allegorical interpretations enabled the Song to become sacred scripture. Seen as *sacred marriage liturgy*, the Song is, or at least is derived from, a Mesopotamian ritual of marriage between two gods, the fertility god Dummuzi-Tammuz (perhaps represented by the king) and his sister Inanna-Astarte (represented by a priestess). A recent *mortuary song* theory identifies the Song's setting as funerary repasts (or orgies) that affirmed life by setting the power of love against the power of death. According to the *wedding song* interpretation (implicitly followed by the NRSV in its choice of verb tenses), the poem describes an actual wedding. The lovers are regarded as bride and groom celebrating their nuptials. Parallels to songs sung at nineteenth-century Palestinian Arab weddings have been used to support this theory. The Song is also seen as *secular love poetry*. In this view, the poem portrays an erotic love between two young people who are not yet betrothed and whose union is not yet recognized by the girl's family, but who look forward to public acceptance of their union and to its culmination in marriage. This is the interpretation followed in the following notes. The other approaches do not necessarily deny that the Song depicts an erotic, noncultic love, but they regard this level of meaning as superficial or incomplete. There are, however, no signs that the author intended to depict any sort of experience other than human, sexual love. Nevertheless, one may legitimately bring meanings to a book as well as draw them from it. As a superb portrayal of adolescent erotic love, the words of the Song can—by a bold

reinterpretation—be applied to other types of love, such as the divine benevolence that bestows loving blessings on humankind, the human devotion that transcends death, or the mature sexual communion solemnized in marriage.

Setting

Judging from its art and control of language, the Song is a product of deliberate artistry, perhaps composed by a professional singer for entertainment at festivities. Similar Egyptian love songs occasionally define themselves as "entertainment" (lit. "diverting the heart") and were sung by professional male and female singers at banquets such as are portrayed in many tombs. Similar festivities are a likely setting for the Song's original use.

Like Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, the Song is attributed to King Solomon (1.1), the archetypal wise man and lover. But nothing in the poem supports that identification, and the title is probably a later addition. The Song's actual author is unknown.

Opinions on the book's structure vary greatly. Some scholars believe it is a unified poem constructed on a tight, intricate pattern, while others consider it a loose anthology of originally independent poems from different sources. One view, popular in the nineteenth century, holds that the poem is a drama whose unity resides in a cohesive plot (such as a story of Solomon taking an unwilling rustic maiden to his palace). Others hold that the Song is a single poem written by a single author but lacking any strict overall pattern. Its cohesiveness comes from the presentation of consistent characters who express the same emotions in similar language throughout the Song.

The dating of the Song is uncertain, since there is nothing to tie it to a specific historical setting. It has been assigned dates ranging from the time of Solomon (mid-tenth century B.C.E.) down to the third or second century B.C.E. The linguistic characteristics of the poem tend to confirm a later (fourth or third century) dating for its present form. However, it incorporates themes and usages from much earlier—probably pre-Israelite—times.

The Song belongs to a tradition of love poetry known elsewhere in the ancient Near East. Similar language and motifs appear in Mesopotamian sacred marriage songs. Even closer are the Egyptian love songs (early thirteenth to mid-twelfth century B.C.E.), which speak of love between unmarried young people who express their longings, joys, and pains as well as their fascination with the new experiences of love.

By portraying lovers, the Song represents an idea—and an ideal—of love. It shows a relationship charged with erotic energy and a joyous, sensual world in which the land's rebirth in spring is the counterpart of the girl's blossoming into womanhood. Sexuality is treated with restraint and indirection and affirmed without coyness or apology. The love portrayed is thoroughly egalitarian and mutual, with both lovers desiring, behaving, feeling, and speaking in the same way and with the same intensity. The constraints of the patriarchal society do not

seem to determine the lovers' behavior toward each other, though they do restrict the girl's freedom of movement.

Love in the Song is seen as a communion of souls, expressed by tightly interlocking dialogue (e.g., 1.9–17; 2.1–3a; 4.1–5.1). It is also a mode of perception, for when the lovers look at each other they see a world of their own. Each describes the other's body, dwelling lovingly on each part as if to caress it with words and capturing its essence in striking (sometimes startling) images. These images come to life on their own and combine to describe a rich and blessed landscape (4.1–7; 5.10–16; 6.4–10; 7.2–10a), the Arcady of love.

Michael V. Fox

1 The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's.

Colloquy of Woman and Friends

2 Let him kiss me with the kisses of
his mouth!
For your love is better than wine,
3 your anointing oils are
fragrant,
your name is perfume
poured out;
therefore the maidens love you.
4 Draw me after you, let us make
haste.
The king has brought me into
his chambers.
We will exult and rejoice in you;
we will extol your love more
than wine;
rightly do they love you.
5 I am black and beautiful,
O daughters of Jerusalem,
like the tents of Kedar,
like the curtains of Solomon.
6 Do not gaze at me because I am
dark,
because the sun has gazed
on me.
My mother's sons were angry
with me;
they made me keeper of the
vineyards,
but my own vineyard I have
not kept!
7 Tell me, you whom my soul loves,
where you pasture your flock,
where you make it lie down
at noon;
for why should I be like one who
is veiled
beside the flocks of your
companions?

1.1 *Song of Songs*, a superlative meaning "the sublime song."

1.2–8 The maiden's complaint. **1.2** *Let him . . . your*. The lovers sometimes address each other in the third person (e.g., 1.12; 2.1–3), which carries a tone of respect. *Let him kiss me*. The Hebrew suggests a pun on the term meaning "give to drink" (used in 8.2). *Love* (Hebrew *dodim*), meaning physical expressions of love. **1.4** *King* is probably a term of affection and esteem referring to the youth. **1.5–8** The girl's brothers grew angry at her (for her new love interests?) and tried to coop her up at home. **1.5** *Black and beautiful*, better "black *but* beautiful." As 1.6 shows, the maiden does not consider "blackness," i.e., sunburn, to be part of her beauty. The *daughters of Jerusalem* are the Shulammite's girlfriends, who listen to her effusions and tease her a bit (5.9). *Kedar*, an Arabian tribe whose name means "dark." *Curtains*, i.e., tent curtains. *Solomon*, or read "Salmah," also an Arabian tribe. *Vineyard*, an allusion to womanhood (cf. 8.12). **1.7–8** *One who is veiled*, a harlot (Gen 38.14–15). The girl is being provocative and gets teased in return in v. 8. To *pasture* or "graze" (Hebrew *ro'eh*), together with homonyms, often enters into wordplays alluding to lovemaking (his beloved is called *ra'yati, my love* [v. 9], from a homonymous root). As for where this shepherd "grazes," see 2.16; 4.16–5.1.

8 If you do not know,
O fairest among women,
follow the tracks of the flock,
and pasture your kids
beside the shepherds' tents.

Colloquy of Lovers

9 I compare you, my love,
to a mare among Pharaoh's
chariots.
10 Your cheeks are comely with
ornaments,
your neck with strings of jewels.
11 We will make you ornaments
of gold,
studded with silver.

12 While the king was on his couch,
my nard gave forth its
fragrance.
13 My beloved is to me a bag of myrrh
that lies between my breasts.
14 My beloved is to me a cluster of
henna blossoms
in the vineyards of En-gedi.

15 Ah, you are beautiful, my love;
ah, you are beautiful;
your eyes are doves.
16 Ah, you are beautiful, my
beloved,
truly lovely.
Our couch is green;
17 the beams of our house are
cedar,
our rafters[a] are pine.

2 I am a rose[b] of Sharon,
a lily of the valleys.

2 As a lily among brambles,
so is my love among maidens.

3 As an apple tree among the trees
of the wood,
so is my beloved among
young men.
With great delight I sat in his
shadow,
and his fruit was sweet to
my taste.
4 He brought me to the banqueting
house,
and his intention toward me
was love.
5 Sustain me with raisins,
refresh me with apples;
for I am faint with love.
6 O that his left hand were under
my head,
and that his right hand
embraced me!
7 I adjure you, O daughters of
Jerusalem,
by the gazelles or the wild
does:
do not stir up or awaken love
until it is ready!

Springtime Rhapsody

8 The voice of my beloved!
Look, he comes,
leaping upon the mountains,
bounding over the hills.
9 My beloved is like a gazelle
or a young stag.
Look, there he stands
behind our wall,
gazing in at the windows,
looking through the lattice.
10 My beloved speaks and says
to me:

a Meaning of Heb uncertain *b* Heb *crocus*

1.9–2.7 An admiration dialogue in which the lovers speak to each other and praise each other's beauty as a whole; set in a bower in the fields. **1.12** The *king* is the youth, reclining royally on a leafy "couch" under the trees (1.16–17). *Nard* is an expensive spice that emits scent when rubbed; *myrrh* and *henna* too are fragrant spices. The girl's beloved lies nestled between her breasts like a pouch of spices. *En-gedi*, where henna grows, is an oasis on the Dead Sea. **1.15–16** The boy speaks in v. 15, the girl replies in v. 16. **2.1** *I am a rose* (better "crocus") *of Sharon* is not a boast, but a modest self-appraisal; the girl says she is but one of thousands. Her beloved turns this into high praise: she is unique (v. 2); and she replies in kind (v. 3). **2.4** *Banqueting house* (lit. "house of wine") alludes to a garden booth (cf. 1.17). **2.5** The fruits that the lovesick girl requires are her lover's caresses (cf. 2.3). **2.6** This sentence should probably be translated as a statement. **2.7** This same request recurs in 3.5; 8.4. The maiden does not want her friends to disturb *love*, i.e., the couple's embrace. *Gazelles, does*, words for making "oaths" without mentioning God's name.

2.8–17 The boy appears at his beloved's window just before dawn and urges her to come away with him to the countryside, now abloom in the

"Arise, my love, my fair one,
and come away;
11 for now the winter is past,
the rain is over and gone.
12 The flowers appear on the earth;
the time of singing has come,
and the voice of the turtledove
is heard in our land.
13 The fig tree puts forth its figs,
and the vines are in blossom;
they give forth fragrance.
Arise, my love, my fair one,
and come away.
14 O my dove, in the clefts of the rock,
in the covert of the cliff,
let me see your face,
let me hear your voice;
for your voice is sweet,
and your face is lovely.
15 Catch us the foxes,
the little foxes,
that ruin the vineyards—
for our vineyards are in blossom."

16 My beloved is mine and I am his;
he pastures his flock among the lilies.
17 Until the day breathes
and the shadows flee,
turn, my beloved, be like a gazelle
or a young stag on the cleft mountains.[c]

A Nighttime Search

3 Upon my bed at night
I sought him whom my soul loves;
I sought him, but found him not;
I called him, but he gave no answer.[d]
2 "I will rise now and go about the city,
in the streets and in the squares;
I will seek him whom my soul loves."
I sought him, but found him not.
3 The sentinels found me,
as they went about in the city.
"Have you seen him whom my soul loves?"
4 Scarcely had I passed them,
when I found him whom my soul loves.
I held him, and would not let him go
until I brought him into my mother's house,
and into the chamber of her that conceived me.
5 I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
by the gazelles or the wild does:
do not stir up or awaken love
until it is ready!

Solomon's Palanquin

6 What is that coming up from the wilderness,
like a column of smoke,
perfumed with myrrh and frankincense,
with all the fragrant powders of the merchant?
7 Look, it is the litter of Solomon!

c Or *on the mountains of Bether*: meaning of Heb uncertain d Gk: Heb lacks this line

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splendor of spring. **2.11** *Winter* in Israel is the rainy season. In April and May the figs and vines begin to ripen and the migrant birds reappear. **2.12** *Singing*. The Hebrew *zamir* may also mean "pruning season" and so may be a wordplay pointing in two directions. **2.15** Meaning of the Hebrew is problematic; *foxes* may be a metaphor for lusty youths, *vineyards* for nubile girls. **2.16** *He pastures his flock* (the Hebrew lacks "his flock"). Her beloved "pastures" or "grazes" among the most delicate and lovely of flowers—the maiden herself (cf. 5.13; 4.16–5.1a). **2.17** The maiden urges her beloved to flee—we may recall her irritable brothers!—before daybreak. *The cleft mountains*, perhaps an anatomical allusion? Better might be "mountains of Bether," hills outside Jerusalem.

3.1–5 A nighttime search for the beloved; cf. 5.2–8. This might all be a dream. **3.5** The happy conclusion; cf. 2.7.

3.6–11 "Solomon's wedding." Though usually understood as an actual royal wedding, this may be a fantasy disguise for the beloved in his humble bower, which is extravagantly pictured as a royal pavilion. **3.6** *What* (Hebrew "who") *is that*, probably an exclamation of surprise, as in the identically phrased 8.5. *Frankincense* is a fragrant balsamic gum whose Hebrew name, *lebonah*, sometimes plays on "Lebanon." **3.7–8** A *litter* is a portable couch; the Hebrew simply has "couch." *Sixty mighty men*: armed guards surround the royal chamber, here perhaps in imagination.

Around it are sixty mighty men
of the mighty men of Israel,
8 all equipped with swords
and expert in war,
each with his sword at his thigh
because of alarms by night.
9 King Solomon made himself a palanquin
from the wood of Lebanon.
10 He made its posts of silver,
its back of gold, its seat of purple;
its interior was inlaid with love.[e]
Daughters of Jerusalem,
11 come out.
Look, O daughters of Zion,
at King Solomon,
at the crown with which his mother crowned him
on the day of his wedding,
on the day of the gladness of his heart.

The Woman's Beauty Extolled

4 How beautiful you are, my love,
how very beautiful!
Your eyes are doves
behind your veil.
Your hair is like a flock of goats,
moving down the slopes of Gilead.
2 Your teeth are like a flock of shorn ewes
that have come up from the washing,
all of which bear twins,
and not one among them is bereaved.
3 Your lips are like a crimson thread,
and your mouth is lovely.
Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate
behind your veil.
4 Your neck is like the tower of David,
built in courses;
on it hang a thousand bucklers,
all of them shields of warriors.
5 Your two breasts are like two fawns,
twins of a gazelle,
that feed among the lilies.
6 Until the day breathes
and the shadows flee,
I will hasten to the mountain of myrrh
and the hill of frankincense.
7 You are altogether beautiful, my love;
there is no flaw in you.
8 Come with me from Lebanon, my bride;
come with me from Lebanon.
Depart[f] from the peak of Amana,
from the peak of Senir and Hermon,
from the dens of lions,
from the mountains of leopards.

9 You have ravished my heart, my sister, my bride,
you have ravished my heart
with a glance of your eyes,
with one jewel of your necklace.
10 How sweet is your love, my sister, my bride!

e Meaning of Heb uncertain *f* Or *Look*

The *alarms by night* may be nocturnal demons. **3.9–11** *Palanquin*, or "pavilion," not necessarily portable. *Inlaid with love*. Emendation yields "inlaid with stones"; cf. Esth 1.6. The *crown* may allude to a floral garland.

4.1–7 A praise song (cf. 5.10–16; 6.4–10; 7.1–9 that describes the beloved part by part with bold and sometimes startling metaphors. The metaphors are often extended by a description pertaining only to the image itself, not to the beloved's appearance. **4.1** *Flock of goats* suggests wavy black tresses cascading over head and shoulders. **4.3** The girl's *veil* casts a shadow that recalls the webbing of membranes in a split pomegranate. **4.4** This image suggests a necklace made up of rows of beads, each of which is like a shield hung on a wall (cf. Ezek 27.11). An actual "Tower of David" is otherwise unknown. **4.6** *The day breathes and the shadows flee*, i.e., at dawn. The hills of myrrh and spices seem to allude to the maiden's breasts.

4.8–5.1 The youth invites his beloved to come away with him, speaking as if she were in far and inaccessible mountains (cf. 2.14), and then lauds her caresses. **4.8** *Lebanon*, a mountain range north of Israel. *Amana*, *Senir*, and *Hermon* are tall mountains in the Anti-Lebanon range, running along the border of present-day Syria and Lebanon. **4.9** *Sister* is a term of endearment, as in the Egyptian love songs, and in no way implies consanguinity. *Bride* too is a term of affection, but it also expresses hopes for the future.

how much better is your love
than wine,
and the fragrance of your oils
than any spice!
11 Your lips distill nectar, my bride;
honey and milk are under your
tongue;
the scent of your garments is
like the scent of Lebanon.
12 A garden locked is my sister,
my bride,
a garden locked, a fountain
sealed.
13 Your channel[g] is an orchard of
pomegranates
with all choicest fruits,
henna with nard,
14 nard and saffron, calamus and
cinnamon,
with all trees of frankincense,
myrrh and aloes,
with all chief spices—
15 a garden fountain, a well of living
water,
and flowing streams from
Lebanon.

16 Awake, O north wind,
and come, O south wind!
Blow upon my garden
that its fragrance may be
wafted abroad.
Let my beloved come to his
garden,
and eat its choicest fruits.

5 I come to my garden, my sister,
my bride;
I gather my myrrh with my
spice,
I eat my honeycomb with my
honey,
I drink my wine with my milk.

Eat, friends, drink,
and be drunk with love.

A Nighttime Search

2 I slept, but my heart was awake.
Listen! my beloved is knocking.
"Open to me, my sister, my love,
my dove, my perfect one;
for my head is wet with dew,
my locks with the drops of the
night."
3 I had put off my garment;
how could I put it on again?
I had bathed my feet;
how could I soil them?
4 My beloved thrust his hand into
the opening,
and my inmost being yearned
for him.
5 I arose to open to my beloved,
and my hands dripped with
myrrh,
my fingers with liquid myrrh,
upon the handles of the bolt.
6 I opened to my beloved,
but my beloved had turned and
was gone.
My soul failed me when he spoke.
I sought him, but did not
find him;
I called him, but he gave
no answer.
7 Making their rounds in the city

g Meaning of Heb uncertain

4.11 *Your lips distill nectar, my bride,* or "drip honeycomb," a striking assonance in Hebrew, *nofet tittofnah siftotayik kallah. The scent of Lebanon.* The fragrant cedars of Lebanon can be smelled from miles away. **4.12** *Garden* and *fountain* are images of feminine sexuality (cf. Prov 5.15–17). The youth extols his beloved's modesty and sexual exclusiveness, while implying his wish to be admitted. **4.13–14** *Channel,* rather the area of a garden irrigated by the channel. *Saffron, calamus,* and the others mentioned are all aromatic spices. The profusion of fruits and spices suggests a fullness of sensual delights. **4.16** The maiden invites the beloved into her garden, her own fresh and fragrant body, which now is *his* garden too, to taste the fruits of love. **5.1** *I come to my garden.* He accepts the invitation and enters the garden, which he now calls his. Then a chorus—the daughters of Jerusalem?—encourages the couple to taste their full of love. *Be drunk with love* (Hebrew *dodim,* "lovemaking") means to give oneself over to sexual ecstasy, as in Prov 5.19; 7.18.

5.2–8 Another nighttime visit and search for the beloved (cf. 3.1–4). **5.2** *I slept, but my heart was awake.* Perhaps the entire passage relates a dream, but the words may also mean that the maiden woke up. **5.4** *Into the opening,* through a window. **5.5** The girl had prepared for the visit by anointing herself with perfumed unguents; cf. Prov 7.17. **5.6** The maiden runs about the streets at night seeking her lover—a strange and dangerous deed. **5.7** The sentinels who guard the walls—perhaps a symbol of proper society (cf. 8.9)—beat her and strip off her garment. Perhaps

the sentinels found me;
they beat me, they wounded me,
they took away my mantle,
those sentinels of the walls.
8 I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
if you find my beloved,
tell him this:
I am faint with love.

Colloquy of the Woman and Her Friends

9 What is your beloved more than another beloved,
O fairest among women?
What is your beloved more than another beloved,
that you thus adjure us?

10 My beloved is all radiant and ruddy,
distinguished among ten thousand.
11 His head is the finest gold;
his locks are wavy,
black as a raven.
12 His eyes are like doves
beside springs of water,
bathed in milk,
fitly set.[h]
13 His cheeks are like beds of spices,
yielding fragrance.
His lips are lilies,
distilling liquid myrrh.
14 His arms are rounded gold,
set with jewels.
His body is ivory work,[h]
encrusted with sapphires.[i]
15 His legs are alabaster columns,
set upon bases of gold.
His appearance is like Lebanon,
choice as the cedars.
16 His speech is most sweet,
and he is altogether desirable.
This is my beloved and this is my friend,
O daughters of Jerusalem.

6 Where has your beloved gone,
O fairest among women?
Which way has your beloved turned,
that we may seek him with you?

2 My beloved has gone down to his garden,
to the beds of spices,
to pasture his flock in the gardens,
and to gather lilies.
3 I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine;
he pastures his flock among the lilies.

The Beloved's Matchless Beauty

4 You are beautiful as Tirzah, my love,
comely as Jerusalem,
terrible as an army with banners.
5 Turn away your eyes from me,
for they overwhelm me!
Your hair is like a flock of goats,
moving down the slopes of Gilead.
6 Your teeth are like a flock of ewes,
that have come up from the washing;
all of them bear twins,
and not one among them is bereaved.
7 Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate
behind your veil.

h Meaning of Heb uncertain *i* Heb *lapis lazuli*

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they are treating her as a prostitute (cf. the behavior of the woman in Prov 7.5–21). Although she is exposed, hurt, and confused, she gives no reason for the sentinel's brutality, as if shrugging it off as a triviality in the face of her need for her lover. **5.8** *Tell him this*, better "do not tell him." She begs her friends *not* to tell her beloved about her love-crazed, distraught behavior.

5.9–16 A praise song using imagery from the plastic arts. **5.10** To be *radiant and ruddy* was considered a sign of health and vigor (Ps 104.15; 1 Sam 16.12; 17.42). **5.16** *His speech is most sweet*, lit. "his palate is sweet drink"—the maiden alludes to her beloved's kisses (cf. 1.2) as well as his speech.

6.1–3 A transition to the next song, returning to the dialogue form of 5.9.

6.4–10 The youth offers another praise song, repeating and expanding 4.1–3. **6.4** The beloved's beauty and majesty equal that of grand cities *Jerusalem* (capital of the Southern Kingdom) and *Tirzah* (for a brief time capital of the North). The maiden is not just a pretty girl, but a dignified, even "awesome," woman (cf. 6.10).

8 There are sixty queens and eighty
concubines,
and maidens without number.
9 My dove, my perfect one, is the
only one,
the darling of her mother,
flawless to her that bore
her.
The maidens saw her and called
her happy;
the queens and concubines also,
and they praised her.
10 "Who is this that looks forth like
the dawn,
fair as the moon, bright as
the sun,
terrible as an army with
banners?"

11 I went down to the nut orchard,
to look at the blossoms of the
valley,
to see whether the vines had
budded,
whether the pomegranates were
in bloom.
12 Before I was aware, my fancy
set me
in a chariot beside my prince.[j]

13[k] Return, return, O Shulammite!
Return, return, that we may
look upon you.

Why should you look upon the
Shulammite,
as upon a dance before two
armies?[l]

Expressions of Praise

7 How graceful are your feet in
sandals,
O queenly maiden!
Your rounded thighs are like
jewels,
the work of a master hand.
2 Your navel is a rounded bowl
that never lacks mixed wine.
Your belly is a heap of wheat,
encircled with lilies.
3 Your two breasts are like two
fawns,
twins of a gazelle.
4 Your neck is like an ivory tower.
Your eyes are pools in Heshbon,
by the gate of Bath-rabbim.
Your nose is like a tower of
Lebanon,
overlooking Damascus.
5 Your head crowns you like
Carmel,
and your flowing locks are like
purple;
a king is held captive in the
tresses.[m]

6 How fair and pleasant you are,
O loved one, delectable
maiden![n]
7 You are stately[o] as a palm tree,
and your breasts are like its
clusters.
8 I say I will climb the palm tree

[j] Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain [k] Ch 7.1 in Heb [l] Or *dance of Mahanaim* [m] Meaning of Heb uncertain [n] Syr: Heb *in delights* [o] Heb *This your stature is*

6.8–10 There are a great many women of rank, but this girl is unique and flawless, as even the (hypothetical) noblewomen declare in v. 10. **6.12** In this obscure verse, the girl seems to be saying that she was overwhelmed by emotion in the presence of her beloved, who is—for her—a nobleman. **6.13a** This verse seems to be spoken by a group (the girls of Jerusalem?), while v. 13b (where the "you" is plural) is the youth's response. *Shulammite*, actually *the* Shulammite; the word is not a proper name but an epithet that probably means "the perfect one." *A dance before two armies* with a minor change may be read as "a camp dancer," i.e., a woman who dances in the camps of soldiers or shepherds.

7.1–7 A praise song with metaphors evoking intangible qualities: plenitude, preciousness, nobility, and grandeur. **7.2** *That never lacks mixed wine*, praise of the bowl, not the belly. **7.4** *Ivory tower*, i.e., decorated with ivory, an image suggestive of a long and graceful neck adorned with an ivory necklace. *Heshbon*, eighty kilometers east of Jerusalem, retains ruins of a large reservoir dating from the eighth century B.C.E. *Bath-rabbim*, presumably the name of a gate or location in Heshbon, means "daughter of noblemen" and alludes to the beloved. The *tower of Lebanon* suggests loftiness and pride and plays on the Hebrew *lebonah*, "frankincense." **7.5** The *Carmel* is a verdant mountain range in northwestern Israel. Its name plays on *karmil*, a red-purple cloth. *Purple* cloth was a sign of royalty. A "king"—the youth himself—is trapped by the maiden's long, curled tresses.

7.8–14 An admiration dialogue in which the lovers speak to each other and praise each other's

and lay hold of its branches.
O may your breasts be like
clusters of the vine,
and the scent of your breath
like apples,
9 and your kisses[p] like the best
wine
that goes down[q] smoothly,
gliding over lips and teeth.[r]

10 I am my beloved's,
and his desire is for me.
11 Come, my beloved,
let us go forth into the fields,
and lodge in the villages;
12 let us go out early to the
vineyards,
and see whether the vines have
budded,
whether the grape blossoms have
opened
and the pomegranates are
in bloom.
There I will give you my love.
13 The mandrakes give forth
fragrance,
and over our doors are all
choice fruits,
new as well as old,
which I have laid up for you,
O my beloved.

8 O that you were like a brother
to me,
who nursed at my mother's
breast!
If I met you outside, I would
kiss you,
and no one would despise me.
2 I would lead you and bring you
into the house of my mother,
and into the chamber of the
one who bore me.[s]
I would give you spiced wine
to drink,
the juice of my pomegranates.
3 O that his left hand were under
my head,
and that his right hand
embraced me!
4 I adjure you, O daughters of
Jerusalem,
do not stir up or awaken love
until it is ready!

5 Who is that coming up from the
wilderness,
leaning upon her beloved?

Under the apple tree I
awakened you.
There your mother was in labor
with you;
there she who bore you was in labor.

Love's Power

6 Set me as a seal upon your heart,
as a seal upon your arm;
for love is strong as death,
passion fierce as the grave.
Its flashes are flashes of fire,
a raging flame.
7 Many waters cannot quench love,
neither can floods drown it.
If one offered for love
all the wealth of one's house,
it would be utterly scorned.

p Heb *palate* q Heb *down for my lover*
r Gk Syr Vg: Heb *lips of sleepers* s Gk Syr: Heb *my mother; she* (or *you*) *will teach me*

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beauty as a whole (cf. 1.9–17; 2.1–3). **7.8** *Your breath*, lit. nose, an allusion to the custom of nose-kissing. **7.9** *That goes down smoothly*. The Hebrew reads, "that flows smoothly to my lover." The NRSV's emendation obscures the fact that the maiden speaks here. She breaks into her lover's sentence and completes it with an offer of her kisses, showing that she reciprocates his desire. *Gliding over lips and teeth*. A better emendation produces "flowing smoothly to my beloved, dripping on scarlet lips." **7.11** *Villages* (Hebrew *kefarim*), a pun, meaning both villages and henna bushes. **7.12** *My love*. The Hebrew here is *dodim*, which means "lovemaking" (1.2). **7.13** *Mandrakes* (Hebrew *duda'im*, suggestive of *dodim*, "lovemaking") were considered an aphrodisiac (Gen 30.14–24). *New as well as old*, i.e., fruits of all sorts.

8.1–7 Expressions of love. **8.1** The girl wishes she could demonstrate her love publicly as she could to a brother. **8.2** *My pomegranates*, her breasts. **8.5a** As in 3.6 an exclamation of unknown meaning, not a real question. **8.5b** *I awakened you*, perhaps after spending the night in the countryside (7.11). *Was in labor*, or "conceived." The setting of coitus was thought to affect the offspring (Gen 30.31–43). Note that the youth is as sweet as apples (2.3).

8.6–7 The maiden declares the fierce power of love and the eternality of its bond. A *seal* was used to stamp documents and functioned like a signature; it would always be kept on one's person. *Flashes*, or flaming arrows. *Raging flame* is a better translation for *shalhevetyah* than the traditional "flame of the Lord [Yah]." The name of

8 We have a little sister,
and she has no breasts.
What shall we do for our sister,
on the day when she is spoken for?
9 If she is a wall,
we will build upon her a battlement of silver;
but if she is a door,
we will enclose her with boards of cedar.
10 I was a wall,
and my breasts were like towers;
then I was in his eyes
as one who brings[t] peace.
11 Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon;
he entrusted the vineyard to keepers;
each one was to bring for its fruit a thousand pieces of silver.
12 My vineyard, my very own, is for myself;
you, O Solomon, may have the thousand,
and the keepers of the fruit two hundred!

13 O you who dwell in the gardens,
my companions are listening for your voice;
let me hear it.

14 Make haste, my beloved,
and be like a gazelle
or a young stag
upon the mountains of spices!

[t] Or *finds*

God does not appear in this book. **8.8–10** Reconciliation with the brothers (cf. 1.6). They promise to lavish wedding ornaments upon their sister when she is mature. They doubt that she is ready, but she insists that she *is* (v. 10). *I was as a wall.* The Hebrew has "I am a wall." She is a wall (probably implying chastity) with "towers"—mature breasts. **8.11–12** The youth asserts that not even Solomon's rich vineyard could compare to *his* vineyard, which is the maiden herself. And whereas Solomon gave his vineyards to *keepers*, the youth will tend his alone. *Baal-hamon.* The location is unknown; the name means "possessor of wealth" and alludes to Solomon.

ISAIAH

THE BOOK OF ISAIAH is a composite work, the product of several different prophets who ministered at different periods in the history of Israel. Scholars normally distinguish between three main sections in the book: chs. 1–39, referred to as First Isaiah and attributed in general to the eighth-century Judean prophet whose name the book bears; chs. 40–55, referred to as Second Isaiah, or Deutero-Isaiah, and attributed to an unknown prophet who lived in Babylon during the Babylonian exile of the sixth century; and chs. 56–66, referred to as Third Isaiah, or Trito-Isaiah, and attributed to a prophet or prophets who lived in Judah after the return from Babylonian exile in 539 B.C.E.

First Isaiah

According to the superscription (Isa 1.1), Isaiah son of Amoz prophesied in Jerusalem during the reign of the four Judean kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. If the vision in Isa 6.1 was Isaiah's inaugural vision, he began prophesying in the year of Uzziah's death (ca. 738 B.C.E.), and while the end of his ministry is less certain, it extended at least until 701, and perhaps as late as 688 B.C.E. Isaiah's datable oracles cluster in three main periods: the period of the Syro-Ephraimite war (735–732 B.C.E.), when Syria and Israel attacked Judah (Isa 7.1–2); the period of anti-Assyrian agitation in the west against Sargon II (ca. 720–710 B.C.E.); and the period of Hezekiah's revolt against Sennacherib (ca. 705–701, possibly again in 689–88 B.C.E.). There is evidence that during his long ministry Isaiah adapted and reused early oracles in new historical settings; some oracles originally directed against Syria and Israel at the time of the Syro-Ephraimite war were later given an anti-Assyrian slant.

Though the editorial process cannot be fully recovered, the genuine Isaian oracles seem to have been preserved in several subcollections. Chs. 1–5 primarily contain oracles against God's own people. The core of chs. 6–11 appears to be a collection from the time of the Syro-Ephraimite war. Chs. 13–23 contain oracles against the nations, chs. 28–33 have oracles on the revolt against Sennacherib.

Not all the material in chs. 1–39 can be attributed to Isaiah of Jerusalem,

however. In addition to individual oracles whose authenticity is questioned by one scholar or another, three major blocks of material in chs. 1–39 are clearly not the work of Isaiah of Jerusalem. Chs. 36–39 are largely prose narrative taken from 2 Kings 18.13–20.19 and secondarily inserted into the book of Isaiah. Chs. 34–35 are much closer in style and content to Second or Third Isaiah and should probably be dated to the exilic or postexilic period. Chs. 24–27, often referred to as the Isaiah Apocalypse, contain proto-apocalyptic oracles that stand in marked contrast to those of Isaiah of Jerusalem. While Isaiah's oracles are rooted in particular historical contexts and his threats and promises do not dissolve the reality of those contexts, the oracles in chs. 24–27 are very difficult to root in any historical context and are marked by a heavy dependence on mythological motifs. Scholars normally date these chapters to the early sixth century B.C.E. or later.

Isaiah of Jerusalem was rooted in the Zion tradition, which celebrated God as the great king of heaven and earth, Jerusalem (Zion) as the city God chose to be his royal dwelling, and the kings of the Davidic line as God's anointed viceregents on earth. The influence of all three aspects of this tradition are evident in the prophet's message. Isaiah's inaugural vision (6.1–4) portrays God as the exalted king, from whose terrifying holiness even the most august angels must hide their eyes. That vision colors the prophet's attitude toward anything that humans might lift up as a rival for the fear and allegiance that rightly belong only to the divine suzerain (see 2.12–22; 8.13). Isaiah assumed that God had founded Zion/Jerusalem (14.32), lived in it (8.18), and hence would ultimately save it. Nevertheless, since the holy God would not live in a moral slum, a morally defiled Jerusalem must be purified by judgment before the city could be saved (1.21–28; 29.1–8). Isaiah's adherence to the Davidic royal tradition is clear from his assurance to Ahaz (7.3–17) and his several portrayals of the ideal king (9.1–7; 11.1–10; 32.1–2).

Second Isaiah

Chs. 40–55 presuppose an Israelite audience living in Babylon toward the end of the Babylonian exile (597–539 B.C.E.). The prophet announces to this audience that the end of their exile in Babylon is imminent. Babylon, not Assyria, is Israel's main enemy, and the burden of the prophet's message is the promise of deliverance, not the threat of judgment. Moreover, the prophet twice mentions Cyrus, the Persian ruler (44.28; 45.1), as a figure who has come to the attention of his audience. Such notice certainly presupposes Cyrus's dethroning of his Median overlord Astyages (550 B.C.E.) and perhaps Cyrus's defeat of the Lydian king Croesus (547/6 B.C.E.) as well. Thus this anonymous prophet's work can probably be dated between 545 and 539 B.C.E.

Though clearly dependent on First Isaiah's message, Second Isaiah is also easily distinguishable. Second Isaiah shares the eighth-century prophet's empha-

sis on the holiness of God and his vision of God as the great king, and he at least adapts the earlier prophet's ideal of the Davidic king, democratizing it to apply it to the entire nation. Unlike First Isaiah, however, the message of Second Isaiah is primarily that of consolation, and this message is couched in a distinctive style. In relatively long, markedly lyrical oracles, Second Isaiah reassures the exiles that God still controls history. Despite present appearances, the Lord will soon demonstrate his power by bringing the Israelites back to their own country in a second exodus more glorious than the first. Before this God, who has created all things, the Babylonian idols are as nothing; God's judgment on both the Babylonians and their gods is imminent.

Third Isaiah

Chs. 56–66 are so similar stylistically to Second Isaiah they must be attributed either to the same author or to some disciple or disciples who used the poetry of Second Isaiah as a model. The historical setting presupposed is different from that of Second Isaiah, however. The audience addressed by Third Isaiah is once more living in the land of Judah. Isa 66.1 suggests work had already begun to rebuild the temple, a work completed in the years 520–515 B.C.E. The initial return from Babylonian exile has already taken place, but this second exodus has not been as glorious as Second Isaiah predicted, and life for the returnees in Judah remains very harsh. In these difficult circumstances there are both economic oppression and, in an attempt to cope with life's problems, a resurgence in the pagan rituals long indigenous in Israel. In response to this situation, Third Isaiah announces God's imminent judgment on the oppressors and syncretists. The prophet promises the righteous that God's glorious deliverance of Israel, long promised by Second Isaiah, is soon to be realized. Soon the wealth of the nations will pour into Jerusalem along with the rest of Israel's exiles, and the shame and sorrow of the recent past will be replaced with eternal joy and prosperity. *J. J. M. Roberts*

1 The vision of Isaiah son of Amoz,
which he saw concerning Judah and
Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham,
Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

God's Lawsuit Against Israel

2 Hear, O heavens, and listen,
O earth;
for the LORD has spoken:
I reared children and brought
them up,
but they have rebelled
against me.
3 The ox knows its owner,
and the donkey its master's
crib;
but Israel does not know,
my people do not understand.

4 Ah, sinful nation,
people laden with iniquity,
offspring who do evil,
children who deal corruptly,
who have forsaken the LORD,
who have despised the Holy
One of Israel,
who are utterly estranged!
5 Why do you seek further
beatings?
Why do you continue to rebel?
The whole head is sick,
and the whole heart faint.
6 From the sole of the foot even to
the head,
there is no soundness in it,
but bruises and sores
and bleeding wounds;
they have not been drained, or
bound up,
or softened with oil.

7 Your country lies desolate,
your cities are burned with fire;
in your very presence
aliens devour your land;
it is desolate, as overthrown by
foreigners.
8 And daughter Zion is left
like a booth in a vineyard,
like a shelter in a cucumber field,
like a besieged city.
9 If the LORD of hosts
had not left us a few survivors,
we would have been like Sodom,
and become like Gomorrah.

1.1 Superscription. In contrast to other superscriptions found in Isaiah (2.1; 13.1; 14.28; 15.1; 17.1; 19.1; 21.1, 11, 13; 22.1; 23.1; 30.6), this superscription is intended as a heading for all of chs. 1–39 (cf. Jer 1.1–3; Ezek 1.1–3). It characterizes the book as a prophetic message from God given to Judah by Isaiah, and it puts the message in a limited historical context.

1.2–20 God brings a legal suit against his people because of their breach of the Mosaic covenant. **1.2–3** The accusation. *Heavens* and *earth* are summoned as witnesses (cf. Deut 32.1; Ps 50; Mic 6.1–8) in this lawsuit because they were witnesses when the covenant was originally made (Deut 4.23–26; 30.19; 31.24–30). God, the father of the people of Israel, charges them with being rebellious children (Deut 32.5–6), a crime subject to the death penalty in Israelite law (Deut 21.18–21). **1.3** *Israel* is sometimes used as a specific reference to the Northern Kingdom, but here it is an inclusive designation for God's people, since Zion, the capital city of Judah, the Southern Kingdom, is mentioned (1.8). The nation's behavior shows less understanding than that normally encountered in dumb animals (cf. Jer 8.7). **1.4–9** Direct address to Israel underscoring the folly of its wicked behavior. **1.4** *Ah*, sometimes translated *Ho* (55.1), is a simple exclamation to get the attention of those being addressed (5.8, 11, 18). The following words identify them as God's wicked *children* mentioned in v. 2. *Holy One of Israel* is one of Isaiah's favorite designations for God (5.19, 24; 10.20; 12.6; 17.7; 29.19; 30.11–12, 15; 31.1; 37.23). It expresses the unapproachable majesty and sanctity of this God (cf. 6.1–5) who nonetheless graciously chose Israel and lives in its midst (12.6; Ex 24.9–11). **1.5–6** To treat such a God with contempt is utter folly. Israel has already been disciplined so harshly that it is like a person whose whole body is covered with untreated wounds yet continues to provoke more punishment. **1.7–8** The historical reality behind Isaiah's metaphor of discipline appears to be the desolation of the land caused by one of the Assyrian invasions, probably that of Sennacherib in 701 B.C.E. *Zion* is another name for Jerusalem, which Sennacherib isolated and besieged. The expression *daughter Zion* personifies the city as a young woman and carries an undertone of affection or sympathy. **1.9** *LORD of hosts* is another of Isaiah's choice designations for God; it occurs fifty-six times in Isa 1–39. The epithet portrays God as the king and leader of the army of heavenly beings (1 Kings 22.19) and thus underscores God's great imperial power (2 Sam 6.2; Ps 24.10; Isa 6.3). *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* were proverbial as cities utterly destroyed by God (Gen 19.24–29; Deut 29.23; Isa 13.19; Jer 49.18;

10 Hear the word of the LORD,
you rulers of Sodom!
Listen to the teaching of
our God,
you people of Gomorrah!
11 What to me is the multitude of
your sacrifices?
says the LORD;
I have had enough of burnt
offerings of rams
and the fat of fed beasts;
I do not delight in the blood
of bulls,
or of lambs, or of goats.

12 When you come to appear
before me,[a]
who asked this from your
hand?
Trample my courts no more;
13 bringing offerings is futile;
incense is an abomination
to me.
New moon and sabbath and
calling of convocation—
I cannot endure solemn
assemblies with iniquity.
14 Your new moons and your
appointed festivals
my soul hates;
they have become a burden
to me,
I am weary of bearing them.
15 When you stretch out your
hands,
I will hide my eyes from you;
even though you make many
prayers,
I will not listen;
your hands are full of blood.
16 Wash yourselves; make yourselves
clean;
remove the evil of your doings
from before my eyes;
cease to do evil,
17 learn to do good;
seek justice,
rescue the oppressed,
defend the orphan,
plead for the widow.

18 Come now, let us argue it out,
says the LORD:
though your sins are like scarlet,
they shall be like snow;
though they are red like crimson,
they shall become like wool.
19 If you are willing and obedient,
you shall eat the good of the
land;
20 but if you refuse and rebel,
you shall be devoured by the
sword;
for the mouth of the LORD has
spoken.

Renewal of a Tarnished Jerusalem

21 How the faithful city
has become a whore!
She that was full of justice,
righteousness lodged in her—
but now murderers!
22 Your silver has become dross,
your wine is mixed with water.
23 Your princes are rebels
and companions of thieves.
Everyone loves a bribe
and runs after gifts.
They do not defend the orphan,
and the widow's cause does not
come before them.

a Or *see my face*

50.40; Am 4.11; Zeph 2.9). **1.10–17** God rejects ritual worship until such rituals are accompanied by a genuine change to moral behavior (cf. 29.13–14; Jer 6.20; 7.1–15; Am 5.21–24). **1.10** *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* were also proverbial as utterly wicked cities (3.9; Gen 19.1–23; Deut 32.32; Jer 23.14; Lam 4.6). **1.14** *My soul* is a Hebrew idiom meaning "I." **1.15** *Hands . . . full of blood*, hands stained by murder and violent oppression. **1.17** Because of their relative powerlessness *orphans* and *widows* were two classes of people often subject to oppression in ancient Near Eastern societies. Following the Near Eastern legal tradition, Israelite law extended special concern for their protection (Ex 22.21; Deut 24.17; 27.19), and this concern is also reflected in Israel's other religious literature (Job 31.16; Ps 94.6; Jer 7.6; Zech 7.10). **1.18–20** The covenantal choice of life or death (cf. Deut 30.19–20). **1.18** *Argue*, as in a lawsuit before a judge (cf. Job 23.7). The use of *scarlet* and *crimson* as metaphors for wickedness probably arose from the association of these colors with blood (cf. v. 15); cloth of this color was used in certain sin offerings (Lev 14.4–6, 49–52; Num 19.6).

1.21–28 The once-glorious city must be purged to restore it to its former honor. **1.21–23** God laments the city's corruption. *Whore.* Cf. Jer 3.6–10; Ezek 16, 23; Hos 1–3.

24 Therefore says the Sovereign, the
LORD of hosts, the Mighty
One of Israel:
Ah, I will pour out my wrath on
my enemies,
and avenge myself on my foes!
25 I will turn my hand against you;
I will smelt away your dross as
with lye
and remove all your alloy.
26 And I will restore your judges as
at the first,
and your counselors as at the
beginning.
Afterward you shall be called the
city of righteousness,
the faithful city.

27 Zion shall be redeemed by justice,
and those in her who repent,
by righteousness.
28 But rebels and sinners shall be
destroyed together,
and those who forsake the
LORD shall be consumed.
29 For you shall be ashamed of
the oaks
in which you delighted;
and you shall blush for the
gardens
that you have chosen.
30 For you shall be like an oak
whose leaf withers,
and like a garden without
water.
31 The strong shall become like
tinder,
and their work[b] like a spark;
they and their work shall burn
together,
with no one to quench them.

2 The word that Isaiah son of Amoz
saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

The Glorified Jerusalem

2 In days to come
the mountain of the LORD's
house
shall be established as the highest
of the mountains,
and shall be raised above
the hills;
all the nations shall stream to it.
3 Many peoples shall come
and say,
"Come, let us go up to the
mountain of the LORD,
to the house of the God of
Jacob;
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his
paths."
For out of Zion shall go forth
instruction,
and the word of the LORD from
Jerusalem.
4 He shall judge between the
nations,
and shall arbitrate for many
peoples;
they shall beat their swords into
plowshares,
and their spears into pruning
hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword
against nation,
neither shall they learn war
any more.

b Or *its makers*

1.24–28 God's solution is a purging judgment. **1.24** *Mighty One of Israel* is a unique Isaian variant of the more common epithet *Mighty One of Jacob* (49.26; 60.16; Gen 49.24; Ps 132.2, 5) and portrays God as a warrior. **1.25** *As with lye.* A better reading may be "in a furnace" (cf. 48.10), since lye was not used in the smelting process. **1.26** The *judges* and *counselors* can only refer to royal officials of the Davidic era, since Jerusalem first became an Israelite city in his day (2 Sam 5.6–9). **1.27–28** Only the repentant will survive the judgment (cf. 1.18–20; 33.14–16). **1.29–31** The prophet condemns sacred groves as pagan cult symbols (17.10–11), and in the religious reform of his contemporary, King Hezekiah, they were destroyed (2 Kings 18.4). **1.31** *Strong* here refers to the oak (cf. Am 2.9). *Its makers* (see text note *b*) is a better translation than *their work*; it refers to the human keepers of the grove. There is a wordplay in Hebrew between *its makers* and *their work* in the following line.

2.1 Second superscription. This can be for ch. 2 or chs. 2–4. **2.2–4** Elevated above all other sites as the divine abode (for this motif, cf. Pss 48.1–2; 78.68–69; Ezek 40.2; Zech 14.10), Jerusalem will one day be acknowledged by the nations as the imperial capital where the divine suzerain will settle international disputes, thus bringing an end to war. This oracle also occurs in Mic 4.1–3.

Judgment Threatened Against Jacob

5 O house of Jacob,
come, let us walk
in the light of the LORD!
6 For you have forsaken the ways
of[c] your people,
O house of Jacob.
Indeed they are full of diviners[d]
from the east
and of soothsayers like the
Philistines,
and they clasp hands with
foreigners.
7 Their land is filled with silver
and gold,
and there is no end to their
treasures;
their land is filled with horses,
and there is no end to their
chariots.
8 Their land is filled with idols;
they bow down to the work of
their hands,
to what their own fingers
have made.
9 And so people are humbled,
and everyone is brought low—
do not forgive them!
10 Enter into the rock,
and hide in the dust
from the terror of the LORD,
and from the glory of his
majesty.
11 The haughty eyes of people shall
be brought low,
and the pride of everyone shall
be humbled;
and the LORD alone will be
exalted on that day.
12 For the LORD of hosts has a day
against all that is proud and
lofty,
against all that is lifted up
and high;[e]
13 against all the cedars of Lebanon,
lofty and lifted up;
and against all the oaks of
Bashan;
14 against all the high mountains,
and against all the lofty hills;
15 against every high tower,
and against every fortified wall;
16 against all the ships of Tarshish,
and against all the beautiful
craft.[f]
17 The haughtiness of people shall
be humbled,
and the pride of everyone shall
be brought low;
and the LORD alone will be
exalted on that day.
18 The idols shall utterly pass away.
19 Enter the caves of the rocks
and the holes of the ground,
from the terror of the LORD,
and from the glory of his
majesty,
when he rises to terrify the
earth.
20 On that day people will throw
away
to the moles and to the bats

c Heb lacks *the ways of* *d* Cn: Heb lacks *of diviners* *e* Cn Compare Gk: Heb *low*
f Compare Gk: Meaning of Heb uncertain

2.5–22 Judgment threatened against Jacob and every rival to God's majesty. **2.5–6a** These verses link the preceding and following oracles as logically connected. Since the nations are going to come to God in Jerusalem, Jacob, who has forsaken his people, is also invited to return and once more walk with God. *House of Jacob* presumably refers to the Northern Kingdom (9.8; 17.4; cf. 8.17; 10.20–21). Mic 4.4–5 ends the oracle differently. **2.6b–22** Jacob's sin is illustrated (2.6–9) and God's judgment is announced (2.10–22). **2.6** *Diviners* and *soothsayers* were regarded as pagan fortune-tellers and were not to be consulted in Israel (Deut 18.14). In parallel to the Philistines on the west, *east* must refer to the Arameans (Isa 9.12). **2.11–12** Just as God's city is exalted above all rivals (2.2), so God is exalted above all rivals (cf. 6.1–5). *In that day* and *the LORD . . . has a day* pick up the common prophetic theme of the "day of the LORD," that day on which God will judge his enemies and manifest his glory (13.6, 9; Ezek 13.5; Joel 1.15; 2.11, 31; 3.14; Am 5.18–20; Ob 15; Zeph 1.7, 14; Mal 4.5). **2.13–14** *Lebanon*, the mountainous area just north of Israel ruled by the Phoenician king of Tyre; *Bashan*, the high plateau in northern Transjordan controlled at this period by the Aramean king of Damascus. The mention of Lebanon, Bashan, and *high mountains* may suggest the Aramean state and its Tyrian ally as God's political and religious rival (cf. Ps 68.15–16). **2.16** *Ships* can symbolize forces hostile to God and his city (33.21–23; Ps 48.7). **2.19–20** Palestine's innumerable limestone *caves* have always served as a refuge, as hiding places for abandoned goods, and as a home for *bats*.

their idols of silver and their idols
of gold,
which they made for themselves
to worship,
21 to enter the caverns of the rocks
and the clefts in the crags,
from the terror of the LORD,
and from the glory of his
majesty,
when he rises to terrify the
earth.
22 Turn away from mortals,
who have only breath in their
nostrils,
for of what account are they?

Judgment Threatened Against Judah

3 For now the Sovereign, the LORD
of hosts,
is taking away from Jerusalem
and from Judah
support and staff—
all support of bread,
and all support of water—
2 warrior and soldier,
judge and prophet,
diviner and elder,
3 captain of fifty
and dignitary,
counselor and skillful magician
and expert enchanter.
4 And I will make boys their
princes,
and babes shall rule over them.
5 The people will be oppressed,
everyone by another
and everyone by a neighbor;
the youth will be insolent to
the elder,
and the base to the honorable.

6 Someone will even seize a
relative,
a member of the clan, saying,
"You have a cloak;
you shall be our leader,
and this heap of ruins
shall be under your rule."
7 But the other will cry out on that
day, saying,
"I will not be a healer;
in my house there is neither
bread nor cloak;
you shall not make me
leader of the people."
8 For Jerusalem has stumbled
and Judah has fallen,
because their speech and their
deeds are against the LORD,
defying his glorious presence.

9 The look on their faces bears
witness against them;
they proclaim their sin like
Sodom,
they do not hide it.
Woe to them!
For they have brought evil on
themselves.
10 Tell the innocent how fortunate
they are,
for they shall eat the fruit of
their labors.
11 Woe to the guilty! How
unfortunate they are,
for what their hands have done
shall be done to them.
12 My people—children are their
oppressors,
and women rule over them.
O my people, your leaders
mislead you,
and confuse the course of your
paths.

13 The LORD rises to argue his case;
he stands to judge the peoples.

3.1–15 Judgment on Jerusalem and Judah. **3.1–9** The breakdown of Judean society. **3.1** *Support and staff*, originally the human functionaries deemed necessary for the continuity and stability of the society (vv. 2–3); *bread* and *water* represent a secondary reinterpretation (Ezek 4.16). **3.4–5** *Boys, babes, youth.* God will replace the experienced officials with inexperienced and naive rulers, and the result will be social chaos, including open oppression and violence. **3.6–7** The breakdown in authority will be so complete that no one will want the thankless task of being *leader* and ruling Judah. **3.8–9** *The look on their faces.* Judah's rulers, by their shameless, brazen sinfulness, have brought this judgment on themselves. **3.10–11** A wisdom saying distinguishing the fate of the *innocent* and the *guilty.* **3.12–15** An indictment of Judah's leadership. **3.12** *Children, women.* Judah's childish rulers are unduly influenced by the selfish desires of their women (vv. 16–17; 32.9–14; cf. Am 4.1–3). **3.13–14** The Lord takes the leaders of his people to court. *Elders,* prominent representatives of the people who had an influential voice in governmental policies and the administration of justice (Deut 21.19–21; 2 Kings 23.1). *Princes,* govern-

14 The LORD enters into judgment
with the elders and princes of his people:
It is you who have devoured the vineyard;
the spoil of the poor is in your houses.
15 What do you mean by crushing my people,
by grinding the face of the poor? says the Lord GOD of hosts.

Judgment on the Daughters of Zion

16 The LORD said:
Because the daughters of Zion are haughty
and walk with outstretched necks,
glancing wantonly with their eyes,
mincing along as they go,
tinkling with their feet;
17 the Lord will afflict with scabs
the heads of the daughters of Zion,
and the LORD will lay bare their secret parts.

18 In that day the Lord will take away the finery of the anklets, the headbands, and the crescents; 19 the pendants, the bracelets, and the scarfs; 20 the headdresses, the armlets, the sashes, the perfume boxes, and the amulets; 21 the signet rings and nose rings; 22 the festal robes, the mantles, the cloaks, and the handbags; 23 the garments of gauze, the linen garments, the turbans, and the veils.
24 Instead of perfume there will be a stench;
and instead of a sash, a rope;
and instead of well-set hair, baldness;
and instead of a rich robe, a binding of sackcloth;
instead of beauty, shame.[g]
25 Your men shall fall by the sword
and your warriors in battle.
26 And her gates shall lament and mourn;
ravaged, she shall sit upon the ground.

4 Seven women shall take hold of one man in that day, saying,
"We will eat our own bread and wear our own clothes;
just let us be called by your name;
take away our disgrace."

The Future Glory of the Survivors in Zion

2 On that day the branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land shall be the pride and glory of the survivors of Israel. 3 Whoever is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy, everyone who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem, 4 once the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst by a spirit of judgment and by a spirit of burning. 5 Then the LORD will create over the whole site of Mount Zion and over its places of assembly a cloud by day and smoke and the shining of a flaming fire by night. Indeed over all the glory there will

g Q Ms: MT lacks *shame*

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ment officials not necessarily related to the royal family. *Vineyard*, a metaphor for God's people (5.1–7).

3.16–4.1 The humiliation of Zion's haughty women (32.9–14; Am 4.1–3). **3.17** *Their secret parts*. A better reading is "their foreheads"; God threatens the women with baldness (cf. v. 24). **3.18–24** All their stylish clothes and accessories will be lost in the day of judgment. **3.26** *Her gates*. The prophet shifts from the image of the humiliated women of Jerusalem to a personification of the city itself as a woman. *Ground*, an inappropriate resting place for a noble woman (47.1). **4.1** Because of the decimation of the male population (v. 25), women will be forced to accept humiliating conditions for even a token respectability.

4.2–6 The purified Jerusalem. **4.2** *Branch*, either the messiah (11.1, 10; Jer 23.5; 33.15; Zech 3.8; 6.12) or the righteous remnant (60.21; 61.3). *Fruit of the land*, the righteous remnant (27.6; 37.31–32; 44.1–5). **4.3** *Called holy*. The idiom implies a real change in character, not just a forensic designation (cf. 1.26). *Recorded for life*, inscribed in God's book of life (Ex 32.32; Ps 69.28; Dan 12.1; Mal 3.16; Rev 20.12, 15). **4.4** Zion purified by a burning judgment (cf. 1.25–28). **4.5** *Cloud by day* and *fire by night*. God's protecting presence in Jerusalem is symbolized by imagery from the exodus tradition (Ex 13.21–22;

be a canopy. 6 It will serve as a pavilion, a
shade by day from the heat, and a refuge
and a shelter from the storm and rain.

The Song of the Unfruitful Vineyard

5 Let me sing for my beloved
my love-song concerning his vineyard:
My beloved had a vineyard
on a very fertile hill.
2 He dug it and cleared it of stones,
and planted it with choice vines;
he built a watchtower in the midst of it,
and hewed out a wine vat in it;
he expected it to yield grapes,
but it yielded wild grapes.

3 And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem
and people of Judah,
judge between me
and my vineyard.
4 What more was there to do for my vineyard
that I have not done in it?
When I expected it to yield grapes,
why did it yield wild grapes?

5 And now I will tell you
what I will do to my vineyard.
I will remove its hedge,
and it shall be devoured;
I will break down its wall,
and it shall be trampled down.
6 I will make it a waste;
it shall not be pruned or hoed,
and it shall be overgrown with briers and thorns;
I will also command the clouds
that they rain no rain upon it.

7 For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts
is the house of Israel,
and the people of Judah
are his pleasant planting;
he expected justice,
but saw bloodshed;
righteousness,
but heard a cry!

Social Injustice Denounced

8 Ah, you who join house to house,
who add field to field,
until there is room for no one but you,
and you are left to live alone
in the midst of the land!
9 The LORD of hosts has sworn in my hearing:
Surely many houses shall be desolate,
large and beautiful houses, without inhabitant.
10 For ten acres of vineyard shall yield but one bath,
and a homer of seed shall yield a mere ephah.[h]

h The Heb *bath*, *homer*, and *ephah* are measures of quantity

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40.34–38). **4.6** *Shelter from the storm and rain.* See 25.4.

5.1–7 This unique poem, sung by the prophet on behalf of his friend, operates on several levels—as a love song, judicial parable, and judgment oracle. **5.1** The poem works metaphorically as a *love-song*, since *vineyard* is a standard metaphor for "lover" in Israelite love poetry (Song 1.6, 14; 2.3, 15; 4.12–16; 7.6–13; 8.12). **5.2** The friend's love for the "vineyard" is unrequited. **5.3–4** The prophet's friend, now quoted directly, calls upon the people of Judah to judge his "vineyard," but in judging the vineyard the people unwittingly pass judgment on themselves. They are entrapped by Isaiah's love song much as David was entrapped by Nathan's parable (2 Sam 12.1–12). **5.7** *Vineyard* as a metaphor for God's people is a common figure of speech in Israelite poetry (27.2–6; Ps 80.8–16; Jer 2.21; Ezek 19.10–14; Hos 10.1). The prophet plays on the similarity in sound between the Hebrew words for *justice* (*mishpat*) and *bloodshed* (*mispach*), *righteousness* (*tsedaqah*) and *cry* (*tse'aqah*), the cry of the oppressed.

5.8–24 Series of oracles against social injustice (vv. 8–10, 11–13, 14–17, 18–19, 20, 21, 22–24). Such oracles introduced by *Ah* are often arranged in a series (cf. 28.1; 29.1, 15; 30.1; 31:1; 33.1; Hab 2.6–19). **5.8–10** Against the amassing of property at other's expense (Mic 2.1–6, 8–9). *Bath*, a liquid measure of approximately 5.5 gallons, a grotesquely small yield for 10 acres of vineyard. *Homer*, a dry measure of approximately 6.5 bushels. *Ephah*, a dry measure equal to

11 Ah, you who rise early in the morning
in pursuit of strong drink,
who linger in the evening
to be inflamed by wine,
12 whose feasts consist of lyre and harp,
tambourine and flute and wine,
but who do not regard the deeds of the LORD,
or see the work of his hands!
13 Therefore my people go into exile without knowledge;
their nobles are dying of hunger,
and their multitude is parched with thirst.

14 Therefore Sheol has enlarged its appetite
and opened its mouth beyond measure;
the nobility of Jerusalem[i] and her multitude go down,
her throng and all who exult in her.
15 People are bowed down, everyone is brought low,
and the eyes of the haughty are humbled.
16 But the LORD of hosts is exalted by justice,
and the Holy God shows himself holy by righteousness.
17 Then the lambs shall graze as in their pasture,
fatlings and kids[j] shall feed among the ruins.

18 Ah, you who drag iniquity along with cords of falsehood,
who drag sin along as with cart ropes,
19 who say, "Let him make haste,
let him speed his work
that we may see it;
let the plan of the Holy One of Israel hasten to fulfillment,
that we may know it!"
20 Ah, you who call evil good and good evil,
who put darkness for light and light for darkness,
who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!
21 Ah, you who are wise in your own eyes,
and shrewd in your own sight!
22 Ah, you who are heroes in drinking wine
and valiant at mixing drink,
23 who acquit the guilty for a bribe,
and deprive the innocent of their rights!
24 Therefore, as the tongue of fire devours the stubble,
and as dry grass sinks down in the flame,
so their root will become rotten,
and their blossom go up like dust;
for they have rejected the instruction of the LORD of hosts,
and have despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

Threat of Judgment Unabated

25 Therefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against his people,

i Heb *her nobility* *j* Cn Compare Gk: Heb *aliens*

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only one-tenth of a *homer* (see Ezek 45.11). **5.11–13** Against drink and debauchery (Am 6.4–7). **5.11** *Strong drink*, barley beer; distilled liquors were still unknown. *To be inflamed by wine*, a wordplay that could also be rendered "so that wine chases them." **5.12** The *deed, work*, or plan of God is a central motif in Isaiah's message (5.19; 10.12; 14.24–27; 19.12, 17; 23.9; 28.21; 30.1). **5.13** *Without knowledge*, because of a lack of knowledge (1.3; Hos 4.1, 6). **5.14–17** A fragmentary oracle against Jerusalem. The introduction to this oracle with the explicit denunciation of the city has apparently been lost, leaving only the announcement of judgment. **5.14** *Sheol*, the underworld, where the dead go (14.9–18). A similar threat that the city would sink into the underworld is found in 29.4. **5.15** Cf. 2.9, 17. **5.16** *Justice . . . righteousness.* God's judgment is just (cf. 28.23–29). **5.18–19** Against scoffers who urged God to hurry up with the divine work so they could discern it too (v. 12; cf. Jer 17.15–16). **5.20** Against moral confusion (32.5; Prov 17.15). **5.21** Against the conceit of the wise (Prov 3.7; 26.5, 12, 16; 28.11). **5.22–23** Against indulgence and bribery (cf. Prov 31.4–5). **5.24** Concluding judgment on these perpetrators of social injustice.

5.25–30 These verses should probably follow

and he stretched out his hand
against them and struck
them;
the mountains quaked,
and their corpses were like refuse
in the streets.
For all this his anger has not
turned away,
and his hand is stretched
out still.

26 He will raise a signal for a nation
far away,
and whistle for a people at the
ends of the earth;
Here they come, swiftly, speedily!
27 None of them is weary, none
stumbles,
none slumbers or sleeps,
not a loincloth is loose,
not a sandal-thong broken;
28 their arrows are sharp,
all their bows bent,
their horses' hoofs seem like flint,
and their wheels like the
whirlwind.
29 Their roaring is like a lion,
like young lions they roar;
they growl and seize their prey,
they carry it off, and no one
can rescue.
30 They will roar over it on
that day,
like the roaring of the sea.
And if one look to the land—
only darkness and distress;
and the light grows dark with
clouds.

The Call of Isaiah

6 In the year that King Uzziah died, I
saw the Lord sitting on a throne,
high and lofty; and the hem of his robe
filled the temple. 2 Seraphs were in atten-
dance above him; each had six wings: with
two they covered their faces, and with two
they covered their feet, and with two they
flew. 3 And one called to another and
said:
"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of
hosts;
the whole earth is full of his
glory."
4 The pivots[k] on the thresholds shook at
the voices of those who called, and the
house filled with smoke. 5 And I said:
"Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of
unclean lips, and I live among a people of
unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the
King, the LORD of hosts!"
6 Then one of the seraphs flew to me,
holding a live coal that had been taken
from the altar with a pair of tongs. 7 The
seraph[l] touched my mouth with it and
said: "Now that this has touched your lips,
your guilt has departed and your sin is
blotted out." 8 Then I heard the voice of
the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and
who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am
I; send me!" 9 And he said, "Go and say to
this people:
'Keep listening, but do not
comprehend;
keep looking, but do not
understand.'

k Meaning of Heb uncertain *l* Heb *He*

9.8–21. **5.25** As in 9.8–21, this past judgment on Israel did not lead to its repentance, so God's anger is still unabated (see 9.12, 17, 21; 10.4). **5.26–30** God will summon the Assyrians as his agent to punish Israel (cf. 7.18–20; 8.7; 10.5–6).

6.1–13 Isaiah's prophetic commission is described as a response to an awesome vision of God as divine suzerain (cf. the portrayals of the enthroned deity in 1 Kings 22.19–23; Ezek 1.4–2.1). **6.1** *Year*, probably 738 B.C.E. *A throne high and lofty*, the 15-foot-high throne in the inner sanctum of the temple formed by the outspread wings of the two giant cherubim (1 Kings 6.22–29; 2 Kings 19.15; Ezek 10.1–2; 1 Chr 28.18). *Hem*, the border on the bottom of God's robe or the part hanging down from the knees; the image is that of a God too gigantic to be contained in the temple (66.1; 1 Kings 8.27). **6.2** *Seraphs*, winged cobras (14.29; 30.6) often represented in Egyptian art, in association with Syro-Phoenician thrones, and on Israelite seals with wings outstretched to protect the deity. *Covered their faces*. Here they must protect themselves from the glory of God. **6.5** *I am lost*, a double entendre that could also be rendered "I am silenced." *Unclean lips*. See 29.13. It was life-threatening for sinful mortals to see God (Ex 33.20; Judg 13.22). **6.6–8** Cleansed by the burning coal from the altar, Isaiah may now speak for God. **6.9–12** The message God gives Isaiah will not lead to repentance, but to the hardening of the people's heart, thus making them ripe for God's judgment. Cf. 29.9–14 and see the NT citations of vv. 9–10 in Mt 13.10–17; Mk 4.10–12;

10 Make the mind of this people
dull,
and stop their ears,
and shut their eyes,
so that they may not look with
their eyes,
and listen with their ears,
and comprehend with their
minds,
and turn and be healed."
11 Then I said, "How long,
O Lord?" And he said:
"Until cities lie waste
without inhabitant,
and houses without people,
and the land is utterly desolate;
12 until the LORD sends everyone
far away,
and vast is the emptiness in the
midst of the land.
13 Even if a tenth part remain in it,
it will be burned again,
like a terebinth or an oak
whose stump remains standing
when it is felled."[m]
The holy seed is its stump.

The Sign of Shear-jashub

7 In the days of Ahaz son of Jotham son of Uzziah, king of Judah, King Rezin of Aram and King Pekah son of Remaliah of Israel went up to attack Jerusalem, but could not mount an attack against it. 2 When the house of David heard that Aram had allied itself with Ephraim, the heart of Ahaz[n] and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind.

3 Then the LORD said to Isaiah, Go out to meet Ahaz, you and your son Shear-jashub,[o] at the end of the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Fuller's Field, 4 and say to him, Take heed, be quiet, do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint because of these two smoldering stumps of firebrands, because of the fierce anger of Rezin and Aram and the son of Remaliah. 5 Because Aram —with Ephraim and the son of Remaliah—has plotted evil against you, saying, 6 Let us go up against Judah and cut off Jerusalem[p] and conquer it for ourselves and make the son of Tabeel king in it; 7 therefore thus says the Lord GOD:
It shall not stand,
and it shall not come to pass.
8 For the head of Aram is
Damascus,
and the head of Damascus is
Rezin.
(Within sixty-five years Ephraim will be shattered, no longer a people.)
9 The head of Ephraim is Samaria,
and the head of Samaria is the
son of Remaliah.
If you do not stand firm in faith,
you shall not stand at all.

The Sign of Immanuel

10 Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying, 11 Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven. 12 But Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test. 13 Then Isaiah[q] said: "Hear then, O house of David!

m Meaning of Heb uncertain
n Heb *his heart*
o That is *A remnant shall return*
p Heb *cut it off*
q Heb *he*

Lk 8.9–10; Jn 12.40; Acts 28.25–29. **6.13** The last part of the verse is textually uncertain.

7.1–8.18 Isaiah and the Syro-Ephraimite war (735–732 B.C.E.). The prophet's message is organized around the symbolic names given to his three children (see 8.18; cf. Hos 1.4–9). For the historical background, see 2 Kings 15.29–16.20; 2 Chr 28.1–27. **7.1–9** The symbolic name of Isaiah's first child assures Ahaz that Israel and Aram's plan against Judah will not succeed. **7.1** *Aram*, Syria, with its capital at Damascus. **7.2** *Ephraim*, the Northern Kingdom; this coalition of Aram and Israel planned to remove Ahaz and end the Davidic dynasty's rule over Judah (see v. 6). **7.3** *Shear-jashub* in Hebrew means "A remnant shall return"; only a remnant of the hostile Northern Kingdom will survive (v. 8; 10.20–22). **7.6** *Tabeel*, perhaps a garbled transcription of (It)tobaal, king of Tyre in 738 B.C.E.; Tyre was allied with the coalition. **7.8–9** God chose both Jerusalem and the Davidic dynasty (Pss 2.6; 132.11–14), so the humanly chosen kings and capital cities of Judah's enemies cannot prevail against them. **7.8** *Sixty-five years*. This parenthetical statement refers to no known historical event; it is either a gloss, or, more likely, a misplaced fragment from an originally longer text.

7.10–17 The symbolic name of the second child gives further reassurance to Ahaz. **7.13** The prophet treats Ahaz's pious-sounding remark as merely masking a refusal to trust the

Is it too little for you to weary mortals,
that you weary my God also? 14 Therefore
the Lord himself will give you a sign.
Look, the young woman[r] is with child
and shall bear a son, and shall name him
Immanuel.[s] 15 He shall eat curds and
honey by the time he knows how to refuse
the evil and choose the good. 16 For be-
fore the child knows how to refuse the evil
and choose the good, the land before
whose two kings you are in dread will be
deserted. 17 The LORD will bring on you
and on your people and on your ancestral
house such days as have not come since
the day that Ephraim departed from
Judah—the king of Assyria."

18 On that day the LORD will whistle
for the fly that is at the sources of the
streams of Egypt, and for the bee that is in
the land of Assyria. 19 And they will all
come and settle in the steep ravines, and
in the clefts of the rocks, and on all the
thornbushes, and on all the pastures.

20 On that day the Lord will shave
with a razor hired beyond the River—
with the king of Assyria—the head and
the hair of the feet, and it will take off the
beard as well.

21 On that day one will keep alive a
young cow and two sheep, 22 and will eat
curds because of the abundance of milk
that they give; for everyone that is left in
the land shall eat curds and honey.

23 On that day every place where
there used to be a thousand vines, worth a
thousand shekels of silver, will become
briers and thorns. 24 With bow and arrows
one will go there, for all the land will be
briers and thorns; 25 and as for all the hills
that used to be hoed with a hoe, you will
not go there for fear of briers and thorns;
but they will become a place where cattle
are let loose and where sheep tread.

The Sign of Maher-shalal-hash-baz

8 Then the LORD said to me, Take a
large tablet and write on it in com-
mon characters, "Belonging to Maher-
shalal-hash-baz,"[t] 2 and have it attested[u]
for me by reliable witnesses, the priest
Uriah and Zechariah son of Jeberechiah.
3 And I went to the prophetess, and she
conceived and bore a son. Then the LORD
said to me, Name him Maher-shalal-hash-
baz; 4 for before the child knows how to
call "My father" or "My mother," the
wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Sa-
maria will be carried away by the king of
Assyria.

Inundated by the Assyrian Flood

5 The LORD spoke to me again: 6 Be-
cause this people has refused the waters
of Shiloah that flow gently, and melt in
fear before[v] Rezin and the son of Rema-
liah; 7 therefore, the Lord is bringing up
against it the mighty flood waters of the
River, the king of Assyria and all his
glory; it will rise above all its channels and
overflow all its banks; 8 it will sweep on
into Judah as a flood, and, pouring over,

r Gk *the virgin* s That is *God is with us*
t That is *The spoil speeds, the prey hastens* u Q Ms Gk Syr: MT *and I caused to be attested*
v Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain

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divine promise. **7.14** The name *Immanuel*, in Hebrew "God is with us," embodies the divine promise of protection to Jerusalem (Ps 46.4–7, 11; cf. Isa 8.9–10). **7.15** *Curds and honey* were choice foods for a newly weaned child, but hard to obtain in a city under siege. **7.16** *Before the child knows . . . good*, by the time the child is weaned—within two or three years—the besieging enemies will have long since been destroyed (cf. 8.4). **7.17** Whether the verse is a promise or a threat to Judah is ambiguous. **7.18–25** Four sayings that expand on v. 17. **7.18** *Fly*, a metaphor for Egyptian troops; *bee*, a metaphor for Assyrian troops. **7.20** *Razor hired beyond the River*, a reference to Assyria as the agent God employed to punish Israel (see 10.5–15); *the River*, the Euphrates. *Feet*, a euphemism for the genitals (Ex 4.25). **7.21–25** The small remnant left in the devastated land will have sufficient to eat, because with the cultivated land reverted to pasture, there will be abundant grazing for the few livestock remaining.

8.1–4 The symbolic name of yet a third child reaffirms God's promise to Ahaz. **8.1** *Maher-shalal-hash-baz*, in Hebrew "The spoil speeds, the prey hastens." **8.2** *Uriah*. See 2 Kings 16.10–16. *Zechariah*, possibly Ahaz's father-in-law (2 Kings 18.2). **8.3** *Prophetess*, Isaiah's wife. **8.4** *Before the child knows . . . "My mother,"* before the child's first words—within about a year (cf. 7.15–16).

8.5–10 Oracle threatening the devastation of Israel but the ultimate deliverance of Judah. **8.6** *Shiloah*, a gentle stream fed by Jerusalem's Gihon spring (cf. Neh 3.15), symbolizing the Davidic dynasty. *Melt in fear before*. The Hebrew may mean "delight in." *Rezin*, Aramean king of Damascus. *Son of Remaliah*, Pekah, king of Israel. **8.7** *The River*, the Euphrates, symbolizing Assyria. **8.8** *And its outspread wings*, better "But

it will reach up to the neck; and its outspread wings will fill the breadth of your land, O Immanuel.

9 Band together, you peoples, and be dismayed;
listen, all you far countries;
gird yourselves and be dismayed;
gird yourselves and be dismayed!
10 Take counsel together, but it shall be brought to naught;
speak a word, but it will not stand,
for God is with us.[w]

Fear the Lord and Not Human Conspiracy

11 For the Lord spoke thus to me while his hand was strong upon me, and warned me not to walk in the way of this people, saying: 12 Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what it fears, or be in dread. 13 But the Lord of hosts, him you shall regard as holy; let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. 14 He will become a sanctuary, a stone one strikes against; for both houses of Israel he will become a rock one stumbles over—a trap and a snare for the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 15 And many among them shall stumble; they shall fall and be broken; they shall be snared and taken.

Disciples of Isaiah

16 Bind up the testimony, seal the teaching among my disciples. 17 I will wait for the Lord, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in him. 18 See, I and the children whom the Lord has given me are signs and portents in Israel from the Lord of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion. 19 Now if people say to you, "Consult the ghosts and the familiar spirits that chirp and mutter; should not a people consult their gods, the dead on behalf of the living, 20 for teaching and for instruction?" surely, those who speak like this will have no dawn! 21 They will pass through the land,[x] greatly distressed and hungry; when they are hungry, they will be enraged and will curse[y] their king and their gods. They will turn their faces upward, 22 or they will look to the earth, but will see only distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish; and they will be thrust into thick darkness.[z]

The Righteous Reign of the Coming King

9[a] But there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.
2[b] The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—

w Heb *immanu el* x Heb *it* y Or *curse by*
z Meaning of Heb uncertain a Ch 8.23 in Heb
b Ch 9.1 in Heb

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his (God's) outspread wings." The antecedent of the pronoun is probably *the Lord* in v. 7; while a standard metaphor for God's protection (Deut 32.11; Pss 17.8; 36.7; 57.1; 61.4; 63.7; 91.1–4), *wings* is never used of rivers, and *Immanuel* suggests a positive word (see v. 10). **8.9–10** A promise of deliverance for Judah ending with a repetition of the symbolic name *God is with us*, "Immanuel" (cf. 7.7–9; 17.12–14).

8.11–15 Sanctify and fear God, not what the crowd fears. **8.11** *His hand was strong upon me*, a technical expression for the onset of prophetic inspiration (Ezek 1.3; 3.14, 22; 33.22). **8.14** God will be both a *sanctuary*, a place of refuge, and *a stone one strikes against*, a stumbling stone (cf. 28.16–17).

8.16–18 The message preserved among Isaiah's circle of supporters while Israel remains disobedient (cf. 30.8–11). **8.16** *Bind, seal*, as one does a scroll (29.11). **8.18** *Signs*, the symbolic names of Isaiah's children. **8.19–22** Condemnation of necromancy (see 1 Sam 28.3–14 for this practice of consulting the dead). **8.19** *Chirp and mutter*, a disparaging comment about the necromancer's customary manner of speaking during the consultation of the dead (29.4).

9.1–7 This passage served originally as an oracle for the coronation of a Judean king, probably Hezekiah. It celebrates the accession of the new king with the traditional ideals of Davidic kingship (see 11.1–9). **9.1** The areas mentioned were turned into three Assyrian provinces by Tiglath-pileser III in 733–32 B.C.E.: *Zebulun* and *Naphtali* represent the Assyrian province of *Galilee*, *the way of the sea* corresponds to the Assyrian province of Dor, south of Mount Carmel, and *the land beyond the Jordan* is equivalent to the province of Gilead. **9.2** *People*, the Israelite inhabitants of

on them light has shined.
3 You have multiplied the nation,
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as people exult when dividing
plunder.
4 For the yoke of their burden,
and the bar across their
shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor,
you have broken as on the day
of Midian.
5 For all the boots of the tramping
warriors
and all the garments rolled in
blood
shall be burned as fuel for
the fire.
6 For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests upon his
shoulders;
and he is named
Wonderful Counselor,
Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
7 His authority shall grow
continually,
and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his
kingdom.
He will establish and uphold it
with justice and with
righteousness
from this time onward and
forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will
do this.

Unheeded Judgment Brings More Judgment

8 The Lord sent a word against
Jacob,
and it fell on Israel;
9 and all the people knew it—
Ephraim and the inhabitants of
Samaria—
but in pride and arrogance of
heart they said:
10 "The bricks have fallen,
but we will build with dressed
stones;
the sycamores have been cut
down,
but we will put cedars in their
place."
11 So the LORD raised adversaries[c]
against them,
and stirred up their enemies,
12 the Arameans on the east and the
Philistines on the west,
and they devoured Israel with
open mouth.
For all this his anger has not
turned away;
his hand is stretched out
still.

13 The people did not turn to him
who struck them,
or seek the LORD of hosts.
14 So the LORD cut off from Israel
head and tail,
palm branch and reed in
one day—
15 elders and dignitaries are the
head,
and prophets who teach lies are
the tail;
16 for those who led this people led
them astray,
and those who were led by
them were left in
confusion.

c Cn: Heb *the adversaries of Rezin*

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the areas annexed by Assyria (v. 1). *Darkness* is standard imagery for oppression, *light* for royal relief from such oppression. **9.3** *You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy.* A better reading is "You have multiplied exultation, you have increased rejoicing." **9.4** *Day of Midian.* See Judg 7.15–25. **9.6** *Child, son.* The divine birth or adoption of the king was announced on his coronation day (see Ps 2.7). *Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace,* coronation names like those given Egyptian kings at their accession.

9.8–10.4 Israel's failure to learn from past judgments is a warning to Judah. Note the refrain (9.12, 17, 21; 10.4; 5.25). **9.8–12** Judgment on the Northern Kingdom's unrepentant pride. **9.8** *Word,* prophetic announcement of judgment that sets in motion the judgment it proclaims (55.10–11; Jer 23.18–20). **9.9** *Ephraim,* designation for the Northern Kingdom; *Samaria,* its royal capital. **9.10** *Bricks, sycamores,* common building material; *dressed stones, cedars,* expensive material used in palaces. **9.13–17** Judgment on Israel's leaders who led the people astray (see 3.12).

17 That is why the Lord did not
have pity on[d] their young
people,
or compassion on their orphans
and widows;
for everyone was godless and an
evildoer,
and every mouth spoke folly.
For all this his anger has not
turned away;
his hand is stretched out still.

18 For wickedness burned like a fire,
consuming briers and thorns;
it kindled the thickets of the
forest,
and they swirled upward in a
column of smoke.
19 Through the wrath of the LORD
of hosts
the land was burned,
and the people became like fuel
for the fire;
no one spared another.
20 They gorged on the right, but
still were hungry,
and they devoured on the left,
but were not satisfied;
they devoured the flesh of their
own kindred;[e]
21 Manasseh devoured Ephraim,
and Ephraim Manasseh,
and together they were against
Judah.
For all this his anger has not
turned away;
his hand is stretched out still.

10 Ah, you who make iniquitous
decrees,
who write oppressive statutes,
2 to turn aside the needy from
justice
and to rob the poor of my
people of their right,
that widows may be your spoil,
and that you may make the
orphans your prey!
3 What will you do on the day of
punishment,
in the calamity that will come
from far away?
To whom will you flee for help,
and where will you leave your
wealth,
4 so as not to crouch among the
prisoners
or fall among the slain?
For all this his anger has not
turned away;
his hand is stretched out still.

Arrogant Assyria Will Also Be Judged

5 Ah, Assyria, the rod of my
anger—
the club in their hands is
my fury!
6 Against a godless nation I
send him,
and against the people of my
wrath I command him,
to take spoil and seize plunder,
and to tread them down like
the mire of the streets.
7 But this is not what he intends,
nor does he have this in mind;
but it is in his heart to destroy,
and to cut off nations not
a few.
8 For he says:
"Are not my commanders all
kings?
9 Is not Calno like Carchemish?

d Q Ms: MT *rejoice over* *e* Or *arm*

9.18–21 Wickedness led to the judgment of civil war. **9.20** *Flesh of their own kindred*, a striking metaphorical description of Israel's self-destruction in the sectional conflicts climaxing in the Syro-Ephraimite war. **9.21** *Manasseh*, *Ephraim*, tribes that constituted the two major sectional rivals for dominance in the Northern Kingdom. *Judah*, the Southern Kingdom. **10.1–4** Judgment on those who pervert justice by oppressive laws (Jer 8.8).

10.5–19 Isaiah reassures Judah that God, not Assyria, controls history. Despite its arrogant pride, Assyria is just God's temporary instrument for punishing others; soon it too will experience God's punishment. **10.9** *Calno*, or "Calneh" (Am 6.2), north Syrian city that twice fell to the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser (740 and 738 B.C.E.). *Carchemish*, north Syrian city dominated by Tiglath-pileser and recaptured by the Assyrian king Sargon II after a brief revolt against Assyrian rule (717 B.C.E.). *Hamath*, central Syrian territory captured by Tiglath-pileser (738 B.C.E.), recaptured by Sargon in 720 B.C.E. *Arpad*, north Syrian city captured by Tiglath-pileser (740 B.C.E.). *Samaria*, capital of Israel that fell to Assyria (722 and 720 B.C.E.). *Damascus*, capital of southern Syria that fell to Tiglath-pileser in 732 B.C.E.

Is not Hamath like Arpad?
Is not Samaria like Damascus?
10 As my hand has reached to the kingdoms of the idols
whose images were greater than those of Jerusalem and Samaria,
11 shall I not do to Jerusalem and her idols
what I have done to Samaria and her images?"

12 When the Lord has finished all his work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, he[f] will punish the arrogant boasting of the king of Assyria and his haughty pride.
13 For he says:
"By the strength of my hand I have done it,
and by my wisdom, for I have understanding;
I have removed the boundaries of peoples,
and have plundered their treasures;
like a bull I have brought down those who sat on thrones.
14 My hand has found, like a nest, the wealth of the peoples;
and as one gathers eggs that have been forsaken,
so I have gathered all the earth;
and there was none that moved a wing,
or opened its mouth, or chirped."

15 Shall the ax vaunt itself over the one who wields it,
or the saw magnify itself against the one who handles it?
As if a rod should raise the one who lifts it up,
or as if a staff should lift the one who is not wood!
16 Therefore the Sovereign, the LORD of hosts,
will send wasting sickness among his stout warriors,
and under his glory a burning will be kindled,
like the burning of fire.
17 The light of Israel will become a fire,
and his Holy One a flame;
and it will burn and devour his thorns and briers in one day.
18 The glory of his forest and his fruitful land
the LORD will destroy, both soul and body,
and it will be as when an invalid wastes away.
19 The remnant of the trees of his forest will be so few
that a child can write them down.

Only a Remnant of Israel Will Return

20 On that day the remnant of Israel and the survivors of the house of Jacob will no more lean on the one who struck them, but will lean on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. 21 A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God. 22 For though your people

f Heb *I*

10.10–11 To the Assyrian king, the God of Judah was just another idol (cf. 36.7–10). **10.12** *Work*, God's strange work (28.21) of purging Zion by judgment (1.21–28; 29.1–8). **10.13** *Removed the boundaries*. Assyria absorbed whole nations into its provincial system and used widespread resettlement of their populations to destroy former national identities. **10.15** Rhetorical questions that underscore Assyria's foolish misconception of its significance. **10.16–19** The original target of this oracle may have been Damascus and Israel (cf. the imagery in 17.1–6), but it now portrays the destruction of Assyria. **10.17** *Light of Israel*, an epithet for God that suggests the image of the deity as a devouring fire (29.6; 30.27–33; 31.9; 33.14).

10.20–23 Originally a threat to the Northern Kingdom, but a promise to Judah. In its present location this oracle conveys the ambiguous message of Judah's salvation through judgment (see 1.21–28; 29.1–8). **10.20** *Israel, Jacob*, designations for the Northern Kingdom. *One who struck them*, the Aramean ruler of Damascus (9.11–12). **10.21** *A remnant will return*, the name of Isaiah's first child, Shear-jashub (7.3). Israel's return to God implied its acceptance of the Davidic dynasty in Jerusalem (2.5–6; 8.5–8); *mighty God* is a coronation name of the Judean king in 9.6. **10.22** *Your people Israel*. Note contrast to *my people, who live in Zion* (v. 24). *Sand of the sea*, only a small

Israel were like the sand of the sea, only a
remnant of them will return. Destruction
is decreed, overflowing with righteous-
ness. 23 For the Lord God of hosts will
make a full end, as decreed, in all the
earth.[g]

The Assyrian Yoke Will Be Removed

24 Therefore thus says the Lord God
of hosts: O my people, who live in Zion,
do not be afraid of the Assyrians when
they beat you with a rod and lift up their
staff against you as the Egyptians did.
25 For in a very little while my indignation
will come to an end, and my anger will be
directed to their destruction. 26 The Lord
of hosts will wield a whip against them, as
when he struck Midian at the rock of
Oreb; his staff will be over the sea, and he
will lift it as he did in Egypt. 27 On that
day his burden will be removed from your
shoulder, and his yoke will be destroyed
from your neck.

The Approach of the Enemy from the North

He has gone up from Rimmon,[h]
28 he has come to Aiath;
he has passed through Migron,
at Michmash he stores his
baggage;
29 they have crossed over the pass,
at Geba they lodge for the
night;
Ramah trembles,
Gibeah of Saul has fled.
30 Cry aloud, O daughter Gallim!
Listen, O Laishah!
Answer her, O Anathoth!
31 Madmenah is in flight,
the inhabitants of Gebim flee
for safety.
32 This very day he will halt at Nob,
he will shake his fist
at the mount of daughter Zion,
the hill of Jerusalem.

God's Response

33 Look, the Sovereign, the Lord
of hosts,
will lop the boughs with
terrifying power;
the tallest trees will be cut down,
and the lofty will be
brought low.
34 He will hack down the thickets of
the forest with an ax,
and Lebanon with its majestic
trees[i] will fall.

The Ideal Davidic King and His Rule

11 A shoot shall come out from the
stump of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of
his roots.

g Or *land* *h* Cn: Heb *and his yoke from your neck, and a yoke will be destroyed because of fatness*
i Cn Compare Gk Vg: Heb *with a majestic one*

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remnant of the North will survive despite the ancient promise (Gen 22.17; 32.12; Hos 1.10).

10.24–27c The promise of deliverance from the rod of Assyria resumes the imagery of vv. 5, 15. **10.26** *Oreb.* See Judg 7.25. *Staff.* See Ex 14.16. *Over the sea . . . Egypt.* God's deliverance of his people from Assyria is compared to the first exodus from Egypt. **10.27** Cf. 9.4.

10.27d–32 This oracle describes the march of an enemy army along the main north-south route from Israelite territory toward Jerusalem in the south. It is the logical approach for the Syro-Ephraimite army to have taken in its attack on the city (7.1), but there is no evidence any Assyrian army ever took this route. **10.27d** *Rimmon* is not in the Hebrew text; a better reading is "Samaria," the Northern capital. **10.28** *Aiath,* a variant spelling of Ai, a village two miles east-southeast of Bethel; *Migron,* unidentified site in Benjamin (1 Sam 14.2); *Michmash,* a village located about seven miles northeast of Jerusalem and just north of a strategic pass across the Wadi es-Suwenit. **10.29** The crossing of the *pass* at Michmash through *Geba,* located just south of the Wadi, suggests a wide swing off the main route, probably to bypass the Judean border fortress of Mizpeh, before regaining the main road at *Ramah,* five miles north of Jerusalem. *Gibeah of Saul,* modern Tell el-Ful, about three and a half miles north of Jerusalem. **10.30** *Gallim, Laishah,* unidentified villages near *Anathoth,* a village three miles north of Jerusalem. **10.31** *Madmenah, Gebim,* unidentified villages north of Jerusalem. **10.32** *Nob,* probably situated on Mount Scopus, about a mile northeast of Jerusalem. *Shake his fist,* a derisive gesture.

10.33–34 God, who founded (14.32) and lives in Zion (8.18), will respond to the enemy's haughty derision by felling his proud troops like a forest (see 2.12–13; 9.18–19; 10.16–19).

11.1–9 This portrayal probably stems from the period of the Syro-Ephraimite war (cf. 9.1–7) when the Davidic dynasty appeared a mere stump compared to its enemies (10.33–34). **11.1** *Jesse,*

2 The spirit of the LORD shall rest
on him,
the spirit of wisdom and
understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and the
fear of the LORD.
3 His delight shall be in the fear of
the LORD.

He shall not judge by what his
eyes see,
or decide by what his ears hear;
4 but with righteousness he shall
judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the
meek of the earth;
he shall strike the earth with the
rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips
he shall kill the wicked.
5 Righteousness shall be the belt
around his waist,
and faithfulness the belt
around his loins.

6 The wolf shall live with the lamb,
the leopard shall lie down with
the kid,
the calf and the lion and the
fatling together,
and a little child shall lead
them.
7 The cow and the bear shall graze,
their young shall lie down
together;
and the lion shall eat straw like
the ox.
8 The nursing child shall play over
the hole of the asp,
and the weaned child shall put
its hand on the
adder's den.
9 They will not hurt or destroy
on all my holy mountain;
for the earth will be full of the
knowledge of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.

Return of the Remnant of Israel and Judah

10 On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious.

11 On that day the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant that is left of his people, from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Ethiopia,[j] from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea.
12 He will raise a signal for the
nations,
and will assemble the outcasts
of Israel,
and gather the dispersed of
Judah
from the four corners of the
earth.
13 The jealousy of Ephraim shall
depart,
the hostility of Judah shall be
cut off;
Ephraim shall not be jealous of
Judah,
and Judah shall not be hostile
towards Ephraim.
14 But they shall swoop down on the
backs of the Philistines in
the west,
together they shall plunder the
people of the east.

[j] Or *Nubia*; Heb *Cush*

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the father of David (1 Sam 16.1–20). **11.2** Just as the *spirit of the LORD* once came upon David (1 Sam 16.13), so it will abide on the new king, equiping him for his royal tasks. **11.3–5** The traditional ideal of royal justice involved extraordinary judicial insight (1 Kings 3.4–28) and harsh justice on oppressors (Pss 72; 101). **11.6–9** His reign will be marked by the peace and harmony of paradise. **11.9** *My holy mountain*, Mount Zion (see 65.25).

11.10–16 During his rule, God will gather and reunite the remnant of Israel and Judah. These verses need not presuppose the Babylonian exile in 587 B.C.E. During Isaiah's lifetime Israel suffered major deportations in 733–731 and 722–720 B.C.E. According to Sennacherib's Assyrian annals more than 200,000 people were deported from Judah in 701 B.C.E., and others undoubtedly sought refuge in Egypt. **11.10** *Inquire of him*, go to him in Jerusalem (*his glorious dwelling*) to obtain the word of the Lord (cf. 2.2–4). **11.11** *Pathros*, Upper or southern Egypt; *Ethiopia*, Nubia or the northern part of modern Sudan; *Elam*, a kingdom on the north shore of the Persian Gulf occupying the Zagros Mountains and modern Luristan and Khuzistan; *Shinar*, Babylonia; *Hamath*, an important city on the Orontes River in Syria. **11.14** *People of the*

They shall put forth their hand
against Edom and Moab,
and the Ammonites shall
obey them.
15 And the LORD will utterly destroy
the tongue of the sea of Egypt;
and will wave his hand over
the River
with his scorching wind;
and will split it into seven
channels,
and make a way to cross on
foot;
16 so there shall be a highway from
Assyria
for the remnant that is left of
his people,
as there was for Israel
when they came up from the
land of Egypt.

Thanksgiving and Praise

12 You will say in that day:
I will give thanks to you,
O LORD,
for though you were angry
with me,
your anger turned away,
and you comforted me.

2 Surely God is my salvation;
I will trust, and will not
be afraid,
for the LORD GOD[k] is my
strength and my might;
he has become my salvation.

3 With joy you will draw water from
the wells of salvation. 4 And you will say in
that day:
Give thanks to the LORD,
call on his name;
make known his deeds among the
nations;
proclaim that his name is
exalted.

5 Sing praises to the LORD, for he
has done gloriously;
let this be known[l] in all the
earth.
6 Shout aloud and sing for joy,
O royal[m] Zion,
for great in your midst is the
Holy One of Israel.

Proclamation Against Babylon

13 The oracle concerning Babylon
that Isaiah son of Amoz saw.

2 On a bare hill raise a signal,
cry aloud to them;
wave the hand for them to enter
the gates of the nobles.
3 I myself have commanded my
consecrated ones,
have summoned my warriors,
my proudly exulting ones,
to execute my anger.

4 Listen, a tumult on the mountains
as of a great multitude!
Listen, an uproar of kingdoms,
of nations gathering together!
The LORD of hosts is mustering
an army for battle.
5 They come from a distant land,
from the end of the heavens,
the LORD and the weapons of his
indignation,
to destroy the whole earth.

6 Wail, for the day of the LORD
is near;

k Heb *for Yah, the* LORD *l* Or *this is made known*
m Or *O inhabitant of*

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east, Arameans of Damascus (9.12). **11.15** *Sea of Egypt*, the Red Sea; *the River*, the Euphrates. **11.16** This future deliverance is portrayed as a new exodus (cf. Jer 23.7–8).

12.1–6 Brief songs of praise for God's deliverance end this section of the book. **12.2b** Cf. Ex 15.2; Ps 118.14. **12.6** *Royal Zion.* The city is portrayed as a princess sitting enthroned (cf. 47.1). *In your midst.* God lives in Zion (8.18). *Holy One of Israel.* See note on 1.4.

13.1–23.18 Oracles against foreign nations (cf. Jer 46–51; Ezek 25–32). **13.1–22** In Isaiah's lifetime, Babylon experienced a resurgence under the Chaldean rule of Merodach-baladan (39.1) and his successors, and Assyria was forced to recapture it at least four times (708, 703, 700, 689 B.C.E.), the last after a prolonged siege that led to its total destruction. Such an occasion, rather than the later uncontested surrender of Babylon to Persia (539 B.C.E.), may be the background for this oracle. **13.3** *Consecrated ones*, the enemy soldiers used by God to carry out the divine judgment (5.26; 10.5–6). **13.5** *Distant land.* Cf. 5.26. **13.6–19** The destruction of Babylon is

it will come like destruction
from the Almighty![n]
7 Therefore all hands will be
feeble,
and every human heart will
melt,
8 and they will be dismayed.
Pangs and agony will seize them;
they will be in anguish like a
woman in labor.
They will look aghast at one
another;
their faces will be aflame.
9 See, the day of the LORD comes,
cruel, with wrath and fierce
anger,
to make the earth a desolation,
and to destroy its sinners
from it.
10 For the stars of the heavens and
their constellations
will not give their light;
the sun will be dark at its rising,
and the moon will not shed
its light.
11 I will punish the world for its
evil,
and the wicked for their
iniquity;
I will put an end to the pride of
the arrogant,
and lay low the insolence of
tyrants.
12 I will make mortals more rare
than fine gold,
and humans than the gold of
Ophir.
13 Therefore I will make the
heavens tremble,
and the earth will be shaken
out of its place,
at the wrath of the LORD of hosts
in the day of his fierce anger.
14 Like a hunted gazelle,
or like sheep with no one to
gather them,
all will turn to their own people,
and all will flee to their
own lands.
15 Whoever is found will be thrust
through,
and whoever is caught will fall
by the sword.
16 Their infants will be dashed
to pieces
before their eyes;
their houses will be plundered,
and their wives ravished.
17 See, I am stirring up the Medes
against them,
who have no regard for silver
and do not delight in gold.
18 Their bows will slaughter the
young men;
they will have no mercy on the
fruit of the womb;
their eyes will not pity children.
19 And Babylon, the glory of
kingdoms,
the splendor and pride of the
Chaldeans,
will be like Sodom and Gomorrah
when God overthrew them.
20 It will never be inhabited
or lived in for all generations;
Arabs will not pitch their
tents there,
shepherds will not make their
flocks lie down there.
21 But wild animals will lie
down there,
and its houses will be full of
howling creatures;
there ostriches will live,
and there goat-demons
will dance.
22 Hyenas will cry in its towers,
and jackals in the pleasant
palaces;
its time is close at hand,
and its days will not be
prolonged.

n Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

portrayed with the traditional imagery of the "day of the LORD" (see 2.11). **13.12** *Ophir*, a country of disputed location famous for its fine gold (1 Kings 9.26–28; Job 22.24; 28.16; Ps 45.9). **13.17** *Medes*, a people northwest of Persia who were vassals of Assyria in Isaiah's time. **13.19** *Chaldeans*, an Aramean tribe from southern Babylonia that dominated Babylon from about 725 until 539 B.C.E. **13.20–22** The fate portrayed in this traditional description of a destroyed and abandoned city (34.8–17; Jer 50.39–40; Zeph 2.13–15) befell Babylon in 689 B.C.E.; it remained in ruins until its rebuilding late in the reign of Esar-haddon (681–669 B.C.E.). **13.21** *Goat-demons*. Demons as well as wild animals were thought to inhabit ruins.

Restoration of Israel

14 But the LORD will have compassion on Jacob and will again
choose Israel, and will set them in their
own land; and aliens will join them and
attach themselves to the house of Jacob.
2 And the nations will take them and bring
them to their place, and the house of Israel will possess the nations[o] as male and
female slaves in the LORD's land; they will
take captive those who were their captors,
and rule over those who oppressed them.

Downfall of the King of Babylon

3 When the LORD has given you rest
from your pain and turmoil and the hard
service with which you were made to
serve, 4 you will take up this taunt against
the king of Babylon:

How the oppressor has ceased!
How his insolence[p] has ceased!
5 The LORD has broken the staff of
the wicked,
the scepter of rulers,
6 that struck down the peoples
in wrath
with unceasing blows,
that ruled the nations in anger
with unrelenting persecution.
7 The whole earth is at rest
and quiet;
they break forth into singing.
8 The cypresses exult over you,
the cedars of Lebanon, saying,
"Since you were laid low,
no one comes to cut us down."
9 Sheol beneath is stirred up
to meet you when you come;
it rouses the shades to greet you,
all who were leaders of the
earth;
it raises from their thrones
all who were kings of the
nations.
10 All of them will speak
and say to you:
"You too have become as weak
as we!
You have become like us!"
11 Your pomp is brought down
to Sheol,
and the sound of your harps;
maggots are the bed beneath you,
and worms are your covering.

12 How you are fallen from heaven,
O Day Star, son of Dawn!
How you are cut down to the
ground,
you who laid the nations low!
13 You said in your heart,
"I will ascend to heaven;
I will raise my throne
above the stars of God;
I will sit on the mount of
assembly
on the heights of Zaphon;[q]
14 I will ascend to the tops of the
clouds,
I will make myself like the
Most High."
15 But you are brought down to
Sheol,
to the depths of the Pit.
16 Those who see you will stare
at you,

o Heb *them* p Q Ms Compare Gk Syr Vg: Meaning of MT uncertain q Or *assembly in the far north*

14.1–2 Restored to its land, Israel will be served by the nations who once oppressed it (cf. 60.4–16; 61.5–7).

14.3–23 This mocking dirge may have originally celebrated the violent death of the Assyrian king Sargon II or Sennacherib, both of whom were also king of Babylon. **14.3–4a** Prose introduction. **14.4b–8** Following the tyrant's death, the earth is at peace. **14.8** Assyrian and Babylonian kings cut *the cedars of Lebanon* for their building projects (see 37.24). **14.9–11** The dead tyrant is greeted in *Sheol* by the *shades*, or spirits, of earlier rulers (see note on 5.14). **14.12–15** Attempting to displace God in heaven, this tyrant, like a figure from Canaanite mythology, fell into Sheol instead. **14.12** *Day star, Dawn*, names of deities. **14.13** *Mount of assembly*, mountain where the assembly of the gods met; *Zaphon*, the name of Baal's mountain in Canaanite mythology, in Israel identified with Mount Zion (see Ps 48.2, where the same expression is translated "in the far north"). **14.14** *Most High*, Hebrew *Elyon*, an archaic name for the head of the pantheon, identified with the Lord in Israel (Deut 32.8–9; Ps 82.6). **14.15** *The Pit*, another name for the underworld. **14.16–20** The tyrant has lost his former glory in death; he does not even receive proper burial. This description fits both Sargon II, whose body was not recovered after he died in battle against mountain tribesmen, and Sennacherib, who was murdered by his own sons and probably did not receive a state funeral.

and ponder over you:
"Is this the man who made the
earth tremble,
who shook kingdoms,
17 who made the world like a
desert
and overthrew its cities,
who would not let his prisoners
go home?"
18 All the kings of the nations lie
in glory,
each in his own tomb;
19 but you are cast out, away from
your grave,
like loathsome carrion,[r]
clothed with the dead, those
pierced by the sword,
who go down to the stones of
the Pit,
like a corpse trampled
underfoot.
20 You will not be joined with them
in burial,
because you have destroyed
your land,
you have killed your people.

May the descendants of
evildoers
nevermore be named!
21 Prepare slaughter for his sons
because of the guilt of their
father.[s]
Let them never rise to possess
the earth
or cover the face of the world
with cities.

22 I will rise up against them, says the LORD of hosts, and will cut off from Babylon name and remnant, offspring and posterity, says the LORD. 23 And I will make it a possession of the hedgehog, and pools of water, and I will sweep it with the broom of destruction, says the LORD of hosts.

An Oracle Concerning Assyria

24 The LORD of hosts has sworn:
As I have designed,
so shall it be;
and as I have planned,
so shall it come to pass:
25 I will break the Assyrian in
my land,
and on my mountains trample
him under foot;
his yoke shall be removed
from them,
and his burden from their
shoulders.
26 This is the plan that is planned
concerning the whole earth;
and this is the hand that is
stretched out
over all the nations.
27 For the LORD of hosts has
planned,
and who will annul it?
His hand is stretched out,
and who will turn it back?

An Oracle Concerning Philistia

28 In the year that King Ahaz died this oracle came:

29 Do not rejoice, all you Philistines,
that the rod that struck you
is broken,
for from the root of the snake
will come forth an adder,
and its fruit will be a flying
fiery serpent.
30 The firstborn of the poor will
graze,
and the needy lie down in
safety;
but I will make your root die
of famine,

r Cn Compare Gk: Heb *like a loathed branch*
s Syr Compare Gk: Heb *fathers*

14.20 *Killed your people.* Sargon and especially Sennacherib slaughtered many of Babylon's inhabitants in their attempt to gain and maintain control of the city. **14.21** A curse on the descendants of the king of Babylon. **14.22–23** Prose conclusion.

14.24–27 God's plan is to destroy Assyria in the land of Israel (see 29.1–8; 30.27–33; 31.8–9), and no power can thwart the divine will.

14.28–32 In ca. 714 B.C.E., Philistia, under the leadership of Ashdod and supported by Egypt and Ethiopia, revolted against Assyria, and sustained the revolt for three years. **14.28** *Year,* 715 B.C.E.; plans for the revolt may already have been underway. **14.29** *Do not rejoice.* Philistia's respite will be brief. The referent of *the rod* is ambiguous; is it the Judean king Ahaz or one of the Assyrian kings such as Tiglath-pileser III?

and your remnant I[t] will kill.
31 Wail, O gate; cry, O city;
melt in fear, O Philistia, all of you!
For smoke comes out of the north,
and there is no straggler in its ranks.

32 What will one answer the messengers of the nation?
"The LORD has founded Zion,
and the needy among his people
will find refuge in her."

An Oracle Concerning Moab

15 An oracle concerning Moab.
Because Ar is laid waste in a night,
Moab is undone;
because Kir is laid waste in a night,
Moab is undone.
2 Dibon[u] has gone up to the temple,
to the high places to weep;
over Nebo and over Medeba
Moab wails.
On every head is baldness,
every beard is shorn;
3 in the streets they bind on sackcloth;
on the housetops and in the squares
everyone wails and melts in tears.
4 Heshbon and Elealeh cry out,
their voices are heard as far as Jahaz;
therefore the loins of Moab quiver;[v]
his soul trembles.
5 My heart cries out for Moab;
his fugitives flee to Zoar,
to Eglath-shelishiyah.
For at the ascent of Luhith
they go up weeping;
on the road to Horonaim
they raise a cry of destruction;
6 the waters of Nimrim
are a desolation;
the grass is withered, the new growth fails,
the verdure is no more.
7 Therefore the abundance they have gained
and what they have laid up
they carry away
over the Wadi of the Willows.
8 For a cry has gone
around the land of Moab;
the wailing reaches to Eglaim,
the wailing reaches to Beer-elim.
9 For the waters of Dibon[w] are full of blood;
yet I will bring upon Dibon[w] even more—
a lion for those of Moab who escape,
for the remnant of the land.
16 Send lambs
to the ruler of the land,

t Q Ms Vg: MT *he* *u* Cn: Heb *the house and Dibon* *v* Cn Compare Gk Syr: Heb *the armed men of Moab cry aloud* *w* Q Ms Vg Compare Syr: MT *Dimon*

14.31 *Smoke . . . out of the north*, the Assyrian army (see 5.26–30). **14.32** Philistia tried to induce Judah to join the revolt, but Isaiah opposed it (see 18.1–7; 20.1–6), urging Judah to trust instead in God's promises to Zion.

15.1–16.14 Moab, Judah's neighbor east of the Dead Sea (Gen 19.30–37), will be destroyed (Jer 48.1–47; Ezek 25.8–11). **15.1–9** The refugees from the ruined cities of Moab are in mourning. **15.1** *Ar*, Moabite city located near Moab's ancient northern border on the south bank of the Arnon River (Num 21.15, 28); *Kir*, probably *Kir-hareseth* (see 16.7), modern Kerak, eleven miles east of the Dead Sea and seventeen miles south of the Arnon. **15.2** *Dibon*, modern Dhiban, three miles north of the Arnon; *Nebo*, another city of Moab in the vicinity of Heshbon (Num 32.3, 38); *Medeba*, Moabite city fifteen miles southeast of the northern end of the Dead Sea. *Baldness . . . beard is shorn*. One shaved the head and beard as a sign of mourning (Lev 21.5). There is probably a wordplay here, since the Hebrew word for baldness (*qorchah*) has the same consonantal spelling as a Moabite place name mentioned several times in Mesha's Moabite Stone. **15.3** The wearing of *sackcloth* was another sign of mourning. **15.4** *Heshbon*, modern Hesban, in Moab fifty miles due east of Jerusalem; *Elealeh*, another city near Heshbon; *Jahaz*, another Moabite city of disputed location. **15.5–8** *Zoar*, *Eglath-shelishiyah*, *Luhith*, *Horonaim*, *waters of Nimrim*, *Wadi of the Willows*, *Eglaim*, *Beer-elim*, sites in Moab of uncertain location. **16.1–5** Moabite refugees seek asylum in Judah, and the Judean crown is urged to give

from Sela, by way of the desert,
to the mount of daughter Zion.
2 Like fluttering birds,
like scattered nestlings,
so are the daughters of Moab
at the fords of the Arnon.
3 "Give counsel,
grant justice;
make your shade like night
at the height of noon;
hide the outcasts,
do not betray the fugitive;
4 let the outcasts of Moab
settle among you;
be a refuge to them
from the destroyer."

When the oppressor is no more,
and destruction has ceased,
and marauders have vanished
from the land,
5 then a throne shall be established
in steadfast love
in the tent of David,
and on it shall sit in faithfulness
a ruler who seeks justice
and is swift to do what is right.

6 We have heard of the pride of
Moab
—how proud he is!—
of his arrogance, his pride, and
his insolence;
his boasts are false.
7 Therefore let Moab wail,
let everyone wail for Moab.
Mourn, utterly stricken,
for the raisin cakes of
Kir-hareseth.

8 For the fields of Heshbon
languish,
and the vines of Sibmah,
whose clusters once made drunk
the lords of the nations,
reached to Jazer
and strayed to the desert;
their shoots once spread abroad
and crossed over the sea.
9 Therefore I weep with the
weeping of Jazer
for the vines of Sibmah;
I drench you with my tears,
O Heshbon and Elealeh;
for the shout over your fruit
harvest
and your grain harvest
has ceased.
10 Joy and gladness are taken away
from the fruitful field;
and in the vineyards no songs
are sung,
no shouts are raised;
no treader treads out wine in
the presses;
the vintage-shout is hushed.[x]
11 Therefore my heart throbs like a
harp for Moab,
and my very soul for Kir-heres.
12 When Moab presents himself, when
he wearies himself upon the high place,
when he comes to his sanctuary to pray,
he will not prevail.
13 This was the word that the LORD
spoke concerning Moab in the past. 14 But
now the LORD says, In three years, like the
years of a hired worker, the glory of Moab
will be brought into contempt, in spite of
all its great multitude; and those who sur-
vive will be very few and feeble.

An Oracle Concerning Damascus

17 An oracle concerning Damascus.
See, Damascus will cease to be
a city,
and will become a heap of
ruins.
2 Her towns will be deserted
forever;[y]
they will be places for flocks,

x Gk: Heb *I have hushed* y Cn Compare Gk: Heb *the cities of Aroer are deserted*

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them shelter. **16.1** *Lambs*, Moabite tribute to Judah (cf. 2 Kings 3.4). *Sela*, another unidentified site in Moab. **16.2** *Arnon*, the modern Wadi el-Mujib that flows into the Dead Sea. **16.5** *Tent of David*. A future descendant of David will once again rule over Moab in justice. **16.6–11** Lament over the destruction of the vineyards of Moab. *Kir-hareseth*. See note on 15.1. *Sibmah*, a Moabite city known for its vineyards; its site is still disputed. *Jazer*, a site near the border with Ammon (Num 21.24 in the Septuagint). *Kir-heres*, alternate form of *Kir-hareseth*. **16.12–14** Moab's prayers will be to no avail; within three years it will be almost completely devastated.

17.1–6 The Aramean and Israelite nations allied against Judah in the Syro-Ephraimite war (735–732 B.C.E.) will be totally destroyed (cf. 7.1–8.4). **17.1** *Damascus*, the capital of the Ara-

which will lie down, and no one
will make them afraid.
3 The fortress will disappear from
Ephraim,
and the kingdom from
Damascus;
and the remnant of Aram will be
like the glory of the children
of Israel,
says the LORD of hosts.

4 On that day
the glory of Jacob will be
brought low,
and the fat of his flesh will
grow lean.
5 And it shall be as when reapers
gather standing grain
and their arms harvest the ears,
and as when one gleans the ears
of grain
in the Valley of Rephaim.
6 Gleanings will be left in it,
as when an olive tree is
beaten—
two or three berries
in the top of the highest bough,
four or five
on the branches of a fruit tree,
says the LORD God of
Israel.

Turning from Idolatrous Worship

7 On that day people will regard their Maker, and their eyes will look to the Holy One of Israel; 8 they will not have regard for the altars, the work of their hands, and they will not look to what their own fingers have made, either the sacred poles[z] or the altars of incense.

9 On that day their strong cities will be like the deserted places of the Hivites and the Amorites,[a] which they deserted because of the children of Israel, and there will be desolation.

10 For you have forgotten the God
of your salvation,
and have not remembered the
Rock of your refuge;
therefore, though you plant
pleasant plants
and set out slips of an
alien god,
11 though you make them grow on
the day that you plant
them,
and make them blossom in the
morning that you sow;
yet the harvest will flee away
in a day of grief and incurable
pain.

God Will Rebuke Jerusalem's Enemies

12 Ah, the thunder of many peoples,
they thunder like the
thundering of the sea!
Ah, the roar of nations,
they roar like the roaring of
mighty waters!
13 The nations roar like the roaring
of many waters,
but he will rebuke them, and
they will flee far away,

z Heb *Asherim* *a* Cn Compare Gk: Heb *places of the wood and the highest bough*

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mean state. **17.3** *Ephraim*, a designation for the Northern Kingdom, Israel. **17.4** Cf. the imagery in 10.16. **17.5** *Rephaim*, a valley just outside of Jerusalem (2 Sam 5.18); its proximity to the heavily populated city meant that it would be thoroughly *gleaned* (see Deut 24.19–22; Ruth 2.2–23) by the landless urban poor.

17.7–11 Judgment on idolatry (cf. 1.29–31; 2.8, 20). **17.7–8** After God's judgment on Israel, the people will turn back to him from their idols. *The work of their hands.* Altars and altars of incense were used in the worship of the Lord; the prophet probably takes exception to these because they were dedicated to either a foreign deity or a Northern form of the Lord, such as the "Yahweh of Samaria" attested from Kuntillet Ajrud, that the Judean prophet considered idolatrous. *Sacred pole*, a wooden cult object or actual tree that represented the Canaanite goddess Asherah; in syncretistic popular Israelite religion Asherah was sometimes identified as the spouse of the Lord. **17.9** Israel's cities will be as devastated as those of the *Hivites* and *Amorites*, the original inhabitants of Palestine (Deut 7.1), when Israel displaced them. **17.10–11** This devastation will befall Israel because it had deserted God, who saved them. **17.10** *Rock*, a standard metaphor for God as a source of refuge (30.29). *Plants, slips*, perhaps sacred groves planted in honor of other gods (1.29–31).

17.12–14 Though Jerusalem's enemies roar like the chaotic waters of the stormy sea (Pss 46.1–3; 93.3–4), God will drive them away before morning. Perhaps originally directed against the Syro-Ephraimite coalition, this oracle

chased like chaff on the
mountains before the wind
and whirling dust before the
storm.
14 At evening time, lo, terror!
Before morning, they are no
more.
This is the fate of those who
despoil us,
and the lot of those who
plunder us.

An Oracle Concerning Ethiopia

18 Ah, land of whirring wings
beyond the rivers of
Ethiopia,[b]
2 sending ambassadors by the Nile
in vessels of papyrus on the
waters!
Go, you swift messengers,
to a nation tall and smooth,
to a people feared near and far,
a nation mighty and
conquering,
whose land the rivers divide.

3 All you inhabitants of the world,
you who live on the earth,
when a signal is raised on the
mountains, look!
When a trumpet is blown,
listen!
4 For thus the LORD said to me:
I will quietly look from my
dwelling
like clear heat in sunshine,
like a cloud of dew in the heat
of harvest.
5 For before the harvest, when the
blossom is over
and the flower becomes a
ripening grape,
he will cut off the shoots with
pruning hooks,
and the spreading branches he
will hew away.
6 They shall all be left
to the birds of prey of the
mountains
and to the animals of the earth.
And the birds of prey will
summer on them,
and all the animals of the earth
will winter on them.

7 At that time gifts will be brought to the LORD of hosts from[c] a people tall and smooth, from a people feared near and far, a nation mighty and conquering, whose land the rivers divide, to Mount Zion, the place of the name of the LORD of hosts.

An Oracle Concerning Egypt

19 An oracle concerning Egypt.
See, the LORD is riding on a
swift cloud
and comes to Egypt;
the idols of Egypt will tremble at
his presence,
and the heart of the Egyptians
will melt within them.
2 I will stir up Egyptians against
Egyptians,
and they will fight, one against
the other,
neighbor against neighbor,
city against city, kingdom
against kingdom;
3 the spirit of the Egyptians within
them will be emptied out,
and I will confound their plans;
they will consult the idols and the
spirits of the dead
and the ghosts and the familiar
spirits;
4 I will deliver the Egyptians
into the hand of a hard master;
a fierce king will rule over them,

b Or *Nubia*; Heb *Cush* *c* Q Ms Gk Vg: MT *of*

could easily be reapplied to the later threat from Assyria (5.30; 8.7; 28.17; 29.7).

18.1–7 The background for this oracle may be Ethiopia's support for Ashdod's revolt against Assyria in 714 B.C.E. In opposition to the Ethiopian messengers encouraging Judah to join this revolt (see 14.32; 20.1–6), Isaiah insists that one must wait for God's appointed time of harvest. **18.2** *A nation tall and smooth*, the Nubians of ancient Ethiopia were black, tall, and, unlike the soldiers of most armies Israel encountered, clean shaven. *Land the rivers divide*, ancient Ethiopia or Nubia, divided by the branches of the Nile. **18.4** *My dwelling*, Mount Zion (see v. 7).

19.1–15 The Lord will bring judgment on Egypt's gods, its leaders, and its people. **19.1–4** The internal conflict in Egypt may reflect the period before the Ethiopian Piankhi, founder of the twenty-fifth dynasty, united Egypt under his rule beginning ca. 715 B.C.E. **19.4** *Hard mas-*

says the Sovereign, the LORD
of hosts.

5 The waters of the Nile will be
dried up,
and the river will be parched
and dry;
6 its canals will become foul,
and the branches of Egypt's
Nile will diminish and
dry up,
reeds and rushes will rot away.
7 There will be bare places by
the Nile,
on the brink of the Nile;
and all that is sown by the Nile
will dry up,
be driven away, and be no
more.
8 Those who fish will mourn;
all who cast hooks in the Nile
will lament,
and those who spread nets on
the water will languish.
9 The workers in flax will be in
despair,
and the carders and those at
the loom will grow pale.
10 Its weavers will be dismayed,
and all who work for wages will
be grieved.

11 The princes of Zoan are utterly
foolish;
the wise counselors of Pharaoh
give stupid counsel.
How can you say to Pharaoh,
"I am one of the sages,
a descendant of ancient kings"?
12 Where now are your sages?
Let them tell you and make
known
what the LORD of hosts has
planned against Egypt.
13 The princes of Zoan have become
fools,
and the princes of Memphis
are deluded;
those who are the cornerstones of
its tribes
have led Egypt astray.
14 The LORD has poured into
them[d]
a spirit of confusion;
and they have made Egypt
stagger in all its doings
as a drunkard staggers around
in vomit.
15 Neither head nor tail, palm
branch or reed,
will be able to do anything for
Egypt.

Five Additional Sayings About Egypt

16 On that day the Egyptians will be like women, and tremble with fear before the hand that the LORD of hosts raises against them. 17 And the land of Judah will become a terror to the Egyptians; everyone to whom it is mentioned will fear because of the plan that the LORD of hosts is planning against them.

18 On that day there will be five cities in the land of Egypt that speak the language of Canaan and swear allegiance to the LORD of hosts. One of these will be called the City of the Sun.

19 On that day there will be an altar to the LORD in the center of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the LORD at its border. 20 It will be a sign and a witness to the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt; when they cry to the LORD because of oppressors, he will send them a savior, and will defend and deliver them. 21 The LORD will make himself known to the Egyptians; and the Egyptians will know the LORD on that day, and will worship with sacrifice and burnt offering, and they will make vows to the LORD and perform them.

d Gk Compare Tg: Heb *it*

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ter, perhaps Piankhi. **19.5–10** Egypt's collapse is portrayed using the imagery of the drying up of the Nile, Egypt's source of life and economic well-being. **19.11–15** Despite their reputation for wisdom, the leaders of Egypt have proven themselves foolish and incompetent. **19.11** *Zoan*, Greek Tanis, an important Egyptian city in the Delta region. **19.13** *Memphis*, ancient capital of Lower Egypt. **19.14** Cf. 28.7–8. **19.15** *Palm branch or reed*, metaphors for the ruler and the ruled (9.14–15).

19.16–25 Five prose sayings, each beginning with *on that day*, expand on the preceding oracle against Egypt. **19.16–17** Egypt will fear Judah because of God's plan against Egypt. **19.18** *Language of Canaan*, Canaanite, of which Hebrew is a dialect. *City of the Sun*, perhaps Heliopolis (cf. Jer 43.13). **19.19–22** The Egyptians will come to know

22 The LORD will strike Egypt, striking
and healing; they will return to the LORD,
and he will listen to their supplications and
heal them.
23 On that day there will be a highway
from Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian
will come into Egypt, and the Egyptian
into Assyria, and the Egyptians will wor-
ship with the Assyrians.
24 On that day Israel will be the third
with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the
midst of the earth, 25 whom the LORD of
hosts has blessed, saying, "Blessed be
Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of
my hands, and Israel my heritage."

Isaiah Dramatizes the Conquest of Egypt and Ethiopia

20 In the year that the commander-
in-chief, who was sent by King
Sargon of Assyria, came to Ashdod and
fought against it and took it— 2 at that
time the LORD had spoken to Isaiah son of
Amoz, saying, "Go, and loose the sack-
cloth from your loins and take your san-
dals off your feet," and he had done so,
walking naked and barefoot. 3 Then the
LORD said, "Just as my servant Isaiah has
walked naked and barefoot for three
years as a sign and a portent against Egypt
and Ethiopia,[e] 4 so shall the king of As-
syria lead away the Egyptians as captives
and the Ethiopians[f] as exiles, both the
young and the old, naked and barefoot,
with buttocks uncovered, to the shame of
Egypt. 5 And they shall be dismayed and
confounded because of Ethiopia[e] their
hope and of Egypt their boast. 6 In that
day the inhabitants of this coastland will
say, 'See, this is what has happened to
those in whom we hoped and to whom we
fled for help and deliverance from the
king of Assyria! And we, how shall we
escape?' "

Oracles Concerning Babylon, Dumah, and Arabia

21 The oracle concerning the wil-
derness of the sea.

As whirlwinds in the Negeb
sweep on,
it comes from the desert,
from a terrible land.
2 A stern vision is told to me;
the betrayer betrays,
and the destroyer destroys.
Go up, O Elam,
lay siege, O Media;
all the sighing she has caused
I bring to an end.
3 Therefore my loins are filled
with anguish;
pangs have seized me,
like the pangs of a woman
in labor;
I am bowed down so that I
cannot hear,
I am dismayed so that I
cannot see.
4 My mind reels, horror has
appalled me;
the twilight I longed for
has been turned for me into
trembling.
5 They prepare the table,

e Or *Nubia*; Heb *Cush* f Or *Nubians*; Heb *Cushites*

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and worship the Lord even as Israel does. **19.23** Assyria will join Egypt in this worship. **19.24–25** Egypt, Assyria, and Israel will all be blessed by God in that day (cf. Gen 12.3).

20.1–6 Sargon's general put down the revolt against Assyria in Ashdod in 711 B.C.E., and Ashdod's Egyptian and Ethiopian allies proved a vain hope. During the revolt Isaiah walked around naked to symbolize the captivity that would soon overtake Egypt and Ethiopia, thus warning the Judean authorities not to trust these allies nor to join the revolt.

21.1–17 These three oracles all seem to presuppose the Assyrian struggle to gain control of southern Mesopotamia against the Aramean rulers of Babylon and their allies in 691–689 B.C.E. Following the bloody battle at Halule (691), which pitted Sennacherib's Assyrian army against a large coalition led by the king of Elam, Assyria regrouped and continued to campaign against Babylon and its Arab allies, eventually destroying Babylon completely in 689 B.C.E. **21.1–10** Announcement of the fall of Babylon. **21.1** *Wilderness of the sea*, probably a reference to the steppe regions in lower Mesopotamia, which was known as the Sealand. *Negeb*, steppe region in southern Palestine. **21.2** *Betrayer, destroyer*, probably a reference to Assyria (16.4; 33.1). *Elam* led the large anti-Assyrian coalition, which included contingents from Persia and perhaps *Media*. **21.3–4** The vision dismays the prophet, because it reveals the fall of Babylon, Israel's ally (39.1–4), rather than the fall of Assyria he longed for. **21.5** *Oil the shield*, to keep the leather supple (cf.

they spread the rugs,
they eat, they drink.
Rise up, commanders,
oil the shield!
6 For thus the Lord said to me:
"Go, post a lookout,
let him announce what he sees.
7 When he sees riders, horsemen
in pairs,
riders on donkeys, riders on camels,
let him listen diligently,
very diligently."
8 Then the watcher[g] called out:
"Upon a watchtower I stand,
O Lord,
continually by day,
and at my post I am stationed
throughout the night.
9 Look, there they come, riders,
horsemen in pairs!"
Then he responded,
"Fallen, fallen is Babylon;
and all the images of her gods
lie shattered on the ground."
10 O my threshed and
winnowed one,
what I have heard from the
LORD of hosts,
the God of Israel, I announce
to you.

11 The oracle concerning Dumah.

One is calling to me from Seir,
"Sentinel, what of the night?
Sentinel, what of the night?"
12 The sentinel says:
"Morning comes, and also
the night.
If you will inquire, inquire;
come back again."

13 The oracle concerning the
desert plain.

In the scrub of the desert plain
you will lodge,
O caravans of Dedanites.
14 Bring water to the thirsty,
meet the fugitive with bread,
O inhabitants of the land
of Tema.
15 For they have fled from the
swords,
from the drawn sword,
from the bent bow,
and from the stress of battle.
16 For thus the Lord said to me:
Within a year, according to the years of a
hired worker, all the glory of Kedar will
come to an end; 17 and the remaining
bows of Kedar's warriors will be few; for
the LORD, the God of Israel, has spoken.

A Warning of Destruction of Jerusalem

22 The oracle concerning the valley
of vision.

What do you mean that you have
gone up,
all of you, to the housetops,
2 you that are full of shoutings,
tumultuous city, exultant town?
Your slain are not slain by
the sword,
nor are they dead in battle.
3 Your rulers have all fled
together;
they were captured without the
use of a bow.[h]

g Q Ms: MT *a lion* *h* Or *without their bows*

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2 Sam 1.21). **21.6–8** *Lookout . . . watcher.* For this image of the prophet as a sentinel, see v. 11; Ezek 3.17; Hab 2.1. **21.9** *The images of her gods lie shattered.* In shocking contrast to their normal practice, the victorious Assyrians destroyed the images of the Babylonian gods when Babylon fell to Sennacherib in 689 B.C.E. **21.11–12** There is as yet no clear answer on the fate of Dumah. **21.11** *Dumah,* Adummatu in the northern Arabian desert, plundered by Sennacherib in connection with his campaign against Babylon. *Seir.* There is a Seir in Edom, but the present context suggests another site of the same name in the northern Arabian desert. **21.13–17** Other Arab groups are urged to give comfort to those Arabs who must flee Sennacherib's attacks. **21.13** *Dedanites,* a northern Arabian group (Ezek 25.13). **21.14** *Tema,* an oasis in northwest Arabia (Jer 25.23). **21.16** *Kedar,* a semi-nomadic tribal group of the northern Arabian desert (42.11; Ezek 27.21).

22.1–14 The occasion for this oracle may have been news of Sennacherib's successful first campaign against Babylon (703 B.C.E.), Judah's ally, that freed the Assyrian king to attack Judah in the west (701 B.C.E.). **22.1** *Valley of vision* may be a reference to the Babylonian plain seen only in the prophet's vision. **22.2–3** In Sennacherib's first campaign, Merodach-baladan, king of Babylon, fled the battlefield, and his Elamite, Chal-

All of you who were found were
captured,
though they had fled far
away.[i]
4 Therefore I said:
Look away from me,
let me weep bitter tears;
do not try to comfort me
for the destruction of my
beloved people.

5 For the Lord GOD of hosts has
a day
of tumult and trampling and
confusion
in the valley of vision,
a battering down of walls
and a cry for help to the
mountains.
6 Elam bore the quiver
with chariots and cavalry,[j]
and Kir uncovered the shield.
7 Your choicest valleys were full of
chariots,
and the cavalry took their stand
at the gates.
8 He has taken away the covering
of Judah.

On that day you looked to the weapons of the House of the Forest, 9and you saw that there were many breaches in the city of David, and you collected the waters of the lower pool. 10You counted the houses of Jerusalem, and you broke down the houses to fortify the wall. 11You made a reservoir between the two walls for the water of the old pool. But you did not look to him who did it, or have regard for him who planned it long ago.

12 In that day the Lord GOD of
hosts
called to weeping and
mourning,
to baldness and putting on
sackcloth;
13 but instead there was joy and
festivity,
killing oxen and slaughtering
sheep,
eating meat and drinking wine.
"Let us eat and drink,
for tomorrow we die."
14 The LORD of hosts has revealed
himself in my ears:
Surely this iniquity will not be
forgiven you until you die,
says the Lord GOD of hosts.

Denunciation of Self-Seeking Officials

15 Thus says the Lord GOD of hosts: Come, go to this steward, to Shebna, who is master of the household, and say to him: 16What right do you have here? Who are your relatives here, that you have cut out a tomb here for yourself, cutting a tomb on the height, and carving a habitation for yourself in the rock? 17The LORD is about to hurl you away violently, my fellow. He will seize firm hold on you, 18whirl you round and round, and throw you like a ball into a wide land; there you shall die, and there your splendid chariots shall lie, O you disgrace to your master's house! 19I will thrust you from your office, and you will be pulled down from your post.

i Gk Syr Vg: Heb *fled from far away*
j Meaning of Heb uncertain

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dean, and Aramaic allies were routed and many prisoners taken. **22.4** *My beloved people*, Judah, exposed to attack because of the collapse of her allies in the east. **22.5** *Day*. See note on 2.11–12. **22.6** *Elam*, Babylon's major ally against Assyria (see note on 11.11); *Kir*, the Aramean allies of Babylon (Am 1.5; 9.7). Kir here is different from the one mentioned in 15.1. **22.7** *Choicest valleys, the gates*, perhaps referring to the major engagements at the Babylonian cities of Kutha and Kish. **22.8a** *The covering of Judah*, the protection provided by her allies on the Babylonian front. **22.8b–11** News of Babylon's fall led to frenzied military preparations in Judah against the threat of Assyrian invasion, but God was ignored in these preparations (cf. 30.1–2, 15–16). **22.8b** *House of the Forest*, the royal palace with its armory (1 Kings 7.2; 10.17). **22.9** *City of David*, the oldest (southeastern) section of Jerusalem. *Collected the waters*, perhaps a reference to Hezekiah's excavation of the Siloam tunnel (2 Kings 20.20). **22.12–14** God was angered by the Judean leaders' failure to turn to him, by the cynical fatalism with which they faced imminent disaster (see 28.14–15).

22.15–25 Shebna, Hezekiah's majordomo, has overreached his authority and is threatened with the loss of his office. **22.15–16** Shebna's *tomb* has been plausibly identified with the tomb cut out of rock at Silwan in the Kidron Valley with a late eighth-century B.C.E. inscription giving the fuller form of the name: "This is [the grave of

20 On that day I will call my servant
Eliakim son of Hilkiah, 21 and will clothe
him with your robe and bind your sash on
him. I will commit your authority to his
hand, and he shall be a father to the in-
habitants of Jerusalem and to the house
of Judah. 22 I will place on his shoulder
the key of the house of David; he shall
open, and no one shall shut; he shall shut,
and no one shall open. 23 I will fasten him
like a peg in a secure place, and he will
become a throne of honor to his ancestral
house. 24 And they will hang on him the
whole weight of his ancestral house, the
offspring and issue, every small vessel,
from the cups to all the flagons. 25 On that
day, says the LORD of hosts, the peg that
was fastened in a secure place will give
way; it will be cut down and fall, and the
load that was on it will perish, for the
LORD has spoken.

An Oracle Concerning Tyre

23 The oracle concerning Tyre.
Wail, O ships of Tarshish,
for your fortress is destroyed.[k]
When they came in from Cyprus
they learned of it.
2 Be still, O inhabitants of
the coast,
O merchants of Sidon,
your messengers crossed over
the sea[l]
3 and were on the mighty waters;
your revenue was the grain of
Shihor,
the harvest of the Nile;
you were the merchant of the
nations.
4 Be ashamed, O Sidon, for the sea
has spoken,
the fortress of the sea, saying:
"I have neither labored nor given
birth,
I have neither reared
young men
nor brought up young women."
5 When the report comes to Egypt,
they will be in anguish over the
report about Tyre.
6 Cross over to Tarshish—
wail, O inhabitants of the coast!
7 Is this your exultant city
whose origin is from days
of old,
whose feet carried her
to settle far away?
8 Who has planned this
against Tyre, the bestower
of crowns,
whose merchants were princes,
whose traders were the
honored of the earth?
9 The LORD of hosts has
planned it—
to defile the pride of all glory,
to shame all the honored of the
earth.
10 Cross over to your own land,
O ships of[m] Tarshish;
this is a harbor[n] no more.
11 He has stretched out his hand
over the sea,
he has shaken the kingdoms;
the LORD has given command
concerning Canaan
to destroy its fortresses.
12 He said:
You will exult no longer,
O oppressed virgin daughter
Sidon;
rise, cross over to Cyprus—
even there you will have no
rest.

k Cn Compare verse 14: Heb *for it is destroyed, without houses* *l* Q Ms: MT *crossing over the sea, they replenished you* *m* Cn Compare Gk: Heb *like the Nile, daughter* *n* Cn: Heb *restraint*

Sheban]yahu who was *master of the household.*" **22.20–23** Shebna's office is promised to *Eliakim,* who apparently replaced Shebna before the siege of Jerusalem (36.3; 2 Kings 18.18). **22.24–25** Eventually Eliakim, weighed down by his family's claims, also proved to be a disappointment.

23.1–18 The original oracle against Tyre probably reflects an Assyrian campaign against Phoenicia, possibly that of Tiglath-pileser III (734 B.C.E.) or Sennacherib (701 B.C.E.). **23.1** *Tarshish,* a seaport in the western Mediterranean, probably Tartessus in southern Spain. *Cyprus* traded with Phoenicia. **23.2** *Sidon* was a neighboring city to Tyre. **23.3** *Shihor,* an area in the Egyptian Delta along the Pelusiac arm of the Nile. **23.4** Sidon is left barren without inhabitants. **23.5–11** Tyre's trading partners will lament their loss of trade with devastated Phoenicia. **23.7** *Settle far away.* Phoenician settlers founded colonies in Cyprus, North Africa, and other distant sites in the Mediterranean.

13 Look at the land of the Chaldeans! This is the people; it was not Assyria.
They destined Tyre for wild animals.
They erected their siege towers, they tore
down her palaces, they made her a ruin.[o]
14 Wail, O ships of Tarshish,
for your fortress is destroyed.
15 From that day Tyre will be forgotten
for seventy years, the lifetime of one king.
At the end of seventy years, it will happen
to Tyre as in the song about the
prostitute:
16 Take a harp,
go about the city,
you forgotten prostitute!
Make sweet melody,
sing many songs,
that you may be remembered.
17 At the end of seventy years, the LORD
will visit Tyre, and she will return to her
trade, and will prostitute herself with all
the kingdoms of the world on the face of
the earth. 18 Her merchandise and her
wages will be dedicated to the LORD; her
profits[p] will not be stored or hoarded,
but her merchandise will supply abundant
food and fine clothing for those who live
in the presence of the LORD.

Impending Judgment on the Earth

24 Now the LORD is about to lay
waste the earth and make
it desolate,
and he will twist its surface and
scatter its inhabitants.
2 And it shall be, as with the
people, so with the priest;
as with the slave, so with his
master;
as with the maid, so with her
mistress;
as with the buyer, so with
the seller;
as with the lender, so with the
borrower;
as with the creditor, so with
the debtor.
3 The earth shall be utterly laid
waste and utterly despoiled;
for the LORD has spoken
this word.

4 The earth dries up and withers,
the world languishes and
withers;
the heavens languish together
with the earth.
5 The earth lies polluted
under its inhabitants;
for they have transgressed laws,
violated the statutes,
broken the everlasting
covenant.
6 Therefore a curse devours
the earth,
and its inhabitants suffer for
their guilt;
therefore the inhabitants of the
earth dwindled,
and few people are left.
7 The wine dries up,
the vine languishes,
all the merry-hearted sigh.
8 The mirth of the timbrels is
stilled,
the noise of the jubilant
has ceased,
the mirth of the lyre is stilled.
9 No longer do they drink wine
with singing;
strong drink is bitter to those
who drink it.
10 The city of chaos is broken down,

o Meaning of Heb uncertain p Heb *it*

23.13 This verse is a later gloss (perhaps the time of Nebuchadnezzar [605–562 B.C.E.], see Ezek 26–28) that attributes the destruction of Tyre to Babylon, *the land of the Chaldeans*, rather than Assyria. **23.15–18** These verses are probably also from the Babylonian period. **23.17** *Seventy years.* See Jer 25.11–12. *Prostitute herself*, make whatever international agreements are necessary for her economic gain. **23.18** Her future wealth, however, will be dedicated to God.

24.1–27.13 The Isaiah Apocalypse. The designation is due to the fact that these chapters, usually attributed to a period at least a hundred years later than the eighth-century Isaiah of Jerusalem, contain a number of themes popular in later apocalyptic writings. Older Isaian material has been reworked in developing these themes, however. **24.1–23** The earth is about to be laid waste in a universal judgment. **24.2** Cf. Hos 4.9. **24.4–6** The whole creation suffers because of human transgressions (33.8–9; Hos 4.1–3). **24.7–11** The vineyards dry up, ending the mirth of the drinking parties (1.11–12; 32.9–14). **24.10** *City of chaos*, a portrait of a society so

every house is shut up so that
no one can enter.
11 There is an outcry in the streets
for lack of wine;
all joy has reached its eventide;
the gladness of the earth is
banished.
12 Desolation is left in the city,
the gates are battered into
ruins.
13 For thus it shall be on the earth
and among the nations,
as when an olive tree is beaten,
as at the gleaning when the
grape harvest is ended.

14 They lift up their voices, they
sing for joy;
they shout from the west over
the majesty of the LORD.
15 Therefore in the east give glory
to the LORD;
in the coastlands of the sea
glorify the name of the
LORD, the God of Israel.
16 From the ends of the earth we
hear songs of praise,
of glory to the Righteous One.
But I say, I pine away,
I pine away. Woe is me!
For the treacherous deal
treacherously,
the treacherous deal very
treacherously.

17 Terror, and the pit, and the
snare
are upon you, O inhabitant of
the earth!
18 Whoever flees at the sound of
the terror
shall fall into the pit;
and whoever climbs out of the pit
shall be caught in the snare.
For the windows of heaven are
opened,
and the foundations of the
earth tremble.
19 The earth is utterly broken,
the earth is torn asunder,
the earth is violently shaken.
20 The earth staggers like a
drunkard,
it sways like a hut;
its transgression lies heavy
upon it,
and it falls, and will not
rise again.

21 On that day the LORD will punish
the host of heaven in heaven,
and on earth the kings of
the earth.
22 They will be gathered together
like prisoners in a pit;
they will be shut up in a prison,
and after many days they will
be punished.
23 Then the moon will be abashed,
and the sun ashamed;
for the LORD of hosts will reign
on Mount Zion and in
Jerusalem,
and before his elders he will
manifest his glory.

Praise for Deliverance from Oppression

25 O LORD, you are my God;
I will exalt you, I will praise
your name;

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disrupted by famine that every house is *shut up* against normal social intercourse (3.1–8). **24.13** Survivors will be as rare as the gleaning after a fruit harvest (17.6). **24.14–16** While the whole world praises God's glory, the prophet complains that the judgment has not yet ended the treachery of the evil oppressors. **24.17–23** Universal judgment will overtake the whole world as God manifests his rule on Mount Zion in Jerusalem. **24.17–18b** See the identical imagery in Jer 48.43–44 and cf. Am 5.18–19. **24.18c** *Windows of heaven are opened,* imagery taken from the Genesis story of Noah and the flood (see Gen 7.11). There may also be an allusion here to an incident in Canaanite myth in which Baal enters his temple, opens a window, and "utters his voice," (i.e., thunders) whereupon the earth quakes and his enemies flee. **24.18d–20** Earthquake imagery. **24.21–23** The judgment embraces the pagan gods as well as their human worshipers. **24.21** *Host of heaven,* astral deities (Jer 19.13; Zeph 1.5). **24.22** *Pit,* the underworld, where God's enemies are imprisoned until the final judgment (14.15; Rev 20.1–3). **24.23** *The moon will be abashed, and the sun ashamed,* two of the astral deities (Deut 17.3) responding to God's rebuke. *Elders.* See Ex 24.9–11.

25.1–5 A psalm praising God for saving the weak by his judgment on the mighty oppressors. **25.1** *Plans formed of old,* an old Isaian theme

for you have done wonderful
things,
plans formed of old, faithful
and sure.
2 For you have made the city
a heap,
the fortified city a ruin;
the palace of aliens is a city
no more,
it will never be rebuilt.
3 Therefore strong peoples will
glorify you;
cities of ruthless nations will
fear you.
4 For you have been a refuge to
the poor,
a refuge to the needy in their
distress,
a shelter from the rainstorm
and a shade from the heat.
When the blast of the ruthless
was like a winter rainstorm,
5 the noise of aliens like heat in a
dry place,
you subdued the heat with the
shade of clouds;
the song of the ruthless
was stilled.

The Banquet on the Mountain

6 On this mountain the LORD of
hosts will make for all
peoples
a feast of rich food, a feast of
well-aged wines,
of rich food filled with marrow,
of well-aged wines strained
clear.
7 And he will destroy on this
mountain
the shroud that is cast over all
peoples,
the sheet that is spread over all
nations;
8 he will swallow up death forever.
Then the Lord GOD will wipe
away the tears from all
faces,
and the disgrace of his people
he will take away from all
the earth,
for the LORD has spoken.
9 It will be said on that day,
Lo, this is our God; we have
waited for him, so that he
might save us.
This is the LORD for whom we
have waited;
let us be glad and rejoice in his
salvation.
10 For the hand of the LORD will
rest on this mountain.

Judgment on Moab

The Moabites shall be trodden
down in their place
as straw is trodden down in a
dung-pit.
11 Though they spread out their
hands in the midst of it,
as swimmers spread out their
hands to swim,
their pride will be laid low
despite the struggle[q] of
their hands.
12 The high fortifications of his
walls will be brought down,

[q] Meaning of Heb uncertain

(14.24–27). **25.2** Whether a specific *city* is in mind is unclear; for the imagery, see 17.1. **25.4** *Poor, needy.* See 14.30, 32. **25.4c–5** For this imagery of protection from storm and heat, see 4.6; 32.2.

25.6–10a God prepares a joyous banquet for all peoples on his royal mountain. **25.6** *This mountain,* Mount Zion, the site of God's royal rule (24.23). *Feast.* A new king celebrated his accession by providing a feast for his supporters (1 Kings 1.24–25); cf. the banquet before God on Mount Sinai (Ex 24.9–11). The motif suggests a new level of communion and intimacy between God and human subjects. **25.7** *Destroy and swallow up* are translations of the same Hebrew verb meaning to "swallow up." The notion of God's swallowing up death is a reversal of a Canaanite mythological motif in which death "swallows" everything (see 5.14; cf. 1 Cor 15.24–57). *Shroud* and *sheet* do not designate burial garments. They are usually taken to refer to garments worn by mourners, but they may refer to the curtains in the tabernacle or temple that shielded the inner sanctum from public view (Ex 26.36; 27.16; Num 3.31), since humans could not look upon God and live (Ex 33.20). In either case, they symbolize the alienation between God and humans that is removed by God's destruction of death. **25.8** *Wipe away the tears.* See Rev 7.17; 21.4.

25.10b–12 Moab, Judah's hostile neighbor, will be cast down to drown in shame as in a dung heap.

laid low, cast to the ground,
even to the dust.

Judah's Song of Victory

26 On that day this song will be sung
in the land of Judah:
We have a strong city;
he sets up victory
like walls and bulwarks.
2 Open the gates,
so that the righteous nation
that keeps faith
may enter in.
3 Those of steadfast mind you keep
in peace—
in peace because they trust
in you.
4 Trust in the LORD forever,
for in the LORD GOD[r]
you have an everlasting rock.
5 For he has brought low
the inhabitants of the height;
the lofty city he lays low.
He lays it low to the ground,
casts it to the dust.
6 The foot tramples it,
the feet of the poor,
the steps of the needy.

Lament and Reassurance

7 The way of the righteous is level;
O Just One, you make smooth
the path of the righteous.
8 In the path of your judgments,
O LORD, we wait for you;
your name and your renown
are the soul's desire.
9 My soul yearns for you in
the night,
my spirit within me earnestly
seeks you.
For when your judgments are in
the earth,
the inhabitants of the world
learn righteousness.
10 If favor is shown to the wicked,
they do not learn
righteousness;
in the land of uprightness they
deal perversely
and do not see the majesty of
the LORD.
11 O LORD, your hand is lifted up,
but they do not see it.
Let them see your zeal for your
people, and be ashamed.
Let the fire for your
adversaries consume them.
12 O LORD, you will ordain peace
for us,
for indeed, all that we have
done, you have done
for us.
13 O LORD our God,
other lords besides you have
ruled over us,
but we acknowledge your
name alone.
14 The dead do not live;
shades do not rise—
because you have punished and
destroyed them,
and wiped out all memory
of them.
15 But you have increased the
nation, O LORD,
you have increased the nation;
you are glorified;
you have enlarged all the
borders of the land.

16 O LORD, in distress they
sought you,
they poured out a prayer[s]
when your chastening was
on them.
17 Like a woman with child,

r Heb *in Yah, the LORD* s Meaning of Heb uncertain

26.1–6 A processional song celebrating God's defense of Jerusalem and his defeat of its enemies (cf. Pss 24; 46; 48). **26.2** *Righteous nation*, a reformed Judah. **26.5** Cf. the humiliation of Jerusalem in 29.4. **26.6** *Poor, needy*. See 25.4.

26.7–27.1 The community pleads for God's judgment on the wicked, and a prophetic voice responds with a demand for patience and a promise that God's intervention will soon come. **26.7** *O Just One*. The characterization of God as just provides the basis for the community's complaint that God's justice is currently anything but evident (cf. Jer 12.1; Hab 1.12–13). **26.9–11** Unless they are punished, the wicked neither acknowledge God nor change their behavior, so the community urges God to punish them. **26.12–15** There will be deliverance for Judah, who acknowledges God, but destruction for its enemies. **26.14** Cf. v. 19. **26.16–18** Judah, under God's chastening, was like a pregnant woman

who writhes and cries out in
her pangs
when she is near her time,
so were we because of you,
O LORD;
18 we were with child, we writhed,
but we gave birth only to wind.
We have won no victories on
earth,
and no one is born to inhabit
the world.
19 Your dead shall live, their
corpses[t] shall rise.
O dwellers in the dust, awake
and sing for joy!
For your dew is a radiant dew,
and the earth will give birth to
those long dead.[u]

20 Come, my people, enter your
chambers,
and shut your doors
behind you;
hide yourselves for a little while
until the wrath is past.
21 For the LORD comes out from
his place
to punish the inhabitants of the
earth for their iniquity;
the earth will disclose the blood
shed on it,
and will no longer cover its
slain.

27 On that day the LORD with his cruel and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and he will kill the dragon that is in the sea.

God's Redemption of Israel

2 On that day:
A pleasant vineyard, sing
about it!
3 I, the LORD, am its keeper;
every moment I water it.
I guard it night and day
so that no one can harm it;
4 I have no wrath.
If it gives me thorns and briers,
I will march to battle against it.
I will burn it up.
5 Or else let it cling to me for
protection,
let it make peace with me,
let it make peace with me.

6 In days to come[v] Jacob shall
take root,
Israel shall blossom and put
forth shoots,
and fill the whole world
with fruit.

7 Has he struck them down as he
struck down those who
struck them?
Or have they been killed as
their killers were killed?
8 By expulsion,[w] by exile you
struggled against them;
with his fierce blast he removed
them in the day of the
east wind.
9 Therefore by this the guilt of
Jacob will be expiated,
and this will be the full fruit of
the removal of his sin:
when he makes all the stones of
the altars
like chalkstones crushed
to pieces,
no sacred poles[x] or incense
altars will remain standing.
10 For the fortified city is solitary,
a habitation deserted and
forsaken, like the
wilderness;
the calves graze there,

t Cn Compare Syr Tg: Heb *my corpse* *u* Heb *to the shades* *v* Heb *Those to come* *w* Meaning of Heb uncertain *x* Heb *Asherim*

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unable to give birth (2 Kings 19.3). **26.19** *Your dead.* For his people, in contrast to the wicked (see v. 14), God promises a resurrection to new life (cf. Ezek 37.1–14). **26.20–21** They must be patient a little longer, however, until God's judgment comes. **27.1** Well known from Canaanite myth, *Leviathan* and the *dragon* are mythological sea monsters (Ps 74.13–14) that personify the powers of chaos, evil, and destruction.

27.2–13 This section is composed of several fragments, all of which portray Israel's future salvation using agricultural imagery. **27.2–6** A reversal of Isaiah's earlier song of the vineyard (5.1–7); under God's protection Israel will prove very fruitful. **27.7–11** God has punished Israel, but for disciplinary reasons, not to destroy them as their enemies have been destroyed. **27.9** Israel's sin will be expiated by the removal of every

there they lie down, and strip
its branches.
11 When its boughs are dry, they
are broken;
women come and make a fire
of them.
For this is a people without
understanding;
therefore he that made them
will not have compassion
on them,
he that formed them will show
them no favor.

12 On that day the LORD will thresh
from the channel of the Euphrates to the
Wadi of Egypt, and you will be gathered
one by one, O people of Israel. 13 And on
that day a great trumpet will be blown,
and those who were lost in the land of
Assyria and those who were driven out to
the land of Egypt will come and worship
the LORD on the holy mountain at Je-
rusalem.

Judgment on Corrupt Rulers, Priests, and Prophets

28 Ah, the proud garland of the
drunkards of Ephraim,
and the fading flower of its
glorious beauty,
which is on the head of those
bloated with rich food, of
those overcome with wine!
2 See, the Lord has one who is
mighty and strong;
like a storm of hail, a
destroying tempest,
like a storm of mighty,
overflowing waters;
with his hand he will hurl them
down to the earth.
3 Trampled under foot will be
the proud garland of the
drunkards of Ephraim.
4 And the fading flower of its
glorious beauty,
which is on the head of those
bloated with rich food,
will be like a first-ripe fig before
the summer;
whoever sees it, eats it up
as soon as it comes to hand.

5 In that day the LORD of hosts will
be a garland of glory,
and a diadem of beauty, to the
remnant of his people;
6 and a spirit of justice to the one
who sits in judgment,
and strength to those who turn
back the battle at the gate.

7 These also reel with wine
and stagger with strong drink;
the priest and the prophet reel
with strong drink,
they are confused with wine,
they stagger with strong drink;
they err in vision,
they stumble in giving
judgment.
8 All tables are covered with
filthy vomit;
no place is clean.

9 "Whom will he teach knowledge,

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symbol of its idolatry. **27.11** *People without understanding*, an earlier characterization of Israel (1.3; 5.13). *Will not have compassion*. Cf. Hos 1.6. **27.12–13** The Lord will gather up the remnant of Israel like the kernels of grain at the grain harvest. **27.12** The *Wadi of Egypt* marks the traditional southwestern boundary of Canaan (Num 34.5) and is identified with the Wadi el-Arish midway between Gaza and Pelusium. **27.13** As the *trumpet* summoned Israel to assemble for worship (Num 10.2–10; Joel 2.15), so in the day of salvation it will summon the exiles back to Judah to worship on Mount Zion (cf. Mt 24.31; 1 Thess 4.16).

28.1–33.24 Oracles concerning Ephraim and Judah. **28.1–29** An early oracle against Ephraim (vv. 1–6) is employed to introduce an elaborate oracle against Judah (vv. 7–29). **28.1–6** This oracle against Ephraim was probably originally composed at the time of the Syro-Ephraimite war (7.1–6). **28.1** *Garland*, a metaphor for the walls of Samaria, capital of the Northern Kingdom. **28.2** *Overflowing waters*, Assyria (see 8.7). **28.4** *Like a first-ripe fig*, a simile that underscores how open to hostile attack Israel will be (cf. 17.6). **28.5–6** Israel's remnant will turn to God as their *garland* of pride (see 10.20–23). **28.7–13** This former judgment on Israel's leaders is now applied to the drunken leaders of Judah (see 5.11–12, 22). **28.7** *Strong drink*. See note on 5.11. *Priest* and *prophet*, presumably those who opposed Isaiah's counsel. **28.9–10** The opponents mocked Isaiah's teaching. The Hebrew behind *precept* and *line* may not represent actual words but simply nonsense sounds uttered in mockery of the prophet's

and to whom will he explain
the message?
Those who are weaned from
milk,
those taken from the breast?
10 For it is precept upon precept,
precept upon precept,
line upon line, line upon line,
here a little, there a little."[y]

11 Truly, with stammering lip
and with alien tongue
he will speak to this people,
12 to whom he has said,
"This is rest;
give rest to the weary;
and this is repose";
yet they would not hear.
13 Therefore the word of the LORD
will be to them,
"Precept upon precept, precept
upon precept,
line upon line, line upon line,
here a little, there a little;"[y]
in order that they may go, and
fall backward,
and be broken, and snared,
and taken.

14 Therefore hear the word of the
LORD, you scoffers
who rule this people in
Jerusalem.
15 Because you have said, "We have
made a covenant with
death,
and with Sheol we have an
agreement;
when the overwhelming scourge
passes through
it will not come to us;
for we have made lies our refuge,
and in falsehood we have taken
shelter";
16 therefore thus says the Lord GOD,
See, I am laying in Zion a
foundation stone,
a tested stone,
a precious cornerstone, a sure
foundation:
"One who trusts will not panic."
17 And I will make justice the line,
and righteousness the plummet;
hail will sweep away the refuge
of lies,
and waters will overwhelm the
shelter.
18 Then your covenant with death
will be annulled,
and your agreement with Sheol
will not stand;
when the overwhelming scourge
passes through
you will be beaten down by it.
19 As often as it passes through, it
will take you;
for morning by morning it will
pass through,
by day and by night;
and it will be sheer terror to
understand the message.
20 For the bed is too short to stretch
oneself on it,
and the covering too narrow to
wrap oneself in it.
21 For the LORD will rise up as on
Mount Perazim,
he will rage as in the valley of
Gibeon
to do his deed—strange is his
deed!—
and to work his work—alien is
his work!
22 Now therefore do not scoff,
or your bonds will be made
stronger;

[y] Meaning of Heb of this verse uncertain

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speech. **28.11–13** Since the leaders rejected as unintelligible nonsense the prophet's simple message that would have given them rest (see 30.15), God will speak to them in the incomprehensible *stammering lip* and *alien tongue* of the Assyrians. **28.14–22** The foolish plans of these scoffers who sought a military alliance with Egypt against Assyria will be destroyed by God's strange work in Zion. **28.14** *Jerusalem.* These are Judean authorities. **28.15** *Covenant with death* presumably refers to a treaty with Egypt (30.1–2; cf. 22.13). *Overwhelming scourge,* Assyria (8.7–8; cf. 30.28). **28.16** *Foundation stone.* God's presence in Jerusalem will constitute either a rock of sanctuary or a stone of stumbling (see 8.14). **28.17** Just as *line* and *plummet* are used to check the alignment of walls, so *justice* and *righteousness* will be the criteria used to determine whether one has built on God's firm foundation. *Refuge of lies,* military preparation that depended on deceitful alliances and oppressive demands on the populace (see 30.12; cf. 22.10). **28.20** Proverbial description of an impossible situation. **28.21** As God once fought on *Mount Perazim* (2 Sam 5.17–21) and at *Gibeon* (Josh 10.10) against Judah's enemies, now he will rise up to do his strange work, to fight against

for I have heard a decree of destruction
from the Lord GOD of hosts upon the whole land.

23 Listen, and hear my voice;
Pay attention, and hear my speech.
24 Do those who plow for sowing plow continually?
Do they continually open and harrow their ground?
25 When they have leveled its surface,
do they not scatter dill, sow cummin,
and plant wheat in rows
and barley in its proper place,
and spelt as the border?
26 For they are well instructed;
their God teaches them.

27 Dill is not threshed with a threshing sledge,
nor is a cart wheel rolled over cummin;
but dill is beaten out with a stick,
and cummin with a rod.
28 Grain is crushed for bread,
but one does not thresh it forever;
one drives the cart wheel and horses over it,
but does not pulverize it.
29 This also comes from the LORD of hosts;
he is wonderful in counsel,
and excellent in wisdom.

God's Siege and Deliverance of Jerusalem

29 Ah, Ariel, Ariel,
the city where David encamped!
Add year to year;
let the festivals run their round.
2 Yet I will distress Ariel,
and there shall be moaning and lamentation,
and Jerusalem[z] shall be to me like an Ariel.[a]
3 And like David[b] I will encamp against you;
I will besiege you with towers
and raise siegeworks against you.
4 Then deep from the earth you shall speak,
from low in the dust your words shall come;
your voice shall come from the ground like the voice of a ghost,
and your speech shall whisper out of the dust.

5 But the multitude of your foes[c] shall be like small dust,
and the multitude of tyrants like flying chaff.
And in an instant, suddenly,
6 you will be visited by the LORD of hosts
with thunder and earthquake and great noise,
with whirlwind and tempest, and the flame of a devouring fire.
7 And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel,
all that fight against her and her stronghold, and who distress her,

z Heb *she* a Probable meaning, *altar hearth*; compare Ezek 43.15 b Gk: Meaning of Heb uncertain c Cn: Heb *strangers*

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his own city Jerusalem (29.1–3). **28.23–29** An agricultural parable showing that just as a farmer adjusts his actions to fit the crop and the season, so even God's strange work makes sense in terms of God's larger purpose. **28.27–28** Just as a farmer is careful not to destroy his crop when harvesting it, so God's work of judgment is measured and is not intended to destroy the harvest (27.12–13).

29.1–8 God first besieges and humiliates Jerusalem before coming to its rescue (cf. 1.21–28). **29.1** *Ariel*, probably an altar hearth (cf. Ezek 43.15), an allusion to Jerusalem. **29.2** *Like an Ariel*. The city will be burned like an altar hearth (1.25; 4.4; 33.14). **29.3** *Like David*, as David once besieged Jerusalem (2 Sam 5.6–9). **29.4** Jerusalem will be brought down to the underworld (5.14–15); *voice of a ghost*, a reference to the muttering or chirping sound that necromancers made when invoking the spirits of the dead (see 8.19). **29.5–8** Then after he has punished Jerusalem, the Lord will suddenly intervene to drive away all those nations he has used as his agents to fight against the city (see 10.12). **29.5** *Small dust, flying chaff*, quickly blown away (17.13). **29.6** Cf. 30.30. **29.7–8** The enemy

shall be like a dream, a vision
of the night.
8 Just as when a hungry person
dreams of eating
and wakes up still hungry,
or a thirsty person dreams of
drinking
and wakes up faint, still thirsty,
so shall the multitude of all the
nations be
that fight against Mount Zion.

Judah's Blindness

9 Stupefy yourselves and be in a
stupor,
blind yourselves and be blind!
Be drunk, but not from wine;
stagger, but not from strong
drink!
10 For the LORD has poured out
upon you
a spirit of deep sleep;
he has closed your eyes, you
prophets,
and covered your heads, you
seers.
11 The vision of all this has become
for you like the words of a sealed docu-
ment. If it is given to those who can read,
with the command, "Read this," they say,
"We cannot, for it is sealed." 12 And if it is
given to those who cannot read, saying,
"Read this," they say, "We cannot read."

13 The Lord said:
Because these people draw near
with their mouths
and honor me with their lips,
while their hearts are far
from me,
and their worship of me is a
human commandment
learned by rote;
14 so I will again do
amazing things with this
people,
shocking and amazing.
The wisdom of their wise shall
perish,
and the discernment of the
discerning shall be hidden.

15 Ha! You who hide a plan too
deep for the LORD,
whose deeds are in the dark,
and who say, "Who sees us?
Who knows us?"
16 You turn things upside down!
Shall the potter be regarded as
the clay?
Shall the thing made say of its
maker,
"He did not make me";
or the thing formed say of the
one who formed it,
"He has no understanding"?

Hope for the Future

17 Shall not Lebanon in a very little
while
become a fruitful field,
and the fruitful field be
regarded as a forest?
18 On that day the deaf shall hear
the words of a scroll,
and out of their gloom and
darkness
the eyes of the blind shall see.
19 The meek shall obtain fresh joy
in the LORD,

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vanishes overnight (17.14; 31.4–9; 2 Kings 19.35). **29.9–16** Judah is incapable of discerning what God is doing, so his work seems shocking and amazing, while the plans of its shrewd political counselors come to nought. **29.9–10** Mere drunkenness cannot explain Judah's lack of vision and judgment (28.7); God must have blinded them (cf. 6.9–10; but see 30.10). **29.11** *Sealed document*, a scroll that cannot be unrolled and read without breaking the seal that secures it. **29.13** Judah's worship is only pretense, not a genuine response to God from the heart (see 1.10–17). **29.14** Thus even Judah's wise cannot discern God's plan (5.12–13). **29.15** *Hide a plan.* Some try to keep their own political plans secret from God and his prophet (30.1–2), apparently on the premise that international politics is too subtle and complicated for the simple religious mind to grasp (28.9–10). **29.16** But this is to forget who is the creature and who the creator.

29.17–24 These verses reverse earlier judgments and are generally dated to the later period of chs. 40–66. **29.17** *Lebanon*, a metaphor for God's people; once decimated (10.18–19, 33–34), they will again become as numerous as a forest (4.2; 60.21–22; 61.3). **29.18** A reversal of vv. 9–12. **29.19** *Holy One of Israel.* See note on 1.4. **29.20–21** The *scoffer* will no longer rule

and the neediest people shall
exult in the Holy One of
Israel.
20 For the tyrant shall be no more,
and the scoffer shall cease
to be;
all those alert to do evil shall be
cut off—
21 those who cause a person to lose
a lawsuit,
who set a trap for the arbiter in
the gate,
and without grounds deny
justice to the one in the
right.

22 Therefore thus says the LORD,
who redeemed Abraham, concerning the
house of Jacob:
No longer shall Jacob be
ashamed,
no longer shall his face
grow pale.
23 For when he sees his children,
the work of my hands, in
his midst,
they will sanctify my name;
they will sanctify the Holy One of
Jacob,
and will stand in awe of the
God of Israel.
24 And those who err in spirit will
come to understanding,
and those who grumble will
accept instruction.

The Futility of Reliance on Egypt

30 Oh, rebellious children, says the
LORD,
who carry out a plan, but not
mine;
who make an alliance, but against
my will,
adding sin to sin;
2 who set out to go down to Egypt
without asking for my counsel,
to take refuge in the protection
of Pharaoh,
and to seek shelter in the
shadow of Egypt;
3 Therefore the protection of
Pharaoh shall become your
shame,
and the shelter in the shadow
of Egypt your humiliation.
4 For though his officials are at
Zoan
and his envoys reach Hanes,
5 everyone comes to shame
through a people that cannot
profit them,
that brings neither help nor
profit,
but shame and disgrace.

Against the Tribute to Egypt

6 An oracle concerning the animals of
the Negeb.
Through a land of trouble and
distress,
of lioness and roaring[d] lion,
of viper and flying serpent,
they carry their riches on the
backs of donkeys,
and their treasures on the
humps of camels,
to a people that cannot profit
them.
7 For Egypt's help is worthless and
empty,
therefore I have called her,
"Rahab who sits still."[e]

d Cn: Heb *from them* *e* Meaning of Heb uncertain

(28.14) and oppress God's people (10.1–3). **29.22** *Abraham.* Cf. 41.8; 51.2. **29.23** *Sanctify,* count as holy. *Stand in awe of,* be in dread of (see 8.12–13).

30.1–5 Isaiah condemns Judah's negotiations with Egypt (703–701 B.C.E.) as rebellion against God and the resulting defensive alliance against Assyria as ultimately useless. **30.1** *Rebellious children.* See 1.2, 4. **30.2** *Without asking for my counsel.* One normally consulted the deity through prophets or the priestly oracle before making a treaty; the failure to do so implied an impious attitude of human self-sufficiency (29.15; cf. Josh 9.14–21). **30.4** *Zoan.* See note on 19.11. *Hanes,* an Egyptian city fifty miles south of Memphis.

30.6–7 The military assistance Judah hoped to acquire by sending a treasure caravan through the desert to Egypt will prove totally useless. **30.6** *Land of trouble . . . flying serpent,* traditional description of desert between Palestine and Egypt (Deut 8.15). **30.7** *Rahab,* a mythological sea dragon slain by God in the cosmogonic battle that led to creation (51.9–10; 89.9–10; Job 9.13; 26.12–13; Ps 89.9–10).

A Prophetic Witness for the Future

8 Go now, write it before them on
a tablet,
and inscribe it in a book,
so that it may be for the time
to come
as a witness forever.
9 For they are a rebellious people,
faithless children,
children who will not hear
the instruction of the LORD;
10 who say to the seers, "Do
not see";
and to the prophets, "Do not
prophesy to us what is
right;
speak to us smooth things,
prophesy illusions,
11 leave the way, turn aside from
the path,
let us hear no more about the
Holy One of Israel."
12 Therefore thus says the Holy
One of Israel:
Because you reject this word,
and put your trust in
oppression and deceit,
and rely on them;
13 therefore this iniquity shall
become for you
like a break in a high wall,
bulging out, and about to
collapse,
whose crash comes suddenly, in
an instant;
14 its breaking is like that of a
potter's vessel
that is smashed so ruthlessly
that among its fragments not a
sherd is found
for taking fire from the hearth,
or dipping water out of the
cistern.

15 For thus said the Lord GOD, the
Holy One of Israel:
In returning and rest you shall
be saved;
in quietness and in trust shall
be your strength.
But you refused 16and said,
"No! We will flee upon horses"—
therefore you shall flee!
and, "We will ride upon swift
steeds"—
therefore your pursuers shall
be swift!
17 A thousand shall flee at the
threat of one,
at the threat of five you
shall flee,
until you are left
like a flagstaff on the top of
a mountain,
like a signal on a hill.

God's Promise to Zion

18 Therefore the LORD waits to be
gracious to you;
therefore he will rise up to
show mercy to you.
For the LORD is a God of justice;
blessed are all those who wait
for him.
19 Truly, O people in Zion, inhabitants of Jerusalem, you shall weep no more. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when he hears it, he will answer you. 20Though the Lord may give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your Teacher will not hide himself any more, but your

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30.8–17 Isaiah is told to record his message as a future witness against Judah, because at the present time the people are unwilling to listen (8.16–18). **30.9** *Rebellious people.* See 30.1. *Faithless children.* See 1.2–4. **30.10** They effectively silenced their *seers* and *prophets* (see 29.10). *Smooth things, illusions,* pleasant words confirming their own plans and hopes, even if false. **30.11** *Hear no more about the Holy One of Israel,* keep silent about God's demands and plans. **30.12** *This word,* the promise recorded in v. 15. Judah's rival military option involved the *oppression* of heavy taxation, forced labor, and government appropriation of property (22.8–11) and the *deceit* of secret alliances (28.15; 29.15). **30.15** Judah's salvation lay in trusting God (cf. 28.12). **30.16** The *horses* they chose to trust in instead will only speed their cowardly flight (cf. Ps 20.7). **30.17** *A thousand shall flee.* See Lev 26.36–37; Deut 32.30. *Signal on a hill,* a metaphor for an isolated and exposed remnant (see 31.9).

30.18–26 An oracle of promise is inserted here, perhaps because of the *signal* metaphor, which is often used in promises of Israel's restoration (11.10–11; 13.2; 49.22). **30.18** *Waits.* See 8.17. Because the *LORD is a God of justice,* his desire to save must wait until Jerusalem has been transformed by judgment (1.27). **30.19** For the thought, see 65.19, 24. **30.20** *Hide himself.*

eyes shall see your Teacher. 21 And when
you turn to the right or when you turn to
the left, your ears shall hear a word be-
hind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in
it." 22 Then you will defile your silver-
covered idols and your gold-plated im-
ages. You will scatter them like filthy rags;
you will say to them, "Away with you!"
23 He will give rain for the seed with
which you sow the ground, and grain, the
produce of the ground, which will be rich
and plenteous. On that day your cattle
will graze in broad pastures; 24 and the
oxen and donkeys that till the ground will
eat silage, which has been winnowed with
shovel and fork. 25 On every lofty moun-
tain and every high hill there will be
brooks running with water—on a day of
the great slaughter, when the towers fall.
26 Moreover the light of the moon will be
like the light of the sun, and the light of
the sun will be sevenfold, like the light of
seven days, on the day when the LORD
binds up the injuries of his people, and
heals the wounds inflicted by his blow.

Judgment on Assyria

27 See, the name of the LORD comes
from far away,
burning with his anger, and in
thick rising smoke;[f]
his lips are full of indignation,
and his tongue is like a
devouring fire;
28 his breath is like an overflowing
stream
that reaches up to the neck—
to sift the nations with the sieve
of destruction,
and to place on the jaws of the
peoples a bridle that leads
them astray.

29 You shall have a song as in the
night when a holy festival is kept; and
gladness of heart, as when one sets out to
the sound of the flute to go to the moun-
tain of the LORD, to the Rock of Israel.
30 And the LORD will cause his majestic
voice to be heard and the descending
blow of his arm to be seen, in furious an-
ger and a flame of devouring fire, with a
cloudburst and tempest and hailstones.
31 The Assyrian will be terror-stricken at
the voice of the LORD, when he strikes
with his rod. 32 And every stroke of the
staff of punishment that the LORD lays
upon him will be to the sound of timbrels
and lyres; battling with brandished arm
he will fight with him. 33 For his burning
place[g] has long been prepared; truly it is
made ready for the king,[h] its pyre made
deep and wide, with fire and wood in
abundance; the breath of the LORD, like a
stream of sulfur, kindles it.

Alliance with Egypt Is Futile

31 Alas for those who go down to
Egypt for help
and who rely on horses,
who trust in chariots because they
are many
and in horsemen because they
are very strong,
but do not look to the Holy One
of Israel
or consult the LORD!
2 Yet he too is wise and brings
disaster;
he does not call back his words,
but will rise against the house of
the evildoers,
and against the helpers of those
who work iniquity.
3 The Egyptians are human, and
not God;
their horses are flesh, and
not spirit.
When the LORD stretches out
his hand,
the helper will stumble, and the
one helped will fall,
and they will all perish
together.

f Meaning of Heb uncertain *g* Or *Topheth*
h Or *Molech*

Cf. 8.17. **30.25–26** These blessings presuppose God's judgment.

30.27–33 This oracle probably dates to 701 B.C.E. (see 37.21–29). For the fire imagery, cf. 10.16–17; 33.10–14. **30.28** *Bridle.* See 37.29. **30.29** *Rock of Israel,* an epithet for God as a source of refuge for his people (17.10; 26.4). **30.33** *Burning place,* Topheth, where children were sacrificed in the fire (2 Kings 23.10; Jer 7.31; 19.4–9).

31.1–3 Cf. 30.1–17; Jer. 17.5–8.

God's Ultimate Deliverance of Jerusalem

4 For thus the LORD said to me,
As a lion or a young lion growls
over its prey,
and—when a band of
shepherds is called out
against it—
is not terrified by their shouting
or daunted at their noise,
so the LORD of hosts will
come down
to fight upon Mount Zion and
upon its hill.
5 Like birds hovering overhead, so
the LORD of hosts
will protect Jerusalem;
he will protect and deliver it,
he will spare and rescue it.

6 Turn back to him whom you[i] have
deeply betrayed, O people of Israel. 7 For
on that day all of you shall throw away
your idols of silver and idols of gold,
which your hands have sinfully made
for you.
8 "Then the Assyrian shall fall by a
sword, not of mortals;
and a sword, not of humans,
shall devour him;
he shall flee from the sword,
and his young men shall be put
to forced labor.
9 His rock shall pass away in terror,
and his officers desert the
standard in panic,"
says the LORD, whose fire is in
Zion,
and whose furnace is in
Jerusalem.

Government with Justice Predicted

32 See, a king will reign in
righteousness,
and princes will rule with
justice.
2 Each will be like a hiding place
from the wind,
a covert from the tempest,
like streams of water in a
dry place,
like the shade of a great rock in
a weary land.
3 Then the eyes of those who have
sight will not be closed,
and the ears of those who have
hearing will listen.
4 The minds of the rash will have
good judgment,
and the tongues of stammerers
will speak readily and
distinctly.
5 A fool will no longer be called
noble,
nor a villain said to be
honorable.
6 For fools speak folly,
and their minds plot iniquity:
to practice ungodliness,
to utter error concerning
the LORD,
to leave the craving of the hungry
unsatisfied,
and to deprive the thirsty of
drink.
7 The villainies of villains are evil;
they devise wicked devices
to ruin the poor with lying words,
even when the plea of the
needy is right.
8 But those who are noble plan
noble things,
and by noble things they stand.

Complacent Women Warned of Disaster

9 Rise up, you women who are at
ease, hear my voice;

i Heb *they*

31.4–9 The mixed imagery of lion and birds suggests God's siege of Jerusalem followed by his deliverance of the city (see 29.1–8). **31.4** Cf. Jer 25.30, 34–38. **31.5** For the imagery, see Deut 32.11. **31.6–7** A call to repentance originally addressed to the Northern Kingdom (cf. 2.20; 17.7–8). **31.8–9** God will destroy Assyria; the Lord dwells in Jerusalem like a *fire* or a *furnace*, ready to refine his own people or consume his enemies (see 1.25; 30.27–33; 33.14).

32.1–8 In the future the rule of the ideal king (9.1–7; 11.1–9) and his princes (cf. 1.26) will be marked by righteousness and justice. **32.2** Unlike the former officials who oppressed the people (1.23; 3.14–15), these rulers, like God, will offer relief (cf. 25.4–5; 28.12). **32.3** A reversal of the judgment in 6.9–10. **32.5–8** In those days *fools* and *villains* will all be called by their right names (cf. 5.20).

32.9–14 Cf. 3.16–4.1. **32.10** The failure of

you complacent daughters,
listen to my speech.
10 In little more than a year
you will shudder, you
complacent ones;
for the vintage will fail,
the fruit harvest will not come.
11 Tremble, you women who are
at ease,
shudder, you complacent ones;
strip, and make yourselves bare,
and put sackcloth on your loins.
12 Beat your breasts for the pleasant
fields,
for the fruitful vine,
13 for the soil of my people
growing up in thorns and
briers;
yes, for all the joyous houses
in the jubilant city.
14 For the palace will be forsaken,
the populous city deserted;
the hill and the watchtower
will become dens forever,
the joy of wild asses,
a pasture for flocks;

Restoration Through God's Spirit

15 until a spirit from on high is
poured out on us,
and the wilderness becomes a
fruitful field,
and the fruitful field is deemed
a forest.
16 Then justice will dwell in the
wilderness,
and righteousness abide in the
fruitful field.
17 The effect of righteousness will
be peace,
and the result of righteousness,
quietness and trust forever.
18 My people will abide in a
peaceful habitation,
in secure dwellings, and in
quiet resting places.
19 The forest will disappear
completely,[j]
and the city will be utterly
laid low.
20 Happy will you be who sow
beside every stream,
who let the ox and the donkey
range freely.

A Prophecy of Deliverance from Assyria

33 Ah, you destroyer,
who yourself have not been
destroyed;
you treacherous one,
with whom no one has dealt
treacherously!
When you have ceased to destroy,
you will be destroyed;
and when you have stopped
dealing treacherously,
you will be dealt with
treacherously.

2 O LORD, be gracious to us; we
wait for you.
Be our arm every morning,
our salvation in the time of
trouble.
3 At the sound of tumult, peoples
fled;
before your majesty, nations
scattered.
4 Spoil was gathered as the
caterpillar gathers;
as locusts leap, they leaped[k]
upon it.
5 The LORD is exalted, he dwells
on high;
he filled Zion with justice and
righteousness;

[j] Cn: Heb *And it will hail when the forest comes down*
[k] Meaning of Heb uncertain

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the vintage will end the former leisurely life of feasting (5.10–12). **32.11–12** Typical mourning rites (Jer 4.8).

32.15–20 The desolation of judgment will only be ended when the pouring out of God's spirit brings justice and righteousness to the people so that they live in security (see 11.2–9).

33.1–24 An extended prophetic liturgy consisting of a communal prayer, oracles promising deliverance from the Assyrian oppressor, and a call to righteous living in God's presence. **33.1** Warning to the treacherous oppressor that his turn will come (see 10.5–12). **33.2–9** Communal lament praising God as the defender of Zion and describing the treachery of the oppressor. **33.2** *Arm*, source of strength. *Morning*, the time of God's intervention (Ps 46.5). **33.3** See Ps 48.4–6. **33.4** Cf. Ps 76.5. **33.5–6** God's presence in Jerusalem is its *treasure*, the source of its security (Pss 46.7, 11; 48.1–3; 76.1–3).

6 he will be the stability of your
times,
abundance of salvation,
wisdom, and knowledge;
the fear of the LORD is Zion's
treasure.[l]

7 Listen! the valiant[m] cry in the
streets;
the envoys of peace weep
bitterly.
8 The highways are deserted,
travelers have quit the road.
The treaty is broken,
its oaths[n] are despised,
its obligation[o] is disregarded.
9 The land mourns and languishes;
Lebanon is confounded and
withers away;
Sharon is like a desert;
and Bashan and Carmel shake
off their leaves.

10 "Now I will arise," says the LORD,
"now I will lift myself up;
now I will be exalted.
11 You conceive chaff, you bring
forth stubble;
your breath is a fire that will
consume you.
12 And the peoples will be as if
burned to lime,
like thorns cut down, that are
burned in the fire."

13 Hear, you who are far away, what
I have done;
and you who are near,
acknowledge my might.
14 The sinners in Zion are afraid;
trembling has seized the
godless:
"Who among us can live with the
devouring fire?
Who among us can live with
everlasting flames?"
15 Those who walk righteously and
speak uprightly,
who despise the gain of
oppression,
who wave away a bribe instead of
accepting it,
who stop their ears from
hearing of bloodshed
and shut their eyes from
looking on evil,
16 they will live on the heights;
their refuge will be the
fortresses of rocks;
their food will be supplied,
their water assured.

17 Your eyes will see the king in his
beauty;
they will behold a land that
stretches far away.
18 Your mind will muse on the
terror:
"Where is the one who
counted?
Where is the one who weighed
the tribute?
Where is the one who counted
the towers?"
19 No longer will you see the
insolent people,
the people of an obscure
speech that you cannot
comprehend,
stammering in a language that
you cannot understand.
20 Look on Zion, the city of our
appointed festivals!
Your eyes will see Jerusalem,
a quiet habitation, an
immovable tent,

l Heb *his treasure*; meaning of Heb uncertain
m Meaning of Heb uncertain *n* Q Ms: MT *cities* *o* Or *everyone*

33.7–9 The situation of need is described as one of imminent war caused by the treacherous disregard of peace initiatives and earlier treaty commitments. Sennacherib's continuation of the campaign against Jerusalem despite Hezekiah's offer of submission provides a possible historical setting (2 Kings 18.13–37). **33.10–12** Oracular response in which God threatens to arise and burn the enemy like thorns (see 10.16–17; 30.27–33). **33.13–16** In response to this mighty display of God's power before the nations, the sinners among his own people are terrified, for only the righteous can live in the presence of such a God (see Ps 15; 24.3–5). **33.17–24** In that golden future they will rejoice in the glory of their king and in the security of Jerusalem. **33.18–20** In that day the former terror will seem but a dream (29.7–8); in place of enemy officers speaking an incomprehensible language (28.11–13), it will be Judah itself who counts Jerusalem's towers in thankful admiration

whose stakes will never be
pulled up,
and none of whose ropes will
be broken.
21 But there the LORD in majesty
will be for us
a place of broad rivers and
streams,
where no galley with oars can go,
nor stately ship can pass.
22 For the LORD is our judge, the
LORD is our ruler,
the LORD is our king; he will
save us.

23 Your rigging hangs loose;
it cannot hold the mast firm in
its place,
or keep the sail spread out.

Then prey and spoil in
abundance will be divided;
even the lame will fall to
plundering.
24 And no inhabitant will say, "I am
sick";
the people who live there will
be forgiven their iniquity.

Judgment on the Nations

34 Draw near, O nations, to hear;
O peoples, give heed!
Let the earth hear, and all that
fills it;
the world, and all that comes
from it.
2 For the LORD is enraged against
all the nations,
and furious against all their
hordes;
he has doomed them, has given
them over for slaughter.
3 Their slain shall be cast out,
and the stench of their corpses
shall rise;
the mountains shall flow with
their blood.
4 All the host of heaven shall rot
away,
and the skies roll up like a
scroll.
All their host shall wither
like a leaf withering on a vine,
or fruit withering on a fig tree.

5 When my sword has drunk its fill
in the heavens,
lo, it will descend upon Edom,
upon the people I have
doomed to judgment.
6 The LORD has a sword; it is sated
with blood,
it is gorged with fat,
with the blood of lambs and
goats,
with the fat of the kidneys
of rams.
For the LORD has a sacrifice in
Bozrah,
a great slaughter in the land
of Edom.
7 Wild oxen shall fall with them,
and young steers with the
mighty bulls.
Their land shall be soaked with
blood,
and their soil made rich
with fat.

8 For the LORD has a day of
vengeance,
a year of vindication by Zion's
cause.[p]
9 And the streams of Edom[q] shall
be turned into pitch,

p Or *of recompense by Zion's defender*
q Heb *her streams*

(Ps 48.12–14). **33.21–23** This portrayal of Jerusalem makes use of Canaanite mythological motifs about the abode of the gods. Jerusalem will be well watered (Ezek 47.1–12), but not exposed to attack by sea, for the divine king will smash all such hostile ships (Ps 48.12).

34.1–17 This is probably a postexilic oracle from the same period as chs. 56–66. For the prominence given to Edom in this judgment, cf. especially 63.1. **34.4** *Host of heaven,* the moon, stars, and planets worshiped by other nations and symbolizing the spiritual powers that lay behind their human governments (see 24.21). **34.5** *My sword,* the sword of the Lord (see Ezek 21.3–32). The judgment on *Edom* simply illustrates the destruction that will befall all the nations (Ob 15–16). **34.6** *Sacrifice.* Cf. Jer 46.10; Ezek 39.17–20. *Bozrah,* an important Edomite city (63.1). **34.8** *A day of vengeance, a year of vindication,* time for God to save Zion and to punish the nations for their treatment of it (61.2; 63.4). **34.9–10** Edom, like Babylon (13.19–22), will

and her soil into sulfur;
her land shall become burning pitch.
10 Night and day it shall not be quenched;
its smoke shall go up forever.
From generation to generation it shall lie waste;
no one shall pass through it forever and ever.
11 But the hawk[r] and the hedgehog[r] shall possess it;
the owl[r] and the raven shall live in it.
He shall stretch the line of confusion over it,
and the plummet of chaos over[s] its nobles.
12 They shall name it No Kingdom There,
and all its princes shall be nothing.
13 Thorns shall grow over its strongholds,
nettles and thistles in its fortresses.
It shall be the haunt of jackals,
an abode for ostriches.
14 Wildcats shall meet with hyenas,
goat-demons shall call to each other;
there too Lilith shall repose,
and find a place to rest.
15 There shall the owl nest
and lay and hatch and brood in its shadow;
there too the buzzards shall gather,
each one with its mate.
16 Seek and read from the book of the LORD:
Not one of these shall be missing;
none shall be without its mate.
For the mouth of the LORD has commanded,
and his spirit has gathered them.
17 He has cast the lot for them,
his hand has portioned it out to them with the line;
they shall possess it forever,
from generation to generation they shall live in it.

The Return of the Redeemed to Zion

35 The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;
like the crocus [2]it shall blossom abundantly,
and rejoice with joy and singing.
The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.
They shall see the glory of the LORD,
the majesty of our God.

3 Strengthen the weak hands,
and make firm the feeble knees.
4 Say to those who are of a fearful heart,
"Be strong, do not fear!
Here is your God.
He will come with vengeance,
with terrible recompense.
He will come and save you."

5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,

r Identification uncertain s Heb lacks *over*

share the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19.24–28). **34.11–15** Edom's ruins will be overgrown and inhabited by wild creatures and demons. **34.11** *Line* and *plummet* were aids used by builders to ensure straight horizontal and vertical lines, but they were also used to decide if a building needed to be torn down (28.16–17; Am 7.7–9). **34.12** *No Kingdom There*, a mocking name given to the Edomite ruins. **34.14** *Goat-demons, Lilith*, two varieties of demons thought to inhabit abandoned ruins. **34.16** *Book of the LORD*, perhaps a reference to an earlier scroll containing the similar judgment against Babylon (13.19–22). **34.17** As the Israelites were assigned their inheritance in the land of Canaan by *lot* (Josh 14.1–2), these wild creatures have been assigned the ruins of Babylon as their alloted inheritance.

35.1–10 This oracle originally belonged to the exilic collection in chs. 40–55. **35.1–2** The wilderness will bloom (41.18–19; 51.3), and all shall see the *glory of the LORD* (40.5). **35.3–4** An unnamed group is commissioned to strengthen the disheartened with the good news that God is coming to save them (cf. 40.9–10; 41.10, 13–14; 43.1, 5; 44.2; 51.7; 54.4). **35.5–6a** The spiritual

and the ears of the deaf
unstopped;
6 then the lame shall leap like
a deer,
and the tongue of the
speechless sing for joy.
For waters shall break forth in
the wilderness,
and streams in the desert;
7 the burning sand shall become
a pool,
and the thirsty ground springs
of water;
the haunt of jackals shall become
a swamp,[t]
the grass shall become reeds
and rushes.

8 A highway shall be there,
and it shall be called the
Holy Way;
the unclean shall not travel on it,[u]
but it shall be for God's
people;[v]
no traveler, not even fools, shall
go astray.
9 No lion shall be there,
nor shall any ravenous beast
come up on it;
they shall not be found there,
but the redeemed shall walk
there.
10 And the ransomed of the LORD
shall return,
and come to Zion with singing;
everlasting joy shall be upon their
heads;
they shall obtain joy and
gladness,
and sorrow and sighing shall
flee away.

Sennacherib Threatens Jerusalem

36 In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, King Sennacherib of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them. 2 The king of Assyria sent the Rabshakeh from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem, with a great army. He stood by the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Fuller's Field. 3 And there came out to him Eliakim son of Hilkiah, who was in charge of the palace, and Shebna the secretary, and Joah son of Asaph, the recorder.

4 The Rabshakeh said to them, "Say to Hezekiah: Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria: On what do you base this confidence of yours? 5 Do you think that mere words are strategy and power for war? On whom do you now rely, that you have rebelled against me? 6 See, you are relying on Egypt, that broken reed of a staff, which will pierce the hand of anyone who leans on it. Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who rely on him. 7 But if you say to me, 'We rely on the LORD our God,' is it not he whose high places and altars Hezekiah has removed, saying to Judah and to Jerusalem, 'You shall worship before this altar'? 8 Come now, make a wager with my master the king of Assyria: I will give you two thousand horses, if you are able on your part to set riders on them. 9 How then can you repulse a single captain among the least of my master's servants, when you rely on Egypt for

t Cn: Heb *in the haunt of jackals is her resting place*
u Or *pass it by* *v* Cn: Heb *for them*

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disabilities of God's people will be corrected (see 42.18–20). **35.6b–7** Cf. 41.18–19. **35.8** There will be a *highway* through the wilderness that no one can miss (40.3–4; 42.16). **35.9** Cf. 11.6–9. **35.10** See 51.11.

36.1–39.8 Historical appendix. Apart from 38.9–20, this material seems to have been inserted from 2 Kings 18.13, 17–20.19. **36.1–22** Sennacherib's campaign against Jerusalem. **36.1** *Fourteenth year of King Hezekiah.* According to his annals, Sennacherib besieged Judah in 701 B.C.E. during the course of his third campaign; hence Hezekiah began his reign in 715 B.C.E.; two other passages date the beginning of Hezekiah's reign to 729 B.C.E. based on a synchronism with the Israelite king Hoshea (2 Kings 18.1, 9), but that synchronism is probably artificial and certainly less reliable than the synchronism with the Assyrian king. *All the fortified cities,* forty-six according to the Assyrian account. **36.2** *Rabshakeh,* "chief steward," Assyrian title for a high official; *Lachish,* a major Judean fortress city lying southwest of Jerusalem midway between Jerusalem and Gaza; Sennacherib's siege of Lachish is graphically portrayed on a bas-relief from Sennacherib's palace in Nineveh. **36.3** *Eliakim, Shebna.* See 22.15–25. **36.6** Cf. 31.1–3. **36.7** Sennacherib misconstrues the character of Hezekiah's religious reform (2 Kings 18.3–6; 2 Chr 29.3–31.21); for a similar Assyrian misun-

chariots and for horsemen? 10 Moreover,
is it without the LORD that I have come up
against this land to destroy it? The LORD
said to me, Go up against this land, and
destroy it."

11 Then Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah
said to the Rabshakeh, "Please speak to
your servants in Aramaic, for we under-
stand it; do not speak to us in the lan-
guage of Judah within the hearing of the
people who are on the wall." 12 But the
Rabshakeh said, "Has my master sent me
to speak these words to your master and
to you, and not to the people sitting on
the wall, who are doomed with you to eat
their own dung and drink their own
urine?"

13 Then the Rabshakeh stood and
called out in a loud voice in the language
of Judah, "Hear the words of the great
king, the king of Assyria! 14 Thus says the
king: 'Do not let Hezekiah deceive you,
for he will not be able to deliver you. 15 Do
not let Hezekiah make you rely on the
LORD by saying, The LORD will surely de-
liver us; this city will not be given into the
hand of the king of Assyria.' 16 Do not lis-
ten to Hezekiah; for thus says the king of
Assyria: 'Make your peace with me and
come out to me; then everyone of you will
eat from your own vine and your own fig
tree and drink water from your own cis-
tern, 17 until I come and take you away to
a land like your own land, a land of grain
and wine, a land of bread and vineyards.
18 Do not let Hezekiah mislead you by say-
ing, The LORD will save us. Has any of the
gods of the nations saved their land out of
the hand of the king of Assyria? 19 Where
are the gods of Hamath and Arpad?
Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? Have
they delivered Samaria out of my hand?
20 Who among all the gods of these coun-
tries have saved their countries out of my
hand, that the LORD should save Jerusa-
lem out of my hand?' "

21 But they were silent and answered
him not a word, for the king's command
was, "Do not answer him." 22 Then Elia-
kim son of Hilkiah, who was in charge of
the palace, and Shebna the secretary, and
Joah son of Asaph, the recorder, came to
Hezekiah with their clothes torn, and told
him the words of the Rabshakeh.

Hezekiah Consults Isaiah

37 When King Hezekiah heard it, he
tore his clothes, covered himself
with sackcloth, and went into the house of
the LORD. 2 And he sent Eliakim, who was
in charge of the palace, and Shebna the
secretary, and the senior priests, covered
with sackcloth, to the prophet Isaiah son
of Amoz. 3 They said to him, "Thus says
Hezekiah, This day is a day of distress, of
rebuke, and of disgrace; children have
come to the birth, and there is no strength
to bring them forth. 4 It may be that the
LORD your God heard the words of the
Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of
Assyria has sent to mock the living God,
and will rebuke the words that the LORD
your God has heard; therefore lift up
your prayer for the remnant that is left."

5 When the servants of King Hezekiah
came to Isaiah, 6 Isaiah said to them, "Say
to your master, 'Thus says the LORD: Do
not be afraid because of the words that
you have heard, with which the servants
of the king of Assyria have reviled me. 7 I
myself will put a spirit in him, so that he
shall hear a rumor, and return to his own
land; I will cause him to fall by the sword
in his own land.' "

Sennacherib Sends a Message to Hezekiah

8 The Rabshakeh returned, and
found the king of Assyria fighting against

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derstanding of the religious situation in Judah, see Isa 10.10–11. **36.9** Cf. 10.8. **36.10** This is typical Assyrian propaganda. **36.11** *Aramaic* was the diplomatic language of the period; *the language of Judah* was Hebrew. The average Judean did not understand Aramaic. **36.12** Horrible conditions resulting from a prolonged siege. **36.13–20** A propaganda speech aimed at the rank and file of Jerusalem's defenders. **36.19** *Hamath, Arpad, Samaria.* See note on 10.9. *Sepharvaim* ("Sibraim," Ezek 47.16), a city located between Damascus and Hamath.

37.1–35 From 2 Kings 19; also cf. 2 Chr 32.16–23. **37.1–7** Hezekiah's first consultation with Isaiah. **37.1** *Tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth,* signs of mourning. **37.2** Delegations sent from the king to consult a prophet were normal in such circumstances (2 Kings 22.11–14; Jer 37.3). **37.5–7** Isaiah reassures Hezekiah. *Rumor,* report of problems back in Assyria. **37.8–13** Sennacherib's second message. **37.8** *Libnah,* the precise identification and location of this Judean fortress is still debated. *Lachish* (see note on 36.2) had apparently been captured in

Libnah; for he had heard that the king had left Lachish. 9 Now the king[w] heard concerning King Tirhakah of Ethiopia,[x] "He has set out to fight against you." When he heard it, he sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying, 10 "Thus shall you speak to King Hezekiah of Judah: Do not let your God on whom you rely deceive you by promising that Jerusalem will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria. 11 See, you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, destroying them utterly. Shall you be delivered? 12 Have the gods of the nations delivered them, the nations that my predecessors destroyed, Gozan, Haran, Rezeph, and the people of Eden who were in Telassar? 13 Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, the king of the city of Sepharvaim, the king of Hena, or the king of Ivvah?"

Hezekiah's Prayer

14 Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it; then Hezekiah went up to the house of the LORD and spread it before the LORD. 15 And Hezekiah prayed to the LORD, saying: 16 "O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, who are enthroned above the cherubim, you are God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth. 17 Incline your ear, O LORD, and hear; open your eyes, O LORD, and see; hear all the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to mock the living God. 18 Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations and their lands, 19 and have hurled their gods into the fire, though they were no gods, but the work of human hands—wood and stone—and so they were destroyed. 20 So now, O LORD our God, save us from his hand, so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you alone are the LORD."

God's Response

21 Then Isaiah son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying: "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Because you have prayed to me concerning King Sennacherib of Assyria, 22 this is the word that the LORD has spoken concerning him:

She despises you, she
scorns you—
virgin daughter Zion;
she tosses her head—behind
your back,
daughter Jerusalem.

23 "Whom have you mocked and
reviled?
Against whom have you raised
your voice
and haughtily lifted your eyes?
Against the Holy One of Israel!
24 By your servants you have
mocked the Lord,
and you have said, 'With my
many chariots
I have gone up the heights of the
mountains,
to the far recesses of Lebanon;
I felled its tallest cedars,
its choicest cypresses;
I came to its remotest height,
its densest forest.
25 I dug wells
and drank waters,

w Heb *he* x Or *Nubia*; Heb *Cush*

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the meantime. **37.9** Sennacherib mentions a battle with an Egyptian army, but it is questionable whether *Tirhakah* was already king in 701 B.C.E., a fact that has led some to posit a second campaign of Sennacherib against Jerusalem in 689–88 B.C.E., when Tirhakah was king of Ethiopia. **37.12** Sites in Mesopotamia: *Gozan*, on the Habor (Khabur) River (2 Kings 17.6); *Haran*, on the Balikh River (Gen 11.27–32); *Rezeph*, near the west end of the Jebel Singar; *Eden*, territory of Bit-adini between the Euphrates and the Balikh (Amos 1.5; Ezek 27.23); *Telassar*, a city of Bit-adini. **37.13** The location of *Hena* and *Ivvah* is unknown.

37.14–20 Hezekiah shows God the Assyrian's boastful letter, and, after the Lord has read it, Hezekiah prays to God for deliverance. **37.14** *Before the LORD*, before the ark within the Most Holy Place in the temple (1 Kings 8.6–7). **37.16** *Enthroned above the cherubim.* The cherubim that overshadowed the ark in the temple were thought of as God's throne (see 6.1). **37.17–20** The Assyrian reproach is a threat to God's own reputation among the nations (see Ex 32.12; Num 14.13–16).

37.21–35 God's response through Isaiah is to taunt the proud Assyrian king and assure Hezekiah of deliverance. **37.23–25** By mocking God,

I dried up with the sole of my foot
all the streams of Egypt.'

26 "Have you not heard
that I determined it long ago?
I planned from days of old
what now I bring to pass,
that you should make fortified cities
crash into heaps of ruins,
27 while their inhabitants, shorn of strength,
are dismayed and confounded;
they have become like plants of the field
and like tender grass,
like grass on the housetops,
blighted[y] before it is grown.

28 "I know your rising up[z] and your sitting down,
your going out and coming in,
and your raging against me.
29 Because you have raged against me
and your arrogance has come to my ears,
I will put my hook in your nose
and my bit in your mouth;
I will turn you back on the way
by which you came.

30 "And this shall be the sign for you: This year eat what grows of itself, and in the second year what springs from that; then in the third year sow, reap, plant vineyards, and eat their fruit. 31 The surviving remnant of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward; 32 for from Jerusalem a remnant shall go out, and from Mount Zion a band of survivors. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

33 "Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the king of Assyria: He shall not come into this city, shoot an arrow there, come before it with a shield, or cast up a siege ramp against it. 34 By the way that he came, by the same he shall return; he shall not come into this city, says the LORD. 35 For I will defend this city to save it, for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David."

Sennacherib's Defeat and Death

36 Then the angel of the LORD set out and struck down one hundred eighty-five thousand in the camp of the Assyrians; when morning dawned, they were all dead bodies. 37 Then King Sennacherib of Assyria left, went home, and lived at Nineveh. 38 As he was worshiping in the house of his god Nisroch, his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer killed him with the sword, and they escaped into the land of Ararat. His son Esar-haddon succeeded him.

Hezekiah's Illness

38 In those days Hezekiah became sick and was at the point of death. The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz came to him, and said to him, "Thus says the LORD: Set your house in order, for you shall die; you shall not recover." 2 Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall, and prayed to the LORD: 3 "Remember now,

y With 2 Kings 19.26: Heb *field* *z* Q Ms Gk: MT lacks *your rising up*

Sennacherib overreached himself (see 10.7–15; 14.4–15). **37.26–27** God was simply using Sennacherib for God's own purposes (10.5–6). **37.28–29** Now God will silence Sennacherib's arrogance by leading him back home (see 30.28). **37.30** *The sign* confirming this oracle of salvation is the time limit: within three years the siege will be long over and agriculture will be back to normal. For similar signs, cf. 7.14–16; 8.4. **37.33–35** God promises that Sennacherib will not capture Jerusalem.

37.36–38 God takes vengeance on Sennacherib by first destroying his army and then later, long after Sennacherib had returned to Assyria, by having the Assyrian king assassinated. **37.36** *Angel of the LORD*, a transcendental explanation for plague (2 Sam 24.15–17), which apparently devastated the besieging Assyrian army; the historian Herodotus (in *Persian Wars* II, 141) speaks of a plague of mice that overran the Assyrian camp. **37.38** Sennacherib died in 681 B.C.E., apparently murdered in a quarrel among his sons over the right of succession.

38.1–22 Hezekiah becomes ill and God tells him he will die, but in response to Hezekiah's prayer God grants him fifteen more years. **38.1** *In those days*, a vague temporal phrase found again in 39.1; though the date of Hezekiah's illness is still disputed, the concerns of 38.6 and the connection with the Babylonian embassy in 39.1 suggest the period just prior to the revolt against Assyria (ca. 705–703 B.C.E.). **38.3** For the con-

O LORD, I implore you, how I have walked before you in faithfulness with a whole heart, and have done what is good in your sight." And Hezekiah wept bitterly.

4 Then the word of the LORD came to Isaiah: 5 "Go and say to Hezekiah, Thus says the LORD, the God of your ancestor David: I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; I will add fifteen years to your life. 6 I will deliver you and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria, and defend this city.

7 "This is the sign to you from the LORD, that the LORD will do this thing that he has promised: 8 See, I will make the shadow cast by the declining sun on the dial of Ahaz turn back ten steps." So the sun turned back on the dial the ten steps by which it had declined.[a]

9 A writing of King Hezekiah of Judah, after he had been sick and had recovered from his sickness:

10 I said: In the noontide of my days
I must depart;
I am consigned to the gates of Sheol
for the rest of my years.
11 I said, I shall not see the LORD
in the land of the living;
I shall look upon mortals no more
among the inhabitants of the world.
12 My dwelling is plucked up and removed from me
like a shepherd's tent;
like a weaver I have rolled up my life;
he cuts me off from the loom;
from day to night you bring me to an end;[a]
13 I cry for help[b] until morning;
like a lion he breaks all my bones;
from day to night you bring me to an end.[a]
14 Like a swallow or a crane[a] I clamor,
I moan like a dove.
My eyes are weary with looking upward.
O Lord, I am oppressed; be my security!
15 But what can I say? For he has spoken to me,
and he himself has done it.
All my sleep has fled[c]
because of the bitterness of my soul.

16 O Lord, by these things people live,
and in all these is the life of my spirit.[a]
Oh, restore me to health and make me live!
17 Surely it was for my welfare
that I had great bitterness;
but you have held back[d] my life
from the pit of destruction,
for you have cast all my sins
behind your back.
18 For Sheol cannot thank you,
death cannot praise you;
those who go down to the Pit cannot hope
for your faithfulness.
19 The living, the living, they thank you,
as I do this day;
fathers make known to children
your faithfulness.

20 The LORD will save me,
and we will sing to stringed instruments[e]
all the days of our lives,
at the house of the LORD.

a Meaning of Heb uncertain *b* Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain *c* Cn Compare Syr: Heb *I will walk slowly all my years* *d* Cn Compare Gk Vg: Heb *loved* *e* Heb *my stringed instruments*

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tent of this petition, cf. Ps 26. **38.8** *Dial*, steps or stairs on which the movement of the shadow of a nearby object was used to mark the passage of time. **38.9–20** This song, attributed to Hezekiah as a written votive offering celebrating his recovery, is a typical thanksgiving song used when presenting a thank offering for personal deliverance in the temple liturgy (see Ps 30). **38.10–16** These verses quote the earlier lament and petition of the psalmist. **38.17–20** Then the psalmist announces the deliverance for which he gives thanks. *Death cannot praise you.* If God had allowed Hezekiah to die, God would have lost a voice to sing God's praises; because God cured him, Hezekiah will continue to sing to others of God's faithfulness (see Pss 6.5; 30.9).

21 Now Isaiah had said, "Let them
take a lump of figs, and apply it to the
boil, so that he may recover." 22 Hezekiah
also had said, "What is the sign that I shall
go up to the house of the LORD?"

Envoys from Babylon Welcomed

39 At that time King Merodach-
baladan son of Baladan of Bab-
ylon sent envoys with letters and a present
to Hezekiah, for he heard that he had
been sick and had recovered. 2 Hezekiah
welcomed them; he showed them his trea-
sure house, the silver, the gold, the spices,
the precious oil, his whole armory, all that
was found in his storehouses. There was
nothing in his house or in all his realm
that Hezekiah did not show them. 3 Then
the prophet Isaiah came to King Heze-
kiah and said to him, "What did these
men say? From where did they come to
you?" Hezekiah answered, "They have
come to me from a far country, from Bab-
ylon." 4 He said, "What have they seen in
your house?" Hezekiah answered, "They
have seen all that is in my house; there is
nothing in my storehouses that I did not
show them."
5 Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear
the word of the LORD of hosts: 6 Days are
coming when all that is in your house, and
that which your ancestors have stored up
until this day, shall be carried to Babylon;
nothing shall be left, says the LORD.
7 Some of your own sons who are born to
you shall be taken away; they shall be eu-
nuchs in the palace of the king of Bab-
ylon." 8 Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah,
"The word of the LORD that you have spo-
ken is good." For he thought, "There will
be peace and security in my days."

Comfort God's People

40 Comfort, O comfort my
people,
says your God.
2 Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and cry to her
that she has served her term,
that her penalty is paid,
that she has received from the
LORD's hand
double for all her sins.

3 A voice cries out:
"In the wilderness prepare the
way of the LORD,
make straight in the desert a
highway for our God.
4 Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be
made low;
the uneven ground shall become
level,
and the rough places a plain.
5 Then the glory of the LORD shall
be revealed,

38.21–22 These verses would fit better between vv. 6 and 7 (see 2 Kings 20.7–8).

39.1–8 Isaiah is disturbed by Hezekiah's open reception of a delegation from the king of Babylon. **39.1** *Merodach-baladan.* This Chaldean king of Babylon, subjugated by Tiglath-pileser III of Assyria, revolted against Sargon II and succeeded in ruling an independent Babylon for twelve years (721–709 B.C.E.) before Sargon recaptured it. After Sargon's death (705), Merodach-baladan again revolted and, though he soon lost Babylon (703 B.C.E.), remained a thorn in Assyria's side for another ten years. **39.2** Hezekiah's display of his *treasure house* and *armory* to these envoys suggests that the real motivation for this visit was an attempt to forge an anti-Assyrian alliance between Babylon and Judah. **39.3–4** Isaiah suspected such intrigue. **39.5–7** The judgment appears to refer to the later events of 597 B.C.E. (2 Kings 24.10–17).

40.1–55.13 Consolation of Judah. These chapters, which console the people of Judah with the promise of a joyous return to their homeland, presuppose the Babylonian exile and probably date from the period between 545 and 539 B.C.E. **40.1–11** God commissions the divine council to issue a message of consolation to the people of Israel, and the prophet, who overhears the voices of the council, clarifies the message. **40.1–2** *Comfort, speak, cry.* These imperatives are all plural, addressed to the angelic members of God's royal council (see 6.8; 1 Kings 22.19–22). *My people ... your God,* covenant language (Jer 31.33). *Served her term.* The period of punishment in exile is passed (see Jer 29.10). *Double.* See Ex 22.7. **40.3–5** Quoted in Lk 3.4–6 (cf. Mt 3.3; Mk 1.3; Jn 1.23). *Way of the LORD,* the highway God will use to come to his people; behind this imagery are the roads especially prepared by the Babylonians for the festive processionals of their gods. *Desert,* the road will extend across the desert from Babylon to Judah. *The glory of the LORD* will

and all people shall see it
together,
for the mouth of the LORD has
spoken."

6 A voice says, "Cry out!"
And I said, "What shall I
cry?"
All people are grass,
their constancy is like the
flower of the field.
7 The grass withers, the flower
fades,
when the breath of the LORD
blows upon it;
surely the people are grass.
8 The grass withers, the flower
fades;
but the word of our God will
stand forever.
9 Get you up to a high mountain,
O Zion, herald of good
tidings;[f]
lift up your voice with strength,
O Jerusalem, herald of good
tidings,[g]
lift it up, do not fear;
say to the cities of Judah,
"Here is your God!"
10 See, the Lord GOD comes with
might,
and his arm rules for him;
his reward is with him,
and his recompense
before him.
11 He will feed his flock like a
shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in
his arms,
and carry them in his bosom,
and gently lead the mother
sheep.

The Incomparability of God the Creator

12 Who has measured the waters in
the hollow of his hand
and marked off the heavens
with a span,
enclosed the dust of the earth in
a measure,
and weighed the mountains
in scales
and the hills in a balance?
13 Who has directed the spirit of
the LORD,
or as his counselor has
instructed him?
14 Whom did he consult for his
enlightenment,
and who taught him the path
of justice?
Who taught him knowledge,
and showed him the way of
understanding?
15 Even the nations are like a drop
from a bucket,
and are accounted as dust on
the scales;
see, he takes up the isles like
fine dust.
16 Lebanon would not provide fuel
enough,
nor are its animals enough for
a burnt offering.
17 All the nations are as nothing
before him;
they are accounted by him as
less than nothing and
emptiness.

18 To whom then will you
liken God,

f Or *O herald of good tidings to Zion* *g* Or *O herald of good tidings to Jerusalem*

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be seen when he returns to Judah on this road (vv. 9–10). **40.6–8** A *voice* from God's council proclaims the eternal reliability of God's word (55.10–11) in contrast to the transitoriness of human existence (see 1 Pet 1.24–25). **40.7** *Breath*, wind. **40.9** Jerusalem is called upon to be the *herald* to announce the good news of God's return to the rest of the cities of Judah. **40.10–11** God is portrayed in the typology of a Jacob returning from Mesopotamia with his flock (the Judean exiles) as his wages (see Gen 31.1–33.14). This portrait reflects traditional royal imagery; the Babylonian king Hammurabi describes himself as "the beneficient shepherd" and asserts, "In my *bosom* I carried the peoples of the land of Sumer and Akkad" (*Code of Hammurabi*, Prologue).

40.12–31 The God who created all things is more than a match for Judah's oppressors and their idols. **40.12–14** A series of rhetorical questions intended to show the incomparable power and wisdom of God. **40.15–17** Neither nature nor the nations can thwart the will of such a God; they are as insignificant as obstacles to the accomplishment of God's purpose as a few specks of fine *dust on the scales* are to a merchant when weighing produce. **40.18–20** God cannot be compared to idols made by human hands (see 42.17; 45.16, 20; 46.1–2; Jer 10.1–16).

or what likeness compare
with him?
19 An idol? —A workman casts it,
and a goldsmith overlays it
with gold,
and casts for it silver chains.
20 As a gift one chooses mulberry
wood[h]
—wood that will not rot—
then seeks out a skilled artisan
to set up an image that will
not topple.

21 Have you not known? Have you
not heard?
Has it not been told you from
the beginning?
Have you not understood from
the foundations of the
earth?
22 It is he who sits above the circle
of the earth,
and its inhabitants are like
grasshoppers;
who stretches out the heavens like
a curtain,
and spreads them like a tent to
live in;
23 who brings princes to naught,
and makes the rulers of the
earth as nothing.

24 Scarcely are they planted, scarcely
sown,
scarcely has their stem taken
root in the earth,
when he blows upon them, and
they wither,
and the tempest carries them
off like stubble.

25 To whom then will you
compare me,
or who is my equal? says the
Holy One.
26 Lift up your eyes on high
and see:
Who created these?
He who brings out their host and
numbers them,
calling them all by name;
because he is great in strength,
mighty in power,
not one is missing.

27 Why do you say, O Jacob,
and speak, O Israel,
"My way is hidden from the
LORD,
and my right is disregarded by
my God"?
28 Have you not known? Have you
not heard?
The LORD is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of
the earth.
He does not faint or grow weary;
his understanding is
unsearchable.
29 He gives power to the faint,
and strengthens the powerless.
30 Even youths will faint and
be weary,
and the young will fall
exhausted;
31 but those who wait for the LORD
shall renew their strength,
they shall mount up with wings
like eagles,
they shall run and not be weary,
they shall walk and not faint.

God's Trial of the Nations

41 Listen to me in silence,
O coastlands;
let the peoples renew their
strength;
let them approach, then let
them speak;
let us together draw near for
judgment.

2 Who has roused a victor from
the east,

h Meaning of Heb uncertain

40.21–24 God who created the world and its peoples also controls their history (44.24–28). **40.24** *He blows upon them, and they wither.* See v. 7. **40.26** Far from being rival gods, the heavenly *host* (24.21) were created by God and are subject to him, appearing promptly at God's call. **40.27–31** God is aware of his people's situation and by his creative power the Lord will renew their strength if they *wait* on him (49.23; see Ps 103.5).

41.1–10 The nations are called upon to go to court with God to resolve the question of who actually controls history. The early victories of Cyrus of Persia, who was becoming a threat to Babylon, form the background to this oracle. **41.2** *Victor from the east,* Cyrus of Persia (44.28;

summoned him to his service?
He delivers up nations to him,
and tramples kings under foot;
he makes them like dust with his sword,
like driven stubble with his bow.
3 He pursues them and passes on safely,
scarcely touching the path with his feet.
4 Who has performed and done this,
calling the generations from the beginning?
I, the LORD, am first,
and will be with the last.
5 The coastlands have seen and are afraid,
the ends of the earth tremble;
they have drawn near and come.
6 Each one helps the other,
saying to one another, "Take courage!"
7 The artisan encourages the goldsmith,
and the one who smooths with the hammer encourages the one who strikes the anvil,
saying of the soldering, "It is good";
and they fasten it with nails so that it cannot be moved.
8 But you, Israel, my servant,
Jacob, whom I have chosen,
the offspring of Abraham, my friend;
9 you whom I took from the ends of the earth,
and called from its farthest corners,
saying to you, "You are my servant,
I have chosen you and not cast you off";
10 do not fear, for I am with you,
do not be afraid, for I am your God;
I will strengthen you, I will help you,
I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.

Israel Assured of God's Help

11 Yes, all who are incensed against you
shall be ashamed and disgraced;
those who strive against you
shall be as nothing and shall perish.
12 You shall seek those who contend with you,
but you shall not find them;
those who war against you
shall be as nothing at all.
13 For I, the LORD your God,
hold your right hand;
it is I who say to you, "Do not fear,
I will help you."

14 Do not fear, you worm Jacob,
you insect[i] Israel!
I will help you, says the LORD;
your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel.
15 Now, I will make of you a threshing sledge,
sharp, new, and having teeth;

i Syr: Heb *men of*

45.1). *Summoned him to his service.* God is the real power behind the rise of Cyrus, who is simply an agent in God's service (10.5; Jer 27.6). **41.3** *Scarcely touching the path,* a reference to the speed of the Persian army. **41.4** *First . . . last,* the God of Israel controls history from beginning to end; the Lord has no rival (43.10; 44.6). **41.5–6** Terrified by the victorious advance of Cyrus, the nations try to encourage one another against him—a reference perhaps to the defensive treaties concluded between Babylon, Lydia, and Egypt. **41.7** Securing their idols is part of the nations' defensive preparations. **41.8–10** Just as God is summoning Cyrus from the east, so God called Abraham and his descendants from the ends of the earth (Gen 12.1–3). That summons to be God's special people still stands, so Israel, God's *servant,* need not fear like the other nations.

41.11–20 God will protect Israel against its enemies and meet its needs in the wilderness. **41.11–13** Israel's enemies will vanish, because God is with Israel. **41.14** *Worm Jacob . . . insect Israel.* Israel seemed insignificant in comparison to its powerful enemies (cf. Ps 22.6). *Redeemer,* the one who avenges or liberates an oppressed kinsman (cf. Lev 25.47–55). *Holy One of Israel,* an epithet for God (see note on 1.4). **41.15–16** Just as Cyrus treated his enemies as stubble (v. 2), so Israel will thresh its enemies. *Mountains,*

you shall thresh the mountains
and crush them,
and you shall make the hills
like chaff.
16 You shall winnow them and the
wind shall carry them away,
and the tempest shall scatter
them.
Then you shall rejoice in the
LORD;
in the Holy One of Israel you
shall glory.

17 When the poor and needy seek
water,
and there is none,
and their tongue is parched
with thirst,
I the LORD will answer them,
I the God of Israel will not
forsake them.
18 I will open rivers on the bare
heights,[j]
and fountains in the midst of
the valleys;
I will make the wilderness a pool
of water,
and the dry land springs of
water.
19 I will put in the wilderness
the cedar,
the acacia, the myrtle, and
the olive;
I will set in the desert the
cypress,
the plane and the pine
together,
20 so that all may see and know,
all may consider and
understand,
that the hand of the LORD has
done this,
the Holy One of Israel has
created it.

The Futility of Idols

21 Set forth your case, says the
LORD;
bring your proofs, says the
King of Jacob.
22 Let them bring them, and tell us
what is to happen.
Tell us the former things, what
they are,
so that we may consider them,
and that we may know their
outcome;
or declare to us the things
to come.
23 Tell us what is to come hereafter,
that we may know that you
are gods;
do good, or do harm,
that we may be afraid and
terrified.
24 You, indeed, are nothing
and your work is nothing at all;
whoever chooses you is an
abomination.

25 I stirred up one from the north,
and he has come,
from the rising of the sun he
was summoned by name.[k]
He shall trample[l] on rulers as on
mortar,
as the potter treads clay.
26 Who declared it from the
beginning, so that we
might know,

j Or *trails* *k* Cn Compare Q Ms Gk: MT *and he shall call on my name* *l* Cn: Heb *come*

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hills suggest the strength of Israel's enemies. **41.17–20** God will provide water and shade for Israel when it crosses the desert in its return from exile. **41.20** *The hand of the* LORD *has done this.* God's care for Israel in the wilderness will prove that it was God who raised up Cyrus to defeat Babylon and bring about Israel's restoration.

41.21–29 The idols of the nations are called upon to provide some proof that they are gods and that they, rather than the Lord, the God of Israel, control the destiny of nations. **41.21** *King of Jacob,* God. **41.22–23** The idols are called upon to cite their past prophecies that have now been fulfilled or to predict the outcome of present events in order to prove that they know and control the course of history. *Do good, or do harm*—a god that neither blesses nor harms humans is nothing of which humans need to be *afraid* or *terrified*; such a god can safely be ignored (see Zeph 1.12). **41.24** *Nothing.* An idol is a nonentity incapable of action. *Abomination.* The one who chooses such a god becomes as detestable as the idol chosen (see Hos 9.10). **41.25** God, in contrast, is the one who called Cyrus. Earlier used of enemies from Assyria (14.31) and Babylon (Jer 6.22), the phrase *from the north* here refers to the Medo-Persian territory north and east of Babylon. **41.26–27** No other god announced the rise of Cyrus; God proclaimed it first to Jerusalem.

and beforehand, so that we
might say, "He is right"?
There was no one who declared
it, none who proclaimed,
none who heard your words.
27 I first have declared it to Zion,[m]
and I give to Jerusalem a
herald of good tidings.
28 But when I look there is no one;
among these there is no
counselor
who, when I ask, gives an
answer.
29 No, they are all a delusion;
their works are nothing;
their images are empty wind.

The Servant, a Light to the Nations

42 Here is my servant, whom I
uphold,
my chosen, in whom my soul
delights;
I have put my spirit upon him;
he will bring forth justice to the
nations.
2 He will not cry or lift up his
voice,
or make it heard in the street;
3 a bruised reed he will not break,
and a dimly burning wick he
will not quench;
he will faithfully bring forth
justice.
4 He will not grow faint or be
crushed
until he has established justice
in the earth;
and the coastlands wait for his
teaching.

5 Thus says God, the LORD,
who created the heavens and
stretched them out,
who spread out the earth and
what comes from it,
who gives breath to the people
upon it
and spirit to those who walk
in it:
6 I am the LORD, I have called you
in righteousness,
I have taken you by the hand
and kept you;
I have given you as a covenant to
the people,[n]
a light to the nations,
7 to open the eyes that are blind,
to bring out the prisoners from
the dungeon,
from the prison those who sit
in darkness.
8 I am the LORD, that is my name;
my glory I give to no other,
nor my praise to idols.
9 See, the former things have come
to pass,

m Cn: Heb *First to Zion—Behold, behold them*
n Meaning of Heb uncertain

41.28–29 The silence of the idols of the nations demonstrates their nonexistence.

42.1–9 This text, or a part of this text (vv. 1–4), is one of four texts (49.1–6; 50.4–11; 52.13–53.12) that some scholars have identified as "servant songs." Both the isolation of these songs from their larger context and the identification of the servant in them are disputed. Those who isolate the songs often identify the servant as an individual. The position taken here is that the songs should be read in context and that the servant is the nation Israel. **42.1** *My servant, whom I uphold, my chosen.* The language points to the identification of Israel as the servant (41.8–10; 44.1–2; 44.21); God only used Cyrus for the sake of God's servant Israel (45.1–4). *Spirit, bring forth justice.* Israel is equipped for (cf. 44.3) and given the task assigned to the ideal king in 11.1–5. **42.2–3** However, unlike that ideal king, the servant neither strikes the earth nor kills the wicked with his royal command (11.4); his *voice* is not even *heard.* He *brings forth justice* in a different way. **42.4** *Be crushed.* It is his endurance of suffering that leads to the establishment of justice (see 53.11). *Wait for his teaching.* Cf. 11.10. **42.5–6a** Despite appearances, Israel will not fail in its mission, for the one who called and sustains Israel is the creator and sustainer of the whole world. **42.6b–7** The light imagery used here is traditional imagery for a king's establishment of justice. God's servant will be a model to make that justice clear to all the nations. **42.6b** *A covenant to the people* (49.8), a difficult expression, perhaps better "a cleansing for the people." **42.7** The subject of the infinitives *to open* and *to bring out* is not the servant, but God, a sense that would be conveyed better by the translation, "that I might open the eyes that are blind, bring out the prisoners from the dungeon." The same Hebrew construction is found in 51.16, where *stretching out the heavens and laying the foundations of the earth* clearly refers to God's actions, not those of Israel. **42.8** *The LORD,* Yahweh, the name of the only true God, a God who will allow no rival (Deut 4.23–24).

and new things I now declare:
before they spring forth,
I tell you of them.

A Hymn of Praise

10 Sing to the LORD a new song,
his praise from the end of the earth!
Let the sea roar[o] and all that fills it,
the coastlands and their inhabitants.
11 Let the desert and its towns lift up their voice,
the villages that Kedar inhabits;
let the inhabitants of Sela sing for joy,
let them shout from the tops of the mountains.
12 Let them give glory to the LORD,
and declare his praise in the coastlands.
13 The LORD goes forth like a soldier,
like a warrior he stirs up his fury;
he cries out, he shouts aloud,
he shows himself mighty against his foes.

14 For a long time I have held my peace,
I have kept still and restrained myself;
now I will cry out like a woman in labor,
I will gasp and pant.
15 I will lay waste mountains and hills,
and dry up all their herbage;
I will turn the rivers into islands,
and dry up the pools.
16 I will lead the blind
by a road they do not know,
by paths they have not known
I will guide them.
I will turn the darkness before them into light,
the rough places into level ground.
These are the things I will do,
and I will not forsake them.
17 They shall be turned back and utterly put to shame—
those who trust in carved images,
who say to cast images,
"You are our gods."

Israel the Blind and Deaf Servant

18 Listen, you that are deaf;
and you that are blind, look up and see!
19 Who is blind but my servant,
or deaf like my messenger whom I send?
Who is blind like my dedicated one,
or blind like the servant of the LORD?
20 He sees many things, but does[p] not observe them;
his ears are open, but he does not hear.
21 The LORD was pleased, for the sake of his righteousness,
to magnify his teaching and make it glorious.
22 But this is a people robbed and plundered,
all of them are trapped in holes and hidden in prisons;
they have become a prey with no one to rescue,
a spoil with no one to say, "Restore!"

o Cn Compare Ps 96.11; 98.7: Heb *Those who go down to the sea* p Heb *You see many things but do*

42.10–17 A song of victory sung by the whole world for God the Warrior (Pss 96; 98). **42.11** *Kedar.* See note on 21.16. *Sela,* a city of Edom. This city is different from the Sela mentioned in 16.1. **42.13** *Soldier, warrior.* See Ex 15.3. **42.14–17** These verses quote God's shout referred to in v. 13. **42.14** *For a long time,* during the long period of Israel's punishment and exile. *Held my peace . . . restrained myself.* God's silence is a metaphor for his failure to intervene in history (see Hab 1.13). **42.15–16** God's work of destruction is to provide a path for his people to return to its land in a new exodus (11.15–16; Ex 13.21–22). **42.17** Having seen this intervention of the true God, idolators will be ashamed of their misplaced trust in dead images.

42.18–25 Israel has not understood the significance of all that has befallen it in its history. **42.18–20** Cf. 6.9–10. **42.21–22** Though God wanted to glorify his teaching among the nations (2.3), blind and deaf Israel, God's intended messenger, sits in exile as a pathetically plundered and

23 Who among you will give heed
to this,
who will attend and listen for
the time to come?
24 Who gave up Jacob to the spoiler,
and Israel to the robbers?
Was it not the LORD, against
whom we have sinned,
in whose ways they would
not walk,
and whose law they would
not obey?
25 So he poured upon him the heat
of his anger
and the fury of war;
it set him on fire all around, but
he did not understand;
it burned him, but he did not
take it to heart.

Israel's Redemption Promised

43 But now thus says the LORD,
he who created you, O Jacob,
he who formed you, O Israel:
Do not fear, for I have
redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you
are mine.
2 When you pass through the
waters, I will be with you;
and through the rivers, they
shall not overwhelm you;
when you walk through fire you
shall not be burned,
and the flame shall not
consume you.
3 For I am the LORD your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your
Savior.
I give Egypt as your ransom,
Ethiopia[q] and Seba in
exchange for you.
4 Because you are precious in
my sight,
and honored, and I love you,
I give people in return for you,
nations in exchange for your
life.
5 Do not fear, for I am with you;
I will bring your offspring from
the east,
and from the west I will
gather you;
6 I will say to the north, "Give
them up,"
and to the south, "Do not
withhold;
bring my sons from far away
and my daughters from the
end of the earth—
7 everyone who is called by my
name,
whom I created for my glory,
whom I formed and made."

The People of Israel Are God's Witnesses

8 Bring forth the people who are
blind, yet have eyes,
who are deaf, yet have ears!
9 Let all the nations gather
together,
and let the peoples assemble.
Who among them declared this,
and foretold to us the former
things?
Let them bring their witnesses to
justify them,
and let them hear and say, "It
is true."
10 You are my witnesses, says the
LORD,

q Or *Nubia*; Heb *Cush*

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helpless people. **42.23–25** Why are they languishing in exile? Israel has been punished for transgressing God's teaching, though Israel did not understand. **42.24** *Law*, same word translated *teaching* in v. 21. **42.25** Israel's failure to learn from the *fire* of God's judgment is a recurring motif in First Isaiah (1.5–7; 9.18–21).

43.1–7 Now this period of punishment is ended, and God will redeem Israel. **43.1** Israel need not fear, for God its creator (44.2, 21, 24) and redeemer (41.14; 48.17; 49.7) has claimed Israel as his own (Ex 19.5–6). *By name* indicates the intimate personal relationship to God (45.3–4; Ex 33.17). **43.2** God will protect his people through all the dangers they encounter (Ps 66.12). **43.3–4** God will give *Egypt*, *Ethiopia*, and the kingdom of *Seba* in Arabia to Cyrus as a ransom for his people. **43.5–7** God will gather the exiles of his people from the four corners of the world (11.11–12). **43.7** *For my glory*. Israel was created to bring glory to God (cf. 43.21).

43.8–13 Though they have been blind and deaf, the people of Israel will be God's witnesses to the nations that the Lord is the only true God. **43.9** The nations are called upon to bring proof that their gods predicted the course of history (41.21–24). **43.10** *My witnesses*. Israel will testify on behalf of God. *My servant*. Note that the collec-

and my servant whom I have chosen,
so that you may know and believe me
and understand that I am he.
Before me no god was formed,
nor shall there be any after me.
11 I, I am the LORD,
and besides me there is no savior.
12 I declared and saved and proclaimed,
when there was no strange god among you;
and you are my witnesses, says the LORD.
13 I am God, and also henceforth I am He;
there is no one who can deliver from my hand;
I work and who can hinder it?

A New Exodus from Babylon

14 Thus says the LORD,
your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel:
For your sake I will send to Babylon
and break down all the bars,
and the shouting of the Chaldeans will be turned to lamentation.[r]
15 I am the LORD, your Holy One,
the Creator of Israel, your King.
16 Thus says the LORD,
who makes a way in the sea,
a path in the mighty waters,
17 who brings out chariot and horse,
army and warrior;
they lie down, they cannot rise,
they are extinguished,
quenched like a wick:
18 Do not remember the former things,
or consider the things of old.
19 I am about to do a new thing;
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness
and rivers in the desert.
20 The wild animals will honor me,
the jackals and the ostriches;
for I give water in the wilderness,
rivers in the desert,
to give drink to my chosen people,
21 the people whom I formed for myself
so that they might declare my praise.

Israel Suffered for Its Own Sins

22 Yet you did not call upon me, O Jacob;
but you have been weary of me, O Israel!
23 You have not brought me your sheep for burnt offerings,
or honored me with your sacrifices.
I have not burdened you with offerings,
or wearied you with frankincense.
24 You have not bought me sweet cane with money,
or satisfied me with the fat of your sacrifices.
But you have burdened me with your sins;
you have wearied me with your iniquities.

r Meaning of Heb uncertain

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tive Israel is referred to in the plural as God's witnesses and in the singular as God's servant. **43.11–13** God has no rival or opponent worthy of the name.

43.14–21 God will break Israel out of its Babylonian exile in a new exodus. **43.14** The mention of *Babylon* and the *Chaldeans* shows that this oracle presupposes the Babylonian exile (597–539 B.C.E.). *Bars*, the wooden or metal crosspieces that held gates shut; to *break* them was to open the gates, allowing Israel to leave Babylon. **43.15** God was Israel's *king* (52.7). **43.16–17** An allusion to the exodus from Egypt (Ex 14–15; cf. Isa 51.9–11). **43.18–19** The new exodus from Babylon, when God will lead Israel home to Palestine through the wilderness, will be even more glorious than the former exodus. **43.20** *Water in the wilderness.* See Ex 15.22–25; 17.1–7; Num 20.2–13. **43.21** See v. 7.

43.22–28 God did not wrong Israel; rather it is Israel who has sinned against God and brought punishment upon itself. **43.22–23** Cf. Mic 6.3. **43.24** *Sweet cane.* See Ex 30.23; Jer 6.20.

25 I, I am He
who blots out your
transgressions for my own
sake,
and I will not remember
your sins.
26 Accuse me, let us go to trial;
set forth your case, so that you
may be proved right.
27 Your first ancestor sinned,
and your interpreters
transgressed against me.
28 Therefore I profaned the princes
of the sanctuary,
I delivered Jacob to utter
destruction,
and Israel to reviling.

God's Blessing on Israel

44 But now hear, O Jacob
my servant,
Israel whom I have chosen!
2 Thus says the LORD who
made you,
who formed you in the womb
and will help you:
Do not fear, O Jacob my servant,
Jeshurun whom I have chosen.
3 For I will pour water on the
thirsty land,
and streams on the dry ground;
I will pour my spirit upon your
descendants,
and my blessing on your
offspring.
4 They shall spring up like a green
tamarisk,
like willows by flowing streams.
5 This one will say, "I am the
LORD's,"
another will be called by the
name of Jacob,
yet another will write on the
hand, "The LORD's,"
and adopt the name of Israel.

The LORD Alone Is God

6 Thus says the LORD, the King
of Israel,
and his Redeemer, the LORD
of hosts:
I am the first and I am the last;
besides me there is no god.
7 Who is like me? Let them
proclaim it,
let them declare and set it forth
before me.
Who has announced from of old
the things to come?[s]
Let them tell us[t] what is yet
to be.
8 Do not fear, or be afraid;
have I not told you from of old
and declared it?
You are my witnesses!
Is there any god besides me?
There is no other rock; I know
not one.

The Absurdity of Idol Worship

9 All who make idols are nothing, and the things they delight in do not profit; their witnesses neither see nor know. And so they will be put to shame. 10 Who would fashion a god or cast an image that can do no good? 11 Look, all its devotees shall be put to shame; the artisans too are merely human. Let them all assemble, let them stand up; they shall be terrified, they shall all be put to shame.

s Cn: Heb *from my placing an eternal people and things to come* t Tg: Heb *them*

43.25 God forgives Israel for God's own sake, not because Israel is worthy of forgiveness. **43.26–28** If Israel wants to challenge this view of Israel's history, Israel should present its evidence that God is the transgressor. For this point of view, see Ps 44.9–26. **43.27** *First ancestor*, Jacob (Gen 27–38; Hos 12.2–4). *Interpreters*, perhaps prophets and priests who were supposed to speak God's word to the people (Hos 4.4–6; Jer 23.9–15). **43.28** *Princes of the sanctuary*, priests (2 Kings 25.18–21).

44.1–5 Now, however, God will restore his blessings to his people. **44.1–2** *My servant*. Note the identification of the servant as Jacob/Israel, Jacob/Jeshurun. **44.2** *Jeshurun* (Deut 32.15; 33.5, 26), an old poetic name for Israel, perhaps meaning "upright one" in Hebrew. **44.3–4** God's *spirit* causes the people to flourish like plants in a well-watered land (see 32.15). **44.5** Then the people will exult in their relationship to the Lord (cf. 4.3; Ps 87.5–6).

44.6–8 The Lord alone has demonstrated his control of history by the prophetic word; there is no other god to challenge the Lord (see 41.21–24). **44.8** *Rock*, an epithet for God as Israel's protector (17.10; 26.4; 30.29; Deut 32.4, 18).

44.9–20 A prose satire on the absurdity of

12 The ironsmith fashions it[u] and
works it over the coals, shaping it with
hammers, and forging it with his strong
arm; he becomes hungry and his strength
fails, he drinks no water and is faint.
13 The carpenter stretches a line, marks it
out with a stylus, fashions it with planes,
and marks it with a compass; he makes it
in human form, with human beauty, to be
set up in a shrine. 14 He cuts down cedars
or chooses a holm tree or an oak and lets
it grow strong among the trees of the for-
est. He plants a cedar and the rain nour-
ishes it. 15 Then it can be used as fuel. Part
of it he takes and warms himself; he kin-
dles a fire and bakes bread. Then he
makes a god and worships it, makes it a
carved image and bows down before it.
16 Half of it he burns in the fire; over this
half he roasts meat, eats it and is satisfied.
He also warms himself and says, "Ah, I
am warm, I can feel the fire!" 17 The rest
of it he makes into a god, his idol, bows
down to it and worships it; he prays to it
and says, "Save me, for you are my god!"
18 They do not know, nor do they
comprehend; for their eyes are shut, so
that they cannot see, and their minds as
well, so that they cannot understand.
19 No one considers, nor is there knowl-
edge or discernment to say, "Half of it I
burned in the fire; I also baked bread on
its coals, I roasted meat and have eaten.
Now shall I make the rest of it an abomi-
nation? Shall I fall down before a block of
wood?" 20 He feeds on ashes; a deluded
mind has led him astray, and he cannot
save himself or say, "Is not this thing in
my right hand a fraud?"

Israel Is Not Forgotten

21 Remember these things, O Jacob,
and Israel, for you are my
servant;
I formed you, you are my
servant;
O Israel, you will not be
forgotten by me.
22 I have swept away your
transgressions like a cloud,
and your sins like mist;
return to me, for I have
redeemed you.

23 Sing, O heavens, for the LORD
has done it;
shout, O depths of the earth;
break forth into singing,
O mountains,
O forest, and every tree in it!
For the LORD has redeemed
Jacob,
and will be glorified in Israel.

24 Thus says the LORD, your
Redeemer,
who formed you in the womb:
I am the LORD, who made all
things,
who alone stretched out the
heavens,
who by myself spread out
the earth;
25 who frustrates the omens of liars,
and makes fools of diviners;
who turns back the wise,
and makes their knowledge
foolish;
26 who confirms the word of his
servant,
and fulfills the prediction of his
messengers;
who says of Jerusalem, "It shall
be inhabited,"
and of the cities of Judah,
"They shall be rebuilt,
and I will raise up their ruins";
27 who says to the deep, "Be dry—

u Cn: Heb *an ax*

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idolatry (cf. 40.18–20; 41.6–7). **44.18** Cf. 6.9–10; 42.18–20.

44.21–28 Reassurance to Israel. **44.21–23** These verses resume the theme of God's redemption of Israel found in vv. 1–8. **44.21** *My servant.* Because of Israel's special status as God's uniquely created servant, God will never forget Israel. **44.22** God has *swept away* Israel's sins as completely as the morning mists vanish before the sun. **44.23** All of nature is called upon to praise God for his redemption of Israel (cf. 42.10–12; Jer 51.48). **44.24–28** These verses summarize most of the themes in the preceding material. **44.24** *Who alone . . . by myself.* The Lord, the God of Israel, created the whole world without any assistance from any other deity (40.12–26; 42.5). **44.25–26** God by his guidance of history *frustrates* the predictions of the pagan diviners and *confirms* the predictions of the Israelite prophets who promised the restoration of Judah (cf. 41.21–29; 42.9; 43.8–13; 44.7–8). **44.27** *Deep,* double allusion to Babylon as the site of the new exodus

I will dry up your rivers";
28 who says of Cyrus, "He is my shepherd,
and he shall carry out all my purpose";
and who says of Jerusalem, "It shall be rebuilt,"
and of the temple, "Your foundation shall be laid."

Cyrus, God's Instrument

45 Thus says the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus,
whose right hand I have grasped
to subdue nations before him
and strip kings of their robes,
to open doors before him—
and the gates shall not be closed:
2 I will go before you
and level the mountains,[v]
I will break in pieces the doors of bronze
and cut through the bars of iron,
3 I will give you the treasures of darkness
and riches hidden in secret places,
so that you may know that it is I, the LORD,
the God of Israel, who call you by your name.
4 For the sake of my servant Jacob,
and Israel my chosen,
I call you by your name,
I surname you, though you do not know me.
5 I am the LORD, and there is no other;
besides me there is no god.
I arm you, though you do not know me,
6 so that they may know, from the rising of the sun
and from the west, that there is no one besides me;
I am the LORD, and there is no other.
7 I form light and create darkness,
I make weal and create woe;
I the LORD do all these things.

8 Shower, O heavens, from above,
and let the skies rain down righteousness;
let the earth open, that salvation may spring up,[w]
and let it cause righteousness to sprout up also;
I the LORD have created it.

Propriety of God's Plan Defended

9 Woe to you who strive with your Maker,
earthen vessels with the potter![x]
Does the clay say to the one who fashions it, "What are you making"?
or "Your work has no handles"?
10 Woe to anyone who says to a father, "What are you begetting?"

v Q Ms Gk: MT *the swellings*
w Q Ms: MT *that they may bring forth salvation*
x Cn: Heb *with the potsherds*, or *with the potters*

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from bondage and as the primordial sea of the cosmogonic myth whose waters must be dried up so that Israel can return home (see 11.15–16; 51.10; Ps 74.12–17). **44.28** *Cyrus*, the founder of the Persian Empire, is identified as God's agent for effecting Israel's salvation. *Shepherd*, a standard metaphor for king (see Jer 23.1–6).

45.1–8 God's commission to Cyrus. **45.1** Cyrus is the only non-Israelite designated in the OT as God's *anointed* (i.e., messiah), a term usually reserved for Israel's kings or high priests. **45.2–3** God will assist and reward Cyrus for carrying out God's commission so that Cyrus will recognize that God is responsible for his success. **45.4–5** Though Cyrus does not know the Lord, the God of Israel, it is the Lord who has summoned and armed Cyrus for the sake of God's servant Israel. **45.6–7** The Lord is doing this so that the whole world will recognize that the Lord alone is God, creator of nature and controller of history. **45.7** *Light . . . darkness, weal . . . woe.* God is in control of all the twists and turns of history, whether good or bad from a human standpoint. **45.8** Concluding command to heaven and earth to bring forth God's salvation.

45.9–19 As the creator and lord of history, God is free to save Israel however God pleases. **45.9–12** There is no logical basis for Israel to challenge God's way of working in the world (see 29.15–16; Rom 9.20), since Israel was created

or to a woman, "With what are you in labor?"
11 Thus says the LORD,
the Holy One of Israel, and its Maker:
Will you question me[y] about my children,
or command me concerning the work of my hands?
12 I made the earth,
and created humankind upon it;
it was my hands that stretched out the heavens,
and I commanded all their host.
13 I have aroused Cyrus[z] in righteousness,
and I will make all his paths straight;
he shall build my city
and set my exiles free,
not for price or reward,
says the LORD of hosts.
14 Thus says the LORD:
The wealth of Egypt and the merchandise of Ethiopia,[a]
and the Sabeans, tall of stature,
shall come over to you and be yours,
they shall follow you;
they shall come over in chains and bow down to you.
They will make supplication to you, saying,
"God is with you alone, and there is no other;
there is no god besides him."
15 Truly, you are a God who hides himself,
O God of Israel, the Savior.
16 All of them are put to shame and confounded,
the makers of idols go in confusion together.
17 But Israel is saved by the LORD with everlasting salvation;
you shall not be put to shame or confounded to all eternity.

18 For thus says the LORD,
who created the heavens (he is God!),
who formed the earth and made it (he established it;
he did not create it a chaos,
he formed it to be inhabited!):
I am the LORD, and there is no other.
19 I did not speak in secret,
in a land of darkness;
I did not say to the offspring of Jacob,
"Seek me in chaos."
I the LORD speak the truth,
I declare what is right.

Idols Cannot Save

20 Assemble yourselves and come together,
draw near, you survivors of the nations!
They have no knowledge—
those who carry about their wooden idols,
and keep on praying to a god that cannot save.
21 Declare and present your case;
let them take counsel together!
Who told this long ago?

y Cn: Heb *Ask me of things to come* z Heb *him*
a Or *Nubia*; Heb *Cush*

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by God just like heaven and earth and the rest of humanity. **45.13** God is the one who raised up Cyrus, and he will free Israel and rebuild Jerusalem for God. **45.14** The nations will bring their wealth to Israel as tribute, will serve Israel, and will acknowledge that Israel's God alone is God (49.22–23; 60.4–16; 61.5–6). **45.15** *Hides himself*, a reference to God's penchant for temporarily withdrawing from visible involvement in the world (8.17) and working in strange ways (28.21) that suggests that God's use of Cyrus is totally in character. **45.16–17** Those who make idols will be put to shame, but Israel will be saved. **45.18–19** Israel's exile in Babylon is not God's final purpose for Israel. As the creator, God did not intend Israel to live in a disordered and chaotic universe, but in a habitable one of order, truth, and right. *Chaos*, the disordered state prior to creation (Gen 1.2).

45.20–25 The remnant of the nations is summoned to gather and recognize the Lord as the only God in order that it might be saved. **45.20** *Carry about their wooden idols.* Just prior to Cyrus's conquest of Babylon the Babylonian king Nabonidus had the images of the Babylonian gods carried from their local shrines to Babylon for safekeeping. **45.21** Unlike the Lord, the pagan gods did not predict the rise of Cyrus

Who declared it of old?
Was it not I, the LORD?
There is no other god
besides me,
a righteous God and a Savior;
there is no one besides me.

22 Turn to me and be saved,
all the ends of the earth!
For I am God, and there is
no other.
23 By myself I have sworn,
from my mouth has gone forth
in righteousness
a word that shall not return:
"To me every knee shall bow,
every tongue shall swear."

24 Only in the LORD, it shall be said
of me,
are righteousness and strength;
all who were incensed against him
shall come to him and be
ashamed.
25 In the LORD all the offspring of
Israel
shall triumph and glory.

God Is Superior to the Idols

46 Bel bows down, Nebo stoops,
their idols are on beasts
and cattle;
these things you carry are loaded
as burdens on weary animals.
2 They stoop, they bow down
together;
they cannot save the burden,
but themselves go into captivity.

3 Listen to me, O house of Jacob,
all the remnant of the house of
Israel,
who have been borne by me from
your birth,
carried from the womb;
4 even to your old age I am he,
even when you turn gray I will
carry you.
I have made, and I will bear;
I will carry and will save.

5 To whom will you liken me and
make me equal,
and compare me, as though we
were alike?
6 Those who lavish gold from the
purse,
and weigh out silver in the
scales—
they hire a goldsmith, who makes
it into a god;
then they fall down and
worship!
7 They lift it to their shoulders,
they carry it,
they set it in its place, and it
stands there;
it cannot move from its place.
If one cries out to it, it does
not answer
or save anyone from trouble.

8 Remember this and consider,[b]
recall it to mind, you
transgressors,
9 remember the former things
of old;
for I am God, and there is no
other;
I am God, and there is no one
like me,
10 declaring the end from the
beginning

b Meaning of Heb uncertain

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or the fall of Babylon. **45.22–23** The pagans are invited to acknowledge God and be saved. **45.23** *By myself.* God swears by himself since there is no higher power (cf. Heb 6.13). *Every knee shall bow.* Cf. Rom 14.11; Phil 2.10. **45.24** *All who were incensed against him,* all who were hostile to Israel (see 41.11–13; cf. Gen 12.1–3).

46.1–13 Idols must be carried by their worshipers, but God has always carried his people, and God will yet carry and save them. **46.1** *Bel,* "Lord," an epithet that became an alternate name for Marduk, the chief god of Babylon; *Nebo,* the Babylonian god Nabu, city god of Borsippa and son of Marduk. **46.2** The Babylonian gods cannot even save their own images, which weigh down the pack animals (see note on 45.20). **46.3–4** God has carried and will carry Israel *from the womb* (cf. Pss 22.9–11; 71.5–6) to *old age* (Ps 71.18). **46.5–7** Cf. 40.18–20. **46.7** The reference could be to the yearly processions of the divine images in Babylon, or it could refer to Nabonidus's vain attempt to prevent the Persians from capturing the images (45.20). **46.8–11** Cf. 45.9–13. **46.8** *This,* the prophetic history of God's dealing with Israel (44.21). **46.9** Cf. 41.22–29; 42.8–9. **46.10** *My purpose*

and from ancient times things
not yet done,
saying, "My purpose shall stand,
and I will fulfill my intention,"
11 calling a bird of prey from the
east,
the man for my purpose from a
far country.
I have spoken, and I will bring it
to pass;
I have planned, and I will do it.

12 Listen to me, you stubborn of
heart,
you who are far from
deliverance:
13 I bring near my deliverance, it is
not far off,
and my salvation will not tarry;
I will put salvation in Zion,
for Israel my glory.

The Humiliation of Babylon

47 Come down and sit in the
dust,
virgin daughter Babylon!
Sit on the ground without a
throne,
daughter Chaldea!
For you shall no more be called
tender and delicate.
2 Take the millstones and grind
meal,
remove your veil,
strip off your robe, uncover
your legs,
pass through the rivers.
3 Your nakedness shall be
uncovered,
and your shame shall be seen.
I will take vengeance,
and I will spare no one.
4 Our Redeemer—the LORD of
hosts is his name—
is the Holy One of Israel.

5 Sit in silence, and go into
darkness,
daughter Chaldea!
For you shall no more be called
the mistress of kingdoms.
6 I was angry with my people,
I profaned my heritage;
I gave them into your hand,
you showed them no mercy;
on the aged you made your yoke
exceedingly heavy.
7 You said, "I shall be mistress
forever,"
so that you did not lay these
things to heart
or remember their end.

8 Now therefore hear this, you
lover of pleasures,
who sit securely,
who say in your heart,
"I am, and there is no one
besides me;
I shall not sit as a widow
or know the loss of children"—
9 both these things shall come
upon you
in a moment, in one day:
the loss of children and
widowhood
shall come upon you in full
measure,
in spite of your many sorceries
and the great power of your
enchantments.

10 You felt secure in your
wickedness;
you said, "No one sees me."
Your wisdom and your
knowledge
led you astray,
and you said in your heart,

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shall stand. Cf. 14.24–27. **46.11** *Bird of prey,* a reference to Cyrus and the swiftness of his assault (41.2–3; 44.28). **46.12–13** Stubborn unbelievers are warned that God's salvation of Israel is near.

47.1–15 God will punish Babylon for its treatment of Israel. **47.1–4** Babylon is portrayed as a royal princess stripped of her glory and taken into captivity. **47.1** *Virgin daughter, daughter* (also v. 5), parallel terms of endearment for a city or country (37.22; Jer 31.4; 46.11). *Chaldea,* a name for the country of Babylon derived from the Chaldeans, the Aramean tribe that dominated Babylon during the Neo-Babylonian Empire. **47.2–3** The former princess is stripped of her finery (3.16–24) and forced to do common labor. **47.6–7** God used Babylon to punish his people, but Babylon did not understand her role and in thoughtless self-conceit failed to show mercy (cf. 10.5–15). **47.8–11** Babylon's haughty sense of security will prove false. **47.9** *Sorceries, enchantments,* a reference to the

"I am, and there is no one
besides me."
11 But evil shall come upon you,
which you cannot charm away;
disaster shall fall upon you,
which you will not be able to
ward off;
and ruin shall come on you
suddenly,
of which you know nothing.

12 Stand fast in your enchantments
and your many sorceries,
with which you have labored
from your youth;
perhaps you may be able to
succeed,
perhaps you may inspire terror.
13 You are wearied with your many
consultations;
let those who study[c] the
heavens
stand up and save you,
those who gaze at the stars,
and at each new moon predict
what[d] shall befall you.

14 See, they are like stubble,
the fire consumes them;
they cannot deliver themselves
from the power of the flame.
No coal for warming oneself is
this,
no fire to sit before!
15 Such to you are those with whom
you have labored,
who have trafficked with you
from your youth;
they all wander about in their
own paths;
there is no one to save you.

God the Creator and Redeemer

48 Hear this, O house of Jacob,
who are called by the name of
Israel,
and who came forth from the
loins[e] of Judah;
who swear by the name of the
LORD,
and invoke the God of Israel,
but not in truth or right.
2 For they call themselves after the
holy city,
and lean on the God of Israel;
the LORD of hosts is his name.

3 The former things I declared
long ago,
they went out from my mouth
and I made them known;
then suddenly I did them and
they came to pass.
4 Because I know that you are
obstinate,
and your neck is an iron sinew
and your forehead brass,
5 I declared them to you from
long ago,
before they came to pass I
announced them to you,
so that you would not say, "My
idol did them,

c Meaning of Heb uncertain Compare Vg: Heb *from what*
d Gk Syr
e Cn: Heb *waters*

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many Babylonian rituals for divining the future and warding off evil omens. **47.11** *Charm away, ward off.* Babylonian religion had rituals for warding off evils predicted by divination. *Know nothing.* Divination will fail to alert Babylon to the destruction that will suddenly overtake her. **47.13** *Many consultations.* There were many different methods in Babylonian divination, but the inspection of the internal organs of sacrificial animals was the dominant one, always requiring a second consultation to confirm the first. If two consultations did not produce the favorable response from the deity that one wanted, one tried again and again; since each consultation required another sacrificial animal, one could exhaust oneself and one's economic resources in attempting to get a reliable response from the deity. *Those who study the heavens.* Astrology was an important means of divination in the Neo-Babylonian period. **47.14–15** Her diviners and astrologers may try, but they cannot deliver Babylon from its destruction; they cannot even save themselves.

48.1–22 God warns his obstinate people to pay attention this time, for God the creator is about to redeem them from Babylonian bondage. **48.1** As elsewhere in chs. 40–66, *house of Jacob* and *Israel* are used here inclusively for the whole people of God, though the vast majority of the people addressed would be the exiles from the Southern Kingdom, *Judah. Not in truth or right,* despite their outward affirmations, they have not followed the Lord (29.13; Zeph 1.5–6). **48.2** *Holy city,* Jerusalem. **48.3–5** To prevent the people of Israel from attributing events to their idols, God announced to Israel what would happen to them and the other nations long

my carved image and my cast
image commanded them."

6 You have heard; now see all this;
and will you not declare it?
From this time forward I make
you hear new things,
hidden things that you have not
known.
7 They are created now, not
long ago;
before today you have never
heard of them,
so that you could not say, "I
already knew them."
8 You have never heard, you have
never known,
from of old your ear has not
been opened.
For I knew that you would deal
very treacherously,
and that from birth you were
called a rebel.

9 For my name's sake I defer my
anger,
for the sake of my praise I
restrain it for you,
so that I may not cut you off.
10 See, I have refined you, but not
like[f] silver;
I have tested you in the furnace
of adversity.
11 For my own sake, for my own
sake, I do it,
for why should my name[g] be
profaned?
My glory I will not give to
another.

12 Listen to me, O Jacob,
and Israel, whom I called:
I am He; I am the first,
and I am the last.
13 My hand laid the foundation of
the earth,
and my right hand spread out
the heavens;
when I summon them,
they stand at attention.

14 Assemble, all of you, and hear!
Who among them has declared
these things?
The LORD loves him;
he shall perform his purpose
on Babylon,
and his arm shall be against the
Chaldeans.
15 I, even I, have spoken and
called him,
I have brought him, and he will
prosper in his way.
16 Draw near to me, hear this!
From the beginning I have not
spoken in secret,
from the time it came to be I
have been there.
And now the Lord GOD has sent
me and his spirit.

17 Thus says the LORD,
your Redeemer, the Holy One
of Israel:
I am the LORD your God,
who teaches you for your
own good,
who leads you in the way you
should go.
18 O that you had paid attention to
my commandments!
Then your prosperity would
have been like a river,
and your success like the waves
of the sea;
19 your offspring would have been
like the sand,
and your descendants like its
grains;
their name would never be
cut off

f Cn: Heb *with* g Gk Old Latin: Heb *for why should it*

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before it came to pass (30.8–9; Jer 36.27–32). **48.6–8** God calls upon Israel to testify to the previously unexpected new things the Lord was doing for it. **48.6** *New things*, the deliverance from Babylon and return to Palestine (43.18–21). **48.8** *Rebel.* See 1.2. **48.9–11** God is saving Israel, not because Israel deserves it, but in order to preserve and enhance God's own reputation (Ex 32.11–12; Ezek 20.22). **48.10** See 1.24–25; Jer 6.27–30. **48.12–13** Israel's God is the creator of the whole world. **48.14–15** *You*, Israel; *them*, the idols; *him*, Cyrus. **48.16** The first-person references at the beginning of the verse refer to God, but the final phrase refers either to the prophet or to Israel as God's servant (42.1–4; 61.1) **48.17** *Teaches, leads.* See 30.20–21. **48.18–19** Had Israel followed God, its prosperity would have come (Ps

or destroyed from before me.

20 Go out from Babylon, flee from Chaldea,
declare this with a shout of joy, proclaim it,
send it forth to the end of the earth;
say, "The LORD has redeemed his servant Jacob!"
21 They did not thirst when he led them through the deserts;
he made water flow for them from the rock;
he split open the rock and the water gushed out.

22 "There is no peace," says the LORD, "for the wicked."

The Servant's Mission

49 Listen to me, O coastlands, pay attention, you peoples from far away!
The LORD called me before I was born,
while I was in my mother's womb he named me.
2 He made my mouth like a sharp sword,
in the shadow of his hand he hid me;
he made me a polished arrow,
in his quiver he hid me away.
3 And he said to me, "You are my servant,
Israel, in whom I will be glorified."
4 But I said, "I have labored in vain,
I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity;
yet surely my cause is with the LORD,
and my reward with my God."

5 And now the LORD says,
who formed me in the womb to be his servant,
to bring Jacob back to him,
and that Israel might be gathered to him,
for I am honored in the sight of the LORD,
and my God has become my strength—
6 he says,
"It is too light a thing that you should be my servant
to raise up the tribes of Jacob
and to restore the survivors of Israel;
I will give you as a light to the nations,
that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

7 Thus says the LORD,
the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One,
to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nations,
the slave of rulers,
"Kings shall see and stand up,
princes, and they shall prostrate themselves,

81.13–16), fulfilling the ancient promises (Gen 22.17). **48.20–21** Israel's departure from Babylon is seen as a new exodus (Ex 17.1–7). **48.22** This salvation will not benefit those who persist in their wickedness (57.20–21).

49.1–7 The second of the so-called servant songs (see note on 42.1–9). Despite Israel's present reputation among the nations, God has chosen it to be his servant, and Israel will ultimately manifest God's glory and salvation to the whole world. **49.1** *Before I was born, in my mother's womb.* See Jer 1.5; Gal 1.15. **49.2** God made the servant's mouth *like a sharp sword* through the words God gave him to speak (51.16; Eph 6.17; Heb 4.12). *Arrow, quiver.* Cf. Ps 127.4–5. **49.3** The identification of the servant with Israel is here explicit. **49.4–7** In the despair of exile it seemed to Israel that its labor had been for nought (cf. Hab 2.13), but God reassures Israel of its significance. **49.5** *To bring Jacob back to him* is not a description of the servant's mission, but a statement of God's action; hence a better rendering would be "in that he brings Israel back to himself." **49.6** The subject of *to raise up, to restore* is again God, which suggests that the beginning of the verse be translated "It is too light a thing, you being my servant, that I should only raise up . . ." *End of the earth.* God will not only restore Israel, but this restoration of Israel will be the means by which God's salvation will extend to the whole earth (42.4, 6). **49.7** *One deeply despised.* The nations had no regard for Israel as long as it was in exile, apparently rejected by God (53.2–3). *Kings shall . . . prostrate themselves,* in response to Israel's unexpected deliverance and exaltation (52.10–15).

because of the LORD, who is faithful,
the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you."

Zion's Children to Be Brought Home

8 Thus says the LORD:
In a time of favor I have answered you,
on a day of salvation I have helped you;
I have kept you and given you as a covenant to the people,[h]
to establish the land,
to apportion the desolate heritages;
9 saying to the prisoners, "Come out,"
to those who are in darkness, "Show yourselves."
They shall feed along the ways,
on all the bare heights[i] shall be their pasture;
10 they shall not hunger or thirst,
neither scorching wind nor sun shall strike them down,
for he who has pity on them will lead them,
and by springs of water will guide them.
11 And I will turn all my mountains into a road,
and my highways shall be raised up.
12 Lo, these shall come from far away,
and lo, these from the north and from the west,
and these from the land of Syene.[j]
13 Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth;
break forth, O mountains, into singing!
For the LORD has comforted his people,
and will have compassion on his suffering ones.

14 But Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me,
my Lord has forgotten me."
15 Can a woman forget her nursing child,
or show no compassion for the child of her womb?
Even these may forget,
yet I will not forget you.
16 See, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands;
your walls are continually before me.
17 Your builders outdo your destroyers,[k]
and those who laid you waste go away from you.
18 Lift up your eyes all around and see;
they all gather, they come to you.
As I live, says the LORD,
you shall put all of them on like an ornament,
and like a bride you shall bind them on.

19 Surely your waste and your desolate places
and your devastated land—

h Meaning of Heb uncertain *i* Or *the trails*
j Q Ms: MT *Sinim* *k* Or *Your children come swiftly; your destroyers*

49.8–26 A collection of sayings celebrating God's deliverance of his people. **49.8** The subject of *to establish, to apportion* is God, not the servant; this part of the verse would be better translated "establishing the land, apportioning the desolate heritages." See 42.6–7. **49.9** *Prisoners*, the Israelite exiles. *Come out.* See 48.20. **49.9c–12** The restoration of Israel to Palestine is described in the imagery of a new exodus (41.17–20; 42.16; 43.19–21; 48.21). **49.11** See 40.3–4. **49.12** The exiles will return from all directions, not just from Babylon (see 43.5–7). *Syene*, modern Assuan, in southern Egypt at its ancient boundary with Ethiopia (Ezek 29.10). **49.13** See 44.23. **49.14–16** God refutes *Zion*'s complaint that God has *forgotten* his city. **49.16** *Inscribed.* God cannot forget Zion, because its plan is tattooed on God's palms. **49.17** The very slight distinction in one vowel between the Hebrew words for *your builders* and *your children* (see text note *k*) suggests an intentional double entendre. **49.18** The imagery shifts from builders/children, and the exiles returning to repopulate Jerusalem are portrayed as *ornaments* of jewelry worn by the city (cf. Lam 4.1–2). **49.19–21** Jerusalem will be surprised at the size of its new population, because of the large numbers of returnees who were born in exile.

surely now you will be too
crowded for your
inhabitants,
and those who swallowed you
up will be far away.
20 The children born in the time of
your bereavement
will yet say in your hearing:
"The place is too crowded
for me;
make room for me to settle."
21 Then you will say in your heart,
"Who has borne me these?
I was bereaved and barren,
exiled and put away—
so who has reared these?
I was left all alone—
where then have these come
from?"

22 Thus says the Lord GOD:
I will soon lift up my hand to the
nations,
and raise my signal to the
peoples;
and they shall bring your sons in
their bosom,
and your daughters shall be
carried on their shoulders.
23 Kings shall be your foster fathers,
and their queens your nursing
mothers.
With their faces to the ground
they shall bow down to you,
and lick the dust of your feet.
Then you will know that I am the
LORD;
those who wait for me shall not
be put to shame.

24 Can the prey be taken from the
mighty,
or the captives of a tyrant[l] be
rescued?
25 But thus says the LORD:
Even the captives of the mighty
shall be taken,
and the prey of the tyrant be
rescued;
for I will contend with those who
contend with you,
and I will save your children.
26 I will make your oppressors eat
their own flesh,
and they shall be drunk with
their own blood as with
wine.
Then all flesh shall know
that I am the LORD your Savior,
and your Redeemer, the
Mighty One of Jacob.

God Can Still Save

50 Thus says the LORD:
Where is your mother's bill of
divorce
with which I put her away?
Or which of my creditors is it
to whom I have sold you?
No, because of your sins you
were sold,
and for your transgressions
your mother was put away.
2 Why was no one there when I
came?
Why did no one answer when I
called?
Is my hand shortened, that it
cannot redeem?
Or have I no power to deliver?
By my rebuke I dry up the sea,
I make the rivers a desert;
their fish stink for lack of water,
and die of thirst.[m]
3 I clothe the heavens with
blackness,
and make sackcloth their
covering.

l Q Ms Syr Vg: MT *of a righteous person*
m Or *die on the thirsty ground*

49.22–23 At God's *signal* the nations will bring Jerusalem's children home (11.10–12; 62.10), and the royalty of the nations will serve Israel (60.9–10, 16). *Bow down . . . and lick the dust,* obeisance normally given to a great king (Ps 72.9). **49.24–26** Even though Babylon still seems a mighty power, God will destroy it to rescue his people (see Jer 50–51), and all flesh will acknowledge the Lord as God (45.14–17, 22–25; 52.10; 60.16).

50.1–3 Nothing in Israel's past signifies God's inability to save his people. **50.1** There is no *bill of divorce* to mark God's putting away of Israel as irrevocable (Deut 24.1–4; Jer 3.1), nor did God have to sell his people to pay off a *creditor*; Israel's suffering was not due to God's weakness, but to Israel's sin. **50.2–3** Despite Israel's failure to respond, God still has the power and will to save, just as in the first exodus.

The Servant's Humiliation and Vindication

4 The Lord God has given me
the tongue of a teacher,[n]
that I may know how to sustain
the weary with a word.
Morning by morning he
wakens—
wakens my ear
to listen as those who are
taught.
5 The Lord God has opened
my ear,
and I was not rebellious,
I did not turn backward.
6 I gave my back to those who
struck me,
and my cheeks to those who
pulled out the beard;
I did not hide my face
from insult and spitting.

7 The Lord God helps me;
therefore I have not been
disgraced;
therefore I have set my face
like flint,
and I know that I shall not be
put to shame;
8 he who vindicates me is near.
Who will contend with me?
Let us stand up together.
Who are my adversaries?
Let them confront me.
9 It is the Lord God who helps me;
who will declare me guilty?
All of them will wear out like a
garment;
the moth will eat them up.
10 Who among you fears the Lord
and obeys the voice of his
servant,
who walks in darkness
and has no light,
yet trusts in the name of the
Lord
and relies upon his God?
11 But all of you are kindlers of fire,
lighters of firebrands.[o]
Walk in the flame of your fire,
and among the brands that you
have kindled!
This is what you shall have from
my hand:
you shall lie down in torment.

Blessings in Store for God's People

51 Listen to me, you that pursue
righteousness,
you that seek the Lord.
Look to the rock from which you
were hewn,
and to the quarry from which
you were dug.
2 Look to Abraham your father
and to Sarah who bore you;
for he was but one when I
called him,
but I blessed him and made
him many.
3 For the Lord will comfort Zion;
he will comfort all her waste
places,
and will make her wilderness
like Eden,

n Cn: Heb *of those who are taught* *o* Syr: Heb *you gird yourselves with firebrands*

50.4–11 The third of the so-called servant songs (see note on 42.1–9). The speaker, either the prophet or the servant proclaimed by the prophet, portrays himself in imagery borrowed from the experience of prophets like Jeremiah. **50.4** Constantly instructed by God (Jer 1.4–10), the speaker encourages the discouraged exiles (42.3; 49.5–6). **50.5–6** Unlike Israel as a whole (1.4; 30.9–11), the speaker did not turn away from God, though he was persecuted for his faithfulness (53.3–5, 7–8; Jer 20.1–2; 26.7–24). **50.7–9** Despite these persecutions, the speaker is confident that God will vindicate him against these adversaries (53.10–12; Jer 11.20–12.3; 20.7–13). **50.7** *Set my face like flint.* The speaker will be just as adamant as his persecutors (Ezek 3.8–9). **50.9** His opponents will perish like old moth-eaten clothes (51.7–8). **50.10–11** But who among his listeners will obey the servant remains a question (42.23); the majority (*all of you*) are disobedient and destined to burn in judgment (1.25–28; 31.9; 33.11–14; 42.25; 47.14).

51.1–8 Three sayings (vv. 1–3; 4–6; 7–8), each introduced with a similar command to listen, containing promises to God's people. **51.1–3** The example of Abraham is proof that God can fulfill the divine promises even if the people are few in number. **51.1** *You that pursue righteousness . . . seek the Lord.* At least some of the exiles were trying to follow God's teaching (see v. 7; 50.10). *Rock, quarry,* Israel's ancestors, Abraham and Sarah (Gen 11.26–25.11). **51.2** *For he was but one.* Cf. Ezek 33.24. **51.3** *Eden . . . garden of the Lord.* The time of salvation is often portrayed in prophetic literature as a return to the conditions of paradise (Ezek 36.35; 47.1–12).

her desert like the garden of
the LORD;
joy and gladness will be found
in her,
thanksgiving and the voice
of song.

4 Listen to me, my people,
and give heed to me, my
nation;
for a teaching will go out
from me,
and my justice for a light to
the peoples.
5 I will bring near my deliverance
swiftly,
my salvation has gone out
and my arms will rule the
peoples;
the coastlands wait for me,
and for my arm they hope.
6 Lift up your eyes to the heavens,
and look at the earth beneath;
for the heavens will vanish like
smoke,
the earth will wear out like a
garment,
and those who live on it will die
like gnats;[p]
but my salvation will be forever,
and my deliverance will never
be ended.

7 Listen to me, you who know
righteousness,
you people who have my
teaching in your hearts;
do not fear the reproach of
others,
and do not be dismayed when
they revile you.
8 For the moth will eat them up
like a garment,
and the worm will eat them
like wool;
but my deliverance will be
forever,
and my salvation to all
generations.

Apostrophe to the Arm of the LORD

9 Awake, awake, put on strength,
O arm of the LORD!
Awake, as in days of old,
the generations of long ago!
Was it not you who cut Rahab in
pieces,
who pierced the dragon?
10 Was it not you who dried up
the sea,
the waters of the great deep;
who made the depths of the sea
a way
for the redeemed to cross over?
11 So the ransomed of the LORD
shall return,
and come to Zion with singing;
everlasting joy shall be upon their
heads;
they shall obtain joy and
gladness,
and sorrow and sighing shall
flee away.

God Comforts His People

12 I, I am he who comforts you;
why then are you afraid of a
mere mortal who must die,

p Or *in like manner*

51.4–6 God's salvation will soon go forth to the whole world. **51.4** *Teaching, justice.* See 2.2–5. **51.5** Even the pagan nations hope for the imposition of God's righteous rule (see Ps 82). **51.6** The present order of reality with its old heavens and earth will vanish, but God's salvation will last (24.21–23; 65.17). **51.7–8** Those who follow God should not fear the reproaches of those who revile them, for their persecutors will perish (50.9).

51.9–11 In response to the preceding promises the arm of the Lord is called upon to demonstrate anew its ancient victories (Hab 3.2). **51.9–10** *Awake,* a cry sometimes addressed to God in laments when the deity's inaction suggests God is asleep (see Ps 44.23). *Arm* is a traditional metaphor for God's power, particularly as it was displayed in God's mighty signs at the exodus (Ex 6.6; 15.16; Deut 4.34; 2 Kings 17.36; Ps 136.12–13; Jer 32.21; Ezek 20.33–34). The exodus is here identified with God's cosmogonic victory over the primeval chaos-dragon (Ps 74.12–17). *Rahab.* See Isa 30.7; Job 26.12. *Dragon.* See Isa 27.1; Ezek 29.3. *Sea.* See Job 26.12. *Great deep.* See Gen 7.11; Am 7.4. **51.11** *The ransomed of the LORD,* those freed from the Babylonian exile (35.8–10; 43.1–21).

51.12–16 Israel need not fear, for God who created Israel and the world is more powerful than Israel's mortal oppressors. **51.12** *Fades like*

a human being who fades like grass?
13 You have forgotten the LORD, your Maker,
who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth.
You fear continually all day long
because of the fury of the oppressor,
who is bent on destruction.
But where is the fury of the oppressor?
14 The oppressed shall speedily be released;
they shall not die and go down to the Pit,
nor shall they lack bread.
15 For I am the LORD your God,
who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar—
the LORD of hosts is his name.
16 I have put my words in your mouth,
and hidden you in the shadow of my hand,
stretching out[q] the heavens
and laying the foundations of the earth,
and saying to Zion, "You are my people."

Appeal to Jerusalem

17 Rouse yourself, rouse yourself!
Stand up, O Jerusalem,
you who have drunk at the hand of the LORD
the cup of his wrath,
who have drunk to the dregs
the bowl of staggering.
18 There is no one to guide her
among all the children she has borne;
there is no one to take her by the hand
among all the children she has brought up.
19 These two things have befallen you
—who will grieve with you?—
devastation and destruction, famine and sword—
who will comfort you?[r]
20 Your children have fainted,
they lie at the head of every street
like an antelope in a net;
they are full of the wrath of the LORD,
the rebuke of your God.

21 Therefore hear this, you who are wounded,[s]
who are drunk, but not with wine:
22 Thus says your Sovereign, the LORD,
your God who pleads the cause of his people:
See, I have taken from your hand the cup of staggering;
you shall drink no more from the bowl of my wrath.
23 And I will put it into the hand of your tormentors,
who have said to you,
"Bow down, that we may walk on you";
and you have made your back like the ground
and like the street for them to walk on.

q Syr: Heb *planting* r Q Ms Gk Syr Vg: MT *how may I comfort you?* s Or *humbled*

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grass. See 40.6–8. **51.14** *Oppressed.* The Babylonian exiles are portrayed as prisoners bending over in a cramped dungeon (42.7). *Pit,* realm of the dead (14.9–11, 15). **51.15** *Who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar,* better "who stills the sea though its waves roar" (Job 26.12–13); Israel need not fear the fury of the oppressor, for God will still the fury of Babylon just as he once stilled the fury of the cosmogonic sea. **51.16** See 49.2.

51.17–23 Jerusalem is called upon to stand up, because her punishment is ended, and now her oppressors will receive their punishment. **51.17** *Cup of his wrath.* This common symbol of judgment plays on the disorientation, shame, and vulnerability of intoxicated individuals to point to the same characteristics among the politically oppressed (Jer 25.15–29; Hab 2.15–16). **51.18–20** The depopulation of Jerusalem is portrayed through the image of a woman who has no children left to help or comfort her in her old age. **51.21** *Not with wine.* Jerusalem's disorientation was caused by the oppression of her tormentors (v. 23).

Let Zion Rejoice

52 Awake, awake,
put on your strength, O Zion!
Put on your beautiful garments,
O Jerusalem, the holy city;
for the uncircumcised and the unclean
shall enter you no more.
2 Shake yourself from the dust, rise up,
O captive[t] Jerusalem;
loose the bonds from your neck,
O captive daughter Zion!

3 For thus says the LORD: You were sold for nothing, and you shall be redeemed without money. 4 For thus says the Lord GOD: Long ago, my people went down into Egypt to reside there as aliens; the Assyrian, too, has oppressed them without cause. 5 Now therefore what am I doing here, says the LORD, seeing that my people are taken away without cause? Their rulers howl, says the LORD, and continually, all day long, my name is despised. 6 Therefore my people shall know my name; therefore in that day they shall know that it is I who speak; here am I.

7 How beautiful upon the mountains
are the feet of the messenger who announces peace,
who brings good news,
who announces salvation,
who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."
8 Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices,
together they sing for joy;
for in plain sight they see
the return of the LORD to Zion.
9 Break forth together into singing,
you ruins of Jerusalem;
for the LORD has comforted his people,
he has redeemed Jerusalem.
10 The LORD has bared his holy arm
before the eyes of all the nations;
and all the ends of the earth shall see
the salvation of our God.

11 Depart, depart, go out from there!
Touch no unclean thing;
go out from the midst of it, purify yourselves,
you who carry the vessels of the LORD.
12 For you shall not go out in haste,
and you shall not go in flight;
for the LORD will go before you,
and the God of Israel will be your rear guard.

The Suffering Servant

13 See, my servant shall prosper;
he shall be exalted and lifted up,
and shall be very high.

t Cn: Heb *rise up, sit*

52.1–12 A series of sayings stressing God's redemption of Jerusalem. **52.1–2** Jerusalem should arise and dress up, because her captivity is ended (cf. 51.17). The *uncircumcised* and the *unclean* are the foreigners and sinful Israelites who will no longer have access to the holy city (33.10–16). **52.3–6** A prose saying. Just as God once redeemed Israel from Egyptian and Assyrian oppression, so now God will redeem them from Babylonian oppression. **52.4–5** *Without cause.* Other nations have mistreated Israel without sufficient justification, and because they have done this with impunity God's name has been *despised* (see 10.10–11). **52.6** *My people shall know my name.* God will soon act to restore the reputation of the divine name. **52.7–10** God's salvation is announced to Jerusalem and displayed before the whole world. **52.7–8** The imagery is that of a king returning in triumph from victory over his enemies (Pss 24.7–10; 47.1–9). **52.10** *Arm* is a standard metaphor for God's power (Ex 6.6; 15.16); for *holy arm,* see Ps 98.1. **52.11–12** The exiles are called upon to leave Babylon. As in the first exodus, God will guide and protect Israel (Ex 14.19–20), but unlike the first exodus (Ex 12.33–39), this one will not be in haste.

52.13–53.12 The last and most striking of the so-called servant songs (see note on 42.1–9). The early church identified the servant in this passage with Jesus (Acts 8.32–35), and Jesus' own sense of identity and mission may have been shaped by this figure (Mk 8.31; 9.30–32; 10.33–34). In the original historical context, however, the servant appears to have been exiled Israel. **52.13–15** God's deliverance and exaltation of Israel will astound the nations who formerly

14 Just as there were many who
were astonished at him[u]
—so marred was his
appearance, beyond human
semblance,
and his form beyond that of
mortals—
15 so he shall startle[v] many nations;
kings shall shut their mouths
because of him;
for that which had not been told
them they shall see,
and that which they had not
heard they shall
contemplate.

53 Who has believed what we have
heard?
And to whom has the arm of
the LORD been revealed?
2 For he grew up before him like a
young plant,
and like a root out of dry
ground;
he had no form or majesty that
we should look at him,
nothing in his appearance that
we should desire him.
3 He was despised and rejected
by others;
a man of suffering[w] and
acquainted with infirmity;
and as one from whom others
hide their faces[x]
he was despised, and we held
him of no account.

4 Surely he has borne our
infirmities
and carried our diseases;
yet we accounted him stricken,
struck down by God, and
afflicted.
5 But he was wounded for our
transgressions,
crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the punishment
that made us whole,
and by his bruises we are
healed.
6 All we like sheep have gone
astray;
we have all turned to our
own way,
and the LORD has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.

7 He was oppressed, and he was
afflicted,
yet he did not open his mouth;
like a lamb that is led to the
slaughter,
and like a sheep that before its
shearers is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.
8 By a perversion of justice he was
taken away.
Who could have imagined his
future?
For he was cut off from the land
of the living,
stricken for the transgression of
my people.
9 They made his grave with the
wicked
and his tomb[y] with the rich,[z]
although he had done no
violence,
and there was no deceit in
his mouth.

10 Yet it was the will of the LORD to
crush him with pain.[a]

u Syr Tg: Heb *you* *v* Meaning of Heb uncertain *w* Or *a man of sorrows* *x* Or *as one who hides his face from us* *y* Q Ms: MT *and in his death* *z* Cn: Heb *with a rich person* *a* Or *by disease*; meaning of Heb uncertain

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despised this disfigured slave (49.7). **53.1–6** The nations speak, expressing their astonishment at the deliverance of Israel, which forces them to revise their assessment of Israel. **53.1–3** The servant's outward appearance suggested nothing special. **53.2** There may be an allusion in the term *root* to Israel's messianic expectations (11.1, 10), but the servant had no *majesty* to suggest a royal status. **53.3** The servant was *despised* by the nations. **53.4–6** Israel's suffering suggested God had rejected it. Now, however, contrary to the nations' original impression, they see that the servant's suffering was vicarious, God's surprising way of restoring all people to himself (42.2–3; Mt 8.17; 1 Pet 2.22–25). **53.7–12** The servant's willing submission to suffering leads to his exaltation (cf. Phil 2.6–11). **53.7–9** The servant suffered silently, though unjustly. **53.8** The Babylonian exile could be seen as a *perversion of justice* despite Israel's sins, since they were more righteous than their Babylonian oppressors (Hab 1.12–17). *Cut off from the land of the living.* Many Israelites saw the Babylonian exile as the death and burial of their nation (Ezek 37.11–14). **53.9** Cf. Mt 27.57–60. **53.10–12** Like a sin offering, the servant's suffering brings forgive-

When you make his life an
offering for sin,[b]
he shall see his offspring, and
shall prolong his days;
through him the will of the LORD
shall prosper.
11 Out of his anguish he shall
see light;[c]
he shall find satisfaction through
his knowledge.
The righteous one,[d] my
servant, shall make many
righteous,
and he shall bear their
iniquities.
12 Therefore I will allot him a
portion with the great,
and he shall divide the spoil
with the strong;
because he poured out himself
to death,
and was numbered with the
transgressors;
yet he bore the sin of many,
and made intercession for the
transgressors.

Promise of Assurance to Jerusalem

54 Sing, O barren one who did
not bear;
burst into song and shout,
you who have not been in
labor!
For the children of the desolate
woman will be more
than the children of her that is
married, says the LORD.
2 Enlarge the site of your tent,
and let the curtains of your
habitations be
stretched out;
do not hold back; lengthen
your cords
and strengthen your stakes.
3 For you will spread out to the
right and to the left,
and your descendants will
possess the nations
and will settle the desolate
towns.

4 Do not fear, for you will not be
ashamed;
do not be discouraged, for you
will not suffer disgrace;
for you will forget the shame of
your youth,
and the disgrace of your
widowhood you will
remember no more.
5 For your Maker is your husband,
the LORD of hosts is his name;
the Holy One of Israel is your
Redeemer,
the God of the whole earth he
is called.
6 For the LORD has called you
like a wife forsaken and grieved
in spirit,
like the wife of a man's youth
when she is cast off,
says your God.
7 For a brief moment I
abandoned you,
but with great compassion I will
gather you.
8 In overflowing wrath for a
moment
I hid my face from you,
but with everlasting love I will
have compassion on you,
says the LORD, your Redeemer.

9 This is like the days of Noah
to me:

b Meaning of Heb uncertain *c* Q Mss: MT lacks *light* *d* Or *and he shall find satisfaction. Through his knowledge, the righteous one*

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ness to many. **53.12** The servant will be exalted among the *great* and *strong* (52.13). *Numbered with the transgressors.* Cf. Lk 22.37.

54.1–17 Jerusalem is comforted by God with the announcement of her restoration. **54.1–3** Israel, personified as the feminine figure of its capital city, Jerusalem, which remained desolate and uninhabited during the exile, will soon overflow with a burgeoning population (49.14–21). **54.1** *Barren one,* Zion or Jerusalem. *Children,* Zion's inhabitants. **54.4–8** Zion will not remain abandoned. **54.4** *Shame, widowhood,* the destruction caused by the exile, which signified God's abandonment of the city (cf. the similar language used of Babylon's destruction, 47.3, 8–9). **54.5** *Husband,* God. **54.6–8** God has not rejected Zion permanently; there was no divorce (50.1), only a brief estrangement, and God will soon redeem her (Hos 2.14–20). *Hid my face,* a recurring image for God's anger (8.17; 30.20; 45.15; 57.17; 59.2; 64.7). **54.9–10** God's eternal covenant with Jerusalem. **54.9** See Gen

Just as I swore that the waters
of Noah
would never again go over
the earth,
so I have sworn that I will not be
angry with you
and will not rebuke you.
10 For the mountains may depart
and the hills be removed,
but my steadfast love shall not
depart from you,
and my covenant of peace shall
not be removed,
says the LORD, who has
compassion on you.

11 O afflicted one, storm-tossed, and
not comforted,
I am about to set your stones in
antimony,
and lay your foundations with
sapphires.[e]
12 I will make your pinnacles of
rubies,
your gates of jewels,
and all your wall of precious
stones.
13 All your children shall be taught
by the LORD,
and great shall be the
prosperity of your children.
14 In righteousness you shall be
established;
you shall be far from
oppression, for you shall
not fear;
and from terror, for it shall not
come near you.
15 If anyone stirs up strife,
it is not from me;
whoever stirs up strife with you
shall fall because of you.
16 See it is I who have created
the smith
who blows the fire of coals,
and produces a weapon fit for
its purpose;
I have also created the ravager
to destroy.
17 No weapon that is fashioned
against you shall prosper,
and you shall confute every
tongue that rises against
you in judgment.
This is the heritage of the
servants of the LORD
and their vindication from me,
says the LORD.

An Invitation to Abundant Life

55 Ho, everyone who thirsts,
come to the waters;
and you that have no money,
come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without
price.
2 Why do you spend your money
for that which is not bread,
and your labor for that which
does not satisfy?
Listen carefully to me, and eat
what is good,
and delight yourselves in
rich food.
3 Incline your ear, and come
to me;
listen, so that you may live.
I will make with you an
everlasting covenant,
my steadfast, sure love for
David.
4 See, I made him a witness to
the peoples,
a leader and commander for
the peoples.

e Or *lapis lazuli*

8.21–22; 9.8–17. **54.10** *Mountains may depart . . . hills be removed.* See Ps 46.1–3. *Covenant of peace.* See Ezek 34.25. **54.11–17** Though formerly *afflicted* (51.21), the new Jerusalem will be established in beauty and security. **54.11–12** Cf. Rev 21.10–21. **54.13** *Taught by the LORD.* See 30.20–21; Jer 31.34; 1 Thess 4.9. **54.14** Cf. 33.18–22. **54.15–17** Since God is on Zion's side, no enemy will successfully rise against her.

55.1–13 Israel should come to God now, for his salvation is about to be realized. **55.1–2** Kings often celebrated the inauguration or establishment of their reign by providing a great banquet for their people (see 25.6), so God, the divine king, uses the metaphor of such a free banquet (cf. Prov 9.1–5; Jn 7.37) to invite Israel to accept God's coming restoration of the nation. **55.3–5** If they turn to him, God will turn his former covenant with David (2 Sam 7.4–17) into a covenant with the whole nation. **55.3** *Sure love for David.* See Ps 89.24, 28, 33. **55.4–5** The nations will come to Israel, their *leader and commander,* as they once came to the Davidic king in Jerusalem (Ps 72.8–11; cf. Isa 2.3–4; 11.10, 12;

5 See, you shall call nations that
you do not know,
and nations that do not know
you shall run to you,
because of the LORD your God,
the Holy One of Israel,
for he has glorified you.

6 Seek the LORD while he may
be found,
call upon him while he is near;
7 let the wicked forsake their way,
and the unrighteous their
thoughts;
let them return to the LORD, that
he may have mercy on
them,
and to our God, for he will
abundantly pardon.
8 For my thoughts are not your
thoughts,
nor are your ways my ways,
says the LORD.
9 For as the heavens are higher
than the earth,
so are my ways higher than
your ways
and my thoughts than your
thoughts.

10 For as the rain and the snow
come down from heaven,
and do not return there until
they have watered the
earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and
bread to the eater,
11 so shall my word be that goes out
from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which
I purpose,
and succeed in the thing for
which I sent it.

12 For you shall go out in joy,
and be led back in peace;
the mountains and the hills
before you
shall burst into song,
and all the trees of the field
shall clap their hands.
13 Instead of the thorn shall come
up the cypress;
instead of the brier shall come
up the myrtle;
and it shall be to the LORD for a
memorial,
for an everlasting sign that shall
not be cut off.

Salvation Is for All Who Obey

56 Thus says the LORD:
Maintain justice, and do what
is right,
for soon my salvation will
come,
and my deliverance be
revealed.

2 Happy is the mortal who does
this,
the one who holds it fast,
who keeps the sabbath, not
profaning it,
and refrains from doing any
evil.

3 Do not let the foreigner joined to
the LORD say,

49.22–23). **55.6–9** Israel should seek God now in repentance, because God has positive plans for those who return to him. **55.6** *While he is near,* now that God has come out of hiding and is ready to save. **55.7** A change of life and thought is demanded of the wicked. **55.8–9** God's *ways* and *thoughts,* the divine plan to redeem Israel, are beyond Israel's comprehension. **55.10–11** As *the rain and the snow,* sent by God to give new life to the earth, succeeds, so shall God's promise to save Israel. **55.12–13** Even nature itself will be transformed and join in the rejoicing at Israel's return to its land (41.18–19; 51.3).

56.1–66.24 Admonitions to Judah. These chapters, often referred to as Third Isaiah, contain a miscellaneous collection of oracles that seem to presuppose a setting in Palestine after the return of the exiles to Judah after 539 B.C.E. **56.1–8** If they do what is right, even those formerly excluded from the religious community will share in the salvation God is about to reveal. **56.2** *Happy is the mortal.* Cf. Pss 1.1; 106.3; Mt 5.3–12. Observance of the *sabbath* became a major concern in the exilic and postexilic period (58.13; Neh 13.15–22; Jer 17.21–27; Ezek 20.12–38). **56.3** Some biblical legislation might incline the *foreigner* and *eunuch* to consider themselves excluded from God's blessings (Deut 23.1–3; cf. Lev

"The LORD will surely separate
me from his people";
and do not let the eunuch say,
"I am just a dry tree."
4 For thus says the LORD:
To the eunuchs who keep my
sabbaths,
who choose the things that
please me
and hold fast my covenant,
5 I will give, in my house and
within my walls,
a monument and a name
better than sons and
daughters;
I will give them an everlasting
name
that shall not be cut off.

6 And the foreigners who join
themselves to the LORD,
to minister to him, to love the
name of the LORD,
and to be his servants,
all who keep the sabbath, and do
not profane it,
and hold fast my covenant—
7 these I will bring to my holy
mountain,
and make them joyful in my
house of prayer;
their burnt offerings and their
sacrifices
will be accepted on my altar;
for my house shall be called a
house of prayer
for all peoples.
8 Thus says the Lord GOD,
who gathers the outcasts of
Israel,
I will gather others to them
besides those already
gathered.[f]

The Corruption of Israel's Rulers

9 All you wild animals,
all you wild animals in the
forest, come to devour!
10 Israel's[g] sentinels are blind,
they are all without knowledge;
they are all silent dogs
that cannot bark;
dreaming, lying down,
loving to slumber.
11 The dogs have a mighty appetite;
they never have enough.
The shepherds also have no
understanding;
they have all turned to their
own way,
to their own gain, one and all.
12 "Come," they say, "let us[h]
get wine;
let us fill ourselves with
strong drink.
And tomorrow will be like today,
great beyond measure."

Israel's Futile Idolatry

57 The righteous perish,
and no one takes it to heart;
the devout are taken away,
while no one understands.
For the righteous are taken away
from calamity,
2 and they enter into peace;
those who walk uprightly
will rest on their couches.
3 But as for you, come here,
you children of a sorceress,
you offspring of an adulterer
and a whore.[i]

f Heb *besides his gathered ones* *g* Heb *His*
h Q Ms Syr Vg Tg: MT *me* *i* Heb *an adulterer and she plays the whore*

21.18–20). But it is not to be so in the coming salvation. **56.5** *Monument*, a stele or plaque set up to preserve one's memory in the absence of children (2 Sam 18.18). **56.6–7** God will accept the offerings of faithful proselytes. *My holy mountain*, the Temple Mount in Jerusalem; *house of prayer for all peoples*. Quoted in Mk 11.17. **56.8** *Others*, proselytes (cf. Jn 10.16).

56.9–12 Israel's leaders are failing to discharge their responsibilities. **56.9** *Wild animals*, foreign nations (5.26–30; Jer 4.7; 5.6). **56.10** *Sentinels*, prophets (Ezek 3.16–21; 33.1–9) or leaders who mislead for lack of knowledge (Isa 5.11–13; 9.14–16). *Silent dogs*, a disparaging reference to the leaders or prophets as useless (cf. 9.14; Job 30.1). **56.11** *Mighty appetite*. The leaders are only good for devouring what they are supposed to guard (3.12–15; cf. Mic 3.5). *Shepherds*, rulers (Ezek 34.1–16; Zech 11.4–17). **56.12** Cf. 5.11–12.

57.1–13 Pagan religious practices still threaten the struggling postexilic community in Judah. **57.1–2** The *righteous* die without regard, their evil detractors unaware that death brings the righteous *peace* and *rest* from the greater evil to come. *Couches*, a reference to proper burial in a tomb. **57.3–4** *You*. Those who mock the righteous are addressed as illegitimate offspring of

4 Whom are you mocking?
Against whom do you open
your mouth wide
and stick out your tongue?
Are you not children of
transgression,
the offspring of deceit—
5 you that burn with lust among
the oaks,
under every green tree;
you that slaughter your children
in the valleys,
under the clefts of the rocks?
6 Among the smooth stones of the
valley is your portion;
they, they, are your lot;
to them you have poured out a
drink offering,
you have brought a grain
offering.
Shall I be appeased for these
things?
7 Upon a high and lofty mountain
you have set your bed,
and there you went up to offer
sacrifice.
8 Behind the door and the
doorpost
you have set up your symbol;
for, in deserting me,[j] you have
uncovered your bed,
you have gone up to it,
you have made it wide;
and you have made a bargain for
yourself with them,
you have loved their bed,
you have gazed on their
nakedness.[k]
9 You journeyed to Molech[l]
with oil,
and multiplied your perfumes;
you sent your envoys far away,
and sent down even to Sheol.
10 You grew weary from your many
wanderings,
but you did not say, "It is
useless."
You found your desire rekindled,
and so you did not weaken.

11 Whom did you dread and fear
so that you lied,
and did not remember me
or give me a thought?
Have I not kept silent and closed
my eyes,[m]
and so you do not fear me?
12 I will concede your righteousness
and your works,
but they will not help you.
13 When you cry out, let your
collection of idols
deliver you!
The wind will carry them off,
a breath will take them away.
But whoever takes refuge in me
shall possess the land
and inherit my holy mountain.

Consolation to the Humble and Contrite

14 It shall be said,
"Build up, build up, prepare
the way,
remove every obstruction from
my people's way."
15 For thus says the high and
lofty one
who inhabits eternity, whose
name is Holy:
I dwell in the high and holy
place,
and also with those who are
contrite and humble in
spirit,
to revive the spirit of the humble,
and to revive the heart of the
contrite.

j Meaning of Heb uncertain *k* Or *their phallus*; Heb *the hand* *l* Or *the king* *m* Gk Vg: Heb *silent even for a long time*

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the foreign gods they worship (Hos 2.4–5). **57.5–8** These apostates continue the old fertility cults with their sexual immorality. *Among the oaks, under every green tree, upon a . . . lofty mountain,* where these cultic practices take place (Deut 12.2; Jer 2.20; 3.6; Ezek 6.13). Because they practiced child sacrifice (*slaughter your children*) in the valleys, their *lot* would be to end up in the same place (cf. Jer 19.4–13). **57.9** *Molech,* the deity to whom child sacrifices were offered; *Sheol,* the underworld personified as a deity. **57.10** Despite the futility of these practices, Israel persists in them (Jer 2.23–25). **57.11–13** The object of their *fear* and *dread* was not God (8.13), because he *kept silent,* but they will learn that idols are useless; only God can save (42.14–17).

57.14–21 The prophet assures the penitent of God's presence and peace. **57.14** Cf. 40.3–4. **57.15** The transcendent God will dwell with those who are contrite and humble (6.1–7).

16 For I will not continually accuse,
nor will I always be angry;
for then the spirits would grow
faint before me,
even the souls that I have
made.
17 Because of their wicked
covetousness I was angry;
I struck them, I hid and was
angry;
but they kept turning back to
their own ways.
18 I have seen their ways, but I will
heal them;
I will lead them and repay
them with comfort,
creating for their mourners the
fruit of the lips.[n]
19 Peace, peace, to the far and the
near, says the LORD;
and I will heal them.
20 But the wicked are like the
tossing sea
that cannot keep still;
its waters toss up mire
and mud.
21 There is no peace, says my God,
for the wicked.

False and True Worship

58 Shout out, do not hold back!
Lift up your voice like a
trumpet!
Announce to my people their
rebellion,
to the house of Jacob their sins.
2 Yet day after day they seek me
and delight to know my ways,
as if they were a nation that
practiced righteousness
and did not forsake the
ordinance of their God;
they ask of me righteous
judgments,
they delight to draw near
to God.
3 "Why do we fast, but you do
not see?
Why humble ourselves, but you
do not notice?"
Look, you serve your own interest
on your fast day,
and oppress all your workers.
4 Look, you fast only to quarrel
and to fight
and to strike with a wicked fist.
Such fasting as you do today
will not make your voice heard
on high.
5 Is such the fast that I choose,
a day to humble oneself?
Is it to bow down the head like a
bulrush,
and to lie in sackcloth and
ashes?
Will you call this a fast,
a day acceptable to the LORD?

6 Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?
7 Is it not to share your bread with
the hungry,
and bring the homeless poor
into your house;
when you see the naked, to
cover them,
and not to hide yourself from
your own kin?
8 Then your light shall break forth
like the dawn,

n Meaning of Heb uncertain

57.16–18 God's anger, though justified, will not last forever. **57.17** Though God *struck them*, the Israelites *kept turning back* in rebellion (cf. 1.5–6). **57.18** Despite the people's past, God will heal them. *Mourners*, the repentant. *Fruit of the lips*, perhaps praise for God's deliverance (see Hos 14.2). **57.19** *The far and the near*, those in Judah and those still in exile. **57.20–21** This consolation is not for the unrepentant wicked.

58.1–14 The prophet here contrasts mere religious ritual with the service God desires. **58.1–2** Israel must be made aware of its sin (Mic 3.8); its delight in ritual does not make it the righteous nation it imagines (1.10–17). *Draw near to God*. Cf. 29.13. **58.3–4** Fasting that serves self-interest and contributes to the oppression of the weak does not move God to respond favorably. **58.5** Wearing *sackcloth* and sitting in *ashes* were rituals of mourning often accompanying a fast (Joel 1.8, 13–14; Jon 3.5–6). **58.6–14** Three parallel formulations (vv. 6–9a, 9b–12, 13–14) stating what God expects of his people, if they want him to hear them. **58.6–9a** The fast that God wants involves saving other people from oppression and satisfying their needs (cf. Mt 25.31–46). **58.7** Cf. Job 31.16–23. **58.8** *Light*,

and your healing shall spring
up quickly;
your vindicator[o] shall go
before you,
the glory of the LORD shall be
your rear guard.
9 Then you shall call, and the LORD
will answer;
you shall cry for help, and he
will say, Here I am.

If you remove the yoke from
among you,
the pointing of the finger, the
speaking of evil,
10 if you offer your food to the
hungry
and satisfy the needs of the
afflicted,
then your light shall rise in
the darkness
and your gloom be like the
noonday.
11 The LORD will guide you
continually,
and satisfy your needs in
parched places,
and make your bones strong;
and you shall be like a watered
garden,
like a spring of water,
whose waters never fail.
12 Your ancient ruins shall be
rebuilt;
you shall raise up the
foundations of many
generations;
you shall be called the repairer of
the breach,
the restorer of streets to live in.

13 If you refrain from trampling the
sabbath,
from pursuing your own
interests on my holy day;
if you call the sabbath a delight
and the holy day of the LORD
honorable;
if you honor it, not going your
own ways,
serving your own interests, or
pursuing your own
affairs;[p]
14 then you shall take delight in
the LORD,
and I will make you ride upon
the heights of the earth;
I will feed you with the heritage
of your ancestor Jacob,
for the mouth of the LORD has
spoken.

Salvation for Sinful Israel Is by God's Grace

59 See, the LORD's hand is not too
short to save,
nor his ear too dull to hear.
2 Rather, your iniquities have been
barriers
between you and your God,
and your sins have hidden his
face from you
so that he does not hear.
3 For your hands are defiled
with blood,
and your fingers with iniquity;
your lips have spoken lies,
your tongue mutters
wickedness.
4 No one brings suit justly,
no one goes to law honestly;
they rely on empty pleas, they
speak lies,
conceiving mischief and
begetting iniquity.
5 They hatch adders' eggs,
and weave the spider's web;
whoever eats their eggs dies,

o Or *vindication* p Heb *or speaking words*

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a metaphor for deliverance and for salvation (42.6–7). *Rear guard.* See 52.12. **58.9b–12** Obedience will result in the restoration of Israel's ancient ruins. **58.9b** *Pointing of the finger* probably involves a legal accusation (cf. Prov 6.13). **58.10–11** *Satisfy . . . needs.* God's treatment of his worshipers corresponds to their treatment of fellow humans in need (cf. Mt 7.2). **58.13** Observance of the *sabbath* is a significant part in this true worship of God. **58.14** *Ride upon the heights of the earth,* an idiom for triumph or success (Deut 32.13; cf. Ps 18.33; Hab 3.19).

59.1–21 While salvation is God's work, it may be hastened or delayed by Israel's response. **59.1–8** It is not God's lack of power, but Israel's wickedness that prevents its salvation. **59.2–3** *Hidden his face, does not hear, hands . . . defiled with blood.* See 1.15. **59.4** *No one.* Israel's wickedness is so great, a single righteous person cannot be found (Ps 14.1–4; Jer 5.1–5; Rom 3.10–18). **59.5** The *adder* and the *viper* are standard metaphors for the wicked (Pss 58.3–4; 140.1–3; Mt

and the crushed egg hatches
out a viper.
6 Their webs cannot serve as
clothing;
they cannot cover themselves
with what they make.
Their works are works of
iniquity,
and deeds of violence are in
their hands.
7 Their feet run to evil,
and they rush to shed innocent
blood;
their thoughts are thoughts
of iniquity,
desolation and destruction are
in their highways.
8 The way of peace they do not
know,
and there is no justice in
their paths.
Their roads they have made
crooked;
no one who walks in them
knows peace.

9 Therefore justice is far from us,
and righteousness does not
reach us;
we wait for light, and lo! there is
darkness;
and for brightness, but we walk
in gloom.
10 We grope like the blind along
a wall,
groping like those who have
no eyes;
we stumble at noon as in the
twilight,
among the vigorous[q] as though
we were dead.
11 We all growl like bears;
like doves we moan mournfully.
We wait for justice, but there is
none;
for salvation, but it is far
from us.
12 For our transgressions before you
are many,
and our sins testify against us.
Our transgressions indeed are
with us,
and we know our iniquities:
13 transgressing, and denying the
LORD,
and turning away from
following our God,
talking oppression and revolt,
conceiving lying words and
uttering them from
the heart.
14 Justice is turned back,
and righteousness stands at a
distance;
for truth stumbles in the public
square,
and uprightness cannot enter.
15 Truth is lacking,
and whoever turns from evil is
despoiled.

The LORD saw it, and it
displeased him
that there was no justice.
16 He saw that there was no one,
and was appalled that there was
no one to intervene;
so his own arm brought him
victory,
and his righteousness
upheld him.
17 He put on righteousness like a
breastplate,
and a helmet of salvation on
his head;
he put on garments of vengeance
for clothing,
and wrapped himself in fury as
in a mantle.
18 According to their deeds, so will
he repay;
wrath to his adversaries,
requital to his enemies;

q Meaning of Heb uncertain

3.7; 12.34; 23.33). **59.6** *Their webs.* The machinations of the wicked will not stand (Job 8.13–15). **59.7–8** The ways of the wicked will not lead to peace (cf. Ps 34.11–14). **59.9–15a** Israel's sin is the reason it stumbles about groaning and oppressed. **59.9** See Job 30.26. **59.10** This verse tells the proverbial fate of the wicked (Job 5.14). **59.12** Israel confesses its sins. **59.15a** Injustice is so rampant in the post-exilic community that it is an extremely hostile environment to anyone who *turns from evil* (see Am 5.10). **59.15b–21** Finding no human concerned with righteousness to help deliver Israel, God established his victory on his own. **59.17** God dressed himself in the armor that brings victory (cf. Eph 6.14–17). **59.18–20** God, the Divine Warrior, will punish his enemies, redeem Zion, and save the Israelites who turn from their

to the coastlands he will render
requital.
19 So those in the west shall fear the
name of the LORD,
and those in the east, his glory;
for he will come like a pent-up
stream
that the wind of the LORD
drives on.

20 And he will come to Zion as
Redeemer,
to those in Jacob who turn
from transgression, says the
LORD.
21 And as for me, this is my covenant with them, says the LORD: my spirit that is upon you, and my words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouths of your children, or out of the mouths of your children's children, says the LORD, from now on and forever.

Song of Triumph for Zion

60 Arise, shine; for your light
has come,
and the glory of the LORD has
risen upon you.
2 For darkness shall cover the
earth,
and thick darkness the peoples;
but the LORD will arise upon you,
and his glory will appear
over you.
3 Nations shall come to your light,
and kings to the brightness of
your dawn.

4 Lift up your eyes and look
around;
they all gather together, they
come to you;
your sons shall come from
far away,
and your daughters shall be
carried on their nurses'
arms.
5 Then you shall see and be
radiant;
your heart shall thrill and
rejoice,[r]
because the abundance of the sea
shall be brought to you,
the wealth of the nations shall
come to you.
6 A multitude of camels shall
cover you,
the young camels of Midian
and Ephah;
all those from Sheba shall
come.
They shall bring gold and
frankincense,
and shall proclaim the praise of
the LORD.
7 All the flocks of Kedar shall be
gathered to you,
the rams of Nebaioth shall
minister to you;
they shall be acceptable on my
altar,
and I will glorify my glorious
house.

8 Who are these that fly like a
cloud,
and like doves to their
windows?
9 For the coastlands shall wait
for me,
the ships of Tarshish first,
to bring your children from far
away,
their silver and gold with them,
for the name of the LORD
your God,
and for the Holy One of Israel,
because he has glorified you.

r Heb *be enlarged*

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sins. **59.18** *According to their deeds.* The judgment is just. **59.19** *Pent-up stream.* Cf. 30.28. **59.21** God's new covenant with Israel (Jer 31.31–34; Ezek 36.26–27).

60.1–22 A vision of Jerusalem's coming exaltation. **60.1–3** The light of God's glory has dawned for Jerusalem (4.5; 9.2), and the nations will be drawn to that light (2.2–5; 11.10; 42.6–7; 49.6). **60.4** The nations will return Jerusalem's children, the Israelite exiles (11.12; 49.18, 22–23). **60.5–7** Jerusalem will be enriched by the tribute of the nations, including that of several northern Arabian tribal groups from the east: *Midian* (Ex 2.15); *Ephah* (Gen 25.4); *Sheba* (Gen 10.7; one might also think of the southern Arabian kingdom of the same name, 1 Kings 10.1–13); *Kedar* (21.13–17; Jer 49.28–29); *Nebaioth* (Gen 25.13). **60.8–9** Other nations from the West will send their tribute and return the Israelite exiles by ship. *Tarshish.* See note on 23.1.

10 Foreigners shall build up your walls,
and their kings shall minister to you;
for in my wrath I struck you down,
but in my favor I have had mercy on you.
11 Your gates shall always be open;
day and night they shall not be shut,
so that nations shall bring you their wealth,
with their kings led in procession.
12 For the nation and kingdom that will not serve you shall perish;
those nations shall be utterly laid waste.
13 The glory of Lebanon shall come to you,
the cypress, the plane, and the pine,
to beautify the place of my sanctuary;
and I will glorify where my feet rest.
14 The descendants of those who oppressed you
shall come bending low to you,
and all who despised you
shall bow down at your feet;
they shall call you the City of the LORD,
the Zion of the Holy One of Israel.
15 Whereas you have been forsaken and hated,
with no one passing through,
I will make you majestic forever,
a joy from age to age.
16 You shall suck the milk of nations,
you shall suck the breasts of kings;
and you shall know that I, the LORD, am your Savior
and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.
17 Instead of bronze I will bring gold,
instead of iron I will bring silver;
instead of wood, bronze,
instead of stones, iron.
I will appoint Peace as your overseer
and Righteousness as your taskmaster.
18 Violence shall no more be heard in your land,
devastation or destruction within your borders;
you shall call your walls Salvation,
and your gates Praise.
19 The sun shall no longer be your light by day,
nor for brightness shall the moon give light to you by night;[s]
but the LORD will be your everlasting light,
and your God will be your glory.
20 Your sun shall no more go down,
or your moon withdraw itself;
for the LORD will be your everlasting light,
and your days of mourning shall be ended.
21 Your people shall all be righteous;
they shall possess the land forever.
They are the shoot that I planted,
the work of my hands,
so that I might be glorified.
22 The least of them shall become a clan,

s Q Ms Gk Old Latin Tg: MT lacks *by night*

60.10 Jerusalem, destroyed by foreigners because of God's anger, will be rebuilt by them because of God's favor. **60.11** Cf. Rev 21.24–26. **60.12** Cf. Zech 14.16–19. **60.13** *Glory of Lebanon*, the fine lumber of Lebanon (cf. 1 Kings 5.8–10) will be used in the rebuilding of the temple. **60.14** Even its former oppressors will acknowledge and exalt Jerusalem as the special *City of the LORD*, the Holy One of Israel. **60.15** God will once again make Jerusalem *majestic* and a *joy* (Ps 48.2; Lam 2.15), but this time forever. **60.16** *Suck the milk of nations*. Jerusalem will be nourished by the wealth of the nations. **60.17–18** Wealth (cf. 1 Kings 10.21) and tranquility will characterize the restored city. **60.19–20** God will be the city's light (vv. 1–2; Rev 21.23). **60.21** The inhabitants of the renewed Jerusalem will *all be righteous* (1.26–28), God's special *planting* that brings God glory (see 4.2–4). **60.22** *A mighty nation*. Like Abraham (see 51.2),

and the smallest one a mighty
nation;
I am the LORD;
in its time I will accomplish
it quickly.

The Good News of Deliverance

61 The spirit of the Lord GOD is
upon me,
because the LORD has
anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good
news to the oppressed,
to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and release to the prisoners;
2 to proclaim the year of the
LORD's favor,
and the day of vengeance of
our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
3 to provide for those who mourn
in Zion—
to give them a garland instead
of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of
mourning,
the mantle of praise instead of
a faint spirit.
They will be called oaks of
righteousness,
the planting of the LORD, to
display his glory.
4 They shall build up the ancient
ruins,
they shall raise up the former
devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many
generations.
5 Strangers shall stand and feed
your flocks,
foreigners shall till your land
and dress your vines;
6 but you shall be called priests of
the LORD,
you shall be named ministers of
our God;
you shall enjoy the wealth of
the nations,
and in their riches you shall
glory.
7 Because their[t] shame was
double,
and dishonor was proclaimed as
their lot,
therefore they shall possess a
double portion;
everlasting joy shall be theirs.

8 For I the LORD love justice,
I hate robbery and
wrongdoing;[u]
I will faithfully give them their
recompense,
and I will make an everlasting
covenant with them.
9 Their descendants shall be known
among the nations,
and their offspring among the
peoples;
all who see them shall
acknowledge
that they are a people whom
the LORD has blessed.
10 I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,
my whole being shall exult in
my God;

t Heb *your* *u* Or *robbery with a burnt offering*

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even the most insignificant member of the restored postexilic community will have numerous progeny, and it is God who will accomplish this rebuilding of the nation.

61.1–11 The prophet brings good news to Zion of its deliverance and glorification. **61.1** The speaker, either the prophet or the servant portrayed by the prophet, announces that God has commissioned him through an *anointing* with the *spirit* (see 11.2; 42.1–4). The portrayal of the speaker's task is reminiscent of that of the servant in Second Isaiah (42.1–9); Luke saw this passage fulfilled in Jesus' ministry (Lk 4.16–21). **61.2** *Year of the LORD's favor*, 49.8. **61.3** *Oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD*, the agricultural metaphor of Israel as God's planting is common in the book of Isaiah (4.2; 5.7; 27.2–6; 60.21). **61.4–5** Israel will rebuild the ruined cities and foreigners will serve them (cf. 60.10–12). **61.6** *Priests*. In contrast to the other nations, Israel will have a special priestly relationship to God (Ex 19.6). **61.7** *Double portion*, a double reward in place of the double punishment Jerusalem once received (40.2). **61.8–9** When God has redeemed his people, the nations will change their estimate of Israel (52.13–53.12) and acknowledge that God has blessed Israel. *Everlasting covenant*. See 54.9–10. **61.10** While God dresses himself in *salvation* and *righteousness* as armor for battle (59.17), God dresses Israel or Zion in *garments of salvation* and *robes of righteousness* as the festive clothing or ornaments that a bride-

for he has clothed me with the
garments of salvation,
he has covered me with the
robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself
with a garland,
and as a bride adorns herself
with her jewels.
11 For as the earth brings forth its
shoots,
and as a garden causes what is
sown in it to spring up,
so the Lord God will cause
righteousness and praise
to spring up before all the
nations.

The Vindication and Salvation of Zion

62 For Zion's sake I will not keep
silent,
and for Jerusalem's sake I will
not rest,
until her vindication shines out
like the dawn,
and her salvation like a burning
torch.
2 The nations shall see your
vindication,
and all the kings your glory;
and you shall be called by a
new name
that the mouth of the Lord
will give.
3 You shall be a crown of beauty in
the hand of the Lord,
and a royal diadem in the hand
of your God.
4 You shall no more be termed
Forsaken,[v]
and your land shall no more be
termed Desolate;[w]
but you shall be called My Delight
Is in Her,[x]
and your land Married;[y]
for the Lord delights in you,
and your land shall be married.
5 For as a young man marries a
young woman,
so shall your builder[z]
marry you,
and as the bridegroom rejoices
over the bride,
so shall your God rejoice
over you.
6 Upon your walls, O Jerusalem,
I have posted sentinels;
all day and all night
they shall never be silent.
You who remind the Lord,
take no rest,
7 and give him no rest
until he establishes Jerusalem
and makes it renowned
throughout the earth.
8 The Lord has sworn by his
right hand
and by his mighty arm:
I will not again give your grain
to be food for your enemies,
and foreigners shall not drink
the wine
for which you have labored;
9 but those who garner it shall
eat it
and praise the Lord,
and those who gather it shall
drink it
in my holy courts.

10 Go through, go through the
gates,

v Heb *Azubah* w Heb *Shemamah*
x Heb *Hephzibah* y Heb *Beulah* z Cn: Heb
your sons

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groom or bride would wear. **61.11** Zion's *righteousness* (or "salvation") and *praise* before the nations will spring up like the green shoots of a garden in springtime.

62.1–12 Anticipation of the vindication and restoration of the holy city. **62.1–5** The prophet will not cease reminding God of the Lord's promise to redeem Zion (vv. 6–7) until God has vindicated the city before the whole world. **62.2** *Your glory.* See 60.1–3. A *new name* implies a change in status (1.26). **62.3** *Crown of beauty.* The encircling walls of a city set on the crest of a hill lie behind this image of Jerusalem as a crown (see 28.1–5). **62.4–5** City and land will no longer be like an abandoned wife (54.5–6; 60.14–15). *Your builder,* God. God will *delight in* Zion and *rejoice over* her land with all the attention that a *bridegroom* gives to a new *bride.* **62.6–9** The prophets must remind God of his sworn promise to glorify Jerusalem. **62.8** God swears by symbols of his own power—his *right hand* (48.13) and his *arm* (59.16). The threat that enemies would enjoy the food, drink, or other goods for which one had *labored* was a traditional curse or punishment for breach of covenant (Deut 28.30–34). **62.10–11** Zion's vindication is

prepare the way for the people;
build up, build up the highway,
clear it of stones,
lift up an ensign over the peoples.
11 The LORD has proclaimed
to the end of the earth:
Say to daughter Zion,
"See, your salvation comes;
his reward is with him,
and his recompense before him."
12 They shall be called, "The Holy People,
The Redeemed of the LORD";
and you shall be called,
"Sought Out,
A City Not Forsaken."

Vengeance on Edom

63 "Who is this that comes from Edom,
from Bozrah in garments stained crimson?
Who is this so splendidly robed,
marching in his great might?"

"It is I, announcing vindication,
mighty to save."

2 "Why are your robes red,
and your garments like theirs who tread the wine press?"

3 "I have trodden the wine press alone,
and from the peoples no one was with me;
I trod them in my anger
and trampled them in my wrath;
their juice spattered on my garments,
and stained all my robes.
4 For the day of vengeance was in my heart,
and the year for my redeeming work had come.
5 I looked, but there was no helper;
I stared, but there was no one to sustain me;
so my own arm brought me victory,
and my wrath sustained me.
6 I trampled down peoples in my anger,
I crushed them in my wrath,
and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth."

A Communal Psalm of Lament

7 I will recount the gracious deeds of the LORD,
the praiseworthy acts of the LORD,
because of all that the LORD has done for us,
and the great favor to the house of Israel
that he has shown them according to his mercy,
according to the abundance of his steadfast love.
8 For he said, "Surely they are my people,
children who will not deal falsely";
and he became their savior
9 in all their distress.
It was no messenger[a] or angel
but his presence that saved them;[b]
in his love and in his pity he redeemed them;

a Gk: Heb *anguish* *b* Or *savior. 9In all their distress he was distressed; the angel of his presence saved them;*

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proclaimed in words reminiscent of Second Isaiah (40.3–5, 10; 49.22). **62.12** See v. 4.

63.1–6 The triumphant return of the Divine Warrior. **63.1** *Who is this?* Challenged by the prophet, the majestic figure coming from Edom identifies himself as the mighty Savior (see Ps 24.8–10). *Edom*, a symbol of wicked, foreign enemies (Jer 49.7–22); *Bozrah*, a major city of Edom (34.6). **63.2–3** In response to the question why his robes are *red*, God the Warrior explains that he has been trampling the *wine press*, a symbol of judgment (Joel 3.13; Rev 14.19–20), and his clothes have been spattered by its *juice*, a metaphor for the *lifeblood* of his enemies (v. 6). **63.4** *Day of vengeance*. See 34.8; 61.2. **63.5** Cf. 59.16.

63.7–64.12 On the basis of God's gracious activity in the past, the community appeals to God for mercy and help in its present miserable circumstances. **63.7–14** An introductory historical recitation of God's mighty redemptive acts in the exodus, the wilderness wandering, and the settlement of the land. This recitation serves both as praise and as the basis for the laments and petitions that follow. **63.9** *His presence*. See Ex

he lifted them up and carried
them all the days of old.

10 But they rebelled
and grieved his holy spirit;
therefore he became their enemy;
he himself fought against them.
11 Then they[c] remembered the
days of old,
of Moses his servant.[d]
Where is the one who brought
them up out of the sea
with the shepherds of his flock?
Where is the one who put
within them
his holy spirit,
12 who caused his glorious arm
to march at the right hand
of Moses,
who divided the waters before
them
to make for himself an
everlasting name,
13 who led them through the
depths?
Like a horse in the desert,
they did not stumble.
14 Like cattle that go down into
the valley,
the spirit of the LORD gave
them rest.
Thus you led your people,
to make for yourself a glorious
name.
15 Look down from heaven and see,
from your holy and glorious
habitation.
Where are your zeal and your
might?
The yearning of your heart and
your compassion?
They are withheld from me.
16 For you are our father,
though Abraham does not
know us
and Israel does not
acknowledge us;
you, O LORD, are our father;
our Redeemer from of old is
your name.
17 Why, O LORD, do you make us
stray from your ways
and harden our heart, so that
we do not fear you?
Turn back for the sake of your
servants,
for the sake of the tribes that
are your heritage.
18 Your holy people took possession
for a little while;
but now our adversaries have
trampled down your
sanctuary.
19 We have long been like those
whom you do not rule,
like those not called by your
name.

64 O that you would tear open the
heavens and come down,
so that the mountains would
quake at your presence—
2[e] as when fire kindles brushwood
and the fire causes water to
boil—
to make your name known to
your adversaries,
so that the nations might
tremble at your presence!
3 When you did awesome deeds
that we did not expect,
you came down, the mountains
quaked at your presence.
4 From ages past no one has heard,
no ear has perceived,
no eye has seen any God
besides you,
who works for those who wait
for him.
5 You meet those who gladly do
right,
those who remember you in
your ways.

c Heb *he* d Cn: Heb *his people* e Ch 64.1 in Heb

33.12–16. *Carried them.* Cf. Ex 19.4. **63.10** Rebellion, punishment, and repentance characterized Israel's relationship with God (Ps 78). **63.11** *Who put within them his holy spirit,* perhaps a reference to the imparting of the spirit to the seventy elders of Israel (Num 11.16–17, 25–29). **63.15–16** God is petitioned to take compassion on his people again, for God is their true father, not the mortal patriarchs Abraham and Israel, who no longer care about their descendants (cf. 51.1–2). **63.17** Israel's continuing transgression is attributed to a divine hardening of the heart (Ex 4.21; 7.3; Jn 12.40; Rom 9.18). **63.18–19** Cf. Ps 79. **64.1–3** God is petitioned to reveal his awesome might in a theophany as

But you were angry, and we
sinned;
because you hid yourself we
transgressed.[f]
6 We have all become like one who
is unclean,
and all our righteous deeds are
like a filthy cloth.
We all fade like a leaf,
and our iniquities, like the
wind, take us away.
7 There is no one who calls on
your name,
or attempts to take hold of you;
for you have hidden your face
from us,
and have delivered[g] us into the
hand of our iniquity.
8 Yet, O LORD, you are our Father;
we are the clay, and you are
our potter;
we are all the work of your
hand.
9 Do not be exceedingly angry,
O LORD,
and do not remember iniquity
forever.
Now consider, we are all your
people.
10 Your holy cities have become a
wilderness,
Zion has become a wilderness,
Jerusalem a desolation.
11 Our holy and beautiful house,
where our ancestors
praised you,
has been burned by fire,
and all our pleasant places have
become ruins.
12 After all this, will you restrain
yourself, O LORD?
Will you keep silent, and
punish us so severely?

God's Righteous Judgment on Israel

65 I was ready to be sought out by
those who did not ask,
to be found by those who did
not seek me.
I said, "Here I am, here I am,"
to a nation that did not call on
my name.
2 I held out my hands all day long
to a rebellious people,
who walk in a way that is not
good,
following their own devices;
3 a people who provoke me
to my face continually,
sacrificing in gardens
and offering incense on bricks;
4 who sit inside tombs,
and spend the night in secret
places;
who eat swine's flesh,
with broth of abominable things
in their vessels;
5 who say, "Keep to yourself,
do not come near me, for I am
too holy for you."
These are a smoke in my nostrils,
a fire that burns all day long.
6 See, it is written before me:
I will not keep silent, but I will
repay;
I will indeed repay into their laps
7 their[h] iniquities and their[h]
ancestors' iniquities
together,
says the LORD;
because they offered incense on
the mountains
and reviled me on the hills,

f Meaning of Heb uncertain g Gk Syr Old Latin Tg: Heb *melted* h Gk Syr: Heb *your*

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of old (Judg 5.4–5; Ps 68.7–8; Hab 3.2–15). **64.5–7** Confession of sins. **64.8–12** Prayer that God turn aside from his anger and comfort his people against the enemies who have destroyed God's cities (Ps 79). **64.8–9** Since God fathered and fashioned Israel as his own people, why should he destroy the work of his own hand (see Job 10.8–12). **64.12** *Restrain yourself*, either from further acts of wrath or from continuing indifference to Israel's plight (see 42.14–17). Either way, the plaintive question constitutes a mild rebuke of God.

65.1–25 As if to answer the rebuke implicit in the questions of 64.12, this chapter provides a defense of God's action. Israel's judgment is deserved; nevertheless God will save a remnant. **65.1–7** Israel will be judged because of its constant rebellion. **65.1–2** God spoke, but Israel did not listen (Rom 10.20–21). *Held out my hands*, a gesture of prayer or entreaty (1.15; 1 Kings 8.22, 38, 54; Ps 143.6; Lam 1.17). **65.3–5** Israel continues the pagan rituals that anger God: *sacrificing in gardens*, presumably a syncretistic fertility ritual; *sit inside tombs*, for consulting the dead (Deut 18.11–12); *eat swine's flesh* (Deut 14.8). *Too holy*. The participants in these pagan practices claimed a dangerous holiness that set them apart from others. **65.6–7** God will not *keep silent*

I will measure into their laps
full payment for their actions.
8 Thus says the LORD:
As the wine is found in the cluster,
and they say, "Do not destroy it,
for there is a blessing in it,"
so I will do for my servants' sake,
and not destroy them all.
9 I will bring forth descendants[i] from Jacob,
and from Judah inheritors[j] of my mountains;
my chosen shall inherit it,
and my servants shall settle there.
10 Sharon shall become a pasture for flocks,
and the Valley of Achor a place for herds to lie down,
for my people who have sought me.
11 But you who forsake the LORD,
who forget my holy mountain,
who set a table for Fortune
and fill cups of mixed wine for Destiny;
12 I will destine you to the sword,
and all of you shall bow down to the slaughter;
because, when I called, you did not answer,
when I spoke, you did not listen,
but you did what was evil in my sight,
and chose what I did not delight in.
13 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD:
My servants shall eat,
but you shall be hungry;
my servants shall drink,
but you shall be thirsty;
my servants shall rejoice,
but you shall be put to shame;
14 my servants shall sing for gladness of heart,
but you shall cry out for pain of heart,
and shall wail for anguish of spirit.
15 You shall leave your name to my chosen to use as a curse,
and the Lord GOD will put you to death;
but to his servants he will give a different name.
16 Then whoever invokes a blessing in the land
shall bless by the God of faithfulness,
and whoever takes an oath in the land
shall swear by the God of faithfulness;
because the former troubles are forgotten
and are hidden from my sight.

17 For I am about to create new heavens
and a new earth;
the former things shall not be remembered
or come to mind.
18 But be glad and rejoice forever
in what I am creating;
for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy,
and its people as a delight.
19 I will rejoice in Jerusalem,
and delight in my people;
no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it,
or the cry of distress.
20 No more shall there be in it
an infant that lives but a few days,
or an old person who does not live out a lifetime;

i Or *a descendant* *j* Or *an inheritor*

(see 64.12), but will punish the Israelites fully for these iniquities. **65.8–16** Nevertheless, God will not destroy all Israel; a remnant will be saved. **65.8** *Servants.* In contrast to Second Isaiah, this writer uses the plural when speaking of Israel as God's servants. **65.9** *Jacob,* descendants of the Northern Kingdom; *Judah,* descendants of the Southern Kingdom. **65.10** *Sharon,* rich pastureland along the Mediterranean between Joppa and Mount Carmel (1 Chr 27.29); *Valley of Achor,* a valley near Jericho (Josh 7.24–26; Hos 2.15). **65.11–12** Those who forsake God for such pagan deities as *Fortune* and *Destiny* will perish. **65.13–16** God's servants will prosper, while the wicked suffer. **65.17–25** God will create new heavens and a new earth of joy, peace, and tranquility for his people. **65.17** *Former things.* See 43.18. **65.20–23** God's people will enjoy

for one who dies at a hundred
years will be considered a
youth,
and one who falls short of a
hundred will be considered
accursed.
21 They shall build houses and
inhabit them;
they shall plant vineyards and
eat their fruit.
22 They shall not build and another
inhabit;
they shall not plant and
another eat;
for like the days of a tree shall
the days of my people be,
and my chosen shall long enjoy
the work of their hands.
23 They shall not labor in vain,
or bear children for calamity;[k]
for they shall be offspring blessed
by the LORD—
and their descendants as well.
24 Before they call I will answer,
while they are yet speaking I
will hear.
25 The wolf and the lamb shall feed
together,
the lion shall eat straw like
the ox;
but the serpent—its food shall
be dust!
They shall not hurt or destroy
on all my holy mountain,
says the LORD.

A Critique of False Worship

66 Thus says the LORD:
Heaven is my throne
and the earth is my footstool;
what is the house that you would
build for me,
and what is my resting place?
2 All these things my hand has
made,
and so all these things
are mine,[l]
says the LORD.
But this is the one to whom I will
look,
to the humble and contrite
in spirit,
who trembles at my word.

3 Whoever slaughters an ox is like
one who kills a human
being;
whoever sacrifices a lamb, like
one who breaks a dog's
neck;
whoever presents a grain
offering, like one who
offers swine's blood;[m]
whoever makes a memorial
offering of frankincense,
like one who blesses an
idol.
These have chosen their own
ways,
and in their abominations they
take delight;
4 I also will choose to mock[n] them,
and bring upon them what
they fear;
because, when I called, no one
answered,
when I spoke, they did not
listen;

k Or *sudden terror* *l* Gk Syr: Heb *these things came to be* *m* Meaning of Heb uncertain
n Or *to punish*

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long life and the fruits of their labor (62.8–9). *Days of a tree.* See Job 14.7–9. **65.24** Cf. 30.19. **65.25** Cf. 11.6–9.

66.1–5 True worship differentiated from false worship. **66.1** *What is the house that you would build for me?* This question presupposes the work of rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem after the return from exile (520–515 B.C.E.). In contrast to Haggai and Zechariah, this prophet does not show much enthusiasm for the rebuilding project. **66.2** Since the creator of the whole world cannot be contained in a temple built by humans (1 Kings 8.27), it is not the temple, but the right attitude among God's worshipers that guarantees God's continuing presence with the people (33.14–16; 57.15). **66.3** *Like one.* Each of the four occurrences of this phrase links a ritual action normally considered appropriate with a sinful action. The NRSV translation suggests a blanket condemnation of the sacrificial system, but this is only one possible interpretation. The word *like* is not in the Hebrew, and the verse may be translated in a way that simply condemns normal worship practices when the worshiper is also engaging in pagan rituals or an immoral life (1.10–17; 65.1–7, 11). The latter interpretation fits better with the complaint that the wicked *have chosen their own ways.* **66.4** God will *choose* to mock the wicked, because they refused to listen to God's word and *chose* what displeased God

but they did what was evil in
my sight,
and chose what did not
please me.
5 Hear the word of the LORD,
you who tremble at his word:
Your own people who hate you
and reject you for my name's
sake
have said, "Let the LORD be
glorified,
so that we may see your joy";
but it is they who shall be put
to shame.

The Vindication of Zion

6 Listen, an uproar from the city!
A voice from the temple!
The voice of the LORD,
dealing retribution to his
enemies!

7 Before she was in labor
she gave birth;
before her pain came upon her
she delivered a son.
8 Who has heard of such a thing?
Who has seen such things?
Shall a land be born in one day?
Shall a nation be delivered in
one moment?
Yet as soon as Zion was in labor
she delivered her children.
9 Shall I open the womb and not
deliver?
says the LORD;
shall I, the one who delivers, shut
the womb?
says your God.

10 Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be
glad for her,
all you who love her;
rejoice with her in joy,
all you who mourn over her—
11 that you may nurse and be
satisfied
from her consoling breast;
that you may drink deeply with
delight
from her glorious bosom.

12 For thus says the LORD:
I will extend prosperity to her
like a river,
and the wealth of the nations
like an overflowing stream;
and you shall nurse and be
carried on her arm,
and dandled on her knees.
13 As a mother comforts her child,
so I will comfort you;
you shall be comforted in
Jerusalem.
14 You shall see, and your heart
shall rejoice;
your bodies[o] shall flourish like
the grass;
and it shall be known that the
hand of the LORD is with
his servants,
and his indignation is against
his enemies.
15 For the LORD will come in fire,
and his chariots like the
whirlwind,
to pay back his anger in fury,
and his rebuke in flames
of fire.
16 For by fire will the LORD execute
judgment,
and by his sword, on all flesh;
and those slain by the LORD
shall be many.

o Heb *bones*

(65.12–16). **66.5** *Let the LORD be glorified so that we may see your joy,* the mocking words of those Israelites who reject God's promises and hate those who take these promises (cf. 5.19; Jer 17.15).

66.6–16 Contrary to what the sceptics say, God's promises to Jerusalem are about to be fulfilled. **66.6–9** God's vindication of the righteous and punishment of the wicked in Zion is as imminent and certain as birth to a woman in labor. **66.7** *Before she was in labor she gave birth.* Zion's delivery will be quick and painless. **66.8** This is incredible because the prophet is talking about the rebirth of a whole *nation,* which normally does not happen in a *day* or a *moment.* **66.9** God's rhetorical questions may be a response to an Israelite complaint that Israel's distress was as desperate as that of pregnant woman who could not give birth (see 26.18; 37.3). **66.10–13** When Zion gives birth to her children, those who love her will delight in Mother Zion's consolations. **66.12** Cf. 60.4–5. **66.13** The prophet switches from the image of Zion as comforting mother to that of God who comforts like a mother. **66.14–16** While the righteous rejoice, God will come in fire to punish the wicked (30.27–33; 33.10–14).

Concluding Comments

17 Those who sanctify and purify themselves to go into the gardens, following the one in the center, eating the flesh of pigs, vermin, and rodents, shall come to an end together, says the LORD.

18 For I know[p] their works and their thoughts, and I am[q] coming to gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and shall see my glory, 19 and I will set a sign among them. From them I will send survivors to the nations, to Tarshish, Put,[r] and Lud—which draw the bow—to Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands far away that have not heard of my fame or seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the nations. 20 They shall bring all your kindred from all the nations as an offering to the LORD, on horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and on mules, and on dromedaries, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, says the LORD, just as the Israelites bring a grain offering in a clean vessel to the house of the LORD. 21 And I will also take some of them as priests and as Levites, says the LORD.

22 For as the new heavens and the
new earth,
which I will make,
shall remain before me, says
the LORD;
so shall your descendants and
your name remain.
23 From new moon to new moon,
and from sabbath to sabbath,
all flesh shall come to worship
before me,
says the LORD.

24 And they shall go out and look at the dead bodies of the people who have rebelled against me; for their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.

p Gk Syr: Heb lacks *know* *q* Gk Syr Vg Tg: Heb *it is* *r* Gk: Heb *Pul*

66.17–24 Concluding comments underscoring the Lord's judgment and the revelation of God's glory before the nations. **66.17** See 65.3–4. **66.18–19** God's glory will be announced even to the most distant nations. *Tarshish.* See note on 23.1. *Put,* a part of Libya (Ezek 30.5). *Lud,* Lydia in Asia Minor. *Tubal,* a country in Asia Minor referred to in the Assyrian sources as Tabal. *Javan,* Ionia or Greece. **66.20–23** The nations will bring the exiles from Israel back to Jerusalem as an offering to God, and all nations will serve the Lord (see 60.4–12). **66.24** The wicked dead will remain as an eternal warning against rebellion.

JEREMIAH

Personal Background

THE PROPHET JEREMIAH CAME FROM ANATHOTH, a village in the hill country of Benjamin, a small tribe to the north of Judah. Though often controlled by its powerful neighbor to the south, Benjamin was culturally and religiously more at home with the tribes who comprised the Northern Kingdom.

Jeremiah was a descendant of Abiathar, one of the two chief priests of King David (1 Sam 22–23; 2 Sam 20.25). Abiathar was a Levitical priest, belonging to a priesthood that was prominent during the period of the judges (ca. 1200–1000 B.C.E.). David's other chief priest, Zadok, was the founder of the Zadokite priesthood, which contended with the Levites for priestly control of royal religion in Jerusalem. Solomon banished Abiathar to Anathoth, because he supported the efforts of Adonijah, Solomon's rival, to succeed David to the throne (1 Kings 2.26–27). Allied with Solomon, Zadok and his descendants gained control of the temple in Jerusalem and were strong supporters of the Davidic monarchy. Jeremiah's strong criticism of the house of David and the Jerusalem temple is due in part to his Levitical and Benjaminite heritage.

Jeremiah's Mosaic theology derived from the older traditions of the exodus from Egypt, the wilderness wandering, the gift of the land of Canaan, and the covenant of Sinai. Indeed, Jeremiah is presented as the "prophet like Moses" whom, like the early lawgiver, people were to hear.

Historical Background

The prose narratives and sermons (1.2; 25.3) place the call in the "thirteenth year of King Josiah" (627 B.C.E.) and note that Jeremiah was active in this king's reign (cf. 3.6; 36.2). The year 627 B.C.E. was an auspicious time in the history of Judah. This year marked the death of Ashurbanipal, the last powerful Assyrian king. Judah had become a vassal of the Assyrian Empire in 735 B.C.E. With Ashurbanipal's death, the Assyrian Empire began to crumble. Asshur, a major city in the Assyrian Empire, fell to the Medes in 614 B.C.E., and Nineveh, the capital, in 612 B.C.E. After Nebuchadrezzar's (also spelled Nebuchadnezzar; see note on

21.2) defeat of the Egyptians at Carchemish in 605 B.C.E., Babylonia conquered much of the ancient Near East.

In 627 B.C.E., the vassal nations in the Assyrian Empire revolted, including Judah, ruled by King Josiah, whose ambition was to reestablish the empire of David and Solomon. Five years later, Josiah launched a reform that reaffirmed the covenant of Moses and centralized the worship of Yahweh in Jerusalem. Judah was initially successful, but its dreams of independence ended with the death of Josiah at the hands of the Egyptians at Megiddo (609 B.C.E.).

Within a year or two after the battle of Carchemish, Judah became a part of the Babylonian Empire. A later king of Judah, Jehoiakim (609–598 B.C.E.), died during an unsuccessful revolt against Babylon, and the first exiles were taken to Babylon (597 B.C.E.). A second rebellion, led by the last king of Judah, Zedekiah (597–587 B.C.E.), resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem and the second, more comprehensive exile in 587 B.C.E. After zealots assassinated the Judean governor, Gedaliah, Jeremiah was forced to accompany a group of Jews seeking exile in Egypt. The Babylonian captivity lasted until 539 B.C.E., when the Persian king, Cyrus, conquered Babylon and allowed the exiles to return home (538 B.C.E.; see Ezra 1.1–4).

Jeremiah's prophetic career coincided with these critical events in Judah's history. The early period of his life is difficult to reconstruct. It is most likely that he opposed the unabashed enthusiasm for the political ambitions of Josiah and spoke of a "foe from the north" who would bring destruction (see chs. 4–10). This foe was not clearly identified as Babylon until the battle of Carchemish. If active at the time, Jeremiah may have initially supported Josiah's reform, though this reformation ended with the king's death in 609 B.C.E. Before coming to Jerusalem after Josiah's death, the prophet preached both repentance by returning to the ancestral faith (ch. 3) and acquiescence to the Babylonians as the sole means of avoiding national destruction, thus gaining for himself powerful enemies within Judah. The "laments of Jeremiah" (see 11.18–20.18) reflect his experience of persecution.

Jeremiah's temple sermon (see chs. 7, 26), dating to the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign (609 B.C.E.), assaulted the theological undergirding of royal religion by arguing that obedience to the commandments and the covenant of Moses, not temple worship, was Judah's only hope for survival. Comparable are Jeremiah's oracles of judgment against Jerusalem and the kings of the house of David (21.11–23.8). In Jeremiah's view, temple worship and the covenant of God with the dynasty of David, so central to royal religion in Jerusalem, were a "false" (Hebrew *sheqer*) religion, sure to fail.

After the exile of 587 B.C.E., Jeremiah chose to stay in Jerusalem to help those who remained rebuild their lives. Now he spoke oracles not of judgment, but of hope. The remnants of both Israel and Judah would enter into a new covenant and faithfully follow God's law, for it would be written upon their hearts

(chs. 30–31). After the assassination of Gedaliah by Jewish partisans, Jeremiah was forced to go into Egyptian exile. Sometime later the prophet disappears from history.

Composition and Literary Character

The book of Jeremiah consists of several kinds of literature that underwent numerous editions before the book achieved its present form. Three major types of literature comprise much of the book. Poetic oracles of judgment are found throughout chs. 1–25. These may contain much that was original with the prophet. Narratives about incidents in the life of Jeremiah are found mainly in chs. 26–45. Prose sermons in the literary style of speeches in Deuteronomy and the books of Samuel and Kings are embedded among the materials of the first forty-five chapters. Indeed, both the narratives and the prose sermons may derive from later scribes, called by scholars Deuteronomic redactors because of their affinities in thought and style to the Deuteronomic literature (Deut–2 Kings), who were responsible for editing much of the book. Their efforts were designed to enable Jeremiah to speak to later exilic and early postexilic Jewish communities.

Several independent collections of various materials appear to have been compiled and transmitted separately, at least for a time, before being brought together in the present book. These collections include the oracles "concerning the house of David" (21.11–23.8), speeches "concerning the prophets" (23.9–40), speeches "concerning the nations" (46–51), and possibly two others: the "laments of Jeremiah" (found throughout 11.18–20.18) and the oracles concerning the "foe from the north" (found throughout chs. 4–10).

In addition, several clues to the composition and growth of the book are given in ch. 36. This chapter mentions two "scrolls of Baruch," Jeremiah's scribe, who is presented as writing down in the first scroll the oracles the prophet spoke from the "days of Josiah" until the battle of Carchemish. After the first scroll's destruction, Baruch wrote a second scroll that repeated the contents of the first and added "many similar words." The call of Jeremiah (ch. 1), his laments (found in parts of 11.18–20.18), and the oracles concerning the "foe from the north" (chs. 4–10) may have comprised the book's first scroll (or edition). The second scroll made allowances for the additions of other materials, including those of later hands.

Part of the literary history of the book also may be reconstructed by comparing the Septuagint (Greek) of Jeremiah with its Masoretic (Hebrew) counterpart. The Septuagint is one-eighth shorter than the Masoretic Text and represents a different arrangement of materials (especially the location of the "oracles against the nations," chs. 46–51). The manuscript evidence for Jeremiah contained in the Qumran scrolls, discovered near the Dead Sea in the 1940s, suggests that the Septuagint is based on an older Hebrew edition of Jeremiah. Some later editor

or editors supplemented that early edition to produce what became the canonical form of the present book.

The rather complex composition and editing of the book should obscure neither the beauty of its literary character nor the power of its prophetic message. Here indeed was a prophet who combined elegance of form with the ethical and redemptive content of the "word of the Lord." And perhaps more than anyone in his time, Jeremiah provided the means by which a despairing people could hope for a new future. *Leo G. Perdue*

1 The words of Jeremiah son of Hilkiah, of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, 2 to whom the word of the LORD came in the days of King Josiah son of Amon of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. 3 It came also in the days of King Jehoiakim son of Josiah of Judah, and until the end of the eleventh year of King Zedekiah son of Josiah of Judah, until the captivity of Jerusalem in the fifth month.

Jeremiah's Call and Commission

4 Now the word of the LORD came to me saying,
5 "Before I formed you in the
womb I knew you,
and before you were born I
consecrated you;
I appointed you a prophet to the
nations."
6 Then I said, "Ah, Lord GOD! Truly I do

1.1–3 Superscription. Added by later editors, superscriptions to prophetic books contain all or some of the following features: the title (*the words of Jeremiah*), personal background (*son of . . . Benjamin*), reception of the revelation (*to whom the word of the LORD came*), whom the revelation concerned (*the nations*, see 1.4–10), and the date (vv. 2–3). See Isa 1.1; Am 1.1; Mic 1.1; Zeph 1.1. **1.1** The name *Jeremiah* in Hebrew means "Yahweh exalts." *Priests . . . in Anathoth.* See Introduction. *Anathoth* (located at modern Ras el Kharuba) was a Levitical village in Benjamin, less than three miles northeast of Jerusalem. **1.2** *Josiah* reigned 640–609 B.C.E. *Thirteenth year*, 627 B.C.E. **1.3** *Jehoiakim* reigned 609–598 B.C.E. Zedekiah reigned 597–587 B.C.E. *Captivity of Jerusalem*, 587 B.C.E. The superscription dates Jeremiah's prophetic activity from 627 to 587 B.C.E.

1.4–19 Jeremiah's call and commission. The date of Jeremiah's call is a matter of debate. The prose texts (1.2; 25.3) place the call in the *thirteenth year of King Josiah* (627 B.C.E.) and note that Jeremiah was active in this king's reign (see 3.6; 36.2). However, the poetry may imply Jeremiah was born in 627 B.C.E., was called from the "womb," and then, as a "boy," began to prophesy in 609 B.C.E. Ch. 1 presents an overture to the book. Key themes and words are introduced and later repeated throughout the various collections. The chapter contains the poetic call of Jeremiah (1.4–10), two accompanying visions (1.11–14), and two editorial expansions (1.15–16; 1.17–19). Of the two forms of prophetic call, the encounter with (the word of) God (Ex 3.1–4.17; Judg 6.11–18; 1 Sam 3) and the vision of God in the heavenly court (1 Kings 22.19–22; Isa 40.1–11; Ezek 1.1–3.11), Jeremiah's followed the first. The first form consists of the divine confrontation (*the word of the LORD came to me*, v. 4), introductory word (*Before I formed you . . . consecrated you*, v. 5a), commission (*I appointed you . . . nations*, v. 5b), objection (*Ah, LORD God . . . only a boy*, v. 6), reassurance (*Do not say . . . to deliver you*, vv. 7–8), and sign (*Then the LORD put out his hand . . . to build and to plant*, vv. 9–10). The striking parallels with the call of Moses (Ex 3.1–4.17) present Jeremiah as the "prophet like Moses" (Deut 18.15–22). **1.5** Jeremiah is predestined to be a prophet even before his birth and to be a *prophet to the nations* (see "oracles against the nations," chs. 46–51). The origins of the world and of the individual (conception, formation in the womb, birth, and nurture) comprise the two major creation traditions in the Hebrew Bible (world: Gen 1.1–2.4a; Pss 33; 74.12–17; 104; individual: Gen 2:4b–25; Job 3; 10; Ps 139.13–16; both are combined in the birth of Wisdom, Prov 8.22–31). In his final lament, Jeremiah curses his birth, thus negating his call (20.14–18). **1.6** *Ah, Lord GOD* introduces a complaint against God (see 4.10; 14.13; 32.17; Josh 7.7; Ezek 4.14; 9.8; 11.13; 20.49). *I do not know how to speak* refers to the role of the prophet

not know how to speak, for I am only a
boy." 7 But the LORD said to me,
"Do not say, 'I am only a boy';
for you shall go to all to whom I
send you,
and you shall speak whatever I
command you.
8 Do not be afraid of them,
for I am with you to deliver you,
says the LORD."
9 Then the LORD put out his hand and
touched my mouth; and the LORD said
to me,
"Now I have put my words in
your mouth.
10 See, today I appoint you over
nations and over kingdoms,
to pluck up and to pull down,
to destroy and to overthrow,
to build and to plant."
11 The word of the LORD came to me,
saying, "Jeremiah, what do you see?" And
I said, "I see a branch of an almond
tree."[a] 12 Then the LORD said to me,
"You have seen well, for I am watching[b]
over my word to perform it." 13 The word
of the LORD came to me a second time,
saying, "What do you see?" And I said, "I
see a boiling pot, tilted away from the
north."
14 Then the LORD said to me: Out of
the north disaster shall break out on all
the inhabitants of the land. 15 For now I
am calling all the tribes of the kingdoms
of the north, says the LORD; and they shall
come and all of them shall set their
thrones at the entrance of the gates of Je-
rusalem, against all its surrounding walls
and against all the cities of Judah. 16 And
I will utter my judgments against them,
for all their wickedness in forsaking me;
they have made offerings to other gods,
and worshiped the works of their own
hands. 17 But you, gird up your loins;
stand up and tell them everything that I
command you. Do not break down before
them, or I will break you before them.
18 And I for my part have made you today
a fortified city, an iron pillar, and a
bronze wall, against the whole land—
against the kings of Judah, its princes, its
priests, and the people of the land.
19 They will fight against you; but they
shall not prevail against you, for I am with
you, says the LORD, to deliver you.

Indictment for Breach of Covenant

2 The word of the LORD came to me,
saying: 2 Go and proclaim in the hear-
ing of Jerusalem, Thus says the LORD:

a Heb *shaqed* b Heb *shoqed*

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as one who speaks on behalf of God (see Ex 4.10–12). *Boy* may refer to a child, adolescent, or young man. The term echoes the call of another "prophet like Moses," the lad Samuel (1 Sam 3). **1.8** *I am with you to deliver you* promises divine presence and aid in the face of persecution (see the laments in 11.18–20.18). **1.9** Touching and placing divine words in the mouth reflects the "prophet like Moses" (Deut 18.15–22; cf. Jer 15.19). **1.10** God appoints Jeremiah, not kings, over nations to destroy and then to build. *To pluck up . . . overthrow* refers to the oracles of judgment in chs. 2–25. *To build and to plant* echoes the oracles of salvation in chs. 30–31. The theme of this verse is a recurring motif aptly summarizing the message of the prophet. See 18.7–9; 24.6; 31.28; 42.10; 45.4 (cf. 31.4, 40; 32.41). **1.11–14** Vision reports consist of several parts: introduction (God shows or the prophet sees something), description of what is seen, dialogue between God and the prophet, and interpretation (God explains the meaning of the vision). See ch. 24; Am 7.1–9.10. A wordplay, *branch of an almond tree* (Hebrew *shaqed*) and *watching* (Hebrew *shoqed*), in the first vision stresses that God will enact the content of the prophetic word. The vision of the *boiling pot* points to destruction from the *north* (see "foe from the north" oracles, chs. 4–10). **1.15–16** An exilic or postexilic editorial expansion of the second vision, explaining the Babylonian conquest resulted from violation of the Mosaic covenant. **1.17–19** A second editorial expansion in which Jeremiah is encouraged to fight against his enemies, the leaders of Judah: *kings of Judah, its princes* (i.e., royal officers), *its priests* (both Levitical and Zadokite), *and the people of the land* (landowners in the countryside). Unlike Jerusalem, he is to be invincible, *a fortified city, an iron pillar, a bronze wall* (see 15.20), because the Lord will sustain and deliver him (see 1.8).

2.1–37 Ch. 2 is an oracular poem dealing with the theme of Israel's and Judah's religious and political disloyalty to the Lord and the covenant. With the deterioration of Assyrian power after 627 B.C.E., Josiah moved into the territory of the former Northern Kingdom to bring it under his control. The oracles in ch. 2, perhaps from the first stage of Jeremiah's activity, assume the form of a "lawsuit" (Hebrew *riv*, 2.9), in which the Lord serves as both plaintiff and judge (see Isa 5.1–7;

I remember the devotion of your
youth,
your love as a bride,
how you followed me in the
wilderness,
in a land not sown.
3 Israel was holy to the LORD,
the first fruits of his harvest.
All who ate of it were held guilty;
disaster came upon them,
says the LORD.

4 Hear the word of the LORD,
O house of Jacob, and all the families of
the house of Israel. 5 Thus says the LORD:
What wrong did your ancestors
find in me
that they went far from me,
and went after worthless things,
and became worthless
themselves?
6 They did not say, "Where is
the LORD
who brought us up from the
land of Egypt,
who led us in the wilderness,
in a land of deserts and pits,
in a land of drought and deep
darkness,
in a land that no one passes
through,
where no one lives?"
7 I brought you into a plentiful
land
to eat its fruits and its good
things.
But when you entered you
defiled my land,
and made my heritage an
abomination.
8 The priests did not say, "Where is
the LORD?"
Those who handle the law did
not know me;
the rulers[c] transgressed
against me;
the prophets prophesied by
Baal,
and went after things that do
not profit.

9 Therefore once more I accuse
you,
says the LORD,
and I accuse your children's
children.
10 Cross to the coasts of Cyprus
and look,

c Heb *shepherds*

Hos 9.10–13; 13.4–8; Mic 6.1–8). "Lawsuits" include an appeal to heaven and earth as witnesses, a summons to the defendant to hear the charges, a listing of charges, rhetorical questions, a description of the Lord's gracious acts on behalf of the accused, and an announcement of guilt and punishment. The poem has five parts, arranged in the following literary pattern: vv. 1–3 (Israel and Judah's faithfulness as a young bride), vv. 4–13 (religious apostasy—Baal worship), vv. 14–19 (political disloyalty—alliances with Assyria and Egypt), vv. 20–28 (religious apostasy—Baal worship), and vv. 29–37 (political disloyalty—alliance with Egypt). The pattern is A, B, C, B′, C′. The wilderness and bridal imagery of the first oracle is repeated in the final one, thus forming an *inclusio* (a repetition signaling the beginning and end of a unit). Echoing Hosea, a Northern prophet of the eighth century B.C.E., Jeremiah contrasts Israel's faithfulness in the Sinai wilderness with its disloyalty after entrance into Canaan. **2.1–2** The prose introduction (*The word of the LORD . . . Jerusalem*) has been inserted by a postexilic editor. **2.2** *Devotion* (Hebrew *chesed*) means love or faithfulness within a covenant relationship (marriage, friendship, and covenant between God and Israel). *Bride* is a common metaphor for Israel in the relationship with God, the husband (Isa 49.18; 61.10; 62.5; see esp. Hos 2). The *wilderness* is the Sinai wilderness, where Israel entered into covenant with the Lord after the exodus from Egypt. **2.3** *Holy* means "set apart, consecrated for divine service." The *first fruits* are the initial and presumably the best yield of the harvest given as an offering to the Lord (see Ex 23.19; 34.26; Deut 26.2, 10). **2.4–13** The oracle contrasts exodus theology (God's liberation of Israel from Egyptian slavery, guidance through the treacherous Sinai wilderness, and gift of the land of Canaan) with Israel's later disloyalty in following the Canaanite god Baal (lit. "husband" in Canaanite and Hebrew). **2.5** *Worthless things*, idols, false gods (8.19; Deut 32.21; 1 Kings 16.13, 26; 10.8; 14.22). **2.7** *Plentiful land*, the land of Canaan. **2.8** *Priests, rulers*, and *prophets* led the people into religious apostasy. **2.10–11** *Cyprus*, an island in the eastern Mediterranean, is approximately sixty miles west of the coast of Phoenicia. It was a center for maritime trade. *Kedar* refers to a powerful league of Arab tribes in the north Arabian desert east of the Transjordan who raided surrounding coun-

send to Kedar and examine
with care;
see if there has ever been such
a thing.
11 Has a nation changed its gods,
even though they are no gods?
But my people have changed
their glory
for something that does not
profit.
12 Be appalled, O heavens, at this,
be shocked, be utterly desolate,
says the LORD,
13 for my people have committed
two evils:
they have forsaken me,
the fountain of living water,
and dug out cisterns for
themselves,
cracked cisterns
that can hold no water.

14 Is Israel a slave? Is he a
homeborn servant?
Why then has he become
plunder?
15 The lions have roared
against him,
they have roared loudly.
They have made his land a waste;
his cities are in ruins, without
inhabitant.
16 Moreover, the people of
Memphis and Tahpanhes
have broken the crown of
your head.
17 Have you not brought this upon
yourself
by forsaking the LORD
your God,
while he led you in the way?
18 What then do you gain by going
to Egypt,
to drink the waters of the Nile?
Or what do you gain by going to
Assyria,
to drink the waters of the
Euphrates?
19 Your wickedness will punish you,
and your apostasies will
convict you.
Know and see that it is evil
and bitter
for you to forsake the LORD
your God;
the fear of me is not in you,
says the Lord GOD of hosts.

20 For long ago you broke your
yoke
and burst your bonds,
and you said, "I will not serve!"
On every high hill
and under every green tree
you sprawled and played
the whore.
21 Yet I planted you as a choice
vine,
from the purest stock.
How then did you turn
degenerate
and become a wild vine?

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tries and controlled the eastern trade route from Arabia to the Fertile Crescent (49.28–33; Isa 21.16–17; Ezek 27.21). From west to east (including all areas crisscrossed by trade routes), Jeremiah contends, no nation changes its gods, even though they are not real. Yet Israel exchanges its *glory* (lit. "divine presence," God) for false gods who *do not profit*. **2.12** The *heavens* are personified as witnesses at Israel's trial. **2.13** Rock-cut *cisterns* were normally plastered to protect against leakage. **2.14–19** Israel's political apostasy, establishing alliances with Egypt and Assyria, is another example of covenant faithlessness. Unlike a *slave* or a *homeborn servant* (i.e., one born to a family as a slave) who is property to be bought and sold, Israel was a nation of slaves liberated by God for responsible freedom within a covenant relationship. Yet this freedom is willingly sacrificed to become a slave of Assyria (*lions*) and of Egypt. **2.16** *Memphis* is situated on the west bank of the Nile and about fifteen miles south of Cairo. It was the capital of Egypt during the Old Kingdom (ca. 2700–2200 B.C.E.) and the cultic center of Ptah, a creator deity and patron of skilled crafts (44.1; Isa 19.13; Ezek 30.13; Hos 9.6). While no longer the capital in Jeremiah's day, it was still a politically and religiously important city. *Tahpanhes* is modern Tell Defenneh, located on Lake Menzaleh in the northeast Delta. King Psammetichus I (664–610 B.C.E.) built a garrison there for Greek mercenaries to defend against the Assyrians. Both cities would have been places where emissaries from Judah would have met with Egyptian officials to discuss alliances against Babylonia. Jewish refugees fled to these cities in the aftermath of the Babylonian invasion of Judah (43.7–9; 44.1). **2.19** Israel is condemned for abandoning the Lord of the exodus for alliances with human kings. **2.20–28** Judah is charged with religious infidelity in worshiping Baal. Graphic images of apostasy include an insatiable whore, an ox that breaks its yoke, a vine that bears strange fruit, a

22 Though you wash yourself
with lye
and use much soap,
the stain of your guilt is still
before me,
says the Lord God.
23 How can you say, "I am not
defiled,
I have not gone after the
Baals"?
Look at your way in the valley;
know what you have done—
a restive young camel interlacing
her tracks,
24 a wild ass at home in the
wilderness,
in her heat sniffing the wind!
Who can restrain her lust?
None who seek her need weary
themselves;
in her month they will find her.
25 Keep your feet from going
unshod
and your throat from thirst.
But you said, "It is hopeless,
for I have loved strangers,
and after them I will go."

26 As a thief is shamed when
caught,
so the house of Israel shall be
shamed—
they, their kings, their officials,
their priests, and their
prophets,
27 who say to a tree, "You are
my father,"
and to a stone, "You gave
me birth."
For they have turned their backs
to me,
and not their faces.
But in the time of their trouble
they say,
"Come and save us!"

28 But where are your gods
that you made for yourself?
Let them come, if they can
save you,
in your time of trouble;
for you have as many gods
as you have towns, O Judah.

29 Why do you complain
against me?
You have all rebelled against
me,
says the Lord.
30 In vain I have struck down
your children;
they accepted no correction.
Your own sword devoured your
prophets
like a ravening lion.
31 And you, O generation, behold
the word of the Lord![d]
Have I been a wilderness to
Israel,
or a land of thick darkness?
Why then do my people say, "We
are free,
we will come to you no more"?
32 Can a girl forget her ornaments,
or a bride her attire?
Yet my people have
forgotten me,
days without number.

33 How well you direct your course
to seek lovers!
So that even to wicked women
you have taught your ways.
34 Also on your skirts is found
the lifeblood of the innocent
poor,
though you did not catch them
breaking in.
Yet in spite of all these things[d]
35 you say, "I am innocent;

d Meaning of Heb uncertain

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stain that will not wash off, and the lust of a young camel and a wild ass in heat. **2.23** *Way* refers to both a road and a life-style. **2.26** Once again the leaders of Judah are condemned: *kings, officials, priests,* and *prophets* (see 1.18). **2.27** *Tree* and *stone* refer to Canaanite fertility worship. Normally, Asherah (an earth mother goddess) is associated with a tree, while a male deity like Baal is represented by a *matzebah* (Hebrew term for an upright stone serving as a phallic symbol). Jeremiah sarcastically reverses the sexual imagery. Unlike the Lord who redeems, the fertility deities are idols created by their worshipers and incapable of saving them (see the idol satires in 10.1–16; Isa 40.18–20; 41.5–7, 21–29; 44.6–20; 46; Pss 115; 135). **2.29–37** Israel's social injustice will lead to its humiliation at the hands of the very nations with whom it sought alliances. Josiah was killed by Neco II (610–594 B.C.E.) at Megiddo in 609 B.C.E., when the Egyptians were marching north to join with the Assyrians at Carchemish in the futile attempt to stall the Babylonian advance.

surely his anger has turned
from me."
Now I am bringing you to
judgment
for saying, "I have not sinned."
36 How lightly you gad about,
changing your ways!
You shall be put to shame
by Egypt
as you were put to shame
by Assyria.
37 From there also you will
come away
with your hands on your head;
for the LORD has rejected those in
whom you trust,
and you will not prosper
through them.

A Call to Repentance

3 If[e] a man divorces his wife
and she goes from him
and becomes another man's wife,
will he return to her?
Would not such a land be greatly
polluted?
You have played the whore with
many lovers;
and would you return to me?
says the LORD.
2 Look up to the bare heights,[f]
and see!
Where have you not been
lain with?
By the waysides you have sat
waiting for lovers,
like a nomad in the wilderness.
You have polluted the land
with your whoring and
wickedness.
3 Therefore the showers have been
withheld,
and the spring rain has not
come;
yet you have the forehead of
a whore,
you refuse to be ashamed.
4 Have you not just now called
to me,
"My Father, you are the friend
of my youth—
5 will he be angry forever,

e Q Ms Gk Syr: MT *Saying, If* *f* Or *the trails*

3.1–4.4 Jeremiah's call to repentance is a collection primarily of poetic oracles directing Israel to *return* to the Lord (i.e., "repent," Hebrew *shuv*). The Hebrew word *shuv* occurs sixteen times in this collection and provides the key theme. The "summons to repentance" occurs four times: 3.12b; 3.14a; 3.22a; 4.1a. 3.1–5 is a continuation of the lawsuit in ch. 2, while the other poetic sections comprise a "call to repentance" (see Am 5.4–7; 14–15; Hos 14.2). The poetic sections include: 3.1–5 (the adulterous wife and the faithless child); 3.12b–13 (the adulterous wife); 3.14, 19–20 (faithless children); 3.21–23 (faithless sons); and 4.1–4 (faithless Israel and Judah exhorted to repent). The poetic call to repentance is addressed to Israel and Judah. It was most likely issued during the early stage of Jeremiah's activity. The contingents of Israelites in Assyrian exile, those remaining in the North after the destruction of Samaria in 722 B.C.E., the Israelite refugees who migrated south to Judah, especially to the western hill in Jerusalem, and Judah are addressed by Jeremiah. Using two metaphors, an unfaithful wife and rebellious children, Jeremiah urges Israel to repent, i.e., return to God, who is both husband and father. Jeremiah's use of these two metaphors follows Hosea. Editors, sometime after the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C.E., inserted three prose speeches: 3.6–12a; 3.15–18; 3.24–25. These additions indict *false sister Judah* (3.7) for being more guilty of religious adultery than Israel, promise a new future with faithful rulers who dwell in a Jerusalem that is the throne of God and the city to which the nations will come, and express hope for the return of a united Israel and Judah from exile in Mesopotamia.

3.1–5 Israel and Judah are presented as both the Lord's faithless wife, who has become a prostitute, and his disobedient child. The lawsuit draws on the legal case of divorce in Deut 24.1–4 and its application in Hos 2. The case in Deuteronomy forbids a man who divorces his wife to remarry her, even if her second husband has died or divorced her. Jeremiah replaces the law in Deut 24.1–4 with two rhetorical questions: *will he* [the husband] *return to her? Would not such a land be greatly polluted?* (v. 1). While the Lord has not divorced his people, they have forsaken the marriage by having many *lovers* (false gods). For Jeremiah divine grace allows a repentant people to return. This sets the stage for the four "summons to repentance" that follow. Immoral actions *pollute* the land, i.e., desecrate the holiness of the land, which God both gave to Israel and Judah and blesses with divine presence and fertility (see Lev 19.29; Num 35.33–34). Desecration leads to God's withholding the rain. *Forehead of a whore* may refer to a phylactery or crown of cord worn

will he be indignant to
the end?"
This is how you have spoken,
but you have done all the evil
that you could.

6 The LORD said to me in the days of
King Josiah: Have you seen what she did,
that faithless one, Israel, how she went up
on every high hill and under every green
tree, and played the whore there? 7 And I
thought, "After she has done all this she
will return to me"; but she did not return,
and her false sister Judah saw it. 8 She[g]
saw that for all the adulteries of that faith-
less one, Israel, I had sent her away with a
decree of divorce; yet her false sister Ju-
dah did not fear, but she too went and
played the whore. 9 Because she took her
whoredom so lightly, she polluted the
land, committing adultery with stone and
tree. 10 Yet for all this her false sister Ju-
dah did not return to me with her whole
heart, but only in pretense, says the LORD.
11 Then the LORD said to me: Faith-
less Israel has shown herself less guilty
than false Judah. 12 Go, and proclaim
these words toward the north, and say:
Return, faithless Israel,
says the LORD.
I will not look on you in anger,
for I am merciful,
says the LORD;
I will not be angry forever.
13 Only acknowledge your guilt,
that you have rebelled against
the LORD your God,
and scattered your favors among
strangers under every
green tree,
and have not obeyed my voice,
says the LORD.
14 Return, O faithless children,
says the LORD,
for I am your master;
I will take you, one from a city
and two from a family,
and I will bring you to Zion.

15 I will give you shepherds after my
own heart, who will feed you with knowl-
edge and understanding. 16 And when
you have multiplied and increased in the
land, in those days, says the LORD, they
shall no longer say, "The ark of the cove-
nant of the LORD." It shall not come to
mind, or be remembered, or missed; nor
shall another one be made. 17 At that time
Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the
LORD, and all nations shall gather to it, to
the presence of the LORD in Jerusalem,
and they shall no longer stubbornly follow
their own evil will. 18 In those days the
house of Judah shall join the house of Is-
rael, and together they shall come from
the land of the north to the land that I
gave your ancestors for a heritage.

g Q Ms Gk Mss Syr: MT *I*

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around the head by cult prostitutes. **3.6–11** A prose commentary on 3.1–5 set in the reign of Josiah. Israel did not *return* and is divorced by the Lord, i.e., sent into Assyrian exile. *False sister Judah* did not learn from Israel's experience. She too became a prostitute by following false gods. Judah also did not return. Indeed, Israel was judged less guilty than Judah. This commentary explains the Babylonian exile. **3.8–9** *Decree of divorce.* See Deut 24.1–4. *Adultery with stone and tree.* Cf. note on 2.27. **3.12–13** *Merciful* (Hebrew *chasid*). The loyalty between two covenant partners includes divine grace as the basis for forgiveness and reconciliation. **3.14, 19–21** A second "summons to repentance," addressed to Israel. The faithful refugees from the former Northern Kingdom will return to Zion as a part of the new people of God. **3.15–18** A prose speech by later editors that comments on v. 14. In the restoration, new and faithful rulers will guide a reunited Israel and Judah, Jerusalem will be the center of divine rule, all nations shall come to Jerusalem, and all will follow the will of God. **3.15** *Shepherds*, a figurative expression for kings (see 10.21; 22.22; 23.1–4; 25.34–38; Ps 78.70–72; Isa 44.28; Ezek 34.1–10). God was the true shepherd of Israel (Ps 23; Ezek 34). **3.16** The *ark of the covenant*, a chest that was originally a portable shrine signifying divine presence and considered the throne of God (cf. Ex 25.10–15; Deut 10.8). Originally kept in the "tent of meeting" (2 Sam 6.17), it contained the two tablets of the law (Deut 10.2, 5) and perhaps the sacred lots (Urim and Thummim, Judg 20.27; 1 Sam 14.17–18). David brought the ark to Jerusalem, signifying the unification of the Northern and Southern kingdoms (2 Sam 6), and Solomon placed it in the Holy of Holies of the new temple (1 Kings 8.4–7). Here it was considered a throne, guarded by two cherubim (2 Kings 19.15). The ark was captured

19 I thought
how I would set you among
my children,
and give you a pleasant land,
the most beautiful heritage of
all the nations.
And I thought you would call me,
My Father,
and would not turn from
following me.
20 Instead, as a faithless wife leaves
her husband,
so you have been faithless to
me, O house of Israel,
says the LORD.

21 A voice on the bare heights[h]
is heard,
the plaintive weeping of Israel's
children,
because they have perverted
their way,
they have forgotten the LORD
their God:
22 Return, O faithless children,
I will heal your faithlessness.

"Here we come to you;
for you are the LORD our God.
23 Truly the hills are[i] a delusion,
the orgies on the mountains.
Truly in the LORD our God
is the salvation of Israel.
24 "But from our youth the shameful thing has devoured all for which our ancestors had labored, their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters. 25 Let us lie down in our shame, and let our dishonor cover us; for we have sinned against the LORD our God, we and our ancestors, from our youth even to this day; and we have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God."

4 If you return, O Israel,
says the LORD,
if you return to me,
if you remove your abominations
from my presence,
and do not waver,
2 and if you swear, "As the LORD
lives!"
in truth, in justice, and in
uprightness,
then nations shall be blessed[j]
by him,
and by him they shall boast.
3 For thus says the LORD to the people of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem:
Break up your fallow ground,
and do not sow among thorns.
4 Circumcise yourselves to the
LORD,
remove the foreskin of your
hearts,

h Or *the trails* *i* Gk Syr Vg: Heb *Truly from the hills is* *j* Or *shall bless themselves*

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or destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 B.C.E. **3.22–23** The third "summons to repentance," also addressed to Israel. *Hills* and *mountains* were important locations for shrines and temples. These sacred sites are sometimes identified as "high places" (Hebrew *bamot*; see 1 Kings 3.2; 2 Kings 12.4). *Orgies* refers to fertility rites involving sacred prostitution, a central feature of Canaanite religion. Fertility rites were believed to secure the fecundity of flocks and people, as well as bountiful crops. **3.24–25** A third editorial addition that places a liturgical confession of sin in the mouth of the exilic or postexilic community. It comprises a ritual response to the prophetic "summons to repentance." **4.1–4** The final poem in the section 3.1–4.4 is also a "summons to repentance," though shaped as a conditional clause (*if you return* . . .) to conform to the opening line of the unit (3.1, *if a man* . . .). This provides an inclusio for the entire section. **4.1** *Abominations* refers primarily to idols and practices associated with idol worship (7.30; 13.27; 16.18; Deut 29.17). **4.2** *Swear* refers to oaths that either began with or implied *as the LORD lives*. The Lord is thus the guarantor of the oath, and lies or broken oaths would be punished. This oath probably refers to ritual swearing during occasions of covenant renewal (Gen 26.28). Oaths are sacred words of promise, and to violate them is to take God's name in vain (Ex 20.7; Lev 19.12). *Blessed* also refers to sacred language. A blessing is a ritual pronouncement, usually by God through a priest, that effectuates good fortune or well-being for the recipient. This may include life, health, longevity, children, fertility, prosperity, and/or peace. Both swearing and blessing are power-laden forms of language; they enact the content of the words they contain. **4.3a** A prose insertion specifying, at least in the mind of the editor, the recipient of the last "summons." **4.4** *Circumcise*, to ritually remove the foreskin of the penis, an action signifying a male's membership in the covenant community (Gen 17.9–27; Lev 12.1–5). Here circumcision is used metaphorically to describe repentance and submission of the human will to divine purpose.

O people of Judah and
inhabitants of Jerusalem,
or else my wrath will go forth
like fire,
and burn with no one to
quench it,
because of the evil of your
doings.

Invasion and Desolation of Judah Threatened

5 Declare in Judah, and proclaim in
Jerusalem, and say:
Blow the trumpet through the
land;
shout aloud[k] and say,
"Gather together, and let us go
into the fortified cities!"
6 Raise a standard toward Zion,
flee for safety, do not delay,
for I am bringing evil from the
north,
and a great destruction.
7 A lion has gone up from its
thicket,
a destroyer of nations has
set out;
he has gone out from his place
to make your land a waste;
your cities will be ruins
without inhabitant.
8 Because of this put on sackcloth,
lament and wail:
"The fierce anger of the LORD
has not turned away from us."

9On that day, says the LORD, courage shall fail the king and the officials; the priests shall be appalled and the prophets astounded. 10Then I said, "Ah, Lord GOD, how utterly you have deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, 'It shall be well with you,' even while the sword is at the throat!"

11 At that time it will be said to this people and to Jerusalem: A hot wind comes from me out of the bare heights[l] in the desert toward my poor people, not to winnow or cleanse— 12a wind too strong for that. Now it is I who speak in judgment against them.

k Or *shout, take your weapons*: Heb *shout, fill* (your hand) *l* Or *the trails*

4.5–10.25 A collection of oracular poems of Jeremiah with the theme of the "foe from the north" comprises the majority of materials in chs. 4–10. These oracles consist mainly of prophecies of judgment containing the following features: commission/appeal for attention (e.g., 5.20–21), indication of the situation (often introduced by "Thus says the LORD"; e.g., 5.22–28), prediction of disaster (e.g., 5.29), and concluding characterization (5.30–31). These poetic prophecies of judgment were probably delivered in the early stage of Jeremiah's prophetic career, prior to his coming to Jerusalem in 609 B.C.E. They are addressed to both Israel and Judah, partially reunited during the reign of Josiah. The identification of the foe is not clear from the poetry itself. The prose identifies the foe as Babylonia (25.8–14). The collection dealing with the "foe from the north" consists of eleven sections: 4.5–31; 5.1–9; 5.10–17; 5.20–31; 6.1–8; 6.9–15; 6.16–30; 8.4–13; 8.14–9.11; 9.17–22; 10.17–25. Edited during the exile (after 587 B.C.E.) and following it (after 539 B.C.E.), the following prose speeches were inserted: 4.27; 5.18–19; 7.1–8.3; 9.12–16; 9.23–26. These additions indicate that the destruction by the "foe from the north" will not be total, that the failure to be faithful to the Mosaic covenant led to the destruction of the Jerusalem temple and the Babylonian exile, and that the uncircumcised foreign nations and Jews uncircumcised in the heart will be punished.

4.5–31 The invasion from the north threatened. This section is addressed to Judah and Jerusalem. God is sending an unidentified enemy to invade and devastate the Southern Kingdom. There will be mass destruction, likened to the end of the world. Three oracles of judgment, plus two interludes, are woven together into a literary masterpiece: first prophecy of judgment (4.5–8), first interlude (4.9–12), second prophecy of judgment (4.13–18), second interlude (4.19–26), and third prophecy of judgment (4.28–31). The inclusio (a repetition signaling the beginning and end of a unit) for the section is Jerusalem/Zion in vv. 5–6 and Zion in v. 31. **4.5–8** This speech describes the sounding of the alarm to signal people in the countryside and unfortified villages to take refuge in Zion, because of an approaching invader. **4.8** *Put on sackcloth, lament and wail,* a ritual of lamentation designed to arouse the Lord to defend his city (see Pss 44; 60; 74; 79; 80; 83; 89; 123; 129). **4.9–12** First interlude. The prophet's anguish over the invasion is expressed in vv. 9–10 (the leaders are *appalled and . . . astounded* over the invasion, and the prophet objects). *Ah, Lord GOD.* See note on 1.6. The prophet accuses God of deception by promising peace but then bringing destruction (see 1 Kings 22).

13 Look! He comes up like clouds,
his chariots like the whirlwind;
his horses are swifter than eagles—
woe to us, for we are ruined!
14 O Jerusalem, wash your heart clean of wickedness
so that you may be saved.
How long shall your evil schemes lodge within you?
15 For a voice declares from Dan
and proclaims disaster from Mount Ephraim.
16 Tell the nations, "Here they are!"
Proclaim against Jerusalem,
"Besiegers come from a distant land;
they shout against the cities of Judah.
17 They have closed in around her like watchers of a field,
because she has rebelled against me,
says the LORD.
18 Your ways and your doings
have brought this upon you.
This is your doom; how bitter it is!
It has reached your very heart."

Sorrow for a Doomed Nation

19 My anguish, my anguish! I writhe in pain!
Oh, the walls of my heart!
My heart is beating wildly;
I cannot keep silent;
for I[m] hear the sound of the trumpet,
the alarm of war.
20 Disaster overtakes disaster,
the whole land is laid waste.
Suddenly my tents are destroyed,
my curtains in a moment.
21 How long must I see the standard,
and hear the sound of the trumpet?
22 "For my people are foolish,
they do not know me;
they are stupid children,
they have no understanding.
They are skilled in doing evil,
but do not know how to do good."

23 I looked on the earth, and lo, it was waste and void;
and to the heavens, and they had no light.
24 I looked on the mountains, and lo, they were quaking,
and all the hills moved to and fro.
25 I looked, and lo, there was no one at all,
and all the birds of the air had fled.
26 I looked, and lo, the fruitful land was a desert,
and all its cities were laid in ruins
before the LORD, before his fierce anger.
27 For thus says the LORD: The whole land shall be a desolation; yet I will not make a full end.
28 Because of this the earth shall mourn,
and the heavens above grow black;
for I have spoken, I have purposed;
I have not relented nor will I turn back.

m Another reading is *for you, O my soul,*

4.13–18 Second prophecy of judgment. The enemy lays siege to Jerusalem, and Jeremiah urges its inhabitants to repent and engage in lamentation (v. 14). **4.19–26** The anguish of God is experienced by the prophet who sees the holocaust rendered by the invaders (vv. 19–22). Vv. 23–26 contain a macabre poem depicting the results of the invasion as the return of chaos (i.e., the state of reality prior to creation). The strong literary allusions to Gen 1.1–2.4a (the first creation account) point to a reversal of creation. While hyperbolic, the poem indicates that the devastation of war is like the end of the world and a return to primordial nothingness. **4.27** A later prose insertion promising the devastation will not be total. **4.28–31** The final prophecy of judgment in the larger poem describes the lamentation of *earth* and *the heavens*, the two spheres of creation (see Gen 1.1; 2.1, 4), the destruction of the nation, and the failure of *Zion*, personified as a woman, to escape death. Zion (Jerusalem) takes on the appearance of a prostitute to offer herself to the invaders to avoid death, but to no avail (see 3.2–3; Jezebel in 2 Kings 9.30–37).

29 At the noise of horseman and archer
every town takes to flight;
they enter thickets; they climb among rocks;
all the towns are forsaken,
and no one lives in them.
30 And you, O desolate one,
what do you mean that you dress in crimson,
that you deck yourself with ornaments of gold,
that you enlarge your eyes with paint?
In vain you beautify yourself.
Your lovers despise you;
they seek your life.
31 For I heard a cry as of a woman in labor,
anguish as of one bringing forth her first child,
the cry of daughter Zion gasping for breath,
stretching out her hands,
"Woe is me! I am fainting before killers!"

The Sinfulness of God's People

5 Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem,
look around and take note!
Search its squares and see
if you can find one person
who acts justly
and seeks truth—
so that I may pardon Jerusalem.[n]
2 Although they say, "As the LORD lives,"
yet they swear falsely.
3 O LORD, do your eyes not look for truth?
You have struck them,
but they felt no anguish;
you have consumed them,
but they refused to take correction.
They have made their faces harder than rock;
they have refused to turn back.
4 Then I said, "These are only the poor,
they have no sense;
for they do not know the way of the LORD,
the law of their God.
5 Let me go to the rich[o]
and speak to them;
surely they know the way of the LORD,
the law of their God."
But they all alike had broken the yoke,
they had burst the bonds.

6 Therefore a lion from the forest shall kill them,
a wolf from the desert shall destroy them.
A leopard is watching against their cities;
everyone who goes out of them shall be torn in pieces—
because their transgressions are many,
their apostasies are great.

7 How can I pardon you?
Your children have forsaken me,
and have sworn by those who are no gods.
When I fed them to the full,
they committed adultery
and trooped to the houses of prostitutes.
8 They were well-fed lusty stallions,
each neighing for his neighbor's wife.
9 Shall I not punish them for these things?
says the LORD;
and shall I not bring retribution
on a nation such as this?

10 Go up through her vine-rows and destroy,
but do not make a full end;

n Heb *it* *o* Or *the great*

5.1–31 A series of judgment oracles. **5.1–9** This oracle of judgment describes the continued disobedience and sinfulness of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, in spite of the siege. **5.1** Like Abraham's efforts to save Sodom and Gomorrah for the sake of ten righteous people (Gen 18.22–33), Jeremiah is commissioned to find one righteous person who may save Jerusalem. **5.2** The oath probably involves faithfulness to the covenant but is *sworn falsely* (see note on 4.2). **5.10–17** Faithlessness leads to destruction. This oracle of judgment is directed against

strip away her branches,
for they are not the LORD's.
11 For the house of Israel and the house of Judah
have been utterly faithless to me,
says the LORD.
12 They have spoken falsely of the LORD,
and have said, "He will do nothing.
No evil will come upon us,
and we shall not see sword or famine."
13 The prophets are nothing but wind,
for the word is not in them.
Thus shall it be done to them!

14 Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of hosts:
Because they[p] have spoken this word,
I am now making my words in your mouth a fire,
and this people wood, and the fire shall devour them.
15 I am going to bring upon you
a nation from far away, O house of Israel,
says the LORD.
It is an enduring nation,
it is an ancient nation,
a nation whose language you do not know,
nor can you understand what they say.
16 Their quiver is like an open tomb;
all of them are mighty warriors.
17 They shall eat up your harvest and your food;
they shall eat up your sons and your daughters;
they shall eat up your flocks and your herds;
they shall eat up your vines and your fig trees;
they shall destroy with the sword your fortified cities in which you trust.

18 But even in those days, says the LORD, I will not make a full end of you.
19 And when your people say, "Why has the LORD our God done all these things to us?" you shall say to them, "As you have forsaken me and served foreign gods in your land, so you shall serve strangers in a land that is not yours."

20 Declare this in the house of Jacob,
proclaim it in Judah:
21 Hear this, O foolish and senseless people,
who have eyes, but do not see,
who have ears, but do not hear.
22 Do you not fear me? says the LORD;
Do you not tremble before me?
I placed the sand as a boundary for the sea,
a perpetual barrier that it cannot pass;
though the waves toss, they cannot prevail,
though they roar, they cannot pass over it.
23 But this people has a stubborn and rebellious heart;
they have turned aside and gone away.
24 They do not say in their hearts,
"Let us fear the LORD our God,
who gives the rain in its season,

p Heb *you*

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the cities and countryside of Israel and Judah for being unfaithful to the covenant. **5.13** *The prophets are nothing but wind* is a play on the Hebrew word *ruach* ("spirit," "wind," "breath"). One of the forms of prophetic inspiration is the "spirit" or "breath" of God (see Num 27.18; 2 Kings 2.15; Isa 29.10). Jeremiah, in effect, calls the false prophets "windbags" or "full of hot air." **5.18–19** A prose speech inserted by a later editor that, while promising that destruction is not to be total, still explains the invasion as punishment for unfaithfulness to God. **5.20–31** A prophecy of judgment against Israel (*house of Jacob*, v. 20) and Judah. God's power as creator to still the powers of chaos and to bring fertility to the land does not inspire fear and covenantal obedience in the people. **5.22** The *sea* (Hebrew *yam*) is often personified as chaos or its ruler (Prince Yam). In Canaanite mythology Prince Yam was the nemesis of Baal, the god of fertility, with whom he contended for rulership of the earth. Chaos is a destructive power that threatens the order of creation (see Job 38.8–11; Ps 74.12–14), but one that is limited here by the Lord.

the autumn rain and the
spring rain,
and keeps for us
the weeks appointed for the
harvest."
25 Your iniquities have turned
these away,
and your sins have deprived
you of good.
26 For scoundrels are found among
my people;
they take over the goods of
others.
Like fowlers they set a trap;[q]
they catch human beings.
27 Like a cage full of birds,
their houses are full of
treachery;
therefore they have become great
and rich,
28 they have grown fat and sleek.
They know no limits in deeds of
wickedness;
they do not judge with justice
the cause of the orphan, to make
it prosper,
and they do not defend the
rights of the needy.
29 Shall I not punish them for these
things?
says the LORD,
and shall I not bring
retribution
on a nation such as this?

30 An appalling and horrible thing
has happened in the land:
31 the prophets prophesy falsely,
and the priests rule as the
prophets direct;[r]
my people love to have it so,
but what will you do when the
end comes?

The Imminence and Horror of the Invasion

6 Flee for safety, O children of
Benjamin,
from the midst of Jerusalem!
Blow the trumpet in Tekoa,
and raise a signal on
Beth-haccherem;
for evil looms out of the north,
and great destruction.
2 I have likened daughter Zion
to the loveliest pasture.[s]
3 Shepherds with their flocks shall
come against her.
They shall pitch their tents
around her;
they shall pasture, all in
their places.
4 "Prepare war against her;
up, and let us attack at noon!"
"Woe to us, for the day declines,
the shadows of evening
lengthen!"
5 "Up, and let us attack by night,
and destroy her palaces!"
6 For thus says the LORD of hosts:
Cut down her trees;
cast up a siege ramp against
Jerusalem.
This is the city that must be
punished;[t]
there is nothing but oppression
within her.
7 As a well keeps its water fresh,
so she keeps fresh her
wickedness;
violence and destruction are
heard within her;
sickness and wounds are ever
before me.
8 Take warning, O Jerusalem,
or I shall turn from you in
disgust,
and make you a desolation,
an uninhabited land.

9 Thus says the LORD of hosts:
Glean[u] thoroughly as a vine
the remnant of Israel;

q Meaning of Heb uncertain *r* Or *rule by their own authority* *s* Or *I will destroy daughter Zion, the loveliest pasture* *t* Or *the city of license*
u Cn: Heb *They shall glean*

6.1–8 The approach of the invader. In this prophecy of judgment, the enemy's conquest of Jerusalem is launched. **6.1** Jeremiah warns his fellow Benjaminites to flee *Jerusalem.* Warnings for Jerusalem are to be issued from *Tekoa* and *Beth-haccherem* (possibly modern Ramet Rahel). Tekoa and Beth-haccherem are south of Jerusalem (twelve miles and two miles, respectively). The invading army is now marching toward the capital. **6.3–8** The assault on the city is launched. **6.3** *Shepherds . . . flocks* here refers to invading kings and their armies (cf. 3.15). **6.9–15** Jeremiah's warnings go unheeded. As the assault against Jerusalem intensifies, children, married couples, and the elderly will experience the *wrath of the LORD* (i.e., divine judgment, v. 9)

like a grape-gatherer, pass your
hand again
over its branches.

10 To whom shall I speak and give
warning,
that they may hear?
See, their ears are closed,[v]
they cannot listen.
The word of the LORD is to them
an object of scorn;
they take no pleasure in it.
11 But I am full of the wrath of
the LORD;
I am weary of holding it in.

Pour it out on the children in
the street,
and on the gatherings of young
men as well;
both husband and wife shall
be taken,
the old folk and the very aged.
12 Their houses shall be turned over
to others,
their fields and wives together;
for I will stretch out my hand
against the inhabitants of
the land,
says the LORD.

13 For from the least to the greatest
of them,
everyone is greedy for unjust
gain;
and from prophet to priest,
everyone deals falsely.
14 They have treated the wound of
my people carelessly,
saying, "Peace, peace,"
when there is no peace.

15 They acted shamefully, they
committed abomination;
yet they were not ashamed,
they did not know how to
blush.
Therefore they shall fall among
those who fall;
at the time that I punish them,
they shall be overthrown,
says the LORD.
16 Thus says the LORD:
Stand at the crossroads, and look,
and ask for the ancient paths,
where the good way lies; and
walk in it,
and find rest for your souls.
But they said, "We will not walk
in it."
17 Also I raised up sentinels for you:
"Give heed to the sound of the
trumpet!"
But they said, "We will not give
heed."
18 Therefore hear, O nations,
and know, O congregation,
what will happen to them.
19 Hear, O earth; I am going to
bring disaster on this
people,
the fruit of their schemes,
because they have not given heed
to my words;
and as for my teaching, they
have rejected it.
20 Of what use to me is frankincense
that comes from Sheba,
or sweet cane from a distant
land?

[v] Heb *are uncircumcised*

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in the form of suffering, death, and exile. **6.16–30** Forsaking the ancient paths. The *ancient paths* (v. 16) are the covenant of Moses and its laws, which were to guide the religious and moral lives of the people. In this prophecy of judgment against Zion (Jerusalem), the people have disobeyed the covenant and not given heed to the warnings of the prophets (*sentinels*, v. 17). The fierce enemy from the north will destroy all (*parents and children . . . neighbor and friend*, v. 21) without distinction and without mercy. **6.20** Sacrifices and gifts do not appease God's wrath (see Hos 9.4). *Frankincense* is a fragrant gum resin from the *Boswellia* tree, which grows in southern Arabia, northeastern Africa, and India. It was imported into Israel by caravans from *Sheba* (a country in southwest Arabia; see 1 Kings 10.1–13; Isa 60.6; Ezek 27.22–23) and was used as perfume (Song 3.6; 4.6, 14) and ritual incense (Ex 30.34–38). *Sweet cane*, also known as calamus, could refer to several varieties of cane or grasses yielding sweet-scented and volatile oils. It was used in holy anointing oil (Ex 30.23). *Burnt offerings* and *sacrifices* cover the array of animal sacrifices connected with the temple. Animals offered as burnt offerings were totally consumed by fire on the altar, while the edible parts of sacrifices were to be eaten by the worshipers. *Acceptable* refers to the Lord's willingness to receive the offering and the spirit with which it is given. The sacrificial laws in Leviticus specify the type and condition of acceptable animals (see Lev 1–7).

Your burnt offerings are not
acceptable,
nor are your sacrifices pleasing
to me.
21 Therefore thus says the LORD:
See, I am laying before this
people
stumbling blocks against which
they shall stumble;
parents and children together,
neighbor and friend shall
perish.

22 Thus says the LORD:
See, a people is coming from the
land of the north,
a great nation is stirring from
the farthest parts of the
earth.
23 They grasp the bow and the
javelin,
they are cruel and have no
mercy,
their sound is like the
roaring sea;
they ride on horses,
equipped like a warrior for
battle,
against you, O daughter Zion!

24 "We have heard news of them,
our hands fall helpless;
anguish has taken hold of us,
pain as of a woman in labor.
25 Do not go out into the field,
or walk on the road;
for the enemy has a sword,
terror is on every side."

26 O my poor people, put on
sackcloth,
and roll in ashes;
make mourning as for an
only child,
most bitter lamentation:
for suddenly the destroyer
will come upon us.

27 I have made you a tester and a
refiner[w] among my people
so that you may know and test
their ways.
28 They are all stubbornly
rebellious,
going about with slanders;
they are bronze and iron,
all of them act corruptly.
29 The bellows blow fiercely,
the lead is consumed by the
fire;
in vain the refining goes on,
for the wicked are not
removed.
30 They are called "rejected silver,"
for the LORD has rejected them.

The Temple Sermon and Illicit Worship

7 The word that came to Jeremiah
from the LORD: 2 Stand in the gate of
the LORD's house, and proclaim there this
word, and say, Hear the word of the

w Or *a fortress*

6.26 Rites of lamentation do not avail. **6.27–30** Jeremiah is a *tester and a refiner* who, like a metalsmith, examines the metal or religious character of the people and discards them like *rejected silver*, i.e., metal not containing enough silver to use for jewelry and decorations (see Job 23.10; Zech 13.9).

7.1–8.3 This section comprises a series of prose speeches written by editors: the temple sermon (7.1–15), Jeremiah's intercession forbidden by God, (7.16–20), disobedience and rejection of sacrificial ritual (7.21–28), the fate of Judah and the disinterment of the faithless dead (7.29–8.3). These speeches were written during the exilic or postexilic period to explain that illicit worship and disobedience to the Mosaic covenant were the reasons for the exile. The theme of illicit worship continues in 10.1–16, a poetic polemic against idol worship. **7.1–15** The temple sermon (an abbreviated version appears in 26.1–6). Although 26.1 places the sermon in the accession year of King Jehoiakim (609 B.C.E.), shortly after the death of Josiah, the sermon we have was most likely written later, during or after the exile. However, it is probable that Jeremiah delivered an oracle of judgment against the temple and that the content of the prose sermon reflects his own views. Josiah's death marked both the end of Judah's political ambitions for self-determination and the religious reform. Neco II's victory over Judah's army at Megiddo and the death of Josiah in 609 B.C.E. led to Egyptian control of Israel, until the defeat of Egypt by the Babylonians at the battle of Carchemish in 605 B.C.E. Israel and Judah were soon incorporated into the Babylonian Empire. The son who succeeded Josiah to the throne, Jehoahaz, only ruled for three months. Neco II took him to Egypt and placed on the throne Jehoiakim, another son of Josiah. Jehoiakim received neither the endorsement of the

LORD, all you people of Judah, you that
enter these gates to worship the LORD.
3 Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of
Israel: Amend your ways and your do-
ings, and let me dwell with you[x] in this
place. 4 Do not trust in these deceptive
words: "This is[y] the temple of the LORD,
the temple of the LORD, the temple of
the LORD."
5 For if you truly amend your ways
and your doings, if you truly act justly one
with another, 6 if you do not oppress the
alien, the orphan, and the widow, or shed
innocent blood in this place, and if you do
not go after other gods to your own hurt,
7 then I will dwell with you in this place, in
the land that I gave of old to your ances-
tors forever and ever.
8 Here you are, trusting in deceptive
words to no avail. 9 Will you steal, murder,
commit adultery, swear falsely, make
offerings to Baal, and go after other gods
that you have not known, 10 and then
come and stand before me in this house,
which is called by my name, and say, "We
are safe!"—only to go on doing all these
abominations? 11 Has this house, which is
called by my name, become a den of rob-
bers in your sight? You know, I too am
watching, says the LORD. 12 Go now to my
place that was in Shiloh, where I made my
name dwell at first, and see what I did to
it for the wickedness of my people Israel.
13 And now, because you have done all
these things, says the LORD, and when I
spoke to you persistently, you did not lis-
ten, and when I called you, you did not
answer, 14 therefore I will do to the house
that is called by my name, in which you
trust, and to the place that I gave to you
and to your ancestors, just what I did to
Shiloh. 15 And I will cast you out of my
sight, just as I cast out all your kinsfolk, all
the offspring of Ephraim.
16 As for you, do not pray for this
people, do not raise a cry or prayer on
their behalf, and do not intercede with
me, for I will not hear you. 17 Do you not
see what they are doing in the towns of
Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem?
18 The children gather wood, the fathers
kindle fire, and the women knead dough,

x Or *and I will let you dwell* y Heb *They are*

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elders of the land nor prophetic anointing. With the death of Josiah and the end of the dreams for national destiny, the people of Judah make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to celebrate a festival, possibly the Festival of Booths (Tabernacles, September–October), an eight-day festival that gave thanks for the autumn harvest and recalled God's guidance of Israel during the wilderness wanderings (Lev 23.39–43). This festival was also the time when Solomon's temple was dedicated (1 Kings 8). Every seven years the Torah was read publicly during this festival (Deut 31.10–11). Jeremiah's sermon (7.1–15) consists of the following parts: introduction (vv. 1–2), first admonition (vv. 3–4), second admonition (vv. 5–8), two rhetorical questions (vv. 9–11), and threat (vv. 12–15). **7.2** *Gate of the LORD's house*, gate of the Jerusalem temple. **7.3** The Hebrew may be read two ways: *let me dwell with you in this place* (i.e., divine presence in the temple), or *I will let you dwell in this place* (i.e., not go into exile). **7.4** *Deceptive words* (Hebrew *sheqer*, "lie, falsehood"). Repeated three times for emphasis, *the temple of the LORD* is rejected as a false basis of security, grounded in the belief that God will defend Zion against its enemies (see Pss 46; 48; 76; Isa 31.4–5). **7.5** Repentance (returning to the Mosaic covenant), not the temple and its worship, is the one hope for divine presence and the people's continued dwelling in Judah. **7.6** *The alien, the orphan, and the widow*. See Deut 10.18–19; 24.17–22; 27.19. The alien is a resident foreigner, while the orphan is one who is fatherless. In Deuteronomy, Judah's responsibility for the destitute is linked with God's merciful deliverance of Israelite slaves in Egypt at the time of the exodus. **7.9** Five of the Ten Commandments (Ex 20.1–17; Deut 5.6–21) are mentioned. Although other law codes were eventually added, the Ten Commandments were the primary religious and moral requirements for keeping the Mosaic covenant. **7.11** *Den of robbers*. See Mt 21.13. **7.12–15** *Shiloh*, eighteen miles north of Jerusalem, is Khirbet Seilun. The seat of the Levitical priesthood and the location of an important sanctuary (Josh 21.1–2; 1 Sam 1.3, 9), the town was a major religious center during the period of the judges (twelfth century B.C.E.). It was destroyed, probably by the Philistines, in the eleventh century B.C.E. (see Jer 26.6–9). Jeremiah's threat of destruction and exile parallels that of Micah in the eighth century B.C.E. (see Mic 3.9–12). **7.15** *Offspring of Ephraim*, the Northern Kingdom, which fell to the Assyrians in the eighth century B.C.E. **7.16–20** Jeremiah is forbidden to intercede to save the nation. Intercession is a primary function of the prophetic office (see 11.14; 15.1; Am 7–9). **7.18** The *queen of heaven* (see 44.15–30) is the Assyro-Babylonian goddess Ishtar, an astral deity associated with Venus. She was a goddess

to make cakes for the queen of heaven;
and they pour out drink offerings to
other gods, to provoke me to anger. 19 Is
it I whom they provoke? says the LORD. Is
it not themselves, to their own hurt?
20 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: My
anger and my wrath shall be poured out
on this place, on human beings and ani-
mals, on the trees of the field and the fruit
of the ground; it will burn and not be
quenched.

21 Thus says the LORD of hosts, the
God of Israel: Add your burnt offerings
to your sacrifices, and eat the flesh. 22 For
in the day that I brought your ancestors
out of the land of Egypt, I did not speak
to them or command them concerning
burnt offerings and sacrifices. 23 But this
command I gave them, "Obey my voice,
and I will be your God, and you shall be
my people; and walk only in the way that
I command you, so that it may be well
with you." 24 Yet they did not obey or in-
cline their ear, but, in the stubbornness of
their evil will, they walked in their own
counsels, and looked backward rather
than forward. 25 From the day that your
ancestors came out of the land of Egypt
until this day, I have persistently sent all
my servants the prophets to them, day af-
ter day; 26 yet they did not listen to me, or
pay attention, but they stiffened their
necks. They did worse than their ances-
tors did.

27 So you shall speak all these words
to them, but they will not listen to you.
You shall call to them, but they will not
answer you. 28 You shall say to them: This
is the nation that did not obey the voice of
the LORD their God, and did not accept
discipline; truth has perished; it is cut off
from their lips.

29 Cut off your hair and throw
it away;
raise a lamentation on the bare
heights,[z]
for the LORD has rejected and
forsaken
the generation that provoked
his wrath.

30 For the people of Judah have done
evil in my sight, says the LORD; they have
set their abominations in the house that is
called by my name, defiling it. 31 And they
go on building the high place[a] of To-
pheth, which is in the valley of the son of
Hinnom, to burn their sons and their
daughters in the fire—which I did not
command, nor did it come into my mind.
32 Therefore, the days are surely coming,
says the LORD, when it will no more be
called Topheth, or the valley of the son of
Hinnom, but the valley of Slaughter: for
they will bury in Topheth until there is no
more room. 33 The corpses of this people
will be food for the birds of the air, and
for the animals of the earth; and no one
will frighten them away. 34 And I will
bring to an end the sound of mirth and
gladness, the voice of the bride and bride-
groom in the cities of Judah and in the
streets of Jerusalem; for the land shall be-
come a waste.

8 At that time, says the LORD, the
bones of the kings of Judah, the
bones of its officials, the bones of the priests,
the bones of the prophets, and the bones
of the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall
be brought out of their tombs; 2 and

z Or *the trails* a Gk Tg: Heb *high places*

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of both war and fertility. **7.21–28** Obedience, including moral behavior, not sacrifice, is the basis for the covenantal relationship with God. **7.21** *Eating the flesh* of burnt offerings was forbidden by ritual law, for the flesh was to be burned and thus reserved for God (Lev 1). **7.25** *My servants the prophets* suggests the image of a king sending his couriers and emissaries to announce royal proclamations (see 23.1; 25.4). God has sought to address the covenant people with a long series of emissaries, but to no avail. **7.29–8.3** A prose sermon on the fate of Judah and the disinterment of its leaders. **7.29** An earlier poetic fragment from Jeremiah, embedded within the prose. *Cut off your hair*, part of the ritual of lamentation (16.6; Mic 1.16). **7.31** *Topheth* (from an Aramaic word meaning "fireplace") was pronounced with the vowels of the word "shame" in Hebrew. This cultic place for child sacrifice was located in the *valley of the son of Hinnom* (Gehenna), just west and south of the walls of Jerusalem. The valley received notoriety for being the site of idolatrous practices, including child sacrifice (2 Chr 28.3; 33.6). The law requiring the giving of the firstborn to God (Ex 22.29–30) may have been interpreted to mean child sacrifice, a view Jeremiah counters (see Lev 18.21). **7.32** *Valley of Slaughter*, lit. "valley of murder". **8.2** *The sun . . . moon and . . . host of heaven* are astral deities (Deut 4.19; 17.3; 2 Kings 23.5). In Assyrian practice, corpses of leaders were disinterred when a vassal violated a treaty (see 2 Kings

they shall be spread before the sun and
the moon and all the host of heaven,
which they have loved and served, which
they have followed, and which they have
inquired of and worshiped; and they shall
not be gathered or buried; they shall be
like dung on the surface of the ground.
3 Death shall be preferred to life by all the
remnant that remains of this evil family in
all the places where I have driven them,
says the LORD of hosts.

Judgment from the North

4 You shall say to them, Thus says
the LORD:
When people fall, do they not get
up again?
If they go astray, do they not
turn back?
5 Why then has this people[b]
turned away
in perpetual backsliding?
They have held fast to deceit,
they have refused to return.
6 I have given heed and listened,
but they do not speak honestly;
no one repents of wickedness,
saying, "What have I done!"
All of them turn to their own
course,
like a horse plunging headlong
into battle.
7 Even the stork in the heavens
knows its times;
and the turtledove, swallow, and
crane[c]
observe the time of their
coming;
but my people do not know
the ordinance of the LORD.

8 How can you say, "We are wise,
and the law of the LORD is
with us,"
when, in fact, the false pen of
the scribes
has made it into a lie?
9 The wise shall be put to shame,
they shall be dismayed and
taken;
since they have rejected the word
of the LORD,
what wisdom is in them?
10 Therefore I will give their wives
to others
and their fields to conquerors,
because from the least to the
greatest
everyone is greedy for unjust
gain;
from prophet to priest
everyone deals falsely.
11 They have treated the wound of
my people carelessly,
saying, "Peace, peace,"
when there is no peace.
12 They acted shamefully, they
committed abomination;
yet they were not at all
ashamed,

b One Ms Gk: MT *this people, Jerusalem,*
c Meaning of Heb uncertain

23.16, which tells of Josiah's desecration of tombs at the sanctuary of Bethel).

8.4–10.25 These chapters return to the theme of the "foe from the north" (see 4.5–6.30). This section contains the following poetic oracles of judgment: 8.4–13; 8.14–9.11; 9.17–22; 10.17–25. Later prose additions include 9.12–16; 9.23–26. Inserted within these chapters is a diatribe against idol worship (10.1–16) with a prose addition (10.11). See 7.1–8.3. **8.4–13** An oracle of judgment consisting of two parts: an indictment of the people for their refusal to repent (vv. 4–7) and a diatribe against the religious leaders (scribes, prophets, and priests, vv. 8–13). **8.4–6** The Hebrew root *shuv* meaning "repent" or "turn" occurs six times in these verses: *go astray, turn back, turned away, backsliding, return, turn. Repents* in v. 6 is translated from a different Hebrew word (*nicham*). See ch. 3. **8.7** Birds instinctively know and act in accord with the natural order, but the people do not know God's revealed order of justice. **8.8–13** Prophetic "word" (revealed through the prophet's encounter with God) conflicts with written law, if the latter is corrupted and misinterpreted. The *wise* are scribes who served two institutions, the royal court and the temple. Temple scribes wrote religious legislation, interpreted priestly law, and taught the nation God's Torah. Royal sages formulated civil legislation, served in legal settings as judges and lawyers, gave advice to kings and other high officials, and administered the kingdom. The "wise" were often in conflict with prophets over the proper discernment and source of the divine will (see 18.18; Isa 3.1–4; 30.1–5; 31.1–3; Ob 8). *Wisdom* is the ability to discern God's righteous order and to teach people and the king how to act in conformity with that order. Wise behavior was thought to lead to

they did not know how to
blush.
Therefore they shall fall among
those who fall;
at the time when I punish
them, they shall be
overthrown,
says the LORD.
13 When I wanted to gather them,
says the LORD,
there are[d] no grapes on the
vine,
nor figs on the fig tree;
even the leaves are withered,
and what I gave them has
passed away from them.[e]

Laments over Coming Destruction

14 Why do we sit still?
Gather together, let us go into
the fortified cities
and perish there;
for the LORD our God has
doomed us to perish,
and has given us poisoned
water to drink,
because we have sinned against
the LORD.
15 We look for peace, but find no
good,
for a time of healing, but there
is terror instead.

16 The snorting of their horses is
heard from Dan;
at the sound of the neighing of
their stallions
the whole land quakes.
They come and devour the land
and all that fills it,
the city and those who live in it.
17 See, I am letting snakes loose
among you,
adders that cannot be charmed,
and they shall bite you,
says the LORD.

18 My joy is gone, grief is upon me,
my heart is sick.
19 Hark, the cry of my poor people
from far and wide in the land:
"Is the LORD not in Zion?
Is her King not in her?"
("Why have they provoked me to
anger with their images,
with their foreign idols?")
20 "The harvest is past, the summer
is ended,
and we are not saved."
21 For the hurt of my poor people I
am hurt,
I mourn, and dismay has taken
hold of me.

22 Is there no balm in Gilead?
Is there no physician there?
Why then has the health of my
poor people
not been restored?
9[f] O that my head were a spring of
water,
and my eyes a fountain of
tears,
so that I might weep day and
night
for the slain of my poor
people!
2[g] O that I had in the desert
a traveler's lodging place,

d Or *I will make an end of them, says the* LORD. *There are* *e* Meaning of Heb uncertain *f* Ch 8.23 in Heb *g* Ch 9.1 in Heb

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peace (Hebrew *shalom*), which also means "well-being" and "harmony."

8.14–9.26 This lengthy poem is fashioned out of several prophetic speeches: 8.14–17 (the people's resignation to divine destruction and the approach of the "foe"); 8.18–9.3 (an interlude describing Jeremiah's and God's anguish over the coming destruction); 9.4–9 (an indictment of the neighbor's deceit); 9.10–22 (three admonitions to lament over imminent destruction). Two prose additions are inserted in 9.12–16; 9.23–26. The first blames the destruction on disobedience to God's law. The second reassures the exiles of God's covenant love (Hebrew *chesed*) and justice and promises future punishment for the "uncircumcised" pagan nations as well as those Jews who are uncircumcised in their hearts (i.e., disobedient to God's will). **8.16** *Dan* refers to either a Northern tribe or more probably a city (Tel Dan) situated on the northern border of Israel. *The whole land quakes* echoes the chaos tradition, in which the order of the cosmos is destabilized by the approach of divine judgment (see Hab 3; note on 4.19–26). **8.18–9.3** The prophet experiences divine suffering over the imminent destruction of the people. **8.19** See note on 7.1–8.3. **8.22** *Balm* refers to resin or gum of the balsam tree used to heal wounds. *Gilead* was a region in the Transjordan

that I might leave my people
and go away from them!
For they are all adulterers,
a band of traitors.
3 They bend their tongues like bows;
they have grown strong in the land for falsehood, and not for truth;
for they proceed from evil to evil,
and they do not know me, says the LORD.

4 Beware of your neighbors,
and put no trust in any of your kin;[h]
for all your kin[i] are supplanters,
and every neighbor goes around like a slanderer.
5 They all deceive their neighbors,
and no one speaks the truth;
they have taught their tongues to speak lies;
they commit iniquity and are too weary to repent.[j]
6 Oppression upon oppression, deceit[k] upon deceit!
They refuse to know me, says the LORD.

7 Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts:
I will now refine and test them,
for what else can I do with my sinful people?[l]
8 Their tongue is a deadly arrow;
it speaks deceit through the mouth.
They all speak friendly words to their neighbors,
but inwardly are planning to lay an ambush.
9 Shall I not punish them for these things? says the LORD;
and shall I not bring retribution
on a nation such as this?

10 Take up[m] weeping and wailing for the mountains,
and a lamentation for the pastures of the wilderness,
because they are laid waste so that no one passes through,
and the lowing of cattle is not heard;
both the birds of the air and the animals
have fled and are gone.
11 I will make Jerusalem a heap of ruins,
a lair of jackals;
and I will make the towns of Judah a desolation,
without inhabitant.

12 Who is wise enough to understand this? To whom has the mouth of the LORD spoken, so that they may declare it? Why is the land ruined and laid waste like a wilderness, so that no one passes through? 13 And the LORD says: Because they have forsaken my law that I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, or walked in accordance with it, 14 but have stubbornly followed their own hearts and have gone after the Baals, as their ancestors taught them. 15 Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: I am feeding this people with wormwood, and giving them poisonous water to drink. 16 I will scatter them among nations that neither they nor their ancestors have known; and I will send the sword after them, until I have consumed them.

17 Thus says the LORD of hosts:
Consider, and call for the mourning women to come;
send for the skilled women to come;
18 let them quickly raise a dirge over us,

h Heb *in a brother* *i* Heb *for every brother*
j Cn Compare Gk: Heb *they weary themselves with iniquity.* 6 *Your dwelling* *k* Cn: Heb *Your dwelling in the midst of deceit* *l* Or *my poor people*
m Gk Syr: Heb *I will take up*

located between Bashan and Moab (see Gen 37.25). **9.4–9** A neighbor's *deceit* ("treachery") resides at the heart of social discord and corruption. **9.10–11, 17–19, 20–22** Three admonitions to engage in ritual lament over the death of the cosmos and the destruction of Jerusalem. **9.17** *Mourning women* and *skilled women* refer to professional mourners who are paid to lament during a funeral or over destruction of a city (see 22.18–19; Lamentations). In the ancient Near East, goddesses and their priestesses ritually mourned over the destruction of their sa-

so that our eyes may run down
with tears,
and our eyelids flow with water.
19 For a sound of wailing is heard
from Zion:
"How we are ruined!
We are utterly shamed,
because we have left the land,
because they have cast down
our dwellings."

20 Hear, O women, the word of
the LORD,
and let your ears receive the
word of his mouth;
teach to your daughters a dirge,
and each to her neighbor
a lament.
21 "Death has come up into our
windows,
it has entered our palaces,
to cut off the children from
the streets
and the young men from
the squares."
22 Speak! Thus says the LORD:
"Human corpses shall fall
like dung upon the open field,
like sheaves behind the reaper,
and no one shall gather them."

23 Thus says the LORD: Do not let the wise boast in their wisdom, do not let the mighty boast in their might, do not let the wealthy boast in their wealth; 24 but let those who boast boast in this, that they understand and know me, that I am the LORD; I act with steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth, for in these things I delight, says the LORD.

25 The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will attend to all those who are circumcised only in the foreskin: 26 Egypt, Judah, Edom, the Ammonites, Moab, and all those with shaven temples who live in the desert. For all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel is uncircumcised in heart.

An Idol Satire

10 Hear the word that the LORD
speaks to you, O house of Israel.
2 Thus says the LORD:
Do not learn the way of the
nations,
or be dismayed at the signs of
the heavens;
for the nations are dismayed
at them.
3 For the customs of the peoples
are false:
a tree from the forest is cut
down,
and worked with an ax by the
hands of an artisan;
4 people deck it with silver and
gold;
they fasten it with hammer
and nails
so that it cannot move.
5 Their idols[n] are like scarecrows
in a cucumber field,
and they cannot speak;
they have to be carried,
for they cannot walk.
Do not be afraid of them,
for they cannot do evil,
nor is it in them to do good.

6 There is none like you, O LORD;
you are great, and your name is
great in might.
7 Who would not fear you, O King
of the nations?
For that is your due;
among all the wise ones of the
nations
and in all their kingdoms
there is no one like you.
8 They are both stupid and foolish;
the instruction given by idols
is no better than wood![o]
9 Beaten silver is brought from
Tarshish,
and gold from Uphaz.

n Heb *They* *o* Meaning of Heb uncertain

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cred cities, at times as a prelude to new life. **9.21–22** An allusion to the Canaanite god of *death* (Mot) who kills the god Baal and drags him into the underworld. **9.26** *Those with shaven temples* refers to a religious rite of hair cutting practiced by Arab tribes (see 25.23; 49.32).

10.1–16 The greatness and power of God as Creator and Lord of history are contrasted with the origins and weakness of idols. See Ps 115.3–8; Isa 40.18–20; 41.6–7; 44.9–20. **10.9** *Tarshish*, an unidentified seaport famous for commerce (1 Kings 10.22; Isa 23.1, 14; 60.9; Ezek 27.25). *Uphaz* is an unknown location. Some scholars see the term as a corruption for Ophir, a place well

They are the work of the artisan
and of the hands of the goldsmith;
their clothing is blue and purple;
they are all the product of skilled workers.
10 But the LORD is the true God;
he is the living God and the everlasting King.
At his wrath the earth quakes,
and the nations cannot endure his indignation.

11 Thus shall you say to them: The gods who did not make the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth and from under the heavens.[p]

12 It is he who made the earth by his power,
who established the world by his wisdom,
and by his understanding stretched out the heavens.
13 When he utters his voice, there is a tumult of waters in the heavens,
and he makes the mist rise from the ends of the earth.
He makes lightnings for the rain,
and he brings out the wind from his storehouses.
14 Everyone is stupid and without knowledge;
goldsmiths are all put to shame by their idols;
for their images are false,
and there is no breath in them.
15 They are worthless, a work of delusion;
at the time of their punishment they shall perish.
16 Not like these is the LORD,[q] the portion of Jacob,
for he is the one who formed all things,
and Israel is the tribe of his inheritance;
the LORD of hosts is his name.

The Coming Exile

17 Gather up your bundle from the ground,
O you who live under siege!
18 For thus says the LORD:
I am going to sling out the inhabitants of the land at this time,
and I will bring distress on them, so that they shall feel it.

19 Woe is me because of my hurt!
My wound is severe.
But I said, "Truly this is my punishment,
and I must bear it."
20 My tent is destroyed,
and all my cords are broken;
my children have gone from me, and they are no more;
there is no one to spread my tent again,
and to set up my curtains.
21 For the shepherds are stupid,
and do not inquire of the LORD;
therefore they have not prospered,
and all their flock is scattered.

22 Hear, a noise! Listen, it is coming—
a great commotion from the land of the north
to make the cities of Judah a desolation,
a lair of jackals.

23 I know, O LORD, that the way of human beings is not in their control,

p This verse is in Aramaic q Heb lacks *the LORD*

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known for its gold (1 Kings 9.28). **10.10** *At his wrath the earth quakes.* God's coming in judgment destabilizes creation (see 9.10). **10.11** A prose addition in Aramaic, unique in Jeremiah. **10.12–13** A fragment of a hymn describing God as Lord of creation (see Pss 29; 33; 104; Am 4.13; 5.8–9; 9.5–6).

10.17–25 The final siege. In this final oracle about the "foe from the north," the siege against the cities will not be lifted. The inhabitants are admonished to prepare for exile. **10.19–21** Mother Zion laments over her wounds and the loss of her children (see 31.15–22). *Shepherds.* See note on 3.15. *To inquire of the LORD* means to consult the Lord through a prophet. **10.23–25** An intercessory prayer in which the prophet asks God for both merciful chastisement for his sins and punishment upon the enemies

that mortals as they walk
cannot direct their steps.
24 Correct me, O LORD, but in
just measure;
not in your anger, or you will
bring me to nothing.

25 Pour out your wrath on the
nations that do not
know you,
and on the peoples that do not
call on your name;
for they have devoured Jacob;
they have devoured him and
consumed him,
and have laid waste his
habitation.

Israel and Judah Have Broken the Covenant

11 The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: 2 Hear the words of this covenant, and speak to the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 3 You shall say to them, Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Cursed be anyone who does not heed the words of this covenant, 4 which I commanded your ancestors when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, from the iron-smelter, saying, Listen to my voice, and do all that I command you. So shall you be my people, and I will be your God, 5 that I may perform the oath that I swore to your ancestors, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as at this day. Then I answered, "So be it, LORD."

6 And the LORD said to me: Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem: Hear the words of this covenant and do them. 7 For I solemnly warned your ancestors when I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, warning them persistently, even to this day, saying, Obey my voice. 8 Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but everyone walked in the stubbornness of an evil will. So I brought upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do, but they did not.

9 And the LORD said to me: Conspiracy exists among the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 10 They have turned back to the iniquities of their ancestors of old, who refused to heed my words; they have gone after other gods to serve them; the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken the covenant that I made with their ancestors. 11 Therefore, thus says the LORD, assuredly I am going to bring disaster upon them that they cannot escape; though they cry out to me, I will not listen to them. 12 Then the cities of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem will go and cry out to the gods to whom they make offerings, but they will never save them in the time of their trouble. 13 For your gods have become as many as your towns, O Judah; and as many as the streets of Jerusalem are the altars to shame you have set up, altars to make offerings to Baal.

14 As for you, do not pray for this people, or lift up a cry or prayer on their behalf, for I will not listen when they call to me in the time of their trouble. 15 What right has my beloved in my house, when she has done vile deeds? Can vows[r] and sacrificial flesh avert your doom? Can you then exult? 16 The LORD once called you, "A green olive tree, fair with goodly fruit"; but with the roar of a great tempest he will set fire to it, and its branches will be consumed. 17 The LORD of hosts, who

r Gk: Heb *Can many*

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who have destroyed God's people.

11.1–17 The broken covenant. The prose sermon is built around a partial poetic oracle of judgment. The prose text is an addition in the form of a speech of judgment against Judah's violation of the covenant. The sermon explains the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem and the Babylonian exile. Both language and theology reflect the Mosaic covenant and its ritual renewal found in Deuteronomy (also see 7.16–28; Josh 24). The formal character of the covenant consists of a historical prologue describing God's acts of salvation on the people's behalf (the exodus from Egypt and the gift of the land of Canaan, vv. 4–5); stipulations necessary for maintaining the covenantal relationship (*heed the words of this covenant*, v. 3); curses for violating the covenant (vv. 3, 8–13); blessings for keeping trust; and witnesses (Jeremiah serves as witness: "*So be it, LORD*," v. 5). **11.3** See Deut 27.26. **11.4** See Deut 4.20. **11.5** *That I may perform the oath . . . ancestors.* See Deut 7.8; 8.18; 9.5. *A land flowing with milk and honey.* See Deut 6.3; 11.9; 26.9, 15; 27.3. *As at this day.* Cf. Deut 2.30; 4.20, 38; 6.24; 8.18; 10.15; 29.28. **11.14** Jeremiah is not allowed to intercede for Judah to avert divine judgment (see 7.16; 14.11; Ex 32.30–32). **11.15** *Sacrificial flesh.* See 6.20; 7.21–22.

planted you, has pronounced evil against
you, because of the evil that the house of
Israel and the house of Judah have done,
provoking me to anger by making offer-
ings to Baal.

Jeremiah's Life Threatened

18 It was the LORD who made it
known to me, and I knew;
then you showed me their
evil deeds.
19 But I was like a gentle lamb
led to the slaughter.
And I did not know it was
against me
that they devised schemes,
saying,
"Let us destroy the tree with
its fruit,
let us cut him off from the land
of the living,
so that his name will no longer
be remembered!"
20 But you, O LORD of hosts, who
judge righteously,
who try the heart and the
mind,
let me see your retribution upon
them,
for to you I have committed
my cause.
21 Therefore thus says the LORD con-

11.18–20.18 The laments of Jeremiah, the Lord, and the people. These chapters consist of various types of materials in both poetry and prose: laments, judgment oracles, biographical narratives, and oracles of salvation. However, dominating chs. 11–20 are the laments by Jeremiah, the Lord, and the people of Judah and Jerusalem. Jeremiah utters seven laments: 11.18–23; 12.1–6; 15.10–21; 17.14–18; 18.18–23; 20.7–13; 20.14–18. The usual structure consists of two parts: the prophet's complaint and the Lord's response. A fragment of a lament describes the conversion of pagan nations in 16.19–21. Parts of two thanksgiving psalms, often found as a response to laments, are inserted in 17.12–13; 20.13. Two laments are attributed to the Lord (12.7–13; 14.17–18) and two others to the people of Jerusalem (14.1–10; 14.19–22). In two prose additions, Jeremiah is told to cease intercession, i.e., to stop offering a lament on behalf of the people in the effort to divert punishment for their sin (14.11–12; 16.1–13). Another prose addition indicates that even if Moses and Samuel, two of Israel's greatest prophets, were to intercede, punishment would not be avoided (15.1–4). Common in the Psalter (e.g., Pss 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 9–10) and the book of Job, laments contain all or at least some of the following elements: invocation (call to God and initial pleas), complaint (description of suffering, reproachful questions), plea for help, condemnation of or imprecation against enemies, affirmation of confidence, confession of sins, acknowledgment of divine response, and hymnic elements (praise of God, blessings). Laments are often followed by thanksgiving psalms in which the worshiper praises and gives thanks to God for salvation (e.g., Pss 18; 21; 32; 34). The laments attributed to Jeremiah provide a unique look at the prophet's inner struggle with faith, persecution, and human suffering. If they are Jeremiah's own words, the laments could be placed in any period of his life. These laments interact with various judgment oracles, in both poetry and prose, which figure prominently in these chapters: 13.1–11, 12–14; 13.15–17, 18–19, 20–27; 14.13–16; 15.1–4; 15.5–9; 16.16–18, 21; 17.1–4. The setting presupposed by the judgment oracles is the siege of Jerusalem and the imminent exile, either in 597 or in 587 B.C.E. Biographical narratives also appear for the first time, to illustrate graphically the reasons for the laments and the reality of judgment and salvation: the potter and the clay (18.1–12), the broken earthenware jug (19.1–15), and persecution of Jeremiah by Pashhur the priest (20.1–6). Also present in the form of prose speeches (12.14–17; 16.14–15) is the promise of salvation, similar to the ones found in the Book of Consolation in chs. 30–31. Finally, a conditional, "either-or" prose sermon offers judgment or salvation depending on whether the sabbath is honored (17.19–27).

11.18–23 The plot against Jeremiah's life. The first lament of Jeremiah consists of a poetic complaint (11.18–20) and a prose response (11.21–23). In the complaint, Jeremiah indicates he is the innocent, unwitting target (*gentle lamb*, v. 19) of a plot against his life. As is common to laments in general and Jeremiah's own complaints, the prophet seeks God's protection and asks for divine retribution against the would-be evildoers. **11.19** To have one's (good) *name . . . remembered* was greatly desired. Survival by means of memory was greatly coveted, for this, along with children, were the two major means of life beyond death in ancient Israel (see Gen 12.2; Eccl 2.16; 7.1). A belief in resurrection did not clearly develop in Judaism until the second century B.C.E. (see Dan 12.2). **11.20** The request for punishment of enemies is common in laments (e.g., Pss 3.7; 7.6). **11.21–23** The enemies of Jeremiah are identified in a prose addition as *the people of*

cerning the people of Anathoth, who seek
your life, and say, "You shall not proph-
esy in the name of the LORD, or you will
die by our hand"— 22 therefore thus says
the LORD of hosts: I am going to punish
them; the young men shall die by the
sword; their sons and their daughters
shall die by famine; 23 and not even a rem-
nant shall be left of them. For I will bring
disaster upon the people of Anathoth, the
year of their punishment.

Jeremiah Complains to God

12 You will be in the right,
O LORD,
when I lay charges against you;
but let me put my case to you.
Why does the way of the guilty
prosper?
Why do all who are treacherous
thrive?
2 You plant them, and they take
root;
they grow and bring forth
fruit;
you are near in their mouths
yet far from their hearts.
3 But you, O LORD, know me;
You see me and test me—my
heart is with you.
Pull them out like sheep for the
slaughter,
and set them apart for the day
of slaughter.
4 How long will the land mourn,
and the grass of every field
wither?
For the wickedness of those who
live in it
the animals and the birds are
swept away,
and because people said, "He is
blind to our ways."[s]
5 If you have raced with
foot-runners and they have
wearied you,
how will you compete with
horses?
And if in a safe land you fall
down,
how will you fare in the thickets
of the Jordan?
6 For even your kinsfolk and your
own family,
even they have dealt
treacherously with you;
they are in full cry after you;
do not believe them,
though they speak friendly
words to you.

The LORD's Lament

7 I have forsaken my house,
I have abandoned my heritage;
I have given the beloved of
my heart
into the hands of her enemies.
8 My heritage has become to me
like a lion in the forest;
she has lifted up her voice
against me—
therefore I hate her.
9 Is the hyena greedy[t] for my
heritage at my command?
Are the birds of prey all
around her?
Go, assemble all the wild animals;
bring them to devour her.
10 Many shepherds have destroyed
my vineyard,
they have trampled down
my portion,

s Gk: Heb *to our future*
t Cn: Heb *Is the hyena, the bird of prey*

Anathoth, i.e., his own family and neighbors. The reason for their persecution of Jeremiah is unclear.

12.1–6 Jeremiah's second lament (see note on 11.18–23), the question of divine justice. In his complaint (vv. 1–4), Jeremiah accuses God of injustice: it is God who supports the wicked. **12.1–2** *Put my case* reflects the law court in which Jeremiah brings charges against God, who serves as judge. The theory of retribution, in which the righteous are rewarded and the wicked are punished, is questioned by the prophet. **12.5–6** God's response is a warning that the present persecution of the prophet is only going to intensify.

12.7–13 The lament pictures God weeping over the destruction of Judah by invading enemies. The Lord, having abandoned his people, is the one who gives victory to the invaders. **12.7** *My house* may refer either to the nation of Judah (Hos 9.15) or the temple (Jer 7.10).

they have made my pleasant
portion
a desolate wilderness.
11 They have made it a desolation;
desolate, it mourns to me.
The whole land is made desolate,
but no one lays it to heart.
12 Upon all the bare heights[u] in
the desert
spoilers have come;
for the sword of the LORD
devours
from one end of the land to
the other;
no one shall be safe.
13 They have sown wheat and have
reaped thorns,
they have tired themselves out
but profit nothing.
They shall be ashamed of their[v]
harvests
because of the fierce anger of
the LORD.

Judgment Against Judah's Neighbors

14 Thus says the LORD concerning all
my evil neighbors who touch the heritage
that I have given my people Israel to in-
herit: I am about to pluck them up from
their land, and I will pluck up the house
of Judah from among them. 15 And after
I have plucked them up, I will again have
compassion on them, and I will bring
them again to their heritage and to their
land, everyone of them. 16 And then, if
they will diligently learn the ways of my
people, to swear by my name, "As the
LORD lives," as they taught my people to
swear by Baal, then they shall be built up
in the midst of my people. 17 But if any
nation will not listen, then I will com-
pletely uproot it and destroy it, says the
LORD.

The Linen Loincloth

13 Thus said the LORD to me, "Go
and buy yourself a linen loin-
cloth, and put it on your loins, but do not
dip it in water." 2 So I bought a loincloth
according to the word of the LORD, and
put it on my loins. 3 And the word of the
LORD came to me a second time, saying,
4 "Take the loincloth that you bought and
are wearing, and go now to the Euphra-
tes,[w] and hide it there in a cleft of the
rock." 5 So I went, and hid it by the Eu-
phrates,[x] as the LORD commanded me.
6 And after many days the LORD said to
me, "Go now to the Euphrates,[w] and take
from there the loincloth that I com-
manded you to hide there." 7 Then I went
to the Euphrates,[w] and dug, and I took
the loincloth from the place where I had
hidden it. But now the loincloth was ru-
ined; it was good for nothing.
8 Then the word of the LORD came to
me: 9 Thus says the LORD: Just so I will
ruin the pride of Judah and the great
pride of Jerusalem. 10 This evil people,
who refuse to hear my words, who stub-
bornly follow their own will and have
gone after other gods to serve them and
worship them, shall be like this loincloth,
which is good for nothing. 11 For as the
loincloth clings to one's loins, so I made
the whole house of Israel and the whole
house of Judah cling to me, says the
LORD, in order that they might be for me

u Or *the trails* v Heb *your* w Or *to Parah*; Heb *perath* x Or *by Parah*; Heb *perath*

12.14–17 Judgment against Judah's neighbors, a prose oracle of salvation added during the exile. Judah's neighbors may escape God's future judgment at the conclusion of the exile only if they are converted to the worship of Yahweh. Common to oracles of salvation is the promise of the punishment of enemies (see 30.10–11).

13.1–11 The linen loincloth. This prose narrative recounts a symbolic action by Jeremiah. A symbolic action graphically illustrates the message of a prophet (see chs. 19; 32). The structure involves three parts: the prophet is commanded by God to perform a symbolic act, the narrative reports the act was carried out, and an explanation of the act is given. A loincloth was an undergarment covering the middle of the body. Linen was used for various types of clothing, sheets, curtains, and burial shrouds. All garments worn by priests were made of linen (Lev 16.4). **13.4** The *Euphrates* and the Tigris were the two major rivers that coursed through Babylonia. That Jeremiah actually twice made such a long journey of some four hundred miles is doubtful. Some scholars suggest the alternative of *Parah*, modern Khirbet Farah, about five miles northeast of Jerusalem. A more likely possibility is that the journey, like the larger narrative, is a symbolic action, not to be taken literally. **13.7** That *the loincloth was ruined* points to Israel's and Judah's corruption by their stubborn sinfulness.

a people, a name, a praise, and a glory.
But they would not listen.

Symbol of the Wine-Jars

12 You shall speak to them this word:
Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel:
Every wine-jar should be filled with wine.
And they will say to you, "Do you think we
do not know that every wine-jar should be
filled with wine?" 13 Then you shall say to
them: Thus says the LORD: I am about to
fill all the inhabitants of this land—the
kings who sit on David's throne, the
priests, the prophets, and all the inhabi-
tants of Jerusalem—with drunkenness.
14 And I will dash them one against an-
other, parents and children together, says
the LORD. I will not pity or spare or have
compassion when I destroy them.

Exile Threatened

15 Hear and give ear; do not be
haughty,
for the LORD has spoken.
16 Give glory to the LORD your God
before he brings darkness,
and before your feet stumble
on the mountains at twilight;
while you look for light,
he turns it into gloom
and makes it deep darkness.
17 But if you will not listen,
my soul will weep in secret for
your pride;
my eyes will weep bitterly and
run down with tears,
because the LORD's flock has
been taken captive.

18 Say to the king and the queen
mother:
"Take a lowly seat,
for your beautiful crown
has come down from your
head."[y]
19 The towns of the Negeb are
shut up
with no one to open them;
all Judah is taken into exile,
wholly taken into exile.

20 Lift up your eyes and see
those who come from the
north.
Where is the flock that was
given you,
your beautiful flock?

y Gk Syr Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain

13.12–14 The symbol of the wine-jars. A prose speech, this oracle of judgment is issued against the leaders of Judah: kings, priests, and prophets, and against the citizens of Jerusalem. Quoting a popular proverb, *every wine-jar should be filled with wine* (v. 12), the speech is similar to the preceding narrative. Either the wine-jar filled with wine symbolizes a complacency that is expressed in the belief there will always be plenty or the saying is a truism: wine-jars are made to hold wine. **13.13** The leaders and the inhabitants of Jerusalem will be filled with wine and become *drunk*, an image that suggests both a condition of stupor that prohibits wise decisions and a "cup of wrath" from which the leaders and people of Jerusalem will be made to drink (see 25.15–29).

13.15–27 These verses make up three poetic oracles shaped into a larger poem that describes the tragedy of exile. Two periods are plausible: the time just prior to the exile in 597 B.C.E. or that prior to the exile of 587 B.C.E. The first oracle calls for repentance (vv. 15–17); the second is a judgment speech addressing the king and queen mother, who have lost their positions (vv. 18–19); and the third is a lawsuit that attributes the ravages of exile to religious apostasy (vv. 20–27). **13.16** *Give glory to the LORD* refers to a doxology, i.e., a word of praise to God in which a person found guilty of a crime acknowledges the judgment is fair (see Josh 7.16–21; 2 Chr 30.8). Guilty Judah, threatened with exile unless there is full-scale repentance, is exhorted to utter a doxology. *Darkness, twilight, gloom,* and *deep darkness,* images of primordial chaos used to describe the devastation of impending doom (see Gen 1.2; Job 3). **13.17** The theme of lament returns as Jeremiah anticipates weeping over the captivity of the nation. **13.18** The *queen mother* was the mother of the ruling king and had significant political power (see 1 Kings 2.19; 15.13; 2 Kings 8.26; 11.1–3). If the exile in 597 B.C.E. is in mind, the king and queen mother would be Jehoiachin and Nehushta (2 Kings 24.8–17). Jehoiachin only ruled three months, prior to his exile. If the exile in 587 B.C.E. is in view, the king and queen mother would be Zedekiah and Hamutal (2 Kings 24.18–20). **13.19** The *Negeb* was the southern part of Judah and is a hot, arid region with under eight inches of annual rainfall. During the monarchy, there were in the Negeb many small villages engaged in agriculture and fortresses to protect Judah to the north and the trade routes that traversed the region. **13.20** *Those who come from the north.* See

21 What will you say when they set
as head over you
those whom you have trained
to be your allies?
Will not pangs take hold of you,
like those of a woman in labor?
22 And if you say in your heart,
"Why have these things come
upon me?"
it is for the greatness of your
iniquity
that your skirts are lifted up,
and you are violated.
23 Can Ethiopians[z] change their
skin
or leopards their spots?
Then also you can do good
who are accustomed to do evil.
24 I will scatter you[a] like chaff
driven by the wind from
the desert.
25 This is your lot,
the portion I have measured
out to you, says the LORD,
because you have forgotten me
and trusted in lies.
26 I myself will lift up your skirts
over your face,
and your shame will be seen.
27 I have seen your abominations,
your adulteries and neighings,
your shameless
prostitutions
on the hills of the countryside.
Woe to you, O Jerusalem!
How long will it be
before you are made clean?

The Great Drought

14 The word of the LORD that
came to Jeremiah concerning the
drought:
2 Judah mourns
and her gates languish;
they lie in gloom on the ground,
and the cry of Jerusalem
goes up.
3 Her nobles send their servants
for water;
they come to the cisterns,
they find no water,
they return with their
vessels empty.
They are ashamed and dismayed
and cover their heads,
4 because the ground is cracked.
Because there has been no rain
on the land
the farmers are dismayed;
they cover their heads.
5 Even the doe in the field forsakes
her newborn fawn
because there is no grass.
6 The wild asses stand on the bare
heights,[b]
they pant for air like jackals;
their eyes fail
because there is no herbage.

7 Although our iniquities testify
against us,
act, O LORD, for your name's
sake;
our apostasies indeed are many,
and we have sinned
against you.
8 O hope of Israel,
its savior in time of trouble,
why should you be like a stranger
in the land,
like a traveler turning aside for
the night?
9 Why should you be like someone
confused,
like a mighty warrior who
cannot give help?
Yet you, O LORD, are in the
midst of us,
and we are called by your
name;
do not forsake us!

10 Thus says the LORD concerning
this people:

z Or *Nubians*; Heb *Cushites* a Heb *them*
b Or *the trails*

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chs. 4–10. **13.23** Using proverbial language in a rhetorical question, Jeremiah addresses the impossibility of a corrupt people doing good. *Ethiopians*, the inhabitants of Cush, the region south of Egypt.

14.1–10 The people's lament. Occasioned by a drought, the first section (vv. 1–6) describes the devastating effects of a prolonged drought. The second part (vv. 7–9) contains the lament of the people in which they acknowledge their iniquities and call upon the Lord for deliverance. **14.8–9** The people reproach God for being one who is neither moved nor able to bring redemption. **14.10** The conclusion contains God's rejec-

Truly they have loved to wander,
they have not restrained
their feet;
therefore the LORD does not
accept them,
now he will remember their
iniquity
and punish their sins.

11 The LORD said to me: Do not pray
for the welfare of this people. 12 Although
they fast, I do not hear their cry, and al-
though they offer burnt offering and
grain offering, I do not accept them; but
by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence
I consume them.

Denunciation of Lying Prophets

13 Then I said: "Ah, Lord GOD! Here
are the prophets saying to them, 'You
shall not see the sword, nor shall you have
famine, but I will give you true peace in
this place.'" 14 And the LORD said to me:
The prophets are prophesying lies in my
name; I did not send them, nor did I com-
mand them or speak to them. They are
prophesying to you a lying vision, worth-
less divination, and the deceit of their own
minds. 15 Therefore thus says the LORD
concerning the prophets who prophesy in
my name though I did not send them,
and who say, "Sword and famine shall not
come on this land": By sword and famine
those prophets shall be consumed. 16 And
the people to whom they prophesy shall
be thrown out into the streets of Jerusa-
lem, victims of famine and sword. There
shall be no one to bury them—them-
selves, their wives, their sons, and their
daughters. For I will pour out their wick-
edness upon them.

17 You shall say to them this word:
Let my eyes run down with tears
night and day,
and let them not cease,
for the virgin daughter—my
people—is struck down
with a crushing blow,
with a very grievous wound.
18 If I go out into the field,
look—those killed by the
sword!
And if I enter the city,
look—those sick with[c] famine!
For both prophet and priest ply
their trade throughout
the land,
and have no knowledge.

The People Plead for Mercy

19 Have you completely rejected
Judah?
Does your heart loathe Zion?
Why have you struck us down
so that there is no healing
for us?
We look for peace, but find no
good;
for a time of healing, but there
is terror instead.
20 We acknowledge our wickedness,
O LORD,
the iniquity of our ancestors,
for we have sinned against you.
21 Do not spurn us, for your name's
sake;
do not dishonor your glorious
throne;
remember and do not break
your covenant with us.

c Heb *look—the sicknesses of*

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tion of the people's petition, because they continue in their wickedness. **14.11–12** Jeremiah is forbidden to intercede on behalf of his people and thus to redeem them from destruction (see 7.16; 11.14; 15.1; 16.5–9). The laments and sacrifices of the people will not avert destruction (6.20; 7.21–29). **14.12** For *burnt offerings*, see note on 6.20. *Grain offerings*, sacrifices of grains and vegetables, which could be given raw or cooked (see Lev 2).

14.13–16 Lying prophets. Jeremiah protests (*Ah, Lord God*; see note on 1.6) the words of prophets whose promises of well-being have deceived the people. **14.13** It may be Jeremiah objects that God is responsible for deceiving the people with lying words (see 1 Kings 22). **14.14–15** God denies the charge, indicating that the prophets speak lies and will be punished (see 23.9–40; 28). **14.16** However, those who are deceived will be killed and will suffer the curse of not being buried (see 7.29–8.3). **14.17–18** God's second lament. Once again God laments over the destruction of his *daughter* (see 12.7–13).

14.19–22 The people lament once more. God is addressed again by the people with a lament containing reproach, confession of sin, and an implicit appeal for salvation (see 14.1–10). **14.21** Jerusalem is known as the *throne* of God (see 3.17), as is the temple (see 17.12; Ezek 43.7).

22 Can any idols of the nations
bring rain?
Or can the heavens give
showers?
Is it not you, O LORD our God?
We set our hope on you,
for it is you who do all this.

Punishment Is Inevitable

15 Then the LORD said to me:
Though Moses and Samuel stood
before me, yet my heart would not turn
toward this people. Send them out of my
sight, and let them go! 2 And when they
say to you, "Where shall we go?" you shall
say to them: Thus says the LORD:
Those destined for pestilence, to
pestilence,
and those destined for the
sword, to the sword;
those destined for famine, to
famine,
and those destined for captivity,
to captivity.
3 And I will appoint over them four kinds
of destroyers, says the LORD: the sword to
kill, the dogs to drag away, and the birds
of the air and the wild animals of the
earth to devour and destroy. 4 I will make
them a horror to all the kingdoms of the
earth because of what King Manasseh son
of Hezekiah of Judah did in Jerusalem.

5 Who will have pity on you,
O Jerusalem,
or who will bemoan you?
Who will turn aside
to ask about your welfare?
6 You have rejected me, says
the LORD,
you are going backward;
so I have stretched out my hand
against you and
destroyed you—
I am weary of relenting.
7 I have winnowed them with a
winnowing fork
in the gates of the land;
I have bereaved them, I have
destroyed my people;
they did not turn from
their ways.
8 Their widows became more
numerous
than the sand of the seas;
I have brought against the
mothers of youths
a destroyer at noonday;
I have made anguish and terror
fall upon her suddenly.
9 She who bore seven has
languished;
she has swooned away;
her sun went down while it was
yet day;
she has been shamed and
disgraced.
And the rest of them I will give
to the sword
before their enemies,
says the LORD.

Jeremiah Complains Again and Is Reassured

10 Woe is me, my mother, that you
ever bore me, a man of strife and conten-
tion to the whole land! I have not lent, nor

15.1–4 Intercession cannot divert destruction. A prose speech, originating during the exile. Even if Moses (Ex 32.11–14, 30–34; Num 14.13–19) and Samuel (1 Sam 12.17–18), two of the greatest prophetic intercessors, were to plead Judah's case, the Lord would not save the nation from destruction (see 7.16; 11.14; 14.11–12; 16.5–9). Jeremiah is understood as the "prophet like Moses" (Deut 18.15–22) and stands in the line of succession from Moses and Samuel. **15.4** *Manasseh* was king over Judah for forty-five years (687/6–642 B.C.E.). A loyal vassal to Assyria, he was condemned for leading Israel into religious infidelity. The editors of 2 Kings blame him for the eventual destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of Judah (2 Kings 21.1–18). Judah's punishment for the sins of Manasseh represents the theory of retribution common in Deuteronomy, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, and the prose edition of Jeremiah. **15.5–9** A town without pity. A poetic judgment oracle in which the final destruction of Jerusalem is announced. Even the great losses suffered at the hands of the Egyptians and Babylonians prior to 587 B.C.E. did not result in Jerusalem's turning to the Lord. **15.9** *She who bore seven.* Bearing seven children is a sign of divine blessing (Ruth 4.15; 1 Sam 2.5).

15.10–21 Jeremiah's third lament (see note on 11.18–23). This lament consists of a poetic complaint by the prophet (vv. 15–18) and divine reassurance (vv. 19–21). Added later is an exilic or postexilic prose insertion (vv. 10–14). **15.10** The prose addition begins with a lament (*woe*) in which the prophet regrets he was born. Note that his call was from the womb and that God decreed from birth that he would be a

have I borrowed, yet all of them curse me.
11 The LORD said: Surely I have intervened in your life[d] for good, surely I have imposed enemies on you in a time of trouble and in a time of distress.[e] 12 Can iron and bronze break iron from the north?
13 Your wealth and your treasures I will give as plunder, without price, for all your sins, throughout all your territory.
14 I will make you serve your enemies in a land that you do not know, for in my anger a fire is kindled that shall burn forever.

15 O LORD, you know;
remember me and visit me,
and bring down retribution for me on my persecutors.
In your forbearance do not take me away;
know that on your account I suffer insult.
16 Your words were found, and I ate them,
and your words became to me a joy
and the delight of my heart;
for I am called by your name,
O LORD, God of hosts.
17 I did not sit in the company of merrymakers,
nor did I rejoice;
under the weight of your hand I sat alone,
for you had filled me with indignation.
18 Why is my pain unceasing,
my wound incurable,
refusing to be healed?
Truly, you are to me like a deceitful brook,
like waters that fail.

19 Therefore thus says the LORD:
If you turn back, I will take you back,
and you shall stand before me.
If you utter what is precious, and not what is worthless,
you shall serve as my mouth.
It is they who will turn to you,
not you who will turn to them.
20 And I will make you to this people
a fortified wall of bronze;
they will fight against you,
but they shall not prevail over you,
for I am with you
to save you and deliver you,
says the LORD.
21 I will deliver you out of the hand of the wicked,
and redeem you from the grasp of the ruthless.

d Heb *intervened with you* e Meaning of Heb uncertain

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prophet (see 1.5; 20.14–18). *Strife* (Hebrew *riv*) refers to Jeremiah's being both the object of contention and the mediator of God's lawsuit against the people (see 2.1–37). His wish not to have been born is grounded in both his prophetic call and the subsequent opposition and persecution he has received from the leaders of Judah for proclaiming divine judgment (see the trial in ch. 26, Jehoiakim's efforts to arrest him in 36.20–26, and his imprisonment by Zedekiah in 37.11–38.13). Even his own priestly family plotted against him (11.21–23). The Hebrew word for *curse* (*qahal*) refers to verbal abuse (Eccl 7.21–22) and even physical harm (Gen 8.21). **15.11** God assumes responsibility for the contempt and persecution of the prophet, yet intervenes in the prophet's life *for good*. **15.12** Such persecution hardens the prophet's character, enabling him to endure the disaster from the north (see 1.17–19). **15.13–14** Jeremiah and his opponents will be plundered and forced into exile. As a prophet of the people, Jeremiah is to experience their disastrous fate. **15.16** *Your words . . . I ate them*, a metaphor for God's putting in the prophet's mouth the divine words he is to speak (1.9; see Isa 55.1–11; Ezek 2.8–3.3). *I am called by your name*. Jeremiah's name in Hebrew means "Yahweh exalts." **15.17** *Under the weight of your hand*, a metaphor for prophetic inspiration (see 1 Kings 18.46; 2 Kings 3.15; Isa 8.11; Ezek 1.3; 3.14). **15.18** Jeremiah likens God to a *deceitful brook* and *waters that fail* to counter God's affirmation of being a *fountain of living waters* (2.13) and denial of being a *wilderness to Israel* (2.31). This imagery reflects the experience of one who, traveling through the wilderness, seeks to find water in a stream bed, only to find it dry. **15.19** The Lord's reply indicates Jeremiah has abandoned the prophetic office. The threefold repetition of "turn back" (Hebrew *shuv*) echoes the call to repentance in 3.1–4.4. To *stand before* the Lord refers to a messenger who stands before the king and awaits the divine word. **15.20** This verse brings to mind the language of the call in 1.18–19. Jeremiah is reminded of his call and is admonished to return to the prophetic office.

Jeremiah's Celibacy and Message

16 The word of the LORD came to me: 2 You shall not take a wife, nor shall you have sons or daughters in this place. 3 For thus says the LORD concerning the sons and daughters who are born in this place, and concerning the mothers who bear them and the fathers who beget them in this land: 4 They shall die of deadly diseases. They shall not be lamented, nor shall they be buried; they shall become like dung on the surface of the ground. They shall perish by the sword and by famine, and their dead bodies shall become food for the birds of the air and for the wild animals of the earth.

5 For thus says the LORD: Do not enter the house of mourning, or go to lament, or bemoan them; for I have taken away my peace from this people, says the LORD, my steadfast love and mercy. 6 Both great and small shall die in this land; they shall not be buried, and no one shall lament for them; there shall be no gashing, no shaving of the head for them. 7 No one shall break bread[f] for the mourner, to offer comfort for the dead; nor shall anyone give them the cup of consolation to drink for their fathers or their mothers. 8 You shall not go into the house of feasting to sit with them, to eat and drink. 9 For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: I am going to banish from this place, in your days and before your eyes, the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride.

10 And when you tell this people all these words, and they say to you, "Why has the LORD pronounced all this great evil against us? What is our iniquity? What is the sin that we have committed against the LORD our God?" 11 then you shall say to them: It is because your ancestors have forsaken me, says the LORD, and have gone after other gods and have served and worshiped them, and have forsaken me and have not kept my law; 12 and because you have behaved worse than your ancestors, for here you are, every one of you, following your stubborn evil will, refusing to listen to me. 13 Therefore I will hurl you out of this land into a land that neither you nor your ancestors have known, and there you shall serve other gods day and night, for I will show you no favor.

God Will Restore Israel

14 Therefore, the days are surely coming, says the LORD, when it shall no longer be said, "As the LORD lives who brought the people of Israel up out of the land of Egypt," 15 but "As the LORD lives who brought the people of Israel up out of the land of the north and out of all the lands where he had driven them." For I will bring them back to their own land that I gave to their ancestors.

16 I am now sending for many fishermen, says the LORD, and they shall catch them; and afterward I will send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from

f Two Mss Gk: MT *break for them*

16.1–13 Celibacy and judgment. A prose sermon, added by later editors, combines an announcement of judgment with a symbolic act: the prophet is commanded by the Lord not to marry and have a family (cf. symbolic acts in 13.1–11, 12–14). The prohibition against marriage and family is to underscore the coming death and destruction that will face parents and children. Even burial will be denied the dead. The theme of lament is repeated in God's refusal to allow Jeremiah to intercede on the people's behalf (7.16; 14.11–12; 15.1). He is also forbidden to rejoice with them, for joy will be taken from the land during the impending destruction and exile. **16.5** The *house of mourning* refers to the room or hall in a house in which a funeral banquet that included feasting and drinking occurred (see Am 6.7, where "the revelry of the loungers" refers to participants at funeral banquets; also see the *bread* and the *cup* in Jer 16.7 and the corresponding expression, *house of feasting*, in v. 8). **16.6** *Gashing* and *shaving* of the head were funerary practices associated with pagan worship and forbidden by Israelite law (Lev 19.28; 21.5; Deut 14.1). **16.10–13** The question and answer form is common in the prose tradition (5.19; 13.12–14; 15.1–4; 22.8–9).

16.14–15 The return from exile. A prose sermon of hope predicts the future return of the exiles from Babylonia. This passage duplicates almost exactly 23.7–8. The return from exile will be remembered and celebrated in religious faith and practice, as once was the exodus from Egypt. **16.16–21** Fishers and hunters of Judah. The prose sermon continues v. 13. **16.16** The *fishermen* and *hunters* may represent, respectively, the Egyptians (Isa 19.5–10) and Babylonians

every mountain and every hill, and out of
the clefts of the rocks. 17 For my eyes are
on all their ways; they are not hidden
from my presence, nor is their iniquity
concealed from my sight. 18 And[g] I will
doubly repay their iniquity and their sin,
because they have polluted my land with
the carcasses of their detestable idols,
and have filled my inheritance with their
abominations.

19 O LORD, my strength and my
stronghold,
my refuge in the day of
trouble,
to you shall the nations come
from the ends of the earth
and say:
Our ancestors have inherited
nothing but lies,
worthless things in which there
is no profit.
20 Can mortals make for themselves
gods?
Such are no gods!

21 "Therefore I am surely going to
teach them, this time I am going to teach
them my power and my might, and they
shall know that my name is the LORD."

Judah's Sin and Punishment

17 The sin of Judah is written with
an iron pen; with a diamond
point it is engraved on the tablet of their
hearts, and on the horns of their altars,
2 while their children remember their al-
tars and their sacred poles,[h] beside every
green tree, and on the high hills, 3 on the
mountains in the open country. Your
wealth and all your treasures I will give
for spoil as the price of your sin[i]
throughout all your territory. 4 By your
own act you shall lose the heritage that I
gave you, and I will make you serve your
enemies in a land that you do not know,
for in my anger a fire is kindled[j] that
shall burn forever.

A Collection of Wisdom Sayings

5 Thus says the LORD:
Cursed are those who trust in
mere mortals
and make mere flesh their
strength,

g Gk: Heb *And first* *h* Heb *Asherim*
i Cn: Heb *spoil your high places for sin* *j* Two Mss Theodotion: *you kindled*

(Lam 4.18–19). **16.18** Being repaid double may suggest the defeat by the Egyptians (Neco II) and the Babylonian conquest. **16.19–20** A fragment of a lament and possibly a thanksgiving psalm that speaks of Jeremiah's faith in God and the conversion of the nations (see Ps 22; Isa 2.3; Mic 4.2). **16.21** A continuation of v. 18.

17.1–4 Judgment against Judah. This prose sermon, deriving from the exile or the postexilic period, indicts Judah for involvement in fertility religion. Despoliation and exile are the judgment. **17.1** An *iron pen* was used to incise wood or metal (Job 19.24). A *diamond point* refers to an engraving instrument. The point was probably not diamond, but rather a very hard stone, perhaps emery. *Engraved on the tablet of their hearts* calls to mind engraving the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone (Ex 31.18; 32.16). *Altars* were places for the offering of oblations, foodstuffs, incense, and animals. Some altars had *horns*, i.e., projections from their four corners (Ex 27.2) on which the blood of sacrificial animals was placed (Lev 4.7). Those who desired asylum would cling to the altar's horns (1 Kings 1.50–51; 2.28–34). Tablets were made of stone, metal, or wood. Engraved writings, especially on stone and metal, were meant to endure permanently, unlike writings on leather and papyrus or notes and records written with ink on broken pottery. Writing and engraving Judah's sins on the tablets of its people's hearts and on the horns of its stone altars suggests a record that will endure for a very long time. This contrasts with the writing of the law on the hearts of the faithful generation in the future (31.33). **17.2** Representing the fertility mother goddess Asherah, *sacred poles* (Hebrew *'asherim*) consisted of carved wood (Judg 6.25) or living trees (Deut 16.21). A Canaanite goddess, Asherah was the consort of El at Ugarit, but of Baal in Israel (see 1 Kings 15.13; 18.19; 2 Kings 21.7; 23.4; Mic 5.13–14).

17.5–11 These verses consist of a wisdom poem (vv. 5–8), a rhetorical question (v. 9), a first-person proverb (v. 10), and a comparative proverb (v. 11). These are forms typically found in wisdom literature (Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes). While it is possible Jeremiah used wisdom texts, it is more probable that these materials were inserted by later editors. **17.5–8** A poem of two strophes (vv. 5–6, vv. 7–8) very similar to Ps 1. Ps 1 emphasizes that avoidance of the wicked and study of the Torah are the key to blessing, while the poem in Jeremiah finds the key to well-being in trusting in the Lord. The imagery of the *tree*

whose hearts turn away from
the LORD.
6 They shall be like a shrub in
the desert,
and shall not see when relief
comes.
They shall live in the parched
places of the wilderness,
in an uninhabited salt land.

7 Blessed are those who trust in
the LORD,
whose trust is the LORD.
8 They shall be like a tree planted
by water,
sending out its roots by
the stream.
It shall not fear when heat comes,
and its leaves shall stay green;
in the year of drought it is
not anxious,
and it does not cease to bear
fruit.

9 The heart is devious above all
else;
it is perverse—
who can understand it?
10 I the LORD test the mind
and search the heart,
to give to all according to
their ways,
according to the fruit of
their doings.
11 Like the partridge hatching what
it did not lay,
so are all who amass wealth
unjustly;
in mid-life it will leave them,
and at their end they will prove
to be fools.

12 O glorious throne, exalted from
the beginning,
shrine of our sanctuary!
13 O hope of Israel! O LORD!
All who forsake you shall be
put to shame;
those who turn away from you[k]
shall be recorded in the
underworld,[l]
for they have forsaken the
fountain of living water,
the LORD.

Jeremiah Prays for Vindication

14 Heal me, O LORD, and I shall
be healed;
save me, and I shall be saved;
for you are my praise.
15 See how they say to me,
"Where is the word of the
LORD?
Let it come!"
16 But I have not run away from
being a shepherd[m] in
your service,

k Heb *me* *l* Or *in the earth* *m* Meaning of Heb uncertain

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planted by water suggests the "tree of life," a common motif taken from mythology and associated with wisdom (Prov 3.13–18). For the sages who wrote wisdom literature, wisdom is the ability to perceive the order of God in creation, the intelligence to act in accordance with God's order, and moral behavior that leads to well-being. Wise behavior produces life in all of its fullness. **17.9** Rhetorical questions, common in wisdom texts, are queries that do not expect answers, for the answers are obvious (see "the voice from the whirlwind" in Job 38–41; Am 3.3–8). For the sages, the *heart* is the mind and seat of volition (will; Prov 14.10; 16.9, 23; 25.3). **17.10** In wisdom literature, God is the one who oversees the just order in nature and society. God is able to distribute to all their just desserts, because of divine knowledge of the human heart (see 20.12; Pss 7.10; 17.3; 139.14). **17.11** Comparative proverbs bring together two different things to discover a common feature. This proverb expresses clearly the theory of retribution (the righteous are rewarded and the wicked punished), so common to proverbial wisdom.

17.12–13 A fragment of a hymn that praises both the Lord and the sacred ark; it probably is a later addition to vv. 5–11. Hymns are common in the Psalter (see, e.g., Pss 8; 19; 33; 47). The *throne* is the ark, located in the temple, considered the seat of the invisible deity and guarded by cherubim (see note on 3.16).

17.14–18 Jeremiah's fourth lament (see note on 11.18–23). Unlike the earlier laments, Jeremiah's complaint is not answered. The prophet cries out for healing and redemption (see Pss 41.4; 147.3). **17.16** Jeremiah denies he has desired the *fatal day* (see *day of disaster* in v. 18), i.e., the day of the Lord when destruction from the invading enemy will come (see Am 5.18; 8.9–14; Zeph 1.14–18). Jeremiah has seen his role as intercessor, hoping to move Judah to repentance and to avert the wrath from the northern enemy.

nor have I desired the
fatal day.
You know what came from my
lips;
it was before your face.
17 Do not become a terror to me;
you are my refuge in the day
of disaster;
18 Let my persecutors be shamed,
but do not let me be shamed;
let them be dismayed,
but do not let me be dismayed;
bring on them the day of
disaster;
destroy them with double
destruction!

Hallow the Sabbath Day

19 Thus said the LORD to me: Go and stand in the People's Gate, by which the kings of Judah enter and by which they go out, and in all the gates of Jerusalem, 20 and say to them: Hear the word of the LORD, you kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who enter by these gates. 21 Thus says the LORD: For the sake of your lives, take care that you do not bear a burden on the sabbath day or bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem. 22 And do not carry a burden out of your houses on the sabbath or do any work, but keep the sabbath day holy, as I commanded your ancestors. 23 Yet they did not listen or incline their ear; they stiffened their necks and would not hear or receive instruction.

24 But if you listen to me, says the LORD, and bring in no burden by the gates of this city on the sabbath day, but keep the sabbath day holy and do no work on it, 25 then there shall enter by the gates of this city kings[n] who sit on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they and their officials, the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and this city shall be inhabited forever. 26 And people shall come from the towns of Judah and the places around Jerusalem, from the land of Benjamin, from the Shephelah, from the hill country, and from the Negeb, bringing burnt offerings and sacrifices, grain offerings and frankincense, and bringing thank offerings to the house of the LORD. 27 But if you do not listen to me, to keep the sabbath day holy, and to carry in no burden through the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath day, then I will kindle a fire in its gates; it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem and shall not be quenched.

The Potter and the Clay

18 The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: 2 "Come, go down to the potter's house, and there I will let you hear my words." 3 So I went down to the potter's house, and there he

n Cn: Heb *kings and officials*

17.19–27 Honor the sabbath. This probably postexilic prose sermon calls upon Judah, in the form of "either-or," to honor the sabbath day. It is a matter of life and death, punishment and blessing. The word *sabbath* occurs seven times in this text. The sabbath was the seventh day of the week and was observed as a day of rest and worship (see Ex 16.23; 20.8–11; 23.12; 31.12–17; Lev 23.3; Deut 5.12–15). Its observance was central to the Mosaic covenant. Am 8.5 points to the abstaining from business. Nehemiah in the fifth century B.C.E. locked the gates of Jerusalem to prevent the carrying on of commerce (Neh 13.15–22). The passage in Jeremiah promises the possibility of the restoration of kingship and kingdom, if the people observe the sabbath, and recalls the temple sermon in 7.1–15, where Jeremiah stands at a temple gate, addresses kings and people, and underscores obedience to the Ten Commandments as necessary for salvation. **17.19** The *People's Gate* is probably one of the gates to the temple. **17.26** The geographical areas are those near Jerusalem, making temple worship accessible. The *Shephelah* designates the low hills that separate the coastal plain from the central hill country. See 32.44; 33.13. Most biblical references are to the Shephelah of Judah. The Negeb is the southern region of Judah. For *burnt offerings*, *sacrifices*, and *frankincense*, see note on 6.20. For *grain offerings*, see note on 14.12. Frankincense was associated with grain offerings (Lev 2). A *thank offering*, consisting of meat and breads that could be eaten by priests and worshipers, is the type of sacrifice offered in thanks for salvation of various types (e.g., recovery from an illness; see Lev 7.11–18; Ps 107).

18.1–12 This prose narrative, originating during the exile or after it, involves another symbolic act coupled with a judgment oracle (see 13.1–11, 12–14). God has devised evil against Judah and Jerusalem, but will alter this fate if they will turn from their evil ways. The conclusion in v. 12 quotes the people as saying they will follow their own evil will. **18.2–4** The craft

was working at his wheel. 4 The vessel he
was making of clay was spoiled in the pot-
ter's hand, and he reworked it into an-
other vessel, as seemed good to him.
5 Then the word of the LORD came to
me: 6 Can I not do with you, O house of
Israel, just as this potter has done? says
the LORD. Just like the clay in the potter's
hand, so are you in my hand, O house of
Israel. 7 At one moment I may declare
concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I
will pluck up and break down and destroy
it, 8 but if that nation, concerning which I
have spoken, turns from its evil, I will
change my mind about the disaster that I
intended to bring on it. 9 And at another
moment I may declare concerning a na-
tion or a kingdom that I will build and
plant it, 10 but if it does evil in my sight,
not listening to my voice, then I will
change my mind about the good that I
had intended to do to it. 11 Now, there-
fore, say to the people of Judah and the
inhabitants of Jerusalem: Thus says the
LORD: Look, I am a potter shaping evil
against you and devising a plan against
you. Turn now, all of you from your evil
way, and amend your ways and your
doings.
12 But they say, "It is no use! We will
follow our own plans, and each of us will
act according to the stubbornness of our
evil will."

Israel's Stubborn Idolatry

13 Therefore thus says the LORD:
Ask among the nations:
Who has heard the like of this?
The virgin Israel has done
a most horrible thing.
14 Does the snow of Lebanon leave
the crags of Sirion?[o]
Do the mountain[p] waters
run dry,[q]
the cold flowing streams?
15 But my people have
forgotten me,
they burn offerings to a
delusion;
they have stumbled[r] in their
ways,
in the ancient roads,
and have gone into bypaths,
not the highway,
16 making their land a horror,
a thing to be hissed at forever.
All who pass by it are horrified
and shake their heads.
17 Like the wind from the east,

o Cn: Heb *of the field* p Cn: Heb *foreign*
q Cn: Heb *Are . . . plucked up?* r Gk Syr Vg: Heb *they made them stumble*

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of the potter was a highly skilled one. Pottery was an important industry and most villages and cities had pottery workshops. Pottery was shaped by hand in several ways: pressing clay to the inside of a basket which was then fired; shaping clay in the palm of one hand with the other hand; piecing clay strips around a base; and connecting lengths of clay with slip (clay mixed with water). However, a potter's wheel was the most common way of producing vessels. The wheel was turned by hand or foot, with the free hand or hands used to shape the clay. While some vessels were sun-dried, most were hardened by firing. Decorations consisted of incision, painting, and especially burnishing (polishing the slip that coated the dried pottery before firing). **18.7–9** *Pluck, up . . . break down, . . . build, . . . plant.* See note on 1.10. **18.11** The image of God as *potter* is common in the Bible. Gen 2.7 presents God as the potter fashioning humanity from clay. In other texts God shapes peoples and nations like a potter (see Isa 29.16; 64.8; Rom 9.20–24). **18.12** The people's rejection of God's will is as absurd as a vessel that argues against the potter, its creator (Isa 45.9).

18.13–17 The foolishness of idolatry. Once again Jeremiah brings charges against Israel for idolatry (see 2.1–3.5). God is both plaintiff and judge, the charges of religious apostasy and idolatry are set forth, the nations are called as witnesses to testify against Israel for abandoning God, rhetorical questions are raised with obvious though unspoken answers, and the judgment is rendered. The passage in form and content is strikingly similar to ch. 2. The oracle was probably uttered during the reign of Josiah as he sought to annex the former Northern Kingdom within his expanding territory. **18.14** *Snow of Lebanon* and *crags of Sirion* refer to the mountain range just to the north of Israel, which extends northward for a hundred miles. Sirion is another name for Mount Hermon, a mountain with three peaks (Deut 3.9; 4.48). It is some 9,230 feet above sea level and is the highest point in the region. **18.15** *My people have forgotten me.* See 2.32; 13.24–25. *Delusion* is a metaphor for idols (Ps 31.6; Jon 2.8). *Ancient roads* refers to the traditional Mosaic religion (see 6.16), which Israel has abandoned to follow other paths. **18.17** A *wind from the east* is often a violent and scorching wind

I will scatter them before
the enemy.
I will show them my back, not
my face,
in the day of their calamity.

A Plot Against Jeremiah

18 Then they said, "Come, let us make
plots against Jeremiah—for instruction
shall not perish from the priest, nor coun-
sel from the wise, nor the word from
the prophet. Come, let us bring charges
against him,[s] and let us not heed any of
his words."

19 Give heed to me, O LORD,
and listen to what my
adversaries say!
20 Is evil a recompense for good?
Yet they have dug a pit for
my life.
Remember how I stood
before you
to speak good for them,
to turn away your wrath
from them.
21 Therefore give their children
over to famine;
hurl them out to the power of
the sword,
let their wives become childless
and widowed.
May their men meet death by
pestilence,
their youths be slain by the
sword in battle.
22 May a cry be heard from their
houses,
when you bring the marauder
suddenly upon them!
For they have dug a pit to
catch me,
and laid snares for my feet.
23 Yet you, O LORD, know
all their plotting to kill me.
Do not forgive their iniquity,
do not blot out their sin from
your sight.
Let them be tripped up
before you;
deal with them while you are
angry.

The Broken Earthenware Jug

19 Thus said the LORD: Go and buy
a potter's earthenware jug. Take
with you[t] some of the elders of the peo-
ple and some of the senior priests, 2and
go out to the valley of the son of Hinnom
at the entry of the Potsherd Gate, and
proclaim there the words that I tell you.
3You shall say: Hear the word of the
LORD, O kings of Judah and inhabitants
of Jerusalem. Thus says the LORD of
hosts, the God of Israel: I am going to
bring such disaster upon this place that
the ears of everyone who hears of it will
tingle. 4Because the people have forsaken
me, and have profaned this place by mak-
ing offerings in it to other gods whom nei-

s Heb *strike him with the tongue* t Syr Tg Compare Gk: Heb lacks *take with you*

that comes from the desert ("sirocco"). See Ex 10.13; 14.21; Ps 48.7; Jon 4.8.

18.18–23 Jeremiah's fifth lament (see note on 11.18–23). The initial verse describes a plot against the life of Jeremiah (see the enemies of Jeremiah in other personal laments: 11.18–23; 12.1–6; 15.10–21; 17.14–18; 20.7–13). The reason for the efforts against Jeremiah is to preserve the priestly instruction (Torah), the counsel of the wise, and the prophetic word (see Ezek 7.26). The Torah, counsel, and word were the three forms of divine revelation and teaching. Jeremiah is seen as standing contrary to the legitimate revelation of God announced by the three offices of religious leadership. Those plotting intend to kill the prophet (see v. 23). The *wise* were probably counselors to kings (cf. note on 8.8–13). **18.20** Jeremiah had even interceded for his enemies (4.10, 19–22). See 14.11–12; 15.1; also 16.5–9 where Jeremiah was forbidden to intercede. **18.21–23** The call for vengeance against enemies is common in Jeremiah's laments (see 11.18–23; 12.6; 15.15; see also Pss 3.7; 5.4–10; 7.6). Jeremiah desires that his enemies perish during the invasion from the north.

19.1–15 This prose narrative, coming from the exile, combines a symbolic act with a prophetic word of judgment (see 13.1–11, 12–14; 16.1–13; 18.1–12). **19.2** *Valley of the son of Hinnom.* See note on 7.31. The *Potsherd Gate,* probably another name for the Dung Gate (Neh 2.13; 3.13–14; 12.31), may have been located in the south wall of Jerusalem. The gate was probably the exit for removing the garbage of the city. Among the garbage would probably be broken pottery. **19.3–9** Idolatrous practices, including child sacrifice, are also condemned in 7.29–8.3. *Topheth.* See 7.30–34; note on 7.31. Eating children was practiced in times of famine and siege when food supplies ran out (2 Kings 6.24–31; Lam 4.10).

ther they nor their ancestors nor the kings
of Judah have known, and because they
have filled this place with the blood of the
innocent, 5 and gone on building the high
places of Baal to burn their children in
the fire as burnt offerings to Baal, which I
did not command or decree, nor did it
enter my mind; 6 therefore the days are
surely coming, says the LORD, when this
place shall no more be called Topheth, or
the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the
valley of Slaughter. 7 And in this place I
will make void the plans of Judah and Je-
rusalem, and will make them fall by the
sword before their enemies, and by the
hand of those who seek their life. I will
give their dead bodies for food to the
birds of the air and to the wild animals of
the earth. 8 And I will make this city a hor-
ror, a thing to be hissed at; everyone who
passes by it will be horrified and will hiss
because of all its disasters. 9 And I will
make them eat the flesh of their sons and
the flesh of their daughters, and all shall
eat the flesh of their neighbors in the
siege, and in the distress with which their
enemies and those who seek their life af-
flict them.

10 Then you shall break the jug in the
sight of those who go with you, 11 and
shall say to them: Thus says the LORD of
hosts: So will I break this people and this
city, as one breaks a potter's vessel, so that
it can never be mended. In Topheth they
shall bury until there is no more room to
bury. 12 Thus will I do to this place, says
the LORD, and to its inhabitants, making
this city like Topheth. 13 And the houses
of Jerusalem and the houses of the kings
of Judah shall be defiled like the place of
Topheth—all the houses upon whose
roofs offerings have been made to the
whole host of heaven, and libations have
been poured out to other gods.

14 When Jeremiah came from To-
pheth, where the LORD had sent him to
prophesy, he stood in the court of the
LORD's house and said to all the people:
15 Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of
Israel: I am now bringing upon this city
and upon all its towns all the disaster that
I have pronounced against it, because
they have stiffened their necks, refusing
to hear my words.

Jeremiah Persecuted by Pashhur

20 Now the priest Pashhur son of
Immer, who was chief officer in
the house of the LORD, heard Jeremiah
prophesying these things. 2 Then Pashhur
struck the prophet Jeremiah, and put him
in the stocks that were in the upper Benja-
min Gate of the house of the LORD. 3 The
next morning when Pashhur released Je-
remiah from the stocks, Jeremiah said to
him, The LORD has named you not Pash-
hur but "Terror-all-around." 4 For thus
says the LORD: I am making you a terror
to yourself and to all your friends; and
they shall fall by the sword of their ene-
mies while you look on. And I will give all
Judah into the hand of the king of Bab-
ylon; he shall carry them captive to Bab-
ylon, and shall kill them with the sword.
5 I will give all the wealth of this city, all its
gains, all its prized belongings, and all the
treasures of the kings of Judah into the

19.9 Eating the flesh of one's children was a curse for disobedience to the law and covenant (Lev 26.29; Deut 28.53; Isa 9.20; 49.26; Zech 11.9). **19.10–13** The breaking of a vessel of pottery is a common symbol of destruction (see Ps 2.9). The most common example is Egyptian execration texts. The names of the king's enemies were inscribed on pottery vessels, curses were uttered, and the pottery was smashed. This ritual was designed to magically break the power of the king's enemies and to defeat them.

20.1–6 Pashhur's public persecution of Jeremiah. This prose narrative identifies one of Jeremiah's enemies and is an example of the persecution about which the prophet complains in his laments. **20.1** *Pashhur* was a priest in charge of the temple police, who were to maintain order in the sacred precinct. **20.2** Pashhur took Jeremiah into custody, beat him, and put him in stocks for a day. **20.3–6** Jeremiah's judgment oracle against Judah, Jerusalem, and Pashhur. **20.3** The act of naming and the meaning of names were important. Names at times embodied the character, faith, or fate of a person. For example, Jacob in Hebrew means "supplanter," for he supplanted his older twin brother in obtaining the birthright from Isaac (see Gen 25.24–34). Jacob's name is later changed to Israel when he is blessed by God (see Gen 32.27–29). "Israel" means "he who strives with God" in Hebrew. Jeremiah's changing of Pashhur's name to *Terror-all-around* (see 6.25; 20.10) points to the coming siege of Jerusalem and exile, a fate that Pashhur and his family will share (see the prophecy against Hananiah in ch. 28, and the prophecy of Amos against Amaziah, priest of Bethel, in Am 7.10–17).

hand of their enemies, who shall plunder them, and seize them, and carry them to Babylon. 6 And you, Pashhur, and all who live in your house, shall go into captivity, and to Babylon you shall go; there you shall die, and there you shall be buried, you and all your friends, to whom you have prophesied falsely.

Jeremiah Denounces His Persecutors

7 O LORD, you have enticed me,
and I was enticed;
you have overpowered me,
and you have prevailed.
I have become a laughingstock all day long;
everyone mocks me.
8 For whenever I speak, I must cry out,
I must shout, "Violence and destruction!"
For the word of the LORD has become for me
a reproach and derision all day long.
9 If I say, "I will not mention him,
or speak any more in his name,"
then within me there is something like a burning fire
shut up in my bones;
I am weary with holding it in,
and I cannot.
10 For I hear many whispering:
"Terror is all around!
Denounce him! Let us denounce him!"
All my close friends
are watching for me to stumble.
"Perhaps he can be enticed,
and we can prevail against him,
and take our revenge on him."
11 But the LORD is with me like a dread warrior;
therefore my persecutors will stumble,
and they will not prevail.
They will be greatly shamed,
for they will not succeed.
Their eternal dishonor
will never be forgotten.
12 O LORD of hosts, you test the righteous,
you see the heart and the mind;
let me see your retribution upon them,
for to you I have committed my cause.

13 Sing to the LORD;
praise the LORD!
For he has delivered the life of the needy
from the hands of evildoers.

Jeremiah Curses the Day of His Birth

14 Cursed be the day
on which I was born!

20.7–13 Jeremiah's sixth lament (see note on 11.18–23). The prophet's lament is found in vv. 7–12, while a thanksgiving, presumably sung by the prophet, follows in v. 13. The complaint is the most blasphemous in the Bible. **20.7–8** The term *enticed,* which occurs twice in the first line of this verse, has two important meanings: "to deceive" and "to seduce." The meaning of "deceive" may reflect God's deception of a prophet (see the case of Micaiah ben Imlah in 1 Kings 22.19–22). "To seduce" is the meaning in the seduction of a virgin in Ex 22.16–17. This same meaning is metaphorically applied to God's "seducing" Israel (Hos 2.14). A wife may "seduce" (i.e., deceive) her husband by her beauty and cunning (Judg 14.15; 16.5). *Overpowered* may suggest rape (see 2 Sam 13.14). In Deut 22.25–27, the law requires that a man who "overpowers" a betrothed virgin in the open countryside be put to death. The woman is spared, for when she "cries out" (see Jer 20.8), there is no one to rescue her. Thus, Jeremiah uses very harsh language, the language of rape, to describe his treatment by God. God has seduced and then raped him. When he cries out "*Violence and destruction,*" there is no one to hear and to save. Jeremiah's enemies, called his close friends, use the same language of seduction and rape in their plans to take revenge against him (v. 10). **20.13** A fragment of a thanksgiving psalm, which, if delivered by Jeremiah, expresses his joy and thanks for God's merciful acts of delivering the *needy* from the *evildoers.* Thanksgiving psalms are uttered either after salvation has come or in sure anticipation of its occurrence. They usually are in response to laments (see note on 11.18–20.18).

20.14–18 Jeremiah's seventh and last lament. Jeremiah curses his own existence, i.e., the day of his birth (see Job 3). For other curses, see Jer 11.1–17; 17.5–8. **20.14–15** Curses were power-filled language designed to bring death and destruction, as opposed to blessings, which were to

The day when my mother
bore me,
let it not be blessed!
15 Cursed be the man
who brought the news to my
father, saying,
"A child is born to you, a son,"
making him very glad.
16 Let that man be like the cities
that the LORD overthrew
without pity;
let him hear a cry in the morning
and an alarm at noon,
17 because he did not kill me in
the womb;
so my mother would have been
my grave,
and her womb forever great.
18 Why did I come forth from
the womb
to see toil and sorrow,
and spend my days in shame?

Jerusalem Will Fall to Nebuchadrezzar

21 This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, when King Zedekiah sent to him Pashhur son of Malchiah and the priest Zephaniah son of Maaseiah, saying, 2 "Please inquire of the LORD on our behalf, for King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon is making war against us; perhaps the LORD will perform a wonderful deed for us, as he has often done, and will make him withdraw from us."
3 Then Jeremiah said to them: 4 Thus

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enhance life and well-being. God is the creator who brings about conception, shapes the fetus in the womb, is the midwife who delivers the baby, and nurtures the newborn throughout life (see note on 1.5). Jeremiah's curse against his birth (15.10) is also a rejection of his call (1.5). *A child . . . glad.* The birth of a son was considered good news and a reason for rejoicing (see Ruth 4.13–17; Prov 4.3; Isa 9.6). **20.16** The two *cities* are Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19; see Isa 1.9–10; 3.9; Jer 23.14; Am 4.11; Zeph 2.9). **20.17** The prophet wishes he had been aborted.

21.1–10 Oracle against Zedekiah and Jerusalem. The setting given to the narrative appears to be 588 B.C.E., after Zedekiah had rebelled against Babylonian rule. The narrative consists of two parts: an oracle against Jerusalem and Zedekiah (vv. 1–7) and a conditional offer of salvation only to those who surrender (vv. 8–10). The narrative is similar to another one that tells of two other emissaries sent to the prophet by Zedekiah, perhaps a short time after this occasion (37.3–10). Also cf. 34.1–7, which contains another warning to Zedekiah. **21.1** *Zedekiah* reigned from 597 to 587 B.C.E. A son of Josiah and a descendant of David, Zedekiah was placed on the throne by Nebuchadrezzar (605/4–562 B.C.E.) after his first conquest of Jerusalem in 597 B.C.E. Against Jeremiah's repeated warnings, Zedekiah rebelled against the Babylonians, leading to the destruction of Jerusalem and the second exile in 587 B.C.E. Zedekiah was blinded by Nebuchadrezzar and taken to Babylon (2 Kings 24.18–25.7). *Pashhur* was the son of *Malchiah,* a prince who owned the cistern in which Jeremiah was imprisoned (38.6). Malchiah may have been a son of Zedekiah. Not to be confused with the priest of the same name in 20.1–6, this Pashhur was a royal prince under Zedekiah (see 38.1). One of his descendants served as a priest during the time of Nehemiah (1 Chr 9.12; Neh 11.12). *Zephaniah,* a priest, was the overseer of the temple who had been rebuked by Shemaiah, a Jewish prophet in Babylonia, for not opposing Jeremiah's prophecy to the first exiles in 597 B.C.E. that the exile would be a long one. Shemaiah insisted Jeremiah be imprisoned. Refusing to imprison the prophet, Zephaniah simply read the letter to Jeremiah, who in turn issued an oracle of judgment against Shemaiah and his descendants (see ch. 29). Zephaniah was executed by Nebuchadrezzar at Riblah after the fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C.E. **21.2** *Inquire of the LORD* means to consult the Lord through a prophet (10.21; 37.2). *A wonderful deed* refers to God's mighty acts, especially deeds of judgment and redemption, in the realm of history (Ex 3.20; Pss 9.1; 26.7; 86.10). The "mighty deeds" celebrated in Jewish faith were the exodus from Egypt, victory at the Red Sea, guidance in the Sinai wilderness, and the taking of the land of Canaan. Zedekiah is hoping for a similar act of deliverance in the face of the Babylonian invasion and siege. The name *Nebuchadrezzar* (Akkadian *Nabu-kudurri-utzur*) means both "May Nabu [a Babylonian deity] protect the boundary" and "May Nabu protect the son." A variant spelling, "Nebuchadnezzar," occurs elsewhere in the OT. See, e.g., 27.6, 8, 20; 28.11; 29.3; 2 Kings 24.10–11; 25.1, 8; Dan 1.1, 18; 2.1, 28; 3.1; 4.1; 5.1. **21.3–7** The Lord will not protect the city as was expected in traditional Jewish faith (Pss 46; 48; 76; Isa 31.4–5). Instead, God will fight against Jerusalem and bring victory to the Babylonians (here and elsewhere in the OT also called "Chaldeans"). This is a reversal of "holy war" theology in which God fights on Israel's behalf (see the holy war campaigns in Josh 1–12). Equally devastating is news that the Lord will not defend the king who is a son of David. Royal theology is based on a covenant between God and David (2 Sam 7; Ps 89).

you shall say to Zedekiah: Thus says the
LORD, the God of Israel: I am going to
turn back the weapons of war that are in
your hands and with which you are fight-
ing against the king of Babylon and
against the Chaldeans who are besieging
you outside the walls; and I will bring
them together into the center of this city.
5 I myself will fight against you with out-
stretched hand and mighty arm, in anger,
in fury, and in great wrath. 6 And I will
strike down the inhabitants of this city,
both human beings and animals; they
shall die of a great pestilence. 7 Afterward,
says the LORD, I will give King Zedekiah
of Judah, and his servants, and the people
in this city—those who survive the pesti-
lence, sword, and famine—into the hands
of King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon, into
the hands of their enemies, into the hands
of those who seek their lives. He shall
strike them down with the edge of the
sword; he shall not pity them, or spare
them, or have compassion.

8 And to this people you shall say:
Thus says the LORD: See, I am setting be-
fore you the way of life and the way of
death. 9 Those who stay in this city shall
die by the sword, by famine, and by pesti-
lence; but those who go out and surren-
der to the Chaldeans who are besieging
you shall live and shall have their lives as
a prize of war. 10 For I have set my face
against this city for evil and not for good,
says the LORD: it shall be given into the
hands of the king of Babylon, and he shall
burn it with fire.

Message to the House of David

11 To the house of the king of Ju-
dah say: Hear the word of the LORD,

Because of divine promise and steadfast love (Hebrew *chesed*), God would support forever the royal line, even though there would be descendants of David evil enough to be punished. The king, who ruled on behalf of God, would receive divine aid against his enemies, as long as he was faithful (see the royal psalms: Pss 2; 18; 20; 21; 45; 72; 89; 110). **21.8–10** This speech is to address the people of Jerusalem, not the king. The oracle of conditional salvation follows a covenantal formula found elsewhere only in Deut 30.15, 19: *I am setting before you the way of life and the way of death*. This "either-or" formula, which asks the audience to choose life or death by obedience to or rejection of the covenant requirements, occurs in the prose narratives and sermons in Jeremiah in 7.1–15; 17.19–27; 22.1–5 (see Deut 28; 30.15–20; Josh 24). Jeremiah believed that the Babylonians were the instrument of God's will. To resist them was to resist God. Thus, the prophet consistently warned both leaders and people to bow the knee to Nebuchadrezzar or face disastrous consequences (27.6; 38.17–18). As a result of his position on the Babylonian question, Jeremiah was considered a traitor by some leaders (see 37.13–14).

21.11–23.8 Concerning the house of David. This collection consists of poetic oracles and prose sermons that address the related themes of Davidic kingship ("the house of David") and Jerusalem (the political capital and religious center of the kingdom of Judah). The key expressions are *house* (dynasty and palace) and (*cedars of*) *Lebanon* (representing the city of Jerusalem, palace, and temple). The collection consists of general speeches addressed to the house of David, oracles concerning specific kings, oracles mentioning future rulers and a messiah, and others that speak of Jerusalem. The references to Lebanon recall that cedars of Lebanon were used in the construction of the palace and temple (1 Kings 5–7; 9.10–28). The general oracles addressed to the house of David are 21.11–12 (poetry); 22.1–5 (prose); 22.6–7 (poetry). The poetic oracles concerning individual kings are 22.10 (Jehoahaz, or Shallum); 22.13–19 (Jehoiakim); 22.28–30 (Jehoiachin, or Coniah). The prose sermons about specific kings are 22.11–12 (Jehoahaz); 22.24–27 (Jehoiachin). Curiously, two kings who are not the direct subject of an oracle are Josiah (indirectly mentioned in 22.15–16) and Zedekiah (an allusion to him may occur in wordplays on *righteous Branch* and *The LORD is our righteousness* in 23.5–6). 23.1–8 contains prose sermons about the future, including the promise of "shepherds" (i.e., kings, see note on 3.15) who will rule faithfully in contrast to their evil predecessors, and a messianic oracle about a *righteous Branch*, who will rule according to wisdom and justice. Finally, several speeches deal with Jerusalem (*this city*, *Lebanon*): 21.13–14 (poetry); 22.8–9 (prose); 22.20–23 (poetry). The strong criticism of kings and the city of Jerusalem (the location of palace and temple) indicate Jeremiah blamed the Jerusalem establishment (kings, princes [officers], prophets, and priests) for the violation of the Mosaic covenant, including especially religious and political apostasy. While Jeremiah may not have been opposed in principle to the existence of the related institutions of palace and temple, they did not have an important place in his theological understanding of the relationship between God, Israel and Judah, and the pagan nations. While later prose sermons attributed to the prophet point to the

12 O house of David! Thus says the LORD:
Execute justice in the morning,
and deliver from the hand of
the oppressor
anyone who has been robbed,
or else my wrath will go forth
like fire,
and burn, with no one to
quench it,
because of your evil doings.

13 See, I am against you,
O inhabitant of the valley,
O rock of the plain,
says the LORD;
you who say, "Who can come
down against us,
or who can enter our places
of refuge?"
14 I will punish you according to the
fruit of your doings,
says the LORD;
I will kindle a fire in its forest,
and it shall devour all that is
around it.

Exhortation to Repent

22 Thus says the LORD: Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and speak there this word, 2 and say: Hear the word of the LORD, O King of Judah sitting on the throne of David—you, and your servants, and your people who enter these gates. 3 Thus says the LORD: Act with justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor anyone who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the alien, the orphan, and the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place. 4 For if you will indeed obey this word, then through the gates of this house shall enter kings who sit on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they, and their servants, and their people. 5 But if you will not heed these

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reestablishment of kingship and temple in Jerusalem and their importance to the future restoration (23.1–8; 30.9; 33.14–26), it is questionable whether this reflects Jeremiah's own view.

21.11–14 General oracles against the house of David and Jerusalem. Two poetic oracles introduce the collection: a warning for kings to rule justly (vv. 11–12) and a judgment against Jerusalem (vv. 13–14). **21.11–12** The warning to the monarchy in vv. 11–12 takes the form of an admonition in apodictic (unconditional) style (see Isa 1.16–17; 56.1; Ezek 45.9; Am 5.4b, 14–15). *Execute* (or "act with") *justice* recurs in 22.3, 15; 23.5. For Jeremiah, destruction is avoided only by the practice of justice, not by an unconditional promise to preserve the monarchy forever (cf. 2 Sam 7.11–16; Ps 89). Although ruling descendants of David would be punished for evil acts and injustice, the Lord's covenant with the house of David, outlined in 2 Sam 7; Ps 89, promises an eternal reign for the dynasty. To *execute justice* involves more than simply a judicial responsibility. Rather, justice is the order of both creation and society. To rule justly means the king maintains the cosmic and social order and produces well-being for the nation (see Ps 72). **21.13–14** This introductory oracle includes a threat in v. 13 (see 23.30–32; 50.31; 51.25) and judgment in v. 14. *Inhabitant of the valley,* better translated "one enthroned over the valley," refers to Jerusalem. The word *inhabitant* in Hebrew is a feminine participle, thus agreeing with the Hebrew word for "city" which is also feminine. *Rock of the plain* is not an appellation for Jerusalem elsewhere in the Bible, but "rock" is a common metaphor for God, occurring some thirty-three times (see Deut 32; Isa 17.10; Pss 31.3; 62.7; 71.3). The reference may be a parody of Zion theology, i.e., the belief that God will defend the city against its enemies (Pss 46; 48; 76; Isa 31.4–5). *Forest* (of Lebanon) is a term for the palace (see 1 Kings 7.2–12; 10.17, 21; Isa 22.8) and possibly the temple as well (1 Kings 6.9–36), since both were built from the cedars of Lebanon. Thus the fire will burn down the city and its two major buildings, the palace and the temple.

22.1–5 An exhortation to kings. This prose sermon, deriving from the exile or later, is an elaboration of the poetic oracle in 21.11–12. It is also in the conditional "either-or" style: obey the covenant by ruling justly and the monarchy will continue; disobey and suffer the end of the dynasty. The sermon seeks to provide the reason for the destruction of the palace and the ending of monarchical succession. **22.1** Jeremiah is to *go down to the house of the king of Judah,* i.e., descend from the temple to the palace. **22.3** *The alien, the orphan, and the widow.* See Deut 16.11, 14; 24.19–21; note on 7.6. **22.5** *I swear by myself.* Oaths in the Hebrew Bible generally invoked the name of God for validation. They were serious expressions of obligation and expected to be kept (Lev 5.1–4; Ps 15.4). Oaths were accompanied by symbolic acts, most often the raising of the hand toward heaven (Dan 12.7; Rev 10.5–6). Even God raises the hand in oath taking (Isa 62.8; Ezek 20.5). Curses, expressed or implied, often accompanied oaths (Ruth 1.17; 1 Sam 3.17; 1 Kings 2.23). In Jer 22.5, the curse is replaced with a stern warning: *this house* (palace) *shall become a des-*

words, I swear by myself, says the LORD,
that this house shall become a desolation.
6 For thus says the LORD concerning the
house of the king of Judah:
You are like Gilead to me,
like the summit of Lebanon;
but I swear that I will make you
a desert,
an uninhabited city.[u]
7 I will prepare destroyers
against you,
all with their weapons;
they shall cut down your choicest
cedars
and cast them into the fire.
8 And many nations will pass by this
city, and all of them will say one to another, "Why has the LORD dealt in this way with that great city?" 9 And they will answer, "Because they abandoned the covenant of the LORD their God, and worshiped other gods and served them."

Message to the Sons of Josiah

10 Do not weep for him who is
dead,
nor bemoan him;
weep rather for him who
goes away,
for he shall return no more
to see his native land.
11 For thus says the LORD concerning Shallum son of King Josiah of Judah, who succeeded his father Josiah, and who went away from this place: He shall return here no more, 12 but in the place where they have carried him captive he shall die, and he shall never see this land again.

13 Woe to him who builds his house
by unrighteousness,

u Cn: Heb *uninhabited cities*

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olation. Desolation often refers to the ruins of cities ravaged by disaster (25.18; 27.17; 44.2, 6; Lev 26.31; Isa 44.26). **22.6–7** Judgment against the palace. This poetic oracle of judgment contains language that connects it to 21.13–14 (*cedars* and *fire* [22.7]; *fire in its forest* [21.14]). **22.6** The introduction addresses the oracle to the *house of the king of Judah* (i.e., the monarchy or the palace). *Gilead* is a region in the Transjordan located between Bashan and Moab. It was a mountainous and heavily forested area. *Summit of Lebanon* refers to a mountainous area also noted for its forests. Both references, Gilead and the summit of Lebanon, are mentioned because of their forests. The palace of Solomon was designated as a forest, because it was constructed of cedars from Lebanon (1 Kings 7.1–12; see note on 21.13–14). *Uninhabited city*, in Hebrew lit. "uninhabited cities," a hyperbole indicating the terrible destruction that is facing the palace. **22.8–9** An explanation of Jerusalem's destruction. Originating in the exile, this prose commentary in the form of a question and answer explains why Jerusalem and the palace were destroyed. The answer is the violation of the Mosaic covenant and the worship of other gods (see 5.19; 9.12–16; 13.12–14; 15.1–4; 16.10–13; Deut 29.22–28; 1 Kings 9.8–9).

22.10–12 Concerning Jehoahaz (Shallum). This section consists of two parts: a fragment of a poetic oracle concerning two unidentified males (one dead and the other in exile) and a prose sermon naming the exiled male as Shallum (Jehoahaz). **22.10** An admonition to the citizens of Judah and Jerusalem not to engage in lamentation over King Josiah, who died at the hands of the Egyptians at Megiddo in 609 B.C.E., thus bringing to an end the nationalistic dream of a Jewish state free from foreign domination. Rather, the people should lament the exile of Jehoahaz (609 B.C.E.) who was chosen by the "people of the land" (male landowners) to succeed his father, Josiah, to the throne, only to rule for three months (2 Kings 23.30–34). Neco replaced him with another son of Josiah, Jehoiakim. **22.11–12** A prose commentary, deriving from the exile or later, explaining that the person in v. 10 who is exiled is *Shallum* (see Ezek 19.2–4). "Shallum" is the personal name (see 1 Chr 3.15) of the king whose royal name, given to him upon ascending the throne, is Jehoahaz. Jehoahaz died in Egyptian exile (2 Kings 23.34).

22.13–19 Against King Jehoiakim. Jehoiakim (609–598 B.C.E.), a son of Josiah and descendant of David, was put on the throne by Neco II (see Introduction) to replace his younger brother, Jehoahaz. Jehoiakim was his throne name, Eliakim his birth name (2 Kings 23.34). Thus, Jehoiakim ruled without a contract with the male landowners ("the people of the land") and with no evidence of prophetic or priestly anointing. After Nebuchadrezzar defeated the Egyptians at Carchemish in 605 B.C.E., Jehoiakim became a Babylonian vassal. After three years, Jehoiakim rebelled against the Babylonians, resulting in his death during the siege of Jerusalem. The city surrendered to Nebuchadrezzar in 597 B.C.E. (see 2 Kings 23.34–24.7). The speech against Jehoiakim is a poetic judgment oracle. The indictment (vv. 13–17) includes using compulsory, uncompensated labor to build a luxurious palace and practicing injustice. The announcement of judgment (vv. 18–19) speaks of the eventual demise of

and his upper rooms by
injustice;
who makes his neighbors work
for nothing,
and does not give them their
wages;
14 who says, "I will build myself a
spacious house
with large upper rooms,"
and who cuts out windows for it,
paneling it with cedar,
and painting it with vermilion.
15 Are you a king
because you compete in cedar?
Did not your father eat and drink
and do justice and
righteousness?
Then it was well with him.
16 He judged the cause of the poor
and needy;
then it was well.
Is not this to know me?
says the LORD.
17 But your eyes and heart
are only on your dishonest
gain,
for shedding innocent blood,
and for practicing oppression
and violence.

18 Therefore thus says the LORD concerning King Jehoiakim son of Josiah of Judah:

They shall not lament for him,
saying,
"Alas, my brother!" or "Alas,
sister!"
They shall not lament for him,
saying,
"Alas, lord!" or "Alas, his
majesty!"
19 With the burial of a donkey he
shall be buried—
dragged off and thrown out
beyond the gates of
Jerusalem.

Against Jerusalem

20 Go up to Lebanon, and cry out,
and lift up your voice in
Bashan;
cry out from Abarim,
for all your lovers are crushed.
21 I spoke to you in your prosperity,
but you said, "I will not listen."
This has been your way from
your youth,
for you have not obeyed
my voice.
22 The wind shall shepherd all your
shepherds,
and your lovers shall go into
captivity;

Jehoiakim, who will neither be lamented nor buried with royal honors. **22.13–14** *Woe* refers to a cry that derives from funeral lamentation (see the repetition of the word in v. 18, where it is translated "alas"). It announces the "funeral" of the one or ones addressed and was commonly used by prophets in introducing judgment oracles (see Isa 10.5; 17.12; 28.1; Am 5.18; 6.1; Hab 2.6, 9, 12, 15, 19; Zech 11.17). *Unrighteousness* and *injustice*. See 21.12; 22.3–4. The *house* probably refers to the palace (a renovation and expansion project). Compulsory labor, without remuneration, was used by Solomon in building the temple, palace, and other projects (see 1 Kings 5.13–18; 9.15–22). *Paneling it with cedar* calls to mind Solomon's palace (1 Kings 7.7). *Vermilion* is red ocher (hematite). **22.15–17** A contrast of the just reign of Josiah with the oppressive rule of his son Jehoiakim. The language throughout this speech indicates Jehoiakim attempted to rule in the same manner and style of his famous ancestor, Solomon, instead of following the pattern of the good and just king, Josiah. *Shedding innocent blood* is one of the twelve curses associated with violating the Mosaic covenant (Deut 27.25). **22.18** This verse refers to the public ritual of lamentation in which mourners weep over the deceased. The references to *brother*, *sister*, *lord* (father), and *majesty* indicate the king symbolically fulfilled various family roles on behalf of his people. **22.19** *Burial of a donkey*. Jehoiakim's carcass will be dragged out of the city and dumped in the open to rot and provide food for scavengers (see 36.30). The denial of burial was a horrible curse (see 8.1–3; Deut 28.26). 2 Kings 24.6 simply mentions the death of Jehoiakim, while 2 Chr 36.6 indicates he was put in fetters by Nebuchadrezzar to be taken to Babylon. Neither mentions his burial.

22.20–23 This poetic judgment oracle calls upon the city of Jerusalem, personified as an adulterous woman, to lament over her approaching humiliation (see 4.8; 9.17–22; 14.1–10). **22.20** *Lebanon*, *Bashan*, and *Abarim* are mountainous locations (north, northeast, and southeast of Israel) from which Jerusalem is to wail over her fate (see Jephthah's daughter in Judg 11.37–38; Rachel in Jer 31.15). *Lovers* (30.14) refers either to false deities (Hos 2) or to allies (Ezek 23.5, 9) who promised Jerusalem protection. **22.21** *Your youth* (see 2.2; Ezek 16.22, 43, 60; Hos 2.17).

then you will be ashamed and dismayed
because of all your wickedness.
23 O inhabitant of Lebanon,
nested among the cedars,
how you will groan[v] when pangs come upon you,
pain as of a woman in labor!

Judgment on Coniah (Jehoiachin)

24 As I live, says the LORD, even if King Coniah son of Jehoiakim of Judah were the signet ring on my right hand, even from there I would tear you off
25 and give you into the hands of those who seek your life, into the hands of those of whom you are afraid, even into the hands of King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon and into the hands of the Chaldeans.
26 I will hurl you and the mother who bore you into another country, where you were not born, and there you shall die.
27 But they shall not return to the land to which they long to return.
28 Is this man Coniah a despised broken pot,
a vessel no one wants?
Why are he and his offspring hurled out
and cast away in a land that they do not know?
29 O land, land, land,
hear the word of the LORD!
30 Thus says the LORD:
Record this man as childless,
a man who shall not succeed in his days;
for none of his offspring shall succeed
in sitting on the throne of David,
and ruling again in Judah.

Restoration After Exile

23 Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! says the LORD. 2 Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concern-

v Gk Vg Syr: Heb *will be pitied*

22.22 *Shepherds.* See note on 3.15. **22.23** *Inhabitant of Lebanon*, lit. "one enthroned in Lebanon," here refers to Jerusalem (see note on 21.13–14).

22.24–30 Jehoiachin was the throne name of *Coniah*, the king who succeeded Jehoiakim to the throne in the final days of the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem. Jehoiachin ruled for only three months before the city fell (597 B.C.E.). Deported to Babylon, along with the people of Jerusalem, including his royal family and important leaders (2 Kings 24.6–17), Jehoiachin died in exile. However, 2 Kings ends with the hopeful report that in the thirty-seventh year of Jehoiachin's exile (560 B.C.E.), he was released from prison by the Babylonian king Evil-merodach, given a place of honor above the other exiled kings, and provided with both food from the king's table and a regular allowance. 22.24–30 consists of two parts: a prose judgment speech that includes a divine oath (vv. 24–27) and a poetic judgment speech (vv. 28–30). The two speeches are directed against the popular hope of the return of Jehoiachin and his children from exile to rule over Judah (28.4). A pro-Jehoiachin political party looked to the exiled king as the legitimate ruler, and not his uncle, Zedekiah, placed on the throne by Nebuchadrezzar. The Babylonian Jewish community calculated their calendar by reference to the exile of Jehoiachin (e.g., Ezek 1.2). Babylonian texts call Jehoiachin "King of Judah" and indicate he received a pension from Nebuchadrezzar. Inscriptions on jar handles from the period indicate royal property belonged to Jehoiachin. Contrary to this popular view, Jeremiah's argument was that Jehoiachin's legal right to kingship expired with his exile. Indeed, Jeremiah predicted the exiled king would never return home. **22.24–27** A prose judgment speech, deriving from the exile, that announces Jehoiachin and his mother, the queen (see note on 13.18), will not return from exile. *As I live* introduces an oath (see notes on 4.2; 22.5). *Signet ring* refers to the authority of the king as God's representative, since the bearer of the king's seal has the authority to stamp documents with the royal signature (see Hag 2.20–23, where Zerubbabel, a Davidic descendant, is likened to the Lord's signet ring). **22.28–30** A judgment speech that dispels any hope that Jehoiachin will rule again in Judah. The same is true of his offspring. It is as though Jehoiachin were childless (actually, he had seven sons; 1 Chr 3.17–18).

23.1–8 Three prose sermons about the future: return from exile and faithful rulers (vv. 1–4), the *righteous Branch* (vv. 5–6), and return from the north country (vv. 7–8). These three sermons may have originated during the exile or shortly thereafter. **23.1–4** Return from exile and faithful rulers. This prose sermon combines a judgment oracle against faithless rulers with a prophecy of salvation that speaks of faithful rulers after the return from captivity. The first

ing the shepherds who shepherd my people: It is you who have scattered my flock,
and have driven them away, and you have
not attended to them. So I will attend to
you for your evil doings, says the LORD.
3 Then I myself will gather the remnant of
my flock out of all the lands where I have
driven them, and I will bring them back to
their fold, and they shall be fruitful and
multiply. 4 I will raise up shepherds over
them who will shepherd them, and they
shall not fear any longer, or be dismayed,
nor shall any be missing, says the LORD.

The Righteous Branch of David

5 The days are surely coming, says the
LORD, when I will raise up for David a
righteous Branch, and he shall reign as
king and deal wisely, and shall execute
justice and righteousness in the land. 6 In
his days Judah will be saved and Israel will
live in safety. And this is the name by
which he will be called: "The LORD is our
righteousness."
7 Therefore, the days are surely coming, says the LORD, when it shall no longer
be said, "As the LORD lives who brought
the people of Israel up out of the land of
Egypt," 8 but "As the LORD lives who
brought out and led the offspring of the
house of Israel out of the land of the
north and out of all the lands where he[w]
had driven them." Then they shall live in
their own land.

False Prophets of Hope Denounced

9 Concerning the prophets:
My heart is crushed within me,

w Gk: Heb *I*

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two verses are modeled on the form of a "woe oracle" (see note on 22.13–14). *Shepherds* are kings (see note on 3.15) who are condemned for their evil rule. **23.3** *Be fruitful and multiply.* See the promises to Abraham and Jacob, the two great ancestors of Israel, in Gen 17.1–8, 20; 28.3; 48.4. **23.5–6** This prose sermon, repeated with modifications in 33.15–16, predicts the coming of a future king who will rule wisely and establish justice (see Isa 11.1–9). *Branch* is a messianic title in Zech 3.8; 6.12 (Isa 11.1 uses a different Hebrew word for "branch"). One of the leaders of the return from exile was Zerubbabel (whose name in Hebrew means "branch/shoot of Babylon"), a descendant of David. Hag 2.20–23 identifies him as the heir to kingship. The future ruler in Jer 23.5–6 will bear the name *The LORD is our righteousness*, perhaps a wordplay on the name Zedekiah, which in Hebrew means "Yahweh is righteousness." Nebuchadrezzar gave this name to Mattaniah when he was appointed king (2 Kings 24.17). Zedekiah was the last king of Judah (597–587 B.C.E.). The Hebrew word for "righteousness" (*tzedeq*) also means "legitimate." While Jeremiah did not oppose Zedekiah, his legitimacy as ruler was questioned by many, even within Judah. The implication may be that the future king will rule in such a way as to demonstrate that "The LORD is our legitimate (ruler)." **23.7–8** Return from the north country. This passage is a prose prediction of salvation that makes use of the oath formula (*as the LORD lives*; see note on 4.2). The exodus from Egypt was central to Israel's ancient faith (see Deut 26.5–9; Josh 24; Pss 78; 105; 106; 135; 136; Neh 9). In the future, the return from captivity in Babylon will replace the ancient creed's emphasis on the exodus. The "new exodus" is a major theme in Second Isaiah (the anonymous prophet of the exile, whose oracles are collected in Isa 40–55; see Isa 43.15–21; 51.9–11).

23.9–40 This collection of various materials about prophets divides into two parts: a largely poetic section in vv. 9–22 and a prose sermon in vv. 23–40. The poetic section includes: a description of general wickedness that priest and prophet share (vv. 9–12), a judgment oracle against the prophets of Samaria and of Jerusalem (vv. 13–15), a warning in prose not to pay heed to the false prophets (vv. 16–17), rhetorical questions and a vision report about the failure of the false prophets to see the coming judgment of the Lord (vv. 18–20), and a rejection of the false prophets (vv. 21–22). The prose section consists of a sermon stating God's opposition to false prophets (vv. 23–32) and a midrash, an interpretive commentary, on the meaning of *the burden of the LORD* (vv. 33–40). The problems involved in distinguishing between true and false prophets were considerable (see ch. 28; 1 Kings 13; 22). Deut 18.15–22 provides the most detailed attempt to distinguish true from false prophets. False prophets spoke in the name of false gods, prophesied good fortune instead of judgment, lied in claiming to speak in the name of God, and predicted things that did not come to pass. Jeremiah adds his own tests: false prophets are immoral, speak at times in the name of Baal, see visions and dreams of their own mind, prophesy weal not woe, tell lies, and have not stood in the *council of the LORD* (v. 18). Even so, Jeremiah had a very difficult time convincing others he was a true prophet and that his prophetic opponents were false prophets. **23.9** This verse is a lamentation

all my bones shake;
I have become like a drunkard,
like one overcome by wine,
because of the LORD
and because of his holy words.
10 For the land is full of adulterers;
because of the curse the land mourns,
and the pastures of the wilderness are dried up.
Their course has been evil,
and their might is not right.
11 Both prophet and priest are ungodly;
even in my house I have found their wickedness,
says the LORD.
12 Therefore their way shall be to them
like slippery paths in the darkness,
into which they shall be driven and fall;
for I will bring disaster upon them
in the year of their punishment,
says the LORD.
13 In the prophets of Samaria
I saw a disgusting thing:
they prophesied by Baal
and led my people Israel astray.
14 But in the prophets of Jerusalem
I have seen a more shocking thing:
they commit adultery and walk in lies;
they strengthen the hands of evildoers,
so that no one turns from wickedness;
all of them have become like Sodom to me,
and its inhabitants like Gomorrah.
15 Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts concerning the prophets:
"I am going to make them eat wormwood,
and give them poisoned water to drink;
for from the prophets of Jerusalem
ungodliness has spread throughout the land."

16 Thus says the LORD of hosts: Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you; they are deluding you. They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the LORD. 17 They keep saying to those who despise the word of the LORD, "It shall be well with you"; and to all who stubbornly follow their own stubborn hearts, they say, "No calamity shall come upon you."

18 For who has stood in the council of the LORD
so as to see and to hear his word?
Who has given heed to his word so as to proclaim it?
19 Look, the storm of the LORD!
Wrath has gone forth,
a whirling tempest;
it will burst upon the head of the wicked.
20 The anger of the LORD will not turn back
until he has executed and accomplished
the intents of his mind.
In the latter days you will understand it clearly.

21 I did not send the prophets,
yet they ran;
I did not speak to them,

(see note on 11.18–23) that mentions prophetic ecstasy, i.e., the physical and mental state of one who receives a divine revelation (see 4.19–21; 1 Sam 10.1–13; 19.23–24). **23.10** *The land is full.* See Gen 6.13; Lev 19.29. **23.12** *Slippery paths.* See Ps 35.6. **23.13** For a description of Baal prophecy, see 1 Kings 18.25–29. **23.14** *Sodom ... and ... Gomorrah* (Gen 18–19). See Jer 20.16 and note; Isa 1.10. **23.16–17** For an example of a prophet of good fortune, see Hananiah in ch. 28. **23.18** *The council of the LORD* is an assembly of divine beings over which God presides (1 Kings 22.19–23; Job 1–2; Pss 82; 89.7; Isa 6.1–8). In this assembly, God issues divine edicts for governing the cosmos and history. **23.19–20** These verses are almost duplicated in 30.23–24. The *storm of the LORD* is an image taken from theophanic judgment scenes in which the Lord as warrior comes to execute judgment against the wicked (25.32; Job 38.1; 40.6; Hab 3). **23.21** Prophets *ran* in the sense

yet they prophesied.
22 But if they had stood in my council,
then they would have proclaimed my words to my people,
and they would have turned them from their evil way,
and from the evil of their doings.

23 Am I a God near by, says the LORD,
and not a God far off? 24 Who can hide in secret places so that I cannot see them?
says the LORD. Do I not fill heaven and earth? says the LORD. 25 I have heard what
the prophets have said who prophesy lies in my name, saying, "I have dreamed, I
have dreamed!" 26 How long? Will the hearts of the prophets ever turn back—
those who prophesy lies, and who prophesy the deceit of their own heart? 27 They
plan to make my people forget my name by their dreams that they tell one another,
just as their ancestors forgot my name for Baal. 28 Let the prophet who has a dream
tell the dream, but let the one who has my word speak my word faithfully. What has
straw in common with wheat? says the LORD. 29 Is not my word like fire, says the
LORD, and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces? 30 See, therefore, I am
against the prophets, says the LORD, who steal my words from one another. 31 See, I
am against the prophets, says the LORD, who use their own tongues and say, "Says
the LORD." 32 See, I am against those who prophesy lying dreams, says the LORD,
and who tell them, and who lead my people astray by their lies and their recklessness, when I did not send them or appoint them; so they do not profit this people at all, says the LORD.

33 When this people, or a prophet, or a priest asks you, "What is the burden of the LORD?" you shall say to them, "You are the burden,[x] and I will cast you off, says the LORD." 34 And as for the prophet, priest, or the people who say, "The burden of the LORD," I will punish them and their households. 35 Thus shall you say to one another, among yourselves, "What has the LORD answered?" or "What has the LORD spoken?" 36 But "the burden of the LORD" you shall mention no more, for the burden is everyone's own word, and so you pervert the words of the living God, the LORD of hosts, our God. 37 Thus you shall ask the prophet, "What has the LORD answered you?" or "What has the LORD spoken?" 38 But if you say, "the burden of the LORD," thus says the LORD: Because you have said these words, "the burden of the LORD," when I sent to you, saying, You shall not say, "the burden of the LORD," 39 therefore, I will surely lift you up[y] and cast you away from my presence, you and the city that I gave to you and your ancestors. 40 And I will bring upon you everlasting disgrace and perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten.

The Good and the Bad Figs

24 The LORD showed me two baskets of figs placed before the temple of the LORD. This was after King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon had taken into ex-

x Gk Vg: Heb *What burden* MT *forget you*
y Heb Mss Gk Vg:

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that they were messengers of God. **23.23–24** God is both immanent and transcendent (see Ps 139.7–12; Am 9.1–4). **23.30–32** Note the threefold occurrence of *I am against*, a challenge formula issued to opponents (see 21.13). **23.33** This verse, in a question and answer form (5.19; 9.12–16; 13.12–14; 15.1–4; 16.10–13; 22.8–9), identifies the people, priests, and prophets as the *burden of the LORD*. The word for "burden" (Hebrew *massa'*) also means "oracle" (see Nah 1.1; Hab 1.1; Mal 1.1). Hence the verse involves a wordplay. When Jeremiah is asked for an oracle from God, he is to respond: "You are the 'burden' of the LORD." **23.34–40** A later pointed commentary or midrash that prohibits the use of the term *burden* for a revelation from God.

24.1–10 This prose narrative contains a prophetic vision report (see 1.11–14, 15–16; Am 7.1–9.10). See note on 1.11–14. The formal structure includes: introduction (*The LORD showed me*, v. 1), description (v. 2), dialogue (v. 3), and interpretation (vv. 4–10). While written during the exile, the narrative is situated in the period after the first exiles were taken to Babylonia in 597 B.C.E. The purpose of the narrative is to stress that the first exiles (the "good figs") were the chosen remnant whom God would use to build a new future, once the return to the Jewish homeland occurred. Chief among these, of course, was the exiled king, Jehoiachin. By contrast the rotten figs were those who remained behind in Jerusalem, including Zedekiah and his officials, and those who were in Egypt (Jehoahaz and his entourage).

ile from Jerusalem King Jeconiah son of
Jehoiakim of Judah, together with the of-
ficials of Judah, the artisans, and the
smiths, and had brought them to Babylon.
2 One basket had very good figs, like first-
ripe figs, but the other basket had very
bad figs, so bad that they could not be
eaten. 3 And the LORD said to me, "What
do you see, Jeremiah?" I said, "Figs, the
good figs very good, and the bad figs very
bad, so bad that they cannot be eaten."
4 Then the word of the LORD came to
me: 5 Thus says the LORD, the God of Is-
rael: Like these good figs, so I will regard
as good the exiles from Judah, whom I
have sent away from this place to the land
of the Chaldeans. 6 I will set my eyes upon
them for good, and I will bring them back
to this land. I will build them up, and not
tear them down; I will plant them, and
not pluck them up. 7 I will give them a
heart to know that I am the LORD; and
they shall be my people and I will be their
God, for they shall return to me with their
whole heart.
8 But thus says the LORD: Like the bad
figs that are so bad they cannot be eaten,
so will I treat King Zedekiah of Judah, his
officials, the remnant of Jerusalem who
remain in this land, and those who live in
the land of Egypt. 9 I will make them a
horror, an evil thing, to all the kingdoms
of the earth—a disgrace, a byword, a
taunt, and a curse in all the places where
I shall drive them. 10 And I will send
sword, famine, and pestilence upon them,
until they are utterly destroyed from
the land that I gave to them and their
ancestors.

The Babylonian Captivity Foretold

25 The word that came to Jeremiah
concerning all the people of Ju-
dah, in the fourth year of King Jehoiakim
son of Josiah of Judah (that was the first
year of King Nebuchadrezzar of Bab-
ylon), 2 which the prophet Jeremiah spoke
to all the people of Judah and all the in-
habitants of Jerusalem: 3 For twenty-three
years, from the thirteenth year of King
Josiah son of Amon of Judah, to this day,
the word of the LORD has come to me, and
I have spoken persistently to you, but you
have not listened. 4 And though the LORD
persistently sent you all his servants the
prophets, you have neither listened nor
inclined your ears to hear 5 when they
said, "Turn now, everyone of you, from
your evil way and wicked doings, and you
will remain upon the land that the LORD
has given to you and your ancestors from
of old and forever; 6 do not go after other
gods to serve and worship them, and do
not provoke me to anger with the work of
your hands. Then I will do you no harm."
7 Yet you did not listen to me, says the

In view of the earlier speech about Jehoiachin (22.24–30), it seems unlikely the present narrative reflects the view of Jeremiah. Rather, the story appears to be a piece of religious propaganda designed to enhance the importance of the first exiles in 597 B.C.E., including Jehoiachin and his officials, in rebuilding the future (see 28.3–4; 2 Kings 25.27–30). This view of divine favor for exiles, rather than for the remnant left behind in Judah, became especially pronounced in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah in the fifth-fourth centuries, B.C.E. **24.1** *Two baskets of figs.* See 29.17; Hos 9.10. *Jeconiah* is an alternate spelling for Jehoiachin. **24.6** *Build . . . tear down, . . . plant . . . pluck up.* See note on 1.10. **24.7** *I will give them a heart to know.* See 31.33–34; 32.39; Deut 29.4. *They shall be my people and I will be their God* is a covenant formula for the sealing of the relationship between God and Israel (see 7.23; 11.4; 30.22; 31.1, 33; 32.38). *Return.* See note on 3.1–4.4. This text anticipates the new covenant passage in 31.31–34. **24.9** *A disgrace, a byword, a taunt, and a curse.* See 19.8; 25.9, 18; 29.18; 42.18; 44.8, 12, 22; Deut 28.37; 1 Kings 9.7; 2 Chr 7.20.

25.1–14 This prose sermon, originating in the exile or later, summarizes the content of Jeremiah's speeches from the beginning of his prophetic activity (627 B.C.E., *the thirteenth year of King Josiah*, v. 3) to the battle of Carchemish (605 B.C.E., *the fourth year of King Jehoiakim*, v. 1); see Introduction. The section divides into two parts: a superscription (vv. 1–2) and an appeal for repentance followed by an announcement of judgment (vv. 3–14). In the appeal, Judah is called upon to repent or face destruction. In the announcement, Judah has not repented and subsequently will be destroyed. **25.1** *King Jehoiakim* (609–598 B.C.E.). See note on 22.13–19. *Nebuchadrezzar* (605–562 B.C.E.). See Introduction. **25.3** *King Josiah* (640–609 B.C.E.). The twenty-three years would be 627 to 605 B.C.E. Jeremiah's speeches these twenty-three years primarily announce judgment and may comprise the first scroll (ch. 36; see Introduction). **25.4** *His servants the prophets.* See note on 7.25. The rejection of Jeremiah's message stands in a long tradition of refusing to listen to the Lord's emissaries. **25.5** *Turn now.* See the summons to repentance in 3.1–4.4;

LORD, and so you have provoked me to
anger with the work of your hands to
your own harm.
8 Therefore thus says the LORD of
hosts: Because you have not obeyed my
words, 9 I am going to send for all the
tribes of the north, says the LORD, even
for King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon, my
servant, and I will bring them against this
land and its inhabitants, and against all
these nations around; I will utterly de-
stroy them, and make them an object of
horror and of hissing, and an everlasting
disgrace.[z] 10 And I will banish from them
the sound of mirth and the sound of glad-
ness, the voice of the bridegroom and the
voice of the bride, the sound of the mill-
stones and the light of the lamp. 11 This
whole land shall become a ruin and a
waste, and these nations shall serve the
king of Babylon seventy years. 12 Then af-
ter seventy years are completed, I will
punish the king of Babylon and that na-
tion, the land of the Chaldeans, for their
iniquity, says the LORD, making the land
an everlasting waste. 13 I will bring upon
that land all the words that I have uttered
against it, everything written in this book,
which Jeremiah prophesied against all the
nations. 14 For many nations and great
kings shall make slaves of them also; and
I will repay them according to their deeds
and the work of their hands.

The Cup of God's Wrath

15 For thus the LORD, the God of Is-
rael, said to me: Take from my hand this
cup of the wine of wrath, and make all the
nations to whom I send you drink it.
16 They shall drink and stagger and go out
of their minds because of the sword that I
am sending among them.
17 So I took the cup from the LORD's
hand, and made all the nations to whom
the LORD sent me drink it: 18 Jerusalem
and the towns of Judah, its kings and offi-
cials, to make them a desolation and a
waste, an object of hissing and of cursing,
as they are today; 19 Pharaoh king of
Egypt, his servants, his officials, and all
his people; 20 all the mixed people;[a] all
the kings of the land of Uz; all the kings
of the land of the Philistines—Ashkelon,
Gaza, Ekron, and the remnant of Ashdod;
21 Edom, Moab, and the Ammonites; 22 all
the kings of Tyre, all the kings of Sidon,
and the kings of the coastland across the
sea; 23 Dedan, Tema, Buz, and all who

z Gk Compare Syr: Heb *and everlasting desolations*
a Meaning of Heb uncertain

18.11. **25.9** This is the first clear indication that the "foe from the north" (*tribes of the north*) is Babylonia. *Nebuchadrezzar . . . my servant* (27.6), i.e., the instrument of the divine will (cf. Cyrus in Isa 45.1–7, who is the "anointed" of God). **25.10** See 7.34; 16.9. **25.11** *Seventy years* is difficult to put into an exact chronology. From 605 to 539 B.C.E. (the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus) is sixty-six years (thus perhaps "seventy" is rounded off). In Zech 1.12 the period of seventy years begins with the destruction of the temple (587 B.C.E.) and concludes with its rebuilding (516/5 B.C.E.). The number also may suggest either the period of a normal life span (Ps 90.10) or the traditional, figurative time for a city to remain in ruins. **25.13** *This book* may have originally referred to the first or, more likely, the second scroll (see ch. 36; Introduction).

25.15–29 This prose narrative contains a symbolic action in which Jeremiah takes from God's hand the cup of wrath and makes the nations who are listed drink and become drunk (see 13.1–11, 12–14; 18.1–12; 19.1–15). The nations listed are cursed with destruction. This section may have originally introduced the "oracles against the nations" in chs. 46–51. In the Septuagint, the "oracles against the nations" in chs. 46–51 follow 25.13a. 25.15–38 is found in 32.1–24 in the Septuagint. The nations listed in this passage roughly parallel those in chs. 46–51. Judgment oracles against foreign nations are found in Isa 13–23; Ezek 25–32; Am 1.3–2.3. **25.15** Drinking from a cup as punishment is a common image (49.12; 51.7; Pss 11.6; 75.8; Isa 51.17, 22; Lam 4.21; Ezek 23.31–34; Hab 2.15–16; Rev 14.10; 16.19; 17.4; 18.6). Cf. the "cup of blessing" in Pss 16.5; 23.5. **25.18** The judgment that will engulf all the nations begins with Jerusalem. **25.20** *Mixed people* probably refers to people of various cultural and ethnic identities who are politically connected to a larger cultural and ethnic group. *Uz* refers to an area in the desert east of Israel, possibly in Edom. *Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and . . . Ashdod* are Philistine cities located on the southern coastal plain. Ashdod was destroyed by Psammetichus I (664–610 B.C.E.) of Egypt after a siege lasting twenty-nine years (Herodotus *History* 2.157). **25.21** *Edom, Moab, and the Ammonites* comprise the countries in the Transjordan, east of Israel. **25.22** *Coastland across the sea* refers to islands and coastal areas in the Mediterranean settled by the Phoenicians. **25.23** *Dedan* and *Tema* are tribes in northwest Arabia. The location of *Buz* is unknown. *All who*

have shaven temples; 24 all the kings of
Arabia and all the kings of the mixed peo-
ples[b] that live in the desert; 25 all the
kings of Zimri, all the kings of Elam, and
all the kings of Media; 26 all the kings of
the north, far and near, one after an-
other, and all the kingdoms of the world
that are on the face of the earth. And af-
ter them the king of Sheshach[c] shall
drink.

27 Then you shall say to them, Thus
says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel:
Drink, get drunk and vomit, fall and rise
no more, because of the sword that I am
sending among you.

28 And if they refuse to accept the
cup from your hand to drink, then you
shall say to them: Thus says the LORD of
hosts: You must drink! 29 See, I am begin-
ning to bring disaster on the city that is
called by my name, and how can you pos-
sibly avoid punishment? You shall not
go unpunished, for I am summoning a
sword against all the inhabitants of the
earth, says the LORD of hosts.

30 You, therefore, shall prophesy
against them all these words, and say to
them:

The LORD will roar from on high,
and from his holy habitation
utter his voice;
he will roar mightily against
his fold,
and shout, like those who tread
grapes,
against all the inhabitants of
the earth.
31 The clamor will resound to the
ends of the earth,
for the LORD has an indictment
against the nations;
he is entering into judgment with
all flesh,
and the guilty he will put to
the sword,
says the LORD.

32 Thus says the LORD of hosts:
See, disaster is spreading
from nation to nation,
and a great tempest is stirring
from the farthest parts of
the earth!

33 Those slain by the LORD on that
day shall extend from one end of the
earth to the other. They shall not be la-
mented, or gathered, or buried; they shall
become dung on the surface of the
ground.

34 Wail, you shepherds, and cry
out;
roll in ashes, you lords of
the flock,
for the days of your slaughter
have come—and your
dispersions,[b]
and you shall fall like a
choice vessel.
35 Flight shall fail the shepherds,
and there shall be no escape for
the lords of the flock.
36 Hark! the cry of the shepherds,
and the wail of the lords of
the flock!
For the LORD is despoiling their
pasture,
37 and the peaceful folds are
devastated,
because of the fierce anger of
the LORD.
38 Like a lion he has left his covert;
for their land has become
a waste

b Meaning of Heb uncertain *c* *Sheshach* is a cryptogram for *Babel*, Babylon

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have shaven temples. See note on 9.26. **25.25** *Elam* and *Media* were in what is now western Iran. *Zimri*. Location unknown. **25.26** In an example of the athbash cipher, in which Hebrew letters are substituted in reverse alphabetical order, Babylon is referred to as *Sheshach* (see 51.41). While all the nations listed are threatened by Babylonia, ultimately it too shall drink from the same cup.

25.30–38 Judgment against the nations. This section continues the theme of the preceding section (25.15–29). The section breaks down into two poetic oracles: vv. 30–32 (announcement of judgment) and vv. 34–38 (call to lamentation). V. 33 is a prose insert that speaks of the widespread destruction brought by the Lord and the lack of burial and funeral rites. **25.30** *The LORD will roar* like a lion from heaven. Cf. Am 1.2, where the Lord roars from Zion (Jerusalem). **25.31** *An indictment against the nations*. See Hos 4.1. The Lord enters into a lawsuit against all the nations. **25.32** See note on 23.19. **25.33** A prose addition. For the curse of being denied burial and funeral rites, see 8.2; 9.22; 16.4. **25.34** For the call for *shepherds* (i.e., kings; see note on 3.15) to lament, see 4.8; Joel 1.13–14. **25.38** The image of the *lion* (see v. 30) provides

because of the cruel sword,
and because of his fierce anger.

Jeremiah's Temple Sermon and Trial

26 At the beginning of the reign of
King Jehoiakim son of Josiah of
Judah, this word came from the LORD:
2 Thus says the LORD: Stand in the court
of the LORD's house, and speak to all the
cities of Judah that come to worship in the
house of the LORD; speak to them all the
words that I command you; do not hold
back a word. 3 It may be that they will lis-
ten, all of them, and will turn from their
evil way, that I may change my mind
about the disaster that I intend to bring
on them because of their evil doings.
4 You shall say to them: Thus says the
LORD: If you will not listen to me, to walk
in my law that I have set before you, 5 and
to heed the words of my servants the
prophets whom I send to you urgently—
though you have not heeded— 6 then I
will make this house like Shiloh, and I will
make this city a curse for all the nations of
the earth.

7 The priests and the prophets and all
the people heard Jeremiah speaking these
words in the house of the LORD. 8 And
when Jeremiah had finished speaking all
that the LORD had commanded him to
speak to all the people, then the priests
and the prophets and all the people laid
hold of him, saying, "You shall die! 9 Why
have you prophesied in the name of the
LORD, saying, 'This house shall be like
Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate,
without inhabitant'?" And all the people
gathered around Jeremiah in the house of
the LORD.

10 When the officials of Judah heard
these things, they came up from the king's
house to the house of the LORD and took
their seat in the entry of the New Gate of
the house of the LORD. 11 Then the priests
and the prophets said to the officials and
to all the people, "This man deserves the
sentence of death because he has proph-
esied against this city, as you have heard
with your own ears."

12 Then Jeremiah spoke to all the of-
ficials and all the people, saying, "It is the
LORD who sent me to prophesy against
this house and this city all the words you
have heard. 13 Now therefore amend your
ways and your doings, and obey the voice
of the LORD your God, and the LORD will
change his mind about the disaster that he
has pronounced against you. 14 But as for
me, here I am in your hands. Do with me
as seems good and right to you. 15 Only
know for certain that if you put me to
death, you will be bringing innocent blood
upon yourselves and upon this city and
its inhabitants, for in truth the LORD sent
me to you to speak all these words in
your ears."

16 Then the officials and all the peo-
ple said to the priests and the prophets,
"This man does not deserve the sentence
of death, for he has spoken to us in the
name of the LORD our God." 17 And some
of the elders of the land arose and said to
all the assembled people, 18 "Micah of Mo-
resheth, who prophesied during the days

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an inclusio (see note on 4.5–31) for this section.

26.1–29.32 This section consists of three episodes in the life of Jeremiah, each of which illustrates his conflict with the priests and the prophets. The first episode involves the temple sermon and the trial of the prophet (26.1–24; see note on 7.1–15). The second episode involves the yoke incident and confrontation with Hananiah (27.1–28.17). The third episode involves Jeremiah's letters to the Babylonian exiles and the ensuing confrontation with false prophets among them (29.1–32).

26.1–24 The prose sermon is abbreviated in 26.1–6, with the rest of the chapter devoted to narrating Jeremiah's trial for his life. **26.1** *The beginning of the reign of King Jehoiakim* probably means his accession year, which was 609 B.C.E. It has been suggested that the sermon was delivered at Jehoiakim's coronation during the New Year's festivities in early autumn when large crowds would be in Jerusalem and coming to the temple. **26.6** *Shiloh.* See note on 7.12–15. **26.7–9** Jeremiah's sermon sounded treasonous to those assembled in the temple court. **26.10** The officials of Judah could hear the commotion from their location in the palace which was nearby (see ch. 36). The location of the *New Gate* is unknown. **26.16** Deuteronomy stipulated death for prophets who spoke in the name of a false god or falsely claimed to speak a word in the Lord's name. In the latter case, the only test for authenticity was whether the prophecy came to pass (18.15–22). **26.17–19** Micah's prophecy against Jerusalem during Hezekiah's attempt to throw off Assyrian rule (Hezekiah, 715–687 B.C.E.) provided a precedent for Jeremiah's temple sermon (Mic 3.12). The *elders of the land* were leaders among the citizen landowners in the country-

of King Hezekiah of Judah, said to all the people of Judah: 'Thus says the LORD of hosts,

Zion shall be plowed as a field;
Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins,
and the mountain of the house a wooded height.'

19 Did King Hezekiah of Judah and all Judah actually put him to death? Did he not fear the LORD and entreat the favor of the LORD, and did not the LORD change his mind about the disaster that he had pronounced against them? But we are about to bring great disaster on ourselves!"

20 There was another man prophesying in the name of the LORD, Uriah son of Shemaiah from Kiriath-jearim. He prophesied against this city and against this land in words exactly like those of Jeremiah. 21 And when King Jehoiakim, with all his warriors and all the officials, heard his words, the king sought to put him to death; but when Uriah heard of it, he was afraid and fled and escaped to Egypt. 22 Then King Jehoiakim sent[d] Elnathan son of Achbor and men with him to Egypt, 23 and they took Uriah from Egypt and brought him to King Jehoiakim, who struck him down with the sword and threw his dead body into the burial place of the common people.

24 But the hand of Ahikam son of Shaphan was with Jeremiah so that he was not given over into the hands of the people to be put to death.

Submission to the Yoke of Babylon

27 In the beginning of the reign of King Zedekiah[e] son of Josiah of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD. 2 Thus the LORD said to me: Make yourself a yoke of straps and bars, and put them on your neck. 3 Send word[f] to the king of Edom, the king of Moab, the king of the Ammonites, the king of Tyre, and the king of Sidon by the hand of the envoys who have come to Jerusalem to King Zedekiah of Judah. 4 Give them this charge for their masters: Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: This is what you shall say to your masters: 5 It is I who by my great power and my

d Heb adds *men to Egypt* *e* Another reading is *Jehoiakim* *f* Cn: Heb *send them*

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side. **26.20–24** The story of Uriah's execution illustrates the ruthlessness that King Jehoiakim was capable of in dealing with prophets who incurred his disfavor. Jehoiakim sought to take Jeremiah captive (36.26). For the execution of a prophet named Zechariah, see 2 Chr 24.20–22. **26.22** *Elnathan son of Achbor.* See 36.12, 25. **26.24** *Ahikam* was an officer who served Josiah (2 Kings 22.12, 14). His father, *Shaphan,* who was Josiah's secretary, was involved in reporting the discovery of the law in the temple to the king. According to the story, this law became the basis for Josiah's reforms. Ahikam also was among the entourage who consulted the prophet Huldah after the discovery of the law (see 2 Kings 22). Ahikam was the father of Gedaliah, the governor of Judah after the fall of Jerusalem who was later assassinated by a Jewish zealot (Jer 40). The association between Jeremiah and the upright family of Shaphan was an important one.

27.1–28.17 Jeremiah opposes the efforts to persuade King Zedekiah (597–587 B.C.E.) to rebel against the Babylonians. The date was probably 594/3 B.C.E. (see 28.1), when emissaries from Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon met in Jerusalem to plan revolution. In the Jewish court, pro-Egyptian conspirators probably looked to Egypt for help, especially with the accession of the new king, Psammetichus II (594–589 B.C.E.). Jeremiah opposed rebellion, arguing that Judah's only hope was to remain a vassal to the Babylonians (see note on 26.1–29.32). **27.1–22** The yoke of Babylon. This prose text centers on a symbolic act: the making and wearing of a yoke, which means submission to Babylon (see 13.1–11, 12–14; 16.1–13; 18.1–12; 19.1–15; 24.1–10). The chapter divides into three sermons: one to foreign kings (vv. 1–11), one to King Zedekiah (vv. 12–15), and one to priests and people (vv. 16–22). **27.1** *In the beginning of the reign of King Zedekiah* (597 B.C.E.) does not fit the chronology for the events in chs. 27–28. Most Hebrew manuscripts read, "in the beginning of the reign of King Jehoiakim," but this is undoubtedly a scribal error. The events described in chs. 27–28 occurred in the fourth year of Zedekiah (594/3 B.C.E.; see 28.1). Since the verse is absent in the Septuagint (i.e., the short text; see Introduction), it is likely an editorial or scribal error. **27.2** The *yoke* is that used by two oxen to pull a heavy load. Normally, yokes consisted of a crossbar with leather or rope nooses or rods of wood that would be placed around the animals' necks. Attached to the crossbar was a wooden shaft for pulling the load (see Deut 21.3; 1 Sam 6.7; 11.5; 1 Kings 19.19). For the yoke as a

outstretched arm have made the earth,
with the people and animals that are on
the earth, and I give it to whomever I
please. 6 Now I have given all these lands
into the hand of King Nebuchadnezzar of
Babylon, my servant, and I have given
him even the wild animals of the field to
serve him. 7 All the nations shall serve him
and his son and his grandson, until the
time of his own land comes; then many
nations and great kings shall make him
their slave.

8 But if any nation or kingdom will
not serve this king, Nebuchadnezzar of
Babylon, and put its neck under the yoke
of the king of Babylon, then I will punish
that nation with the sword, with famine,
and with pestilence, says the LORD, until I
have completed its[g] destruction by his
hand. 9 You, therefore, must not listen
to your prophets, your diviners, your
dreamers,[h] your soothsayers, or your sor-
cerers, who are saying to you, "You shall
not serve the king of Babylon." 10 For they
are prophesying a lie to you, with the re-
sult that you will be removed far from
your land; I will drive you out, and you
will perish. 11 But any nation that will
bring its neck under the yoke of the king
of Babylon and serve him, I will leave on
its own land, says the LORD, to till it and
live there.

12 I spoke to King Zedekiah of Judah
in the same way: Bring your necks under
the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve
him and his people, and live. 13 Why
should you and your people die by the
sword, by famine, and by pestilence, as
the LORD has spoken concerning any na-
tion that will not serve the king of Bab-
ylon? 14 Do not listen to the words of the
prophets who are telling you not to serve
the king of Babylon, for they are proph-
esying a lie to you. 15 I have not sent them,
says the LORD, but they are prophesying
falsely in my name, with the result that I
will drive you out and you will perish, you
and the prophets who are prophesying
to you.

16 Then I spoke to the priests and to
all this people, saying, Thus says the
LORD: Do not listen to the words of your
prophets who are prophesying to you,
saying, "The vessels of the LORD's house
will soon be brought back from Babylon,"
for they are prophesying a lie to you.
17 Do not listen to them; serve the king of
Babylon and live. Why should this city be-
come a desolation? 18 If indeed they are
prophets, and if the word of the LORD is
with them, then let them intercede with
the LORD of hosts, that the vessels left in
the house of the LORD, in the house of the
king of Judah, and in Jerusalem may not
go to Babylon. 19 For thus says the LORD
of hosts concerning the pillars, the sea,
the stands, and the rest of the vessels that
are left in this city, 20 which King Nebu-
chadnezzar of Babylon did not take away
when he took into exile from Jerusalem to
Babylon King Jeconiah son of Jehoiakim
of Judah, and all the nobles of Judah and
Jerusalem— 21 thus says the LORD of
hosts, the God of Israel, concerning the
vessels left in the house of the LORD, in
the house of the king of Judah, and in
Jerusalem: 22 They shall be carried to
Babylon, and there they shall stay, until

g Heb *their* h Gk Syr Vg: Heb *dreams*

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symbol of servitude, see also 1 Kings 12.1–11. **27.6** *Nebuchadnezzar* (see note on 21.2) is God's *servant*, i.e., the one who carries out God's will (see 25.9). **27.7** This verse is absent in the Septuagint. The prediction was not fulfilled, at least literally, since the last king of the Babylonian Empire was Nabonidus (556–539 B.C.E.), the fourth king to succeed Nebuchadrezzar. Also, Nabonidus was not a descendant of Nebuchadrezzar. The reference may be to Nebuchadrezzar, Nabonidus, and Belshazzar (Dan 5.2). Belshazzar was the son of Nabonidus. **27.12–15** Zedekiah receives essentially the same warning delivered to the foreign kings: submit to the yoke of Nebuchadrezzar or face destruction. False *prophets*. See note on 23.9–40. **27.16** The *priests* are mentioned, for they desire the return of the sacred objects carried away to Babylon in 597 B.C.E. **27.18–22** The sacred objects that remained after 597 B.C.E. will be taken away to Babylon. There were two cast bronze, freestanding *pillars* (Jachin and Boaz) at the entrance of the temple (1 Kings 7.15–22). A huge basin or tank standing perhaps some ten feet in height, the *sea* was also cast bronze, perhaps located at the entrance to the temple and before the altar (1 Kings 7.23–26). Its estimated capacity was approximately 12,000 gallons. 2 Chr 4.6 indicates it was used as a basin in which the priests washed. The pillars and the basin were broken into pieces and carried to Babylon in 587 B.C.E. (2 Kings 25.13, 16). The *stands* were ornamented bronze wagons upon which were mounted the ten lavers or wash basins (see 1 Kings 7.27–39). These and other vessels would

the day when I give attention to them,
says the LORD. Then I will bring them up
and restore them to this place.

Hananiah Opposes Jeremiah and Dies

28 In that same year, at the beginning of the reign of King Zedekiah of Judah, in the fifth month of the fourth year, the prophet Hananiah son of Azzur, from Gibeon, spoke to me in the house of the LORD, in the presence of the priests and all the people, saying, 2"Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. 3Within two years I will bring back to this place all the vessels of the LORD's house, which King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon took away from this place and carried to Babylon. 4I will also bring back to this place King Jeconiah son of Jehoiakim of Judah, and all the exiles from Judah who went to Babylon, says the LORD, for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon."

5 Then the prophet Jeremiah spoke to the prophet Hananiah in the presence of the priests and all the people who were standing in the house of the LORD; 6and the prophet Jeremiah said, "Amen! May the LORD do so; may the LORD fulfill the words that you have prophesied, and bring back to this place from Babylon the vessels of the house of the LORD, and all the exiles. 7But listen now to this word that I speak in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people. 8The prophets who preceded you and me from ancient times prophesied war, famine, and pestilence against many countries and great kingdoms. 9As for the prophet who prophesies peace, when the word of that prophet comes true, then it will be known that the LORD has truly sent the prophet."

10 Then the prophet Hananiah took the yoke from the neck of the prophet Jeremiah, and broke it. 11And Hananiah spoke in the presence of all the people, saying, "Thus says the LORD: This is how I will break the yoke of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon from the neck of all the nations within two years." At this, the prophet Jeremiah went his way.

12 Sometime after the prophet Hananiah had broken the yoke from the neck of the prophet Jeremiah, the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: 13Go, tell Hananiah, Thus says the LORD: You have broken wooden bars only to forge iron bars in place of them! 14For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: I have put an iron yoke on the neck of all these nations so that they may serve King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, and they shall indeed serve him; I have even given him the wild animals. 15And the prophet Jeremiah said to the prophet Hananiah, "Listen, Hananiah, the LORD has not sent you, and you made this people trust in a lie. 16Therefore thus says the LORD: I am going to send you off the face of the earth. Within this year you will be dead, because you have spoken rebellion against the LORD."

17 In that same year, in the seventh month, the prophet Hananiah died.

Jeremiah's Letter to the Exiles in Babylon

29 These are the words of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the remaining elders among the exiles, and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom Nebu-

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be taken to Babylon (see 2 Kings 25.13–17). **28.1–17** This prose narrative is the best illustration of conflict between two prophets who claim to be spokespersons for God (see 23.9–40). Hananiah (whose name in Hebrew means "Yahweh has been gracious") utters an oracle of salvation: the yoke of Babylon has been broken and within two years God will bring back to Jerusalem King Jehoiachin, the exiles of 597 B.C.E., and the sacred vessels stolen from the temple. Jeremiah, wearing a yoke, which symbolizes submission to Babylon (see ch. 27), opposes Hananiah and his hopeful word. Indeed, he announces an oracle of judgment against Hananiah, a prophecy that comes to pass in his death *that same year* (v. 17). **28.1** The Septuagint reads only "in the fourth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the fifth month," which must be correct. The Hebrew, which is translated here, is contradictory, for the *beginning* would be 597 B.C.E., while the *fourth year* would be 594/3 B.C.E. *Gibeon* is modern el-Jib, five and a half miles northwest of Jerusalem. It contained a great high place where Solomon prayed for wisdom (1 Kings 3.4–15). **28.8–9** While there were occasional oracles of salvation from true prophets, the prophetic tradition was dominated by announcements of punishment. By contrast, false prophets generally promised good fortune (see Deut 18.20–22).

29.1–32 This prose narrative describes how

chadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. 2 This was after King Jeconiah, and the queen mother, the court officials, the leaders of Judah and Jerusalem, the artisans, and the smiths had departed from Jerusalem. 3 The letter was sent by the hand of Elasah son of Shaphan and Gemariah son of Hilkiah, whom King Zedekiah of Judah sent to Babylon to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. It said: 4 Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: 5 Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. 6 Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. 7 But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. 8 For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let the prophets and the diviners who are among you deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams that they dream,[i] 9 for it is a lie that they are prophesying to you in my name; I did not send them, says the LORD.

10 For thus says the LORD: Only when Babylon's seventy years are completed will I visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. 11 For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. 12 Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. 13 When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, 14 I will let you find me, says the LORD, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

15 Because you have said, "The LORD has raised up prophets for us in Babylon," — 16 Thus says the LORD concerning the king who sits on the throne of David, and concerning all the people who live in this city, your kinsfolk who did not go out with you into exile: 17 Thus says the LORD of hosts, I am going to let loose on them sword, famine, and pestilence, and I will make them like rotten figs that are so bad they cannot be eaten. 18 I will pursue them with the sword, with famine, and with pestilence, and will make them a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be an object of cursing, and horror, and hissing, and a derision among all the nations where I have driven them, 19 because they did not heed my words, says the LORD, when I persistently sent to you my servants the prophets, but they[j] would not listen, says the LORD. 20 But now, all you exiles whom I sent away from Jerusalem to Babylon, hear the word of the LORD: 21 Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning Ahab son of Kolaiah and Zedekiah son of Maaseiah, who are prophesying a lie to you in my name: I am going to deliver them into the hand of King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon, and he shall kill them before your eyes. 22 And on account of them this curse shall be used by all the exiles from Judah in Babylon: "The LORD make you like Zedekiah and Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire," 23 because they have perpetrated outrage in Israel and have commit-

i Cn: Heb *your dreams that you cause to dream*
j Syr: Heb *you*

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the exiles in Babylon were incited to consider rebellion by false prophets who predicted an early return from exile. The time frame is apparently the same as that for chs. 27–28 (594/3 B.C.E.). Jeremiah writes letters to oppose these false hopes for an early return. Singled out for condemnation in the first letter were two prophets, Ahab son of Kolaiah and Zedekiah son of Maaseiah. In the second letter, Shemaiah of Nehelam, who had attempted without success to silence Jeremiah, receives the judgment of the prophet (see note on 26.1–29.32). The chapter consists of two parts: a general letter to the exiles (vv. 1–23) and a letter concerning Shemaiah (vv. 24–32). **29.2** *Jeconiah* is another spelling for the name Jehoiachin (see 22.24–30). **29.3** *Elasah* was probably the brother of Ahikam son of Shaphan (see note on 26.24). *Gemariah* may have been the son of Hilkiah the high priest, who was involved in the discovery of the book of the law during the reign of Josiah (see 2 Kings 22–23). If so, Jeremiah was supported by two very powerful families in Judah who had been involved in Josiah's reform. **29.4–7** The exiles are to build their lives in Babylon and not expect immediate restoration. Indeed, they are to seek the welfare of Babylon. **29.10–14** For a discussion of *seventy years*, see note on 25.11. **29.16–20** See ch. 24. These

ted adultery with their neighbors' wives,
and have spoken in my name lying words
that I did not command them; I am the
one who knows and bears witness, says
the LORD.

The Letter Against Shemaiah

24 To Shemaiah of Nehelam you shall
say: 25 Thus says the LORD of hosts, the
God of Israel: In your own name you sent
a letter to all the people who are in Jerusa-
lem, and to the priest Zephaniah son of
Maaseiah, and to all the priests, saying,
26 The LORD himself has made you priest
instead of the priest Jehoiada, so that
there may be officers in the house of the
LORD to control any madman who plays
the prophet, to put him in the stocks and
the collar. 27 So now why have you not re-
buked Jeremiah of Anathoth who plays
the prophet for you? 28 For he has actually
sent to us in Babylon, saying, "It will be a
long time; build houses and live in them,
and plant gardens and eat what they
produce."

29 The priest Zephaniah read this let-
ter in the hearing of the prophet Jere-
miah. 30 Then the word of the LORD came
to Jeremiah: 31 Send to all the exiles, say-
ing, Thus says the LORD concerning She-
maiah of Nehelam: Because Shemaiah
has prophesied to you, though I did not
send him, and has led you to trust in a lie,
32 therefore thus says the LORD: I am go-
ing to punish Shemaiah of Nehelam and
his descendants; he shall not have anyone
living among this people to see[k] the good
that I am going to do to my people, says
the LORD, for he has spoken rebellion
against the LORD.

Restoration Promised for Israel and Judah

30 The word that came to Jeremiah
from the LORD: 2 Thus says the
LORD, the God of Israel: Write in a book
all the words that I have spoken to you.
3 For the days are surely coming, says the
LORD, when I will restore the fortunes of
my people, Israel and Judah, says the
LORD, and I will bring them back to the
land that I gave to their ancestors and
they shall take possession of it.

4 These are the words that the LORD
spoke concerning Israel and Judah:

5 Thus says the LORD:
We have heard a cry of panic,
of terror, and no peace.
6 Ask now, and see,
can a man bear a child?
Why then do I see every man
with his hands on his loins like
a woman in labor?
Why has every face turned
pale?
7 Alas! that day is so great
there is none like it;
it is a time of distress for Jacob;
yet he shall be rescued from it.
8 On that day, says the LORD of hosts,

k Gk: Heb *and he shall not see*

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verses are absent in the Septuagint. **29.24–32** The letter against Shemaiah condemns him for attempting to have Jeremiah imprisoned. Shemaiah is also condemned as a false prophet whose descendants shall not live to experience the restoration. **29.25** *Zephaniah.* See 21.1; 37.3; 52.24–27.

30.1–31.40 The Book of Consolation. The poetic and prose oracles in this collection speak of the future restoration of Israel and Judah. There is considerable debate as to which of these oracles may derive from Jeremiah. The best cases may be made for Jeremian authorship of 30.5–7, 12–15; 31.2–6; 31.15–22. Two dates are often assigned to the oracles uttered by Jeremiah: the early part of his ministry and after the fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C.E. The oracles most likely date from the later period, during the governorship of Gedaliah, who was appointed by the Babylonians to administer the provincial district into which Judah was incorporated (40.7–41.18; 2 Kings 25.22–26). The other oracles derive from the exilic and postexilic periods. The form that predominates in this collection is the "prophecy of salvation." It contains the following parts: the appeal for attention and/or the introductory messenger formula (e.g., "Thus says the LORD"), the description of the present situation, the prediction of salvation, a final characterization either of God or of the message, and the concluding messenger formula ("says the LORD"). **30.1–4** General introduction. These verses are an editorial introduction to the oracles of salvation in chs. 30–31. The oracles pertain to both Israel and Judah. **30.5–7** The day of God's judgment upon Israel. Dominated by rhetorical questions, this poem is a lament over the great and terrible day of God's judgment against Jacob. For the "day of the LORD," see Isa 2.12–21; Am 5.18–20; Zeph 1.14–18. Laments dominate Jer 11.18–20.18. The last line of v. 7 is added to form a transition to vv. 8–9. **30.8–9** This prose oracle of salva-

I will break the yoke from off his[l] neck,
and I will burst his[l] bonds, and strangers
shall no more make a servant of him.
9 But they shall serve the LORD their God
and David their king, whom I will raise up
for them.

10 But as for you, have no fear, my
servant Jacob, says the
LORD,
and do not be dismayed,
O Israel;
for I am going to save you from
far away,
and your offspring from the
land of their captivity.
Jacob shall return and have quiet
and ease,
and no one shall make him
afraid.
11 For I am with you, says the LORD,
to save you;
I will make an end of all the
nations
among which I scattered you,
but of you I will not make
an end.
I will chastise you in just
measure,
and I will by no means leave
you unpunished.

12 For thus says the LORD:
Your hurt is incurable,
your wound is grievous.
13 There is no one to uphold your
cause,
no medicine for your wound,
no healing for you.
14 All your lovers have
forgotten you;
they care nothing for you;
for I have dealt you the blow of
an enemy,
the punishment of a
merciless foe,
because your guilt is great,
because your sins are so
numerous.
15 Why do you cry out over your
hurt?
Your pain is incurable.
Because your guilt is great,
because your sins are so
numerous,
I have done these things
to you.
16 Therefore all who devour you
shall be devoured,
and all your foes, everyone of
them, shall go into
captivity;
those who plunder you shall be
plundered,
and all who prey on you I will
make a prey.
17 For I will restore health to you,
and your wounds I will heal,
says the LORD,
because they have called you
an outcast:
"It is Zion; no one cares
for her!"

18 Thus says the LORD:
I am going to restore the
fortunes of the tents of
Jacob,
and have compassion on his
dwellings;
the city shall be rebuilt upon its
mound,

l Cn: Heb *your*

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tion by a later hand promises the removal of the yoke (see chs. 27–28) and the restoration of the Davidic monarchy (23.5–6; 33.14–26; Ezek 34.24; Hos 3.5). Jeremiah himself placed little importance on the restoration of the monarchy (see 21.11–23.8). **30.10–11** The salvation of *Jacob*, i.e., Israel, the Lord's *servant*. 46.27–28 almost duplicates this oracle of salvation. The language and content resonates with Second Isaiah (an anonymous poet of the exile, whose oracles are collected in Isa 40–55; see Isa 41.8–14; 43.1–5). Israel as the servant of the Lord is a common expression in Second Isaiah (see Isa 44.1, 2, 21). **30.12–17** Though Jerusalem is incurably wounded (see 15.18), nevertheless the divine healer will restore Zion to health and will make an end of her enemies. For a similar description of Zion's distress and lamentation, see 4.31; 8.18–21; 9.17–19. **30.14** Zion's *lovers* (probably allies) have abandoned her. Jeremiah may be speaking of the Egyptians who withdrew before the Babylonian advance (37.5). Other states that joined in the rebellion beginning in 589 B.C.E. included at least Tyre and Ammon. **30.18–22** This oracle of salvation speaks of the restoration of Jacob (Israel), the Israelites' thanksgiving over their return, their increase in population, and their own prince who shall approach the

and the citadel set on its
rightful site.
19 Out of them shall come
thanksgiving,
and the sound of merrymakers.
I will make them many, and they
shall not be few;
I will make them honored, and
they shall not be disdained.
20 Their children shall be as of old,
their congregation shall be
established before me;
and I will punish all who
oppress them.
21 Their prince shall be one of
their own,
their ruler shall come from
their midst;
I will bring him near, and he
shall approach me,
for who would otherwise dare
to approach me?
says the LORD.
22 And you shall be my people,
and I will be your God.

23 Look, the storm of the LORD!
Wrath has gone forth,
a whirling[m] tempest;
it will burst upon the head of
the wicked.
24 The fierce anger of the LORD will
not turn back
until he has executed and
accomplished
the intents of his mind.
In the latter days you will
understand this.

31 At that time, says the LORD, I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people.
2 Thus says the LORD:
The people who survived the
sword
found grace in the wilderness;
when Israel sought for rest,
3 the LORD appeared to him[n]
from far away.[o]
I have loved you with an
everlasting love;
therefore I have continued my
faithfulness to you.
4 Again I will build you, and you
shall be built,
O virgin Israel!
Again you shall take[p] your
tambourines,
and go forth in the dance of
the merrymakers.
5 Again you shall plant vineyards
on the mountains of Samaria;
the planters shall plant,
and shall enjoy the fruit.
6 For there shall be a day when
sentinels will call
in the hill country of Ephraim:
"Come, let us go up to Zion,
to the LORD our God."

7 For thus says the LORD:
Sing aloud with gladness for
Jacob,
and raise shouts for the chief of
the nations;
proclaim, give praise, and say,
"Save, O LORD, your people,
the remnant of Israel."
8 See, I am going to bring them
from the land of the north,
and gather them from the
farthest parts of the earth,
among them the blind and
the lame,
those with child and those in
labor, together;
a great company, they shall
return here.

m One Ms: Meaning of MT uncertain
n Gk: Heb *me* *o* Or *to him long ago*
p Or *adorn yourself with*

Lord. The ruler shall be an Israelite, not a foreigner (see Deut 17.15). **30.21** To *approach* God was normally a priestly prerogative (see Ex 29.4, 8; 40.12, 14; Lev 7.35). Cf. Ezekiel's prince in Ezek 46.1–18. **30.22** A repetition of the covenant formula (see note on 24.7). **30.23–24** The storm of the Lord. This poem occurs also in 23.19–20 (see note). **31.1** A covenant formula. See note on 24.7. **31.2–6** This oracle of salvation grounds Israel's future redemption in the everlasting love of God. The poem addresses the Northern Kingdom (*Israel, mountains of Samaria,* and *hill country of Ephraim*). **31.2** *Found grace in the wilderness* refers to the period of wandering in the Sinai after the exodus from Egypt and before entrance into Canaan (see Exodus; Numbers). In Hosea and Jeremiah, the time in the wilderness was a period of intimacy between the Lord and Israel (Jer 2.2–3; Hos 2). **31.6** In the restoration, North and South will be united and will worship God in Jerusalem. **31.7–9** In this oracle of salvation, Israel's return from the Diaspora is

9 With weeping they shall come,
and with consolations[q] I will lead them back,
I will let them walk by brooks of water,
in a straight path in which they shall not stumble;
for I have become a father to Israel,
and Ephraim is my firstborn.

10 Hear the word of the LORD, O nations,
and declare it in the coastlands far away;
say, "He who scattered Israel will gather him,
and will keep him as a shepherd a flock."
11 For the LORD has ransomed Jacob,
and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him.
12 They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion,
and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the LORD,
over the grain, the wine, and the oil,
and over the young of the flock and the herd;
their life shall become like a watered garden,
and they shall never languish again.
13 Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance,
and the young men and the old shall be merry.
I will turn their mourning into joy,
I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow.
14 I will give the priests their fill of fatness,
and my people shall be satisfied with my bounty,
says the LORD.

15 Thus says the LORD:
A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping.
Rachel is weeping for her children;
she refuses to be comforted for her children,
because they are no more.
16 Thus says the LORD:
Keep your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears;
for there is a reward for your work,
says the LORD:
they shall come back from the land of the enemy;
17 there is hope for your future,
says the LORD:
your children shall come back to their own country.

18 Indeed I heard Ephraim pleading:
"You disciplined me, and I took the discipline;
I was like a calf untrained.
Bring me back, let me come back,
for you are the LORD my God.
19 For after I had turned away I repented;
and after I was discovered, I struck my thigh;
I was ashamed, and I was dismayed

q Gk Compare Vg Tg: Heb *supplications*

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praised in hymnic celebration (see Second Isaiah, i.e., Isa 40–55). **31.9** God as *father* is a common metaphor in the Hebrew Bible (see esp. Jer 3.19; 31.20; Hos 11.1). Israel is designated as the Lord's *firstborn*, a designation of election (Ex 4.22). In Israel the firstborn was privileged with a double share of the father's estate, received the paternal blessing, and succeeded him in authority. **31.10–14** Exiles rejoice as they return. Another oracle of salvation in which Israel returns from exile and in Jerusalem praises God for many blessings. The lamentation during periods of peril will turn into thanksgiving. **31.15–22** Rachel's weeping and the return of her children. **31.15** In biblical tradition, *Rachel*, the more favored wife of Jacob (Israel, Gen 35.10), was the mother of Joseph and Benjamin. Joseph had two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. Along with her sister Leah and their handmaidens, Rachel is one of the matriarchs of the nation (see Gen 25–35). *Ramah* (modern er-Ram), located five miles north of Jerusalem, appears to have been the place where the exiles were gathered for deportation to Babylon (40.1, 4). According to one tradition (1 Sam 10.2), Rachel's grave was located in the territory of Benjamin, thus to the north of Jerusalem. For an alternate location, see Gen 35.16–20; 48.7; Mt 2.18. The dead Rachel is heard weeping over her

because I bore the disgrace of
my youth."
20 Is Ephraim my dear son?
Is he the child I delight in?
As often as I speak against him,
I still remember him.
Therefore I am deeply moved
for him;
I will surely have mercy on
him,
says the LORD.

21 Set up road markers for yourself,
make yourself guideposts;
consider well the highway,
the road by which you went.
Return, O virgin Israel,
return to these your cities.
22 How long will you waver,
O faithless daughter?
For the LORD has created a new
thing on the earth:
a woman encompasses[r] a man.

23 Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Once more they shall use these words in the land of Judah and in its towns when I restore their fortunes:
"The LORD bless you, O abode of
righteousness,
O holy hill!"
24 And Judah and all its towns shall live there together, and the farmers and those who wander[s] with their flocks.
25 I will satisfy the weary,
and all who are faint I will
replenish.

26 Thereupon I awoke and looked, and my sleep was pleasant to me.

Individual Retribution

27 The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of humans and the seed of animals. 28 And just as I have watched over them to pluck up and break down, to overthrow, destroy, and bring evil, so I will watch over them to build and to plant, says the LORD. 29 In those days they shall no longer say:
"The parents have eaten sour
grapes,
and the children's teeth are set
on edge."
30 But all shall die for their own sins; the teeth of everyone who eats sour grapes shall be set on edge.

A New Covenant

31 The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. 32 It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband,[t] says the LORD. 33 But this is the

r Meaning of Heb uncertain s Cn Compare Syr Vg Tg: Heb *and they shall wander* t Or *master*

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children, who were either killed or deported. **31.22** The verb in the last line of the poem, *a woman encompasses a man,* is subject to many translations and interpretations: "a woman protects a man," "the woman woos the man," "the woman sets out to find her husband again," "the woman must encompass the man with devotion," and "a woman is turned into a man." The NRSV translation suggests two possibilities: in a reversal of traditional roles, the woman (Israel?) embraces the man (God?); or, in contrast to Rachel bereaved of children, Virgin Israel will bear a son, a posterity, and thus have a future. **31.23–26** The restoration of Judah. This oracle of salvation anticipates the restoration of worship in the destroyed temple in Jerusalem and the resettlement of Judah. **31.26** An editor places these words in Jeremiah's mouth to indicate he had been dreaming of the future restoration. **31.27–30** The repopulation of Israel and Judah and individual retribution. **31.27** The land of Israel and Judah will be repopulated with people and herds (Ezek 36.9–11). **31.28** See note on 1.10. **31.29–30** These words and thoughts are borrowed from Ezekiel (see Ezek 18.1–32). **31.31–34** The new covenant. See Lk 22.20; 1 Cor 11.25; 2 Cor 3.5–14; Heb 8.8–12; 10.16–17. In this prose oracle of salvation, Jeremiah promises a new covenant, not a new law. The old (Mosaic) covenant had been broken, but the new covenant will continue because of an inward transformation of the human heart that will allow the people to know God intimately and to be obedient to the commandments. And God will forgive and forget the people's sins. **31.33** *I will make,* lit. "I will cut." "Cutting a covenant" involved the sacrifice of animals and a ceremony in which the covenant partners walked between the slaughtered animals

covenant that I will make with the house
of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I
will put my law within them, and I will
write it on their hearts; and I will be their
God, and they shall be my people. 34 No
longer shall they teach one another, or say
to each other, "Know the LORD," for they
shall all know me, from the least of them
to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will
forgive their iniquity, and remember their
sin no more.

God's Abiding Commitment to Israel

35 Thus says the LORD,
who gives the sun for light by day
and the fixed order of the
moon and the stars for
light by night,
who stirs up the sea so that its
waves roar—
the LORD of hosts is his name:
36 If this fixed order were ever
to cease
from my presence, says the
LORD,
then also the offspring of Israel
would cease
to be a nation before me
forever.

37 Thus says the LORD:
If the heavens above can be
measured,
and the foundations of the
earth below can be
explored,
then I will reject all the offspring
of Israel
because of all they have done,
says the LORD.

Jerusalem to Be Enlarged

38 The days are surely coming, says
the LORD, when the city shall be rebuilt
for the LORD from the tower of Hananel
to the Corner Gate. 39 And the measuring
line shall go out farther, straight to the
hill Gareb, and shall then turn to Goah.
40 The whole valley of the dead bodies
and the ashes, and all the fields as far as
the Wadi Kidron, to the corner of the
Horse Gate toward the east, shall be sacred to the LORD. It shall never again be
uprooted or overthrown.

Jeremiah Buys a Field During the Siege

32 The word that came to Jeremiah
from the LORD in the tenth year
of King Zedekiah of Judah, which was the
eighteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar. 2 At
that time the army of the king of Babylon
was besieging Jerusalem, and the prophet
Jeremiah was confined in the court of the
guard that was in the palace of the king of
Judah, 3 where King Zedekiah of Judah
had confined him. Zedekiah had said,
"Why do you prophesy and say: Thus says
the LORD: I am going to give this city into
the hand of the king of Babylon, and he
shall take it; 4 King Zedekiah of Judah
shall not escape out of the hands of the
Chaldeans, but shall surely be given into
the hands of the king of Babylon, and
shall speak with him face to face and see
him eye to eye; 5 and he shall take Zedekiah to Babylon, and there he shall remain until I attend to him, says the LORD;
though you fight against the Chaldeans,
you shall not succeed?"
6 Jeremiah said, The word of the

(see 34.18; Gen 15.7–21). **31.35–37** The continuation of Israel. This oracle of salvation makes use of hymnic language praising the God of creation. The power of God revealed in the endless cycle of days and seasons and the unfathomable character of the heavens and the earth guarantees Israel's continuation (see Isa 40.12, 26; 42.5; 44.24; 45.7, 18; 54.10). **31.38–40** Jerusalem will be rebuilt and enlarged and the areas desecrated by death will be purified (see Zech 14.10–11). The boundaries of Jerusalem are mentioned: the *tower of Hananel* in the northeast (Neh 3.1), the *Corner Gate* in the northwest (2 Kings 14.13), the southern boundary of Hinnom (7.31–32), the eastern boundary of *Kidron* (2 Kings 23.4, 6), and the *Horse Gate* in the southeast corner (Neh 3.28). *Gareb* and *Goah* are unknown. The *valley of the dead bodies and the ashes* must be the valley of Hinnom, where child sacrifice was practiced (see 7.31–32; 19.2, 6; 32.35; 2 Kings 23.10).

32.1–44 Jeremiah's purchase of a field in Anathoth, another symbolic act, illustrates Jeremiah's preaching (see note on 13.1–11). **32.1** This prose narrative is set in 588 B.C.E., during the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadrezzar. **32.2** Jeremiah was imprisoned for attempting to leave the city to go to Anathoth when the siege was temporarily lifted. He was accused of deserting to the enemy (see 37.11–21). **32.3–5** Zedekiah accused Jeremiah of treason and insurrection (see Am 7.10–17). **32.6–8** The *right of redemption* was a means to prevent the threatened

LORD came to me: 7 Hanamel son of your
uncle Shallum is going to come to you and
say, "Buy my field that is at Anathoth, for
the right of redemption by purchase is
yours." 8 Then my cousin Hanamel came
to me in the court of the guard, in accor-
dance with the word of the LORD, and said
to me, "Buy my field that is at Anathoth in
the land of Benjamin, for the right of pos-
session and redemption is yours; buy it
for yourself." Then I knew that this was
the word of the LORD.

9 And I bought the field at Anathoth
from my cousin Hanamel, and weighed
out the money to him, seventeen shekels
of silver. 10 I signed the deed, sealed it,
got witnesses, and weighed the money on
scales. 11 Then I took the sealed deed of
purchase, containing the terms and condi-
tions, and the open copy; 12 and I gave the
deed of purchase to Baruch son of Neriah
son of Mahseiah, in the presence of my
cousin Hanamel, in the presence of the
witnesses who signed the deed of pur-
chase, and in the presence of all the Ju-
deans who were sitting in the court of the
guard. 13 In their presence I charged Bar-
uch, saying, 14 Thus says the LORD of
hosts, the God of Israel: Take these
deeds, both this sealed deed of purchase
and this open deed, and put them in an
earthenware jar, in order that they may
last for a long time. 15 For thus says the
LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Houses
and fields and vineyards shall again be
bought in this land.

Jeremiah Prays for Understanding

16 After I had given the deed of pur-
chase to Baruch son of Neriah, I prayed
to the LORD, saying: 17 Ah Lord GOD! It is
you who made the heavens and the earth
by your great power and by your out-
stretched arm! Nothing is too hard for
you. 18 You show steadfast love to the
thousandth generation,[u] but repay the
guilt of parents into the laps of their chil-
dren after them, O great and mighty God
whose name is the LORD of hosts, 19 great
in counsel and mighty in deed; whose
eyes are open to all the ways of mortals,
rewarding all according to their ways and
according to the fruit of their doings.
20 You showed signs and wonders in the
land of Egypt, and to this day in Israel
and among all humankind, and have
made yourself a name that continues to
this very day. 21 You brought your people
Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs
and wonders, with a strong hand and out-
stretched arm, and with great terror;
22 and you gave them this land, which you
swore to their ancestors to give them, a
land flowing with milk and honey; 23 and
they entered and took possession of it.
But they did not obey your voice or follow
your law; of all you commanded them to
do, they did nothing. Therefore you have
made all these disasters come upon them.
24 See, the siege ramps have been cast up
against the city to take it, and the city,
faced with sword, famine, and pestilence,
has been given into the hands of the Chal-
deans who are fighting against it. What
you spoke has happened, as you yourself
can see. 25 Yet you, O Lord GOD, have
said to me, "Buy the field for money and
get witnesses"—though the city has been
given into the hands of the Chaldeans.

God's Assurance of the People's Return

26 The word of the LORD came to Jer-
emiah: 27 See, I am the LORD, the God of
all flesh; is anything too hard for me?
28 Therefore, thus says the LORD: I am go-
ing to give this city into the hands of the
Chaldeans and into the hand of King
Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon, and he shall
take it. 29 The Chaldeans who are fighting

u Or *to thousands*

loss of family property (see Lev 25.25–28). **32.9–15** *Seventeen shekels of silver* (about seven ounces) refers to weight, not coins. Coins were probably not used until the Persian period (beginning in 539 B.C.E.). The official copy of the scroll was rolled up and sealed, while the *open copy* was unsealed for easy reference. *Baruch* was Jeremiah's secretary (amanuensis) and companion (see chs. 36; 45). The purchase of a field at the time of conquest and threatened exile underscores the prophet's faith in a future restoration. **32.16–25** A prayer of Jeremiah. See Neh 9.6–38. This prose prayer is similar to hymns praising God for great acts of salvation (Pss 78; 105; 106; 135; 136). **32.26–44** This response of God to Jeremiah's prayer outlines the sins of the people as the basis for the fall of Jerusalem. It is a history of disobedience (see Ezek 20.1–32). Yet God also promises a restoration in which the covenant will be renewed (cf. vv. 39–40 with 31.31–34). Even as Jeremiah purchased his field, so once again fields will be bought in the land.

against this city shall come, set it on fire,
and burn it, with the houses on whose
roofs offerings have been made to Baal
and libations have been poured out to
other gods, to provoke me to anger. 30 For
the people of Israel and the people of Ju-
dah have done nothing but evil in my
sight from their youth; the people of Is-
rael have done nothing but provoke me to
anger by the work of their hands, says the
LORD. 31 This city has aroused my anger
and wrath, from the day it was built until
this day, so that I will remove it from my
sight 32 because of all the evil of the peo-
ple of Israel and the people of Judah that
they did to provoke me to anger—they,
their kings and their officials, their priests
and their prophets, the citizens of Judah
and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 33 They
have turned their backs to me, not their
faces; though I have taught them persis-
tently, they would not listen and accept
correction. 34 They set up their abomina-
tions in the house that bears my name,
and defiled it. 35 They built the high
places of Baal in the valley of the son
of Hinnom, to offer up their sons and
daughters to Molech, though I did not
command them, nor did it enter my mind
that they should do this abomination,
causing Judah to sin.

36 Now therefore thus says the LORD,
the God of Israel, concerning this city of
which you say, "It is being given into the
hand of the king of Babylon by the sword,
by famine, and by pestilence": 37 See, I am
going to gather them from all the lands to
which I drove them in my anger and my
wrath and in great indignation; I will
bring them back to this place, and I will
settle them in safety. 38 They shall be my
people, and I will be their God. 39 I will
give them one heart and one way, that
they may fear me for all time, for their
own good and the good of their children
after them. 40 I will make an everlasting
covenant with them, never to draw back
from doing good to them; and I will put
the fear of me in their hearts, so that they
may not turn from me. 41 I will rejoice in
doing good to them, and I will plant them
in this land in faithfulness, with all my
heart and all my soul.

42 For thus says the LORD: Just as I
have brought all this great disaster upon
this people, so I will bring upon them all
the good fortune that I now promise
them. 43 Fields shall be bought in this land
of which you are saying, It is a desolation,
without human beings or animals; it has
been given into the hands of the Chalde-
ans. 44 Fields shall be bought for money,
and deeds shall be signed and sealed and
witnessed, in the land of Benjamin, in the
places around Jerusalem, and in the cities
of Judah, of the hill country, of the She-
phelah, and of the Negeb; for I will re-
store their fortunes, says the LORD.

Healing After Punishment

33 The word of the LORD came to
Jeremiah a second time, while he
was still confined in the court of the
guard: 2 Thus says the LORD who made
the earth,[v] the LORD who formed it to
establish it—the LORD is his name: 3 Call
to me and I will answer you, and will tell
you great and hidden things that you
have not known. 4 For thus says the LORD,
the God of Israel, concerning the houses
of this city and the houses of the kings of
Judah that were torn down to make a de-
fense against the siege ramps and before
the sword:[w] 5 The Chaldeans are coming
in to fight[x] and to fill them with the dead
bodies of those whom I shall strike down
in my anger and my wrath, for I have hid-
den my face from this city because of all
their wickedness. 6 I am going to bring it
recovery and healing; I will heal them and
reveal to them abundance[w] of prosperity
and security. 7 I will restore the fortunes
of Judah and the fortunes of Israel, and
rebuild them as they were at first. 8 I will
cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin
against me, and I will forgive all the guilt
of their sin and rebellion against me.
9 And this city[y] shall be to me a name of
joy, a praise and a glory before all the na-

v Gk: Heb *it* w Meaning of Heb uncertain
x Cn: Heb *They are coming in to fight against the Chaldeans* y Heb *And it*

33.1–26 Promises of future restoration. Continuing the theme of salvation in chs. 30–32, this chapter consists of various sections that speak of future restoration. **33.1–9** Destroyed Jerusalem will be rebuilt. **33.1** See ch. 32. **33.2–3** The prose sermon begins with a hymnic acclamation of the Lord as Creator (see 31.35–37). **33.4–5** The imminent destruction of Jerusalem is reaffirmed. **33.6–9** Nevertheless, Israel and Judah will be forgiven and restored and Jerusalem

tions of the earth who shall hear of all the
good that I do for them; they shall fear
and tremble because of all the good and
all the prosperity I provide for it.

10 Thus says the LORD: In this place
of which you say, "It is a waste without
human beings or animals," in the towns of
Judah and the streets of Jerusalem that
are desolate, without inhabitants, human
or animal, there shall once more be heard
11 the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the
voice of the bride, the voices of those who
sing, as they bring thank offerings to the
house of the LORD:

"Give thanks to the LORD of
hosts,
for the LORD is good,
for his steadfast love endures
forever!"

For I will restore the fortunes of the land
as at first, says the LORD.

12 Thus says the LORD of hosts: In
this place that is waste, without human beings or animals, and in all its towns there
shall again be pasture for shepherds resting their flocks. 13 In the towns of the hill
country, of the Shephelah, and of the Negeb, in the land of Benjamin, the places
around Jerusalem, and in the towns of
Judah, flocks shall again pass under the
hands of the one who counts them, says
the LORD.

The Righteous Branch and the Covenant with David

14 The days are surely coming, says
the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I
made to the house of Israel and the house
of Judah. 15 In those days and at that time
I will cause a righteous Branch to spring
up for David; and he shall execute justice
and righteousness in the land. 16 In those
days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem
will live in safety. And this is the name by
which it will be called: "The LORD is our
righteousness."

17 For thus says the LORD: David shall
never lack a man to sit on the throne of
the house of Israel, 18 and the levitical
priests shall never lack a man in my presence to offer burnt offerings, to make
grain offerings, and to make sacrifices for
all time.

19 The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: 20 Thus says the LORD: If any of
you could break my covenant with the day
and my covenant with the night, so that
day and night would not come at their appointed time, 21 only then could my covenant with my servant David be broken, so
that he would not have a son to reign on
his throne, and my covenant with my ministers the Levites. 22 Just as the host of
heaven cannot be numbered and the
sands of the sea cannot be measured, so I
will increase the offspring of my servant
David, and the Levites who minister
to me.

23 The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: 24 Have you not observed how
these people say, "The two families that
the LORD chose have been rejected by
him," and how they hold my people in
such contempt that they no longer regard
them as a nation? 25 Thus says the LORD:
Only if I had not established my covenant
with day and night and the ordinances of
heaven and earth, 26 would I reject the
offspring of Jacob and of my servant David and not choose any of his descendants
as rulers over the offspring of Abraham,
Isaac, and Jacob. For I will restore their
fortunes, and will have mercy upon them.

Judgment Against Zedekiah

34 The word that came to Jeremiah
from the LORD, when King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon and all his army
and all the kingdoms of the earth and all

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rebuilt. **33.10–11** This oracle of salvation announces the return of gladness to a desolate land. For thank offerings and thanksgiving psalms, see Lev 7.11–18; Ps 107. The poetic quotation (v. 11b) comes from Ps 136.1, a thanksgiving psalm that praises God for mighty acts of salvation. **33.12–13** A prose oracle of salvation that promises pastures and flocks in the restoration period. **33.14–26** Future leaders. This prose oracle of salvation is an expansion of 23.5–6. Coming from the exile, it promises the restoration of the Davidic monarchy and the Levitical priesthood. These verses are not in the Septuagint. God's promises to David and the Levites will be honored (Deut 18.1–8; 2 Sam 7). See Hag 1.1; 2.23; Zech 4.11–14; 6.9–13. **33.15–16** Jerusalem, not the future king, will be called *The LORD is our righteousness* (see 23.5–6).

34.1–7 A prose oracle of judgment against Zedekiah (cf. the oracle against Hananiah in

the peoples under his dominion were
fighting against Jerusalem and all its cities: 2 Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Go and speak to King Zedekiah of
Judah and say to him: Thus says the
LORD: I am going to give this city into the
hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall
burn it with fire. 3 And you yourself shall
not escape from his hand, but shall surely
be captured and handed over to him; you
shall see the king of Babylon eye to eye
and speak with him face to face; and you
shall go to Babylon. 4 Yet hear the word of
the LORD, O King Zedekiah of Judah!
Thus says the LORD concerning you: You
shall not die by the sword; 5 you shall die
in peace. And as spices were burned[z] for
your ancestors, the earlier kings who preceded you, so they shall burn spices[a] for
you and lament for you, saying, "Alas,
lord!" For I have spoken the word, says
the LORD.

6 Then the prophet Jeremiah spoke
all these words to Zedekiah king of Judah,
in Jerusalem, 7 when the army of the king
of Babylon was fighting against Jerusalem
and against all the cities of Judah that
were left, Lachish and Azekah; for these
were the only fortified cities of Judah that
remained.

Treacherous Treatment of Slaves

8 The word that came to Jeremiah
from the LORD, after King Zedekiah had
made a covenant with all the people in Jerusalem to make a proclamation of liberty
to them— 9 that all should set free their
Hebrew slaves, male and female, so that no
one should hold another Judean in slavery. 10 And they obeyed, all the officials
and all the people who had entered into
the covenant that all would set free their
slaves, male or female, so that they would
not be enslaved again; they obeyed and
set them free. 11 But afterward they
turned around and took back the male
and female slaves they had set free, and
brought them again into subjection as
slaves. 12 The word of the LORD came to
Jeremiah from the LORD: 13 Thus says the
LORD, the God of Israel: I myself made a
covenant with your ancestors when I
brought them out of the land of Egypt,
out of the house of slavery, saying, 14 "Every seventh year each of you must set free
any Hebrews who have been sold to you
and have served you six years; you must
set them free from your service." But
your ancestors did not listen to me or incline their ears to me. 15 You yourselves
recently repented and did what was right
in my sight by proclaiming liberty to one
another, and you made a covenant before
me in the house that is called by my name;
16 but then you turned around and profaned my name when each of you took
back your male and female slaves, whom
you had set free according to their desire,
and you brought them again into subjection to be your slaves. 17 Therefore, thus
says the LORD: You have not obeyed me
by granting a release to your neighbors
and friends; I am going to grant a release
to you, says the LORD—a release to the
sword, to pestilence, and to famine. I will
make you a horror to all the kingdoms of
the earth. 18 And those who transgressed

z Heb *as there was burning* a Heb *shall burn*

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ch. 28). The sermon is set at the onset of the siege of Jerusalem. Jeremiah was not yet imprisoned. **34.3–5** Zedekiah was blinded and exiled to Babylon, where he died in prison (39.7; 52.8–11; 2 Kings 25.5–7). In contrast to Jehoiakim (see 22.13–19), Zedekiah will have a funeral and be lamented. To *burn spices* was part of a royal funeral (2 Chr 16.14; 21.19). **34.7** *Lachish* is modern Tell ed-Duweir, located about thirty miles southwest of Jerusalem. It was a major walled fortress city located between Jerusalem and Gaza. *Azekah* (modern Tell ez-Zahariyeh), lying to the northeast of Lachish, was also a fortified city. In the fourth letter of the Lachish ostraca, recovered from a tower in the outer city gate and dated to the period just before the fall of Jerusalem, Hoshaiah, an official in an outpost to the north of Lachish, writes to Yaosh, its military commander: "We are looking for the signals of Lachish, according to all the indications my Lord has given, because we do not see Azekah."

34.8–22 Slaves and the broken covenant. This prose narrative is set during the siege of Jerusalem (588 B.C.E.). King Zedekiah and the population entered into covenant to release their Hebrew slaves in the hopes of gaining God's help. However, when Nebuchadrezzar temporarily lifted the siege to oppose an advancing Egyptian army (cf. 37.6–11), the people broke their covenantal oath by re-enslaving the slaves they had set free. This act of bad faith leads to an oracle of judgment against Jerusalem. **34.14** The law quoted is Deut 15.1, 12 (see Ex 21.2). **34.18–19** These verses describe the ritual of cov-

my covenant and did not keep the terms
of the covenant that they made before
me, I will make like[b] the calf when they
cut it in two and passed between its parts:
19 the officials of Judah, the officials of Je-
rusalem, the eunuchs, the priests, and all
the people of the land who passed be-
tween the parts of the calf 20 shall be
handed over to their enemies and to those
who seek their lives. Their corpses shall
become food for the birds of the air and
the wild animals of the earth. 21 And as
for King Zedekiah of Judah and his offi-
cials, I will hand them over to their ene-
mies and to those who seek their lives, to
the army of the king of Babylon, which
has withdrawn from you. 22 I am going to
command, says the LORD, and will bring
them back to this city; and they will fight
against it, and take it, and burn it with
fire. The towns of Judah I will make a
desolation without inhabitant.

The Rechabites Commended

35 The word that came to Jeremiah
from the LORD in the days of
King Jehoiakim son of Josiah of Judah:
2 Go to the house of the Rechabites, and
speak with them, and bring them to the
house of the LORD, into one of the cham-
bers; then offer them wine to drink. 3 So I
took Jaazaniah son of Jeremiah son of
Habazziniah, and his brothers, and all his
sons, and the whole house of the Rechab-
ites. 4 I brought them to the house of the
LORD into the chamber of the sons of Ha-
nan son of Igdaliah, the man of God,
which was near the chamber of the offi-
cials, above the chamber of Maaseiah son
of Shallum, keeper of the threshold.
5 Then I set before the Rechabites pitch-
ers full of wine, and cups; and I said to
them, "Have some wine." 6 But they an-
swered, "We will drink no wine, for our
ancestor Jonadab son of Rechab com-
manded us, 'You shall never drink wine,
neither you nor your children; 7 nor shall
you ever build a house, or sow seed; nor
shall you plant a vineyard, or even own
one; but you shall live in tents all your
days, that you may live many days in the
land where you reside.' 8 We have obeyed
the charge of our ancestor Jonadab son of
Rechab in all that he commanded us, to
drink no wine all our days, ourselves, our
wives, our sons, or our daughters, 9 and
not to build houses to live in. We have no
vineyard or field or seed; 10 but we have
lived in tents, and have obeyed and done
all that our ancestor Jonadab commanded
us. 11 But when King Nebuchadrezzar of
Babylon came up against the land, we
said, 'Come, and let us go to Jerusalem for
fear of the army of the Chaldeans and the
army of the Arameans.' That is why we
are living in Jerusalem."

12 Then the word of the LORD came
to Jeremiah: 13 Thus says the LORD of
hosts, the God of Israel: Go and say to the
people of Judah and the inhabitants of Je-
rusalem, Can you not learn a lesson and
obey my words? says the LORD. 14 The
command has been carried out that Jona-
dab son of Rechab gave to his descendants
to drink no wine; and they drink none to
this day, for they have obeyed their ances-
tor's command. But I myself have spoken
to you persistently, and you have not
obeyed me. 15 I have sent to you all my
servants the prophets, sending them per-
sistently, saying, "Turn now everyone of
you from your evil way, and amend your
doings, and do not go after other gods to
serve them, and then you shall live in the
land that I gave to you and your ances-
tors." But you did not incline your ear or
obey me. 16 The descendants of Jonadab
son of Rechab have carried out the com-
mand that their ancestor gave them, but
this people has not obeyed me. 17 There-
fore, thus says the LORD, the God of hosts,
the God of Israel: I am going to bring
on Judah and on all the inhabitants of
Jerusalem every disaster that I have
pronounced against them; because I
have spoken to them and they have not

b Cn: Heb lacks *like*

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enant making, "to cut a covenant" (see note on 31.33; Gen 15.7–21).

35.1–19 Set in the reign of Jehoiakim (609–598 B.C.E.), this prose narrative describes the faithfulness of the Rechabites, a religious sect named in honor of their founder, Jonadab the son of Rechab, during the reign of Jehu (842–815 B.C.E.). Presumably the editor who positioned chs. 34 and 35 next to each other wished to contrast the covenant loyalty of the Rechabites with the faithlessness of the citizens of Jerusalem exhibited in taking back their slaves. The Rechabites abstained from wine, lived as nomads in tents, and did not practice agriculture, all in accordance

listened, I have called to them and they
have not answered.
18 But to the house of the Rechabites
Jeremiah said: Thus says the LORD of
hosts, the God of Israel: Because you have
obeyed the command of your ancestor
Jonadab, and kept all his precepts, and
done all that he commanded you, 19 there-
fore thus says the LORD of hosts, the God
of Israel: Jonadab son of Rechab shall not
lack a descendant to stand before me for
all time.

The Scroll Read in the Temple

36 In the fourth year of King Jehoi-
akim son of Josiah of Judah, this
word came to Jeremiah from the LORD:
2 Take a scroll and write on it all the words
that I have spoken to you against Israel
and Judah and all the nations, from the
day I spoke to you, from the days of Jo-
siah until today. 3 It may be that when the
house of Judah hears of all the disasters
that I intend to do to them, all of them
may turn from their evil ways, so that I
may forgive their iniquity and their sin.
4 Then Jeremiah called Baruch son of
Neriah, and Baruch wrote on a scroll at
Jeremiah's dictation all the words of the
LORD that he had spoken to him. 5 And
Jeremiah ordered Baruch, saying, "I am
prevented from entering the house of the
LORD; 6 so you go yourself, and on a fast
day in the hearing of the people in the
LORD's house you shall read the words of
the LORD from the scroll that you have
written at my dictation. You shall read
them also in the hearing of all the people
of Judah who come up from their towns.
7 It may be that their plea will come before
the LORD, and that all of them will turn
from their evil ways, for great is the anger
and wrath that the LORD has pronounced
against this people." 8 And Baruch son of
Neriah did all that the prophet Jeremiah
ordered him about reading from the
scroll the words of the LORD in the LORD's
house.
9 In the fifth year of King Jehoiakim
son of Josiah of Judah, in the ninth
month, all the people in Jerusalem and all
the people who came from the towns of
Judah to Jerusalem proclaimed a fast be-
fore the LORD. 10 Then, in the hearing of
all the people, Baruch read the words of
Jeremiah from the scroll, in the house of
the LORD, in the chamber of Gemariah
son of Shaphan the secretary, which was
in the upper court, at the entry of the
New Gate of the LORD's house.

The Scroll Read in the Palace

11 When Micaiah son of Gemariah
son of Shaphan heard all the words of the
LORD from the scroll, 12 he went down to

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with the principles of Jonadab. **35.19** *To stand before me* (before God) is a priestly prerogative. The Rechabites were not priests, but their devotion was a form of divine service.

36.1–32 The two scrolls of Baruch. Clues to the composition of the book of Jeremiah are contained in this chapter. The story begins with the *fourth year of King Jehoiakim* (605 B.C.E., v. 1), the same year of the battle of Carchemish (see Introduction), and describes the formation of two scrolls of Baruch. The first scroll contained the prophecies of Jeremiah from 627 to 605 B.C.E., described primarily as oracles of judgment. The purpose of the scroll was to present the "house of Judah" an opportunity to repent, be forgiven, and avoid destruction (see 25. 1–14). Baruch, Jeremiah's companion and secretary, belonged to an important family in Jerusalem and was a royal scribe (36.32; see chs. 32; 45). His brother, Seraiah, was minister to Zedekiah (51.59). Seals of the two brothers have been excavated. Baruch's reads: "to/from Baruch / son of Neriah / the scribe." Numerous efforts to reconstruct the two scrolls have been undertaken (see Introduction). If ch. 36 is historical, we may have indications of the first two editions of the book of Jeremiah. **36.5** Jeremiah was barred from the temple precinct, possibly because of the temple sermon (see chs. 7; 26). **36.6** Public fasts were held periodically, especially during times of distress (see 2 Chr 20.3; Ezra 8.21–23; Neh 1.4–11). Since these were periods of penance in which lamenting, wearing sackcloth, offering sacrifices, and fasting made up the ritual, a *fast day* was appropriate for reading to the people assembled in the temple Jeremiah's oracles of judgment. **36.9** *The fifth year of King Jehoiakim* (604 B.C.E.) would coincide with Nebuchadrezzar's advance into the Philistine plain where he conquered Ashkelon. Shortly thereafter, Jehoiakim declared his allegiance to Nebuchadrezzar. **36.11–13** *Elnathan* was the father of Nehushta, the mother of Jehoiachin (2 Kings 24.8), and the leader of the party that captured Uriah and brought him to Jehoiakim for execution (26.22–23). *Gemariah* was the son of *Shaphan*, the royal secretary to whom Hilkiah, the high priest, revealed the discovery of the "book of the law" in the temple (2 Kings 22). *Micaiah* was

the king's house, into the secretary's chamber; and all the officials were sitting there: Elishama the secretary, Delaiah son of Shemaiah, Elnathan son of Achbor, Gemariah son of Shaphan, Zedekiah son of Hananiah, and all the officials. 13 And Micaiah told them all the words that he had heard, when Baruch read the scroll in the hearing of the people. 14 Then all the officials sent Jehudi son of Nethaniah son of Shelemiah son of Cushi to say to Baruch, "Bring the scroll that you read in the hearing of the people, and come." So Baruch son of Neriah took the scroll in his hand and came to them. 15 And they said to him, "Sit down and read it to us." So Baruch read it to them. 16 When they heard all the words, they turned to one another in alarm, and said to Baruch, "We certainly must report all these words to the king." 17 Then they questioned Baruch, "Tell us now, how did you write all these words? Was it at his dictation?" 18 Baruch answered them, "He dictated all these words to me, and I wrote them with ink on the scroll." 19 Then the officials said to Baruch, "Go and hide, you and Jeremiah, and let no one know where you are."

Jehoiakim Burns the Scroll

20 Leaving the scroll in the chamber of Elishama the secretary, they went to the court of the king; and they reported all the words to the king. 21 Then the king sent Jehudi to get the scroll, and he took it from the chamber of Elishama the secretary; and Jehudi read it to the king and all the officials who stood beside the king. 22 Now the king was sitting in his winter apartment (it was the ninth month), and there was a fire burning in the brazier before him. 23 As Jehudi read three or four columns, the king[c] would cut them off with a penknife and throw them into the fire in the brazier, until the entire scroll was consumed in the fire that was in the brazier. 24 Yet neither the king, nor any of his servants who heard all these words, was alarmed, nor did they tear their garments. 25 Even when Elnathan and Delaiah and Gemariah urged the king not to burn the scroll, he would not listen to them. 26 And the king commanded Jerahmeel the king's son and Seraiah son of Azriel and Shelemiah son of Abdeel to arrest the secretary Baruch and the prophet Jeremiah. But the LORD hid them.

Jeremiah Dictates Another

27 Now, after the king had burned the scroll with the words that Baruch wrote at Jeremiah's dictation, the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: 28 Take another scroll and write on it all the former words that were in the first scroll, which King Jehoiakim of Judah has burned. 29 And concerning King Jehoiakim of Judah you shall say: Thus says the LORD, You have dared to burn this scroll, saying, Why have you written in it that the king of Babylon will certainly come and destroy this land, and will cut off from it human beings and animals? 30 Therefore thus says the LORD concerning King Jehoiakim of Judah: He shall have no one to sit upon the throne of David, and his dead body shall be cast out to the heat by day and the frost by night. 31 And I will punish him and his offspring and his servants for their iniquity; I will bring on them, and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and on the people of Judah, all the disasters with which I have threatened them—but they would not listen.

32 Then Jeremiah took another scroll and gave it to the secretary Baruch son of Neriah, who wrote on it at Jeremiah's dictation all the words of the scroll that King Jehoiakim of Judah had burned in the fire; and many similar words were added to them.

Zedekiah's Vain Hope

37 Zedekiah son of Josiah, whom King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon made king in the land of Judah, succeeded Coniah son of Jehoiakim. 2 But neither he nor his servants nor the people

c Heb *he*

his son. Interestingly, Shaphan read the newly discovered law to King Josiah but received a positive response. **36.30** See note on 22.13–19. Jehoiakim was succeeded by his son Jehoiachin, who ruled for three months (see note on 22.24–30).

37.1–38.28 Jeremiah and Zedekiah. The prose narratives in these two chapters are sequential accounts of Jeremiah's dealings with Zedekiah during the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem. **37.1–10** News of an advancing Egyptian army

of the land listened to the words of the LORD that he spoke through the prophet Jeremiah.

3 King Zedekiah sent Jehucal son of Shelemiah and the priest Zephaniah son of Maaseiah to the prophet Jeremiah saying, "Please pray for us to the LORD our God." 4 Now Jeremiah was still going in and out among the people, for he had not yet been put in prison. 5 Meanwhile, the army of Pharaoh had come out of Egypt; and when the Chaldeans who were besieging Jerusalem heard news of them, they withdrew from Jerusalem.

6 Then the word of the LORD came to the prophet Jeremiah: 7 Thus says the LORD, God of Israel: This is what the two of you shall say to the king of Judah, who sent you to me to inquire of me: Pharaoh's army, which set out to help you, is going to return to its own land, to Egypt. 8 And the Chaldeans shall return and fight against this city; they shall take it and burn it with fire. 9 Thus says the LORD: Do not deceive yourselves, saying, "The Chaldeans will surely go away from us," for they will not go away. 10 Even if you defeated the whole army of Chaldeans who are fighting against you, and there remained of them only wounded men in their tents, they would rise up and burn this city with fire.

Jeremiah Is Imprisoned

11 Now when the Chaldean army had withdrawn from Jerusalem at the approach of Pharaoh's army, 12 Jeremiah set out from Jerusalem to go to the land of Benjamin to receive his share of property[d] among the people there. 13 When he reached the Benjamin Gate, a sentinel there named Irijah son of Shelemiah son of Hananiah arrested the prophet Jeremiah saying, "You are deserting to the Chaldeans." 14 And Jeremiah said, "That is a lie; I am not deserting to the Chaldeans." But Irijah would not listen to him, and arrested Jeremiah and brought him to the officials. 15 The officials were enraged at Jeremiah, and they beat him and imprisoned him in the house of the secretary Jonathan, for it had been made a prison. 16 Thus Jeremiah was put in the cistern house, in the cells, and remained there many days.

17 Then King Zedekiah sent for him, and received him. The king questioned him secretly in his house, and said, "Is there any word from the LORD?" Jeremiah said, "There is!" Then he said, "You shall be handed over to the king of Babylon." 18 Jeremiah also said to King Zedekiah, "What wrong have I done to you or your servants or this people, that you have put me in prison? 19 Where are your prophets who prophesied to you, saying, 'The king of Babylon will not come against you and against this land'? 20 Now please hear me, my lord king: be good enough to listen to my plea, and do not send me back to the house of the secretary Jonathan to die there." 21 So King Zedekiah gave orders, and they committed Jeremiah to the court of the guard; and a loaf of bread was given him daily from the bakers' street, until all the bread of the city was gone. So Jeremiah remained in the court of the guard.

Jeremiah in the Cistern

38 Now Shephatiah son of Mattan, Gedaliah son of Pashhur, Jucal son of Shelemiah, and Pashhur son of Malchiah heard the words that Jeremiah was saying to all the people, 2 Thus says the LORD, Those who stay in this city shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pesti-

d Meaning of Heb uncertain

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led to Nebuchadrezzar's withdrawal from Jerusalem to meet the threat (see 34.21). When Zedekiah sends emissaries to ask Jeremiah to intercede on the behalf of Jerusalem (see 21.1–10), the prophet responds with an oracle that the Babylonians will return to destroy the city. **37.5** The *Pharaoh* was Hophra (589–570 B.C.E.). See 44.30. Zedekiah's rebellion, which began in 589 B.C.E., was no doubt stimulated in part by an alliance with Egypt. **37.11–15** At the time of the lifting of the siege, Jeremiah is accused of deserting to the Babylonians when he attempts to travel to the territory of Benjamin to receive his share of the family property. This is probably not connected with the redeeming of the field in Anathoth (ch. 32), which occurred when he was in prison. **37.16–21** Zedekiah's renewed efforts to find a hopeful prophetic word fail. Jeremiah does succeed in being transferred to more comfortable quarters. **38.1–13** Jeremiah's enemies, officials who were pro-Egyptian and supportive of the rebellion, succeed in having the prophet imprisoned

lence; but those who go out to the Chaldeans shall live; they shall have their lives as
a prize of war, and live. 3 Thus says the
LORD, This city shall surely be handed
over to the army of the king of Babylon
and be taken. 4 Then the officials said to
the king, "This man ought to be put to
death, because he is discouraging the sol-
diers who are left in this city, and all the
people, by speaking such words to them.
For this man is not seeking the welfare of
this people, but their harm." 5 King Zede-
kiah said, "Here he is; he is in your hands;
for the king is powerless against you." 6 So
they took Jeremiah and threw him into
the cistern of Malchiah, the king's son,
which was in the court of the guard, let-
ting Jeremiah down by ropes. Now there
was no water in the cistern, but only mud,
and Jeremiah sank in the mud.

Jeremiah Is Rescued by Ebed-melech

7 Ebed-melech the Ethiopian,[e] a eu-
nuch in the king's house, heard that they
had put Jeremiah into the cistern. The
king happened to be sitting at the Benja-
min Gate, 8 So Ebed-melech left the king's
house and spoke to the king, 9 "My lord
king, these men have acted wickedly in all
they did to the prophet Jeremiah by
throwing him into the cistern to die there
of hunger, for there is no bread left in the
city." 10 Then the king commanded Ebed-
melech the Ethiopian,[e] "Take three men
with you from here, and pull the prophet
Jeremiah up from the cistern before he
dies." 11 So Ebed-melech took the men
with him and went to the house of the
king, to a wardrobe of[f] the storehouse,
and took from there old rags and worn-
out clothes, which he let down to Jere-
miah in the cistern by ropes. 12 Then
Ebed-melech the Ethiopian[e] said to Jere-
miah, "Just put the rags and clothes be-
tween your armpits and the ropes."
Jeremiah did so. 13 Then they drew Jere-
miah up by the ropes and pulled him out
of the cistern. And Jeremiah remained in
the court of the guard.

Zedekiah Consults Jeremiah Again

14 King Zedekiah sent for the prophet
Jeremiah and received him at the third
entrance of the temple of the LORD. The
king said to Jeremiah, "I have something
to ask you; do not hide anything from
me." 15 Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, "If I
tell you, you will put me to death, will you
not? And if I give you advice, you will not
listen to me." 16 So King Zedekiah swore
an oath in secret to Jeremiah, "As the
LORD lives, who gave us our lives, I will
not put you to death or hand you over to
these men who seek your life."
17 Then Jeremiah said to Zedekiah,
"Thus says the LORD, the God of hosts,
the God of Israel, If you will only surren-
der to the officials of the king of Babylon,
then your life shall be spared, and this city
shall not be burned with fire, and you and
your house shall live. 18 But if you do not
surrender to the officials of the king of
Babylon, then this city shall be handed
over to the Chaldeans, and they shall
burn it with fire, and you yourself shall
not escape from their hand." 19 King Zed-
ekiah said to Jeremiah, "I am afraid of the
Judeans who have deserted to the Chalde-
ans, for I might be handed over to them
and they would abuse me." 20 Jeremiah
said, "That will not happen. Just obey the
voice of the LORD in what I say to you,
and it shall go well with you, and your life
shall be spared. 21 But if you are deter-
mined not to surrender, this is what the
LORD has shown me— 22 a vision of all the
women remaining in the house of the
king of Judah being led out to the officials
of the king of Babylon and saying,

'Your trusted friends have
seduced you
and have overcome you;

e Or *Nubian*; Heb *Cushite* f Cn: Heb *to under*

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and presumably left to die in a muddy, but waterless cistern. **38.4** The charge of treason against Jeremiah is similar to a charge in letter six of the Lachish letters against some officials in Jerusalem (see note on 34.7). **38.7** *Ebed-melech* was an Ethiopian and either a eunuch or palace official (Hebrew *saris*). Later, he receives an oracle from Jeremiah promising he would survive the destruction of Jerusalem (39.15–18). **38.14–28** In this final consultation between Jeremiah and Zedekiah, Jeremiah advises the king to surrender in order to save the city and himself. Zedekiah's fear of both the pro-Babylonian and pro-Egyptian factions is obvious. **38.14** *Third entrance.* The various entrances to the temple are not currently known. **38.16** *Oath.* See note on 4.2.

Now that your feet are stuck in
the mud,
they desert you.'
23 All your wives and your children shall
be led out to the Chaldeans, and you
yourself shall not escape from their hand,
but shall be seized by the king of Babylon;
and this city shall be burned with fire."
24 Then Zedekiah said to Jeremiah,
"Do not let anyone else know of this con-
versation, or you will die. 25 If the officials
should hear that I have spoken with you,
and they should come and say to you,
'Just tell us what you said to the king; do
not conceal it from us, or we will put you
to death. What did the king say to you?'
26 then you shall say to them, 'I was pre-
senting my plea to the king not to send me
back to the house of Jonathan to die
there.'" 27 All the officials did come to
Jeremiah and questioned him; and he an-
swered them in the very words the king
had commanded. So they stopped ques-
tioning him, for the conversation had not
been overheard. 28 And Jeremiah re-
mained in the court of the guard until the
day that Jerusalem was taken.

The Fall of Jerusalem

39 In the ninth year of King Zede-
kiah of Judah, in the tenth
month, King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon
and all his army came against Jerusalem
and besieged it; 2 in the eleventh year of
Zedekiah, in the fourth month, on the
ninth day of the month, a breach was
made in the city. 3 When Jerusalem was
taken,[g] all the officials of the king of Bab-
ylon came and sat in the middle gate:
Nergal-sharezer, Samgar-nebo, Sarsechim
the Rabsaris, Nergal-sharezer the Rab-
mag, with all the rest of the officials of the
king of Babylon. 4 When King Zedekiah
of Judah and all the soldiers saw them,
they fled, going out of the city at night by
way of the king's garden through the gate
between the two walls; and they went to-
ward the Arabah. 5 But the army of the
Chaldeans pursued them, and overtook
Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho; and
when they had taken him, they brought
him up to King Nebuchadrezzar of Bab-
ylon, at Riblah, in the land of Hamath;
and he passed sentence on him. 6 The
king of Babylon slaughtered the sons of
Zedekiah at Riblah before his eyes; also
the king of Babylon slaughtered all the
nobles of Judah. 7 He put out the eyes of
Zedekiah, and bound him in fetters to
take him to Babylon. 8 The Chaldeans
burned the king's house and the houses of
the people, and broke down the walls of
Jerusalem. 9 Then Nebuzaradan the cap-
tain of the guard exiled to Babylon the
rest of the people who were left in the
city, those who had deserted to him, and
the people who remained. 10 Nebuzara-
dan the captain of the guard left in the
land of Judah some of the poor people
who owned nothing, and gave them vine-
yards and fields at the same time.
11 King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon
gave command concerning Jeremiah
through Nebuzaradan, the captain of the
guard, saying, 12 "Take him, look after
him well and do him no harm, but deal
with him as he may ask you." 13 So Nebu-
zaradan the captain of the guard, Nebu-
shazban the Rabsaris, Nergal-sharezer the
Rabmag, and all the chief officers of the
king of Babylon sent 14 and took Jeremiah
from the court of the guard. They en-
trusted him to Gedaliah son of Ahikam
son of Shaphan to be brought home. So
he stayed with his own people.
15 The word of the LORD came to Je-
remiah while he was confined in the court
of the guard: 16 Go and say to Ebed-
melech the Ethiopian:[h] Thus says the
LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: I am

[g] This clause has been transposed from 38.28
[h] Or *Nubian*; Heb *Cushite*

39.1–40.6 The fall of Jerusalem. **39.1–14** The first ten verses summarize 52.4–16 (see 2 Kings 25.1–12). **39.3** The names *Nergal-sharezer, Samgar-nebo, Sarsechim the Rabsaris, Nergal-sharezer the Rabmag* are to be understood as follows: "Nergal-sharezer the Simmagir, Nebushazban the chief court official, and Nergal-sharezer the Rabmag." Simmagir and *Rabmag* are titles of Babylonian officials. *Nergal-sharezer* (see v. 13) was Nergalsharusur (Neriglissar), Nebuchadrezzar's son-in-law, who succeeded to the Babylonian throne in 560 and ruled until 556 B.C.E. **39.6** *Riblah* was a city in the Beqaa Valley in Lebanon that guarded the highway between Egypt and Mesopotamia. It was an important military base in the seventh and sixth centuries B.C.E. **39.11–14** For a slightly different account regarding Jeremiah's release from prison, cf. 40.1–6. **39.15–18** See 38.7–13.

going to fulfill my words against this city
for evil and not for good, and they shall
be accomplished in your presence on that
day. 17 But I will save you on that day, says
the LORD, and you shall not be handed
over to those whom you dread. 18 For I
will surely save you, and you shall not fall
by the sword; but you shall have your life
as a prize of war, because you have
trusted in me, says the LORD.

40 The word that came to Jeremiah
from the LORD after Nebuzara-
dan the captain of the guard had let him
go from Ramah, when he took him bound
in fetters along with all the captives of Je-
rusalem and Judah who were being exiled
to Babylon. 2 The captain of the guard
took Jeremiah and said to him, "The
LORD your God threatened this place with
this disaster; 3 and now the LORD has
brought it about, and has done as he said,
because all of you sinned against the LORD
and did not obey his voice. Therefore this
thing has come upon you. 4 Now look, I
have just released you today from the fet-
ters on your hands. If you wish to come
with me to Babylon, come, and I will take
good care of you; but if you do not wish to
come with me to Babylon, you need not
come. See, the whole land is before you;
go wherever you think it good and right
to go. 5 If you remain,[i] then return to
Gedaliah son of Ahikam son of Shaphan,
whom the king of Babylon appointed gov-
ernor of the towns of Judah, and stay with
him among the people; or go wherever
you think it right to go." So the captain of
the guard gave him an allowance of food
and a present, and let him go. 6 Then Je-
remiah went to Gedaliah son of Ahikam at
Mizpah, and stayed with him among the
people who were left in the land.

Gedaliah's Rule at Mizpah

7 When all the leaders of the forces in
the open country and their troops heard
that the king of Babylon had appointed
Gedaliah son of Ahikam governor in the
land, and had committed to him men,
women, and children, those of the poorest
of the land who had not been taken into
exile to Babylon, 8 they went to Gedaliah
at Mizpah—Ishmael son of Nethaniah,
Johanan son of Kareah, Seraiah son of
Tanhumeth, the sons of Ephai the Ne-
tophathite, Jezaniah son of the Maaca-
thite, they and their troops. 9 Gedaliah son
of Ahikam son of Shaphan swore to them
and their troops, saying, "Do not be afraid
to serve the Chaldeans. Stay in the land
and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall
go well with you. 10 As for me, I am stay-
ing at Mizpah to represent you before the
Chaldeans who come to us; but as for you,
gather wine and summer fruits and oil,
and store them in your vessels, and live in
the towns that you have taken over."
11 Likewise, when all the Judeans who
were in Moab and among the Ammonites
and in Edom and in other lands heard
that the king of Babylon had left a rem-
nant in Judah and had appointed Geda-
liah son of Ahikam son of Shaphan as
governor over them, 12 then all the Ju-
deans returned from all the places to
which they had been scattered and came
to the land of Judah, to Gedaliah at Miz-
pah; and they gathered wine and summer
fruits in great abundance.

13 Now Johanan son of Kareah and
all the leaders of the forces in the open
country came to Gedaliah at Mizpah
14 and said to him, "Are you at all aware
that Baalis king of the Ammonites has
sent Ishmael son of Nethaniah to take
your life?" But Gedaliah son of Ahikam
would not believe them. 15 Then Johanan
son of Kareah spoke secretly to Gedaliah
at Mizpah, "Please let me go and kill Ish-
mael son of Nethaniah, and no one else
will know. Why should he take your life,
so that all the Judeans who are gathered

i Syr: Meaning of Heb uncertain

40.7–41.18 The governorship and assassination of Gedaliah. See 2 Kings 25.22–26. **40.7–16** After the fall of Jerusalem, Judah was incorporated into the provincial system of the Babylonian Empire. With the destruction of its cities, the decimation of its economy, and the deportation of its leaders, including the best educated and the highly skilled artisans, Judah was left largely with poor peasants. Nebuchadrezzar appointed as governor *Gedaliah*, the son of the same *Ahikam* who set Jeremiah free at the conclusion of the trial in ch. 26, and the grandson of *Shaphan*, Josiah's royal secretary (2 Kings 22). How long Gedaliah's government lasted is unclear, although certainly no longer than 582 B.C.E. He set up his government in *Mizpah*, probably modern Tell en-Nasbeh, about eight miles north of Jerusalem on the border between Benjamin

around you would be scattered, and the
remnant of Judah would perish?" 16 But
Gedaliah son of Ahikam said to Johanan
son of Kareah, "Do not do such a thing,
for you are telling a lie about Ishmael."

Insurrection Against Gedaliah

41 In the seventh month, Ishmael
son of Nethaniah son of Elish-
ama, of the royal family, one of the chief
officers of the king, came with ten men to
Gedaliah son of Ahikam, at Mizpah. As
they ate bread together there at Mizpah,
2 Ishmael son of Nethaniah and the ten
men with him got up and struck down
Gedaliah son of Ahikam son of Shaphan
with the sword and killed him, because
the king of Babylon had appointed him
governor in the land. 3 Ishmael also killed
all the Judeans who were with Gedaliah at
Mizpah, and the Chaldean soldiers who
happened to be there.

4 On the day after the murder of Ged-
aliah, before anyone knew of it, 5 eighty
men arrived from Shechem and Shiloh
and Samaria, with their beards shaved
and their clothes torn, and their bodies
gashed, bringing grain offerings and in-
cense to present at the temple of the
LORD. 6 And Ishmael son of Nethaniah
came out from Mizpah to meet them,
weeping as he came. As he met them, he
said to them, "Come to Gedaliah son of
Ahikam." 7 When they reached the mid-
dle of the city, Ishmael son of Nethaniah
and the men with him slaughtered them,
and threw them[j] into a cistern. 8 But
there were ten men among them who said
to Ishmael, "Do not kill us, for we have
stores of wheat, barley, oil, and honey
hidden in the fields." So he refrained, and
did not kill them along with their com-
panions.

9 Now the cistern into which Ishmael
had thrown all the bodies of the men
whom he had struck down was the large
cistern[k] that King Asa had made for de-
fense against King Baasha of Israel; Ish-
mael son of Nethaniah filled that cistern
with those whom he had killed. 10 Then
Ishmael took captive all the rest of the
people who were in Mizpah, the king's
daughters and all the people who were
left at Mizpah, whom Nebuzaradan, the
captain of the guard, had committed to
Gedaliah son of Ahikam. Ishmael son of
Nethaniah took them captive and set out
to cross over to the Ammonites.

11 But when Johanan son of Kareah
and all the leaders of the forces with him
heard of all the crimes that Ishmael son of
Nethaniah had done, 12 they took all their
men and went to fight against Ishmael
son of Nethaniah. They came upon him
at the great pool that is in Gibeon. 13 And
when all the people who were with Ish-
mael saw Johanan son of Kareah and all
the leaders of the forces with him, they
were glad. 14 So all the people whom Ish-
mael had carried away captive from Miz-
pah turned around and came back, and
went to Johanan son of Kareah. 15 But
Ishmael son of Nethaniah escaped from
Johanan with eight men, and went to the
Ammonites. 16 Then Johanan son of Ka-
reah and all the leaders of the forces with
him took all the rest of the people whom
Ishmael son of Nethaniah had carried
away captive[l] from Mizpah after he had
slain Gedaliah son of Ahikam—soldiers,
women, children, and eunuchs, whom
Johanan brought back from Gibeon.[m]
17 And they set out, and stopped at Ge-

j Syr: Heb lacks *and threw them*; compare verse 9
k Gk: Heb *whom he had killed by the hand of Gedaliah*
l Cn: Heb *whom he recovered from Ishmael son of Nethaniah* *m* Meaning of Heb uncertain

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and Judah. **41.1–3** When Gedaliah attempted to persuade the survivors to settle down and accept Babylonian rule, the government was overthrown and Gedaliah was assassinated by *Ishmael*, a member of the royal family and a superpatriot who collaborated with Baalis, king of the Ammonites (40.14), to continue resistance against the Babylonians. **41.4–10** Ishmael slaughters pilgrims from cities in the old Northern Kingdom going to Jerusalem to make sacrifices. Perhaps they were engaged in lamentation rituals in their mourning over the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. **41.11–18** *Johanan*, a Jewish military commander and strong supporter of Gedaliah, intercepted and defeated Ishmael, though he made good his escape to Ammon. Fearful of Babylonian reprisals for the slaughter at Mizpah, Johanan and his forces began to seek refuge in Egypt. This fear was not unfounded, as a third exile was carried out in 582 B.C.E. (52.30). **41.12** The *great pool that is in Gibeon*. See 2 Sam 2.13. **41.17** *Geruth Chimham* is unidentified. Geruth may mean "inn," thus Chimham's Inn.

ruth Chimham near Bethlehem, intending to go to Egypt 18because of the Chaldeans; for they were afraid of them, because Ishmael son of Nethaniah had killed Gedaliah son of Ahikam, whom the king of Babylon had made governor over the land.

Jeremiah Advises Survivors Not to Migrate

42 Then all the commanders of the forces, and Johanan son of Kareah and Azariah[n] son of Hoshaiah, and all the people from the least to the greatest, approached 2the prophet Jeremiah and said, "Be good enough to listen to our plea, and pray to the LORD your God for us—for all this remnant. For there are only a few of us left out of many, as your eyes can see. 3Let the LORD your God show us where we should go and what we should do." 4The prophet Jeremiah said to them, "Very well: I am going to pray to the LORD your God as you request, and whatever the LORD answers you I will tell you; I will keep nothing back from you." 5They in their turn said to Jeremiah, "May the LORD be a true and faithful witness against us if we do not act according to everything that the LORD your God sends us through you. 6Whether it is good or bad, we will obey the voice of the LORD our God to whom we are sending you, in order that it may go well with us when we obey the voice of the LORD our God."

7 At the end of ten days the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah. 8Then he summoned Johanan son of Kareah and all the commanders of the forces who were with him, and all the people from the least to the greatest, 9and said to them, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, to whom you sent me to present your plea before him: 10If you will only remain in this land, then I will build you up and not pull you down; I will plant you, and not pluck you up; for I am sorry for the disaster that I have brought upon you. 11Do not be afraid of the king of Babylon, as you have been; do not be afraid of him, says the LORD, for I am with you, to save you and to rescue you from his hand. 12I will grant you mercy, and he will have mercy on you and restore you to your native soil. 13But if you continue to say, 'We will not stay in this land,' thus disobeying the voice of the LORD your God 14and saying, 'No, we will go to the land of Egypt, where we shall not see war, or hear the sound of the trumpet, or be hungry for bread, and there we will stay,' 15then hear the word of the LORD, O remnant of Judah. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: If you are determined to enter Egypt and go to settle there, 16then the sword that you fear shall overtake you there, in the land of Egypt; and the famine that you dread shall follow close after you into Egypt; and there you shall die. 17All the people who have determined to go to Egypt to settle there shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence; they shall have no remnant or survivor from the disaster that I am bringing upon them.

18 "For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Just as my anger and my wrath were poured out on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so my wrath will be poured out on you when you go to Egypt. You shall become an object of execration and horror, of cursing and ridicule. You shall see this place no more. 19The LORD has said to you, O remnant of Judah, Do not go to Egypt. Be well aware that I have warned you today 20that you have made a fatal mistake. For you yourselves sent me to the LORD your God, saying, 'Pray for us to the LORD our God, and whatever the LORD our God says, tell us and we will do it.' 21So I have told you today, but you have not obeyed the voice of the LORD your God in anything that he sent me to tell you. 22Be well aware, then, that you shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence in the place where you desire to go and settle."

n Gk: Heb *Jezaniah*

42.1–43.7 The survivors of Mizpah and their rescuers decide to flee to Egypt and to force Jeremiah to accompany them. **42.1–6** Jeremiah is asked to intercede with God to tell them what to do. **42.7–22** God's reply is that they should remain and rebuild the land. If they do so, God will bless them and deliver them from Nebuchadrezzar. However, should the survivors flee to Egypt, even

Jeremiah's Advice Is Ignored

43 When Jeremiah finished speaking to all the people all these words of the LORD their God, with which the LORD their God had sent him to them, 2 Azariah son of Hoshaiah and Johanan son of Kareah and all the other insolent men said to Jeremiah, "You are telling a lie. The LORD our God did not send you to say, 'Do not go to Egypt to settle there'; 3 but Baruch son of Neriah is inciting you against us, to hand us over to the Chaldeans, in order that they may kill us or take us into exile in Babylon." 4 So Johanan son of Kareah and all the commanders of the forces and all the people did not obey the voice of the LORD, to stay in the land of Judah. 5 But Johanan son of Kareah and all the commanders of the forces took all the remnant of Judah who had returned to settle in the land of Judah from all the nations to which they had been driven— 6 the men, the women, the children, the princesses, and everyone whom Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard had left with Gedaliah son of Ahikam son of Shaphan; also the prophet Jeremiah and Baruch son of Neriah. 7 And they came into the land of Egypt, for they did not obey the voice of the LORD. And they arrived at Tahpanhes.

Jeremiah in Egypt

8 Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah in Tahpanhes: 9 Take some large stones in your hands, and bury them in the clay pavement[o] that is at the entrance to Pharaoh's palace in Tahpanhes. Let the Judeans see you do it, 10 and say to them, Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: I am going to send and take my servant King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon, and he[p] will set his throne above these stones that I have buried, and he will spread his royal canopy over them. 11 He shall come and ravage the land of Egypt, giving

those who are destined for pestilence, to pestilence,
and those who are destined for captivity, to captivity,
and those who are destined for the sword, to the sword.

12 He[q] shall kindle a fire in the temples of the gods of Egypt; and he shall burn them and carry them away captive; and he shall pick clean the land of Egypt, as a shepherd picks his cloak clean of vermin; and he shall depart from there safely. 13 He shall break the obelisks of Heliopolis, which is in the land of Egypt; and the temples of the gods of Egypt he shall burn with fire.

Denunciation of Persistent Idolatry

44 The word that came to Jeremiah for all the Judeans living in the land of Egypt, at Migdol, at Tahpanhes, at Memphis, and in the land of Pathros, 2 Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: You yourselves have seen all the

o Meaning of Heb uncertain p Gk Syr: Heb *I*
q Gk Syr Vg: Heb *I*

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there war, famine, and pestilence will overtake them and no remnant will remain. **43.1–7** Jeremiah is accused of lying and following the counsel of Baruch, who is accused of wishing to turn the survivors over to the Babylonians. The survivors and their rescuers flee to Egypt, and Jeremiah and Baruch are forced to go with them. **43.7** *Tahpanhes*. See note on 2.16.

43.8–44.30 This narrative tells of Jeremiah's condemnation of the Jewish refugees who fled to Egypt. The story is set in the years following the assassination of Gedaliah, i.e., around 582 to 570 B.C.E. **43.8–13** The narrative begins with a symbolic act designed to demonstrate that Nebuchadrezzar will conquer Egypt (see 13.1–11, 12–14; 16.1–13; 18.1–12; 19.1–15; 27.1–22; 32.1–44). **43.9** *Pharaoh's palace* is probably a royal building, since the capital was in Sais in the western Delta. **43.11** See 15.2. **43.13** *Heliopolis*, also called On (Egyptian, "city of the pillar"; see Gen 41.45), is modern Tell Hisn and Matariyeh, seven miles northeast of downtown Cairo. It was the cultic center for the worship of the sun god Re and well known for its *obelisks*: four-sided, freestanding granite pillars with pyramidal tops. According to the oracle, the Jewish refugees will not escape their dreaded foe. Nebuchadrezzar did invade Egypt in 568–567 B.C.E. and fought Pharaoh Amasis, though the outcome of the battle is not known. However, Babylonia did not conquer Egypt. **44.1–14** The narrative continues with Jeremiah's rather lengthy sermon condemning all Jewish refugees in Egypt for abandoning their homeland and engaging in idolatry. **44.1** *Migdol* was a city in northern Egypt, possibly identified with modern Tell el-Heir (see 46.14). *Tahpanhes*. See 43.7; note on 2.16. *Memphis*. See note on 2.16. *Pathros* is Upper Egypt, the area south of Mem-

disaster that I have brought on Jerusalem
and on all the towns of Judah. Look at
them; today they are a desolation, without
an inhabitant in them, 3 because of the
wickedness that they committed, provok-
ing me to anger, in that they went to make
offerings and serve other gods that they
had not known, neither they, nor you, nor
your ancestors. 4 Yet I persistently sent to
you all my servants the prophets, saying,
"I beg you not to do this abominable thing
that I hate!" 5 But they did not listen or
incline their ear, to turn from their wick-
edness and make no offerings to other
gods. 6 So my wrath and my anger were
poured out and kindled in the towns of
Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem;
and they became a waste and a desolation,
as they still are today. 7 And now thus says
the LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel:
Why are you doing such great harm to
yourselves, to cut off man and woman,
child and infant, from the midst of Judah,
leaving yourselves without a remnant?
8 Why do you provoke me to anger with
the works of your hands, making offer-
ings to other gods in the land of Egypt
where you have come to settle? Will you
be cut off and become an object of cursing
and ridicule among all the nations of the
earth? 9 Have you forgotten the crimes of
your ancestors, of the kings of Judah, of
their[r] wives, your own crimes and those
of your wives, which they committed in
the land of Judah and in the streets of
Jerusalem? 10 They have shown no contri-
tion or fear to this day, nor have they
walked in my law and my statutes that I
set before you and before your ancestors.

11 Therefore thus says the LORD of
hosts, the God of Israel: I am determined
to bring disaster on you, to bring all Ju-
dah to an end. 12 I will take the remnant
of Judah who are determined to come to
the land of Egypt to settle, and they shall
perish, everyone; in the land of Egypt
they shall fall; by the sword and by famine
they shall perish; from the least to the
greatest, they shall die by the sword and
by famine; and they shall become an ob-
ject of execration and horror, of cursing
and ridicule. 13 I will punish those who
live in the land of Egypt, as I have pun-
ished Jerusalem, with the sword, with
famine, and with pestilence, 14 so that
none of the remnant of Judah who have
come to settle in the land of Egypt shall
escape or survive or return to the land of
Judah. Although they long to go back to
live there, they shall not go back, except
some fugitives.

15 Then all the men who were aware
that their wives had been making offer-
ings to other gods, and all the women who
stood by, a great assembly, all the people
who lived in Pathros in the land of Egypt,
answered Jeremiah: 16 "As for the word
that you have spoken to us in the name of
the LORD, we are not going to listen to
you. 17 Instead, we will do everything that
we have vowed, make offerings to the
queen of heaven and pour out libations to
her, just as we and our ancestors, our
kings and our officials, used to do in the
towns of Judah and in the streets of Jeru-
salem. We used to have plenty of food,
and prospered, and saw no misfortune.
18 But from the time we stopped making
offerings to the queen of heaven and
pouring out libations to her, we have
lacked everything and have perished by
the sword and by famine." 19 And the
women said,[s] "Indeed we will go on mak-
ing offerings to the queen of heaven and
pouring out libations to her; do you think
that we made cakes for her, marked
with her image, and poured out libations
to her without our husbands' being
involved?"

20 Then Jeremiah said to all the peo-
ple, men and women, all the people who
were giving him this answer: 21 "As for the
offerings that you made in the towns of
Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, you
and your ancestors, your kings and your
officials, and the people of the land, did
not the LORD remember them? Did it not
come into his mind? 22 The LORD could no
longer bear the sight of your evil doings,
the abominations that you committed;
therefore your land became a desolation
and a waste and a curse, without inhabi-
tant, as it is to this day. 23 It is because you
burned offerings, and because you sinned

r Heb *his* s Compare Syr: Heb lacks *And the women said*

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phis and the Delta (see Isa 11.11; Ezek 29.14; 30.14). **44.15–19** The response of the people is defiant: they intend to continue in their idolatry. **44.17** *Queen of heaven.* See note on 7.18. **44.20–28** Jeremiah continues to condemn the refugees, predicting that most will die, while a few

against the LORD and did not obey the
voice of the LORD or walk in his law and in
his statutes and in his decrees, that this
disaster has befallen you, as is still evident
today."
24 Jeremiah said to all the people and
all the women, "Hear the word of the
LORD, all you Judeans who are in the land
of Egypt, 25 Thus says the LORD of hosts,
the God of Israel: You and your wives
have accomplished in deeds what you de-
clared in words, saying, 'We are deter-
mined to perform the vows that we have
made, to make offerings to the queen of
heaven and to pour out libations to her.'
By all means, keep your vows and make
your libations! 26 Therefore hear the
word of the LORD, all you Judeans who
live in the land of Egypt: Lo, I swear by
my great name, says the LORD, that my
name shall no longer be pronounced on
the lips of any of the people of Judah in
all the land of Egypt, saying, 'As the Lord
GOD lives.' 27 I am going to watch over
them for harm and not for good; all the
people of Judah who are in the land of
Egypt shall perish by the sword and by
famine, until not one is left. 28 And those
who escape the sword shall return from
the land of Egypt to the land of Judah,
few in number; and all the remnant of
Judah, who have come to the land of
Egypt to settle, shall know whose words
will stand, mine or theirs! 29 This shall be
the sign to you, says the LORD, that I am
going to punish you in this place, in order
that you may know that my words against
you will surely be carried out: 30 Thus says
the LORD, I am going to give Pharaoh
Hophra, king of Egypt, into the hands of
his enemies, those who seek his life, just as
I gave King Zedekiah of Judah into the
hand of King Nebuchadrezzar of Bab-
ylon, his enemy who sought his life."

A Word of Comfort to Baruch

45 The word that the prophet Jere-
miah spoke to Baruch son of Ne-
riah, when he wrote these words in a
scroll at the dictation of Jeremiah, in the
fourth year of King Jehoiakim son of Jo-
siah of Judah: 2 Thus says the LORD, the
God of Israel, to you, O Baruch: 3 You
said, "Woe is me! The LORD has added
sorrow to my pain; I am weary with my
groaning, and I find no rest." 4 Thus you
shall say to him, "Thus says the LORD: I
am going to break down what I have built,
and pluck up what I have planted—that
is, the whole land. 5 And you, do you seek
great things for yourself? Do not seek
them; for I am going to bring disaster
upon all flesh, says the LORD; but I will
give you your life as a prize of war in ev-
ery place to which you may go."

Judgment on Egypt

46 The word of the LORD that came
to the prophet Jeremiah concern-
ing the nations.
2 Concerning Egypt, about the army
of Pharaoh Neco, king of Egypt, which

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will escape to return to Judah. **44.30** *Hophra* (Aphries) was king of Egypt from 589 to 570 B.C.E. (see 37.5). He was assassinated by Amasis (570–526 B.C.E.), a former court official who ruled as coregent for three years before killing Hophra.

45.1–5 Message to Baruch. This oracle of salvation is addressed to Baruch, Jeremiah's secretary and companion (see note on 36.1–32). Set in 605 B.C.E. when Baruch wrote down the judgment oracles of Jeremiah (see ch. 36), Jeremiah's words promise the scribe that his own life will be spared when the disasters against Judah and Jerusalem take place. **45.3** The oracle refers to Baruch's lament. Cf. Jeremiah's laments in 11.18–20.18 (see note on 11.18–23). **45.4** See 1.10; 18.7–9; 24.6. **45.5** What Baruch sought for himself is not clear. However, he does seem to have held an important position in government (see note on 36.1–32). For one's *life as a prize of war*, cf. 21.9; 38.2; 39.18.

46.1–51.58 Oracles against the nations. This collection of oracles, with its own superscription (46.1), had its own history of transmission before being included in the growing corpus that became the book of Jeremiah. The location of this collection in the Septuagint (after 25.13a) is probably original (see the similar positioning of oracles concerning foreign nations in Isa 13–23 and Ezek 25–32 where they follow oracles of judgment against Judah and precede oracles of salvation and hope). The question of the authorship of these oracles is greatly debated by scholars. Some of the oracles may have been original to Jeremiah (e.g., the oracle against Egypt in 46.3–12), with others by later prophets and editors.

46.2–26 Two oracles of judgment are against Egypt: the defeat at Carchemish, vv. 2–12, and

was by the river Euphrates at Carchemish
and which King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon defeated in the fourth year of King
Jehoiakim son of Josiah of Judah:

3 Prepare buckler and shield,
and advance for battle!
4 Harness the horses;
mount the steeds!
Take your stations with your helmets,
whet your lances,
put on your coats of mail!
5 Why do I see them terrified?
They have fallen back;
their warriors are beaten down,
and have fled in haste.
They do not look back—
terror is all around!
says the LORD.
6 The swift cannot flee away,
nor can the warrior escape;
in the north by the river Euphrates
they have stumbled and fallen.

7 Who is this, rising like the Nile,
like rivers whose waters surge?
8 Egypt rises like the Nile,
like rivers whose waters surge.
It said, Let me rise, let me cover the earth,
let me destroy cities and their inhabitants.
9 Advance, O horses,
and dash madly, O chariots!
Let the warriors go forth:
Ethiopia[t] and Put who carry the shield,
the Ludim, who draw[u] the bow.
10 That day is the day of the Lord GOD of hosts,
a day of retribution,
to gain vindication from his foes.
The sword shall devour and be sated,
and drink its fill of their blood.
For the Lord GOD of hosts holds a sacrifice
in the land of the north by the river Euphrates.
11 Go up to Gilead, and take balm,
O virgin daughter Egypt!
In vain you have used many medicines;
there is no healing for you.
12 The nations have heard of your shame,
and the earth is full of your cry;
for warrior has stumbled against warrior;
both have fallen together.

Babylonia Will Strike Egypt

13 The word that the LORD spoke to the prophet Jeremiah about the coming
of King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon to attack the land of Egypt:

14 Declare in Egypt, and proclaim in Migdol;
proclaim in Memphis and Tahpanhes;
Say, "Take your stations and be ready,
for the sword shall devour those around you."
15 Why has Apis fled?[v]
Why did your bull not stand?
—because the LORD thrust him down.
16 Your multitude stumbled[w] and fell,
and one said to another,[x]
"Come, let us go back to our own people
and to the land of our birth,
because of the destroying sword."

t Or *Nubia*; Heb *Cush* *u* Cn: Heb *who grasp, who draw* *v* Gk: Heb *Why was it swept away*
w Gk: Meaning of Heb uncertain *x* Gk: Heb *and fell one to another and they said*

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the approach of Nebuchadrezzar, vv. 13–26. **46.2** The defeat of Neco II by Nebuchadrezzar, first at Carchemish, and then near Hamath, opened the way to Syro-Palestine for the expanding Babylonian Empire. By 604 or 603 B.C.E., Judah became a vassal to the Babylonians. The oracle either predicts or celebrates the Egyptian defeat. **46.9** *Ethiopia, Put* (probably a region in Libya), and *Ludim* (a group of people in North Africa) are three nations fighting with the Egyptians. **46.11** *Gilead.* See note on 8.22. **46.13–26** This oracle supposes Jeremiah predicted an invasion of Egypt by Nebuchadrezzar. While Nebuchadrezzar invaded Egypt, he did not conquer the country (see Ezek 29.19–21; notes on Jer 43.8–13; 48.13). **46.14** *Migdol.* See note on 44.1. *Memphis, Tahpanhes.* See note on 2.16. **46.15** *Apis*, an Egyptian god of fertility,

17 Give Pharaoh, king of Egypt,
the name
"Braggart who missed his
chance."

18 As I live, says the King,
whose name is the LORD of
hosts,
one is coming
like Tabor among the
mountains,
and like Carmel by the sea.
19 Pack your bags for exile,
sheltered daughter Egypt!
For Memphis shall become a
waste,
a ruin, without inhabitant.

20 A beautiful heifer is Egypt—
a gadfly from the north lights
upon her.
21 Even her mercenaries in her
midst
are like fatted calves;
they too have turned and fled
together,
they did not stand;
for the day of their calamity has
come upon them,
the time of their punishment.

22 She makes a sound like a snake
gliding away;
for her enemies march in force,
and come against her with axes,
like those who fell trees.
23 They shall cut down her forest,
says the LORD,
though it is impenetrable,
because they are more numerous
than locusts;
they are without number.
24 Daughter Egypt shall be put
to shame;
she shall be handed over to a
people from the north.

25 The LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, said: See, I am bringing punishment upon Amon of Thebes, and Pharaoh, and Egypt and her gods and her kings, upon Pharaoh and those who trust in him. 26 I will hand them over to those who seek their life, to King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon and his officers. Afterward Egypt shall be inhabited as in the days of old, says the LORD.

God Will Save Israel

27 But as for you, have no fear, my
servant Jacob,
and do not be dismayed,
O Israel;
for I am going to save you from
far away,
and your offspring from the
land of their captivity.
Jacob shall return and have quiet
and ease,
and no one shall make him
afraid.
28 As for you, have no fear, my
servant Jacob,
says the LORD,
for I am with you.
I will make an end of all the
nations
among which I have
banished you,
but I will not make an end
of you!
I will chastise you in just
measure,
and I will by no means leave
you unpunished.

Judgment on the Philistines

47 The word of the LORD that came to the prophet Jeremiah concerning the Philistines, before Pharaoh attacked Gaza:
2 Thus says the LORD:
See, waters are rising out of
the north

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was worshiped in Memphis as a sacred bull. **46.25–26** These prose verses are a later commentary on the two oracles. *Amon* was an Egyptian sun god whose cult center was the temple of Karnak in *Thebes*. **46.27–28** An oracle of salvation for Israel found also in (see note on) 30.10–11.

47.1–7 The prose introduction points to an imminent attack on Gaza, one of the major Philistine cities, by an unidentified pharaoh as the occasion for this judgment oracle. Herodotus (*History* 2.159) indicates that, after the battle of Megiddo (609 B.C.E.), Neco II conquered Kadytis (Gaza). However, the *waters . . . rising out of the north* and the reference to Ashkelon would best suggest Nebuchadrezzar's invasion of Philistia in 604 B.C.E. after he defeated the Egyptians at Carche-

and shall become an
overflowing torrent;
they shall overflow the land and
all that fills it,
the city and those who live
in it.
People shall cry out,
and all the inhabitants of the
land shall wail.
3 At the noise of the stamping of
the hoofs of his stallions,
at the clatter of his chariots, at
the rumbling of their
wheels,
parents do not turn back for
children,
so feeble are their hands,
4 because of the day that is
coming
to destroy all the Philistines,
to cut off from Tyre and Sidon
every helper that remains.
For the LORD is destroying the
Philistines,
the remnant of the coastland
of Caphtor.
5 Baldness has come upon Gaza,
Ashkelon is silenced.
O remnant of their power![y]
How long will you gash
yourselves?
6 Ah, sword of the LORD!
How long until you are quiet?
Put yourself into your scabbard,
rest and be still!
7 How can it[z] be quiet,
when the LORD has given it
an order?
Against Ashkelon and against the
seashore—
there he has appointed it.

Judgment on Moab

48 Concerning Moab.
Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of
Israel:
Alas for Nebo, it is laid waste!
Kiriathaim is put to shame, it
is taken;
the fortress is put to shame and
broken down;
2 the renown of Moab is no
more.
In Heshbon they planned evil
against her:
"Come, let us cut her off from
being a nation!"
You also, O Madmen, shall be
brought to silence;[a]
the sword shall pursue you.

3 Hark! a cry from Horonaim,
"Desolation and great
destruction!"
4 "Moab is destroyed!"
her little ones cry out.
5 For at the ascent of Luhith
they go[b] up weeping bitterly;
for at the descent of Horonaim
they have heard the distressing
cry of anguish.

y Gk: Heb *their valley* *z* Gk Vg: Heb *you*
a The place-name *Madmen* sounds like the Hebrew verb *to be silent* *b* Cn: Heb *he goes*

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mish. **47.4** *Tyre and Sidon* were Phoenician cities presumably allied with the Philistines. *Caphtor* is the island of Crete (see Am 9.7), one of the places from which the Philistines came. **47.5** *Gaza,* taken by Neco II after 609 B.C.E., came within the Babylonian orbit along with the other cities of Philistia after the battle of Carchemish. *Ashkelon* was destroyed by Nebuchadrezzar in late 604 B.C.E.

48.1–47 A series of oracles of judgment against Moab: the advance of Nebuchadrezzar (vv. 1–10), destruction is at hand (vv. 11–17), a taunt of destroyed Moab (vv. 18–28), a lament over fallen Moab (vv. 29–39), judgment against Moab (vv. 40–42), and a woe oracle ending with the promise of salvation (vv. 43–47). The oracles and prose additions (vv. 10, 12, 21–27, 34–39) feature extensive borrowings from Isa 15–16. Located east of Israel in the Transjordan, Moab was a historic enemy of Israel, often receiving prophetic condemnation (Isa 15–16; Zeph 2.8–11). When Jehoiakim rebelled against Nebuchadrezzar, Moabites joined in raids on Judah (2 Kings 24.2). According to Jer 27.1–11, Moab joined in the conspiracy against the Babylonians (595 B.C.E.). It is possible Moab joined in the later revolt. **48.1** *Nebo* was a Moabite city (probably modern Khirbet Mekhayyet) approximately five miles southwest of Heshbon (see Isa 15.2). *Kiriathaim* was a city in Moab, probably located near modern el-Qereiyat, five and a half miles north-northwest of Dibon (see Ezek 25.9). **48.2** *Heshbon,* modern Tell Hesban located near the Jordanian village of Hesban, was an important city in northern Moab (see Isa 15.4; 16.8–9). **48.3** *Horonaim,* a town in Moab (see Isa. 15.5). **48.5** *Luhith,* a city of Moab, probably near the

6 Flee! Save yourselves!
Be like a wild ass[c] in the
desert!

7 Surely, because you trusted in
your strongholds[d] and
your treasures,
you also shall be taken;
Chemosh shall go out into exile,
with his priests and his
attendants.
8 The destroyer shall come upon
every town,
and no town shall escape;
the valley shall perish,
and the plain shall be
destroyed,
as the LORD has spoken.

9 Set aside salt for Moab,
for she will surely fall;
her towns shall become a
desolation,
with no inhabitant in them.

10 Accursed is the one who is slack in doing the work of the LORD; and accursed is the one who keeps back the sword from bloodshed.

11 Moab has been at ease from his
youth,
settled like wine[e] on its dregs;
he has not been emptied from
vessel to vessel,
nor has he gone into exile;
therefore his flavor has remained
and his aroma is unspoiled.
12 Therefore, the time is surely coming, says the LORD, when I shall send to him decanters to decant him, and empty his vessels, and break his[f] jars in pieces. 13 Then Moab shall be ashamed of Chemosh, as the house of Israel was ashamed of Bethel, their confidence.

14 How can you say, "We are heroes
and mighty warriors"?
15 The destroyer of Moab and his
towns has come up,
and the choicest of his young
men have gone down to
slaughter,
says the King, whose name is
the LORD of hosts.
16 The calamity of Moab is near
at hand
and his doom approaches
swiftly.
17 Mourn over him, all you his
neighbors,
and all who know his name;
say, "How the mighty scepter is
broken,
the glorious staff!"

18 Come down from glory,
and sit on the parched ground,
enthroned daughter Dibon!
For the destroyer of Moab has
come up against you;
he has destroyed your
strongholds.
19 Stand by the road and watch,
you inhabitant of Aroer!
Ask the man fleeing and the
woman escaping;
say, "What has happened?"
20 Moab is put to shame, for it is
broken down;
wail and cry!
Tell it by the Arnon,
that Moab is laid waste.

21 Judgment has come upon the tableland, upon Holon, and Jahzah, and Mephaath, 22 and Dibon, and Nebo, and Beth-diblathaim, 23 and Kiriathaim, and Beth-gamul, and Beth-meon, 24 and Kerioth, and Bozrah, and all the towns of the land of Moab, far and near. 25 The horn of Moab is cut off, and his arm is broken, says the LORD.
26 Make him drunk, because he magnified himself against the LORD; let Moab wallow in his vomit; he too shall become a laughingstock. 27 Israel was a laughingstock for you, though he was not caught

c Gk Aquila: Heb *like Aroer* d Gk: Heb *works*
e Heb lacks *like wine* f Gk Aquila: Heb *their*

south end of the Dead Sea (see Isa 15.5). **48.7** *Chemosh* was the national deity of Moab (see 1 Kings 11.7). **48.13** *Bethel.* See 1 Kings 12.25–33; Am 7.10–17. **48.18** *Dibon,* modern Dhiban, was an important city located on the King's Highway, thirteen miles east of the Dead Sea (see Isa 15.2, 9). **48.19** *Aroer* was a fortress on the Arnon River, identified with modern Khirbet Ara'ir. **48.20** The *Arnon* River flows through Moab from the east into the Dead Sea. **48.21–24** Various towns and cities in Moab.

among thieves; but whenever you spoke
of him you shook your head!

28 Leave the towns, and live on
the rock,
O inhabitants of Moab!
Be like the dove that nests
on the sides of the mouth of
a gorge.
29 We have heard of the pride of
Moab—
he is very proud—
of his loftiness, his pride, and his
arrogance,
and the haughtiness of his
heart.
30 I myself know his insolence, says
the LORD;
his boasts are false,
his deeds are false.
31 Therefore I wail for Moab;
I cry out for all Moab;
for the people of Kir-heres I
mourn.
32 More than for Jazer I weep
for you,
O vine of Sibmah!
Your branches crossed over
the sea,
reached as far as Jazer;[g]
upon your summer fruits and
your vintage
the destroyer has fallen.
33 Gladness and joy have been
taken away
from the fruitful land of Moab;
I have stopped the wine from the
wine presses;
no one treads them with shouts
of joy;
the shouting is not the shout
of joy.

34 Heshbon and Elealeh cry out;[h] as
far as Jahaz they utter their voice, from
Zoar to Horonaim and Eglath-shelishiyah.
For even the waters of Nimrim have be-
come desolate. 35 And I will bring to an
end in Moab, says the LORD, those who
offer sacrifice at a high place and make
offerings to their gods. 36 Therefore my
heart moans for Moab like a flute, and my
heart moans like a flute for the people of
Kir-heres; for the riches they gained have
perished.
37 For every head is shaved and every
beard cut off; on all the hands there are
gashes, and on the loins sackcloth. 38 On
all the housetops of Moab and in the
squares there is nothing but lamentation;
for I have broken Moab like a vessel that
no one wants, says the LORD. 39 How it is
broken! How they wail! How Moab has
turned his back in shame! So Moab has be-
come a derision and a horror to all his
neighbors.

40 For thus says the LORD:
Look, he shall swoop down like
an eagle,
and spread his wings against
Moab;
41 the towns[i] shall be taken
and the strongholds seized.
The hearts of the warriors of
Moab, on that day,
shall be like the heart of a
woman in labor.
42 Moab shall be destroyed as
a people,
because he magnified himself
against the LORD.
43 Terror, pit, and trap
are before you, O inhabitants
of Moab!
says the LORD.
44 Everyone who flees from the
terror
shall fall into the pit,
and everyone who climbs out of
the pit
shall be caught in the trap.
For I will bring these things[j]
upon Moab
in the year of their
punishment,
says the LORD.

g Two Mss and Isa 16.8: MT *the sea of Jazer*
h Cn: Heb *From the cry of Heshbon to Elealeh*
i Or *Kerioth* j Gk Syr: Heb *bring upon it*

48.29–39 See the laments, both of God for the people (14.17–18) and of Judah and Jerusalem for themselves (14.1–10, 19–22). **48.31** *Kir-heres*, identified with modern el-Kerak (see Isa 15.1), was a capital city of Moab. It is about eleven miles east of the Dead Sea. **48.32** *Sibmah*, a Moabite city, may be modern Qurn el-Kibsh, five miles southwest of Hesban. *Jazer* was a Moabite city probably located just to the west of Amman. **48.34** A list of various Moabite sites.

45 In the shadow of Heshbon
fugitives stop exhausted;
for a fire has gone out from Heshbon,
a flame from the house of Sihon;
it has destroyed the forehead of Moab,
the scalp of the people of tumult.[k]
46 Woe to you, O Moab!
The people of Chemosh have perished,
for your sons have been taken captive,
and your daughters into captivity.
47 Yet I will restore the fortunes of Moab
in the latter days, says the LORD.
Thus far is the judgment on Moab.

Judgment on the Ammonites

49 Concerning the Ammonites.
Thus says the LORD:
Has Israel no sons?
Has he no heir?
Why then has Milcom dispossessed Gad,
and his people settled in its towns?
2 Therefore, the time is surely coming,
says the LORD,
when I will sound the battle alarm
against Rabbah of the Ammonites;
it shall become a desolate mound,
and its villages shall be burned with fire;
then Israel shall dispossess those who dispossessed him,
says the LORD.

3 Wail, O Heshbon, for Ai is laid waste!
Cry out, O daughters[l] of Rabbah!
Put on sackcloth,
lament, and slash yourselves with whips![m]
For Milcom shall go into exile,
with his priests and his attendants.
4 Why do you boast in your strength?
Your strength is ebbing,
O faithless daughter.
You trusted in your treasures, saying,
"Who will attack me?"
5 I am going to bring terror upon you,
says the Lord GOD of hosts,
from all your neighbors,
and you will be scattered, each headlong,
with no one to gather the fugitives.

k Or *of Shaon* *l* Or *villages* *m* Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain

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48.45–47 These verses are missing in the Septuagint, an indication that they were added later. **48.45** *Sihon* was an Amorite king whose capital was Heshbon. He was defeated by the Israelites during their migration prior to the settlement in Canaan (see Num 21.21–30; Deut 2.24–37; Judg 11.18–22).

49.1–6 Ammon was a country in the Transjordan, east of Israel, and a perennial enemy. After the fall of Assyria, Ammon soon came under the control of the Babylonians and joined with them in the attack on Judah when Jehoiakim revolted (see 2 Kings 24.2). Later, they joined in a conspiracy against Babylonia (Jer 27.3) and eventually revolted (see Ezek 21.18–23). After the fall of Judah in 587 B.C.E., Ammon continued the rebellion, even supporting a Jewish partisan, Ishmael, who assassinated Gedaliah (see ch. 41). Sometime later, Nebuchadrezzar sent punitive expeditions that led to the end of the Ammonite state. The oracle of judgment indicates destruction will come upon Ammon. **49.1** *Milcom* was the national deity of Ammon and, like Baal, was a god of war and fertility (see 1 Kings 11.5, 33). *Gad*, an Israelite tribe that occupied land east of the Jordan between the Jabbok and Arnon rivers. Ammon took over territory formerly claimed by Israel (see Judg 10.6–12.6; 2 Sam 12.26–31). **49.2** *Rabbah*, the capital of Ammon, is modern Amman (see Ezek 25.5; Am 1.14). **49.3** *Heshbon* (see note on 48.2) may have fallen into Ammonite hands. *Ai* may refer to an Israelite settlement just south of the ancient city of Ai (located two miles southeast of Bethel). Or since the word *Ai* means "ruin" in Hebrew, the reference may be to Rabbah. Cf. the calls for Judah and Jerusalem to la-

6 But afterward I will restore the fortunes of the Ammonites, says the LORD.

Judgment on Edom

7 Concerning Edom.

Thus says the LORD of hosts:
Is there no longer wisdom in Teman?
Has counsel perished from the prudent?
Has their wisdom vanished?
8 Flee, turn back, get down low, inhabitants of Dedan!
For I will bring the calamity of Esau upon him,
the time when I punish him.
9 If grape-gatherers came to you, would they not leave gleanings?
If thieves came by night, even they would pillage only what they wanted.
10 But as for me, I have stripped Esau bare,
I have uncovered his hiding places,
and he is not able to conceal himself.
His offspring are destroyed, his kinsfolk
and his neighbors; and he is no more.
11 Leave your orphans, I will keep them alive;
and let your widows trust in me.
12 For thus says the LORD: If those who do not deserve to drink the cup still have to drink it, shall you be the one to go unpunished? You shall not go unpunished; you must drink it. 13 For by myself I have sworn, says the LORD, that Bozrah shall become an object of horror and ridicule, a waste, and an object of cursing; and all her towns shall be perpetual wastes.
14 I have heard tidings from the LORD,
and a messenger has been sent among the nations:
"Gather yourselves together and come against her,
and rise up for battle!"
15 For I will make you least among the nations,
despised by humankind.
16 The terror you inspire
and the pride of your heart have deceived you,
you who live in the clefts of the rock,[n]
who hold the height of the hill.
Although you make your nest as high as the eagle's,
from there I will bring you down,
says the LORD.
17 Edom shall become an object of horror; everyone who passes by it will be horrified and will hiss because of all its disasters. 18 As when Sodom and Gomorrah and their neighbors were overthrown, says the LORD, no one shall live there, nor shall anyone settle in it. 19 Like a lion coming up from the thickets of the Jordan against a perennial pasture, I will suddenly chase Edom[o] away from it; and I will appoint over it whomever I choose.[p] For who is like me? Who can summon

n Or *of Sela* *o* Heb *him* *p* Or *and I will single out the choicest of his rams*: Meaning of Heb uncertain

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ment (6.26; 9.10; 9.17–22). **49.6** This verse, a promise of salvation, is absent in the Septuagint, an indication it was added later (see 48.45–47).

49.7–22 Against Edom, a bitter rival of Israel. Tradition traced Edom's origins back to Esau, the twin brother of Jacob (Israel; see Gen 25.19–28). Its territory was to the east and south of Israel. The Edomites were often the object of prophetic invective (see Ps 137; Isa 11.14; 34.5–17; Ezek 35; Am 1.6, 9, 11; 2.1; Obadiah; Mal 1.2–5). A vassal of Nebuchadrezzar's expanding empire as early as 604 B.C.E., Edom joined in his conquest of Jerusalem in 587 B.C.E. and exulted over the devastation of the city (Ps 137.7; Lam 4.21–22; Ob 10–16). After the exile in 587 B.C.E., some Edomites moved into southern Judah, making Hebron their capital. The present oracle is closely related to Obadiah (vv. 14–16 are close to Ob 1–4, while vv. 9–10a are similar to Ob 5–6). **49.7** *Teman* was a significant military and commercial city in central Edom. Edom was famous for its wisdom. **49.8** *Dedan* was a country in northwest Arabia known for its commerce (see Ezek 25.13). **49.13** *Bozrah* was the chief city of northern Edom (see Isa 34.6; Am 1.12). **49.18** *Sodom and Gomorrah*. See note on 20.16.

me? Who is the shepherd who can stand
before me? 20 Therefore hear the plan
that the LORD has made against Edom
and the purposes that he has formed
against the inhabitants of Teman: Surely
the little ones of the flock shall be dragged
away; surely their fold shall be appalled at
their fate. 21 At the sound of their fall the
earth shall tremble; the sound of their cry
shall be heard at the Red Sea.[q] 22 Look,
he shall mount up and swoop down like
an eagle, and spread his wings against
Bozrah, and the heart of the warriors of
Edom in that day shall be like the heart of
a woman in labor.

Judgment on Damascus

23 Concerning Damascus.

Hamath and Arpad are
confounded,
for they have heard bad news;
they melt in fear, they are
troubled like the sea[r]
that cannot be quiet.
24 Damascus has become feeble, she
turned to flee,
and panic seized her;
anguish and sorrows have taken
hold of her,
as of a woman in labor.
25 How the famous city is
forsaken,[s]
the joyful town![t]
26 Therefore her young men shall
fall in her squares,
and all her soldiers shall be
destroyed in that day,
says the LORD of hosts.
27 And I will kindle a fire at the
wall of Damascus,
and it shall devour the
strongholds of Ben-hadad.

Judgment on Kedar and Hazor

28 Concerning Kedar and the king-
doms of Hazor that King Nebuchadrezzar
of Babylon defeated.

Thus says the LORD:
Rise up, advance against Kedar!
Destroy the people of the east!
29 Take their tents and their flocks,
their curtains and all their
goods;
carry off their camels for
yourselves,
and a cry shall go up: "Terror
is all around!"
30 Flee, wander far away, hide in
deep places,
O inhabitants of Hazor!
says the LORD.
For King Nebuchadrezzar of
Babylon
has made a plan against you
and formed a purpose
against you.

31 Rise up, advance against a nation
at ease,
that lives secure,
says the LORD,
that has no gates or bars,
that lives alone.
32 Their camels shall become booty,
their herds of cattle a spoil.
I will scatter to every wind
those who have shaven temples,
and I will bring calamity
against them from every side,
says the LORD.
33 Hazor shall become a lair of
jackals,

[q] Or *Sea of Reeds* [r] Cn: Heb *there is trouble in the sea* [s] Vg: Heb *is not forsaken* [t] Syr Vg Tg: Heb *the town of my joy*

49.23–27 Damascus was the capital of Syria (see 1 Kings 11.24; 15.18; 19.15; 20.34; 2 Kings 8.7, 9; 16.10–12; Isa 7.8). It was conquered by the Assyrians in 733/2 B.C.E. and became the center of a province ruled by successive empires. Little is known of its history for the next several centuries. It is not in the list of nations doomed to drink the cup of the Lord's wrath in 25.18–26 and thus was probably a later addition to the collection. **49.23** *Hamath* (modern Hama) was both a Syrian city on the Orontes River between Damascus and Aleppo and a kingdom in its own right. *Arpad* (Tell Erfad), located some twenty-five miles north of Aleppo, was a city in northern Syria. Hamath and Arpad were destroyed by the Assyrians (see 2 Kings 18.34; 19.13; Isa 10.9; 36.19; 37.13). **49.27** This verse is taken from Am 1.4. *Ben-hadad* was the name of several kings of Damascus (1 Kings 15.18, 20; 2 Kings 13.24).

49.28–33 An oracle of judgment against Arabian tribes (see 25.23–24). *Kedar.* See note on 2.10–11. Kedar was apparently conquered by Nebuchadrezzar. *Hazor* is an unknown site in the Arabian desert, possibly conquered by Nebuchadrezzar. **49.32** *Shaven temples.* See note on 9.26.

an everlasting waste;
no one shall live there,
nor shall anyone settle in it.

Judgment on Elam

34 The word of the LORD that came to
the prophet Jeremiah concerning Elam,
at the beginning of the reign of King Zed-
ekiah of Judah.
35 Thus says the LORD of hosts: I am
going to break the bow of Elam, the main-
stay of their might; 36 and I will bring
upon Elam the four winds from the four
quarters of heaven; and I will scatter
them to all these winds, and there shall be
no nation to which the exiles from Elam
shall not come. 37 I will terrify Elam be-
fore their enemies, and before those who
seek their life; I will bring disaster upon
them, my fierce anger, says the LORD. I
will send the sword after them, until I
have consumed them; 38 and I will set my
throne in Elam, and destroy their king
and officials, says the LORD.
39 But in the latter days I will restore
the fortunes of Elam, says the LORD.

Judgment on Babylon

50 The word that the LORD spoke
concerning Babylon, concerning
the land of the Chaldeans, by the prophet
Jeremiah:
2 Declare among the nations
and proclaim,
set up a banner and proclaim,
do not conceal it, say:
Babylon is taken,
Bel is put to shame,
Merodach is dismayed.
Her images are put to shame,
her idols are dismayed.
3 For out of the north a nation has
come up against her; it shall make her
land a desolation, and no one shall live in
it; both human beings and animals shall
flee away.

4 In those days and in that time, says
the LORD, the people of Israel shall come,
they and the people of Judah together;
they shall come weeping as they seek the
LORD their God. 5 They shall ask the way
to Zion, with faces turned toward it, and
they shall come and join[u] themselves to
the LORD by an everlasting covenant that
will never be forgotten.

6 My people have been lost sheep;
their shepherds have led them astray,
turning them away on the mountains;
from mountain to hill they have gone,
they have forgotten their fold. 7 All who
found them have devoured them, and
their enemies have said, "We are not
guilty, because they have sinned against
the LORD, the true pasture, the LORD, the
hope of their ancestors."

8 Flee from Babylon, and go out of
the land of the Chaldeans, and be like
male goats leading the flock. 9 For I am
going to stir up and bring against Babylon
a company of great nations from the land
of the north; and they shall array them-

u Gk: Heb *toward it. Come! They shall join*

49.34–39 *Elam* was a country located east of the Tigris River. Its capital was Susa. Conquered by the Assyrians, Elam helped in the Assyrian war against Israel (see Isa 11.11; 21.2; 22.6). Eventually, Elam came under Babylonian and then Persian control. The oracle is dated at the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah (597 B.C.E.). **49.39** This verse is probably a later addition (see 46.25–26; 48.47; 49.6).

50.1–51.58 A collection of poetic and prose judgment oracles that speak of the destruction of Babylon and the return of the Jews from captivity (see chs. 24, 25, 29). Whether or not these two chapters contain a nucleus of material from Jeremiah is debated. Prior to the fall of Jerusalem, the prophet speaks favorably of Babylon: Nebuchadrezzar is the servant of God, the Babylonians are the instrument of God's will, the exiles are to pray for Babylon, and Judah should submit to Babylonian rule. After the fall of Jerusalem, the prophet could have changed his views. Now the devastator of nations will be destroyed because of its arrogance. It is more likely, however, that most of the collection derives from prophets of the exile and the early postexilic period who announce and celebrate the collapse of the empire and the return home. The Babylonian Empire fell in 539 B.C.E. to the Persians and shortly thereafter, Cyrus, the Persian king, allowed the Jews to return home (Ezra 1.1–4).

50.1 Superscription (see Hag 1.1; Mal 1.1). **50.2** *Bel* is one of the names of Marduk, the leading god of Babylonia. *Merodach* is the biblical name for Marduk. **50.3** The imagery of the

selves against her; from there she shall be
taken. Their arrows are like the arrows of
a skilled warrior who does not return
empty-handed. 10 Chaldea shall be plun-
dered; all who plunder her shall be sated,
says the LORD.

11 Though you rejoice, though
you exult,
O plunderers of my heritage,
though you frisk about like a
heifer on the grass,
and neigh like stallions,
12 your mother shall be utterly
shamed,
and she who bore you shall
be disgraced.
Lo, she shall be the last of the
nations,
a wilderness, dry land, and
a desert.
13 Because of the wrath of the LORD
she shall not be inhabited,
but shall be an utter desolation;
everyone who passes by Babylon
shall be appalled
and hiss because of all her
wounds.
14 Take up your positions around
Babylon,
all you that bend the bow;
shoot at her, spare no arrows,
for she has sinned against
the LORD.
15 Raise a shout against her from
all sides,
"She has surrendered;
her bulwarks have fallen,
her walls are thrown down."
For this is the vengeance of
the LORD:
take vengeance on her,
do to her as she has done.
16 Cut off from Babylon the sower,
and the wielder of the sickle in
time of harvest;
because of the destroying sword
all of them shall return to their
own people,
and all of them shall flee to
their own land.

17 Israel is a hunted sheep driven
away by lions. First the king of Assyria de-
voured it, and now at the end King Nebu-
chadrezzar of Babylon has gnawed its
bones. 18 Therefore, thus says the LORD of
hosts, the God of Israel: I am going to
punish the king of Babylon and his land,
as I punished the king of Assyria. 19 I will
restore Israel to its pasture, and it shall
feed on Carmel and in Bashan, and on
the hills of Ephraim and in Gilead its hun-
ger shall be satisfied. 20 In those days and
at that time, says the LORD, the iniquity of
Israel shall be sought, and there shall be
none; and the sins of Judah, and none
shall be found; for I will pardon the rem-
nant that I have spared.

21 Go up to the land of
Merathaim;[v]
go up against her,
and attack the inhabitants of
Pekod[w]
and utterly destroy the last
of them,[x]
says the LORD;
do all that I have
commanded you.
22 The noise of battle is in the land,
and great destruction!
23 How the hammer of the whole
earth
is cut down and broken!
How Babylon has become
a horror among the nations!
24 You set a snare for yourself and
you were caught,
O Babylon,
but you did not know it;
you were discovered and seized,
because you challenged the
LORD.
25 The LORD has opened his
armory,
and brought out the weapons
of his wrath,
for the Lord GOD of hosts has a
task to do
in the land of the Chaldeans.

v Or *of Double Rebellion* w Or *of Punishment*
x Tg: Heb *destroy after them*

"foe from the north" (see chs. 4–10) is transferred to the enemies of Babylonia (the Medes and the Persians). **50.11–16** Babylon surrendered to the armies of Persia, led by Gobryas. It was not taken by force and destroyed. **50.21** This verse contains two wordplays. *Merathaim* means "double rebellion," and is a wordplay on a region in southern Babylonia, *nar marratu*.

26 Come against her from every
quarter;
open her granaries;
pile her up like heaps of grain,
and destroy her utterly;
let nothing be left of her.
27 Kill all her bulls,
let them go down to the
slaughter.
Alas for them, their day has come,
the time of their punishment!

28 Listen! Fugitives and refugees from the land of Babylon are coming to declare in Zion the vengeance of the LORD our God, vengeance for his temple.

29 Summon archers against Babylon, all who bend the bow. Encamp all around her; let no one escape. Repay her according to her deeds; just as she has done, do to her—for she has arrogantly defied the LORD, the Holy One of Israel. 30 Therefore her young men shall fall in her squares, and all her soldiers shall be destroyed on that day, says the LORD.

31 I am against you, O arrogant one,
says the Lord GOD of hosts;
for your day has come,
the time when I will
punish you.
32 The arrogant one shall stumble
and fall,
with no one to raise him up,
and I will kindle a fire in his
cities,
and it will devour everything
around him.

33 Thus says the LORD of hosts: The people of Israel are oppressed, and so too are the people of Judah; all their captors have held them fast and refuse to let them go. 34 Their Redeemer is strong; the LORD of hosts is his name. He will surely plead their cause, that he may give rest to the earth, but unrest to the inhabitants of Babylon.

35 A sword against the Chaldeans,
says the LORD,
and against the inhabitants of
Babylon,
and against her officials and
her sages!
36 A sword against the diviners,
so that they may become fools!
A sword against her warriors,
so that they may be destroyed!
37 A sword against her[y] horses and
against her[y] chariots,
and against all the foreign
troops in her midst,
so that they may become
women!
A sword against all her treasures,
that they may be plundered!
38 A drought[z] against her waters,
that they may be dried up!
For it is a land of images,
and they go mad over idols.

39 Therefore wild animals shall live with hyenas in Babylon,[a] and ostriches shall inhabit her; she shall never again be peopled, or inhabited for all generations. 40 As when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah and their neighbors, says the LORD, so no one shall live there, nor shall anyone settle in her.

41 Look, a people is coming from
the north;
a mighty nation and many kings
are stirring from the farthest
parts of the earth.
42 They wield bow and spear,
they are cruel and have
no mercy.
The sound of them is like the
roaring sea;
they ride upon horses,
set in array as a warrior for
battle,
against you, O daughter
Babylon!

43 The king of Babylon heard news
of them,
and his hands fell helpless;
anguish seized him,

y Cn: Heb *his* *z* Another reading is *A sword*
a Heb lacks *in Babylon*

Pekod, "punishment" in Hebrew, refers to an Aramean tribe on the eastern bank of the lower Tigris River (see Ezek 23.23). **50.29–32** The pride of rulers that leads to self-exaltation and the desire to rule in the place of God is the basis for Babylonia's judgment (see Ezek 28). **50.40** *Sodom and*

pain like that of a woman
in labor.

44 Like a lion coming up from the
thickets of the Jordan against a perennial
pasture, I will suddenly chase them away
from her; and I will appoint over her
whomever I choose.[b] For who is like me?
Who can summon me? Who is the shep-
herd who can stand before me? 45 There-
fore hear the plan that the LORD has
made against Babylon, and the purposes
that he has formed against the land of the
Chaldeans: Surely the little ones of the
flock shall be dragged away; surely their[c]
fold shall be appalled at their fate. 46 At
the sound of the capture of Babylon the
earth shall tremble, and her cry shall be
heard among the nations.

51 Thus says the LORD:
I am going to stir up a
destructive wind[d]
against Babylon
and against the inhabitants of
Leb-qamai;[e]
2 and I will send winnowers to
Babylon,
and they shall winnow her.
They shall empty her land
when they come against her
from every side
on the day of trouble.
3 Let not the archer bend his bow,
and let him not array himself in
his coat of mail.
Do not spare her young men;
utterly destroy her entire army.
4 They shall fall down slain in the
land of the Chaldeans,
and wounded in her streets.
5 Israel and Judah have not been
forsaken
by their God, the LORD of
hosts,
though their land is full of guilt
before the Holy One of Israel.

6 Flee from the midst of Babylon,
save your lives, each of you!
Do not perish because of her
guilt,
for this is the time of the
LORD's vengeance;
he is repaying her what is due.
7 Babylon was a golden cup in the
LORD's hand,
making all the earth drunken;
the nations drank of her wine,
and so the nations went mad.
8 Suddenly Babylon has fallen and
is shattered;
wail for her!
Bring balm for her wound;
perhaps she may be healed.
9 We tried to heal Babylon,
but she could not be healed.
Forsake her, and let each of
us go
to our own country;
for her judgment has reached up
to heaven
and has been lifted up even to
the skies.
10 The LORD has brought forth our
vindication;
come, let us declare in Zion
the work of the LORD our
God.

11 Sharpen the arrows!
Fill the quivers!
The LORD has stirred up the spirit of the
kings of the Medes, because his purpose
concerning Babylon is to destroy it, for
that is the vengeance of the LORD, ven-
geance for his temple.
12 Raise a standard against the walls
of Babylon;
make the watch strong;
post sentinels;
prepare the ambushes;
for the LORD has both planned
and done
what he spoke concerning the
inhabitants of Babylon.

b Or *and I will single out the choicest of her rams*: Meaning of Heb uncertain *c* Syr Gk Tg Compare 49.20: Heb lacks *their* *d* Or *stir up the spirit of a destroyer* *e* *Leb-qamai* is a cryptogram for *Kasdim*, Chaldea

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Gomorrah. See 20.16 and note; 23.14. **51.1** *Leb-qamai* means in Hebrew "the heart of those who rise up against me." It is another example of athbash (see note on 25.26) that works out to mean *kasdim*, the Chaldeans (Babylonians). **51.11** *Medes*. Media, located in northwest Iran, was a separate empire that helped in the overthrow of the Assyrians at the end of the seventh century B.C.E. It became a Persian province in 549 B.C.E. and participated in the defeat of the

13 You who live by mighty waters,
rich in treasures,
your end has come,
the thread of your life is cut.
14 The LORD of hosts has sworn
by himself:
Surely I will fill you with troops
like a swarm of locusts,
and they shall raise a shout of
victory over you.

15 It is he who made the earth by
his power,
who established the world by
his wisdom,
and by his understanding
stretched out the heavens.
16 When he utters his voice there is
a tumult of waters in the
heavens,
and he makes the mist rise
from the ends of the earth.
He makes lightnings for the rain,
and he brings out the wind
from his storehouses.
17 Everyone is stupid and without
knowledge;
goldsmiths are all put to shame
by their idols;
for their images are false,
and there is no breath in them.
18 They are worthless, a work of
delusion;
at the time of their punishment
they shall perish.
19 Not like these is the LORD,[f] the
portion of Jacob,
for he is the one who formed
all things,
and Israel is the tribe of his
inheritance;
the LORD of hosts is his name.

The Creator's Instrument

20 You are my war club, my weapon
of battle:
with you I smash nations;
with you I destroy kingdoms;
21 with you I smash the horse and
its rider;
with you I smash the chariot
and the charioteer;
22 with you I smash man and
woman;
with you I smash the old man
and the boy;
with you I smash the young man
and the girl;
23 with you I smash shepherds
and their flocks;
with you I smash farmers and
their teams;
with you I smash governors
and deputies.

The Doom of Babylon

24 I will repay Babylon and all the inhabitants of Chaldea before your very eyes for all the wrong that they have done in Zion, says the LORD.

25 I am against you, O destroying
mountain,
says the LORD,
that destroys the whole earth;
I will stretch out my hand
against you,
and roll you down from the
crags,
and make you a burned-out
mountain.
26 No stone shall be taken from you
for a corner
and no stone for a foundation,
but you shall be a perpetual
waste,
says the LORD.

27 Raise a standard in the land,
blow the trumpet among the
nations;

f Heb lacks *the* LORD

Babylonians (see Isa 13.17). **51.15–19** These verses are taken from 10.12–16. **51.20–23** These words appear to be addressed to Cyrus (see Isa 41.2–4). **51.27** *Ararat* (Urartu) is the name of a people inhabiting a region near Lake Van (southeast Turkey and northwest Iran). *Minni* (Mannaya) refers to a people who lived in an area south of Lake Urmia in modern northern Iraq. *Ashkenaz* probably is a designation of an Indo-European people who lived near modern Armenia and were identified by Herodotus as the Scythians.

prepare the nations for war against her,
summon against her the kingdoms,
Ararat, Minni, and Ashkenaz;
appoint a marshal against her,
bring up horses like bristling locusts.
28 Prepare the nations for war against her,
the kings of the Medes, with their governors and deputies,
and every land under their dominion.
29 The land trembles and writhes,
for the LORD's purposes against Babylon stand,
to make the land of Babylon a desolation,
without inhabitant.
30 The warriors of Babylon have given up fighting,
they remain in their strongholds;
their strength has failed,
they have become women;
her buildings are set on fire,
her bars are broken.
31 One runner runs to meet another,
and one messenger to meet another,
to tell the king of Babylon
that his city is taken from end to end:
32 the fords have been seized,
the marshes have been burned with fire,
and the soldiers are in panic.
33 For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel:
Daughter Babylon is like a threshing floor
at the time when it is trodden;
yet a little while
and the time of her harvest will come.

34 "King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon has devoured me,
he has crushed me;
he has made me an empty vessel,
he has swallowed me like a monster;
he has filled his belly with my delicacies,
he has spewed me out.
35 May my torn flesh be avenged on Babylon,"
the inhabitants of Zion shall say.
"May my blood be avenged on the inhabitants of Chaldea,"
Jerusalem shall say.
36 Therefore thus says the LORD:
I am going to defend your cause
and take vengeance for you.
I will dry up her sea
and make her fountain dry;
37 and Babylon shall become a heap of ruins,
a den of jackals,
an object of horror and of hissing,
without inhabitant.

38 Like lions they shall roar together;
they shall growl like lions' whelps.
39 When they are inflamed, I will set out their drink
and make them drunk, until they become merry
and then sleep a perpetual sleep
and never wake, says the LORD.
40 I will bring them down like lambs to the slaughter,
like rams and goats.

41 How Sheshach[g] is taken,
the pride of the whole earth seized!
How Babylon has become
an object of horror among the nations!
42 The sea has risen over Babylon;
she has been covered by its tumultuous waves.
43 Her cities have become an object of horror,
a land of drought and a desert,
a land in which no one lives,
and through which no mortal passes.
44 I will punish Bel in Babylon,
and make him disgorge what he has swallowed.
The nations shall no longer stream to him;
the wall of Babylon has fallen.

45 Come out of her, my people!

g *Sheshach* is a cryptogram for *Babel*, Babylon

Save your lives, each of you,
from the fierce anger of the
LORD!
46 Do not be fainthearted or fearful
at the rumors heard in
the land—
one year one rumor comes,
the next year another,
rumors of violence in the land
and of ruler against ruler.

47 Assuredly, the days are coming
when I will punish the images
of Babylon;
her whole land shall be put to
shame,
and all her slain shall fall in
her midst.
48 Then the heavens and the earth,
and all that is in them,
shall shout for joy over Babylon;
for the destroyers shall come
against them out of
the north,
says the LORD.
49 Babylon must fall for the slain of
Israel,
as the slain of all the earth have
fallen because of Babylon.

50 You survivors of the sword,
go, do not linger!
Remember the LORD in a distant
land,
and let Jerusalem come into
your mind:
51 We are put to shame, for we have
heard insults;
dishonor has covered our face,
for aliens have come
into the holy places of the
LORD's house.

52 Therefore the time is surely
coming, says the LORD,
when I will punish her idols,
and through all her land
the wounded shall groan.
53 Though Babylon should mount
up to heaven,
and though she should fortify
her strong height,
from me destroyers would come
upon her,
says the LORD.

54 Listen!—a cry from Babylon!
A great crashing from the land
of the Chaldeans!
55 For the LORD is laying Babylon
waste,
and stilling her loud clamor.
Their waves roar like mighty
waters,
the sound of their clamor
resounds;
56 for a destroyer has come
against her,
against Babylon;
her warriors are taken,
their bows are broken;
for the LORD is a God of
recompense,
he will repay in full.
57 I will make her officials and her
sages drunk,
also her governors, her
deputies, and her warriors;
they shall sleep a perpetual sleep
and never wake,
says the King, whose name is
the LORD of hosts.

58 Thus says the LORD of hosts:
The broad wall of Babylon
shall be leveled to the ground,
and her high gates
shall be burned with fire.
The peoples exhaust themselves
for nothing,
and the nations weary
themselves only for fire.[h]

A Symbolic Action Against Babylon

59 The word that the prophet Jeremiah commanded Seraiah son of Neriah son of Mahseiah, when he went with King

h Gk Syr Compare Hab 2.13: Heb *and the nations for fire, and they are weary*

51.41 *Sheshach.* See note on 25.26.

51.59–64 This narrative purports to tell how the oracles against Babylonia were written in a book and carried to Babylon by Seraiah when he accompanied King Zedekiah on his trip to Babylon in the fourth year of his reign (593 B.C.E.). Seraiah was a brother of Baruch (see 32.12). It may be that Zedekiah made such a trip in order to explain his participation in the conspiracy mentioned in ch. 27. The oracles against Babylon do not agree with Jeremiah's pro-Babylonian stance prior to the fall of Jerusalem. It is likely that the editor of the collection of oracles against Babylon

Zedekiah of Judah to Babylon, in the fourth year of his reign. Seraiah was the quartermaster. 60 Jeremiah wrote in a[i] scroll all the disasters that would come on Babylon, all these words that are written concerning Babylon. 61 And Jeremiah said to Seraiah: "When you come to Babylon, see that you read all these words, 62 and say, 'O LORD, you yourself threatened to destroy this place so that neither human beings nor animals shall live in it, and it shall be desolate forever.' 63 When you finish reading this scroll, tie a stone to it, and throw it into the middle of the Euphrates, 64 and say, 'Thus shall Babylon sink, to rise no more, because of the disasters that I am bringing on her.' "[j]

Thus far are the words of Jeremiah.

The Destruction of Jerusalem Reviewed

52 Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he began to reign; he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hamutal daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. 2 He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, just as Jehoiakim had done. 3 Indeed, Jerusalem and Judah so angered the LORD that he expelled them from his presence.

Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon. 4 And in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon came with all his army against Jerusalem, and they laid siege to it; they built siegeworks against it all around. 5 So the city was besieged until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah. 6 On the ninth day of the fourth month the famine became so severe in the city that there was no food for the people of the land. 7 Then a breach was made in the city wall;[k] and all the soldiers fled and went out from the city by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, by the king's garden, though the Chaldeans were all around the city. They went in the direction of the Arabah. 8 But the army of the Chaldeans pursued the king, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho; and all his army was scattered, deserting him. 9 Then they captured the king, and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah in the land of Hamath, and he passed sentence on him. 10 The king of Babylon killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and also killed all the officers of Judah at Riblah. 11 He put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him in fetters, and the king of Babylon took him to Babylon, and put him in prison until the day of his death.

12 In the fifth month, on the tenth day of the month—which was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadrezzar, king of Babylon—Nebuzaradan the captain of the bodyguard who served the king of Babylon, entered Jerusalem. 13 He burned the house of the LORD, the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem; every great house he burned down. 14 All the army of the Chaldeans, who were with the captain of the guard, broke down all the walls around Jerusalem. 15 Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried into exile some of the poorest of the people and the rest of the people who were left in the city and the deserters who had defected to the king of Babylon, together with the rest of the artisans. 16 But Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard left some of the poorest people of the land to be vinedressers and tillers of the soil.

17 The pillars of bronze that were in the house of the LORD, and the stands and the bronze sea that were in the house of the LORD, the Chaldeans broke in pieces, and carried all the bronze to Babylon. 18 They took away the pots, the shovels, the snuffers, the basins, the ladles, and all the vessels of bronze used in the temple service. 19 The captain of the guard took away the small bowls also, the firepans, the basins, the pots, the lampstands, the

i Or *one* *j* Gk: Heb *on her. And they shall weary themselves* *k* Heb lacks *wall*

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composed this narrative in order to attribute them to Jeremiah. **51.63** A symbolic act (see note on 13.1–11).

52.1–34 A historical appendix. This chapter is principally taken from 2 Kings 24.18–25.30 in order to provide additional information about the rebellion of Zedekiah, the fall of Jerusalem, and the exile (see chs. 39–43). **52.1–3** A brief summary of the reign of Zedekiah (see 2 Kings 24.18–20). **52.4–11** The siege, fall of Jerusalem, and capture of Zedekiah. **52.12–16** The commander of the Babylonian army, *Nebuzaradan* (cf. 39.9–14; 40.1–6), ordered the burning of Jerusalem, including the temple and palace, and took into exile all but the country's very poor. **52.17–23** The spoils taken from the temple are

ladles, and the bowls for libation, both those of gold and those of silver. 20 As for the two pillars, the one sea, the twelve bronze bulls that were under the sea, and the stands,[1] which King Solomon had made for the house of the LORD, the bronze of all these vessels was beyond weighing. 21 As for the pillars, the height of the one pillar was eighteen cubits, its circumference was twelve cubits; it was hollow and its thickness was four fingers. 22 Upon it was a capital of bronze; the height of the capital was five cubits; latticework and pomegranates, all of bronze, encircled the top of the capital. And the second pillar had the same, with pomegranates. 23 There were ninety-six pomegranates on the sides; all the pomegranates encircling the latticework numbered one hundred.

24 The captain of the guard took the chief priest Seraiah, the second priest Zephaniah, and the three guardians of the threshold; 25 and from the city he took an officer who had been in command of the soldiers, and seven men of the king's council who were found in the city; the secretary of the commander of the army who mustered the people of the land; and sixty men of the people of the land who were found inside the city. 26 Then Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard took them, and brought them to the king of Babylon at Riblah. 27 And the king of Babylon struck them down, and put them to death at Riblah in the land of Hamath. So Judah went into exile out of its land.

28 This is the number of the people whom Nebuchadrezzar took into exile: in the seventh year, three thousand twenty-three Judeans; 29 in the eighteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar he took into exile from Jerusalem eight hundred thirty-two persons; 30 in the twenty-third year of Nebuchadrezzar, Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard took into exile of the Judeans seven hundred forty-five persons; all the persons were four thousand six hundred.

Jehoiachin Favored in Captivity

31 In the thirty-seventh year of the exile of King Jehoiachin of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-fifth day of the month, King Evil-merodach of Babylon, in the year he began to reign, showed favor to King Jehoiachin of Judah and brought him out of prison; 32 he spoke kindly to him, and gave him a seat above the seats of the other kings who were with him in Babylon. 33 So Jehoiachin put aside his prison clothes, and every day of his life he dined regularly at the king's table. 34 For his allowance, a regular daily allowance was given him by the king of Babylon, as long as he lived, up to the day of his death.

[1] Cn: Heb *that were under the stands*

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listed (cf. 28.3). **52.24–27** *Seraiah*. See 36.26. *Zephaniah*. See 21.1; 29.24–32. **52.28–30** The lists of exiles from three deportations (597, 587, 582 B.C.E.). These verses are not in the account in 2 Kings. **52.31–34** The release of *Jehoiachin* from prison in 560 B.C.E. indicates the book of Jeremiah was edited sometime after this event. *Evil-merodach* (Akkadian *Amel-Marduk*) was the son and successor of Nebuchadrezzar. He ruled only two years (562–560 B.C.E.) before being replaced by his brother-in-law, Neriglissar, in a rebellion.

LAMENTATIONS

THE BOOK OF LAMENTATIONS consists of a series of five mournful poems. Together they constitute a moving expression of grief over the destruction of Jerusalem and exile of its people by King Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians in 586 B.C.E. A concise summary of this historical background can be found in 2 Kings 25.8–21.

Name and Canonical Context

The name of the book in the Hebrew Bible is *'ekah* ("How!"), after the initial word in 1.1, repeated in 2.1; 4.1. The English title Lamentations is a translation of the Latin *threni* (Greek *threnoi*), which in turn goes back to another Hebrew title, *qinot* attested in the Babylonian Talmud (*Bava Batra* 14b). In most English Bibles, which follow the order of the Latin and Greek versions, Lamentations comes after Jeremiah. But in the threefold division of the Hebrew Bible, Lamentations is placed among the Writings (Hebrew *ketuvim*) as one of the five short books or festal scrolls (Hebrew *megillot*), along with Song of Songs, Ruth, Ecclesiastes, and Esther. In the Jewish liturgical calendar, Lamentations is associated with "the Ninth of Av," which commemorates the destruction of the temple by the Roman emperor Titus in 70 C.E. In the Christian liturgical tradition, portions of Lamentations are read during Holy Week. The text of Lamentations has frequently been set to music.

Authorship and Date of Composition

Ancient tradition, already attested by the Greek version of the OT, ascribed Lamentations to Jeremiah, thus reinforcing the popular but misleading characterization of him as the "weeping prophet." This tradition finds some support in that Jeremiah was the prophet who persistently predicted and lived through the fall of Jerusalem; that he is said to have wept and mourned over the destruction of his nation (see Jer 7.29; 8.18–9.1; 9.17–22); and that later biblical tradition ascribed to him the composition of a lament (Hebrew *qinah*) over King Josiah (2 Chr 35.25).

The evidence against Jeremian authorship, however, appears to be more weighty. The oldest Hebrew manuscripts of Lamentations make no reference to Jeremiah. Furthermore, some of the contents of and sentiments expressed in the book do not jibe very well with Jeremiah's known views. For instance, the attitude toward the political and religious establishment in Jerusalem is much more positive and deferential in Lamentations than it is in the prophet's utterances. Cf., e.g., 1.10 with Jer 7.14; 4.17 with Jer 2.18; 37.5–10; and 4.20 with Jer 37.17. It is also difficult to imagine a statement like the following on the lips of Jeremiah: "Guidance (Hebrew *torah*) is no more, and her prophets obtain no vision from the LORD" (2.9). For these and other reasons, it is best to seek to understand Lamentations not as an utterance of Jeremiah, but rather as the composition of an anonymous exilic author (or authors) who gave eloquent poetic expression to the sense of bewilderment, anguish, and loss felt by many of the people. The vividness and local color found in this book, as well as the freshness and intensity of feeling expressed in it, suggest that the author was a Judean survivor remaining behind in the land and writing in close proximity to the catastrophic demise of the nation in 586 B.C.E.

Literary Form and Character

The entire book is written in poetry. Chs. 1–4 are composed as alphabetical acrostics; the strophes or verses begin with successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet, of which there are twenty-two. In chs. 1, 2, and 4 each verse begins with a different letter, whereas in ch. 3 three successive verses begin with the same letter; thus vv. 1–3 begin with the letter *aleph*, vv. 4–6 with the letter *beth*, and so on. Ch. 5 is not an acrostic, but alphabetical constraints can be seen in that it also has only twenty-two verses. Alphabetical acrostics are fairly common in the Hebrew Bible. Others include Pss 9–10; 25; 34; 111; 112; 119 (the most elaborate, with each letter beginning eight successive verses); 145; Prov 31.10–31. Though the origins and meaning of this literary device are uncertain, its use suggests notions of perfection, completeness, and aesthetic restraint. In the case of Lamentations, it provides the poet with a viable means of coming to terms with pain and grief. Instead of being allowed to spill over without limit, the pathos is channeled into a literary structure that brings a measure of order to social and emotional chaos. The alphabetic acrostic device channels and sets limits to feelings at the same time as it allows for complete expression, "from A to Z" as it were, of what needs to be said.

While the meter varies, there is a preponderance of the so-called Qinah meter, in which a longer three-beat line is followed by a shorter two-beat line. An example of this meter is Lam 5.14:

The old men have left the city gate, (3)
the young men their music. (2)

Formally, the poetry of Lamentations exhibits affinities to such other biblical genres as the elegy or funeral lament and the individual and communal psalm of lamentation. Laments over the destruction of cities and temples are known also from extrabiblical sources going back to the second millennium B.C.E.; see, e.g., the *Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur*. Yet in keeping with the specificity of the historical occasion, Lamentations, while incorporating and adapting several traditional elements, is a unique literary composition addressed to the survivors of the destruction of Jerusalem and designed to help them come to terms with the historical reality and the religious implications of that catastrophic experience. It has been suggested, with some degree of plausibility, that these poems were used in public rites of mourning, such as those known to have been carried on at the site of the ruins of the Jerusalem temple (see Jer 41.5; Zech 7.1–7; 8.19).

Message

Lamentations is first and foremost an eloquent expression of grief that helped survivors come to terms with the historical calamity they had gone through. Furthermore, the author accepted the message of the great preexilic prophets and proclaimed that the destruction of the holy city was the just judgment of God for Israel's sin. Appeals for repentance, however, are frequently interspersed with appeals for God's mercy and compassion on the penitent survivors. A cautious note of hope is sounded in the center of the book (see 3.21–33). Here the poet gives expression to the belief that whereas God's wrath is limited (3.31), God's mercy and compassion are without limit (3.22–24). This message has continued to reverberate through subsequent ages and calamities to the present day.
Werner E. Lemke

The Desolation of Zion

1 How lonely sits the city
that once was full of people!
How like a widow she has become,
she that was great among the nations!
She that was a princess among the provinces
has become a vassal.

2 She weeps bitterly in the night,
with tears on her cheeks;
among all her lovers
she has no one to comfort her;
all her friends have dealt treacherously with her,
they have become her enemies.

3 Judah has gone into exile with suffering
and hard servitude;
she lives now among the nations,
and finds no resting place;
her pursuers have all overtaken her
in the midst of her distress.

4 The roads to Zion mourn,
for no one comes to the festivals;
all her gates are desolate,
her priests groan;
her young girls grieve,[a]
and her lot is bitter.

5 Her foes have become the masters,
her enemies prosper,
because the LORD has made her suffer
for the multitude of her transgressions;
her children have gone away,
captives before the foe.

6 From daughter Zion has departed
all her majesty.
Her princes have become like stags
that find no pasture;
they fled without strength
before the pursuer.

7 Jerusalem remembers,
in the days of her affliction and wandering,
all the precious things
that were hers in days of old.
When her people fell into the hand of the foe,
and there was no one to help her,
the foe looked on mocking
over her downfall.

8 Jerusalem sinned grievously,
so she has become a mockery;
all who honored her despise her,
for they have seen her nakedness;
she herself groans,
and turns her face away.

9 Her uncleanness was in her skirts;

a Meaning of Heb uncertain

1.1–22 A moving description of the plight of the holy city following its destruction. Two voices mark the main sections of the poem. **1.1–11** The poet contrasts the present miserable condition of the city with its former glory. **1.1** *How* (Hebrew *'ekah*) signals a sharp contrast between "now" and "then" and is found characteristically, though not exclusively, in elegies (see 2 Sam 1.19, 25, 27; Isa 1.21; 14.4; Jer 48.17; Ezek 26.17). **1.2** *Lovers, friends,* nations with whom Judah had entered into political alliances, which were denounced by the prophets (see Isa 31.1–3; Jer 4.30; 27.1–7; 30.14; Ezek 16.33). Some of these former allies made common cause with the Babylonians when they attacked Jerusalem (see 2 Kings 24.2; Ezek 25.12–17). **1.4** *The roads . . . mourn,* or "roads are dried up," for lack of religious pilgrims. City *gates* were normally bustling with activity (see 5.14). **1.5** *Foes . . . the masters* (*the masters,* lit. "the heads") alludes to the covenant blessing/curse in Deut 28.13, 44. A covenant context is also suggested by *transgressions,* a political term referring to willful acts of rebellion. God punished Jerusalem for breach of covenant, a theme more fully developed in ch. 2. **1.6** *Daughter Zion* or the like (see 1.15; 2.1, 4, 8, 10, 13, 15; 4.21, 22; cf. 3.48; 4.3, 6, 10, where the Hebrew reads lit. "daughter of my people") is a poetic expression of tender endearment personifying a city, land, or people. **1.8** *Nakedness* was considered shameful and humiliating (see Gen 9.22–23; Ex 20.26; Isa 47.3; Ezek 16.37–39). Ancient reliefs show prisoners being marched into captivity stark naked. **1.9** *Uncleanness,* a metaphor drawn

she took no thought of her
future;
her downfall was appalling,
with none to comfort her.
"O LORD, look at my affliction,
for the enemy has triumphed!"

10 Enemies have stretched out
their hands
over all her precious things;
she has even seen the nations
invade her sanctuary,
those whom you forbade
to enter your congregation.

11 All her people groan
as they search for bread;
they trade their treasures for
food
to revive their strength.
Look, O LORD, and see
how worthless I have become.

12 Is it nothing to you,[b] all you who
pass by?
Look and see
if there is any sorrow like my
sorrow,
which was brought upon me,
which the LORD inflicted
on the day of his fierce anger.

13 From on high he sent fire;
it went deep into my bones;
he spread a net for my feet;
he turned me back;
he has left me stunned,
faint all day long.

14 My transgressions were bound[b]
into a yoke;
by his hand they were fastened
together;
they weigh on my neck,
sapping my strength;
the Lord handed me over
to those whom I cannot
withstand.

15 The LORD has rejected
all my warriors in the midst
of me;
he proclaimed a time against me
to crush my young men;
the Lord has trodden as in a
wine press
the virgin daughter Judah.

16 For these things I weep;
my eyes flow with tears;
for a comforter is far from me,
one to revive my courage;
my children are desolate,
for the enemy has prevailed.

17 Zion stretches out her hands,
but there is no one to
comfort her;
the LORD has commanded against
Jacob
that his neighbors should
become his foes;
Jerusalem has become
a filthy thing among them.

18 The LORD is in the right,
for I have rebelled against
his word;
but hear, all you peoples,
and behold my suffering;

b Meaning of Heb uncertain

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from ritual purity laws (see Lev 15.16–24). **1.10** *Precious things*, the temple treasures plundered by the Babylonians (2 Kings 25.13–17; Jer 28.1–3). Ironically, foreigners barred by law from entering the Lord's *congregation* (Deut 23.3) had invaded God's *sanctuary*. **1.11** *Treasures* (same Hebrew word translated *precious things* in v. 10) here probably refers to humans rather than valuables (cf. Ezek 24.16; Hos 9.16).

1.12–22 Zion is speaking. **1.12** *On the day of his fierce anger*, a reference to the prophetic concept of "the day of the LORD," on which God comes to judge Israel or the nations (see Isa 10.3; 13.13; 22.5; Ezek 7.7–12; Joel 2.1–2; Am 5.18, 20; Ob 15–18). Here it is identified with the destruction of Jerusalem. **1.13** Traditional metaphors drawn from the individual laments (see Job 30.30; Ps 10.9; 35.7–8; 57.6; 102.3; Jer 20.9). **1.14** The *yoke*, or heavy burden (see 1 Kings 12.3–14; Isa 9.4; Jer 27–28), has been brought on by Israel's rebellious acts against the Lord (cf. Deut 28.47–48). **1.15** *Virgin daughter Judah*. See note on 1.6. **1.17** *Filthy thing* belongs to the same semantic realm as *uncleanness* in v. 9 (cf. Lev. 12.2; 15.19–32; 2 Chr 29.5; Ezra 9.11; Zech 13.1). **1.18** Zion concedes that God's punishment is just because she had *rebelled against his word* (lit. "mouth"), that is, disobeyed divine directives given through prophetic mediators (see Num 20.24; Deut 1.26, 43; 1 Sam 12.14–15;

my young women and
young men
have gone into captivity.

19 I called to my lovers
but they deceived me;
my priests and elders
perished in the city
while seeking food
to revive their strength.

20 See, O LORD, how distressed
I am;
my stomach churns,
my heart is wrung within me,
because I have been very
rebellious.
In the street the sword bereaves;
in the house it is like death.

21 They heard how I was groaning,
with no one to comfort me.
All my enemies heard of my
trouble;
they are glad that you have
done it.
Bring on the day you have
announced,
and let them be as I am.

22 Let all their evil doing come
before you;
and deal with them
as you have dealt with me
because of all my
transgressions;
for my groans are many
and my heart is faint.

The LORD Has Done What He Purposed

2 How the Lord in his anger
has humiliated[c] daughter Zion!
He has thrown down from
heaven to earth
the splendor of Israel;
he has not remembered his
footstool
in the day of his anger.

2 The Lord has destroyed without
mercy
all the dwellings of Jacob;
in his wrath he has broken down
the strongholds of daughter
Judah;
he has brought down to the
ground in dishonor
the kingdom and its rulers.

3 He has cut down in fierce anger
all the might of Israel;
he has withdrawn his right hand
from them
in the face of the enemy;
he has burned like a flaming fire
in Jacob,
consuming all around.

4 He has bent his bow like an
enemy,
with his right hand set like
a foe;
he has killed all in whom we
took pride
in the tent of daughter Zion;
he has poured out his fury like
fire.

5 The Lord has become like an
enemy;
he has destroyed Israel.
He has destroyed all its palaces,
laid in ruins its strongholds,
and multiplied in daughter Judah
mourning and lamentation.

6 He has broken down his booth
like a garden,

c Meaning of Heb uncertain

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1 Kings 13.21, 26). **1.19** *Lovers.* See note on 1.2. **1.21–22** Petitions for God's intervention against Zion's oppressors for gloating over her misfortune.

2.1–22 The poet describes the enormity of Zion's suffering but acknowledges purposeful divine activity in these events. **2.1** *Daughter Zion.* See note on 1.6. *The splendor of Israel* is a reference to the capital city (cf. Isa 13.19; Ezek 24.25) or its sanctuary (cf. Ps 78.61; Isa 64.11). God's *footstool,* the ark of the Lord or the temple where it was housed (see 1 Chr 28.2; Ps 99.5; 132.7). *In the day of his anger.* See also vv. 3, 4, 6, 21, 22; note on 1.12. **2.2** *Without mercy,* i.e., unsparingly, but without exhausting divine capabilities for mercy (cf. 3.22–23, 32–33). **2.3–5** The Divine Warrior who used to fight Israel's enemies (see Ex 15.3–10; Judg 5.10–11; Hab 3.1–16) has now withdrawn his *right hand* or protective power and become *like an enemy* to Israel (cf. Jer 30.14). **2.6** *Booth, tabernacle,* the temple (see v. 7). *King and priest,* the two pillars of the Jerusalemite rul-

he has destroyed his tabernacle:
the LORD has abolished in Zion
festival and sabbath,
and in his fierce indignation has spurned
king and priest.

7 The Lord has scorned his altar,
disowned his sanctuary;
he has delivered into the hand of the enemy
the walls of her palaces;
a clamor was raised in the house of the LORD
as on a day of festival.

8 The LORD determined to lay in ruins
the wall of daughter Zion;
he stretched the line;
he did not withhold his hand from destroying;
he caused rampart and wall to lament;
they languish together.

9 Her gates have sunk into the ground;
he has ruined and broken her bars;
her king and princes are among the nations;
guidance is no more,
and her prophets obtain
no vision from the LORD.

10 The elders of daughter Zion
sit on the ground in silence;
they have thrown dust on their heads
and put on sackcloth;
the young girls of Jerusalem
have bowed their heads to the ground.

11 My eyes are spent with weeping;
my stomach churns;
my bile is poured out on the ground
because of the destruction of my people,
because infants and babes faint
in the streets of the city.

12 They cry to their mothers,
"Where is bread and wine?"
as they faint like the wounded
in the streets of the city,
as their life is poured out
on their mothers' bosom.

13 What can I say for you, to what compare you,
O daughter Jerusalem?
To what can I liken you, that I may comfort you,
O virgin daughter Zion?
For vast as the sea is your ruin;
who can heal you?

14 Your prophets have seen for you
false and deceptive visions;
they have not exposed your iniquity
to restore your fortunes,
but have seen oracles for you
that are false and misleading.

15 All who pass along the way
clap their hands at you;
they hiss and wag their heads
at daughter Jerusalem;
"Is this the city that was called
the perfection of beauty,
the joy of all the earth?"

16 All your enemies
open their mouths against you;
they hiss, they gnash their teeth,
they cry: "We have devoured her!
Ah, this is the day we longed for;
at last we have seen it!"

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ing class. Temple and palace were both part of the building complex destroyed by the Babylonians (2 Kings 25.8–12, 18–21), and kings played an important role in the Israelite religion (2 Kings 23.1–25). **2.9** *Guidance*, or priestly "instruction." **2.10** This verse describes traditional rites of mourning in the face of calamity (see Job 2.12–13; Jer 4.8; 6.26; Jon 3.6). **2.13** *Daughter Jerusalem, virgin daughter Zion.* See note on 1.6. **2.14** *Deceptive visions.* See Jer 14.13–16; 23.9–22; 28.1–17; 29.8–9. **2.15–16** Cf. 1 Kings 9.8–9; Ps 22.7; Jer 19.8; Zeph 2.15. **2.15** *Is this the city . . . the joy of all the earth,* a derisive question that mocks the exalted praise of the holy city found in

17 The LORD has done what he
purposed,
he has carried out his threat;
as he ordained long ago,
he has demolished without pity;
he has made the enemy rejoice
over you,
and exalted the might of
your foes.

18 Cry aloud[d] to the Lord!
O wall of daughter Zion!
Let tears stream down like a
torrent
day and night!
Give yourself no rest,
your eyes no respite!

19 Arise, cry out in the night,
at the beginning of the watches!
Pour out your heart like water
before the presence of the
Lord!
Lift your hands to him
for the lives of your children,
who faint for hunger
at the head of every street.

20 Look, O LORD, and consider!
To whom have you done this?
Should women eat their
offspring,
the children they have borne?
Should priest and prophet be
killed
in the sanctuary of the Lord?

21 The young and the old are lying
on the ground in the streets;
my young women and my
young men
have fallen by the sword;
in the day of your anger you
have killed them,
slaughtering without mercy.

22 You invited my enemies from
all around
as if for a day of festival;
and on the day of the anger of
the LORD
no one escaped or survived;
those whom I bore and reared
my enemy has destroyed.

The LORD Will Not Reject Forever

3 I am one who has seen affliction
under the rod of God's[e]
wrath;
2 he has driven and brought me
into darkness without any light;
3 against me alone he turns
his hand,
again and again, all day long.

4 He has made my flesh and my
skin waste away,
and broken my bones;
5 he has besieged and
enveloped me
with bitterness and tribulation;
6 he has made me sit in darkness
like the dead of long ago.

d Cn: Heb *Their heart cried* *e* Heb *his*

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the songs of Zion (Pss 46; 48). **2.17** The claims of her enemies notwithstanding (v. 16b), Jerusalem's destruction was the Lord's purposive doing (cf. 1.5, 12–15, 18). **2.18–19** Zion is encouraged to engage in penitential prayer. **2.20–22** Zion's plaintive prayer appeals to God's mercy through a heartrending description of her misery. **2.20** *Should women eat their offspring.* The horrors of cannibalism during severe famine are mentioned in traditional treaty curses and prophetic threats (see Lev 26.29; Deut 28.53–57; Jer 19.9; Ezek 5.10) and reported on at least some occasions (Lam 4.10; 2 Kings 6.28–29). **2.21** Cf. Jer 9.21–22.

3.1–66 A didactic poem that seeks to console Zion by sounding a cautious but unmistakable note of hope. **3.1–39** The speaker is an individual who through personal experience of *God's wrath* feels credentialed to impart valuable teachings to the community. **3.1** *I am one who.* The Hebrew *gever,* translated *one* here and in v. 27, *human* in v. 35, and (with Heb. *'adam*) *any* in v. 39, means "man," showing that the speaker here is not Zion, but an individual male. **3.2–18** The description of the speaker's suffering is so traditional that attempts to identify him are misplaced. He is a typical sufferer, like the "I" in the individual psalms of lamentation. **3.3** The *hand* of God often produces sickness or calamity (see v. 4; cf. 1 Sam 5.6–12; Job 19.21; Ps 32.4; 38.2). Hebraic monotheism precludes dualistic explanations of evil; thus all the actions described in vv. 2–18 have God as their ultimate subject. **3.4** *Flesh, bones.* See Ps 38.3; 51.8; cf. Ps 34.20. **3.6–7** *Darkness* is traditionally associated with prison (Ps 107.10–14) and the netherworld (Job 10.21; Ps

7 He has walled me about so that I
cannot escape;
he has put heavy chains on me;
8 though I call and cry for help,
he shuts out my prayer;
9 he has blocked my ways with
hewn stones,
he has made my paths crooked.

10 He is a bear lying in wait for me,
a lion in hiding;
11 he led me off my way and tore
me to pieces;
he has made me desolate;
12 he bent his bow and set me
as a mark for his arrow.

13 He shot into my vitals
the arrows of his quiver;
14 I have become the laughingstock
of all my people,
the object of their taunt-songs
all day long.
15 He has filled me with bitterness,
he has sated me with
wormwood.

16 He has made my teeth grind
on gravel,
and made me cower in ashes;
17 my soul is bereft of peace;
I have forgotten what
happiness is;
18 so I say, "Gone is my glory,
and all that I had hoped for
from the LORD."

19 The thought of my affliction and
my homelessness
is wormwood and gall!
20 My soul continually thinks of it
and is bowed down within me.
21 But this I call to mind,
and therefore I have hope:

22 The steadfast love of the LORD
never ceases,[f]
his mercies never come to
an end;
23 they are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.
24 "The LORD is my portion," says
my soul,
"therefore I will hope in him."

25 The LORD is good to those who
wait for him,
to the soul that seeks him.
26 It is good that one should wait
quietly
for the salvation of the LORD.
27 It is good for one to bear
the yoke in youth,
28 to sit alone in silence
when the Lord has imposed it,
29 to put one's mouth to the dust
(there may yet be hope),
30 to give one's cheek to the smiter,
and be filled with insults.

31 For the Lord will not
reject forever.
32 Although he causes grief, he will
have compassion
according to the abundance of
his steadfast love;
33 for he does not willingly afflict
or grieve anyone.

34 When all the prisoners of the
land
are crushed under foot,

f Syr Tg: Heb *LORD, we are not cut off*

88.6, 12, 18). Prison here is viewed as a form of death. **3.6** Cf. Ps 143.3. **3.10–11** The enemies of the sufferer are often pictured as wild animals (see Ps 7.2; 17.12; 22.12–13, 16), but here the enemy is the Lord, as in Job 10.16; Hos 13.7–8; Am 5.18–19. **3.12** *Bow, arrow,* refer to the divine archer who produces disaster and death (see Deut 32.23–24; Job 16.12–13; Ps 7.12–13; 38.2). **3.13** *Vitals,* or "kidneys," internal organs essential for life. **3.14** On the pain of mockery, see also v. 63; Job 30.9; Ps 22.6–7; 44.13–16. **3.15** *Wormwood,* a bitter-tasting plant and a symbol of extreme calamity or sorrow (see v. 19; Jer 9.15; 23.15). **3.20–21** These verses mark an important transition from despair to hope (vv. 22–33) that is not uncommon in psalms of lamentation (see Pss 42.5, 6, 11; 73.15–17). Here hope is restored through remembrance. **3.22–23** These verses express a basic article of biblical faith (see Ex 34.6; Ps 103.8; Jon 4.2). **3.24–26** *Portion,* tribal inheritance of land (see Josh 18.2–10), but here, symbolically, of the Lord, as in Pss 16.5; 73.26; 142.5. *Hope* entails patient waiting and intense longing for God (cf. Pss 40.1; 130.5–7). **3.27–30** Speaking like a sage, the sufferer counsels humble submission to suffering as divine chastisement (cf. Ps 37.7; Prov 23.13–14; Isa 50.6). **3.31–33** Affirmation of the triumph of God's love over God's wrath, as in vv. 22–23; Ps 103.8–14. **3.34–36** God is not in-

35 when human rights are perverted
in the presence of the Most
High,
36 when one's case is subverted
—does the Lord not see it?

37 Who can command and have
it done,
if the Lord has not ordained it?
38 Is it not from the mouth of the
Most High
that good and bad come?
39 Why should any who draw breath
complain
about the punishment of
their sins?

40 Let us test and examine our ways,
and return to the LORD.
41 Let us lift up our hearts as well as
our hands
to God in heaven.
42 We have transgressed and
rebelled,
and you have not forgiven.

43 You have wrapped yourself with
anger and pursued us,
killing without pity;
44 you have wrapped yourself with
a cloud
so that no prayer can pass
through.
45 You have made us filth and
rubbish
among the peoples.

46 All our enemies
have opened their mouths
against us;
47 panic and pitfall have come
upon us,
devastation and destruction.
48 My eyes flow with rivers of tears
because of the destruction of
my people.

49 My eyes will flow without ceasing,
without respite,
50 until the LORD from heaven
looks down and sees.
51 My eyes cause me grief
at the fate of all the young
women in my city.

52 Those who were my enemies
without cause
have hunted me like a bird;
53 they flung me alive into a pit
and hurled stones on me;
54 water closed over my head;
I said, "I am lost."

55 I called on your name, O LORD,
from the depths of the pit;
56 you heard my plea, "Do not close
your ear
to my cry for help, but give
me relief!"
57 You came near when I called
on you;
you said, "Do not fear!"

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different to wrongs. **3.37–39** Since nothing happens apart from God's will, divine chastisement should be accepted willingly. **3.40–41** In the light of the foregoing verses (1–39), a communal appeal is now issued for penitential self-examination, which must go beyond external ritual (*hands*) to interior renewal (*hearts*); cf. 1 Sam 16.7; Jer 4.4; 12.2.

3.42–47 A communal lament acknowledging guilt but complaining over the continuing experience of divine wrath. **3.43–44** On the hiddenness or absence of God, see Isa 45.15. **3.44** The *cloud*, normally a symbol of God's protective presence (see Ex 14.19–25; Num 9.15–23), is here a symbol of God's inaccessibility. **3.45** This verse describes a stark reversal of fortune from Deut 7.6. **3.46** See Ps 22.13. **3.48–51** This section describes the poet's grief over the ruin of his people (cf. 1.16; 2.11; 2.18–19). **3.50** *Until . . . looks down*, i.e., in answer to the people's prayers (see Ps 102.19–20). **3.52–66** The speaker in this section is probably not the same as the one in vv. 1–39, but a corporate "I" speaking for the city and people. **3.52** *Without cause*, or treacherously. See note on 1.2. *Hunted . . . bird.* See Pss 11.1; 124.7; Prov 6.5. **3.54** *Water closed over my head*, a metaphor for Sheol or death (see Pss 69.1–2, 14–15; 88.16–17; Jon 2.2–3). **3.55–66** The verbs in this section alternate between past tenses and imperatives, thus making the speaker appear to look back and forward at the same time. Given the ambiguities of the Hebrew verbal system, it is possible, and in the light of the historical situation of Lamentations perhaps preferable, to translate most of the verbs as imperatives, thus making the entire section a more consistent series of petitions invoking divine help. **3.55** *I called*, or "I call." *Pit*, a metaphor for Sheol (see Pss 28.1; 30.3; 88.4, 6; 143.7). **3.56** *You heard*, or "hear!" (cf. Ps 130.2). **3.57** *You came near when I called on you; you said*, or "Come near when I call on you and say!" *Do not*

58 You have taken up my cause,
O Lord,
you have redeemed my life.
59 You have seen the wrong done to
me, O Lord;
judge my cause.
60 You have seen all their malice,
all their plots against me.

61 You have heard their taunts,
O Lord,
all their plots against me.
62 The whispers and murmurs of
my assailants
are against me all day long.
63 Whether they sit or rise—see,
I am the object of their
taunt-songs.

64 Pay them back for their deeds,
O Lord,
according to the work of their
hands!
65 Give them anguish of heart;
your curse be on them!
66 Pursue them in anger and
destroy them
from under the Lord's
heavens.

Zion's Children Are Ravaged

4 How the gold has grown dim,
how the pure gold is changed!
The sacred stones lie scattered
at the head of every street.

2 The precious children of Zion,
worth their weight in fine
gold—
how they are reckoned as
earthen pots,
the work of a potter's hands!

3 Even the jackals offer the breast
and nurse their young,
but my people has become cruel,
like the ostriches in the
wilderness.

4 The tongue of the infant sticks
to the roof of its mouth for
thirst;
the children beg for food,
but no one gives them
anything.

5 Those who feasted on delicacies
perish in the streets;
those who were brought up
in purple
cling to ash heaps.

6 For the chastisement[g] of my
people has been greater
than the punishment[h] of
Sodom,
which was overthrown in a
moment,
though no hand was laid
on it.[i]

7 Her princes were purer than
snow,
whiter than milk;
their bodies were more ruddy
than coral,
their hair[i] like sapphire.[j]

g Or *iniquity* *h* Or *sin* *i* Meaning of Heb uncertain *j* Or *lapis lazuli*

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fear, a standard divine assurance when God comes near to humans (see Gen 15.1; 21.17; 26.24; Ex 14.13; Isa 41.10, 13–14; 43.1, 5). **3.58–59** *You have taken up, redeemed*, and *seen*, or "Take up," "redeem," "see!" These are appeals to God as judge (see Pss 7.6–8; 35.24; 82.8; 94.2). **3.60–63** These verses provide motivations for the petitions that follow in vv. 64–66. **3.63** *Whether they sit or rise*, i.e., "in whatever they do" (see Deut 6.7; Ps 139.2). **3.64–66** Awareness of their own sin does not preclude the people from petitioning God to requite the excessive cruelties of their tormentors (cf. 1.21–22; Pss 74.18–23; 79.1–13; 94.1–7, 23).

4.1–22 A description of the horrors of the final siege of Jerusalem, focusing on the suffering of her people. **4.1** *How*. See note on 1.1. *Sacred stones*, precious stones or jewels, here metaphorically the inhabitants of the city (see v. 2; 2.19; cf. Song 5.11–16), now scattered at *every street* corner (cf. Isa 51.20). **4.2** *Earthen pots* were common utensils that, when broken, were not mended but thrown away (cf. Jer 22.28). **4.3** For similarly unfavorable comparisons of human and animal behavior, see Isa 1.3; Jer 8.7. *Ostriches* had a reputation for neglecting their young (Job 39.13–18). **4.6** *Sodom*. See Gen 19.24–25; Deut 29.23; Isa 1.9–10; 13.19; Jer 23.14; Ezek 16.44–52. In comparison, Jerusalem suffered a worse fate: whereas Sodom was overthrown *in a moment* and without a *hand laid on it*, Jerusalem went through a long siege and famine

8 Now their visage is blacker
than soot;
they are not recognized in
the streets.
Their skin has shriveled on
their bones;
it has become as dry as wood.

9 Happier were those pierced by
the sword
than those pierced by hunger,
whose life drains away, deprived
of the produce of the field.

10 The hands of compassionate
women
have boiled their own children;
they became their food
in the destruction of my
people.

11 The LORD gave full vent to
his wrath;
he poured out his hot anger,
and kindled a fire in Zion
that consumed its foundations.

12 The kings of the earth did
not believe,
nor did any of the inhabitants
of the world,
that foe or enemy could enter
the gates of Jerusalem.

13 It was for the sins of her
prophets
and the iniquities of her priests,
who shed the blood of the
righteous
in the midst of her.

14 Blindly they wandered through
the streets,
so defiled with blood
that no one was able
to touch their garments.

15 "Away! Unclean!" people shouted
at them;
"Away! Away! Do not touch!"
So they became fugitives and
wanderers;
it was said among the nations,
"They shall stay here no
longer."

16 The LORD himself has scattered
them,
he will regard them no more;
no honor was shown to the
priests,
no favor to the elders.

17 Our eyes failed, ever watching
vainly for help;
we were watching eagerly
for a nation that could not save.

18 They dogged our steps
so that we could not walk in
our streets;
our end drew near; our days
were numbered;
for our end had come.

19 Our pursuers were swifter
than the eagles in the heavens;
they chased us on the mountains,
they lay in wait for us in the
wilderness.

20 The LORD's anointed, the breath
of our life,
was taken in their pits—
the one of whom we said, "Under
his shadow
we shall live among the
nations."

21 Rejoice and be glad, O daughter
Edom,
you that live in the land of Uz;
but to you also the cup shall pass;

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before it was destroyed. **4.10** See note on 2.20. **4.11** *Fire*, a symbol of divine wrath (see 2.3–4; Deut 32.22; Isa 10.17), here perhaps also meant literally (see 2 Kings 25.8–9). **4.12** An allusion to Zion's alleged inviolability as celebrated in Ps 48.4–5, 12–13. *Inhabitants*, or "rulers." **4.13–14** *Prophets . . . priests*. Cf. Jer 6.13; 23.11; 26.7–8. **4.17** Perhaps an allusion to expected relief from Egypt during the siege (see Jer 34.21–22; 37.3–10). **4.20** *The LORD's anointed*, the Judean king, here perhaps a reference to Zedekiah (see 2 Kings 25.1–7; Jer 39.1–7). *The breath of our life* (lit. "nostrils") and *under his shadow* are traditional royal epithets reflecting a high view of kingship. **4.21–22** Punishment is announced on Edom (cf. Ps 137.7; Ezek 25.12–14; Ob 10–15). **4.21** *Rejoice . . . daughter Edom* is ironic (cf. note on 1.6). On the *cup* of God's wrath, see Ps 75.8; Jer

you shall become drunk and
strip yourself bare.

22 The punishment of your iniquity,
O daughter Zion, is
accomplished,
he will keep you in exile
no longer;
but your iniquity, O daughter
Edom, he will punish,
he will uncover your sins.

Remember Us and Restore Us!

5 Remember, O LORD, what has
befallen us;
look, and see our disgrace!
2 Our inheritance has been turned
over to strangers,
our homes to aliens.
3 We have become orphans,
fatherless;
our mothers are like widows.
4 We must pay for the water
we drink;
the wood we get must be
bought.
5 With a yoke[k] on our necks we
are hard driven;
we are weary, we are given
no rest.
6 We have made a pact with[l]
Egypt and Assyria,
to get enough bread.
7 Our ancestors sinned; they are
no more,
and we bear their iniquities.
8 Slaves rule over us;
there is no one to deliver us
from their hand.
9 We get our bread at the peril of
our lives,
because of the sword in the
wilderness.
10 Our skin is black as an oven
from the scorching heat
of famine.
11 Women are raped in Zion,
virgins in the towns of Judah.
12 Princes are hung up by
their hands;
no respect is shown to the
elders.
13 Young men are compelled to
grind,
and boys stagger under loads
of wood.
14 The old men have left the city
gate,
the young men their music.
15 The joy of our hearts has ceased;
our dancing has been turned
to mourning.
16 The crown has fallen from
our head;
woe to us, for we have sinned!
17 Because of this our hearts are
sick,
because of these things our eyes
have grown dim:
18 because of Mount Zion, which
lies desolate;
jackals prowl over it.

k Symmachus: Heb lacks *With a yoke* *l* Heb *have given the hand to*

25.15–28. **4.22** *Accomplished, he will keep you in exile no longer*, or "complete, he will not exile you again," sounds a note of hope for Zion.

5.1–22 A communal lament, like Pss 44; 74; 79. **5.1** The *disgrace* or "derision" (cf. Pss 44.13; 79.4, 12) that God is asked to *remember* (cf. Pss 74.2, 18, 22; 137.7) is spelled out in greater detail in vv. 2–18. **5.2** *Our inheritance*, the land God gave Israel (see Deut 4.38; 25.19; 26.1). Israel in turn was called God's inheritance (see Deut 4.20; 9.26, 29; 32.9). **5.3** *Orphans . . . widows*, marginalized groups vulnerable to abuse and in need of special protection (see Ex 22.21–14; Deut 24.17–18, 21–22; 27.19). Here the terms are used metaphorically. **5.5** *Yoke*. See note on 1.14. **5.7** Like Jer 31.29; Ezek 18.2, this verse could be read as a complaint about unmerited suffering. However, in view of v. 16 (see also 1.14, 18; 3.42), it more likely expresses identification with the people's sinful ancestors. Cf. also Ex 20.5; 34.7; Deut 5.9; Deut 7.10; 24.16. **5.10** *Our skin is black*. See 4.8. **5.12** *Their hands*, the enemy's hands. **5.14** *Old men . . . city gate*. The elders customarily carried out judicial functions in the city gate (see Deut 22.15; 25.7; Ruth 4.1–2, 11). **5.15** The cessation of joy was predicted by Israel's prophets (Jer 16.9; Ezek 24.25; Hos 2.11). **5.16** *The crown . . . from our head* figuratively refers to Israel's humiliation (cf. Job 19.9; Isa 62.3). **5.17** *Because of this . . . these things* looks back to vv. 2–16, as well as forward to v. 18. **5.18** An alternate translation of this verse is possible: "On Mount Zion, which is desolate, jackals roam about." The roaming of *jackals* (or "foxes") over ruins is a traditional picture of desolation found in treaty or covenant curses (see Isa 13.22;

19 But you, O LORD, reign forever;
your throne endures to all
generations.
20 Why have you forgotten us
completely?
Why have you forsaken us
these many days?

21 Restore us to yourself, O LORD,
that we may be restored;
renew our days as of old—
22 unless you have utterly
rejected us,
and are angry with us beyond
measure.

34.13; Jer 9.11; 10.22; 49.33; 51.37). **5.19** The hymnic declaration of faith in God's sovereign rule (cf. Pss 93.1–2; 102.12) provides the context for the petition that follows. **5.20** Such impassioned questioning of God is characteristic of biblical prayer (see Pss 10.1; 13.1–2; 22.1; 44.23–24; 74.11; 79.5, 10). **5.21** *Restore us . . . that we may be restored* acknowledges the necessity of divine intervention to effect true penitence, much as in Ps 80.3, 7, 19; Jer 31.18; 23.22; cf. Deut 30.6. **5.22** *Unless you have utterly rejected us.* The possibility of such rejection is briefly considered but dismissed as unthinkable in the light of 3.22–33; 4.22. However, it adds urgency to the petition of v. 21.

EZEKIEL

EZEKIEL AND THE BOOK ASSOCIATED WITH HIM have puzzled readers for centuries. Ezekiel is both priest and prophet, two roles that are often viewed as incontrovertibly opposed. He speaks, falls down, acts out God's word, travels between Mesopotamia and Syro-Palestine in a visionary state, sees strange visions, and proclaims dangerous messages (e.g., ch. 18). Perhaps it is not surprising that according to some Jewish traditions the book was only to be read by those over thirty years of age. Despite these ambiguities, discerning readers of Ezekiel have the opportunity to encounter one of ancient Israel's most vigorous religious thinkers, a thinker concerned with both classical priestly concerns—purity and holiness—and prophetic issues—righteousness and religious propriety.

Context

The numerous chronological formulas that occur throughout the book (e.g., 1.1–3; 20.1; 24.1; 32.1; 40.1) attest to the pivotal times during which Ezekiel lived. Such formulas indicate that Ezekiel prophesied from 593 to 571 B.C.E. These years span the decisive moment—587 B.C.E.—when Jerusalem fell to Nebuchadnezzar (whom Ezekiel deemed an instrument of God [29.19–20]). Before Ezekiel was commissioned as prophet, he had been taken into exile, along with other prominent Judahites, in 597 B.C.E. After that year, there were prominent communities in both Babylon and Judah. In fact, there were two kings—the exiled Jehoiachin and the puppet Zedekiah—in these two areas, respectively.

Person

Ezekiel had been born into a priestly family (1.3), probably Zadokite, and had followed the ritual requirements that allow one to work as a priest. He was married, though his wife predeceased him (24.15–27); the book mentions no offspring. Before 597 he lived in Jerusalem; afterward not far from Nippur, on the banks of an irrigation canal. In exile, other Judahites consulted him on a regular basis (8.1; 14.1; 20.1), which suggests that he had significant stature in that expatriate community. Although the book includes vision reports with vivid

imagery, such literature, which is stylized, does not allow readers readily to make judgments about the personality of the prophet.

Book

The book is made up of four primary sections: chs. 1–24, oracles concerning Judah and Jerusalem; chs. 25–32, oracles concerning foreign nations; chs. 33–39, restoration discourses; and chs. 40–48, a vision of the new temple and polity. Unlike Isaiah and more like Jeremiah, much of the book is written in prose—though the NRSV discerns more poetry than did the RSV (e.g., ch. 7). Divine utterance, rather than prophetic utterance, is the predominant rhetorical style.

Ezekiel used diverse literary forms in his prophetic proclamation including vision reports (chs. 1–3; 8.1–11.25; 37.1–14; 40.1–48.35) and at least twelve symbolic actions (e.g., 4.1–3). In both vision and action reports, the prophet is described as physically involved—he is transported and tours in visions, he acts out oracles. Other important forms include allegorical features (e.g., chs. 15–17), quotations, and various formulaic expressions, especially "you will know that I am the LORD," which appears more than fifty times. Moreover, priestly legal argumentation (e.g., ch. 18) as well as priestly vocabulary and imagery (e.g., of the enthroned "glory of the LORD") characterize the book.

Scholars have explained the composition of the book in diverse ways. Some have discerned a long process of editorial reinterpretation, which may have begun with Ezekiel himself. Others maintain that most of the book may be attributed directly to the prophet. Moreover, while some hold that the prophet originally delivered his discourses orally, others maintain that much in the book was, from the outset, written.

Message

Ezekiel responded directly to the conditions that the Israelites, particularly those in exile, confronted—before 587 B.C.E. words of judgment predominated; after 587 words of consolation and restoration were more prominent. None were immune from judgment, even those already in exile. However, those still in Judah were singled out for the brunt of God's attack (9.3–11).

The book presents several distinctive theological formulations. Concern for the religious status of the individual works itself out in several ways. The prophet's task is defined as that of a sentinel who may individually succeed or fail (3.16–21; 33.7–16). And more generally, God will respond to individual Israelites according to their deeds ("a child shall not suffer for the iniquity of a parent, nor a parent suffer for the iniquity of a child," 18.20).

Consistent with his priestly status, Ezekiel construed the problems of and promise for Israel in priestly theological terms. Idolatrous behavior at the temple required punishment (ch. 8). As a result, "the glory of the LORD" had to depart from Jerusalem. Then the defiled temple and those who worshiped there could

be destroyed. Once the defilement was removed, a new temple with new regulations would provide the focus for a restored Israel.

Ezekiel thought in radical terms. In his theological reviews of Israel's history, he deemed Israel fundamentally foreign and recalcitrant from its beginnings (ch. 16). Moreover, Israel's ensuing experiences with God justified radical punishment—obliteration without regard for a remnant. Such finality made it difficult to imagine a viable future. Hence, the well-known vision of dry bones (37.1–14) is truly remarkable—that which is dead might live again. The comprehensive vision of new life (chs. 40–48) may properly be termed utopian, one based on "the Torah of the temple," which is newly revealed in the concluding vision. Ezekiel's theology is one in which God is other and acts to preserve the sanctity of his name. When God acts, foreign nations (28.23) as well as Israel will know that the Lord—and no other—is God. *David L. Petersen*

The Vision of the Chariot

1 In the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I was among the exiles by the river Chebar, the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. 2 On the fifth day of the month (it was the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin), 3 the word of the LORD came to the priest Ezekiel son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the LORD was on him there.

4 As I looked, a stormy wind came out of the north: a great cloud with brightness around it and fire flashing forth continually, and in the middle of the fire, something like gleaming amber. 5 In the middle of it was something like four living creatures. This was their appearance: they were of human form. 6 Each had four faces, and each of them had four wings. 7 Their legs were straight, and the soles of their feet were like the sole of a calf's foot; and they sparkled like burnished bronze. 8 Under their wings on their four sides they had human hands. And the four had their faces and their wings thus: 9 their wings touched one another; each of them moved straight ahead, without turning as they moved.

1.1–3.15 Ezekiel's inaugural vision, which may be compared with shorter, though similar, accounts in Isa 6; Jer 1. God calls Ezekiel to act as a prophet and provides him with instructions about fulfilling this task. **1.1–3** The book's introduction places the prophet in Babylonia and dates his activity by reference to a Judahite king, Jehoiachin, who is now in exile. **1.1** *The river Chebar*, a canal, not a natural river, near Nippur. **1.2** Jehoiachin, Ezekiel, and others were exiled to Babylon in 597 B.C.E. *The fifth year of the exile* would have been 593. **1.3** *The priest* could refer either to Ezekiel or to Buzi. This phrase defines Ezekiel as a priest because of his lineage, whereas he becomes a prophet because of this visionary experience. *The land of the Chaldeans*, or the plains of southern Mesopotamia, which were associated with an Aramean-speaking people who had entered this area earlier in the first millennium. *The hand of the LORD*, a phrase indicative of spirit possession; cf. 3.22.

1.4–28 Ezekiel encounters God. The combination of cloud, fire, creatures, the spirit and wheels makes it impossible to reduce this vision to some readily understandable phenomenon. **1.4–14** Ezekiel perceives strange creatures. **1.4** *Fire* and *cloud* are often associated with an appearance of the deity, e.g., Ps 18. **1.5** The author uses *like* (see also vv. 22, 26, 27) to emphasize that the vision is proximate. The prophet does not actually see the deity and his accoutrements. The *living creatures* are part animal, part human, with the latter dominant, i.e., they have two legs and stand upright. Such winged creatures with animal features are related to the seraphim in Isa 6, another prophetic call narrative. Ancient Near Eastern mythology knows such creatures, often minor deities, some of which support the divine or royal

10 As for the appearance of their faces:
the four had the face of a human being,
the face of a lion on the right side, the
face of an ox on the left side, and the
face of an eagle; 11 such were their faces.
Their wings were spread out above; each
creature had two wings, each of which
touched the wing of another, while two
covered their bodies. 12 Each moved
straight ahead; wherever the spirit would
go, they went, without turning as they
went. 13 In the middle of[a] the living crea-
tures there was something that looked like
burning coals of fire, like torches moving
to and fro among the living creatures; the
fire was bright, and lightning issued from
the fire. 14 The living creatures darted to
and fro, like a flash of lightning.

15 As I looked at the living creatures,
I saw a wheel on the earth beside the liv-
ing creatures, one for each of the four of
them.[b] 16 As for the appearance of the
wheels and their construction: their ap-
pearance was like the gleaming of beryl;
and the four had the same form, their
construction being something like a wheel
within a wheel. 17 When they moved, they
moved in any of the four directions with-
out veering as they moved. 18 Their rims
were tall and awesome, for the rims of all
four were full of eyes all around. 19 When
the living creatures moved, the wheels
moved beside them; and when the living
creatures rose from the earth, the wheels
rose. 20 Wherever the spirit would go,
they went, and the wheels rose along with
them; for the spirit of the living creatures
was in the wheels. 21 When they moved,
the others moved; when they stopped, the
others stopped; and when they rose from
the earth, the wheels rose along with
them; for the spirit of the living creatures
was in the wheels.

22 Over the heads of the living crea-
tures there was something like a dome,
shining like crystal,[c] spread out above
their heads. 23 Under the dome their
wings were stretched out straight, one to-
ward another; and each of the creatures
had two wings covering its body. 24 When
they moved, I heard the sound of their
wings like the sound of mighty waters,
like the thunder of the Almighty,[d] a
sound of tumult like the sound of an
army; when they stopped, they let down
their wings. 25 And there came a voice
from above the dome over their heads;
when they stopped, they let down their
wings.

26 And above the dome over their
heads there was something like a throne,
in appearance like sapphire;[e] and seated
above the likeness of a throne was some-
thing that seemed like a human form.
27 Upward from what appeared like the
loins I saw something like gleaming am-
ber, something that looked like fire en-
closed all around; and downward from
what looked like the loins I saw something
that looked like fire, and there was a
splendor all around. 28 Like the bow in a
cloud on a rainy day, such was the appear-

a Gk OL: Heb *And the appearance of* b Heb *of their faces* c Gk: Heb *like the awesome crystal*
d Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*
e Or *lapis lazuli*

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throne. **1.10** Four *faces* (human, lion, ox, eagle) on one head is otherwise unattested. The imagery may emphasize alertness: as the wheels turn, the creature will be able to look in any direction. **1.12** *The spirit,* not the deity, but *the spirit of the living creatures* in v. 21 (see also 1.20; 3.12). **1.13–14** The creatures are associated with fire or lightning; cf. Gen 3.24 for an analogous creature who brandishes a flaming sword and Gen 15.17, where torches symbolize the presence of the deity. **1.15–21** Crystalline wheels associated with the creatures. Although the writer mentions *a wheel,* there are apparently four wheels, one for each creature. Either a chariot with four wheels on one axle (two wheels on each side of the carriage) or a ceremonial cart with two axles (and two wheels per axle) may be presumed in this description. **1.22–25** Below the dome. **1.22** *Dome.* Cf. the RSV translation, "firmament," which is the heavenly vault (see Gen 1.7–8). **1.24** Auditory imagery (e.g., *like the thunder*) rather than visual imagery, fire and light, prevails. Both sound and visual imagery attend the appearance of the deity (e.g., Ex 19.16–19). The *sound of mighty waters.* Cf. 43.2. In Rev 14.2, the sound is further defined in association with thunder. **1.25** *A voice* or "a sound" from above the dome indicates that even the deafening roar created by the creatures' wings under the dome is penultimate. **1.26–28** Above the dome. The *throne* above the heavenly vault signifies the throne or council room of the deity. The word *like* is used ten times in three verses to emphasize that Ezekiel does not actually see the deity. *Sapphire* is used in Ex 24.10, a visual description of the deity. *Like a human form* begins the description of the deity, above the loins (waist) like amber, below the loins like fire. **1.28** Rather than proceed with a more detailed and hence

ance of the splendor all around. This was
the appearance of the likeness of the
glory of the LORD.
When I saw it, I fell on my face, and I
heard the voice of someone speaking.

The Commission

2 He said to me: O mortal,[f] stand up
on your feet, and I will speak with
you. 2 And when he spoke to me, a spirit
entered into me and set me on my feet;
and I heard him speaking to me. 3 He said
to me, Mortal, I am sending you to the
people of Israel, to a nation[g] of rebels
who have rebelled against me; they and
their ancestors have transgressed against
me to this very day. 4 The descendants are
impudent and stubborn. I am sending
you to them, and you shall say to them,
"Thus says the Lord GOD." 5 Whether
they hear or refuse to hear (for they are a
rebellious house), they shall know that
there has been a prophet among them.
6 And you, O mortal, do not be afraid of
them, and do not be afraid of their words,
though briers and thorns surround you
and you live among scorpions; do not be
afraid of their words, and do not be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house. 7 You shall speak my words to them, whether they hear or refuse to hear; for they are a rebellious house.

8 But you, mortal, hear what I say to
you; do not be rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat
what I give you. 9 I looked, and a hand
was stretched out to me, and a written
scroll was in it. 10 He spread it before me;
it had writing on the front and on the
back, and written on it were words of lamentation and mourning and woe.

3 He said to me, O mortal, eat what is
offered to you; eat this scroll, and
go, speak to the house of Israel. 2 So I
opened my mouth, and he gave me the
scroll to eat. 3 He said to me, Mortal, eat
this scroll that I give you and fill your
stomach with it. Then I ate it; and in my
mouth it was as sweet as honey.

4 He said to me: Mortal, go to the
house of Israel and speak my very words
to them. 5 For you are not sent to a people
of obscure speech and difficult language,

f Or *son of man*; Heb *ben adam* (and so throughout the book when Ezekiel is addressed) *g* Syr: Heb *to nations*

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dangerous description, the author moves to the general—the rainbow and the concluding sentence, *This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD,* which again emphasizes that the prophet did not see God directly. **1.28b** The author is careful not to impute *the voice* to God, though the deity is almost certainly speaking.

2.1–3.3 Ezekiel made to stand up and provided with a commission. **2.1** *Mortal,* lit. "son of man" (see text note *f*). The Hebrew phrase "son of *x*" means a member of a certain class, e.g., "son of Israel" is properly translated "Israelite." *Mortal* occurs over ninety times in Ezekiel. It is appropriate here since the other characters, whether spirits or living creatures, belong to the divine realm. *Stand up* signifies that this is a waking as opposed to a sleeping (incubation) vision. Cf. Dan 8.17–18; 10.9–11; Zech 4.1. **2.2** *A spirit.* See also, e.g., 3.12, 14, 24, which in Hebrew do not have the definite article. Is this a minor deity, the deity's spirit (cf. 11.5, 24; 37.1), or simply human energy? This spirit, and not the prophet's own power, enables him to stand up. **2.3** Israel's rebellion against God has been going on for generations, a standard theme for Ezekiel; see ch. 16. **2.4** *Thus says the Lord GOD,* a standard phrase with which a prophetic utterance may be introduced. Without an ensuing oracle, however, the phrase alone is ironic; cf. 3.11, 27. **2.6** *Do not be afraid.* Cf. the call of Jeremiah (Jer 1.8). The *descendants* (v. 4) are here characterized as plants (*briers and thorns*) and animals (*scorpions*). The commission recognizes that Israel may not hear (vv. 5, 7) but emphasizes the importance of having someone *speak* (v. 7) who is recognizably a prophet. **2.8–10** *Open your mouth.* Oral imagery is prominent in prophetic call narratives. Isaiah's mouth was purified (Isa 6.6–7). The Lord touched Jeremiah's mouth (Jer 1.9) and in so doing introduced his words into the prophet's mouth. **2.9–10** The *scroll* has been fully inscribed and bears bad news; cf. Zech 5.1–4. **2.10** *Lamentation and mourning and woe* all may reflect funeral rites in ancient Israel. **3.1–3** There is no precedent for eating scrolls, which were made of either papyrus or leather. Cf. Jer 15.16, "your words were found, and I ate them." If Ezekiel's consumption of the scroll is surprising, his palate is shocking, namely, that funeral words could be *as sweet as honey.* Cf. Jer 15.16, "your words became to me as a joy."

3.4–11 Words to Israel. **3.4** This verse reiterates 2.7, though now presuming the content of the scroll. **3.5** *Obscure speech and difficult language,* no doubt a reference to Akkadian, the Northeast Semitic cuneiform language of ancient Mesopotamia, which, as a more fully inflected language than Hebrew, would have been viewed as

but to the house of Israel— 6 not to many
peoples of obscure speech and difficult
language, whose words you cannot under-
stand. Surely, if I sent you to them, they
would listen to you. 7 But the house of Is-
rael will not listen to you, for they are not
willing to listen to me; because all the
house of Israel have a hard forehead and
a stubborn heart. 8 See, I have made your
face hard against their faces, and your
forehead hard against their foreheads.
9 Like the hardest stone, harder than flint,
I have made your forehead; do not fear
them or be dismayed at their looks, for
they are a rebellious house. 10 He said to
me: Mortal, all my words that I shall
speak to you receive in your heart and
hear with your ears; 11 then go to the ex-
iles, to your people, and speak to them.
Say to them, "Thus says the Lord God";
whether they hear or refuse to hear.

Ezekiel at the River Chebar

12 Then the spirit lifted me up, and as
the glory of the Lord rose[h] from its
place, I heard behind me the sound of
loud rumbling; 13 it was the sound of the
wings of the living creatures brushing
against one another, and the sound of the
wheels beside them, that sounded like a
loud rumbling. 14 The spirit lifted me up
and bore me away; I went in bitterness in
the heat of my spirit, the hand of the
Lord being strong upon me. 15 I came to
the exiles at Tel-abib, who lived by the
river Chebar.[i] And I sat there among
them, stunned, for seven days.

16 At the end of seven days, the word
of the Lord came to me: 17 Mortal, I have
made you a sentinel for the house of Is-
rael; whenever you hear a word from my
mouth, you shall give them warning from
me. 18 If I say to the wicked, "You shall
surely die," and you give them no warn-
ing, or speak to warn the wicked from
their wicked way, in order to save their
life, those wicked persons shall die for
their iniquity; but their blood I will re-
quire at your hand. 19 But if you warn the
wicked, and they do not turn from their
wickedness, or from their wicked way,
they shall die for their iniquity; but you
will have saved your life. 20 Again, if the
righteous turn from their righteousness
and commit iniquity, and I lay a stum-
bling block before them, they shall die;
because you have not warned them, they
shall die for their sin, and their righteous
deeds that they have done shall not be re-
membered; but their blood I will require
at your hand. 21 If, however, you warn
the righteous not to sin, and they do not
sin, they shall surely live, because they
took warning; and you will have saved
your life.

Ezekiel Isolated and Silenced

22 Then the hand of the Lord was
upon me there; and he said to me, Rise
up, go out into the valley, and there I will
speak with you. 23 So I rose up and went

h Cn: Heb *and blessed be the glory of the* Lord
i Two Mss Syr: Heb *Chebar, and to where they lived.* Another reading is *Chebar, and I sat where they sat*

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difficult; cf. Isa 33.19, "the people of an obscure speech."

3.12–15 Vision conclusion. **3.12** *The spirit,* lit. "a spirit," here probably a wind. Cf. other instances of wind impelling the prophet in a vision (8.3; 11.1, 24; 43.5). *The glory of the* Lord also moves, though of its own accord. **3.12–13** *The sound of loud rumbling* (RSV, "a great earthquake") suggests, (so 1.22–25) and then v. 13 makes explicit, that the creatures' wings, along with the wheels, assist in this movement. **3.14** *The spirit* (cf. RSV, "The Spirit," an interpretive rendering), again lit. "a spirit," best understood as the wind. The Septuagint omits *in bitterness. In the heat of my spirit,* probably "angry." **3.15** *Tel-abib* reflects the Akkadian *til-abubi,* "mound of the flood." In Hebrew *'abib* means "ears of grain."

3.16–21 Ezekiel as sentinel (RSV, "watchman"). This conception of the prophet's role is used elsewhere in the OT (Jer 6.17; Hos 9.8; cf. Isa 21.6) and is more fully developed in Ezek 33.1–9. The logic is informed by that used in chs. 18 and 33, chapters that insist each individual is responsible for his or her fate. In this instance, the prophet as sentinel is accountable to the Lord. That accountability is expressed in the sentinel's providing a warning. There are four cases, one per verse, in vv. 18, 19, 20, 21; concerns of the latter two are not part of the discourse in Ezek 33, but 33.8 parallels the case in 3.18 and 33.9 parallels the one in 3.19. **3.16** *The word of the* Lord *came to me,* a phrase characteristic of Ezekiel (occurring almost fifty times). This formula emphasizes the "private" character of these revelations. **3.17** *I have made you,* a translation that suggests 3.16–21 presents a way of understanding the earlier commissioning, not a new call.

3.22–5.17 Ezekiel communicates God's mes-

out into the valley; and the glory of the
LORD stood there, like the glory that I had
seen by the river Chebar; and I fell on my
face. 24 The spirit entered into me, and set
me on my feet; and he spoke with me and
said to me: Go, shut yourself inside your
house. 25 As for you, mortal, cords shall be
placed on you, and you shall be bound
with them, so that you cannot go out
among the people; 26 and I will make your
tongue cling to the roof of your mouth, so
that you shall be speechless and unable to
reprove them; for they are a rebellious
house. 27 But when I speak with you, I will
open your mouth, and you shall say to
them, "Thus says the Lord GOD"; let those
who will hear, hear; and let those who re-
fuse to hear, refuse; for they are a rebel-
lious house.

The Siege of Jerusalem Portrayed

4 And you, O mortal, take a brick and
set it before you. On it portray a city,
Jerusalem; 2 and put siegeworks against
it, and build a siege wall against it, and
cast up a ramp against it; set camps
also against it, and plant battering rams
against it all around. 3 Then take an iron
plate and place it as an iron wall between
you and the city; set your face toward it,
and let it be in a state of siege, and press
the siege against it. This is a sign for the
house of Israel.

4 Then lie on your left side, and place
the punishment of the house of Israel
upon it; you shall bear their punishment
for the number of the days that you lie
there. 5 For I assign to you a number of
days, three hundred ninety days, equal to
the number of the years of their punish-
ment; and so you shall bear the punish-
ment of the house of Israel. 6 When you
have completed these, you shall lie down a
second time, but on your right side, and
bear the punishment of the house of Ju-
dah; forty days I assign you, one day for
each year. 7 You shall set your face toward
the siege of Jerusalem, and with your arm
bared you shall prophesy against it. 8 See,
I am putting cords on you so that you can-
not turn from one side to the other until
you have completed the days of your
siege.

9 And you, take wheat and barley,

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sage through bodily action. The Lord requires Ezekiel to act out his prophetic message in a series of discrete performances. Numerous prophets prior to Ezekiel had used nonverbal behavior to convey a message from the deity, e.g., Elisha (2 Kings 13.14–19); Hosea (Hos 1); Jeremiah (Jer 16.1–9; 19). However, reports of symbolic actions occur more frequently in Ezekiel (twelve times) than in any other prophetic book. **3.22–27** The prophet experiences again *the glory of the LORD* (v. 23), which results in directions to perform certain actions. **3.22** *There* and *the valley*, which is probably better translated "the plain" (RSV) and refers to a broad alluvial river basin typical of Mesopotamia, emphasize that Ezekiel is in Babylon when he perceives the Lord and when the spirit speaks with him. **3.24a** Cf. 2.2. **3.26** *I will make . . . so that you shall be speechless.* Here the absence of prophetic speech is attributed to the Lord's prohibition, not malfeasance by the prophet. **3.26–27** Cf. 24.27; 34.22, a text that links news about the destruction of Jerusalem to the removal of Ezekiel's speechlessness. Only when the Lord permits, will Ezekiel be able to perform his prophetic task, namely, by saying *Thus says the Lord GOD* (cf. 2.4; 3.11).

4.1–3 Siege and separation. This symbolic act uses imagery attested in an earlier prophetic text, Jer 1.18. **4.1** *Brick*, i.e., brick made out of mud and dried in the sun. Ezekiel is probably being commanded to etch the city and siegeworks into a still damp brick, though the verbs seem to call for sculpting, which would have been possible with damp clay. Such bricks could vary widely in size and general configuration (square or rectangular), though one 40 by 20 by 12 centimeters would not be unusual. **4.3** *Iron plate*, probably an iron cooking griddle. This vignette is to be an uninterpreted sign for Israel.

4.4–8 Ezekiel is commanded to lie first on his left and then on his right side to communicate the length of punishment for Israel and Judah, respectively. The numbers of days—three hundred ninety and forty—do not conform to the chronology of either nation's exile. The Septuagint offers different figures, one hundred fifty and forty years, respectively. **4.4** *Bear their punishment.* The Hebrew word here translated "punishment" can also mean "sin" or "guilt." The prophet may serve as a "scapegoat" (Lev 16.20–22), evoking a priestly role in ancient Israel (Lev 16.17); Ezekiel was both priest and prophet.

4.9–17 Ezekiel is commanded to bake bread and eat it and then to drink water according to a specific rationing. **4.9** *Wheat and barley, beans and lentils, millet and spelt.* This mixture of six foodstuffs probably symbolizes that no one grain or legume is found in sufficient quantity to allow the preparation of something to eat. These foods were known both in Israel and in Babylon.

beans and lentils, millet and spelt; put
them into one vessel, and make bread for
yourself. During the number of days that
you lie on your side, three hundred
ninety days, you shall eat it. 10 The food
that you eat shall be twenty shekels a day
by weight; at fixed times you shall eat it.
11 And you shall drink water by measure,
one-sixth of a hin; at fixed times you shall
drink. 12 You shall eat it as a barley-cake,
baking it in their sight on human dung.
13 The LORD said, "Thus shall the people
of Israel eat their bread, unclean, among
the nations to which I will drive them."
14 Then I said, "Ah Lord GOD! I have
never defiled myself; from my youth up
until now I have never eaten what died of
itself or was torn by animals, nor has car-
rion flesh come into my mouth." 15 Then
he said to me, "See, I will let you have
cow's dung instead of human dung, on
which you may prepare your bread."

16 Then he said to me, Mortal, I am
going to break the staff of bread in Jeru-
salem; they shall eat bread by weight and
with fearfulness; and they shall drink wa-
ter by measure and in dismay. 17 Lacking
bread and water, they will look at one an-
other in dismay, and waste away under
their punishment.

A Sword Against Jerusalem

5 And you, O mortal, take a sharp
sword; use it as a barber's razor and
run it over your head and your beard;
then take balances for weighing, and di-
vide the hair. 2 One third of the hair you
shall burn in the fire inside the city, when
the days of the siege are completed; one
third you shall take and strike with the
sword all around the city;[j] and one third
you shall scatter to the wind, and I will
unsheathe the sword after them. 3 Then
you shall take from these a small number,
and bind them in the skirts of your robe.
4 From these, again, you shall take some,
throw them into the fire and burn them
up; from there a fire will come out against
all the house of Israel.

5 Thus says the Lord GOD: This is Je-
rusalem; I have set her in the center of
the nations, with countries all around her.
6 But she has rebelled against my ordi-
nances and my statutes, becoming more
wicked than the nations and the countries
all around her, rejecting my ordinances
and not following my statutes. 7 There-
fore thus says the Lord GOD: Because you
are more turbulent than the nations that

j Heb *it*

4.10 *Twenty shekels.* One shekel weighed almost half an ounce; hence twenty shekels would weigh almost half a pound. **4.11** *One-sixth of a hin.* One hin (the word belongs to an Egyptian system) equals slightly less than a gallon; hence one-sixth of one would constitute approximately two-thirds of a quart. **4.12–13** The Hebrew syntax and phrase *barley-cake* make it unclear whether the barley bread is the one Ezekiel baked (v. 9). V. 12 may begin a new symbolic action that emphasizes impurity rather than scarcity, which appears to be the point in vv. 9–11. *Human dung* as fuel is otherwise unattested in ancient Israel. Deut 23.12–14 demonstrates that human fecal material violates holiness. **4.14** For Ezekiel to have cooked over a fire fueled with human offal would have introduced impurity, would have *defiled* him, which would have been especially pernicious since Ezekiel was a priest. The cases that Ezekiel attests, eating something that was not properly slaughtered (Lev 22.8) and meat that has not been eaten within a specific time limit (*carrion flesh*, Lev 7.18), are forbidden in Israel's ritual legislation. **4.16–17** The prophet returns to the imagery of vv. 9–11, that of scarcity; cf. Lev 26.26 for similar language.

5.1–4 Ezekiel and the blade of a barber. In the final symbolic action of this series, Ezekiel is to take a sharp instrument (*sword*, or "sharp blade") and use it to cut his hair and beard (cf. Isa 7.20 for the imagery of a foreign enemy as a razor). The manipulation of the hair in three parts and then *a small number* (vv. 2–4) suggests that no part of Israel will be immune from destruction. What Ezekiel does to the hair—weighing, dividing, burning, striking, scattering, binding—may symbolize God's punishment. Fire is a destructive element at both beginning and end.

5.5–17 God vows that he will destroy Jerusalem using various weapons. This long speech is replete with prophetic speech formulas, *thus says the Lord GOD* in vv. 5, 7, 8, 11 and *I, the LORD, have spoken* in vv. 13, 15, 17. **5.5** *This is Jerusalem* signifies that the divine oracle interprets the purport of the foregoing symbolic actions, especially the last one, as referring to Jerusalem. *In the center of the nations* resonates with traditions of a holy site or city being located at the earth's central point (cf. 38.12). However, here that tradition involves no divine protection for the city and, instead, allows for judgment in the next verse. **5.6** *My ordinances and my statutes*, i.e., specific requirements created by God's covenant with Israel. Jerusalem's becoming *more wicked than the nations* is a theme

are all around you, and have not followed
my statutes or kept my ordinances, but
have acted according to the ordinances of
the nations that are all around you;
8 therefore thus says the Lord GOD: I, I
myself, am coming against you: I will exe-
cute judgments among you in the sight of
the nations. 9 And because of all your
abominations, I will do to you what I have
never yet done, and the like of which I
will never do again. 10 Surely, parents
shall eat their children in your midst, and
children shall eat their parents; I will exe-
cute judgments on you, and any of you
who survive I will scatter to every wind.
11 Therefore, as I live, says the Lord GOD,
surely, because you have defiled my sanc-
tuary with all your detestable things and
with all your abominations—therefore I
will cut you down;[k] my eye will not spare,
and I will have no pity. 12 One third of
you shall die of pestilence or be consumed
by famine among you; one third shall fall
by the sword around you; and one third I
will scatter to every wind and will un-
sheathe the sword after them.

13 My anger shall spend itself, and I
will vent my fury on them and satisfy my-
self; and they shall know that I, the LORD,
have spoken in my jealousy, when I spend
my fury on them. 14 Moreover I will make
you a desolation and an object of mocking
among the nations around you, in the
sight of all that pass by. 15 You shall be[l] a
mockery and a taunt, a warning and a
horror, to the nations around you, when I
execute judgments on you in anger and
fury, and with furious punishments—I,
the LORD, have spoken— 16 when I loose
against you[m] my deadly arrows of famine,
arrows for destruction, which I will let
loose to destroy you, and when I bring
more and more famine upon you, and
break your staff of bread. 17 I will send
famine and wild animals against you, and
they will rob you of your children; pesti-
lence and bloodshed shall pass through
you; and I will bring the sword upon you.
I, the LORD, have spoken.

Judgment on Idolatrous Israel

6 The word of the LORD came to me:
2 O mortal, set your face toward the
mountains of Israel, and prophesy against
them, 3 and say, You mountains of Israel,
hear the word of the Lord GOD! Thus says
the Lord GOD to the mountains and the
hills, to the ravines and the valleys: I, I
myself will bring a sword upon you, and I
will destroy your high places. 4 Your altars
shall become desolate, and your incense
stands shall be broken; and I will throw
down your slain in front of your idols. 5 I
will lay the corpses of the people of Israel
in front of their idols; and I will scatter
your bones around your altars. 6 Wher-
ever you live, your towns shall be waste
and your high places ruined, so that your
altars will be waste and ruined,[n] your
idols broken and destroyed, your incense

k Another reading is *I will withdraw*
l Gk Syr Vg Tg: Heb *It shall be* *m* Heb *them*
n Syr Vg Tg: Heb *and be made guilty*

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also present in ch. 16. **5.8** *I, I myself, am coming against you.* Cf. Nah 2.13; 3.5. **5.10** Ezekiel takes the case of parents consuming children (cf. Lev 26.29; 2 Kings 6.29; Jer 19.9) and adds the converse, and otherwise unattested, children consuming parents. Here and in v. 12 Ezekiel uses imagery drawn from covenant curses. **5.11** *Defiled my sanctuary.* See Ezek 8; 11 for specific ways in which the temple had been desecrated. **5.12** This verse builds on the fractional symbolism of 5.1–2. **5.16–17** On God's arsenal. Cf. Deut 32.23–24, which suggests Ezekiel is using standard notions of ways in which God can inflict punishment.

6.1–14 Destruction with survivors. **6.1–7** Ezekiel addresses first the mountains of Israel and then all Israel. Cf. Ezek 36 for similar imagery, employed after the destruction foretold in ch. 6; 3.22, where Ezekiel is speaking in a valley. Geographic imagery is prominent throughout the book. **6.2–4** The mountains themselves are personified and addressed, as are valleys. Mountains are important because Israel had built improper religious sites on them. The term *high place* could refer to anything from a small ritual platform to a temple complex. High places are frequently related to Canaanite religious practices. For OT polemic against high places, see, e.g., 2 Kings 23.8; Jer 19.5 (high places could also be located in valleys; so Jer 7.31). Even Yahwistic high places were to have been destroyed after the reforms of Josiah. *Altars, incense stands,* and *idols* indicate that Ezekiel understands these shrines to have been major installations. *Idols* (Hebrew *gillulim*), used thirty-nine times in Ezekiel, is characteristic of this book. **6.5–6** Instead of the sacrifices normally expected at the high places, God will provide corpses (cf. Jer 7.31–33, with corpses at the high place Topheth). **6.6** *Your works,* a reference to religious implements made

stands cut down, and your works wiped
out. 7 The slain shall fall in your midst;
then you shall know that I am the LORD.
8 But I will spare some. Some of you
shall escape the sword among the nations
and be scattered through the countries.
9 Those of you who escape shall remem-
ber me among the nations where they are
carried captive, how I was crushed by
their wanton heart that turned away from
me, and their wanton eyes that turned af-
ter their idols. Then they will be loath-
some in their own sight for the evils that
they have committed, for all their abomi-
nations. 10 And they shall know that I am
the LORD; I did not threaten in vain to
bring this disaster upon them.
11 Thus says the Lord GOD: Clap your
hands and stamp your foot, and say, Alas
for all the vile abominations of the house
of Israel! For they shall fall by the sword,
by famine, and by pestilence. 12 Those far
off shall die of pestilence; those nearby
shall fall by the sword; and any who are
left and are spared shall die of famine.
Thus I will spend my fury upon them.
13 And you shall know that I am the LORD,
when their slain lie among their idols
around their altars, on every high hill, on
all the mountain tops, under every green
tree, and under every leafy oak, wherever
they offered pleasing odor to all their
idols. 14 I will stretch out my hand against
them, and make the land desolate and
waste, throughout all their settlements,
from the wilderness to Riblah.[o] Then
they shall know that I am the LORD.

Impending Disaster

7 The word of the LORD came to me:
2 You, O mortal, thus says the Lord
GOD to the land of Israel:
An end! The end has come
upon the four corners of the
land.
3 Now the end is upon you,
I will let loose my anger
upon you;
I will judge you according to
your ways,
I will punish you for all your
abominations.
4 My eye will not spare you, I will
have no pity.
I will punish you for your ways,
while your abominations are
among you.
Then you shall know that I am the LORD.
5 Thus says the Lord GOD:
Disaster after disaster! See,
it comes.
6 An end has come, the end
has come.
It has awakened against you; see,
it comes!

o Another reading is *Diblah*

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by human hands (see Isa 17.7–8). **6.7** *You shall know that I am the LORD,* a sentence common to Ezekiel (over sixty times) that regularly marks the boundary of a speech, e.g., 7.27. Here remembering and self-loathing lead to knowledge. **6.8–10** Those who survive will be exiled. **6.9** *I was crushed.* God has been affected personally and does not simply enforce covenant curses. **6.11–14** An oracle that begins with a new device, ritual use of hands, foot, and voice. On *alas,* cf. the related Hebrew word translated *aha* in 25.3; 26.2; 36.2. **6.12** The possibility for survivors seems remote. *Far off, nearby* may refer to proximity to Jerusalem. **6.13** An allusion to the imagery of 6.1–7. **6.14** *From the wilderness to Riblah,* a general description of Israel's boundaries at their greatest extent. *Wilderness* refers to southern Judah (Ex 23.31); *Riblah* (*Diblah* in Hebrew; the letters *r* and *d* may be easily confused) lies in Syria (2 Kings 23.33).

7.1–27 Sayings concerning the end for Israel. *Thus says the Lord GOD* introduces two of the three oracles that make up this chapter, vv. 1–4, 5–9, 10–27. The formula *Then you shall know that I am the LORD* occurs at the end of each oracle. These oracles share much imagery and phraseology with other OT texts, e.g., Isa 13–14. **7.1–4** The word *end* occurs three times and provides the basic theme of the first oracle. Am 8.2 also understands God's judgment to be "the end." *Four corners of the land.* One could translate "four corners of the earth" and emphasize the destruction's cosmic scope. However, Hebrew *'adamah,* "land," is regularly used by Ezekiel to refer to Israelite territory, e.g., 11.17. Cf. Isa 11.12 on *the four corners.* **7.3** *Let loose my anger.* See Ex 15.7; Ps 78.49. **7.4** *Eye.* Cf. Pss 33.18; 34.15, where God's eye looks hospitably at the righteous. **7.5–9** The end is defined as *the day,* which is imminent. The "day of the LORD" as a time for destruction and disorder is a prominent motif in other prophetic texts, e.g., Joel 1.15; Zeph 1.14; Zech 14.1; Mal 4.1. The general terms—*doom, end, disaster, tumult*—are presented as God's personal *wrath,* which will be meted out in proportion to *your*

7 Your doom[p] has come to you,
O inhabitant of the land.
The time has come, the day
is near—
of tumult, not of reveling on
the mountains.
8 Soon now I will pour out my
wrath upon you;
I will spend my anger
against you.
I will judge you according to
your ways,
and punish you for all your
abominations.
9 My eye will not spare; I will have
no pity.
I will punish you according to
your ways,
while your abominations are
among you.
Then you shall know that it is I the LORD
who strike.
10 See, the day! See, it comes!
Your doom[p] has gone out.
The rod has blossomed, pride has
budded.
11 Violence has grown into a rod
of wickedness.
None of them shall remain,
not their abundance, not their
wealth;
no pre-eminence among
them.[p]
12 The time has come, the day
draws near;
let not the buyer rejoice, nor
the seller mourn,
for wrath is upon all their
multitude.
13 For the sellers shall not return to what
has been sold as long as they remain alive.
For the vision concerns all their multi-
tude; it shall not be revoked. Because of
their iniquity, they cannot maintain their
lives.[p]
14 They have blown the horn and
made everything ready;
but no one goes to battle,
for my wrath is upon all their
multitude.
15 The sword is outside, pestilence
and famine are inside;
those in the field die by
the sword;
those in the city—famine and
pestilence devour them.
16 If any survivors escape,
they shall be found on the
mountains
like doves of the valleys,
all of them moaning over
their iniquity.
17 All hands shall grow feeble,
all knees turn to water.
18 They shall put on sackcloth,
horror shall cover them.
Shame shall be on all faces,
baldness on all their heads.
19 They shall fling their silver into
the streets,
their gold shall be treated as
unclean.
Their silver and gold cannot save them on
the day of the wrath of the LORD. They
shall not satisfy their hunger or fill their
stomachs with it. For it was the stumbling
block of their iniquity. 20 From their[q]
beautiful ornament, in which they took
pride, they made their abominable im-
ages, their detestable things; therefore I
will make of it an unclean thing to them.
21 I will hand it over to strangers
as booty,
to the wicked of the earth
as plunder;
they shall profane it.
22 I will avert my face from them,

p Meaning of Heb uncertain
q Syr Symmachus: Heb *its*

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ways; cf. ch. 18. **7.10–27** What will happen to humans on *the day* is spelled out. **7.10–11** The *rod*. Another word with the same consonants in Hebrew could mean "injustice," as the RSV translates. Both *pride* and *wickedness* are symbolized by twigs that grow larger. **7.12–13** Normal life, as exemplified in market transactions, is inappropriate since many will die. **7.14–17** *They have blown the horn* presumably refers to those on guard and responsible for mustering defensive forces. However, the onslaught of sword, pestilence, and famine has prevented a military response. Some may flee, but they will only be able to *moan*. **7.18** Wearing *sackcloth* and shaving the head (*baldness*) constitute lamentation practices. **7.19–20** *Silver* and *gold*, wealth generally, as well as specific objects made out of precious metal, including idols, provide no protection from disaster. **7.21–22** As in v. 20, riches are referred to as *it*, which God can give over to the foreign army in order to fulfill the promise of desecration, which also includes profanation of the temple.

so that they may profane my
treasured[r] place;
the violent shall enter it,
they shall profane it.
23 Make a chain![s]
For the land is full of bloody
crimes;
the city is full of violence.
24 I will bring the worst of the
nations
to take possession of their
houses.
I will put an end to the arrogance
of the strong,
and their holy places shall be
profaned.
25 When anguish comes, they will
seek peace,
but there shall be none.
26 Disaster comes upon disaster,
rumor follows rumor;
they shall keep seeking a vision
from the prophet;
instruction shall perish from
the priest,
and counsel from the elders.
27 The king shall mourn,
the prince shall be wrapped
in despair,
and the hands of the people of
the land shall tremble.
According to their way I will deal
with them;
according to their own
judgments I will judge
them.
And they shall know that I am the LORD.

Abominations in the Temple

8 In the sixth year, in the sixth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I sat in my house, with the elders of Judah sitting before me, the hand of the Lord GOD fell upon me there. 2 I looked, and there was a figure that looked like a human being;[t] below what appeared to be its loins it was fire, and above the loins it was like the appearance of brightness, like gleaming amber. 3 It stretched out the form of a hand, and took me by a lock of my head; and the spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven, and brought me in visions of God to Jerusalem, to the entrance of the gateway of the inner court that faces north, to the seat of the image of jealousy, which provokes to jealousy. 4 And the glory of the God of Israel was there, like the vision that I had seen in the valley.

5 Then God[u] said to me, "O mortal, lift up your eyes now in the direction of the north." So I lifted up my eyes toward the north, and there, north of the altar gate, in the entrance, was this image of jealousy. 6 He said to me, "Mortal, do you see what they are doing, the great abominations that the house of Israel are committing here, to drive me far from my sanctuary? Yet you will see still greater abominations."

7 And he brought me to the entrance of the court; I looked, and there was a

r Or *secret* s Meaning of Heb uncertain
t Gk: Heb *like fire* u Heb *he*

7.23 *Make a chain* may refer to the chains of slavery leading to exile (Nah 3.10). **7.24–27** Though *the people of the land* (v. 27) will suffer, special attention is devoted to prominent functionaries (priest, prophet, elders, king, prince), who are characterized by *the arrogance of the strong* (v. 24). Cf. Isa 3.2–3; Jer 4.9 for similar lists of prominent officials in a city.

8.1–11.25 Visions at the temple and God's response. This is the second vision report in the book (the first occurred in 1.1–3.15). **8.1–18** Acts of religious impropriety in and around the temple. **8.1–4** Vision introduction. **8.1** The *sixth year* is 592 B.C.E.; see note on 1.2. Leaders of the community consult with Ezekiel (cf. also 14.1; 20.1; 33.31), an important glimpse into exilic life. *The hand of the Lord GOD* recalls 1.3. **8.2** The *figure* is described in ways similar to the figure in the first vision, 1.26–27. **8.3** *Visions of God* means visions enabled by God and by means of which Ezekiel is about to see and experience Jerusalem via visionary transport. **8.4** *In the valley* alludes to 3.22–23, where Ezekiel also perceived the *glory*. **8.5–6** The first scene of religious impropriety. God tells Ezekiel to look north. From where he was located, the gate of the inner temple courtyard (v. 3; 10.5 refers to an outer court), his gaze is directed toward the *image of jealousy*, probably an image of a god or goddess that made the Lord "jealous." This object was doubly inappropriate since it violated the command against making images; cf. Deut 4.15–18. The scene concludes with formulaic question and response, which are repeated with slight variations in vv. 13, 15, 17. **8.6** *Drive me far from my sanctuary*. The prophet alludes to the ultimate effect of these indictments—God will leave the temple (action described in ch. 10). *Abominations* is a favorite term of Ezekiel for describing ritual sin. **8.7–13** A second scene of religious impropriety.

hole in the wall. 8 Then he said to me,
"Mortal, dig through the wall"; and when
I dug through the wall, there was an en-
trance. 9 He said to me, "Go in, and see
the vile abominations that they are com-
mitting here." 10 So I went in and looked;
there, portrayed on the wall all around,
were all kinds of creeping things, and
loathsome animals, and all the idols of the
house of Israel. 11 Before them stood sev-
enty of the elders of the house of Israel,
with Jaazaniah son of Shaphan standing
among them. Each had his censer in his
hand, and the fragrant cloud of incense
was ascending. 12 Then he said to me,
"Mortal, have you seen what the elders of
the house of Israel are doing in the dark,
each in his room of images? For they say,
'The LORD does not see us, the LORD has
forsaken the land.'" 13 He said also to me,
"You will see still greater abominations
that they are committing."

14 Then he brought me to the en-
trance of the north gate of the house of
the LORD; women were sitting there weep-
ing for Tammuz. 15 Then he said to me,
"Have you seen this, O mortal? You will
see still greater abominations than these."

16 And he brought me into the inner
court of the house of the LORD; there, at
the entrance of the temple of the LORD,
between the porch and the altar, were
about twenty-five men, with their backs to
the temple of the LORD, and their faces
toward the east, prostrating themselves to
the sun toward the east. 17 Then he said to
me, "Have you seen this, O mortal? Is it
not bad enough that the house of Judah
commits the abominations done here?
Must they fill the land with violence, and
provoke my anger still further? See, they
are putting the branch to their nose!
18 Therefore I will act in wrath; my eye
will not spare, nor will I have pity; and
though they cry in my hearing with a loud
voice, I will not listen to them."

The Slaughter of the Idolaters

9 Then he cried in my hearing with a
loud voice, saying, "Draw near, you
executioners of the city, each with his de-
stroying weapon in his hand." 2 And six

God commands the prophet to dig and discover a secret area. The prophet sees wall art (engravings or paintings) of various animals and more *idols* termed as *of the house of Israel*. Moreover, representatives of the Judahite community, including *Jaazaniah* (who belonged to a prominent family; Shaphan, his father, is mentioned in 2 Kings 22), perform an incense ritual. This second scene is "worse" than the first since it depicts people actively disregarding Israelite traditions. Here the people attempt to justify their behavior by asserting that *the LORD has forsaken the land* (v. 12). **8.14–15** Ezekiel is now apparently closer to the temple itself. This third and briefest scene is even worse than the second since the name of another deity appears, *Tammuz*. Tammuz (also known as Dumuzi) was worshiped in Mesopotamia as early as the third millennium B.C.E. Since he was thought to die and be held captive in the underworld, lamentation rites belong to Tammuz religion. Ritual *weeping* by women (cf. 32.16) would be natural, especially as a part of the annual cycle of vegetation. Plant growth and fertility were associated with the life power of Tammuz, harvest and drought with his death. Veneration of Tammuz was probably incorporated in the worship of Canaanite gods, especially Baal, who was also associated with vegetation and time in the underworld. **8.16–17** The fourth and most heinous scene, probably because it occurs at the temple's doorway. Judahites were bowing down to worship the sun. Veneration of the sun god Shamash (a god associated with wisdom and law) was prominent in Mesopotamia. However, worship of Yahweh had also been associated with the sun, e.g., Ps 84.11; 2 Kings 23.11. **8.17** The focus shifts from abominations at the temple complex, to *violence* throughout the land. *Putting the branch to their nose* is obscure, since there is no obvious connection between this image and the veneration of the sun. **8.18** If vv. 5–17 provide indictment, v. 18 constitutes the sentence. God promises radical justice with no possibility for intercession by the prophet or for mercy by God.

9.1–11 Execution in Jerusalem. **9.1–2** God summons *executioners of the city*, i.e., individuals who have been given the task of executing those in the city. Although the text defines these persons as *men*, Israelite tradition normally attributed this punitive role to minor deities or angels, e.g., Ex 12.23 ("the destroyer"); 2 Sam 24.16; 2 Kings 19.35. Ezekiel presents the first instance in which multiple individuals carry out this task; cf. Rev 15.6. *Among them*, lit. "in their midst." The *man clothed in linen* is probably a priest since priests normally wore linen garments (Ex 28.39). (However, Dan 10.5 describes a man who is clearly an angel wearing a linen garment.) Ezekiel's man in linen possesses the implements of a scribe, *a writing case*. Egyptian writing cases included, minimally, brushes and various inks. All seven men positioned themselves near the *bronze altar*, which

men came from the direction of the upper gate, which faces north, each with his weapon for slaughter in his hand; among them was a man clothed in linen, with a writing case at his side. They went in and stood beside the bronze altar.

3 Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub on which it rested to the threshold of the house. The LORD called to the man clothed in linen, who had the writing case at his side; 4 and said to him, "Go through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of those who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in it." 5 To the others he said in my hearing, "Pass through the city after him, and kill; your eye shall not spare, and you shall show no pity. 6 Cut down old men, young men and young women, little children and women, but touch no one who has the mark. And begin at my sanctuary." So they began with the elders who were in front of the house. 7 Then he said to them, "Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain. Go!" So they went out and killed in the city. 8 While they were killing, and I was left alone, I fell prostrate on my face and cried out, "Ah Lord GOD! will you destroy all who remain of Israel as you pour out your wrath upon Jerusalem?" 9 He said to me, "The guilt of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great; the land is full of bloodshed and the city full of perversity; for they say, 'The LORD has forsaken the land, and the LORD does not see.' 10 As for me, my eye will not spare, nor will I have pity, but I will bring down their deeds upon their heads."

11 Then the man clothed in linen, with the writing case at his side, brought back word, saying, "I have done as you commanded me."

God's Glory Leaves Jerusalem

10 Then I looked, and above the dome that was over the heads of the cherubim there appeared above them something like a sapphire,[v] in form resembling a throne. 2 He said to the man

[v] Or *lapis lazuli*

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belonged to the Solomonic temple, but which had been repositioned by Ahaz (2 Kings 16.14), i.e., they were in the northern area of the temple courtyard. **9.3** As alluded to in 8.6, *the glory of the God of Israel* begins to leave the temple. God was understood to be enthroned above the cherubim. At this point, the glory moves to the temple doorway; cf. 10.4. **9.3b–6** God's charge to the seven men. **9.3b–4** God speaks first to the scribe, whom he commands to place a *mark on the foreheads of those who sigh and groan over the all the abominations*. The Hebrew word translated *mark* is a vocalization of the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, *taw*, which would have been written as an X. One might think that the individuals so designated were to be spared (cf. the protective marking of Passover, Ex 12.23). However, the remainder of the vision does not explicitly report that any individuals were marked and spared (although cf. v. 11). **9.5–6** Then the six are authorized to *kill* everyone whom they encounter, regardless of gender or age. They are to begin *at my sanctuary*, i.e., where they are now located. They begin at the temple so that it could not offer sanctuary to those under attack and because abominations at the temple itself had just been identified. The first to be slain, the *elders*, are probably those men indicted in 8.11, 16. **9.7** *Defile the house* refers to corpse defilement (Num 19) in the temple complex (cf. Ezek 6.4–5). Since God is leaving the temple, it is possible for that structure to become impure. **9.8** Ezekiel attempts to intercede on behalf of Israel. Cf. 11.11; Isa 6.11; Am 7.1–6. **9.9–10** To Ezekiel's question, God responds in the negative, affirming again (see 8.18; 9.5) that the destruction will occur without pity. However, unlike earlier language in this vision, God speaks of more than just the city: *the house of Israel and Judah, the land*. The vast geographic scope of wrongdoing appears to justify radical punishment. The quotation of the people in v. 9 revises a similar statement in 8.12. There is a play on the motif of God seeing. The people think *the LORD does not see*, whereas God responds *As for me, my eye will not spare*. **9.11** Just as the biblical writer attests that the executioners performed their task (v. 7), now the text reports that the scribe also accomplished his work.

10.1–22 God's glory leaves the temple. **10.1** Ezekiel perceives the divine throne (cf. 1.26), but this time there is nothing seated above the throne. In ch. 10, *cherubim* have replaced the living creatures of ch. 1. (There are important and complex similarities and differences between the imagery found in ch. 10 and that in ch. 1.) **10.2–8** The *man clothed in linen* receives a new task. **10.2** This verse continues the narrative of 9.11. *Go within the wheelwork* and 1.16 suggest that the wheels comprise a structure large enough to enter. The location of the wheelwork is unclear. Presumably it is outside the temple (v. 3). The man is charged with gathering some *burning coals*;

clothed in linen, "Go within the wheel-
work underneath the cherubim; fill your
hands with burning coals from among the
cherubim, and scatter them over the city."
He went in as I looked on. 3 Now the cher-
ubim were standing on the south side of
the house when the man went in; and a
cloud filled the inner court. 4 Then the
glory of the LORD rose up from the
cherub to the threshold of the house;
the house was filled with the cloud, and
the court was full of the brightness of the
glory of the LORD. 5 The sound of the
wings of the cherubim was heard as far as
the outer court, like the voice of God Al-
mighty[w] when he speaks.

6 When he commanded the man
clothed in linen, "Take fire from within
the wheelwork, from among the cheru-
bim," he went in and stood beside a wheel.
7 And a cherub stretched out his hand
from among the cherubim to the fire that
was among the cherubim, took some of it
and put it into the hands of the man
clothed in linen, who took it and went out.
8 The cherubim appeared to have the
form of a human hand under their wings.

9 I looked, and there were four
wheels beside the cherubim, one beside
each cherub; and the appearance of the
wheels was like gleaming beryl. 10 And as
for their appearance, the four looked
alike, something like a wheel within a
wheel. 11 When they moved, they moved
in any of the four directions without veer-
ing as they moved; but in whatever direc-
tion the front wheel faced, the others
followed without veering as they moved.
12 Their entire body, their rims, their
spokes, their wings, and the wheels—the
wheels of the four of them—were full of
eyes all around. 13 As for the wheels, they
were called in my hearing "the wheel-
work." 14 Each one had four faces: the
first face was that of the cherub, the sec-
ond face was that of a human being, the
third that of a lion, and the fourth that of
an eagle.

15 The cherubim rose up. These were
the living creatures that I saw by the river
Chebar. 16 When the cherubim moved,
the wheels moved beside them; and when
the cherubim lifted up their wings to rise
up from the earth, the wheels at their side
did not veer. 17 When they stopped, the
others stopped, and when they rose up,
the others rose up with them; for the
spirit of the living creatures was in them.

18 Then the glory of the LORD went
out from the threshold of the house and
stopped above the cherubim. 19 The cher-
ubim lifted up their wings and rose up
from the earth in my sight as they went
out with the wheels beside them. They
stopped at the entrance of the east gate of
the house of the LORD; and the glory of
the God of Israel was above them.

20 These were the living creatures
that I saw underneath the God of Israel

[w] Traditional rendering of Heb *El Shaddai*

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cf. 1.13, which refers to *something that looked like burning coals*. What was a simile now becomes literal. Since priests normally manipulated the coals of the altar fire, one has additional reason for thinking that this man was a priest. Such coals could function in different ways. According to Isa 6.6, coals purify the prophet. In Ezek 10.2, however, they are to be scattered *over the city*, presumably to start a fire that would destroy the city. By implication, Jerusalem is as sinful as Sodom and Gomorrah (cf. Gen 19). **10.4–5** *The glory of the LORD* begins to move, as do certain of the cherubim. The biblical writer is careful to note that the glory moves from the cherub, since this sole cherub was affixed to the ark. Other cherubim were part of the divine retinue and depart from the temple. The *cloud* could represent God's presence (Ex 19.9; 1 Kings 8.10–11). **10.6–7** The man is given burning coals by one of the cherubim because, for some unknown reason, he does not himself approach the coals. **10.8–14** The author provides a detailed description of the cherubim vis-à-vis the wheelwork, which is similar to that in 1.4–21. **10.15–17** As if to underline the similarity between chs. 1 and 10, the author notes that *these were the living creatures that I saw by the river Chebar* (see 1.3). Mobility is the hallmark of the cherubim wheelwork. The structure rises up with cherubim wings beating and with wheels turning. **10.18–19** *The glory of the LORD* moves from the threshold of the house (cf. v. 4) and is located above the cherubim, which are themselves moving. The glory is at its accustomed position, namely, enthroned above cherubim, but now they are movable. *The east gate* is the main ceremonial entrance into the temple complex, known elsewhere as "the gate of the LORD," (Ps 118.20). **10.20–22** Ezekiel reaffirms the identity of the living creatures as cherubim. Three times in short compass (vv. 15, 20, 22) he states that he perceived them while by the river Chebar. This repetition verifies Ezekiel's ability to experience God while he is in exile.

by the river Chebar; and I knew that they
were cherubim. 21 Each had four faces,
each four wings, and underneath their
wings something like human hands. 22 As
for what their faces were like, they were
the same faces whose appearance I had
seen by the river Chebar. Each one moved
straight ahead.

Judgment on Wicked Counselors

11 The spirit lifted me up and
brought me to the east gate of the
house of the LORD, which faces east.
There, at the entrance of the gateway,
were twenty-five men; among them I saw
Jaazaniah son of Azzur, and Pelatiah son
of Benaiah, officials of the people. 2 He
said to me, "Mortal, these are the men
who devise iniquity and who give wicked
counsel in this city; 3 they say, 'The time
is not near to build houses; this city is
the pot, and we are the meat.' 4 Therefore prophesy against them; prophesy,
O mortal."

5 Then the spirit of the LORD fell
upon me, and he said to me, "Say, Thus
says the LORD: This is what you think,
O house of Israel; I know the things that
come into your mind. 6 You have killed
many in this city, and have filled its streets
with the slain. 7 Therefore thus says the
Lord GOD: The slain whom you have
placed within it are the meat, and this city
is the pot; but you shall be taken out of it.
8 You have feared the sword; and I will
bring the sword upon you, says the Lord
GOD. 9 I will take you out of it and give
you over to the hands of foreigners, and
execute judgments upon you. 10 You shall
fall by the sword; I will judge you at the
border of Israel. And you shall know that
I am the LORD. 11 This city shall not be
your pot, and you shall not be the meat
inside it; I will judge you at the border of
Israel. 12 Then you shall know that I am
the LORD, whose statutes you have not followed, and whose ordinances you have
not kept, but you have acted according to
the ordinances of the nations that are
around you."

13 Now, while I was prophesying, Pelatiah son of Benaiah died. Then I fell
down on my face, cried with a loud voice,
and said, "Ah Lord GOD! will you make a
full end of the remnant of Israel?"

God Will Restore Israel

14 Then the word of the LORD came
to me: 15 Mortal, your kinsfolk, your own

11.1–13 Ezekiel performs as prophet during his visionary transport. **11.1–4** Just as the cherubim and the glory of the Lord have paused at the *east gate* as they leave the temple complex (10.19), now Ezekiel is taken to this site. The *twenty-five men* may be the same group identified in 8.16. *Jaazaniah son of Azzur* and *Pelatiah son of Benaiah* do not appear elsewhere in Ezekiel. They, unlike the other twenty-three, were *officials of the people* a phrase that elsewhere occurs only in postexilic texts (Neh 11.1; 1 Chr 21.2; 2 Chr 24.23; Esth 3.12). Normally the phrase distinguishes lay from priestly leaders or public officials. **11.2** God proffers an indictment that focuses on ethical rather than religious malfeasance as it did in ch. 8. Ezek 7.26 demonstrates that *counsel* was the provenance of "elders," who could be characterized as officials. **11.3** *The time is not near to build houses*, perhaps because it is a time for investing in defense or perhaps because those taken into exile in 597 B.C.E. had left houses available for use by others (see v. 15); cf. Jer 32.15. *This city is the pot, and we are the meat.* The image of the pot appears in greater detail in 24.1–14. The sense here is apparently one of the pot protecting the meat, i.e., the twenty-five men. In v. 7, God identifies the meat with those whom the men have killed, not the men themselves. **11.5–13** Ezekiel, empowered by the prophetic spirit, prophesies as God has commanded. **11.5–6** Ezekiel's indictment continues the motif begun in v. 2, devising or plotting evil. The effect of such plots has been slaughter in Jerusalem (cf. 19.3; 22.6), though whether in war or not is unclear. **11.7–10** A sentence of doom in which the image of the pot in v. 4 is recast. The men will be removed from the protection of the pot and be subjected to attack by foreign swords. *At the border of Israel*, at Riblah, a city in Syria, many Judahites were executed in 588–87 B.C.E. (Jer 52.10, 24–27). **11.12** Destruction by foreigners is appropriate because Judahites have behaved according to *the ordinances of the nations*, the foreign religious practices described in ch. 8 (cf. 5.7). **11.13** Pelatiah dies before his execution, an event that enhances the power of Ezekiel's sentence (cf. Jer 28). Then Ezekiel again (cf. 9.8) attempts to intercede on behalf of *the remnant of Israel.*

11.14–21 The problem of land ownership. This section may be read as an answer to the question with which v. 13 concludes. **11.15** A dispute is placed within the context of kinship (Hebrew, "people of your kin") — the relations between those in exile and those in Judah. The lat-

kin, your fellow exiles,[x] the whole house
of Israel, all of them, are those of whom
the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said,
"They have gone far from the LORD; to
us this land is given for a possession."
16 Therefore say: Thus says the Lord
GOD: Though I removed them far away
among the nations, and though I scat-
tered them among the countries, yet I
have been a sanctuary to them for a little
while[y] in the countries where they have
gone. 17 Therefore say: Thus says the
Lord GOD: I will gather you from the peo-
ples, and assemble you out of the coun-
tries where you have been scattered, and I
will give you the land of Israel. 18 When
they come there, they will remove from it
all its detestable things and all its abomi-
nations. 19 I will give them one[z] heart,
and put a new spirit within them; I will
remove the heart of stone from their flesh
and give them a heart of flesh, 20 so that
they may follow my statutes and keep my
ordinances and obey them. Then they
shall be my people, and I will be their
God. 21 But as for those whose heart goes
after their detestable things and their
abominations,[a] I will bring their deeds
upon their own heads, says the Lord GOD.
22 Then the cherubim lifted up their
wings, with the wheels beside them; and
the glory of the God of Israel was above
them. 23 And the glory of the LORD as-
cended from the middle of the city, and
stopped on the mountain east of the city.
24 The spirit lifted me up and brought
me in a vision by the spirit of God into
Chaldea, to the exiles. Then the vision
that I had seen left me. 25 And I told the
exiles all the things that the LORD had
shown me.

Judah's Captivity Portrayed

12 The word of the LORD came to
me: 2 Mortal, you are living in the
midst of a rebellious house, who have eyes
to see but do not see, who have ears to
hear but do not hear; 3 for they are a re-
bellious house. Therefore, mortal, pre-
pare for yourself an exile's baggage, and
go into exile by day in their sight; you
shall go like an exile from your place to
another place in their sight. Perhaps they
will understand, though they are a rebel-
lious house. 4 You shall bring out your
baggage by day in their sight, as baggage
for exile; and you shall go out yourself at
evening in their sight, as those do who go
into exile. 5 Dig through the wall in their
sight, and carry the baggage through it.
6 In their sight you shall lift the baggage
on your shoulder, and carry it out in the
dark; you shall cover your face, so that

x Gk Syr: Heb *people of your kindred* y Or *to some extent* z Another reading is *a new* a Cn: Heb *And to the heart of their detestable things and their abominations their heart goes*

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ter claim possession of the land vacated by those taken into exile and do so on theological grounds, *they have gone far from the LORD.* **11.16** The first of two divine oracles introduced by *thus says the Lord GOD.* In support of those who have been dispossessed by exile, God has been *a sanctuary to them for a little while,* a phrase that may also be translated, "a minor sanctuary." This provision would counter the claim of those in the land that the exiles had *gone far from the LORD* (v. 15). **11.17–19** The second divine oracle includes a sequence of promises: return to *the land of Israel,* removal of *abominations,* and a different *heart* and *spirit.* **11.19** *One heart.* Some manuscripts read "new heart"; cf. Jer 32.39; Ezek 18.31; 36.26. **11.20** Cf. Jer 31.33–34; Ezek 16.59–63.

11.22–25 Ezekiel's vision concludes with a return to the primary images: cherubim, wheels, and the glory. *The glory of the LORD* leaves the city and is located on a massif to the east, namely, the Mount of Olives. In visionary transport, Ezekiel returns to Babylonia and reports to those in exile what he has seen.

12.1–16 Symbolic action and its interpretation concerning exile. **12.1–7** The symbolic act commanded and performed. **12.1–2** The condition of Judah as *a rebellious house* is characterized as having eyes to see but not seeing. Hence something visible, vv. 3–4, becomes an appropriate mode of prophetic communication. **12.3–6** God commands Ezekiel to perform a series of acts that symbolize someone going into exile. **12.3** *An exile's baggage,* apparently all of one's carryable belongings. *In their sight,* which occurs repeatedly in vv. 3–7, emphasizes the visual character of Ezekiel's prophetic task. At first Ezekiel is commanded to act out the exile role in daylight so that *they will understand,* lit. "they will see." **12.4–5** Then the prophet is to act as an exile at night, which approximates the actual behavior of those escaping from a city. Digging *through the wall* suggests that the wall as defensive fortification has already been partially destroyed. **12.6** On *cover your face,* see v. 12. *I have made you a sign.* See also v. 11; 24.24; Isa 8.18. The prophet's action, not just words, can become part

you may not see the land; for I have made
you a sign for the house of Israel.
7 I did just as I was commanded. I
brought out my baggage by day, as bag-
gage for exile, and in the evening I dug
through the wall with my own hands; I
brought it out in the dark, carrying it on
my shoulder in their sight.
8 In the morning the word of the
LORD came to me: 9 Mortal, has not the
house of Israel, the rebellious house, said
to you, "What are you doing?" 10 Say to
them, "Thus says the Lord GOD: This ora-
cle concerns the prince in Jerusalem and
all the house of Israel in it." 11 Say, "I am
a sign for you: as I have done, so shall it
be done to them; they shall go into exile,
into captivity." 12 And the prince who is
among them shall lift his baggage on his
shoulder in the dark, and shall go out;
he[b] shall dig through the wall and carry it
through; he shall cover his face, so that he
may not see the land with his eyes. 13 I will
spread my net over him, and he shall be
caught in my snare; and I will bring him
to Babylon, the land of the Chaldeans, yet
he shall not see it; and he shall die there.
14 I will scatter to every wind all who are
around him, his helpers and all his
troops; and I will unsheathe the sword be-
hind them. 15 And they shall know that I
am the LORD, when I disperse them
among the nations and scatter them
through the countries. 16 But I will let a
few of them escape from the sword, from
famine and pestilence, so that they may
tell of all their abominations among the
nations where they go; then they shall
know that I am the LORD.

Judgment Not Postponed

17 The word of the LORD came to me:
18 Mortal, eat your bread with quaking,
and drink your water with trembling and
with fearfulness; 19 and say to the people
of the land, Thus says the Lord GOD con-
cerning the inhabitants of Jerusalem in
the land of Israel: They shall eat their
bread with fearfulness, and drink their
water in dismay, because their land shall
be stripped of all it contains, on account
of the violence of all those who live in it.
20 The inhabited cities shall be laid waste,
and the land shall become a desolation;
and you shall know that I am the LORD.
21 The word of the LORD came to me:
22 Mortal, what is this proverb of yours
about the land of Israel, which says, "The
days are prolonged, and every vision
comes to nothing"? 23 Tell them there-
fore, "Thus says the Lord GOD: I will put
an end to this proverb, and they shall use
it no more as a proverb in Israel." But say
to them, The days are near, and the ful-
fillment of every vision. 24 For there shall
no longer be any false vision or flattering
divination within the house of Israel.
25 But I the LORD will speak the word that
I speak, and it will be fulfilled. It will no
longer be delayed; but in your days,
O rebellious house, I will speak the word
and fulfill it, says the Lord GOD.

b Gk Syr: Heb *they*

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of God's communication. **12.7** Ezekiel's self-report that the symbolic action has been carried out. **12.8–16** An interpretation of the symbolic action. **12.8** *In the morning* suggests that the act concluded during the previous evening. **12.10–16** The oracle answers the people's question to Ezekiel, *What are you doing?* (v. 9). **12.10** *The prince in Jerusalem* probably refers to Zedekiah, whose fate is described in Jer 39.1–7; 52.6–11; 2 Kings 25.3–7. He fled at night "through the gate between the two walls" (Jer 39.4), was captured by Babylonian forces, taken into Riblah, and blinded before being taken into exile. A symbolic act that initially addresses *the house of Israel* (v. 6) focuses now on the fate of the prince as well as the people (v. 11). **12.12–14** These verses address the plight of the prince in ways that foreshadow the flight and exile of Zedekiah. However, v. 14 continues the theme of other people driven into exile. *Sword* (vv. 14, 16) recalls Ezek 5. **12.15–16** A remnant in exile will attest to abominations performed in the land.

12.17–20 God commands Ezekiel to consume *bread* and *water* so as to act out the way in which Jerusalemites will eat and drink after the destruction throughout the land begins.

12.21–28 The people's perceptions of prophetic visions. Two sayings of the people (in vv. 22, 27) require a divine response. **12.22** *Proverb*, a brief saying that expresses popular consensus. *The days are prolonged* probably means "time passes." The saying has as its point that even though time passes, visions that prefigure the future do not come to pass. **12.23** God provides a contrary saying the purport of which is: the time approaches when prophetic visions will be verified. **12.24–25** God will enact

26 The word of the LORD came to me:
27 Mortal, the house of Israel is saying,
"The vision that he sees is for many years
ahead; he prophesies for distant times."
28 Therefore say to them, Thus says the
Lord GOD: None of my words will be de-
layed any longer, but the word that I
speak will be fulfilled, says the Lord GOD.

False Prophets Condemned

13 The word of the LORD came to
me: 2 Mortal, prophesy against
the prophets of Israel who are prophesy-
ing; say to those who prophesy out of
their own imagination: "Hear the word of
the LORD!" 3 Thus says the Lord GOD,
Alas for the senseless prophets who follow
their own spirit, and have seen nothing!
4 Your prophets have been like jackals
among ruins, O Israel. 5 You have not
gone up into the breaches, or repaired a
wall for the house of Israel, so that it
might stand in battle on the day of the
LORD. 6 They have envisioned falsehood
and lying divination; they say, "Says the
LORD," when the LORD has not sent them,
and yet they wait for the fulfillment of
their word! 7 Have you not seen a false
vision or uttered a lying divination, when
you have said, "Says the LORD," even
though I did not speak?

8 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD:
Because you have uttered falsehood and
envisioned lies, I am against you, says the
Lord GOD. 9 My hand will be against the
prophets who see false visions and utter
lying divinations; they shall not be in the
council of my people, nor be enrolled in
the register of the house of Israel, nor
shall they enter the land of Israel; and
you shall know that I am the Lord GOD.
10 Because, in truth, because they have
misled my people, saying, "Peace," when
there is no peace; and because, when the
people build a wall, these prophets[c]
smear whitewash on it. 11 Say to those who
smear whitewash on it that it shall fall.
There will be a deluge of rain,[d] great
hailstones will fall, and a stormy wind will
break out. 12 When the wall falls, will it
not be said to you, "Where is the white-
wash you smeared on it?" 13 Therefore
thus says the Lord GOD: In my wrath I
will make a stormy wind break out, and in
my anger there shall be a deluge of rain,
and hailstones in wrath to destroy it. 14 I
will break down the wall that you have
smeared with whitewash, and bring it to
the ground, so that its foundation will be
laid bare; when it falls, you shall perish
within it; and you shall know that I am the
LORD. 15 Thus I will spend my wrath upon
the wall, and upon those who have
smeared it with whitewash; and I will say
to you, The wall is no more, nor those
who smeared it— 16 the prophets of Israel
who prophesied concerning Jerusalem and

c Heb *they* d Heb *rain and you*

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quickly the *word*, so that no ineffectual visions can hold sway. **12.27** In the second saying, people argue that Ezekiel's visions do not affect their own times.

13.1–23 Judgment on false prophets. **13.1–7** Indictment of prophets, whom Ezekiel characterizes as those who prophesy *out of their own imagination* (v. 2) and as those *who follow their own spirit* (v. 3), in contrast to Ezekiel who speaks *the word of the LORD* (v. 2). For similar language about conflict between prophets, see Jer 23.9–32; 1 Kings 22. **13.4** *Like jackals among ruins*, a simile that probably refers to wild animals rooting in a destroyed city (see Lam 5.18). **13.5** *You* is plural in the Hebrew, which means that the prophets are being condemned. **13.6–7** These prophets perceive *falsehood*, which Jeremiah also uses to describe other prophets (Jer 14.14; 23.21), *lying divination*, and *false vision* despite the fact that they use standard prophetic language: *says the LORD*. *Divination* is a human means of securing information from the deity often involving physically observable data, e.g., examining the organs of a sacrificed animal for signs (as in 21.21) or in standard Israelite practice the Urim and Thummim (Ex 28.30). **13.8–16** Punishment of false prophets. **13.9** *Council of my people*. Cf. Gen 49.6. The term *council* does not necessarily mean a political assembly. *The register*. Cf. Ezra 2.62. To be excluded from such a written document was tantamount to losing membership among the people of Israel. The register was especially important after the exile, hence its prominence in Ezra and Nehemiah. *Nor shall they enter the land* presumes that one form of punishment will be exile. **13.10** *Peace*. Cf. Jer 23; 27–29 for similar conflict over whether or not a message of peace was appropriate before 587 B.C.E. **13.10–16** The imagery involves a wall of friable construction, the strength of which might be minimally enhanced with a light coating of plaster (whitewash). The people build the wall, the prophets apply the *whitewash*. God intends to destroy the wall using a storm. And since it is inherently weak, the wall will fall. Both the people and their prophets will be punished.

saw visions of peace for it, when there was
no peace, says the Lord GOD.
17 As for you, mortal, set your face
against the daughters of your people, who
prophesy out of their own imagination;
prophesy against them 18 and say, Thus
says the Lord GOD: Woe to the women
who sew bands on all wrists, and make
veils for the heads of persons of every
height, in the hunt for human lives! Will
you hunt down lives among my people,
and maintain your own lives? 19 You have
profaned me among my people for hand-
fuls of barley and for pieces of bread, put-
ting to death persons who should not die
and keeping alive persons who should not
live, by your lies to my people, who listen
to lies.
20 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD:
I am against your bands with which you
hunt lives;[e] I will tear them from your
arms, and let the lives go free, the lives
that you hunt down like birds. 21 I will
tear off your veils, and save my people
from your hands; they shall no longer be
prey in your hands; and you shall know
that I am the LORD. 22 Because you have
disheartened the righteous falsely, al-
though I have not disheartened them,
and you have encouraged the wicked not
to turn from their wicked way and save
their lives; 23 therefore you shall no lon-
ger see false visions or practice divination;
I will save my people from your hand.
Then you will know that I am the LORD.

God's Judgments Justified

14 Certain elders of Israel came to
me and sat down before me.
2 And the word of the LORD came to me:
3 Mortal, these men have taken their idols
into their hearts, and placed their iniquity
as a stumbling block before them; shall I
let myself be consulted by them? 4 There-
fore speak to them, and say to them, Thus
says the Lord GOD: Any of those of the
house of Israel who take their idols into
their hearts and place their iniquity as a
stumbling block before them, and yet
come to the prophet—I the LORD will an-
swer those who come with the multitude
of their idols, 5 in order that I may take
hold of the hearts of the house of Isra-
el, all of whom are estranged from me
through their idols.
6 Therefore say to the house of Israel,
Thus says the Lord GOD: Repent and turn
away from your idols; and turn away your
faces from all your abominations. 7 For
any of those of the house of Israel, or of
the aliens who reside in Israel, who sepa-
rate themselves from me, taking their
idols into their hearts and placing their

e Gk Syr: Heb *lives for birds*

13.17–23 Judgment upon prophetesses. **13.17** *The daughters of your people.* Both in Israel (the prophetess Huldah, 2 Kings 22.14) and elsewhere (e.g., the ancient city-state of Mari) women functioned as prophets. **13.18** However, the *bands* and *veils* have more to do with magic than intermediation. Unfortunately, practices having to do with these textiles remain obscure. Hunting *lives* involves the very life and death of a person; see v. 19. **13.19** *For handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread,* probably payment for services rendered; see 1 Sam 9.7. **13.20–23** Punishment of the prophetesses. **13.20–21** *With which you hunt lives* may be translated "with which you hunt persons like birds." God punishes the prophetesses by removing the *bands* and *veils* and in so doing liberates those who had been trapped. **13.22** The indictment is further clarified: those trapped were the *righteous,* an action that *encouraged the wicked.* **13.23** *I will save my people.* When compared to texts such as 9.9–10, this verse is strikingly positive.

14.1–11 Prophet and people. **14.1** The scene is similar to 8.1; Ezekiel is consulted by representatives of the exilic community. **14.3** God provides an assessment of the people before they are able to ask a question. The precise meaning of *taken their idols into their hearts* is not clear. Ezekiel used the term *idols* in diverse ways. Typically it refers to representations of non-Yahwistic religious entities. If such objects were destroyed or left in the land, those in exile may not actually possess idols but may still be venerating what the idols represented. On the prophet as consultant, see 20.3. **14.6** Instead of a sentence, the prophet offers an admonition, *repent and turn away.* **14.7** *Aliens who reside in Israel* appears unusual when referring to the exilic context. Cf. Isa 56.3, "the foreigner joined to the LORD." Originally, an alien was a non-Israelite who lived in Israelite territory and who had defined rights (e.g., Deut 1.16; 14.29). Ezek 47.22–23 allows for land inheritance by aliens. **14.7–8** Those who do not repent will be accursed. The actual punishment would constitute a *sign,* whereas those who observed the situation would summarize and express it using a saying (a *byword*). *Cut them off from the midst of my people* expresses a sentiment similar

iniquity as a stumbling block before them,
and yet come to a prophet to inquire of
me by him, I the LORD will answer them
myself. 8 I will set my face against them; I
will make them a sign and a byword and
cut them off from the midst of my people;
and you shall know that I am the LORD.
9 If a prophet is deceived and speaks a
word, I, the LORD, have deceived that
prophet, and I will stretch out my hand
against him, and will destroy him from
the midst of my people Israel. 10 And they
shall bear their punishment—the punish-
ment of the inquirer and the punishment
of the prophet shall be the same— 11 so
that the house of Israel may no longer go
astray from me, nor defile themselves any
more with all their transgressions. Then
they shall be my people, and I will be their
God, says the Lord GOD.
12 The word of the LORD came to me:
13 Mortal, when a land sins against me by
acting faithlessly, and I stretch out my
hand against it, and break its staff of
bread and send famine upon it, and cut
off from it human beings and animals,
14 even if Noah, Daniel,[f] and Job, these
three, were in it, they would save only
their own lives by their righteousness, says
the Lord GOD. 15 If I send wild animals
through the land to ravage it, so that it is
made desolate, and no one may pass
through because of the animals; 16 even if
these three men were in it, as I live, says
the Lord GOD, they would save neither
sons nor daughters; they alone would be
saved, but the land would be desolate.
17 Or if I bring a sword upon that land
and say, "Let a sword pass through the
land," and I cut off human beings and ani-
mals from it; 18 though these three men
were in it, as I live, says the Lord GOD,
they would save neither sons nor daugh-
ters, but they alone would be saved. 19 Or
if I send a pestilence into that land, and
pour out my wrath upon it with blood, to
cut off humans and animals from it;
20 even if Noah, Daniel,[f] and Job were in
it, as I live, says the Lord GOD, they would
save neither son nor daughter; they
would save only their own lives by their
righteousness.
21 For thus says the Lord GOD: How
much more when I send upon Jerusalem
my four deadly acts of judgment, sword,
famine, wild animals, and pestilence, to
cut off humans and animals from it!
22 Yet, survivors shall be left in it, sons and
daughters who will be brought out; they
will come out to you. When you see their
ways and their deeds, you will be consoled
for the evil that I have brought upon Je-
rusalem, for all that I have brought upon
it. 23 They shall console you, when you see
their ways and their deeds; and you shall
know that it was not without cause that I
did all that I have done in it, says the
Lord GOD.

The Useless Vine

15 The word of the LORD came
to me:
2 O mortal, how does the wood of

f Or, as otherwise read, *Danel*

to that in 13.9. **14.9–11** In case a prophet would provide a word to idolaters, contrary to v. 3, that prophet will be destroyed. **14.9** God claims responsibility for the deceit of such a prophet; cf. 1 Kings 13 for an instance in which a prophet is misled through divine instrumentality.

14.12–23 Sin, destruction, and survival. **14.12–20** A formulaic discourse (signaled by the repetition of *if, even if, they would save neither sons nor daughters, they would save only their own lives*) concerning the severity of God's punishment, which is a direct response to radical sin. These verses build on four different modes of punishment: *famine* (v. 13), *wild animals* (v. 15), *sword* (v. 17), and *pestilence* (v. 19). Ezekiel identifies three individuals and reports that, although they would escape destruction, they would not be able to save others. *Noah, Daniel,* and *Job* were figures known widely in the ancient Near East as especially righteous. Their righteousness worked itself out on behalf of others, namely, their children. Noah enabled his family to survive the deluge; Job's children exist at the end of the book. And Danel, the righteous king described in the Ugaritic Aqhat epic who is a traditional figure related to the biblical Daniel, is apparently able to engender life for his son. **14.21–23** The four modes of punishment are repeated (cf. 5.16) and focused on Jerusalem. However, there will be survivors, *sons and daughters,* an implicit literary link with the three aforementioned heroes. **14.22–23** These survivors will provide consolation for the earlier generation.

15.1–8 The useless vine. **15.1** *To me,* a "private" oracle. **15.2** The first in a series of rhetorical questions. Despite the prominence of vine imagery in OT literature (e.g., Judg 9.8–15; Isa 5.1–5; Hos 10.1), questions about the quality of

the vine surpass all other
wood—
the vine branch that is among
the trees of the forest?
3 Is wood taken from it to make
anything?
Does one take a peg from it
on which to hang any
object?
4 It is put in the fire for fuel;
when the fire has consumed
both ends of it
and the middle of it is
charred,
is it useful for anything?
5 When it was whole it was used
for nothing;
how much less—when the fire
has consumed it,
and it is charred—
can it ever be used for
anything!

6 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Like the wood of the vine among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so I will give up the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 7 I will set my face against them; although they escape from the fire, the fire shall still consume them; and you shall know that I am the LORD, when I set my face against them. 8 And I will make the land desolate, because they have acted faithlessly, says the Lord GOD.

God's Faithless Bride

16 The word of the LORD came to me: 2 Mortal, make known to Jerusalem her abominations, 3 and say, Thus says the Lord GOD to Jerusalem: Your origin and your birth were in the land of the Canaanites; your father was an Amorite, and your mother a Hittite. 4 As for your birth, on the day you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water to cleanse you, nor rubbed with salt, nor wrapped in cloths. 5 No eye pitied you, to do any of these things for you out of compassion for you; but you were thrown out in the open field, for you were abhorred on the day you were born.

6 I passed by you, and saw you flailing about in your blood. As you lay in your blood, I said to you, "Live! 7 and grow up[g] like a plant of the field." You grew up and became tall and arrived at full womanhood;[h] your breasts were formed, and your hair had grown; yet you were naked and bare.

8 I passed by you again and looked on you; you were at the age for love. I spread the edge of my cloak over you, and covered your nakedness: I pledged myself to you and entered into a covenant with you, says the Lord GOD, and you became mine.

g Gk Syr: Heb *Live! I made you a myriad*
h Cn: Heb *ornament of ornaments*

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the wood from a vine are innovative. The initial question elicits an understood response—wood from a vine does not surpass any wood of the forest. **15.3** The second and third questions concerning the utility of vine wood that has been worked imply brief, negative answers. **15.4** The poet adduces an obvious case, a fragment of partially burned vine. The ensuing question implies another negative answer. **15.5** An indicative judgment, summarizing the cases presented in vv. 3–4. **15.6–8** The foregoing poem is viewed as a simile, *the wood of the vine* being likened to *the inhabitants of Jerusalem*. They are destined for destruction, whether by fire or not.

16.1–63 An extended discourse in which Jerusalem is understood as God's adulterous wife. **16.1–7** Jerusalem the orphan. **16.2** *Make known . . . her abominations* has legal connotations. **16.3** *Land of the Canaanites*, ancient Syro-Palestine, which is roughly equivalent to Lebanon and Israel today. Jerusalem was under Jebusite (or Canaanite) control before David conquered it. *Amorite* culture is generally associated with Syria and the Transjordan; *Hittite* with ancient Anatolia (but some Hittites lived in Syro-Palestine, e.g., Uriah the Hittite [2 Sam 11.3]). In biblical traditions, Amorites and Hittites can refer generally to the pre-Israelite population. These three ethnolinguistic categories—Canaanite, Amorite, and Hittite—define Jerusalem's origins as different from that of Israel, which traced its lineage through Abraham to Nahor. Jerusalem is a "foreigner." **16.4–5** Standard birth rituals were not performed, possibly because the parents intended to commit infanticide by exposure in a field. **16.6–7** God discovers the foundling and admonishes her to remain alive. *And grow up*, in Hebrew "I made you a myriad," or "I made you flourish." In this translation, God assists the child at the very first instance. **16.8–14** On the image of covering with a garment in order to symbolize an intent to marry, cf. Ruth 3.9. *I pledged myself to you . . . and you became mine* echoes standard covenant language (e.g., Ex 6.7). God performs various ministrations on behalf of his new wife. They involve cleansing, providing clothing and jewelry,

9 Then I bathed you with water and washed off the blood from you, and anointed you with oil. 10 I clothed you with embroidered cloth and with sandals of fine leather; I bound you in fine linen and covered you with rich fabric.[i] 11 I adorned you with ornaments: I put bracelets on your arms, a chain on your neck, 12 a ring on your nose, earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown upon your head. 13 You were adorned with gold and silver, while your clothing was of fine linen, rich fabric,[i] and embroidered cloth. You had choice flour and honey and oil for food. You grew exceedingly beautiful, fit to be a queen. 14 Your fame spread among the nations on account of your beauty, for it was perfect because of my splendor that I had bestowed on you, says the Lord God.

15 But you trusted in your beauty, and played the whore because of your fame, and lavished your whorings on any passer-by.[j] 16 You took some of your garments, and made for yourself colorful shrines, and on them played the whore; nothing like this has ever been or ever shall be.[i] 17 You also took your beautiful jewels of my gold and my silver that I had given you, and made for yourself male images, and with them played the whore; 18 and you took your embroidered garments to cover them, and set my oil and my incense before them. 19 Also my bread that I gave you—I fed you with choice flour and oil and honey—you set it before them as a pleasing odor; and so it was, says the Lord God. 20 You took your sons and your daughters, whom you had borne to me, and these you sacrificed to them to be devoured. As if your whorings were not enough! 21 You slaughtered my children and delivered them up as an offering to them. 22 And in all your abominations and your whorings you did not remember the days of your youth, when you were naked and bare, flailing about in your blood.

23 After all your wickedness (woe, woe to you! says the Lord God), 24 you built yourself a platform and made yourself a lofty place in every square; 25 at the head of every street you built your lofty place and prostituted your beauty, offering yourself to every passer-by, and multiplying your whoring. 26 You played the whore with the Egyptians, your lustful neighbors, multiplying your whoring, to provoke me to anger. 27 Therefore I stretched out my hand against you, reduced your rations, and gave you up to the will of your enemies, the daughters of the Philistines, who were ashamed of your lewd behavior. 28 You played the whore with the Assyrians, because you were insatiable; you played the whore with them, and still you were not satisfied. 29 You multiplied your whoring with Chaldea, the land of merchants; and even with this you were not satisfied.

30 How sick is your heart, says the Lord God, that you did all these things, the deeds of a brazen whore; 31 building your platform at the head of every street, and making your lofty place in every square! Yet you were not like a whore, because you scorned payment. 32 Adulterous wife, who receives strangers instead of her husband! 33 Gifts are given to all whores; but you gave your gifts to all your lovers, bribing them to come to you from all around for your whorings. 34 So you were different from other women in your whorings: no one solicited you to play the whore; and you gave payment, while no

i Meaning of Heb uncertain *j* Heb adds *let it be his*

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and special food. **16.15–34** Jerusalem, understood now as an adulterous wife, commits various sinful acts. Hos 2 and Jer 2–3 also liken Israel to an unfaithful wife. **16.16** Using textiles, she makes *colorful shrines*, whether for veneration of other deities or for illicit sexual practice (or both, as in sacral prostitution) is unclear. **16.17–19** Using precious metals and garments she makes and clothes *male images* and sets food before them. **16.20–21** Children born to the woman are sacrificed; cf. Jer 19.4–6; 32.35, which attribute child sacrifice to veneration of Baal. **16.23–26** The wife is indicted for having built a structure (*platform*), whether ritual or not is uncertain, where she engaged in prostitution (cf. ch. 23). Reference to the Egyptians alludes to a treaty made with Egypt. **16.27–29** God's sentence includes punishment by *the daughters of the Philistines*, but mention of *whoring* with Assyria and Babylon (*Chaldea*) continues the tone of indictment. The order of foreign nations parallels a sketch of Israelite history: slavery in Egypt, conflict with Philistia, and confrontation with the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian empires. **16.30–34** Jerusalem gave presents to rather than received income from those with whom she had

payment was given to you; you were different.

35 Therefore, O whore, hear the word of the LORD: 36 Thus says the Lord GOD, Because your lust was poured out and your nakedness uncovered in your whoring with your lovers, and because of all your abominable idols, and because of the blood of your children that you gave to them, 37 therefore, I will gather all your lovers, with whom you took pleasure, all those you loved and all those you hated; I will gather them against you from all around, and will uncover your nakedness to them, so that they may see all your nakedness. 38 I will judge you as women who commit adultery and shed blood are judged, and bring blood upon you in wrath and jealousy. 39 I will deliver you into their hands, and they shall throw down your platform and break down your lofty places; they shall strip you of your clothes and take your beautiful objects and leave you naked and bare. 40 They shall bring up a mob against you, and they shall stone you and cut you to pieces with their swords. 41 They shall burn your houses and execute judgments on you in the sight of many women; I will stop you from playing the whore, and you shall also make no more payments. 42 So I will satisfy my fury on you, and my jealousy shall turn away from you; I will be calm, and will be angry no longer. 43 Because you have not remembered the days of your youth, but have enraged me with all these things; therefore, I have returned your deeds upon your head, says the Lord GOD.

Have you not committed lewdness beyond all your abominations? 44 See, everyone who uses proverbs will use this proverb about you, "Like mother, like daughter." 45 You are the daughter of your mother, who loathed her husband and her children; and you are the sister of your sisters, who loathed their husbands and their children. Your mother was a Hittite and your father an Amorite. 46 Your elder sister is Samaria, who lived with her daughters to the north of you; and your younger sister, who lived to the south of you, is Sodom with her daughters. 47 You not only followed their ways, and acted according to their abominations; within a very little time you were more corrupt than they in all your ways. 48 As I live, says the Lord GOD, your sister Sodom and her daughters have not done as you and your daughters have done. 49 This was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy. 50 They were haughty, and did abominable things before me; therefore I removed them when I saw it. 51 Samaria has not committed half your sins; you have committed more abominations than they, and have made your sisters appear righteous by all the abominations that you have committed. 52 Bear your disgrace, you also, for you have brought about for your sisters a more favorable judgment; because of your sins in which you acted more abominably than they, they are more in the right than you. So be ashamed, you also, and bear your disgrace, for you have made your sisters appear righteous.

53 I will restore their fortunes, the fortunes of Sodom and her daughters and the fortunes of Samaria and her daughters, and I will restore your own fortunes along with theirs, 54 in order that you may bear your disgrace and be ashamed of all that you have done, becoming a consolation to them. 55 As for your sisters, Sodom and her daughters shall return to their former state, Samaria and her daughters shall return to their former state, and you and your daughters shall return to your former state. 56 Was not your sister Sodom a byword in your mouth in the day

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intercourse. **16.35–43** God will punish Jerusalem by using the foreign nations with whom she has committed adultery. **16.40** See Deut 22.22–24 for laws concerning adultery, which involve death by stoning. **16.41** On destruction by fire (*burn your houses*), see 23.47. **16.44–52** Though *mother-daughter* imagery continues, siblings now appear: Samaria the elder and Sodom the younger. Sodom's sins focused on injustice (v. 49); Samaria's sins remain unnamed. Both cities had already been destroyed, Sodom in the distant past (Gen 19), Samaria in 721 B.C.E. Jerusalem has, however, *committed more abominations* (v. 51) than either sister. **16.53–58** Restoration for Sodom, Samaria, and Jerusalem. (Cf. Jer 12.14–17 on the concept of restoration of many Syro-Palestinian cities and states.) However, the goal of the restoration is their suffering

of your pride, 57 before your wickedness
was uncovered? Now you are a mockery
to the daughters of Aram[k] and all her
neighbors, and to the daughters of the
Philistines, those all around who despise
you. 58 You must bear the penalty of your
lewdness and your abominations, says
the LORD.

An Everlasting Covenant

59 Yes, thus says the Lord GOD: I will
deal with you as you have done, you who
have despised the oath, breaking the cove-
nant; 60 yet I will remember my covenant
with you in the days of your youth, and I
will establish with you an everlasting cove-
nant. 61 Then you will remember your
ways, and be ashamed when I[l] take your
sisters, both your elder and your younger,
and give them to you as daughters, but
not on account of my[m] covenant with you.
62 I will establish my covenant with you,
and you shall know that I am the LORD,
63 in order that you may remember and be
confounded, and never open your mouth
again because of your shame, when I for-
give you all that you have done, says the
Lord GOD.

The Two Eagles and the Vine

17 The word of the LORD came to
me: 2 O mortal, propound a rid-
dle, and speak an allegory to the house of
Israel. 3 Say: Thus says the Lord GOD:
A great eagle, with great wings
and long pinions,
rich in plumage of many colors,
came to the Lebanon.
He took the top of the cedar,
4 broke off its topmost shoot;
he carried it to a land of trade,
set it in a city of merchants.
5 Then he took a seed from the
land,
placed it in fertile soil;
a plant[n] by abundant waters,
he set it like a willow twig.
6 It sprouted and became a vine
spreading out, but low;
its branches turned toward him,
its roots remained where it
stood.
So it became a vine;
it brought forth branches,
put forth foliage.

7 There was another great eagle,
with great wings and much
plumage.
And see! This vine stretched out
its roots toward him;
it shot out its branches
toward him,
so that he might water it.
From the bed where it was
planted
8 it was transplanted
to good soil by abundant waters,
so that it might produce
branches
and bear fruit

k Another reading is *Edom* *l* Syr: Heb *you*
m Heb lacks *my* *n* Meaning of Heb uncertain

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disgrace and being *ashamed* (v. 54). **16.57** *Aram*, in Hebrew; a variant manuscript tradition reads "Edom"; cf. 25.12. **16.59–63** An everlasting covenant. **16.59** *The oath . . . the covenant.* These two terms may be understood as complementary; in taking an oath one makes a covenant (cf. Deut 29.12). The prominence of similar vocabulary and rhetoric in Deuteronomy makes clear that the prophet alludes to the Sinai covenant. **16.60** References to an earlier covenant and *an everlasting covenant* suggest that the latter refers to a new covenant. Cf. 37.26 (*a covenant of peace . . . an everlasting covenant*); Jer 31.31–34. **16.61** God will introduce new kinship relationships. Samaria and Sodom, which had earlier been "sisters," will now become daughters of Jerusalem. **16.62** God will, ultimately, absolve Jerusalem of her sin.

17.1–24 The two eagles, the vine, and the cedar. **17.2** *Riddle* and *allegory* normally refer to different kinds of sayings. On riddle in the OT, cf. Judg 14.12–19. The word translated here as "allegory" also appears in Ezek 12.23; 16.44, 18.2, where it is translated "proverb." Hence, though there may be allegorical elements in ch. 17, the Hebrew word itself does not define these verses as an allegory. **17.3–10** Most of the important symbols allude to kings and international politics from 598 to 588 B.C.E. **17.3–5** The *cedar*, traditionally associated with Lebanon, is a majestic tree; cf. ch. 31; Ps 92.12. *A great eagle* is Nebuchadnezzar, who took *a city of merchants* into exile, the *topmost shoot*, Jehoiachin. The *seed*, which becomes a *vine*, is Zedekiah, who was placed on the throne by and was initially loyal to Nebuchadnezzar. **17.7–8** *Another great eagle* is the pharaoh Psammetichus II, to whom Zedekiah expressed allegiance, abandoning his oath of loyalty to the Neo-Babylonians. This transfer of loyalty is expressed by the imagery of transplanting.

and become a noble vine.
9 Say: Thus says the Lord God:
Will it prosper?
Will he not pull up its roots,
cause its fruit to rot[o] and wither,
its fresh sprouting leaves to fade?
No strong arm or mighty army will be needed
to pull it from its roots.
10 When it is transplanted, will it thrive?
When the east wind strikes it,
will it not utterly wither,
wither on the bed where it grew?

11 Then the word of the Lord came to me: 12 Say now to the rebellious house: Do you not know what these things mean? Tell them: The king of Babylon came to Jerusalem, took its king and its officials, and brought them back with him to Babylon. 13 He took one of the royal offspring and made a covenant with him, putting him under oath (he had taken away the chief men of the land), 14 so that the kingdom might be humble and not lift itself up, and that by keeping his covenant it might stand. 15 But he rebelled against him by sending ambassadors to Egypt, in order that they might give him horses and a large army. Will he succeed? Can one escape who does such things? Can he break the covenant and yet escape? 16 As I live, says the Lord God, surely in the place where the king resides who made him king, whose oath he despised, and whose covenant with him he broke—in Babylon he shall die. 17 Pharaoh with his mighty army and great company will not help him in war, when ramps are cast up and siege walls built to cut off many lives. 18 Because he despised the oath and broke the covenant, because he gave his hand and yet did all these things, he shall not escape. 19 Therefore thus says the Lord God: As I live, I will surely return upon his head my oath that he despised, and my covenant that he broke. 20 I will spread my net over him, and he shall be caught in my snare; I will bring him to Babylon and enter into judgment with him there for the treason he has committed against me. 21 All the pick[p] of his troops shall fall by the sword, and the survivors shall be scattered to every wind; and you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken.

Israel Exalted at Last

22 Thus says the Lord God:
I myself will take a sprig
from the lofty top of a cedar;
I will set it out.
I will break off a tender one
from the topmost of its young twigs;
I myself will plant it
on a high and lofty mountain.
23 On the mountain height of Israel
I will plant it,
in order that it may produce boughs and bear fruit,
and become a noble cedar.
Under it every kind of bird will live;
in the shade of its branches will nest
winged creatures of every kind.
24 All the trees of the field shall know

o Meaning of Heb uncertain *p* Another reading is *fugitives*

17.9–10 Various symbols (*will he not pull up its roots, the east wind*) refer to Nebuchadnezzar's attack and siege (January 588–August 587 B.C.E.) of Zedekiah in Jerusalem. Rhetorical questions underline the impossibility of survival. **17.11–15** In prose the prophet recounts the individuals and events to which earlier poetry alludes. As with the poem, the prose version concludes with a series of questions. **17.16–21** Two divine oaths. The first (vv. 16–18) foresees Zedekiah's death in Babylonian exile due to inadequate Egyptian military assistance. Zedekiah is condemned for having violated his treaty obligation to Nebuchadnezzar. The second (vv. 19–21) focuses on the military defeat, capture, and exile of Zedekiah as acts of God. **17.21** *The pick*, or "fugitives" as attested in some Greek manuscript traditions. **17.22** God, instead of *a great eagle* (v. 3), will plant a cedar shoot in Israel. **17.23** *The mountain height* may refer to Zion (Ps 48.1–2), which would be consistent with a replanting or restoration of the Davidic house (cf. Isa 11.1; Jer 23.5–6; 33.15). *Every kind of bird* (cf. Gen 7.14), along with the reference to a high mountain and singular tree, provides cosmic scale to the deity's action. **17.24** Typical for Ezekiel, God's action redounds to his glory and demonstrates the deity's ability to enact a word. *Bring low . . . make high*, a rhetorical figure that defines God's power; cf. 1 Sam 2.7; Pss 75.7; 147.6.

that I am the LORD.
I bring low the high tree,
I make high the low tree;
I dry up the green tree
and make the dry tree flourish.
I the LORD have spoken;
I will accomplish it.

Individual Retribution

18 The word of the LORD came to me: 2 What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, "The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge"? 3 As I live, says the Lord GOD, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel. 4 Know that all lives are mine; the life of the parent as well as the life of the child is mine: it is only the person who sins that shall die.

5 If a man is righteous and does what is lawful and right— 6 if he does not eat upon the mountains or lift up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, does not defile his neighbor's wife or approach a woman during her menstrual period, 7 does not oppress anyone, but restores to the debtor his pledge, commits no robbery, gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with a garment, 8 does not take advance or accrued interest, withholds his hand from iniquity, executes true justice between contending parties, 9 follows my statutes, and is careful to observe my ordinances, acting faithfully —such a one is righteous; he shall surely live, says the Lord GOD.

10 If he has a son who is violent, a shedder of blood, 11 who does any of these things (though his father[q] does none of them), who eats upon the mountains, defiles his neighbor's wife, 12 oppresses the poor and needy, commits robbery, does not restore the pledge, lifts up his eyes to the idols, commits abomination, 13 takes advance or accrued interest; shall he then live? He shall not. He has done all these abominable things; he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon himself.

14 But if this man has a son who sees all the sins that his father has done, considers, and does not do likewise, 15 who does not eat upon the mountains or lift up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, does not defile his neighbor's wife, 16 does not wrong anyone, exacts no pledge, commits no robbery, but gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with a garment, 17 withholds his hand from iniquity,[r] takes no advance or accrued interest, observes my ordinances, and follows my statutes; he shall not die for his father's iniquity; he shall surely live. 18 As

q Heb *he* *r* Gk: Heb *the poor*

18.1–32 Justice for the individual. **18.1–4** A popular saying prompts reflection and rejection by both Ezekiel and Jeremiah (Jer 31.29–30). Quoting such terse Israelite sayings is typical of Ezekiel, e.g., 12.21; 16.44. The saying grows logically out of provisions for the unlimited liability of covenant punishment, which regularly extended well beyond the individual violating a stipulation, e.g., "to the third and fourth generation" (Ex 20.5). By contrast, Ezekiel provides a postulate that focuses on God's concern for *all lives*. Individuals will live or die according to their own deeds. **18.5–9** The first generation, in which an individual is righteous and lives. **18.6–9** A catalogue of virtues—many are described in negative fashion—that is consistent with the Decalogue. Both sacral and secular topics are included. **18.6** *Eat upon the mountains*, i.e., consume food from sacrifices to gods other than Yahweh; cf. 6.13; Hos 4.13. *Idols of the house of Israel*. Cf. 8.10; 18.6, 15. The phrase does not necessarily involve veneration of deities other than Yahweh. **18.7** *Does not oppress*. Cf. Lev 25.17. *Restores to the debtor his pledge*. See Ex 22.26. **18.8** On debt *interest*, see Ex 22.25; Deut 23.20. *Executes true justice*, i.e., comports himself properly in the law court convened in the city gate (Lev 19.15). **18.9** *Such a one is righteous*, the sort of judgment that might normally have occurred at the temple. However, Ezekiel lived in Babylonia, which made a judgment of this sort almost revolutionary; and it leads to life. **18.10–13** The second generation, in which an individual is sinful and dies. The righteousness of the father does not affect the fate of the son. In both the first and last verses, the individual is characterized as *a shedder of blood*, a phrase characteristic of Ezekiel and influenced by priestly rhetoric (Lev 17.4). **18.11–12** The evildoer behaves conversely from the person in the first generation. **18.14–18** The third generation, in which an individual is righteous and lives. **18.14** This individual reviews the life of his father and acts in an accordingly different manner. The behavior of the sinful father does not prejudice the fate of his son. **18.15–17** A repetition of the case of the individual in the first generation, vv. 6–9. **18.18** Instead of concluding with the grandson, this case refers to that of the sinful son.

for his father, because he practiced extortion, robbed his brother, and did what is
not good among his people, he dies for
his iniquity.
19 Yet you say, "Why should not the
son suffer for the iniquity of the father?"
When the son has done what is lawful and
right, and has been careful to observe all
my statutes, he shall surely live. 20 The
person who sins shall die. A child shall not
suffer for the iniquity of a parent, nor a
parent suffer for the iniquity of a child;
the righteousness of the righteous shall be
his own, and the wickedness of the wicked
shall be his own.
21 But if the wicked turn away from
all their sins that they have committed
and keep all my statutes and do what is
lawful and right, they shall surely live;
they shall not die. 22 None of the transgressions that they have committed shall
be remembered against them; for the
righteousness that they have done they
shall live. 23 Have I any pleasure in the
death of the wicked, says the Lord GOD,
and not rather that they should turn from
their ways and live? 24 But when the righteous turn away from their righteousness
and commit iniquity and do the same
abominable things that the wicked do,
shall they live? None of the righteous
deeds that they have done shall be remembered; for the treachery of which
they are guilty and the sin they have committed, they shall die.
25 Yet you say, "The way of the Lord
is unfair." Hear now, O house of Israel: Is
my way unfair? Is it not your ways that are
unfair? 26 When the righteous turn away
from their righteousness and commit iniquity, they shall die for it; for the iniquity
that they have committed they shall die.
27 Again, when the wicked turn away from
the wickedness they have committed and
do what is lawful and right, they shall save
their life. 28 Because they considered and
turned away from all the transgressions
that they had committed, they shall surely
live; they shall not die. 29 Yet the house of
Israel says, "The way of the Lord is unfair." O house of Israel, are my ways unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair?
30 Therefore I will judge you,
O house of Israel, all of you according to
your ways, says the Lord GOD. Repent
and turn from all your transgressions;
otherwise iniquity will be your ruin.[s]
31 Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed against me,
and get yourselves a new heart and a new
spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? 32 For I have no pleasure in the
death of anyone, says the Lord GOD.
Turn, then, and live.

Israel Degraded

19 As for you, raise up a lamentation for the princes of Israel,
2 and say:

What a lioness was your mother
among lions!
She lay down among young lions,
rearing her cubs.
3 She raised up one of her cubs;
he became a young lion,

s Or *so that they shall not be a stumbling block of iniquity to you*

18.19–20 Ezekiel quotes yet another saying, which sounds more like a response to the foregoing analysis than an epigram; see 2 Kings 14.6; cf. Deut 24.16. Such insistence upon the separate fate of discrete generations reflects the concerns of those in exile. Were they to be punished for the sins of their fathers, who had already been subject to attack? **18.21–24** *If the wicked turn away from all their sins.* Now the case of the wicked is couched in the plural and has meaning for the life of one individual, for one may speak here of repentance that engenders life. **18.24** Conversely, one who had led a righteous life but then *commits iniquity* will die. **18.25–29** *The way of the Lord is unfair* (repeated in v. 29; 33.17). It is not clear to which of the numerous foregoing cases this saying might refer. Job, Jeremiah, Habakkuk, and Ecclesiastes offer similar sentiments. The prophet responds by citing the cases developed in vv. 21–24. If an individual is treated according to what she or he does, then, Ezekiel claims, God is fair. **18.30–32** What has been implicit becomes explicit, *repent . . . a new heart and a new spirit!*, that which enables a new form of life, vocabulary associated with a new covenant.

19.1–14 Two laments, one using lion imagery and the other vine symbolism, describe the fate of the mother of the princes. **19.1** *Lamentation*, a dirge or funeral song. *The princes of Israel.* The Greek manuscript tradition reads "a prince." **19.2–9** The lion may serve as a metaphor for Judah, the territory ruled by the house of David (Gen 49.9–10). Some scholars have argued that Hamutal, a queen mother and wife of Josiah, is symbolized by the *lioness.* **19.3–4** *One of her cubs*, probably Jehoahaz, son of Josiah and

and he learned to catch prey;
he devoured humans.
4 The nations sounded an alarm against him;
he was caught in their pit;
and they brought him with hooks to the land of Egypt.
5 When she saw that she was thwarted,
that her hope was lost,
she took another of her cubs
and made him a young lion.
6 He prowled among the lions;
he became a young lion,
and he learned to catch prey;
he devoured people.
7 And he ravaged their strongholds,[t]
and laid waste their towns;
the land was appalled, and all in it,
at the sound of his roaring.
8 The nations set upon him
from the provinces all around;
they spread their net over him;
he was caught in their pit.
9 With hooks they put him in a cage,
and brought him to the king of Babylon;
they brought him into custody,
so that his voice should be heard no more
on the mountains of Israel.
10 Your mother was like a vine in a vineyard[u]
transplanted by the water,
fruitful and full of branches
from abundant water.
11 Its strongest stem became
a ruler's scepter;[v]
it towered aloft
among the thick boughs;
it stood out in its height
with its mass of branches.
12 But it was plucked up in fury,
cast down to the ground;
the east wind dried it up;
its fruit was stripped off,
its strong stem was withered;
the fire consumed it.
13 Now it is transplanted into the wilderness,
into a dry and thirsty land.
14 And fire has gone out from its stem,
has consumed its branches and fruit,
so that there remains in it no strong stem,
no scepter for ruling.

This is a lamentation, and it is used as a lamentation.

t Heb *his widows* *u* Cn: Heb *in your blood*
v Heb *Its strongest stems became rulers' scepters*

Hamutal, who was captured by the pharaoh Neco and taken to Egypt, where he died (2 Kings 23.31–34). **19.5–9** It is uncertain to which king *another of her cubs* refers. Jehoiakim, also a son of Hamutal, was not taken into exile in Babylon, whereas both Jehoiachin and Zedekiah were exiled to Babylon. Cf. Jer 22 for laments on Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin. The poem may be read as a general lament over the Davidic lineage without identifying either the lioness or the cubs as specific persons. The poem stresses certain features common to both cubs: *he was caught in their pit* (vv. 4, 8), *the nations* responded to both animals (vv. 4, 8), both *devoured humans* (vv. 3, 6), and both were taken with *hooks* (vv. 4, 9). Nonetheless, the fate of the second cub receives greater attention than that of the first. **19.7** *He ravaged their strongholds*, in Hebrew "he knew his widows," possibly with sexual connotations; cf. the Greek manuscript tradition, "he ravaged his widows." **19.8** *Set upon him from the provinces*. Cf. the RSV translation, "set against him snares." The *net* was used throughout the ancient Near East as a military implement. **19.10–14** A second lament, which uses vine imagery. Cf. Ezek 15; 17. **19.10** *Your* in Hebrew is singular. In this lament, Ezekiel uses a simile, *like a vine*, instead of a metaphor. Just as the lioness was grand, so too this vine flourished in an ideal location. *In a vineyard* is conjectural; cf. the Hebrew, "in your blood." **19.11** *Its strongest stem became a ruler's scepter*. Cf. the Hebrew, "its strongest stems became rulers' scepters," which accords with the imagery of more than one king in vv. 2–9. *Scepter*, a ceremonial staff used by the king (Isa 14.5); it could symbolize Judah and the Davidic house (Ps 60.7). **19.12** The vine is destroyed by various means: it is pulled out, dried up by an east wind (cf. 17.10), and consumed by fire. As a result, the stem (and scepter) are also destroyed. **19.13** *Transplanted*, surely an allusion to the Babylonian exile. **19.14** *And fire . . . for ruling*. The emphasis on the entire plant and not just the strongest stem focuses on the demise of the entire Davidic house as a royal line and not just the defeat of one or another king. *This is a lamentation* underlines the ritual use to which dirges were put as well as the individuals who chanted them; cf. 32.16.

Israel's Continuing Rebellion

20 In the seventh year, in the fifth month, on the tenth day of the month, certain elders of Israel came to consult the LORD, and sat down before me. 2 And the word of the LORD came to me: 3 Mortal, speak to the elders of Israel, and say to them: Thus says the Lord GOD: Why are you coming? To consult me? As I live, says the Lord GOD, I will not be consulted by you. 4 Will you judge them, mortal, will you judge them? Then let them know the abominations of their ancestors, 5 and say to them: Thus says the Lord GOD: On the day when I chose Israel, I swore to the offspring of the house of Jacob—making myself known to them in the land of Egypt—I swore to them, saying, I am the LORD your God. 6 On that day I swore to them that I would bring them out of the land of Egypt into a land that I had searched out for them, a land flowing with milk and honey, the most glorious of all lands. 7 And I said to them, Cast away the detestable things your eyes feast on, every one of you, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt; I am the LORD your God. 8 But they rebelled against me and would not listen to me; not one of them cast away the detestable things their eyes feasted on, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt.

Then I thought I would pour out my wrath upon them and spend my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt. 9 But I acted for the sake of my name, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations among whom they lived, in whose sight I made myself known to them in bringing them out of the land of Egypt. 10 So I led them out of the land of Egypt and brought them into the wilderness. 11 I gave them my statutes and showed them my ordinances, by whose observance everyone shall live. 12 Moreover I gave them my sabbaths, as a sign between me and them, so that they might know that I the LORD sanctify them. 13 But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness; they did not observe my statutes but rejected my ordinances, by whose observance everyone shall live; and my sabbaths they greatly profaned.

Then I thought I would pour out my wrath upon them in the wilderness, to make an end of them. 14 But I acted for the sake of my name, so that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations, in whose sight I had brought them out. 15 Moreover I swore to them in the wilderness that I would not bring them into the land that I had given them, a land flowing with milk and honey, the most glorious of all lands, 16 because they rejected my ordinances and did not observe my statutes, and profaned my sabbaths; for their heart went after their idols. 17 Nevertheless my eye spared them, and I did not destroy them or make an end of them in the wilderness.

18 I said to their children in the wil-

20.1–32 Israel's rebellious past. **20.1–4** Again, Ezekiel meets with the elders (8.1; 14.1), who seek God's word. **20.1** *Seventh year . . . month,* August 14, 591 B.C.E. (see note on 1.2), five years before the temple was destroyed. Ezekiel had been acting as a prophet for two years and had been in exile since 597. Note the prominence of the first-person pronoun *me* in the mouth of the deity; the deity is the preeminent actor. **20.2–4** Instead of acting as an intermediary for the people, Ezekiel is commanded by God to *judge them*; see also 22.2; 23.36. **20.5–31** Various periods when Israel rebelled against God. For another version of Israel's history with God, see Ps 106. **20.5** *Chose Israel,* virtually royal language since God also "chose" David as king. **20.7–8** In Egypt, Israel had been venerating *detestable things, idols of Egypt.* Israel's rebellion involved continuing to worship such objects. **20.9–26** The wilderness experiences. **20.9** *For the sake of my name.* Ezekiel emphasizes here (and elsewhere, vv. 14, 22; 36.22) that such action is not undertaken because Israel deserves such bounty. **20.10** The exodus and the time in the wilderness are concisely conjoined. Throughout this historical reprise, Ezekiel distills longer accounts. **20.11** The Sinai event is linked immediately to these other epochal episodes. *Everyone shall live.* Cf. Lev 18.5. **20.12** *Sabbaths,* remarkably important in this chapter; see vv. 13, 16, 20, 21, 24. Observance of the sabbath is associated with the covenant at Sinai; see Ex 31.13 on the sabbath as a *sign.* For a contemporaneous prophetic perspective on the sabbath observances, see Jer 17.19–27. The sabbath is to make the people holy, to *sanctify them.* **20.13–17** After the Sinai event, the people again *rebelled,* whereupon God was tempted to annihilate them. However, concern for the viability of the deity's name among the nations prevented this punitive response. **20.18–21** Introduction of the motif of the next generation, *their children*; cf. ch. 18. These individuals are

derness, Do not follow the statutes of your
parents, nor observe their ordinances, nor
defile yourselves with their idols. 19 I the
LORD am your God; follow my statutes,
and be careful to observe my ordinances,
20 and hallow my sabbaths that they may
be a sign between me and you, so that you
may know that I the LORD am your God.
21 But the children rebelled against me;
they did not follow my statutes, and were
not careful to observe my ordinances, by
whose observance everyone shall live;
they profaned my sabbaths.

Then I thought I would pour out my
wrath upon them and spend my anger
against them in the wilderness. 22 But I
withheld my hand, and acted for the sake
of my name, so that it should not be pro-
faned in the sight of the nations, in whose
sight I had brought them out. 23 More-
over I swore to them in the wilderness
that I would scatter them among the na-
tions and disperse them through the
countries, 24 because they had not exe-
cuted my ordinances, but had rejected my
statutes and profaned my sabbaths, and
their eyes were set on their ancestors'
idols. 25 Moreover I gave them statutes
that were not good and ordinances by
which they could not live. 26 I defiled
them through their very gifts, in their
offering up all their firstborn, in order
that I might horrify them, so that they
might know that I am the LORD.

27 Therefore, mortal, speak to the
house of Israel and say to them, Thus says
the Lord GOD: In this again your ances-
tors blasphemed me, by dealing treacher-
ously with me. 28 For when I had brought
them into the land that I swore to give
them, then wherever they saw any high
hill or any leafy tree, there they offered
their sacrifices and presented the provo-
cation of their offering; there they sent
up their pleasing odors, and there they
poured out their drink offerings. 29 (I said
to them, What is the high place to which
you go? So it is called Bamah[w] to this
day.) 30 Therefore say to the house of Is-
rael, Thus says the Lord GOD: Will you
defile yourselves after the manner of your
ancestors and go astray after their detest-
able things? 31 When you offer your gifts
and make your children pass through the
fire, you defile yourselves with all your
idols to this day. And shall I be consulted
by you, O house of Israel? As I live, says
the Lord GOD, I will not be consulted
by you.

32 What is in your mind shall never
happen—the thought, "Let us be like the
nations, like the tribes of the countries,
and worship wood and stone."

God Will Restore Israel

33 As I live, says the Lord GOD, surely
with a mighty hand and an outstretched
arm, and with wrath poured out, I will be
king over you. 34 I will bring you out from
the peoples and gather you out of the

w That is *High Place*

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challenged to obey in a way that their fathers did not obey. And yet they also rebelled, unlike the case of ch. 18. **20.22–26** The generation of children, in the wilderness, is threatened with exile; see also Ps 106.26–27. **20.25** Moreover, God gives them *statutes that were not good and ordinances by which they could not live.* Ezekiel's charge is radical, but it is not outside the pale of other or assessments, e.g., Isa 63.17. **20.26** This verse defines the sort of laws to which Ezekiel refers, namely, offering the *firstborn.* Certain obligations involving the firstborn are ambiguous, e.g., Ex 22.29. Nonetheless, child sacrifice is attested in ancient Israel (Deut 12.31; Jer 7.31; 19.4–6; 32.35). **20.27–29** Another geographic setting, now in *the land that I swore to give them.* The promised land provided occasions for ritual malfeasance: *sacrifices, offering, pleasing odors* (incense), *drink offerings,* and the *high place.* **20.30–31** Ezekiel addresses his generation (*the house of Israel*), which can now be compared to those who have gone before. V. 31 suggests that those in exile are guilty of misdeeds like those performed by their forebears. To wit, with the effect of an inclusio (a repetition signaling the beginning and end of a unit; see vv. 3–4), God asks: *Shall I be consulted by you?* To this question the deity answers in the negative, which is a much milder response than it was to earlier audiences. **20.32** Again Ezekiel quotes those whom he addresses: *Let us be like the nations,* a clause that could also be translated, "we will be like the nations." *Worship wood and stone*; the most overt reference to veneration of objects representing gods other than Yahweh in this chapter; cf. Jer 2.27. **20.33–44** These verses offer hope. **20.33–35** *With wrath poured out* indicates that this new exodus will be accompanied by harsh trials en route. *Wilderness of the peoples,* through which Israel will have to pass on its way from Babylon to Syro-Palestine. *Face to face,* imagery of direct encounter, similar to the prior encounter in the wilderness at Mount Sinai (Deut

countries where you are scattered, with a
mighty hand and an outstretched arm,
and with wrath poured out; 35 and I will
bring you into the wilderness of the peo-
ples, and there I will enter into judgment
with you face to face. 36 As I entered into
judgment with your ancestors in the wil-
derness of the land of Egypt, so I will en-
ter into judgment with you, says the Lord
GOD. 37 I will make you pass under the
staff, and will bring you within the bond
of the covenant. 38 I will purge out the re-
bels among you, and those who transgress
against me; I will bring them out of the
land where they reside as aliens, but they
shall not enter the land of Israel. Then
you shall know that I am the LORD.

39 As for you, O house of Israel, thus
says the Lord GOD: Go serve your idols,
everyone of you now and hereafter, if you
will not listen to me; but my holy name
you shall no more profane with your gifts
and your idols.

40 For on my holy mountain, the
mountain height of Israel, says the Lord
GOD, there all the house of Israel, all of
them, shall serve me in the land; there I
will accept them, and there I will require
your contributions and the choicest of
your gifts, with all your sacred things.
41 As a pleasing odor I will accept you,
when I bring you out from the peoples,
and gather you out of the countries where
you have been scattered; and I will mani-
fest my holiness among you in the sight of
the nations. 42 You shall know that I am
the LORD, when I bring you into the land
of Israel, the country that I swore to give
to your ancestors. 43 There you shall re-
member your ways and all the deeds by
which you have polluted yourselves; and
you shall loathe yourselves for all the evils
that you have committed. 44 And you shall
know that I am the LORD, when I deal
with you for my name's sake, not accord-
ing to your evil ways, or corrupt deeds,
O house of Israel, says the Lord GOD.

A Prophecy Against the Negeb

45[x] The word of the LORD came to me:
46 Mortal, set your face toward the south,
preach against the south, and prophesy
against the forest land in the Negeb; 47 say
to the forest of the Negeb, Hear the word
of the LORD: Thus says the Lord GOD, I
will kindle a fire in you, and it shall de-
vour every green tree in you and every
dry tree; the blazing flame shall not be
quenched, and all faces from south to
north shall be scorched by it. 48 All flesh
shall see that I the LORD have kindled it; it
shall not be quenched. 49 Then I said, "Ah
Lord GOD! they are saying of me, 'Is he
not a maker of allegories?'"

The Drawn Sword of God

21[y] The word of the LORD came to
me: 2 Mortal, set your face toward
Jerusalem and preach against the sanctu-
aries; prophesy against the land of Israel
3 and say to the land of Israel, Thus says
the LORD: I am coming against you, and

x Ch 21.1 in Heb y Ch 21.6 in Heb

5.4). **20.37** *I . . . will bring you within the bond of the covenant.* Cf. the Greek manuscript tradition and RSV translation, "I will let you go by number." **20.38** Certain Israelites, *rebels*, will be removed from the community before it enters the *land* (cf. 13.9 for the motif of being removed from among the people). **20.39** The first part of the verse is an ironic admonition to worship religious objects. The final clause demonstrates the purpose of such language, to prevent God's *holy name* from being profaned. **20.40–44** The scene shifts to Jerusalem and Zion, *my holy mountain*, the site of the temple. Ezekiel describes a hopeful future in which the people resume proper religious practices. *Contributions, choicest of . . . gifts, sacred things* all refer to ritual offerings at the temple. **20.41** Israel itself will be like a *pleasing odor*, the incense and smoke from various sacrifices. **20.43** Memory will lead to contrition.

20.45–48 A prophecy against the South. **20.46** Three different Hebrew terms, which are translated by *the south, the south*, and *the Negeb*, respectively, should probably all be understood as referring to the Southern Kingdom or tribal territory of Judah. According to this imagery, Ezekiel is in the north; cf. on the enemy from the north, see ch. 38; Jer 5.14–17. **20.47–48** Fire imagery is prominent in Ezekiel (e.g., 5.4; 10.2; 15.4–7; 16.41; 19.12, 14; 21.32; 23.25). For such a great fire, cf. Am 7.4–5. **20.49** Ezekiel laments (so the formulaic *Ah*) that the people perceive him as speaking unclearly.

21.1–32 Sayings that have in common sword imagery, which appears elsewhere in Ezekiel (e.g., 14.21). **21.1–7** The audience is diverse: *Jerusalem, the sanctuaries, the land of Israel.* Moreover, God will attack *all flesh*, which includes both *righteous and wicked.* The oracle therefore stresses the

will draw my sword out of its sheath, and
will cut off from you both righteous and
wicked. 4 Because I will cut off from you
both righteous and wicked, therefore my
sword shall go out of its sheath against all
flesh from south to north; 5 and all flesh
shall know that I the LORD have drawn my
sword out of its sheath; it shall not be
sheathed again. 6 Moan therefore, mortal;
moan with breaking heart and bitter grief
before their eyes. 7 And when they say to
you, "Why do you moan?" you shall say,
"Because of the news that has come. Every heart will melt and all hands will be
feeble, every spirit will faint and all knees
will turn to water. See, it comes and it will
be fulfilled," says the Lord GOD.

8 And the word of the LORD came to
me: 9 Mortal, prophesy and say: Thus says
the Lord; Say:

A sword, a sword is sharpened,
it is also polished;
10 it is sharpened for slaughter,
honed to flash like lightning!
How can we make merry?
You have despised the rod,
and all discipline.[z]
11 The sword[a] is given to be
polished,
to be grasped in the hand;
it is sharpened, the sword is
polished,
to be placed in the slayer's
hand.
12 Cry and wail, O mortal,
for it is against my people;
it is against all Israel's princes;
they are thrown to the sword,
together with my people.
Ah! Strike the thigh!

13 For consider: What! If you despise the
rod, will it not happen?[z] says the Lord GOD.

14 And you, mortal, prophesy;
strike hand to hand.
Let the sword fall twice, thrice;
it is a sword for killing.
A sword for great slaughter—
it surrounds them;
15 therefore hearts melt
and many stumble.
At all their gates I have set
the point[z] of the sword.
Ah! It is made for flashing,
it is polished[b] for slaughter.
16 Attack to the right!
Engage to the left!
—wherever your edge is
directed.
17 I too will strike hand to hand,
I will satisfy my fury;
I the LORD have spoken.

18 The word of the LORD came to me:
19 Mortal, mark out two roads for the
sword of the king of Babylon to come;
both of them shall issue from the same
land. And make a signpost, make it for a
fork in the road leading to a city; 20 mark
out the road for the sword to come to
Rabbah of the Ammonites or to Judah
and to[c] Jerusalem the fortified. 21 For the
king of Babylon stands at the parting of
the way, at the fork in the two roads, to
use divination; he shakes the arrows, he
consults the teraphim,[d] he inspects the
liver. 22 Into his right hand comes the lot
for Jerusalem, to set battering rams, to
call out for slaughter, for raising the battle cry, to set battering rams against the

z Meaning of Heb uncertain *a* Heb *It*
b Tg: Heb *wrapped up* *c* Gk Syr: Heb *Judah in*
d Or *the household gods*

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totality of the coming destruction; cf. Ezek 9; 18. **21.6–7** The prophet laments symbolically, which elicits a question from the people, thereby allowing for a new utterance about the universal scope of God's punitive action: *every heart, all hands, every spirit, all knees.* **21.8–17** The number of text-critical notes indicates the difficulty of this poem. Descriptions of the sword are interposed with comments from the prophet and God respectively (vv. 10, 12). **21.12** Again Ezekiel is commanded to lament (v. 6). That the sword is against *Israel's princes* (cf. 19.1; 22.60) does not, however, limit the scope of the punishment; see *my people* twice in this verse. *Strike the thigh,* an expression of sorrow; see Jer 31.19. **21.13–17** These verses are built on the foregoing poem; the rod in v. 13 alludes to the rod in v. 10. Now imperative language predominates as God addresses the sword and its function, e.g., v. 16. **21.18–24** The sword of Babylon. Ezekiel is admonished to direct Nebuchadnezzar's sword, which is at a crossroads. **21.20** *Rabbah* was the capital of Ammon. **21.21** Nebuchadnezzar employs various divinatory techniques to determine which road to take. On *teraphim* as sources of information, see Hos 3.4; Zech 10.2. Hepatoscopy, *liver* divination, was prominent in Mesopotamia. In the ancient Near East kings regularly consulted various omens before entering battle. Ezekiel as an intermediary could affect his decision. **21.22** The *lot,* which symbolizes a divinatory decision, designates Jerusalem. The repertoire of

gates, to cast up ramps, to build siege towers. 23 But to them it will seem like a false divination; they have sworn solemn oaths; but he brings their guilt to remembrance, bringing about their capture.

24 Therefore thus says the Lord God: Because you have brought your guilt to remembrance, in that your transgressions are uncovered, so that in all your deeds your sins appear—because you have come to remembrance, you shall be taken in hand.[e]

25 As for you, vile, wicked prince
of Israel,
you whose day has come,
the time of final punishment,
26 thus says the Lord God:
Remove the turban, take off
the crown;
things shall not remain as
they are.
Exalt that which is low,
abase that which is high.
27 A ruin, a ruin, a ruin—
I will make it!
(Such has never occurred.)
Until he comes whose right it is;
to him I will give it.

28 As for you, mortal, prophesy, and say, Thus says the Lord God concerning the Ammonites, and concerning their reproach; say:

A sword, a sword! Drawn for
slaughter,
polished to consume,[f] to flash
like lightning.
29 Offering false visions for you,
divining lies for you,
they place you over the necks
of the vile, wicked ones—
those whose day has come,
the time of final punishment.
30 Return it to its sheath!
In the place where you were
created,
in the land of your origin,
I will judge you.
31 I will pour out my indignation
upon you,
with the fire of my wrath
I will blow upon you.
I will deliver you into brutish
hands,
those skillful to destroy.
32 You shall be fuel for the
fire,
your blood shall enter the
earth;
you shall be remembered no
more,
for I the Lord have spoken.

The Bloody City

22 The word of the Lord came to me: 2 You, mortal, will you judge, will you judge the bloody city? Then declare to it all its abominable deeds. 3 You shall say, Thus says the Lord God: A city! Shedding blood within itself; its time has come; making its idols, defiling itself. 4 You have become guilty by the blood that you have shed, and defiled by the idols that you have made; you have brought your day near, the appointed time of your years has come. Therefore I have made you a disgrace before the nations, and a mockery to all the countries. 5 Those who are near and those who are far from you will mock you, you infamous one, full of tumult.

6 The princes of Israel in you, everyone according to his power, have been bent on shedding blood. 7 Father and mother are treated with contempt in you; the alien residing within you suffers extortion; the orphan and the widow are

e Or *be taken captive* *f* Cn: Heb *to contain*

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siege and destruction ensue. **21.25–27** God addresses a *wicked prince of Israel*, almost certainly Zedekiah. *Exalt . . . low, abase . . . high*, a reversal of social order, which exemplifies dysfunction (cf. Isa 3.4–5). **21.27** *Until he comes*, probably Nebuchadnezzar, the one whom God has designated to administer judgment; cf. Gen 49.10. **21.28–32** Concerning the *Ammonites*, whose capital had been Nebuchadnezzar's alternate site for attack (v. 20). The sense of v. 29 remains unclear. Ammon appears first in the collection of oracles against the nations, 25.1–7. **21.30** Presumably Nebuchadnezzar is addressed. God's judgment will also fall on Babylon; cf. Isa 13–14; Jer 50–51. The sword is under God's control.

22.1–31 Oracles of judgment on Jerusalem and Judah. **22.2–5** Bloodshed (cf. Nahum's indictment of Nineveh as a "city of bloodshed" [3.1]) and veneration of idols are the hallmark indictments. **22.5** On Jerusalem as scorned, cf. 16.57. **22.6–12** *Shedding blood* (vv. 6, 9, 12) attributed to *the princes of Israel* (v. 6). **22.7** Cases that violate Israelite legal formulations: *father and mother*, Ex 21.17; *the alien*, Ex 22.21; *the orphan and*

wronged in you. 8 You have despised my
holy things, and profaned my sabbaths.
9 In you are those who slander to shed
blood, those in you who eat upon the
mountains, who commit lewdness in your
midst. 10 In you they uncover their fa-
thers' nakedness; in you they violate wom-
en in their menstrual periods. 11 One
commits abomination with his neighbor's
wife; another lewdly defiles his daughter-
in-law; another in you defiles his sister,
his father's daughter. 12 In you, they take
bribes to shed blood; you take both ad-
vance interest and accrued interest, and
make gain of your neighbors by extortion;
and you have forgotten me, says the
Lord GOD.

13 See, I strike my hands together at
the dishonest gain you have made, and at
the blood that has been shed within you.
14 Can your courage endure, or can your
hands remain strong in the days when I
shall deal with you? I the LORD have spo-
ken, and I will do it. 15 I will scatter you
among the nations and disperse you
through the countries, and I will purge
your filthiness out of you. 16 And I[g] shall
be profaned through you in the sight of
the nations; and you shall know that I am
the LORD.

17 The word of the LORD came to me:
18 Mortal, the house of Israel has become
dross to me; all of them, silver,[h] bronze,
tin, iron, and lead. In the smelter they
have become dross. 19 Therefore thus says
the Lord GOD: Because you have all be-
come dross, I will gather you into the
midst of Jerusalem. 20 As one gathers sil-
ver, bronze, iron, lead, and tin into a
smelter, to blow the fire upon them in or-
der to melt them; so I will gather you in
my anger and in my wrath, and I will put
you in and melt you. 21 I will gather you
and blow upon you with the fire of my
wrath, and you shall be melted within it.
22 As silver is melted in a smelter, so you
shall be melted in it; and you shall know
that I the LORD have poured out my
wrath upon you.

23 The word of the LORD came to me:
24 Mortal, say to it: You are a land that is
not cleansed, not rained upon in the day
of indignation. 25 Its princes[i] within it
are like a roaring lion tearing the prey;
they have devoured human lives; they
have taken treasure and precious things;
they have made many widows within it.
26 Its priests have done violence to my
teaching and have profaned my holy
things; they have made no distinction be-
tween the holy and the common, neither
have they taught the difference between
the unclean and the clean, and they have
disregarded my sabbaths, so that I am
profaned among them. 27 Its officials
within it are like wolves tearing the prey,
shedding blood, destroying lives to get
dishonest gain. 28 Its prophets have
smeared whitewash on their behalf, see-
ing false visions and divining lies for
them, saying, "Thus says the Lord GOD,"
when the LORD has not spoken. 29 The
people of the land have practiced extor-
tion and committed robbery; they have
oppressed the poor and needy, and have
extorted from the alien without redress.
30 And I sought for anyone among them
who would repair the wall and stand in
the breach before me on behalf of the

g Gk Syr Vg: Heb *you* *h* Transposed from the end of the verse; compare verse 20 *i* Gk: Heb *indignation.* 25 *A conspiracy of its prophets*

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the widow, Deut 16.11. **22.8–9** Violations of the orders involving holiness. **22.10–11** Concerning illicit sexual practice. **22.12** Concerning illegal monetary practices. **22.13–16** Judgment for the iniquity just cited. Punishment will occur in the form of exile. **22.13** *Strike my hands together.* Cf. 21.14. **22.17–22** Judgment on the *house of Israel* based on smelting imagery. Cf. Isa 1.22, 25; Jer 9.7; Zech 13.9; Mal 3.2–3. As with ore in which the desired metal is still present, so Israel will be gathered to one furnace, Jerusalem, for a decisive smelting. Ezekiel emphasizes the diverse elements—*silver, bronze, tin, iron, and lead*—that are being collected. However, at the outset God views Israel as dross, not the essential metal sought in the smelting process. **22.22** This verse focuses on the most precious of these metals, *silver*, as opposed to the earlier dross. Nonetheless, wrath remains the hallmark. **22.23–31** Those in certain social roles—prince, priest, official, and prophet—have acted improperly; cf. Jer 8.8–10; esp. Zeph 3.3–4. The malfeasance may be identified: *princes* who are to foster peace kill (v. 25), *priests* do not distinguish between the sacred and the common (v. 26), *officials* do not administer impartial justice (v. 27), and *prophets* do not speak on behalf of God (v. 28). *The people of the land* (v. 29; cf. 7.27) moves the discourse beyond discrete classes to all Israel. **22.30** For the search for *anyone*, cf. Jer 5.1. There as here, no such person was found. The absence of such an individual results in judgment, which is described

land, so that I would not destroy it; but I
found no one. 31 Therefore I have poured
out my indignation upon them; I have
consumed them with the fire of my wrath;
I have returned their conduct upon their
heads, says the Lord God.

Oholah and Oholibah

23 The word of the Lord came to
me: 2 Mortal, there were two
women, the daughters of one mother;
3 they played the whore in Egypt; they
played the whore in their youth; their
breasts were caressed there, and their vir-
gin bosoms were fondled. 4 Oholah was
the name of the elder and Oholibah the
name of her sister. They became mine,
and they bore sons and daughters. As for
their names, Oholah is Samaria, and
Oholibah is Jerusalem.

5 Oholah played the whore while she
was mine; she lusted after her lovers the
Assyrians, warriors[j] 6 clothed in blue,
governors and commanders, all of them
handsome young men, mounted horse-
men. 7 She bestowed her favors upon
them, the choicest men of Assyria all of
them; and she defiled herself with all the
idols of everyone for whom she lusted.
8 She did not give up her whorings that
she had practiced since Egypt; for in her
youth men had lain with her and fondled
her virgin bosom and poured out their
lust upon her. 9 Therefore I delivered her
into the hands of her lovers, into the
hands of the Assyrians, for whom she
lusted. 10 These uncovered her naked-
ness; they seized her sons and her daugh-
ters; and they killed her with the sword.
Judgment was executed upon her, and
she became a byword among women.

11 Her sister Oholibah saw this, yet
she was more corrupt than she in her lust-
ing and in her whorings, which were
worse than those of her sister. 12 She
lusted after the Assyrians, governors and
commanders, warriors[j] clothed in full ar-
mor, mounted horsemen, all of them
handsome young men. 13 And I saw that
she was defiled; they both took the same
way. 14 But she carried her whorings fur-
ther; she saw male figures carved on the
wall, images of the Chaldeans portrayed
in vermilion, 15 with belts around their
waists, with flowing turbans on their
heads, all of them looking like officers—a
picture of Babylonians whose native land
was Chaldea. 16 When she saw them she
lusted after them, and sent messengers to
them in Chaldea. 17 And the Babylonians
came to her into the bed of love, and they
defiled her with their lust; and after she
defiled herself with them, she turned
from them in disgust. 18 When she carried
on her whorings so openly and flaunted
her nakedness, I turned in disgust from
her, as I had turned from her sister. 19 Yet
she increased her whorings, remembering
the days of her youth, when she played
the whore in the land of Egypt 20 and
lusted after her paramours there, whose
members were like those of donkeys, and

j Meaning of Heb uncertain

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in v. 31. **22.31** *Fire* (see vv. 17–22) will destroy those just indicted.

23.1–49 Oholah and Oholibah, symbols for Samaria and Jerusalem. Cf. ch. 16 for a similar indictment of Jerusalem. **23.2** *Daughters of one mother.* Who is the mother? Perhaps all of Israel in Egypt, where Israel's whoredom begins; see 20.8. **23.4** *Oholah,* lit. "her tent." *Oholibah,* lit. "my tent is in her." If tent refers to tent shrine (cf. the tent of meeting, Ex 33.7–11), then the names allude to the royal shrines at the national capitals: Samaria and Jerusalem. God identifies the latter as having "my tent," which makes Oholibah's whoring worse than that of her sister. **23.5–9** Indictment and sentence of Oholah. *Governors, commanders,* and *horsemen* presume the presence of Neo-Assyrian provincial political and military officials in Syro-Palestine. Her licentious behavior with Assyrians may symbolize treaties with the Neo-Assyrian Empire. Such alliances required oaths of fealty and payment of tribute as early as the late ninth century B.C.E. **23.9–10** The death of Oholah and her children reflects the destruction of Samaria by the Neo-Assyrians in 721 B.C.E. *Delivered into the hands of her lovers.* Cf. 16.37–39. **23.11–27** Indictment and sentence of Oholibah. **23.11–21** The indictment. Like her sister, Oholibah lusts after Neo-Assyrian officials. However, *she was more corrupt,* which Ezekiel argues in vv. 14–15. *She saw male figures carved on the wall . . .* (v. 14), probably a reference to Neo-Assyrian wall reliefs, which were sometimes tinted red. Ezekiel may have known a tradition according to which Judahites sent emissaries to Neo-Assyrian (or Neo-Babylonian, *Chaldean*) cities. The greater sin would result from the Judahites' sexual misbehavior in Mesopotamia. After God rejects Oholibah, she continues *her*

whose emission was like that of stallions.
21 Thus you longed for the lewdness of
your youth, when the Egyptians[k] fondled
your bosom and caressed[l] your young
breasts.

22 Therefore, O Oholibah, thus says
the Lord GOD: I will rouse against you
your lovers from whom you turned in dis-
gust, and I will bring them against you
from every side: 23 the Babylonians and
all the Chaldeans, Pekod and Shoa and
Koa, and all the Assyrians with them,
handsome young men, governors and
commanders all of them, officers and
warriors,[m] all of them riding on horses.
24 They shall come against you from the
north[n] with chariots and wagons and a
host of peoples; they shall set themselves
against you on every side with buckler,
shield, and helmet, and I will commit the
judgment to them, and they shall judge
you according to their ordinances. 25 I will
direct my indignation against you, in or-
der that they may deal with you in fury.
They shall cut off your nose and your
ears, and your survivors shall fall by the
sword. They shall seize your sons and
your daughters, and your survivors shall
be devoured by fire. 26 They shall also
strip you of your clothes and take away
your fine jewels. 27 So I will put an end to
your lewdness and your whoring brought
from the land of Egypt; you shall not long
for them, or remember Egypt any more.
28 For thus says the Lord GOD: I will de-
liver you into the hands of those whom
you hate, into the hands of those from
whom you turned in disgust; 29 and they
shall deal with you in hatred, and take
away all the fruit of your labor, and leave
you naked and bare, and the nakedness of
your whorings shall be exposed. Your
lewdness and your whorings 30 have
brought this upon you, because you
played the whore with the nations, and
polluted yourself with their idols. 31 You
have gone the way of your sister; there-
fore I will give her cup into your hand.
32 Thus says the Lord GOD:

You shall drink your sister's cup,
deep and wide;
you shall be scorned and derided,
it holds so much.
33 You shall be filled with
drunkenness and sorrow.
A cup of horror and desolation
is the cup of your sister
Samaria;
34 you shall drink it and drain
it out,
and gnaw its sherds,
and tear out your breasts;

for I have spoken, says the Lord GOD.
35 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Be-
cause you have forgotten me and cast me
behind your back, therefore bear the con-
sequences of your lewdness and whorings.

36 The LORD said to me: Mortal, will
you judge Oholah and Oholibah? Then
declare to them their abominable deeds.
37 For they have committed adultery, and
blood is on their hands; with their idols
they have committed adultery; and they
have even offered up to them for food
the children whom they had borne to
me. 38 Moreover this they have done to
me: they have defiled my sanctuary on
the same day and profaned my sabbaths.
39 For when they had slaughtered their
children for their idols, on the same day
they came into my sanctuary to profane it.
This is what they did in my house.

40 They even sent for men to come

k Two Mss: MT *from Egypt* *l* Cn: Heb *for the sake of* *m* Compare verses 6 and 12: Heb *officers and called ones* *n* Gk: Meaning of Heb uncertain

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whorings, as she had done earlier with her sexually vigorous partners (vv. 19–20). **23.22–27** The sentence. As with Oholah, the woman will be turned over to her lovers, who now include both Assyrians and Babylonians. Note the prominence of the *o* vowel in the tribal names (v. 23), which creates assonance with the names Oholah and Oholibah. **23.23–24** Horsemen, *chariots and wagons*, and *buckler, shield, and helmet* attest to the power of the Neo-Babylonian army. **23.25–27** As prisoners of war, Oholibah and her children are subject to physical mutilation and death. *Egypt*. Ezekiel continues to emphasize that the whoring dates far back in Israel's existence. **23.28–49** Diverse judgments and reflections based on the Oholah and Oholibah discourse. **23.28–30** A general oracle of judgment, probably directed to Oholibah (Jerusalem); *you* (v. 28) is feminine singular. **23.30** Use of *idols* becomes part of the indictment. **23.31–35** These verses address Oholibah and describe her punishment using the imagery of *your sister's cup*; cf. Isa 51.17, 22; Jer 25.15–28; 51.7; Hab 2.16. **23.36–49** Final reflections, which point in a new direction. **23.36–39** More indictments, which recall chs. 16, 20, 38–39. *My sanctuary* focuses on ritual infractions. **23.40–44** One woman, probably Oholibah, undertakes self-adornment, but with some

from far away, to whom a messenger was
sent, and they came. For them you bathed
yourself, painted your eyes, and decked
yourself with ornaments; 41 you sat on a
stately couch, with a table spread before it
on which you had placed my incense and
my oil. 42 The sound of a raucous multi-
tude was around her, with many of the
rabble brought in drunken from the
wilderness; and they put bracelets on
the arms[o] of the women, and beautiful
crowns upon their heads.

43 Then I said, Ah, she is worn out
with adulteries, but they carry on their
sexual acts with her. 44 For they have gone
in to her, as one goes in to a whore. Thus
they went in to Oholah and to Oholibah,
wanton women. 45 But righteous judges
shall declare them guilty of adultery and
of bloodshed; because they are adulter-
esses and blood is on their hands.

46 For thus says the Lord God: Bring
up an assembly against them, and make
them an object of terror and of plunder.
47 The assembly shall stone them and with
their swords they shall cut them down;
they shall kill their sons and their daugh-
ters, and burn up their houses. 48 Thus
will I put an end to lewdness in the land,
so that all women may take warning and
not commit lewdness as you have done.
49 They shall repay you for your lewdness,
and you shall bear the penalty for your
sinful idolatry; and you shall know that I
am the Lord God.

The Boiling Pot

24 In the ninth year, in the tenth
month, on the tenth day of the
month, the word of the Lord came to me:
2 Mortal, write down the name of this day,
this very day. The king of Babylon has
laid siege to Jerusalem this very day.
3 And utter an allegory to the rebellious
house and say to them, Thus says the
Lord God:

Set on the pot, set it on,
pour in water also;
4 put in it the pieces,
all the good pieces, the thigh
and the shoulder;
fill it with choice bones.
5 Take the choicest one of the
flock,
pile the logs[p] under it;
boil its pieces,[q]
seethe[r] also its bones in it.

6 Therefore thus says the Lord God:
Woe to the bloody city,
the pot whose rust is in it,
whose rust has not gone out
of it!
Empty it piece by piece,
making no choice at all.[s]
7 For the blood she shed is
inside it;
she placed it on a bare rock;
she did not pour it out on the
ground,
to cover it with earth.
8 To rouse my wrath, to take
vengeance,
I have placed the blood she
shed
on a bare rock,
so that it may not be covered.
9 Therefore thus says the Lord God:
Woe to the bloody city!
I will even make the pile great.

o Heb *hands* p Compare verse 10: Heb *the bones* q Two Mss: Heb *its boilings* r Cn: Heb *its bones seethe* s Heb *piece, no lot has fallen on it*

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materials belonging to religious ritual (*my incense*, v. 41). **23.40–42** *Men* and *rabble* are imported for Oholibah; cf. 23.17. **23.45–49** The scene shifts to human judgment (*righteous judges*) and Israelite laws regarding adultery (Lev 20.10). **23.48** *That all women may take warning.* The conclusion has a wisdomlike admonitory tone rather than one of annihilation.

24.1–14 The boiling pot. **24.1–2** *Ninth year . . . month,* January 15, 588 B.C.E. (see note on 1.2), a date that the prophet is to inscribe since Nebuchadnezzar began his siege of Jerusalem on that day. **24.3** Another *allegory.* Cf. 17.2. **24.3–5** One individual is directed to cook an animal in boiling water. Cf. Mic 3.3 for the motif of flesh and bones (though there human) in one pot. Also cf. Ezek 11.3. **24.6–8** The imagery becomes complicated, with attention now devoted to corrosion in the pot. **24.7–8** Then blood contaminates what is inside the pot. On Jerusalem and blood, see ch. 22. On blood manipulation, see 33.25; Gen 9.4; Lev 7.10–14; Deut 12.16. God will not allow the blood that Jerusalem has shed to be *covered*; cf. Gen 4.10–11; Job 16.18. **24.9–14** Though this woe oracle commences with reference to blood, the imagery of the pot returns. The fire will be hotter, the rust will contaminate the pot, the pot will be emptied (so also v. 6b), and nothing will be clean. This flurry of prophetic rhetoric—which is consonant with *my*

10 Heap up the logs, kindle the fire:
boil the meat well, mix in
the spices,
let the bones be burned.
11 Stand it empty upon the coals,
so that it may become hot, its
copper glow,
its filth melt in it, its rust
be consumed.
12 In vain I have wearied myself;[t]
its thick rust does not depart.
To the fire with its rust![u]
13 Yet, when I cleansed you in your
filthy lewdness,
you did not become clean from
your filth;
you shall not again be cleansed
until I have satisfied my fury
upon you.
14 I the LORD have spoken; the time is coming, I will act. I will not refrain, I will not spare, I will not relent. According to your ways and your doings I will judge you, says the Lord GOD.

Ezekiel's Bereavement

15 The word of the LORD came to me: 16 Mortal, with one blow I am about to take away from you the delight of your eyes; yet you shall not mourn or weep, nor shall your tears run down. 17 Sigh, but not aloud; make no mourning for the dead. Bind on your turban, and put your sandals on your feet; do not cover your upper lip or eat the bread of mourners.[v] 18 So I spoke to the people in the morning, and at evening my wife died. And on the next morning I did as I was commanded.

19 Then the people said to me, "Will you not tell us what these things mean for us, that you are acting this way?" 20 Then I said to them: The word of the LORD came to me: 21 Say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: I will profane my sanctuary, the pride of your power, the delight of your eyes, and your heart's desire; and your sons and your daughters whom you left behind shall fall by the sword. 22 And you shall do as I have done; you shall not cover your upper lip or eat the bread of mourners.[v] 23 Your turbans shall be on your heads and your sandals on your feet; you shall not mourn or weep, but you shall pine away in your iniquities and groan to one another. 24 Thus Ezekiel shall be a sign to you; you shall do just as he has done. When this comes, then you shall know that I am the Lord GOD.

25 And you, mortal, on the day when I take from them their stronghold, their joy and glory, the delight of their eyes and their heart's affection, and also[w] their sons and their daughters, 26 on that day, one who has escaped will come to you to report to you the news. 27 On that day your mouth shall be opened to the one who has escaped, and you shall speak and no longer be silent. So you shall be a sign to them; and they shall know that I am the LORD.

Proclamation Against Ammon

25 The word of the LORD came to me: 2 Mortal, set your face toward the Ammonites and prophesy against them. 3 Say to the Ammonites, Hear the word of the Lord GOD: Thus says the

t Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain *u* Meaning of Heb uncertain *v* Vg Tg: Heb *of men*
w Heb lacks *and also*

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fury—provides images rather than a definitive picture of destruction by fire.

24.15–27 Ezekiel's bereavement. **24.15–18** God commands the prophet to undertake another symbolic act (cf. 4.1–5.17; 12.1–16), which involves the absence of standard mourning rituals for his wife, who is about to die. Cf. Jer 16.5 for another prohibition of mourning. **24.17** Certain of these lamentation practices, i.e., not wearing the normal headdress, not wearing sandals, covering part of the face (*upper lip*), would create a different appearance for the mourner and in so doing protect the individual from the netherworld. *Bread of mourners* (Hebrew, "bread of humans") may refer to feasting that was part of the funeral rites. **24.19–24** The act explained. God interprets the destruction of the temple to be like the death of Ezekiel's wife. Both shall occur without the expected and appropriate lamentation. Just as Ezekiel's wife was the *delight* of his eyes (v. 16), so the temple was the *delight* of the people's eyes (v. 21). **24.24** Ezekiel, the person, and not simply what he says, becomes a *sign*. **24.25–27** *On the day* or *on that day*, a formula prominent in late prophetic texts; cf. Zech 14. Ezek 33.21–22 reports the sequel to these verses: Ezekiel will be able to speak again as a prophet and be, again, a *sign* to the people.

25.1–32.32 Oracles against foreign nations. As in other books (Isa 13–23; Jer 46–51; Am

Lord GOD, Because you said, "Aha!" over
my sanctuary when it was profaned, and
over the land of Israel when it was made
desolate, and over the house of Judah
when it went into exile; 4 therefore I am
handing you over to the people of the east
for a possession. They shall set their en-
campments among you and pitch their
tents in your midst; they shall eat your
fruit, and they shall drink your milk. 5 I
will make Rabbah a pasture for camels
and Ammon a fold for flocks. Then you
shall know that I am the LORD. 6 For thus
says the Lord GOD: Because you have
clapped your hands and stamped your
feet and rejoiced with all the malice within
you against the land of Israel, 7 therefore
I have stretched out my hand against you,
and will hand you over as plunder to the
nations. I will cut you off from the peo-
ples and will make you perish out of the
countries; I will destroy you. Then you
shall know that I am the LORD.

Proclamation Against Moab

8 Thus says the Lord GOD: Because
Moab[x] said, The house of Judah is like all
the other nations, 9 therefore I will lay
open the flank of Moab from the towns[y]
on its frontier, the glory of the country,
Beth-jeshimoth, Baal-meon, and Kiria-
thaim. 10 I will give it along with Ammon
to the people of the east as a possession.
Thus Ammon shall be remembered no
more among the nations, 11 and I will exe-
cute judgments upon Moab. Then they
shall know that I am the LORD.

Proclamation Against Edom

12 Thus says the Lord GOD: Because
Edom acted revengefully against the
house of Judah and has grievously of-
fended in taking vengeance upon them,
13 therefore thus says the Lord GOD, I will
stretch out my hand against Edom, and
cut off from it humans and animals, and I
will make it desolate; from Teman even to
Dedan they shall fall by the sword. 14 I will
lay my vengeance upon Edom by the
hand of my people Israel; and they shall
act in Edom according to my anger and

x Gk Old Latin: Heb *Moab and Seir* y Heb *towns from its towns*

1.3–2.3; Nahum), prophets often directed oracles against nations and rulers other than Israel and Judah. Ezekiel addresses one empire, Egypt, and a number of smaller Syro-Palestinian states, Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre, which form a geographic arc around Judah. Tyre (chs. 26–28) and Egypt (chs. 29–32)—and their respective kings—receive primary attention. **25.1–17** Four oracles against nations on the eastern and western flanks of Israel: Ammon, Moab, Edom, and Philistia. **25.1–7** Proclamation against Ammon, a nation east of the Jordan River, north of Moab. Its southern border began approximately half way up the Dead Sea and continued for almost half the Jordan Valley between the Dead Sea and the Sea of Galilee. In 21.28, Ezekiel had already focused attention on this nation. Ammon had, in league with the Moabites and Arameans, cooperated with the Neo-Babylonians in their first major attack against Jerusalem (2 Kings 24.1–2). Later however, Ammon and Judah together attempted to withstand the Neo-Babylonians (Jer 27). **25.3** Not the aforementioned history, but Ammonite delight in the destruction of the temple and Judah serve as Ezekiel's indictment. **25.4** *People of the east.* References in this verse to *encampments* and *tents* suggest that other, though unnamed, foreign peoples—desert nomads—will destroy Ammon. **25.5** *Rabbah,* the Ammonite capital, modern Amman, Jordan. **25.8–11** Proclamation against Moab, a nation that lay south of Ammon. Since the method of punishment for Moab is the same as that of Ammon (destruction by the *people of the east*), since Ammon is mentioned explicitly in both oracles, and since Israel understood itself to stand in a kinship relation with both Ammon and Moab (Gen 19; 37–38), these first two oracles are closely related. **25.8** *Like all the other nations.* Cf. 20.32; 1 Sam 8.5. In all three texts the phrase bears a negative connotation. **25.9** *The towns.* Cf. Jer 47, which also emphasizes destruction of cities and villages and not just the capital. *Beth-jeshimoth, Baal-meon, and Kiriathaim,* cities near Moab's border with Israel. **25.12–14** Proclamation against Edom, which lies next to Moab just south of the Dead Sea. As with the other nations, there was a kinship relationship to Israel, in this case through Esau (see Gen 25.23–26). **25.12** Other biblical texts allude to Edomite action against Israel (Ps 137.7; Isa 34.5–17; Jer 49.7–22; Lam 4.21–22; Ob 1–14; Mal 1.2–5), which results in a particularly spiteful relationship between Judah and Edom; cf. Am 1.9. **25.13** *My hand,* God will act directly with Edom, not through an intermediary as was the case with Ammon and Moab. *From Teman . . . to Dedan.* The locations of both cities are uncertain, though Teman was probably not located on a border. **25.14** *By the hand of my people,* which seems to stand in contrast with v. 13. On

according to my wrath; and they shall
know my vengeance, says the Lord God.

Proclamation Against Philistia

15 Thus says the Lord God: Because
with unending hostilities the Philistines
acted in vengeance, and with malice
of heart took revenge in destruction;
16 therefore thus says the Lord God, I will
stretch out my hand against the Philis-
tines, cut off the Cherethites, and destroy
the rest of the seacoast. 17 I will execute
great vengeance on them with wrathful
punishments. Then they shall know that
I am the Lord, when I lay my vengeance
on them.

Proclamation Against Tyre

26 In the eleventh year, on the first
day of the month, the word of the
Lord came to me: 2 Mortal, because Tyre
said concerning Jerusalem,
"Aha, broken is the gateway of
the peoples;
it has swung open to me;
I shall be replenished,
now that it is wasted,"
3 therefore, thus says the Lord God:
See, I am against you, O Tyre!
I will hurl many nations
against you,
as the sea hurls its waves.
4 They shall destroy the walls
of Tyre
and break down its towers.
I will scrape its soil from it
and make it a bare rock.
5 It shall become, in the midst of
the sea,
a place for spreading nets.
I have spoken, says the Lord God.
It shall become plunder for
the nations,
6 and its daughter-towns in
the country
shall be killed by the sword.
Then they shall know that I am the Lord.
7 For thus says the Lord God: I will
bring against Tyre from the north King
Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon, king of kings,
together with horses, chariots, cavalry,
and a great and powerful army.
8 Your daughter-towns in the
country
he shall put to the sword.
He shall set up a siege wall
against you,
cast up a ramp against you,
and raise a roof of shields
against you.
9 He shall direct the shock of his
battering rams against
your walls
and break down your towers
with his axes.
10 His horses shall be so many
that their dust shall cover you.
At the noise of cavalry, wheels,
and chariots

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the demise of Edom, cf. 32.29. **25.15–17** Proclamation against Philistia. Cf. Jer 47, though there is less evidence for a Philistine nation as such in the early sixth century B.C.E. than there is for the other three territories.

26.1–28.19 Pronouncements against Tyre and its rulers. Tyre was one city-state, in contrast to the larger geographic units addressed in ch. 25. Its maritime trade and geographic remove just off the Phoenician coast made it a particularly prominent city. After defeating Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Tyre for thirteen years, though without obtaining a decisive victory (cf. 29.18). Ezekiel probably devotes so much attention to Tyre (and Egypt) because they, unlike Judah, were able to resist the instrument of God's punishment, Nebuchadnezzar and the Neo-Babylonians. **26.1–21** Four distinct oracles, vv. 2–6, 7–14, 15–18, 19–21, the last three of which are introduced by the same formula. **26.1** *The eleventh year*, probably of King Jehoiachin (see note on 1.2), which was 587 B.C.E., the year in which Jerusalem fell (cf. 33.21). **26.2–6** Indictment and sentence. **26.2** Ezekiel quotes Tyre's apparent delight at the destruction of Jerusalem as an indictment. *Gateway* reads "gateways" in the Hebrew. Whether singular or plural, the Tyrians refer to Judah as a commercial competitor, the absence of whom will enrich Tyre. **26.3** *Many nations*. Cf. the singular focus on Nebuchadnezzar in vv. 7–10. **26.5** Cf. 47.10 for imagery of *spreading nets*. **26.6** *Daughter-towns*, those cities, especially coastal, in Syro-Palestine over which Tyre exerted political and economic influence. **26.7–14** Destruction by Nebuchadrezzar. **26.7** *Nebuchadrezzar*, a more correct spelling of the Akkadian name which may be translated "May Nabu preserve my offspring"; in the Bible more often "Nebuchadnezzar." *King of kings*, a royal title used throughout the ancient Near East as early as the second millennium B.C.E. **26.8** Unlike Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander the Great was able to build a *ramp* and *siege wall* to

your very walls shall shake,
when he enters your gates
like those entering a
breached city.
11 With the hoofs of his horses
he shall trample all your streets.
He shall put your people to
the sword,
and your strong pillars shall fall
to the ground.
12 They will plunder your riches
and loot your merchandise;
they shall break down your walls
and destroy your fine houses.
Your stones and timber and soil
they shall cast into the water.
13 I will silence the music of
your songs;
the sound of your lyres shall be
heard no more.
14 I will make you a bare rock;
you shall be a place for
spreading nets.
You shall never again be rebuilt,
for I the LORD have spoken,
says the Lord GOD.

15 Thus says the Lord GOD to Tyre: Shall not the coastlands shake at the sound of your fall, when the wounded groan, when slaughter goes on within you? 16 Then all the princes of the sea shall step down from their thrones; they shall remove their robes and strip off their embroidered garments. They shall clothe themselves with trembling, and shall sit on the ground; they shall tremble every moment, and be appalled at you. 17 And they shall raise a lamentation over you, and say to you:

How you have vanished[z] from
the seas,
O city renowned,
once mighty on the sea,
you and your inhabitants,[a]
who imposed your[b] terror
on all the mainland![c]
18 Now the coastlands tremble
on the day of your fall;
the coastlands by the sea
are dismayed at your passing.

19 For thus says the Lord GOD: When I make you a city laid waste, like cities that are not inhabited, when I bring up the deep over you, and the great waters cover you, 20 then I will thrust you down with those who descend into the Pit, to the people of long ago, and I will make you live in the world below, among primeval ruins, with those who go down to the Pit, so that you will not be inhabited or have a place[d] in the land of the living. 21 I will bring you to a dreadful end, and you shall be no more; though sought for, you will never be found again, says the Lord GOD.

Lamentation over Tyre

27 The word of the LORD came to me: 2 Now you, mortal, raise a lamentation over Tyre, 3 and say to Tyre, which sits at the entrance to the sea, merchant of the peoples on many coastlands, Thus says the Lord GOD:

O Tyre, you have said,
"I am perfect in beauty."
4 Your borders are in the heart of
the seas;

z Gk OL Aquila: Heb *have vanished, O inhabited one,*
a Heb *it and its inhabitants* *b* Heb *their*
c Cn: Heb *its inhabitants* *d* Gk: Heb *I will give beauty*

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conquer Tyre. **26.13** Cf. Am 5.23. **26.14a** A repetition of imagery in the first oracle (vv. 4–5). **26.15–18** Lament described and intoned. **26.15** Cf. 27.26–36; 31.16. **26.16** *Princes of the sea*, either a mythological allusion or a reference to rulers of other coastal city-states who begin traditional lament practices. **26.17–18** Composed in the Hebrew *qinah* or lament rhythm, this short poem emphasizes the prior and present position of Tyre vis-à-vis the *seas*. **26.19–21** God proclaims to Tyre its final fate. The destruction of Tyre is viewed as a direct act of God, who manipulates the *great waters*, i.e., the primeval deep, against Tyre (cf. 31.4). **26.20** *The Pit*, the netherworld, abode of the dead; cf. 32.17–32; Pss 63.9; 139.15; Isa 44.23. Tyrians will live in the netherworld, thus allowing for a city *not inhabited*. *The world below*. Cf. Deut 32.22; Pss 86.13; 88.6; Lam 3.55. *Land of the living*. Cf. 32.23–27, 32.

27.1–36 Lamentation over Tyre, which uses the limping *qinah* rhythm in vv. 3–9, 25–36. A prose description of economic transactions interrupts the poem, which uses the primary metaphor of a large sailing ship. Ezekiel uses metaphors in other laments; see 19.1; 28.12; 32.3. **27.3** *Entrance to the sea*, i.e., a description from the perspective of those who live on land, which is consistent with a description of Tyre as a *merchant of the peoples*. Tyre's self-description of perfection causes a negative connotation that stands in contrast with vv. 4–9. **27.4–9** The ship described. **27.4** *Your borders* refers to the shape of the hull

your builders made perfect
your beauty.
5 They made all your planks
of fir trees from Senir;
they took a cedar from Lebanon
to make a mast for you.
6 From oaks of Bashan
they made your oars;
they made your deck of pines[e]
from the coasts of Cyprus,
inlaid with ivory.
7 Of fine embroidered linen
from Egypt
was your sail,
serving as your ensign;
blue and purple from the coasts
of Elishah
was your awning.
8 The inhabitants of Sidon and
Arvad
were your rowers;
skilled men of Zemer[f] were
within you,
they were your pilots.
9 The elders of Gebal and its
artisans were within you,
caulking your seams;
all the ships of the sea with their
mariners were within you,
to barter for your wares.
10 Paras[g] and Lud and Put
were in your army,
your mighty warriors;
they hung shield and helmet
in you;
they gave you splendor.
11 Men of Arvad and Helech[h]
were on your walls all around;
men of Gamad were at
your towers.
They hung their quivers all
around your walls;
they made perfect your beauty.
12 Tarshish did business with you out of the abundance of your great wealth; silver, iron, tin, and lead they exchanged for your wares. 13 Javan, Tubal, and Meshech traded with you; they exchanged human beings and vessels of bronze for your merchandise. 14 Beth-togarmah exchanged for your wares horses, war horses, and mules. 15 The Rhodians[i] traded with you; many coastlands were your own special markets; they brought you in payment ivory tusks and ebony. 16 Edom[j] did business with you because of your abundant goods; they exchanged for your wares turquoise, purple, embroidered work, fine linen, coral, and rubies. 17 Judah and the land of Israel traded with you; they exchanged for your merchandise wheat from Minnith, millet,[k] honey, oil, and balm. 18 Damascus traded with you for your abundant goods—because of your great wealth of every kind—wine of Helbon, and white wool. 19 Vedan and Javan from Uzal[k] entered into trade for your wares; wrought iron,

e Or *boxwood* f Cn Compare Gen 10.18: Heb *your skilled men, O Tyre* g Or *Persia* h Or *and your army* i Gk: Heb *The Dedanites* j Another reading is *Aram* k Meaning of Heb uncertain

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below the surface of the sea. *Beauty.* Cf. 28.12, 17. **27.5–6** Ezekiel stresses the variety of woods used for this masted galley. Such variety comes from diverse locales: Senir—the Anti-Lebanon, Lebanon, Bashan—east of the sea of Galilee in southern Syria, and Cyprus. *Inlaid with ivory.* The Hebrew is problematical. **27.7** Textiles on board—sails, ensigns, awnings—also stem from abroad. *Elishah,* another name for Cyprus. The trade attested to in vv. 5–9 underlines Tyre as *merchant of the peoples* (v. 3). **27.8** The crew came from *Zemer* (Hebrew *Tyre*), *Arvad,* and *Sidon,* Phoenician coastal cities north of Tyre (moving south to north). **27.8–9** Portions of these verses are problematical. **27.10–11** These verses turn to describe land-based military mercenaries and their armaments. *Paras,* Persia. *Lud,* Lydia. *Put* Libya. *Arvad,* Phoenicia. *Helech,* in Hebrew lit. "your army," and *Gamad* are difficult. **27.12–25a** This prose section provides a virtual catalogue of ancient Near Eastern international commerce, which begins and ends with Tarshish (vv. 12, 25a), a port (Tartessos) located in southern Spain and important for metal ore. Apart from this literary envelope, the toponyms move generally from the western Mediterranean to the eastern Mesopotamian environs, e.g., from western places like *Javan* (v. 13, Ionia), *Tubal and Meshech* (v. 13, Asia Minor), *Beth-togarmah* (v. 14, in Armenia), and Rhodes (v. 14, in the Aegean Sea) to eastern ones like *Sheba* (v. 23, the southern Arabian Peninsula), *Asshur* (v. 23, northern Mesopotamia), and *Chilmad* (v. 23, a reference to Media). *You* and *your* emphasize the central role of Tyre as an intermediary in these trade routes. **27.17** Judah and Israel provided agricultural goods. *Minnith,* if a place-name, lies outside Israelite territory (Judg 11.33). *Wheat, oil,* and *honey* are part of the standard inventory for the promised land; see, e.g., Deut 8.8. Hebrew *pannag,* translated *millet,* is uncertain; it may refer to a fig. *Balm,* resin from a tree; see Gen 37.25; 43.11; Jer 8.22; 46.11; 51.8.

cassia, and sweet cane were bartered for
your merchandise. 20 Dedan traded with
you in saddlecloths for riding. 21 Arabia
and all the princes of Kedar were your
favored dealers in lambs, rams, and goats;
in these they did business with you. 22 The
merchants of Sheba and Raamah traded
with you; they exchanged for your wares
the best of all kinds of spices, and all pre-
cious stones, and gold. 23 Haran, Canneh,
Eden, the merchants of Sheba, Asshur,
and Chilmad traded with you. 24 These
traded with you in choice garments, in
clothes of blue and embroidered work,
and in carpets of colored material, bound
with cords and made secure; in these they
traded with you.[l] 25 The ships of Tar-
shish traveled for you in your trade.

So you were filled and heavily
laden
in the heart of the seas.
26 Your rowers have brought you
into the high seas.
The east wind has wrecked you
in the heart of the seas.
27 Your riches, your wares, your
merchandise,
your mariners and your pilots,
your caulkers, your dealers in
merchandise,
and all your warriors
within you,
with all the company
that is with you,
sink into the heart of the seas
on the day of your ruin.
28 At the sound of the cry of
your pilots
the countryside shakes,
29 and down from their ships
come all that handle the oar.
The mariners and all the pilots
of the sea
stand on the shore
30 and wail aloud over you,
and cry bitterly.
They throw dust on their heads
and wallow in ashes;
31 they make themselves bald
for you,
and put on sackcloth,
and they weep over you in
bitterness of soul,
with bitter mourning.
32 In their wailing they raise a
lamentation for you,
and lament over you:
"Who was ever destroyed[m]
like Tyre
in the midst of the sea?
33 When your wares came from
the seas,
you satisfied many peoples;
with your abundant wealth and
merchandise
you enriched the kings of
the earth.
34 Now you are wrecked by the seas,
in the depths of the waters;
your merchandise and all your
crew
have sunk with you.
35 All the inhabitants of the
coastlands
are appalled at you;
and their kings are horribly
afraid,
their faces are convulsed.
36 The merchants among the
peoples hiss at you;
you have come to a
dreadful end
and shall be no more forever."

Proclamation Against the King of Tyre

28 The word of the LORD came to
me: 2 Mortal, say to the prince of
Tyre, Thus says the Lord GOD:
Because your heart is proud

l Cn: Heb *in your market silence*
m Tg Vg: Heb *like*

27.25b–36 The poem resumes, in virtual narrative form. **27.25b–27** The ship founders; the entire cargo and crew are lost. **27.26** *The east wind*, a destructive agent attested elsewhere (Ps 48.7, "as when an east wind shatters the ships of Tarshish"). Cf. Ezek 19.12; Jer 18.17. **27.28–36** The lament. Cf. 26.17–18. Poignantly, other mariners mourn the fate of those drowned. **27.32b** The Hebrew is difficult. An alternate reading is, "Who like Tyre like such silence" or, preferably, "Who may be compared to Tyre?" **27.33–35** The prominence of royalty (*kings*) in such international trade as well as the role of the *seas* in the destruction of the ship is emphasized.

28.1–10 Proclamation of indictment (vv. 2–6) and sentence (vv. 7–10) against the king of Tyre. The fate of the city is personified through the figure of its prince or ruler. **28.2** *Your heart is proud* is elsewhere explicitly an affront to God

and you have said, "I am
a god;
I sit in the seat of the gods,
in the heart of the seas,"
yet you are but a mortal, and
no god,
though you compare your mind
with the mind of a god.
3 You are indeed wiser than
Daniel;[n]
no secret is hidden from you;
4 by your wisdom and your
understanding
you have amassed wealth
for yourself,
and have gathered gold and silver
into your treasuries.
5 By your great wisdom in trade
you have increased your wealth,
and your heart has become
proud in your wealth.
6 Therefore thus says the
Lord GOD:
Because you compare your mind
with the mind of a god,
7 therefore, I will bring strangers
against you,
the most terrible of the nations;
they shall draw their swords
against the beauty of
your wisdom
and defile your splendor.
8 They shall thrust you down to
the Pit,
and you shall die a violent
death
in the heart of the seas.
9 Will you still say, "I am a god,"
in the presence of those who
kill you,
though you are but a mortal, and
no god,
in the hands of those who
wound you?
10 You shall die the death of the
uncircumcised
by the hand of foreigners;
for I have spoken, says the
Lord GOD.

Lamentation over the King of Tyre

11 Moreover the word of the LORD
came to me: 12 Mortal, raise a lamentation
over the king of Tyre, and say to him,
Thus says the Lord GOD:
You were the signet of
perfection,[o]
full of wisdom and perfect in
beauty.
13 You were in Eden, the garden
of God;
every precious stone was your
covering,
carnelian, chrysolite, and
moonstone,
beryl, onyx, and jasper,
sapphire,[p] turquoise, and
emerald;
and worked in gold were your
settings
and your engravings.[o]
On the day that you were created
they were prepared.
14 With an anointed cherub as
guardian I placed you;[o]

n Or, as otherwise read, *Danel* o Meaning of Heb uncertain p Or *lapis lazuli*

(Prov 16.5). *The seat of the gods* is related to Tyre's island setting. In Canaanite tradition, El, head of the Canaanite pantheon, is described in Canaanite epic texts as dwelling "at the springs of two rivers, amid the channels of the double watery deep." On such self-deification, cf. Isa 14.13–14. The deity's response echoes language in Isa 31.3 and introduces the motif of wisdom. **28.3** On *Daniel,* see note on 14.12–20. The legendary king Danel was not only righteous but also wise, a typical attribute of kings (see 1 Kings 3; Isa 11.2). However, Ezekiel admits that the prince was even wiser than Danel. **28.4–5** The working out of such wisdom results in vast *wealth* (cf. 1 Kings 10.14–22), which itself has engendered pride. **28.6** A recapitulation of the theme of self-deification (introduced in v. 2) and the conclusion of the indictment. **28.7** Cf. 26.7–12, which suggests that the *strangers* are the Neo-Babylonians. **28.8** *The Pit.* Cf. note on 26.20; 32.17–32. **28.10** *The death of the uncircumcised,* i.e., the fate of non-Israelites, particularly Mesopotamians, who did not practice the rite of circumcision, on which see 32.17–32.

28.11–19 Lamentation over the king of Tyre. The text is obscure at numerous points, though it seems clear Ezekiel attests a variant form of the Eden story that focuses on the expulsion of the king from the primal garden. **28.12** *Signet,* as in a royal signet ring. The initial perfection involves wisdom, beauty, and adornment. **28.13** *Eden,* here as in Gen 2.8, 10, is a place; cf. Gen 2.15. On the precious stones and metals, cf. Gen 2.11–12 and the description of the ephod, Ex 28.17–20. **28.14** The *cherub* functions here as a guardian of,

you were on the holy mountain
of God;
you walked among the stones
of fire.
15 You were blameless in your ways
from the day that you were
created,
until iniquity was found in you.
16 In the abundance of your trade
you were filled with violence,
and you sinned;
so I cast you as a profane thing
from the mountain of God,
and the guardian cherub drove
you out
from among the stones of fire.
17 Your heart was proud because of
your beauty;
you corrupted your wisdom for
the sake of your splendor.
I cast you to the ground;
I exposed you before kings,
to feast their eyes on you.
18 By the multitude of your
iniquities,
in the unrighteousness of
your trade,
you profaned your sanctuaries.
So I brought out fire from
within you;
it consumed you,
and I turned you to ashes on
the earth
in the sight of all who saw you.
19 All who know you among the
peoples
are appalled at you;
you have come to a dreadful end
and shall be no more forever.

Proclamation Against Sidon

20 The word of the LORD came to me:
21 Mortal, set your face toward Sidon, and
prophesy against it, 22 and say, Thus says
the Lord GOD:
I am against you, O Sidon,
and I will gain glory in your
midst.
They shall know that I am
the LORD
when I execute judgments in it,
and manifest my holiness in it;
23 for I will send pestilence into it,
and bloodshed into its streets;
and the dead shall fall in its
midst,
by the sword that is against it
on every side.
And they shall know that I am
the LORD.
24 The house of Israel shall no longer
find a pricking brier or a piercing thorn
among all their neighbors who have
treated them with contempt. And they
shall know that I am the Lord GOD.

Future Blessing for Israel

25 Thus says the Lord GOD: When I
gather the house of Israel from the peoples among whom they are scattered, and
manifest my holiness in them in the sight
of the nations, then they shall settle on
their own soil that I gave to my servant
Jacob. 26 They shall live in safety in it, and
shall build houses and plant vineyards.
They shall live in safety, when I execute
judgments upon all their neighbors
who have treated them with contempt.

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not against, the human; cf. 10.2; especially Gen 3.24. *The holy mountain of God*, the divine dwelling place, upon which in this tradition the divine garden was located; cf. Isa 14.13; Ps 48.13. *Stones of fire*, possibly the aforementioned gems. **28.15–19** The imagery of expulsion focuses on removal from the mountain. **28.18** Instead of *iniquity* (v. 15), the poet now offers specific indictments: improper trade practices, defilement of sanctuaries. Punishment is multiple: being cast down, exposure, fire.

28.20–23 Pronouncement against Sidon, another Phoenician port, twenty-five miles north of Tyre. The two cities often occur as a formulaic pair, e.g., in Joel 3.4; Zech 9.2. The language is typical of other Ezekiel texts: *I am against you* (5.8), *gain glory* (39.13), *execute judgments* (5.10), *pestilence* (5.12). No specific reason is offered for the punishment of Sidon.

28.24–26 Conclusion to chs. 25–28. **28.24** The aforementioned Syro-Palestinian states are likened to *briers* and *thorns*, imagery used elsewhere to describe the pre-Israelite population of the land (Num 33.55; Josh 23.13) and as instruments of torture (Judg 8.7). **28.25–26** Oracle of return and renewal. God promises to bring back those who lived in exile, a theme elsewhere important to Ezekiel (11.17; 20.41; 34.13; 39.27). On *living in safety*, see chs. 34, 36. The imagery of restoration is primarily rural and agricultural; cf. Isa 65.21 on the motif of building houses and planting vineyards.

And they shall know that I am the LORD
their God.

Proclamation Against Egypt

29 In the tenth year, in the tenth
month, on the twelfth day of the
month, the word of the LORD came to me:
2 Mortal, set your face against Pharaoh
king of Egypt, and prophesy against him
and against all Egypt; 3 speak, and say,
Thus says the Lord GOD:
I am against you,
Pharaoh king of Egypt,
the great dragon sprawling
in the midst of its channels,
saying, "My Nile is my own;
I made it for myself."
4 I will put hooks in your jaws,
and make the fish of your
channels stick to your
scales.
I will draw you up from your
channels,
with all the fish of your
channels
sticking to your scales.
5 I will fling you into the
wilderness,
you and all the fish of your
channels;
you shall fall in the open field,
and not be gathered and
buried.
To the animals of the earth and
to the birds of the air
I have given you as food.
6 Then all the inhabitants of Egypt
shall know
that I am the LORD
because you[q] were a staff of reed
to the house of Israel;
7 when they grasped you with the
hand, you broke,
and tore all their shoulders;
and when they leaned on you,
you broke,
and made all their legs
unsteady.[r]
8 Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD:
I will bring a sword upon you, and will cut
off from you human being and animal;
9 and the land of Egypt shall be a desola-
tion and a waste. Then they shall know
that I am the LORD.
Because you[s] said, "The Nile is mine,
and I made it," 10 therefore, I am against
you, and against your channels, and I will
make the land of Egypt an utter waste and
desolation, from Migdol to Syene, as far
as the border of Ethiopia.[t] 11 No human
foot shall pass through it, and no animal
foot shall pass through it; it shall be unin-
habited forty years. 12 I will make the land
of Egypt a desolation among desolated
countries; and her cities shall be a desola-
tion forty years among cities that are laid
waste. I will scatter the Egyptians among
the nations, and disperse them among the
countries.
13 Further, thus says the Lord GOD:
At the end of forty years I will gather the
Egyptians from the peoples among whom

q Gk Syr Vg: Heb *they* *r* Syr: Heb *stand*
s Gk Syr Vg: Heb *he* *t* Or *Nubia*; Heb *Cush*

29.1–32.32 Seven pronouncements against Egypt and its rulers. As with his contemporary Jeremiah, Ezekiel addresses Egypt more than any other foreign state. Like Tyre, Egypt had remained outside the sway of God's punitive force, the Neo-Babylonians; hence they, along with Israel, deserved judgment. All the pronouncements except 30.1–19 are prefaced by a date formula, which refers to Jehoiachin's regnal years. **29.1–16** On January 7, 587 B.C.E. (*tenth year . . . month*, v. 1; see note on 1.2), Hophra was pharaoh in Egypt. **29.3–7** A poem in which Pharaoh is likened to a *great dragon*, probably an allusion to a Nile crocodile. Because of boasting, Pharaoh will be captured and along with others—*the fish of your channels* (the various channels of the Nile)—will be destroyed. **29.5** *Not . . . buried*, a violation of standard pharaonic funerary practice. **29.6** *A staff of reed*, a new image, that of the bulrush (cf. Isa 36.6), to depict the pharaoh. **29.7** *When they grasped you*, a reference to Judah's unsuccessful alliance with Egypt against the Babylonians (cf. Jer 37). **29.8–9a** Language of judgment typical of Ezekiel (cf. 14.13; 25.13). **29.9b–16** Pharaoh's boast (v. 3) is repeated, thereby allowing another statement of judgment that highlights the extent of destruction. *Migdol*, though the site is unknown, is probably in the Nile Delta region; *Syene* is just north of the first cataract on the Nile; *from Migdol to Syene* is therefore a merism signifying the entire land (cf. Hebrew, "from Dan to Beer-sheba"). *Ethiopia* (Hebrew, "Cush"), another reference to the southern border. **29.11** *Forty years*, a traditional number of years for national exile; cf. 4.6; Num 14.33. **29.13–16** Just as with Israel (11.17; 20.34;

they were scattered; 14 and I will restore
the fortunes of Egypt, and bring them
back to the land of Pathros, the land of
their origin; and there they shall be a low-
ly kingdom. 15 It shall be the most lowly
of the kingdoms, and never again exalt
itself above the nations; and I will make
them so small that they will never again
rule over the nations. 16 The Egyptians[u]
shall never again be the reliance of the
house of Israel; they will recall their
iniquity, when they turned to them for
aid. Then they shall know that I am the
Lord God.

Babylonia Will Plunder Egypt

17 In the twenty-seventh year, in the
first month, on the first day of the month,
the word of the Lord came to me: 18 Mor-
tal, King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon
made his army labor hard against Tyre;
every head was made bald and every
shoulder was rubbed bare; yet neither he
nor his army got anything from Tyre to
pay for the labor that he had expended
against it. 19 Therefore thus says the Lord
God: I will give the land of Egypt to King
Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon; and he shall
carry off its wealth and despoil it and
plunder it; and it shall be the wages for
his army. 20 I have given him the land of
Egypt as his payment for which he la-
bored, because they worked for me, says
the Lord God.

21 On that day I will cause a horn to
sprout up for the house of Israel, and I
will open your lips among them. Then
they shall know that I am the Lord.

Lamentation for Egypt

30 The word of the Lord came to
me: 2 Mortal, prophesy, and say,
Thus says the Lord God:
Wail, "Alas for the day!"
3 For a day is near,
the day of the Lord is near;
it will be a day of clouds,
a time of doom[v] for the
nations.
4 A sword shall come upon Egypt,
and anguish shall be in
Ethiopia,[w]
when the slain fall in Egypt,
and its wealth is carried away,
and its foundations are
torn down.
5 Ethiopia,[w] and Put, and Lud, and all
Arabia, and Libya,[x] and the people of the
allied land[y] shall fall with them by the
sword.

6 Thus says the Lord:
Those who support Egypt shall
fall,
and its proud might shall
come down;
from Migdol to Syene
they shall fall within it by
the sword,

u Heb *It* v Heb lacks *of doom* w Or *Nubia*; Heb *Cush* x Compare Gk Syr Vg: Heb *Cub* y Meaning of Heb uncertain

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28.25), God will return Egypt to its land. **29.14** *Pathros*, a reference to Upper or southern Egypt, i.e., Egypt will be limited, as *a lowly kingdom*, to a smaller territory than it possessed under Hophra. Though a nation, Egypt will no longer be an empire; cf. Jer 46.26.

29.17–21 The second pronouncement is prefaced by the latest date in the book, later than the pronouncements that follow it, April 26, 571 B.C.E. (v. 1; see note on 1.2). **29.18** Ezekiel refers to Nebuchadnezzar's thirteen-year siege against Tyre, which ended ca. 573 B.C.E. This verse makes it clear that Nebuchadnezzar did not despoil Tyre (cf. 26.7–14). **29.19–20** Since Nebuchadnezzar had *worked for* God and without sufficient reward, he will be permitted to attack Egypt instead. Such an attack was launched in 568 B.C.E., again without conclusive results. **29.21** *A horn*. Cf. Ps 132.17, which suggests that the promise involves restoration of Davidic kingship. *Open your lips*, a reference to exercise of the prophetic role; cf. 16.63.

30.1–19 The third, and undated, pronouncement, which is itself made up of several distinct utterances (vv. 2–9, 10–12, 13–19). **30.2–9** By commencing with *Wail*, a plural imperative, the prophet admonishes his audience to begin lamenting the destruction of Egypt. **30.3** *The day of the Lord*. Cf. other prophetic texts in which God's day is one of doom and destruction (Am 5.18; Zeph 1.14–18). *A day of clouds*, one in which the darkness of God's day is envisioned (Joel 2.2; Zeph 1.15). **30.4** Here *Ethiopia* is understood to be part of Egypt, as in Isa 20.3, 5. **30.5** With the exception of *all Arabia* and *the people of the allied land*, the other four names rhyme in Hebrew. On *Put, Lud*, see note on 27.10–11. *Them*, i.e., the Egyptians. The destruction will be so vast that it affects peoples far and near. **30.6** The key word *fall* (vv. 4, 5) is repeated, but now it is Egypt's allies

says the Lord God.
7 They shall be desolated among
other desolated countries,
and their cities shall lie among
cities laid waste.
8 Then they shall know that I am
the Lord,
when I have set fire to Egypt,
and all who help it are broken.
9 On that day, messengers shall go out from me in ships to terrify the unsuspecting Ethiopians;[z] and anguish shall come upon them on the day of Egypt's doom;[a] for it is coming!

10 Thus says the Lord God:
I will put an end to the hordes
of Egypt,
by the hand of King
Nebuchadrezzar of
Babylon.
11 He and his people with him, the
most terrible of the nations,
shall be brought in to destroy
the land;
and they shall draw their swords
against Egypt,
and fill the land with the slain.
12 I will dry up the channels,
and will sell the land into the
hand of evildoers;
I will bring desolation upon the
land and everything in it
by the hand of foreigners;
I the Lord have spoken.

13 Thus says the Lord God:
I will destroy the idols
and put an end to the images
in Memphis;
there shall no longer be a prince
in the land of Egypt;
so I will put fear in the land
of Egypt.
14 I will make Pathros a desolation,
and will set fire to Zoan,
and will execute acts of
judgment on Thebes.
15 I will pour my wrath upon
Pelusium,
the stronghold of Egypt,
and cut off the hordes of
Thebes.
16 I will set fire to Egypt;
Pelusium shall be in great
agony;
Thebes shall be breached,
and Memphis face adversaries
by day.
17 The young men of On and of
Pi-beseth shall fall by
the sword;
and the cities themselves[b] shall
go into captivity.
18 At Tehaphnehes the day shall
be dark,
when I break there the
dominion of Egypt,
and its proud might shall come to
an end;
the city[c] shall be covered by
a cloud,
and its daughter-towns shall go
into captivity.

z Or *Nubians*; Heb *Cush* *a* Heb *the day of Egypt*
b Heb *and they* *c* Heb *she*

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who will fall, perhaps those identified in v. 5. **30.9** As with v. 5, this prose verse appears intrusive; and both verses emphasize that nations other than Egypt will be affected on this terrible day. The Hebrew does not include *doom*. Cf. Isa 18.2, which also refers to divine emissaries arriving via ship. **30.10–12** Again (29.18–20), Ezekiel identifies *Nebuchadrezzar* as the one designated by God, i.e., Nebuchadnezzar is to *be brought in* to destroy Egypt; cf. 26.7–14. **30.12** *I*, God, the ultimate author of Egypt's destruction. The drying up of the Nile and sale of Egyptian land are new motifs. **30.13–19** Ezekiel cites various place-names to make God's judgment geographically specific. The forms of destruction remain general. Moreover, there is no apparent order to the listings. Many of the cities were associated with specific gods, e.g., On (v. 17) with Re-Atum, Pi-beseth (v. 17) with Bastis. Apart from v. 13, there are no overt religious polemics. **30.13** *Memphis*, which lies about fifteen miles south of Cairo, was the early capital and largest city in Egypt during most of its history. Both religious images (though the words for *idols* and *images* are uncertain and may refer to humans) and leaders (a *prince*) will be destroyed. **30.14** *Pathros*, or "land of Pathros" (so reads the Greek manuscript tradition); see note on 29.14. *Zoan*, a city (probably Avaris [Greek Tanis]) in the eastern Nile Delta. *Thebes*, the capital of Egypt during much of its history, located in Middle Egypt. **30.15** *Pelusim* is near Zoan in the northeast Delta. **30.17** *On*, Heliopolis, only six miles northeast of Cairo. *Pibeseth*, Bubastis, in the eastern Delta. **30.18** *Tehaphnehes*, near the northern shore of the Suez Gulf.

19 Thus I will execute acts of
judgment on Egypt.
Then they shall know that I am
the LORD.

Proclamation Against Pharaoh

20 In the eleventh year, in the first month, on the seventh day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me: 21 Mortal, I have broken the arm of Pharaoh king of Egypt; it has not been bound up for healing or wrapped with a bandage, so that it may become strong to wield the sword. 22 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: I am against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and will break his arms, both the strong arm and the one that was broken; and I will make the sword fall from his hand. 23 I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and disperse them throughout the lands. 24 I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, and put my sword in his hand; but I will break the arms of Pharaoh, and he will groan before him with the groans of one mortally wounded. 25 I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, but the arms of Pharaoh shall fall. And they shall know that I am the LORD, when I put my sword into the hand of the king of Babylon. He shall stretch it out against the land of Egypt, 26 and I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations and disperse them throughout the countries. Then they shall know that I am the LORD.

The Lofty Cedar

31 In the eleventh year, in the third month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me: 2 Mortal, say to Pharaoh king of Egypt and to his hordes:

Whom are you like in your
greatness?
3 Consider Assyria, a cedar
of Lebanon,
with fair branches and forest
shade,
and of great height,
its top among the clouds.[d]
4 The waters nourished it,
the deep made it grow tall,
making its rivers flow[e]
around the place it was planted,
sending forth its streams
to all the trees of the field.
5 So it towered high
above all the trees of the field;
its boughs grew large
and its branches long,
from abundant water in
its shoots.
6 All the birds of the air
made their nests in its boughs;
under its branches all the animals
of the field
gave birth to their young;
and in its shade
all great nations lived.

d Gk: Heb *thick boughs* *e* Gk: Heb *rivers going*

30.20–26 The fourth pronouncement. The date in v. 20 is April 29, 587 B.C.E. (see note on 1.2). **30.21** The bodily imagery probably refers to a military defeat of Hophra by Nebuchadnezzar, when the pharaoh came to Judah's aid during the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians (Jer 37.5). The defeat probably occurred in 588 B.C.E. **30.23–24** The historical allusion sets the stage for an announcement that both Hophra's arms will be broken, an act that symbolizes total defeat for Egypt (*mortally wounded*). Remaining with the "arm" imagery, God will *strengthen* Nebuchadnezzar's arms. **30.26** Cf. 29.12.

31.1–18 The fifth pronouncement. The date in v. 1 is June 21, 587 B.C.E. (see note on 1.2). This pronouncement utilizes the imagery of a cedar from Lebanon in a poem, vv. 2b–9, and two interpretations, vv. 10–14, 15–18. As with the first pronouncement, the fifth is directed to Pharaoh (vv. 2, 18), though apart from these verses there is no explicit reference to Egypt. Cf. the RSV translation in vv. 11–13, 15–17, where the verbs are translated in the future tense. The NRSV by contrast reads them correctly as past tense. **31.2** Cf. the analogous question in v. 18. **31.3** Cf. the RSV's conjectural translation, "Behold I will liken you," to the NRSV's translation of the Hebrew, *Consider Assyria*. However, the word translated *Assyria* may result from a scribal error in a word meaning "cypress." The tree is greater than life; some have termed it a cosmic or world tree, with its top in the clouds (cf. Gen 11.4) and its roots in the primeval deep. Cf. 17.23; Dan 4; Mk 4.32; and the tree of life, Gen 2–3. **31.4** *The deep*. See Gen 1.2; 7.11; 8.2; 49.25; Deut 33.13; Isa 51.9–11. The tree is so important that the poet may speak of *its rivers*. **31.5** *Towered* and *branches* present Aramaic spellings. **31.6** The poet uses hyperbole, *all the birds, all the animals, all great nations*, to reinforce the cosmic scale of this tree. It

7 It was beautiful in its greatness,
in the length of its branches;
for its roots went down
to abundant water.
8 The cedars in the garden of God
could not rival it,
nor the fir trees equal its
boughs;
the plane trees were as nothing
compared with its branches;
no tree in the garden of God
was like it in beauty.
9 I made it beautiful
with its mass of branches,
the envy of all the trees of Eden
that were in the garden of God.

10 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Because it[f] towered high and set its top among the clouds,[g] and its heart was proud of its height, 11 I gave it into the hand of the prince of the nations; he has dealt with it as its wickedness deserves. I have cast it out. 12 Foreigners from the most terrible of the nations have cut it down and left it. On the mountains and in all the valleys its branches have fallen, and its boughs lie broken in all the watercourses of the land; and all the peoples of the earth went away from its shade and left it.

13 On its fallen trunk settle
all the birds of the air,
and among its boughs lodge
all the wild animals.

14 All this is in order that no trees by the waters may grow to lofty height or set their tops among the clouds,[g] and that no trees that drink water may reach up to them in height.

For all of them are handed over
to death,
to the world below;
along with all mortals,
with those who go down to
the Pit.

15 Thus says the Lord GOD: On the day it went down to Sheol I closed the deep over it and covered it; I restrained its rivers, and its mighty waters were checked. I clothed Lebanon in gloom for it, and all the trees of the field fainted because of it. 16 I made the nations quake at the sound of its fall, when I cast it down to Sheol with those who go down to the Pit; and all the trees of Eden, the choice and best of Lebanon, all that were well watered, were consoled in the world below. 17 They also went down to Sheol with it, to those killed by the sword, along with its allies,[h] those who lived in its shade among the nations.

18 Which among the trees of Eden was like you in glory and in greatness? Now you shall be brought down with the trees of Eden to the world below; you shall lie among the uncircumcised, with those who are killed by the sword. This is Pharaoh and all his horde, says the Lord GOD.

f Syr Vg: Heb *you* g Gk: Heb *thick boughs*
h Heb *its arms*

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provides protection for birthing and living; cf. 17.23. **31.7** *Beautiful in its greatness.* Cf. Gen 3.6 for a tree that was "a delight to the eyes." **31.8–9** A new tone of rivalry and envy between the great tree and *the cedars in the garden of God.* This element suggests the great tree was not located in the garden; see v. 18. Moreover, 17.23 speaks of a tree being planted on the mountain of God. *Plane trees,* perhaps a form of pine; cf. Isa 41.19. **31.9** God is the explicit creator of this tree. **31.10–14** Indictment and sentence passed. **31.10** The tree ("you" in the Hebrew, though other manuscript traditions read *it*) took inappropriate pride in its stature. Cf. 28.17 for similar language applied to the king of Tyre. **31.11** *The prince of the nations,* lit. "a ram," which probably refers to Nebuchadnezzar. **31.12** *Foreigners,* the Neo-Babylonians, cut down the tree, leaving both timber and detritus. **31.13** Ironically, the tree still appears to provide shelter for birds and animals, though people have left (v. 12). All taint of civilization has disappeared. **31.14** An almost sermonic conclusion for the benefit of other "trees." **31.14b** This verse appears related to vv. 15–18. **31.15–18** Fate in the underworld; cf. 26.19–21; 28.8; 32.17–32. **31.15–16** *I closed the deep over it and covered it.* Cf. the Greek manuscript tradition and the RSV translation, "I will make the deep mourn for it." The tree, as would a person, descends into *Sheol,* the netherworld (see also 32.21, 27), which could be viewed as a watery abyss. God controls the watery powers (cf. Gen 8.2). Whereas *the trees of the field fainted, the trees of Eden* apparently are also in Sheol and are comforted since they share the same fate as that of the great tree. **31.17** Hebrew text is problematical here. **31.18** The question now asks the pharaoh for a comparison with *the trees of Eden*; cf. 28.10 on the motif of the *uncircumcised.*

Lamentation over Pharaoh and Egypt

32 In the twelfth year, in the twelfth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me:
2 Mortal, raise a lamentation over Pharaoh king of Egypt, and say to him:
You consider yourself a lion among the nations,
but you are like a dragon in the seas;
you thrash about in your streams,
trouble the water with your feet,
and foul your[i] streams.
3 Thus says the Lord GOD:
In an assembly of many peoples
I will throw my net over you;
and I[j] will haul you up in my dragnet.
4 I will throw you on the ground,
on the open field I will fling you,
and will cause all the birds of the air to settle on you,
and I will let the wild animals of the whole earth gorge themselves with you.
5 I will strew your flesh on the mountains,
and fill the valleys with your carcass.[k]
6 I will drench the land with your flowing blood
up to the mountains,
and the watercourses will be filled with you.
7 When I blot you out, I will cover the heavens,
and make their stars dark;
I will cover the sun with a cloud,
and the moon shall not give its light.
8 All the shining lights of the heavens
I will darken above you,
and put darkness on your land, says the Lord GOD.
9 I will trouble the hearts of many peoples,
as I carry you captive[l] among the nations,
into countries you have not known.
10 I will make many peoples appalled at you;
their kings shall shudder because of you.
When I brandish my sword before them,
they shall tremble every moment
for their lives, each one of them,
on the day of your downfall.
11 For thus says the Lord GOD:
The sword of the king of Babylon shall come against you.
12 I will cause your hordes to fall
by the swords of mighty ones,
all of them most terrible among the nations.
They shall bring to ruin the pride of Egypt,
and all its hordes shall perish.
13 I will destroy all its livestock
from beside abundant waters;
and no human foot shall trouble them any more,

i Heb *their* *j* Gk Vg: Heb *they* *k* Symmachus Syr Vg: Heb *your height* *l* Gk: Heb *bring your destruction*

32.1–16 The sixth pronouncement, March 3, 586 B.C.E. (see note on 1.2). Vv. 2, 16 suggest that these verses are one lament; cf. ch. 19. However, only v. 2 contains the language and form of lament. Other sections (vv. 3–8, 9–10, 11–14, 15) are oracular utterances. **32.2** Ezekiel addresses Pharaoh directly and likens him to a sea dragon (not the crocodile as in 29.3), instead of the self-proffered and typical royal heraldic symbol, the lion. The parallel nouns *seas* and *streams* connote mythic waters; cf. 31.4. The lament functions to indict the pharaoh for contaminating all waters. **32.3–8** Judgment on the dragon. **32.3** *My net* may allude to the archetypal combat, attested in the Babylonian *Enuma Elish*, when Marduk netted and then killed Tiamat, the sea dragon. **32.4–6** A vivid depiction of the fate of the dragon's carcass; cf. 29.5. The immense scale—*animals of the whole earth, fill the valleys*—demonstrate the mythic proportions of the dragon that has been slain; cf. Isa 51.9. **32.7–8** The motif of darkness suggests that this is the day of the Lord; cf. 30.3; Joel 2.1–2; 3.15; Zeph 1.15, though Ezek 32.8 here recalls the plague of darkness (Ex 10.21–29). **32.9–10** Pharaoh (or Egypt), now as *captive*, will be paraded among various nations, perhaps a reference to exile; cf. 29.12–13. **32.11** *The king of Babylon*, Nebuchadnezzar; cf. 29.19. **32.12** *Mighty ones* may be translated "warriors"; cf. 32.21, 27. **32.13–14** On the motif of turbid versus *clear* water, cf. v. 2. Cf. 29.11 for similar

nor shall the hoofs of cattle
trouble them.
14 Then I will make their waters
clear,
and cause their streams to run
like oil, says the Lord GOD.
15 When I make the land of Egypt
desolate
and when the land is stripped
of all that fills it,
when I strike down all who live
in it,
then they shall know that I am
the LORD.
16 This is a lamentation; it shall
be chanted.
The women of the nations shall
chant it.
Over Egypt and all its hordes
they shall chant it,
says the Lord GOD.

Dirge over Egypt

17 In the twelfth year, in the first month,[m] on the fifteenth day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me:
18 Mortal, wail over the hordes
of Egypt,
and send them down,
with Egypt[n] and the daughters
of majestic nations,
to the world below,
with those who go down to
the Pit.
19 "Whom do you surpass in beauty?
Go down! Be laid to rest with
the uncircumcised!"
20 They shall fall among those who are killed by the sword. Egypt[o] has been handed over to the sword; carry away both it and its hordes. 21 The mighty chiefs shall speak of them, with their helpers, out of the midst of Sheol: "They have come down, they lie still, the uncircumcised, killed by the sword."
22 Assyria is there, and all its company, their graves all around it, all of them killed, fallen by the sword. 23 Their graves are set in the uttermost parts of the Pit. Its company is all around its grave, all of them killed, fallen by the sword, who spread terror in the land of the living.
24 Elam is there, and all its hordes around its grave; all of them killed, fallen by the sword, who went down uncircumcised into the world below, who spread terror in the land of the living. They bear their shame with those who go down to the Pit. 25 They have made Elam[n] a bed among the slain with all its hordes, their graves all around it, all of them uncircumcised, killed by the sword; for terror of them was spread in the land of the living, and they bear their shame with those who go down to the Pit; they are placed among the slain.
26 Meshech and Tubal are there, and all their multitude, their graves all around them, all of them uncircumcised, killed by the sword; for they spread terror in the

m Gk: Heb lacks *in the first month* *n* Heb *it*
o Heb *It*

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imagery of desolation. **32.15** A final and summary saying, which includes language typical of Ezekiel. **32.16** *The women of the nations*, apparently women regularly undertook the role of public lamentation; see similarly Jer 9.17–18.

32.17–32 The seventh pronouncement, April 27, 586 B.C.E. (see note on 1.2), depicts the demography of the Pit or Sheol, to which Pharaoh and his army will descend (cf. note on 26.20). **32.18** *Wail*, a word different from "lamentation" (v. 16); cf. Jer 9.10, 17–19. Ezekiel not only is to wail; the utterance is performative—it will *send them down. With Egypt ... below*. The Hebrew is difficult; one may translate "majestic nations have brought her down to the world below." **32.19–20** V. 19 is the beginning of the song of wailing. If one includes the first three Hebrew words of v. 20, lit. "in the midst of those killed by the sword," with v. 19, one discovers that *the Pit* is populated with the *uncircumcised* and those who suffer a violent death (in distinction from those who, as a common biblical formula says, "go down to peace in Sheol"). Egypt is personified in the masculine singular in the Hebrew, translated *it* here. One infers that in the netherworld there is a separate place (the Pit?) for the unclean, the nations listed here. **32.21** *Mighty chiefs* could be translated "mighty gods," an ironic reference to minor deities in the underworld. **32.22–23** The first in a series of nations who are already in the netherworld, *Assyria* was defeated at Nineveh by the Babylonians (and Medes) in 612 B.C.E. *All around it*, or simply "round its grave." *Uttermost parts*. Cf. Isa 14.15. **32.24–25** *Elam*, an empire just to the east of Babylonia, was defeated decisively by the Assyrians in the mid-seventh century B.C.E. **32.26–28** *Meshech and Tubal*, lit. "Meshech-Tubal," the area of Asia Minor,

land of the living. 27 And they do not lie
with the fallen warriors of long ago[p] who
went down to Sheol with their weapons of
war, whose swords were laid under their
heads, and whose shields[q] are upon their
bones; for the terror of the warriors was
in the land of the living. 28 So you shall be
broken and lie among the uncircumcised,
with those who are killed by the sword.
29 Edom is there, its kings and all its
princes, who for all their might are laid
with those who are killed by the sword;
they lie with the uncircumcised, with
those who go down to the Pit.
30 The princes of the north are there,
all of them, and all the Sidonians, who
have gone down in shame with the slain,
for all the terror that they caused by their
might; they lie uncircumcised with those
who are killed by the sword, and bear
their shame with those who go down to
the Pit.
31 When Pharaoh sees them, he will
be consoled for all his hordes—Pharaoh
and all his army, killed by the sword, says
the Lord God. 32 For he[r] spread terror in
the land of the living; therefore he shall
be laid to rest among the uncircumcised,
with those who are slain by the sword—
Pharaoh and all his multitude, says the
Lord God.

Ezekiel, Israel's Sentry

33 The word of the Lord came to
me: 2 O Mortal, speak to your
people and say to them, If I bring the
sword upon a land, and the people of the
land take one of their number as their
sentinel; 3 and if the sentinel sees the
sword coming upon the land and blows
the trumpet and warns the people; 4 then
if any who hear the sound of the trumpet
do not take warning, and the sword comes
and takes them away, their blood shall be
upon their own heads. 5 They heard the
sound of the trumpet and did not take
warning; their blood shall be upon themselves. But if they had taken warning,
they would have saved their lives. 6 But if
the sentinel sees the sword coming and
does not blow the trumpet, so that the
people are not warned, and the sword
comes and takes any of them, they are
taken away in their iniquity, but their
blood I will require at the sentinel's hand.
7 So you, mortal, I have made a sentinel for the house of Israel; whenever you
hear a word from my mouth, you shall
give them warning from me. 8 If I say to
the wicked, "O wicked ones, you shall
surely die," and you do not speak to warn
the wicked to turn from their ways, the
wicked shall die in their iniquity, but their
blood I will require at your hand. 9 But if
you warn the wicked to turn from their
ways, and they do not turn from their
ways, the wicked shall die in their iniquity,
but you will have saved your life.

God's Justice and Mercy

10 Now you, mortal, say to the house
of Israel, Thus you have said: "Our transgressions and our sins weigh upon us, and

p Gk Old Latin: Heb *of the uncircumcised*
q Cn: Heb *iniquities* r Cn: Heb *I*

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though the specific nation is uncertain (cf. 27.13). **32.27** The honorable burials of ancient military heroes; cf. Gen 10.8–9. **32.29–30** Syro-Palestinian groups in the Pit: *Edom* (cf. 25.12–14); *princes of the north* (Phoenician rulers?); *Sidonians* (28.20–23). **32.31–32** Pharaoh *consoled* by his colleagues in the Pit (31.16).

33.1–39.29 The third major section in Ezekiel, which includes many oracles of restoration along with more oracles against foreign nations. **33.1–33** Ch. 33 comprises diverse material, much of which is paralleled elsewhere in the book. **33.1–9** The prophet as sentinel, a way of understanding the prophetic role addressed earlier in 3.16–21. **33.2–6** Those with Ezekiel in exile are to hear this description of the prophet's task. **33.2–5** The first case, in which the sentinel sounds the alarm, but the people do not respond. *Blood . . . upon their own heads.* Cf. 17.19. **33.6** The case in which the sentinel does not sound the alarm. In both this case and the previous one (vv. 2–5), the people die. *Their blood I will require.* The Hebrew uses a parallel but different term for "require" in v. 8; cf. 3.18. The implication is that God will avenge the death of the person who had not been warned. **33.7–9** An oracle to Ezekiel in which two more cases are adduced. In v. 8 the wicked are not warned. In v. 9 the wicked are warned, but do not turn. Again, in both cases, the wicked die. *You shall surely die,* the pronouncement of a legal death sentence; cf. Gen 2.17; 20.7; 1 Sam 14.44; 22.16. **33.10–20** God responds to the people's plight; see similarly ch. 18. **33.10** As in ch. 18, the section begins with a quotation from the people, which, however, focuses on the *sins* of the present generation,

we waste away because of them; how then
can we live?" 11 Say to them, As I live, says
the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the
death of the wicked, but that the wicked
turn from their ways and live; turn back,
turn back from your evil ways; for why
will you die, O house of Israel? 12 And
you, mortal, say to your people, The righ-
teousness of the righteous shall not save
them when they transgress; and as for the
wickedness of the wicked, it shall not
make them stumble when they turn from
their wickedness; and the righteous shall
not be able to live by their righteousness[s]
when they sin. 13 Though I say to the
righteous that they shall surely live, yet if
they trust in their righteousness and com-
mit iniquity, none of their righteous deeds
shall be remembered; but in the iniquity
that they have committed they shall die.
14 Again, though I say to the wicked, "You
shall surely die," yet if they turn from
their sin and do what is lawful and right—
15 if the wicked restore the pledge, give
back what they have taken by robbery,
and walk in the statutes of life, commit-
ting no iniquity—they shall surely live,
they shall not die. 16 None of the sins that
they have committed shall be remem-
bered against them; they have done what
is lawful and right, they shall surely live.
17 Yet your people say, "The way of
the Lord is not just," when it is their own
way that is not just. 18 When the righteous
turn from their righteousness, and com-
mit iniquity, they shall die for it.[t] 19 And
when the wicked turn from their wicked-
ness, and do what is lawful and right, they
shall live by it.[t] 20 Yet you say, "The way
of the Lord is not just." O house of Israel,
I will judge all of you according to your
ways!

The Fall of Jerusalem

21 In the twelfth year of our exile, in
the tenth month, on the fifth day of the
month, someone who had escaped from
Jerusalem came to me and said, "The city
has fallen." 22 Now the hand of the LORD
had been upon me the evening before the
fugitive came; but he had opened my
mouth by the time the fugitive came to me
in the morning; so my mouth was opened,
and I was no longer unable to speak.

The Survivors in Judah

23 The word of the LORD came to me:
24 Mortal, the inhabitants of these waste
places in the land of Israel keep saying,
"Abraham was only one man, yet he got
possession of the land; but we are many;
the land is surely given us to possess."
25 Therefore say to them, Thus says the
Lord GOD: You eat flesh with the blood,
and lift up your eyes to your idols, and
shed blood; shall you then possess the
land? 26 You depend on your swords, you
commit abominations, and each of you
defiles his neighbor's wife; shall you then
possess the land? 27 Say this to them, Thus
says the Lord GOD: As I live, surely those
who are in the waste places shall fall by
the sword; and those who are in the open
field I will give to the wild animals to be
devoured; and those who are in strong-
holds and in caves shall die by pestilence.
28 I will make the land a desolation and a
waste, and its proud might shall come to
an end; and the mountains of Israel shall
be so desolate that no one will pass
through. 29 Then they shall know that I
am the LORD, when I have made the
land a desolation and a waste because of

s Heb *by it* t Heb *them*

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not the past. **33.11** *Turn back from your evil ways,* the key admonition. **33.12** To act righteously is to save oneself; cf. 18.26–27. **33.13–16** Neither the fate of those deemed righteous nor that of those called wicked is unchangeable. **33.13** Cf. 18.24. **33.15** Two specific cases in which the *wicked* might act righteously, cf. 18.5–17. **33.17–20** These verses mirror directly 18.25–30. The issue is one of theodicy or God's justice. **33.21–22** *Twelfth year ... month,* January 19, 585 B.C.E. (see note on 1.2), the day on which news of Jerusalem's fall came to Ezekiel in exile. *Unable to speak.* Cf. 24.15–27 on the issue of Ezekiel's dumbness. *The hand of the LORD,* a reference to spirit possession, which may have also involved lack of speech; cf. 1.3. **33.23–29** Judahites in the land. As with 11.14–16, the issue involves claims to land ownership in Judah. The leitmotif *waste* characterizes the land after it had been devastated by the Babylonians. **33.24** A proverbial saying, quite different from the people's rationale in 11.15. **33.25–26** Specific ritual and ethical indictments of those who live in Judah. **33.27** The punishments are typical of Ezekiel (5.12; 7.15; 14.15–19). **33.28–29** The *land,* which had already been destroyed, might suffer further devastation; cf. 6.14. The people in the land have lost their claim to that territory *because*

all their abominations that they have committed.

30 As for you, mortal, your people who talk together about you by the walls, and at the doors of the houses, say to one another, each to a neighbor, "Come and hear what the word is that comes from the LORD." 31 They come to you as people come, and they sit before you as my people, and they hear your words, but they will not obey them. For flattery is on their lips, but their heart is set on their gain. 32 To them you are like a singer of love songs,[u] one who has a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument; they hear what you say, but they will not do it. 33 When this comes—and come it will!—then they shall know that a prophet has been among them.

Israel's False Shepherds

34 The word of the LORD came to me: 2 Mortal, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel: prophesy, and say to them—to the shepherds: Thus says the Lord GOD: Ah, you shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? 3 You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fatlings; but you do not feed the sheep. 4 You have not strengthened the weak, you have not healed the sick, you have not bound up the injured, you have not brought back the strayed, you have not sought the lost, but with force and harshness you have ruled them. 5 So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd; and scattered, they became food for all the wild animals. 6 My sheep were scattered, they wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill; my sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with no one to search or seek for them.

7 Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: 8 As I live, says the Lord GOD, because my sheep have become a prey, and my sheep have become food for all the wild animals, since there was no shepherd; and because my shepherds have not searched for my sheep, but the shepherds have fed themselves, and have not fed my sheep; 9 therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: 10 Thus says the Lord GOD, I am against the shepherds; and I will demand my sheep at their hand, and put a stop to their feeding the sheep; no longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, so that they may not be food for them.

God, the True Shepherd

11 For thus says the Lord GOD: I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. 12 As shepherds seek out their flocks when they are among their scattered sheep, so I will seek out my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places to

u Cn: Heb *like a love song*

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of all their abominations. **33.30–33** Judahites in exile. **33.30** Now those in Babylon are quoted, providing the rationale for gatherings attested in 8.1; 14.1; 20.1. **33.31** *They come . . . as people come* means "they come in groups." *As my people*, i.e., as a religious assembly; cf. 37.12. **33.33** Cf. 2.5. Vv. 31–33 are related to 33.1–9, since they portray a prophet functioning as sentinel and the people not heeding his words.

34.1–31 The structure of this chapter devoted to shepherds is complex. Two primary sections (vv. 1–16, 17–31) may be subdivided further. **34.1–16** The first half of the chapter focuses primarily on shepherds, a symbol for kings throughout the ancient Near East, including Israel. **34.1–10** A woe oracle. *Ah* may be translated "woe." Neglect of duties is the primary indictment; all are articulated using the metaphoric sphere of the shepherd's life. **34.3** *Fat.* The Greek manuscript tradition reads "milk." Not all the action in this verse appears improper. **34.4** Specific acts of omission are cited. **34.5–6** Because of improper care, the flock was scattered, attacked, and dispersed in dangerous territory. *My sheep.* God owns the flock. *All the face of the earth,* perhaps a hyperbolic description of exile, which included Egypt as well as Babylon. **34.7–8** These verses seem intrusive. V. 7 duplicates v. 9. **34.8** A shift to a third-person address about *my shepherds.* **34.9–10** A judgment upon the shepherds. God will reclaim the flock and rescue them. Concern for the well-being of the sheep appears more prominent than does punishment of the shepherds. **34.11–15** God restores the flock, places them in *their own land* (v. 13), and performs properly the role of shepherd. **34.12** *When they are among,* lit. "when he is among"; the Hebrew is awkward. *Day of clouds and*

which they have been scattered on a day
of clouds and thick darkness. 13 I will
bring them out from the peoples and
gather them from the countries, and will
bring them into their own land; and I will
feed them on the mountains of Israel, by
the watercourses, and in all the inhabited
parts of the land. 14 I will feed them with
good pasture, and the mountain heights
of Israel shall be their pasture; there they
shall lie down in good grazing land, and
they shall feed on rich pasture on the
mountains of Israel. 15 I myself will be the
shepherd of my sheep, and I will make
them lie down, says the Lord GOD. 16 I will
seek the lost, and I will bring back the
strayed, and I will bind up the injured,
and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat
and the strong I will destroy. I will feed
them with justice.

17 As for you, my flock, thus says the
Lord GOD: I shall judge between sheep
and sheep, between rams and goats: 18 Is
it not enough for you to feed on the good
pasture, but you must tread down with
your feet the rest of your pasture? When
you drink of clear water, must you foul
the rest with your feet? 19 And must my
sheep eat what you have trodden with
your feet, and drink what you have fouled
with your feet?

20 Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD
to them: I myself will judge between the
fat sheep and the lean sheep. 21 Because
you pushed with flank and shoulder, and
butted at all the weak animals with your
horns until you scattered them far and
wide, 22 I will save my flock, and they shall
no longer be ravaged; and I will judge be-
tween sheep and sheep.

23 I will set up over them one shep-
herd, my servant David, and he shall feed
them: he shall feed them and be their
shepherd. 24 And I, the LORD, will be their
God, and my servant David shall be
prince among them; I, the LORD, have
spoken.

25 I will make with them a covenant of
peace and banish wild animals from the
land, so that they may live in the wild and
sleep in the woods securely. 26 I will make
them and the region around my hill a
blessing; and I will send down the show-
ers in their season; they shall be showers
of blessing. 27 The trees of the field shall
yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield
its increase. They shall be secure on their
soil; and they shall know that I am the
LORD, when I break the bars of their yoke,
and save them from the hands of those
who enslaved them. 28 They shall no more
be plunder for the nations, nor shall the
animals of the land devour them; they
shall live in safety, and no one shall make
them afraid. 29 I will provide for them a
splendid vegetation so that they shall no
more be consumed with hunger in the
land, and no longer suffer the insults of
the nations. 30 They shall know that I, the
LORD their God, am with them, and that
they, the house of Israel, are my people,
says the Lord GOD. 31 You are my sheep,
the sheep of my pasture[v] and I am your
God, says the Lord GOD.

[v] Gk OL: Heb *pasture, you are people*

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thick darkness, the day of the Lord, which has already transpired; cf. 30.3. **34.14** See similarly Ps 23. **34.16** A verse transitional between vv. 1–15 and vv. 17–31. *I will destroy* foreshadows the language of judgment in vv. 17–22. **34.17–30** Various sayings concerning the proper administration of the flock by God. **34.17–19** God addresses the *flock*, which is made up of diverse animals. **34.18–19** Questions that interrogate the flock for feeding and drinking in ways that make it difficult for all the flock to eat and drink. **34.19** *My sheep . . . you*, i.e., a distinction within the flock. **34.20–21** Judgment ensues, though in what it consists is unclear. Physical condition (*fat* versus *lean*), which results from the behavior described in vv. 18–19, provides the criterion for judgment. **34.21** *You*, apparently the fat sheep. **34.22** *Saving* and *judging* the flock are interdependent; cf. v. 10. **34.23–24** A member of the Davidic line will function as shepherd, though as *prince* (cf. 44.1–3), not as king. *My servant*, a typical designation of David (e.g., 2 Sam 3.18). On a future David, cf. Hos 3.5; Jer 30.9. *One shepherd*, not multiple rulers, as was the case during the period 597–587 B.C.E. when Jehoiachin was in exile and Zedekiah on the throne in Judah; cf. 37.19. **34.25–30** *A covenant of peace.* The blessings that conclude the so-called Holiness code (Lev 26.4–6) provide striking parallels to the weal depicted here; cf. Ezek 16.60; 37.26; Isa 54.10. The covenant obligations devolve on God. **34.26** *My hill*, probably a reference to Zion. **34.31** A concluding pronouncement using flock and shepherd imagery to convey the reality of a covenant relationship; cf. 11.20; 14.11.

Judgment on Mount Seir

35 The word of the LORD came to me: 2 Mortal, set your face against Mount Seir, and prophesy against it, 3 and say to it, Thus says the Lord GOD:

I am against you, Mount Seir;
I stretch out my hand
against you
to make you a desolation and
a waste.
4 I lay your towns in ruins;
you shall become a desolation,
and you shall know that I am
the LORD.

5 Because you cherished an ancient enmity, and gave over the people of Israel to the power of the sword at the time of their calamity, at the time of their final punishment; 6 therefore, as I live, says the Lord GOD, I will prepare you for blood, and blood shall pursue you; since you did not hate bloodshed, bloodshed shall pursue you. 7 I will make Mount Seir a waste and a desolation; and I will cut off from it all who come and go. 8 I will fill its mountains with the slain; on your hills and in your valleys and in all your watercourses those killed with the sword shall fall. 9 I will make you a perpetual desolation, and your cities shall never be inhabited. Then you shall know that I am the LORD.

10 Because you said, "These two nations and these two countries shall be mine, and we will take possession of them,"—although the LORD was there—11 therefore, as I live, says the Lord GOD, I will deal with you according to the anger and envy that you showed because of your hatred against them; and I will make myself known among you,[w] when I judge you. 12 You shall know that I, the LORD, have heard all the abusive speech that you uttered against the mountains of Israel, saying, "They are laid desolate, they are given us to devour." 13 And you magnified yourselves against me with your mouth, and multiplied your words against me; I heard it. 14 Thus says the Lord GOD: As the whole earth rejoices, I will make you desolate. 15 As you rejoiced over the inheritance of the house of Israel, because it was desolate, so I will deal with you; you shall be desolate, Mount Seir, and all Edom, all of it. Then they shall know that I am the LORD.

Blessing on Israel

36 And you, mortal, prophesy to the mountains of Israel, and say: O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the LORD. 2 Thus says the Lord GOD: Because the enemy said of you, "Aha!" and, "The ancient heights have become our possession," 3 therefore prophesy, and say: Thus says the Lord GOD: Because

w Gk: Heb *them*

35.1–36.15 Oracles concerning mountains, both Edomite and Israelite. The structure is complex. Ch. 35 is made up of four "proof sayings" ("Because ... therefore": vv. 3–4, 5–9, 10–13, 14–15), whereas 36.1–15 may be construed as an elaborated oracle of salvation. **35.1–2** *Mount Seir*, a mountainous area east of the Arabah that extends north-south throughout Edom. *Seir* may be equated with Edom, e.g., Gen 36.8; Num 24.18. Ezekiel had addressed Edom earlier (25.12–14). **35.3–4** The language is typical of Ezekiel. **35.5–6** *Ancient enmity*. Cf. the prior indictment of the Philistines, 25.15. In the case of Edom and Israel, such enmity exists within kinship lines (Gen 25.27–34; 27.41–45; cf. Jer 49.7–22; Obadiah). For reference to Edomite action during the defeat of Judah, see Ob 11–14. *Blood, bloodshed* belong to the concept of bloodguilt (cf. Gen 9.6). **35.8** Imagery used earlier (9.7; 11.6; 30.11; 32.5–6). **35.9** Cf. Mal 1.2–5 for the notion of God's *perpetual* (eternal) anger at Edom. **35.10** *Two nations ... two countries*, Israel and Judah; cf. 37.22. Not just those in the land (11.15; 33.24), but non-Israelites lay claim to the land. **35.12–13** *Abusive speech, you uttered, your mouth, your words*. Verbal impropriety receives special attention. **35.12** The *mountains of Israel* are addressed in 36.1–15. *To devour*, the language of destruction by animals, birds, or fire (15.4, 6; 29.5; 34.5, 8) **35.14–15** Punishment in kind for Edom. Just as Edom gloated at the destruction of Judah, the *whole earth* will gloat at the destruction of Edom; cf. Ob 12–13. **36.1–15** Concerning salvation for Israel's mountains, a discourse with complex structure, i.e., the numerous oracular formulas (vv. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 13). **36.1** *Mountains of Israel* (cf. 35.12; Deut 3.25), a way of referring to the entire country. **36.2** *Aha*, quoted earlier in the mouths of the Ammonites (25.3) and the Tyrians (26.2). *Ancient heights*, poetic diction for the mountains; the word translated *heights* is elsewhere in the book translated "high places." Cf. 6.3, 6; 20.29; Num 21.28; Deut 32.13; Mic 3.12. *Our possession*. Cf. the claim in v. 10. **36.3** *The rest of the nations*. V. 5 uses the same phrase (cf. 25.16); all probably refer to the nations elsewhere in-

they made you desolate indeed, and
crushed you from all sides, so that you be-
came the possession of the rest of the na-
tions, and you became an object of gossip
and slander among the people; 4 there-
fore, O mountains of Israel, hear the
word of the Lord GOD: Thus says the
Lord GOD to the mountains and the hills,
the watercourses and the valleys, the deso-
late wastes and the deserted towns, which
have become a source of plunder and an
object of derision to the rest of the nations
all around; 5 therefore thus says the Lord
GOD: I am speaking in my hot jealousy
against the rest of the nations, and against
all Edom, who, with wholehearted joy and
utter contempt, took my land as their pos-
session, because of its pasture, to plunder
it. 6 Therefore prophesy concerning the
land of Israel, and say to the mountains
and hills, to the watercourses and valleys,
Thus says the Lord GOD: I am speaking in
my jealous wrath, because you have suf-
fered the insults of the nations; 7 there-
fore thus says the Lord GOD: I swear that
the nations that are all around you shall
themselves suffer insults.

8 But you, O mountains of Israel,
shall shoot out your branches, and yield
your fruit to my people Israel; for they
shall soon come home. 9 See now, I am for
you; I will turn to you, and you shall be
tilled and sown; 10 and I will multiply your
population, the whole house of Israel, all
of it; the towns shall be inhabited and the
waste places rebuilt; 11 and I will multiply
human beings and animals upon you.
They shall increase and be fruitful; and I
will cause you to be inhabited as in your
former times, and will do more good to
you than ever before. Then you shall
know that I am the LORD. 12 I will lead
people upon you—my people Israel—
and they shall possess you, and you shall
be their inheritance. No longer shall you
bereave them of children.

13 Thus says the Lord GOD: Because
they say to you, "You devour people, and
you bereave your nation of children,"
14 therefore you shall no longer devour
people and no longer bereave your nation
of children, says the Lord GOD; 15 and no
longer will I let you hear the insults of the
nations, no longer shall you bear the dis-
grace of the peoples; and no longer shall
you cause your nation to stumble, says the
Lord GOD.

The Renewal of Israel

16 The word of the LORD came to me:
17 Mortal, when the house of Israel lived
on their own soil, they defiled it with their
ways and their deeds; their conduct in my
sight was like the uncleanness of a woman
in her menstrual period. 18 So I poured
out my wrath upon them for the blood
that they had shed upon the land, and for
the idols with which they had defiled it.
19 I scattered them among the nations,
and they were dispersed through the
countries; in accordance with their con-
duct and their deeds I judged them.
20 But when they came to the nations,

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dicted in the book. **36.4** God continues to speak to Israel using geographic vocabulary. **36.5** *Hot jealousy*. Cf. the variant in v. 6 (cf. Ex 20.5; Josh 24.19; 1 Kings 14.22). As befits ch. 35, *Edom* is the only nation singled out. **36.6** Vocabulary found in vv. 4–5. **36.7** *I swear*, lit. "I lift up my hand." **36.8** God continues to speak to the depopulated mountains, whose inhabitants, now in exile, will *soon come home*. Instead of being desolate, the mountains will produce verdure and consumable crops for the benefit of the people (see similarly 17.8). **36.9** *I am for you*. On this terse affirmation of the covenant relationship, cf. Lev 26.9. **36.10–11** God addresses the issue of repopulation, which was a serious problem after 587 B.C.E. **36.12** *Inheritance*. Cf. 35.15; Deut 26.9. *Bereave them of children*, perhaps an addition in which the mountains are viewed as negative; see 6.1–14; Deut 12.1–3. **36.13** The nations observe that the mountains, i.e., the land, *devours people*. Cf. the similar rhetoric in Num 13.32. An external observer might think that those who lived in Israel were doomed because of all the wars fought in that area. **36.15** *Cause your nation to stumble*. See note on 36.12. The mountains were not simply neutral geographic venues.

36.16–38 Discourse on the restoration of Israel, which is made up of several discrete utterances (vv. 17–21, 22–32, 33–36, 37–38). **36.17–21** A cursory theological survey of Israelite history that adumbrates themes and images used elsewhere in the book and serves as a prologue to the longest section in the discourse. **36.17** *Their own soil* (cf. 28.25), "their land." On menstrual *uncleanness*, which is used here in a simile, see Lev 15.19–30. **36.18** *Blood*, here of violence, cf. 22.4. **36.20** By dint of the response of those countries to which Israel came, God's name was *profaned*. *My holy name*; i.e., it is holiness that is subject to profanation. The conception is

wherever they came, they profaned my
holy name, in that it was said of them,
"These are the people of the LORD, and
yet they had to go out of his land." 21 But
I had concern for my holy name, which
the house of Israel had profaned among
the nations to which they came.

22 Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. 23 I will sanctify my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them; and the nations shall know that I am the LORD, says the Lord GOD, when through you I display my holiness before their eyes. 24 I will take you from the nations, and gather you from all the countries, and bring you into your own land. 25 I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. 26 A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. 27 I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances. 28 Then you shall live in the land that I gave to your ancestors; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God. 29 I will save you from all your uncleannesses, and I will summon the grain and make it abundant and lay no famine upon you. 30 I will make the fruit of the tree and the produce of the field abundant, so that you may never again suffer the disgrace of famine among the nations. 31 Then you shall remember your evil ways, and your dealings that were not good; and you shall loathe yourselves for your iniquities and your abominable deeds. 32 It is not for your sake that I will act, says the Lord GOD; let that be known to you. Be ashamed and dismayed for your ways, O house of Israel.

33 Thus says the Lord GOD: On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the towns to be inhabited, and the waste places shall be rebuilt. 34 The land that was desolate shall be tilled, instead of being the desolation that it was in the sight of all who passed by. 35 And they will say, "This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined towns are now inhabited and fortified." 36 Then the nations that are left all around you shall know that I, the LORD, have rebuilt the ruined places, and replanted that which was desolate; I, the LORD, have spoken, and I will do it.

37 Thus says the Lord GOD: I will also let the house of Israel ask me to do this for them: to increase their population like a flock. 38 Like the flock for sacrifices,[x] like the flock at Jerusalem during her appointed festivals, so shall the ruined towns be filled with flocks of people. Then they shall know that I am the LORD.

x Heb *flock of holy things*

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dialectical: the people of Israel have profaned God's name, even though it is God who exiled them. **36.21** *I had concern for,* lit. "I grieved for." **36.22–32** The rationale for and design of God's new plan for Israel. **36.22, 32** Both at beginning and end, Ezekiel makes clear that God acts on behalf of the *holy name,* not for the sake of the people; cf. Isa 43.22–28. **36.23** *I will sanctify my great name,* presumably by the purificatory acts that follow, which will be apparent to Israelite and non-Israelite alike. Israel must return and remain in its land in order for God's name to be holy. **36.24** Purification will occur after the people have returned to their *own land.* **36.25** On cleansing lustration rites, which here remove the uncleanness and idols, cf. Num 19.9–22; Ps 51.7. **36.26** Then God will give the people a *new heart . . . and a new spirit*; cf. 11.19; 18.31; Jer 31.31–34; Ps 51.10. For Ezekiel the new heart is to the old heart as flesh is to stone; the former did not enable life. **36.27** The *new spirit* (v. 26) is construed as *my spirit,* God's spirit (cf. Lev 26.3; Gen 2.7), which will enable Israelites to obey the covenant statutes. **36.28** The covenant formula (e.g., 11.20; 14.11) reinforces Israel's ability to remain in the land. **36.29–30** Cf. 34.27. **36.33–36** Destroyed towns and fields, of a sort described in 36.4, will be rebuilt. **36.35** Just as foreigners commented on the ignominious state of Israel in exile, they will attest verbally to the restored country—it will be *like the garden of Eden*; cf. Jer 31.23–28; Isa 51.3. **36.37–38** The first instance of Israel being allowed to request something (cf. 14.3; 20.3)—repopulation; cf. vv. 10–11. Cf. covenant blessings of population, Lev 26.9. The evidence for great numbers, two flocks for sacrifice, allows for a return to the imagery of God's people as a flock (cf. ch. 34).

The Valley of Dry Bones

37 The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. 2 He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. 3 He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord GOD, you know." 4 Then he said to me, "Prophesy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. 5 Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause breath[y] to enter you, and you shall live. 6 I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath[y] in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the LORD."

7 So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. 8 I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. 9 Then he said to me, "Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath:[z] Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath,[z] and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." 10 I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

11 Then he said to me, "Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.' 12 Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. 13 And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. 14 I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken and will act, says the LORD."

The Two Sticks

15 The word of the LORD came to me: 16 Mortal, take a stick and write on it, "For Judah, and the Israelites associated with it"; then take another stick and write on it, "For Joseph (the stick of Ephraim) and all the house of Israel associated with it"; 17 and join them together into one stick, so that they may become one in your hand. 18 And when your people say to you, "Will you not show us what you mean by

y Or *spirit* *z* Or *wind* or *spirit*

37.1–14 The valley of dry bones (vv. 1–10) and its meaning (vv. 11–14). **37.1** *The hand of the LORD came upon me* suggests spirit possession behavior; cf. 1.3; 8.1; 33.22. *He brought me out by the spirit of the LORD* seems awkward if *he* is the deity; cf. 11.5, 24. *Valley*, or "plain"; see note on 3.22. The venue is Mesopotamia. **37.3** After having shown Ezekiel the bones in the valley, God asks him a question that, if rhetorical, deserves a negative answer. The prophet demurs with a response that affirms the power of the deity. **37.4–5** The prophet is ordered to address the bones with an oracle, which concludes with an echo of the "know" motif (v. 6). **37.6** *Breath*, or "spirit"; cf. 36.26–27. **37.7–10** Ezekiel performs as ordered but must utter a second oracle to the *breath*, or the "spirit"; cf. Gen 2.7; Eccl 3.20–21; 12.7. *The four winds*. Cf. 42.20; Jer 49.36; Dan 8.8; Zech 2.6; 6.5; but the *breath* comes from and is not identical with the winds of the compass points. *Slain*. One senses the imagery of a battlefield full of long dead warriors; cf. 32.4–5. If so, the valley of dry bones is no straightforward allegory of Israel in exile. **37.11** An interpretation of the bones as *the whole house of Israel*, i.e., those in various Diaspora settings as well as those still in the land (cf. vv. 15–22). The quotation reflects the vocabulary and style of lamentation (e.g., Pss 31.10; 35.10) on *bones*, in which various symbolically graphic descriptions of physical malaise may occur. On being *cut off*, cf. Ps 88.5; Isa 53.8; Lam 3.54. **37.12–14** The prophet continues to speak to all Israel as if the people were dead. However, the imagery is new—not that of unburied bones but of corpses in graves. **37.14** Cf. 36.27–28.

37.15–28 The two sticks become one, a symbolic action with several interpretations. **37.15–19** The symbolic action and its primary interpretation. **37.16** *Stick*, perhaps a wooden staff (cf. Num 17.1–13, a narrative in which the names of Israelite ancestral houses were written upon staffs), or a wooden writing board. Less likely is a shepherd's crook or a royal scepter. The Hebrew noun is the generic word for tree or wood. The most probable forms of the original inscriptions were: "For Judah" and

these?" 19 say to them, Thus says the Lord
God: I am about to take the stick of Jo-
seph (which is in the hand of Ephraim)
and the tribes of Israel associated with it;
and I will put the stick of Judah upon it,[a]
and make them one stick, in order that
they may be one in my hand. 20 When the
sticks on which you write are in your hand
before their eyes, 21 then say to them,
Thus says the Lord God: I will take the
people of Israel from the nations among
which they have gone, and will gather
them from every quarter, and bring them
to their own land. 22 I will make them one
nation in the land, on the mountains of
Israel; and one king shall be king over
them all. Never again shall they be two
nations, and never again shall they be di-
vided into two kingdoms. 23 They shall
never again defile themselves with their
idols and their detestable things, or with
any of their transgressions. I will save
them from all the apostasies into which
they have fallen,[b] and will cleanse them.
Then they shall be my people, and I will
be their God.

24 My servant David shall be king
over them; and they shall all have one
shepherd. They shall follow my ordi-
nances and be careful to observe my stat-
utes. 25 They shall live in the land that I
gave to my servant Jacob, in which your
ancestors lived; they and their children
and their children's children shall live
there forever; and my servant David shall
be their prince forever. 26 I will make a
covenant of peace with them; it shall be an
everlasting covenant with them; and I will
bless[c] them and multiply them, and will
set my sanctuary among them forever-
more. 27 My dwelling place shall be with
them; and I will be their God, and they
shall be my people. 28 Then the nations
shall know that I the Lord sanctify Israel,
when my sanctuary is among them for-
evermore.

Invasion by Gog

38 The word of the Lord came to
me: 2 Mortal, set your face toward
Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief
prince of Meshech and Tubal. Prophesy
against him 3 and say: Thus says the Lord
God: I am against you, O Gog, chief
prince of Meshech and Tubal; 4 I will turn
you around and put hooks into your jaws,
and I will lead you out with all your army,
horses and horsemen, all of them clothed
in full armor, a great company, all of
them with shield and buckler, wielding
swords. 5 Persia, Ethiopia,[d] and Put are
with them, all of them with buckler and
helmet; 6 Gomer and all its troops; Beth-
togarmah from the remotest parts of the
north with all its troops—many peoples
are with you.

7 Be ready and keep ready, you and
all the companies that are assembled
around you, and hold yourselves in re-
serve for them. 8 After many days you
shall be mustered; in the latter years you
shall go against a land restored from war,

a Heb *I will put them upon it* b Another reading is *from all the settlements in which they have sinned*
c Tg: Heb *give* d Or *Nubia*; Heb *Cush*

"For Joseph," symbolizing the Southern and Northern kingdoms respectively. **37.19** National reunification—*one stick*—is the goal (so also vv. 21–22). **37.22** *One king*. Cf. v. 25; 34.23–24; 46.1–18, though the term *king* is not used in those places. **37.24b–26** The people will be in a covenant relationship; cf. 34.25. **37.27–28** *My sanctuary*, the temple in Jerusalem, which foreshadows chs. 40–48.

38.1–39.29 Discourse against Gog of Magog. Two complex chapters directed against Gog, the ruler and general of Magog's forces. His army will be decimated in a cataclysmic defeat, once it attacks Israel. After the drama has been played out, Israel will dwell securely in the land. Gog and Magog appear transhistorical, though the name Gog may derive from the name of the Lydian ruler Gyges. The name of the land Magog was probably created to rhyme with Gog; for another toponymic rhyme, cf. 27.10; 30.5. **38.2** *Chief prince* does not imply subordination to someone but highest status among a plurality of rulers, e.g., a regional group of rulers (26.16; 32.30). *Meshech and Tubal*. Cf. 27.13; note on 32.26–28; Gen 10.2. **38.4** *I will turn you . . . lead you out*. God physically drags Gog and his army out for battle; cf. 19.4. Mention of numerous weapons becomes especially important in light of 39.9–10. **38.5** The force is international, though these names may be later additions to the passage. **38.6** *Gomer* (the Cimmerians) and *Beth-togarmah* (cf. 27.14; Gen 10.3) are both associated with Asia Minor, i.e., *from the remotest parts of the north*. **38.8** *After many days*, often viewed as an eschatological formula, pertaining to an end-time or a future time of judgment and transformation. *A land restored from war*, presumably a reference to Israel restored after exile, i.e., from the perspec-

a land where people were gathered from
many nations on the mountains of Israel,
which had long lain waste; its people were
brought out from the nations and now are
living in safety, all of them. 9 You shall ad-
vance, coming on like a storm; you shall
be like a cloud covering the land, you
and all your troops, and many peoples
with you.

10 Thus says the Lord God: On that
day thoughts will come into your mind,
and you will devise an evil scheme. 11 You
will say, "I will go up against the land of
unwalled villages; I will fall upon the
quiet people who live in safety, all of them
living without walls, and having no bars or
gates"; 12 to seize spoil and carry off plun-
der; to assail the waste places that are now
inhabited, and the people who were gath-
ered from the nations, who are acquiring
cattle and goods, who live at the center[e]
of the earth. 13 Sheba and Dedan and the
merchants of Tarshish and all its young
warriors[f] will say to you, "Have you come
to seize spoil? Have you assembled your
horde to carry off plunder, to carry away
silver and gold, to take away cattle and
goods, to seize a great amount of booty?"

14 Therefore, mortal, prophesy, and
say to Gog: Thus says the Lord God: On
that day when my people Israel are living
securely, you will rouse yourself[g] 15 and
come from your place out of the remotest
parts of the north, you and many peoples
with you, all of them riding on horses, a
great horde, a mighty army; 16 you will
come up against my people Israel, like a
cloud covering the earth. In the latter
days I will bring you against my land, so
that the nations may know me, when
through you, O Gog, I display my holi-
ness before their eyes.

Judgment on Gog

17 Thus says the Lord God: Are you
he of whom I spoke in former days by my
servants the prophets of Israel, who in
those days prophesied for years that I
would bring you against them? 18 On that
day, when Gog comes against the land of
Israel, says the Lord God, my wrath shall
be aroused. 19 For in my jealousy and in
my blazing wrath I declare: On that day
there shall be a great shaking in the land
of Israel; 20 the fish of the sea, and the
birds of the air, and the animals of the
field, and all creeping things that creep
on the ground, and all human beings that
are on the face of the earth, shall quake at
my presence, and the mountains shall be
thrown down, and the cliffs shall fall, and
every wall shall tumble to the ground. 21 I
will summon the sword against Gog[h] in[i]
all my mountains, says the Lord God; the
swords of all will be against their com-
rades. 22 With pestilence and bloodshed I
will enter into judgment with him; and I
will pour down torrential rains and hail-
stones, fire and sulfur, upon him and his
troops and the many peoples that are with
him. 23 So I will display my greatness and
my holiness and make myself known in

e Heb *navel* f Heb *young lions* g Gk: Heb *will you not know?* h Heb *him* i Heb *to* or *for*

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tive of Ezekiel and his contemporaries in the quite distant future. **38.9** For similar descriptions of military *advance*, see Isa 10.3; Jer 4.13; Joel 2.2. **38.10–13** Gog and his scheme for plunder. For similar language concerning an enemy of Israel, see Jer 4.13. **38.11** *Unwalled villages*. Cf. Esth 9.19; Zech 2.4. **38.12** *Center* or navel of the earth, in Greek the *omphalos*, which must refer to Jerusalem, so 5.5. **38.13** The three names are all nations cited in the commercial nation listing: *Sheba* (27.22); *Dedan* (27.20); *Tarshish* (27.12). Their interest in plunder is conveyed in prolix questions. **38.14–18** God declaims to Gog. **38.14** *On that day*, another eschatological formula; cf. note on v. 8. For the remainder of the verse, cf. vv. 4–5. **38.16** *Through you*, a foreshadowing of Gog's fate. **38.17** The Hebrew Masoretic tradition preserves a textual error that results in the verses being construed as a question. It is preferable to read with Greek (Septuagint) and Latin (Vulgate) an indicative sentence, "You are he of whom I spoke ..." For the notion of earlier prophets, cf. Zech 1.4. Such earlier oracles might have been similar to Jer 4.5–6.26. **38.18–23** God's theophanic response. **38.18–19** *On that day*, the day of the Lord; cf. 30.3. **38.19–22** A classic description of a theophany in which the deity's appearance wreaks havoc with the natural order and, when it occurs in a military context, with any enemy of the Lord. **38.19** On theophanic *shaking*, cf. Joel 2.10; 2.30. **38.20** *The fish ... the earth*. Using vocabulary drawn from the Priestly creation account in Gen 1, the objects of such *shaking* are specified. On geographic disorder, cf. Isa 2.14; Zech 14.4–5. **38.22** An eclectic assemblage of destructive natural phenomena directed at Gog. **38.23** Reflexive verbs in the Hebrew highlight God's role in the destruction

the eyes of many nations. Then they shall know that I am the LORD.

Gog's Armies Destroyed

39 And you, mortal, prophesy against Gog, and say: Thus says the Lord GOD: I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal! 2 I will turn you around and drive you forward, and bring you up from the remotest parts of the north, and lead you against the mountains of Israel. 3 I will strike your bow from your left hand, and will make your arrows drop out of your right hand. 4 You shall fall upon the mountains of Israel, you and all your troops and the peoples that are with you; I will give you to birds of prey of every kind and to the wild animals to be devoured. 5 You shall fall in the open field; for I have spoken, says the Lord GOD. 6 I will send fire on Magog and on those who live securely in the coastlands; and they shall know that I am the LORD.

7 My holy name I will make known among my people Israel; and I will not let my holy name be profaned any more; and the nations shall know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel. 8 It has come! It has happened, says the Lord GOD. This is the day of which I have spoken.

9 Then those who live in the towns of Israel will go out and make fires of the weapons and burn them—bucklers and shields, bows and arrows, handpikes and spears—and they will make fires of them for seven years. 10 They will not need to take wood out of the field or cut down any trees in the forests, for they will make their fires of the weapons; they will despoil those who despoiled them, and plunder those who plundered them, says the Lord GOD.

The Burial of Gog

11 On that day I will give to Gog a place for burial in Israel, the Valley of the Travelers[j] east of the sea; it shall block the path of the travelers, for there Gog and all his horde will be buried; it shall be called the Valley of Hamon-gog.[k] 12 Seven months the house of Israel shall spend burying them, in order to cleanse the land. 13 All the people of the land shall bury them; and it will bring them honor on the day that I show my glory, says the Lord GOD. 14 They will set apart men to pass through the land regularly and bury any invaders[l] who remain on the face of the land, so as to cleanse it; for seven months they shall make their search. 15 As the searchers[l] pass through the land, anyone who sees a human bone shall set up a sign by it, until the buriers have buried it in the Valley of Hamon-gog.[k] 16 (A city Hamonah[m] is there also.) Thus they shall cleanse the land.

17 As for you, mortal, thus says the Lord GOD: Speak to the birds of every kind and to all the wild animals: Assemble and come, gather from all around to the sacrificial feast that I am preparing for you, a great sacrificial feast on the mountains of Israel, and you shall eat flesh and

j Or *of the Abarim* *k* That is, *the Horde of Gog*
l Heb *travelers* *m* That is *The Horde*

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of Gog. **39.1–5** Destruction on the mountains of Israel. **39.1–2** Parallel in formulation to 38.1–2, 8. **39.3** Personal combat between God the warrior and Gog, who is depicted as an archer. **39.4** *Birds ... wild animals.* Cf. 29.5. **39.6** *Send fire on* reflects the mode of punishment in Amos's oracles against the nations (1.4, 7, 10, 12; 2.5). The *coastlands* may refer to Tyre (26.15, 18; 27.3) or, more generally, the maritime trading regions (38.13). **39.7** *My holy name.* Cf. v. 25; 36.20–23. **39.8** *It has come! It has happened.* Cf. the RSV translation, "Behold, it is coming and it will be brought about," which is preferable, since the reference is to the day of the Lord. **39.9–10** Destruction of Gog's weaponry; cf. Ps 46.9. *Those who live in towns.* Cf. v. 13, *all the people of the land. Seven years,* an idealized number based on the sabbath and sabbatical cycle; cf. vv. 12, 14. On the specific *weapons,* cf. 23.24. *Buckler,* a small shield. **39.10** Israel apparently uses the *wood* for domestic purposes. **39.11–16** Burying Gog. **39.11** *Valley of the Travelers,* Hebrew "Valley of the Obarim"; however, perhaps one should read "Abarim," a mountain range east of the Dead Sea in northern Moab. The place of burial would be outside the land, hence avoiding contamination from corpse impurity (see Num 19.11–13) and allowing for purification (Ezek 39.12, 16). **39.14** A group *set apart* from all the people, who search for bones for another *seven months.* **39.15** Yet another group, *the buriers.* **39.17–20** An elaboration of 39.4b. Ezekiel is to summon birds and animals for a *sacrificial feast,* perhaps with allusions to earlier Canaanite my-

drink blood. 18 You shall eat the flesh of
the mighty, and drink the blood of the
princes of the earth—of rams, of lambs,
and of goats, of bulls, all of them fatlings
of Bashan. 19 You shall eat fat until you
are filled, and drink blood until you are
drunk, at the sacrificial feast that I am
preparing for you. 20 And you shall be
filled at my table with horses and charioteers,[n] with warriors and all kinds of soldiers, says the Lord GOD.

Israel Restored to the Land

21 I will display my glory among the
nations; and all the nations shall see my
judgment that I have executed, and my
hand that I have laid on them. 22 The
house of Israel shall know that I am the
LORD their God, from that day forward.
23 And the nations shall know that the
house of Israel went into captivity for
their iniquity, because they dealt treacherously with me. So I hid my face from
them and gave them into the hand of
their adversaries, and they all fell by the
sword. 24 I dealt with them according to
their uncleanness and their transgressions, and hid my face from them.

25 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD:
Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob,
and have mercy on the whole house of
Israel; and I will be jealous for my holy
name. 26 They shall forget[o] their shame,
and all the treachery they have practiced
against me, when they live securely in
their land with no one to make them
afraid, 27 when I have brought them back
from the peoples and gathered them
from their enemies' lands, and through
them have displayed my holiness in the
sight of many nations. 28 Then they shall
know that I am the LORD their God because I sent them into exile among the
nations, and then gathered them into
their own land. I will leave none of them
behind; 29 and I will never again hide my
face from them, when I pour out my
spirit upon the house of Israel, says the
Lord GOD.

The Vision of the New Temple

40 In the twenty-fifth year of our exile, at the beginning of the year,
on the tenth day of the month, in the
fourteenth year after the city was struck
down, on that very day, the hand of the
LORD was upon me, and he brought me
there. 2 He brought me, in visions of God,
to the land of Israel, and set me down
upon a very high mountain, on which was
a structure like a city to the south. 3 When
he brought me there, a man was there,
whose appearance shone like bronze, with
a linen cord and a measuring reed in his
hand; and he was standing in the gateway.

n Heb *chariots*
o Another reading is *They shall bear*

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thography; cf. Isa 34.5–7; Zeph 1.7. **39.18** The proper sacrificial character is underlined by construing the dead warriors as animals acceptable for sacrifice. *Fatlings of Bashan.* Cf. Ps 22.12; Am 4.1. In standard Israelite practice, the blood and fat were not consumed by humans (so 44.7, 15; Lev 3.16–17). **39.21–29** Concluding oracles. **39.21–22** God's actions perceived by both the nations and Israel; cf. 39.6–8. **39.23–24** Defeat and exile are treated as God's just punishment. *Hid my face.* Cf. Pss 13.1; 22.24; 27.9; 104.29; Isa 54.8; 57.17; 59.2; 64.7; Num 6.24–26. **39.25–29** *Restore the fortunes.* Cf. 16.53–58; 29.14; Jer 33.26. *Jealous for my holy name.* Cf. 36.22–23; Joel 2.18. **39.27** *When I have brought them back.* Return is still a future event. **39.29** *Pour out my spirit.* Cf. 36.26–27; Joel 2.28–29.

40.1–48.35 The new temple and polity. Ezek 40–48, the fourth major section of the book, is the report of visionary experience. Ezekiel travels to Jerusalem, receives a tour of the new temple complex (chs. 40–42), and perceives the glory of the Lord returning to the rebuilt temple (43.4–5). Then he is instructed in the Torah (43.12–46.24) relevant to the new structure and the community gathered around it. Finally, in chs. 47–48, the land beyond the temple is defined and described. **40.1–42.20** The temple and its courtyards. **40.1–4** Prologue. The date in v. 1 is April 28, 573 B.C.E. (see note on 1.2). A quarter century after Ezekiel and the first deportees had been taken into exile and fourteen years after Jerusalem had been razed, he returns via visionary experience (*the hand of the LORD, in visions of God*) to Jerusalem. **40.2** A *very high mountain,* Mount Zion, upon which the temple stood; cf. 20.40; 43.12; Isa 2.2. *A city to the south* places Jerusalem south of the temple; cf. 48.15–19. **40.3** *Like bronze.* As with the creatures in 1.7, bronze characterizes the man as something other than a human; cf. 8.2. *A linen cord and a measuring reed,* two instruments for linear measurement. The reed (also in v. 5) was a little longer than 10 feet or 3 meters.

4 The man said to me, "Mortal, look
closely and listen attentively, and set your
mind upon all that I shall show you, for
you were brought here in order that I
might show it to you; declare all that you
see to the house of Israel."

5 Now there was a wall all around the
outside of the temple area. The length of
the measuring reed in the man's hand was
six long cubits, each being a cubit and a
handbreadth in length; so he measured
the thickness of the wall, one reed; and the
height, one reed. 6 Then he went into
the gateway facing east, going up its steps,
and measured the threshold of the gate,
one reed deep.[p] There were 7 recesses,
and each recess was one reed wide and
one reed deep; and the space between the
recesses, five cubits; and the threshold of
the gate by the vestibule of the gate at the
inner end was one reed deep. 8 Then he
measured the inner vestibule of the gate-
way, one cubit. 9 Then he measured the
vestibule of the gateway, eight cubits; and
its pilasters, two cubits; and the vestibule
of the gate was at the inner end. 10 There
were three recesses on either side of the
east gate; the three were of the same size;
and the pilasters on either side were of
the same size. 11 Then he measured the
width of the opening of the gateway, ten
cubits; and the width of the gateway, thir-
teen cubits. 12 There was a barrier before
the recesses, one cubit on either side; and
the recesses were six cubits on either side.
13 Then he measured the gate from the
back[q] of the one recess to the back[q] of
the other, a width of twenty-five cubits,
from wall to wall.[r] 14 He measured[s] also
the vestibule, twenty cubits; and the gate
next to the pilaster on every side of the
court.[t] 15 From the front of the gate at
the entrance to the end of the inner vesti-
bule of the gate was fifty cubits. 16 The
recesses and their pilasters had windows,
with shutters[t] on the inside of the gate-
way all around, and the vestibules also
had windows on the inside all around;
and on the pilasters were palm trees.

17 Then he brought me into the outer
court; there were chambers there, and a
pavement, all around the court; thir-
ty chambers fronted on the pavement.
18 The pavement ran along the side of the
gates, corresponding to the length of
the gates; this was the lower pavement.
19 Then he measured the distance from
the inner front of[u] the lower gate to the
outer front of the inner court, one hun-
dred cubits.[v]

20 Then he measured the gate of the
outer court that faced north—its depth
and width. 21 Its recesses, three on either
side, and its pilasters and its vestibule
were of the same size as those of the first
gate; its depth was fifty cubits, and its
width twenty-five cubits. 22 Its windows,
its vestibule, and its palm trees were of the
same size as those of the gate that faced
toward the east. Seven steps led up to it;
and its vestibule was on the inside.[w]
23 Opposite the gate on the north, as on
the east, was a gate to the inner court; he
measured from gate to gate, one hundred
cubits.

24 Then he led me toward the south,
and there was a gate on the south; and he
measured its pilasters and its vestibule;

p Heb *deep, and one threshold, one reed deep*
q Gk: Heb *roof* r Heb *opening facing opening*
s Heb *made* t Meaning of Heb uncertain
u Compare Gk: Heb *from before* v Heb adds *the east and the north* w Gk: Heb *before them*

The cord does not recur; cf. Zech 2.1. **40.4** The rationale for Ezekiel's experience is the imperative to *declare all that you see*; cf. 43.10. **40.5** A *long cubit* was about 518 millimeters long; the ratio of a short to long cubit was 6 to 7. The distinction between a short and long cubit was known throughout the ancient Near East. **40.5–16** The eastern gate (*gateway facing east*) to the temple compound, which has the basic configuration of city gates excavated at Gezer, Hazor, and Megiddo (which date to the Solomonic era), in this case a passageway with four recessed rooms (three recesses and one vestibule on either side). Such fortified gates make Ezekiel's temple rather like a religious citadel. As with other city gates, this wall met the gate before the first recess, with the rest of the gate structure inside the *temple area*. Apart from v. 5b, which may be a later addition, the measurements provide a groundplan, i.e., with no elevations, though there were seven stairs just before the gate (see v. 22). The entire gate complex was almost ninety feet long. Windows provided light in the rooms. **40.16** *Pilasters*, projecting columns, which may have been door jambs, were decorated with *palm trees*; cf. 1 Kings 6.29, 32, 35; 7.36. **40.17–19** The *outer courtyard* was lined with *thirty chambers*; cf. Jer 35.2–4; Neh 13.4–14 for such rooms, which could have been used for meeting, storage, etc. **40.20–27** The north and

they had the same dimensions as the oth-
ers. 25 There were windows all around in
it and in its vestibule, like the windows of
the others; its depth was fifty cubits, and
its width twenty-five cubits. 26 There were
seven steps leading up to it; its vestibule
was on the inside.[x] It had palm trees on
its pilasters, one on either side. 27 There
was a gate on the south of the inner court;
and he measured from gate to gate to-
ward the south, one hundred cubits.

28 Then he brought me to the inner
court by the south gate, and he measured
the south gate; it was of the same dimen-
sions as the others. 29 Its recesses, its pilas-
ters, and its vestibule were of the same
size as the others; and there were win-
dows all around in it and in its vestibule;
its depth was fifty cubits, and its width
twenty-five cubits. 30 There were vesti-
bules all around, twenty-five cubits deep
and five cubits wide. 31 Its vestibule faced
the outer court, and palm trees were on
its pilasters, and its stairway had eight
steps.

32 Then he brought me to the inner
court on the east side, and he measured
the gate; it was of the same size as the
others. 33 Its recesses, its pilasters, and its
vestibule were of the same dimensions as
the others; and there were windows all
around in it and in its vestibule; its depth
was fifty cubits, and its width twenty-five
cubits. 34 Its vestibule faced the outer
court, and it had palm trees on its pilas-
ters, on either side; and its stairway had
eight steps.

35 Then he brought me to the north
gate, and he measured it; it had the same
dimensions as the others. 36 Its recesses,
its pilasters, and its vestibule were of the
same size as the others;[y] and it had win-
dows all around. Its depth was fifty cubits,
and its width twenty-five cubits. 37 Its ves-
tibule[z] faced the outer court, and it had
palm trees on its pilasters, on either side;
and its stairway had eight steps.

38 There was a chamber with its door
in the vestibule of the gate,[a] where the
burnt offering was to be washed. 39 And
in the vestibule of the gate were two tables
on either side, on which the burnt offer-
ing and the sin offering and the guilt
offering were to be slaughtered. 40 On the
outside of the vestibule[b] at the entrance
of the north gate were two tables; and on
the other side of the vestibule of the gate
were two tables. 41 Four tables were on the
inside, and four tables on the outside of
the side of the gate, eight tables, on which
the sacrifices were to be slaughtered.
42 There were also four tables of hewn
stone for the burnt offering, a cubit and a
half long, and one cubit and a half wide,
and one cubit high, on which the instru-
ments were to be laid with which the
burnt offerings and the sacrifices were
slaughtered. 43 There were pegs, one
handbreadth long, fastened all around
the inside. And on the tables the flesh of
the offering was to be laid.

44 On the outside of the inner gate-
way there were chambers for the singers
in the inner court, one[c] at the side of the
north gate facing south, the other at the
side of the east gate facing north. 45 He
said to me, "This chamber that faces
south is for the priests who have charge of
the temple, 46 and the chamber that faces
north is for the priests who have charge of
the altar; these are the descendants of Za-
dok, who alone among the descendants of
Levi may come near to the LORD to minis-
ter to him." 47 He measured the court, one
hundred cubits deep, and one hundred
cubits wide, a square; and the altar was in
front of the temple.

x Gk: Heb *before them* y One Ms: Compare verses 29 and 33: MT lacks *were of the same size as the others* z Gk Vg Compare verses 26, 31, 34: Heb *pilasters* a Cn: Heb *at the pilasters of the gates* b Cn: Heb *to him who goes up* c Heb lacks *one*

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south gates, which are fundamentally similar to the east gate. **40.28–37** Three gates (south, east, north) leading from the outer to the inner courtyards, which involved an elevation of eight stairs. These gates are similar to the aforementioned, though with a reversal in the order of vestibule and recesses. **40.38–43** Chambers, located in one of the inside gates (probably the north one since it had just been described), were to be used for preparation of animals for sacrifices—washing and slaughter. On *burnt, sin,* and *guilt* offerings, see Lev 1; 4–7. **40.44–46** Rooms for the priests: the north chamber for Zadokites, who alone could perform the altar sacrifice (cf. 44.15), the south for priests of lesser status. *The singers,* Levitical singers (1 Chr 16). **40.47** The inner court was a square, with the altar

The Temple

48 Then he brought me to the vestibule of the temple and measured the pilasters of the vestibule, five cubits on either side; and the width of the gate was fourteen cubits; and the sidewalls of the gate were three cubits[d] on either side. 49 The depth of the vestibule was twenty cubits, and the width twelve[e] cubits; ten steps led up[f] to it; and there were pillars beside the pilasters on either side.

41 Then he brought me to the nave, and measured the pilasters; on each side six cubits was the width of the pilasters.[g] 2 The width of the entrance was ten cubits; and the sidewalls of the entrance were five cubits on either side. He measured the length of the nave, forty cubits, and its width, twenty cubits. 3 Then he went into the inner room and measured the pilasters of the entrance, two cubits; and the width of the entrance, six cubits; and the sidewalls[h] of the entrance, seven cubits. 4 He measured the depth of the room, twenty cubits, and its width, twenty cubits, beyond the nave. And he said to me, This is the most holy place.

5 Then he measured the wall of the temple, six cubits thick; and the width of the side chambers, four cubits, all around the temple. 6 The side chambers were in three stories, one over another, thirty in each story. There were offsets[i] all around the wall of the temple to serve as supports for the side chambers, so that they should not be supported by the wall of the temple. 7 The passageway[j] of the side chambers widened from story to story; for the structure was supplied with a stairway all around the temple. For this reason the structure became wider from story to story. One ascended from the bottom story to the uppermost story by way of the middle one. 8 I saw also that the temple had a raised platform all around; the foundations of the side chambers measured a full reed of six long cubits. 9 The thickness of the outer wall of the side chambers was five cubits; and the free space between the side chambers of the temple 10 and the chambers of the court was a width of twenty cubits all around the temple on every side. 11 The side chambers opened onto the area left free, one door toward the north, and another door toward the south; and the width of the part that was left free was five cubits all around.

12 The building that was facing the temple yard on the west side was seventy cubits wide; and the wall of the building was five cubits thick all around, and its depth ninety cubits.

13 Then he measured the temple, one hundred cubits deep; and the yard and the building with its walls, one hundred cubits deep; 14 also the width of the east front of the temple and the yard, one hundred cubits.

15 Then he measured the depth of the building facing the yard at the west, together with its galleries[k] on either side, one hundred cubits.

The nave of the temple and the inner room and the outer[l] vestibule 16 were paneled,[m] and, all around, all three had

d Gk: Heb *and the width of the gate was three cubits* *e* Gk: Heb *eleven* *f* Gk: Heb *and by steps that went up* *g* Compare Gk: Heb *tent* *h* Gk: Heb *width* *i* Gk Compare 1 Kings 6.6: Heb *they entered* *j* Cn: Heb *it was surrounded* *k* Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain *l* Gk: Heb *of the court* *m* Gk: Heb *the thresholds*

(43.13–17) near the temple itself; cf. 1 Kings 8.64; 2 Kings 16.14. **40.48–41.4** Ten steps lead up to the temple's entrance—into the *vestibule*. The three rooms arranged on a linear axis had the following dimensions: *vestibule* (35 feet long by 21 feet wide), *nave* (71 feet long by 25 feet wide), *the inner room* (35 feet by 35 feet); cf. the dimensions of the Solomonic temple (1 Kings 6), from which Ezekiel's temple differs in important ways. Though the man entered the inner room, Ezekiel did not. Silence throughout their tour is broken when the man announces: "This is the most holy place." **40.49** *Pillars*, similar to the placement of Solomon's pillars, but without names; cf. 1 Kings 7.15–22. **41.5–11** Three stories of thirty rooms each abutting the exterior walls; cf. 1 Kings 6.5–10. **41.8** *Raised platform*, probably an allusion to the final elevation upon which the temple was built. **41.12–15a.** Concluding exterior measurements both of the temple and the *building*, which was similar in size to the temple, though the purpose of this latter structure is unknown; cf. 1 Chr 26.18. **41.15b–26** Interior decoration of the temple, expressed in ways different from the language and motifs typical of accounts of Ezekiel's tour through the temple complex. **41.15b–16** Only the vestibule and nave are explicitly mentioned in the Hebrew text. They are paneled (cf. 1 Kings 6.9; 7.3, 7), but much remains obscure, especially in v. 16, though

windows with recessed[n] frames. Facing
the threshold the temple was paneled with
wood all around, from the floor up to the
windows (now the windows were cov-
ered), 17 to the space above the door, even
to the inner room, and on the outside.
And on all the walls all around in the in-
ner room and the nave there was a pat-
tern.[o] 18 It was formed of cherubim and
palm trees, a palm tree between cherub
and cherub. Each cherub had two faces:
19 a human face turned toward the palm
tree on the one side, and the face of a
young lion turned toward the palm tree
on the other side. They were carved on
the whole temple all around; 20 from the
floor to the area above the door, cheru-
bim and palm trees were carved on the
wall.[p]

21 The doorposts of the nave were
square. In front of the holy place was
something resembling 22 an altar of wood,
three cubits high, two cubits long, and two
cubits wide;[q] its corners, its base,[r] and its
walls were of wood. He said to me, "This
is the table that stands before the LORD."
23 The nave and the holy place had each a
double door. 24 The doors had two leaves
apiece, two swinging leaves for each door.
25 On the doors of the nave were carved
cherubim and palm trees, such as were
carved on the walls; and there was a can-
opy of wood in front of the vestibule out-
side. 26 And there were recessed windows
and palm trees on either side, on the side-
walls of the vestibule.[s]

The Holy Chambers and the Outer Wall

42 Then he led me out into the
outer court, toward the north,
and he brought me to the chambers
that were opposite the temple yard and
opposite the building on the north.
2 The length of the building that was on
the north side[t] was[u] one hundred cubits,
and the width fifty cubits. 3 Across the
twenty cubits that belonged to the inner
court, and facing the pavement that be-
longed to the outer court, the chambers
rose[v] gallery[w] by gallery[w] in three sto-
ries. 4 In front of the chambers was a pas-
sage on the inner side, ten cubits wide and
one hundred cubits deep,[x] and its[y] en-
trances were on the north. 5 Now the up-
per chambers were narrower, for the
galleries[w] took more away from them
than from the lower and middle chambers
in the building. 6 For they were in three
stories, and they had no pillars like the
pillars of the outer[z] court; for this reason
the upper chambers were set back from
the ground more than the lower and the
middle ones. 7 There was a wall outside
parallel to the chambers, toward the outer
court, opposite the chambers, fifty cubits
long. 8 For the chambers on the outer
court were fifty cubits long, while those
opposite the temple were one hundred
cubits long. 9 At the foot of these cham-
bers ran a passage that one entered from
the east in order to enter them from the
outer court. 10 The width of the passage[a]
was fixed by the wall of the court.

On the south[b] also, opposite the vacant
area and opposite the building, there
were chambers 11 with a passage in front
of them; they were similar to the cham-
bers on the north, of the same length and
width, with the same exits[c] and arrange-
ments and doors. 12 So the entrances of
the chambers to the south were entered

n Cn Compare Gk 1 Kings 6.4: Meaning of Heb uncertain *o* Heb *measures* *p* Cn Compare verse 25: Heb *and the wall* *q* Gk: Heb lacks *two cubits wide* *r* Gk: Heb *length* *s* Cn: Heb *vestibule. And the side chambers of the temple and the canopies* *t* Gk: Heb *door* *u* Gk: Heb *before the length* *v* Heb lacks *the chambers rose* *w* Meaning of Heb uncertain *x* Gk Syr: Heb *a way of one cubit* *y* Heb *their* *z* Gk: Heb lacks *outer* *a* Heb lacks *of the passage* *b* Gk: Heb *east* *c* Heb *and all their exits*

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the windows appear similar to those in the gates. **41.17–20** Some repeating patterns of cherubim (with human and lion faces) and palm trees appear on one register of the walls (cf. 1 Kings 6.29), probably as reliefs carved in wood. **41.21–22** *Something resembling an altar of wood*, a *table* typologically similar to the table for rows of "show" bread (Ex 25.23–30; Lev 24.7–9; 1 Kings 6.20–22). **41.23–26** There were two swinging doors per aperture; on doors, cf. v. 21a, and windows, v. 16. *Canopy of wood*, obscure; cf. 1 Kings 7.6. **42.1–14** The Hebrew text is at many places problematical; moreover, the precise physical character and location of the buildings is difficult to determine, though they are related to the *outer court* (v. 1; cf. 40.17). The buildings function as temple sacristies and may be related to the tradition of the two chambers described in 40.44–46. Each was three stories high. Specific attention is devoted to passages and doors, which is consistent with the concern to limit access to the holy. **42.1** The *building*, a structure west of and hence

through the entrance at the head of the corresponding passage, from the east, along the matching wall.[d]

13 Then he said to me, "The north chambers and the south chambers opposite the vacant area are the holy chambers, where the priests who approach the LORD shall eat the most holy offerings; there they shall deposit the most holy offerings —the grain offering, the sin offering, and the guilt offering—for the place is holy. 14 When the priests enter the holy place, they shall not go out of it into the outer court without laying there the vestments in which they minister, for these are holy; they shall put on other garments before they go near to the area open to the people."

15 When he had finished measuring the interior of the temple area, he led me out by the gate that faces east, and measured the temple area all around. 16 He measured the east side with the measuring reed, five hundred cubits by the measuring reed. 17 Then he turned and measured[e] the north side, five hundred cubits by the measuring reed. 18 Then he turned and measured[e] the south side, five hundred cubits by the measuring reed. 19 Then he turned to the west side and measured, five hundred cubits by the measuring reed. 20 He measured it on the four sides. It had a wall around it, five hundred cubits long and five hundred cubits wide, to make a separation between the holy and the common.

The Divine Glory Returns to the Temple

43 Then he brought me to the gate, the gate facing east. 2 And there, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the east; the sound was like the sound of mighty waters; and the earth shone with his glory. 3 The[f] vision I saw was like the vision that I had seen when he came to destroy the city, and[g] like the vision that I had seen by the river Chebar; and I fell upon my face. 4 As the glory of the LORD entered the temple by the gate facing east, 5 the spirit lifted me up, and brought me into the inner court; and the glory of the LORD filled the temple.

6 While the man was standing beside me, I heard someone speaking to me out

d Meaning of Heb uncertain *e* Gk: Heb *measuring reed all around. He measured* *f* Gk: Heb *Like the vision* *g* Syr: Heb *and the visions*

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behind the temple; see 41.12. **42.13** The *grain offering, the sin offering, and the guilt offering* are reserved for priestly consumption (see 44.29); cf. 40.39 for a similar list of sacrifices. Such ritually prepared food is to remain in the sacristies, a holy precinct. **42.14** Requirements for the use of ritual apparel. Priestly *vestments* that are worn in the temple building are not to be worn in the temple's outer courtyard (see similarly 44.19). **42.15–20** Dimensions of the temple complex: a square with each side 500 cubits long. The process of measuring parallels the description in 40.6–37; movement is from the east to the north, south, and then west. **42.20** The purpose of the wall is defined not as a defensive structure but as boundary between *the holy and the common* (i.e., the sacred and the profane). On this distinction elsewhere in Ezekiel, cf. 22.26; 44.23. Given this statement about the function of the wall, the defensive character of the gates becomes even more important, since they must guard against the intrusion of the common into the holy.

43.1–12 The glory of God returns to the temple. **43.1–2** *The gate facing east*, i.e., the gate from which the glory of God departed (10.19) and the gate at which Ezekiel's visionary tour had begun (40.6). *From the east.* Cf. 11.23 for the last explicit reference to the eastward movement of the glory of God. *The sound of mighty waters.* See note on 1.24. *The earth shone.* Cf. 1.4, 13 for the symbolism of light. **43.3** Allusions to 8.1–11.25 and 1.1–28a, respectively. And Ezekiel's behavior is similar—*I fell upon my face* (see 1.28b). **43.5** *The spirit lifted me up.* Cf. 3.12, 14; 8.3; 11.1, 24 for the spirit transporting Ezekiel. *The glory of the LORD filled the temple*, an event analogous to the presence of God filling the tabernacle and temple, respectively (Ex 40.34–35; 1 Kings 8.10–13). **43.6** The *man*, the one who had conducted Ezekiel's earlier visionary tour of the temple compound and who, despite God's presence in the temple, continues to perform this role (44.1, 4; 46.19). **43.7–12** God's new Torah. God promises never again to leave the temple (vv. 7, 9). **43.7** *Place of my throne*, Jerusalem (Jer 3.16–17; 17.12). *Soles of my feet.* The ark of the covenant was understood to be the object upon which the feet of the deity might rest (cf. esp. 1 Chr 28.2; but also Ps 132.7; Isa 60.13; Lam 2.1; and, for an entirely different conception, Isa 66.1). *Their kings*, perhaps a reference to royal burials near the temple (cf. 2 Kings 21.18; 21.26), or perhaps a reference to royal "steles" erected in the temple area and commemorating the dead king (the final

of the temple. 7 He said to me: Mortal,
this is the place of my throne and the
place for the soles of my feet, where I will
reside among the people of Israel for-
ever. The house of Israel shall no more
defile my holy name, neither they nor
their kings, by their whoring, and by the
corpses of their kings at their death.[h]
8 When they placed their threshold by my
threshold and their doorposts beside my
doorposts, with only a wall between me
and them, they were defiling my holy
name by their abominations that they
committed; therefore I have consumed
them in my anger. 9 Now let them put
away their idolatry and the corpses of
their kings far from me, and I will reside
among them forever.

10 As for you, mortal, describe the
temple to the house of Israel, and let
them measure the pattern; and let them
be ashamed of their iniquities. 11 When
they are ashamed of all that they have
done, make known to them the plan of
the temple, its arrangement, its exits and
its entrances, and its whole form—all its
ordinances and its entire plan and all its
laws; and write it down in their sight, so
that they may observe and follow the en-
tire plan and all its ordinances. 12 This is
the law of the temple: the whole territory
on the top of the mountain all around
shall be most holy. This is the law of the
temple.

The Altar

13 These are the dimensions of the al-
tar by cubits (the cubit being one cubit
and a handbreadth): its base shall be one
cubit high,[i] and one cubit wide, with a
rim of one span around its edge. This
shall be the height of the altar: 14 From
the base on the ground to the lower ledge,
two cubits, with a width of one cubit; and
from the smaller ledge to the larger ledge,
four cubits, with a width of one cubit;
15 and the altar hearth, four cubits; and
from the altar hearth projecting upward,
four horns. 16 The altar hearth shall be
square, twelve cubits long by twelve wide.
17 The ledge also shall be square, fourteen
cubits long by fourteen wide, with a rim
around it half a cubit wide, and its sur-
rounding base, one cubit. Its steps shall
face east.

18 Then he said to me: Mortal, thus
says the Lord God: These are the ordi-
nances for the altar: On the day when it is
erected for offering burnt offerings upon
it and for dashing blood against it, 19 you
shall give to the levitical priests of the
family of Zadok, who draw near to me to
minister to me, says the Lord God, a bull
for a sin offering. 20 And you shall take
some of its blood, and put it on the four
horns of the altar, and on the four cor-
ners of the ledge, and upon the rim all
around; thus you shall purify it and make

h Or *on their high places* *i* Gk: Heb lacks *high*

Hebrew phrase in the Masoretic Text is ambiguous). **43.8** A specific critique of the earlier proximity of palace to temple as well as more general reference to *their abominations*. **43.9** A challenge and promise to the present generation. **43.10** The first portion corresponds to the charge in 40.4 whereas *let them measure* . . . involves the people's pragmatic and emotional response. **43.11** In distinction to 40.4, Ezekiel is charged with writing down the plans for the temple. *Its exits and its entrances*, the permeable portions of the boundary between the sacred and the profane. **43.12** *This is the law of the temple. Law* is a translation of the Hebrew *Torah*. The claim is extraordinary, since Israel already knew an authoritative book of *Torah* (2 Kings 22.8). *The whole territory . . . shall be most holy*, the primary theme of Ezek 40–48.

43.13–27 The construction and consecration of the altar. **43.13–17** The dimensions of the *altar*, a stepped structure, with each ascending level smaller in area than the one before (base, 18 square cubits; lower ledge, 16 cubits; upper ledge 14 cubits; hearth with four horns, 12 square cubits). **43.13** *Cubit*. See note on 40.5. **43.15–16** This difficult term translated *altar hearth*, in the Hebrew looks like the phrase "the mountain of God" (v. 15) or "the lion of God," (vv. 15–16). The latter phrase is very similar to Ariel in Isa 29.1–2, 7. Some have suggested that the configuration of the altar as well as the Hebrew reflect the Mesopotamian ziggurat. **43.15** Archaeologists have discovered numerous stone altars with *horns* at the four corners of the top. Cf. Ex 27.2; 29.12; 1 Kings 1.50–51; Am 3.14. **43.17** The altar was so high, over twenty feet, that it required *steps*. **43.18–27** Consecration of the altar requires one week. **43.19** *Family of Zadok*. Only Zadokites, not all Levitical priests, may offer sacrifices on the altar. On the first day, both anointing rituals with blood (cf. Lev 16.18; Ex 29.16) and burnt offerings will take place. *Sin offering*. See Lev 4.1–5.13. **43.20** *Purify . . . make atonement*, both cleanse and remove any residual

atonement for it. 21 You shall also take the
bull of the sin offering, and it shall be
burnt in the appointed place belonging to
the temple, outside the sacred area.
22 On the second day you shall offer a
male goat without blemish for a sin offer-
ing; and the altar shall be purified, as it
was purified with the bull. 23 When you
have finished purifying it, you shall offer
a bull without blemish and a ram from
the flock without blemish. 24 You shall
present them before the LORD, and the
priests shall throw salt on them and offer
them up as a burnt offering to the LORD.
25 For seven days you shall provide daily a
goat for a sin offering; also a bull and a
ram from the flock, without blemish, shall
be provided. 26 Seven days shall they
make atonement for the altar and cleanse
it, and so consecrate it. 27 When these days
are over, then from the eighth day on-
ward the priests shall offer upon the altar
your burnt offerings and your offerings
of well-being; and I will accept you, says
the Lord GOD.

The Closed Gate

44 Then he brought me back to the
outer gate of the sanctuary,
which faces east; and it was shut. 2 The
LORD said to me: This gate shall remain
shut; it shall not be opened, and no one
shall enter by it; for the LORD, the God of
Israel, has entered by it; therefore it shall
remain shut. 3 Only the prince, because he
is a prince, may sit in it to eat food before
the LORD; he shall enter by way of the ves-
tibule of the gate, and shall go out by the
same way.

Admission to the Temple

4 Then he brought me by way of the
north gate to the front of the temple; and
I looked, and lo! the glory of the LORD
filled the temple of the LORD; and I fell
upon my face. 5 The LORD said to me:
Mortal, mark well, look closely, and listen
attentively to all that I shall tell you con-
cerning all the ordinances of the temple
of the LORD and all its laws; and mark well
those who may be admitted to[j] the tem-
ple and all those who are to be excluded
from the sanctuary. 6 Say to the rebellious
house,[k] to the house of Israel, Thus says
the Lord GOD: O house of Israel, let there
be an end to all your abominations 7 in
admitting foreigners, uncircumcised in
heart and flesh, to be in my sanctuary,
profaning my temple when you offer to
me my food, the fat and the blood. You[l]
have broken my covenant with all your
abominations. 8 And you have not kept
charge of my sacred offerings; but you
have appointed foreigners[m] to act for you
in keeping my charge in my sanctuary.
9 Thus says the Lord GOD: No fore-
igner, uncircumcised in heart and flesh,
of all the foreigners who are among the
people of Israel, shall enter my sanctuary.
10 But the Levites who went far from me,

j Cn: Heb *the entrance of*
k Gk: Heb lacks *house*
l Gk Syr Vg: Heb *They*
m Heb lacks *foreigners*

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impurity; cf. Ex 29.36; Lev 8.15. **43.21** *Outside the sacred area.* See Lev 4.12, 21; 8.17. **43.22–24** The second day's offerings. **43.24** *Salt* is elsewhere used only for vegetarian offerings; see Lev 2.13; Num 18.19; 2 Chr 13.5; Ezek 47.11. **43.25–27** *Seven days* of offerings mirrors other rituals for dedication. (Ex 29.37; Lev 8.33, 35). **43.27** *Offerings of well-being,* RSV translation, "peace offerings," which priests and supplicants could eat; see Lev 3.1–17.

44.1–3 The exterior east gate closed. The east gate, described in 40.6–16, is shut because God is now in the temple. Such action makes the gate function as part of the wall, which is a boundary between the holy and the common (42.20). **44.2** The closed gate apparently symbolizes the final (43.7, 9) reentry of God into the temple. **44.3** The *prince,* the "civil" ruler in Ezekiel's new polity; see 46.1–18. *Eat food before the LORD,* i.e., consume food prepared as part of a sacrifice, e.g., a well-being sacrifice. What was a gate becomes a ritual dining area. **44.4–5** Reprise. These two verses recapitulate much in 40.4; 43.2–3, 12. One key difference is that the gate now used is the north one, presumably due to the closing of the east gate (44.2). In addition, v. 5b links the language of *ordinances* and *laws* to the ensuing regulations regarding admission to the temple complex. **44.6–16** Admission of priests to the temple. **44.6–8** The prophet inveighs against Israel for allowing *foreigners* to worship at the sanctuary; see similarly Lev 22.25 and contrast Isa 56.3–8. For specific instances, see 1 Chr 9.2; Neh 13.4–9. **44.7, 9** *Uncircumcised in heart and flesh.* Cf. Lev 26.41; Deut 10.16; Jer 4.4; 9.25. Consistent with Deut 23.2–4, no foreigners who reside in Judahite territory are to be allowed into the temple precinct. **44.10–14** The *Levites,* who were enfranchised to sacrifice in Deut 18.6–8, are demoted because of idolatrous behavior, though

going astray from me after their idols
when Israel went astray, shall bear their
punishment. 11 They shall be ministers in
my sanctuary, having oversight at the
gates of the temple, and serving in the
temple; they shall slaughter the burnt
offering and the sacrifice for the people,
and they shall attend on them and serve
them. 12 Because they ministered to them
before their idols and made the house of
Israel stumble into iniquity, therefore I
have sworn concerning them, says the
Lord GOD, that they shall bear their pun-
ishment. 13 They shall not come near to
me, to serve me as priest, nor come near
any of my sacred offerings, the things that
are most sacred; but they shall bear their
shame, and the consequences of the
abominations that they have committed.
14 Yet I will appoint them to keep charge
of the temple, to do all its chores, all that
is to be done in it.

The Levitical Priests

15 But the levitical priests, the descen-
dants of Zadok, who kept the charge of
my sanctuary when the people of Israel
went astray from me, shall come near to
me to minister to me; and they shall at-
tend me to offer me the fat and the blood,
says the Lord GOD. 16 It is they who shall
enter my sanctuary, it is they who shall ap-
proach my table, to minister to me, and
they shall keep my charge. 17 When they
enter the gates of the inner court, they
shall wear linen vestments; they shall have
nothing of wool on them, while they min-
ister at the gates of the inner court, and
within. 18 They shall have linen turbans
on their heads, and linen undergarments
on their loins; they shall not bind them-
selves with anything that causes sweat.
19 When they go out into the outer court
to the people, they shall remove the vest-
ments in which they have been minister-
ing, and lay them in the holy chambers;
and they shall put on other garments,
so that they may not communicate holi-
ness to the people with their vestments.
20 They shall not shave their heads or let
their locks grow long; they shall only trim
the hair of their heads. 21 No priest shall
drink wine when he enters the inner
court. 22 They shall not marry a widow, or
a divorced woman, but only a virgin of the
stock of the house of Israel, or a widow
who is the widow of a priest. 23 They shall
teach my people the difference between
the holy and the common, and show them
how to distinguish between the unclean
and the clean. 24 In a controversy they
shall act as judges, and they shall decide it
according to my judgments. They shall
keep my laws and my statutes regarding
all my appointed festivals, and they shall
keep my sabbaths holy. 25 They shall not
defile themselves by going near to a dead
person; for father or mother, however,
and for son or daughter, and for brother
or unmarried sister they may defile them-
selves. 26 After he has become clean, they
shall count seven days for him. 27 On the
day that he goes into the holy place, into
the inner court, to minister in the holy
place, he shall offer his sin offering, says
the Lord GOD.

28 This shall be their inheritance: I
am their inheritance; and you shall give
them no holding in Israel; I am their
holding. 29 They shall eat the grain offer-
ing, the sin offering, and the guilt offer-

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no specific charges are leveled. Nonetheless, they are to have a role in the temple compound, i.e., oversight of the gates and preparation of sacrifices, the more so since foreigners have been barred from such activity. **44.15–16** The Zadokites, because of past orthodox behavior, will conduct sacrifices. *Zadok,* a priest in Jerusalem when David ruled (2 Sam 20.25), became prominent during Solomon's reign (1 Kings 1.41–45). **44.16** *My table.* See 41.22.

44.17–31 Priestly duties. **44.17–18** Priestly apparel. *Linen.* See note on 9.1–2. **44.19** Cf. the description of *holy chambers* (42.1–14). *Communicate holiness.* See note on 46.20. **44.20** Tonsure is forbidden; cf. Lev 21.5. Deut 14.1–2 indicates that shaving one's head as a form of lamentation (cf. Jer 7.29) could be construed as non-Yahwistic. **44.21** *Drink wine.* See Lev 10.9. **44.22** *Marry.* Cf. Lev 21.7, 13–14. **44.23** *Teach my people.* Cf. Deut 33.8–10. **44.24** *Act as judges.* Cf. Ex 22.9 for such a case; Deut 17.8–9; 19.17; 21.1–5. **44.25** Corpse defilement. See Lev 21.1–3; Num 19. **44.26** For the laity it takes seven days to remove corpse defilement, twice that for priests. **44.28** *No holding.* Cf. the RSV translation, "no inheritance," i.e., the tradition that the Levitical priests had no land holdings (Num 18.20–24; Josh 13.14; 18.7); cf. Ezek 45.1–5; 48.8–14. **44.29** On the priestly portion of the *grain offering,* see Lev 2.3, the *sin offering,* Lev 6.24, and the *guilt offering,* Lev 7.6; more generally, see Num 18.9–13. On *every devoted*

ing; and every devoted thing in Israel shall be theirs. 30 The first of all the first fruits of all kinds, and every offering of all kinds from all your offerings, shall belong to the priests; you shall also give to the priests the first of your dough, in order that a blessing may rest on your house. 31 The priests shall not eat of anything, whether bird or animal, that died of itself or was torn by animals.

The Holy District

45 When you allot the land as an inheritance, you shall set aside for the LORD a portion of the land as a holy district, twenty-five thousand cubits long and twenty[n] thousand cubits wide; it shall be holy throughout its entire extent. 2 Of this, a square plot of five hundred by five hundred cubits shall be for the sanctuary, with fifty cubits for an open space around it. 3 In the holy district you shall measure off a section twenty-five thousand cubits long and ten thousand wide, in which shall be the sanctuary, the most holy place. 4 It shall be a holy portion of the land; it shall be for the priests, who minister in the sanctuary and approach the LORD to minister to him; and it shall be both a place for their houses and a holy place for the sanctuary. 5 Another section, twenty-five thousand cubits long and ten thousand cubits wide, shall be for the Levites who minister at the temple, as their holding for cities to live in.[o]

6 Alongside the portion set apart as the holy district you shall assign as a holding for the city an area five thousand cubits wide, and twenty-five thousand cubits long; it shall belong to the whole house of Israel.

7 And to the prince shall belong the land on both sides of the holy district and the holding of the city, alongside the holy district and the holding of the city, on the west and on the east, corresponding in length to one of the tribal portions, and extending from the western to the eastern boundary 8 of the land. It is to be his property in Israel. And my princes shall no longer oppress my people; but they shall let the house of Israel have the land according to their tribes.

9 Thus says the Lord GOD: Enough, O princes of Israel! Put away violence and oppression, and do what is just and right. Cease your evictions of my people, says the Lord GOD.

Weights and Measures

10 You shall have honest balances, an honest ephah, and an honest bath.[p] 11 The ephah and the bath shall be of the same measure, the bath containing one-tenth of a homer, and the ephah one-tenth of a homer; the homer shall be the standard measure. 12 The shekel shall be

n Gk: Heb *ten* *o* Gk: Heb *as their holding, twenty chambers* *p* A Heb measure of volume

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thing, cf. Num 18.14; Lev 27.28–29. **44.30** On other priestly income, cf. Num 18.25–30. *Dough.* Cf. the RSV translation, "coarse meal." **44.31** See Ex 22.31; Lev 17.15, where the prohibition applies to all people, but cf. Lev 22.8, where the stipulation devolves specifically on priests.

45.1–8 Instruction about a holy district in the restored land, which treats the matter of priestly inheritance differently than does 44.28 and continues the distinction between Levites and priests. **45.1** *Inheritance*, i.e., in perpetuity; see 48.14. The district is a square plot, 25,000 cubits on a side. Cf. the longer description of land divisions in 48.8–22. **45.2** Land for the sanctuary, a *plot* 500 cubits square, and *open space*; cf. 42.20; 48.8, 17. **45.3–4** The share of the land *for the priests*. According to 48.10, the temple is located in this priestly allotment. **45.5** The *Levites'* share. The forty-eight Levitical *cities* (Josh 21.1–42) are all to be located in this section. **45.6** Land *for the city*. Cf. 48.15–20. **45.7** The *prince's* portion, which lies to the east and west of all three other allocations. **45.9** *Princes of Israel*, language reminiscent of Ezekiel before 587 B.C.E. (e.g., 21.12), which in this context may have been secondarily applied to the priests in the new polity. On earlier *evictions*, see 1 Kings 21.1–16; Isa 5.8; Mic 2.2. But land possession was important for Ezekiel as well, e.g., 11.14–16.

45.10–12 Dry volume and weight. Not only are measures standardized, Israel is admonished to adhere to them. Such admonitions are consistent with earlier stipulations (Lev 19.35–36; Deut 25.13–16). Earlier prophets had inveighed against violation of standard measures, e.g., Am 8.5; Mic 6.10–11. Cf. Prov 11.1; 20.10. The base for dry measurement was the *homer* (the Hebrew word suggests that it was the load one donkey could bear), approximately 5–6 bushels. The *shekel* (the standard for weight) weighed a little less than one-half ounce, though both a "heavy" and a "light" shekel are known—thus justifying such a call for standardization.

twenty gerahs. Twenty shekels, twenty-
five shekels, and fifteen shekels shall
make a mina for you.

Offerings

13 This is the offering that you shall
make: one-sixth of an ephah from each
homer of wheat, and one-sixth of an
ephah from each homer of barley, 14 and
as the fixed portion of oil,[q] one-tenth of
a bath from each cor (the cor,[r] like the
homer, contains ten baths); 15 and one
sheep from every flock of two hundred,
from the pastures of Israel. This is the
offering for grain offerings, burnt offer-
ings, and offerings of well-being, to make
atonement for them, says the Lord God.
16 All the people of the land shall join with
the prince in Israel in making this offer-
ing. 17 But this shall be the obligation of
the prince regarding the burnt offerings,
grain offerings, and drink offerings, at
the festivals, the new moons, and the
sabbaths, all the appointed festivals of
the house of Israel: he shall provide the
sin offerings, grain offerings, the burnt
offerings, and the offerings of well-being,
to make atonement for the house of
Israel.

Festivals

18 Thus says the Lord God: In the
first month, on the first day of the month,
you shall take a young bull without blem-
ish, and purify the sanctuary. 19 The
priest shall take some of the blood of the
sin offering and put it on the doorposts of
the temple, the four corners of the ledge
of the altar, and the posts of the gate of
the inner court. 20 You shall do the same
on the seventh day of the month for any-
one who has sinned through error or ig-
norance; so you shall make atonement for
the temple.

21 In the first month, on the four-
teenth day of the month, you shall cele-
brate the festival of the passover, and for
seven days unleavened bread shall be
eaten. 22 On that day the prince shall pro-
vide for himself and all the people of the
land a young bull for a sin offering.
23 And during the seven days of the festi-
val he shall provide as a burnt offering to
the Lord seven young bulls and seven
rams without blemish, on each of the
seven days; and a male goat daily for a sin
offering. 24 He shall provide as a grain
offering an ephah for each bull, an ephah
for each ram, and a hin of oil to each
ephah. 25 In the seventh month, on the
fifteenth day of the month and for the
seven days of the festival, he shall make
the same provision for sin offerings,
burnt offerings, and grain offerings, and
for the oil.

Miscellaneous Regulations

46 Thus says the Lord God: The
gate of the inner court that faces
east shall remain closed on the six work-
ing days; but on the sabbath day it shall be
opened and on the day of the new moon
it shall be opened. 2 The prince shall enter

q Cn: Heb *oil, the bath the oil* r Vg: Heb *homer*

45.13–17 Offerings, which follow in the measures just defined. The people's agricultural products (grain, olive oil, livestock) are subject to a tax of the following percentages: grain (1.5 percent, olive oil (1 percent), livestock (.5 percent); these are payable in the form of offerings in kind (*grain offerings, burnt offerings, and offerings of well-being*). **45.16** Cf. the RSV translation, "all the people of the land shall give this offering to the prince of Israel." **45.17** The *prince* is subject to a higher tax; cf. 45.22–46.15 on the prince's obligations for the sacrificial system.

45.18–25 Rites of purification and festivals. **45.18–20** An otherwise unattested annual rite of temple purification; cf. 43.18–27 for the use of blood in purification rites and Lev 16 on the Day of Atonement. **45.20** Purification of the individual (*anyone*), though the text is difficult. **45.21–25** Passover and Festival of Booths (Tabernacles). Ezekiel has revised significantly the standard festival calendar (cf. Num 28) by highlighting these two primary feasts. **45.21** Calendar for the Passover celebration. **45.22–24** The prince's responsibilities for Passover sacrifices. **45.25** *The festival*, the fall harvest festival otherwise known as Booths, Ingathering, or Tabernacles. Cf. Lev 23.33–36; Num 29.12–38; Deut 16.13–15, where it continues for eight days.

46.1–18 Stipulations regarding the prince. **46.1–7** The prince and sacrifices. The inner east gate is to be closed except on the sabbath and new moon (cf. the closing of the exterior east gate [44.1–3]). When the *prince* enters and moves through the gate to stand at the interior door with the appropriate offerings (v. 2), the priests will perform his sacrifices. By contrast, the *people of the land* (v. 3) may only come near the outside open-

by the vestibule of the gate from outside, and shall take his stand by the post of the gate. The priests shall offer his burnt offering and his offerings of well-being, and he shall bow down at the threshold of the gate. Then he shall go out, but the gate shall not be closed until evening. 3 The people of the land shall bow down at the entrance of that gate before the LORD on the sabbaths and on the new moons. 4 The burnt offering that the prince offers to the LORD on the sabbath day shall be six lambs without blemish and a ram without blemish; 5 and the grain offering with the ram shall be an ephah, and the grain offering with the lambs shall be as much as he wishes to give, together with a hin of oil to each ephah. 6 On the day of the new moon he shall offer a young bull without blemish, and six lambs and a ram, which shall be without blemish; 7 as a grain offering he shall provide an ephah with the bull and an ephah with the ram, and with the lambs as much as he wishes, together with a hin of oil to each ephah. 8 When the prince enters, he shall come in by the vestibule of the gate, and he shall go out by the same way.

9 When the people of the land come before the LORD at the appointed festivals, whoever enters by the north gate to worship shall go out by the south gate; and whoever enters by the south gate shall go out by the north gate: they shall not return by way of the gate by which they entered, but shall go out straight ahead. 10 When they come in, the prince shall come in with them; and when they go out, he shall go out.

11 At the festivals and the appointed seasons the grain offering with a young bull shall be an ephah, and with a ram an ephah, and with the lambs as much as one wishes to give, together with a hin of oil to an ephah. 12 When the prince provides a freewill offering, either a burnt offering or offerings of well-being as a freewill offering to the LORD, the gate facing east shall be opened for him; and he shall offer his burnt offering or his offerings of well-being as he does on the sabbath day. Then he shall go out, and after he has gone out the gate shall be closed.

13 He shall provide a lamb, a yearling, without blemish, for a burnt offering to the LORD daily; morning by morning he shall provide it. 14 And he shall provide a grain offering with it morning by morning regularly, one-sixth of an ephah, and one-third of a hin of oil to moisten the choice flour, as a grain offering to the LORD; this is the ordinance for all time. 15 Thus the lamb and the grain offering and the oil shall be provided, morning by morning, as a regular burnt offering.

16 Thus says the Lord GOD: If the prince makes a gift to any of his sons out of his inheritance,[s] it shall belong to his sons, it is their holding by inheritance. 17 But if he makes a gift out of his inheritance to one of his servants, it shall be his to the year of liberty; then it shall revert to the prince; only his sons may keep a gift from his inheritance. 18 The prince shall not take any of the inheritance of the people, thrusting them out of their holding; he shall give his sons their inheritance out of his own holding, so that none of my people shall be dispossessed of their holding.

19 Then he brought me through the

s Gk: Heb *it is his inheritance*

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ing of the gate. **46.4** On the *sabbath* sacrifices, cf. those in Num 28.9–10. **46.6** On *new moon* sacrifices, cf. those in Num 28.11–15. **46.8–10** Entering and exiting during festivals. As with v. 2, the prince approaches the interior east gate from the outside and proceeds to the inner door. Though he makes ritual entrance at the same time as the people, they must use different exterior gates from those through which they entered. Moreover they must move according to either a north-south or south-north axis, apparently a form of traffic control during major festivals. **46.11** See v. 7. **46.12–15** Instructions for the prince when making a freewill (noncalendrical) or daily (calendrical) offering. On the freewill or voluntary offering, which may result from payment of a vow, see Lev 22.18–23; on the daily offering, see Num 28.3–8. **46.16–18** The prince's land (45.7; 48.21–22) may be inherited by his *sons*, but it is to remain in that family in perpetuity. Such land could be temporarily granted to someone outside, *one of his servants*, but the land would revert to kin ownership on *the year of liberty*, i.e., the year of release associated with the jubilee celebration (Lev 25.8–17). **46.18a** The prince is not to take others' inheritance; cf. note on 45.9.

46.19–24 Sacrifice preparation areas for priests and laity. Near the inner north gate and in the *holy chambers*, there is a room where priests

entrance, which was at the side of the gate, to the north row of the holy chambers for the priests; and there I saw a place at the extreme western end of them. 20 He said to me, "This is the place where the priests shall boil the guilt offering and the sin offering, and where they shall bake the grain offering, in order not to bring them out into the outer court and so communicate holiness to the people."

21 Then he brought me out to the outer court, and led me past the four corners of the court; and in each corner of the court there was a court— 22 in the four corners of the court were small[t] courts, forty cubits long and thirty wide; the four were of the same size. 23 On the inside, around each of the four courts[u] was a row of masonry, with hearths made at the bottom of the rows all around. 24 Then he said to me, "These are the kitchens where those who serve at the temple shall boil the sacrifices of the people."

Water Flowing from the Temple

47 Then he brought me back to the entrance of the temple; there, water was flowing from below the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east); and the water was flowing down from below the south end of the threshold of the temple, south of the altar. 2 Then he brought me out by way of the north gate, and led me around on the outside to the outer gate that faces toward the east;[v] and the water was coming out on the south side.

3 Going on eastward with a cord in his hand, the man measured one thousand cubits, and then led me through the water; and it was ankle-deep. 4 Again he measured one thousand, and led me through the water; and it was knee-deep. Again he measured one thousand, and led me through the water; and it was up to the waist. 5 Again he measured one thousand, and it was a river that I could not cross, for the water had risen; it was deep enough to swim in, a river that could not be crossed. 6 He said to me, "Mortal, have you seen this?"

Then he led me back along the bank of the river. 7 As I came back, I saw on the bank of the river a great many trees on the one side and on the other. 8 He said to me, "This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah; and when it enters the sea, the sea of stagnant waters, the water will become fresh. 9 Wherever the river goes,[w] every living creature that swarms will live, and there will be very many fish, once these waters reach there. It will become fresh; and everything will live where the river goes. 10 People will stand fishing beside the

t Gk Syr Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain
u Heb *the four of them* *v* Meaning of Heb uncertain *w* Gk Syr Vg Tg: Heb *the two rivers go*

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prepare the *guilt, sin,* and *grain* offerings; cf. 42.13. **46.20** *Communicate holiness to the people.* The holy is a threat to the people, e.g., when Uzzah touched the ark and died (2 Sam 6.6–7); cf. 44.19. **46.21–24** Sizable cooking areas in the four corners of the exterior court. *Those who serve at the temple,* i.e., the Levites, prepare foodstuffs on behalf of the people; cf. 2 Chr 35.11–13.

47.1–12 The guide returns to show Ezekiel a stream flowing out from beneath the temple, past the altar and out from under the exterior east gate. Water imagery had already been associated with the presence of the deity (1.24; 43.2). The river apparently reflects the motif of the deity's garden or dwelling as a watery and fertile place (e.g., Gen 2.10–14; Ps 46.4), which clearly links the river to Jerusalem; see note on 28.2. Late prophetic writings—Joel 3.18 ("a fountain shall come forth from the house of the LORD and water the Wadi Shittim") and Zech 13.1; 14.8 ("on that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem")—share Ezekiel's basic expectation. **47.2** The flow is to the southeast. **47.3–5** The man takes four measurements at 1,000 cubit intervals, which reveals that the river is growing progressively larger and deeper—it is *ankle-deep, knee-deep, up to the waist,* and finally *could not be crossed.* **47.6–7** As they retrace their steps, Ezekiel observes the fertile growth on the riverbanks; cf. descriptions of the Jordan banks (Jer 12.5; Zech 11.3). **47.8** The river continues southeast into the Arabah, which means here the Jordan rift valley just north of *the sea,* the Dead Sea. The *water will become fresh;* cf. 2 Kings 2.22 for the same Hebrew expression. **47.9–12** The river as a source of fertility. **47.9** *The river goes.* The Masoretic tradition reads "the two rivers go," which reflects an expectation of two rivers attested in Zech 14.8. The verse utilizes vocabulary from Gen 1 (*living creature, swarms, fish*). **47.10** Fish will be prolific and the fishing excellent (cf. 26.5, 14 on earlier fishing imagery). *En-gedi,* an oasis with spring, waterfall, and small canyon on the western bank of the Dead Sea. *En-glaim.* Site unknown, though

sea[x] from En-gedi to En-eglaim; it will be
a place for the spreading of nets; its fish
will be of a great many kinds, like the fish
of the Great Sea. 11 But its swamps and
marshes will not become fresh; they are to
be left for salt. 12 On the banks, on both
sides of the river, there will grow all kinds
of trees for food. Their leaves will not
wither nor their fruit fail, but they will
bear fresh fruit every month, because the
water for them flows from the sanctuary.
Their fruit will be for food, and their
leaves for healing."

The New Boundaries of the Land

13 Thus says the Lord GOD: These are
the boundaries by which you shall divide
the land for inheritance among the twelve
tribes of Israel. Joseph shall have two por-
tions. 14 You shall divide it equally; I
swore to give it to your ancestors, and this
land shall fall to you as your inheritance.
15 This shall be the boundary of the
land: On the north side, from the Great
Sea by way of Hethlon to Lebo-hamath,
and on to Zedad,[y] 16 Berothah, Sibraim
(which lies between the border of Dama-
scus and the border of Hamath), as far as
Hazer-hatticon, which is on the border of
Hauran. 17 So the boundary shall run
from the sea to Hazar-enon, which is
north of the border of Damascus, with the
border of Hamath to the north.[z] This
shall be the north side.
18 On the east side, between Hauran
and Damascus; along the Jordan between
Gilead and the land of Israel; to the east-
ern sea and as far as Tamar.[a] This shall
be the east side.
19 On the south side, it shall run from
Tamar as far as the waters of Meribath-
kadesh, from there along the Wadi of
Egypt[b] to the Great Sea. This shall be the
south side.
20 On the west side, the Great Sea
shall be the boundary to a point opposite
Lebo-hamath. This shall be the west side.
21 So you shall divide this land among
you according to the tribes of Israel.
22 You shall allot it as an inheritance for
yourselves and for the aliens who reside
among you and have begotten children
among you. They shall be to you as citi-
zens of Israel; with you they shall be allot-
ted an inheritance among the tribes of
Israel. 23 In whatever tribe aliens reside,
there you shall assign them their inheri-
tance, says the Lord GOD.

The Tribal Portions

48 These are the names of the
tribes: Beginning at the northern
border, on the Hethlon road,[c] from Lebo-
hamath, as far as Hazar-enon (which
is on the border of Damascus, with
Hamath to the north), and[d] extending
from the east side to the west,[e] Dan, one

x Heb *it* y Gk: Heb *Lebo-zedad,* 16 *Hamath*
z Meaning of Heb uncertain a Compare Syr: Heb *you shall measure* b Heb lacks *of Egypt*
c Compare 47.15: Heb *by the side of the way*
d Cn: Heb *and they shall be his* e Gk Compare verses 2-8: Heb *the east side the west*

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some scholars think it lies on the eastern bank of the Dead Sea. *Like the fish of the Great Sea,* which probably refers to a prolific fishery and not specific salt-water species. **47.11** Saline wetlands will be preserved, not for ecological reasons but for salt production, i.e., *they are to be left for salt,* which was used in ritual practice (43.24). **47.12** Cf. v. 7, a picture of preternatural fertility: deciduous trees whose leaves do not fall and that bear fruit *every month.* The fertility provides for food and healing. All this is attributable to the source of the river: *the sanctuary.*

47.13–48.29 New configuration of the land. **47.13–22** Boundaries and allocation of the land. This process suggests Ezekiel envisions a new settlement preceded by a new exodus and wilderness wanderings (20.33–35). **47.13** *Joseph . . . two portions,* i.e., Manasseh and Ephraim, 48.4–5. **47.14** What was promised to the ancestors will be fulfilled for a future generation. **47.15–21** The idealized perimeter *boundary of the land*: on the north, basically Damascus to the coast; on the east, the Jordan; south, a line through Kadesh-barnea on the southern side; and west, the Mediterranean. Cf. earlier Israelites, e.g., in Num 34; Josh 15. Striking is the absence of Transjordanian tribal land (Num 34.13–15). **47.22–23** Quite a liberal allowance concerning *inheritance* and *aliens.* Cf. Lev 19.34; 24.22; Num 15.29; Deut 23.2–8 on the status of the so-called resident aliens. In order to "inherit" land, the alien family must be of two generations. **48.1–29** Boundaries inside the land. **48.1–7** Tribal allocations to the north of the holy sector (vv. 8–22): Dan, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Ephraim, Ruben, Judah. Each tribe receives an equal portion of land. The grants are strips of land that extend from the eastern to western borders. The rationale for the ordering of the tribal land is unclear, e.g., Benjamin south of Judah. Cf.

portion. 2 Adjoining the territory of Dan,
from the east side to the west, Asher,
one portion. 3 Adjoining the territory of
Asher, from the east side to the west,
Naphtali, one portion. 4 Adjoining the ter-
ritory of Naphtali, from the east side to
the west, Manasseh, one portion. 5 Adjoin-
ing the territory of Manasseh, from the
east side to the west, Ephraim, one por-
tion. 6 Adjoining the territory of Ephraim,
from the east side to the west, Reuben,
one portion. 7 Adjoining the territory of
Reuben, from the east side to the west,
Judah, one portion.

8 Adjoining the territory of Judah,
from the east side to the west, shall be the
portion that you shall set apart, twenty-
five thousand cubits in width, and in
length equal to one of the tribal portions,
from the east side to the west, with the
sanctuary in the middle of it. 9 The por-
tion that you shall set apart for the LORD
shall be twenty-five thousand cubits in
length, and twenty[f] thousand in width.
10 These shall be the allotments of the
holy portion: the priests shall have an al-
lotment measuring twenty-five thousand
cubits on the northern side, ten thousand
cubits in width on the western side, ten
thousand in width on the eastern side,
and twenty-five thousand in length on the
southern side, with the sanctuary of the
LORD in the middle of it. 11 This shall be
for the consecrated priests, the descen-
dants[g] of Zadok, who kept my charge,
who did not go astray when the people of
Israel went astray, as the Levites did. 12 It
shall belong to them as a special portion
from the holy portion of the land, a most
holy place, adjoining the territory of the
Levites. 13 Alongside the territory of the
priests, the Levites shall have an allotment
twenty-five thousand cubits in length and
ten thousand in width. The whole length
shall be twenty-five thousand cubits and
the width twenty[h] thousand. 14 They shall
not sell or exchange any of it; they shall
not transfer this choice portion of the
land, for it is holy to the LORD.

15 The remainder, five thousand cu-
bits in width and twenty-five thousand in
length, shall be for ordinary use for the
city, for dwellings and for open country.
In the middle of it shall be the city; 16 and
these shall be its dimensions: the north
side four thousand five hundred cubits,
the south side four thousand five hun-
dred, the east side four thousand five
hundred, and the west side four thousand
five hundred. 17 The city shall have open
land: on the north two hundred fifty cu-
bits, on the south two hundred fifty, on
the east two hundred fifty, on the west
two hundred fifty. 18 The remainder of
the length alongside the holy portion shall
be ten thousand cubits to the east, and ten
thousand to the west, and it shall be
alongside the holy portion. Its produce
shall be food for the workers of the city.
19 The workers of the city, from all the
tribes of Israel, shall cultivate it. 20 The
whole portion that you shall set apart shall
be twenty-five thousand cubits square,
that is, the holy portion together with the
property of the city.

21 What remains on both sides of the
holy portion and of the property of the
city shall belong to the prince. Extending
from the twenty-five thousand cubits of
the holy portion to the east border, and
westward from the twenty-five thousand
cubits to the west border, parallel to the
tribal portions, it shall belong to the
prince. The holy portion with the sanctu-
ary of the temple in the middle of it,
22 and the property of the Levites and of
the city, shall be in the middle of that
which belongs to the prince. The por-
tion of the prince shall lie between the

f Compare 45.1: Heb *ten* *g* One Ms Gk: Heb *of the descendants* *h* Gk: Heb *ten*

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the tribal allocations in Josh 13–19. **48.8–22** The holy sector, the description of which dominates this depiction of the land. Cf. 45.1–8, which is an abbreviated form of this description. **48.12** The Zadokite's allocation is *a most holy place*, an expression that presupposes various gradations of holiness in comparison to the binary distinction between holy and common; cf. 45.4. **48.14** The priests, like other Israelites, hold the land in perpetuity; cf. 46.16–18; 47.13–14. **48.15–20** *The city*, Jerusalem, though not so explicitly stated. The city is a square, a little over one and one-half miles per side. **48.15** Land *for ordinary use for the city*, a portion of which is designated for agriculture. **48.21–22** The *prince*'s holdings, a grant which, consistent with 43.8, does not place the prince in direct proximity to the temple. **48.21** *Sanctuary of the temple*, a peculiar phrase, which, however, emphasizes the intensely holy character of the Zadokites' sector.

territory of Judah and the territory of Benjamin.

23 As for the rest of the tribes: from the east side to the west, Benjamin, one portion. 24 Adjoining the territory of Benjamin, from the east side to the west, Simeon, one portion. 25 Adjoining the territory of Simeon, from the east side to the west, Issachar, one portion. 26 Adjoining the territory of Issachar, from the east side to the west, Zebulun, one portion. 27 Adjoining the territory of Zebulun, from the east side to the west, Gad, one portion. 28 And adjoining the territory of Gad to the south, the boundary shall run from Tamar to the waters of Meribath-kadesh, from there along the Wadi of Egypt[i] to the Great Sea. 29 This is the land that you shall allot as an inheritance among the tribes of Israel, and these are their portions, says the Lord GOD.

30 These shall be the exits of the city: On the north side, which is to be four thousand five hundred cubits by measure, 31 three gates, the gate of Reuben, the gate of Judah, and the gate of Levi, the gates of the city being named after the tribes of Israel. 32 On the east side, which is to be four thousand five hundred cubits, three gates, the gate of Joseph, the gate of Benjamin, and the gate of Dan. 33 On the south side, which is to be four thousand five hundred cubits by measure, three gates, the gate of Simeon, the gate of Issachar, and the gate of Zebulun. 34 On the west side, which is to be four thousand five hundred cubits, three gates,[j] the gate of Gad, the gate of Asher, and the gate of Naphtali. 35 The circumference of the city shall be eighteen thousand cubits. And the name of the city from that time on shall be, The LORD is There.

i Heb lacks *of Egypt* *j* One Ms Gk Syr: MT *their gates three*

48.23–29 Allocations *for the rest of the tribes* to the south of the holy sector: Benjamin, Simeon, Issachar, Zebulun, Gad. Of these tribes, only Simeon was, according to other tribal allocation traditions, a southern tribe (Josh 19.1–9). **48.30–35** The perimeter and name of the *city*. Each side of the city wall will have three gates, which are given tribal names. Unlike the list in vv.1–7, 23–27, Levi is present, which means that Joseph replaces Manasseh and Ephraim in order to preserve the number twelve; cf. Jer 31.38–39; Zech 14.10–11; Rev 21.12–14. **48.35** A new name for the city, the name of which has not been explicitly mentioned in descriptions of the *city* (vv. 15–20; 43.6). *The LORD is There*, a natural expression of sentiments such as those in Isa 60.14; cf. Jer 23.6.

DANIEL

THE BOOK APPEARING UNDER THE NAME OF DANIEL is actually by an unknown author. A Daniel is mentioned in Ezek 14.14–20; 28.3 as a righteous sage of antiquity alongside two non-Israelite heroes of the Hebrew Bible, Noah and Job. A non-Israelite Daniel (or Danel) is mentioned as a just judge in the Aqhat legend from Ugarit (fourteenth century B.C.E.). The name of such a wise and righteous legendary figure was probably chosen to enhance the text.

Genre and Structure

The book as a whole is usually described as an apocalypse, a genre in which revelation is mediated in a narrative framework to a human recipient through otherworldly beings. Apocalypses often use conventions such as pseudonymity and employ a variety of literary forms. Daniel is the only full-fledged example of the genre in the Hebrew Bible but other examples include Revelation and the pseudepigraphical books of *1 Enoch* and *2 Baruch*. The book of Daniel has two distinct parts, a collection of stories in chs. 1–6 and four visions in chs. 7–12. The stories, narrated mostly in the third person, are about a Jew named Daniel and his companions, who are among the prisoners from Jerusalem taken into exile to Babylon. The visions, largely in the first person, are received by Daniel. The two parts are unified by the narrative framework and the character, Daniel.

Setting, Date, and Languages

The portrayal of Daniel as a Jewish exile in Babylon creates a literary setting in the sixth century B.C.E. The visions he receives there thus appear to provide insight into events in Judea in later centuries. But the literary setting is not the setting in which the book was actually written. The fact that ch. 11 obviously refers to Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the Seleucid ruler from Syria, makes it clear that the book took its final form during Antiochus's persecution of the Jews, which began with the desecration of the temple in 167 B.C.E. While one group of Jews led by the Maccabees resisted militarily, others offered passive resistance (1 Macc 1.29–38).

Much of the material in chs. 1–6 probably originated in the fourth and third centuries B.C.E. and circulated independently before being joined to the visions. The inaccurate description of the end of Antiochus's reign and of his death indicates that the book was finished before these took place in 164 B.C.E. The process by which the book was composed is further complicated by the fact that it is written in two languages, Hebrew (1.1–2.4a; 8.1–12.13) and Aramaic (2.4b–7.28). The language divisions do not correspond to the content divisions.

Authorship and Audience

Clues scattered through the book indicate that the author (or authors) belonged to "the wise," those faithful to the covenant and supporters of Jewish religious practice in the midst of Antiochus's persecution, but not advocates of active resistance. They are sometimes identified with the Hasidim, but this term has been used so indiscriminately that it is of little value here. The tales were probably originally composed for a general audience in the eastern Diaspora, the visions for a more learned audience in Judea.

Intention

As a whole, the book of Daniel encourages and consoles Jews facing persecution in the reign of Antiochus. In chs. 1–6, it provides them with heroic role models of Jews who thrive because they remain faithful to Jewish law while serving a foreign king. In chs. 7–12, it holds out promise of deliverance in the new kingdom of God for those who remain faithful in the face of persecution. Together these messages enunciate the book's major theme of God's sovereign control of history.

Place in the Canon

Daniel's place among the prophetic books derives from its location in the Greek Septuagint canon. The Hebrew canon, on the other hand, places it among the Writings, between Esther and Ezra. The placement of the book bears significantly on the history of its interpretation as prophecy or apocalyptic. The book itself, however, is the shorter version of Daniel preserved in the Hebrew canon. The two major Greek versions, the Septuagint and the Theodotion, contain the Prayer of Azariah (3.24–45), the Song of the Three Jews (3.46–90), and the stories of Susanna (13.1–64), Bel (14.1–22), and the Dragon (14.23–42). These additions are found in the Apocrypha. Manuscript fragments of Daniel were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls in three caves in Qumran. Two other compositions linked with the name of Daniel were also found there: the Prayer of Nabonidus and, in fragmentary form, the Apocalypse of Pseudo-Daniel.

Pamela J. Milne

Four Young Israelites at the Babylonian Court

1 In the third year of the reign of King Jehoiakim of Judah, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. 2 The Lord let King Jehoiakim of Judah fall into his power, as well as some of the vessels of the house of God. These he brought to the land of Shinar,[a] and placed the vessels in the treasury of his gods.

3 Then the king commanded his palace master Ashpenaz to bring some of the Israelites of the royal family and of the nobility, 4 young men without physical defect and handsome, versed in every branch of wisdom, endowed with knowledge and insight, and competent to serve in the king's palace; they were to be taught the literature and language of the Chaldeans. 5 The king assigned them a daily portion of the royal rations of food and wine. They were to be educated for three years, so that at the end of that time they could be stationed in the king's court. 6 Among them were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, from the tribe of Judah. 7 The palace master gave them other names: Daniel he called Belteshazzar, Hananiah he called Shadrach, Mishael he called Meshach, and Azariah he called Abednego.

8 But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the royal rations of food and wine; so he asked the palace master to allow him not to defile himself. 9 Now God allowed Daniel to receive favor and compassion from the palace master. 10 The palace master said to Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king; he has appointed your food and your drink. If he should see you in poorer condition than the other young men of your own age, you would endanger my head with the king." 11 Then Daniel asked the guard whom the palace master had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: 12 "Please test your servants for ten

a Gk Theodotion: Heb adds *to the house of his own gods*

1.1–6.28 The edifying popular tales in chs. 1–6 are linked to the visions in chs. 7–12 by the central character, Daniel, and a focus on the sovereignty and power of God. They incorporate older, traditional material and exhibit many characteristics of folklore including stereotyped characters, stylized plots, marvelous interventions, and extensive repetition and elaboration. In chs. 2, 4, and 5 wise courtiers compete to interpret dreams and visions, while in chs. 3 and 6, Jewish courtiers are miraculously delivered from mortal danger after coming into conflict with foreign courtiers and their king. There are many parallels with the stories of Joseph (Gen 39–41), Mordecai (Esther), and the Assyrian story of Ahikar. **1.1–21** This introduction in Hebrew to the Aramaic stories in chs. 2–6 sets the time, place, and general circumstance of exile in Babylon and introduces five of the eight major characters in the remaining stories. The superiority of the Jews' God-given wisdom introduces the theme of the sovereignty of the Jewish God. **1.1** *Third year of . . . Jehoiakim*, 606 B.C.E. See 2 Chr 36.5–7. Jerusalem was actually captured in 597 B.C.E. during the reign of Jehoiachin, Jehoiakim's son; see 2 Kings 24.10–12 and the Babylonian Chronicle, a cuneiform source. *Nebuchadnezzar* (605–562 B.C.E.), alternately spelled "Nebuchadrezzar" (Jer 24.1; 25.1, 9) can be translated "Nabu/Nebo [a Babylonian deity], guard of the frontier"; see Isa 46.1. **1.2** See 2 Kings 24.10–16; 2 Chr 36.7, 18–20; Ezra 5.14. *Shinar*, the ancient name of Babylon, ordinarily with negative connotations; see Gen 10.10; 11.2; 14.1, 9; Isa 11.11; Zech 5.11. *His gods*, Marduk (Bel), the chief god of Babylon, and his son, Nabu/Nebo, the personal god of Nebuchadnezzar. **1.3–5** Similar to court training known from Greek sources. **1.3** *Palace master*, lit. "chief eunuch," but the title does not necessarily mean "castrated"; see Gen 37.36; 39.1. *The Israelites . . . of the nobility*, the bulk of those taken to Babylon in 597 B.C.E.; see 2 Kings 24.14–16. **1.4** *Without physical defect*, used of priests (Lev 21.17–23) and sacrificial animals (Lev 22.19–21). *Chaldeans*, usually Aramaic-speaking, Neo-Babylonian peoples (5.30; 9.1; Ezra 5.12), but here and elsewhere in Daniel (2.2–5, 10; 4.7; 5.7, 11) a generic term for wise men; see 2.2. **1.5** *Portion*, from an Old Persian word meaning "government-supplied food ration"; see 1.8, 15, 16; 11.26; 2 Kings 25.30; Jer 52.34. **1.6–7** The Hebrew names contain references to the Jewish God. For service in the royal court the young men are given new names incorporating references to Babylonian deities: Bel, Marduk, and Nabu. **1.8** By the second century B.C.E. observance of the dietary laws (Lev 11) was a cornerstone of orthodoxy; see Tob 1.10–11; Jdt 10.5; 12.1–2; 1 Macc 1.62–63; 2 Macc 5.27; 6.8,

days. Let us be given vegetables to eat and
water to drink. 13 You can then compare
our appearance with the appearance of
the young men who eat the royal rations,
and deal with your servants according to
what you observe." 14 So he agreed to this
proposal and tested them for ten days.
15 At the end of ten days it was observed
that they appeared better and fatter than
all the young men who had been eating
the royal rations. 16 So the guard contin-
ued to withdraw their royal rations and
the wine they were to drink, and gave
them vegetables. 17 To these four young
men God gave knowledge and skill in ev-
ery aspect of literature and wisdom; Dan-
iel also had insight into all visions and
dreams.

18 At the end of the time that the king
had set for them to be brought in, the pal-
ace master brought them into the pres-
ence of Nebuchadnezzar, 19 and the king
spoke with them. And among them all, no
one was found to compare with Daniel,
Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; there-
fore they were stationed in the king's
court. 20 In every matter of wisdom and
understanding concerning which the king
inquired of them, he found them ten
times better than all the magicians and en-
chanters in his whole kingdom. 21 And
Daniel continued there until the first year
of King Cyrus.

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

2 In the second year of Nebuchad-
nezzar's reign, Nebuchadnezzar
dreamed such dreams that his spirit was
troubled and his sleep left him. 2 So the
king commanded that the magicians, the
enchanters, the sorcerers, and the Chal-
deans be summoned to tell the king his
dreams. When they came in and stood be-
fore the king, 3 he said to them, "I have
had such a dream that my spirit is trou-
bled by the desire to understand it." 4 The
Chaldeans said to the king (in Aramaic),[b]
"O king, live forever! Tell your servants
the dream, and we will reveal the inter-
pretation." 5 The king answered the Chal-
deans, "This is a public decree: if you do
not tell me both the dream and its inter-
pretation, you shall be torn limb from
limb, and your houses shall be laid in ru-
ins. 6 But if you do tell me the dream and
its interpretation, you shall receive from
me gifts and rewards and great honor.
Therefore tell me the dream and its inter-
pretation." 7 They answered a second
time, "Let the king first tell his servants
the dream, then we can give its interpreta-
tion." 8 The king answered, "I know with
certainty that you are trying to gain time,
because you see I have firmly decreed: 9 if

b The text from this point to the end of chapter 7 is in Aramaic

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18–31; 7.1. **1.14** *Ten days*, a typical period for a spiritual test; see Rev 2.10; *Jubilees* 19.8. In Dan 1.20, the four Jews prove to be *ten times better*. **1.20** The Hebrew term translated *magicians* is derived from Egyptian and found only in the stories of Joseph (Gen 41.8, 24) and Moses and Aaron (Ex 7.11, 22; 8.3, 14, 15; 9.11), both of which are set at the Egyptian royal court. *Enchanters*, a term derived from Akkadian meaning "incantation priest"; see 2.2; 4.7; 5.7. **1.21** *First year of King Cyrus*, 539 B.C.E., the end of Daniel's service at the royal court but not the end of his career, which continues until 536 B.C.E. (10.1), seventy years after the date in 1.1.

2.1–49 God's superiority demonstrated through a contest to interpret a king's dream; in this contest the wisdom skills of Daniel are pitted against those of the Babylonian wise men. The plot is similar to the Joseph story (Gen 41) and the Assyrian story of Ahiqar. Duplications (e.g., 2.16, 25) and inconsistencies (e.g., 2.34–35, 45) suggest an older story was expanded. **2.1** *Second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign*, 603 B.C.E.; this is inconsistent with 1.1, where Nebuchadnezzar is already king during the three years Daniel and his friends are in training. *Nebuchadnezzar*. Originally the king might have been Nabonidus; see 4.28–33. *Dreams*, believed to be important vehicles for divine-human communication; see Dan 4; 7; Gen 15.12; 20.3; 28.10–12; 37.5–10; 41.1–32; 1 Sam 3.3–5; Mt 27.19; kings were regarded as favored recipients of divine oracles. **2.2** *Magicians . . . Chaldeans*. See 1.4, 20. Originally these terms designated different religious specialists, but here they are used synonymously; see 4.7. *To tell . . . his dreams*, a difficult task (repeated in 2.6, 9). Providing interpretations was a common practice, attested in numerous Mesopotamian divination tablets, but not the telling of the dream itself (2.11). **2.4** *O king, live forever*, a royal greeting used for Persian kings until the Islamic period (beginning in the mid-seventh century C.E.); see 3.9; 5.10; 6.6, 21. **2.5** On the threat of punishment, see 2.9, 12. *Torn . . . laid in ruins*. See 3.29. **2.6** On the promise of reward, see 2.48. **2.9** This verse suggests the king has not

you do not tell me the dream, there is but
one verdict for you. You have agreed to
speak lying and misleading words to me
until things take a turn. Therefore, tell
me the dream, and I shall know that you
can give me its interpretation." 10 The
Chaldeans answered the king, "There is
no one on earth who can reveal what the
king demands! In fact no king, however
great and powerful, has ever asked such a
thing of any magician or enchanter or
Chaldean. 11 The thing that the king is
asking is too difficult, and no one can re-
veal it to the king except the gods, whose
dwelling is not with mortals."

12 Because of this the king flew into a
violent rage and commanded that all the
wise men of Babylon be destroyed. 13 The
decree was issued, and the wise men were
about to be executed; and they looked for
Daniel and his companions, to execute
them. 14 Then Daniel responded with
prudence and discretion to Arioch, the
king's chief executioner, who had gone
out to execute the wise men of Babylon;
15 he asked Arioch, the royal official,
"Why is the decree of the king so urgent?"
Arioch then explained the matter to Dan-
iel. 16 So Daniel went in and requested
that the king give him time and he would
tell the king the interpretation.

God Reveals Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

17 Then Daniel went to his home and
informed his companions, Hananiah,
Mishael, and Azariah, 18 and told them to
seek mercy from the God of heaven con-
cerning this mystery, so that Daniel and
his companions with the rest of the wise
men of Babylon might not perish. 19 Then
the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a
vision of the night, and Daniel blessed the
God of heaven.

20 Daniel said:

"Blessed be the name of God
from age to age,
for wisdom and power are his.
21 He changes times and seasons,
deposes kings and sets up
kings;
he gives wisdom to the wise
and knowledge to those who
have understanding.
22 He reveals deep and hidden
things;
he knows what is in the
darkness,
and light dwells with him.
23 To you, O God of my ancestors,
I give thanks and praise,
for you have given me wisdom
and power,
and have now revealed to me
what we asked of you,
for you have revealed to us
what the king ordered."

Daniel Interprets the Dream

24 Therefore Daniel went to Arioch,
whom the king had appointed to destroy
the wise men of Babylon, and said to him,
"Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon;
bring me in before the king, and I will
give the king the interpretation."

25 Then Arioch quickly brought Dan-
iel before the king and said to him: "I
have found among the exiles from Judah
a man who can tell the king the interpre-
tation." 26 The king said to Daniel, whose
name was Belteshazzar, "Are you able to
tell me the dream that I have seen and its
interpretation?" 27 Daniel answered the
king, "No wise men, enchanters, magi-
cians, or diviners can show to the king the
mystery that the king is asking, 28 but
there is a God in heaven who reveals mys-
teries, and he has disclosed to King Nebu-
chadnezzar what will happen at the end of

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forgotten his dreams but is testing the competence of the wise men. **2.11** The task exceeds human ability. **2.13–23** Widely regarded as a late addition to harmonize with ch. 1. Daniel has direct access to the king, in contrast to 2.24 where Arioch introduces him to the king as an exile. **2.17** See 1.6–7; 2.49. **2.18** *The God of heaven,* a Persian title for the Jewish God, occurs frequently in texts from the Persian period (539 B.C.E.) onward; see 2.19, 37, 44; Ezra 1.2; 5.11, 12; 6.9, 10; 7.12, 21, 23; Neh 1.4, 5; 2.4, 20; Jon 1.9; Tob 10.11; Jdt 5.8; 6.19; 11.17. *Mystery,* a loanword from Old Persian meaning something secret, implies knowledge gained through divine revelation, not conventional wisdom. It is found only in Dan 2.19, 27, 28, 29, 30; 4.9 in the Bible but is frequent in the Dead Sea Scrolls from Qumran. **2.19** *Vision of the night.* See 7.2; Gen 46.2; Zech 1.8. **2.20–23** A doxology in the form of a short psalm of praise and thanksgiving; see Neh 9.5; Job 12.13, 22; Pss 36.9; 41.13; 106.48; 139.11–12; Prov 2.6; Isa 60.19–20; Hab 3.4; Rev 5.12. **2.24–25** See 2.13–16. **2.28** *End of days* refers to the end of the present age and points to

days. Your dream and the visions of your
head as you lay in bed were these: 29 To
you, O king, as you lay in bed, came
thoughts of what would be hereafter, and
the revealer of mysteries disclosed to you
what is to be. 30 But as for me, this mys-
tery has not been revealed to me because
of any wisdom that I have more than any
other living being, but in order that the
interpretation may be known to the king
and that you may understand the
thoughts of your mind.

31 "You were looking, O king, and lo!
there was a great statue. This statue was
huge, its brilliance extraordinary; it was
standing before you, and its appearance
was frightening. 32 The head of that
statue was of fine gold, its chest and arms
of silver, its middle and thighs of bronze,
33 its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and
partly of clay. 34 As you looked on, a stone
was cut out, not by human hands, and it
struck the statue on its feet of iron and
clay and broke them in pieces. 35 Then the
iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and
the gold, were all broken in pieces and
became like the chaff of the summer
threshing floors; and the wind carried
them away, so that not a trace of them
could be found. But the stone that struck
the statue became a great mountain and
filled the whole earth.

36 "This was the dream; now we will
tell the king its interpretation. 37 You,
O king, the king of kings—to whom the
God of heaven has given the kingdom,
the power, the might, and the glory,
38 into whose hand he has given human
beings, wherever they live, the wild ani-
mals of the field, and the birds of the air,
and whom he has established as ruler over
them all—you are the head of gold. 39 After
you shall arise another kingdom infe-
rior to yours, and yet a third kingdom of
bronze, which shall rule over the whole
earth. 40 And there shall be a fourth king-
dom, strong as iron; just as iron crushes
and smashes everything,[c] it shall crush
and shatter all these. 41 As you saw the
feet and toes partly of potter's clay and
partly of iron, it shall be a divided king-
dom; but some of the strength of iron
shall be in it, as you saw the iron mixed
with the clay. 42 As the toes of the feet
were part iron and part clay, so the king-
dom shall be partly strong and partly brit-
tle. 43 As you saw the iron mixed with clay,
so will they mix with one another in mar-
riage,[d] but they will not hold together,
just as iron does not mix with clay. 44 And
in the days of those kings the God of
heaven will set up a kingdom that shall
never be destroyed, nor shall this king-
dom be left to another people. It shall

c Gk Theodotion Syr Vg: Aram adds *and like iron that crushes* d Aram *by human seed*

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the new age of God's rule; see 10.14; Isa 2.2; Jer 23.20; Ezek 38.16; Hos 3.5. **2.29–30** A repetition of the theme of 2.28; possibly an editorial expansion (see 2.13–23). **2.31–35** The difficult task successfully completed by Daniel (see note on 2.2). **2.31** *You . . . and lo,* a formulaic introduction. **2.32–33** The five statue parts are constructed from materials of decreasing value. The motif of four metals in order of descending value is also found in Greek (Hesiod), Roman (Ovid) and Persian (Bahman Yasht) sources. **2.33** *Clay,* baked clay or terra-cotta. **2.34** *Not by human hands* emphasizes the divine nature of the intervention; see 8.25; Ps 118.22; Isa 28.16. The *feet* are the weakest point because of the fragile clay but a strategic point because they support the statue; see Jer 51.20–23. **2.35** Here the stone *became* a mountain, but in 2.45 it *was cut* from the mountain. Stones and mountains are frequently associated with the divine presence; see Gen 28.10–22; Deut 32.4, 15, 18, 30–31; Ps 36.6; Isa 8.14; 11.9–10; Ezek 17.22–24. **2.36–45** Daniel interprets the dream symbolically or allegorically as a political oracle; many regard the interpretation as a later addition because it does not correspond completely to the dream. The four kingdoms are not named, although they are usually identified as Neo-Babylonian, Median, Persian, and Greek; similar four-kingdom schemes are found in several ancient sources (the *Fourth Sibylline Oracle*, the Babylonian Dynastic Prophecy, the writings of Aemilius Sura, and Pseudo-Daniel [4QPseudoDan]). **2.37** *King of kings,* a title for Persian monarchs; see Ezra 7.12; Ezek 26.7. **2.37–38** God's power extends even to foreign rulers; see Gen 1.26; Ps 8.5–8; Jer 27.5–7; 28.14. **2.41** After the death of Alexander the Great, the Greek empire was divided among four of his generals. Judea was controlled by the Ptolemies until 198 B.C.E., then by the Seleucids; see 8.8; 11.4. *Toes* are not mentioned in the dream itself (2.31–35). **2.42** It is *brittle* because it is baked clay. **2.43** The Ptolemies and Seleucids unsuccessfully sought peace and stability between themselves through intermarriage; see 11.6–7, 17. **2.44** *Those kings,* the kings of the

crush all these kingdoms and bring them
to an end, and it shall stand forever;
45 just as you saw that a stone was cut from
the mountain not by hands, and that it
crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the
silver, and the gold. The great God has
informed the king what shall be hereafter.
The dream is certain, and its interpreta-
tion trustworthy."

Daniel and His Friends Promoted

46 Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on
his face, worshiped Daniel, and com-
manded that a grain offering and incense
be offered to him. 47 The king said to
Daniel, "Truly, your God is God of gods
and Lord of kings and a revealer of mys-
teries, for you have been able to reveal
this mystery!" 48 Then the king promoted
Daniel, gave him many great gifts, and
made him ruler over the whole province
of Babylon and chief prefect over all the
wise men of Babylon. 49 Daniel made a re-
quest of the king, and he appointed Sha-
drach, Meshach, and Abednego over the
affairs of the province of Babylon. But
Daniel remained at the king's court.

The Golden Image

3 King Nebuchadnezzar made a gold-
en statue whose height was sixty cu-
bits and whose width was six cubits; he
set it up on the plain of Dura in the prov-
ince of Babylon. 2 Then King Nebuchad-
nezzar sent for the satraps, the prefects,
and the governors, the counselors, the
treasurers, the justices, the magistrates,
and all the officials of the provinces, to as-
semble and come to the dedication of the
statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set
up. 3 So the satraps, the prefects, and the
governors, the counselors, the treasurers,
the justices, the magistrates, and all the
officials of the provinces, assembled for
the dedication of the statue that King
Nebuchadnezzar had set up. When they
were standing before the statue that Neb-
uchadnezzar had set up, 4 the herald pro-
claimed aloud, "You are commanded,
O peoples, nations, and languages, 5 that
when you hear the sound of the horn,
pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, drum, and entire
musical ensemble, you are to fall down
and worship the golden statue that King
Nebuchadnezzar has set up. 6 Whoever

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fourth kingdom. **2.45** *A stone* symbolizes the everlasting kingdom of God. **2.46** See Gen 17.3; Ezek 3.23. *Worshiped.* The RSV translates this "did homage," but more than civic honor is implied; the specifically religious sense of the word is reinforced by the strictly religious terms *grain offering* and *incense*; see 3.5–7, 10, 15; 8.17; Isa 44.15–19; 46.6. **2.47** A very brief doxology like 2.20–23. **2.48** The hero is rewarded, a favorite folktale motif; see Gen 41.37–45; Esth 8.1–2. **2.49** A literary link to 3.12.

3.1–30 A sacred legend of conflict between three Jewish courtiers and rival Babylonian wise men over acknowledging the divine sovereignty of the Babylonian king. The issue is resolved in a wondrous way in favor of God by a mysterious figure who protects the Jews from harm in the fire. Extensive use of repetition and hyperbole adds to the story's folktale quality. The unified structure and Daniel's absence suggest the story originated independently of others in chs. 1–6, possibly in the early Hellenistic or late Persian period. **3.1** *Golden statue*, of a Babylonian god or of the king; see Jdt 3.8; 6.2. Giant colossi were widely used free-standing art forms in Egypt and Mesopotamia; Diodorus Siculus (first century B.C.E.) and Herodotus (fifth century B.C.E.) report a gold statue of Zeus (Bel?) in Babylon; see Isa 40.19; Jer 10.3–10. *Sixty . . . six cubits*, about 30 by 3 meters, obelisk shaped; the proportions reflect the Babylonian sexagesimal number system. *Dura* in Aramaic or *dûru* in Babylonian, meaning "fortress" or "city wall," is usually the first part of a place-name and is not to be identified with any specific place. **3.2** The list of *officials* is given in order of precedence; the terms for *prefects* and *governors* derive from Akkadian, all others from Old Persian; see 3.3, 27. *Dedication.* See 1 Kings 8.63; 2 Chr 7.9; Neh 12.27. **3.4–6** The order to worship the statue creates a problem for the Jews who cannot obey without breaching a basic tenet of their faith. **3.4** *Peoples, nations, and languages*, a stereotyped phrase used as a rhetorical device to create hyperbole; e.g., 3.7, 29; 4.1; 5.19; 7.14; Esth 1.22; 3.12; 8.9; Rev 5.9; 7.9. **3.5** The list of instruments, used as hyperbole, is repeated in 3.7, 10, 15; see 1 Chr 25.1. *Lyre*, a Greek loanword; an Asiatic variant of an instrument with three to twelve strings. *Trigon*, a triangular four-stringed instrument. *Harp*, a Greek loanword; an instrument with ten strings across a sound board. *Drum.* The Greek loanword *symphonia* usually means "harmony," but it is attested as an instrument from 200 B.C.E.; the RSV translates "bagpipe." *Fall down and worship*, repeated in 3.6, 11, 15; see 2.46. **3.6** A known, but not a common, form of execution; see Gen 38.24 (probably in an open fire, not in a furnace); Jer 29.21–22; 2 Macc 6.11;

does not fall down and worship shall immediately be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire." 7 Therefore, as soon as all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, drum, and entire musical ensemble, all the peoples, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the golden statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

8 Accordingly, at this time certain Chaldeans came forward and denounced the Jews. 9 They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever! 10 You, O king, have made a decree, that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, drum, and entire musical ensemble, shall fall down and worship the golden statue, 11 and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire. 12 There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These pay no heed to you, O king. They do not serve your gods and they do not worship the golden statue that you have set up."

13 Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought in; so they brought those men before the king. 14 Nebuchadnezzar said to them, "Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods and you do not worship the golden statue that I have set up? 15 Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, drum, and entire musical ensemble to fall down and worship the statue that I have made, well and good.[e] But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire, and who is the god that will deliver you out of my hands?"

16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to present a defense to you in this matter. 17 If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire and out of your hand, O king, let him deliver us.[f] 18 But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods and we will not worship the golden statue that you have set up."

The Fiery Furnace

19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was so filled with rage against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego that his face was distorted. He ordered the furnace heated up seven times more than was customary, 20 and ordered some of the strongest guards in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and to throw them into the furnace of blazing fire. 21 So the men were bound, still wearing their tunics,[g] their trousers,[g] their hats, and their other garments, and they were thrown into the furnace of blazing fire. 22 Because the king's command was urgent and the furnace was so overheated, the raging flames killed the men who lifted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. 23 But the three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down, bound, into the furnace of blazing fire.

24 Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up quickly. He said to his counselors, "Was it not three men that we threw bound into the fire?" They answered the king, "True, O king." 25 He replied, "But I see four men unbound,

e Aram lacks *well and good* f Or *If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us, he will deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire and out of your hand, O king.* g Meaning of Aram word uncertain

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7.5; 13.4–6. **3.8** *Chaldeans.* See note on 1.4. *Denounced,* lit. "ate pieces of," an idiom indicating maliciousness. This is not a false accusation, but one motivated by envy; see 3.12; 2.49; Esth 3. **3.9** *O king, live forever.* See note on 2.4. **3.12** See 2.49. **3.13–18** The interrogation repeats much of the accusation. **3.13** *Furious rage.* See Esth 1.12; 7.7; 2 Macc 7.3. **3.15** *Who ... hands.* See 2 Kings 18.20–22, 29–35; Isa 36.13–20; 37.8–12. **3.19** *Seven times.* An ordinary fire would have been sufficient; the extreme heat is stressed for hyperbole and to heighten drama. **3.20** *Strongest guards,* hyperbole. **3.21** *Tunics ... garments.* The listing of clothing, similar to the listing of officials (3.2) and musical instruments (3.5), delays the plot and increases tension. Clothing would intensify the burning, thereby heightening the marvelous effect of the deliverance; see 3.27. **3.22** The death of the other men confirms the peril facing the three Jews. **3.23** *Fell down ... fire.* The furnace has an opening in the top and a door (3.26) near the bottom, like a kiln. **3.25** A *god,* one of a class of beings associated with the divine council as attendants to the deity; see Gen 6.2; Job 1.6; 2.1; 38.7; Ps 29.1. The fourth figure is described as an *angel* in

walking in the middle of the fire, and they
are not hurt; and the fourth has the ap-
pearance of a god."[h] 26 Nebuchadnezzar
then approached the door of the furnace
of blazing fire and said, "Shadrach, Me-
shach, and Abednego, servants of the
Most High God, come out! Come here!"
So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego
came out from the fire. 27 And the sa-
traps, the prefects, the governors, and the
king's counselors gathered together and
saw that the fire had not had any power
over the bodies of those men; the hair of
their heads was not singed, their tunics[i]
were not harmed, and not even the smell
of fire came from them. 28 Nebuchadnez-
zar said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach,
Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his
angel and delivered his servants who
trusted in him. They disobeyed the king's
command and yielded up their bodies
rather than serve and worship any god
except their own God. 29 Therefore I
make a decree: Any people, nation, or
language that utters blasphemy against
the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and
Abednego shall be torn limb from limb,
and their houses laid in ruins; for there is
no other god who is able to deliver in this
way." 30 Then the king promoted Sha-
drach, Meshach, and Abednego in the
province of Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar's Second Dream

4[j] King Nebuchadnezzar to all peo-
ples, nations, and languages that live
throughout the earth: May you have abun-
dant prosperity! 2 The signs and wonders
that the Most High God has worked
for me I am pleased to recount.

3 How great are his signs,
how mighty his wonders!
His kingdom is an everlasting
kingdom,
and his sovereignty is from
generation to generation.

4[k] I, Nebuchadnezzar, was living at
ease in my home and prospering in my
palace. 5 I saw a dream that frightened
me; my fantasies in bed and the visions of
my head terrified me. 6 So I made a de-
cree that all the wise men of Babylon
should be brought before me, in order
that they might tell me the interpretation
of the dream. 7 Then the magicians, the
enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the divin-
ers came in, and I told them the dream,
but they could not tell me its interpreta-
tion. 8 At last Daniel came in before me—
he who was named Belteshazzar after the
name of my god, and who is endowed

h Aram *a son of the gods* *i* Meaning of Aram word uncertain *j* Ch 3.31 in Aram *k* Ch 4.1 in Aram

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Dan 3.28. **3.26** *Most High God,* a title used by both Jews and non-Jews; see 4.2; Gen 14.19–20; Num 24.16; Deut 32.8; Isa 14.14; 1 Esd 6.31; 2 Macc 3.31; Mk 5.7; Acts 16.17. **3.28** A doxology in the form of a short hymn of praise. **3.29** A royal decree granting legitimacy and protection to the Jewish religion; see Ezra 4–7. *Torn . . . laid in ruins.* See 2.5. **3.30** A typical folk motif of reward for heroes; see 2.48.

4.1–47 This text differs markedly from other stories in chs. 1–6. Although many folk elements are present, including the motif of dream interpretation, the literary form is not the tale but the epistle or public proclamation. It begins (4.1–18) and ends (4.34–37) in the first person with a third-person tale in between (4.19–33). The tightly circular rhetorical structure emphasizes the central theme of God's sovereignty. The king first acknowledges God's sovereignty and greatness (4.2–3) and prospers (4.4), then asserts his own sovereignty and greatness (4.30) and is brought low (4.32–33) as predicted (4.22), only to accept God's sovereignty again (4.34–35) and have his own greatness restored by God. Daniel's role is less prominent than in ch. 2. **4.1–2** Epistolary introduction and greeting; see, e.g., 1 Macc 10.18; 14.20; 15.2, 16; 2 Macc 1.1, 10; 1 Cor 1.1–3; Rom 1.1, 7; Gal 1.1–3; Eph 1.1–2. **4.1** *Peoples, nations, and languages.* See note on 3.4. **4.2** *Signs and wonders,* a typical description of marvelous acts of God, especially in relation to the exodus from Egypt; see 4.3; 6.27; Ex 7.3; Deut 4.34; 6.22; Isa 8.18; Mk 13.22; Jn 4.48. *Most High God.* See note on 3.26. **4.3** A doxology. See 2.20–23. It is paralleled by 4.34–35 and is a typical opening for an epistle; see 2 Cor 1.3–4; Eph 1.3–4; 1 Pet 1.3–5. *His kingdom . . . generation.* See 4.34; Ps 145.13. **4.5** *Dream.* See 2.1. *Frightened, terrified.* See 5.6; 7.15. The effect of the dream is stronger than in 2.1, which creates foreboding about the interpretation. **4.6–7** The task is only to interpret, not tell the dream, but the Chaldeans still fail; no punishment is threatened; see 2.2–11. **4.7** *Magicians . . . Chaldeans.* See notes on 1.4; 2.2. *Diviners* were the most important type of religious intermediary in Babylonia; here the term is used simply as a synonym for "wise men." **4.8** *Name of my god.* See note on 1.6–7. *Endowed with a spirit of the holy gods,* either Babylonian deities or the Jewish God; see 2.11;

with a spirit of the holy gods[l]—and I
told him the dream: 9"O Belteshazzar,
chief of the magicians, I know that you
are endowed with a spirit of the holy
gods[l] and that no mystery is too difficult
for you. Hear[m] the dream that I saw; tell
me its interpretation.
10[n] Upon my bed this is what I saw;
there was a tree at the center of
the earth,
and its height was great.
11 The tree grew great and strong,
its top reached to heaven,
and it was visible to the ends of
the whole earth.
12 Its foliage was beautiful,
its fruit abundant,
and it provided food for all.
The animals of the field found
shade under it,
the birds of the air nested in
its branches,
and from it all living beings
were fed.

13 "I continued looking, in the visions
of my head as I lay in bed, and there was
a holy watcher, coming down from heaven.
14 He cried aloud and said:
'Cut down the tree and chop off
its branches,
strip off its foliage and scatter
its fruit.
Let the animals flee from
beneath it
and the birds from its branches.
15 But leave its stump and roots in
the ground,
with a band of iron and bronze,
in the tender grass of the field.
Let him be bathed with the dew
of heaven,
and let his lot be with the
animals of the field
in the grass of the earth.
16 Let his mind be changed from
that of a human,
and let the mind of an animal
be given to him.
And let seven times pass
over him.
17 The sentence is rendered by
decree of the watchers,
the decision is given by order
of the holy ones,
in order that all who live
may know
that the Most High is sovereign
over the kingdom of
mortals;
he gives it to whom he will
and sets over it the lowliest of
human beings.'

18 "This is the dream that I, King Nebuchadnezzar, saw. Now you, Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation, since all the wise men of my kingdom are unable to tell me the interpretation. You are able, however, for you are endowed with a spirit of the holy gods."[l]

Daniel Interprets the Second Dream

19 Then Daniel, who was called Belteshazzar, was severely distressed for a while. His thoughts terrified him. The

l Or *a holy, divine spirit* *m* Theodotion: Aram *The visions of* *n* Theodotion Syr Compare Gk: Aram adds *The visions of my head*

4.9, 18; 5.11, 14; Gen 41.38. **4.9** *Mystery.* See note on 2.18. **4.10–17** The dream has two parts: a vision of a great tree (4.10–12) and the decree of a watcher (4.13–17). **4.10** *Tree at the center of the earth,* a widely used image in ancient Near Eastern mythology. Here it is used allegorically for the king's greatness and might; see Ps 37.35–36; Isa 10.33–11.1; 14.4–20; Ezek 31; Zech 11.2. **4.11** *Great,* a key term used allegorically of the king; see 4.20, 22, 30; it is used of God in 4.3. *Its top reached to heaven.* See Isa 14.13–14; Ezek 31.3. **4.12** See Ezek 17.23; 31.6. **4.13–17** A cryptic interpretation in the form of a command or decree, which Nebuchadnezzar cannot understand. **4.13** *Watcher.* See 4.17, 20. This is the only biblical occurrence of this term to designate an angelic being, but it is commonly found in pseudepigraphical texts and the Dead Sea Scrolls; see, e.g., *1 Enoch* 1.5; 20.1; *Jubilees* 4.15; *Genesis Apocryphon* (1QapGen) 2.1. **4.15** *Stump and roots* implies potential for regeneration; see Isa 6.13; 11.1. *Band of iron and bronze,* unknown practice; more likely the image foreshadows a fettered king. *Him.* The tree's stump becomes a man. **4.16** *Let his mind be changed,* a mental illness. *Seven times,* a conventional number; see 3.19; 4.25, 32. **4.17** *Watchers* and *holy ones* are made parallel by the verse structure and recall mythological imagery of the divine council; see note on 3.25; cf. Job 5.1; 15.15; Ps 89.7; Zech 14.5. **4.19–27** Daniel makes the watcher's interpretation explicit. The identification of Nebuchadnezzar is intensified by repeating *you/your.*

king said, "Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or the interpretation terrify you." Belteshazzar answered, "My lord, may the dream be for those who hate you, and its interpretation for your enemies! 20 The tree that you saw, which grew great and strong, so that its top reached to heaven and was visible to the end of the whole earth, 21 whose foliage was beautiful and its fruit abundant, and which provided food for all, under which animals of the field lived, and in whose branches the birds of the air had nests— 22 it is you, O king! You have grown great and strong. Your greatness has increased and reaches to heaven, and your sovereignty to the ends of the earth. 23 And whereas the king saw a holy watcher coming down from heaven and saying, 'Cut down the tree and destroy it, but leave its stump and roots in the ground, with a band of iron and bronze, in the grass of the field; and let him be bathed with the dew of heaven, and let his lot be with the animals of the field, until seven times pass over him'— 24 this is the interpretation, O king, and it is a decree of the Most High that has come upon my lord the king: 25 You shall be driven away from human society, and your dwelling shall be with the wild animals. You shall be made to eat grass like oxen, you shall be bathed with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over you, until you have learned that the Most High has sovereignty over the kingdom of mortals, and gives it to whom he will. 26 As it was commanded to leave the stump and roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be re-established for you from the time that you learn that Heaven is sovereign. 27 Therefore, O king, may my counsel be acceptable to you: atone for[o] your sins with righteousness, and your iniquities with mercy to the oppressed, so that your prosperity may be prolonged."

Nebuchadnezzar's Humiliation

28 All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. 29 At the end of twelve months he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, 30 and the king said, "Is this not magnificent Babylon, which I have built as a royal capital by my mighty power and for my glorious majesty?" 31 While the words were still in the king's mouth, a voice came from heaven: "O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: The kingdom has departed from you! 32 You shall be driven away from human society, and your dwelling shall be with the animals of the field. You shall be made to eat grass like oxen, and seven times shall pass over you, until you have learned that the Most High has sovereignty over the kingdom of mortals and gives it to whom he will." 33 Immediately the sentence was fulfilled against Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven away from human society, ate grass like oxen, and his body was bathed with the dew of heaven, until his hair grew as long as eagles' feathers and his nails became like birds' claws.

Nebuchadnezzar Praises God

34 When that period was over, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me.

I blessed the Most High,
and praised and honored the
one who lives forever.
For his sovereignty is an
everlasting sovereignty,
and his kingdom endures from
generation to generation.
35 All the inhabitants of the earth
are accounted as nothing,

o Aram *break off*

4.25 Prediction of affliction. **4.26** Promise of restoration. *Heaven* is capitalized here as the equivalent of "God"; see 1 Macc 3.18–19; 4.10, 55. **4.27** Admonition to atone and repent; see Ps 34.14–17; Isa 1.16–17; Jer 22.3; Am 5.6–7. **4.28–33** Prediction of affliction fulfilled. A similar story about Nabonidus is found in the Nabonidus Chronicle, the Haran inscriptions, and the Qumran Prayer of Nabonidus (4QPrNab). **4.30** Nebuchadnezzar's arrogance in asserting his own greatness (see 4.11, 20, 22); irony is achieved by having his downfall occur as he reaches his highest self-glorification. *Magnificent Babylon.* Many of Babylon's most beautiful monumental buildings were built by Nebuchadnezzar. In later times, "Babylon" could symbolize another great and hostile city, as in Rev 14.8; 16.19. **4.34–37** Epistolary conclusion. **4.34–35** A doxology; see 4.3. **4.34** *My reason returned.* The prediction is fulfilled; see 4.36. *Sovereignty ... generation.* See 4.3. **4.35** *All the inhabitants of the earth.* See 4.1. *Host of heaven* (see 1 Kings 22.19;

and he does what he wills with
the host of heaven
and the inhabitants of the
earth.
There is no one who can stay
his hand
or say to him, "What are you
doing?"
36 At that time my reason returned to me;
and my majesty and splendor were re-
stored to me for the glory of my kingdom.
My counselors and my lords sought me
out, I was re-established over my king-
dom, and still more greatness was added
to me. 37 Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise
and extol and honor the King of heaven,
for all his works are truth,
and his ways are justice;
and he is able to bring low
those who walk in pride.

Belshazzar's Feast

5 King Belshazzar made a great festival for a thousand of his lords, and he was drinking wine in the presence of the thousand.

2 Under the influence of the wine, Belshazzar commanded that they bring in the vessels of gold and silver that his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem, so that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them. 3 So they brought in the vessels of gold and silver[p] that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. 4 They drank the wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.

The Writing on the Wall

5 Immediately the fingers of a human hand appeared and began writing on the plaster of the wall of the royal palace, next to the lampstand. The king was watching the hand as it wrote. 6 Then the king's face turned pale, and his thoughts terrified him. His limbs gave way, and his knees knocked together. 7 The king cried aloud to bring in the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the diviners; and the king

p Theodotion Vg: Aram lacks *and silver*

Isa 24.21), members of the divine council (see Dan 4.17) or stars (see Deut 4.19; 17.3; Isa 34.4; Jer 8.2; 19.13). **4.36** Reward for recognizing God's sovereignty. **4.37** A doxology and final hymn of praise; see Ps 47; Isa 40.17; Ezek 21.26. *King of heaven*, only occurrence of this precise epithet in Daniel or the Hebrew Scriptures, but see comparable imagery in Deut 33.26 and terminology in Gen 24.7. Equilibrium has been restored—Nebuchadnezzar is recognized as sovereign king of Babylon and God as sovereign King of heaven; see Pss 93.1–2; 97.1; 99.1; Jer 10.7, 10.

5.1–31 The contest here involves the interpretation of mysterious writing, not a dream (chs. 2, 4). The sovereignty of God is asserted against a king who is unrepentant in his arrogance and sacrilege. The repetitive style of vv. 1–23 contrasts with the economical style of vv. 24–31. Direct references to earlier chapters, especially to ch. 4, suggest a late date. The historical inaccuracy of previous chapters continues. **5.1** *King Belshazzar*, a new king whose name in Babylonian means "Bel, protect the king"; in fact, Belshazzar was never king of Babylon but only regent while Nabonidus was at Teima; see 4.28–33; 7.1; 8.1. *A great festival.* See Esth 1.3–8. **5.2** *Under the influence of wine.* See Esth 1.7–9. *Vessels . . . of the temple in Jerusalem.* See 1.2. *His father Nebuchadnezzar.* See 5.11–12, 22; Bar 1.11. Nabonidus was actually Belshazzar's father. *The king . . . concubines.* A listing as in, e.g., 3.2, 5, 21; 4.7. Women attend the banquet, in contrast to Esth 1.9. Some biblical texts speak of two classes of women in royal harems (see 1 Kings 11.3; Song 6.8): *wives*, queenly consorts (see Neh 2.6; Ps 45.9) and *concubines*, lower-rank women in the harem. **5.3–4** Belshazzar profanes temple vessels by having his whole retinue, including his concubines, drink from them and commits a sacrilege by using them in the praise of idols; both acts mock the power and sovereignty of God, as 5.23 makes explicit. **5.4** *The gods of . . . stone*, a list of elements very similar to one in the Prayer of Nabonidus from Qumran where Nabonidus is indicted for idolatry. It recalls elements of the statue in Dan 2. See 5.23; Deut 4.28; Pss 115.4–8; 135.15–18. **5.5** *Immediately*, swiftness of response similar to the speed of punishment in 5.30. *Fingers of a human hand*, a popular marvelous motif in folk tales; see Ex 31.18. **5.6** See 5.9. Here fear is so intense it has physical manifestations; see Ps 69.23; Isa 21.3; Ezek 21.7; Nah 2.10. **5.7–8** The double task of reading and interpreting the writing (see 2.2–9). As usual, the Babylonian wise men fail; see 2.2–11; 4.7, 18. Political reward is promised those who are successful (see 5.16, 29; 2.6) but there is no threat of punishment for failure (see 2.5, 9, 13). **5.7** *Purple*, a sign of dignity and/or royalty; see Esth 8.15; Song 3.10; 1 Macc

said to the wise men of Babylon, "Whoever can read this writing and tell me its interpretation shall be clothed in purple, have a chain of gold around his neck, and rank third in the kingdom." 8 Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the writing or tell the king the interpretation. 9 Then King Belshazzar became greatly terrified and his face turned pale, and his lords were perplexed.

10 The queen, when she heard the discussion of the king and his lords, came into the banqueting hall. The queen said, "O king, live forever! Do not let your thoughts terrify you or your face grow pale. 11 There is a man in your kingdom who is endowed with a spirit of the holy gods.[q] In the days of your father he was found to have enlightenment, understanding, and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods. Your father, King Nebuchadnezzar, made him chief of the magicians, enchanters, Chaldeans, and diviners,[r] 12 because an excellent spirit, knowledge, and understanding to interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Now let Daniel be called, and he will give the interpretation."

The Writing on the Wall Interpreted

13 Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king said to Daniel, "So you are Daniel, one of the exiles of Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah? 14 I have heard of you that a spirit of the gods[s] is in you, and that enlightenment, understanding, and excellent wisdom are found in you. 15 Now the wise men, the enchanters, have been brought in before me to read this writing and tell me its interpretation, but they were not able to give the interpretation of the matter. 16 But I have heard that you can give interpretations and solve problems. Now if you are able to read the writing and tell me its interpretation, you shall be clothed in purple, have a chain of gold around your neck, and rank third in the kingdom."

17 Then Daniel answered in the presence of the king, "Let your gifts be for yourself, or give your rewards to someone else! Nevertheless I will read the writing to the king and let him know the interpretation. 18 O king, the Most High God gave your father Nebuchadnezzar kingship, greatness, glory, and majesty. 19 And because of the greatness that he gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. He killed those he wanted to kill, kept alive those he wanted to keep alive, honored those he wanted to honor, and degraded those he wanted to degrade. 20 But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened so that he acted proudly, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and his glory was stripped from him. 21 He was driven from human society, and his mind was made like that of an animal. His dwelling was with the wild asses, he was fed grass like oxen, and his body was bathed with the dew of heaven, until he learned that the Most High God has sovereignty over the kingdom of mortals, and sets over it whomever he will. 22 And you, Belshazzar his son, have not humbled your heart,

q Or *a holy, divine spirit* r Aram adds *the king your father* s Or *a divine spirit*

10.20; 14.43–44; 2 Macc 4.38; 1 Esd 3.6; Mt 27.28. *Chain*, lit. "collar," a Persian ornament signifying rank; see Gen 41.42. *Rank third*, be a high official; see 2.48; 5.16, 29; 6.2; Gen 41.40–41; Ezek 23.23. **5.10** *The queen*, usually regarded as queen mother rather than queen consort because of her position of influence and power, her use of *your father, King Nebuchadnezzar* (v. 11), and her knowledge of Daniel's high position in Nebuchadnezzar's court; see 2.48; 4.9; 1 Kings 15.13; 2 Kings 10.13; 24.12. *O king, live forever*. See note on 2.4. **5.11** *Endowed with a spirit of the holy gods*. See note on 4.8. *Chief of the ... diviners*. See 2.48; 4.9. **5.12** *Excellent spirit ... solve problems*. See 1.17, 20; 4.9, 18; Gen 41.38. *Explain riddles*. See Prov 1.5–6; Sir 39.1–3. *Whom the king named Belteshazzar*. See 1.7. **5.13** The new king does not seem to know Daniel; see 5.11–12; Ex 1.8. **5.17–21** See 4.22–27, 30–33. **5.18–19** *Gave* emphasizes the king's sovereignty as a gift from the Most High God; see Dan 4. **5.19** *Peoples, nations, and languages*. See note on 3.4. *He killed ... degrade*, a surprising description of royal power more usually reserved for God alone; see Deut 32.39; 1 Sam 2.6–7; Job 5.11; Ps 75.7–8; Tob 4.19; Sir 7.11. **5.22–23** Repetition of *you/yours* focuses the rebuke forcefully on Belshazzar, who is quite unlike Nebuchadnezzar; see 4.37; Jer

even though you knew all this! 23 You
have exalted yourself against the Lord of
heaven! The vessels of his temple have
been brought in before you, and you and
your lords, your wives and your concu-
bines have been drinking wine from
them. You have praised the gods of silver
and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and
stone, which do not see or hear or know;
but the God in whose power is your very
breath, and to whom belong all your ways,
you have not honored.

24 "So from his presence the hand
was sent and this writing was inscribed.
25 And this is the writing that was in-
scribed: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN.
26 This is the interpretation of the matter:
MENE, God has numbered the days of[t]
your kingdom and brought it to an end;
27 TEKEL, you have been weighed on the
scales and found wanting; 28 PERES,[u] your
kingdom is divided and given to the
Medes and Persians."

29 Then Belshazzar gave the com-
mand, and Daniel was clothed in purple, a
chain of gold was put around his neck,
and a proclamation was made concerning
him that he should rank third in the
kingdom.

30 That very night Belshazzar, the
Chaldean king, was killed. 31[v] And Da-
rius the Mede received the kingdom, be-
ing about sixty-two years old.

The Plot Against Daniel

6 It pleased Darius to set over the
kingdom one hundred twenty sa-
traps, stationed throughout the whole
kingdom, 2 and over them three presi-
dents, including Daniel; to these the sa-
traps gave account, so that the king might
suffer no loss. 3 Soon Daniel distinguished
himself above all the other presidents and
satraps because an excellent spirit was in
him, and the king planned to appoint
him over the whole kingdom. 4 So the
presidents and the satraps tried to find
grounds for complaint against Daniel in
connection with the kingdom. But they
could find no grounds for complaint or
any corruption, because he was faithful,
and no negligence or corruption could be
found in him. 5 The men said, "We shall
not find any ground for complaint against
this Daniel unless we find it in connection
with the law of his God."

t Aram lacks *the days of* *u* The singular of *Parsin* *v* Ch 6.1 in Aram

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22.15–19. **5.23** *The gods of . . . stone.* See note on 5.4; gold and silver are reversed here. **5.24–28** A succinct interpretation contrasts with lengthy preliminary remarks. **5.25** *MENE. . . PARSIN,* units of monetary weight or value in Aramaic: the mina, shekel, and half-mina. A mina was worth between 50 and 60 shekels. **5.26–28** The enigmatic words require further interpretation; Daniel's explanation is allegorical, not literal, and creates puns by reading the Aramaic nouns as similar-sounding verbal roots; see Am 8.1–2. **5.26** *MENE* sounds like *mn'*, "to number"; see Ps 90.12. **5.27** *TEKEL* sounds like *tkl*, "to weigh"; see Job 31.6; Prov 16.2; 21.2; 24.12. **5.28** *PERES* sounds like *prs*, "to divide"; there is a second pun on the word *Persians*. *Medes*, people of Media, an obscure kingdom with its capital at Ecbatana. Media played a role in the Babylonian conquest of the Assyrians at Nineveh in 612 B.C.E. but was incorporated into the Persian Empire by 550/49 B.C.E.; see 7.5; 8.3–4; 9.1. *Persians*, people in the territory roughly corresponding to modern Iran; they defeated the Medes in 550/49 B.C.E.; in 331 B.C.E. their empire fell to Alexander the Great; see 6.8, 12, 15; 7.6; 8.3–4; 9.1. **5.29** Daniel accepts the reward spurned earlier (5.17); see 2.48; Gen 41.40–45; Esth 8.15. **5.30** Punishment is swift and severe with no chance for repentance; see Isa 13.17–22; 21.1–10; Jer 51.8–16, 39–46. **5.31** *Darius the Mede* is not a historical figure; Babylon was conquered by Cyrus the Great of Persia in 539 B.C.E., not by the Medes, despite the prophecies of Isa 13.17–22; 21.1–10; Jer 50.9, 41; 51.11, 28; see Dan 9.1.

6.1–28 A sacred legend similar in structure and style to the one in ch. 3. Despite an unusually benevolent king, conflict with jealous rivals puts Daniel in a life-threatening situation from which he is wondrously delivered by an angel. The underlying issue is again God's sovereignty, which is introduced in 6.7 and culminates in 6.26–27. Extensive use is made of repetition and elaboration (e.g., 6.3–4, 7–8, 12). **6.1** *Darius.* See note on 5.31. *Satraps*, officials who administered large regions called satrapies, which were subdivided into provinces ruled by governors (see 3.2); only twenty to thirty satrapies are known from Persian records so the number here may include provinces (see Esth 1.1; 8.9; 1 Esd 3.2). **6.2** *Three* might be an allusion to *third* in 5.7, 16, 29; see Gen 41.41–42; 1 Esd 3.9. *Presidents.* No such officials are known from Persian documents. **6.3** *An excellent spirit.* See 5.12. *Appoint him over the whole kingdom.* See Gen 41.41–44. **6.5** The conspiracy is politically, not religiously, motivated.

6 So the presidents and satraps conspired and came to the king and said to him, "O King Darius, live forever! 7 All the presidents of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the counselors and the governors are agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an interdict, that whoever prays to anyone, divine or human, for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into a den of lions. 8 Now, O king, establish the interdict and sign the document, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be revoked." 9 Therefore King Darius signed the document and interdict.

Daniel in the Lions' Den

10 Although Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he continued to go to his house, which had windows in its upper room open toward Jerusalem, and to get down on his knees three times a day to pray to his God and praise him, just as he had done previously. 11 The conspirators came and found Daniel praying and seeking mercy before his God. 12 Then they approached the king and said concerning the interdict, "O king! Did you not sign an interdict, that anyone who prays to anyone, divine or human, within thirty days except to you, O king, shall be thrown into a den of lions?" The king answered, "The thing stands fast, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked." 13 Then they responded to the king, "Daniel, one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the interdict you have signed, but he is saying his prayers three times a day."

14 When the king heard the charge, he was very much distressed. He was determined to save Daniel, and until the sun went down he made every effort to rescue him. 15 Then the conspirators came to the king and said to him, "Know, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no interdict or ordinance that the king establishes can be changed."

16 Then the king gave the command, and Daniel was brought and thrown into the den of lions. The king said to Daniel, "May your God, whom you faithfully serve, deliver you!" 17 A stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet and with the signet of his lords, so that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel. 18 Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; no food was brought to him, and sleep fled from him.

Daniel Saved from the Lions

19 Then, at break of day, the king got up and hurried to the den of lions. 20 When he came near the den where Daniel was, he cried out anxiously to Daniel, "O Daniel, servant of the living God,

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6.6 *O King Darius, live forever*! See note on 2.4. **6.7** A typically fanciful plan but it makes sovereignty the central issue of the conflict. *Prefects . . . governors.* See note on 3.2. *Whoever prays . . . O king.* The king is the only lawfully worshiped deity. When the king agrees to make this law (6.9), he unwittingly challenges the sovereignty of God. *Den*, a pit or subterranean area with a small opening (see 6.17); there is no evidence of lions being kept this way. The hunting and caging of *lions* is well documented in Mesopotamian inscriptions and art. The danger posed by the lions' power took on symbolic value. See 1 Kings 13.24; Pss 22.21; 58.6; 91.13; Ezek 19.2–9. **6.8** *Cannot be revoked.* The scheme is designed to trap both Daniel and the king; see Esth 1.19; 8.8. *Medes . . . Persians.* See note on 5.28. **6.10** *Windows.* See Tob 3.11. *Upper room.* See Judg 3.20; 1 Kings 17.19–20; 2 Kings 1.2; 4.10; Jer 22.14; Acts 1.13. Praying *toward Jerusalem* was especially important in the exilic and postexilic periods; see 1 Kings 8.35–44; Pss 5.7; 138.2; 1 Esd 4.58. *Down on his knees.* Jews ordinarily stood for public prayer but during the postexilic period began the custom of kneeling for private prayer; see 1 Kings 8.54; 2 Chr 6.13; Ezra 9.5; Lk 22.41; Acts 9.40; 20.36. *Three times a day.* See 9.21; Ps 55.17; Jdt 9.1; Acts 3.1. **6.12** *Approached*, in the sense of "bringing a charge" in a legal manner; see Isa 41.1; Mal 3.5. **6.14** The king is remarkably sympathetic to Daniel; see 6.16, 18–19, 23. He is *distressed* at Daniel's plight and the realization he has been tricked; see 2.1; 3.13; 4.5; 5.6. Despite his royal power, the king cannot *save* Daniel; only the power of God will save him; see 6.16, 22–23, 27. **6.17** The *king sealed . . . lords*, an assurance that no human help could be given. Seals were made by pressing the signet into clay and were regularly used on official correspondence; see 1 Kings 21.8; Esth 3.12; 8.8, 10. **6.20–22** The king does not observe the angel himself, as in ch. 3. **6.20** *The living God.* See Deut 5.26; Ps 42.2; Jer 10.10;

has your God whom you faithfully serve
been able to deliver you from the lions?"
21 Daniel then said to the king, "O king,
live forever! 22 My God sent his angel and
shut the lions' mouths so that they would
not hurt me, because I was found blame-
less before him; and also before you,
O king, I have done no wrong." 23 Then
the king was exceedingly glad and com-
manded that Daniel be taken up out of
the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the
den, and no kind of harm was found on
him, because he had trusted in his God.
24 The king gave a command, and those
who had accused Daniel were brought
and thrown into the den of lions—they,
their children, and their wives. Before they
reached the bottom of the den the lions
overpowered them and broke all their
bones in pieces.

25 Then King Darius wrote to all peo-
ples and nations of every language
throughout the whole world: "May you
have abundant prosperity! 26 I make a de-
cree, that in all my royal dominion people
should tremble and fear before the God
of Daniel:

For he is the living God,
enduring forever.
His kingdom shall never be
destroyed,
and his dominion has no end.
27 He delivers and rescues,
he works signs and wonders in
heaven and on earth;
for he has saved Daniel
from the power of the lions."

28 So this Daniel prospered during the
reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the
Persian.

Visions of the Four Beasts

7 In the first year of King Belshazzar
of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and
visions of his head as he lay in bed. Then
he wrote down the dream:[w] 2 I,[x] Daniel,

w Q Ms Theodotion: MT adds *the beginning of the words; he said* *x* Theodotion: Aram *Daniel answered and said, "I*

23.36. **6.21** *O king, live forever!* See note on 2.4. **6.22** Daniel insists on his legal innocence; see Ps 91.9–16; 1 Macc 2.60. *Angel.* Postexilic Jewish writers increasingly depicted divine-human encounters as mediated through heavenly beings; see 3.28; 2 Kings 1.3; 1 Chr 21.12; Ps 91.11; Zech 3; Tob 5.4. **6.24** Punishment for false witness. See Deut 19.16–19; Esth 9.25; Ps 140.9–11. As the property of men, *children and . . . wives* could be punished along with them; see Num 16.25–33; Josh 7.24; Judg 20.48; 21.10; 2 Sam 21.5–9; Esth 9.12–14. **6.25** *Peoples and nations of every language.* See note on 3.4. **6.26a** Darius's edict goes even further than that of Nebuchadnezzar (3.29) in ordering all to revere God. **6.26–27** The rationale for the edict is a doxology as in 4.3, 34–35, 37 recognizing the sovereignty of God. **6.26** The *living God.* See 6.20. *Enduring forever . . . no end.* See 4.3, 34; Ex 15.18; Pss 10.16; 29.10; 66.7; 102.12. **6.27** *Signs and wonders.* See 4.2–3. **6.28** *Cyrus the Persian* allowed Jewish exiles to return home in 539 B.C.E., exhibiting moderation and religious sensitivity toward conquered peoples; see 5.31; 10.1; Ezra 1.1–4; 6.3–5; Isa 44.28; 45.1; 48.14.

7.1–12.13 It is generally agreed that these chapters focus on the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–164 B.C.E.). The chronological sequence of the visions parallels that of the stories in chs. 1–6. These visions are similar to the visions in Am 7.7–9; Zech 1.8–17, 18–21; 2.1–5; 4.1–5, 10b–14; 5.1–4, 5–11; 6.1–8. While the visions of chs. 7 and 8 are symbolic visions, the rest are direct revelations to Daniel. The symbolic vision in ch. 7 is received in a dream (as in ch. 2); in both visions a detailed description is given and an interpretation requested and received. In ch. 7 this contact with the divine realm produces a feeling of fear; see 4.5; 5.5, 6; 7.15, 28. All the visions present past events as if about to happen. There are indications of editorial activity in these chapters, but the unevenness in the imagery may be due to deliberate contrasts by the author. **7.1–28** Although the translation indicates a mixture of prose and poetical sections, the whole chapter has a rhythmic prose style often very close to poetry. Ch. 7 is connected in its language, Aramaic, to chs. 2–6 and in theme to ch. 2 and chs. 8–12. The theme of four world kingdoms superseded by a fifth more ideal kingdom has a long history in the Near East before and after the time of the composition of Daniel. Here the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes has negatively colored the portrayal of the entire fourth kingdom and indeed of all four kingdoms, a view much more negative than in ch. 2. **7.1** *The first year of King Belshazzar of Babylon* (see 5.1, 30), a sixth-century date to present the vision as an ancient prediction. **7.2** *Four winds . . . stirring up.* Ordinary winds would blow from one direction. Daniel's dream and night vision give a setting beyond the mundane. As in other ancient Near Eastern creation traditions, the *sea* is associated with mythological monsters, forces of chaos; see Job 26.12–13; Pss 74.13–17; 89.9–10; Isa 27.1; 51.9–10. Here the sea spawns mythological beasts

saw in my vision by night the four winds
of heaven stirring up the great sea, 3 and
four great beasts came up out of the sea,
different from one another. 4 The first
was like a lion and had eagles' wings.
Then, as I watched, its wings were
plucked off, and it was lifted up from the
ground and made to stand on two feet
like a human being; and a human mind
was given to it. 5 Another beast appeared,
a second one, that looked like a bear. It
was raised up on one side, had three
tusks[y] in its mouth among its teeth and
was told, "Arise, devour many bodies!"
6 After this, as I watched, another ap-
peared, like a leopard. The beast had four
wings of a bird on its back and four heads;
and dominion was given to it. 7 After this
I saw in the visions by night a fourth
beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceed-
ingly strong. It had great iron teeth and
was devouring, breaking in pieces, and
stamping what was left with its feet. It was
different from all the beasts that preceded
it, and it had ten horns. 8 I was consider-
ing the horns, when another horn ap-
peared, a little one coming up among
them; to make room for it, three of the
earlier horns were plucked up by the
roots. There were eyes like human eyes in
this horn, and a mouth speaking ar-
rogantly.

Judgment Before the Ancient One

9 As I watched,
thrones were set in place,
and an Ancient One[z] took
his throne,
his clothing was white as snow,
and the hair of his head like
pure wool;
his throne was fiery flames,
and its wheels were burning
fire.
10 A stream of fire issued
and flowed out from his
presence.
A thousand thousands
served him,
and ten thousand times ten
thousand stood
attending him.
The court sat in judgment,
and the books were opened.
11 I watched then because of the noise of
the arrogant words that the horn was
speaking. And as I watched, the beast was
put to death, and its body destroyed and
given over to be burned with fire. 12 As
for the rest of the beasts, their dominion
was taken away, but their lives were pro-
longed for a season and a time. 13 As I
watched in the night visions,

y Or *ribs* z Aram *an Ancient of Days*

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symbolizing kingdoms (Dan 7.17). In regard to the four kingdoms, see note on 2.36–45. **7.4** *First*, the Babylonian Empire, as in 2.36. *Like a lion . . . eagles' wings.* Winged lions are well known from Assyro-Babylonian art. *Wings . . . plucked off* may refer to 4.10–33; *human being* and *human mind* to 4.36. **7.5** *Another beast*, the Median Empire; see 5.28. The savagery of the Medes attacking Babylon by divine command had been predicted (Jer 51.11) but did not occur. *Up on one side*, perhaps ready to spring. *Three tusks* may refer to its ravenous appetite for booty (if *three ribs* [see text note *y*], to the booty being devoured). **7.6** *Another* beast, the Persian Empire; see 5.28. *Four wings* may allude to the rapidity of Persia's conquests under Cyrus; see Isa 41.3. *Four heads* may refer to Persia's dominion in all directions or to the four kings of Persia mentioned in Ezra 1.1; 4.6, 7; Neh 12.22. **7.7** *Fourth beast*, the empire of Alexander the Great. *Ten horns*, the line of rulers of the Seleucid dynasty (which ruled Syria after the death of Alexander) culminating in Antiochus IV. The first Seleucid kings had coins decorated with horns, symbols of divine power; see 7.23–24. **7.8** *Eyes* and *mouth* indicate the horn represents a human character, the contemporary ruler Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who disposed of other claimants to the throne (see 7.24; 11.21). **7.9–14** The imagery becomes more cryptic and more poetic as the future and the heavenly realm are described; much of this judgment scene imagery partakes of traditions preserved in Psalms and the prophets; see Pss 82.1; 90.2; Isa 6; Ezek 1; see also 1 Kings 22.19. Some of the motifs suggest aspects of ancient Canaanite mythology. The image of an *Ancient One* and of *one like a human being coming with the clouds of heaven* (7.13) has been compared to myths that refer to the god El as king and father of years and Baal as a triumphant warrior god. There is, however, no cosmic battle here, only a judgment. **7.11** A violent end to the fourth kingdom. **7.12** Respite for the other kingdoms accentuates the wickedness of the fourth kingdom and anticipates 7.27. **7.13–14** The symbol of the fifth kingdom, a human figure, stands in contrast to the animal symbols from the abyss by being associated with the heavenly realm; the animals were connected with historical events, but in these two verses the scene moves beyond history. *One like a*

I saw one like a human being[a]
coming with the clouds
of heaven.
And he came to the Ancient
One[b]
and was presented before him.
14 To him was given dominion
and glory and kingship,
that all peoples, nations, and
languages
should serve him.
His dominion is an everlasting
dominion
that shall not pass away,
and his kingship is one
that shall never be destroyed.

Daniel's Visions Interpreted

15 As for me, Daniel, my spirit was troubled within me,[c] and the visions of my head terrified me. 16 I approached one of the attendants to ask him the truth concerning all this. So he said that he would disclose to me the interpretation of the matter: 17 "As for these four great beasts, four kings shall arise out of the earth. 18 But the holy ones of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever—forever and ever."

19 Then I desired to know the truth concerning the fourth beast, which was different from all the rest, exceedingly terrifying, with its teeth of iron and claws of bronze, and which devoured and broke in pieces, and stamped what was left with its feet; 20 and concerning the ten horns that were on its head, and concerning the other horn, which came up and to make room for which three of them fell out—the horn that had eyes and a mouth that spoke arrogantly, and that seemed greater than the others. 21 As I looked, this horn made war with the holy ones and was prevailing over them, 22 until the Ancient One[b] came; then judgment was given for the holy ones of the Most High, and the time arrived when the holy ones gained possession of the kingdom.

23 This is what he said: "As for the fourth beast,
there shall be a fourth kingdom
on earth
that shall be different from all
the other kingdoms;
it shall devour the whole earth,
and trample it down, and break
it to pieces.
24 As for the ten horns,
out of this kingdom ten kings
shall arise,
and another shall arise after
them.
This one shall be different from
the former ones,
and shall put down three kings.
25 He shall speak words against the
Most High,
shall wear out the holy ones of
the Most High,
and shall attempt to change the
sacred seasons and the law;
and they shall be given into
his power
for a time, two times,[d] and half
a time.

a Aram *one like a son of man* b Aram *the Ancient of Days* c Aram *troubled in its sheath* d Aram *a time, times*

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human being symbolizes a new, everlasting kingdom (see 2.28, 45), which stands in contrast to those ominous kingdoms symbolized by what looked like animals; the figure is corporate and includes Israel (see 7.18, 22, 27). This human figure would then be coming from earth to God, although some scholars, to the contrary, see a descent of an angelic being (see 3.25; 6.22) from heaven underlying the vision, based on the fact that angels are described as human in appearance in 10.5, 16, 18. The association between the Jewish people and angels in this mysterious future kingdom will become clearer in the following verses and chapters. **7.15** *Troubled,* like Nebuchadnezzar; see 2.1; 4.4. **7.16** In chs. 1–6 Daniel was the interpreter; here he needs an interpreter. **7.18** *The holy ones of the Most High* could be humans or angels. In 8.10–13 they seem to be angels; this distinction may be implied by 7.27 with the phrase, *the people of the holy ones of the Most High*; but the fact that the recipients of the kingdom could be described by either of these two phrases would indicate that the phrases have the same meaning and refer to humans, namely, the Jewish people, who because of their tribulations have achieved a higher-than-human status. **7.20–21** The little horn of 7.8 has now become greater than the others; the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes begins. **7.25** Antiochus Epiphanes banned the observance of the sabbath and feast days (1 Macc 1.41–53). A *time . . . time.* The persecution is for a limited time, three and a half years, half of the perfect number seven.

26 Then the court shall sit in
judgment,
and his dominion shall be
taken away,
to be consumed and totally
destroyed.
27 The kingship and dominion
and the greatness of the
kingdoms under the
whole heaven
shall be given to the people of
the holy ones of the
Most High;
their kingdom shall be an
everlasting kingdom,
and all dominions shall serve
and obey them."

28 Here the account ends. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly terrified me, and my face turned pale; but I kept the matter in my mind.

Vision of a Ram and a Goat

8 In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar a vision appeared to me, Daniel, after the one that had appeared to me at first. 2 In the vision I was looking and saw myself in Susa the capital, in the province of Elam,[e] and I was by the river Ulai.[f] 3 I looked up and saw a ram standing beside the river.[g] It had two horns. Both horns were long, but one was longer than the other, and the longer one came up second. 4 I saw the ram charging westward and northward and southward. All beasts were powerless to withstand it, and no one could rescue from its power; it did as it pleased and became strong.

5 As I was watching, a male goat appeared from the west, coming across the face of the whole earth without touching the ground. The goat had a horn[h] between its eyes. 6 It came toward the ram with the two horns that I had seen standing beside the river,[g] and it ran at it with savage force. 7 I saw it approaching the ram. It was enraged against it and struck the ram, breaking its two horns. The ram did not have power to withstand it; it threw the ram down to the ground and trampled upon it, and there was no one who could rescue the ram from its power. 8 Then the male goat grew exceedingly great; but at the height of its power, the great horn was broken, and in its place there came up four prominent horns toward the four winds of heaven.

9 Out of one of them came another[i] horn, a little one, which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the beautiful land. 10 It grew as high as the host of heaven. It threw

e Gk Theodotion: MT Q Ms repeat *in the vision I was looking* *f* Or *the Ulai Gate* *g* Or *gate*
h Theodotion: Gk *one horn*; Heb *a horn of vision*
i Cn Compare 7.8: Heb *one*

8.1–27 The language of the book returns to Hebrew and the literary style deteriorates, possibly because the author was more at home in Aramaic. There is also increasing concern with actual contemporary history from the time of the Medes and Persians through to Antiochus IV. The animal symbolism is explained, even though the meaning is quite obvious. The chapter refers to some of the same events as ch. 7. **8.1** *Third year of ... Belshazzar,* two years later than 7.1. **8.2** The text is obscure but Daniel, while still in Babylon, seems to be transported in vision to *Susa,* the winter capital of the Medo-Persian Empire in the province of *Elam. The river Ulai,* at or near Susa, a setting similar to that of Ezek 1.1 (Ezekiel's vision by the river Chebar). Rivers and gates (see text note *f*) provide equally good "boundary" places where communication with divine beings is possible; see Gen 32.22–32 (a river); Gen 28.10–19 (Bethel, "house of God," "gate of heaven"). **8.3** *Ram* with *two horns,* the Medes and the Persians symbolically merged as in 6.8, 12; cf. chs. 2 and 7, where separate symbols were used. *Longer one,* Persia, see note on 5.28. **8.4** The expansion of the Medo-Persian Empire. **8.5–7** The *goat* advancing so swiftly from the *west* refers to the Macedonian army, which quickly conquered the whole Persian Empire. *Horn between its eyes,* Alexander the Great, as 8.21 indicates; see 2.40; 7.7; 11.3. **8.8** *Height of its power.* Alexander died in 323 B.C.E. and the kingdom was divided up among four generals, *four prominent horns;* see 2.41. **8.9** *A little one,* the author is interested only in the Seleucid kingdom in Syria and especially in one of its rulers, represented by the little horn. It is generally agreed that this refers to Antiochus Epiphanes and his campaigns: *south* to Egypt, *east* to Parthia, and finally toward *the beautiful land,* namely, Judea, as indicated by the references to the *sanctuary* or temple in 8.10–13; see 11.16, 41, 45. **8.10** If the imagery is based on Isa 14.12–14, Antiochus is pictured as challenging heaven itself; *host* here probably refers to angels; see 4.35. *Stars,* a mythic element; see Judg 5.20. The motif of a rebellion by lower powers against the heavenly forces is found in Canaanite and other Near Eastern myths.

down to the earth some of the host and
some of the stars, and trampled on them.
11 Even against the prince of the host it
acted arrogantly; it took the regular burnt
offering away from him and overthrew
the place of his sanctuary. 12 Because of
wickedness, the host was given over to it
together with the regular burnt offer-
ing;[j] it cast truth to the ground, and kept
prospering in what it did. 13 Then I heard
a holy one speaking, and another holy
one said to the one that spoke, "For how
long is this vision concerning the regular
burnt offering, the transgression that
makes desolate, and the giving over of the
sanctuary and host to be trampled?"[j]
14 And he answered him,[k] "For two thou-
sand three hundred evenings and morn-
ings; then the sanctuary shall be restored
to its rightful state."

Gabriel Interprets the Vision

15 When I, Daniel, had seen the vi-
sion, I tried to understand it. Then some-
one appeared standing before me, having
the appearance of a man, 16 and I heard a
human voice by the Ulai, calling, "Gabriel,
help this man understand the vision."
17 So he came near where I stood; and
when he came, I became frightened and
fell prostrate. But he said to me, "Under-
stand, O mortal,[l] that the vision is for
the time of the end."

18 As he was speaking to me, I fell
into a trance, face to the ground; then he
touched me and set me on my feet. 19 He
said, "Listen, and I will tell you what will
take place later in the period of wrath; for
it refers to the appointed time of the end.
20 As for the ram that you saw with the
two horns, these are the kings of Media
and Persia. 21 The male goat[m] is the king
of Greece, and the great horn between its
eyes is the first king. 22 As for the horn
that was broken, in place of which four
others arose, four kingdoms shall arise
from his[n] nation, but not with his power.

23 At the end of their rule,
when the transgressions have
reached their full measure,
a king of bold countenance
shall arise,
skilled in intrigue.
24 He shall grow strong in power,[o]
shall cause fearful destruction,
and shall succeed in what
he does.
He shall destroy the powerful
and the people of the holy
ones.
25 By his cunning

j Meaning of Heb uncertain *k* Gk Theodotion Syr Vg: Heb *me* *l* Heb *son of man* *m* Or *shaggy male goat* *n* Gk Theodotion Vg: Heb *the* *o* Theodotion and one Gk Ms: Heb repeats (from 8.22) *but not with his power*

8.11–12 Antiochus interfered with the offerings in the temple, a direct affront to *the prince of the host* (God). 1 Macc 1.41–59 describes his profanation of the temple and erection, on the altar of burnt offering, of a foreign altar, referred to as *the transgression that makes desolate* in Dan 8.13 and as *an abomination that desolates* in 9.27; 11.31; 12.11; see 1 Macc 4.36–59. **8.13–14** Daniel overhears the conversation of *a holy one* and *another holy one* (angels; see Zech 2.3–4) and learns *how long* the desolation of the sanctuary and of the interference with the daily burnt offerings will last: *two thousand three hundred . . . mornings*, 1,150 days, almost as long as the length of time in 7.25 and 12.7, namely, three and a half years, about 1,260 days, which corresponds roughly to the period of the desecration of the sanctuary according to 1 Macc 1.54–4.52. **8.13** *Transgression . . . desolate*. See note on 8.11–12. **8.15** *Appearance of a man*. Celestial beings are said to have the appearance of humans; see 10.5–6, 16–19; Ezek 1.5, 26–28; 40.3–4. **8.16** *Gabriel*, a member of the divine retinue, see 6.22; 9.21. **8.17** *Mortal*, a title accentuating the distance between the human and the divine; see, e.g., Ezek 1.28–2.1; 3.1; 3.4; 3.16. *The time of the end* in this context (8.14, 25) refers to the end of the persecution; see 8.19; 10.14. There is no explicit mention of an eternal kingdom as in 7.14, 18, 22, 27. **8.18** On Daniel's reaction and the angel touching him, see 10.8–10, 16, 18; Ezek 1.28–2.2. **8.19** *The period of wrath*, possibly the wrath of Antiochus or the wrath of God; contexts here and in 11.36 may suggest a fixed time during which God is angry with the Jewish people and uses Antiochus as the rod of divine anger; see Isa 5.1–30; 10.1–12; Zech 1.12–17. **8.20–25** Gabriel's explanation spells out what was quite obvious in Daniel's description of the vision in 8.5–12; it reflects what is known of that historical period from the time of the Medes and Persians to the reign of Antiochus IV. **8.22** The four kingdoms (*horns*) mentioned in 8.8 are here said to lack the power that Alexander had. **8.23–25** Brief rhythmic phrases spell out the acts of the tyrant Antiochus; both form and content are reminiscent of Isa 14.4–21. See Dan 8.9–11; 11.21–45. **8.25** *Prince of princes*, a title for God; see 8.11. *Not by*

he shall make deceit prosper
under his hand,
and in his own mind he shall
be great.
Without warning he shall
destroy many
and shall even rise up against
the Prince of princes.
But he shall be broken, and not
by human hands.
26 The vision of the evenings and the
mornings that has been told is true. As for
you, seal up the vision, for it refers to
many days from now."
27 So I, Daniel, was overcome and lay
sick for some days; then I arose and went
about the king's business. But I was dis-
mayed by the vision and did not under-
stand it.

Daniel's Prayer for the People

9 In the first year of Darius son of
Ahasuerus, by birth a Mede, who
became king over the realm of the
Chaldeans— 2 in the first year of his
reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books
the number of years that, according to the
word of the LORD to the prophet Jere-
miah, must be fulfilled for the devastation
of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.
3 Then I turned to the Lord God, to
seek an answer by prayer and supplication
with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. 4 I
prayed to the LORD my God and made
confession, saying,
"Ah, Lord, great and awesome God,
keeping covenant and steadfast love with
those who love you and keep your com-
mandments, 5 we have sinned and done
wrong, acted wickedly and rebelled, turn-
ing aside from your commandments and
ordinances. 6 We have not listened to
your servants the prophets, who spoke in
your name to our kings, our princes, and
our ancestors, and to all the people of
the land.
7 "Righteousness is on your side,
O Lord, but open shame, as at this day,
falls on us, the people of Judah, the in-
habitants of Jerusalem, and all Israel,
those who are near and those who are far
away, in all the lands to which you have
driven them, because of the treachery that
they have committed against you. 8 Open
shame, O LORD, falls on us, our kings, our
officials, and our ancestors, because we
have sinned against you. 9 To the Lord

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human hands, divine intervention in the defeat of Antiochus; see 2.34; 7.26. **8.26** *Seal up*. Daniel is to keep the vision secret until later, since it is supposedly being given in the middle of the sixth century (8.1); this emphasizes the mystery the future holds. **8.27** *King's*, Belshazzar's (8.1). *Did not understand*. Daniel's lack of understanding after the explanation of 8.19–26 may be a literary artifice pointing ahead to the very detailed presentation in ch. 11.

9.1–27 A reinterpretation of Jeremiah's prophecy of a seventy-year exile to reassure Jews that their religious persecution by Antiochus Epiphanes will soon end. **9.1** *Darius*. See note on 5.31. *Ahasuerus*, Hebrew for Xerxes. Both Darius and Xerxes were names of later Persian, not Median, kings. *Who became king over the . . . Chaldeans*, a reminder of the fall of the Babylonian Empire in 539 B.C.E. to introduce thoughts of the end of captivity. **9.2** *Seventy years* (Jer 25.11, 12; 29.10), a round number indicating a long exile, lasting a lifetime; see Ps 90.10; Isa 23.15. 2 Chr 36.22–23 considers this prophecy fulfilled by Cyrus's decree in 539 B.C.E., but the persecution by Antiochus and the continued devastation of Jerusalem would have called this fulfillment into question. As a sixth-century B.C.E. character, Daniel would have been disturbed about the Babylonian devastation of Jerusalem, but in the second century B.C.E., the actual time of composition, the ravages of Antiochus are the underlying and central concern of the book. This double perspective must be kept in mind in reading the prayer in 9.4–19. **9.3** *Supplication*. See 9.17, 18, 20, 23. *Sackcloth and ashes*, traditional signs of mourning; see 10.2–3; Neh 9.1; Esth 4.1–3; Jer 4.8; 6.26; 49.3; Joel 1.13–14. **9.4–19** A communal confession of sin and petition for mercy. The quality of the Hebrew is superior to that in surrounding verses; hence it is sometimes considered a later addition. More likely it is a traditional prayer reminiscent in language and theology of the "Deuteronomistic" corpus in Deuteronomy–2 Kings and included to explain why the tribulation spoken of by Jeremiah is prolonged; see 1 Kings 8.23–53; Ezra 9.6–15; Neh 1.5–11; 9.6–37. The people's troubles are not the result of a predetermined divine plan, as in the visions, but are due to sin. **9.4** *Great and awesome God*. See Deut 7.21; Neh 1.5; 9.32. *Covenant and steadfast love*. See Deut 7.9, 12. *Keep your commandments*. See Ex 20.6; Deut 7.9; 1 Kings 8.23; Neh 1.5. **9.5** See 1 Kings 8.47; Ps 106.6. **9.6** *Not listened to . . . prophets*. See 9.10; Jer 7.25–26; 29.19. *Kings . . . land*. See Jer 44.21. **9.7–8** See Lev 26.40; 1 Kings 8.46–50; Ezra 9.7. **9.9–10** See Neh

our God belong mercy and forgiveness,
for we have rebelled against him, 10and
have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our
God by following his laws, which he set
before us by his servants the prophets.
11 "All Israel has transgressed your
law and turned aside, refusing to obey
your voice. So the curse and the oath writ-
ten in the law of Moses, the servant of
God, have been poured out upon us, be-
cause we have sinned against you. 12He
has confirmed his words, which he spoke
against us and against our rulers, by
bringing upon us a calamity so great that
what has been done against Jerusalem has
never before been done under the whole
heaven. 13Just as it is written in the law of
Moses, all this calamity has come upon us.
We did not entreat the favor of the LORD
our God, turning from our iniquities and
reflecting on his[p] fidelity. 14So the LORD
kept watch over this calamity until he
brought it upon us. Indeed, the LORD our
God is right in all that he has done; for we
have disobeyed his voice.
15 "And now, O Lord our God, who
brought your people out of the land of
Egypt with a mighty hand and made your
name renowned even to this day—we
have sinned, we have done wickedly.
16O Lord, in view of all your righteous
acts, let your anger and wrath, we pray,
turn away from your city Jerusalem, your
holy mountain; because of our sins and
the iniquities of our ancestors, Jerusalem
and your people have become a disgrace
among all our neighbors. 17Now there-
fore, O our God, listen to the prayer
of your servant and to his supplication,
and for your own sake, Lord,[q] let your
face shine upon your desolated sanctuary.
18Incline your ear, O my God, and hear.
Open your eyes and look at our desola-
tion and the city that bears your name.
We do not present our supplication be-
fore you on the ground of our righteous-
ness, but on the ground of your great
mercies. 19O Lord, hear; O Lord, for-
give; O Lord, listen and act and do not
delay! For your own sake, O my God,
because your city and your people bear
your name!"

The Seventy Weeks

20 While I was speaking, and was
praying and confessing my sin and the sin
of my people Israel, and presenting my
supplication before the LORD my God on
behalf of the holy mountain of my God—
21while I was speaking in prayer, the man
Gabriel, whom I had seen before in a vi-
sion, came to me in swift flight at the time
of the evening sacrifice. 22He came[r] and
said to me, "Daniel, I have now come out
to give you wisdom and understanding.
23At the beginning of your supplications
a word went out, and I have come to de-
clare it, for you are greatly beloved. So
consider the word and understand the
vision:
24 "Seventy weeks are decreed for
your people and your holy city: to finish
the transgression, to put an end to sin,
and to atone for iniquity, to bring in ever-
lasting righteousness, to seal both vision
and prophet, and to anoint a most holy
place.[s] 25Know therefore and under-
stand: from the time that the word went

p Heb *your* q Theodotion Vg Compare Syr: Heb *for the Lord's sake* r Gk Syr: Heb *He made to understand* s Or *thing* or *one*

9.17; Ps 130.4. **9.11** See Lev 26.14–45; Deut 28.15–68; 29.10–29. **9.12–14** A shift from second to third person; the text now addresses the people instead of God. A *calamity* . . . *Jerusalem*, the sixth-century B.C.E. destruction and the second-century B.C.E. desecration; the latter would be uppermost in the mind of the author. **9.14** *Kept watch*. Here God keeps watch to punish disobedience; see Jer 1.11–12; 31.28; 44.27. **9.15** See Deut 6.21; Neh 9.10; Jer 32.20–21. **9.16** *Your holy mountain*. See 9.20. *Disgrace*, language typical of exilic and postexilic laments; see Ps 44.13–16. **9.17** See Num 6.25; 1 Kings 8.28–30. *Desolated*. See 9.18, 27; the language of the prayer resonates in the other verses of ch. 9; see also 8.11–13. **9.21** *Gabriel*. See 8.15–18. *Evening sacrifice*. See Ex 29.38–42. **9.23** *A word went out*. See Isa 55.11. *Greatly beloved* becomes an epithet for the prophet in 10.11, 19. **9.24** *Seventy weeks*, the seventy years of 9.2 are interpreted as seventy weeks of years, perhaps because Israel merited such a sevenfold punishment (Lev 26.18). 2 Chr 36.21 also connects Jeremiah's prophecy with the sabbatical years of Lev 26.34–35. *To seal both vision and prophet*, either as their ratification, or their termination as they are no longer necessary. *Most holy place*, the sanctuary. **9.25** The final week is the author's main interest. The remaining sixty-nine weeks are then divided into *seven* and *sixty-two weeks*. *Anointed prince*, either Zerubbabel or the high priest Joshua; see Ezra 2.2; 3.2; Hag 1.1–14; Zech 6.9–14. *Sixty-two weeks*, a

out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until
the time of an anointed prince, there shall
be seven weeks; and for sixty-two weeks it
shall be built again with streets and moat,
but in a troubled time. 26 After the sixty-
two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut
off and shall have nothing, and the troops
of the prince who is to come shall destroy
the city and the sanctuary. Its[t] end shall
come with a flood, and to the end there
shall be war. Desolations are decreed.
27 He shall make a strong covenant with
many for one week, and for half of the
week he shall make sacrifice and offer-
ing cease; and in their place[u] shall be
an abomination that desolates, until the
decreed end is poured out upon the
desolator."

Conflict of Nations and Heavenly Powers

10 In the third year of King Cyrus of
Persia a word was revealed to
Daniel, who was named Belteshazzar. The
word was true, and it concerned a great
conflict. He understood the word, having
received understanding in the vision.
2 At that time I, Daniel, had been
mourning for three weeks. 3 I had eaten
no rich food, no meat or wine had en-
tered my mouth, and I had not anointed
myself at all, for the full three weeks. 4 On
the twenty-fourth day of the first month,
as I was standing on the bank of the great
river (that is, the Tigris), 5 I looked up and
saw a man clothed in linen, with a belt of
gold from Uphaz around his waist. 6 His
body was like beryl, his face like lightning,
his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and
legs like the gleam of burnished bronze,
and the sound of his words like the roar
of a multitude. 7 I, Daniel, alone saw the
vision; the people who were with me did
not see the vision, though a great trem-
bling fell upon them, and they fled and
hid themselves. 8 So I was left alone to see
this great vision. My strength left me, and
my complexion grew deathly pale, and I
retained no strength. 9 Then I heard the
sound of his words; and when I heard the
sound of his words, I fell into a trance,
face to the ground.
10 But then a hand touched me and
roused me to my hands and knees. 11 He
said to me, "Daniel, greatly beloved, pay
attention to the words that I am going to
speak to you. Stand on your feet, for I
have now been sent to you." So while he
was speaking this word to me, I stood up
trembling. 12 He said to me, "Do not fear,
Daniel, for from the first day that you set
your mind to gain understanding and to
humble yourself before your God, your
words have been heard, and I have come
because of your words. 13 But the prince
of the kingdom of Persia opposed me

t Or *His* *u* Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain

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round number to describe the period down to Antiochus. *Troubled time* could refer to the struggle for control of the country between the Seleucid and Ptolemaic dynasties; see 2.41, 43; 11.4–20. **9.26** *Anointed one,* Onias III, the deposed high priest murdered in 171 B.C.E. (2 Macc 32–34). *The prince,* Antiochus IV. **9.27** *With many,* with hellenizing Jews; see 1 Macc 1.11–15. *Half of the week,* the second half of the last week; see 7.25; see 8.13–14 for these three and a half years from 167 to 164 B.C.E. *Abomination that desolates.* See 8.11–13; 1 Macc 1.54. *Decreed end.* See 7.26–27.

10.1–12.13 Chs. 10–12 comprise a single vision: a long preparation on 10.1–11.1, then in 11.2–12.4 another survey of the future. The survey contains brief references to the Persian Empire and the conquests and demise of Alexander, then lengthy descriptions of the conflict between Ptolemies and Seleucids with its effects on Judea; everything leads up to the final wickedness of Antiochus IV. All this takes place against the backdrop of a heavenly struggle and culminates in the deliverance of the elect, especially the wise. A supplementary vision in 12.5–13 indicates that the time of this final deliverance is uncertain. **10.1** *Third year of . . . Cyrus,* 536 B.C.E., seventy years after the date given in 1.1. *Belteshazzar.* See 1.7. *Conflict,* the wars of 11.5–45 and perhaps the heavenly struggle of 10.13, 20. **10.2** *Mourning.* See 9.3; 10.12. **10.3** The purpose of penance is to evoke a divine response. See 9.3; 10.12. **10.4** *River.* See 8.2. **10.5–6** See Ezekiel, especially chs. 1 and 9–11 for the imagery. *A man,* an angel in human form, probably Gabriel; see 8.15–17. *Uphaz,* an unknown place. **10.7** The cause of the *trembling* is not stated; see 10.11. The scene enhances Daniel's position. **10.8–9** Both the vision and the sound of the words are overpowering; see 8.17–18; 10.15–17. **10.10–11** See 8.18; Ezek 1.28–2.2. Superhuman support is needed; see also 10.16, 18. *Greatly beloved.* See 9.23; 10.19. **10.13** *Prince,* the patron angel of a people. The idea of struggles between angelic princes is an adaptation of the common mythology of the ancient Near East: there was a god over every nation; if nations battled, the more significant battle was waged be-

twenty-one days. So Michael, one of the
chief princes, came to help me, and I left
him there with the prince of the kingdom
of Persia,[v] 14and have come to help you
understand what is to happen to your
people at the end of days. For there is a
further vision for those days."

15 While he was speaking these words
to me, I turned my face toward the
ground and was speechless. 16Then one
in human form touched my lips, and I
opened my mouth to speak, and said to
the one who stood before me, "My lord,
because of the vision such pains have
come upon me that I retain no strength.
17How can my lord's servant talk with my
lord? For I am shaking,[w] no strength re-
mains in me, and no breath is left in me."

18 Again one in human form touched
me and strengthened me. 19He said, "Do
not fear, greatly beloved, you are safe. Be
strong and courageous!" When he spoke
to me, I was strengthened and said, "Let
my lord speak, for you have strengthened
me." 20Then he said, "Do you know why I
have come to you? Now I must return to
fight against the prince of Persia, and
when I am through with him, the prince
of Greece will come. 21But I am to tell you
what is inscribed in the book of truth.
There is no one with me who contends
against these princes except Michael, your
prince. 1As for me, in the first
year of Darius the Mede, I stood
up to support and strengthen him.

2 "Now I will announce the truth to
you. Three more kings shall arise in Per-
sia. The fourth shall be far richer than all
of them, and when he has become strong
through his riches, he shall stir up all
against the kingdom of Greece. 3Then a
warrior king shall arise, who shall rule
with great dominion and take action as he
pleases. 4And while still rising in power,
his kingdom shall be broken and divided
toward the four winds of heaven, but not
to his posterity, nor according to the do-
minion with which he ruled; for his king-
dom shall be uprooted and go to others
besides these.

5 "Then the king of the south shall
grow strong, but one of his officers shall
grow stronger than he and shall rule a
realm greater than his own realm. 6After
some years they shall make an alliance,
and the daughter of the king of the south
shall come to the king of the north to rat-
ify the agreement. But she shall not retain
her power, and his offspring shall not en-
dure. She shall be given up, she and her
attendants and her child and the one who
supported her.

"In those times 7a branch from her
roots shall rise up in his place. He shall
come against the army and enter the for-
tress of the king of the north, and he shall
take action against them and prevail.
8Even their gods, with their idols and
with their precious vessels of silver and
gold, he shall carry off to Egypt as spoils
of war. For some years he shall refrain
from attacking the king of the north;
9then the latter shall invade the realm of

v Gk Theodotion: Heb *I was left there with the kings of Persia* w Gk: Heb *from now*

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tween their gods; see Josh 5.13–15. *Twenty-one days,* the duration of the fast in 10.2–3. *Michael,* protector of the Jewish people; see 10.21; 12.1. **10.14** *End of days,* in 11.40–12.4. *A further vision,* supplementing chs. 7–9. **10.20–21** *Do you know why I have come to you?* The answer is that Gabriel is to reveal the contents of the *book of truth* and he begins to do so in 11.2: the future is under divine control. *Return to fight,* thoughts of the heavenly struggle interject themselves; Michael will be the only support for Gabriel in the successive conflicts with the angel patrons of Persia and Greece. **11.1** *First year of Darius* (see 9.1), possibly an editorial addition, but it may be part of the speech that began in 10.20; the angel would be speaking of strengthening Darius in the supposed Median conquest of Babylon (5.30–31; note on 5.31; Jer 51.11). **11.2** *Three more kings,* possibly Ahasuerus, Artaxerxes, and Darius II (see 7.6), although no names are mentioned and there is no scholarly consensus about who is meant; this adds a sense of mystery to an oracle supposedly pronounced beforehand. **11.3** *Warrior king,* Alexander the Great. See 7.7; 8.5–8, 21. **11.4** *Broken and divided.* See 2.41; 8.8. **11.5** *King of the south,* Ptolemy I of Egypt. *One of his officers,* Seleucus I, who established a greater kingdom in Syria. **11.6** *They,* the Ptolemies and the Seleucids. *An alliance,* an unsuccessful interdynastic marriage; see 2.43. *Daughter,* Berenice, the daughter of Ptolemy II (now *king of the south*) to Antiochus II of Syria (now *king of the north*) in 252 B.C.E.; Berenice, her child, and her attendants were murdered after Antiochus himself died under suspicious circumstances. **11.7–8** *A branch,* Berenice's brother, Ptolemy III, took revenge for her death. **11.9** *The latter.* Seleucus II unsuccess-

the king of the south, but will return to his
own land.
10 "His sons shall wage war and as-
semble a multitude of great forces, which
shall advance like a flood and pass
through, and again shall carry the war as
far as his fortress. 11 Moved with rage, the
king of the south shall go out and do bat-
tle against the king of the north, who shall
muster a great multitude, which shall,
however, be defeated by his enemy.
12 When the multitude has been carried
off, his heart shall be exalted, and he shall
overthrow tens of thousands, but he shall
not prevail. 13 For the king of the north
shall again raise a multitude, larger than
the former, and after some years[x] he
shall advance with a great army and abun-
dant supplies.
14 "In those times many shall rise
against the king of the south. The lawless
among your own people shall lift them-
selves up in order to fulfill the vision, but
they shall fail. 15 Then the king of the
north shall come and throw up siege-
works, and take a well-fortified city. And
the forces of the south shall not stand, not
even his picked troops, for there shall be
no strength to resist. 16 But he who comes
against him shall take the actions he
pleases, and no one shall withstand him.
He shall take a position in the beautiful
land, and all of it shall be in his power.
17 He shall set his mind to come with the
strength of his whole kingdom, and he
shall bring terms of peace[y] and perform
them. In order to destroy the kingdom,[z]
he shall give him a woman in marriage;
but it shall not succeed or be to his advan-
tage. 18 Afterward he shall turn to the
coastlands, and shall capture many. But a
commander shall put an end to his inso-
lence; indeed,[a] he shall turn his insolence
back upon him. 19 Then he shall turn back
toward the fortresses of his own land, but
he shall stumble and fall, and shall not be
found.
20 "Then shall arise in his place one
who shall send an official for the glory of
the kingdom; but within a few days he
shall be broken, though not in anger or in
battle. 21 In his place shall arise a con-
temptible person on whom royal majesty
had not been conferred; he shall come in
without warning and obtain the kingdom
through intrigue. 22 Armies shall be ut-
terly swept away and broken before him,
and the prince of the covenant as well.
23 And after an alliance is made with him,
he shall act deceitfully and become strong
with a small party. 24 Without warning he
shall come into the richest parts[b] of the
province and do what none of his prede-
cessors had ever done, lavishing plunder,
spoil, and wealth on them. He shall devise
plans against strongholds, but only for a
time. 25 He shall stir up his power and de-
termination against the king of the south
with a great army, and the king of the
south shall wage war with a much greater
and stronger army. But he shall not suc-
ceed, for plots shall be devised against
him 26 by those who eat of the royal ra-
tions. They shall break him, his army shall
be swept away, and many shall fall slain.
27 The two kings, their minds bent on evil,
shall sit at one table and exchange lies.
But it shall not succeed, for there remains
an end at the time appointed. 28 He shall
return to his land with great wealth, but

x Heb *and at the end of the times years* y Gk: Heb *kingdom, and upright ones with him* z Heb *it*
a Meaning of Heb uncertain b Or *among the richest men*

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fully invaded Egypt. **11.10** *Sons,* Seleucus III and Antiochus III. **11.10–19** Reign of Antiochus III the Great. **11.11–12** Ptolemy IV (*king of the south*) does not capitalize on his victory over Antiochus III (*king of the north*). **11.13–16** Antiochus III defeats Ptolemy V. **11.14** Revolts in Egypt. *The lawless,* very likely Jewish supporters of the Seleucids; see 11.30, 32. **11.15** *Forces of the south,* the Egyptians, defeated at Paneas by Antiochus III in 200 B.C.E. **11.16** *He,* Antiochus III, in complete control. *Beautiful land,* Judea; see 8.9. **11.17** *Marriage.* Whatever Antiochus intended by giving his daughter in marriage to Ptolemy V, the marriage did not further the father's ambitions. **11.18** *A commander.* The Romans intervene to repel Antiochus III's westward expansion, even into parts of Greece. **11.19** *Fall.* Antiochus III was assassinated. **11.20** *One who . . . kingdom,* Antiochus III's successor, Seleucus IV, who sent Heliodorus to rob the temple treasury in Jerusalem (2 Macc 3.1–40); Seleucus was later assassinated. **11.21–45** The reign of Antiochus IV (175–164 B.C.E.). **11.21** *Obtain . . . intrigue.* Antiochus IV usurped the throne, which belonged to his nephew. **11.22** *The prince of the covenant,* Onias III; see note on 9.26. **11.24** See 1 Macc 3.30. **11.25–28** The successful campaign against Egypt. **11.28** *Against the holy covenant,* the attack

his heart shall be set against the holy covenant. He shall work his will, and return to his own land.

29 "At the time appointed he shall return and come into the south, but this time it shall not be as it was before. 30 For ships of Kittim shall come against him, and he shall lose heart and withdraw. He shall be enraged and take action against the holy covenant. He shall turn back and pay heed to those who forsake the holy covenant. 31 Forces sent by him shall occupy and profane the temple and fortress. They shall abolish the regular burnt offering and set up the abomination that makes desolate. 32 He shall seduce with intrigue those who violate the covenant; but the people who are loyal to their God shall stand firm and take action. 33 The wise among the people shall give understanding to many; for some days, however, they shall fall by sword and flame, and suffer captivity and plunder. 34 When they fall victim, they shall receive a little help, and many shall join them insincerely. 35 Some of the wise shall fall, so that they may be refined, purified, and cleansed,[c] until the time of the end, for there is still an interval until the time appointed.

36 "The king shall act as he pleases. He shall exalt himself and consider himself greater than any god, and shall speak horrendous things against the God of gods. He shall prosper until the period of wrath is completed, for what is determined shall be done. 37 He shall pay no respect to the gods of his ancestors, or to the one beloved by women; he shall pay no respect to any other god, for he shall consider himself greater than all. 38 He shall honor the god of fortresses instead of these; a god whom his ancestors did not know he shall honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts. 39 He shall deal with the strongest fortresses by the help of a foreign god. Those who acknowledge him he shall make more wealthy, and shall appoint them as rulers over many, and shall distribute the land for a price.

The Time of the End

40 "At the time of the end the king of the south shall attack him. But the king of the north shall rush upon him like a whirlwind, with chariots and horsemen, and with many ships. He shall advance against countries and pass through like a flood. 41 He shall come into the beautiful land, and tens of thousands shall fall victim, but Edom and Moab and the main part of the Ammonites shall escape from his power. 42 He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. 43 He shall become ruler of the treasures of gold and of silver, and all the riches of Egypt; and the Libyans and the Ethiopians[d] shall follow in his train. 44 But reports from the east and the north shall alarm him, and he shall go out with great fury to bring ruin

c Heb *made them white* d Or *Nubians*; Heb *Cushites*

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on Jerusalem and the Jewish religion; see 11.30. **11.29–35** The unsuccessful campaign in Egypt and attack on Jerusalem. **11.30** *Kittim* originally referred to Cypriots; here it means the Romans. *Forsake the holy covenant.* Some Jews support Antiochus. **11.31** See 8.11–14; 9.27. **11.33** *The wise*, those steadfast ones like the author to whom truth has been revealed, *give understanding*, sharing the messages preserved in the book of Daniel, central of which is that God controls events. *Fall.* The wise suffer martyrdom, but see 12.3. **11.34** *A little help*, probably more a reference to the small number who sincerely join "the wise" than to the activities of the Maccabees, Jews who confront the forces of Antiochus militarily and eventually succeed (167–164 B.C.E.). **11.36–39** The character and pretensions of Antiochus; see 7.8; 8.9–12, 23–25. **11.36** *As he pleases*, a Danielic expression for a ruler's excesses just prior to his demise; see 8.4; 11.3, 16. *Exalt . . . any god.* Antiochus claims divine honors as Epiphanes, from the Greek meaning "manifestation" of a god. The imagery may be influenced by the old Canaanite myth of a rebellion in heaven, which is reflected in Isa 14.3–21; Ezek 28.2–19. *What is determined*, divine control of events; see 7.22, 26–27; 8.19, 25; 9.26–27. **11.37** *The one beloved by women*, Tammuz, Mesopotamian god of vegetation (Adonis); see Ezek 8.14. **11.38** *God of fortresses*, probably the Olympian Zeus, the Hellenistic equivalent of Baal Shamem, whose statue Antiochus erected in the sanctuary; see 1 Macc 1.54–59. **11.39** *A foreign god.* Such a god was unknown to his ancestors. **11.40–45** This passage is not historical; it represents the author's hopes for this climactic moment in history, based perhaps in part on Ezek 38–39. **11.41** *Beautiful land.* See note on 11.16. *But Edom . . . escape.* Why the peoples east of the Jordan are spared or even mentioned is not clear, except perhaps to imply

and complete destruction to many. 45 He
shall pitch his palatial tents between the
sea and the beautiful holy mountain. Yet
he shall come to his end, with no one to
help him.

The Resurrection of the Dead

12 "At that time Michael, the great
prince, the protector of your people, shall arise. There shall be a time of
anguish, such as has never occurred since
nations first came into existence. But at
that time your people shall be delivered,
everyone who is found written in the
book. 2 Many of those who sleep in the
dust of the earth[e] shall awake, some to
everlasting life, and some to shame and
everlasting contempt. 3 Those who are
wise shall shine like the brightness of the
sky,[f] and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.
4 But you, Daniel, keep the words secret
and the book sealed until the time of the
end. Many shall be running back and
forth, and evil[g] shall increase."

5 Then I, Daniel, looked, and two others appeared, one standing on this bank
of the stream and one on the other. 6 One
of them said to the man clothed in linen,
who was upstream, "How long shall it be
until the end of these wonders?" 7 The
man clothed in linen, who was upstream,
raised his right hand and his left hand toward heaven. And I heard him swear by
the one who lives forever that it would be
for a time, two times, and half a time,[h]
and that when the shattering of the power
of the holy people comes to an end, all
these things would be accomplished. 8 I
heard but could not understand; so I said,
"My lord, what shall be the outcome of
these things?" 9 He said, "Go your way,
Daniel, for the words are to remain secret
and sealed until the time of the end.
10 Many shall be purified, cleansed, and
refined, but the wicked shall continue to
act wickedly. None of the wicked shall understand, but those who are wise shall
understand. 11 From the time that the
regular burnt offering is taken away and
the abomination that desolates is set up,
there shall be one thousand two hundred
ninety days. 12 Happy are those who persevere and attain the thousand three hundred thirty-five days. 13 But you, go your
way,[i] and rest; you shall rise for your reward at the end of the days."

e Or *the land of dust* *f* Or *dome*
g Cn Compare Gk: Heb *knowledge* *h* Heb *a time, times, and a half* *i* Gk Theodotion: Heb adds *to the end*

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their cooperation with Antiochus. **11.45** *Between the sea . . . mountain.* The idea of Antiochus coming to his end between the Mediterranean and Mount Zion could be influenced by prophetic texts about such a final climactic battle, including Ezek 38.17–23; 39.4–5. Antiochus actually died in Persia during his eastern campaign in 164 B.C.E. **12.1** Whether *at that time* means during or after the last days of Antiochus is not clear. With the reference to *Michael* here and in 10.13–14, 20–21, just as in 7.9–10, 13–14, the scene moves beyond the bounds of earth. *Time of anguish.* See Jer 30.7 and the many references to the anguish associated with the "day of the LORD," e.g., Joel 2–3; Am 5.18–20; Zeph 1.14–18. *Delivered.* The nature of the deliverance is not specified. *Book.* See Ex 32.32–33; Ps 69.28; Isa 4.3. **12.2** *Many,* so not everyone. *Sleep,* death. *Shall awake.* Death is overcome in some unspecified way; many interpreters think this refers to resurrection. *Some . . . and some . . .,* contrasting consequences. Implicit is a worldview strongly dividing between "saved" and "unsaved." **12.3** Probably synonymous parallel structure characteristic of Hebrew poetry: not two groups, but one—the wise who lead many to righteousness shall shine like the bright sky and stars; see 11.33. **12.4** *Keep . . . book sealed.* See 8.26. **12.5–6** *Two others,* beside the one *clothed in linen* (10.5). **12.7** *Swear,* sworn testimony about the time of the end; see 7.25. **12.10** See 11.33. **12.11–12** No satisfactory explanation can be given for these new numbers; the time is uncertain. **12.13** *Rest . . . rise.* Daniel's reward at the end is certain; see 12.2–3.

HOSEA

THE PROPHECY OF HOSEA is an exposition of one word of the Lord found in his book: "I have been the LORD your God ever since the land of Egypt; you know no God but me and besides me there is no savior" (13.4). Hosea's task as prophet was to apply that word to the life of his people in a time when its meaning had been virtually lost.

The Historical Setting

The time was approximately the period from 750 to 722 B.C.E. The place was the Northern Kingdom, Israel. Hosea's career began in the relatively quiet years of the reign of Jeroboam II (ca. 786–746 B.C.E.). From 745 on Assyria's military incursions in the area were the background for everything that happened in Israel. Hosea's sayings reflect the war of Israel and Syria against Judah to force the Southern state into an anti-Assyrian alliance and the aftermath of that struggle. He seems to have been active particularly during the time of King Hoshea's fatal rebellion against Assyria that led to the end of the Northern Kingdom. The biblical accounts of the period are found in 2 Kings 14.23–17.41.

Two features of this period get special attention in Hosea's prophecy. One was the religious pluralism in Israel and the flourishing worship of the god Baal. Baal was the storm god in the Canaanite pantheon; he was believed to be the source of rain and fertility in the land. He was worshiped in various manifestations at local shrines, and Hosea refers at times to a plurality of Baals. The other feature was royal politics in the Northern Kingdom. After Jeroboam's reign there was a series of revolutions involving assassinations. In the midst of this instability the acting kings were incessantly intriguing with different foreign powers to cope with Assyrian pressure.

The Prophet

Hosea's book tells us nothing directly about Hosea himself. His sayings suggest that he was a man of broad learning and great rhetorical skills. He refers to the royal city of Samaria and the sanctuaries of Gilgal and Bethel where presumably he appeared as prophet. There are narratives about him in chs. 1 and 3 but they

are prophecy in type and function, not biography. Both tell about symbolic actions the Lord commanded Hosea to perform. They are transparent vehicles of Hosea's message, but quite opaque as sources of information. Ch. 1 says he married a wife of whoredom, but in what way Gomer fit the category is not said. The children she bore were given names symbolic of God's judgment. In ch. 3 Hosea reports that he purchased and sequestered an adulteress but does not identify her in any further way. What this all meant for Hosea's public and private life can be imagined; what his marital life involved in detail remains hidden.

The Book

The book has two major parts. The first, chs. 1–3, is organized by the theme of marriage as a metaphor for God's relation to the chosen people. The narratives in chs. 1 and 3 stand as a frame around a long speech of God portraying Israel as God's promiscuous wife. Narratives and speech major in a message of accusation and punishment but conclude with the promises of restoration after punishment (1.10–2.1; 2.14–23; 3.5). The second part, chs. 4–14, is composed wholly of sayings arranged in literary units of varying length. The order of the units seems to be generally chronological, covering the span of Hosea's activity as a prophet. In ch. 9 the units begin to feature recollections of Israel's past. This second part is divided at the end of ch. 11 by a promise of salvation that draws an intermediate conclusion to its message of judgment. Then, the sayings of judgment in chs. 12–13 reach a final conclusion in a promise of restoration in ch. 14. In the process of being preserved in writing the material in chs. 2, 4–13 has been worked up in conflated compositions that blur the shape of individual sayings. The compositions generally have a thematic and/or structural pattern.

Among the numerous notes in the NRSV, there are twelve that call the Hebrew text uncertain and seventeen that identify conjectural changes in the text translated. All together they point to the unusual difficulty of the Hebrew text for translators. The title and some other features of the book indicate that it was put in its present form for readers in Judah. The extent to which Hosea's material was expanded in the process is a matter of disagreement.

The Prophecy

Hosea's prophecy is based on a specific understanding of the Lord as God of Israel and Israel as the people of the Lord. Israel came to know its God and to be the people of God through the history that began with the exodus, led through the wilderness, and culminated in the gift of life in the land. The covenant that the Lord made with Israel as the authority for its life and its instruction defines the steadfast love and knowledge of God required of the people of God. On the basis of this theology Hosea announced the Lord's indictment of the people for unfaithfulness in their religious and political life. In their anxious desire for crops and prosperity Israel continued to worship the old Baals, the owners and husbands of the land, and even to worship the Lord as if the Lord

were a Baal. In their anxious search for kings and allies who would save them from the dangers threatening their national existence, Israel's leaders were driven into a habit of revolutions, assassinations, and foreign alliances, all of which disavowed trust in the Lord. For both failures Hosea used the metaphors of whoredom and adultery and portrayed the Lord as the aggrieved husband of a faithless wife. He proclaimed a searing and total punishment that would end the nation's career of promiscuity. But in an amazing way Hosea saw behind the wrath of God a love that would not let the people be wiped out. The very judgment itself would take Israel back into the wilderness for a new beginning, a new covenant, and a new gift of the land in a second history of reconciliation and regeneration. *James Luther Mays*

The Title

1 The word of the LORD that came to Hosea son of Beeri, in the days of Kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah of Judah, and in the days of King Jeroboam son of Joash of Israel.

Hosea's Children as Symbols of Judgment

2 When the LORD first spoke through Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea, "Go, take for yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the LORD." 3 So he went and took Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.

4 And the LORD said to him, "Name him Jezreel;[a] for in a little while I will punish the house of Jehu for the blood of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel. 5 On that day I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel."

6 She conceived again and bore a daughter. Then the LORD said to him, "Name her Lo-ruhamah,[b] for I will no longer have pity on the house of Israel or forgive them. 7 But I will have pity on the house of Judah, and I will save them by the LORD their God; I will not save them by bow, or by sword, or by war, or by horses, or by horsemen."

a That is *God sows* *b* That is *Not pitied*

1.1 *Word of the LORD* is a formula used in titles of prophetic books to identify them as communication from Israel's God. *Hosea* is a shortened form of Hoshaiah, which in Hebrew means "Yahweh has saved." The prophet's career is dated by reference to the reigns of Judean and Israelite kings recorded in 2 Kings 15–18.

1.2–2.1 The book opens with an account of God's commission to Hosea to marry and beget children to bear names that are signs of the Lord's response to Israel's unfaithfulness. **1.2** The symbolic meaning of *whoredom* is clear from the text. It is a metaphor for Israel's involvement with the religion of the culture area and its sexual rites to ensure the fertility of the land. What the term means about the character and identity of Hosea's wife is unclear. The children are to be *children of whoredom*, but the following account says they are children of Hosea and his wife. Perhaps for wife and children the term means simply that they belong to a people who are religiously promiscuous (see the Introduction). **1.3** The name *Gomer daughter of Diblaim* says nothing about her identity as a wife of whoredom. Her role is simply to be the mother of the children who bear the symbolic names. **1.4–5** In this context *Jezreel* refers to a plain in the central section of Israel and to a city on its perimeter associated with the bloody violence of the power politics practiced by the kings of Israel to gain throne and wealth. See 1 Kings 21; 2 Kings 9–10. The Jeroboam who was king during Hosea's early career was a descendent of the *house of Jehu*. **1.5** *Break the bow* is an idiom for the destruction of a state's military power; Israel's defeat by Assyria in 722 B.C.E. is anticipated. **1.6** The verb in the name *Lo-ruhamah* means to feel and act bonded to a child or kin or a needy person. **1.7** A contrast be-

8 When she had weaned Lo-ruhamah,
she conceived and bore a son. 9 Then the
LORD said, "Name him Lo-ammi,[c] for
you are not my people and I am not
your God."[d]

The Restoration of Israel

10[e] Yet the number of the people of
Israel shall be like the sand of the sea,
which can be neither measured nor num-
bered; and in the place where it was said
to them, "You are not my people," it shall
be said to them, "Children of the living
God." 11 The people of Judah and the
people of Israel shall be gathered to-
gether, and they shall appoint for them-
selves one head; and they shall take
possession of[f] the land, for great shall be
the day of Jezreel.

2[g] Say to your brother,[h] Ammi,[i] and
to your sister,[j] Ruhamah.[k]

God's Unfaithful Wife

2 Plead with your mother, plead—
for she is not my wife,
and I am not her husband—
that she put away her whoring
from her face,
and her adultery from between
her breasts,
3 or I will strip her naked
and expose her as in the day
she was born,
and make her like a wilderness,
and turn her into a parched
land,
and kill her with thirst.
4 Upon her children also I will
have no pity,
because they are children of
whoredom.
5 For their mother has played
the whore;
she who conceived them has
acted shamefully.
For she said, "I will go after
my lovers;
they give me my bread and
my water,
my wool and my flax, my oil
and my drink."
6 Therefore I will hedge up her[l]
way with thorns;
and I will build a wall
against her,
so that she cannot find her
paths.
7 She shall pursue her lovers,
but not overtake them;

c That is *Not my people* d Heb *I am not yours* e Ch 2.1 in Heb f Heb *rise up from* g Ch 2.3 in Heb h Gk: Heb *brothers* i That is *My people* j Gk Vg: Heb *sisters* k That is *Pitied* l Gk Syr: Heb *your*

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tween Judah's escape from Assyria and the fate of Israel; see 2 Kings 19.35–37. **1.9** The name *Lo-ammi*, "Not my people," negates the basic relation between Israel and its God, the covenant that the Lord established with Israel at Sinai (Ex 19–24). **1.10–2.1** A salvation prophecy that foresees a time when the negations of the children's names will be reversed in a revival of Judah and Israel as the *Children of the living God*. **1.10** The promise that Israel's population would be as numerous as *the sand of the sea* renews the Lord's promise to the ancestors, Abraham and Jacob (Gen 22.17; 32.12). **1.11** The term *head* is used instead of "king" because the restored Israel is to be as it was before the time of the monarchy. Here *Jezreel* means "God sows" the people in the land, i.e., is the source of their life and fertility; see 2.22–23; cf. note on 1.4–5.

2.2–23 This long complex section takes up the theme of the *wife of whoredom* from 1.2. It is composed as a speech of the Lord setting forth the guilt of Israel and a plan for the nation's punishment and reconciliation. The speech is cast in an idiom much like an allegory. The Lord is an aggrieved husband dealing with an unfaithful wife who is variously the people and the land Israel. The lovers (vv. 5, 7, 10, 12, 13) are the local manifestations of the Canaanite storm and fertility deity Baal. The speech reaches its climax in a promise of reconciliation (vv. 14–15) that is then developed in a further series of sayings (vv. 16–23). **2.2** Identification of the speech, the protagonists, and the problem. *Plead* is the term for a process of accusation, argument, and persuasion aimed at settling conflict; that is what the entire speech is. In the opening imperative the Lord invites individual Israelites to join his process against their mother, Israel as a people and a land. The phrase *not my wife* does not assume a divorce has occurred; it declares that the wife by promiscuity has deserted the status of wife and relieved the husband of any responsibility for her. Cultic jewelry was worn on the forehead and between the breasts by devotees of Baal; see 2.13. **2.3** The wife as a person and as the land. **2.5** *Go after my lovers* alludes to the practice of sexual rites in Canaanite religion to guarantee the fruitfulness of the land. **2.6–8** The Lord's purpose is to bring Israel back to an acknowledgment of her dependence on his provision.

and she shall seek them,
but shall not find them.
Then she shall say, "I will go
and return to my first husband,
for it was better with me then
than now."
8 She did not know
that it was I who gave her
the grain, the wine, and the oil,
and who lavished upon her silver
and gold that they used for
Baal.
9 Therefore I will take back
my grain in its time,
and my wine in its season;
and I will take away my wool and
my flax,
which were to cover her
nakedness.
10 Now I will uncover her shame
in the sight of her lovers,
and no one shall rescue her out
of my hand.
11 I will put an end to all her mirth,
her festivals, her new moons,
her sabbaths,
and all her appointed festivals.
12 I will lay waste her vines and her
fig trees,
of which she said,
"These are my pay,
which my lovers have
given me."
I will make them a forest,
and the wild animals shall
devour them.
13 I will punish her for the festival
days of the Baals,
when she offered incense to
them
and decked herself with her ring
and jewelry,
and went after her lovers,
and forgot me, says the LORD.

14 Therefore, I will now allure her,
and bring her into the
wilderness,
and speak tenderly to her.
15 From there I will give her her
vineyards,
and make the Valley of Achor a
door of hope.
There she shall respond as in the
days of her youth,
as at the time when she came
out of the land of Egypt.
16 On that day, says the LORD, you will call me, "My husband," and no longer will you call me, "My Baal."[m] 17 For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they shall be mentioned by name no more. 18 I will make for you[n] a covenant on that day with the wild animals, the birds of the air, and the creeping things of the ground; and I will abolish[o] the bow, the sword, and war from the land; and I will make you lie down in safety. 19 And I will take you for my wife forever; I will take you for my wife in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love, and in mercy. 20 I will take you for my wife in faithfulness; and you shall know the LORD.
21 On that day I will answer, says
the LORD,

m That is, "*My master*" *n* Heb *them*
o Heb *break*

2.9–13 The Lord's purpose will be achieved by withholding the produce of the land to demonstrate who is really its giver. **2.14** *Allure* in many contexts means "seduce"; the Lord must overwhelm Israel's will in order to regain it. The *wilderness* is the place where Israel was truly dependent on the Lord. **2.15** The *Valley of Achor* offers a route out of the wilderness into the heart of the land. The Lord will bring about a recapitulation of the original gift of the land. **2.16–17** The right name. **2.16** An implication that in their worship Israelites used *Baal* as a title for their god Yahweh, a practice that would confuse the identity of the two deities. In Hebrew *Baal* is both the name of the chief deity of Canaan and the legal title of a husband; "man" (NRSV, *husband*) is the more intimate and personal term. **2.17** *Mentioned by name* refers to the ritual use of a deity's name. **2.18** The gift of safety. The purpose of a *covenant* was to create conditions of peace between its parties. Here the Lord makes a covenant with creatures and also provides freedom from war. A life of security in the land depended on Israel's faithfulness to the covenant (Lev 25.18–19), but after judgment it will be provided by the Lord's own action (as in Ezek 34.25–31). **2.19–20** The new marriage. **2.19** *Take you for my wife* refers to the first legal step in a Hebrew marriage when the bridegroom pays a bride-price to the father-in-law. The list of five covenant virtues is the bride-price. **2.20** *Know the LORD* is the consummate response of Israel as bride to the gifts of the Lord; the response involves trust and obedience. **2.21–23** The new names. **2.21** *Answer* is the verb for a deity's response to lament-prayer. Its

I will answer the heavens
and they shall answer the earth;
22 and the earth shall answer the
grain, the wine, and the oil,
and they shall answer Jezreel;[p]
23 and I will sow him[q] for myself
in the land.
And I will have pity on
Lo-ruhamah,[r]
and I will say to Lo-ammi,[s]
"You are my people";
and he shall say, "You are
my God."

Love for an Adulteress

3 The LORD said to me again, "Go, love a woman who has a lover and is an adulteress, just as the LORD loves the people of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes." 2 So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer of barley and a measure of wine.[t] 3 And I said to her, "You must remain as mine for many days; you shall not play the whore, you shall not have intercourse with a man, nor I with you." 4 For the Israelites shall remain many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or pillar, without ephod or teraphim. 5 Afterward the Israelites shall return and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; they shall come in awe to the LORD and to his goodness in the latter days.

The LORD's Indictment

4 Hear the word of the LORD,
O people of Israel;
for the LORD has an indictment
against the inhabitants
of the land.
There is no faithfulness or
loyalty,
and no knowledge of God in
the land.
2 Swearing, lying, and murder,
and stealing and adultery
break out;
bloodshed follows bloodshed.
3 Therefore the land mourns,
and all who live in it languish;
together with the wild animals
and the birds of the air,
even the fish of the sea are
perishing.

Priest and People Are Unfaithful

4 Yet let no one contend,
and let none accuse,
for with you is my contention,
O priest.[u]

p That is *God sows* q Cn: Heb *her* r That is *Not pitied* s That is *Not my people* t Gk: Heb *a homer of barley and a lethech of barley*
u Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain

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repetition forms a chain that connects the Lord with every phase of fertility. **2.22** The name *Jezreel* (cf. notes on 1.4–5; 1.11) is climax and meaning of the sequence; it is Israel's God who sows the crops and in v. 23 also sows Israel back into its land. **2.23** The names *Lo-ruhamah* and *Lo-ammi* are reversed as already in 2.1.

3.1–5 Ch. 3, like 1.2–8, tells about God's commission to Hosea to make his own life a symbolic enactment of God's way with Israel. **3.1** The meaning of *again* is not clear; it may correspond to *first* in 1.2 to mark this unit as the second commission of a symbolic act. What the command to *love* entails is wholly defined by the Lord's love for Israel. The *woman* is identified only as an adulteress, all the symbol requires. *Raisin cakes* are sacrificial offerings to a Canaanite goddess (see Jer 7.18; 44.19). **3.2** Payment of a price implies the woman was in the legal possession of someone. **3.4** Israel must live without government, religious ritual, and media for consulting a deity. The loss of these features of corporate life is tantamount to a loss of national identity among the nations. **3.5** The resolution corresponds to 2.7, 15.

4.1–3 This saying serves as an introduction to chs. 4–11. **4.1** *Indictment* (Hebrew *riv*) includes both associations and trial proceedings; see 12.1, *plead* in 2.2, and *contend* in 4.4. *Loyalty* (Hebrew *chesed*), a crucial term in Hosea's theological vocabulary, is the attitude and act that make the best of a given or assumed relationship between persons or with God. The term *chesed* is variously translated in NRSV as *loyalty* (4.1), *steadfast love* (2.19; 10.12), and *love* (6.4, 6; 12.6). *Knowledge of God*, another crucial term, is acknowledgment and practice of dependence on God in worship and conduct; see 2.8, 20; 4.6; 6.6. **4.2** *Murder, and stealing and adultery* correspond to three commandments in the Decalogue (Ex 20.13–15); *swearing* refers to unreliable oaths. **4.3** *The land* as the gift of the Lord for the life of the people suffers from the sins of its inhabitants.

4.4–19 The theme of whoredom from chs. 2–3 continues. Both priest (vv. 4–11) and people (vv. 12–19) are guilty of cultic heresy. **4.4** The singular *priest* may refer to the chief priest; the entire profession is addressed in the

5 You shall stumble by day;
the prophet also shall stumble
with you by night,
and I will destroy your mother.
6 My people are destroyed for lack
of knowledge;
because you have rejected
knowledge,
I reject you from being a priest
to me.
And since you have forgotten the
law of your God,
I also will forget your children.

7 The more they increased,
the more they sinned
against me;
they changed[v] their glory
into shame.
8 They feed on the sin of my
people;
they are greedy for their
iniquity.
9 And it shall be like people,
like priest;
I will punish them for their
ways,
and repay them for their deeds.
10 They shall eat, but not be
satisfied;
they shall play the whore, but
not multiply;
because they have forsaken
the LORD
to devote themselves to
11 whoredom.

Wine and new wine
take away the understanding.
12 My people consult a piece of
wood,
and their divining rod gives
them oracles.
For a spirit of whoredom has led
them astray,
and they have played the
whore, forsaking their God.
13 They sacrifice on the tops of the
mountains,
and make offerings upon
the hills,
under oak, poplar, and terebinth,
because their shade is good.

Therefore your daughters play
the whore,
and your daughters-in-law
commit adultery.
14 I will not punish your daughters
when they play the whore,
nor your daughters-in-law when
they commit adultery;
for the men themselves go aside
with whores,
and sacrifice with temple
prostitutes;
thus a people without
understanding comes to
ruin.

15 Though you play the whore,
O Israel,
do not let Judah become guilty.
Do not enter into Gilgal,
or go up to Beth-aven,
and do not swear, "As the
LORD lives."
16 Like a stubborn heifer,
Israel is stubborn;
can the LORD now feed them
like a lamb in a broad pasture?

17 Ephraim is joined to idols—
let him alone.
18 When their drinking is ended,
they indulge in sexual
orgies;

v Ancient Heb tradition: MT *I will change*

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following verses. **4.5** *Destroy your mother* is an idiom for the elimination of the entire family of hereditary priests. **4.8** Priests *feed on the sin* of the people by profiting from the religious practices described in vv. 12–19. **4.10** *Play the whore* is Hosea's language for participation in the worship of Baal. **4.12** *Piece of wood* may be a religious object called an Asherah, a symbol of the goddess who was the consort of the deity to whom the shrine was devoted. **4.13** Local shrines were usually located on elevated sites in relation to groves of trees. *Daughters* of Israelites may have ritually dedicated their virginity at shrines before marriage. **4.14** *Temple prostitutes* were women consecrated to roles in fertility rituals. **4.15** *Beth-aven,* Hebrew, "house of wrong," is a pejorative name for Bethel. *Gilgal* and Bethel were cities that had national shrines. *As the LORD lives* is a ritual cry used in the fertility cult to greet the revival of a god who had been absent or dead; using the name of the Lord in the cry indicates that Israel's god was being worshiped and viewed as a god like Baal. **4.17** *Ephraim* is the name for the Northern Kingdom, Israel.

they love lewdness more than
their glory.[w]
19 A wind has wrapped them[x] in
its wings,
and they shall be ashamed
because of their altars.[y]

Captive to Unfaithfulness

5 Hear this, O priests!
Give heed, O house of Israel!
Listen, O house of the king!
For the judgment pertains
to you;
for you have been a snare at
Mizpah,
and a net spread upon Tabor,
2 and a pit dug deep in Shittim;[z]
but I will punish all of them.

3 I know Ephraim,
and Israel is not hidden
from me;
for now, O Ephraim, you have
played the whore;
Israel is defiled.
4 Their deeds do not permit them
to return to their God.
For the spirit of whoredom is
within them,
and they do not know the
LORD.

5 Israel's pride testifies against him;
Ephraim[a] stumbles in his guilt;
Judah also stumbles with them.
6 With their flocks and herds they
shall go
to seek the LORD,
but they will not find him;
he has withdrawn from them.
7 They have dealt faithlessly with
the LORD;
for they have borne illegitimate
children.
Now the new moon shall
devour them along with
their fields.

Judgment on Brothers at War

8 Blow the horn in Gibeah,
the trumpet in Ramah.
Sound the alarm at Beth-aven;
look behind you, Benjamin!
9 Ephraim shall become a
desolation
in the day of punishment;
among the tribes of Israel
I declare what is sure.
10 The princes of Judah have
become
like those who remove the
landmark;
on them I will pour out
my wrath like water.
11 Ephraim is oppressed, crushed in
judgment,
because he was determined to
go after vanity.[b]
12 Therefore I am like maggots to
Ephraim,
and like rottenness to the house
of Judah.
13 When Ephraim saw his sickness,
and Judah his wound,
then Ephraim went to Assyria,
and sent to the great king.[c]

w Cn Compare Gk: Meaning of Heb uncertain
x Heb *her* *y* Gk Syr: Heb *sacrifices*
z Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain *a* Heb *Israel and Ephraim* *b* Gk: Meaning of Heb uncertain
c Cn: Heb *to a king who will contend*

5.1–7 Their leaders have misled the Israelites into the trap of Baal worship. They are so enmeshed in their guilt that return to their God is impossible for them. **5.1** *Judgment* in the sense of verdict; some translate *For the judgment pertains to you* as "for justice is your concern." **5.1–2** *Mizpah*, *Tabor*, and *Shittim* (?) are names of towns with shrines of the Baal cult. **5.4** The *spirit of whoredom* is the power that the Baals exercise over the will of Israel. **5.6** Israelites will *seek the LORD* in their trouble by laments and sacrifices from their flocks to no avail. **5.7** The meaning of *new moon* as destroyer is unclear. The sentence may mean that Israel's pagan observance of a festival at the new moon will lead to the nation's destruction.

5.8–6.6 The historical setting for the sayings in this unit is the conflict between Israel and Judah over policies for dealing with the Assyrian threat. See 2 Kings 16–17; Isa 7. **5.8** *Gibeah*, *Ramah* and *Beth-aven* (Bethel, see note on 4.15) are towns in *Benjamin's* tribal territory. **5.10** Judah's invasion of Ephraim is compared to *removing the landmark*, a crime forbidden in Israel's law and ethics (Deut 27.17; Prov 22.28). **5.11** *Go after vanity* probably refers to Ephraim's alliance with Syria. **5.13** This verse refers to the tribute and territorial concessions Israel paid Assyria in the

But he is not able to cure you
or heal your wound.
14 For I will be like a lion to
Ephraim,
and like a young lion to the
house of Judah.
I myself will tear and go away;
I will carry off, and no one
shall rescue.
15 I will return again to my place
until they acknowledge their
guilt and seek my face.
In their distress they will beg
my favor:

6 "Come, let us return to the LORD;
for it is he who has torn, and
he will heal us;
he has struck down, and he will
bind us up.
2 After two days he will revive us;
on the third day he will raise
us up,
that we may live before him.
3 Let us know, let us press on to
know the LORD;
his appearing is as sure as
the dawn;
he will come to us like the
showers,
like the spring rains that water
the earth."
4 What shall I do with you,
O Ephraim?
What shall I do with you,
O Judah?
Your love is like a morning cloud,
like the dew that goes
away early.
5 Therefore I have hewn them by
the prophets,
I have killed them by the words
of my mouth,
and my[d] judgment goes forth
as the light.
6 For I desire steadfast love and
not sacrifice,
the knowledge of God rather
than burnt offerings.

An Agenda of Accusations

7 But at[e] Adam they transgressed
the covenant;
there they dealt faithlessly
with me.
8 Gilead is a city of evildoers,
tracked with blood.
9 As robbers lie in wait[f] for
someone,
so the priests are banded
together;[g]
they murder on the road to
Shechem,
they commit a monstrous
crime.
10 In the house of Israel I have seen
a horrible thing;
Ephraim's whoredom is there,
Israel is defiled.

11 For you also, O Judah, a harvest
is appointed.

7 When I would restore the
fortunes of my people,
when I would heal Israel,
the corruption of Ephraim is
revealed,
and the wicked deeds of
Samaria;
for they deal falsely,
the thief breaks in,

d Gk Syr: Heb *your* *e* Cn: Heb *like*
f Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain *g* Syr: Heb *are a company*

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attempt to survive (2 Kings 15.19–20; 17.3). **5.15** The Lord's *place* is his heavenly palace from which he comes forth to intervene in the world's affairs. **6.1–3** The response of Ephraim and Judah to the Lord's withdrawal from them. The quote is a composition of the prophet to characterize a repentance that lacks the acknowledgment of guilt called for in 5.15. **6.4** Israel and Judah show *love* (Hebrew *chesed*; see v. 6) for God only when they are desperate. **6.5** A reference to *prophets* of the past who announced God's punishment. God's assertion that *my judgment goes forth as the light* is counterpart and rejoinder to Israel's claim that *his appearing* [to save us] *is as sure as the dawn* in v. 3. **6.6** On *steadfast love* (Hebrew *chesed*) and *knowledge of God* as God's chief requirements of the people of God, see note on 4.1. Integrity of life under the covenant is valued far above the rituals of sacrifice (see 1 Sam 15.22; Isa 1.12–17; Mic 6.6–8).

6.7–7.16 A compilation of sayings to specify ways that steadfast love of the Lord is lacking in Israel. **6.7–7.2** A list of evils occurring at various places in Israel. **6.7** The *covenant* between the Lord and Israel set the basic requirements of their relationship. For *Adam*, see Josh 3.16. **6.9** *Shechem* was the location of an ancient sanctuary of Israel's covenant God; priests harass

and the bandits raid outside.
2 But they do not consider
that I remember all their
wickedness.
Now their deeds surround them,
they are before my face.
3 By their wickedness they make
the king glad,
and the officials by their
treachery.
4 They are all adulterers;
they are like a heated oven,
whose baker does not need to stir
the fire,
from the kneading of the
dough until it is leavened.
5 On the day of our king the
officials
became sick with the heat
of wine;
he stretched out his hand with
mockers.
6 For they are kindled[h] like an
oven, their heart burns
within them;
all night their anger smolders;
in the morning it blazes like a
flaming fire.
7 All of them are hot as an oven,
and they devour their rulers.
All their kings have fallen;
none of them calls upon me.

8 Ephraim mixes himself with
the peoples;
Ephraim is a cake not turned.
9 Foreigners devour his strength,
but he does not know it;
gray hairs are sprinkled
upon him,
but he does not know it.
10 Israel's pride testifies
against[i] him;
yet they do not return to the
LORD their God,
or seek him, for all this.

11 Ephraim has become like a dove,
silly and without sense;
they call upon Egypt, they go
to Assyria.
12 As they go, I will cast my net
over them;
I will bring them down like
birds of the air;
I will discipline them according
to the report made to their
assembly.[j]
13 Woe to them, for they have
strayed from me!
Destruction to them, for they
have rebelled against me!
I would redeem them,
but they speak lies against me.

14 They do not cry to me from
the heart,
but they wail upon their beds;
they gash themselves for grain
and wine;
they rebel against me.
15 It was I who trained and
strengthened their arms,
yet they plot evil against me.
16 They turn to that which does not
profit;[k]
they have become like a
defective bow;
their officials shall fall by
the sword

h Gk Syr: Heb *brought near* *i* Or *humbles*
j Meaning of Heb uncertain *k* Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain

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pilgrims who visit it. **6.10** *Whoredom* is a metaphor for Baal worship. **7.2** The *deeds* of Israel are what the Lord sees when its people appeal for help. **7.3–7** Royal politics in Israel is driven by a passion that is as constant and renewed as an oven fire. **7.3** The *King* may be Hoshea (ca. 732–724 B.C.E.), who gained the throne through the *wickedness* and *treachery* of assassination. See 2 Kings 15.30. **7.4** *Adulterers* seem in this context to be a metaphor for those who were politically disloyal. **7.5** *The day of our King*, the time of the coronation festival. **7.7** There were four royal murders in Israel within twelve years (ca. 745–732 B.C.E.) during a series of revolutions. See 2 Kings 15.8–10, 13–14, 23–25, 30. **7.8–12** Israel turns to other nations for help instead of returning to its God. **7.8** A *cake* mixed of foreign ingredients and half baked. **7.9** *Foreigners* are Egypt and Assyria (v. 11) between whom Israel alternates in seeking a protecting ally. **7.13–16** In their worship and national policy the Israelites have rebelled against the Lord. **7.13** *Redeem* is a legal term for reclaiming or ransoming a person or thing by payment. The *lies* against the Lord are identified in vv. 14, 15–16. **7.14** The rituals of wailing and self-mutilation are a lie (v. 13) because they treat the Lord like a Canaanite god. **7.15–16** Turning to useless allies is a lie (v. 13) that represents the Lord as a god who cannot save.

because of the rage of their
tongue.
So much for their babbling in the
land of Egypt.

The Crisis and Its Cause

8 Set the trumpet to your lips!
One like a vulture[l] is over the
house of the LORD,
because they have broken my
covenant,
and transgressed my law.
2 Israel cries to me,
"My God, we—Israel—
know you!"
3 Israel has spurned the good;
the enemy shall pursue him.

4 They made kings, but not
through me;
they set up princes, but without
my knowledge.
With their silver and gold they
made idols
for their own destruction.
5 Your calf is rejected, O Samaria.
My anger burns against them.
How long will they be incapable
of innocence?
6 For it is from Israel,
an artisan made it;
it is not God.
The calf of Samaria
shall be broken to pieces.[m]

7 For they sow the wind,
and they shall reap the
whirlwind.
The standing grain has no heads,
it shall yield no meal;
if it were to yield,
foreigners would devour it.
8 Israel is swallowed up;
now they are among the
nations
as a useless vessel.
9 For they have gone up to Assyria,
a wild ass wandering alone;
Ephraim has bargained
for lovers.
10 Though they bargain with
the nations,
I will now gather them up.
They shall soon writhe
under the burden of kings
and princes.

11 When Ephraim multiplied altars
to expiate sin,
they became to him altars for
sinning.
12 Though I write for him the
multitude of my
instructions,
they are regarded as a strange
thing.
13 Though they offer choice
sacrifices,[n]
though they eat flesh,
the LORD does not accept them.
Now he will remember their
iniquity,
and punish their sins;
they shall return to Egypt.
14 Israel has forgotten his Maker,
and built palaces;
and Judah has multiplied
fortified cities;
but I will send a fire upon
his cities,
and it shall devour his
strongholds.

l Meaning of Heb uncertain *m* Or *shall go up in flames* *n* Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain

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8.1–14 A complex of sayings declaring that Israel has rejected its God (vv. 1–3) in its government (vv. 4, 14), religious practices (vv. 5–6, 11–13), and international policy (vv. 7–10). **8.1** *One like a vulture* is probably a reference to Assyria. On *my covenant and . . . my law* as basis for the relation between Israel and the Lord, see 6.7; 4.6. **8.4** In the recurrent revolutions in the northern state of Israel (cf. note on 7.7) *kings* and *princes* had been installed without any appointing word from the Lord through a prophet. **8.5–6** The *calf of Samaria* is the golden bull that Jeroboam I placed in Bethel as an equivalent to the ark in the Jerusalem temple (1 Kings 12.26–33). Samaria as the capital is the sponsor of the image. **8.9** *Bargained for lovers* is Hosea's language for Israel's deals with Syria, Egypt, and Assyria in a frantic search for security. **8.12** The *multitude of my instructions* in writing must refer to some early form of the commandments and laws recorded in Exodus and Deuteronomy as requirements of the covenant. **8.13** A *return to Egypt* would reverse and cancel the Lord's historical way with Israel (cf. Deut 17.16).

No More Harvest Festivals

9 Do not rejoice, O Israel!
Do not exult[o] as other
nations do;
for you have played the whore,
departing from your God.
You have loved a
prostitute's pay
on all threshing floors.
2 Threshing floor and wine vat
shall not feed them,
and the new wine shall fail
them.
3 They shall not remain in the land
of the LORD;
but Ephraim shall return to
Egypt,
and in Assyria they shall eat
unclean food.

4 They shall not pour drink
offerings of wine to the
LORD,
and their sacrifices shall not
please him.
Such sacrifices shall be like
mourners' bread;
all who eat of it shall be
defiled;
for their bread shall be for their
hunger only;
it shall not come to the house
of the LORD.

5 What will you do on the day of
appointed festival,
and on the day of the festival
of the LORD?
6 For even if they escape
destruction,
Egypt shall gather them,
Memphis shall bury them.
Nettles shall possess their
precious things of silver;[p]
thorns shall be in their tents.

7 The days of punishment have
come,
the days of recompense
have come;
Israel cries,[q]
"The prophet is a fool,
the man of the spirit is mad!"
Because of your great iniquity,
your hostility is great.
8 The prophet is a sentinel for my
God over Ephraim,
yet a fowler's snare is on all
his ways,
and hostility in the house of
his God.
9 They have deeply corrupted
themselves
as in the days of Gibeah;
he will remember their iniquity,
he will punish their sins.

The Present Is Like the Past

10 Like grapes in the wilderness,
I found Israel.
Like the first fruit on the fig tree,
in its first season,
I saw your ancestors.
But they came to Baal-peor,
and consecrated themselves to a
thing of shame,
and became detestable like the
thing they loved.
11 Ephraim's glory shall fly away like
a bird—

o Gk: Heb *To exultation* p Meaning of Heb uncertain q Cn Compare Gk: Heb *shall know*

9.1–9 Hosea condemns Israel's celebration of their harvest festival as unfaithfulness to the Lord (vv. 1–6) and is denounced in turn (vv. 7–9). **9.1** *Rejoice* and *exult* refer to festival jubilation. Grain piled on threshing floors is *prostitute's pay* because Israel takes the harvest as the gift of the deity Baal. **9.4** Sacrificial worship of the Lord will be unclean in a land that is not the land of the Lord. **9.5** *The festival of the LORD* is the harvest festival called Tabernacles, or Sukkoth. **9.7** Prophets were often possessed by the *spirit* of the Lord; the quotation reports the taunt of Hosea's opposition. **9.8** The *sentinel* is a frequent figure for the role of the prophet in Israel, e.g., Jer 6.17; Ezek 3.17. *The house of his God* may mean the land of the Lord or a sanctuary where the Lord was worshiped faithfully. **9.9** *The days of Gibeah* may refer to the shameful episode recorded in Judg 19–21.

9.10–17 The guilt of what happened at Baal-peor and Gilgal still marks the present Israel and will lead to its punishment. **9.10** The comparisons represent what is desirable; in Hosea's tradition the *wilderness* was a place and time when Israel pleased the Lord. At *Baal-peor*, the last station of its wilderness journey, Israel became involved in the worship of Baal (Num 25.1–5). *Thing of shame* (Hebrew *boshet*) is a derogatory

no birth, no pregnancy, no
conception!
12 Even if they bring up children,
I will bereave them until no
one is left.
Woe to them indeed
when I depart from them!
13 Once I saw Ephraim as a young
palm planted in a lovely
meadow,[r]
but now Ephraim must lead out
his children for slaughter.
14 Give them, O LORD—
what will you give?
Give them a miscarrying womb
and dry breasts.

15 Every evil of theirs began at
Gilgal;
there I came to hate them.
Because of the wickedness of
their deeds
I will drive them out of
my house.
I will love them no more;
all their officials are rebels.

16 Ephraim is stricken,
their root is dried up,
they shall bear no fruit.
Even though they give birth,
I will kill the cherished
offspring of their womb.
17 Because they have not listened
to him,
my God will reject them;
they shall become wanderers
among the nations.

End of Cult, King, and Calf

10 Israel is a luxuriant vine
that yields its fruit.
The more his fruit increased
the more altars he built;
as his country improved,
he improved his pillars.
2 Their heart is false;
now they must bear their guilt.
The LORD[s] will break down
their altars,
and destroy their pillars.

3 For now they will say:
"We have no king,
for we do not fear the LORD,
and a king—what could he do
for us?"
4 They utter mere words;
with empty oaths they make
covenants;
so litigation springs up like
poisonous weeds
in the furrows of the field.
5 The inhabitants of Samaria
tremble
for the calf[t] of Beth-aven.
Its people shall mourn for it,
and its idolatrous priests shall
wail[u] over it,
over its glory that has departed
from it.
6 The thing itself shall be carried to
Assyria
as tribute to the great king.[v]
Ephraim shall be put to shame,
and Israel shall be ashamed of
his idol.[w]

7 Samaria's king shall perish
like a chip on the face of
the waters.
8 The high places of Aven, the sin
of Israel,
shall be destroyed.
Thorn and thistle shall grow up
on their altars.

r Meaning of Heb uncertain s Heb *he*
t Gk Syr: Heb *calves* u Cn: Heb *exult*
v Cn: Heb *to a king who will contend* w Cn: Heb *counsel*

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name for the god Baal. **9.11** Israel's *glory* is its honor as a significant and promising people. **9.15** *Gilgal* was Israel's first station on the way into the land (Josh 4.19). Kingship for Israel was inaugurated there (1 Sam 11.14–15) and Israel's kings were responsible for religious apostasy and political unreliability.

10.1–8 The shrines (vv. 1–2, 8) and king (vv. 3–4, 7) and calf image (vv. 5–6) in which Israel invested wealth and hope will be swept away. **10.1** Israel used its prosperity to build sanctuaries with *altars* and wooden and stone *pillars* to represent divine potency (see Ex 34.13; Deut 12.3). **10.3** Hosea quotes a lament of the Israelites over their failure to honor the Lord as king and the failure of the kings they did honor. **10.5** *Beth-aven*. See note on 4.15. On the *calf* image in the shrine at Bethel, see note on 8.5–6. **10.8** The *high places of Aven* (Hebrew, "wrong") are the hilltop sanctuaries of v. 1.

They shall say to the mountains,
Cover us,
and to the hills, Fall on us.

Sowing and Reaping

9 Since the days of Gibeah you
have sinned, O Israel;
there they have continued.
Shall not war overtake them in
Gibeah?
10 I will come[x] against the wayward
people to punish them;
and nations shall be gathered
against them
when they are punished[y] for
their double iniquity.

11 Ephraim was a trained heifer
that loved to thresh,
and I spared her fair neck;
but I will make Ephraim break
the ground;
Judah must plow;
Jacob must harrow for himself.
12 Sow for yourselves righteousness;
reap steadfast love;
break up your fallow ground;
for it is time to seek the LORD,
that he may come and rain
righteousness upon you.

13 You have plowed wickedness,
you have reaped injustice,
you have eaten the fruit of lies.
Because you have trusted in
your power
and in the multitude of your
warriors,
14 therefore the tumult of war shall
rise against your people,
and all your fortresses shall
be destroyed,
as Shalman destroyed Beth-arbel
on the day of battle
when mothers were dashed in
pieces with their children.
15 Thus it shall be done to you,
O Bethel,
because of your great
wickedness.
At dawn the king of Israel
shall be utterly cut off.

God's Compassion

11 When Israel was a child, I
loved him,
and out of Egypt I called
my son.
2 The more I[z] called them,
the more they went from me;[a]
they kept sacrificing to the Baals,
and offering incense to idols.

3 Yet it was I who taught Ephraim
to walk,
I took them up in my[b] arms;
but they did not know that I
healed them.
4 I led them with cords of human
kindness,
with bands of love.
I was to them like those
who lift infants to their
cheeks.[c]
I bent down to them and
fed them.

x Cn Compare Gk: Heb *In my desire* y Gk: Heb *bound* z Gk: Heb *they* a Gk: Heb *them* b Gk Syr Vg: Heb *his* c Or *who ease the yoke on their jaws*

10.9–15 Israel's sinful history in the land (vv. 9–10) contradicts God's original purpose for the nation (vv. 11–12), so it will suffer a terrible punishment (vv. 13–15). **10.9** Again *the days of Gibeah* and the gruesome crime that happened then are used as a benchmark for Israel's subsequent history (9.9; Judg 19–21). **10.10** The *double iniquity* is that of Gibeah continued in the present. **10.11** The metaphor of a heifer trained for treading out grain and then set to the heavier work of plowing represents an Israel brought out of the wilderness and set to the task of being the people of God. **10.12** The exhortation is a quote of God's original charge to Israel. Israel must cultivate *righteousness* and *steadfast love* in its social life to receive the gift of the Lord, *righteousness* as blessing. **10.14** Shalman's destruction of *Beth-arbel* is mentioned nowhere else.

11.1–11 The history of God's love and Israel's unfaithfulness (vv. 1–4) leads inexorably to a reversal of that history (vv. 5–7), but God's compassion is greater than God's wrath (vv. 8–9) and will bring about a renewal of his history with Israel. **11.1** Hosea uses family imagery to speak of the exodus. *Loved* and *called* are his terms for God's election of Israel as people of the Lord. **11.2** *Baals* are deities worshiped at local shrines scattered across the land into which Israel came. **11.3–4** The Lord's way with Israel in the early history is portrayed as the tender care of a parent

5 They shall return to the land of
Egypt,
and Assyria shall be their king,
because they have refused to
return to me.
6 The sword rages in their cities,
it consumes their oracle-priests,
and devours because of their
schemes.
7 My people are bent on turning
away from me.
To the Most High they call,
but he does not raise them up
at all.[d]

8 How can I give you up, Ephraim?
How can I hand you over,
O Israel?
How can I make you like
Admah?
How can I treat you like
Zeboiim?
My heart recoils within me;
my compassion grows warm
and tender.
9 I will not execute my fierce
anger;
I will not again destroy
Ephraim;
for I am God and no mortal,
the Holy One in your midst,
and I will not come in wrath.[d]

10 They shall go after the LORD,
who roars like a lion;
when he roars,
his children shall come
trembling from the west.
11 They shall come trembling like
birds from Egypt,
and like doves from the land of
Assyria;
and I will return them to their
homes, says the LORD.

Falsehood and Deceit

12[e] Ephraim has surrounded me
with lies,
and the house of Israel with
deceit;
but Judah still walks[f] with God,
and is faithful to the Holy One.
12 Ephraim herds the wind,
and pursues the east wind all
day long;
they multiply falsehood and
violence;
they make a treaty with Assyria,
and oil is carried to Egypt.

2 The LORD has an indictment
against Judah,
and will punish Jacob according
to his ways,
and repay him according to
his deeds.
3 In the womb he tried to supplant
his brother,
and in his manhood he strove
with God.
4 He strove with the angel and
prevailed,
he wept and sought his favor;
he met him at Bethel,
and there he spoke with him.[g]
5 The LORD the God of hosts,
the LORD is his name!
6 But as for you, return to
your God,
hold fast to love and justice,
and wait continually for
your God.

7 A trader, in whose hands are
false balances,
he loves to oppress.
8 Ephraim has said, "Ah, I am rich,

d Meaning of Heb uncertain *e* Ch 12.1 in Heb
f Heb *roams* or *rules* *g* Gk Syr: Heb *us*

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for a baby. **11.8** *Admah* and *Zeboiim* were cities famous for their total destruction. The *heart* in Hebrew psychology was the organ of thinking and deciding. **11.9** *Mortal*, lit. "man" in the Hebrew does not just connote human mortality but contrasts a human as such to God. *Holy* is the essential attribute of deity. **11.10** The *roaring* of the Lord is a motif from descriptions of God's interventions as warrior deity to deliver God's people.

11.12–12.14 A series of indictments for political and religious failures featuring Israel's ancestor Jacob as a case study. **12.1** King Hoshea's vacillation between Assyria and Egypt (2 Kings 17.3–4). **12.3** At his birth (Gen 25.19–26), Jacob was given the name "he *supplants*" (v. 26). At the Jabbok (Gen 32.22–32), Jacob *strove* with an angel and was named Israel (v. 28). **12.4** Jacob's revelation at *Bethel* could refer to Gen 28.10–22 or 35.1–7. **12.6** Hosea's exhortation to Israel to live a life different from Jacob's. **12.7** *Trader* can

I have gained wealth for
myself;
in all of my gain
no offense has been found
in me
that would be sin."[h]
9 I am the LORD your God
from the land of Egypt;
I will make you live in tents
again,
as in the days of the appointed
festival.

10 I spoke to the prophets;
it was I who multiplied visions,
and through the prophets I will
bring destruction.
11 In Gilead[i] there is iniquity,
they shall surely come to
nothing.
In Gilgal they sacrifice bulls,
so their altars shall be like
stone heaps
on the furrows of the field.
12 Jacob fled to the land of Aram,
there Israel served for a wife,
and for a wife he guarded
sheep.[j]
13 By a prophet the LORD brought
Israel up from Egypt,
and by a prophet he was
guarded.
14 Ephraim has given bitter offense,
so his Lord will bring his crimes
down on him
and pay him back for his
insults.

Sin and Death

13 When Ephraim spoke, there was
trembling;
he was exalted in Israel;
but he incurred guilt through
Baal and died.
2 And now they keep on sinning
and make a cast image for
themselves,
idols of silver made according to
their understanding,
all of them the work of artisans.
"Sacrifice to these," they say.[k]
People are kissing calves!
3 Therefore they shall be like the
morning mist
or like the dew that goes
away early,
like chaff that swirls from the
threshing floor
or like smoke from a window.

4 Yet I have been the LORD
your God
ever since the land of Egypt;
you know no God but me,
and besides me there is no
savior.
5 It was I who fed[l] you in the
wilderness,
in the land of drought.
6 When I fed[m] them, they were
satisfied;
they were satisfied, and their
heart was proud;
therefore they forgot me.
7 So I will become like a lion
to them,
like a leopard I will lurk beside
the way.
8 I will fall upon them like a bear
robbed of her cubs,
and will tear open the covering
of their heart;
there I will devour them like
a lion,
as a wild animal would
mangle them.

9 I will destroy you, O Israel;
who can help you?[n]

h Meaning of Heb uncertain *i* Compare Syr: Heb *Gilead* *j* Heb lacks *sheep* *k* Cn Compare Gk: Heb *To these they say sacrifices of people* *l* Gk Syr: Heb *knew* *m* Cn: Heb *according to their pasture* *n* Gk Syr: Heb *for in me is your help*

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be translated "Canaan"; the term is a double taunt. **12.10–13** A contrast between God's word and care through prophets (vv. 10, 13) and Israel's care for *sacrifices* at shrines like *Gilead* and *Gilgal* (v. 11) and Jacob's flight to gain a wife and wealth (v. 12).

13.1–16 A sequence of sayings unified by the theme of sin and death. **13.1** *Guilt through Baal* because of violation of the covenant prohibition of relation to another god (Ex 20.2). *Died.* Death had already set in for Ephraim in its loss of independence and territory to Assyria (2 Kings 17.3). **13.2** The *cast image* refers to the bull image at Bethel (8.5; 10.5); the *idols of silver* and *calves* that people kiss are probably amulets privately owned and revered as media of divine potency. **13.4–5** The exodus and the way through the wilderness determined for Israel who its

10 Where now is[o] your king, that he
may save you?
Where in all your cities are
your rulers,
of whom you said,
"Give me a king and rulers"?
11 I gave you a king in my anger,
and I took him away in
my wrath.

12 Ephraim's iniquity is bound up;
his sin is kept in store.
13 The pangs of childbirth come
for him,
but he is an unwise son;
for at the proper time he does
not present himself
at the mouth of the womb.

14 Shall I ransom them from the
power of Sheol?
Shall I redeem them from
Death?
O Death, where are[p] your
plagues?
O Sheol, where is[p] your
destruction?
Compassion is hidden from
my eyes.

15 Although he may flourish among
rushes,[q]
the east wind shall come, a blast
from the LORD,
rising from the wilderness;
and his fountain shall dry up,
his spring shall be parched.
It shall strip his treasury
of every precious thing.
16[r] Samaria shall bear her guilt,
because she has rebelled against
her God;
they shall fall by the sword,
their little ones shall be dashed
in pieces,
and their pregnant women
ripped open.

Repentance and Forgiveness

14 Return, O Israel, to the LORD
your God,
for you have stumbled because
of your iniquity.
2 Take words with you
and return to the LORD;
say to him,
"Take away all guilt;
accept that which is good,
and we will offer
the fruit[s] of our lips.
3 Assyria shall not save us;
we will not ride upon horses;
we will say no more, 'Our God,'
to the work of our hands.
In you the orphan finds mercy."

4 I will heal their disloyalty;
I will love them freely,
for my anger has turned
from them.
5 I will be like the dew to Israel;
he shall blossom like the lily,
he shall strike root like the
forests of Lebanon.[t]
6 His shoots shall spread out;
his beauty shall be like the
olive tree,
and his fragrance like that of
Lebanon.
7 They shall again live beneath
my[u] shadow,

o Gk Syr Vg: Heb *I will be* p Gk Syr: Heb *I will be* q Or *among brothers* r Ch 14.1 in Heb s Gk Syr: Heb *bulls* t Cn: Heb *like Lebanon* u Heb *his*

God is. **13.10** An implication that King Hoshea and his officials are already in the hands of the invading Assyrian army (2 Kings 17.4). **13.12** The language of *binding up* and *storing* draws on the practice of preserving papyrus documents in archives. **13.13** An *unwise son* is a fetus that does not seem to know how to be born. **13.14** *Death* and *Sheol,* the realm of death, are personified as powers that put God's punishment into effect. **13.16** Anticipation of the fall of Samaria to Assyria (2 Kings 17.5).

14.1–8 A summons to repentance (vv. 1–3) and a divine promise of forgiveness and renewal (vv. 4–8) serve as a conclusion to chs. 12–13 and to the entire book. The summons is based on and presupposes the promise. **14.2** Israel is bid to bring *words* and *the fruit* (Hebrew, "bulls") *of our lips* as the offering of repentance instead of animal sacrifice; for a valuation of verbal over animal sacrifice, cf. Pss 50; 51. **14.3** The prayer of penitence is to cover the two basic failures of Israel, turning to foreign powers for security and having another god. Israel is to base its prayers on the Lord's special concern for the orphan (Ex 22.22–23; Deut 27.19). **14.5–7** A series of

they shall flourish as a
garden;[v]
they shall blossom like the vine,
their fragrance shall be like the
wine of Lebanon.

8 O Ephraim, what have I[w] to do
with idols?
It is I who answer and look
after you.[x]
I am like an evergreen cypress;
your faithfulness[y] comes
from me.

A Concluding Note

9 Those who are wise understand
these things;
those who are discerning
know them.
For the ways of the LORD are
right,
and the upright walk in them,
but transgressors stumble
in them.

v Cn: Heb *they shall grow grain* *w* Or *What more has Ephraim* *x* Heb *him* *y* Heb *your fruit*

similes from plant life is used to evoke the well-being offered repentant Israel.

14.9 The last verse of the book is commendation of it to those who are wise enough to know that the ways of the Lord can be learned from its study.

JOEL

Content and Structure

THE WORDS OF THE COMPELLING PROPHET JOEL give us a book of vivid content: we almost immediately meet a swarm of locusts, then are led through a bitter lamentation for the "day of the LORD"; priests weep and then we abruptly hear of a promised joy; the theme of judgment recurs and finally there is a happy ending.

Distressing metaphors tell of an invasion, but by what nation? The book does not say. The Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians—each has been accused, with the dating of the book assigned anywhere from 800 to 300 B.C.E. Dividing the book into parts, each with its own date, would be somewhat conjectural and destroy its loose but flowing unity. The brilliant poet probably conflated all the distressing invasions the Israelites had gone through in history and brought the same theology to each.

Authorship and Historical Background

Nor do we know who the prophet is. 1.1 gives only his patronymic, which occurs nowhere else in the Bible. Joel's name is a common one, meaning the same as that of Elijah, ("My God is Yah [the LORD]"), but with the elements reversed.

The historical theme of the book is a locust plague and the theological theme is the "day of the LORD"; the scheme of the book is to put the two side by side. Palestine is in the path of locust movements that have occurred throughout history up to the present day. If they move by migration, they originate in the Sudan, move up through northeast Africa, through the Arabah, and into the Levant.

The surprisingly positive note the book gives to public worship and religious ritual is quite the opposite of that of the eighth-century prophets, Amos, Micah, Hosea, and Isaiah, who in general were critical of it, at least of the incongruity between the people's behavior and what they prayed for. Priests, also called "ministers" here, are given the nonsacrificial role of lamenters. But the people have their role also—they must repent.

In fact, there will be a role "afterward" (2.28) for all people, and it will be that of prophesying. Male and female shall do this, one of the few places in the OT where women prophets are mentioned (see Huldah in 2 Kings 22.14–20 and Miriam in Ex 15.20 for others).

Startling apocalyptic elements appear from time to time in the book (2.31; 3.16) presaging a fuller usage of this language in Ezek 1 and Zech 1–8 and the fullest in the OT in Dan 7.9–10, 13–14. This genre of literature shows an overturning of nature near an end time, after which there will be no more problems.

Message

To put the theology in a nutshell: the invaders have come as punishment (though the book never specifies the crimes), so Israel must repent by worship and fasting. The "day of the LORD" predicted of old has come. This is a time (not necessarily a twenty-four hour period that can be dated), when the Lord will see to it that all his promises will be fulfilled, whether for punishment or for prosperity. If the Israelites repent and return to the Lord, the army will leave and never again return. Their enemies will fall and their lands will be fertile forever.
Richard A. Henshaw

1 The word of the LORD that came to
Joel son of Pethuel:

Lament over the Ruin of the Country

2 Hear this, O elders,
give ear, all inhabitants of
the land!
Has such a thing happened in
your days,
or in the days of your
ancestors?
3 Tell your children of it,
and let your children tell their
children,
and their children another
generation.

4 What the cutting locust left,
the swarming locust has eaten.
What the swarming locust left,
the hopping locust has eaten,
and what the hopping locust left,
the destroying locust has
eaten.

5 Wake up, you drunkards, and
weep;
and wail, all you wine-drinkers,
over the sweet wine,
for it is cut off from your
mouth.
6 For a nation has invaded my
land,
powerful and innumerable;
its teeth are lions' teeth,
and it has the fangs of a
lioness.
7 It has laid waste my vines,
and splintered my fig trees;
it has stripped off their bark and
thrown it down;
their branches have turned
white.

1.1–12 The locust swarm, meaning destruction. **1.2–3** Opening, scene-setting verses, such as occur often in the prophetic books, call upon the people to *hear*; see Hos 4.1; Isa 1.2; Mic 1.2. **1.4** Four kinds of *locust* symbolize four different invasions, according to some commentators. The type translated *cutting locust* appears also in Am 4.9, one of the many contacts between this pre-

8 Lament like a virgin dressed in sackcloth
for the husband of her youth.
9 The grain offering and the drink offering are cut off
from the house of the LORD.
The priests mourn,
the ministers of the LORD.
10 The fields are devastated,
the ground mourns;
for the grain is destroyed,
the wine dries up,
the oil fails.

11 Be dismayed, you farmers,
wail, you vinedressers,
over the wheat and the barley;
for the crops of the field are ruined.
12 The vine withers,
the fig tree droops.
Pomegranate, palm, and apple—
all the trees of the field are dried up;
surely, joy withers away
among the people.

A Call to Repentance and Prayer

13 Put on sackcloth and lament, you priests;
wail, you ministers of the altar.
Come, pass the night in sackcloth,
you ministers of my God!
Grain offering and drink offering
are withheld from the house of your God.

14 Sanctify a fast,
call a solemn assembly.
Gather the elders
and all the inhabitants of the land
to the house of the LORD your God,
and cry out to the LORD.

15 Alas for the day!
For the day of the LORD is near,
and as destruction from the Almighty[a] it comes.
16 Is not the food cut off
before our eyes,
joy and gladness
from the house of our God?

17 The seed shrivels under the clods,[b]
the storehouses are desolate;
the granaries are ruined
because the grain has failed.
18 How the animals groan!
The herds of cattle wander about
because there is no pasture for them;
even the flocks of sheep are dazed.[c]

19 To you, O LORD, I cry.
For fire has devoured
the pastures of the wilderness,
and flames have burned
all the trees of the field.
20 Even the wild animals cry to you
because the watercourses are dried up,
and fire has devoured
the pastures of the wilderness.

The Day of the LORD Is Near

2 Blow the trumpet in Zion;
sound the alarm on my holy mountain!
Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,
for the day of the LORD is coming, it is near—

a Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*
b Meaning of Heb uncertain *c* Compare Gk Syr Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain

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sumably later book and Amos. **1.8** *Lament* was often done in the ancient Near East by women (see Jer 9.17–22). In Ezek 8.14 women weep for Tammuz, a Babylonian god. In Jer 31.15 Rachel, no doubt an eponym for lamenting women, laments for the captured Israelites. **1.9** The invasion of the army (a *nation*, v. 6), both symbolic and actual, has caused the temple services to cease.

1.13–20 A ritual lament. **1.13–14** The lament is led by *priests* and includes *the elders*, indeed *all the inhabitants*, and calls for *fasting, blowing the trumpet* (2.1), and *crying out* to the Lord. Archaeology has recovered many prayers of lamentation from Babylonia from about this time. **1.15** *The day of the LORD* is a major theme in Joel and an often used prophetic motif (see Introduction), very close to themes in Am 5.18 and Zeph 1.14–16, the latter with many of the images of Joel.

2.1–11 Further description of the day and

2 a day of darkness and gloom,
a day of clouds and thick darkness!
Like blackness spread upon the mountains
a great and powerful army comes;
their like has never been from of old,
nor will be again after them
in ages to come.

3 Fire devours in front of them,
and behind them a flame burns.
Before them the land is like the garden of Eden,
but after them a desolate wilderness,
and nothing escapes them.

4 They have the appearance of horses,
and like war-horses they charge.
5 As with the rumbling of chariots,
they leap on the tops of the mountains,
like the crackling of a flame of fire
devouring the stubble,
like a powerful army
drawn up for battle.

6 Before them peoples are in anguish,
all faces grow pale.[d]
7 Like warriors they charge,
like soldiers they scale the wall.
Each keeps to its own course,
they do not swerve from[e] their paths.
8 They do not jostle one another,
each keeps to its own track;
they burst through the weapons
and are not halted.
9 They leap upon the city,
they run upon the walls;
they climb up into the houses,
they enter through the windows
like a thief.

10 The earth quakes before them,
the heavens tremble.
The sun and the moon are darkened,
and the stars withdraw their shining.
11 The LORD utters his voice
at the head of his army;
how vast is his host!
Numberless are those who obey his command.
Truly the day of the LORD is great;
terrible indeed—who can endure it?

A Renewed Call to Repentance

12 Yet even now, says the LORD,
return to me with all your heart,
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;
13 rend your hearts and not your clothing.
Return to the LORD, your God,
for he is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love,
and relents from punishing.
14 Who knows whether he will not turn and relent,
and leave a blessing behind him,
a grain offering and a drink offering
for the LORD, your God?

15 Blow the trumpet in Zion;
sanctify a fast;

d Meaning of Heb uncertain *e* Gk Syr Vg: Heb *they do not take a pledge along*

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the locust army. **2.2** *Darkness and gloom,* the thrust also of the "day" passage in Am 5.18. **2.5** *Rumbling . . . crackling.* Those who have experienced locust plagues remark on the accompanying noise, which is like a roar or an onrushing fire. **2.8–9** No way has ever been discovered of stopping the ongoing rush of a locust horde. **2.10–11** The effect of the locusts, now with the Lord at their head, is that of the apocalyptic "day of the LORD" described in more detail in 2.30.

2.12–17 An abrupt change, a more gentle tone. **2.12** *Fasting . . . weeping,* a further description of the lamentation theme of 1.13–14. **2.13** *Gracious . . . relents from punishing.* This concatenation of epithets is as deeply religious as anything in one place in all of prophetic literature; each of

call a solemn assembly;
16 gather the people.
Sanctify the congregation;
assemble the aged;
gather the children,
even infants at the breast.
Let the bridegroom leave his room,
and the bride her canopy.

17 Between the vestibule and the altar
let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep.
Let them say, "Spare your people, O LORD,
and do not make your heritage a mockery,
a byword among the nations.
Why should it be said among the peoples,
'Where is their God?' "

God's Response and Promise

18 Then the LORD became jealous for his land,
and had pity on his people.
19 In response to his people the LORD said:
I am sending you
grain, wine, and oil,
and you will be satisfied;
and I will no more make you
a mockery among the nations.

20 I will remove the northern army far from you,
and drive it into a parched and desolate land,
its front into the eastern sea,
and its rear into the western sea;
its stench and foul smell will rise up.
Surely he has done great things!

21 Do not fear, O soil;
be glad and rejoice,
for the LORD has done great things!
22 Do not fear, you animals of the field,
for the pastures of the wilderness are green;
the tree bears its fruit,
the fig tree and vine give their full yield.

23 O children of Zion, be glad
and rejoice in the LORD your God;
for he has given the early rain[f] for your vindication,
he has poured down for you abundant rain,
the early and the later rain, as before.
24 The threshing floors shall be full of grain,
the vats shall overflow with wine and oil.

25 I will repay you for the years
that the swarming locust has eaten,
the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter,
my great army, which I sent against you.

26 You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied,
and praise the name of the LORD your God,
who has dealt wondrously with you.

f Meaning of Heb uncertain

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these elements is found elsewhere (see Ex 34.6; Ps 103.8–9). **2.17** *The vestibule and the altar.* The prophet seems to know something about the temple and its practices. The vestibule was at the entrance and the altar was at the extreme front, so this is another way of saying the whole temple. We can picture a procession here or the description of the places where prayer was offered.

2.18–27 A response to the people's lamentation from a kindly God. The crops will grow again, the army (v. 20) will go away; indeed there will be a reversal in that abundance will be theirs and they will praise God's name (v. 26). Then they will know that God is in their midst (v. 27), as Isa 7.14 pictures in the name Immanuel, "with us is God." **2.20** *Northern army.* Other than from Egypt almost all of Israel's invasions came from the north. The *eastern sea* is the Persian (Arabian) Gulf, and the *western sea* is the Mediterranean. *Stench.* Victims of present-day locust swarms describe the fetid odor from the millions of dead insects remaining when the plague is over. **2.25** The reversal of fortune refers to the *locusts,* now an *army,* in the same terms as in 1.4.

And my people shall never again
be put to shame.
27 You shall know that I am in the
midst of Israel,
and that I, the LORD, am your
God and there is no other.
And my people shall never again
be put to shame.

God's Spirit Poured Out

28[g] Then afterward
I will pour out my spirit on
all flesh;
your sons and your daughters
shall prophesy,
your old men shall dream
dreams,
and your young men shall
see visions.
29 Even on the male and female
slaves,
in those days, I will pour out
my spirit.

30 I will show portents in the heavens
and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. 31 The sun shall be
turned to darkness, and the moon to
blood, before the great and terrible day of
the LORD comes. 32 Then everyone who
calls on the name of the LORD shall be
saved; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the
LORD has said, and among the survivors
shall be those whom the LORD calls.

Judgment on the Nations

3[h] For then, in those days and at that
time, when I restore the fortunes of
Judah and Jerusalem, 2 I will gather all
the nations and bring them down to the
valley of Jehoshaphat, and I will enter
into judgment with them there, on account of my people and my heritage Israel, because they have scattered them
among the nations. They have divided my
land, 3 and cast lots for my people, and
traded boys for prostitutes, and sold girls
for wine, and drunk it down.
4 What are you to me, O Tyre and Sidon, and all the regions of Philistia? Are
you paying me back for something? If you
are paying me back, I will turn your deeds
back upon your own heads swiftly and
speedily. 5 For you have taken my silver
and my gold, and have carried my rich
treasures into your temples.[i] 6 You have
sold the people of Judah and Jerusalem to
the Greeks, removing them far from their
own border. 7 But now I will rouse them
to leave the places to which you have sold
them, and I will turn your deeds back
upon your own heads. 8 I will sell your
sons and your daughters into the hand of
the people of Judah, and they will sell
them to the Sabeans, to a nation far away;
for the LORD has spoken.

g Ch 3.1 in Heb *h* Ch 4.1 in Heb
i Or *palaces*

2.27 This assurance of God's presence has the tone of an ending, delineating one of the several divisions in the book. *Never again.* The invasions will not occur over and over again, as in the past, but will come to an end. The theme is repeated in 3.17.

2.28–32 All will be prophets of the "day of the LORD." **2.28–29** The *spirit poured out* tells of a prophetic fervor, a kind of an ecstasy, as in Num 11.25. But unlike anything seen before, the spirit will fall on all human beings, irrespective of their social status or class. This will occur *afterward . . . in those days*, a "day of the LORD" motif, sometime in the future. **2.30–31** Cf. 2.10; 3.15. With these apocalyptic elements, the text slips into a different "language." This genre appears rarely in the OT (Ezek 32.7; Am 8.9; Isa 13.10), but often in intertestamental literature, the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, and the NT (Revelation). **2.32** *Everyone who calls* must mean Israelites by context.

3.1–8 Now the *nations* who were cruel toward Israel will be judged (see Zeph 2). **3.2** The location of the *valley of Jehoshaphat* is unknown, although there could have been a valley named for this early Israelite king. It was undoubtedly chosen in this prophecy for its symbolic meaning: "The Lord judges." **3.4–6** This criticizes *Tyre and Sidon* and *Philistia* for plundering and *selling the people of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks*, a historical note we do not find elsewhere. The Greeks here are the Ionian Greeks, who inhabited the western coast of Asia Minor, as the Hebrew term for them, *Yavan*, indicates. **3.8** *Sabeans*, an important trading and caravan people whose homeland was on the western side of the tip of the Arabian Peninsula, part of today's Yemen.

Judgment in the Valley of Jehoshaphat

9 Proclaim this among the nations:
Prepare war,[j]
stir up the warriors.
Let all the soldiers draw near,
let them come up.
10 Beat your plowshares into swords,
and your pruning hooks into spears;
let the weakling say, "I am a warrior."

11 Come quickly,[k]
all you nations all around,
gather yourselves there.
Bring down your warriors, O LORD.
12 Let the nations rouse themselves,
and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat;
for there I will sit to judge
all the neighboring nations.

13 Put in the sickle,
for the harvest is ripe.
Go in, tread,
for the wine press is full.
The vats overflow,
for their wickedness is great.

14 Multitudes, multitudes,
in the valley of decision!
For the day of the LORD is near
in the valley of decision.
15 The sun and the moon are darkened,
and the stars withdraw their shining.

16 The LORD roars from Zion,
and utters his voice from Jerusalem,
and the heavens and the earth shake.
But the LORD is a refuge for his people,
a stronghold for the people of Israel.

17 So you shall know that I, the LORD your God,
dwell in Zion, my holy mountain.
And Jerusalem shall be holy,
and strangers shall never again pass through it.

The Glorious Future of Judah

18 In that day
the mountains shall drip sweet wine,
the hills shall flow with milk,
and all the stream beds of Judah
shall flow with water;
a fountain shall come forth from the house of the LORD
and water the Wadi Shittim.

19 Egypt shall become a desolation
and Edom a desolate wilderness,
because of the violence done to the people of Judah,

j Heb *sanctify war* *k* Meaning of Heb uncertain

3.9–17 Further symbolism of judgment on Israel's neighbors. **3.10a** An ironic reversal of Mic 4.3 and Isa 2.4, peaceful there, warlike here. **3.12** The Lord will judge them in the *valley* called "The Lord judges" (see 3.2). **3.14** *Valley of decision,* again an unknown place, but apparently an echo of the valley of Jehoshaphat of 3.2, 12. **3.15** *Sun and moon are darkened.* Like 2.10 and 2.31, one of the several cases in which the book quotes itself. **3.16** An almost exact replica of half of the opening prophetic verse of Am 1.2. *Shake* is the same Hebrew word as that of Am 1.1. One of these prophets quotes the other, a rare event in prophetic literature, and we are fairly sure it is Joel who quotes Amos.

3.18–21 An ideal, utopian ending. The passage starts with an "in that day" verse, matching the themes of the ends of other prophetic books, as in Am 9.11–15; Hos 14.4–9; Mic 7.11–20; Zeph 3.14–20; Isa 66.10–14. **3.18** *Wine . . . milk . . . water.* The people's salvation will be symbolized by material forms, as drinking wine in Am 9.14, flourishing gardens in Hos 14.7, and fortunes restored in Zeph 3.20. *Fountain . . . from the house of the LORD,* as the water from the temple in Ezek 47.1–12. *Wadi Shittim,* a place in Moab where the people sinned in Num 25.1; that sin will be overcome by this water. **3.19** Under

in whose land they have shed
innocent blood.
20 But Judah shall be inhabited
forever,
and Jerusalem to all
generations.
21 I will avenge their blood, and I
will not clear the guilty,[1]
for the LORD dwells in Zion.

[1] Gk Syr: Heb *I will hold innocent their blood that I have not held innocent*

Pharaoh Neco *Egypt* controlled and exploited Israel (see 2 Kings 23.31–35). The tradition that *Edom* plundered Jerusalem when it was being overrun by others appears also in Ezek 25.12–14; Obadiah; Am 1.11; Mal 1.4; and many other places in the OT.

AMOS

OF THE FOUR PROPHETIC BOOKS that originated with eighth-century B.C.E. figures—Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah—Amos is the earliest one. But Amos was by no means the earliest prophet in ancient Israel. The historical books of the OT allude to the existence of other prophets since the eleventh century B.C.E. (see 1 Sam 9.9–13; 2 Sam 12).

Historical Circumstances

The superscription (1.1) locates Amos in the reigns of two kings, Uzziah of Judah (783–742 B.C.E.) and Jeroboam II of Israel (786–746 B.C.E.). Allusions elsewhere in the book, especially in 7.9–10, confirm this report and also verify that the prophet was a native of the southern kingdom of Judah who came to the northern kingdom of Israel to proclaim the word of God. While the earthquake by which Amos is dated (1.1) cannot be identified, the report that the prophet spoke "two years before the earthquake" suggests that Amos was active for a very short time.

More precisely, the circumstances assumed by the prophet's message place Amos in the last decade or so of the reign of Jeroboam II, about 760 B.C.E. The reigns of Jeroboam II and Uzziah were long and relatively peaceful. There had been no major threats to the small states from major Near Eastern powers such as Egypt or Assyria, and peace seems to have been accompanied by prosperity, at least for a few and—according to Amos—at the expense of many. There seems to have been a breakdown in the old tribal and family systems of land ownership and the emergence of a wealthy class at the top of the society.

But Israel and Judah would not be left on their own much longer. At about the time the long reigns of Uzziah and Jeroboam ended, a new and aggressive king came to the throne in Assyria. He was Tiglath-pileser III (745–727 B.C.E.), whose goal was to incorporate the little states of Syria and Palestine into his empire. He would not live to conquer Israel, but his successors would invade the Northern Kingdom, destroy its cities, and carry the people into exile. Samaria, the capital city, fell to the Assyrian king Sargon II in 722/21 B.C.E., and the

history of Israel came to an end. The prophecies of Amos thus were fulfilled some forty years after he uttered them.

Only a few details are preserved concerning the life of Amos. His home of Tekoa is in the Judean hills south of Bethlehem, and by trade he was "a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore trees" (7.14) who was called to prophecy in Israel. Since Amos addressed his words particularly to those who lived in Samaria and Bethel, it is reasonable to conclude that he was active in those two northern cities.

The Book of Amos

The book of Amos is a collection of the words of and traditions concerning the prophet. The material sometimes is organized carefully but at other points the logic of the collection is difficult to discern. Most of the book consists of speeches attributed to the prophet. Most of his speeches are prophetic announcements; i.e., he speaks in the name of the Lord concerning the immediate future. Some of his speeches were reports of his threatening visions. Although it is possible that Amos himself later dictated his speeches to someone or even wrote them down himself, it is more likely that the addresses were collected and recorded by others. In addition to speeches there are reports about the prophet's activities (1.1; 7.10–17) and three fragments of hymns (4.13; 5.8–9; 9.5–6).

Not everything in the book comes from the prophet or even from his time. The first verse looks back on the prophet's activity and talks about him. Likewise the story of the prophet's clash with Amaziah the priest of Bethel (7.10–17) speaks of Amos from the perspective of a third party. A few other passages reflect a later perspective and must have been added as the book was saved and circulated in Judah, long after the state of Israel fell. These include the prophecy against Judah (2.4–5), the hymnic passages, the concluding prophecies of hope (9.8c–15), and a few others.

The Message of the Prophet and of the Book

The message of Amos is direct and uncompromising. Over and over he announces to the people of Israel that, because of their social injustice and religious arrogance, the Lord will punish them by means of a total military disaster. His addresses typically make a logical connection between Israel's unjust actions—past and present—and the Lord's coming judgment. Rarely does the prophet call for the people to change their behavior.

The words of Amos are so startling and dramatic that they might appear to be unprecedented, but the message of the prophet did not arise out of thin air. Rather, Amos over and over again appeals to traditions that he and his hearers held in common. Among these is the belief that the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt and granted the people the land of Canaan (2.9–10; 3.1–2; 9.7–8). The prophet also takes it for granted that the people of Israel had always known that

the Lord expected of them justice and righteousness. Consequently, he is not introducing any new moral or legal expectations, but simply holding the people accountable for their transgressions. In this respect Amos is not radical, but conservative, calling Israel back to what had been revealed from the beginning of its history.

Although Amos relies upon earlier beliefs and traditions, he does introduce some new perspectives. First, he seems to have been the first to stress that Israel's election itself may be a reason for judgment (3.12–2) and that Israel is not the only people the Lord has chosen (9.7–8). Second, Amos is the first one we know of who announced total and complete judgment upon Israel.

Just as Amos depended upon tradition, so his words became part of tradition, being collected and handed down in Judah after Israel fell to Assyria. In the process of centuries, additions were made to the scroll, generally with a view toward applying the old prophetic message to new circumstances. For example, although Amos did not speak against Judah, an announcement against Judah (2.4–5) was subsequently added, to apply the now validated words of judgment to the Southern Kingdom. *Gene M. Tucker*

1 The words of Amos, who was among
the shepherds of Tekoa, which he
saw concerning Israel in the days of King
Uzziah of Judah and in the days of
King Jeroboam son of Joash of Israel,
two years[a] before the earthquake. 2 And
he said:

The LORD roars from Zion,
and utters his voice from
Jerusalem;
the pastures of the shepherds
wither,
and the top of Carmel dries up.

Oracles Against the Nations and Israel

3 Thus says the LORD:
For three transgressions of
Damascus,
and for four, I will not revoke
the punishment;[b]
because they have threshed
Gilead
with threshing sledges of iron.
4 So I will send a fire on the house
of Hazael,

a Or *during two years* *b* Heb *cause it to return*

1.1–2 These verses serve as an introduction to the whole book. **1.1** This verse is the superscription to the book, providing its title, *The words of Amos*, and information concerning the background of the prophet, the object of his words, and the date of his activity. In addition to locating Amos in the reigns of *Uzziah* (783–743 B.C.E.) and *Jeroboam* (786–746 B.C.E.), the editor provides a specific date, *two years before the earthquake*. **1.2** The motto summarizes the message of the book: the word of the Lord through the Judean prophet roars northward to bring destruction.

1.3–2.16 Seven similar prophecies against foreign nations are followed by a prophecy against Israel. The foreigners are not judged because they are Israel's enemies but because of violations against other neighbors. The sequence of condemning foreigners, then Judah, and finally Israel would have been rhetorically powerful before an Israelite audience, but there is no reason to doubt the seriousness of those judgments as well as that against Israel. **1.3** The phrase *for three transgressions of X and for four*, a refrain in the series of announcements (e.g., 1.6; 1.9; 1.11), probably means an indefinite but finally decisive number of violations. The meaning of the Hebrew phrase translated *I will not revoke the punishment*, lit. "I will not cause it to return," is uncertain, but it likely refers to the Lord's promise not to stop the effects of the transgressions. **1.4** The Aramean king *Hazael* established a dy-

and it shall devour the
strongholds of Ben-hadad.
5 I will break the gate bars of
Damascus,
and cut off the inhabitants
from the Valley of Aven,
and the one who holds the
scepter from Beth-eden;
and the people of Aram shall
go into exile to Kir,
says the LORD.

6 Thus says the LORD:
For three transgressions of Gaza,
and for four, I will not revoke
the punishment;[c]
because they carried into exile
entire communities,
to hand them over to Edom.
7 So I will send a fire on the wall
of Gaza,
fire that shall devour its
strongholds.
8 I will cut off the inhabitants from
Ashdod,
and the one who holds the
scepter from Ashkelon;
I will turn my hand against
Ekron,
and the remnant of the
Philistines shall perish,
says the Lord GOD.

9 Thus says the LORD:
For three transgressions of Tyre,
and for four, I will not revoke
the punishment;[c]
because they delivered entire
communities over to Edom,
and did not remember the
covenant of kinship.
10 So I will send a fire on the wall
of Tyre,
fire that shall devour its
strongholds.

11 Thus says the LORD:
For three transgressions of Edom,
and for four, I will not revoke
the punishment;[c]
because he pursued his brother
with the sword
and cast off all pity;
he maintained his anger
perpetually,[d]
and kept his wrath[e] forever.
12 So I will send a fire on Teman,
and it shall devour the
strongholds of Bozrah.

13 Thus says the LORD:
For three transgressions of the
Ammonites,
and for four, I will not revoke
the punishment;[c]
because they have ripped open
pregnant women in Gilead
in order to enlarge their
territory.
14 So I will kindle a fire against the
wall of Rabbah,
fire that shall devour its
strongholds,
with shouting on the day of
battle,
with a storm on the day of the
whirlwind;
15 then their king shall go into exile,
he and his officials together,
says the LORD.

2 Thus says the LORD:
For three transgressions of Moab,
and for four, I will not revoke
the punishment;[c]
because he burned to lime
the bones of the king of Edom.
2 So I will send a fire on Moab,
and it shall devour the
strongholds of Kerioth,
and Moab shall die amid uproar,
amid shouting and the sound
of the trumpet;
3 I will cut off the ruler from its
midst,
and will kill all its officials
with him,
says the LORD.

[c] Heb *cause it to return* [d] Syr Vg: Heb *and his anger tore perpetually* [e] Gk Syr Vg: Heb *and his wrath kept*

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nasty by assassinating a certain *Ben-hadad* (2 Kings 8.15). Likewise one of his descendants was named Ben-hadad (2 Kings 13.3). **1.6** *Gaza* was one of the Philistine city-states. Three others are listed in v. 8. **1.9** Since *covenant of kinship*, lit. "covenant of brothers," does not occur elsewhere in the OT, its meaning is uncertain. It probably refers to a political treaty that Tyre violated. **2.4** The in-

4 Thus says the LORD:
For three transgressions of
Judah,
and for four, I will not revoke
the punishment;[f]
because they have rejected the
law of the LORD,
and have not kept his statutes,
but they have been led astray by
the same lies
after which their ancestors
walked.
5 So I will send a fire on Judah,
and it shall devour the
strongholds of Jerusalem.

6 Thus says the LORD:
For three transgressions of Israel,
and for four, I will not revoke
the punishment;[f]
because they sell the righteous
for silver,
and the needy for a pair of
sandals—
7 they who trample the head of the
poor into the dust of
the earth,
and push the afflicted out of
the way;
father and son go in to the
same girl,
so that my holy name is
profaned;
8 they lay themselves down beside
every altar
on garments taken in pledge;
and in the house of their God
they drink
wine bought with fines they
imposed.

9 Yet I destroyed the Amorite
before them,
whose height was like the
height of cedars,
and who was as strong as oaks;
I destroyed his fruit above,
and his roots beneath.
10 Also I brought you up out of the
land of Egypt,
and led you forty years in
the wilderness,
to possess the land of the
Amorite.
11 And I raised up some of your
children to be prophets
and some of your youths to be
nazirites.[g]
Is it not indeed so, O people
of Israel?
says the LORD.

12 But you made the nazirites[g]
drink wine,
and commanded the prophets,
saying, "You shall not
prophesy."

13 So, I will press you down in
your place,
just as a cart presses down
when it is full of sheaves.[h]
14 Flight shall perish from the swift,
and the strong shall not retain
their strength,
nor shall the mighty save
their lives;
15 those who handle the bow shall
not stand,

f Heb *cause it to return* *g* That is, *those separated* or *those consecrated* *h* Meaning of Heb uncertain

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dictment of *Judah* is quite different from the preceding ones, all of which had listed violations of standards of international conduct as reasons for Yahweh's judgment. The language of the accusation, *law of the LORD . . . his statutes . . . after which their ancestors walked*, is that of Deuteronomy, indicating that the judgment against Judah was added after the time of Amos and probably even after Jerusalem had fallen to the Babylonians. **2.6–8** Israel is accused of injustice against the poor and of several forms of religious corruption. **2.6** *Sell the righteous*, a reference to enslavement for nonpayment of debts. **2.7** *Push the afflicted out of the way*, probably the denial of legal due process in the courts. *Father and son go in to the same girl*. The accusation may refer to the violation of laws concerning incest, although there is no law that exactly parallels this situation (but see Lev 18.15; 20.12), or the offense may be the exploitation of the girl. **2.9–11** As further foundation for the announcement of judgment Yahweh reminds Israel of his saving acts on their behalf. **2.9** *Amorite*. See Num 21.21–31. **2.11** The *nazirites*, "separated or consecrated ones," took vows that included abstinence from wine and strong drink (see v. 12; Num 6.1–21). The only person specifically named as a Nazirite was Samson (see Judg 13.4–7), whose consecration included the vow that his hair would never be cut. **2.13–16** The Lord announces judgment against Israel in the form of a military catastrophe in which the army is routed and even the most

and those who are swift of foot
shall not save themselves,
nor shall those who ride horses
save their lives;
16 and those who are stout of heart
among the mighty
shall flee away naked in
that day,
says the LORD.

Oracles Against Israel

3 Hear this word that the LORD has spoken against you, O people of Israel, against the whole family that I brought up out of the land of Egypt:
2 You only have I known
of all the families of the earth;
therefore I will punish you
for all your iniquities.

3 Do two walk together
unless they have made an
appointment?
4 Does a lion roar in the forest,
when it has no prey?
Does a young lion cry out from
its den,
if it has caught nothing?
5 Does a bird fall into a snare on
the earth,
when there is no trap for it?
Does a snare spring up from
the ground,
when it has taken nothing?
6 Is a trumpet blown in a city,
and the people are not afraid?
Does disaster befall a city,
unless the LORD has done it?
7 Surely the Lord GOD does
nothing,
without revealing his secret
to his servants the prophets.
8 The lion has roared;
who will not fear?
The Lord GOD has spoken;
who can but prophesy?

9 Proclaim to the strongholds
in Ashdod,
and to the strongholds in the
land of Egypt,
and say, "Assemble yourselves on
Mount[i] Samaria,
and see what great tumults are
within it,
and what oppressions are in
its midst."
10 They do not know how to do
right, says the LORD,
those who store up violence
and robbery in their
strongholds.
11 Therefore thus says the
Lord GOD:
An adversary shall surround
the land,
and strip you of your defense;
and your strongholds shall be
plundered.

12 Thus says the LORD: As the shepherd rescues from the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear, so shall the people of Israel who live in Samaria be rescued, with the corner of a couch and part[j] of a bed.

13 Hear, and testify against the
house of Jacob,

i Gk Syr: Heb *the mountains of* *j* Meaning of Heb uncertain

courageous *flee away naked.* **2.16** *That day,* the "day of the LORD" (see 5.18–20).

3.1–6.14 Oracles against Israel. **3.1–2** Ironically, because the people of Israel were the Lord's elect, saved from Egypt, they will be held particularly accountable for their actions. **3.2** *Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities,* lit. "therefore I will visit your sins upon you." **3.3–8** A series of sayings in the form of rhetorical questions (vv. 3–6) establishes the principle that every effect has its cause, arguing in support of the conclusion that the Lord GOD (Lord Yahweh) is the one who causes someone to *prophesy* (v. 8; see 7.10–17). **3.7** A later addition from the point of view of Deuteronomy, asserting far more than the original prophetic saying, namely, that Yahweh does not act at all without confiding in the prophets. **3.9–15** Sayings concerning Samaria, the capital of Israel. **3.9** The prophetic voice calls for the Philistines (*Ashdod*) and the Egyptians to serve as witnesses to Samaria's corruption. **3.11** Yahweh addresses Samaria directly, announcing a military defeat. **3.12** A simile of disaster. When the day of trouble comes, all that will be left of Israel will be broken fragments (see 5.3). **3.13–15** Judgment against Israel will include destruction of two types of buildings, the sanctuaries (*altars of Bethel*) and the houses of those wealthy enough to have both a summer place and a winter place.

says the Lord GOD, the God
of hosts:
14 On the day I punish Israel for its
transgressions,
I will punish the altars of
Bethel,
and the horns of the altar shall
be cut off
and fall to the ground.
15 I will tear down the winter house
as well as the summer
house;
and the houses of ivory shall
perish,
and the great houses[k] shall come
to an end,
says the LORD.

4 Hear this word, you cows
of Bashan
who are on Mount Samaria,
who oppress the poor, who crush
the needy,
who say to their husbands,
"Bring something to
drink!"
2 The Lord GOD has sworn by
his holiness:
The time is surely coming
upon you,
when they shall take you away
with hooks,
even the last of you with
fishhooks.
3 Through breaches in the wall you
shall leave,
each one straight ahead;
and you shall be flung out into
Harmon,[l]
says the LORD.
4 Come to Bethel—and transgress;
to Gilgal—and multiply
transgression;
bring your sacrifices every
morning,
your tithes every three days;
5 bring a thank offering of
leavened bread,
and proclaim freewill offerings,
publish them;
for so you love to do, O people
of Israel!
says the Lord GOD.

6 I gave you cleanness of teeth in
all your cities,
and lack of bread in all your
places,
yet you did not return to me,
says the LORD.

7 And I also withheld the rain
from you
when there were still three
months to the harvest;
I would send rain on one city,
and send no rain on another
city;
one field would be rained upon,
and the field on which it did
not rain withered;
8 so two or three towns wandered
to one town
to drink water, and were not
satisfied;
yet you did not return to me,
says the LORD.

9 I struck you with blight and
mildew;
I laid waste[m] your gardens and
your vineyards;

k Or *many houses* *l* Meaning of Heb uncertain
m Cn: Heb *the multitude of*

4.1–3 A prophecy of punishment against the wealthy women of Samaria, ridiculed as *cows of Bashan*. Bashan was a region in northern Transjordan known for its sleek cattle (cf. Deut 32.14; Ps 22.12). Typically, the prophecy includes a summons to attention (v. 1a), an indictment (v. 1b), and an announcement of punishment (vv. 2–3). **4.1** The women are guilty of social injustice and arrogance, epitomized by what they say to their husbands. **4.4–5** Through ironic calls to worship or parodies of pilgrim songs to the traditional sanctuaries at *Bethel* and *Gilgal* (Gen 28.10–22; Josh 5.2–9; Am 7.10–17), Amos asserts that worship and *transgression* have become synonymous (see 5.21–24). **4.6–13** Because a series of disasters sent by the Lord has failed to persuade Israel to *return* to its God, the people will now *meet* (v. 12) that God directly. The meaning of the refrain that links the series, *yet you did not return to me*, is not self-evident. In some instances the expression refers to obedience to God generally (Deut 4.30; 30.2), but elsewhere "to return" or "to turn" to the Lord refers specifically to acts of confession and repentance (Isa 19.22; Hos 14.2; Joel 2.12). **4.6** *Cleanness of teeth . . . and lack of bread*, hunger, resulting from famine. **4.7–8** Drought did not lead Israel to its God. **4.9** Crops were destroyed by disease and in-

the locust devoured your fig
trees and your olive trees;
yet you did not return to me,
says the LORD.

10 I sent among you a pestilence
after the manner of
Egypt;
I killed your young men with
the sword;
I carried away your horses;[n]
and I made the stench of your
camp go up into your
nostrils;
yet you did not return to me,
says the LORD.

11 I overthrew some of you,
as when God overthrew Sodom
and Gomorrah,
and you were like a brand
snatched from the fire;
yet you did not return to me,
says the LORD.

12 Therefore thus I will do to you,
O Israel;
because I will do this to you,
prepare to meet your God,
O Israel!

13 For lo, the one who forms the
mountains, creates the
wind,
reveals his thoughts to
mortals,
makes the morning darkness,
and treads on the heights of
the earth—
the LORD, the God of hosts, is
his name!

5 Hear this word that I take up over
you in lamentation, O house of
Israel:
2 Fallen, no more to rise,
is maiden Israel;
forsaken on her land,
with no one to raise her up.

3 For thus says the Lord GOD:
The city that marched out
a thousand
shall have a hundred left,
and that which marched out
a hundred
shall have ten left.[o]

4 For thus says the LORD to the
house of Israel:
Seek me and live;
5 but do not seek Bethel,
and do not enter into Gilgal
or cross over to Beer-sheba;
for Gilgal shall surely go into
exile,
and Bethel shall come to
nothing.

6 Seek the LORD and live,
or he will break out against the
house of Joseph like fire,
and it will devour Bethel, with
no one to quench it.
7 Ah, you that turn justice to
wormwood,
and bring righteousness to
the ground!

8 The one who made the Pleiades
and Orion,

n Heb *with the captivity of your horses* *o* Heb adds *to the house of Israel*

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sects. **4.10** *A pestilence after the manner of Egypt.* The prophet alludes to the tradition of the plagues against Egypt (Ex 5–11, esp. 9.3–7, 15). The remainder of the verse refers to a military disaster. **4.11** By the time of Amos, *Sodom and Gommorah* were synonymous with total and divinely sent destruction (Gen 19.12–29; Isa 1.9; Jer 49.18). **4.12** Although the verse is cryptic, the *therefore* that links it to the recital of Israel's failure to return indicates that *prepare to meet your God* is an announcement of judgment. The encounter with God will not be pleasant. **4.13** Words from a hymn that probably once functioned in worship conclude the announcement against Israel (see also 5.8–9; 9.5–6).

5.1–3 The prophet calls for the people (*house of Israel*) to hear a *lamentation*, that is, a dirge or funeral song. **5.2** Since it is *maiden Israel* that has died, the song announces the death of the nation. **5.3** The military forces will be decimated. **5.4–7** Exhortations to seek the Lord as the path to life. See also 5.14–15. **5.4** *Seek* is probably a technical term for inquiring of God or turning to God in a service of prayer. **5.5** Seeking the Lord is contrasted with making pilgrimages to the famous religious centers at *Bethel* (see 3.14; 4.4; 7.10–17), *Gilgal*, and *Beer-sheba* (see 8.14; Gen 21.14, 32–33; 26.23–25), which are destined for *exile* and destruction. **5.6** *House of Joseph*, the northern kingdom of Israel. **5.7** *Justice . . . righteousness.* See 5.24. **5.8–9** Like many of the psalms, this hymn extols the Lord as

and turns deep darkness into
the morning,
and darkens the day into night,
who calls for the waters of
the sea,
and pours them out on the
surface of the earth,
the LORD is his name,
9 who makes destruction flash out
against the strong,
so that destruction comes upon
the fortress.

10 They hate the one who reproves
in the gate,
and they abhor the one who
speaks the truth.
11 Therefore because you trample
on the poor
and take from them levies
of grain,
you have built houses of
hewn stone,
but you shall not live in them;
you have planted pleasant
vineyards,
but you shall not drink
their wine.
12 For I know how many are your
transgressions,
and how great are your sins—
you who afflict the righteous,
who take a bribe,
and push aside the needy in
the gate.
13 Therefore the prudent will keep
silent in such a time;
for it is an evil time.

14 Seek good and not evil,
that you may live;
and so the LORD, the God of
hosts, will be with you,
just as you have said.
15 Hate evil and love good,
and establish justice in the gate;
it may be that the LORD, the God
of hosts,
will be gracious to the remnant
of Joseph.

16 Therefore thus says the LORD,
the God of hosts, the Lord:
In all the squares there shall be
wailing;
and in all the streets they shall
say, "Alas! alas!"
They shall call the farmers to
mourning,
and those skilled in
lamentation, to wailing;
17 in all the vineyards there shall
be wailing,
for I will pass through the
midst of you,
says the LORD.

18 Alas for you who desire the day
of the LORD!
Why do you want the day of
the LORD?
It is darkness, not light;
19 as if someone fled from a lion,
and was met by a bear;
or went into the house and rested
a hand against the wall,
and was bitten by a snake.
20 Is not the day of the LORD
darkness, not light,
and gloom with no brightness
in it?

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the creator of the cosmos. **5.8** The Lord made the constellations (*Pleiades and Orion*), causes day and night, and brings the rain from the sea. **5.9** The one who controls natural forces also acts in history to destroy. **5.10–13** Accusations of injustice against the wealthy and powerful members of the community who take advantage of the poor (v. 11) and the needy (v. 12). **5.10** *They* are the ones addressed as *you* in v. 11, i.e., the prophet's audience. The *gate* is the location of the law court. **5.11** Ironically, the wealthy will lose the very things they have acquired unjustly. **5.12** *Push aside the needy in the gate,* use the legal process to take advantage of the poor. **5.13** The prophet refers enigmatically to the time of judgment (*evil time*). **5.14–15** Further exhortations to seek the Lord. See 5.4–7. **5.15** It is possible that it is not too late to change and avert the coming disaster. *Be gracious*; pardon. *Remnant of Joseph*, what is left of the Northern Kingdom, Israel. **5.16–20** Contrary to popular expectations, a day of death and destruction lies ahead. **5.16–17** As in 5.1–2, mourning songs announce the death of Israel. *Those skilled in lamentation* are professional mourners (Jer 9.17–19; Ezek 8.14; 2 Chr 35.25). **5.18–20** The *day of the LORD* will be a dark day of judgment. In this earliest prophetic reference to the expectation, Amos repudiates and reverses the false hopes of his hearers through the use of rhetorical questions and metaphorical language. For subsequent understandings of the "day of the LORD" see Ezek 30.1–4;

21 I hate, I despise your festivals,
and I take no delight in your
solemn assemblies.
22 Even though you offer me your
burnt offerings and grain
offerings,
I will not accept them;
and the offerings of well-being of
your fatted animals
I will not look upon.
23 Take away from me the noise of
your songs;
I will not listen to the melody
of your harps.
24 But let justice roll down like
waters,
and righteousness like an
ever-flowing stream.

25 Did you bring to me sacrifices and offerings the forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? 26 You shall take up Sakkuth your king, and Kaiwan your star-god, your images,[p] which you made for yourselves; 27 therefore I will take you into exile beyond Damascus, says the LORD, whose name is the God of hosts.

6 Alas for those who are at ease
in Zion,
and for those who feel secure
on Mount Samaria,
the notables of the first of the
nations,
to whom the house of Israel
resorts!
2 Cross over to Calneh, and see;
from there go to Hamath
the great;
then go down to Gath of the
Philistines.
Are you better[q] than these
kingdoms?
Or is your[r] territory greater
than their[s] territory,
3 O you that put far away the
evil day,
and bring near a reign of
violence?

4 Alas for those who lie on beds
of ivory,
and lounge on their couches,
and eat lambs from the flock,
and calves from the stall;
5 who sing idle songs to the sound
of the harp,
and like David improvise on
instruments of music;
6 who drink wine from bowls,
and anoint themselves with the
finest oils,
but are not grieved over the
ruin of Joseph!
7 Therefore they shall now be the
first to go into exile,
and the revelry of the loungers
shall pass away.

p Heb *your images, your star-god* q Or *Are they better* r Heb *their* s Heb *your*

Joel 2.1–2; Zeph 1.14–18. **5.21–27** The prophet has the Lord speaking in the strongest terms (*I hate, I despise*, v. 21) to reject all kinds of religious practices and to call instead for *justice* and *righteousness* (v. 24; see Isa 1.10–17; Mic 6.6–8). **5.21** *Festivals* and *solemn assemblies* include both regular and unscheduled gatherings for prayer, sacrifice, and celebration. **5.22** Three common types of sacrifice are rejected. **5.23** The Lord considers sacred music to be *noise* (see 8.10). **5.24** Amos frequently speaks of *justice* and *righteousness* in tandem (see also 5.7; 6.12). *Justice* is the establishment of the right, and of the person in the right, through fair legal procedures (5.15; Deut 25.1), in accordance with the will of the Lord. *Righteousness* is that quality of life in relationship with others in the community that gives rise to justice. **5.25** Contrary to the pentateuchal account of Israel's history (Ex 19–Num 10), Amos asserts that sacrifices and offerings were not given during the wandering in the wilderness. **5.26** *Sakkuth* and *Kaiwan* were Mesopotamian deities. **5.27** *Exile beyond Damascus*, i.e., to Assyria.

6.1–7 Indictments of a self-indulgent society conclude (v. 7) with an announcement of judgment. **6.1–3** The powerful and wealthy (*notables*) are accused of arrogant self-satisfaction. **6.1** Although the message of Amos is to the Northern Kingdom (Israel) and its capital (*Samaria*) in particular, here he includes the leaders of Jerusalem (*Zion*) as well. **6.2** *Calneh* and *Hamath* were Syrian cities to the north of Israel, perhaps taken by Assyria in 738 B.C.E.; *Gath* was one of the five Philistine cities to the west. **6.4–6** The upper class, including the political leadership, indulge themselves with rich food, drink, and entertainment but have no concern for the troubles of the nation (*ruin of Joseph*, v. 6). **6.4** *Alas* does not appear in the Hebrew text. **6.7** The leaders will lead the way into exile.

8 The Lord God has sworn by
himself
(says the Lord, the God of hosts):
I abhor the pride of Jacob
and hate his strongholds;
and I will deliver up the city
and all that is in it.

9 If ten people remain in one house,
they shall die. 10 And if a relative, one who
burns the dead,[t] shall take up the body
to bring it out of the house, and shall say
to someone in the innermost parts of the
house, "Is anyone else with you?" the an-
swer will come, "No." Then the relative[u]
shall say, "Hush! We must not mention
the name of the Lord."

11 See, the Lord commands,
and the great house shall be
shattered to bits,
and the little house to pieces.
12 Do horses run on rocks?
Does one plow the sea with
oxen?[v]
But you have turned justice
into poison
and the fruit of righteousness
into wormwood—
13 you who rejoice in Lo-debar,[w]
who say, "Have we not by our
own strength
taken Karnaim[x] for ourselves?"
14 Indeed, I am raising up against
you a nation,
O house of Israel, says the
Lord, the God of hosts,
and they shall oppress you from
Lebo-hamath
to the Wadi Arabah.

Visions of Judgment

7 This is what the Lord God showed
me: he was forming locusts at the
time the latter growth began to sprout (it
was the latter growth after the king's
mowings). 2 When they had finished eat-
ing the grass of the land, I said,
"O Lord God, forgive, I beg you!
How can Jacob stand?
He is so small!"
3 The Lord relented concerning
this;
"It shall not be," said the Lord.

4 This is what the Lord God showed
me: the Lord God was calling for a
shower of fire,[y] and it devoured the
great deep and was eating up the land.
5 Then I said,
"O Lord God, cease, I beg you!
How can Jacob stand?
He is so small!"
6 The Lord relented concerning
this;
"This also shall not be," said
the Lord God.

7 This is what he showed me: the Lord

t Or *who makes a burning for him* *u* Heb *he* *v* Or *Does one plow them with oxen* *w* Or *in a thing of nothingness* *x* Or *horns* *y* Or *for a judgment by fire*

6.8–14 Diverse materials have been combined to advance the common theme of the Lord's judgment on *the city* (v. 8), presumably Samaria. **6.8** The Lord solemnly swears (see 4.2; 8.7) to hand over (*deliver up*) the city and its inhabitants to its enemies. **6.9–10** A narrative sketches a mysterious and ominous little scene of survivors hiding among the ruins and the bodies of the slain. **6.12** The prophet employs proverbial sayings to show that Israel's sins are unnatural and ridiculous behavior. **6.13** Israel boasts that its military conquests were achieved through its own *strength*. The names of cities in the Transjordan conquered by Jeroboam II (2 Kings 14.25) are turned into puns, "not a thing" and "horns," the sarcastic use of a symbol of strength. **6.14** The Lord promises to bring an unnamed enemy to oppress the people from one end of the land to the other.

7.1–9.4 Five vision reports organize this section of the book. **7.1–9** Amos reports three visions of divine judgment against Israel. In the first two (vv. 1–3, 4–7) he intercedes on behalf of the people and the Lord relents, but in the third, as in the fourth and fifth (8.1–3; 9.1–4) he does not intercede and the sentence is not lifted. **7.1** *Showed me*, technical language in autobiographical style for the introduction of a vision report (7.4, 7; 8.1). *Locusts* were a familiar threat to crops and therefore to the lives of the people. **7.3** *Relented*, or "repented." Reports that God repented or reversed a decision are not uncommon in the Hebrew scriptures (see esp. Jon 3.9–10; 4.2; Joel 2.14, 18–19). **7.4** *Shower of fire*, better "judgment by fire." Since it devoured the *great deep*, the waters believed to surround the earth and heavens (see Gen 1.2), as well as the *land*, this was no ordinary flame but a cosmic fire. **7.7** The Hebrew word translated *plumb line* appears only in this context and therefore its

was standing beside a wall built with
a plumb line, with a plumb line in his
hand. 8 And the LORD said to me, "Amos,
what do you see?" And I said, "A plumb
line." Then the Lord said,
"See, I am setting a plumb line
in the midst of my people
Israel;
I will never again pass them by;
9 the high places of Isaac shall be
made desolate,
and the sanctuaries of Israel
shall be laid waste,
and I will rise against the house
of Jeroboam with the
sword."

Amaziah and Amos

10 Then Amaziah, the priest of
Bethel, sent to King Jeroboam of Israel,
saying, "Amos has conspired against you
in the very center of the house of Israel;
the land is not able to bear all his words.
11 For thus Amos has said,
'Jeroboam shall die by the sword,
and Israel must go into exile
away from his land.' "
12 And Amaziah said to Amos, "O seer,
go, flee away to the land of Judah, earn
your bread there, and prophesy there;
13 but never again prophesy at Bethel, for
it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a temple
of the kingdom."
14 Then Amos answered Amaziah, "I
am[z] no prophet, nor a prophet's son; but
I am[z] a herdsman, and a dresser of syca-
more trees, 15 and the LORD took me from
following the flock, and the LORD said to
me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.'
16 "Now therefore hear the word of
the LORD.
You say, 'Do not prophesy against
Israel,
and do not preach against the
house of Isaac.'
17 Therefore thus says the LORD:
'Your wife shall become a
prostitute in the city,
and your sons and your
daughters shall fall by
the sword,
and your land shall be parceled
out by line;
you yourself shall die in an
unclean land,
and Israel shall surely go into
exile away from its land.' "

8 This is what the Lord GOD showed
me—a basket of summer fruit.[a]
2 He said, "Amos, what do you see?" And
I said, "A basket of summer fruit."[a] Then
the LORD said to me,
"The end[b] has come upon my
people Israel;
I will never again pass them by.
3 The songs of the temple[c] shall
become wailings in
that day,"
says the Lord GOD;
"the dead bodies shall be many,
cast out in every place. Be
silent!"

4 Hear this, you that trample on
the needy,

z Or *was* a Heb *qayits* b Heb *qets*
c Or *palace*

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meaning is uncertain. **7.9** The *high places* were the locations of sanctuaries for legitimate worship and sacrifice until they were outlawed in the time of Josiah (2 Kings 23.8). *Isaac* as a name for the land of Israel is unusual.

7.10–17 Conflict between prophet and priest. The report from the perspective of a third person first gives the background (vv. 10–11) and then reports the dialogue between Amos and Amaziah (vv. 12–15) that concludes with the prophet's announcement of judgment against the priest, his family, and his people (vv. 16–17). **7.10–11** Amos is accused of conspiracy against the state because of words of judgment such as those found in 7.9. **7.12–13** Amaziah does not challenge the right of Amos to prophesy but only his authority to speak at the royal sanctuary and, by implication, in the state of Israel. **7.14** *I am no prophet.* The Hebrew clause could be translated "I was no prophet." *Prophet's son,* member of a prophetic guild (see 2 Kings 2.3; 4.1). **7.15** Amos asserts the authority of his divine vocation against the authority of the priest. **7.16–17** Judgment is announced upon Amaziah and his household because he has opposed the word of God.

8.1–3 The fourth vision report parallels the third one (7.7–9) in form and effect: divine judgment upon Israel. **8.2** The Hebrew for *basket of summer fruit* (*gayitz*) is a pun on the word for *end* (*qetz*). **8.4–8** Because of Israel's corrupt business practices that oppress the needy and the poor

and bring to ruin the poor of
the land,
5 saying, "When will the new moon
be over
so that we may sell grain;
and the sabbath,
so that we may offer wheat
for sale?
We will make the ephah small
and the shekel great,
and practice deceit with false
balances,
6 buying the poor for silver
and the needy for a pair of
sandals,
and selling the sweepings of
the wheat."

7 The LORD has sworn by the pride
of Jacob:
Surely I will never forget any of
their deeds.
8 Shall not the land tremble on
this account,
and everyone mourn who lives
in it,
and all of it rise like the Nile,
and be tossed about and sink
again, like the Nile of
Egypt?

9 On that day, says the Lord GOD,
I will make the sun go down
at noon,
and darken the earth in
broad daylight.
10 I will turn your feasts into
mourning,
and all your songs into
lamentation;
I will bring sackcloth on all loins,
and baldness on every head;
I will make it like the mourning
for an only son,
and the end of it like a
bitter day.

11 The time is surely coming, says
the Lord GOD,
when I will send a famine on
the land;
not a famine of bread, or a thirst
for water,
but of hearing the words of
the LORD.
12 They shall wander from sea
to sea,
and from north to east;
they shall run to and fro, seeking
the word of the LORD,
but they shall not find it.

13 In that day the beautiful young
women and the young men
shall faint for thirst.
14 Those who swear by Ashimah
of Samaria,
and say, "As your god lives,
O Dan,"
and, "As the way of Beer-sheba
lives"—
they shall fall, and never
rise again.

9 I saw the LORD standing beside[d] the
altar, and he said:
Strike the capitals until the
thresholds shake,
and shatter them on the heads
of all the people;[e]
and those who are left I will kill
with the sword;
not one of them shall flee away,
not one of them shall escape.

2 Though they dig into Sheol,
from there shall my hand
take them;

d Or *on* *e* Heb *all of them*

(vv. 4–6), the Lord will intervene against the *land* (vv. 7–8). **8.5** The *new moon* was obviously a monthly religious festival day when business was suspended. **8.6** *Buying the poor*, a reference to debt slavery (see 2.6). **8.8** *Land*, the earth. **8.9–14** The coming "day of the LORD" will be a time of darkness (5.18–20), mourning, famine, and thirst. **8.9** The imagery of a solar eclipse is a portent of the darkness of death. **8.11–12** Worse than a *famine* will be the Lord's withdrawal of his *word*. **8.14** *Ashimah* and *the way of Beer-sheba* are either the names of gods or pejorative titles applied to gods.

9.1–4 The fifth vision report is unlike the previous ones in form, lacking the introductory formula and dialogue between the prophet and the Lord, and it is the vision of the most severe judgment. **9.1** The prophet sees the Lord himself and hears him giving orders for the total destruction of the people. **9.2–4** There is no escape from the Lord, not even in death or captivity. **9.2** *Sheol*, the underworld realm of the

though they climb up to heaven,
from there I will bring
them down.
3 Though they hide themselves on
the top of Carmel,
from there I will search out
and take them;
and though they hide from my
sight at the bottom of
the sea,
there I will command the
sea-serpent, and it
shall bite them.
4 And though they go into captivity
in front of their enemies,
there I will command the
sword, and it shall kill
them;
and I will fix my eyes on them
for harm and not for good.

5 The Lord, God of hosts,
he who touches the earth and
it melts,
and all who live in it mourn,
and all of it rises like the Nile,
and sinks again, like the Nile
of Egypt;
6 who builds his upper chambers in
the heavens,
and founds his vault upon
the earth;
who calls for the waters of
the sea,
and pours them out upon the
surface of the earth—
the Lord is his name.

7 Are you not like the Ethiopians[f]
to me,
O people of Israel? says the
Lord.
Did I not bring Israel up from
the land of Egypt,
and the Philistines from
Caphtor and the Arameans
from Kir?
8 The eyes of the Lord God are
upon the sinful kingdom,
and I will destroy it from the
face of the earth
—except that I will not utterly
destroy the house of Jacob,
says the Lord.

9 For lo, I will command,
and shake the house of Israel
among all the nations
as one shakes with a sieve,
but no pebble shall fall to
the ground.
10 All the sinners of my people shall
die by the sword,
who say, "Evil shall not
overtake or meet us."

The Restoration of David's Kingdom

11 On that day I will raise up
the booth of David that is
fallen,
and repair its[g] breaches,
and raise up its[h] ruins,
and rebuild it as in the days
of old;
12 in order that they may possess
the remnant of Edom
and all the nations who are
called by my name,
says the Lord who does this.

f Or *Nubians*; Heb *Cushites* *g* Gk: Heb *their*
h Gk: Heb *his*

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dead. **9.3** *Sea-serpent*, the dragon of chaos, well known in Near Eastern mythology. **9.5–6** The third hymnic passage or doxology of judgment in the book (4.13; 5.8–9). The Lord is the name of the one who created the world and whose touch can cause it to melt or toss about. **9.7–8** Against people who had come to view their election by God arrogantly, the prophet points out that the Lord had been concerned for and had brought up other nations as well. **9.8** The Israelites' election has become the occasion for their self-satisfaction and therefore for their judgment (see 3.1–2). In a later addition to the book, an exception is made for Judah (*house of Jacob*). **9.9–10** Typically in the book of Amos judgment is announced on the people as a whole, but these verses restrict it to certain sinners. **9.9** The simile of a *sieve* suggests the process of separating the sinners from the others.

9.11–15 Announcements of salvation. Since the prophecies presume that the nation has been destroyed and the people exiled, they probably come from the time of the Babylonian exile (597–539 B.C.E.). **9.11–12** The Lord promises to restore the Davidic kingdom, rebuild its cities, and restore its territory. **9.11** *That day*. Unlike

13 The time is surely coming, says the LORD,
when the one who plows shall overtake the one who reaps,
and the treader of grapes the one who sows the seed;
the mountains shall drip sweet wine,
and all the hills shall flow with it.
14 I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel,
and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them;
they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine,
and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit.
15 I will plant them upon their land,
and they shall never again be plucked up
out of the land that I have given them,
says the LORD your God.

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other texts in Amos (5.18–21; 2.16; 8.3), the "day of the LORD" is a time of salvation for God's people. **9.13–15** In the new age, nature will be incredibly fruitful and the people will be secure in their land. Those who experienced the judgment announced by Amos now see God acting to save and restore.

OBADIAH

THE SHORTEST BOOK OF THE OT, Obadiah carries the name of an otherwise unknown prophet meaning "slave/servant of Yah (i.e., Yahweh, 'the LORD')." The time of writing is unknown, though internal evidence suggests an exilic or early postexilic date. The title verse calls it a "vision," using a special Hebrew word for what the prophets saw, as in Isa 1.1.

Structure and Content

Obadiah has much of the terminology of the better-known prophetic books, and its theology also follows that of the other prophets. The book divides neatly into two parts: vv. 1–14, an oracle against Edom, blasted for its anti-Judah words and actions at the time of Judah's calamity, and vv. 15–21, a utopian picture of the Judeans possessing the lands of their neighbors.

The first part is a genre called "oracles against the nations" (see Isa 13–23; Jer 46–51; Ezek 26–32). Jer 49.7–22 and Ezek 25.12–14 are also diatribes against Edom. The second part strains our historical knowledge in listing a surprising array of states that shall be dispossessed by the remaining Judeans and the exiled Israelites. Each of these areas touches Judah on either the north, east, or south.

Message

As in the theology of other "oracles against the nations," Edom has been proud and so will be "brought to the ground" (v. 3). Also, Edom has done "violence" to its "brother Jacob" (v. 10, the same theme found in Am 1.11), rejoicing when Judah was in distress, even looting it (v. 13).

The punishment will not be done at the time of the book, but at one referred to by that often used prophetic term "day of the LORD" (v. 15) and by "on that day" (v. 8). This is fair, for as the Edomites have done, the same will be done to them (v. 15). This is the ancient doctrine of retribution, found in many of the old Semitic codes of law (cf. Ex 21.24–25; Jer 50.29).

The second part flows from the first, for after Edom gets its just deserts, Israel will get its own, by the possession of the various countries enumerated. But did this ever happen? We do not know that it did, but the last verses of the prophets

are full of utopian predictions of the fall of the nations and the exaltation of Israel. We compare Zeph 3.19 and Joel 3.19–21 and note that Am 9.12 has similar words to Ob 21. *Richard A. Henshaw*

Proud Edom Will Be Brought Low

1 The vision of Obadiah.

Thus says the Lord GOD
concerning Edom:
We have heard a report from
the LORD,
and a messenger has been sent
among the nations:
"Rise up! Let us rise against it
for battle!"
2 I will surely make you least
among the nations;
you shall be utterly despised.
3 Your proud heart has
deceived you,
you that live in the clefts of
the rock,[a]
whose dwelling is in the
heights.
You say in your heart,
"Who will bring me down to
the ground?"
4 Though you soar aloft like
the eagle,
though your nest is set among
the stars,
from there I will bring you
down,
says the LORD.
5 If thieves came to you,
if plunderers by night
—how you have been
destroyed!—
would they not steal only what
they wanted?
If grape-gatherers came to you,
would they not leave gleanings?
6 How Esau has been pillaged,
his treasures searched out!
7 All your allies have deceived you,
they have driven you to
the border;
your confederates have prevailed
against you;
those who ate[b] your bread
have set a trap for you—
there is no understanding of it.
8 On that day, says the LORD,
I will destroy the wise out
of Edom,
and understanding out of
Mount Esau.
9 Your warriors shall be shattered,
O Teman,
so that everyone from Mount
Esau will be cut off.
10 For the slaughter and violence
done to your brother Jacob,
shame shall cover you,

a Or *clefts of Sela* b Cn: Heb lacks *those who ate*

1–14 An oracle against Edom, announcing destruction because of its treachery against Judah. **1** *Edom*, the tiny desert nation directly east of the Arabah, whose language was so close to Hebrew that its inhabitants were considered "brothers" by the biblical authors (see Gen 25.23–26; Am 1.1; Ob 12). The name Esau, Edom's eponymous ancestor in the Genesis tale, is sometimes used in this book for Edom. The Hebrew text of vv. 1–2 is almost exactly that of Jer 49.14–15, but we do not know which borrowed from which. **3** Pride is often mentioned as the reason for punishment in the "oracles," as in Isa 14.13; 16.6; 23.9; Jer 48.29; 49.4; Ezek 28.1; 31.10. *The rock* (Hebrew *sela'*) refers either to the mountainous terrain of Edom or to *Sela*, a major Edomite city, identified by some with later Petra, which also means "rock." **4** *Soar aloft . . . bring you down.* There is no escape from the Lord, a theme also in Am 9.2–3. **5–9** A lamentation over Edom, whose military might and legendary wisdom (cf. Jer 49.7) could not prevent its total destruction, decreed by the Lord and brought about by the treachery of Edom's former allies. **9** *Teman*, an important city in Edom, here a synecdoche standing for the whole country. **10–13** *Looting* seems to refer to the fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C.E. 2 Kings 25.1–21 gives the biblical account of the fall of Jerusalem, not mentioning the Edomites, but Hebrew tradition blames the Edomites for cruelty against Judah (see Ps 137.7; Lam 4.21–22; Ezek 35.12–14). More details, however, are given in Obadiah than in any other place.

and you shall be cut off
forever.
11 On the day that you stood
aside,
on the day that strangers
carried off his wealth,
and foreigners entered his
gates
and cast lots for Jerusalem,
you too were like one of
them.
12 But you should not have
gloated[c] over[d] your
brother
on the day of his misfortune;
you should not have rejoiced over
the people of Judah
on the day of their ruin;
you should not have boasted
on the day of distress.
13 You should not have entered the
gate of my people
on the day of their calamity;
you should not have joined in the
gloating over Judah's[e]
disaster
on the day of his calamity;
you should not have looted
his goods
on the day of his calamity.
14 You should not have stood at
the crossings
to cut off his fugitives;
you should not have handed over
his survivors
on the day of distress.

Israel's Final Triumph

15 For the day of the LORD is near
against all the nations.
As you have done, it shall be
done to you;
your deeds shall return on your
own head.
16 For as you have drunk on my
holy mountain,
all the nations around you
shall drink;
they shall drink and gulp
down,[f]
and shall be as though they
had never been.
17 But on Mount Zion there shall be
those that escape,
and it shall be holy;
and the house of Jacob shall take
possession of those who
dispossessed them.
18 The house of Jacob shall be a
fire,
the house of Joseph a
flame,
and the house of Esau
stubble;
they shall burn them and
consume them,
and there shall be no survivor
of the house of Esau;
for the LORD has spoken.
19 Those of the Negeb shall possess
Mount Esau,
and those of the Shephelah the
land of the Philistines;
they shall possess the land of
Ephraim and the land
of Samaria,
and Benjamin shall possess
Gilead.
20 The exiles of the Israelites who
are in Halah[g]

c Heb *But do not gloat* (and similarly through verse 14) *d* Heb *on the day of* *e* Heb *his* *f* Meaning of Heb uncertain *g* Cn: Heb *in this army*

15–21 A utopian picture of Judah possessing neighboring lands. **15** *The day of the LORD*, a common term in the prophets, not indicating a twenty-four-hour period but a promised time when the Lord will finally set everything right, whether for punishment or reward. **15–16** The Lord will punish *all the nations* that have hurt Judah, at some unstipulated future time. **17** *Mount Zion ... holy*. The Temple Mount, which was not allowed to be holy by its captors, now will be so. The term *Mount Zion* is picked up again in v. 21. *Those that escape* are known elsewhere by the term "remnant," both terms occurring in Isa 10.20. They are called *those who have been saved* in v. 21. **20** *Halah*, an emendation of the Hebrew text (see text note *g*), refers to a place of uncertain location in northern Mesopotamia to which Israelites had been exiled by the Assyrians (see 2 Kings 17.6; 18.11). *Phoenicia*, lit. "the Canaanites." *Zarephath*, a coastal town in southern Phoenicia. *Sepharad*, not the medieval word for Spain or for the Sephardic branch of Judaism, but a place where, according to the text but not found elsewhere, the people from Jerusalem were ex-

shall possess[h] Phoenicia as far
as Zarephath;
and the exiles of Jerusalem who
are in Sepharad
shall possess the towns of
the Negeb.

21 Those who have been saved[i]
shall go up to Mount Zion
to rule Mount Esau;
and the kingdom shall be
the LORD's.

h Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain *i* Or *Saviors*

iled. Some identify it with the city of Sardis in Asia Minor. This climactic ending describes a complete reversal of history: the Israelites shall possess their foes' lands, will go back to their beloved temple on Mount Zion, and the Lord will rule over all.

JONAH

THE JONAH STORY is quite different from all the other prophetic books. Other biblical prophets were primarily concerned with Israel and Judah. Although they had only minimal success, their books are filled with oracles passionately urging the people to observe Israel's covenant obligations to God. Jonah, on the other hand, is sent to the Assyrians in Nineveh—a people whose brutal actions had made their name a byword among the Israelites (cf. Nahum). He then delivers only a one-verse oracle (3.4) and succeeds marvelously, despite his best efforts to run and fail. The story is a satire, giving us a hero who says the right things in a context where his actions belie his words (1.9; 2.2–9; 4.2).

Setting and Purpose

Satire entertains, but it also has a polemical purpose—addressing major issues being faced by the writer's contemporaries. Because of its language and allusive style, most scholars believe that the story was written in the sixth or fifth century B.C.E., during or after the exile in Babylonia. This was a time of great trauma but also of great regeneration within the Jewish community. Jews had been driven out of their homeland, and there was a real possibility that the people—now living as minority groups throughout the Near East—would be assimilated into the neighboring populations. Although they were permitted to return to their homeland after the exile, there was a strong concern with maintaining traditional covenant values and identity as God's holy people over against the melting pot of the vast Persian Empire. The only recourse, many leaders concluded, was to separate the Jewish community from the outside world as much as possible. Thus one issue in the story is surely the relationship between Jew and Gentile, between the God of Israel and the nations of the world. A second concern was God's apparent unfair treatment of the Jews. Biblical traditions explained the exile as God's punishment for the Jews' neglect of the covenant laws, yet Jews now living among foreigners soon realized that the ethical norms and behavior of the surrounding peoples were more abhorrent than their own. If we deserved punishment, they asked, how could God possibly spare others whose offenses were far more serious? Finally, many Jews believed that the suffering of the present gen-

eration was caused by the sins of past generations (cf. Ezek 18.2). If God's judgment continues on to the third and fourth generation (cf. Ex 20.5), does that mean that our lives are hopelessly determined by the past? Would God be merciful if people repent of their sins and truly change their ways (cf. Jer 18.1–22)?

The Prophet

Although Jonah is a caricature of the biblical prophet, the story also depicts him as a man of faith who, like Job, is struggling to make sense of God's actions. Whereas Job is angry over undeserved suffering, Jonah's problem is undeserved forgiveness. In his anger he seeks out shelters to retreat from the world and his calling. The story ends with a question from God addressed to Jonah, placing readers in Jonah's shoes and asking us to work out appropriate resolutions to the issues raised in the story. *James S. Ackerman*

Jonah's Call and Flight

1 Now the word of the LORD came to
Jonah son of Amittai, saying, 2 "Go
at once to Nineveh, that great city, and cry
out against it; for their wickedness has
come up before me." 3 But Jonah set out
to flee to Tarshish from the presence of
the LORD. He went down to Joppa and
found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid
his fare and went on board, to go with
them to Tarshish, away from the presence
of the LORD.
4 But the LORD hurled a great wind
upon the sea, and such a mighty storm
came upon the sea that the ship threat-
ened to break up. 5 Then the mariners
were afraid, and each cried to his god.
They threw the cargo that was in the ship
into the sea, to lighten it for them. Jonah,
meanwhile, had gone down into the hold
of the ship and had lain down, and was
fast asleep. 6 The captain came and said to
him, "What are you doing sound asleep?
Get up, call on your god! Perhaps the god
will spare us a thought so that we do not
perish."
7 The sailors[a] said to one another,
"Come, let us cast lots, so that we may
know on whose account this calamity has
come upon us." So they cast lots, and the
lot fell on Jonah. 8 Then they said to him,
"Tell us why this calamity has come upon
us. What is your occupation? Where do
you come from? What is your country?

a Heb *They*

1.1–16 Jonah's call and flight. **1.1** *Jonah* is described in 2 Kings 14.23–27 as a prophet who supported the Northern Kingdom (Israel) of Jeroboam II (786–746 B.C.E.). **1.2** *Nineveh,* a major city in Assyria to the east—a nation that conquered the Northern Kingdom in 722 B.C.E. Although many biblical prophets gave oracles against foreign nations, no prophet actually journeyed from Israel to another land to deliver a message from God. **1.3** *Tarshish,* a western seaport possibly to be identified with Tartessus in Spain—on the outer edge of the then-known world. Many biblical prophets resisted their initial call from God (e.g., Ex 3.11; 4.10–17; Jer 1.6). Jonah resists even more strenuously, moving in the direction exactly opposite to the one commanded by God. His flight from *the presence of the LORD* is described as a series of descents, from his village in Israel into the hold of the Tarshish-bound ship. Later in the story he will descend even deeper! **1.5–6** Many polytheistic peoples believed that the best remedy for sickness or danger was to propitiate the deity whose anger had caused the calamity. Jonah refuses to heed the captain's appeal. **1.7** For other examples of determining guilt by the casting of lots, see Josh 7.16–18; 1 Sam 14.40–42. **1.9** Although he perhaps does not realize it, Jonah's pious confession of faith in God as creator both of *the sea and the dry land* underscores the futility of his attempt

And of what people are you?" 9"I am a
Hebrew," he replied. "I worship the
LORD, the God of heaven, who made the
sea and the dry land." 10Then the men
were even more afraid, and said to him,
"What is this that you have done!" For the
men knew that he was fleeing from the
presence of the LORD, because he had told
them so.

11 Then they said to him, "What shall
we do to you, that the sea may quiet down
for us?" For the sea was growing more
and more tempestuous. 12He said to
them, "Pick me up and throw me into the
sea; then the sea will quiet down for you;
for I know it is because of me that this
great storm has come upon you." 13Nev-
ertheless the men rowed hard to bring the
ship back to land, but they could not, for
the sea grew more and more stormy
against them. 14Then they cried out to
the LORD, "Please, O LORD, we pray, do
not let us perish on account of this man's
life. Do not make us guilty of innocent
blood; for you, O LORD, have done as it
pleased you." 15So they picked Jonah up
and threw him into the sea; and the sea
ceased from its raging. 16Then the men
feared the LORD even more, and they
offered a sacrifice to the LORD and
made vows.

Jonah in the Fish

17[b] But the LORD provided a large fish
to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the
belly of the fish three days and three
nights.

Jonah's Song of Thanksgiving

2 Then Jonah prayed to the LORD
his God from the belly of the fish,
2saying,

"I called to the LORD out of my
distress,
and he answered me;
out of the belly of Sheol I cried,
and you heard my voice.
3 You cast me into the deep,
into the heart of the seas,
and the flood surrounded me;
all your waves and your billows
passed over me.
4 Then I said, 'I am driven away
from your sight;
how[c] shall I look again
upon your holy temple?'
5 The waters closed in over me;
the deep surrounded me;
weeds were wrapped around
my head
6 at the roots of the mountains.
I went down to the land
whose bars closed upon me
forever;
yet you brought up my life from
the Pit,
O LORD my God.
7 As my life was ebbing away,
I remembered the LORD;
and my prayer came to you,
into your holy temple.
8 Those who worship vain idols
forsake their true loyalty.
9 But I with the voice of
thanksgiving

b Ch 2.1 in Heb *c* Theodotion: Heb *surely*

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to escape from God's presence. **1.12** Jonah is willing to accept death for his disobedience, but we have not yet learned why he feels compelled to disobey. **1.15** The Lord's hurling the great wind (v. 4) prompts the hurling overboard first of the ship's cargo (v. 5) and then finally of Jonah. **1.16** The sailors have changed from *fearing* the storm and *crying to* their gods (v. 5) to *crying to* (v. 14) and *fearing* the Lord.

1.17–2.10 God judges and delivers Jonah by means of a fish. **1.17** The Hebrew verb translated *to swallow up* always has a negative meaning in the Bible (Ex 15.12; Num 16.30). Thus the fish first appears as an instrument of divine judgment rather than deliverance. **2.1** Since the Hebrew verb translated *prayed* always refers to asking for help not yet rendered, most scholars conclude that Jonah's song of thanksgiving in vv. 2–9 was added by a later editor. If the song is read as an integral part of the story, however, we can again find Jonah saying words that do not accord with the action (cf. 1.9). It is thus possible to read the prayer ironically as false piety, since Jonah is eager to return to the temple while he has not repented for having disobeyed God's command. **2.3–6** Ancient Canaanite and Mesopotamian texts depict the underworld as a walled city located under the waters and below the mountains that were thought to support the cosmos (see Job 38.16–17; Pss 9.13–14; 107.18). **2.8–9** Jonah perceives pagans as forsakers of *true loyalty* (Hebrew *chesed*) and vows to make a proper sacrifice when he returns, while the gentile sailors in the ship above him are already completing their sacri-

will sacrifice to you;
what I have vowed I will pay.
Deliverance belongs to the
LORD!"
10 Then the LORD spoke to the fish, and it
spewed Jonah out upon the dry land.

Jonah in Nineveh

3 The word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time, saying, 2 "Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you." 3 So Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large city, a three days' walk across. 4 Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's walk. And he cried out, "Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" 5 And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth.

6 When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. 7 Then he had a proclamation made in Nineveh: "By the decree of the king and his nobles: No human being or animal, no herd or flock, shall taste anything. They shall not feed, nor shall they drink water. 8 Human beings and animals shall be covered with sackcloth, and they shall cry mightily to God. All shall turn from their evil ways and from the violence that is in their hands. 9 Who knows? God may relent and change his mind; he may turn from his fierce anger, so that we do not perish."

10 When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.

Jonah and God

4 But this was very displeasing to Jonah, and he became angry. 2 He prayed to the LORD and said, "O LORD! Is not this what I said while I was still in my own country? That is why I fled to Tarshish at the beginning; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing. 3 And now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live." 4 And the LORD said, "Is it right for you to be angry?" 5 Then Jonah went out of the city and sat down east of the city, and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, waiting to see what would become of the city.

6 The LORD God appointed a bush,[d] and made it come up over Jonah, to give shade over his head, to save him from his

d Heb *qiqayon*, possibly *the castor bean plant*

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ficial vows to the Lord (1.16). **2.10** God's response to Jonah's song is to have the fish *spew* Jonah out; a better translation would be "vomit" (see Prov 23.8; 25.16; Jer 25.27).

3.1–10 A second group of Gentiles turns to God, with king and Ninevites replacing the captain and sailors of ch. 1. The ease of Jonah's great success with the king in Nineveh should be contrasted with the prophets' repeated failure with kings in Jerusalem (e.g., Jer 36). **3.3** The literal Hebrew says that Nineveh "was a great city to God," thus contrasting with the city of Death that Jonah had almost entered during the fish episode (2.3–6). The *three days* it takes to traverse Nineveh recalls Jonah's three days in the belly of the fish (1.17). **3.4–5** *Overthrown* renders the same Hebrew verb that describes the overturning of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19.21, 25, 29); but Jonah here uses the passive voice, which has a primary meaning of being "turned around" or "transformed" (Ex 7.17, 20; 1 Sam 10.6). **3.6** Traditional actions of mourning (Job 2.8; Gen 37.34; 2 Sam 3.31) and repentance (Job 42.6; Dan 9.3; Neh 9.1) in response to personal and national crises. **3.7–9** The repentance of Nineveh contrasts with Jonah's failure to repent in ch. 2.

4.1–11 Ch. 4 juxtaposes Jonah's response to the sparing of Nineveh with God's reason for that action. **4.2** Citing the description of God revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai (Ex 34.6–7), Jonah accuses God of being too merciful. The divine order underlying the biblical covenant is based on justice; and from Jonah's perspective, "steadfast love" (the same *chesed* of 2.8!) undermines that order, turning God into a capricious pagan deity. **4.3** In the continuing death/descent theme of chs. 1–2, the prophet prefers death to living in a world having no recognizable order of justice. **4.5** Certain that Nineveh will return to its evil ways, Jonah finds solace in a secure shelter that he builds for himself. **4.6–8** Reinforcing the shelter theme, God appoints a *bush* to save Jonah (cf. 1 Kings 19.4–18)

discomfort; so Jonah was very happy
about the bush. 7 But when dawn came up
the next day, God appointed a worm that
attacked the bush, so that it withered.
8 When the sun rose, God prepared a sul-
try east wind, and the sun beat down on
the head of Jonah so that he was faint and
asked that he might die. He said, "It is
better for me to die than to live."
9 But God said to Jonah, "Is it right
for you to be angry about the bush?"
And he said, "Yes, angry enough to die."
10 Then the LORD said, "You are con-
cerned about the bush, for which you did
not labor and which you did not grow; it
came into being in a night and perished in
a night. 11 And should I not be concerned
about Nineveh, that great city, in which
there are more than a hundred and twen-
ty thousand persons who do not know
their right hand from their left, and
also many animals?"

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and then destroys it to bring the prophet to his senses. **4.8** The scorching *wind* (Hebrew *ruach*) playfully recalls the divine spirit (*ruach*) that traditionally inspired the prophets (Num 11.24–29; 2 Kings 2.9, 15; Joel 2.28–29). Jonah's reaction to the loss of the protective bush is the same as his reaction to the sparing of Nineveh (4.3). In the first case he is angry at God's mercy; now he misses God's protective grace. **4.9–11** Jonah had confronted God with thirty-nine words (in Hebrew) of complaint in 4.2–3. In vv. 10–11 God gets the last thirty-nine words (in Hebrew). The emphasis is on God's sovereignty over and care for the whole creation rather than on *Nineveh's* repentance. The bush *perished* in a night; both the sea captain and the king were desperate to keep their people from *perishing* (1.6; 3.9). And God, we learn, is attentive to that concern. **4.11** God still can't get over those *animals* running around in sackcloth (3.8)!

MICAH

The Prophet

THE NAME MICAH, meaning "Who is like the LORD," is not a question but an exclamation underscoring the incomparability of the God of Israel. With Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah, Micah was one of the four eighth century B.C.E. prophets. A younger contemporary of the aristocrat Isaiah, Micah was a member of the laboring class who came from the rural area of Moresheth-gath (1.14), a small village situated about twenty-five miles southwest of Jerusalem and identified with Tell el-Judeideh. Moresheth-gath is located in the Shephelah, or foothills between the coastal plain and the central highlands of Palestine. Living in a frontier town, Micah was keenly aware of the imminence of an Assyrian incursion into the Southern Kingdom, Judah, during the latter part of the eighth century. Little is known about Micah; what is known comes from the book bearing his name.

Historical Situation

According to the superscription (1.1), Micah prophesied during the reigns of three Judahite kings: Jotham (742–735), Ahaz (735–715), and Hezekiah (715–687 B.C.E.). More likely, Micah's prophetic career spanned only the last quarter of the eighth century B.C.E. Ahaz, son of Jotham and father of Hezekiah, was a weak and indecisive king.

Hezekiah was a vigorous ruler who enjoyed the confidence of both priests and prophets. He was responsible for centralizing worship in the Jerusalem temple and for suppressing illicit cult practices throughout Judah. He also expanded the western boundaries of Jerusalem to accommodate the influx of refugees from Samaria following the demise of the Northern Kingdom in 722. Under the threat of Assyrian invasion, he strengthened the walls of Jerusalem, and constructed a 1750-foot tunnel to protect Jerusalem's exposed water supply. When the Assyrian king Sargon II died in 705, Hezekiah formed a coalition with Phoenicia and Philistia (Ashkelon and Ekron) against Sennacherib, the successor of Sargon.

International Setting

The latter half of the eighth century B.C.E. witnessed the resurgence of the neo-Assyrian empire under the imperialist king Tiglath-pileser III (745–727). Assyria, preoccupied with domestic problems in the first part of the century, was bent on expanding westward after 745. Damascus was conquered in 732. Ten years later the Northern Kingdom (Israel) was vanquished, and large numbers were deported. In 711 the Philistine city of Ashdod was besieged. In 701, when Sennacherib attacked the Southern Kingdom (Judah), already an Assyrian vassal, forty-six fortified towns fell. Mic 1.10–15 lists the towns conquered by Sennacherib, many near his hometown. Jerusalem was spared when Hezekiah paid indemnity.

Structure

The book of Micah is well preserved, compared to Hosea, although textual problems and some inconsistencies make certain passages difficult. Micah is usually divided into two major parts: 1.2–5.15 and 6.1–7.20, but scholars disagree over which sections belong to the prophet himself. The first three chapters are thought to be genuine; the remainder may be later expansions. Such opinions, however, are highly speculative. The arrangement of the oracles form a pattern alternating between oracles of doom and oracles of salvation: doom (1.1–2.11), salvation (2.12–13); doom (3.1–12), salvation (4.1–5.15); doom (6.1–7.7), salvation (7.8–20). This schema is probably from a later compiler, although the editing of Micah over time is a complex and uncertain matter. The specific historical circumstances of Micah's oracles are equally uncertain.

The Message

Though a native of the Southern Kingdom, Micah did not espouse the David-Zion tradition, with its belief in the inviolability of Jerusalem. In fact, he delivered a bitter oracle against Jerusalem (3.9–12). Micah favored the Moses-Sinai tradition of the Northern Kingdom, with its emphasis on the exodus and Moses as the centerpiece.

Micah was concerned principally with ethical issues. He declared that the sins of Judah would inevitably lead to punishment, with Assyria acting as God's instrument of punishment. The prophet focuses on the crimes of the corrupt officials, both religious and political, whom Micah attacks scathingly for their exploitation of the people. Priests, prophets, and judges were self-serving and corrupt.

Micah also placed much of the blame on the capital cities—Samaria in the north and Jerusalem in the south. The destruction of Samaria in 722 B.C.E. was cited as a warning to Judah of what would befall Jerusalem.

Like Amos, who lived slightly earlier, Micah inveighed against socioeconomic injustice (chs. 2, 3, 6). Religious worship without social justice was meaningless.

Micah spoke out boldly in defense of the shepherds and poor farmers whose lands were being expropriated by the rich.

Despite all the indictments, Micah also had a message of divine forgiveness and hope. He spoke of the restoration of the temple and the salvation of the remnant. Micah foresees the centrality of Jerusalem in the life of the nations and looks forward to universal peace (4.1–5). The book ends with a psalm of hope in a future restoration (7.8–20). *Philip J. King*

1 The word of the LORD that came to
Micah of Moresheth in the days of
Kings Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah of Ju-
dah, which he saw concerning Samaria
and Jerusalem.

Judgment Pronounced Against Samaria

2 Hear, you peoples, all of you;
listen, O earth, and all that is
in it;
and let the Lord GOD be a
witness against you,
the Lord from his holy temple.
3 For lo, the LORD is coming out of
his place,
and will come down and tread
upon the high places of
the earth.
4 Then the mountains will melt
under him
and the valleys will burst open,
like wax near the fire,
like waters poured down a
steep place.
5 All this is for the transgression
of Jacob
and for the sins of the house
of Israel.
What is the transgression of
Jacob?
Is it not Samaria?
And what is the high place[a]
of Judah?
Is it not Jerusalem?
6 Therefore I will make Samaria a
heap in the open country,
a place for planting vineyards.
I will pour down her stones into
the valley,
and uncover her foundations.
7 All her images shall be beaten
to pieces,

a Heb *what are the high places*

1.1 Superscription. Added by an editor who compiled the collection of oracles, the superscription situates the book in time and place. King Omri (ca. 876–869 B.C.E.) established Samaria as the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel. Situated about forty miles north of Jerusalem, Samaria was well located: the region was fertile, the city was defensible (perched on a hill about three hundred feet above the valley), and it was close to the trade routes. After David (ca. 1000–961 B.C.E.) captured Jerusalem from the Jebusites, it became the political and religious capital of the United Kingdom. When the Northern Kingdom seceded in 920 B.C.E., Jerusalem remained the capital of the Southern Kingdom. The Jerusalem of David, known as the City of David, occupied only the southeast section of present-day Jerusalem.

1.2–7 Oracle of divine judgment. A covenant lawsuit (Hebrew *rîv*) between the Lord and the people over their violation of the covenant proceeds like a court trial, with God as plaintiff and the people as defendants. Nature is called to bear witness against the people. The covenant lawsuit is a common literary form in the prophets, the classic example being Mic 6.1–8. **1.2** *Holy temple* refers to heaven. **1.3–4** A theophany or manifestation of God depicted in poetic language. **1.5** *Jacob* represents the Northern Kingdom. A *high place* was an artificially constructed elevation, open-air or roofed, serving as a shrine where illicit religious rites were practiced; it was most often associated with Canaanite religious practice but was also connected with popular Israelite religion. Only from the eighth century on were the high places condemned. **1.7** A polemic

all her wages shall be burned
with fire,
and all her idols I will lay
waste;
for as the wages of a prostitute
she gathered them,
and as the wages of a prostitute
they shall again be used.

The Doom of the Cities of Judah

8 For this I will lament and wail;
I will go barefoot and naked;
I will make lamentation like
the jackals,
and mourning like the
ostriches.
9 For her wound[b] is incurable.
It has come to Judah;
it has reached to the gate of
my people,
to Jerusalem.

10 Tell it not in Gath,
weep not at all;
in Beth-leaphrah
roll yourselves in the dust.
11 Pass on your way,
inhabitants of Shaphir,
in nakedness and shame;
the inhabitants of Zaanan
do not come forth;
Beth-ezel is wailing
and shall remove its support
from you.
12 For the inhabitants of Maroth
wait anxiously for good,
yet disaster has come down from
the LORD
to the gate of Jerusalem.
13 Harness the steeds to the
chariots,
inhabitants of Lachish;
it was the beginning of sin
to daughter Zion,
for in you were found
the transgressions of Israel.
14 Therefore you shall give
parting gifts
to Moresheth-gath;
the houses of Achzib shall be
a deception
to the kings of Israel.
15 I will again bring a conqueror
upon you,

b Gk Syr Vg: Heb *wounds*

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against idolatry. Idolatrous worship is described as harlotry or prostitution. Sacred prostitution was sometimes practiced at these religious shrines.

1.8–16 Lamentation. Vv. 8–9 introduce the lamentation. **1.8** *Barefoot and naked* signifies mourning. Out of love for his people Micah weeps over the inevitable fate of Judah and its capital Jerusalem. *Jackals* and *ostriches* are often linked in biblical descriptions of the wilderness. **1.10–16** All the towns mentioned in this section are situated in Judah, southwest of Jerusalem, the region of the country best known to Micah. In almost every case the prophet first mentions the name of the town and then makes a wordplay on its name. The text is not well preserved, so there is some uncertainty about the meaning of the names. Also, not all the towns can be identified. The historical event associated with this disaster would have been Sennacherib's campaign in 701 B.C.E. **1.10** *Gath*, one of the five Philistine cities, has not been identified with certainty, but it probably is located at Tell es-Safi (Tel Zafit), twelve miles east of the Philistine city of Ashdod. *Beth-leaphrah* ("house of dust"), may be identified with et-Taiyibeh, northwest of Hebron in the hill country of Judah. Rolling in the dust (Hebrew *'aphar*) was a way of expressing grief or mourning. *Roll yourselves* (*hitpallashti*) may be a pun on "Philistines." **1.11** *Shaphir* may be located at Khirbet el-Qom, a hill west of Hebron. *Zaanan* has not been located, but there is a pun on the verb form *come forth* (Hebrew *yats'ah*). *Beth-ezel* may be modern Deir el-Asal, in the vicinity of Hebron. **1.12** The site of *Maroth* has not been identified, but the wordplay consists in the sharp contrast between Maroth, meaning "to be bitter," and the adjective *good*. **1.13** *Lachish*, situated thirty miles southwest of Jerusalem in the Judean hills, was the most important city in Judah after Jerusalem. In the reign of Hezekiah two massive city walls fortified Lachish. Stratum III of Lachish, dating to 701 B.C.E., is an indisputable witness to Sennacherib's devastation of the city. Micah reproaches the people of Lachish for relying on horses and chariots. The wordplay is on the name Lachish and the phrase *(to) the steeds* (Hebrew *larekesh*). *Daughter Zion* personifies Jerusalem. **1.14** *Achzib*, tentatively identified with Tell el-Beida, northeast of Lachish. The pun focuses on the Hebrew root *kzb* ("to lie"), found both in the name Achzib and *deception* (*'akzab*). **1.15** *Mareshah*, modern Tell Sandahannah, is one mile southeast of Beit Jibrin (Eleutheropolis). Famous as an underground city because of its caves, it is known in Greek as Marisa. The play is on the name Mareshah and the Hebrew participle *yoresh* ("to possess"), although not obvious in the translation *conqueror*. *Adullam* may be located at

inhabitants of Mareshah;
the glory of Israel
shall come to Adullam.
16 Make yourselves bald and cut off
your hair
for your pampered children;
make yourselves as bald as
the eagle,
for they have gone from you
into exile.

Social Evils Denounced

2 Alas for those who devise
wickedness
and evil deeds[c] on their beds!
When the morning dawns, they
perform it,
because it is in their power.
2 They covet fields, and seize
them;
houses, and take them away;
they oppress householder
and house,
people and their inheritance.
3 Therefore thus says the LORD:
Now, I am devising against this
family an evil
from which you cannot remove
your necks;
and you shall not walk haughtily,
for it will be an evil time.
4 On that day they shall take up a
taunt song against you,
and wail with bitter
lamentation,
and say, "We are utterly ruined;
the LORD[d] alters the
inheritance of my people;
how he removes it from me!
Among our captors[e] he parcels
out our fields."
5 Therefore you will have no one
to cast the line by lot
in the assembly of the LORD.

6 "Do not preach"—thus they
preach—
"one should not preach of
such things;
disgrace will not overtake us."
7 Should this be said, O house
of Jacob?
Is the LORD's patience
exhausted?
Are these his doings?
Do not my words do good
to one who walks uprightly?
8 But you rise up against my
people[f] as an enemy;
you strip the robe from the
peaceful,[g]
from those who pass by trustingly
with no thought of war.
9 The women of my people you
drive out
from their pleasant houses;
from their young children you
take away
my glory forever.
10 Arise and go;
for this is no place to rest,
because of uncleanness that
destroys
with a grievous destruction.[h]
11 If someone were to go about
uttering empty falsehoods,
saying, "I will preach to you of
wine and strong drink,"
such a one would be the
preacher for this people!

c Cn: Heb *work evil* d Heb *he* e Cn: Heb *the rebellious* f Cn: Heb *But yesterday my people rose* g Cn: Heb *from before a garment* h Meaning of Heb uncertain

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Tell esh-Sheikh Madkur, five miles south of Beth-shemesh. David took refuge from Saul in a cave near Adullam (1 Sam 22.1; 2 Sam 23.13). **1.16** The lament concludes with a description of mourning rites. Although artificial baldness was prohibited (Lev 19.27; Deut 14.1), shaving the head was sometimes practiced as a sign of mourning.

2.1–11 The prophet inveighs against social sins. **2.1–5** Land monopoly by the greedy rich at the expense of the defenseless poor. **2.2** To lose one's *inheritance* was to lose one's independence. **2.3** The metaphor of a yoked ox describes the punishment for expropriation of land. **2.4** A mocking song. **2.5** Those who have grabbed the land of others will be deprived permanently of their own inheritance in Israel. *Assembly of the LORD* refers to the religious community of Israel. **2.6–11** The Hebrew text is not well preserved, so the meaning is sometimes difficult. The land-grabbers tried to silence Micah because they found his message unpalatable. **2.7–9** Micah's response to those who would silence him. He continues to indict those who exploit the poor, especially widows and orphans. **2.11** Micah states sarcastically that the people would prefer false preachers, plied with liquor, who lie, to those who tell the truth.

A Promise for the Remnant of Israel

12 I will surely gather all of you,
O Jacob,
I will gather the survivors
of Israel;
I will set them together
like sheep in a fold,
like a flock in its pasture;
it will resound with people.
13 The one who breaks out will go
up before them;
they will break through and
pass the gate,
going out by it.
Their king will pass on before
them,
the LORD at their head.

Wicked Rulers and Prophets

3 And I said:
Listen, you heads of Jacob
and rulers of the house of
Israel!
Should you not know justice?—
2 you who hate the good and
love the evil,
who tear the skin off my
people,[i]
and the flesh off their bones;
3 who eat the flesh of my people,
flay their skin off them,
break their bones in pieces,
and chop them up like meat[j]
in a kettle,
like flesh in a caldron.

4 Then they will cry to the LORD,
but he will not answer them;
he will hide his face from them at
that time,
because they have acted
wickedly.

5 Thus says the LORD concerning
the prophets
who lead my people astray,
who cry "Peace"
when they have something
to eat,
but declare war against those
who put nothing into their
mouths.
6 Therefore it shall be night to you,
without vision,
and darkness to you, without
revelation.
The sun shall go down upon
the prophets,
and the day shall be black
over them;
7 the seers shall be disgraced,
and the diviners put to shame;
they shall all cover their lips,
for there is no answer
from God.
8 But as for me, I am filled
with power,
with the spirit of the LORD,
and with justice and might,
to declare to Jacob his
transgression
and to Israel his sin.

9 Hear this, you rulers of the house
of Jacob
and chiefs of the house of
Israel,
who abhor justice
and pervert all equity,
10 who build Zion with blood
and Jerusalem with wrong!

i Heb *from them* *j* Gk: Heb *as*

2.12–13 Oracle of salvation dated by some to the Babylonian exile (587–539 B.C.E.). The Lord who is shepherd-king speaks (Ezek 34; Jer 23.1–4). The promised restoration is described in terms of a new exodus (Isa 49.9–12). **2.12** *Survivors* are those who will be redeemed.

3.1–12 Announcement of judgment on the political and religious leaders for abuse of power. **3.1–4** Using the gruesome metaphor of cannibalism, Micah describes graphically the ruthless injustice of Jerusalem's public officials in rendering legal decisions. Ultimately, the offending rulers will experience the same fate when God chooses to ignore them. **3.5–8** Indictment of venal prophets in contrast to selfless prophets like Micah. Mercenary prophets tell the people what they want to hear, but in so doing mislead them. **3.5** *Peace* (Hebrew *shalom*) means wholeness, well-being, integrity. **3.6** The punishment of avaricious prophets is described in ominous figures of darkness. **3.7** *Cover their lips* was a popular mourning custom (Ezek 24.17, 22). **3.8** In contrast, Micah lists the God-given endowments of the genuine prophet that enable him to speak the truth. **3.9–12** A recapitulation including the inevitable judgment of doom on Jerusalem. **3.10** Archaeology testifies to the building activities underway in Jerusalem at that time, obviously

11 Its rulers give judgment for a bribe,
its priests teach for a price,
its prophets give oracles for money;
yet they lean upon the LORD and say,
"Surely the LORD is with us!
No harm shall come upon us."
12 Therefore because of you
Zion shall be plowed as a field;
Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins,
and the mountain of the house a wooded height.

Peace and Security Through Obedience

4 In days to come
the mountain of the LORD's house
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be raised up above the hills.
Peoples shall stream to it,
2 and many nations shall come and say:
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
to the house of the God of Jacob;
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths."
For out of Zion shall go forth instruction,
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
3 He shall judge between many peoples,
and shall arbitrate between strong nations far away;
they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more;
4 but they shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees,
and no one shall make them afraid;
for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken.

5 For all the peoples walk,
each in the name of its god,
but we will walk in the name of the LORD our God
forever and ever.

Restoration Promised

6 In that day, says the LORD,
I will assemble the lame
and gather those who have been driven away,
and those whom I have afflicted.
7 The lame I will make the remnant,

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done at the expense of the poor. **3.11** Secular and religious leaders, despite their patently unscrupulous conduct, believed that God would protect them on the basis of the Davidic covenant. **3.12** The crassness of the leaders will result in the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple. This announcement of judgment echoes 1.6 on Samaria. Micah's prophecy was cited a century later in defense of Jeremiah (Jer 26.18–19). By predicting the doom of Jerusalem, Micah and Jeremiah stood in sharp contrast to Isaiah, who believed the holy city was invulnerable.

4.1–5 A poem of universal peace for the future, closely paralleled in Isa 2.2–4, but in marked contrast to Mic 3.12. The source may be an anonymous prophet borrowed from by both Micah and Isaiah. **4.1** The Lord resided on Jerusalem's Temple Mount, considered the center of the world. **4.2** Three times each year on the major feasts (Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles) pilgrims went up to Jerusalem (Ps 122.1, 4). *Instruction* (Hebrew *torah*), in the sense of divine teachings. **4.3** A classic description of disarmament. To conserve scrap metal, the conversion from weapons to agricultural tools (as described here) was reversed in times of war (Joel 3.10). **4.4** Lacking in Isaiah (see note on 4.1–5). The possession of land brings security. **4.5** *We* designates God's people.

4.6–5.15 A series of promises of restoration of uncertain date. **4.6–8** Oracle of salvation. It may relate to the exile, but it could also apply to the tragedy of Samaria in 722 or of Jerusalem in 702 B.C.E. Like a good shepherd the Lord assembles the scattered sheep, including the maimed. **4.7** The dispersed will be brought back to Jerusa-

and those who were cast off, a
strong nation;
and the LORD will reign over
them in Mount Zion
now and forevermore.

8 And you, O tower of the flock,
hill of daughter Zion,
to you it shall come,
the former dominion shall
come,
the sovereignty of daughter
Jerusalem.

9 Now why do you cry aloud?
Is there no king in you?
Has your counselor perished,
that pangs have seized you like
a woman in labor?
10 Writhe and groan,[k] O daughter
Zion,
like a woman in labor;
for now you shall go forth from
the city
and camp in the open country;
you shall go to Babylon.
There you shall be rescued,
there the LORD will redeem you
from the hands of your
enemies.

11 Now many nations
are assembled against you,
saying, "Let her be profaned,
and let our eyes gaze upon
Zion."
12 But they do not know
the thoughts of the LORD;
they do not understand his plan,
that he has gathered them as
sheaves to the threshing
floor.
13 Arise and thresh,
O daughter Zion,
for I will make your horn iron
and your hoofs bronze;
you shall beat in pieces many
peoples,
and shall[l] devote their gain to
the LORD,
their wealth to the Lord of the
whole earth.

The Ruler from Bethlehem

5 [m] Now you are walled around with
a wall;[n]
siege is laid against us;
with a rod they strike the ruler
of Israel
upon the cheek.

2[o] But you, O Bethlehem of
Ephrathah,

k Meaning of Heb uncertain *l* Gk Syr Tg: Heb *and I will* *m* Ch 4.14 in Heb *n* Cn Compare Gk: Meaning of Heb uncertain *o* Ch 5.1 in Heb

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lem, where the Lord will rule over them from the Temple Mount. **4.8** *Tower of the flock* is also a place-name: Migdal Eder, situated between Bethlehem and Hebron, where Jacob tented after burying Rachel (Gen 35.21). Towers were sometimes erected to protect pastures. Here *tower of the flock* designates Mount Zion. *Hill* (Hebrew *'ophel*) refers to the fortified upper sector of capital cities where the palace and other royal buildings stood. In Jerusalem, Ophel designated the area lying between the Temple Mount and the City of David on the southeast hill. **4.9–10** Oracle of salvation, thought to be late on account of "Babylon" (v. 10), which may be a later updating of the oracle. If it is contemporary, the *king* would be Hezekiah. *Counselor* is a title of the king. The travail of childbirth is a common metaphor for the distress of suffering people. **4.10** *Redeem* (Hebrew *ga'al*). The Hebrew root designates obligations based on bonds of blood, such as purchasing the freedom from slavery of a kinsman or avenging the murder of a relative. **4.11–13** Oracle of salvation expressed in a harsh simile of threshing grain. **4.13** *Iron* and *bronze* symbolize strength and hardness, respectively. *Devote* (Hebrew *chrm*) designates holy war, involving total destruction of persons and possessions (Deut 20.16–17).

5.1–6 Passage cited partially in Mt 2.6 in connection with Jesus' birth in Bethlehem. The meaning of this fragment concerning the restoration of Israel's kingship is somewhat uncertain and obscure. **5.1** *They strike . . . upon the cheek* is an act of humiliation expressing contempt for the king. It may refer to King Hezekiah who, in 701 B.C.E., was cowed by Sennacherib. **5.2** *Bethlehem*, a small town five miles south of Jerusalem, assumed importance in the Christian era on account of its association with the birth of Jesus. David, a native of Bethlehem, was anointed there by Samuel (1 Sam 16.1–13). *Ephrathah* is identified with Bethlehem. The relationship between Bethlehem and Ephrathah is unclear. Ephrathah may have been the ancient name of Bethlehem, or it may have been absorbed into Bethlehem. This undistinguished town was paradoxically to be the source of salvation. *Me* refers to God. *Whose ori-*

who are one of the little clans
of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to rule in Israel,
whose origin is from of old,
from ancient days.
3 Therefore he shall give them up
until the time
when she who is in labor has
brought forth;
then the rest of his kindred shall
return
to the people of Israel.
4 And he shall stand and feed his
flock in the strength of
the LORD,
in the majesty of the name of
the LORD his God.
And they shall live secure, for
now he shall be great
to the ends of the earth;
5 and he shall be the one of peace.

If the Assyrians come into
our land
and tread upon our soil,[p]
we will raise against them seven
shepherds
and eight installed as rulers.
6 They shall rule the land of
Assyria with the sword,
and the land of Nimrod with
the drawn sword;[q]
they[r] shall rescue us from the
Assyrians
if they come into our land
or tread within our border.

The Future Role of the Remnant

7 Then the remnant of Jacob,
surrounded by many peoples,
shall be like dew from the LORD,
like showers on the grass,
which do not depend upon
people
or wait for any mortal.
8 And among the nations the
remnant of Jacob,
surrounded by many peoples,
shall be like a lion among the
animals of the forest,
like a young lion among the
flocks of sheep,
which, when it goes through,
treads down
and tears in pieces, with no one
to deliver.
9 Your hand shall be lifted up over
your adversaries,
and all your enemies shall be
cut off.

10 In that day, says the LORD,
I will cut off your horses from
among you
and will destroy your chariots;
11 and I will cut off the cities of
your land
and throw down all your
strongholds;
12 and I will cut off sorceries from
your hand,
and you shall have no more
soothsayers;
13 and I will cut off your images
and your pillars from
among you,
and you shall bow down no more
to the work of your hands;
14 and I will uproot your sacred
poles[s] from among you
and destroy your towns.

p Gk: Heb *in our palaces* *q* Cn: Heb *in its entrances* *r* Heb *he* *s* Heb *Asherim*

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gin . . . ancient days refers to the Davidic covenant (2 Sam 7). **5.3** Labor pains symbolizing distress may refer to a time frame rather than to a person. **5.4** Description, comparable to the royal psalms, of the ideal shepherd-king, who will bring security and peace. **5.5–6** Victory over the unrelenting Assyrians to be accomplished by Israel's own leaders. **5.5** *Seven . . . eight*, numerical progression as in Am 1.3, signifying an indefinite number. The reference is to an alliance of rulers defeating the Assyrians. **5.6** *Land of Nimrod*, a poetic term for Assyria, is in parallel with *land of Assyria*. *Nimrod*, renowned as a hunter, was an ancient Mesopotamian king (Gen 10.8–12).

5.7–9 Oracle of salvation expressing victory over other nations. **5.10–15** As part of the messianic restoration, Israel will be stripped of all those things that have caused alienation from the Lord, including military armament, sorcery, and idolatrous worship. **5.13** *Images* were carved or sculptured from stone, metal, or wood. Representations of God were forbidden to the Israelites (Ex 20.4; Deut 5.8). *Pillars* refer to standing stone monuments with a variety of functions; they may have been symbols of the male deity (Deut 16.22; 1 Kings 14.23). *Work of your hands* signifies idols sardonically. **5.14** *Sacred poles* designates wooden cult symbols of the Canaanite

15 And in anger and wrath I will
execute vengeance
on the nations that did not
obey.

God Challenges Israel

6 Hear what the LORD says:
Rise, plead your case before
the mountains,
and let the hills hear your
voice.
2 Hear, you mountains, the
controversy of the LORD,
and you enduring foundations
of the earth;
for the LORD has a controversy
with his people,
and he will contend with Israel.

3 "O my people, what have I done
to you?
In what have I wearied you?
Answer me!
4 For I brought you up from the
land of Egypt,
and redeemed you from the
house of slavery;
and I sent before you Moses,
Aaron, and Miriam.
5 O my people, remember now
what King Balak of Moab
devised,
what Balaam son of Beor
answered him,
and what happened from Shittim
to Gilgal,
that you may know the saving
acts of the LORD."

6 "With what shall I come before
the LORD,
and bow myself before God
on high?
Shall I come before him with
burnt offerings,
with calves a year old?
7 Will the LORD be pleased with
thousands of rams,
with ten thousands of rivers
of oil?
Shall I give my firstborn for my
transgression,
the fruit of my body for the sin
of my soul?"
8 He has told you, O mortal, what
is good;
and what does the LORD
require of you
but to do justice, and to love
kindness,
and to walk humbly with
your God?

Cheating and Violence to Be Punished

9 The voice of the LORD cries to
the city
(it is sound wisdom to fear
your name):
Hear, O tribe and assembly of
the city![t]
10 Can I forget[u] the treasures of
wickedness in the house of
the wicked,
and the scant measure that is
accursed?
11 Can I tolerate wicked scales
and a bag of dishonest weights?
12 Your[v] wealthy are full of
violence;
your[w] inhabitants speak lies,
with tongues of deceit in
their mouths.

t Cn Compare Gk: Heb *tribe, and who has appointed it yet?* *u* Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain
v Heb *Whose* *w* Heb *whose*

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mother goddess Asherah. This passage may be associated with the reform of Hezekiah.

6.1–8 A covenant lawsuit (Hebrew *rīv*) against an ungrateful people, with the prophet as attorney. **6.1–2** Summons of the natural elements as witnesses. **6.3–5** The Lord's charge as plaintiff. **6.4** The events of the exodus. **6.5** *King Balak* tried unsuccessfully to persuade the prophet Balaam to curse the Israelite armies (Num 22–24). *From Shittim to Gilgal*, from the east to the west side of the Jordan. *Shittim* was the site of Israel's camp under Joshua east of the Jordan River; *Gilgal* was the site of the Israelite camp after crossing the Jordan (Josh 3–5). **6.6–7** Defendant's plea in the form of questions that are answered negatively in v. 8. **6.6** *Burnt offerings*, or holocausts in which the entire victim is burned, and is thus totally dedicated to God. **6.7** *Give my firstborn* refers to human sacrifice practiced in Judah under kings Ahaz (2 Kings 16.3) and Manasseh (2 Kings 21.6). **6.8** Famous judicial verdict based on the obligations of the covenant; also, a perfect summary of the prophetic teaching on true religion.

6.9–16 Oracle of judgment addressed to Jerusalem because of social sins. **6.10–11** Cheat-

13 Therefore I have begun[x] to
strike you down,
making you desolate because of
your sins.
14 You shall eat, but not be satisfied,
and there shall be a gnawing
hunger within you;
you shall put away, but not save,
and what you save, I will hand
over to the sword.
15 You shall sow, but not reap;
you shall tread olives, but not
anoint yourselves with oil;
you shall tread grapes, but not
drink wine.
16 For you have kept the statutes
of Omri[y]
and all the works of the house
of Ahab,
and you have followed their
counsels.
Therefore I will make you a
desolation, and your[z]
inhabitants an object
of hissing;
so you shall bear the scorn of
my people.

The Total Corruption of the People

7 Woe is me! For I have become like
one who,
after the summer fruit has
been gathered,
after the vintage has been
gleaned,
finds no cluster to eat;
there is no first-ripe fig for
which I hunger.
2 The faithful have disappeared
from the land,
and there is no one left who
is upright;
they all lie in wait for blood,
and they hunt each other
with nets.
3 Their hands are skilled to do evil;
the official and the judge ask
for a bribe,
and the powerful dictate what
they desire;
thus they pervert justice.[a]
4 The best of them is like a brier,
the most upright of them a
thorn hedge.
The day of their[b] sentinels, of
their[b] punishment,
has come;
now their confusion is at hand.
5 Put no trust in a friend,
have no confidence in a
loved one;
guard the doors of your mouth
from her who lies in your
embrace;
6 for the son treats the father with
contempt,
the daughter rises up against
her mother,
the daughter-in-law against her
mother-in-law;
your enemies are members of
your own household.
7 But as for me, I will look to
the LORD,
I will wait for the God of my
salvation;
my God will hear me.

Penitence and Trust in God

8 Do not rejoice over me, O my
enemy;
when I fall, I shall rise;
when I sit in darkness,
the LORD will be a light to me.
9 I must bear the indignation of
the LORD,

x Gk Syr Vg: Heb *have made sick* y Gk Syr Vg Tg: Heb *the statutes of Omri are kept* z Heb *its*
a Cn: Heb *they weave it* b Heb *your*

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ing with fraudulent weights and measures (Lev 19.35–36; Deut 25.13–16). **6.14–15** Curses invoked for breaking the covenant (Deut 28.30–31, 38–40). **6.16** The sins of Samaria. *Omri* and his son *Ahab*, kings of Israel in the ninth century B.C.E., were guilty of syncretism and apostasy (1 Kings 16.25–26, 30–33).

7.1–7 A lamentation was uttered by the prophet, who feels alone and abandoned as he undertakes the futile task of finding a good person. **7.2–4** In the absence of honorable people, only the treacherous, including the civil leaders, remain. **7.5–6** Normal human relations, even among family members, have ceased for lack of trust. **7.6** See Mt 10.35–36; Lk 12.53. **7.7** Micah, mentioning God three times, professes his faith in the Lord.

7.8–20 Psalm of hope. **7.8–10** The people, confident of their deliverance, confess their sins. The unnamed *enemy* may be Assyria.

because I have sinned
against him,
until he takes my side
and executes judgment for me.
He will bring me out to the light;
I shall see his vindication.
10 Then my enemy will see,
and shame will cover her who
said to me,
"Where is the LORD your God?"
My eyes will see her downfall;[c]
now she will be trodden down
like the mire of the streets.

11 A day for the building of your
walls!
In that day the boundary shall
be far extended.
12 In that day they will come to you
from Assyria to[d] Egypt,
and from Egypt to the River,
from sea to sea and from
mountain to mountain.
13 But the earth will be desolate
because of its inhabitants,
for the fruit of their doings.

14 Shepherd your people with
your staff,
the flock that belongs to you,
which lives alone in a forest
in the midst of a garden land;
let them feed in Bashan and
Gilead
as in the days of old.
15 As in the days when you came
out of the land of Egypt,
show us[e] marvelous things.
16 The nations shall see and be
ashamed
of all their might;
they shall lay their hands on
their mouths;
their ears shall be deaf;
17 they shall lick dust like a snake,
like the crawling things of
the earth;
they shall come trembling out of
their fortresses;
they shall turn in dread to the
LORD our God,
and they shall stand in fear
of you.

18 Who is a God like you, pardoning
iniquity
and passing over the
transgression
of the remnant of your[f]
possession?
He does not retain his anger
forever,
because he delights in showing
clemency.
19 He will again have compassion
upon us;
he will tread our iniquities
under foot.
You will cast all our[g] sins
into the depths of the sea.
20 You will show faithfulness to
Jacob
and unswerving loyalty to
Abraham,
as you have sworn to our
ancestors
from the days of old.

c Heb lacks *downfall* d One Ms: MT *Assyria and cities of* e Cn: Heb *I will show him* f Heb *his* g Gk Syr Vg Tg: Heb *their*

7.11–13 Restoration and repopulation in the future. **7.12** *River* refers to the Euphrates in Mesopotamia (modern Iraq). **7.14–17** Prayer for restoration in which the Lord is the shepherd and the people are God's flock. **7.14** *Bashan* designates the fertile plateau northeast of the Jordan River. *Gilead* is a highland region, rich in pasture, lying east of the Jordan. Both symbolize abundance. **7.15** *You* refers to the Lord. **7.16–17** The nations other than Israel will be humiliated. **7.18–20** The community's confession of faith in God who is loving and forgiving echoes Ex 34.6–7.

NAHUM

Date

NAHUM IS A POETIC BOOK filled with vivid images that express the Lord's coming judgment against Nineveh. The brief superscription (1.1) gives no hint of the date of Nahum's activity. However, it is reasonable to assume that the oracles were delivered after the fall of Thebes (663 B.C.E.), alluded to in 3.8, and prior to the fall of Nineveh (612 B.C.E.).

Content and Message

The announcement of Nineveh's impending fall is placed in the context of the initial psalm (1.2–8), which pictures a God of enormous power who sees Judah's need for assurance that the Lord will deliver it. Nearly one hundred years after the destruction of the Northern Kingdom (Israel) at the hand of the Assyrians (722 B.C.E.) and prior to Josiah's reform (621 B.C.E.), Judah must have heard these oracles as both reassuring and terrifying. To know that the Lord "is slow to anger but great in power" (1.3) and "a stronghold in a day of trouble" (1.7) gives profound assurance in the face of a terrible enemy like Assyria. On the other hand, Judah knows that there are those in its midst who question the Lord's resolve to destroy the enemy (1.9–10). Nahum's oracles do not call the Judahites into account for their transgressions but must have reminded them that their God above all else will not permit oppression. The assortment of utterances collected in the book of Nahum encompasses both judgment and salvation. Judgment will come for any people, like the inhabitants of Nineveh, who would subvert God's justice. Salvation will come to Judah as a result of God's judgment on Nineveh (1.12), thus making possible once again the joyous celebration of sacred festivals (1.15).

Canonical Context

The book of Nahum has often been criticized as vengeful and lacking in the strong moral tone of a book like Amos. Some have suggested reading Jonah as a complement to Nahum, to make sure that God's compassion is seen. These

concerns about the religious and theological perspectives of Nahum, along with a series of literary and historical issues, continue all too often to impede the reading of the book. However, one must see the bold metaphors of the vision of Nahum (1.1), place the book among his contemporaries such as Habakkuk, Jeremiah, and Zephaniah, and hear the interplay between God's judgment and salvation. *Kent Harold Richards*

1 An oracle concerning Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum of Elkosh.

A Psalm of God's Power

2 A jealous and avenging God is the LORD,
the LORD is avenging and wrathful;
the LORD takes vengeance on his adversaries
and rages against his enemies.
3 The LORD is slow to anger but great in power,
and the LORD will by no means clear the guilty.

His way is in whirlwind and storm,
and the clouds are the dust of his feet.
4 He rebukes the sea and makes it dry,
and he dries up all the rivers;
Bashan and Carmel wither,
and the bloom of Lebanon fades.
5 The mountains quake before him,
and the hills melt;
the earth heaves before him,
the world and all who live in it.

6 Who can stand before his indignation?
Who can endure the heat of his anger?
His wrath is poured out like fire,
and by him the rocks are broken in pieces.
7 The LORD is good,
a stronghold in a day of trouble;
he protects those who take refuge in him,
8 even in a rushing flood.
He will make a full end of his adversaries,[a]
and will pursue his enemies into darkness.

a Gk: Heb *of her place*

1.1 The title, or superscription, identifies Nahum as an *oracle* (lit. "burden"; cf. Isa 13.1; Hab 1.1; Zech 9.1; Mal 1.1) against Nineveh and as a *book of the vision*. No other superscription of a prophetic book refers to the contents as a *book*, although Hab 2.2 refers to the Lord instructing the prophet to "write the vision." *Vision* is used in prophetic superscriptions (Isa 1.1; Ob 1). *Elkosh*, an unknown location mentioned no other place in the Bible.

1.2–8 (9) An incomplete alphabetic (acrostic) psalm (cf. Pss 9–10); only the first half of the Hebrew alphabet can be reconstructed. The psalm expresses in awesome, theophanic terms the Lord's protection of *those who take refuge* (v. 7; cf. Pss 27.1; 31.4) in the God who is creator and judge of all adversaries. **1.2** *God*. The Hebrew uses El and not the more common Elohim. *Wrathful*, lit. "a baal of wrath." That the Hebrew uses terms such as *baal* and *El*, which were divine names in the Canaanite religion, suggests Canaanite mythic images, along with the terms "sea" and "rivers" (v. 4) and the images of storm and fire throughout the psalm (cf. Ps 29). *Avenging* and *vengeance* arise from a legal sense of justifiable vindication and not rancorous retaliation (see Ps 94). **1.3** See Ex 34.6–7. **1.4** *Bashan*, *Carmel*, and *Lebanon* are especially noted for fertility, so their drying up enforces the power of the theophanic images (cf. Isa 19.5–7).

Assurance of Deliverance

9 Why do you plot against the
LORD?
He will make an end;
no adversary will rise up twice.
10 Like thorns they are entangled,
like drunkards they are drunk;
they are consumed like dry
straw.
11 From you one has gone out
who plots evil against the LORD,
one who counsels wickedness.

12 Thus says the LORD,
"Though they are at full strength
and many,[b]
they will be cut off and
pass away.
Though I have afflicted you,
I will afflict you no more.
13 And now I will break off his yoke
from you
and snap the bonds that
bind you."

14 The LORD has commanded
concerning you:
"Your name shall be
perpetuated no longer;
from the house of your gods I
will cut off
the carved image and the
cast image.
I will make your grave, for you
are worthless."

15[c] Look! On the mountains the feet
of one
who brings good tidings,
who proclaims peace!
Celebrate your festivals, O Judah,
fulfill your vows,
for never again shall the wicked
invade you;
they are utterly cut off.

Oracles Against Nineveh

2 A shatterer[d] has come up
against you.
Guard the ramparts;
watch the road;
gird your loins;
collect all your strength.

2 (For the LORD is restoring the
majesty of Jacob,
as well as the majesty of Israel,
though ravagers have ravaged
them
and ruined their branches.)

3 The shields of his warriors
are red;
his soldiers are clothed in
crimson.
The metal on the chariots flashes
on the day when he musters
them;
the chargers[e] prance.
4 The chariots race madly through
the streets,
they rush to and fro through
the squares;
their appearance is like torches,
they dart like lightning.

b Meaning of Heb uncertain *c* Ch 2.1 in Heb
d Cn: Heb *scatterer* *e* Cn Compare Gk Syr: Heb *cypresses*

1.9–15 The prophet's promise and assurance of Judah's deliverance. The addressee is ambiguous, not only because the English language does not distinguish gender and number in the second person, "you," but also because the Hebrew text uses diverse second-person grammatical forms. Judah and Jerusalem seem to be addressed in vv. 9–10, 11–13 and are specifically cited in v. 15. The second masculine singular of v. 14 is best understood as an address to the king of Assyria. **1.15** The import of this section is clear, namely, the one bringing *good tidings* and *peace* has arrived and *Judah* may *celebrate*, because the end of Nineveh has come. According to 2 Kings 23.21–25, the public celebration of Passover was possible after the Assyrian domination was concluded during the reign of Josiah (640–609 B.C.E.).

2.1–3.19 Oracles concerning the king of Assyria and Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. The *king of Assyria* is specifically addressed in 3.18 and is the assumed addressee in 2.1, *you*. *Nineveh* (2.8), *City of bloodshed* (3.1), is spoken of extensively between the addresses to the king at the beginning and end. These diverse oracles declare to Judah that the Assyrians will no longer be the oppressor. **2.1–13** A succession of diverse and powerful images depicting the fall of Nineveh. **2.2** Parentheses indicate a later insertion. The verse draws on earlier prophetic motifs and ties the chapter back into the assurance of deliverance in the previous chapter. **2.3–5** The images, possibly of a siege, begin with a swift, finely outfitted

5 He calls his officers;
they stumble as they come forward;
they hasten to the wall,
and the mantelet[f] is set up.
6 The river gates are opened,
the palace trembles.
7 It is decreed[f] that the city[g] be exiled,
its slave women led away,
moaning like doves
and beating their breasts.
8 Nineveh is like a pool
whose waters[h] run away.
"Halt! Halt!"—
but no one turns back.
9 "Plunder the silver,
plunder the gold!
There is no end of treasure!
An abundance of every precious thing!"

10 Devastation, desolation, and destruction!
Hearts faint and knees tremble,
all loins quake,
all faces grow pale!
11 What became of the lions' den,
the cave[i] of the young lions,
where the lion goes,
and the lion's cubs, with no one to disturb them?
12 The lion has torn enough for his whelps
and strangled prey for his lionesses;
he has filled his caves with prey
and his dens with torn flesh.

13 See, I am against you, says the LORD of hosts, and I will burn your[j] chariots in smoke, and the sword shall devour your young lions; I will cut off your prey from the earth, and the voice of your messengers shall be heard no more.

3 Ah! City of bloodshed,
utterly deceitful, full of booty—
no end to the plunder!
2 The crack of whip and rumble of wheel,
galloping horse and bounding chariot!
3 Horsemen charging,
flashing sword and glittering spear,
piles of dead,
heaps of corpses,
dead bodies without end—
they stumble over the bodies!
4 Because of the countless debaucheries of the prostitute,
gracefully alluring, mistress of sorcery,
who enslaves[k] nations through her debaucheries,
and peoples through her sorcery,
5 I am against you,
says the LORD of hosts,
and will lift up your skirts over your face;
and I will let nations look on your nakedness
and kingdoms on your shame.
6 I will throw filth at you
and treat you with contempt,
and make you a spectacle.
7 Then all who see you will shrink from you and say,
"Nineveh is devastated; who will bemoan her?"
Where shall I seek comforters for you?

8 Are you better than Thebes[l]

f Meaning of Heb uncertain *g* Heb *it*
h Cn Compare Gk: Heb *a pool, from the days that she has become, and they* *i* Cn: Heb *pasture*
j Heb *her* *k* Heb *sells* *l* Heb *No-amon*

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army reminiscent of the warrior imagery in 1.2–8. **2.6, 8** The water/flood images of 1.4, 8 are revisited with convincing power given the location of Nineveh near the Tigris River. **2.11–13** The taunting image of the *lion* concludes the section. The lion, associated with Assyria's ferocious strength even in Assyrian reliefs, succumbs. The taunt is reinforced by virtue of the frequent identification of the Lord with the power of the lion (Hos 5.14; 13.8; Am 3.8). **3.1–17** A woe oracle addressed to Nineveh. **3.1–3** The oracle commences with the war imagery begun in 2.3–5. **3.4–6** A new image of Nineveh as the *prostitute, gracefully alluring* all nations to her in order to plunder them. However, the seducing will no longer take place. The Lord will *lift up* [her] *skirts* and expose the *nakedness* (cf. Jer 13.22, 26), just as an enemy handles a conquered city (cf. Isa 47.1–3). **3.8–10** A rhetorical question (v. 8) and extended answer (vv. 9–10) compares Nineveh with the extensively fortified *Thebes*, capital of Upper Egypt captured by the Assyrians under Ashurbanipal in 663 B.C.E. Thebes is located on the Nile about 350 miles

that sat by the Nile,
with water around her,
her rampart a sea,
water her wall?
9 Ethiopia[m] was her strength,
Egypt too, and that without limit;
Put and the Libyans were her[n] helpers.

10 Yet she became an exile,
she went into captivity;
even her infants were dashed in pieces
at the head of every street;
lots were cast for her nobles,
all her dignitaries were bound in fetters.
11 You also will be drunken,
you will go into hiding;[o]
you will seek
a refuge from the enemy.
12 All your fortresses are like fig trees
with first-ripe figs—
if shaken they fall
into the mouth of the eater.
13 Look at your troops:
they are women in your midst.
The gates of your land
are wide open to your foes;
fire has devoured the bars of your gates.

14 Draw water for the siege,
strengthen your forts;
trample the clay,
tread the mortar,
take hold of the brick mold!
15 There the fire will devour you,
the sword will cut you off.
It will devour you like the locust.

Multiply yourselves like the locust,
multiply like the grasshopper!
16 You increased your merchants
more than the stars of the heavens.
The locust sheds its skin and flies away.
17 Your guards are like grasshoppers,
your scribes like swarms[o] of locusts
settling on the fences
on a cold day—
when the sun rises, they fly away;
no one knows where they have gone.

18 Your shepherds are asleep,
O king of Assyria;
your nobles slumber.
Your people are scattered on the mountains
with no one to gather them.
19 There is no assuaging your hurt,
your wound is mortal.
All who hear the news about you
clap their hands over you.
For who has ever escaped
your endless cruelty?

m Or *Nubia*; Heb *Cush* *n* Gk: Heb *your*
o Meaning of Heb uncertain

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south of modern Cairo. *Ethiopia*'s twenty-fifth dynasty controlled Egypt during this period. The listing of *Egypt*, *Put* (precise location unknown), and the *Libyans* illustrates the indomitability of Thebes. **3.11–14** Even more than Thebes, Nineveh will be little more than like the *first-ripe figs* which fall. **3.15–17** The oracle concludes with a multileveled comparison of Nineveh and its leaders with the *locust*. First, the comparison concerns the way they both *devour* (v. 15a), then ironically suggests that Nineveh must *multiply* (vv. 15b–16a) as rapidly as the locust, and concludes with the notion of the ephemerality of Nineveh's *guards* and *scribes* (v. 17) who, like the locust, will disappear. **3.18–19** From the leaders in the preceding verses the book turns to address the *king of Assyria*, who is so bewildered with the destruction that he must be told his leaders are *asleep*, most probably meaning they are dead (see Ps 13.3; Jer 51.39; 57). *All who hear the news*, presumably even those beyond Judah, will *clap their hands*. They will rejoice at knowing the Assyrian king finally will get what he has given to so many neighboring people, death and suffering. The book ends with a question, just as does the book of Jonah, which also is concerned with Nineveh.

HABAKKUK

Traditional Interpretations of the Book

THE BOOK OF HABAKKUK gives little direct information about the prophet or the historical background out of which his words emerge. This has led to diverse understandings of the book and the prophet within religious traditions. In Jewish tradition the prayer of Habakkuk in ch. 3 is associated with the giving of the Torah at Sinai. The development of the Christian doctrine of "justification by faith" adapts Hab 2.4b (cf. Rom 1.17, Gal 3.11). The members of the Qumran community, who wrote what we now refer to as the Dead Sea Scrolls, related Hab 1–2 to their own time (first century B.C.E.) in a commentary which has been preserved. An addition to Daniel entitled Bel and the Dragon from the second century B.C.E. refers to the prophet Habakkuk, and some versions attribute the addition to Habakkuk.

Historical Background and Message

Considerable agreement exists among scholars that the oracles come from different occasions during the last quarter of the seventh century B.C.E. and the first decade of the sixth century B.C.E. The Chaldeans (1.6–10), who bring God's judgment on Judah in 597 B.C.E., generate for Habakkuk after 597 the concern that confidence in the righteousness of God will not be understood. While some of the oracles seem to be addressed to the injustices of a Judean king like Jehoiakim (609–598 B.C.E.; see 1.2–4), it is clear that this is not the ultimate message of Habakkuk. That message is found in the concluding prayer in which the prophet sees God's intervention portrayed in cosmic, theophanic terms. Habakkuk's repeated complaints and questions find their answer in the affirmation "God, the LORD, is my strength" (3.19).

Literary Character

The book uses diverse types of literature to convey its meaning. Dominant among these is the first-person, almost autobiographical, account in the dialogue between the prophet and God. This is further developed within the prayer of

ch. 3, which ends on the above-mentioned note of confidence found in individual thanksgivings. Some have seen the book shaped by liturgical concerns because of the numerous musical and liturgical elements, especially in the last chapter, and the dialogical shaping of the first two chapters. The identification of no single type of literature will provide a key to the book. Rather, one must be attentive with eye and ear to the powerful images of justice and injustice, confidence and doubt, salvation and judgment, God and humankind. *Kent Harold Richards*

1 The oracle that the prophet Habakkuk saw.

Dialogue Between Prophet and God

2 O LORD, how long shall I cry
for help,
and you will not listen?
Or cry to you "Violence!"
and you will not save?
3 Why do you make me see
wrongdoing
and look at trouble?
Destruction and violence are
before me;
strife and contention arise.
4 So the law becomes slack
and justice never prevails.
The wicked surround the
righteous—
therefore judgment comes forth
perverted.

5 Look at the nations, and see!
Be astonished! Be astounded!
For a work is being done in
your days
that you would not believe if
you were told.
6 For I am rousing the Chaldeans,
that fierce and impetuous
nation,
who march through the breadth
of the earth
to seize dwellings not their own.
7 Dread and fearsome are they;
their justice and dignity
proceed from themselves.
8 Their horses are swifter than
leopards,
more menacing than wolves
at dusk;
their horses charge.
Their horsemen come from
far away;
they fly like an eagle swift
to devour.
9 They all come for violence,
with faces pressing[a] forward;
they gather captives like sand.
10 At kings they scoff,
and of rulers they make sport.
They laugh at every fortress,
and heap up earth to take it.
11 Then they sweep by like the wind;
they transgress and become
guilty;
their own might is their god!

a Meaning of Heb uncertain

1.1 The title, or superscription, identifies Habakkuk as an *oracle* (lit. "burden"; cf. Isa 13.1; Nah 1.1; Zech 9.1; Mal 1.1) from a *prophet*. This heading is for chs. 1–2 since at the beginning of ch. 3 there is another superscription (see 3.1).

1.2–2.20 A series of exchanges between the prophet and God. **1.2–4** Habakkuk begins the exchange with God using language typical of the complaint (see Job 19.1–7; Ps 13) to question *how long* and *why* the injustice within Judah, perpetrated by the *wicked*, will persist. **1.2** "*Violence!*" is shouted by Habakkuk. The term appears six times in Habakkuk (cf. 1.3, 9; 2.8, 17), always signifying confusion and the disruption of order (cf. Gen 6.11, 13). **1.4** *Law* (Hebrew *torah*) refers to all that would maintain order including prophetic oracle and priestly instruction. **1.5–11** The speaker is not explicitly identified, but it seems to be God responding, somewhat unexpectedly with an oracle of judgment. The judgment will be brought by the *Chaldeans* (e.g., Babylonians), an enemy. This motif of God's judgment being carried out by an enemy of God's people is a frequent prophetic motif (e.g., Isa 5.26–30; Jer 32.4–5, 24–25, 28–29). Despite the frequency of the motif, it seems to emphasize the unexpected-

12 Are you not from of old,
O LORD my God, my
Holy One?
You[b] shall not die.
O LORD, you have marked them
for judgment;
and you, O Rock, have
established them for
punishment.
13 Your eyes are too pure to
behold evil,
and you cannot look on
wrongdoing;
why do you look on the
treacherous,
and are silent when the wicked
swallow
those more righteous than
they?
14 You have made people like the
fish of the sea,
like crawling things that have
no ruler.

15 The enemy[c] brings all of them
up with a hook;
he drags them out with his
net,
he gathers them in his seine;
so he rejoices and exults.
16 Therefore he sacrifices to his
net
and makes offerings to his
seine;
for by them his portion is lavish,
and his food is rich.
17 Is he then to keep on emptying
his net,
and destroying nations without
mercy?

2 I will stand at my watchpost,
and station myself on the
rampart;
I will keep watch to see what he
will say to me,
and what he[d] will answer
concerning my complaint.
2 Then the LORD answered me
and said:
Write the vision;
make it plain on tablets,
so that a runner may read it.
3 For there is still a vision for the
appointed time;
it speaks of the end, and does
not lie.
If it seems to tarry, wait for it;
it will surely come, it will
not delay.
4 Look at the proud!
Their spirit is not right in
them,
but the righteous live by
their faith.[e]
5 Moreover, wealth[f] is
treacherous;
the arrogant do not endure.
They open their throats wide
as Sheol;
like Death they never have
enough.
They gather all nations for
themselves,
and collect all peoples as
their own.

6 Shall not everyone taunt such peo-

b Ancient Heb tradition: MT *We* *c* Heb *He*
d Syr: Heb *I* *e* Or *faithfulness* *f* Other Heb
Mss read *wine*

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ness of God's response. **1.12–17** Habakkuk's second complaint registers the shock that God could use the *enemy* (v. 15) to bring judgment on the people since God's *eyes are too pure to behold evil* (v. 13). **1.12** *Holy One* is used widely in Isaiah (e.g., Isa 1.4; 5.19, 24) and later in Hab 3.13. **1.14** *You have made people like the fish of the sea* begins the comparison of people to fish. Here people are likened to fish and *crawling things that have no ruler*. This is in stark opposition to the views expressed in Ps 8, where humans are slightly less than God and provide order for the entire natural world. **1.15** Moreover, the *enemy* who is bringing the judgment treats the people merely as fish. **1.16** *Sacrifices to his net* emphasizes the value the Babylonians placed on those implements with which they attained their power. **2.1–4** The prophet takes his *watchpost* (see Isa 21.8; Ezek 33.1–9) to await God's response to his second complaint. **2.2** *Write the vision* is indicative of the connection in Habakkuk and other prophetic traditions between hearing and seeing (see Am 1.1; Mic 1.1). Putting the vision in writing is to preserve it for the appropriate time of fulfillment (see Isa 30.8). **2.4** Contrasted with the *proud* are *the righteous* [who] *live by their faith* and trust in the reliability of God's fulfilling the vision. **2.5–20** A series of five woe oracles expands on the meaning of 2.1–4. **2.5** The *arrogant* are the same as the *proud* (v. 4). *Gather*, a bringing together in a negative sense just as the gathering in 1.15. **2.6** The *taunt* of the Babylonians by *everyone* who has suffered at their hands. *Alas*, (also vv. 9, 12, 15, 17) sets off each of the

ple and, with mocking riddles, say about them,
"Alas for you who heap up what
is not your own!"
How long will you load
yourselves with goods taken
in pledge?
7 Will not your own creditors
suddenly rise,
and those who make you
tremble wake up?
Then you will be booty for
them.
8 Because you have plundered
many nations,
all that survive of the peoples
shall plunder you—
because of human bloodshed, and
violence to the earth,
to cities and all who live in
them.

9 "Alas for you who get evil gain
for your houses,
setting your nest on high
to be safe from the reach of
harm!"
10 You have devised shame for
your house
by cutting off many peoples;
you have forfeited your life.
11 The very stones will cry out from
the wall,
and the plaster[g] will respond
from the woodwork.

12 "Alas for you who build a town
by bloodshed,
and found a city on iniquity!"
13 Is it not from the LORD of hosts
that peoples labor only to feed
the flames,
and nations weary themselves
for nothing?
14 But the earth will be filled
with the knowledge of the glory
of the LORD,
as the waters cover the sea.

15 "Alas for you who make your
neighbors drink,
pouring out your wrath[h] until
they are drunk,
in order to gaze on their
nakedness!"
16 You will be sated with contempt
instead of glory.
Drink, you yourself, and
stagger![i]
The cup in the LORD's right hand
will come around to you,
and shame will come upon
your glory!
17 For the violence done to Lebanon
will overwhelm you;
the destruction of the animals
will terrify you—[j]
because of human bloodshed and
violence to the earth,
to cities and all who live in
them.

18 What use is an idol
once its maker has shaped it—
a cast image, a teacher of lies?
For its maker trusts in what has
been made,
though the product is only an
idol that cannot speak!
19 Alas for you who say to the
wood, "Wake up!"
to silent stone, "Rouse
yourself!"
Can it teach?
See, it is gold and silver plated,
and there is no breath in it
at all.

g Or *beam* *h* Or *poison* *i* Q Ms Gk: MT *be uncircumcised* *j* Gk Syr: Meaning of Heb uncertain

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following five woe oracles directed toward the various crimes of the Babylonians. **2.6b–8** The first woe oracle is directed toward plundering. **2.8** Repeated again in 2.17b. **2.9–11** The second woe oracle indicates that even the buildings constructed for safety by the Babylonians will *cry out* (cf. 1.2) against the injustices. **2.12–14** The third woe oracle suggests that those who *build a town by bloodshed* will be punished, and this will become visible when the *glory of the LORD* fills the earth (cf. Isa 11.9). **2.15–17** The metaphor of drinking is used in this fourth woe oracle to speak of how the oppressor degraded the oppressed (see Jer 51.7) by forcing them to drink and how the *cup in the LORD's right hand* will be turned on the oppressor in like manner (see Jer 25.15–27). *Violence.* See note on 1.2. **2.18–20** The final woe oracle decries idolatry, namely, the inability to recognize the true God. The woe oracles conclude with the simple request, amongst all the clatter of these words, to *keep silence* before the Lord (cf. Ps 46.10).

20 But the LORD is in his holy
temple;
let all the earth keep silence
before him!

The Prayer of Habakkuk

3 A prayer of the prophet Habakkuk
according to Shigionoth.

2 O LORD, I have heard of your
renown,
and I stand in awe, O LORD, of
your work.
In our own time revive it;
in our own time make it
known;
in wrath may you remember
mercy.
3 God came from Teman,
the Holy One from Mount
Paran. *Selah*
His glory covered the heavens,
and the earth was full of
his praise.
4 The brightness was like the sun;
rays came forth from his hand,
where his power lay hidden.
5 Before him went pestilence,
and plague followed close
behind.
6 He stopped and shook the earth;
he looked and made the
nations tremble.
The eternal mountains were
shattered;
along his ancient pathways
the everlasting hills sank low.
7 I saw the tents of Cushan under
affliction;
the tent-curtains of the land of
Midian trembled.
8 Was your wrath against the
rivers,[k] O LORD?
Or your anger against the
rivers,[k]
or your rage against the sea,[l]
when you drove your horses,
your chariots to victory?
9 You brandished your naked bow,
sated[m] were the arrows at your
command.[n] *Selah*
You split the earth with rivers.
10 The mountains saw you,
and writhed;
a torrent of water swept by;
the deep gave forth its voice.
The sun[o] raised high its
hands;
11 the moon[p] stood still in its
exalted place,
at the light of your arrows
speeding by,
at the gleam of your flashing
spear.
12 In fury you trod the earth,
in anger you trampled nations.
13 You came forth to save your
people,
to save your anointed.
You crushed the head of the
wicked house,
laying it bare from foundation
to roof.[n] *Selah*
14 You pierced with their[q] own arrows
the head[r] of his warriors,[s]
who came like a whirlwind to
scatter us,[t]

k Or *against River* *l* Or *against Sea*
m Cn: Heb *oaths* *n* Meaning of Heb uncertain
o Heb *It* *p* Heb *sun, moon* *q* Heb *his*
r Or *leader* *s* Vg Compare Gk Syr: Meaning
of Heb uncertain *t* Heb *me*

3.1–19 The so-called prayer of Habakkuk consists of a theophanic vision report (vv. 3–15) embedded in the prophet's prayerful declaration of trust in God (vv. 2, 16–19a) and provided with an editorial superscription and postscript (vv. 1, 19b). **3.1** *Shigionoth* (see Ps 7.1), a musical and liturgical term, along with *Selah* (vv. 3, 9, 13; see Ps 3), which may indicate that the prayer was used in the temple. **3.2** An introduction to the prayer requesting that the Lord's *work* (cf. 1.5) be renewed. The request is that this new work bring salvation. **3.3–15** Description of the new work in a theophanic vision that causes both people and the earth to shake (cf. Judg 5.4–5; Nah 1.3–5). **3.3–7** Description of God coming from the southern mountains near Sinai (cf. Deut 33.2) and through *Cushan* and *Midian*. **3.3** *Holy One*. Cf. 1.12. *Selah*. See note on 3.1. **3.5** *Pestilence and plague* were frequently used by the Lord against enemies (see Ex 5.3; 9.15; Deut 32.24). **3.8, 10** *Was your wrath against the rivers* asks the prophet. *Rivers* and *sea* (also 3.15) are allusions, along with *the deep*, throughout this theophanic vision to God's victory over the cosmic forces of chaos. **3.13** *You came forth to save your people* makes it clear that the salvation has come forth. *Anointed* refers to a Davidic king. *Crushed the head of the wicked house* brings to mind the earlier allu-

gloating as if ready to devour
the poor who were in
hiding.
15 You trampled the sea with
your horses,
churning the mighty waters.

16 I hear, and I tremble within;
my lips quiver at the sound.
Rottenness enters into my bones,
and my steps tremble[u]
beneath me.
I wait quietly for the day of
calamity
to come upon the people who
attack us.

17 Though the fig tree does not
blossom,
and no fruit is on the vines;
though the produce of the
olive fails,
and the fields yield no food;
though the flock is cut off from
the fold,
and there is no herd in the
stalls,
18 yet I will rejoice in the LORD;
I will exult in the God of my
salvation.
19 GOD, the Lord, is my strength;
he makes my feet like the feet
of a deer,
and makes me tread upon the
heights.[v]

To the leader: with stringed[w]
instruments.

u Cn Compare Gk: Meaning of Heb uncertain
v Heb *my heights* *w* Heb *my stringed*

sions to the *wicked* (1.4, 13) who now are defeated. **3.16–19a** These verses describe the prophet's response to the vision he just "heard" (v. 16; cf. 3.2). Although deeply shaken by it, he vows that despite agricultural failings and hardships (v. 17), he will rejoice in the Lord who alone is the source of his confidence (vv. 18–19a). **3.19b** *To the leader: with stringed instruments* is a concluding musical and liturgical notation, much like those found in the superscriptions to many psalms (see, e.g., Pss 4; 6; 54; 61; 76).

ZEPHANIAH

Setting

THE WORDS IN ZEPHANIAH reflect a time early in the reign of Josiah (640–609 B.C.E.) before his reforms were fully developed. As reported in Kings (2 Kings 22.1–23.25), Josiah came to the throne when he was eight years old and not until he was eighteen is there mention of the beginning of his reforming activities. Zephaniah condemns the religious and political leadership, but says little about Josiah, who proves to be one of the few kings since David and Solomon to provide strong moral leadership.

Content and Message

An awareness of the corruption and injustice rampant in Judah is coupled with earlier prophetic traditions, so much so that some have suggested that Zephaniah may have been a disciple of Isaiah. The "day of the LORD" traditions are used to bring a message of judgment against Judah, but not a judgment void of promise and hope. The promise seems to have rested with a just remnant who were among the humble and not part of the corrupt and disobedient leaders with whom Zephaniah must have been intimately familiar, since he was undoubtedly from a prominent family. The restoration of salvation among God's people may stem in part from later editors of the Zephaniah traditions. Nevertheless, it is abundantly clear that God's announcement of judgment brought by Zephaniah was inextricably bound to an anticipated return of fortune for God's people.

Canonical Significance

The book of Zephaniah has never attained the stature of the books of Isaiah or Amos or any of the prophetic traditions on which Zephaniah relied. Nevertheless, the book is a vital link in prophetic traditions. It employs traditional announcements of judgment and salvation. It develops the "day of the LORD" traditions that gave rise to the medieval hymn *Dies Irae*. More importantly, it serves as a reminder of the need for religious renewal—not otherworldly re-

newal, but one where this world will come to reflect God's vision of a world without violence, injustice, and oppression, a world where even God may sing in response to human singing (3.14–17). *Kent Harold Richards*

1 The word of the LORD that came to Zephaniah son of Cushi son of Gedaliah son of Amariah son of Hezekiah, in the days of King Josiah son of Amon of Judah.

Judgment Against Judah and Jerusalem

2 I will utterly sweep away
everything
from the face of the earth, says
the LORD.
3 I will sweep away humans and
animals;
I will sweep away the birds of
the air
and the fish of the sea.
I will make the wicked stumble.[a]
I will cut off humanity
from the face of the earth, says
the LORD.
4 I will stretch out my hand against
Judah,
and against all the inhabitants
of Jerusalem;
and I will cut off from this place
every remnant of Baal
and the name of the idolatrous
priests;[b]
5 those who bow down on the roofs
to the host of the heavens;
those who bow down and swear
to the LORD,
but also swear by Milcom;[c]
6 those who have turned back from
following the LORD,
who have not sought the LORD
or inquired of him.

7 Be silent before the Lord GOD!
For the day of the LORD is
at hand;
the LORD has prepared a
sacrifice,
he has consecrated his guests.

a Cn: Heb *sea, and those who cause the wicked to stumble* *b* Compare Gk: Heb *the idolatrous priests with the priests* *c* Gk Mss Syr Vg: Heb *Malcam* (or, *their king*)

1.1 The title, or superscription, identifies the book as a revelation from the Lord, names the recipient with genealogical information, and concludes with historical information (cf. Hos 1.1; Joel 1.1; Mic 1.1). The long genealogy suggests that the prophet came from a prominent family. *Zephaniah* is a fairly common Hebrew name meaning "the LORD hides or protects." *In the days of King Josiah*, 640–609 B.C.E.

1.2–2.3 A variety of individual announcements of judgment from different occasions that develop older prophetic traditions, especially the "day of the LORD" motif. **1.2–3** An announcement of judgment against all humans and animals sets a universal context which is developed throughout the book. *I will sweep away* occurs three times to emphasize the totality of the destruction (cf. Ps 26.9). *From the face of the earth* begins and ends this judgment, forming a literary device known as an inclusio. The phrase calls to mind the threefold repetition of it in the flood story (cf. Gen 6.7; 7.4; 8.8). *Says the LORD* is a formulaic identification of an oracle of the Lord used extensively in Zephaniah and other prophetic literature. **1.4–6** The beginning of the series of specific announcements of judgment against Judah and Jerusalem. *I will stretch out my hand* typically announces an action against an enemy (see Ezek 14.9, 13; 25.13) instead of toward the Lord's people. *Idolatrous priests* translates a rare Hebrew word that refers to pagan priests banned by Josiah (see 2 Kings 23.5; Hos 10.5). The list of those who will be *cut off* in vv. 5–6 includes syncretists who worship the heavenly bodies (cf. Deut 4.19) and *Milcom*, an Ammonite deity (cf. 2 Kings 23.13), as well as those who were unfaithful (*turned back*; see Ps 78.57). **1.7–13** A direct address to the prophet begins this section. **1.7** The *day of the LORD* is a major motif known widely in Judah and Israel. The expectation was that the Lord would appear one day to destroy all enemies and that this day would be one of great victory for the Lord's people. However, just as with Amos's hearers (Am 5.17–20), Zephaniah announces that the day will bring punishment and not rescue for the Lord's people. *Sacrifice* plays further on the unexpected since Judah will become the offering.

8 And on the day of the LORD's
sacrifice
I will punish the officials and the
king's sons
and all who dress themselves in
foreign attire.
9 On that day I will punish
all who leap over the threshold,
who fill their master's house
with violence and fraud.

10 On that day, says the LORD,
a cry will be heard from the
Fish Gate,
a wail from the Second Quarter,
a loud crash from the hills.
11 The inhabitants of the Mortar
wail,
for all the traders have
perished;
all who weigh out silver are
cut off.
12 At that time I will search
Jerusalem with lamps,
and I will punish the people
who rest complacently[d] on
their dregs,
those who say in their hearts,
"The LORD will not do good,
nor will he do harm."
13 Their wealth shall be plundered,
and their houses laid waste.
Though they build houses,
they shall not inhabit them;
though they plant vineyards,
they shall not drink wine
from them.

14 The great day of the LORD is
near,
near and hastening fast;
the sound of the day of the LORD
is bitter,
the warrior cries aloud there.
15 That day will be a day of wrath,
a day of distress and anguish,
a day of ruin and devastation,
a day of darkness and gloom,
a day of clouds and thick
darkness,
16 a day of trumpet blast and
battle cry
against the fortified cities
and against the lofty
battlements.

17 I will bring such distress upon
people
that they shall walk like
the blind;
because they have sinned
against the LORD,
their blood shall be poured out
like dust,
and their flesh like dung.
18 Neither their silver nor their gold
will be able to save them
on the day of the LORD's wrath;
in the fire of his passion
the whole earth shall be
consumed;
for a full, a terrible end
he will make of all the
inhabitants of the earth.

2 Gather together, gather,
O shameless nation,
2 before you are driven away
like the drifting chaff,[e]
before there comes upon you
the fierce anger of the LORD,
before there comes upon you
the day of the LORD's wrath.
3 Seek the LORD, all you humble of
the land,

d Heb *who thicken* *e* Cn Compare Gk Syr: Heb *before a decree is born; like chaff a day has passed away*

1.8 *I will punish* continues the direct address of the Lord and is repeated two more times (vv. 9, 12) to emphasize the message of judgment. *Foreign attire* continues the objection to syncretism (1.4–5). **1.9** *All who leap over the threshold.* See 1 Sam 5.5. **1.10** *Fish Gate.* See Neh 12.38–39. **1.11** *Mortar* is a district in Jerusalem. **1.14–18** These verses develop with even greater anticipation (*hastening fast*) the coming of the *day of the LORD.* While Judah and Jerusalem are not mentioned in this section, given the immediate context it is apparent they are the recipients of the announcement of utter desolation. **1.18** *The whole earth shall be consumed* returns to the broader context of 1.2–3 and serves to underscore the comprehensiveness of the destruction. **2.1–3** A hint that the people might avoid the "day of the LORD's" wrath. **2.1** *Gather together.* The Hebrew term is used for the gathering of straw or sticks (see Ex 5.7–12; Num 15.32), contrasting with the gathering for rejoicing in 3.20. The *shameless nation* is Judah. The Hebrew term translated *shameless* is unusual; the phrase means lit. a "nation not longing for [God]" (see Ps 84.2). **2.3** *Perhaps* indicates only a hope, not an assurance, that judgment is avoidable.

who do his commands;
seek righteousness, seek humility;
perhaps you may be hidden
on the day of the LORD's wrath.

Judgment Against Other Nations

4 For Gaza shall be deserted,
and Ashkelon shall become a desolation;
Ashdod's people shall be driven out at noon,
and Ekron shall be uprooted.

5 Ah, inhabitants of the seacoast,
you nation of the Cherethites!
The word of the LORD is against you,
O Canaan, land of the Philistines;
and I will destroy you until no inhabitant is left.
6 And you, O seacoast, shall be pastures,
meadows for shepherds
and folds for flocks.
7 The seacoast shall become the possession
of the remnant of the house of Judah,
on which they shall pasture,
and in the houses of Ashkelon
they shall lie down at evening.
For the LORD their God will be mindful of them
and restore their fortunes.

8 I have heard the taunts of Moab
and the revilings of the Ammonites,
how they have taunted my people
and made boasts against their territory.
9 Therefore, as I live, says the LORD of hosts,
the God of Israel,
Moab shall become like Sodom
and the Ammonites like Gomorrah,
a land possessed by nettles and salt pits,
and a waste forever.
The remnant of my people shall plunder them,
and the survivors of my nation shall possess them.
10 This shall be their lot in return for their pride,
because they scoffed and boasted
against the people of the LORD of hosts.
11 The LORD will be terrible against them;
he will shrivel all the gods of the earth,
and to him shall bow down,
each in its place,
all the coasts and islands of the nations.

12 You also, O Ethiopians,[f]
shall be killed by my sword.

13 And he will stretch out his hand against the north,
and destroy Assyria;
and he will make Nineveh a desolation,
a dry waste like the desert.
14 Herds shall lie down in it,
every wild animal;[g]
the desert owl[h] and the screech owl[h]
shall lodge on its capitals;
the owl[i] shall hoot at the window,
the raven[j] croak on the threshold;
for its cedar work will be laid bare.

f Or *Nubians*; Heb *Cushites* *g* Tg Compare Gk: Heb *nation* *h* Meaning of Heb uncertain
i Cn: Heb *a voice* *j* Gk Vg: Heb *desolation*

2.4–15 A familiar ordering found in prophetic books of moving from threats against Judah and Jerusalem to threats against foreign nations. **2.4** *For* links these judgments with those against Judah and serves to underscore the totality of God's judgment, as well as providing an additional motivation for the possibility given Judah in 2.1–3. **2.5** *Philistines.* This ancient enemy of the Hebrew people includes all of the places and peoples mentioned in vv. 5–7. **2.8–10** Judgment against *Moab* and the *Ammonites.* **2.9** *LORD of hosts, the God of Israel* comes from the earlier Zion theology (2 Sam 7.27) and may hint at the hope of reuniting Israel and Judah. **2.13–15** Judgment against *Assyria* and *Nineveh. He will stretch out his hand* recalls the same words used against Judah and Jerusalem in 1.4.

15 Is this the exultant city
that lived secure,
that said to itself,
"I am, and there is no one
else"?
What a desolation it has become,
a lair for wild animals!
Everyone who passes by it
hisses and shakes the fist.

Judgment Against Jerusalem and a Remnant

3 Ah, soiled, defiled,
oppressing city!
2 It has listened to no voice;
it has accepted no correction.
It has not trusted in the LORD;
it has not drawn near to
its God.

3 The officials within it
are roaring lions;
its judges are evening wolves
that leave nothing until
the morning.
4 Its prophets are reckless,
faithless persons;
its priests have profaned what
is sacred,
they have done violence to
the law.
5 The LORD within it is righteous;
he does no wrong.
Every morning he renders his
judgment,
each dawn without fail;
but the unjust knows no shame.

6 I have cut off nations;
their battlements are in ruins;
I have laid waste their streets
so that no one walks in them;
their cities have been made
desolate,
without people, without
inhabitants.
7 I said, "Surely the city[k] will
fear me,
it will accept correction;
it will not lose sight[l]
of all that I have brought
upon it."
But they were the more eager
to make all their deeds corrupt.

8 Therefore wait for me, says
the LORD,
for the day when I arise as
a witness.
For my decision is to gather
nations,
to assemble kingdoms,
to pour out upon them my
indignation,
all the heat of my anger;
for in the fire of my passion
all the earth shall be consumed.

9 At that time I will change the
speech of the peoples
to a pure speech,
that all of them may call on the
name of the LORD
and serve him with one accord.
10 From beyond the rivers of
Ethiopia[m]
my suppliants, my scattered
ones,
shall bring my offering.

11 On that day you shall not be put
to shame
because of all the deeds by
which you have rebelled
against me;
for then I will remove from
your midst
your proudly exultant ones,
and you shall no longer be
haughty
in my holy mountain.
12 For I will leave in the midst
of you
a people humble and lowly.

k Heb *it* *l* Gk Syr: Heb *its dwelling will not be cut off* *m* Or *Nubia*; Heb *Cush*

3.1–13 The city addressed is not identified, but it is generally agreed to be Jerusalem. **3.2–5** Every type of political and religious leader in the city (cf. Ezek 22.23–29) is contrasted with the Lord (v. 5). **3.6–7** A shift back to a direct quotation of the Lord. **3.8–13** The beginning of a section that suggests that there will exist among the people a *remnant* (2.7, 9; 3.13) who will listen to the Lord. **3.8** *Wait* often suggests that something positive will follow (see Ps 33.20; Isa 8.17; Hab 2.3). **3.11** *On that day* refers back to v. 9. *Proudly exultant ones* alludes to the leaders in 3.2–4. **3.12** *I will leave* plays on the same Hebrew word as *remnant* (v. 13) and contrasts with the negative remnants left in the land by other religions (see 1.4).

They shall seek refuge in the
name of the LORD—
13 the remnant of Israel;
they shall do no wrong
and utter no lies,
nor shall a deceitful tongue
be found in their mouths.
Then they will pasture and
lie down,
and no one shall make them
afraid.

Call to Rejoice

14 Sing aloud, O daughter Zion;
shout, O Israel!
Rejoice and exult with all
your heart,
O daughter Jerusalem!
15 The LORD has taken away the
judgments against you,
he has turned away your
enemies.
The king of Israel, the LORD, is
in your midst;
you shall fear disaster no more.
16 On that day it shall be said to
Jerusalem:
Do not fear, O Zion;
do not let your hands grow
weak.
17 The LORD, your God, is in
your midst,
a warrior who gives victory;
he will rejoice over you with
gladness,
he will renew you[n] in his love;
he will exult over you with
loud singing
18 as on a day of festival.[o]
I will remove disaster from you,[p]
so that you will not bear
reproach for it.
19 I will deal with all your
oppressors
at that time.
And I will save the lame
and gather the outcast,
and I will change their shame
into praise
and renown in all the earth.
20 At that time I will bring you
home,
at the time when I gather you;
for I will make you renowned
and praised
among all the peoples of
the earth,
when I restore your fortunes
before your eyes, says the
LORD.

n Gk Syr: Heb *he will be silent* *o* Gk Syr: Meaning of Heb uncertain *p* Cn: Heb *I will remove from you; they were*

3.14–20 The call to sing assumes that the restoration anticipated in 3.8–13 has occurred. **3.14** *Sing aloud*, a public invitation to respond to the salvation that has come. **3.16** *On that day* no longer refers to the day on which punishment arises (1.9, 10), but a day on which it can be said, *Do not fear*, an introduction to words of salvation (see Isa 10.24). **3.17** *With loud singing*. The same Hebrew word used to call the people to *sing aloud* (v. 14) now has the Lord responding in kind. **3.19** *Oppressors* includes those within Judah and those in other nations. **3.20** *Gather* no longer carries the irony of gathering straw (see note on 2.1) but is more like the gathering a shepherd does of lambs (Isa 40.11; Jer 23.3). The restoration of *fortunes* envisaged is much like that described in Deut 30.1–4.

HAGGAI

Name

THE BOOK OF HAGGAI gives us no personal information about the seer whose name it bears. Were it not for references to "the prophets Haggai and Zechariah" in Ezra 5.1; 6.14, we would not even have reason to link these two contemporary figures. Neither prophet ever mentions the other, though their work surely brought them together in the small town that was postexilic Jerusalem. Perhaps Haggai's name, which is derived from the Hebrew verbal root *hgg*, "to make a pilgrimage," gains significance from his single-minded effort to bring about the reconstruction of that goal of all ancient Judean pilgrimages, the temple in Jerusalem.

Date, Content, and Message

In contrast to the person of the author, information about the date of the book of Haggai is unusually precise. The chronological notices attached to the four oracles of the book place Haggai's work between mid-August and mid-December, 520 B.C.E., early in the reign of Darius I (the Great), who ruled the Persian Empire from 522 to 486 B.C.E. In the decades after Cyrus repatriated the Judean exiles from their Babylonian captivity in 539 B.C.E., modest prosperity had evidently begun to return to the land. Encouraged by the edict of Cyrus (Ezra 1.1–4), Sheshbazzar, the leader of the returned exiles, may even have made a start at rebuilding the ruined temple in Jerusalem (see Ezra 5.14–16). Work must have stopped, however, for in 520 the prophet Haggai warns that until the temple is up and running, normalcy will elude the Judean community.

The sequence of sermons in the book moves from the prophet's initial exhortation to Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the high priest through the beginning of the reconstruction project to the blessings that began to flow on the occasion of the consecration of the still unfinished structure. The actual completion of the work in 516/5 B.C.E. (see Ezra 6.15) evidently lay outside Haggai's experience. But what he saw under way moved him deeply, for he understood it as a prelude to the coming messianic age. *W. Sibley Towner*

The Scandal of the Ruined Temple

1 In the second year of King Darius, in
the sixth month, on the first day of
the month, the word of the LORD came
by the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel son
of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to
Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest:
2 Thus says the LORD of hosts: These peo-
ple say the time has not yet come to re-
build the LORD's house. 3 Then the word
of the LORD came by the prophet Haggai,
saying: 4 Is it a time for you yourselves to
live in your paneled houses, while this
house lies in ruins? 5 Now therefore thus
says the LORD of hosts: Consider how you
have fared. 6 You have sown much, and
harvested little; you eat, but you never
have enough; you drink, but you never
have your fill; you clothe yourselves, but
no one is warm; and you that earn wages
earn wages to put them into a bag with
holes.
7 Thus says the LORD of hosts: Con-
sider how you have fared. 8 Go up to the
hills and bring wood and build the house,
so that I may take pleasure in it and be
honored, says the LORD. 9 You have
looked for much, and, lo, it came to little;
and when you brought it home, I blew it
away. Why? says the LORD of hosts. Be-
cause my house lies in ruins, while all
of you hurry off to your own houses.
10 Therefore the heavens above you have
withheld the dew, and the earth has with-
held its produce. 11 And I have called for
a drought on the land and the hills, on the
grain, the new wine, the oil, on what the
soil produces, on human beings and ani-
mals, and on all their labors.
12 Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel,
and Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high
priest, with all the remnant of the people,
obeyed the voice of the LORD their God,
and the words of the prophet Haggai, as
the LORD their God had sent him; and the
people feared the LORD. 13 Then Haggai,
the messenger of the LORD, spoke to the
people with the LORD's message, saying, I
am with you, says the LORD. 14 And the
LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel
son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and
the spirit of Joshua son of Jehozadak, the
high priest, and the spirit of all the rem-
nant of the people; and they came and
worked on the house of the LORD of hosts,
their God, 15 on the twenty-fourth day of
the month, in the sixth month.

The Splendor of the Second Temple

2 In the second year of King Darius,
1 in the seventh month, on the
twenty-first day of the month, the word of
the LORD came by the prophet Haggai,
saying: 2 Speak now to Zerubbabel son of
Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to
Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest,
and to the remnant of the people, and
say, 3 Who is left among you that saw this
house in its former glory? How does it
look to you now? Is it not in your sight
as nothing? 4 Yet now take courage,
O Zerubbabel, says the LORD; take cour-

1.1–15 The prophet speaks to Zerubbabel. **1.1** *Second year . . . sixth month,* August/September, 520 B.C.E. *Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel* was the grandson of Jehoiachin (Jeconiah), the Judean king who enjoyed royal favor in Babylonian captivity (2 Kings 25.27–30). He was presumably made *governor of Judah* by Darius, though no mention is made of the fact elsewhere in Persian or biblical sources. *Joshua son of Jehozadak* is the first person to bear the title *high priest* in the OT (see Zech 6.11). His father was a priest among the exiles in Babylon (1 Chr 6.15). **1.2** With its reference to the heavenly army at the Lord's command, the title *LORD of hosts* depicts God as Divine Warrior. *These people* might either refer to the entire Judean community or to *the remnant* (see v. 12) who had returned from Babylonian exile more than two decades earlier; however, the reference to *paneled houses* in v. 4 suggests that the message of the prophet was probably directed to the more affluent community leaders. The same contrast between *the LORD's house* and the houses of the human authorities is present in 2 Sam 7.1–17. In that text, however, the Lord disclaims any desire for a "house." **1.11** The forms of productivity listed here constituted "blessing" for the ancient Israelites. **1.13–15** The simple but reassuring word brought by *the messenger of the LORD* (see Mal 3.1) results in *stirred up* spirits. Yet more than three weeks elapse after Haggai's first oracle before the reconstruction of the temple gets under way.

2.1–9 Second address to Zerubbabel. **2.1** *Seventh month,* October, 520 B.C.E. **2.3** Persons old enough to remember the appearance of the First Temple prior to its destruction in 587 would have to have been at least seventy-three years of age when Haggai said these words. **2.4–5** *I am with you . . . Egypt.* Haggai compares the spirit of God in the midst of the community of his day to

age, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high
priest; take courage, all you people of the
land, says the LORD; work, for I am with
you, says the LORD of hosts, 5 according to
the promise that I made you when you
came out of Egypt. My spirit abides
among you; do not fear. 6 For thus says
the LORD of hosts: Once again, in a little
while, I will shake the heavens and the
earth and the sea and the dry land; 7 and
I will shake all the nations, so that the
treasure of all nations shall come, and I
will fill this house with splendor, says the
LORD of hosts. 8 The silver is mine, and
the gold is mine, says the LORD of hosts.
9 The latter splendor of this house shall be
greater than the former, says the LORD of
hosts; and in this place I will give prosper-
ity, says the LORD of hosts.

A Rebuke and a Promise

10 On the twenty-fourth day of the
ninth month, in the second year of Da-
rius, the word of the LORD came by the
prophet Haggai, saying: 11 Thus says the
LORD of hosts: Ask the priests for a rul-
ing: 12 If one carries consecrated meat in
the fold of one's garment, and with the
fold touches bread, or stew, or wine, or
oil, or any kind of food, does it become
holy? The priests answered, "No."
13 Then Haggai said, "If one who is un-
clean by contact with a dead body touches
any of these, does it become unclean?"
The priests answered, "Yes, it becomes
unclean." 14 Haggai then said, So is it with
this people, and with this nation before
me, says the LORD; and so with every work
of their hands; and what they offer there
is unclean. 15 But now, consider what will
come to pass from this day on. Before a
stone was placed upon a stone in the
LORD's temple, 16 how did you fare?[a]
When one came to a heap of twenty mea-
sures, there were but ten; when one came
to the wine vat to draw fifty measures,
there were but twenty. 17 I struck you and
all the products of your toil with blight
and mildew and hail; yet you did not re-
turn to me, says the LORD. 18 Consider
from this day on, from the twenty-fourth
day of the ninth month. Since the day that
the foundation of the LORD's temple was
laid, consider: 19 Is there any seed left in
the barn? Do the vine, the fig tree, the
pomegranate, and the olive tree still yield
nothing? From this day on I will
bless you.

The Coming Messianic Kingdom

20 The word of the LORD came a sec-
ond time to Haggai on the twenty-fourth
day of the month: 21 Speak to Zerubbabel,
governor of Judah, saying, I am about to
shake the heavens and the earth, 22 and to
overthrow the throne of kingdoms; I am
about to destroy the strength of the king-
doms of the nations, and overthrow the
chariots and their riders; and the horses
and their riders shall fall, every one by the

a Gk: Heb *since they were*

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the manifestation of God's presence in the pillars of cloud and fire during the exodus from Egypt (Ex 13.21–22). **2.6–9** God will take such powerful action against all the nations that, because of their tribute in gold and silver, the splendor of the Second Temple would eclipse that of the First.

2.10–14 An indictment of the people in dialogue form. **2.10** *Ninth month*, early December, 520 B.C.E. **2.12** Even though the temple had not yet resumed its function as the source of holiness in Judah, the priests remember that *consecrated meat* cannot make other foodstuffs *holy* by contact (cf. Lev 6.26–27). **2.13** But things are easily subject to becoming *unclean* through contact with that which is ritually unclean. **2.14** Now the point of these priestly rulings becomes clear: this people cannot make offerings acceptable to God because *every work of their hands* (i.e., agricultural produce; see 2.17) is *unclean*. Perhaps offerings brought to God are rendered unclean by being brought into a sanctuary and laid upon an altar that have not themselves been cleansed and reconsecrated. **2.15–19** The prophet promises a new era. **2.15** *From this day on* suggests that a milestone has been reached in the temple reconstruction project. Whereas in 1.14 the people *came and worked on the house of the LORD*, here they have placed *stone . . . upon stone*, suggesting that a foundation deposit ceremony or consecration took place on the *twenty-fourth day of the ninth month* (v. 18). **2.17** See Am 4.9. **2.19** With the temple reconsecrated, the problem of unacceptable offerings (see 2.14) is overcome and a general blessing of agriculture ensues.

2.20–23 On the same day that he spoke the words of 2.10–19, Haggai addressed a final oracle directly to Zerubbabel. **2.21–22** The Lord's immanent intervention means cosmic quakes (see 2.6; Joel 3.16) and military disaster for the *kingdoms of the nations* (see Ex 15.1–10).

sword of a comrade. [23] On that day, says the LORD of hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel my servant, son of Shealtiel, says the LORD, and make you like a signet ring; for I have chosen you, says the LORD of hosts.

2.23 Consistent with the promise to David in 2 Sam 7.16, Zerubbabel, the descendant of David, is *chosen* to be the Lord's *signet ring* (see Sir 49.11). Just as the bearer of the king's signet ring enjoyed the authority of the king (see Esth 3.10; 8.2; Jer 22.24), so also the chosen one acted on behalf of the Lord (cf. Isa 42.1; 43.10; see also the attribution of future cosmic authority to Zerubbabel in Zech 4.6–10).

ZECHARIAH

Date, Authorship, and Context

THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH IS GENERALLY AGREED to have been written by more than one hand. The eight visions and prophetic oracles that make up chs. 1–8 begin with the date October/November, 520 B.C.E. There seems no reason to question this chronological framework, nor for that matter the attribution of the first part of the book to one "Zechariah son of Berechiah son of Iddo." According to Zech 7.1, his work continued until 518 B.C.E., which means that he functioned significantly longer than the five months during the year 520 in which Haggai worked. The two prophets shared the same mission, namely to advocate the reconstruction of the temple in Jerusalem.

The Judean exiles had returned from their Babylonian captivity after 539 B.C.E., armed with the so-called edict of Cyrus (Ezra 6.3–5), which permitted them to rebuild the holy sanctuary in Jerusalem. Perhaps they were guided as well by the visionary plan of restoration put forth in Ezek 40–48; certainly they were animated by the stunning promises of the great prophet of the exile, the author of Isa 40–55 (Second Isaiah). Reconstruction work began rather quickly under Sheshbazzar, the governor of Judah appointed by the Persians; but then for unknown reasons it stopped (see Ezra 5.13–16). More than a decade later, during the tension stirred up throughout the Persian Empire by the accession of Darius I in 522 B.C.E., first Haggai, then Zechariah, sprang into prophetic action. They stressed the importance of rebuilding the temple so that the elect and restored community of Judah could enjoy the God-given provisions for right relationship and right worship that were to be centered there. Apparently their words were heeded, for the temple was completed and rededicated just a few years after the end of their ministries, in 516/5 B.C.E. (see Ezra 6.15).

First and Second Zechariah Contrasted

The visions and oracles of Zech 1–8 reflect the essentially hierocratic or priestly outlook of a central prophet who belonged to temple circles and who linked Israel's salvation with worship and sacrifice. An individual or a school with a

more peripheral or socially marginal point of view speaks in Zech 9–14. This so-called Second Zechariah does not display the editorial unity of the first eight chapters of the book but reveals a pattern of steadily increasing disillusionment with the postexilic restoration and a sense that the glorious vision of a just society put forward by the author of Isa 40–55 was not going to be achieved by a priestly establishment centered in Jerusalem. In other words, these chapters take a position almost the reverse of Zech 1–8. It is difficult to date these chapters or, for that matter, to assign them to one author. The steadily more urgent sense of the impending "day of the LORD" suggests that they were produced over a number of decades. The culminating vision of ch. 14 may have occurred late in the fifth century B.C.E. This would place these chapters in the company of such other protoapocalyptic texts as Joel 2.28–3.21; Isa 24–27. *W. Sibley Towner*

A History of the Prophetic Word

1 In the eighth month, in the second
year of Darius, the word of the LORD
came to the prophet Zechariah son of
Berechiah son of Iddo, saying: 2 The
LORD was very angry with your ancestors.
3 Therefore say to them, Thus says the
LORD of hosts: Return to me, says the
LORD of hosts, and I will return to you,
says the LORD of hosts. 4 Do not be like
your ancestors, to whom the former
prophets proclaimed, "Thus says the
LORD of hosts, Return from your evil ways
and from your evil deeds." But they did
not hear or heed me, says the LORD.
5 Your ancestors, where are they? And the
prophets, do they live forever? 6 But my
words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did
they not overtake your ancestors? So they
repented and said, "The LORD of hosts
has dealt with us according to our ways
and deeds, just as he planned to do."

First Vision: God's Horsemen

7 On the twenty-fourth day of the
eleventh month, the month of Shebat, in
the second year of Darius, the word of the
LORD came to the prophet Zechariah son
of Berechiah son of Iddo; and Zechariah[a] said, 8 In the night I saw a man riding on a red horse! He was standing
among the myrtle trees in the glen; and
behind him were red, sorrel, and white
horses. 9 Then I said, "What are these, my
lord?" The angel who talked with me said
to me, "I will show you what they are."

a Heb *and he*

1.1–6 First oracle. **1.1** *Eighth month . . . second year,* October/November, 520 B.C.E. *Zechariah son of Berechiah son of Iddo.* The reference to this person in Neh 12.16 establishes that he was of a priestly family. According to Ezra 5.1; 6.14, Zechariah was the son and not the grandson of Iddo. The Zechariah who was the son of Jeberechiah (Isa 8.2) was apparently a different person, though they may have been identified with each other in Mt 23.35 (and then further confused with the martyred Zechariah of 2 Chr 24.20–22). **1.6** *So they repented.* Though the prophets often called for repentance (e.g., Ezek 14.6; Am 5.14–15), it is not often reported that repentance occurred (cf. Zech 7.11).

1.7–17 First vision. **1.7** *Eleventh month,* January/February, 519 B.C.E. The Babylonian/Persian name of the month *Shebat* demonstrates the extent of the foreign domination in postexilic Judah. **1.8** The *man* is one of the angelic host (v. 11). *The myrtle trees in the glen* bring to mind an Eden-like place of lush, well-watered shrubs. In Second Isaiah, myrtle is a feature of the restored Israel (see Isa 41.19; 55.13). The red, sorrel, and white colors of the horses might have symbolic values; however, it seems more likely that they simply reflect the colorations of the horses known in the ancient Near East. *Horses* is an indefinite number; the vision of 6.1–3 speaks of four

10 So the man who was standing among
the myrtle trees answered, "They are
those whom the LORD has sent to patrol
the earth." 11 Then they spoke to the an-
gel of the LORD who was standing among
the myrtle trees, "We have patrolled the
earth, and lo, the whole earth remains at
peace." 12 Then the angel of the LORD
said, "O LORD of hosts, how long will you
withhold mercy from Jerusalem and the
cities of Judah, with which you have been
angry these seventy years?" 13 Then the
LORD replied with gracious and comfort-
ing words to the angel who talked with
me. 14 So the angel who talked with me
said to me, Proclaim this message: Thus
says the LORD of hosts; I am very jealous
for Jerusalem and for Zion. 15 And I am
extremely angry with the nations that are
at ease; for while I was only a little angry,
they made the disaster worse. 16 There-
fore, thus says the LORD, I have returned
to Jerusalem with compassion; my house
shall be built in it, says the LORD of hosts,
and the measuring line shall be stretched
out over Jerusalem. 17 Proclaim further:
Thus says the LORD of hosts: My cities
shall again overflow with prosperity; the
LORD will again comfort Zion and again
choose Jerusalem.

Second Vision: Four Horns and Four Smiths

18[b] And I looked up and saw four
horns. 19 I asked the angel who talked
with me, "What are these?" And he an-
swered me, "These are the horns that
have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusa-
lem." 20 Then the LORD showed me four
blacksmiths. 21 And I asked, "What are
they coming to do?" He answered, "These
are the horns that scattered Judah, so that
no head could be raised; but these have
come to terrify them, to strike down the
horns of the nations that lifted up their
horns against the land of Judah to scatter
its people."[c]

Third Vision: A Wall of Fire

2[d] I looked up and saw a man with a
measuring line in his hand. 2 Then I
asked, "Where are you going?" He an-
swered me, "To measure Jerusalem, to
see what is its width and what is its
length." 3 Then the angel who talked with
me came forward, and another angel
came forward to meet him, 4 and said to
him, "Run, say to that young man: Jerusa-
lem shall be inhabited like villages without
walls, because of the multitude of people
and animals in it. 5 For I will be a wall of
fire all around it, says the LORD, and I will
be the glory within it."

A Song for the Daughter of Zion

6 Up, up! Flee from the land of the
north, says the LORD; for I have spread

b Ch 2.1 in Heb *c* Heb *it* *d* Ch 2.5 in Heb

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teams. **1.10–11** The horses have been sent out from the heavenly court on reconnaissance of the earth (see 6.1–8). **1.12** The angel's cry, *O LORD of hosts, how long . . . ?* draws on the language of the psalms of lament (e.g., Pss 6.3; 13.2; 79.5) to press God about the duration of human suffering. *These seventy years.* The figure is conventional, but it can be applied to various spans of time. In Jer 25.11; 29.10 it refers to the seventy-plus years in which the Neo-Babylonian Empire flourished (612–539 B.C.E.), whereas here it refers to the period of the devastation of Jerusalem and Judah (587, the year of the destruction of the temple, to this approximate time of this oracle, 519 B.C.E.). **1.16** The image of *a measuring line* is drawn from the profession of carpentry (Isa 44.13). It can refer to judgment (see Isa 34.11; Lam 2.8) and, as in this case, restoration (see also Jer 31.38–39). **1.17** *The LORD will . . . again choose Jerusalem.* No other prophet ever claimed that God "chose" Jerusalem (see also 2.12; 3.2), but the theme is sounded in Deut 12.1–28; 1 Kings 8.44–48; 11.13.

1.18–21 Second vision. **1.19** The foreign nations that had oppressed Israel since the days of the Divided Monarchy are the *horns* (cf. Dan 7.19–27). **1.20–21** The *four blacksmiths* therefore represent the divine agents that will destroy the oppressive foreign powers (see Isa 54.16–17).

2.1–5 Third vision. **2.1** The *measuring line* mentioned here (in contrast to that of 1.16) is used to find the dimensions of an existing entity such as Jerusalem (cf. Am 7.17; Mic 2.4–5). **2.4** The restored city will have a *multitude* of human and animal inhabitants. Second Isaiah (chs. 40–55) also envisions restored Israel as "too crowded for your inhabitants" (Isa 49.19; see 54.3; Zech 14.11). **2.5** *I will be a wall of fire all around it* means that the Lord will provide for the safety of the new Jerusalem, even as God's presence in its midst will be disclosed by the *glory within it.* The priestly theme of the return of God's glory to the temple is dramatically set forth in Ezek 43.1–5.

2.6–13 Second oracle. **2.6** As Jer 6.22; 10.22 show, *the north* is the generic location of the

you abroad like the four winds of heaven,
says the LORD. 7 Up! Escape to Zion, you
that live with daughter Babylon. 8 For
thus said the LORD of hosts (after his
glory[e] sent me) regarding the nations
that plundered you: Truly, one who
touches you touches the apple of my
eye.[f] 9 See now, I am going to raise[g] my
hand against them, and they shall become
plunder for their own slaves. Then you
will know that the LORD of hosts has sent
me. 10 Sing and rejoice, O daughter Zion!
For lo, I will come and dwell in your
midst, says the LORD. 11 Many nations
shall join themselves to the LORD on that
day, and shall be my people; and I will
dwell in your midst. And you shall know
that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you.
12 The LORD will inherit Judah as his portion in the holy land, and will again
choose Jerusalem.

13 Be silent, all people, before the
LORD; for he has roused himself from his
holy dwelling.

Fourth Vision: Joshua and the Satan

3 Then he showed me the high priest
Joshua standing before the angel of
the LORD, and Satan[h] standing at his
right hand to accuse him. 2 And the LORD
said to Satan,[h] "The LORD rebuke you,
O Satan![h] The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this man a
brand plucked from the fire?" 3 Now
Joshua was dressed with filthy clothes as
he stood before the angel. 4 The angel
said to those who were standing before
him, "Take off his filthy clothes." And to
him he said, "See, I have taken your guilt
away from you, and I will clothe you with
festal apparel." 5 And I said, "Let them
put a clean turban on his head." So they
put a clean turban on his head and
clothed him with the apparel; and the angel of the LORD was standing by.

6 Then the angel of the LORD assured
Joshua, saying 7 "Thus says the LORD of
hosts: If you will walk in my ways and
keep my requirements, then you shall rule
my house and have charge of my courts,
and I will give you the right of access
among those who are standing here.
8 Now listen, Joshua, high priest, you and
your colleagues who sit before you! For
they are an omen of things to come: I am
going to bring my servant the Branch.
9 For on the stone that I have set before
Joshua, on a single stone with seven facets,

e Cn: Heb *after glory he* *f* Heb *his eye*
g Or *wave* *h* Or *the Accuser*; Heb *the Adversary*

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enemies of Israel and the place of its exile. Since Babylon is an enemy, it can be the referent here even though it lay east of Judah. **2.8** Perhaps the sense of the phrase *the apple of my eye* (see Deut 32.10) is that Judah is as close to God and as carefully protected as is the divine eyeball. **2.9** The prophet imagines that the returning exiles will *plunder* their captors (see Ex 12.35–36). Such a reversal of fortunes leads to the formula suitable for the recognition of God's work in history, *you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me* (see also v. 11; 4.9; 6.15). **2.10** *Daughter Zion* often receives news of her rescue (see 9.9; also Isa 12.6; 52.2; 62.11; Mic 4.8; Zeph 3.14–15). **2.11** *You shall know . . . sent me.* See note on 2.9. **2.12** The term *holy land* is used nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible, though it can be found in Wis 12.3; 2 Macc 1.7. **2.13** See Hab 2.20.

3.1–10 Fourth vision. **3.1** *The high priest Joshua.* See note on Hag 1.1. The use of the article before the word *satan* in Hebrew makes clear that this is a title and not a proper name. The satan is a member of the divine council whose task it is to discover and indict malefactors (see Job 1.6–12). 1 Chr 21.1 gives to the satan the function of testing that the Lord plays in the parallel text in 2 Sam 24.1. The picture of the divine council given in 1 Kings 22.19–23 shows spirits performing various functions in God's court, including that of testing and provoking sinners. **3.2–3** In Isa 4.3–4, the filthiness of Jerusalem is purged by burning. Here Joshua has already emerged as *a brand plucked from the fire* and his filthiness derives not from his sin but from his ordeal. **3.4–5** These verses anticipate the consecration of the high priest in *festal apparel* and *clean turban* to his function of taking upon himself the guilt of the people so that they might be acceptable before the Lord (see Ex 28.31–38). **3.8** *My servant the Branch.* In Isa 11.1, the coming Davidic ruler is described as a "branch" (see also Jer 23.5; 33.15). In this verse, the *Branch* seems to be someone other than Joshua and his colleagues, since Joshua was not of the royal dynasty of David. The most likely referent would be Zerubbabel, who, as we know from Hag 2.20–23, embodied the hopes for a political future for Judah under a descendant of David. See also note on Zech 6.12. **3.9** *A single stone with seven facets* may again refer to the description of the regalia of the high priest in Ex 28.36–38, specifically to the engraved "rosette of pure gold," which was fastened to the front of the turban of the high priest. In this instance, however, the ornament is not fabricated by any human

I will engrave its inscription, says the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the guilt
of this land in a single day. 10 On that day,
says the LORD of hosts, you shall invite
each other to come under your vine and
fig tree."

Fifth Vision: The Lampstand and Olive Trees

4 The angel who talked with me came
again, and wakened me, as one is
wakened from sleep. 2 He said to me,
"What do you see?" And I said, "I see a
lampstand all of gold, with a bowl on the
top of it; there are seven lamps on it, with
seven lips on each of the lamps that are on
the top of it. 3 And by it there are two olive trees, one on the right of the bowl and
the other on its left." 4 I said to the angel
who talked with me, "What are these, my
lord?" 5 Then the angel who talked with
me answered me, "Do you not know what
these are?" I said, "No, my lord." 6 He said
to me, "This is the word of the LORD to
Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power,
but by my spirit, says the LORD of hosts.
7 What are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain;
and he shall bring out the top stone amid
shouts of 'Grace, grace to it!' "
8 Moreover the word of the LORD
came to me, saying, 9 "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this
house; his hands shall also complete it.
Then you will know that the LORD of
hosts has sent me to you. 10 For whoever
has despised the day of small things shall
rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the
hand of Zerubbabel.

The Vision Explained

"These seven are the eyes of the LORD,
which range through the whole earth."
11 Then I said to him, "What are these two
olive trees on the right and the left of the
lampstand?" 12 And a second time I said
to him, "What are these two branches of
the olive trees, which pour out the oil[i]
through the two golden pipes?" 13 He said
to me, "Do you not know what these are?"
I said, "No, my lord." 14 Then he said,
"These are the two anointed ones who
stand by the Lord of the whole earth."

Sixth Vision: The Flying Scroll

5 Again I looked up and saw a flying
scroll. 2 And he said to me, "What do
you see?" I answered, "I see a flying
scroll; its length is twenty cubits, and its
width ten cubits." 3 Then he said to me,
"This is the curse that goes out over the

i Cn: Heb *gold*

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hand but is given to Joshua by the Lord. For Zechariah, divine intervention alone could solve the problems of contamination and deconsecration that confounded efforts to worship at the temple in the early postexilic Judean community. **3.10** See Mic 4.4.

4.1–14 Fifth vision. This apparently complex vision is made much clearer when the oracle to Zerubbabel embedded within it (vv. 6–10a) is treated separately. **4.2** The *lampstand* is not the familiar seven-branched candelabrum of Ex 25.31–40; 37.17–24. Archaeological evidence now confirms that the object envisioned here could be a bowl-shaped oil reservoir surmounting a golden base and fitted around the rim with seven (not forty-nine!) protruding spouts to serve as lamps. **4.6–10a** Third oracle. **4.6** On *Zerubbabel*, see note on Hag 1.1. **4.7** *O great mountain* may refer to a political or priestly opponent of Zerubbabel, or simply the ruinous situation that faced him in the rebuilding project. Perhaps *top stone* should be understood as a stone from the former temple incorporated into the foundation deposit of the new structure. Mesopotamian sources attest to similar efforts to ensure sacral continuity. *Grace, grace to it.* In Hag 2.15–19, the gracious blessing of rich agricultural yield begins right after the reconsecration of the temple. **4.9** *You will know . . . sent me.* See note on 2.9. **4.10b** *These seven are the eyes of the LORD* returns us to the angelic question of v. 5. If the lamps are the eyes of the Lord, then the lampstand must stand for the Lord in person. The image of the all-seeing eyes of the Lord is common in biblical tradition (see 2 Chr 16.9; Job 34.21; Pss 14.2, 66.7; Prov 15.3). **4.14** At last the two olive trees are identified as *the two anointed ones* (lit. "sons of the oil") and no doubt represent Joshua and Zerubbabel, the two heroes of the temple reconstruction effort in both Zech 1–8 and Haggai. The "oil" referred to here is not that used for consecration of priest or king, but is rather that used for food and lamp fuel. If the lamp burns this very oil, then there is an exquisite interrelationship between the human and divine worlds since human abundance would help feed the divine light.

5.1–4 Sixth vision. **5.1** See Ezek 2.8–3.3; Rev 10.9–11. **5.2** Since a *cubit* is about 18 inches in length, the dimensions of this visionary scroll were 30 by 15 feet. Such a scroll would be impossible to unroll or handle, but this is a *flying scroll* (v. 1), not held by human hands. **5.3** The *curse* is

face of the whole land; for everyone who
steals shall be cut off according to the
writing on one side, and everyone who
swears falsely[j] shall be cut off according
to the writing on the other side. 4 I have
sent it out, says the LORD of hosts, and it
shall enter the house of the thief, and the
house of anyone who swears falsely by my
name; and it shall abide in that house and
consume it, both timber and stones."

Seventh Vision: A Woman in a Basket

5 Then the angel who talked with me
came forward and said to me, "Look up
and see what this is that is coming out." 6 I
said, "What is it?" He said, "This is a bas-
ket[k] coming out." And he said, "This is
their iniquity[l] in all the land." 7 Then a
leaden cover was lifted, and there was a
woman sitting in the basket![k] 8 And he
said, "This is Wickedness." So he thrust
her back into the basket,[k] and pressed
the leaden weight down on its mouth.
9 Then I looked up and saw two women
coming forward. The wind was in their
wings; they had wings like the wings of a
stork, and they lifted up the basket[k] be-
tween earth and sky. 10 Then I said to the
angel who talked with me, "Where are
they taking the basket?"[k] 11 He said to
me, "To the land of Shinar, to build a
house for it; and when this is prepared,
they will set the basket[k] down there on its
base."

Eighth Vision: Four Chariots

6 And again I looked up and saw four
chariots coming out from between
two mountains—mountains of bronze.
2 The first chariot had red horses, the sec-
ond chariot black horses, 3 the third char-
iot white horses, and the fourth chariot
dappled gray[m] horses. 4 Then I said to
the angel who talked with me, "What are
these, my lord?" 5 The angel answer-
ed me, "These are the four winds[n] of
heaven going out, after presenting them-
selves before the Lord of all the earth.
6 The chariot with the black horses goes
toward the north country, the white ones
go toward the west country,[o] and the
dappled ones go toward the south coun-
try." 7 When the steeds came out, they
were impatient to get off and patrol the
earth. And he said, "Go, patrol the earth."
So they patrolled the earth. 8 Then he
cried out to me, "Lo, those who go toward
the north country have set my spirit at
rest in the north country."

The Crowning of the Branch

9 The word of the LORD came to me:
10 Collect silver and gold[p] from the exiles
—from Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah—
who have arrived from Babylon; and go
the same day to the house of Josiah son of
Zephaniah. 11 Take the silver and gold
and make a crown,[q] and set it on the
head of the high priest Joshua son of Je-
hozadak; 12 say to him: Thus says the
LORD of hosts: Here is a man whose name

j The word *falsely* added from verse 4
k Heb *ephah* *l* Gk Compare Syr: Heb *their eye*
m Compare Gk: Meaning of Heb uncertain
n Or *spirits* *o* Cn: Heb *go after them*
p Cn Compare verse 11: Heb lacks *silver and gold*
q Gk Mss Syr Tg: Heb *crowns*

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directed against violators of the eighth and ninth commandments, which forbid theft and false oaths (see Ex 20.15–16; Deut 5.19–20).

5.5–11 Seventh vision. **5.6** *A basket,* in Hebrew an *ephah,* a container of about two-thirds bushel in dry measure, typically used for such commodities as flour (Lev 5.11) and barley (Ruth 2.17). **5.8** *This is Wickedness.* Israel's sin is personified as a woman who could somehow fit into a basket. **5.11** *The land of Shinar* is Babylon, the place of Israel's exile (see Isa 11.11; Dan 1.2). Shinar was also a place of the primeval sin of the Tower of Babel (Gen 11.2). Placing the basket *on its base* in the house built for it suggests that the cleansing of Judah through the reconstruction of the temple would cause a corresponding desecration of worship in Babylon.

6.1–8 Eighth vision. **6.1** The patrol sent forth from divine headquarters is equipped with *chariots* drawn in all directions by teams of various colored horses (see note on 1.8; 1.10–11). **6.6** See note on 2.6. **6.8** *My spirit at rest in the north country.* God has extended right order throughout the world, even in the land of the enemy.

6.9–15 Fourth oracle. From this point on the prophet ceases to function as a visionary and assumes the more typical role of an intermediary for divine instructions. **6.12–13** *A man whose name is Branch.* See note on 3.8. Even though the intrustive oracle of 4.6–10a hails Zerubbabel as the rebuilder of the temple, the crown of silver and gold is placed on the head of the priestly fig-

is Branch: for he shall branch out in his
place, and he shall build the temple of the
LORD. 13 It is he that shall build the temple
of the LORD; he shall bear royal honor,
and shall sit upon his throne and rule.
There shall be a priest by his throne, with
peaceful understanding between the two
of them. 14 And the crown[r] shall be in
the care of Heldai,[s] Tobijah, Jedaiah, and
Josiah[t] son of Zephaniah, as a memorial
in the temple of the LORD.

15 Those who are far off shall come
and help to build the temple of the LORD;
and you shall know that the LORD of hosts
has sent me to you. This will happen if
you diligently obey the voice of the LORD
your God.

The Fallacy of Fasting

7 In the fourth year of King Darius,
the word of the LORD came to Zecha-
riah on the fourth day of the ninth
month, which is Chislev. 2 Now the people
of Bethel had sent Sharezer and Regem-
melech and their men, to entreat the fa-
vor of the LORD, 3 and to ask the priests of
the house of the LORD of hosts and the
prophets, "Should I mourn and practice
abstinence in the fifth month, as I have
done for so many years?" 4 Then the word
of the LORD of hosts came to me: 5 Say to
all the people of the land and the priests:
When you fasted and lamented in the
fifth month and in the seventh, for these
seventy years, was it for me that you
fasted? 6 And when you eat and when you
drink, do you not eat and drink only for
yourselves? 7 Were not these the words
that the LORD proclaimed by the former
prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited
and in prosperity, along with the towns
around it, and when the Negeb and the
Shephelah were inhabited?

8 The word of the LORD came to Zech-
ariah, saying: 9 Thus says the LORD of
hosts: Render true judgments, show kind-
ness and mercy to one another; 10 do not
oppress the widow, the orphan, the alien,
or the poor; and do not devise evil in your
hearts against one another. 11 But they re-
fused to listen, and turned a stubborn
shoulder, and stopped their ears in order
not to hear. 12 They made their hearts ad-
amant in order not to hear the law and
the words that the LORD of hosts had sent
by his spirit through the former prophets.
Therefore great wrath came from the
LORD of hosts. 13 Just as, when I[u] called,
they would not hear, so, when they called,
I would not hear, says the LORD of hosts,
14 and I scattered them with a whirlwind
among all the nations that they had not
known. Thus the land they left was deso-
late, so that no one went to and fro, and a
pleasant land was made desolate.

r Gk Syr: Heb *crowns* s Syr Compare verse 10: Heb *Helem* t Syr Compare verse 10: Heb *Hen* u Heb *he*

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ure, Joshua son of Jehozadak, and not on the head of the royal figure (v. 11). Perhaps this text was edited after the final disappearance of any vestige of the house of David toward a more priestly bias. **6.13** Even so, *a priest by his throne* still suggests the kind of bicameral polity in the postexilic community described in Hag 1.1–15, in which priest and civil governor worked side by side. The Branch now seems to be someone who is shown to Joshua rather than Joshua himself. **6.15** *You shall know . . . sent me.* See note on 2.9.

7.1–14 Fifth oracle. **7.1** *Fourth year . . . ninth month,* November/December, 518 B.C.E. The term *Chislev* is based on the Babylonian/Persian name for the month. See note on 1.7. **7.3** Mention of the *priests of the house of the LORD of hosts and the prophets* suggests that the temple staff was back in action after the temple was reconsecrated, even though it was not yet fully reconstructed (see Hag 2.10–19). **7.5** The fast of the *fifth* month may have been established in memory of the destruction of the First Temple (2 Kings 25.8–9; Jer 52.12–13). The fast in the *seventh* month may have memorialized the death of Gedaliah, the governor of Judah (2 Kings 25.25; Jer 41.1–3). **7.7** *The words . . . by the former prophets.* The preexilic prophets criticized Israel's public piety as hypocritical (though fasting is mentioned only in Jer 14.12). Their criticism came at a time *when Jerusalem was . . . inhabited,* namely, when no evidence of the Lord's displeasure at the shallowness of such practice had as yet been manifested in destruction and dispersal. **7.9–10** The true acts of piety before God are *true judgments . . . kindness and mercy* and the other righteous acts enumerated here. The words are reminiscent of the great teaching of Mic 6.8 and also of the typical demands of prophetic social ethics (e.g., Isa 1.16–17; Am 5.14–15; 21–24; Mal 3.5). **7.13** The failure of Israel to achieve a hearing from God is dramatically paralleled with God's inability to receive a hearing from Israel (cf. Isa 1.15; Jer 7.13–15).

God's Promises to Zion

8 The word of the LORD of hosts came
to me, saying: 2 Thus says the LORD
of hosts: I am jealous for Zion with great
jealousy, and I am jealous for her with
great wrath. 3 Thus says the LORD: I will
return to Zion, and will dwell in the midst
of Jerusalem; Jerusalem shall be called
the faithful city, and the mountain of the
LORD of hosts shall be called the holy
mountain. 4 Thus says the LORD of hosts:
Old men and old women shall again sit in
the streets of Jerusalem, each with staff in
hand because of their great age. 5 And the
streets of the city shall be full of boys and
girls playing in its streets. 6 Thus says the
LORD of hosts: Even though it seems im-
possible to the remnant of this people in
these days, should it also seem impossible
to me, says the LORD of hosts? 7 Thus says
the LORD of hosts: I will save my people
from the east country and from the west
country; 8 and I will bring them to live in
Jerusalem. They shall be my people and I
will be their God, in faithfulness and in
righteousness.

9 Thus says the LORD of hosts: Let
your hands be strong—you that have re-
cently been hearing these words from the
mouths of the prophets who were present
when the foundation was laid for the re-
building of the temple, the house of the
LORD of hosts. 10 For before those days
there were no wages for people or for ani-
mals, nor was there any safety from the
foe for those who went out or came in,
and I set them all against one other. 11 But
now I will not deal with the remnant of
this people as in the former days, says the
LORD of hosts. 12 For there shall be a sow-
ing of peace; the vine shall yield its fruit,
the ground shall give its produce, and the
skies shall give their dew; and I will cause
the remnant of this people to possess all
these things. 13 Just as you have been a
cursing among the nations, O house of
Judah and house of Israel, so I will save
you and you shall be a blessing. Do not be
afraid, but let your hands be strong.

14 For thus says the LORD of hosts:
Just as I purposed to bring disaster upon
you, when your ancestors provoked me to
wrath, and I did not relent, says the LORD
of hosts, 15 so again I have purposed in
these days to do good to Jerusalem and to
the house of Judah; do not be afraid.
16 These are the things that you shall do:
Speak the truth to one another, render in
your gates judgments that are true and
make for peace, 17 do not devise evil in
your hearts against one another, and love
no false oath; for all these are things that
I hate, says the LORD.

God's Future Work of Blessing

18 The word of the LORD of hosts
came to me, saying: 19 Thus says the LORD
of hosts: The fast of the fourth month,
and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of
the seventh, and the fast of the tenth,
shall be seasons of joy and gladness, and
cheerful festivals for the house of Judah:
therefore love truth and peace.

20 Thus says the LORD of hosts: Peo-

8.1–17 Seven oracles on the restoration of Zion. **8.2** God's self-description as *jealous* is a theme of the Deuteronomists, editors responsible for the history that runs from Deuteronomy through 2 Kings (see Deut 4.24; 5.9). Here God's *jealousy* is zeal for achieving justice for Zion. **8.3** See Isa 11.9; 65.25; Jer 31.23. **8.4–5** The delightful vision of streets *full of boys and girls* as well as old men and women echoes the blessing for age and youth alike in the coming new Jerusalem in Isa 65.20. **8.6** In the Isaian tradition, too, the restored community of Judah is typically referred to as the *remnant* (Isa 10.22–23; 11.11; 37.31–32). **8.7–8** *They shall be my people and I will be their God* is a refrain heard frequently in Jeremiah (24.7; 31.33; 32.38) and Ezekiel (11.20; 14.11; 37.23, 27). The covenant stipulated that this right relationship would come into existence when Israel was faithful. **8.9–13** See Hag 1.6–11; 2.4–9, 15–19. **8.13** The exiled and dispersed Judah and Israel have been an object of hissing and cursing (see Jer 25.18; 29.18; Mic 6.16), but all that is to be reversed in a restoration era characterized by agricultural productivity and peace. **8.14–17** The prophet continues to think in terms of the covenant tradition, stressing truth and justice as the basis for a new community (see 7.9–10; Mic 6.12; Eph 4.25). **8.17** See note on 5.3.

8.18–23 Three oracles on the future joy of Judah. **8.19** To the fasts mentioned in 7.5 are now added fasts of the *fourth* and *tenth* months, which apparently memorialized events in the siege and capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 25.1–4). These verses answer the question raised by the elders of Bethel (7.2–3) with a no—in the days to come fasts shall become *cheerful festivals*. **8.20–22** *Many peoples and strong nations* are among the throngs envisioned as com-

ples shall yet come, the inhabitants of
many cities; 21 the inhabitants of one city
shall go to another, saying, "Come, let us
go to entreat the favor of the LORD, and to
seek the LORD of hosts; I myself am go-
ing." 22 Many peoples and strong nations
shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in
Jerusalem, and to entreat the favor of the
LORD. 23 Thus says the LORD of hosts: In
those days ten men from nations of every
language shall take hold of a Jew, grasp-
ing his garment and saying, "Let us go
with you, for we have heard that God is
with you."

Approach of the Divine Warrior

9 An Oracle.

The word of the LORD is against
the land of Hadrach
and will rest upon Damascus.
For to the LORD belongs the
capital[v] of Aram,[w]
as do all the tribes of Israel;
2 Hamath also, which borders on it,
Tyre and Sidon, though they
are very wise.
3 Tyre has built itself a rampart,
and heaped up silver like dust,
and gold like the dirt of the
streets.
4 But now, the Lord will strip it of
its possessions
and hurl its wealth into the sea,
and it shall be devoured by fire.
5 Ashkelon shall see it and be
afraid;
Gaza too, and shall writhe in
anguish;
Ekron also, because its hopes
are withered.
The king shall perish from
Gaza;
Ashkelon shall be uninhabited;
6 a mongrel people shall settle
in Ashdod,
and I will make an end of the
pride of Philistia.
7 I will take away its blood from
its mouth,
and its abominations from
between its teeth;
it too shall be a remnant for
our God;
it shall be like a clan in Judah,
and Ekron shall be like the
Jebusites.
8 Then I will encamp at my house
as a guard,
so that no one shall march to
and fro;
no oppressor shall again overrun
them,
for now I have seen with my
own eyes.

The Peace of God's Victory

9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion!
Shout aloud, O daughter
Jerusalem!

v Heb *eye* w Cn: Heb *of Adam* (or *of humankind*)

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ing to the soon to be reconstructed temple to *entreat the favor of the LORD*. The universal scope of God's future work of blessing answers to the promise to Abram in Gen 12.3; it is also used to describe the work of God in Christ in such texts as Jn 12.32. **8.23** This is probably the earliest use of the term *Jew* in the Hebrew Bible. The universal vision of human harmony with Zion at the center responds fully to the earlier prophetic vision of the peaceable kingdom (Isa 11.6–9), the beating of swords into plowshares (Isa 2.4; Mic 4.3), the love of God for other nations mediated through the faithful prophets of Israel (Isa 19.23–25; Jonah), and the work of the servant of the Lord (Isa 42.4; 49.1–6).

9.1–11.17 The Divine Warrior and the restoration of scattered Israel. **9.1–8** These verses picture the Lord as Divine Warrior moving triumphantly toward Jerusalem prior to the "day of the LORD" (cf. Joel 2.11; Isa 63.1–6). The list of cities mentioned in this passage works its way systematically from north to south, pausing for a siege of Tyre (v. 3). Commentators point out that the conquest of the eastern Mediterranean by Alexander the Great in 332 B.C.E. followed a similar course. **9.1** *An Oracle*. This introductory formula, repeated in 12.1, serves to bind the two parts of Second Zechariah (chs. 9–11 and 12–14; see the Introduction). The ensuing booklet of Malachi is introduced by the same formula and perhaps should be viewed as an appendix to Zechariah. **9.7** The threats against the Phillistines include application of the universal Israelite rule against the eating of *blood* (see Gen 9.4). The *Jebusites*, former inhabitants of Jerusalem, suffered defeat by David and his men (2 Sam 5.6–9). **9.9** *Daughter Zion*. See note on 2.10. The triumphant king arrives *humble and riding on a . . . donkey*, thereby demonstrating his peaceful intentions. Two Gospels (Mt 21.2–7; Jn 12.14–15) cite this text in their

Lo, your king comes to you;
  triumphant and victorious is he,
humble and riding on a donkey,
  on a colt, the foal of a donkey.
10 He[x] will cut off the chariot
    from Ephraim
  and the war-horse from
    Jerusalem;
and the battle bow shall be
    cut off,
  and he shall command peace to
    the nations;
his dominion shall be from sea
    to sea,
  and from the River to the ends
    of the earth.

11 As for you also, because of the
    blood of my covenant
    with you,
  I will set your prisoners free
    from the waterless pit.
12 Return to your stronghold,
    O prisoners of hope;
  today I declare that I will
    restore to you double.
13 For I have bent Judah as
    my bow;
  I have made Ephraim its arrow.
I will arouse your sons, O Zion,
  against your sons, O Greece,
  and wield you like a
    warrior's sword.

Arrival of the Divine Warrior

14 Then the LORD will appear
    over them,
  and his arrow go forth like
    lightning;
the Lord GOD will sound the
    trumpet
  and march forth in the
    whirlwinds of the south.
15 The LORD of hosts will protect
    them,
  and they shall devour and tread
    down the slingers;[y]
they shall drink their blood[z]
    like wine,
  and be full like a bowl,
  drenched like the corners of
    the altar.

16 On that day the LORD their God
    will save them
  for they are the flock of
    his people;
for like the jewels of a crown
  they shall shine on his land.
17 For what goodness and beauty
    are his!
  Grain shall make the young
    men flourish,
  and new wine the young
    women.

The LORD of the Rains

10 Ask rain from the LORD
    in the season of the
    spring rain,
from the LORD who makes the
    storm clouds,
  who gives showers of rain
    to you,[a]
  the vegetation in the field
    to everyone.

x Gk: Heb *I* y Cn: Heb *the slingstones*
z Gk: Heb *shall drink* a Heb *them*

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accounts of Palm Sunday, but the Matthean version fails to take into consideration the parallelism of the Hebrew poetry (*donkey* is equivalent to *colt*) when it has Jesus riding on two donkeys at once. **9.10** The Divine Warrior demilitarizes the nations within the vast sweep of his dominion *from the River* [probably the Euphrates] *to the ends of the earth* (see Ps 46.8–9; Isa 57.19). **9.11** The phrase *the blood of my covenant* is the conventional way of referring to the sacrificially sealed covenant relationship between the Lord and the people (see Ex 24.8; Mt 26.28; Heb 9.15–22). **9.12** Cf. Isa 40.2. **9.13** God will rescue the long-vanished Northern Kingdom, *Ephraim* (Israel) along with *Judah* (see 10.7). *Greece* is the earliest reference to that Western power in the Bible, though the late prophet Joel refers to "the Greeks" (Joel 3.6). **9.14** In classic Divine Warrior guise, *the LORD will appear over them*, with the heavenly hosts. **9.15** *They shall devour . . . drink their blood* suggests not only the triumph of the Lord's human allies but also a sacral ceremony comparable to the sacrifice of an animal on an altar (Ex 24.8). **9.17** In the aftermath of victory, *grain shall make the young men flourish, and new wine the young women* (see Jer 31.12–14; Am 9.13–14; Joel 3.18). If commentators are correct in seeing a development through Second Zechariah toward a more radical and cosmic outlook, then perhaps this first chapter in the series should not be dated as late as the reference to Greece might suggest but should be considered to be as early as the sixth-century B.C.E.

2 For the teraphim[b] utter
nonsense,
and the diviners see lies;
the dreamers tell false dreams,
and give empty consolation.
Therefore the people wander
like sheep;
they suffer for lack of a
shepherd.

The Lord of History

3 My anger is hot against the
shepherds,
and I will punish the leaders;[c]
for the Lord of hosts cares for
his flock, the house of
Judah,
and will make them like his
proud war-horse.
4 Out of them shall come the
cornerstone,
out of them the tent peg,
out of them the battle bow,
out of them every commander.
5 Together they shall be like
warriors in battle,
trampling the foe in the mud
of the streets;
they shall fight, for the Lord is
with them,
and they shall put to shame the
riders on horses.

6 I will strengthen the house
of Judah,
and I will save the house
of Joseph.
I will bring them back because I
have compassion on them,
and they shall be as though I
had not rejected them;
for I am the Lord their God
and I will answer them.
7 Then the people of Ephraim shall
become like warriors,
and their hearts shall be glad as
with wine.
Their children shall see it and
rejoice,
their hearts shall exult in
the Lord.

8 I will signal for them and gather
them in,
for I have redeemed them,
and they shall be as numerous
as they were before.
9 Though I scattered them among
the nations,
yet in far countries they shall
remember me,
and they shall rear their
children and return.
10 I will bring them home from the
land of Egypt,
and gather them from Assyria;
I will bring them to the land of
Gilead and to Lebanon,
until there is no room for
them.
11 They[d] shall pass through the sea
of distress,
and the waves of the sea shall
be struck down,
and all the depths of the Nile
dried up.
The pride of Assyria shall be
laid low,
and the scepter of Egypt
shall depart.
12 I will make them strong in
the Lord,
and they shall walk in his name,
says the Lord.

Doom for Fertile Lebanon

11 Open your doors, O Lebanon,
so that fire may devour
your cedars!

b Or *household gods* *c* Or *male goats*
d Gk: Heb *He*

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date of Zech 1–8. **10.2** The *teraphim* were part of the apparatus of prophetic prognosticators. They were evidently amulets or metallic images or statues of gods (see Judg 18.14–20; Ezek 21.21; Hos 3.4). The great prophets of the previous century were particularly incensed about the perversion of the prophetic office in the mouths of false prophets (see Jer 14.14; 23.23–32; Ezek 13.8–16; 22.28). **10.3** Because of the failure of Israel's human *leaders*, the Lord will personally be the shepherd of the house of Judah (see text note *c*; cf. Ezek 34.11–24, where the leaders of the people are also called "goats"). **10.7** See note on 9.13. **10.10** The theme of the gathering in of the exiles is sounded here. In a veritable new exodus, they will come from Egypt and Assyria *until there is no room for them* (see note on 2.4).

11.1–3 In an ironic way, Lebanon is invited to

2 Wail, O cypress, for the cedar
has fallen,
for the glorious trees are
ruined!
Wail, oaks of Bashan,
for the thick forest has
been felled!
3 Listen, the wail of the shepherds,
for their glory is despoiled!
Listen, the roar of the lions,
for the thickets of the Jordan
are destroyed!

Two Kinds of Shepherds

4 Thus said the LORD my God: Be a shepherd of the flock doomed to slaughter. 5 Those who buy them kill them and go unpunished; and those who sell them say, "Blessed be the LORD, for I have become rich"; and their own shepherds have no pity on them. 6 For I will no longer have pity on the inhabitants of the earth, says the LORD. I will cause them, every one, to fall each into the hand of a neighbor, and each into the hand of the king; and they shall devastate the earth, and I will deliver no one from their hand.

7 So, on behalf of the sheep merchants, I became the shepherd of the flock doomed to slaughter. I took two staffs; one I named Favor, the other I named Unity, and I tended the sheep. 8 In one month I disposed of the three shepherds, for I had become impatient with them, and they also detested me. 9 So I said, "I will not be your shepherd. What is to die, let it die; what is to be destroyed, let it be destroyed; and let those that are left devour the flesh of one another!" 10 I took my staff Favor and broke it, annulling the covenant that I had made with all the peoples. 11 So it was annulled on that day, and the sheep merchants, who were watching me, knew that it was the word of the LORD. 12 I then said to them, "If it seems right to you, give me my wages; but if not, keep them." So they weighed out as my wages thirty shekels of silver. 13 Then the LORD said to me, "Throw it into the treasury"[e]—this lordly price at which I was valued by them. So I took the thirty shekels of silver and threw them into the treasury[e] in the house of the LORD. 14 Then I broke my second staff Unity, annulling the family ties between Judah and Israel.

15 Then the LORD said to me: Take once more the implements of a worthless shepherd. 16 For I am now raising up in the land a shepherd who does not care for the perishing, or seek the wandering,[f] or heal the maimed, or nourish the healthy,[g] but devours the flesh of the fat ones, tearing off even their hoofs.

17 Oh, my worthless shepherd,
who deserts the flock!
May the sword strike his arm
and his right eye!
Let his arm be completely
withered,
his right eye utterly blinded!

e Syr: Heb *it to the potter* *f* Syr Compare Gk Vg: Heb *the youth* *g* Meaning of Heb uncertain

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lay itself open to destruction, in contrast to the invitation to Judah to make itself open to divine nurture (10.1). **11.1** The *cedars* of Lebanon were prized for their beauty and strength (Ezek 31.2–9). **11.2** *Oaks of Bashan,* in the region immediately east of the Sea of Galilee, were the source of timber of high durability (see Ezek 27.6). In prophetic polemic, cedars and oaks are used as metaphors for the proud nations (see Isa 2.12–19). **11.7** *So . . . I became the shepherd.* An unknown individual, perhaps the prophet himself, undertakes to do acts symbolic of the recalcitrance of the Judean community. It is difficult to say who are *the sheep merchants* for whom he is working. **11.10** *I took my staff Favor and broke it* no doubt reflects the prophetic indictment of the leadership of the Judean community, perhaps in the years immediately following the reconstruction of the temple but before the first governorship of Nehemiah (445/4 B.C.E.). **11.12–13** *Thirty shekels of silver* is the figure assigned in Ex 21.32 as indemnity for a slave who had been gored by an ox. This was the fee paid to the traitor Judas (Mt 26.15; 27.9). The Gospel writers surely allude to these verses in reporting that Judas threw down the silver coins in the temple and that the money was used to buy the Potter's Field as a burial place (see text note *e*). **11.14** *I broke my second staff Unity* suggests despair for the restoration of both the Northern and Southern kingdoms (cf. 9.13; 10.6–7). **11.15–17** An expansion on these verses is to be found in 13.7–9. **11.17** God raises up a *worthless shepherd* so vicious that he is placed under the terrible curse of maiming and blinding.

The Day of the Lord

12

An Oracle.

The word of the Lord concerning Israel: Thus says the Lord, who stretched
out the heavens and founded the earth
and formed the human spirit within:
2 See, I am about to make Jerusalem a cup
of reeling for all the surrounding peoples;
it will be against Judah also in the siege
against Jerusalem. 3 On that day I will
make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the
peoples; all who lift it shall grievously
hurt themselves. And all the nations of
the earth shall come together against it.
4 On that day, says the Lord, I will strike
every horse with panic, and its rider with
madness. But on the house of Judah I will
keep a watchful eye, when I strike every
horse of the peoples with blindness.
5 Then the clans of Judah shall say to
themselves, "The inhabitants of Jerusalem have strength through the Lord of
hosts, their God."
6 On that day I will make the clans of
Judah like a blazing pot on a pile of wood,
like a flaming torch among sheaves; and
they shall devour to the right and to the
left all the surrounding peoples, while Jerusalem shall again be inhabited in its
place, in Jerusalem.
7 And the Lord will give victory to the
tents of Judah first, that the glory of the
house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem may not be exalted
over that of Judah. 8 On that day the
Lord will shield the inhabitants of Jerusalem so that the feeblest among them on
that day shall be like David, and the house
of David shall be like God, like the angel
of the Lord, at their head. 9 And on that
day I will seek to destroy all the nations
that come against Jerusalem.

Events on the Day of the Lord

10 And I will pour out a spirit of compassion and supplication on the house of
David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem,
so that, when they look on the one[h]
whom they have pierced, they shall
mourn for him, as one mourns for an
only child, and weep bitterly over him, as
one weeps over a firstborn. 11 On that day
the mourning in Jerusalem will be as
great as the mourning for Hadad-rimmon
in the plain of Megiddo. 12 The land shall
mourn, each family by itself; the family of
the house of David by itself, and their
wives by themselves; the family of the
house of Nathan by itself, and their wives
by themselves; 13 the family of the house
of Levi by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the Shimeites by itself, and their wives by themselves; 14 and
all the families that are left, each by itself,
and their wives by themselves.

h Heb *on me*

12.1–14.21 The use of the formulas *on that day* and *a day of the Lord* seventeen times in these three chapters provides them with a strong thematic unity. Now the focus will be on the culminating day of God's victory as Divine Warrior and on the paradisical aftermath of that victory. **12.1–13.6** The purge of Jerusalem. This section may be datable to the middle of the fifth century B.C.E. when tensions between early apocalyptic visionary circles and the Jerusalem priests were beginning to grow acute. **12.1–9** These verses presuppose Jerusalem's conflict not only with the nations around it but with Judah itself. **12.1** *An oracle.* See note on 9.1. **12.2** *A cup of reeling.* See Ps 75.8. **12.3** Like the stone not cut by human hands of Dan 2.34–45, God's elect city becomes a *heavy stone for all the peoples* on the "day of the Lord." The motifs of the election of Jerusalem (3.2) and of the house of David (2 Sam 7.16) recur in the thinking of Second Zechariah. **12.8–9** The motif of the great battle against the nations gathered before Jerusalem is a favorite one in late prophetic eschatology (Isa 63.1–6; Ezek 38.14–23) and is taken up again in apocalyptic texts (see Joel 3.11–14; Rev 14.14–20).

12.10 *The one whom they have pierced.* The Hebrew text (see text note *h*) suggests that the prophet himself (see 13.6), or even the Lord, might be this "suffering servant" (see Isa 52.13–53.12; Mt 23.37; Jn 19.34–37); other ancient versions point to an unknown victim of intracommunity strife. **12.11** The martyrdom of the prophetic/messianic figure leads to a *day of mourning in Jerusalem.* If *Hadad-rimmon* is taken as the name of a place in the region of *Megiddo* and not that of a fertility god of Canaan as some commentators prefer, it should probably be identified with the Rimmon of Josh 19.13 (not that of Zech 14.10). The mourning alluded to in that case might be that for the Judean king Josiah, killed on the plain of Megiddo in 609 B.C.E., which was made customary by the prophet Jeremiah and the

13 On that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity.

2 On that day, says the LORD of hosts, I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, so that they shall be remembered no more; and also I will remove from the land the prophets and the unclean spirit. 3 And if any prophets appear again, their fathers and mothers who bore them will say to them, "You shall not live, for you speak lies in the name of the LORD"; and their fathers and their mothers who bore them shall pierce them through when they prophesy. 4 On that day the prophets will be ashamed, every one, of their visions when they prophesy; they will not put on a hairy mantle in order to deceive, 5 but each of them will say, "I am no prophet, I am a tiller of the soil; for the land has been my possession[i] since my youth." 6 And if anyone asks them, "What are these wounds on your chest?"[j] the answer will be "The wounds I received in the house of my friends."

My Sword Against My Shepherd

7 "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd,
against the man who is my associate,"
says the LORD of hosts.
Strike the shepherd, that the sheep may be scattered;
I will turn my hand against the little ones.
8 In the whole land, says the LORD,
two-thirds shall be cut off and perish,
and one-third shall be left alive.
9 And I will put this third into the fire,
refine them as one refines silver,
and test them as gold is tested.
They will call on my name,
and I will answer them.
I will say, "They are my people";
and they will say, "The LORD is our God."

The "Apocalypse of Zechariah"

14 See, a day is coming for the LORD, when the plunder taken from you will be divided in your midst. 2 For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken and the houses looted and the women raped; half the city shall go into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city. 3 Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle. 4 On

i Cn: Heb *for humankind has caused me to possess*
j Heb *wounds between your hands*

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singers (see 2 Chr 35.20–27). **13.1** The *fountain* is the first of two references in Zechariah to the river of God that flows from the Jerusalem sanctuary for the cleansing of the people (14.8; Ps 46.4; Ezek 47.1–12; Joel 3.18; Rev 22.1–2; in Jn 4.14; 7.37–38, Jesus compares himself to this life-giving stream). **13.4** *Hairy mantle.* None of the usual tricks of the prophetic trade will find favor on the "day of the LORD." Perhaps vv. 2–6 are intended to be a rejection of prophetic guilds associated with the temple; however, the denial that the wounds visible on the chests of the prophets are evidences of punishment for prophesying (v. 6) hints at a general repression of all forms of prophecy. **13.5** *I am no prophet.* Here, near the end of the prophetic period, the words of Amos, the very first writing prophet, are echoed (Am 7.14). Evidently both Amos and Second Zechariah were eager to dissociate themselves from the prophetic guilds.

13.7–9 A continuation of 11.15–17. **13.7** *The man who is* [God's] *associate* might be the prophet who serves at God's behest (Dan 8.16–17), an angel (Dan 9.21), or even the messianic leader of the remnant of Judah in the time of God's act of judgment (Dan 7.13). In any case, the suffering of this "man" opens the way for the purification and final salvation of the people (see Mt 26.31; Mk 14.27). **13.9** See Mal 3.2–4; also Isa 48.10).

14.1–21 Because this chapter achieves the most radical, even cosmic, vision of change on the "day of the LORD," it is thought to be the latest in the ongoing series of oracles and visions in Second Zechariah. It may be as late as 420 B.C.E. **14.1** On the day of the Lord, *the plunder taken from you will be divided in your midst.* This is not the motif of the despoiling of the oppressor nations by Israel (see 2.9; Ex 12.36; Ezek 38–39; Nah 2.9; Hag 2.7–8), but rather one of the details of the terror to be experienced by those Judeans who will have to endure the "day of the LORD's" victory. **14.3** See note on 12.8–9. **14.4** *The Mount of Olives shall be split in two.* The cosmic dimension of this last vision of Zechariah implies changes in the very structure of the earth itself. Perhaps

that day his feet shall stand on the Mount
of Olives, which lies before Jerusalem on
the east; and the Mount of Olives shall be
split in two from east to west by a very
wide valley; so that one half of the Mount
shall withdraw northward, and the other
half southward. 5 And you shall flee by
the valley of the LORD's mountain,[k] for
the valley between the mountains shall
reach to Azal;[l] and you shall flee as you
fled from the earthquake in the days of
King Uzziah of Judah. Then the LORD my
God will come, and all the holy ones
with him.

6 On that day there shall not be[m] ei-
ther cold or frost.[n] 7 And there shall be
continuous day (it is known to the LORD),
not day and not night, for at evening time
there shall be light.

8 On that day living waters shall flow
out from Jerusalem, half of them to the
eastern sea and half of them to the west-
ern sea; it shall continue in summer as in
winter.

9 And the LORD will become king over
all the earth; on that day the LORD will be
one and his name one.

10 The whole land shall be turned
into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south
of Jerusalem. But Jerusalem shall remain
aloft on its site from the Gate of Benjamin
to the place of the former gate, to the
Corner Gate, and from the Tower of
Hananel to the king's wine presses. 11 And
it shall be inhabited, for never again shall
it be doomed to destruction; Jerusalem
shall abide in security.

12 This shall be the plague with which
the LORD will strike all the peoples that
wage war against Jerusalem: their flesh
shall rot while they are still on their feet;
their eyes shall rot in their sockets, and
their tongues shall rot in their mouths.
13 On that day a great panic from the LORD
shall fall on them, so that each will seize
the hand of a neighbor, and the hand
of the one will be raised against the hand
of the other; 14 even Judah will fight at
Jerusalem. And the wealth of all the
surrounding nations shall be collected—
gold, silver, and garments in great abun-
dance. 15 And a plague like this plague
shall fall on the horses, the mules, the
camels, the donkeys, and whatever ani-
mals may be in those camps.

16 Then all who survive of the nations
that have come against Jerusalem shall go
up year after year to worship the King,
the LORD of hosts, and to keep the festival
of booths.[o] 17 If any of the families of the
earth do not go up to Jerusalem to wor-
ship the King, the LORD of hosts, there
will be no rain upon them. 18 And if the
family of Egypt do not go up and present
themselves, then on them shall[p] come the
plague that the LORD inflicts on the na-
tions that do not go up to keep the festival
of booths.[o] 19 Such shall be the punish-
ment of Egypt and the punishment of all
the nations that do not go up to keep the
festival of booths.[o]

20 On that day there shall be inscribed
on the bells of the horses, "Holy to the

k Heb *my mountains* *l* Meaning of Heb uncertain *m* Cn: Heb *there shall not be light* *n* Compare Gk Syr Vg Tg: Meaning of Heb uncertain *o* Or *tabernacles*; Heb *succoth* *p* Gk Syr: Heb *shall not*

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by their hugeness and weight, the divine feet are sufficient to alter the landscape of Jerusalem. **14.5** *The earthquake.* See Am 1.1. The phrase *all the holy ones with him* suggests that the Lord wins divine warfare only with a full compliment of angelic forces (cf. Dan 7.22). **14.6–7** The displacement of the sun by the glory of God is a motif used by the nearly contemporary "Isaiah Apocalypse" (Isa 24–27; see also Isa 24.23; 60.19–20; Rev 22.5). **14.8** *Living waters.* See note on 13.1. **14.9** *The LORD will be one and his name one* suggests the achievement of that utter undividedness of loyalty anticipated in the Shema (Deut 6.4). The universal respect of the name of the Lord, also alluded to in Mal 1.11, is featured in the doxologies offered to the Lord by foreign kings throughout Dan 1–6. See also Rev 11.15–18; 15.3–4. **14.11** *Shall be inhabited.* See 2.4; Joel 3.20. The lifting of the curse pronounced in Zech 11.6 leads to the blessing of progeny promised to a covenant-obedient people in Deut 28.11. **14.14** See notes on 12.8–9; 14.1. **14.15** Those who fight against Jerusalem will experience a fate like those who oppose the covenant of God (Deut 28.20–22). **14.16–21** In the tranquility of the new age that lies beyond the "day of the LORD," the remnants of the other nations become Judaized and keep the annual pilgrimage *festival of booths* (see Lev 23.39–43). The vision has positive meaning for the other nations because they can find succor of the Lord's presence (see Isa 19.16–25). **14.20–21** *Bells, bowls,* and *cooking pots* will all achieve ritual purity through the direct activity of God rather than through priestly consecration (cf. Lev 27.30–33). In contrast to Joel 3.17, this vision anticipates the gathering of all

LORD." And the cooking pots in the house of the LORD shall be as holy as[q] the bowls in front of the altar; 21 and every cooking pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be sacred to the LORD of hosts, so that all who sacrifice may come and use them to boil the flesh of the sacrifice. And there shall no longer be traders[r] in the house of the LORD of hosts on that day.

q Heb *shall be like* *r* Or *Canaanites*

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nations to Jerusalem with the exception that *there shall no longer be traders* [Hebrew, "Canaanites"] *in the house of the LORD of hosts on that day.* Thus did the visionaries who gave us Second Zechariah imagine that the temple, the restoration of which was such a primary concern of Zechariah son of Berechiah, will finally become fit to serve as the worship center for the whole world in the new age.

MALACHI

Date and Historical Context

ALTHOUGH MALACHI IS THE LAST BOOK of the Hebrew canon of prophets, it was by no means the last of the prophetic books to be written. The criticism of temple behavior in 1.6–14; 2.11 makes clear that the Jerusalem temple is functioning once again. This means the book came into being after the time of Haggai and the author of Zech 1–8, and after the temple was rededicated in 516/5 B.C.E. (see Ezra 6.15). The fact that the sacrificial worship of the temple had had time to fall into disorder and the deep concern with intermarriage with foreign women (2.10–17), which this book shares with Ezra and Nehemiah, both suggest that it was written shortly before Nehemiah's first return in 445/4 B.C.E. during the reign of Artaxerxes I (465–424 B.C.E.)

Name, Authorship, and Message

Like the book of Haggai, Malachi gives us no personal information about its author. Even its name, "Malachi," may not be a personal name at all but simply a title, "My messenger" (see 3.1). The name is appropriate, however, for it is the task of this late prophetic book to bring two messages: God is displeased with the lack of piety in the community gathered around the temple (1.6–2.16; 3.6–12); and God is about to send a messenger who will reunite and purify all of Israel prior to the "great and terrible day of the LORD" (4.5). The book ends on that eschatological note; in the Christian canon it is followed immediately by the Gospel announcement of the birth of Jesus. The earliest Gospel, Mark, even opens with the preaching of the "messenger" John the Baptist, whom Jesus called "Elijah who is to come" (Mt 11.14; see also Mk 9.13). This juxtaposition suggests that in early Christian eyes, the advent of the Christ was the first of the culminating events of history promised by the prophet "Malachi."

Social Location

Unlike such early prophets as Amos and Hosea, the late prophetic book of Malachi is not simply the voice of the observant masses against a corrupt priesthood,

though it readily indicts the priesthood for its failures (1.6–2.9). It identifies itself with Levitical priestly circles (2.4–6) and believes deeply in the temple, true worship, and the payment of tithes as means for obtaining the blessing of the land (3.10–12). Like Haggai and Zech 1–8 in the previous century, it is the work of a "central" prophet who worked among the ruling circles of his people, rather than at the periphery. The book fulfills its task in six disputations, followed by two brief appendices. *W. Sibley Towner*

1 An oracle. The word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi.[a]

The Rejection of Edom

2 I have loved you, says the LORD. But you say, "How have you loved us?" Is not Esau Jacob's brother? says the LORD. Yet I have loved Jacob 3 but I have hated Esau; I have made his hill country a desolation and his heritage a desert for jackals. 4 If Edom says, "We are shattered but we will rebuild the ruins," the LORD of hosts says: They may build, but I will tear down, until they are called the wicked country, the people with whom the LORD is angry forever. 5 Your own eyes shall see this, and you shall say, "Great is the LORD beyond the borders of Israel!"

The Temple Priesthood

6 A son honors his father, and servants their master. If then I am a father, where is the honor due me? And if I am a master, where is the respect due me? says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name. You say, "How have we despised your name?" 7 By offering polluted food on my altar. And you say, "How have we polluted it?"[b] By thinking that the LORD's table may be despised. 8 When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that not wrong? And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that not wrong? Try presenting that to your governor; will he be pleased with you or show you favor? says the LORD of hosts. 9 And now implore the favor of God, that he may be gracious to us. The fault is yours. Will he show favor to any of you? says the LORD of hosts. 10 Oh, that someone among you would shut the temple[c] doors, so that you would not kindle fire on my altar in vain! I have no pleasure in you, says the LORD of hosts, and I will not accept an offering from your hands. 11 For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name is great among the nations, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure offering; for my name is great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts. 12 But you profane it when you say that the Lord's table is polluted, and the food for it[d] may be despised. 13 "What a weariness this is," you say, and you sniff at me,[e] says the LORD of hosts. You bring what has been taken by vio-

a Or *by my messenger* b Gk: Heb *you*
c Heb lacks *temple* d Compare Syr Tg: Heb *its fruit, its food* e Another reading is *at it*

1.1 Superscription. See note on Zech 9.1. **1.2–5** First oracle. This section is introduced in the distinctive question-and-answer style of Malachi, a mode of speech also found quite prominently in Haggai (Hag 1.4–6, 7–11; 2.3–5, 15–16). For other prophetic oracles against Edom see Isa 34; 63.1–6; Jer 49.7–22; Ezek 25.12–14; and most of the book of Obadiah. **1.2** *Esau Jacob's brother.* See Gen 25.24–34. Esau is identified as the ancestor of the Edomites in Gen 36.1. **1.5** The Lord's sovereignty even *beyond the borders of Israel* is a theme beloved to the exilic and post-exilic prophets: see Isa 19.23–25; 46.1–2; Ezek 1.1–3; Zech 9.1–8; Jon 3–4.

1.6–2.9 Second oracle. An indictment of the Jerusalemite priesthood for its failures. **1.8** *Blind animals* and *those that are lame or sick* were not acceptable for sacrifice (see Lev 22.17–30; Deut 15.21). **1.10** *Shut the temple doors* suggests that no worship at all would be preferable to stingy, grudging offerings. **1.11** In a universal vision of the worship of Israel's Lord, even the gentile nations are held to be able to worship the

lence or is lame or sick, and this you bring
as your offering! Shall I accept that from
your hand? says the LORD. 14 Cursed be
the cheat who has a male in the flock
and vows to give it, and yet sacrifices to
the Lord what is blemished; for I am a
great King, says the LORD of hosts,
and my name is reverenced among the
nations.

2 And now, O priests, this command is
for you. 2 If you will not listen, if you
will not lay it to heart to give glory to my
name, says the LORD of hosts, then I will
send the curse on you and I will curse
your blessings; indeed I have already
cursed them,[f] because you do not lay it to
heart. 3 I will rebuke your offspring, and
spread dung on your faces, the dung of
your offerings, and I will put you out of
my presence.[g]

4 Know, then, that I have sent this
command to you, that my covenant with
Levi may hold, says the LORD of hosts.
5 My covenant with him was a covenant of
life and well-being, which I gave him; this
called for reverence, and he revered me
and stood in awe of my name. 6 True in-
struction was in his mouth, and no wrong
was found on his lips. He walked with me
in integrity and uprightness, and he
turned many from iniquity. 7 For the lips
of a priest should guard knowledge, and
people should seek instruction from his
mouth, for he is the messenger of the
LORD of hosts. 8 But you have turned
aside from the way; you have caused
many to stumble by your instruction; you
have corrupted the covenant of Levi, says
the LORD of hosts, 9 and so I make you
despised and abased before all the people,
inasmuch as you have not kept my ways
but have shown partiality in your in-
struction.

God Hates Faithlessness

10 Have we not all one father? Has
not one God created us? Why then are we
faithless to one another, profaning the
covenant of our ancestors? 11 Judah has
been faithless, and abomination has been
committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for
Judah has profaned the sanctuary of the
LORD, which he loves, and has married
the daughter of a foreign god. 12 May the
LORD cut off from the tents of Jacob any-
one who does this—any to witness[h] or
answer, or to bring an offering to the
LORD of hosts.

13 And this you do as well: You cover
the LORD's altar with tears, with weeping
and groaning because he no longer re-
gards the offering or accepts it with favor
at your hand. 14 You ask, "Why does he
not?" Because the LORD was a witness be-
tween you and the wife of your youth, to
whom you have been faithless, though she
is your companion and your wife by cove-
nant. 15 Did not one God make her?[i]
Both flesh and spirit are his.[j] And what
does the one God[k] desire? Godly off-
spring. So look to yourselves, and do not
let anyone be faithless to the wife of his
youth. 16 For I hate[l] divorce, says the
LORD, the God of Israel, and covering
one's garment with violence, says the
LORD of hosts. So take heed to yourselves
and do not be faithless.

The LORD Will Judge Justly

17 You have wearied the LORD with
your words. Yet you say, "How have we

f Heb *it* *g* Cn Compare Gk Syr: Heb *and he shall bear you to it* *h* Cn Compare Gk: Heb *arouse* *i* Or *Has he not made one?* *j* Cn: Heb *and a remnant of spirit was his* *k* Heb *he* *l* Cn: Heb *he hates*

Lord in holiness (see Ps 50.1). **1.14** See Ps 102.15. **2.2** It is the task of priests to pronounce blessings (Num 6.22–27). Malachi's curse against the priests turns their benedictions into anathemas. **2.3** The Septuagint reads "I will cut off your arm" instead of *I will rebuke your offspring*, perhaps as a way of stressing that the priests will not be able to perform their duty of pronouncing blessings with upraised hands. The *dung* of offerings was supposed to have been burned outside the camp (see Ex 29.14). **2.4–6** Because the priestly tribe of *Levi* supported Moses against the Aaronites in the incident of the golden calf (Ex 32.25–28), the Levites were always held in esteem by the prophets. **2.4** The *covenant with Levi* is nowhere described, but it is implied in Jer 33.21. **2.7** Lev 10.11 underscores the duty of priests to teach the covenant tradition, but this is the only place in the Bible in which the priest is described as *the messenger of the LORD of hosts*.

2.10–16 Third oracle. An indictment of the people for their conduct toward one another. **2.13–16** This is the strongest condemnation of divorce expressed anywhere in the Hebrew Bible. While divorce is permitted by Deut 24.1–4, the Bible always regards marriage as a holy covenant (Gen 2.24; 31.50; Prov 2.17; Eph 5.21–33). **2.17–3.5** Fourth oracle. **2.17** In words reminis-

wearied him?" By saying, "All who do evil
are good in the sight of the LORD, and he
delights in them." Or by asking, "Where is
the God of justice?"

3 See, I am sending my messenger to
prepare the way before me, and the
Lord whom you seek will suddenly come
to his temple. The messenger of the cove-
nant in whom you delight—indeed, he is
coming, says the LORD of hosts. 2 But who
can endure the day of his coming, and
who can stand when he appears?
For he is like a refiner's fire and like
fullers' soap; 3 he will sit as a refiner and
purifier of silver, and he will purify the
descendants of Levi and refine them like
gold and silver, until they present offer-
ings to the LORD in righteousness.[m]
4 Then the offering of Judah and Jerusa-
lem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the
days of old and as in former years.
5 Then I will draw near to you for
judgment; I will be swift to bear witness
against the sorcerers, against the adulter-
ers, against those who swear falsely,
against those who oppress the hired work-
ers in their wages, the widow and the or-
phan, against those who thrust aside the
alien, and do not fear me, says the LORD
of hosts.

Blessings Will Flow

6 For I the LORD do not change;
therefore you, O children of Jacob, have
not perished. 7 Ever since the days of your
ancestors you have turned aside from my
statutes and have not kept them. Return
to me, and I will return to you, says the
LORD of hosts. But you say, "How shall we
return?"
8 Will anyone rob God? Yet you are
robbing me! But you say, "How are we
robbing you?" In your tithes and offer-
ings! 9 You are cursed with a curse, for
you are robbing me—the whole nation of
you! 10 Bring the full tithe into the store-
house, so that there may be food in my
house, and thus put me to the test, says
the LORD of hosts; see if I will not open
the windows of heaven for you and pour
down for you an overflowing blessing. 11 I
will rebuke the locust[n] for you, so that it
will not destroy the produce of your soil;
and your vine in the field shall not be bar-
ren, says the LORD of hosts. 12 Then all
nations will count you happy, for you will
be a land of delight, says the LORD of
hosts.

Those Written in the Book

13 You have spoken harsh words
against me, says the LORD. Yet you say,
"How have we spoken against you?"
14 You have said, "It is vain to serve God.
What do we profit by keeping his com-
mand or by going about as mourners be-

m Or *right offerings to the* LORD *n* Heb *devourer*

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cent of the skepticism of Eccl 7.15; 8.14–15, the questioners challenge God's intention to vindicate goodness and to be just. **3.1–4** Fully cleansed by *the messenger of the covenant,* the Levitical priests will at last be able to perform the priestly office *in righteousness.* This will open the way for blessings to flow, just as was promised by Haggai at the time of the reconsecration of the temple (Hag 2.19). **3.2** See Mt 3.10–12. **3.5** God promises to *be swift to bear witness* (see Zeph 3.8) against all those who violate the covenant tradition. The list of sins is typical of the prophetic indictment of evildoers (see Jer 7.9; note on Zech 7.9–10). Because God is "Father of orphans and protector of widows" (Ps 68.5), the day of the Lord brings retribution to any who abuse these who are marginalized (Zeph 3.1–5).

3.6–12 Fifth oracle. Repentance issuing in right action will restore God's blessings. **3.8** The law required that God receive the first tenth of the produce of the land (see Lev 27.30; Num 18.21–24); in Deut 14.28 the tithe of every third year is given to the support of widows, orphans, and Levitical priests. **3.10** At the waters of Meribah the people "tested" God in the matter of the manna, causing God to be angry (Ps 95.8–11). God also "tests" people to determine whether they are wicked or righteous (Ps 11.4–5). Here God invites Israel to *put me to the test.* **3.12** Judah is assured that the test will vindicate God and that *all nations will count you happy* (see Pss 41.2; 72.17; Isa 61.6–9; 62.4). The charge that the Lord delights in evildoers (2.17) is here refuted by the nations who once again prove to be authentic witnesses to the truth about God's blessing (cf. 1.14).

3.13–4.3 Sixth oracle. God takes note of the faithful and will save them on the day of judgment. **3.14–15** See note on 2.17. Conventional wisdom held that the righteous prosper and evildoers fail (Ps 1.3; Prov 28.13). However, the tragedy of exile (see Lam 1.5), the ambivalence of the Preacher (see Eccl 8.10–13), and the pessimism of apocalyptic about history (see Dan 8.25; 11.36) all concede that the wicked may prosper. Malachi tacitly concedes this as well, even when *they put God to the test* (see 3.10); but their success is only

fore the LORD of hosts? 15 Now we count
the arrogant happy; evildoers not only
prosper, but when they put God to the
test they escape."

16 Then those who revered the LORD
spoke with one another. The LORD took
note and listened, and a book of remem-
brance was written before him of those
who revered the LORD and thought on his
name. 17 They shall be mine, says the
LORD of hosts, my special possession on
the day when I act, and I will spare them
as parents spare their children who serve
them. 18 Then once more you shall see the
difference between the righteous and the
wicked, between one who serves God and
one who does not serve him.

4 [o] See, the day is coming, burning like
an oven, when all the arrogant and
all evildoers will be stubble; the day that
comes shall burn them up, says the LORD
of hosts, so that it will leave them neither
root nor branch. 2 But for you who revere
my name the sun of righteousness shall
rise, with healing in its wings. You shall go
out leaping like calves from the stall.
3 And you shall tread down the wicked,
for they will be ashes under the soles of
your feet, on the day when I act, says the
LORD of hosts.

Two Postscripts

4 Remember the teaching of my ser-
vant Moses, the statutes and ordinances
that I commanded him at Horeb for all
Israel.

5 Lo, I will send you the prophet Eli-
jah before the great and terrible day of
the LORD comes. 6 He will turn the hearts
of parents to their children and the hearts
of children to their parents, so that I will
not come and strike the land with a
curse.[p]

o Ch 4.1-6 are Ch 3.19-24 in Heb *p* Or *a ban of utter destruction*

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temporary. **3.16** Biblical tradition knows of two, or even three, heavenly record books. The book hinted at in Ps 139.16 seems to be a book of destiny in which the fate of the individual was written down before the beginning of time (cf. Dan 10.21; Rev 13.8; 20.15; 21.27). Here, however, the *book of remembrance* is juridical in character. In it the obedient deeds done by individuals during their lifetimes are recorded (see Ex 32.32–33; Ps 40.7 [cited in Heb 10.7]; 56.8; 69.28; Phil 4.3; Rev 3.5). Two references to "the books" in Dan 7.10; 12.1 could be read either way; and in the great judgment scene of Rev 20.12, both categories of books are opened together with a third one, the "book of life." **3.17** A *special possession* is the title given Israel in one of the most famous election scenes in the Bible, Ex 19.5. **4.1** The English ch. 4 is 3.19–24 in the Hebrew. **4.2** For *the sun of righteousness*, see Ps 84.11. One of the most familiar symbols of deity in Egyptian and Mesopotamian religion is the winged solar disk. Although God is not directly described here as a winged disk, the implication is that God will rise on the "day of the LORD" to effect justice and vindication for the righteous.

4.4–6 Two of Israel's greatest covenant mediators are mentioned in the concluding postscripts to the book. **4.5–6** Now the "messenger" of 3.1 is identified with Elijah the prophet, who, because he did not die but was carried into heaven (2 Kings 2.11), was regarded as ready to return as the harbinger of the day of the Lord. In the Gospel tradition the identification is carried further to John the Baptist (see Mt 11.13; 17.9–13; Mk 6.14–15; Lk 1.17).

THE

APOCRYPHAL/ DEUTEROCANONICAL BOOKS

OF

THE OLD TESTAMENT

New Revised Standard Version

APOCRYPHAL/DEUTEROCANONICAL BOOKS IN VARIOUS BIBLES

BOOKS INCLUDED IN ALL ORTHODOX AND CATHOLIC BIBLES
Tobit
Judith
Additions to Esther
Wisdom of Solomon
Ecclesiasticus, or the Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach
Baruch
Letter of Jeremiah
Additions to Daniel (Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Jews, Susanna, Bel and the Dragon)
1 Maccabees
2 Maccabees

GREEK ORTHODOX BIBLE	SLAVONIC ORTHODOX BIBLES
Prayer of Manasseh	Prayer of Manasseh
Psalm 151	Psalm 151
1 Esdras	2 Esdras
3 Maccabees	3 Esdras
4 Maccabees (in appendix)	3 Maccabees

DESIGNATIONS FOR BOOKS ASSOCIATED WITH EZRA AND NEHEMIAH

NRSV	GREEK BIBLE (SEPTUAGINT)	LATIN BIBLE (VULGATE)	SLAVONIC BIBLE
Ezra	2 Esdras	1 Ezra	1 Esdras
Nehemiah	2 Esdras	2 Ezra	Nehemiah
1 Esdras	1 Esdras	3 Ezra	2 Esdras
2 Esdras	(not included)	4 Ezra*	3 Esdras

*4 Ezra is sometimes used for chs. 3–14 specifically; chs. 1–2 are then designated 5 Ezra and chs. 15–16 designated 6 Ezra.

(a) The books and parts of books from Tobit through 2 Maccabees are recognized as Deuterocanonical Scripture by the Roman Catholic, Greek, and Russian Orthodox Churches.

TOBIT

TOBIT, A MULTIFACETED PIECE of historical fiction about the sufferings and healing of a pious Israelite and his family, is one of the most remarkable texts to have survived from Jewish antiquity. In complex ways it offers precious evidence about the religious, intellectual, and social worlds of the people of Israel in the last centuries before the common era.

A Religious Text

Theodicy, the vindication of God's justice, is the book's central motif. Tobit, the story's protagonist, is by every account a pious and righteous Israelite who does not deserve the intense suffering he experiences. Nor does his young relative Sarah. The situation is different for the nation as a whole; Israel has been exiled because of its apostasy, and the prophets' predictions that the nation will return to the land promised to Abraham and his descendants remain unfulfilled. The author offers a twofold explanation of unjust suffering. In some cases, an unseen demonic realm causes the innocent to suffer; in others, God sends suffering to those who are righteous, but not perfect, as a temporary means of chastisement. The author solves the problem of suffering by appealing to the future. As in Job, things end well for the righteous sufferer. For Israel, the prophecies will be fulfilled when the nation's chastisement at the hands of more sinful nations is complete. But in everything a sovereign and just God is active, orchestrating human events for the good of those who are pious and righteous.

The author makes these points by means of a worldview in which visible and invisible realms interpenetrate. Readers, who are allowed to see activity in both realms, can also empathize with the real-life characters, who are oblivious to God's beneficent presence and activity.

Tobit appropriates and modifies elements in the religious traditions that were then becoming Israel's scripture. Details in the narrative recall the patriarchal stories of Genesis (Sarah's altercation with Hagar, Gen 21; Eliezer's journey for Isaac's bride, Gen 24). Tobit's piety is based on commandments and injunctions in the Torah and a wisdom tradition (attested also in Sirach) spun out of

the Torah. The books of the prophets, especially Second and Third Isaiah (Isa 40–66), are considered reliable forecasts of God's future for the nation. Events and themes in chs. 1–2 echo the Mesopotamian court tales preserved in Dan 1–6 as well as the pagan story of Ahikar, which Jews and Christians adopted as their own. With its demons and archangels, its view of divine sovereignty and predestination, and its appeal to the future revelation of God's justice, Tobit's narrative also employs motifs and devices at home in apocalypses like Daniel and *1 Enoch.*

A Window into a Social World

Because it is a narrative about real-life characters rather than an apocalypse, the book offers a window into its author's world and some of its customs relating to family life, marriage, burial, the eating of meals, relationships between parents and children, inequalities between the sexes, elements of religious ritual, and the obligations of the rich to the poor.

Literary Aspects

The complexity of Tobit is most obvious in its use of literary genres and themes. As a whole it is a fictional narrative about life in biblical times. It differs from its sketchier narrative counterparts in the Bible in that its characters are developed with some attention to the complexity of their emotions and motivations. Narrative tension is maintained as scenes alternate between Nineveh and Ecbatana. An element of humor helps hold readers' attention and reminds them that there is a fine line between the sublime and the ridiculous. The narrative is nuanced by its use of other genres familiar from biblical and related literature: prayers and hymns, an account of the appearance of a divine being (epiphany), two testaments containing proverbial wisdom, and a prediction of future events similar to historical apocalypses. These genres enrich the narrative and embody elements from the author's social, intellectual, and religious worlds.

Complicating an assessment of this sophisticated piece of literature are its folkloric roots, evident in motifs also found elsewhere in ancient tales about "the dangerous bride" and "the grateful dead." These folkloric elements, including a playful touch of magic, stand in tension with the story's theological reflection and the intellectual strains of its wisdom tradition. The mix reminds one that this story about a wealthy member of the royal court is also about ordinary people—their experiences and expectations, woes and worries, superstitions and naïveté. In this complexity and the artistry with which it is presented lies the story's appeal.

Date, Place of Origin, and Language

The many historical inaccuracies in the story indicate that it is a pseudonymous text written long after the time it portrays. The date of its composition is limited by its mention of the rebuilding of the temple (515 B.C.E.) and its omission of

any reference to the persecution of the Jews under Antiochus IV Epiphanes (168 B.C.E.). Tobit is most likely to have been composed in the fourth or third century B.C.E.

The diaspora setting of the story, which underlies its many concerns about interactions between Israelites and Gentiles, suggests that it was written either in the Diaspora or in a predominantly gentile setting.

Tobit was composed in Aramaic. Textual fragments of the Aramaic and of a Hebrew translation were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. The story in its entirety has been preserved in manuscripts of the Greek OT.

Function

The story's use of wisdom genres and its repeated assertions that God acts for good even in adverse circumstances indicate that the author wishes to encourage readers to trust and hope in the enactment of God's mercy in their personal lives and through the gathering of the Diaspora and the realization of God's reign over all humanity. *George W. E. Nickelsburg*

1 This book tells the story of Tobit son
of Tobiel son of Hananiel son of Ad-
uel son of Gabael son of Raphael son of
Raguel of the descendants[a] of Asiel, of the
tribe of Naphtali, 2 who in the days of King
Shalmaneser[b] of the Assyrians was taken
into captivity from Thisbe, which is to the
south of Kedesh Naphtali in Upper Gali-
lee, above Asher toward the west, and
north of Phogor.

Tobit's Piety in Apostate Israel

3 I, Tobit, walked in the ways of truth
and righteousness all the days of my life. I
performed many acts of charity for my
kindred and my people who had gone
with me in exile to Nineveh in the land of
the Assyrians. 4 When I was in my own
country, in the land of Israel, while I was
still a young man, the whole tribe of my
ancestor Naphtali deserted the house of
David and Jerusalem. This city had been
chosen from among all the tribes of Is-
rael, where all the tribes of Israel should
offer sacrifice and where the temple, the
dwelling of God, had been consecrat-
ed and established for all generations
forever.

5 All my kindred and our ancestral
house of Naphtali sacrificed to the calf[c]
that King Jeroboam of Israel had erected
in Dan and on all the mountains of Gali-

a Other ancient authorities lack *of Raphael son of Raguel of the descendants* b Gk *Enemessaros*
c Other ancient authorities read *heifer*

1.1–2 This superscription provides the protagonist with a genealogy and place of origin. Cf. Zeph 1.1. **1.1** *Tobit* is the Greek form of the Hebrew *Tobi* ("my good"), which may be an abbreviation for *Tobiah* ("Yahweh is my good"), the name of Tobit's son (*Tobias* in Greek). The name is appropriate to the story. **1.2** The locations of *Thisbe* and *Phogor* are uncertain. *Asher* is probably Hazor.

1.3–9 Tobit is a faithful and righteous exception among his compatriots, who continue Jeroboam's apostasy (1 Kings 12.25–33). **1.3** Israelite wisdom tradition describes human conduct as walking *in the ways of truth and righteousness* or *in the ways of wrongdoing* (4.5). The Northern Kingdom, Israel, was exiled to *the land of the Assyrians* in 722 B.C.E. under Sargon II. **1.4–5** Because God had *chosen* Jerusalem as the unique site for Israelite worship (Deut 12.5–7), Jeroboam's sin was apostasy. **1.5** *Dan* lies eleven miles from Kedesh (v. 2), not far from Tobit's home. It continued to be a site of religious activity long after the exile; cf. *1 Enoch* 13.7–10, a text contemporary with the book of Tobit.

lee. 6 But I alone went often to Jerusalem
for the festivals, as it is prescribed for all
Israel by an everlasting decree. I would
hurry off to Jerusalem with the first fruits
of the crops and the firstlings of the flock,
the tithes of the cattle, and the first shear-
ings of the sheep. 7 I would give these to
the priests, the sons of Aaron, at the altar;
likewise the tenth of the grain, wine, olive
oil, pomegranates, figs, and the rest of the
fruits to the sons of Levi who ministered
at Jerusalem. Also for six years I would
save up a second tenth in money and go
and distribute it in Jerusalem. 8 A third
tenth[d] I would give to the orphans and
widows and to the converts who had at-
tached themselves to Israel. I would bring
it and give it to them in the third year,
and we would eat it according to the ordi-
nance decreed concerning it in the law of
Moses and according to the instructions
of Deborah, the mother of my father
Tobiel,[e] for my father had died and left
me an orphan. 9 When I became a man I
married a woman,[f] a member of our own
family, and by her I became the father of
a son whom I named Tobias.

Tobit's Success in Shalmaneser's Court

10 After I was carried away captive to
Assyria and came as a captive to Nineveh,
everyone of my kindred and my people
ate the food of the Gentiles, 11 but I kept
myself from eating the food of the Gen-
tiles. 12 Because I was mindful of God with
all my heart, 13 the Most High gave me
favor and good standing with Shalmane-
ser,[g] and I used to buy everything he
needed. 14 Until his death I used to go
into Media, and buy for him there. While
in the country of Media I left bags of sil-
ver worth ten talents in trust with Gabael,
the brother of Gabri. 15 But when Shal-
maneser[g] died, and his son Sennacherib
reigned in his place, the highways into
Media became unsafe and I could no lon-
ger go there.

Tobit Persecuted and Restored

16 In the days of Shalmaneser[g] I per-
formed many acts of charity to my kin-
dred, those of my tribe. 17 I would give my
food to the hungry and my clothing to the
naked; and if I saw the dead body of any
of my people thrown out behind the wall
of Nineveh, I would bury it. 18 I also bur-
ied any whom King Sennacherib put to
death when he came fleeing from Judea
in those days of judgment that the king of
heaven executed upon him because of his
blasphemies. For in his anger he put to
death many Israelites; but I would se-
cretly remove the bodies and bury them.
So when Sennacherib looked for them he
could not find them. 19 Then one of the
Ninevites went and informed the king
about me, that I was burying them; so I
hid myself. But when I realized that the
king knew about me and that I was being

d A third tenth added from other ancient authorities *e* Lat: Gk *Hananiel* *f* Other ancient authorities add *Anna* *g* Gk *Enemessaros*

1.6–8 Tobit's faithfulness to the Torah is evident in his festival pilgrimages to *Jerusalem* (Deut 16.16–17; cf. Lk 2.41) and his presentation to the priests of *first fruits of the crops* (Deut 26.1–11), *firstlings* (Ex 13.12), *tithes of the cattle* (Lev 27.32), *first shearings* (Deut 18.4), a *tenth* of his crops (Lev 27.30; Deut 14.22–23), *a second tenth* turned to money (Deut 14.25), and *a third tenth*, which he distributed *to the orphans and widows and to the converts* (Deut 14.28–29). **1.9** Endogamy, marriage to *a member of our own family* (not just to an Israelite), is a major concern in Tobit; see 4.12–13.

1.10–22 Tobit's promotion in a Mesopotamian court, his persecution for pious acts, and his restoration echo Dan 1–6, Esther, and the story of Ahikar. **1.10** *Nineveh* was the Assyrian capital. **1.11–13** As in vv. 5–9, Tobit's piety is exceptional. Like Daniel, he is rewarded for avoiding unclean *food* (Dan 1.8–20; cf. Lev 11). **1.14** On *Media* as a site of Israelite settlement, cf. 2 Kings 17.6. The deposit of silver with *Gabael* is one of several providential events in the story and prepares the way for a major turn in the plot (4.1). **1.15** This section is marked by a number of historical inaccuracies. *Shalmaneser* V died during the siege of Samaria; his successors were his brothers Sargon II (not mentioned here or in 2 Kings 17) and Sennacherib (cf. 1.18–20). **1.16–22** Tobit's piety, like Daniel's, leads to his persecution (see Dan 3; 6). **1.17** On the obligation to *give . . . food to the hungry and . . . clothing to the naked*, see 4.16; Mt 25.35–36. **1.18** Sennacherib invaded *Judea* (2 Kings 19.35–37) in 701 B.C.E., twenty years before his death (cf. *forty days*, v. 21). Exposure of bodies was a common means of showing contempt (cf. 1 Kings 21.24; 2 Kings 9.30–37; Ps 79.2–3). Burial of the dead is a major motif in Tobit (2.3–8; 4.3–4; 6.15; 8.12; 14.10–13). **1.19** Punishment for burying the king's victims recalls Sophocles' *Antigone*.

searched for to be put to death, I was afraid and ran away. 20 Then all my property was confiscated; nothing was left to me that was not taken into the royal treasury except my wife Anna and my son Tobias.

21 But not forty[h] days passed before two of Sennacherib's[i] sons killed him, and they fled to the mountains of Ararat, and his son Esar-haddon[j] reigned after him. He appointed Ahikar, the son of my brother Hanael[k] over all the accounts of his kingdom, and he had authority over the entire administration. 22 Ahikar interceded for me, and I returned to Nineveh. Now Ahikar was chief cupbearer, keeper of the signet, and in charge of administration of the accounts under King Sennacherib of Assyria; so Esar-haddon[j] reappointed him. He was my nephew and so a close relative.

Tobit Blinded Because of His Piety

2 Then during the reign of Esar-haddon[j] I returned home, and my wife Anna and my son Tobias were restored to me. At our festival of Pentecost, which is the sacred festival of weeks, a good dinner was prepared for me and I reclined to eat. 2 When the table was set for me and an abundance of food placed before me, I said to my son Tobias, "Go, my child, and bring whatever poor person you may find of our people among the exiles in Nineveh, who is wholeheartedly mindful of God,[l] and he shall eat together with me. I will wait for you, until you come back." 3 So Tobias went to look for some poor person of our people. When he had returned he said, "Father!" And I replied, "Here I am, my child." Then he went on to say, "Look, father, one of our own people has been murdered and thrown into the market place, and now he lies there strangled." 4 Then I sprang up, left the dinner before even tasting it, and removed the body[m] from the square[n] and laid it[m] in one of the rooms until sunset when I might bury it.[m] 5 When I returned, I washed myself and ate my food in sorrow. 6 Then I remembered the prophecy of Amos, how he said against Bethel,[o]

"Your festivals shall be turned
into mourning,
and all your songs into
lamentation."

And I wept.

7 When the sun had set, I went and dug a grave and buried him. 8 And my neighbors laughed and said, "Is he still not afraid? He has already been hunted down to be put to death for doing this, and he ran away; yet here he is again burying the dead!" 9 That same night I washed myself and went into my courtyard and slept by the wall of the courtyard; and my face was uncovered because of the heat. 10 I did not know that there were sparrows on the wall; their fresh droppings fell into my eyes and produced white films. I went to physicians to be healed, but the more they treated me with

h Other ancient authorities read either *forty-five* or *fifty* *i* Gk *his* *j* Gk *Sacherdonos* *k* Other authorities read *Hananael* *l* Lat: Gk *wholeheartedly mindful* *m* Gk *him* *n* Other ancient authorities lack *from the square* *o* Other ancient authorities read *against Bethlehem*

1.21 *Ahikar* was the protagonist in a popular Mesopotamian story preserved by Jews and Christians; however, it makes no mention of Tobit. Other details of the story are reflected in 1.22; 2.10; 11.18; 14.10.

2.1–10 Tobit's pious concern for others—the poor and the unburied—again results in his suffering. **2.1** In addition to food laws (1.11), Tobit observes Israelite festivals, here the harvest *festival of Pentecost* (Deut 16.10). **2.2** On the obligation to feed the *poor*, cf. Lk 14.12–24; 16.19–31. For Tobit the festival must be shared with one *who is wholeheartedly mindful of God*, as he is (cf. 1.12). Wholehearted love and obedience of God is a cliche; cf. Deut 30.2, 6, and allusions to this Deuteronomic language in Bar 2.30–33; *Jubilees* 1.14–16. **2.4–9** The rationale for this sequence of events is unclear. Contact with a corpse rendered one impure (Num 19.11–19), which explains why Tobit sleeps in the *courtyard*; but why may he eat in his house? **2.6** The meal provides a setting for Tobit to apply ironically to himself Am 8.10, "*Your festivals . . . into lamentation*," an oracle against those who trample on the poor and take their grain. **2.9–10** How does the author understand the cause of Tobit's blindness? Is it happenstance, or are the sparrows agents of a demon like Asmodeus (3.8; cf. *Jubilees* 11.11)? In either case, the incident triggers the divinely directed scenario recounted through the rest of the story. Although Tobit and his family cannot predict the outcome, a providential God will dispose matters for them.

ointments the more my vision was obscured by the white films, until I became completely blind. For four years I remained unable to see. All my kindred were sorry for me, and Ahikar took care of me for two years before he went to Elymais.

Tobit and Anna Have an Argument

11 At that time, also, my wife Anna earned money at women's work. 12 She used to send what she made to the owners and they would pay wages to her. One day, the seventh of Dystrus, when she cut off a piece she had woven and sent it to the owners, they paid her full wages and also gave her a young goat for a meal. 13 When she returned to me, the goat began to bleat. So I called her and said, "Where did you get this goat? It is surely not stolen, is it? Return it to the owners; for we have no right to eat anything stolen." 14 But she said to me, "It was given to me as a gift in addition to my wages." But I did not believe her, and told her to return it to the owners. I became flushed with anger against her over this. Then she replied to me, "Where are your acts of charity? Where are your righteous deeds? These things are known about you!"[p]

Tobit Prays for Death

3 Then with much grief and anguish of heart I wept, and with groaning began to pray:

2 "You are righteous, O Lord,
and all your deeds are just;
all your ways are mercy and truth;
you judge the world.[q]
3 And now, O Lord, remember me
and look favorably upon me.
Do not punish me for my sins
and for my unwitting offenses
and those that my ancestors committed before you.
They sinned against you,
4 and disobeyed your commandments.
So you gave us over to plunder, exile, and death,
to become the talk, the byword, and an object of reproach
among all the nations among whom you have dispersed us.
5 And now your many judgments are true
in exacting penalty from me for my sins.
For we have not kept your commandments
and have not walked in accordance with truth before you.
6 So now deal with me as you will;
command my spirit to be taken from me,
so that I may be released from the face of the earth and become dust.
For it is better for me to die than to live,

p Or *to you*; Gk *with you* *q* Other ancient authorities read *you render true and righteous judgment forever*

2.11–3.17 The destinies of two innocent sufferers are joined as reproach leads them to pray for death. **2.11–14** The humiliation of the once-wealthy public servant is complete, and the situation pits Tobit and his wife against each other. **2.12** The *seventh of Dystrus* in the Macedonian calendar is roughly mid-January. **2.13–14** Tobit's concern with righteousness has become an obsession. His distrust of Anna leads to her ironic rebuke; its gist is either to question the sincerity of his *righteous deeds* or to taunt him because they have gone unrewarded. **3.1–6** His neighbors' mockery and his wife's rebuke prompt Tobit to seek release in death. **3.2–5** The motifs in the first part of Tobit's prayer are common in Jewish prayers of confession (Dan 9.4–19; Bar 1.15–3.8; Prayer of Azariah) and may indicate that this is an excerpt or epitome of a traditional text. Vv. 2, 5 frame the section with the assertion that God's judgments are *righteous, just,* and *true* (cf. *Psalms of Solomon* 2.10, 15; 8.7, 26). **3.3** Though Tobit is righteous, he is not sinless; he is guilty of *sins* and *unwitting offenses,* and he does not have access to the sacrificial system to atone for them (cf. Lev 5.17–19; *Psalms of Solomon* 3.8). He is also liable for the sins of his *ancestors* (cf. Ex 20.5–6). On all these accounts, a just God is exacting judgment on him. On the manner of this judgment, see note on 11.15. **3.4** The idea that the *exile* is deserved punishment for Israel's sins is a common OT motif. **3.5** Tobit, the righteous exception, paradoxically acknowledges his solidarity with the sinful nation. **3.6** Tobit seeks to *become dust* (Gen 3.19) and find release from Anna's *undeserved* (lit. "false") *insults.*

because I have had to listen to
undeserved insults,
and great is the sorrow
within me.
Command, O Lord, that I be
released from this distress;
release me to go to the eternal
home,
and do not, O Lord, turn your
face away from me.
For it is better for me to die
than to see so much distress in
my life
and to listen to insults."

Sarah Falsely Accused

7 On the same day, at Ecbatana in Media, it also happened that Sarah, the daughter of Raguel, was reproached by one of her father's maids. 8 For she had been married to seven husbands, and the wicked demon Asmodeus had killed each of them before they had been with her as is customary for wives. So the maid said to her, "You are the one who kills[r] your husbands! See, you have already been married to seven husbands and have not borne the name of[s] a single one of them. 9 Why do you beat us? Because your husbands are dead? Go with them! May we never see a son or daughter of yours!"

Sarah Prays for Death

10 On that day she was grieved in spirit and wept. When she had gone up to her father's upper room, she intended to hang herself. But she thought it over and said, "Never shall they reproach my father, saying to him, 'You had only one beloved daughter but she hanged herself because of her distress.' And I shall bring my father in his old age down in sorrow to Hades. It is better for me not to hang myself, but to pray the Lord that I may die and not listen to these reproaches anymore." 11 At that same time, with hands outstretched toward the window, she prayed and said,

"Blessed are you, merciful God!
Blessed is your name forever;
let all your works praise you
forever.
12 And now, Lord,[t] I turn my face
to you,
and raise my eyes toward you.
13 Command that I be released
from the earth
and not listen to such
reproaches any more.
14 You know, O Master, that I am
innocent
of any defilement with a man,
15 and that I have not disgraced my
name
or the name of my father in
the land of my exile.
I am my father's only child;
he has no other child to be his
heir;
and he has no close relative or
other kindred
for whom I should keep myself
as wife.
Already seven husbands of mine
have died.
Why should I still live?
But if it is not pleasing to you,
O Lord, to take my life,
hear me in my disgrace."

r Other ancient authorities read *strangles*
s Other ancient authorities read *have had no benefit from*
t Other ancient authorities lack *Lord*

3.7–9 Tobit's relative Sarah is also an innocent victim of circumstances beyond her control and an object of insults. **3.8–9** The meaning of the name *Asmodeus* is uncertain. The demon lover, a common motif in ancient folklore, also appears in *1 Enoch* 6–11. Here the demon who cannot satisfy his lust kills his rival each time before the marriage is consummated, thus leaving Sarah without the possibility of offspring and making her the object of reproach (cf. Gen 16.4–6, on another Sarah and her maid; 1 Sam 1.6). For an allusion to a story about marriage to seven brothers, see Mk 12.18–25. **3.10–15** Unfair reproach leads Sarah, like Tobit, to wish and pray for death. **3.10** Sarah's rejection of suicide indicates a concern for her family lacking in Tobit's unmitigated self-pity. **3.11** Sarah adopts a common posture for prayer, *with hands outstretched* (Ezra 9.5; Dan 6.10). In spite of her tragedy, she can bless a *merciful God* (cf. Pr Azar 3). **3.14–15** Unlike Tobit, Sarah does not confess her sins. Her denial of sexual sin is puzzling (cf. Sus 42–43); perhaps she is protesting that the deaths of her husbands are unjust for a chaste woman. Her marriages to seven relatives fulfilled levirate law (Deut 25.5–10; cf. Gen 38). Unaware of Tobias's existence, she sees no further options for marriage, but unlike Tobit, she allows God another option if

The Prayers Are Heard in Heaven

16 At that very moment, the prayers
of both of them were heard in the glori-
ous presence of God. 17 So Raphael was
sent to heal both of them: Tobit, by re-
moving the white films from his eyes, so
that he might see God's light with his eyes;
and Sarah, daughter of Raguel, by giving
her in marriage to Tobias son of Tobit,
and by setting her free from the wicked
demon Asmodeus. For Tobias was enti-
tled to have her before all others who had
desired to marry her. At the same time
that Tobit returned from the courtyard
into his house, Sarah daughter of Raguel
came down from her upper room.

Tobit's Testamentary Instruction to His Son

4 That same day Tobit remembered
the money that he had left in trust
with Gabael at Rages in Media, 2 and he
said to himself, "Now I have asked for
death. Why do I not call my son Tobias
and explain to him about the money be-
fore I die?" 3 Then he called his son To-
bias, and when he came to him he said,
"My son, when I die,[u] give me a proper
burial. Honor your mother and do not
abandon her all the days of her life. Do
whatever pleases her, and do not grieve
her in anything. 4 Remember her, my son,
because she faced many dangers for you
while you were in her womb. And when
she dies, bury her beside me in the same
grave.

5 "Revere the Lord all your days, my
son, and refuse to sin or to transgress his
commandments. Live uprightly all the
days of your life, and do not walk in the
ways of wrongdoing; 6 for those who act
in accordance with truth will prosper in
all their activities. To all those who prac-
tice righteousness[v] 7 give alms from your
possessions, and do not let your eye be-
grudge the gift when you make it. Do not
turn your face away from anyone who is
poor, and the face of God will not be
turned away from you. 8 If you have many
possessions, make your gift from them in
proportion; if few, do not be afraid to
give according to the little you have. 9 So
you will be laying up a good treasure for
yourself against the day of necessity.
10 For almsgiving delivers from death and
keeps you from going into the Darkness.
11 Indeed, almsgiving, for all who practice

u Lat *v* The text of codex Sinaiticus goes directly from verse 6 to verse 19, reading *To those who practice righteousness* [19]*the Lord will give good counsel.* In order to fill the lacuna verses 7 to 18 are derived from other ancient authorities

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her death is not *pleasing* to God. **3.16–17** God does have an unexpected solution to the parallel problems in the Tobiad family. **3.16** In the *glorious presence of God,* seven angels relay human prayers and stand ready to implement God's responses (cf. Rev 1.4; *1 Enoch* 20). **3.17** *Raphael* (Hebrew, "God has healed") is the appropriate agent to *heal* Tobit's and Sarah's afflictions. Tobias's preeminent right *to marry* Sarah, his predestined bride (6.18), has ironically been facilitated by the tragic deaths of their seven kinsmen.

4.1–19 Certain that God will answer his prayer for death, Tobit dispenses testamentary instruction to his son. The testament was a well-defined literary genre in biblical and early Jewish literature (Gen 49; *1 Enoch* 81–82.3; 91; *Jubilees* 20–21; *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*; *Testament of Job*) in which a father anticipating death offered his children ethical instruction and information about the future. Tobit will offer the latter in ch. 14 in connection with his actual death.

4.1–2 One wonders why Tobit had not previously remembered the deposit of silver that would solve his financial woes. Evidently God has jogged his memory; Tobias will return from Media not only with the silver, but with the wife God has destined for him. **4.3** On the son's responsibility to provide his parents *a proper burial,* cf. Mt 8.21; Lk 9.59. **4.3–4** On the nuance in the allusion to the fourth (fifth) commandment (Ex 20.12), cf. Sir 7.27. **4.5** An admonition to act righteously and avoid *the ways of wrongdoing* (cf. 1.3) prefaces a section on the right use of money (4.6–11), which is appropriate in light of Tobias's mission. **4.7** To *give alms* to the poor was an important element of Jewish piety linked to biblical concerns about the poor. Here and elsewhere in ch. 4, a principle of appropriate recompense governs God's reward of the righteous (*Do not turn your face away . . . and the face of God will not be turned away*). **4.8** Cf. Mk 12.41–44. **4.10** Tobit has practiced the *almsgiving* he preaches (1.3, 17), although his depressed situation seems to undercut the notion that God rewards the righteous. Deliverance *from death* does not mean eternal life but avoidance of premature death. **4.11** In a diaspora situation, where Israelites could not engage in sacrificial practices, the atoning value of almsgiving as *an excellent offering* (cf. 12.9; Sir 35.1–2) was especially significant, as it again came to be

it, is an excellent offering in the presence of the Most High.

12 "Beware, my son, of every kind of fornication. First of all, marry a woman from among the descendants of your ancestors; do not marry a foreign woman, who is not of your father's tribe; for we are the descendants of the prophets. Remember, my son, that Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, our ancestors of old, all took wives from among their kindred. They were blessed in their children, and their posterity will inherit the land. 13 So now, my son, love your kindred, and in your heart do not disdain your kindred, the sons and daughters of your people, by refusing to take a wife for yourself from among them. For in pride there is ruin and great confusion. And in idleness there is loss and dire poverty, because idleness is the mother of famine.

14 "Do not keep over until the next day the wages of those who work for you, but pay them at once. If you serve God you will receive payment. Watch yourself, my son, in everything you do, and discipline yourself in all your conduct. 15 And what you hate, do not do to anyone. Do not drink wine to excess or let drunkenness go with you on your way. 16 Give some of your food to the hungry, and some of your clothing to the naked. Give all your surplus as alms, and do not let your eye begrudge your giving of alms. 17 Place your bread on the grave of the righteous, but give none to sinners. 18 Seek advice from every wise person and do not despise any useful counsel. 19 At all times bless the Lord God, and ask him that your ways may be made straight and that all your paths and plans may prosper. For none of the nations has understanding, but the Lord himself will give them good counsel; but if he chooses otherwise, he casts down to deepest Hades. So now, my child, remember these commandments, and do not let them be erased from your heart.

Plans to Recover Money Left in Trust

20 "And now, my son, let me explain to you that I left ten talents of silver in trust with Gabael son of Gabrias, at Rages in Media. 21 Do not be afraid, my son, because we have become poor. You have great wealth if you fear God and flee from every sin and do what is good in the sight of the Lord your God."

5 Then Tobias answered his father Tobit, "I will do everything that you have commanded me, father; 2 but how can I obtain the money[w] from him, since he does not know me and I do not know him? What evidence[x] am I to give him so that he will recognize and trust me, and give me the money? Also, I do not know the roads to Media, or how to get there." 3 Then Tobit answered his son Tobias,

w Gk *it* x Gk *sign*

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after the destruction of the temple in 70 C.E. **4.12–13** Returning to a concern about family (see vv. 3–4), and in keeping with his own example (1.9), Tobit advocates endogamy, recalling the patriarchal narratives (Gen 11.29; 24.3–4; 27.46–28.2; *Jubilees* 4.33). Israelite theory and practice on this subject varied. Mandating marriage to an Israelite are the Genesis passages just cited, Ezra 9–10, Neh 10.28–30, and many passages in *Jubilees*. Ruth and *Joseph and Aseneth* attest a more liberal attitude. In a diaspora situation, the concern for preserving national and religious identity is understandable and the problem of finding the right spouse especially difficult.

4.14–19 These verses return to the topic of vv. 5–10. **4.14** For *do not keep . . . for you*, cf. Lev 19.13. **4.15** The Golden Rule, *what you hate, do not do to anyone*, was widespread in the cultures of antiquity. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, its negative formulation is first attested here and is also attributed to Rabbi Hillel (*Babylonian Talmud Shabbat* 31a), James (Acts 15.20, 29 in manuscripts of the "Western tradition"), and the Twelve (*Didache* 1.2). The positive form of the proverb is ascribed to Jesus in Mt 7.12; Lk 6.31. On the evils of *drunkenness*, cf. Prov 23.29–35; Sir 31.25–30; *Testament of Judah* 11–14, 16. **4.17** The practice alluded to here is obscure. The idea is that one should sustain the hungry, but that it is better to leave food at the grave of the righteous than to give it to sinners (cf. *Ahikar* 2.10, Syriac version). The restriction of charity to the righteous is noteworthy; cf. 2.2; Gal 6.10. **4.19** *At all times bless . . . God* may reflect Ps 34.1; the psalm describes the plight and fate of people like Tobit. That *none of the nations has understanding* (Deut 32.28) is an observation appropriate to the diaspora setting. On the concluding admonition, cf. *1 Enoch* 94.5.

4.20–5.3 The conclusion of Tobit's instruction returns to the narrative that introduced it (4.1–2). **4.20** *Ten talents of silver* weighed about 750 pounds, worth a substantial sum. **5.1** Tobias's response to his father's instruction echoes Ex 19.8; 24.3; Josh 1.16.

"He gave me his bond and I gave him my bond. I[y] divided his in two; we each took one part, and I put one with the money. And now twenty years have passed since I left this money in trust. So now, my son, find yourself a trustworthy man to go with you, and we will pay him wages until you return. But get back the money from Gabael."[z]

The Angel Raphael Hired as a Travel Companion

4 So Tobias went out to look for a man to go with him to Media, someone who was acquainted with the way. He went out and found the angel Raphael standing in front of him; but he did not perceive that he was an angel of God. 5 Tobias[a] said to him, "Where do you come from, young man?" "From your kindred, the Israelites," he replied, "and I have come here to work." Then Tobias[b] said to him, "Do you know the way to go to Media?" 6 "Yes," he replied, "I have been there many times; I am acquainted with it and know all the roads. I have often traveled to Media, and would stay with our kinsman Gabael who lives in Rages of Media. It is a journey of two days from Ecbatana to Rages; for it lies in a mountainous area, while Ecbatana is in the middle of the plain." 7 Then Tobias said to him, "Wait for me, young man, until I go in and tell my father; for I do need you to travel with me, and I will pay you your wages." 8 He replied, "All right, I will wait; but do not take too long."

9 So Tobias[b] went in to tell his father Tobit and said to him, "I have just found a man who is one of our own Israelite kindred!" He replied, "Call the man in, my son, so that I may learn about his family and to what tribe he belongs, and whether he is trustworthy enough to go with you."

10 Then Tobias went out and called him, and said, "Young man, my father is calling for you." So he went in to him, and Tobit greeted him first. He replied, "Joyous greetings to you!" But Tobit retorted, "What joy is left for me any more? I am a man without eyesight; I cannot see the light of heaven, but I lie in darkness like the dead who no longer see the light. Although still alive, I am among the dead. I hear people but I cannot see them." But the young man[b] said, "Take courage; the time is near for God to heal you; take courage." Then Tobit said to him, "My son Tobias wishes to go to Media. Can you accompany him and guide him? I will pay your wages, brother." He answered, "I can go with him and I know all the roads, for I have often gone to Media and have crossed all its plains, and I am familiar with its mountains and all of its roads."

11 Then Tobit[b] said to him, "Brother, of what family are you and from what tribe? Tell me, brother." 12 He replied, "Why do you need to know my tribe?" But Tobit[b] said, "I want to be sure, brother, whose son you are and what your name is." 13 He replied, "I am Azariah, the son of the great Hananiah, one of your relatives." 14 Then Tobit said to him, "Welcome! God save you, brother. Do not feel bitter toward me, brother, because I wanted to be sure about your ancestry. It turns out that you are a kinsman, and of good and noble lineage. For I knew Hananiah and Nathan,[c] the two sons of Shemeliah,[d] and they used to go with me to Jerusalem and worshiped with me there, and were not led astray.

y Other authorities read *He* *z* Gk *from him*
a Gk *He* *b* Gk *he* *c* Other ancient authorities read *Jathan* or *Nathaniah* *d* Other ancient authorities read *Shemaiah*

5.4–17a Tobias's need for a traveling companion (cf. 1.15) is met by the angel Raphael, who is conveniently waiting outside the door. Stories about the appearance (epiphany) of a divine being are frequent in the Bible (cf. Gen 18.1–15; Judg 13; Lk 1.8–23, 26–38) and elsewhere in antiquity (e.g., Books 1–3 of the *Odyssey*, where Athena travels with Telemachus). The conversation between Raphael and the two Israelites is a storyteller's delight. The divine being cannot reveal his identity and must resort to white lies and half-truths, while Tobit is unaware of the real truth of some of his own utterances. **5.5** Given Raphael's real identity, his conversation with Tobias is a charade, although it is true that he has *come here to work*. **5.6** Raphael's angelic missions have doubtless taken him to Media. **5.10** *Take courage* is a typical admonition in epiphanies (*Joseph and Aseneth* 14.11; 15.2–5). **5.11–14** Tobit's queries are irrelevant, although his conclusion that *your kindred are good people; you come of good stock* is true in a way he cannot imagine (cf. 5.22). **5.13** The names *Azariah* (Hebrew, "Yahweh has helped") and *Hananiah* ("Yahweh has had mercy") symbolize a situation Tobit does not understand

Your kindred are good people; you come
of good stock. Hearty welcome!"
15 Then he added, "I will pay you a
drachma a day as wages, as well as ex-
penses for yourself and my son. So go
with my son, 16and[e] I will add something
to your wages." Raphael[f] answered, "I
will go with him; so do not fear. We shall
leave in good health and return to you in
good health, because the way is safe."
17So Tobit[g] said to him, "Blessings be
upon you, brother."
Then he called his son and said to him,
"Son, prepare supplies for the journey
and set out with your brother. May God in
heaven bring you safely there and return
you in good health to me; and may his
angel, my son, accompany you both for
your safety."

Family Farewells

Before he went out to start his journey,
he kissed his father and mother. Tobit
then said to him, "Have a safe journey."
18 But his mother[h] began to weep,
and said to Tobit, "Why is it that you have
sent my child away? Is he not the staff of
our hand as he goes in and out before us?
19Do not heap money upon money, but
let it be a ransom for our child. 20For the
life that is given to us by the Lord is
enough for us." 21Tobit[f] said to her, "Do
not worry; our child will leave in good
health and return to us in good health.
Your eyes will see him on the day when he
returns to you in good health. Say no
more! Do not fear for them, my sister.
22For a good angel will accompany him;
his journey will be successful, and he will
6 come back in good health." 1So she
stopped weeping.

The Journey to Rages

The young man went out and the angel
went with him; 2and the dog came out
with him and went along with them. So
they both journeyed along, and when the
first night overtook them they camped by
the Tigris river. 3Then the young man
went down to wash his feet in the Tigris
river. Suddenly a large fish leaped up
from the water and tried to swallow the
young man's foot, and he cried out. 4But
the angel said to the young man, "Catch
hold of the fish and hang on to it!" So the
young man grasped the fish and drew it
up on the land. 5Then the angel said to
him, "Cut open the fish and take out its
gall, heart, and liver. Keep them with you,
but throw away the intestines. For its gall,
heart, and liver are useful as medicine."
6So after cutting open the fish the young
man gathered together the gall, heart,
and liver; then he roasted and ate some of
the fish, and kept some to be salted.
The two continued on their way to-
gether until they were near Media.[i]
7Then the young man questioned the an-
gel and said to him, "Brother Azariah,
what medicinal value is there in the fish's
heart and liver, and in the gall?" 8He re-
plied, "As for the fish's heart and liver,
you must burn them to make a smoke in
the presence of a man or woman afflicted
by a demon or evil spirit, and every affli-
ction will flee away and never remain with
that person any longer. 9And as for the
gall, anoint a person's eyes where white
films have appeared on them; blow upon
them, upon the white films, and the eyes[j]
will be healed."

Raphael Promises Tobias a Bride

10 When he entered Media and al-
ready was approaching Ecbatana,[k] 11Ra-
phael said to the young man, "Brother

e Other ancient authorities add *when you return safely* f Gk *He* g Gk *he* h Other ancient authorities add *Anna* i Other ancient authorities read *Ecbatana* j Gk *they* k Other ancient authorities read *Rages*

5.17a Readers are to smile at Tobit's wish that an angel accompany Tobias and "Azariah."

5.17b–6.1a Tobit's and Anna's contrasting attitudes toward their son's departure are in character. Cf. 10.1–7.

6.1b–9 The journey to Rages has several functions. Most obviously, it is the narrative device that gets Tobias to his money, his bride, and the magical devices that will heal Sarah and Tobit. It also has symbolic overtones. Readers see how God literally makes the paths of the righteous prosper (cf. 4.19), and the presence of Raphael recalls the notion that a good angel guides one along the paths of righteousness (cf. Dead Sea Scrolls *Rule of the Community* [1QS] 3.18–4.6; *Letter of Barnabas* 18; Hermas *Mandates* 6.2). On the angelic guide, cf. Ex 23.20; *1 Enoch* 20–33.

6.3–6 Again God intervenes, this time by providing *a large fish* (cf. Jon 1.17).

6.10–18 The author now reveals the real

Tobias." "Here I am," he answered. Then Raphael[l] said to him, "We must stay this night in the home of Raguel. He is your relative, and he has a daughter named Sarah. 12 He has no male heir and no daughter except Sarah only, and you, as next of kin to her, have before all other men a hereditary claim on her. Also it is right for you to inherit her father's possessions. Moreover, the girl is sensible, brave, and very beautiful, and her father is a good man." 13 He continued, "You have every right to take her in marriage. So listen to me, brother; tonight I will speak to her father about the girl, so that we may take her to be your bride. When we return from Rages we will celebrate her marriage. For I know that Raguel can by no means keep her from you or promise her to another man without incurring the penalty of death according to the decree of the book of Moses. Indeed he knows that you, rather than any other man, are entitled to marry his daughter. So now listen to me, brother, and tonight we shall speak concerning the girl and arrange her engagement to you. And when we return from Rages we will take her and bring her back with us to your house."

14 Then Tobias said in answer to Raphael, "Brother Azariah, I have heard that she already has been married to seven husbands and that they died in the bridal chamber. On the night when they went in to her, they would die. I have heard people saying that it was a demon that killed them. 15 It does not harm her, but it kills anyone who desires to approach her. So now, since I am the only son my father has, I am afraid that I may die and bring my father's and mother's life down to their grave, grieving for me —and they have no other son to bury them."

16 But Raphael[l] said to him, "Do you not remember your father's orders when he commanded you to take a wife from your father's house? Now listen to me, brother, and say no more about this demon. Take her. I know that this very night she will be given to you in marriage. 17 When you enter the bridal chamber, take some of the fish's liver and heart, and put them on the embers of the incense. An odor will be given off; 18 the demon will smell it and flee, and will never be seen near her any more. Now when you are about to go to bed with her, both of you must first stand up and pray, imploring the Lord of heaven that mercy and safety may be granted to you. Do not be afraid, for she was set apart for you before the world was made. You will save her, and she will go with you. I presume that you will have children by her, and they will be as brothers to you. Now say no more!" When Tobias heard the words of Raphael and learned that she was his kinswoman,[m] related through his father's lineage, he loved her very much, and his heart was drawn to her.

Tobias and Raphael Welcomed at Home of Raguel

7 Now when they[n] entered Ecbatana, Tobias[l] said to him, "Brother Azariah, take me straight to our brother Raguel." So he took him to Raguel's house, where they found him sitting beside the courtyard door. They greeted him first, and he replied, "Joyous greetings, brothers; welcome and good health!" Then he brought them into his house. 2 He said to his wife Edna, "How much the young man resembles my kinsman Tobit!" 3 Then Edna questioned them, saying, "Where are you from, brothers?" They answered, "We belong to the descendants

l Gk *he* *m* Gk *sister* *n* Other ancient authorities read *he*

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purposes for the journey. In addition to finding the medicine to heal Tobit (6.9), Tobias will rid Sarah of her demon, and each will find in the other the kind of spouse recommended by Tobit (4.12–13) and the very spouse foreordained by God. Recovering the money from Gabael is a bonus. The section is rich in psychological insight. **6.11** "Azariah" plays the marriage broker (cf. Gen 24, where the servant may be Eliezer, Hebrew, "El is my help"). **6.14–18** Tobias's hesitation is not simply self-serving; it reflects concern for his parents, which Raphael cleverly parries by reference to his father's command. **6.18** The youth's acquiescence is remarkable, given that he is unaware of his companion's real identity, but his trust in *the Lord of Heaven* carries him through the dilemma. *Do not be afraid* is typical of the vocabulary of epiphanies (cf. Lk 1.13, 30).

7.1–9a The arrival of Tobias and "Azariah" at Raguel's house is marked by a concern about

of Naphtali who are exiles in Nineveh."
4 She said to them, "Do you know our
kinsman Tobit?" And they replied, "Yes,
we know him." Then she asked them, "Is
he[o] in good health?" 5 They replied, "He
is alive and in good health." And Tobias
added, "He is my father!" 6 At that Raguel
jumped up and kissed him and wept. 7 He
also spoke to him as follows, "Blessings on
you, my child, son of a good and noble
father![p] O most miserable of calamities
that such an upright and beneficent man
has become blind!" He then embraced
his kinsman Tobias and wept. 8 His wife
Edna also wept for him, and their daugh-
ter Sarah likewise wept. 9 Then Raguel[q]
slaughtered a ram from the flock and re-
ceived them very warmly.

The Wedding of Tobias and Sarah

When they had bathed and washed
themselves and had reclined to dine, To-
bias said to Raphael, "Brother Azariah,
ask Raguel to give me my kinswoman[r]
Sarah." 10 But Raguel overheard it and
said to the lad, "Eat and drink, and be
merry tonight. For no one except you,
brother, has the right to marry my daugh-
ter Sarah. Likewise I am not at liberty to
give her to any other man than yourself,
because you are my nearest relative. But
let me explain to you the true situation
more fully, my child. 11 I have given her
to seven men of our kinsmen, and all died
on the night when they went in to her.
But now, my child, eat and drink, and the
Lord will act on behalf of you both." But
Tobias said, "I will neither eat nor drink
anything until you settle the things that
pertain to me." So Raguel said, "I will do
so. She is given to you in accordance with
the decree in the book of Moses, and it
has been decreed from heaven that she be
given to you. Take your kinswoman;[r]
from now on you are her brother and she
is your sister. She is given to you from
today and forever. May the Lord of
heaven, my child, guide and prosper you
both this night and grant you mercy and
peace." 12 Then Raguel summoned his
daughter Sarah. When she came to him
he took her by the hand and gave her to
Tobias,[s] saying, "Take her to be your
wife in accordance with the law and de-
cree written in the book of Moses. Take
her and bring her safely to your father.
And may the God of heaven prosper your
journey with his peace." 13 Then he called
her mother and told her to bring writing
material; and he wrote out a copy of a
marriage contract, to the effect that he
gave her to him as wife according to the
decree of the law of Moses. 14 Then they
began to eat and drink.

15 Raguel called his wife Edna and
said to her, "Sister, get the other room
ready, and take her there." 16 So she went
and made the bed in the room as he
had told her, and brought Sarah[t] there.
She wept for her daughter.[t] Then, wip-
ing away the tears,[u] she said to her,
"Take courage, my daughter; the Lord of
heaven grant you joy[v] in place of your

o Other ancient authorities add *alive and*
p Other ancient authorities add *When he heard that Tobit had lost his sight, he was stricken with grief and wept. Then he said,* q Gk *he* r Gk *sister*
s Gk *him* t Gk *her* u Other ancient authorities read *the tears of her daughter* v Other ancient authorities read *favor*

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family ties and well-being. **7.7** Raguel echoes a major motif in the story when he observes that Tobit's blindness is incongruous for one who is *upright and beneficent.* **7.9b–16** Raphael, Raguel, and Tobias now work out the details of the marriage. The narrative seems to reflect actual customs of hospitality: greetings, ablutions, and a sumptuous meal (cf. Gen 18.1–8; Lk 7.44) for males only (see vv. 12–13). **7.9b** One normally did not discuss business before the meal; Tobias's breach of etiquette underscores the urgency of his request. **7.10** Raguel's suggestion to *eat and drink, and be merry* may be an ironic reformulation of the familiar aphorism. If past events are any indicator, tomorrow Sarah's new husband will be dead. Cf. Lk 12.19–20 for a similar ironic reformulation. The narrative presumes throughout the law of levirate marriage (Deut 25.5–10). Although such marriage was a duty, honesty leads Raguel to offer Tobias the option to decline. **7.11–12** Raguel's assertion that *the Lord will act on behalf of you both* and his wish that the Lord *grant you mercy and peace* suggest that his pessimism, which will return in 8.9–10, is momentarily tempered. The titles *Lord of Heaven* and *God of Heaven* are typical of contemporary Mesopotamian documents (cf. Dan 2.19, 37, 44; 5.23). In Tobit the titles appear primarily in quasi-liturgical formulas of blessing (see 5.17; 6.18; 7.16; 8.15; 9.6; 10.11–13). **7.16** Edna also vacillates between sorrow and hope. Her repeated *take courage* may translate the same Aramaic phrase as Raphael's *do not be afraid* (6.18), spoken to Tobias on the same subject.

sorrow. Take courage, my daughter."
Then she went out.

The Wedding Night Brings Healing and Rejoicing

8 When they had finished eating and drinking they wanted to retire; so they took the young man and brought him into the bedroom. 2 Then Tobias remembered the words of Raphael, and he took the fish's liver and heart out of the bag where he had them and put them on the embers of the incense. 3 The odor of the fish so repelled the demon that he fled to the remotest parts[w] of Egypt. But Raphael followed him, and at once bound him there hand and foot.

4 When the parents[x] had gone out and shut the door of the room, Tobias got out of bed and said to Sarah,[y] "Sister, get up, and let us pray and implore our Lord that he grant us mercy and safety." 5 So she got up, and they began to pray and implore that they might be kept safe. Tobias[z] began by saying,

"Blessed are you, O God of our ancestors,
and blessed is your name in all generations forever.
Let the heavens and the whole creation bless you forever.
6 You made Adam, and for him you made his wife Eve
as a helper and support.
From the two of them the human race has sprung.
You said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone;
let us make a helper for him like himself.'
7 I now am taking this kinswoman of mine,
not because of lust,
but with sincerity.
Grant that she and I may find mercy
and that we may grow old together."

8 And they both said, "Amen, Amen." 9 Then they went to sleep for the night.

But Raguel arose and called his servants to him, and they went and dug a grave, 10 for he said, "It is possible that he will die and we will become an object of ridicule and derision." 11 When they had finished digging the grave, Raguel went into his house and called his wife, 12 saying, "Send one of the maids and have her go in to see if he is alive. But if he is dead, let us bury him without anyone knowing it." 13 So they sent the maid, lit a lamp, and opened the door; and she went in and found them sound asleep together. 14 Then the maid came out and informed them that he was alive and that nothing was wrong. 15 So they blessed the God of heaven, and Raguel[x] said,

"Blessed are you, O God, with every pure blessing;
let all your chosen ones bless you.[a]
Let them bless you forever.
16 Blessed are you because you have made me glad.
It has not turned out as I expected,
but you have dealt with us according to your great mercy.
17 Blessed are you because you had compassion
on two only children.
Be merciful to them, O Master, and keep them safe;
bring their lives to fulfillment in happiness and mercy."

18 Then he ordered his servants to fill in the grave before daybreak.

The Wedding Feast

19 After this he asked his wife to bake many loaves of bread; and he went out to the herd and brought two steers and four

w Or *fled through the air to the parts* x Gk *they* y Gk *her* z Gk *He* a Other ancient authorities lack this line

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8.1–18 For most of the characters in the story, the tension is unbearable: will Tobias suffer the fate of his kinsmen and Sarah's last hope be dashed? God, Raphael, and the readers know better. **8.2–3** Tobias's humorous fumigation ritual may reflect some actual exorcistic technique. **8.3** *Binding* is a technical term for incapacitating a demon (cf. Mt 22.13; *1 Enoch* 10.4). **8.5** The doxological character of Tobias's and Sarah's prayer, expressed in the repeated *blessed* and *bless*, contrasts with Raguel's pessimism and ludicrous gravedigging (vv. 9–11). **8.6** Tobias and Sarah appeal to God's intention in creation (Gen 2.20). **8.15** When Raguel ascertains that Tobias is alive, he utters a blessing parallel to that of Tobias and Sarah (v. 5). **8.19–21** The

rams and ordered them to be slaughtered.
So they began to make preparations.
20 Then he called for Tobias and swore on
oath to him in these words:[b] "You shall
not leave here for fourteen days, but shall
stay here eating and drinking with me;
and you shall cheer up my daughter, who
has been depressed. 21 Take at once half
of what I own and return in safety to your
father; the other half will be yours when
my wife and I die. Take courage, my
child. I am your father and Edna is your
mother, and we belong to you as well as to
your wife[c] now and forever. Take cour-
age, my child."

The Money Recovered

9 Then Tobias called Raphael and said
to him, 2 "Brother Azariah, take four
servants and two camels with you and
travel to Rages. Go to the home of Gabael,
give him the bond, get the money, and
then bring him with you to the wedding
celebration. 4 For you know that my father
must be counting the days, and if I delay
even one day I will upset him very much.
3 You are witness to the oath Raguel has
sworn, and I cannot violate his oath."[d]
5 So Raphael with the four servants and
two camels went to Rages in Media and
stayed with Gabael. Raphael[e] gave him
the bond and informed him that Tobit's
son Tobias had married and was inviting
him to the wedding celebration. So
Gabael[f] got up and counted out to him
the money bags, with their seals intact;
then they loaded them on the camels.[g]
6 In the morning they both got up early
and went to the wedding celebration.
When they came into Raguel's house
they found Tobias reclining at table.
He sprang up and greeted Gabael,[h] who
wept and blessed him with the words,
"Good and noble son of a father good and
noble, upright and generous! May the
Lord grant the blessing of heaven to you
and your wife, and to your wife's father
and mother. Blessed be God, for I see
in Tobias the very image of my cousin
Tobit."

Anticipation and Anxiety at Tobias's Home

10 Now, day by day, Tobit kept
counting how many days Tobias[f]
would need for going and for returning.
And when the days had passed and his
son did not appear, 2 he said, "Is it possi-
ble that he has been detained? Or that
Gabael has died, and there is no one to
give him the money?" 3 And he began to
worry. 4 His wife Anna said, "My child has
perished and is no longer among the liv-
ing." And she began to weep and mourn
for her son, saying, 5 "Woe to me, my
child, the light of my eyes, that I let you
make the journey." 6 But Tobit kept say-
ing to her, "Be quiet and stop worrying,
my dear;[c] he is all right. Probably some-
thing unexpected has happened there.
The man who went with him is trustwor-
thy and is one of our own kin. Do not
grieve for him, my dear;[c] he will soon be
here." 7 She answered him, "Be quiet
yourself! Stop trying to deceive me! My
child has perished." She would rush out
every day and watch the road her son had
taken, and would heed no one.[i] When
the sun had set she would go in and
mourn and weep all night long, getting no
sleep at all.

Newlyweds and Parents Bid Farewell

Now when the fourteen days of the wed-
ding celebration had ended that Raguel

b Other ancient authorities read *Tobias and said to him* *c* Gk *sister* *d* In other ancient authorities verse 3 precedes verse 4 *e* Gk *He* *f* Gk *he* *g* Other ancient authorities lack *on the camels* *h* Gk *him* *i* Other ancient authorities read *and she would eat nothing*

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apprehension felt during the meal of welcome is replaced by joy. **8.20** Raguel's invitation to eat, drink, and *cheer up my daughter* contrasts with 7.10. **8.21** Raguel's twofold *take courage*, spoken to Tobias, parallels Edna's words to Sarah (7.16). The sentence *I am . . . forever* reads almost like a formula of adoption. Cf. 10.12. **9.6** Gabael is welcomed as a member of the family and his meeting with Tobias parallels the scene in 7.1–8.

10.1–11.18 Tobias completes his journey, and Tobit's healing solves the problem that led to the development of the plot. **10.1–7a** In contrast to the joy of the wedding celebration, gloom pervades the Tobiad home. Unaware of events in Ecbatana, Tobit and Anna, last seen in 5.17–22, engage in an increasingly bitter dispute. Anna grieves and mourns over her son as if he were dead. **10.7b–13** This farewell scene between children and parents is a more extensive counterpart of 5.17. Family concerns govern the discourse. **10.7b–9** As in 6.15, Tobias expresses

had sworn to observe for his daughter,
Tobias came to him and said, "Send me
back, for I know that my father and
mother do not believe that they will see
me again. So I beg of you, father, to let
me go so that I may return to my own
father. I have already explained to you
how I left him." 8 But Raguel said to To-
bias, "Stay, my child, stay with me; I will
send messengers to your father Tobit and
they will inform him about you." 9 But he
said, "No! I beg you to send me back to
my father." 10 So Raguel promptly gave
Tobias his wife Sarah, as well as half of all
his property: male and female slaves,
oxen and sheep, donkeys and camels,
clothing, money, and household goods.
11 Then he saw them safely off; he em-
braced Tobias[j] and said, "Farewell, my
child; have a safe journey. The Lord of
heaven prosper you and your wife Sarah,
and may I see children of yours before I
die." 12 Then he kissed his daughter Sarah
and said to her, "My daughter, honor
your father-in-law and your mother-in-
law,[k] since from now on they are as much
your parents as those who gave you birth.
Go in peace, daughter, and may I hear a
good report about you as long as I live."
Then he bade them farewell and let them
go. Then Edna said to Tobias, "My child
and dear brother, the Lord of heaven
bring you back safely, and may I live long
enough to see children of you and of my
daughter Sarah before I die. In the sight
of the Lord I entrust my daughter to you;
do nothing to grieve her all the days of
your life. Go in peace, my child. From
now on I am your mother and Sarah is
your beloved wife.[l] May we all prosper
together all the days of our lives." Then
she kissed them both and saw them safely
off. 13 Tobias parted from Raguel with
happiness and joy, praising the Lord of
heaven and earth, King over all, because
he had made his journey a success. Fi-
nally, he blessed Raguel and his wife
Edna, and said, "I have been commanded
by the Lord to honor you all the days of
my life."[m]

The Return of Tobias

11 When they came near to Kaserin,
which is opposite Nineveh, Ra-
phael said, 2 "You are aware of how we
left your father. 3 Let us run ahead of
your wife and prepare the house while
they are still on the way." 4 As they went
on together Raphael[n] said to him, "Have
the gall ready." And the dog[o] went along
behind them.

5 Meanwhile Anna sat looking intently
down the road by which her son would
come. 6 When she caught sight of him
coming, she said to his father, "Look,
your son is coming, and the man who
went with him!"

Tobit's Sight Restored

7 Raphael said to Tobias, before he
had approached his father, "I know that
his eyes will be opened. 8 Smear the gall of
the fish on his eyes; the medicine will
make the white films shrink and peel off
from his eyes, and your father will regain
his sight and see the light."

9 Then Anna ran up to her son and
threw her arms around him, saying, "Now

j Gk *him* *k* Other ancient authorities lack parts of *Then . . . mother-in-law* *l* Gk *sister* *m* Lat: Meaning of Gk uncertain *n* Gk *he* *o* Codex Sinaiticus reads *And the Lord*

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concern for his parents. **10.10** Sarah's dowry is a down payment on the full inheritance of her family's wealth, which Raphael has predicted (6.12). **10.12** *Honor . . . your mother-in-law*, a paraphrase of the fourth (fifth) commandment, parallels 4.3. *They are . . . your parents* parallels 8.21, where Tobias is accepted as the son of Raguel and Edna. **10.13** With an allusion to the fourth (fifth) commandment, *I have . . . my life*, Tobias acknowledges that he is the son of Raguel and Edna.

11.1–6 Unlike the journey to Rages (6.1–9), the journey home is not described; the author focuses on the arrival in Nineveh and the events to come. **11.4** Tobias's *dog* has been mentioned previously only in 6.2, at the beginning of the journey. The significance of this narrative device framing the journey account is obscure; however, the detail here is reminiscent of Odysseus's dog's recognition of its master upon his return (*Odyssey* 17.290–327). Cf. note on 5.4–17 on the journey of Telemachus and Athena. The Bible does not generally describe dogs as pets (but cf. Mk 7.27–28) and often portrays them as carnivorous scavengers. **11.7–15** The problem that triggered the plot is now resolved. The scene has some striking parallels (and echoes?) in Lk 15.20–24. **11.9** Anna's speech momentarily delays the account of Tobit's healing and maintains narrative tension. On her words, cf. Lk

that I have seen you, my child, I am ready
to die." And she wept. 10 Then Tobit got
up and came stumbling out through the
courtyard door. Tobias went up to him,
11 with the gall of the fish in his hand, and
holding him firmly, he blew into his eyes,
saying, "Take courage, father." With this
he applied the medicine on his eyes,
12 and it made them smart.[p] 13 Next, with
both his hands he peeled off the white
films from the corners of his eyes. Then
Tobit[q] saw his son and[r] threw his arms
around him, 14 and he wept and said to
him, "I see you, my son, the light of my
eyes!" Then he said,

"Blessed be God,
and blessed be his great name,
and blessed be all his holy
angels.
May his holy name be blessed[s]
throughout all the ages.
15 Though he afflicted me,
he has had mercy upon me.[t]
Now I see my son Tobias!"

So Tobit went in rejoicing and praising
God at the top of his voice. Tobias re-
ported to his father that his journey had
been successful, that he had brought the
money, that he had married Raguel's
daughter Sarah, and that she was, indeed,
on her way there, very near to the gate of
Nineveh.

Rejoicing in Nineveh

16 Then Tobit, rejoicing and praising
God, went out to meet his daughter-in-law
at the gate of Nineveh. When the people
of Nineveh saw him coming, walking
along in full vigor and with no one lead-
ing him, they were amazed. 17 Before
them all, Tobit acknowledged that God
had been merciful to him and had re-
stored his sight. When Tobit met Sarah
the wife of his son Tobias, he blessed her
saying, "Come in, my daughter, and wel-
come. Blessed be your God who has
brought you to us, my daughter. Blessed
be your father and your mother, blessed
be my son Tobias, and blessed be you, my
daughter. Come in now to your home,
and welcome, with blessing and joy. Come
in, my daughter." So on that day there
was rejoicing among all the Jews who
were in Nineveh. 18 Ahikar and his
nephew Nadab were also present to share
Tobit's joy. With merriment they cele-
brated Tobias's wedding feast for seven
days, and many gifts were given to him.[u]

Raphael Offered His Wages

12 When the wedding celebration
was ended, Tobit called his son
Tobias and said to him, "My child, see to
paying the wages of the man who went
with you, and give him a bonus as well."
2 He replied, "Father, how much shall I
pay him? It would do no harm to give him

p Lat: Meaning of Gk uncertain q Gk *he*
r Other ancient authorities lack *saw his son and*
s Codex Sinaiticus reads *May his great name be upon us and blessed be all the angels* t Lat: Gk lacks this line u Other ancient authorities lack parts of this sentence

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2.29–30. **11.11–13** The cause and cure of Tobit's blindness make some anatomical sense. Acid on the cornea can discolor its epithelium, which sometimes can be peeled off like a film. Cf. Acts 9.18. The healing has a miraculous element; fish gall is effective where physicians failed (2.10). Of course, that failure facilitated both the recovery of Tobit's money and Tobias's marriage. **11.14** Tobit's ability to see *the light of my eyes* fulfills Raphael's prediction that he will *see the light* (v. 8). **11.14–15** Like Tobias, Sarah, and Raguel before him (8.5–7, 15–17), Tobit appropriately breaks into a doxology, which is a foil to his earlier prayer of lament (3.2–6). Cf. the contrast between the Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Jews. Tobit's reference to God's *holy angels* is to the point, though he does not know this. **11.15** The word pair *afflicted* (lit. "scourged") / *had mercy* recurs in 13.2, 5 with reference to Israel. These are technical terms for the manner in which God deals with the righteous. God will judge the wicked (or the nations) with full fury; in contrast, God scourges, chastises, or disciplines the righteous (or Israel), so that when they repent they will be shown mercy. Cf. 2 Macc 6.12–16; *Psalms of Solomon* 3, 13. **11.16–17** Elements in this scene—visible evidence of the cure, the people's amazement, and Tobit's acknowledgment of God's activity—recur in the later miracle stories in the Gospels. **11.17** Tobit now meets the wife he had hoped Tobias would find (4.12–13). The reference to *the Jews* (Judeans) is odd in a document about a Northern family in exile in Assyria, but note the close identification with Jerusalem in 1.3–7 and ch. 13.

12.1–22 Stories about epiphanies traditionally end with the divine being revealing its identity and suddenly disappearing. **12.1–5** Because

half of the possessions brought back with me. 3 For he has led me back to you safely, he cured my wife, he brought the money back with me, and he healed you. How much extra shall I give him as a bonus?" 4 Tobit said, "He deserves, my child, to receive half of all that he brought back." 5 So Tobias[v] called him and said, "Take for your wages half of all that you brought back, and farewell."

Raphael's Instruction

6 Then Raphael[v] called the two of them privately and said to them, "Bless God and acknowledge him in the presence of all the living for the good things he has done for you. Bless and sing praise to his name. With fitting honor declare to all people the deeds[w] of God. Do not be slow to acknowledge him. 7 It is good to conceal the secret of a king, but to acknowledge and reveal the works of God, and with fitting honor to acknowledge him. Do good and evil will not overtake you. 8 Prayer with fasting[x] is good, but better than both is almsgiving with righteousness. A little with righteousness is better than wealth with wrongdoing.[y] It is better to give alms than to lay up gold. 9 For almsgiving saves from death and purges away every sin. Those who give alms will enjoy a full life, 10 but those who commit sin and do wrong are their own worst enemies.

Raphael Reveals His Identity

11 "I will now declare the whole truth to you and will conceal nothing from you. Already I have declared it to you when I said, 'It is good to conceal the secret of a king, but to reveal with due honor the works of God.' 12 So now when you and Sarah prayed, it was I who brought and read[z] the record of your prayer before the glory of the Lord, and likewise whenever you would bury the dead. 13 And that time when you did not hesitate to get up and leave your dinner to go and bury the dead, 14 I was sent to you to test you. And at the same time God sent me to heal you and Sarah your daughter-in-law. 15 I am Raphael, one of the seven angels who stand ready and enter before the glory of the Lord."

16 The two of them were shaken; they fell face down, for they were afraid. 17 But he said to them, "Do not be afraid; peace be with you. Bless God forevermore. 18 As for me, when I was with you, I was not acting on my own will, but by the will of God. Bless him each and every day; sing his praises. 19 Although you were watching me, I really did not eat or drink anything—but what you saw was a vision.

v Gk *he* w Gk *words*; other ancient authorities read *words of the deeds* x Codex Sinaiticus *with sincerity* y Lat z Lat: Gk lacks *and read*

Raphael has exceeded expectations, Tobit and Tobias, still acting in accordance with their misperceptions, offer the angel a 50 percent commission (cf. 5.15–16), an act of generosity consonant with the book's attitude about the use of money. **12.6–10** Raphael's self-revelation and instruction occur privately to the men of the story. Throughout the narrative, there has been no contact or proximity between the angel and the women (cf. 1 Cor 11.10; *1 Enoch* 6–11). **12.6** The admonition to praise God *in the presence of all the living* anticipates ch. 13 and its universalistic tone (13.3–4, 11; see also 14.6–7). **12.7a** Raphael's admonition that *it is good . . . to acknowledge him* presupposes Tobit's former position in the royal court and may presume God's status as king (see 13.6–7, 10–11, 15–16). **12.7b–10** Complementary proverbs in vv. 7b and 10 frame a section on almsgiving that reiterates 4.6–11. **12.8** The combined references to *prayer, fasting, almsgiving,* and *laying up gold* parallel Mt 6.1–21, which is based on Jewish wisdom teaching. **12.9** *Almsgiving saves from death.* In light of subsequent events, the truth of 4.10 is now evident, although Tobit's assertion there that *almsgiving delivers from death* seemed ironic. **12.11–22** Raphael reveals to Tobit and Tobias what the readers have known since 3.16–17. **12.12** On the notion that angels *read the record* of human prayers and deeds in God's presence, cf. *1 Enoch* 8.4–9.11; 89.76; 97.3–6; 99.3; 104.1. **12.14** Raphael's having been sent to *test* Tobit may suggest divine initiative in the events described in 2.1–10. More likely, it reflects the widespread belief that Satan originates testing or tempting and that God witnesses human responses and provides help, sometimes through an angel; cf. Mt 4.1–10; 6.13; 1 Cor 10.13; Dead Sea Scrolls *Rule of the Community* (1QS) 3.20, 24; *Jubilees* 17.15–18.16. **12.16** This imagery and vocabulary are traditional in epiphany accounts; cf. Dan 10.1–12; *1 Enoch* 14.24–15.1. **12.19** That angels do not eat human food is a traditional idea (cf. Lk 24.36–43; *Testament of Abraham* 4, recension A).

20 So now get up from the ground,[a] and
acknowledge God. See, I am ascending to
him who sent me. Write down all these
things that have happened to you." And
he ascended. 21 Then they stood up, and
could see him no more. 22 They kept
blessing God and singing his praises, and
they acknowledged God for these marvel-
ous deeds of his, when an angel of God
had appeared to them.

Tobit's Thanksgiving to God

13 Then Tobit[b] said:
"Blessed be God who lives
forever,
because his kingdom[c] lasts
throughout all ages.
2 For he afflicts, and he shows
mercy;
he leads down to Hades in
the lowest regions of the
earth,
and he brings up from the
great abyss,[d]
and there is nothing that can
escape his hand.
3 Acknowledge him before the
nations, O children of
Israel;
for he has scattered you among
them.
4 He has shown you his greatness
even there.
Exalt him in the presence of
every living being,
because he is our Lord and he
is our God;
he is our Father and he is God
forever.
5 He will afflict[e] you for your
iniquities,
but he will again show mercy
on all of you.
He will gather you from all the
nations
among whom you have been
scattered.
6 If you turn to him with all your
heart and with all your
soul,

a Other ancient authorities read *now bless the Lord on earth* *b* Gk *he* *c* Other ancient authorities read *forever, and his kingdom* *d* Gk *from destruction* *e* Other ancient authorities read *He afflicted*

12.20–22 The formula *I am ascending to him who sent me* recurs in Jn 16.5. John shares with Tobit the pattern of a descending and ascending savior figure. The command to *write* a book is also consonant with the commissioning function in such stories about heavenly messengers on earth; cf. Rev 1.9–20. It is to be a doxological book, and the commands to *bless* God (vv. 17–18) and *acknowledge* God's merciful activity resonate with the frequent blessing of God throughout the narrative and in the hymn that follows (see 13.1, 3, 6, 10, 15, 17).

13.1–17 Tobit's hymn of praise, a much-expanded counterpart to 11.14–15, epitomizes the book's many exhortations to praise God. Very possibly a version of a liturgical composition, it reflects real usage in the author's time and lends verisimilitude to this portrait of a pious Israelite. Although its vocabulary is reminiscent of the Psalter (especially Pss 92–118), its themes reflect the concerns of the author's time. **13.1–2** The introduction establishes the hymn's theme of divine justice and mercy. **13.1** An opening blessing and explication ("Blessed are you ... because ... ") is formulaic in prayers of this period (cf. Dead Sea Scrolls *Thanksgiving Hymns* [1QH] 5.20; 10.14). V. 1b implies the title *King of the ages* (vv. 6, 10). **13.2** On the word pair *afflicts / shows mercy* (see also v. 5), see note on 11.15. Tobit's situation is inseparable from the nation's; see note on 3.2–5. Sickness and healing were, in Israelite thought, descent to and return from Sheol (Greek *Hades*), the realm of the dead. The complex of ideas here echoes Deut 32.39; 1 Sam 2.6; Wis 16.13–15; 2 Macc 7.35. For death, Sheol, and resurrection as metaphors for exile and return, cf. Ezek 34; Bar 2.17; 3.4–8. **13.3–7** The first of two major sections of the hymn. Its vocabulary echoes Deut 30.2, and it presumes the importance of Deut 28–33 as a prediction of Israel's situation in exile and Diaspora. The Deuteronomic scheme of sin, punishment, repentance, and salvation predominates in Jewish literature of the Greco-Roman period. Cf. Baruch; 2 Macc 3–8; *Jubilees* 23.14–31. **13.3** This section of the hymn is addressed to the *children of Israel ... scattered* in exile. Like the blessing in v. 1, "I acknowledge you O Lord ... for ... " is formulaic in contemporary hymns (cf. Dead Sea Scrolls *Thanksgiving Hymns* [1QH] 3.19; 4.5). **13.5** Return to the promised land is the solution for the Diaspora and exile faced by the author. **13.6** Such a restoration requires that Israel repent (*turn to him* [God] *with all your heart and all your soul*). Tobit's acknowledgment of God *to a nation of sinners* reflects a concern that the enemy not draw unwarranted conclusions about its power and the weakness of Israel's God, who is described throughout the hymn with titles

to do what is true before him.
then he will turn to you
and will no longer hide his face
from you.
So now see what he has done
for you;
acknowledge him at the top of
your voice.
Bless the Lord of righteousness,
and exalt the King of the
ages.[f]
In the land of my exile I
acknowledge him,
and show his power and
majesty to a nation of
sinners:
'Turn back, you sinners, and do
what is right before him;
perhaps he may look with favor
upon you and show you
mercy.'
7 As for me, I exalt my God,
and my soul rejoices in the
King of heaven.
8 Let all people speak of his
majesty,
and acknowledge him in
Jerusalem.
9 O Jerusalem, the holy city,
he afflicted[g] you for the deeds
of your hands,[h]
but will again have mercy on
the children of the
righteous.
10 Acknowledge the Lord, for he is
good,[i]
and bless the King of the ages,
so that his tent[j] may be rebuilt
in you in joy.
May he cheer all those within you
who are captives,
and love all those within you
who are distressed,
to all generations forever.
11 A bright light will shine to all the
ends of the earth;
many nations will come to you
from far away,
the inhabitants of the remotest
parts of the earth to your
holy name,
bearing gifts in their hands for
the King of heaven.
Generation after generation will
give joyful praise in you;
the name of the chosen city will
endure forever.
12 Cursed are all who speak a harsh
word against you;
cursed are all who conquer you
and pull down your walls,
all who overthrow your towers
and set your homes on fire.
But blessed forever will be all
who revere you.[k]
13 Go, then, and rejoice over the
children of the righteous,
for they will be gathered
together
and will praise the Lord of the
ages.
14 Happy are those who love you,
and happy are those who
rejoice in your prosperity.
Happy also are all people who
grieve with you
because of your afflictions;
for they will rejoice with you
and witness all your glory
forever.
15 My soul blesses[l] the Lord, the
great King!
16 For Jerusalem will be built[m] as
his house for all ages.

f The lacuna in codex Sinaiticus, verses 6b to 10a, is filled in from other ancient authorities
g Other ancient authorities read *will afflict*
h Other ancient authorities read *your children*
i Other ancient authorities read *Lord worthily*
j Or *tabernacle* *k* Other ancient authorities read *who build you up* *l* Or *O my soul, bless*
m Other ancient authorities add *for a city*

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that emphasize the divine *power, majesty,* and sovereignty. On this concern, cf. Deut 32.27–31; Dan 1–6. **13.8–17** Although Tobit is a Galilean, the second major part of the hymn focuses on *Jerusalem* as the locus of salvation; cf. 1.6–8; 14.5–7. The direct address to Jerusalem and the joyful anticipation of Jerusalem's deliverance parallel a number of contemporary compositions (Bar 4.36–5.9; *Psalms of Solomon* 11; Dead Sea Scrolls *Psalms Scroll* [11QPs[a]] 22.1–15; cf. Sir 36.1–17). Like other contemporary texts influenced by Isa 40–66 (the chief source for the hope of Zion's restoration), these verses do not foresee a restoration of the Davidic dynasty. God will rule as *King* without an earthly agent. **13.16–17** Cf. Isa 54.11–14 and the even bolder allusion to the new Jerusalem in Rev 21.9–27.

How happy I will be if a remnant
of my descendants should
survive
to see your glory and
acknowledge the King of
heaven.
The gates of Jerusalem will be
built with sapphire and
emerald,
and all your walls with precious
stones.
The towers of Jerusalem will be
built with gold,
and their battlements with pure
gold.
The streets of Jerusalem will be
paved
with ruby and with stones of
Ophir.
17 The gates of Jerusalem will sing
hymns of joy,
and all her houses will cry,
'Hallelujah!
Blessed be the God of Israel!'
and the blessed will bless the
holy name forever and
ever."

Tobit's Testament

14 So ended Tobit's words of praise.
2 Tobit[n] died in peace when he was one hundred twelve years old, and was buried with great honor in Nineveh. He was sixty-two[o] years old when he lost his eyesight, and after regaining it he lived in prosperity, giving alms and continually blessing God and acknowledging God's majesty.

3 When he was about to die, he called his son Tobias and the seven sons of Tobias[p] and gave this command: "My son, take your children 4 and hurry off to Media, for I believe the word of God that Nahum spoke about Nineveh, that all these things will take place and overtake Assyria and Nineveh. Indeed, everything that was spoken by the prophets of Israel, whom God sent, will occur. None of all their words will fail, but all will come true at their appointed times. So it will be safer in Media than in Assyria and Babylon. For I know and believe that whatever God has said will be fulfilled and will come true; not a single word of the prophecies will fail. All of our kindred, inhabitants of the land of Israel, will be scattered and taken as captives from the good land; and the whole land of Israel will be desolate, even Samaria and Jerusalem will be desolate. And the temple of God in it will be burned to the ground, and it will be desolate for a while.[q]

5 "But God will again have mercy on them, and God will bring them back into the land of Israel; and they will rebuild the temple of God, but not like the first one until the period when the times of fulfillment shall come. After this they all will return from their exile and will rebuild Jerusalem in splendor; and in it the

n Gk *He* *o* Other ancient authorities read *fifty-eight* *p* Lat: Gk lacks *and the seven sons of Tobias* *q* Lat: Other ancient authorities read *of God will be in distress and will be burned for a while*

14.1–11a The final chapter centers on the events relating to Tobit's death, especially his second testament (vv. 3–11a), which, unlike the first (ch. 4), focuses on predictions about the future (vv. 4–7). **14.2–3a** The narrative introduction contrasts with the setting of Tobit's first testament and affirms that Tobit's piety has been rewarded; his almsgiving and praise of God have led to a long, prosperous life. **14.4–7** Tobit supports his predictions by appealing to *everything that was spoken by the prophets of Israel* (v. 4); cf. 2.6; 14.5. These references attest the authority of the biblical prophetic corpus in at least some circles during the author's time. Vv. 4–5 are the earliest extant testimony to the belief that the events of history are fixed and must occur *at their appointed times* (v. 4) in accordance with prophetic predictions. Later apocalyptic speculation lays out detailed scenarios based on this idea; cf. Dan 10–12; *1 Enoch* 85–90; 91.11–17; 93.1–10. A number of NT texts also presume that future events are fixed and must occur according to the prophetic word (Mk 8.31; 9.11; 13.7, 10; Rev 1.1; cf. Acts 1.7). Identifiable historical events in Tobit's scenario for the future begin with the destruction of Nineveh (612 B.C.E.), predicted by the prophet *Nahum* (v. 4), and end with the return from the Babylonian exile and the rebuilding of *Jerusalem in splendor* (515 B.C.E.; v. 5), as foreseen in Isa 40–66. In vv. 5b–7, the recitation of historical events gives way to a picture of the future that transcends the author's experience: a glorified temple, the conversion of the nations and their abandoning of their idols, the full return of the Diaspora, and the removal of sin from the earth. Elements in this scenario are predicted in the books of the

temple of God will be rebuilt, just as the
prophets of Israel have said concerning it.
6 Then the nations in the whole world will
all be converted and worship God in
truth. They will all abandon their idols,
which deceitfully have led them into their
error; 7 and in righteousness they will
praise the eternal God. All the Israelites
who are saved in those days and are truly
mindful of God will be gathered together;
they will go to Jerusalem and live in safety
forever in the land of Abraham, and it
will be given over to them. Those who sin-
cerely love God will rejoice, but those who
commit sin and injustice will vanish from
all the earth. 8,9 So now, my children, I
command you, serve God faithfully and
do what is pleasing in his sight. Your chil-
dren are also to be commanded to do
what is right and to give alms, and to be
mindful of God and to bless his name at
all times with sincerity and with all their
strength. So now, my son, leave Nineveh;
do not remain here. 10 On whatever day
you bury your mother beside me, do not
stay overnight within the confines of the
city. For I see that there is much wicked-
ness within it, and that much deceit is
practiced within it, while the people are
without shame. See, my son, what Nadab
did to Ahikar who had reared him. Was
he not, while still alive, brought down into
the earth? For God repaid him to his face
for this shameful treatment. Ahikar came
out into the light, but Nadab went into the
eternal darkness, because he tried to kill
Ahikar. Because he gave alms, Ahikar[r]
escaped the fatal trap that Nadab had set
for him, but Nadab fell into it himself,
and was destroyed. 11 So now, my chil-
dren, see what almsgiving accomplishes,
and what injustice does—it brings death!
But now my breath fails me."

The Death of Tobit and Anna

Then they laid him on his bed, and he
died; and he received an honorable fu-
neral. 12 When Tobias's mother died, he
buried her beside his father. Then he and
his wife and children[s] returned to Media
and settled in Ecbatana with Raguel his
father-in-law. 13 He treated his parents-in-
law[t] with great respect in their old age,
and buried them in Ecbatana of Media.
He inherited both the property of Raguel
and that of his father Tobit. 14 He died
highly respected at the age of one hun-
dred seventeen[u] years. 15 Before he died
he heard[v] of the destruction of Nineveh,
and he saw its prisoners being led into
Media, those whom King Cyaxares[w] of
Media had taken captive. Tobias[x] praised
God for all he had done to the people of
Nineveh and Assyria; before he died he
rejoiced over Nineveh, and he blessed the
Lord God forever and ever. Amen.[y]

r Gk *he*; other ancient authorities read *Manasses*
s Codex Sinaiticus lacks *and children* t Gk *them*
u Other authorities read other numbers
v Codex Sinaiticus reads *saw and heard*
w Cn: Codex Sinaiticus *Ahikar*; other ancient authorities read *Nebuchadnezzar and Ahasuerus*
x Gk *He* y Other ancient authorities lack *Amen*

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prophets, notably Isa 40–66, but the best parallel is *1 Enoch* 91.11–14. **14.7** A return from the Diaspora to the land of Israel is a common topic in texts of the Greco-Roman period (cf. Sir 36.11; Bar 4.21–5.9; *Psalms of Solomon* 11; *1 Enoch* 90.33). In keeping with a major emphasis in the patriarchal narratives (Gen 12.1; 13.14–18; 15.7, 18–19), Israel is identified as *the land of Abraham*. **14.8–11a** Tobit's testament concludes with a summary of ethical instruction that reiterates motifs in ch. 4 and 12.8–10. Here Tobit's example is supplemented by those of *Nadab* and *Ahikar* (v. 10); on Ahikar's almsgiving, cf. 2.10. **14.11b–13** The *honorable funeral* of Tobit (v. 11b) and the reference to Tobias's *inheritance* (v. 13) are final reminders that this is a story about the wealthy. For this author, the pious rich deserve splendid burials. Cf. Lk 16.19–31; *1 Enoch* 103.5–8. **14.13** Tobias's responsibility as a son extends to the burial of his *parents-in-law*. **14.15** The *destruction of Nineveh* guarantees the fulfillment of the other predictions in Tobit's testament. Not surprisingly, the book ends with Tobias blessing the Lord.

JUDITH

WRITTEN IN GREEK and found only in the Septuagint, Judith is excluded from the Hebrew canon as an "outside book." Protestants regard Judith as part of the Apocrypha. Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Christians designate Judith as one of the deuterocanonical books in the OT, listing it as one of the historical books.

The story is extant in four Greek recensions (Septuagint codices Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, Alexandrinus, and Basiliano-Vaticanus), four translations (Old Latin, Syriac, Sahidic, and Ethiopic), and other relatively late abridged and modified Hebrew versions. Despite Jerome's claim in the Vulgate to have translated an Aramaic text, no ancient Aramaic or Hebrew manuscripts have been found. The oldest extant text of Judith is likely a third-century C.E. potsherd on which Jdt 15.1–7 is preserved.

Setting and Date

Judith is an anonymous book, likely written by a Palestinian Jew. Nothing is known about its author, except what can be surmised from the story itself, which is written in Greek that imitates Hebrew idiom and syntax. The story imaginatively intermingles references to well-known geographic sites with uncertain and even imaginary ones. Judith shows familiarity with Palestinian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, and Greek history and geography, and most especially Jewish religious customs of the second and first centuries B.C.E.

Because Judith is replete with conflated details drawn from at least five centuries of real history, the exact date of its composition cannot be determined. There are historical references to Nineveh (1.1; 2.21), the Assyrian capital destroyed in the seventh century (612 B.C.E.); Nebuchadnezzar (1.1), a sixth-century Babylonian ruler (605/4–562 B.C.E.); the Second Temple (4.3), rebuilt by 515 B.C.E.; two characters with Persian names, Holofernes and Bagoas (12.10–11), who appear together in the fourth century in the campaigns of Artaxerxes III Ochus (358–338 B.C.E.); as well as references associated with the second century B.C.E. when Antiochus IV Epiphanes required that the Jews

forsake their God (cf. 3.8) and when the Jews were governed by a high priest (cf. 4.6) with military and religious responsibilities (cf. 1 Macc 14.41–49).

A reference to Judith in the first letter of Clement of Rome in the first century C.E. makes it clear that the story was composed before this time. Most likely Judith was composed late in the second or early in the first century B.C.E., during the late Hasmonean period.

The story suits the reign of John Hyrcanus (134–104 B.C.E.), who served as both king and high priest of Jerusalem. Early in Hyrcanus's reign, after Jerusalem had been under siege for a year, he agreed to pay a heavy tribute to the Seleucid king Antiochus VII Sidetes. On the death of Antiochus in 129 B.C.E., Hyrcanus ceased paying the indemnity and expanded the borders of his territory. He forced the Idumeans (Edomites) to become Jews. Similar issues related to fear of military domination and contest over which God should be served figure in the story of Judith.

Narrative Character and Structure

There can be no doubt that Judith was meant as didactic fiction, not factual history. Not only are historical and geographical details of the story conflated but its most important scene and star character are otherwise unknown. Most of the story takes place during two fateful months in 587 B.C.E. in the little town Bethulia, described as strategically located to the north of Jerusalem in the region of Samaria, but otherwise unknown in Palestinian geography. For thirty-four days Bethulia is under attack (7.20); for four days Judith, the otherwise unknown courageous woman who delivers her people, is in the enemy camp (12.10); and for thirty days the Israelites go out from this town to plunder the Assyrians (15.11).

The sixteen chapters of Judith divide into two balanced and proportional parts. Each is structured internally by a threefold chiastic pattern that repeats certain narrative components in reverse order.

Part 1 (1.1–7.32) narrates a military and religious struggle that begins in Persia and makes its way across the western nations to the little Israelite town Bethulia. Nebuchadnezzar's political sovereignty over all the nations of the western world and God's divine sovereignty over Israel come into direct conflict. Judging themselves guilty of some sin (7.28), the besieged Bethulians lose faith and declare that God has abandoned them (7.25). Crisis makes apostasy and slavery look appealing, and they ask their leaders to surrender. Uzziah, a town official, suggests a compromise that gives God five days to deliver them. As Part 1 ends, the Bethulians, "in great misery" (7.32), have temporarily postponed what seems inevitable surrender, destruction of their sanctuary, and worship of Nebuchadnezzar.

Part 2 (8.1–16.25) tells how the God-fearing woman Judith destroys the enemies of Israel. This "beautiful" widow of Manasseh (8.7) lays aside the sackcloth of her widowhood in order to make herself "very beautiful, to entice the eyes of

all the men who might see her" (10.4). The elders of Bethulia (10.7), the Assyrian patrol (10.14), the entire Assyrian camp (10.19), and most importantly Holofernes, the Assyrian general (10.23), marvel at her "beauty." Holofernes and his servants acclaim her as "beautiful" and "wise" in speech (11.21, 23). Holofernes is so aroused that he instructs his eunuch, Bagoas, to persuade her to eat and drink with them so that he might have an opportunity for sexual intercourse with her (12.13). Judith, who "fears God with great devotion" (8.8), proves more than equal to his seduction and the theological confusion that has brought her own community to the threshold of surrender.

Together Parts 1 and 2 show what it means to serve only one God, to turn to this God for an easing of life's plights, and to trust God without reserve. The book teaches that by vocation and God's design, the covenant people are free if they fear only God and rely wholeheartedly on the covenant. *Toni Craven*

Nebuchadnezzar's Campaign Against Arphaxad

1 It was the twelfth year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, who ruled over the Assyrians in the great city of Nineveh. In those days Arphaxad ruled over the Medes in Ecbatana. 2 He built walls around Ecbatana with hewn stones three cubits thick and six cubits long; he made the walls seventy cubits high and fifty cubits wide. 3 At its gates he raised towers one hundred cubits high and sixty cubits wide at the foundations. 4 He made its gates seventy cubits high and forty cubits wide to allow his armies to march out in force and his infantry to form their ranks. 5 Then King Nebuchadnezzar made war against King Arphaxad in the great plain that is on the borders of Ragau. 6 There rallied to him all the people of the hill country and all those who lived along the Euphrates, the Tigris, and the Hydaspes, and, on the plain, Arioch, king of the Elymeans. Thus, many nations joined the forces of the Chaldeans.[a]

7 Then Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Assyrians, sent messengers to all who lived in Persia and to all who lived in the west, those who lived in Cilicia and Damascus, Lebanon and Antilebanon, and all who lived along the seacoast, 8 and those among the nations of Carmel and Gilead, and Upper Galilee and the great plain of Esdraelon, 9 and all who were in Samaria and its towns, and beyond the Jordan as far as Jerusalem and Bethany and Chelous and Kadesh and the river of Egypt, and Tahpanhes and Raamses and the whole land of Goshen, 10 even beyond Tanis and Memphis, and all who lived in Egypt as far as the borders of Ethiopia.

a Syr: Gk *Cheleoudites*

1.1–7.32 Part 1. **1.1–16** Introduction to Nebuchadnezzar and his campaign against Arphaxad. Arphaxad and his strongly fortified capital city, Ecbatana, are destroyed. Vassal nations who do and do not join Nebuchadnezzar are tallied. **1.1** *Nebuchadnezzar* (605/4–562 B.C.E.), the most famous Neo-Babylonian king, ruled from Babylon, not Nineveh, and destroyed Jerusalem in 587 B.C.E. (2 Kings 24–25). His father, Nabopolassar, together with Cyazares, the king of the Medes, destroyed the Assyrian capital Nineveh in 612 B.C.E. In *the twelfth year* (593 B.C.E.), Nebuchadnezzar is described as a military aggressor against the invented character *Arphaxad* in his Median capital. *Ecbatana*, modern Hamadan, three hundred miles northeast of Babylon and three hundred and twenty-five southeast of Nineveh, a favorite summer palace of the Persian King Cyrus; the city figures in Tob 3.7 as the home of Sarah, the daughter of Edna and Raguel, and in Ezra 6.2 as the place where the edict permitting the Babylonian exiles to return home was preserved. **1.5** *Ragau*, two hundred miles northeast of Ecbatana, mentioned in v. 15 as the place where Arphaxad is slain. **1.6** *Chaldeans*,

11 But all who lived in the whole region
disregarded the summons of Nebuchad-
nezzar, king of the Assyrians, and refused
to join him in the war; for they were not
afraid of him, but regarded him as only
one man.[b] So they sent back his messen-
gers empty-handed and in disgrace.
12 Then Nebuchadnezzar became
very angry with this whole region, and
swore by his throne and kingdom that he
would take revenge on the whole territory
of Cilicia and Damascus and Syria, that he
would kill with his sword also all the in-
habitants of the land of Moab, and the
people of Ammon, and all Judea, and ev-
ery one in Egypt, as far as the coasts of the
two seas.
13 In the seventeenth year he led his
forces against King Arphaxad and de-
feated him in battle, overthrowing the
whole army of Arphaxad and all his cav-
alry and all his chariots. 14 Thus he took
possession of his towns and came to Ec-
batana, captured its towers, plundered its
markets, and turned its glory into dis-
grace. 15 He captured Arphaxad in the
mountains of Ragau and struck him down
with his spears, thus destroying him once
and for all. 16 Then he returned to Nine-
veh, he and all his combined forces, a vast
body of troops; and there he and his
forces rested and feasted for one hundred
twenty days.

The Expedition Against the West

2 In the eighteenth year, on the
twenty-second day of the first
month, there was talk in the palace of
Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Assyrians,
about carrying out his revenge on the
whole region, just as he had said. 2 He
summoned all his ministers and all his no-
bles and set before them his secret plan
and recounted fully, with his own lips, all
the wickedness of the region.[c] 3 They de-
cided that every one who had not obeyed
his command should be destroyed.
4 When he had completed his plan,
Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Assyrians,
called Holofernes, the chief general of his
army, second only to himself, and said to
him, 5 "Thus says the Great King, the lord
of the whole earth: Leave my presence
and take with you men confident in their
strength, one hundred twenty thousand
foot soldiers and twelve thousand cavalry.
6 March out against all the land to the
west, because they disobeyed my orders.
7 Tell them to prepare earth and water,
for I am coming against them in my an-
ger, and will cover the whole face of the
earth with the feet of my troops, to whom
I will hand them over to be plundered.
8 Their wounded shall fill their ravines
and gullies, and the swelling river shall be
filled with their dead. 9 I will lead them
away captive to the ends of the whole
earth. 10 You shall go and seize all their
territory for me in advance. They must
yield themselves to you, and you shall
hold them for me until the day of their
punishment. 11 But to those who resist
show no mercy, but hand them over to
slaughter and plunder throughout your
whole region. 12 For as I live, and by the
power of my kingdom, what I have spo-
ken I will accomplish by my own hand.
13 And you—take care not to transgress
any of your lord's commands, but carry

b Or *a man* *c* Meaning of Gk uncertain

Neo-Babylonians. **1.11** *The whole region* of the west corresponds to Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Egypt; see note on 2.1. **1.12** *The two seas*, unclear, possibly the Mediterranean and the Red Sea. **1.13** In the *seventeenth year* (588 B.C.E.), without the help of the nations of the west, Nebuchadnezzar defeats Arphaxad.

2.1–13 Nebuchadnezzar commissions Holofernes to take vengeance on the disobedient vassal nations. **2.1** Most of the story (2.1–16.20) is imagined as having occurred in the *eighteenth year*, the catastrophic year 587 B.C.E., when Jerusalem actually fell to the historical Nebuchadnezzar. Revenge is planned against the *whole region*, meaning all the nations west of Persia as far as Egypt. These nations are referenced nine times in Jdt 1–2: 1.7–10 specifies the nations; *the whole region* (or *the region*) appears again in 1.11; 1.12; 2.1; 2.2; 2.11; *all the land to the west* in 2.6; *the whole face of the earth to the west* in 2.19; and 2.23–28 details the ravaging of specific western nations. **2.2** Ironically Nebuchadnezzar fully recounts *his secret plan . . . with his own lips*, but in 8.34 Judith keeps her plan secret. **2.5–13** Calling himself *the Great King, the lord of the whole earth*, Nebuchadnezzar, in his only speech, declares that all the rebel lands must surrender. **2.10–13** Nebuchadnezzar specifically instructs Holofernes to seize the disobedient territory and hold it, killing only those who refuse to surrender.

them out exactly as I have ordered you;
do it without delay."

Campaign of Holofernes

14 So Holofernes left the presence of
his lord, and summoned all the com-
manders, generals, and officers of the As-
syrian army. 15 He mustered the picked
troops by divisions as his lord had or-
dered him to do, one hundred twenty
thousand of them, together with twelve
thousand archers on horseback, 16 and he
organized them as a great army is mar-
shaled for a campaign. 17 He took along a
vast number of camels and donkeys and
mules for transport, and innumerable
sheep and oxen and goats for food; 18 also
ample rations for everyone, and a huge
amount of gold and silver from the royal
palace.

19 Then he set out with his whole
army, to go ahead of King Nebuchadnez-
zar and to cover the whole face of the
earth to the west with their chariots and
cavalry and picked foot soldiers. 20 Along
with them went a mixed crowd like a
swarm of locusts, like the dust[d] of the
earth—a multitude that could not be
counted.

21 They marched for three days from
Nineveh to the plain of Bectileth, and
camped opposite Bectileth near the
mountain that is to the north of Upper
Cilicia. 22 From there Holofernes[e] took
his whole army, the infantry, cavalry, and
chariots, and went up into the hill coun-
try. 23 He ravaged Put and Lud, and plun-
dered all the Rassisites and the
Ishmaelites on the border of the desert,
south of the country of the Chelleans.
24 Then he followed[f] the Euphrates and
passed through Mesopotamia and de-
stroyed all the fortified towns along the
brook Abron, as far as the sea. 25 He also
seized the territory of Cilicia, and killed
everyone who resisted him. Then he came
to the southern borders of Japheth, facing
Arabia. 26 He surrounded all the Midian-
ites, and burned their tents and plun-
dered their sheepfolds. 27 Then he went
down into the plain of Damascus during
the wheat harvest, and burned all their
fields and destroyed their flocks and
herds and sacked their towns and ravaged
their lands and put all their young men to
the sword.

28 So fear and dread of him fell upon

d Gk *sand* *e* Gk *he* *f* Or *crossed*

2.14–7.32 Holofernes attacks the western nations. The confrontation between the various nations who refused to aid Nebuchadnezzar is told in a threefold chiastic structure—similar episodes are repeated in reverse order. Each unit is defined by a major shift of scene, alternation between the nations of Assyria and Israel, and a temporal clause. In the following notes, the scenes are labeled A, B, C, and their counterparts, C′, B′, A′. In domino-like fashion, the nations topple to Assyria as "terror" sweeps across the empire at large (2.28), then Judea (4.1), and finally Bethulia (7.4).

2.14–3.10 In Section A of the first chiastic unit (see note on 2.14–7.32), Holofernes leads the campaign against the disobedient nations; the vassals surrender. The line of advance is from Nineveh to Damascus; all the vassals are ravaged, plundered, burned, and destroyed. **2.21** *The plain of Bectileth*, an unidentified plain opposite Upper Cilicia, a distance of three hundred miles from Nineveh, which would be impossible to cover in three days. **2.23** *Put and Lud, Rassisites, Chelleans*, unknown locations and peoples here in proximity to Cilicia (a large and important area in the southeastern coastal zone of Asia Minor, divided into western and eastern parts by the Lamus River). *Ishmaelites*, Arabs. **2.24** *Then he followed the Euphrates*, geographically impossible without backtracking. *Abron*, unknown. **2.25** *Seized . . . Cilicia* seems better after v. 21. *Japheth*, the youngest of Noah's three sons, ancestor of the Indo-European family of nations whose area stretched from the south coast of Europe to Persia (Gen 5.32; 10.2–5). *Facing Arabia*, facing the Syrian desert (1 Macc 11.16). **2.26** *Midianites*, nomads identified in the annals of Tiglathpileser III (ca. 732 B.C.E.) as Haiappu, perhaps located in northwest Arabia. **2.27** *Damascus*, capital of Syria. **2.28** *People who lived along the seacoast*. Seven peoples are listed in the Phoenician maritime and commercial centers. *Sidon*, a city on the Mediterranean coast. *Tyre*, originally an island twenty-five miles south of Sidon, difficult to subdue because of its protected location. Nebuchadnezzar besieged Tyre for thirteen years; Alexander attacked it by building a mole half a mile long and 200 feet wide from the mainland. *Sur, Ocina*, both unknown. *Jamnia*, nine miles north of Azotus, about four miles inland. *Azotus*, formerly Ashdod, one of the five principal cities of the Philistines. *Ascalon*, also one of the five

all the people who lived along the seacoast, at Sidon and Tyre, and those who lived in Sur and Ocina and all who lived in Jamnia. Those who lived in Azotus and Ascalon feared him greatly.

3 They therefore sent messengers to him to sue for peace in these words: 2"We, the servants of Nebuchadnezzar, the Great King, lie prostrate before you. Do with us whatever you will. 3See, our buildings and all our land and all our wheat fields and our flocks and herds and all our encampments[g] lie before you; do with them as you please. 4Our towns and their inhabitants are also your slaves; come and deal with them as you see fit."

5 The men came to Holofernes and told him all this. 6Then he went down to the seacoast with his army and stationed garrisons in the fortified towns and took picked men from them as auxiliaries. 7These people and all in the countryside welcomed him with garlands and dances and tambourines. 8Yet he demolished all their shrines[h] and cut down their sacred groves; for he had been commissioned to destroy all the gods of the land, so that all nations should worship Nebuchadnezzar alone, and that all their dialects and tribes should call upon him as a god.

9 Then he came toward Esdraelon, near Dothan, facing the great ridge of Judea; 10he camped between Geba and Scythopolis, and remained for a whole month in order to collect all the supplies for his army.

Judea on the Alert

4 When the Israelites living in Judea heard of everything that Holofernes, the general of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of the Assyrians, had done to the nations, and how he had plundered and destroyed all their temples, 2they were therefore greatly terrified at his approach; they were alarmed both for Jerusalem and for the temple of the Lord their God. 3For they had only recently returned from exile, and all the people of Judea had just now gathered together, and the sacred vessels and the altar and the temple had been consecrated after their profanation. 4So they sent word to every district of Samaria, and to Kona, Beth-horon, Belmain, and Jericho, and to Choba and Aesora, and the valley of Salem. 5They immediately seized all the high hilltops and fortified the villages on them and stored up food in preparation for war—since their fields had recently been harvested.

6 The high priest, Joakim, who was in Jerusalem at the time, wrote to the people of Bethulia and Betomesthaim, which faces Esdraelon opposite the plain near Dothan, 7ordering them to seize the mountain passes, since by them Judea could be invaded; and it would be easy to stop any who tried to enter, for the approach was narrow, wide enough for only two at a time to pass.

8 So the Israelites did as they had been ordered by the high priest Joakim

g Gk *all the sheepfolds of our tents* *h* Syr: Gk *borders*

Philistine cities, was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 609 B.C.E. **3.1–4** The seven cities in 2.28 surrender. **3.8** Violating the instruction of 2.10–13, Holofernes *demolishes all their shrines*, claiming that Nebuchadnezzar is the sovereign god (6.2) whom all must worship. Ptolemy V of Egypt (203–181 B.C.E.) was the first king to present himself as "God Manifest." No Assyrian, Babylonian, or Persian king is known to have claimed divinity. **3.9** *Esdraelon*, the western portion of the Valley of Jezreel. *Dothan*, fifteen miles southeast of Scythopolis, is mentioned also in 4.6; 7.3, 18; 8.3, leading some to suggest that this was the author's home. **3.10** *Geba*, uncertain. *Scythopolis*, the only city in Judith given its Greek name, strategically guarded the eastern end of the Valley of Jezreel.

4.1–15 In Section B (see note on 2.14–7.32) the scene shifts to Judea and what is happening there. Israel hears and is greatly terrified; Joakim orders war preparations. **4.3** *Recently returned from exile*, a reference to 539 B.C.E., inconsistent with 2.1. The issue is further complicated by the reference *consecrated after their profanation*, referring to the rededication of the temple, either sometime after 515 B.C.E. or even 164 B.C.E. **4.4** Of the eight cities listed, only Samaria, Bethhoron, and Jericho can be located. **4.6** *The high priest Joakim* (see also 4.8, 14; 15.8) exercises both military and religious authority (on this role of the high priest, see Jonathan in 1 Macc 10.18–21; on the name, see Neh 12.26). *Bethulia*. Bethel? Shechem? *Betomesthaim*, unknown. **4.7** *Wide enough for only two at a time to pass*, dramatic exaggeration. **4.8** *Senate*. A supreme Jewish council was not known until the Maccabean period (see

and the senate of the whole people of Israel, in session at Jerusalem. 9And every man of Israel cried out to God with great fervor, and they humbled themselves with much fasting. 10They and their wives and their children and their cattle and every resident alien and hired laborer and purchased slave—they all put sackcloth around their waists. 11And all the Israelite men, women, and children living at Jerusalem prostrated themselves before the temple and put ashes on their heads and spread out their sackcloth before the Lord. 12They even draped the altar with sackcloth and cried out in unison, praying fervently to the God of Israel not to allow their infants to be carried off and their wives to be taken as booty, and the towns they had inherited to be destroyed, and the sanctuary to be profaned and desecrated to the malicious joy of the Gentiles.

13 The Lord heard their prayers and had regard for their distress; for the people fasted many days throughout Judea and in Jerusalem before the sanctuary of the Lord Almighty. 14The high priest Joakim and all the priests who stood before the Lord and ministered to the Lord, with sackcloth around their loins, offered the daily burnt offerings, the votive offerings, and freewill offerings of the people. 15With ashes on their turbans, they cried out to the Lord with all their might to look with favor on the whole house of Israel.

Achior in the Council Against the Israelites

5 It was reported to Holofernes, the general of the Assyrian army, that the people of Israel had prepared for war and had closed the mountain passes and fortified all the high hilltops and set up barricades in the plains. 2In great anger he called together all the princes of Moab and the commanders of Ammon and all the governors of the coastland, 3and said to them, "Tell me, you Canaanites, what people is this that lives in the hill country? What towns do they inhabit? How large is their army, and in what does their power and strength consist? Who rules over them as king and leads their army? 4And why have they alone, of all who live in the west, refused to come out and meet me?"

5 Then Achior, the leader of all the Ammonites, said to him, "May my lord please listen to a report from the mouth of your servant, and I will tell you the truth about this people that lives in the mountain district near you. No falsehood shall come from your servant's mouth. 6These people are descended from the Chaldeans. 7At one time they lived in Mesopotamia, because they did not wish to follow the gods of their ancestors who were in Chaldea. 8Since they had abandoned the ways of their ancestors, and worshiped the God of heaven, the God they had come to know, their ancestors[i] drove them out from the presence of their gods. So they fled to Mesopotamia, and lived there for a long time. 9Then their God commanded them to leave the place where they were living and go to the land of Canaan. There they settled, and grew very prosperous in gold and silver and very much livestock. 10When a famine spread over the land of Canaan they went down to Egypt and lived there as long as they had food. There they became so great a multitude that their race could not be counted. 11So the king of Egypt became hostile to them; he exploited them and forced them to make bricks. 12They cried out to their God, and he afflicted the whole land of Egypt with incurable plagues. So the Egyptians drove them out of their sight. 13Then God dried up

i Gk *they*

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2 Macc 11.27). The Greek term used here, *gerousia*, is also used in 11.14; 15.8. **4.10** Wearing *sackcloth* was a traditional act of mourning, penitence, and supplication. **4.13** *The Lord heard their prayers*, an important detail in the later development of the story when the people believe God has abandoned them (7.25).

5.1–6.13 In Section C (see note on 2.14–7.32) the scene shifts to the Assyrian camp outside Bethulia. Holofernes talks with Achior; Achior is expelled from the Assyrian camp. **5.2** *Moab, Ammon*. The Moabites, east of the Dead Sea, and the Ammonites, in Transjordan north of Moab, were Semitic peoples who were traditional enemies of Israel (see 2 Kings 24.2). **5.5** *Achior*, a righteous Gentile. His name may mean in Hebrew "brother of light" or may be derived from Achihud, meaning "brother of Judah." **5.5–21** Achior recites Israel's history from Abraham to the exile and defends God's special protection of the covenant people if they do not sin. **5.8** *God of heaven*, also in 6.19; 11.17 (cf. 7.28; 9.12; 13.18); the title is more common in Persian times (see Gen 24.3, 7; 2 Chr 36.23; Ezra 1.2;

the Red Sea before them, 14and he led
them by the way of Sinai and Kadesh-
barnea. They drove out all the people of
the desert, 15and took up residence in the
land of the Amorites, and by their might
destroyed all the inhabitants of Heshbon;
and crossing over the Jordan they took
possession of all the hill country. 16They
drove out before them the Canaanites, the
Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Shechemites,
and all the Gergesites, and lived there a
long time.

17 "As long as they did not sin against
their God they prospered, for the God
who hates iniquity is with them. 18But
when they departed from the way he had
prescribed for them, they were utterly de-
feated in many battles and were led away
captive to a foreign land. The temple of
their God was razed to the ground, and
their towns were occupied by their ene-
mies. 19But now they have returned to
their God, and have come back from the
places where they were scattered, and
have occupied Jerusalem, where their
sanctuary is, and have settled in the hill
country, because it was uninhabited.

20 "So now, my master and lord, if
there is any oversight in this people and
they sin against their God and we find out
their offense, then we can go up and de-
feat them. 21But if they are not a guilty
nation, then let my lord pass them by; for
their Lord and God will defend them, and
we shall become the laughingstock of the
whole world."

22 When Achior had finished saying
these things, all the people standing
around the tent began to complain; Holo-
fernes' officers and all the inhabitants of
the seacoast and Moab insisted that he
should be cut to pieces. 23They said, "We
are not afraid of the Israelites; they are a
people with no strength or power for
making war. 24Therefore let us go ahead,
Lord Holofernes, and your vast army will
swallow them up."

6 When the disturbance made by the
people outside the council had died
down, Holofernes, the commander of the
Assyrian army, said to Achior[j] in the
presence of all the foreign contingents:

2 "Who are you, Achior and you mer-
cenaries of Ephraim, to prophesy among
us as you have done today and tell us not
to make war against the people of Israel
because their God will defend them?
What god is there except Nebuchadnez-
zar? He will send his forces and destroy
them from the face of the earth. Their
God will not save them; 3we the king's[k]
servants will destroy them as one man.
They cannot resist the might of our cav-
alry. 4We will overwhelm them;[l] their
mountains will be drunk with their blood,
and their fields will be full of their dead.
Not even their footprints will survive our
attack; they will utterly perish. So says
King Nebuchadnezzar, lord of the whole
earth. For he has spoken; none of his
words shall be in vain.

5 "As for you, Achior, you Ammonite
mercenary, you have said these words in a
moment of perversity; you shall not see
my face again from this day until I take
revenge on this race that came out of
Egypt. 6Then at my return the sword of
my army and the spear[m] of my servants
shall pierce your sides, and you shall fall
among their wounded. 7Now my slaves
are going to take you back into the hill
country and put you in one of the towns
beside the passes. 8You will not die until
you perish along with them. 9If you really
hope in your heart that they will not be
taken, then do not look downcast! I have
spoken, and none of my words shall fail to
come true."

10 Then Holofernes ordered his
slaves, who waited on him in his tent, to
seize Achior and take him away to Bethu-
lia and hand him over to the Israelites.

j Other ancient authorities add *and to all the Moabites* *k* Gk *his* *l* Other ancient authorities add *with it* *m* Lat Syr: Gk *people*

5.11, 12; 6.9, 10; 7.12, 21; Dan 2.37; Jon 1.9; Tob 10.11, 12). **5.16** Cf. other lists of dispossessed peoples in Gen 15.19–21; Ex 3.8, 17; Deut 7.1; Josh 11.3. The inclusion of the *Shechemites* is unusual and perhaps anticipates the allusion to revenge on the Shechemites by Simeon in Judith's prayer (9.2). **6.2** *Who are you? ... What god is there except Nebuchadnezzar?* Holofernes asks important identity questions that constitute one of the corresponding symmetries in the two halves of the book. In 8.12, Judith asks the magistrates of Bethulia, *Who are you to put God to the test today?* **6.5–9** Holofernes declares that Achior will *not see his face again* until revenge is taken against the Israelites; this verse anticipates the reversal of 14.6.

11 So the slaves took him and led him out
of the camp into the plain, and from the
plain they went up into the hill country
and came to the springs below Bethulia.
12 When the men of the town saw them,[n]
they seized their weapons and ran out of
the town to the top of the hill, and all the
slingers kept them from coming up by
throwing stones at them. 13 So having
taken shelter below the hill, they bound
Achior and left him lying at the foot of
the hill, and returned to their master.

Achior in Bethulia

14 Then the Israelites came down
from their town and found him; they un-
tied him and brought him into Bethulia
and placed him before the magistrates of
their town, 15 who in those days were Uz-
ziah son of Micah, of the tribe of Simeon,
and Chabris son of Gothoniel, and Char-
mis son of Melchiel. 16 They called to-
gether all the elders of the town, and all
their young men and women ran to the
assembly. They set Achior in the midst of
all their people, and Uzziah questioned
him about what had happened. 17 He an-
swered and told them what had taken
place at the council of Holofernes, and all
that he had said in the presence of the
Assyrian leaders, and all that Holofernes
had boasted he would do against the
house of Israel. 18 Then the people fell
down and worshiped God, and cried out:
19 "O Lord God of heaven, see their
arrogance, and have pity on our people in
their humiliation, and look kindly today
on the faces of those who are consecrated
to you."
20 Then they reassured Achior, and
praised him highly. 21 Uzziah took him
from the assembly to his own house and
gave a banquet for the elders; and all
that night they called on the God of Israel
for help.

War Preparations

7 The next day Holofernes ordered
his whole army, and all the allies who
had joined him, to break camp and move
against Bethulia, and to seize the passes
up into the hill country and make war
on the Israelites. 2 So all their warriors
marched off that day; their fighting
forces numbered one hundred seventy
thousand infantry and twelve thousand
cavalry, not counting the baggage and the
foot soldiers handling it, a very great mul-
titude. 3 They encamped in the valley near
Bethulia, beside the spring, and they
spread out in breadth over Dothan as far
as Balbaim and in length from Bethulia to
Cyamon, which faces Esdraelon.
4 When the Israelites saw their vast
numbers, they were greatly terrified and
said to one another, "They will now strip
clean the whole land; neither the high
mountains nor the valleys nor the hills will

n Other ancient authorities add *on the top of the hill*

6.14–21 In Section C′, which begins the second half of the chiastic structure for Part 1 of the book (see note on 2.14–7.32), the scene shifts back to Israel. From this point on, the narrative in Part 1 inverts its scenes and actions. Achior who was expelled from the Assyrian camp is now brought into Bethulia; conversation with the Assyrian Holofernes corresponds to conversation with the Israelite magistrates of Bethulia. **6.15** *Uzziah . . . of the tribe of Simeon.* The tribe of Simeon first settled in the general vicinity of Shechem (Gen 34; Deut 27.12) but later moved to the most southerly border of the cultivated land in the vicinity of Beer-sheba with the capture of the town Zephath/Hormah (Judg 1.17); it is not mentioned in the Song of Deborah (Judg 5) or the blessing of Moses (Deut 33). Judith is also from the tribe of Simeon (9.2). *Chabris, Charmis,* invented characters. **6.18** *Then the people fell down and worshiped God.* As in 4.12, the people turn to God in their distress. **6.19** *God of heaven,* see note on 5.8.

7.1–5 In Section B′ (see note on 2.14–7.32) the scene shifts to the Assyrian camp (vv. 1–3) and then back to the Bethulia (vv. 4–5). Holofernes orders war preparations; Israel sees this and is greatly terrified. **7.2** The forces of Holofernes have grown from one hundred twenty thousand (2.5, 15) to *one hundred seventy thousand* infantry. **7.3** As in 6.11 *Bethulia* is described as atop a hill with its water supply below it. If the writer had Shechem in mind as a model for Bethulia, then perhaps the spring is the so-called Well of Jacob, first mentioned in the story of the Samaritan woman (Jn 4.6). Tradition supports identification of this ancient site with a deep cistern or spring located at Shechem, near the foot of Mount Gerizim, where a junction of roads from Jerusalem and the Jordan Valley join. *Dothan.* See note on 3.9. *Balbaim, Cyamon,* unknown. **7.4–5** Despair overcomes the Bethulians when they see the enormity of their enemy. Nonetheless, they seize their weapons and prepare to defend their town.

bear their weight." 5Yet they all seized
their weapons, and when they had kin-
dled fires on their towers, they remained
on guard all that night.

The Campaign Against Bethulia

6 On the second day Holofernes led
out all his cavalry in full view of the Israel-
ites in Bethulia. 7He reconnoitered the
approaches to their town, and visited the
springs that supplied their water; he
seized them and set guards of soldiers
over them, and then returned to his army.
8 Then all the chieftains of the Edom-
ites and all the leaders of the Moabites
and the commanders of the coastland
came to him and said, 9"Listen to what we
have to say, my lord, and your army will
suffer no losses. 10This people, the Israel-
ites, do not rely on their spears but on the
height of the mountains where they live,
for it is not easy to reach the tops of their
mountains. 11Therefore, my lord, do not
fight against them in regular formation,
and not a man of your army will fall.
12Remain in your camp, and keep all the
men in your forces with you; let your ser-
vants take possession of the spring of wa-
ter that flows from the foot of the
mountain, 13for this is where all the peo-
ple of Bethulia get their water. So thirst
will destroy them, and they will surrender
their town. Meanwhile, we and our people
will go up to the tops of the nearby moun-
tains and camp there to keep watch to see
that no one gets out of the town. 14They
and their wives and children will waste
away with famine, and before the sword
reaches them they will be strewn about in
the streets where they live. 15Thus you
will pay them back with evil, because they
rebelled and did not receive you
peaceably."
16 These words pleased Holofernes
and all his attendants, and he gave orders
to do as they had said. 17So the army of
the Ammonites moved forward, together
with five thousand Assyrians, and they en-
camped in the valley and seized the water
supply and the springs of the Israelites.
18And the Edomites and Ammonites
went up and encamped in the hill country
opposite Dothan; and they sent some of
their men toward the south and the east,
toward Egrebeh, which is near Chusi be-
side the Wadi Mochmur. The rest of the
Assyrian army encamped in the plain, and
covered the whole face of the land. Their
tents and supply trains spread out in
great number, and they formed a vast
multitude.

The Distress of the Israelites

19 The Israelites then cried out to the
Lord their God, for their courage failed,
because all their enemies had surrounded
them, and there was no way of escape
from them. 20The whole Assyrian army,
their infantry, chariots, and cavalry, sur-
rounded them for thirty-four days, until
all the water containers of every inhabi-
tant of Bethulia were empty; 21their cis-
terns were going dry, and on no day did
they have enough water to drink, for their
drinking water was rationed. 22Their chil-
dren were listless, and the women and
young men fainted from thirst and were
collapsing in the streets of the town and in
the gateways; they no longer had any
strength.

7.6–32 In Section A′, which completes the first chiasm (see note on 2.14–7.32), the scene shifts between the Assyrian camp (vv. 6–18) and Bethulia (vv. 19–32). Holofernes leads the campaign against Bethulia; the Bethulians want to surrender. **7.7** Holofernes seized the spring (7.3) that supplied Bethulia's water. **7.8** *Edomites* (mentioned here for first time) and *Moabites* propose a scheme to cut off the water supply so that thirst and famine will destroy the Bethulians. **7.10** The leaders point out that the Israelites depend *on the height of the mountains where they live* for protection. **7.12** *Take possession of the spring* is redundant, given that the springs were taken and put under guard in 7.7. **7.13** Thirst will successfully devastate the Bethulians, but the plan to surround the town in order *to see that no one gets out of the town* ultimately fails because it is not enforced to stop the two women—Judith and her female servant—from leaving the city (10.9b–10) and saving it. **7.16** Holofernes orders the town surrounded, but either his order is ignored or understood to refer to men only. **7.18** *Egrebeh, which is near Chusi beside the Wadi Mochmur,* is likely Acraba, near Sychar's well, twenty-five miles north of Jerusalem. **7.19–32** The final scene in Part 1 takes the people of Bethulia to the threshold of surrender. **7.20** After being surrounded for *thirty-four days,* the Bethulians lose heart. In Part 2, Judith spends four days in the Assyrian

23 Then all the people, the young men, the women, and the children, gathered around Uzziah and the rulers of the town and cried out with a loud voice, and said before all the elders, 24"Let God judge between you and us! You have done us a great injury in not making peace with the Assyrians. 25For now we have no one to help us; God has sold us into their hands, to be strewn before them in thirst and exhaustion. 26Now summon them and surrender the whole town as booty to the army of Holofernes and to all his forces. 27For it would be better for us to be captured by them.[o] We shall indeed become slaves, but our lives will be spared, and we shall not witness our little ones dying before our eyes, and our wives and children drawing their last breath. 28We call to witness against you heaven and earth and our God, the Lord of our ancestors, who punishes us for our sins and the sins of our ancestors; do today the things that we have described!"

29 Then great and general lamentation arose throughout the assembly, and they cried out to the Lord God with a loud voice. 30But Uzziah said to them, "Courage, my brothers and sisters![p] Let us hold out for five days more; by that time the Lord our God will turn his mercy to us again, for he will not forsake us utterly. 31But if these days pass by, and no help comes for us, I will do as you say."

32 Then he dismissed the people to their various posts, and they went up on the walls and towers of their town. The women and children he sent home. In the town they were in great misery.

The Character of Judith

8 Now in those days Judith heard about these things: she was the daughter of Merari son of Ox son of Joseph son of Oziel son of Elkiah son of Ananias son of Gideon son of Raphain son of Ahitub son of Elijah son of Hilkiah son of Eliab son of Nathanael son of Salamiel son of Sarasadai son of Israel. 2Her husband Manasseh, who belonged to her tribe and family, had died during the barley harvest. 3For as he stood overseeing those who were binding sheaves in the field, he was overcome by the burning heat, and took to his bed and died in his town Bethulia. So they buried him with his ancestors in the field between Dothan and Balamon. 4Judith remained as a widow for three years and four months 5at home where she set up a tent for herself on the roof of her house. She put sackcloth around her waist and dressed in widow's clothing. 6She fasted all the days of her widowhood, except the day before the sabbath and the sabbath itself, the day before the new moon and the day of the new moon, and the festivals and days of rejoicing of the house of Israel. 7She was beautiful in appearance, and was very lovely to behold. Her husband Manasseh

o Other ancient authorities add *than to die of thirst*
p Gk *Courage, brothers*

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camp (12.10) and the Israelites plunder the enemy camp for thirty days (15.11). **7.25** In despair, the people claim *we have no one to help us; God has sold us into their hands*; cf. Esth 7.4. According to 4.13, God *heard their prayers and had regard for their distress*, but the people are not convinced. **7.27** Crisis and confusion make slavery to Assyria look appealing. **7.28** The people judge themselves guilty, for God *punishes us for our sins and the sins of our ancestors*. In 8.18–27 Judith will deny that their suffering is the result of sinfulness. **7.30–31** Uzziah urges courage, but does not address the theological confusion that has made the people believe their suffering results from sin. He asks for a compromise to give God *five days more* before surrender. **7.32** Part 1 ends on the bleak note that the people return to their various posts and homes in *great misery*. Surrender, destruction of the sanctuary, and worship of Nebuchadnezzar seem inevitable, granted the five-day wait.

8.1–16.25 Part 2. These chapters are organized by a threefold chiastic pattern, in which narrative elements are repeated in reverse order (A, B, C, C′, B′, A′), with the climactic scene of Holofernes' beheading at its center (D).

8.1–8 Section A of Part 2 (see note on 8.1–16.25) introduces Judith. **8.1** *Judith* is named for the first time in the story in a genealogy that traces her as the daughter of a father, Merari, fourteen generations removed from Israel. The Greek name *Judith* (Hebrew *yehudit*) is the feminine of Jew or Judean. *Now in those days Judith heard* links Part 2 to all that has gone before. **8.2–3** *Manasseh*, Judith's husband, is dead as the result of sunstroke (cf. 2 Kings 4.19). For the last reference to *Dothan*, see note on 3.9. **8.4–8** No longer a wife, apparently never a

had left her gold and silver, men and
women slaves, livestock, and fields; and
she maintained this estate. 8 No one spoke
ill of her, for she feared God with great
devotion.

Judith and the Elders

9 When Judith heard the harsh words
spoken by the people against the ruler,
because they were faint for lack of water,
and when she heard all that Uzziah said to
them, and how he promised them under
oath to surrender the town to the Assyrians after five days, 10 she sent her maid,
who was in charge of all she possessed, to
summon Uzziah and[q] Chabris and Charmis, the elders of her town. 11 They came
to her, and she said to them:

"Listen to me, rulers of the people of
Bethulia! What you have said to the people today is not right; you have even
sworn and pronounced this oath between
God and you, promising to surrender the
town to our enemies unless the Lord
turns and helps us within so many days.
12 Who are you to put God to the test today, and to set yourselves up in the place
of[r] God in human affairs? 13 You are
putting the Lord Almighty to the test, but
you will never learn anything! 14 You cannot plumb the depths of the human heart
or understand the workings of the human
mind; how do you expect to search out
God, who made all these things, and find
out his mind or comprehend his thought?
No, my brothers, do not anger the Lord
our God. 15 For if he does not choose to
help us within these five days, he has
power to protect us within any time he
pleases, or even to destroy us in the presence of our enemies. 16 Do not try to bind
the purposes of the Lord our God; for
God is not like a human being, to be
threatened, or like a mere mortal, to be
won over by pleading. 17 Therefore, while
we wait for his deliverance, let us call
upon him to help us, and he will hear our
voice, if it pleases him.

18 "For never in our generation, nor
in these present days, has there been any
tribe or family or people or town of ours
that worships gods made with hands, as
was done in days gone by. 19 That was why
our ancestors were handed over to the
sword and to pillage, and so they suffered
a great catastrophe before our enemies.
20 But we know no other god but him, and
so we hope that he will not disdain us or
any of our nation. 21 For if we are captured, all Judea will be captured and our
sanctuary will be plundered; and he will
make us pay for its desecration with our
blood. 22 The slaughter of our kindred
and the captivity of the land and the desolation of our inheritance—all this he will
bring on our heads among the Gentiles,
wherever we serve as slaves; and we shall
be an offense and a disgrace in the eyes of
those who acquire us. 23 For our slavery
will not bring us into favor, but the Lord
our God will turn it to dishonor.

24 "Therefore, my brothers, let us set
an example for our kindred, for their
lives depend upon us, and the sanctuary
—both the temple and the altar—rests
upon us. 25 In spite of everything let us
give thanks to the Lord our God, who is
putting us to the test as he did our ancestors. 26 Remember what he did with Abra-

q Other ancient authorities lack *Uzziah and* (see verses 28 and 35) *r* Or *above*

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mother, Judith is pious, beautiful, wealthy, and lives alone on her estate (cf. 16.21). **8.8** *No one spoke ill of her, for she feared God.* Notice about her effect on the people is repeated in the story's conclusion (16.25). Judith fears no one in the story save God.

8.9–10.8 Section B (see note on 8.1–16.25) tells how Judith plans to save Israel. **8.9–36** Judith and the elders. **8.9** *When Judith heard.* The narrative resumes with repetition of the opening words of Part 2 (8.1). **8.10** Judith's first act in the story is to send the unnamed woman (*maid*, lit. "graceful one"; see also 8.33; 10.2, 5, 17; 13.9; 16.23) *who was in charge of all she possessed* (cf. Gen 15.2; 24.2; 39.4) to summon the town officials, *Uzziah and Chabris and Charmis* (see 6.15). **8.12** Judith reprimands the leaders for putting *God to the test* (cf. Deut 6.16); in 8.25–27 Judith will argue that to God alone belongs the right to test. **8.15** Judith defends God's freedom to deliver or destroy (cf. Job 1.21; 2.10). **8.16** *God is not like a human being* and cannot be won over by threat (cf. the actions of the Assyrians, 2.1–13) or pleading (cf. the actions of Israel, 7.23–29). **8.17** Faith is waiting for deliverance, calling upon God for help, and being heard *if it pleases* God. Judith defends the innocence of her people (8.18–23). **8.24** *Let us set an example.* Judith in-

ham, and how he tested Isaac, and what
happened to Jacob in Syrian Mesopota-
mia, while he was tending the sheep of
Laban, his mother's brother. 27 For he has
not tried us with fire, as he did them, to
search their hearts, nor has he taken ven-
geance on us; but the Lord scourges those
who are close to him in order to admon-
ish them."

28 Then Uzziah said to her, "All that
you have said was spoken out of a true
heart, and there is no one who can deny
your words. 29 Today is not the first time
your wisdom has been shown, but from
the beginning of your life all the people
have recognized your understanding, for
your heart's disposition is right. 30 But the
people were so thirsty that they compelled
us to do for them what we have promised,
and made us take an oath that we cannot
break. 31 Now since you are a God-fearing
woman, pray for us, so that the Lord may
send us rain to fill our cisterns. Then we
will no longer feel faint from thirst."

32 Then Judith said to them, "Listen
to me. I am about to do something that
will go down through all generations of
our descendants. 33 Stand at the town gate
tonight so that I may go out with my
maid; and within the days after which you
have promised to surrender the town to
our enemies, the Lord will deliver Israel
by my hand. 34 Only, do not try to find out
what I am doing; for I will not tell you
until I have finished what I am about
to do."

35 Uzziah and the rulers said to her,
"Go in peace, and may the Lord God go
before you, to take vengeance on our ene-
mies." 36 So they returned from the tent
and went to their posts.

The Prayer of Judith

9 Then Judith prostrated herself, put
ashes on her head, and uncovered
the sackcloth she was wearing. At the very
time when the evening incense was being
offered in the house of God in Jerusalem,
Judith cried out to the Lord with a loud
voice, and said,

2 "O Lord God of my ancestor Sim-
eon, to whom you gave a sword to take
revenge on those strangers who had torn
off a virgin's clothing[s] to defile her, and
exposed her thighs to put her to shame,
and polluted her womb to disgrace her;
for you said, 'It shall not be done'—yet
they did it; 3 so you gave up their rulers to
be killed, and their bed, which was
ashamed of the deceit they had practiced,
was stained with blood, and you struck
down slaves along with princes, and
princes on their thrones. 4 You gave up
their wives for booty and their daughters
to captivity, and all their booty to be di-
vided among your beloved children who
burned with zeal for you and abhorred
the pollution of their blood and called on
you for help. O God, my God, hear me
also, a widow.

5 "For you have done these things and
those that went before and those that fol-
lowed. You have designed the things that
are now, and those that are to come. What
you had in mind has happened; 6 the
things you decided on presented them-
selves and said, 'Here we are!' For all your
ways are prepared in advance, and your
judgment is with foreknowledge.

s Cn: Gk *loosed her womb*

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cludes herself in the solution she proposes. **8.27** Together they will model belief that God *scourges those who are close to him* (wisdom reminiscent of Ps 94.10, 12; Prov 3.12). **8.28** Uzziah responds and acknowledges her *true heart* (because of this verse, Judith has been the queen of hearts in French playing cards since the fourteenth century). **8.29** Uzziah claims that Judith is recognized for her *understanding* and that her *heart's disposition is right*, hollow flattery in light of the fact he did not think earlier to seek her counsel. **8.30** Uzziah argues that he was forced to take *an oath that* [he] *cannot break* (on other foolish vows, see Judg 11.30–31, 35; on the blaming of others, see Gen 3.12–13; Ex 32.22–24). **8.31** *Pray for us, so that the Lord may send us rain.* Uzziah wants a face-saving miracle. **8.32–34** Judith protests *listen to me* (notice the verbal modulation of the reported *Judith heard* in 8.1, 8 to the imperative *listen to me* in 8.11, 32 to the petition *hear me* in 9.4, 12), within the five days allowed by the compromise, *the Lord will deliver Israel by my hand.* Judith refuses to explain the details of what she will do to accomplish God's purpose (cf. Nebuchadnezzar's full explanation of his secret plan in 2.2) but asks the leaders to meet her and her maid that night at the town gate.

9.1–14 Alone, Judith prays that God grant her success by hearing her prayer (9.4), breaking the strength of the Assyrians (9.8), and defeating

7 "Here now are the Assyrians, a
greatly increased force, priding them-
selves in their horses and riders, boasting
in the strength of their foot soldiers, and
trusting in shield and spear, in bow and
sling. They do not know that you are the
Lord who crushes wars; the Lord is your
name. 8 Break their strength by your
might, and bring down their power in
your anger; for they intend to defile your
sanctuary, and to pollute the tabernacle
where your glorious name resides, and to
break off the horns[t] of your altar with
the sword. 9 Look at their pride, and send
your wrath upon their heads. Give to me,
a widow, the strong hand to do what I
plan. 10 By the deceit of my lips strike
down the slave with the prince and the
prince with his servant; crush their arro-
gance by the hand of a woman.

11 "For your strength does not de-
pend on numbers, nor your might on the
powerful. But you are the God of the
lowly, helper of the oppressed, upholder
of the weak, protector of the forsaken,
savior of those without hope. 12 Please,
please, God of my father, God of the heri-
tage of Israel, Lord of heaven and earth,
Creator of the waters, King of all your
creation, hear my prayer! 13 Make my de-
ceitful words bring wound and bruise on
those who have planned cruel things
against your covenant, and against your
sacred house, and against Mount Zion,
and against the house your children pos-
sess. 14 Let your whole nation and every
tribe know and understand that you are
God, the God of all power and might, and
that there is no other who protects the
people of Israel but you alone!"

Judith Prepares to Go to Holofernes

10 When Judith[u] had stopped cry-
ing out to the God of Israel, and
had ended all these words, 2 she rose from
where she lay prostrate. She called her
maid and went down into the house
where she lived on sabbaths and on her
festal days. 3 She removed the sackcloth
she had been wearing, took off her
widow's garments, bathed her body with
water, and anointed herself with precious
ointment. She combed her hair, put on a
tiara, and dressed herself in the festive at-
tire that she used to wear while her hus-
band Manasseh was living. 4 She put
sandals on her feet, and put on her an-
klets, bracelets, rings, earrings, and all her
other jewelry. Thus she made herself very
beautiful, to entice the eyes of all the men
who might see her. 5 She gave her maid a
skin of wine and a flask of oil, and filled a
bag with roasted grain, dried fig cakes,
and fine bread;[v] then she wrapped up all
her dishes and gave them to her to carry.

6 Then they went out to the town gate
of Bethulia and found Uzziah standing
there with the elders of the town, Chabris
and Charmis. 7 When they saw her trans-
formed in appearance and dressed differ-
ently, they were very greatly astounded at
her beauty and said to her, 8 "May the
God of our ancestors grant you favor and
fulfill your plans, so that the people of Is-
rael may glory and Jerusalem may be ex-
alted." She bowed down to God.

t Syr: Gk *horn* u Gk *she* v Other ancient authorities add *and cheese*

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the enemy by *the deceit of* [her] *lips* (9.10; *deceitful words* in 9.13) and *the hand of a woman* (9.10). **9.10, 13** Twice Judith specifies *deceit* as her weapon for success. The law, which required that a person's public testimony have constancy and reliability, does not prohibit her request to win by deceit (see Ex 20.16; Deut 5.20). Lev 19.11 prohibits lying, but this text, like others that express negative sentiments about lying (Ps 15.2; Prov 6.17; 12.22), is overshadowed by the many biblical stories in which "private" lies are told for the preservation of the community (e.g., the lies told by Rebekah, Gen 27–28; Tamar, Gen 38; the midwives, mother, and sister of Moses and the princess, Ex 1–2; Rahab, Josh 2; and the woman of Tekoa, 2 Sam 14). **9.10** *By the hand of a woman.* In this phrase the Greek word *thēleia* ("female") is used rather than the more common *gunē* ("woman"); see also 13.15; 16.5. To be killed by a female was a special disgrace according to Judg 9.53–54.

10.1–8 Judith readies herself to carry out her plan. **10.3** That Judith *bathed her body with water* does not fit with the short supply of water in Bethulia. **10.4** Judith dresses beautifully *to entice the eyes of all the men.* Her motivation is not vanity—her plan is to smash the enemy. In Part 2, Judith's beauty influences all who meet her (8.7; 10.7, 14, 19, 23; 11.21, 23; 12.13). **10.5** Judith prepares ritually pure food for the journey (cf. Dan 1.8–16).

Judith Leaves Bethulia

9 Then she said to them, "Order the gate of the town to be opened for me so that I may go out and accomplish the things you have just said to me." So they ordered the young men to open the gate for her, as she requested. 10 When they had done this, Judith went out, accompanied by her maid. The men of the town watched her until she had gone down the mountain and passed through the valley, where they lost sight of her.

Judith Is Captured

11 As the women[w] were going straight on through the valley, an Assyrian patrol met her 12 and took her into custody. They asked her, "To what people do you belong, and where are you coming from, and where are you going?" She replied, "I am a daughter of the Hebrews, but I am fleeing from them, for they are about to be handed over to you to be devoured. 13 I am on my way to see Holofernes the commander of your army, to give him a true report; I will show him a way by which he can go and capture all the hill country without losing one of his men, captured or slain."

14 When the men heard her words, and observed her face—she was in their eyes marvelously beautiful—they said to her, 15 "You have saved your life by hurrying down to see our lord. Go at once to his tent; some of us will escort you and hand you over to him. 16 When you stand before him, have no fear in your heart, but tell him what you have just said, and he will treat you well."

17 They chose from their number a hundred men to accompany her and her maid, and they brought them to the tent of Holofernes. 18 There was great excitement in the whole camp, for her arrival was reported from tent to tent. They came and gathered around her as she stood outside the tent of Holofernes, waiting until they told him about her. 19 They marveled at her beauty and admired the Israelites, judging them by her. They said to one another, "Who can despise these people, who have women like this among them? It is not wise to leave one of their men alive, for if we let them go they will be able to beguile the whole world!"

Judith Is Brought Before Holofernes

20 Then the guards of Holofernes and all his servants came out and led her into the tent. 21 Holofernes was resting on his bed under a canopy that was woven with purple and gold, emeralds and other precious stones. 22 When they told him of her, he came to the front of the tent, with silver lamps carried before him. 23 When Judith came into the presence of Holofernes[x] and his servants, they all marveled at the beauty of her face. She prostrated herself and did obeisance to him, but his slaves raised her up.

11 Then Holofernes said to her, "Take courage, woman, and do not be afraid in your heart, for I have never hurt anyone who chose to serve Nebuchadnezzar, king of all the earth. 2 Even now, if your people who live in the hill country had not slighted me, I would never have lifted my spear against them. They have brought this on themselves. 3 But now tell me why you have fled from them and have come over to us. In any event, you have come to safety. Take courage! You will live tonight and ever after. 4 No one will hurt you. Rather, all will

w Gk *they* *x* Gk *him*

10.9–10 In Section C (see note on 8.1–16.25), Judith and her maid leave Bethulia. The order to open the gate begins a journey down the mountain and through the valley to the Assyrian camp, a journey that will be repeated in reverse in 13.10b–11.

10.11–13.10a In this climactic and central section (D), Judith overcomes Holofernes. **10.11–19** A patrol meets Judith and takes her to Holofernes. **10.12–13** Judith's first words to the patrol are a mixture of truth and lies: she is a *daughter of the Hebrews,* but she does not plan to give Holofernes a *true report* about how to capture the hill country without any loss. **10.14** The men observe that she is *marvelously beautiful* (see note on 10.4). **10.18–19** Judith's beauty causes the whole camp to marvel (as it will Holofernes and his servants in 10.23).

10.20–12.9 During their first meeting, Judith and Holofernes deceive each other. Only in 11.9–10; 12.2, 4 does Judith speak the whole truth; otherwise her statements are lies or at best mixtures of truth and lie or words with double meanings (as in 11.6). **11.1** Holofernes' first lie, given his destruction of the worship places of the nations who pledged they were servants of

treat you well, as they do the servants of
my lord King Nebuchadnezzar."
5 Judith answered him, "Accept the
words of your slave, and let your servant
speak in your presence. I will say nothing
false to my lord this night. 6 If you follow
out the words of your servant, God will
accomplish something through you, and
my lord will not fail to achieve his purposes. 7 By the life of Nebuchadnezzar,
king of the whole earth, and by the power
of him who has sent you to direct every
living being! Not only do human beings
serve him because of you, but also the animals of the field and the cattle and the
birds of the air will live, because of your
power, under Nebuchadnezzar and all his
house. 8 For we have heard of your wisdom and skill, and it is reported throughout the whole world that you alone are the
best in the whole kingdom, the most informed and the most astounding in military strategy.
9 "Now as for Achior's speech in your
council, we have heard his words, for the
people of Bethulia spared him and he
told them all he had said to you. 10 Therefore, lord and master, do not disregard
what he said, but keep it in your mind, for
it is true. Indeed our nation cannot be
punished, nor can the sword prevail
against them, unless they sin against
their God.
11 "But now, in order that my lord
may not be defeated and his purpose
frustrated, death will fall upon them, for
a sin has overtaken them by which they
are about to provoke their God to anger
when they do what is wrong. 12 Since their
food supply is exhausted and their water
has almost given out, they have planned
to kill their livestock and have determined
to use all that God by his laws has forbidden them to eat. 13 They have decided to
consume the first fruits of the grain and
the tithes of the wine and oil, which they
had consecrated and set aside for the
priests who minister in the presence of
our God in Jerusalem—things it is not
lawful for any of the people even to touch
with their hands. 14 Since even the people
in Jerusalem have been doing this, they
have sent messengers there in order to
bring back permission from the council of
the elders. 15 When the response reaches
them and they act upon it, on that very
day they will be handed over to you to be
destroyed.
16 "So when I, your slave, learned all
this, I fled from them. God has sent me to
accomplish with you things that will astonish the whole world wherever people shall
hear about them. 17 Your servant is indeed God-fearing and serves the God of
heaven night and day. So, my lord, I will
remain with you; but every night your
servant will go out into the valley and pray
to God. He will tell me when they have
committed their sins. 18 Then I will come
and tell you, so that you may go out with
your whole army, and not one of them
will be able to withstand you. 19 Then I
will lead you through Judea, until you
come to Jerusalem; there I will set your
throne.[y] You will drive them like sheep
that have no shepherd, and no dog will so
much as growl at you. For this was told me
to give me foreknowledge; it was announced to me, and I was sent to
tell you."
20 Her words pleased Holofernes and
all his servants. They marveled at her wisdom and said, 21 "No other woman from
one end of the earth to the other looks so
beautiful or speaks so wisely!" 22 Then
Holofernes said to her, "God has done
well to send you ahead of the people, to
strengthen our hands and bring destruction on those who have despised my lord.
23 You are not only beautiful in appearance, but wise in speech. If you do as you
have said, your God shall be my God, and
you shall live in the palace of King Nebuchadnezzar and be renowned throughout
the whole world."
12 Then he commanded them to
bring her in where his silver dinnerware was kept, and ordered them to
set a table for her with some of his own
delicacies, and with some of his own wine
to drink. 2 But Judith said, "I cannot par-

y Or *chariot*

Nebuchadnezzar (3.2). **11.5** Judith's words have a double meaning. Is *my lord* Holofernes or God? **11.11** Judith lies that *a sin has overtaken* her people (8.18–20 is her statement to the contrary). **11.17** Judith's plan (which is sealed in 12.5–7) to go out into the valley each night sets up her escape. **11.23** Holofernes' offer that *your God shall be my God* is unlikely given his insistence that Nebuchadnezzar alone is god (3.8); cf. Ruth 1.16.

take of them, or it will be an offense; but
I will have enough with the things I
brought with me." 3 Holofernes said to
her, "If your supply runs out, where can
we get you more of the same? For none of
your people are here with us." 4 Judith re-
plied, "As surely as you live, my lord, your
servant will not use up the supplies I have
with me before the Lord carries out by my
hand what he has determined."

5 Then the servants of Holofernes
brought her into the tent, and she slept
until midnight. Toward the morning
watch she got up 6 and sent this message
to Holofernes: "Let my lord now give or-
ders to allow your servant to go out and
pray." 7 So Holofernes commanded his
guards not to hinder her. She remained
in the camp three days. She went out each
night to the valley of Bethulia, and bathed
at the spring in the camp.[z] 8 After bath-
ing, she prayed the Lord God of Israel to
direct her way for the triumph of his[a]
people. 9 Then she returned purified and
stayed in the tent until she ate her food
toward evening.

Judith Attends Holofernes' Banquet

10 On the fourth day Holofernes held
a banquet for his personal attendants
only, and did not invite any of his officers.
11 He said to Bagoas, the eunuch who had
charge of his personal affairs, "Go and
persuade the Hebrew woman who is in
your care to join us and to eat and drink
with us. 12 For it would be a disgrace if we
let such a woman go without having inter-
course with her. If we do not seduce her,
she will laugh at us."

13 So Bagoas left the presence of Hol-
ofernes, and approached her and said,
"Let this pretty girl not hesitate to come to
my lord to be honored in his presence,
and to enjoy drinking wine with us, and to
become today like one of the Assyrian
women who serve in the palace of Nebu-
chadnezzar." 14 Judith replied, "Who am I
to refuse my lord? Whatever pleases him I
will do at once, and it will be a joy to me
until the day of my death." 15 So she pro-
ceeded to dress herself in all her woman's
finery. Her maid went ahead and spread
for her on the ground before Holofernes
the lambskins she had received from Ba-
goas for her daily use in reclining.

16 Then Judith came in and lay down.
Holofernes' heart was ravished with her
and his passion was aroused, for he had
been waiting for an opportunity to seduce
her from the day he first saw her. 17 So
Holofernes said to her, "Have a drink and
be merry with us!" 18 Judith said, "I will
gladly drink, my lord, because today is the
greatest day in my whole life." 19 Then she
took what her maid had prepared and ate
and drank before him. 20 Holofernes was
greatly pleased with her, and drank a
great quantity of wine, much more than
he had ever drunk in any one day since he
was born.

Judith Beheads Holofernes

13 When evening came, his slaves
quickly withdrew. Bagoas closed
the tent from outside and shut out the at-
tendants from his master's presence.
They went to bed, for they all were weary
because the banquet had lasted so long.
2 But Judith was left alone in the tent, with
Holofernes stretched out on his bed, for
he was dead drunk.

3 Now Judith had told her maid to
stand outside the bedchamber and to wait
for her to come out, as she did on the
other days; for she said she would be go-
ing out for her prayers. She had said the
same thing to Bagoas. 4 So everyone went
out, and no one, either small or great, was
left in the bedchamber. Then Judith,
standing beside his bed, said in her heart,
"O Lord God of all might, look in this
hour on the work of my hands for the
exaltation of Jerusalem. 5 Now indeed is
the time to help your heritage and to
carry out my design to destroy the ene-
mies who have risen up against us."

z Other ancient authorities lack *in the camp*
a Other ancient authorities read *her*

12.10–20 The banquet. **12.10** *On the fourth day* of the five allotted before the people of Bethulia surrender, Holofernes plans a banquet. **12.12** The purpose of the evening is for Holofernes to have *intercourse with her*. **12.14** *Who am I . . . ?* Judith's identity is not at stake as she accepts Bagoas's invitation to the banquet (cf. 6.2; 8.12). **12.16** Holofernes is waiting *to seduce her*; Judith is there to deceive him.

13.1–10a Holofernes loses his head.

13.2–8 Judith is alone with Holofernes who is *dead drunk*. She prays twice (13.4–5, 7) and

6 She went up to the bedpost near
Holofernes' head, and took down his
sword that hung there. 7 She came close
to his bed, took hold of the hair of his
head, and said, "Give me strength today,
O Lord God of Israel!" 8 Then she struck
his neck twice with all her might, and cut
off his head. 9 Next she rolled his body off
the bed and pulled down the canopy from
the posts. Soon afterward she went out
and gave Holofernes' head to her maid,
10 who placed it in her food bag.

Judith Returns to Bethulia

Then the two of them went out together, as they were accustomed to do for prayer. They passed through the camp, circled around the valley, and went up the mountain to Bethulia, and came to its gates. 11 From a distance Judith called out to the sentries at the gates, "Open, open the gate! God, our God, is with us, still showing his power in Israel and his strength against our enemies, as he has done today!"

Judith's Counsel to Bethulia

12 When the people of her town heard her voice, they hurried down to the town gate and summoned the elders of the town. 13 They all ran together, both small and great, for it seemed unbelievable that she had returned. They opened the gate and welcomed them. Then they lit a fire to give light, and gathered around them. 14 Then she said to them with a loud voice, "Praise God, O praise him! Praise God, who has not withdrawn his mercy from the house of Israel, but has destroyed our enemies by my hand this very night!"

15 Then she pulled the head out of the bag and showed it to them, and said, "See here, the head of Holofernes, the commander of the Assyrian army, and here is the canopy beneath which he lay in his drunken stupor. The Lord has struck him down by the hand of a woman. 16 As the Lord lives, who has protected me in the way I went, I swear that it was my face that seduced him to his destruction, and that he committed no sin with me, to defile and shame me."

17 All the people were greatly astonished. They bowed down and worshiped God, and said with one accord, "Blessed are you our God, who have this day humiliated the enemies of your people."

18 Then Uzziah said to her, "O daughter, you are blessed by the Most High God above all other women on earth; and blessed be the Lord God, who created the heavens and the earth, who has guided you to cut off the head of the leader of our enemies. 19 Your praise[b] will never depart from the hearts of those who remember the power of God. 20 May God grant this to be a perpetual honor to you, and may he reward you with blessings, because you risked your own life when our nation was brought low, and you averted our ruin, walking in the straight path before our God." And all the people said, "Amen. Amen."

b Other ancient authorities read *hope*

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strikes his neck twice (13.8) with his own sword. **13.9–10a** The reason for her actions, taking the head and pulling the canopy down, appear later (v. 15).

13.10b–11 In Section C′, which begins the second half of Part 2 (see note on 8.1–16.25), Judith and her maid retrace their steps (see 10.9–10) to Bethulia through the valley and up the mountain. **13.11** Judith proclaims that *God, our God, is with us,* in contrast to the people's cry that God has abandoned them (7.25).

13.12–16.20 Judith plans the destruction of Israel's enemy. This section, B′, repeats elements found in B of Part 2 (8.9–10.8; see note on 8.1–16.25). Both open with a meeting with Judith: she summons the town officials (8.10); the people assemble when they "hear" (13.12; cf. uses of this important verb variously translated as "hear" or "listen" in 4.1, 13; 5.5; 7.9; 8.1, 9 [twice], 11, 17, 32; 9.4, 12; 10.14; 11.8, 9, 16; 13.12; 14.1, 7, 19; 15.1, 5) her voice asking that the gate be opened (13.13). B and B′ contain an instruction from Judith that begins with the words *listen to me* (8.11; 14.1). She prays for success in 9.1–14 and announces it in 13.14–16. Uzziah blesses her in 8.35 and again in 13.18–20. **13.12–14.10** Judith now speaks to the people of Bethulia. **13.15** *By the hand of a woman.* See note on 9.10. Judith gives God full credit for the triumph (see also 13.4; 16.5). **13.17** *Blessed are you our God.* The Greek word *eulogētos,* "blessed," appears only seven times in Judith, and all its occur-

14 Then Judith said to them, "Listen
to me, my friends. Take this head
and hang it upon the parapet of your
wall. 2 As soon as day breaks and the sun
rises on the earth, each of you take up
your weapons, and let every able-bodied
man go out of the town; set a captain over
them, as if you were going down to the
plain against the Assyrian outpost; only
do not go down. 3 Then they will seize
their arms and go into the camp and
rouse the officers of the Assyrian army.
They will rush into the tent of Holofernes
and will not find him. Then panic will
come over them, and they will flee before
you. 4 Then you and all who live within
the borders of Israel will pursue them and
cut them down in their tracks. 5 But be-
fore you do all this, bring Achior the Am-
monite to me so that he may see and
recognize the man who despised the
house of Israel and sent him to us as if to
his death."

6 So they summoned Achior from the
house of Uzziah. When he came and saw
the head of Holofernes in the hand of one
of the men in the assembly of the people,
he fell down on his face in a faint. 7 When
they raised him up he threw himself at
Judith's feet, and did obeisance to her,
and said, "Blessed are you in every tent
of Judah! In every nation those who
hear your name will be alarmed. 8 Now
tell me what you have done during
these days."

So Judith told him in the presence of
the people all that she had done, from the
day she left until the moment she began
speaking to them. 9 When she had fin-
ished, the people raised a great shout and
made a joyful noise in their town. 10 When
Achior saw all that the God of Israel had
done, he believed firmly in God. So he
was circumcised, and joined the house of
Israel, remaining so to this day.

Panic in the Assyrian Camp

11 As soon as it was dawn they hung
the head of Holofernes on the wall. Then
they all took their weapons, and they went
out in companies to the mountain passes.
12 When the Assyrians saw them they sent
word to their commanders, who then
went to the generals and the captains
and to all their other officers. 13 They
came to Holofernes' tent and said to the
steward in charge of all his personal af-
fairs, "Wake up our lord, for the slaves
have been so bold as to come down
against us to give battle, to their utter
destruction."

14 So Bagoas went in and knocked at
the entry of the tent, for he supposed that
he was sleeping with Judith. 15 But when
no one answered, he opened it and went
into the bedchamber and found him
sprawled on the floor dead, with his head
missing. 16 He cried out with a loud voice
and wept and groaned and shouted, and
tore his clothes. 17 Then he went to the
tent where Judith had stayed, and when
he did not find her, he rushed out to the
people and shouted, 18 "The slaves have
tricked us! One Hebrew woman has
brought disgrace on the house of King
Nebuchadnezzar. Look, Holofernes is ly-
ing on the ground, and his head is
missing!"

19 When the leaders of the Assyrian
army heard this, they tore their tunics and
were greatly dismayed, and their loud
cries and shouts rose up throughout the
camp.

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rences are in B′ (13.17; 13.18 [twice]; 14.7; 15.9; 15.10; 15.12). **14.1–5** *Listen to me* is used three times in this form; cf. the imperatives in 8.11, 32. Judith instructs the people to hang the head of Holofernes *upon the parapet* and to display themselves in ranks before the enemy at daybreak. Her strategy is that the Assyrians will then discover that Holofernes is dead and flee in panic. **14.5–6** *Achior* is brought to Judith so that Holofernes' head can be verified. Achior collapses at the sight. **14.7** *Blessed are you in every tent in Judah,* reminiscent of the praise of Jael in Judg 5.24. **14.10** *So he was circumcised.* The author is not concerned with the prohibition of Deut 23.3 that no Ammonite or Moabite shall enter the assembly, even to the tenth generation. Since Judith is more than ten generations removed from Jacob (8.1), so also is Achior and perhaps this law was not judged pertinent. Some suggest that this verse accounts for the exclusion of this book from the canon. Others argue that 14.5–10 is intrusive; the verses do stop the action, but with dramatic effect on this night before attack.

14.11–15.7 The effect of Judith's strategy against the Assyrian camp. **14.19** When the Assyrians hear Holofernes is dead, they are *greatly*

15 When the men in the tents heard it, they were amazed at what had happened. 2 Overcome with fear and trembling, they did not wait for one another, but with one impulse all rushed out and fled by every path across the plain and through the hill country. 3 Those who had camped in the hills around Bethulia also took to flight. Then the Israelites, everyone that was a soldier, rushed out upon them. 4 Uzziah sent men to Betomasthaim[c] and Choba and Kola, and to all the frontiers of Israel, to tell what had taken place and to urge all to rush out upon the enemy to destroy them. 5 When the Israelites heard it, with one accord they fell upon the enemy,[d] and cut them down as far as Choba. Those in Jerusalem and all the hill country also came, for they were told what had happened in the camp of the enemy. The men in Gilead and in Galilee outflanked them with great slaughter, even beyond Damascus and its borders. 6 The rest of the people of Bethulia fell upon the Assyrian camp and plundered it, acquiring great riches. 7 And the Israelites, when they returned from the slaughter, took possession of what remained. Even the villages and towns in the hill country and in the plain got a great amount of booty, since there was a vast quantity of it.

The Israelites Celebrate Their Victory

8 Then the high priest Joakim and the elders of the Israelites who lived in Jerusalem came to witness the good things that the Lord had done for Israel, and to see Judith and to wish her well. 9 When they met her, they all blessed her with one accord and said to her, "You are the glory of Jerusalem, you are the great boast of Israel, you are the great pride of our nation! 10 You have done all this with your own hand; you have done great good to Israel, and God is well pleased with it. May the Almighty Lord bless you forever!" And all the people said, "Amen."

11 All the people plundered the camp for thirty days. They gave Judith the tent of Holofernes and all his silver dinnerware, his beds, his bowls, and all his furniture. She took them and loaded her mules and hitched up her carts and piled the things on them.

12 All the women of Israel gathered to see her, and blessed her, and some of them performed a dance in her honor. She took ivy-wreathed wands in her hands and distributed them to the women who were with her; 13 and she and those who were with her crowned themselves with olive wreaths. She went before all the people in the dance, leading all the women, while all the men of Israel followed, bearing their arms and wearing garlands and singing hymns.

Judith Offers Her Hymn of Praise

14 Judith began this thanksgiving before all Israel, and all the people loudly sang this song of praise.

16 1 And Judith said,

Begin a song to my God with tambourines,
sing to my Lord with cymbals.
Raise to him a new psalm;[e]
exalt him, and call upon his name.
2 For the Lord is a God who crushes wars;
he sets up his camp among his people;

c Other ancient authorities add *and Bebai*
d Gk *them* e Other ancient authorities read *a psalm and praise*

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dismayed; cf. the description of Israel in 4.1–2. **15.2** Here the Assyrians experience *the fear and trembling* they caused in 2.28. **15.4** *Betomasthaim and Choba and Kola*, unidentified locations.

15.8–16.20 A victory celebration in Bethulia with Joakim, the high priest of Jerusalem (15.8–10); a thirty-day interlude (15.11); and a triumphal procession of dance and song to Jerusalem for a three-month long celebration (15.12–16.17). **15.11** The Israelites plunder the enemy camp for *thirty days*; added to the four days Judith spent in the Assyrian camp, the time balances the thirty-four days Bethulia was under siege (7.20). **15.13** The wearing of *olive wreaths* was a Greek custom. Judith led the *women* in dance (like Miriam in Ex 15.20).

15.14–16.17 Judith's hymn of praise is most likely modeled on the Song of Moses (Ex 15). This liturgical poem opens with a hymnic introduction in which Judith calls the people to worship and proclaims God victor and deliverer (16.1–2). There follows in 16.3–12 a narration of the epic event in which Judith describes the Assyrian threat (16.3–5) and another voice tells of

he delivered me from the
hands of my pursuers.
3 The Assyrian came down from
the mountains of the north;
he came with myriads of his
warriors;
their numbers blocked up the
wadis,
and their cavalry covered the
hills.
4 He boasted that he would burn
up my territory,
and kill my young men with the
sword,
and dash my infants to the
ground,
and seize my children as booty,
and take my virgins as spoil.

5 But the Lord Almighty has foiled
them
by the hand of a woman.[f]
6 For their mighty one did not fall
by the hands of the
young men,
nor did the sons of the Titans
strike him down,
nor did tall giants set
upon him;
but Judith daughter of Merari
with the beauty of her
countenance undid him.

7 For she put away her widow's
clothing
to exalt the oppressed in Israel.
She anointed her face with
perfume;
8 she fastened her hair with a tiara
and put on a linen gown to
beguile him.
9 Her sandal ravished his eyes,
her beauty captivated his mind,
and the sword severed his neck!
10 The Persians trembled at her
boldness,
the Medes were daunted at her
daring.

11 Then my oppressed people
shouted;
my weak people cried out,[g]
and the enemy[h] trembled;
they lifted up their voices, and
the enemy[h] were turned
back.
12 Sons of slave-girls pierced them
through
and wounded them like the
children of fugitives;
they perished before the army
of my Lord.

13 I will sing to my God a new song:
O Lord, you are great and
glorious,
wonderful in strength,
invincible.
14 Let all your creatures serve you,
for you spoke, and they were
made.
You sent forth your spirit,[i] and
it formed them;[j]
there is none that can resist
your voice.
15 For the mountains shall be
shaken to their foundations
with the waters;
before your glance the rocks
shall melt like wax.
But to those who fear you
you show mercy.
16 For every sacrifice as a fragrant
offering is a small thing,
and the fat of all whole burnt
offerings to you is a very
little thing;
but whoever fears the Lord is
great forever.

17 Woe to the nations that rise up
against my people!
The Lord Almighty will take
vengeance on them in the
day of judgment;
he will send fire and worms into
their flesh;
they shall weep in pain forever.

18 When they arrived at Jerusalem, they worshiped God. As soon as the people were purified, they offered their

f Other ancient authorities add *he has confounded them* *g* Other ancient authorities read *feared* *h* Gk *they* *i* Or *breath* *j* Other ancient authorities read *they were created*

her triumph (16.6–10). In the hymnic conclusion (16.13–17) Judith praises God with a *new song* (16.13) and summons all creation to join her song of praise. **16.15–16** *Fear* of God is entitlement to mercy and true greatness. **16.17** Ruin is the fate of those who arise against God's people.

burnt offerings, their freewill offerings,
and their gifts. [19] Judith also dedicated to
God all the possessions of Holofernes,
which the people had given her; and the
canopy that she had taken for herself
from his bedchamber she gave as a votive
offering. [20] For three months the people
continued feasting in Jerusalem before
the sanctuary, and Judith remained with
them.

The Renown and Death of Judith

21 After this they all returned home
to their own inheritances. Judith went to
Bethulia, and remained on her estate. For
the rest of her life she was honored
throughout the whole country. [22] Many
desired to marry her, but she gave herself
to no man all the days of her life after her
husband Manasseh died and was gathered
to his people. [23] She became more and
more famous, and grew old in her hus-
band's house, reaching the age of one
hundred five. She set her maid free. She
died in Bethulia, and they buried her in
the cave of her husband Manasseh; [24] and
the house of Israel mourned her for
seven days. Before she died she distrib-
uted her property to all those who were
next of kin to her husband Manasseh, and
to her own nearest kindred. [25] No one
ever again spread terror among the Isra-
elites during the lifetime of Judith, or for
a long time after her death.

16.21–25 Section A′ (see note on 8.1–16.25), conclusion about Judith. The narrative closes with elements found in Section A (8.1–8). Both include the information that Judith was the widow of Manasseh (8.2; 16.22), that she lived alone in Bethulia on her estate (8.4; 16.22), and that she had servants and property (8.7; 16.21, 24). Both tell of a death: Manasseh dies and is buried (8.2–3); Judith dies and is buried (16.23–24). Both conclude with the public effect of Judith's faith (8.8; 16.25). **16.22** *Many desired to marry her, but she gave herself to no man* is perhaps better translated "many men wanted her, but no man had intercourse with her." Judith practiced celibacy. The motivations of the men are unclear. What is certain is that she chose to continue living in solitude for the rest of her life. **16.23** *One hundred five* years is the length of the Maccabean period (168–63 B.C.E.). *She set her maid free.* Judith's last act balances her first, in which she sent the maid to summon Uzziah, Chabris, and Charmis (8.10). **16.24** *Seven days* is the customary period of mourning for the dead (1 Sam 31.13; 1 Chr 10.12; Sir 22.12). **16.25** *No one ever again spread terror among the Israelites.* Because of what Judith did for the people, they more fully understand their own identity as God's people.

ESTHER

(THE GREEK VERSION CONTAINING THE ADDITIONAL CHAPTERS)

NOTE. The deuterocanonical portions of the book of Esther are several additional passages found in the Greek translation of the Hebrew book of Esther, a translation that differs also in other respects from the Hebrew text (the latter is translated in the NRSV Old Testament). The disordered chapter numbers come from the displacement of the additions to the end of the canonical book of Esther by Jerome in his Latin translation and from the subsequent division of the Bible into chapters by Stephen Langton, who numbered the additions consecutively as though they formed a direct continuation of the Hebrew text. So that the additions may be read in their proper context, the whole of the Greek version is here translated, though certain familiar names are given according to their Hebrew rather than their Greek form; for example, Mordecai and Vashti instead of Mardocheus and Astin. The order followed is that of the Greek text, but the chapter and verse numbers conform to those of the King James or Authorized Version. The additions, conveniently indicated by the letters A–F, are located as follows: A, before 1.1; B, after 3.13; C and D, after 4.17; E, after 8.12; F, after 10.3.

The Two Books Compared

THE BOOK OF ESTHER AS FOUND IN THE GREEK BIBLE (the Septuagint) is significantly longer than the book of Esther in Hebrew. The Greek version contains blocks of material that are referred to as Additions to Esther. This designation suggests that the material was added to an earlier form of Esther, to deal with concerns of Jews whose sensibilities were disturbed by qualities of the older Hebrew story. It is better, however, to leave open the question of whether this material should be understood as corrective additions to an earlier Hebrew Esther or whether the Greek and Hebrew versions of Esther simply reflect different forms of a basic popular story. It is nevertheless useful to assess the impact of the Additions on the basic story and to compare the Greek with the Hebrew Esther.

Contention has surrounded the book of Esther and its canonical status. Perhaps most striking in the Hebrew is the absence of any direct mention of God,

especially in a story about dangers confronting the Jews in an alien setting. Also striking is the apparent neglect, especially by Esther, of aspects of Jewish Torah that came to define what it meant to be a Jew. There are as well a number of points in the story that stretch historical credulity, and the strong note of harsh vengeance wrought by the Jews on their enemies has disturbed some readers. Noteworthy is the central role played by a woman, for spheres of influence and action for women in postexilic Judaism were quite circumscribed.

Additions A–F

God is very present from the opening of the Greek Esther as the author of Mordecai's dream (Addition A). Not only does the righteous nation cry out to God in its affliction, but we are told that what Mordecai saw was "what God had determined to do" (11.12). At the end of the story Mordecai recalls his dream, recognizes its point-by-point fulfillment, and attributes the rescue of his people to God (Addition F). This sense of providential shaping of events in human history, along with imagery envisioning a return of created order to chaos, envelops the story in an apocalyptic interpretative frame. This beginning and conclusion also highlight the importance of Mordecai, as does the account of how he uncovered a plot against the king, was rewarded with service in the court, but earned thereby the enmity of Haman.

Copies of the decrees written in the king's name (Additions B and E) provide historical verisimilitude. The first authorizes the pogrom planned by Haman (Addition B), while the second counters the first by allowing Jews to defend themselves and calls on Persians to support them against their enemies (Addition E). These appear to be the only Additions originally composed in Greek. They serve to characterize both the villain Haman and the malleable king in fine counterpoint. In the first Haman is lauded as "second father" (13.6) to the king, the Jews and their Torah are slandered, and the king's motives are said to be the peace of his kingdom. In the second Haman is vilified, the Jews and Torah are praised, the king's motives are defended, and credit for his enlightenment, Haman's defeat, and the Jews' salvation is attributed to "the living God" (16.16).

Prayers by Mordecai and Esther seeking divine aid (Addition C) assert God's power to save now as in the past. Mordecai is also able to justify his failure to bow before Haman by saying he would grant such respect only to God, and Esther is able to lament her marriage to a Gentile and her difficulties in observing Jewish dietary practices and to express her abhorrence of her present royal estate.

Esther's reception when she appears unbidden before the king (Addition D) is more dramatic than in the Hebrew Esther. The Greek version also attributes the king's change of spirit to God, and 6.1 states that "the Lord took sleep from the king," making the deity the force behind these climaxes on the road to salvation for the Jews.

The tone of vengeance is lessened by the absence in the Greek of any trace of Esth 9.5 in the Hebrew ("so the Jews struck down all their enemies . . ."). The

number slain in the provinces is also reduced by sixty thousand in the Greek of 9.16. Thus in both the Additions and in other small variations, the Greek Esther represents a distinct story that differs qualitatively from the Hebrew. Originating in Jewish circles whose theology and praxis differed from those who produced and preserved the Hebrew Esther, the Greek Esther dates from the last two centuries B.C.E. Within Christian tradition the Additions took on something of a life of their own, being either set at the end of a translation of the Hebrew Esther or gathered separately in the Protestant Apocrypha.

The notes focus on the Additions and on differences between the Greek and Hebrew versions. For fuller notes on the common material, see Esther in the Old Testament. *W. Lee Humphreys*

Addition A

Mordecai's Dream

11 [a] 2 In the second year of the reign of Artaxerxes the Great, on the first day of Nisan, Mordecai son of Jair son of Shimei[b] son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, had a dream. 3 He was a Jew living in the city of Susa, a great man, serving in the court of the king. 4 He was one of the captives whom King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had brought from Jerusalem with King Jeconiah of Judea. And this was his dream: 5 Noises[c] and confusion, thunders and earthquake, tumult on the earth! 6 Then two great dragons came forward, both ready to fight, and they roared terribly. 7 At their roaring every nation prepared for war, to fight against the righteous nation. 8 It was a day of darkness and gloom, of tribulation and distress, affliction and great tumult on the earth! 9 And the whole righteous nation was troubled; they feared the evils that threatened them,[d] and were ready to perish. 10 Then they cried out to God; and at their outcry, as though from a tiny spring, there came a great river, with abundant water; 11 light came, and the sun rose, and the lowly were exalted and devoured those held in honor.

12 Mordecai saw in this dream what

a Chapters 11.2—12.6 correspond to chapter A 1-17 in some translations. b Gk *Semeios*
c Or *Voices* d Gk *their own evils*

11.2–12 Mordecai's dream (Addition A) provides a divine but cryptic preview of what will take place. **11.2** *Artaxerxes*, called Ahasuerus in the Hebrew Esther, is fully introduced in 1.1–9. *Nisan* (March–April) is the first month of the Jewish year. *Mordecai*, whose name is built upon "Marduk," the Babylonian deity, is introduced as a Benjaminite of the line of Saul, Israel's first king. For *Shimei*, see 2 Sam 16.5–14; 19.16–23; 1 Kings 2.8, 36–46; for *Kish*, Saul's father, see 1 Sam 9.1. Generations are telescoped, as *son of* can mean "descendant of." Mordecai is introduced again in 2.5. **11.3** In the Greek Esther Mordecai is an important figure in the royal court from the outset. Cf. the Hebrew, which says he "was sitting at the king's gate" (2.19; 3.2). **11.4** To have Mordecai exiled by *Nebuchadnezzar* in 597 B.C.E. along with *Jeconiah* (2 Kings 24.6–17), elsewhere called Jehoiachin, poses chronological problems, for Artaxerxes I reigned from 465 to 424 B.C.E. **11.5–6** A potential return of created order to chaos is tersely presented here. What in the Hebrew Esther is a conflict sparked by contention between court officials is in this dream transposed into a cosmic conflict between Israel and all other nations, indeed between righteous order and chaos. **11.7** The *righteous nation* is clearly Israel. **11.8** Comparison with Joel 2.2, 10–11 gives this dream an apocalyptic quality. **11.10** *God*. This is the first of many references to the deity in the Greek Esther, in marked contrast to the Hebrew which makes no direct mention of the deity. The *tiny spring* is Esther. **11.12** The general import of this dream, stressing God's shaping of human history, seems clear to Mordecai, but the details will be apparent only at the end (10.4–12).

God had determined to do, and after he awoke he had it on his mind, seeking all day to understand it in every detail.

A Plot Against the King

12 Now Mordecai took his rest in the courtyard with Gabatha and Tharra, the two eunuchs of the king who kept watch in the courtyard. 2 He overheard their conversation and inquired into their purposes, and learned that they were preparing to lay hands on King Artaxerxes; and he informed the king concerning them. 3 Then the king examined the two eunuchs, and after they had confessed it, they were led away to execution. 4 The king made a permanent record of these things, and Mordecai wrote an account of them. 5 And the king ordered Mordecai to serve in the court, and rewarded him for these things. 6 But Haman son of Hammedatha, a Bougean, who was in great honor with the king, determined to injure Mordecai and his people because of the two eunuchs of the king.

END OF ADDITION A

Artaxerxes' Banquet

1 It was after this that the following things happened in the days of Artaxerxes, the same Artaxerxes who ruled over one hundred twenty-seven provinces from India to Ethiopia.[e] 2 In those days, when King Artaxerxes was enthroned in the city of Susa, 3 in the third year of his reign, he gave a banquet for his Friends and other persons of various nations, the Persians and Median nobles, and the governors of the provinces. 4 After this, when he had displayed to them the riches of his kingdom and the splendor of his bountiful celebration during the course of one hundred eighty days, 5 at the end of the festivity[f] the king gave a drinking party for the people of various nations who lived in the city. This was held for six days in the courtyard of the royal palace, 6 which was adorned with curtains of fine linen and cotton, held by cords of purple linen attached to gold and silver blocks on pillars of marble and other stones. Gold and silver couches were placed on a mosaic floor of emerald, mother-of-pearl, and marble. There were coverings of gauze, embroidered in various colors, with roses arranged around them. 7 The cups were of gold and silver, and a miniature cup was displayed, made of ruby, worth thirty thousand talents. There was abundant sweet wine, such as the king himself drank. 8 The drinking was not according to a fixed rule; but the king wished to have it so, and he commanded his stewards to comply with his pleasure and with that of the guests.

9 Meanwhile, Queen Vashti[g] gave a drinking party for the women in the palace where King Artaxerxes was.

Dismissal of Queen Vashti

10 On the seventh day, when the king was in good humor, he told Haman, Bazan, Tharra, Boraze, Zatholtha, Abataza, and Tharaba, the seven eunuchs who served King Artaxerxes, 11 to escort the queen to him in order to proclaim her as queen and to place the diadem on her head, and to have her display her beauty to all the governors and the people of various nations, for she was indeed a beautiful woman. 12 But Queen Vashti[g] refused to obey him and would not come with the eunuchs. This offended the king and he became furious. 13 He said to his Friends,

e Other ancient authorities lack *to Ethiopia*
f Gk *marriage feast* *g* Gk *Astin*

12.1–6 A plot against the king. **12.1** *Eunuchs*, men who had been castrated, were ever-present functionaries in the Persian court. **12.5** Cf. 2.21–23, where the events are noted but Mordecai is not *rewarded*. **12.6** *Haman*, the villain of this story, is motivated to act against Mordecai because of links with the executed eunuchs. The meaning of *Bougean* is not clear; the substitution of "Macedonian" in some Greek texts (see also 16.10) and the Hebrew's use of "Agagite" (3.1), linking him with Israel's enemies the Amalakites, suggest the term is derogatory.

1.1–9 Artaxerxes and his banquets, along with descriptions of the palace and extent of the empire, set an opulent stage for this story of court intrigue.

1.10–22 Dismissal of Queen Vashti. While summoned not only to display her beauty, as in the Hebrew version, but also to be proclaimed queen and crowned with the diadem, Vashti disobeys the king, sparking a potential crisis from the males' point of view.

"This is how Vashti[h] has answered me.[i]
Give therefore your ruling and judgment
on this matter." 14 Arkesaeus, Sarsa-
thaeus, and Malesear, then the governors
of the Persians and Medes who were clos-
est to the king—Arkesaeus, Sarsathaeus,
and Malesear, who sat beside him in the
chief seats—came to him 15 and told him
what must be done to Queen Vashti[h] for
not obeying the order that the king had
sent her by the eunuchs. 16 Then Mu-
chaeus said to the king and the governors,
"Queen Vashti[h] has insulted not only the
king but also all the king's governors and
officials" 17 (for he had reported to them
what the queen had said and how she had
defied the king). "And just as she defied
King Artaxerxes, 18 so now the other la-
dies who are wives of the Persian and Me-
dian governors, on hearing what she has
said to the king, will likewise dare to insult
their husbands. 19 If therefore it pleases
the king, let him issue a royal decree, in-
scribed in accordance with the laws of the
Medes and Persians so that it may not be
altered, that the queen may no longer
come into his presence; but let the king
give her royal rank to a woman better
than she. 20 Let whatever law the king
enacts be proclaimed in his kingdom, and
thus all women will give honor to their
husbands, rich and poor alike." 21 This
speech pleased the king and the gover-
nors, and the king did as Muchaeus had
recommended. 22 The king sent the de-
cree into all his kingdom, to every prov-
ince in its own language, so that in every
house respect would be shown to every
husband.

Esther Becomes Queen

2 After these things, the king's anger
abated, and he no longer was con-
cerned about Vashti[h] or remembered
what he had said and how he had con-
demned her. 2 Then the king's servants
said, "Let beautiful and virtuous girls be
sought out for the king. 3 The king shall
appoint officers in all the provinces of his
kingdom, and they shall select beautiful
young virgins to be brought to the harem
in Susa, the capital. Let them be entrusted
to the king's eunuch who is in charge of
the women, and let ointments and what-
ever else they need be given them. 4 And
the woman who pleases the king shall be
queen instead of Vashti."[h] This pleased
the king, and he did so.

5 Now there was a Jew in Susa the cap-
ital whose name was Mordecai son of Jair
son of Shimei[j] son of Kish, of the tribe of
Benjamin; 6 he had been taken captive
from Jerusalem among those whom King
Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had cap-
tured. 7 And he had a foster child, the
daughter of his father's brother, Amina-
dab, and her name was Esther. When her
parents died, he brought her up to wom-
anhood as his own. The girl was beautiful
in appearance. 8 So, when the decree of
the king was proclaimed, and many girls
were gathered in Susa the capital in cus-
tody of Gai, Esther also was brought to
Gai, who had custody of the women.
9 The girl pleased him and won his favor,
and he quickly provided her with oint-
ments and her portion of food,[k] as well
as seven maids chosen from the palace; he
treated her and her maids with special fa-
vor in the harem. 10 Now Esther had not
disclosed her people or country, for Mor-
decai had commanded her not to make
it known. 11 And every day Mordecai
walked in the courtyard of the harem, to
see what would happen to Esther.

12 Now the period after which a girl
was to go to the king was twelve months.
During this time the days of beautification
are completed—six months while they are
anointing themselves with oil of myrrh,
and six months with spices and ointments
for women. 13 Then she goes in to the
king; she is handed to the person ap-
pointed, and goes with him from the
harem to the king's palace. 14 In the eve-
ning she enters and in the morning she
departs to the second harem, where Gai
the king's eunuch is in charge of the
women; and she does not go in to the king
again unless she is summoned by name.

15 When the time was fulfilled for Es-
ther daughter of Aminadab, the brother

h Gk *Astin* *i* Gk *Astin has said thus and so*
j Gk *Semeios* *k* Gk lacks *of food*

2.1–18 Esther becomes queen. **2.1** In the Hebrew the king's remembering Vashti launches the search for a replacement; here he forgets her. **2.5–6** A second introduction of Mordecai; see 11.2–4. **2.7** The Greek names *Esther's* father *Aminadab* (cf. the Hebrew's Abihail [2.15]), and fails to mention her Jewish name Hadassah (Esth 2.7). **2.9** Presumably the *portion of food* was

of Mordecai's father, to go in to the king,
she neglected none of the things that Gai,
the eunuch in charge of the women, had
commanded. Now Esther found favor in
the eyes of all who saw her. 16 So Esther
went in to King Artaxerxes in the twelfth
month, which is Adar, in the seventh year
of his reign. 17 And the king loved Esther
and she found favor beyond all the other
virgins, so he put on her the queen's dia-
dem. 18 Then the king gave a banquet last-
ing seven days for all his Friends and the
officers to celebrate his marriage to Es-
ther; and he granted a remission of taxes
to those who were under his rule.

The Plot Discovered

19 Meanwhile Mordecai was serving
in the courtyard. 20 Esther had not dis-
closed her country—such were the in-
structions of Mordecai; but she was to
fear God and keep his laws, just as she
had done when she was with him. So Es-
ther did not change her mode of life.

21 Now the king's eunuchs, who were
chief bodyguards, were angry because of
Mordecai's advancement, and they plot-
ted to kill King Artaxerxes. 22 The matter
became known to Mordecai, and he
warned Esther, who in turn revealed the
plot to the king. 23 He investigated the two
eunuchs and hanged them. Then the king
ordered a memorandum to be deposited
in the royal library in praise of the good-
will shown by Mordecai.

Mordecai Refuses to Do Obeisance

3 After these events King Artaxerxes
promoted Haman son of Hammeda-
tha, a Bougean, advancing him and grant-
ing him precedence over all the king's[l]
Friends. 2 So all who were at court used to
do obeisance to Haman,[m] for so the king
had commanded to be done. Mordecai,
however, did not do obeisance. 3 Then the
king's courtiers said to Mordecai, "Morde-
cai, why do you disobey the king's com-
mand?" 4 Day after day they spoke to him,
but he would not listen to them. Then
they informed Haman that Mordecai was
resisting the king's command. Mordecai
had told them that he was a Jew. 5 So
when Haman learned that Mordecai was
not doing obeisance to him, he became fu-
riously angry, 6 and plotted to destroy all
the Jews under Artaxerxes' rule.

7 In the twelfth year of King Arta-
xerxes Haman[n] came to a decision by
casting lots, taking the days and the
months one by one, to fix on one day to
destroy the whole race of Mordecai. The
lot fell on the fourteenth[o] day of the
month of Adar.

8 Then Haman[n] said to King Arta-
xerxes, "There is a certain nation scat-
tered among the other nations in all your
kingdom; their laws are different from
those of every other nation, and they do
not keep the laws of the king. It is not
expedient for the king to tolerate them.
9 If it pleases the king, let it be decreed
that they are to be destroyed, and I will
pay ten thousand talents of silver into the
king's treasury." 10 So the king took off his
signet ring and gave it to Haman to seal
the decree[p] that was to be written against
the Jews. 11 The king told Haman, "Keep
the money, and do whatever you want
with that nation."

12 So on the thirteenth day of the first
month the king's secretaries were sum-
moned, and in accordance with Haman's
instructions they wrote in the name of
King Artaxerxes to the magistrates and
the governors in every province from In-
dia to Ethiopia. There were one hundred

l Gk *all his* *m* Gk *him* *n* Gk *he* *o* Other ancient witnesses read *thirteenth*; see 8.12
p Gk lacks *the decree*

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not kosher (cf. 14.17). **2.18** This second in a series of feasts marking critical events in the story celebrates Esther's appointment as queen (see 1.10).

2.19–23 The plot discovered. This is a second plot, not a repetition of 12.1–6. **2.20** Unlike in the Hebrew, Mordecai's instructions to Esther include that she is *to fear God and keep his laws* (see 2.10; 14.17). **2.21–23** Mordecai's previous advancement sparks this plot by the chief bodyguards. His role is noted in a *memorandum*, but he is not rewarded (see 6.1–3).

3.1–15 Mordecai's disobedience endangers the Jews. **3.1** The villain *Haman* was first met in 12.6, allied with those involved in the first plot against the king. **3.2–4** Mordecai's refusal is explained in his prayer in 13.12–13; later Jewish tradition said it was because Haman wore idols. **3.8–13** Just as the king did not earlier investigate the case of Vashti, so now he accepts Haman's presentation of the situation without inquiring into his charges.

twenty-seven provinces in all, and the governors were addressed each in his own language. 13 Instructions were sent by couriers throughout all the empire of Artaxerxes to destroy the Jewish people on a given day of the twelfth month, which is Adar, and to plunder their goods.

ADDITION B

The King's Letter

13 [q] This is a copy of the letter: "The Great King, Artaxerxes, writes the following to the governors of the hundred twenty-seven provinces from India to Ethiopia and to the officials under them:

2 "Having become ruler of many nations and master of the whole world (not elated with presumption of authority but always acting reasonably and with kindness), I have determined to settle the lives of my subjects in lasting tranquility and, in order to make my kingdom peaceable and open to travel throughout all its extent, to restore the peace desired by all people.

3 "When I asked my counselors how this might be accomplished, Haman—who excels among us in sound judgment, and is distinguished for his unchanging goodwill and steadfast fidelity, and has attained the second place in the kingdom—4 pointed out to us that among all the nations in the world there is scattered a certain hostile people, who have laws contrary to those of every nation and continually disregard the ordinances of kings, so that the unifying of the kingdom that we honorably intend cannot be brought about. 5 We understand that this people, and it alone, stands constantly in opposition to every nation, perversely following a strange manner of life and laws, and is ill-disposed to our government, doing all the harm they can so that our kingdom may not attain stability.

6 "Therefore we have decreed that those indicated to you in the letters written by Haman, who is in charge of affairs and is our second father, shall all—wives and children included—be utterly destroyed by the swords of their enemies, without pity or restraint, on the fourteenth day of the twelfth month, Adar, of this present year, 7 so that those who have long been hostile and remain so may in a single day go down in violence to Hades, and leave our government completely secure and untroubled hereafter."

END OF ADDITION B

3 14 Copies of the document were posted in every province, and all the nations were ordered to be prepared for that day. 15 The matter was expedited also in Susa. And while the king and Haman caroused together, the city of Susa[r] was thrown into confusion.

Mordecai Seeks Esther's Aid

4 When Mordecai learned of all that had been done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth, and sprinkled himself with ashes; then he rushed through the street of the city, shouting loudly: "An innocent nation is being destroyed!" 2 He got as far as the king's gate, and there he stopped, because no one was allowed to enter the courtyard clothed in sackcloth and ashes. 3 And in every province where the king's proclamation had been posted there was a loud cry of mourning and lamentation among the Jews, and they put on sackcloth and ashes. 4 When the queen's[s] maids and eunuchs came and told her, she was deeply troubled by what she heard had happened, and sent

q Chapter 13.1-7 corresponds to chapter B 1-7 in some translations. *r* Gk *the city* *s* Gk *When her*

13.1–7 The bombastic quality of the king's letter (Addition B) and its claims contrast with the opaqueness shown by him up to now. **13.3** *I asked . . . accomplished.* The king here assumes the initiative in seeking advice leading to the pogrom. This description of Haman contrasts with how readers will experience him and how the king will in time describe him in 16.1–14. **13.4–5** Jewish Torah is said here not only to set Jews apart from others, but to set them against other nations. **13.6** On Haman as the king's *second father*, cf. Joseph's relationship to Pharaoh in Gen 45.8. The Jews are to be *utterly destroyed*, lit. "destroyed with root and branch." **13.7** *Hades* is the place of the dead, not necessarily of eternal punishment.

4.1–17 Mordecai seeks the aid of Esther.

some clothes to Mordecai to put on instead
of sackcloth; but he would not consent.
5 Then Esther summoned Hachratheus,
the eunuch who attended her, and or-
dered him to get accurate information for
her from Mordecai.[t]
7 So Mordecai told him what had hap-
pened and how Haman had promised to
pay ten thousand talents into the royal
treasury to bring about the destruction of
the Jews. 8 He also gave him a copy of
what had been posted in Susa for their
destruction, to show to Esther; and he
told him to charge her to go in to the king
and plead for his favor in behalf of the
people. "Remember," he said, "the days
when you were an ordinary person, being
brought up under my care—for Haman,
who stands next to the king, has spoken
against us and demands our death. Call
upon the Lord; then speak to the king in
our behalf, and save us from death."
9 Hachratheus went in and told Es-
ther all these things. 10 And she said to
him, "Go to Mordecai and say, 11 'All na-
tions of the empire know that if any man
or woman goes to the king inside the in-
ner court without being called, there is no
escape for that person. Only the one to
whom the king stretches out the golden
scepter is safe—and it is now thirty days
since I was called to go to the king.' "
12 When Hachratheus delivered her
entire message to Mordecai, 13 Mordecai
told him to go back and say to her, "Es-
ther, do not say to yourself that you alone
among all the Jews will escape alive. 14 For
if you keep quiet at such a time as this,
help and protection will come to the Jews
from another quarter, but you and your
father's family will perish. Yet, who knows
whether it was not for such a time as this
that you were made queen?" 15 Then Es-
ther gave the messenger this answer to
take back to Mordecai: 16 "Go and gather
all the Jews who are in Susa and fast on
my behalf; for three days and nights do
not eat or drink, and my maids and I will
also go without food. After that I will go
to the king, contrary to the law, even if I
must die." 17 So Mordecai went away and
did what Esther had told him to do.

Addition C

Mordecai's Prayer

13 8[u] Then Mordecai[v] prayed to the
Lord, calling to remembrance
all the works of the Lord.
9 He said, "O Lord, Lord, you rule as
King over all things, for the universe is in
your power and there is no one who can
oppose you when it is your will to save
Israel, 10 for you have made heaven and
earth and every wonderful thing under
heaven. 11 You are Lord of all, and there
is no one who can resist you, the Lord.
12 You know all things; you know,
O Lord, that it was not in insolence or
pride or for any love of glory that I did
this, and refused to bow down to this
proud Haman; 13 for I would have been
willing to kiss the soles of his feet to save
Israel! 14 But I did this so that I might not
set human glory above the glory of God,
and I will not bow down to anyone but
you, who are my Lord; and I will not do
these things in pride. 15 And now, O Lord
God and King, God of Abraham, spare
your people; for the eyes of our foes are
upon us[w] to annihilate us, and they desire

t Other ancient witnesses add *6 So Hachratheus went out to Mordecai in the street of the city opposite the city gate.* u Chapters 13.8—15.16 correspond to chapters C 1-30 and D 1-16 in some translations.
v Gk *he* w Gk *for they are eying us*

4.8 Unlike in the Hebrew, Mordecai's actual words to Esther are cited, including his request that she *call upon the Lord* as well as approach the king. **4.11** Whether or not this security precaution reflects actual Persian custom, it serves to heighten the narrative tension. **4.16** Initiative now passes to Esther, but not before Mordecai and she each offer prayers to their God.

13.8–18 Mordecai's prayer (Addition C). After appearing twice in this introduction, the word *Lord* appears eight times in the prayer, underscoring its themes of divine power to save and human reliance on that power. **13.9–11** The prayer opens with praise of the deity as King, Creator, able to save Israel, one whom none can resist. **13.12–14** A confession of innocence follows in which Mordecai explains why he did not bow down to Haman. Elsewhere in the Bible Jews are depicted bowing down before kings and others (Gen 23.7; 42.6; 2 Sam 14.4; 1 Kings 1.16), and in the Diaspora Jews, like others, showed respect in this way before authorities. **13.15–17** Petition follows, in which the deity's relationship with Abraham, the election of Israel, and the exodus are all recalled.

to destroy the inheritance that has been
yours from the beginning. 16 Do not ne-
glect your portion, which you redeemed
for yourself out of the land of Egypt.
17 Hear my prayer, and have mercy upon
your inheritance; turn our mourning into
feasting that we may live and sing praise
to your name, O Lord; do not destroy the
lips[x] of those who praise you."
18 And all Israel cried out mightily,
for their death was before their eyes.

Esther's Prayer

14 Then Queen Esther, seized with
deadly anxiety, fled to the Lord.
2 She took off her splendid apparel and
put on the garments of distress and
mourning, and instead of costly per-
fumes she covered her head with ashes
and dung, and she utterly humbled her
body; every part that she loved to adorn
she covered with her tangled hair. 3 She
prayed to the Lord God of Israel, and
said: "O my Lord, you only are our king;
help me, who am alone and have no
helper but you, 4 for my danger is in my
hand. 5 Ever since I was born I have heard
in the tribe of my family that you,
O Lord, took Israel out of all the nations,
and our ancestors from among all their
forebears, for an everlasting inheritance,
and that you did for them all that you
promised. 6 And now we have sinned be-
fore you, and you have handed us over to
our enemies 7 because we glorified their
gods. You are righteous, O Lord! 8 And
now they are not satisfied that we are in
bitter slavery, but they have covenanted
with their idols 9 to abolish what your
mouth has ordained, and to destroy your
inheritance, to stop the mouths of those
who praise you and to quench your altar
and the glory of your house, 10 to open
the mouths of the nations for the praise of
vain idols, and to magnify forever a mor-
tal king.
11 "O Lord, do not surrender your
scepter to what has no being; and do not
let them laugh at our downfall; but turn
their plan against them, and make an ex-
ample of him who began this against us.
12 Remember, O Lord; make yourself
known in this time of our affliction, and
give me courage, O King of the gods and
Master of all dominion! 13 Put eloquent
speech in my mouth before the lion, and
turn his heart to hate the man who is
fighting against us, so that there may be
an end of him and those who agree with
him. 14 But save us by your hand, and
help me, who am alone and have no
helper but you, O Lord. 15 You have
knowledge of all things, and you know
that I hate the splendor of the wicked and
abhor the bed of the uncircumcised and
of any alien. 16 You know my necessity—
that I abhor the sign of my proud posi-
tion, which is upon my head on days when
I appear in public. I abhor it like a filthy
rag, and I do not wear it on the days when
I am at leisure. 17 And your servant has
not eaten at Haman's table, and I have not
honored the king's feast or drunk the
wine of libations. 18 Your servant has had
no joy since the day that I was brought
here until now, except in you, O Lord
God of Abraham. 19 O God, whose might

x Gk *mouth*

14.1–19 Esther's prayer. Esther's deeds, like her words, are more dramatic and given in fuller detail than Mordecai's, as is appropriate for the one who now acts to save her people. Praise and petition intermix in Esther's prayer. **14.2** *Ashes and dung* nicely contrasts Esther's present distress with her royal estate. **14.5** Israel's special relationship and history with God is the basis for her hope. **14.6–7** These sins are specified only here and play no part in the story. **14.8–10** This issue of worshiping God or pagan idols and even mortal kings also appears in Judith, recalling a basic theme in Isa 40–55 and other diaspora literature. **14.9** Jews in Diaspora, as well as the homeland, were concerned for the welfare of the temple in Jerusalem. **14.11** *What has no being.* Pagan gods are not simply ineffective—they do not exist. **14.12–19** From prayer for her people Esther now turns to prayer for herself, seeking support and strength in what she is about to do and understanding for her difficult position as a Jew in this foreign court. **14.12** Referring to God as *King* and *Master*, she seeks aid in going before the Persian king and master of the empire. **14.15** This appears a defense of her violation of strictures against marriage to non-Jews as in Deut 7.3–4 and especially characteristic of the reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah (Ezra 10.2; Neh 13.23–27). **14.16** *Filthy rag* is lit. "menstruous rag," expressing in a strikingly sexist image the uncleanness of her royal attire (see Lev 15.19–24). **14.17** *Not eaten at Haman's table.* Esther does all she can to avoid nonkosher food (cf. Dan 1.8–16).

is over all, hear the voice of the despairing, and save us from the hands of evildoers. And save me from my fear!"

END OF ADDITION C

ADDITION D

Esther Is Received by the King

15 On the third day, when she ended her prayer, she took off the garments in which she had worshiped, and arrayed herself in splendid attire. 2 Then, majestically adorned, after invoking the aid of the all-seeing God and Savior, she took two maids with her; 3 on one she leaned gently for support, 4 while the other followed, carrying her train. 5 She was radiant with perfect beauty, and she looked happy, as if beloved, but her heart was frozen with fear. 6 When she had gone through all the doors, she stood before the king. He was seated on his royal throne, clothed in the full array of his majesty, all covered with gold and precious stones. He was most terrifying.

7 Lifting his face, flushed with splendor, he looked at her in fierce anger. The queen faltered, and turned pale and faint, and collapsed on the head of the maid who went in front of her. 8 Then God changed the spirit of the king to gentleness, and in alarm he sprang from his throne and took her in his arms until she came to herself. He comforted her with soothing words, and said to her, 9 "What is it, Esther? I am your husband.[y] Take courage; 10 You shall not die, for our law applies only to our subjects.[z] Come near."

11 Then he raised the golden scepter and touched her neck with it; 12 he embraced her, and said, "Speak to me." 13 She said to him, "I saw you, my lord, like an angel of God, and my heart was shaken with fear at your glory. 14 For you are wonderful, my lord, and your countenance is full of grace." 15 And while she was speaking, she fainted and fell. 16 Then the king was agitated, and all his servants tried to comfort her.

END OF ADDITION D

5[a] 3 The king said to her, "What do you wish, Esther? What is your request? It shall be given you, even to half of my kingdom." 4 And Esther said, "Today is a special day for me. If it pleases the king, let him and Haman come to the dinner that I shall prepare today." 5 Then the king said, "Bring Haman quickly, so that we may do as Esther desires." So they both came to the dinner that Esther had spoken about. 6 While they were drinking wine, the king said to Esther, "What is it, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you." 7 She said, "My petition and request is: 8 if I have found favor in the sight of the king, let the king and Haman come to the dinner that I shall prepare them, and tomorrow I will do as I have done today."

Haman's Plot Against Mordecai

9 So Haman went out from the king joyful and glad of heart. But when he saw Mordecai the Jew in the courtyard, he was filled with anger. 10 Nevertheless, he went home and summoned his friends and his wife Zosara. 11 And he told them about his riches and the honor that the king had bestowed on him, and how he had advanced him to be the first in the kingdom.

y Gk *brother* *z* Meaning of Gk uncertain
a In Greek, Chapter D replaces verses 1 and 2 in Hebrew.

15.1–5.8 Esther is received by the king. The Greek Esther presents this initial climax in a much more dramatic manner than the Hebrew, contrasting Esther's inner fear with her outer calm and radiance and her vulnerability with the terrifying splendor of the king. **15.7** In the face of the king's initial anger Esther's fainting need not be a clever act on her part to change his attitude (see v. 15). **15.8** *God . . . to gentleness.* As earlier in the Greek form of the story, God is the ultimate mover of events and even the hearts of kings (cf. 11.12). **15.9–14** The king's willingness to accept and align Esther with himself provokes her laudatory praise of him, echoing what one might say of a deity. Cf. what she said in her prayer (14.10). Several times David is said to be "like an angel of God" (1 Sam 29.9; 2 Sam 14.17, 20; 19.27). **5.3–8** The motive for Esther's delay in requesting that her people be saved, even though she clearly has won royal favor, is not clear, but it heightens the tension and allows space for further complications.

5.9–14 Haman's plot against Mordecai. The apparent honor of being included in Esther's dinner clouds Haman's judgment, causing him to seek to hasten Mordecai's destruction and later to

12 And Haman said, "The queen did not
invite anyone to the dinner with the king
except me; and I am invited again tomor-
row. 13 But these things give me no plea-
sure as long as I see Mordecai the Jew in
the courtyard." 14 His wife Zosara and his
friends said to him, "Let a gallows be
made, fifty cubits high, and in the morn-
ing tell the king to have Mordecai hanged
on it. Then, go merrily with the king to
the dinner." This advice pleased Haman,
and so the gallows was prepared.

Mordecai's Reward from the King

6 That night the Lord took sleep from
the king, so he gave orders to his
secretary to bring the book of daily
records, and to read to him. 2 He found
the words written about Mordecai, how he
had told the king about the two royal eu-
nuchs who were on guard and sought to
lay hands on King Artaxerxes. 3 The king
said, "What honor or dignity did we be-
stow on Mordecai?" The king's servants
said, "You have not done anything for
him." 4 While the king was inquiring
about the goodwill shown by Mordecai,
Haman was in the courtyard. The king
asked, "Who is in the courtyard?" Now
Haman had come to speak to the king
about hanging Mordecai on the gallows
that he had prepared. 5 The servants of
the king answered, "Haman is standing in
the courtyard." And the king said, "Sum-
mon him." 6 Then the king said to Ha-
man, "What shall I do for the person
whom I wish to honor?" And Haman said
to himself, "Whom would the king wish to
honor more than me?" 7 So he said to the
king, "For a person whom the king wishes
to honor, 8 let the king's servants bring
out the fine linen robe that the king has
worn, and the horse on which the king
rides, 9 and let both be given to one of the
king's honored Friends, and let him robe
the person whom the king loves and
mount him on the horse, and let it be pro-
claimed through the open square of the
city, saying, 'Thus shall it be done to ev-
eryone whom the king honors.'" 10 Then
the king said to Haman, "You have made
an excellent suggestion! Do just as you
have said for Mordecai the Jew, who is on
duty in the courtyard. And let nothing be
omitted from what you have proposed."
11 So Haman got the robe and the horse;
he put the robe on Mordecai and made
him ride through the open square of the
city, proclaiming, "Thus shall it be done
to everyone whom the king wishes to
honor." 12 Then Mordecai returned to the
courtyard, and Haman hurried back to
his house, mourning and with his head
covered. 13 Haman told his wife Zosara
and his friends what had befallen him.
His friends and his wife said to him, "If
Mordecai is of the Jewish people, and you
have begun to be humiliated before him,
you will surely fall. You will not be able to
defend yourself, because the living God is
with him."

Haman at Esther's Banquet

14 While they were still talking, the
eunuchs arrived and hurriedly brought
Haman to the banquet that Esther had
7 prepared. 1 So the king and Haman
went in to drink with the queen. 2 And
the second day, as they were drinking
wine, the king said, "What is it, Queen
Esther? What is your petition and what is
your request? It shall be granted to you,
even to half of my kingdom." 3 She an-
swered and said, "If I have found favor
with the king, let my life be granted me at
my petition, and my people at my request.
4 For we have been sold, I and my people,
to be destroyed, plundered, and made
slaves—we and our children—male and
female slaves. This has come to my knowl-
edge. Our antagonist brings shame on[b]
the king's court." 5 Then the king said,
"Who is the person that would dare to do

b Gk *is not worthy of*

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misconstrue the king's intent (6.6). **5.14** The exaggerated height of the gallows (*fifty cubits*, 75 feet!) accents Haman's hatred.

6.1–13 Mordecai's reward from the king. **6.1** *The Lord took sleep from the king.* Unlike in the Hebrew, royal insomnia is clearly caused by the deity. **6.2** The reference is to the second plot of 2.21–23, not 12.1–6. **6.13** Wise after the events, Haman's wife and friends interpret this second climactic reversal as God's work and a clear sign of Haman's fall.

6.14–7.6 Haman at Esther's banquet. Any hopes that Haman's fortunes might turn again at Esther's second dinner are quickly dashed as Esther reveals to the king both her people's plight and its cause.

this thing?" 6 Esther said, "Our enemy is this evil man Haman!" At this, Haman was terrified in the presence of the king and queen.

Punishment of Haman

7 The king rose from the banquet and went into the garden, and Haman began to beg for his life from the queen, for he saw that he was in serious trouble. 8 When the king returned from the garden, Haman had thrown himself on the couch, pleading with the queen. The king said, "Will he dare even assault my wife in my own house?" Haman, when he heard, turned away his face. 9 Then Bugathan, one of the eunuchs, said to the king, "Look, Haman has even prepared a gallows for Mordecai, who gave information of concern to the king; it is standing at Haman's house, a gallows fifty cubits high." So the king said, "Let Haman be hanged on that." 10 So Haman was hanged on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. With that the anger of the king abated.

Royal Favor Shown the Jews

8 On that very day King Artaxerxes granted to Esther all the property of the persecutor[c] Haman. Mordecai was summoned by the king, for Esther had told the king[d] that he was related to her. 2 The king took the ring that had been taken from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai; and Esther set Mordecai over everything that had been Haman's.

3 Then she spoke once again to the king and, falling at his feet, she asked him to avert all the evil that Haman had planned against the Jews. 4 The king extended his golden scepter to Esther, and she rose and stood before the king. 5 Esther said, "If it pleases you, and if I have found favor, let an order be sent rescinding the letters that Haman wrote and sent to destroy the Jews in your kingdom. 6 How can I look on the ruin of my people? How can I be safe if my ancestral nation[e] is destroyed?" 7 The king said to Esther, "Now that I[f] have granted all of Haman's property to you and have hanged him on a tree because he acted against the Jews, what else do you request? 8 Write in my name what you think best and seal it with my ring; for whatever is written at the king's command and sealed with my ring cannot be contravened."

9 The secretaries were summoned on the twenty-third day of the first month, that is, Nisan, in the same year; and all that he commanded with respect to the Jews was given in writing to the administrators and governors of the provinces from India to Ethiopia, one hundred twenty-seven provinces, to each province in its own language. 10 The edict was written[g] with the king's authority and sealed with his ring, and sent out by couriers. 11 He ordered the Jews in every city to observe their own laws, to defend themselves, and to act as they wished against their opponents and enemies 12 on a certain day, the thirteenth of the twelfth month, which is Adar, throughout all the kingdom of Artaxerxes.

ADDITION E

The Decree of Artaxerxes

16[h] The following is a copy of this letter:

"The Great King, Artaxerxes, to the governors of the provinces from India to Ethiopia, one hundred twenty-seven provinces, and to those who are loyal to our government, greetings.

2 "Many people, the more they are honored with the most generous kindness

c Gk *slanderer* d Gk *him* e Gk *country*
f Gk *If I* g Gk *It was written* h Chapter 16.1-24 corresponds to chapter E 1-24 in some translations.

7.7–10 Punishment of Haman. **7.8** Ironically, Haman's intent is here misunderstood by the king. **7.9–10** Ironic reversal of intent and result continues as measure-for-measure justice is executed when Haman is *hanged on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai.*

8.1–17 Royal favor shown the Jews. The reversals are completed as Mordecai assumes the position and estate of Haman, and, in language that recalls 3.12–14, a decree allowing the Jews to defend themselves counters the decree issued by Haman.

16.1–24 The decree of Artaxerxes (Addition E). The earlier decree lauded Haman and vilified the Jews; this decree reverses this characterization of each. **16.2–6** The decree opens

of their benefactors, the more proud do they become, 3 and not only seek to injure our subjects, but in their inability to stand prosperity, they even undertake to scheme against their own benefactors. 4 They not only take away thankfulness from others, but, carried away by the boasts of those who know nothing of goodness, they even assume that they will escape the evil-hating justice of God, who always sees everything. 5 And often many of those who are set in places of authority have been made in part responsible for the shedding of innocent blood, and have been involved in irremediable calamities, by the persuasion of friends who have been entrusted with the administration of public affairs, 6 when these persons by the false trickery of their evil natures beguile the sincere goodwill of their sovereigns.

7 "What has been wickedly accomplished through the pestilent behavior of those who exercise authority unworthily can be seen, not so much from the more ancient records that we hand on, as from investigation of matters close at hand.[i] 8 In the future we will take care to render our kingdom quiet and peaceable for all, 9 by changing our methods and always judging what comes before our eyes with more equitable consideration. 10 For Haman son of Hammedatha, a Macedonian (really an alien to the Persian blood, and quite devoid of our kindliness), having become our guest, 11 enjoyed so fully the goodwill that we have for every nation that he was called our father and was continually bowed down to by all as the person second to the royal throne. 12 But, unable to restrain his arrogance, he undertook to deprive us of our kingdom and our life,[j] 13 and with intricate craft and deceit asked for the destruction of Mordecai, our savior and perpetual benefactor, and of Esther, the blameless partner of our kingdom, together with their whole nation. 14 He thought that by these methods he would catch us undefended and would transfer the kingdom of the Persians to the Macedonians.

15 "But we find that the Jews, who were consigned to annihilation by this thrice-accursed man, are not evildoers, but are governed by most righteous laws 16 and are children of the living God, most high, most mighty,[k] who has directed the kingdom both for us and for our ancestors in the most excellent order.

17 "You will therefore do well not to put in execution the letters sent by Haman son of Hammedatha, 18 since he, the one who did these things, has been hanged at the gate of Susa with all his household—for God, who rules over all things, has speedily inflicted on him the punishment that he deserved.

19 "Therefore post a copy of this letter publicly in every place, and permit the Jews to live under their own laws. 20 And give them reinforcements, so that on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, Adar, on that very day, they may defend themselves against those who attack them at the time of oppression. 21 For God, who rules over all things, has made this day to be a joy for his chosen people instead of a day of destruction for them.

i Gk *matters beside* (your) *feet* *j* Gk *our spirit*
k Gk *greatest*

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with a general lesson drawn from this experience about pride, loyalty, gratitude, and deceit. **16.4** Even the king now acknowledges that human plans stand under divine judgment. **16.5–6** So far the king asserts his own innocence: he was deceived by one he trusted as friend. **16.7–16** The general lesson of vv. 1–16 is now brought to the immediate events at hand. **16.7** *Ancient records* are possibly monuments and inscriptions available for all to consult. **16.8–9** The king almost admits his guilt, or at least his negligence. His motives remain, as he stated in 13.2, the welfare and peace of the kingdom. **16.10** *Macedonian* is a reproach; cf. *Bougean* in 12.6. **16.11–13** The alien Haman, who was valued as father to the king (13.6), is contrasted with the aliens Mordecai, who acted truly as royal *benefactor* and *savior*, and Esther, who is recognized as a *blameless partner* in the rule of the empire (see 15.9). **16.14** That treason, not revenge for slighted honor, might have motivated Haman, suggests that this is the king's view of matters, in contrast to how Mordecai and Esther would perceive Haman's plot against their coreligionists. **16.15–16** Here and in vv. 18, 21 the king again acknowledges the guiding hand of the living God, who rules all things (cf. Nebuchadnezzar in Dan 4.34–37; Cyrus in Ezra 1.2). The Torah of the Jews is declared most righteous, anticipating permission granted to the Jews (v. 19) to live by it. **16.17–20** The king cannot annul the earlier decree but can align himself with the Jews and allow them to defend themselves. **16.21** The desingation *chosen people* carries echoes of the

22 "Therefore you shall observe this
with all good cheer as a notable day
among your commemorative festivals,
23 so that both now and hereafter it may
represent deliverance for you[l] and the
loyal Persians, but that it may be a re-
minder of destruction for those who plot
against us.
24 "Every city and country, without
exception, that does not act accordingly
shall be destroyed in wrath with spear and
fire. It shall be made not only impassable
for human beings, but also most hateful
to wild animals and birds for all time.

END OF ADDITION E

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8 13 "Let copies of the decree be posted
conspicuously in all the kingdom,
and let all the Jews be ready on that day
to fight against their enemies."
14 So the messengers on horseback set
out with all speed to perform what the
king had commanded; and the decree was
published also in Susa. 15 Mordecai went
out dressed in the royal robe and wearing
a gold crown and a turban of purple
linen. The people in Susa rejoiced on see-
ing him. 16 And the Jews had light and
gladness 17 in every city and province
wherever the decree was published; wher-
ever the proclamation was made, the Jews
had joy and gladness, a banquet and a
holiday. And many of the Gentiles were
circumcised and became Jews out of fear
of the Jews.

Victory of the Jews

9 Now on the thirteenth day of the
twelfth month, which is Adar,
the decree written by the king arrived.
2 On that same day the enemies of the
Jews perished; no one resisted, be-
cause they feared them. 3 The chief pro-
vincial governors, the princes, and the
royal secretaries were paying honor to the
Jews, because fear of Mordecai weighed
upon them. 4 The king's decree required
that Mordecai's name be held in honor
throughout the kingdom.[m] 6 Now in the
city of Susa the Jews killed five hundred
people, 7 including Pharsannestain, Del-
phon, Phasga, 8 Pharadatha, Barea,
Sarbacha, 9 Marmasima, Aruphaeus,
Arsaeus, Zabutheus, 10 the ten sons of Ha-
man son of Hammedatha, the Bougean,
the enemy of the Jews—and they in-
dulged[n] themselves in plunder.
11 That very day the number of those
killed in Susa was reported to the king.
12 The king said to Esther, "In Susa, the
capital, the Jews have destroyed five hun-
dred people. What do you suppose they
have done in the surrounding country-
side? Whatever more you ask will be done
for you." 13 And Esther said to the king,
"Let the Jews be allowed to do the same
tomorrow. Also, hang up the bodies of
Haman's ten sons." 14 So he permitted this
to be done, and handed over to the Jews
of the city the bodies of Haman's sons to
hang up. 15 The Jews who were in Susa
gathered on the fourteenth and killed
three hundred people, but took no
plunder.
16 Now the other Jews in the kingdom
gathered to defend themselves, and got
relief from their enemies. They destroyed
fifteen thousand of them, but did not en-
gage in plunder. 17 On the fourteenth day
they rested and made that same day a day
of rest, celebrating it with joy and glad-
ness. 18 The Jews who were in Susa, the
capital, came together also on the four-
teenth, but did not rest. They celebrated
the fifteenth with joy and gladness. 19 On
this account then the Jews who are scat-
tered around the country outside Susa
keep the fourteenth of Adar as a joyful
holiday, and send presents of food to one
another, while those who live in the large
cities keep the fifteenth day of Adar as

l Other ancient authorities read *for us*
m Meaning of Gk uncertain. Some ancient authorities add verse 5, *So the Jews struck down all their enemies with the sword, killing and destroying them, and they did as they pleased to those who hated them.*
n Other ancient authorities read *did not indulge*

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exodus. **16.22–23** Commemoration of the day of deliverance entails celebration for Jews and a sign to Persians, both loyal and otherwise, of the fate of those who plot against the Jews and thereby the king. **8.13** The Greek version's *fight against* is less harsh than the Hebrew's "take revenge." **8.17** Many Persians not only supported the Jews, but actually *were circumcised and became Jews*; cf. the Hebrew version's "professed to be Jews."

9.1–19 Victory of the Jews. The Jews treat

their joyful holiday, also sending presents to one another.

The Festival of Purim

20 Mordecai recorded these things in a book, and sent it to the Jews in the kingdom of Artaxerxes both near and far, 21 telling them that they should keep the fourteenth and fifteenth days of Adar, 22 for on these days the Jews got relief from their enemies. The whole month (namely, Adar), in which their condition had been changed from sorrow into gladness and from a time of distress to a holiday, was to be celebrated as a time for feasting[o] and gladness and for sending presents of food to their friends and to the poor.

23 So the Jews accepted what Mordecai had written to them 24 — how Haman son of Hammedatha, the Macedonian,[p] fought against them, how he made a decree and cast lots[q] to destroy them, 25 and how he went in to the king, telling him to hang Mordecai; but the wicked plot he had devised against the Jews came back upon himself, and he and his sons were hanged. 26 Therefore these days were called "Purim," because of the lots (for in their language this is the word that means "lots"). And so, because of what was written in this letter, and because of what they had experienced in this affair and what had befallen them, Mordecai established this festival,[r] 27 and the Jews took upon themselves, upon their descendants, and upon all who would join them, to observe it without fail.[s] These days of Purim should be a memorial and kept from generation to generation, in every city, family, and country. 28 These days of Purim were to be observed for all time, and the commemoration of them was never to cease among their descendants.

29 Then Queen Esther daughter of Aminadab along with Mordecai the Jew wrote down what they had done, and gave full authority to the letter about Purim.[t] 31 And Mordecai and Queen Esther established this decision on their own responsibility, pledging their own well-being to the plan.[s] 32 Esther established it by a decree forever, and it was written for a memorial.

10 The king levied a tax upon his kingdom both by land and sea. 2 And as for his power and bravery, and the wealth and glory of his kingdom, they were recorded in the annals of the kings of the Persians and the Medes. 3 Mordecai acted with authority on behalf of King Artaxerxes and was great in the kingdom, as well as honored by the Jews. His way of life was such as to make him beloved to his whole nation.

Addition F

Mordecai's Dream Fulfilled

4[u] And Mordecai said, "These things have come from God; 5 for I remember the dream that I had concerning these matters, and none of them has failed to be fulfilled. 6 There was the little spring that became a river, and there was light and sun and abundant water — the river is Esther, whom the king married and made queen. 7 The two dragons are Haman and myself. 8 The nations are those that gathered to destroy the name of the Jews. 9 And my nation, this is Israel, who cried out to God and was saved. The Lord has saved his people; the Lord has rescued us

o Gk *of weddings* *p* Other ancient witnesses read *the Bougean* *q* Gk *a lot* *r* Gk *he established* (it) *s* Meaning of Gk uncertain *t* Verse 30 in Heb is lacking in Gk: *Letters were sent to all the Jews, to the one hundred twenty-seven provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, in words of peace and truth.* *u* Chapter 10.4-13 and 11.1 correspond to chapter F 1-11 in some translations.

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their enemies as they would have been treated by them.

9.20–10.3 The Festival of Purim. The name *Purim* (9.26) is based on the Hebrew word *Pur*, which is related to the Akkadian word for *lot*, used by Haman to determine the day for his pogrom. The emphasis on keeping the feast throughout the generations seems designed to regularize and secure a place in the Jewish calendar for a celebration that was not authorized by Torah and whose legitimacy, therefore, might be doubted.

10.4–13 Mordecai's dream stands fulfilled. **10.4–5** Recalling his dream, Mordecai underscores *God's* action. No part of what was predicted *failed to be fulfilled*, as he briefly details. **10.9** *Signs and wonders* links this story with God's saving events in the history of the Jews and

from all these evils; God has done great
signs and wonders, wonders that have
never happened among the nations.
10 For this purpose he made two lots, one
for the people of God and one for all the
nations, 11 and these two lots came to the
hour and moment and day of decision be-
fore God and among all the nations.
12 And God remembered his people and
vindicated his inheritance. 13 So they will
observe these days in the month of Adar,
on the fourteenth and fifteenth[v] of that
month, with an assembly and joy and
gladness before God, from generation to
generation forever among his people
Israel."

Postscript

11 1 In the fourth year of the reign
of Ptolemy and Cleopatra, Dosith-
eus, who said that he was a priest and a
Levite,[w] and his son Ptolemy brought
to Egypt[x] the preceding Letter about
Purim, which they said was authentic
and had been translated by Lysimachus
son of Ptolemy, one of the residents of
Jerusalem.

END OF ADDITION F

v Other ancient authorities lack *and fifteenth*
w Or *priest, and Levitas* x Cn: Gk *brought in*

especially the exodus. **10.10–11** *Lots* here refers to the fate set by God for Israel and the nations, fulfilled in the time appointed.

11.1 Postscript. Greek texts sometimes contained postscripts or colophons presenting date, author, and assertions of authenticity. This could be especially important for Esther, which existed in different Greek as well as Hebrew forms. Many suggest the *Ptolemy* referred to here is Ptolemy VIII (ca. 114 B.C.E.), although two other Ptolemies were married to a *Cleopatra* and ruled for at least four years. *Dositheus*, *Ptolemy*, and *Lysimachus* are common Greek names; nothing specific can be added to what is claimed here about them. Some take the reference to the *preceding Letter about Purim* to refer not just to the document mentioned in 9.29, but to the Greek Esther to which this postscript is attached.

WISDOM OF SOLOMON

THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON is a hortatory discourse featuring a highly enthusiastic and eulogistic invocation of wisdom. It was written in Greek by a learned and profoundly hellenized Jew of Alexandria after that city's conquest by Rome in 30 B.C.E. The earlier optimism of the Alexandrian Jewish community for a rapprochement with the Greeks and for social and cultural acceptance by them had been replaced by a mounting sense of disillusionment and disappointment. In contrast to the mild criticisms of heathen cults in the earlier *Letter of Aristeas*, in the Wisdom of Solomon the wrathful exhibition of the crimes and corruptions connected with pagan idolatry and the unrestrained attacks on Egyptian animal worship are a clear indication of the complete break with the native Egyptians and Greeks.

Authorship, Language, and Style

The strongest argument for the unity of the Wisdom of Solomon may be elicited from its language and style. In spite of some Hebrew coloring, such as parallelism, Hebraisms, and the simple connection of clauses by conjunctions, the author's Greek is rich and spontaneous, and Jerome's judgment that his style is "redolent of Greek eloquence" is completely justified. The author's writing at times has the light touch of Greek lyric poetry, and he employs a wide array of Greek rhetorical figures. These characteristics, in addition to his many favorite theme words and expressions that recur throughout the book, argue for unity of authorship. The hypothesis that the Wisdom of Solomon is a translation of a Hebrew original is untenable for the same reasons.

Date

There is no consensus regarding the date of the book, and various scholars have placed it anywhere between 250 B.C.E. and 50 C.E. The linguistic evidence points to a period not earlier than that of Augustus (30 B.C.E.). Further considerations

seem to indicate the reign of Gaius "Caligula" (37–41 C.E.) as a likely setting for the book. The apocalyptic vision in which the author describes the annihilation of the wicked with such ferocious passion (5.16–23) could only be called forth by a desperate historical situation in which the security of the Alexandrian Jewish community was threatened by a power against which it was hopeless to put up any serious resistance. The anti-Jewish riots that broke out in Alexandria in 38 C.E. involved just such a situation. Most commentators have correctly assumed an Egyptian origin for the book. The intensity of the author's hatred of the Egyptians undoubtedly reflects the persecution of the Jewish community of Alexandria at the hands of the Greeks aided and abetted by the native Egyptians.

Religious Ideas

The centrality of the teaching on the immortality of the soul represents a new emphasis in Jewish tradition, although it must be seen as part of a continuous development in Hellenistic-Jewish thought. According to *1 Enoch* 102.51, the spirits of the righteous descend to Sheol, but they will ultimately ascend to a life of joy as companions of the host of heaven (cf. *Jubilees* 23.31; *Testament of Asher* 6.5–6). The concept of the preexistent soul found in the Wisdom of Solomon (8.19), on the other hand, may be the earliest attestation of this teaching in Jewish literature.

The central figure striding across the book is *Sophia* or Woman Wisdom, appearing at first under a variety of names (ch. 1) and then gradually coming into sharper focus until she begins (in 6.12) to dominate the stage completely. Then, however, she recedes once again into the background and merges almost imperceptibly with the deity, only suddenly to emerge in full power under one of her alternate titles, that of *Logos*—the Greek word with broad range of meaning from "word" to "speech" to "reason" (18.15). She is no innovation of the author but had already made her appearance as a cosmic figure in Prov 8.22–31 and Job 28.12–28, and has obvious roots in ancient Near Eastern myth.

Wisdom appears again in Sirach (ca. 180 B.C.E.), a Jewish Palestinian work that left its distinct mark on the Wisdom of Solomon. Sirach (especially in 24.1–22) reaches the uneasy compromise of a divine wisdom that pervades the cosmos yet maintains its focus in Zion and in the teachings of the Torah, which thus achieves a new universal significance. In light of this wisdom tradition, it is easy to understand why our author chose the Wisdom figure as mediator of his own message. She was the perfect bridge between the exclusive nationalist tradition of Israel and the universalist philosophical tradition that appealed so strongly to the Jewish youth of Roman Alexandria.

In sketching his own spiritual odyssey, the author confesses to a passion for Sophia that had gripped him from early youth and had led him to cast his lot with her forever. There is no impression here of a mere literary artifice; readers are clearly confronting a genuine religious experience that has enveloped the author's mind and soul and has filled him with the divine presence (8.2–3). His

unbridled love for Wisdom is vividly reflected in his magnificent fivefold description of her essence, in which she is conceived as an eternal emanation of God's power and glory (7.25–26, 29–30).

The author's highly charged language leaves the strong impression that he is very likely alluding to his own experience of union with the wisdom aspect of God. Moreover, he is convinced that it is an experience open to all and offers himself as a living paradigm for others to follow. In detailing his spiritual odyssey, he thus strikes a religious chord new to the Hebrew wisdom writings, echoing a type of religiosity characteristic of the contemporary Isis mysteries in the pagan world and the Dead Sea sect within the Jewish world. In contrast to both, however, he disdains the path of esotericism, constantly conveying instead the openness of wisdom's path, which requires neither secret initiations nor entry into the community of a holy elect.

Purpose

The author is primarily addressing his fellow Jews in an effort to encourage them to take pride in their traditional faith. By presenting Judaism in intellectually respectable terms, he seeks to shore up the faith against hostile anti-Jewish attacks from without and gnawing doubts from within, and through a determined counterattack against the immoral pagan world, which he threatens with divine retribution, he attempts to revive the flagging spirits of his hard-pressed people. *David Winston*

Exhortation to Uprightness

1 Love righteousness, you rulers of the earth,
think of the Lord in goodness
and seek him with sincerity of heart;
2 because he is found by those who do not put him to the test,
and manifests himself to those who do not distrust him.
3 For perverse thoughts separate people from God,
and when his power is tested, it exposes the foolish;
4 because wisdom will not enter a deceitful soul,
or dwell in a body enslaved to sin.
5 For a holy and disciplined spirit will flee from deceit,
and will leave foolish thoughts behind,
and will be ashamed at the approach of unrighteousness.
6 For wisdom is a kindly spirit,
but will not free blasphemers from the guilt of their words;

1.1–15 The prologue introduces many of the key themes and motifs of the book: righteousness assures wisdom and immortality; wickedness leads to death. **1.1** The author writes as if he were King Solomon (9.7–8, 12) speaking to fellow kings, *you rulers of the earth*; in fact, the book is addressed to the author's Jewish audience. **1.3–10** *Power* (v. 3), *wisdom* (v. 4), *holy . . . spirit*, the divine tutor (v. 5), *spirit of the Lord* (v. 7), *justice* (v. 8), and *jealous ear* (v. 10) all speak of differing

because God is witness of their
inmost feelings,
and a true observer of their
hearts, and a hearer of
their tongues.
7 Because the spirit of the Lord has
filled the world,
and that which holds all things
together knows what is
said,
8 therefore those who utter
unrighteous things will not
escape notice,
and justice, when it punishes, will
not pass them by.
9 For inquiry will be made into the
counsels of the ungodly,
and a report of their words will
come to the Lord,
to convict them of their lawless
deeds;
10 because a jealous ear hears all
things,
and the sound of grumbling does
not go unheard.
11 Beware then of useless
grumbling,
and keep your tongue from
slander;
because no secret word is without
result,[a]
and a lying mouth destroys the
soul.

12 Do not invite death by the error
of your life,
or bring on destruction by the
works of your hands;
13 because God did not make death,
and he does not delight in the
death of the living.
14 For he created all things so that
they might exist;
the generative forces[b] of the
world are wholesome,
and there is no destructive poison
in them,
and the dominion[c] of Hades is
not on earth.
15 For righteousness is immortal.

Life as the Ungodly See It

16 But the ungodly by their words
and deeds summoned
death;[d]
considering him a friend, they
pined away
and made a covenant with him,
because they are fit to belong to
his company.
2 For they reasoned unsoundly,
saying to themselves,
"Short and sorrowful is our life,
and there is no remedy when a
life comes to its end,
and no one has been known to
return from Hades.
2 For we were born by mere
chance,
and hereafter we shall be as
though we had never been,
for the breath in our nostrils is
smoke,

a Or *will go unpunished* b Or *the creatures*
c Or *palace* d Gk *him*

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aspects of God. **1.6** *Kindly spirit*, lit. "lover of humanity," a Greek expression. **1.7** *That which holds all things together* is a Stoic expression adopted here to describe the spirit that holds the cosmos in existence. **1.10** *Grumbling* recalls the rebellion of Israel in the desert (Ex 15–17; Num 17.5–10), which epitomizes all rebellion against God. **1.12–13** *Death*, the lot of the sinner, is eternal separation from God; the author of Wisdom pays little attention to the reality of physical death. **1.14** *Hades* is personified (Job 38.17; Rev 6.8; 20.14). **1.15** Immortality is not a natural quality, but dependent on living in conformity with God's will, i.e., according to righteousness (v. 1).

1.16–2.24 The author allows the wicked to speak for themselves in the manner of the Hellenistic diatribe, a popular philosophical discourse often making use of an imaginary adversary. The pessimistic tone is a frequent feature of the popular thought and poetry of Hellenistic and Imperial times. **1.16** The wicked *covenant* with Death (Isa 28.15). Their *pining* for Death is exemplified in *Apocalypse of Abraham* 13.23; in the Dead Sea Scrolls *War Scroll* (1QM) it is repeatedly stated that the wicked are attached to Belial (Satan) because their desire is for him (13.12; 15.9; 17.4). **2.1** *Short and sorrowful is our life*, a commonplace human lament (Job 14.1–2; Lucretius *On the Nature of Things* 3.914–15). **2.2** *Chance* played an important role in Epicurean cosmology. In a Greek epitaph from the third century B.C.E. we read, "like animals we are pulled hither and thither by chance, in life as in death." A similar thought is prominent in Ecclesiastes where the Hebrew word *miqreh* ("fate") refers to the common fate awaiting all, death, the timing of which is utterly concealed from human understanding

and reason is a spark kindled by
the beating of our hearts;
3 when it is extinguished, the body
will turn to ashes,
and the spirit will dissolve like
empty air.
4 Our name will be forgotten in
time,
and no one will remember our
works;
our life will pass away like the
traces of a cloud,
and be scattered like mist
that is chased by the rays of
the sun
and overcome by its heat.
5 For our allotted time is the
passing of a shadow,
and there is no return from our
death,
because it is sealed up and no
one turns back.

6 "Come, therefore, let us enjoy the
good things that exist,
and make use of the creation to
the full as in youth.
7 Let us take our fill of costly wine
and perfumes,
and let no flower of spring pass
us by.
8 Let us crown ourselves with
rosebuds before they
wither.
9 Let none of us fail to share in
our revelry;
everywhere let us leave signs of
enjoyment,
because this is our portion, and
this our lot.
10 Let us oppress the righteous
poor man;
let us not spare the widow
or regard the gray hairs of the
aged.
11 But let our might be our law of
right,
for what is weak proves itself to
be useless.

12 "Let us lie in wait for the
righteous man,
because he is inconvenient to us
and opposes our actions;
he reproaches us for sins against
the law,
and accuses us of sins against our
training.
13 He professes to have knowledge
of God,
and calls himself a child[e] of the
Lord.
14 He became to us a reproof of our
thoughts;
15 the very sight of him is a burden
to us,
because his manner of life is
unlike that of others,
and his ways are strange.
16 We are considered by him as
something base,
and he avoids our ways as
unclean;
he calls the last end of the
righteous happy,
and boasts that God is his father.
17 Let us see if his words are true,
and let us test what will happen
at the end of his life;
18 for if the righteous man is God's
child, he will help him,
and will deliver him from the
hand of his adversaries.
19 Let us test him with insult and
torture,
so that we may find out how
gentle he is,
and make trial of his forbearance.
20 Let us condemn him to a
shameful death,
for, according to what he says, he
will be protected."

e Or *servant*

(cf. Eccl 2.14; 3.19; 9.2). The Stoics conceived of the soul as *a spark*, a fiery breath. **2.4** Plato refers to the childish fear that when the soul leaves the body the wind will blow it away and *scatter* it (*Phaedo* 77D). **2.6** *Let us enjoy*, a popular motif (Isa 22.13; Eccl 9.7; Horace *Odes* 1.11.8, *carpe diem*, Latin, "seize the day"). **2.9** *Our portion*, a prominent motif in Ecclesiastes (2.10; 3.22; 9.9). **2.12–20** The description of the suffering and vindication of the *child of the Lord* (v. 13) is based on the fourth servant song in Isaiah (52.13–53.12). The early church fathers saw in this description a prophecy of Christ's Passion. **2.17** When Joseph's brothers plot his death, they similarly say, "let us kill him . . . and we shall see what will become of his dreams" (Gen 37.20).

21 Thus they reasoned, but they
were led astray,
for their wickedness blinded
them,
22 and they did not know the secret
purposes of God,
nor hoped for the wages of
holiness,
nor discerned the prize for
blameless souls;
23 for God created us for
incorruption,
and made us in the image of his
own eternity,[f]
24 but through the devil's envy
death entered the world,
and those who belong to his
company experience it.

The Destiny of the Righteous and the Ungodly

3 But the souls of the righteous are
in the hand of God,
and no torment will ever touch
them.
2 In the eyes of the foolish they
seemed to have died,
and their departure was thought
to be a disaster,
3 and their going from us to be
their destruction;
but they are at peace.
4 For though in the sight of others
they were punished,
their hope is full of immortality.
5 Having been disciplined a little,
they will receive great
good,
because God tested them and
found them worthy of
himself;
6 like gold in the furnace he tried
them,
and like a sacrificial burnt
offering he accepted them.
7 In the time of their visitation they
will shine forth,
and will run like sparks through
the stubble.
8 They will govern nations and rule
over peoples,
and the Lord will reign over
them forever.
9 Those who trust in him will
understand truth,
and the faithful will abide with
him in love,
because grace and mercy are
upon his holy ones,
and he watches over his elect.[g]

10 But the ungodly will be punished
as their reasoning deserves,
those who disregarded the
righteous[h]
and rebelled against the Lord;
11 for those who despise wisdom
and instruction are
miserable.
Their hope is vain, their labors
are unprofitable,
and their works are useless.
12 Their wives are foolish, and their
children evil;
13 their offspring are accursed.

f Other ancient authorities read *nature* g Text of this line uncertain; omitted by some ancient authorities. Compare 4.15 h Or *what is right*

2.22 *The secret purposes of God.* The doctrine of the afterlife is referred to as a mystery in 1 Cor 4.1–5; 15.51; *1 Enoch* 103.2; and in the Dead Sea Scrolls *Book of Mysteries* (1Q27) 1.3–4. **2.24** That *through the devil's envy death entered the world* appears to be an echo of Zoroastrian teaching.

3.1–13a The author is deliberately vague as to the precise timing and location of the postmortem events he describes. He may have envisaged the temporary abode of all souls in Sheol until the final judgment, as in *1 Enoch* 22, or else thought that the judgment takes place immediately after death. **3.1** The Greek doctrine of the immortality of the soul is already found in *1 Enoch* 102–105; and later in 4 Macc 18.23; Philo *On Abraham* 258; Josephus *Jewish War* 3.372; 7.343–50. **3.5** The notion of brief chastisement followed by *great good* (Isa 54.7–8) is elaborated by the author of 2 Macc (6.12) to justify the calamities of the persecution by Antiochus IV Epiphanes. **3.7** *Shine forth.* The future starlike brilliance of the righteous and their judging and governing of the nations (v. 8) is a common conception in Jewish apocalyptic (Dan 7.22; 12.3; 2 Esd 9.97; *1 Enoch* 104.2; *Testament of Abraham* 1–4; Dead Sea Scrolls *Commentary on Habakkuk* [1QpHab] 5.4; cf. *Sifre Deuteronomy* 10).

3.13b–4.6 Status in the ancient Near East was deeply affected by the number of one's progeny. Sexual sin was believed to result in sterility (Gen 30.23; Ps 128; Lk 1.25; *1 Enoch* 98.5; Pseudo-Philo *Biblical Antiquities* 50.5; *Genesis Rabbah* 45.4). The Wisdom of Solomon, however, emphatically

On Childlessness

For blessed is the barren woman
who is undefiled,
who has not entered into a sinful union;
she will have fruit when God examines souls.
14 Blessed also is the eunuch whose hands have done no lawless deed,
and who has not devised wicked things against the Lord;
for special favor will be shown him for his faithfulness,
and a place of great delight in the temple of the Lord.
15 For the fruit of good labors is renowned,
and the root of understanding does not fail.
16 But children of adulterers will not come to maturity,
and the offspring of an unlawful union will perish.
17 Even if they live long they will be held of no account,
and finally their old age will be without honor.
18 If they die young, they will have no hope
and no consolation on the day of judgment.
19 For the end of an unrighteous generation is grievous.

4 Better than this is childlessness with virtue,
for in the memory of virtue[i] is immortality,
because it is known both by God and by mortals.
2 When it is present, people imitate[j] it,
and they long for it when it has gone;
throughout all time it marches, crowned in triumph,
victor in the contest for prizes that are undefiled.
3 But the prolific brood of the ungodly will be of no use,
and none of their illegitimate seedlings will strike a deep root
or take a firm hold.
4 For even if they put forth boughs for a while,
standing insecurely they will be shaken by the wind,
and by the violence of the winds they will be uprooted.
5 The branches will be broken off before they come to maturity,
and their fruit will be useless,
not ripe enough to eat, and good for nothing.
6 For children born of unlawful unions
are witnesses of evil against their parents when God examines them.[k]

The Triumph of the Righteous

7 But the righteous, though they die early, will be at rest.

i Gk *it* *j* Other ancient authorities read *honor*
k Gk *at their examination*

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denies any necessary connection between sin and sterility. Sterility, if pure, will be redeemed by spiritual fertility. **3.14** *The eunuch.* See Isa 56.3–5, in which the prophet refers to those Jewish youth who were castrated at the hands of the Babylonians and consequently despaired of any share in Israel's future redemption (Deut 23.1). Isaiah gives them the divine assurance of a monument and a name better than sons or daughters. **3.16** It was believed that illegitimate children would not live long (Sir 23.25; *1 Enoch* 10.9; *Babylonian Talmud Yebamot* 78b). **4.1** *Better . . . is childlessness with virtue* strikes a Platonic note. The life of the soul is paramount, so that physical childlessness is of little moment, provided the soul is productive (Plato *Symposium* 208E). **4.2** The sage's *contest* for virtue is contrasted with the unholy athletic contests (see 4 Macc 17.11–16; Plato *Phaedrus* 256B; Philo *On Husbandry* 113). **4.3** *Strike a deep root.* See Sir 23.25. **4.6** *Witnesses . . . against their parents,* a widespread motif (see *Leviticus Rabbah* 23.12; Pseudo-Phocylides *The Sentences* 178; Horace *Odes* 4.5.23; *Gospel of Philip* 78).

4.7–19 Premature death is justified by viewing it as a token of God's care. The author employs the popular philosophical conceit that one's true age is not measured chronologically, but by maturity of intellect and character (see Cicero *Tusculans* 5.5; Seneca *Epistles* 93.2), and further resorts to a Jewish tradition that Enoch had been removed by God early to forestall the imminent perversion of his character (*Genesis Rabbah* 25.1).

8 For old age is not honored for
length of time,
or measured by number of years;
9 but understanding is gray hair
for anyone,
and a blameless life is ripe
old age.

10 There were some who pleased
God and were loved
by him,
and while living among sinners
were taken up.
11 They were caught up so that evil
might not change their
understanding
or guile deceive their souls.
12 For the fascination of wickedness
obscures what is good,
and roving desire perverts the
innocent mind.
13 Being perfected in a short time,
they fulfilled long years;
14 for their souls were pleasing to
the Lord,
therefore he took them quickly
from the midst of
wickedness.
15 Yet the peoples saw and did not
understand,
or take such a thing to heart,
that God's grace and mercy are
with his elect,
and that he watches over his holy
ones.

16 The righteous who have died will
condemn the ungodly who
are living,
and youth that is quickly
perfected[l] will condemn
the prolonged old age of
the unrighteous.

17 For they will see the end of the
wise,
and will not understand what the
Lord purposed for them,
and for what he kept them safe.
18 The unrighteous[m] will see, and
will have contempt for
them,
but the Lord will laugh them to
scorn.
After this they will become
dishonored corpses,
and an outrage among the dead
forever;
19 because he will dash them
speechless to the ground,
and shake them from the
foundations;
they will be left utterly dry and
barren,
and they will suffer anguish,
and the memory of them will
perish.

The Final Judgment

20 They will come with dread when
their sins are reckoned up,
and their lawless deeds will
convict them to their face.
5 Then the righteous will stand with
great confidence
in the presence of those who have
oppressed them
and those who make light of their
labors.
2 When the unrighteous[n] see
them, they will be shaken
with dreadful fear,
and they will be amazed at the
unexpected salvation of the
righteous.

l Or *ended* *m* Gk *They* *n* Gk *they*

4.10 *Some who pleased God and were loved by him*, lit. "being well pleasing to God he was dearly loved." The reference is to Enoch. We have here the first example of the author's deliberate avoidance of proper names, revealing his disinterest in the historical differences between the biblical figures to whom he alludes and his concern only for the repeated manifestations of universal types, such as the righteous and the wicked. The same technique is employed in Philo *On the Virtues* 199–219 and the *Testament of Orpheus* 27–32, 41–42. **4.11** Seneca similarly consoles Marcia for the loss of her sons by noting that even noble natures do not maintain into old age the expectations of their youth (*To Marcia* 22). **4.12** *Roving desire*, a Greek expression, most likely a Stoic coinage (Marcus Aurelius *Meditations* 2.7). **4.18** *Laugh them to scorn*. See Prov 1.26; Ps 2.4; *1 Enoch* 94.10; *Sifre Numbers* 117.

4.20–5.23 A tableau of the final judgment, colored by the language and imagery of Isa 52.13–15; 59.16–17. The speech of the wicked in vv. 4–13 is the counterpart to their monologue in 2.1–20. **5.1** The *great confidence* of the righteous

3 They will speak to one another in repentance,
and in anguish of spirit they will groan, and say,
4 "These are persons whom we once held in derision
and made a byword of reproach —fools that we were!
We thought that their lives were madness
and that their end was without honor.
5 Why have they been numbered among the children of God?
And why is their lot among the saints?
6 So it was we who strayed from the way of truth,
and the light of righteousness did not shine on us,
and the sun did not rise upon us.
7 We took our fill of the paths of lawlessness and destruction,
and we journeyed through trackless deserts,
but the way of the Lord we have not known.
8 What has our arrogance profited us?
And what good has our boasted wealth brought us?

9 "All those things have vanished like a shadow,
and like a rumor that passes by;
10 like a ship that sails through the billowy water,
and when it has passed no trace can be found,
no track of its keel in the waves;
11 or as, when a bird flies through the air,
no evidence of its passage is found;
the light air, lashed by the beat of its pinions
and pierced by the force of its rushing flight,
is traversed by the movement of its wings,
and afterward no sign of its coming is found there;
12 or as, when an arrow is shot at a target,
the air, thus divided, comes together at once,
so that no one knows its pathway.
13 So we also, as soon as we were born, ceased to be,
and we had no sign of virtue to show,
but were consumed in our wickedness."
14 Because the hope of the ungodly is like thistledown[o] carried by the wind,
and like a light frost[p] driven away by a storm;
it is dispersed like smoke before the wind,
and it passes like the remembrance of a guest who stays but a day.

15 But the righteous live forever,
and their reward is with the Lord;
the Most High takes care of them.
16 Therefore they will receive a glorious crown
and a beautiful diadem from the hand of the Lord,
because with his right hand he will cover them,
and with his arm he will shield them.
17 The Lord[q] will take his zeal as his whole armor,
and will arm all creation to repel[r] his enemies;
18 he will put on righteousness as a breastplate,

o Other ancient authorities read *dust* p Other ancient authorities read *spider's web* q Gk *He* r Or *punish*

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contrasts with the speechlessness of the wicked (4.19). **5.9–14** Multiple similes illustrate the author's point. Similarly, in 7.25–8.1 he employs five metaphors to describe Wisdom's origin. **5.10** *Like a ship.* The image is of a light skiff gliding over the water's surface and leaving no impression, like the reed boats in Job 9.26. **5.14** *Like . . . a guest who stays but a day,* a vivid image of the transitoriness of the wicked (cf. Jer 14.8). **5.17–20** These verses are modeled on Isa 59.17, where God is presented as a warrior arming himself with his own attributes for chastisement of the wicked and deliverance of the godly. Similar imagery appears in Rom 13.12; 2 Cor 6.7;

and wear impartial justice as a helmet;
19 he will take holiness as an invincible shield,
20 and sharpen stern wrath for a sword,
and creation will join with him to fight against his frenzied foes.
21 Shafts of lightning will fly with true aim,
and will leap from the clouds to the target, as from a well-drawn bow,
22 and hailstones full of wrath will be hurled as from a catapult;
the water of the sea will rage against them,
and rivers will relentlessly overwhelm them;
23 a mighty wind will rise against them,
and like a tempest it will winnow them away.
Lawlessness will lay waste the whole earth,
and evildoing will overturn the thrones of rulers.

Kings Should Seek Wisdom

6 Listen therefore, O kings, and understand;
learn, O judges of the ends of the earth.
2 Give ear, you that rule over multitudes,
and boast of many nations.
3 For your dominion was given you from the Lord,
and your sovereignty from the Most High;
he will search out your works and inquire into your plans.
4 Because as servants of his kingdom you did not rule rightly,
or keep the law,
or walk according to the purpose of God,
5 he will come upon you terribly and swiftly,
because severe judgment falls on those in high places.
6 For the lowliest may be pardoned in mercy,
but the mighty will be mightily tested.
7 For the Lord of all will not stand in awe of anyone,
or show deference to greatness;
because he himself made both small and great,
and he takes thought for all alike.
8 But a strict inquiry is in store for the mighty.
9 To you then, O monarchs, my words are directed,
so that you may learn wisdom and not transgress.
10 For they will be made holy who observe holy things in holiness,
and those who have been taught them will find a defense.
11 Therefore set your desire on my words;
long for them, and you will be instructed.
12 Wisdom is radiant and unfading,
and she is easily discerned by those who love her,
and is found by those who seek her.
13 She hastens to make herself known to those who desire her.
14 One who rises early to seek her will have no difficulty,
for she will be found sitting at the gate.
15 To fix one's thought on her is perfect understanding,
and one who is vigilant on her account will soon be free from care,

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Eph 6.14–17; *Testament of Levi* 8.2. **5.20** *Creation will join with him,* a favorite thought of the author (see also 16.17, 24; 19.6). Similarly, in Judg 5.20 the stars join the battle against Sisera (cf. Sir 39.28–31).

6.1–21 An exhortation to Wisdom with her gifts of immortality and sovereignty. **6.1** *Judges of the ends of the earth* refers to the spreading power of Roman rule. **6.3** *Dominion* translates a Greek term (*kratēsis*) frequently used in papyri to date the capture of Alexandria by Augustus Caesar. **6.4** *The law,* not Mosaic law, but the natural prin-

16 because she goes about seeking
those worthy of her,
and she graciously appears to
them in their paths,
and meets them in every thought.

17 The beginning of wisdom[s] is the
most sincere desire for
instruction,
and concern for instruction is
love of her,
18 and love of her is the keeping of
her laws,
and giving heed to her laws is
assurance of immortality,
19 and immortality brings one near
to God;
20 so the desire for wisdom leads to
a kingdom.

21 Therefore if you delight in
thrones and scepters,
O monarchs over the
peoples,
honor wisdom, so that you may
reign forever.

Description of Wisdom

22 I will tell you what wisdom is and
how she came to be,
and I will hide no secrets
from you,
but I will trace her course from
the beginning of creation,
and make knowledge of her clear,
and I will not pass by the truth;
23 nor will I travel in the company
of sickly envy,
for envy[t] does not associate with
wisdom.
24 The multitude of the wise is the
salvation of the world,
and a sensible king is the stability
of any people.
25 Therefore be instructed by my
words, and you will profit.

Solomon Like Other Mortals

7 I also am mortal, like everyone
else,
a descendant of the first-formed
child of earth;
and in the womb of a mother I
was molded into flesh,
2 within the period of ten months,
compacted with blood,
from the seed of a man and the
pleasure of marriage.
3 And when I was born, I began to
breathe the common air,
and fell upon the kindred earth;
my first sound was a cry, as is
true of all.
4 I was nursed with care in
swaddling cloths.

s Gk *Her beginning* t Gk *this*

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ciples of justice. **6.17–20** A six-part chain syllogism (in Greek *sorites*), in which statements proceed step by step to a climactic conclusion, each successive statement picking up the last key word or phrase from the one before. This stylistic device is common in Greco-Roman, Indian, and Chinese literature and also occurs in ancient Egyptian and Semitic wisdom writings.

6.22–25 Wisdom's mysteries revealed. In *1 Enoch* 51.3 the Elect One is said to pour forth all the secrets of wisdom, and a favorite Qumran expression is "to give knowledge in the marvelous mysteries of God" (Dead Sea Scrolls *Thanksgiving Hymns* [1QH] 4.27; 7.27; 11.9). **6.23** *Envy* is personified (as in Ovid *Metamorphoses* 2.770–80). That *envy does not associate with wisdom* is a well-known Platonic motif (*Phaedrus* 247A; *Timaeus* 29E); it is also very prominent in Philo, who asserts that wisdom "never closes her school of thought but always opens her doors to those who thirst for the sweet water of discourse" (*Every Good Man Is Free* 13). **6.24** This vocation of the wise to be the *salvation of the world* is frequently referred to by Philo and the rabbis.

7.1–6 In keeping with the Jewish view, the author emphasizes the human side of the king, unlike pagan writers who often treated the king as divine (cf. *Letter of Aristeas* 352–63; 282). **7.1** *First-formed*, a standard epithet of Adam (cf. 1 Tim 2.13; *Testament of Abraham* A 11.9; Philo *Questions on Exodus* 2.46; Pseudo-Philo *Biblical Antiquities* 13.8). **7.2** A widespread view in the ancient world was that pregnancy lasted *ten months*. According to Roman law, ten lunar months made up the full period of gestation. *Compacted with blood*. A better translation is "curdled"; cf. Job 10.10; Aristotle *Generation of Animals* 739b21. That the menstrual blood is the material from which the seminal fluid produces the embryo was a common concept in ancient Greek science. *Pleasure*, part of the author's scientific description. See Aristotle *Generation of Animals* 728a10. **7.3** *Kindred*. A better translation is "that suffers the same from all," i.e., mother earth that all both use and misuse.

5 For no king has had a different
beginning of existence;
6 there is for all one entrance into
life, and one way out.

Solomon's Respect for Wisdom

7 Therefore I prayed, and
understanding was
given me;
I called on God, and the spirit of
wisdom came to me.
8 I preferred her to scepters and
thrones,
and I accounted wealth as
nothing in comparison
with her.
9 Neither did I liken to her any
priceless gem,
because all gold is but a little
sand in her sight,
and silver will be accounted as
clay before her.
10 I loved her more than health and
beauty,
and I chose to have her rather
than light,
because her radiance never
ceases.
11 All good things came to me along
with her,
and in her hands uncounted
wealth.
12 I rejoiced in them all, because
wisdom leads them;
but I did not know that she was
their mother.
13 I learned without guile and I
impart without grudging;
I do not hide her wealth,
14 for it is an unfailing treasure for
mortals;
those who get it obtain friendship
with God,
commended for the gifts that
come from instruction.

Solomon Prays for Wisdom

15 May God grant me to speak with
judgment,
and to have thoughts worthy of
what I have received;
for he is the guide even of
wisdom
and the corrector of the wise.
16 For both we and our words are in
his hand,
as are all understanding and skill
in crafts.
17 For it is he who gave me
unerring knowledge of
what exists,
to know the structure of the
world and the activity of
the elements;
18 the beginning and end and
middle of times,
the alternations of the solstices
and the changes of the
seasons,
19 the cycles of the year and the
constellations of the stars,
20 the natures of animals and the
tempers of wild animals,
the powers of spirits[u] and the
thoughts of human beings,
the varieties of plants and the
virtues of roots;
21 I learned both what is secret and
what is manifest,
22 for wisdom, the fashioner of all
things, taught me.

u Or *winds*

7.7–14 A passage reflecting Philo's position in its more moderate mood: one should seek wisdom for its own sake, but all other goods will inevitably follow. **7.7** *Prayed.* See 1 Kings 3.6–15; 8.12–53; Sir 51.13. **7.11** *Came to me along with her.* Cf. 1 Kings 3.13; Mt 6.33; *Midrash Rabbah Song* 1.1.9. **7.13** *Without grudging.* See Plato *Symposium* 210A; Pseudo-Aristotle *On the Cosmos* 391a17; Xenophon *Symposium* 4.43.

7.15–22a Divine wisdom is here identified with the full range of human science and philosophy. Cf. Aeschylus *Prometheus Bound* 436–506 and the striking parallel in Pseudo-Plato *Axiochus* 370B, where it is argued that it is only through the divine breath in the soul that such knowledge can be attained and immortality be assured. The passage is inspired by the Greek philosophical argument from design, in which God's works are seen as a manifestation of his existence and wise regime. **7.18** *Beginning and end and middle,* a phrase deriving from the Orphic theogony and one that recurs in the Hellenistic-Jewish poem *Orphica,* v. 39. **7.22a** *Fashioner,* the Stoics defined nature as "an artistically working fire going on its way to create" (Diogenes Laertius *Lives of Philosophers* 7.156).

7.22b–24 Wisdom is described in a series of twenty-one epithets borrowed largely from

The Nature of Wisdom

There is in her a spirit that is
intelligent, holy,
unique, manifold, subtle,
mobile, clear, unpolluted,
distinct, invulnerable, loving the
good, keen,
irresistible, 23 beneficent, humane,
steadfast, sure, free from anxiety,
all-powerful, overseeing all,
and penetrating through all
spirits
that are intelligent, pure, and
altogether subtle.
24 For wisdom is more mobile than
any motion;
because of her pureness she
pervades and penetrates all
things.
25 For she is a breath of the power
of God,
and a pure emanation of the
glory of the Almighty;
therefore nothing defiled gains
entrance into her.
26 For she is a reflection of eternal
light,
a spotless mirror of the working
of God,
and an image of his goodness.
27 Although she is but one, she can
do all things,
and while remaining in herself,
she renews all things;
in every generation she passes
into holy souls
and makes them friends of God,
and prophets;
28 for God loves nothing so much as
the person who lives with
wisdom.
29 She is more beautiful than
the sun,
and excels every constellation of
the stars.
Compared with the light she is
found to be superior,
30 for it is succeeded by the night,
but against wisdom evil does not
prevail.

8 She reaches mightily from one end
of the earth to the other,
and she orders all things well.

Solomon's Love for Wisdom

2 I loved her and sought her from
my youth;
I desired to take her for my
bride,
and became enamored of her
beauty.
3 She glorifies her noble birth by
living with God,
and the Lord of all loves her.

Greek philosophy. There are numerous parallels for such serial lists in the ancient world. **7.22b** Anaxagoras (Fragment 12) describes cosmic mind as the most *subtle* of all things. **7.24** *Pervades and penetrates*, technical Stoic phraseology reflecting the principle of "body going through body." **7.25–26** The author employs a fivefold metaphor to emphasize the notion that Wisdom is an emanation from God's power and glory—a bold move for one writing within the biblical tradition; even the more philosophically ambitious Philo backs off from such explicit terminology in describing the origin of the Logos. **7.25** *Emanation*, the earliest attestation of the explicit application of this Greek term (*aporroia*) to Sophia as an effluence from God. **7.26** Heb 1.3 refers to Christ as a *reflection* of God's glory. *Image*, a favorite Platonic metaphor. Philo speaks of the Logos as the image of God. **7.27** *Remaining in herself*. Anaxagoras's cosmic mind similarly remains unmixed and motionless while moving all things (cf. Plato *Timaeus* 42E). **7.29** According to Philo, the *sun* is only an image of Wisdom, and according to his precursor Aristobulus "all light comes from Wisdom." In Pseudo-Philo *Biblical Antiquities* we read that Moses came down from the mountain covered with an invisible light that overcame the brightness of sun and moon (12.1–3). **8.1** *From one end of the earth to the other*. Cf. the similar description in Sir 24.3–6.

8.2–16 Solomon sought to make Wisdom his bride. In rabbinic literature, Torah is imaged as the daughter of God, a bride, and a mother. The bride image is based on a midrashic reading of the Hebrew word *morashah*, "possession," in Deut 33.4 as *me'orasah*, "betrothed." This feminine depiction is connected in some texts to the metaphorical depiction of the Sinai theophany as a wedding day. Cf. Prov 7.4; Sir 15.2. Similar sexual imagery is found in Philo's *On Mating with the Preliminary Studies*, where he develops an allegory in which Abraham, the Soul, is married to Sarah, Wisdom. **8.2** *Sought her*. Cf. Pseudo-Plato *Epinomis* 989A, "for I have sought this wisdom high and low." **8.3** *Living with God*. Philo similarly writes: "With his knowledge God had union, not as men have it, and begat created being" (*On Sobriety* 30).

4 For she is an initiate in the
knowledge of God,
and an associate in his works.
5 If riches are a desirable
possession in life,
what is richer than wisdom, the
active cause of all things?
6 And if understanding is effective,
who more than she is fashioner
of what exists?
7 And if anyone loves
righteousness,
her labors are virtues;
for she teaches self-control and
prudence,
justice and courage;
nothing in life is more profitable
for mortals than these.
8 And if anyone longs for wide
experience,
she knows the things of old, and
infers the things to come;
she understands turns of speech
and the solutions of
riddles;
she has foreknowledge of signs
and wonders
and of the outcome of seasons
and times.
9 Therefore I determined to take
her to live with me,
knowing that she would give me
good counsel
and encouragement in cares and
grief.
10 Because of her I shall have glory
among the multitudes
and honor in the presence of the
elders, though I am young.
11 I shall be found keen in
judgment,
and in the sight of rulers I shall
be admired.
12 When I am silent they will wait
for me,
and when I speak they will give
heed;
if I speak at greater length,
they will put their hands on their
mouths.
13 Because of her I shall have
immortality,
and leave an everlasting
remembrance to those who
come after me.
14 I shall govern peoples,
and nations will be subject to me;
15 dread monarchs will be afraid of
me when they hear of me;
among the people I shall show
myself capable, and
courageous in war.
16 When I enter my house, I shall
find rest with her;
for companionship with her has
no bitterness,
and life with her has no pain, but
gladness and joy.

God's Gift of Wisdom

17 When I considered these things
inwardly,
and pondered in my heart
that in kinship with wisdom there
is immortality,
18 and in friendship with her, pure
delight,
and in the labors of her hands,
unfailing wealth,
and in the experience of her
company, understanding,
and renown in sharing her words,
I went about seeking how to get
her for myself.
19 As a child I was naturally gifted,
and a good soul fell to my lot;
20 or rather, being good, I entered
an undefiled body.

8.5–8 The four successive clauses beginning with *if* are another example of the author's striving for rhetorical effect. **8.7** *Self-control and prudence, justice and courage.* The four cardinal virtues go back to Plato (*Phaedo* 69C). Cf. 4 Macc 1.18. **8.16** *Find rest,* the same idea in Sir 6.28 and a central theme in Philo. Cf. Plato *Republic* 490B.

8.17–21 Wisdom is a sheer gift of God's grace. **8.17** *Kinship* with Wisdom is a characteristic teaching of Plato (*Timaeus* 90A) and the Stoics. Philo takes up the theme with equal vigor. **8.19** Moses too, according to Philo, had a *naturally gifted* soul (*Life of Moses* 1.9), and in general "God drops from above the ethereal wisdom upon minds that are naturally well endowed" (*On Flight and Finding* 138). **8.20** *I entered an undefiled body* clearly implies the notion of the soul's preexistence. Cf. *2 Enoch* 23.4–5; *2 Apocalypse of Baruch* 23.5; Philo *On Dreams* 1.135–41. In *Testament of Naphtali* 2.2 it is said that God implants the spirit according to the capacity of the body.

21 But I perceived that I would not
possess wisdom unless God
gave her to me—
and it was a mark of insight to
know whose gift she was—
so I appealed to the Lord and
implored him,
and with my whole heart I said:

Solomon's Prayer for Wisdom

9 "O God of my ancestors and Lord
of mercy,
who have made all things by your
word,
2 and by your wisdom have formed
humankind
to have dominion over the
creatures you have
made,
3 and rule the world in holiness
and righteousness,
and pronounce judgment in
uprightness of soul,
4 give me the wisdom that sits by
your throne,
and do not reject me from among
your servants.
5 For I am your servant[v] the son
of your serving girl,
a man who is weak and
short-lived,
with little understanding of
judgment and laws;
6 for even one who is perfect
among human beings
will be regarded as nothing
without the wisdom that
comes from you.
7 You have chosen me to be king
of your people
and to be judge over your sons
and daughters.
8 You have given command to
build a temple on your holy
mountain,
and an altar in the city of your
habitation,
a copy of the holy tent that you
prepared from the
beginning.
9 With you is wisdom, she who
knows your works
and was present when you made
the world;
she understands what is pleasing
in your sight
and what is right according to
your commandments.
10 Send her forth from the holy
heavens,
and from the throne of your
glory send her,
that she may labor at my side,
and that I may learn what is
pleasing to you.
11 For she knows and understands
all things,
and she will guide me wisely in
my actions
and guard me with her glory.
12 Then my works will be
acceptable,
and I shall judge your people
justly,
and shall be worthy of the
throne[w] of my father.

v Gk *slave* w Gk *thrones*

8.21 *Unless God gave her to me.* So too in Pseudo-Plato *Epinomis* 989D even those naturally gifted "cannot get this teaching either, unless God gives his guidance."

9.1–18 The prayer consists of three strophes (vv. 1–6, 7–12, 13–18) chiastically arranged. The author presents his own version of Solomon's prayer (1 Kings 3.6–9; 2 Chr 1.8–10). **9.1** *By your word.* Cf. Ps 33.6; Sir 39.17; *Sibylline Oracles* 3.20. **9.2** *By your wisdom,* an emphatic theme in the Dead Sea Scrolls (cf. *2 Enoch* A 30.8). **9.4** *Wisdom . . . sits by your throne.* In Greek literature, Justice is pictured as sitting with Zeus, and the same image is frequent in Philo. **9.5** *Weak and short-lived.* Cf. 1 Chr 29.15; Philo *Who Is the Heir* 58. **9.6** Philo also never tires of insisting that without divine help we could accomplish nothing. **9.8** *Your holy mountain,* Mount Moriah, which became identified with the place where Abraham was commanded to sacrifice Isaac, see 2 Chr 3.1. According to rabbinic tradition even before the creation of the world there already existed a supernal temple of which the earthly temple is a *copy.* The same notion is found in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in Heb 8–10 and is also widespread in the Pseudepigrapha. Philo too tells us that the tabernacle is a representation and copy of wisdom (*Who Is the Heir* 112). Moreover, the notion of heavenly archetypes of earthly things was well known in ancient Babylonia. **9.9** *When you made the world.* Cf. Prov 8.22, a verse cited both by Aristobulus and Philo. **9.10** In his famous *Hymn to Zeus,* the Stoic philosopher Cleanthes prays that Zeus bestow the wisdom by which he steers all

13 For who can learn the counsel
of God?
Or who can discern what the
Lord wills?
14 For the reasoning of mortals is
worthless,
and our designs are likely to fail;
15 for a perishable body weighs
down the soul,
and this earthy tent burdens the
thoughtful[x] mind.
16 We can hardly guess at what is on
earth,
and what is at hand we find with
labor;
but who has traced out what is in
the heavens?
17 Who has learned your counsel,
unless you have given wisdom
and sent your holy spirit from on
high?
18 And thus the paths of those on
earth were set right,
and people were taught what
pleases you,
and were saved by wisdom."

The Work of Wisdom from Adam to Moses

10 Wisdom[y] protected the
first-formed father of the
world, when he alone had
been created;
she delivered him from his
transgression,
2 and gave him strength to rule all
things.
3 But when an unrighteous man
departed from her in his
anger,
he perished because in rage he
killed his brother.
4 When the earth was flooded
because of him, wisdom
again saved it,
steering the righteous man by a
paltry piece of wood.

5 Wisdom[y] also, when the nations
in wicked agreement had
been put to confusion,
recognized the righteous man
and preserved him
blameless before God,
and kept him strong in the face
of his compassion for his
child.

6 Wisdom[y] rescued a righteous
man when the ungodly
were perishing;
he escaped the fire that
descended on the Five
Cities.[z]

x Or *anxious* y Gk *She* z Or *on Pentapolis*

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things in justice. **9.13** *For who can learn.* Cf. Prov 30.2–4; Isa 40.13–14; Sir 1.1–10; Bar 3.29–37; 2 Esd 4; *1 Enoch* 93.11–14. A similar note is already found in the Babylonian poem *I Will Praise the Lord of Wisdom* 36–38. **9.15** The adverse influence of the *body* on the soul is emphatically taught by Plato in *Phaedo* (66B). That the body *weighs down the soul* is another widespread Platonic motif (*Phaedo* 81C) and fairly common in Philo and the Roman Stoics. *Earthy tent,* a Greek expression for the body, very frequent in Neo-Pythagorean writings. **9.16** This verse expresses a widespread literary conceit (Jdt 8.14; 2 Esd 4.11; Jn 3.12; *Testament of Job* 38.5; *Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin* 39a).

10.1–21 Wisdom's saving and punishing power is illustrated by the enumeration of seven righteous heroes and their wicked counterparts. Miraculous eruptions in history are reinterpreted and described as the providential ordering of Israel's history through Wisdom's continuous election of holy servants. The author has constructed his ode to Wisdom by the use of anaphora, repetition of the same word at the beginning of successive verses. He thus introduces Wisdom throughout the chapter with the emphatic Greek pronoun *hautē* ("she"), which marks off six sections each of which contains the word *righteous* once (vv. 1–4, 5, 6–8, 9–12, 13–14, 15–21). See the similar use of anaphora in Acts 7.35–38; Cicero's hymn to philosophy in *Tusculans* 5.5; Seneca *To Marcia* 20.2; and the Hellenistic aretalogies or hymns of praise discovered in Egypt. **10.1** *Father of the world,* Adam. **10.3** *An unrighteous man,* Cain. *Killed his brother.* Philo thrice applies the adjective "fratricidal" to Cain. **10.4** *Because of him.* As the first murderer, Cain serves as a paradigm of wickedness, so that the cause of the flood can be ascribed to him. The verb translated *steering* here is also employed by Stoics to describe the guiding power of Logos. According to the midrash *Genesis Rabbah* 34.8, the stars did not function during the flood, implying that Noah's ark was piloted by God. The *righteous man* here is Noah. **10.5** *The righteous man,* Abraham. According to *Genesis Rabbah* 38.6, Abraham was a contemporary of the generation of the Tower of Babel. **10.6** *A righteous man,* Lot.

7 Evidence of their wickedness still
remains:
a continually smoking wasteland,
plants bearing fruit that does not
ripen,
and a pillar of salt standing as a
monument to an
unbelieving soul.
8 For because they passed
wisdom by,
they not only were hindered from
recognizing the good,
but also left for humankind a
reminder of their folly,
so that their failures could never
go unnoticed.

9 Wisdom rescued from troubles
those who served her.
10 When a righteous man fled from
his brother's wrath,
she guided him on straight paths;
she showed him the kingdom
of God,
and gave him knowledge of holy
things;
she prospered him in his labors,
and increased the fruit of his toil.
11 When his oppressors were
covetous,
she stood by him and made him
rich.
12 She protected him from his
enemies,
and kept him safe from those
who lay in wait for him;
in his arduous contest she gave
him the victory,
so that he might learn that
godliness is more powerful
than anything else.
13 When a righteous man was sold,
wisdom[a] did not
desert him,
but delivered him from sin.
She descended with him into the
dungeon,
14 and when he was in prison she
did not leave him,
until she brought him the scepter
of a kingdom
and authority over his masters.
Those who accused him she
showed to be false,
and she gave him everlasting
honor.

15 A holy people and blameless race
wisdom delivered from a nation
of oppressors.
16 She entered the soul of a servant
of the Lord,
and withstood dread kings with
wonders and signs.
17 She gave to holy people the
reward of their labors;
she guided them along a
marvelous way,
and became a shelter to them
by day,
and a starry flame through the
night.
18 She brought them over the
Red Sea,
and led them through deep
waters;
19 but she drowned their enemies,
and cast them up from the depth
of the sea.
20 Therefore the righteous
plundered the ungodly;

a Gk *she*

10.7 *Evidence . . . still remains.* Both Philo and Josephus speak of vestiges of the divine fire as still visible. *Fruit that does not ripen.* See Josephus *Jewish War* 4.484; Tacitus *Histories* 5.7. *A pillar of salt.* Josephus writes: "I have seen this pillar of salt which remains to this day" (*Antiquities* 1.203–204). The erosion of the salt mountain along the south end of the Dead Sea has caused pinnacles to stand out, which many writers have likened to Lot's wife. **10.10** *A righteous man,* Jacob. *Showed him the kingdom of God and gave him knowledge of holy things.* According to *Testament of Levi* 9.3 Jacob saw a vision concerning Levi that he should be a priest unto God, and in 5.1–2 Levi is privileged with a vision of the heavenly temple. Our author may be alluding to such a vision by Jacob. **10.12** *Arduous contest,* a reference to Jacob's struggle with the angel (Gen. 32.25–33). *So that he might learn.* Jacob's struggle is given a symbolic meaning. **10.13** *A righteous man,* Joseph. **10.16** *Servant of the Lord,* Moses (see Isa 63.11–14). **10.17** *The reward of their labors,* the objects of silver and gold "borrowed" by the Israelites from the Egyptians before leaving Egypt (Ex 11.2; 12.35–36; cf. Ps 105.37; *Jubilees* 48.18; Ezekiel *Exagoge* 165; Philo *Life of Moses* 1.140–42). *Shelter, starry flame.* The pillar of cloud and of fire (Ex 13.21–22) is allegorized as Wisdom. **10.20** *Plundered the ungodly.* Demetrius, the earliest known Greco-Jewish writer, had already attempted to answer the ques-

they sang hymns, O Lord, to your holy name,
and praised with one accord your defending hand;
21 for wisdom opened the mouths of those who were mute,
and made the tongues of infants speak clearly.

Wisdom Led the Israelites Through the Desert

11 Wisdom[b] prospered their works by the hand of a holy prophet.
2 They journeyed through an uninhabited wilderness,
and pitched their tents in untrodden places.
3 They withstood their enemies and fought off their foes.
4 When they were thirsty, they called upon you,
and water was given them out of flinty rock,
and from hard stone a remedy for their thirst.
5 For through the very things by which their enemies were punished,
they themselves received benefit in their need.
6 Instead of the fountain of an ever-flowing river,
stirred up and defiled with blood
7 in rebuke for the decree to kill the infants,
you gave them abundant water unexpectedly,
8 showing by their thirst at that time
how you punished their enemies.
9 For when they were tried, though they were being disciplined in mercy,
they learned how the ungodly were tormented when judged in wrath.
10 For you tested them as a parent[c] does in warning,
but you examined the ungodly[d] as a stern king does in condemnation.
11 Whether absent or present, they were equally distressed,
12 for a twofold grief possessed them,
and a groaning at the memory of what had occurred.
13 For when they heard that through their own punishments
the righteous[e] had received benefit, they perceived it was the Lord's doing.

b Gk *She* *c* Gk *a father* *d* Gk *those*
e Gk *they*

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tion raised as to how the Israelites, who left Egypt unarmed, managed to obtain arms (cf. Josephus *Antiquities* 2.349). *With one accord.* Cf. *2 Enoch* 19.6; *Ascension of Isaiah* 7.15; *Testament of Solomon* 18.2; *Midrash Rabbah Song* 8.15. In Zoroastrian texts, the Bounteous Immortals are seven beings who are "of one mind, of one voice, of one act." Cf. also Hesiod *Theogony* 60. **10.21** The *tongues of infants* alludes to an early Jewish tradition that even the infants sang God's praises (*Tosefta Sota* 6.4).

11.1–14 After an introductory narrative (vv. 1–4), which speaks of the successful advance of the Israelites through the desert, we get an elaborate *synkrisis* or comparison, in which the author employs seven antitheses (the first one here, the other six in 16.1–19.22) to illustrate his theme that Egypt was punished measure for measure and Israel was benefited by the very things with which Egypt was punished. Already in the biblical account, the contrast between the fate of the Egyptians and the Israelites is clearly spelled out in five of the ten plagues. **11.6** *An ever-flowing river*, the Nile. **11.7** *In rebuke.* The same notion appears in *Pirke Rabbi Eliezer* 19, where it is stated that God plagued the waters of the Nile because the Egyptians had cast the children of the Israelites into the Nile. **11.8** The author here enunciates a principle that recurs in 16.4, that it was pedagogically necessary that the Israelites have a taste of their enemies' punishments. The medieval Jewish exegete Ibn Ezra (on Ex 7.24) similarly takes the absence of an explicit notice that the Israelites were exempt from the first three plagues to mean that they affected the Egyptians and Israelites alike. **11.9** *Tried.* See Deut 8.2–5. **11.11** The Egyptians suffered both when the Israelites were *present* with them in Egypt (they were afflicted by the plagues) and when the Israelites were *absent* from them in the wilderness (they were overwhelmed in the sea). **11.12** They were pained *twofold*, both at their own calamity and by the fact that it brought deliverance to the Israelites.

14 For though they had mockingly
rejected him who long
before had been cast out
and exposed,
at the end of the events they
marveled at him,
when they felt thirst in a
different way from the
righteous.

Punishment of the Wicked

15 In return for their foolish and
wicked thoughts,
which led them astray to worship
irrational serpents and
worthless animals,
you sent upon them a multitude
of irrational creatures to
punish them,
16 so that they might learn that one
is punished by the very
things by which one sins.
17 For your all-powerful hand,
which created the world out of
formless matter,
did not lack the means to send
upon them a multitude of
bears, or bold lions,
18 or newly-created unknown beasts
full of rage,
or such as breathe out fiery
breath,
or belch forth a thick pall of
smoke,
or flash terrible sparks from their
eyes;
19 not only could the harm they did
destroy people,[f]
but the mere sight of them could
kill by fright.
20 Even apart from these, people[g]
could fall at a single breath
when pursued by justice
and scattered by the breath of
your power.
But you have arranged all things
by measure and number
and weight.

21 For it is always in your power to
show great strength,
and who can withstand the might
of your arm?
22 Because the whole world before
you is like a speck that tips
the scales,
and like a drop of morning dew
that falls on the ground.
23 But you are merciful to all, for
you can do all things,
and you overlook people's sins, so
that they may repent.
24 For you love all things that
exist,
and detest none of the things that
you have made,
for you would not have made
anything if you had
hated it.
25 How would anything have
endured if you had not
willed it?
Or how would anything not
called forth by you have
been preserved?

f Gk *them* *g* Gk *they*

11.15–12.2 An excursus dealing with the nature and purpose of divine mercy. The Egyptians could have been smashed with one blow, but God never acts arbitrarily. His omnipotence guarantees his all-embracing love, and his very act of creation is a manifestation of this love, precluding the possibility of hatred toward any of his creatures. **11.15** *Irrational serpents and worthless animals.* Cf. *Letter of Aristeas* 138; Philo *Decalogue* 76–80. Roman ridicule of Egyptian animal worship is best illustrated by Octavian's remark when asked if he would like to visit the Apis bull: "My custom is to worship gods, not cattle" (Dio Cassius *Roman History* 51.16.5). **11.16** The law of retaliation occurs three times in the Pentateuch (Ex 21.23–25; Lev 24.18–20; Deut 19.21) and appears frequently in the Pseudepigrapha. The rabbis were equally fond of elaborating this principle (*Tosefta Sota* 3–4). **11.17** The doctrine is Platonic, but for the terminology of *formless matter*, see Aristotle *Physics* 191a10, and Posidonius frag. 92. Philo raises the same question as this author about whether God *lacks the means* to create, and his first answer is similar to that given in v. 23 (*Life of Moses* 1.109–12). **11.20** *By measure and number and weight.* God's actions always follow the mathematical laws by which he governs the entire cosmos. Disproportionate punishments such as those described in vv. 17–19 are therefore ruled out. Cf. Job 28.25; Isa 40.12; 2 Esd 4.36–37; *Testament of Naphtali* 2.3. Philo placed special emphasis on this notion (*On Dreams* 2.193; cf. Plato *Laws* 575B). **11.22** Cf. Isa 40.15. **11.24** *Detest none . . . that you have made.* Cf. Sir 15.11. This view is in sharp contrast with that of the Dead Sea sect.

26 You spare all things, for they are
yours, O Lord, you who
love the living.

12 For your immortal spirit is in all
things.
2 Therefore you correct little by
little those who trespass,
and you remind and warn them
of the things through
which they sin,
so that they may be freed from
wickedness and put their
trust in you, O Lord.

The Sins of the Canaanites

3 Those who lived long ago in your
holy land
4 you hated for their detestable
practices,
their works of sorcery and unholy
rites,
5 their merciless slaughter[h] of
children,
and their sacrificial feasting on
human flesh and blood.
These initiates from the midst of
a heathen cult,[i]
6 these parents who murder
helpless lives,
you willed to destroy by the
hands of our ancestors,
7 so that the land most precious of
all to you
might receive a worthy colony of
the servants[j] of God.
8 But even these you spared, since
they were but mortals,
and sent wasps[k] as forerunners
of your army
to destroy them little by little,
9 though you were not unable to
give the ungodly into the
hands of the righteous in
battle,
or to destroy them at one blow by
dread wild animals or your
stern word.
10 But judging them little by little
you gave them an
opportunity to repent,
though you were not unaware
that their origin[l] was evil
and their wickedness inborn,
and that their way of thinking
would never change.
11 For they were an accursed race
from the beginning,
and it was not through fear of
anyone that you left them
unpunished for their sins.

12 For who will say, "What have you
done?"
or will resist your judgment?
Who will accuse you for the
destruction of nations that
you made?
Or who will come before you to
plead as an advocate for
the unrighteous?
13 For neither is there any god
besides you, whose care is
for all people,[m]
to whom you should prove that
you have not judged
unjustly;

h Gk *slaughterers* *i* Meaning of Gk uncertain
j Or *children* *k* Or *hornets* *l* Or *nature*
m Or *all things*

12.3–18 An attempt to justify the Israelite conquest of Canaan. In Jewish-Hellenistic apologetics, this issue occupied no small place. The author of *Jubilees* rewrote Genesis to prove that the land of Canaan was originally allotted to Shem and illegally seized by Canaan (8.8–11; 9.14–15; 10.29–34; cf. *Genesis Rabbah* 56.14) and Philo's account of the conquest of Canaan is openly apologetic (*Hypothetica* 6.5; *Special Laws* 2.170). **12.3** *Holy land.* For this designation, which appears neither in Josephus nor in Tannaitic literature, see Zech 2.12; 2 Macc 1.7; 2 Esd 13.48; Pseudo-Philo *Biblical Antiquities* 19.20; *2 Apocalypse of Baruch* 63.10; *Testament of Job* 33.5, where it is a metaphor for heaven. **12.5** *Slaughter of children.* The sacrifices of Molech described in the Bible (Lev 18.21; 20.2–5) are identical with the *molk* sacrifices in North Africa and were kept up for a very long time. There is also evidence of human sacrifice in Egypt during the Roman period. *Sacrificial*, lit. "entrail-devouring." The charge of *feasting on human flesh and blood* appears to be an exaggeration and turns the tables on those who, like Damocritus and Apion, had hurled the charge of cannibalism against the Jews. **12.8** *Wasps.* See Ex 23.28 (and text note there). **12.10** *Their origin was evil.* A similar notion is found in 2 Esd 4.30. **12.11** *Accursed race* refers to the curse laid upon Canaan (Gen 9.25–27), but there is no hint in the biblical text of a curse that entails moral degeneracy. Cf. Wis 3.12–13; Sir 33.12; *Jubilees* 22.20–21. **12.12** See Job 9.12; Eccl 8.4; Dan 4.32; Rom 9.20; *Genesis Rabbah* 1.2.

14 nor can any king or monarch
confront you about those
whom you have punished.
15 You are righteous and you rule
all things righteously,
deeming it alien to your power
to condemn anyone who does not
deserve to be punished.
16 For your strength is the source of
righteousness,
and your sovereignty over all
causes you to spare all.
17 For you show your strength when
people doubt the
completeness of your
power,
and you rebuke any insolence
among those who know it.[n]
18 Although you are sovereign in
strength, you judge with
mildness,
and with great forbearance you
govern us;
for you have power to act
whenever you choose.

God's Lessons for Israel

19 Through such works you have
taught your people
that the righteous must be kind,
and you have filled your children
with good hope,
because you give repentance for
sins.
20 For if you punished with such
great care and indulgence[o]
the enemies of your servants[p]
and those deserving of
death,
granting them time and
opportunity to give up
their wickedness,
21 with what strictness you have
judged your children,
to whose ancestors you gave oaths
and covenants full of good
promises!
22 So while chastening us you
scourge our enemies ten
thousand times more,
so that, when we judge, we may
meditate upon your
goodness,
and when we are judged, we may
expect mercy.

The Punishment of the Egyptians

23 Therefore those who lived
unrighteously, in a life of
folly,
you tormented through their own
abominations.
24 For they went far astray on the
paths of error,
accepting as gods those animals
that even their enemies[q]
despised;
they were deceived like foolish
infants.
25 Therefore, as though to children
who cannot reason,
you sent your judgment to mock
them.
26 But those who have not heeded
the warning of mild
rebukes
will experience the deserved
judgment of God.
27 For when in their suffering they
became incensed
at those creatures that they had
thought to be gods, being
punished by means of
them,
they saw and recognized as the
true God the one whom
they had before refused to
know.
Therefore the utmost
condemnation came upon
them.

The Foolishness of Nature Worship

13 For all people who were
ignorant of God were
foolish by nature;

n Meaning of Gk uncertain *o* Other ancient authorities lack *and indulgence*; others read *and entreaty* *p* Or *children* *q* Gk *they*

13.1–15.19 The theme of Egyptian animal worship leads the author to a long excursus on idolatry (chs. 13–15), whose major components are clearly discernible in the analogous passages in Philo (*Decalogue* 52–81; *Special Laws* 1.13–31). Both accounts may well derive from a common Jewish-Hellenistic apologetic tradition, although direct dependence of the one on the other is not to be ruled out. Our author presents the three forms of false worship in the form of a gradation:

and they were unable from the
good things that are seen to
know the one who exists,
nor did they recognize the artisan
while paying heed to his
works;
2 but they supposed that either fire
or wind or swift air,
or the circle of the stars, or
turbulent water,
or the luminaries of heaven were
the gods that rule the
world.
3 If through delight in the beauty
of these things people
assumed them to be gods,
let them know how much better
than these is their Lord,
for the author of beauty created
them.
4 And if people[r] were amazed at
their power and working,
let them perceive from them
how much more powerful is the
one who formed them.
5 For from the greatness and
beauty of created things
comes a corresponding
perception of their Creator.
6 Yet these people are little to be
blamed,
for perhaps they go astray
while seeking God and desiring to
find him.
7 For while they live among his
works, they keep searching,
and they trust in what they see,
because the things that are
seen are beautiful.
8 Yet again, not even they are to be
excused;
9 for if they had the power to
know so much
that they could investigate the
world,
how did they fail to find sooner
the Lord of these things?

The Foolishness of Idolatry

10 But miserable, with their hopes
set on dead things, are
those
who give the name "gods" to the
works of human hands,
gold and silver fashioned with
skill,
and likenesses of animals,
or a useless stone, the work of an
ancient hand.
11 A skilled woodcutter may saw
down a tree easy to handle
and skillfully strip off all its bark,
and then with pleasing
workmanship
make a useful vessel that serves
life's needs,
12 and burn the cast-off pieces of his
work
to prepare his food, and eat his
fill.
13 But a cast-off piece from among
them, useful for nothing,
a stick crooked and full of knots,
he takes and carves with care in
his leisure,
and shapes it with skill gained in
idleness;[s]
he forms it in the likeness of a
human being,
14 or makes it like some worthless
animal,

r Gk *they* s Other ancient authorities read *with intelligent skill*

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the nature worshipers are described as *foolish* (13.1), the idolators as *miserable* (13.10), and the Egyptian animal worshipers as *most foolish* (15.14).

13.1–9 Worship of nature. **13.1** *The one who exists*, lit. "he who exists," is derived from Ex 3.14. Unlike Philo, who uses both the personal masculine form (Greek *ho ōn*) and the impersonal neuter (*to on*), the author of the Wisdom of Solomon uses only the former. **13.5** This is a well-known Stoic argument (already used by Plato and Aristotle and repeated by Philo): we form the concept of divinity from our awareness of the world's beauty, since no beautiful thing happens by chance but is the product of creative art. **13.6** *While seeking God*, a widespread motif (Philo *On Abraham* 124–30; *Bhagavad Gita* 7.16). **13.7** Nature worshipers are overly impressed by *what they see*, whereas the ultimate reality is invisible (cf. Heb 11.3; Plato *Sophist* 246A–B; Philo *On Abraham* 69; *Testament of Orpheus* 4–5). **13.9** *Investigate the world*, better "infer the universe."

13.10–14.11 Wooden image making. **13.10** *Useless stone*. Philo of Byblos defined the bethels, rough stones regarded as the residence of a god, as "animate stones"; the animate quality referred to is magnetism, very common in meteorites. **13.12** *To prepare his food*. See Isa 44.16; *Apocalypse of Abraham* 5; *Mekilta* on Ex 20.3.

giving it a coat of red paint and coloring its surface red
and covering every blemish in it with paint;
15 then he makes a suitable niche for it,
and sets it in the wall, and fastens it there with iron.
16 He takes thought for it, so that it may not fall,
because he knows that it cannot help itself,
for it is only an image and has need of help.
17 When he prays about possessions and his marriage and children,
he is not ashamed to address a lifeless thing.
18 For health he appeals to a thing that is weak;
for life he prays to a thing that is dead;
for aid he entreats a thing that is utterly inexperienced;
for a prosperous journey, a thing that cannot take a step;
19 for money-making and work and success with his hands
he asks strength of a thing whose hands have no strength.

14 Again, one preparing to sail and about to voyage over raging waves
calls upon a piece of wood more fragile than the ship that carries him.
2 For it was desire for gain that planned that vessel,
and wisdom was the artisan who built it;
3 but it is your providence, O Father, that steers its course,
because you have given it a path in the sea,
and a safe way through the waves,
4 showing that you can save from every danger,
so that even a person who lacks skill may put to sea.
5 It is your will that works of your wisdom should not be without effect;
therefore people trust their lives even to the smallest piece of wood,
and passing through the billows on a raft they come safely to land.
6 For even in the beginning, when arrogant giants were perishing,
the hope of the world took refuge on a raft,
and guided by your hand left to the world the seed of a new generation.
7 For blessed is the wood by which righteousness comes.

8 But the idol made with hands is accursed, and so is the one who made it—
he for having made it, and the perishable thing because it was named a god.
9 For equally hateful to God are the ungodly and their ungodliness;
10 for what was done will be punished together with the one who did it.
11 Therefore there will be a visitation also upon the heathen idols,
because, though part of what God created, they became an abomination,
snares for human souls
and a trap for the feet of the foolish.

14.1 *Calls upon a piece of wood.* The divine twins, Castor and Pollux, the youths of Zeus (Dioscuri), were especially popular as rescuers from danger at sea. St. Elmo's fire, the electric discharge from the ship's mast during a thunderstorm, was regarded as their corporeal epiphany. According to Cyril of Alexandria (commenting on Acts 28.11), it was especially an Alexandrian custom to have pictures of the twins to right and left of the ship's prow. **14.3** *Your providence . . . that steers,* Platonic/Stoic terminology. **14.5** *Works of your wisdom should not be without effect.* God wishes to allow for a better distribution of nature's products (cf. Euripides *Suppliant Women* 209; Philo *On Providence* 2.65). **14.6** *The hope of the world,* Noah and his family (cf. 4 Macc 15.31). **14.7** *Wood,* Noah's ark. The church fathers applied this verse either directly or symbolically to the cross.

The Origin and Evils of Idolatry

12 For the idea of making idols was
the beginning of
fornication,
and the invention of them was
the corruption of life;
13 for they did not exist from the
beginning,
nor will they last forever.
14 For through human vanity they
entered the world,
and therefore their speedy end
has been planned.

15 For a father, consumed with grief
at an untimely
bereavement,
made an image of his child, who
had been suddenly taken
from him;
he now honored as a god what
was once a dead human
being,
and handed on to his dependents
secret rites and initiations.
16 Then the ungodly custom, grown
strong with time, was kept
as a law,
and at the command of monarchs
carved images were
worshiped.
17 When people could not honor
monarchs[t] in their
presence, since they lived at
a distance,
they imagined their appearance
far away,
and made a visible image of the
king whom they honored,
so that by their zeal they might
flatter the absent one as
though present.
18 Then the ambition of the artisan
impelled
even those who did not know the
king to intensify their
worship.
19 For he, perhaps wishing to please
his ruler,
skillfully forced the likeness to
take more beautiful form,
20 and the multitude, attracted by
the charm of his work,
now regarded as an object of
worship the one whom
shortly before they had
honored as a human being.
21 And this became a hidden trap
for humankind,
because people, in bondage to
misfortune or to royal
authority,
bestowed on objects of stone or
wood the name that ought
not to be shared.

22 Then it was not enough for them
to err about the knowledge
of God,
but though living in great strife
due to ignorance,
they call such great evils peace.
23 For whether they kill children in
their initiations, or
celebrate secret mysteries,
or hold frenzied revels with
strange customs,
24 they no longer keep either their
lives or their marriages
pure,
but they either treacherously kill
one another, or grieve one
another by adultery,

t Gk *them*

14.12–31 To bolster his attack on idolatry, the author argues that it did not exist from the beginning but arose in the course of time through human error. The two explanations adduced for its origins probably derive from a pagan Hellenistic source, a highly rationalized euhemeristic account of the origins of the idol cult. **14.13** Idols will not *last forever*. See Isa 2.18; Ezek 30.13; Mic 5.12; Zech 13.2; Let Jer 50–73. **14.14** *Human vanity*, better "empty imagining," an Epicurean term. Since the origin of idols is rooted in total emptiness, *their speedy end has been planned*, i.e., the moment their vacuous character is disclosed, idolatry will evaporate into thin air and completely disappear (cf. Jer 16.19; *Gospel of Truth* 26.25). **14.15** Fulgentius provides an Egyptian analogue to the explanation given in this verse, and we have a reference to it in *Mekilta* on Ex 12.30 (cf. Cicero *To Atticus* 12.35–36). **14.21** *Ought not to be shared*. See Isa 42.8. **14.22** *Call such great evils peace*. Cf. Jer 6.14; Tacitus *Agricola* 30. The theme of war-in-peace was common in the Cynic-Stoic philosophical discourses of the first century C.E. (see Pseudo-Heraclitus *Epistle* 7). **14.26** *Sexual*

25 and all is a raging riot of blood
and murder, theft and
deceit, corruption,
faithlessness, tumult,
perjury,
26 confusion over what is good,
forgetfulness of favors,
defiling of souls, sexual
perversion,
disorder in marriages, adultery,
and debauchery.
27 For the worship of idols not to be
named
is the beginning and cause and
end of every evil.
28 For their worshipers[u] either rave
in exultation,
or prophesy lies, or live
unrighteously, or readily
commit perjury;
29 for because they trust in lifeless
idols
they swear wicked oaths and
expect to suffer no harm.
30 But just penalties will overtake
them on two counts:
because they thought wrongly
about God in devoting
themselves to idols,
and because in deceit they swore
unrighteously through
contempt for holiness.
31 For it is not the power of the
things by which people
swear,[v]
but the just penalty for those
who sin,
that always pursues the
transgression of the
unrighteous.

Benefits of Worshiping the True God

15 But you, our God, are kind and
true,
patient, and ruling all things[w] in
mercy.
2 For even if we sin we are yours,
knowing your power;
but we will not sin, because we
know that you acknowledge
us as yours.
3 For to know you is complete
righteousness,
and to know your power is the
root of immortality.
4 For neither has the evil intent of
human art misled us,
nor the fruitless toil of painters,
a figure stained with varied
colors,
5 whose appearance arouses
yearning in fools,
so that they desire[x] the lifeless
form of a dead image.
6 Lovers of evil things and fit for
such objects of hope[y]
are those who either make or
desire or worship them.

7 A potter kneads the soft earth
and laboriously molds each vessel
for our service,
fashioning out of the same clay
both the vessels that serve clean
uses
and those for contrary uses,
making all alike;

u Gk *they* *v* Or *of the oaths people swear*
w Or *ruling the universe* *x* Gk *and he desires*
y Gk *such hopes*

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perversion, lit. "alteration of generation," i.e., all nonprocreative sexual activities.

15.1–19 Israel's immunity from idolatry. The writer is thinking of his own period. The consensus among the rabbis of the third century was that all idolatrous impulses had been eradicated from Israel as early as the beginning of the Second Temple period (*Babylonian Talmud Yoma* 69b; cf. Jdt 8.18; Tacitus *Historiae* 5.5). **15.1** For the four divine attributes enumerated here, see Ex 34.6. **15.2** *We are yours.* According to Rabbi Meir (*Sifre Deuteronomy* 96), whether the Jews sin or do not sin, they are God's children (cf. Philo *Special Laws* 4.180–81). **15.4** The choice of the Greek word *skiagraphos*—here translated *painter*—is deliberate, since it refers to "painting with the shadows" so as to produce an illusion of solidity at a distance and is frequently used to indicate that which is illusory. The fourth-century Christian bishop Epiphanius connected the beginnings of idolatry with painting or shadow sketching (*Panarion* 3.4–5; *Ancoratus* 102.1; cf. Pliny *Natural History* 35.151). **15.5** See Ovid *Metamorphoses* 10.243–97 for the story of Pygmalion, who, having fashioned an ivory statue of a woman, fell in love with it. **15.7** *That serve clean uses and those for contrary uses.* This theme is reminiscent of the story about Amasis (often quoted by Christian writers), who made an image of a god out of his golden foot bath (Herodotus *History* 2.172; cf.

but which shall be the use of each of them
the worker in clay decides.
8 With misspent toil, these workers form a futile god from the same clay—
these mortals who were made of earth a short time before
and after a little while go to the earth from which all mortals are taken,
when the time comes to return the souls that were borrowed.
9 But the workers are not concerned that mortals are destined to die
or that their life is brief,
but they compete with workers in gold and silver,
and imitate workers in copper;
and they count it a glorious thing to mold counterfeit gods.
10 Their heart is ashes, their hope is cheaper than dirt,
and their lives are of less worth than clay,
11 because they failed to know the one who formed them
and inspired them with active souls
and breathed a living spirit into them.
12 But they considered our existence an idle game,
and life a festival held for profit,
for they say one must get money however one can, even by base means.
13 For these persons, more than all others, know that they sin
when they make from earthy matter fragile vessels and carved images.
14 But most foolish, and more miserable than an infant,
are all the enemies who oppressed your people.
15 For they thought that all their heathen idols were gods,
though these have neither the use of their eyes to see with,
nor nostrils with which to draw breath,
nor ears with which to hear,
nor fingers to feel with,
and their feet are of no use for walking.
16 For a human being made them,
and one whose spirit is borrowed formed them;
for none can form gods that are like themselves.
17 People are mortal, and what they make with lawless hands is dead;
for they are better than the objects they worship,
since[z] they have life, but the idols[a] never had.

18 Moreover, they worship even the most hateful animals,
which are worse than all others when judged by their lack of intelligence;
19 and even as animals they are not so beautiful in appearance that one would desire them,
but they have escaped both the praise of God and his blessing.

The Sending of the Quail

16 Therefore those people[b] were deservedly punished through such creatures,

z Other ancient authorities read *of which*
a Gk *but they* b Gk *they*

Philo *Contemplative Life* 7). **15.8** *When the time comes to return the souls that were borrowed*, a very popular Platonic image (*Timaeus* 42E; cf. Pseudo-Phocylides *The Sentences* 106; Josephus *Jewish War* 3.372–74; Philo *On Abraham* 257 and frequently; Lk 12.20). **15.12** For the metaphor of *an idle game*, cf. Plato *Laws* 644D; Cicero *On Duties* 1.103; Qur'an 57.19. Life as a *festival* is another widespread motif (Epictetus *Discourses* 4.1.105; Cicero *Tusculans* 5.9). *However one can, even by base means*, another commonplace (Sophocles *Antigone* 312; Horace *Epistles* 1.1.65; Philo *Every Good Man Is Free* 65). **15.19** *Escaped both the praise of God and his blessing*, not a Jewish teaching; the author seems to be alluding to a characteristic Zoroastrian doctrine.

16.1–4 The second antithesis (see note on 11.1–14): the Egyptians hunger but Israel enjoys exotic quail food. The author has adapted the biblical version of this event (Num 11) to serve his

and were tormented by a
multitude of animals.
2 Instead of this punishment you
showed kindness to your
people,
and you prepared quails to eat,
a delicacy to satisfy the desire of
appetite;
3 in order that those people, when
they desired food,
might lose the least remnant of
appetite[c]
because of the odious creatures
sent to them,
while your people,[d] after
suffering want a short time,
might partake of delicacies.
4 For it was necessary that upon
those oppressors
inescapable want should
come,
while to these others it was
merely shown how their
enemies were being
tormented.

The Bronze Serpent

5 For when the terrible rage of wild
animals came upon your
people[e]
and they were being destroyed by
the bites of writhing
serpents,
your wrath did not continue to
the end;
6 they were troubled for a little
while as a warning,
and received a symbol of
deliverance to remind them
of your law's command.

7 For the one who turned toward it
was saved, not by the thing
that was beheld,
but by you, the Savior of all.
8 And by this also you convinced
our enemies
that it is you who deliver from
every evil.
9 For they were killed by the bites
of locusts and flies,
and no healing was found for
them,
because they deserved to be
punished by such things.
10 But your children were not
conquered even by the
fangs of venomous
serpents,
for your mercy came to their help
and healed them.
11 To remind them of your oracles
they were bitten,
and then were quickly delivered,
so that they would not fall into
deep forgetfulness
and become unresponsive[f] to
your kindness.
12 For neither herb nor poultice
cured them,
but it was your word, O Lord,
that heals all people.
13 For you have power over life and
death;
you lead mortals down to the
gates of Hades and back
again.
14 A person in wickedness kills
another,
but cannot bring back the
departed spirit,
or set free the imprisoned
soul.

The Israelites Receive Manna

15 To escape from your hand is
impossible;

c Gk *loathed the necessary appetite* d Gk *they*
e Gk *them* f Meaning of Gk uncertain

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own purposes by omitting all mention of the people's murmuring and gluttony and the divine anger that culminated in the destruction of many of them.

16.5–14 The third antithesis (see note on 11.1–14). **16.6** *A symbol of deliverance*, the bronze serpent (Num 21.9). Philo similarly interprets the serpent of Moses as a symbol of steadfast endurance (*On Husbandry* 98). Cf. Jn 3.14; Justin *First Apology* 60. **16.7** The author replaces the principle of homeopathic magic that appears to be operative in Num 21.8–9 with a spiritual conception (a similar interpretation is in *Mishnah Rosh ha-Shanah* 3.8). **16.13** Cf. 1 Sam 2.6; Tob 13.2.

16.15–29 The fourth antithesis (see note on 11.1–14): the Egyptians are plagued by thunderstorms (Ex 9.13–26), but Israel is fed by manna

16 for the ungodly, refusing to know you,
were flogged by the strength of your arm,
pursued by unusual rains and hail and relentless storms,
and utterly consumed by fire.
17 For—most incredible of all—in water, which quenches all things,
the fire had still greater effect,
for the universe defends the righteous.
18 At one time the flame was restrained,
so that it might not consume the creatures sent against the ungodly,
but that seeing this they might know
that they were being pursued by the judgment of God;
19 and at another time even in the midst of water it burned more intensely than fire,
to destroy the crops of the unrighteous land.
20 Instead of these things you gave your people food of angels,
and without their toil you supplied them from heaven with bread ready to eat,
providing every pleasure and suited to every taste.
21 For your sustenance manifested your sweetness toward your children;
and the bread, ministering[g] to the desire of the one who took it,
was changed to suit everyone's liking.
22 Snow and ice withstood fire without melting,
so that they might know that the crops of their enemies
were being destroyed by the fire that blazed in the hail
and flashed in the showers of rain;
23 whereas the fire,[h] in order that the righteous might be fed,
even forgot its native power.

24 For creation, serving you who made it,
exerts itself to punish the unrighteous,
and in kindness relaxes on behalf of those who trust in you.
25 Therefore at that time also, changed into all forms,
it served your all-nourishing bounty,
according to the desire of those who had need,[i]
26 so that your children, whom you loved, O Lord, might learn
that it is not the production of crops that feeds humankind
but that your word sustains those who trust in you.
27 For what was not destroyed by fire
was melted when simply warmed by a fleeting ray of the sun,
28 to make it known that one must rise before the sun to give you thanks,
and must pray to you at the dawning of the light;
29 for the hope of an ungrateful person will melt like wintry frost,
and flow away like waste water.

g Gk *and it, ministering* *h* Gk *this* *i* Or *who made supplication*

(Ex 16; Num 11.7–9). **16.18** *At one time.* The author appears to assume that the plagues of frogs, flies, gnats, locusts and hail were simultaneous, thus contradicting the biblical narrative. Although there were varying traditions concerning the number and order of the plagues, there is no known parallel to our author's particular scheme. **16.20** *Food of angels* reflects the unusual phrase *lechem abbirim* (lit. "bread of the mighty ones"), which in Ps 78.25 is translated by the Septuagint as "bread of angels" (cf. *Babylonian Talmud Yoma* 75b). *Suited to every taste.* See *Mekilta* on Ex 16.23; *Babylonian Talmud Yoma* 75a. **16.26** An adaptation of Deut 8.3. **16.28** *To make it known,* another example of the author's eagerness to uncover the symbolic meaning behind the physical events narrated in scripture; see also note on 10.12. *At the dawning of the light.* Cf. *Babylonian Talmud Berakot* 9b; Josephus *Jewish War* 2.128; Philo *Contemplative Life* 89.

Terror Strikes the Egyptians at Night

17 Great are your judgments and hard to describe;
therefore uninstructed souls have gone astray.
2 For when lawless people supposed that they held the holy nation in their power,
they themselves lay as captives of darkness and prisoners of long night,
shut in under their roofs, exiles from eternal providence.
3 For thinking that in their secret sins they were unobserved
behind a dark curtain of forgetfulness,
they were scattered, terribly[j] alarmed,
and appalled by specters.
4 For not even the inner chamber that held them protected them from fear,
but terrifying sounds rang out around them,
and dismal phantoms with gloomy faces appeared.
5 And no power of fire was able to give light,
nor did the brilliant flames of the stars
avail to illumine that hateful night.
6 Nothing was shining through to them
except a dreadful, self-kindled fire,
and in terror they deemed the things that they saw
to be worse than that unseen appearance.
7 The delusions of their magic art lay humbled,
and their boasted wisdom was scornfully rebuked.
8 For those who promised to drive off the fears and disorders of a sick soul
were sick themselves with ridiculous fear.
9 For even if nothing disturbing frightened them,
yet, scared by the passing of wild animals and the hissing of snakes
10 they perished in trembling fear,
refusing to look even at the air, though it nowhere could be avoided.
11 For wickedness is a cowardly thing, condemned by its own testimony;[k]
distressed by conscience, it has always exaggerated[l] the difficulties.
12 For fear is nothing but a giving up of the helps that come from reason;
13 and hope, defeated by this inward weakness,
prefers ignorance of what causes the torment.
14 But throughout the night, which was really powerless

j Other ancient authorities read *unobserved, they were darkened behind a dark curtain of forgetfulness, terribly* *k* Meaning of Gk uncertain *l* Other ancient authorities read *anticipated*

17.1–18.4 In this elaborate antithesis, the fifth (see note on 11.1–14), the author employs all his rhetorical skill to provide readers with a living impression of the psychological terror occasioned by the plague of darkness (Ex 10.21–23). He deftly moves from the physical contrast between darkness and light to the spiritual one that sees in the Egyptians moral villains obsessed with a bad conscience and in Israel ethical heroes destined to illumine the world with the light of the Torah. He was undoubtedly influenced by the literary genre of the "descent into Hades." The rabbis similarly identified the darkness that plagued the Egyptians as coming from Gehenna (*Exodus Rabbah* 14.2). **17.2** *Lawless people*, the Egyptians. **17.3** Another example of the principle of talion: the Egyptians sought to conceal their sins in darkness and were therefore plagued by darkness. *Appalled by specters.* Cf. Sir 40.5–7. **17.10** *The air*, better "the dark haze." The haze (Greek *aēr*) in which Apollo hides Hector is described in the *Iliad* (20.446) as thick, and Achilles strikes it three times with his spear. **17.11** *Distressed by conscience.* The same phrase appears in *Testament of Reuben* 4.3. The notion of conscience (*syneidēsis*) appears in the writings of the Greek poets and popular moralists, such as Euripides and Menander, and above all in the Epicurean stress on the pangs of conscience suffered by the guilty (Lucretius *On the Nature of Things* 3.1018). **17.14** *From the recesses of powerless Hades.* Cf. Apollonius of Rhodes *Argonautica* 4.1694–1700.

and which came upon them from
the recesses of powerless
Hades,
they all slept the same sleep,
15 and now were driven by
monstrous specters,
and now were paralyzed by their
souls' surrender;
for sudden and unexpected fear
overwhelmed them.
16 And whoever was there fell
down,
and thus was kept shut up in a
prison not made of iron;
17 for whether they were farmers or
shepherds
or workers who toiled in the
wilderness,
they were seized, and endured
the inescapable fate;
for with one chain of darkness
they all were bound.
18 Whether there came a whistling
wind,
or a melodious sound of birds in
wide-spreading branches,
or the rhythm of violently
rushing water,
19 or the harsh crash of rocks
hurled down,
or the unseen running of leaping
animals,
or the sound of the most savage
roaring beasts,
or an echo thrown back from a
hollow of the mountains,
it paralyzed them with terror.
20 For the whole world was
illumined with brilliant
light,
and went about its work
unhindered,
21 while over those people alone
heavy night was spread,
an image of the darkness that was
destined to receive them;
but still heavier than darkness
were they to themselves.

18 But for your holy ones there
was very great light.
Their enemies[m] heard their
voices but did not see their
forms,
and counted them happy for not
having suffered,
2 and were thankful that your holy
ones,[n] though previously
wronged, were doing them
no injury;
and they begged their pardon for
having been at variance
with them.[n]
3 Therefore you provided a
flaming pillar of fire
as a guide for your people's[o]
unknown journey,
and a harmless sun for their
glorious wandering.
4 For their enemies[p] deserved to
be deprived of light and
imprisoned in darkness,
those who had kept your children
imprisoned,
through whom the imperishable
light of the law was to be
given to the world.

The Death of the Egyptian Firstborn

5 When they had resolved to kill
the infants of your holy
ones,
and one child had been
abandoned and rescued,
you in punishment took away a
multitude of their children;
and you destroyed them all
together by a mighty flood.

m Gk *They* *n* Meaning of Gk uncertain
o Gk *their* *p* Gk *those persons*

17.17 *Workers who toiled in the wilderness.* A better translation might be "troubled laborer in the wilderness." Egyptian peasants crushed by taxes often withdrew into the desert where they led the life of outlaws. These flights became especially frequent under the Romans. **18.4** In Jewish-Hellenistic and rabbinic writings, Israel's acceptance of the Torah is understood to include an obligation to spread its teachings among the Gentiles (see 2 Esd 7.20–24; *Testament of Levi* 14.4; *2 Apocalypse of Baruch* 48.40; Pseudo-Philo *Biblical Antiquities* 11.1–2; *Mekilta* on Ex 20.2; Philo *Questions on Exodus* 2.41–42).

18.5–25 The sixth antithesis (see note on 11.1–14): the Egyptian firstborn are destroyed (Ex 11.1–12.32), but Israel is protected and glorified. **18.5** *One child,* Moses (Ex 1.22–2.10). *By a mighty flood.* The author returns to his favorite theme of measure for measure (cf. *Mekilta* on Ex

6 That night was made known
beforehand to our
ancestors,
so that they might rejoice in sure
knowledge of the oaths in
which they trusted.
7 The deliverance of the righteous
and the destruction of their
enemies
were expected by your people.
8 For by the same means by which
you punished our enemies
you called us to yourself and
glorified us.
9 For in secret the holy children of
good people offered
sacrifices,
and with one accord agreed to
the divine law,
so that the saints would share
alike the same things,
both blessings and dangers;
and already they were singing the
praises of the ancestors.[q]
10 But the discordant cry of their
enemies echoed back,
and their piteous lament for their
children was spread abroad.
11 The slave was punished with the
same penalty as the master,
and the commoner suffered the
same loss as the king;
12 and they all together, by the one
form[r] of death,
had corpses too many to count.
For the living were not sufficient
even to bury them,
since in one instant their most
valued children had been
destroyed.
13 For though they had disbelieved
everything because of their
magic arts,
yet, when their firstborn were
destroyed, they
acknowledged your people
to be God's child.
14 For while gentle silence
enveloped all things,
and night in its swift course was
now half gone,
15 your all-powerful word leaped
from heaven, from the
royal throne,
into the midst of the land that
was doomed,
a stern warrior
16 carrying the sharp sword of your
authentic command,
and stood and filled all things
with death,
and touched heaven while
standing on the earth.
17 Then at once apparitions in
dreadful dreams greatly
troubled them,
and unexpected fears assailed
them;
18 and one here and another there,
hurled down half dead,
made known why they were
dying;
19 for the dreams that disturbed
them forewarned them of
this,
so that they might not perish
without knowing why they
suffered.

20 The experience of death touched
also the righteous,
and a plague came upon the
multitude in the desert,
but the wrath did not long
continue.
21 For a blameless man was quick to
act as their champion;
he brought forward the shield of
his ministry,
prayer and propitiation by
incense;

q Other ancient authorities read *dangers, the ancestors already leading the songs of praise*
r Gk *name*

14.26; *Jubilees* 48.14). **18.6** *That night*, the well-known night on which the firstborn of the Egyptians were slain. *The oaths*. Cf. Ps 105.42–43. **18.9** *Singing the praises of the ancestors*. The writer attributes to those who partook of the first Passover a practice that developed in later days; see 2 Chr 30.21; *Jubilees* 49.6. **18.10** *The discordant cry of their enemies echoed back*. The rabbis draw the same contrast (*Mekilta* on Ex 13.4; Philo *Questions on Exodus* 1.3). **18.15** *Leaped from heaven . . . a stern warrior*. Athena, the personification of wisdom, is similarly described in the *Hymn to Athena* 5–9 and by Callimachus frag. 37. **18.16** *Touched heaven while standing on the earth*, a well-known Homeric image (*Iliad* 4.443; cf. 1 Chr 21.16; *Testament of Orpheus* 33–34; *Babylonian Talmud Chagiga* 13b; Philo *Confusion of Tongues* 113). **18.20** *A plague*. See Num 17.6–15. **18.21** *A blameless man*, Aaron.

he withstood the anger and put
an end to the disaster,
showing that he was your servant.
22 He conquered the wrath[s] not by
strength of body,
not by force of arms,
but by his word he subdued the
avenger,
appealing to the oaths and
covenants given to our
ancestors.
23 For when the dead had already
fallen on one another in
heaps,
he intervened and held back the
wrath,
and cut off its way to the living.
24 For on his long robe the whole
world was depicted,
and the glories of the ancestors
were engraved on the four
rows of stones,
and your majesty was on the
diadem upon his head.
25 To these the destroyer yielded,
these he[t] feared;
for merely to test the wrath was
enough.

The Red Sea

19 But the ungodly were assailed to
the end by pitiless anger,
for God[u] knew in advance even
their future actions:
2 how, though they themselves had
permitted[v] your people to
depart
and hastily sent them out,
they would change their minds
and pursue them.
3 For while they were still engaged
in mourning,
and were lamenting at the graves
of their dead,
they reached another foolish
decision,
and pursued as fugitives those
whom they had begged and
compelled to leave.
4 For the fate they deserved drew
them on to this end,
and made them forget what had
happened,
in order that they might fill up
the punishment that their
torments still lacked,
5 and that your people might
experience[w] an incredible
journey,
but they themselves might meet a
strange death.

6 For the whole creation in its
nature was fashioned anew,
complying with your commands,
so that your children[x] might be
kept unharmed.
7 The cloud was seen
overshadowing the camp,
and dry land emerging where
water had stood before,
an unhindered way out of the
Red Sea,
and a grassy plain out of the
raging waves,
8 where those protected by your
hand passed through as
one nation,
after gazing on marvelous
wonders.
9 For they ranged like horses,
and leaped like lambs,
praising you, O Lord, who
delivered them.
10 For they still recalled the events
of their sojourn,
how instead of producing animals
the earth brought forth
gnats,
and instead of fish the river
spewed out vast numbers of
frogs.
11 Afterward they saw also a new
kind[y] of birds,

s Cn: Gk *multitude* t Other ancient authorities read *they* u Gk *he* v Other ancient authorities read *had changed their minds to permit* w Other ancient authorities read *accomplish* x Or *servants* y Or *production*

18.24 *The whole world* alludes to a widespread Stoic-Cynic notion that the true temple is the universe itself (Cicero *Nature of the Gods* 3.26; Philo *Special Laws* 1.66–97). *The diadem.* See Ex 28.36–38; *Babylonian Talmud Shabbat* 63b. **18.25** *The destroyer.* Cf. 1 Cor 10.10.

19.1–12 The seventh antithesis (see note on 11.1–14): the Egyptians are drowned in the sea, but Israel passes through safely (Ex 14). **19.1** *The ungodly,* the Egyptians. **19.7** *A grassy plain,* a legendary elaboration of the biblical narrative. **19.9** *Leaped like lambs.* See Ps 114.4.

when desire led them to ask for
luxurious food;
12 for, to give them relief, quails
came up from the sea.

The Punishment of the Egyptians

13 The punishments did not come
upon the sinners
without prior signs in the violence
of thunder,
for they justly suffered because of
their wicked acts;
for they practiced a more bitter
hatred of strangers.
14 Others had refused to receive
strangers when they came
to them,
but these made slaves of guests
who were their benefactors.
15 And not only so—but, while
punishment of some sort
will come upon the former
for having received strangers with
hostility,
16 the latter, having first received
them with festal
celebrations,
afterward afflicted with terrible
sufferings
those who had already shared the
same rights.
17 They were stricken also with loss
of sight—
just as were those at the door of
the righteous man—
when, surrounded by yawning
darkness,
all of them tried to find the way
through their own doors.

A New Harmony in Nature

18 For the elements changed[z]
places with one another,
as on a harp the notes vary the
nature of the rhythm,
while each note remains the
same.[a]
This may be clearly inferred from
the sight of what took
place.
19 For land animals were
transformed into water
creatures,
and creatures that swim moved
over to the land.
20 Fire even in water retained its
normal power,
and water forgot its
fire-quenching nature.
21 Flames, on the contrary, failed to
consume
the flesh of perishable creatures
that walked among them,
nor did they melt[b] the
crystalline, quick-melting
kind of heavenly food.

Conclusion

22 For in everything, O Lord, you
have exalted and glorified
your people,
and you have not neglected to
help them at all times and
in all places.

z Gk *changing* *a* Meaning of Gk uncertain
b Cn: Gk *nor could be melted*

19.13–17 Egypt is more blameworthy than Sodom. **19.13** *Sinners*, the Egyptians. In applying the term *hatred of strangers* to the Egyptians, the author is reversing the very charge made against the Jews by the pagan world (Diodorus of Sicily *History* 34.1; Josephus *Against Apion* 2.95). **19.14** *Others*, the Sodomites (Gen 19). *Guests*. The Israelites had been invited to Egypt (Gen 45.17–18). *Benefactors*, a reference to Joseph's services. **19.16** The reference to *festal celebrations* and civic *rights* represents an amplification of Gen 45.18; 47.2–12 (the same point is made in Philo *Moses* 1.34–36). **19.17** *Loss of sight*. See Ex 14.20. *Righteous man*, Lot.

19.18–21 Transposition of the elements. **19.18** *For the elements ... remains the same*. The precise meaning is uncertain, but the following translation yields a satisfactory sense: "the elements were transposed, as on a harp the notes vary the key while holding to the melody." The reference is to the variation of a musical key by the transposition of the notes within it, and the analogous heightening or lowering of the tension of the elements through a change in the proportions of fire and air constituting their *pneumata* or breath currents, in accordance with Stoic physical theory (cf. 16.24).

19.22 Concluding doxology or formula of praise to God. Including a doxology was a practice common in Jewish religious literature. See Ps 150; Tob 14.15; Sir 51.30; 3 Macc 7.23; 4 Macc 18.24.

ECCLESIASTICUS, OR THE WISDOM OF JESUS SON OF

SIRACH

Author and Title

SIRACH TAKES ITS TITLE FROM the name of its author, Jesus son of Eleazar son of Sirach, given in the signature (50.27). The name Jesus, a Greek transliteration of the Hebrew *Yeshu'a*, is also mentioned in the prologue written by his grandson on the occasion of his translation of the book into Greek. In rabbinic tradition through the eleventh century the book was frequently referred to as "The Book (or Instruction) of Ben Sira." In Christian tradition the book has been referred to as "The Wisdom (or Book) of Jesus son of Sirach" (most Greek and Old Latin manuscripts) or as "Ecclesiasticus," a title found in many Latin Vulgate manuscripts meaning "churchly" or "belonging to the church."

Text and Canon

Ben Sira's book of wisdom was eagerly read and widely used as a handbook for study and instruction in educational settings. It was copied many times over in Hebrew and in its Greek, Latin, and Syriac translations. In the course of its transmission, as was customary with collections of proverbial material, teachers felt free to add explanatory notes, compare translations, revise and retranslate difficult sayings, and even add to the collection. The variant readings given in the NRSV text notes as well as the added verses and italicized material given in the text in chs. 26 and 51 are only some of the more obvious instances of important differences among the various manuscript traditions.

Portions of the Hebrew text have been found at Masada and Qumran dating from the first centuries B.C.E. and C.E., but the major Hebrew texts were found late last century in the Cairo synagogue *genizah*, or "storeroom," dating from the eleventh and twelfth centuries. When combined, these manuscripts provide a Hebrew text for approximately two-thirds of the book. The Greek, Syriac, and Latin translations, on the other hand, provide complete texts. The reason is that Sirach was included in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures, and thus was preserved in the canon of the Christian church. Because of differences between the Jewish and Christian canons of the Hebrew scriptures,

Sirach has been assigned to the Apocrypha by Protestants and to the deuterocanonical writings by Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches. The NRSV translation is based on a critical comparison of the Hebrew manuscripts with the Greek text edited by Joseph Ziegler in the Göttingen edition of the Septuagint.

Date and Times

Ben Sira, a teacher in Jerusalem, wrote sometime between 200 and 180 B.C.E., in the shadow of the shift in hegemony that occurred in 198 B.C.E. when the Seleucid successors to Alexander the Great in Antioch wrested control of Judea from the Ptolemies of Egypt. In ch. 50 Ben Sira mentions the high priest Simon son of Onias (50.1) as if he were a contemporary who had recently died, and in the prologue his grandson reports that he moved to Egypt in the thirty-eighth year of the reign of (Ptolemy) Euergetes ("Benefactor"). Simon II, "The Just," was high priest from 219 to 196 B.C.E., and the grandson's arrival in Egypt can be dated at 132 B.C.E. Taking two generations into account and noting that Sirach contains no allusions to the Maccabean-Seleucid conflict that broke out under Antiochus IV in 175–164 B.C.E., Ben Sira must have completed his writings by 180 B.C.E.

Trouble was already brewing, nonetheless, for the Jews in Jerusalem. The Seleucid victory aggravated two issues that had been threatening the Jewish social system: the rule of foreign kings (hegemony) and the intrusion of an alien culture (Hellenism). Combined with conflicts internal to the aspirations of leading priestly families who jockeyed for patronage between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids, these threats set the stage for the wars and bloody intrigues that soon broke out under Antiochus IV.

Sirach clearly reflects Ben Sira's assessment of these threats to the Jewish temple system and way of life, but he does not address them directly. Instead, he offers a book of instruction that assumes the integrity and glory of the Jewish way of life, a way of life to which he was fully committed and to which he devoted his life as a scholar and teacher. Social and cultural threats are handled obliquely by allusion, repeated emphasis upon injunctions related to critical social relations, and warnings about foreign rulers and strangers.

Content and Achievement

Ben Sira's achievement was to combine the learning typical for the ancient Near Eastern and Israelite wisdom traditions with the commandments of Moses found in the Torah ("instruction," regularly translated "law"). He did this, moreover, in the interest of supporting the Second Temple system of governance with its priestly codes of law and sacrifice. The term he uses to combine the wisdom of Proverbs with the law of Moses is the "fear of the Lord," a term capable of naming an ethical piety appropriate to the culture of Second Temple Judaism.

Ben Sira's intellectual achievement is demonstrated by his knowledge and employment of a large literature. His study of the Hebrew scriptures is mentioned in the prologue. Allusions to this literature throughout Sirach show that he was acquainted with all of the books now contained in the Hebrew Bible except Ezra, Daniel, Esther, and Ruth. He also shows knowledge of Greek and Egyptian literature and thought. His achievement was to draw upon this learning to create a conceptual framework in support of an ethic of Jewish piety for Second Temple times.

Literary Forms

Ben Sira combines proverbs and precepts in compositions typical for Hebrew poetry. Parallel lines (or bicola) are used creatively in various combinations to yield units of poetry with thematic and rhetorical coherence. He also wrote hymns of praise on the model of Hebrew psalms and prayers, as well as narrative, autobiographical, and exegetical poems on a wide range of topics. Among his more famous accomplishments are a number of poems in praise of the personified figure of wisdom and the long epic poem in chs. 44–50 in praise of the ancestral fathers.

The book as a whole does not have a tight structure. However, the wisdom poem in ch. 1 works well as an introduction, and the first several chapters show signs of deliberate design and sequence. There also seems to be some design to the sequence and placement of the wisdom poems in the first half of the book, through ch. 24, as well as purpose to the position of the hymn in praise of the fathers at the end of the book. Many smaller units are highly crafted and arranged in sequences to form larger coherent sections. But the nature of the material in this large collection of wisdom proverbs and poetry prohibits neat organization and frustrates prolonged linear reading. It is doubtful that the book was meant to be read from beginning to end as if it developed a narrative or logical theme. It was a resource of instructional material meant to be used as a handbook for consultation in the preparation of lessons. *Burton Mack*

The Prologue

Many great teachings have been given to us through the Law and the Prophets and the others[a] that followed them, and for these we should praise Israel for instruction and wisdom. Now, those who read the scriptures must not only themselves understand them, but must also as lovers of learning be able through the spoken and written word to help the outsiders. So my grandfather Jesus, who had devoted himself especially to the reading of the Law and the Prophets and the other books of our ancestors, and had acquired considerable proficiency in them, was himself also led to write something pertaining to instruction and wisdom, so that by becoming familiar also with his book[b] those who love learning might make even greater progress in living according to the law.

You are invited therefore to read it with goodwill and attention, and to be indulgent in cases where, despite our diligent labor in translating, we may seem to have rendered some phrases imperfectly. For what was originally expressed in Hebrew does not have exactly the same sense when translated into another language. Not only this book, but even the Law itself, the Prophecies, and the rest of the books differ not a little when read in the original.

When I came to Egypt in the thirty-eighth year of the reign of Euergetes and stayed for some time, I found opportunity for no little instruction.[c] It seemed highly necessary that I should myself devote some diligence and labor to the translation of this book. During that time I have applied my skill day and night to complete and publish the book for those living abroad who wished to gain learning and are disposed to live according to the law.

In Praise of Wisdom

1 All wisdom is from the Lord,
and with him it remains
forever.
2 The sand of the sea, the drops of
rain,
and the days of eternity—who
can count them?
3 The height of heaven, the
breadth of the earth,
the abyss, and wisdom[d]—who
can search them out?
4 Wisdom was created before all
other things,
and prudent understanding
from eternity.[e]
6 The root of wisdom—to whom
has it been revealed?
Her subtleties—who knows
them?[f]
8 There is but one who is wise,
greatly to be feared,

a Or *other books* *b* Gk *with these things* *c* Other ancient authorities read *I found a copy affording no little instruction* *d* Other ancient authorities read *the depth of the abyss* *e* Other ancient authorities add as verse 5, *The source of wisdom is God's word in the highest heaven, and her ways are the eternal commandments.* *f* Other ancient authorities add as verse 7, *The knowledge of wisdom—to whom was it manifested? And her abundant experience—who has understood it?*

Prologue The prologue was written by Ben Sira's grandson, who explains the importance of the book, the difficulty of translating it into Greek, and the circumstances of its publication for those living abroad. *The Law and the Prophets and the other books* refers to the Hebrew scriptures and is the earliest clear reference to such a threefold classification. *Instruction and wisdom* is a reference to the combination of Torah instruction and proverbial wisdom characteristic of the book. There may be an allusion to Deut 4.6. *Living according to the law* is a Greek formulation of the Jewish idiom "to keep (observe, or obey) the law."

1.1–10 A poem about personified wisdom as the creation of the Lord. It combines the theme of wisdom's hiddenness from humans (characteristic of Job 28) with the theme of wisdom's availability to humans (characteristic of Prov 8.22–25) and may be compared with the poem in Sir 24.1–12. Wisdom is personified in Job 28; Prov 1–9; Wis 6.12–10.21; Bar 3.9–37; the works of Philo of Alexandria; Jewish apocalyptic texts; Gnostic texts; and early Christian texts. **1.2–6** The rhetorical questions in these verses are typical of the theme of hidden wisdom, a theme that recurs throughout Sirach and in other literature. See 3.21–23; 16.20–22; 17.30; 18.4–7; 24.28–29; Job 28; Eccl 7.23–24; Wis 9.13–17; Bar 3.29–37. The questions imply that no one except the Lord has such knowledge. See Sir 42.18–21. **1.3** *Heaven . . . earth . . . abyss.* Wisdom is aligned with the horizons of the created world typical of ancient cosmology. **1.4** That wisdom was *created before all other things* is a recurring motif in the mythology

seated upon his throne—the
Lord.
9 It is he who created her;
he saw her and took her
measure;
he poured her out upon all his
works,
10 upon all the living according to
his gift;
he lavished her upon those who
love him.[g]

Fear of the Lord Is True Wisdom

11 The fear of the Lord is glory and
exultation,
and gladness and a crown of
rejoicing.
12 The fear of the Lord delights the
heart,
and gives gladness and joy and
long life.[h]
13 Those who fear the Lord will
have a happy end;
on the day of their death they
will be blessed.

14 To fear the Lord is the beginning
of wisdom;
she is created with the faithful
in the womb.
15 She made[i] among human beings
an eternal foundation,
and among their descendants
she will abide faithfully.
16 To fear the Lord is fullness of
wisdom;
she inebriates mortals with her
fruits;
17 she fills their[j] whole house with
desirable goods,
and their[j] storehouses with
her produce.
18 The fear of the Lord is the crown
of wisdom,
making peace and perfect
health to flourish.[k]
19 She rained down knowledge and
discerning comprehension,
and she heightened the glory of
those who held her fast.
20 To fear the Lord is the root of
wisdom,
and her branches are long
life.[l]

22 Unjust anger cannot be justified,
for anger tips the scale to one's
ruin.
23 Those who are patient stay calm
until the right moment,
and then cheerfulness comes
back to them.
24 They hold back their words until
the right moment;

g Other ancient authorities add *Love of the Lord is glorious wisdom; to those to whom he appears he apportions her, that they may see him.* *h* Other ancient authorities add *The fear of the Lord is a gift from the Lord; also for love he makes firm paths.* *i* Gk *made as a nest* *j* Other ancient authorities read *her* *k* Other ancient authorities add *Both are gifts of God for peace; glory opens out for those who love him. He saw her and took her measure.* *l* Other ancient authorities add as verse 21, *The fear of the Lord drives away sins; and where it abides, it will turn away all anger.*

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of personified wisdom. See Job 28.27; Prov 8.22; Wis 9.9; Bar 3.31, 36. **1.9** That the Lord *saw her and took her measure* makes use of an architectural image. The metaphor imagines wisdom as a model or plan for creating the world. Cf. Job 28.25–27; Prov 8.23, 30. **1.10** A relative contrast between the wisdom available to all humans and that lavished upon the pious Jews who keep the commandments. See 1.26.

1.11–30 A long poem of twenty-two bicola (the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet) is composed of a thesis statement that identifies wisdom with the fear of the Lord (v. 11), a shorter poem that draws upon wisdom metaphors to promise blessings and *long life* (vv. 12–20), a hint of the need for patience under testing (vv. 22–24), a definition of wisdom as the keeping of the commandments (vv. 25–27), and a warning about the dishonor that disobedience brings (vv. 28–30). The poem is programmatic and introduces many themes that recur throughout the book. **1.11** *Glory* and *crown*, metaphors common to personified wisdom, who exalts kings. See Prov 4.7–9; 8.15–16. **1.12–20** The metaphors of rain, tree, produce, health, happiness, and long life in this passage are typical of the poetry of personified wisdom and her "fruits" in Prov 1–9, Sirach, Wisdom of Solomon, and the works of Philo of Alexandria. *Long life* in vv. 12, 20 forms an *inclusio* (repetition of a phrase to mark the beginning and end of a unit). **1.14** Whereas the first line of this verse is traditional wisdom (Job 28.28; Ps 111.10; Prov 1.7; 9.10), *created with the faithful in the womb* plays on a prophetic tradition. See 49.7; Isa 44.24; Jer 1.5. **1.15** This allusion to wisdom's residence in Jerusalem is made explicit in 24.8–12. **1.23** *The right moment* (Greek *kairos*) is a concept distinctive to Sirach and its

then the lips of many tell of
their good sense.

25 In the treasuries of wisdom are
wise sayings,
but godliness is an abomination
to a sinner.
26 If you desire wisdom, keep the
commandments,
and the Lord will lavish her
upon you.
27 For the fear of the Lord is
wisdom and discipline,
fidelity and humility are his
delight.

28 Do not disobey the fear of the
Lord;
do not approach him with a
divided mind.
29 Do not be a hypocrite before
others,
and keep watch over your lips.
30 Do not exalt yourself, or you may
fall
and bring dishonor upon
yourself.
The Lord will reveal your secrets
and overthrow you before the
whole congregation,
because you did not come in the
fear of the Lord,
and your heart was full of
deceit.

Duties Toward God

2 My child, when you come to serve
the Lord,
prepare yourself for testing.[m]
2 Set your heart right and be
steadfast,
and do not be impetuous in
time of calamity.
3 Cling to him and do not
depart,
so that your last days may be
prosperous.
4 Accept whatever befalls you,
and in times of humiliation be
patient.
5 For gold is tested in the fire,
and those found acceptable, in
the furnace of
humiliation.[n]
6 Trust in him, and he will
help you;
make your ways straight, and
hope in him.

7 You who fear the Lord, wait for
his mercy;
do not stray, or else you may
fall.
8 You who fear the Lord, trust
in him,
and your reward will not be
lost.
9 You who fear the Lord, hope for
good things,
for lasting joy and mercy.[o]
10 Consider the generations of old
and see:
has anyone trusted in the Lord
and been disappointed?
Or has anyone persevered in the
fear of the Lord[p] and been
forsaken?
Or has anyone called upon him
and been neglected?

m Or *trials* *n* Other ancient authorities add *in sickness and poverty put your trust in him* *o* Other ancient authorities add *For his reward is an everlasting gift with joy.* *p* Gk *of him*

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mention here announces a theme. See note on 4.20. **1.30** *Dishonor* states the consequences of not adhering to wisdom piety; *the whole congregation* defines the social arena within which honor and shame functioned. Honor and shame were highly nuanced ethical categories in the cultures of antiquity, expressly elaborated in Greek tradition as signs of a person's virtue or lack of it. The theme of honor and shame courses through all of Sirach, but comes to express formulation in such sayings as 3.2–11; 4.21; 7.7; 10.19–11.6; 41.17–42.8. Cf. note on 39.10.

2.1–18 A poem of three stanzas introduces the theme of testing and elaborates on the need to remain obedient to the law. The theme of testing, or undergoing trial, is common in the OT and recurs throughout Sirach. See the wisdom poem in 6.18–31; cf. Gen 22; Gen 39–50; Job; Daniel; Wis 2.17. **2.1** *My child* is a typical introduction for a unit of instructional material in wisdom literature. It recurs periodically throughout Sirach. **2.10** *The generations of old* supply examples of the faithful. See Ben Sira's own list in chs. 44–50. **2.11** *Compassionate and merciful,* taken from Ex 34.6–7. The theme of the Lord's compassion is common in Psalms and the prophets. See Pss 86.5, 15; 103.3–4; 145.8–9; Joel 2.13. That the Lord *saves in time of distress* those who call upon him is

11 For the Lord is compassionate
and merciful;
he forgives sins and saves in
time of distress.

12 Woe to timid hearts and to slack
hands,
and to the sinner who walks a
double path!
13 Woe to the fainthearted who have
no trust!
Therefore they will have no
shelter.
14 Woe to you who have lost your
nerve!
What will you do when the
Lord's reckoning comes?

15 Those who fear the Lord do not
disobey his words,
and those who love him keep
his ways.
16 Those who fear the Lord seek to
please him,
and those who love him are
filled with his law.
17 Those who fear the Lord prepare
their hearts,
and humble themselves
before him.
18 Let us fall into the hands of the
Lord,
but not into the hands of
mortals;
for equal to his majesty is his
mercy,
and equal to his name are his
works.[q]

Duties Toward Parents

3 Listen to me your father,
O children;
act accordingly, that you may
be kept in safety.
2 For the Lord honors a father
above his children,
and he confirms a mother's
right over her children.
3 Those who honor their father
atone for sins,
4 and those who respect their
mother are like those who
lay up treasure.
5 Those who honor their father will
have joy in their own
children,
and when they pray they will be
heard.
6 Those who respect their father
will have long life,
and those who honor[r] their
mother obey the Lord;
7 they will serve their parents as
their masters.[s]
8 Honor your father by word and
deed,
that his blessing may come
upon you.
9 For a father's blessing strengthens
the houses of the children,
but a mother's curse uproots
their foundations.

q Syr: Gk lacks this line *r* Heb: Other ancient authorities read *comfort* *s* In other ancient authorities this line is preceded by *Those who fear the Lord honor their father,*

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another theme common to Psalms that recurs in Sirach. See 4.6; 11.12–13, 22; 21.5; 33.1; 34.15; 35.16–26; 39.33; 48.20; Ex 22.23; Pss 34; 57; 61; 81.7. Wisdom also rescues those in trouble (Wis 10.9). **2.14** *The Lord's reckoning* refers to times in life when accounts will be settled, usually in chastisement or punishment for wrongdoing. This is a traditional notion about divine rewards and punishment in support of piety and in answer to the question of why sinners prosper; it does not refer to a day of divine judgment after life or at the end of history. See 5.1–8; 16.5–23. **2.18** *Equal to his name* is a play on the Hebrew term "Merciful One" referring to the Lord in Ex 34.6.

3.1–16 A poem in three stanzas elaborates on the commandment to honor one's father and mother (Ex 20.12; Deut 5.16). Its position suggests that the preceding poem may have been written with the first commandment in mind. The connection between the "fear of the Lord" and the honor of one's parents is made in the first four verses and recurs as a conclusion, or period, in v. 16. **3.2** The curious formulation of this verse results from the desire to keep the Lord in view as the ultimate author of the commandment to honor one's parents. It nevertheless expresses the ranking basic to ancient Jewish family structure and ethic. **3.3** To *atone for sins*, or failures to keep the law, one could offer a sacrifice or perform an act of mercy such as almsgiving. Cf. note on 4.1–10; 28.5; 35.5. **3.4** To *lay up treasure*. See note on 29.11. In v. 14 such a kindness to a father will be *credited to you against your sins*; see note on 3.14. **3.6** *Long life*, an allusion to the reward for honoring parents in Ex 20.12; Deut 5.16, as well as a resonance with the long life promised by

10 Do not glorify yourself by
dishonoring your father,
for your father's dishonor is no
glory to you.
11 The glory of one's father is one's
own glory,
and it is a disgrace for children
not to respect their mother.

12 My child, help your father in his
old age,
and do not grieve him as long
as he lives;
13 even if his mind fails, be patient
with him;
because you have all your
faculties do not
despise him.
14 For kindness to a father will not
be forgotten,
and will be credited to you
against your sins;
15 in the day of your distress it will
be remembered in your
favor;
like frost in fair weather, your
sins will melt away.
16 Whoever forsakes a father is like
a blasphemer,
and whoever angers a mother is
cursed by the Lord.

Humility

17 My child, perform your tasks with
humility;[t]
then you will be loved by those
whom God accepts.
18 The greater you are, the more
you must humble yourself;
so you will find favor in the
sight of the Lord.[u]
20 For great is the might of the
Lord;
but by the humble he is
glorified.
21 Neither seek what is too difficult
for you,
nor investigate what is beyond
your power.
22 Reflect upon what you have been
commanded,
for what is hidden is not your
concern.
23 Do not meddle in matters that
are beyond you,
for more than you can
understand has been
shown you.
24 For their conceit has led many
astray,
and wrong opinion has
impaired their judgment.

25 Without eyes there is no light;
without knowledge there is no
wisdom.[v]
26 A stubborn mind will fare badly
at the end,
and whoever loves danger will
perish in it.
27 A stubborn mind will be
burdened by troubles,
and the sinner adds sin to sins.
28 When calamity befalls the proud,
there is no healing,
for an evil plant has taken root
in him.
29 The mind of the intelligent
appreciates proverbs,

t Heb: Gk *meekness* u Other ancient authorities add as verse 19, *Many are lofty and renowned, but to the humble he reveals his secrets.* v Heb: Other ancient authorities lack verse 25

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wisdom in Sir 1.12, 20. **3.9** For the importance of the *father's blessing*, cf. Gen 27.27–29 (Isaac); 48.15–20 (Israel); 49.8–12 (Jacob). **3.14** *Credited . . . against your sins* refers to the common view that God kept an account of one's sins and transgressions as well as one's deeds of mercy. See note on 28.1. **3.16** This harsh conclusion may allude to the death penalty prescribed for one who curses father or mother (cf. Ex 21.17; Lev 20.9; Prov 19.26). But it may also be Ben Sira's attempt to integrate an ethic of honor (wisdom) with his religious piety (fear of the Lord).

3.17–4.10 A longer poetic unit on humility and almsgiving brings the needy and society into view. It completes the triad of relationships under consideration in the first major section of the book (1.1–4.10): duties to God, family, and society. **3.17–29** Humility is the essential virtue, an attitude appropriate to all three traditions of thought combined in Ben Sira's ethical system: wisdom, Mosaic law, and temple worship. Cf. 2 Chr 7.14; Job 22.29; Prov 15.33; Mic 6.8. **3.21** *What is beyond your power* draws upon the theme of hidden wisdom as a way to express human limitation. See 18.4–7; Ps 131; Eccl 7.24. As developed in vv. 22–24, a subtle warning against Greek philosophy may also be implied. **3.27** *Adds sin to sins*, a reference to the (sinful)

and an attentive ear is the
desire of the wise.

Alms for the Poor

30 As water extinguishes a blazing fire,
so almsgiving atones for sin.
31 Those who repay favors give thought to the future;
when they fall they will find support.

Duties Toward the Poor and the Oppressed

4 My child, do not cheat the poor of their living,
and do not keep needy eyes waiting.
2 Do not grieve the hungry,
or anger one in need.
3 Do not add to the troubles of the desperate,
or delay giving to the needy.
4 Do not reject a suppliant in distress,
or turn your face away from the poor.
5 Do not avert your eye from the needy,
and give no one reason to curse you;
6 for if in bitterness of soul some should curse you,
their Creator will hear their prayer.

7 Endear yourself to the congregation;
bow your head low to the great.
8 Give a hearing to the poor,
and return their greeting politely.
9 Rescue the oppressed from the oppressor;
and do not be hesitant in giving a verdict.
10 Be a father to orphans,
and be like a husband to their mother;
you will then be like a son of the Most High,
and he will love you more than does your mother.

The Rewards of Wisdom

11 Wisdom teaches[w] her children
and gives help to those who seek her.
12 Whoever loves her loves life,
and those who seek her from early morning are filled with joy.
13 Whoever holds her fast inherits glory,
and the Lord blesses the place she[x] enters.
14 Those who serve her minister to the Holy One;
the Lord loves those who love her.
15 Those who obey her will judge the nations,
and all who listen to her will live secure.
16 If they remain faithful, they will inherit her;

w Heb Syr: Gk *exalts* *x* Or *he*

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presumption that sins make no difference. See 5.5. **3.30–31** *Almsgiving atones for sin,* the statement of a basic theme elaborated in the next section (4.1–10). On almsgiving see 7.10, 32–36; 12.3–7; 14.13; 17.22; 18.15; 29.1–20; 35.4; 40.17. Almsgiving was the cornerstone of Jewish social ethic at this time. See Tob 4.10–11.

4.1–10 An ancient standard for social justice lies behind this section: the care of widows, orphans, aliens, and the poor. This standard was used to measure the righteousness of a king's rule, the health of a society, and the piety of the individual Jew. It was basic for prophetic social critique. Cf. Ex 22.22; Lev 19.9–10; 23.22; Deut 10.18; 24.17–22; 27.19; Job 29.11–16; 31.13–22; Isa 1.17; Am 5.10–15; Zech 7.10; Tob 1.3, 8; Jas 1.27. See also Sir 35.16–19. **4.9** *Giving a verdict,* an indication that Ben Sira's students were being prepared for a legal vocation. See 38.31–33. This unit completes that first section of the book (1.1–4.10) concerned with the programmatic relation of wisdom to ethical piety.

4.11–31 A poem on personified wisdom as a teacher (vv. 11–19) introduces the topic of considered speech (vv. 20–31) and sets the stage for much of the material in chs. 5–6. **4.11–19** The poem echoes the speech of personified wisdom in Prov 1.20–9.6. **4.13** *The place she enters* is the temple (24.10–11) as her "house." Cf. Prov 9.1–6. **4.15** To *judge the nations* was a widespread ideal, namely, that the righteous wise ones would rule the world. Cf. Prov 8.15–16; 29.9; Wis 3.8; 9.12; Lk 22.30; 1 Cor 6.2. In the Greek tradition of popular philosophy the wise were the true

their descendants will also
obtain her.
17 For at first she will walk with
them on tortuous paths;
she will bring fear and dread
upon them,
and will torment them by her
discipline
until she trusts them,[y]
and she will test them with her
ordinances.
18 Then she will come straight back
to them again and gladden
them,
and will reveal her secrets to
them.
19 If they go astray she will forsake
them,
and hand them over to their
ruin.

20 Watch for the opportune time,
and beware of evil,
and do not be ashamed to be
yourself.
21 For there is a shame that leads
to sin,
and there is a shame that is
glory and favor.
22 Do not show partiality, to your
own harm,
or deference, to your downfall.
23 Do not refrain from speaking at
the proper moment,[z]
and do not hide your wisdom.[a]
24 For wisdom becomes known
through speech,
and education through the
words of the tongue.
25 Never speak against the truth,
but be ashamed of your
ignorance.
26 Do not be ashamed to confess
your sins,
and do not try to stop the
current of a river.
27 Do not subject yourself to a fool,
or show partiality to a ruler.
28 Fight to the death for truth,
and the Lord God will fight
for you.

29 Do not be reckless in your
speech,
or sluggish and remiss in your
deeds.
30 Do not be like a lion in your
home,
or suspicious of your servants.
31 Do not let your hand be stretched
out to receive
and closed when it is time to
give.

Precepts for Everyday Living

5 Do not rely on your wealth,
or say, "I have enough."
2 Do not follow your inclination
and strength
in pursuing the desires of your
heart.
3 Do not say, "Who can have power
over me?"
for the Lord will surely
punish you.

y Or *until they remain faithful in their heart*
z Heb: Gk *at a time of salvation* a So some Gk Mss and Heb Syr Lat: Other Gk Mss lack *and do not hide your wisdom*

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kings. **4.17** *At first,* the first stage of a two-stage process in education: first hard work, finally accomplishment (v. 18). In Greek tradition the standard metaphor for education (*paideia,* meaning both "education" and "culture") was sowing seed and cultivating vines. The labor of farming occurs as the metaphor of wisdom's discipline in 6.18–31. Here in 4.17–18 the metaphor of the *path* is used. Cf. Wis 6.13–16. The phrase *her ordinances* merges wisdom instruction with the commandments of the Torah as if the commandments were ordained by personified wisdom. Cf. Wis 6.18. **4.19** *She will forsake them,* reminiscent of Prov 1.24–32. **4.20–31** Negative injunctions now appear as an appropriate form of instruction. The common theme is considered speech, the goal of ancient education in both the ancient Near East and in Greece. See v. 24. The theme continues in chs. 5–6, interwoven with the codes of honor/shame and sin. **4.20** Watching for the *opportune time* refers to knowing when to speak, what to say on a specific occasion, and when to keep silent. See 1.23; 4.23; 20.7, 20. Proverbs were formulated as general statements, but in fact were observations on particular sets of circumstances ("cases"). Knowing when a proverb applied was also considered a mark of wisdom. See 20.20. **4.29** *Speech* and *deeds* are the two modes of human behavior that must correspond in a person of integrity.

5.1–6.4 A twenty-two-line poetic arrangement of warnings on the ruinous consequences

4 Do not say, "I sinned, yet what
has happened to me?"
for the Lord is slow to anger.
5 Do not be so confident of
forgiveness[b]
that you add sin to sin.
6 Do not say, "His mercy is great,
he will forgive[c] the multitude
of my sins,"
for both mercy and wrath are
with him,
and his anger will rest on
sinners.
7 Do not delay to turn back to the
Lord,
and do not postpone it from
day to day;
for suddenly the wrath of the
Lord will come upon you,
and at the time of punishment
you will perish.
8 Do not depend on dishonest
wealth,
for it will not benefit you on
the day of calamity.

9 Do not winnow in every wind,
or follow every path.[d]
10 Stand firm for what you know,
and let your speech be
consistent.
11 Be quick to hear,
but deliberate in answering.
12 If you know what to say, answer
your neighbor;
but if not, put your hand over
your mouth.

13 Honor and dishonor come from
speaking,
and the tongue of mortals may
be their downfall.

14 Do not be called
double-tongued[e]
and do not lay traps with your
tongue;
for shame comes to the thief,
and severe condemnation to the
double-tongued.
15 In great and small matters cause
no harm,[f]

6 1 and do not become an enemy
instead of a friend;
for a bad name incurs shame and
reproach;
so it is with the double-tongued
sinner.

2 Do not fall into the grip of
passion,[g]
or you may be torn apart as by
a bull.[h]
3 Your leaves will be devoured and
your fruit destroyed,
and you will be left like a
withered tree.
4 Evil passion destroys those who
have it,
and makes them the
laughingstock of their
enemies.

Friendship, False and True

5 Pleasant speech multiplies friends,
and a gracious tongue
multiplies courtesies.

b Heb: Gk *atonement* *c* Heb: Gk *he* (or *it*) *will atone for* *d* Gk adds *so it is with the double-tongued sinner* (see 6.1) *e* Heb: Gk *a slanderer*
f Heb Syr: Gk *be ignorant* *g* Heb: Meaning of Gk uncertain *h* Meaning of Gk uncertain

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of mistaken presumptions, wrong speech, and shameful behavior. **5.4** *Slow to anger,* a reference to Ex 34.6, a verse basic to a commonly held understanding of the relationship between the Lord's wrath and mercy. **5.7** *The time of punishment,* any experience of ruin, shame, or destruction as a moment of divine retribution; see 16.5–23. **5.9** Metaphors of behavior without principle. **5.12** *Put your hand over your mouth,* an idiomatic gesture common to Egypt and Israel indicating discretionary silence, whether in respect, admission of ignorance, or regret. Cf. Job 21.5; Prov 30.32; Wis 8.12. **5.14** *Double-tongued,* a common idiom for deceitful speech, slander, and gossip. See 28.13. *The thief,* one who "robs" another's good reputation, i.e., a slanderer.

6.5–17 A unit that contrasts true and false friends shifts the preceding reflections on integrity away from the student and focuses upon one's associates. Friendship was an important concept in social relations during the Hellenistic period. See 9.10; 11.29–14.2; 22.19–26; 37.1–6. In Greek literature of the time, a friend was one who remained true in times of distress and could therefore be trusted with one's official or private interests and affairs. This unit completes a section of instructions and admonitions concerned with situations that test one's resolve, integrity, and capacity for making judgments in keeping with wisdom piety (4.11–6.17).

6 Let those who are friendly with
you be many,
but let your advisers be one in
a thousand.
7 When you gain friends, gain
them through testing,
and do not trust them hastily.
8 For there are friends who are
such when it suits them,
but they will not stand by you
in time of trouble.
9 And there are friends who
change into enemies,
and tell of the quarrel to your
disgrace.
10 And there are friends who sit at
your table,
but they will not stand by you
in time of trouble.
11 When you are prosperous, they
become your second self,
and lord it over your servants;
12 but if you are brought low, they
turn against you,
and hide themselves from you.
13 Keep away from your enemies,
and be on guard with your
friends.

14 Faithful friends are a sturdy
shelter:
whoever finds one has found a
treasure.
15 Faithful friends are beyond price;
no amount can balance their
worth.
16 Faithful friends are life-saving
medicine;
and those who fear the Lord
will find them.
17 Those who fear the Lord direct
their friendship aright,
for as they are, so are their
neighbors also.

Blessings of Wisdom

18 My child, from your youth choose
discipline,
and when you have gray hair
you will still find wisdom.
19 Come to her like one who plows
and sows,
and wait for her good harvest.
For when you cultivate her you
will toil but little,
and soon you will eat of her
produce.
20 She seems very harsh to the
undisciplined;
fools cannot remain with her.
21 She will be like a heavy stone to
test them,
and they will not delay in
casting her aside.
22 For wisdom is like her name;
she is not readily perceived by
many.

23 Listen, my child, and accept my
judgment;
do not reject my counsel.
24 Put your feet into her fetters,
and your neck into her collar.
25 Bend your shoulders and
carry her,
and do not fret under her
bonds.
26 Come to her with all your soul,
and keep her ways with all your
might.
27 Search out and seek, and she will
become known to you;
and when you get hold of her,
do not let her go.
28 For at last you will find the rest
she gives,
and she will be changed into
joy for you.

6.18–37 A twenty-two-line poem on personified wisdom elaborating on the theme of discipline first, honors at last. Cf. 4.17–19. The first stanza (vv. 18–22) emphasizes the harshness of wisdom's discipline; the second (vv. 23–31) promises rewards for those who accept it; and the last (vv. 32–37) applies the metaphors to the teacher-student relationship. **6.19** *Toil but little* draws upon the common Greek maxim: "The root of education is bitter (referring to toil), but the fruit is sweet (referring to honor and accomplishment)." On toiling with wisdom, cf. Wis 8.7; 9.10. On toiling but little, see Sir 51.27. **6.22** *Like her name* refers to a wordplay on the Hebrew *musar* meaning "instruction," which can also be used to mean "withdrawn," a subtle reference to the hiddenness of personified wisdom. The twofold reference to both wisdom and instruction (or discipline) in vv. 18, 22 forms a poetic unit, or period. **6.23–31** The two stages of education are described as toiling under wisdom's yoke as one who plows (vv. 23–27), followed by a change of status as one who appears in the garments of a royal priest (vv. 28–31). **6.24** On wisdom's *collar*, or yoke (vv. 24–25, 29–30), see 51.26; Mt 11.29–30. **6.26** *With all your soul . . . and might.*

29 Then her fetters will become for
you a strong defense,
and her collar a glorious robe.
30 Her yoke[i] is a golden ornament,
and her bonds a purple cord.
31 You will wear her like a glorious
robe,
and put her on like a splendid
crown.[j]

32 If you are willing, my child, you
can be disciplined,
and if you apply yourself you
will become clever.
33 If you love to listen you will gain
knowledge,
and if you pay attention you
will become wise.
34 Stand in the company of the
elders.
Who is wise? Attach yourself to
such a one.
35 Be ready to listen to every godly
discourse,
and let no wise proverbs
escape you.
36 If you see an intelligent person,
rise early to visit him;
let your foot wear out his
doorstep.
37 Reflect on the statutes of the
Lord,
and meditate at all times on his
commandments.
It is he who will give insight to[k]
your mind,
and your desire for wisdom will
be granted.

Miscellaneous Advice

7 Do no evil, and evil will never
overtake you.
2 Stay away from wrong, and it will
turn away from you.
3 Do[l] not sow in the furrows of
injustice,
and you will not reap a
sevenfold crop.

4 Do not seek from the Lord high
office,
or the seat of honor from the
king.
5 Do not assert your righteousness
before the Lord,
or display your wisdom before
the king.
6 Do not seek to become a judge,
or you may be unable to root
out injustice;
you may be partial to the
powerful,
and so mar your integrity.
7 Commit no offense against the
public,
and do not disgrace yourself
among the people.

8 Do not commit a sin twice;
not even for one will you go
unpunished.
9 Do not say, "He will consider the
great number of my gifts,
and when I make an offering
to the Most High God, he
will accept it."
10 Do not grow weary when you
pray;
do not neglect to give alms.
11 Do not ridicule a person who is
embittered in spirit,

i Heb: Gk *Upon her* *j* Heb: Gk *crown of gladness*
k Heb: Gk *will confirm* *l* Gk *My child, do*

Cf. Deut 6.5. **6.30–31** For *a purple cord*, cf. Num 15.38–39. On the glorious *robe* and *crown*, see 50.11; Prov 4.8–9. **6.32–37** This stanza applies the preceding metaphors to enrollment as a student in the *company of the elders*, or wise teachers, whose intelligence encompasses both proverbial wisdom and the law. On the elders as sages, cf. 8.8–9. **6.34** *Attach yourself to such a one* may reflect the Greek custom of becoming a student of a particular teacher, but it is also reminiscent of later rabbinic practice. This may be an early bit of evidence for such an institution of education in formative Judaism. See note on 51.23.

7.1–9.16 A long section of warning and advice characterized by negative injunctions (*Do not* . . .), frequently interspersed with motive clauses (*For* . . . in the sense of "because"). The structure is loose, but generally consists of small units organized around relationships to particular classes of people. **7.4–7** This admonition against seeking high office in the court of a king or as a judge is most curious, since both offices were traditional goals of scribal education. It may simply be a caution against presumption, as in Prov 25.6–7, but appears to be a warning against cooperation with the Seleucids. Cf. 11.9. **7.8–14** Admonitions concerning careless performance of basic ritual and ethical prescriptions. On offerings, prayers,

for there is One who humbles
and exalts.
12 Do not devise[m] a lie against your
brother,
or do the same to a friend.
13 Refuse to utter any lie,
for it is a habit that results in
no good.
14 Do not babble in the assembly of
the elders,
and do not repeat yourself
when you pray.

15 Do not hate hard labor
or farm work, which was
created by the Most High.
16 Do not enroll in the ranks of
sinners;
remember that retribution does
not delay.
17 Humble yourself to the utmost,
for the punishment of the
ungodly is fire and
worms.[n]

Relations with Others

18 Do not exchange a friend for
money,
or a real brother for the gold
of Ophir.
19 Do not dismiss[o] a wise and good
wife,
for her charm is worth more
than gold.
20 Do not abuse slaves who work
faithfully,
or hired laborers who devote
themselves to their task.
21 Let your soul love intelligent
slaves;[p]
do not withhold from them
their freedom.

22 Do you have cattle? Look after
them;
if they are profitable to you,
keep them.
23 Do you have children? Discipline
them,
and make them obedient[q]
from their youth.
24 Do you have daughters? Be
concerned for their
chastity,[r]
and do not show yourself too
indulgent with them.
25 Give a daughter in marriage, and
you complete a great task;
but give her to a sensible man.
26 Do you have a wife who pleases
you?[s] Do not divorce her;
but do not trust yourself to one
whom you detest.

27 With all your heart honor your
father,
and do not forget the birth
pangs of your mother.
28 Remember that it was of your
parents[t] you were born;
how can you repay what they
have given to you?

29 With all your soul fear the Lord,
and revere his priests.
30 With all your might love your
Maker,

m Heb: Gk *plow* *n* Heb *for the expectation of mortals is worms* *o* Heb: Gk *deprive yourself of* *p* Heb *Love a wise slave as yourself* *q* Gk *bend their necks* *r* Gk *body* *s* Heb Syr lack *who pleases you* *t* Gk *them*

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and alms, see note on 35.1–13. **7.15–17** A set of three bicola on the virtue of labor. The translation follows the Greek text, which has partially obscured the logic of the Hebrew, especially in v. 16 where to *enroll in the ranks of sinners* is unclear. The original point was not to esteem oneself better than those who do manual labor (v. 16), but to practice humility in one's own (scribal, bureaucratic, or managerial) vocation (v. 17). **7.15** *Work* was considered good in the wisdom tradition and by Ben Sira. See 38.24–34. Labor is mentioned in the Decalog (Deut 5.13). But cf. Gen 2.15, where labor is a result of sin. *Created* translates the Greek; the Hebrew reads "assigned" or "allotted." Both terms are used to indicate human occupations that have their place in the world as God intended it to be. See 31.27; 38.1; 39.25; 40.1; 44.2. **7.17** The Hebrew does not contain any allusion to postmortem punishment or fire; the reference to *the punishment of the ungodly* and *fire* reveals the influence of Hellenistic eschatologies on those who translated Sirach into Greek.

7.18–28 Advice on managing one's household. **7.18** *Ophir*, a region on the lower western shore of the Red Sea, was famous for its gold. See 1 Kings 9.28; Job 28.16. **7.21** On giving *slaves* their *freedom*, see Ex 21.2; Deut 15.12.

and do not neglect his
ministers.
31 Fear the Lord and honor the
priest,
and give him his portion, as
you have been commanded:
the first fruits, the guilt offering,
the gift of the shoulders,
the sacrifice of sanctification,
and the first fruits of the
holy things.

32 Stretch out your hand to the
poor,
so that your blessing may be
complete.
33 Give graciously to all the living;
do not withhold kindness even
from the dead.
34 Do not avoid those who weep,
but mourn with those who
mourn.
35 Do not hesitate to visit the sick,
because for such deeds you will
be loved.
36 In all you do, remember the end
of your life,
and then you will never sin.

Prudence and Common Sense

8 Do not contend with the powerful,
or you may fall into their
hands.
2 Do not quarrel with the rich,
in case their resources outweigh
yours;
for gold has ruined many,
and has perverted the minds of
kings.
3 Do not argue with the loud of
mouth,
and do not heap wood on their
fire.

4 Do not make fun of one who is
ill-bred,
or your ancestors may be
insulted.
5 Do not reproach one who is
turning away from sin;
remember that we all deserve
punishment.
6 Do not disdain one who is old,
for some of us are also
growing old.
7 Do not rejoice over anyone's
death;
remember that we must all die.

8 Do not slight the discourse of the
sages,
but busy yourself with their
maxims;
because from them you will learn
discipline
and how to serve princes.
9 Do not ignore the discourse of
the aged,
for they themselves learned
from their parents;[u]
from them you learn how to
understand
and to give an answer when the
need arises.

10 Do not kindle the coals of
sinners,
or you may be burned in their
flaming fire.
11 Do not let the insolent bring you
to your feet,
or they may lie in ambush
against your words.
12 Do not lend to one who is
stronger than you;
but if you do lend anything,
count it as a loss.
13 Do not give surety beyond your
means;
but if you give surety, be
prepared to pay.

u Or *ancestors*

7.29–31 Wisdom piety includes honoring the *priests*. **7.31** On the priest's *portion*, see Ex 29.27; Lev 7.31–34; Deut 18.3; Num 18.8–20. **7.32–36** The wisdom ethic focuses on helping the *poor*. **7.33** The meaning of *kindness* toward the *dead* is unclear. It may refer to burial of the poor, a pious act. Cf. Tob 1.17.

8.1–19 Cautionary advice on dangerous relationships with a long list of character types and social roles. Caution is a constant theme underlying much of the advice in Sirach and many cautionary sayings have parallels in Egyptian wisdom literature. **8.3** To *heap wood on their fire* was a common metaphor for "fueling the flame" of a hothead, or person given to anger, a character type just the opposite of the "cool" person of wisdom. See 8.10; 28.10; cf. the Egyptian *Instruction of Amenemope*. **8.11** To *lie in ambush* was a com-

14 Do not go to law against a judge,
for the decision will favor him
because of his standing.
15 Do not go traveling with the
reckless,
or they will be burdensome
to you;
for they will act as they please,
and through their folly you will
perish with them.
16 Do not pick a fight with the
quick-tempered,
and do not journey with them
through lonely country,
because bloodshed means nothing
to them,
and where no help is at hand,
they will strike you down.
17 Do not consult with fools,
for they cannot keep a secret.
18 In the presence of strangers do
nothing that is to be kept
secret,
for you do not know what they
will divulge.[v]
19 Do not reveal your thoughts to
anyone,
or you may drive away your
happiness.[w]

Advice Concerning Women

9 Do not be jealous of the wife of
your bosom,
or you will teach her an evil
lesson to your own hurt.
2 Do not give yourself to a woman
and let her trample down your
strength.
3 Do not go near a loose woman,
or you will fall into her snares.
4 Do not dally with a singing girl,
or you will be caught by her
tricks.
5 Do not look intently at a virgin,
or you may stumble and incur
penalties for her.
6 Do not give yourself to
prostitutes,
or you may lose your
inheritance.
7 Do not look around in the streets
of a city,
or wander about in its deserted
sections.
8 Turn away your eyes from a
shapely woman,
and do not gaze at beauty
belonging to another;
many have been seduced by a
woman's beauty,
and by it passion is kindled like
a fire.
9 Never dine with another man's
wife,
or revel with her at wine;
or your heart may turn aside
to her,
and in blood[x] you may be
plunged into destruction.

Choice of Friends

10 Do not abandon old friends,
for new ones cannot equal
them.
A new friend is like new wine;

v Or *it will bring forth return a favor to you*
w Heb: Gk *and let him not*
x Heb: Gk *by your spirit*

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mon metaphor meaning to entrap. **8.18** To keep a *secret* refers to keeping a confidence, the mark of a true friend. The problem of betrayal by strangers and fools was of great concern to Ben Sira. See 1.30; 13.12; 19.7–12; 22.22; 27.16–21; 37.10; 42.1.

9.1–9 Warnings about seduction and sexual promiscuity. The male point of view prevails. The topic was both ancient and timely, given the heightened Jewish concern during this period for stable families and ethnic purity as ways to guarantee distinctive social identity. **9.3** *A loose woman* is mentioned in Prov 2.16–19; 5.3–6; 7.5–27; 9.13–18. **9.4** *A singing girl* implied an entertainer, customarily viewed as a prostitute in the Greek tradition of the banquet. Cf. Isa 23.15–16. **9.6** *Lose your inheritance* is unclear but may mean "squander." Cf. Prov 29.3. **9.9** To *dine with another man's wife* was considered risky. Greek practice frowned upon the presence of wives at meals where guests were invited. Ben Sira knew about the Greek convention of the banquet and its after-dinner symposium. Sirach does not include warnings about women in attendance in the description of mealtime etiquette in 31.12–32.13. *Plunged into destruction* may refer to the death penalty for adultery (Lev 20.10; Deut 22.22).

9.10–16 Advice on associations with various classes of people serves as a subtle introduction to the discourse on those in positions of power in ch. 10. **9.10** On the theme of friendship and its

when it has aged, you can drink
it with pleasure.

11 Do not envy the success of
sinners,
for you do not know what their
end will be like.
12 Do not delight in what pleases the
ungodly;
remember that they will not be
held guiltless all their lives.

13 Keep far from those who have
power to kill,
and you will not be haunted by
the fear of death.
But if you approach them, make
no misstep,
or they may rob you of your
life.
Know that you are stepping
among snares,
and that you are walking on the
city battlements.

14 As much as you can, aim to know
your neighbors,
and consult with the wise.
15 Let your conversation be with
intelligent people,
and let all your discussion be
about the law of the Most
High.
16 Let the righteous be your dinner
companions,
and let your glory be in the
fear of the Lord.

Concerning Rulers

17 A work is praised for the skill of
the artisan;
so a people's leader is proved
wise by his words.
18 The loud of mouth are feared in
their city,
and the one who is reckless in
speech is hated.

10 A wise magistrate educates his
people,
and the rule of an intelligent
person is well ordered.
2 As the people's judge is, so are
his officials;
as the ruler of the city is, so are
all its inhabitants.
3 An undisciplined king ruins his
people,
but a city becomes fit to live in
through the understanding
of its rulers.
4 The government of the earth is
in the hand of the Lord,
and over it he will raise up the
right leader for the time.
5 Human success is in the hand of
the Lord,
and it is he who confers honor
upon the lawgiver.[y]

The Sin of Pride

6 Do not get angry with your
neighbor for every injury,
and do not resort to acts of
insolence.
7 Arrogance is hateful to the Lord
and to mortals,
and injustice is outrageous to
both.
8 Sovereignty passes from nation to
nation
on account of injustice and
insolence and wealth.[z]

y Heb: Gk *scribe* *z* Other ancient authorities add here or after verse 9a, *Nothing is more wicked than one who loves money, for such a person puts his own soul up for sale.*

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social and political significance, see note on 6.5–17. **9.11–12** *Sinners* and the *ungodly* may refer to foreigners as a class as well as to Jews who assimilate gentile ways. Cf. the picture of the ungodly in Wis 1.16–4.20 and the contrast between Jews and "Gentile sinners" in Gal 2.15. **9.13** *Those who have power to kill*, rulers and kings. Cf. Dan 2.5; 3.29; Lk 12.4.

9.17–10.5 This description of the ideal ruler may be a veiled polemic against Ptolemaic-Seleucid hegemony. The section breaks the pattern of negative injunctions and cautionary advice that predominates in chs. 7–9.

10.6–18 A discourse on the sin of pride directed toward those in power. A first stanza shows pride to be foolish in the light of human mortality (vv. 6–11). A second stanza forms a poetic unit on the consequences of pride because of its close relationship to sin (vv. 12–18). **10.8** *Insolence*, the Greek notion of arrogance and violence (*hubris*), is added to the Jewish concern for justice and a social critique of wealth as factors in the rise and fall of kingdoms. Insolence may be an oblique reference to Hellenistic ideologies of kings as gods.

9 How can dust and ashes be proud?
Even in life the human body decays.[a]
10 A long illness baffles the physician;[b]
the king of today will die tomorrow.
11 For when one is dead
he inherits maggots and vermin[c] and worms.
12 The beginning of human pride is to forsake the Lord;
the heart has withdrawn from its Maker.
13 For the beginning of pride is sin,
and the one who clings to it pours out abominations.
Therefore the Lord brings upon them unheard-of calamities,
and destroys them completely.
14 The Lord overthrows the thrones of rulers,
and enthrones the lowly in their place.
15 The Lord plucks up the roots of the nations,[d]
and plants the humble in their place.
16 The Lord lays waste the lands of the nations,
and destroys them to the foundations of the earth.
17 He removes some of them and destroys them,
and erases the memory of them from the earth.
18 Pride was not created for human beings,
or violent anger for those born of women.

Persons Deserving Honor

19 Whose offspring are worthy of honor?
Human offspring.
Whose offspring are worthy of honor?
Those who fear the Lord.
Whose offspring are unworthy of honor?
Human offspring.
Whose offspring are unworthy of honor?
Those who break the commandments.
20 Among family members their leader is worthy of honor,
but those who fear the Lord are worthy of honor in his eyes.[e]
22 The rich, and the eminent, and the poor—
their glory is the fear of the Lord.
23 It is not right to despise one who is intelligent but poor,
and it is not proper to honor one who is sinful.
24 The prince and the judge and the ruler are honored,
but none of them is greater than the one who fears the Lord.
25 Free citizens will serve a wise servant,

a Heb: Meaning of Gk uncertain *b* Heb Lat: Meaning of Gk uncertain *c* Heb: Gk *wild animals* *d* Other ancient authorities read *proud nations* *e* Other ancient authorities add as verse 21, *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of acceptance; obduracy and pride are the beginning of rejection.*

10.10 For the counterproposition that *the king . . . will die*, cf. Wis 7.5–6 in tension with Wis 8.19–20. **10.13** *Pride*, which might be called a secular vice, and *sin*, a culturally specific religious transgression, are joined. Because pride stems from sin it suffers the divine response to sin. **10.14–16** The motif of humiliation/exaltation as found in Psalms and the wisdom stories of the pious righteous one (Gen 39–50; Dan 1–6; Wis 2–5) is merged with a theology of divine judgment and applied to the fall and rise of nations. **10.18** *Created* translates "allotted," or "assigned," Ben Sira's term for divine intention, agency, and will. Cf. note on 7.15. The point is that God is not responsible for sin and its effects, an issue with which Ben Sira struggles in chs. 15–17.

10.19–11.6 A section on the honor due those who fear the Lord. It contrasts with the preceding section on the pride of those who do not fear the Lord (9.17–10.18). **10.19–25** Four riddles establish the theme that only those who fear the Lord are truly honorable (v. 19). Vv. 22–25 define those who fear the Lord as the poor, oppressed, and subservient. **10.25** To *serve a wise servant* draws upon a topic common to the Hellenistic period, namely, that slaves may be more learned than their masters. This was frequently the case because of the widespread enslavement of peoples by conquest.

and an intelligent person will
not complain.

Concerning Humility

26 Do not make a display of your
wisdom when you do your
work,
and do not boast when you are
in need.
27 Better is the worker who has
goods in plenty
than the boaster who lacks
bread.

28 My child, honor yourself with
humility,
and give yourself the esteem
you deserve.
29 Who will acquit those who
condemn[f] themselves?
And who will honor those who
dishonor themselves?[g]
30 The poor are honored for their
knowledge,
while the rich are honored for
their wealth.
31 One who is honored in poverty,
how much more in wealth!
And one dishonored in wealth,
how much more in poverty!

The Deceptiveness of Appearances

11 The wisdom of the humble lifts
their heads high,
and seats them among the
great.
2 Do not praise individuals for
their good looks,
or loathe anyone because of
appearance alone.
3 The bee is small among flying
creatures,
but what it produces is the best
of sweet things.
4 Do not boast about wearing fine
clothes,
and do not exalt yourself when
you are honored;
for the works of the Lord are
wonderful,
and his works are concealed
from humankind.
5 Many kings have had to sit on the
ground,
but one who was never thought
of has worn a crown.
6 Many rulers have been utterly
disgraced,
and the honored have been
handed over to others.

Deliberation and Caution

7 Do not find fault before you
investigate;
examine first, and then
criticize.
8 Do not answer before you listen,
and do not interrupt when
another is speaking.
9 Do not argue about a matter that
does not concern you,
and do not sit with sinners
when they judge a
case.

10 My child, do not busy yourself
with many matters;
if you multiply activities, you
will not be held blameless.
If you pursue, you will not
overtake,
and by fleeing you will not
escape.
11 There are those who work and
struggle and hurry,
but are so much the more in
want.
12 There are others who are slow
and need help,

f Heb: Gk *sin against*
g Heb Lat: Gk *their own life*

10.26–31 A small collection of proverbs concerned with the problem of relating the notion of honor with humility, a cultural code and an ethic of piety at odds with one another.

11.1–6 A cluster of warnings and proverbs about pretention and false appearances supports the suggestion that the tables will be turned on the proud and mighty (10.14) and that the humble (pious) will be vindicated by the Lord. Cf. 1 Sam 2.7–8; Ps 113.7–8. **11.5** Possibly an allusion to the story of David's selection to be king (1 Sam 16.6–13). **11.6** *Handed over* was a common idiom for defeat in war, related to "falling into the hands of" one who gains power over another.

11.7–28 A reflection on patience aimed at instilling confidence that the Lord will reward piety

who lack strength and abound
in poverty;
but the eyes of the Lord look
kindly upon them;
he lifts them out of their lowly
condition
13 and raises up their heads
to the amazement of the many.

14 Good things and bad, life and
death,
poverty and wealth, come from
the Lord.[h]
17 The Lord's gift remains with the
devout,
and his favor brings lasting
success.
18 One becomes rich through
diligence and self-denial,
and the reward allotted to him
is this:
19 when he says, "I have found rest,
and now I shall feast on my
goods!"
he does not know how long it
will be
until he leaves them to others
and dies.

20 Stand by your agreement and
attend to it,
and grow old in your work.
21 Do not wonder at the works of a
sinner,
but trust in the Lord and keep
at your job;
for it is easy in the sight of the
Lord
to make the poor rich
suddenly, in an instant.
22 The blessing of the Lord is[i] the
reward of the pious,
and quickly God causes his
blessing to flourish.

23 Do not say, "What do I need,
and what further benefit can be
mine?"
24 Do not say, "I have enough,
and what harm can come to
me now?"
25 In the day of prosperity,
adversity is forgotten,
and in the day of adversity,
prosperity is not
remembered.
26 For it is easy for the Lord on the
day of death
to reward individuals according
to their conduct.
27 An hour's misery makes one
forget past delights,
and at the close of one's life
one's deeds are revealed.
28 Call no one happy before his
death;
by how he ends, a person
becomes known.[j]

Care in Choosing Friends

29 Do not invite everyone into your
home,
for many are the tricks of the
crafty.
30 Like a decoy partridge in a cage,
so is the mind of the
proud,
and like spies they observe your
weakness;[k]

h Other ancient authorities add as verses 15 and 16, *[15]Wisdom, understanding, and knowledge of the law come from the Lord; affection and the ways of good works come from him. [16]Error and darkness were created with sinners; evil grows old with those who take pride in malice.* *i* Heb: Gk *is in* *j* Heb: Gk *and through his children a person becomes known*
k Heb: Gk *downfall*

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in his time. **11.14** On God as the source of all human conditions, cf. Job 1.21; Isa 45.7. **11.19** On leaving one's goods to others, cf. Ps 49.10; Eccl 2.18–23; Lk 12.19. **11.26** This is Ben Sira's solution to the problem of individual theodicy, or the assurance that accounts will be balanced so that the righteous will be rewarded and sinners punished. Since he did not imagine life after death, the *day of death* must be the last earthly moment for the "appointed time" of rewards and judgments. The *reward* will be to have one's good name remembered and the strength and confidence to bless the next generation. See 1.13; 2.3; 3.26; 6.18, 28; 7.17, 36; 8.7; 9.11–12; 14.12–19; 17.27–32; 18.24; 19.3; 21.10; 28.6; 29.21; 33.24; 37.25; 38.21–23; 39.11; 41.1–10. **11.28** This saying was proverbial among the Greeks.

11.29–12.18 Cautionary advice on close relationships with scoundrels, strangers, sinners, and enemies. They are not to be trusted.

31 for they lie in wait, turning good into evil,
and to worthy actions they attach blame.
32 From a spark many coals are kindled,
and a sinner lies in wait to shed blood.
33 Beware of scoundrels, for they devise evil,
and they may ruin your reputation forever.
34 Receive strangers into your home and they will stir up trouble for you,
and will make you a stranger to your own family.

12 If you do good, know to whom you do it,
and you will be thanked for your good deeds.
2 Do good to the devout, and you will be repaid—
if not by them, certainly by the Most High.
3 No good comes to one who persists in evil
or to one who does not give alms.
4 Give to the devout, but do not help the sinner.
5 Do good to the humble, but do not give to the ungodly;
hold back their bread, and do not give it to them,
for by means of it they might subdue you;
then you will receive twice as much evil
for all the good you have done to them.
6 For the Most High also hates sinners
and will inflict punishment on the ungodly.[l]
7 Give to the one who is good, but do not help the sinner.
8 A friend is not known[m] in prosperity,
nor is an enemy hidden in adversity.
9 One's enemies are friendly[n] when one prospers,
but in adversity even one's friend disappears.
10 Never trust your enemy,
for like corrosion in copper, so is his wickedness.
11 Even if he humbles himself and walks bowed down,
take care to be on your guard against him.
Be to him like one who polishes a mirror,
to be sure it does not become completely tarnished.
12 Do not put him next to you,
or he may overthrow you and take your place.
Do not let him sit at your right hand,
or else he may try to take your own seat,
and at last you will realize the truth of my words,
and be stung by what I have said.

13 Who pities a snake charmer when he is bitten,
or all those who go near wild animals?
14 So no one pities a person who associates with a sinner
and becomes involved in the other's sins.
15 He stands by you for a while,
but if you falter, he will not be there.
16 An enemy speaks sweetly with his lips,
but in his heart he plans to throw you into a pit;
an enemy may have tears in his eyes,
but if he finds an opportunity he will never have enough of your blood.
17 If evil comes upon you, you will find him there ahead of you;
pretending to help, he will trip you up.
18 Then he will shake his head, and clap his hands,
and whisper much, and show his true face.

l Other ancient authorities add *and he is keeping them for the day of their punishment* *m* Other ancient authorities read *punished* *n* Heb: Gk *grieved*

Caution Regarding Associates

13 Whoever touches pitch gets dirty,
and whoever associates with a proud person becomes like him.
2 Do not lift a weight too heavy for you,
or associate with one mightier and richer than you.
How can the clay pot associate with the iron kettle?
The pot will strike against it and be smashed.
3 A rich person does wrong, and even adds insults;
a poor person suffers wrong, and must add apologies.
4 A rich person[o] will exploit you if you can be of use to him,
but if you are in need he will abandon you.
5 If you own something, he will live with you;
he will drain your resources without a qualm.
6 When he needs you he will deceive you,
and will smile at you and encourage you;
he will speak to you kindly and say, "What do you need?"
7 He will embarrass you with his delicacies,
until he has drained you two or three times,
and finally he will laugh at you.
Should he see you afterwards, he will pass you by
and shake his head at you.

8 Take care not to be led astray
and humiliated when you are enjoying yourself.[p]
9 When an influential person invites you, be reserved,
and he will invite you more insistently.
10 Do not be forward, or you may be rebuffed;
do not stand aloof, or you will be forgotten.
11 Do not try to treat him as an equal,
or trust his lengthy conversations;
for he will test you by prolonged talk,
and while he smiles he will be examining you.
12 Cruel are those who do not keep your secrets;
they will not spare you harm or imprisonment.
13 Be on your guard and very careful,
for you are walking about with your own downfall.[q]

15 Every creature loves its like,
and every person the neighbor.
16 All living beings associate with their own kind,
and people stick close to those like themselves.
17 What does a wolf have in common with a lamb?
No more has a sinner with the devout.
18 What peace is there between a hyena and a dog?
And what peace between the rich and the poor?
19 Wild asses in the wilderness are the prey of lions;
likewise the poor are feeding grounds for the rich.
20 Humility is an abomination to the proud;
likewise the poor are an abomination to the rich.

21 When the rich person totters, he is supported by friends,

o Gk *He* *p* Other ancient authorities read *in your folly* *q* Other ancient authorities add as verse 14, *When you hear these things in your sleep, wake up! During all your life love the Lord, and call on him for your salvation.*

13.1–24 Cautionary advice about relations with the rich from the perspective of one who is poor. **13.1a** A proverb with a long history that can be traced from Theognis, through Sirach and Shakespeare, to the present time. **13.5** *He will live with you* may have the sense of "moving in on you." **13.19** *Feeding grounds* is a particularly striking image for social predation. Preying upon the poor was a major concern for the prophets of social justice; cf. Isaiah's vision of a society without

but when the humble[r] falls, he
is pushed away even by
friends.
22 If the rich person slips, many
come to the rescue;
he speaks unseemly words, but
they justify him.
If the humble person slips, they
even criticize him;
he talks sense, but is not given
a hearing.
23 The rich person speaks and all
are silent;
they extol to the clouds what he
says.
The poor person speaks and they
say, "Who is this fellow?"
And should he stumble, they
even push him down.
24 Riches are good if they are free
from sin;
poverty is evil only in the
opinion of the ungodly.

Responsible Use of Wealth

25 The heart changes the
countenance,
either for good or for evil.[s]
26 The sign of a happy heart is a
cheerful face,
but to devise proverbs requires
painful thinking.

14 Happy are those who do not
blunder with their lips,
and need not suffer remorse
for sin.
2 Happy are those whose hearts do
not condemn them,
and who have not given up
their hope.

3 Riches are inappropriate for a
small-minded person;
and of what use is wealth to a
miser?
4 What he denies himself he
collects for others;
and others will live in luxury on
his goods.
5 If one is mean to himself, to
whom will he be generous?
He will not enjoy his own
riches.
6 No one is worse than one who is
grudging to himself;
this is the punishment for his
meanness.
7 If ever he does good, it is by
mistake;
and in the end he reveals his
meanness.
8 The miser is an evil person;
he turns away and disregards
people.
9 The eye of the greedy person is
not satisfied with his share;
greedy injustice withers the
soul.
10 A miser begrudges bread,
and it is lacking at his table.

11 My child, treat yourself well,
according to your means,
and present worthy offerings to
the Lord.
12 Remember that death does not
tarry,
and the decree[t] of Hades has
not been shown to you.
13 Do good to friends before
you die,
and reach out and give to them
as much as you can.
14 Do not deprive yourself of a day's
enjoyment;
do not let your share of desired
good pass by you.
15 Will you not leave the fruit of
your labors to another,
and what you acquired by toil
to be divided by lot?
16 Give, and take, and indulge
yourself,

r Other ancient authorities read *poor* s Other ancient authorities add *and a glad heart makes a cheerful countenance* t Heb Syr: Gk *covenant*

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predation (Isa 11.6–9). **13.24** An exception to the preceding statements about the rich is made for wealth that is *free from sin*. This probably refers to almsgiving; see 3.30–4.6.

13.25–14.19 Reflections on the proper use of wealth. **13.25** The *heart* was understood as the seat of sentiment, desire, thought, and will. **14.3–10** A poetic unit on the miser as a contrast to the wise use of wealth. **14.12** *The decree of Hades* may refer either to death's appointed time or to the decree that one must die as expressed in 14.17. **14.15** *Divided by lot* refers to a method for distributing an inheritance. **14.16** *Indulge yourself* is reminiscent of Eccl 7.14; 9.7–10.

because in Hades one cannot
look for luxury.
17 All living beings become old like
a garment,
for the decree[u] from of old is,
"You must die!"
18 Like abundant leaves on a
spreading tree
that sheds some and puts forth
others,
so are the generations of flesh
and blood:
one dies and another is born.
19 Every work decays and ceases to
exist,
and the one who made it will
pass away with it.

The Happiness of Seeking Wisdom

20 Happy is the person who
meditates on[v] wisdom
and reasons intelligently,
21 who[w] reflects in his heart on her
ways
and ponders her secrets,
22 pursuing her like a hunter,
and lying in wait on her paths;
23 who peers through her windows
and listens at her doors;
24 who camps near her house
and fastens his tent peg to her
walls;
25 who pitches his tent near her,
and so occupies an excellent
lodging place;
26 who places his children under her
shelter,
and lodges under her boughs;
27 who is sheltered by her from the
heat,
and dwells in the midst of her
glory.

15 Whoever fears the Lord will do
this,
and whoever holds to the law
will obtain wisdom.[x]
2 She will come to meet him like a
mother,
and like a young bride she will
welcome him.
3 She will feed him with the bread
of learning,
and give him the water of
wisdom to drink.
4 He will lean on her and not fall,
and he will rely on her and not
be put to shame.
5 She will exalt him above his
neighbors,
and will open his mouth in the
midst of the assembly.
6 He will find gladness and a crown
of rejoicing,
and will inherit an everlasting
name.
7 The foolish will not obtain her,
and sinners will not see her.
8 She is far from arrogance,
and liars will never think
of her.
9 Praise is unseemly on the lips of a
sinner,
for it has not been sent from
the Lord.
10 For in wisdom must praise be
uttered,
and the Lord will make it
prosper.

Freedom of Choice

11 Do not say, "It was the Lord's
doing that I fell away";

u Heb: Gk *covenant* *v* Other ancient authorities read *dies in* *w* The structure adopted in verses 21-27 follows the Heb *x* Gk *her*

14.17 An allusion to Gen 3.3, 19.

14.20–15.10 A poem on personified wisdom in two stanzas that develop the theme of seeking (14.20–27) and finding (15.1–10). **14.21–22** On wisdom's *ways*, or path, cf. 51.15; Prov 3.17; 8.20, 32. **14.23–25** On the metaphor of approaching wisdom's *house*, cf. 51.13–14; Prov 8.34; 9.1–6. **14.26–27** On wisdom as a tree, cf. 1.20; 24.13–17; Prov 3.18. **15.2** On wisdom as *mother* and *bride*, cf. Prov 7.4; Wis 7.12; 8.2. **15.3** On receiving *bread* and *water* (or wine) from wisdom, cf. 1.16; 24.19–21; Prov 9.5. **15.5** On the *assembly* as the place for speech and praise, see 21.17; 24.2; 31.11; 33.19; 38.32–33; 39.10; 44.15; Wis 8.10–12.

15.11–20 A diatribe, or fictional debate, introduces the question of responsibility for sin in the light of its devastating consequences, a theme that has surfaced with increasing frequency in the preceding chapters. The position argued against is that God ultimately must be responsible because he created the world in such a way as to make sin possible. Ben Sira argues that God is not responsible because humans have free choice. This is a theodicy similar to that argued by the friends of Job, but quite different from that proposed by the

for he does not do[y] what he
hates.
12 Do not say, "It was he who led
me astray";
for he has no need of the
sinful.
13 The Lord hates all abominations;
such things are not loved by
those who fear him.
14 It was he who created humankind
in the beginning,
and he left them in the power
of their own free choice.
15 If you choose, you can keep the
commandments,
and to act faithfully is a matter
of your own choice.
16 He has placed before you fire
and water;
stretch out your hand for
whichever you choose.
17 Before each person are life and
death,
and whichever one chooses will
be given.
18 For great is the wisdom of the
Lord;
he is mighty in power and sees
everything;
19 his eyes are on those who
fear him,
and he knows every human
action.
20 He has not commanded anyone
to be wicked,
and he has not given anyone
permission to sin.

God's Punishment of Sinners

16 Do not desire a multitude of
worthless[z] children,
and do not rejoice in ungodly
offspring.
2 If they multiply, do not rejoice in
them,
unless the fear of the Lord is in
them.
3 Do not trust in their survival,
or rely on their numbers;[a]
for one can be better than a
thousand,
and to die childless is better than
to have ungodly children.
4 For through one intelligent
person a city can be filled
with people,
but through a clan of outlaws it
becomes desolate.

5 Many such things my eye has
seen,

y Heb: Gk *you ought not to do* *z* Heb: Gk *unprofitable* *a* Other ancient authorities add *For you will groan in untimely mourning, and will know of their sudden end.*

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author of Job. **15.14** *Free choice* translates the Hebrew *yetzer*, a term for the "design," "plan," or "intention" one has in mind when preparing to form, craft, or create something. *Yetzer* is used of evil design, or imagination, in Gen 6.5; 8.21; and of good design in 1 Chr 29.28; Isa 26.3. Sirach documents an early use of the term to define human nature. Cf. 17.6; 21.11; 27.6; 37.3. Later rabbinic tradition sometimes refers to two *yetzers*, meaning that each person has both a good and an evil "inclination." The Greek is *diaboulion*, meaning "deliberation." V. 15 and the context show that *free choice* is an appropriate translation. Cf. 6.32. **15.16** *Fire and water* are metaphors for destruction and the generation of life. **15.17** *Life and death.* Cf. Deut 30.19. The image of choosing between two ways, one of life and one of death, was also common in Greek tradition. **15.18** That the Lord *sees everything* is a notion essential to Ben Sira's theodicy, with its insistence upon divine reward (or rescue) for the righteous and punishment for sinners. See 16.17–23; 17.15–19; 23.19–21; 34.19–20; 39.19–20; 42.16–20; cf. Job 34.21–22; Pss 33.13–15; 90.8; Prov 5.21; 15.3; Heb 4.13.

16.1–23 A set of three arguments for the certainty of divine recompense: that the large number of the ungodly does not count (vv. 1–4); that history provides examples of the destruction of sinners (vv. 5–14); and that the Lord sees everything (vv. 17–23). **16.1–4** A challenge to the traditional view that many children are a blessing: this is not so if they are *worthless* or *ungodly*. In Sirach, only godly children are worthwhile. **16.3** This radical view of the acceptability of childlessness is an indication of social distress. It is repeated in Wis 4.1–3. **16.4** The importance of *one intelligent person* for the well-being of a city recurs as a theme in the writings of Philo of Alexandria; cf. Eccl 9.15. *Filled with people* may be an allusion to Abraham's blessing (Gen 17.5–6; 22.17–18). Abraham was considered a wise man in legendary accounts such as those documented in the works of Philo of Alexandria. *Desolate* may be an allusion to the Sodomites (Gen 18.16–32). **16.5–14** A series of examples from the epic history of Israel prepares for a programmatic statement about the Lord's mercy and wrath

and my ear has heard things
more striking than these.
6 In an assembly of sinners a fire is
kindled,
and in a disobedient nation
wrath blazes up.
7 He did not forgive the ancient
giants
who revolted in their might.
8 He did not spare the neighbors
of Lot,
whom he loathed on account of
their arrogance.
9 He showed no pity on the
doomed nation,
on those dispossessed because
of their sins;[b]
10 or on the six hundred thousand
foot soldiers
who assembled in their
stubbornness.[c]
11 Even if there were only one
stiff-necked person,
it would be a wonder if he
remained unpunished.
For mercy and wrath are with the
Lord;[d]
he is mighty to forgive—but he
also pours out wrath.
12 Great as is his mercy, so also is his
chastisement;
he judges a person according to
his or her deeds.
13 The sinner will not escape with
plunder,
and the patience of the godly
will not be frustrated.
14 He makes room for every act of
mercy;
everyone receives in accordance
with his or her deeds.[e]
17 Do not say, "I am hidden from
the Lord,
and who from on high has me
in mind?
Among so many people I am
unknown,
for what am I in a boundless
creation?
18 Lo, heaven and the highest
heaven,
the abyss and the earth,
tremble at his visitation![f]
19 The very mountains and the
foundations of the
earth
quiver and quake when he
looks upon them.
20 But no human mind can grasp
this,
and who can comprehend his
ways?
21 Like a tempest that no one
can see,
so most of his works are
concealed.[g]
22 Who is to announce his acts of
justice?

b Other ancient authorities add *All these things he did to the hard-hearted nations, and by the multitude of his holy ones he was not appeased.* *c* Other ancient authorities add *Chastising, showing mercy, striking, healing, the Lord persisted in mercy and discipline.* *d* Gk *him* *e* Other ancient authorities add *15The Lord hardened Pharaoh so that he did not recognize him, in order that his works might be known under heaven. 16His mercy is manifest to the whole of creation, and he divided his light and darkness with a plumb line.* *f* Other ancient authorities add *The whole world past and present is in his will.* *g* Meaning of Gk uncertain: Heb Syr *If I sin, no eye can see me, and if I am disloyal all in secret, who is to know?*

(vv. 11–12). **16.6** *An assembly of sinners,* an allusion to the rebellion of Korah's company (Num 16); cf. Num 11.1–3; see Sir 45.18–19. **16.7** For the *giants,* see Gen 6.1–4. **16.8** *The neighbors of Lot* alludes to Gen 19; cf. Ezek 16.49–50. **16.9** The *doomed nation* may be an allusion to the Canaanites. **16.10** An allusion to Israel in the wilderness (Ex 12.37); cf. Sir 46.8. **16.12** The Hebrew word for *chastisement* also means punishment. The Greek term is *elenkos,* "conviction," in the sense of instructional correction. At a somewhat later time chastisement for the godly was distinguished from punishment for the ungodly, as in the Wisdom of Solomon. The mention of mercy in vv. 11–12 and the shift to a consideration of rewards and punishments according to one's deeds in this section as a whole may have called for a Greek term other than "punishment" and probably lie behind the additions in some manuscripts to v. 10 that emphasize chastising and discipline (text note *c*). Cf. 18.13. **16.17–23** The theme of hidden wisdom is used ironically to characterize the speech of the foolish person who draws the wrong conclusion from the inscrutability of God's ways. **16.18** *Visitation* was an important concept for Jewish theodicies of the time. It refers to a time when God "visits" the earth and looks upon it to render judgment. See 18.20. Cf. Ps 104.32; Wis 3.7; 14.11.

Or who can await them? For his
decree[h] is far off."[i]
23 Such are the thoughts of one
devoid of understanding;
a senseless and misguided
person thinks foolishly.

God's Wisdom Seen in Creation

24 Listen to me, my child, and
acquire knowledge,
and pay close attention to my
words.
25 I will impart discipline precisely[j]
and declare knowledge
accurately.

26 When the Lord created[k] his
works from the beginning,
and, in making them,
determined their
boundaries,
27 he arranged his works in an
eternal order,
and their dominion[l] for all
generations.
They neither hunger nor grow
weary,
and they do not abandon their
tasks.
28 They do not crowd one another,
and they never disobey his
word.
29 Then the Lord looked upon the
earth,
and filled it with his good
things.
30 With all kinds of living beings he
covered its surface,
and into it they must return.

17 The Lord created human beings
out of earth,
and makes them return to it
again.
2 He gave them a fixed number of
days,
but granted them authority
over everything on the
earth.[m]
3 He endowed them with strength
like his own,[n]
and made them in his own
image.
4 He put the fear of them[o] in all
living beings,
and gave them dominion over
beasts and birds.[p]
6 Discretion and tongue and eyes,
ears and a mind for thinking
he gave them.
7 He filled them with knowledge
and understanding,

h Heb *the decree*: Gk *the covenant* *i* Other ancient authorities add *and a scrutiny for all comes at the end* *j* Gk *by weight* *k* Heb: Gk *judged* *l* Or *elements* *m* Lat: Gk *it* *n* Lat: Gk *proper to them* *o* Syr: Gk *him* *p* Other ancient authorities add as verse 5, *They obtained the use of the five faculties of the Lord; as sixth he distributed to them the gift of mind, and as seventh, reason, the interpreter of one's faculties.*

16.24–18.14 A long didactic poem on the Lord's creation with a focus upon the creation of human beings, their capacity to know and keep the law, and their ability to repent should they fall into sin. **16.24–30** An account of creation emphasizing the stability, order, and "obedience" of God's works. Cf. Gen 1.1–31; Ps 104. **16.29** *Good things* is an allusion to the repeated statement in Gen 1 that "God saw that it was good." To affirm that God's creation is good was a characteristic of the wisdom tradition. Cf. Wis 1.14. Among the Greeks, and especially with the Stoics, *good things* was a common technical term for beneficial goods and human values. **16.30** *Must return.* Cf. Gen 3.19.

17.1–24 A poem in praise of the Lord for the creation of humankind. This is an early midrash, or narrative interpretation, of the Genesis account. **17.1** *Out of the earth.* Cf. Gen 2.7. **17.2** For a *fixed number of days*, see 18.9; cf. Ps 90.10. **17.3** *His own image.* Cf. Gen 1.26–27. **17.4** *Dominion.* Cf. Gen 1.28. Ben Sira combines the two accounts of the creation of humankind (Gen 1.26–27; 2.7) and interprets the image of God as authority (v. 2), strength (v. 3), and dominion (v. 4), thus developing a hierarchy of power: God, humans, living beings. Cf. 10.4 (God, rulers, people); 3.2 (God, fathers, children). In Philo's works and later literature a distinction between the two creation accounts led to elaborate, speculative anthropologies. Cf. 1 Cor 15.45–49. **17.6** This list of faculties for perception is similar to that common to the Stoic tradition. See the addition in v. 5, (text note *p*) which is clearly in reference to Stoic psychologies; the "five faculties" were sight, touch, smell, hearing, and taste. *Discretion* probably translates *yetzer* (the Hebrew text is missing at this point); see note on 15.14. **17.7** *Showed them good and evil.* Cf. Gen 2.17; 3.5, 22. Sirach overlooks the transgression in the Gen-

and showed them good and
evil.
8 He put the fear of him into[q]
their hearts
to show them the majesty of his
works.[r]
10 And they will praise his holy
name,
9 to proclaim the grandeur of his
works.
11 He bestowed knowledge upon
them,
and allotted to them the law of
life.[s]
12 He established with them an
eternal covenant,
and revealed to them his
decrees.
13 Their eyes saw his glorious
majesty,
and their ears heard the glory
of his voice.
14 He said to them, "Beware of all
evil."
And he gave commandment to
each of them concerning
the neighbor.
15 Their ways are always known
to him;
they will not be hid from his
eyes.[t]
17 He appointed a ruler for every
nation,
but Israel is the Lord's own
portion.[u]
19 All their works are as clear as the
sun before him,
and his eyes are ever upon
their ways.
20 Their iniquities are not hidden
from him,
and all their sins are before the
Lord.[v]
22 One's almsgiving is like a signet
ring with the Lord,[w]
and he will keep a person's
kindness like the apple of
his eye.[x]
23 Afterward he will rise up and
repay them,
and he will bring their
recompense on their heads.
24 Yet to those who repent he grants
a return,
and he encourages those who
are losing hope.

A Call to Repentance

25 Turn back to the Lord and
forsake your sins;
pray in his presence and lessen
your offense.
26 Return to the Most High and
turn away from iniquity,[y]
and hate intensely what he
abhors.
27 Who will sing praises to the Most
High in Hades
in place of the living who give
thanks?
28 From the dead, as from one who
does not exist, thanksgiving
has ceased;
those who are alive and well
sing the Lord's praises.

q Other ancient authorities read *He set his eye upon* r Other ancient authorities add *and he gave them to boast of his marvels forever* s Other ancient authorities add *so that they may know that they who are alive now are mortal* t Other ancient authorities add *16Their ways from youth tend toward evil, and they are unable to make for themselves hearts of flesh in place of their stony hearts. 17For in the division of the nations of the whole earth, he appointed* u Other ancient authorities add as verse 18, *whom, being his firstborn, he brings up with discipline, and allotting to him the light of his love, he does not neglect him.* v Other ancient authorities add as verse 21, *But the Lord, who is gracious and knows how they are formed, has neither left them nor abandoned them, but has spared them.* w Gk *him* x Other ancient authorities add *apportioning repentance to his sons and daughters* y Other ancient authorities add *for he will lead you out of darkness to the light of health.*

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esis story that led to this knowledge. But cf. 25.24. **17.11** *The law of life* refers to the Mosaic law, which is included in the endowments that God "allotted" to humankind, thus collapsing the time between creation and Sinai. **17.13** *Their eyes saw.* Cf. Ex 19.16–19; 24.15–17. **17.14** *Gave commandment* refers to the duties to one's neighbors outlined in the Ten Commandments (Ex 20.13–17; Deut 5.17–21). **17.17** For the notion that Israel is *the Lord's own portion,* see Deut 32.8–9. **17.24** *A return* to those who repent accords with the tradition of Deuteronomy and the prophets.

17.25–32 One should repent in order to sing praises to the Most High. **17.27** To *sing praises* is, for Ben Sira, the highest achievement for humans. See 15.9–10; 17.10; 18.4–7; 39.8, 15, 35; 43.28–30; 51.1, 22; cf. the same theme in Psalms;

29 How great is the mercy of the Lord,
and his forgiveness for those who return to him!
30 For not everything is within human capability,
since human beings are not immortal.
31 What is brighter than the sun? Yet it can be eclipsed.
So flesh and blood devise evil.
32 He marshals the host of the height of heaven;
but all human beings are dust and ashes.

The Majesty of God

18 He who lives forever created the whole universe;
2 the Lord alone is just.[z]
4 To none has he given power to proclaim his works;
and who can search out his mighty deeds?
5 Who can measure his majestic power?
And who can fully recount his mercies?
6 It is not possible to diminish or increase them,
nor is it possible to fathom the wonders of the Lord.
7 When human beings have finished, they are just beginning,
and when they stop, they are still perplexed.
8 What are human beings, and of what use are they?
What is good in them, and what is evil?
9 The number of days in their life is great if they reach one hundred years.[a]
10 Like a drop of water from the sea and a grain of sand,
so are a few years among the days of eternity.
11 That is why the Lord is patient with them
and pours out his mercy upon them.
12 He sees and recognizes that their end is miserable;
therefore he grants them forgiveness all the more.
13 The compassion of human beings is for their neighbors,
but the compassion of the Lord is for every living thing.
He rebukes and trains and teaches them,
and turns them back, as a shepherd his flock.
14 He has compassion on those who accept his discipline
and who are eager for his precepts.

The Right Spirit in Giving Alms

15 My child, do not mix reproach with your good deeds,
or spoil your gift by harsh words.
16 Does not the dew give relief from the scorching heat?
So a word is better than a gift.
17 Indeed, does not a word surpass a good gift?
Both are to be found in a gracious person.
18 A fool is ungracious and abusive,

z Other ancient authorities add *and there is no other beside him; [3]he steers the world with the span of his hand, and all things obey his will; for he is king of all things by his power, separating among them the holy things from the profane.* *a* Other ancient authorities add *but the death of each one is beyond the calculation of all*

Wis 10.20–21; 18.1. **17.30** A clear statement of Ben Sira's position against the Greek idea of immortality, an idea that was later found attractive by Jewish thinkers. See the addition to Sirach in 19.19 (text note *h*); cf. Wis 8.13.

18.1–14 An assurance of God's mercy. The frailty of humans, demonstrated by the inability to fully understand and praise God's creation (vv. 2–7), the inability to understand themselves (v. 8), and by mortality (vv. 9–10), is the reason for God's mercy and compassion (vv. 11–12). **18.8** The rhetorical questions are reminiscent of Ps 8.4. **18.13** That the Lord *turns them back* by rebuke, training, and teaching contrasts with the exercise of his punishment upon sinners. *As a shepherd* draws upon a common image for kings and gods. Cf. Isa 40.11.

18.15–19.17 Practical advice on almsgiving (18.15–18), on self-criticism (18.19–21), on vows

and the gift of a grudging giver
makes the eyes dim.

The Need of Reflection and Self-control

19 Before you speak, learn;
and before you fall ill, take care
of your health.
20 Before judgment comes, examine
yourself;
and at the time of scrutiny you
will find forgiveness.
21 Before falling ill, humble yourself;
and when you have sinned,
repent.
22 Let nothing hinder you from
paying a vow promptly,
and do not wait until death to
be released from it.
23 Before making a vow, prepare
yourself;
do not be like one who puts the
Lord to the test.
24 Think of his wrath on the day of
death,
and of the moment of
vengeance when he turns
away his face.
25 In the time of plenty think of the
time of hunger;
in days of wealth think of
poverty and need.
26 From morning to evening
conditions change;
all things move swiftly before
the Lord.

27 One who is wise is cautious in
everything;
when sin is all around, one
guards against wrongdoing.
28 Every intelligent person knows
wisdom,
and praises the one who
finds her.
29 Those who are skilled in words
become wise themselves,
and pour forth apt proverbs.[b]

SELF-CONTROL[c]

30 Do not follow your base desires,
but restrain your appetites.
31 If you allow your soul to take
pleasure in base desire,
it will make you the
laughingstock of your
enemies.
32 Do not revel in great luxury,
or you may become
impoverished by its
expense.
33 Do not become a beggar by
feasting with borrowed money,
when you have nothing in your
purse.[d]

19 The one who does this[e] will not
become rich;
one who despises small things
will fail little by little.
2 Wine and women lead intelligent
men astray,
and the man who consorts with
prostitutes is reckless.
3 Decay and worms will take
possession of him,
and the reckless person will be
snatched away.

Against Loose Talk

4 One who trusts others too quickly
has a shallow mind,
and one who sins does wrong
to himself.
5 One who rejoices in wickedness[f]
will be condemned,[g]
6 but one who hates gossip has
less evil.
7 Never repeat a conversation,
and you will lose nothing at all.
8 With friend or foe do not
report it,
and unless it would be a sin for
you, do not reveal it;
9 for someone may have heard you
and watched you,

b Other ancient authorities add *Better is confidence in the one Lord than clinging with a dead heart to a dead one.* *c* This heading is included in the Gk text. *d* Other ancient authorities add *for you will be plotting against your own life* *e* Heb: Gk *A worker who is a drunkard* *f* Other ancient authorities read *heart* *g* Other ancient authorities add *but one who withstands pleasures crowns his life.* [6]*One who controls the tongue will live without strife,*

(18.22–23), on eventualities (18.24–29), on desires (18.30–19.3), and on gossip (19.4–17). **18.23** The standard example of *putting the Lord to the test* was the story of the murmuring of the people in the wilderness (Ex 17.1–7; Deut 6.16). **19.3** *Snatched away* is an idiom for untimely death.

and in time will hate you.
10 Have you heard something? Let it
die with you.
Be brave, it will not make you
burst!
11 Having heard something, the fool
suffers birth pangs
like a woman in labor with a
child.
12 Like an arrow stuck in a person's
thigh,
so is gossip inside a fool.

13 Question a friend; perhaps he
did not do it;
or if he did, so that he may not
do it again.
14 Question a neighbor; perhaps he
did not say it;
or if he said it, so that he may
not repeat it.
15 Question a friend, for often it is
slander;
so do not believe everything
you hear.
16 A person may make a slip
without intending it.
Who has not sinned with his
tongue?
17 Question your neighbor before
you threaten him;
and let the law of the Most
High take its course.[h]

True and False Wisdom

20 The whole of wisdom is fear of
the Lord,
and in all wisdom there is the
fulfillment of the law.[i]
22 The knowledge of wickedness is
not wisdom,
nor is there prudence in the
counsel of sinners.
23 There is a cleverness that is
detestable,
and there is a fool who merely
lacks wisdom.
24 Better are the God-fearing who
lack understanding
than the highly intelligent who
transgress the law.
25 There is a cleverness that is exact
but unjust,
and there are people who abuse
favors to gain a verdict.
26 There is the villain bowed down
in mourning,
but inwardly he is full of deceit.
27 He hides his face and pretends
not to hear,
but when no one notices, he
will take advantage of you.
28 Even if lack of strength keeps
him from sinning,
he will nevertheless do evil
when he finds the
opportunity.
29 A person is known by his
appearance,
and a sensible person is known
when first met, face to face.
30 A person's attire and hearty
laughter,
and the way he walks, show
what he is.

Silence and Speech

20 There is a rebuke that is
untimely,
and there is the person who is
wise enough to keep silent.
2 How much better it is to rebuke
than to fume!
3 And the one who admits his fault
will be kept from failure.
4 Like a eunuch lusting to violate a
girl
is the person who does right
under compulsion.
5 Some people keep silent and are
thought to be wise,
while others are detested for
being talkative.
6 Some people keep silent because
they have nothing to say,

h Other ancient authorities add *and do not be angry.* [18]*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of acceptance, and wisdom obtains his love.* [19]*The knowledge of the Lord's commandments is life-giving discipline; and those who do what is pleasing to him enjoy the fruit of the tree of immortality.* *i* Other ancient authorities add *and the knowledge of his omnipotence.* [21]*When a slave says to his master, "I will not act as you wish," even if later he does it, he angers the one who supports him.*

19.20–30 A contrast between true wisdom and cleverness. **19.22** *Knowledge of wickedness is not wisdom* may be an allusion to Gen 3.1–7. **20.1–31** This passage is a loosely connected set of sayings on the topic of timely and appropriate speech.

while others keep silent because
they know when to speak.
7 The wise remain silent until the
right moment,
but a boasting fool misses the
right moment.
8 Whoever talks too much is
detested,
and whoever pretends to
authority is hated.[j]

Paradoxes

9 There may be good fortune for a
person in adversity,
and a windfall may result in a
loss.
10 There is the gift that profits you
nothing,
and the gift to be paid back
double.
11 There are losses for the sake of
glory,
and there are some who have
raised their heads from
humble circumstances.
12 Some buy much for little,
but pay for it seven times over.
13 The wise make themselves
beloved by only few
words,[k]
but the courtesies of fools are
wasted.
14 A fool's gift will profit you
nothing,[l]
for he looks for recompense
sevenfold.[m]
15 He gives little and upbraids
much;
he opens his mouth like a town
crier.
Today he lends and tomorrow he
asks it back;
such a one is hateful to God
and humans.[n]
16 The fool says, "I have no friends,
and I get no thanks for my
good deeds.
Those who eat my bread are
evil-tongued."
17 How many will ridicule him, and
how often![o]

Inappropriate Speech

18 A slip on the pavement is better
than a slip of the tongue;
the downfall of the wicked will
occur just as speedily.
19 A coarse person is like an
inappropriate story,
continually on the lips of the
ignorant.
20 A proverb from a fool's lips will
be rejected,
for he does not tell it at the
proper time.

21 One may be prevented from
sinning by poverty;
so when he rests he feels no
remorse.
22 One may lose his life through
shame,
or lose it because of human
respect.[p]
23 Another out of shame makes
promises to a friend,
and so makes an enemy for
nothing.

Lying

24 A lie is an ugly blot on a person;
it is continually on the lips of
the ignorant.
25 A thief is preferable to a habitual
liar,
but the lot of both is ruin.
26 A liar's way leads to disgrace,
and his shame is ever with him.

PROVERBIAL SAYINGS[q]

27 The wise person advances himself
by his words,
and one who is sensible pleases
the great.
28 Those who cultivate the soil heap
up their harvest,
and those who please the great
atone for injustice.
29 Favors and gifts blind the eyes of
the wise;
like a muzzle on the mouth
they stop reproofs.

j Other ancient authorities add *How good it is to show repentance when you are reproved, for so you will escape deliberate sin!* *k* Heb: Gk *by words*
l Other ancient authorities add *so it is with the envious who give under compulsion* *m* Syr: Gk *he has many eyes instead of one* *n* Other ancient authorities lack *to God and humans* *o* Other ancient authorities add *for he has not honestly received what he has, and what he does not have is unimportant to him* *p* Other ancient authorities read *his foolish look* *q* This heading is included in the Gk text.

30 Hidden wisdom and unseen treasure,
of what value is either?
31 Better are those who hide their folly
than those who hide their wisdom.[r]

Various Sins

21 Have you sinned, my child? Do so no more,
but ask forgiveness for your past sins.
2 Flee from sin as from a snake;
for if you approach sin, it will bite you.
Its teeth are lion's teeth,
and can destroy human lives.
3 All lawlessness is like a two-edged sword;
there is no healing for the wound it inflicts.

4 Panic and insolence will waste away riches;
thus the house of the proud will be laid waste.[s]
5 The prayer of the poor goes from their lips to the ears of God,[t]
and his judgment comes speedily.
6 Those who hate reproof walk in the sinner's steps,
but those who fear the Lord repent in their heart.
7 The mighty in speech are widely known;
when they slip, the sensible person knows it.

8 Whoever builds his house with other people's money
is like one who gathers stones for his burial mound.[u]
9 An assembly of the wicked is like a bundle of tow,
and their end is a blazing fire.
10 The way of sinners is paved with smooth stones,
but at its end is the pit of Hades.

Wisdom and Foolishness

11 Whoever keeps the law controls his thoughts,
and the fulfillment of the fear of the Lord is wisdom.
12 The one who is not clever cannot be taught,
but there is a cleverness that increases bitterness.
13 The knowledge of the wise will increase like a flood,
and their counsel like a life-giving spring.
14 The mind[v] of a fool is like a broken jar;
it can hold no knowledge.

15 When an intelligent person hears a wise saying,
he praises it and adds to it;
when a fool[w] hears it, he laughs at[x] it
and throws it behind his back.
16 A fool's chatter is like a burden on a journey,
but delight is found in the speech of the intelligent.
17 The utterance of a sensible person is sought in the assembly,

r Other ancient authorities add [32]*Unwearied endurance in seeking the Lord is better than a masterless charioteer of one's own life.* s Other ancient authorities read *uprooted* t Gk *his ears*
u Other ancient authorities read *for the winter*
v Syr Lat: Gk *entrails* w Syr: Gk *reveler*
x Syr: Gk *dislikes*

21.1–10 A loose collection of sayings on sin. **21.5** That *the prayer of the poor* will be heard is a form of the common theme about the cry of the righteous in distress. See 2.10–11; 35.16–26. In Sirach the lowly or oppressed God-fearer is frequently called *poor*. **21.8** *Builds his house* is probably meant literally, but "building a house" was also a metaphor for amassing wealth. **21.10** *Paved with smooth stones* may be an oblique reference to Greco-Roman road building in Palestine.

21.11–28 A loosely connected set of sayings about the fool. **21.11** *Thoughts* translates the Hebrew *yetzer*, thus "impulses," or "designs"; see note on 15.14. The *fear of the Lord* is used as a synonym for ethical piety, or obedience to the law, and thus can be "fulfilled." Cf. 1.28, where the fear of the Lord can be obeyed or disobeyed. **21.15** *Throws it behind his back* means disregards it. **21.17** *Ponder his words* is a reference to deliberation in an assembly charged with making decisions. See notes on 15.5; 38.32–33; cf. Wis 8.10–12.

and they ponder his words in
their minds.

18 Like a house in ruins is wisdom
to a fool,
and to the ignorant, knowledge
is talk that has no
meaning.
19 To a senseless person education is
fetters on his feet,
and like manacles on his right
hand.
20 A fool raises his voice when he
laughs,
but the wise[y] smile quietly.
21 To the sensible person education
is like a golden ornament,
and like a bracelet on the
right arm.

22 The foot of a fool rushes into a
house,
but an experienced person
waits respectfully outside.
23 A boor peers into the house from
the door,
but a cultivated person remains
outside.
24 It is ill-mannered for a person to
listen at a door;
the discreet would be grieved
by the disgrace.

25 The lips of babblers speak of
what is not their
concern,[z]
but the words of the prudent
are weighed in the
balance.
26 The mind of fools is in their
mouth,
but the mouth of the wise is
in[a] their mind.
27 When an ungodly person curses
an adversary,[b]
he curses himself.
28 A whisperer degrades himself
and is hated in his
neighborhood.

The Idler

22 The idler is like a filthy stone,
and every one hisses at his
disgrace.
2 The idler is like the filth of
dunghills;
anyone that picks it up will
shake it off his hand.

Degenerate Children

3 It is a disgrace to be the father of
an undisciplined son,
and the birth of a daughter is a
loss.
4 A sensible daughter obtains a
husband of her own,
but one who acts shamefully is
a grief to her father.
5 An impudent daughter disgraces
father and husband,
and is despised by both.
6 Like music in time of mourning is
ill-timed conversation,
but a thrashing and discipline
are at all times wisdom.[c]

Wisdom and Folly

9 Whoever teaches a fool is like one
who glues potsherds
together,
or who rouses a sleeper from
deep slumber.
10 Whoever tells a story to a fool
tells it to a drowsy man;
and at the end he will say,
"What is it?"
11 Weep for the dead, for he has
left the light behind;
and weep for the fool, for he
has left intelligence behind.

y Syr Lat: Gk *clever* *z* Other ancient authorities read *of strangers speak of these things* *a* Other ancient authorities omit *in* *b* Or *curses Satan*
c Other ancient authorities add [7]*Children who are brought up in a good life, conceal the lowly birth of their parents.* [8]*Children who are disdainfully and boorishly haughty stain the nobility of their kindred.*

21.19 *Fetters* is a metaphor of personified wisdom in 6.24. **21.21** *Golden ornament* is a metaphor of personified wisdom in 6.30.

22.3–6 A small set of sayings on the need to discipline one's children. **22.3** A common view in antiquity was that *the birth of a daughter is a loss.* For Ben Sira's views on daughters, see 42.9–14. **22.6** *Thrashing* was the commonly accepted approach to *discipline* in antiquity, both at home and in the Hellenistic classroom. See 30.1–13.

22.9–18 On watching out for the fool. The fool was a character type common to wisdom

Weep less bitterly for the dead,
for he is at rest;
but the life of the fool is worse
than death.
12 Mourning for the dead lasts
seven days,
but for the foolish or the
ungodly it lasts all the days
of their lives.

13 Do not talk much with a senseless
person
or visit an unintelligent
person.[d]
Stay clear of him, or you may
have trouble,
and be spattered when he
shakes himself off.
Avoid him and you will find rest,
and you will never be wearied
by his lack of sense.
14 What is heavier than lead?
And what is its name except
"Fool"?
15 Sand, salt, and a piece of iron
are easier to bear than a stupid
person.

16 A wooden beam firmly bonded
into a building
is not loosened by an
earthquake;
so the mind firmly resolved after
due reflection
will not be afraid in a crisis.
17 A mind settled on an intelligent
thought
is like stucco decoration that
makes a wall smooth.
18 Fences[e] set on a high place
will not stand firm against the
wind;
so a timid mind with a fool's
resolve
will not stand firm against any
fear.

The Preservation of Friendship

19 One who pricks the eye brings
tears,
and one who pricks the heart
makes clear its feelings.
20 One who throws a stone at birds
scares them away,
and one who reviles a friend
destroys a friendship.
21 Even if you draw your sword
against a friend,
do not despair, for there is a
way back.
22 If you open your mouth against
your friend,
do not worry, for reconciliation
is possible.
But as for reviling, arrogance,
disclosure of secrets, or a
treacherous blow—
in these cases any friend will
take to flight.

23 Gain the trust of your neighbor
in his poverty,
so that you may rejoice with
him in his prosperity.
Stand by him in time of distress,
so that you may share with him
in his inheritance.[f]
24 The vapor and smoke of the
furnace precede the fire;
so insults precede bloodshed.
25 I am not ashamed to shelter a
friend,
and I will not hide from him.
26 But if harm should come to me
because of him,
whoever hears of it will beware
of him.

A Prayer for Help Against Sinning

27 Who will set a guard over my
mouth,
and an effective seal upon my
lips,
so that I may not fall because of
them,

d Other ancient authorities add *For being without sense he will despise everything about you* *e* Other ancient authorities read *Pebbles* *f* Other ancient authorities add *For one should not always despise restricted circumstances, or admire a rich person who is stupid.*

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discourse. **22.12** *Seven days* was the traditional period of mourning. See Gen 50.10; Jdt 16.24; but Cf. Sir 38.17. **22.13** *Shakes himself off* is unclear. The Hebrew is missing, but the Syriac reads "pig" for the *unintelligent person*, which means that the Hebrew may have used a derogatory label such as "dog," an animal that shakes itself off. **22.14** On the *fool* as a heavy burden, see 21.16.

22.19–26 A cluster of sayings on insults and their effect upon friendship. **22.27–23.6** A

and my tongue may not
destroy me?
23 O Lord, Father and Master of
my life,
do not abandon me to their
designs,
and do not let me fall because
of them!
2 Who will set whips over my
thoughts,
and the discipline of wisdom
over my mind,
so as not to spare me in my
errors,
and not overlook my[g] sins?
3 Otherwise my mistakes may be
multiplied,
and my sins may abound,
and I may fall before my
adversaries,
and my enemy may rejoice
over me.[h]
4 O Lord, Father and God of my
life,
do not give me haughty eyes,
5 and remove evil desire
from me.
6 Let neither gluttony nor lust
overcome me,
and do not give me over to
shameless passion.

Discipline of the Tongue[i]

7 Listen, my children, to instruction
concerning the mouth;
the one who observes it will
never be caught.
8 Sinners are overtaken through
their lips;
by them the reviler and the
arrogant are tripped up.
9 Do not accustom your mouth to
oaths,
nor habitually utter the name
of the Holy One;
10 for as a servant who is constantly
under scrutiny
will not lack bruises,
so also the person who always
swears and utters the Name
will never be cleansed[j]
from sin.
11 The one who swears many oaths
is full of iniquity,
and the scourge will not leave
his house.
If he swears in error, his sin
remains on him,
and if he disregards it, he sins
doubly;
if he swears a false oath, he will
not be justified,
for his house will be filled with
calamities.

Foul Language

12 There is a manner of speaking
comparable to death;[k]
may it never be found in the
inheritance of Jacob!
Such conduct will be far from the
godly,
and they will not wallow in sins.
13 Do not accustom your mouth to
coarse, foul language,
for it involves sinful speech.
14 Remember your father and
mother
when you sit among the great,
or you may forget yourself in
their presence,
and behave like a fool through
bad habit;
then you will wish that you had
never been born,
and you will curse the day of
your birth.
15 Those who are accustomed to
using abusive language

g Gk *their* *h* Other ancient authorities add *From them the hope of your mercy is remote* *i* This heading is included in the Gk text. *j* Syr *be free* *k* Other ancient authorities read *clothed about with death*

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prayer of petition that the Lord be a guardian or teacher to help control one's speech, thoughts, and desires.

23.7–11 Advice against swearing. **23.9** *The Holy One* is an epithet, not a proper name, occurring frequently in Isaiah. Cf. Isa 1.4. **23.10** It is unclear whether the problem is the habitual practice of swearing, a misuse of taking an oath, or the breaking of a taboo against uttering the divine name. On taking God's name "in vain," see Ex 20.7; Lev 19.12; Deut 5.11. **23.11** *Sins doubly* may refer to Lev 5.4.

23.12–15 Advice against the use of coarse speech. **23.12** The meaning of speech *comparable to death* is unclear. It may mean "rivaling death" or "meriting death" and so intend a reference to blasphemy, the punishment for which was death. See Lev 24.11–16.

will never become disciplined as
long as they live.

Concerning Sexual Sins

16 Two kinds of individuals multiply sins,
and a third incurs wrath.
Hot passion that blazes like a fire
will not be quenched until it burns itself out;
one who commits fornication with his near of kin
will never cease until the fire burns him up.
17 To a fornicator all bread is sweet;
he will never weary until he dies.
18 The one who sins against his marriage bed
says to himself, "Who can see me?
Darkness surrounds me, the walls hide me,
and no one sees me. Why should I worry?
The Most High will not remember sins."
19 His fear is confined to human eyes
and he does not realize that the eyes of the Lord
are ten thousand times brighter than the sun;
they look upon every aspect of human behavior
and see into hidden corners.
20 Before the universe was created, it was known to him,
and so it is since its completion.
21 This man will be punished in the streets of the city,
and where he least suspects it, he will be seized.
22 So it is with a woman who leaves her husband
and presents him with an heir by another man.
23 For first of all, she has disobeyed the law of the Most High;
second, she has committed an offense against her husband;
and third, through her fornication she has committed adultery
and brought forth children by another man.
24 She herself will be brought before the assembly,
and her punishment will extend to her children.
25 Her children will not take root,
and her branches will not bear fruit.
26 She will leave behind an accursed memory
and her disgrace will never be blotted out.
27 Those who survive her will recognize
that nothing is better than the fear of the Lord,
and nothing sweeter than to heed the commandments of the Lord.[l]

24 The Praise of Wisdom[m]

Wisdom praises herself,
and tells of her glory in the midst of her people.

l Other ancient authorities add as verse 28, *It is a great honor to follow God, and to be received by him is long life.* *m* This heading is included in the Gk text.

23.16–27 A narrative poem on the sexual license of a man (vv. 16–21) and a woman (vv. 22–27), introduced by a numerical proverb (*Two kinds . . . and a third*). **23.21** *Punished in the streets* means that his sin will become public knowledge. *In the streets* may refer to the marketplace or the city gates where trials took place. According to Lev 20.10; Deut 22.22–24, the penalty for adultery was death, but Ben Sira does not allude to it. Thus the penalty referred to is probably dishonor. **23.24** *Brought before the assembly* refers to a court hearing. As with the case of the man (v. 21), it is not clear what the woman's punishment would have been. That *her punishment will extend to her children* seems to imply disgrace, the point made in the following lines. For a similar picture, cf. Wis 4.3–6.

24.1–22 A poem of twenty-two lines in praise of personified wisdom, with three stanzas (vv. 3–7, 8–12, 13–17), plus introduction (vv. 1–2) and conclusion (vv. 19–22). The three stanzas tell the story of wisdom from creation, through Israel's epic history, to her flourishing in Jerusalem. The poem is tightly constructed and the narrative logic is controlled and complete. The last line of each stanza introduces an image that prepares for

2 In the assembly of the Most High
she opens her mouth,
and in the presence of his hosts
she tells of her glory:
3 "I came forth from the mouth of
the Most High,
and covered the earth like a
mist.
4 I dwelt in the highest heavens,
and my throne was in a pillar
of cloud.
5 Alone I compassed the vault of
heaven
and traversed the depths of the
abyss.
6 Over waves of the sea, over all
the earth,
and over every people and
nation I have held sway.[n]
7 Among all these I sought a
resting place;
in whose territory should I
abide?

8 "Then the Creator of all things
gave me a command,
and my Creator chose the place
for my tent.
He said, 'Make your dwelling in
Jacob,
and in Israel receive your
inheritance.'
9 Before the ages, in the beginning,
he created me,
and for all the ages I shall not
cease to be.
10 In the holy tent I ministered
before him,
and so I was established in
Zion.
11 Thus in the beloved city he gave
me a resting place,
and in Jerusalem was my
domain.
12 I took root in an honored people,
in the portion of the Lord, his
heritage.

13 "I grew tall like a cedar in
Lebanon,

n Other ancient authorities read *I have acquired a possession*

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the next stanza. The poem stands in the tradition of Job 28; Prov 8.22–31 (cf. Bar 3.9–37) and brings to a climax the wisdom poems in Sirach: 1.1–20; 4.11–19; 6.18–37; 14.20–15.10. These poems answer the problem of hidden wisdom by imagining the wisdom of God in creation to be present and available to Jews in the tradition of Israel with its covenants and Mosaic law. Ch. 24 expands upon this claim by locating wisdom in the temple society of Ben Sira's time. This feature makes the poem distinctive and prepares for the express identification of wisdom with the books of Moses in 24.23, as well as her location in the vocation of the scribe in 39.1–11, the history of Israel's leaders in chs. 44–49, and the office of the high priest in ch. 50. **24.1–2** An introduction of the speaker. **24.1** *Praises herself* is Ben Sira's acknowledgment of the distinctive characteristic of the poem, called an aretalogy (a recital of one's virtues or achievements), a genre associated primarily with the Egyptian goddess Isis. **24.2** *The assembly of the Most High* is a curious formulation, suggesting that both *her people* (v. 1) and *his* [heavenly] *hosts* (v. 2) are present as she speaks. *His hosts* are the heavenly bodies and court of the Most High; see 17.32; cf. Gen 2.1; Pss 82; 103.19–22. **24.3–7** The first stanza tells of Wisdom's origin (v. 3), her part in the creation of the world (vv. 4–6), and her quest for rest and residence (v. 7). **24.3** *From the mouth* is an image common in Egyptian poems of creation; it perhaps alludes to Gen 1 ("And God said"). Cf. Pss 29.2; 33.6. *Like a mist*, an image common to Egyptian mythologies of creation that perhaps alludes to the spirit of God in Gen 1.2. **24.4** The *throne . . . in a pillar of cloud* is an allusive interpretation of Ex 13.21–22. **24.5** A mythological image meaning that wisdom traversed the great circle and so "described" (created) the world, an image common in Egyptian mythology. Cf. Prov 8.27–29. **24.6** *Held sway* means she ruled as queen. The Egyptian goddess Isis makes a similar claim in one of her aretalogies, "I am the queen of every land." Cf. Wis 8.1. **24.7** That Wisdom *sought a resting place* is reminiscent of Isis mythologies and may allude as well to God resting on the seventh day (Gen 2.2–3). Wisdom's quest for recognition and habitation among humans complements the human quest for wisdom, thus making the theme of seeking and finding capable of inversion. **24.8–12** The second stanza tells of Wisdom finding a resting place in Jerusalem. **24.8** *My Creator* domesticates the preceding mythological imagery by using the preferred language of creation. Cf. 1.4; Prov 8.22. *My tent* refers to the tabernacle in the wilderness (Ex 25.8–9); cf. v. 10. **24.10** *Ministered before him* as priest is a rare attribution. Traditionally, the social location of wisdom was the palace or the school; but see 4.13. *Zion* was a designation for Jerusalem as the location for God's house and presence in Israel; see 36.18–19. **24.13–17** The third stanza tells

and like a cypress on the
heights of Hermon.
14 I grew tall like a palm tree in En-
gedi,[o]
and like rosebushes in Jericho;
like a fair olive tree in the field,
and like a plane tree beside
water[p] I grew tall.
15 Like cassia and camel's thorn I
gave forth perfume,
and like choice myrrh I spread
my fragrance,
like galbanum, onycha, and
stacte,
and like the odor of incense in
the tent.
16 Like a terebinth I spread out my
branches,
and my branches are glorious
and graceful.
17 Like the vine I bud forth
delights,
and my blossoms become
glorious and abundant
fruit.[q]

19 "Come to me, you who desire me,
and eat your fill of my fruits.
20 For the memory of me is sweeter
than honey,
and the possession of me
sweeter than the
honeycomb.
21 Those who eat of me will hunger
for more,
and those who drink of me will
thirst for more.
22 Whoever obeys me will not be put
to shame,
and those who work with me
will not sin."

Wisdom and the Law

23 All this is the book of the
covenant of the Most
High God,
the law that Moses
commanded us
as an inheritance for the
congregations of Jacob.[r]
25 It overflows, like the Pishon, with
wisdom,
and like the Tigris at the time
of the first fruits.
26 It runs over, like the Euphrates,
with understanding,
and like the Jordan at harvest
time.
27 It pours forth instruction like the
Nile,[s]

o Other ancient authorities read *on the beaches*
p Other ancient authorities omit *beside water*
q Other ancient authorities add as verse 18, *I am the mother of beautiful love, of fear, of knowledge, and of holy hope; being eternal, I am given to all my children, to those who are named by him.* r Other ancient authorities add as verse 24, *"Do not cease to be strong in the Lord, cling to him so that he may strengthen you; the Lord Almighty alone is God, and besides him there is no savior."* s Syr: Gk *It makes instruction shine forth like light*

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of Wisdom "taking root" in Jerusalem, flourishing like a tree. Most of the trees mentioned were prized for their beauty, utility, and fragrance, and some were symbolic of the grandeur of their districts, reaching from Lebanon in the north (cedar) to Judea in the south (olive). Several were used in the preparation of perfumes and incense, suggesting a connection to the temple ritual mentioned in v. 15. The addition of the vine and its fruit in v. 17 enables a shift to the metaphor of cultivation and prepares for the concluding invitation that follows in vv. 19–22. **24.18** See text note *q*. Some ancient manuscripts have this verse describing Wisdom as a mother; cf. Prov 8.32; Wis 7.12; Lk 13.34; it also occurs in Philo's writings and in Gnostic texts. **24.19–22** Wisdom's invitation to her feast. On Wisdom's fruit see 1.16–17; 6.19; 15.3; Prov 8.19; 9.2, 5.

24.23–34 The author acknowledges that personified wisdom is a metaphor for the wisdom available in both the Mosaic law (vv. 23–29) and the instruction of the teacher (vv. 30–34). **24.23–29** The wisdom of the Torah is unfathomable. **24.23** The express identification of wisdom with the Torah is given in prose, not poetry, an extremely odd feature of this transition between the poem and its interpretation. It is the earliest statement of this kind in Jewish literature; but cf. Deut 4.5–8. In later rabbinic tradition the identification of wisdom and Torah was common and even the mythology of personified wisdom was transferred to the Torah. The reference to *the book of the covenant* is uncertain, but cf. Ex 24.7. For *the law that Moses commanded*, see Deut 33.4. **24.25–27** The rivers are those flowing from the garden of Eden (Gen 2.10–14), plus the Jordan and the Nile. **24.27** *Pours forth like the Nile* is a simile derived from Egyptian lore about the first cataract (Elephantine, modern Aswan) as the "source" of the Nile and its periodic inundations. The principal temple of Isis was located at Philae, an island at the first cataract. See 24.30–31 and the image of "pour forth" in 24.33. The metaphor is used of wisdom (1.9); of the scribe (39.6); of the

like the Gihon at the time of vintage.
28 The first man did not know wisdom[t] fully,
nor will the last one fathom her.
29 For her thoughts are more abundant than the sea,
and her counsel deeper than the great abyss.

30 As for me, I was like a canal from a river,
like a water channel into a garden.
31 I said, "I will water my garden and drench my flower-beds."
And lo, my canal became a river, and my river a sea.
32 I will again make instruction shine forth like the dawn,
and I will make it clear from far away.
33 I will again pour out teaching like prophecy,
and leave it to all future generations.
34 Observe that I have not labored for myself alone,
but for all who seek wisdom.[t]

Those Who Are Worthy of Praise

25 I take pleasure in three things, and they are beautiful in the sight of God and of mortals:[u]
agreement among brothers and sisters, friendship among neighbors,
and a wife and a husband who live in harmony.
2 I hate three kinds of people,
and I loathe their manner of life:
a pauper who boasts, a rich person who lies,
and an old fool who commits adultery.

3 If you gathered nothing in your youth,
how can you find anything in your old age?
4 How attractive is sound judgment in the gray-haired,
and for the aged to possess good counsel!
5 How attractive is wisdom in the aged,
and understanding and counsel in the venerable!
6 Rich experience is the crown of the aged,
and their boast is the fear of the Lord.

7 I can think of nine whom I would call blessed,
and a tenth my tongue proclaims:
a man who can rejoice in his children;
a man who lives to see the downfall of his foes.
8 Happy the man who lives with a sensible wife,

t Gk *her* *u* Syr Lat: Gk *In three things I was beautiful and I stood in beauty before the Lord and mortals.*

Lord's blessing (39.22); of Solomon's wisdom (47.14–15); and of Ben Sira's own instruction (50.27). **24.28–29** On the limits of human understanding, a theme related to that of hidden wisdom, see 1.6. **24.30–34** Ben Sira assumes the voice of personified wisdom. **24.32** To *make instruction shine forth* is an expression of Ben Sira's desire, perhaps in the awareness that his program was new and that it countered the skepticism documented in Ecclesiastes. On the Torah as light, cf. Ps 119.105; Prov 4.18; 6.23. On wisdom as light, see Wis 7.26, 29. **24.33** To *pour out teaching like prophecy* is a novel notion that merges two concepts of effective speech, that of the sage, which leads to understanding, and that of the prophet, which predicts or effects change in a political or social situation. The combination is based on Ben Sira's conception of personified wisdom as the source of enlightenment and thus identifiable with the spirit (of God) as the agent of prophetic inspiration. On *pour out*, see note on 24.27. On prophecy as wisdom, see note on 39.1; 39.6. **24.34** This saying is repeated in 33.18.

25.1–2 Two contrasting numerical proverbs on acceptable and unacceptable relationships. **25.3–6** A unit in praise of mature wisdom. **25.7–11** A numerical proverb introducing a series of beatitudes. **25.8** To *plow with ox and ass together* was a legal prohibition, used here as metaphor for an incompatible marriage or perhaps for two incompatible wives. See Deut 22.10; cf. Sir 26.6. To *serve an inferior* was considered a disgrace.

and the one who does not plow
with ox and ass together.[v]
Happy is the one who does not
sin with the tongue,
and the one who has not served
an inferior.
9 Happy is the one who finds a
friend,[w]
and the one who speaks to
attentive listeners.
10 How great is the one who finds
wisdom!
But none is superior to the one
who fears the Lord.
11 Fear of the Lord surpasses
everything;
to whom can we compare the
one who has it?[x]

Some Extreme Forms of Evil

13 Any wound, but not a wound of
the heart!
Any wickedness, but not the
wickedness of a woman!
14 Any suffering, but not suffering
from those who hate!
And any vengeance, but not the
vengeance of enemies!
15 There is no venom[y] worse than a
snake's venom,[y]
and no anger worse than a
woman's[z] wrath.

The Evil of a Wicked Woman

16 I would rather live with a lion
and a dragon
than live with an evil woman.
17 A woman's wickedness changes
her appearance,
and darkens her face like that
of a bear.
18 Her husband sits[a] among the
neighbors,
and he cannot help sighing[b]
bitterly.
19 Any iniquity is small compared to
a woman's iniquity;
may a sinner's lot befall her!
20 A sandy ascent for the feet of the
aged—
such is a garrulous wife to a
quiet husband.
21 Do not be ensnared by a woman's
beauty,
and do not desire a woman for
her possessions.[c]
22 There is wrath and impudence
and great disgrace
when a wife supports her
husband.
23 Dejected mind, gloomy face,
and wounded heart come from
an evil wife.
Drooping hands and weak knees
come from the wife who does
not make her husband
happy.
24 From a woman sin had its
beginning,
and because of her we all die.
25 Allow no outlet to water,
and no boldness of speech to
an evil wife.
26 If she does not go as you direct,
separate her from yourself.

The Joy of a Good Wife

26 Happy is the husband of a good
wife;
the number of his days will be
doubled.
2 A loyal wife brings joy to her
husband,
and he will complete his years
in peace.

v Heb Syr: Gk lacks *and the one who does not plow with ox and ass together* w Lat Syr: Gk *good sense* x Other ancient authorities add as verse 12, *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of love for him, and faith is the beginning of clinging to him.* y Syr: Gk *head* z Other ancient authorities read *an enemy's* a Heb Syr: Gk *loses heart* b Other ancient authorities read *and listening he sighs* c Heb Syr: Other Gk authorities read *for her beauty*

25.13–26.27 A large collection of proverbs about bad and good wives. **25.13–15** Sayings about a woman's wrath. **25.14** *The vengeance of enemies* may refer to two wives in a single household; see 26.6. **25.16–26** The bad wife was a topic traditional to proverbial wisdom. See Prov 21.19; 25.24; 27.15. **25.24** *From a woman sin had its beginning* alludes to Eve (Gen 3.1–24). Cf. 2 Cor 11.3; 1 Tim 2.14. Alternate interpretations of the Genesis story were that sin originated from the devil, as in Wis 2.24, or from Adam, as in Rom 5.12–14. Ben Sira does not mention the sin of either Adam or Eve in his interpretation of the Genesis account in 17.7. **25.26** The advice to *separate her from yourself* implies divorce; cf. Deut 24.1. **26.1–4** The good wife was also a tradi-

3 A good wife is a great blessing;
she will be granted among the blessings of the man who fears the Lord.
4 Whether rich or poor, his heart is content,
and at all times his face is cheerful.

The Worst of Evils: A Wicked Wife

5 Of three things my heart is frightened,
and of a fourth I am in great fear:[d]
Slander in the city, the gathering of a mob,
and false accusation—all these are worse than death.
6 But it is heartache and sorrow when a wife is jealous of a rival,
and a tongue-lashing makes it known to all.
7 A bad wife is a chafing yoke;
taking hold of her is like grasping a scorpion.
8 A drunken wife arouses great anger;
she cannot hide her shame.
9 The haughty stare betrays an unchaste wife;
her eyelids give her away.

10 Keep strict watch over a headstrong daughter,
or else, when she finds liberty, she will make use of it.
11 Be on guard against her impudent eye,
and do not be surprised if she sins against you.
12 As a thirsty traveler opens his mouth
and drinks from any water near him,
so she will sit in front of every tent peg
and open her quiver to the arrow.

The Blessing of a Good Wife

13 A wife's charm delights her husband,
and her skill puts flesh on his bones.
14 A silent wife is a gift from the Lord,
and nothing is so precious as her self-discipline.
15 A modest wife adds charm to charm,
and no scales can weigh the value of her chastity.
16 Like the sun rising in the heights of the Lord,
so is the beauty of a good wife in her well-ordered home.
17 Like the shining lamp on the holy lampstand,
so is a beautiful face on a stately figure.
18 Like golden pillars on silver bases,
so are shapely legs and steadfast feet.

Other ancient authorities add verses 19–27:

19 *My child, keep sound the bloom of your youth,*
and do not give your strength to strangers.
20 *Seek a fertile field within the whole plain,*
and sow it with your own seed, trusting in your fine stock.
21 *So your offspring will prosper,*
and, having confidence in their good descent, will grow great.
22 *A prostitute is regarded as spittle,*

d Syr: Meaning of Gk uncertain

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tional topic; see Prov 31.10–31. **26.5–12** Additional sayings about a bad wife. **26.6** *Jealous of a rival* may assume polygamy; cf. Gen 30.1. **26.10** The mention of a *daughter* interrupts the discourse on wives. Since the Syriac has "wife" and the Hebrew is missing, the saying was probably about one's wife. **26.12** Euphemisms for sexual intercourse. **26.13–18** Six attributes of a good wife. **26.16** In both Jewish and Greek society, the woman's place was in the household for which she had the responsibility of maintaining order. **26.17** *The holy lampstand* refers to the menorah, a candelabrum located in the temple. **26.19–27** A miscellany on women, added later. **26.19–21** Mixed marriage was taboo in Second Temple times and violated the laws of ritual purity. Cf. Ezra 10.1–17; Neh 10.30; 13.23–27.

and a married woman as a tower
of death to her lovers.
23 *A godless wife is given as a portion to*
a lawless man,
but a pious wife is given to the
man who fears the Lord.
24 *A shameless woman constantly acts*
disgracefully,
but a modest daughter will even be
embarrassed before her
husband.
25 *A headstrong wife is regarded as*
a dog,
but one who has a sense of shame
will fear the Lord.
26 *A wife honoring her husband will*
seem wise to all,
but if she dishonors him in her
pride she will be known to all
as ungodly.
Happy is the husband of a good
wife;
for the number of his years will be
doubled.
27 *A loud-voiced and garrulous wife is*
like a trumpet sounding the
charge,
and every person like this lives in
the anarchy of war.

Three Depressing Things

28 At two things my heart is grieved,
and because of a third anger
comes over me:
a warrior in want through
poverty,
intelligent men who are treated
contemptuously,
and a man who turns back from
righteousness to sin—
the Lord will prepare him for
the sword!

The Temptations of Commerce

29 A merchant can hardly keep
from wrongdoing,
nor is a tradesman innocent
of sin.

27 Many have committed sin for
gain,[e]
and those who seek to get rich
will avert their eyes.
2 As a stake is driven firmly into a
fissure between stones,
so sin is wedged in between
selling and buying.
3 If a person is not steadfast in the
fear of the Lord,
his house will be quickly
overthrown.

Tests in Life

4 When a sieve is shaken, the
refuse appears;
so do a person's faults when he
speaks.
5 The kiln tests the potter's vessels;
so the test of a person is in his
conversation.
6 Its fruit discloses the cultivation
of a tree;
so a person's speech discloses
the cultivation of his mind.
7 Do not praise anyone before he
speaks,
for this is the way people are
tested.

Reward and Retribution

8 If you pursue justice, you will
attain it
and wear it like a glorious robe.
9 Birds roost with their own kind,
so honesty comes home to those
who practice it.
10 A lion lies in wait for prey;
so does sin for evildoers.

Varieties of Speech

11 The conversation of the godly is
always wise,

e Other ancient authorities read *a trifle*

26.28–27.21 A collection of proverbs on violations of integrity. **26.29** An exceptionally harsh judgment about commerce, due perhaps to the social and political situation of the time. The traditional warning was against dishonesty in dealing, not against trade itself. Cf. Prov 11.1; 20.10. **27.6** *The cultivation of his mind* combines concepts of the Hebrew *yetzer* with the standard Greek metaphor for education, *paideia*; cf. 6.18–37; see notes on 4.17; 15.14. Integrity was

but the fool changes like the moon.
12 Among stupid people limit your time,
but among thoughtful people linger on.
13 The talk of fools is offensive,
and their laughter is wantonly sinful.
14 Their cursing and swearing make one's hair stand on end,
and their quarrels make others stop their ears.
15 The strife of the proud leads to bloodshed,
and their abuse is grievous to hear.

Betraying Secrets

16 Whoever betrays secrets destroys confidence,
and will never find a congenial friend.
17 Love your friend and keep faith with him;
but if you betray his secrets, do not follow after him.
18 For as a person destroys his enemy,
so you have destroyed the friendship of your neighbor.
19 And as you allow a bird to escape from your hand,
so you have let your neighbor go, and will not catch him again.
20 Do not go after him, for he is too far off,
and has escaped like a gazelle from a snare.
21 For a wound may be bandaged,
and there is reconciliation after abuse,
but whoever has betrayed secrets is without hope.

Hypocrisy and Retribution

22 Whoever winks the eye plots mischief,
and those who know him will keep their distance.
23 In your presence his mouth is all sweetness,
and he admires your words;
but later he will twist his speech
and with your own words he will trip you up.
24 I have hated many things, but him above all;
even the Lord hates him.
25 Whoever throws a stone straight up throws it on his own head,
and a treacherous blow opens up many wounds.
26 Whoever digs a pit will fall into it,
and whoever sets a snare will be caught in it.
27 If a person does evil, it will roll back upon him,
and he will not know where it came from.
28 Mockery and abuse issue from the proud,
but vengeance lies in wait for them like a lion.
29 Those who rejoice in the fall of the godly will be caught in a snare,
and pain will consume them before their death.

Anger and Vengeance

30 Anger and wrath, these also are abominations,
yet a sinner holds on to them.
28 The vengeful will face the Lord's vengeance,
for he keeps a strict account of[f] their sins.

f Other ancient authorities read *for he firmly establishes*

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measured by the correspondence of one's speech with one's actions. **27.16–21** A unit on betraying *secrets*. Cf. Prov 20.19; 25.8–10; see Sir 8.17–19. To keep a confidence was a standard measure of true friendship.

27.22–29 A description of the schemer with warning. **27.22** On *winking* as a sign of duplicity, cf. Prov 6.13; 10.10. **27.30–28.11** On anger and forgiveness. **28.1** That the Lord keeps *a strict account* of one's sins (and deeds of mercy) occurs repeatedly in Sirach. See 2.14; 3.14, 31; 5.3–8; 11.26; 12.2; 16.14; 17.23; 18.20; 35.13, 24.

2 Forgive your neighbor the wrong
he has done,
and then your sins will be
pardoned when you
pray.
3 Does anyone harbor anger
against another,
and expect healing from the
Lord?
4 If one has no mercy toward
another like himself,
can he then seek pardon for his
own sins?
5 If a mere mortal harbors
wrath,
who will make an atoning
sacrifice for his sins?
6 Remember the end of your life,
and set enmity aside;
remember corruption and
death, and be true to the
commandments.
7 Remember the commandments,
and do not be angry with
your neighbor;
remember the covenant of the
Most High, and overlook
faults.

8 Refrain from strife, and your sins
will be fewer;
for the hot-tempered kindle
strife,
9 and the sinner disrupts
friendships
and sows discord among those
who are at peace.
10 In proportion to the fuel, so will
the fire burn,
and in proportion to the
obstinacy, so will strife
increase;[g]
in proportion to a person's
strength will be his anger,
and in proportion to his wealth
he will increase his wrath.
11 A hasty quarrel kindles a fire,
and a hasty dispute sheds
blood.

The Evil Tongue

12 If you blow on a spark, it will
glow;
if you spit on it, it will be
put out;
yet both come out of your
mouth.

13 Curse the gossips and the
double-tongued,
for they destroy the peace of
many.
14 Slander[h] has shaken many,
and scattered them from nation
to nation;
it has destroyed strong cities,
and overturned the houses of
the great.
15 Slander[h] has driven virtuous
women from their homes,
and deprived them of the fruit
of their toil.
16 Those who pay heed to slander[i]
will not find rest,
nor will they settle down in
peace.
17 The blow of a whip raises a welt,
but a blow of the tongue
crushes the bones.
18 Many have fallen by the edge of
the sword,
but not as many as have fallen
because of the tongue.
19 Happy is the one who is
protected from it,
who has not been exposed to its
anger,
who has not borne its yoke,
and has not been bound with
its fetters.
20 For its yoke is a yoke of iron,
and its fetters are fetters of
bronze;
21 its death is an evil death,
and Hades is preferable to it.
22 It has no power over the godly;

g Other ancient authorities read *burn* *h* Gk *A third tongue* *i* Gk *it*

28.2 On the advice to *forgive your neighbor . . . when you pray,* cf. Mk 11.25; Lk 11.4. **28.5** Since one made sacrifice for one's own sins, the implied answer to this question (regarding the person who harbors wrath, vv. 2–5) is no one. This puts an ethical condition upon the efficacy of sacrifice for sins. **28.7** *Do not be angry with your neighbor* may be an interpretation of Lev 19.18. **28.12–26** On slander. **28.22** *Burned in its flame* is a reference to slander, the subject throughout this section, not to Hades, mentioned in v. 21.

they will not be burned in its flame.
23 Those who forsake the Lord will fall into its power;
it will burn among them and will not be put out.
It will be sent out against them like a lion;
like a leopard it will mangle them.
24a As you fence in your property with thorns,
25b so make a door and a bolt for your mouth.
24b As you lock up your silver and gold,
25a so make balances and scales for your words.
26 Take care not to err with your tongue,[j]
and fall victim to one lying in wait.

On Lending and Borrowing

29 The merciful lend to their neighbors;
by holding out a helping hand they keep the commandments.
2 Lend to your neighbor in his time of need;
repay your neighbor when a loan falls due.
3 Keep your promise and be honest with him,
and on every occasion you will find what you need.
4 Many regard a loan as a windfall,
and cause trouble to those who help them.
5 One kisses another's hands until he gets a loan,
and is deferential in speaking of his neighbor's money;
but at the time for repayment he delays,
and pays back with empty promises,
and finds fault with the time.
6 If he can pay, his creditor[k] will hardly get back half,
and will regard that as a windfall.
If he cannot pay, the borrower[k] has robbed the other of his money,
and he has needlessly made him an enemy;
he will repay him with curses and reproaches,
and instead of glory will repay him with dishonor.
7 Many refuse to lend, not because of meanness,
but from fear[l] of being defrauded needlessly.

8 Nevertheless, be patient with someone in humble circumstances,
and do not keep him waiting for your alms.
9 Help the poor for the commandment's sake,
and in their need do not send them away empty-handed.
10 Lose your silver for the sake of a brother or a friend,
and do not let it rust under a stone and be lost.
11 Lay up your treasure according to the commandments of the Most High,
and it will profit you more than gold.
12 Store up almsgiving in your treasury,
and it will rescue you from every disaster;
13 better than a stout shield and a sturdy spear,
it will fight for you against the enemy.

j Gk *with it* *k* Gk *he* *l* Other ancient authorities read *many refuse to lend, therefore, because of such meanness; they are afraid*

29.1–20 A twenty-two-line poem on money matters. **29.1** That *the merciful lend to their neighbors* is a merger of wisdom piety with the traditional code on lending to fellow Jews; cf. Ex 22.25; Lev 25.35–37; Deut 15.7–11; 23.20–21; Neh 5.10–11. **29.8** Almsgiving was the most emphasized of all the acts of piety; see 3.30–4.6. **29.9** For the *commandment*, see Deut 15.7–11. **29.10** On treasure *rusting*, cf. Mt 6.19; Jas 5.2–3. **29.11** To *lay up . . . treasure* was an idiomatic expression for almsgiving, a way of adding credits to one's account. See v. 12; cf. Tob 4.9; Mt

On Guaranteeing Debts

14 A good person will be surety for his neighbor,
but the one who has lost all sense of shame will fail him.
15 Do not forget the kindness of your guarantor,
for he has given his life for you.
16 A sinner wastes the property of his guarantor,
17 and the ungrateful person abandons his rescuer.
18 Being surety has ruined many who were prosperous,
and has tossed them about like waves of the sea;
it has driven the influential into exile,
and they have wandered among foreign nations.
19 The sinner comes to grief through surety;
his pursuit of gain involves him in lawsuits.
20 Assist your neighbor to the best of your ability,
but be careful not to fall yourself.

Home and Hospitality

21 The necessities of life are water, bread, and clothing,
and also a house to assure privacy.
22 Better is the life of the poor under their own crude roof
than sumptuous food in the house of others.
23 Be content with little or much,
and you will hear no reproach for being a guest.[m]
24 It is a miserable life to go from house to house;
as a guest you should not open your mouth;
25 you will play the host and provide drink without being thanked,
and besides this you will hear rude words like these:
26 "Come here, stranger, prepare the table;
let me eat what you have there."
27 "Be off, stranger, for an honored guest is here;
my brother has come for a visit, and I need the guest-room."
28 It is hard for a sensible person to bear
scolding about lodging[n] and the insults of the moneylender.

CONCERNING CHILDREN[o]

30 He who loves his son will whip him often,
so that he may rejoice at the way he turns out.
2 He who disciplines his son will profit by him,
and will boast of him among acquaintances.
3 He who teaches his son will make his enemies envious,
and will glory in him among his friends.
4 When the father dies he will not seem to be dead,
for he has left behind him one like himself,
5 whom in his life he looked upon with joy
and at death, without grief.
6 He has left behind him an avenger against his enemies,

m Lat: Gk *reproach from your family*; other ancient authorities lack this line *n* Or *scolding from the household* *o* This heading is included in the Gk text.

6.20–21. **29.14** *Surety* refers to collateral. In Proverbs the advice is against giving surety (Prov 6.1–5; 11.15; 17.18; 22.26). **29.15** *Has given his life for you* is an exaggeration based on "life" as one's property or "livelihood." Cf. 33.31.

29.21–28 Supporting oneself is better than dependence upon others. **29.21** Another list of *the necessities of life* is given in 39.26. **29.25** To *play the host* is an irony for being treated like a slave. **30.1–13** On the discipline of children. **30.1** *Will whip him often* accords with the standard approach to discipline and education in antiquity. See 22.6; cf. Prov 13.24; 23.13–14. **30.6** *An avenger* refers to the son who will defend the father's name and interests. Honor, obligation, and

and one to repay the kindness
of his friends.

7 Whoever spoils his son will bind
up his wounds,
and will suffer heartache at
every cry.
8 An unbroken horse turns out
stubborn,
and an unchecked son turns
out headstrong.
9 Pamper a child, and he will
terrorize you;
play with him, and he will
grieve you.
10 Do not laugh with him, or you
will have sorrow with him,
and in the end you will gnash
your teeth.
11 Give him no freedom in his
youth,
and do not ignore his errors.
12 Bow down his neck in his
youth,[p]
and beat his sides while he is
young,
or else he will become stubborn
and disobey you,
and you will have sorrow of
soul from him.[q]
13 Discipline your son and make his
yoke heavy,[r]
so that you may not be
offended by his
shamelessness.

Concerning Illness

14 Better off poor, healthy, and fit
than rich and afflicted in body.
15 Health and fitness are better than
any gold,
and a robust body than
countless riches.
16 There is no wealth better than
health of body,
and no gladness above joy of
heart.
17 Death is better than a life of
misery,
and eternal sleep[s] than chronic
sickness.

CONCERNING FOODS[t]

18 Good things poured out upon a
mouth that is closed
are like offerings of food
placed upon a grave.
19 Of what use to an idol is a
sacrifice?
For it can neither eat nor smell.
So is the one punished by the
Lord;
20 he sees with his eyes and groans
as a eunuch groans when
embracing a girl.[u]

21 Do not give yourself over to
sorrow,
and do not distress yourself
deliberately.
22 A joyful heart is life itself,
and rejoicing lengthens one's
life span.
23 Indulge yourself[v] and take
comfort,

p Other ancient authorities lack this line and the preceding line *q* Other ancient authorities lack this line *r* Heb: Gk *take pains with him* *s* Other ancient authorities lack *eternal sleep* *t* This heading is included in the Gk text; other ancient authorities place the heading before verse 16 *u* Other ancient authorities add *So is the person who does right under compulsion* *v* Other ancient authorities read *Beguile yourself*

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the keeping of accounts were cross-generational matters.

30.14–25 A miscellany on attitudes in the face of illness. **30.18** *A mouth that is closed* probably refers to one who is sick, but the language is suggestive of one who has died; the Hebrew reads "one who cannot eat." The hyperbole is followed by three examples of those incapable of enjoying the pleasures of life: the dead (v. 18), idols (v. 19), and the eunuch (v. 20). *Offerings of food placed upon a grave* refers to the Eastern Mediterranean custom of placing food and pouring out drink on the burial stones of the dead. Cf. 7.33; Deut 4.28; 26.14; Ezek 24.17; Tob 4.7. **30.19** That sacrificial offerings are of no *use to an idol* is ridicule. Criticism of idolatry was a characteristic attitude of the Jews. The critique is based upon the second commandment (Ex 20.4; Deut 5.8), and phrased as a comparison between the Lord as a living God and idols, which were lifeless things, made by human artisans. The ridicule is aimed at the way in which idols were treated as if they were alive (clothed, served with offerings of food and drink, conversed with, and handled) when in fact they were lifeless objects. Cf. Ps 115.4–7; Isa 44.9–11; 57.6; Wis 13; Let Jer 27; Bel 3–22. **30.21** *Do not give yourself over to sorrow* is the language of mourning, used as a transition from the imagery of death (vv. 17–19) to the topic of enjoyment. On mourning, see 38.17–20. **30.23** *Indulge your-*

and remove sorrow far
from you,
for sorrow has destroyed many,
and no advantage ever comes
from it.
24 Jealousy and anger shorten life,
and anxiety brings on
premature old age.
25 Those who are cheerful and
merry at table
will benefit from their food.

Right Attitude Toward Riches

31 Wakefulness over wealth wastes
away one's flesh,
and anxiety about it drives
away sleep.
2 Wakeful anxiety prevents
slumber,
and a severe illness carries off
sleep.[w]
3 The rich person toils to amass a
fortune,
and when he rests he fills
himself with his dainties.
4 The poor person toils to make a
meager living,
and if ever he rests he becomes
needy.

5 One who loves gold will not be
justified;
one who pursues money will be
led astray[x] by it.
6 Many have come to ruin because
of gold,
and their destruction has met
them face to face.
7 It is a stumbling block to those
who are avid for it,
and every fool will be taken
captive by it.
8 Blessed is the rich person who is
found blameless,
and who does not go after gold.
9 Who is he, that we may
praise him?
For he has done wonders
among his people.
10 Who has been tested by it and
been found perfect?
Let it be for him a ground for
boasting.
Who has had the power to
transgress and did not
transgress,
and to do evil and did not
do it?
11 His prosperity will be
established,[y]

w Other ancient authorities read *sleep carries off a severe illness will be filled because of this*
x Heb Syr: Gk *pursues destruction*
y Other ancient authorities add

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self, advice common to the Epicurean tradition. Cf. 14.11, 16; Eccl 2.24. **30.25** *Merry at table* is a weak attempt to bridge between the images of mourning and eating in vv. 17–23 in order to return to the theme of gladness in vv.14–16. The translation follows the Greek text, since the Hebrew appears uncertain, and v. 25 occurs at a break in the Greek text where several pages of a Greek codex were mistakenly transposed, thereby reordering some chapters in the manuscript tradition of the Septuagint. Instead of continuing with ch. 31 (as does the Hebrew and the NRSV), the Septuagint inserts the text from (Hebrew/NRSV) 33.16–36.13 at this point, thus giving rise to messy textual seams both here and at 36.13 (see text note *x* there). It is possible that the Greek 30.25 was rephrased after the transposition in the attempt to round off the preceding proverbial unit.

31.1–11 A troubled set of sayings on acquiring, protecting, and using wealth. Two ethical considerations underlie Ben Sira's attempt to deal with the widespread Hellenistic critique of the rich. One is that avarice is to be condemned (vv. 5–8); the other is that almsgiving is to be commended (vv. 9–11). **31.2** Wakefulness was a common idiom, both as a sign of anxiety and as a sign of legitimate concern. Kings were expected to stay awake out of concern for their people, and in the case of impending crises wakefulness (as watchfulness) was enjoined for all. Anxiety, on the other hand, was usually thought detrimental (cf. Lk 12.22). The phrase *wakeful anxiety* is a combination of the two terms based on their occurrence in v. 1. **31.3–4** This is a common form of couplet, used to compare two sets of opposing categories (rich/poor; sufficiency/need) by relating each to a third and common factor (toil). In this case, the resulting observation is merely clever, not judgmental. **31.8** *Found blameless* refers to Ben Sira's notion of the pious rich; cf. 13.24. The Greek word for *gold* translates the Hebrew *mamon*; this is the earliest example of this Aramaic loanword which also occurs in Mt 6.24; Lk 16.9, 11, 13. **31.9–11** The rhetorical questions may be intended as irony, illustrating the difficulty of knowing how to assess legitimate and illegitimate wealth.

and the assembly will proclaim
his acts of charity.

Table Etiquette

12 Are you seated at the table of the great?[z]
Do not be greedy at it,
and do not say, "How much food there is here!"
13 Remember that a greedy eye is a bad thing.
What has been created more greedy than the eye?
Therefore it sheds tears for any reason.
14 Do not reach out your hand for everything you see,
and do not crowd your neighbor[a] at the dish.
15 Judge your neighbor's feelings by your own,
and in every matter be thoughtful.
16 Eat what is set before you like a well brought-up person,[b]
and do not chew greedily, or you will give offense.
17 Be the first to stop, as befits good manners,
and do not be insatiable, or you will give offense.
18 If you are seated among many persons,
do not help yourself[c] before they do.

19 How ample a little is for a well-disciplined person!
He does not breathe heavily when in bed.
20 Healthy sleep depends on moderate eating;
he rises early, and feels fit.
The distress of sleeplessness and of nausea
and colic are with the glutton.
21 If you are overstuffed with food,
get up to vomit, and you will have relief.
22 Listen to me, my child, and do not disregard me,
and in the end you will appreciate my words.
In everything you do be moderate,[d]
and no sickness will overtake you.
23 People bless the one who is liberal with food,
and their testimony to his generosity is trustworthy.
24 The city complains of the one who is stingy with food,
and their testimony to his stinginess is accurate.

Temperance in Drinking Wine

25 Do not try to prove your strength by wine-drinking,
for wine has destroyed many.
26 As the furnace tests the work of the smith,[e]
so wine tests hearts when the insolent quarrel.
27 Wine is very life to human beings if taken in moderation.
What is life to one who is without wine?
It has been created to make people happy.

z Heb Syr: Gk *at a great table* *a* Gk *him* *b* Heb: Gk *like a human being* *c* Gk *reach out your hand* *d* Heb Syr: Gk *industrious* *e* Heb: Gk *tests the hardening of steel by dipping*

31.12–32.13 Comportment at a banquet concerning moderation in foods (31.12–24), moderation in drinking wine (31.25–31), knowing one's place (32.1–2), when to speak (32.3–9), and when to depart (32.10–13). The banquet in question corresponds to the Greek tradition of dinner with guests followed by a symposium. Features in common are the mention of honor (31.23–24); the wine-drinking contest (31.25–26); license for merrymaking (31.31; 32.2); the master of the feast (32.1); ranking (32.1–2; 32.3, 7); entertainment (32.4); display of cleverness (32.4); music (32.5–6); and a blessing to the gods at the conclusion of the feast (32.13). Cf. Prov 23.1–8. **31.13** *Greedy eye* is a somewhat unusual reference to the eye as medium for desire and lust; cf. 14.9; Job 31.1. *Tears for any reason* includes the calculated kind, for purposes of deception, and the natural kind, the result of emotion or desire. **31.23–24** *Their testimony . . . is trustworthy . . . accurate* in the sense of having a lasting effect. The point is reputation. On being *stingy*, see 14.9–10. **31.25** To *prove your strength* refers to the drinking contest, a feature of the Greek symposium. Cf. 32.5–6. On the thought that wine has *destroyed many*, cf. Prov 23.29–35. **31.27** The phrase *very life* may derive from a toast. It was common in the Eastern Mediterranean cultures to

28 Wine drunk at the proper time
and in moderation
is rejoicing of heart and
gladness of soul.
29 Wine drunk to excess leads to
bitterness of spirit,
to quarrels and stumbling.
30 Drunkenness increases the anger
of a fool to his own hurt,
reducing his strength and
adding wounds.
31 Do not reprove your neighbor at
a banquet of wine,
and do not despise him in his
merrymaking;
speak no word of reproach to him,
and do not distress him by
making demands of him.

Etiquette at a Banquet

32 If they make you master of the
feast, do not exalt yourself;
be among them as one of their
number.
Take care of them first and then
sit down;
2 when you have fulfilled all your
duties, take your place,
so that you may be merry along
with them
and receive a wreath for your
excellent leadership.

3 Speak, you who are older, for it
is your right,
but with accurate knowledge,
and do not interrupt the
music.
4 Where there is entertainment, do
not pour out talk;
do not display your cleverness
at the wrong time.
5 A ruby seal in a setting of gold
is a concert of music at a
banquet of wine.
6 A seal of emerald in a rich setting
of gold
is the melody of music with
good wine.

7 Speak, you who are young, if you
are obliged to,
but no more than twice, and
only if asked.
8 Be brief; say much in few words;
be as one who knows and can
still hold his tongue.
9 Among the great do not act as
their equal;
and when another is speaking,
do not babble.

10 Lightning travels ahead of the
thunder,
and approval goes before one
who is modest.
11 Leave in good time and do not be
the last;
go home quickly and do not
linger.
12 Amuse yourself there to your
heart's content,
but do not sin through proud
speech.
13 But above all bless your Maker,
who fills you with his good gifts.

The Providence of God

14 The one who seeks God[f] will
accept his discipline,
and those who rise early to seek
him[g] will find favor.
15 The one who seeks the law will
be filled with it,
but the hypocrite will stumble
at it.

f Heb: Gk *who fears the Lord* *g* Other ancient authorities lack *to seek him*

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praise wine. Cf. Ps 104.15. **32.1** *Master of the feast* was a position of honor with responsibility for such things as seating arrangements, courses, wines, and entertainment. **32.3** *It is your right* refers to the ancient Near Eastern custom that honored the elder with the privilege of speaking first, a form of ranking. The advice was not for the elders, who would know this, but to the youth who were being taught the rules of social etiquette. Cf. 32.7–9.

32.14–33.6 A loosely connected set of sayings on being deliberate in one's judgments. **32.14** *Rise early to seek him* is a reference to prayers at sunrise, a sign of piety. Cf. 39.5. **32.16–17** To *form true judgments* was the goal of instruction in wisdom, transferred here to instruction in Mosaic law (32.15; 33.3–4). The contrast is that *the sinner . . . will find a decision according to his liking* (v. 17). On rendering judgments as a judge, one of the goals of Ben Sira's instructions, cf.

16 Those who fear the Lord will
form true judgments,
and they will kindle righteous
deeds like a light.
17 The sinner will shun reproof,
and will find a decision
according to his liking.

18 A sensible person will not
overlook a thoughtful
suggestion;
an insolent[h] and proud person
will not be deterred by
fear.[i]
19 Do nothing without deliberation,
but when you have acted, do
not regret it.
20 Do not go on a path full of
hazards,
and do not stumble at an
obstacle twice.[j]
21 Do not be overconfident on a
smooth[k] road,
22 and give good heed to your
paths.[l]
23 Guard[m] yourself in every act,
for this is the keeping of the
commandments.

24 The one who keeps the law
preserves himself,[n]
and the one who trusts the
Lord will not suffer loss.

33 No evil will befall the one who
fears the Lord,
but in trials such a one will be
rescued again and again.
2 The wise will not hate the law,
but the one who is hypocritical
about it is like a boat in a
storm.
3 The sensible person will trust in
the law;
for such a one the law is as
dependable as a divine
oracle.

4 Prepare what to say, and then
you will be listened to;
draw upon your training, and
give your answer.
5 The heart of a fool is like a cart
wheel,
and his thoughts like a turning
axle.
6 A mocking friend is like a stallion
that neighs no matter who the
rider is.

Differences in Nature and in Humankind

7 Why is one day more important
than another,
when all the daylight in the
year is from the sun?
8 By the Lord's wisdom they were
distinguished,
and he appointed the different
seasons and festivals.

h Heb: Gk *alien* *i* Meaning of Gk uncertain. Other ancient authorities add *and after acting, with him, without deliberation* *j* Heb: Gk *stumble on stony ground* *k* Or *an unexplored* *l* Heb Syr: Gk *and beware of your children* *m* Heb Syr: Gk *Trust* *n* Heb: Gk *who believes the law heeds the commandments*

38.31–33. *Righteous deeds* correspond to the thoughts and words of those who seek the law and are filled with it (32.15). **32.23** A curious identification of the wisdom of caution with ethical piety (obedience to the law), perhaps with an eye to Deut 4.9. On the wisdom of caution, see 8.1–19. **33.1** On *rescue* as a theme, see 2.6–11; cf. Wis 10.1–21. **33.2** *Like a boat in a storm* means without rudder or control, a very common metaphor in late antiquity. **33.3** That *the law is as dependable as a divine oracle* is unclear. Oracles were predictive. Perhaps the saying refers to the blessings promised in the Torah (Lev 26.3–13; Deut 28.1–14), or the promises attached to the covenants in the biblical epic (see 44.21), or simply that the Torah is as trustworthy in its own way as a divine oracle is in its way. Cf. 34.6. The oracle used by the priests was the casting of dice called Urim and Thummim. Cf. Ex 28.30; Lev 8.8; Num 27.21; Deut 33.8; 1 Sam 14.41–42; Ezra 2.63; Neh 7.65. On attitudes toward divination, see Sir 34.1–20.

33.7–19 A striking list of ranked pairs in creation and history, including exalted and ordinary days (vv. 7–9), blessed and cursed human beings (vv. 10–13), good and evil, life and death, sinners and the godly, all the works of the Lord (vv. 14–15), and early and late arrivals in the "vineyard" of the scribal office. The logic behind this list merges Greek conceptuality, with its penchant for classification into categories of opposition, with the wisdom categories of ranked pairs (e.g., foolish/wise; bad/good; better/best). See 42.24. **33.7–9** *Exalted* and *ordinary days* refers to the Jewish calendar of weeks, months, and festivals based on the lunar year. See 43.6–8; cf.

9 Some days he exalted and hallowed,
and some he made ordinary days.
10 All human beings come from the ground,
and humankind[o] was created out of the dust.
11 In the fullness of his knowledge the Lord distinguished them
and appointed their different ways.
12 Some he blessed and exalted,
and some he made holy and brought near to himself;
but some he cursed and brought low,
and turned them out of their place.
13 Like clay in the hand of the potter,
to be molded as he pleases,
so all are in the hand of their Maker,
to be given whatever he decides.

14 Good is the opposite of evil,
and life the opposite of death;
so the sinner is the opposite of the godly.
15 Look at all the works of the Most High;
they come in pairs, one the opposite of the other.

16 Now I was the last to keep vigil;
I was like a gleaner following the grape-pickers;
17 by the blessing of the Lord I arrived first,
and like a grape-picker I filled my wine press.
18 Consider that I have not labored for myself alone,
but for all who seek instruction.
19 Hear me, you who are great among the people,
and you leaders of the congregation, pay heed!

The Advantage of Independence

20 To son or wife, to brother or friend,
do not give power over yourself, as long as you live;
and do not give your property to another,
in case you change your mind and must ask for it.
21 While you are still alive and have breath in you,
do not let anyone take your place.

o Heb: Gk *Adam*

39.12; 50.6; Gen 1.14; Ps 104.19. **33.12** *Some he blessed* probably refers to the blessing promised to Abraham (Gen 12.2–3; 15.5; 22.17; 24.60; 28.14; Ex 32.13; Deut 1.10); cf. Sir 44.20–23. *Some he made holy and brought near to himself* probably refers to the priests of Israel whose privilege was to "approach" the Lord. Cf. Num 16.5; Ezek 40.46. Second Temple society was organized largely by orientation to priestly families and their genealogies. *Some he cursed . . . out of their place* may refer to the Canaanites. Cf. Gen 9.25–27; 12.6–7; Ex 33.1–3; Deut 34.1–4. **33.13** *Clay in the hand of the potter*, a common metaphor for the divine determination of human destinies. Cf. Isa 29.16; 45.8; 64.8; Jer 18.4; Wis 15.7–8; Rom 9.21. The word *potter*, meaning "one who forms," is from the same Hebrew root as the word *yetzer*. See note on 15.14. **33.14–15** The *works* of the Lord was a common idiom for creation, with particular reference to the sun, moon, and astrophysical and geophysical phenomena. See 42.15–43.33. That they *come in pairs* is a novel notion. See 42.24–25. The concept of pairs is probably taken from the ethical dualism of wise/foolish, righteous/sinner, good/bad, life/death, which has been transferred to "all the works" in the interest of a theodicy of divine power and judgment. See 34.14–20; 39.16–31; 40.8–10; cf. Wis 16.24–26; 17.20–21; 18.24–25; 19.6–22. **33.16** Ben Sira refers to himself by using the first person, a practice common in Greek literary traditions. On authorial self-reference in Sirach, cf. 24.30–34; 34.12–13; 39.12–15, 32–35; 41.16; 43.32; 50.25–29; 51.1–30. *The last to keep vigil* means to stand at the end of a line of teachers; vigil may imply an association with the prophets who "watched out" for the well-being of the people. Cf. Ezek 3.17; 33.7; Hab 2.1. **33.17** *I arrived first* implies privilege or honor. Cf. "The last will be first" (Mt 19.30). *Filled my wine press* is a metaphor of wisdom. Cf. 1.15; 24.17–21; 39.6; 51.15. **33.18** The verse repeats 24.34.

33.20–24 A small unit offers advice on controlling one's own property.

22 For it is better that your children
should ask from you
than that you should look to
the hand of your children.
23 Excel in all that you do;
bring no stain upon your
honor.
24 At the time when you end the
days of your life,
in the hour of death, distribute
your inheritance.

The Treatment of Slaves

25 Fodder and a stick and burdens
for a donkey;
bread and discipline and work
for a slave.
26 Set your slave to work, and you
will find rest;
leave his hands idle, and he will
seek liberty.
27 Yoke and thong will bow the
neck,
and for a wicked slave there are
racks and tortures.
28 Put him to work, in order that he
may not be idle,
29 for idleness teaches much evil.
30 Set him to work, as is fitting
for him,
and if he does not obey, make
his fetters heavy.
Do not be overbearing toward
anyone,
and do nothing unjust.

31 If you have but one slave, treat
him like yourself,
because you have bought him
with blood.
If you have but one slave, treat
him like a brother,
for you will need him as you
need your life.
32 If you ill-treat him, and he leaves
you and runs away,
33 which way will you go to
seek him?

Dreams Mean Nothing

34 The senseless have vain and
false hopes,
and dreams give wings to fools.
2 As one who catches at a shadow
and pursues the wind,
so is anyone who believes in[p]
dreams.
3 What is seen in dreams is but a
reflection,
the likeness of a face looking at
itself.
4 From an unclean thing what can
be clean?
And from something false what
can be true?
5 Divinations and omens and
dreams are unreal,
and like a woman in labor, the
mind has fantasies.
6 Unless they are sent by
intervention from the Most
High,
pay no attention to them.
7 For dreams have deceived many,
and those who put their hope
in them have perished.
8 Without such deceptions the law
will be fulfilled,

p Syr: Gk *pays heed to*

33.25–33 Advice on controlling one's slaves. **33.31** *Bought him with blood* is an exaggeration based on the idiom of "life" as one's "livelihood." Cf. 29.15; 34.27.

34.1–8 A decidedly negative judgment on the predictive value of dreams. In contrast, cf. the important role of dreams in the stories of Joseph (Gen 37–50), Gideon (Judg 7.13–15), Job (Job 33.15–18), and Daniel. During the Hellenistic period dreams were generally thought to contain predictions, and dream interpretation was considered a critical and scientific occupation. Ben Sira ranks dreams with omens and other forms of divination as fantasies (34.5). **34.2** To *pursue the wind* was a metaphor for impossible projects. Cf. Eccl 1.14; Hos 12.1. **34.6** *Unless they are sent by intervention from the Most High* grants an exception, explaining Ben Sira's hesitation in consigning all dreams to the realm of the occult and thus classed as evil or taboo according to Jewish standards. How one distinguished dreams that were sent from the Most High is not explained. Cf. the similar problem of true and false prophecy in Deut 18.15–22. **34.8** That *the law will be fulfilled* echoes 33.3. That *wisdom is complete* probably relates to Ben Sira's view that wisdom, in addition to knowing the Lord's instructions, promises, and covenants, includes knowing the Lord's "ways," namely, that he will protect, rescue, and restore the righteous and Israel to states of well-being. Cf. 24.33; 36.1–22; 39.33; 50.24. Thus one does not need to pursue divination.

and wisdom is complete in the
mouth of the faithful.

Travel as a Teacher

9 An educated[q] person knows
many things,
and one with much experience
knows what he is talking
about.
10 An inexperienced person knows
few things,
11 but he that has traveled
acquires much cleverness.
12 I have seen many things in my
travels,
and I understand more than I
can express.
13 I have often been in danger of
death,
but have escaped because of
these experiences.

Fear the Lord

14 The spirit of those who fear the
Lord will live,
15 for their hope is in him who
saves them.
16 Those who fear the Lord will not
be timid,
or play the coward, for he is
their hope.
17 Happy is the soul that fears the
Lord!
18 To whom does he look? And
who is his support?
19 The eyes of the Lord are on
those who love him,
a mighty shield and strong
support,
a shelter from scorching wind
and a shade from
noonday sun,
a guard against stumbling and
a help against falling.
20 He lifts up the soul and makes
the eyes sparkle;
he gives health and life and
blessing.

Offering Sacrifices

21 If one sacrifices ill-gotten goods,
the offering is blemished;[r]
22 the gifts[s] of the lawless are not
acceptable.
23 The Most High is not pleased
with the offerings of the
ungodly,
nor for a multitude of sacrifices
does he forgive sins.
24 Like one who kills a son before
his father's eyes
is the person who offers a
sacrifice from the property
of the poor.
25 The bread of the needy is the life
of the poor;
whoever deprives them of it is a
murderer.
26 To take away a neighbor's living
is to commit murder;
27 to deprive an employee of
wages is to shed blood.

28 When one builds and another
tears down,
what do they gain but hard
work?
29 When one prays and another
curses,
to whose voice will the Lord
listen?

q Other ancient authorities read *A traveled*
r Other ancient authorities read *is made in mockery*
s Other ancient authorities read *mockeries*

34.9–13 On the value of travel. **34.9** *A traveled person* (text note *q*) is a more appropriate translation than *an educated person* for the sense of this section. Learning through travel was a common idea in Hellenistic times, made famous by writers from Herodotus to Pausanius. **34.13** *In danger of death* was idiomatic for lack of protection away from home, a common theme in entertainment literature such as the Joseph story (Gen 37–50) and the Hellenistic romance.

34.14–20 On the protection of the pious. **34.14** That the *spirit . . . will live* does not refer to spiritual or postmortem destiny, but to a sense of courage that is "lively." **34.15** The Lord *saves them* from trouble, or distress. Cf. 2.6–11. **34.19** On *the eyes of the Lord*, see 42.16–20. On the Lord as *a shelter* and *a guard*, cf. Ps 91.1–16.

34.21–31 A unit on ritual observances relates wisdom piety to temple worship. **34.21** That *ill-gotten goods* are *blemished* merges Ben Sira's ethic of acquisition (cf. 31.1–9) with the prescription that sacrificial offerings were to be made from "per-

30 If one washes after touching a
corpse, and touches it
again,
what has been gained by
washing?
31 So if one fasts for his sins,
and goes again and does the
same things,
who will listen to his prayer?
And what has he gained by
humbling himself?

The Law and Sacrifices

35 The one who keeps the law
makes many offerings;
2 one who heeds the
commandments makes an
offering of well-being.
3 The one who returns a kindness
offers choice flour,
4 and one who gives alms
sacrifices a thank offering.
5 To keep from wickedness is
pleasing to the Lord,
and to forsake unrighteousness
is an atonement.
6 Do not appear before the Lord
empty-handed,
7 for all that you offer is in
fulfillment of the
commandment.
8 The offering of the righteous
enriches the altar,
and its pleasing odor rises
before the Most High.
9 The sacrifice of the righteous is
acceptable,
and it will never be forgotten.
10 Be generous when you worship
the Lord,
and do not stint the first fruits
of your hands.
11 With every gift show a cheerful
face,
and dedicate your tithe with
gladness.
12 Give to the Most High as he has
given to you,
and as generously as you can
afford.
13 For the Lord is the one who
repays,
and he will repay you
sevenfold.

Divine Justice

14 Do not offer him a bribe, for he
will not accept it;
15 and do not rely on a dishonest
sacrifice;
for the Lord is the judge,
and with him there is no
partiality.
16 He will not show partiality to the
poor;
but he will listen to the prayer
of one who is wronged.
17 He will not ignore the
supplication of the orphan,
or the widow when she pours
out her complaint.
18 Do not the tears of the widow
run down her cheek
19 as she cries out against the one
who causes them to fall?
20 The one whose service is pleasing
to the Lord will be
accepted,
and his prayer will reach to the
clouds.
21 The prayer of the humble pierces
the clouds,
and it will not rest until it
reaches its goal;

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fect," or "unblemished," animals or produce. Cf. Lev 22.21. **34.30** *Touching a corpse* made one ritually impure. Cf. Num 19.11.

35.1–13 Advice concerning the offering of sacrifices. Ben Sira regards ethical piety (keeping the commandments, especially almsgiving) as effective as ritual observance (vv. 1–5), but does not conclude that the sacrificial system is therefore unimportant or ineffective (vv. 6–13). Cultic practices recommended in Sirach include temple worship, support for the priests, tithes, sacrificial offerings, prayers, praise, and oaths. See 4.13–14; 7.9–10, 31; 14.11; 23.9–11; 28.5; 34.21–31; 35.14–26; 38.9–15; 45.6–22; 50.1–21. **35.6** To *appear before the Lord* means to approach the temple with offerings.

35.14–26 A unit on divine justice that builds upon the ethic of helping the poor, the widow, and the orphan, confidence in the effectiveness of the prayer of supplication from one in distress, and a theology of divine judgment in history. On the Lord's provision for the poor, the widow, and the orphan, see 4.1–10. For the cry of one in distress, see 2.10–11. The theme of divine intervention in history appears unexpectedly but prepares for the prayer to follow in 36.1–22.

it will not desist until the Most
High responds
22 and does justice for the
righteous, and executes
judgment.
Indeed, the Lord will not delay,
and like a warrior[t] will not be
patient
until he crushes the loins of the
unmerciful
23 and repays vengeance on the
nations;
until he destroys the multitude of
the insolent,
and breaks the scepters of the
unrighteous;
24 until he repays mortals according
to their deeds,
and the works of all according
to their thoughts;
25 until he judges the case of his
people
and makes them rejoice in his
mercy.
26 His mercy is as welcome in time
of distress
as clouds of rain in time of
drought.

A Prayer for God's People

36 Have mercy upon us, O God[u]
of all,
2 and put all the nations in fear
of you.
3 Lift up your hand against foreign
nations
and let them see your might.
4 As you have used us to show
your holiness to them,
so use them to show your glory
to us.
5 Then they will know,[v] as we
have known,
that there is no God but you,
O Lord.
6 Give new signs, and work other
wonders;
7 make your hand and right arm
glorious.
8 Rouse your anger and pour out
your wrath;
9 destroy the adversary and wipe
out the enemy.
10 Hasten the day, and remember
the appointed time,[w]
and let people recount your
mighty deeds.
11 Let survivors be consumed in the
fiery wrath,
and may those who harm your
people meet destruction.
12 Crush the heads of hostile rulers
who say, "There is no one but
ourselves."
13 Gather all the tribes of Jacob,[x]
16 and give them their
inheritance, as at the
beginning.
17 Have mercy, O Lord, on the
people called by your
name,
on Israel, whom you have
named[y] your firstborn,
18 Have pity on the city of your
sanctuary,[z]

t Heb: Gk *and with them* *u* Heb: Gk *O Master, the God* *v* Heb: Gk *And let them know you*
w Other ancient authorities read *remember your oath*
x Owing to a dislocation in the Greek Mss of Sirach, the verse numbers 14 and 15 are not used in chapter 36, though no text is missing.
y Other ancient authorities read *you have likened to*
z Or *on your holy city*

36.1–22 A prayer for the deliverance of Jerusalem and the people of Israel from foreign oppression. Such a prayer comes as a surprise within a book of wisdom and brings to expression political judgments and hopes that are extremely veiled elsewhere in Sirach. In form it draws upon the Psalms and shares many features with prayers and poems found in somewhat later apocalyptic literature. *Foreign nations* (v. 3), *the enemy* (v. 9), *those who harm your people* (v. 11), and the *hostile rulers* (v. 12) refer to the Seleucid overlords at the time. **36.4** To *show your holiness* refers to divine deliverance in the idiom of cultic practices. Cf. Ezek 20.41; 28.25. **36.5** *Then they will know,* a common expression of theodicy related to divine deliverance. See v. 22; cf. 1 Sam 17.46–47; 1 Kings 8.60; 1 Chr 17.20; Isa 45.14; Wis 4.20–5.8; 12.26–27. **36.6–7** *Signs and . . . wonders, hand and right arm,* common shorthand allusions to the exodus story of deliverance from Egypt; cf. Ex 15.6; Deut 4.34; 7.19; 3.11; Neh 9.10; Isa 63.12; Pss 78.43; 98.1. **36.16** *Their inheritance,* the land promised to the children of Abraham (Gen 17.8). **36.17** *Called by your name,* a common designation for the people of Israel. Cf. Deut 28.10; Isa 63.19; Jer 14.9; 15.16. The name Israel means "God rules." That Israel was *named your firstborn* evokes a common idiom. Cf. Ex 4.22; Jer 31.9; Hos 11.1; Wis 18.13. **36.18–19** On Jerusalem as *Zion,* the place where

Jerusalem, the place of your
dwelling.[a]
19 Fill Zion with your majesty,[b]
and your temple[c] with your
glory.
20 Bear witness to those whom you
created in the beginning,
and fulfill the prophecies
spoken in your name.
21 Reward those who wait for you
and let your prophets be found
trustworthy.
22 Hear, O Lord, the prayer of your
servants, according to your
goodwill toward[d] your
people,
and all who are on the earth will
know
that you are the Lord, the God
of the ages.

Concerning Discrimination

23 The stomach will take any food,
yet one food is better than
another.
24 As the palate tastes the kinds of
game,
so an intelligent mind detects
false words.
25 A perverse mind will cause grief,
but a person with experience
will pay him back.
26 A woman will accept any man as
a husband,
but one girl is preferable to
another.
27 A woman's beauty lights up a
man's face,
and there is nothing he desires
more.
28 If kindness and humility mark
her speech,
her husband is more fortunate
than other men.
29 He who acquires a wife gets his
best possession,[e]
a helper fit for him and a pillar
of support.[f]
30 Where there is no fence, the
property will be plundered;
and where there is no wife, a
man will become a fugitive
and a wanderer.[g]
31 For who will trust a nimble
robber
that skips from city to city?
So who will trust a man that has
no nest,
but lodges wherever night
overtakes him?

False Friends

37 Every friend says, "I too am a
friend";
but some friends are friends
only in name.
2 Is it not a sorrow like that for
death itself
when a dear friend turns into
an enemy?
3 O inclination to evil, why were
you formed
to cover the land with deceit?
4 Some companions rejoice in the
happiness of a friend,
but in time of trouble they are
against him.
5 Some companions help a friend
for their stomachs' sake,
yet in battle they will carry his
shield.

a Heb: Gk *your rest* b Heb Syr: Gk *the celebration of your wondrous deeds* c Heb Syr: Gk Lat *people* d Heb and two Gk witnesses: Lat and most Gk witnesses read *according to the blessing of Aaron for* e Heb: Gk *enters upon a possession* f Heb: Gk *rest* g Heb: Gk *wander about and sigh*

God dwells, cf. Ex 15.17; Isa 2.2–3; Jer 31.6; Mic 4.1–2. **36.20–21** This petition is an early occurrence of the idea that the *prophecies* of the *prophets* in general referred to a divine deliverance of Jerusalem yet to be accomplished. It is unique in Sirach, though the idea became programmatic for the somewhat later Qumran community, some Jewish authors of apocalyptic literature, and some early Christian authors such as Mark. A somewhat related idea does occur in Sir 48.10, where Elijah is expected to return as *it is written*. Elsewhere in Sirach prophecies are referred to as a source of wisdom, insight, and instruction. See 24.33. In chs. 44–50 prophets are depicted as those whose insights and words were effective agents in the events of their times that determined the epic history of Israel. See 46.13.

36.23–31 A cluster of loosely connected sayings on taking care in the choice of associates. **37.1–6** A set of five sayings on the difficulty of identifying a true friend (vv. 1–5) concludes with advice on how to treat such a friend both in

6 Do not forget a friend during the battle,[h]
and do not be unmindful of him when you distribute your spoils.[i]

Caution in Taking Advice

7 All counselors praise the counsel they give,
but some give counsel in their own interest.
8 Be wary of a counselor,
and learn first what is his interest,
for he will take thought for himself.
He may cast the lot against you
9 and tell you, "Your way is good,"
and then stand aside to see what happens to you.
10 Do not consult the one who regards you with suspicion;
hide your intentions from those who are jealous of you.
11 Do not consult with a woman about her rival
or with a coward about war,
with a merchant about business
or with a buyer about selling,
with a miser about generosity[j]
or with the merciless about kindness,
with an idler about any work
or with a seasonal laborer about completing his work,
with a lazy servant about a big task—
pay no attention to any advice they give.
12 But associate with a godly person
whom you know to be a keeper of the commandments,
who is like-minded with yourself,
and who will grieve with you if you fail.
13 And heed[k] the counsel of your own heart,
for no one is more faithful to you than it is.
14 For our own mind sometimes keeps us better informed
than seven sentinels sitting high on a watchtower.
15 But above all pray to the Most High
that he may direct your way in truth.

True and False Wisdom

16 Discussion is the beginning of every work,
and counsel precedes every undertaking.
17 The mind is the root of all conduct;
18 it sprouts four branches,[l]
good and evil, life and death;
and it is the tongue that continually rules them.
19 Some people may be clever enough to teach many,
and yet be useless to themselves.
20 A skillful speaker may be hated;
he will be destitute of all food,
21 for the Lord has withheld the gift of charm,
since he is lacking in all wisdom.
22 If a person is wise to his own advantage,
the fruits of his good sense will be praiseworthy.[m]
23 A wise person instructs his own people,
and the fruits of his good sense will endure.
24 A wise person will have praise heaped upon him,
and all who see him will call him happy.
25 The days of a person's life are numbered,
but the days of Israel are without number.

h Heb: Gk *in your heart* *i* Heb: Gk *him in your wealth* *j* Heb: Gk *gratitude* *k* Heb: Gk *establish* *l* Heb: Gk *As a clue to changes of heart four kinds of destiny appear* *m* Other ancient witnesses read *trustworthy*

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adversity and in prosperity (v. 6). **37.7–15** A unit of nine sayings cautions against the advice of persons biased by self-interest (vv. 7–11) and recommends instead the counsel of godly persons, one's own heart, and the guidance of God (vv. 12–15). **37.16–26** A set of reflections on deliberative speech in the counsel chambers concludes with sayings on the honor granted to the

26 One who is wise among his
people will inherit honor,[n]
and his name will live forever.

Concerning Moderation

27 My child, test yourself while you
live;
see what is bad for you and do
not give in to it.
28 For not everything is good for
everyone,
and no one enjoys everything.
29 Do not be greedy for every
delicacy,
and do not eat without
restraint;
30 for overeating brings sickness,
and gluttony leads to nausea.
31 Many have died of gluttony,
but the one who guards against
it prolongs his life.

Concerning Physicians and Health

38 Honor physicians for their
services,
for the Lord created them;
2 for their gift of healing comes
from the Most High,
and they are rewarded by the
king.
3 The skill of physicians makes
them distinguished,
and in the presence of the
great they are admired.
4 The Lord created medicines out
of the earth,
and the sensible will not despise
them.
5 Was not water made sweet with a
tree
in order that its[o] power might
be known?
6 And he gave skill to human
beings
that he[p] might be glorified in
his marvelous works.
7 By them the physician[q] heals and
takes away pain;
8 the pharmacist makes a mixture
from them.
God's[r] works will never be
finished;
and from him health[s] spreads
over all the earth.

9 My child, when you are ill, do not
delay,
but pray to the Lord, and he
will heal you.
10 Give up your faults and direct
your hands rightly,
and cleanse your heart from
all sin.
11 Offer a sweet-smelling sacrifice,
and a memorial portion of
choice flour,
and pour oil on your offering,
as much as you can
afford.[t]
12 Then give the physician his place,
for the Lord created him;
do not let him leave you, for
you need him.
13 There may come a time when
recovery lies in the hands
of physicians,[u]
14 for they too pray to the Lord

n Other ancient authorities read *confidence*
o Or *his* *p* Or *they* *q* Heb: Gk *he*
r Gk *His* *s* Or *peace* *t* Heb: Lat lacks *as much as you can afford*; Meaning of Gk uncertain
u Gk *in their hands*

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skillful speaker. **37.27–31** Caution about overindulgence introduces the theme of sickness as a preparation for the following sayings on the value of physicians.

38.1–15 A meditation on physicians recommends their services (vv. 1–8) but advises not to forget the traditional approach to illness as the more fundamental consideration (vv. 9–15). The science and practice of medicine, developed by the Greeks, threatened the ancient Near Eastern view of illness as caused by personal fault and its remedy by means of sacrifice for sin and healing. Ben Sira struggled to find a place for each approach by arguing that medicines were the works of the Lord (vv. 4–8) and that the physician should be consulted after offering one's sacrifice at the temple (vv. 9–15). **38.1** The statement that the Lord *created* physicians, both here and in v. 12, translates the Greek; the Hebrew reads "allotted" with the sense that God ordained the profession as part of his plan for human society. See note on 7.15. **38.4** *Medicines out of the earth,* medicinal plants, the knowledge of which belonged to ancient Near Eastern and Egyptian wisdom traditions. **38.5** *Water made sweet with a tree* alludes to the miracle in Ex 15.23–25. **38.10** *Faults* and *sin* were thought to be the cause of illness. Cf. Deut 28.22; Job; Prov 3.7–8; Jn 9.2. **38.11** *Flour.* The cereal offering is described in Lev 2.1–3.

that he grant them success in
diagnosis[v]
and in healing, for the sake of
preserving life.
15 He who sins against his Maker,
will be defiant toward the
physician.[w]

On Mourning for the Dead

16 My child, let your tears fall for
the dead,
and as one in great pain begin
the lament.
Lay out the body with due
ceremony,
and do not neglect the burial.
17 Let your weeping be bitter and
your wailing fervent;
make your mourning worthy of
the departed,
for one day, or two, to avoid
criticism;
then be comforted for your
grief.
18 For grief may result in death,
and a sorrowful heart saps
one's strength.
19 When a person is taken away,
sorrow is over;
but the life of the poor weighs
down the heart.
20 Do not give your heart to grief;
drive it away, and remember
your own end.
21 Do not forget, there is no coming
back;
you do the dead[x] no good, and
you injure yourself.
22 Remember his[y] fate, for yours is
like it;
yesterday it was his,[z] and today
it is yours.
23 When the dead is at rest, let his
remembrance rest too,
and be comforted for him
when his spirit has
departed.

Trades and Crafts

24 The wisdom of the scribe
depends on the opportunity
of leisure;
only the one who has little
business can become wise.
25 How can one become wise who
handles the plow,
and who glories in the shaft of
a goad,
who drives oxen and is occupied
with their work,
and whose talk is about bulls?
26 He sets his heart on plowing
furrows,
and he is careful about fodder
for the heifers.
27 So it is with every artisan and master
artisan
who labors by night as well as
by day;
those who cut the signets of seals,
each is diligent in making a
great variety;
they set their heart on painting a
lifelike image,
and they are careful to finish
their work.
28 So it is with the smith, sitting by
the anvil,

v Heb: Gk *rest* w Heb: Gk *may he fall into the hands of the physician* x Gk *him* y Heb: Gk *my* z Heb: Gk *mine*

38.16–23 Injunctions to observe the traditions of mourning and burial (vv. 16–17) yield to advice on appropriate attitudes and thoughts about death (vv. 18–23). The advice is remarkable in that it presents a realistic attitude toward death as an argument against excessive grief. **38.16** The *lament* was an ancient tradition. Cf. 2 Sam 1.17; Jer 7.29; 9.9, 19; Ezek 19.1; 26.17; 27.32; 32.16; Am 5.1; 8.10. *Burial* was a religious duty. Cf. Tob 1.17–18; 4.3–4; 6.15; 12.12; 14.12–13. **38.17** That one should mourn *one day, or two* is a striking curtailment of the customary requirement of seven days. See 22.12.

38.24–34 A tightly crafted poem describing those who work with their hands. The poem has been compared with the Egyptian *Instruction of Duauf*, sometimes called a "Satire on the Trades," which was written from the elitist perspective of the scribal vocation. But Ben Sira's poem does not engage in satire. The crafts are set in contrast to the vocation of the scribe (vv. 24, 32–33) without ridicule. The point of contrast is that artisans must concentrate their attention upon their handiwork and therefore have no time for the pursuit of learning which requires "leisure." The examples given, farmer, artisan, smith, and potter, when combined with the mention of rulers, judges, scribes, and public assemblies, provide a

intent on his iron-work;
the breath of the fire melts his flesh,
and he struggles with the heat of the furnace;
the sound of the hammer deafens his ears,[a]
and his eyes are on the pattern of the object.
He sets his heart on finishing his handiwork,
and he is careful to complete its decoration.
29 So it is with the potter sitting at his work
and turning the wheel with his feet;
he is always deeply concerned over his products,
and he produces them in quantity.
30 He molds the clay with his arm
and makes it pliable with his feet;
he sets his heart to finish the glazing,
and he takes care in firing[b] the kiln.

31 All these rely on their hands,
and all are skillful in their own work.
32 Without them no city can be inhabited,
and wherever they live, they will not go hungry.[c]
Yet they are not sought out for the council of the people,[d]
33 nor do they attain eminence in the public assembly.
They do not sit in the judge's seat,
nor do they understand the decisions of the courts;
they cannot expound discipline or judgment,
and they are not found among the rulers.[e]
34 But they maintain the fabric of the world,
and their concern is for[f] the exercise of their trade.

The Activity of the Scribe

How different the one who devotes himself
to the study of the law of the Most High!
39 He seeks out the wisdom of all the ancients,

a Cn: Gk *renews his ear* b Cn: Gk *cleaning*
c Syr: Gk *and people can neither live nor walk there*
d Most ancient authorities lack this line
e Cn: Gk *among parables* f Syr: Gk *prayer is in*

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sketch of the productive society of Ben Sira's time. **38.32–33** The mention of *rulers, courts,* and *public assemblies* describes the social setting for the professional activity of the scribe, the one who can read, write, and speak well. Missing only is any mention of a school, Ben Sira's own social location. Cf. 51.23. The professional goals of instruction in wisdom, assumed in these verses, explain the emphasis throughout the book on effective speech, sound judgment, knowledge of and consideration for conventional codes of law, piety, and ethics, as well as the repeated reference to the assembly as the place where praise and honor are won or lost. On references to the assembly, see note on 15.5. **38.34b** If the second line of the bicola in v. 34 is treated as an inclusio by returning to the themes announced in v. 24, the poem on the trades is composed of twenty-two lines framed by statements of contrast with the vocation of the scribe. The half-verse 34b also serves as an introduction to the following poem on the scribe, however, and so must be seen as a carefully crafted transitional statement intended both to sum up the previous unit and to lead into the following reflection. Transitional statements of this kind were common in literary compositions of the time.

38.34b–39.11 A poem on the activity of the scribe includes mention of his study (vv. 1–3), professional role (v. 4a), wide experience (v. 4b), piety (v. 5), inspiration (vv. 6–7), learned achievements (v. 8), and honor among the people (vv. 9–11). **38.34b** The *law* refers to the Torah, or books of Moses. Cf. 24.23. **39.1** The *wisdom of all the ancients* probably intends a reference to literature in general, other than the books of Moses, and without respect to cultural constraints. It was common in antiquity to trace the collective knowledge of a people to its source in the discoveries and revelations of culture-bringers and sages who lived at the beginning of time. To *seek out* this wisdom refers both to an intellectual quest in general that could include cross-cultural experience (v. 4) as well as to concerted research in the literatures of the time. The genres of wisdom for which one looked are given in the following verses. The mention of *prophecies* has been taken to refer specifically to the books of the Hebrew prophets,

and is concerned with
prophecies;
2 he preserves the sayings of the
famous
and penetrates the subtleties of
parables;
3 he seeks out the hidden meanings
of proverbs
and is at home with the
obscurities of parables.
4 He serves among the great
and appears before rulers;
he travels in foreign lands
and learns what is good and
evil in the human lot.
5 He sets his heart to rise early
to seek the Lord who
made him,
and to petition the Most High;
he opens his mouth in prayer
and asks pardon for his sins.

6 If the great Lord is willing,
he will be filled with the spirit
of understanding;
he will pour forth words of
wisdom of his own
and give thanks to the Lord in
prayer.
7 The Lord[g] will direct his counsel
and knowledge,
as he meditates on his
mysteries.
8 He will show the wisdom of what
he has learned,
and will glory in the law of the
Lord's covenant.
9 Many will praise his
understanding;
it will never be blotted out.
His memory will not disappear,
and his name will live through
all generations.
10 Nations will speak of his wisdom,
and the congregation will
proclaim his praise.
11 If he lives long, he will leave a
name greater than a
thousand,
and if he goes to rest, it is
enough[h] for him.

A Hymn of Praise to God

12 I have more on my mind to
express;
I am full like the full moon.
13 Listen to me, my faithful
children, and blossom
like a rose growing by a stream
of water.
14 Send out fragrance like incense,
and put forth blossoms like a
lily.
Scatter the fragrance, and sing a
hymn of praise;

g Gk *He himself* *h* Cn: Meaning of Gk uncertain

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but the more probable reference is to prophecies, oracles, and omens in whatever literature they may be found. Ben Sira lists prophecies along with sayings, parables, and proverbs (vv. 2–3) as if they were all various formulations of wisdom (v. 1). Also in 44.3–5 prophecies are included in a list of scribal accomplishments, and in 24.33 Ben Sira promises to *pour out teaching like prophecy*. On prophets and prophecy, see 36.20–21; 46.13. **39.2–3** *Parables* refers to metaphors, similes, and comparisons typical for wisdom discourse. The Hebrew is missing, but probably used the term *meshalim*, a general designation for wisdom sayings of all kinds, including proverbs, riddles, rhetorical questions, and maxims. **39.6** The *spirit of understanding* is an application of a prophetic idiom (speaking by the spirit of God) to the accomplished scribe. The wisdom he pours forth, however, is said to be *his own*. Cf. 24.27. **39.8–9** A Greek concept underlies the connection between these verses, namely, that if an author writes or delivers a well-crafted encomium, or work of praise, the author also will be praised. **39.10** That *the congregation will proclaim* the speaker's *praise* refers to honor as the scribe's ultimate reward. Honor was the public recognition of one's status and of behavior and accomplishment appropriate to one's social position. Honor before the congregation or people is a theme in Sirach. Cf. 1.24; 1.30 and note; 7.7, 14; 15.5–6; 21.17; 24.2; 33.19; 44.15. Sir 44.15 is a close parallel to 39.10. **39.11** To *leave a name* means to be remembered, the Jewish correlate to the Greek notion of immortality.

39.12–35 A lengthy poem in praise of the works of the Lord (vv. 16–31) introduced by an invitation to recite it (vv. 12–15) and concluded by a personal statement from the author (vv. 32–35). The poem follows upon the description of the scribe in 39.1–11 as if to exemplify Ben Sira's own accomplishments on its model. **39.12–15** The metaphors used to depict the author's thoughts and the congregation's recitation, being *full like the full moon* and *blossoming* forth with *fragrance*, are reminiscent of the flourishing of wisdom in 24.13–34.

bless the Lord for all his works.
15 Ascribe majesty to his name
and give thanks to him with praise,
with songs on your lips, and with harps;
this is what you shall say in thanksgiving:

16 "All the works of the Lord are very good,
and whatever he commands will be done at the appointed time.
17 No one can say, 'What is this?' or 'Why is that?'—
for at the appointed time all such questions will be answered.
At his word the waters stood in a heap,
and the reservoirs of water at the word of his mouth.
18 When he commands, his every purpose is fulfilled,
and none can limit his saving power.
19 The works of all are before him,
and nothing can be hidden from his eyes.
20 From the beginning to the end of time he can see everything,
and nothing is too marvelous for him.
21 No one can say, 'What is this?' or 'Why is that?'—
for everything has been created for its own purpose.

22 "His blessing covers the dry land like a river,
and drenches it like a flood.
23 But his wrath drives out the nations,
as when he turned a watered land into salt.
24 To the faithful his ways are straight,
but full of pitfalls for the wicked.
25 From the beginning good things were created for the good,
but for sinners good things and bad.[i]
26 The basic necessities of human life
are water and fire and iron and salt
and wheat flour and milk and honey,
the blood of the grape and oil and clothing.
27 All these are good for the godly,
but for sinners they turn into evils.

28 "There are winds created for vengeance,
and in their anger they can dislodge mountains;[j]
on the day of reckoning they will pour out their strength
and calm the anger of their Maker.
29 Fire and hail and famine and pestilence,
all these have been created for vengeance;
30 the fangs of wild animals and scorpions and vipers,
and the sword that punishes the ungodly with destruction.
31 They take delight in doing his bidding,
always ready for his service on earth;
and when their time comes they never disobey his command."

i Heb Lat: Gk *sinners bad things* *j* Heb Syr: Gk *can scourge mightily*

39.16–31 The hymn of praise focuses upon the works of the Lord in both creation and history and argues that the works are good for the godly but turn to vengeance for sinners. **39.16** That the works are *very good* is a common view in the traditions of wisdom. Cf. 16.26–29; Gen 1. The *appointed time* refers to a divine visitation as planned and in keeping with the calendrical ordering of natural and historical events. Cf. 16.18; 36.10; 39.34; 48.10. **39.17** *The waters stood in a heap.* Cf. Ex 15.8. **39.22** The image of inundation also occurs in 24.25–27, 30–33. **39.23** *Land into salt,* an allusion to Sodom and Gomorrah. Cf. Gen 13.10; 19.24–28; Deut 29.23; Ps 107.34; Wis 10.7. **39.28–31** A catalog of geophysical and natural phenomena that obey their creator to punish the ungodly. The list is reminiscent of the exodus plagues. Cf. a similar view in Wis

32 So from the beginning I have
been convinced of all this
and have thought it out and
left it in writing:
33 All the works of the Lord are
good,
and he will supply every need
in its time.
34 No one can say, "This is not as
good as that,"
for everything proves good in
its appointed time.
35 So now sing praise with all your
heart and voice,
and bless the name of the Lord.

Human Wretchedness

40 Hard work was created for
everyone,
and a heavy yoke is laid on the
children of Adam,
from the day they come forth
from their mother's womb
until the day they return to[k]
the mother of all the
living.[l]
2 Perplexities and fear of heart are
theirs,
and anxious thought of the day
of their death.
3 From the one who sits on a
splendid throne
to the one who grovels in dust
and ashes,
4 from the one who wears purple
and a crown
to the one who is clothed in
burlap,
5 there is anger and envy and
trouble and unrest,
and fear of death, and fury and
strife.
And when one rests upon
his bed,
his sleep at night confuses his
mind.
6 He gets little or no rest;
he struggles in his sleep as he
did by day.[m]
He is troubled by the visions of
his mind
like one who has escaped from
the battlefield.
7 At the moment he reaches safety
he wakes up,
astonished that his fears were
groundless.
8 To all creatures, human and
animal,
but to sinners seven times
more,
9 come death and bloodshed and
strife and sword,
calamities and famine and ruin
and plague.
10 All these were created for the
wicked,
and on their account the flood
came.
11 All that is of earth returns to
earth,
and what is from above returns
above.[n]

Injustice Will Not Prosper

12 All bribery and injustice will be
blotted out,
but good faith will last forever.
13 The wealth of the unjust will dry
up like a river,
and crash like a loud clap of
thunder in a storm.
14 As a generous person has cause
to rejoice,
so lawbreakers will utterly fail.

k Other Gk and Lat authorities read *are buried in* *l* Heb: Gk *of all* *m* Arm: Meaning of Gk uncertain *n* Heb Syr: Gk Lat *from the waters returns to the sea*

16.24–19.22. **39.32–35** A first-person signature that reveals Ben Sira's self-understanding as a scribe on the model of 39.1–11 and expressly mentions creative writing (in addition to collecting or copying) as a scribal accomplishment. This pride of authorship is a clear indication of Hellenistic influence.

40.1–11 A somber reflection on human miseries with an attempt to see them in the light of the theodicy proposed in 39.16–31. **40.1** That *work was created* is an allusion to Gen 3.17–19. Eve is referred to as *the mother of all the living* in Gen 3.20; here the reference is to the earth to which all must return (Gen 3.19; cf. Sir 16.30). **40.10** The *flood* alludes to the story in Gen 6–8. Cf. Gen 6.7, 17. **40.11** *What is from above returns above* probably refers to the life-breath of God. Cf. Gen 2.7; Eccl 12.7.

40.12–17 An affirmation that good faith (v. 12) and almsgiving (v. 17) are lasting values; it

15 The children of the ungodly put
out few branches;
they are unhealthy roots on
sheer rock.
16 The reeds by any water or river
bank
are plucked up before any
grass;
17 but kindness is like a garden of
blessings,
and almsgiving endures
forever.

The Joys of Life

18 Wealth and wages make life
sweet,[o]
but better than either is finding
a treasure.
19 Children and the building of a
city establish one's name,
but better than either is the one
who finds wisdom.
Cattle and orchards make one
prosperous;[p]
but a blameless wife is
accounted better than
either.
20 Wine and music gladden the
heart,
but the love of friends[q] is
better than either.
21 The flute and the harp make
sweet melody,
but a pleasant voice is better
than either.
22 The eye desires grace and beauty,
but the green shoots of grain
more than either.
23 A friend or companion is always
welcome,
but a sensible wife[r] is better
than either.
24 Kindred and helpers are for a
time of trouble,
but almsgiving rescues better
than either.
25 Gold and silver make one stand
firm,
but good counsel is esteemed
more than either.
26 Riches and strength build up
confidence,
but the fear of the Lord is
better than either.
There is no want in the fear of
the Lord,
and with it there is no need to
seek for help.
27 The fear of the Lord is like a
garden of blessing,
and covers a person better than
any glory.

The Disgrace of Begging

28 My child, do not lead the life of a
beggar;
it is better to die than to beg.
29 When one looks to the table of
another,
one's way of life cannot be
considered a life.
One loses self-respect with
another person's food,
but one who is intelligent and
well instructed guards
against that.
30 In the mouth of the shameless
begging is sweet,
but it kindles a fire inside him.

Concerning Death

41 O death, how bitter is the
thought of you
to the one at peace among
possessions,
who has nothing to worry about
and is prosperous in
everything,

o Heb: Gk *Life is sweet for the self-reliant worker*
p Heb Syr: Gk lacks *but better . . . prosperous*
q Heb: Gk *wisdom* *r* Heb Compare Syr: Gk *wife with her husband*

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is only ungodliness that will come to naught. **40.18–27** A reflection on the good things in life composed as a unit of ten sayings that develop the comparative degree, frequently called the "better than" proverb, an ancient form of proverbial wisdom. The poem comes to a climax in vv. 26–27 with the thought that the fear of the Lord is better than any other good. **40.28–30** Several sayings warn against begging. It is improbable that the students of Ben Sira would need to be warned against leading the *life of a beggar* due to economic exigency, given the elitist constituency of the profession. It is possible, therefore, that the warning inveighs against the Cynic practice of begging as a form of social critique. **41.1–4** A meditation on the thought of dying recognizes its gravity

and still is vigorous enough to
enjoy food!
2 O death, how welcome is your
sentence
to one who is needy and failing
in strength,
worn down by age and anxious
about everything;
to one who is contrary, and has
lost all patience!
3 Do not fear death's decree
for you;
remember those who went
before you and those who
will come after.
4 This is the Lord's decree for all
flesh;
why then should you reject the
will of the Most High?
Whether life lasts for ten years or
a hundred or a thousand,
there are no questions asked in
Hades.

The Fate of the Wicked

5 The children of sinners are
abominable children,
and they frequent the haunts of
the ungodly.
6 The inheritance of the children
of sinners will perish,
and on their offspring will be a
perpetual disgrace.
7 Children will blame an ungodly
father,
for they suffer disgrace because
of him.
8 Woe to you, the ungodly,
who have forsaken the law of
the Most High God!
9 If you have children, calamity will
be theirs;
you will beget them only for
groaning.
When you stumble, there is
lasting joy;[s]
and when you die, a curse is
your lot.
10 Whatever comes from earth
returns to earth;
so the ungodly go from curse
to destruction.

11 The human body is a fleeting
thing,
but a virtuous name will never
be blotted out.[t]
12 Have regard for your name, since
it will outlive you
longer than a thousand hoards
of gold.
13 The days of a good life are
numbered,
but a good name lasts forever.

14 My children, be true to your
training and be at peace;
hidden wisdom and unseen
treasure—
of what value is either?

On Shameful Things

15 Better are those who hide their
folly

s Heb: Meaning of Gk uncertain *t* Heb: Gk *People grieve over the death of the body, but the bad name of sinners will be blotted out*

(vv. 1–2) but recommends its acceptance without fear (vv. 3–4). **41.4** *The Lord's decree.* Cf. Gen 3.19.

41.5–14 A set of reflections on the fate of the ungodly (vv. 5–10) in contrast to the memorial of the godly (vv. 11–14). **41.6** That a *perpetual disgrace* rests upon sinners and their children was a very serious consideration in the light of Jewish concern for progeny, memorial, and honor. The thought of disgrace continuing in one's children is developed in Wis 3.12–13, 16–19; 4.3–6. **41.13** To have a *good name,* or honorable reputation, and be remembered by subsequent generations was the Jewish way of transcending death. See 39.11. **41.14** The thought seems to be that, in view of the previous reflections about death, one need not do more to assure lasting honor than be *true* to one's *training.* If *hidden wisdom* has no value, it may refer to Greek philosophies of transcendent worlds and postmortem destinies, notions that are not necessary in Ben Sira's view. Cf. 3.21.

41.15–42.8 A poem in two stanzas on the topic of shame, consisting of an introduction (41.15–16), a stanza on shameful behavior (41.17–42.1a), and a stanza on things about which one should not be ashamed (42.1b–8). The poem uses the language of honor and shame customary for the public recognition of shared values in ancient societies, but it mentions such a mixture of actions and attitudes that one cannot be sure whose values Ben Sira had in mind. The curious twist in the second stanza is that many of these items may actually have been matters about which

than those who hide their
wisdom.
16 Therefore show respect for my
words;
for it is not good to feel shame in
every circumstance,
nor is every kind of abashment
to be approved.[u]

17 Be ashamed of sexual immorality,
before your father or
mother;
and of a lie, before a prince or
a ruler;
18 of a crime, before a judge or
magistrate;
and of a breach of the law,
before the congregation
and the people;
of unjust dealing, before your
partner or your friend;
19 and of theft, in the place where
you live.
Be ashamed of breaking an oath
or agreement,[v]
and of leaning on your elbow at
meals;
of surliness in receiving or giving,
20 and of silence, before those
who greet you;
of looking at a prostitute,
21 and of rejecting the appeal of a
relative;
of taking away someone's portion
or gift,
and of gazing at another man's
wife;
22 of meddling with his
servant-girl—
and do not approach her bed;
of abusive words, before
friends—
and do not be insulting after
making a gift.

42 Be ashamed of repeating what
you hear,
and of betraying secrets.
Then you will show proper
shame,
and will find favor with
everyone.

Of the following things do not be
ashamed,
and do not sin to save face:
2 Do not be ashamed of the law of
the Most High and his
covenant,
and of rendering judgment to
acquit the ungodly;
3 of keeping accounts with a
partner or with traveling
companions,
and of dividing the inheritance
of friends;
4 of accuracy with scales and
weights,
and of acquiring much or little;
5 of profit from dealing with
merchants,
and of frequent disciplining of
children,
and of drawing blood from the
back of a wicked slave.
6 Where there is an untrustworthy
wife, a seal is a good thing;
and where there are many
hands, lock things up.
7 When you make a deposit, be
sure it is counted and
weighed,
and when you give or receive,
put it all in writing.
8 Do not be ashamed to correct the
stupid or foolish
or the aged who are guilty of
sexual immorality.
Then you will show your sound
training,
and will be approved by all.

Daughters and Fathers

9 A daughter is a secret anxiety to
her father,

u Heb: Gk *and not everything is confidently esteemed by everyone* *v* Heb: Gk *before the truth of God and the covenant*

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many were ashamed. **42.1** To find *favor* (honor) *with everyone* by *showing proper shame* is a succinct definition of the honor/shame system. *To save face* indicates that social forces may have been running against Ben Sira and his students on the following list of things about which one should not be ashamed.

42.9–14 A reflection on the danger of falling into public disfavor through the actions of a daughter, with advice on protecting her from promiscuity. The harsh measures recommended may indicate that traditional customs were being severely challenged by the social and cultural forces of the time. The protection of a daughter's

and worry over her robs him of sleep;
when she is young, for fear she may not marry,
or if married, for fear she may be disliked;
10 while a virgin, for fear she may be seduced
and become pregnant in her father's house;
or having a husband, for fear she may go astray,
or, though married, for fear she may be barren.
11 Keep strict watch over a headstrong daughter,
or she may make you a laughingstock to your enemies,
a byword in the city and the assembly of[w] the people,
and put you to shame in public gatherings.[x]
See that there is no lattice in her room,
no spot that overlooks the approaches to the house.[y]
12 Do not let her parade her beauty before any man,
or spend her time among married women;[w]
13 for from garments comes the moth,
and from a woman comes woman's wickedness.
14 Better is the wickedness of a man than a woman who does good;
it is woman who brings shame and disgrace.

The Works of God in Nature

15 I will now call to mind the works of the Lord,
and will declare what I have seen.
By the word of the Lord his works are made;
and all his creatures do his will.[z]
16 The sun looks down on everything with its light,
and the work of the Lord is full of his glory.
17 The Lord has not empowered even his holy ones
to recount all his marvelous works,
which the Lord the Almighty has established
so that the universe may stand firm in his glory.
18 He searches out the abyss and the human heart;
he understands their innermost secrets.
For the Most High knows all that may be known;
he sees from of old the things that are to come.[a]
19 He discloses what has been and what is to be,
and he reveals the traces of hidden things.
20 No thought escapes him,
and nothing is hidden from him.

w Heb: Meaning of Gk uncertain *x* Heb: Gk *to shame before the great multitude* *y* Heb: Gk lacks *See . . . house* *z* Syr Compare Heb: most Gk witnesses lack *and all . . . will* *a* Heb: Gk *he sees the sign(s) of the age*

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virtue and the arrangement of a successful marriage for her were basic for the Jewish concern to retain ethnic identity and cultural independence in the face of Hellenistic culture and hegemony.

42.15–43.33 A hymn of praise to the Lord and his creation. It consists of a concise poem on the inscrutable knowledge and power of the creator (42.15–21) followed by a lengthy poem on the wonders of the natural order (42.22–43.26) and concludes with an invitation to join the author in singing the Lord's praises (43.27–33).

42.15–21 The Lord is praised for his wisdom and power as revealed in his works. **42.15** *By the word of the Lord* alludes to the account of creation in Gen 1.1–31. **42.17** *His holy ones* refers to astrophysical phenomena as creatures of the Lord who know his mind, obey his will, keep their appointed places, and stand watch over the orderly arrangement of the created order. Cf. 43.5, 10, 13, 16, 26. **42.18** *The Most High* knows everything because he *sees* all. The notion was basic to the thought of the Lord's wisdom and to Ben Sira's theodicy of divine rewards and punishments. Cf. note on 15.18. The notion drew upon the ancient Near Eastern system of governance whereby the king's men were his "eyes and ears," as well as upon a fascination with solar mythology whereby the sun represented the eye of the high god. Note the importance and role of the sun in 42.16; 43.1–5.

21 He has set in order the splendors
of his wisdom;
he is from all eternity one and
the same.
Nothing can be added or taken
away,
and he needs no one to be his
counselor.
22 How desirable are all his works,
and how sparkling they are
to see![b]
23 All these things live and remain
forever;
each creature is preserved to
meet a particular need.[c]
24 All things come in pairs, one
opposite the other,
and he has made nothing
incomplete.
25 Each supplements the virtues of
the other.
Who could ever tire of seeing
his glory?

The Splendor of the Sun

43 The pride of the higher realms
is the clear vault of the sky,
as glorious to behold as the
sight of the heavens.
2 The sun, when it appears,
proclaims as it rises
what a marvelous instrument it
is, the work of the Most
High.
3 At noon it parches the land,
and who can withstand its
burning heat?
4 A man tending[d] a furnace works
in burning heat,
but three times as hot is the
sun scorching the
mountains;
it breathes out fiery vapors,
and its bright rays blind the
eyes.
5 Great is the Lord who made it;
at his orders it hurries on its
course.

The Splendor of the Moon

6 It is the moon that marks the
changing seasons,[e]
governing the times, their
everlasting sign.
7 From the moon comes the sign
for festal days,
a light that wanes when it
completes its course.
8 The new moon, as its name
suggests, renews itself;[f]
how marvelous it is in this
change,
a beacon to the hosts on high,
shining in the vault of the
heavens!

The Glory of the Stars and the Rainbow

9 The glory of the stars is the
beauty of heaven,
a glittering array in the heights
of the Lord.
10 On the orders of the Holy One
they stand in their
appointed places;
they never relax in their
watches.
11 Look at the rainbow, and praise
him who made it;
it is exceedingly beautiful in its
brightness.
12 It encircles the sky with its
glorious arc;
the hands of the Most High
have stretched it out.

The Marvels of Nature

13 By his command he sends the
driving snow
and speeds the lightnings of his
judgment.
14 Therefore the storehouses are
opened,

b Meaning of Gk uncertain *c* Heb: Gk *forever for every need, and all are obedient* *d* Other ancient authorities read *blowing upon* *e* Heb: Meaning of Gk uncertain *f* Heb: Gk *The month is named after the moon*

42.22–43.33 The works of the Lord are arranged in a list that begins with the sun as the highest visible creature, descends through moon, stars, and geophysical phenomena (rainbow, lightning, clouds, winds, snow, frost, ice, and dew), to end with a notice about the ocean as "the deep." This arrangement was typical for *onomastica*, or lists of natural phenomena. Cf. the similar arrangement in Job 38.1–38. In Job the list of astrophysical phenomena is complemented by a list of living creatures in 38.39–41.34. **43.6** Ben Sira assumes a lunar calendar. Cf. 33.8. **43.14** It

and the clouds fly out like birds.
15 In his majesty he gives the clouds their strength,
and the hailstones are broken in pieces.
17a The voice of his thunder rebukes the earth;
16 when he appears, the mountains shake.
At his will the south wind blows;
17b so do the storm from the north and the whirlwind.
He scatters the snow like birds flying down,
and its descent is like locusts alighting.
18 The eye is dazzled by the beauty of its whiteness,
and the mind is amazed as it falls.
19 He pours frost over the earth like salt,
and icicles form like pointed thorns.
20 The cold north wind blows,
and ice freezes on the water;
it settles on every pool of water,
and the water puts it on like a breastplate.
21 He consumes the mountains and burns up the wilderness,
and withers the tender grass like fire.
22 A mist quickly heals all things;
the falling dew gives refreshment from the heat.
23 By his plan he stilled the deep
and planted islands in it.
24 Those who sail the sea tell of its dangers,
and we marvel at what we hear.
25 In it are strange and marvelous creatures,
all kinds of living things, and huge sea-monsters.
26 Because of him each of his messengers succeeds,
and by his word all things hold together.

27 We could say more but could never say enough;
let the final word be: "He is the all."
28 Where can we find the strength to praise him?
For he is greater than all his works.
29 Awesome is the Lord and very great,
and marvelous is his power.
30 Glorify the Lord and exalt him as much as you can,
for he surpasses even that.
When you exalt him, summon all your strength,
and do not grow weary, for you cannot praise him enough.
31 Who has seen him and can describe him?
Or who can extol him as he is?
32 Many things greater than these lie hidden,

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was common in antiquity to imagine *storehouses* in the heavens, beyond the horizon, where the Lord kept the winds, clouds, and storms until he needed them. He then opened the doors and sent them out to perform their missions. **43.23** That the Lord *stilled the deep* is derived from an ancient myth of creation, according to which God had to slay the monster of the deep or still the chaotic waters in order to let the dry land appear and construct upon it his house. Cf. Ps 104.24–26; 107.23–24. **43.26** This verse, which serves as a conclusion to the poem of praise for the natural order (42.22–43.26), brings together two cosmologies, or mythologies of the way in which the world is ordered. *Messengers* refers to all of the natural phenomena as servants of the Lord who do his bidding *so that the universe may stand firm* (42.17). *His word* by which *all things hold together* derives from the Stoic view of the *logos* (Greek "word" or "logic") that permeates the natural world (*kosmos*) as a principle of cohesion and order. It is probable that Ben Sira had the Genesis account of creation in mind, according to which God spoke the world into being, and that both mythologies were understood as explications of God words, as commands (to his "messengers") and as expressions of rhyme and reason for the world he had in mind ("logos"). In somewhat later literatures, such as the works of Philo of Alexandria and the Gospel of John (Jn 1.1–18), the Stoic *logos* became the primary concept for interpreting the Genesis account. **43.27** The statement that "*He is the all*" also derives from Stoic philosophies of the world as an organism generated and held together by a single (divine) principle. **43.30** To *praise* and *glorify* the Lord is a demonstration of one's own wisdom, that one has come to see how marvelous his works are despite the limitations of human capacity to plumb their mysteries. According to 15.10, *in wisdom must praise be uttered.*

for I[g] have seen but few of his
works.
33 For the Lord has made all things,
and to the godly he has given
wisdom.

HYMN IN HONOR OF OUR ANCESTORS[h]

44 Let us now sing the praises of
famous men,
our ancestors in their
generations.
2 The Lord apportioned to them[i]
great glory,
his majesty from the beginning.
3 There were those who ruled in
their kingdoms,
and made a name for
themselves by their valor;
those who gave counsel because
they were intelligent;
those who spoke in prophetic
oracles;
4 those who led the people by their
counsels
and by their knowledge of the
people's lore;
they were wise in their words of
instruction;
5 those who composed musical
tunes,
or put verses in writing;
6 rich men endowed with
resources,

g Heb: Gk *we* h This title is included in the Gk text. i Heb: Gk *created*

43.33 This is a transitional verse, providing a summary for the hymn to creation and pointing ahead to the hymn in praise of the famous men to follow. It shows that Ben Sira intended the two poems to be taken together, *now* to call the works of the Lord to mind (42.15), *now* to sing the praises of famous men (44.1). The combination follows a recognizable pattern in certain psalms and other poems that begins with a meditation upon creation and comes to focus upon the sweep of epic history. Cf. Pss 135; 136.

44.1–51.24 A long poem eulogizing the great leaders of the people throughout the epic history of Israel. It consists of an introductory poem in praise of all the ancestors, even those who left no name (44.1–15), a series of poetic units dedicated to specific figures from Enoch to Nehemiah (44.16–49.16), and a concluding *encomium*, or work of praise, on the high priest Simon from Ben Sira's own time (50.1–24). The epic is divided into three parts, the period during which the covenants were established, the period of the kings and their kingdoms, and the Second Temple period following the return from exile. The three periods of the epic are joined together by descriptions of the two transitional periods, one under the judges (46.1–12) and one under the leaders of the restoration (49.11–13). The hymn as a whole is patterned on the model of Hellenistic *encomia*, eulogistic histories in commemoration of local shrines and cities, in this case with an eye on the temple at Jerusalem. The individual units are patterned on the model of Hellenistic *encomia* in praise of famous persons and leaders. The *encomium* opened with an introduction and a mention of the person's birth and genealogy, then went on to describe the person's pursuits, virtues, accomplishments, and blessings, and concluded with acknowledgment of his death and memorial. Ben Sira modifies this pattern in keeping with Jewish culture and values. A leader's election to office is more important than an account of his genealogy and pursuits. Piety counts more than personal virtues. And a leader's deeds are not noted as heroic achievements. Instead, he is eulogized for correct performance of social and religious offices established by the covenants and consistently evaluated in keeping with the consequences of his performance as it affected the well-being of the people. His reward is the honor he received from both God (by election and favor) and the people (who sang his praises).

44.1–15 The ancestors are glorious because of their recognition by God (v. 2), their honorable achievements (vv. 3–6), their recognition by their own generations (vv. 7–8), their godliness (vv. 9–10), their legacy to their children (vv. 11–12), and their lasting name and memory (vv. 13–14). **44.3–6** The list of social roles includes several offices traditional for ancient Hebrew society, such as king and prophet, that appear in the following verses. However, the purpose of the list is not to present a full and balanced typology of the offices, but to create a general picture of glory and honor worthy of the ancestors and characteristic for the grand tradition Ben Sira wishes to claim for the Jews. These verses are heavily weighted toward the accomplishments of the wise, the intellectuals, the creative, and the wealthy; not all the leaders praised in the following verses have all these characteristics. The epic sections of the hymn (see note on 44.1–51.24) are more concerned with the covenants underlying the social structure of Israel, the failure of the kingdoms to actualize the ideal order, and the claim that a society organized around the temple and its systems is what God originally intended for Israel. Thus patriarchs, priests,

living peacefully in their
homes—
7 all these were honored in their
generations,
and were the pride of their
times.
8 Some of them have left behind a
name,
so that others declare their
praise.
9 But of others there is no
memory;
they have perished as though
they had never existed;
they have become as though they
had never been born,
they and their children after
them.
10 But these also were godly men,
whose righteous deeds have not
been forgotten;
11 their wealth will remain with their
descendants,
and their inheritance with their
children's children.[j]
12 Their descendants stand by the
covenants;
their children also, for their
sake.
13 Their offspring will continue
forever,
and their glory will never be
blotted out.
14 Their bodies are buried in peace,
but their name lives on
generation after generation.
15 The assembly declares[k] their
wisdom,
and the congregation proclaims
their praise.

Enoch

16 Enoch pleased the Lord and was
taken up,
an example of repentance to all
generations.

Noah

17 Noah was found perfect and
righteous;
in the time of wrath he kept
the race alive;[l]
therefore a remnant was left on
the earth
when the flood came.
18 Everlasting covenants were made
with him
that all flesh should never again
be blotted out by a flood.

Abraham

19 Abraham was the great father of
a multitude of nations,
and no one has been found like
him in glory.
20 He kept the law of the Most
High,

j Heb Compare Lat Syr: Meaning of Gk uncertain
k Heb: Gk *Peoples declare* *l* Heb: Gk *was taken in exchange*

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kings, and prophets dominate the history. Scribes, teachers, and sages are hardly in view. **44.12** *The covenants,* contracts or agreements between God and the patriarchs or leaders of Israel who initiated institutions and offices constitutive for the social and religious structure of Israel. Most covenants were associated with ritual occasions and their stories therefore served as charters for contemporary ritual practices. In the poem to follow, covenants are mentioned for Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob-Israel, Moses, Aaron, and Phinehas from the archaic period before the entrance into the land, when the plans for Israel were being formulated, and for David from the period of the kings after Israel is located in the land.

44.16 A single bicola is dedicated to Enoch, based upon an allusion to Gen 5.24. The significance of Enoch to the poem as a whole is unclear, since he does not represent a covenant (as do the next seven figures) and is set forth as an example (something not true of the other twenty-nine figures in the poem). Since v. 16 is missing in the earliest Hebrew fragments from Masada as well as in the Syriac text and since the mention of Enoch disrupts the covenantal logic of the first section of the poem, it is probably a later addition. Thus the original poem must have opened with the figure of Noah.

44.17–18 The epic starts with Noah, the righteous man who survived the flood and with whom God made a covenant never again to destroy humankind. Cf. Gen 6–9. That Noah was found to be *righteous* is taken from Gen 6.9; 7.1. For the *covenants* and the rainbow as sign, see Gen 9.8–17.

44.19–21 Abraham is praised as the blessed *father of a multitude of nations.* See Gen 17.4–8. **44.20** *Certified the covenant in his flesh* refers to circumcision. See Gen 17.9–14. *When he was tested* alludes to the binding of Isaac (Gen 22.1–14).

and entered into a covenant
with him;
he certified the covenant in his
flesh,
and when he was tested he
proved faithful.
21 Therefore the Lord[m] assured
him with an oath
that the nations would be
blessed through his
offspring;
that he would make him as
numerous as the dust of
the earth,
and exalt his offspring like the
stars,
and give them an inheritance
from sea to sea
and from the Euphrates[n] to
the ends of the earth.

Isaac and Jacob

22 To Isaac also he gave the same
assurance
for the sake of his father
Abraham.
The blessing of all people and the
covenant
23 he made to rest on the head of
Jacob;
he acknowledged him with his
blessings,
and gave him his inheritance;
he divided his portions,
and distributed them among
twelve tribes.

Moses

From his descendants the Lord[m]
brought forth a godly man,
who found favor in the sight of
all
45 [1]and was beloved by God and
people,
Moses, whose memory is
blessed.
2 He made him equal in glory to
the holy ones,
and made him great, to the
terror of his enemies.
3 By his words he performed swift
miracles;[o]
the Lord[m] glorified him in the
presence of kings.
He gave him commandments for
his people,
and revealed to him his glory.
4 For his faithfulness and meekness
he consecrated him,
choosing him out of all
humankind.
5 He allowed him to hear his voice,
and led him into the dark
cloud,
and gave him the commandments
face to face,
the law of life and knowledge,
so that he might teach Jacob the
covenant,
and Israel his decrees.

Aaron

6 He exalted Aaron, a holy man
like Moses[p]
who was his brother, of the
tribe of Levi.
7 He made an everlasting covenant
with him,
and gave him the priesthood of
the people.
He blessed him with stateliness,
and put a glorious robe on him.
8 He clothed him in perfect
splendor,
and strengthened him with the
symbols of authority,

m Gk *he* *n* Syr: Heb Gk *River* *o* Heb: Gk *caused signs to cease* *p* Gk *him*

44.21 For the *oath* and *blessing*, see Gen 22.15–18. A blessing established legitimacy and involved a promise of divine fulfillment.

44.22–23 The blessing passed through Isaac to Jacob, the father of the children of Israel. See Gen 17.19; 28.1–4. Jacob's *inheritance* was the land (Gen 28.4).

44.23–45.5 Moses was chosen to receive the commandments and teach them to Israel. **45.3** *Miracles . . . in the presence of kings* refers to the exodus. Cf. Ex 7.1–11.10. *Gave him commandments* refers to the revelation of the Ten Commandments to Moses. Cf. Ex 20.1–17; Deut 5.1–33. **45.4** *Faithfulness and meekness.* Cf. Num 12.3, 7. **45.5** Meeting God *face to face* in the *cloud* alludes to the stories of Moses on the mountain; cf. Ex 19–20; 24; 34. *That he might teach* alludes to Deut 4.1–5.

45.6–22 With Aaron the priesthood is established. **45.7** The *everlasting covenant* refers to a "perpetual priesthood" promised in Ex 29.9; 40.15. Cf. Sir 45.13, 15. **45.8** *Clothed him in*

the linen undergarments, the
long robe, and the ephod.
9 And he encircled him with
pomegranates,
with many golden bells all
around,
to send forth a sound as he
walked,
to make their ringing heard in
the temple
as a reminder to his people;
10 with the sacred vestment, of gold
and violet
and purple, the work of an
embroiderer;
with the oracle of judgment,
Urim and Thummim;
11 with twisted crimson, the work
of an artisan;
with precious stones engraved
like seals,
in a setting of gold, the work of
a jeweler,
to commemorate in engraved
letters
each of the tribes of Israel;
12 with a gold crown upon his
turban,
inscribed like a seal with
"Holiness,"
a distinction to be prized, the
work of an expert,
a delight to the eyes, richly
adorned.
13 Before him such beautiful things
did not exist.
No outsider ever put them on,
but only his sons
and his descendants in
perpetuity.
14 His sacrifices shall be wholly
burned
twice every day continually.
15 Moses ordained him,
and anointed him with holy oil;
it was an everlasting covenant
for him
and for his descendants as long
as the heavens endure,
to minister to the Lord[q] and
serve as priest
and bless his people in his
name.
16 He chose him out of all the living
to offer sacrifice to the Lord,
incense and a pleasing odor as a
memorial portion,
to make atonement for the[r]
people.
17 In his commandments he
gave him
authority and statutes and[s]
judgments,
to teach Jacob the testimonies,
and to enlighten Israel with
his law.
18 Outsiders conspired against him,
and envied him in the
wilderness,
Dathan and Abiram and their
followers
and the company of Korah, in
wrath and anger.
19 The Lord saw it and was not
pleased,
and in the heat of his anger
they were destroyed;
he performed wonders against
them
to consume them in flaming
fire.
20 He added glory to Aaron
and gave him a heritage;
he allotted to him the best of the
first fruits,
and prepared bread of first
fruits in abundance;
21 for they eat the sacrifices of the
Lord,
which he gave to him and his
descendants.
22 But in the land of the people he
has no inheritance,
and he has no portion among
the people;

q Gk *him* r Other ancient authorities read *his* or *your* s Heb: Gk *authority in covenants of*

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perfect splendor, elaborated in vv. 8–13, derives from Ex 28. Cf. the description of Simon in Sir 50.5–11. **45.10** For *Urim and Thummim*, see note on 33.3. **45.14** Twice daily burnt offerings was the practice in Ben Sira's time. Cf. Lev 6.8–15. **45.15** *Ordained* by Moses alludes to Lev 8.1–13; cf. Ex 28.41. *To bless . . . in his name* may refer to the blessing in Num 6.22–27; cf. Deut 10.8. **45.17** On the priest's *authority . . . to teach*, cf. Lev 10.11; Deut 33.10; Mal 2.7. **45.18** The *company of Korah* alludes to the story in Num 16.1–17.15. **45.20–21** For the prescription that priests may *eat the sacrifices*, see Num 18.8–19. **45.22** On the Lord as Aaron's *portion*, see Num 18.20.

for the Lord[t] himself is his[u]
portion and inheritance.

Phinehas

23 Phinehas son of Eleazar ranks
third in glory
for being zealous in the fear of
the Lord,
and standing firm, when the
people turned away,
in the noble courage of his
soul;
and he made atonement for
Israel.
24 Therefore a covenant of
friendship was established
with him,
that he should be leader of the
sanctuary and of his
people,
that he and his descendants
should have
the dignity of the priesthood
forever.
25 Just as a covenant was established
with David
son of Jesse of the tribe of
Judah,
that the king's heritage passes
only from son to son,
so the heritage of Aaron is for
his descendants alone.

26 And now bless the Lord
who has crowned you with
glory.[v]
May the Lord[t] grant you wisdom
of mind
to judge his people with justice,
so that their prosperity may not
vanish,
and that their glory may
endure through all their
generations.

Joshua and Caleb

46 Joshua son of Nun was mighty
in war,
and was the successor of Moses
in the prophetic office.
He became, as his name implies,
a great savior of God's[w] elect,
to take vengeance on the enemies
that rose against them,
so that he might give Israel its
inheritance.
2 How glorious he was when he
lifted his hands
and brandished his sword
against the cities!
3 Who before him ever stood so
firm?
For he waged the wars of the
Lord.
4 Was it not through him that the
sun stood still
and one day became as long
as two?
5 He called upon the Most High,
the Mighty One,
when enemies pressed him on
every side,
and the great Lord answered him
with hailstones of mighty
power.
6 He overwhelmed that nation in
battle,
and on the slope he destroyed
his opponents,

t Gk *he* u Other ancient authorities read *your*
v Heb: Gk lacks *And . . . glory* w Gk *his*

45.23–26 Phinehas is glorified as priest in the line of Aaron with whom the covenant of friendship (Hebrew, "peace") was confirmed. Cf. Num 25.7–13. **45.23** *Third in glory* may refer to being third in the sequence of the poem from Moses through Aaron or third in the line from Aaron, cf. Num 25.10. **45.25** Mention of *the covenant . . . with David* is out of place here. Cf. 47.11. The point, however, is to link the two covenants, of kingship and priesthood, as fundamental for the ideal structure of Israel's society. That Aaron's heritage is *for his descendants alone* may indicate an ideological battle for the priesthood in Ben Sira's time between the Oniads and the Tobiads, two leading families who fought for political control of Jerusalem during the shift from Ptolemaic to Seleucid hegemony.

46.1–10 Joshua and Caleb are praised for leading Israel into the land. **46.1** On the *successor of Moses*, see Deut 34.9; Josh 1.1, 5; 3.7. The *prophetic office* is Ben Sira's designation for the social role of teachers, scribes, counselors, and prophets who instruct both kings and priests as well as the people in the law. *As his name implies* refers to the meaning of Joshua in Hebrew, "The Lord is salvation." **46.2** *He lifted his hands . . . against*, an idiom for going to war, a reference to Joshua taking the land (Josh 6–11). **46.4** *The sun stood still.* Cf. Josh 10.12–14. **46.5** *Hailstones.*

so that the nations might know
his armament,
that he was fighting in the sight
of the Lord;
for he was a devoted follower
of the Mighty One.
7 And in the days of Moses he
proved his loyalty,
he and Caleb son of
Jephunneh:
they opposed the congregation,[x]
restrained the people from sin,
and stilled their wicked
grumbling.
8 And these two alone were spared
out of six hundred thousand
infantry,
to lead the people[y] into their
inheritance,
the land flowing with milk and
honey.
9 The Lord gave Caleb strength,
which remained with him in his
old age,
so that he went up to the hill
country,
and his children obtained it for
an inheritance,
10 so that all the Israelites might see
how good it is to follow the
Lord.

The Judges

11 The judges also, with their
respective names,
whose hearts did not fall into
idolatry
and who did not turn away from
the Lord—
may their memory be blessed!
12 May their bones send forth new
life from where they lie,
and may the names of those
who have been honored
live again in their children!

13 Samuel was beloved by his Lord;
a prophet of the Lord, he
established the kingdom
and anointed rulers over his
people.
14 By the law of the Lord he judged
the congregation,
and the Lord watched over
Jacob.
15 By his faithfulness he was proved
to be a prophet,
and by his words he became
known as a trustworthy
seer.
16 He called upon the Lord, the
Mighty One,
when his enemies pressed him
on every side,
and he offered in sacrifice a
suckling lamb.
17 Then the Lord thundered from
heaven,
and made his voice heard with
a mighty sound;
18 he subdued the leaders of the
enemy[z]
and all the rulers of the
Philistines.
19 Before the time of his eternal
sleep,
Samuel[a] bore witness before
the Lord and his anointed:
"No property, not so much as a
pair of shoes,
have I taken from anyone!"
And no one accused him.
20 Even after he had fallen asleep,
he prophesied
and made known to the king
his death,

x Other ancient authorities read *the enemy*
y Gk *them* z Heb: Gk *leaders of the people of Tyre*
a Gk *he*

Cf. Josh 10.11. **46.7** *Proved his loyalty* refers to the "good report" that Joshua and Caleb brought when spying out the land (Num 14.6–10; cf. 1 Macc 2.55–56). **46.8** Of the *six hundred thousand* who were led out of Egypt, all perished in the wilderness except Joshua and Caleb, who *alone were spared* and entered the land. Cf. Num 11.21; 14.38; 26.65. **46.9** On Caleb's *inheritance*, see Josh 14.6–14.

46.11–12 Some of the judges deserve to be honored, those who *did not fall into idolatry*. Cf. Judg 8.27; 16.20. *New life* from their *bones* means drawing strength from their spiritual legacy through memory and memorial. Cf. 49.10. **46.13–20** Samuel is honored as the prophet who established kingship in Israel. Cf. 1 Sam 1.1–16.13. **46.13** *Anointed rulers* (plural), both Saul and David (1 Sam 10.1; 16.13), though Saul is not mentioned in the poem by name. **46.16** *Offered in sacrifice*. Cf. 1 Sam 7.9–11. **46.19** *Bore witness*. Cf. 1 Sam 12.3. **46.20** *His voice from the ground*. Cf. 1 Sam 28.8–19.

and lifted up his voice from the ground
in prophecy, to blot out the wickedness of the people.

Nathan

47 After him Nathan rose up to prophesy in the days of David.

David

2 As the fat is set apart from the offering of well-being,
so David was set apart from the Israelites.
3 He played with lions as though they were young goats,
and with bears as though they were lambs of the flock.
4 In his youth did he not kill a giant,
and take away the people's disgrace,
when he whirled the stone in the sling
and struck down the boasting Goliath?
5 For he called on the Lord, the Most High,
and he gave strength to his right arm
to strike down a mighty warrior,
and to exalt the power[b] of his people.
6 So they glorified him for the tens of thousands he conquered,
and praised him for the blessings bestowed by the Lord,
when the glorious diadem was given to him.
7 For he wiped out his enemies on every side,
and annihilated his adversaries the Philistines;
he crushed their power[b] to our own day.
8 In all that he did he gave thanks to the Holy One, the Most High, proclaiming his glory;
he sang praise with all his heart,
and he loved his Maker.
9 He placed singers before the altar,
to make sweet melody with their voices.[c]
10 He gave beauty to the festivals,
and arranged their times throughout the year,[d]
while they praised God's[e] holy name,
and the sanctuary resounded from early morning.
11 The Lord took away his sins,
and exalted his power[b] forever;
he gave him a covenant of kingship
and a glorious throne in Israel.

Solomon

12 After him a wise son rose up
who because of him lived in security:[f]
13 Solomon reigned in an age of peace,
because God made all his borders tranquil,
so that he might build a house in his name

b Gk *horn* *c* Other ancient authorities add *and daily they sing his praises* *d* Gk *to completion* *e* Gk *his* *f* Heb: Gk *in a broad place*

47.1 Nathan is mentioned as the prophet associated with David. Cf. 2 Sam 7.2–17; 12.1; 1 Chr 17.1. **47.2–11** David is given a covenant of kingship. **47.2** *Set apart* refers to God's choice of David to be king (1 Sam 16.1–12). **47.3** *Played with lions . . . and with bears* is a euphemism for the easy kill (1 Sam 17.34–36). **47.4** *Killing a giant,* Goliath, is related in 1 Sam 17.49–51. **47.6** *Tens of thousands* alludes to 1 Sam 18.7. **47.8–10** That David *sang praise,* installed *singers* in the temple, and arranged the *festivals* is an anachronism taken from Chronicles, a postexilic account of the royal history that recast the image of David to include care for the institution of the temple systems. Cf. 1 Chr 16.4; 23.5, 31–32. It is this tradition that resulted in the attribution of the Psalms to David. **47.11** On David's *sins,* cf. 2 Sam 12.1–15. For the *covenant of kingship,* see 2 Sam 7.12–16; cf. Ps 89.28–29; Sir 45.25.

47.12–22 Solomon is praised for his wisdom and remembered for the consequences of his sin. Cf. 1 Kings 1–11. **47.13** Solomon's reign was *an age of peace* in contrast to the wars of David. Cf. 1 Kings 4.20–21; 5.3–4. He was therefore privileged to *build a house* (for God), the famous temple

and provide a sanctuary to
stand forever.
14 How wise you were when you
were young!
You overflowed like the Nile[g]
with understanding.
15 Your influence spread
throughout the earth,
and you filled it with proverbs
having deep meaning.
16 Your fame reached to far-off
islands,
and you were loved for your
peaceful reign.
17 Your songs, proverbs, and
parables,
and the answers you gave
astounded the nations.
18 In the name of the Lord God,
who is called the God of Israel,
you gathered gold like tin
and amassed silver like lead.
19 But you brought in women to lie
at your side,
and through your body you
were brought into
subjection.
20 You stained your honor,
and defiled your family line,
so that you brought wrath upon
your children,
and they were grieved[h] at your
folly,
21 because the sovereignty was
divided
and a rebel kingdom arose out
of Ephraim.
22 But the Lord will never give up
his mercy,
or cause any of his works to
perish;
he will never blot out the
descendants of his
chosen one,
or destroy the family line of
him who loved him.
So he gave a remnant to Jacob,
and to David a root from his
own family.

Rehoboam and Jeroboam

23 Solomon rested with his
ancestors,
and left behind him one of his
sons,
broad in[i] folly and lacking in
sense,

g Heb: Gk *a river* *h* Other ancient authorities read *I was grieved* *i* Heb (with a play on the name Rehoboam) Syr: Gk *the people's*

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of Solomon. Cf. 1 Kings 5–8. **47.16** Fame reaching *far-off islands* (Hebrew, "distant coasts") may be an allusion to the queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10.1–12). **47.17** Solomon's wisdom was proverbial. Cf. 1 Kings 3.3–14; 4.29–34; 10.1–10, 23–25. Attributed to him were the book of Proverbs, the Song of Songs, the Wisdom of Solomon, a first-century B.C.E. collection of prayers and meditations called the Psalms of Solomon, and a late first-century C.E. book of esoteric Christian devotions called the Odes of Solomon, as well as other poems, prayers, riddles, and lore scattered through Jewish and early Christian literature of the Greco-Roman period. See Prov 1.1; Song 1.1; Wis 7–9; Lk 11.31. **47.18** On Solomon's *gold* and *silver*, cf. 1 Kings 10.21, 27. **47.20** *Stained your honor* refers to Solomon's taking of foreign wives and building of shrines to foreign gods, practices against which the Lord had warned him. Cf. 1 Kings 11.1–11. **47.21** The Divided Kingdom was thought to be the result of Solomon's sin. Cf. 47.23–25; 1 Kings 11.9–11; 12.12–20. After Solomon there were two kingdoms, Judah, centered in Jerusalem, and Israel, centered at Shechem. *Ephraim* is another name for Israel, the Northern Kingdom. *Ephraim* was preferred by writers loyal to Jerusalem who wanted to claim the name and traditions of Israel as their own heritage. **47.22** Despite Solomon's sin and the division of the kingdoms, the promise to David remained in force. Cf. 2 Sam 7.12–16; 1 Kings 11.12–13, 34–39. *Remnant* refers to a Jewish theology of survival: despite oppression, wars, and exile, some would remain true to the Lord and survive. *Root*, a metaphor for Davidic genealogy. Cf. 2 Kings 19.30; Isa 11.10; 37.31; 53.2. The combination of remnant and root is Ben Sira's own interpretation and hope.

47.23–25 The kingdom of David and Solomon was divided between Rehoboam, Solomon's son at Jerusalem, and Jeroboam, who established himself as king at Shechem. There is manuscript evidence that wordplays instead of proper names were originally used to refer to each of them in v. 23. That would agree with Ben Sira's care in the use of proper names throughout the poem, a concern related to the importance of memory and memorial and governed by his intention only to praise those worthy of honor. **47.23** Rehoboam's *folly* was an increase in forced labor (1 Kings 12.1–24). The sin of *Jeroboam* was to set up shrines at Dan and Bethel as rivals of the tem-

Rehoboam, whose policy drove
the people to revolt.
Then Jeroboam son of Nebat led
Israel into sin
and started Ephraim on its
sinful ways.
24 Their sins increased more and
more,
until they were exiled from
their land.
25 For they sought out every kind of
wickedness,
until vengeance came upon
them.

Elijah

48 Then Elijah arose, a prophet
like fire,
and his word burned like a
torch.
2 He brought a famine upon
them,
and by his zeal he made them
few in number.
3 By the word of the Lord he shut
up the heavens,
and also three times brought
down fire.
4 How glorious you were, Elijah, in
your wondrous deeds!
Whose glory is equal to yours?
5 You raised a corpse from death
and from Hades, by the word
of the Most High.
6 You sent kings down to
destruction,
and famous men, from their
sickbeds.
7 You heard rebuke at Sinai
and judgments of vengeance at
Horeb.
8 You anointed kings to inflict
retribution,
and prophets to succeed you.[j]
9 You were taken up by a
whirlwind of fire,
in a chariot with horses of fire.
10 At the appointed time, it is
written, you are destined[k]
to calm the wrath of God
before it breaks out in fury,
to turn the hearts of parents to
their children,
and to restore the tribes of
Jacob.
11 Happy are those who saw you
and were adorned[l] with your
love!
For we also shall surely live.[m]

Elisha

12 When Elijah was enveloped in the
whirlwind,
Elisha was filled with his spirit.
He performed twice as many
signs,
and marvels with every
utterance of his mouth.[n]
Never in his lifetime did he
tremble before any ruler,
nor could anyone intimidate
him at all.
13 Nothing was too hard for him,
and when he was dead, his
body prophesied.
14 In his life he did wonders,
and in death his deeds were
marvelous.

j Heb: Gk *him* *k* Heb: Gk *are for reproofs*
l Other ancient authorities read *and have died*
m Text and meaning of Gk uncertain
n Heb: Gk lacks *He performed . . . mouth*

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ple in Jerusalem (1 Kings 12.25–33). **47.24** The kingdom divided in 922 B.C.E.; the exile occurred in 722 B.C.E. when the Assyrians conquered Shechem/Samaria and deported the Israelites. Cf. 2 Kings 17.6, 18–23.

48.1–11 Elijah is praised as the prophet of the Northern Kingdom who prophesied in the name of the Lord against King Ahab of the house of Omri (ca. 869 B.C.E.) and countered the worship of Baal. For the many exploits of Elijah mentioned by Ben Sira, cf. 1 Kings 17–19; 2 Kings 1–2. **48.10** *It is written.* The text that prophesies Elijah's return is Mal 4.5–6. Cf. Mt 11.14; 16.14; 17.10–12; Mk 6.15; 8.28; 9.11–13; Lk 9.8, 19. **48.11** The meaning of this verse is unclear because of divergent manuscript traditions. According to 2 Kings 2.10, Elisha was the fortunate (or happy) one who *saw* Elijah taken up, but the Hebrew text seems to refer to seeing Elijah upon his return. Later scribes apparently understood Elijah's ascension to be a transformation and thus a sign of translation to immortal status. Cf. Mt 17.3–4; Mk 9.4–5; Lk 9.30–33.

48.12–16 The prophet Elisha is praised for continuing the work in the spirit of Elijah. Cf. 2 Kings 2–13. **48.12** *Filled with his spirit* alludes to 2 Kings 2.9–15. **48.13** That *his body prophesied* refers to the story in 2 Kings 13.20–21.

15 Despite all this the people did not repent,
nor did they forsake their sins,
until they were carried off as plunder from their land,
and were scattered over all the earth.
The people were left very few in number,
but with a ruler from the house of David.
16 Some of them did what was right,
but others sinned more and more.

Hezekiah

17 Hezekiah fortified his city,
and brought water into its midst;
he tunneled the rock with iron tools,
and built cisterns for the water.
18 In his days Sennacherib invaded the country;
he sent his commander[o] and departed;
he shook his fist against Zion,
and made great boasts in his arrogance.
19 Then their hearts were shaken and their hands trembled,
and they were in anguish, like women in labor.
20 But they called upon the Lord who is merciful,
spreading out their hands toward him.
The Holy One quickly heard them from heaven,
and delivered them through Isaiah.
21 The Lord[p] struck down the camp of the Assyrians,
and his angel wiped them out.
22 For Hezekiah did what was pleasing to the Lord,
and he kept firmly to the ways of his ancestor David,
as he was commanded by the prophet Isaiah,
who was great and trustworthy in his visions.

Isaiah

23 In Isaiah's[q] days the sun went backward,
and he prolonged the life of the king.
24 By his dauntless spirit he saw the future,
and comforted the mourners in Zion.
25 He revealed what was to occur to the end of time,
and the hidden things before they happened.

o Other ancient authorities add *from Lachish*
p Gk *He* q Gk *his*

48.15 That the people *were carried off* because they *did not repent* is stated in 2 Kings 18.11–12. That *the people were left very few in number* is a translation from the Greek. The Hebrew reads: "But Judah was left, a small people." The original point was that, despite the sorry end for the people of (northern) Israel, continuity with the earlier kingdom of David and Solomon was assured because Judah remained and had *a ruler from the house of David*, a reference to Hezekiah, whose praise immediately follows. **48.16** The reference is to the kings of Judah. In 1 and 2 Kings they are assessed according to Deuteronomic values with the result that only six receive commendation: Asa (1 Kings 15.11); Jehosaphat (1 Kings 22.43); Joash (2 Kings 12.2); Azariah (2 Kings 15.3); Hezekiah (2 Kings 18.3); and Josiah (2 Kings 22.2). Of these six, Ben Sira mentions only two along with David as worthy of praise: Hezekiah and Josiah. Cf. 49.4.

48.17–22 Hezekiah is praised for his defense of Jerusalem and obedience to the Lord. His reign (715–687 B.C.E.) is recorded in 2 Kings 18–20; 2 Chr 29–32. **48.17** On Hezekiah's defense of the city, see 2 Kings 20.20; 2 Chr 32.5, 30. **48.18** The failure of Sennacherib to conquer Jerusalem is related in 2 Kings 18.13–37; 2 Chr 32.1–20. Cf. Isa 36.1–22. **48.20** That they *called upon the Lord* and were *delivered . . . through Isaiah* is related in 2 Kings 19.15–35. Cf. Isa 37.21–38. **48.23–25** Isaiah is praised for his prophetic role during Hezekiah's reign and for his trustworthy visions of the future (v. 22). Ben Sira may have had in mind not only the stories about Isaiah in 2 Kings 19–20, but the prophecies of restoration in the book of Isaiah (chs. 40–66). **48.23** That *the sun went backward* is related in 2 Kings 20.6–11. Cf. Isa 38.5–8. **48.24** Isaiah *comforted . . . Zion* may be an allusion to Isa 40.1.

Josiah and Other Worthies

49 The name[r] of Josiah is like
blended incense
prepared by the skill of the
perfumer;
his memory[s] is as sweet as honey
to every mouth,
and like music at a banquet of
wine.
2 He did what was right by
reforming the people,
and removing the wicked
abominations.
3 He kept his heart fixed on the
Lord;
in lawless times he made
godliness prevail.

4 Except for David and Hezekiah
and Josiah,
all of them were great sinners,
for they abandoned the law of
the Most High;
the kings of Judah came to
an end.
5 They[t] gave their power to
others,
and their glory to a foreign
nation,
6 who set fire to the chosen city of
the sanctuary,
and made its streets desolate,
as Jeremiah had foretold.[u]
7 For they had mistreated him,
who even in the womb had
been consecrated a
prophet,
to pluck up and ruin and destroy,
and likewise to build and to
plant.

8 It was Ezekiel who saw the vision
of glory,
which God[v] showed him above
the chariot of the
cherubim.
9 For God[w] also mentioned Job
who held fast to all the ways of
justice.[x]
10 May the bones of the Twelve
Prophets
send forth new life from where
they lie,
for they comforted the people of
Jacob
and delivered them with
confident hope.

11 How shall we magnify
Zerubbabel?
He was like a signet ring on the
right hand,
12 and so was Jeshua son of
Jozadak;
in their days they built the house

r Heb: Gk *memory* s Heb: Gk *it* t Heb *He*
u Gk *by the hand of Jeremiah* v Gk *He*
w Gk *he* x Heb Compare Syr: Meaning of Gk uncertain

49.1–3 Josiah is praised for reforming the people in lawless times. Cf. 2 Kings 22.2–23.25; 2 Chr 34–35. Ben Sira does not mention that most remarkable feature of Josiah's fame, namely, that the reform was a covenant to obey the book of the law, which was discovered while repairing the temple.

49.4–7 The end of the kings of Judah is attributed to a failure to keep the law, and the desolation of Jerusalem is said to have been foretold by Jeremiah. **49.5** The *foreign nation* that destroyed Jerusalem (586 B.C.E.) was Babylon. Cf. 2 Kings 25.1–15; 2 Chr 36.17–19. **49.6** For Jeremiah's prophecies concerning the fall of Jerusalem, cf. Jer 36–38. **49.7** For Jeremiah's call and mistreatment, see Jer 1.5, 10; 20; 37.13–15; 38.4–6.

49.8–10 Ezekiel and the twelve prophets are honored for their visions of restoration. **49.8** Ezekiel's *vision of glory* is a reference to Ezek 1.4–28. **49.9** *God . . . mentioned Job* to Ezekiel in an oracle (Ezek 14.14, 20). **49.10** The *Twelve Prophets* are the books of Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Their mention by Ben Sira is evidence that these books were classed together in his time and were regarded as a single corpus. That they *comforted the people* indicates that they were being read not for their prophecies of doom, but for their promising predictions of restoration, a characteristic feature of the oracles with which most of the prophetic books end.

49.11–13 Three leaders of the return (537 B.C.E.) and restoration are praised. **49.11** *Zerubbabel*, the governor of Judah when Cyrus, king of Persia, captured Babylon and gave his famous edict that the Jews could return to Jerusalem and rebuild their temple (537 B.C.E.), and *Jeshua*, the high priest at the time, are mentioned in Hag 1.1–2, 8, 12; 2.2. Cf. Zech 3–4. The description

and raised a temple[y] holy to
the Lord,
destined for everlasting glory.
13 The memory of Nehemiah also is
lasting;
he raised our fallen walls,
and set up gates and bars,
and rebuilt our ruined houses.

Retrospect

14 Few have[z] ever been created on
earth like Enoch,
for he was taken up from the
earth.
15 Nor was anyone ever born like
Joseph;[a]
even his bones were cared for.
16 Shem and Seth and Enosh were
honored,[b]
but above every other created
living being was Adam.

Simon Son of Onias

50 The leader of his brothers and
the pride of his people[c]
was the high priest, Simon son
of Onias,
who in his life repaired the
house,
and in his time fortified the
temple.
2 He laid the foundations for the
high double walls,
the high retaining walls for the
temple enclosure.
3 In his days a water cistern
was dug,[d]
a reservoir like the sea in
circumference.
4 He considered how to save his
people from ruin,
and fortified the city against
siege.
5 How glorious he was, surrounded
by the people,
as he came out of the house of
the curtain.
6 Like the morning star among the
clouds,
like the full moon at the festal
season;[d]
7 like the sun shining on the
temple of the Most High,
like the rainbow gleaming in
splendid clouds;
8 like roses in the days of first
fruits,
like lilies by a spring of water,

y Other ancient authorities read *people*
z Heb Syr: Gk *No one has* a Heb Syr: Gk adds *the leader of his brothers, the support of the people*
b Heb: Gk *Shem and Seth were honored by people*
c Heb Syr: Gk lacks this line. Compare 49.15
d Heb: Meaning of Gk uncertain

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of Zerubbabel as *like a signet ring* is taken from Hag 2.23. **49.13** *Nehemiah* is remembered for rebuilding the city walls. Cf. Neh 2.17–7.3; 13.14, 22, 31. Ben Sira does not mention Ezra the scribe. Cf. Ezra 7–10.

49.14–16 Six additional figures are briefly mentioned as worthy of praise, four from the preflood period. The significance of the unit is unclear because it breaks the pattern of following the sequence of the epic history and ascribes honor for reasons that are not noted as glorious elsewhere in Sirach. It may have been a later addition to the poem. For *Enoch's* being *taken up*, see Gen 5.24; cf. Wis 4.10–14; Heb 11.5. For the burial of *Joseph*, see Gen 50.25–26; cf. Ex 13.9; Josh 24.32. Of the three sons of Noah, *Shem* was blessed as the forefather of Abraham. Cf. Gen 9.18–27; 11.10–26. *Seth* and *Enosh* provide the first two genealogical links from Adam to Noah. See Gen 5.1–25; cf. Gen 4.25. That *Adam* is honored above all seems out of place in Sirach. Such an idealization is not otherwise documented until a somewhat later time. Cf. Wis 10.1; Lk 3.38; Philo of Alexandria.

50.1–24 Simon the high priest is praised for his leadership (v. 1), fortification of the temple (vv. 1–4), glorious appearance in the court of the temple (vv. 5–11), performance of the daily sacrifice (vv. 12–19), and pronouncement of the blessing (vv. 20–21). **50.1** *Simon son of Onias*, called Simon the Just in later tradition, was high priest from 219 to 196 B.C.E. That he *repaired the house* (temple; cf. Josephus *Antiquities* 12.3.3 [141]) is reminiscent of Hezekiah's glory (48.17), an achievement that subtly attributes royal functions to him. **50.5–11** Simon's *glorious* appearance is described in terms reminiscent both of Aaron's glory (45.8–13) and wisdom's flourishing (24.13–17). **50.5** The *house of the curtain*, the temple, in terms reminiscent of the tent, or tabernacle, in the wilderness. The Hebrew for v. 5a reads "How glorious he was as he looked out from the tent" (instead of the Greek *surrounded by the people*), using the term that refers to the tent in the wilderness (Ex 26.33). A curtain or veil is not mentioned for Solomon's temple in 1 Kings 6, but was added to its description in 2 Chr 3.14. For other mentions of the veil, cf. 1 Macc 1.21–23;

like a green shoot on Lebanon
on a summer day;
9 like fire and incense in the
censer,
like a vessel of hammered gold
studded with all kinds of
precious stones;
10 like an olive tree laden with fruit,
and like a cypress towering in
the clouds.
11 When he put on his glorious robe
and clothed himself in perfect
splendor,
when he went up to the holy
altar,
he made the court of the
sanctuary glorious.

12 When he received the portions
from the hands of the
priests,
as he stood by the hearth of the
altar
with a garland of brothers
around him,
he was like a young cedar on
Lebanon
surrounded by the trunks of
palm trees.
13 All the sons of Aaron in their
splendor
held the Lord's offering in
their hands
before the whole congregation
of Israel.
14 Finishing the service at the
altars,[e]
and arranging the offering to
the Most High, the
Almighty,
15 he held out his hand for the cup
and poured a drink offering of
the blood of the grape;
he poured it out at the foot of
the altar,
a pleasing odor to the Most
High, the king of all.
16 Then the sons of Aaron shouted;
they blew their trumpets of
hammered metal;
they sounded a mighty fanfare
as a reminder before the Most
High.
17 Then all the people together
quickly
fell to the ground on their faces
to worship their Lord,
the Almighty, God Most High.

18 Then the singers praised him
with their voices
in sweet and full-toned
melody.[f]
19 And the people of the Lord Most
High offered
their prayers before the
Merciful One,
until the order of worship of the
Lord was ended,
and they completed his ritual.
20 Then Simon[g] came down and
raised his hands
over the whole congregation of
Israelites,
to pronounce the blessing of the
Lord with his lips,
and to glory in his name;
21 and they bowed down in worship
a second time,
to receive the blessing from the
Most High.

A Benediction

22 And now bless the God of all,
who everywhere works great
wonders,

e Other ancient authorities read *altar* *f* Other ancient authorities read *in sweet melody throughout the house* *g* Gk *he*

Mk 15.38; Heb 10.20; Josephus *Antiquities* 3.6.4 (124–25). **50.11** The high priest's *robe* was frequently described at great length and its symbols were allegorized by later writers such as Philo of Alexandria; cf. Ex 28.2–43; 39.1–31; Wis 18.24; Josephus *Antiquities* 3.7.1–6 (151–78). **50.12–21** Simon's service at the altars closely parallels the description of the daily whole offering in *Mishnah Tamid* 6.3–7.3. **50.13** The *sons of Aaron* are the priests. **50.15** On the *drink offering* as a libation, cf. Num 28.7; Josephus *Antiquities* 3.9.4 (234). **50.16** On the *trumpets of hammered metal*, cf. Num 10.2. **50.18** For the *singers*, cf. 2 Chr 29.26–30. **50.20** The *blessing* of the high priest conferred peace in the name of the Lord. Cf. Lev 9.22–23; Num 6.24–27.

50.22–24 Ben Sira adds his own benediction and prayer for peace. The Hebrew differs from the Greek. It includes a prayer for God's "lasting kindness toward Simon" and for a fulfillment of "the covenant with Phinehas" (cf. 45.23–25), items that may have been deleted by the grandson as embarrassing or dangerous in the light of the violent end to the Zadokite line of high priests

who fosters our growth from
birth,
and deals with us according to
his mercy.
23 May he give us[h] gladness of
heart,
and may there be peace in
our[i] days
in Israel, as in the days of old.
24 May he entrust to us his mercy,
and may he deliver us in our[j]
days!

Epilogue

25 Two nations my soul detests,
and the third is not even a
people:
26 Those who live in Seir,[k] and the
Philistines,
and the foolish people that live
in Shechem.

27 Instruction in understanding and
knowledge
I have written in this book,
Jesus son of Eleazar son of
Sirach[l] of Jerusalem,
whose mind poured forth
wisdom.
28 Happy are those who concern
themselves with these
things,
and those who lay them to
heart will become wise.
29 For if they put them into
practice, they will be equal
to anything,
for the fear[m] of the Lord is
their path.

PRAYER OF JESUS SON OF SIRACH[n]

51 I give you thanks, O Lord and
King,
and praise you, O God my
Savior.
I give thanks to your name,
2 for you have been my protector
and helper
and have delivered me from
destruction
and from the trap laid by a
slanderous tongue,
from lips that fabricate lies.
In the face of my adversaries
you have been my helper 3 and
delivered me,
in the greatness of your mercy
and of your name,
from grinding teeth about to
devour me,
from the hand of those seeking
my life,
from the many troubles I
endured,
4 from choking fire on every side,
and from the midst of fire that
I had not kindled,
5 from the deep belly of Hades,
from an unclean tongue and
lying words—

h Other ancient authorities read *you* *i* Other ancient authorities read *your* *j* Other ancient authorities read *his* *k* Heb Compare Lat: Gk *on the mountain of Samaria* *l* Heb: Meaning of Gk uncertain *m* Heb: Other ancient authorities read *light* *n* This title is included in the Gk text.

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that had occurred in the meantime. Onias III, Simon's son, had been deposed and murdered (2 Macc 4.34); Menelaus, who was not from a priestly family, had been installed as high priest by Antiochus IV; and the Maccabean wars had produced the Hasmonean dynasty of priest-kings. Thus it was obvious that Ben Sira's prayer had not been answered.

50.25–29 An epilogue and signature conclude Ben Sira's book of instruction. **50.26** The detested nations are those that bordered Judea to the south (Seir), the west (Philistines), and the north (Shechem), but they are referred to by archaic designations. *Those who live in Seir* were the Edomites, known in Ben Sira's time as Idumeans. *Shechem* was the old center of the Northern Kingdom and a euphemism for Samaria in Ben Sira's time. The *Philistines* were the ancient occupants of the land and enemies during the time of the judges and the early kings, probably Ben Sira's allusion to the Hellenistic cities along the seacoast.

51.1–12 A psalm of thanksgiving for deliverance from adversity is appended to the book of instruction. Its authenticity has been questioned, but there is nothing about its form or content that suggests it could not have been written by Ben Sira.

The hymn of praise positioned between v. 12 and 13 is not included in the Greek or Syriac manuscripts and is therefore difficult to attribute to Ben Sira. It is composed as a litany in the style of Ps 136 and contains features that suggest Essene provenance. These include the epithet *God of praises*, designations in the banner style such as *shield of Abraham* and *rock of Isaac*, as well as the notice of Zadokite loyalty.

6 the slander of an unrighteous
tongue to the king.
My soul drew near to death,
and my life was on the brink of
Hades below.
7 They surrounded me on every
side,
and there was no one to
help me;
I looked for human assistance,
and there was none.
8 Then I remembered your mercy,
O Lord,
and your kindness[o] from
of old,
for you rescue those who wait
for you
and save them from the hand
of their enemies.
9 And I sent up my prayer from
the earth,
and begged for rescue from
death.
10 I cried out, "Lord, you are my
Father;[p]
do not forsake me in the days
of trouble,
when there is no help against
the proud.
11 I will praise your name
continually,
and will sing hymns of
thanksgiving."
My prayer was heard,
12 for you saved me from
destruction
and rescued me in time of
trouble.
For this reason I thank you and
praise you,
and I bless the name of the
Lord.

Heb adds:

Give thanks to the LORD, *for he is good,*
for his mercy endures forever;

Give thanks to the God of praises,
for his mercy endures forever;

Give thanks to the guardian of Israel,
for his mercy endures forever;

Give thanks to him who formed all things,
for his mercy endures forever;

Give thanks to the redeemer of Israel,
for his mercy endures forever;

Give thanks to him who gathers the dispersed of Israel,
for his mercy endures forever;

Give thanks to him who rebuilt his city and his sanctuary,
for his mercy endures forever;

Give thanks to him who makes a horn to sprout for the house of David,
for his mercy endures forever;

Give thanks to him who has chosen the sons of Zadok to be priests,
for his mercy endures forever;

Give thanks to the shield of Abraham,
for his mercy endures forever;

Give thanks to the rock of Isaac,
for his mercy endures forever;

Give thanks to the mighty one of Jacob,
for his mercy endures forever;

Give thanks to him who has chosen Zion,
for his mercy endures forever;

Give thanks to the King of the kings of kings,
for his mercy endures forever;

He has raised up a horn for his people,
praise for all his loyal ones.

For the children of Israel, the people close to him.
Praise the LORD*!*

Autobiographical Poem on Wisdom

13 While I was still young, before I
went on my travels,
I sought wisdom openly in my
prayer.

o Other ancient authorities read *work*
p Heb: Gk *the Father of my lord*

14 Before the temple I asked
for her,
and I will search for her until
the end.

15 From the first blossom to the
ripening grape
my heart delighted in her;
my foot walked on the straight
path;
from my youth I followed her
steps.

16 I inclined my ear a little and
received her,
and I found for myself much
instruction.
17 I made progress in her;
to him who gives wisdom I will
give glory.

18 For I resolved to live according to
wisdom,[q]
and I was zealous for the good,
and I shall never be
disappointed.
19 My soul grappled with wisdom,[q]
and in my conduct I was
strict;[r]

I spread out my hands to the
heavens,
and lamented my ignorance
of her.
20 I directed my soul to her,
and in purity I found her.

With her I gained understanding
from the first;
therefore I will never be
forsaken.
21 My heart was stirred to seek her;
therefore I have gained a prize
possession.

22 The Lord gave me my tongue as
a reward,
and I will praise him with it.

23 Draw near to me, you who are
uneducated,
and lodge in the house of
instruction.
24 Why do you say you are lacking
in these things,[s]
and why do you endure such
great thirst?
25 I opened my mouth and said,
Acquire wisdom[t] for
yourselves without money.

26 Put your neck under her[u]
yoke,
and let your souls receive
instruction;
it is to be found close by.

27 See with your own eyes that I
have labored but little
and found for myself much
serenity.
28 Hear but a little of my
instruction,
and through me you will
acquire silver and gold.[v]

29 May your soul rejoice in God's[w]
mercy,
and may you never be ashamed
to praise him.
30 Do your work in good time,
and in his own time God[x] will
give you your reward.

q Gk *her* *r* Meaning of Gk uncertain
s Cn Compare Heb Syr: Meaning of Gk uncertain
t Heb: Gk lacks *wisdom* *u* Heb: other ancient authorities read *the* *v* Syr Compare Heb: Gk *Get instruction with a large sum of silver, and you will gain by it much gold.* *w* Gk *his* *x* Gk *he*

51.13–30 An autobiographical poem on the author's quest for wisdom (vv. 13–22) leads to his invitation to join him in receiving her instruction (vv. 23–30). A manuscript containing the first half of the poem (vv. 13–20a), discovered at Qumran (*Psalms Scroll* [11QPs[a]]) shows that the original Hebrew was an acrostic, a feature that was blurred in later transcriptions and translations. The language of seeking and finding wisdom resonates with the poetry of personified wisdom in chs. 1, 4, 6, 14, 15, and 24. **51.13** The *prayer* for wisdom may allude to Solomon's request (1 Kings 3.7–9); cf. Sir 51.20; Wis 7.7; 8.21; 9.1–12. **51.23** The invitation is reminiscent of wisdom. Cf. 14.20–27; Prov 9.1–6. It is difficult to know whether the *house of instruction* is merely a poetic figure or whether it refers to the institution of a school. Given the form and content of Ben Sira's book of instruction, some formal setting for educational purposes has to be supposed. **51.26** For wisdom's *yoke*, see 6.23–31. For the idea that her instruction is *close by*, cf. Deut 30.11–14.

BARUCH

Authorship

THE NARRATIVE INTRODUCTION presents the book of Baruch as a letter sent by Baruch, the secretary and friend of Jeremiah, from exile in Babylon to the priests and people of Jerusalem in the early sixth century B.C.E. According to Jer 43.1–7, however, Jeremiah and Baruch in 582 B.C.E. were taken from Jerusalem to Egypt, where they presumably remained until they died. A later tradition, reflected in Baruch and in other Jewish sources (*Seder Olam Rabbah* 26; *Midrash Rabbah Song* 5.5; *Babylonian Talmud Megillah* 16b), assumes that Baruch went to Babylon. These sources are full of historical inaccuracies, however, and belong to the realm of legend rather than history. It was a relatively common practice during the late Second Temple period to compose edifying works that expanded the biblical tradition (e.g., Prayer of Manasseh, *Jubilees*, Ps.-Philo *Biblical Antiquities*), and it is within this context that Baruch should be situated.

Content

Baruch consists of three originally independent compositions (a prose prayer, a wisdom poem, and a poem of consolation) that have been joined together and given a narrative introduction. The narrative introduction (1.1–14) instructs the recipients to read the contents as a confessional liturgy "on the days of the festivals and at appointed seasons"(1.14). It is followed by a prose prayer (1.15–3.8) consisting of a preliminary confession (1.15–2.10) and the prayer itself (2.11–3.8). The confession and prayer are a pastiche of quotations from Daniel and Jeremiah, with the relationship between Bar 1.15–2.19 and Dan 9.4–19 being especially close. The wisdom poem (3.9–4.4) speaks of the elusiveness of wisdom but also identifies wisdom with the Torah ("the book of the commandments of God," 4.1) as God's gift to Israel. Like the prose prayer, the wisdom poem is a pastiche of biblical phrases. Although no single text predominates, echoes of Deut 30; Job 28; Sir 24 are easily identifiable. The last section of the book is a poem of consolation (4.5–5.9) that is strongly influenced by Isa 40–66. The poem begins with words of encouragement to the remnant of Israel (4.5–9a)

and continues with an address of personified Zion to her neighbors (4.9b–16) and to her children (4.17–29). The poem concludes with words of encouragement to Zion (4.30–5.9), who will see the return of her children. The last part of the poem, 4.36–5.9, closely resembles the noncanonical *Psalms of Solomon* 11.1–7. Opinion is divided, however, as to whether *Psalms of Solomon* is dependent on Baruch or whether both draw on an earlier poem of restoration.

The distinctiveness of the sections is evident not only in their different styles and in the different biblical texts on which they draw but also in the terms for God that they use. In the prose introduction and prayer God is referred to most often as "Lord," in the wisdom poem as "God," and in the poem of consolation as "the Everlasting."

Language, Place, and Date of Composition

It is now generally agreed that all of the parts of Baruch were originally composed in Hebrew, although no Hebrew text now exists. Of the translations, the Greek text is the most important. Versions in Syriac, Latin, Coptic, Ethiopic, Arabic, and Armenian are also known. Because the book was composed in Hebrew, Palestine is the most likely place of origin.

The dates of composition of the originally independent sections of Baruch are difficult to establish. Historical inaccuracies in the introduction suggest a time considerably later than the Babylonian exile. The dependence of the prose prayer on Dan 9 might point to a date after 165 B.C.E, the date of Daniel, but it is possible that the prayer in Dan 9 is an earlier composition than Daniel as a whole. If the wisdom poem does in fact allude to Sir 24, then a date after 180 B.C.E. is indicated for that section. There are few clues to the date of the poem of consolation. Most scholars favor a date between 200 and 60 B.C.E. for the compilation of the book as a whole. *Carol A. Newsom*

Baruch and the Jews in Babylon

1 These are the words of the book that
Baruch son of Neriah son of Mahse-
iah son of Zedekiah son of Hasadiah son
of Hilkiah wrote in Babylon, 2 in the fifth
year, on the seventh day of the month, at
the time when the Chaldeans took Jerusa-
lem and burned it with fire.
3 Baruch read the words of this book
to Jeconiah son of Jehoiakim, king of Ju-
dah, and to all the people who came to
hear the book, 4 and to the nobles and the
princes, and to the elders, and to all the
people, small and great, all who lived in
Babylon by the river Sud.
5 Then they wept, and fasted, and
prayed before the Lord; 6 they collected as
much money as each could give, 7 and
sent it to Jerusalem to the high priest[a]
Jehoiakim son of Hilkiah son of Shallum,
and to the priests, and to all the people
who were present with him in Jerusalem.
8 At the same time, on the tenth day of
Sivan, Baruch[b] took the vessels of the
house of the Lord, which had been car-
ried away from the temple, to return
them to the land of Judah—the silver ves-
sels that Zedekiah son of Josiah, king of
Judah, had made, 9 after King Nebuchad-
nezzar of Babylon had carried away from
Jerusalem Jeconiah and the princes and
the prisoners and the nobles and the peo-
ple of the land, and brought them to
Babylon.

A Letter to Jerusalem

10 They said: Here we send you
money; so buy with the money burnt
offerings and sin offerings and incense,
and prepare a grain offering, and offer
them on the altar of the Lord our God;
11 and pray for the life of King Nebuchad-
nezzar of Babylon, and for the life of his
son Belshazzar, so that their days on earth
may be like the days of heaven. 12 The
Lord will give us strength, and light to our
eyes; we shall live under the protection[c]
of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, and
under the protection of his son Belshaz-
zar, and we shall serve them many days
and find favor in their sight. 13 Pray also
for us to the Lord our God, for we have
sinned against the Lord our God, and to
this day the anger of the Lord and his
wrath have not turned away from us.
14 And you shall read aloud this scroll that
we are sending you, to make your confes-
sion in the house of the Lord on the days
of the festivals and at appointed seasons.

a Gk *the priest* *b* Gk *he* *c* Gk *in the shadow*

1.1–9 The first part of the narrative introduction, giving the circumstances of the letter. **1.1** *Baruch son of . . . Hilkiah.* Only Baruch's father and grandfather are named in the genealogy in Jer 32.12. **1.2** Whether the *fifth year* is calculated from the exile of 597 B.C.E. (see 2 Kings 24.10–17) or of 586 B.C.E. (see 2 Kings 25.8–12) is not stated. The reference to the burning of Jerusalem suggests the latter. Curiously, the date formula omits the name of the month (but see v. 8). 2 Kings 25.8 states that Nebuzaradan burned Jerusalem "in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month." For penitential activity in Palestine on the anniversary of the destruction, see Zech 7.3–5. **1.3** *Jeconiah* is one of the names of Jehoiachin, the last king of Judah, who was exiled in 597 B.C.E. **1.4** Although *the river Sud* is otherwise unknown, Ezekiel also locates the community of exiles to which he belongs in relation to a river, the Chebar (Ezek 1.1). **1.5** The favorable reception given to Baruch's book by the exiled king and all the assembled people contrasts with the hostility Baruch received from Jeconiah's father, King Jehoiakim, when he read the scroll dictated by Jeremiah in 604 B.C.E. (Jer 36). **1.6–9** The account of a collection for Jerusalem and the return of silver vessels is apparently modeled on Ezra 1, where a similar collection accompanies the return of gold and silver vessels by the Persian king Cyrus in 538 B.C.E. **1.7** No high priest by the name of *Jehoiakim* appears in the list of 1 Chr 6.13–15. **1.8–9** *Sivan* is the third month of the Jewish year (May/June). 2 Kings does not mention the making of *silver vessels* by *Zedekiah* to replace those taken by *Nebuchadnezzar* in the exile of 597 B.C.E. (cf. 2 Kings 25.13–16).

1.10–14 The letter to the community in Jerusalem includes instructions for the use of the collection and requests for prayer and for the public reading of the scroll. **1.10** The text assumes the continuation of sacrifices in Jerusalem. This does not necessarily imply a date before 586 B.C.E.; see Jer 41.5. **1.11** *Belshazzar* was not the son of Nebuchadnezzar, but of Nabonidus. Here the author of Baruch is influenced by Dan 5, which also erroneously called Belshazzar Nebuchadnezzar's son. Prayer was offered for the Persian king and his children, according to Ezra 6.10.

Confession of Sins

15 And you shall say: The Lord our
God is in the right, but there is open
shame on us today, on the people of Ju-
dah, on the inhabitants of Jerusalem,
16 and on our kings, our rulers, our
priests, our prophets, and our ancestors,
17 because we have sinned before the
Lord. 18 We have disobeyed him, and
have not heeded the voice of the Lord our
God, to walk in the statutes of the Lord
that he set before us. 19 From the time
when the Lord brought our ancestors out
of the land of Egypt until today, we have
been disobedient to the Lord our God,
and we have been negligent, in not heed-
ing his voice. 20 So to this day there have
clung to us the calamities and the curse
that the Lord declared through his ser-
vant Moses at the time when he brought
our ancestors out of the land of Egypt to
give to us a land flowing with milk and
honey. 21 We did not listen to the voice of
the Lord our God in all the words of the
prophets whom he sent to us, 22 but all of
us followed the intent of our own wicked
hearts by serving other gods and doing
what is evil in the sight of the Lord
our God.

2 So the Lord carried out the threat he
spoke against us: against our judges
who ruled Israel, and against our kings
and our rulers and the people of Israel
and Judah. 2 Under the whole heaven
there has not been done the like of what
he has done in Jerusalem, in accordance
with the threats that were[d] written in the
law of Moses. 3 Some of us ate the flesh of
their sons and others the flesh of their
daughters. 4 He made them subject to all
the kingdoms around us, to be an object
of scorn and a desolation among all the
surrounding peoples, where the Lord has
scattered them. 5 They were brought
down and not raised up, because our na-
tion[e] sinned against the Lord our God, in
not heeding his voice.

6 The Lord our God is in the right,
but there is open shame on us and our
ancestors this very day. 7 All those calami-
ties with which the Lord threatened us
have come upon us. 8 Yet we have not en-
treated the favor of the Lord by turning
away, each of us, from the thoughts of
our wicked hearts. 9 And the Lord has
kept the calamities ready, and the Lord
has brought them upon us, for the Lord is
just in all the works that he has com-
manded us to do. 10 Yet we have not
obeyed his voice, to walk in the statutes of
the Lord that he set before us.

Prayer for Deliverance

11 And now, O Lord God of Israel,
who brought your people out of the land
of Egypt with a mighty hand and with
signs and wonders and with great power
and outstretched arm, and made yourself
a name that continues to this day, 12 we
have sinned, we have been ungodly, we
have done wrong, O Lord our God,
against all your ordinances. 13 Let your
anger turn away from us, for we are left,
few in number, among the nations where
you have scattered us. 14 Hear, O Lord,
our prayer and our supplication, and for
your own sake deliver us, and grant us
favor in the sight of those who have car-
ried us into exile; 15 so that all the earth
may know that you are the Lord our God,
for Israel and his descendants are called
by your name.

16 O Lord, look down from your holy
dwelling, and consider us. Incline your

d Gk *in accordance with what is* *e* Gk *because we*

1.15–2.10 In preparation for prayer, the people confess their guilt before God. The passage is modeled closely on Dan 9.7–14, with significant influence also from Deuteronomy, Jeremiah, and the prayer in Neh 9. **1.15** Dan 9.7. **1.16–17** See Dan 9.8; Neh 9.33–34; Jer 32.32. **1.18** Dan 9.9–10; see Neh 9.26. **1.19** See Deut 9.7; Jer 7.25. **1.20** See Dan 9.11, 13; Deut 29.20; Jer 11.4–5. For the curses, see Lev 26.14–39; Deut 28.15–68. **1.21** Dan 9.10; see Deut 9.23; 28.15; Jer 26.5. **1.22** See Jer 7.24. **2.1–2** Dan 9.12–13. **2.3** Cannibalism of one's own children in time of siege is mentioned as one of the horrors of war in Lev 26.29; Deut 28.53; 2 Kings 6.24–31; Jer 19.9; Lam 2.20; 4.10. **2.4** Jer 29.18. **2.5** See Deut 28.13; Dan 9.8, 11. **2.6** Dan 9.7. **2.7** Dan 9.12. **2.8** Dan 9.13; see Jer 7.24. **2.9** See Dan 9.14. **2.10** Dan 9.10.

2.11–35 Recalling God's activity in the exodus and confessing their sin, the people appeal to God's mercy. **2.11–18** These verses closely follow Dan 9.15–19. **2.11–12** See Dan 9.15; Jer 32.20–21. **2.13** See Dan 9.16; Deut 4.27; Jer 42.2. **2.14–15** See 2 Kings 19.19; Dan 9.16–17; See also Gen 39.21. **2.16** Dan 9.18; see Deut

ear, O Lord, and hear; 17open your eyes,
O Lord, and see, for the dead who are in
Hades, whose spirit has been taken from
their bodies, will not ascribe glory or jus-
tice to the Lord; 18but the person who is
deeply grieved, who walks bowed and fee-
ble, with failing eyes and famished soul,
will declare your glory and righteousness,
O Lord.

19 For it is not because of any righ-
teous deeds of our ancestors or our kings
that we bring before you our prayer for
mercy, O Lord our God. 20For you have
sent your anger and your wrath upon us,
as you declared by your servants the
prophets, saying: 21Thus says the Lord:
Bend your shoulders and serve the king
of Babylon, and you will remain in the
land that I gave to your ancestors. 22But
if you will not obey the voice of the Lord
and will not serve the king of Babylon, 23I
will make to cease from the towns of Ju-
dah and from the region around Jerusa-
lem the voice of mirth and the voice of
gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and
the voice of the bride, and the whole land
will be a desolation without inhabitants.

24 But we did not obey your voice, to
serve the king of Babylon; and you have
carried out your threats, which you spoke
by your servants the prophets, that the
bones of our kings and the bones of our
ancestors would be brought out of their
resting place; 25and indeed they have
been thrown out to the heat of day and
the frost of night. They perished in great
misery, by famine and sword and pesti-
lence. 26And the house that is called by
your name you have made as it is today,
because of the wickedness of the house of
Israel and the house of Judah.

27 Yet you have dealt with us, O Lord
our God, in all your kindness and in all
your great compassion, 28as you spoke by
your servant Moses on the day when you
commanded him to write your law in the
presence of the people of Israel, saying,
29"If you will not obey my voice, this very
great multitude will surely turn into a
small number among the nations, where I
will scatter them. 30For I know that they
will not obey me, for they are a stiff-
necked people. But in the land of their
exile they will come to themselves 31and
know that I am the Lord their God. I will
give them a heart that obeys and ears that
hear; 32they will praise me in the land of
their exile, and will remember my name
33and turn from their stubbornness and
their wicked deeds; for they will remem-
ber the ways of their ancestors, who
sinned before the Lord. 34I will bring
them again into the land that I swore to
give to their ancestors, to Abraham, Isaac,
and Jacob, and they will rule over it; and
I will increase them, and they will not be
diminished. 35I will make an everlasting
covenant with them to be their God and
they shall be my people; and I will never
again remove my people Israel from the
land that I have given them."

Final Petition

3 O Lord Almighty, God of Israel, the
soul in anguish and the wearied
spirit cry out to you. 2Hear, O Lord, and
have mercy, for we have sinned before
you. 3For you are enthroned forever, and
we are perishing forever. 4O Lord Al-
mighty, God of Israel, hear now the
prayer of the people[f] of Israel, the chil-
dren of those who sinned before you, who
did not heed the voice of the Lord their
God, so that calamities have clung to us.
5Do not remember the iniquities of our
ancestors, but in this crisis remember your
power and your name. 6For you are the
Lord our God, and it is you, O Lord,
whom we will praise. 7For you have put
the fear of you in our hearts so that we
would call upon your name; and we will
praise you in our exile, for we have put
away from our hearts all the iniquity of
our ancestors who sinned against you.

f Gk *dead*

26.15. **2.17–18** See 2 Kings 19.16; Dan 9.18. For the idea that the dead cannot praise God, see Pss 30.9; 88.10–12; 115.17; Isa 38.18. **2.19–20** Dan 9.6, 18. **2.21–23** Not an exact quotation from Jeremiah but a pastiche of Jer 7.34; 27.9, 12; 48.9. **2.24–26** The threats are adapted from Jer 8.1; 11.17; 16.4; 32.36; 36.30; 44.6. **2.29–35** The quotation attributed to Moses is not attested in the Pentateuch but is largely a pastiche of phrases from Jeremiah, with some echoes of Deuteronomy. Cf. Deut 28.62; Jer 24.7, 9; 25.5; 29.6; 30.3; 31.33; 32.40. Cf. also Lev 26.42–45; Deut 30.1–5. **3.1–8** Conclusion and final petition. The exiles' repentance and prayer conforms to the pattern of Lev 26.40–45; Deut 30.1–10; Jer 29.12–14. **3.7** See Jer 32.40.

8 See, we are today in our exile where you
have scattered us, to be reproached and
cursed and punished for all the iniquities
of our ancestors, who forsook the Lord
our God.

In Praise of Wisdom

9 Hear the commandments of life,
O Israel;
give ear, and learn wisdom!
10 Why is it, O Israel, why is it that
you are in the land of your
enemies,
that you are growing old in a
foreign country,
that you are defiled with the
dead,
11 that you are counted among
those in Hades?
12 You have forsaken the fountain
of wisdom.
13 If you had walked in the way
of God,
you would be living in peace
forever.
14 Learn where there is wisdom,
where there is strength,
where there is understanding,
so that you may at the same time
discern
where there is length of days,
and life,
where there is light for the
eyes, and peace.

15 Who has found her place?
And who has entered her
storehouses?
16 Where are the rulers of the
nations,
and those who lorded it over
the animals on earth;
17 those who made sport of the
birds of the air,
and who hoarded up silver and
gold
in which people trust,
and there is no end to their
getting;
18 those who schemed to get silver,
and were anxious,
but there is no trace of their
works?
19 They have vanished and gone
down to Hades,
and others have arisen in their
place.

20 Later generations have seen the
light of day,
and have lived upon the earth;
but they have not learned the way
to knowledge,
nor understood her paths,
nor laid hold of her.
21 Their descendants have strayed
far from her[g] way.
22 She has not been heard of in
Canaan,
or seen in Teman;
23 the descendants of Hagar, who
seek for understanding on
the earth,
the merchants of Merran and
Teman,
the story-tellers and the seekers
for understanding,
have not learned the way to
wisdom,

g Other ancient authorities read *their*

3.8 The exiles are punished for the sins of their ancestors (Ex 3.7; Lam 5.7); but cf. Jer 31.29; Ezek 18.2–32.

3.9–4.4 A poem in the style of a wisdom discourse describes the elusiveness of wisdom but also God's gift of wisdom to Israel in the Torah. **3.9–14** Israel's experience of exile is used as an object lesson to motivate obedience to *the commandments of life* and *wisdom*; cf. Deut 30.15–20. **3.9** The address to Israel echoes Deut 4.1; 5.1; cf. also the command to hear in Prov 1.8; 4.1, 10. **3.10** An exilic setting is presumed, though *growing old in a foreign country* suggests a different time than *the fifth year* mentioned in 1.2. **3.11** Ps 88.4. **3.12** See Prov 18.4; Sir 1.1, 5. **3.14** See Prov 3.13–18. **3.15–28** Neither the powerful, nor the wealthy, nor the nations with a reputation for wisdom, nor the ancient giants have been able to find it. **3.15** See Job 28.12, 20. **3.16–17** Both hunting and the collecting of exotic animals were symbols of royal power; cf. 1 Kings 10.22; Jer 27.6; Dan 2.38; Jdt 11.7. **3.22** The *Canaanite* (Phoenician) cities of Tyre and Sidon were associated with wisdom; cf. Ezek 28.4; Zech 9.2. For the wisdom of *Teman*, the capital of Edom, see Job 2.11; Jer 49.7; Ob 8. **3.23** The *descendants of Hagar* are the Ishmaelites (Gen 16.11–12), who appear as merchant travelers in Gen 37.25. *Merran* may be an error for Midian; see Gen 37.28 for Midianite caravanners. Sir 39.4 associates travel with wisdom.

or given thought to her paths.

24 O Israel, how great is the house of God,
how vast the territory that he possesses!
25 It is great and has no bounds;
it is high and immeasurable.
26 The giants were born there, who were famous of old,
great in stature, expert in war.
27 God did not choose them,
or give them the way to knowledge;
28 so they perished because they had no wisdom,
they perished through their folly.

29 Who has gone up into heaven, and taken her,
and brought her down from the clouds?
30 Who has gone over the sea, and found her,
and will buy her for pure gold?
31 No one knows the way to her,
or is concerned about the path to her.
32 But the one who knows all things knows her,
he found her by his understanding.
The one who prepared the earth for all time
filled it with four-footed creatures;
33 the one who sends forth the light, and it goes;
he called it, and it obeyed him, trembling;
34 the stars shone in their watches, and were glad;
he called them, and they said, "Here we are!"
They shone with gladness for him who made them.
35 This is our God;
no other can be compared to him.
36 He found the whole way to knowledge,
and gave her to his servant Jacob
and to Israel, whom he loved.
37 Afterward she appeared on earth
and lived with humankind.

4 She is the book of the commandments of God,
the law that endures forever.
All who hold her fast will live,
and those who forsake her will die.
2 Turn, O Jacob, and take her;
walk toward the shining of her light.
3 Do not give your glory to another,
or your advantages to an alien people.
4 Happy are we, O Israel,
for we know what is pleasing to God.

Encouragement for Israel

5 Take courage, my people,
who perpetuate Israel's name!
6 It was not for destruction
that you were sold to the nations,

3.24–25 Here the *house of God* is not the temple but the whole cosmos. **3.26–28** According to ancient tradition, *the giants* (see Gen 6.1–4) were the children of fallen angels, who communicated a corrupted form of heavenly wisdom to humans (*1 Enoch* 7). The giants perished in the deluge (Wis 14.6). **3.29–37** Although no human can reach wisdom, God knows her and has given her to Israel. **3.29–30a** Cf. Deut 30.12–13, which uses similar imagery to describe the accessibility of the divine commandments. **3.30b** See Job 28.12–19. **3.31–32** See Job 28.23–27. **3.33–34** See Job 38.35. **3.35** See Isa 43.10–11; 45.18. **3.36–37** For the gift of wisdom to Israel, see Sir 24.8. Although v. 37 has sometimes been regarded as a Christian interpolation referring to the incarnation, the idea of wisdom living with humankind is attested in Prov 8.1–4, 31; Wis 9.10; Sir 24.10–12. **4.1–4** Wisdom is explicitly identified with the Torah (cf. Sir 24.23). **4.4** See Wis 9.18.

4.5–5.9 In the poem of consolation the psalmist addresses the exiles (4.5–9a), quotes the words of personified Jerusalem (4.9b–29), and finally addresses words of hope to Jerusalem (4.30–5.9). The composition draws extensively on phrases and images from Isa 40–66. **4.5–9a** The reason for the exile is identified as the people's sin. **4.5** The call to *take courage* is repeated in vv. 21, 30. **4.6** See Isa 50.1b.

but you were handed over to
your enemies
because you angered God.
7 For you provoked the one who
made you
by sacrificing to demons and
not to God.
8 You forgot the everlasting God,
who brought you up,
and you grieved Jerusalem,
who reared you.
9 For she saw the wrath that came
upon you from God,
and she said:
Listen, you neighbors of Zion,
God has brought great sorrow
upon me;
10 for I have seen the exile of my
sons and daughters,
which the Everlasting brought
upon them.
11 With joy I nurtured them,
but I sent them away with
weeping and sorrow.
12 Let no one rejoice over me, a
widow
and bereaved of many;
I was left desolate because of the
sins of my children,
because they turned away from
the law of God.
13 They had no regard for his
statutes;
they did not walk in the ways
of God's commandments,
or tread the paths his
righteousness showed them.
14 Let the neighbors of Zion come;
remember the capture of my
sons and daughters,
which the Everlasting brought
upon them.
15 For he brought a distant nation
against them,
a nation ruthless and of a
strange language,
which had no respect for the
aged
and no pity for a child.
16 They led away the widow's
beloved sons,
and bereaved the lonely woman
of her daughters.

17 But I, how can I help you?
18 For he who brought these
calamities upon you
will deliver you from the hand
of your enemies.
19 Go, my children, go;
for I have been left desolate.
20 I have taken off the robe of
peace
and put on sackcloth for my
supplication;
I will cry to the Everlasting all
my days.

21 Take courage, my children, cry
to God,
and he will deliver you from
the power and hand of the
enemy.
22 For I have put my hope in the
Everlasting to save you,
and joy has come to me from
the Holy One,
because of the mercy that will
soon come to you
from your everlasting savior.[h]
23 For I sent you out with sorrow
and weeping,
but God will give you back to
me with joy and gladness
forever.
24 For as the neighbors of Zion have
now seen your capture,
so they soon will see your
salvation by God,
which will come to you with great
glory
and with the splendor of the
Everlasting.
25 My children, endure with
patience the wrath that has
come upon you from God.
Your enemy has overtaken you,

h Or *from the Everlasting, your savior*

4.7 *Sacrificing to demons.* Cf. Deut 32.16–17. **4.8** Parental images of God (Deut 32.18; Isa 1.2; Hos 11.4) and Jerusalem (see note on 4.9b–16) are combined. **4.9b–16** The personification of Zion as grieving widow and mother is based on Isa 51.18–20; Lam 1.1, 16–18; 2.19–22. **4.15** Deut 28.49–50. **4.20** For *sackcloth* as a garment of mourning, see Lam 1.10. In Isa 52.1 festive garments mark the end of mourning (see note on 5.1–2). **4.22** *Everlasting.* Cf. Isa 26.4; 40.28. *Holy One* is a common epithet for God in Isa 40–55; see also Pss 71.22; 78.41; Hab 3.3.

but you will soon see their destruction
and will tread upon their necks.
26 My pampered children have traveled rough roads;
they were taken away like a flock carried off by the enemy.

27 Take courage, my children, and cry to God,
for you will be remembered by the one who brought this upon you.
28 For just as you were disposed to go astray from God,
return with tenfold zeal to seek him.
29 For the one who brought these calamities upon you
will bring you everlasting joy with your salvation.

Jerusalem Is Assured of Help

30 Take courage, O Jerusalem,
for the one who named you will comfort you.
31 Wretched will be those who mistreated you
and who rejoiced at your fall.
32 Wretched will be the cities that your children served as slaves;
wretched will be the city that received your offspring.
33 For just as she rejoiced at your fall
and was glad for your ruin,
so she will be grieved at her own desolation.
34 I will take away her pride in her great population,
and her insolence will be turned to grief.
35 For fire will come upon her from the Everlasting for many days,
and for a long time she will be inhabited by demons.

36 Look toward the east, O Jerusalem,
and see the joy that is coming to you from God.
37 Look, your children are coming, whom you sent away;
they are coming, gathered from east and west,
at the word of the Holy One,
rejoicing in the glory of God.

5 Take off the garment of your sorrow and affliction, O Jerusalem,
and put on forever the beauty of the glory from God.
2 Put on the robe of the righteousness that comes from God;
put on your head the diadem of the glory of the Everlasting;
3 for God will show your splendor everywhere under heaven.
4 For God will give you evermore the name,
"Righteous Peace, Godly Glory."

5 Arise, O Jerusalem, stand upon the height;
look toward the east,
and see your children gathered from west and east
at the word of the Holy One,
rejoicing that God has remembered them.
6 For they went out from you on foot,

4.23 See Ps 126.6; Isa 35.10; 51.11. **4.24** See Isa 60.1–3. **4.25** See Deut 33.29; cf. Isa 51.23. **4.30–5.9** Three imperatives (*take courage*, 4.30; *look*, 4.36; *arise*, 5.5) divide the address to Jerusalem into its major parts. **4.30–35** The punishment of Babylon is part of the consolation of Jerusalem (cf. Isa 43.14; 47.1–15). Contrast the attitude expressed in 1.11–12. **4.30** See Isa 51.12; 62.2, 4. **4.31** Edom was especially blamed for having gloated over Jerusalem's destruction (Isa 34; 63.1–6; Lam 4.21; Ob 8–14; Mal 1.2–5). **4.35** *Fire*. Cf. Jer 50.32; 51.30, 58. *Inhabited by demons*. Cf. Isa 13.21. **4.36–5.4** Jerusalem's joy at seeing her exiled children return is described. **4.36** See Isa 40.9–11. **4.37** See Isa 43.5–6; Zech 8.7–8; cf. *Psalms of Solomon* 11.3. **5.1–2** These verses reverse the image of 4.20. See Isa 52.1; 61.10; cf. *Psalms of Solomon* 11.8. **5.4** New garments and a new name for Jerusalem are mentioned together in Isa 62.2–4. For other symbolic names of Zion, see Isa 1.26; 60.14; Jer

led away by their enemies;
but God will bring them back
to you,
carried in glory, as on a royal
throne.
7 For God has ordered that every
high mountain and the
everlasting hills be
made low
and the valleys filled up, to
make level ground,
so that Israel may walk safely in
the glory of God.
8 The woods and every fragrant
tree
have shaded Israel at God's
command.
9 For God will lead Israel with joy,
in the light of his glory,
with the mercy and
righteousness that come
from him.

33.16; Ezek 48.35. **5.5–9** The return of the exiled children is described. **5.5** See Isa 40.9; 43.5; 51.17; 60.4; cf. *Psalms of Solomon* 11.3. **5.6** See Isa 49.22; 66.20. **5.7** See Isa 40.4–5; cf. *Psalms of Solomon* 11.5. **5.8** Cf. *Psalms of Solomon* 11.6–7. **5.9** See Isa 60.1–3.

THE LETTER OF JEREMIAH

THE LETTER OF JEREMIAH is addressed to those Jews deported to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar, presumably in the exile of 597 B.C.E. It imitates the letter in Jer 29.1–23 to the same exiles, which advised them of the length of their stay (seventy years, an indefinite number) and of their conduct (expect to stay a long time). The Letter of Jeremiah likewise advises the exiles of their expected stay (v. 3; up to seven generations) and of their conduct (do not worship divine images).

Content

The Letter of Jeremiah draws upon biblical texts such as Deut 4.27–28; Pss 115.3–8; 135.15–18; Isa 40.18–20; 44.9–20; 46.1–7; Jer 10.2–16, which satirize divine images in order to encourage the worship of Israel's unique God. The first commandment of the Decalogue forbidding divine images (Ex 20.3–5; Deut 5.7–9) ensured that biblical religion was imageless, but some early biblical texts allowed other peoples their own gods so long as Israel's God was the Most High (Deut 32.8–9). In the sixth century B.C.E., however, during the exile, biblical authors began to argue for only one deity exclusively. They developed the idea by ridiculing the statues that in the ancient Near East represented deities to their worshipers. The Letter of Jeremiah is heir to that tradition, not only attacking pagan gods and cultures but celebrating implicitly Israel's unique imageless God and distinctiveness as a people.

Setting and Date

The Letter of Jeremiah draws upon the biblical tradition against images, summarizing rather than developing it in original ways. A "silver age" work, it reverently looks back to the "golden age" of inspired works like the books of Isaiah and Jeremiah. Because of its use of old traditions, most scholars date it and similar works to the Hellenistic period, between the late fourth and late second

centuries B.C.E. It was known by the author of the letter in 2 Macc 2.1–3, who wrote near the end of the second century B.C.E. The period brought Judaism into contact with the religions of Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia, and Greece, which routinely used statues of gods in their elaborate rituals. To those in the dependent and relatively poor Jewish communities in Palestine and elsewhere, the rich religions of these dominating cultures were a constant temptation to abandon their own, more austere traditions. The author, in common with the custom of the time, took the name of Jeremiah for a title because the Letter of Jeremiah developed the venerable prophet's ideas (cf. Jer 10.2–16; 29) and because the ancient name lent credibility to the new work.

Structure and Language

The Letter of Jeremiah consists of ten warnings, all (except the last) ending in a refrain that the statues are not divine and therefore the people should not fear them, i.e., worship them (vv. 16, 23, 29, 40, 44, 52, 56, 65, 69). The author denies power to the statues and heaps ridicule upon them. There is little development of ideas, the unity of the work coming from the framework and unvarying perspective. The original language seems to have been Hebrew or Aramaic. The Greek occasionally reflects Semitic syntax, and several unclear passages can be plausibly corrected by postulating an original Semitic word or construction. A small fragment in Greek (vv. 43–44) was found in Cave 7 at Qumran.
Richard J. Clifford

6 [a] A copy of a letter that Jeremiah sent to those who were to be taken to Babylon as exiles by the king of the Babylonians, to give them the message that God had commanded him.

The People Face a Long Captivity

2 Because of the sins that you have committed before God, you will be taken to Babylon as exiles by Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Babylonians. 3 Therefore when you have come to Babylon you will remain there for many years, for a long time, up to seven generations; after that I will bring you away from there in peace. 4 Now in Babylon you will see gods made of silver and gold and wood, which people carry on their shoulders, and which cause the heathen to fear. 5 So beware of becoming at all like the foreigners or of letting fear for these gods[b] possess you 6 when

a The King James Version (like the Latin Vulgate) prints The Letter of Jeremiah as Chapter 6 of the Book of Baruch, and the chapter and verse numbers are here retained. In the Greek Septuagint, the Letter is separated from Baruch by the Book of Lamentations. b Gk *for them*

1–7 Historical context and theme. **1** The setting is probably the deportation of 597 B.C.E. (2 Kings 24.10–17) since the letter in Jer 29.1–23 was addressed to the *exiles* of that deportation. **3** If *up to seven generations* is taken literally, reckoning forty years to the generation as in the wilderness period this yields 317 B.C.E. as the possible date of composition. More likely, however, the phrase expands Jeremiah's projection of seventy years (Jer 25.12; 29.10) or three generations of Babylonian rulers (Jer 27.7) in the manner of Dan 9.24, "seventy weeks (of years)." *After that . . . in peace.* Idols are a temporary trial of exile; there will be no more idols when the exiles return home. **4–7** The theme of the Letter is the central affirmation of the Bible: "you shall have no other gods before me" (Ex 20.3; Deut 5.7) and "The LORD is our God, the LORD alone"

you see the multitude before and behind them worshiping them. But say in your heart, "It is you, O Lord, whom we must worship." 7 For my angel is with you, and he is watching over your lives.

The Helplessness of Idols

8 Their tongues are smoothed by the carpenter, and they themselves are overlaid with gold and silver; but they are false and cannot speak. 9 People[c] take gold and make crowns for the heads of their gods, as they might for a girl who loves ornaments. 10 Sometimes the priests secretly take gold and silver from their gods and spend it on themselves, 11 or even give some of it to the prostitutes on the terrace. They deck their gods[d] out with garments like human beings—these gods of silver and gold and wood 12 that cannot save themselves from rust and corrosion. When they have been dressed in purple robes, 13 their faces are wiped because of the dust from the temple, which is thick upon them. 14 One of them holds a scepter, like a district judge, but is unable to destroy anyone who offends it. 15 Another has a dagger in its right hand, and an ax, but cannot defend itself from war and robbers. 16 From this it is evident that they are not gods; so do not fear them.

17 For just as someone's dish is useless when it is broken, 18 so are their gods when they have been set up in the temples. Their eyes are full of the dust raised by the feet of those who enter. And just as the gates are shut on every side against anyone who has offended a king, as though under sentence of death, so the priests make their temples secure with doors and locks and bars, in order that they may not be plundered by robbers. 19 They light more lamps for them than they light for themselves, though their gods[e] can see none of them. 20 They are[f] just like a beam of the temple, but their hearts, it is said, are eaten away when crawling creatures from the earth devour them and their robes. They do not notice 21 when their faces have been blackened by the smoke of the temple. 22 Bats, swallows, and birds alight on their bodies and heads; and so do cats. 23 From this you will know that they are not gods; so do not fear them.

24 As for the gold that they wear for beauty—it[g] will not shine unless someone wipes off the tarnish; for even when they were being cast, they did not feel it. 25 They are bought without regard to cost, but there is no breath in them. 26 Having no feet, they are carried on the shoulders of others, revealing to humankind their worthlessness. And those who serve them are put to shame 27 because, if any of these gods falls[h] to the ground, they themselves must pick it up. If anyone sets it upright, it cannot move itself; and if it is tipped over, it cannot straighten itself. Gifts are placed before them just as before the dead. 28 The priests sell the sacrifices that are offered to these gods[i] and use the money themselves. Likewise their wives preserve some of the meat[j] with salt, but give none to the poor or helpless. 29 Sacrifices to them may even be touched by women in their periods or at childbirth. Since you know by these things that they are not gods, do not fear them.

30 For how can they be called gods?

c Gk *They* *d* Gk *them* *e* Gk *they* *f* Gk *It is* *g* Lat Syr: Gk *they* *h* Gk *if they fall* *i* Gk *to them* *j* Gk *of them*

(Deut 6.4). **7** *My angel* in some early biblical texts expressed God's very presence and power (Gen 16.7; Ex 23.23), but here it is a heavenly figure to whom God has entrusted the people's welfare.

8–16 Though made of gold and silver, the statues cannot act or move. **9–10** The statues' authority, denoted by *crowns,* cannot prevent their own priests from plundering their gold. **12–13** *Purple robes* denote royal power, yet the gods cannot even keep their faces clean. **16** A variant of this statement concludes each section except the last. **17–23** The statues are useless and unseeing. **17** The *broken* dish is proverbial for uselessness (Jer 19.11; 22.28; Hos 8.8). **18** The gods are shut up within their temples like prisoners. **20** *Their hearts, it is said, are eaten away* is a difficult phrase, possibly "their minds [lit. hearts], so to speak, are destroyed by insects." **24–29** The statues are unfeeling and passive, and their food is plundered and ritually unclean. **25** *No breath in them.* Cf. Ps 135.17; Jer 10.14. **26** Cf. Isa 46.7. **27** The statues are as passive as *the dead.* **29** Women became ritually unclean *in their periods or at childbirth* (Lev 12.2–5; 15.19–30). **30–40a** The statues cannot do what is expected of gods. **30** As Judaism did not allow female priests, women's priestly service is

Women serve meals for gods of silver and
gold and wood; 31 and in their temples the
priests sit with their clothes torn, their
heads and beards shaved, and their heads
uncovered. 32 They howl and shout be-
fore their gods as some do at a funeral
banquet. 33 The priests take some of the
clothing of their gods[k] to clothe their
wives and children. 34 Whether one does
evil to them or good, they will not be able
to repay it. They cannot set up a king or
depose one. 35 Likewise they are not able
to give either wealth or money; if one
makes a vow to them and does not keep it,
they will not require it. 36 They cannot
save anyone from death or rescue the
weak from the strong. 37 They cannot re-
store sight to the blind; they cannot res-
cue one who is in distress. 38 They cannot
take pity on a widow or do good to an
orphan. 39 These things that are made of
wood and overlaid with gold and silver
are like stones from the mountain, and
those who serve them will be put to
shame. 40 Why then must anyone think
that they are gods, or call them gods?

The Foolishness of Worshiping Idols

Besides, even the Chaldeans themselves
dishonor them; for when they see some-
one who cannot speak, they bring Bel and
pray that the mute may speak, as though
Bel[l] were able to understand! 41 Yet they
themselves cannot perceive this and aban-
don them, for they have no sense. 42 And
the women, with cords around them, sit
along the passageways, burning bran for
incense. 43 When one of them is led off by
one of the passers-by and is taken to bed
by him, she derides the woman next to
her, because she was not as attractive as
herself and her cord was not broken.
44 Whatever is done for these idols[m] is
false. Why then must anyone think that
they are gods, or call them gods?

45 They are made by carpenters and
goldsmiths; they can be nothing but what
the artisans wish them to be. 46 Those who
make them will certainly not live very long
themselves; 47 how then can the things
that are made by them be gods? They
have left only lies and reproach for those
who come after. 48 For when war or ca-
lamity comes upon them, the priests con-
sult together as to where they can hide
themselves and their gods.[m] 49 How then
can one fail to see that these are not gods,
for they cannot save themselves from war
or calamity? 50 Since they are made of
wood and overlaid with gold and silver, it
will afterward be known that they are
false. 51 It will be manifest to all the na-
tions and kings that they are not gods but
the work of human hands, and that there
is no work of God in them. 52 Who then
can fail to know that they are not gods?[n]

53 For they cannot set up a king over
a country or give rain to people. 54 They
cannot judge their own cause or deliver
one who is wronged, for they have no
power; 55 they are like crows between
heaven and earth. When fire breaks out
in a temple of wooden gods overlaid with

k Gk *some of their clothing* *l* Gk *he* *m* Gk *them*
n Meaning of Gk uncertain

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taken as a sign of folly. Foolish too is food given to statues made of metal and wood. **31–32** Since Israel's God is not one of the dying and rising gods of the ancient Near East, ritual mourning is out of place. **33–34a** The gods are unable to prevent their own servants from plundering them (cf. v. 10). **34b–38** The acts of deliverance expected of a god they cannot do, but the true God of Israel can do all this (Deut 32.39; Pss 49.15; 146.8–9).

40b–44 The senseless behavior of the gods' servants: two examples. **40** The *Chaldeans* are either people of the Babylonian Empire or, more specifically, professional diviners. *Bel* is the Akkadian word for "lord," corresponding to Hebrew *Baal*, a title of Marduk, chief of the Babylonian pantheon. His priests, supposedly wise, pray to an unhearing god for the cure of a mute. **42–43** Women sponsored by the temple are engaged in sexual acts celebrating the fertility bestowed by the gods. The fifth-century B.C.E. Greek historian Herodotus described similar rituals (*History* 1.199). Since Israel's God did not create by procreation, human sexual activity played no role in its ritual. **45–56** The statues of the gods are made by mortals. **45** The statues represent human rather than divine will. **47** One generation was expected to hand on to *those who come after* the tradition of true worship (cf. Deut 6.7; Pss 48.13; 78.1–8), but the artisans hand on only shameful images. **50** The statues are only wooden cores *overlaid with gold and silver*; they will be unable to protect themselves from the ravages of war and time. **53–54** Among the tasks of gods in the ancient Near East were to establish kings, give fertility, and rescue the innocent poor, but these gods do nothing. **55** The difficult *crows* is sometimes corrected to "clouds" on the

gold or silver, their priests will flee and
escape, but the gods[o] will be burned up
like timbers. 56 Besides, they can offer no
resistance to king or enemy. Why then
must anyone admit or think that they
are gods?

57 Gods made of wood and overlaid
with silver and gold are unable to save
themselves from thieves or robbers.
58 Anyone who can will strip them of their
gold and silver and of the robes they
wear, and go off with this booty, and they
will not be able to help themselves. 59 So it
is better to be a king who shows his cour-
age, or a household utensil that serves its
owner's need, than to be these false gods;
better even the door of a house that pro-
tects its contents, than these false gods;
better also a wooden pillar in a palace,
than these false gods.

60 For sun and moon and stars are
bright, and when sent to do a service, they
are obedient. 61 So also the lightning,
when it flashes, is widely seen; and the
wind likewise blows in every land.
62 When God commands the clouds to go
over the whole world, they carry out his
command. 63 And the fire sent from
above to consume mountains and woods
does what it is ordered. But these idols[p]
are not to be compared with them in ap-
pearance or power. 64 Therefore one
must not think that they are gods, nor call
them gods, for they are not able either to
decide a case or to do good to anyone.
65 Since you know then that they are not
gods, do not fear them.

66 They can neither curse nor bless
kings; 67 they cannot show signs in the
heavens for the nations, or shine like the
sun or give light like the moon. 68 The
wild animals are better than they are, for
they can flee to shelter and help them-
selves. 69 So we have no evidence what-
ever that they are gods; therefore do not
fear them.

70 Like a scarecrow in a cucumber
bed, which guards nothing, so are their
gods of wood, overlaid with gold and sil-
ver. 71 In the same way, their gods of
wood, overlaid with gold and silver, are
like a thornbush in a garden on which ev-
ery bird perches; or like a corpse thrown
out in the darkness. 72 From the purple
and linen[q] that rot upon them you will
know that they are not gods; and they will
finally be consumed themselves, and be a
reproach in the land. 73 Better, therefore,
is someone upright who has no idols; such
a person will be far above reproach.

o Gk *they* *p* Gk *these things* *q* Cn: Gk *marble*, Syr *silk*

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basis of a similar Semitic word. The gods are as helpless as clouds before the winds. **57–65** The divine statues are helpless and useless, unfit images of the true God. **57–58** Cf. vv. 10, 28, 49, 56. **59** All things, noble and base, have their use but not the divine statues. **60–64** The true images of God are the heavenly luminaries and the storm, which convey a universal message of the one God. **60** The luminaries mark day and night and seasonal feasts (Gen 1.14–18). **61–63** Israel's God appeared in the storm (Ex 19.16–19; 1 Kings 18.44–45; Ps 29). **66–69** The gods are passive, mute, and more helpless than wild animals. **70–73** Final metaphors of contempt for the statues. True honor belongs to the *upright person* (v. 73).

THE PRAYER OF AZARIAH AND THE SONG OF THE THREE JEWS

THE GREEK AND LATIN VERSIONS of Daniel contain several additions that are not present in the Jewish and Protestant canons of the OT. These are collectively referred to as the Additions to Daniel and consist of the Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Jews, Susanna, and Bel and the Dragon.

The first of these, the Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Jews, is found inserted between Dan 3.23 and 3.24. Dan 3 recounts the story of Daniel's three companions who are thrown into a furnace by Nebuchadnezzar and survive unharmed. Although short prayers and doxologies are found in Daniel in the Hebrew Bible (2.20–23; 3.28; 4.3, 34–35, 37; 6.26–27), this addition is much longer, delaying the narrative considerably. It was a common practice in the editing of the OT to insert such poetic compositions into prose works (cf. 1 Sam 2; 2 Sam 22). This insertion falls into three parts: the Prayer of Azariah (vv. 1–22); a description of the furnace (vv. 23–27); and the Song of the Three Jews (vv. 28–68). The last section can also be divided further into vv. 28–34 and vv. 35–68, based on differences in the poetic arrangement. Although there is no evidence that the Prayer of Azariah or the Song of the Three Jews was used in Jewish liturgy, they were very popular among Christians and were included as numbers 7 and 8 in the section "Odes" in some manuscripts of the Greek Bible.

By form, the Prayer of Azariah is a national lament, similar to Pss 44; 74; 79; and 80, although the latter do not dwell as much on the speaker's confession of sin. The confession of sin was, however, a staple of the covenantal theology of the postexilic period (cf. Ezra 9.6–15; Neh 9.6–37; Dan 9.4–19; Bar 1.15–3.8).

The Song of the Three Jews was often divided in early Christian use at the same point where a division is suggested here, between vv. 34 and 35. In both parts this is a hymn of praise; the first part is similar to Pss 96 and 97 in its

themes, while the second is similar to Ps 148 in content and to Ps 136 in its use of a repeated, antiphonal refrain.

Dan 3 only hints at what is going on within the furnace (cf. Dan 3.25). This addition, probably inserted in the second or first century B.C.E. serves to record the prayers and blessings of the three men and to increase the sense of the miraculous by describing in detail how the angel is intervening. Readers thus enter more fully into the experience of the three pious and courageous Jews.
Lawrence Wills

(Additions to Daniel, inserted between 3.23 and 3.24)

The Prayer of Azariah in the Furnace

1 They[a] walked around in the midst of the flames, singing hymns to God and blessing the Lord. 2 Then Azariah stood still in the fire and prayed aloud:

3 "Blessed are you, O Lord, God of our ancestors, and worthy of praise;
and glorious is your name forever!
4 For you are just in all you have done;
all your works are true and your ways right,
and all your judgments are true.
5 You have executed true judgments in all you have brought upon us
and upon Jerusalem, the holy city of our ancestors;
by a true judgment you have brought all this upon us because of our sins.
6 For we have sinned and broken your law in turning away from you;
in all matters we have sinned grievously.
7 We have not obeyed your commandments,
we have not kept them or done what you have commanded us for our own good.
8 So all that you have brought upon us,
and all that you have done to us,
you have done by a true judgment.
9 You have handed us over to our enemies, lawless and hateful rebels,
and to an unjust king, the most wicked in all the world.
10 And now we cannot open our mouths;
we, your servants who worship you, have become a shame and a reproach.

a That is, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (Dan 2.17), the original names of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Dan 1.6-7)

1–22 The Prayer of Azariah. Elements of the older "national lament" psalms are combined here with the confession of sin as a step toward reestablishing a covenant with God. The tone of penitence is totally lacking in Dan 1–6, and the three Jews are apparently blameless before God; thus the prayer does not correspond to their circumstances but has been added to the book of Daniel to introduce another dimension of the religious life of Jews in the postexilic period. **2** Both the Hebrew names of the three men and their adopted Babylonian names are given in Dan 1.7, but only the Babylonian names are used in Dan 3, and only the Hebrew names in the addition (vv. 2, 66). **5–10** The confession of sin and the recognition that God's covenant has been broken, which has resulted in the fall of Jerusalem. **9** *An unjust king, the most wicked.* Although Jewish tradition would naturally hurl this sort of invective at Nebuchadnezzar for capturing Jerusalem and destroying the temple, Dan 1–4 presents a varied portrait of this king. Later Jewish tradition condemned Daniel's cooperation with Nebuchadnezzar, and this addition shares this negative view.

11 For your name's sake do not give
us up forever,
and do not annul your
covenant.
12 Do not withdraw your mercy
from us,
for the sake of Abraham your
beloved
and for the sake of your
servant Isaac
and Israel your holy one,
13 to whom you promised
to multiply their descendants
like the stars of heaven
and like the sand on the shore
of the sea.
14 For we, O Lord, have become
fewer than any other
nation,
and are brought low this day in
all the world because of our
sins.
15 In our day we have no ruler, or
prophet, or leader,
no burnt offering, or sacrifice,
or oblation, or incense,
no place to make an offering
before you and to find
mercy.
16 Yet with a contrite heart and a
humble spirit may we be
accepted,
17 as though it were with burnt
offerings of rams and bulls,
or with tens of thousands of fat
lambs;
such may our sacrifice be in
your sight today,
and may we unreservedly
follow you,[b]
for no shame will come to those
who trust in you.
18 And now with all our heart we
follow you;
we fear you and seek your
presence.
19 Do not put us to shame,
but deal with us in your
patience
and in your abundant mercy.
20 Deliver us in accordance with
your marvelous works,
and bring glory to your name,
O Lord.
21 Let all who do harm to your
servants be put to shame;
let them be disgraced and
deprived of all power,
and let their strength be
broken.
22 Let them know that you alone are
the Lord God,
glorious over the whole world."

The Song of the Three Jews

23 Now the king's servants who threw them in kept stoking the furnace with naphtha, pitch, tow, and brushwood. 24 And the flames poured out above the furnace forty-nine cubits, 25 and spread out and burned those Chaldeans who were caught near the furnace. 26 But the angel of the Lord came down into the furnace to be with Azariah and his companions, and drove the fiery flame out of the furnace, 27 and made the inside of the furnace as though a moist wind were whistling through it. The fire did not touch them at all and caused them no pain or distress.

28 Then the three with one voice praised and glorified and blessed God in the furnace:

29 "Blessed are you, O Lord, God of
our ancestors,
and to be praised and highly
exalted forever;
30 And blessed is your glorious, holy
name,
and to be highly praised and
highly exalted forever.

b Meaning of Gk uncertain

11–22 Appeal to God's mercy to reinstate the covenant. **12–13** God's covenant with *Abraham* is invoked (cf. Gen 15.1–6); *Isaac* and *Israel* (Jacob) are also included (Gen 22.15–18; Josh 24.3–4; Isa 41.8). **15** *No ruler . . . no place.* The temple and the government have fallen, which fits Daniel's situation, but it is possible that the lament may have been written about a later period.

23–27 Description of the furnace. **23** Highly flammable substances and kindling, *naphtha, pitch, tow, and brushwood,* are fed to the flames—mere wood will not do! The miraculous element is thus heightened in the addition and the story made more exciting by the inclusion of such details. **24** *Forty-nine cubits,* about 80 feet.

28–68 The Song of the Three Jews. **29–34** First song. A royal enthronement hymn that celebrates God's rule of the universe as king

31 Blessed are you in the temple of
your holy glory,
and to be extolled and highly
glorified forever.
32 Blessed are you who look into the
depths from your throne
on the cherubim,
and to be praised and highly
exalted forever.
33 Blessed are you on the throne of
your kingdom,
and to be extolled and highly
exalted forever.
34 Blessed are you in the firmament
of heaven,
and to be sung and glorified
forever.

35 "Bless the Lord, all you works of
the Lord;
sing praise to him and highly
exalt him forever.
36 Bless the Lord, you heavens;
sing praise to him and highly
exalt him forever.
37 Bless the Lord, you angels of the
Lord;
sing praise to him and highly
exalt him forever.
38 Bless the Lord, all you waters
above the heavens;
sing praise to him and highly
exalt him forever.
39 Bless the Lord, all you powers of
the Lord;
sing praise to him and highly
exalt him forever.
40 Bless the Lord, sun and moon;
sing praise to him and highly
exalt him forever.
41 Bless the Lord, stars of heaven;
sing praise to him and highly
exalt him forever.

42 "Bless the Lord, all rain and dew;
sing praise to him and highly
exalt him forever.
43 Bless the Lord, all you winds;
sing praise to him and highly
exalt him forever.
44 Bless the Lord, fire and heat;
sing praise to him and highly
exalt him forever.
45 Bless the Lord, winter cold and
summer heat;
sing praise to him and highly
exalt him forever.
46 Bless the Lord, dews and falling
snow;
sing praise to him and highly
exalt him forever.
47 Bless the Lord, nights and days;
sing praise to him and highly
exalt him forever.
48 Bless the Lord, light and
darkness;
sing praise to him and highly
exalt him forever.
49 Bless the Lord, ice and cold;
sing praise to him and highly
exalt him forever.
50 Bless the Lord, frosts and snows;
sing praise to him and highly
exalt him forever.
51 Bless the Lord, lightnings and
clouds;
sing praise to him and highly
exalt him forever.

52 "Let the earth bless the Lord;
let it sing praise to him and
highly exalt him forever.
53 Bless the Lord, mountains and
hills;
sing praise to him and highly
exalt him forever.
54 Bless the Lord, all that grows in
the ground;
sing praise to him and highly
exalt him forever.
55 Bless the Lord, seas and rivers;
sing praise to him and highly
exalt him forever.
56 Bless the Lord, you springs;

(cf. Pss 96; 97). **31** Some of the images seem to presuppose a standing *temple* and ongoing worship (cf. Azariah's prayer, v. 15) but are directly referring only to a heavenly temple. **32** The *cherubim* are mythical creatures on which God rides in heaven; they were represented in the temple (cf. 1 Sam 4.4; 1 Kings 6.23–28). **35–68** Second song. Praise is elicited from all of God's creation, beginning with the highest cosmological phenomena and the angels (vv. 36–41), descending through the elements of the atmosphere (vv. 42–51), to the earth and the creatures on it (vv. 52–59), and ending with worshipers of God (vv. 60–68; cf. Ps 148). Whereas the first song addresses God directly and utilizes many similar-sounding phrases to increase its poetic beauty, here the universe itself is summoned to give praise, and the second line of each verse is not only similar, but identical, likely an antiphonal

sing praise to him and highly
exalt him forever.
57 Bless the Lord, you whales and
all that swim in the waters;
sing praise to him and highly
exalt him forever.
58 Bless the Lord, all birds of
the air;
sing praise to him and highly
exalt him forever.
59 Bless the Lord, all wild animals
and cattle;
sing praise to him and highly
exalt him forever.

60 "Bless the Lord, all people on
earth;
sing praise to him and highly
exalt him forever.
61 Bless the Lord, O Israel;
sing praise to him and highly
exalt him forever.
62 Bless the Lord, you priests of the
Lord;
sing praise to him and highly
exalt him forever.
63 Bless the Lord, you servants of
the Lord;
sing praise to him and highly
exalt him forever.
64 Bless the Lord, spirits and souls
of the righteous;
sing praise to him and highly
exalt him forever.
65 Bless the Lord, you who are holy
and humble in heart;
sing praise to him and highly
exalt him forever.

66 "Bless the Lord, Hananiah,
Azariah, and Mishael;
sing praise to him and highly
exalt him forever.
For he has rescued us from
Hades and saved us from
the power[c] of death,
and delivered us from the
midst of the burning fiery
furnace;
from the midst of the fire he
has delivered us.
67 Give thanks to the Lord, for he is
good,
for his mercy endures forever.
68 All who worship the Lord, bless
the God of gods,
sing praise to him and give
thanks to him,
for his mercy endures forever."

c Gk *hand*

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community response to the first line (cf. Ps 136). The two songs probably both existed separately before being inserted here. **66** *Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael,* probably an addition to the hymn here, since in this verse the orderly structure is disrupted.

SUSANNA

(CHAPTER 13 OF THE GREEK VERSION OF DANIEL)

MANY STORIES AND VISIONS concerning Daniel, similar to the ones now contained in the OT book, circulated in ancient Judaism in the Second Temple period; fragments of some of these have been found at Qumran. Susanna and Bel and the Dragon are two such entertaining short stories that probably circulated independently and were later inserted into the book of Daniel, Susanna appearing either after Dan 12 or before Dan 1 to introduce the young Daniel. The purpose for adding these two stories to the previously existing book was perhaps to bring it more in line with the novelistic literature of the period such as Tobit, Judith, and Esther (especially with its Greek additions).

Susanna and Bel and the Dragon are best read as edifying fictions; no real historical account is intended in either case. They are examples of a commonplace in Jewish literature, the persecution and vindication of the righteous hero or heroine (cf. Gen 37–50; Esther; Dan 3; 6; Wis 2–5). Susanna differs from Dan 1–6 and Bel and the Dragon (as well as Gen 37–50 and Esther) in that the action does not take place in the highest court in the land, but in the local, self-governing Jewish court.

Traditional folk motifs, such as the upright woman who is falsely accused of being promiscuous and the young boy who steps forward to render a just verdict, are reflected in the story. Susanna is also one of the first detective stories of world literature, or better, one of the first "courtroom dramas." It cannot be dated precisely but was probably composed between the third and first centuries B.C.E. The Greek version translated here is attributed to Theodotion; the Septuagint version is quite different in a number of places (see note on v. 32).
Lawrence Wills

Susanna's Beauty Attracts Two Elders

1 There was a man living in Babylon
whose name was Joakim. 2 He married the
daughter of Hilkiah, named Susanna, a
very beautiful woman and one who feared
the Lord. 3 Her parents were righteous,
and had trained their daughter according
to the law of Moses. 4 Joakim was very
rich, and had a fine garden adjoining his
house; the Jews used to come to him
because he was the most honored of
them all.

5 That year two elders from the people were appointed as judges. Concerning them the Lord had said: "Wickedness came forth from Babylon, from elders who were judges, who were supposed to govern the people." 6 These men were frequently at Joakim's house, and all who had a case to be tried came to them there.

7 When the people left at noon, Susanna would go into her husband's garden to walk. 8 Every day the two elders used to see her, going in and walking about, and they began to lust for her. 9 They suppressed their consciences and turned away their eyes from looking to Heaven or remembering their duty to administer justice. 10 Both were overwhelmed with passion for her, but they did not tell each other of their distress, 11 for they were ashamed to disclose their lustful desire to seduce her. 12 Day after day they watched eagerly to see her.

13 One day they said to each other, "Let us go home, for it is time for lunch." So they both left and parted from each other. 14 But turning back, they met again; and when each pressed the other for the reason, they confessed their lust. Then together they arranged for a time when they could find her alone.

The Elders Attempt to Seduce Susanna

15 Once, while they were watching for an opportune day, she went in as before with only two maids, and wished to bathe in the garden, for it was a hot day. 16 No one was there except the two elders, who had hidden themselves and were watching her. 17 She said to her maids, "Bring me olive oil and ointments, and shut the garden doors so that I can bathe." 18 They did as she told them: they shut the doors of the garden and went out by the side doors to bring what they had been commanded; they did not see the elders, because they were hiding.

19 When the maids had gone out, the two elders got up and ran to her. 20 They said, "Look, the garden doors are shut, and no one can see us. We are burning with desire for you; so give your consent, and lie with us. 21 If you refuse, we will testify against you that a young man was with you, and this was why you sent your maids away."

22 Susanna groaned and said, "I am completely trapped. For if I do this, it will mean death for me; if I do not, I cannot escape your hands. 23 I choose not to do it; I will fall into your hands, rather than sin in the sight of the Lord."

24 Then Susanna cried out with a loud voice, and the two elders shouted against her. 25 And one of them ran and opened the garden doors. 26 When the people in the house heard the shouting in the garden, they rushed in at the side door to see what had happened to her. 27 And when the elders told their story,

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1–14 Calm setting of the story and introduction of a threat to Susanna. **1** Since the story introduces the young man Daniel, the time must be during the exile. It is difficult to imagine Jews living lives of such genteel wealth during the exile in *Babylon*, but cf. Jer 29.4–7 and, from a much later period, 2 Esd 3.2. This story may reflect the actual social conditions of some Jews of a later century. *Joakim*, in Hebrew means "the Lord will establish." This figure is not to be identified either with the Joakim of Jdt 4.6; 15.8, or with Jehoiachin in 2 Kings 24.15. **2** *Hilkiah*, in Hebrew "the Lord is my portion," a common priestly name. *Susanna*, in Hebrew "lily." *A very beautiful woman . . . the Lord.* Cf. Tob 6.12; Jdt 8.7–8; Esth 2.7, 20 (according to the Greek translation). **5** The quotation is unknown, but cf. Jer 23.14–15; 29.20–23.

15–27 The attempted seduction of Susanna. **17** *Olive oil* was used as a cosmetic and sometimes perfumed with myrrh to make a fragrant *ointment*; cf. Esth 2.12; Ps 104.15. **21** *Was with you* is here a euphemism for sexual intercourse; merely being alone with a young man would not warrant death (cf. v. 37). **22** According to Mosaic law, the punishment for adultery was *death* (Lev 20.10; Deut 22.22). **23** *I choose not to do it.* Central to many such Jewish stories is a moment of decision; cf. Gen 39.9.

the servants felt very much ashamed, for nothing like this had ever been said about Susanna.

The Elders Testify Against Susanna

28 The next day, when the people gathered at the house of her husband Joakim, the two elders came, full of their wicked plot to have Susanna put to death. In the presence of the people they said, 29"Send for Susanna daughter of Hilkiah, the wife of Joakim." 30So they sent for her. And she came with her parents, her children, and all her relatives.

31 Now Susanna was a woman of great refinement and beautiful in appearance. 32As she was veiled, the scoundrels ordered her to be unveiled, so that they might feast their eyes on her beauty. 33Those who were with her and all who saw her were weeping.

34 Then the two elders stood up before the people and laid their hands on her head. 35Through her tears she looked up toward Heaven, for her heart trusted in the Lord. 36The elders said, "While we were walking in the garden alone, this woman came in with two maids, shut the garden doors, and dismissed the maids. 37Then a young man, who was hiding there, came to her and lay with her. 38We were in a corner of the garden, and when we saw this wickedness we ran to them. 39Although we saw them embracing, we could not hold the man, because he was stronger than we, and he opened the doors and got away. 40We did, however, seize this woman and asked who the young man was, 41but she would not tell us. These things we testify."

Because they were elders of the people and judges, the assembly believed them and condemned her to death.

42 Then Susanna cried out with a loud voice, and said, "O eternal God, you know what is secret and are aware of all things before they come to be; 43you know that these men have given false evidence against me. And now I am to die, though I have done none of the wicked things that they have charged against me!"

44 The Lord heard her cry. 45Just as she was being led off to execution, God stirred up the holy spirit of a young lad named Daniel, 46and he shouted with a loud voice, "I want no part in shedding this woman's blood!"

Daniel Rescues Susanna

47 All the people turned to him and asked, "What is this you are saying?" 48Taking his stand among them he said, "Are you such fools, O Israelites, as to condemn a daughter of Israel without examination and without learning the facts? 49Return to court, for these men have given false evidence against her."

50 So all the people hurried back. And the rest of the[a] elders said to him, "Come, sit among us and inform us, for God has given you the standing of an elder." 51Daniel said to them, "Separate them far from each other, and I will examine them."

52 When they were separated from each other, he summoned one of them and said to him, "You old relic of wicked days, your sins have now come home, which you have committed in the past, 53pronouncing unjust judgments, con-

a Gk lacks *rest of the*

28–46 The trial of Susanna. **32** The narrative presumes that a woman of position would be *veiled* in public; unveiling her face would violate her modesty. In the Septuagint version of Susanna, however, she is evidently stripped and exposed to the gaze of the crowd, a ritual punishment for adulterous women attested in Jewish law. Cf. Ezek 16.37–39; Hos 2.3–10; *Mishnah Sota* 1.5–6. **34** The gesture of laying *hands on the head* was used in various solemn rituals (cf. Gen 48.14; Lev 16.21; Num 8.10), but here it signifies the witnesses' role in testifying to a capital offense before the community carries out the execution (cf. Lev 24.14). **35** *Heaven*, i.e., God. **42–43** Susanna, who has trusted in the Lord (v. 35), testifies on her own behalf before God as a higher judge. She accuses the elders of bearing false witness, a violation of Jewish law (Deut 19.16–21). Her prayer for intercession, though quite short, is similar to the prayers of Jdt 9.2–14; Add Esth 14.3–19. **44–46** God as judge hears her testimony and inspires Daniel to come to her defense as a legal advocate. Whether the *holy spirit* here is the spirit of prophecy or more to be associated with wisdom is unclear (cf. Dan 4.8, 18; 5.11–12; 6.3).

47–64 Vindication of Susanna. **48** Cross-examination of the two witnesses has been wrongly omitted (Deut 19.15–20). **53** See Ex 23.7.

demning the innocent and acquitting the
guilty, though the Lord said, 'You shall
not put an innocent and righteous person
to death.' 54 Now then, if you really saw
this woman, tell me this: Under what tree
did you see them being intimate with each
other?" He answered, "Under a mastic
tree."[b] 55 And Daniel said, "Very well!
This lie has cost you your head, for the
angel of God has received the sentence
from God and will immediately cut[b] you
in two."

56 Then, putting him to one side, he
ordered them to bring the other. And he
said to him, "You offspring of Canaan
and not of Judah, beauty has beguiled
you and lust has perverted your heart.
57 This is how you have been treating the
daughters of Israel, and they were inti-
mate with you through fear; but a daugh-
ter of Judah would not tolerate your
wickedness. 58 Now then, tell me: Under
what tree did you catch them being inti-
mate with each other?" He answered,
"Under an evergreen oak."[c] 59 Daniel
said to him, "Very well! This lie has cost
you also your head, for the angel of God
is waiting with his sword to split[c] you in
two, so as to destroy you both."

60 Then the whole assembly raised a
great shout and blessed God, who saves
those who hope in him. 61 And they took
action against the two elders, because out
of their own mouths Daniel had convicted
them of bearing false witness; they did to
them as they had wickedly planned to do
to their neighbor. 62 Acting in accordance
with the law of Moses, they put them to
death. Thus innocent blood was spared
that day.

63 Hilkiah and his wife praised God
for their daughter Susanna, and so did
her husband Joakim and all her relatives,
because she was found innocent of a
shameful deed. 64 And from that day on-
ward Daniel had a great reputation
among the people.

b The Greek words for *mastic tree* and *cut* are similar, thus forming an ironic wordplay
c The Greek words for *evergreen oak* and *split* are similar, thus forming an ironic wordplay

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56 The wicked elder is associated with the sexual sins of *Canaan* (Gen 9.20–27; Lev 18.24–28). **57** *Daughters of Israel, daughter of Judah.* Jews traced their descent through southern Judahites, not northern Israelites. **61–62** The punishment for bearing false witness is the same as the one that would have been applied to the charge falsely brought, or in this case, *death.*

BEL AND THE DRAGON

(CHAPTER 14 OF THE GREEK VERSION OF DANIEL)

BEL AND THE DRAGON is found at the end of the book of Daniel in the Greek version as another story of Daniel's experiences in the great royal courts of the ancient Near East. The two parts of Bel and the Dragon (vv. 1–22; 23–42) are composed of narratives that depict the folly of revering idols and may have circulated independently. During the postexilic period, when Jews regularly encountered those who worshiped representations of various kinds, the theme of the parody of idols was developed into a literary commonplace (Pss 115.4–8; 135.15–18; Isa 40.18–20; 44.9–20; 46.6–7; Jer 10.3–9; Hab 2.18–19; Wis 13.1–15.17; Letter of Jeremiah). The entertaining motifs that begin Bel and the Dragon are given a more dramatic turn, however; the angry Babylonians force the king to throw Daniel into the lions' den. Daniel's fall from a position of honor and the threat to his life, together with his vindication and restoration at the end, are similar in plot outline to Dan 3 and 6 and also to Susanna, Gen 37–50, and Esther (see Introduction to Susanna).

Although Dan 6 and Bel and the Dragon evidently share a common history (the method of execution in both is to be thrown into a den of lions), it is unclear which is closer to the original narrative. Bel and the Dragon is more fantastic and miraculous than Dan 6—perhaps even whimsical—but in two details Bel and the Dragon is more realistic: the succession of kings here is correct ("Darius the Mede" of Dan 5.31; 6.28 is unhistorical), and the use of the signet ring here is more logical and integrated into the narrative (cf. Dan 6.17).

Bel and the Dragon, like Susanna, was probably composed between the third and first centuries B.C.E. *Lawrence Wills*

Daniel and the Priests of Bel

1 When King Astyages was laid to rest
with his ancestors, Cyrus the Persian succeeded to his kingdom. 2 Daniel was a
companion of the king, and was the most
honored of all his Friends.

3 Now the Babylonians had an idol
called Bel, and every day they provided
for it twelve bushels of choice flour and
forty sheep and six measures[a] of wine.
4 The king revered it and went every day
to worship it. But Daniel worshiped his
own God.

So the king said to him, "Why do you
not worship Bel?" 5 He answered, "Because I do not revere idols made with
hands, but the living God, who created
heaven and earth and has dominion over
all living creatures."

6 The king said to him, "Do you not
think that Bel is a living god? Do you not
see how much he eats and drinks every
day?" 7 And Daniel laughed, and said, "Do
not be deceived, O king, for this thing is
only clay inside and bronze outside, and it
never ate or drank anything."

8 Then the king was angry and called
the priests of Bel[b] and said to them, "If
you do not tell me who is eating these provisions, you shall die. 9 But if you prove
that Bel is eating them, Daniel shall die,
because he has spoken blasphemy against
Bel." Daniel said to the king, "Let it be
done as you have said."

10 Now there were seventy priests of
Bel, besides their wives and children. So
the king went with Daniel into the temple
of Bel. 11 The priests of Bel said, "See, we
are now going outside; you yourself,
O king, set out the food and prepare the
wine, and shut the door and seal it with
your signet. 12 When you return in the
morning, if you do not find that Bel has
eaten it all, we will die; otherwise Daniel
will, who is telling lies about us." 13 They
were unconcerned, for beneath the table
they had made a hidden entrance,
through which they used to go in regularly and consume the provisions. 14 After
they had gone out, the king set out the
food for Bel. Then Daniel ordered his
servants to bring ashes, and they scattered
them throughout the whole temple in the
presence of the king alone. Then they
went out, shut the door and sealed it with
the king's signet, and departed. 15 During
the night the priests came as usual, with
their wives and children, and they ate and
drank everything.

16 Early in the morning the king rose
and came, and Daniel with him. 17 The
king said, "Are the seals unbroken, Daniel?" He answered, "They are unbroken,
O king." 18 As soon as the doors were
opened, the king looked at the table, and
shouted in a loud voice, "You are great,
O Bel, and in you there is no deceit
at all!"

19 But Daniel laughed and restrained
the king from going in. "Look at the

a A little more than fifty gallons b Gk *his priests*

1–22 Daniel uncovers the deceit of the priests of Bel. **1** *King Astyages* ruled the Medes from 585 to 550 B.C.E.; according to Herodotus (*History* 1.130), *Cyrus the Persian* took the kingdom of Astyages by force. In Dan 5.31; 6.28 Cyrus succeeds the unknown "Darius the Mede." **2** *Friends* here is a designation for those who held favored positions in the court; cf. Gen 26.26; 1 Kings 4.5; Jn 19.12. **3** When Cyrus captured Babylon in 539 B.C.E., the *Babylonians*, like the Jews, became a subject people whose interests—and deities—would be seen by Jews as competing with theirs. *Bel*, or Baal, was identified with the main Babylonian deity Marduk (Merodach); cf. Isa 46.1; Jer 50.2. Herodotus (*History* 1.183) provides a secondhand description of the idol of Bel in Babylon, a "figure of a man" 18 feet tall made of solid gold (cf. v. 7). According to inscriptions, Nebuchadnezzar supplied large quantities of food and drink to the god. **4** Cyrus claimed in an inscription to have been ordained by Bel to rule over Babylon. **5** *Idols made with hands*, a negative phrase that came into use in the postexilic period; cf. Jdt 8.18; Mk 14.58; Acts 7.48; Heb 9.11. *The living God*, who truly exists apart from all representations; cf. Deut 5.26; Jer 10.10; Acts 14.15; 1 Thess 1.9. **6** Cyrus ironically applies the lofty idea of a "living god" to a god who gorges on vast quantities of food and wine, like a living being. Irony of various kinds can be found in the Bible (cf. Judg 5.28–30; Tob 5.3–21; Jdt 11.5–6), but what is ironic here (as in v. 24) is that lofty theological ideas are misconstrued as referring to the mundane level (cf. Jn 3.3–4; 4.10–15). **7** *Clay inside and bronze outside*. Cf. Isa 40.18–19. **18** The king ironically utters the cry *in you there is no deceit* just after readers are fully informed of the deceit involved (vv. 13, 15). **19a** Daniel's boldness with

floor," he said, "and notice whose footprints these are." 20 The king said, "I see the footprints of men and women and children."

21 Then the king was enraged, and he arrested the priests and their wives and children. They showed him the secret doors through which they used to enter to consume what was on the table. 22 Therefore the king put them to death, and gave Bel over to Daniel, who destroyed it and its temple.

Daniel Kills the Dragon

23 Now in that place[c] there was a great dragon, which the Babylonians revered. 24 The king said to Daniel, "You cannot deny that this is a living god; so worship him." 25 Daniel said, "I worship the Lord my God, for he is the living God. 26 But give me permission, O king, and I will kill the dragon without sword or club." The king said, "I give you permission."

27 Then Daniel took pitch, fat, and hair, and boiled them together and made cakes, which he fed to the dragon. The dragon ate them, and burst open. Then Daniel said, "See what you have been worshiping!"

28 When the Babylonians heard about it, they were very indignant and conspired against the king, saying, "The king has become a Jew; he has destroyed Bel, and killed the dragon, and slaughtered the priests." 29 Going to the king, they said, "Hand Daniel over to us, or else we will kill you and your household." 30 The king saw that they were pressing him hard, and under compulsion he handed Daniel over to them.

Daniel in the Lions' Den

31 They threw Daniel into the lions' den, and he was there for six days. 32 There were seven lions in the den, and every day they had been given two human bodies and two sheep; but now they were given nothing, so that they would devour Daniel.

33 Now the prophet Habakkuk was in Judea; he had made a stew and had broken bread into a bowl, and was going into the field to take it to the reapers. 34 But the angel of the Lord said to Habakkuk, "Take the food that you have to Babylon, to Daniel, in the lions' den." 35 Habakkuk said, "Sir, I have never seen Babylon, and I know nothing about the den." 36 Then the angel of the Lord took him by the crown of his head and carried him by his hair; with the speed of the wind[d] he set him down in Babylon, right over the den.

37 Then Habakkuk shouted, "Daniel, Daniel! Take the food that God has sent you." 38 Daniel said, "You have remembered me, O God, and have not forsaken those who love you." 39 So Daniel got up and ate. And the angel of God immediately returned Habakkuk to his own place.

c Other ancient authorities lack *in that place*
d Or *by the power of his spirit*

Cyrus (cf. v. 14) is paralleled by the king's surprising sympathy for Daniel (vv. 30, 40). **22** A morally balanced punishment for the villains, typical of folk narrative: the priests are *put to death* (with their families) in accord with their previous agreement (vv. 8–9), and by the same means of execution they had intended for Daniel.

23–30 Daniel cleverly kills the dragon. **23** *Great dragon.* In early OT passages a serpent is sometimes associated with Mosaic practice, but it was later excluded in Israel (Num 21.6–9; 2 Kings 18.4). A mythological serpent or chaos-monster was said by the Babylonians to be destroyed by Bel/Marduk, and serpents appear elsewhere in ancient Near Eastern mythology (cf. Job 7.12; Ps 74.13–14; Isa 27.1). It is not clear whether it is the worship of a living snake that is being parodied here or the mythological battle of Bel and the chaos-monster reduced to a humorous scale. **24** Once again Cyrus looks for evidence of *a living god* on a mundane level (cf. v. 6). **27** *Pitch, fat, and hair* are not magical ingredients, but everyday substances. The absurdity of the story should not detract from its enjoyment; with suspension of disbelief, readers can accept that this clever concoction will swell up in the dragon's stomach and burst it open. The idol parody theme in postexilic literature looked to a naturalistic exposé of idolatry (see Introduction). **30** Cyrus is portrayed very favorably; it is the Babylonians who force the king's hand, so that he acts only *under compulsion.* Cyrus's actual authority over the Babylonians would have been absolute.

31–42 Daniel is thrown into the lions' den and survives unharmed. **33** *The prophet Habak-*

40 On the seventh day the king came
to mourn for Daniel. When he came to
the den he looked in, and there sat Dan-
iel! 41 The king shouted with a loud voice,
"You are great, O Lord, the God of Dan-
iel, and there is no other besides you!"
42 Then he pulled Daniel[e] out, and threw
into the den those who had attempted his
destruction, and they were instantly eaten
before his eyes.

e Gk *him*

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kuk is abruptly introduced to heighten the miraculous; vv. 33–39 may be an interpolation. **40** Daniel is in the lions' den for *seven days*, a holy number in Judaism. **41** Cf. Dan 3.28; 4.3, 34–35, 37; 6.26–27.

1 MACCABEES

Historical Setting

THE DEFEAT OF THE PERSIAN EMPIRE by Alexander the Great brought a change of political masters to the land of Israel. At Alexander's death in 323 B.C.E. there was much confusion and struggle among his generals, friends, and heirs. But by about 300 B.C.E. the political situation of the Near East became clear. Judea found itself between two powerful dynasties—the Seleucids in the north (Syria) and the Ptolemies to the south (Egypt). From 300 to 200 B.C.E. Judea was controlled by the Ptolemies. After defeating the Ptolemies, Antiochus III brought the Jews of Palestine into the Seleucid Empire in 198 B.C.E. His successor Seleucus IV (187–175 B.C.E.) was replaced by Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–164 B.C.E.).

Contents

The first book of Maccabees tells the story of the revolt begun by the Jewish priest Mattathias and carried on by his five sons and grandson. The family is known both as the Maccabees (from the nickname given to Judas; see 2.4) and as the Hasmoneans (perhaps from Mattathias's grandfather Simeon; see 2.1).

Covering the period from Antiochus IV to 134 B.C.E., 1 Maccabees shows how the God of Israel used this family to remove foreign political and cultural oppression and how the Jewish high-priesthood came to reside in this family. After describing the crisis caused by Antiochus IV and his Jewish supporters (ch. 1) and the resistance begun by Mattathias (ch. 2), it narrates the exploits of Judas Maccabeus (3.1–9.22), his brothers Jonathan (9.23–12.53) and Simon (13.1–15.41), and Simon's son John (16.1–24). The book portrays the Maccabees as God's instruments in bringing about Jewish independence: "the family of those men through whom deliverance was given to Israel" (5.62).

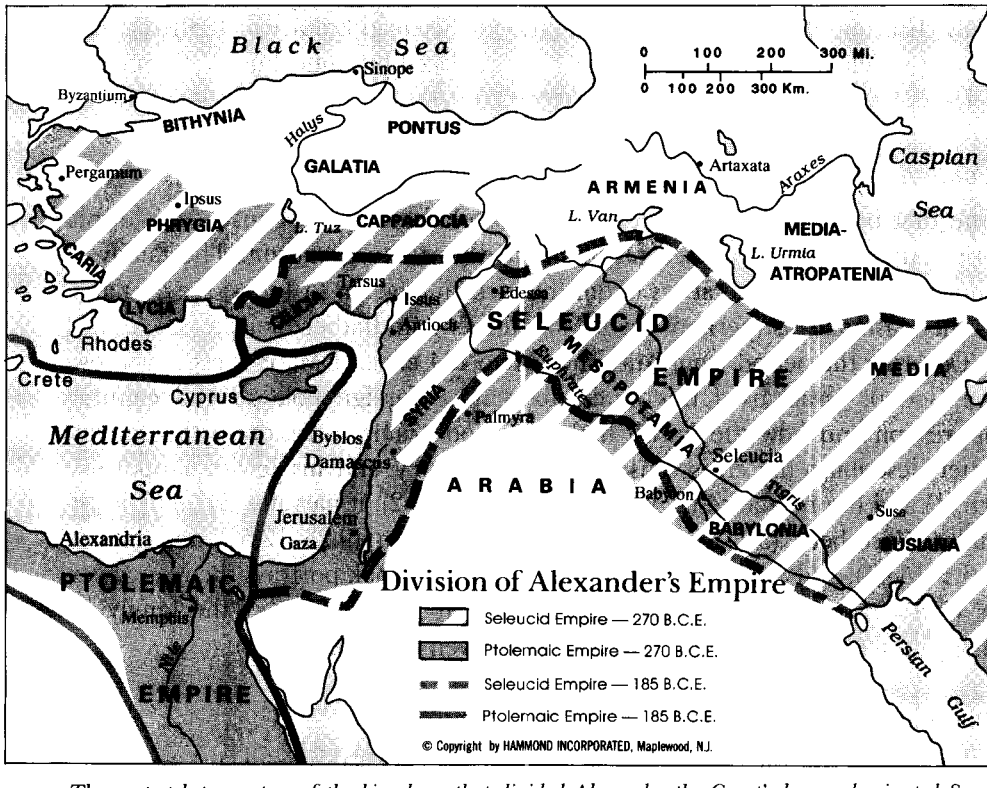
Relation to Other Works

The text of 1 Maccabees is in Greek and is part of the Septuagint. It is generally assumed that the work was composed in Hebrew (now lost) and translated into

a "biblical" or "Semitic" Greek. In its style and language it is similar to the Greek versions of the early historical books (1–2 Samuel, 1–2 Kings).

The book ends with the accession of Simon's son John Hyrcanus to the high-priesthood in 134 B.C.E. Its Hebrew original was probably composed during the reign of John Hyrcanus (134–104 B.C.E.) or in the early first century B.C.E. The author, who is unknown, was surely a supporter of the Maccabean dynasty. The book undoubtedly served as "propaganda" for the Maccabean dynasty (whose legitimacy was suspect in some Jewish circles).

1 Maccabees incorporates the texts of some "official" documents (8.23–32; 10.18–20; 10.25–45; 11.30–37; 11.57; 12.5–23; 13.36–40). The authenticity of these documents has long been debated, though current scholarship supports them at least in their basic content. Some of the battle reports (3.27–4.24; 6.18–63; 9.1–22) may depend on the eyewitness accounts of a participant, though in many such passages the numbers are inflated. A common source may underlie the accounts about Judas in 1 Macc 1–7 and 2 Macc 3–15. The poems, speeches, and prayers throughout the book are best interpreted as free compositions by the author (in accordance with the practices of ancient historians).

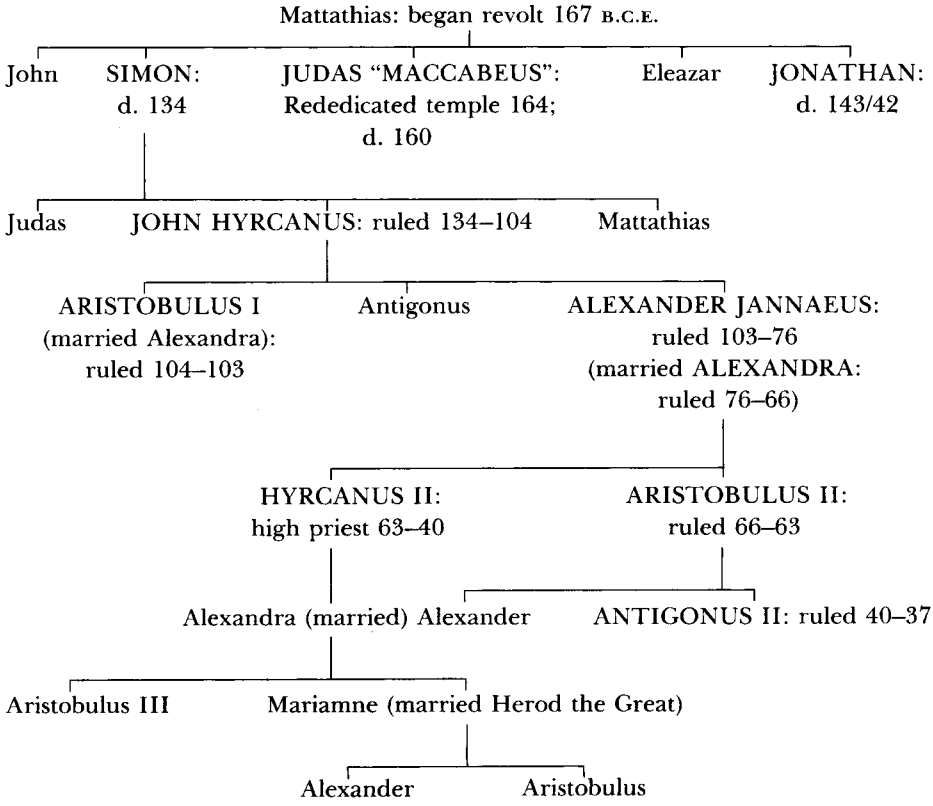


The contest between two of the kingdoms that divided Alexander the Great's legacy dominated Syro-Palestine in the third and early second centuries B.C.E. Ascendancy of the Seleucids set the stage for the struggle recounted in 1 and 2 Maccabees.

The three generations of the Maccabee family constitute the focus of 1 Maccabees. The author of Daniel, writing shortly before the death of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, looked for imminent divine intervention to defeat Israel's enemies and to establish God's kingdom. 2 Maccabees stresses Judas's role as the savior of the Jerusalem temple. 1 Maccabees, however, presents the Maccabean dynasty as bringing about Israel's salvation and emphasizes its leaders' military and political exploits as well as their religious stance. Those in the community responsible for the Dead Sea Scrolls (found at Qumran) may well have been early supporters of the Maccabean movement but fell away when the Maccabees took control of the high-priesthood and the temple worship.

In its literary style and evocations of biblical precedents, 1 Maccabees shows how the words and deeds of the Maccabean dynasty stand in line with those of earlier biblical heroes. It presents the Maccabees as examples of this-worldly activism and as champions of religious freedom and national independence. It allows readers to follow the course of a revolutionary movement over the period

THE MACCABEES: A FAMILY TREE



Leaders'/Rulers' names are in capital letters.

of more than thirty years. It is considered deuterocanonical by Catholics and Orthodox, apocryphal by Protestants, and noncanonical by Jews (though the origin of the Jewish feast of Hanukkah is described in 4.36–59).
Daniel J. Harrington

Alexander the Great

1 After Alexander son of Philip, the Macedonian, who came from the land of Kittim, had defeated[a] King Darius of the Persians and the Medes, he succeeded him as king. (He had previously become king of Greece.) 2 He fought many battles, conquered strongholds, and put to death the kings of the earth. 3 He advanced to the ends of the earth, and plundered many nations. When the earth became quiet before him, he was exalted, and his heart was lifted up. 4 He gathered a very strong army and ruled over countries, nations, and princes, and they became tributary to him.

5 After this he fell sick and perceived that he was dying. 6 So he summoned his most honored officers, who had been brought up with him from youth, and divided his kingdom among them while he was still alive. 7 And after Alexander had reigned twelve years, he died.

8 Then his officers began to rule, each in his own place. 9 They all put on crowns after his death, and so did their descendants after them for many years; and they caused many evils on the earth.

Antiochus Epiphanes and Renegade Jews

10 From them came forth a sinful root, Antiochus Epiphanes, son of King Antiochus; he had been a hostage in Rome. He began to reign in the one hundred thirty-seventh year of the kingdom of the Greeks.[b]

11 In those days certain renegades came out from Israel and misled many, saying, "Let us go and make a covenant with the Gentiles around us, for since we separated from them many disasters have come upon us." 12 This proposal pleased them, 13 and some of the people eagerly went to the king, who authorized them to observe the ordinances of the Gentiles.

a Gk adds *and he defeated* b 175 B.C.

1.1–9 A summary of events from 336 to 175 B.C.E. sets the scene for the appearance of Antiochus IV Epiphanes in 1.10. **1.1** *Alexander* the Great replaced his father, Philip II, on the latter's assassination (336 B.C.E.), set out from Macedonia (here called *the land of Kittim*, originally a name for Cyprus in Gen 10.4; 1 Chr 1.7), and defeated the armies of Darius III Codomannus between 334 and 331 B.C.E. **1.3** For the rise of Alexander, see Dan 2.33, 40; 7.23; 8.5–8, 21; 11.3. The descriptions of him (*exalted ... lifted up*) suggest an arrogance anticipating Antiochus IV Epiphanes. **1.6** The division of Alexander's empire was not really settled until 305 B.C.E. The idealized scene of his handing on power reflects the propaganda of the successors. **1.7** After ruling for somewhat more than *twelve years* (336–323 B.C.E.), Alexander died in Babylon in June 323 at the age of thirty-two or thirty-three. **1.9** The Ptolemies (Egypt) controlled Judea until 198 B.C.E. when the Seleucids (Syria) under Antiochus III took over. The whole period is dismissed as a time of *many evils* (cf. 2 Macc 3.23).

1.10–15 The accession of Antiochus IV led certain Jews to approach him with a proposal making them less distinctive and more integrated into the Seleucid Empire (see 1 Macc 1.41–64). For a much more detailed account, see 2 Macc 4.7–50. **1.10** The Seleucid king *Antiochus* IV *Epiphanes* (175–164 B.C.E.), taken to Rome under the treaty of Apamea (188 B.C.E.) as a penalty on his father, Antiochus III, replaced his brother Seleucus IV (187–175). The name Epiphanes ("illustrious, [god] manifest") was parodied as Epimanes ("madman"). The *kingdom of the Greeks* is counted from the establishment of the Seleucid reign in Babylon (312/311 B.C.E.). **1.11** According to 2 Macc 4.7–17 the chief of the Jewish *renegades* was Jason, brother of the high priest Onias III and later high priest himself from 175 to 172 B.C.E. **1.14** The *gymnasium* was a place not only for physical exercise but also for literary

14 So they built a gymnasium in Jerusalem, according to Gentile custom, 15 and removed the marks of circumcision, and abandoned the holy covenant. They joined with the Gentiles and sold themselves to do evil.

Antiochus in Egypt

16 When Antiochus saw that his kingdom was established, he determined to become king of the land of Egypt, in order that he might reign over both kingdoms. 17 So he invaded Egypt with a strong force, with chariots and elephants and cavalry and with a large fleet. 18 He engaged King Ptolemy of Egypt in battle, and Ptolemy turned and fled before him, and many were wounded and fell. 19 They captured the fortified cities in the land of Egypt, and he plundered the land of Egypt.

Persecution of the Jews

20 After subduing Egypt, Antiochus returned in the one hundred forty-third year.[c] He went up against Israel and came to Jerusalem with a strong force. 21 He arrogantly entered the sanctuary and took the golden altar, the lampstand for the light, and all its utensils. 22 He took also the table for the bread of the Presence, the cups for drink offerings, the bowls, the golden censers, the curtain, the crowns, and the gold decoration on the front of the temple; he stripped it all off. 23 He took the silver and the gold, and the costly vessels; he took also the hidden treasures that he found. 24 Taking them all, he went into his own land.

He shed much blood,
and spoke with great
arrogance.

c 169 B.C.

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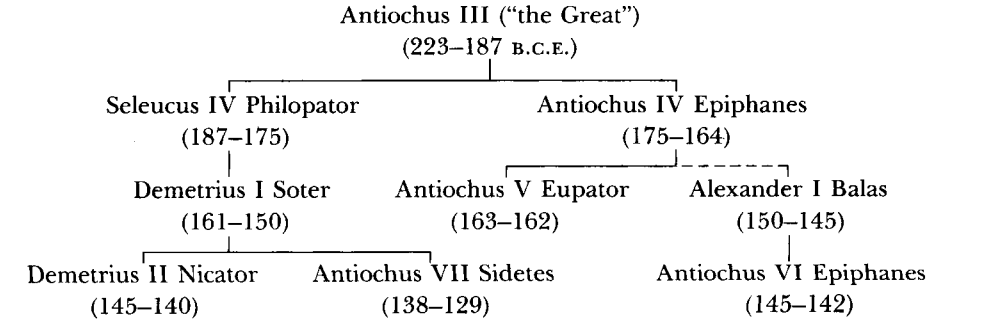
and philosophical education, thus an institution of Greek culture. **1.15** The surgical correction of *the marks of circumcision* (epispasm) may relate to the Greek practice of nudity in physical exercise and sports. Instead of the *holy covenant* (Torah) the renegades sought a constitution appropriate to a Greek city-state.

1.16–19 Antiochus's military action in Egypt in 169 B.C.E. leads to his robbery of the Jerusalem temple. See 2 Macc 5.1–21. **1.16** In response to a Ptolemaic threat in 170 B.C.E. Antiochus invaded *Egypt* and achieved great success (see Dan 11.25–27), though he failed to capture Alexandria. **1.18** *Ptolemy* VI Philometor, the nephew of Antiochus, remained ruler in Egypt from 180 to 145 B.C.E.

1.20–28 Like other ancient temples, the Jerusalem temple held sacred vessels and served as a bank (see 2 Macc 3.10–11). To pay his mercenaries and probably to exact what had been promised by the high priest Menelaus (2 Macc 5.15), Antiochus followed the example of Antiochus III (who died robbing a temple) and Seleucus IV (2 Macc 3). **1.21** For the furnishings and sacred vessels of the *sanctuary*, see 1 Kings 6.23–36; Ex 39.32–40.11. Whereas 2 Macc 5.11–21 places the robbery after Antiochus's second Egyptian campaign, Dan 11.28 agrees with 1 Maccabees in

A FAMILY TREE OF SELEUCID RULERS
IN THE MACCABEAN PERIOD



---- represents claim of sonship

25 Israel mourned deeply in every community,
26 rulers and elders groaned,
young women and young men became faint,
the beauty of the women faded.
27 Every bridegroom took up the lament;
she who sat in the bridal chamber was mourning.
28 Even the land trembled for its inhabitants,
and all the house of Jacob was clothed with shame.

The Occupation of Jerusalem

29 Two years later the king sent to the cities of Judah a chief collector of tribute, and he came to Jerusalem with a large force. 30 Deceitfully he spoke peaceable words to them, and they believed him; but he suddenly fell upon the city, dealt it a severe blow, and destroyed many people of Israel. 31 He plundered the city, burned it with fire, and tore down its houses and its surrounding walls. 32 They took captive the women and children, and seized the livestock. 33 Then they fortified the city of David with a great strong wall and strong towers, and it became their citadel. 34 They stationed there a sinful people, men who were renegades. These strengthened their position; 35 they stored up arms and food, and collecting the spoils of Jerusalem they stored them there, and became a great menace,
36 for the citadel[d] became an ambush against the sanctuary,
an evil adversary of Israel at all times.
37 On every side of the sanctuary they shed innocent blood;
they even defiled the sanctuary.
38 Because of them the residents of Jerusalem fled;
she became a dwelling of strangers;
she became strange to her offspring,
and her children forsook her.
39 Her sanctuary became desolate like a desert;
her feasts were turned into mourning,
her sabbaths into a reproach,
her honor into contempt.
40 Her dishonor now grew as great as her glory;
her exaltation was turned into mourning.

Installation of Gentile Cults

41 Then the king wrote to his whole kingdom that all should be one people, 42 and that all should give up their particular customs. 43 All the Gentiles accepted the command of the king. Many even from Israel gladly adopted his religion; they sacrificed to idols and profaned the sabbath. 44 And the king sent letters by messengers to Jerusalem and the towns of Judah; he directed them to follow customs strange to the land, 45 to forbid burnt offerings and sacrifices and drink offerings in the sanctuary, to profane sabbaths and festivals, 46 to defile the sanctu-

d Gk *it*

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placing it after the first Egyptian campaign. **1.25–28** For other laments over Jerusalem, see 1 Macc 1.36–40; 2.7–13; 3.45.

1.29–40 The second Syrian attack against Jerusalem (in 167 B.C.E.) resulted in the establishment of a Syrian garrison (Akra) there. See 2 Macc 5.22–26. **1.29** In 2 Macc 5.24 he is named Apollonius, the "captain of the Mysians" (mercenaries from northwest Asia Minor). The Greek translator read Hebrew *sar hammusim* ("chief of the Mysians") as *sar hammissim* (*chief collector of tribute*). **1.33** The *citadel* (Akra) served as the garrison for foreign troops and renegade Jews. Though its precise location is debated, it overlooked the temple area, probably to the northwest. It fell to Simon in 141 B.C.E. (1 Macc 13.49–50).

1.41–64 The religious and cultural program sponsored by Antiochus IV and his Jewish supporters threatened the distinctiveness of the Jewish people. See 2 Macc 6.1–11. **1.41** No non-Jewish evidence supports the claim that Antiochus IV imposed this policy on *his whole kingdom*; it seems to have been confined to Jerusalem and Judah (1.44). **1.43** *His religion* was the cult of Ba'al Shamen ("Lord of the Heavens"). It was probably understood by him as equivalent to the Jewish worship of their God (the Most High God), but it was not viewed as such by some in Israel. **1.44** His introduction of *customs strange to the land* included prohibition of temple worship, observance of sabbaths and holy days, circumcision, and Torah observance—precisely those features that made Jews distinctive. His program won

ary and the priests, 47 to build altars and
sacred precincts and shrines for idols, to
sacrifice swine and other unclean animals,
48 and to leave their sons uncircumcised.
They were to make themselves abomina-
ble by everything unclean and profane,
49 so that they would forget the law and
change all the ordinances. 50 He added,[e]
"And whoever does not obey the com-
mand of the king shall die."

51 In such words he wrote to his
whole kingdom. He appointed inspectors
over all the people and commanded the
towns of Judah to offer sacrifice, town by
town. 52 Many of the people, everyone
who forsook the law, joined them, and
they did evil in the land; 53 they drove Is-
rael into hiding in every place of refuge
they had.

54 Now on the fifteenth day of Chis-
lev, in the one hundred forty-fifth year,[f]
they erected a desolating sacrilege on the
altar of burnt offering. They also built
altars in the surrounding towns of Judah,
55 and offered incense at the doors of the
houses and in the streets. 56 The books of
the law that they found they tore to pieces
and burned with fire. 57 Anyone found
possessing the book of the covenant, or
anyone who adhered to the law, was con-
demned to death by decree of the king.
58 They kept using violence against Israel,
against those who were found month af-
ter month in the towns. 59 On the twenty-
fifth day of the month they offered
sacrifice on the altar that was on top of the
altar of burnt offering. 60 According to
the decree, they put to death the women
who had their children circumcised,
61 and their families and those who cir-
cumcised them; and they hung the infants
from their mothers' necks.

62 But many in Israel stood firm and
were resolved in their hearts not to eat
unclean food. 63 They chose to die rather
than to be defiled by food or to profane
the holy covenant; and they did die.
64 Very great wrath came upon Israel.

Mattathias and His Sons

2 In those days Mattathias son of John
son of Simeon, a priest of the family
of Joarib, moved from Jerusalem and set-
tled in Modein. 2 He had five sons, John
surnamed Gaddi, 3 Simon called Thassi,
4 Judas called Maccabeus, 5 Eleazar called
Avaran, and Jonathan called Apphus.
6 He saw the blasphemies being commit-
ted in Judah and Jerusalem, 7 and said,

"Alas! Why was I born to see this,
the ruin of my people, the ruin
of the holy city,
and to live there when it was
given over to the enemy,
the sanctuary given over to
aliens?
8 Her temple has become like a
person without honor;[g]
9 her glorious vessels have been
carried into exile.
Her infants have been killed in
her streets,
her youths by the sword of
the foe.
10 What nation has not inherited
her palaces[h]
and has not seized her spoils?
11 All her adornment has been
taken away;

e Gk lacks *He added* f 167 B.C. g Meaning of Gk uncertain h Other ancient authorities read *has not had a part in her kingdom*

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some Jewish support (1.43, 52). **1.53** Only those who resisted deserved the name *Israel* according to the author of 1 Maccabees. For the fate of some Jews in *hiding*, see 1 Macc 2.29–38; 2 Macc 6.11. **1.54** The *fifteenth day of Chislev* would be around the middle of December. The *desolating sacrilege* from Dan 11.31 (Hebrew *shiggutz meshomem*, lit. "abomination that makes desolate") reflects a pun on the name "Lord of Heaven" (Ba'al Shamen; see note on 1.43); see Mt 24.15; Mk 13.14. **1.56** The *books of the law* (Torah) were no longer to serve as the constitution for Israel (see 1 Macc 1.15). **1.59** The *twenty-fifth day of the month* (December 167 B.C.E.) coincided with the monthly celebration of Antiochus IV's birthday (see 2 Macc 6.7). **1.63** For those who *chose to die*, see 1 Macc 2.29–38; 2 Macc 6.18–7.42.

2.1–14 The main characters in the book are introduced: Mattathias (ch. 2), Judas (chs. 3–8), Jonathan (chs. 9–12), and Simon (chs. 13–16). **2.1** From the priestly family of *Joarib* (1 Chr 9.10; 24.7), *Mattathias* lived in *Modein* (seven miles east of Lydda, seventeen miles northwest of Jerusalem); he may have been there either for a short time (because of recent events in Jerusalem) or for a long time before 167 B.C.E. (see 2.70; 9.19). **2.2–5** The surnames of the five sons remain mysterious, though *Maccabeus* most likely means "Hammerer." **2.7–13** The language of the lament echoes certain Psalms (44, 74, 79) and

no longer free, she has become
a slave.
12 And see, our holy place, our
beauty,
and our glory have been laid
waste;
the Gentiles have profaned them.
13 Why should we live any
longer?"
14 Then Mattathias and his sons tore their clothes, put on sackcloth, and mourned greatly.

Pagan Worship Refused

15 The king's officers who were enforcing the apostasy came to the town of Modein to make them offer sacrifice. 16 Many from Israel came to them; and Mattathias and his sons were assembled. 17 Then the king's officers spoke to Mattathias as follows: "You are a leader, honored and great in this town, and supported by sons and brothers. 18 Now be the first to come and do what the king commands, as all the Gentiles and the people of Judah and those that are left in Jerusalem have done. Then you and your sons will be numbered among the Friends of the king, and you and your sons will be honored with silver and gold and many gifts."

19 But Mattathias answered and said in a loud voice: "Even if all the nations that live under the rule of the king obey him, and have chosen to obey his commandments, everyone of them abandoning the religion of their ancestors, 20 I and my sons and my brothers will continue to live by the covenant of our ancestors. 21 Far be it from us to desert the law and the ordinances. 22 We will not obey the king's words by turning aside from our religion to the right hand or to the left."

23 When he had finished speaking these words, a Jew came forward in the sight of all to offer sacrifice on the altar in Modein, according to the king's command. 24 When Mattathias saw it, he burned with zeal and his heart was stirred. He gave vent to righteous anger; he ran and killed him on the altar. 25 At the same time he killed the king's officer who was forcing them to sacrifice, and he tore down the altar. 26 Thus he burned with zeal for the law, just as Phinehas did against Zimri son of Salu.

27 Then Mattathias cried out in the town with a loud voice, saying: "Let every one who is zealous for the law and supports the covenant come out with me!" 28 Then he and his sons fled to the hills and left all that they had in the town.

29 At that time many who were seeking righteousness and justice went down to the wilderness to live there, 30 they, their sons, their wives, and their livestock, because troubles pressed heavily upon them. 31 And it was reported to the king's officers, and to the troops in Jerusalem the city of David, that those who had rejected the king's command had gone down to the hiding places in the wilderness. 32 Many pursued them, and overtook them; they encamped opposite them and prepared for battle against them on the sabbath day. 33 They said to them, "Enough of this! Come out and do what the king commands, and you will live." 34 But they said, "We will not come out, nor will we do what the king commands and so profane the sabbath day." 35 Then the enemy[i] quickly attacked them. 36 But they did not answer them or hurl a stone

i Gk *they*

Lamentations. **2.14** For the signs of *mourning*, see Gen 37.29, 34.

2.15–41 The revolt begins with Mattathias's refusal to participate in what he perceived as pagan worship. His zealous, military resistance is contrasted with the fate of a group that refused to fight back on the sabbath. **2.18** The rank of *Friends of the king* carried the privileges of members of the royal court (see 1 Macc 10.65; 11.27). **2.26** In Num 25.6–15, *Phinehas*, the grandson of Aaron, showed his *zeal* by killing an Israelite man and a Midianite woman involved in the cult of Baal of Peor, thus stopping a plague. Celebrated for his zeal for God's covenant and worship (Ps 106.28–31; Sir 45.23–24), Phinehas provided a model for Mattathias (1 Macc 2.54). **2.28** The *hills* were most likely in the district of Gophna, northeast of Modein and bordering on Samaria. But 2 Macc 5.27 (which says nothing of the Modein incident) suggests the Judean desert. **2.29** The group is described in terms (*seeking righteousness and justice*) used somewhat later about the Qumran community. The Judean *wilderness* was a traditional place of refuge (see 1 Sam 23.14). **2.34** The group died because they refused to obey the king's decree to *profane the sabbath day*. They may have refused to fight defensive wars as part of their strict code of piety, thus inviting

at them or block up their hiding places,
37 for they said, "Let us all die in our innocence; heaven and earth testify for us that you are killing us unjustly." 38 So they attacked them on the sabbath, and they died, with their wives and children and livestock, to the number of a thousand persons.

39 When Mattathias and his friends learned of it, they mourned for them deeply. 40 And all said to their neighbors: "If we all do as our kindred have done and refuse to fight with the Gentiles for our lives and for our ordinances, they will quickly destroy us from the earth." 41 So they made this decision that day: "Let us fight against anyone who comes to attack us on the sabbath day; let us not all die as our kindred died in their hiding places."

Counter-Attack

42 Then there united with them a company of Hasideans, mighty warriors of Israel, all who offered themselves willingly for the law. 43 And all who became fugitives to escape their troubles joined them and reinforced them. 44 They organized an army, and struck down sinners in their anger and renegades in their wrath; the survivors fled to the Gentiles for safety. 45 And Mattathias and his friends went around and tore down the altars; 46 they forcibly circumcised all the uncircumcised boys that they found within the borders of Israel. 47 They hunted down the arrogant, and the work prospered in their hands. 48 They rescued the law out of the hands of the Gentiles and kings, and they never let the sinner gain the upper hand.

The Last Words of Mattathias

49 Now the days drew near for Mattathias to die, and he said to his sons: "Arrogance and scorn have now become strong; it is a time of ruin and furious anger. 50 Now, my children, show zeal for the law, and give your lives for the covenant of our ancestors.

51 "Remember the deeds of the ancestors, which they did in their generations; and you will receive great honor and an everlasting name. 52 Was not Abraham found faithful when tested, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness? 53 Joseph in the time of his distress kept the commandment, and became lord of Egypt. 54 Phinehas our ancestor, because he was deeply zealous, received the covenant of everlasting priesthood. 55 Joshua, because he fulfilled the command, became a judge in Israel. 56 Caleb, because he testified in the assembly, received an inheritance in the land. 57 David, because he was merciful, inherited the throne of the kingdom forever. 58 Elijah, because of great zeal for the law, was taken up into heaven. 59 Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael believed and were saved from the flame. 60 Daniel, because of his innocence, was delivered from the mouth of the lions.

61 "And so observe, from generation to generation, that none of those who put their trust in him will lack strength. 62 Do not fear the words of sinners, for their splendor will turn into dung and worms. 63 Today they will be exalted, but tomorrow they will not be found, because they will have returned to the dust, and their plans will have perished. 64 My children,

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martyrdom in this case. See 2 Macc 6.11. **2.41** The decision to engage in defensive warfare on the *sabbath* was not necessarily a complete innovation in Israel; the problem surely had arisen previously.

2.42–48 The rebellion begun by Mattathias and his sons attracted Jewish support, especially that of the Hasideans. **2.42** Unlike the group described in 2.29–38, the *Hasideans* ("pious, loyal ones") joined the military action with the Maccabees. See 1 Macc 7.12–13, which suggests a scribal aspect to their movement and a rift with the Maccabees. In 2 Macc 14.6 Judas appears as the leader of the Hasideans. **2.48** Seeking to *rescue the law*, the rebels attacked not only Gentiles but also Jews (*sinners* and *renegades*, 2.44). Their goal was to do away with the program described in 1.41–50 and to reestablish their traditional Judaism.

2.49–70 As he faces death in 166 B.C.E. (2.70) Mattathias gives a farewell speech as did Jacob (Gen 49), Moses (Deut 33), and Samuel (1 Sam 12). He appeals to biblical characters who underwent testing and were rewarded by God: Abraham (Gen 22), Joseph (Gen 39–45), Phinehas (Num 25), Joshua (Josh 1), Caleb (Num 13), David (2 Sam 7), Elijah (1 Kings 18; 2 Kings 2), and Daniel and his three companions (Dan 1–6). Their rewards—priesthood, rulership, deliverance from danger, land—foreshadow the gains to be made by Judas, Jonathan, and Simon. **2.62** For *dung and worms* as the sinner's fate, see the description of Antiochus IV's death in 2 Macc

be courageous and grow strong in the law,
for by it you will gain honor.
65 "Here is your brother Simeon who,
I know, is wise in counsel; always listen to
him; he shall be your father. 66 Judas Mac-
cabeus has been a mighty warrior from
his youth; he shall command the army for
you and fight the battle against the peo-
ples.[j] 67 You shall rally around you all
who observe the law, and avenge the
wrong done to your people. 68 Pay back
the Gentiles in full, and obey the com-
mands of the law."
69 Then he blessed them, and was
gathered to his ancestors. 70 He died in
the one hundred forty-sixth year[k] and
was buried in the tomb of his ancestors at
Modein. And all Israel mourned for him
with great lamentation.

The Early Victories of Judas

3 Then his son Judas, who was called
Maccabeus, took command in his
place. 2 All his brothers and all who had
joined his father helped him; they gladly
fought for Israel.

3 He extended the glory of his
people.
Like a giant he put on his
breastplate;
he bound on his armor of war
and waged battles,
protecting the camp by his
sword.
4 He was like a lion in his deeds,
like a lion's cub roaring for
prey.
5 He searched out and pursued
those who broke the law;
he burned those who troubled
his people.
6 Lawbreakers shrank back for fear
of him;
all the evildoers were
confounded;
and deliverance prospered by
his hand.
7 He embittered many kings,
but he made Jacob glad by his
deeds,
and his memory is blessed
forever.
8 He went through the cities of
Judah;
he destroyed the ungodly out
of the land;[l]
thus he turned away wrath
from Israel.
9 He was renowned to the ends of
the earth;
he gathered in those who were
perishing.

10 Apollonius now gathered together
Gentiles and a large force from Samaria
to fight against Israel. 11 When Judas
learned of it, he went out to meet him,
and he defeated and killed him. Many
were wounded and fell, and the rest fled.
12 Then they seized their spoils; and Judas
took the sword of Apollonius, and used it
in battle the rest of his life.
13 When Seron, the commander of
the Syrian army, heard that Judas had
gathered a large company, including a
body of faithful soldiers who stayed with
him and went out to battle, 14 he said, "I
will make a name for myself and win
honor in the kingdom. I will make war on
Judas and his companions, who scorn the
king's command." 15 Once again a strong
army of godless men went up with him
to help him, to take vengeance on the
Israelites.
16 When he approached the ascent of
Beth-horon, Judas went out to meet him

j Or *of the people* *k* 166 B.C. *l* Gk *it*

9.5–10, 28. **2.65** This is the only place where the text calls Simon *Simeon*. Though the older son (see 2.3), Simon exercised leadership only after Judas and Jonathan died.

3.1–26 A poem (3.3–9) summarizing the exploits of Judas celebrates him as the legitimate leader of Israel (3.2) and the enemy of both renegade Jews and foreign kings. His first battles end in dramatic victories over Apollonius (3.10–12) and Seron (3.13–26). **3.7** The *many kings* include Antiochus IV and Antiochus V as well as Demetrius I. **3.9** The *ends of the earth* extend at least to Rome (see 1 Macc 8). **3.10** *Apollonius* was the military commander and governor of Samaria. Whether his force included Samaritan Jews is uncertain. **3.12** Judas used the *sword of Apollonius* just as David used the sword of Goliath (1 Sam 17.51; 21.8–9). **3.13** To call Seron *the commander of the Syrian army* probably exaggerates his rank and importance. **3.15** The *godless men* included renegade Jews. Judas and his army constitute the *Israelites*, according to the author. **3.16** The *ascent of Beth-horon* was on the main road from the west to Jerusalem. About twelve miles northwest of Jerusalem travelers went through a narrow pass between Lower and Upper

with a small company. 17 But when they
saw the army coming to meet them, they
said to Judas, "How can we, few as we are,
fight against so great and so strong a mul-
titude? And we are faint, for we have
eaten nothing today." 18 Judas replied, "It
is easy for many to be hemmed in by few,
for in the sight of Heaven there is no dif-
ference between saving by many or by
few. 19 It is not on the size of the army that
victory in battle depends, but strength
comes from Heaven. 20 They come
against us in great insolence and lawless-
ness to destroy us and our wives and our
children, and to despoil us; 21 but we fight
for our lives and our laws. 22 He himself
will crush them before us; as for you, do
not be afraid of them."

23 When he finished speaking, he
rushed suddenly against Seron and his
army, and they were crushed before him.
24 They pursued them[m] down the descent
of Beth-horon to the plain; eight hundred
of them fell, and the rest fled into the
land of the Philistines. 25 Then Judas and
his brothers began to be feared, and ter-
ror fell on the Gentiles all around them.
26 His fame reached the king, and the
Gentiles talked of the battles of Judas.

The Policy of Antiochus

27 When King Antiochus heard these
reports, he was greatly angered; and he
sent and gathered all the forces of his
kingdom, a very strong army. 28 He
opened his coffers and gave a year's pay
to his forces, and ordered them to be
ready for any need. 29 Then he saw that
the money in the treasury was exhausted,
and that the revenues from the country
were small because of the dissension and
disaster that he had caused in the land by
abolishing the laws that had existed from
the earliest days. 30 He feared that he
might not have such funds as he had be-
fore for his expenses and for the gifts that
he used to give more lavishly than preced-
ing kings. 31 He was greatly perplexed in
mind; then he determined to go to Persia
and collect the revenues from those re-
gions and raise a large fund.

32 He left Lysias, a distinguished man
of royal lineage, in charge of the king's
affairs from the river Euphrates to the
borders of Egypt. 33 Lysias was also to take
care of his son Antiochus until he re-
turned. 34 And he turned over to Lysias[n]
half of his forces and the elephants, and
gave him orders about all that he wanted
done. As for the residents of Judea and
Jerusalem, 35 Lysias was to send a force
against them to wipe out and destroy the
strength of Israel and the remnant of Je-
rusalem; he was to banish the memory of
them from the place, 36 settle aliens in all
their territory, and distribute their land
by lot. 37 Then the king took the remain-
ing half of his forces and left Antioch his
capital in the one hundred and forty-
seventh year.[o] He crossed the Euphra-
tes river and went through the upper
provinces.

m Other ancient authorities read *him* *n* Gk *him*
o 165 B.C.

Beth-horon, which made the ambush by Judas and his army relatively easy. **3.18–19** A portion of Judas's speech before battle echoes that of Jonathan in 1 Sam 14.6. Instead of the names "Lord" or "God," 1 Maccabees uses *Heaven* or personal pronouns (see 3.22). **3.24** The estimate of *eight hundred* slain is modest compared with the figures for other battles. The *land of the Philistines* refers to the hellenized cities in the southern coastal plain.

3.27–37 The importance of the Jewish rebellion is deliberately exaggerated to give the impression that it was determining all the policies of Antiochus IV. In fact he had to deal with other rebellions and incursions in the eastern part of his empire. **3.28** The *year's pay* refers not only to the subsistence allowance but also to the wages paid to mercenaries and regular troops. This unusual arrangement emphasizes the importance of the situation. **3.30** The Roman historian Polybius and other ancient sources confirm that Antiochus IV was lavish in giving *gifts*. **3.31** *Persia* refers to the entire territory of historical Persia, not simply the eastern province of Persis. Antiochus IV died while plundering a temple in Elam, according to Roman historians Polybius (*The Histories* 31.9) and Appian (*Roman History* 11.66). **3.32** Prominent in the later battles at Beth-zur and Beth-zechariah (4.26–35; 6.28–63), *Lysias* held the highest title of Seleucid nobility ("kinsman of the king"). He became overseer in the western part of Antiochus IV's empire and the guardian of Antiochus V (then about seven or eight years old). **3.34** The Greek text gives the impression that all the *elephants* remained with Lysias (see 3.37). **3.37** *Antioch* on the Orontes in Syria had been built by Seleucus I in 300 B.C.E. and served as the western capital.

Preparations for Battle

38 Lysias chose Ptolemy son of Dorymenes, and Nicanor and Gorgias, able men among the Friends of the king, 39 and sent with them forty thousand infantry and seven thousand cavalry to go into the land of Judah and destroy it, as the king had commanded. 40 So they set out with their entire force, and when they arrived they encamped near Emmaus in the plain. 41 When the traders of the region heard what was said to them, they took silver and gold in immense amounts, and fetters,[p] and went to the camp to get the Israelites for slaves. And forces from Syria and the land of the Philistines joined with them.

42 Now Judas and his brothers saw that misfortunes had increased and that the forces were encamped in their territory. They also learned what the king had commanded to do to the people to cause their final destruction. 43 But they said to one another, "Let us restore the ruins of our people, and fight for our people and the sanctuary." 44 So the congregation assembled to be ready for battle, and to pray and ask for mercy and compassion.

45 Jerusalem was uninhabited like a wilderness;
not one of her children went in or out.
The sanctuary was trampled down,
and aliens held the citadel;
it was a lodging place for the Gentiles.
Joy was taken from Jacob;
the flute and the harp ceased to play.

46 Then they gathered together and went to Mizpah, opposite Jerusalem, because Israel formerly had a place of prayer in Mizpah. 47 They fasted that day, put on sackcloth and sprinkled ashes on their heads, and tore their clothes. 48 And they opened the book of the law to inquire into those matters about which the Gentiles consulted the likenesses of their gods. 49 They also brought the vestments of the priesthood and the first fruits and the tithes, and they stirred up the nazirites[q] who had completed their days; 50 and they cried aloud to Heaven, saying,

"What shall we do with these?
Where shall we take them?
51 Your sanctuary is trampled down and profaned,
and your priests mourn in humiliation.
52 Here the Gentiles are assembled against us to destroy us;
you know what they plot against us.
53 How will we be able to withstand them,
if you do not help us?"

54 Then they sounded the trumpets and gave a loud shout. 55 After this Judas appointed leaders of the people, in charge of thousands and hundreds and fifties and tens. 56 Those who were building houses, or were about to be married, or were planting a vineyard, or were faint-hearted, he told to go home again, ac-

p Syr: Gk Mss, Vg *slaves* q That is *those separated* or *those consecrated*

3.38–60 The rallying point for the Jews is the defiled sanctuary in Jerusalem. Judas takes care to evoke biblical precedents and to observe biblical regulations for battle. See 2 Macc 8.9–23. **3.38** According to 2 Macc 8.8–9 *Gorgias* was a deputy to *Nicanor*, and *Ptolemy* was superior to Nicanor and ordered him and Gorgias into battle. **3.39** According to 2 Macc 8.9 there were at least twenty thousand, not *forty thousand*. Both figures are most likely exaggerated, perhaps on the basis of 1 Chr 18.4; 19.18. **3.40** The Seleucid army camped in the plain near *Emmaus*, about twenty miles west-northwest of Jerusalem. Their encampment attracted the slave traders (3.41), who expected an easy Seleucid victory. **3.45** *Jerusalem was uninhabited* in the sense that no true Israelite was there, true Israelites now being equated with Judas and his army. **3.46** *Mizpah*, eight miles north of Jerusalem, was a place of assembly and prayer before battle in Judg 20.1; 1 Sam 7.5–9; 10.17. For fasting there, see 1 Sam 7.6. **3.48** The Jews consulted the *book of the law* for guidance in battle. A variant reading of the Greek of the second part of the verse might suggest that the scroll had been defiled by the painting of pagan pictures on it. **3.49** According to Num 6.1–21 *nazirites* took vows of (temporary) consecration to God. The completion of their period of special consecration was marked by rites at the temple (which were impossible because the temple was in the wrong hands). **3.55** For another division of the army, see 2 Macc 8.22–23. **3.56** The list of those exempted from battle follows Deut 20.5–8. Judas appears throughout as the ideal

cording to the law. 57 Then the army
marched out and encamped to the south
of Emmaus.
58 And Judas said, "Arm yourselves
and be courageous. Be ready early in the
morning to fight with these Gentiles who
have assembled against us to destroy us
and our sanctuary. 59 It is better for us to
die in battle than to see the misfortunes of
our nation and of the sanctuary. 60 But as
his will in heaven may be, so shall he do."

The Battle at Emmaus

4 Now Gorgias took five thousand in-
fantry and one thousand picked cav-
alry, and this division moved out by night
2 to fall upon the camp of the Jews and
attack them suddenly. Men from the cita-
del were his guides. 3 But Judas heard of
it, and he and his warriors moved out to
attack the king's force in Emmaus 4 while
the division was still absent from the
camp. 5 When Gorgias entered the camp
of Judas by night, he found no one there,
so he looked for them in the hills, because
he said, "These men are running away
from us."
6 At daybreak Judas appeared in the
plain with three thousand men, but they
did not have armor and swords such as
they desired. 7 And they saw the camp of
the Gentiles, strong and fortified, with
cavalry all around it; and these men were
trained in war. 8 But Judas said to those
who were with him, "Do not fear their
numbers or be afraid when they charge.
9 Remember how our ancestors were
saved at the Red Sea, when Pharaoh with
his forces pursued them. 10 And now, let
us cry to Heaven, to see whether he will
favor us and remember his covenant with
our ancestors and crush this army before
us today. 11 Then all the Gentiles will
know that there is one who redeems and
saves Israel."
12 When the foreigners looked up
and saw them coming against them,
13 they went out from their camp to battle.
Then the men with Judas blew their
trumpets 14 and engaged in battle. The
Gentiles were crushed, and fled into the
plain, 15 and all those in the rear fell by
the sword. They pursued them to Gazara,
and to the plains of Idumea, and to Azo-
tus and Jamnia; and three thousand of
them fell. 16 Then Judas and his force
turned back from pursuing them, 17 and
he said to the people, "Do not be greedy
for plunder, for there is a battle before
us; 18 Gorgias and his force are near us in
the hills. But stand now against our ene-
mies and fight them, and afterward seize
the plunder boldly."
19 Just as Judas was finishing this
speech, a detachment appeared, coming
out of the hills. 20 They saw that their
army[r] had been put to flight, and that
the Jews[r] were burning the camp, for the
smoke that was seen showed what had
happened. 21 When they perceived this,
they were greatly frightened, and when
they also saw the army of Judas drawn up
in the plain for battle, 22 they all fled into
the land of the Philistines. 23 Then Judas
returned to plunder the camp, and they

r Gk *they*

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biblical warrior. **3.57** *Emmaus* was a less appropriate site than Mizpah for Judas's pre-battle speech (see Deut 20.3–4).

4.1–25 Judas by his strategy divides the great army of Gorgias and defeats the main camp as well as Gorgias's expeditionary force. Throughout Judas acts as the perfect biblical warrior. See 2 Macc 8.24–30. **4.1** *Five thousand . . . one thousand.* As in 3.39, there seems to be exaggeration in the numbers of troops able to carry out such a journey by night. **4.2** The *guides* from the *citadel* in Jerusalem most likely included Jews familiar with the terrain. **4.5** Gorgias looked for Judas *in the hills*, presumably because it never occurred to him that Judas would attack the main camp in Emmaus. **4.8** Following the instruction in Deut 20.3–4, Judas as the commander exhorts his troops to disregard the disparity in numbers (see 3.39; 4.1, 6). See the precedent of Gideon (Judg 7) who triumphed with only three hundred men. **4.9** For Moses' victory at the *Red Sea*, see Ex 14. **4.10** The *covenant* involved God's promise of the land and descendants (Gen 17) as well as the opportunity to serve God according to the Torah (Ex 19)—precisely matters at stake in the rebellion (see 1 Macc 1.11). **4.15** *Gazara* (Gezer) was the closest Seleucid fort in the district (see 7.45; 13.43–48). *Azotus* was biblical Ashdod. The *three thousand* slain enemy soldiers matches the number of Judas's army (see 4.6). **4.18** Judas's military strategy splits Gorgias (4.1) and a portion of his men off from his main force. **4.20** *Burning the camp* before seizing its plunder indicated that the battle was over and suggested that Judas had a very large army, thus demoralizing Gorgias and his troops. **4.23** The *gold and*

seized a great amount of gold and silver,
and cloth dyed blue and sea purple, and
great riches. 24 On their return they sang
hymns and praises to Heaven—"For he is
good, for his mercy endures forever."
25 Thus Israel had a great deliverance
that day.

First Campaign of Lysias

26 Those of the foreigners who es-
caped went and reported to Lysias all that
had happened. 27 When he heard it, he
was perplexed and discouraged, for
things had not happened to Israel as he
had intended, nor had they turned out as
the king had ordered. 28 But the next year
he mustered sixty thousand picked infan-
try and five thousand cavalry to subdue
them. 29 They came into Idumea and en-
camped at Beth-zur, and Judas met them
with ten thousand men.

30 When he saw that their army was
strong, he prayed, saying, "Blessed are
you, O Savior of Israel, who crushed the
attack of the mighty warrior by the hand
of your servant David, and gave the camp
of the Philistines into the hands of Jona-
than son of Saul, and of the man who car-
ried his armor. 31 Hem in this army by the
hand of your people Israel, and let them
be ashamed of their troops and their cav-
alry. 32 Fill them with cowardice; melt the
boldness of their strength; let them trem-
ble in their destruction. 33 Strike them
down with the sword of those who love
you, and let all who know your name
praise you with hymns."

34 Then both sides attacked, and
there fell of the army of Lysias five thou-
sand men; they fell in action.[s] 35 When
Lysias saw the rout of his troops and ob-
served the boldness that inspired those of
Judas, and how ready they were either to
live or to die nobly, he withdrew to Anti-
och and enlisted mercenaries in order to
invade Judea again with an even larger
army.

Cleansing and Dedication of the Temple

36 Then Judas and his brothers said,
"See, our enemies are crushed; let us go
up to cleanse the sanctuary and dedicate
it." 37 So all the army assembled and went
up to Mount Zion. 38 There they saw the
sanctuary desolate, the altar profaned,
and the gates burned. In the courts they
saw bushes sprung up as in a thicket, or as
on one of the mountains. They saw also
the chambers of the priests in ruins.
39 Then they tore their clothes and
mourned with great lamentation; they
sprinkled themselves with ashes 40 and fell
face down on the ground. And when the
signal was given with the trumpets, they
cried out to Heaven.

41 Then Judas detailed men to fight
against those in the citadel until he
had cleansed the sanctuary. 42 He chose
blameless priests devoted to the law,

s Or *and some fell on the opposite side*

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silver and other riches for plunder had been brought at least in part by the slave traders (see 3.41). **4.24–25** The victory is celebrated by singing Ps 136.1, thus marking God's *deliverance* of Israel (see Judg 15.18; 1 Sam 14.45).

4.26–35 In 164 B.C.E. Lysias tries a different battle approach to Judas and his army, but he too meets defeat. See 2 Macc 11.1–15. **4.26** *Lysias* had been put in charge of the western part of Antiochus's empire and named guardian of Antiochus V (see 3.32). **4.28–29** Though the numbers are exaggerations, they suggest that, while still vastly outnumbered, Judas's army was growing (see 4.6). **4.29** *Beth-zur* was on the southern border of Judea and Idumea. Lysias approached from the south in a "fishhook" strategy to take advantage of the somewhat easier terrain and the political sympathies of the inhabitants. **4.30** In his prayer before battle (Deut 20.3–4) Judas invokes the examples of *David* (1 Sam 17) and *Jonathan* (1 Sam 14). **4.35** For Lysias's second invasion of *Judea*, see 6.28–31.

4.36–61 Having defeated the Seleucid forces, Judas restores the temple furnishings and inaugurates the proper rituals there. See 2 Macc 10.1–8. **4.36** The immediate goal of the uprising is achieved when the Jews *dedicate* the new altar in the temple. The name Hanukkah derives from the Hebrew word for "dedicate." In 2 Maccabees the theme of purification is stressed. **4.37** *Mount Zion*, the temple area. **4.38–40** Why the temple area was in such disrepair is not clear. Was the "reform" a failure? Is this the writer's judgment on the new worship? Did Judas delay restoring the temple? **4.41** The *citadel* overlooking the temple area (1.33) was still under enemy control. **4.42–43** The *blameless priests* were ritually pure (Lev 21.17–23) and did not partake in programs established under Antiochus IV (2 Macc 4.14–15). The *defiled stones* were associated with the desolating sacrilege (1 Macc 1.54).

43 and they cleansed the sanctuary and re-
moved the defiled stones to an unclean
place. 44 They deliberated what to do
about the altar of burnt offering, which
had been profaned. 45 And they thought
it best to tear it down, so that it would not
be a lasting shame to them that the Gen-
tiles had defiled it. So they tore down the
altar, 46 and stored the stones in a conve-
nient place on the temple hill until a
prophet should come to tell what to do
with them. 47 Then they took unhewn[t]
stones, as the law directs, and built a new
altar like the former one. 48 They also re-
built the sanctuary and the interior of
the temple, and consecrated the courts.
49 They made new holy vessels, and
brought the lampstand, the altar of in-
cense, and the table into the temple.
50 Then they offered incense on the altar
and lit the lamps on the lampstand, and
these gave light in the temple. 51 They
placed the bread on the table and hung
up the curtains. Thus they finished all the
work they had undertaken.

52 Early in the morning on the
twenty-fifth day of the ninth month,
which is the month of Chislev, in the one
hundred forty-eighth year,[u] 53 they rose
and offered sacrifice, as the law directs,
on the new altar of burnt offering that
they had built. 54 At the very season and
on the very day that the Gentiles had pro-
faned it, it was dedicated with songs and
harps and lutes and cymbals. 55 All the
people fell on their faces and worshiped
and blessed Heaven, who had prospered
them. 56 So they celebrated the dedication
of the altar for eight days, and joyfully
offered burnt offerings; they offered a
sacrifice of well-being and a thanksgiving
offering. 57 They decorated the front of
the temple with golden crowns and small
shields; they restored the gates and the
chambers for the priests, and fitted them
with doors. 58 There was very great joy
among the people, and the disgrace
brought by the Gentiles was removed.

59 Then Judas and his brothers and
all the assembly of Israel determined that
every year at that season the days of dedi-
cation of the altar should be observed
with joy and gladness for eight days, be-
ginning with the twenty-fifth day of the
month of Chislev.

60 At that time they fortified Mount
Zion with high walls and strong towers all
around, to keep the Gentiles from coming
and trampling them down as they had
done before. 61 Judas[v] stationed a garri-
son there to guard it; he also fortified
Beth-zur to guard it, so that the people
might have a stronghold that faced
Idumea.

Wars with Neighboring Peoples

5 When the Gentiles all around heard
that the altar had been rebuilt and
the sanctuary dedicated as it was before,
they became very angry, 2 and they deter-
mined to destroy the descendants of Jacob
who lived among them. So they began to
kill and destroy among the people. 3 But
Judas made war on the descendants of
Esau in Idumea, at Akrabattene, because
they kept lying in wait for Israel. He dealt
them a heavy blow and humbled them
and despoiled them. 4 He also remem-
bered the wickedness of the sons of
Baean, who were a trap and a snare to
the people and ambushed them on the
highways. 5 They were shut up by him in

t Gk *whole* *u* 164 B.C. *v* Gk *He*

4.44–46 Rather than destroy the *altar of burnt offering* Judas proposed waiting for illumination from a future *prophet* (see 14.41; Deut 18.15; Mal 4.5). **4.47–51** For building the altar with *unhewn stones*, see Ex 20.25; Deut 27.5–6. The temple furnishings, plundered by Antiochus IV (1 Macc 1.21–24), are restored in accord with Ex 25–27. **4.52–55** Temple worship was resumed on 14 December 164 B.C.E. See 2 Chr 7.1–10 for the dedication of the First Temple. **4.56** The Feast of Dedication (Hanukkah) lasted *eight days*, after the pattern of the Festival of Booths (Tabernacles; Lev 23.33–36) and earlier consecrations of the temple by Solomon (1 Kings 8) and Hezekiah (2 Chr 29). **4.60–61** *Mount Zion*, the temple area, was fortified against attacks from the citadel; and *Beth-zur* against approaches from the south (as in 4.29).

5.1–8 To secure the safety of other Jews sympathetic to the Maccabees, Judas and his brothers wage battles against allies of the Seleucids and other enemies (with David as their model; 2 Sam 8; 10). See 2 Macc 8.30–33; 10.14–17. **5.2** The *descendants of Jacob* were Jews living outside the area controlled by Judas; his success angered their non-Jewish neighbors. **5.3** *Akrabattene* may refer to the ascent of the Akrabbim (Num 34.4) southwest of the Dead Sea or (more likely) the place on the eastern boundary of Judea and Samaria. **5.4** The *sons of Baean* were nomads who

their[w] towers; and he encamped against them, vowed their complete destruction, and burned with fire their towers and all who were in them. 6 Then he crossed over to attack the Ammonites, where he found a strong band and many people, with Timothy as their leader. 7 He engaged in many battles with them, and they were crushed before him; he struck them down. 8 He also took Jazer and its villages; then he returned to Judea.

Liberation of Galilean Jews

9 Now the Gentiles in Gilead gathered together against the Israelites who lived in their territory, and planned to destroy them. But they fled to the stronghold of Dathema, 10 and sent to Judas and his brothers a letter that said, "The Gentiles around us have gathered together to destroy us. 11 They are preparing to come and capture the stronghold to which we have fled, and Timothy is leading their forces. 12 Now then, come and rescue us from their hands, for many of us have fallen, 13 and all our kindred who were in the land of Tob have been killed; the enemy[x] have captured their wives and children and goods, and have destroyed about a thousand persons there."

14 While the letter was still being read, other messengers, with their garments torn, came from Galilee and made a similar report; 15 they said that the people of Ptolemais and Tyre and Sidon, and all Galilee of the Gentiles,[y] had gathered together against them "to annihilate us." 16 When Judas and the people heard these messages, a great assembly was called to determine what they should do for their kindred who were in distress and were being attacked by enemies.[z] 17 Then Judas said to his brother Simon, "Choose your men and go and rescue your kindred in Galilee; Jonathan my brother and I will go to Gilead." 18 But he left Joseph, son of Zechariah, and Azariah, a leader of the people, with the rest of the forces, in Judea to guard it; 19 and he gave them this command, "Take charge of this people, but do not engage in battle with the Gentiles until we return." 20 Then three thousand men were assigned to Simon to go to Galilee, and eight thousand to Judas for Gilead.

21 So Simon went to Galilee and fought many battles against the Gentiles, and the Gentiles were crushed before him. 22 He pursued them to the gate of Ptolemais; as many as three thousand of the Gentiles fell, and he despoiled them. 23 Then he took the Jews[a] of Galilee and Arbatta, with their wives and children, and all they possessed, and led them to Judea with great rejoicing.

Judas and Jonathan in Gilead

24 Judas Maccabeus and his brother Jonathan crossed the Jordan and made three days' journey into the wilderness. 25 They encountered the Nabateans, who met them peaceably and told them all that had happened to their kindred in Gilead: 26 "Many of them have been shut up in

w Gk *her* *x* Gk *they* *y* Gk *aliens* *z* Gk *them*
a Gk *those*

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attacked caravans (see 2 Macc 10.14). **5.6** *Timothy* may have been the local ruler of the *Ammonites* in Transjordan or the Syrian commander (2 Macc 8.30–33). **5.8** *Jazer* (Num 21.32) was near Heshbon in Transjordan.

5.9–23 In response to pleas from Jews in Gilead (5.9–13) and in western Galilee (5.14–15), Judas sends Simon to Galilee (5.21–23) and goes with Jonathan to Gilead. **5.9** *Gilead*, the territory east of the Jordan (Josh 22.9). The location of *Dathema* is uncertain aside from the fact that it was a night's journey from Bozrah (5.29). **5.13** The *land of Tob* (Judg 11.3–5) refers to modern et-Taiyibeh, twelve miles east and slightly north of Ramoth-gilead, across the Jordan. **5.15** *All Galilee of the Gentiles* (see Isa 9.1) refers to the seacoast towns south of Ptolemais, Tyre, and Sidon. **5.18–19** For the failure of *Joseph* and *Azariah* to obey, see 5.55–62. **5.22–23** *Ptolemais*, named after Ptolemy II of Egypt, who restored it, was also known as Acco and Acre. *Arbatta* (or Narbatta) was probably south of Mount Carmel.

5.24–44 Relying on information from the Nabateans, Judas and Jonathan rescue Jews under siege in Gilead and defeat Timothy decisively near Raphon. See 2 Macc 12.1–25. **5.25** The *Nabateans*, whose center was in southern Transjordan, traveled caravan routes as traders. Here and in 9.35 they appear friendly toward Judas and Jonathan. Perhaps they shared the Jews' desire for independence from the Seleucids. **5.26** *Bozrah* (seventy miles south of Damascus) . . . *and Carnaim*, cities east and north of the Yarmuk River in Transjordan. Their non-Jewish inhabitants probably identified with the Seleucids and thus opposed the Jews in light of their recent victories

Bozrah and Bosor, in Alema and Chaspho, Maked and Carnaim"—all these towns were strong and large— 27"and some have been shut up in the other towns of Gilead; the enemy[b] are getting ready to attack the strongholds tomorrow and capture and destroy all these people in a single day."

28 Then Judas and his army quickly turned back by the wilderness road to Bozrah; and he took the town, and killed every male by the edge of the sword; then he seized all its spoils and burned it with fire. 29He left the place at night, and they went all the way to the stronghold of Dathema.[c] 30At dawn they looked out and saw a large company, which could not be counted, carrying ladders and engines of war to capture the stronghold, and attacking the Jews within.[d] 31So Judas saw that the battle had begun and that the cry of the town went up to Heaven, with trumpets and loud shouts, 32and he said to the men of his forces, "Fight today for your kindred!" 33Then he came up behind them in three companies, who sounded their trumpets and cried aloud in prayer. 34And when the army of Timothy realized that it was Maccabeus, they fled before him, and he dealt them a heavy blow. As many as eight thousand of them fell that day.

35 Next he turned aside to Maapha,[e] and fought against it and took it; and he killed every male in it, plundered it, and burned it with fire. 36From there he marched on and took Chaspho, Maked, and Bosor, and the other towns of Gilead.

37 After these things Timothy gathered another army and encamped opposite Raphon, on the other side of the stream. 38Judas sent men to spy out the camp, and they reported to him, "All the Gentiles around us have gathered to him; it is a very large force. 39They also have hired Arabs to help them, and they are encamped across the stream, ready to come and fight against you." And Judas went to meet them.

40 Now as Judas and his army drew near to the stream of water, Timothy said to the officers of his forces, "If he crosses over to us first, we will not be able to resist him, for he will surely defeat us. 41But if he shows fear and camps on the other side of the river, we will cross over to him and defeat him." 42When Judas approached the stream of water, he stationed the officers[f] of the army at the stream and gave them this command, "Permit no one to encamp, but make them all enter the battle." 43Then he crossed over against them first, and the whole army followed him. All the Gentiles were defeated before him, and they threw away their arms and fled into the sacred precincts at Carnaim. 44But he took the town and burned the sacred precincts with fire, together with all who were in them. Thus Carnaim was conquered; they could stand before Judas no longer.

The Return to Jerusalem

45 Then Judas gathered together all the Israelites in Gilead, the small and the great, with their wives and children and goods, a very large company, to go to the land of Judah. 46So they came to Ephron. This was a large and very strong town on the road, and they could not go around it to the right or to the left; they had to go through it. 47But the people of the town shut them out and blocked up the gates with stones.

b Gk *they* *c* Gk lacks *of Dathema*. See verse 9
d Gk *and they were attacking them* *e* Other ancient authorities read *Alema* *f* Or *scribes*

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over the Seleucids. **5.29** That Jews had a *stronghold* or fortress at *Dathema* (see 5.9) or elsewhere (see 5.27) may exaggerate the actual situation. **5.30–32** The description of the siege echoes various biblical texts (1 Sam 4.5–6; 5.12; Jer 4.19; Ezek 4.23; 21.22; Joel 2.1). **5.35** *Maapha* may be Mizpah of Gilead (Judg 11.29). **5.37** It is not certain that this is the same *Timothy* as in 5.6–8. **5.39** The Seleucids often used *Arabs* as mercenaries (see 2 Macc 12.10). **5.40–43** Rather than looking for an omen or heavenly sign, Timothy needed to discover whether Judas's troops were sufficiently numerous and ready for him to take the initiative in battle. **5.43** *Carnaim* means "horns." The name suggests that the goddess Astarte was worshiped there under the aspect of her having a cow's horns (cf. 2 Macc 12.21, 26). Timothy fled there either in hope of protection from the pagan goddess or for asylum. **5.44** When Judas *took the town*, he did not respect the sanctity of the pagan shrine at Carnaim.

5.45–54 The Israelites in Gilead are brought to Judea and the Jerusalem temple by way of Ephron and Beth-shan. See 2 Macc 12.26–31. **5.46–51** *Ephron* was nine miles east of Jordan, opposite Beth-shan. Judas acts toward it in accord

48 Judas sent them this friendly message, "Let us pass through your land to
get to our land. No one will do you harm;
we will simply pass by on foot." But they
refused to open to him. 49 Then Judas
ordered proclamation to be made to the
army that all should encamp where they
were. 50 So the men of the forces encamped, and he fought against the town
all that day and all the night, and the town
was delivered into his hands. 51 He destroyed every male by the edge of the
sword, and razed and plundered the
town. Then he passed through the town
over the bodies of the dead.
52 Then they crossed the Jordan into
the large plain before Beth-shan. 53 Judas
kept rallying the laggards and encouraging the people all the way until he came to
the land of Judah. 54 So they went up to
Mount Zion with joy and gladness, and offered burnt offerings, because they had
returned in safety; not one of them had
fallen.

Joseph and Azariah Defeated

55 Now while Judas and Jonathan
were in Gilead and their[g] brother Simon
was in Galilee before Ptolemais, 56 Joseph
son of Zechariah, and Azariah, the commanders of the forces, heard of their
brave deeds and of the heroic war they
had fought. 57 So they said, "Let us also
make a name for ourselves; let us go and
make war on the Gentiles around us."
58 So they issued orders to the men of the
forces that were with them and marched
against Jamnia. 59 Gorgias and his men
came out of the town to meet them in
battle. 60 Then Joseph and Azariah were
routed, and were pursued to the borders
of Judea; as many as two thousand of the
people of Israel fell that day. 61 Thus the
people suffered a great rout because,
thinking to do a brave deed, they did not
listen to Judas and his brothers. 62 But
they did not belong to the family of those
men through whom deliverance was given
to Israel.
63 The man Judas and his brothers
were greatly honored in all Israel and
among all the Gentiles, wherever their
name was heard. 64 People gathered to
them and praised them.

Success at Hebron and Philistia

65 Then Judas and his brothers went
out and fought the descendants of Esau in
the land to the south. He struck Hebron
and its villages and tore down its strongholds and burned its towers on all sides.
66 Then he marched off to go into
the land of the Philistines, and passed
through Marisa.[h] 67 On that day some
priests, who wished to do a brave deed,
fell in battle, for they went out to battle
unwisely. 68 But Judas turned aside to
Azotus in the land of the Philistines; he
tore down their altars, and the carved images of their gods he burned with fire; he
plundered the towns and returned to the
land of Judah.

The Last Days of Antiochus Epiphanes

6 King Antiochus was going through
the upper provinces when he heard
that Elymais in Persia was a city famed for
its wealth in silver and gold. 2 Its temple

g Gk *his* h Other ancient authorities read *Samaria*

with Deut 20.10–15. **5.52** *Beth-shan*, also known as Scythopolis ("city of Scythians"), was west of the Jordan. **5.54** According to 2 Macc 12.31–32 they arrived at *Mount Zion* in time to celebrate the Festival of Weeks/Pentecost.

5.55–64 The rout suffered by the two left in charge of Judea (5.18–19) is explained as due to their failure to follow Judas's command (5.61). See 2 Macc 12.32–35. **5.58–59** *Jamnia* (Yavneh) was the capital of the province of Azotus (Ashdod) and a seat of opposition to the Jews (2 Macc 12.8–9). This may not be the same *Gorgias* as in 3.38; 4.1.

5.65–68 The account of the Jewish victory closes with battles against Idumea (to the south) and Philistia (to the west). See 2 Macc 12.36–45. **5.65–66** The anachronistic names *descendants of Esau* and *Philistines* contribute to the portrayal of Judas as the ideal biblical warrior. **5.67** The *priests who . . . fell in battle* failed to follow Judas's command (see 5.56–62); 2 Macc 12.32–45 may be another version of this episode. **5.68** *Azotus* (Ashdod) may refer to the province, not merely the city.

6.1–17 For other reports of Antiochus IV's death, see 2 Macc 1.13–17; 9.1–29; Dan 11.40–45. Antiochus died in late 164 B.C.E. in connection with robbing a pagan temple. The Jews interpreted his death as punishment for his outrages against their temple. **6.1** *Elymais* (Elam) refers to the mountainous country west of (not in) Persia. The *city* may have been Persepolis.

was very rich, containing golden shields,
breastplates, and weapons left there by
Alexander son of Philip, the Macedonian
king who first reigned over the Greeks.
3 So he came and tried to take the city and
plunder it, but he could not because his
plan had become known to the citizens
4 and they withstood him in battle. So he
fled and in great disappointment left
there to return to Babylon.

5 Then someone came to him in Persia and reported that the armies that had
gone into the land of Judah had been
routed; 6 that Lysias had gone first with a
strong force, but had turned and fled before the Jews;[i] that the Jews[j] had grown
strong from the arms, supplies, and abundant spoils that they had taken from the
armies they had cut down; 7 that they had
torn down the abomination that he had
erected on the altar in Jerusalem; and
that they had surrounded the sanctuary
with high walls as before, and also Bethzur, his town.

8 When the king heard this news, he
was astounded and badly shaken. He took
to his bed and became sick from disappointment, because things had not turned
out for him as he had planned. 9 He lay
there for many days, because deep disappointment continually gripped him, and
he realized that he was dying. 10 So he
called all his Friends and said to them,
"Sleep has departed from my eyes and I
am downhearted with worry. 11 I said to
myself, 'To what distress I have come!
And into what a great flood I now am
plunged! For I was kind and beloved in
my power.' 12 But now I remember the
wrong I did in Jerusalem. I seized all its
vessels of silver and gold, and I sent to
destroy the inhabitants of Judah without
good reason. 13 I know that it is because of
this that these misfortunes have come
upon me; here I am, perishing of bitter
disappointment in a strange land."

14 Then he called for Philip, one of
his Friends, and made him ruler over all
his kingdom. 15 He gave him the crown
and his robe and the signet, so that he
might guide his son Antiochus and bring
him up to be king. 16 Thus King Antiochus died there in the one hundred forty-
ninth year.[k] 17 When Lysias learned that
the king was dead, he set up Antiochus
the king's[l] son to reign. Lysias[m] had
brought him up from boyhood; he named
him Eupator.

Renewed Attacks from Syria

18 Meanwhile the garrison in the citadel kept hemming Israel in around the
sanctuary. They were trying in every way
to harm them and strengthen the Gentiles. 19 Judas therefore resolved to destroy them, and assembled all the people
to besiege them. 20 They gathered together and besieged the citadel[n] in the
one hundred fiftieth year;[o] and he built
siege towers and other engines of war.
21 But some of the garrison escaped from
the siege and some of the ungodly Israelites joined them. 22 They went to the king
and said, "How long will you fail to do
justice and to avenge our kindred? 23 We

i Gk *them* *j* Gk *they* *k* 163 B.C. *l* Gk *his*
m Gk *He* *n* Gk *it* *o* 162 B.C.

6.5–7 To the report of the defeat of *Lysias* (3.32–4.35) is added a summary of events in 4.36–61 — events that occurred after the death of Antiochus IV. **6.10** *Friends* were designated to serve as the king's advisers. They constituted the lowest rank of nobility in the Seleucid aristocracy. **6.11–13** Antiochus IV's description of himself as *kind and beloved* is affirmed by the name Eupator ("of a good father") given his son in 6.17. But 1 Maccabees looks at him mainly with regard to the effects of his policies on the Jews and presents him negatively. **6.14** *Philip* receives the same appointment Lysias had (3.32–33), and thus the two become rivals. **6.16** *Antiochus* died in October or November 164 B.C.E., but news of his death may not have reached Jerusalem before the dedication of the temple (4.36–61).

6.18–31 Judas's attempt to seize the citadel in Jerusalem leads to renewed complaints against him and a new and massive expedition. **6.18** The Seleucid *garrison in the citadel* (see 1.33–34; 4.41; 9.52; 10.6–9; 11.41; 14.36) continued harassment of Judas's people. Some were Jews (6.18, 21). **6.19–20** Judas took the confusion surrounding the death of Antiochus IV as the occasion for attacking the citadel. **6.21–27** The complaint of the *ungodly Israelites* (led by the high priest Menelaus according to 2 Macc 13.3) was that, despite their cooperation and support for the program of Antiochus IV, they were being abandoned in the face of Judas's growing power. **6.22** The *king*, Antiochus V Eupator, was only about eleven or twelve years old. Lysias was making policy, though the young

were happy to serve your father, to live by
what he said, and to follow his commands.
24 For this reason the sons of our people
besieged the citadel[p] and became hostile
to us; moreover, they have put to death as
many of us as they have caught, and they
have seized our inheritances. 25 It is not
against us alone that they have stretched
out their hands; they have also attacked
all the lands on their borders. 26 And see,
today they have encamped against the cit-
adel in Jerusalem to take it; they have for-
tified both the sanctuary and Beth-zur;
27 unless you quickly prevent them, they
will do still greater things, and you will
not be able to stop them."

28 The king was enraged when he
heard this. He assembled all his Friends,
the commanders of his forces and those in
authority.[q] 29 Mercenary forces also came
to him from other kingdoms and from is-
lands of the seas. 30 The number of his
forces was one hundred thousand foot
soldiers, twenty thousand horsemen, and
thirty-two elephants accustomed to war.
31 They came through Idumea and en-
camped against Beth-zur, and for many
days they fought and built engines of war;
but the Jews[r] sallied out and burned
these with fire, and fought courageously.

The Battle at Beth-zechariah

32 Then Judas marched away from
the citadel and encamped at Beth-
zechariah, opposite the camp of the king.
33 Early in the morning the king set out
and took his army by a forced march
along the road to Beth-zechariah, and his
troops made ready for battle and sounded
their trumpets. 34 They offered the ele-
phants the juice of grapes and mulberries,
to arouse them for battle. 35 They distrib-
uted the animals among the phalanxes;
with each elephant they stationed a thou-
sand men armed with coats of mail, and
with brass helmets on their heads; and
five hundred picked horsemen were as-
signed to each beast. 36 These took their
position beforehand wherever the animal
was; wherever it went, they went with it,
and they never left it. 37 On the ele-
phants[s] were wooden towers, strong and
covered; they were fastened on each ani-
mal by special harness, and on each were
four[t] armed men who fought from
there, and also its Indian driver. 38 The
rest of the cavalry were stationed on ei-
ther side, on the two flanks of the army, to
harass the enemy while being themselves
protected by the phalanxes. 39 When the
sun shone on the shields of gold and
brass, the hills were ablaze with them and
gleamed like flaming torches.

40 Now a part of the king's army was
spread out on the high hills, and some
troops were on the plain, and they ad-
vanced steadily and in good order. 41 All
who heard the noise made by their multi-
tude, by the marching of the multitude
and the clanking of their arms, trembled,
for the army was very large and strong.
42 But Judas and his army advanced to the
battle, and six hundred of the king's army
fell. 43 Now Eleazar, called Avaran, saw
that one of the animals was equipped with
royal armor. It was taller than all the oth-
ers, and he supposed that the king was on
it. 44 So he gave his life to save his people

p Meaning of Gk uncertain *q* Gk *those over the reins* *r* Gk *they* *s* Gk *them* *t* Cn: Some authorities read *thirty*; others *thirty-two*

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king was probably involved in the events. **6.28–31** The greatness (probably exaggerated) of the Seleucid army indicates how seriously Judas was now taken. As in 4.29 the Seleucid army approaches from the south, through *Idumea*. *Beth-zur*, which figured in the first battle with Lysias (4.29–35), had been fortified by Judas (4.61) as the southern outpost against attacks.

6.32–47 Probably based on an eyewitness account, this passage is a remarkably vivid and generally accurate description of an ancient battle. That Judas was defeated is played down; the emphasis is on the superior numbers of the Seleucids and the bravery of Eleazar. See 2 Macc 13.18–20. **6.32** *Beth-zechariah*, south of Jerusalem and six miles north of Beth-zur, was chosen because its topography could be used to stop the enemy's advance. Apparently Beth-zur (6.31) had fallen (see 6.49–50). **6.34–37** The *elephants* (the ancient equivalent of tanks) serve as the rallying point for the Seleucid formations. That there were *thirty-two* elephants (6.30) is unlikely. That number appears again in the Greek in 6.37 (which is ridiculous); the conjecture *four* is more reasonable. **6.40–41** As the Seleucid army proceeds some troops are dispatched to secure the ridges (*high hills*). **6.43–47** That the young king Antiochus V would have been riding on an elephant in battle is highly unlikely. *Eleazar* (2.5) may have sought to demonstrate that the elephants could be stopped. If so, his action had the opposite effect (6.47).

and to win for himself an everlasting
name. 45 He courageously ran into the
midst of the phalanx to reach it; he killed
men right and left, and they parted be-
fore him on both sides. 46 He got under
the elephant, stabbed it from beneath,
and killed it; but it fell to the ground
upon him and he died. 47 When the Jews[u]
saw the royal might and the fierce attack
of the forces, they turned away in flight.

The Siege of the Temple

48 The soldiers of the king's army
went up to Jerusalem against them, and
the king encamped in Judea and at
Mount Zion. 49 He made peace with the
people of Beth-zur, and they evacuated
the town because they had no provisions
there to withstand a siege, since it was a
sabbatical year for the land. 50 So the king
took Beth-zur and stationed a guard there
to hold it. 51 Then he encamped before
the sanctuary for many days. He set up
siege towers, engines of war to throw fire
and stones, machines to shoot arrows, and
catapults. 52 The Jews[u] also made engines
of war to match theirs, and fought for
many days. 53 But they had no food in
storage,[v] because it was the seventh year;
those who had found safety in Judea from
the Gentiles had consumed the last of the
stores. 54 Only a few men were left in the
sanctuary; the rest scattered to their own
homes, for the famine proved too much
for them.

Syria Offers Terms

55 Then Lysias heard that Philip,
whom King Antiochus while still living
had appointed to bring up his son Antio-
chus to be king, 56 had returned from Per-
sia and Media with the forces that had
gone with the king, and that he was trying
to seize control of the government. 57 So
he quickly gave orders to withdraw, and
said to the king, to the commanders of
the forces, and to the troops, "Daily we
grow weaker, our food supply is scant, the
place against which we are fighting is
strong, and the affairs of the kingdom
press urgently on us. 58 Now then let us
come to terms with these people, and
make peace with them and with all their
nation. 59 Let us agree to let them live by
their laws as they did before; for it was on
account of their laws that we abolished
that they became angry and did all these
things."

60 The speech pleased the king and
the commanders, and he sent to the
Jews[w] an offer of peace, and they ac-
cepted it. 61 So the king and the com-
manders gave them their oath. On these
conditions the Jews[u] evacuated the
stronghold. 62 But when the king entered
Mount Zion and saw what a strong for-
tress the place was, he broke the oath he
had sworn and gave orders to tear down
the wall all around. 63 Then he set off in
haste and returned to Antioch. He found
Philip in control of the city, but he fought
against him, and took the city by force.

Expedition of Bacchides and Alcimus

7 In the one hundred fifty-first year[x]
Demetrius son of Seleucus set out
from Rome, sailed with a few men to a
town by the sea, and there began to reign.

u Gk *they* *v* Other ancient authorities read *in the sanctuary* *w* Gk *them* *x* 161 B.C.

6.48–54 With the surrender of Beth-zur, the Temple Mount under siege, and low food supplies, the Maccabean movement is close to complete defeat. **6.48** The symbolic value of the Temple Mount (Mount Zion; see 4.36–61) explains both the Seleucid strategy and the Jewish resistance. **6.49** In a *sabbatical year* the land was not worked (Ex 23.11; Lev 25.3–7). The real food shortage would occur the year after the sabbatical year (see 6.53).

6.55–63 Because Lysias had to return to Antioch to prevent Philip (see 6.14–15) from taking control, he made a quick settlement with Judas. See 2 Macc 13.23–26. **6.57** The scant *food supply* caused by the sabbatical year (6.49, 53) threatened the Seleucid army also. **6.59** By agreeing to let the Jews *live by their laws as they did before* (i.e., by the Torah) Lysias effectively cancelled the decree of Antiochus IV (1.41–50). **6.61–62** The Temple Mount (Mount Zion) held by Judas's troops and fortified by a wall (4.60), functioned as a *stronghold*. The citadel remained in enemy hands.

7.1–25 With Antiochus V and Lysias removed, Demetrius I seeks to stabilize affairs in Judea by sending Bacchides' army and by making Alcimus both high priest and political ruler. **7.1** *Demetrius* I Soter, the son of Seleucus IV, escaped from being a hostage at Rome with the help of the historian Polybius and landed at Tripolis (*a town by the sea*) in 161 B.C.E. See 2 Macc

2 As he was entering the royal palace of
his ancestors, the army seized Antiochus
and Lysias to bring them to him. 3 But
when this act became known to him, he
said, "Do not let me see their faces!" 4 So
the army killed them, and Demetrius took
his seat on the throne of his kingdom.

5 Then there came to him all the rene-
gade and godless men of Israel; they were
led by Alcimus, who wanted to be high
priest. 6 They brought to the king this ac-
cusation against the people: "Judas and
his brothers have destroyed all your
Friends, and have driven us out of our
land. 7 Now then send a man whom you
trust; let him go and see all the ruin that
Judas[y] has brought on us and on the land
of the king, and let him punish them and
all who help them."

8 So the king chose Bacchides, one of
the king's Friends, governor of the prov-
ince Beyond the River; he was a great
man in the kingdom and was faithful to
the king. 9 He sent him, and with him he
sent the ungodly Alcimus, whom he made
high priest; and he commanded him to
take vengeance on the Israelites. 10 So
they marched away and came with a large
force into the land of Judah; and he sent
messengers to Judas and his brothers with
peaceable but treacherous words. 11 But
they paid no attention to their words, for
they saw that they had come with a large
force.

12 Then a group of scribes appeared
in a body before Alcimus and Bacchides
to ask for just terms. 13 The Hasideans
were first among the Israelites to seek
peace from them, 14 for they said, "A
priest of the line of Aaron has come with
the army, and he will not harm us." 15 Al-
cimus[z] spoke peaceable words to them
and swore this oath to them, "We will not
seek to injure you or your friends." 16 So
they trusted him; but he seized sixty of
them and killed them in one day, in accor-
dance with the word that was written,

17 "The flesh of your faithful ones
and their blood
they poured out all around
Jerusalem,
and there was no one to bury
them."

18 Then the fear and dread of them fell
on all the people, for they said, "There is
no truth or justice in them, for they have
violated the agreement and the oath that
they swore."

19 Then Bacchides withdrew from
Jerusalem and encamped in Beth-zaith.
And he sent and seized many of the men
who had deserted to him,[a] and some of
the people, and killed them and threw
them into a great pit. 20 He placed Alci-
mus in charge of the country and left with
him a force to help him; then Bacchides
went back to the king.

21 Alcimus struggled to maintain his
high priesthood, 22 and all who were trou-
bling their people joined him. They
gained control of the land of Judah and
did great damage in Israel. 23 And Judas
saw all the wrongs that Alcimus and those
with him had done among the Israelites;
it was more than the Gentiles had done.
24 So Judas[y] went out into all the sur-
rounding parts of Judea, taking ven-
geance on those who had deserted and
preventing those in the city[b] from going
out into the country. 25 When Alcimus saw
that Judas and those with him had grown

y Gk *he* *z* Gk *He* *a* Or *many of his men who had deserted* *b* Gk *and they were prevented*

14.1–2. **7.2** The *royal palace* was in Antioch, about 170 miles north of Tripolis. **7.5** *Alcimus* (*Yakim* in Hebrew), from a priestly family (7.14; 1 Chr 24.12), may have already been appointed as high priest under Antiochus V. He represented the faction in Israel that was favorable to the Seleucids (see 1.11–15; 2 Macc 14.3–4). **7.8** While Demetrius I was putting down the rebellion of Timarchus in the east, he appointed *Bacchides* (who was governor of *Beyond the River* province—between the Euphrates and Egypt) to subdue Judea. **7.12–15** Deceived by peaceable words from Bacchides (7.10) and Alcimus (7.15) and impressed by the priestly lineage of Alcimus, the *Hasideans* (see 2.42) deserted the cause of Judas. **7.16–18** Why Alcimus had *sixty* Hasideans killed is not stated; perhaps it was because of their past opposition to the pro-Seleucid faction. The fate of the Hasideans is said to fulfill Ps 79.2–3. **7.19** *Beth-zaith* was between Jerusalem and Beth-zur. The *pit* was probably a large cistern no longer in use for saving water (see Jer 41.7). **7.20** Bacchides' goal in subduing Judea was to establish the high priest Alcimus as head of state (*in charge of the country*)—as previous high priests (Onias, Jason, Menelaus) had been. **7.24** Judas was still strong enough to carry out guerilla warfare and thus prevent Alcimus from taking full control of Judea.

strong, and realized that he could not withstand them, he returned to the king and brought malicious charges against them.

Nicanor in Judea

26 Then the king sent Nicanor, one of his honored princes, who hated and detested Israel, and he commanded him to destroy the people. 27 So Nicanor came to Jerusalem with a large force, and treacherously sent to Judas and his brothers this peaceable message, 28 "Let there be no fighting between you and me; I shall come with a few men to see you face to face in peace."

29 So he came to Judas, and they greeted one another peaceably; but the enemy were preparing to kidnap Judas. 30 It became known to Judas that Nicanor[c] had come to him with treacherous intent, and he was afraid of him and would not meet him again. 31 When Nicanor learned that his plan had been disclosed, he went out to meet Judas in battle near Caphar-salama. 32 About five hundred of the army of Nicanor fell, and the rest[d] fled into the city of David.

Nicanor Threatens the Temple

33 After these events Nicanor went up to Mount Zion. Some of the priests from the sanctuary and some of the elders of the people came out to greet him peaceably and to show him the burnt offering that was being offered for the king. 34 But he mocked them and derided them and defiled them and spoke arrogantly, 35 and in anger he swore this oath, "Unless Judas and his army are delivered into my hands this time, then if I return safely I will burn up this house." And he went out in great anger. 36 At this the priests went in and stood before the altar and the temple; they wept and said,

37 "You chose this house to be called
by your name,
and to be for your people a
house of prayer and
supplication.
38 Take vengeance on this man and
on his army,
and let them fall by the sword;
remember their blasphemies,
and let them live no longer."

The Death of Nicanor

39 Now Nicanor went out from Jerusalem and encamped in Beth-horon, and the Syrian army joined him. 40 Judas encamped in Adasa with three thousand men. Then Judas prayed and said, 41 "When the messengers from the king spoke blasphemy, your angel went out and struck down one hundred eighty-five thousand of the Assyrians.[e] 42 So also crush this army before us today; let the rest learn that Nicanor[c] has spoken wickedly against the sanctuary, and judge him according to this wickedness."

43 So the armies met in battle on the

c Gk *he* d Gk *they* e Gk *of them*

7.26–32 Sent to strengthen Alcimus and his party, Nicanor used both diplomatic and military strategies against Judas. See 2 Macc 14.11–36 for a different perspective on Nicanor. **7.26** It is not certain that this was the same *Nicanor* who helped Demetrius flee from Rome (see Josephus *Antiquities* 12.402) or who was part of the Emmaus campaign (3.38). **7.27** Whereas in 1 Maccabees Nicanor acts *treacherously* throughout, in 2 Macc 14.18–25 he develops a genuine friendship with Judas and at first tries to mediate between the Jewish factions. **7.31** *Caphar-salama.* Exact location unknown, but likely to the north of Jerusalem. **7.32** *City of David,* the Seleucid-held citadel (Akra) in Jerusalem.

7.33–38 Nicanor's threat to destroy the temple unless Judas is handed over seems to have proceeded more from frustration than from political realism. **7.33** The temple priests, probably loyal to Alcimus and the Seleucids, offered sacrifices and prayers on behalf of the Seleucid *king* (see Ezra 6.10). **7.34** Nicanor *defiled* them, probably by spitting on them, thus making them temporarily unfit for service. **7.36–38** The prayer echoes that of Solomon in 1 Kings 8 (see vv. 29–30, 33–34, 43).

7.39–50 Nicanor's threat against the temple ends in his defeat by Judas and the dismemberment of his body. See 2 Macc 15.1–37. **7.39–40** For an earlier battle near *Beth-horon,* see 3.13–26. Though its exact location is uncertain, *Adasa* was between Jerusalem and Beth-horon. **7.41** The appeal to the expedition of Sennacherib in 701 B.C.E. (2 Kings 19.35; Isa 37.36) suggests that Judas was vastly outnumbered. See also 2 Macc 8.19; 15.22. **7.42** Nicanor's threat *against the sanctuary* (7.33–35) became the rallying cry for Judas's supporters. **7.43–44** When the armies met in March (*Adar*) 161 or 160 B.C.E., Judas's strategy was to kill the

thirteenth day of the month of Adar. The
army of Nicanor was crushed, and he
himself was the first to fall in the battle.
44 When his army saw that Nicanor had
fallen, they threw down their arms and
fled. 45 The Jews[f] pursued them a day's
journey, from Adasa as far as Gazara, and
as they followed they kept sounding the
battle call on the trumpets. 46 People came
out of all the surrounding villages of Ju-
dea, and they outflanked the enemy[g] and
drove them back to their pursuers,[h] so
that they all fell by the sword; not even
one of them was left. 47 Then the Jews[f]
seized the spoils and the plunder; they cut
off Nicanor's head and the right hand
that he had so arrogantly stretched out,
and brought them and displayed them
just outside Jerusalem. 48 The people re-
joiced greatly and celebrated that day as a
day of great gladness. 49 They decreed
that this day should be celebrated each
year on the thirteenth day of Adar. 50 So
the land of Judah had rest for a few days.

A Eulogy of the Romans

8 Now Judas heard of the fame of the
Romans, that they were very strong
and were well-disposed toward all who
made an alliance with them, that they
pledged friendship to those who came to
them, 2 and that they were very strong.
He had been told of their wars and of the
brave deeds that they were doing among
the Gauls, how they had defeated them
and forced them to pay tribute, 3 and
what they had done in the land of Spain
to get control of the silver and gold mines
there, 4 and how they had gained control
of the whole region by their planning and
patience, even though the place was far
distant from them. They also subdued the
kings who came against them from the
ends of the earth, until they crushed them
and inflicted great disaster on them; the
rest paid them tribute every year. 5 They
had crushed in battle and conquered
Philip, and King Perseus of the Macedoni-
ans,[i] and the others who rose up against
them. 6 They also had defeated Antiochus
the Great, king of Asia, who went to fight
against them with one hundred twenty el-
ephants and with cavalry and chariots and
a very large army. He was crushed by
them; 7 they took him alive and decreed
that he and those who would reign after
him should pay a heavy tribute and give
hostages and surrender some of their best
provinces, 8 the countries of India, Media,
and Lydia. These they took from him and
gave to King Eumenes. 9 The Greeks
planned to come and destroy them, 10 but
this became known to them, and they
sent a general against the Greeks[g] and
attacked them. Many of them were
wounded and fell, and the Romans[f] took
captive their wives and children; they
plundered them, conquered the land,
tore down their strongholds, and enslaved
them to this day. 11 The remaining king-
doms and islands, as many as ever op-
posed them, they destroyed and enslaved;
12 but with their friends and those who
rely on them they have kept friendship.
They have subdued kings far and near,
and as many as have heard of their fame
have feared them. 13 Those whom they

f Gk *they* *g* Gk *them* *h* Gk *these*
i Or *Kittim*

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commander Nicanor, thus causing his troops to panic. **7.45** *Gazara* (Gezer) was the closest Seleucid fort to the west. **7.47** Cutting off the *head and the right hand* was originally a Persian punishment. Here it is related to Nicanor's threat against the Jerusalem temple. **7.49** The *thirteenth day of Adar* was celebrated in the first century C.E. but dropped out of the Jewish calendar later on. **7.50** A formula familiar from Judges (e.g., 3.30; 5.31) is modified (*for a few days*) to underline the ongoing Seleucid threat.

8.1–16 An idealized and sometimes inaccurate description of the Romans prepares for the treaty described in the next section. **8.2** The *Gauls* defeated by the Romans were most likely the Cisalpine Gauls, those on the south side of the Alps. **8.3** After the defeat of the Carthaginians in the late third century B.C.E., Spain came increasingly under Roman control. **8.4** Mention of the *kings* introduces the episodes in 8.5–13. **8.5** The Romans defeated *Philip* V of Macedon in 197 B.C.E. and later his son *Perseus* in 168 B.C.E. **8.6–8** *Antiochus* III was defeated by the Romans at Magnesia in 189 B.C.E. and was forced to cede some of his territories to *Eumenes* II of Pergamum. Among the *hostages* was Antiochus IV. Neither *India* nor *Media* was ceded to Eumenes; perhaps the text originally had "Ionia" and "Mysia." **8.9–10** In 146 B.C.E. the Achaean League of Greece was defeated by Lucius Mummius, who in turn destroyed Corinth. These events happened fifteen years after the Jewish embassy to Rome described in 8.17–32.

wish to help and to make kings, they make
kings, and those whom they wish they de-
pose; and they have been greatly exalted.
14 Yet for all this not one of them has put
on a crown or worn purple as a mark of
pride, 15 but they have built for them-
selves a senate chamber, and every day
three hundred twenty senators constantly
deliberate concerning the people, to gov-
ern them well. 16 They trust one man each
year to rule over them and to control all
their land; they all heed the one man, and
there is no envy or jealousy among them.

An Alliance with Rome

17 So Judas chose Eupolemus son of
John son of Accos, and Jason son of Elea-
zar, and sent them to Rome to establish
friendship and alliance, 18 and to free
themselves from the yoke; for they saw
that the kingdom of the Greeks was en-
slaving Israel completely. 19 They went to
Rome, a very long journey; and they en-
tered the senate chamber and spoke as
follows: 20 "Judas, who is also called Mac-
cabeus, and his brothers and the people
of the Jews have sent us to you to establish
alliance and peace with you, so that we
may be enrolled as your allies and
friends." 21 The proposal pleased them,
22 and this is a copy of the letter that they
wrote in reply, on bronze tablets, and sent
to Jerusalem to remain with them there as
a memorial of peace and alliance:

23 "May all go well with the Romans
and with the nation of the Jews at sea and
on land forever, and may sword and en-
emy be far from them. 24 If war comes
first to Rome or to any of their allies in all
their dominion, 25 the nation of the Jews
shall act as their allies wholeheartedly, as
the occasion may indicate to them. 26 To
the enemy that makes war they shall not
give or supply grain, arms, money, or
ships, just as Rome has decided; and they
shall keep their obligations without receiv-
ing any return. 27 In the same way, if war
comes first to the nation of the Jews, the
Romans shall willingly act as their allies, as
the occasion may indicate to them. 28 And
to their enemies there shall not be given
grain, arms, money, or ships, just as Rome
has decided; and they shall keep these ob-
ligations and do so without deceit. 29 Thus
on these terms the Romans make a treaty
with the Jewish people. 30 If after these
terms are in effect both parties shall de-
termine to add or delete anything, they
shall do so at their discretion, and any ad-
dition or deletion that they may make
shall be valid.

31 "Concerning the wrongs that King
Demetrius is doing to them, we have writ-
ten to him as follows, 'Why have you
made your yoke heavy on our friends and
allies the Jews? 32 If now they appeal again
for help against you, we will defend their
rights and fight you on sea and on land.' "

Bacchides Returns to Judea

9 When Demetrius heard that Nicanor
and his army had fallen in battle, he
sent Bacchides and Alcimus into the land
of Judah a second time, and with them

8.15 The senate had three hundred members, not *three hundred twenty*, and did not meet *every day*. **8.16** Two consuls, not *one*, were chosen every year.

8.17–32 The Romans were eager to extend their influence eastward and were displeased by the actions of Demetrius. The Jews needed an ally against the Seleucids. But in the period covered by 1 Maccabees nothing comes of the alliance until 14.16–24. **8.17** *Eupolemus*, from the priestly clan of Hakkoz (1 Chr 24.10), was the son of the man who had won concessions from Antiochus III (2 Macc 4.11). **8.19** Their *very long journey* to Rome (over a month) may have taken place in 161 B.C.E., when Demetrius arrived in Syria and before the defeat of Nicanor. **8.22** The original treaty was inscribed on *bronze tablets* and kept in Rome. The copy was presumably written in Latin or Greek, translated into Hebrew in the first edition of 1 Maccabees, and translated into Greek in the extant text of 1 Maccabees. **8.23–30** The treaty is regarded as basically authentic by most scholars today. After the opening (v. 23), there are parallel clauses stipulating that each side will come to the aid of the other if war breaks out (vv. 24–26, 27–28). **8.25** The clause *as the occasion may indicate to them* leaves a good deal of flexibility. **8.26** *Without receiving any return* is probably a mistake in the translation process; see the parallel clause *without deceit* in v. 28, which corresponds to the usual treaty form. **8.30** Possible alterations had to be done by the common consent of *both parties*. **8.31–32** The threatening letter to *Demetrius* I is cast in biblical idiom (*you made your yoke heavy*) and was never acted upon by the Romans. It may not have been part of the original treaty.

9.1–10 To avenge the defeat of Nicanor,

the right wing of the army. 2 They went by
the road that leads to Gilgal and en-
camped against Mesaloth in Arbela, and
they took it and killed many people. 3 In
the first month of the one hundred fifty-
second year[j] they encamped against Je-
rusalem; 4 then they marched off and
went to Berea with twenty thousand foot
soldiers and two thousand cavalry.

5 Now Judas was encamped in Elasa,
and with him were three thousand picked
men. 6 When they saw the huge number
of the enemy forces, they were greatly
frightened, and many slipped away from
the camp, until no more than eight hun-
dred of them were left.

7 When Judas saw that his army had
slipped away and the battle was imminent,
he was crushed in spirit, for he had no
time to assemble them. 8 He became faint,
but he said to those who were left, "Let us
get up and go against our enemies. We
may have the strength to fight them."
9 But they tried to dissuade him, saying,
"We do not have the strength. Let us
rather save our own lives now, and let us
come back with our kindred and fight
them; we are too few." 10 But Judas said,
"Far be it from us to do such a thing as to
flee from them. If our time has come, let
us die bravely for our kindred, and leave
no cause to question our honor."

The Last Battle of Judas

11 Then the army of Bacchides[k]
marched out from the camp and took its
stand for the encounter. The cavalry was
divided into two companies, and the sling-
ers and the archers went ahead of the
army, as did all the chief warriors. 12 Bac-
chides was on the right wing. Flanked by
the two companies, the phalanx advanced
to the sound of the trumpets; and the
men with Judas also blew their trumpets.
13 The earth was shaken by the noise of
the armies, and the battle raged from
morning until evening.

14 Judas saw that Bacchides and the
strength of his army were on the right;
then all the stouthearted men went with
him, 15 and they crushed the right wing,
and he pursued them as far as Mount
Azotus. 16 When those on the left wing
saw that the right wing was crushed, they
turned and followed close behind Judas
and his men. 17 The battle became desper-
ate, and many on both sides were
wounded and fell. 18 Judas also fell, and
the rest fled.

19 Then Jonathan and Simon took
their brother Judas and buried him in the
tomb of their ancestors at Modein, 20 and
wept for him. All Israel made great lam-
entation for him; they mourned many
days and said,

21 "How is the mighty fallen,
the savior of Israel!"

22 Now the rest of the acts of Judas, and
his wars and the brave deeds that he did,
and his greatness, have not been re-
corded, but they were very many.

Jonathan Succeeds Judas

23 After the death of Judas, the rene-
gades emerged in all parts of Israel; all

j 160 B.C. *k* Gk lacks *of Bacchides*

Demetrius sent Bacchides, who confronted the vastly outnumbered army of Judas north of Jerusalem. **9.1** The *right wing* refers to the right flank of the army in battle formation (as in 9.12). **9.2** *Gilgal* may be an error for Galilee. *Mesaloth* is probably a misreading of a Hebrew common noun ("trails, highways, ascents"). **9.4** *Berea* was about ten miles north of Jerusalem, opposite *Elasa* (v. 5, precise location uncertain). **9.5–6** The number of deserters (from *three thousand* down to *eight hundred* troops) is large and may be exaggerated to explain Judas's defeat. **9.8–10** Judas's strategy was to seize the initiative and surprise his numerically superior opponents.

9.11–22 After a vivid description of the battle of Elasa, there is mourning over the fallen Judas, who is celebrated as a biblical hero. **9.12** The *phalanx* (see 6.35, 38, 45; 10.82) refers to the heavy infantry unit of soldiers carrying spears and shields. **9.14** Judas's strategy was to destroy Bacchides and the *right* flank of his army. But he found himself trapped in a pincer maneuver on the part of the Seleucids (9.16). **9.15** There is no *Mount Azotus* (Ashdod). The Hebrew original probably read "the mountain slopes." **9.19** For the Maccabean family tomb at *Modein*, see 2.70; 13.27–30. **9.21** The lament combines material from 2 Sam 1.25, 27; Judg 3.9. **9.22** The concluding formula (*the rest of the acts of Judas*) echoes the refrain in 1–2 Kings about the kings of Israel and Judah (e.g., 1 Kings 11.41).

9.23–31 With the death of Judas, the reemergence of the renegade Jews, a famine, and the punishment of Judas's supporters, the rebellion

the wrongdoers reappeared. [24] In those
days a very great famine occurred, and
the country went over to their side. [25] Bac-
chides chose the godless and put them in
charge of the country. [26] They made in-
quiry and searched for the friends of Ju-
das, and brought them to Bacchides, who
took vengeance on them and made sport
of them. [27] So there was great distress in
Israel, such as had not been since the time
that prophets ceased to appear among
them.

28 Then all the friends of Judas as-
sembled and said to Jonathan, [29] "Since
the death of your brother Judas there has
been no one like him to go against our
enemies and Bacchides, and to deal with
those of our nation who hate us. [30] Now
therefore we have chosen you today to
take his place as our ruler and leader, to
fight our battle." [31] So Jonathan accepted
the leadership at that time in place of his
brother Judas.

The Campaigns of Jonathan

32 When Bacchides learned of this, he
tried to kill him. [33] But Jonathan and his
brother Simon and all who were with him
heard of it, and they fled into the wilder-
ness of Tekoa and camped by the water of
the pool of Asphar. [34] Bacchides found
this out on the sabbath day, and he with
all his army crossed the Jordan.

35 So Jonathan[l] sent his brother as
leader of the multitude and begged the
Nabateans, who were his friends, for per-
mission to store with them the great
amount of baggage that they had. [36] But
the family of Jambri from Medeba came
out and seized John and all that he had,
and left with it.

37 After these things it was reported
to Jonathan and his brother Simon, "The
family of Jambri are celebrating a great
wedding, and are conducting the bride, a
daughter of one of the great nobles of Ca-
naan, from Nadabath with a large escort."
[38] Remembering how their brother John
had been killed, they went up and hid un-
der cover of the mountain. [39] They looked
out and saw a tumultuous procession with
a great amount of baggage; and the bride-
groom came out with his friends and
his brothers to meet them with tambou-
rines and musicians and many weapons.
[40] Then they rushed on them from the
ambush and began killing them. Many
were wounded and fell, and the rest fled
to the mountain; and the Jews[m] took all
their goods. [41] So the wedding was turned
into mourning and the voice of their mu-
sicians into a funeral dirge. [42] After they
had fully avenged the blood of their
brother, they returned to the marshes of
the Jordan.

43 When Bacchides heard of this, he
came with a large force on the sabbath
day to the banks of the Jordan. [44] And
Jonathan said to those with him, "Let us
get up now and fight for our lives, for
today things are not as they were before.
[45] For look! the battle is in front of us and
behind us; the water of the Jordan is on
this side and on that, with marsh and
thicket; there is no place to turn. [46] Cry
out now to Heaven that you may be
delivered from the hands of our ene-
mies." [47] So the battle began, and Jonathan

l Gk *he* *m* Gk *they*

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reached its lowest point. Jonathan is chosen to carry on the movement. **9.24** During a *famine* the government had control over the food supply and thus could win people *over to their side*. **9.27** Probably a reference to the postexilic *prophets* Haggai and Zechariah or Malachi; see 1 Macc 4.46; 14.41 for hope of a new prophet arising. **9.28–31** Why *Jonathan* was preferred over Simon is not explained. As *ruler and leader* Jonathan acts like the judges of old (Judg 11.11).

9.32–49 Jonathan avenges the death of his brother John east of the Jordan and narrowly escapes from Bacchides at the Jordan. **9.33** The *wilderness of Tekoa* (fifteen miles southeast of Jerusalem) was a safe refuge for Jonathan (see 2 Sam 14.1–17; 2 Chr 20.20). The *pool of Asphar* was probably a cistern. **9.34** The report of Bacchides' movement is out of place here; it properly belongs in 9.43, where it is repeated. **9.35–36** For the *Nabateans* as *friends* of the Maccabean movement, see 5.25. It is not clear whether the family of *Jambri* from *Medeba* (near the northeastern tip of the Dead Sea) were Nabateans. That John (see 2.2) was killed is made clear in 9.42. **9.37** There is much speculation but no certainty about *Canaan* (a code name for Nabatean traders? an archaism? an origin west of the Jordan?) and *Nadabath* (Nebo? Medeba? other?). **9.43–49** It is difficult to discern from the text the places and strategies of the armies. The basic point is that in swampy area north of the Dead Sea Jonathan eluded the trap sprung by Bacchi-

stretched out his hand to strike Bacchides,
but he eluded him and went to the rear.
48 Then Jonathan and the men with him
leaped into the Jordan and swam across to
the other side, and the enemy[n] did not
cross the Jordan to attack them. 49 And
about one thousand of Bacchides' men
fell that day.

Bacchides Builds Fortifications

50 Then Bacchides[o] returned to Je-
rusalem and built strong cities in Judea:
the fortress in Jericho, and Emmaus, and
Beth-horon, and Bethel, and Timnath,
and[p] Pharathon, and Tephon, with high
walls and gates and bars. 51 And he placed
garrisons in them to harass Israel. 52 He
also fortified the town of Beth-zur, and
Gazara, and the citadel, and in them he
put troops and stores of food. 53 And he
took the sons of the leading men of the
land as hostages and put them under
guard in the citadel at Jerusalem.

54 In the one hundred and fifty-third
year,[q] in the second month, Alcimus gave
orders to tear down the wall of the inner
court of the sanctuary. He tore down the
work of the prophets! 55 But he only be-
gan to tear it down, for at that time Alci-
mus was stricken and his work was
hindered; his mouth was stopped and he
was paralyzed, so that he could no longer
say a word or give commands concerning
his house. 56 And Alcimus died at that
time in great agony. 57 When Bacchides
saw that Alcimus was dead, he returned to
the king, and the land of Judah had rest
for two years.

The End of the War

58 Then all the lawless plotted and
said, "See! Jonathan and his men are liv-
ing in quiet and confidence. So now let us
bring Bacchides back, and he will capture
them all in one night." 59 And they went
and consulted with him. 60 He started to
come with a large force, and secretly sent
letters to all his allies in Judea, telling
them to seize Jonathan and his men; but
they were unable to do it, because their
plan became known. 61 And Jonathan's
men[n] seized about fifty of the men of the
country who were leaders in this treach-
ery, and killed them.

62 Then Jonathan with his men, and
Simon, withdrew to Bethbasi in the wil-
derness; he rebuilt the parts of it that had
been demolished, and they fortified it.
63 When Bacchides learned of this, he as-
sembled all his forces, and sent orders to
the men of Judea. 64 Then he came and
encamped against Bethbasi; he fought
against it for many days and made ma-
chines of war.

65 But Jonathan left his brother Si-
mon in the town, while he went out into
the country; and he went with only a few
men. 66 He struck down Odomera and his
kindred and the people of Phasiron in
their tents. 67 Then he[r] began to attack
and went into battle with his forces; and
Simon and his men sallied out from the
town and set fire to the machines of war.
68 They fought with Bacchides, and he
was crushed by them. They pressed him

n Gk *they* *o* Gk *he* *p* Some authorities omit *and* *q* 159 B.C. *r* Other ancient authorities read *they*

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des. This is the first report of actual fighting on a sabbath (see 2.40–41). **9.49** The number of casualties (*one thousand*) in Bacchides' army is probably exaggerated. In fact, the encounter was probably a defeat for Jonathan, who was fortunate to escape alive.

9.50–57 The Seleucid triumph represented by Bacchides' fortifications and Alcimus's remodeling the temple is cut short by Alcimus's death, thus giving Jonathan the chance to regroup and gain power. **9.50–52** Bacchides secured key places in northern *Judea* and southern Samaria (Timnath, Pharathon, Tephon) against Jonathan. **9.53** To secure the cooperation of their parents he held in the citadel as *hostages* the sons of Jewish leaders. **9.54** The *wall of the inner court* separated the Holy of Holies (reserved for Israelite priests) from the rest of the temple area. The *prophets* Haggai and Zechariah encouraged and oversaw the building of the Second Temple. **9.55–56** The stroke and subsequent death of Alcimus were viewed as punishment for his evil deeds in altering the temple architecture.

9.58–73 Setbacks for Bacchides and the renegade Jews result in a peace with Jonathan, who takes on the role of "judge" at Michmash. The high-priesthood was most likely vacant between 159 and 152 B.C.E. **9.60** The plot to kill Jonathan in 157 B.C.E. *became known* and was thus a defeat for the renegade Jews and an embarrassment for Bacchides. **9.62** *Bethbasi*, a fort south of Bethlehem (see 2 Chr 26.10), toward Tekoa. **9.66** *Odomera* and the *people of Phasiron* were local people who had allied themselves with Bacchi-

very hard, for his plan and his expedition had been in vain. 69 So he was very angry at the renegades who had counseled him to come into the country, and he killed many of them. Then he decided to go back to his own land.

70 When Jonathan learned of this, he sent ambassadors to him to make peace with him and obtain release of the captives. 71 He agreed, and did as he said; and he swore to Jonathan[s] that he would not try to harm him as long as he lived. 72 He restored to him the captives whom he had taken previously from the land of Judah; then he turned and went back to his own land, and did not come again into their territory. 73 Thus the sword ceased from Israel. Jonathan settled in Michmash and began to judge the people; and he destroyed the godless out of Israel.

Revolt of Alexander Epiphanes

10 In the one hundred sixtieth year[t] Alexander Epiphanes, son of Antiochus, landed and occupied Ptolemais. They welcomed him, and there he began to reign. 2 When King Demetrius heard of it, he assembled a very large army and marched out to meet him in battle. 3 Demetrius sent Jonathan a letter in peaceable words to honor him; 4 for he said to himself, "Let us act first to make peace with him[u] before he makes peace with Alexander against us, 5 for he will remember all the wrongs that we did to him and to his brothers and his nation." 6 So Demetrius[v] gave him authority to recruit troops, to equip them with arms, and to become his ally; and he commanded that the hostages in the citadel should be released to him.

7 Then Jonathan came to Jerusalem and read the letter in the hearing of all the people and of those in the citadel. 8 They were greatly alarmed when they heard that the king had given him authority to recruit troops. 9 But those in the citadel released the hostages to Jonathan, and he returned them to their parents.

10 And Jonathan took up residence in Jerusalem and began to rebuild and restore the city. 11 He directed those who were doing the work to build the walls and encircle Mount Zion with squared stones, for better fortification; and they did so.

12 Then the foreigners who were in the strongholds that Bacchides had built fled; 13 all of them left their places and went back to their own lands. 14 Only in Beth-zur did some remain who had forsaken the law and the commandments, for it served as a place of refuge.

15 Now King Alexander heard of all the promises that Demetrius had sent to Jonathan, and he heard of the battles that Jonathan[v] and his brothers had fought, of the brave deeds that they had done, and of the troubles that they had endured. 16 So he said, "Shall we find another such man? Come now, we will make him our friend and ally." 17 And he wrote a letter and sent it to him, in the following words:

Jonathan Becomes High Priest

18 "King Alexander to his brother Jonathan, greetings. 19 We have heard about you, that you are a mighty warrior

s Gk *him* t 152 B.C. u Gk *them* v Gk *he*

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des. **9.69** Bacchides' anger is now directed *at the renegades,* perhaps out of frustration at having been called on so many times to resolve internal conflicts in Judea. **9.70–72** With only *Jonathan* remaining as a significant political figure in Judea, Bacchides comes to terms with him. **9.73** *Michmash,* nine miles north of Jerusalem, had been the base of an earlier Israelite kingdom (1 Sam 13.2) and the scene of an earlier Jonathan's victory (1 Sam 14.5–31). It was Jonathan's headquarters from 157 to 152 B.C.E.

10.1–17 The appearance of Alexander Balas in 152 B.C.E. as a claimant to the Seleucid throne enabled Jonathan to gain concessions from him and Demetrius I. **10.1** *Alexander Epiphanes* (also called Balas, from the Hebrew *ba'al*) claimed to be the son of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. **10.3** Demetrius I recognized that Jonathan was the only remaining power in Judea. **10.6** The *hostages* were sons of the leading men of Judea (see 9.53). **10.11** The *walls* of Jerusalem had been destroyed on several occasions in recent years (1.31; 6.62). *Mount Zion,* the temple area. **10.14** The renegade Jews remained not only at *Beth-zur* (9.52) but also in Gazara (13.43). **10.15–16** As he made his move against Demetrius, Alexander wanted to avoid having Jonathan as an enemy at his rear.

10.18–25 Alexander offers Jonathan the Jewish high-priesthood, and Jonathan seizes the

and worthy to be our friend. 20 And so we
have appointed you today to be the high
priest of your nation; you are to be called
the king's Friend and you are to take our
side and keep friendship with us." He also
sent him a purple robe and a golden
crown.

21 So Jonathan put on the sacred vest-
ments in the seventh month of the one
hundred sixtieth year,[w] at the festival of
booths,[x] and he recruited troops and
equipped them with arms in abundance.
22 When Demetrius heard of these things
he was distressed and said, 23 "What is this
that we have done? Alexander has gotten
ahead of us in forming a friendship with
the Jews to strengthen himself. 24 I also
will write them words of encouragement
and promise them honor and gifts, so that
I may have their help." 25 So he sent a
message to them in the following words:

A Letter from Demetrius to Jonathan

"King Demetrius to the nation of the
Jews, greetings. 26 Since you have kept
your agreement with us and have contin-
ued your friendship with us, and have not
sided with our enemies, we have heard of
it and rejoiced. 27 Now continue still to
keep faith with us, and we will repay you
with good for what you do for us. 28 We
will grant you many immunities and give
you gifts.

29 "I now free you and exempt all the
Jews from payment of tribute and salt tax
and crown levies, 30 and instead of collect-
ing the third of the grain and the half of
the fruit of the trees that I should receive,
I release them from this day and hence-
forth. I will not collect them from the land
of Judah or from the three districts added
to it from Samaria and Galilee, from this
day and for all time. 31 Jerusalem and its
environs, its tithes and its revenues, shall
be holy and free from tax. 32 I release also
my control of the citadel in Jerusalem and
give it to the high priest, so that he may
station in it men of his own choice to
guard it. 33 And everyone of the Jews
taken as a captive from the land of Judah
into any part of my kingdom, I set free
without payment; and let all officials can-
cel also the taxes on their livestock.

34 "All the festivals and sabbaths and
new moons and appointed days, and the
three days before a festival and the three
after a festival—let them all be days of
immunity and release for all the Jews who
are in my kingdom. 35 No one shall have
authority to exact anything from them or
annoy any of them about any matter.

36 "Let Jews be enrolled in the king's
forces to the number of thirty thousand
men, and let the maintenance be given
them that is due to all the forces of the
king. 37 Let some of them be stationed in
the great strongholds of the king, and let
some of them be put in positions of trust
in the kingdom. Let their officers and
leaders be of their own number, and let
them live by their own laws, just as the
king has commanded in the land of
Judah.

38 "As for the three districts that have
been added to Judea from the country of
Samaria, let them be annexed to Judea so
that they may be considered to be under
one ruler and obey no other authority
than the high priest. 39 Ptolemais and the

w 152 B.C. x Or *tabernacles*

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opportunity. **10.20** The office of *high priest* had been vacant since the death of Alcimus. As Seleucid king, Alexander could appoint the Jewish high priest (2 Macc 4.7, 23–24), and Jonathan was from a priestly family (1 Macc 2.1). But he was not from the right high-priestly family. The *purple robe* and *golden crown* symbolized Jonathan's new offices as high priest and Friend of the king. **10.21** At the *festival of booths* (see Lev 23.39–43) in October 152 B.C.E. *Jonathan* assumed the office of Jewish high priest. Opposition to his claim may have been the occasion for the beginning of the Qumran community and the building of a rival temple by Onias IV at Leontopolis in Egypt (see 2 Macc 1.1–9).

10.25–45 The letter from Demetrius to Jonathan may have been originally intended to win the Jewish people away from Jonathan. In this context, however, it is used to confirm his privileges as high priest (10.32, 38). **10.25–28** The letter is addressed to *the nation of the Jews*, not to Jonathan directly. The claim that they *have not sided with* Demetrius's *enemies* overlooks Jonathan's acceptance of the high-priesthood from Alexander Balas. **10.29–45** The list of promises includes exemption from various taxes, recognition of Jerusalem as a holy city, release of Jewish captives, religious freedom for Jews, maintenance for Jewish soldiers, annexation of territory, subsidy for Jerusalem, right of asylum in Jerusalem, and money to rebuild Jerusalem.

land adjoining it I have given as a gift to
the sanctuary in Jerusalem, to meet the
necessary expenses of the sanctuary. 40 I
also grant fifteen thousand shekels of sil-
ver yearly out of the king's revenues from
appropriate places. 41 And all the addi-
tional funds that the government officials
have not paid as they did in the first
years,[y] they shall give from now on for
the service of the temple.[z] 42 Moreover,
the five thousand shekels of silver that my
officials[a] have received every year from
the income of the services of the temple,
this too is canceled, because it belongs to
the priests who minister there. 43 And all
who take refuge at the temple in Jerusa-
lem, or in any of its precincts, because
they owe money to the king or are in debt,
let them be released and receive back all
their property in my kingdom.

44 "Let the cost of rebuilding and re-
storing the structures of the sanctuary be
paid from the revenues of the king.
45 And let the cost of rebuilding the walls
of Jerusalem and fortifying it all around,
and the cost of rebuilding the walls in
Judea, also be paid from the revenues of
the king."

Death of Demetrius

46 When Jonathan and the people
heard these words, they did not believe or
accept them, because they remembered
the great wrongs that Demetrius[b] had
done in Israel and how much he had op-
pressed them. 47 They favored Alexander,
because he had been the first to speak
peaceable words to them, and they re-
mained his allies all his days.

48 Now King Alexander assembled
large forces and encamped opposite De-
metrius. 49 The two kings met in battle,
and the army of Demetrius fled, and
Alexander[c] pursued him and defeated
them. 50 He pressed the battle strongly
until the sun set, and on that day Deme-
trius fell.

Treaty of Ptolemy and Alexander

51 Then Alexander sent ambassadors
to Ptolemy king of Egypt with the follow-
ing message: 52 "Since I have returned to
my kingdom and have taken my seat on
the throne of my ancestors, and estab-
lished my rule—for I crushed Demetrius
and gained control of our country; 53 I
met him in battle, and he and his army
were crushed by us, and we have taken
our seat on the throne of his kingdom—
54 now therefore let us establish friend-
ship with one another; give me now your
daughter as my wife, and I will become
your son-in-law, and will make gifts to you
and to her in keeping with your position."

55 Ptolemy the king replied and said,
"Happy was the day on which you re-
turned to the land of your ancestors and
took your seat on the throne of their king-
dom. 56 And now I will do for you as you
wrote, but meet me at Ptolemais, so that
we may see one another, and I will be-
come your father-in-law, as you have
said."

57 So Ptolemy set out from Egypt, he
and his daughter Cleopatra, and came
to Ptolemais in the one hundred sixty-
second year.[d] 58 King Alexander met him,
and Ptolemy[b] gave him his daughter
Cleopatra in marriage, and celebrated her
wedding at Ptolemais with great pomp, as
kings do.

59 Then King Alexander wrote to
Jonathan to come and meet him. 60 So he
went with pomp to Ptolemais and met the
two kings; he gave them and their Friends
silver and gold and many gifts, and found
favor with them. 61 A group of malcon-
tents from Israel, renegades, gathered to-
gether against him to accuse him; but the
king paid no attention to them. 62 The
king gave orders to take off Jonathan's

y Meaning of Gk uncertain *z* Gk *house*
a Gk *they* *b* Gk *he* *c* Other ancient authorities read *Alexander fled, and Demetrius*
d 150 B.C.

10.46–50 Jonathan's distrust of Demetrius is borne out by the latter's defeat at the hands of Alexander. **10.47** As 1 Macc 10.3–6, 15 indicate, Demetrius had been the *first* to offer peace. **10.50** *Demetrius* was killed in battle in 150 B.C.E.

10.51–66 The marriage alliance between the Ptolemies and Seleucids served as the occasion for Jonathan's advancement. **10.51** *Ptolemy king of Egypt* was Ptolemy VI Philometor (see 1.18). **10.54** His *daughter* was Cleopatra Thea (10.58). Marriage alliances between the Seleucids and the Ptolemies were sometimes unsuccessful (see also Dan 2.43; 11.17). **10.56** *Ptolemais* (Acco) on the Palestinian coast was a neutral site. **10.60–61** Where Jonathan got the *gifts* is not said. His Jewish opponents, who are dismissed as *malcontents* and *renegades*, may have objected to his

garments and to clothe him in purple,
and they did so. 63 The king also seated
him at his side; and he said to his officers,
"Go out with him into the middle of the
city and proclaim that no one is to bring
charges against him about any matter,
and let no one annoy him for any reason."
64 When his accusers saw the honor that
was paid him, in accord with the procla-
mation, and saw him clothed in purple,
they all fled. 65 Thus the king honored
him and enrolled him among his chief[e]
Friends, and made him general and
governor of the province. 66 And Jona-
than returned to Jerusalem in peace and
gladness.

Apollonius Is Defeated by Jonathan

67 In the one hundred sixty-fifth
year[f] Demetrius son of Demetrius came
from Crete to the land of his ancestors.
68 When King Alexander heard of it, he
was greatly distressed and returned to
Antioch. 69 And Demetrius appointed Ap-
ollonius the governor of Coelesyria, and
he assembled a large force and encamped
against Jamnia. Then he sent the follow-
ing message to the high priest Jonathan:
70 "You are the only one to rise up
against us, and I have fallen into ridicule
and disgrace because of you. Why do you
assume authority against us in the hill
country? 71 If you now have confidence in
your forces, come down to the plain to
meet us, and let us match strength with
each other there, for I have with me the
power of the cities. 72 Ask and learn who I
am and who the others are that are help-
ing us. People will tell you that you cannot
stand before us, for your ancestors were
twice put to flight in their own land.
73 And now you will not be able to with-
stand my cavalry and such an army in the
plain, where there is no stone or pebble,
or place to flee."

74 When Jonathan heard the words of
Apollonius, his spirit was aroused. He
chose ten thousand men and set out from
Jerusalem, and his brother Simon met
him to help him. 75 He encamped before
Joppa, but the people of the city closed its
gates, for Apollonius had a garrison in
Joppa. 76 So they fought against it, and
the people of the city became afraid and
opened the gates, and Jonathan gained
possession of Joppa.

77 When Apollonius heard of it, he
mustered three thousand cavalry and a
large army, and went to Azotus as though
he were going farther. At the same time
he advanced into the plain, for he had a
large troop of cavalry and put confidence
in it. 78 Jonathan[g] pursued him to Azo-
tus, and the armies engaged in battle.
79 Now Apollonius had secretly left a
thousand cavalry behind them. 80 Jona-
than learned that there was an ambush
behind him, for they surrounded his
army and shot arrows at his men from
early morning until late afternoon. 81 But
his men stood fast, as Jonathan had com-
manded, and the enemy's[h] horses grew
tired.

82 Then Simon brought forward his
force and engaged the phalanx in battle
(for the cavalry was exhausted); they were
overwhelmed by him and fled, 83 and the
cavalry was dispersed in the plain. They
fled to Azotus and entered Beth-dagon,
the temple of their idol, for safety. 84 But
Jonathan burned Azotus and the sur-
rounding towns and plundered them;
and the temple of Dagon, and those who
had taken refuge in it, he burned with
fire. 85 The number of those who fell by
the sword, with those burned alive, came
to eight thousand.

86 Then Jonathan left there and en-
camped against Askalon, and the people

e Gk *first* *f* 147 B.C. *g* Gk *he* *h* Gk *their*

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taxing or plundering them. **10.65** Jonathan is promoted from Friend to *chief Friend* and made the military and political ruler in Judea.

10.67–89 A plan to remove Jonathan fails and results in even greater honors for Jonathan when he defeats Apollonius. **10.67** *Demetrius* II was about fourteen in 147 B.C.E. **10.69** As governor of *Coelesyria* (originally the region between the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon mountains, but later a designation also for Palestine) *Apollonius* was officially Jonathan's superior. *Jamnia* (Yavneh) was on the coast. **10.72–73** Apollonius's taunt that the Jews had been *twice put to flight* alludes to Judas's defeats at Beth-zechariah (6.47) and Elasa (9.18). The *pebble* recalls the David and Goliath episode (1 Sam 17.40, 49). **10.75–76** By taking *Joppa* (north of Jamnia) Jonathan cut Apollonius off from Demetrius II. **10.77–83** By heading south to *Azotus* (Ashdod) Apollonius also lured Jonathan out onto level ground (see 10.71, 73). **10.84–85** For Judas's similar treatment of other pagan sanctuaries, see 5.44, 68. **10.86** *As-*

of the city came out to meet him with great pomp.

87 He and those with him then returned to Jerusalem with a large amount of booty. 88 When King Alexander heard of these things, he honored Jonathan still more; 89 and he sent to him a golden buckle, such as it is the custom to give to the King's Kinsmen. He also gave him Ekron and all its environs as his possession.

Ptolemy Invades Syria

11 Then the king of Egypt gathered great forces, like the sand by the seashore, and many ships; and he tried to get possession of Alexander's kingdom by trickery and add it to his own kingdom. 2 He set out for Syria with peaceable words, and the people of the towns opened their gates to him and went to meet him, for King Alexander had commanded them to meet him, since he was Alexander's[i] father-in-law. 3 But when Ptolemy entered the towns he stationed forces as a garrison in each town.

4 When he[j] approached Azotus, they showed him the burnt-out temple of Dagon, and Azotus and its suburbs destroyed, and the corpses lying about, and the charred bodies of those whom Jonathan[k] had burned in the war, for they had piled them in heaps along his route. 5 They also told the king what Jonathan had done, to throw blame on him; but the king kept silent. 6 Jonathan met the king at Joppa with pomp, and they greeted one another and spent the night there. 7 And Jonathan went with the king as far as the river called Eleutherus; then he returned to Jerusalem.

8 So King Ptolemy gained control of the coastal cities as far as Seleucia by the sea, and he kept devising wicked designs against Alexander. 9 He sent envoys to King Demetrius, saying, "Come, let us make a covenant with each other, and I will give you in marriage my daughter who was Alexander's wife, and you shall reign over your father's kingdom. 10 I now regret that I gave him my daughter, for he has tried to kill me." 11 He threw blame on Alexander[l] because he coveted his kingdom. 12 So he took his daughter away from him and gave her to Demetrius. He was estranged from Alexander, and their enmity became manifest.

13 Then Ptolemy entered Antioch and put on the crown of Asia. Thus he put two crowns on his head, the crown of Egypt and that of Asia. 14 Now King Alexander was in Cilicia at that time, because the people of that region were in revolt. 15 When Alexander heard of it, he came against him in battle. Ptolemy marched out and met him with a strong force, and put him to flight. 16 So Alexander fled into Arabia to find protection there, and King Ptolemy was triumphant. 17 Zabdiel the Arab cut off the head of Alexander and sent it to Ptolemy. 18 But King Ptolemy died three days later, and his troops in the strongholds were killed by the inhabitants of the strongholds. 19 So Demetrius became king in the one hundred sixty-seventh year.[m]

Jonathan's Diplomacy

20 In those days Jonathan assembled the Judeans to attack the citadel in Jerusalem, and he built many engines of war to

i Gk *his* *j* Other ancient authorities read *they*
k Gk *he* *l* Gk *him* *m* 145 B.C.

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kalon, the harbor city south of Azotus, offered no resistance. **10.89** *Kinsmen* of the king fastened their purple cloaks with a golden buckle. *Ekron*, another ancient Philistine city, was on the road from Jerusalem to the coast.

11.1–19 The attempt by Ptolemy VI to annex the Seleucid kingdom ends in his death and that of Alexander Balas, thus allowing Demetrius II to take power in 145 B.C.E. **11.1** Other ancient sources cast doubt on the claim that the sole motive of Ptolemy VI Philometor was *to get possession of Alexander's* (Seleucid) *kingdom* (see also 11.11). **11.3** The *garrisons* that Ptolemy VI established in the coastal towns were destroyed after his death (see 11.18). **11.4–5** For what Jonathan did at *Azotus*, see 10.83–85. **11.7** The river *Eleutherus*, two hundred miles north of Joppa, marked the southern border of the Syrian territory of the Seleucids. **11.8** *Seleucia*, the port city of Antioch, was loyal to Demetrius II. **11.9–12** For the marriage alliance between Ptolemy and Alexander, see 10.51–58. **11.15** The *battle* was fought at the river Oenoparus near Antioch in the summer of 145 B.C.E. Ptolemy VI died (11.18) from wounds inflicted in this battle. **11.16** *Arabia* here refers to the northern desert, east of Damascus.

11.20–37 After another failed attempt at dislodging the citadel, Jonathan meets Demetrius II at Ptolemais, where he gains important conces-

use against it. 21 But certain renegades
who hated their nation went to the king
and reported to him that Jonathan was
besieging the citadel. 22 When he heard
this he was angry, and as soon as he heard
it he set out and came to Ptolemais; and
he wrote Jonathan not to continue the
siege, but to meet him for a conference at
Ptolemais as quickly as possible.

23 When Jonathan heard this, he gave
orders to continue the siege. He chose
some of the elders of Israel and some of
the priests, and put himself in danger,
24 for he went to the king at Ptolemais,
taking silver and gold and clothing and
numerous other gifts. And he won his fa-
vor. 25 Although certain renegades of his
nation kept making complaints against
him, 26 the king treated him as his prede-
cessors had treated him; he exalted him in
the presence of all his Friends. 27 He con-
firmed him in the high priesthood and in
as many other honors as he had formerly
had, and caused him to be reckoned
among his chief[n] Friends. 28 Then Jona-
than asked the king to free Judea and the
three districts of Samaria[o] from tribute,
and promised him three hundred talents.
29 The king consented, and wrote a letter
to Jonathan about all these things; its con-
tents were as follows:

30 "King Demetrius to his brother
Jonathan and to the nation of the Jews,
greetings. 31 This copy of the letter that
we wrote concerning you to our kinsman
Lasthenes we have written to you also, so
that you may know what it says. 32 'King
Demetrius to his father Lasthenes, greet-
ings. 33 We have determined to do good to
the nation of the Jews, who are our
friends and fulfill their obligations to us,
because of the goodwill they show toward
us. 34 We have confirmed as their posses-
sion both the territory of Judea and the
three districts of Aphairema and Lydda
and Rathamin; the latter, with all the re-
gion bordering them, were added to Ju-
dea from Samaria. To all those who offer
sacrifice in Jerusalem we have granted re-
lease from[p] the royal taxes that the king
formerly received from them each year,
from the crops of the land and the fruit of
the trees. 35 And the other payments
henceforth due to us of the tithes, and the
taxes due to us, and the salt pits and the
crown taxes due to us—from all these we
shall grant them release. 36 And not one
of these grants shall be canceled from this
time on forever. 37 Now therefore take
care to make a copy of this, and let it be
given to Jonathan and put up in a con-
spicuous place on the holy mountain.' "

The Intrigue of Trypho

38 When King Demetrius saw that the
land was quiet before him and that there
was no opposition to him, he dismissed all
his troops, all of them to their own homes,
except the foreign troops that he had re-
cruited from the islands of the nations. So
all the troops who had served under his
predecessors hated him. 39 A certain Try-
pho had formerly been one of Alexan-
der's supporters; he saw that all the
troops were grumbling against Deme-
trius. So he went to Imalkue the Arab,
who was bringing up Antiochus, the
young son of Alexander, 40 and insistently

n Gk *first* *o* Cn: Gk *the three districts and Samaria*
p Or *Samaria, for all those who offer sacrifice in Jerusalem, in place of*

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sions and honors. **11.20–21** In light of the political confusion at Antioch Jonathan sought to get control of the *citadel* in Jerusalem. There is still opposition from other Jews (*renegades*) more closely allied to Seleucid interests. **11.23–29** At *Ptolemais* (Acco) Demetrius II confirmed many privileges promised or granted by Demetrius I and Alexander Balas (10.3–6, 15–20, 25–45, 59–66). **11.31–32** *Lasthenes* was the chief of Demetrius's Cretan mercenaries and his chief minister. The titles *kinsman* and *father* were honorary, expressing Lasthenes' role in the court of Demetrius. **11.34** For the *three districts*, see 10.30, 38; 11.28. Their revenues now go to the support of the Jerusalem temple. **11.37** For another public display of the copy of a treaty, see 8.22. The *holy mountain* is the Temple Mount, also called Mount Zion.

11.38–53 Jonathan helps Demetrius II put down a rebellion in Antioch but is not rewarded properly. **11.38** Lasthenes convinced Demetrius II to *dismiss* all the native troops, retaining only his mercenary troops; thus Demetrius was freed from financial obligations and could exercise tighter control. The *islands* were the home of Lasthenes' Cretan mercenaries. **11.39–40** Diodotus *Trypho* ("the luxurious one") persuaded *Imalkue* to let him set up Alexander's young son as

urged him to hand Antiochus[q] over to him, to become king in place of his father. He also reported to Imalkue[r] what Demetrius had done and told of the hatred that the troops of Demetrius[s] had for him; and he stayed there many days.

41 Now Jonathan sent to King Demetrius the request that he remove the troops of the citadel from Jerusalem, and the troops in the strongholds; for they kept fighting against Israel. 42 And Demetrius sent this message back to Jonathan: "Not only will I do these things for you and your nation, but I will confer great honor on you and your nation, if I find an opportunity. 43 Now then you will do well to send me men who will help me, for all my troops have revolted." 44 So Jonathan sent three thousand stalwart men to him at Antioch, and when they came to the king, the king rejoiced at their arrival.

45 Then the people of the city assembled within the city, to the number of a hundred and twenty thousand, and they wanted to kill the king. 46 But the king fled into the palace. Then the people of the city seized the main streets of the city and began to fight. 47 So the king called the Jews to his aid, and they all rallied around him and then spread out through the city; and they killed on that day about one hundred thousand. 48 They set fire to the city and seized a large amount of spoil on that day, and saved the king. 49 When the people of the city saw that the Jews had gained control of the city as they pleased, their courage failed and they cried out to the king with this entreaty: 50 "Grant us peace, and make the Jews stop fighting against us and our city." 51 And they threw down their arms and made peace. So the Jews gained glory in the sight of the king and of all the people in his kingdom, and they returned to Jerusalem with a large amount of spoil.

52 So King Demetrius sat on the throne of his kingdom, and the land was quiet before him. 53 But he broke his word about all that he had promised; he became estranged from Jonathan and did not repay the favors that Jonathan[t] had done him, but treated him very harshly.

Trypho Seizes Power

54 After this Trypho returned, and with him the young boy Antiochus who began to reign and put on the crown. 55 All the troops that Demetrius had discharged gathered around him; they fought against Demetrius,[r] and he fled and was routed. 56 Trypho captured the elephants[u] and gained control of Antioch. 57 Then the young Antiochus wrote to Jonathan, saying, "I confirm you in the high priesthood and set you over the four districts and make you one of the king's Friends." 58 He also sent him gold plate and a table service, and granted him the right to drink from gold cups and dress in purple and wear a gold buckle. 59 He appointed Jonathan's[v] brother Simon governor from the Ladder of Tyre to the borders of Egypt.

Campaigns of Jonathan and Simon

60 Then Jonathan set out and traveled beyond the river and among the towns, and all the army of Syria gathered to him as allies. When he came to Askalon, the people of the city met him and paid him honor. 61 From there he went to Gaza, but the people of Gaza shut him out. So he besieged it and burned its

q Gk *him* *r* Gk *him* *s* Gk *his troops*
t Gk *he* *u* Gk *animals* *v* Gk *his*

Antiochus VI. See 13.31–32 for Antiochus's murder by Trypho. **11.41** Jonathan's earlier attack against the *citadel* (11.20–21) failed. For the other *strongholds*, see 9.50–51. **11.44–51** The role played by the *Jews*, though substantial, was probably secondary to that of the Cretans under Lasthenes. **11.53** Trusting in his Greek mercenaries, Demetrius then demanded taxes from Judea going back to the "first kings."

11.54–59 Trypho through Antiochus VI gains Jonathan and Simon as allies. **11.55** Trypho exploited the unrest among the Seleucid *troops* (see 11.38). **11.58** For the *gold buckle* as a sign of the rank of the king's kinsman, see 10.89. **11.59** The appointment of *Simon* as governor of the coastal area (from Syria to Egypt) expands Maccabean control westward.

11.60–74 Jonathan recruits soldiers for Antiochus VI and wins a surprising victory at Hazor, while Simon takes Beth-zur. **11.60–62** Jonathan traveled *beyond the river* (west of the Euphrates) to gather troops against Demetrius II.

suburbs with fire and plundered them.
62 Then the people of Gaza pleaded with
Jonathan, and he made peace with them,
and took the sons of their rulers as hos-
tages and sent them to Jerusalem. And he
passed through the country as far as
Damascus.

63 Then Jonathan heard that the offi-
cers of Demetrius had come to Kadesh in
Galilee with a large army, intending to re-
move him from office. 64 He went to meet
them, but left his brother Simon in the
country. 65 Simon encamped before Beth-
zur and fought against it for many days
and hemmed it in. 66 Then they asked him
to grant them terms of peace, and he did
so. He removed them from there, took
possession of the town, and set a garrison
over it.

67 Jonathan and his army encamped
by the waters of Gennesaret. Early in the
morning they marched to the plain of Ha-
zor, 68 and there in the plain the army of
the foreigners met him; they had set an
ambush against him in the mountains, but
they themselves met him face to face.
69 Then the men in ambush emerged
from their places and joined battle. 70 All
the men with Jonathan fled; not one of
them was left except Mattathias son of
Absalom and Judas son of Chalphi, com-
manders of the forces of the army. 71 Jon-
athan tore his clothes, put dust on his
head, and prayed. 72 Then he turned back
to the battle against the enemy[w] and
routed them, and they fled. 73 When his
men who were fleeing saw this, they re-
turned to him and joined him in the pur-
suit as far as Kadesh, to their camp, and
there they encamped. 74 As many as three
thousand of the foreigners fell that day.
And Jonathan returned to Jerusalem.

Alliances with Rome and Sparta

12 Now when Jonathan saw that the
time was favorable for him, he
chose men and sent them to Rome to con-
firm and renew the friendship with them.
2 He also sent letters to the same effect to
the Spartans and to other places. 3 So they
went to Rome and entered the senate
chamber and said, "The high priest Jona-
than and the Jewish nation have sent us to
renew the former friendship and alliance
with them." 4 And the Romans[x] gave
them letters to the people in every place,
asking them to provide for the envoys[w]
safe conduct to the land of Judah.

5 This is a copy of the letter that Jona-
than wrote to the Spartans: 6 "The high
priest Jonathan, the senate of the nation,
the priests, and the rest of the Jewish peo-
ple to their brothers the Spartans, greet-
ings. 7 Already in time past a letter was
sent to the high priest Onias from Arius,[y]
who was king among you, stating that you
are our brothers, as the appended copy
shows. 8 Onias welcomed the envoy with
honor, and received the letter, which con-
tained a clear declaration of alliance and
friendship. 9 Therefore, though we have
no need of these things, since we have as
encouragement the holy books that are in
our hands, 10 we have undertaken to send
to renew our family ties and friendship
with you, so that we may not become es-
tranged from you, for considerable time
has passed since you sent your letter to us.
11 We therefore remember you constantly
on every occasion, both at our festivals
and on other appropriate days, at the sac-
rifices that we offer and in our prayers, as

w Gk *them* x Gk *they* y Vg Compare verse 20: Gk *Darius*

11.63 Because Jonathan was supporting Antiochus VI, the *officers of Demetrius* sought to stop him from rallying troops. **11.65–66** Simon's capture of *Beth-zur* in 144 B.C.E. (see 9.51; 10.14) gave the Maccabees a southern garrison again. **11.67** *Hazor*, captured by Joshua (Josh 11.10–11), was ten miles north of the Sea of Galilee (*the waters of Gennesaret*). **11.71** Jonathan does what Joshua did in Josh 7.6–9.

12.1–23 By confirming alliances with Rome and Sparta, Jonathan and Simon sought to take the pressure off their own situation in 144 B.C.E. **12.1** For the earlier embassy to *Rome*, see 8.17–32. **12.2** With the Roman defeat of the Greek Achaean League in 146 B.C.E. (see 8.9–10) the *Spartans* (who had not been part of the league) regained prominence. **12.3** The formula *the high priest Jonathan and the Jewish nation* implies an independent status beyond that claimed in 8.20; see also 12.6. **12.6** The *senate* was the council of Jewish elders (Greek *gerousia*). **12.7** *Onias* I was the Jewish high priest around 300 B.C.E., and *Arius* I was king of Sparta from 309 to 265 B.C.E. **12.8** The *letter* quoted in 12.20–23 says nothing about *alliance*. **12.9** For what constituted *the holy books* see the prologue to Sirach ("the Law, the Prophecies, and the rest of the books"); see also 2 Macc 2.14.

it is right and proper to remember brothers. 12 And we rejoice in your glory. 13 But as for ourselves, many trials and many wars have encircled us; the kings around us have waged war against us. 14 We were unwilling to annoy you and our other allies and friends with these wars, 15 for we have the help that comes from Heaven for our aid, and so we were delivered from our enemies, and our enemies were humbled. 16 We therefore have chosen Numenius son of Antiochus and Antipater son of Jason, and have sent them to Rome to renew our former friendship and alliance with them. 17 We have commanded them to go also to you and greet you and deliver to you this letter from us concerning the renewal of our family ties. 18 And now please send us a reply to this."

19 This is a copy of the letter that they sent to Onias: 20 "King Arius of the Spartans, to the high priest Onias, greetings. 21 It has been found in writing concerning the Spartans and the Jews that they are brothers and are of the family of Abraham. 22 And now that we have learned this, please write us concerning your welfare; 23 we on our part write to you that your livestock and your property belong to us, and ours belong to you. We therefore command that our envoys[z] report to you accordingly."

Further Campaigns of Jonathan and Simon

24 Now Jonathan heard that the commanders of Demetrius had returned, with a larger force than before, to wage war against him. 25 So he marched away from Jerusalem and met them in the region of Hamath, for he gave them no opportunity to invade his own country. 26 He sent spies to their camp, and they returned and reported to him that the enemy[z] were being drawn up in formation to attack the Jews[a] by night. 27 So when the sun had set, Jonathan commanded his troops to be alert and to keep their arms at hand so as to be ready all night for battle, and he stationed outposts around the camp. 28 When the enemy heard that Jonathan and his troops were prepared for battle, they were afraid and were terrified at heart; so they kindled fires in their camp and withdrew.[b] 29 But Jonathan and his troops did not know it until morning, for they saw the fires burning. 30 Then Jonathan pursued them, but he did not overtake them, for they had crossed the Eleutherus river. 31 So Jonathan turned aside against the Arabs who are called Zabadeans, and he crushed them and plundered them. 32 Then he broke camp and went to Damascus, and marched through all that region.

33 Simon also went out and marched through the country as far as Askalon and the neighboring strongholds. He turned aside to Joppa and took it by surprise, 34 for he had heard that they were ready to hand over the stronghold to those whom Demetrius had sent. And he stationed a garrison there to guard it.

35 When Jonathan returned he convened the elders of the people and planned with them to build strongholds in Judea, 36 to build the walls of Jerusalem still higher, and to erect a high barrier between the citadel and the city to separate it from the city, in order to isolate it so that its garrison[z] could neither buy nor sell. 37 So they gathered together to rebuild the city; part of the wall on the valley to the east had fallen, and he repaired the section called Chaphenatha. 38 Simon

z Gk *they* *a* Gk *them* *b* Other ancient authorities omit *and withdrew*

12.14–15 The apparent failure of Onias I to respond to Arius I is explained as an unwillingness to *annoy* allies. **12.16** The ambassadors sent to *Rome* (see also 14.22, 24) stopped at Sparta on their return home. **12.21** The fiction that Spartans and Jews both descended from *Abraham* is an example of finding genealogical justification for an alliance.

12.24–38 Jonathan and Simon gain further military victories. **12.25** *Hamath* was in the Orontes Valley, between the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon mountains. **12.31** The *Zabadeans* lived about thirty miles northwest of Damascus. There may be a connection with Zabdiel (11.17), who killed Alexander Balas. **12.33–34** *Simon*, now governor in the coastal district (11.59), put down a planned rebellion in *Joppa* (10.76). **12.35–36** The *strongholds* probably included those fortified by Bacchides (9.50; 10.12). The Jerusalem *citadel* still escaped Maccabean control. **12.37** *Chaphenatha* is usually identified as the "Second Quarter," northwest of the temple area (see 2 Kings 22.14). **12.38** *Adida*, near Lydda, could serve as a stronghold between the coastal plain and the hill country of Judea.

also built Adida in the Shephelah; he fortified it and installed gates with bolts.

Trypho Captures Jonathan

39 Then Trypho attempted to become king in Asia and put on the crown, and to raise his hand against King Antiochus. 40 He feared that Jonathan might not permit him to do so, but might make war on him, so he kept seeking to seize and kill him, and he marched out and came to Beth-shan. 41 Jonathan went out to meet him with forty thousand picked warriors, and he came to Beth-shan. 42 When Trypho saw that he had come with a large army, he was afraid to raise his hand against him. 43 So he received him with honor and commended him to all his Friends, and he gave him gifts and commanded his Friends and his troops to obey him as they would himself. 44 Then he said to Jonathan, "Why have you put all these people to so much trouble when we are not at war? 45 Dismiss them now to their homes and choose for yourself a few men to stay with you, and come with me to Ptolemais. I will hand it over to you as well as the other strongholds and the remaining troops and all the officials, and will turn around and go home. For that is why I am here."

46 Jonathan[c] trusted him and did as he said; he sent away the troops, and they returned to the land of Judah. 47 He kept with himself three thousand men, two thousand of whom he left in Galilee, while one thousand accompanied him. 48 But when Jonathan entered Ptolemais, the people of Ptolemais closed the gates and seized him, and they killed with the sword all who had entered with him.

49 Then Trypho sent troops and cavalry into Galilee and the Great Plain to destroy all Jonathan's soldiers. 50 But they realized that Jonathan had been seized and had perished along with his men, and they encouraged one another and kept marching in close formation, ready for battle. 51 When their pursuers saw that they would fight for their lives, they turned back. 52 So they all reached the land of Judah safely, and they mourned for Jonathan and his companions and were in great fear; and all Israel mourned deeply. 53 All the nations around them tried to destroy them, for they said, "They have no leader or helper. Now therefore let us make war on them and blot out the memory of them from humankind."

Simon Takes Command

13 Simon heard that Trypho had assembled a large army to invade the land of Judah and destroy it, 2 and he saw that the people were trembling with fear. So he went up to Jerusalem, and gathering the people together 3 he encouraged them, saying to them, "You yourselves know what great things my brothers and I and the house of my father have done for the laws and the sanctuary; you know also the wars and the difficulties that my brothers and I have seen. 4 By reason of this all my brothers have perished for the sake of Israel, and I alone am left. 5 And now, far be it from me to spare my life in any time of distress, for I am not better than my brothers. 6 But I will avenge my nation and the sanctuary and your wives and children, for all the nations have gathered together out of hatred to destroy us."

7 The spirit of the people was rekindled when they heard these words, 8 and they answered in a loud voice, "You are our leader in place of Judas and your brother Jonathan. 9 Fight our battles, and all that you say to us we will do." 10 So he assembled all the warriors and hurried to

c Gk *he*

12.39–53 Trypho is first thwarted from capturing Jonathan but finally succeeds in so doing, thus leaving Israel without a leader or helper (12.53). **12.39** *Asia* was a common name for the Seleucid Empire. **12.40–41** *Beth-shan* (Scythopolis) was a strategic point in the Jordan Valley (see 5.52). Though *forty thousand picked warriors* is an exaggeration, it does seem that Jonathan's large force frightened Trypho. **12.48** For earlier references to the hostility of *Ptolemais*, see 5.15, 22, 55. **12.49** The *Great Plain*, also called Esdraelon, the western section of the valleys and plains separating Galilee from Samaria. **12.50** As 13.23 shows, Jonathan had not *perished*.

13.1–11 The only remaining brother (see 2.1–5), Simon takes on Jonathan's roles in Judea. **13.3–6** Simon's speech reminds the people of what the Maccabees fought for (*laws*, *sanctuary*, *Israel*) and how they died in doing so: Eleazar (6.46), Judas (9.18), John (9.36–42), and Jonathan (13.23). **13.10–11** See 12.36–37 for fortifications in *Jerusalem* and 12.33–34 for problems

complete the walls of Jerusalem, and he
fortified it on every side. 11 He sent Jona-
than son of Absalom to Joppa, and with
him a considerable army; he drove out its
occupants and remained there.

Deceit and Treachery of Trypho

12 Then Trypho left Ptolemais with a
large army to invade the land of Judah,
and Jonathan was with him under guard.
13 Simon encamped in Adida, facing the
plain. 14 Trypho learned that Simon had
risen up in place of his brother Jonathan,
and that he was about to join battle with
him, so he sent envoys to him and said,
15 "It is for the money that your brother
Jonathan owed the royal treasury, in con-
nection with the offices he held, that we
are detaining him. 16 Send now one hun-
dred talents of silver and two of his sons
as hostages, so that when released he will
not revolt against us, and we will re-
lease him."

17 Simon knew that they were speak-
ing deceitfully to him, but he sent to get
the money and the sons, so that he would
not arouse great hostility among the peo-
ple, who might say, 18 "It was because Si-
mon[d] did not send him the money and
the sons, that Jonathan[e] perished." 19 So
he sent the sons and the hundred talents,
but Trypho[e] broke his word and did not
release Jonathan.

20 After this Trypho came to invade
the country and destroy it, and he circled
around by the way to Adora. But Simon
and his army kept marching along oppo-
site him to every place he went. 21 Now
the men in the citadel kept sending en-
voys to Trypho urging him to come to
them by way of the wilderness and to send
them food. 22 So Trypho got all his cavalry
ready to go, but that night a very heavy
snow fell, and he did not go because of
the snow. He marched off and went into
the land of Gilead. 23 When he ap-
proached Baskama, he killed Jonathan,
and he was buried there. 24 Then Trypho
turned and went back to his own land.

Jonathan's Tomb

25 Simon sent and took the bones of
his brother Jonathan, and buried him in
Modein, the city of his ancestors. 26 All Is-
rael bewailed him with great lamentation,
and mourned for him many days. 27 And
Simon built a monument over the tomb of
his father and his brothers; he made it
high so that it might be seen, with pol-
ished stone at the front and back. 28 He
also erected seven pyramids, opposite one
another, for his father and mother and
four brothers. 29 For the pyramids[f] he
devised an elaborate setting, erecting
about them great columns, and on the col-
umns he put suits of armor for a perma-
nent memorial, and beside the suits of
armor he carved ships, so that they could
be seen by all who sail the sea. 30 This is
the tomb that he built in Modein; it re-
mains to this day.

Judea Gains Independence

31 Trypho dealt treacherously with
the young King Antiochus; he killed him
32 and became king in his place, putting

d Gk *I* *e* Gk *he* *f* Gk *For these*

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at *Joppa*. *Jonathan son of Absalom* may have been the brother of Mattathias (11.70).

13.12–24 Trypho deceives Simon and kills Jonathan but then fails to capture Jerusalem. **13.13** *Adida*, recently fortified (12.38), blocked the road from Ptolemais to Jerusalem. **13.15–16** Why Jonathan owed *money* to the royal treasury is not specified; it was an excuse that Trypho exploited. Perhaps the independence shown by Jonathan was interpreted as a *revolt*, for the Seleucids looked on the Maccabees as their clients. **13.20** Trypho tried to approach Jerusalem from the south, as Lysias had done (4.29; 6.31). *Adora* was about five miles southwest of Hebron. **13.21** The garrison at the *citadel* urged Trypho to attack from the *wilderness* of Judah, from the south and southeast. **13.22–23** The location of *Baskama* is uncertain. If it was in *Gilead* (rather than Galilee), Trypho made a large circle in his abortive attack on Jerusalem. He probably killed Jonathan's hostage sons also (13.16, 19) in the winter of 143/42 B.C.E.

13.25–30 The interment of Jonathan's bones becomes the occasion for Simon to build a monument to his family. **13.25–27** The family tomb at *Modein* (2.70; 9.19) was presumably a cave or chamber carved out of rock, with small recesses for corpses. The *monument* was built over it. **13.28** For the *pyramid* or pillar of Absalom, see 2 Sam 18.18. The remaining pyramid was for Simon. **13.29–30** The *ships* may have commemorated the capture of Joppa. *Modein* was twelve miles from the sea.

13.31–42 Simon's support for Demetrius II

on the crown of Asia; and he brought
great calamity on the land. 33 But Simon
built up the strongholds of Judea and
walled them all around, with high towers
and great walls and gates and bolts, and
he stored food in the strongholds. 34 Si-
mon also chose emissaries and sent them
to King Demetrius with a request to grant
relief to the country, for all that Trypho
did was to plunder. 35 King Demetrius
sent him a favorable reply to this request,
and wrote him a letter as follows, 36 "King
Demetrius to Simon, the high priest and
friend of kings, and to the elders and na-
tion of the Jews, greetings. 37 We have re-
ceived the gold crown and the palm
branch that you[g] sent, and we are ready
to make a general peace with you and to
write to our officials to grant you release
from tribute. 38 All the grants that we
have made to you remain valid, and let
the strongholds that you have built be
your possession. 39 We pardon any errors
and offenses committed to this day, and
cancel the crown tax that you owe; and
whatever other tax has been collected in
Jerusalem shall be collected no longer.
40 And if any of you are qualified to be
enrolled in our bodyguard,[h] let them be
enrolled, and let there be peace be-
tween us."

41 In the one hundred seventieth
year[i] the yoke of the Gentiles was re-
moved from Israel, 42 and the people be-
gan to write in their documents and
contracts, "In the first year of Simon the
great high priest and commander and
leader of the Jews."

The Capture of Gazara by Simon

43 In those days Simon[j] encamped
against Gazara[k] and surrounded it with
troops. He made a siege engine, brought
it up to the city, and battered and cap-
tured one tower. 44 The men in the siege
engine leaped out into the city, and a
great tumult arose in the city. 45 The men
in the city, with their wives and children,
went up on the wall with their clothes
torn, and they cried out with a loud voice,
asking Simon to make peace with them;
46 they said, "Do not treat us according to
our wicked acts but according to your
mercy." 47 So Simon reached an agree-
ment with them and stopped fighting
against them. But he expelled them from
the city and cleansed the houses in which
the idols were located, and then entered it
with hymns and praise. 48 He removed all
uncleanness from it, and settled in it those
who observed the law. He also strength-
ened its fortifications and built in it a
house for himself.

Simon Regains the Citadel at Jerusalem

49 Those who were in the citadel at
Jerusalem were prevented from going in
and out to buy and sell in the country. So
they were very hungry, and many of them
perished from famine. 50 Then they cried
to Simon to make peace with them, and
he did so. But he expelled them from
there and cleansed the citadel from its
pollutions. 51 On the twenty-third day of

g The word *you* in verses 37-40 is plural
h Or *court* *i* 142 B.C. *j* Gk *he* *k* Cn: Gk *Gaza*

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wins Judea's freedom from the annual crown tax. **13.31–32** Trypho deposed Antiochus VI in 142 B.C.E. and had him killed in 139 B.C.E. For *putting on the crown of Asia*, see 8.6. **13.34** Simon went over to Demetrius II not only because Trypho killed Jonathan but also because Trypho demanded heavy taxes (*plunder*). **13.37** *The gold crown and the palm branch* were peace offerings. **13.39–40** The *errors and offenses* included supporting Trypho and fighting against Demetrius II (11.63–74; 12.24–32). The *crown tax* was the annual tribute from Jerusalem. For the royal *bodyguard*, see 11.47–48. **13.41–42** The *yoke of the Gentiles* may refer specifically to the annual crown tax (13.39). Its removal was taken as the start of a new era, that of Simon.

13.43–48 With Trypho and Demetrius II occupied with their own struggle, Simon captures Gazara (Gezer). **13.43** The reading *Gaza* in the Greek is surely incorrect; the capture of *Gazara* (Gezer) is assumed in 13.53; 14.7, 34; 15.28, 35; 16.1, 19, 21. The *siege engine* was a movable tower containing battering rams and catapults, able to accommodate many soldiers. **13.47–48** Simon not only made Gazara a Jewish city (thus ensuring its loyalty to him) but also was able to reward his soldiers and supporters with its property.

13.49–53 The capture of the citadel at Jerusalem, the last symbol of anti-Maccabean power in Jerusalem, marks the final success of the revolt. There are parallels with the cleansing of the temple (4.41–61). **13.49–52** The *citadel*, founded under Antiochus IV in 167 B.C.E., fell in June 141 B.C.E. It was now fortified by Simon's

the second month, in the one hundred seventy-first year,[l] the Jews[m] entered it with praise and palm branches, and with harps and cymbals and stringed instruments, and with hymns and songs, because a great enemy had been crushed and removed from Israel. 52 Simon[n] decreed that every year they should celebrate this day with rejoicing. He strengthened the fortifications of the temple hill alongside the citadel, and he and his men lived there. 53 Simon saw that his son John had reached manhood, and so he made him commander of all the forces; and he lived at Gazara.

Capture of Demetrius

14 In the one hundred seventy-second year[o] King Demetrius assembled his forces and marched into Media to obtain help, so that he could make war against Trypho. 2 When King Arsaces of Persia and Media heard that Demetrius had invaded his territory, he sent one of his generals to take him alive. 3 The general[n] went and defeated the army of Demetrius, and seized him and took him to Arsaces, who put him under guard.

Eulogy of Simon

4 The land[p] had rest all the days of Simon.
He sought the good of his nation;
his rule was pleasing to them,
as was the honor shown him, all his days.
5 To crown all his honors he took Joppa for a harbor,
and opened a way to the isles of the sea.
6 He extended the borders of his nation,
and gained full control of the country.
7 He gathered a host of captives;
he ruled over Gazara and Beth-zur and the citadel,
and he removed its uncleanness from it;
and there was none to oppose him.
8 They tilled their land in peace;
the ground gave its increase,
and the trees of the plains their fruit.
9 Old men sat in the streets;
they all talked together of good things,
and the youths put on splendid military attire.
10 He supplied the towns with food,
and furnished them with the means of defense,
until his renown spread to the ends of the earth.
11 He established peace in the land,
and Israel rejoiced with great joy.
12 All the people sat under their own vines and fig trees,
and there was none to make them afraid.
13 No one was left in the land to fight them,
and the kings were crushed in those days.
14 He gave help to all the humble among his people;
he sought out the law,
and did away with all the renegades and outlaws.
15 He made the sanctuary glorious,
and added to the vessels of the sanctuary.

l 141 B.C. *m* Gk *they* *n* Gk *He* *o* 140 B.C.
p Other ancient authorities add *of Judah*

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troops. **13.53** *John* Hyrcanus I succeeded Simon and ruled from 134 to 104 B.C.E. 1 Maccabees was probably composed during his reign as a dynastic history.

14.1–3 In 140 B.C.E. Simon's ally Demetrius II was removed from power in his campaign against the Parthians. **14.2** *Arsaces* VI was the dynastic name of the Parthian king Mithridates I (171–138 B.C.E.). He treated Demetrius well and even married his daughter to him.

14.4–15 A poem summarizes Simon's exploits (14.4–7) and celebrates them in biblical language (14.8–15). **14.5** For the capture of *Joppa*, see 12.33; 13.11. It gave Simon a good Mediterranean port. **14.8–15** For biblical texts underlying this section see Lev 26.3–4 (v. 8); Zech 8.4 (v. 9); Mic 4.4 (v. 12). **14.14** The *renegades and outlaws* were Jews who supported the Seleucid program (1.11–15).

Diplomacy with Rome and Sparta

16 It was heard in Rome, and as far
away as Sparta, that Jonathan had died,
and they were deeply grieved. 17 When
they heard that his brother Simon had be-
come high priest in his stead, and that he
was ruling over the country and the towns
in it, 18 they wrote to him on bronze tab-
lets to renew with him the friendship and
alliance that they had established with his
brothers Judas and Jonathan. 19 And
these were read before the assembly in Je-
rusalem.

20 This is a copy of the letter that the
Spartans sent:

"The rulers and the city of the Spartans
to the high priest Simon and to the elders
and the priests and the rest of the Jewish
people, our brothers, greetings. 21 The
envoys who were sent to our people have
told us about your glory and honor, and
we rejoiced at their coming. 22 We have
recorded what they said in our public de-
crees, as follows, 'Numenius son of Antio-
chus and Antipater son of Jason, envoys
of the Jews, have come to us to renew
their friendship with us. 23 It has pleased
our people to receive these men with
honor and to put a copy of their words in
the public archives, so that the people of
the Spartans may have a record of them.
And they have sent a copy of this to the
high priest Simon.' "

24 After this Simon sent Numenius to
Rome with a large gold shield weighing
one thousand minas, to confirm the alli-
ance with the Romans.[q]

Official Honors for Simon

25 When the people heard these
things they said, "How shall we thank Si-
mon and his sons? 26 For he and his broth-
ers and the house of his father have stood
firm; they have fought and repulsed Is-
rael's enemies and established its free-
dom." 27 So they made a record on bronze
tablets and put it on pillars on Mount
Zion.

This is a copy of what they wrote: "On
the eighteenth day of Elul, in the one
hundred seventy-second year,[r] which is
the third year of the great high priest Si-
mon, 28 in Asaramel,[s] in the great assem-
bly of the priests and the people and the
rulers of the nation and the elders of the
country, the following was proclaimed
to us:

29 "Since wars often occurred in the
country, Simon son of Mattathias, a priest
of the sons[t] of Joarib, and his brothers,
exposed themselves to danger and re-
sisted the enemies of their nation, in or-
der that their sanctuary and the law might
be preserved; and they brought great
glory to their nation. 30 Jonathan rallied
the[u] nation, became their high priest,
and was gathered to his people. 31 When
their enemies decided to invade their
country and lay hands on their sanctuary,
32 then Simon rose up and fought for his
nation. He spent great sums of his own
money; he armed the soldiers of his na-
tion and paid them wages. 33 He fortified
the towns of Judea, and Beth-zur on the
borders of Judea, where formerly the
arms of the enemy had been stored, and
he placed there a garrison of Jews. 34 He
also fortified Joppa, which is by the sea,
and Gazara, which is on the borders of
Azotus, where the enemy formerly lived.
He settled Jews there, and provided in
those towns[q] whatever was necessary for
their restoration.

35 "The people saw Simon's faithful-
ness[v] and the glory that he had resolved
to win for his nation, and they made him
their leader and high priest, because he

q Gk *them* *r* 140 B.C. *s* This word resembles the Hebrew words for *the court of the people of God* or *the prince of the people of God* *t* Meaning of Gk uncertain *u* Gk *their* *v* Other ancient authorities read *conduct*

14.16–24 The alliances with Rome and Sparta are renewed under Simon. **14.18** It was customary to *renew* alliances when leadership changed. The renewal of the Roman alliance probably took place shortly after Simon's accession in 142 B.C.E. For *bronze tablets*, see 8.22. **14.22** *Numenius* and *Antipater* had served previously as Jonathan's ambassadors (12.16). **14.24** The report about the *gold shield* may belong before 14.16, since Numenius and Antipater had already visited Rome and Sparta (14.16, 22).

14.25–49 The official decree declaring Simon the benefactor of the people outlines his good deeds, confirms him as sole leader, and warns those who oppose him. **14.27** The decree is dated September 140 B.C.E. **14.32** Nothing has been said about Simon's spending *great sums of his own money* unless 13.15–19; 14.24 should be taken this way. Apart from this, 14.29–40 summarizes events narrated elsewhere in the book.

had done all these things and because of
the justice and loyalty that he had main-
tained toward his nation. He sought in ev-
ery way to exalt his people. 36 In his days
things prospered in his hands, so that the
Gentiles were put out of the[w] country, as
were also those in the city of David in Je-
rusalem, who had built themselves a cita-
del from which they used to sally forth
and defile the environs of the sanctuary,
doing great damage to its purity. 37 He
settled Jews in it and fortified it for the
safety of the country and of the city, and
built the walls of Jerusalem higher.

38 "In view of these things King De-
metrius confirmed him in the high priest-
hood, 39 made him one of his Friends, and
paid him high honors. 40 For he had
heard that the Jews were addressed by the
Romans as friends and allies and broth-
ers, and that the Romans[x] had received
the envoys of Simon with honor.

41 "The Jews and their priests have
resolved that Simon should be their
leader and high priest forever, until a
trustworthy prophet should arise, 42 and
that he should be governor over them and
that he should take charge of the sanctu-
ary and appoint officials over its tasks and
over the country and the weapons and the
strongholds, and that he should take
charge of the sanctuary, 43 and that he
should be obeyed by all, and that all con-
tracts in the country should be written in
his name, and that he should be clothed in
purple and wear gold.

44 "None of the people or priests shall
be permitted to nullify any of these deci-
sions or to oppose what he says, or to con-
vene an assembly in the country without
his permission, or to be clothed in purple
or put on a gold buckle. 45 Whoever acts
contrary to these decisions or rejects any
of them shall be liable to punishment."

46 All the people agreed to grant Si-
mon the right to act in accordance with
these decisions. 47 So Simon accepted and
agreed to be high priest, to be com-
mander and ethnarch of the Jews and
priests, and to be protector of them all.[y]
48 And they gave orders to inscribe this
decree on bronze tablets, to put them up
in a conspicuous place in the precincts of
the sanctuary, 49 and to deposit copies of
them in the treasury, so that Simon and
his sons might have them.

Letter of Antiochus VII

15 Antiochus, son of King Deme-
trius, sent a letter from the is-
lands of the sea to Simon, the priest and
ethnarch of the Jews, and to all the na-
tion; 2 its contents were as follows: "King
Antiochus to Simon the high priest and
ethnarch and to the nation of the Jews,
greetings. 3 Whereas certain scoundrels
have gained control of the kingdom of
our ancestors, and I intend to lay claim to
the kingdom so that I may restore it as it
formerly was, and have recruited a host of
mercenary troops and have equipped
warships, 4 and intend to make a landing
in the country so that I may proceed
against those who have destroyed our
country and those who have devastated
many cities in my kingdom, 5 now there-
fore I confirm to you all the tax remis-
sions that the kings before me have
granted you, and a release from all the
other payments from which they have re-
leased you. 6 I permit you to mint your
own coinage as money for your country,
7 and I grant freedom to Jerusalem and
the sanctuary. All the weapons that you
have prepared and the strongholds that
you have built and now hold shall remain
yours. 8 Every debt you owe to the royal
treasury and any such future debts shall
be canceled for you from henceforth and
for all time. 9 When we gain control of our

w Gk *their* *x* Gk *they* *y* Or *to preside over them all*

14.41–42 The people agree that Simon should have military (*leader*), religious (*high priest*), and political (*governor*) power. The provision about the *trustworthy prophet* (see 4.46; 9.27) suggests that there was some opposition to Simon's priesthood. **14.43** For dating *contracts*, see 13.42. For *purple* and *gold* as insignia of a high priest and king's Friend, see 10.20, 89.

15.1–14 Antiochus VII makes promises to Simon and traps Trypho at Dor in 138 B.C.E. **15.1** *Antiochus* VII, the son of Demetrius I and younger brother of Demetrius II, grew up in Side in Pamphylia and was therefore known as Sidetes. **15.3** The *scoundrels* include Trypho and perhaps Alexander Balas and Antiochus VI. **15.6** To the privileges already granted to Simon, Antiochus added the right to mint his own *coinage*. But Simon never exercised this right (see 15.27). **15.9** Despite the independence implied by the privileges, it appears that Antio-

kingdom, we will bestow great honor on
you and your nation and the temple, so
that your glory will become manifest in all
the earth."
10 In the one hundred seventy-fourth
year[z] Antiochus set out and invaded the
land of his ancestors. All the troops rallied
to him, so that there were only a few with
Trypho. 11 Antiochus pursued him, and
Trypho[a] came in his flight to Dor, which
is by the sea; 12 for he knew that troubles
had converged on him, and his troops
had deserted him. 13 So Antiochus en-
camped against Dor, and with him were
one hundred twenty thousand warriors
and eight thousand cavalry. 14 He sur-
rounded the town, and the ships joined
battle from the sea; he pressed the town
hard from land and sea, and permitted no
one to leave or enter it.

Rome Supports the Jews

15 Then Numenius and his compan-
ions arrived from Rome, with letters to
the kings and countries, in which the fol-
lowing was written: 16 "Lucius, consul of
the Romans, to King Ptolemy, greetings.
17 The envoys of the Jews have come to us
as our friends and allies to renew our an-
cient friendship and alliance. They had
been sent by the high priest Simon and by
the Jewish people 18 and have brought a
gold shield weighing one thousand minas.
19 We therefore have decided to write to
the kings and countries that they should
not seek their harm or make war against
them and their cities and their country, or
make alliance with those who war against
them. 20 And it has seemed good to us to
accept the shield from them. 21 Therefore
if any scoundrels have fled to you from
their country, hand them over to the high
priest Simon, so that he may punish them
according to their law."
22 The consul[b] wrote the same thing
to King Demetrius and to Attalus and Ari-
arathes and Arsaces, 23 and to all the
countries, and to Sampsames,[c] and to the
Spartans, and to Delos, and to Myndos,
and to Sicyon, and to Caria, and to Samos,
and to Pamphylia, and to Lycia, and to
Halicarnassus, and to Rhodes, and to Pha-
selis, and to Cos, and to Side, and to Ara-
dus and Gortyna and Cnidus and Cyprus
and Cyrene. 24 They also sent a copy of
these things to the high priest Simon.

Antiochus VII Threatens Simon

25 King Antiochus besieged Dor for
the second time, continually throwing his
forces against it and making engines of
war; and he shut Trypho up and kept him
from going out or in. 26 And Simon sent
to Antiochus[d] two thousand picked
troops, to fight for him, and silver and
gold and a large amount of military
equipment. 27 But he refused to receive
them, and broke all the agreements he
formerly had made with Simon, and be-
came estranged from him. 28 He sent to
him Athenobius, one of his Friends, to
confer with him, saying, "You hold con-
trol of Joppa and Gazara and the citadel
in Jerusalem; they are cities of my king-
dom. 29 You have devastated their terri-
tory, you have done great damage in the
land, and you have taken possession of
many places in my kingdom. 30 Now then,
hand over the cities that you have seized
and the tribute money of the places that
you have conquered outside the borders
of Judea; 31 or else pay me five hundred

z 138 B.C. *a* Gk *he* *b* Gk *He* *c* The name is uncertain *d* Gk *him*

chus VII regarded the Jews as part of his own *kingdom*. **15.11** *Dor* was south of Mount Carmel and nine miles north of Caesarea.

15.15–24 The sequel to 14.16–24, this passage presents a letter (from the copy sent to Simon, 15.24) reaffirming friendship and alliance between Rome and the Jews. **15.15** *Numenius*, the Jewish envoy (12.16; 14.22, 24). **15.16** *Lucius* Caecilius Metullus (consul in 142 B.C.E.) addresses *Ptolemy* VIII Euergetes II (Physcon; ca. 145–116 B.C.E.). The text sent to the Egyptian ruler was also sent to those listed in 15.22–23. **15.22** *Demetrius* II of Syria (see 14.3); *Attalus* II of Pergamum; *Ariarathes* V of Cappadocia; and *Arsaces* of Parthia (see 14.2). **15.23** The *countries* are mainly independent states in Asia Minor, Greece, and the Greek Isles.

15.25–36 Antiochus VII refuses Simon's aid, takes away all concessions, and demands indemnities from Simon. **15.25** The story broken off in 15.14 is rejoined with the awkward expression *for the second time*. **15.27** Antiochus VII *refused* Simon's help because victory was in his grasp and he did not need Simon. Therefore he retracted the promises made in 15.5–9. **15.30** The places *outside the borders of Judea* probably included the Samaritan districts (11.34) as well as Adida,

talents of silver for the destruction that
you have caused and five hundred talents
more for the tribute money of the cities.
Otherwise we will come and make war
on you."
32 So Athenobius, the king's Friend,
came to Jerusalem, and when he saw the
splendor of Simon, and the sideboard
with its gold and silver plate, and his great
magnificence, he was amazed. When he
reported to him the king's message, 33 Si-
mon said to him in reply: "We have nei-
ther taken foreign land nor seized foreign
property, but only the inheritance of our
ancestors, which at one time had been un-
justly taken by our enemies. 34 Now that
we have the opportunity, we are firmly
holding the inheritance of our ancestors.
35 As for Joppa and Gazara, which you de-
mand, they were causing great damage
among the people and to our land;
for them we will give you one hundred
talents."
Athenobius[e] did not answer him a
word, 36 but returned in wrath to the king
and reported to him these words, and also
the splendor of Simon and all that he had
seen. And the king was very angry.

Victory over Cendebeus

37 Meanwhile Trypho embarked on a
ship and escaped to Orthosia. 38 Then the
king made Cendebeus commander-in-
chief of the coastal country, and gave him
troops of infantry and cavalry. 39 He com-
manded him to encamp against Judea, to
build up Kedron and fortify its gates, and
to make war on the people; but the king
pursued Trypho. 40 So Cendebeus came
to Jamnia and began to provoke the peo-
ple and invade Judea and take the people
captive and kill them. 41 He built up Ke-
dron and stationed horsemen and troops
there, so that they might go out and make
raids along the highways of Judea, as the
king had ordered him.

16 John went up from Gazara and
reported to his father Simon
what Cendebeus had done. 2 And Simon
called in his two eldest sons Judas and
John, and said to them: "My brothers and
I and my father's house have fought the
wars of Israel from our youth until this
day, and things have prospered in our
hands so that we have delivered Israel
many times. 3 But now I have grown old,
and you by Heaven's[f] mercy are mature
in years. Take my place and my brother's,
and go out and fight for our nation, and
may the help that comes from Heaven be
with you."
4 So John[g] chose out of the country
twenty thousand warriors and cavalry,
and they marched against Cendebeus and
camped for the night in Modein. 5 Early
in the morning they started out and
marched into the plain, where a large
force of infantry and cavalry was coming
to meet them; and a stream lay between
them. 6 Then he and his army lined up
against them. He saw that the soldiers
were afraid to cross the stream, so he
crossed over first; and when his troops
saw him, they crossed over after him.
7 Then he divided the army and placed
the cavalry in the center of the infantry,
for the cavalry of the enemy were very
numerous. 8 They sounded the trumpets,
and Cendebeus and his army were put to
flight; many of them fell wounded and
the rest fled into the stronghold. 9 At that
time Judas the brother of John was
wounded, but John pursued them until
Cendebeus[h] reached Kedron, which he
had built. 10 They also fled into the towers
that were in the fields of Azotus, and

e Gk *He* f Gk *his* g Other ancient authorities read *he* h Gk *he*

Beth-zur, and Akkaron. **15.33** The right to the *inheritance* of one's ancestors was based on Greek international law as well as (in the case of the Jews) the biblical promises of the land.

15.37–16.10 Simon's son John defeats the Seleucids under Cendebeus. **15.37** When Trypho escaped to *Orthosia* (a port north of Tripolis), Antiochus VII pursued him and had him killed in Apamea. **15.38–41** *Cendebeus*, appointed governor of the coastal region in the absence of Antiochus VII, used *Kedron* (four miles southeast of *Jamnia*) as a base. **16.1** The Maccabean fortress nearest to Cendebeus's activity was *Gazara*, where John Hyrcanus was in command (see 13.53). **16.2** For the fate of *Judas* and his brother Mattathias, see 16.14. **16.4** Jewish *cavalry* is mentioned here for the first time. *Modein* (see 2.1) remained a center of Maccabean support. **16.6** For courage in crossing the *stream*, see Judas's action in 5.40–43. **16.7** The Jewish *cavalry* went up against the Seleucid *infantry*, not the cavalry, thus confusing the enemy's battle plan. **16.10** Jonathan had already burned *Azotus* (10.84).

John[i] burned it with fire, and about two thousand of them fell. He then returned to Judea safely.

Murder of Simon and His Sons

11 Now Ptolemy son of Abubus had been appointed governor over the plain of Jericho; he had a large store of silver and gold, 12 for he was son-in-law of the high priest. 13 His heart was lifted up; he determined to get control of the country, and made treacherous plans against Simon and his sons, to do away with them. 14 Now Simon was visiting the towns of the country and attending to their needs, and he went down to Jericho with his sons Mattathias and Judas, in the one hundred seventy-seventh year,[j] in the eleventh month, which is the month of Shebat. 15 The son of Abubus received them treacherously in the little stronghold called Dok, which he had built; he gave them a great banquet, and hid men there. 16 When Simon and his sons were drunk, Ptolemy and his men rose up, took their weapons, rushed in against Simon in the banquet hall and killed him and his two sons, as well as some of his servants. 17 So he committed an act of great treachery and returned evil for good.

John Succeeds Simon

18 Then Ptolemy wrote a report about these things and sent it to the king, asking him to send troops to aid him and to turn over to him the towns and the country. 19 He sent other troops to Gazara to do away with John; he sent letters to the captains asking them to come to him so that he might give them silver and gold and gifts; 20 and he sent other troops to take possession of Jerusalem and the temple hill. 21 But someone ran ahead and reported to John at Gazara that his father and brothers had perished, and that "he has sent men to kill you also." 22 When he heard this, he was greatly shocked; he seized the men who came to destroy him and killed them, for he had found out that they were seeking to destroy him.

23 The rest of the acts of John and his wars and the brave deeds that he did, and the building of the walls that he completed, and his achievements, 24 are written in the annals of his high priesthood, from the time that he became high priest after his father.

i Gk *he* *j* 134 B.C.

16.11–17 In the winter of 134 B.C.E. near Jericho, Simon and his sons Judas and Mattathias were murdered by Simon's son-in-law Ptolemy. **16.11** *Abubus* probably means "beloved" (in Hebrew *chabub*). **16.15** *Dok*, a fortress near Jericho.

16.18–24 Simon's surviving son John Hyrcanus escapes the plot of his brother-in-law and succeeds his father as high priest as well as military and political ruler. **16.18** With his report *to the king* Ptolemy hoped to be appointed the official Seleucid ruler in Judea and environs. **16.19–22** John at Gazara escaped only because an informant told him what happened to Simon at Dok. **16.23–24** Using the formula familiar from 1–2 Kings (see 1 Macc 9.22), the book ends by showing how John Hyrcanus inherited the high-priesthood.

2 MACCABEES

Contents

THE SECOND BOOK OF MACCABEES supplies important information about the events leading up to the revolt under Judas Maccabeus and recounts the subsequent exploits of Judas up to 161 B.C.E. (his defeat of Nicanor). It describes the political intrigues surrounding the Jewish high-priesthood and portrays Judas Maccabeus as the ideal Jewish warrior—one who prays before battles and gives thanks afterward, always careful to observe the sabbath and other Jewish rituals.

The body of 2 Maccabees (2.19–15.39) narrates three attacks on the Jerusalem temple by Israel's enemies and their defeats by supernatural agents or by Judas and his companions. The first attack (3.1–40) occurred under Seleucus IV when Heliodorus sought to plunder the temple treasury. The second attack (4.1–10.9) took place under Antiochus IV Epiphanes and ended with Judas's capture of the temple and its purification. The third attack (10.10–15.36) happened under Antiochus V Eupator and involved the defeat of his general Nicanor as he tried to kill Judas. Though this outline does not include everything in the book, it does bring out which events were most important for the author and underlines his emphasis on the holiness and inviolability of the Jerusalem temple.

Literary Connections and Character

In the author's preface (2.19–32) we are told that 2 Maccabees is the condensation of a five-volume work by Jason of Cyrene (2.23). He claims to rely on Jason for the facts and proposes to give a pleasurable and memorable account. Jason's work is no longer extant, and there is no way of being sure how closely the condenser/epitomator followed his source. The original language of both Jason's five-volume work and 2 Maccabees was Greek. The Greek is not nearly as "biblical" as that of 1 Maccabees. Jason may have written shortly after the events he described; at least the narrative breaks off before the death of Judas. The condensation seems to have been completed by 124 B.C.E., the date of the "cover letter" preserved in 2 Macc 1.1–9.

The major theme of 2 Maccabees is the Jerusalem temple, whose Defender is the God of Israel at work in angelic figures and especially in Judas Maccabeus. Thus the book is sometimes called "temple propaganda" in that it stresses the sanctity of that temple. The book is also described as "pathetic history" in that it speaks to and plays upon human emotions (Greek *pathē*). The two prefixed letters (1.1–9; 1.10–2.18) encourage Jews in Egypt and elsewhere to observe the festival of Hanukkah as it was being observed in Jerusalem. The letters were added to the main work as it was sent to diaspora Jews.

As a historical source 2 Maccabees is especially valuable for information concerning the disputes among Jews regarding the high-priesthood (Onias III, Jason, Menelaus) and the cultural-religious program of hellenization carried out under Antiochus IV (4.9–17; 6.1–9). When it recounts the battles and other events described in 1 Maccabees, it tends to be less reliable on facts and more concerned with religious matters. The author probably did not have access to 1 Maccabees (which may not have yet been written). It is possible that the two writers used a common source, but this is difficult to prove. The letters quoted in ch. 11 are very likely authentic documents, though they contain some confusions and obscurities. The battle accounts are far less precise than those in 1 Maccabees, but share the tendency to inflate the numbers of enemy troops and casualties.

Theological Ideas

Besides stressing the inviolability of the Jerusalem temple, 2 Maccabees is noteworthy for its doctrine of suffering (5.18–20; 6.12–17) and portrayal of martyrs (6.10–11, 18–31; 7.1–42; 14.37–46). The sufferings inflicted on the Jews are the consequence of their leaders' sins (Simon, Jason, Menelaus) and a sign of God's loving discipline toward the chosen people. There is an expectation that Israel's enemies will eventually be punished appropriately. The martyrs (especially Eleazar, the seven brothers, and their mother, Razis) willingly undergo torture and death rather than be unfaithful to the precepts of Judaism. In ch. 7 these two themes come together around the theme of resurrection. In the resurrection the martyrs will be rewarded with eternal life and the wicked (like Antiochus IV) will be punished. The author's belief in resurrection led him to interpret Judas's sin offering for his dead soldiers (see 12.39–45) as atonement on behalf of the sins of the dead. 2 Maccabees is deuterocanonical for Catholics and Orthodox, apocryphal for Protestants, and noncanonical for Jews (though it does recount the origin of Hanukkah). *Daniel J. Harrington*

A Letter to the Jews in Egypt

1 The Jews in Jerusalem and those in
the land of Judea,
To their Jewish kindred in Egypt,
Greetings and true peace.
2 May God do good to you, and may
he remember his covenant with Abraham
and Isaac and Jacob, his faithful servants.
3 May he give you all a heart to worship
him and to do his will with a strong heart
and a willing spirit. 4 May he open your
heart to his law and his commandments,
and may he bring peace. 5 May he hear
your prayers and be reconciled to you,
and may he not forsake you in time of
evil. 6 We are now praying for you here.
7 In the reign of Demetrius, in the
one hundred sixty-ninth year,[a] we Jews
wrote to you, in the critical distress that
came upon us in those years after Jason
and his company revolted from the holy
land and the kingdom 8 and burned the
gate and shed innocent blood. We prayed
to the Lord and were heard, and we of-
fered sacrifice and grain offering, and we
lit the lamps and set out the loaves. 9 And
now see that you keep the festival of
booths in the month of Chislev, in the one
hundred eighty-eighth year.[b]

A Letter to Aristobulus

10 The people of Jerusalem and of
Judea and the senate and Judas,
To Aristobulus, who is of the family of
the anointed priests, teacher of King Ptol-
emy, and to the Jews in Egypt,
Greetings and good health.
11 Having been saved by God out of
grave dangers we thank him greatly for
taking our side against the king,[c] 12 for
he drove out those who fought against the
holy city. 13 When the leader reached Per-
sia with a force that seemed irresistible,
they were cut to pieces in the temple of
Nanea by a deception employed by the
priests of the goddess[d] Nanea. 14 On the
pretext of intending to marry her, Antio-
chus came to the place together with his
Friends, to secure most of its treasures as
a dowry. 15 When the priests of the temple
of Nanea had set out the treasures and
Antiochus had come with a few men in-
side the wall of the sacred precinct, they
closed the temple as soon as he entered it.
16 Opening a secret door in the ceiling,
they threw stones and struck down the
leader and his men; they dismembered
them and cut off their heads and threw
them to the people outside. 17 Blessed in
every way be our God, who has brought
judgment on those who have behaved im-
piously.

Fire Consumes Nehemiah's Sacrifice

18 Since on the twenty-fifth day of
Chislev we shall celebrate the purification
of the temple, we thought it necessary to

a 143 B.C. *b* 124 B.C. *c* Cn: Gk *as those who array themselves against a king* *d* Gk lacks *the goddess*

1.1–9 In 124 B.C.E. the Jews of Jerusalem and Judea wrote to the Jews in Egypt to urge them to celebrate Hanukkah. The letter may have been composed to accompany the copy of 2 Maccabees sent to Egypt. **1.2–6** The prayer may be criticizing the Jewish temple founded by Onias IV at Leontopolis in Egypt in about 160 B.C.E. **1.5** The *time of evil* may have been a persecution of Egyptian Jews by Ptolemy VIII. **1.7–8** *Demetrius* II (145–140 B.C.E.). The letter referred to was written in 143 B.C.E. and recounted the events described in 5.5–10. **1.9** For Hanukkah as similar to the *festival of booths*, see 10.6.

1.10–17 The long explanation (reaching to 2.18) about Hanukkah's origins in Jewish history begins with the death of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. **1.10** If the letter is from *Judas* Maccabeus, it must have been written between 164 (Antiochus's death) and 160 B.C.E. (Judas's death). *Aristobulus* was the Jewish teacher of *Ptolemy* VI (180–145 B.C.E.). **1.11–12** The *king* was Antiochus IV (175–164 B.C.E.); for the recovery of the *holy city* of Jerusalem, see 10.1. **1.13–17** The *leader* is Antiochus IV, though the story may first have been told about Antiochus III, his father. *Nanea* was originally a Sumerian goddess of love and fertility. For other accounts of the king's death, see ch. 9; 1 Macc 6.1–16; Dan 11.40–45. **1.17** From the Jewish perspective Antiochus died for behaving *impiously* against the Jerusalem temple, not the temple of Nanea.

1.18–36 The miracle of the fire is a precedent for the purification of the temple commemorated at Hanukkah. The somewhat strained search for precedents here and in 2.1–18 suggests that observing Hanukkah was controversial. **1.18** For the date, see 6.7; 10.5; 1 Macc 1.59. The Second Temple and its altar were already built

notify you, in order that you also may celebrate the festival of booths and the festival of the fire given when Nehemiah, who built the temple and the altar, offered sacrifices.

19 For when our ancestors were being led captive to Persia, the pious priests of that time took some of the fire of the altar and secretly hid it in the hollow of a dry cistern, where they took such precautions that the place was unknown to anyone. 20 But after many years had passed, when it pleased God, Nehemiah, having been commissioned by the king of Persia, sent the descendants of the priests who had hidden the fire to get it. And when they reported to us that they had not found fire but only a thick liquid, he ordered them to dip it out and bring it. 21 When the materials for the sacrifices were presented, Nehemiah ordered the priests to sprinkle the liquid on the wood and on the things laid upon it. 22 When this had been done and some time had passed, and when the sun, which had been clouded over, shone out, a great fire blazed up, so that all marveled. 23 And while the sacrifice was being consumed, the priests offered prayer—the priests and everyone. Jonathan led, and the rest responded, as did Nehemiah. 24 The prayer was to this effect:

"O Lord, Lord God, Creator of all things, you are awe-inspiring and strong and just and merciful, you alone are king and are kind, 25 you alone are bountiful, you alone are just and almighty and eternal. You rescue Israel from every evil; you chose the ancestors and consecrated them. 26 Accept this sacrifice on behalf of all your people Israel and preserve your portion and make it holy. 27 Gather together our scattered people, set free those who are slaves among the Gentiles, look on those who are rejected and despised, and let the Gentiles know that you are our God. 28 Punish those who oppress and are insolent with pride. 29 Plant your people in your holy place, as Moses promised."

30 Then the priests sang the hymns. 31 After the materials of the sacrifice had been consumed, Nehemiah ordered that the liquid that was left should be poured on large stones. 32 When this was done, a flame blazed up; but when the light from the altar shone back, it went out. 33 When this matter became known, and it was reported to the king of the Persians that, in the place where the exiled priests had hidden the fire, the liquid had appeared with which Nehemiah and his associates had burned the materials of the sacrifice, 34 the king investigated the matter, and enclosed the place and made it sacred. 35 And with those persons whom the king favored he exchanged many excellent gifts. 36 Nehemiah and his associates called this "nephthar," which means purification, but by most people it is called naphtha.[e]

Jeremiah Hides the Tent, Ark, and Altar

2 One finds in the records that the prophet Jeremiah ordered those who were being deported to take some of the fire, as has been mentioned, 2 and that the prophet, after giving them the law, instructed those who were being deported not to forget the commandments of the Lord, or to be led astray in their thoughts on seeing the gold and silver statues and their adornment. 3 And with other similar words he exhorted them that the law should not depart from their hearts.

4 It was also in the same document that the prophet, having received an ora-

e Gk *nephthai*

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when *Nehemiah* came to Jerusalem as governor. **1.19** The Jews were exiled to Babylon, not *Persia*. Babylon had become part of the Persian Empire by Nehemiah's time. **1.20** The *thick liquid* was a kind of petroleum (naphtha) as in 1.36. **1.23** *Jonathan* may be the same as Mattaniah "who was the leader to begin the thanksgiving in prayer" (Neh 11.17). Both names mean "God's gift" in Hebrew. **1.24–29** The prayer's emphases on monotheism and Israel's election were very appropriate to the situation of Israel in the second century B.C.E., as was the plea that God rescue Israel and punish its enemies. **1.31–34** Fire was sacred to the *Persians*, who sometimes built temples around it. The event described in 1.31–32 stresses the sacredness of the altar in the Jerusalem temple. **1.36** For the interpretation of Hanukkah as a *purification*, see 2.18; 10.3; 14.36; for the thick liquid, *naphtha*, see 1.20.

2.1–18 More precedents for Hanukkah are found in connection with Jeremiah, Solomon, Moses, and Nehemiah. **2.2** For Jeremiah's warnings against idolatry, see the Letter of Jeremiah. **2.4** The *prophet* is Jeremiah. The *mountain* is Nebo (Deut 32.49), from which Moses viewed

cle, ordered that the tent and the ark should follow with him, and that he went out to the mountain where Moses had gone up and had seen the inheritance of God. 5 Jeremiah came and found a cave-dwelling, and he brought there the tent and the ark and the altar of incense; then he sealed up the entrance. 6 Some of those who followed him came up intending to mark the way, but could not find it. 7 When Jeremiah learned of it, he rebuked them and declared: "The place shall remain unknown until God gathers his people together again and shows his mercy. 8 Then the Lord will disclose these things, and the glory of the Lord and the cloud will appear, as they were shown in the case of Moses, and as Solomon asked that the place should be specially consecrated."

9 It was also made clear that being possessed of wisdom Solomon[f] offered sacrifice for the dedication and completion of the temple. 10 Just as Moses prayed to the Lord, and fire came down from heaven and consumed the sacrifices, so also Solomon prayed, and the fire came down and consumed the whole burnt offerings. 11 And Moses said, "They were consumed because the sin offering had not been eaten." 12 Likewise Solomon also kept the eight days.

13 The same things are reported in the records and in the memoirs of Nehemiah, and also that he founded a library and collected the books about the kings and prophets, and the writings of David, and letters of kings about votive offerings. 14 In the same way Judas also collected all the books that had been lost on account of the war that had come upon us, and they are in our possession. 15 So if you have need of them, send people to get them for you.

16 Since, therefore, we are about to celebrate the purification, we write to you. Will you therefore please keep the days? 17 It is God who has saved all his people, and has returned the inheritance to all, and the kingship and the priesthood and the consecration, 18 as he promised through the law. We have hope in God that he will soon have mercy on us and will gather us from everywhere under heaven into his holy place, for he has rescued us from great evils and has purified the place.

The Compiler's Preface

19 The story of Judas Maccabeus and his brothers, and the purification of the great temple, and the dedication of the altar, 20 and further the wars against Antiochus Epiphanes and his son Eupator, 21 and the appearances that came from heaven to those who fought bravely for Judaism, so that though few in number they seized the whole land and pursued the barbarian hordes, 22 and regained possession of the temple famous throughout the world, and liberated the city, and re-established the laws that were about to be abolished, while the Lord with great kindness became gracious to them— 23 all this, which has been set forth by Jason of Cyrene in five volumes, we shall attempt to condense into a single book. 24 For considering the flood of statistics involved and the difficulty there is for those who wish to enter upon the narratives of history because of the mass of material, 25 we

f Gk *he*

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the promised land. **2.8** For the *glory of the Lord* and the *cloud*, see Ex 40.34–35 (Moses and the tent of meeting); 1 Kings 8.10–11 (Solomon's temple). **2.10–12** For *fire* from heaven, see Lev 9.23–24; 2 Chr 7.1. For the words of *Moses*, see Lev 10.16–19. For *eight days*, see 1 Kings 8.65–66; 2 Chr 7.9. **2.13** Neh 1–7, 11–13 are *memoirs* but do not mention the building of the temple or the fire. Nehemiah's *library* probably included the historical books (1–2 Samuel, 1–2 Kings), Psalms, and the royal decrees in Ezra 6.3–12; 7.12–26. **2.14** For Jewish *books that had been lost on account of the war*, see 1 Macc 1.56–57. **2.16–18** The plea to observe Hanukkah (see 1.18, 36) as the *purification* of the temple alludes to Ex 19.6; Deut 30.3–5.

2.19–32 2 Maccabees is the digest of a five-volume work by Jason of Cyrene. The compiler here explains his goals and procedures. **2.19–22** The summary of content omits Seleucus IV (ch. 3) and Demetrius I (chs. 14–15). It contains the first extant use of the word *Judaism* (see 8.1; 14.38) and refers to *appearances* or epiphanies (see 3.24–26; 10.29–30; 11.8; 12.22; 15.27) that figure prominently in the story. **2.23** *Cyrene*, a city in Cyrenaica (modern Libya), included Jewish settlers from Egypt. *Jason* was undoubtedly Jewish. **2.24–28** Relying on Jason for *exact details*, the writer seeks to make the story pleasurable, memorable, and profitable (2.25).

have aimed to please those who wish to
read, to make it easy for those who are
inclined to memorize, and to profit all
readers. 26 For us who have undertaken
the toil of abbreviating, it is no light mat-
ter but calls for sweat and loss of sleep,
27 just as it is not easy for one who pre-
pares a banquet and seeks the benefit of
others. Nevertheless, to secure the grati-
tude of many we will gladly endure the
uncomfortable toil, 28 leaving the respon-
sibility for exact details to the compiler,
while devoting our effort to arriving at
the outlines of the condensation. 29 For as
the master builder of a new house must be
concerned with the whole construction,
while the one who undertakes its painting
and decoration has to consider only what
is suitable for its adornment, such in my
judgment is the case with us. 30 It is the
duty of the original historian to occupy
the ground, to discuss matters from every
side, and to take trouble with details,
31 but the one who recasts the narrative
should be allowed to strive for brevity of
expression and to forego exhaustive treat-
ment. 32 At this point therefore let us be-
gin our narrative, without adding any
more to what has already been said; for it
would be foolish to lengthen the preface
while cutting short the history itself.

Arrival of Heliodorus in Jerusalem

3 While the holy city was inhabited in
unbroken peace and the laws were
strictly observed because of the piety of
the high priest Onias and his hatred of
wickedness, 2 it came about that the kings
themselves honored the place and glori-
fied the temple with the finest presents,
3 even to the extent that King Seleucus of
Asia defrayed from his own revenues all
the expenses connected with the service of
the sacrifices.

4 But a man named Simon, of the
tribe of Benjamin, who had been made
captain of the temple, had a disagreement
with the high priest about the administra-
tion of the city market. 5 Since he could
not prevail over Onias, he went to Apollo-
nius of Tarsus,[g] who at that time was
governor of Coelesyria and Phoenicia,
6 and reported to him that the treasury in
Jerusalem was full of untold sums of
money, so that the amount of the funds
could not be reckoned, and that they did
not belong to the account of the sacrifices,
but that it was possible for them to fall
under the control of the king. 7 When Ap-
ollonius met the king, he told him of the
money about which he had been in-
formed. The king[h] chose Heliodorus,
who was in charge of his affairs, and sent
him with commands to effect the removal
of the reported wealth. 8 Heliodorus at
once set out on his journey, ostensibly to
make a tour of inspection of the cities of
Coelesyria and Phoenicia, but in fact to
carry out the king's purpose.

9 When he had arrived at Jerusalem
and had been kindly welcomed by the
high priest of[i] the city, he told about the
disclosure that had been made and stat-
ed why he had come, and he inquired
whether this really was the situation.
10 The high priest explained that there
were some deposits belonging to widows
and orphans, 11 and also some money of
Hyrcanus son of Tobias, a man of very
prominent position, and that it totaled in

g Gk *Apollonius son of Tharseas* *h* Gk *He*
i Other ancient authorities read *and*

2.29 The author compares himself to the painter-decorator (see 2.25), and Jason to the builder. See 15.38–39.

3.1–12 The first crisis involving *the sanctity and inviolability of the temple* in Jerusalem (3.12) arose from rivalry between pro-Seleucid (Simon) and pro-Ptolemaic (Hyrcanus) factions among the Jews. **3.1** *Onias* III was the Jewish high priest until 175 B.C.E. **3.2** The *place* is the name for the Jerusalem temple frequently in 2 Maccabees. **3.3** *Seleucus* IV Philopator (187–175 B.C.E.) was the successor of Antiochus III and predecessor of Antiochus IV. **3.4** *Simon* was more likely from the priestly clan of Bilgah (Neh 12.5, 18; 1 Chr 24.14), not of the *tribe of Benjamin*. His brothers were Menelaus (4.23) and Lysimachus (4.29). **3.5** *Apollonius* is called *son of Menestheus* in 4.4, 21, and so the reading *son of Tharseas* here (see text note *g*) is emended to *Tarsus*. The territory of Apollonius included Judea and all the territory from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean except for Seleucis (the area of Greek cities in north Syria). **3.6** The temple *treasury* included money from private depositors (see 3.10–11), a common practice in antiquity. **3.7** *Heliodorus* was raised with Seleucus IV and was involved in the plot that resulted in the king's death in 175 B.C.E. **3.11** *Hyrcanus*, son of Joseph and grandson of Tobias, was part of the Jewish family of Tobiads known to be sympathetic to the Ptolemies.

all four hundred talents of silver and two
hundred of gold. To such an extent the
impious Simon had misrepresented the
facts. 12 And he said that it was utterly im-
possible that wrong should be done to
those people who had trusted in the holi-
ness of the place and in the sanctity and
inviolability of the temple that is honored
throughout the whole world.

Heliodorus Plans to Rob the Temple

13 But Heliodorus, because of the or-
ders he had from the king, said that this
money must in any case be confiscated for
the king's treasury. 14 So he set a day and
went in to direct the inspection of these
funds.

There was no little distress throughout
the whole city. 15 The priests prostrated
themselves before the altar in their
priestly vestments and called toward
heaven upon him who had given the law
about deposits, that he should keep them
safe for those who had deposited them.
16 To see the appearance of the high
priest was to be wounded at heart, for his
face and the change in his color disclosed
the anguish of his soul. 17 For terror and
bodily trembling had come over the man,
which plainly showed to those who looked
at him the pain lodged in his heart. 18 Peo-
ple also hurried out of their houses in
crowds to make a general supplication be-
cause the holy place was about to be
brought into dishonor. 19 Women, gird-
ed with sackcloth under their breasts,
thronged the streets. Some of the young
women who were kept indoors ran to-
gether to the gates, and some to the walls,
while others peered out of the windows.
20 And holding up their hands to heaven,
they all made supplication. 21 There was
something pitiable in the prostration of
the whole populace and the anxiety of the
high priest in his great anguish.

The Lord Protects His Temple

22 While they were calling upon the
Almighty Lord that he would keep what
had been entrusted safe and secure for
those who had entrusted it, 23 Heliodorus
went on with what had been decided.
24 But when he arrived at the treasury
with his bodyguard, then and there the
Sovereign of spirits and of all authority
caused so great a manifestation that all
who had been so bold as to accompany
him were astounded by the power of God,
and became faint with terror. 25 For there
appeared to them a magnificently capari-
soned horse, with a rider of frightening
mien; it rushed furiously at Heliodorus
and struck at him with its front hoofs.
Its rider was seen to have armor and
weapons of gold. 26 Two young men
also appeared to him, remarkably strong,
gloriously beautiful and splendidly
dressed, who stood on either side of him
and flogged him continuously, inflicting
many blows on him. 27 When he suddenly
fell to the ground and deep darkness
came over him, his men took him up, put
him on a stretcher, 28 and carried him
away—this man who had just entered the
aforesaid treasury with a great retinue
and all his bodyguard but was now unable
to help himself. They recognized clearly
the sovereign power of God.

Onias Prays for Heliodorus

29 While he lay prostrate, speechless
because of the divine intervention and
deprived of any hope of recovery, 30 they
praised the Lord who had acted marvel-
ously for his own place. And the temple,
which a little while before was full of fear
and disturbance, was filled with joy and
gladness, now that the Almighty Lord had
appeared.

31 Some of Heliodorus's friends
quickly begged Onias to call upon the

3.13–21 Heliodorus's threat to the temple's security elicits a highly emotional response from the people of Jerusalem. **3.15** For the *law about deposits*, see Ex 22.7–13. Nothing is said about the Gentile Heliodorus profaning the temple. **3.19** *Sackcloth*, a coarse material made from goats' hair, was a sign of mourning (Esth 4.1).

3.22–28 Heliodorus is struck down and the temple's deposits are saved by miraculous intervention. **3.24–25** Other miraculous manifestations of *horse* and *rider* occur in 5.2–3; 10.29; 11.8. **3.26** The *two young men* are angelic figures. **3.28** Who *recognized* God's power—Heliodorus and his retinue or the Jewish bystanders? See also 3.30.

3.29–34 Lest the miraculous intervention be misinterpreted by Seleucus IV, Onias III prays for the healing of Heliodorus. **3.30** As in many biblical texts there is no sharp line between the action of the *Almighty Lord* and the angelic

Most High to grant life to one who was
lying quite at his last breath. 32 So the high
priest, fearing that the king might get the
notion that some foul play had been per-
petrated by the Jews with regard to Helio-
dorus, offered sacrifice for the man's
recovery. 33 While the high priest was
making an atonement, the same young
men appeared again to Heliodorus
dressed in the same clothing, and they
stood and said, "Be very grateful to the
high priest Onias, since for his sake the
Lord has granted you your life. 34 And see
that you, who have been flogged by
heaven, report to all people the majestic
power of God." Having said this they
vanished.

The Conversion of Heliodorus

35 Then Heliodorus offered sacrifice
to the Lord and made very great vows to
the Savior of his life, and having bidden
Onias farewell, he marched off with his
forces to the king. 36 He bore testimony to
all concerning the deeds of the supreme
God, which he had seen with his own eyes.
37 When the king asked Heliodorus what
sort of person would be suitable to send
on another mission to Jerusalem, he re-
plied, 38 "If you have any enemy or plotter
against your government, send him there,
for you will get him back thoroughly
flogged, if he survives at all; for there is
certainly some power of God about the
place. 39 For he who has his dwelling in
heaven watches over that place himself
and brings it aid, and he strikes and de-
stroys those who come to do it injury."
40 This was the outcome of the episode
of Heliodorus and the protection of the
treasury.

Simon Accuses Onias

4 The previously mentioned Simon,
who had informed about the money
against[j] his own country, slandered
Onias, saying that it was he who had in-
cited Heliodorus and had been the real
cause of the misfortune. 2 He dared to
designate as a plotter against the govern-
ment the man who was the benefactor of
the city, the protector of his compatriots,
and a zealot for the laws. 3 When his ha-
tred progressed to such a degree that
even murders were committed by one of
Simon's approved agents, 4 Onias recog-
nized that the rivalry was serious and that
Apollonius son of Menestheus,[k] and gov-
ernor of Coelesyria and Phoenicia, was
intensifying the malice of Simon. 5 So he
appealed to the king, not accusing his
compatriots but having in view the wel-
fare, both public and private, of all the
people. 6 For he saw that without the
king's attention public affairs could not
again reach a peaceful settlement, and that
Simon would not stop his folly.

Jason's Reforms

7 When Seleucus died and Antiochus,
who was called Epiphanes, succeeded to
the kingdom, Jason the brother of Onias
obtained the high priesthood by corrup-
tion, 8 promising the king at an inter-
view[l] three hundred sixty talents of
silver, and from another source of reve-
nue eighty talents. 9 In addition to this he

j Gk *and* *k* Vg Compare verse 21: Meaning of Gk uncertain *l* Or *by a petition*

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figures. **3.33** The ability of Onias III to make *atonement* for a gentile sinner like Heliodorus places him with Moses (Ex 8.28–29) and Job (Job 42.7–10).

3.35–40 As a result of the divine intervention Heliodorus recognizes the power of Israel's God to defend the temple. **3.35–36** Without necessarily becoming a Jew Heliodorus *offered sacrifice* and acknowledged Israel's God as *supreme*. **3.38** The *power of God about the place* (the temple) is the major theme of 2 Maccabees.

4.1–6 The internal Jewish struggle between Simon and Onias III continues to be involved with Seleucid affairs. **4.1** *Simon* was *previously mentioned* in 3.4–6. His slander may have been based on the apparently pro-Ptolemaic stance of Onias III. **4.2** The *laws* include both the Jewish Torah and the Seleucid laws. **4.4** *Apollonius* was Simon's collaborator in 3.7 also.

4.7–17 The new high priest Jason introduces Greek institutions and customs to Jerusalem. See 1 Macc 1.11–15, where Jason goes unnamed. **4.7** After *Seleucus* IV was killed in 175 B.C.E., he was succeeded (after a political struggle) by *Antiochus* IV *Epiphanes* (175–164 B.C.E.), who appointed *Jason* the Jewish high priest in place of Onias III. **4.9** The *gymnasium* was a Greek institution concerned not only with physical exercise but also with education and general culture. Some Jews may have become honorary *citizens of Antioch* in Syria, or perhaps Jerusalem itself had been renamed as Antioch and made a Greek city-state.

promised to pay one hundred fifty more
if permission were given to establish by
his authority a gymnasium and a body of
youth for it, and to enroll the people of
Jerusalem as citizens of Antioch. 10 When
the king assented and Jason[m] came to of-
fice, he at once shifted his compatriots
over to the Greek way of life.

11 He set aside the existing royal con-
cessions to the Jews, secured through
John the father of Eupolemus, who went
on the mission to establish friendship and
alliance with the Romans; and he de-
stroyed the lawful ways of living and in-
troduced new customs contrary to the law.
12 He took delight in establishing a gym-
nasium right under the citadel, and he in-
duced the noblest of the young men to
wear the Greek hat. 13 There was such an
extreme of Hellenization and increase in
the adoption of foreign ways because of
the surpassing wickedness of Jason, who
was ungodly and no true[n] high priest,
14 that the priests were no longer intent
upon their service at the altar. Despising
the sanctuary and neglecting the sacri-
fices, they hurried to take part in the un-
lawful proceedings in the wrestling arena
after the signal for the discus-throwing,
15 disdaining the honors prized by their
ancestors and putting the highest value
upon Greek forms of prestige. 16 For this
reason heavy disaster overtook them, and
those whose ways of living they admired
and wished to imitate completely became
their enemies and punished them. 17 It is
no light thing to show irreverence to the
divine laws—a fact that later events will
make clear.

More Outrages

18 When the quadrennial games were
being held at Tyre and the king was
present, 19 the vile Jason sent envoys, cho-
sen as being Antiochian citizens from
Jerusalem, to carry three hundred silver
drachmas for the sacrifice to Hercules.
Those who carried the money, however,
thought best not to use it for sacrifice, be-
cause that was inappropriate, but to ex-
pend it for another purpose. 20 So this
money was intended by the sender for the
sacrifice to Hercules, but by the decision
of its carriers it was applied to the con-
struction of triremes.

21 When Apollonius son of Menes-
theus was sent to Egypt for the corona-
tion[o] of Philometor as king, Antiochus
learned that Philometor[m] had become
hostile to his government, and he took
measures for his own security. Therefore
upon arriving at Joppa he proceeded to
Jerusalem. 22 He was welcomed magnifi-
cently by Jason and the city, and usher-
ed in with a blaze of torches and with
shouts. Then he marched his army into
Phoenicia.

Menelaus Becomes High Priest

23 After a period of three years Jason
sent Menelaus, the brother of the pre-
viously mentioned Simon, to carry the

m Gk *he* *n* Gk lacks *true* *o* Meaning of Gk uncertain

4.10 The *Greek way of life* is opposed to Judaism (2.21). Far more so than 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees interprets the Jewish "reformers" as supporting a foreign culture and religion. **4.11** The *royal concessions to the Jews* included the right to be ruled by the Torah rather than Seleucid law. For Eupolemus's *mission* to Rome, see 1 Macc 8.17. **4.12** The *citadel* was the fort on the northwest corner of the temple area. The *Greek hat* (Greek *petasos*) was the wide-brimmed hat worn by Hermes, god of athletic skill. **4.13** As brother of Onias III, Jason was from the right priestly family. But he was *no true high priest* because he got the office by corruption and carried out a program hostile to Judaism. **4.16–17** According to 2 Maccabees the evils that befell the Jewish people and the temple were the result of following the Greek way of life (see 6.12–17).

4.18–22 Participation in the games at Tyre and Jason's welcome of Antiochus IV to Jerusalem illustrate the results of the new program. **4.18–19** Every four years *games* were held at Tyre in honor of the god Melqart/Heracles/*Hercules*. For the *Antiochian citizens from Jerusalem*, see note on 4.9. **4.20** Rather than allow the money to be used for the sacrifice to a pagan god, the Jews had it applied to the *construction of triremes*, Greek ships with three rows of oars on each side. **4.21** Through *Apollonius* (3.7; 4.4) Antiochus IV learned that his nephew Ptolemy VI *Philometor* had designs against his Seleucid kingdom. On his way down the coast to Egypt Antiochus went east to Jerusalem, where he was welcomed by Jason.

4.23–29 The *vile Jason* (4.19) is replaced by the even worse Menelaus, the brother of Simon (3.4). **4.23–24** In 172 B.C.E. *Menelaus* usurped the high-priesthood from Jason, in the same way

money to the king and to complete the
records of essential business. 24 But he,
when presented to the king, extolled him
with an air of authority, and secured the
high priesthood for himself, outbidding
Jason by three hundred talents of silver.
25 After receiving the king's orders he re-
turned, possessing no qualification for the
high priesthood, but having the hot tem-
per of a cruel tyrant and the rage of a
savage wild beast. 26 So Jason, who after
supplanting his own brother was sup-
planted by another man, was driven as a
fugitive into the land of Ammon. 27 Al-
though Menelaus continued to hold the
office, he did not pay regularly any of the
money promised to the king. 28 When Sos-
tratus the captain of the citadel kept re-
questing payment—for the collection of
the revenue was his responsibility—the
two of them were summoned by the king
on account of this issue. 29 Menelaus left
his own brother Lysimachus as deputy in
the high priesthood, while Sostratus left
Crates, the commander of the Cyprian
troops.

The Murder of Onias

30 While such was the state of affairs,
it happened that the people of Tarsus and
of Mallus revolted because their cities had
been given as a present to Antiochis, the
king's concubine. 31 So the king went hur-
riedly to settle the trouble, leaving Andro-
nicus, a man of high rank, to act as his
deputy. 32 But Menelaus, thinking he had
obtained a suitable opportunity, stole
some of the gold vessels of the temple and
gave them to Andronicus; other vessels, as
it happened, he had sold to Tyre and the
neighboring cities. 33 When Onias became
fully aware of these acts, he publicly ex-
posed them, having first withdrawn to a
place of sanctuary at Daphne near Anti-
och. 34 Therefore Menelaus, taking An-
dronicus aside, urged him to kill Onias.
Andronicus[p] came to Onias, and resort-
ing to treachery, offered him sworn
pledges and gave him his right hand; he
persuaded him, though still suspicious, to
come out from the place of sanctuary;
then, with no regard for justice, he imme-
diately put him out of the way.

Andronicus Is Punished

35 For this reason not only Jews, but
many also of other nations, were grieved
and displeased at the unjust murder of
the man. 36 When the king returned from
the region of Cilicia, the Jews in the city[q]
appealed to him with regard to the un-
reasonable murder of Onias, and the
Greeks shared their hatred of the crime.
37 Therefore Antiochus was grieved at
heart and filled with pity, and wept be-
cause of the moderation and good con-
duct of the deceased. 38 Inflamed with
anger, he immediately stripped off the
purple robe from Andronicus, tore off his
clothes, and led him around the whole
city to that very place where he had com-
mitted the outrage against Onias, and
there he dispatched the bloodthirsty fel-
low. The Lord thus repaid him with the
punishment he deserved.

Unpopularity of Lysimachus and Menelaus

39 When many acts of sacrilege had
been committed in the city by Lysimachus
with the connivance of Menelaus, and

p Gk *He* q Or *in each city*

Jason did from Onias III (4.7–8). **4.26** *Ammon* in Transjordan, perhaps to the Nabateans (5.8) or to Hyrcanus (3.11). **4.28** *Sostratus* (a non-Jew) was in charge of the *citadel* (4.12) that was held mainly by mercenaries from Cyprus (4.29). **4.29** For more about *Lysimachus*, see 4.39–42.

4.30–34 The evil character of Menelaus and Andronicus is revealed in their treatment of the temple vessels and the murder of the rightful high priest, Onias III. **4.30** *Tarsus* and *Mallus* were cities in Cilicia, across the Syrian border to the northwest. **4.31–32** *Andronicus* had been the murderer of the young son of Seleucus IV in 175 B.C.E. He was bribed by Menelaus, who was plundering the Jerusalem temple. **4.33** The *place of sanctuary* was the temple of Apollo at *Daphne*, five miles from Antioch. Onias III denounced both Menelaus and Andronicus.

4.35–38 The revulsion of both Jews and non-Jews leads Antiochus IV to punish Andronicus. **4.36** There was a growing Jewish colony in the *city* of Antioch, as the presence of Onias III indicates. **4.38** The *purple robe* was worn by Friends of the king (see 1 Macc 10.20). Antiochus IV probably recognized the *bloodthirsty* Andronicus as a threat to his own rule.

4.39–50 A riot in Jerusalem leads to the death of Lysimachus, and Menelaus escapes only by bribery. **4.39** *Lysimachus*, Menelaus's brother and assistant (4.29), joined in plundering the tem-

when report of them had spread abroad,
the populace gathered against Lysimachus, because many of the gold vessels
had already been stolen. 40 Since the
crowds were becoming aroused and filled
with anger, Lysimachus armed about
three thousand men and launched an unjust attack, under the leadership of a certain Auranus, a man advanced in years
and no less advanced in folly. 41 But when
the Jews[r] became aware that Lysimachus
was attacking them, some picked up
stones, some blocks of wood, and others
took handfuls of the ashes that were lying
around, and threw them in wild confusion
at Lysimachus and his men. 42 As a result,
they wounded many of them, and killed
some, and put all the rest to flight; the
temple robber himself they killed close by
the treasury.

43 Charges were brought against
Menelaus about this incident. 44 When the
king came to Tyre, three men sent by the
senate presented the case before him.
45 But Menelaus, already as good as
beaten, promised a substantial bribe to
Ptolemy son of Dorymenes to win over
the king. 46 Therefore Ptolemy, taking the
king aside into a colonnade as if for refreshment, induced the king to change his
mind. 47 Menelaus, the cause of all the
trouble, he acquitted of the charges
against him, while he sentenced to death
those unfortunate men, who would have
been freed uncondemned if they had
pleaded even before Scythians. 48 And so
those who had spoken for the city and the
villages[s] and the holy vessels quickly suffered the unjust penalty. 49 Therefore
even the Tyrians, showing their hatred of
the crime, provided magnificently for
their funeral. 50 But Menelaus, because of
the greed of those in power, remained
in office, growing in wickedness, having
become the chief plotter against his compatriots.

Jason Tries to Regain Control

5 About this time Antiochus made his
second invasion of Egypt. 2 And it
happened that, for almost forty days,
there appeared over all the city golden-
clad cavalry charging through the air, in
companies fully armed with lances and
drawn swords— 3 troops of cavalry drawn
up, attacks and counterattacks made on
this side and on that, brandishing of
shields, massing of spears, hurling of missiles, the flash of golden trappings, and
armor of all kinds. 4 Therefore everyone
prayed that the apparition might prove to
have been a good omen.

5 When a false rumor arose that Antiochus was dead, Jason took no fewer than
a thousand men and suddenly made an
assault on the city. When the troops on
the wall had been forced back and at last
the city was being taken, Menelaus took
refuge in the citadel. 6 But Jason kept relentlessly slaughtering his compatriots,
not realizing that success at the cost of
one's kindred is the greatest misfortune,
but imagining that he was setting up trophies of victory over enemies and not
over compatriots. 7 He did not, however,
gain control of the government; in the
end he got only disgrace from his conspiracy, and fled again into the country of the
Ammonites. 8 Finally he met a miserable
end. Accused[t] before Aretas the ruler of
the Arabs, fleeing from city to city, pursued by everyone, hated as a rebel against
the laws, and abhorred as the executioner
of his country and his compatriots, he was

r Gk *they* s Other ancient authorities read *the people* t Cn: Gk *Imprisoned*

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ple vessels at Jerusalem. **4.42** The *temple robber* Lysimachus died at the very place he was robbing—a sign of divine intervention to the writer. **4.45** *Ptolemy son of Dorymenes*, later governor of Coelesyria and Phoenicia (8.8; 1 Macc 3.38), sided with Menelaus against the delegates sent by the senate (Greek *gerousia*), the council of Jewish elders. **4.47** *Scythians*, from north of the Black Sea, were notorious for their cruelty.

5.1–14 An abortive coup by Jason results in a brutal attack on Jerusalem by a frustrated Antiochus IV. **5.1** Antiochus's *second invasion of Egypt* took place in 168 B.C.E. (see Dan 11.29–30). Forced by the Romans to retreat, Antiochus vented his anger on Jerusalem. **5.2–4** In view of what follows in chs. 5–7, the apparition does not seem to have been a *good omen*. **5.5–6** Jason apparently took the report about the Romans' stopping Antiochus in Egypt as involving his death (see 5.11). His rival Menelaus joined the Cyprian mercenaries in the citadel. **5.7** For Jason's earlier flight to the *Ammonites*, see 4.26. **5.8** *Aretas* was Harith I, king of the Nabateans. As a rebel against the Seleucids Jason naturally took

cast ashore in Egypt. 9 There he who had driven many from their own country into exile died in exile, having embarked to go to the Lacedaemonians in hope of finding protection because of their kinship. 10 He who had cast out many to lie unburied had no one to mourn for him; he had no funeral of any sort and no place in the tomb of his ancestors.

11 When news of what had happened reached the king, he took it to mean that Judea was in revolt. So, raging inwardly, he left Egypt and took the city by storm. 12 He commanded his soldiers to cut down relentlessly everyone they met and to kill those who went into their houses. 13 Then there was massacre of young and old, destruction of boys, women, and children, and slaughter of young girls and infants. 14 Within the total of three days eighty thousand were destroyed, forty thousand in hand-to-hand fighting, and as many were sold into slavery as were killed.

Pillage of the Temple

15 Not content with this, Antiochus[u] dared to enter the most holy temple in all the world, guided by Menelaus, who had become a traitor both to the laws and to his country. 16 He took the holy vessels with his polluted hands, and swept away with profane hands the votive offerings that other kings had made to enhance the glory and honor of the place. 17 Antiochus was elated in spirit, and did not perceive that the Lord was angered for a little while because of the sins of those who lived in the city, and that this was the reason he was disregarding the holy place. 18 But if it had not happened that they were involved in many sins, this man would have been flogged and turned back from his rash act as soon as he came forward, just as Heliodorus had been, whom King Seleucus sent to inspect the treasury. 19 But the Lord did not choose the nation for the sake of the holy place, but the place for the sake of the nation. 20 Therefore the place itself shared in the misfortunes that befell the nation and afterward participated in its benefits; and what was forsaken in the wrath of the Almighty was restored again in all its glory when the great Lord became reconciled.

21 So Antiochus carried off eighteen hundred talents from the temple, and hurried away to Antioch, thinking in his arrogance that he could sail on the land and walk on the sea, because his mind was elated. 22 He left governors to oppress the people: at Jerusalem, Philip, by birth a Phrygian and in character more barbarous than the man who appointed him; 23 and at Gerizim, Andronicus; and besides these Menelaus, who lorded it over his compatriots worse than the others did. In his malice toward the Jewish citizens,[v] 24 Antiochus[u] sent Apollonius, the captain of the Mysians, with an army of twenty-two thousand, and commanded him to kill all the grown men and to sell the women and boys as slaves. 25 When this man arrived in Jerusalem, he pretended to be peaceably disposed and waited until the holy sabbath day; then, finding the Jews not at work, he ordered his troops to parade under arms. 26 He put to the sword all those who came out to see them, then rushed into the city with

u Gk *he* *v* Or *worse than the others did in his malice toward the Jewish citizens*

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refuge in *Egypt*. **5.9** *Lacedaemonians* were the Spartans, in Greece. For their alleged kinship with the Jews, see 1 Macc 12.2–23. **5.10** The villain Jason suffers an appropriate punishment (see 4.16, 38, 42). **5.14** As usual in 1–2 Maccabees, the numbers are exaggerated. Antiochus probably viewed events in Jerusalem as a full-scale rebellion that needed to be controlled.

5.15–27 The robbery by Antiochus (with the help of Menelaus) and the attack by Apollonius are softened only by the brief mention of Judas Maccabeus in 5.27. See 1 Macc 1.21–40. **5.15–16** Non-Jews were forbidden to enter the most sacred parts of the temple and handle the sacred vessels. The fact that Menelaus (the high priest!) served as Antiochus's guide is outrageous to the writer. **5.17–18** According to the theology of 2 Maccabees God allowed the profanation because of the people's *sins* (see 6.12–17). But Antiochus's arrogance will eventually be punished (see 9.1–29). **5.21** *Eighteen hundred talents* was a very large sum, perhaps an exaggeration. For the "elation" of Antiochus, see Dan 11.36. **5.22–23** *Philip* the Phrygian (from western Asia Minor) appears again in 6.11; 8.8. This *Andronicus* is not the same as the one in 4.31–38. **5.24–26** For another account of *Apollonius*, see 1 Macc 1.29–32. 2 Maccabees places the attack on

his armed warriors and killed great numbers of people.

27 But Judas Maccabeus, with about nine others, got away to the wilderness, and kept himself and his companions alive in the mountains as wild animals do; they continued to live on what grew wild, so that they might not share in the defilement.

The Suppression of Judaism

6 Not long after this, the king sent an Athenian[w] senator[x] to compel the Jews to forsake the laws of their ancestors and no longer to live by the laws of God; 2 also to pollute the temple in Jerusalem and to call it the temple of Olympian Zeus, and to call the one in Gerizim the temple of Zeus-the-Friend-of-Strangers, as did the people who lived in that place.

3 Harsh and utterly grievous was the onslaught of evil. 4 For the temple was filled with debauchery and reveling by the Gentiles, who dallied with prostitutes and had intercourse with women within the sacred precincts, and besides brought in things for sacrifice that were unfit. 5 The altar was covered with abominable offerings that were forbidden by the laws. 6 People could neither keep the sabbath, nor observe the festivals of their ancestors, nor so much as confess themselves to be Jews.

7 On the monthly celebration of the king's birthday, the Jews[y] were taken, under bitter constraint, to partake of the sacrifices; and when a festival of Dionysus was celebrated, they were compelled to wear wreaths of ivy and to walk in the procession in honor of Dionysus. 8 At the suggestion of the people of Ptolemais[z] a decree was issued to the neighboring Greek cities that they should adopt the same policy toward the Jews and make them partake of the sacrifices, 9 and should kill those who did not choose to change over to Greek customs. One could see, therefore, the misery that had come upon them. 10 For example, two women were brought in for having circumcised their children. They publicly paraded them around the city, with their babies hanging at their breasts, and then hurled them down headlong from the wall. 11 Others who had assembled in the caves nearby, in order to observe the seventh day secretly, were betrayed to Philip and were all burned together, because their piety kept them from defending themselves, in view of their regard for that most holy day.

Providential Significance of the Persecution

12 Now I urge those who read this book not to be depressed by such calamities, but to recognize that these punishments were designed not to destroy but to discipline our people. 13 In fact, it is a sign of great kindness not to let the impious alone for long, but to punish them immediately. 14 For in the case of the other

w Other ancient authorities read *Antiochian*
x Or *Geron an Athenian* y Gk *they* z Cn: Gk *suggestion of the Ptolemies* (or *of Ptolemy*)

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the *sabbath* when Jews would be unprepared (see 1 Macc 2.29–38). **5.27** *Judas Maccabeus* and his *nine* companions kept the Jewish food laws by eating vegetation and refusing unclean animals. There is no mention of Judas's father or brothers (see 1 Macc 2.1–5). Judas reappears in 2 Macc 8.

6.1–11 The assimilation to Greek religion and customs is interpreted as a direct attack on Judaism. See 1 Macc 1.41–64. **6.1** In 167 B.C.E. an *Athenian* elder or *senator* (Greek *geron*) or *Geron an Athenian* was sent to bring order to the religious affairs of the Jews. **6.2** *Olympian Zeus* was the Greek equivalent of Israel's Most High God (though pious Jews resented this identification). **6.4** The description suggests temple prostitution (see Amos 2.7; Ezek 23.36–49; Dan 11.31)—a practice more at home in Semitic than in Greek religion. **6.5** Though it mentions *abominable offerings*, 2 Maccabees is silent about the "desolating sacrilege" (1 Macc 1.54; Dan 11.31). **6.7** Antiochus's *birthday* was celebrated on the twenty-fifth of every month (1 Macc 1.58–59). *Dionysus* was the Greek god of wine and harvest. **6.8** *Ptolemais* is probably the city on the coast also known as Acco, or perhaps *Ptolemy*, mentioned in 4.45, should be read. **6.9** *Greek customs* includes the general cultural program known as Hellenism. Not every feature came from Greece; there was a mix of Greek and oriental elements. **6.10–11** These incidents appear also in 1 Macc 1.60–61; 2.31–38.

6.12–17 The stories of the martyrs are given an interpretation as a discipline applied by God in the short term. Nevertheless God's mercy to Israel remains firm and will prevail in the end. **6.14–15** The *other nations* are given the leeway to have their sins build up, so that their ultimate punishment is worse than Israel's.

nations the Lord waits patiently to punish them until they have reached the full measure of their sins; but he does not deal in this way with us, 15 in order that he may not take vengeance on us afterward when our sins have reached their height. 16 Therefore he never withdraws his mercy from us. Although he disciplines us with calamities, he does not forsake his own people. 17 Let what we have said serve as a reminder; we must go on briefly with the story.

The Martyrdom of Eleazar

18 Eleazar, one of the scribes in high position, a man now advanced in age and of noble presence, was being forced to open his mouth to eat swine's flesh. 19 But he, welcoming death with honor rather than life with pollution, went up to the rack of his own accord, spitting out the flesh, 20 as all ought to go who have the courage to refuse things that it is not right to taste, even for the natural love of life.

21 Those who were in charge of that unlawful sacrifice took the man aside because of their long acquaintance with him, and privately urged him to bring meat of his own providing, proper for him to use, and to pretend that he was eating the flesh of the sacrificial meal that had been commanded by the king, 22 so that by doing this he might be saved from death, and be treated kindly on account of his old friendship with them. 23 But making a high resolve, worthy of his years and the dignity of his old age and the gray hairs that he had reached with distinction and his excellent life even from childhood, and moreover according to the holy God-given law, he declared himself quickly, telling them to send him to Hades.

24 "Such pretense is not worthy of our time of life," he said, "for many of the young might suppose that Eleazar in his ninetieth year had gone over to an alien religion, 25 and through my pretense, for the sake of living a brief moment longer, they would be led astray because of me, while I defile and disgrace my old age. 26 Even if for the present I would avoid the punishment of mortals, yet whether I live or die I will not escape the hands of the Almighty. 27 Therefore, by bravely giving up my life now, I will show myself worthy of my old age 28 and leave to the young a noble example of how to die a good death willingly and nobly for the revered and holy laws."

When he had said this, he went[a] at once to the rack. 29 Those who a little before had acted toward him with goodwill now changed to ill will, because the words he had uttered were in their opinion sheer madness.[b] 30 When he was about to die under the blows, he groaned aloud and said: "It is clear to the Lord in his holy knowledge that, though I might have been saved from death, I am enduring terrible sufferings in my body under this beating, but in my soul I am glad to suffer these things because I fear him."

31 So in this way he died, leaving in his death an example of nobility and a memorial of courage, not only to the young but to the great body of his nation.

The Martyrdom of Seven Brothers

7 It happened also that seven brothers and their mother were arrested and were being compelled by the king, under torture with whips and thongs, to partake of unlawful swine's flesh. 2 One of them, acting as their spokesman, said, "What do you intend to ask and learn from us? For we are ready to die rather than transgress the laws of our ancestors."

a Other ancient authorities read *was dragged*
b Meaning of Gk uncertain

6.18–31 Eleazar appears as a model Jew because he refuses to compromise his religious principles in the face of suffering and death. **6.18** The story of *Eleazar* (otherwise unknown) is told at greater length in 4 Macc 5–7. Eating *swine's flesh* was prohibited by Lev 11.7–8. **6.19** The exact nature of the torture is uncertain; the *rack* is only one possibility. **6.23** *Hades*, the abode of the dead, Sheol in the Hebrew scriptures. **6.26** Eleazar envisions the possibility of *punishment* from God after death. **6.29** For the death of the righteous as apparent *madness*, see Wis 3.1–4; 5.4. **6.30** The *holy knowledge* refers to God's ability to know why Eleazar underwent martyrdom.

7.1–42 The most famous part of 2 Maccabees contains the statements of the seven brothers and their mother about the resurrection of the just and the annihilation of the wicked. **7.1** The *king* is later identified as Antiochus (7.24). For the

3 The king fell into a rage, and gave
orders to have pans and caldrons heated.
4 These were heated immediately, and he
commanded that the tongue of their
spokesman be cut out and that they scalp
him and cut off his hands and feet, while
the rest of the brothers and the mother
looked on. 5 When he was utterly helpless,
the king[c] ordered them to take him to
the fire, still breathing, and to fry him in
a pan. The smoke from the pan spread
widely, but the brothers[d] and their
mother encouraged one another to die
nobly, saying, 6 "The Lord God is watch-
ing over us and in truth has compassion
on us, as Moses declared in his song that
bore witness against the people to their
faces, when he said, 'And he will have
compassion on his servants.' "[e]

7 After the first brother had died in
this way, they brought forward the second
for their sport. They tore off the skin of
his head with the hair, and asked him,
"Will you eat rather than have your body
punished limb by limb?" 8 He replied in
the language of his ancestors and said to
them, "No." Therefore he in turn under-
went tortures as the first brother had
done. 9 And when he was at his last
breath, he said, "You accursed wretch,
you dismiss us from this present life, but
the King of the universe will raise us up to
an everlasting renewal of life, because we
have died for his laws."

10 After him, the third was the victim
of their sport. When it was demanded, he
quickly put out his tongue and coura-
geously stretched forth his hands, 11 and
said nobly, "I got these from Heaven, and
because of his laws I disdain them, and
from him I hope to get them back again."
12 As a result the king himself and those
with him were astonished at the young
man's spirit, for he regarded his suffer-
ings as nothing.

13 After he too had died, they mal-
treated and tortured the fourth in the
same way. 14 When he was near death, he
said, "One cannot but choose to die at the
hands of mortals and to cherish the hope
God gives of being raised again by him.
But for you there will be no resurrection
to life!"

15 Next they brought forward the
fifth and maltreated him. 16 But he looked
at the king,[f] and said, "Because you have
authority among mortals, though you also
are mortal, you do what you please. But
do not think that God has forsaken our
people. 17 Keep on, and see how his
mighty power will torture you and your
descendants!"

18 After him they brought forward
the sixth. And when he was about to die,
he said, "Do not deceive yourself in vain.
For we are suffering these things on our
own account, because of our sins against
our own God. Therefore[g] astounding
things have happened. 19 But do not think
that you will go unpunished for having
tried to fight against God!"

20 The mother was especially admira-
ble and worthy of honorable memory.
Although she saw her seven sons perish
within a single day, she bore it with good
courage because of her hope in the Lord.
21 She encouraged each of them in the
language of their ancestors. Filled with a
noble spirit, she reinforced her woman's
reasoning with a man's courage, and said
to them, 22 "I do not know how you came
into being in my womb. It was not I who
gave you life and breath, nor I who set in
order the elements within each of you.
23 Therefore the Creator of the world,
who shaped the beginning of humankind
and devised the origin of all things, will in
his mercy give life and breath back to you
again, since you now forget yourselves for
the sake of his laws."

c Gk *he* *d* Gk *they* *e* Gk *slaves* *f* Gk *at him*
g Lat: Other ancient authorities lack *Therefore*

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prohibition against *swine's flesh*, see note on 6.18. **7.3–5** The punishment for all the sons involved scalping, dismemberment, and roasting. **7.6** In Deut 32.36–38 trust in the Lord's *compassion* appears in the context of rejecting apostasy (as here). **7.8** The *language of his ancestors* (see 7.21, 27; 12.37; 15.29) was Hebrew. **7.9** The *King of the universe* (God) is superior to King Antiochus since God can raise the faithful to eternal life (see Dan 12.1–3). **7.11** *Hope* in bodily resurrection is based on the power of God the creator, not on human nature. **7.14** For the wicked there will be *no resurrection to life*; they will be annihilated. **7.17** The *descendants* of Antiochus included Antiochus V Eupator, Alexander Balas, and Antiochus VI. **7.18–19** *Our sins* refers to the sins of the people as a whole (see also 7.32). The sixth son echoes what the author said in 6.12–17. **7.22–23** See 7.11 and various biblical texts (Job 1.10–12; Ps 139.13–16; Eccl 11.5) for God as the

24 Antiochus felt that he was being
treated with contempt, and he was suspi-
cious of her reproachful tone. The youn-
gest brother being still alive, Antiochus[h]
not only appealed to him in words, but
promised with oaths that he would make
him rich and enviable if he would turn
from the ways of his ancestors, and that
he would take him for his Friend and en-
trust him with public affairs. 25 Since the
young man would not listen to him at all,
the king called the mother to him and
urged her to advise the youth to save him-
self. 26 After much urging on his part, she
undertook to persuade her son. 27 But,
leaning close to him, she spoke in their
native language as follows, deriding the
cruel tyrant: "My son, have pity on me. I
carried you nine months in my womb,
and nursed you for three years, and have
reared you and brought you up to this
point in your life, and have taken care of
you.[i] 28 I beg you, my child, to look at the
heaven and the earth and see everything
that is in them, and recognize that God
did not make them out of things that ex-
isted.[j] And in the same way the human
race came into being. 29 Do not fear this
butcher, but prove worthy of your broth-
ers. Accept death, so that in God's mercy
I may get you back again along with your
brothers."

30 While she was still speaking, the
young man said, "What are you[k] waiting
for? I will not obey the king's command,
but I obey the command of the law that
was given to our ancestors through Moses.
31 But you,[l] who have contrived all sorts
of evil against the Hebrews, will certainly
not escape the hands of God. 32 For we
are suffering because of our own sins.
33 And if our living Lord is angry for a
little while, to rebuke and discipline us, he
will again be reconciled with his own ser-
vants.[m] 34 But you, unholy wretch, you
most defiled of all mortals, do not be
elated in vain and puffed up by uncertain
hopes, when you raise your hand against
the children of heaven. 35 You have not
yet escaped the judgment of the almighty,
all-seeing God. 36 For our brothers after
enduring a brief suffering have drunk[n]
of ever-flowing life, under God's cove-
nant; but you, by the judgment of God,
will receive just punishment for your ar-
rogance. 37 I, like my brothers, give up
body and life for the laws of our ances-
tors, appealing to God to show mercy
soon to our nation and by trials and
plagues to make you confess that he alone
is God, 38 and through me and my broth-
ers to bring to an end the wrath of the
Almighty that has justly fallen on our
whole nation."

39 The king fell into a rage, and han-
dled him worse than the others, being
exasperated at his scorn. 40 So he died
in his integrity, putting his whole trust in
the Lord.

41 Last of all, the mother died, after
her sons.

42 Let this be enough, then, about the
eating of sacrifices and the extreme
tortures.

The Revolt of Judas Maccabeus

8 Meanwhile Judas, who was also
called Maccabeus, and his compan-
ions secretly entered the villages and sum-
moned their kindred and enlisted those
who had continued in the Jewish faith,
and so they gathered about six thousand.
2 They implored the Lord to look upon
the people who were oppressed by all;
and to have pity on the temple that had
been profaned by the godless; 3 to have
mercy on the city that was being de-

h Gk *he* *i* Or *have borne the burden of your education* *j* Or *God made them out of things that did not exist* *k* The Gk here for *you* is plural *l* The Gk here for *you* is singular *m* Gk *slaves* *n* Cn: Gk *fallen*

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origin of human life and thus lord over its destiny. **7.24** *Friend* was an official title of the king's advisers (see 1 Macc 2.18). **7.28** The mother's confession that *God did not make them out of things that existed* echoes 7.11, 22–23; it need not be taken as a philosophical statement of "creation out of nothing" (Latin *creatio ex nihilo*), though it has often been interpreted in that way. **7.32–33** For the same basic theology of suffering, see 6.12–17; 7.18–19. The *sins* are those of the people taken collectively (see 7.18–19). **7.37–38** By dying *for the laws of our ancestors* the seventh son expects to hasten the fulfillment of the discipline placed on Israel and the just recompense owed to the king.

8.1–11 Judas Maccabeus (the "Hammerer") arises as Israel's champion against the Seleucids. See 1 Macc 3.1–41. **8.1** The narrative about *Judas* begun in 5.27 continues. Most of the material in 1 Macc 2.1–3.26 is absent. **8.2–4** The prayer

stroyed and about to be leveled to the
ground; to hearken to the blood that
cried out to him; 4to remember also the
lawless destruction of the innocent babies
and the blasphemies committed against
his name; and to show his hatred of evil.
5 As soon as Maccabeus got his army
organized, the Gentiles could not with-
stand him, for the wrath of the Lord had
turned to mercy. 6Coming without warn-
ing, he would set fire to towns and vil-
lages. He captured strategic positions and
put to flight not a few of the enemy. 7He
found the nights most advantageous for
such attacks. And talk of his valor spread
everywhere.
8 When Philip saw that the man was
gaining ground little by little, and that he
was pushing ahead with more frequent
successes, he wrote to Ptolemy, the gover-
nor of Coelesyria and Phoenicia, to come
to the aid of the king's government.
9Then Ptolemy[o] promptly appointed Ni-
canor son of Patroclus, one of the king's
chief[p] Friends, and sent him, in com-
mand of no fewer than twenty thousand
Gentiles of all nations, to wipe out the
whole race of Judea. He associated with
him Gorgias, a general and a man of ex-
perience in military service. 10Nicanor de-
termined to make up for the king the
tribute due to the Romans, two thousand
talents, by selling the captured Jews into
slavery. 11So he immediately sent to the
towns on the seacoast, inviting them to
buy Jewish slaves and promising to hand
over ninety slaves for a talent, not expect-
ing the judgment from the Almighty that
was about to overtake him.

Preparation for Battle

12 Word came to Judas concerning
Nicanor's invasion; and when he told his
companions of the arrival of the army,
13those who were cowardly and distrust-
ful of God's justice ran off and got away.
14Others sold all their remaining prop-
erty, and at the same time implored the
Lord to rescue those who had been sold
by the ungodly Nicanor before he ever
met them, 15if not for their own sake,
then for the sake of the covenants made
with their ancestors, and because he had
called them by his holy and glorious
name. 16But Maccabeus gathered his
forces together, to the number six thou-
sand, and exhorted them not to be fright-
ened by the enemy and not to fear the
great multitude of Gentiles who were
wickedly coming against them, but to
fight nobly, 17keeping before their eyes
the lawless outrage that the Gentiles[q]
had committed against the holy place, and
the torture of the derided city, and besides,
the overthrow of their ancestral way of
life. 18"For they trust to arms and acts of
daring," he said, "but we trust in the Al-
mighty God, who is able with a single nod
to strike down those who are coming
against us, and even, if necessary, the
whole world."
19 Moreover, he told them of the oc-
casions when help came to their ancestors;
how, in the time of Sennacherib, when
one hundred eighty-five thousand per-
ished, 20and the time of the battle against
the Galatians that took place in Babylo-
nia, when eight thousand Jews[r] fought
along with four thousand Macedonians;
yet when the Macedonians were hard
pressed, the eight thousand, by the help
that came to them from heaven, de-
stroyed one hundred twenty thousand

o Gk *he* p Gk *one of the first* q Gk *they*
r Gk lacks *Jews*

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of the troops summarizes events described so far in the book. **8.5–7** Judas's success as a guerilla warrior is interpreted in the light of 6.12–17; 7.38 (*the wrath of the Lord had turned to mercy*). **8.8–9** In 1 Macc 3.38–41 the major opponent is *Gorgias*. *Nicanor* may be the same villain in 2 Macc 14–15. **8.10** The *tribute due to the Romans* may refer to the payment imposed on Antiochus III by the treaty of Apamea in 188 B.C.E. **8.11** *Ninety slaves for a talent* was a very low price, thus expressing a contemptuous attitude toward Jews.

8.12–20 Judas gathers his army and exhorts them to fight bravely despite the numerical odds. See 1 Macc 3.42–60. **8.13** In 1 Macc 3.56 the desertion is explained in the light of Deut 20.5–8. **8.16–18** For another version of Judas's exhortation, see 1 Macc 3.58–60. **8.19** For *Sennacherib's* defeat in 701 B.C.E., see 2 Kings 19.35–36. See 2 Macc 15.22; 1 Macc 7.41 for other allusions to this incident. **8.20** The *Galatians* in Babylonia were a mercenary force defeated by Jews and Seleucids (*Macedonians*). Nothing else is known about this battle.

Galatians[s] and took a great amount of booty.

Judas Defeats Nicanor

21 With these words he filled them
with courage and made them ready to die
for their laws and their country; then he
divided his army into four parts. 22 He
appointed his brothers also, Simon and
Joseph and Jonathan, each to command a
division, putting fifteen hundred men un-
der each. 23 Besides, he appointed Eleazar
to read aloud[t] from the holy book, and
gave the watchword, "The help of God";
then, leading the first division himself, he
joined battle with Nicanor.

24 With the Almighty as their ally,
they killed more than nine thousand of
the enemy, and wounded and disabled
most of Nicanor's army, and forced them
all to flee. 25 They captured the money of
those who had come to buy them as slaves.
After pursuing them for some distance,
they were obliged to return because the
hour was late. 26 It was the day before the
sabbath, and for that reason they did not
continue their pursuit. 27 When they had
collected the arms of the enemy and
stripped them of their spoils, they kept
the sabbath, giving great praise and
thanks to the Lord, who had preserved
them for that day and allotted it to them
as the beginning of mercy. 28 After the
sabbath they gave some of the spoils to
those who had been tortured and to the
widows and orphans, and distributed the
rest among themselves and their children.
29 When they had done this, they made
common supplication and implored the
merciful Lord to be wholly reconciled
with his servants.[u]

Judas Defeats Timothy and Bacchides

30 In encounters with the forces of
Timothy and Bacchides they killed more
than twenty thousand of them and got
possession of some exceedingly high
strongholds, and they divided a very large
amount of plunder, giving to those who
had been tortured and to the orphans and
widows, and also to the aged, shares equal
to their own. 31 They collected the arms of
the enemy,[v] and carefully stored all of
them in strategic places; the rest of the
spoils they carried to Jerusalem. 32 They
killed the commander of Timothy's
forces, a most wicked man, and one who
had greatly troubled the Jews. 33 While
they were celebrating the victory in the
city of their ancestors, they burned those
who had set fire to the sacred gates, Callis-
thenes and some others, who had fled
into one little house; so these received the
proper reward for their impiety.[t]

34 The thrice-accursed Nicanor, who
had brought the thousand merchants to
buy the Jews, 35 having been humbled
with the help of the Lord by opponents
whom he regarded as of the least account,
took off his splendid uniform and made
his way alone like a runaway slave across
the country until he reached Antioch,
having succeeded chiefly in the destruc-
tion of his own army! 36 So he who had
undertaken to secure tribute for the Ro-
mans by the capture of the people of Je-
rusalem proclaimed that the Jews had a
Defender, and that therefore the Jews
were invulnerable, because they followed
the laws ordained by him.

s Gk lacks *Galatians* t Meaning of Gk uncertain
u Gk *slaves* v Gk *their arms*

8.21–29 In defeating Nicanor Judas appears as the exemplary biblical warrior. See 1 Macc 4.1–25. **8.22–23** *Simon* and *Jonathan* were Judas's brothers. *Eleazar* may be Azariah (1 Macc 5.18, 55–62), the companion of *Joseph*. The password *The help of God* is what Eleazar means in Hebrew. **8.24–25** For a fuller account, see 1 Macc 4.13–25. For the *nine thousand of the enemy* slain, 1 Macc 4.15 has three thousand. **8.26–27** Judas in 2 Maccabees is very careful to observe the *sabbath*; 1 Macc 4.16–17 gives a different rationale in postponing the plundering. **8.28** For the division of *spoils*, see Num 31.25–47; 1 Sam 30.21–25. *Widows and orphans*, see Deut 26.12–13. **8.30–36** A summary of victories over Israel's enemies. **8.30–31** For the defeats of *Timothy* and *Bacchides*, see 1 Macc 5.6–7; 7.8–25. For the policy regarding *plunder*, see 8.28. **8.32** The *commander of Timothy's forces* may have been the chief of the Arab mercenaries (see 1 Macc 5.37–44). **8.33** For the *gates*, see 1 Macc 1.31. Nothing is known about *Callisthenes*. **8.34–35** The story returns to *Nicanor* (see 8.24), who suffers an appropriate punishment: he who sought to enslave Israel flees *like a runaway slave*. **8.36** The *Defender* is the God of Israel.

The Last Campaign of Antiochus Epiphanes

9 About that time, as it happened, Antiochus had retreated in disorder
from the region of Persia. 2 He had entered the city called Persepolis and attempted to rob the temples and control the city. Therefore the people rushed to the rescue with arms, and Antiochus and his army were defeated,[w] with the result that Antiochus was put to flight by the inhabitants and beat a shameful retreat.
3 While he was in Ecbatana, news came to him of what had happened to Nicanor and the forces of Timothy. 4 Transported with rage, he conceived the idea of turning upon the Jews the injury done by those who had put him to flight; so he ordered his charioteer to drive without stopping until he completed the journey. But the judgment of heaven rode with him! For in his arrogance he said, "When I get there I will make Jerusalem a cemetery of Jews."
5 But the all-seeing Lord, the God of Israel, struck him with an incurable and invisible blow. As soon as he stopped speaking he was seized with a pain in his bowels, for which there was no relief, and with sharp internal tortures— 6 and that very justly, for he had tortured the bowels of others with many and strange inflictions. 7 Yet he did not in any way stop his insolence, but was even more filled with arrogance, breathing fire in his rage against the Jews, and giving orders to drive even faster. And so it came about that he fell out of his chariot as it was rushing along, and the fall was so hard as to torture every limb of his body. 8 Thus he who only a little while before had thought in his superhuman arrogance that he could command the waves of the sea, and had imagined that he could weigh the high mountains in a balance, was brought down to earth and carried in a litter, making the power of God manifest to all. 9 And so the ungodly man's body swarmed with worms, and while he was still living in anguish and pain, his flesh rotted away, and because of the stench the whole army felt revulsion at his decay. 10 Because of his intolerable stench no one was able to carry the man who a little while before had thought that he could touch the stars of heaven. 11 Then it was that, broken in spirit, he began to lose much of his arrogance and to come to his senses under the scourge of God, for he was tortured with pain every moment.
12 And when he could not endure his own stench, he uttered these words, "It is right to be subject to God; mortals should not think that they are equal to God."[x]

Antiochus Makes a Promise to God

13 Then the abominable fellow made a vow to the Lord, who would no longer have mercy on him, stating 14 that the holy city, which he was hurrying to level to the ground and to make a cemetery, he was now declaring to be free; 15 and the Jews, whom he had not considered worth burying but had planned to throw out with their children for the wild animals and for the birds to eat, he would make, all of them, equal to citizens of Athens; 16 and the holy sanctuary, which he had formerly plundered, he would adorn with the finest offerings; and all the holy vessels he would give back, many times over; and the expenses incurred for the sacrifices he would provide from his own revenues;
17 and in addition to all this he also would become a Jew and would visit every inhabited place to proclaim the power of God.
18 But when his sufferings did not in any

w Gk *they were defeated*
x Or *not think thoughts proper only to God*

9.1–12 After undergoing various gruesome but appropriate punishments, Antiochus finally recognizes the power of Israel's God. For other accounts of his end see 1.13–17; 1 Macc 6.1–17; Dan 11.40–45. **9.2–3** *Persepolis* was the old capital of the Persian Empire, founded by Darius I. *Ecbatana* was northwest of Persepolis. **9.4** The *judgment of heaven* (God) directs the misfortunes that Antiochus undergoes: pains in his bowels (9.5–6), fall from the chariot (9.7), and worms and stench (9.9–10). **9.8** For an earlier display of Antiochus's *arrogance*, see 5.21. Cf. Isa 40.12. **9.9** For *worms* as a punishment for the wicked, see Isa 14.11; 66.24; Jdt 16.17; Sir 7.17; Acts 12.23. **9.12** For a similar acknowledgement by King Nebuchadnezzar, see Dan 4.34–37.

9.13–18 No other ancient source confirms Antiochus's promises to God, and they are historically unlikely. At any rate, God does not accept Antiochus's prayer. **9.14** Jerusalem was *to be free* of taxes (see 1 Macc 10.31). **9.15** To be *equal to citizens of Athens* probably meant that Jews would enjoy freedom and democracy. Athens was not part of Antiochus's empire.

way abate, for the judgment of God had justly come upon him, he gave up all hope for himself and wrote to the Jews the following letter, in the form of a supplication. This was its content:

Antiochus's Letter and Death

19 "To his worthy Jewish citizens, Antiochus their king and general sends hearty greetings and good wishes for their health and prosperity. 20 If you and your children are well and your affairs are as you wish, I am glad. As my hope is in heaven, 21 I remember with affection your esteem and goodwill. On my way back from the region of Persia I suffered an annoying illness, and I have deemed it necessary to take thought for the general security of all. 22 I do not despair of my condition, for I have good hope of recovering from my illness, 23 but I observed that my father, on the occasions when he made expeditions into the upper country, appointed his successor, 24 so that, if anything unexpected happened or any unwelcome news came, the people throughout the realm would not be troubled, for they would know to whom the government was left. 25 Moreover, I understand how the princes along the borders and the neighbors of my kingdom keep watching for opportunities and waiting to see what will happen. So I have appointed my son Antiochus to be king, whom I have often entrusted and commended to most of you when I hurried off to the upper provinces; and I have written to him what is written here. 26 I therefore urge and beg you to remember the public and private services rendered to you and to maintain your present goodwill, each of you, toward me and my son. 27 For I am sure that he will follow my policy and will treat you with moderation and kindness."

28 So the murderer and blasphemer, having endured the more intense suffering, such as he had inflicted on others, came to the end of his life by a most pitiable fate, among the mountains in a strange land. 29 And Philip, one of his courtiers, took his body home; then, fearing the son of Antiochus, he withdrew to Ptolemy Philometor in Egypt.

Purification of the Temple

10 Now Maccabeus and his followers, the Lord leading them on, recovered the temple and the city; 2 they tore down the altars that had been built in the public square by the foreigners, and also destroyed the sacred precincts. 3 They purified the sanctuary, and made another altar of sacrifice; then, striking fire out of flint, they offered sacrifices, after a lapse of two years, and they offered incense and lighted lamps and set out the bread of the Presence. 4 When they had done this, they fell prostrate and implored the Lord that they might never again fall into such misfortunes, but that, if they should ever sin, they might be disciplined by him with forbearance and not be handed over to blasphemous and barbarous nations. 5 It happened that on the same day on which the sanctuary had

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9.19–29 The tone of the letter appointing Antiochus V as the successor does not fit the context well, but it is probably authentic in content. **9.19** Rather than to *his worthy Jewish citizens*, the letter was more likely addressed to the people of Antioch. **9.21** In view of 9.1–12 *an annoying illness* is understatement and probably reflects Antiochus's true condition (which has been exaggerated in 9.1–12). **9.23** His *father*, Antiochus III, has appointed Seleucus IV as his successor. **9.25** His *son* was Antiochus V Eupator ("of a good father"). He was still a young boy and needed a regent (1 Macc 3.33; 6.14–15). **9.28** According to 2 Maccabees Antiochus died before the purification of the Jerusalem temple, whereas in 1 Maccabees (6.1–17) he died afterward. In fact he died just about the same time, and both writers draw a connection. **9.29** *Philip* tried to seize the government (1 Macc 6.55–56) but could not hold Antioch (6.63). Then he fled to Egypt.

10.1–9 2 Maccabees portrays Judas's restoration of the temple as a purification, whereas 1 Macc 4.36–59 presents it as a dedication. **10.1–2** 1 Maccabees mentions neither the recovery of the *city* nor the *altars that had been built in the public square*. **10.3** For the emphasis on *fire*, see 1.19–2.1, which gives a very different account of the fire; the use of *flint* guaranteed a new fire. The time *two years* is one year short (see 1 Macc 1.54; 4.52). **10.4** In accord with 6.12–17 the desecration of the temple is explained as punishment for Israel's sins (especially in following Jason and Menelaus) and as a *discipline*. **10.5–6** For the date, see 1 Macc 4.52, 54. For the comparison with *the festival of booths*, see 2 Macc 1.9, and for

been profaned by the foreigners, the purification of the sanctuary took place, that is, on the twenty-fifth day of the same month, which was Chislev. 6 They celebrated it for eight days with rejoicing, in the manner of the festival of booths, remembering how not long before, during the festival of booths, they had been wandering in the mountains and caves like wild animals. 7 Therefore, carrying ivy-wreathed wands and beautiful branches and also fronds of palm, they offered hymns of thanksgiving to him who had given success to the purifying of his own holy place. 8 They decreed by public edict, ratified by vote, that the whole nation of the Jews should observe these days every year.

9 Such then was the end of Antiochus, who was called Epiphanes.

Accession of Antiochus Eupator

10 Now we will tell what took place under Antiochus Eupator, who was the son of that ungodly man, and will give a brief summary of the principal calamities of the wars. 11 This man, when he succeeded to the kingdom, appointed one Lysias to have charge of the government and to be chief governor of Coelesyria and Phoenicia. 12 Ptolemy, who was called Macron, took the lead in showing justice to the Jews because of the wrong that had been done to them, and attempted to maintain peaceful relations with them. 13 As a result he was accused before Eupator by the king's Friends. He heard himself called a traitor at every turn, because he had abandoned Cyprus, which Philometor had entrusted to him, and had gone over to Antiochus Epiphanes. Unable to command the respect due his office,[y] he took poison and ended his life.

Campaign in Idumea

14 When Gorgias became governor of the region, he maintained a force of mercenaries, and at every turn kept attacking the Jews. 15 Besides this, the Idumeans, who had control of important strongholds, were harassing the Jews; they received those who were banished from Jerusalem, and endeavored to keep up the war. 16 But Maccabeus and his forces, after making solemn supplication and imploring God to fight on their side, rushed to the strongholds of the Idumeans. 17 Attacking them vigorously, they gained possession of the places, and beat off all who fought upon the wall, and slaughtered those whom they encountered, killing no fewer than twenty thousand.

18 When at least nine thousand took refuge in two very strong towers well equipped to withstand a siege, 19 Maccabeus left Simon and Joseph, and also Zacchaeus and his troops, a force sufficient to besiege them; and he himself set off for places where he was more urgently needed. 20 But those with Simon, who were money-hungry, were bribed by some of those who were in the towers, and on receiving seventy thousand drachmas let some of them slip away. 21 When word of what had happened came to Maccabeus, he gathered the leaders of the people, and accused these men of having sold their kindred for money by setting their enemies free to fight against them.

[y] Cn: Meaning of Gk uncertain

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the allusion to Judas in the *mountains*, see 5.27. **10.7** The *ivy-wreathed wands* (Greek *thyrsoi*) were carried in the procession honoring Dionysus (6.7) but were probably not perceived as distinctively pagan. **10.8** The *whole nation of the Jews* is expected to observe the feast, though Jews in Egypt needed encouragement to do so (see 1.1–9; 2.16–18).

10.10–13 On the death of Antiochus IV the Seleucid Empire passed to his son Antiochus V. **10.10** *Antiochus* V *Eupator* ("of a good father"); see 9.25, 29. He was about nine years old. He reigned until 162 B.C.E. when he was murdered by Demetrius I. **10.11** *Lysias* had been regent over the western territories (1 Macc 3.32–33). Since Antiochus V was a young boy, Lysias was responsible for making policy. **10.12** *Ptolemy who was called Macron* ("large headed") supported Antiochus IV when Cyprus was invaded in 168 B.C.E., thus incurring the suspicion of both the Ptolemies and the Seleucids.

10.14–23 In Idumea (see 1 Macc 5.1–54) Judas meets success. Whatever success he lacked was due to the treachery of some of his troops. **10.14** *Gorgias* was governor of Idumea (12.32). **10.15–17** See 1 Macc 5.3 for another account of the war against the *Idumeans*. **10.17–18, 23** The numbers *twenty thousand*, *nine thousand*, and *twenty thousand* are vastly exaggerated. **10.18–23** For Judas's attack on *towers* of the sons of Baean, see 1 Macc 5.4–5. **10.19** *Joseph*. See 1 Macc 5.18, 56; 2 Macc 8.22. Nothing is known of *Zacchaeus*.

22 Then he killed these men who had
turned traitor, and immediately captured
the two towers. 23 Having success at arms
in everything he undertook, he destroyed
more than twenty thousand in the two
strongholds.

Judas Defeats Timothy

24 Now Timothy, who had been de-
feated by the Jews before, gathered a tre-
mendous force of mercenaries and
collected the cavalry from Asia in no small
number. He came on, intending to take
Judea by storm. 25 As he drew near, Mac-
cabeus and his men sprinkled dust on
their heads and girded their loins with
sackcloth, in supplication to God. 26 Fall-
ing upon the steps before the altar, they
implored him to be gracious to them and
to be an enemy to their enemies and an
adversary to their adversaries, as the law
declares. 27 And rising from their prayer
they took up their arms and advanced a
considerable distance from the city; and
when they came near the enemy they
halted. 28 Just as dawn was breaking, the
two armies joined battle, the one having
as pledge of success and victory not only
their valor but also their reliance on the
Lord, while the other made rage their
leader in the fight.

29 When the battle became fierce,
there appeared to the enemy from heaven
five resplendent men on horses with
golden bridles, and they were leading the
Jews. 30 Two of them took Maccabeus be-
tween them, and shielding him with their
own armor and weapons, they kept him
from being wounded. They showered ar-
rows and thunderbolts on the enemy, so
that, confused and blinded, they were
thrown into disorder and cut to pieces.
31 Twenty thousand five hundred were
slaughtered, besides six hundred cavalry.

32 Timothy himself fled to a strong-
hold called Gazara, especially well garri-
soned, where Chaereas was commander.
33 Then Maccabeus and his men were
glad, and they besieged the fort for four
days. 34 The men within, relying on the
strength of the place, kept blaspheming
terribly and uttering wicked words. 35 But
at dawn of the fifth day, twenty young
men in the army of Maccabeus, fired with
anger because of the blasphemies, bravely
stormed the wall and with savage fury cut
down everyone they met. 36 Others who
came up in the same way wheeled around
against the defenders and set fire to the
towers; they kindled fires and burned the
blasphemers alive. Others broke open the
gates and let in the rest of the force, and
they occupied the city. 37 They killed Tim-
othy, who was hiding in a cistern, and his
brother Chaereas, and Apollophanes.
38 When they had accomplished these
things, with hymns and thanksgivings
they blessed the Lord who shows great
kindness to Israel and gives them the
victory.

Lysias Besieges Beth-zur

11 Very soon after this, Lysias, the
king's guardian and kinsman,
who was in charge of the government, be-
ing vexed at what had happened, 2 gath-
ered about eighty thousand infantry and
all his cavalry and came against the Jews.
He intended to make the city a home for
Greeks, 3 and to levy tribute on the temple
as he did on the sacred places of the other
nations, and to put up the high priest-
hood for sale every year. 4 He took no ac-
count whatever of the power of God, but

10.24–38 In his battles with Timothy, Judas is careful to pray and give thanks and so gets further victories. **10.24** For the defeat of Timothy *before*, see 8.30–33. **10.26** *As the law declares*, in Ex 23.22. **10.29** For other visions of *men on horses*, see 3.25–26; 5.2–3; 11.8. Here they protect Judas and send thunderbolts on the enemy—usually considered Greek features. **10.31** The numbers are exaggerations. **10.32** Simon captured *Gazara* (Gezer); see 1 Macc 13.43–48. The story originally concerned Jazer as in 1 Macc 5.8. *Chaereas* is identified as Timothy's brother in 10.37. **10.37** A *cistern* was a large pit with plastered walls used for storing water during the rainy season.

11.1–12 1 Macc 4.28–35 places Lysias's siege of Beth-zur before the death of Antiochus IV. **11.1** Lysias was named *guardian* of Antiochus V Eupator by Antiochus IV (see 1 Macc 3.32–33). *Kinsman* was an honorary title applied to the king's closest advisers. **11.2** *Eighty thousand*. According to 1 Macc 4.28, Lysias had sixty thousand infantry and five thousand cavalry. The figures in both accounts are exaggerated. **11.2–3** The *city* is Jerusalem. For the sale of the *high priesthood*, see 4.7–8, 23–24. This was a common Hellenistic

was elated with his ten thousands of infantry, and his thousands of cavalry, and his eighty elephants. 5 Invading Judea, he approached Beth-zur, which was a fortified place about five stadia[z] from Jerusalem, and pressed it hard.

6 When Maccabeus and his men got word that Lysias[a] was besieging the strongholds, they and all the people, with lamentations and tears, prayed the Lord to send a good angel to save Israel. 7 Maccabeus himself was the first to take up arms, and he urged the others to risk their lives with him to aid their kindred. Then they eagerly rushed off together. 8 And there, while they were still near Jerusalem, a horseman appeared at their head, clothed in white and brandishing weapons of gold. 9 And together they all praised the merciful God, and were strengthened in heart, ready to assail not only humans but the wildest animals or walls of iron. 10 They advanced in battle order, having their heavenly ally, for the Lord had mercy on them. 11 They hurled themselves like lions against the enemy, and laid low eleven thousand of them and sixteen hundred cavalry, and forced all the rest to flee. 12 Most of them got away stripped and wounded, and Lysias himself escaped by disgraceful flight.

Lysias Makes Peace with the Jews

13 As he was not without intelligence, he pondered over the defeat that had befallen him, and realized that the Hebrews were invincible because the mighty God fought on their side. So he sent to them 14 and persuaded them to settle everything on just terms, promising that he would persuade the king, constraining him to be their friend.[z] 15 Maccabeus, having regard for the common good, agreed to all that Lysias urged. For the king granted every request in behalf of the Jews which Maccabeus delivered to Lysias in writing.

16 The letter written to the Jews by Lysias was to this effect:

"Lysias to the people of the Jews, greetings. 17 John and Absalom, who were sent by you, have delivered your signed communication and have asked about the matters indicated in it. 18 I have informed the king of everything that needed to be brought before him, and he has agreed to what was possible. 19 If you will maintain your goodwill toward the government, I will endeavor in the future to help promote your welfare. 20 And concerning such matters and their details, I have ordered these men and my representatives to confer with you. 21 Farewell. The one hundred forty-eighth year,[b] Dioscorinthius twenty-fourth."

22 The king's letter ran thus:

"King Antiochus to his brother Lysias, greetings. 23 Now that our father has gone on to the gods, we desire that the subjects of the kingdom be undisturbed in caring for their own affairs. 24 We have heard that the Jews do not consent to our father's change to Greek customs, but prefer their own way of living and ask that their own customs be allowed them. 25 Accordingly, since we choose that this nation also should be free from disturbance, our decision is that their temple be restored to them and that they shall live according to the customs of their ancestors. 26 You will do well, therefore, to send word to them and give them pledges of friendship, so that they may know our policy and be of

z Meaning of Gk uncertain *a* Gk *he*
b 164 B.C.

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practice. **11.4** For Lysias's *elephants*, see 1 Macc 3.34. **11.5** *Beth-zur* was about twenty miles south of Jerusalem. **11.8** For other visions of horsemen, see 3.25–26; 5.2–3; 10.29–30. **11.11** According to 1 Macc 4.34, five thousand of Lysias's men fell.

11.13–38 The peace negotiations between Lysias and the Jews are described by means of four letters. Their most likely chronological sequence is: 11.16–21; 11.34–38; 11.27–33; 11.22–26. **11.13** The "religious" term *Hebrews* (7.31; 15.37) complements the emphasis on their divine protector (3.39; 8.36). **11.16–21** Lysias addresses the Jewish *people* (not Judas) and agrees to the peace described in 11.15, though with the proviso *what was possible* (v. 18). **11.17** *John* may be Judas's brother (1 Macc 2.2); for *Absalom*, see 1 Macc 11.70; 13.11. **11.21** The name of the month *Dioscorinthius* is uncertain; the compiler thought it preceded March (Xanthicus) 164 B.C.E. (see 11.33, 38). **11.22–26** Antiochus V instructs Lysias (after his second campaign; see 1 Macc 6.28–63; 2 Macc 13.1–26) to give to the Jews their temple (which they already had) and to let them live according to their ancestral laws (which Antiochus IV had already allowed; see 11.31).

good cheer and go on happily in the conduct of their own affairs."

27 To the nation the king's letter was as follows:

"King Antiochus to the senate of the Jews and to the other Jews, greetings. 28 If you are well, it is as we desire. We also are in good health. 29 Menelaus has informed us that you wish to return home and look after your own affairs. 30 Therefore those who go home by the thirtieth of Xanthicus will have our pledge of friendship and full permission 31 for the Jews to enjoy their own food and laws, just as formerly, and none of them shall be molested in any way for what may have been done in ignorance. 32 And I have also sent Menelaus to encourage you. 33 Farewell. The one hundred forty-eighth year,[c] Xanthicus fifteenth."

34 The Romans also sent them a letter, which read thus:

"Quintus Memmius and Titus Manius, envoys of the Romans, to the people of the Jews, greetings. 35 With regard to what Lysias the kinsman of the king has granted you, we also give consent. 36 But as to the matters that he decided are to be referred to the king, as soon as you have considered them, send some one promptly so that we may make proposals appropriate for you. For we are on our way to Antioch. 37 Therefore make haste and send messengers so that we may have your judgment. 38 Farewell. The one hundred forty-eighth year,[c] Xanthicus fifteenth."

Incidents at Joppa and Jamnia

12 When this agreement had been reached, Lysias returned to the king, and the Jews went about their farming.

2 But some of the governors in various places, Timothy and Apollonius son of Gennaeus, as well as Hieronymus and Demophon, and in addition to these Nicanor the governor of Cyprus, would not let them live quietly and in peace. 3 And the people of Joppa did so ungodly a deed as this: they invited the Jews who lived among them to embark, with their wives and children, on boats that they had provided, as though there were no ill will to the Jews;[d] 4 and this was done by public vote of the city. When they accepted, because they wished to live peaceably and suspected nothing, the people of Joppa[e] took them out to sea and drowned them, at least two hundred. 5 When Judas heard of the cruelty visited on his compatriots, he gave orders to his men 6 and, calling upon God, the righteous judge, attacked the murderers of his kindred. He set fire to the harbor by night, burned the boats, and massacred those who had taken refuge there. 7 Then, because the city's gates were closed, he withdrew, intending to come again and root out the whole community of Joppa. 8 But learning that the people in Jamnia meant in the same way to wipe out the Jews who were living among them, 9 he attacked the Jamnites by night and set fire to the harbor and the fleet, so that the glow of the light was seen in Jerusalem, thirty miles[f] distant.

The Campaign in Gilead

10 When they had gone more than a mile[g] from there, on their march against Timothy, at least five thousand Arabs with five hundred cavalry attacked them. 11 After a hard fight, Judas and his companions, with God's help, were victorious.

c 164 B.C. d Gk *to them* e Gk *they*
f Gk *two hundred forty stadia* g Gk *nine stadia*

11.27–33 In March 164 B.C.E. Antiochus IV grants an amnesty to Jews who stop fighting before the end of the month. He also promises a return to Jewish observance of Torah. **11.29** *Menelaus* went to the king (in Persia?) and convinced him that this strategy would weaken the opposition from Judas. **11.34–38** In March 164 B.C.E. the Romans consent to the arrangement between Lysias and the Jews. **11.34** *Titus* Manilius (Torquatus) was consul in 165 B.C.E. and in Egypt in 164. *Manius* Sergius was sent to Antiochus IV in 164. The two figures may be combined here.

12.1–9 At Joppa and Jamnia, Judas emerges as the champion of all Jews, even those outside of Jerusalem and Judea. **12.2** *Timothy.* See 8.30–33; 10.24–28; 12.10–31. There may be more than one person bearing the same name. **12.3** *Joppa,* an important harbor city on the Mediterranean coast, near present-day Tel Aviv, about thirty-two miles from Jerusalem. **12.8–9** *Jamnia,* about twelve miles south of Joppa, somewhat inland; see 1 Macc 5.58.

12.10–16 See 1 Macc 5.9–36 for a much fuller account of Judas's campaign in Gilead. **12.10** Gilead is east of the Jordan; *more than a mile*

The defeated nomads begged Judas to
grant them pledges of friendship, promis-
ing to give him livestock and to help his
people[h] in all other ways. 12 Judas, realiz-
ing that they might indeed be useful in
many ways, agreed to make peace with
them; and after receiving his pledges they
went back to their tents.

13 He also attacked a certain town
that was strongly fortified with earth-
works[i] and walls, and inhabited by all
sorts of Gentiles. Its name was Caspin.
14 Those who were within, relying on the
strength of the walls and on their supply
of provisions, behaved most insolently to-
ward Judas and his men, railing at them
and even blaspheming and saying unholy
things. 15 But Judas and his men, calling
upon the great Sovereign of the world,
who without battering rams or engines of
war overthrew Jericho in the days of
Joshua, rushed furiously upon the walls.
16 They took the town by the will of God,
and slaughtered untold numbers, so that
the adjoining lake, a quarter of a mile[j]
wide, appeared to be running over with
blood.

Judas Defeats Timothy's Army

17 When they had gone ninety-five
miles[k] from there, they came to Charax,
to the Jews who are called Toubiani.
18 They did not find Timothy in that re-
gion, for he had by then left there without
accomplishing anything, though in one
place he had left a very strong garrison.
19 Dositheus and Sosipater, who were cap-
tains under Maccabeus, marched out and
destroyed those whom Timothy had left
in the stronghold, more than ten thou-
sand men. 20 But Maccabeus arranged his
army in divisions, set men[h] in command
of the divisions, and hurried after Timo-
thy, who had with him one hundred
twenty thousand infantry and two thou-
sand five hundred cavalry. 21 When Tim-
othy learned of the approach of Judas, he
sent off the women and the children and
also the baggage to a place called Car-
naim; for that place was hard to besiege
and difficult of access because of the nar-
rowness of all the approaches. 22 But
when Judas's first division appeared, ter-
ror and fear came over the enemy at the
manifestation to them of him who sees all
things. In their flight they rushed head-
long in every direction, so that often they
were injured by their own men and
pierced by the points of their own swords.
23 Judas pressed the pursuit with the ut-
most vigor, putting the sinners to the
sword, and destroyed as many as thirty
thousand.

24 Timothy himself fell into the hands
of Dositheus and Sosipater and their men.
With great guile he begged them to let
him go in safety, because he held the par-
ents of most of them, and the brothers of
some, to whom no consideration would be
shown. 25 And when with many words he
had confirmed his solemn promise to re-
store them unharmed, they let him go, for
the sake of saving their kindred.

Judas Wins Other Victories

26 Then Judas[l] marched against Car-
naim and the temple of Atargatis, and
slaughtered twenty-five thousand peo-
ple. 27 After the rout and destruction of
these, he marched also against Ephron, a
fortified town where Lysias lived with

h Gk *them* *i* Meaning of Gk uncertain
j Gk *two stadia* *k* Gk *seven hundred fifty stadia*
l Gk *he*

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is awkward and erroneous, suggesting textual corruption. The *Arabs* were mercenaries (see 1 Macc 5.39); here they are assimilated to the Nabateans favorable to Judas's cause (1 Macc 5.25). **12.13** *Caspin*, probably the same as Chaspho in 1 Macc 5.26, 36. **12.14** For *blaspheming* by Judas's opponents, see 10.34, 36; Antiochus and Nicanor are called blasphemers (9.28; 15.24). **12.15** For the fall of *Jericho*, see Josh 6.1–21.

12.17–25 See 1 Macc 5.37–43 for another account of Judas's defeat of Timothy. **12.17** *Charax* may be a common noun ("pallisaded camp"), not a place-name. The *Toubiani* were the remnants of a military unit commanded by the Tobiad family. **12.21** *Carnaim* (see 1 Macc 5.43–44) means "horns"; it was site of a temple to Atargatis (2 Macc 12.26). **12.22** The description of God as the one *who sees all things* implies sins on Timothy's part (12.2; see 1 Macc 5.10–13, 25–27). **12.25** *Their kindred*, the relatives of the Tobiad Jews (see 1 Macc 5.13).

12.26–31 See 1 Macc 5.46–54 for an account of Judas's other victories. **12.26** *Atargatis*, the Syrian fish and grain goddess, consort of Hadad, was identified with Astarte and Artemis in Hellenistic times. **12.27** *Ephron* (see 1 Macc 5.46), east of the Jordan and opposite Beth-shan/Scythopolis. *Lysias* is not the governor mentioned in

multitudes of people of all nationalities.[m]
Stalwart young men took their stand be-
fore the walls and made a vigorous de-
fense; and great stores of war engines and
missiles were there. 28 But the Jews[n]
called upon the Sovereign who with
power shatters the might of his enemies,
and they got the town into their hands,
and killed as many as twenty-five thou-
sand of those who were in it.

29 Setting out from there, they has-
tened to Scythopolis, which is seventy-five
miles[o] from Jerusalem. 30 But when the
Jews who lived there bore witness to the
goodwill that the people of Scythopolis
had shown them and their kind treatment
of them in times of misfortune, 31 they
thanked them and exhorted them to be
well disposed to their race in the future
also. Then they went up to Jerusalem, as
the festival of weeks was close at hand.

Judas Defeats Gorgias

32 After the festival called Pentecost,
they hurried against Gorgias, the gover-
nor of Idumea, 33 who came out with
three thousand infantry and four hun-
dred cavalry. 34 When they joined battle, it
happened that a few of the Jews fell.
35 But a certain Dositheus, one of Bace-
nor's men, who was on horseback and was
a strong man, caught hold of Gorgias, and
grasping his cloak was dragging him off
by main strength, wishing to take the ac-
cursed man alive, when one of the Thra-
cian cavalry bore down on him and cut off
his arm; so Gorgias escaped and reached
Marisa.

36 As Esdris and his men had been
fighting for a long time and were weary,
Judas called upon the Lord to show him-
self their ally and leader in the battle. 37 In
the language of their ancestors he raised
the battle cry, with hymns; then he
charged against Gorgias's troops when
they were not expecting it, and put them
to flight.

Prayers for Those Killed in Battle

38 Then Judas assembled his army
and went to the city of Adullam. As the
seventh day was coming on, they purified
themselves according to the custom, and
kept the sabbath there.

39 On the next day, as had now be-
come necessary, Judas and his men went
to take up the bodies of the fallen and to
bring them back to lie with their kindred
in the sepulchres of their ancestors.
40 Then under the tunic of each one of
the dead they found sacred tokens of the
idols of Jamnia, which the law forbids the
Jews to wear. And it became clear to all
that this was the reason these men had
fallen. 41 So they all blessed the ways of
the Lord, the righteous judge, who re-
veals the things that are hidden; 42 and
they turned to supplication, praying that
the sin that had been committed might be
wholly blotted out. The noble Judas ex-
horted the people to keep themselves free
from sin, for they had seen with their own
eyes what had happened as the result of
the sin of those who had fallen. 43 He also
took up a collection, man by man, to the
amount of two thousand drachmas of sil-

m Meaning of Gk uncertain *n* Gk *they*
o Gk *six hundred stadia*

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2 Macc 10.11. **12.28** For *the Sovereign* (Greek *dynastēs*) as a title for God see 12.15. **12.29** *Scythopolis*, the Greek name ("city of Scythians") for Beth-shan (see 1 Macc 5.52), west of the Jordan. **12.31** The *festival of weeks* (Ex 23.16; Lev 23.15–22) marked the beginning of the grain harvest; its Greek name was Pentecost (12.32) meaning "fifty" (days after Passover).

12.32–37 See 1 Macc 5.55–68 for episodes similar to Judas's defeat of Gorgias. **12.32** For *Gorgias* and *Idumea*, see 10.14–15. Idumea, Edom in ancient times, was south and east of Judea. **12.35** *Dositheus*. See 12.19, 24. *Marisa*, called Mareshah in ancient times, was one of the major cities of Idumea; see 1 Macc 5.66, where Judas is said to have passed through (the district of) Marisa. **12.36** *Esdris*, perhaps Eleazar/Azariah of 8.23. **12.37** Hebrew was *the language of their ancestors*. See 7.8, 21, 27; 15.29.

12.38–45 Judas's perfect observance in battle contrasts with that of the fallen soldiers. His sin offering receives a novel interpretation as proof of his belief in resurrection of the dead. **12.38** *Adullam*, about eight miles northeast of Marisa; the purification involved ritual bathing after battle. **12.40** The *sacred tokens* may have been amulets dedicated to foreign gods or other objects taken from pagan shrines. See Deut 7.25–26 for their prohibition for Jews. **12.43** The *sin offering* was probably intended by Judas to ward off punishment against the living (see Josh 7). The author of 2 Maccabees took it as applying to the dead and thus proof of Judas's belief in *resurrection* (see Dan 12.1–3).

ver, and sent it to Jerusalem to provide
for a sin offering. In doing this he acted
very well and honorably, taking account
of the resurrection. 44 For if he were not
expecting that those who had fallen would
rise again, it would have been superfluous
and foolish to pray for the dead. 45 But if
he was looking to the splendid reward
that is laid up for those who fall asleep in
godliness, it was a holy and pious thought.
Therefore he made atonement for the
dead, so that they might be delivered
from their sin.

Menelaus Is Put to Death

13 In the one hundred forty-ninth
year[p] word came to Judas and
his men that Antiochus Eupator was com-
ing with a great army against Judea, 2 and
with him Lysias, his guardian, who had
charge of the government. Each of them
had a Greek force of one hundred ten
thousand infantry, five thousand three
hundred cavalry, twenty-two elephants,
and three hundred chariots armed with
scythes.
3 Menelaus also joined them and with
utter hypocrisy urged Antiochus on, not
for the sake of his country's welfare, but
because he thought that he would be es-
tablished in office. 4 But the King of kings
aroused the anger of Antiochus against
the scoundrel; and when Lysias informed
him that this man was to blame for all the
trouble, he ordered them to take him to
Beroea and to put him to death by the
method that is customary in that place.
5 For there is a tower there, fifty cubits
high, full of ashes, and it has a rim run-
ning around it that on all sides inclines
precipitously into the ashes. 6 There they
all push to destruction anyone guilty of
sacrilege or notorious for other crimes.
7 By such a fate it came about that Mene-
laus the lawbreaker died, without even
burial in the earth. 8 And this was emi-
nently just; because he had committed
many sins against the altar whose fire and
ashes were holy, he met his death in ashes.

A Battle Near the City of Modein

9 The king with barbarous arrogance
was coming to show the Jews things far
worse than those that had been done[q] in
his father's time. 10 But when Judas heard
of this, he ordered the people to call upon
the Lord day and night, now if ever to
help those who were on the point of being
deprived of the law and their country and
the holy temple, 11 and not to let the peo-
ple who had just begun to revive fall into
the hands of the blasphemous Gentiles.
12 When they had all joined in the same
petition and had implored the merciful
Lord with weeping and fasting and lying
prostrate for three days without ceasing,
Judas exhorted them and ordered them
to stand ready.
13 After consulting privately with the
elders, he determined to march out and
decide the matter by the help of God be-
fore the king's army could enter Judea
and get possession of the city. 14 So, com-
mitting the decision to the Creator of the
world and exhorting his troops to fight
bravely to the death for the laws, temple,
city, country, and commonwealth, he
pitched his camp near Modein. 15 He gave
his troops the watchword, "God's victory,"
and with a picked force of the bravest
young men, he attacked the king's pavil-

p 163 B.C. *q* Or *the worst of the things that had been done*

13.1–8 Menelaus, the Jewish high priest, receives a just punishment for his evil deeds. **13.1–2** In 163 B.C.E. *Antiochus* V *Eupator* had succeeded his father, and Lysias served as his chief adviser (1 Macc 6.17). The *Greek force* was composed of mercenaries. The *scythes* on the chariots kept infantry away. **13.3–4** God (*the King of kings*) aroused anger against *Menelaus*, who may well have fallen behind on paying his taxes (4.27, 43–47). **13.4** *Beroea*, the name given to Aleppo in Syria by Seleucus I. **13.5–6** The method of execution was used by the Persians; the person died by asphyxiation (if the ashes were cold) or burning (if they were hot). **13.8** Menelaus's mode of death was *just*, in that his punishment fit his crimes.

13.9–17 After appropriate preparation for battle, Judas strikes the Seleucid army near Modein. **13.9** There is no explanation for Antiochus V's actions beyond his *barbarous arrogance* (see, however, 11.22–26). At any rate, it was Lysias's policy, since Antiochus V was a boy. **13.10–12** For battle preparations, see 1 Macc 3.44–47. **13.14** *Modein*, the hometown of the Maccabees (1 Macc 2.1), allowed Judas to make a preemptive strike. **13.15** For Eleazar's heroic death while stabbing an *elephant*, see 1 Macc 6.43–46.

ion at night and killed as many as two
thousand men in the camp. He stabbed[r]
the leading elephant and its rider. 16 In
the end they filled the camp with ter-
ror and confusion and withdrew in tri-
umph. 17 This happened, just as day was
dawning, because the Lord's help pro-
tected him.

Antiochus Makes a Treaty with the Jews

18 The king, having had a taste of the
daring of the Jews, tried strategy in at-
tacking their positions. 19 He advanced
against Beth-zur, a strong fortress of the
Jews, was turned back, attacked again,[s]
and was defeated. 20 Judas sent in to the
garrison whatever was necessary. 21 But
Rhodocus, a man from the ranks of the
Jews, gave secret information to the en-
emy; he was sought for, caught, and put
in prison. 22 The king negotiated a second
time with the people in Beth-zur, gave
pledges, received theirs, withdrew, at-
tacked Judas and his men, was defeated;
23 he got word that Philip, who had been
left in charge of the government, had re-
volted in Antioch; he was dismayed, called
in the Jews, yielded and swore to observe
all their rights, settled with them and of-
fered sacrifice, honored the sanctuary
and showed generosity to the holy place.
24 He received Maccabeus, left Hegemon-
ides as governor from Ptolemais to Gerar,
25 and went to Ptolemais. The people of
Ptolemais were indignant over the treaty;
in fact they were so angry that they
wanted to annul its terms.[r] 26 Lysias took
the public platform, made the best poss-
ible defense, convinced them, appeased
them, gained their goodwill, and set out
for Antioch. This is how the king's attack
and withdrawal turned out.

Alcimus Speaks Against Judas

14 Three years later, word came to
Judas and his men that Deme-
trius son of Seleucus had sailed into the
harbor of Tripolis with a strong army and
a fleet, 2 and had taken possession of the
country, having made away with Antio-
chus and his guardian Lysias.
3 Now a certain Alcimus, who had for-
merly been high priest but had willfully
defiled himself in the times of separa-
tion,[t] realized that there was no way for
him to be safe or to have access again to
the holy altar, 4 and went to King Deme-
trius in about the one hundred fifty-first
year,[u] presenting to him a crown of gold
and a palm, and besides these some of the
customary olive branches from the tem-
ple. During that day he kept quiet. 5 But
he found an opportunity that furthered
his mad purpose when he was invited by
Demetrius to a meeting of the council and
was asked about the attitude and inten-
tions of the Jews. He answered:
6 "Those of the Jews who are called
Hasideans, whose leader is Judas Macca-
beus, are keeping up war and stirring up
sedition, and will not let the kingdom
attain tranquility. 7 Therefore I have laid
aside my ancestral glory—I mean the
high priesthood—and have now come
here, 8 first because I am genuinely con-
cerned for the interests of the king, and
second because I have regard also for my
compatriots. For through the folly of
those whom I have mentioned our whole
nation is now in no small misfortune.
9 Since you are acquainted, O king, with

r Meaning of Gk uncertain s Or *faltered*
t Other ancient authorities read *of mixing*
u 161 B.C.

13.18–26 The peace treaty between Antiochus V and the Jews was due mainly to events back in Antioch. **13.18–22** For the siege of *Beth-zur,* see 1 Macc 6.31, 49–50. 2 Maccabees blames its fall on the treachery of *Rhodocus,* a Jew with a Persian name. **13.23** *Philip* (see 9.29) had been appointed by Antiochus IV (1 Macc 6.14–15) and took control of Antioch (1 Macc 6.63). **13.24** *From Ptolemais to Gerar,* i.e., the coastal plain from north to south. **13.25** For *Ptolemais* as hostile to Jews, see 6.8; 1 Macc 5.15.

14.1–14 For another account of Alcimus's criticism of Judas, see 1 Macc 7.1–7, 25–26. 2 Maccabees omits Bacchides (1 Macc 7.8–24). **14.1–2** In 161 B.C.E. *Demetrius* I, son of *Seleucus* IV, arrived at *Tripolis,* a port city named "Three Cities" because merchants from three other cities controlled parts of it. See 1 Macc 7.1–4 for a more vivid description of the fates of *Antiochus* V and *Lysias.* **14.3–5** *Alcimus* had been appointed high priest by Antiochus V after Menelaus was executed. His "defilement" probably consisted in collaborating with the Seleucid regime. He seems to have had two separate meetings with Demetrius I (14.4, 5). **14.6** In 1 Macc 2.42; 7.12–17 the *Hasideans* constitute a party separate from the Maccabees. Here Judas is portrayed as their leader. **14.7** For the *ancestral*

the details of this matter, may it please
you to take thought for our country and
our hard-pressed nation with the gracious
kindness that you show to all. 10 For as
long as Judas lives, it is impossible for the
government to find peace." 11 When he
had said this, the rest of the king's
Friends,[v] who were hostile to Judas,
quickly inflamed Demetrius still more.
12 He immediately chose Nicanor, who
had been in command of the elephants,
appointed him governor of Judea, and
sent him off 13 with orders to kill Judas
and scatter his troops, and to install Alcimus as high priest of the great[w] temple.
14 And the Gentiles throughout Judea,
who had fled before[x] Judas, flocked to
join Nicanor, thinking that the misfortunes and calamities of the Jews would
mean prosperity for themselves.

Nicanor Makes Friends with Judas

15 When the Jews[y] heard of Nicanor's coming and the gathering of the
Gentiles, they sprinkled dust on their
heads and prayed to him who established
his own people forever and always upholds his own heritage by manifesting
himself. 16 At the command of the leader,
they[z] set out from there immediately and
engaged them in battle at a village called
Dessau.[x] 17 Simon, the brother of Judas,
had encountered Nicanor, but had been
temporarily[a] checked because of the sudden consternation created by the enemy.
18 Nevertheless Nicanor, hearing of
the valor of Judas and his troops and their
courage in battle for their country, shrank
from deciding the issue by bloodshed.
19 Therefore he sent Posidonius, Theodotus, and Mattathias to give and receive
pledges of friendship. 20 When the terms
had been fully considered, and the leader
had informed the people, and it had appeared that they were of one mind, they
agreed to the covenant. 21 The leaders[b]
set a day on which to meet by themselves.
A chariot came forward from each army;
seats of honor were set in place; 22 Judas
posted armed men in readiness at key
places to prevent sudden treachery on the
part of the enemy; so they duly held the
consultation.
23 Nicanor stayed on in Jerusalem
and did nothing out of the way, but dismissed the flocks of people that had gathered. 24 And he kept Judas always in his
presence; he was warmly attached to the
man. 25 He urged him to marry and have
children; so Judas[z] married, settled
down, and shared the common life.

Nicanor Turns Against Judas

26 But when Alcimus noticed their
goodwill for one another, he took the covenant that had been made and went to
Demetrius. He told him that Nicanor was
disloyal to the government, since he had
appointed that conspirator against the
kingdom, Judas, to be his successor.
27 The king became excited and, provoked by the false accusations of that
depraved man, wrote to Nicanor, stating
that he was displeased with the covenant
and commanding him to send Maccabeus
to Antioch as a prisoner without delay.
28 When this message came to Nicanor, he was troubled and grieved that he
had to annul their agreement when the
man had done no wrong. 29 Since it was

v Gk *of the Friends* *w* Gk *greatest* *x* Meaning of Gk uncertain *y* Gk *they* *z* Gk *he*
a Other ancient authorities read *slowly*
b Gk *They*

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claim to the high-priesthood by Alcimus, see 1 Macc 7.14. **14.11** The *rest of the king's Friends* suggests that Alcimus was already a member of the inner circle of royal advisers. **14.12** *Nicanor.* See 2 Macc 8.9–36. His appointment as *governor* was probably temporary until he cleared up matters in Judea. **14.14** These *Gentiles* may have been settled in Judea under Antiochus IV.

14.15–25 See 1 Macc 7.27–29 for another view of Nicanor's friendship with Judas. **14.16–17** The exact location of *Dessau* is uncertain, though it does seem to have been in Judea. The encounter with *Nicanor* appears to have been a defeat for *Simon.* **14.19** *Mattathias* is a Hebrew name, and *Theodotus* was a Greek name often taken by Jews. **14.21–25** The private discussion between Nicanor and Judas issues in a warm friendship; 1 Macc 7.27, where Nicanor is accused of treachery from the start.

14.26–36 See 1 Macc 7.30–38 for another version of Nicanor's change in attitude toward Judas. **14.26–27** It is possible that, in the interests of peace in Judea, Nicanor viewed Judas as his *successor* or deputy. *Alcimus* sought to wreck the plan by denouncing Nicanor and having Judas taken *prisoner.* **14.28–30** 1 Macc 7.30–32 says that Judas was informed about Nicanor's treacherous intent and defeated Nicanor in battle near

not possible to oppose the king, he
watched for an opportunity to accomplish
this by a stratagem. 30 But Maccabeus, no-
ticing that Nicanor was more austere in
his dealings with him and was meeting
him more rudely than had been his cus-
tom, concluded that this austerity did not
spring from the best motives. So he gath-
ered not a few of his men, and went into
hiding from Nicanor. 31 When the latter
became aware that he had been cleverly
outwitted by the man, he went to the
great[c] and holy temple while the priests
were offering the customary sacrifices,
and commanded them to hand the man
over. 32 When they declared on oath that
they did not know where the man was
whom he wanted, 33 he stretched out his
right hand toward the sanctuary, and
swore this oath: "If you do not hand Ju-
das over to me as a prisoner, I will level
this shrine of God to the ground and tear
down the altar, and build here a splendid
temple to Dionysus."

34 Having said this, he went away.
Then the priests stretched out their hands
toward heaven and called upon the con-
stant Defender of our nation, in these
words: 35 "O Lord of all, though you have
need of nothing, you were pleased that
there should be a temple for your habita-
tion among us; 36 so now, O holy One,
Lord of all holiness, keep undefiled for-
ever this house that has been so recently
purified."

Razis Dies for His Country

37 A certain Razis, one of the elders of
Jerusalem, was denounced to Nicanor as a
man who loved his compatriots and was
very well thought of and for his goodwill
was called father of the Jews. 38 In former
times, when there was no mingling with
the Gentiles, he had been accused of Ju-
daism, and he had most zealously risked
body and life for Judaism. 39 Nicanor,
wishing to exhibit the enmity that he had
for the Jews, sent more than five hundred
soldiers to arrest him; 40 for he thought
that by arresting[d] him he would do them
an injury. 41 When the troops were about
to capture the tower and were forcing the
door of the courtyard, they ordered that
fire be brought and the doors burned. Be-
ing surrounded, Razis[e] fell upon his own
sword, 42 preferring to die nobly rather
than to fall into the hands of sinners and
suffer outrages unworthy of his noble
birth. 43 But in the heat of the struggle he
did not hit exactly, and the crowd was
now rushing in through the doors. He
courageously ran up on the wall, and
bravely threw himself down into the
crowd. 44 But as they quickly drew back, a
space opened and he fell in the middle of
the empty space. 45 Still alive and aflame
with anger, he rose, and though his blood
gushed forth and his wounds were severe
he ran through the crowd; and standing
upon a steep rock, 46 with his blood now
completely drained from him, he tore out
his entrails, took them in both hands and
hurled them at the crowd, calling upon
the Lord of life and spirit to give them
back to him again. This was the manner
of his death.

Nicanor's Arrogance

15 When Nicanor heard that Judas
and his troops were in the region
of Samaria, he made plans to attack them
with complete safety on the day of rest.
2 When the Jews who were compelled to
follow him said, "Do not destroy so sav-

c Gk *greatest* *d* Meaning of Gk uncertain
e Gk *he*

Caphar-salama. **14.31–33** Cf. 1 Macc 7.33–38, where Nicanor threatens only to burn the temple. The threat to turn the Jerusalem temple into *a splendid temple to Dionysus* may be the author's embellishment (see 6.7). **14.34** For God as Israel's *Defender*, see 8.36. **14.35–36** For the fulfillment of the prayer, see 15.34.

14.37–46 There is no parallel in 1 Maccabees to the martyrdom of Razis; see the other martyrdoms in 2 Macc 6–7. **14.37** *Razis*, bearing a Persian name, may have been a convert to Judaism (as 14.38 suggests). As an *elder* he may have been a member of the council; as *father of the Jews* he was acknowledged as their benefactor. **14.42** Razis's preference *to die nobly* rather than to fall into enemy hands had the precedent of Saul (1 Sam 31.4). **14.46** Razis's "suicide" was based on the firm conviction that God would restore his body in the resurrection (see 7.11, 22–23).

15.1–5 Nicanor's decision to attack Judas on the sabbath appears as an attempt to claim divine sovereignty for himself. **15.1** From *Samaria* and the area around Modein Judas controlled the northern approaches to Jerusalem. Nicanor knows nothing of the Maccabees' decision to defend themselves on the sabbath (see 1 Macc

agely and barbarously, but show respect
for the day that he who sees all things has
honored and hallowed above other days,"
3 the thrice-accursed wretch asked if there
were a sovereign in heaven who had com-
manded the keeping of the sabbath day.
4 When they declared, "It is the living
Lord himself, the Sovereign in heaven,
who ordered us to observe the seventh
day," 5 he replied, "But I am a sovereign
also, on earth, and I command you to take
up arms and finish the king's business."
Nevertheless, he did not succeed in carry-
ing out his abominable design.

Judas Prepares the Jews for Battle

6 This Nicanor in his utter boastful-
ness and arrogance had determined to
erect a public monument of victory over
Judas and his forces. 7 But Maccabeus did
not cease to trust with all confidence that
he would get help from the Lord. 8 He
exhorted his troops not to fear the attack
of the Gentiles, but to keep in mind the
former times when help had come to
them from heaven, and so to look for the
victory that the Almighty would give
them. 9 Encouraging them from the law
and the prophets, and reminding them
also of the struggles they had won, he
made them the more eager. 10 When he
had aroused their courage, he issued his
orders, at the same time pointing out the
perfidy of the Gentiles and their violation
of oaths. 11 He armed each of them not so
much with confidence in shields and
spears as with the inspiration of brave
words, and he cheered them all by relat-
ing a dream, a sort of vision,[f] which was
worthy of belief.

12 What he saw was this: Onias, who
had been high priest, a noble and good
man, of modest bearing and gentle man-
ner, one who spoke fittingly and had been
trained from childhood in all that belongs
to excellence, was praying with out-
stretched hands for the whole body of the
Jews. 13 Then in the same fashion another
appeared, distinguished by his gray hair
and dignity, and of marvelous majesty
and authority. 14 And Onias spoke, say-
ing, "This is a man who loves the family of
Israel and prays much for the people and
the holy city—Jeremiah, the prophet of
God." 15 Jeremiah stretched out his right
hand and gave to Judas a golden sword,
and as he gave it he addressed him thus:
16 "Take this holy sword, a gift from God,
with which you will strike down your ad-
versaries."

17 Encouraged by the words of Judas,
so noble and so effective in arousing valor
and awaking courage in the souls of the
young, they determined not to carry on a
campaign[g] but to attack bravely, and to
decide the matter by fighting hand to
hand with all courage, because the city
and the sanctuary and the temple were in
danger. 18 Their concern for wives and
children, and also for brothers and sis-
ters[h] and relatives, lay upon them less
heavily; their greatest and first fear was
for the consecrated sanctuary. 19 And
those who had to remain in the city were
in no little distress, being anxious over the
encounter in the open country.

The Defeat and Death of Nicanor

20 When all were now looking for-
ward to the coming issue, and the enemy
was already close at hand with their
army drawn up for battle, the elephants[i]
strategically stationed and the cavalry
deployed on the flanks, 21 Maccabeus, ob-
serving the masses that were in front of
him and the varied supply of arms and
the savagery of the elephants, stretched
out his hands toward heaven and called
upon the Lord who works wonders; for
he knew that it is not by arms, but as the

f Meaning of Gk uncertain *g* Or *to remain in camp* *h* Gk *for brothers* *i* Gk *animals*

2.41). **15.3–5** The conversation between Nicanor and the Jewish collaborators revolved around who really is *sovereign*—the God of Israel or Nicanor?

15.6–19 In contrast to Nicanor's arrogance, Judas displays exemplary piety and is encouraged by a vision of Onias III and Jeremiah. **15.6** The *public monument*, or trophy, was to be made from armor taken from Judas and the other dead soldiers. **15.10** For Nicanor's *violation of oaths*, see 14.18–30. **15.12** For the intercessory prayer of *Onias* III, see 3.31–33. **15.13–16** For *Jeremiah*, see 2.1–8. The *sword* may derive from Jer 50.35–38. Both priest (Onias III) and prophet (Jeremiah) take up Judas's cause. **15.18** Defense of the *consecrated sanctuary* has been the major theme of 2 Maccabees.

15.20–37 See 1 Macc 7.40–50, which locates the battle at Adasa. **15.20** The use of *elephants*

Lord[j] decides, that he gains the victory
for those who deserve it. 22 He called
upon him in these words: "O Lord, you
sent your angel in the time of King
Hezekiah of Judea, and he killed fully
one hundred eighty-five thousand in
the camp of Sennacherib. 23 So now,
O Sovereign of the heavens, send a good
angel to spread terror and trembling be-
fore us. 24 By the might of your arm may
these blasphemers who come against your
holy people be struck down." With these
words he ended his prayer.

25 Nicanor and his troops advanced
with trumpets and battle songs, 26 but Ju-
das and his troops met the enemy in battle
with invocations to God and prayers.
27 So, fighting with their hands and pray-
ing to God in their hearts, they laid low
at least thirty-five thousand, and were
greatly gladdened by God's manifestation.

28 When the action was over and they
were returning with joy, they recognized
Nicanor, lying dead, in full armor.
29 Then there was shouting and tumult,
and they blessed the Sovereign Lord in
the language of their ancestors. 30 Then
the man who was ever in body and soul
the defender of his people, the man who
maintained his youthful goodwill toward
his compatriots, ordered them to cut off
Nicanor's head and arm and carry them
to Jerusalem. 31 When he arrived there
and had called his compatriots together
and stationed the priests before the altar,
he sent for those who were in the citadel.
32 He showed them the vile Nicanor's
head and that profane man's arm, which
had been boastfully stretched out against
the holy house of the Almighty. 33 He cut
out the tongue of the ungodly Nicanor
and said that he would feed it piecemeal
to the birds and would hang up these re-
wards of his folly opposite the sanctuary.
34 And they all, looking to heaven, blessed
the Lord who had manifested himself,
saying, "Blessed is he who has kept his
own place undefiled!" 35 Judas[k] hung Ni-
canor's head from the citadel, a clear and
conspicuous sign to everyone of the help
of the Lord. 36 And they all decreed by
public vote never to let this day go unob-
served, but to celebrate the thirteenth day
of the twelfth month—which is called
Adar in the Aramaic language—the day
before Mordecai's day.

37 This, then, is how matters turned
out with Nicanor, and from that time the
city has been in the possession of the He-
brews. So I will here end my story.

The Compiler's Epilogue

38 If it is well told and to the point,
that is what I myself desired; if it is poorly
done and mediocre, that was the best I
could do. 39 For just as it is harmful to
drink wine alone, or, again, to drink water
alone, while wine mixed with water is
sweet and delicious and enhances one's
enjoyment, so also the style of the story
delights the ears of those who read the
work. And here will be the end.

j Gk *he* *k* Gk *He*

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suggests an open and level battlefield. **15.22** For the miraculous defeat of *Sennacherib*, see 2 Kings 18.13–19.35; Isa 36–37. The same incident is part of Judas's prayer in 1 Macc 7.41–42; see also 2 Macc 8.19. **15.27** According to 1 Macc 7.40 Judas had three thousand men, hardly enough to kill *thirty-five thousand* of the enemy. The victory itself is taken as God's *manifestation*. **15.29** The *language of their ancestors* was Hebrew, as in 7.8, 21, 27; 12.37. **15.31** The *citadel* (Akra), the Syrian garrison north of the temple area, was still in Syrian control. **15.32–35** The gruesome disposition of *Nicanor's* body climaxes the theme of appropriate punishments for evildoers. See Jdt 13–14. **15.36** For *Mordecai's day*, see Esth 3.7; 9.20–23; 10.3. **15.37** The *city* is Jerusalem. It remained in *possession of the Hebrews* until the intervention of the Roman general Pompey in 63 B.C.E.

15.38–39 The narrator's epilogue takes up 2.19–32. **15.39** *Wine* in antiquity was often so strong that it had to be mixed with water.

(b) The books from 1 Esdras through 3 Maccabees are recognized as Deuterocanonical Scripture by the Greek and the Russian Orthodox Churches. They are not so recognized by the Roman Catholic Church, but 1 Esdras and the Prayer of Manasseh (together with 2 Esdras) are placed in an appendix to the Latin Vulgate Bible.

1 ESDRAS

ESDRAS IS THE GREEK FORM of the Hebrew personal name Ezra. 1 Esdras as the name of the book derives from the Greek Bible (the Septuagint), where it is called Esdras A (alpha), while the combined book of Ezra and Nehemiah is called Esdras B (beta). In the Latin Bible (the Vulgate), 1 Esdras is called 3 Ezra.

Scope and Relation to Other Biblical Books

1 Esdras is a selective narrative of important religious events in the history of Judah, from the Passover of Josiah after the finding of the book of the law to the reading of the law by Ezra and its imposition as the norm for Jewish life. For the most part, 1 Esdras simply parallels the relevant portions of 2 Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah; the only extensive unparalleled material is 1 Esd 3.1–5.6, the debate of the three bodyguards. The detailed correspondences of 1 Esdras to other biblical texts is set out in the table on page 1724, "The Relation of 1 Esdras to Other Biblical Books."

The exact relation of 1 Esdras to the other biblical texts in the table is a matter of some dispute. 1 Esdras is extant only in Greek and in other versions translated from the Greek (Latin, Syriac, Ethiopic, Armenian, and Arabic). There is no Hebrew version. Some have thought that it was originally written in Hebrew, its text being a variant from that of the Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Bible. Others have suggested that it is a fragment of a Greek translation of those books older than the Septuagint translation in the second century B.C.E. But perhaps the most common view is that 1 Esdras was compiled on the basis of the Septuagint version of the books of 2 Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah. Occasionally it seems to preserve a reading preferable to that of the Hebrew Masoretic Text; that would suggest that its compiler used either a form of the Septuagint no longer attested or else a Hebrew original differing from the Masoretic Text.

Whatever the origins of the text of the book as a whole, it may be necessary to treat the debate of the three bodyguards in chs. 3–4 separately, and see there,

for example, a Hebrew or Aramaic original even if the rest of the book was originally composed in Greek.

Purpose

It is very difficult to discern the purpose for the compilation of 1 Esdras. It might be easier if we could be sure that we have the complete work. The ending has almost certainly been lost (the last sentence is incomplete), and the beginning is so abrupt as to raise suspicions that the book originally opened at a somewhat earlier point.

There is a definite concern with the temple, from Josiah's Passover celebration in ch. 1 to the restoration of the temple treasures in ch. 2, the rebuilding of the temple in 5.56–7.9, the treasures brought for the temple by Ezra in ch. 8, and the settlement of the mixed marriages question in the square before the temple and the reading of the law in the same place in ch. 9. But it would be hazardous to argue that the temple is the theme of the work; there is too much material that has no connection at all with the temple.

THE RELATION OF 1 ESDRAS TO OTHER BIBLICAL BOOKS

1 ESDRAS	PARALLEL BIBLICAL TEXTS
1.1–33	2 Chr 35.1–27
1.34–58	2 Chr 36.1–21
2.1–15	Ezra 1.1–11
2.16–30	Ezra 4.7–24a
5.7–46	Ezra 2.1–70 (Neh 7.6–73a)
5.47–65	Ezra 3.1–13
5.66–73	Ezra 4.1–5
6.1–22	Ezra 4.24b–5.17
6.23–34	Ezra 6.1–12
7.1–15	Ezra 6.13–22
8.1–27	Ezra 7.1–28
8.28–67	Ezra 8.1–36
8.68–90	Ezra 9.1–15
8.91–96	Ezra 10.1–5
9.1–36	Ezra 10.6–44
9.37–55	Neh 7.73b–8.13

Likewise, there is an obvious concentration on the two leaders of the postexilic community, Zerubbabel and Ezra. The work of Zerubbabel is more prominent than it is in the book of Ezra, and the figure of Ezra has entirely supplanted that of Nehemiah. But it would be unwise to regard the whole work as designed to rewrite the historical record about these characters, for the modifications to the books of Ezra and Nehemiah are relatively slight. It is more likely that 1 Esdras reflects the views of a group in postexilic Judaism that regarded Ezra and Nehemiah and their work quite differently (in 2 Macc 1.18–2.13 and in Sir 49.13 Nehemiah is mentioned and Ezra is ignored).

The presence of the extensive narrative of the debate of the three bodyguards of Darius in chs. 3–4 further complicates the question of the purpose or theme of the book. For while the victor in the debate is Zerubbabel and the narrative no doubt enhances the portrait of that leader, no connection is drawn between the speeches in the debate and the events narrated in the rest of the book, and it seems that the narrative is told for its own sake, with only the weakest of links to the characters of the book.

It is hard for even a careful reader to resist the impression that the book has no clear theme. The very reason for its existence is not apparent, and the selection of material from the other biblical books has been carried out on principles no longer evident to us.

Date

Lacking any idea of the purpose of the book, we are at a loss to date it with any accuracy. Most scholars would assign it to the second century B.C.E., but there is no certainty about that. We know that 1 Esdras, rather than the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, was the source used by Josephus in composing his *Antiquities of the Jews* toward the end of the first century C.E.

Since most of 1 Esdras is found elsewhere in the biblical text, these notes comment only on the differences between 1 Esdras and those other texts.
David J. A. Clines

Josiah Celebrates the Passover

1 Josiah kept the passover to his Lord
in Jerusalem; he killed the passover
lamb on the fourteenth day of the first
month, 2 having placed the priests accor-
ding to their divisions, arrayed in their
vestments, in the temple of the Lord. 3 He
told the Levites, the temple servants of Is-
rael, that they should sanctify themselves
to the Lord and put the holy ark of the
Lord in the house that King Solomon, son
of David, had built; 4 and he said, "You
need no longer carry it on your shoulders.
Now worship the Lord your God and
serve his people Israel; prepare your-
selves by your families and kindred, 5 in
accordance with the directions of King
David of Israel and the magnificence of
his son Solomon. Stand in order in the
temple according to the groupings of the
ancestral houses of you Levites, who min-
ister before your kindred the people of
Israel, 6 and kill the passover lamb and
prepare the sacrifices for your kindred,
and keep the passover according to the
commandment of the Lord that was given
to Moses."

7 To the people who were present Jo-
siah gave thirty thousand lambs and kids,
and three thousand calves; these were
given from the king's possessions, as he
promised, to the people and the priests
and Levites. 8 Hilkiah, Zechariah, and Je-
hiel,[a] the chief officers of the temple,
gave to the priests for the passover two
thousand six hundred sheep and three
hundred calves. 9 And Jeconiah and She-
maiah and his brother Nethanel, and Hash-
abiah and Ochiel and Joram, captains
over thousands, gave the Levites for the
passover five thousand sheep and seven
hundred calves.

10 This is what took place. The priests
and the Levites, having the unleavened
bread, stood in proper order according to
kindred 11 and the grouping of the ances-
tral houses, before the people, to make
the offering to the Lord as it is written in
the book of Moses; this they did in the
morning. 12 They roasted the passover
lamb with fire, as required; and they
boiled the sacrifices in bronze pots and
caldrons, with a pleasing odor, 13 and car-
ried them to all the people. Afterward
they prepared the passover for them-
selves and for their kindred the priests,
the sons of Aaron, 14 because the priests
were offering the fat until nightfall; so the

a Gk *Esyelus*

1.1–22 This account of the reign of Josiah is parallel to that in 2 Chr 35. An important concern of the book is introduced in the opening chapter: the Jerusalem temple and the worship carried out there. The Passover celebrations obviously symbolized for the author the reformation of the temple worship undertaken by Josiah. **1.1** *Josiah*, king of Judah 640–609 B.C.E. *Kept the passover*. Cf. 2 Chr 35.1–19; 2 Kings 23.21–23. *To his Lord*. The Hebrew in the parallel verse, 2 Chr 35.1, has "to the LORD," using the divine name YHWH; in Greek, however, the divine personal name is represented by the title "the Lord," to which the possessive pronoun "his" can be attached. **1.2** The *divisions* are the "courses" or teams of priests that were rostered throughout the year for service in the temple; see 1 Chr 24.3–19. The detail that the priests were *arrayed in their vestments* is not in 2 Chr 35.2, but see Ezra 3.10. The author is attracted by the splendor of the temple officials (see also note on 1.10). **1.3** *The Levites, the temple servants*. In 2 Chr 35.3 the Levites are described as those who "taught all Israel." Perhaps the author has less regard for the Levites than does the Chronicler (though 1 Esd 9.48–49 does depict them as teachers of the law). The "temple servants" are elsewhere a separate and inferior class, the Nethinim (cf. Ezra 2.43–54). **1.4** *Worship the Lord your God and serve his people Israel*. In the Hebrew of 2 Chr 35.3 there is only one verb, "serve," which can mean both "worship" (a deity) and "serve" (humans). **1.5** *Magnificence*. 2 Chr 35.4 has only "written directions," but 1 Esdras is stressing the importance of the temple. **1.7** *Calves*, or "young bulls"; 2 Chr 35.7 reads "bulls." **1.9** *Seven hundred calves*, in 2 Chr 35.9 "five hundred bulls." **1.10** It should be the *Levites alone*, who are preparing the Passover for themselves and for the priests (1.13). The reference to *the unleavened bread* perhaps comes from a misreading of the Hebrew *mitzwat*, "command" (2 Chr 35.10) as *matzot*, "unleavened bread." The Festival of Unleavened Bread followed Passover (cf. 1.19). *In proper order*, lit. "becomingly," stresses the attractive appearance of the clergy more than the Hebrew "in their divisions" (2 Chr 35.10). **1.11** The reference to *the morning* comes from misreading of the Hebrew word *baqar*, "cattle" (2 Chr 35.12) as *boqer*, "morning" (some Hebrew manuscripts have the same error). **1.12** At the beginning of this verse 2 Chr 35.11–12 has been omitted. *With a pleasing odor*, a misreading of "pans" (2 Chr 35.13).

Levites prepared it for themselves and for their kindred the priests, the sons of Aaron. 15 The temple singers, the sons of Asaph, were in their place according to the arrangement made by David, and also Asaph, Zechariah, and Eddinus, who represented the king. 16 The gatekeepers were at each gate; no one needed to interrupt his daily duties, for their kindred the Levites prepared the passover for them.

17 So the things that had to do with the sacrifices to the Lord were accomplished that day: the passover was kept 18 and the sacrifices were offered on the altar of the Lord, according to the command of King Josiah. 19 And the people of Israel who were present at that time kept the passover and the festival of unleavened bread seven days. 20 No passover like it had been kept in Israel since the times of the prophet Samuel; 21 none of the kings of Israel had kept such a passover as was kept by Josiah and the priests and Levites and the people of Judah and all of Israel who were living in Jerusalem. 22 In the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah this passover was kept.

The End of Josiah's Reign

23 And the deeds of Josiah were upright in the sight of the Lord, for his heart was full of godliness. 24 In ancient times the events of his reign have been recorded—concerning those who sinned and acted wickedly toward the Lord beyond any other people or kingdom, and how they grieved the Lord[b] deeply, so that the words of the Lord fell upon Israel.

25 After all these acts of Josiah, it happened that Pharaoh, king of Egypt, went to make war at Carchemish on the Euphrates, and Josiah went out against him. 26 And the king of Egypt sent word to him saying, "What have we to do with each other, O king of Judea? 27 I was not sent against you by the Lord God, for my war is at the Euphrates. And now the Lord is with me! The Lord is with me, urging me on! Stand aside, and do not oppose the Lord."

28 Josiah, however, did not turn back to his chariot, but tried to fight with him, and did not heed the words of the prophet Jeremiah from the mouth of the Lord. 29 He joined battle with him in the plain of Megiddo, and the commanders came down against King Josiah. 30 The king said to his servants, "Take me away from the battle, for I am very weak." And immediately his servants took him out of the line of battle. 31 He got into his second chariot; and after he was brought back to Jerusalem he died, and was buried in the tomb of his ancestors.

32 In all Judea they mourned for Josiah. The prophet Jeremiah lamented for Josiah, and the principal men, with the women,[c] have made lamentation for him to this day; it was ordained that this should always be done throughout the whole nation of Israel. 33 These things are written in the book of the histories of the kings of Judea; and every one of the acts of Josiah, and his splendor, and his understanding of the law of the Lord, and the things that he had done before, and

b Gk *him* *c* Or *their wives*

1.23–33 The death of Josiah. **1.23–24** 1 Esdras makes this addition to 2 Chr 35 as an explanatory preface to the narrative of how, despite Josiah's piety, he meets an untimely death (1.25–31). The death of Josiah was obviously a theological problem. There may be some allusion to 2 Kings 23.24–27. It is strange that 1 Esdras omits the phrase from 2 Chr 35.20 "After all this, when Josiah had set the temple in order," since that would have suited its purposes well. **1.28** Instead of *the words of the prophet Jeremiah* the Hebrew has "the words of Neco" (2 Chr 35.22). Perhaps the author disapproved of depicting the Egyptian king as a vehicle for God's words. No specific words of Jeremiah on the subject are known, but the author may have felt Josiah should have been warned by words like Jer 46.6. **1.32** *The principal men, with the women* is probably a misreading of the Hebrew *hasharim wehasharot* "the singing men and singing women" (2 Chr 35.25) as *hasarim wehasarot*, "the princes and princesses," which the Greek author further transformed by putting the women into a subordinate place. **1.33** *The book of the histories of the kings of Judea* is not the biblical Kings or Chronicles. 2 Chr 35.25 says their laments are "recorded in the Laments," but that is not the biblical book of Lamentations. Josephus's history includes such a lament, but we do not know where he got it (*Antiquities* 10.5.1). *His splendor, and his understanding of the law of the Lord.* In 2 Chr 35.26 it is simply "his faithful deeds in accordance with what is written in the law of the LORD." Josiah is more of a hero to the author of 1 Esdras.

these that are now told, are recorded in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah.

The Last Kings of Judah

34 The men of the nation took Jeconiah[d] son of Josiah, who was twenty-three years old, and made him king in succession to his father Josiah. 35 He reigned three months in Judah and Jerusalem. Then the king of Egypt deposed him from reigning in Jerusalem, 36 and fined the nation one hundred talents of silver and one talent of gold. 37 The king of Egypt made his brother Jehoiakim king of Judea and Jerusalem. 38 Jehoiakim put the nobles in prison, and seized his brother Zarius and brought him back from Egypt.

39 Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he began to reign in Judea and Jerusalem; he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. 40 King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came up against him; he bound him with a chain of bronze and took him away to Babylon. 41 Nebuchadnezzar also took some holy vessels of the Lord, and carried them away, and stored them in his temple in Babylon. 42 But the things that are reported about Jehoiakim,[e] and his uncleanness and impiety, are written in the annals of the kings.

43 His son Jehoiachin[f] became king in his place; when he was made king he was eighteen years old, 44 and he reigned three months and ten days in Jerusalem. He did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. 45 A year later Nebuchadnezzar sent and removed him to Babylon, with the holy vessels of the Lord, 46 and made Zedekiah king of Judea and Jerusalem.

The Fall of Jerusalem

Zedekiah was twenty-one years old, and he reigned eleven years. 47 He also did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and did not heed the words that were spoken by the prophet Jeremiah from the mouth of the Lord. 48 Although King Nebuchadnezzar had made him swear by the name of the Lord, he broke his oath and rebelled; he stiffened his neck and hardened his heart and transgressed the laws of the Lord, the God of Israel. 49 Even the leaders of the people and of the priests committed many acts of sacrilege and lawlessness beyond all the unclean deeds of all the nations, and polluted the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem—the temple that God had made holy. 50 The God of their ancestors sent his messenger to call them back, because he would have spared them and his dwelling place. 51 But they mocked his messengers, and whenever the Lord spoke, they scoffed at his prophets, 52 until in his anger against his people because of their ungodly acts he gave command to bring against them the kings of the Chaldeans. 53 These killed their young men with the sword around their holy temple, and did not spare young man or young woman,[g] old man or child, for he gave them all into their hands. 54 They took all the holy vessels of the Lord, great and small, the treasure chests of the Lord, and the royal stores, and carried them away to Babylon. 55 They burned the house of the Lord, broke down the walls of Jerusalem, burned their towers with fire, 56 and utterly destroyed all its glorious things. The survivors he led away to Babylon with the sword, 57 and they were servants to him and to his sons until the Persians began to reign, in fulfillment of the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, 58 saying, "Until the land has enjoyed its sabbaths, it shall

d 2 Kings 23.30; 2 Chr 36.1 *Jehoahaz* *e* Gk *him*
f Gk *Jehoiakim* *g* Gk *virgin*

1.34–46 The last kings of Judah. **1.34** *Jeconiah* is an error for Jehoahaz (which appears in 2 Kings 23.30; 2 Chr 36.1). **1.35** 1 Chr 36.2 adds that Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old at his accession. **1.38** In having Jehoiakim *put the nobles in prison* (not in 2 Chr 36) and in having him, not the Egyptian Neco, deport his brother Zarius (Jehoahaz), 1 Esdras paints Jehoiakim as more of a villain than does 2 Chr 36. *From Egypt* should probably be "to Egypt" (as some manuscripts also have). **1.43** *Eighteen years old*, as in 2 Kings 24.8 and one Septuagint reading in 2 Chr 36.9 (the Hebrew of 2 Chr 36.9 has "eight years old"). **1.45** *A year later*. The Greek perhaps means "at the end of the accession year" (which in this case would have lasted for only three months), and so "at the turn of the regnal year" or "in the spring" (as in 2 Chr 36.10).

1.46b–58 The fall of Jerusalem. **1.58** The quoted words are a combination of Jeremiah's prophecy of a seventy-year devastation of the land (Jer 25.11–12) with the idea of that period as a sabbatical rest for the land (Lev 26.34–35).

keep sabbath all the time of its desolation
until the completion of seventy years."

Cyrus Permits the Exiles to Return

2 In the first year of Cyrus as king of
the Persians, so that the word of the
Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be
accomplished— 2the Lord stirred up the
spirit of King Cyrus of the Persians, and
he made a proclamation throughout all
his kingdom and also put it in writing:
3 "Thus says Cyrus king of the Per-
sians: The Lord of Israel, the Lord Most
High, has made me king of the world,
4and he has commanded me to build him
a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judea.
5If any of you, therefore, are of his peo-
ple, may your Lord be with you; go up to
Jerusalem, which is in Judea, and build
the house of the Lord of Israel—he is the
Lord who dwells in Jerusalem— 6and let
each of you, wherever you may live, be
helped by the people of your place with
gold and silver, 7with gifts and with
horses and cattle, besides the other things
added as votive offerings for the temple
of the Lord that is in Jerusalem."
8 Then arose the heads of families of
the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, and the
priests and the Levites, and all whose
spirit the Lord had stirred to go up to
build the house in Jerusalem for the
Lord; 9their neighbors helped them with
everything, with silver and gold, with
horses and cattle, and with a very great
number of votive offerings from many
whose hearts were stirred.
10 King Cyrus also brought out the
holy vessels of the Lord that Nebuchad-
nezzar had carried away from Jerusalem
and stored in his temple of idols. 11When
King Cyrus of the Persians brought these
out, he gave them to Mithridates, his trea-
surer, 12and by him they were given to
Sheshbazzar,[h] the governor of Judea.
13The number of these was: one thou-
sand gold cups, one thousand silver cups,
twenty-nine silver censers, thirty gold
bowls, two thousand four hundred ten sil-
ver bowls, and one thousand other vessels.
14All the vessels were handed over, gold
and silver, five thousand four hundred
sixty-nine, 15and they were carried back
by Sheshbazzar with the returning exiles
from Babylon to Jerusalem.

Opposition to Rebuilding Jerusalem

16 In the time of King Artaxerxes
of the Persians, Bishlam, Mithridates,
Tabeel, Rehum, Beltethmus, the scribe
Shimshai, and the rest of their associates,
living in Samaria and other places, wrote
him the following letter, against those
who were living in Judea and Jerusalem:
17 "To King Artaxerxes our lord,
your servants the recorder Rehum and
the scribe Shimshai and the other mem-
bers of their council, and the judges in
Coelesyria and Phoenicia: 18Let it now be
known to our lord the king that the Jews
who came up from you to us have gone to
Jerusalem and are building that rebellious
and wicked city, repairing its market
places and walls and laying the founda-
tions for a temple. 19Now if this city is
built and the walls finished, they will not
only refuse to pay tribute but will even
resist kings. 20Since the building of the
temple is now going on, we think it best
not to neglect such a matter, 21but to
speak to our lord the king, in order that,
if it seems good to you, search may be

h Gk *Sanabassaros*

2.1–15 The return of the exiles. **2.1–5** These sentences are paralleled both in 2 Chr 36.22–23 and in Ezra 1.1–3. **2.13–14** For the differences in the listing of the *vessels* from that in Ezra, see Ezra 1.9–11.

2.16–30 The narrative now skips to Ezra 4.7, omitting to note that the building of the temple actually started (cf. Ezra 3.8–10), though v. 30 will say that it "stopped" (the start of the work will be recounted much later, in 5.56–58). More importantly, the narrative becomes misleading by introducing here an episode from a much later period. Rather than in the time of the temple building (537–515 B.C.E.), we are now in the days of Artaxerxes I (465–424 B.C.E.), when the temple had long ago been finished and it was the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem (not the temple) that was being hindered. The author of 1 Esdras, however, confused the two building operations, inserting references to the temple in vv. 18, 20 where they do not belong (cf. Ezra 4.12, 14). **2.16** The names listed are a combination of two sets of signatories to separate letters in Ezra 4.7, 8. **2.17** *Coelesyria*, lit. "hollow Syria," the valleys and flatlands of inland Syria, reaching as far south as Judea, as distinct from *Phoenicia*, the east-

made in the records of your ancestors.
22 You will find in the annals what has
been written about them, and will learn
that this city was rebellious, troubling both
kings and other cities, 23 and that the Jews
were rebels and kept setting up blockades
in it from of old. That is why this city was
laid waste. 24 Therefore we now make
known to you, O lord and king, that if this
city is built and its walls finished, you will
no longer have access to Coelesyria and
Phoenicia."

25 Then the king, in reply to the re-
corder Rehum, Beltethmus, the scribe
Shimshai, and the others associated with
them and living in Samaria and Syria and
Phoenicia, wrote as follows:

26 "I have read the letter that you sent
me. So I ordered search to be made, and
it has been found that this city from of old
has fought against kings, 27 that the peo-
ple in it were given to rebellion and war,
and that mighty and cruel kings ruled in
Jerusalem and exacted tribute from Coel-
esyria and Phoenicia. 28 Therefore I have
now issued orders to prevent these people
from building the city and to take care
that nothing more be done 29 and that
such wicked proceedings go no further to
the annoyance of kings."

30 Then, when the letter from King
Artaxerxes was read, Rehum and the
scribe Shimshai and their associates went
quickly to Jerusalem, with cavalry and a
large number of armed troops, and began
to hinder the builders. And the building
of the temple in Jerusalem stopped until
the second year of the reign of King Da-
rius of the Persians.

The Debate of the Three Bodyguards

3 Now King Darius gave a great ban-
quet for all that were under him, all
that were born in his house, and all the
nobles of Media and Persia, 2 and all the
satraps and generals and governors that
were under him in the hundred twenty-
seven satrapies from India to Ethiopia.
3 They ate and drank, and when they
were satisfied they went away, and King
Darius went to his bedroom; he went to
sleep, but woke up again.

4 Then the three young men of the
bodyguard, who kept guard over the per-
son of the king, said to one another,
5 "Let each of us state what one thing is
strongest; and to the one whose statement
seems wisest, King Darius will give rich
gifts and great honors of victory. 6 He
shall be clothed in purple, and drink from
gold cups, and sleep on a gold bed,[i] and
have a chariot with gold bridles, and a tur-
ban of fine linen, and a necklace around
his neck; 7 and because of his wisdom he
shall sit next to Darius and shall be called
Kinsman of Darius."

8 Then each wrote his own statement,
and they sealed them and put them under
the pillow of King Darius, 9 and said,
"When the king wakes, they will give him

i Gk *on gold*

ern Mediterranean coast. **2.27** *Cruel,* or "ruthless," "stubborn" (there is nothing corresponding to this in the Aramaic of Ezra 4.20). **2.30** The addition of *cavalry and a large number of armed troops* gives the story a more dramatic touch than in Ezra 4.23, which speaks more abstractly of "force and power."

3.1–4.63 The debate of the three bodyguards. This is the one lengthy section of 1 Esdras that has no equivalent in 2 Chronicles or in Ezra-Nehemiah. Its function is to introduce governor Zerubbabel, explaining how this Jew came to be favored by the Persian king Darius. Zerubbabel proves to be the winner of the debate over what the strongest thing in the world is (4.13, 41), and he is rewarded by being given permission to rebuild the temple (4.42–57, 62–63). It seems likely that the story was a popular one long before it had the name of Zerubbabel attached to it, since it is found in other forms in different cultures.

3.1–17 This account of a banquet given by Darius (522–486 B.C.E.) has probably been borrowed from Esth 1.1–2 where, however, the king is Ahasuerus. **3.1** *Media* had been an important part of the Persian Empire since Cyrus I had conquered it in 550 B.C.E. **3.2** A *satrap* was governor of a satrapy, as the provinces of the Persian Empire were called. **3.3** *But woke up again* contradicts v. 13; there may be a textual error. **3.4–11** The details lack plausibility. Why should the bodyguards suppose that the winner of a competition of their own devising and for their own amusement would be rewarded so handsomely by the king? And why should the answers be put under the king's pillow if "they" (his servants, presumably, v. 9) are going to give them to him? Josephus, not surprisingly, rewrites the story to have the king himself make the promise of reward (as does Herod in Mk 6.22–23, for exam-

the writing; and to the one whose statement the king and the three nobles of Persia judge to be wisest the victory shall be given according to what is written."
10 The first wrote, "Wine is strongest."
11 The second wrote, "The king is strongest."
12 The third wrote, "Women are strongest, but above all things truth is victor."[j]

13 When the king awoke, they took the writing and gave it to him, and he read it.
14 Then he sent and summoned all the nobles of Persia and Media and the satraps and generals and governors and prefects,
15 and he took his seat in the council chamber, and the writing was read in their presence.
16 He said, "Call the young men, and they shall explain their statements." So they were summoned, and came in.
17 They said to them, "Explain to us what you have written."

The Speech About Wine

Then the first, who had spoken of the strength of wine, began and said:
18 "Gentlemen, how is wine the strongest? It leads astray the minds of all who drink it.
19 It makes equal the mind of the king and the orphan, of the slave and the free, of the poor and the rich.
20 It turns every thought to feasting and mirth, and forgets all sorrow and debt.
21 It makes all hearts feel rich, forgets kings and satraps, and makes everyone talk in millions.[k]
22 When people drink they forget to be friendly with friends and kindred, and before long they draw their swords.
23 And when they recover from the wine, they do not remember what they have done.
24 Gentlemen, is not wine the strongest, since it forces people to do these things?"
When he had said this, he stopped speaking.

The Speech About the King

4 Then the second, who had spoken of the strength of the king, began to speak:
2 "Gentlemen, are not men strongest, who rule over land and sea and all that is in them?
3 But the king is stronger; he is their lord and master, and whatever he says to them they obey.
4 If he tells them to make war on one another, they do it; and if he sends them out against the enemy, they go, and conquer mountains, walls, and towers.
5 They kill and are killed, and do not disobey the king's command; if they win the victory, they bring everything to the king—whatever spoil they take and everything else.
6 Likewise those who do not serve in the army or make war but till the soil; whenever they sow and reap, they bring some to the king; and they compel one another to pay taxes to the king.
7 And yet he is only one man! If he tells them to kill, they kill; if he tells them to release, they release;
8 if he tells them to attack, they attack; if he tells them to lay waste, they lay waste; if he tells them to build, they build;
9 if he tells them to cut down, they cut down; if he tells them to plant, they plant.
10 All his people and his armies obey him. Furthermore, he reclines, he eats and drinks and sleeps,
11 but they keep watch around him, and no one may go away to attend to his own affairs, nor do they disobey him.
12 Gentlemen, why is not the king the strongest, since he is to be obeyed in this fashion?"
And he stopped speaking.

The Speech About Women

13 Then the third, who had spoken of women and truth (and this was Zerubbabel), began to speak:
14 "Gentlemen, is not

j Or *but truth is victor over all things* *k* Gk *talents*

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ple). **3.12** Strangely, the third guard has two chances to win the competition! Also, how can women be strongest if truth is stronger still? It seems that *but above all things truth is victor* is an addition to an earlier form of the story.

3.18–24 The main point of this speech about wine is that it is "strong," but in it we can also detect a note of praise for wine (cf. Ps 104.15; Sir 31.27–28) as well as a note of warning (cf. Prov 20.1; 23.29–35). **4.1–12** This speech about the power of the king portrays an absolute monarch who determines the lives of his subjects. There is at least a hint of sycophancy about this speech, which is (in the narrative) being delivered in the presence of the king. But the author no doubt also intends to criticize the despotism he describes. **4.13–32** This speech about women is put in the mouth of the historical personage Zerubbabel, known as the governor of the province of Judah (cf. Ezra 3.2). The attitude taken toward women here is ambivalent, as is that toward wine and the king in the previous speeches. While women can further men's interests (4.16–17), they also can be harmful to men (4.18–19, 26–27). Interestingly, women's power here is only in relation to individual men; they have no

the king great, and are not men many,
and is not wine strong? Who is it, then,
that rules them, or has the mastery over
them? Is it not women? 15 Women gave
birth to the king and to every people that
rules over sea and land. 16 From women
they came; and women brought up the
very men who plant the vineyards from
which comes wine. 17 Women make men's
clothes; they bring men glory; men can-
not exist without women. 18 If men gather
gold and silver or any other beautiful
thing, and then see a woman lovely in ap-
pearance and beauty, 19 they let all those
things go, and gape at her, and with open
mouths stare at her, and all prefer her to
gold or silver or any other beautiful thing.
20 A man leaves his own father, who
brought him up, and his own country,
and clings to his wife. 21 With his wife he
ends his days, with no thought of his
father or his mother or his country.
22 Therefore you must realize that women
rule over you!

"Do you not labor and toil, and bring
everything and give it to women? 23 A
man takes his sword, and goes out to
travel and rob and steal and to sail the sea
and rivers; 24 he faces lions, and he walks
in darkness, and when he steals and robs
and plunders, he brings it back to the
woman he loves. 25 A man loves his wife
more than his father or his mother.
26 Many men have lost their minds be-
cause of women, and have become slaves
because of them. 27 Many have perished,
or stumbled, or sinned because of women.
28 And now do you not believe me?

"Is not the king great in his power? Do
not all lands fear to touch him? 29 Yet I
have seen him with Apame, the king's
concubine, the daughter of the illustrious
Bartacus; she would sit at the king's right
hand 30 and take the crown from the
king's head and put it on her own, and
slap the king with her left hand. 31 At this
the king would gaze at her with mouth
agape. If she smiles at him, he laughs; if
she loses her temper with him, he flatters
her, so that she may be reconciled to him.
32 Gentlemen, why are not women strong,
since they do such things?"

The Speech About Truth

33 Then the king and the nobles
looked at one another; and he began to
speak about truth: 34 "Gentlemen, are not
women strong? The earth is vast, and
heaven is high, and the sun is swift in its
course, for it makes the circuit of the
heavens and returns to its place in one
day. 35 Is not the one who does these
things great? But truth is great, and stron-
ger than all things. 36 The whole earth
calls upon truth, and heaven blesses it.
All God's works[l] quake and tremble, and
with him there is nothing unrighteous.
37 Wine is unrighteous, the king is unrigh-
teous, women are unrighteous, all human
beings are unrighteous, all their works are
unrighteous, and all such things. There is
no truth in them and in their unrigh-
teousness they will perish. 38 But truth en-
dures and is strong forever, and lives and
prevails forever and ever. 39 With it there
is no partiality or preference, but it does
what is righteous instead of anything that
is unrighteous or wicked. Everyone ap-
proves its deeds, 40 and there is nothing
unrighteous in its judgment. To it belongs
the strength and the kingship and the
power and the majesty of all the ages.
Blessed be the God of truth!" 41 When he
stopped speaking, all the people shouted
and said, "Great is truth, and strongest
of all!"

Zerubbabel's Reward

42 Then the king said to him, "Ask
what you wish, even beyond what is writ-

l Gk *All the works*

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political or social power of their own. **4.29** No concubine of a Persian king by the name *Apame* is known from other sources. The point would be made better if no reference were made to the woman's parentage.

4.33–41 This speech in praise of truth contains no ambivalence about its subject. *Truth* is here not freedom from error but more like "virtue"; it is the opposite of *unrighteousness* (4.37, 39–40). It is hard to see any real argument in this speech that truth is "strong"; there is a claim that it endures and prevails (4.38), but no evidence is brought forward. The speech about truth has not been well integrated into the story of the three-cornered contest, which apparently existed in an earlier version without Zerubbabel. **4.38** This is the origin of the aphorism "Great is truth and it prevails" (often quoted in the Vulgate version, *magna est veritas et praevalet*).

4.42–57 This account of the resumption of

ten, and we will give it to you, for you
have been found to be the wisest. You
shall sit next to me, and be called my Kins-
man." 43 Then he said to the king, "Re-
member the vow that you made on the
day when you became king, to build Jeru-
salem, 44 and to send back all the vessels
that were taken from Jerusalem, which
Cyrus set apart when he began[m] to de-
stroy Babylon, and vowed to send them
back there. 45 You also vowed to build the
temple, which the Edomites burned when
Judea was laid waste by the Chaldeans.
46 And now, O lord the king, this is what I
ask and request of you, and this befits
your greatness. I pray therefore that you
fulfill the vow whose fulfillment you
vowed to the King of heaven with your
own lips."

47 Then King Darius got up and
kissed him, and wrote letters for him to all
the treasurers and governors and gener-
als and satraps, that they should give safe
conduct to him and to all who were going
up with him to build Jerusalem. 48 And he
wrote letters to all the governors in Coele-
syria and Phoenicia and to those in Leba-
non, to bring cedar timber from Lebanon
to Jerusalem, and to help him build the
city. 49 He wrote in behalf of all the Jews
who were going up from his kingdom to
Judea, in the interest of their freedom,
that no officer or satrap or governor or
treasurer should forcibly enter their
doors; 50 that all the country that they
would occupy should be theirs without
tribute; that the Idumeans should give up
the villages of the Jews that they held;
51 that twenty talents a year should be
given for the building of the temple until
it was completed, 52 and an additional ten
talents a year for burnt offerings to be of-
fered on the altar every day, in accor-
dance with the commandment to make
seventeen offerings; 53 and that all who
came from Babylonia to build the city
should have their freedom, they and their
children and all the priests who came.
54 He wrote also concerning their support
and the priests' vestments in which[n] they
were to minister. 55 He wrote that the sup-
port for the Levites should be provided
until the day when the temple would be
finished and Jerusalem built. 56 He wrote
that land and wages should be provided
for all who guarded the city. 57 And he
sent back from Babylon all the vessels that
Cyrus had set apart; everything that Cy-
rus had ordered to be done, he also com-
manded to be done and to be sent to
Jerusalem.

Zerubbabel's Prayer

58 When the young man went out, he
lifted up his face to heaven toward Jerusa-
lem, and praised the King of heaven, say-
ing, 59 "From you comes the victory; from
you comes wisdom, and yours is the glory.
I am your servant. 60 Blessed are you, who
have given me wisdom; I give you thanks,
O Lord of our ancestors."

61 So he took the letters, and went to
Babylon and told this to all his kindred.
62 And they praised the God of their an-
cestors, because he had given them re-
lease and permission 63 to go up and build
Jerusalem and the temple that is called by
his name; and they feasted, with music
and rejoicing, for seven days.

m Cn: Gk *vowed* *n* Gk *in what priestly vestments*

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the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple differs somewhat from that of the other biblical books. **4.43** Ezra 1.7–8 (cf. 6.5; 1 Esd 3.10–12) says that it was Cyrus, not Darius, who restored the temple vessels. **4.45** No other biblical text says that *the Edomites* burned the temple. **4.47** Zerubbabel and Darius were not involved in the *building* of the city of *Jerusalem*; it was, rather, Nehemiah under Artaxerxes. **4.48** The letters of safe conduct and permission to take cedars from Lebanon were given to Nehemiah, not Zerubbabel (Neh 2.7–8). **4.49–56** The various rights given here to Zerubbabel and his community (freedom, privacy, tax-free status, removal of Idumeans, specific sums for temple worship, support of priests, Levites, and city guardkeepers), are not to be found in the decree of Cyrus in Ezra 6.6–12, though the provision of temple vessels, tax-free status for temple personnel, and specific sums for maintaining temple worship are promised by Artaxerxes to Ezra (Ezra 7.12–26).

4.58–63 Praise and celebration. **4.59–60** Zerubbabel's prayer of thanks combines many conventional OT phrases. **4.63** As before (e.g., 4.47), the *building* of the city *Jerusalem* is here ascribed to Zerubbabel rather than Nehemiah, whose work does not appear in 1 Esdras at all (the Nehemiah in 5.8 may or may not be understood as the governor Nehemiah; see also note on 5.40).

List of the Returning Exiles

5 After this the heads of ancestral houses were chosen to go up, according to their tribes, with their wives and sons and daughters, and their male and female servants, and their livestock. 2 And Darius sent with them a thousand cavalry to take them back to Jerusalem in safety, with the music of drums and flutes; 3 all their kindred were making merry. And he made them go up with them.

4 These are the names of the men who went up, according to their ancestral houses in the tribes, over their groups: 5 the priests, the descendants of Phinehas son of Aaron; Jeshua son of Jozadak son of Seraiah and Joakim son of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, of the house of David, of the lineage of Phares, of the tribe of Judah, 6 who spoke wise words before King Darius of the Persians, in the second year of his reign, in the month of Nisan, the first month.

7 These are the Judeans who came up out of their sojourn in exile, whom King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had carried away to Babylon 8 and who returned to Jerusalem and the rest of Judea, each to his own town. They came with Zerubbabel and Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Resaiah, Eneneus, Mordecai, Beelsarus, Aspharasus, Reeliah, Rehum, and Baanah, their leaders.

9 The number of those of the nation and their leaders: the descendants of Parosh, two thousand one hundred seventy-two. The descendants of Shephatiah, four hundred seventy-two. 10 The descendants of Arah, seven hundred fifty-six. 11 The descendants of Pahath-moab, of the descendants of Jeshua and Joab, two thousand eight hundred twelve. 12 The descendants of Elam, one thousand two hundred fifty-four. The descendants of Zattu, nine hundred forty-five. The descendants of Chorbe, seven hundred five. The descendants of Bani, six hundred forty-eight. 13 The descendants of Bebai, six hundred twenty-three. The descendants of Azgad, one thousand three hundred twenty-two. 14 The descendants of Adonikam, six hundred sixty-seven. The descendants of Bigvai, two thousand sixty-six. The descendants of Adin, four hundred fifty-four. 15 The descendants of Ater, namely of Hezekiah, ninety-two. The descendants of Kilan and Azetas, sixty-seven. The descendants of Azaru, four hundred thirty-two. 16 The descendants of Annias, one hundred one. The descendants of Arom. The descendants of Bezai, three hundred twenty-three. The descendants of Arsiphurith, one hundred twelve. 17 The descendants of Baiterus, three thousand five. The descendants of Bethlomon, one hundred twenty-three. 18 Those from Netophah, fifty-five. Those from Anathoth, one hundred fifty-eight. Those from Bethasmoth, forty-two. 19 Those from Kiriatharim, twenty-five.

5.1–6 These verses correspond to nothing in Ezra and are obviously designed as a link between the story of the three bodyguards in chs. 3–4 and the material from Ezra that resumes in 5.7. The book of Ezra has no account of a return of exiles in the time of Darius. **5.1** The idea that certain exiles were *chosen to go up*, to return to the land, is not found elsewhere. In Ezra 1.5 it is those "whose spirit God had stirred," and in Ezra 8.16–17 certain classes of exiles are prevailed upon to join Ezra's company. *Their livestock*, as in Ezra 1.4, 6. **5.2** The inclusion of *a thousand cavalry* is unparalleled elsewhere, though cf. Neh 2.9. *With the music of drums and flutes*. The picture is of a religious procession or, perhaps, of a military march. The music, however, might be simply for the farewell. **5.4** *These are the names of the men who went up*. What follows is not a full list of returnees, so there seems to be some problem with the text. **5.5** Something is amiss here, since *Joakim* is not one of the *sons of Zerubbabel* according to 1 Chr 3.19, and, more importantly, Zerubbabel is not a priest, but a member of the *tribe of Judah*. There must be some error in the text. **5.6** *Who spoke wise words before King Darius*. The reference is to Zerubbabel and his speech in 4.13–40. The author knows that the building of the temple was halted until *the second year of the reign of King Darius* (2.30), so the contest is dated to *the month of Nisan, the first month* of that year to explain how Zerubbabel came to be appointed as director of the temple works.

5.7–46 This inventory of inhabitants of Judea at some unknown period in postexilic times is copied from Ezra 2.1–70 (Neh 7.6–73a) and assigned to the time of Zerubbabel, whose name is indeed the first in the list of leaders of returning exiles (1 Esd 5.8). The number of the Judeans differs somewhat in the various lists: there are, for example, 2150 more inhabitants of Judea in 1 Esd 5 than in Ezra 2, and several names are missing from either list. The differences all seem to be

Those from Chephirah and Beeroth,
seven hundred forty-three. 20 The Chadi-
asans and Ammidians, four hundred
twenty-two. Those from Kirama and
Geba, six hundred twenty-one. 21 Those
from Macalon, one hundred twenty-two.
Those from Betolio, fifty-two. The de-
scendants of Niphish, one hundred fifty-
six. 22 The descendants of the other
Calamolalus and Ono, seven hundred
twenty-five. The descendants of Jerechus,
three hundred forty-five. 23 The descen-
dants of Senaah, three thousand three
hundred thirty.

24 The priests: the descendants of Je-
daiah son of Jeshua, of the descendants of
Anasib, nine hundred seventy-two. The
descendants of Immer, one thousand and
fifty-two. 25 The descendants of Pashhur,
one thousand two hundred forty-seven.
The descendants of Charme, one thou-
sand seventeen.

26 The Levites: the descendants of
Jeshua and Kadmiel and Bannas and Su-
dias, seventy-four. 27 The temple singers:
the descendants of Asaph, one hundred
twenty-eight. 28 The gatekeepers: the de-
scendants of Shallum, the descendants of
Ater, the descendants of Talmon, the de-
scendants of Akkub, the descendants of
Hatita, the descendants of Shobai, in all
one hundred thirty-nine.

29 The temple servants: the descen-
dants of Esau, the descendants of Hasu-
pha, the descendants of Tabbaoth, the
descendants of Keros, the descendants of
Sua, the descendants of Padon, the de-
scendants of Lebanah, the descendants of
Hagabah, 30 the descendants of Akkub,
the descendants of Uthai, the descendants
of Ketab, the descendants of Hagab, the
descendants of Subai, the descendants of
Hana, the descendants of Cathua, the de-
scendants of Geddur, 31 the descendants
of Jairus, the descendants of Daisan, the
descendants of Noeba, the descendants of
Chezib, the descendants of Gazera, the
descendants of Uzza, the descendants of
Phinoe, the descendants of Hasrah, the
descendants of Basthai, the descendants
of Asnah, the descendants of Maani,
the descendants of Nephisim, the descen-
dants of Acuph,[o] the descendants of Ha-
kupha, the descendants of Asur, the
descendants of Pharakim, the descen-
dants of Bazluth, 32 the descendants of
Mehida, the descendants of Cutha, the
descendants of Charea, the descendants
of Barkos, the descendants of Serar, the
descendants of Temah, the descendants
of Neziah, the descendants of Hatipha.

33 The descendants of Solomon's ser-
vants: the descendants of Assaphioth, the
descendants of Peruda, the descendants
of Jaalah, the descendants of Lozon, the
descendants of Isdael, the descendants of
Shephatiah, 34 the descendants of Agia,
the descendants of Pochereth-hazzebaim,
the descendants of Sarothie, the descen-
dants of Masiah, the descendants of Gas,
the descendants of Addus, the descen-
dants of Subas, the descendants of Apher-
ra, the descendants of Barodis, the de-
scendants of Shaphat, the descendants
of Allon.

35 All the temple servants and the de-
scendants of Solomon's servants were
three hundred seventy-two.

36 The following are those who came
up from Tel-melah and Tel-harsha, un-
der the leadership of Cherub, Addan, and
Immer, 37 though they could not prove by
their ancestral houses or lineage that they
belonged to Israel: the descendants of De-
laiah son of Tobiah, and the descendants
of Nekoda, six hundred fifty-two.

38 Of the priests the following had as-
sumed the priesthood but were not found
registered: the descendants of Habaiah,
the descendants of Hakkoz, and the de-
scendants of Jaddus who had married
Agia, one of the daughters of Barzillai,
and was called by his name. 39 When a
search was made in the register and the
genealogy of these men was not found,
they were excluded from serving as
priests. 40 And Nehemiah and Attharias[p]
told them not to share in the holy things
until a high priest should appear wearing
Urim and Thummim.[q]

41 All those of Israel, twelve or more
years of age, besides male and female

o Other ancient authorities read *Acub* or *Acum*
p Or *the governor* q Gk *Manifestation and Truth*

due to scribal error. **5.40** *Nehemiah and Attharias.* Ezra 2.63 has simply "the governor" (in Hebrew *hattirshata*). This has been understood as a reference to Nehemiah (who is called by this term in Neh 8.9), and then the term has been misunderstood as a proper name, Attharias. *Urim and Thummim* are the sacred lots used by the priests to make decisions (Ex 28.30; Deut 33.8).

servants, were forty-two thousand three
hundred sixty; 42 their male and female
servants were seven thousand three hun-
dred thirty-seven; there were two hun-
dred forty-five musicians and singers.
43 There were four hundred thirty-five
camels, and seven thousand thirty-six
horses, two hundred forty-five mules, and
five thousand five hundred twenty-five
donkeys.

44 Some of the heads of families,
when they came to the temple of God that
is in Jerusalem, vowed that, to the best of
their ability, they would erect the house
on its site, 45 and that they would give to
the sacred treasury for the work a thou-
sand minas of gold, five thousand mi-
nas of silver, and one hundred priests'
vestments.

46 The priests, the Levites, and some
of the people[r] settled in Jerusalem and
its vicinity; and the temple singers, the
gatekeepers, and all Israel in their towns.

Worship Begins Again

47 When the seventh month came,
and the Israelites were all in their own
homes, they gathered with a single pur-
pose in the square before the first gate
toward the east. 48 Then Jeshua son of
Jozadak, with his fellow priests, and Ze-
rubbabel son of Shealtiel, with his kins-
men, took their places and prepared the
altar of the God of Israel, 49 to offer burnt
offerings upon it, in accordance with the
directions in the book of Moses the man
of God. 50 And some joined them from
the other peoples of the land. And they
erected the altar in its place, for all the
peoples of the land were hostile to them
and were stronger than they; and they of-
fered sacrifices at the proper times and
burnt offerings to the Lord morning and
evening. 51 They kept the festival of
booths, as it is commanded in the law, and
offered the proper sacrifices every day,
52 and thereafter the regular offerings
and sacrifices on sabbaths and at new
moons and at all the consecrated feasts.
53 And all who had made any vow to God
began to offer sacrifices to God, from the
new moon of the seventh month, though
the temple of God was not yet built.
54 They gave money to the masons and
the carpenters, and food and drink 55 and
carts[s] to the Sidonians and the Tyrians,
to bring cedar logs from Lebanon and
convey them in rafts to the harbor of
Joppa, according to the decree that they
had in writing from King Cyrus of the
Persians.

The Foundations of the Temple Laid

56 In the second year after their com-
ing to the temple of God in Jerusalem, in
the second month, Zerubbabel son of She-
altiel and Jeshua son of Jozadak made a
beginning, together with their kindred
and the levitical priests and all who had
come back to Jerusalem from exile; 57 and
they laid the foundation of the temple of
God on the new moon of the second
month in the second year after they came
to Judea and Jerusalem. 58 They ap-
pointed the Levites who were twenty or
more years of age to have charge of the
work of the Lord. And Jeshua arose, and
his sons and kindred and his brother Kad-
miel and the sons of Jeshua Emadabun
and the sons of Joda son of Iliadun, with
their sons and kindred, all the Levites,
pressing forward the work on the house
of God with a single purpose.

So the builders built the temple of the

r Or *those who were of the people* s Meaning of Gk uncertain

5.47–55 This account of the restoration of worship is largely identical with that in Ezra 3.1–7. **5.47** In this context (cf. 2.30; 5.6) this is *the seventh month* in the second year of Darius I (520 B.C.E.). In Ezra 3.1, however, it is in the first year of Cyrus (538 B.C.E.). The transference of the return and the resumption of worship to the reign of Darius serves to emphasize further the work of Zerubbabel. *In the square before the first gate toward the east*, i.e., in the vicinity of the temple. The phrase is not paralleled in the account in Ezra 3. **5.50** *Some joined them from the other peoples of the land* is an interesting addition to the narrative in Ezra. It may be due simply to a scribal error, for it is hard to see why some of the other inhabitants would have joined in the worship if *all the peoples of the land were hostile to them* (cf. also 5.66–71). **5.52** *Sacrifices on sabbaths* is an addition to the Ezra account, perhaps reflecting the increasing prominence of the sabbath. **5.55** *Carts.* Ezra 3.7 reads "oil." *Convey them in rafts*, a quite correct explanation of the mode of transport from the Lebanon.

5.56–73 The foundations of the temple.

Lord. 59 And the priests stood arrayed in
their vestments, with musical instruments
and trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of
Asaph, with cymbals, 60 praising the Lord
and blessing him, according to the direc-
tions of King David of Israel; 61 they sang
hymns, giving thanks to the Lord, "For
his goodness and his glory are forever
upon all Israel." 62 And all the people
sounded trumpets and shouted with a
great shout, praising the Lord for the
erection of the house of the Lord. 63 Some
of the levitical priests and heads of ances-
tral houses, old men who had seen the
former house, came to the building of this
one with outcries and loud weeping,
64 while many came with trumpets and a
joyful noise, 65 so that the people could
not hear the trumpets because of the
weeping of the people.

For the multitude sounded the trum-
pets loudly, so that the sound was heard
far away; 66 and when the enemies of the
tribe of Judah and Benjamin heard it,
they came to find out what the sound of
the trumpets meant. 67 They learned that
those who had returned from exile were
building the temple for the Lord God of
Israel. 68 So they approached Zerubbabel
and Jeshua and the heads of the ancestral
houses and said to them, "We will build
with you. 69 For we obey your Lord just as
you do and we have been sacrificing to
him ever since the days of King Esar-
haddon[t] of the Assyrians, who brought
us here." 70 But Zerubbabel and Jeshua
and the heads of the ancestral houses in
Israel said to them, "You have nothing to
do with us in building the house for the
Lord our God, 71 for we alone will build it
for the Lord of Israel, as Cyrus, the king
of the Persians, has commanded us."
72 But the peoples of the land pressed
hard[u] upon those in Judea, cut off their
supplies, and hindered their building;
73 and by plots and demagoguery and up-
risings they prevented the completion of
the building as long as King Cyrus lived.
They were kept from building for two
years, until the reign of Darius.

Work on the Temple Begins Again

6 Now in the second year of the reign
of Darius, the prophets Haggai and
Zechariah son of Iddo prophesied to the
Jews who were in Judea and Jerusalem;
they prophesied to them in the name of
the Lord God of Israel. 2 Then Zerubba-
bel son of Shealtiel and Jeshua son of
Jozadak began to build the house of the
Lord that is in Jerusalem, with the help
of the prophets of the Lord who were
with them.

3 At the same time Sisinnes the gover-
nor of Syria and Phoenicia and Sathrabu-
zanes and their associates came to them
and said, 4 "By whose order are you build-
ing this house and this roof and finishing
all the other things? And who are the
builders that are finishing these things?"
5 Yet the elders of the Jews were dealt
with kindly, for the providence of the
Lord was over the captives; 6 they were
not prevented from building until word
could be sent to Darius concerning them
and a report made.

7 A copy of the letter that Sisinnes the
governor of Syria and Phoenicia, and Sa-
thrabuzanes, and their associates the local
rulers in Syria and Phoenicia, wrote and
sent to Darius:

8 "To King Darius, greetings. Let it be
fully known to our lord the king that,
when we went to the country of Judea and
entered the city of Jerusalem, we found
the elders of the Jews, who had been in
exile, 9 building in the city of Jerusalem a
great new house for the Lord, of hewn
stone, with costly timber laid in the walls.
10 These operations are going on rapidly,

t Gk *Asbasareth* *u* Meaning of Gk uncertain

5.62 The comment *all the people sounded trumpets* is not in Ezra 3, and is a little strange, since trumpets were usually blown by priests (e.g., Num 10.2–10). **5.64–65** Again, the references to *trumpets* are not paralleled in Ezra 3. **5.73** This note about being *kept from building for two years* seems to result from a misunderstanding of the reference to "the second year" of Darius in Ezra 4.24. The account in Ezra envisages cessation of work on the temple from about the second year of Cyrus (537 B.C.E.) to the second year of Darius (520 B.C.E.).

6.1–34 Work begins again. **6.4** *Finishing all the other things.* Perhaps the author of 1 Esdras has in mind that other buildings in addition to the temple were in progress (as in 3.18 the building of the temple and the building of the city are

and the work is prospering in their hands
and being completed with all splendor
and care. 11 Then we asked these elders,
'At whose command are you building this
house and laying the foundations of this
structure?' 12 In order that we might in-
form you in writing who the leaders are,
we questioned them and asked them for a
list of the names of those who are at their
head. 13 They answered us, 'We are the
servants of the Lord who created the
heaven and the earth. 14 The house was
built many years ago by a king of Israel
who was great and strong, and it was fin-
ished. 15 But when our ancestors sinned
against the Lord of Israel who is in
heaven, and provoked him, he gave them
over into the hands of King Nebuchad-
nezzar of Babylon, king of the Chaldeans;
16 and they pulled down the house, and
burned it, and carried the people away
captive to Babylon. 17 But in the first year
that Cyrus reigned over the country of
Babylonia, King Cyrus wrote that this
house should be rebuilt. 18 And the holy
vessels of gold and of silver, which Nebu-
chadnezzar had taken out of the house in
Jerusalem and stored in his own temple,
these King Cyrus took out again from the
temple in Babylon, and they were deliv-
ered to Zerubbabel and Sheshbazzar[v] the
governor 19 with the command that he
should take all these vessels back and put
them in the temple at Jerusalem, and that
this temple of the Lord should be rebuilt
on its site. 20 Then this Sheshbazzar, after
coming here, laid the foundations of the
house of the Lord that is in Jerusalem.
Although it has been in process of con-
struction from that time until now, it has
not yet reached completion.' 21 Now
therefore, O king, if it seems wise to do
so, let search be made in the royal ar-
chives of our lord[w] the king that are in
Babylon; 22 if it is found that the building
of the house of the Lord in Jerusalem was
done with the consent of King Cyrus, and
if it is approved by our lord the king, let
him send us directions concerning these
things."

Official Permission Granted

23 Then Darius commanded that
search be made in the royal archives that
were deposited in Babylon. And in Ecbat-
ana, the fortress that is in the country of
Media, a scroll[x] was found in which this
was recorded: 24 "In the first year of the
reign of King Cyrus, he ordered the
building of the house of the Lord in Jeru-
salem, where they sacrifice with perpetual
fire; 25 its height to be sixty cubits and its
width sixty cubits, with three courses of
hewn stone and one course of new native
timber; the cost to be paid from the trea-
sury of King Cyrus; 26 and that the holy
vessels of the house of the Lord, both of
gold and of silver, which Nebuchadnezzar
took out of the house in Jerusalem and
carried away to Babylon, should be re-
stored to the house in Jerusalem, to be
placed where they had been."

27 So Darius[y] commanded Sisinnes
the governor of Syria and Phoenicia, and
Sathrabuzanes, and their associates, and
those who were appointed as local rulers
in Syria and Phoenicia, to keep away from
the place, and to permit Zerubbabel, the
servant of the Lord and governor of Ju-
dea, and the elders of the Jews to build
this house of the Lord on its site. 28 "And
I command that it be built completely,
and that full effort be made to help those
who have returned from the exile of Ju-
dea, until the house of the Lord is fin-
ished; 29 and that out of the tribute of
Coelesyria and Phoenicia a portion be
scrupulously given to these men, that is,
to Zerubbabel the governor, for sacrifices
to the Lord, for bulls and rams and lambs,
30 and likewise wheat and salt and wine
and oil, regularly every year, without
quibbling, for daily use as the priests in
Jerusalem may indicate, 31 in order that
libations may be made to the Most High
God for the king and his children, and
prayers be offered for their lives."

v Gk *Sanabassarus* w Other ancient authorities read *of Cyrus* x Other authorities read *passage*
y Gk *he*

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conflated). **6.18–20** The reference to *Zerubbabel* is an addition to Ezra 5.14; it is a curious feature of the Ezra account that Zerubbabel's name is missing, but the absence is probably significant in some way. Nevertheless, it is *Sheshbazzar*, not Zerubbabel, who lays the foundations of the temple (6.20). **6.27** In Ezra 6.7 the reference is solely to "the governor of the Jews"; the naming of Zerubbabel, and especially the title given to him, *the servant of the Lord and governor of Judea*, are evidence of his importance in the eyes of the author of 1 Esdras.

32 He commanded that if anyone should transgress or nullify any of the things herein written,[z] a beam should be taken out of the house of the perpetrator, who then should be impaled upon it, and all property forfeited to the king.
33 "Therefore may the Lord, whose name is there called upon, destroy every king and nation that shall stretch out their hands to hinder or damage that house of the Lord in Jerusalem.
34 "I, King Darius, have decreed that it be done with all diligence as here prescribed."

The Temple Is Dedicated

7 Then Sisinnes the governor of Coelesyria and Phoenicia, and Sathrabuzanes, and their associates, following the orders of King Darius, 2 supervised the holy work with very great care, assisting the elders of the Jews and the chief officers of the temple. 3 The holy work prospered, while the prophets Haggai and Zechariah prophesied; 4 and they completed it by the command of the Lord God of Israel. So with the consent of Cyrus and Darius and Artaxerxes, kings of the Persians, 5 the holy house was finished by the twenty-third day of the month of Adar, in the sixth year of King Darius. 6 And the people of Israel, the priests, the Levites, and the rest of those who returned from exile who joined them, did according to what was written in the book of Moses. 7 They offered at the dedication of the temple of the Lord one hundred bulls, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs, 8 and twelve male goats for the sin of all Israel, according to the number of the twelve leaders of the tribes of Israel; 9 and the priests and the Levites stood arrayed in their vestments, according to kindred, for the services of the Lord God of Israel in accordance with the book of Moses; and the gatekeepers were at each gate.

The Passover

10 The people of Israel who came from exile kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the first month, after the priests and the Levites were purified together. 11 Not all of the returned captives were purified, but the Levites were all purified together,[a] 12 and they sacrificed the passover lamb for all the returned captives and for their kindred the priests and for themselves. 13 The people of Israel who had returned from exile ate it, all those who had separated themselves from the abominations of the peoples of the land and sought the Lord. 14 They also kept the festival of unleavened bread seven days, rejoicing before the Lord, 15 because he had changed the will of the king of the Assyrians concerning them, to strengthen their hands for the service of the Lord God of Israel.

Ezra Arrives in Jerusalem

8 After these things, when Artaxerxes, the king of the Persians, was reigning, Ezra came, the son of Seraiah, son of Azariah, son of Hilkiah, son of Shallum, 2 son of Zadok, son of Ahitub, son of Amariah, son of Uzzi, son of Bukki, son of Abishua, son of Phineas, son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the high[b] priest. 3 This Ezra came up from Babylon as a scribe skilled in the law of Moses, which was given by the God of Israel; 4 and the king showed him honor, for he found favor before the king[c] in all his requests. 5 There came up with him to Jerusalem some of the people of Israel and some of the priests and

z Other authorities read *stated above* or *added in writing* a Meaning of Gk uncertain b Gk *the first* c Gk *him*

7.1–9 The temple is dedicated. **7.2** The account in Ezra 6.13 speaks only of the non-Jews doing what Darius had ordered—providing resources for the temple work. Here they are, strangely enough, actively involved in the rebuilding as they *supervised the holy work*. **7.5** *The twenty-third day of the month of Adar*, April 1, 515 B.C.E. This date is perhaps to be preferred to that of Ezra 6.15, "the third day." **7.9** *And the gatekeepers were at each gate*, an addition to Ezra 6.18.

7.10–15 The Passover. **7.11** *Not all of the returned captives were purified.* This clause, lacking in Ezra 6.20, perhaps results from a scribal error, though there may be an allusion to 2 Chr 30.18, where some unpurified Northerners nevertheless were able to celebrate Passover. **7.15** *King of the Assyrians* is an unusual title for Darius (cf. Ezra 6.22).

8.1–7 Ezra arrives. **8.1–2** The genealogy of Ezra is more concise than in Ezra 7.1–5.

Levites and temple singers and gatekeepers and temple servants, 6in the seventh year of the reign of Artaxerxes, in the fifth month (this was the king's seventh year); for they left Babylon on the new moon of the first month and arrived in Jerusalem on the new moon of the fifth month, by the prosperous journey that the Lord gave them.[d] 7For Ezra possessed great knowledge, so that he omitted nothing from the law of the Lord or the commandments, but taught all Israel all the ordinances and judgments.

The King's Mandate

8 The following is a copy of the written commission from King Artaxerxes that was delivered to Ezra the priest and reader of the law of the Lord:

9 "King Artaxerxes to Ezra the priest and reader of the law of the Lord, greeting. 10In accordance with my gracious decision, I have given orders that those of the Jewish nation and of the priests and Levites and others in our realm, those who freely choose to do so, may go with you to Jerusalem. 11Let as many as are so disposed, therefore, leave with you, just as I and the seven Friends who are my counselors have decided, 12in order to look into matters in Judea and Jerusalem, in accordance with what is in the law of the Lord, 13and to carry to Jerusalem the gifts for the Lord of Israel that I and my Friends have vowed, and to collect for the Lord in Jerusalem all the gold and silver that may be found in the country of Babylonia, 14together with what is given by the nation for the temple of their Lord that is in Jerusalem, both gold and silver for bulls and rams and lambs and what goes with them, 15so as to offer sacrifices on the altar of their Lord that is in Jerusalem. 16Whatever you and your kindred are minded to do with the gold and silver, perform it in accordance with the will of your God; 17deliver the holy vessels of the Lord that are given you for the use of the temple of your God that is in Jerusalem. 18And whatever else occurs to you as necessary for the temple of your God, you may provide out of the royal treasury.

19 "I, King Artaxerxes, have commanded the treasurers of Syria and Phoenicia that whatever Ezra the priest and reader of the law of the Most High God sends for, they shall take care to give him, 20up to a hundred talents of silver, and likewise up to a hundred cors of wheat, a hundred baths of wine, and salt in abundance. 21Let all things prescribed in the law of God be scrupulously fulfilled for the Most High God, so that wrath may not come upon the kingdom of the king and his sons. 22You are also informed that no tribute or any other tax is to be laid on any of the priests or Levites or temple singers or gatekeepers or temple servants or persons employed in this temple, and that no one has authority to impose any tax on them.

23 "And you, Ezra, according to the wisdom of God, appoint judges and justices to judge all those who know the law of your God, throughout all Syria and Phoenicia; and you shall teach it to those who do not know it. 24All who transgress the law of your God or the law of the kingdom shall be strictly punished, whether by death or some other punishment, either fine or imprisonment."

Ezra Praises God

25 Then Ezra the scribe said,[e] "Blessed be the Lord alone, who put this into the heart of the king, to glorify his house that is in Jerusalem, 26and who honored me in the sight of the king and his counselors and all his Friends and nobles. 27I was encouraged by the help of the Lord my God, and I gathered men from Israel to go up with me."

The Leaders Who Returned

28 These are the leaders, according to their ancestral houses and their groups, who went up with me from Babylon, in the reign of King Artaxerxes: 29Of the descendants of Phineas, Gershom. Of the descendants of Ithamar, Gamael. Of

d Other authorities add *for him* or *upon him*
e Other ancient authorities lack *Then Ezra the scribe said*

8.7 *He omitted nothing from the law of the Lord.* Even more so than the wording of Ezra 7.10, the language emphasizes Ezra's strictness in observing the law. **8.42** *None of the descendants of the priests or of the Levites.* Ezra 8.15 says only that there were no Levites. **8.50** The author of 1 Esdras apparently read *na'arim* (*young men*), instead of *nahar* ("river" as in Ezra 8.21).

the descendants of David, Hattush son of
Shecaniah. 30 Of the descendants of Pa-
rosh, Zechariah, and with him a hundred
fifty men enrolled. 31 Of the descendants
of Pahath-moab, Eliehoenai son of Zera-
hiah, and with him two hundred men.
32 Of the descendants of Zattu, Shecaniah
son of Jahaziel, and with him three hun-
dred men. Of the descendants of Adin,
Obed son of Jonathan, and with him two
hundred fifty men. 33 Of the descendants
of Elam, Jeshaiah son of Gotholiah, and
with him seventy men. 34 Of the descen-
dants of Shephatiah, Zeraiah son of Mi-
chael, and with him seventy men. 35 Of
the descendants of Joab, Obadiah son of
Jehiel, and with him two hundred twelve
men. 36 Of the descendants of Bani, She-
lomith son of Josiphiah, and with him a
hundred sixty men. 37 Of the descendants
of Bebai, Zechariah son of Bebai, and
with him twenty-eight men. 38 Of the de-
scendants of Azgad, Johanan son of Hak-
katan, and with him a hundred ten men.
39 Of the descendants of Adonikam, the
last ones, their names being Eliphelet, Je-
uel, and Shemaiah, and with them seventy
men. 40 Of the descendants of Bigvai,
Uthai son of Istalcurus, and with him sev-
enty men.

41 I assembled them at the river called
Theras, and we encamped there three
days, and I inspected them. 42 When I
found there none of the descendants of
the priests or of the Levites, 43 I sent word
to Eliezar, Iduel, Maasmas, 44 Elnathan,
Shemaiah, Jarib, Nathan, Elnathan, Zech-
ariah, and Meshullam, who were leaders
and men of understanding; 45 I told them
to go to Iddo, who was the leading man at
the place of the treasury, 46 and ordered
them to tell Iddo and his kindred and the
treasurers at that place to send us men to
serve as priests in the house of our Lord.
47 And by the mighty hand of our
Lord they brought us competent men
of the descendants of Mahli son of Levi,
son of Israel, namely Sherebiah[f] with
his descendants and kinsmen, eighteen;
48 also Hashabiah and Annunus and his
brother Jeshaiah, of the descendants of
Hananiah, and their descendants, twenty
men; 49 and of the temple servants, whom
David and the leaders had given for the
service of the Levites, two hundred twenty
temple servants; the list of all their names
was reported.

Ezra Proclaims a Fast

50 There I proclaimed a fast for the
young men before our Lord, to seek from
him a prosperous journey for ourselves
and for our children and the livestock
that were with us. 51 For I was ashamed to
ask the king for foot soldiers and cavalry
and an escort to keep us safe from our
adversaries; 52 for we had said to the king,
"The power of our Lord will be with those
who seek him, and will support them in
every way." 53 And again we prayed to our
Lord about these things, and we found
him very merciful.

The Gifts for the Temple

54 Then I set apart twelve of the lead-
ers of the priests, Sherebiah and Hasha-
biah, and ten of their kinsmen with them;
55 and I weighed out to them the silver
and the gold and the holy vessels of the
house of our Lord, which the king himself
and his counselors and the nobles and all
Israel had given. 56 I weighed and gave to
them six hundred fifty talents of silver,
and silver vessels worth a hundred talents,
and a hundred talents of gold, 57 and
twenty golden bowls, and twelve bronze
vessels of fine bronze that glittered like
gold. 58 And I said to them, "You are holy
to the Lord, and the vessels are holy, and
the silver and the gold are vowed to the
Lord, the Lord of our ancestors. 59 Be
watchful and on guard until you deliver
them to the leaders of the priests and the
Levites, and to the heads of the ancestral
houses of Israel, in Jerusalem, in the
chambers of the house of our Lord." 60 So
the priests and the Levites who took the
silver and the gold and the vessels that
had been in Jerusalem carried them to the
temple of the Lord.

The Return to Jerusalem

61 We left the river Theras on the
twelfth day of the first month; and we ar-
rived in Jerusalem by the mighty hand of
our Lord, which was upon us; he deliv-
ered us from every enemy on the way,
and so we came to Jerusalem. 62 When we
had been there three days, the silver and
the gold were weighed and delivered in

f Gk *Asbebias*

the house of our Lord to the priest Meremoth son of Uriah; 63 with him was Eleazar son of Phinehas, and with them were Jozabad son of Jeshua and Moeth son of Binnui,[g] the Levites. 64 The whole was counted and weighed, and the weight of everything was recorded at that very time. 65 And those who had returned from exile offered sacrifices to the Lord, the God of Israel, twelve bulls for all Israel, ninety-six rams, 66 seventy-two lambs, and as a thank offering twelve male goats—all as a sacrifice to the Lord. 67 They delivered the king's orders to the royal stewards and to the governors of Coelesyria and Phoenicia; and these officials[h] honored the people and the temple of the Lord.

Ezra's Prayer

68 After these things had been done, the leaders came to me and said, 69 "The people of Israel and the rulers and the priests and the Levites have not put away from themselves the alien peoples of the land and their pollutions, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Edomites. 70 For they and their descendants have married the daughters of these people,[i] and the holy race has been mixed with the alien peoples of the land; and from the beginning of this matter the leaders and the nobles have been sharing in this iniquity."

71 As soon as I heard these things I tore my garments and my holy mantle, and pulled out hair from my head and beard, and sat down in anxiety and grief. 72 And all who were ever moved at[j] the word of the Lord of Israel gathered around me, as I mourned over this iniquity, and I sat grief-stricken until the evening sacrifice. 73 Then I rose from my fast, with my garments and my holy mantle torn, and kneeling down and stretching out my hands to the Lord 74 I said,

"O Lord, I am ashamed and confused before your face. 75 For our sins have risen higher than our heads, and our mistakes have mounted up to heaven 76 from the times of our ancestors, and we are in great sin to this day. 77 Because of our sins and the sins of our ancestors, we with our kindred and our kings and our priests were given over to the kings of the earth, to the sword and exile and plundering, in shame until this day. 78 And now in some measure mercy has come to us from you, O Lord, to leave to us a root and a name in your holy place, 79 and to uncover a light for us in the house of the Lord our God, and to give us food in the time of our servitude. 80 Even in our bondage we were not forsaken by our Lord, but he brought us into favor with the kings of the Persians, so that they have given us food 81 and glorified the temple of our Lord, and raised Zion from desolation, to give us a stronghold in Judea and Jerusalem.

82 "And now, O Lord, what shall we say, when we have these things? For we have transgressed your commandments, which you gave by your servants the prophets, saying, 83 'The land that you are entering to take possession of is a land polluted with the pollution of the aliens of the land, and they have filled it with their uncleanness. 84 Therefore do not give your daughters in marriage to their descendants, and do not take their daughters for your descendants; 85 do not seek ever to have peace with them, so that you may be strong and eat the good things of the land and leave it for an inheritance to your children forever.' 86 And all that has happened to us has come about because of our evil deeds and our great sins. For you, O Lord, lifted the burden of our sins 87 and gave us such a root as this; but we turned back again to transgress your law by mixing with the uncleanness of the peoples of the land. 88 Were you not angry enough with us to destroy us without leaving a root or seed or name? 89 O Lord of Israel, you are faithful; for we are left as a root to this day. 90 See, we are now before you in our iniquities; for we can no longer stand in your presence because of these things."

g Gk *Sabannus* *h* Gk *they* *i* Gk *their daughters*
j Or *zealous for*

8.66 Ezra 8.35 has "seventy-seven lambs"; 1 Esdras may preserve the correct number *seventy-two*, which is a multiple of twelve, symbolizing the twelve tribes of Israel. **8.71** *My holy mantle.* Ezra 9.3 has simply "my mantle," but Ezra is of course a priest, so his garments are holy. **8.80** *Have given us food.* Ezra 9.9 has a less literal phrase, "to give us new life."

The Plan for Ending Mixed Marriages

91 While Ezra was praying and making his confession, weeping and lying on the ground before the temple, there gathered around him a very great crowd of men and women and youths from Jerusalem; for there was great weeping among the multitude. 92 Then Shecaniah son of Jehiel, one of the men of Israel, called out, and said to Ezra, "We have sinned against the Lord, and have married foreign women from the peoples of the land; but even now there is hope for Israel. 93 Let us take an oath to the Lord about this, that we will put away all our foreign wives, with their children, 94 as seems good to you and to all who obey the law of the Lord. 95 Rise up[k] and take action, for it is your task, and we are with you to take strong measures." 96 Then Ezra rose up and made the leaders of the priests and Levites of all Israel swear that they would do this. And they swore to it.

The Expulsion of Foreign Wives

9 Then Ezra set out and went from the court of the temple to the chamber of Jehohanan son of Eliashib, 2 and spent the night there; and he did not eat bread or drink water, for he was mourning over the great iniquities of the multitude. 3 And a proclamation was made throughout Judea and Jerusalem to all who had returned from exile that they should assemble at Jerusalem, 4 and that if any did not meet there within two or three days, in accordance with the decision of the ruling elders, their livestock would be seized for sacrifice and the men themselves[l] expelled from the multitude of those who had returned from the captivity.

5 Then the men of the tribe of Judah and Benjamin assembled at Jerusalem within three days; this was the ninth month, on the twentieth day of the month. 6 All the multitude sat in the open square before the temple, shivering because of the bad weather that prevailed. 7 Then Ezra stood up and said to them, "You have broken the law and married foreign women, and so have increased the sin of Israel. 8 Now then make confession and give glory to the Lord the God of our ancestors, 9 and do his will; separate yourselves from the peoples of the land and from your foreign wives."

10 Then all the multitude shouted and said with a loud voice, "We will do as you have said. 11 But the multitude is great and it is winter, and we are not able to stand in the open air. This is not a work we can do in one day or two, for we have sinned too much in these things. 12 So let the leaders of the multitude stay, and let all those in our settlements who have foreign wives come at the time appointed, 13 with the elders and judges of each place, until we are freed from the wrath of the Lord over this matter."

14 Jonathan son of Asahel and Jahzeiah son of Tikvah[m] undertook the matter on these terms, and Meshullam and Levi and Shabbethai served with them as judges. 15 And those who had returned from exile acted in accordance with all this.

16 Ezra the priest chose for himself the leading men of their ancestral houses, all of them by name; and on the new moon of the tenth month they began their sessions to investigate the matter. 17 And the cases of the men who had foreign wives were brought to an end by the new moon of the first month.

18 Of the priests, those who were brought in and found to have foreign wives were: 19 of the descendants of Jeshua son of Jozadak and his kindred, Maaseiah, Eliezar, Jarib, and Jodan. 20 They pledged themselves to put away their wives, and to offer rams in expiation of their error. 21 Of the descendants of Immer: Hanani and Zebadiah and Maaseiah and Shemaiah and Jehiel and Azariah. 22 Of the descendants of Pashhur: Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, and Nathanael, and Gedaliah, and Salthas.

23 And of the Levites: Jozabad and Shimei and Kelaiah, who was Kelita, and

k Other ancient authorities read *as seems good to you." And all who obeyed the law of the Lord rose and said to Ezra,* 95 *"Rise up*
l Gk *he himself*
m Gk *Thocanos*

9.4 *Seized for sacrifice.* The parallel in Ezra 10.8 has "forfeited," but the reference is to the ancient institution of the "ban," according to which objects were removed from secular use and devoted to God by sacrifice. **9.14** *Undertook the matter*, or perhaps "approved of this"; Ezra 10.15 suggests

Pethahiah and Judah and Jonah. 24 Of
the temple singers: Eliashib and Zac-
cur.[n] 25 Of the gatekeepers: Shallum and
Telem.[o]
26 Of Israel: of the descendants of Pa-
rosh: Ramiah, Izziah, Malchijah, Mijamin,
and Eleazar, and Asibias, and Benaiah.
27 Of the descendants of Elam: Mattaniah
and Zechariah, Jezrielus and Abdi, and
Jeremoth and Elijah. 28 Of the descen-
dants of Zamoth: Eliadas, Eliashib, Otho-
niah, Jeremoth, and Zabad and Zerdaiah.
29 Of the descendants of Bebai: Jehoha-
nan and Hananiah and Zabbai and
Emathis. 30 Of the descendants of Mani:
Olamus, Mamuchus, Adaiah, Jashub, and
Sheal and Jeremoth. 31 Of the descen-
dants of Addi: Naathus and Moossias,
Laccunus and Naidus, and Bescaspasmys
and Sesthel, and Belnuus and Manasseas.
32 Of the descendants of Annan, Elionas
and Asaias and Melchias and Sabbaias and
Simon Chosamaeus. 33 Of the descendants
of Hashum: Mattenai and Mattattah and
Zabad and Eliphelet and Manasseh and
Shimei. 34 Of the descendants of Bani:
Jeremai, Momdius, Maerus, Joel, Mamdai
and Bedeiah and Vaniah, Carabasion and
Eliashib and Mamitanemus, Eliasis, Bin-
nui, Elialis, Shimei, Shelemiah, Netha-
niah. Of the descendants of Ezora: Sha-
shai, Azarel, Azael, Samatus, Zambris,
Joseph. 35 Of the descendants of Nooma:
Mazitias, Zabad, Iddo, Joel, Benaiah.
36 All these had married foreign women,
and they put them away together with
their children.

Ezra Reads the Law to the People

37 The priests and the Levites and the
Israelites settled in Jerusalem and in the
country. On the new moon of the seventh
month, when the people of Israel were in
their settlements, 38 the whole multitude
gathered with one accord in the open
square before the east gate of the temple;
39 they told Ezra the chief priest and
reader to bring the law of Moses that had
been given by the Lord God of Israel.
40 So Ezra the chief priest brought the law,
for all the multitude, men and women,
and all the priests to hear the law, on the
new moon of the seventh month. 41 He
read aloud in the open square before the
gate of the temple from early morning
until midday, in the presence of both men
and women; and all the multitude gave
attention to the law. 42 Ezra the priest and
reader of the law stood on the wooden
platform that had been prepared; 43 and
beside him stood Mattathiah, Shema,
Ananias, Azariah, Uriah, Hezekiah, and
Baalsamus on his right, 44 and on his left
Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Lothasubus,
Nabariah, and Zechariah. 45 Then Ezra
took up the book of the law in the sight of
the multitude, for he had the place of
honor in the presence of all. 46 When he
opened the law, they all stood erect. And
Ezra blessed the Lord God Most High, the
God of hosts, the Almighty, 47 and the
multitude answered, "Amen." They lifted
up their hands, and fell to the ground and
worshiped the Lord. 48 Jeshua and Anni-
uth and Sherebiah, Jadinus, Akkub, Shab-
bethai, Hodiah, Maiannas and Kelita,
Azariah and Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, the
Levites, taught the law of the Lord,[p] at
the same time explaining what was read.
49 Then Attharates[q] said to Ezra the

n Gk *Bacchurus* *o* Gk *Tolbanes* *p* Other ancient authorities add *and read the law of the Lord to the multitude* *q* Or *the governor*

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rather that these men opposed the proposal of the people. **9.36** The reading *they put them away together with their children* is more intelligible than the Hebrew text of the parallel in Ezra 10.44, and it perhaps preserves the original Hebrew reading.

9.37–55 The narrative jumps to Nehemiah 7.73b–8.12, where the story of Ezra continues in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. The work of Nehemiah is entirely omitted from the narrative of 1 Esdras. Historically, the events of these verses, set at the beginning of the seventh month (1 Esd 9.37), probably occurred between Ezra's arrival in Jerusalem in the fifth month of the seventh year of Artaxerxes (8.6) and the twentieth day of the ninth month, when the assembly met to consider the question of the mixed marriages (9.5). See also Neh 7.73b–8.13. The effect of narrating the reading of the law at the very end of 1 Esdras is to make even more clear than in Ezra and Nehemiah that the reading and acceptance of the law was the goal of Ezra's mission. **9.49** *Attharates* is a transformation of the Hebrew title *Tirshata*, "governor," into a personal name. The parallel in Neh 8.9 has "Nehemiah, who was the governor"; but 1 Esdras is ignoring the work of Nehemiah almost entirely (though cf. note on 5.40). It is a little strange that it is the governor here who tells Ezra and the Levites how the people should behave on the holy day. The reading of Neh 8.9 is more probable, where it is Ezra and

chief priest and reader, and to the Levites
who were teaching the multitude, and to
all, 50 "This day is holy to the Lord" — now
they were all weeping as they heard the
law — 51 "so go your way, eat the fat and
drink the sweet, and send portions to
those who have none; 52 for the day is
holy to the Lord; and do not be sorrowful,
for the Lord will exalt you." 53 The Levites
commanded all the people, saying, "This
day is holy; do not be sorrowful." 54 Then
they all went their way, to eat and drink
and enjoy themselves, and to give portions to those who had none, and to make
great rejoicing; 55 because they were inspired by the words which they had been
taught. And they came together.[r]

[r] The Greek text ends abruptly: compare Neh 8.13

the Levites (along with the governor Nehemiah, if indeed his name rightly belongs in the verse), who give the people directions. **9.55** *They were inspired by the words.* Neh 8.12 has, more prosaically, "they had understood the words." *And they came together.* These words clearly imply that a continuation of the narrative has been lost. They seem to be from Neh 8.13, and we may assume that 1 Esdras originally included at least the narrative of the celebration of the Festival of Booths that is found in Neh 8.13–18.

PRAYER OF MANASSEH

THE PRAYER OF MANASSEH is included in Greek and Slavonic Bibles and, since the Council of Trent (1546), has been included with 3 and 4 Esdras in the appendix to the Vulgate. In two Septuagint manuscripts it appears as part of a collection entitled "Odes," a group of fifteen psalms or canticles that, with the exception of this prayer and one other, are also found in other books of one of the Christian canons (e.g., Ex 15; Deut 32; Lk 1).

Setting

Manasseh, king of Judah of the house of David from about 698 to 642 B.C.E., reigned longer than any other monarch. In 2 Kings (21.1–18) he is portrayed as the worst possible offender of the laws set forth in the Torah and as the cause of the downfall of Judah. In 2 Chr 33.10–17, Manasseh, while still depicted as Judah's most sinful king before his deportation to Babylon, is reported to have humbly repented in exile and earnestly prayed to God who restored him to kingship in Jerusalem where he rectified his most serious idolatrous offenses. His prayer is further mentioned in the concluding record of his reign (33.18–19).

But Chronicles fails to include the prayer. Many ancient readers would have noted the lack; and one of them filled the void by piecing together familiar liturgical and psalmic phrases found elsewhere in the Bible as well as a few interesting nonbiblical expressions (vv. 8, 11, 13). It is thought by some that the Prayer of Manasseh was originally composed in Greek late in the first century B.C.E. It was translated in antiquity into Latin and Syriac.

Style and Theology

The Prayer of Manasseh, though largely composed (like 1 Chr 16.8–36) of older biblical terms and phrases, is a classic of penitential intention with limited literary quality. The theology is resonant with that of early Judaism generally: God, though clearly the God of justice, is equally the God of mercy and repen-

tance. He is especially the God of those who repent of their ways (v. 13). The theme was important to the developing theology of exilic and postexilic Judaism, which constantly lived under repressive regimes throughout the eastern Mediterranean region. The consequences of Manasseh's sin devolved upon the whole kingdom of Judah and upon the following generations (see Ex 34.7). The scriptural base of the prayer's theology of repentance is found in the pivotal affirmations of individual responsibility within the covenant community found in Jer 31.29–30; Ezek 18. Manasseh's repentance, while apparently efficacious for himself and his immediate generation (2 Chr 33.14–17), was limited to his personal restoration and did nothing to halt the demise of the kingdom of Judah.

Manasseh as king had the power to do the evil that, in the divine economy, brought about the destruction of Judah. In the Jewish mind of the period, however, if Manasseh was excluded from repentance and redemption, there would be doubt about who could repent and especially about God's being the God of mercy as well as of justice. God is not only Creator and Sustainer (vv. 1–4), but also Redeemer, "of great compassion, long-suffering, and very merciful" (v. 7). God, therefore, appointed repentance not for the righteous, like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but ordained it for all sinners (v. 8), even Manasseh.

James A. Sanders

Ascription of Praise

1 O Lord Almighty,
God of our ancestors,
of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob
and of their righteous offspring;
2 you who made heaven and earth
with all their order;
3 who shackled the sea by your
word of command,
who confined the deep
and sealed it with your terrible
and glorious name;
4 at whom all things shudder,
and tremble before your power,
5 for your glorious splendor cannot
be borne,
and the wrath of your threat to
sinners is unendurable;
6 yet immeasurable and
unsearchable
is your promised mercy,
7 for you are the Lord Most High,
of great compassion,
long-suffering, and very
merciful,
and you relent at human
suffering.
O Lord, according to your great
goodness
you have promised repentance
and forgiveness
to those who have sinned
against you,

1–7 An invocation to the *God of our ancestors* (Ex 3.6, 15; 1 Chr 29.18; Dan 2.23); the first and longest of the three strophes that make up the prayer. It lists the divine attributes starting with God's creating *heaven and earth with all their order* (Gen 1.1; Gen 2.1 in the Septuagint version). **3** *Who shackled the sea* recalls Job 38.8–11; Ps 104.7, 9. *Who confined the deep* expresses the power of God to control the chthonian forces of chaos and evil (e.g., Gen 1.2; 7.11; 8.2; Pss 63.9; 88.5–6). **7** *Of great compassion, long-suffering, and very merciful.* See Joel 2.13 (Septuagint version). The second part of the verse, *O Lord, according . . . be saved,* reminding God of the divine promises, is preserved in the Latin and Syriac versions and in some late Greek manuscripts.

and in the multitude of your mercies
you have appointed repentance for sinners,
so that they may be saved.[a]

Confession of Sins

8 Therefore you, O Lord, God of the righteous,
have not appointed repentance for the righteous,
for Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, who did not sin against you,
but you have appointed repentance for me, who am a sinner.
9 For the sins I have committed are more in number than the sand of the sea;
my transgressions are multiplied, O Lord, they are multiplied!
I am not worthy to look up and see the height of heaven
because of the multitude of my iniquities.
10 I am weighted down with many an iron fetter,
so that I am rejected[b] because of my sins,
and I have no relief;
for I have provoked your wrath
and have done what is evil in your sight,
setting up abominations and multiplying offenses.

Supplication for Pardon

11 And now I bend the knee of my heart,
imploring you for your kindness.
12 I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned,
and I acknowledge my transgressions.
13 I earnestly implore you,
forgive me, O Lord, forgive me!
Do not destroy me with my transgressions!
Do not be angry with me forever or store up evil for me;
do not condemn me to the depths of the earth.
For you, O Lord, are the God of those who repent,
14 and in me you will manifest your goodness;
for, unworthy as I am, you will save me according to your great mercy,
15 and I will praise you continually all the days of my life.
For all the host of heaven sings your praise,
and yours is the glory forever. Amen.

a Other ancient authorities lack *O Lord, according . . . be saved* *b* Other ancient authorities read *so that I cannot lift up my head*

8–10 Manasseh's confession of sins more numerous than *the sand of the sea* (v. 9). The contrast between the righteous (Mk 2.17; Lk 5.32; 1 Tim 1.15) and sinners (Lk 15.7; 18.13) reflects first-century thinking such as may be found in the NT and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

11–15 Manasseh's petition for forgiveness. **11** The expression *bend the knee of my heart* is not found elsewhere and well expresses the depth of sincerity of the truly penitent. **12–13** The two-fold repetition *I have sinned* is matched in pathos by the double supplication *forgive me, O Lord, forgive me. Depths of the earth.* See note on v. 3. The phrase *the God of those who repent,* like the phrase *God of the righteous* (v. 8), is not found in the Bible and should probably neither be generalized nor seen to conflict with biblical thinking; rather it expresses the spirit of one who feels deeply the need to repent and be restored to the fold of the faithful. **15** The prayer closes with a doxology expressing the hope that the praise of God, which Manasseh vows *all the days of my life,* would be caught up into the praise of the whole *host of heaven* (see 2 Chr 18.18).

PSALM 151

PSALM 151 IS KNOWN in four ancient text forms, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and Syriac. The oldest is the Hebrew, which is found in a scroll of biblical psalms discovered in 1956 in Qumran Cave 11 (11QPs[a]); the manuscript dates to the first half of the first century C.E. The Greek Psalm 151 was a recension of the original Hebrew. The Syriac (except for one verse), like the Latin, was translated from the Greek. As indicated in the accompanying notes, the psalm underwent revision in antiquity as well as translation.

The reason Psalm 151 is included in the apocryphal section of the NRSV is that it forms a part of Bibles of communities of faith today, those revering Eastern Orthodox canons, including the Greek and Slavonic. Its discovery, therefore, in a Hebrew Psalter belonging to a pre-Christian Jewish community was notable indeed; it has never, to our knowledge, formed a part of a Jewish canon since that time.

It is called Psalm 151 not only because it follows Ps 150 in some Greek Psalter manuscripts but also because it is numbered Psalm 151 in what is probably the oldest and most reliable Greek manuscript (Sinaiticus) and in some medieval Syriac Psalters (one of which has four further psalms specifically numbered up to Ps 155).

The text of Greek Psalm 151 is straightforward with few problems and only one important variant in v. 3. The text of the Hebrew at vv. 3–4 is by contrast highly multivalent, lending itself to different understandings. This was probably the reason the psalm was condensed in translation into Greek, or had been condensed already in Hebrew.

While the Greek (Latin and Syriac) version of the psalm appears to be a single unit of seven verses, the Hebrew text comprises two poetic units each bearing a superscription in the manner of other psalms purporting to reflect events in David's life (e.g., Pss 3; 7; 18). The first Hebrew unit is a poetic midrash on events reported in 1 Sam 16.1–13, and the second is on events noted in 1 Sam 17.17–54. The first unit was condensed into Greek vv. 1–5, and the second into vv. 6–7.

The date of the composition of Hebrew Psalm 151 is unknown; estimates vary from the sixth century B.C.E. to sometime in the Hellenistic period. The latter is more likely. The translation into Greek would probably have been made by the beginning of the second century C.E. *James A. Sanders*

This psalm is ascribed to David as his own composition (though it is outside the number[a]), after he had fought in single combat with Goliath.

1 I was small among my brothers,
and the youngest in my father's house;
I tended my father's sheep.

2 My hands made a harp;
my fingers fashioned a lyre.

3 And who will tell my Lord?
The Lord himself; it is he who hears.[b]

4 It was he who sent his messenger[c]
and took me from my father's sheep,
and anointed me with his anointing oil.

5 My brothers were handsome and tall,
but the Lord was not pleased with them.

a Other ancient authorities add *of the one hundred fifty* (psalms) *b* Other ancient authorities add *everything*; others add *me*; others read *who will hear me* *c* Or *angel*

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1 *Small.* In Hebrew, the same adjective is used to describe David in 1 Sam 16.11; 17.14 ("the youngest"), and by Solomon in speaking of himself in 1 Kings 3.7 ("a little child"). *Youngest.* Gideon describes himself with the same adjective in Judg 6.15 ("the least"); see Ps 119.141. This verse in the Hebrew reads, "Smaller was I than my brothers and the youngest of the sons of my father, yet he made me shepherd of his flock and ruler over his kids" (on "shepherd," see 1 Sam 16.11; on "ruler," see Ps 105.21). Some Syriac manuscripts conclude v. 1 with "and I found a lion and a wolf and I killed and rent them." **2** The Hebrew concludes v. 2 with "and (so) have I rendered glory to the LORD, thought I within myself." **3** The Hebrew text here is both longer and multivalent:

The mountains do not witness to him,
nor do the hills proclaim;
The trees have cherished my words
and the flocks my works.
For who can proclaim and who can bespeak
and who can recount the deeds of the Lord?
Everything has God seen,
everything has he heard and he has heeded.

Greek manuscripts vary considerably in the reading *The Lord himself; it is he who hears*; one important Greek witness (Sinaiticus) reads "the Lord himself, he hears everything," reflecting, like the Hebrew, 1 Sam 16.7. The reason the Hebrew recensionist or Greek translator omitted most of the above lines of the Hebrew was that they apparently contradict frequent biblical assertions that nature does indeed proclaim the glory of God. In the context of the Hebrew poem, whereas the surrounding mountains and hills seem to be mute, the solitary shepherd dedicates his musical gifts to glorification of God by fashioning musical instruments, tunes, and words (2 Chr 29.26; cf. Am 6.5). **5** The first poetic unit of Psalm 151 in the Hebrew scroll concludes,

He sent his prophet to anoint me,
Samuel to make me great;
My brothers went out to meet him,
handsome of figure and appearance.
Though they were tall of stature
and handsome by their hair,
The Lord God chose
them not.
But he sent and took me from behind the flock
and anointed me with holy oil,
And he made me leader of his people
and ruler over the people of his covenant.

6 I went out to meet the
Philistine,[d]
and he cursed me by his
idols.

7 But I drew his own sword;
I beheaded him, and took away
disgrace from the people of
Israel.

d Or *foreigner*

6 The second poetic unit in the original Hebrew, with its superscription, reads: "At the beginning of David's power after the prophet of God had anointed him. Then I [saw] a Philistine uttering defiances from the r[anks of the enemy]." *By his idols.* See 1 Sam 17.43. Some later Latin, Arabic, and Ethiopic manuscripts continue, "and I threw three stones at him in the middle of his forehead and felled him by the power of the Lord" (cf. "a stone" in 1 Sam 17.49–50). **7** *His own sword.* See 1 Sam 17.51.

3 MACCABEES

THE TITLE 3 MACCABEES is a misnomer, as the book has nothing to do with the Maccabees. It is found in some manuscripts of the Greek Bible (Alexandrinus and Venetus, but not Vaticanus or Sinaiticus). The title probably comes from the fact that this book follows 1 and 2 Maccabees in the manuscripts and is set in the Hellenistic period. Because it was not included in the Latin Vulgate, it is not one of the deuterocanonical books that are accepted by the Catholic church, nor is it among the traditional Protestant Apocrypha. It is, however, regarded as deuterocanonical in the Eastern Orthodox churches.

Contents and Historical Accuracy

3 Maccabees describes three episodes in the reign of Ptolemy IV Philopator, king of Egypt (221–204 B.C.E.). 1.1–5 describes how an attempted assassination of Ptolemy was foiled by the intervention of an apostate Jew named Dositheus. An unsuccessful attempt by the king to enter the Jerusalem temple is recorded in 1.6–2.24. And 2.25–7.23, the main body of the book, describes Ptolemy's persecution of the Egyptian Jews.

Although some scholars have accepted 3 Maccabees as either wholly or partly a historical account, the genre of the narrative raises grave doubts about its historical value. The story has strong legendary features and seems designed to edify and inspire wonder rather than to report accurately. The plot to assassinate Ptolemy (1.2) is also reported by the second-century B.C.E. Greek historian Polybius, but without mention of the Jew Dositheus, whose role in 3 Maccabees is reminiscent of that of Mordecai in Esth 2.21–23. The unsuccessful attempt to enter the temple has a parallel in 2 Macc 3 in the story of Heliodorus. A variant of the longest episode, the persecution of the Egyptian Jews, is found in the tract *Against Apion* (2.53–55) written by the Jewish historian Josephus at the end of the first century C.E. There, however, Ptolemy is identified not as Philopator but as Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II (Physcon, 144–117 B.C.E.). This variation shows that the story became traditional and that historical accuracy was not the primary consideration in its transmission. It may, of course, refer to historical events (such

as the battle of Raphia), but these references are incidental. The book is best viewed as a historical novel with a religious message.

Language, Place, and Date of Composition

There is general agreement that 3 Maccabees was written in Greek, probably in Alexandria (in Egypt). It was most likely written during the Roman era (between 30 B.C.E. and 70 C.E.). It shows signs of dependence on the Greek editions of Esther and Daniel, which would require a date no earlier than the first century B.C.E. The most specific indication of date is the statement in 2.28 that "all Jews shall be subjected to a registration involving poll tax and to the status of slaves." The Greek word *laographia*, lit. "census," here translated "registration," acquired a special connotation in Roman times because of a poll tax introduced by Augustus in 24/23 B.C.E. Greeks were exempt from this tax, but Jews were not, so they suffered a de facto reduction in status. This tax bore directly on the issue of whether the Jews had "equal citizenship with the Alexandrians" (2.30).

A further indication of date lies in the book's peculiar combination of episodes that find parallels in different sources and may have circulated as independent stories. The decision of the author of 3 Maccabees to combine the story of a threat to the Jerusalem temple with that of the persecution of Egyptian Judaism brings to mind the reign of Caligula (37–41 C.E.). During that reign there was a pogrom in Alexandria and also an attempt to introduce a statue of Caligula into the Jerusalem temple (both incidents are described in the treatise *On the Embassy to Gaius* by the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria). Though the stories in 3 Maccabees are traditional tales and were not composed as allegories for the crisis of the Roman era, that crisis may have been the occasion for their combination and edition in this book.

Message and Outlook

3 Maccabees is reminiscent of the stories of Esther and Dan 1–6 as a description of life in the Jewish Diaspora. It describes a situation of divided loyalty. The Jews are loyal servants of the king but also strict observers of the Jewish law. Problems arise because of the arrogance, even madness, of the king and his bad advisers. But these problems are aberrations. In the end, the king comes to his senses and all is well for the Jews. 3 Maccabees also distinguishes sharply between the Alexandrians, who are hostile to the Jews, and "the Greeks," who are sympathetic. This distinction is of dubious historical value, but it reflects the desire of the Jewish community to be accepted as Greek and its refusal to dignify its enemies with that name.

3 Maccabees can be seen as an illustration of the problems of a religious minority in an alien land, and as such it is relevant to situations that have recurred throughout history. The viewpoint of 3 Maccabees is optimistic. Evil is an aberration, and divine providence will prevail. The religious message of the book is that God responds to those who pray for deliverance (see 2.21; 5.28; 6.18).

There is no appeal to the ideas of immortality or afterlife that were widely accepted in Hellenistic Judaism by this time. The optimistic theology of the book was still possible for Jews in the time of Caligula, but in the following century the Jewish community in Egypt was virtually destroyed. Unfortunately, subsequent history has more often reminded readers of the book's picture of Jews being rounded up for destruction (ch. 4) than its picture of miraculous deliverance.
John J. Collins

The Battle of Raphia

1 When Philopator learned from those who returned that the regions that he had controlled had been seized by Antiochus, he gave orders to all his forces, both infantry and cavalry, took with him his sister Arsinoë, and marched out to the region near Raphia, where the army of Antiochus was encamped. 2 But a certain Theodotus, determined to carry out the plot he had devised, took with him the best of the Ptolemaic arms that had been previously issued to him,[a] and crossed over by night to the tent of Ptolemy, intending single-handed to kill him and thereby end the war. 3 But Dositheus, known as the son of Drimylus, a Jew by birth who later changed his religion and apostatized from the ancestral traditions, had led the king away and arranged that a certain insignificant man should sleep in the tent; and so it turned out that this man incurred the vengeance meant for the king.[b] 4 When a bitter fight resulted, and matters were turning out rather in favor of Antiochus, Arsinoë went to the troops with wailing and tears, her locks all disheveled, and exhorted them to defend themselves and their children and wives bravely, promising to give them each two minas of gold if they won the battle. 5 And so it came about that the enemy was routed in the action, and many captives also were taken. 6 Now that he had foiled the plot, Ptolemy[c] decided to visit the neighboring cities and encourage them. 7 By doing this, and by endowing their sacred enclosures with gifts, he strengthened the morale of his subjects.

Philopator Attempts to Enter the Temple

8 Since the Jews had sent some of their council and elders to greet him, to bring him gifts of welcome, and to congratulate him on what had happened, he was all the more eager to visit them as soon as possible. 9 After he had arrived in Jerusalem, he offered sacrifice to the su-

a Or *the best of the Ptolemaic soldiers previously put under his command* *b* Gk *that one* *c* Gk *he*

1.1–7 The battle of Raphia (217 B.C.E.). The abrupt beginning suggests that this passage was adapted from a longer account. A full description of the battle is found in Polybius *The Histories* 5.79–86. **1.1** *Philopator* is Ptolemy IV, king of Egypt (221–204 B.C.E.). *Antiochus* is Antiochus III, later called the Great, king of Syria (223–187 B.C.E.). *Raphia* was a town in Palestine, three miles from Gaza, near the Egyptian border. **1.2** According to Polybius, *Theodotus* had been commander in chief of the Egyptian forces in Syria but had defected to Antiochus. *Single-handed.* Polybius says Theodotus took two soldiers with him. **1.3** *Dositheus* was the name of a Jewish general in Egypt in the mid-second century B.C.E. Dositheus *son of Drimylus* occurs as the name of a pagan priest in a papyrus from the third century B.C.E. (Papyrus Hibeh 90), but there is no evidence that this individual was Jewish. Note that apostate Jews are held in abhorrence in 2.33. Polybius identifies the man who slept in the tent as Andreas, the king's physician, who was not *insignificant.* The author of 3 Maccabees may have misread "Andreas" as *andra* (Greek for "man"). **1.5** According to Polybius, Antiochus lost nearly 10,000 foot soldiers and 300 cavalry, and 4,000 were taken prisoners, while Ptolemy lost 1,500 foot soldiers and 700 cavalry.

1.8–15 Ptolemy attempts to enter the Jerusalem temple. Cf. the story of Heliodorus in 2 Macc 3. **1.9** *The supreme* (lit. "greatest") *God* is mentioned often in 3 Maccabees and also in 2 Macc 3.36. Josephus claims that Alexander the Great also sacrificed to God in Jerusalem (*Antiquities*

preme God[d] and made thank offerings
and did what was fitting for the holy
place.[e] Then, upon entering the place
and being impressed by its excellence and
its beauty, 10 he marveled at the good or-
der of the temple, and conceived a desire
to enter the sanctuary. 11 When they said
that this was not permitted, because not
even members of their own nation were
allowed to enter, not even all of the
priests, but only the high priest who was
pre-eminent over all—and he only once a
year—the king was by no means per-
suaded. 12 Even after the law had been
read to him, he did not cease to maintain
that he ought to enter, saying, "Even if
those men are deprived of this honor, I
ought not to be." 13 And he inquired why,
when he entered every other temple,[f] no
one there had stopped him. 14 And some-
one answered thoughtlessly that it was
wrong to take that as a portent.[g] 15 "But
since this has happened," the king[h] said,
"why should not I at least enter, whether
they wish it or not?"

The Jewish Reaction

16 Then the priests in all their vest-
ments prostrated themselves and en-
treated the supreme God[d] to aid in the
present situation and to avert the violence
of this evil design, and they filled the tem-
ple with cries and tears; 17 those who re-
mained behind in the city were agitated
and hurried out, supposing that some-
thing mysterious was occurring. 18 Young
women who had been secluded in their
chambers rushed out with their mothers,
sprinkled their hair with dust,[i] and filled
the streets with groans and lamentations.
19 Those women who had recently been
arrayed for marriage abandoned the
bridal chambers[j] prepared for wedded
union, and, neglecting proper modesty, in
a disorderly rush flocked together in the
city. 20 Mothers and nurses abandoned
even newborn children here and there,
some in houses and some in the streets,
and without a backward look they
crowded together at the most high tem-
ple. 21 Various were the supplications of
those gathered there because of what the
king was profanely plotting. 22 In addi-
tion, the bolder of the citizens would not
tolerate the completion of his plans or
the fulfillment of his intended purpose.
23 They shouted to their compatriots to
take arms and die courageously for the
ancestral law, and created a considerable
disturbance in the holy place;[e] and being
barely restrained by the old men and
the elders,[k] they resorted to the same
posture of supplication as the others.
24 Meanwhile the crowd, as before, was
engaged in prayer, 25 while the elders
near the king tried in various ways to
change his arrogant mind from the plan
that he had conceived. 26 But he, in his
arrogance, took heed of nothing, and be-
gan now to approach, determined to
bring the aforesaid plan to a conclusion.
27 When those who were around him ob-
served this, they turned, together with
our people, to call upon him who has all
power to defend them in the present
trouble and not to overlook this unlaw-
ful and haughty deed. 28 The continu-
ous, vehement, and concerted cry of the
crowds[l] resulted in an immense uproar;
29 for it seemed that not only the people
but also the walls and the whole earth
around echoed, because indeed all at that

d Gk *the greatest God* *e* Gk *the place* *f* Or *entered the temple precincts* *g* Or *to boast of this* *h* Gk *he* *i* Other ancient authorities add *and ashes* *j* Or *the canopies* *k* Other ancient authorities read *priests* *l* Other ancient authorities read *vehement cry of the assembled crowds*

11.336). **1.10** *He marveled at . . . the temple.* Philopator was known for his interest in architecture. **1.11** *Only the high priest* was allowed to enter the inner sanctuary or Holy of Holies (Ex 30.10; Lev 16.2, 11–12, 15, 34; Heb 9.7). In 63 B.C.E. the Roman general Pompey outraged the Jews by entering the Holy of Holies. In contrast, Antiochus the Great, in 198 B.C.E., decreed it unlawful for any foreigner to enter the temple enclosure (Josephus *Antiquities* 12.145). **1.16–29** The Jewish reaction to Philopator's effort to enter the temple. A very similar account is found in the story of Heliodorus in 2 Macc 3.15–22. There were comparable incidents in the first century C.E. when Pilate allowed military standards with images of the emperor to be brought into Jerusalem, and when Caligula ordered the erection of his statue in the temple. **1.23** The Jews' resolve *to take arms and die courageously for the ancestral law* is comparable to the stand taken by Mattathias in 1 Macc 2. *Barely restrained by the . . . elders.* Josephus reports similar attempts to restrain the rebels at the outbreak of the Jewish War in 66 C.E.

time[m] preferred death to the profanation of the place.

The Prayer of the High Priest Simon

2 Then the high priest Simon, facing the sanctuary, bending his knees and extending his hands with calm dignity, prayed as follows:[n] 2"Lord, Lord, king of the heavens, and sovereign of all creation, holy among the holy ones, the only ruler, almighty, give attention to us who are suffering grievously from an impious and profane man, puffed up in his audacity and power. 3For you, the creator of all things and the governor of all, are a just Ruler, and you judge those who have done anything in insolence and arrogance. 4You destroyed those who in the past committed injustice, among whom were even giants who trusted in their strength and boldness, whom you destroyed by bringing on them a boundless flood. 5You consumed with fire and sulfur the people of Sodom who acted arrogantly, who were notorious for their vices;[o] and you made them an example to those who should come afterward. 6You made known your mighty power by inflicting many and varied punishments on the audacious Pharaoh who had enslaved your holy people Israel. 7And when he pursued them with chariots and a mass of troops, you overwhelmed him in the depths of the sea, but carried through safely those who had put their confidence in you, the Ruler over the whole creation. 8And when they had seen works of your hands, they praised you, the Almighty. 9You, O King, when you had created the boundless and immeasurable earth, chose this city and sanctified this place for your name, though you have no need of anything; and when you had glorified it by your magnificent manifestation,[p] you made it a firm foundation for the glory of your great and honored name. 10And because you love the house of Israel, you promised that if we should have reverses and tribulation should overtake us, you would listen to our petition when we come to this place and pray. 11And indeed you are faithful and true. 12And because of tentimes when our fathers were oppressed you helped them in their humiliation, and rescued them from great evils, 13see now, O holy King, that because of our many and great sins we are crushed with suffering, subjected to our enemies, and overtaken by helplessness. 14In our downfall this audacious and profane man undertakes to violate the holy place on earth dedicated to your glorious name. 15For your dwelling is the heaven of heavens, unapproachable by human beings. 16But because you graciously bestowed your glory on your people Israel, you sanctified this place. 17Do not punish us for the defilement committed by these men, or call us to account for this profanation, otherwise the transgressors will boast in their wrath and exult in the arrogance of their tongue, saying, 18'We have trampled down the house of the sanctuary as the houses of the abominations are trampled down.' 19Wipe away our sins and disperse our errors, and reveal your mercy at this hour. 20Speedily let your mercies overtake us, and put praises in the mouth of those who are downcast and broken in spirit, and give us peace."

m Other ancient authorities lack *at that time*
n Other ancient authorities lack verse 1
o Other ancient authorities read *secret in their vices*
p Or *epiphany*

2.1–20 The high priest's prayer conforms to a type common in postexilic Judaism (Ezra 9; Neh 9; Dan 9; Bar 1.15–3.8) that reviews salvation history and emphasizes the righteousness of God and the sinfulness of Israel. This prayer differs from the others in that it does not relate the distress of Israel to the exile and that it places less emphasis on confession of sin. **2.1** *The high priest Simon* is Simon II, called "the Just." He is eulogized in Sir 50. **2.4** The connection between the *giants* (Gen 6.1–4) and the *flood* is more explicit in intertestamental writings such as *1 Enoch* 6–11 than it is in Genesis. **2.5** *The people of Sodom.* See Gen 19. **2.6** *Pharaoh.* See Ex 7–12. **2.7** *In the depths of the sea.* See Ex 14–15. **2.9** *This place,* Jerusalem. *For your name.* See Deut 12.11; 1 Kings 8.29. *Your magnificent manifestation,* the glory of the Lord. Cf. Isa 6; Ezek 1. **2.10** *You would listen to our petition when we come to this place.* See 1 Kings 8.27–50. **2.13** *Because of our many and great sins* is a standard confession in prayers of this type, even though in this case the fault rests with the intruder. **2.15** *For your dwelling is the heaven of heavens.* See 1 Kings 8.27; Isa 66.1. **2.18** *We have trampled down.* See Isa 10.11; Dan 8.13.

God's Punishment of Ptolemy

21 Thereupon God, who oversees all things, the first Father of all, holy among the holy ones, having heard the lawful supplication, scourged him who had exalted himself in insolence and audacity. 22 He shook him on this side and that as a reed is shaken by the wind, so that he lay helpless on the ground and, besides being paralyzed in his limbs, was unable even to speak, since he was smitten[q] by a righteous judgment. 23 Then both friends and bodyguards, seeing the severe punishment that had overtaken him, and fearing that he would lose his life, quickly dragged him out, panic-stricken in their exceedingly great fear. 24 After a while he recovered, and though he had been punished, he by no means repented, but went away uttering bitter threats.

The Demand Made on the Jews

25 When he arrived in Egypt, he increased in his deeds of malice, abetted by the previously mentioned drinking companions and comrades, who were strangers to everything just. 26 He was not content with his uncounted licentious deeds, but even continued with such audacity that he framed evil reports in the various localities; and many of his friends, intently observing the king's purpose, themselves also followed his will. 27 He proposed to inflict public disgrace on the Jewish community,[r] and he set up a stone[s] on the tower in the courtyard with this inscription: 28 "None of those who do not sacrifice shall enter their sanctuaries, and all Jews shall be subjected to a registration involving poll tax and to the status of slaves. Those who object to this are to be taken by force and put to death; 29 those who are registered are also to be branded on their bodies by fire with the ivy-leaf symbol of Dionysus, and they shall also be reduced to their former limited status." 30 In order that he might not appear to be an enemy of all, he inscribed below: "But if any of them prefer to join those who have been initiated into the mysteries, they shall have equal citizenship with the Alexandrians."

31 Now some, however, with an obvious abhorrence of the price to be exacted for maintaining the religion of their city,[t] readily gave themselves up, since they expected to enhance their reputation by their future association with the king. 32 But the majority acted firmly with a courageous spirit and did not abandon

q Other ancient authorities read *pierced*
r Gk *the nation* *s* Gk *stele* *t* Meaning of Gk uncertain

2.21–24 The punishment of Ptolemy. **2.21** *Scourged.* Cf. 2 Macc 3.26, where two young men appeared and scourged Heliodorus, and 2 Macc 9.5, where the Lord struck Antiochus Epiphanes an incurable and unseen blow. **2.24** Ptolemy *by no means repented* though 2 Maccabees says that both Heliodorus and Antiochus Epiphanes repented (2 Macc 3.31–40; 9.11–29). Here the repentance of the king is deferred to a later point in the story.

2.25–33 The demand made on the Jews. **2.25** *The previously mentioned drinking companions* have not in fact been previously mentioned. Either the beginning of the book has been lost or this passage was excerpted from a more detailed source. **2.27** *He set up a stone.* Decrees were often displayed on palace walls. **2.28** *Those who do not sacrifice* can only refer to the Jews. A *registration involving poll tax.* See Introduction. The idea was probably inspired by the poll tax introduced by Augustus in 24/23 B.C.E. *Status of slaves.* The author may have confused branding in honor of Dionysus (2.29) with the branding of slaves. In the Maccabean wars, the Syrian commanders sold Jewish captives into slavery (1 Macc 3.41). **2.29** *Branded . . . with the ivy-leaf symbol of Dionysus.* Greeks and Romans often confused Judaism with the cult of Dionysus, because of the Feast of Tabernacles at the height of the vintage and the Jewish ritual use of wine (see Plutarch *Table Talk* 4.6.1–2). During the persecution by Antiochus Epiphanes, Jews were compelled to walk in procession in honor of Dionysus, wearing wreaths of ivy (2 Macc 6.7). Philopator was known for his devotion to Dionysus, and it is possible that he made some attempt to organize Judaism as a Dionysiac cult. The custom of branding or tattooing was associated with the cult of Dionysus from ancient times. *Their former limited status* probably refers to the condition of Jewish captives before their liberation by Ptolemy II Philadelphus (*Letter of Aristeas* 22). **2.30** The Jews in Egypt very much wanted *equal citizenship with the Alexandrians,* but most were unwilling to perform the pagan religious acts that citizenship would have required. Cf. the offer in 1 Macc 2.18 to number Mattathias and his sons among the Friends of the king if they perform the pagan sacrifice. **2.31** As in the Maccabean crisis, many Jews forsook the law (1 Macc 1.52). **2.32** *But the majority acted firmly.* Cf. Dan 11.32;

their religion; and by paying money in exchange for life they confidently attempted to save themselves from the registration. 33 They remained resolutely hopeful of obtaining help, and they abhorred those who separated themselves from them, considering them to be enemies of the Jewish nation,[u] and depriving them of companionship and mutual help.

The Slander Against the Jews

3 When the impious king comprehended this situation, he became so infuriated that not only was he enraged against those Jews who lived in Alexandria, but was still more bitterly hostile toward those in the countryside; and he ordered that all should promptly be gathered into one place, and put to death by the most cruel means. 2 While these matters were being arranged, a hostile rumor was circulated against the Jewish nation by some who conspired to do them ill, a pretext being given by a report that they hindered others[v] from the observance of their customs. 3 The Jews, however, continued to maintain goodwill and unswerving loyalty toward the dynasty; 4 but because they worshiped God and conducted themselves by his law, they kept their separateness with respect to foods. For this reason they appeared hateful to some; 5 but since they adorned their style of life with the good deeds of upright people, they were established in good repute with everyone. 6 Nevertheless those of other races paid no heed to their good service to their nation, which was common talk among all; 7 instead they gossiped about the differences in worship and foods, alleging that these people were loyal neither to the king nor to his authorities, but were hostile and greatly opposed to his government. So they attached no ordinary reproach to them.

8 The Greeks in the city, though wronged in no way, when they saw an unexpected tumult around these people and the crowds that suddenly were forming, were not strong enough to help them, for they lived under tyranny. They did try to console them, being grieved at the situation, and expected that matters would change; 9 for such a great community ought not be left to its fate when it had committed no offense. 10 And already some of their neighbors and friends and business associates had taken some of them aside privately and were pledging to protect them and to exert more earnest efforts for their assistance.

Ptolemy's Decree

11 Then the king, boastful of his present good fortune, and not considering the might of the supreme God,[w] but assuming that he would persevere constantly in his same purpose, wrote this letter against them:

12 "King Ptolemy Philopator to his generals and soldiers in Egypt and all its districts, greetings and good health:

u Gk *the nation* *v* Gk *them* *w* Gk *the greatest God*

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1 Macc 1.62. **2.33** Renegades, that is, *those who separated themselves*, are singled out for special contempt.

3.1–10 The slander against the Jews. **3.1** *This situation* is the refusal of the Jews to submit to registration. *Enraged against those Jews.* Cf. Philo's comment on the situation under Caligula: "A vast and truceless war was prepared against the nation" (*On the Embassy to Gaius* 119). The following story deals initially with the threat to the Jews *in the countryside* (see note on 4.12). It would seem that this part of the story came from a distinct source. **3.2** There was a tradition of anti-Jewish polemic in Egypt, beginning with the historian Manetho about 300 B.C.E. and reaching a crescendo in the first century C.E. (see Josephus *Against Apion*). Among the recurring charges were "atheism" and "inhospitality" because of the exclusivism of the Jewish religion. **3.3** The Jews in Egypt were known for their *goodwill and . . . loyalty* to the Ptolemies, and also at first to the Romans; this loyalty exacerbated their relations with the native Egyptians. **3.4** Jewish dietary laws that required *separateness with respect to foods* were incomprehensible to the Greeks but were an essential marker of separate identity. *Letter of Aristeas* 128–66 defends the dietary laws but gives them an allegorical explanation. **3.8** The author insists that the enemies of the Jews were not *the Greeks in the city*, although the Friends of the king must surely have been Greeks.

3.11–30 Ptolemy's decree. Cf. the decree in Add Esth 13.1–7. **3.11** In *boasting* and *not considering the might of the supreme God*, the king is guilty of hubris, the typical sin of kings in both Greek tragedy and Hebrew prophecy (Isa 14; Ezek 28). **3.12** The Ptolemies did not use titles such as *Philopator* in their decrees until about

13 "I myself and our government are
faring well. 14 When our expedition took
place in Asia, as you yourselves know, it
was brought to conclusion, according to
plan, by the gods' deliberate alliance with
us in battle, 15 and we considered that we
should not rule the nations inhabiting
Coelesyria and Phoenicia by the power of
the spear, but should cherish them with
clemency and great benevolence, gladly
treating them well. 16 And when we had
granted very great revenues to the tem-
ples in the cities, we came on to Jerusalem
also, and went up to honor the temple of
those wicked people, who never cease
from their folly. 17 They accepted our
presence by word, but insincerely by
deed, because when we proposed to enter
their inner temple and honor it with
magnificent and most beautiful offerings,
18 they were carried away by their tradi-
tional arrogance, and excluded us from
entering; but they were spared the exer-
cise of our power because of the benevo-
lence that we have toward all. 19 By
maintaining their manifest ill-will toward
us, they become the only people among
all nations who hold their heads high in
defiance of kings and their own benefac-
tors, and are unwilling to regard any ac-
tion as sincere.

20 "But we, when we arrived in Egypt
victorious, accommodated ourselves to
their folly and did as was proper, since we
treat all nations with benevolence.
21 Among other things, we made known
to all our amnesty toward their compatri-
ots here, both because of their alliance
with us and the myriad affairs liberally
entrusted to them from the beginning;
and we ventured to make a change, by
deciding both to deem them worthy of
Alexandrian citizenship and to make
them participants in our regular religious
rites.[x] 22 But in their innate malice they
took this in a contrary spirit, and dis-
dained what is good. Since they incline
constantly to evil, 23 they not only spurn
the priceless citizenship, but also both by
speech and by silence they abominate
those few among them who are sincerely
disposed toward us; in every situation, in
accordance with their infamous way of
life, they secretly suspect that we may
soon alter our policy. 24 Therefore, fully
convinced by these indications that they
are ill-disposed toward us in every way,
we have taken precautions so that, if a
sudden disorder later arises against us, we
shall not have these impious people be-
hind our backs as traitors and barbarous
enemies. 25 Therefore we have given or-
ders that, as soon as this letter arrives, you
are to send to us those who live among
you, together with their wives and chil-
dren, with insulting and harsh treatment,
and bound securely with iron fetters, to
suffer the sure and shameful death that
befits enemies. 26 For when all of these
have been punished, we are sure that for
the remaining time the government will
be established for ourselves in good order
and in the best state. 27 But those who
shelter any of the Jews, whether old peo-
ple or children or even infants, will be
tortured to death with the most hateful
torments, together with their families.
28 Any who are willing to give information
will receive the property of those who in-
cur the punishment, and also two thou-
sand drachmas from the royal treasury,
and will be awarded their freedom.[y]
29 Every place detected sheltering a Jew is
to be made unapproachable and burned
with fire, and shall become useless for all
time to any mortal creature." 30 The letter
was written in the above form.

x Other ancient authorities read *partners of our regular priests* y Gk *crowned with freedom*

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100 B.C.E. **3.17** *Insincerely by deed.* The refusal of admission to the temple is construed as a lack of genuine respect for the king. Similarly, Caligula failed to understand or accept the reasons for Jewish resistance to placing his statue in the temple. **3.21** *Myriad affairs liberally entrusted to them from the beginning.* Jews were entrusted with military duties as early as the fifth century B.C.E. at Elephantine in southern Egypt. *We ventured to make a change.* The king's claim that his actions were benevolent seems hypocritical from a Jewish viewpoint. Note, however, that Gentiles such as the Roman historian Tacitus thought that Antiochus Epiphanes was trying to civilize the Jews by forcing them to adopt Greek customs. **3.23** *The priceless citizenship* was offered to the Jews of Alexandria, but the punishment falls on the Jews of the countryside. **3.25** Cf. Esth 3.13, where orders to kill the Jews were sent to all the provinces. In 3 Maccabees the Jews are to be gathered for destruction. **3.26** *The government will be established.* Cf. Add Esth 13.7. **3.28** The statement that informers will be *awarded their freedom* is presumably addressed to the native Egyptians.

The Imprisonment of the Jews

4 In every place, then, where this decree arrived, a feast at public expense was arranged for the Gentiles with shouts and gladness, for the inveterate enmity that had long ago been in their minds was now made evident and outspoken. 2 But among the Jews there was incessant mourning, lamentation, and tearful cries; everywhere their hearts were burning, and they groaned because of the unexpected destruction that had suddenly been decreed for them. 3 What district or city, or what habitable place at all, or what streets were not filled with mourning and wailing for them? 4 For with such a harsh and ruthless spirit were they being sent off, all together, by the generals in the several cities, that at the sight of their unusual punishments, even some of their enemies, perceiving the common object of pity before their eyes, reflected on the uncertainty of life and shed tears at the most miserable expulsion of these people. 5 For a multitude of gray-headed old men, sluggish and bent with age, was being led away, forced to march at a swift pace by the violence with which they were driven in such a shameful manner. 6 And young women who had just entered the bridal chamber[z] to share married life exchanged joy for wailing, their myrrh-perfumed hair sprinkled with ashes, and were carried away unveiled, all together raising a lament instead of a wedding song, as they were torn by the harsh treatment of the heathen.[a] 7 In bonds and in public view they were violently dragged along as far as the place of embarkation. 8 Their husbands, in the prime of youth, their necks encircled with ropes instead of garlands, spent the remaining days of their marriage festival in lamentations instead of good cheer and youthful revelry, seeing death immediately before them.[b] 9 They were brought on board like wild animals, driven under the constraint of iron bonds; some were fastened by the neck to the benches of the boats, others had their feet secured by unbreakable fetters, 10 and in addition they were confined under a solid deck, so that, with their eyes in total darkness, they would undergo treatment befitting traitors during the whole voyage.

11 When these people had been brought to the place called Schedia, and the voyage was concluded as the king had decreed, he commanded that they should be enclosed in the hippodrome that had been built with a monstrous perimeter wall in front of the city, and that was well suited to make them an obvious spectacle to all coming back into the city and to those from the city[c] going out into the country, so that they could neither communicate with the king's forces nor in any way claim to be inside the circuit of the city.[d] 12 And when this had happened, the king, hearing that the Jews' compatriots from the city frequently went out in secret to lament bitterly the ignoble misfortune of their kindred, 13 ordered in his rage that these people be dealt with in precisely the same fashion as the others, not omitting any detail of their punishment. 14 The entire race was to be registered individually, not for the hard labor that has been briefly mentioned before, but to be tortured with the outrages that he had ordered, and at the end to be destroyed in the space of a single day. 15 The registration of these people was therefore conducted with bitter haste and zealous intensity from the rising of the sun until

z Or *the canopy* *a* Other ancient authorities read *as though torn by heathen whelps* *b* Gk *seeing Hades already lying at their feet* *c* Gk *those of them*
d Or *claim protection of the walls*; meaning of Gk uncertain

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4.1–21 The imprisonment of the Jews. The emotionalism of the account is typical of Greek historiography in this period. **4.1** *A feast at public expense.* Cf. the feast of the Jews in Esth 8.17. **4.2** *Incessant mourning.* See Esth 4.3. **4.11** *Schedia* is a promontory about three miles from Alexandria. *The hippodrome* was located at the east or Canobic gate of the city. A canal joined Schedia and the Canobic gate (Strabo *The Geography* 17.1.10, 16). **4.12** Given that *the Jews' compatriots from the city frequently went out,* it is clear that only the Jews from the countryside were imprisoned initially. Perhaps the story originally concerned an attempt to register the Jews from the countryside by bringing them to one place. **4.14** *The entire race was to be registered individually,* presumably so that no one would escape, but the process seems unduly laborious. Again this may point to an original story concerned with registration rather than annihilation. **4.15** *Forty days* is a stereotypical figure. This is the length of time it takes for Moses to transcribe the law and the

its setting, coming to an end after forty days but still uncompleted.

16 The king was greatly and continually filled with joy, organizing feasts in honor of all his idols, with a mind alienated from truth and with a profane mouth, praising speechless things that are not able even to communicate or to come to one's help, and uttering improper words against the supreme God.[e] 17 But after the previously mentioned interval of time the scribes declared to the king that they were no longer able to take the census of the Jews because of their immense number, 18 though most of them were still in the country, some still residing in their homes, and some at the place;[f] the task was impossible for all the generals in Egypt. 19 After he had threatened them severely, charging that they had been bribed to contrive a means of escape, he was clearly convinced about the matter 20 when they said and proved that both the paper[g] and the pens they used for writing had already given out. 21 But this was an act of the invincible providence of him who was aiding the Jews from heaven.

The Frustration of the King's Plans

5 Then the king, completely inflexible, was filled with overpowering anger and wrath; so he summoned Hermon, keeper of the elephants, 2 and ordered him on the following day to drug all the elephants—five hundred in number—with large handfuls of frankincense and plenty of unmixed wine, and to drive them in, maddened by the lavish abundance of drink, so that the Jews might meet their doom. 3 When he had given these orders he returned to his feasting, together with those of his Friends and of the army who were especially hostile toward the Jews. 4 And Hermon, keeper of the elephants, proceeded faithfully to carry out the orders. 5 The servants in charge of the Jews[h] went out in the evening and bound the hands of the wretched people and arranged for their continued custody through the night, convinced that the whole nation would experience its final destruction. 6 For to the Gentiles it appeared that the Jews were left without any aid, 7 because in their bonds they were forcibly confined on every side. But with tears and a voice hard to silence they all called upon the Almighty Lord and Ruler of all power, their merciful God and Father, praying 8 that he avert with vengeance the evil plot against them and in a glorious manifestation rescue them from the fate now prepared for them. 9 So their entreaty ascended fervently to heaven.

10 Hermon, however, when he had drugged the pitiless elephants until they had been filled with a great abundance of wine and satiated with frankincense, presented himself at the courtyard early in the morning to report to the king about these preparations. 11 But the Lord[i] sent upon the king a portion of sleep, that beneficence that from the beginning, night and day, is bestowed by him who grants it to whomever he wishes. 12 And by the action of the Lord he was overcome by so pleasant and deep a sleep[j] that he quite failed in his lawless purpose and was completely frustrated in his inflexible plan. 13 Then the Jews, since they had escaped the appointed hour, praised their holy God and again implored him who is easily

e Gk *the greatest God* f Other ancient authorities read *on the way* g Or *paper factory* h Gk *them* i Gk *he* j Other ancient authorities add *from evening until the ninth hour*

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apocryphal books in 2 Esd 14.44. **4.16** *A profane mouth.* See Dan 7.8, 20. *Against the supreme God.* See Dan 11.36. **4.17** The failure of the scribes underlines the absurdity of the endeavor. For Israel as a people so numerous they cannot be numbered or counted, see 1 Kings 3.8. **4.21** The failure of the census might be taken as proof of the king's folly, but 3 Maccabees draws a more theological lesson about *invincible providence.*

5.1–51 The frustration of the king's plans. **5.1** The name *Hermon* recalls Haman, the adversary of the Jews in Esther. **5.2** Drugging *the elephants* would have made little sense. War elephants were trained to trample and would have been more difficult to control if they were drugged. *Five hundred.* At the battle of Raphia, Philopator had only seventy-three elephants, still an impressive number. **5.3** The *Friends* of the king constituted a special honorific class in the Hellenistic age. **5.5** *Bound the hands.* According to 3.25, the Jews had been sent to Alexandria in fetters. Presumably they had been unbound in the meantime. **5.8** *Glorious manifestation.* Cf. 2 Macc 2.21. **5.11** Cf. Ps 127.2. *Sleep* is often praised as a divine gift, especially in the classical tradition.

reconciled to show the might of his all-
powerful hand to the arrogant Gentiles.
14 But now, since it was nearly the
middle of the tenth hour, the person who
was in charge of the invitations, seeing
that the guests were assembled, ap-
proached the king and nudged him.
15 And when he had with difficulty roused
him, he pointed out that the hour of the
banquet was already slipping by, and he
gave him an account of the situation.
16 The king, after considering this, re-
turned to his drinking, and ordered those
present for the banquet to recline oppo-
site him. 17 When this was done he urged
them to give themselves over to revelry
and to make the present[k] portion of the
banquet joyful by celebrating all the more.
18 After the party had been going on for
some time, the king summoned Hermon
and with sharp threats demanded to know
why the Jews had been allowed to remain
alive through the present day. 19 But
when he, with the corroboration of the
king's[l] Friends, pointed out that while it
was still night he had carried out com-
pletely the order given him, 20 the king,[m]
possessed by a savagery worse than that of
Phalaris, said that the Jews[n] were benefited
by today's sleep, "but," he added, "tomor-
row without delay prepare the elephants
in the same way for the destruction of the
lawless Jews!" 21 When the king had spo-
ken, all those present readily and joyfully
with one accord gave their approval, and
all went to their own homes. 22 But they
did not so much employ the duration of
the night in sleep as in devising all sorts
of insults for those they thought to be
doomed.
23 Then, as soon as the cock had
crowed in the early morning, Hermon,
having equipped[o] the animals, began to
move them along in the great colonnade.
24 The crowds of the city had been assem-
bled for this most pitiful spectacle and
they were eagerly waiting for daybreak.
25 But the Jews, at their last gasp—since
the time had run out—stretched their
hands toward heaven and with most tear-
ful supplication and mournful dirges im-
plored the supreme God[p] to help them
again at once. 26 The rays of the sun were
not yet shed abroad, and while the king
was receiving his Friends, Hermon ar-
rived and invited him to come out, indi-
cating that what the king desired was
ready for action. 27 But he, on receiving
the report and being struck by the un-
usual invitation to come out—since he
had been completely overcome by incom-
prehension—inquired what the matter
was for which this had been so zealous-
ly completed for him. 28 This was the act
of God who rules over all things, for
he had implanted in the king's mind a
forgetfulness of the things he had previ-
ously devised. 29 Then Hermon and all
the king's Friends[q] pointed out that the
animals and the armed forces were ready,
"O king, according to your eager pur-
pose."[r] 30 But at these words he was filled
with an overpowering wrath, because by
the providence of God his whole mind
had been deranged concerning these mat-
ters; and with a threatening look he said,
31 "If your parents or children were
present, I would have prepared them to
be a rich feast for the savage animals in-
stead of the Jews, who give me no ground
for complaint and have exhibited to an
extraordinary degree a full and firm loy-
alty to my ancestors. 32 In fact you would
have been deprived of life instead of
these, if it were not for an affection aris-
ing from our nurture in common and
your usefulness." 33 So Hermon suffered
an unexpected and dangerous threat, and
his eyes wavered and his face fell. 34 The
king's Friends one by one sullenly slipped

k Other ancient authorities read *delayed* (Gk *untimely*) *l* Gk *his* *m* Gk *he* *n* Gk *they* *o* Or *armed* *p* Gk *the greatest God* *q* Gk *all the Friends* *r* Other ancient authorities read *pointed to the beasts and the armed forces, saying, "They are ready, O king, according to your eager purpose."*

5.14 *The middle of the tenth hour*, mid-afternoon, at the end of siesta time. Elaborate banquets started early rather than finishing late. **5.20** *Phalaris* was tyrant of Agrigentum in the sixth century B.C.E. He was known for roasting people alive in his hollow brazen bull, so that it would bellow realistically (Polybius *The Histories* 12.25). **5.20** *Tomorrow without delay*. The frustration of the first plan and the new beginning contribute to building suspense. **5.29** Some manuscripts have an interpolation at this point, in which the king wants to release the Jews but Hermon persuades him to proceed. **5.30** *His whole mind had been deranged*. Cf. the madness of Nebuchadnezzar in Dan 4. **5.33** Hermon suffers an unexpected reversal of royal favor, as Haman did in Esther.

away and dismissed[s] the assembled people to their own occupations. 35 Then the Jews, on hearing what the king had said, praised the manifest Lord God, King of kings, since this also was his aid that they had received.

36 The king, however, reconvened the party in the same manner and urged the guests to return to their celebrating. 37 After summoning Hermon he said in a threatening tone, "How many times, you poor wretch, must I give you orders about these things? 38 Equip[t] the elephants now once more for the destruction of the Jews tomorrow!" 39 But the officials who were at table with him, wondering at his instability of mind, remonstrated as follows: 40 "O king, how long will you put us to the test, as though we are idiots, ordering now for a third time that they be destroyed, and again revoking your decree in the matter?[u] 41 As a result the city is in a tumult because of its expectation; it is crowded with masses of people, and also in constant danger of being plundered."

42 At this the king, a Phalaris in everything and filled with madness, took no account of the changes of mind that had come about within him for the protection of the Jews, and he firmly swore an irrevocable oath that he would send them to death[v] without delay, mangled by the knees and feet of the animals, 43 and would also march against Judea and rapidly level it to the ground with fire and spear, and by burning to the ground the temple inaccessible to him[w] would quickly render it forever empty of those who offered sacrifices there. 44 Then the Friends and officers departed with great joy, and they confidently posted the armed forces at the places in the city most favorable for keeping guard.

45 Now when the animals had been brought virtually to a state of madness, so to speak, by the very fragrant draughts of wine mixed with frankincense and had been equipped with frightful devices, the elephant keeper 46 entered at about dawn into the courtyard—the city now being filled with countless masses of people crowding their way into the hippodrome—and urged the king on to the matter at hand. 47 So he, when he had filled his impious mind with a deep rage, rushed out in full force along with the animals, wishing to witness, with invulnerable heart and with his own eyes, the grievous and pitiful destruction of the aforementioned people.

48 When the Jews saw the dust raised by the elephants going out at the gate and by the following armed forces, as well as by the trampling of the crowd, and heard the loud and tumultuous noise, 49 they thought that this was their last moment of life, the end of their most miserable suspense, and giving way to lamentation and groans they kissed each other, embracing relatives and falling into one another's arms[x]—parents and children, mothers and daughters, and others with babies at their breasts who were drawing their last milk. 50 Not only this, but when they considered the help that they had received before from heaven, they prostrated themselves with one accord on the ground, removing the babies from their breasts, 51 and cried out in a very loud voice, imploring the Ruler over every power to manifest himself and be merciful to them, as they stood now at the gates of death.[u]

The Prayer of Eleazar

6 Then a certain Eleazar, famous among the priests of the country, who had attained a ripe old age and throughout his life had been adorned with every virtue, directed the elders around him to stop calling upon the holy God, and he prayed as follows: 2 "King of

s Other ancient authorities read *he dismissed*
t Or *Arm* u Other ancient authorities read *when the matter is in hand* v Gk *Hades* w Gk *us*
x Gk *falling upon their necks*

5.41 The vacillation of the king again heightens the suspense (for the crowd and the reader). **5.42–43** The double threat to the Alexandrian Jews and the Jerusalem temple is particularly reminiscent of the time of Caligula. **5.42** *An irrevocable oath.* Cf. the irrevocable decree of Darius in Dan 6.8. **5.45** Apparently *devices* such as scythes and knives were attached to the elephants as they were to war chariots.

6.1–15 The prayer of Eleazar further delays the climax and builds the suspense. It also balances the prayer of Simon in ch. 2. **6.1** *Eleazar* is the name of a high priest in *Letter of Aristeas* 41 and of a martyr in 2 Macc 6.18–31 and 4 Macc 5–7. The designation *priests of the country* perhaps refers to the priests of the Jewish temple at Leon-

great power, Almighty God Most High,
governing all creation with mercy, 3 look
upon the descendants of Abraham,
O Father, upon the children of the
sainted Jacob, a people of your consecrated portion who are perishing as foreigners in a foreign land. 4 Pharaoh with
his abundance of chariots, the former
ruler of this Egypt, exalted with lawless
insolence and boastful tongue, you destroyed together with his arrogant army
by drowning them in the sea, manifesting
the light of your mercy on the nation of
Israel. 5 Sennacherib exulting in his
countless forces, oppressive king of the
Assyrians, who had already gained control of the whole world by the spear and
was lifted up against your holy city, speaking grievous words with boasting and
insolence, you, O Lord, broke in pieces,
showing your power to many nations.
6 The three companions in Babylon who
had voluntarily surrendered their lives to
the flames so as not to serve vain things,
you rescued unharmed, even to a hair,
moistening the fiery furnace with dew
and turning the flame against all their enemies. 7 Daniel, who through envious
slanders was thrown down into the
ground to lions as food for wild animals,
you brought up to the light unharmed.
8 And Jonah, wasting away in the belly of
a huge, sea-born monster, you, Father,
watched over and restored[y] unharmed to
all his family. 9 And now, you who hate
insolence, all-merciful and protector of
all, reveal yourself quickly to those of the
nation of Israel[z]—who are being outrageously treated by the abominable and
lawless Gentiles.

10 "Even if our lives have become entangled in impieties in our exile, rescue us
from the hand of the enemy, and destroy
us, Lord, by whatever fate you choose.
11 Let not the vain-minded praise their
vanities[a] at the destruction of your beloved people, saying, 'Not even their god
has rescued them.' 12 But you, O Eternal
One, who have all might and all power,
watch over us now and have mercy on us
who by the senseless insolence of the lawless are being deprived of life in the manner of traitors. 13 And let the Gentiles
cower today in fear of your invincible
might, O honored One, who have power
to save the nation of Jacob. 14 The whole
throng of infants and their parents entreat you with tears. 15 Let it be shown to
all the Gentiles that you are with us,
O Lord, and have not turned your face
from us; but just as you have said, 'Not
even when they were in the land of their
enemies did I neglect them,' so accomplish it, O Lord."

The Reversal of Fortune

16 Just as Eleazar was ending his
prayer, the king arrived at the hippodrome with the animals and all the arrogance of his forces. 17 And when the Jews
observed this they raised great cries to
heaven so that even the nearby valleys
resounded with them and brought an
uncontrollable terror upon the army.
18 Then the most glorious, almighty, and
true God revealed his holy face and
opened the heavenly gates, from which
two glorious angels of fearful aspect descended, visible to all but the Jews.
19 They opposed the forces of the enemy
and filled them with confusion and terror,
binding them with immovable shackles.
20 Even the king began to shudder bodily,
and he forgot his sullen insolence. 21 The
animals turned back upon the armed

y Other ancient authorities read *rescued and restored*; others, *mercifully restored* *z* Other ancient authorities read *to the saints of Israel*
a Or *bless their vain gods*

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topolis. *A ripe old age.* See 2 Macc 6–18. **6.3** *Perishing as foreigners.* Cf. the assertion of Philo that Jews "severally hold that land as their fatherland in which they were born and reared" (*Flaccus* 46). **6.4** *By drowning them in the sea.* See Ex 14–15. **6.5** *Sennacherib.* See 2 Kings 18–19; Isa 36–37. **6.6** *The three companions.* See Dan 3. *Moistening the fiery furnace.* This detail is found only in the Additions to Daniel (Pr Azar 27). **6.7** *Daniel . . . wild animals.* See Dan 6; Bel 31–42. **6.10** *Even if our lives have become entangled in impieties* is an even more minimal confession of sin than was found in the prayer of Simon (ch. 2). **6.11** See Ps 115.2. **6.15** *Not even . . . did I neglect them* is from Lev 26.44.

6.16–29 The reversal of fortune. The story now moves to its climax. **6.17** *An uncontrollable terror.* See Ex 15.16. **6.18** *Two glorious angels.* See 2 Macc 3.26. The fact that the angels are not visible to everyone shows their supernatural character. **6.21** At the battle of Raphia, Philopator's elephants proved intractable and disrupted their

forces following them and began trampling and destroying them.

22 Then the king's anger was turned to pity and tears because of the things that he had devised beforehand. 23 For when he heard the shouting and saw them all fallen headlong to destruction, he wept and angrily threatened his Friends, saying, 24 "You are committing treason and surpassing tyrants in cruelty; and even me, your benefactor, you are now attempting to deprive of dominion and life by secretly devising acts of no advantage to the kingdom. 25 Who has driven from their homes those who faithfully kept our country's fortresses, and foolishly gathered every one of them here? 26 Who is it that has so lawlessly encompassed with outrageous treatment those who from the beginning differed from[b] all nations in their goodwill toward us and often have accepted willingly the worst of human dangers? 27 Loose and untie their unjust bonds! Send them back to their homes in peace, begging pardon for your former actions![c] 28 Release the children of the almighty and living God of heaven, who from the time of our ancestors until now has granted an unimpeded and notable stability to our government." 29 These then were the things he said; and the Jews, immediately released, praised their holy God and Savior, since they now had escaped death.

The Celebration

30 Then the king, when he had returned to the city, summoned the official in charge of the revenues and ordered him to provide to the Jews both wines and everything else needed for a festival of seven days, deciding that they should celebrate their rescue with all joyfulness in that same place in which they had expected to meet their destruction. 31 Accordingly those disgracefully treated and near to death,[d] or rather, who stood at its gates, arranged for a banquet of deliverance instead of a bitter and lamentable death, and full of joy they apportioned to celebrants the place that had been prepared for their destruction and burial. 32 They stopped their chanting of dirges and took up the song of their ancestors, praising God, their Savior and worker of wonders.[e] Putting an end to all mourning and wailing, they formed choruses[f] as a sign of peaceful joy. 33 Likewise also the king, after convening a great banquet to celebrate these events, gave thanks to heaven unceasingly and lavishly for the unexpected rescue that he[g] had experienced. 34 Those who had previously believed that the Jews would be destroyed and become food for birds, and had joyfully registered them, groaned as they themselves were overcome by disgrace, and their fire-breathing boldness was ignominiously[h] quenched.

35 The Jews, as we have said before, arranged the aforementioned choral group[i] and passed the time in feasting to the accompaniment of joyous thanksgiving and psalms. 36 And when they had ordained a public rite for these things in their whole community and for their descendants, they instituted the observance of the aforesaid days as a festival, not for drinking and gluttony, but because of the deliverance that had come to them through God. 37 Then they petitioned the king, asking for dismissal to their homes. 38 So their registration was carried out from the twenty-fifth of Pachon to the

b Or *excelled above* *c* Other ancient authorities read *revoking your former commands* *d* Gk *Hades* *e* Other ancient authorities read *praising Israel and the wonder-working God*; or *praising Israel's Savior, the wonder-working God* *f* Or *dances* *g* Other ancient authorities read *they* *h* Other ancient authorities read *completely* *i* Or *dance*

own lines (Polybius *The Histories* 5.84.7). **6.22** *The king's anger was turned to pity.* This is the moment of reversal. **6.23** Philopator blames his *Friends*, though it is he who took the initiative. In Esther and Daniel, the counselors were primarily to blame. **6.25** *Those who faithfully kept our country's fortresses.* Jews already kept the fortress at Elephantine in the fifth century B.C.E. **6.28** *The children of the almighty and living God of heaven.* See Wis 18.13.

6.30–41 The celebration. **6.31** *A banquet of deliverance instead of . . . death* heavily emphasizes the reversal of fortune. **6.32** *The song of their ancestors* is perhaps Ps 136 (cf. 1 Chr 16.41; 2 Chr 5.13; 7.3; Ezra 3.11). **6.34** *Food for birds.* See Ezek 39.4; 2 Macc 9.15. **6.36** Cf. the establishment of Purim in Esth 9. Josephus says that the deliverance from the elephants was "the origin of the well-known feast which the Jews of Alexandria keep, with good reason, on this day" (*Against Apion* 2.55).

fourth of Epeiph,[j] for forty days: and
their destruction was set for the fifth to
the seventh of Epeiph,[k] the three days
39 on which the Lord of all most gloriously
revealed his mercy and rescued them all
together and unharmed. 40 Then they
feasted, being provided with everything
by the king, until the fourteenth day,[l] on
which also they made the petition for
their dismissal. 41 The king granted their
request at once and wrote the follow-
ing letter for them to the generals in
the cities, magnanimously expressing his
concern:

Ptolemy's Letter on Behalf of the Jews

7 "King Ptolemy Philopator to the
generals in Egypt and all in author-
ity in his government, greetings and good
health:

2 "We ourselves and our children are
faring well, the great God guiding our af-
fairs according to our desire. 3 Certain of
our friends, frequently urging us with
malicious intent, persuaded us to gather
together the Jews of the kingdom in a
body and to punish them with barbarous
penalties as traitors; 4 for they declared
that our government would never be
firmly established until this was accom-
plished, because of the ill-will that these
people had toward all nations. 5 They also
led them out with harsh treatment as
slaves, or rather as traitors, and, girding
themselves with a cruelty more savage
than that of Scythian custom, they tried
without any inquiry or examination to put
them to death. 6 But we very severely
threatened them for these acts, and in ac-
cordance with the clemency that we have
toward all people we barely spared their
lives. Since we have come to realize that
the God of heaven surely defends the
Jews, always taking their part as a father
does for his children, 7 and since we have
taken into account the friendly and firm
goodwill that they had toward us and our
ancestors, we justly have acquitted them
of every charge of whatever kind. 8 We
also have ordered all people to return to
their own homes, with no one in any
place[m] doing them harm at all or re-
proaching them for the irrational things
that have happened. 9 For you should
know that if we devise any evil against
them or cause them any grief at all, we
always shall have not a mortal but the
Ruler over every power, the Most High
God, in everything and inescapably as an
antagonist to avenge such acts. Farewell."

Revenge on Apostates

10 On receiving this letter the Jews[n]
did not immediately hurry to make their
departure, but they requested of the king
that at their own hands those of the Jew-
ish nation who had willfully transgressed
against the holy God and the law of God
should receive the punishment they de-
served. 11 They declared that those who
for the belly's sake had transgressed the
divine commandments would never be fa-
vorably disposed toward the king's gov-
ernment. 12 The king[o] then, admitting
and approving the truth of what they
said, granted them a general license so
that freely, and without royal authority or
supervision, they might destroy those ev-
erywhere in his kingdom who had trans-
gressed the law of God. 13 When they had
applauded him in fitting manner, their
priests and the whole multitude shouted
the Hallelujah and joyfully departed.
14 And so on their way they punished and
put to a public and shameful death any

j July 7—August 15 *k* August 16—18
l August 25 *m* Other ancient authorities read *way* *n* Gk *they* *o* Gk *He*

7.1–9 Ptolemy's letter. **7.2** *Our children.* Philopator had only one legitimate son, who later reigned as Ptolemy V Epiphanes. **7.3** Again the king puts the blame on *certain . . . friends,* in blatant contradiction of the story. **7.5** The *Scythians* were proverbial for barbarism and cruelty. See 2 Macc 4.47; 4 Macc 10.7. **7.6** Jewish stories of this period often have the pagan king acknowledge the true God (Dan 2.47; 4.2, 37; 6.26; 2 Macc 9.12, 13). *God of heaven* is a title that might be used by both Jews and Gentiles. Philopator does not necessarily concede that Judaism is the only true religion, but he does concede that the universal God protects it.

7.10–16 Revenge on apostates. In Esther, the king authorized the Jews to slaughter their gentile enemies (Esth 8.11–13; 9.1–17). Here there is no revenge on the Gentiles, but more than three hundred Jewish apostates are killed, even though they acted under duress. This reflects the tensions within the Jewish community in time of crisis. It is ironic that 3 Maccabees began with an exploit of the apostate Dositheus.

whom they met of their compatriots who had become defiled. 15 In that day they put to death more than three hundred men; and they kept the day as a joyful festival, since they had destroyed the profaners. 16 But those who had held fast to God even to death and had received the full enjoyment of deliverance began their departure from the city, crowned with all sorts of very fragrant flowers, joyfully and loudly giving thanks to the one God of their ancestors, the eternal Savior[p] of Israel, in words of praise and all kinds of melodious songs.

The Departure

17 When they had arrived at Ptolemais, called "rose-bearing" because of a characteristic of the place, the fleet waited for them, in accordance with the common desire, for seven days. 18 There they celebrated their deliverance,[q] for the king had generously provided all things to them for their journey until all of them arrived at their own houses. 19 And when they had all landed in peace with appropriate thanksgiving, there too in like manner they decided to observe these days as a joyous festival during the time of their stay. 20 Then, after inscribing them as holy on a pillar and dedicating a place of prayer at the site of the festival, they departed unharmed, free, and overjoyed, since at the king's command they had all of them been brought safely by land and sea and river to their own homes. 21 They also possessed greater prestige among their enemies, being held in honor and awe; and they were not subject at all to confiscation of their belongings by anyone. 22 Besides, they all recovered all of their property, in accordance with the registration, so that those who held any of it restored it to them with extreme fear.[r] So the supreme God perfectly performed great deeds for their deliverance. 23 Blessed be the Deliverer of Israel through all times! Amen.

p Other ancient authorities read *the holy Savior*; others, *the holy one* *q* Gk *they made a cup of deliverance* *r* Other ancient authorities read *with a very large supplement*

7.17–23 The departure. **7.17** This *Ptolemais* is the one at the harbor near Cairo, not the better known Ptolemais in Upper Egypt. **7.20** The king is benevolent in the end. *Sea*, possibly Lake Moeris, or perhaps *by land and sea and river* is idiomatic and means "by whatever means necessary." **7.22** The *registration* proves to have a providential purpose, as it enables the Jews to recover their possessions. **7.23** *Blessed be the Deliverer of Israel.* Cf. the closing doxology found at 4 Macc 18.24.

(c) The following book is included in the Slavonic Bible as 3 Esdras, but is not found in the Greek. It is included in the Appendix to the Latin Vulgate Bible as 4 Esdras.

2 ESDRAS

THE BOOK WE KNOW AS 2 ESDRAS is made up of three works: 4 Ezra, an apocalypse by a Jewish author (chs. 3–14), and two independent Christian supplements, 5 Ezra (chs. 1–2) and 6 Ezra (chs. 15–16). Esdras, the Greek form of the Hebrew name Ezra, is the seer who receives seven visions in the main portion of the book. The pseudepigraphic author writes as if he were the Ezra who figures in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

4 Ezra

4 Ezra was written in the aftermath of the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in 70 C.E. On the basis of the identification of the heads in the fifth vision (chs. 11–12), its date can be set more precisely in the last decade of the first century C.E. Other indications of date have been sought in the work, but no convincing argument for them can be made.

The original audience of 4 Ezra was Jewish, probably living in the land of Israel, and was wrestling with the implications of the destruction of the temple. 12.42 may indicate the author's prophetic status within his own community. We have little indication of how 4 Ezra may have functioned in that community or how it was used.

It is almost universally held today that 4 Ezra was written in a Semitic language, most probably Hebrew. The original Hebrew text and the Greek primary translation of it have perished, except for a few quotations from the Greek text by ancient authors. The text translated here is basically the Latin version, with some account taken of Syriac, Ethiopic, Arabic, Armenian, and Georgian versions. Previous theories of the composition of 4 Ezra from five sources are no longer entertained. It is believed to be the work of one individual, who draws at points on older material. 4.35–36a; 6.49–52; 13.1–20; 13.40–47 seem to be preexisting blocks of material included in the work.

4 Ezra is composed of seven visions separated by fasts. The first three visions are unusual in form, composed of addresses, dialogues, and predictions. In the

first two visions (3.1–6.34) the seer's problems in the addresses are partly answered in the predictive dialogues and direct predictions. The third vision (6.35–9.25) is very long and much more complex. The address of the first vision (3.4–36) indicts God the creator for the state of the world and of Israel. Israel's suffering under Rome raises for the author the question of God's justice. The angel's responses in this and the following visions gradually lead Ezra from skepticism to acceptance of God's incomprehensible providence.

This acceptance provides the basis for the fourth vision (9.26–10.59), the seer's conversion followed by his waking experience of heavenly Jerusalem. After his conversion, he becomes a more conventional apocalyptic seer. In the fifth (11.1–12.51) and sixth (13.1–58) visions, we find symbolic dreams interpreted by an angel, as is customary in apocalypses. In the seventh vision (14.1–48), Ezra is granted a revelation of the ninety-four secret and public books of scripture. The visions are set within a narrative framework, indicating the progression of the seer's experience.

4 Ezra was an influential writing. It is deeply imbued with Hebrew scriptures and has an explicit relationship to the book of Daniel, which sets it in an apocalyptic tradition. Of ancient Jewish writing, it is extremely closely related to *2 Apocalypse of Baruch*, although scholars differ as to which work was written first. A number of later Christian apocalypses exist, fashioned on the form of 4 Ezra. The chief such writings are 6 Ezra, the *Greek Esdras Apocalypse*, the *Apocalypse of Sedrach* (Greek), the *Revelation of Ezra* (Latin), and the *Questions of Ezra* (Armenian). 4 Ezra had a deep and broad influence in both Eastern and Western Christianity. No impression on rabbinic or later Judaism has been discerned.

5 and 6 Ezra

5 Ezra is of Christian authorship; there are some indications that it was written in the second century C.E. although this is not certain. 6 Ezra was probably written by a Christian and can be dated on internal grounds to the third century C.E. Both works indicate how 4 Ezra was read in the centuries after its composition. 5 Ezra seems to have been written as a separate literary unit. It comprises two parts, of varied character, a prophetic indictment of God's people (1.4–2.9) and an assurance of redemption to a new people (2.10–48). 6 Ezra, composed of predictions, woes, and exhortations to God's people, was written to encourage a third-century Christian audience in time of oppression. Some dependence on the NT has been discerned in both works.

It is agreed that 5 Ezra was originally written in Greek. A papyrus fragment of the Greek text of 6 Ezra has been identified, and there seems no reason to doubt its composition in that language. Both 5 Ezra and 6 Ezra survive in full only in Latin. 5 Ezra had no known influence on Jewish literature but has influenced the Roman church, particularly in its liturgy. 6 Ezra seems to have had no particular influence in Jewish or Christian circles. The three writings occur together only in the Latin version.

Canonical Status

No part of 2 Esdras has canonical status in the Jewish tradition. Except for a few quotations and its utilization in the Greek apocalypses mentioned above, it had no standing in the Greek church. The Western church was much attached to it and it was often found in manuscripts of the Vulgate; however, the book did not form part of the Roman Catholic canon as defined by the Council of Trent (1546). In the Armenian church it has a semicanonical status, being mentioned in some canon lists and occurring exclusively in biblical manuscripts. In Ethiopic, too, it occurs in biblical manuscripts (though the concept of canon in the Ethiopic church is not always clear). The fact that there are only a few copies in Christian Arabic and Georgian indicates that it had no canonical role in these churches.
Michael E. Stone

Comprising what is sometimes called 5 Ezra (chapters 1–2), 4 Ezra (chapters 3–14), and 6 Ezra (chapters 15–16)

The Genealogy of Ezra

1 The book[a] of the prophet Ezra son
of Seraiah, son of Azariah, son of Hil-
kiah, son of Shallum, son of Zadok, son of
Ahitub, 2 son of Ahijah, son of Phinehas,
son of Eli, son of Amariah, son of Azariah,
son of Meraimoth, son of Arna, son of
Uzzi, son of Borith, son of Abishua, son of
Phinehas, son of Eleazar, 3 son of Aaron,
of the tribe of Levi, who was a captive in
the country of the Medes in the reign of
Artaxerxes, king of the Persians.[b]

Ezra's Prophetic Call

4 The word of the Lord came to me,
saying, 5 "Go, declare to my people their
evil deeds, and to their children the iniq-
uities that they have committed against
me, so that they may tell[c] their children's
children 6 that the sins of their parents
have increased in them, for they have for-
gotten me and have offered sacrifices to
strange gods. 7 Was it not I who brought
them out of the land of Egypt, out of the
house of bondage? But they have angered
me and despised my counsels. 8 Now you,
pull out the hair of your head and hurl[d]
all evils upon them, for they have not
obeyed my law—they are a rebellious
people. 9 How long shall I endure them,
on whom I have bestowed such great ben-
efits? 10 For their sake I have overthrown
many kings; I struck down Pharaoh with
his servants and all his army. 11 I de-
stroyed all nations before them, and scat-
tered in the east the peoples of two
provinces,[e] Tyre and Sidon; I killed all
their enemies.

a Other ancient authorities read *The second book*
b Other ancient authorities, which place chapters 1 and 2 after 16.78, lack verses 1-3 and begin the chapter: *The word of the Lord that came to Ezra son of Chusi in the days of King Nebuchadnezzar, saying, "Go,*
c Other ancient authorities read *nourish*
d Other ancient authorities read *and shake out*
e Other ancient authorities read *Did I not destroy the city of Bethsaida because of you, and to the south burn two cities . . . ?*

1.1–2.48 Chs. 1–2 form a separate, Christian work often entitled 5 Ezra (see Introduction).
1.1–3 Ezra is here described both as priest (cf. Ezra 7.1–5; 1 Esd 8.1–2) and *prophet*. The latter is unusual. In the biblical book Ezra is a scribe (Ezra 7.6).
1.4–11 A summary of God's gracious deeds and Israel's rejection of them. **1.4** Such prophetic calls are found, e.g., in Jer 1.4; Ezek 7.1. **1.8** *Pull out the hair of your head,* a sign of mourning; cf. Ezra 9.3. **1.10** See Ex 14.28; 20.2. **1.11** The verse is obscure; *Tyre and Sidon* are cities, not provinces, and are west, not east, of Media (cf. v. 3).

God's Mercies to Israel

12 "But speak to them and say, Thus says the Lord: 13 Surely it was I who brought you through the sea, and made safe highways for you where there was no road; I gave you Moses as leader and Aaron as priest; 14 I provided light for you from a pillar of fire, and did great wonders among you. Yet you have forgotten me, says the Lord.

15 "Thus says the Lord Almighty:[f] The quails were a sign to you; I gave you camps for your protection, and in them you complained. 16 You have not exulted in my name at the destruction of your enemies, but to this day you still complain.[g] 17 Where are the benefits that I bestowed on you? When you were hungry and thirsty in the wilderness, did you not cry out to me, 18 saying, 'Why have you led us into this wilderness to kill us? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in this wilderness.' 19 I pitied your groanings and gave you manna for food; you ate the bread of angels. 20 When you were thirsty, did I not split the rock so that waters flowed in abundance? Because of the heat I clothed you with the leaves of trees.[h] 21 I divided fertile lands among you; I drove out the Canaanites, the Perizzites, and the Philistines[i] before you. What more can I do for you? says the Lord. 22 Thus says the Lord Almighty:[f] When you were in the wilderness, at the bitter stream, thirsty and blaspheming my name, 23 I did not send fire on you for your blasphemies, but threw a tree into the water and made the stream sweet.

Israel's Disobedience and Rejection

24 "What shall I do to you, O Jacob? You, Judah, would not obey me. I will turn to other nations and will give them my name, so that they may keep my statutes. 25 Because you have forsaken me, I also will forsake you. When you beg mercy of me, I will show you no mercy. 26 When you call to me, I will not listen to you; for you have defiled your hands with blood, and your feet are swift to commit murder. 27 It is not as though you had forsaken me; you have forsaken yourselves, says the Lord.

28 "Thus says the Lord Almighty: Have I not entreated you as a father entreats his sons or a mother her daughters or a nurse her children, 29 so that you should be my people and I should be your God, and that you should be my children and I should be your father? 30 I gathered you as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. But now, what shall I do to you? I will cast you out from my presence. 31 When you offer oblations to me, I will turn my face from you; for I have rejected your[j] festal days, and new moons, and circumcisions of the flesh.[k] 32 I sent you my servants the prophets, but you have taken and killed them and torn their bodies[l] in pieces; I will require their blood of you, says the Lord.[m]

33 "Thus says the Lord Almighty:

f Other ancient authorities lack *Almighty*
g Other ancient authorities read verse 16, *Your pursuer with his army I sank in the sea, but still the people complain also concerning their own destruction.*
h Other ancient authorities read *I made for you trees with leaves* *i* Other ancient authorities read *Perizzites and their children* *j* Other ancient authorities read *I have not commanded for you*
k Other ancient authorities lack *of the flesh*
l Other ancient authorities read *the bodies of the apostles* *m* Other ancient authorities add *Thus says the Lord Almighty: Recently you also laid hands on me, crying out before the judge's seat for him to deliver me to you. You took me as a sinner, not as a father who freed you from slavery, and you delivered me to death by hanging me on the tree; these are the things you have done. Therefore, says the Lord, let my Father and his angels return and judge between you and me; if I have not kept the commandment of the Father, if I have not nourished you, if I have not done the things my Father commanded, I will contend in judgment with you, says the Lord.*

1.12–23 This passage is similar to Neh 9; Ps 78. **1.14** *Pillar of fire.* Cf. Ex 13.21. **1.15** God's care in the desert. For the *quails,* see Ex 16.13. **1.18** See Ex 14.11–12. **1.19** *Bread of angels,* i.e., manna; see Ps 78.25. **1.20** *Split the rock.* See Num 20.11. The clothing with *the leaves of trees* is unknown. **1.22** A reference to the complaints at the Waters of Marah (Hebrew, "bitterness"); see Ex 15.22–25.

1.24–40 This section refers to a replacement of Israel by *the people . . . from the east* (v. 38; cf. v. 24) and is usually taken to show the Christian origin of 5 Ezra. **1.29** God as parent of Israel is a frequent image in the Hebrew Bible; cf. Jer 3.19; 31.9. **1.30** *As a hen gathers her chicks.* See Mt 23.37; Lk 13.34. **1.32** Based on Mt 23.34–35; Lk 11.49–51. The rejection of prophets is found in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., 2 Chr 24.19; 36.16; Jer

Your house is desolate; I will drive you
out as the wind drives straw; 34and your
sons will have no children, because with
you[n] they have neglected my command-
ment and have done what is evil in my
sight. 35I will give your houses to a people
that will come, who without having heard
me will believe. Those to whom I have
shown no signs will do what I have com-
manded. 36They have seen no prophets,
yet will recall their former state.[o] 37I call
to witness the gratitude of the people that
is to come, whose children rejoice with
gladness;[p] though they do not see me
with bodily eyes, yet with the spirit they
will believe the things I have said.

38 "And now, father,[q] look with
pride and see the people coming from the
east; 39to them I will give as leaders Abra-
ham, Isaac, and Jacob, and Hosea and
Amos and Micah and Joel and Obadiah
and Jonah 40and Nahum and Habakkuk,
Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Mala-
chi, who is also called the messenger of
the Lord.[r]

God's Judgment on Israel

2 "Thus says the Lord: I brought this
people out of bondage, and I gave
them commandments through my ser-
vants the prophets; but they would not lis-
ten to them, and made my counsels void.
2The mother who bore them[s] says to
them, 'Go, my children, because I am a
widow and forsaken. 3I brought you up
with gladness; but with mourning and
sorrow I have lost you, because you have
sinned before the Lord God and have
done what is evil in my sight.[t] 4But now
what can I do for you? For I am a widow
and forsaken. Go, my children, and ask
for mercy from the Lord.' 5Now I call
upon you, father, as a witness in addition
to the mother of the children, because
they would not keep my covenant, 6so
that you may bring confusion on them
and bring their mother to ruin, so that
they may have no offspring. 7Let them be
scattered among the nations; let their
names be blotted out from the earth, be-
cause they have despised my covenant.

8 "Woe to you, Assyria, who conceal
the unrighteous within you! O wicked na-
tion, remember what I did to Sodom and
Gomorrah, 9whose land lies in lumps of
pitch and heaps of ashes.[u] That is what I
will do to those who have not listened to
me, says the Lord Almighty."

New Israel's Reward

10 Thus says the Lord to Ezra: "Tell
my people that I will give them the king-
dom of Jerusalem, which I was going to
give to Israel. 11Moreover, I will take back
to myself their glory, and will give to these

n Other ancient authorities lack *with you*
o Other ancient authorities read *their iniquities*
p Other ancient authorities read *The apostles bear witness to the coming people with joy*
q Other ancient authorities read *brother*
r Other ancient authorities read *and Jacob, Elijah and Enoch, Zechariah and Hosea, Amos, Joel, Micah, Obadiah, Zephaniah, 40Nahum, Jonah, Mattia* (or *Mattathias*), *Habakkuk, and twelve angels with flowers*
s Other ancient authorities read *They begat for themselves a mother who* *t* Other ancient authorities read *in his sight* *u* Other ancient authorities read *Gomorrah, whose land descends to hell*

2.3) and other Jewish writings (e.g., *Jubilees* 1.12; *1 Enoch* 89.51–53). **1.35** This verse indicates the transfer of Israel's position to the Christians. In particular, the gentile Christians are implied here. The *signs* are Christ's signs while alive. **1.36** Again the Gentiles are implied. The book of Jonah makes an analogous point from an intra-Israelite perspective. **1.38** The unique title *father* denotes Ezra; see also 2.5. Father is a prophetic title (2 Kings 2.12). Does *from the east* imply that the place of origin of 5 Ezra was Palestine? Is this a different group of Christians from those referred to in vv. 35–37? **1.39–40** The *leaders* are the three patriarchs of Israel and twelve minor prophets. **1.40** *Malachi* in Hebrew means "my messenger." Ezra is identified as Malachi by rabbinic sources.

2.1–9 God judges and rejects Israel as a mother rejects her children. **2.1** The laws are given through *prophets*; cf. Ezra 9.10–11; Dan 9.10. **2.2** Zion speaks as Israel's *mother*, a biblical idea (cf. esp. Bar 4.5–29). She is both widowed and deserted and rejects her children (v. 4). **2.5** The writer invokes the *father*, God (or perhaps Ezra), and the *mother*, Zion, to witness and pronounces doom on the children and ruin on the mother. The imagery of dual rejection is particularly powerful. **2.7** *Scattering* is an ultimate curse for disobedience (Lev 26.33); *names . . . blotted out* expresses annihilation—Israel's very name will be forgotten. **2.8** *Assyria* may be a cognomen for Rome, replacing the more common "Babylon"; cf. 3.1. The Jews and the Romans who harbored them are cursed.

2.10–14 The reward for the new Israel. **2.11** In *habitations* the righteous Christians are to

others the everlasting habitations, which I
had prepared for Israel.[v] 12 The tree of
life shall give them fragrant perfume, and
they shall neither toil nor become weary.
13 Go[w] and you will receive; pray that
your days may be few, that they may be
shortened. The kingdom is already pre-
pared for you; be on the watch! 14 Call,
O call heaven and earth to witness: I set
aside evil and created good; for I am the
Living One, says the Lord.

Exhortation to Good Works

15 "Mother, embrace your children;
bring them up with gladness, as does a
dove; strengthen their feet, because I
have chosen you, says the Lord. 16 And I
will raise up the dead from their places,
and bring them out from their tombs, be-
cause I recognize my name in them. 17 Do
not fear, mother of children, for I have
chosen you, says the Lord. 18 I will send
you help, my servants Isaiah and Jere-
miah. According to their counsel I have
consecrated and prepared for you twelve
trees loaded with various fruits, 19 and the
same number of springs flowing with milk
and honey, and seven mighty mountains
on which roses and lilies grow; by these I
will fill your children with joy.

20 "Guard the rights of the widow, se-
cure justice for the ward, give to the
needy, defend the orphan, clothe the na-
ked, 21 care for the injured and the weak,
do not ridicule the lame, protect the
maimed, and let the blind have a vision of
my splendor. 22 Protect the old and the
young within your walls. 23 When you find
any who are dead, commit them to the
grave and mark it,[x] and I will give you
the first place in my resurrection. 24 Pause
and be quiet, my people, because your
rest will come.

25 "Good nurse, nourish your chil-
dren; strengthen their feet. 26 Not one of
the servants[y] whom I have given you
will perish, for I will require them from
among your number. 27 Do not be anx-
ious, for when the day of tribulation and
anguish comes, others shall weep and be
sorrowful, but you shall rejoice and have
abundance. 28 The nations shall envy you,
but they shall not be able to do anything
against you, says the Lord. 29 My power
will protect[z] you, so that your children
may not see hell.[a]

30 "Rejoice, O mother, with your chil-
dren, because I will deliver you, says the
Lord. 31 Remember your children that
sleep, because I will bring them out of the
hiding places of the earth, and will show
mercy to them; for I am merciful, says
the Lord Almighty. 32 Embrace your chil-
dren until I come, and proclaim mercy to
them; because my springs run over, and
my grace will not fail."

Ezra on Mount Horeb

33 I, Ezra, received a command from
the Lord on Mount Horeb to go to Israel.
When I came to them they rejected me
and refused the Lord's commandment.
34 Therefore I say to you, O nations that
hear and understand, "Wait for your
shepherd; he will give you everlasting
rest, because he who will come at the end

v Lat *for those* w Other ancient authorities read *Seek* x Or *seal it*; or *mark them and commit them to the grave* y Or *slaves* z Lat *hands will cover*
a Lat *Gehenna*

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be rewarded and will be given glory; cf. 4.35; 7.98. **2.12** *Perfume.* Some thought the tree of life exuded a fragrance or oil rather than gave fruit; cf. *Life of Adam and Eve* 36.2, 40–42; *2 Enoch* 5.5. **2.13** Eschatological reward is created in advance. For the sense of urgency, cf., e.g., Mt 24.15–34; Mk 13.14–20; Rom 13.11–14; 1 Cor 7.29–31; 1 Thess 4.13–5.11; Rev 1.3; 22.10–12, 20.

2.15–32 The image of the mother is applied to the church. Resurrection is promised throughout this passage (e.g., vv. 16, 23, 29, 31). **2.18–19** A description of eschatological paradise. *Twelve trees.* Cf. Rev 22.2. *Milk and honey,* traditional symbols of fertility; cf. Ex 3.8. *Seven ... mountains,* perhaps the mountains of paradise (*1 Enoch* 24–25); Rome is known later as the city of seven hills, so this might be an inversion of Rome's role. **2.20–23** The call to protect the weak and particularly to care for the dead is standard biblical exhortation; cf. Tob 1.17 and, indeed, the whole book of Tobit. **2.24** *Rest* denotes eschatological reward; cf. 7.36; Heb 3.18–19; *1 Enoch* 11.2. **2.25–26** The *nurse* is the church; *your number* means "the number given to you"; the phrase may derive from Jn 17.12. **2.31** *Sleep,* death, but resurrection is implied.

2.33–41 A first-person address by Ezra. **2.33** The depiction of Ezra on *Mount Horeb* (i.e., Mount Sinai) suggests a typological comparison of Ezra with Moses; see ch. 14. Israel is again rejected. **2.34** *Shepherd* refers to Christ.

of the age is close at hand. 35 Be ready for
the rewards of the kingdom, because per-
petual light will shine on you forever-
more. 36 Flee from the shadow of this age,
receive the joy of your glory; I publicly
call on my savior to witness.[b] 37 Receive
what the Lord has entrusted to you and
be joyful, giving thanks to him who has
called you to the celestial kingdoms.
38 Rise, stand erect and see the number of
those who have been sealed at the feast of
the Lord. 39 Those who have departed
from the shadow of this age have received
glorious garments from the Lord. 40 Take
again your full number, O Zion, and close
the list of your people who are clothed in
white, who have fulfilled the law of the
Lord. 41 The number of your children,
whom you desired, is now complete; im-
plore the Lord's authority that your peo-
ple, who have been called from the
beginning, may be made holy."

Ezra Sees the Son of God

42 I, Ezra, saw on Mount Zion a great
multitude that I could not number, and
they all were praising the Lord with
songs. 43 In their midst was a young man
of great stature, taller than any of the oth-
ers, and on the head of each of them he
placed a crown, but he was more exalted
than they. And I was held spellbound.
44 Then I asked an angel, "Who are these,
my lord?" 45 He answered and said to me,
"These are they who have put off mortal
clothing and have put on the immortal,
and have confessed the name of God.
Now they are being crowned, and receive
palms." 46 Then I said to the angel, "Who
is that young man who is placing crowns
on them and putting palms in their
hands?" 47 He answered and said to me,
"He is the Son of God, whom they con-
fessed in the world." So I began to praise
those who had stood valiantly for the
name of the Lord.[c] 48 Then the angel
said to me, "Go, tell my people how great
and how many are the wonders of the
Lord God that you have seen."

First Vision: Ezra's Address

3 In the thirtieth year after the de-
struction of the city, I was in Babylon
—I, Salathiel, who am also called Ezra. I
was troubled as I lay on my bed, and my
thoughts welled up in my heart, 2 because
I saw the desolation of Zion and the
wealth of those who lived in Babylon. 3 My
spirit was greatly agitated, and I began to
speak anxious words to the Most High,
and said, 4 "O sovereign Lord, did you
not speak at the beginning when you
planted[d] the earth—and that without
help—and commanded the dust[e] 5 and it
gave you Adam, a lifeless body? Yet he
was the creation of your hands, and you
breathed into him the breath of life, and
he was made alive in your presence. 6 And
you led him into the garden that your
right hand had planted before the earth
appeared. 7 And you laid upon him one
commandment of yours; but he trans-
gressed it, and immediately you ap-
pointed death for him and for his
descendants. From him there sprang na-
tions and tribes, peoples and clans without

b Other ancient authorities read *I testify that my savior has been commissioned by the Lord*
c Other ancient authorities read *to praise and glorify the Lord* *d* Other ancient authorities read *formed*
e Syr Ethiop: Lat *people* or *world*

2.35 *Light will shine* upon the righteous; cf. Isa 60.19–20; Rev 21.23. **2.36** *Savior* clearly means Christ. **2.37** The soul is what is *entrusted*; see 1 Tim 6.20; 2 Tim 1.12, 14; Hermas *Mandates* 3.2. **2.38** *Sealed*. See Ezek 9.4; Rev 7.2–8. **2.39** *Glorious garments* are the shining robes of the righteous at the end; cf. Rev 3.4–5. **2.40–41** The *number* of the righteous is fixed; cf. 4.36.

2.42–48 Christ confirms the predictions offered in the preceding passage. **2.42** *Mount Zion*. Cf. ch. 13; Rev 14.1. **2.43** A similar description of the *crowning* is in Hermas *Similitudes* 8.2.1; 8.3.6. **2.45** Victors receive *palms*, perhaps referring to martyrs.

3.1–14.48 Chs. 3–14 form a separate work, a Jewish apocalypse containing seven visions; it is often called 4 Ezra (see Introduction).

3.1–5.15 First vision. **3.1–3** The introduction to the first vision. **3.1** Cf. Ezek 1.1. *Salathiel* is used only here; cf. Dan 4.5. **3.3** The onset of inspiration is described. *Most High* is the usual title for God in this book. **3.4–36** Ezra's address falls into two parts. Vv. 4–27 are an indictment of God; vv. 28–36 set forth the specific charges. **3.4** *Speak, without help*. God creates alone (perhaps a polemical assertion) and by speech; cf. Ps 33.6, 9. **3.5** The idea of God's *hands* also occurs in 8.7, 44; *2 Enoch* A 44.1. **3.6** Eden was created before the world, a common exegesis of Gen 2.8.

number. 8 And every nation walked after
its own will; they did ungodly things in
your sight and rejected your commands,
and you did not hinder them. 9 But again,
in its time you brought the flood upon the
inhabitants of the world and destroyed
them. 10 And the same fate befell all of
them: just as death came upon Adam, so
the flood upon them. 11 But you left one
of them, Noah with his household, and
all the righteous who have descended
from him.

12 "When those who lived on earth
began to multiply, they produced children and peoples and many nations, and
again they began to be more ungodly than
were their ancestors. 13 And when they
were committing iniquity in your sight,
you chose for yourself one of them, whose
name was Abraham; 14 you loved him,
and to him alone you revealed the end of
the times, secretly by night. 15 You made
an everlasting covenant with him, and
promised him that you would never forsake his descendants; and you gave him
Isaac, and to Isaac you gave Jacob and
Esau. 16 You set apart Jacob for yourself,
but Esau you rejected; and Jacob became
a great multitude. 17 And when you led
his descendants out of Egypt, you brought
them to Mount Sinai. 18 You bent down
the heavens and shook[f] the earth, and
moved the world, and caused the depths
to tremble, and troubled the times.
19 Your glory passed through the four
gates of fire and earthquake and wind
and ice, to give the law to the descendants
of Jacob, and your commandment to the
posterity of Israel.

20 "Yet you did not take away their
evil heart from them, so that your law
might produce fruit in them. 21 For the
first Adam, burdened with an evil heart,
transgressed and was overcome, as were
also all who were descended from him.
22 Thus the disease became permanent;
the law was in the hearts of the people
along with the evil root; but what was
good departed, and the evil remained.
23 So the times passed and the years were
completed, and you raised up for yourself
a servant, named David. 24 You commanded him to build a city for your
name, and there to offer you oblations
from what is yours. 25 This was done for
many years; but the inhabitants of the city
transgressed, 26 in everything doing just
as Adam and all his descendants had
done, for they also had the evil heart.
27 So you handed over your city to your
enemies.

28 "Then I said in my heart, Are the
deeds of those who inhabit Babylon any
better? Is that why it has gained dominion
over Zion? 29 For when I came here I saw
ungodly deeds without number, and my
soul has seen many sinners during these
thirty years.[g] And my heart failed me,
30 because I have seen how you endure
those who sin, and have spared those who
act wickedly, and have destroyed your
people, and protected your enemies,
31 and have not shown to anyone how
your way may be comprehended.[h] Are
the deeds of Babylon better than those of
Zion? 32 Or has another nation known you

f Syr Ethiop Arab 1 Georg: Lat *set fast*
g Ethiop Arab 1 Arm: Lat Syr *in this thirtieth year*
h Syr; compare Ethiop: Lat *how this way should be forsaken*

3.8 God did not prevent human sin; see also 3.20. **3.10** *Adam*'s punishment is again evoked; cf. vv. 21, 26. **3.14** The night revelation is that of Gen 15.17; cf. *Apocalypse of Abraham*. It concerned secrets about the end of times also in many rabbinic sources. Cf. 14.5–6. **3.15** Cf. Gen 15.18–21; Josh 24.3–4. **3.16** See Mal 1.2–3. *Esau* may signify Rome. **3.17** Moses is not mentioned. **3.18** See Ex 19.18; *times* might be better translated "universe." **3.19** The *gates* are of the storehouses of the weather; cf. Ps 78.23; *1 Enoch* 36.1; 76.1–14. **3.20–21** The *evil heart* is the inclination to sin; cf. 4.30. Humans were created with it, transgressed as a result, and became mortal. This accords generally with rabbinic ideas. *Fruit* is reward. **3.22** *Evil root*. Cf. 8.53; see Ps 155.13–14 in the Dead Sea Scrolls *Psalms Scroll* (11QPs[a]). The view expressed in this verse differs from that in Rom 7 and is modified later in the book; see 2 Esd 3.32–36; 7.116–31. **3.23–24** In 10.46 Solomon builds the city. **3.26** Israel's sin is parallel to *Adam*'s; both lead to expulsion; cf. *Genesis Rabbah* 19.9. Thus Israel's exile results from the way God created the world. **3.28** *Then I said in my heart*. A reflective tone enters the address. The concern resembles that in Isa 10.5–8; Jer 25.8–14. **3.29** *Here*, Babylon. **3.30** The problem arises from comparing Israel's fate and that of the nations. **3.31** Ezra wishes to understand God's way of conducting the world. For *way* of God, see 4.2, 11; Rom 11.33; Dead Sea Scrolls *Thanksgiving Hymns* (1QH) 7.31–32. God's action is unknowable; cf. Job 9.11–12; Isa 40.13. **3.32** Israel, though not perfect, is better than the

besides Israel? Or what tribes have so believed the covenants as these tribes of Jacob? 33 Yet their reward has not appeared and their labor has borne no fruit. For I have traveled widely among the nations and have seen that they abound in wealth, though they are unmindful of your commandments. 34 Now therefore weigh in a balance our iniquities and those of the inhabitants of the world; and it will be found which way the turn of the scale will incline. 35 When have the inhabitants of the earth not sinned in your sight? Or what nation has kept your commandments so well? 36 You may indeed find individuals who have kept your commandments, but nations you will not find."

The Dispute

4 Then the angel that had been sent to me, whose name was Uriel, answered 2 and said to me, "Your understanding has utterly failed regarding this world, and do you think you can comprehend the way of the Most High?" 3 Then I said, "Yes, my lord." And he replied to me, "I have been sent to show you three ways, and to put before you three problems. 4 If you can solve one of them for me, then I will show you the way you desire to see, and will teach you why the heart is evil."

5 I said, "Speak, my lord."

And he said to me, "Go, weigh for me the weight of fire, or measure for me a blast[i] of wind, or call back for me the day that is past."

6 I answered and said, "Who of those that have been born can do that, that you should ask me about such things?"

7 And he said to me, "If I had asked you, 'How many dwellings are in the heart of the sea, or how many streams are at the source of the deep, or how many streams are above the firmament, or which are the exits of Hades, or which are the entrances[j] of paradise?' 8 perhaps you would have said to me, 'I never went down into the deep, nor as yet into Hades, neither did I ever ascend into heaven.' 9 But now I have asked you only about fire and wind and the day—things that you have experienced and from which you cannot be separated, and you have given me no answer about them." 10 He said to me, "You cannot understand the things with which you have grown up; 11 how then can your mind comprehend the way of the Most High? And how can one who is already worn out[k] by the corrupt world understand incorruption?"[l] When I heard this, I fell on my face[m] 12 and said to him, "It would have been better for us not to be here than to come here and live in ungodliness, and to suffer and not understand why."

13 He answered me and said, "I went into a forest of trees of the plain, and they made a plan 14 and said, 'Come, let us go and make war against the sea, so that it may recede before us and so that we may make for ourselves more forests.' 15 In like manner the waves of the sea also made a plan and said, 'Come, let us go up and subdue the forest of the plain so that there also we may gain more territory for ourselves.' 16 But the plan of the forest was in vain, for the fire came and consumed it; 17 likewise also the plan of the

i Syr Ethiop Arab 1 Arab 2 Georg *a measure*
j Syr Compare Ethiop Arab 2 Arm: Lat lacks *of Hades, or which are the entrances*
k Meaning of Lat uncertain *l* Syr Ethiop *the way of the incorruptible?* *m* Syr Ethiop Arab 1: Meaning of Lat uncertain

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others. **3.34** The *scale* weighing human deeds also occurs in *1 Enoch* 41.1; 61.8; *2 Enoch* 44.5. **3.35–36** These verses stress the injustice of God's punishment of Israel.

4.1–25 The seer and the angel argue. **4.1** *Uriel* appears without introduction. He often reveals secrets; cf. *1 Enoch* 19.1. **4.2** *Utterly failed*, better "quite confounded." **4.3** Uriel poses three riddles to Ezra, oddly called *ways*. **4.5–8** These questions and those in 5.36–37 imply a rejection of common subjects in apocalypses; cf. *2 Apocalypse of Baruch* 59.5–11. **4.7–8** The angel shows Ezra the limitations of his knowledge. The questions are patterned on Job 38.16–17. *Streams above the firmament* are the orbits of the luminaries. **4.9** The angel's point resembles that in Job 37.14–39.30. **4.11** Instead of *one who is already worn out*, read "your vessel," i.e., your body; cf. 7.88; *Apocalypse of Moses* 31.4. **4.12** Understanding is stressed. **4.13** *I went into a forest of trees of the plain*. The best text reads: *Once upon a time the forests of trees of the plain set forth*. There are other such nature parables in 4.13–18; 4.48–49; 7.3–9; 7.51–56; 8.41–43; 10.9–13. **4.15** The conflict between land and sea may have mythical roots. **4.17** For *sand* as a barrier, see Jer 5.22.

waves of the sea was in vain,[n] for the sand
stood firm and blocked it. 18 If now you
were a judge between them, which would
you undertake to justify, and which to
condemn?"
19 I answered and said, "Each made a
foolish plan, for the land has been as-
signed to the forest, and the locale of the
sea a place to carry its waves."
20 He answered me and said, "You
have judged rightly, but why have you not
judged so in your own case? 21 For as the
land has been assigned to the forest and
the sea to its waves, so also those who in-
habit the earth can understand only what
is on the earth, and he who is[o] above the
heavens can understand what is above the
height of the heavens."
22 Then I answered and said, "I im-
plore you, my lord, why[p] have I been en-
dowed with the power of understanding?
23 For I did not wish to inquire about the
ways above, but about those things that we
daily experience: why Israel has been
given over to the Gentiles in disgrace; why
the people whom you loved has been
given over to godless tribes, and the law of
our ancestors has been brought to de-
struction and the written covenants no
longer exist. 24 We pass from the world
like locusts, and our life is like a mist,[q]
and we are not worthy to obtain mercy.
25 But what will he do for his[r] name that
is invoked over us? It is about these things
that I have asked."

Predictive Discussion

26 He answered me and said, "If you
are alive, you will see, and if you live
long,[s] you will often marvel, because the
age is hurrying swiftly to its end. 27 It will
not be able to bring the things that have
been promised to the righteous in their
appointed times, because this age is full of
sadness and infirmities. 28 For the evil
about which[t] you ask me has been sown,
but the harvest of it has not yet come. 29 If
therefore that which has been sown is not
reaped, and if the place where the evil has
been sown does not pass away, the field
where the good has been sown will not
come. 30 For a grain of evil seed was sown
in Adam's heart from the beginning, and
how much ungodliness it has produced
until now—and will produce until the
time of threshing comes! 31 Consider now
for yourself how much fruit of ungodli-
ness a grain of evil seed has produced.
32 When heads of grain without number
are sown, how great a threshing floor they
will fill!"

Predictive Dialogue

33 Then I answered and said, "How
long?[t] When will these things be? Why
are our years few and evil?" 34 He an-
swered me and said, "Do not be in a
greater hurry than the Most High. You,
indeed, are in a hurry for yourself,[u] but
the Highest is in a hurry on behalf of
many. 35 Did not the souls of the righteous
in their chambers ask about these matters,
saying, 'How long are we to remain
here?[v] And when will the harvest of our

n Lat lacks *was in vain* *o* Or *those who are*
p Syr Ethiop Arm: Meaning of Lat uncertain
q Syr Ethiop Arab Georg: Lat *a trembling*
r Ethiop adds *holy* *s* Syr: Lat *live*
t Syr Ethiop: Meaning of Lat uncertain
u Syr Ethiop Arab Arm: Meaning of Lat uncertain
v Syr Ethiop Arab 2 Georg: Lat *How long do I hope thus?*

4.21 The moral of the parable is Ezra's constitutional inability to understand the way of the Most High. **4.22–25** A rephrasing of the question of understanding; Ezra has not been convinced by the angel's argument. Israel's fate is incomprehensible in light of God's love for Israel. **4.23** The destruction of all of scripture is meant; cf. 14.21. **4.25** Cf. *2 Apocalypse of Baruch* 21.21.

4.26–32 A transitional oracle. The author shifts from disputatious to predictive dialogue. **4.26** This verse implies the dominant idea of the imminence of the *end* and refers to the author's own time. Of course, "Ezra" is only a pseudonym. The terms *marvel* and "wonder" are used almost exclusively of eschatological events; cf. 7.27; 13.14; 13.50; 13.56; 14.5. **4.27** *Appointed times* implies predestinarian ideas. **4.28** *Harvest* means the fruit of action, i.e., recompense. Agricultural imagery dominates this passage. **4.29** The harvest is both in the human heart and this world. There will be a new heart and a new world.

4.33–52 Ezra continues to elicit information about the end by posing questions. **4.33** *Why are our years few and evil,* preferably "for our years are few and evil," expresses Ezra's sense of urgency. **4.34** *Do not be in a greater hurry than the Most High.* Cf. 5.33, 44; 8.47. **4.35–36a** These verses may be from another source. **4.35** *Chambers* are where souls repose after death; cf. 4.41; 7.32.

reward come?' 36 And the archangel Jeremiel answered and said, 'When the number of those like yourselves is completed;[w] for he has weighed the age in the balance, 37 and measured the times by measure, and numbered the times by number; and he will not move or arouse them until that measure is fulfilled.' "

38 Then I answered and said, "But, O sovereign Lord, all of us also are full of ungodliness. 39 It is perhaps on account of us that the time of threshing is delayed for the righteous—on account of the sins of those who inhabit the earth."

40 He answered me and said, "Go and ask a pregnant woman whether, when her nine months have been completed, her womb can keep the fetus within her any longer."

41 And I said, "No, lord, it cannot."

He said to me, "In Hades the chambers of the souls are like the womb. 42 For just as a woman who is in labor makes haste to escape the pangs of birth, so also do these places hasten to give back those things that were committed to them from the beginning. 43 Then the things that you desire to see will be disclosed to you."

44 I answered and said, "If I have found favor in your sight, and if it is possible, and if I am worthy, 45 show me this also: whether more time is to come than has passed, or whether for us the greater part has gone by. 46 For I know what has gone by, but I do not know what is to come."

47 And he said to me, "Stand at my right side, and I will show you the interpretation of a parable."

48 So I stood and looked, and lo, a flaming furnace passed by before me, and when the flame had gone by I looked, and lo, the smoke remained. 49 And after this a cloud full of water passed before me and poured down a heavy and violent rain, and when the violent rainstorm had passed, drops still remained in the cloud.[x]

50 He said to me, "Consider it for yourself; for just as the rain is more than the drops, and the fire is greater than the smoke, so the quantity that passed was far greater; but drops and smoke remained."

51 Then I prayed and said, "Do you think that I shall live until those days? Or who will be alive in those days?"

52 He answered me and said, "Concerning the signs about which you ask me, I can tell you in part; but I was not sent to tell you concerning your life, for I do not know.

Prediction of Woes

5 "Now concerning the signs: lo, the days are coming when those who inhabit the earth shall be seized with great terror,[y] and the way of truth shall be hidden, and the land shall be barren of faith. 2 Unrighteousness shall be increased beyond what you yourself see, and beyond what you heard of formerly. 3 And the land that you now see ruling shall be a trackless waste, and people shall see it desolate. 4 But if the Most High grants that you live, you shall see it thrown into confusion after the third period;[z]

and the sun shall suddenly begin
to shine at night,
and the moon during the day.

w Syr Ethiop Arab 2: Lat *number of seeds is completed for you* *x* Lat *in it* *y* Syr Ethiop: Meaning of Lat uncertain *z* Literally *after the third*; Ethiop *after three months*; Arm *after the third vision*; Georg *after the third day*

4.36–37 Cf. Wis 11.20. The idea of foreordination of the times is prominent. **4.36** *Jeremiel*, i.e., Jerachmeel, appears also in the *Coptic Apocalypses of Zephaniah* and the *Coptic Jeremiah Apocalypse*. *Number . . . is completed.* The predestined number of the created occurs in *2 Apocalypse of Baruch* 23.4–5; cf. 48.46. **4.38** *Sovereign Lord.* As often, the angel is addressed as if he were God. **4.40** The simile of the *pregnant woman* also occurs elsewhere; cf. 5.46, 48. **4.41** *In Hades the chambers*, better "the underworld and its treasuries." **4.42** *Committed.* Cf. 1 Tim 6.20; 2 Tim 1.12, 14; Pseudo-Philo *Biblical Antiquities* 3.10. Souls are something entrusted to humans. **4.44–52** This is a double parable, seen as a vision; cf. 4.13–18; 7.3–9; Jer 1.11–14. **4.51** *Who will be alive*, better "what will take place." The two questions in this verse derive from 4.26. **4.52** *Signs* are those terrible events that will take place before the end; cf. 5.1, 13. *In part.* The description continues in 6.11–28.

5.1–13 Prediction of the woes that will precede the eschaton, i.e., the end of this world-age. The passage has poetic form and traditional content. **5.1** *Lo, the days* gives a prophetic flavor; cf. 6.18; 7.26; Isa 39.6. *Way*, better "portion" or "lot." **5.2** Evil is to peak before the Messiah comes; cf. Mt 24.12. **5.3** The destruction of Rome. **5.4** *Period.* This word is quite uncertain. The confusion of the natural order is part of the

5 Blood shall drip from wood,
and the stone shall utter its voice;
the peoples shall be troubled,
and the stars shall fall.[a]
6 And one shall reign whom those who
inhabit the earth do not expect, and the
birds shall fly away together; 7 and the
Dead Sea[b] shall cast up fish; and one
whom the many do not know shall make
his voice heard by night, and all shall hear
his voice.[c] 8 There shall be chaos also in
many places, fire shall often break out,
the wild animals shall roam beyond their
haunts, and menstruous women shall
bring forth monsters. 9 Salt waters shall be
found in the sweet, and all friends shall
conquer one another; then shall reason
hide itself, and wisdom shall withdraw
into its chamber, 10 and it shall be sought
by many but shall not be found, and un-
righteousness and unrestraint shall in-
crease on earth. 11 One country shall ask
its neighbor, 'Has righteousness, or any-
one who does right, passed through you?'
And it will answer, 'No.' 12 At that time
people shall hope but not obtain; they
shall labor, but their ways shall not pros-
per. 13 These are the signs that I am per-
mitted to tell you, and if you pray again,
and weep as you do now, and fast for
seven days, you shall hear yet greater
things than these."

Conclusion of the Vision

14 Then I woke up, and my body
shuddered violently, and my soul was so
troubled that it fainted. 15 But the angel
who had come and talked with me held
me and strengthened me and set me on
my feet.

Narrative Transition

16 Now on the second night Phaltiel, a
chief of the people, came to me and said,
"Where have you been? And why is your
face sad? 17 Or do you not know that Is-
rael has been entrusted to you in the land
of their exile? 18 Rise therefore and eat
some bread, and do not forsake us, like a
shepherd who leaves the flock in the
power of savage wolves."

19 Then I said to him, "Go away from
me and do not come near me for seven
days; then you may come to me."

He heard what I said and left me. 20 So
I fasted seven days, mourning and
weeping, as the angel Uriel had com-
manded me.

Second Vision: Ezra's Address

21 After seven days the thoughts of
my heart were very grievous to me again.
22 Then my soul recovered the spirit of
understanding, and I began once more to
speak words in the presence of the Most
High. 23 I said, "O sovereign Lord, from
every forest of the earth and from all its
trees you have chosen one vine, 24 and
from all the lands of the world you have
chosen for yourself one region,[d] and
from all the flowers of the world you have

a Ethiop Compare Syr and Arab: Meaning of Lat uncertain *b* Lat *Sea of Sodom* *c* Cn: Lat *fish; and it shall make its voice heard by night, which the many have not known, but all shall hear its voice.* *d* Ethiop: Lat *pit*

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eschatological woes. **5.5** *Blood . . . wood.* Cf. *Letter of Barnabas* 12.1. **5.6** *One shall reign.* This is not a specific ruler, but the expected wicked future king; cf. *2 Apocalypse of Baruch* 40.1. **5.8** *Chaos,* better "chasms"; cf. Zech 14.4; *Sibylline Oracles* 3.341. **5.9** *Friends . . . conquer one another.* Conflict between friends or relatives is part of the messianic woes; cf. Isa 19.2; Mt 24.7; Mk 13.8; *1 Enoch* 56.7. **5.13** End of the vision. *Fasts* or limited food precede the second, third, fourth, and fifth visions.

5.14–15 Conclusion of the vision. **5.14** *Woke up* describes Ezra's leaving the trance; he is frightened and faints; cf. Zech 4.1; Dan 7.15. The angel functions similarly in Dan 8.18; 10.10–11.

5.16–22 Narrative transition to the second vision. The only similar narrative is 12.40–50. Vv. 20–22 resemble the other transitions; see 3.1–3. **5.16** *Phaltiel* is no known person; for the name, cf. Num 34.26; 2 Sam 3.15. **5.18** The image of *shepherds* is often used for the leaders of the people: see Acts 20.29; *1 Enoch* 89. **5.19** Add at the end of the verse "and I will tell you the matter." **5.22** *Recovered,* better "received." This is the onset of the seer's inspiration.

5.23–6.34 Second vision. **5.23–30** Ezra's address functions just like 3.4–36 in the first vision. Vv. 23–27 have a common rhetorical structure, *from all . . . you have chosen,* highlighting the election of Israel. **5.23** Cf. *Apocalypse of Sedrach* 8.2. Israel is a *vine*; see 2 Esd 9.21; Isa 5.7; Jer 2.21. **5.24** *From all the lands . . . one region,* the election of the land; see Gen 12.1; *2 Apocalypse of Baruch* 40.2; and many other sources. *Lily.* See

chosen for yourself one lily, 25 and from
all the depths of the sea you have filled
for yourself one river, and from all the
cities that have been built you have consecrated Zion for yourself, 26 and from all
the birds that have been created you have
named for yourself one dove, and from
all the flocks that have been made you
have provided for yourself one sheep,
27 and from all the multitude of peoples
you have gotten for yourself one people;
and to this people, whom you have loved,
you have given the law that is approved by
all. 28 And now, O Lord, why have you
handed the one over to the many, and dishonored[e] the one root beyond the others, and scattered your only one among
the many? 29 And those who opposed
your promises have trampled on those
who believed your covenants. 30 If you really hate your people, they should be punished at your own hands."

Dispute

31 When I had spoken these words,
the angel who had come to me on a previous night was sent to me. 32 He said to me,
"Listen to me, and I will instruct you; pay
attention to me, and I will tell you more."

33 Then I said, "Speak, my lord." And
he said to me, "Are you greatly disturbed
in mind over Israel? Or do you love him
more than his Maker does?"

34 I said, "No, my lord, but because of
my grief I have spoken; for every hour I
suffer agonies of heart, while I strive to
understand the way of the Most High and
to search out some part of his judgment."

35 He said to me, "You cannot." And
I said, "Why not, my lord? Why then was
I born? Or why did not my mother's
womb become my grave, so that I would
not see the travail of Jacob and the exhaustion of the people of Israel?"

36 He said to me, "Count up for me
those who have not yet come, and gather
for me the scattered raindrops, and make
the withered flowers bloom again for me;
37 open for me the closed chambers, and
bring out for me the winds shut up in
them, or show me the picture of a voice;
and then I will explain to you the travail
that you ask to understand."[f]

38 I said, "O sovereign Lord, who is
able to know these things except him
whose dwelling is not with mortals? 39 As
for me, I am without wisdom, and how can
I speak concerning the things that you
have asked me?"

40 He said to me, "Just as you cannot
do one of the things that were mentioned,
so you cannot discover my judgment, or
the goal of the love that I have promised
to my people."

Predictive Dialogue About the Last Things

41 I said, "Yet, O Lord, you have
charge of those who are alive at the end,
but what will those do who lived before
me, or we, ourselves, or those who come
after us?"

42 He said to me, "I shall liken my
judgment to a circle;[g] just as for those
who are last there is no slowness, so for
those who are first there is no haste."

43 Then I answered and said, "Could
you not have created at one time those
who have been and those who are and
those who will be, so that you might show
your judgment the sooner?"

e Syr Ethiop Arab: Lat *prepared* f Lat *see*
g Or *crown*

Hos 14.6; Song 2.1–2. **5.25** The *river* is the Jordan. *Zion*, the site of the temple, is *consecrated* as a sacred place where sacrifices are offered. **5.26** *From all the birds . . . one dove*, based on an allegorical interpretation of Song 2.14; 5.2. *Sheep* and *flocks* evoke Israel's nomadic origins. **5.28** These questions focus the address on the problems arising from Israel's election and fate. **5.29** *Promises*, better "Torah." **5.30** Punishment should come from God, an old idea; see 2 Sam 24.14; Sir 2.18.

5.31–40 Dispute. **5.32** Similar invocations are found in Job 33.1; Prov 4.1. Cf. 2 Esd 7.49. **5.33** Cf. 4.34; 5.47. Ezra can no more exceed God's love than he can know God's way. **5.34** Ezra's mourning for Israel. **5.35** This sentiment is found elsewhere; cf. 1 Macc 2.7; *2 Apocalypse of Baruch* 3.1–2; 10.6–7. **5.36–37** These seven riddles (see note on 5.37) complement those in 4.5–8 and are drawn from the same list. Cf. Sir 1.2; *2 Enoch* 47.5. **5.37** *Winds* could also be translated "spirits." The better texts also have "or show me the appearance of him whom you have never seen" following *shut up in them*. **5.38** Cf. 4.6, 13–19, 21.

5.41–6.10 Predictive dialogue concerning the last things. **5.41** *Have charge of*, perhaps "promise." **5.42** *Circle*, perhaps better *crown* (see text note *g*). The circularity of the crown implies iden-

44 He replied to me and said, "The creation cannot move faster than the Creator, nor can the world hold at one time those who have been created in it."

45 I said, "How have you said to your servant that you[h] will certainly give life at one time to your creation? If therefore all creatures will live at one time[i] and the creation will sustain them, it might even now be able to support all of them present at one time."

46 He said to me, "Ask a woman's womb, and say to it, 'If you bear ten[j] children, why one after another?' Request it therefore to produce ten at one time."

47 I said, "Of course it cannot, but only each in its own time."

48 He said to me, "Even so I have given the womb of the earth to those who from time to time are sown in it. 49 For as an infant does not bring forth, and a woman who has become old does not bring forth any longer, so I have made the same rule for the world that I created."

50 Then I inquired and said, "Since you have now given me the opportunity, let me speak before you. Is our mother, of whom you have told me, still young? Or is she now approaching old age?"

51 He replied to me, "Ask a woman who bears children, and she will tell you. 52 Say to her, 'Why are those whom you have borne recently not like those whom you bore before, but smaller in stature?' 53 And she herself will answer you, 'Those born in the strength of youth are different from those born during the time of old age, when the womb is failing.' 54 Therefore you also should consider that you and your contemporaries are smaller in stature than those who were before you, 55 and those who come after you will be smaller than you, as born of a creation that already is aging and passing the strength of youth."

56 I said, "I implore you, O Lord, if I have found favor in your sight, show your servant through whom you will visit your creation."

6 He said to me, "At the beginning of the circle of the earth, before[k] the portals of the world were in place, and before the assembled winds blew, 2 and before the rumblings of thunder sounded, and before the flashes of lightning shone, and before the foundations of paradise were laid, 3 and before the beautiful flowers were seen, and before the powers of movements[l] were established, and before the innumerable hosts of angels were gathered together, 4 and before the heights of the air were lifted up, and before the measures of the firmaments were named, and before the footstool of Zion was established, 5 and before the present years were reckoned and before the imaginations of those who now sin were estranged, and before those who stored up treasures of faith were sealed— 6 then I planned these things, and they were made through me alone and not through another; just as the end shall come through me alone and not through another."

7 I answered and said, "What will be the dividing of the times? Or when will be the end of the first age and the beginning of the age that follows?"

8 He said to me, "From Abraham to

h Syr Ethiop Arab 1: Meaning of Lat uncertain
i Lat lacks *If . . . one time* *j* Syr Ethiop Arab 2 Arm: Meaning of Lat uncertain
k Meaning of Lat uncertain: Compare Syr *The beginning by the hand of humankind, but the end by my own hands. For as before the land of the world existed there, and before*; Ethiop: *At first by the Son of Man, and afterwards I myself. For before the earth and the lands were created, and before* *l* Or *earthquakes*

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tity of beginning and end. **5.44** *The creation . . . Creator.* Cf. 4.26–27, 34. The end cannot be forced. **5.45** *Give life . . . to your creation.* The resurrection is implied. **5.48** The earth is both mother and womb; cf. 10.9–14. **5.50** The senescence of the earth and consequent breakdown of order; cf. 5.55; 14.10. This implies an overall scheme of history. **5.52–55** Degeneration of offspring corresponds to degeneration of the generations. **6.1** After *he said to me* should be added "The beginning is through a human being and the end is through myself." Instead of *at the beginning of,* read "for before." **6.2** Paradise was created before the world; cf. 3.6. **6.3** *Powers of movements,* probably angels; cf. Mt 24.29. **6.4** *Zion* is God's footstool; cf. Pss 99.5; 132.7. **6.5** Predetermination is stressed. **6.6** *Just as . . . another* should be omitted; it is in the Latin but not in any of the other versions. God alone planned and created. **6.8–10** The answer to the double question of 6.7. *From Abraham to Isaac.* Read *From Abraham to Abraham* (text note *m*); i.e., there is no division of the times, yet the second *Abraham* denotes Esau and Jacob, who followed one another immediately. So Rome (Esau) will be followed by Israel's kingdom.

Isaac,[m] because from him were born
Jacob and Esau, for Jacob's hand held
Esau's heel from the beginning. 9 Now
Esau is the end of this age, and Jacob is
the beginning of the age that follows.
10 The beginning of a person is the hand,
and the end of a person is the heel;[n] seek
for nothing else, Ezra, between the heel
and the hand, Ezra!"

Prediction of Signs

11 I answered and said, "O sovereign
Lord, if I have found favor in your sight,
12 show your servant the last of your signs
of which you showed me a part on a previ-
ous night."

13 He answered and said to me, "Rise
to your feet and you will hear a full, re-
sounding voice. 14 And if the place where
you are standing is greatly shaken 15 while
the voice is speaking, do not be terrified;
because the word concerns the end, and
the foundations of the earth will under-
stand 16 that the speech concerns them.
They will tremble and be shaken, for they
know that their end must be changed."

17 When I heard this, I got to my feet
and listened; a voice was speaking, and
its sound was like the sound of mighty[o]
waters. 18 It said, "The days are coming
when I draw near to visit the inhabitants
of the earth, 19 and when I require from
the doers of iniquity the penalty of their
iniquity, and when the humiliation of
Zion is complete. 20 When the seal is
placed upon the age that is about to pass
away, then I will show these signs: the
books shall be opened before the face of
the firmament, and all shall see my judg-
ment[p] together. 21 Children a year old
shall speak with their voices, and preg-
nant women shall give birth to premature
children at three and four months, and
these shall live and leap about. 22 Sown
places shall suddenly appear unsown, and
full storehouses shall suddenly be found
to be empty; 23 the trumpet shall sound
aloud, and when all hear it, they shall sud-
denly be terrified. 24 At that time friends
shall make war on friends like enemies,
the earth and those who inhabit it shall be
terrified, and the springs of the fountains
shall stand still, so that for three hours
they shall not flow.

25 "It shall be that whoever remains
after all that I have foretold to you shall
be saved and shall see my salvation and
the end of my world. 26 And they shall
see those who were taken up, who from
their birth have not tasted death; and the
heart of the earth's[q] inhabitants shall be
changed and converted to a different
spirit. 27 For evil shall be blotted out, and
deceit shall be quenched; 28 faithfulness
shall flourish, and corruption shall be
overcome, and the truth, which has been
so long without fruit, shall be revealed."

Conclusion of the Second Vision

29 While he spoke to me, little by little
the place where I was standing began to
rock to and fro.[r] 30 And he said to me, "I
have come to show you these things this
night.[s] 31 If therefore you will pray again
and fast again for seven days, I will again
declare to you greater things than these,[t]
32 because your voice has surely been

m Other ancient authorities read *to Abraham*
n Syr: Meaning of Lat uncertain *o* Lat *many*
p Syr: Lat lacks *my judgment*
q Syr Compare Ethiop Arab 1 Arm: Lat lacks *earth's* *r* Syr Ethiop Compare Arab Arm: Meaning of Lat uncertain
s Syr Compare Ethiop: Meaning of Lat uncertain
t Syr Ethiop Arab 1 Arm: Lat adds *by day*

6.11–29 A prediction of signs resembling 5.1–13 in form and continuing it. **6.13** *Rise to your feet,* for divine pronouncement. *A full, resounding voice.* Cf. the sound with Ezek 1.24; Dan 10.6. **6.14–16** The earth shakes when God appears (1 Kings 19.11–12; Joel 3.16); a cosmic change will happen. **6.18** God is speaking: *visit* means "punish"; see 5.56. **6.19–20** *When* these measures are filled, *then* omens will be revealed. *Books* of human deeds; see Dan 7.10; Rev 20.12; *2 Apocalypse of Baruch* 24.1. **6.21** The omen is a dramatic shortening of the normal life pattern. Cf. Gen 6.3; *Jubilees* 23.25. **6.22** The natural order is disrupted. **6.24** *Friends . . . like enemies,* social disorder; cf. note on 5.9; *1 Enoch* 100.1. **6.25** The first prophecy of redemption. *See my salvation.* Cf. 7.27; 9.8; 13.48, 50; Ps 91.16; Dead Sea Scrolls *Damascus Document* (CD) 20.34. **6.26** *Who . . . have not tasted death.* Perhaps including Enoch (Gen 5.24) and Elijah (2 Kings 2.9–12). *Heart . . . shall be changed.* See Ezek 11.19; 36.26. **6.27–28** An eschatological poem; cf. 7.33–35, 113–14; 14.18. *Corruption* designates this-worldly things. **6.29** The fulfillment of 6.13–16.

6.30–34 Conclusion including injunctions (cf. 5.13) and a statement of Ezra's worthiness (cf. 12.36; 14.45–46). **6.30** *This night,* better

heard by the Most High; for the Mighty
One has seen your uprightness and has
also observed the purity that you have
maintained from your youth. 33 Therefore he sent me to show you all these
things, and to say to you: 'Believe and do
not be afraid! 34 Do not be quick to think
vain thoughts concerning the former
times; then you will not act hastily in the
last times.' "

Third Vision: Ezra's Address

35 Now after this I wept again and
fasted seven days in the same way as before, in order to complete the three weeks
that had been prescribed for me. 36 Then
on the eighth night my heart was troubled
within me again, and I began to speak in
the presence of the Most High. 37 My
spirit was greatly aroused, and my soul
was in distress.

38 I said, "O Lord, you spoke at the
beginning of creation, and said on the
first day, 'Let heaven and earth be made,'
and your word accomplished the work.
39 Then the spirit was blowing, and darkness and silence embraced everything; the
sound of human voices was not yet
there.[u] 40 Then you commanded a ray
of light to be brought out from your
store-chambers, so that your works could
be seen.

41 "Again, on the second day, you created the spirit of the firmament, and commanded it to divide and separate the
waters, so that one part might move upward and the other part remain beneath.

42 "On the third day you commanded
the waters to be gathered together in a
seventh part of the earth; six parts you
dried up and kept so that some of them
might be planted and cultivated and be of
service before you. 43 For your word went
forth, and at once the work was done.
44 Immediately fruit came forth in endless
abundance and of varied appeal to the
taste, and flowers of inimitable color, and
odors of inexpressible fragrance. These
were made on the third day.

45 "On the fourth day you commanded the brightness of the sun, the
light of the moon, and the arrangement
of the stars to come into being; 46 and you
commanded them to serve humankind,
about to be formed.

47 "On the fifth day you commanded
the seventh part, where the water had
been gathered together, to bring forth living creatures, birds, and fishes; and so it
was done. 48 The dumb and lifeless water
produced living creatures, as it was commanded, so that therefore the nations
might declare your wondrous works.

49 "Then you kept in existence two
living creatures;[v] the one you called Behemoth[w] and the name of the other Leviathan. 50 And you separated one from the
other, for the seventh part where the water had been gathered together could not
hold them both. 51 And you gave Behemoth[w] one of the parts that had been
dried up on the third day, to live in it,
where there are a thousand mountains;
52 but to Leviathan you gave the seventh
part, the watery part; and you have kept
them to be eaten by whom you wish, and
when you wish.

53 "On the sixth day you commanded
the earth to bring forth before you cattle,
wild animals, and creeping things; 54 and
over these you placed Adam, as ruler over
all the works that you had made; and

u Syr Ethiop: Lat *was not yet from you*
v Syr Ethiop: Lat *two souls* *w* Other Lat authorities read *Enoch*

"on the night that has passed." **6.34** Oracular statements mark shifts in the revelatory dynamic. See 4.34.

6.35–9.25 Third vision. **6.35–37** Introduction. Cf. 3.1–3; 5.21–22. This vision is extremely long. **6.35** *Three weeks* of fasting, apparently taken from Dan 10.2–3. The first week is not mentioned before the first vision. **6.37** Ezra receives inspiration.

6.38–59 Address. Cf. 3.4–36; 5.23–30. A narrative of creation, followed by inferences from it. **6.38** Cf. Gen 1.1; *Jubilees* 2.2. Creation through speech; see 3.4. **6.39** Cf. Gen 1.2. Primordial silence; see 7.30; Pseudo-Philo *Biblical Antiquities* 60.2. Speech is an essential attribute characterizing the creation of humans. **6.40** Cf. Gen 1.3; *Jubilees* 2.2. **6.41** Spirits of natural phenomena; see also *Jubilees* 2.2, *1 Enoch* 60.15. **6.42** Cf. Gen 1.9–10; *Jubilees* 2.5–6; a sevenfold division of the world is unknown elsewhere. **6.44** Note the *fragrances*; cf. *1 Enoch* 24.3–4; *2 Enoch* 8.3. **6.45** Cf. Gen 1.14–19; *Jubilees* 2.8–10. **6.47** Cf. Gen 1.20; *Jubilees* 2.11. **6.49–52** *Behemoth, Leviathan*. These legendary animals developed from mythological origins. They will be the food at the eschatological banquet for the righteous, according to Jewish tradition; see *2 Apocalypse of Baruch* 29.4; *1 Enoch* 60.7–10.

from him we have all come, the people
whom you have chosen.
55 "All this I have spoken before you,
O Lord, because you have said that it was
for us that you created this world.[x] 56 As
for the other nations that have descended
from Adam, you have said that they are
nothing, and that they are like spittle, and
you have compared their abundance to a
drop from a bucket. 57 And now, O Lord,
these nations, which are reputed to be as
nothing, domineer over us and devour us.
58 But we your people, whom you have
called your firstborn, only begotten, zeal-
ous for you,[y] and most dear, have been
given into their hands. 59 If the world has
indeed been created for us, why do we not
possess our world as an inheritance? How
long will this be so?"

Dialogic Dispute

7 When I had finished speaking these
words, the angel who had been sent
to me on the former nights was sent to me
again. 2 He said to me, "Rise, Ezra, and
listen to the words that I have come to
speak to you."
3 I said, "Speak, my lord." And he
said to me, "There is a sea set in a wide
expanse so that it is deep and vast, 4 but it
has an entrance set in a narrow place, so
that it is like a river. 5 If there are those
who wish to reach the sea, to look at it or
to navigate it, how can they come to the
broad part unless they pass through the
narrow part? 6 Another example: There is
a city built and set on a plain, and it is full
of all good things; 7 but the entrance to it
is narrow and set in a precipitous place, so
that there is fire on the right hand and
deep water on the left. 8 There is only one
path lying between them, that is, between
the fire and the water, so that only one
person can walk on the path. 9 If now the
city is given to someone as an inheritance,
how will the heir receive the inheritance
unless by passing through the appointed
danger?"
10 I said, "That is right, lord." He said
to me, "So also is Israel's portion. 11 For I
made the world for their sake, and when
Adam transgressed my statutes, what had
been made was judged. 12 And so the en-
trances of this world were made narrow
and sorrowful and toilsome; they are few
and evil, full of dangers and involved in
great hardships. 13 But the entrances of
the greater world are broad and safe, and
yield the fruit of immortality. 14 There-
fore unless the living pass through the
difficult and futile experiences, they can
never receive those things that have been
reserved for them. 15 Now therefore why
are you disturbed, seeing that you are to
perish? Why are you moved, seeing that
you are mortal? 16 Why have you not con-
sidered in your mind what is to come,
rather than what is now present?"
17 Then I answered and said,
"O sovereign Lord, you have ordained in
your law that the righteous shall inherit
these things, but that the ungodly shall
perish. 18 The righteous, therefore, can
endure difficult circumstances while hop-
ing for easier ones; but those who have
done wickedly have suffered the difficult
circumstances and will never see the eas-
ier ones."

x Syr Ethiop Arab 2: Lat *the firstborn world* Compare Arab 1 *first world* y Meaning of Lat uncertain

6.55 The world was created for Israel's sake; see 6.59; 7.11; *Testament of Moses* 1.12; *Sifre Deuteronomy* 11.21; *Genesis Rabbah* 12.2. **6.56** Based on Isa 40.15, 17. **6.57** See 3.28; 5.28–29. **6.58** *Firstborn*. Cf. Ex 4.22; Jer 31.9. **6.59** *How long*. Cf. Pss 4.2; 13.2; *2 Apocalypse of Baruch* 81.3.

7.1–25 Ezra and the angel begin a dialogic dispute. **7.1** Parallel to 4.1; 5.31. **7.2** *Rise*. On standing for solemn events, cf. 4.47; 6.13. **7.3–5** The origins of this parable are unclear. **7.5** *Navigate* is an emendation of "rule over." **7.6–9** A second similar parable follows, as in Mk 4.26–33. The plenteous *city* evokes Jerusalem with the righteous. Similar images occur in Hermas *Similitudes* 9.12.5; *Testament of Job* 18.6. *Good things* means eschatological reward. **7.7** The word translated *entrance* could be "way." The way, with dangers on both sides, occurs in Ps 66.12 (Septuagint, Vulgate); Sir 15.11, 15–17; *Avot de Rabbi Nathan* A 28. **7.9** Israel is to inherit the world; cf. 6.59. **7.11** See note on 6.55. This view of the result of Adam's sin is to be found in contemporary Judaism. **7.12–13** Note the contrast *this world*/age and the *greater* (or "coming") *world*/age, common terms in NT and rabbinic sources. The fruit gives immortality; cf. Gen 3.6, 22. **7.14** Difficulties precede reward. **7.15–16** Rebuke questions, implying an assertion of Ezra's future immortality. **7.17** *Sovereign Lord*. The angel is frequently addressed as God.

19 He said to me, "You are not a better judge than the Lord,[z] or wiser than
the Most High! 20 Let many perish who
are now living, rather than that the law of
God that is set before them be disregarded! 21 For the Lord[a] strictly commanded those who came into the world,
when they came, what they should do
to live, and what they should observe
to avoid punishment. 22 Nevertheless
they were not obedient, and spoke
against him;

they devised for themselves vain thoughts,
23 and proposed to themselves wicked frauds;
they even declared that the Most High does not exist,
and they ignored his ways.
24 They scorned his law,
and denied his covenants;
they have been unfaithful to his statutes,
and have not performed his works.

25 That is the reason, Ezra, that empty
things are for the empty, and full things
are for the full.

Prediction

26 "For indeed the time will come,
when the signs that I have foretold to you
will come to pass, that the city that now is
not seen shall appear,[b] and the land that
now is hidden shall be disclosed. 27 Everyone who has been delivered from the evils
that I have foretold shall see my wonders.
28 For my son the Messiah[c] shall be revealed with those who are with him, and
those who remain shall rejoice four hundred years. 29 After those years my son
the Messiah shall die, and all who draw
human breath.[d] 30 Then the world shall
be turned back to primeval silence for
seven days, as it was at the first beginnings, so that no one shall be left. 31 After
seven days the world that is not yet awake
shall be roused, and that which is corruptible shall perish. 32 The earth shall give up
those who are asleep in it, and the dust
those who rest there in silence; and the
chambers shall give up the souls that have
been committed to them. 33 The Most
High shall be revealed on the seat of judgment, and compassion shall pass away,
and patience shall be withdrawn.[e] 34 Only
judgment shall remain, truth shall stand,
and faithfulness shall grow strong. 35 Recompense shall follow, and the reward
shall be manifested; righteous deeds shall
awake, and unrighteous deeds shall not
sleep.[f] 36 The pit[g] of torment shall appear, and opposite it shall be the place of
rest; and the furnace of hell[h] shall be disclosed, and opposite it the paradise of

z Other ancient authorities read *God*; Ethiop Georg *the only One* a Other ancient authorities read *God* b Arm: Lat Syr *that the bride shall appear, even the city appearing* c Syr Arab 1: Ethiop *my Messiah*; Arab 2 *the Messiah*; Arm *the Messiah of God*; Lat *my son Jesus* d Arm *all who have continued in faith and in patience* e Lat *shall gather together*
f The passage from verse *36* to verse *105*, formerly missing, has been restored to the text
g Syr Ethiop: Lat *place* h Lat Syr Ethiop *Gehenna*

The reference may be to Deut 8.1 or Ps 37.9. **7.18** Cf. 7.117–18. **7.19** Similar rebukes occur in 4.34; 5.33. **7.20** Alternately "let many perish ... who disregarded the law of God." *Perish* implies eternal death. **7.21** *Commanded.* See Deut 30.15–18; cf. Sir 15.17. **7.23–24** The wicked are charged with overall unfaithfulness (also 7.79, 81) and denying God's existence (also 7.37; 8.55–58; 9.10). Cf. Ps 14.1. **7.25** Oracular transitional statement; cf. note on 6.34.

7.26–44 The course of eschatological events is expounded. **7.26** *Indeed*, or "behold." The unseen *city* is heavenly Jerusalem; see the fourth vision (10.27–10.59). The *land* is the land of Israel; it is *hidden* since it was precreated. Cf. 6.14–16. **7.27** Those who survive the woes preceding the Messiah's advent shall see the wonders; cf. 6.25; 9.8. *Wonders* are eschatological events. **7.28** A kingdom with God or the Messiah living among its citizens is envisaged in *Psalms of Solomon* 17.32–36; *1 Enoch* 105.2. Its duration is limited; see 2 Esd 12.34. The Messiah's assumed companions are also mentioned in 13.52; 14.9; cf. 1 Thess 3.13. **7.29** That *the Messiah shall die* is not explicit elsewhere, but see *2 Apocalypse of Baruch* 30.1; cf. 1 Cor 15.28. **7.30** The world reverts to the primordial state. *Silence.* See 6.39. *Seven days* corresponds to seven days' creation. **7.31** *After seven days ... roused.* Cf. Pseudo-Philo *Biblical Antiquities* 3.10. **7.32** Omit the words *in silence.* For *chambers*, see note on 4.35. The reunion of soul and body in resurrection is described. **7.33** God alone judges humans; for the *seat of judgment*, see Dan 7.9. The withdrawal of *compassion* in judgment comes from the full revelation of truth; see 7.104. **7.35** *Recompense* follows judgment. **7.36** *Torment* is a common term for eschatological punishment (7.38, 47, 67), as are *rest* (7.38, 75, 95)

delight. 37 Then the Most High will say to
the nations that have been raised from the
dead, 'Look now, and understand whom
you have denied, whom you have not
served, whose commandments you have
despised. 38 Look on this side and on that;
here are delight and rest, and there are
fire and torments.' Thus he will[i] speak to
them on the day of judgment— 39 a day
that has no sun or moon or stars, 40 or
cloud or thunder or lightning, or wind
or water or air, or darkness or evening or
morning, 41 or summer or spring or heat
or winter[j] or frost or cold, or hail or rain
or dew, 42 or noon or night, or dawn or
shining or brightness or light, but only the
splendor of the glory of the Most High, by
which all shall see what has been destined.
43 It will last as though for a week of years.
44 This is my judgment and its prescribed
order; and to you alone I have shown
these things."

Dialogic Dispute

45 I answered and said, "O sovereign
Lord, I said then and[k] I say now: Blessed
are those who are alive and keep your
commandments! 46 But what of those for
whom I prayed? For who among the living is there that has not sinned, or who is
there among mortals that has not transgressed your covenant? 47 And now I see
that the world to come will bring delight
to few, but torments to many. 48 For an
evil heart has grown up in us, which has
alienated us from God,[l] and has brought
us into corruption and the ways of death,
and has shown us the paths of perdition
and removed us far from life—and that
not merely for a few but for almost all
who have been created."

49 He answered me and said, "Listen to
me, Ezra,[m] and I will instruct you, and
will admonish you once more. 50 For this
reason the Most High has made not one
world but two. 51 Inasmuch as you have
said that the righteous are not many but
few, while the ungodly abound, hear the
explanation for this.

52 "If you have just a few precious
stones, will you add to them lead and
clay?"[n] 53 I said, "Lord, how could that
be?" 54 And he said to me, "Not only that,
but ask the earth and she will tell you; defer to her, and she will declare it to you.
55 Say to her, 'You produce gold and silver
and bronze, and also iron and lead and
clay; 56 but silver is more abundant than
gold, and bronze than silver, and iron
than bronze, and lead than iron, and
clay than lead.' 57 Judge therefore which
things are precious and desirable, those
that are abundant or those that are rare?"

58 I said, "O sovereign Lord, what is
plentiful is of less worth, for what is more
rare is more precious."

59 He answered me and said, "Consider within yourself[o] what you have
thought, for the person who has what is
hard to get rejoices more than the person
who has what is plentiful. 60 So also will be
the judgment[p] that I have promised; for
I will rejoice over the few who shall be

i Syr Ethiop Arab 1: Lat *you shall* *j* Or *storm*
k Syr: Lat *And I answered, "I said then, O Lord, and*
l Cn: Lat Syr Ethiop *from these* *m* Syr Arab 1
Georg: Lat Ethiop lack *Ezra* *n* Arab 1: Meaning
of Lat Syr Ethiop uncertain
o Syr Ethiop Arab 1: Meaning of Lat uncertain
p Syr Arab 1: Lat *creation*

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and *delight* (the translation of Hebrew *Eden*) for reward. **7.37** Despite the term *nations*, the contrast between the righteous and wicked dominates. *Midrash on Proverbs* 16.11 preserves a similar address. **7.39–42** Abolition of the divisions of times and seasons. The list derives from Gen 8.22; cf. Zech 14.6–7; *Sibylline Oracles* 3.88–92. **7.42** *Or noon . . . the Most High*, the development and eschatologization of Isa 60.19–20. *Glory* is connected with God's appearance on earth; see 3.19; 7.60, 112, 122. **7.43** The *week of years*, a seven-year period, is used in apocalyptic reckonings; see Dan 9.24, 26.

7.45–74 Ezra's questions urge his point of view against the angel's. **7.45** *Blessed are . . . commandments*, a biblical commonplace; cf. Pss 1.1; 119.1; Lk 11.28; Rev 22.7. **7.46** The statement that all have sinned is ancient and widespread, e.g., 1 Kings 8.46; Prov 20.9. The book often takes extreme positions at the start of an argument. **7.47** In *the world to come* the righteous will be few; see 8.1–3. This issue of the few and the many pervades the rest of the third vision. **7.48** See 3.2–22. *Life* means eternal life. As in 7.47, sin is not quite universal. **7.51** *The ungodly abound*. The angel corrects Ezra's words in vv. 46–47. **7.52–57** A parable of precious and base metals. A similar image is the droplets and the wave (9.14–16). **7.59** *What you have thought*, i.e., in the preceding verse. **7.60–61** The few and the many from the angel's perspective. *Name*, like *glory*, is a divine hypostasis; cf. *Apocalypse of Abraham* 29.17. *Mist, flame*, and *smoke* all convey impermanence already in the Hebrew scrip-

saved, because it is they who have made
my glory to prevail now, and through
them my name has now been honored.
61 I will not grieve over the great number
of those who perish; for it is they who are
now like a mist, and are similar to a flame
and smoke—they are set on fire and burn
hotly, and are extinguished."

62 I replied and said, "O earth, what
have you brought forth, if the mind is
made out of the dust like the other cre-
ated things? 63 For it would have been bet-
ter if the dust itself had not been born, so
that the mind might not have been made
from it. 64 But now the mind grows with
us, and therefore we are tormented, be-
cause we perish and we know it. 65 Let the
human race lament, but let the wild ani-
mals of the field be glad; let all who have
been born lament, but let the cattle and
the flocks rejoice. 66 It is much better with
them than with us; for they do not look
for a judgment, and they do not know of
any torment or salvation promised to
them after death. 67 What does it profit us
that we shall be preserved alive but cruelly
tormented? 68 For all who have been born
are entangled in[q] iniquities, and are full
of sins and burdened with transgressions.
69 And if after death we were not to come
into judgment, perhaps it would have
been better for us."

70 He answered me and said, "When
the Most High made the world and Adam
and all who have come from him, he first
prepared the judgment and the things
that pertain to the judgment. 71 But now,
understand from your own words—for
you have said that the mind grows with
us. 72 For this reason, therefore, those
who live on earth shall be tormented, be-
cause though they had understanding,
they committed iniquity; and though they
received the commandments, they did not
keep them; and though they obtained the
law, they dealt unfaithfully with what they
received. 73 What, then, will they have to
say in the judgment, or how will they an-
swer in the last times? 74 How long the
Most High has been patient with those
who inhabit the world!—and not for their
sake, but because of the times that he has
foreordained."

Prediction of the Postmortem State

75 I answered and said, "If I have
found favor in your sight, O Lord, show
this also to your servant: whether after
death, as soon as everyone of us yields up
the soul, we shall be kept in rest until
those times come when you will renew the
creation, or whether we shall be tor-
mented at once?"

76 He answered me and said, "I will
show you that also, but do not include
yourself with those who have shown
scorn, or number yourself among those
who are tormented. 77 For you have a
treasure of works stored up with the Most
High, but it will not be shown to you until
the last times. 78 Now concerning death,
the teaching is: When the decisive decree
has gone out from the Most High that a
person shall die, as the spirit leaves the
body to return again to him who gave it,
first of all it adores the glory of the Most
High. 79 If it is one of those who have
shown scorn and have not kept the way of
the Most High, who have despised his law
and hated those who fear God— 80 such
spirits shall not enter into habitations, but
shall immediately wander about in tor-
ments, always grieving and sad, in seven
ways. 81 The first way, because they have

q Syr *defiled with*

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tures. **7.62** Apostrophe of the *earth*; see 4.40. This opens a lament over the mind comparable with 4.12–22. *Mind* seems to mean consciousness. **7.64** Punishment is related to mind; cf. 7.72; *2 Apocalypse of Baruch* 15.6; 55.2. **7.67** A special application of the idea of the survivors. **7.69** A recapitulation of 7.63, ending the lament with one of its opening themes. **7.70** *He first prepared the judgment.* A famous rabbinic dictum says paradise and Gehenna were created before the world. **7.71** Ezra's words in 7.64 are quoted. **7.72** 2 Esdras uses terms like *commandments, covenants* for obligations placed on the Gentiles; cf. 7.11, 21. **7.73** See Mt 25.37, 44. **7.74** The reasons for the delay of the end are discussed in 4.35–37.

7.75–99 A prediction of the postmortem state of the righteous and wicked unparalleled in ancient Jewish literature. **7.75** Will there be immediate recompense after death or only at the end of the age? **7.76** Ezra is repeatedly assured of his own righteousness; cf. 8.47–51, responding to 7.45–74. **7.77** *Treasure . . . stored up with the Most High.* Cf. 8.32, 36. The same terminology is found in many Jewish sources; cf. Mt 6.20; Lk 12.33; Mt 19.21; Mk 10.21. **7.78** *The spirit . . . who gave it,* drawn from Eccl 12.7. **7.80** *Habitations,* better "chambers"; cf. 4.35. The righteous

scorned the law of the Most High. *82* The second way, because they cannot now make a good repentance so that they may live. *83* The third way, they shall see the reward laid up for those who have trusted the covenants of the Most High. *84* The fourth way, they shall consider the torment laid up for themselves in the last days. *85* The fifth way, they shall see how the habitations of the others are guarded by angels in profound quiet. *86* The sixth way, they shall see how some of them will cross over[r] into torments. *87* The seventh way, which is worse[s] than all the ways that have been mentioned, because they shall utterly waste away in confusion and be consumed with shame,[t] and shall wither with fear at seeing the glory of the Most High in whose presence they sinned while they were alive, and in whose presence they are to be judged in the last times.

88 "Now this is the order of those who have kept the ways of the Most High, when they shall be separated from their mortal body.[u] *89* During the time that they lived in it,[t] they laboriously served the Most High, and withstood danger every hour so that they might keep the law of the Lawgiver perfectly. *90* Therefore this is the teaching concerning them: *91* First of all, they shall see with great joy the glory of him who receives them, for they shall have rest in seven orders. *92* The first order, because they have striven with great effort to overcome the evil thought that was formed with them, so that it might not lead them astray from life into death. *93* The second order, because they see the perplexity in which the souls of the ungodly wander and the punishment that awaits them. *94* The third order, they see the witness that he who formed them bears concerning them, that throughout their life they kept the law with which they were entrusted. *95* The fourth order, they understand the rest that they now enjoy, being gathered into their chambers and guarded by angels in profound quiet, and the glory waiting for them in the last days. *96* The fifth order, they rejoice that they have now escaped what is corruptible and shall inherit what is to come; and besides they see the straits and toil[v] from which they have been delivered, and the spacious liberty that they are to receive and enjoy in immortality. *97* The sixth order, when it is shown them how their face is to shine like the sun, and how they are to be made like the light of the stars, being incorruptible from then on. *98* The seventh order, which is greater than all that have been mentioned, because they shall rejoice with boldness, and shall be confident without confusion, and shall be glad without fear, for they press forward to see the face of him whom they served in life and from whom they are to receive their reward when glorified. *99* This is the order of the souls of the righteous, as henceforth is announced;[w] and the previously mentioned are the ways of torment that those who would not give heed shall suffer hereafter."

Prediction About Intercession

100 Then I answered and said, "Will time therefore be given to the souls, after they have been separated from the bodies, to see what you have described to me?"

101 He said to me, "They shall have

r Cn: Meaning of Lat uncertain
s Lat Syr Ethiop *greater* t Syr Ethiop: Meaning of Lat uncertain u Lat *the corruptible vessel*
v Syr Ethiop: Lat *fullness* w Syr: Meaning of Lat uncertain

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rest while the wicked *wander*. **7.82** After judgment starts there is no *repentance* (7.33), an idea here applied to the intermediate state (cf. *1 Enoch* 63.5–9). **7.83** Part of punishment is seeing the reward of the righteous; cf. 7.93. **7.85** *Quiet*. Cf. *rest* in 7.95; such guardian *angels* are found in 7.95; *1 Enoch* 100.5. **7.87** Note the effect on the wicked souls of *seeing the glory* of God; cf. *Midrash on Psalms* 12.5. **7.88** *Mortal body*, better *mortal vessel*; cf. 4.11. **7.90–91** A later development of this passage is *Questions of Ezra* A 19. The wicked wander on *ways* (v. 80) but the righteous ascend through *orders*. **7.92** Righteousness is achieved *with great effort*, by struggle, the labor of 7.89. **7.93** The converse of 7.83, implying precreation of eschatological punishment. **7.94** *Witness . . . concerning them*, legal language. **7.95** *Chambers*, better "treasuries." **7.96** A reference predominantly to the eschatological state. **7.97** *Their face is to shine*. See 7.125. The righteous shine; see Dan 12.3; cf. Rev 1.16; *2 Enoch* 1.5; 19.1. They resemble *stars*; see 4 Macc 17.5; *2 Apocalypse of Baruch* 51.10. **7.98** *The face of him*. The climax is the vision of God's face; cf. Ex 33.20.

7.100–115 Dialogic prediction about intercession. **7.100** The reverse of 7.32. *Will time therefore be given* means "how long will be given."

freedom for seven days, so that during these seven days they may see the things of which you have been told, and afterwards they shall be gathered in their habitations."

102 I answered and said, "If I have found favor in your sight, show further to me, your servant, whether on the day of judgment the righteous will be able to intercede for the ungodly or to entreat the Most High for them— *103* fathers for sons or sons for parents, brothers for brothers, relatives for their kindred, or friends for those who are most dear."

104 He answered me and said, "Since you have found favor in my sight, I will show you this also. The day of judgment is decisive[x] and displays to all the seal of truth. Just as now a father does not send his son, or a son his father, or a master his servant, or a friend his dearest friend, to be ill[y] or sleep or eat or be healed in his place, *105* so no one shall ever pray for another on that day, neither shall anyone lay a burden on another;[z] for then all shall bear their own righteousness and unrighteousness."

36 *106* I answered and said, "How then do we find that first Abraham prayed for the people of Sodom, and Moses for our ancestors who sinned in the desert, 37 *107* and Joshua after him for Israel in the days of Achan, 38 *108* and Samuel in the days of Saul,[a] and David for the plague, and Solomon for those at the dedication, 39 *109* and Elijah for those who received the rain, and for the one who was dead, that he might live, 40 *110* and Hezekiah for the people in the days of Sennacherib, and many others prayed for many? 41 *111* So if now, when corruption has increased and unrighteousness has multiplied, the righteous have prayed for the ungodly, why will it not be so then as well?"

42 *112* He answered me and said, "This present world is not the end; the full glory does not[b] remain in it;[c] therefore those who were strong prayed for the weak. 43 *113* But the day of judgment will be the end of this age and the beginning[d] of the immortal age to come, in which corruption has passed away, 44 *114* sinful indulgence has come to an end, unbelief has been cut off, and righteousness has increased and truth has appeared. 45 *115* Therefore no one will then be able to have mercy on someone who has been condemned in the judgment, or to harm[e] someone who is victorious."

Dispute

46 *116* I answered and said, "This is my first and last comment: it would have been better if the earth had not produced Adam, or else, when it had produced him, had restrained him from sinning. 47 *117* For what good is it to all that they live in sorrow now and expect punishment after death? 48 *118* O Adam, what have you done? For though it was you who sinned, the fall was not yours alone, but ours also who are your descendants. 49 *119* For what good is it to us, if an immortal time has been promised to us, but we have done deeds that bring death? 50 *120* And what good is it that an everlasting hope has been promised to us, but we

x Lat *bold* y Syr Ethiop Arm: Lat *to understand* z Syr Ethiop: Lat lacks *on that . . . another* a Syr Ethiop Arab 1: Lat Arab 2 Arm lack *in the days of Saul* b Lat lacks *not* c Or *the glory does not continuously abide in it* d Syr Ethiop: Lat lacks *the beginning* e Syr Ethiop: Lat *overwhelm*

7.102–3 Cf. Pseudo-Philo *Biblical Antiquities* 33.5. The question of intercession dominates. **7.104** The expression *seal of truth* is strikingly paralleled in *Babylonian Talmud Shabbat* 55a; *Babylonian Talmud Yoma* 69b. **7.105** Individual responsibility. Cf. Deut 24.16; Jer 31.28–29; Ezek 18.20. **7.106** *Abraham,* Gen 18.23–33; *Moses,* Ex 32.11–14. On double verse numbering, see text note *f* at 7.35. **7.107** *Joshua,* Josh 7.6–9. **7.108** *Samuel,* 1 Sam 7.8–9; *David,* 2 Sam 24.17–25; *Solomon,* 1 Kings 8.22–53. **7.109** *Elijah,* for drought, 1 Kings 18.2–6, 36–46; for revival, 1 Kings 17.21–23. **7.110** *Hezekiah,* 2 Kings 19.15–19; Isa 37.16–20. **7.111** This is an argument *a fortiori.* **7.112** *This present world is not the end,* better "The end of this world has not yet come to pass." Since the world does not exhibit glory fully, intercession can be effective. **7.113–14** Cf. 6.27–28; 7.33–35.

7.116–8.3 A dispute composed of a lament (7.116–26) and a midrash on the divine attributes (7.132–40), punctuated by angelic responses. **7.116** A variant on the idea "Why was I born?"; cf. 7.62. The earth is here said to do what God does in ch. 3. **7.117** Pessimistic; cf. 7.62, 67–68; *2 Apocalypse of Baruch* 14.14. **7.118** Apostrophe to *Adam,* comparable to 3.20–22. *Fall* is better translated "misfortune." **7.119–25** Powerful rhetorical use of both repetition and contrast. **7.119** *Death* means eternal death. **7.120** *Ever-*

have miserably failed? 51 *121* Or that safe
and healthful habitations have been re-
served for us, but we have lived wickedly?
52 *122* Or that the glory of the Most High
will defend those who have led a pure life,
but we have walked in the most wicked
ways? 53 *123* Or that a paradise shall be re-
vealed, whose fruit remains unspoiled
and in which are abundance and healing,
but we shall not enter it 54 *124* because we
have lived in perverse ways?[f] 55 *125* Or
that the faces of those who practiced self-
control shall shine more than the stars,
but our faces shall be blacker than dark-
ness? 56 *126* For while we lived and com-
mitted iniquity we did not consider what
we should suffer after death."

57 *127* He answered and said, "This is
the significance of the contest that all who
are born on earth shall wage: 58 *128* if they
are defeated they shall suffer what you
have said, but if they are victorious they
shall receive what I have said.[g] 59 *129* For
this is the way of which Moses, while he
was alive, spoke to the people, saying,
'Choose life for yourself, so that you may
live!' 60 *130* But they did not believe him or
the prophets after him, or even myself
who have spoken to them. 61 *131* There-
fore there shall not be[h] grief at their de-
struction, so much as joy over those to
whom salvation is assured."

62 *132* I answered and said, "I know,
O Lord, that the Most High is now called
merciful, because he has mercy on those
who have not yet come into the world;
63 *133* and gracious, because he is gracious
to those who turn in repentance to his
law; 64 *134* and patient, because he shows
patience toward those who have sinned,
since they are his own creatures; 65 *135* and
bountiful, because he would rather give
than take away;[i] 66 *136* and abundant in
compassion, because he makes his com-
passions abound more and more to those
now living and to those who are gone and
to those yet to come— 37 *137* for if he did
not make them abound, the world with
those who inhabit it would not have life—
68 *138* and he is called the giver, because if
he did not give out of his goodness so that
those who have committed iniquities
might be relieved of them, not one ten-
thousandth of humankind could have
life; 69 *139* and the judge, because if he did
not pardon those who were created by
his word and blot out the multitude of
their sins,[j] 70 *140* there would probably be
left only very few of the innumerable
multitude."

8 He answered me and said, "The
Most High made this world for the
sake of many, but the world to come for
the sake of only a few. 2 But I tell you a
parable, Ezra. Just as, when you ask the
earth, it will tell you that it provides a
large amount of clay from which earthen-
ware is made, but only a little dust from
which gold comes, so is the course of the
present world. 3 Many have been created,
but only a few shall be saved."

Ezra's Monologue

4 I answered and said, "Then drink
your fill of understanding,[k] O my soul,
and drink wisdom, O my heart. 5 For not
of your own will did you come into the
world,[l] and against your will you depart,
for you have been given only a short time
to live. 6 O Lord above us, grant to your
servant that we may pray before you, and

f Cn: Lat Syr *places* g Syr Ethiop Arab 1: Lat *what I say* h Syr: Lat *there was not* i Or *he is ready to give according to requests* j Lat *contempts*
k Syr: Lat *Then release understanding*
l Syr: Meaning of Lat uncertain

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lasting hope. Cf. 1 Pet 1.3. **7.121** *Habitations*, better "treasuries." **7.122** *Glory* as advocate is comparable with glory as judgment; cf. 7.112–15. **7.123** *Fruit . . . abundance and healing*. Cf. Ezek 47.12. **7.125** For shining faces, see note on 7.97; for blackened faces, see *1 Enoch* 62.10. **7.127** The conflict of the good and evil inclinations in the human heart. See 7.92; cf. *Apocryphon of John* 26.4–6. **7.128** Cf. 7.59–61. **7.129** Quotations are rare; this is Deut 30.19. Free will is asserted. **7.130** The *prophets* were rejected; cf. 2 Chr 36.15–16; Mt 5.17; 23.34–37. **7.131** See 7.45–74; *1 Enoch* 94.10. **7.132–40** A midrash on Ex 34.6–7, verses often quoted in penitential prayers. **7.137** The world cannot survive without compassion; cf. *Genesis Rabbah* 12.15. **7.139** *Judge*. Cf. Ex 34.7; *2 Apocalypse of Baruch* 84.11. **7.140** Cf. 7.48; 9.15–16. **8.2** The earth's response demanded by 7.55–56. **8.3** A proverbial statement; cf. 9.15; Mt 22.14.

8.4–19a A monologue, the third part of the third vision. Issues are raised—God creates, nurtures, and brings the end of humans (vv. 4–14)—and questions posed—how is Israel's fate to be understood (vv. 15–19)? **8.4–5** Sapiential apostrophe to the *soul*. **8.5** *Not of your own will . . . into the world*. Cf. *2 Apocalypse of Baruch* 48.15; *Mishnah Avot* 4.21. **8.6** God is addressed. For the agricul-

give us a seed for our heart and cultivation of our understanding so that fruit may be produced, by which every mortal who bears the likeness[m] of a human being may be able to live. 7 For you alone exist, and we are a work of your hands, as you have declared. 8 And because you give life to the body that is now fashioned in the womb, and furnish it with members, what you have created is preserved amid fire and water, and for nine months the womb[n] endures your creature that has been created in it. 9 But that which keeps and that which is kept shall both be kept by your keeping.[o] And when the womb gives up again what has been created in it, 10 you have commanded that from the members themselves (that is, from the breasts) milk, the fruit of the breasts, should be supplied, 11 so that what has been fashioned may be nourished for a time; and afterwards you will still guide it in your mercy. 12 You have nurtured it in your righteousness, and instructed it in your law, and reproved it in your wisdom. 13 You put it to death as your creation, and make it live as your work. 14 If then you will suddenly and quickly[p] destroy what with so great labor was fashioned by your command, to what purpose was it made? 15 And now I will speak out: About all humankind you know best; but I will speak about your people, for whom I am grieved, 16 and about your inheritance, for whom I lament, and about Israel, for whom I am sad, and about the seed of Jacob, for whom I am troubled. 17 Therefore I will pray before you for myself and for them, for I see the failings of us who inhabit the earth; 18 and now also[q] I have heard of the swiftness of the judgment that is to come. 19 Therefore hear my voice and understand my words, and I will speak before you."

Ezra's Prayer

The beginning of the words of Ezra's prayer,[r] before he was taken up. He said: 20 "O Lord, you who inhabit eternity,[s] whose eyes are exalted[t] and whose upper chambers are in the air, 21 whose throne is beyond measure and whose glory is beyond comprehension, before whom the hosts of angels stand trembling 22 and at whose command they are changed to wind and fire,[u] whose word is sure and whose utterances are certain, whose command is strong and whose ordinance is terrible, 23 whose look dries up the depths and whose indignation makes the mountains melt away, and whose truth is established[v] forever— 24 hear, O Lord, the prayer of your servant, and give ear to the petition of your creature; attend to my words. 25 For as long as I live I will speak, and as long as I have understanding I will answer. 26 O do not look on the sins of your people, but on those who serve you in truth. 27 Do not take note of the endeavors of those who act wickedly, but of the endeavors of those who have kept your covenants amid afflictions. 28 Do not think of those who have lived wickedly in your sight, but remember those who have

m Syr: Lat *place* *n* Lat *what you have formed*
o Syr: Meaning of Lat uncertain *p* Syr: Lat *will with a light command* *q* Syr: Lat *but*
r Syr Ethiop; Lat *beginning of Ezra's words*
s Or *you who abide forever* *t* Another Lat text reads *whose are the highest heavens* *u* Syr: Lat *they whose service takes the form of wind and fire*
v Arab 2: Other authorities read *truth bears witness*

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tural image, cf. 4.28–32. **8.7** *You alone exist,* the uniqueness of God; cf. Deut 4.35; 6.4. Humans were created by God's *hands*; see 3.5. **8.8–11** Wonder at God's creation; cf. Dead Sea Scrolls *Thanksgiving Hymns* (1QH) 9.29–31. *Fire and water,* unparalleled elsewhere. **8.9** *That which keeps . . . keeping,* a striking use of repetition. **8.11** God's responsibility extends to education. **8.12** *Law* or Torah is equated with *wisdom.* **8.13** God's responsibility is reemphasized; cf. Deut 32.39; 1 Sam 2.6; 2 Kings 5.7. **8.14** Cf. *Greek Esdras Apocalypse* 3.9; *Apocalypse of Sedrach* 3.7. Note the contradiction in God's action. **8.15** See 3.1–2, 28–32; 4.23. **8.16** Israel is God's *inheritance*; see 5.27–28; Deut 32.9.

8.19b–36 Ezra's prayer (cf. Ezra 9; Neh 9; Dan 9) including doxology, confession, and petition. **8.19b** Ezra's assumption; see 14.9, 49. This is a gloss. **8.20** *Eyes,* alternately "heavens." Ancient concepts of the deity's heavenly palace are reflected here. *Upper chambers.* Cf. Ps 104.3; Am 9.6. **8.21** God's fiery *throne* surrounded by ministering hosts; cf. 1 Kings 22.19; Isa 6; Dan 7. **8.22** *Wind and fire.* See Ps 104.4; cf. *2 Apocalypse of Baruch* 21.6; 48.8; *Genesis Rabbah* 78.1. **8.23** *Dries up* (cf. Ps 74.15; Isa 50.2; 51.10), *melt* (cf. Ps 97.5; Mic 1.4; *1 Enoch* 1.6), theophanic language. **8.25** Cf. *Greek Esdras Apocalypse* 2.7; 4.1, 4; 6.20; Ezra will speak whatever the consequences. **8.26–31** Intercession commences. Ezra asks God to do the reverse of 7.131. **8.27** On keeping of *covenants,* see 3.32, 35.

willingly acknowledged that you are to be
feared. 29 Do not will the destruction of
those who have the ways of cattle, but
regard those who have gloriously taught
your law.[w] 30 Do not be angry with those
who are deemed worse than wild animals,
but love those who have always put their
trust in your glory. 31 For we and our an-
cestors have passed our lives in ways that
bring death;[x] but it is because of us sin-
ners that you are called merciful. 32 For if
you have desired to have pity on us, who
have no works of righteousness, then you
will be called merciful. 33 For the righ-
teous, who have many works laid up with
you, shall receive their reward in conse-
quence of their own deeds. 34 But what
are mortals, that you are angry with them;
or what is a corruptible race, that you are
so bitter against it? 35 For in truth there is
no one among those who have been born
who has not acted wickedly; among those
who have existed[y] there is no one who
has not done wrong. 36 For in this,
O Lord, your righteousness and goodness
will be declared, when you are merciful to
those who have no store of good works."

Dispute

37 He answered me and said, "Some
things you have spoken rightly, and it will
turn out according to your words. 38 For
indeed I will not concern myself about the
fashioning of those who have sinned, or
about their death, their judgment, or
their destruction; 39 but I will rejoice over
the creation of the righteous, over their
pilgrimage also, and their salvation, and
their receiving their reward. 40 As I have
spoken, therefore, so it shall be.

41 "For just as the farmer sows many
seeds in the ground and plants a multi-
tude of seedlings, and yet not all that have
been sown will come up[z] in due season,
and not all that were planted will take
root; so also those who have been sown in
the world will not all be saved."

42 I answered and said, "If I have
found favor in your sight, let me speak.
43 If the farmer's seed does not come up,
because it has not received your rain in
due season, or if it has been ruined by too
much rain, it perishes.[a] 44 But people,
who have been formed by your hands and
are called your own image because they
are made like you, and for whose sake
you have formed all things—have you
also made them like the farmer's seed?
45 Surely not, O Lord[b] above! But spare
your people and have mercy on your in-
heritance, for you have mercy on your
own creation."

46 He answered me and said, "Things
that are present are for those who live
now, and things that are future are for
those who will live hereafter. 47 For you
come far short of being able to love my
creation more than I love it. But you have
often compared yourself[c] to the unrigh-
teous. Never do so! 48 But even in this re-
spect you will be praiseworthy before the
Most High, 49 because you have humbled
yourself, as is becoming for you, and have
not considered yourself to be among the
righteous. You will receive the greatest
glory, 50 for many miseries will affect
those who inhabit the world in the last
times, because they have walked in great

w Syr *have received the brightness of your law*
x Syr Ethiop: Meaning of Lat uncertain
y Syr: Meaning of Lat uncertain
z Syr Ethiop *will live*; Lat *will be saved*
a Cn: Compare Syr Arab 1 Arm Georg 2: Meaning of Lat uncertain *b* Ethiop Arab Compare Syr: Lat lacks *O Lord* *c* Syr Ethiop: Lat *brought yourself near*

8.29 *Cattle.* The contrast is between domestic and wild animals; see v. 30; cf. 7.65–66; Ps 73.22. **8.31–36** Confession; cf. 7.119, 122; Dan 9.4–6. **8.32** Cf. Rom 3.19–26. **8.33** The sinners, not the righteous, need mercy; cf. Pr Man 8, 13–14. **8.34** *But what are mortals,* a common theme in prayers; cf. Job 7.17; Ps 8.4. **8.35** Note the typical apparent contradiction with 8.33.

8.37–62 Disputatious and predictive discourse. Two angelic addresses (vv. 37–41, 46–62) are separated by Ezra's response (vv. 42–45). **8.37** *Spoken,* i.e., in the preceding. **8.38** *Death, judgment,* and *destruction* mean eternal perdition. **8.39** *Pilgrimage, salvation, reward,* terms parallel to those in v. 38. *Pilgrimage* indicates the soul's ascent. **8.40** Emphatic conclusion of the long discussion. **8.41** A parable complete with interpretation; cf. Mk 4.1–9, 14–20. **8.43** *Your rain,* i.e., God's, stressing divine responsibility. **8.44** God's role in creation of humans makes the last question more telling. **8.45** An appeal for mercy like 7.132–139; 8.32–36. **8.46** An antithesis resembling 4.21; 7.25. Mercy will be in the future world. **8.47** *You come far short . . . than I love it.* Ezra, though righteous (cf. 7.76), cannot love Israel more than God. **8.49** A common NT sentiment; cf. Mt 23.12; Lk 14.11. **8.50** *Miseries,* the troubles preceding the Messiah's advent.

pride. 51 But think of your own case, and
inquire concerning the glory of those who
are like yourself, 52 because it is for you
that paradise is opened, the tree of life is
planted, the age to come is prepared,
plenty is provided, a city is built, rest is
appointed,[d] goodness is established and
wisdom perfected beforehand. 53 The
root of evil[e] is sealed up from you, illness
is banished from you, and death[f] is hid-
den; Hades has fled and corruption has
been forgotten;[g] 54 sorrows have passed
away, and in the end the treasure of im-
mortality is made manifest. 55 Therefore
do not ask any more questions about the
great number of those who perish. 56 For
when they had opportunity to choose,
they despised the Most High, and were
contemptuous of his law, and abandoned
his ways. 57 Moreover, they have even
trampled on his righteous ones, 58 and
said in their hearts that there is no God—
though they knew well that they must die.
59 For just as the things that I have pre-
dicted await[h] you, so the thirst and tor-
ment that are prepared await them. For
the Most High did not intend that anyone
should be destroyed; 60 but those who
were created have themselves defiled the
name of him who made them, and have
been ungrateful to him who prepared life
for them now. 61 Therefore my judgment
is now drawing near; 62 I have not shown
this to all people, but only to you and a
few like you."

Prediction About Signs of the End

Then I answered and said, 63 "O Lord,
you have already shown me a great num-
ber of the signs that you will do in the last
times, but you have not shown me when
you will do them."

9 He answered me and said, "Measure
carefully in your mind, and when
you see that some of the predicted signs
have occurred, 2 then you will know that it
is the very time when the Most High is
about to visit the world that he has made.
3 So when there shall appear in the world
earthquakes, tumult of peoples, intrigues
of nations, wavering of leaders, confusion
of princes, 4 then you will know that it was
of these that the Most High spoke from
the days that were of old, from the begin-
ning. 5 For just as with everything that has
occurred in the world, the beginning is
evident,[i] and the end manifest; 6 so also
are the times of the Most High: the begin-
nings are manifest in wonders and mighty
works, and the end in penalties[j] and in
signs.

7 "It shall be that all who will be saved
and will be able to escape on account of
their works, or on account of the faith by
which they have believed, 8 will survive the

d Syr Ethiop: Lat *allowed* *e* Lat lacks *of evil*
f Syr Ethiop Arm: Lat lacks *death*
g Syr: Lat *Hades and corruption have fled into oblivion*; or *corruption has fled into Hades to be forgotten*
h Syr: Lat *will receive* *i* Syr: Ethiop *is in the word*; Meaning of Lat uncertain *j* Syr: Lat Ethiop *in effects*

8.51 *Your own case.* Attention is focused on Ezra, a paradigmatic righteous man. Cf. *2 Apocalypse of Baruch* 48.48. **8.52** Features of the future world; cf. 7.117–25; *Testament of Levi* 18.9–10. *Paradise*, the place of eschatological reward. *City*, heavenly Jerusalem; cf. 7.26; 10.27, 44, 54. *Wisdom.* Cf. 1 Cor 2.7. **8.53–54a** Things removed from the future world; a reversal of the results of Adam's sin. *Root of evil* means "evil heart." For the other features, cf. Pr Man 3; *2 Apocalypse of Baruch* 21.23; 73.2. **8.54** Heavenly *treasure* of the righteous. See 7.13, 77. **8.55** Cf. 6.10; 9.9–13. **8.56–58** Cf. 5.29; 7.22–24, 37, 79, 81; 9.9–13. **8.56** *Opportunity to choose* implies free will; cf. vv. 59–60; 9.11. *Despised the Most High.* See 7.23–24, 37, 81; 9.10–11. **8.59** *So the thirst and torment . . . await them*, eschatological recompense. People are responsible for their own fate. **8.60** *Defiled the name*, publicly ignored or disgraced God. **8.61** A transitional remark; judgment is close; cf. 14.18; *2 Apocalypse of Baruch* 48.2. **8.62** Revelation is for the few.

8.63–9.22 A prediction comparable to 5.1–13; 6.11–29. This one bears a distinct dialogic character. **8.63** *Signs* is a technical term often used specifically to denote those terrible events that will presage the end of this world-age. **9.1–2** This is the most explicit answer to the question "When?" (*How long*, 4.33). *Predicted* refers to 5.1–13; 6.18–28. These lists are a sort of diagnostic device. *Visit* means "penal visitation." **9.3** *Earthquakes* are a common sign of the end; see Mk 13.8; *2 Apocalypse of Baruch* 27.7. *Tumult of peoples . . . confusion of princes.* Cf. 12.30; Ps 2.1–2. **9.4** *From the beginning* is probably an addition to the text. Eschatological things were foreordained and revealed to Abraham and Moses (3.14; 14.5). **9.5–6** The end is manifested in deeds and signs, the latter having just been mentioned. God's power, visible in creation, will be manifested in the eschaton. **9.8** For those who *survive* the messianic woes, particularly in the land of

dangers that have been predicted, and
will see my salvation in my land and
within my borders, which I have sanctified for myself from the beginning.
9 Then those who have now abused my
ways shall be amazed, and those who have
rejected them with contempt shall live in
torments. 10 For as many as did not acknowledge me in their lifetime, though
they received my benefits, 11 and as many
as scorned my law while they still had
freedom, and did not understand but despised it[k] while an opportunity of repentance was still open to them, 12 these must
in torment acknowledge it[k] after death.
13 Therefore, do not continue to be curious about how the ungodly will be punished; but inquire how the righteous will
be saved, those to whom the age belongs
and for whose sake the age was made."[l]

14 I answered and said, 15 "I said before, and I say now, and will say it again:
there are more who perish than those
who will be saved, 16 as a wave is greater
than a drop of water."

17 He answered me and said, "As is
the field, so is the seed; and as are the
flowers, so are the colors; and as is
the work, so is the product; and as is the
farmer, so is the threshing floor. 18 For
there was a time in this age when I was
preparing for those who now exist, before
the world was made for them to live in,
and no one opposed me then, for no one
existed; 19 but now those who have been
created in this world, which is supplied
both with an unfailing table and an inexhaustible pasture,[m] have become corrupt
in their ways. 20 So I considered my world,
and saw that it was lost. I saw that my
earth was in peril because of the devices
of those who[n] had come into it. 21 And I
saw and spared some[o] with great difficulty, and saved for myself one grape out
of a cluster, and one plant out of a great
forest.[p] 22 So let the multitude perish that
has been born in vain, but let my grape
and my plant be saved, because with
much labor I have perfected them.

Concluding Injunction

23 "Now, if you will let seven days
more pass—do not, however, fast during
them, 24 but go into a field of flowers
where no house has been built, and eat
only of the flowers of the field, and taste
no meat and drink no wine, but eat only
flowers— 25 and pray to the Most High
continually, then I will come and talk
with you."

Fourth Vision: Ezra's Address About the Law

26 So I went, as he directed me, into
the field that is called Ardat;[q] there I sat
among the flowers and ate of the plants of
the field, and the nourishment they afforded satisfied me. 27 After seven days,
while I lay on the grass, my heart was
troubled again as it was before. 28 Then
my mouth was opened, and I began to
speak before the Most High, and said,
29 "O Lord, you showed yourself among

k Or *me* *l* Syr: Lat *saved, and whose is the age and for whose sake the age was made and when*
m Cn: Lat *law* *n* Cn: Lat *devices that*
o Lat *them* *p* Syr Ethiop Arab 1: Lat *tribe*
q Syr Ethiop *Arpad*; Arm *Ardab*

Israel, see 12.34; 13.26, 48–49. **9.9–11** A list of sins; cf. 7.79; 8.56–58. **9.10** *Did not acknowledge me.* Rejection of God is the chief sin; cf. 7.37, 81; 8.58–59. **9.11** *Repentance* is only available in this world; see 7.33, 82, 113–15. **9.12** *Torment,* eschatological punishment. **9.13** *How the ungodly will be punished.* Cf. 8.51–55. Ezra asked in the past why the wicked are punished. **9.15** Ezra has accepted that few will be saved and many will die. **9.16** Cf. 4.50. **9.17** Proverbs illustrating the relationship between action and result; cf. particularly *Palestinian Talmud Sanhedrin* 2 (20d). For seed imagery, see 4.28–30. **9.18** *Before the world,* better "before they came into being, the world." Only humans could oppose creation. Cf. Pseudo-Philo *Biblical Antiquities* 28.4. **9.19** *Table, pasture.* See Ps 23.1, 5. Human *ways* are corrupt; see 8.31. **9.20** *World . . . was lost.* Does the world pass away because of its degeneration or because of human action? Cf. 5.50–55; 14.17; 7.11–12; 9.19–20. **9.21** *Grape* (or vine) and *plant* (or root) indicate Israel; see 5.23; Isa 60.21; 61.3. **9.22** *Grape and . . . plant be saved.* The few righteous are significant for God.

9.23–25 Concluding injunctions parallel to 5.14–20; 6.30–34. The mourning ends and the seer's regimen is modified to a vegetarian diet; cf. 9.26; 12.51. A major change has taken place.

9.26–10.59 Fourth vision. **9.26–28** Introduction. **9.26** The field's name, *Ardat,* is mysterious. It is the location of the fourth, fifth, and sixth visions. *Satisfied me.* Cf. Dan 1.8–15; *Testament of Joseph* 3.4. **9.27** Cf. 3.1. **9.28** *My mouth was opened,* the onset of inspiration; Ezra is passive.

9.29–37 An address devoted to Torah and

us, to our ancestors in the wilderness
when they came out from Egypt and
when they came into the untrodden and
unfruitful wilderness; 30 and you said,
'Hear me, O Israel, and give heed to my
words, O descendants of Jacob. 31 For I
sow my law in you, and it shall bring forth
fruit in you, and you shall be glorified
through it forever.' 32 But though our an-
cestors received the law, they did not keep
it and did not observe the[r] statutes; yet
the fruit of the law did not perish—for it
could not, because it was yours. 33 Yet
those who received it perished, because
they did not keep what had been sown in
them. 34 Now this is the general rule that,
when the ground has received seed, or
the sea a ship, or any dish food or drink,
and when it comes about that what was
sown or what was launched or what was
put in is destroyed, 35 they are destroyed,
but the things that held them remain; yet
with us it has not been so. 36 For we who
have received the law and sinned will per-
ish, as well as our hearts that received it;
37 the law, however, does not perish but
survives in its glory."

The Vision of a Weeping Woman

38 When I said these things in my
heart, I looked around,[s] and on my right
I saw a woman; she was mourning and
weeping with a loud voice, and was deeply
grieved at heart; her clothes were torn,
and there were ashes on her head.
39 Then I dismissed the thoughts with
which I had been engaged, and turned
to her 40 and said to her, "Why are
you weeping, and why are you grieved at
heart?"

41 She said to me, "Let me alone, my
lord, so that I may weep for myself and
continue to mourn, for I am greatly em-
bittered in spirit and deeply distressed."

42 I said to her, "What has happened
to you? Tell me."

43 And she said to me, "Your servant
was barren and had no child, though I
lived with my husband for thirty years.
44 Every hour and every day during those
thirty years I prayed to the Most High,
night and day. 45 And after thirty years
God heard your servant, and looked upon
my low estate, and considered my distress,
and gave me a son. I rejoiced greatly over
him, I and my husband and all my neigh-
bors;[t] and we gave great glory to the
Mighty One. 46 And I brought him up
with much care. 47 So when he grew up
and I came to take a wife for him, I set a
day for the marriage feast.

10 "But it happened that when my
son entered his wedding cham-
ber, he fell down and died. 2 So all of us
put out our lamps, and all my neighbors[t]
attempted to console me; I remained
quiet until the evening of the second day.
3 But when all of them had stopped con-
soling me, encouraging me to be quiet, I
got up in the night and fled, and I came
to this field, as you see. 4 And now I in-
tend not to return to the town, but to stay
here; I will neither eat nor drink, but will
mourn and fast continually until I die."

r Lat *my* s Syr Arab Arm: Lat *I looked about me with my eyes* t Literally *all my citizens*

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parallel to the addresses at the start of the first three visions. The rest of the fourth vision, however, does not respond to this address. **9.29** *In the wilderness*, i.e., at Sinai; cf. Jer 2.6. **9.30–31** Cf. Deut 5.1; 6.4. The quotation is drawn from 2 Esd 3.19–20. **9.31** *Sow.* For Torah as seed, see 3.20; its *fruit* is eternal glory. **9.32** The Torah's eternity and human disobedience are contrasted. **9.36–37** Conclusions are drawn from the inverted analogy in vv. 34–35.

9.38–10.4 Vision. The first-person narrative continues. The woman's tale may be an earlier piece incorporated by the author. Folk motifs resemble those in Tobit and 1 Sam 1–2. In general, the parallels between the Ezra of the first three visions and the woman here are notable. **9.38** *On my right.* Cf. 4.47. This is a waking vision; no trance or dream state is implied. **9.39** An attempt to account for the discrepancy that the vision is not a response to the address. The verse is repeated in 10.5 and may further indicate the abandonment of the issues motivating the first three visions. **9.41** Cf. 1 Sam 1.10. **9.43** An imitation of biblical style; cf. 12.8; 13.14; and particularly 1 Sam 1.16. *Thirty* may evoke the period from exile to Ezra's vision (3.1). **9.44** Cf. the role of prayer in 1 Sam 1.9–11. **9.45** *Low estate,* better "affliction." **9.47** The mother *takes a wife* for her son; cf. Gen 21.21; contrast *Mishnah Kiddushin* 2.1; 3.7–9. A *feast* celebrating a marriage was common in biblical times; cf. Mt 25.1–10. **10.1** Cf. Tob 7.11; 8.10. **10.2** The night of the *second day* marked the end of the first period of mourning. Sitting in silence and extinguishing lamps are ancient Jewish mourning customs.

Ezra's Response

5 Then I broke off the reflections with
which I was still engaged, and answered
her in anger and said, 6 "You most foolish
of women, do you not see our mourning,
and what has happened to us? 7 For Zion,
the mother of us all, is in deep grief and
great distress. 8 It is most appropriate to
mourn now, because we are all mourning,
and to be sorrowful, because we are all
sorrowing; you are sorrowing for one son,
but we, the whole world, for our
mother.[u] 9 Now ask the earth, and she
will tell you that it is she who ought to
mourn over so many who have come into
being upon her. 10 From the beginning all
have been born of her, and others will
come; and, lo, almost all go[v] to perdition,
and a multitude of them will come to
doom. 11 Who then ought to mourn the
more, she who lost so great a multitude,
or you who are grieving for one alone?
12 But if you say to me, 'My lamentation is
not like the earth's, for I have lost the
fruit of my womb, which I brought forth
in pain and bore in sorrow; 13 but it is with
the earth according to the way of the
earth—the multitude that is now in it goes
as it came'; 14 then I say to you, 'Just as
you brought forth in sorrow, so the earth
also has from the beginning given her
fruit, that is, humankind, to him who
made her.' 15 Now, therefore, keep your
sorrow to yourself, and bear bravely the
troubles that have come upon you. 16 For
if you acknowledge the decree of God to
be just, you will receive your son back in
due time, and will be praised among
women. 17 Therefore go into the town to
your husband."

18 She said to me, "I will not do so; I
will not go into the city, but I will die
here."

19 So I spoke again to her, and said,
20 "Do not do that, but let yourself be
persuaded—for how many are the adver-
sities of Zion?—and be consoled because
of the sorrow of Jerusalem. 21 For you see
how our sanctuary has been laid waste,
our altar thrown down, our temple de-
stroyed; 22 our harp has been laid low, our
song has been silenced, and our rejoicing
has been ended; the light of our lamp-
stand has been put out, the ark of our
covenant has been plundered, our holy
things have been polluted, and the name
by which we are called has been almost
profaned; our children[w] have suffered
abuse, our priests have been burned to
death, our Levites have gone into exile,
our virgins have been defiled, and our
wives have been ravished; our righteous
men[x] have been carried off, our little
ones have been cast out, our young men
have been enslaved and our strong men
made powerless. 23 And, worst of all, the
seal of Zion has been deprived of its glory,
and given over into the hands of those
that hate us. 24 Therefore shake off your
great sadness and lay aside your many
sorrows, so that the Mighty One may be
merciful to you again, and the Most High
may give you rest, a respite from your
troubles."

u Compare Syr: Meaning of Lat uncertain
v Literally *walk* w Ethiop *free men*
x Syr *our seers*

10.5–24 The second part of Ezra's vision; here Ezra dominates, as the woman did in the preceding section. Ezra takes on the angel's characteristics, and the woman takes on Ezra's. This is possible because Ezra has accepted the teachings contained in the angel's earlier speech, yet his pain persists. **10.5** See 9.39. **10.6** The phrase *our mourning and what has happened to us* points ahead to the next part of the vision. Cf. the angel's reproach in 4.2; 5.33. **10.7** *Zion* or Jerusalem as *mother* is biblical, e.g., Isa 50.1; Jer 50.12; Gal 4.26. A striking parallel story is *Pesiqta Rabbati* 26. **10.8** The phrase *but we . . . mother* does not seem to be original: the verse's structure resembles 10.20. **10.9** This apostrophe quotes 7.54; cf. 4.40. The earth begets humans; cf. 5.48; 6.53. **10.10** This teaching Ezra rejected in the third vision. His perception has changed. **10.12** *Pain* and *sorrow*. Cf. Gen 3.16. **10.14** *The earth* also undergoes a sort of travail. **10.16** This focuses Ezra's earlier concern with justice. Here he asserts what he rejected previously. The return of the son may be an element of the older folk tale. *Due time* implies predestination. **10.17** The *husband*'s role is secondary. **10.21–22** Note this poetic lament; cf. 1 Macc 1.36–40; 2.7–13, relating to the desecration of the temple; also cf. Lam 1.10; 2.7. This is the last lament in 4 Ezra. The destruction of the temple and the ensuing issue of theodicy are central in ancient Judaism. **10.22** This verse mentions temple-related features and different groups of the population. **10.23** The exact meaning of *seal* is unclear but the point is that Zion is in enemy hands.

Transformation

25 While I was talking to her, her face suddenly began to shine exceedingly; her countenance flashed like lightning, so that I was too frightened to approach her, and my heart was terrified. While[y] I was wondering what this meant, 26 she suddenly uttered a loud and fearful cry, so that the earth shook at the sound. 27 When I looked up, the woman was no longer visible to me, but a city was being built,[z] and a place of huge foundations showed itself. I was afraid, and cried with a loud voice and said, 28 "Where is the angel Uriel, who came to me at first? For it was he who brought me into this overpowering bewilderment; my end has become corruption, and my prayer a reproach."

The Appearance of the Angel

29 While I was speaking these words, the angel who had come to me at first came to me, and when he saw me 30 lying there like a corpse, deprived of my understanding, he grasped my right hand and strengthened me and set me on my feet, and said to me, 31 "What is the matter with you? And why are you troubled? And why are your understanding and the thoughts of your mind troubled?"

32 I said, "It was because you abandoned me. I did as you directed, and went out into the field, and lo, what I have seen and can still see, I am unable to explain."

33 He said to me, "Stand up like a man, and I will instruct you."

34 I said, "Speak, my lord; only do not forsake me, so that I may not die before my time.[a] 35 For I have seen what I did not know, and I hear[b] what I do not understand 36 — or is my mind deceived, and my soul dreaming? 37 Now therefore I beg you to give your servant an explanation of this bewildering vision."

Interpretation of the Vision

38 He answered me and said, "Listen to me, and I will teach you, and tell you about the things that you fear; for the Most High has revealed many secrets to you. 39 He has seen your righteous conduct, and that you have sorrowed continually for your people and mourned greatly over Zion. 40 This therefore is the meaning of the vision. 41 The woman who appeared to you a little while ago, whom you saw mourning and whom you began to console 42 (you do not now see the form of a woman, but there appeared to you a city being built)[c] 43 and who told you about the misfortune of her son — this is the interpretation: 44 The woman whom you saw is Zion, which you now behold as a city being built.[d] 45 And as for her

y Syr Ethiop Arab 1: Lat lacks *I was too . . . terrified. While* *z* Lat: Syr Ethiop Arab 1 Arab 2 Arm *but there was an established city* *a* Syr Ethiop Arab: Lat *die to no purpose* *b* Other ancient authorities read *have heard* *c* Lat: Syr Ethiop Arab 1 Arab 2 Arm *an established city* *d* Cn: Lat *an established city*

10.25–28 Transformation. Nothing had hinted that the woman was other than what she seemed. The description of her transformation is unparalleled in apocalyptic literature. Ezra is terrified and faints; he undergoes an intense emotional experience. **10.25** *Face . . . began to shine.* See note on 7.97. **10.26** The earth shakes at portentous events and cries accompany them; see 3.18; 6.13–15. **10.27** *But a city was being built* should be read as *but there was an established city* (text note *z*). See 7.26; 8.52; 13.36. *Foundations.* Cf. Heb 11.10; Rev 21.14, 19. **10.28** *Uriel* is the usual interpreting angel in the book.

10.29–37 The angel's role as interpreter here differs from that in 5.31; 7.1 and is more traditional. A strong sense of Ezra's turmoil is conveyed. **10.30** *Lying there like a corpse.* Fainting is described; cf. 5.14. **10.31** Cf. 4.2. **10.32** *And can still see* implies that the vision has not passed. *Unable to explain,* different from 2 Cor 12.4. **10.33** *Stand up.* Cf. 4.47; 6.13; 7.2. **10.34** Danger accompanies such experiences. **10.35** *Hear,* better *have heard* (text note *b*). A sense of numinous awe is conveyed; Ezra has seen the ineffable. **10.36** Cf. Sir 34.1–8.

10.38–54 Interpretation of the vision; cf. 12.10; 13.25. The detailed interpretation of the vision's symbols (vv. 44–48) is followed by an explanation of Ezra's experience (vv. 49–54). The center stage is held by the woman, and the son's role is quite passive. **10.38** *Secrets* indicates the special nature of the ensuing. **10.39** Cf. 10.50. **10.40** General introduction to the interpretation; cf. 4.47. *Meaning of the vision,* lit. "word." **10.42** *A city being built,* better *an established city* (text note *c*), and similarly in v. 44. Cf. 10.27. **10.43** This verse marks the shift from relating the symbol to offering its interpretation. **10.45** Metaphorical barrenness; see 5.1; 6.28. Temple offerings are central; cf. 3.24. A millen-

telling you that she was barren for thirty years, the reason is that there were three thousand[e] years in the world before any offering was offered in it.[f] 46 And after three thousand[g] years Solomon built the city, and offered offerings; then it was that the barren woman bore a son. 47 And as for her telling you that she brought him up with much care, that was the period of residence in Jerusalem. 48 And as for her saying to you, 'My son died as he entered his wedding chamber,' and that misfortune had overtaken her,[h] this was the destruction that befell Jerusalem. 49 So you saw her likeness, how she mourned for her son, and you began to console her for what had happened.[i] 50 For now the Most High, seeing that you are sincerely grieved and profoundly distressed for her, has shown you the brilliance of her glory, and the loveliness of her beauty. 51 Therefore I told you to remain in the field where no house had been built, 52 for I knew that the Most High would reveal these things to you. 53 Therefore I told you to go into the field where there was no foundation of any building, 54 because no work of human construction could endure in a place where the city of the Most High was to be revealed.

Concluding Injunctions

55 "Therefore do not be afraid, and do not let your heart be terrified; but go in and see the splendor or[j] the vastness of the building, as far as it is possible for your eyes to see it, 56 and afterward you will hear as much as your ears can hear. 57 For you are more blessed than many, and you have been called to be with[k] the Most High as few have been. 58 But tomorrow night you shall remain here, 59 and the Most High will show you in those dream visions what the Most High will do to those who inhabit the earth in the last days."

So I slept that night and the following one, as he had told me.

Fifth Vision: The Vision of the Eagle

11 On the second night I had a dream: I saw rising from the sea an eagle that had twelve feathered wings and three heads. 2 I saw it spread its wings over[l] the whole earth, and all the winds of heaven blew upon it, and the clouds were gathered around it.[m] 3 I saw that out of its wings there grew opposing wings; but they became little, puny wings. 4 But its heads were at rest; the middle head was larger than the other heads, but it too was at rest with them. 5 Then I saw that the eagle flew with its wings, and it reigned over the earth and over those who inhabit it. 6 And I saw how all things under heaven were subjected to it, and no

e Most Lat Mss read *three* *f* Cn: Lat Syr Arab Arm *her* *g* Syr Ethiop Arab Arm: Lat *three*
h Or *him* *i* Most Lat Mss and Arab 1 add *These were the things to be opened to you* *j* Other ancient authorities read *and* *k* Or *been named by*
l Arab 2 Arm: Lat Syr Ethiop *in*
m Syr: Compare Ethiop Arab: Lat lacks *the clouds* and *around it*

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nial reckoning from the creation of the world may be used here, but it would be unusual. **10.46** *Solomon.* David builds the city in 3.24. Both David and Solomon in fact expanded it. **10.47** Cf. 9.45–46. The son's marriage is attributed no significance. **10.48** Cf. 10.1–2. **10.49** Cf. 9.38–40; 10.6–24. *Likeness* means "appearance." **10.50** *For her* indicates the shift from signifying the woman to signifying Zion. On *glory*, see 3.19; 7.42. **10.51** *Field.* Cf. 9.24.

10.55–59 Concluding injunctions of the fourth vision. **10.55** *Go in and see* implies that the city is still standing; cf. 10.32. **10.56** *Afterward,* after you enter the building. Ezra's experience in the city is not related. The limits of human knowledge are stressed by *as much as.* **10.57** *Called,* better "named"; cf. 14.35; Isa 45.4. Only few resemble Ezra. **10.59** The preparation for the fifth vision differs from preceding visions: only two nights' wait, no fast, and *dream visions* are promised, which are a new type in the book.

11.1–12.39, 51 Fifth vision. **11.1–12.3a** This long vision is a dream the writer had at night. It resembles other apocalypses and is related to them by 11.40, which recalls Dan 7; cf. 2 Esd 12.11. The vision is composed of the description of the eagle (11.1–35), the judgment scene (11.36–46), and the execution of judgment (12.1–3a). **11.1** General description of the eagle. The eagle was also the symbol found on the standards of the Roman legions. *Feathered,* probably secondary. **11.2–4** Initial stance of the eagle. **11.2** *Spread.* Cf. Ex 19.4; Deut 32.11. **11.3** The *puny wings* have particular significance. **11.5–6** The eagle's rule extended over the whole earth. **11.6** *Creature* may signify

one spoke against it—not a single creature that was on the earth. 7 Then I saw the eagle rise upon its talons, and it uttered a cry to its wings, saying, 8 "Do not all watch at the same time; let each sleep in its own place, and watch in its turn; 9 but let the heads be reserved for the last."

10 I looked again and saw that the voice did not come from its heads, but from the middle of its body. 11 I counted its rival wings, and there were eight of them. 12 As I watched, one wing on the right side rose up, and it reigned over all the earth. 13 And after a time its reign came to an end, and it disappeared, so that even its place was no longer visible. Then the next wing rose up and reigned, and it continued to reign a long time. 14 While it was reigning its end came also, so that it disappeared like the first. 15 And a voice sounded, saying to it, 16 "Listen to me, you who have ruled the earth all this time; I announce this to you before you disappear. 17 After you no one shall rule as long as you have ruled, not even half as long."

18 Then the third wing raised itself up, and held the rule as the earlier ones had done, and it also disappeared. 19 And so it went with all the wings; they wielded power one after another and then were never seen again. 20 I kept looking, and in due time the wings that followed[n] also rose up on the right[o] side, in order to rule. There were some of them that ruled, yet disappeared suddenly; 21 and others of them rose up, but did not hold the rule.

22 And after this I looked and saw that the twelve wings and the two little wings had disappeared, 23 and nothing remained on the eagle's body except the three heads that were at rest and six little wings.

24 As I kept looking I saw that two little wings separated from the six and remained under the head that was on the right side; but four remained in their place. 25 Then I saw that these little wings[p] planned to set themselves up and hold the rule. 26 As I kept looking, one was set up, but suddenly disappeared; 27 a second also, and this disappeared more quickly than the first. 28 While I continued to look the two that remained were planning between themselves to reign together; 29 and while they were planning, one of the heads that were at rest (the one that was in the middle) suddenly awoke; it was greater than the other two heads. 30 And I saw how it allied the two heads with itself, 31 and how the head turned with those that were with it and devoured the two little wings[p] that were planning to reign. 32 Moreover this head gained control of the whole earth, and with much oppression dominated its inhabitants; it had greater power over the world than all the wings that had gone before.

33 After this I looked again and saw the head in the middle suddenly disappear, just as the wings had done. 34 But the two heads remained, which also in like manner ruled over the earth and its inhabitants. 35 And while I looked, I saw the head on the right side devour the one on the left.

36 Then I heard a voice saying to me, "Look in front of you and consider what you see." 37 When I looked, I saw what seemed to be a lion roused from the forest, roaring; and I heard how it uttered a human voice to the eagle, and spoke, saying, 38 "Listen and I will speak to you. The Most High says to you, 39 'Are you not the

n Syr Arab 2 *the little wings* *o* Some Ethiop Mss read *left* *p* Syr: Lat *underwings*

"human being." **11.7–11** Preparation for the sequence of rulers. **11.8** *Watch*, i.e., "be awake." **11.9** *The last* is an eschatological term. **11.12–19** Rule of right-hand wings. The right side is dominant and favorable. **11.13** *And after a time*, text uncertain. *The next wing* is treated in detail because of its importance; cf. 12.15. **11.22–23** Summary. **11.24–27** Rule of four little wings. **11.25** *These little wings*, better "these four little wings." **11.26–27** Brief rule of first two wings. **11.28–32** Fate of next two wings. They did not achieve even a brief rule. **11.33–35** Fate of the heads. **11.35** The Dead Sea Scrolls *Pesher on Habakkuk* (1QpHab) 3.11 refers to the Kittim, which *devour* like an eagle. **11.36–38** The appearance of a lion. **11.36** *I*. Ezra becomes personally involved. **11.37** The *lion* symbolizes the Messiah. The *voice* is a human attribute. **11.38–43** Indictment of the eagle. These verses have a clearly legal character. **11.39** *My times*, better "the times." This verse establishes the identification of the eagle; cf. *2 Apocalypse of Baruch* 39.7. Kings and empires are foreordained by God; the eagle's domination is

one that remains of the four beasts that I had made to reign in my world, so that the end of my times might come through them? 40 You, the fourth that has come, have conquered all the beasts that have gone before; and you have held sway over the world with great terror, and over all the earth with grievous oppression; and for so long you have lived on the earth with deceit.[q] 41 You have judged the earth, but not with truth, 42 for you have oppressed the meek and injured the peaceable; you have hated those who tell the truth, and have loved liars; you have destroyed the homes of those who brought forth fruit, and have laid low the walls of those who did you no harm. 43 Your insolence has come up before the Most High, and your pride to the Mighty One. 44 The Most High has looked at his times; now they have ended, and his ages have reached completion. 45 Therefore you, eagle, will surely disappear, you and your terrifying wings, your most evil little wings, your malicious heads, your most evil talons, and your whole worthless body, 46 so that the whole earth, freed from your violence, may be refreshed and relieved, and may hope for the judgment and mercy of him who made it.'"

12 While the lion was saying these words to the eagle, I looked 2 and saw that the remaining head had disappeared. The two wings that had gone over to it rose up and[r] set themselves up to reign, and their reign was brief and full of tumult. 3 When I looked again, they were already vanishing. The whole body of the eagle was burned, and the earth was exceedingly terrified.

Response to the Vision

Then I woke up in great perplexity of mind and great fear, and I said to my spirit, 4 "You have brought this upon me, because you search out the ways of the Most High. 5 I am still weary in mind and very weak in my spirit, and not even a little strength is left in me, because of the great fear with which I have been terrified tonight. 6 Therefore I will now entreat the Most High that he may strengthen me to the end."

7 Then I said, "O sovereign Lord, if I have found favor in your sight, and if I have been accounted righteous before you beyond many others, and if my prayer has indeed come up before your face, 8 strengthen me and show me, your servant, the interpretation and meaning of this terrifying vision so that you may fully comfort my soul. 9 For you have judged me worthy to be shown the end of the times and the last events of the times."

The Interpretation of the Vision

10 He said to me, "This is the interpretation of this vision that you have seen: 11 The eagle that you saw coming up from the sea is the fourth kingdom that appeared in a vision to your brother Daniel. 12 But it was not explained to him as I now explain to you or have explained it. 13 The days are coming when a kingdom shall rise on earth, and it shall be more terrifying than all the kingdoms that have been

q Syr Arab Arm: Lat Ethiop *The fourth came, however, and conquered . . . and held sway . . . and for so long lived* *r* Ethiop: Lat lacks *rose up and*

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the zenith of evil, preceding the end. **11.40** A parallel structure is in *2 Apocalypse of Baruch* 39.8. **11.42** *Meek, peaceable.* Cf. Mt 5.5, 9. **11.43** *Pride* is typical of the wicked kingdom. **11.44–46** Sentencing of the eagle. **11.46** *Whole earth, freed . . . refreshed and relieved* apparently hints at the messianic kingdom. **12.1–3a** Execution of the sentence. Enemies of God are often destroyed by fire and terror; cf. Mal 3.19.

12.3b–9 In function, this section resembles 10.5–24; 13.13b–20a, describing the seer's reaction to the vision: fear, perplexity of mind, and prayer. **12.3b** The seer's state of mind is similarly described in 5.33. **12.4** An apostrophe to his spirit or mind; cf. 7.62. The frightening dream is precipitated by his mind's search for understanding. **12.5** Cf. Dan 7.15; *mind,* like *spirit,* indicates the seer's consciousness. **12.7** *O sovereign Lord.* God is addressed. **12.8** Similar requests for interpretation may be seen in Dan 2.26; 5.26. **12.9** The revelation is of a special nature; cf. 3.14; 14.5.

12.10–36 Interpretation of the vision by the angel. Note the recapitulation of the symbol, followed by its meaning. The vision is related to apocalyptic tradition and explicitly to Dan 7.11. It also provides a date for the book. The vision and interpretation cohere closely, giving information about particular stages of the eschatological process. **12.10** Cf. 10.40; 13.25. **12.11** The *eagle* is the fourth kingdom (cf. Dan 7) and, implicitly, Rome. This vision supersedes Daniel's.

before it. 14 And twelve kings shall reign
in it, one after another. 15 But the second
that is to reign shall hold sway for a longer
time than any other one of the twelve.
16 This is the interpretation of the twelve
wings that you saw.

17 "As for your hearing a voice that
spoke, coming not from the eagle's[s]
heads but from the midst of its body, this
is the interpretation: 18 In the midst of[t]
the time of that kingdom great struggles
shall arise, and it shall be in danger of fall-
ing; nevertheless it shall not fall then, but
shall regain its former power.[u] 19 As for
your seeing eight little wings[v] clinging to
its wings, this is the interpretation:
20 Eight kings shall arise in it, whose times
shall be short and their years swift; 21 two
of them shall perish when the middle of
its time draws near; and four shall be kept
for the time when its end approaches, but
two shall be kept until the end.

22 "As for your seeing three heads at
rest, this is the interpretation: 23 In its last
days the Most High will raise up three
kings,[w] and they[x] shall renew many
things in it, and shall rule the earth 24 and
its inhabitants more oppressively than all
who were before them. Therefore they
are called the heads of the eagle, 25 be-
cause it is they who shall sum up his wick-
edness and perform his last actions. 26 As
for your seeing that the large head disap-
peared, one of the kings[y] shall die in his
bed, but in agonies. 27 But as for the two
who remained, the sword shall devour
them. 28 For the sword of one shall devour
him who was with him; but he also shall
fall by the sword in the last days.

29 "As for your seeing two little wings[z]
passing over to[a] the head which was on
the right side, 30 this is the interpretation:
It is these whom the Most High has kept
for the eagle's[s] end; this was the reign
which was brief and full of tumult, as you
have seen.

31 "And as for the lion whom you saw
rousing up out of the forest and roaring
and speaking to the eagle and reproving
him for his unrighteousness, and as for all
his words that you have heard, 32 this is
the Messiah[b] whom the Most High has
kept until the end of days, who will arise
from the offspring of David, and will
come and speak[c] with them. He will de-
nounce them for their ungodliness and
for their wickedness, and will display be-
fore them their contemptuous dealings.
33 For first he will bring them alive before
his judgment seat, and when he has re-
proved them, then he will destroy them.
34 But in mercy he will set free the rem-
nant of my people, those who have been
saved throughout my borders, and he will
make them joyful until the end comes, the
day of judgment, of which I spoke to you
at the beginning. 35 This is the dream that
you saw, and this is its interpretation.
36 And you alone were worthy to learn this
secret of the Most High. 37 Therefore
write all these things that you have seen in
a book, put it[d] in a hidden place; 38 and
you shall teach them to the wise among
your people, whose hearts you know
are able to comprehend and keep these

s Lat *his* t Syr Arm: Lat *After*
u Ethiop Arab 1 Arm: Lat Syr *its beginning*
v Syr: Lat *underwings* w Syr Ethiop Arab Arm: Lat *kingdoms* x Syr Ethiop Arm: Lat *he*
y Lat *them* z Arab 1: Lat *underwings*
a Syr Ethiop: Lat lacks *to* b Literally *anointed one*
c Syr: Lat lacks *of days . . . and speak*
d Ethiop Arab 1 Arab 2 Arm: Lat Syr *them*

12.13 *Terrifying*; cf. Dan 7.7, 19, 23. **12.14** *Twelve kings* are expected. **12.15** The king with a long rule is Augustus (27 B.C.E.–14 C.E.). **12.23** The idea is that evil will peak with the rule of the heads. **12.25** *Sum up*, better "be the heads of," making the wordplay evident. **12.26** The author adds information from contemporary events. The head is Vespasian (69–79 C.E.). **12.27–28** *The two*, Titus (79–81 C.E.) and Domitian (81–96 C.E.). The vision was written in the time of Domitian. **12.29–30** The *little wings* are part of the eschatological events. **12.31** Cf. 2 *Apocalypse of Baruch* 39.8–40.3. *Lion*. The Messiah is associated with Judah and David. His activity is basically legal in character. **12.32** Indictment by the Messiah; *them*, the Roman emperors. **12.33** *Before his judgment seat*, better "in judgment." The Messiah executes judgment. **12.34** Describes the messianic kingdom; cf. 9.8; 13.48. *Remnant*, those who survive the terrible "woes"; see 5.1–13. The day of judgment will follow the messianic kingdom. *Borders*. Note the role of the holy land here; cf. 13.48. **12.35** Cf. Dan 2.45. **12.36** The special *secret* status of the revealed information is stressed; cf. 10.38–39.

12.37–39 Conclusion. **12.37** The command to write the revelation in a *book* is new in 4 Ezra; cf. Dan 12.4, 9. **12.38** The transmission of secret books to the *wise* is a prominent feature in ch. 14. A change has taken place in Ezra's role and in the vision's content.

secrets. 39 But as for you, wait here seven
days more, so that you may be shown
whatever it pleases the Most High to show
you." Then he left me.

The People Come to Ezra

40 When all the people heard that the
seven days were past and I had not re-
turned to the city, they all gathered to-
gether, from the least to the greatest, and
came to me and spoke to me, saying,
41 "How have we offended you, and what
harm have we done you, that you have
forsaken us and sit in this place? 42 For of
all the prophets you alone are left to us,
like a cluster of grapes from the vintage,
and like a lamp in a dark place, and like a
haven for a ship saved from a storm.
43 Are not the disasters that have befallen
us enough? 44 Therefore if you forsake
us, how much better it would have been
for us if we also had been consumed in
the burning of Zion. 45 For we are no bet-
ter than those who died there." And they
wept with a loud voice.

Then I answered them and said,
46 "Take courage, O Israel; and do not be
sorrowful, O house of Jacob; 47 for the
Most High has you in remembrance, and
the Mighty One has not forgotten you in
your struggle. 48 As for me, I have neither
forsaken you nor withdrawn from you;
but I have come to this place to pray on
account of the desolation of Zion, and to
seek mercy on account of the humiliation
of our[e] sanctuary. 49 Now go to your
homes, every one of you, and after these
days I will come to you." 50 So the people
went into the city, as I told them to do.
51 But I sat in the field seven days, as the
angel[f] had commanded me; and I ate
only of the flowers of the field, and my
food was of plants during those days.

Sixth Vision: The Man from the Sea

13 After seven days I dreamed a
dream in the night. 2 And lo, a
wind arose from the sea and stirred up[g]
all its waves. 3 As I kept looking the wind
made something like the figure of a
man come up out of the heart of the
sea. And I saw[h] that this man flew[i] with
the clouds of heaven; and wherever he
turned his face to look, everything under
his gaze trembled, 4 and whenever his
voice issued from his mouth, all who
heard his voice melted as wax melts[j]
when it feels the fire.

5 After this I looked and saw that an
innumerable multitude of people were
gathered together from the four winds of
heaven to make war against the man who
came up out of the sea. 6 And I looked
and saw that he carved out for himself a
great mountain, and flew up on to it.
7 And I tried to see the region or place
from which the mountain was carved, but
I could not.

8 After this I looked and saw that all
who had gathered together against him,
to wage war with him, were filled with
fear, and yet they dared to fight. 9 When
he saw the onrush of the approaching
multitude, he neither lifted his hand nor

e Syr Ethiop: Lat *your* *f* Literally *he*
g Other ancient authorities read *I saw a wind arise from the sea and stir up* *h* Syr: Lat lacks *the wind . . . I saw* *i* Syr Ethiop Arab Arm: Lat *grew strong*
j Syr: Lat *burned as the earth rests*

12.40–50 A narrative interlude and transition comparable to 5.16–22. **12.40** The *days* of the first six visions add up to forty, corresponding to the forty days of Ezra's new revelation in ch. 14. *City*, presumably Babylon. **12.42** Ezra is called *prophet* for the first time in 4 Ezra and this is his first "ordinary" apocalyptic revelation. He accepts this role. *Grapes* indicate election; see 9.21–22. *Lamp*. See *2 Apocalypse of Baruch* 77.13. **12.44** Reapplication of an old idea, stated in 4.12 of Ezra himself. **12.47** *In your struggle*, or else "forever." God's relationship to Israel is inalienable. **12.48** Cf. 12.38; he keeps the revelation secret and says he was praying for the people, as a prophet should.

12.51 This is a second conclusion to the fifth vision. This injunction belongs with 12.37–39.

13.1–58 Sixth vision. **13.1–13a** This vision is much simpler than the fifth. The closeness of the end is not mentioned. **13.1** *Seven days*. See 12.51. This is explicitly a dream; Ezra is prostrate (cf. 13.57). **13.2** *Wind*, better "great wind." Cf. Dan 7.2. **13.3** Cf. Dan 7.13; the *figure of a man* is a redeemer. **13.4** *Melting* of enemies is a divine characteristic; cf. Ps 97.5; Mic 1.4. The superhuman nature of the figure is strongly suggested. **13.5** The eschatological attack (see Rev 16.12–15), an idea originating in Deut 28.49; Joel 2.1–10. **13.6** *Carved out . . . a great mountain*. Cf. Dan 2.34, 45. **13.7** The dreamer intervenes here. **13.9** *Nor . . . any weapon of war*; cf. *Psalms of Solomon* 17.33–34; fire (v. 10) is God's chief

held a spear or any weapon of war; 10 but
I saw only how he sent forth from his
mouth something like a stream of fire,
and from his lips a flaming breath, and
from his tongue he shot forth a storm of
sparks.[k] 11 All these were mingled to-
gether, the stream of fire and the flaming
breath and the great storm, and fell on
the onrushing multitude that was pre-
pared to fight, and burned up all of them,
so that suddenly nothing was seen of the
innumerable multitude but only the dust
of ashes and the smell of smoke. When I
saw it, I was amazed.

12 After this I saw the same man come
down from the mountain and call to him-
self another multitude that was peaceable.
13 Then many people[l] came to him, some
of whom were joyful and some sorrowful;
some of them were bound, and some were
bringing others as offerings.

Response to the Vision

Then I woke up in great terror, and
prayed to the Most High, and said,
14 "From the beginning you have shown
your servant these wonders, and have
deemed me worthy to have my prayer
heard by you; 15 now show me the inter-
pretation of this dream also. 16 For as I
consider it in my mind, alas for those who
will be left in those days! And still more,
alas for those who are not left! 17 For
those who are not left will be sad 18 be-
cause they understand the things that are
reserved for the last days, but cannot at-
tain them. 19 But alas for those also who
are left, and for that very reason! For they
shall see great dangers and much distress,
as these dreams show. 20 Yet it is better[m]
to come into these things,[n] though incur-
ring peril, than to pass from the world
like a cloud, and not to see what will hap-
pen in the last days."

The Interpretation of the Dream

He answered me and said, 21 "I will tell
you the interpretation of the vision, and I
will also explain to you the things that you
have mentioned. 22 As for what you said
about those who survive, and concerning
those who do not survive,[o] this is the in-
terpretation: 23 The one who brings the
peril at that time will protect those who
fall into peril, who have works and faith
toward the Almighty. 24 Understand
therefore that those who are left are more
blessed than those who have died.

25 "This is the interpretation of the vi-
sion: As for your seeing a man come up
from the heart of the sea, 26 this is he
whom the Most High has been keeping
for many ages, who will himself deliver
his creation; and he will direct those who
are left. 27 And as for your seeing wind
and fire and a storm coming out of his
mouth, 28 and as for his not holding a
spear or weapon of war, yet destroying
the onrushing multitude that came to con-
quer him, this is the interpretation: 29 The
days are coming when the Most High will
deliver those who are on the earth. 30 And
bewilderment of mind shall come over
those who inhabit the earth. 31 They shall
plan to make war against one another,
city against city, place against place, peo-
ple against people, and kingdom against

k Meaning of Lat uncertain
l Lat Syr Arab 2 literally *the faces of many people*
m Ethiop Compare Arab 2: Lat *easier*
n Syr: Lat *this*
o Syr Arab 1: Lat lacks *and . . . not survive*

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weapon; cf. Ps 97.3. **13.10** This perhaps hints at God's effective word; see Ps 2.9; Isa 11.4; *Psalms of Solomon* 17.35. **13.11** Again the dreamer intervenes. **13.13a** See Isa 66.20; the ingathering of converted Gentiles.

13.13b–20a The response functions like 12.3b–9. **13.14** Ezra asserts his own worthiness; cf. 12.7–9. *Wonders* is the eschatological revelation in the book. **13.16** Woe pronouncement: survivors live on after the woes; see 13.19. **13.18** The seeing of reward or punishment is part of recompense; see 7.66, 83, 93. **13.20** *Yet it is better . . . in the last days,* the reversal of the idea that death is better; cf. 4.12. Ezra, now a prophet, no longer despairs.

13.20b–55 The interpretation of the dream is unclear and repetitive. The author may have composed the interpretation for a previously existing vision he took over. **13.21** Ezra's dream and prayer are to be interpreted. No angel appears. **13.22** Ezra's words are interpreted just like the dream. **13.24** Ezra's view is confirmed. **13.26** *Who will himself,* better "through whom he will." The Messiah is precreated. *Those who are left,* after the messianic woes. **13.27–28** A restatement of vv. 10–11, but the interpretation comes only in vv. 36–38. **13.29** *The days are coming.* A predictive passage starts, relating to the woes. **13.30** Cf. *2 Apocalypse of Baruch* 25.3; 70.2. *Bewilderment of mind* leads to interne-

kingdom. 32 When these things take place
and the signs occur that I showed you
before, then my Son will be revealed,
whom you saw as a man coming up from
the sea.[p]

33 "Then, when all the nations hear
his voice, all the nations shall leave their
own lands and the warfare that they have
against one another; 34 and an innumera-
ble multitude shall be gathered together,
as you saw, wishing to come and conquer
him. 35 But he shall stand on the top of
Mount Zion. 36 And Zion shall come and
be made manifest to all people, prepared
and built, as you saw the mountain carved
out without hands. 37 Then he, my Son,
will reprove the assembled nations for
their ungodliness (this was symbolized by
the storm), 38 and will reproach them to
their face with their evil thoughts and the
torments with which they are to be tor-
tured (which were symbolized by the
flames), and will destroy them without
effort by means of the law[q] (which was
symbolized by the fire).

39 "And as for your seeing him gather
to himself another multitude that was
peaceable, 40 these are the nine[r] tribes
that were taken away from their own land
into exile in the days of King Hoshea,
whom Shalmaneser, king of the Assyri-
ans, made captives; he took them across
the river, and they were taken into an-
other land. 41 But they formed this plan
for themselves, that they would leave the
multitude of the nations and go to a more
distant region, where no human beings
had ever lived, 42 so that there at least they
might keep their statutes that they had
not kept in their own land. 43 And they
went in by the narrow passages of the
Euphrates river. 44 For at that time the
Most High performed signs for them, and
stopped the channels of the river until
they had crossed over. 45 Through that re-
gion there was a long way to go, a journey
of a year and a half; and that country is
called Arzareth.[s]

46 "Then they lived there until the
last times; and now, when they are about
to come again, 47 the Most High will stop[t]
the channels of the river again, so that
they may be able to cross over. Therefore
you saw the multitude gathered together
in peace. 48 But those who are left of your
people, who are found within my holy
borders, shall be saved.[u] 49 Therefore
when he destroys the multitude of the na-
tions that are gathered together, he will
defend the people who remain. 50 And
then he will show them very many
wonders."

51 I said, "O sovereign Lord, explain
this to me: Why did I see the man coming
up from the heart of the sea?"

52 He said to me, "Just as no one can
explore or know what is in the depths of
the sea, so no one on earth can see my Son
or those who are with him, except in the
time of his day.[v] 53 This is the interpreta-
tion of the dream that you saw. And you
alone have been enlightened about this,
54 because you have forsaken your own
ways and have applied yourself to mine,
and have searched out my law; 55 for
you have devoted your life to wisdom,

p Syr and most Lat Mss lack *from the sea*
q Syr: Lat *effort and the law* *r* Other Lat Mss *ten*; Syr Ethiop Arab 1 Arm *nine and a half*
s That is *Another Land* *t* Syr: Lat *stops*
u Syr: Lat lacks *shall be saved* *v* Syr: Ethiop *except when his time and his day have come.* Lat lacks *his*

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cine strife; see 5.9; 6.24; 9.3–4. **13.32** *Son*, better either "servant" or "son" (no capital letter). The *man* (v. 3) is the servant. **13.33** *Voice*. See 13.4. **13.34** The evil nations' final assault on Zion; it will be repulsed by the Messiah. **13.35** See 13.6–7; cf. Ps 2.6; Isa 31.4. **13.36** Cf. Dan 2.34, 45. *The mountain* is Zion. *Without hands* explicitly contradicts 13.6. **13.37** See 13.10–11. The man's breath is both fire and judgment. **13.38** *Reproach*, the Messiah's judgmental word. **13.40** *Nine and a half* tribes (text note *r*) is the preferred reading here, and not *nine* or ten. This number is also mentioned in *2 Apocalypse of Baruch* 77.17, 19; 78.1. **13.41** Cf. Josephus *Antiquities of the Jews* 11.133. **13.44** Based on the miracle of the Red Sea, Ex 14.21–31. **13.45** *Arzareth* is enigmatic; perhaps cf. Deut 29.28 for Hebrew *'eretz 'acheret*, "another land." **13.46** The end is close. **13.47** *The Most High . . . to cross over*. Eschatological redemption is associated with the exodus. **13.48** See 9.8; 12.34, where similar events are foretold. **13.49** The Messiah will protect the survivors. **13.50** *Wonders* mean the Messiah's action; cf. 4.26; 7.27. **13.51** A repetitive question. Cf. 13.25–26. **13.52** See 13.3. *Depths of the sea*. See 4.7. *Those who are with him* are those taken alive to heaven, like Elijah and Enoch. **13.54** Ezra's wisdom is praised; Torah (*law*) and wisdom are often connected. **13.55** *Wisdom* is the tradition of eschatological teaching; see 14.40, 47.

and called understanding your mother.
56 Therefore I have shown you these
things; for there is a reward laid up with
the Most High. For it will be that after
three more days I will tell you other
things, and explain weighty and won-
drous matters to you."
57 Then I got up and walked in the
field, giving great glory and praise to the
Most High for the wonders that he does[w]
from time to time, 58 and because he gov-
erns the times and whatever things come
to pass in their seasons. And I stayed
there three days.

Seventh Vision: Address to Ezra

14 On the third day, while I was
sitting under an oak, suddenly a
voice came out of a bush opposite me and
said, "Ezra, Ezra!" 2 And I answered,
"Here I am, Lord," and I rose to my feet.
3 Then he said to me, "I revealed myself
in a bush and spoke to Moses when my
people were in bondage in Egypt; 4 and I
sent him and led[x] my people out of
Egypt; and I led him up on Mount Sinai,
where I kept him with me many days. 5 I
told him many wondrous things, and
showed him the secrets of the times and
declared to him[y] the end of the times.
Then I commanded him, saying, 6 'These
words you shall publish openly, and these
you shall keep secret.' 7 And now I say to
you: 8 Lay up in your heart the signs that
I have shown you, the dreams that you
have seen, and the interpretations that
you have heard; 9 for you shall be taken
up from among humankind, and hence-
forth you shall live with my Son and with
those who are like you, until the times are
ended. 10 The age has lost its youth, and
the times begin to grow old. 11 For the age
is divided into twelve parts, and nine[z] of
its parts have already passed, 12 as well as
half of the tenth part; so two of its parts
remain, besides half of the tenth part.[a]
13 Now therefore, set your house in order,
and reprove your people; comfort the
lowly among them, and instruct those that
are wise.[b] And now renounce the life that
is corruptible, 14 and put away from you
mortal thoughts; cast away from you the
burdens of humankind, and divest your-
self now of your weak nature; 15 lay to one
side the thoughts that are most grievous
to you, and hurry to escape from these
times. 16 For evils worse than those that
you have now seen happen shall take
place hereafter. 17 For the weaker the
world becomes through old age, the more
shall evils be increased upon its inhabi-
tants. 18 Truth shall go farther away, and
falsehood shall come near. For the eagle[c]
that you saw in the vision is already hurry-
ing to come."

w Lat *did* *x* Syr Arab 1 Arab 2 *he led*
y Syr Ethiop Arab Arm: Lat lacks *declared to him*
z Cn: Lat Ethiop *ten* *a* Syr lacks verses 11, 12: Ethiop *For the world is divided into ten parts, and has come to the tenth, and half of the tenth remains. Now . . .*
b Lat lacks *and . . . wise* *c* Syr Ethiop Arab Arm: Meaning of Lat uncertain

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13.56–58 Conclusion and injunctions. This stands in deliberate contrast to the start of the first vision. **13.56** *Reward* is precreated; see 8.52–53, 59. **13.57** *Then I got up.* In 3.1 Ezra lies on his bed in Babylon. **13.58** *Because he governs . . . in their seasons.* God's governance of the world had been questioned in ch. 3.

14.1–48 The seventh vision, the revelation of scripture to Ezra, concludes 4 Ezra. God speaks directly in this chapter.

14.1–2 Narrative introduction and call. **14.1** *Third day.* The preceding six visions total forty days. *Oak.* See Gen 18.1; Judg 4.5; *2 Apocalypse of Baruch* 6.1; 77.18. *Bush.* See Ex 3.2–4.17. Ezra resembles Moses here. **14.2** See Ex 3.5; 2 Esd 6.13–15.

14.3–18 Address to Ezra before his assumption. **14.3–4** Cf. Ex 3.2–12. **14.4** See Ex 24.15–18; 34.1–35. **14.5** Cf. 3.14; 12.36–37. Moses also received a secret revelation; cf. *2 Apocalypse of Baruch* 59.4. **14.6** A double revelation; this command is apocryphal, cf. 9.29–31; 12.37. Also cf. 14.45. **14.7** 12.9, 36–37 link Ezra's revelation to Moses' and Abraham's. **14.8** Ezra has only secret revelation in the first six visions; cf. 14.6. **14.9** *Son,* better "servant." Ezra's assumption is prophesied; cf. 6.26; 13.52. **14.10** The waning of this world-age; see 14.17. **14.11** Many such divisions of history exist; the actual basis of the reckoning here is obscure. **14.13** *Set your house . . . that are wise.* These commands, using wisdom terms, are executed in 14.27–36, although the wise are not instructed. That which is *corruptible* dies. **14.14** Ezra is not to be assumed in the body. **14.15** Ezra will escape the toilsomeness of the age. **14.17** See 14.10–11. The senescence of the earth brings evils. **14.18** The author here refers to his own times, not those of Ezra.

Ezra's Response

19 Then I answered and said, "Let me
speak[d] in your presence, Lord. 20 For I
will go, as you have commanded me, and
I will reprove the people who are now liv-
ing; but who will warn those who will be
born hereafter? For the world lies in
darkness, and its inhabitants are without
light. 21 For your law has been burned,
and so no one knows the things which
have been done or will be done by you.
22 If then I have found favor with you,
send the holy spirit into me, and I will
write everything that has happened in the
world from the beginning, the things that
were written in your law, so that people
may be able to find the path, and that
those who want to live in the last days may
do so."

Injunctions

23 He answered me and said, "Go and
gather the people, and tell them not to
seek you for forty days. 24 But prepare for
yourself many writing tablets, and take
with you Sarea, Dabria, Selemia, Ethanus,
and Asiel—these five, who are trained to
write rapidly; 25 and you shall come here,
and I will light in your heart the lamp of
understanding, which shall not be put out
until what you are about to write is fin-
ished. 26 And when you have finished,
some things you shall make public, and
some you shall deliver in secret to the
wise; tomorrow at this hour you shall be-
gin to write."

Ezra's Speech

27 Then I went as he commanded me,
and I gathered all the people together,
and said, 28 "Hear these words, O Israel.
29 At first our ancestors lived as aliens in
Egypt, and they were liberated from there
30 and received the law of life, which they
did not keep, which you also have trans-
gressed after them. 31 Then land was
given to you for a possession in the land
of Zion; but you and your ancestors com-
mitted iniquity and did not keep the ways
that the Most High commanded you.
32 And since he is a righteous judge, in
due time he took from you what he had
given. 33 And now you are here, and your
people[e] are farther in the interior.[f] 34 If
you, then, will rule over your minds and
discipline your hearts, you shall be kept
alive, and after death you shall obtain
mercy. 35 For after death the judgment
will come, when we shall live again; and
then the names of the righteous shall be-
come manifest, and the deeds of the un-
godly shall be disclosed. 36 But let no one
come to me now, and let no one seek me
for forty days."

The Revelation of the Scriptures

37 So I took the five men, as he com-
manded me, and we proceeded to the
field, and remained there. 38 And on the
next day a voice called me, saying, "Ezra,
open your mouth and drink what I give
you to drink." 39 So I opened my mouth,
and a full cup was offered to me; it was

d Most Lat Mss lack *Let me speak* *e* Lat *brothers*
f Syr Ethiop Arm: Lat *are among you*

14.19–22 Ezra already has esoteric knowledge. Now he asks for exoteric revelation to become like Moses. **14.20** *Who will warn . . . hereafter?* Cf. 5.41. On *light*, see Pss 36.10; 119.105; Prov 6.23. **14.21** The Torah (*law*) was lost; cf. 4.23. For its contents here, cf. *Jubilees* 1.29. **14.22** This request is unparalleled in the book. *Holy spirit.* See Ps 51.13; Isa 63.10; Wis 1.5; *Jubilees* 1.21. *Live*, i.e., eternal life.

14.23–26 Injunctions. **14.23** *Forty days*, the length of time Moses was on the mountain (Ex 24.19). The first six visions also took a total of forty days. **14.24** *Ethanus*, alternately "Elkana." *Five* men, *2 Apocalypse of Baruch* 5.5. **14.25** *Is finished*, better "you finish." The nature of the inspiration is described. Ezra will remember the revelation until he finishes writing. **14.26** *Some . . . public, and some . . . to the wise.* The revelation is both exoteric and esoteric, like Moses, (14.6).

14.27–36 Ezra's speech to the people stating the reasons for exile and the hope of eternal life. Zion's fate is not mentioned. **14.27** See 14.23. Ezra's admonition is prophetic. **14.28** Cf. 9.30. **14.30** *Law of life.* See Sir 17.11; 45.5. **14.32** General conclusion of the historical recital. **14.33** See 13.40–41. **14.35** Resurrection is intended and judgment is disclosed.

14.37–48 Revelation of the exoteric and esoteric books to Ezra, who has achieved prophetic status, and his translation. **14.37** *Five men.* See 14.24. **14.38** Cf. 14.25. This is a waking experience. **14.39** He passes from audition to vision. The *cup* contains the holy spirit.

full of something like water, but its color
was like fire. 40 I took it and drank; and
when I had drunk it, my heart poured
forth understanding, and wisdom in-
creased in my breast, for my spirit re-
tained its memory, 41 and my mouth
was opened and was no longer closed.
42 Moreover, the Most High gave under-
standing to the five men, and by turns
they wrote what was dictated, using char-
acters that they did not know.[g] They sat
forty days; they wrote during the daytime,
and ate their bread at night. 43 But as for
me, I spoke in the daytime and was not
silent at night. 44 So during the forty days,
ninety-four[h] books were written. 45 And
when the forty days were ended, the Most
High spoke to me, saying, "Make public
the twenty-four[i] books that you wrote
first, and let the worthy and the unworthy
read them; 46 but keep the seventy that
were written last, in order to give them to
the wise among your people. 47 For in
them is the spring of understanding, the
fountain of wisdom, and the river of
knowledge." 48 And I did so.[j]

Commission of the Prophet

15 [k] Speak in the ears of my people
the words of the prophecy that I
will put in your mouth, says the Lord,
2 and cause them to be written on paper;
for they are trustworthy and true. 3 Do
not fear the plots against you, and do not
be troubled by the unbelief of those who
oppose you. 4 For all unbelievers shall die
in their unbelief.[l]

Prediction of Doom

5 Beware, says the Lord, I am bring-
ing evils upon the world, the sword and
famine, death and destruction, 6 because
iniquity has spread throughout every
land, and their harmful doings have
reached their limit. 7 Therefore, says the
Lord, 8 I will be silent no longer concern-
ing their ungodly acts that they impiously
commit, neither will I tolerate their
wicked practices. Innocent and righteous
blood cries out to me, and the souls of the
righteous cry out continually. 9 I will
surely avenge them, says the Lord, and
will receive to myself all the innocent
blood from among them. 10 See, my peo-
ple are being led like a flock to the slaugh-
ter; I will not allow them to live any longer
in the land of Egypt, 11 but I will bring
them out with a mighty hand and with an
uplifted arm, and will strike Egypt with
plagues, as before, and will destroy all
its land.

12 Let Egypt mourn, and its founda-
tions, because of the plague of chastise-
ment and castigation that the Lord will

g Syr Compare Ethiop Arab 2 Arm: Meaning of Lat uncertain *h* Syr Ethiop Arab 1 Arm: Meaning of Lat uncertain *i* Syr Arab 1: Lat lacks *twenty-four* *j* Syr adds *in the seventh year of the sixth week, five thousand years and three months and twelve days after creation. At that time Ezra was caught up, and taken to the place of those who are like him, after he had written all these things. And he was called the scribe of the knowledge of the Most High for ever and ever.* Ethiop Arab 1 Arm have a similar ending *k* Chapters 15 and 16 (except 15.57-59, which has been found in Greek) are extant only in Lat *l* Other ancient authorities add *and all who believe shall be saved by their faith*

14.40 *Drinking* denotes inspiration. *Poured forth understanding.* Cf. *Odes of Solomon* 36.7. **14.42** The scribes are also inspired, which guarantees the accuracy of their writing. **14.45–46** Cf. 14.26. *Twenty-four* is a traditional number of books in the Hebrew Bible. *Seventy,* perhaps the apocalyptic books; they are to be transmitted secretly. **14.47** Cf. Prov 18.4; *1 Enoch* 48.1. The esoteric books contain saving knowledge.

14.49 Conclusion. The additional material, found in text note *j*, should be regarded as original; cf. 14.9, 14–15.

15.1–16.78 Chs. 15–16 are a Christian addition to the Jewish apocalypse that concluded in 14.49. They are known as 6 Ezra.

15.1–4 The author is made a prophet. **15.1** *Put in your mouth.* Cf. Isa 51.16; Jer 1.9. The author is unnamed. **15.2** Is this related to ch. 14? If so, 6 Ezra was written to supplement 4 Ezra. *Paper,* papyrus. **15.3** Cf. Jer 1.7–8.

15.5–27 Prediction of doom directed to the wicked. Egypt is mentioned specifically. **15.5** Cf. Isa 51.19; Jer 14.12. **15.6** There is a fixed measure of evil. **15.8** *Blood cries out.* Cf. Gen 4.10; reminiscent of Rev 6.9–10; *1 Enoch* 9.3–5. **15.9** *I will . . . avenge them, says the Lord.* See Deut 32.43. *Blood* is life; cf. Lev 17.14. **15.10** *Flock to the slaughter.* Cf. Ps 44.22; Isa 53.7. The historical context remains obscure; some consider it the famine and plague in Alexandria sometime between 260 and 268 C.E. (Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 7.21–22). **15.11** The exodus is

bring upon it. 13 Let the farmers that till
the ground mourn, because their seed
shall fail to grow[m] and their trees shall be
ruined by blight and hail and by a terrible
tempest. 14 Alas for the world and for
those who live in it! 15 For the sword
and misery draw near them, and nation
shall rise up to fight against nation, with
swords in their hands. 16 For there shall be
unrest among people; growing strong
against one another, they shall in their
might have no respect for their king or
the chief of their leaders. 17 For a person
will desire to go into a city, and shall
not be able to do so. 18 Because of their
pride the cities shall be in confusion, the
houses shall be destroyed, and people
shall be afraid. 19 People shall have no
pity for their neighbors, but shall make
an assault upon[n] their houses with the
sword, and plunder their goods, because
of hunger for bread and because of great
tribulation.

20 See how I am calling together all
the kings of the earth to turn to me, says
God, from the rising sun and from the
south, from the east and from Lebanon;
to turn and repay what they have given
them. 21 Just as they have done to my elect
until this day, so I will do, and will repay
into their bosom. Thus says the Lord
God: 22 My right hand will not spare the
sinners, and my sword will not cease from
those who shed innocent blood on earth.
23 And a fire went forth from his wrath,
and consumed the foundations of the
earth and the sinners, like burnt straw.
24 Alas for those who sin and do not
observe my commandments, says the
Lord;[o] 25 I will not spare them. Depart,
you faithless children! Do not pollute my
sanctuary. 26 For God[p] knows all who sin
against him; therefore he will hand them
over to death and slaughter. 27 Already
calamities have come upon the whole
earth, and you shall remain in them;
God[p] will not deliver you, because you
have sinned against him.

Conflicts Between Kingdoms

28 What a terrifying sight, appearing
from the east! 29 The nations of the drag-
ons of Arabia shall come out with many
chariots, and from the day that they set
out, their hissing shall spread over the
earth, so that all who hear them will fear
and tremble. 30 Also the Carmonians, rag-
ing in wrath, shall go forth like wild
boars[q] from the forest, and with great
power they shall come and engage them
in battle, and with their tusks they shall
devastate a portion of the land of the
Assyrians with their teeth. 31 And then
the dragons,[r] remembering their origin,
shall become still stronger; and if they
combine in great power and turn to pur-
sue them, 32 then these shall be disorga-
nized and silenced by their power, and
shall turn and flee.[s] 33 And from the land
of the Assyrians an enemy in ambush
shall attack them and destroy one of
them, and fear and trembling shall come
upon their army, and indecision upon
their kings.

m Lat lacks *to grow* *n* Cn: Lat *shall empty*
o Other ancient authorities read *God*
p Other ancient authorities read *the Lord*
q Other ancient authorities lack *like wild boars*
r Cn: Lat *dragon* *s* Other ancient authorities read *turn their face to the north*

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invoked; cf. Deut 4.34. **15.13** *Hail.* Cf. Ex 9.25. **15.14** Troubles will come on the whole earth. **15.15** Internecine strife; see 13.31; Mt 24.7. **15.16** The social order breaks down, part of the woes; cf. 5.1–13. **15.17–19** Civil order is overturned. Famine is also part of this chaos. **15.20** The *kings* are discussed here. *Rising sun.* The text is uncertain here. **15.21** *Just as . . . so I will do.* There is a relationship between punishment and the offense committed. **15.23** *Fire* as God's weapon; cf. Deut 32.22; Ezek 22.21. God's wrath affects the very underpinnings of the earth. *Burnt straw* is a common biblical image; cf. Ex 15.7; Mt 3.12. **15.24** A woe statement; cf. Isa 3.11; *1 Enoch* 100.7–9. **15.25** *Sanctuary* may refer to a community. **15.26–27** The *calamities* that will befall the earth are foretold.

15.28–33 This passage has been thought to refer to the Sasanian Persian attack of the mid-third century C.E., which was eventually repulsed by Palmyrene forces under Odenathus, who was murdered in 267. Palmyra was an oasis between Syria and Babylonia and an important military and political force in the latter part of the third century. **15.29** *Dragons of Arabia,* the Palmyrene forces. The desert (i.e., Arabia) is a land of serpents (*hissing*); see Isa 30.6. **15.30** *Carmonians,* usually interpreted as Persians from Kirman province. *Land of the Assyrians* stands for Syria. **15.31–32** Shapur's defeat described. **15.33** *De-*

Vision of Judgment

34 See the clouds from the east, and
from the north to the south! Their ap-
pearance is exceedingly threatening, full
of wrath and storm. 35 They shall clash
against one another and shall pour out a
heavy tempest on the earth, and their own
tempest;[t] and there shall be blood from
the sword as high as a horse's belly 36 and
a man's thigh and a camel's hock. 37 And
there shall be fear and great trembling on
the earth; those who see that wrath shall
be horror-stricken, and they shall be
seized with trembling. 38 After that, heavy
storm clouds shall be stirred up from the
south, and from the north, and another
part from the west. 39 But the winds from
the east shall prevail over the cloud that
was[u] raised in wrath, and shall dispel it;
and the tempest[t] that was to cause de-
struction by the east wind shall be driven
violently toward the south and west.
40 Great and mighty clouds, full of wrath
and tempest, shall rise and destroy all the
earth and its inhabitants, and shall pour
out upon every high and lofty place[v] a
terrible tempest, 41 fire and hail and flying
swords and floods of water, so that all the
fields and all the streams shall be filled
with the abundance of those waters.
42 They shall destroy cities and walls,
mountains and hills, trees of the forests,
and grass of the meadows, and their
grain. 43 They shall go on steadily to Bab-
ylon and blot it out. 44 They shall come to
it and surround it; they shall pour out on
it the tempest[t] and all its fury;[w] then the
dust and smoke shall reach the sky, and
all who are around it shall mourn for it.
45 And those who survive shall serve those
who have destroyed it.

Judgment on Asia

46 And you, Asia, who share in the
splendor of Babylon and the glory of her
person— 47 woe to you, miserable wretch!
For you have made yourself like her; you
have decked out your daughters for pros-
titution to please and glory in your lovers,
who have always lusted after you. 48 You
have imitated that hateful one in all her
deeds and devices.[x] Therefore God[y]
says, 49 I will send evils upon you: widow-
hood, poverty, famine, sword, and pesti-
lence, bringing ruin to your houses,
bringing destruction and death. 50 And
the glory of your strength shall wither like
a flower when the heat shall rise that is
sent upon you. 51 You shall be weakened
like a wretched woman who is beaten and
wounded, so that you cannot receive your
mighty lovers. 52 Would I have dealt with
you so violently, says the Lord, 53 if you
had not killed my chosen people continu-
ally, exulting and clapping your hands
and talking about their death when you
were drunk?

54 Beautify your face! 55 The reward
of a prostitute is in your lap; therefore
you shall receive your recompense. 56 As
you will do to my chosen people, says the
Lord, so God will do to you, and will hand
you over to adversities. 57 Your children
shall die of hunger, and you shall fall by
the sword; your cities shall be wiped out,
and all your people who are in the open
country shall fall by the sword. 58 Those

t Meaning of Lat uncertain u Literally *that he*
v Or *eminent person* w Other ancient authorities add *until they destroy it to its foundations*
x Other ancient authorities read *devices, and you have followed after that one about to gratify her magnates and leaders so that you may be made proud and be pleased by her fornications* y Other ancient authorities read *the Lord*

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stroy one of them, perhaps the murder of Odenathus. **15.34–45** This passage is interpreted by some as the invasion of the Goths into the Roman Empire in the mid-third century C.E.; it could be taken, also, as a future prophecy. **15.34** *2 Apocalypse of Baruch* 53 also utilizes *clouds* in a symbolic vision. **15.35** *Blood . . . as high.* Cf. Rev 14.20; *1 Enoch* 100.3. **15.38–40** If the historical interpretation is taken, the events referred to here still are unclear, but the third century was very unsettled. **15.41** *Flying swords.* Cf. *Sibylline Oracles* 3.672. **15.43** *Babylon* means Rome; cf. 3.1; Rev 14.8; *2 Apocalypse of Baruch* 11.1. **15.44–45** The attack reaches Rome itself.

15.46–63 Some have interpreted this passage as referring to the fate of Palmyra under Odenathus and Zenobia, while others would see it as purely future prophecy. **15.47–48** Derived from Rev 17.4–6; Asia is the wicked harlot's daughter. **15.49** See Rev 18.7–8; cf. 15.5. **15.53** 6 Ezra refers throughout to *my . . . people*, e.g., 15.10, but their identification is uncertain. *Drunk.* Cf. Dan 5.2. *3 Apocalypse of Baruch* 4.17 is strongly opposed to alcoholic drink. **15.55** In biblical legislation the harlot's *recompense* is death (Gen 38.24; Lev 21.9). **15.56** See 15.21. **15.58** People fled to *mountains* in troubled times; see Isa 2.10, 19, 21; Rev 6.15–16. *Eat their*

who are in the mountains and highlands[z]
shall perish of hunger, and they shall eat
their own flesh in hunger for bread and
drink their own blood in thirst for water.
59 Unhappy above all others, you shall
come and suffer fresh miseries. 60 As they
pass by they shall crush the hateful[a] city,
and shall destroy a part of your land and
abolish a portion of your glory, when they
return from devastated Babylon. 61 You
shall be broken down by them like stub-
ble,[b] and they shall be like fire to you.
62 They shall devour you and your cities,
your land and your mountains; they
shall burn with fire all your forests and
your fruitful trees. 63 They shall carry
your children away captive, plunder your
wealth, and mar the glory of your
countenance.

The Inevitability of Judgment

16 Woe to you, Babylon and Asia!
Woe to you, Egypt and Syria!
2 Bind on sackcloth and cloth of goats'
hair,[c] and wail for your children, and la-
ment for them; for your destruction is at
hand. 3 The sword has been sent upon
you, and who is there to turn it back? 4 A
fire has been sent upon you, and who is
there to quench it? 5 Calamities have been
sent upon you, and who is there to drive
them away? 6 Can one drive off a hungry
lion in the forest, or quench a fire in the
stubble once it has started to burn?[d]
7 Can one turn back an arrow shot by a
strong archer? 8 The Lord God sends ca-
lamities, and who will drive them away?
9 Fire will go forth from his wrath, and
who is there to quench it? 10 He will flash
lightning, and who will not be afraid? He
will thunder, and who will not be terri-
fied? 11 The Lord will threaten, and who
will not be utterly shattered at his pres-
ence? 12 The earth and its foundations
quake, the sea is churned up from the
depths, and its waves and the fish with
them shall be troubled at the presence of
the Lord and the glory of his power.
13 For his right hand that bends the bow is
strong, and his arrows that he shoots are
sharp and when they are shot to the ends
of the world will not miss once. 14 Calami-
ties are sent forth and shall not return un-
til they come over the earth. 15 The fire is
kindled, and shall not be put out until it
consumes the foundations of the earth.
16 Just as an arrow shot by a mighty archer
does not return, so the calamities that are
sent upon the earth shall not return.
17 Alas for me! Alas for me! Who will de-
liver me in those days?

The Desolation

18 The beginning of sorrows, when
there shall be much lamentation; the be-
ginning of famine, when many shall per-
ish; the beginning of wars, when the
powers shall be terrified; the beginning of
calamities, when all shall tremble. What
shall they do, when the calamities come?
19 Famine and plague, tribulation and an-
guish are sent as scourges for the correc-
tion of humankind. 20 Yet for all this they
will not turn from their iniquities, or ever
be mindful of the scourges. 21 Indeed,
provisions will be so cheap upon earth
that people will imagine that peace is as-
sured for them, and then calamities shall
spring up on the earth—the sword, fam-
ine, and great confusion. 22 For many of
those who live on the earth shall perish by

z Gk: Lat omits *and highlands*
a Another reading is *idle* or *unprofitable*
b Other ancient authorities read *like dry straw*
c Other ancient authorities lack *cloth of goats' hair*
d Other ancient authorities read *fire when dry straw has been set on fire*

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own flesh. Cf. Jer 19.9. **15.60** See 15.43–44. **15.61–63** According to the historical interpretation, this is Zenobia's defeat.

16.1–17 Judgment is irrevocable on the four nations that represent the Roman Empire. No historical situation can be envisaged. **16.1** *Syria.* See note on 15.30. **16.2** These are signs of mourning; see 2 Sam 3.31; Am 8.10. **16.3** *Sword . . . upon you.* Cf. Ezek 21.8–11. **16.6** *Lion.* Cf. Am 3.8. *Stubble.* Cf. Isa 5.24; 47.14. **16.9** For *fire* as God's instrument, see 13.9; 15.23; Jer 4.4. **16.10** For *lightning* as God's instrument, see 2 Sam 22.15. **16.12** *The earth and its foundations quake.* Cf. 2 Sam 22.8, 16. The very underpinnings of the creation are shaken. *Fish.* Cf. Ezek 38.20. **16.13** *Arrows . . . he shoots.* Cf. vv. 7, 16. This image is not frequent though it appears in 2 Sam 22.15. **16.14** Cf. Jer 30.24. **16.15** At judgment the earth will be destroyed by fire; cf. 2 Pet 3.10; Josephus *Antiquities* 1.70.

16.18–34 The eschatological desolation emerges from the discussion of judgment. **16.19** *Correction.* See Prov 3.11–12; Am 4.6–12. **16.21** *Provisions . . . assured for them.* Cf. *1 Enoch* 96.4–6. Plenty, regarded as a sign of virtue, will give false confidence. **16.22** *Famine, sword.*

famine; and those who survive the famine shall die by the sword. 23 And the dead shall be thrown out like dung, and there shall be no one to console them; for the earth shall be left desolate, and its cities shall be demolished. 24 No one shall be left to cultivate the earth or to sow it. 25 The trees shall bear fruit, but who will gather it? 26 The grapes shall ripen, but who will tread them? For in all places there shall be great solitude; 27 a person will long to see another human being, or even to hear a human voice. 28 For ten shall be left out of a city; and two, out of the field, those who have hidden themselves in thick groves and clefts in the rocks. 29 Just as in an olive orchard three or four olives may be left on every tree, 30 or just as, when a vineyard is gathered, some clusters may be left[e] by those who search carefully through the vineyard, 31 so in those days three or four shall be left by those who search their houses with the sword. 32 The earth shall be left desolate, and its fields shall be plowed up,[f] and its roads and all its paths shall bring forth thorns, because no sheep will go along them. 33 Virgins shall mourn because they have no bridegrooms; women shall mourn because they have no husbands; their daughters shall mourn, because they have no help. 34 Their bridegrooms shall be killed in war, and their husbands shall perish of famine.

God's People Must Prepare for the End

35 Listen now to these things, and understand them, you who are servants of the Lord. 36 This is the word of the Lord; receive it and do not disbelieve what the Lord says.[g] 37 The calamities draw near, and are not delayed. 38 Just as a pregnant woman, in the ninth month when the time of her delivery draws near, has great pains around her womb for two or three hours beforehand, but when the child comes forth from the womb, there will not be a moment's delay, 39 so the calamities will not delay in coming upon the earth, and the world will groan, and pains will seize it on every side.

40 Hear my words, O my people; prepare for battle, and in the midst of the calamities be like strangers on the earth. 41 Let the one who sells be like one who will flee; let the one who buys be like one who will lose; 42 let the one who does business be like one who will not make a profit; and let the one who builds a house be like one who will not live in it; 43 let the one who sows be like one who will not reap; so also the one who prunes the vines, like one who will not gather the grapes; 44 those who marry, like those who will have no children; and those who do not marry, like those who are widowed. 45 Because of this, those who labor, labor in vain; 46 for strangers shall gather their fruits, and plunder their goods, overthrow their houses, and take their children captive; for in captivity and famine they will produce their children.[h] 47 Those who conduct business, do so only to have it plundered; the more they adorn their cities, their houses and possessions, and their persons, 48 the more angry I will be with them for their sins, says the Lord.

e Other ancient authorities read *a cluster may remain exposed* f Other ancient authorities read *be for briers* g Cn: Lat *do not believe the gods of whom the Lord speaks* h Other ancient authorities read *therefore those who are married may know that they will produce children for captivity and famine*

See 15.5, 57–58. **16.23** See 5.3. **16.24** See 6.22. **16.25–26** Cf. the covenant curses in Lev 26.16, 20. **16.27** Cf. 5.3. **16.28** *Ten . . . left out of a city.* Cf. Am 5.3. *Two, out of the field.* Cf. Mt 24.40–41. *Clefts.* Cf. Isa 2.10; Rev 6.15–16. **16.29–31** Cf. Isa 17.4–6. *Clusters.* See 12.42. **16.32** Cf. Isa 7.23–25. Note the different application of the same image. **16.33** *Virgins . . . husbands.* Cf. Jer 7.34.

16.35–52 The eschatological woes are to come, and God's people must separate themselves from this-worldly concerns, such as property. **16.35** The elect people are addressed again; see note on 15.53. **16.36** Prophetic opening: the Latin text is odd here and is emended. **16.37** *Calamities* such as have just been prophesied. **16.38** The image of the *pregnant woman* is frequent in 2 Esdras and is used in similar contexts; e.g., 4.40–43. The troubles preceding the Messiah are called "birth pangs"; cf. Mt 24.8; 1 Thess 5.3. **16.40** The idea of the eschatological *battle* is greatly developed in the *War Scroll* (1QM) from Qumran. *Strangers,* as in Heb 11.13; 1 Pet 2.11. **16.41–44** That is to say, regard the present world as temporary; cf. 1 Cor 7.29–31. **16.45** Cf. 5.12. **16.47–48** God's anger at possessions, an ascetic dimension of the writer's

49 Just as a respectable and virtuous
woman abhors a prostitute, 50 so righ-
teousness shall abhor iniquity, when she
decks herself out, and shall accuse her
to her face when he comes who will de-
fend the one who searches out every sin
on earth.

The Power and Wisdom of God

51 Therefore do not be like her or her
works. 52 For in a very short time iniquity
will be removed from the earth, and righ-
teousness will reign over us. 53 Sinners
must not say that they have not sinned;[i]
for God[j] will burn coals of fire on the
head of everyone who says, "I have not
sinned before God and his glory." 54 The
Lord[k] certainly knows everything that
people do; he knows their imaginations
and their thoughts and their hearts. 55 He
said, "Let the earth be made," and it was
made, and "Let the heaven be made," and
it was made. 56 At his word the stars were
fixed in their places, and he knows the
number of the stars. 57 He searches the
abyss and its treasures; he has measured
the sea and its contents; 58 he has confined
the sea in the midst of the waters;[l] and
by his word he has suspended the earth
over the water. 59 He has spread out the
heaven like a dome and made it secure
upon the waters; 60 he has put springs of
water in the desert, and pools on the tops
of the mountains, so as to send rivers
from the heights to water the earth. 61 He
formed human beings and put a heart in
the midst of each body, and gave each
person breath and life and understanding
62 and the spirit[m] of Almighty God,[n] who
surely made all things and searches out
hidden things in hidden places. 63 He
knows your imaginations and what you
think in your hearts! Woe to those who sin
and want to hide their sins! 64 The Lord
will strictly examine all their works, and
will make a public spectacle of all of you.
65 You shall be put to shame when your
sins come out before others, and your
own iniquities shall stand as your accusers
on that day. 66 What will you do? Or how
will you hide your sins before the Lord
and his glory? 67 Indeed, God[o] is the
judge; fear him! Cease from your sins,
and forget your iniquities, never to com-
mit them again; so God[o] will lead you
forth and deliver you from all tribulation.

Impending Persecution of God's People

68 The burning wrath of a great mul-
titude is kindled over you; they shall drag
some of you away and force you to eat
what was sacrificed to idols. 69 And those
who consent to eat shall be held in deri-
sion and contempt, and shall be trampled
under foot. 70 For in many places[p] and in
neighboring cities there shall be a great
uprising against those who fear the Lord.
71 They shall[q] be like maniacs, sparing no
one, but plundering and destroying those
who continue to fear the Lord.[r] 72 For
they shall destroy and plunder their
goods, and drive them out of house and
home. 73 Then the tested quality of my
elect shall be manifest, like gold that is
tested by fire.

i Other ancient authorities add *or the unjust done injustice* *j* Lat *for he* *k* Other ancient authorities read *Lord God* *l* Other ancient authorities read *confined the world between the waters and the waters* *m* Or *breath* *n* Other ancient authorities read *of the Lord Almighty*
o Other ancient authorities read *the Lord*
p Meaning of Lat uncertain *q* Other ancient authorities read *For people, because of their misfortunes, shall* *r* Other ancient authorities read *fear God*

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views. **16.49** Iniquity as a *prostitute*; a widely used image. **16.50** *He comes who . . . every sin on earth.* God and his agent, Jesus, are intended. **16.52** Eschatological *righteousness.*

16.53–67 The sinner must not deny sinning because God, the creator will know. **16.53** Cf. 1 Jn 1.8. **16.54** That *the Lord . . . knows everything* is a common biblical theme; cf. Sir 15.19. **16.55–62** These verses are loosely based on Gen 1. **16.56** God's power in creating and numbering or naming the stars; cf. Isa 40.26; Ps 147.4. **16.57** See Job 38.16. **16.58** *Confined the sea.* See Jer 5.22; Pr Man 3; *1 Enoch* 69.19. *Suspended.* See Ps 136.6. **16.59** See Isa 44.24. **16.60** *Water in the desert.* Cf. Isa 40.22 (Septuagint); Ps 107.35. **16.61** *Formed human beings.* See Gen 2.8; 2 Esd 8.8–13. **16.62** Cf. Deut 29.29; Ps 44.21. **16.64** The idea of the public character of judgment is found prominently in 7.37. **16.65** *Put to shame.* Cf. 7.87. **16.66** Glory as the revealing element; see 7.112. **16.67** Exhortation.

16.68–73 An attack to test the righteous is foreseen. **16.68** Cf. Acts 15.20; 2 Macc 6.7–8. **16.73** See Isa 48.10; Zech 13.9; 1 Pet 1.7.

Promise of Divine Deliverance

74 Listen, my elect ones, says the
Lord; the days of tribulation are at hand,
but I will deliver you from them. 75 Do not
fear or doubt, for God[s] is your guide.
76 You who keep my commandments and
precepts, says the Lord God, must not let
your sins weigh you down, or your iniquities prevail over you. 77 Woe to those who
are choked by their sins and overwhelmed
by their iniquities! They are like a field
choked with underbrush and its path[t]
overwhelmed with thorns, so that no one
can pass through. 78 It is shut off and
given up to be consumed by fire.

s Other ancient authorities read *the Lord*
t Other ancient authorities read *seed*

(d) The following book appears in an appendix to the Greek Bible.

4 MACCABEES

THE BOOK OF 4 MACCABEES is found as an appendix to some manuscripts of the Septuagint, although it was never considered canonical. It is also found in some manuscripts of the works of the first-century C.E. Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, although Josephus's authorship of 4 Maccabees is now universally rejected.

Content and Purpose

4 Maccabees is divided into two parts. The first part (1.1–3.18) is a philosophical discourse demonstrating the supremacy of "religious reason" over the emotions and the compatibility of reason with Mosaic law. This compatibility is illustrated by several biblical examples. The second and much longer part (3.19–18.24) gives three examples to support the thesis of the supremacy of religious reason over the emotions. After an introductory narrative that sets the scene (3.19–4.26), the author tells the stories of the torture and martyrdom by the Seleucid ruler Antiochus IV Epiphanes of the elderly priest Eleazar (5.1–7.23), of seven brothers (8.1–14.10), and of their mother (14.11–18.19). These examples are followed by a brief conclusion (18.20–24). The author's purpose was, through the use of Greek rhetorical and philosophical conventions, to persuade his fellow diaspora Jews to observe the Mosaic law strictly even in the most terrible of circumstances.

Literary Genre, Occasion, and Sources

4 Maccabees was originally composed in Greek, and its author was familiar with Greek rhetorical conventions and, to a limited extent, Greek philosophical viewpoints. The style of 4 Maccabees represents the florid, elaborate, Asianic style of Greek rhetoric rather than the classical, Attic style. The book is a combination of two literary genres: moral instruction and funeral oration. The genre of moral instruction, with its emphasis on the domination of religious reason over the emotions, is most prominent in 1.1–3.18 but is also found scattered throughout the book (e.g., 6.31–35; 13.1–5). The genre of funeral oration dominates the rest

of 4 Maccabees, that is, the actual descriptions of the sufferings and deaths of Eleazar, the seven brothers, and their mother. Greek funeral orations, such as Pericles' funeral oration for the Athenian dead (Thucydides *The Peloponnesian Wars* 2.35–46) and Plato's *Menexemus*, have many thematic elements in common with 4 Maccabees. These themes include praise of the noble birth, education, courage, piety, and endurance of those who have fallen, praise of their opposition to a tyrannical king, and praise of the ancestral land for which they died. Both Greek funeral orations and 4 Maccabees were intended to encourage the living to show similar virtues.

It has been suggested that 4 Maccabees was written as a synagogue homily, a lecture, or a genuine funeral oration commemorating the anniversary of the deaths of the martyrs. Given its combination of literary genres and its highly ornate and rhetorical style, it was more likely composed as a fictive discourse unconnected with any particular occasion, similar to the discourse in Plato's *Menexemus*.

The source of the stories in 4 Maccabees is 2 Maccabees. 4 Macc 3.19–4.14 derives from 2 Macc 3.1–40, 4 Macc 4.15–26 from 2 Macc 4.7–6.11, 4 Macc 5.1–6.35 from 2 Macc 6.18–31, and 4 Macc 8.1–18.19 from 2 Macc 7.1–42. Although the author of 4 Maccabees may have been acquainted with the work of Jason of Cyrene, of which 2 Maccabees is a "summary," it is much more likely that the differences between 4 Maccabees and 2 Maccabees are due to reinterpretations and rhetorical expansions by the author of 4 Maccabees himself.

Author, Place, and Date of Composition

The identity of the author of 4 Maccabees is unknown, but he was certainly an observant Jew of the Hellenistic Diaspora who had a Greek rhetorical education. While he makes use of Greek philosophical concepts and vocabulary (such as the cardinal virtues and the supremacy of reason over the emotions), his knowledge of Greek philosophy is neither wide nor deep and represents an eclectic Stoicism that was quite common during this period. It is the philosophical knowledge someone would have obtained as part of a rhetorical rather than a philosophical education. In the end it serves exclusively to support his views about the importance of the faithful observance of Mosaic law.

The precise date and place of composition of 4 Maccabees are unclear. It was almost certainly composed in the Hellenistic-Jewish Diaspora, that is, outside of Palestine. Alexandria in Egypt, Antioch in Syria, or one of the coastal cities in Asia Minor, all of which had significant Jewish communities, have been suggested as places of composition. Since later Jewish and Christian tradition located the tombs of these martyrs at Antioch, that city may be the most plausible suggestion, although the others cannot be ruled out. Various dates of composition have been suggested, from the middle of the first century B.C.E. through the early second century C.E. The most plausible range of dates, however, is probably from the middle of the first century C.E. to the early second century.

Theological Perspectives

From a theological point of view, 4 Maccabees is notable for its belief in the immortality of the soul (e.g., 9.22; 14.5; 15.3; 16.13; 17.12; 18.23), a viewpoint it shares with the Wisdom of Solomon (ca. 30 B.C.E.–50 C.E.) and the writings of Philo of Alexandria (ca. 10 B.C.E.–50 C.E.). The pure and immortal soul will enter into the incorruption of everlasting life. There is also a strong belief in divine reward (e.g., 5.37; 9.8; 15.3; 17.12) and retribution (e.g., 4.10–12; 9.9, 32; 10.11, 15, 21; 11.3; 12.12, 18; 18.5, 22). God will reward those who die for the sake of Mosaic law and will punish both in this life and after death those who torture and execute them. Finally, there is the belief that the sufferings and deaths of these martyrs have a redemptive efficacy and have secured God's pardon for Israel (1.11; 6.28–29; 9.24; 12.17; 17.10, 21–22; 18.4). The idea of vicarious atonement was also used in the NT to explain the efficacy of Jesus' suffering and death (e.g., Mt 20.28; Mk 10.45; Rom 5.5–21; 1 Tim 2.6; Heb 9.11–14). Though it is possible that some NT writers took this concept from 4 Maccabees, it is much more likely that both 4 Maccabees and the NT writers shared a belief that, while not widespread, was certainly present in Judaism during this period (see the Dead Sea Scrolls *Rule of the Community* [1QS] 5.6; 8.3–4, 10; 9.4). *Thomas H. Tobin*

The Author's Definition of His Task

1 The subject that I am about to discuss is most philosophical, that is, whether devout reason is sovereign over the emotions. So it is right for me to advise you to pay earnest attention to philosophy. 2 For the subject is essential to everyone who is seeking knowledge, and in addition it includes the praise of the highest virtue—I mean, of course, rational judgment. 3 If, then, it is evident that reason rules over those emotions that hinder self-control, namely, gluttony and lust, 4 it is also clear that it masters the emotions that hinder one from justice, such as malice, and those that stand in the way of courage, namely anger, fear, and pain. 5 Some might perhaps ask, "If reason rules the emotions, why is it not sovereign over forgetfulness and ignorance?" Their attempt at argument is ridiculous![a] 6 For reason does not rule its own emotions, but those that are opposed to jus-

a Or *They are attempting to make my argument ridiculous!*

1.1–3.18 In a lengthy philosophical introduction, the author develops his thesis about the supremacy of reason over the emotions and the compatibility of reason with Jewish law. He then offers the conduct of King David as an example.

1.1–12 This section serves as a rhetorical exordium (prologue). The author states the philosophical thesis that *devout reason is sovereign over the emotions* (1.1–7) and promises to prove this thesis by the examples of Eleazar and the seven brothers and their mother (1.8–12). **1.2–4** *Rational judgment* (or prudence), *self-control* (or temperance), *justice*, and *courage* are the four cardinal virtues commonly discussed in writings of both the Platonic and Stoic schools of Greek philosophy. They are also discussed in Wis 8.7 and frequently in the works of Philo of Alexandria (e.g., *Allegories on the Law* 1.71). See 1.18; 5.23–24; 15.10. **1.5–6** See 2.24–3.5 for a fuller answer to the objection that reason is *not sovereign over forgetfulness and ignorance*. Though Stoics generally held that reason was able to eradicate the emotions, that position was not universal. The Stoic Posidonius (ca. 135–51 B.C.E.) held that emotions could be

tice, courage, and self-control;[b] and it is
not for the purpose of destroying them,
but so that one may not give way to them.
7 I could prove to you from many and
various examples that reason[c] is dominant over the emotions, 8 but I can demonstrate it best from the noble bravery of
those who died for the sake of virtue, Eleazar and the seven brothers and their
mother. 9 All of these, by despising sufferings that bring death, demonstrated that
reason controls the emotions. 10 On this
anniversary[d] it is fitting for me to praise
for their virtues those who, with their
mother, died for the sake of nobility and
goodness, but I would also call them
blessed for the honor in which they are
held. 11 All people, even their torturers,
marveled at their courage and endurance,
and they became the cause of the downfall of tyranny over their nation. By their
endurance they conquered the tyrant,
and thus their native land was purified
through them. 12 I shall shortly have an
opportunity to speak of this; but, as my
custom is, I shall begin by stating my main
principle, and then I shall turn to their
story, giving glory to the all-wise God.

The Supremacy of Reason

13 Our inquiry, accordingly, is whether reason is sovereign over the emotions.
14 We shall decide just what reason is
and what emotion is, how many kinds of
emotions there are, and whether reason
rules over all these. 15 Now reason is the
mind that with sound logic prefers the life
of wisdom. 16 Wisdom, next, is the knowledge of divine and human matters and
the causes of these. 17 This, in turn, is education in the law, by which we learn divine matters reverently and human affairs
to our advantage. 18 Now the kinds of
wisdom are rational judgment, justice,
courage, and self-control. 19 Rational judgment is supreme over all of these, since
by means of it reason rules over the emotions. 20 The two most comprehensive
types[e] of the emotions are pleasure and
pain; and each of these is by nature concerned with both body and soul. 21 The
emotions of both pleasure and pain have
many consequences. 22 Thus desire precedes pleasure and delight follows it.
23 Fear precedes pain and sorrow comes
after. 24 Anger, as a person will see by reflecting on this experience, is an emotion
embracing pleasure and pain. 25 In pleasure there exists even a malevolent tendency, which is the most complex of all
the emotions. 26 In the soul it is boastfulness, covetousness, thirst for honor,
rivalry, and malice; 27 in the body, indiscriminate eating, gluttony, and solitary
gormandizing.
28 Just as pleasure and pain are two
plants growing from the body and the
soul, so there are many offshoots of these
plants,[f] 29 each of which the master cultivator, reason, weeds and prunes and ties
up and waters and thoroughly irrigates,
and so tames the jungle of habits and
emotions. 30 For reason is the guide of
the virtues, but over the emotions it is
sovereign.
Observe now, first of all, that rational
judgment is sovereign over the emotions
by virtue of the restraining power of self-
control. 31 Self-control, then, is dominance

b Other ancient authorities add *and rational judgment* *c* Other ancient authorities read *devout reason* *d* Gk *At this time* *e* Or *sources*
f Other ancient authorities read *these emotions*

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controlled but not eradicated. **1.8** *Eleazar and the seven brothers and their mother* serve as examples not only of the dominance of reason over the emotions but also of the virtues of courage and endurance, which led to the downfall of the tyrant (the Seleucid king Antiochus IV) and the purification of their native land. This second element is more prominent in 3.19–18.24 than the first. **1.10** The phrase *on this anniversary* (lit. *at this time*; see text note *d*) has led some (probably incorrectly) to believe that 4 Maccabees may have been composed in connection with some sort of commemoration of the deaths of Eleazar and the seven brothers and their mother. See also 3.19; 14.9.

1.13–35 This section consists of a series of philosophical definitions and distinctions intended to show more specifically how reason dominates various emotions. This discussion is then connected with the Mosaic law (1.17, 33–34). **1.16** This definition of wisdom was commonplace in Greek philosophy and was used by both Stoics and Platonists (Cicero *Tusculan Disputations* 4.26.57; Philo *On the Preliminary Studies* 79). **1.17** Wisdom is equated with *education in the law*. **1.18–27** This exposition of the virtues and their relationship to various vices is filled with philosophical commonplaces. **1.18** See 1.2–4. **1.26–27** A catalogue of vices; such catalogues were common in Greco-Roman

over the desires. 32 Some desires are mental, others are physical, and reason obviously rules over both. 33 Otherwise, how is it that when we are attracted to forbidden foods we abstain from the pleasure to be had from them? Is it not because reason is able to rule over appetites? I for one think so. 34 Therefore when we crave seafood and fowl and animals and all sorts of foods that are forbidden to us by the law, we abstain because of domination by reason. 35 For the emotions of the appetites are restrained, checked by the temperate mind, and all the impulses of the body are bridled by reason.

Compatibility of the Law with Reason

2 And why is it amazing that the desires of the mind for the enjoyment of beauty are rendered powerless? 2 It is for this reason, certainly, that the temperate Joseph is praised, because by mental effort[g] he overcame sexual desire. 3 For when he was young and in his prime for intercourse, by his reason he nullified the frenzy[h] of the passions. 4 Not only is reason proved to rule over the frenzied urge of sexual desire, but also over every desire.[i] 5 Thus the law says, "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife or anything that is your neighbor's." 6 In fact, since the law has told us not to covet, I could prove to you all the more that reason is able to control desires.

Just so it is with the emotions that hinder one from justice. 7 Otherwise how could it be that someone who is habitually a solitary gormandizer, a glutton, or even a drunkard can learn a better way, unless reason is clearly lord of the emotions? 8 Thus, as soon as one adopts a way of life in accordance with the law, even though a lover of money, one is forced to act contrary to natural ways and to lend without interest to the needy and to cancel the debt when the seventh year arrives. 9 If one is greedy, one is ruled by the law through reason so that one neither gleans the harvest nor gathers the last grapes from the vineyard.

In all other matters we can recognize that reason rules the emotions. 10 For the law prevails even over affection for parents, so that virtue is not abandoned for their sakes. 11 It is superior to love for one's wife, so that one rebukes her when she breaks the law. 12 It takes precedence over love for children, so that one punishes them for misdeeds. 13 It is sovereign over the relationship of friends, so that one rebukes friends when they act wickedly. 14 Do not consider it paradoxical when reason, through the law, can prevail even over enmity. The fruit trees of the enemy are not cut down, but one preserves the property of enemies from marauders and helps raise up what has fallen.[j]

15 It is evident that reason rules even[k] the more violent emotions: lust for power, vainglory, boasting, arrogance, and malice. 16 For the temperate mind repels all these malicious emotions, just as it repels anger—for it is sovereign over even this. 17 When Moses was angry with Dathan and Abiram, he did nothing against them in anger, but controlled his anger by reason. 18 For, as I have said, the temperate mind is able to get the better of the emotions, to correct some, and to ren-

g Other ancient authorities add *in reasoning*
h Or *gadfly* *i* Or *all covetousness* *j* Or *the beasts that have fallen* *k* Other ancient authorities read *through*

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ethics. See also Rom 1.28–32; Gal 5.19–23. **1.33** *Forbidden foods.* The author once again brings in Jewish law, which then becomes more prominent in the rest of the philosophical introduction. **1.34** *Seafood and . . . animals.* For the various kinds of unclean creatures, see Lev 11.1–47; Deut 14.3–21; Acts 10.10–14.

2.1–3.5 Biblical examples and texts are now used to illustrate the compatibility of reason and Mosaic law. **2.2–3** The patriarch *Joseph* is used as an example of temperance. See Gen 39.7–12. **2.5** See Ex 20.17. **2.8** On *lending without interest* (to fellow Jews), see Ex 22.25; Lev 25.35–37; Deut 23.19–20; on *canceling the debt when the seventh year arrives,* see Deut 15.1–11. **2.9a** On leaving gleanings for the poor, see Lev 19.9–10; 23.22; Deut 24.21. **2.9b–14** Reason/law prevails over all other natural affections, even love for parents, wife, and children. This discussion foreshadows the stories of Eleazar, the mother, and her seven sons, which form the main part of 4 Maccabees. See 14.1. **2.14** *Fruit trees . . . not cut down.* Cutting down enemies' fruit trees is forbidden by Deut 20.19 (see Josephus *Against Apion* 2.211–12). **2.15–23** The examples of Moses and Jacob show that reason/law rules over even violent emotions such as anger. **2.17** On *Dathan and Abiram,* see Num 16.12–15, 23–35; Sir

der others powerless. 19 Why else did Jacob, our most wise father, censure the households of Simeon and Levi for their irrational slaughter of the entire tribe of the Shechemites, saying, "Cursed be their anger"? 20 For if reason could not control anger, he would not have spoken thus. 21 Now when God fashioned human beings, he planted in them emotions and inclinations, 22 but at the same time he enthroned the mind among the senses as a sacred governor over them all. 23 To the mind he gave the law; and one who lives subject to this will rule a kingdom that is temperate, just, good, and courageous.

24 How is it then, one might say, that if reason is master of the emotions, it does not control forgetfulness and ignorance?

3 1 But this argument is entirely ridiculous; for it is evident that reason rules not over its own emotions, but over those of the body. 2 No one of us[l] can eradicate that kind of desire, but reason can provide a way for us not to be enslaved by desire. 3 No one of us can eradicate anger from the mind, but reason can help to deal with anger. 4 No one of us can eradicate malice, but reason can fight at our side so that we are not overcome by malice. 5 For reason does not uproot the emotions but is their antagonist.

King David's Thirst

6 Now this can be explained more clearly by the story of King David's thirst. 7 David had been attacking the Philistines all day long, and together with the soldiers of his nation had killed many of them. 8 Then when evening fell, he[m] came, sweating and quite exhausted, to the royal tent, around which the whole army of our ancestors had encamped. 9 Now all the rest were at supper, 10 but the king was extremely thirsty, and though springs were plentiful there, he could not satisfy his thirst from them. 11 But a certain irrational desire for the water in the enemy's territory tormented and inflamed him, undid and consumed him. 12 When his guards complained bitterly because of the king's craving, two staunch young soldiers, respecting[n] the king's desire, armed themselves fully, and taking a pitcher climbed over the enemy's ramparts. 13 Eluding the sentinels at the gates, they went searching throughout the enemy camp 14 and found the spring, and from it boldly brought the king a drink. 15 But David,[o] though he was burning with thirst, considered it an altogether fearful danger to his soul to drink what was regarded as equivalent to blood. 16 Therefore, opposing reason to desire, he poured out the drink as an offering to God. 17 For the temperate mind can conquer the drives of the emotions and quench the flames of frenzied desires; 18 it can overthrow bodily agonies even when they are extreme, and by nobility of reason spurn all domination by the emotions.

An Attempt on the Temple Treasury

19 The present occasion now invites us to a narrative demonstration of temperate reason.

l Gk *you* *m* Other ancient authorities read *he hurried and* *n* Or *embarrassed because of* *o* Gk *he*

45.18–19. **2.19** On the rape of Dinah, the sister of Simeon and Levi, the slaughter of the Shechemites, and Jacob's rebuke, see Gen 34; 49.7. **2.21** God's *planting* of various emotions (both good and evil) in human beings is discussed in the Dead Sea Scrolls (*Rule of the Community* [1QS] 3.13–4.26), in Philo (*On the Creation of the World* 153, 154; *Allegories on the Laws* 1.43–52), and in rabbinic literature. **2.23** That the wise man is a king is a Stoic commonplace (Diogenes Laertius *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 7.122) and is also found in Philo *On the Migration of Abraham* 197. See 14.2. **2.24–3.5** This section gives a fuller refutation of the objection raised in 1.5–6. The point is that reason can control the emotions but not eradicate them. The inability of reason to master forgetfulness is discussed in Philo *On the Migration of Abraham* 206.

3.6–18 With some differences of detail, the story of David's thirst is the same as that found in 2 Sam 23.13–17; 1 Chr 11.15–19. The author uses the story as the prime example of how reason, the temperate mind, can overcome irrational, frenzied desires. **3.11** That David's desire is *irrational* is emphasized.

3.19–18.24 The narratives of the martyrdoms of Eleazar and of the seven brothers and their mother make up the bulk of 4 Maccabees. They consist of two introductory narratives that set the scene (3.19–4.26), followed by the narratives of the martyrdoms of Eleazar (5.1–7.23), of the seven brothers (8.1–14.10), and finally of their mother (14.11–18.19). For the most part, these narratives emphasize themes such as courage,

20 At a time when our ancestors were
enjoying profound peace because of their
observance of the law and were prospering, so that even Seleucus Nicanor, king
of Asia, had both appropriated money to
them for the temple service and recognized their commonwealth— 21 just at
that time certain persons attempted a revolution against the public harmony and
caused many and various disasters.

4 Now there was a certain Simon, a political opponent of the noble and
good man, Onias, who then held the high
priesthood for life. When despite all manner of slander he was unable to injure
Onias in the eyes of the nation, he fled the
country with the purpose of betraying it.
2 So he came to Apollonius, governor of
Syria, Phoenicia, and Cilicia, and said, 3 "I
have come here because I am loyal to the
king's government, to report that in the
Jerusalem treasuries there are deposited
tens of thousands in private funds, which
are not the property of the temple but
belong to King Seleucus." 4 When Apollonius learned the details of these things, he
praised Simon for his service to the king
and went up to Seleucus to inform him of
the rich treasure. 5 On receiving authority
to deal with this matter, he proceeded
quickly to our country accompanied by
the accursed Simon and a very strong military force. 6 He said that he had come
with the king's authority to seize the private funds in the treasury. 7 The people
indignantly protested his words, considering it outrageous that those who had committed deposits to the sacred treasury
should be deprived of them, and did all
that they could to prevent it. 8 But, uttering threats, Apollonius went on to the
temple. 9 While the priests together with
women and children were imploring God
in the temple to shield the holy place that
was being treated so contemptuously,
10 and while Apollonius was going up with
his armed forces to seize the money, angels on horseback with lightning flashing from their weapons appeared from
heaven, instilling in them great fear and
trembling. 11 Then Apollonius fell down
half dead in the temple area that was
open to all, stretched out his hands toward heaven, and with tears begged the
Hebrews to pray for him and propitiate
the wrath of the heavenly army. 12 For he
said that he had committed a sin deserving of death, and that if he were spared
he would praise the blessedness of the
holy place before all people. 13 Moved by
these words, the high priest Onias, although otherwise he had scruples about
doing so, prayed for him so that King Seleucus would not suppose that Apollonius
had been overcome by human treachery
and not by divine justice. 14 So Apollonius,[p] having been saved beyond all expectations, went away to report to the
king what had happened to him.

Antiochus's Persecution of the Jews

15 When King Seleucus died, his son
Antiochus Epiphanes succeeded to the
throne, an arrogant and terrible man,

p Gk *he*

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patient endurance for the sake of religion, and commitment to observance of the law rather than the dominance of reason over the emotions.

3.19–4.14 The source of this section is 2 Macc 3.1–40. **3.19** *The present occasion*, the time at which the speech was purportedly delivered, probably a rhetorical fiction. See also 1.10; 14.9. **3.20–21** Peace and prosperity, which are connected with observance of the law, are endangered by those who seek to disturb public harmony by breaking the law. **3.20** *Seleucus Nicanor*. The author has confused Seleucus I Nicanor (311–281 B.C.E.) with Seleucus IV Philopator (187–175 B.C.E.), who is the actual Seleucid king in this story. **4.1** *Simon*, according to 2 Macc 3.4, was the captain of the Jerusalem temple. *Onias* III was the son of the high priest Simon II the Just praised in Sir 50.1–21. *Life* tenure for the high priest was the common, although not constant, practice until the first century C.E., when the Roman procurators disregarded it (Josephus *Antiquities* 17.339; 18.34–35; 20.224–51). **4.2** *Cilicia* was attached to Syria and Phoenicia from 44 B.C.E. until the Roman emperor Vespasian made it a separate province in 72 C.E. The connection in this verse is probably a historical anachronism rather than a clue to the date of the composition of 4 Maccabees. **4.3** *In the . . . treasuries there are . . . private funds*. The temple treasury, among other things, served as a kind of bank (Josephus *Jewish War* 6.282). **4.4–5** In 2 Macc 3.7 another official, Heliodorus, not *Apollonius*, was put in command of the expedition. The author of 4 Maccabees has simplified the story.

4.15–26 This section is a much-shortened version of 2 Macc 4.7–6.11. **4.15** *Antiochus* IV *Epiphanes* (175–164 B.C.E.) was the brother, not the *son*, of Seleucus IV. Both were sons of Antio-

16who removed Onias from the priesthood and appointed Onias's[q] brother Jason as high priest. 17Jason[r] agreed that if the office were conferred on him he would pay the king three thousand six hundred sixty talents annually. 18So the king appointed him high priest and ruler of the nation. 19Jason[r] changed the nation's way of life and altered its form of government in complete violation of the law, 20so that not only was a gymnasium constructed at the very citadel[s] of our native land, but also the temple service was abolished. 21The divine justice was angered by these acts and caused Antiochus himself to make war on them. 22For when he was warring against Ptolemy in Egypt, he heard that a rumor of his death had spread and that the people of Jerusalem had rejoiced greatly. He speedily marched against them, 23and after he had plundered them he issued a decree that if any of them were found observing the ancestral law they should die. 24When, by means of his decrees, he had not been able in any way to put an end to the people's observance of the law, but saw that all his threats and punishments were being disregarded 25—even to the extent that women, because they had circumcised their sons, were thrown headlong from heights along with their infants, though they had known beforehand that they would suffer this— 26when, I say, his decrees were despised by the people, he himself tried through torture to compel everyone in the nation to eat defiling foods and to renounce Judaism.

Antiochus's Encounter with Eleazar

5 The tyrant Antiochus, sitting in state with his counselors on a certain high place, and with his armed soldiers standing around him, 2ordered the guards to seize each and every Hebrew and to compel them to eat pork and food sacrificed to idols. 3If any were not willing to eat defiling food, they were to be broken on the wheel and killed. 4When many persons had been rounded up, one man, Eleazar by name, leader of the flock, was brought[t] before the king. He was a man of priestly family, learned in the law, advanced in age, and known to many in the tyrant's court because of his philosophy.[u]

5 When Antiochus saw him he said, 6"Before I begin to torture you, old man, I would advise you to save yourself by eating pork, 7for I respect your age and your gray hairs. Although you have had them for so long a time, it does not seem to me that you are a philosopher when you observe the religion of the Jews. 8When nature has granted it to us, why should you abhor eating the very excellent meat of

q Gk *his* *r* Gk *He* *s* Or *high place*
t Or *was the first of the flock to be brought*
u Other ancient authorities read *his advanced age*

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chus III. **4.16** *Jason* was the Jewish high priest ca. 175–172 B.C.E. **4.20** The *gymnasium*, in addition to being a place of physical training, was more importantly a place where the Greek way of life was imparted to young men. The gymnasium was not actually built on the *citadel*. **4.22** On *Ptolemy* VI Philometor (180–145 B.C.E.), see 1 Macc 1.16–19. *People of Jerusalem* suggests that the events described in 4 Maccabees took place in Jerusalem, although the city is not mentioned again until 18.5. Later Jewish and Christian traditions placed the tombs of the martyrs in Antioch. **4.24–26** The author emphasizes the extent to which the Jews would go to continue observing their law. **4.26** *Defiling foods*, especially pork. See 5.2.

5.1–7.23 The source of the story of the martyrdom of Eleazar is 2 Macc 6.18–31. The story has been significantly expanded in 4 Maccabees, especially by means of speeches by Eleazar and Antiochus.

5.1–38 The emphasis in the encounter between Antiochus and Eleazar is on two speeches, one by Antiochus (5.5–13) and the other by Eleazar (5.14–38). **5.1** A *tyrant*, for the Greeks, was a ruler unlimited by either law or a constitution; the term usually had a negative connotation. **5.2** During the Maccabean period and later, the refusal *to eat pork* became a touchstone to Jews for observance of the law in a hostile environment and as important as not eating *food sacrificed to idols*. **5.4** The name *Eleazar* in Hebrew means "God has helped." The author of 4 Maccabees, in addition to pointing out Eleazar's other qualities, emphasizes the recognition he has received from members of Antiochus's court *because of his philosophy*. **5.5–13** Antiochus tries to persuade Eleazar to eat pork first on the basis of philosophical arguments (5.8–12) and then by claiming that compulsion is a legitimate excuse for transgressing a law (5.13). Antiochus's philosophical arguments are Stoic in character, being based on "living according to nature." **5.7** The Greek word *thrēskeia* usually means religious cult or practice, but here

this animal? 9 It is senseless not to enjoy
delicious things that are not shameful,
and wrong to spurn the gifts of nature.
10 It seems to me that you will do some-
thing even more senseless if, by holding a
vain opinion concerning the truth, you
continue to despise me to your own hurt.
11 Will you not awaken from your foolish
philosophy, dispel your futile reasonings,
adopt a mind appropriate to your years,
philosophize according to the truth of
what is beneficial, 12 and have compassion
on your old age by honoring my humane
advice? 13 For consider this: if there is
some power watching over this religion of
yours, it will excuse you from any trans-
gression that arises out of compulsion."

14 When the tyrant urged him in this
fashion to eat meat unlawfully, Eleazar
asked to have a word. 15 When he had re-
ceived permission to speak, he began to
address the people as follows: 16 "We,
O Antiochus, who have been persuaded
to govern our lives by the divine law,
think that there is no compulsion more
powerful than our obedience to the law.
17 Therefore we consider that we should
not transgress it in any respect. 18 Even if,
as you suppose, our law were not truly di-
vine and we had wrongly held it to be di-
vine, not even so would it be right for us
to invalidate our reputation for piety.
19 Therefore do not suppose that it would
be a petty sin if we were to eat defiling
food; 20 to transgress the law in matters
either small or great is of equal serious-
ness, 21 for in either case the law is equally
despised. 22 You scoff at our philosophy
as though living by it were irrational,
23 but it teaches us self-control, so that we
master all pleasures and desires, and it
also trains us in courage, so that we en-
dure any suffering willingly; 24 it instructs
us in justice, so that in all our dealings we
act impartially,[v] and it teaches us piety,
so that with proper reverence we worship
the only living God.

25 "Therefore we do not eat defiling
food; for since we believe that the law was
established by God, we know that in the
nature of things the Creator of the world
in giving us the law has shown sympathy
toward us. 26 He has permitted us to eat
what will be most suitable for our lives,[w]
but he has forbidden us to eat meats that
would be contrary to this. 27 It would be
tyrannical for you to compel us not only
to transgress the law, but also to eat in
such a way that you may deride us for eat-
ing defiling foods, which are most hateful
to us. 28 But you shall have no such occa-
sion to laugh at me, 29 nor will I transgress
the sacred oaths of my ancestors concern-
ing the keeping of the law, 30 not even if
you gouge out my eyes and burn my
entrails. 31 I am not so old and cowardly
as not to be young in reason on behalf
of piety. 32 Therefore get your torture
wheels ready and fan the fire more vehe-
mently! 33 I do not so pity my old age as to
break the ancestral law by my own act. 34 I
will not play false to you, O law that
trained me, nor will I renounce you, be-
loved self-control. 35 I will not put you to
shame, philosophical reason, nor will I re-
ject you, honored priesthood and knowl-
edge of the law. 36 You, O king,[x] shall
not defile the honorable mouth of my old
age, nor my long life lived lawfully. 37 My

v Or *so that we hold in balance all our habitual inclinations* w Or *souls* x Gk lacks *O king*

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it means something more general, i.e., *religion*. See Wis 14.18, 27 for a similar usage. **5.13** The idea of God *watching over* human beings is a Greek philosophical concept frequently found also in the works of Jewish writers (2 Macc 7.35; 9.5; 3 Macc 2.21; Philo *Against Flaccus* 121). The same argument that *compulsion* is an excuse is found in 8.14, 25. **5.14–38** Eleazar's speech emphasizes not only his absolute commitment to observance of the law but also that this commitment is a rational one and in accordance with nature. Eleazar uses Stoic viewpoints to refute Antiochus's Stoic arguments. **5.20** The author seems to espouse the Stoic position that all transgressions are *of equal seriousness*. **5.23–24** *Self-control, courage, justice*, three of the four cardinal virtues. Eleazar substitutes *piety* (Greek *eusebeia*), that is, proper reverence toward God, for the usual rational judgment (Greek *phronēsis*; see 1.2–4, 18; 15.10). The substitution of piety for one of the cardinal virtues is also found in Xenophon *Memorabilia* 4.6, Josephus *Against Apion* 2.170, and Philo *On the Cherubim* 96. **5.26** Eleazar claims that eating certain foods and refraining from eating others has its basis in what is *suitable for our lives* (lit. "souls"; see text note *w*). A similar approach to the purity regulations is found in *Letter of Aristeas* 128–71 and often in Philo's interpretations. See Lev 11.1–23. **5.37** *My ancestors will receive me*. See 13.17; 17.12, which indicate the immortality of the martyrs more clearly.

ancestors will receive me as pure, as one
who does not fear your violence even to
death. 38 You may tyrannize the ungodly,
but you shall not dominate my religious
principles, either by words or through
deeds."

Martyrdom of Eleazar

6 When Eleazar in this manner had
made eloquent response to the ex-
hortations of the tyrant, the guards who
were standing by dragged him violently to
the instruments of torture. 2 First they
stripped the old man, though he re-
mained adorned with the gracefulness of
his piety. 3 After they had tied his arms on
each side they flogged him, 4 while a her-
ald who faced him cried out, "Obey the
king's commands!" 5 But the courageous
and noble man, like a true Eleazar, was
unmoved, as though being tortured in a
dream; 6 yet while the old man's eyes were
raised to heaven, his flesh was being torn
by scourges, his blood flowing, and his
sides were being cut to pieces. 7 Although
he fell to the ground because his body
could not endure the agonies, he kept his
reason upright and unswerving. 8 One of
the cruel guards rushed at him and began
to kick him in the side to make him get up
again after he fell. 9 But he bore the pains
and scorned the punishment and en-
dured the tortures. 10 Like a noble athlete
the old man, while being beaten, was vic-
torious over his torturers; 11 in fact, with
his face bathed in sweat, and gasping
heavily for breath, he amazed even his
torturers by his courageous spirit.

12 At that point, partly out of pity for
his old age, 13 partly out of sympathy from
their acquaintance with him, partly out of
admiration for his endurance, some of the
king's retinue came to him and said,
14 "Eleazar, why are you so irrationally
destroying yourself through these evil
things? 15 We will set before you some
cooked meat; save yourself by pretending
to eat pork."

16 But Eleazar, as though more bit-
terly tormented by this counsel, cried out:
17 "Never may we, the children of Abra-
ham,[y] think so basely that out of coward-
ice we feign a role unbecoming to us!
18 For it would be irrational if having lived
in accordance with truth up to old age
and having maintained in accordance
with law the reputation of such a life, we
should now change our course 19 and our-
selves become a pattern of impiety to the
young by setting them an example in the
eating of defiling food. 20 It would be
shameful if we should survive for a little
while and during that time be a laughing-
stock to all for our cowardice, 21 and be
despised by the tyrant as unmanly by not
contending even to death for our divine
law. 22 Therefore, O children of Abra-
ham, die nobly for your religion! 23 And
you, guards of the tyrant, why do you
delay?"

24 When they saw that he was so cou-
rageous in the face of the afflictions, and
that he had not been changed by their
compassion, the guards brought him to
the fire. 25 There they burned him with
maliciously contrived instruments, threw
him down, and poured stinking liquids
into his nostrils. 26 When he was now
burned to his very bones and about to ex-
pire, he lifted up his eyes to God and said,
27 "You know, O God, that though I
might have saved myself, I am dying in
burning torments for the sake of the law.
28 Be merciful to your people, and let our
punishment suffice for them. 29 Make my
blood their purification, and take my life
in exchange for theirs." 30 After he said
this, the holy man died nobly in his tor-
tures; even in the tortures of death he re-
sisted, by virtue of reason, for the sake of
the law.

y Or *O children of Abraham*

6.1–35 This account of Eleazar's death is marked by its graphic description of Eleazar's tortures and his speeches (6.16–23, 27–29) during the tortures. Cf. 2 Macc 6.28–29. **6.5** *A true Eleazar*, a worthy successor to his namesake Eleazar, the third and most prominent son of Aaron, who became high priest at Aaron's death (Num 20.25–28). **6.10** *A noble athlete*, an image also used in 9.8; 11.20–21; 14.5; 15.29; 16.16; 17.11–16 about the seven brothers and their mother, and also popular in Christian martyrdom literature. **6.16–23** In reply to the suggestion that he pretend to eat pork, Eleazar emphasizes that it would be *irrational* for him, after a long life of observing the law, now to eat defiled food and thus give an example of *impiety to the young* and become a *laughingstock to all* because of his cowardice. **6.28–29** The notion that the martyr's death was a vicarious atonement is found especially in 17.22 (see also 12.17; 17.10, 21–22;

31 Admittedly, then, devout reason is
sovereign over the emotions. 32 For if the
emotions had prevailed over reason, we
would have testified to their domination.
33 But now that reason has conquered the
emotions, we properly attribute to it the
power to govern. 34 It is right for us to
acknowledge the dominance of reason
when it masters even external agonies. It
would be ridiculous to deny it.[z] 35 I have
proved not only that reason has mastered
agonies, but also that it masters pleasures
and in no respect yields to them.

An Encomium on Eleazar

7 For like a most skillful pilot, the rea-
son of our father Eleazar steered the
ship of religion over the sea of the emo-
tions, 2 and though buffeted by the storm-
ings of the tyrant and overwhelmed by
the mighty waves of tortures, 3 in no way
did he turn the rudder of religion until he
sailed into the haven of immortal victory.
4 No city besieged with many ingenious
war machines has ever held out as did that
most holy man. Although his sacred life
was consumed by tortures and racks, he
conquered the besiegers with the shield of
his devout reason. 5 For in setting his
mind firm like a jutting cliff, our father
Eleazar broke the maddening waves of
the emotions. 6 O priest, worthy of the
priesthood, you neither defiled your sa-
cred teeth nor profaned your stomach,
which had room only for reverence and
purity, by eating defiling foods. 7 O man
in harmony with the law and philosopher
of divine life! 8 Such should be those who
are administrators of the law, shielding
it with their own blood and noble sweat
in sufferings even to death. 9 You, fa-
ther, strengthened our loyalty to the law
through your glorious endurance, and
you did not abandon the holiness that you
praised, but by your deeds you made
your words of divine[a] philosophy credible.
10 O aged man, more powerful than tor-
tures; O elder, fiercer than fire; O su-
preme king over the passions, Eleazar!
11 For just as our father Aaron, armed
with the censer, ran through the multi-
tude of the people and conquered the
fiery[b] angel, 12 so the descendant of Aa-
ron, Eleazar, though being consumed by
the fire, remained unmoved in his rea-
son. 13 Most amazing, indeed, though he
was an old man, his body no longer tense
and firm,[c] his muscles flabby, his sinews
feeble, he became young again 14 in spirit
through reason; and by reason like that of
Isaac he rendered the many-headed rack
ineffective. 15 O man of blessed age and
of venerable gray hair and of law-abiding
life, whom the faithful seal of death has
perfected!

16 If, therefore, because of piety an
aged man despised tortures even to death,
most certainly devout reason is governor
of the emotions. 17 Some perhaps might
say, "Not all have full command of their
emotions, because not all have prudent
reason." 18 But as many as attend to reli-
gion with a whole heart, these alone are
able to control the passions of the flesh,
19 since they believe that they, like our pa-
triarchs Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, do
not die to God, but live to God. 20 No con-
tradiction therefore arises when some
persons appear to be dominated by their
emotions because of the weakness of their
reason. 21 What person who lives as a phi-
losopher by the whole rule of philosophy,
and trusts in God, 22 and knows that it is
blessed to endure any suffering for the
sake of virtue, would not be able to over-
come the emotions through godliness?

z Syr: Meaning of Gk uncertain
a Other ancient authorities lack *divine*
b Other ancient authorities lack *fiery*
c Gk *the tautness of the body already loosed*

Introduction). **6.31–35** The author again emphasizes that *devout reason is sovereign over the emotions*. This emphasis is further developed in 7.1–23. See also 13.1–5, which closely parallels this passage.

7.1–23 The author lavishes praise on Eleazar as an example of how devout reason can dominate the emotions. **7.1–3** The metaphor of the *pilot* and the *ship* is common in Greek literature and recurs in 13.6–7; 15.31–32. See 1 Pet 3.20. **7.7–10** Eleazar's ability to control his emotions is linked to his loyalty to the law. **7.11** *Aaron* averted a plague (Num 16.46–50); in Wis 18.22 the plague is connected to an "avenger," similar to the *angel* in this verse. **7.14** An allusion to Gen 22.1–19. See note on 13.12. **7.16–23** Not everyone can dominate emotions with reason, but only those who *attend to religion* and live as *philosophers by the whole rule of philosophy*, that is, the law. **7.19** See 16.25; Ex 3.6; Mk 12.26; Rom 6.10; 14.8; Gal 2.19.

23 For only the wise and courageous are
masters of their emotions.

Seven Brothers Defy the Tyrant

8 For this is why even the very young,
by following a philosophy in accordance with devout reason, have prevailed over the most painful instruments of torture. 2 For when the tyrant was conspicuously defeated in his first attempt, being unable to compel an aged man to eat defiling foods, then in violent rage he commanded that others of the Hebrew captives be brought, and that any who ate defiling food would be freed after eating, but if any were to refuse, they would be tortured even more cruelly.

3 When the tyrant had given these orders, seven brothers—handsome, modest, noble, and accomplished in every way—were brought before him along with their aged mother. 4 When the tyrant saw them, grouped about their mother as though a chorus, he was pleased with them. And struck by their appearance and nobility, he smiled at them, and summoned them nearer and said, 5 "Young men, with favorable feelings I admire each and every one of you, and greatly respect the beauty and the number of such brothers. Not only do I advise you not to display the same madness as that of the old man who has just been tortured, but I also exhort you to yield to me and enjoy my friendship. 6 Just as I am able to punish those who disobey my orders, so I can be a benefactor to those who obey me. 7 Trust me, then, and you will have positions of authority in my government if you will renounce the ancestral tradition of your national life. 8 Enjoy your youth by adopting the Greek way of life and by changing your manner of living. 9 But if by disobedience you rouse my anger, you will compel me to destroy each and every one of you with dreadful punishments through tortures. 10 Therefore take pity on yourselves. Even I, your enemy, have compassion for your youth and handsome appearance. 11 Will you not consider this, that if you disobey, nothing remains for you but to die on the rack?"

12 When he had said these things, he ordered the instruments of torture to be brought forward so as to persuade them out of fear to eat the defiling food. 13 When the guards had placed before them wheels and joint-dislocators, rack and hooks[d] and catapults[e] and caldrons, braziers and thumbscrews and iron claws and wedges and bellows, the tyrant resumed speaking: 14 "Be afraid, young fellows; whatever justice you revere will be merciful to you when you transgress under compulsion."

15 But when they had heard the inducements and saw the dreadful devices, not only were they not afraid, but they also opposed the tyrant with their own philosophy, and by their right reasoning nullified his tyranny. 16 Let us consider, on the other hand, what arguments might have been used if some of them had been cowardly and unmanly. Would they not have been the following? 17 "O wretches that we are and so senseless! Since the king has summoned and exhorted us to accept kind treatment if we obey him, 18 why do we take pleasure in vain resolves and venture upon a disobedience that brings death? 19 O men and brothers, should we not fear the instruments of torture and consider the threats of torments, and give up this vain opinion and this arrogance that threatens to destroy us? 20 Let us take pity on our youth and have compassion on our mother's age; 21 and

d Meaning of Gk uncertain *e* Here and elsewhere in 4 Macc an instrument of torture

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8.1–9.9 This section is an expansion of 2 Macc 7.1–2 with speeches by the tyrant Antiochus (8.5–11) and the brothers (9.1–9), as well as a description of what the brothers could have said had they given in (8.17–26). **8.4–11** Antiochus attempts to persuade the brothers to give up their *ancestral tradition of . . . national life* and to adopt the *Greek way of life* by threatening them with severe tortures and death and by promising them his *friendship* and *benefaction*, two things highly sought after from autocratic Hellenistic rulers. **8.4** The *chorus*, which was important in Greek plays, usually spoke its lines in unison. See 8.29; 13.8–18; 14.7; 18.23. **8.12** Most of the *instruments of torture* cannot be described precisely. **8.14** See 5.13; 8.25. **8.16–26** By presenting this imaginary speech listing all of the possible reasons for giving in, the author highlights the strength of the brothers' character in refusing to submit. The brothers' actual speech follows (9.1–9). The same technique is used in the story of the mother; an imaginary speech in 16.6–11 is followed by the

let us seriously consider that if we disobey
we are dead! 22 Also, divine justice will ex-
cuse us for fearing the king when we are
under compulsion. 23 Why do we banish
ourselves from this most pleasant life and
deprive ourselves of this delightful world?
24 Let us not struggle against compul-
sion[f] or take hollow pride in being put to
the rack. 25 Not even the law itself would
arbitrarily put us to death for fearing the
instruments of torture. 26 Why does such
contentiousness excite us and such a fatal
stubbornness please us, when we can live
in peace if we obey the king?"

27 But the youths, though about to
be tortured, neither said any of these
things nor even seriously considered them.
28 For they were contemptuous of the
emotions and sovereign over agonies,
29 so that as soon as the tyrant had ceased
counseling them to eat defiling food, all
with one voice together, as from one
mind, said:

9 "Why do you delay, O tyrant? For
we are ready to die rather than
transgress our ancestral commandments;
2 we are obviously putting our forebears
to shame unless we should practice ready
obedience to the law and to Moses[g] our
counselor. 3 Tyrant and counselor of law-
lessness, in your hatred for us do not pity
us more than we pity ourselves.[h] 4 For we
consider this pity of yours, which insures
our safety through transgression of the
law, to be more grievous than death itself.
5 You are trying to terrify us by threaten-
ing us with death by torture, as though a
short time ago you learned nothing from
Eleazar. 6 And if the aged men of the He-
brews because of their religion lived pi-
ously[i] while enduring torture, it would
be even more fitting that we young men
should die despising your coercive tor-
tures, which our aged instructor also over-
came. 7 Therefore, tyrant, put us to the
test; and if you take our lives because of
our religion, do not suppose that you can
injure us by torturing us. 8 For we,
through this severe suffering and endur-
ance, shall have the prize of virtue and
shall be with God, on whose account we
suffer; 9 but you, because of your blood-
thirstiness toward us, will deservedly un-
dergo from the divine justice eternal
torment by fire."

The Torture of the First Brother

10 When they had said these things,
the tyrant was not only indignant, as at
those who are disobedient, but also infuri-
ated, as at those who are ungrateful.
11 Then at his command the guards
brought forward the eldest, and having
torn off his tunic, they bound his hands
and arms with thongs on each side.
12 When they had worn themselves out
beating him with scourges, without ac-
complishing anything, they placed him
upon the wheel. 13 When the noble youth
was stretched out around this, his limbs
were dislocated, 14 and with every mem-
ber disjointed he denounced the tyrant,
saying, 15 "Most abominable tyrant, enemy
of heavenly justice, savage of mind, you
are mangling me in this manner, not be-
cause I am a murderer, or as one who acts

f Or *fate* *g* Other ancient authorities read *knowledge* *h* Meaning of Gk uncertain
i Other ancient authorities read *died*

actual speech in 16.16–23. **8.22** The law would not condemn *fearing* the instruments of torture and death, but it would condemn submitting to the tyrant by committing idolatry, even in these circumstances. See 5.13; 8.14, 25. **8.27–9.9** In their actual speech the brothers defy the tyrant and refuse to shame their ancestors by transgressing the law. **9.5** See 5.4–6.30. **9.6** *Aged men of the Hebrews*, perhaps the prophets who, according to some Jewish traditions, were martyred. See *The Lives of the Prophets* (first century C.E.). **9.8–9** The brothers will be rewarded with immortality with God; the tyrant will suffer eternal torment. These are constant themes throughout 4 Maccabees.

9.10–12.19 In comparison to 2 Macc 7.1–40, the account of the tortures and deaths of the seven brothers has been significantly expanded by graphic descriptions of the tortures and by speeches from each of the brothers. Rhetorically these serve to increase the pathos of the scene. The speeches also comment on the significance of the events and bring out the themes the author wants to emphasize. In good rhetorical fashion, the descriptions of the tortures and deaths of the first brother (9.10–25) and the last brother (12.1–19) are the most elaborate.

9.10–25 In this section tyranny is contrasted to endurance for the sake of the law. **9.14** Opposition to tyranny was a common theme in funeral orations. **9.15–18** In the speech of the first brother, the themes of commitment to the Mosaic law, the power of reason, and the *invincible ... virtue* of the Hebrews are emphasized.

impiously, but because I protect the divine law." 16And when the guards said, "Agree to eat so that you may be released from the tortures," 17he replied, "You abominable lackeys, your wheel is not so powerful as to strangle my reason. Cut my limbs, burn my flesh, and twist my joints; 18through all these tortures I will convince you that children of the Hebrews alone are invincible where virtue is concerned." 19While he was saying these things, they spread fire under him, and while fanning the flames[j] they tightened the wheel further. 20The wheel was completely smeared with blood, and the heap of coals was being quenched by the drippings of gore, and pieces of flesh were falling off the axles of the machine. 21Although the ligaments joining his bones were already severed, the courageous youth, worthy of Abraham, did not groan, 22but as though transformed by fire into immortality, he nobly endured the rackings. 23"Imitate me, brothers," he said. "Do not leave your post in my struggle[k] or renounce our courageous family ties. 24Fight the sacred and noble battle for religion. Thereby the just Providence of our ancestors may become merciful to our nation and take vengeance on the accursed tyrant." 25When he had said this, the saintly youth broke the thread of life.

The Torture of the Second Brother

26 While all were marveling at his courageous spirit, the guards brought in the next eldest, and after fitting themselves with iron gauntlets having sharp hooks, they bound him to the torture machine and catapult. 27Before torturing him, they inquired if he were willing to eat, and they heard his noble decision.[l] 28These leopard-like beasts tore out his sinews with the iron hands, flayed all his flesh up to his chin, and tore away his scalp. But he steadfastly endured this agony and said, 29"How sweet is any kind of death for the religion of our ancestors!" 30To the tyrant he said, "Do you not think, you most savage tyrant, that you are being tortured more than I, as you see the arrogant design of your tyranny being defeated by our endurance for the sake of religion? 31I lighten my pain by the joys that come from virtue, 32but you suffer torture by the threats that come from impiety. You will not escape, you most abominable tyrant, the judgments of the divine wrath."

The Torture of the Third Brother

10 When he too had endured a glorious death, the third was led in, and many repeatedly urged him to save himself by tasting the meat. 2But he shouted, "Do you not know that the same father begot me as well as those who died, and the same mother bore me, and that I was brought up on the same teachings? 3I do not renounce the noble kinship that binds me to my brothers."[m] 5Enraged by the man's boldness, they disjointed his hands and feet with their instruments,

j Meaning of Gk uncertain *k* Other ancient authorities read *post forever* *l* Other ancient authorities read *having heard his noble decision, they tore him to shreds* *m* Other ancient authorities add verse 4, *So if you have any instrument of torture, apply it to my body; for you cannot touch my soul, even if you wish.*"

9.18 *Virtue* was also a standard theme in funeral orations. **9.21** *Worthy of Abraham.* The connection with ancestors was yet another common theme in funeral orations. **9.22** *Immortality*, lit. "incorruption." See also 14.5; 16.13; 17.12; 18.23. The purifying power of fire is a common biblical metaphor, especially in sacrificial contexts (e.g., Lev 1.9, 13; 2.2; 3.5; see also Mal 3.2). **9.24** *Religion*, lit. "piety." *Providence*, a Stoic theme found in the works of Greek historians and of Josephus (see also 13.19; 17.22). Note also the themes of reward and punishment and the belief that the brothers' deaths will lead God to be *merciful* to the Jewish people.

9.26–11.27 The tortures of the second brother through the sixth brother are told more briefly. **9.29** A similar theme can be found in the Latin poet Horace's *Ode* 3.2.13 ("How sweet and noble to die for one's fatherland"). **9.30–32** Again the themes of opposition to *tyranny, endurance for the sake of religion* (lit. "piety"), *virtue*, and eventual punishment of the tyrant recur.

10.1–11 The themes of noble kinship (10.2–3), suffering for virtue (2.10), and eventual punishment of the tyrant (2.11) remain prominent. **10.4** See text note *m*. This verse is not found in one of the most important manuscripts (Codex Alexandrinus) and may be an interpola-

dismembering him by prying his limbs
from their sockets, 6 and breaking his fin-
gers and arms and legs and elbows. 7 Since
they were not able in any way to break
his spirit,[n] they abandoned the instru-
ments[o] and scalped him with their fin-
gernails in a Scythian fashion. 8 They
immediately brought him to the wheel,
and while his vertebrae were being dislo-
cated by this, he saw his own flesh torn all
around and drops of blood flowing from
his entrails. 9 When he was about to die,
he said, 10 "We, most abominable tyrant,
are suffering because of our godly train-
ing and virtue, 11 but you, because of your
impiety and bloodthirstiness, will undergo
unceasing torments."

The Torture of the Fourth Brother

12 When he too had died in a manner
worthy of his brothers, they dragged in
the fourth, saying, 13 "As for you, do not
give way to the same insanity as your
brothers, but obey the king and save your-
self." 14 But he said to them, "You do not
have a fire hot enough to make me play
the coward. 15 No—by the blessed death
of my brothers, by the eternal destruction
of the tyrant, and by the everlasting life of
the pious, I will not renounce our noble
family ties. 16 Contrive tortures, tyrant, so
that you may learn from them that I am
a brother to those who have just now
been tortured." 17 When he heard this,
the bloodthirsty, murderous, and utterly
abominable Antiochus gave orders to cut
out his tongue. 18 But he said, "Even if
you remove my organ of speech, God
hears also those who are mute. 19 See,
here is my tongue; cut it off, for in spite
of this you will not make our reason
speechless. 20 Gladly, for the sake of God,
we let our bodily members be mutilated.
21 God will visit you swiftly, for you are
cutting out a tongue that has been melodi-
ous with divine hymns."

The Torture of the Fifth Brother

11 When he too died, after being
cruelly tortured, the fifth leaped
up, saying, 2 "I will not refuse, tyrant, to
be tortured for the sake of virtue. 3 I have
come of my own accord, so that by mur-
dering me you will incur punishment
from the heavenly justice for even more
crimes. 4 Hater of virtue, hater of human-
kind, for what act of ours are you destroy-
ing us in this way? 5 Is it because[p] we
revere the Creator of all things and live
according to his virtuous law? 6 But these
deeds deserve honors, not tortures."[q]
9 While he was saying these things, the
guards bound him and dragged him to
the catapult; 10 they tied him to it on his
knees, and fitting iron clamps on them,
they twisted his back[r] around the wedge
on the wheel,[s] so that he was completely
curled back like a scorpion, and all his
members were disjointed. 11 In this condi-
tion, gasping for breath and in anguish of
body, 12 he said, "Tyrant, they are splen-
did favors that you grant us against your
will, because through these noble suffer-
ings you give us an opportunity to show
our endurance for the law."

The Torture of the Sixth Brother

13 When he too had died, the sixth, a
mere boy, was led in. When the tyrant in-
quired whether he was willing to eat and
be released, he said, 14 "I am younger in
age than my brothers, but I am their
equal in mind. 15 Since to this end we were
born and bred, we ought likewise to die
for the same principles. 16 So if you intend

n Gk *to strangle him* *o* Other ancient authorities read *they tore off his skin* *p* Other ancient authorities read *Or does it seem evil to you that* *q* Other authorities add verses 7 and 8, *7 If you but understood human feelings and had hope of salvation from God— 8 but, as it is, you are a stranger to God and persecute those who serve him."* *r* Gk *loins* *s* Meaning of Gk uncertain

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tion. **10.7** *Scythian fashion.* The Scythians were known for scalping their slain enemies (Herodotus *Histories* 4.64; Pliny *Natural History* 7.11) and in general for their cruelty (2 Macc 4.47; 3 Macc 7.5).

10.12–21 The themes here are quite similar to those in 10.1–11. **10.19–20** See Isa 53.7–12, the suffering of the servant. **10.21** See Isa 35.6.

11.1–12 This brother too suffers for the sake of virtue, but he adds that he also does it so that the tyrant will be punished. **11.7–8** See text note *q*. These verses are missing from Codex Sinaiticus and are probably interpolations. **11.12** The fifth brother claims, with some irony, that suffering for the law is not simply a necessity, but an *opportunity*.

11.13–27 The speeches of the sixth brother become more elaborate as the author builds toward a climax. **11.13** The pathos is heightened by the fact that the sixth brother is *a mere boy*.

to torture me for not eating defiling
foods, go on torturing!" 17 When he had
said this, they led him to the wheel. 18 He
was carefully stretched tight upon it, his
back was broken, and he was roasted[t]
from underneath. 19 To his back they ap-
plied sharp spits that had been heated in
the fire, and pierced his ribs so that his
entrails were burned through. 20 While
being tortured he said, "O contest befit-
ting holiness, in which so many of us
brothers have been summoned to an
arena of sufferings for religion, and in
which we have not been defeated! 21 For
religious knowledge, O tyrant, is invinci-
ble. 22 I also, equipped with nobility, will
die with my brothers, 23 and I myself will
bring a great avenger upon you, you in-
ventor of tortures and enemy of those
who are truly devout. 24 We six boys have
paralyzed your tyranny. 25 Since you have
not been able to persuade us to change
our mind or to force us to eat defiling
foods, is not this your downfall? 26 Your
fire is cold to us, and the catapults pain-
less, and your violence powerless. 27 For
it is not the guards of the tyrant but those
of the divine law that are set over us;
therefore, unconquered, we hold fast to
reason."

The Torture of the Seventh Brother

12 When he too, thrown into the cal-
dron, had died a blessed death,
the seventh and youngest of all came for-
ward. 2 Even though the tyrant had been
vehemently reproached by the brothers,
he felt strong compassion for this child
when he saw that he was already in fet-
ters. He summoned him to come nearer
and tried to persuade him, saying, 3 "You
see the result of your brothers' stupidity,
for they died in torments because of their
disobedience. 4 You too, if you do not
obey, will be miserably tortured and die
before your time, 5 but if you yield to per-
suasion you will be my friend and a leader
in the government of the kingdom."
6 When he had thus appealed to him, he
sent for the boy's mother to show compas-
sion on her who had been bereaved of so
many sons and to influence her to per-
suade the surviving son to obey and save
himself. 7 But when his mother had ex-
horted him in the Hebrew language, as
we shall tell a little later, 8 he said, "Let me
loose, let me speak to the king and to all
his friends that are with him." 9 Extremely
pleased by the boy's declaration, they
freed him at once. 10 Running to the near-
est of the braziers, 11 he said, "You pro-
fane tyrant, most impious of all the
wicked, since you have received good
things and also your kingdom from God,
were you not ashamed to murder his ser-
vants and torture on the wheel those
who practice religion? 12 Because of this,
justice has laid up for you intense and
eternal fire and tortures, and these
throughout all time[u] will never let you
go. 13 As a man, were you not ashamed,
you most savage beast, to cut out the
tongues of men who have feelings like
yours and are made of the same elements
as you, and to maltreat and torture them
in this way? 14 Surely they by dying nobly
fulfilled their service to God, but you will
wail bitterly for having killed without
cause the contestants for virtue." 15 Then
because he too was about to die, he said,
16 "I do not desert the excellent example[v]
of my brothers, 17 and I call on the God of

t Other ancient authorities add *by fire*
u Gk *throughout the whole age* *v* Other ancient authorities read *the witness*

11.20–21 The last words of the sixth brother are filled with images of an athletic *contest* in which he and his brothers are victorious because *religious knowledge . . . is invincible*. See note on 6.10.

12.1–19 The dramatic character of the torture of the seventh and youngest brother is enhanced by the tyrant's compassion for him and for his mother (12.2, 6), by the mother's exhortation to her son (12.7), and by the son's asking to speak (12.8). For a moment the catastrophe seems avoidable. **12.7** The mother exhorts her son in *Hebrew*, which emphasizes the sacred nature of the exhortation and also allows for dramatic tension in the minds of the hearers about what she is saying. The promise that the words of this speech will be given *later* seems to be fulfilled in 18.6–19. **12.8** *Friends*, a title for the king's courtiers. **12.11–18** The youngest brother's speech sums up a number of the themes found in the other speeches but emphasizes especially the injustice and savagery of the tyrant and the punishment awaiting him for all eternity. **12.13** *Who have feelings . . . as you*, a Stoic commonplace about the unity of all human beings, also found in Wis 7.1–16. **12.14** See Wis 5.1–13 for a similar lamentation by the wicked for their persecution of the pious. **12.17** *To be merciful to our nation* is perhaps an allusion to the notion that the martyr-

our ancestors to be merciful to our nation;[w] 18 but on you he will take vengeance both in this present life and when you are dead." 19 After he had uttered these imprecations, he flung himself into the braziers and so ended his life.[x]

Reason's Sovereignty in the Seven

13 Since, then, the seven brothers despised sufferings even unto death, everyone must concede that devout reason is sovereign over the emotions. 2 For if they had been slaves to their emotions and had eaten defiling food, we would say that they had been conquered by these emotions. 3 But in fact it was not so. Instead, by reason, which is praised before God, they prevailed over their emotions. 4 The supremacy of the mind over these cannot be overlooked, for the brothers[y] mastered both emotions and pains. 5 How then can one fail to confess the sovereignty of right reason over emotion in those who were not turned back by fiery agonies? 6 For just as towers jutting out over harbors hold back the threatening waves and make it calm for those who sail into the inner basin, 7 so the seven-towered right reason of the youths, by fortifying the harbor of religion, conquered the tempest of the emotions. 8 For they constituted a holy chorus of religion and encouraged one another, saying, 9 "Brothers, let us die like brothers for the sake of the law; let us imitate the three youths in Assyria who despised the same ordeal of the furnace. 10 Let us not be cowardly in the demonstration of our piety." 11 While one said, "Courage, brother," another said, "Bear up nobly," 12 and another reminded them, "Remember whence you came, and the father by whose hand Isaac would have submitted to being slain for the sake of religion." 13 Each of them and all of them together looking at one another, cheerful and undaunted, said, "Let us with all our hearts consecrate ourselves to God, who gave us our lives,[z] and let us use our bodies as a bulwark for the law. 14 Let us not fear him who thinks he is killing us, 15 for great is the struggle of the soul and the danger of eternal torment lying before those who transgress the commandment of God. 16 Therefore let us put on the full armor of self-control, which is divine reason. 17 For if we so die,[a] Abraham and Isaac and Jacob will welcome us, and all the fathers will praise us." 18 Those who were left behind said to each of the brothers who were being dragged away, "Do not put us to shame, brother, or betray the brothers who have died before us."

w Other ancient authorities read *my race*
x Gk *and so gave up*; other ancient authorities read *gave up his spirit* or *his soul* y Gk *they*
z Or *souls* a Other ancient authorities read *suffer*

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doms were an atonement for the nation (see note on 6.28–29). **12.19** See 17.1. Both Stoicism and Judaism allowed for suicide in some circumstances. See Josephus's description of the suicide of the remaining Jewish defenders at Masada in *Jewish War* 7.320–401.

13.1–14.10 After the graphic and emotionally charged description of the deaths of the seven brothers, the author returns to the theme that reason is sovereign over the emotions and then goes on to praise the brothers' courage, piety, and endurance for the sake of religion. See 1.1–3.18; 6.31–35. **13.1–5** This section closely parallels 6.31–35 both in content and in its position immediately after a description of martyrdom. The style is dry and pedantic. **13.6–7** These verses return to the oratorical style that marked the description of the deaths of the seven brothers. **13.6** The metaphor of *towers jutting out over harbors* is similar to the nautical imagery in 7.1–3 and especially 7.5. **13.7** *Seven-towered right reason.* See Prov 9.1 (the seven pillars of wisdom). **13.8** The imagery of the *chorus* is again used (see note on 8.4). The author breaks up the chorus into short phrases uttered by individual members; some Greek tragedies do the same (see Aeschylus *Agamemnon* 1346–71). **13.9** See Dan 3, the story of the three youths in the fiery furnace who also endured great trials for the sake of religion. **13.12** *Remember whence you came.* See Isa 51.1–2. *The father ... slain.* See Gen 22.1–19, in which Abraham nearly sacrifices his son Isaac. This story is alluded to also in 7.14; 14.20; 15.28; 16.20; 17.6; 18.11. See also Wis 10.5; Heb 11.17–19. **13.13** *All of them together.* After speaking separately, the brothers unite, again as in a Greek chorus, for the climactic closing lines. **13.14–15** See Mt 10.28. **13.16** *Armor.* See Eph 6.11–14. **13.17** See 5.37. **13.19–14.1** This section praises the family ties, education, and affection that encouraged the brothers to endure their trials together. Such praises were rhetorical commonplaces, especially in funeral orations. **13.19** *Divine and all-wise Providence,* a Stoic con-

19 You are not ignorant of the affection of family ties, which the divine and all-wise Providence has bequeathed through the fathers to their descendants and which was implanted in the mother's womb. 20 There each of the brothers spent the same length of time and was shaped during the same period of time; and growing from the same blood and through the same life, they were brought to the light of day. 21 When they were born after an equal time of gestation, they drank milk from the same fountains. From such embraces brotherly-loving souls are nourished; 22 and they grow stronger from this common nurture and daily companionship, and from both general education and our discipline in the law of God.

23 Therefore, when sympathy and brotherly affection had been so established, the brothers were the more sympathetic to one another. 24 Since they had been educated by the same law and trained in the same virtues and brought up in right living, they loved one another all the more. 25 A common zeal for nobility strengthened their goodwill toward one another, and their concord, 26 because they could make their brotherly love more fervent with the aid of their religion. 27 But although nature and companionship and virtuous habits had augmented the affection of family ties, those who were left endured for the sake of religion, while watching their brothers being maltreated and tortured to death.

14 Furthermore, they encouraged them to face the torture, so that they not only despised their agonies, but also mastered the emotions of brotherly love.

2 O reason,[b] more royal than kings and freer than the free! 3 O sacred and harmonious concord of the seven brothers on behalf of religion! 4 None of the seven youths proved coward or shrank from death, 5 but all of them, as though running the course toward immortality, hastened to death by torture. 6 Just as the hands and feet are moved in harmony with the guidance of the mind, so those holy youths, as though moved by an immortal spirit of devotion, agreed to go to death for its sake. 7 O most holy seven, brothers in harmony! For just as the seven days of creation move in choral dance around religion, 8 so these youths, forming a chorus, encircled the sevenfold fear of tortures and dissolved it. 9 Even now, we ourselves shudder as we hear of the suffering of these young men; they not only saw what was happening, not only heard the direct word of threat, but also bore the sufferings patiently, and in agonies of fire at that. 10 What could be more excruciatingly painful than this? For the power of fire is intense and swift, and it consumed their bodies quickly.

An Encomium on the Mother of the Seven

11 Do not consider it amazing that reason had full command over these men

b Or *O minds*

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cept also found in 9.24; 17.22. A close parallel to the view that brotherly affection is instilled through the mother and father is found in Xenophon *Cryopedia* 8.7.14. **13.22** Note the emphasis on the brothers' education and training in Mosaic law, which nurtured both their companionship and their striving after virtue. **13.24** See note on 13.22. **14.1** *Mastered the emotions of brotherly love*, expresses a somewhat different viewpoint in which brotherly love is seen as an obstacle to be overcome, similar to the viewpoint in 2.9b–12, 19–20. **14.2–10** An apostrophe to reason followed by praise for the seven brothers. **14.2** *More royal than kings*. See 2.23. **14.5** *Running the course*, another athletic metaphor. See note on 6.10. *Immortality*, lit. "deathlessness." See note on 9.22. **14.6** The seven brothers are *moved by an immortal spirit of devotion* (or piety). This goes beyond the ordinary Stoic notion that the members of the body are moved by the mind. **14.7** The importance of *seven* in connection with creation was emphasized by Philo in *On the Creation of the World* 89–128. **14.9** *Even now, we . . . shudder as we hear*, perhaps an indication that the speech was actually delivered, but more likely part of the rhetorical fiction of 4 Maccabees. See also 1.10; 3.19.

14.11–17.6 The death of the mother, which is simply mentioned in 2 Macc 7.41, is transformed in 4 Maccabees into the climax of the oration. In this section, written as an encomium in praise of the mother, the author emphasizes her terrible torments in being forced to watch the tortures and deaths of all of her seven sons. Through her commitment to religion and the law, her reason overcomes the weakness of her gender and even her maternal affection. **14.11–12** The author's assumption, a common one in the ancient

in their tortures, since the mind of woman
despised even more diverse agonies, 12 for
the mother of the seven young men bore
up under the rackings of each one of her
children.

13 Observe how complex is a mother's
love for her children, which draws every-
thing toward an emotion felt in her in-
most parts. 14 Even unreasoning animals,
as well as human beings, have a sympa-
thy and parental love for their offspring.
15 For example, among birds, the ones
that are tame protect their young by
building on the housetops, 16 and the oth-
ers, by building in precipitous chasms and
in holes and tops of trees, hatch the nest-
lings and ward off the intruder. 17 If they
are not able to keep the intruder[c] away,
they do what they can to help their young
by flying in circles around them in the an-
guish of love, warning them with their
own calls. 18 And why is it necessary to
demonstrate sympathy for children by the
example of unreasoning animals, 19 since
even bees at the time for making honey-
combs defend themselves against intrud-
ers and, as though with an iron dart, sting
those who approach their hive and de-
fend it even to the death? 20 But sympathy
for her children did not sway the mother
of the young men; she was of the same
mind as Abraham.

15 O reason of the children, tyrant
over the emotions! O religion,
more desirable to the mother than her
children! 2 Two courses were open to this
mother, that of religion, and that of pre-
serving her seven sons for a time, as the
tyrant had promised. 3 She loved religion
more, the religion that preserves them for
eternal life according to God's promise.[d]
4 In what manner might I express the
emotions of parents who love their chil-
dren? We impress upon the character of a
small child a wondrous likeness both of
mind and of form. Especially is this true
of mothers, who because of their birth
pangs have a deeper sympathy toward
their offspring than do the fathers. 5 Con-
sidering that mothers are the weaker sex
and give birth to many, they are more de-
voted to their children.[e] 6 The mother of
the seven boys, more than any other
mother, loved her children. In seven
pregnancies she had implanted in herself
tender love toward them, 7 and because of
the many pains she suffered with each of
them she had sympathy for them; 8 yet be-
cause of the fear of God she disdained the
temporary safety of her children. 9 Not
only so, but also because of the nobility of
her sons and their ready obedience to the
law, she felt a greater tenderness toward
them. 10 For they were righteous and
self-controlled and brave and magnani-
mous, and loved their brothers and their
mother, so that they obeyed her even to
death in keeping the ordinances.

11 Nevertheless, though so many fac-
tors influenced the mother to suffer with
them out of love for her children, in the

c Gk *it* d Gk *according to God* e Or *For to the degree that mothers are weaker and the more children they bear, the more they are devoted to their children.*

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world, was that reason is less dominant in women than in men. Consequently, if the mother could endure her agonies, it is not amazing that *reason had full command* over the seven sons in theirs. This theme also occurs in 15.5, 23, 30; 16.1–2, 14. **14.13–20** The power of parental love in human beings is compared to that in *unreasoning animals*. The examples of *birds* (14.15–17) and *bees* (14.19) demonstrate that the parental instinct to protect one's young is extremely powerful. Yet *sympathy for her children did not sway* the mother's mind (14.20). This combination of natural history and sentimentality is not uncommon in writings of this period. **14.20** Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his own son is the prime example of someone overcoming parental affection for the sake of religion. See note on 13.12. **15.1–32** For the sake of religion, the woman overcomes maternal affection. This section emphasizes both the power of that affection and the mother's ability to overcome it for the sake of religion. **15.2–3** The mother's choice was between *religion* and *preserving her seven sons for a time*. She chose the former. See 15.24–28, where the same theme occurs. **15.4** *Likeness both of mind and of form*, a Stoic doctrine which held that children are like their parents both in soul and in body. See Plutarch *On the Opinions of the Philosophers* 7.11.3. **15.4b–7** Parental affection is especially strong in mothers because they bear their children in their wombs. **15.5** See note on 14.11–12. **15.9** Her sons' *nobility* and *obedience to the law* only increased her affection for them. **15.10** *Righteous . . . self-controlled . . . brave*, three of the four cardinal virtues. *Magnanimous* is substituted for *rational* in *judgment*. See 1.2–4, 18; 5.23–24. **15.11–23** This section emphasizes the pathos of the situation by calling to mind the sons' tortures,

case of none of them were the various tortures strong enough to pervert her reason. 12 But each child separately and all of them together the mother urged on to death for religion's sake. 13 O sacred nature and affection of parental love, yearning of parents toward offspring, nurture and indomitable suffering by mothers! 14 This mother, who saw them tortured and burned one by one, because of religion did not change her attitude. 15 She watched the flesh of her children being consumed by fire, their toes and fingers scattered[f] on the ground, and the flesh of the head to the chin exposed like masks.

16 O mother, tried now by more bitter pains than even the birth pangs you suffered for them! 17 O woman, who alone gave birth to such complete devotion! 18 When the firstborn breathed his last, it did not turn you aside, nor when the second in torments looked at you piteously nor when the third expired; 19 nor did you weep when you looked at the eyes of each one in his tortures gazing boldly at the same agonies, and saw in their nostrils the signs of the approach of death. 20 When you saw the flesh of children burned upon the flesh of other children, severed hands upon hands, scalped heads upon heads, and corpses fallen on other corpses, and when you saw the place filled with many spectators of the torturings, you did not shed tears. 21 Neither the melodies of sirens nor the songs of swans attract the attention of their hearers as did the voices of the children in torture calling to their mother. 22 How great and how many torments the mother then suffered as her sons were tortured on the wheel and with the hot irons! 23 But devout reason, giving her heart a man's courage in the very midst of her emotions, strengthened her to disregard, for the time, her parental love.

24 Although she witnessed the destruction of seven children and the ingenious and various rackings, this noble mother disregarded all these[g] because of faith in God. 25 For as in the council chamber of her own soul she saw mighty advocates—nature, family, parental love, and the rackings of her children— 26 this mother held two ballots, one bearing death and the other deliverance for her children. 27 She did not approve the deliverance that would preserve the seven sons for a short time, 28 but as the daughter of God-fearing Abraham she remembered his fortitude.

29 O mother of the nation, vindicator of the law and champion of religion, who carried away the prize of the contest in your heart! 30 O more noble than males in steadfastness, and more courageous than men in endurance! 31 Just as Noah's ark, carrying the world in the universal flood, stoutly endured the waves, 32 so you, O guardian of the law, overwhelmed from every side by the flood of your emotions and the violent winds, the torture of your sons, endured nobly and withstood the wintry storms that assail religion.

16 If, then, a woman, advanced in years and mother of seven sons, endured seeing her children tortured to death, it must be admitted that devout reason is sovereign over the emotions. 2 Thus I have demonstrated not only that men have ruled over the emotions, but also that a woman has despised the fiercest tortures. 3 The lions surrounding Daniel were not so savage, nor was the raging fiery furnace of Mishael so intensely hot, as was her innate parental love, inflamed as she saw her seven sons tortured in such

f Or *quivering* *g* Other ancient authorities read *having bidden them farewell, surrendered them*

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which the mother was forced to witness but which did not pervert her reason. **15.16–20** An apostrophe to the mother gives vividness to the scene (see also 15.29–32; 16.14–15; 17.2–6). **15.21** *Melodies of sirens*, the songs that sought to lure Odysseus and his companions to their deaths (*Odyssey* 12.39–58, 154–200). *Songs of swans*, the plaintive cries of swans, which, according to myth, they utter as they are about to die. **15.23** *A man's courage*. See note on 14.11–12. **15.24–28** The author returns to the mother's choice between dying for religion and temporary deliverance (see 15.1–3). **15.25–26** The imagery is that of balloting in the Greek assembly. **15.29–32** Another apostrophe to the mother (see note on 15.16–20). Note also the imagery of the athletic contest (see note on 6.10). **15.30** See note on 14.11–12. **15.31** See Gen 6.5–8.22. **16.1–4** The author returns to the theme with which he began this section in 15.1: *reason is sovereign over the emotions*. **16.3** On *Daniel* in the lions' den, see Dan 6; on the three youths in the *fiery furnace*, see

varied ways. 4 But the mother quenched
so many and such great emotions by de-
vout reason.

5 Consider this also: If this woman,
though a mother, had been fainthearted,
she would have mourned over them and
perhaps spoken as follows: 6 "O how
wretched am I and many times unhappy!
After bearing seven children, I am now
the mother of none! 7 O seven childbirths
all in vain, seven profitless pregnancies,
fruitless nurturings and wretched nurs-
ings! 8 In vain, my sons, I endured many
birth pangs for you, and the more griev-
ous anxieties of your upbringing. 9 Alas
for my children, some unmarried, others
married and without offspring.[h] I shall
not see your children or have the happi-
ness of being called grandmother. 10 Alas,
I who had so many and beautiful children
am a widow and alone, with many sor-
rows.[i] 11 And when I die, I shall have
none of my sons to bury me."

12 Yet that holy and God-fearing
mother did not wail with such a lament
for any of them, nor did she dissuade any
of them from dying, nor did she grieve as
they were dying. 13 On the contrary, as
though having a mind like adamant and
giving rebirth for immortality to the
whole number of her sons, she implored
them and urged them on to death for the
sake of religion. 14 O mother, soldier of
God in the cause of religion, elder and
woman! By steadfastness you have con-
quered even a tyrant, and in word and
deed you have proved more powerful
than a man. 15 For when you and your
sons were arrested together, you stood
and watched Eleazar being tortured, and
said to your sons in the Hebrew language,
16 "My sons, noble is the contest to which
you are called to bear witness for the na-
tion. Fight zealously for our ancestral law.
17 For it would be shameful if, while an
aged man endures such agonies for the
sake of religion, you young men were to
be terrified by tortures. 18 Remember that
it is through God that you have had a
share in the world and have enjoyed life,
19 and therefore you ought to endure any
suffering for the sake of God. 20 For his
sake also our father Abraham was zealous
to sacrifice his son Isaac, the ancestor of
our nation; and when Isaac saw his fa-
ther's hand wielding a knife[j] and de-
scending upon him, he did not cower.
21 Daniel the righteous was thrown to the
lions, and Hananiah, Azariah, and Mish-
ael were hurled into the fiery furnace and
endured it for the sake of God. 22 You too
must have the same faith in God and not
be grieved. 23 It is unreasonable for peo-
ple who have religious knowledge not to
withstand pain."

24 By these words the mother of the
seven encouraged and persuaded each of
her sons to die rather than violate God's
commandment. 25 They knew also that
those who die for the sake of God live to
God, as do Abraham and Isaac and Jacob
and all the patriarchs.

17 Some of the guards said that
when she also was about to be
seized and put to death she threw herself
into the flames so that no one might touch
her body.

h Gk *without benefit* *i* Or *much to be pitied*
j Gk *sword*

Dan 3. **16.5–23** As in 8.16–9.9 regarding the seven brothers, the author contrasts a speech that the mother could have given had she been fainthearted (16.6–11) with the one that she actually gave (16.16–23). **16.6–11** The speech emphasizes the sorrows of a mother whose children all die before her. **16.10** *A widow and alone.* The place of a widow in the ancient world was always a precarious one. **16.11** To have no children to give one a proper burial was considered tragic in the ancient world among both Jews and Greeks. **16.12–15** Instead of grieving over the deaths of her sons, she urges them on to *rebirth for immortality* (see note on 9.22) for the sake of *religion* and to victory over the *tyrant.* **16.14–15** Another apostrophe to the mother (see note on 15.16–20). **16.14** See note on 14.11–12. **16.15** This speech was supposedly delivered when *Eleazar* was being tortured. This seems, however, to be inconsistent with 5.4; 8.3, which indicate that the mother and her sons were brought in only after the death of Eleazar. The *Hebrew language.* See 12.7. **16.16–22** The initial imagery is that of an athletic *contest* in which the seven sons are to *fight zealously* for Mosaic law (see note on 6.10). This is followed by appeals to the examples of Eleazar (5.1–7.23), Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac (Gen 22.1–19; see note on 13.12), Daniel in the lions' den (Dan 6), and the three youths in the fiery furnace (Dan 3). **16.23** Because reason (Greek *logismos*) can dominate the emotions, it would be *unreasonable* (Greek *alogiston*) not to endure pain for the sake of religion. **16.25** See note on 7.19. **17.1** See 2 Macc 7.41. The mother

2 O mother, who with your seven sons
nullified the violence of the tyrant, frus-
trated his evil designs, and showed the
courage of your faith! 3 Nobly set like a
roof on the pillars of your sons, you held
firm and unswerving against the earth-
quake of the tortures. 4 Take courage,
therefore, O holy-minded mother, main-
taining firm an enduring hope in God.
5 The moon in heaven, with the stars, does
not stand so august as you, who, after
lighting the way of your star-like seven
sons to piety, stand in honor before God
and are firmly set in heaven with them.
6 For your children were true descendants
of father Abraham.[k]

The Effect of the Martyrdoms

7 If it were possible for us to paint the
history of your religion as an artist might,
would not those who first beheld it have
shuddered as they saw the mother of the
seven children enduring their varied tor-
tures to death for the sake of religion?
8 Indeed it would be proper to inscribe on
their tomb these words as a reminder to
the people of our nation:[l]

9 "Here lie buried an aged priest and
an aged woman and seven sons, because
of the violence of the tyrant who wished
to destroy the way of life of the Hebrews.
10 They vindicated their nation, looking to
God and enduring torture even to death."

11 Truly the contest in which they
were engaged was divine, 12 for on that
day virtue gave the awards and tested
them for their endurance. The prize was
immortality in endless life. 13 Eleazar was
the first contestant, the mother of the
seven sons entered the competition, and
the brothers contended. 14 The tyrant was
the antagonist, and the world and the hu-
man race were the spectators. 15 Rever-
ence for God was victor and gave the
crown to its own athletes. 16 Who did not
admire the athletes of the divine[m] legisla-
tion? Who were not amazed?

17 The tyrant himself and all his
council marveled at their[n] endurance,
18 because of which they now stand before
the divine throne and live the life of eter-
nal blessedness. 19 For Moses says, "All
who are consecrated are under your
hands." 20 These, then, who have been
consecrated for the sake of God,[o] are
honored, not only with this honor, but
also by the fact that because of them our
enemies did not rule over our nation,
21 the tyrant was punished, and the home-
land purified—they having become, as it
were, a ransom for the sin of our nation.
22 And through the blood of those devout

k Gk *For your childbearing was from Abraham the father*; other ancient authorities read *For . . . Abraham the servant* *l* Or *as a memorial to the heroes of our people* *m* Other ancient authorities read *true* *n* Other ancient authorities add *virtue and* *o* Other ancient authorities lack *for the sake of God*

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here throws herself into the flames rather than let the guards violate her chastity by touching her. On the question of suicide, see note on 12.19. **17.2–6** This section is a final apostrophe to the mother (see note on 15.16–20). **17.2** A short summary of some of the principal themes of 4 Maccabees. **17.5** See Dan 12.3: "those who lead many to righteousness" shall shine "like the stars"; see also *Testament of Job* 39.9–40.5. Plato and the Stoics thought of the stars as living beings.

17.7–18.5 The author describes the effects of the martyrdoms on the martyrs themselves, on the tyrant, his council, and his soldiers, and, as the author hopes, on his fellow Jews. **17.7** *Paint . . . as an artist might.* Descriptions of artworks and their effects were common in Greek literature. **17.8–10** Because the mention of imaginary epitaphs is a classical rhetorical device, its mention here does not prove that 4 Maccabees was intended to be delivered as an oration at the martyrs' tomb. **17.10** *They vindicated their nation,* perhaps another allusion to some sort of vicarious atonement for the nation (see note on 6.28–29). **17.11–16** This passage develops most fully the metaphor of the martyrs' torture and death as an athletic contest in which the prize for a life tested by *virtue* is *immortality* (see notes on 6.10; 9.22). **17.14** *The world and the human race* gives a universal significance to the contest. **17.17–24** Descriptions of the amazement of Antiochus and his council (17.17–18, 23–24) precede and follow a summary of the effects of the martyrdoms on the Jewish people (17.19–22). **17.19** The quotation, from Deut 33.3, indicates that the martyrs are protected by God. **17.20–22** A summary of the results of the martyrs' deaths that credits them with the eventual victory of the Maccabees and the defeat of Antiochus. **17.21–22** This imagery, which draws on the description of the ritual of the Day of Atonement in Lev 16.1–34, is the most developed imagery in 4 Maccabees of vicarious atonement (see note on 6.28–29). The Greek

ones and their death as an atoning sacrifice, divine Providence preserved Israel that previously had been mistreated.

23 For the tyrant Antiochus, when he saw the courage of their virtue and their endurance under the tortures, proclaimed them to his soldiers as an example for their own endurance, 24 and this made them brave and courageous for infantry battle and siege, and he ravaged and conquered all his enemies.

18 O Israelite children, offspring of the seed of Abraham, obey this law and exercise piety in every way, 2 knowing that devout reason is master of all emotions, not only of sufferings from within, but also of those from without.

3 Therefore those who gave over their bodies in suffering for the sake of religion were not only admired by mortals, but also were deemed worthy to share in a divine inheritance. 4 Because of them the nation gained peace, and by reviving observance of the law in the homeland they ravaged the enemy. 5 The tyrant Antiochus was both punished on earth and is being chastised after his death. Since in no way whatever was he able to compel the Israelites to become pagans and to abandon their ancestral customs, he left Jerusalem and marched against the Persians.

The Mother's Address to Her Children

6 The mother of seven sons expressed also these principles to her children: 7 "I was a pure virgin and did not go outside my father's house; but I guarded the rib from which woman was made.[p] 8 No seducer corrupted me on a desert plain, nor did the destroyer, the deceitful serpent, defile the purity of my virginity. 9 In the time of my maturity I remained with my husband, and when these sons had grown up their father died. A happy man was he, who lived out his life with good children, and did not have the grief of bereavement. 10 While he was still with you, he taught you the law and the prophets. 11 He read to you about Abel slain by Cain, and Isaac who was offered as a burnt offering, and about Joseph in prison. 12 He told you of the zeal of Phinehas, and he taught you about Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael in the fire. 13 He praised Daniel in the den of the lions and blessed him. 14 He reminded you of the scripture of Isaiah, which says, 'Even though you go through the fire, the flame shall not consume you.' 15 He sang to you songs of the psalmist David, who said, 'Many are the afflictions of the righteous.' 16 He recounted to you Solomon's proverb, 'There is a tree of life for those who do his will.' 17 He confirmed the query of Ezekiel, 'Shall these dry bones live?' 18 For he did not forget to teach you the song that Moses taught, which says, 19 'I kill and I make alive: this is your life and the length of your days.' "

20 O bitter was that day—and yet not bitter—when that bitter tyrant of the Greeks quenched fire with fire in his cruel caldrons, and in his burning rage brought those seven sons of the daughter of Abraham to the catapult and back again to more[q] tortures, 21 pierced the pupils of their eyes and cut out their tongues, and

p Gk *the rib that was built*
q Other ancient authorities read *to all his*

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term for *atoning sacrifice* (*hilastērion*) also occurs in Rom 3.25. See also Heb 9.11–15; 1 Pet 1.18–19; 1 Jn 1.7. **17.23–24** The tyrant Antiochus is so amazed by the martyrs' courage that he uses them as examples for his soldiers. **18.1–5** A concluding exhortation to the author's fellow Jews emphasizing the values of obeying the law, mastering the emotions with reason, and suffering for the sake of religion. **18.5** *Jerusalem.* See 4.22, the only other place in 4 Maccabees that Jerusalem is mentioned.

18.6–19 This seems to be the address promised in 12.7; it is placed here for greater rhetorical effect. Though emotional, it is not bombastic. It emphasizes the mother's chastity and the father's proper education of his sons in the heroic examples of the Jewish past, the law, and the prophets. See 2 Macc 7.22–29. **18.7** *Rib.* See Gen 2.22. **18.8** The verse alludes to Gen 3.1–7; Deut 22.25–27. **18.11** *Abel . . . Cain.* See Gen 4.2–15. *Isaac.* See Gen 22.1–19; note on 13.12. *Joseph.* See Gen 39.7–23. **18.12** *Phinehas.* See Num 25.7–13. *Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael.* See Dan 3. **18.13** *Daniel in the den of the lions.* See Dan 6. **18.14** See Isa 43.2. **18.15** Ps 34.19. **18.16** Prov 3.18 (modified). **18.17** See Ezek 37.2–3. **18.19** Deut 32.39; see Deut 30.20.

18.20–24 The section serves as the perora-

put them to death with various tortures.
22 For these crimes divine justice pursued
and will pursue the accursed tyrant. 23 But
the sons of Abraham with their victorious
mother are gathered together into the
chorus of the fathers, and have received
pure and immortal[r] souls from God, 24 to
whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

r Other ancient authorities read *victorious*

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tion or conclusion of the whole work. The themes of punishment of the tyrant and the reward of immortality for the martyrs are once again emphasized. **18.23** *Chorus.* See note on 8.4. *Immortal.* See note on 9.22; Wis 8.19. **18.24** See Rom 11.36; 16.27; 2 Tim 4.18; Heb 13.21.

THE NEW COVENANT

COMMONLY CALLED

THE NEW TESTAMENT

OF

OUR LORD AND SAVIOR

JESUS CHRIST

New Revised Standard Version

A TABLE OF

PARALLEL PASSAGES IN THE FOUR GOSPELS

This table indicates where equivalent or similar passages occur in the four Gospels. Roman type indicates consecutive passages. Italic type signifies that the passages occur in a different order in the Gospel represented by that column.

	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
JESUS' BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD				
Prologue	1.1	1.1	1.1–4	1.1–18
John's birth promised			1.5–25	
The annunciation			1.26–38	
Mary's visit to Elizabeth			1.39–56	
John's birth			1.57–80	
Jesus' lineage	1.2–17		*3.23–38*	
The birth of Jesus	1.18–25		2.1–7	
Adoration of the infant Jesus	2.1–12		2.8–20	
Jesus presented in the temple			2.21–38	
The flight into Egypt and return	2.13–21			
Jesus' childhood in Nazareth	2.22–23		2.39–40	
The child Jesus in the temple			2.41–52	
THE MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST				
John the Baptist introduced	3.1–6	1.2–6	3.1–6	1.19–23
John preaches repentance	3.7–10		3.7–9	
John responds to questions			3.10–14	
John announces the Messiah	3.11–12	1.7–8	3.15–18	1.24–28
The imprisonment of John	*14.3–4*	*6.17–18*	3.19–20	

Based on *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum*, 13th rev. ed., edited by Kurt Aland. Stuttgart: German Bible Society, 1990. Used with permission of German Bible Society.

	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
Jesus is baptized	3.13–17	1.9–11	3.21–22	1.29–34
Jesus' lineage	*1.1–17*		3.23–38	
Jesus is tempted	4.1–11	1.12–13	4.1–13	
THE BEGINNING OF JESUS' PUBLIC MINISTRY (according to John)				
Jesus calls the first disciples				1.35–51
The wedding at Cana				2.1–11
The interlude at Capernaum				2.12
The first trip to Jerusalem				2.13
Jesus cleanses the temple	*21.12–13*	*11.15–17*	*19.45–46*	2.14–22
The discussion with Nicodemus				2.23–3.21
Jesus' ministry in Judea				3.22
John testifies of the Messiah				3.23–36
JESUS' MINISTRY IN GALILEE				
The journey to Galilee	4.12	1.14a	4.14a	4.1–3
The discussion with the Samaritan woman				4.4–42
Jesus' ministry in Galilee	4.13–17	1.14b–15	4.14b–15	4.43–46a
Jesus' preaching at Nazareth	*13.53–58*	*6.1–6a*	4.16–30	
Jesus calls the disciples	4.18–22	1.16–20		
Teaching in the Capernaum synagogue		1.21–22	4.31–32	
Jesus heals a man with an unclean spirit		1.23–28	4.33–37	
The healing of Peter's mother-in-law	*8.14–15*	1.29–31	4.38–39	
Jesus heals various diseases	*8.16–17*	1.32–34	4.40–41	
Jesus leaves Capernaum		1.35–38	4.42–43	
Jesus' initial preaching in Galilee	4.23	1.39	4.44	
The miraculous catch of fish			5.1–11	

	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
Jesus cures the leper	*8.1–4*	1.40–45	5.12–16	
Jesus heals the paralytic	*9.1–8*	2.1–12	5.17–26	*5.1–9a*
Jesus calls Levi (Matthew)	*9.9–13*	2.13–17	5.27–32	
The question about fasting	*9.14–17*	2.18–22	5.33–39	
Plucking grain on the sabbath	*12.1–8*	2.23–28	6.1–5	
Jesus heals the withered hand	*12.9–14*	3.1–6	6.6–11	
Jesus heals many	4.24–25	3.7–12	6.17–19	
	12.15–16			
Jesus chooses the Twelve	*10.1–4*	3.13–19a	6.12–16	
The Sermon on the Mount (according to Matthew)				
The setting of the sermon	5.1–2	*3.7–13a*	6.17–20a	
The Beatitudes	5.3–12		6.20b–23	
The salt of the earth	5.13	*9.49–50*	*14.34–35*	
The light of the world	5.14–16	*4.21*	*8.16*	
The law and the prophets	5.17–20		*16.16–17*	
On murder and anger	5.21–24			
On reconciliation and judgment	5.25–26		*12.57–59*	
On adultery and divorce	5.27–32	*9.43–48*	*16.18*	
On oaths	5.33–37			
On retaliation	5.38–42		*6.29–30*	
On love of enemies	5.43–48		*6.27–28*	
			6.32–36	
On giving alms	6.1–4			
On prayer	6.5–6			
The Lord's Prayer	6.7–15	*11.25 [26]*	*11.1–4*	
On fasting	6.16–18			
On treasures	6.19–21		*12.33–34*	
The healthy eye	6.22–23		*11.34–36*	

	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
Serving two masters	6.24		*16.13*	
On anxiety	6.25–34		*12.22–32*	
On judging	7.1–5	*4.24–25*	*6.37–42*	
On profaning the holy	7.6			
That God answers prayer	7.7–11		*11.9–13*	
The Golden Rule	7.12		*6.31*	
The two ways	7.13–14		*13.23–24*	
Prophets known by their fruits	7.15–20		*6.43–45*	
	12.33–35			
Those who say, "Lord, Lord"	7.21–23		*6.46*	
The house built on the rock	7.24–27		*6.47–49*	
Response to the sermon	7.28–29	*1.21–22*		
The Sermon on the Plain (according to Luke)				
Occasion of the sermon	*5.1–2*	*3.7–13a*	6.17–20a	
The Beatitudes	*5.3–12*		6.20b–23	
The Woes			6.24–26	
On love of enemies	*5.38–48*		6.27–36	
On judging	*7.1–5*	*4.24–25*	6.37–42	
People known by their fruits	*7.15–20*		6.43–45	
	12.33–35			
The house built on the rock	*7.21–27*		6.46–49	
Jesus cures the leper	8.1–4	*1.40–45*	*5.12–16*	
The centurion of Capernaum	8.5–13		7.1–10	4.46b–54
		7.30	*13.28–29*	
The widow's son at Nain			7.11–17	
The healing of Peter's mother-in-law	8.14–15	*1.29–31*	*4.38–39*	
The sick healed at evening	8.16–17	*1.32–34*	*4.40–41*	
On following Jesus	8.18–22		*9.57–62*	

	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
Stilling the storm	8.23–27	*4.35–41*	*8.22–25*	
The Gadarene demoniacs	8.28–34	*5.1–20*	*8.26–39*	
The healing of the paralytic	9.1–8	*2.1–12*	*5.17–26*	*5.1–9a*
The call of Levi (Matthew)	9.9–13	*2.13–17*	*5.27–32*	
The question about fasting	9.14–17	*2.18–22*	*5.33–39*	
Jairus's daughter and the woman with a hemorrhage	9.18–26	*5.21–43*	*8.40–56*	
Two blind men	9.27–31	*10.46–52*	*18.35–43*	
	20.29–34			
The mute demoniac	9.32–34	*3.22*	*11.14–15*	
	12.22–24			
The harvest is great	9.35–38	*6.6b*	*8.1*	*4.35*
		6.34	*10.2*	
Commissioning the Twelve	10.1–16	*6.7*	*9.1*	
		3.13–19	*6.12–16*	
		6.8–11	*9.2–5*	
			10.3	
The fate of the disciples	10.17–25		*12.11–12*	*13.16*
	24.9–14	*13.9–13*	*21.12–19*	
Exhortation to courage	10.26–33		*12.2–9*	
Households divided by the gospel	10.34–36		*12.51–53*	
The conditions of discipleship	10.37–39		*14.25–27*	
			17.33	*12.25*
The rewards of discipleship	10.40–42	*9.41*	*10.16*	*13.20*
Continuation of the journey	11.1			
Jesus answers John the Baptist	11.2–6		7.18–23	
Jesus praises John	11.7–19		7.24–35	
			16.16	
Woes on Galilean cities	11.20–24		*10.13–15*	
Jesus thanks the Father	11.25–27		*10.21–22*	

	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
"Come to me"	11.28–30			
Plucking grain on the sabbath	12.1–8	*2.23–28*	*6.1–5*	
Healing the withered hand	12.9–14	*3.1–6*	*6.6–11*	
Jesus heals many by the sea	12.15–21	*3.7–12*	*6.17–19*	
The woman with the ointment	*26.6–13*	*14.3–9*	7.36–50	*12.1–8*
Women minister to Jesus			8.1–3	
Jesus thought to be out of his mind		3.19b–21		
Jesus accused of using Satan's power	12.22–30	3.22–27	*11.14–15*	
	9.32–34		*11.17–23*	
The sin against the Holy Spirit	12.31–32	3.28–30	*12.10*	
Tree and fruit	12.33–37			
	7.16–20	*6.43–45*		
The sign of Jonah	12.38–42	*8.11–12*	*11.16*	
	16.1–2a, 4		*11.29–32*	
The return of the unclean spirit	12.43–45		*11.24–26*	
Jesus' true family	12.46–50	3.31–35	*8.19–21*	*15.14*
The parable of the seed	13.1–9	4.1–9	8.4–8	
Jesus' rationale for the parables	13.10–17	4.10–12	8.9–10	
		4.25	*8.18b*	
Jesus explains the parable of the seed	13.18–23	4.13–20	8.11–15	
The one who has ears to hear	*5.15*	4.21–25	8.16–18	
	10.26			
	7.2			
	13.12			
The parable of the growing seed		4.26–29		
The parable of the weeds	13.24–30			
The parable of the mustard seed	13.31–32	4.30–32	*13.18–19*	
The parable of the yeast	13.33		*13.20–21*	
Jesus' use of parables	13.34–35	4.33–34		

	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
Jesus explains the parable of the weeds	13.36–43			
The hidden treasure and the pearl	13.44–46			
The parable of the net	13.47–50			
Treasures new and old	13.51–52			
Jesus' true family	*12.46–50*	*3.31–35*	8.19–21	*15.14*
The stilling of the storm	*8.23–27*	4.35–41	8.22–25	
The Gerasene demoniac	*8.28–34*	5.1–20	8.26–39	
Jairus's daughter and the woman with a hemorrhage	*9.18–26*	5.21–43	8.40–56	
Jesus is rejected in Nazareth	13.53–58	6.1–6a	*4.16–30*	
Jesus' second journey to Jerusalem				5.1
The healing at the pool				5.2–47
Jesus commissions the Twelve	*9.35*	6.6b–13	9.1–6	
	10.1, 7–11, 14	*3.13–15*		
Jesus' identity discussed	14.1–2	6.14–16	9.7–9	
The death of John the Baptist	14.3–12	6.17–29	*3.19–20*	
The apostles' return		6.30–31	9.10a	
Jesus feeds the five thousand	14.13–21	6.32–44	9.10b–17	6.1–15
Jesus walks on the water	14.22–33	6.45–52		6.16–21
The healings at Gennesaret	14.34–36	6.53–56		6.22–25
The Bread of Life				6.26–59
On defilement	15.1–20	7.1–23	*11.37–41*	
			6.39	
The Syrophoenician woman	15.21–28	7.24–30		
Jesus heals a deaf mute	15.29–31	7.31–37		
Jesus feeds the four thousand	15.32–39	8.1–10		
The Pharisees seek a sign	16.1–4	8.11–13	*11.16*	
	12.38–39		*12.54–56*	
			11.29	

	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
The yeast of the Pharisees	16.5–12	8.14–21	*12.1*	
A blind man is healed at Bethsaida		8.22–26		
Many take offense at Jesus				6.60–66
Peter's confession	16.13–20	8.27–30	9.18–21	6.67–71
First passion prediction	16.21–23	8.31–33	9.22	
The cost of discipleship	16.24–28	8.34–9.1	9.23–27	*12.25*
The transfiguration	17.1–9	9.2–10	9.28–36	
The coming of Elijah	17.10–13	9.11–13		
Jesus heals a possessed boy	17.14–21	9.14–29	9.37–43a	
			17.6	
Second passion prediction	17.22–23	9.30–32	9.43b–45	
On the temple tax	17.24–27			
True greatness	18.1–5	9.33–37	9.46–48	*13.20*
The outside exorcist	*10.42*	9.38–41	9.49–50	
Warnings concerning temptations	18.6–9	9.42–50	*17.1–2*	
	5.13		*14.34–35*	
The parable of the lost sheep	18.10–14		*15.3–7*	
On discipline in the community	18.15–18		*17.3*	*20.23*
"Where two or three are gathered"	18.19–20			
On reconciliation	18.21–22		*17.4*	
The parable of the unforgiving servant	18.23–35			
JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM (according to Luke)				
The departure for Jerusalem	19.1–2	10.1	9.51	
Rejection by Samaritans			9.52–56	
The demands of discipleship	*8.18–22*		9.57–62	
Jesus sends seventy before him	*9.37–38; 10.7–16; 11.20–24; 10.40*		10.1–16	*13.20*

	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
The Seventy return	*11.25–27; 13.16–17*		10.17–24	
A lawyer's question	*22.34–40*	*12.28–34*	10.25–28	
The parable of the good Samaritan			10.29–37	
Mary and Martha			10.38–42	
The Lord's Prayer	*6.9–13*		11.1–4	
The parable of the importunate friend	*7.7–11*		11.5–13	
The Beelzebul controversy	*12.22–30*	*3.22–27*	11.14–23	
The return of the unclean spirit	*12.43–45*		11.24–26	
On those truly blessed			11.27–28	
The sign of Jonah	*12.38–42*	*8.11–12*	11.29–32	
On light and darkness	*5.15; 6.22–23*	*4.21*	11.33–36	
Jesus dines with a Pharisee	*15.1–9*	*7.1–9*	11.37–54	
On hypocrisy	*16.5–6*	*8.14–15*	12.1–3	
On fear and confession	*10.26–33; 12.31–32*	*3.28–30*	12.4–10	
The Holy Spirit's aid	*10.19–20*	*13.11*	12.11–12	
			21.14–15	
On riches	*6.25–34, 19–21*		12.13–34	
Exhortation to watch	*24.42–51*		12.35–48	*13.4–5*
Division in households	*10.34–36*		12.49–53	
On interpreting the present time	*16.2–3*		12.54–56	
On settling with one's accuser	*5.25–26*		12.57–59	
Repent or perish			13.1–9	
The healing of the crippled woman			13.10–17	
The parable of the mustard seed	*13.31–32*	*4.30–32*	13.18–19	
The parable of the yeast	*13.33*		13.20–21	

	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
The narrow door to the kingdom	*7.13–14, 22–23; 8.11–12; 19.30*	*10.31*	13.22–30	
The third day			13.31–33	
The lament for Jerusalem	*23.37–39*		13.34–35	
The healing of a man with dropsy			14.1–6	
On humility			14.7–14	
The parable of the great dinner	*22.1–14*		14.15–24	
On the costs of discipleship	*10.37–38; 5.13*	*9.49–50*	14.25–35	
The parable of the lost sheep	*18.12–14*		15.1–7	
The parable of the lost coin			15.8–10	
The parable of the prodigal son			15.11–32	
The parable of the dishonest manager and teaching about riches	*6.24*		16.1–15	
On the Torah	*11.12–13; 5.18*		16.16–17	
On divorce	*19.9; 5.32*	*10.11–12*	16.18	
The parable of the rich man and Lazarus			16.19–31	
On occasions for stumbling	*18.6–7*	*9.42*	17.1–3a	
On forgiveness	*18.15, 21–22*		17.3b–4	
On faith	*17.19–21*	*9.28–29*	17.5–6	
	21.21	*11.22–23*		
Worthless slaves			17.7–10	
Cleansing of ten lepers			17.11–19	
On the coming of God's kingdom			17.20–21	
The day of the Son of Man	*24.23, 26–27*	*13.19–23*	17.22–37	

	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
The day of the Son of Man *(cont.)*	*24.37–39, 17–18; 10.39; 24.40–41, 28*	*13.14–16*		*12.25*
The parable of the unjust judge			18.1–8	
The parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector	*23.12*		18.9–14	
JESUS AT THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES (according to John)				
A private pilgrimage				7.1–13
Jesus teaches in the temple				7.14–39
The crowd is divided over Jesus				7.40–52
[The woman caught in adultery				7.53–8.11]
The Light of the World				8.12–20
Discussion with the Jews: "Before Abraham was, I am"				8.21–59
Healing of a man born blind				9.1–41
The Good Shepherd				10.1–18
Renewed division among the Jews				10.19–21
JESUS' MINISTRY IN JUDEA				
The departure for Jerusalem	19.1–2	10.1	*9.51*	
On divorce and celibacy	19.3–12	10.2–12	*16.18*	
Jesus blesses the children	19.13–15	10.13–16	18.15–17	
The rich youth	19.16–22	10.17–22	18.18–23	
On riches and rewards	19.23–30	10.23–31	18.24–30	
			22.28–30	
The laborers in the vineyard	20.1–16	10.31	*13.30*	
Jesus at the Feast of Dedication				10.22–39
Jesus departs across the Jordan				10.40–42

	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
The raising of Lazarus				11.1–44
The chief priests and Pharisees conspire against Jesus				11.45–53
Jesus withdraws to Ephraim				11.54–57
Third prediction of the Passion	20.17–19	10.32–34	18.31–34	
Preeminence among the disciples	20.20–28	10.35–45	*22.24–27*	
The healing of the blind	20.29–34	10.46–52	18.35–43	
	9.27–31			
Zacchaeus			19.1–10	
The parable of the pounds	*25.14–30*	*13.34*	19.11–27	
Mary anoints Jesus at Bethany	*26.6–13*	*14.3–9*	*7.36–50*	12.1–8
The priests plot against Lazarus				12.9–11
THE FINAL WEEK IN JERUSALEM				
Triumphal entry	21.1–11; *17*	11.1–11	19.28–40	12.12–19
Jesus weeps over Jerusalem			19.41–44	
The cursing of the fig tree	*21.18–19*	11.12–14		
The cleansing of the temple	21.12–16	11.15–17	19.45–46	*2.13–17*
The chief priests and scribes conspire against Jesus		11.18–19	19.47–48	
The withered fig tree	21.20–22	11.20–26		
	6.14–15			
Jesus' authority and the Baptist's	21.23–27	11.27–33	20.1–8	
The parable of two sons	21.28–32			
The parable of the wicked tenants	21.33–46	12.1–12	20.9–19	
The parable of the wedding banquet	22.1–14		*14.15–24*	
On paying taxes to the emperor	22.15–22	12.13–17	20.20–26	
On the resurrected life	22.23–33	12.18–27	20.27–40	
The Great Commandment	22.34–40	12.28–34	*10.25–28*	

	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
On the Son of David	22.41–46	12.35–37a	20.41–44	
Woe to the scribes and the Pharisees	23.1–36	12.37b–40	20.45–47	
Jesus laments over Jerusalem	23.37–39		*13.34–35*	
The widow's copper coins		12.41–44	21.1–4	
The Eschatological Discourse				
"Not one stone upon another"	24.1–2	13.1–2	21.5–6	
Signs of the end	24.3–8	13.3–8	21.7–11	
Persecutions foretold	24.9–14	13.9–13	21.12–19	
	10.17–22a		*12.11–12*	
The desolating sacrilege	24.15–22	13.14–20	21.20–24	
False messiahs and false prophets	24.23–28	13.21–23	*17.23–24, 37b*	
The coming of the Son of Man	24.29–31	13.24–27	21.25–28	
The parable of the fig tree	24.32–36	13.28–32	21.29–33	
Summons to watchfulness	*25.13–15*	13.33–37	21.34–36	
	24.42			
Example of the flood	24.37–44		*17.26–36*	
The parable of good and wicked slaves	24.45–51		*12.41–46*	
The parable of the ten bridesmaids	25.1–13			
The parable of the talents	25.14–30	*13.34*	*19.11–27*	
The final judgment	25.31–46			
Summary: Jesus in Jerusalem			21.37–38	
Greeks wish to see Jesus				12.20–36
Blindness and judgment by the light				12.37–50
The chief priests conspire	26.1–5	14.1–2	22.1–2	
Anointing in Bethany	26.6–13	14.3–9	*7.36–50*	*12.1–8*
Judas conspires to betray Jesus	26.14–16	14.10–11	22.3–6	

	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
Preparations for the Passover	26.17–20	14.12–17	22.7–14	
Jesus washes the disciples' feet				13.1–20
Judas' betrayal predicted	26.21–25	14.18–21	*22.21–23*	13.21–30
The Last Supper	26.26–29	14.22–25	22.15–20	
Preeminence among the disciples	*20.24–28; 19.28*	*10.41–45*	22.24–30	
The new commandment of love				13.31–35
Peter's denial predicted	26.30–35	14.26–31	22.31–34	13.36–38
The two swords			22.35–38	
Jesus' farewell discourses				14.1–16.33
Prayer with the disciples	26.36–46	14.32–42	22.39–46	17.1–26
The arrest of Jesus	26.47–56	14.43–52	22.47–53	18.1–12
Jesus before the council	26.57–68	14.53–65	22.54–55, 63–71	18.13–24
Peter's denial	26.69–75	14.66–72	*22.56–62*	18.25–27
Jesus handed over to Pilate	27.1–2	15.1	23.1	18.28
The death of Judas	27.3–10		*Acts 1.16–20*	
Jesus tried before Pilate	27.11–14	15.2–5	23.2–5	18.29–38
Jesus before Herod			23.6–12	
Pilate acquits Jesus of wrong			23.13–16	
Jesus or Barabbas	27.15–23	15.6–14	23.17–23	18.39–40
Jesus handed over to be crucified	27.24–26	15.15	23.24–25	19.1, 4–16
The soldiers mock Jesus	27.27–31a	15.16–20a		*19.2–3*
Jesus takes up his cross	27.31b–32	15.20b–21	23.26–32	19.17a
The crucifixion	27.33–37	15.22–26	23.33–34	19.17b–27
Jesus derided on the cross	27.38–43	15.27–32a	23.35–38	*19.18*
The two bandits	27.44	15.32b	23.39–43	
The death of Jesus	27.45–54	15.33–39	23.44–48	19.28–30
Witnesses of the crucifixion	27.55–56	15.40–41	23.49	*19.25–27*

	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
Piercing of Jesus' side				19.31–37
Jesus' burial	27.57–61	15.42–47	23.50–56	19.38–42
The guard at the tomb	27.62–66			
THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS				
The women at the tomb	28.1–8	16.1–8	24.1–12	20.1–13
Jesus appears to the women	28.9–10		*24.10–11*	20.14–18
The guards report	28.11–15			
Appearance to two disciples at Emmaus			24.13–35	
Appearance to the Eleven	28.16–17		24.36–43	20.19–29
The Eleven commissioned to preach	28.18–20		24.44–53	
Conclusion to the body of John's Gospel				20.30–31
Second appearance to disciples				21.1–14
Discussion with Peter				21.15–23
Seal of the beloved disciple				21.24–25

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO

MATTHEW

Genre

THE FIRST GOSPEL resists neat genre classification. It is a narrative about Jesus that has a quality of historical "pastness," yet it speaks to the time of its composition and it stresses the future. While such elements are reminiscent of a fusion of history, myth, and apocalyptic eschatology, the book also seems similar to an ancient Hellenistic "biography" that lauds its miracle-working hero. It has Jewish qualities as well: poetic parallelism; scribal argument; an emphasis on law, practice, and piety; an interest in symbolic numbers; scriptural quotation and fulfillment; and a genealogy. It also has distinctive Christian elements, including accounts of the virgin Mary, church discipline, teaching, baptism, prayer, Jesus' last meal, the promise of his continuing presence, a special role for the apostle Peter, and strongly developed views of Jesus as Messiah. These elements have contributed to its preeminence as the First Gospel of the orthodox Christian canon.

Authorship and Date

Some early traditions speak of a document written in a Hebrew dialect by Matthew, one of Jesus' twelve disciples. Nevertheless, most contemporary scholars are reluctant to identify the First Gospel with this document, for Matthew is written in Greek, and though it betrays Semitic (Hebrew or Aramaic) language influence, it is not a translation. Furthermore, according to the widely held "Two-Source Theory," the author of Matthew used as sources the Gospel of Mark (written in the late 60s), a lost sayings source (designated "Q"), and some special traditions (designated "M"). References within the Gospel suggest that its author knew about the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. (see 21.41; 22.7; 24.15–16), and the author highlights the Pharisees as Jesus' main opponents though this sect asserted its authority only after 70 C.E. Thus, internal references combined with source analysis point to a date between 80 and 90 C.E. So late a date makes composition by a disciple unlikely, though not impossible. The Gospel may have been composed in Palestine, but it is more likely that it was written in Antioch, Syria, where Bishop Ignatius seems to cite Matthean passages as early as 110 C.E.

Since anonymous works in antiquity were often attributed to prominent persons, cumulative evidence suggests that an unknown Greek-speaking Jewish Christian, probably a scribe (see 13.52), composed this Gospel and that in the second century it was attributed to the disciple Matthew primarily to lend it authority.

Circumstances of Writing

This Gospel stresses the Pharisees as Jesus' major opponents (see 9.11, 34; 12.2; 27.62); accuses them of being "hypocrites" (ch. 23); emphasizes "righteousness" that exceeds theirs (5.17–20); and speaks of "their scribes" (7.29) and "their synagogues" (4.23; 9.35). These themes suggest that the author represented a group of Jewish Christians or Christian Jews no longer in communion with post-70 C.E., Pharisee-led Judaism (see 21.28–23.39). At the same time, there is evidence that the Matthean group was disrupted internally. The church seems to be viewed as a mixed body of both good and bad (13.24–30, 47–50; 22.1–14); there are "false prophets" and Christians who seem to want freedom from Torah obedience altogether (7.15–23); and there are some in the church who threaten the faith of others (18.6–7, 10–14). Indeed, the disciples themselves are characterized by "little faith" (6.30; 8.26; 14.31; 16.8), though clearly they show a measure of understanding (13.51). In this connection, only in this Gospel is the word "church" (Greek *ekklesia*) used, first in relation to the authority of Peter (16.17–19) and later in relation to the assembled group's power to excommunicate errant members (18.17).

Structure and Composition

The sequence of Matthew generally follows the geographical outline of Mark from Galilee to Jerusalem, but it diverges with the addition of the birth stories at the beginning (chs. 1–2) and the resurrection appearance and the final commissioning scene at the end (28.9–20) and with the reordering of sources in chs. 5–11. The narrative is marked by temporal statements in 4.17 and 16.21 ("from that time Jesus began . . ."), but structurally its most striking features are the five major discourses (5.1–7.27; 10.5–42; 13.1–52; 18.1–35; 24.3–25.46), each of which is concluded by a similar formula, "and when Jesus had finished saying these things . . ." (7.28; 11.1; 13.53; 19.1; 26.1). These discourses may be intended to recall the five books of the Torah, then thought to have been authored by Moses, and the author may have viewed Jesus as a new Moses offering a new Torah that fulfills, yet supersedes, the old (13.52). Moreover, the author stresses fourteen "formula quotations" showing that events fulfill the holy scriptures (see note on 1.22–23).

This Gospel contains a sharp anti-Pharisaism, moral stringency, and apocalyptic severity. Yet it has a marvelous vision of Jesus as the compassionate, healing Messiah/Son of David, the royal Son of God, and the apocalyptic Son of Man,

who is claimed as the fulfillment of the Torah and the prophets (5.17–20) and who calls his followers to spread the good news of the kingdom of heaven to the whole world (28.16–20). *Dennis C. Duling*

The Genealogy of Jesus the Messiah

1 An account of the genealogy[a] of Jesus the Messiah,[b] the son of David, the son of Abraham.

2 Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, 3 and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Aram, 4 and Aram the father of Aminadab, and Aminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, 5 and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, 6 and Jesse the father of King David.

And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, 7 and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph,[c] 8 and Asaph[c] the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, 9 and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, 10 and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos,[d] and Amos[d] the father of Josiah, 11 and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

12 And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Salathiel, and Salathiel the father of Zerubbabel, 13 and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, 14 and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, 15 and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, 16 and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah.[e]

17 So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah,[e] fourteen generations.

a Or *birth* *b* Or *Jesus Christ* *c* Other ancient authorities read *Asa* *d* Other ancient authorities read *Amon* *e* Or *the Christ*

1.1–2.23 Matthew legitimates the Messiah's human and divine origins. **1.1–17** Cf. Lk 3.23–38. Jesus' human origin from patriarchs and kings. **1.1** *Genealogy*, lit. "origin" (Greek *genesis*), translated *birth* in 1.18 (see text note *a*; see also Gen 5.1). *Jesus*. See note on 1.21. *Messiah*, lit. "Anointed [One]." In Israel, kings and priests were anointed with oils (see, e.g., 26.6–13; Lev 21.10–12; 1 Sam 10.1; 16.1–13; Ps 18.50; Lk 7.36–50). *Son of*, i.e., descended from (see note on 9.27). *David*, Israel's greatest king (1 Sam 16.1–1 Kings 2.12). *Abraham*, ancestor of the Jews (see 3.9), but also "ancestor of a multitude of nations (i.e., Gentiles)" (Gen 17.4–5); see Mt 10.5–6; 15.24; 28.19; see also Gal 3–4; Rom 4. **1.2–6a** The first of three divisions of the genealogy; see 1.17; see also 1 Chr 2.1–15; Ruth 4.18–22. The four women (vv. 3, 5, 6) are Gentiles and/or women who, like Mary, had irregular sexual unions but were considered important for God's plan. **1.3** *Tamar*. See Gen 38. **1.5** *Rahab*, probably the prostitute of Josh 2.1–21; 6.22–25; but she is nowhere else mentioned as Boaz's mother. *Ruth*. See Ruth 2–4. **1.6b–11** The second division (see 1.17) traces the genealogy through Davidic kings (1–2 Kings). **1.6** *Wife of Uriah*, i.e., Bathsheba (see 2 Sam 11–12, esp. 12.9; 1 Kings 15.5). **1.11** *Deportation to Babylon*, i.e., the Babylonian exile (597–539 B.C.E.). **1.12–16a** The third division contains mostly unknown names. **1.12** *Zerubbabel*. See Ezra 3.2, 8; Neh 12.1; Hag 1–2; cf. 1 Chr 3.17–19. **1.17** *Fourteen* is the numerical value of David's name in Hebrew. The artificial divisions are unequal (about 750, 400, and 600 years) and

The Birth of Jesus the Messiah

18 Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah[f] took place in this way. When his
mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she
was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. 19 Her husband Joseph, being a
righteous man and unwilling to expose
her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss
her quietly. 20 But just when he had re-
solved to do this, an angel of the Lord
appeared to him in a dream and said, "Jo-
seph, son of David, do not be afraid to
take Mary as your wife, for the child con-
ceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.
21 She will bear a son, and you are to name
him Jesus, for he will save his people from
their sins." 22 All this took place to fulfill
what had been spoken by the Lord
through the prophet:

23 "Look, the virgin shall conceive
and bear a son,
and they shall name him
Emmanuel,"

which means, "God is with us." 24 When
Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the
angel of the Lord commanded him; he
took her as his wife, 25 but had no marital
relations with her until she had borne a
son;[g] and he named him Jesus.

The Visit of the Wise Men

2 In the time of King Herod, after
Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Ju-
dea, wise men[h] from the East came to Je-
rusalem, 2 asking, "Where is the child who
has been born king of the Jews? For we
observed his star at its rising,[i] and have
come to pay him homage." 3 When King
Herod heard this, he was frightened, and
all Jerusalem with him; 4 and calling to-
gether all the chief priests and scribes of
the people, he inquired of them where
the Messiah[j] was to be born. 5 They told
him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has
been written by the prophet:

6 'And you, Bethlehem, in the land
of Judah,
are by no means least among
the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who is to shepherd[k] my
people Israel.' "

f Or *Jesus Christ* g Other ancient authorities read *her firstborn son* h Or *astrologers*; Gk *magi* i Or *in the East* j Or *the Christ* k Or *rule*

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omit four kings and a queen. **1.18–25** Cf. Lk 1.26–38. Matthew explains 1.16 and legitimates Jesus' divine origin. **1.18** *Birth.* See note on 1.1. *Engaged.* At puberty a girl was promised by the father to her (future) husband (1.19; see Deut 20.7). For her to be with child *before they lived together* dishonored the male and was grounds for "divorce" (see 1.19), even execution (Deut 22.13–21). *The Holy Spirit,* creative divine agency (see 1.20; 3.16; 22.43; 28.19; Lk 1.35). **1.19** Henceforth *Joseph* dominates the story (cf. Lk 1–2). *Righteous,* probably "law (Torah) abiding" (see note on 3.15; Lk 1.6). *Dismiss.* See 5.31–32; 19.7. **1.20** The *dream* (see also 2.12, 13, 19, 22) recalls the patriarch Joseph (Gen 37.5–11). *Son of David.* See 1.1. **1.21** *Jesus,* from the Greek form of a common Hebrew name (Joshua) derived from *yasha'*, "he saves" (see 8.25). **1.22–23** The first of fourteen quotations introduced with almost identical formulas; see 2.5b–6; 2.15b; 2.17–18; 2.23b; 3.3; 4.14–16; 8.17; 12.17–21; 13.14–15; 13.35; 21.4–5; 26.56 [see 26.54]; 27.9–10. These emphasize that events fulfill prophecy and thus conform to the will of God. This first one quotes Isa 7.14 (Septuagint). *Virgin.* The Hebrew text refers to a "young woman" (*'almah*). **1.25** *Until.* Matthew's birth narrative does not seem to imply the perpetual virginity of Mary (see also 13.55).

2.1–23 The infant Jesus is linked with Bethlehem, Egypt, and Nazareth. **2.1–12** Gentiles pay homage to the true king. **2.1** Rome allowed certain native "client kings" such as *King Herod* (Herod the Great) to rule (37–4 B.C.E.); see note on 2.22; Lk 3.1. *Bethlehem,* David's hometown, five miles south of Jerusalem (1 Sam 16.1–13; see note on 2.5–6; cf. Lk 1.26). *Wise men,* court priests (perhaps from Parthia) who practiced astrology and magic (see text note *h*). **2.2** *King of the Jews* (see also 27.11, 29, 37, 42) contrasts with King Herod (2.1). *His star.* See Num 24.17. A famous leader of a messianic revolt (132–135 C.E.) was called Bar Kochba, "Son of the Star." *Pay him homage,* i.e., bow down in respect or worship (see 2.8, 11; 14.33; 28.9, 17; see also Ps 72.10–11). **2.4** *Chief priests,* aristocratic temple priests who performed sacrifices and purification rites (see note on 21.15). *Scribes,* writing bureaucrats and scholars, usually viewed negatively in Matthew as part of the Jewish leadership opposing Jesus (but cf. 8.19; 13.52; 17.10; 23.2–3). *The people* are sometimes viewed negatively; see 13.15; 15.8; 21.23; 26.3, 47; esp. 27.24–25; cf. 1.21; 4.23; 9.35. **2.5b–6** The second formula quotation (see note on 1.22–23) combines Mic 5.2 with 2 Sam 5.2, giving Bethlehem geographic preci-

7 Then Herod secretly called for the
wise men[l] and learned from them the
exact time when the star had appeared.
8 Then he sent them to Bethlehem, sa-
ying, "Go and search diligently for the
child; and when you have found him,
bring me word so that I may also go and
pay him homage." 9 When they had heard
the king, they set out; and there, ahead of
them, went the star that they had seen at
its rising,[m] until it stopped over the place
where the child was. 10 When they saw
that the star had stopped,[n] they were
overwhelmed with joy. 11 On entering the
house, they saw the child with Mary his
mother; and they knelt down and paid
him homage. Then, opening their trea-
sure chests, they offered him gifts of gold,
frankincense, and myrrh. 12 And having
been warned in a dream not to return to
Herod, they left for their own country by
another road.

The Escape to Egypt

13 Now after they had left, an angel of
the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream
and said, "Get up, take the child and his
mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain
there until I tell you; for Herod is about
to search for the child, to destroy him."
14 Then Joseph[o] got up, took the child
and his mother by night, and went to
Egypt, 15 and remained there until the
death of Herod. This was to fulfill what
had been spoken by the Lord through the
prophet, "Out of Egypt I have called
my son."

The Massacre of the Infants

16 When Herod saw that he had been
tricked by the wise men,[l] he was infuri-
ated, and he sent and killed all the chil-
dren in and around Bethlehem who were
two years old or under, according to
the time that he had learned from the
wise men.[l] 17 Then was fulfilled what
had been spoken through the prophet
Jeremiah:

18 "A voice was heard in Ramah,
wailing and loud lamentation,
Rachel weeping for her children;
she refused to be consoled,
because they are no more."

The Return to Nazareth

19 When Herod died, an angel of the
Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Jo-
seph in Egypt and said, 20 "Get up, take
the child and his mother, and go to the
land of Israel, for those who were seeking
the child's life are dead." 21 Then Joseph[o]
got up, took the child and his mother, and
went to the land of Israel. 22 But when he
heard that Archelaus was ruling over Ju-
dea in place of his father Herod, he was
afraid to go there. And after being
warned in a dream, he went away to the
district of Galilee. 23 There he made his
home in a town called Nazareth, so that
what had been spoken through the
prophets might be fulfilled, "He will be
called a Nazorean."

l Or *astrologers*; Gk *magi* *m* Or *in the East*
n Gk *saw the star* *o* Gk *he*

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sion, prominence, and relevance. **2.11** *Gold, frankincense* (a fragrant resin). See Ps 72.15; Isa 60.5–6. *Myrrh*, a resin used for anointing (Ex 30.23–32) and embalming (Jn 19.39–40). **2.12** *Dream*. See note on 1.20. **2.13–15** Escape to and return from Egypt echo the stories of Joseph (Gen 37), Moses, and Israel. **2.15b** The third formula quotation (see note on 1.22–23) cites Hos 11.1, where "son" refers to Israel (Ex 4.22–23; Deut 1.31); but see note on 3.17. **2.16–18** The massacre echoes Pharaoh's act at the birth of Moses (Ex 1.15–22). **2.17–18** The fourth formula quotation (see note on 1.22–23) cites Jer 31.15, which refers to the exile of the Northern tribes to Assyria (722/21 B.C.E.). **2.19–23** The final point of origin of the Messiah is identified as Nazareth (cf. 2.4–5, 15). **2.19** *Dream*. See note on 1.20. **2.22** Herod the Great's kingdom was divided among three sons: *Archelaus* ruled Judea, Samaria, and Idumea (4 B.C.E.–6 C.E.); Herod Antipas ruled Galilee and Perea (4 B.C.E.–39 C.E.); and Philip ruled the region northeast of the Sea of Galilee (4 B.C.E.–33/34 C.E.). See 14.3–4; Mk 6.17–18; Lk 3.1. **2.23a** *Nazareth*, an agricultural village fifteen miles west of the Sea of Galilee (see Lk 2.4; Jn 1.46; 7.41, 52). **2.23b** No OT passage corresponds to this fifth formula quotation (see note on 1.22–23), but *Nazorean* may allude to the messianic "Branch" (Hebrew *nētzer*) of David's line (Isa 11.1; see Zech 3.8; 6.12) or to a Nazirite, a "Holy One" who vowed to abstain from wine and cutting his hair (Num 6; Judg 13.5–7; Acts 18.18; 21.17–26; cf. Mt 11.18–19).

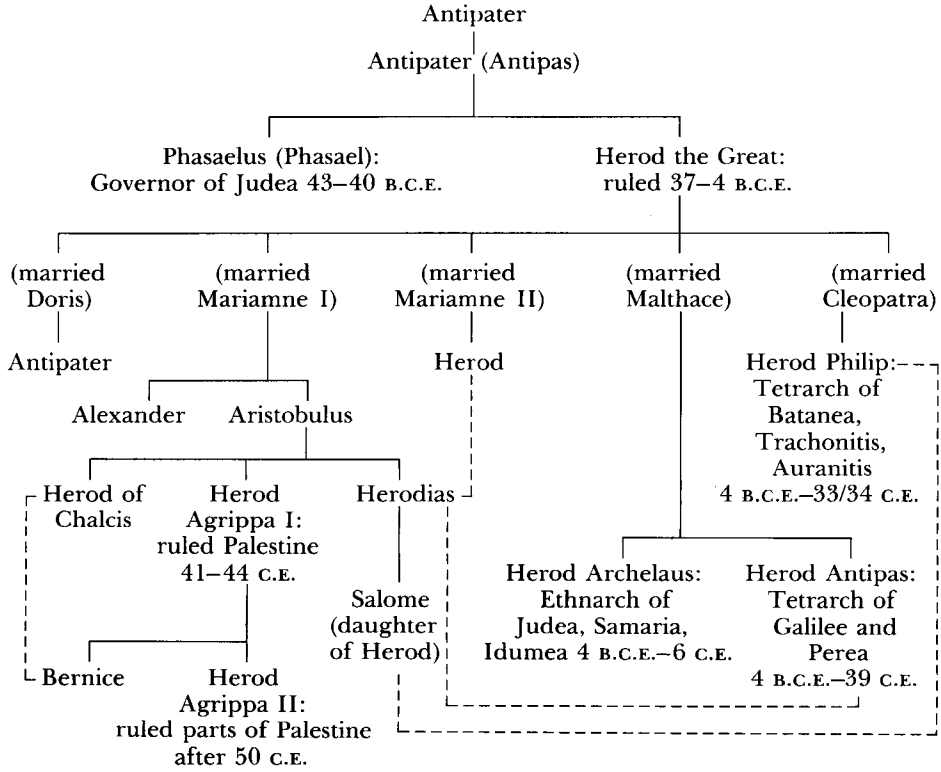
The Proclamation of John the Baptist

3 In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea,
proclaiming, 2"Repent, for the kingdom
of heaven has come near."*p* 3This is the
one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke
when he said,
"The voice of one crying out in
the wilderness:
'Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.' "
4Now John wore clothing of camel's hair
with a leather belt around his waist, and
his food was locusts and wild honey.
5Then the people of Jerusalem and all
Judea were going out to him, and all the
region along the Jordan, 6and they were
baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.
7 But when he saw many Pharisees
and Sadducees coming for baptism, he

p Or *is at hand*

3.1–4.25 Matthew follows Mark for the accounts of John the Baptist, Jesus' baptism, the temptation, and Jesus' first public ministry, occasionally adding material from Q and M (see Introduction). **3.1–6** Cf. Mk 1.2–6; Lk 3.1–6; Jn 1.19–23. **3.1** *John the Baptist.* See also 3.7–17; 11.2–19; 14.1–12; 16.14; 17.10–13; 21.23–27; Josephus *Antiquities* 18.117. *Wilderness*, near where the Jordan empties into the Dead Sea. **3.2** *The kingdom of heaven has come near.* Matthew alone has John proclaim Jesus' message (see 4.17; cf. Mk 1.4). **3.3** The sixth formula quotation (see note on 1.22–23) cites Isa 40.3. *The Lord*, here Jesus, not Yahweh (see note on 7.21). **3.4** John's *clothing* recalls Elijah (see 2 Kings 1.8; Zech 13.4), who was expected to return before the "day of the LORD" (see 2 Kings 2.1, 11; Mal 4.5–6). **3.7–10** Cf. Lk 3.7–9. Matthew inserts apocalyptic warnings from Q into Mark, and adds Pharisaic and Sadducean opponents. **3.7** *Pharisees*, a Jew-

THE HERODS: A SIMPLIFIED FAMILY TREE



---- represents marriage

said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who
warned you to flee from the wrath to
come? 8 Bear fruit worthy of repentance.
9 Do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We
have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell
you, God is able from these stones to raise
up children to Abraham. 10 Even now the
ax is lying at the root of the trees; every
tree therefore that does not bear good
fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.
11 "I baptize you with[q] water for repentance, but one who is more powerful
than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize
you with[q] the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 His
winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will
clear his threshing floor and will gather
his wheat into the granary; but the chaff
he will burn with unquenchable fire."

The Baptism of Jesus

13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to
John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him.
14 John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do
you come to me?" 15 But Jesus answered
him, "Let it be so now; for it is proper for
us in this way to fulfill all righteousness."
Then he consented. 16 And when Jesus
had been baptized, just as he came up
from the water, suddenly the heavens
were opened to him and he saw the Spirit
of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. 17 And a voice from heaven
said, "This is my Son, the Beloved,[r] with
whom I am well pleased."

The Temptation of Jesus

4 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit
into the wilderness to be tempted by
the devil. 2 He fasted forty days and forty
nights, and afterwards he was famished.
3 The tempter came and said to him, "If
you are the Son of God, command these
stones to become loaves of bread." 4 But
he answered, "It is written,

'One does not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes
from the mouth of God.' "

5 Then the devil took him to the holy
city and placed him on the pinnacle of the
temple, 6 saying to him, "If you are the
Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is
written,

'He will command his angels
concerning you,'
and 'On their hands they will
bear you up,
so that you will not dash your
foot against a stone.' "

q Or *in* *r* Or *my beloved Son*

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ish group that rigorously applied the Jewish law to everyday living (see, e.g., 15.1–20). They are Jesus' major opponents in Matthew (see Introduction; see also 5.20; 16.6, 11; 23). *Sadducees*, a group of powerful, aristocratic priests usually hostile to the Pharisees. In Matthew they are linked with them as Jesus' opponents; see 16.1–12; 22.23, 34. *Vipers* are poisonous snakes; see 12.34; 23.33. **3.8** *Bear fruit*, i.e., by doing good works (see 3.10; 7.15–20; 12.33; 21.43). **3.9** Raising up *children to Abraham* from stones may allude to Gentiles (see note on 1.1). **3.10** *Thrown into the fire*, a metaphor for eternal punishment (see 3.12; 5.22; 7.15–20; see also Mal 4.1). **3.11–12** Cf. Mk 1.7–8; Lk 3.15–18; Jn 1.24–28. **3.11** *Repentance*. See 3.2, 6, 8. *One . . . coming after me*, a messianic allusion (see 11.3; 21.5, 9). *Carry*, i.e., like a slave (see 10.24). *Holy Spirit and fire*. See Acts 2.3; 19.1–7. **3.12** A *winnowing fork* was used to toss grain in the air so the wind would blow away the chaff. Matthew uses various images to contrast the fates of the good and the evil; see 7.24–27; 13.47–50; 25.31–46; see also note on 5.45. **3.13–17** Cf. Mk 1.9–11; Lk 3.21–22; Jn 1.29–34. The account of Jesus' baptism includes an explanation of the apparent anomaly of the superior submitting to the inferior (vv. 14–15). **3.15** *Righteousness*, right conduct in accord with God's will as revealed in scripture (see 1.19; 5.10, 17–20). **3.16** *The heavens*, the skydome covering the flat earth (Gen 1.6–8, 16–17). Above it sat God enthroned (see Mt 22.44; 23.22; Acts 7.49). *Opened*. See Acts 7.55–56; Rev 4.1. *Spirit of God*. See Gen 1.2 (text note *b*); Isa 61.1. **3.17** See Ps 2.7; Isa 42.1; see also Mt 17.5. The king was called "Son of God"; see, e.g., 2 Sam 7.14; Lk 1.32–33; Rom 1.3–4. This is a key messianic title in Matthew; see 2.15; 4.3, 6; 8.29; 11.27; 16.16; 26.63; 28.19.

4.1–11 Cf. Mk 1.12–13; Lk 4.1–13. Matthew expands Mark with three temptations from Q (see Introduction). Quotations from Deuteronomy suggest a Christian legend based on the wilderness testing of Israel. **4.1** *The devil*, i.e., Satan (see 4.10), also called *the tempter* (see 4.3; Job 1–2) and *the evil one* (see 6.13). **4.2** *Forty days and forty nights*, like Moses and Elijah (see Ex 24.18; 34.28; Deut 9.9; 1 Kings 19.8). Israel was tested forty years; see Deut 8.2. **4.3** *Loaves of bread* recall Israel's miraculous feeding; see Ex 16; cf. Mt 14.13–21; 15.32–39. **4.4** Jesus quotes Deut 8.3. **4.6** The devil quotes Ps 91.11–12.

7 Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'Do
not put the Lord your God to the test.' "
8 Again, the devil took him to a very
high mountain and showed him all the
kingdoms of the world and their splen-
dor; 9 and he said to him, "All these I will
give you, if you will fall down and worship
me." 10 Jesus said to him, "Away with you,
Satan! for it is written,
'Worship the Lord your God,
and serve only him.' "
11 Then the devil left him, and suddenly
angels came and waited on him.

Jesus Begins His Ministry in Galilee

12 Now when Jesus[s] heard that John
had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee.
13 He left Nazareth and made his home in
Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of
Zebulun and Naphtali, 14 so that what had
been spoken through the prophet Isaiah
might be fulfilled:
15 "Land of Zebulun, land of
Naphtali,
on the road by the sea, across
the Jordan, Galilee of the
Gentiles—
16 the people who sat in darkness
have seen a great light,
and for those who sat in the
region and shadow of
death
light has dawned."
17 From that time Jesus began to proclaim,
"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has
come near."[t]

Jesus Calls the First Disciples

18 As he walked by the Sea of Galilee,
he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called
Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a
net into the sea—for they were fisher-
men. 19 And he said to them, "Follow me,
and I will make you fish for people."
20 Immediately they left their nets and fol-
lowed him. 21 As he went from there, he
saw two other brothers, James son of Zeb-
edee and his brother John, in the boat
with their father Zebedee, mending their
nets, and he called them. 22 Immediately
they left the boat and their father, and
followed him.

Jesus Ministers to Crowds of People

23 Jesus[u] went throughout Galilee,
teaching in their synagogues and pro-
claiming the good news[v] of the kingdom
and curing every disease and every sick-
ness among the people. 24 So his fame
spread throughout all Syria, and they
brought to him all the sick, those who
were afflicted with various diseases and

s Gk *he* t Or *is at hand* u Gk *He*
v Gk *gospel*

4.7 The quotation is from Deut 6.16. Jesus, unlike Israel, does not test God. **4.8** This is the first of several references to a *mountain* (see 5.1; 8.1; 15.29; 17.1, 9; 24.3; 28.16), often in Matthew a sacred place of revelation recalling the Moses tradition (see Ex 19; Deut 34.1–4). **4.9** *Worship.* See note on 2.2. **4.10** Jesus quotes Deut 6.13. **4.11** Like Elijah (see 1 Kings 19.5–8), Jesus is fed by angels. **4.12–17** Cf. Mk 1.14–15; Lk 4.14–15. **4.12** *John has been arrested.* See 14.3–4. **4.13** *Capernaum,* a fishing, farming, and trading village on the Sea of Galilee (see 8.5–13; 11.23; 17.24). **4.14–16** The seventh formula quotation (see note on 1.22–23) cites Isa 9.1–2. *Galilee* is the main location of the Messiah's activity (but see Jn 1.46; 7.41–42, 52). *Of the Gentiles.* See notes on 1.2–6a; 3.9; 28.19. **4.17** *From that time.* The phrase signals a major shift in the narrative (see Introduction; Mt 16.21). *Repent.* See 3.2. *Kingdom* teaching dominates Matthew (see, e.g., chs. 5–7; 13; 18–20). *Heaven,* a spatial term (see note on 3.16) that avoids using the divine name (cf. Mk 1.15). *Has come near.* Though the kingdom is present in some way with the coming of Jesus (see 11.12; 12.28), it remains primarily future (see, e.g., 5.20; 6.10; 21.31). **4.18–22** Cf. Mk 1.16–20; Lk 5.1–11. **4.18** On the naming of *Peter,* see 16.17–19. *Fishermen* were from the lower social strata (but cf. Mk 1.20). **4.19** *Follow me.* See also 8.22; 9.9; 10.38; 16.24; 19.21. *Fish for people.* See 13.47–50; cf. Jer 16.16. **4.21** *James son of Zebedee* (see also 10.2; 17.1; 20.20; 26.37) was martyred by Herod Agrippa I; see Acts 12.1–3. *John* (see also 10.2; 17.1) became a Jerusalem church "pillar"; see Gal 2.9. **4.23–25** Cf. Mk 1.39. Matthew's first major summary of Jesus' acts (see also 8.16; 9.35; 14.35–36; 15.29–31; 19.1–2) introduces the teachings and miracles of chs. 5–9. **4.23** This verse is repeated at 9.35, providing a framework for chs. 5–9. *Their synagogues,* i.e., those of the Pharisees (see 9.35; 10.17; 12.9; 13.54; see also 7.29; 11.1). The *good news* of the advent of the kingdom (see 4.17) is made concrete through Jesus' merciful and compassionate healings. **4.24** *Syria.* See Introduction.

pains, demoniacs, epileptics, and paralytics, and he cured them. 25And great crowds followed him from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

The Beatitudes

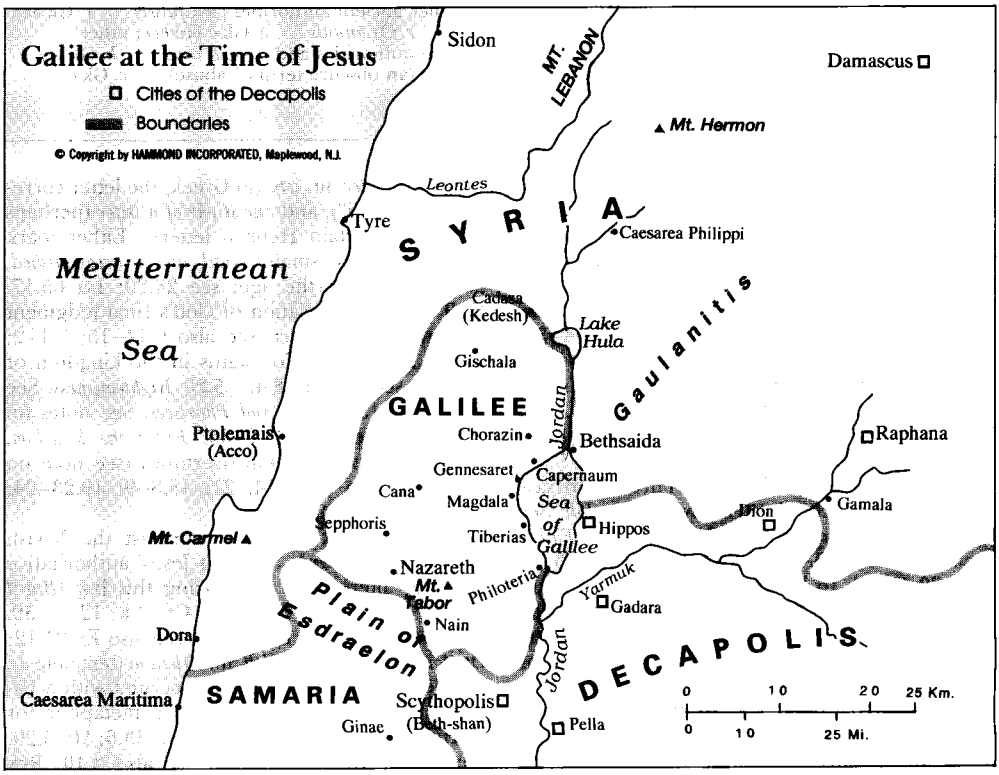
5 When Jesus[w] saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. 2Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
5 "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.
6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

w Gk *he*

4.25 *Crowds* appear often in Matthew and are neutral or sympathetic to Jesus (see, e.g., 7.28; 9.33; 12.23; 14.13; 21.45–46) until swayed by Jerusalem religious leaders (see 26.47; 27.20).

5.1–7.29 Cf. Lk 6.20–49. "The Sermon on the Mount," the first of Jesus' five great discourses (see Introduction). Jesus both reinterprets the old law and offers a new law, recalling the revelation to Moses on Mount Sinai (see Ex 19–24). **5.1–12** Cf. Mk 3.13; Lk 6.17, 20–23; Jn 6.3. Matthew's nine beatitudes (see also 11.6; 13.16; 16.17; 24.46) are eschatological and ethical. **5.1** *Crowds*. See note on 4.25. *Mountain*. See note on 4.8; cf. Lk 6.17. *He sat down*, teaching like a rabbi (see 23.2; 24.3), or, according to Jewish interpretations of Deut 9.9, like Moses. *Disciples*, lit. "learners," are defined in Matthew as those who follow Jesus (see esp. 4.18–22; 8.19–23; 9.9; see also 12.49–50). **5.3** *Blessed*, i.e., "happy" or "fortunate" (see Ps 1.1–2; Prov 8.32, 34). *Poor*, or "broken," *in spirit*. Cf. Lk 6.20; *Gospel of Thomas* 54; see also Isa 61.1. *Kingdom of heaven*. See note on 4.17. **5.4** *Mourn*. See Isa 61.2–3. **5.5** *Meek*, i.e., "humble" or "powerless"; see 11.29; 18.4; 21.5. *Earth*, or "land"; see Deut 4.1; 16.20. **5.6** *Righteousness*. Cf. Lk 6.21; *Gospel of Thomas* 69;



7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they
will receive mercy.
8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for
they will see God.
9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for
they will be called children of God.
10 "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is
the kingdom of heaven.
11 "Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all
kinds of evil against you falsely[x] on my
account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your
reward is great in heaven, for in the same
way they persecuted the prophets who
were before you.

Salt and Light

13 "You are the salt of the earth; but if
salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness
be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot.
14 "You are the light of the world. A
city built on a hill cannot be hid. 15 No one
after lighting a lamp puts it under the
bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and
it gives light to all in the house. 16 In the
same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works
and give glory to your Father in heaven.

Fulfilling the Law and the Prophets

17 "Do not think that I have come to
abolish the law or the prophets; I have
come not to abolish but to fulfill. 18 For
truly I tell you, until heaven and earth
pass away, not one letter,[y] not one stroke
of a letter, will pass from the law until all
is accomplished. 19 Therefore, whoever
breaks[z] one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the
same, will be called least in the kingdom
of heaven; but whoever does them and
teaches them will be called great in the
kingdom of heaven. 20 For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the
scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter
the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus' Teaching Alters the Law

21 "You have heard that it was said to
those of ancient times, 'You shall not murder'; and 'whoever murders shall be liable
to judgment.' 22 But I say to you that if
you are angry with a brother or sister,[a]
you will be liable to judgment; and if you
insult[b] a brother or sister,[c] you will be

x Other ancient authorities lack *falsely* *y* Gk *one iota* *z* Or *annuls* *a* Gk *a brother*; other ancient authorities add *without cause* *b* Gk *say Raca to* (an obscure term of abuse) *c* Gk *a brother*

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see note on 3.15. **5.7** *Merciful.* See 9.13; 12.7; 18.21–35. **5.8** The *heart* was considered the region of thought, intention, and moral disposition; see 9.4; 11.29; 12.34; Ps 24.3–4; Isa 61.1. **5.9** *Peacemakers.* See 5.38–48; cf. 10.34. *Children,* lit. "sons" (see 3.17). **5.10** *Persecuted for righteousness' sake.* See 5.11–12; 10.16–31; 23.34–35; 1 Pet 3.14; *Gospel of Thomas* 68; 69; see also note on 3.15. **5.11–12** The final beatitude has an unusual, long form (see Lk 6.22–23). *Reward . . . in heaven.* See, e.g., 5.19–20; 10.32–33. *Persecuted the prophets.* See 23.29–36. **5.13–16** Cf. Mk 9.50; 4.21; Lk 14.34–35; 8.16; 11.33. Three short sayings stress conduct. **5.14** *A city . . . on a hill.* See Isa 2.2–4; *Gospel of Thomas* 32. **5.16** *Your Father in heaven.* See 5.48; 6.1, 9; note on 3.16. **5.17–20** Cf. Lk 16.17. This prelude to the antitheses (see note on 5.21–48) attempts to avoid the impression that Jesus' teachings are against the Jewish law. **5.17** *The law or the prophets,* two of three Jewish divisions of scripture; see 7.12; 11.13; 22.40. *To fulfill,* i.e., to realize, complete. **5.18** *Truly I tell you,* a frequent introduction to Jesus' authoritative teaching; see also note on 5.21–48. *Letter,* lit. *iota* (in Greek, the letter corresponding to "i"), and *one stroke of a letter* (perhaps a serif on certain Hebrew letters). Either mark would be very small. *Until all is accomplished,* i.e., the end of the age; see 28.20; Isa 65.17. **5.19** On the correlation of God's final judgment with present conduct, see also 6.14–15; 7.1–2; 12.32. *Least, great.* For status in the kingdom of heaven, see 11.11; 18.4. **5.20** *Righteousness.* See note on 3.15. *Scribes and Pharisees.* See notes on 2.4; 3.7; see also 23.2–36. *Enter the kingdom,* a metaphor with spatial overtones (see note on 3.16; see also 7.13–14, 21; 18.8–9; 19.23–24; 23.13; 25.21, 23).

5.21–48 Six antitheses contrast the Jewish law (*You have heard . . .*) with Jesus' authoritative teaching altering or radicalizing this law (*But I say to you . . .*). **5.21–26** Cf. Lk 12.57–59. **5.21** See Ex 20.13; Deut 5.17; see also Ex 21.12; Deut 17.8–13. **5.22** *Hell,* lit. *Gehenna* (text note *d*), a valley south of Jerusalem associated with a pagan fire rite. Its name became a metaphor for eternal damnation (see 2 Chr 28.3; 33.6; Mt. 5.29, 30; 10.28; 18.9; 23.15, 33; see also 3.10; Rev

liable to the council; and if you say, 'You
fool,' you will be liable to the hell[d] of fire.
23 So when you are offering your gift at
the altar, if you remember that your
brother or sister[e] has something against
you, 24 leave your gift there before the
altar and go; first be reconciled to your
brother or sister,[e] and then come and of-
fer your gift. 25 Come to terms quickly
with your accuser while you are on the
way to court[f] with him, or your accuser
may hand you over to the judge, and the
judge to the guard, and you will be
thrown into prison. 26 Truly I tell you, you
will never get out until you have paid the
last penny.

27 "You have heard that it was said,
'You shall not commit adultery.' 28 But I
say to you that everyone who looks at a
woman with lust has already committed
adultery with her in his heart. 29 If your
right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and
throw it away; it is better for you to lose
one of your members than for your whole
body to be thrown into hell.[d] 30 And if
your right hand causes you to sin, cut it
off and throw it away; it is better for you
to lose one of your members than for
your whole body to go into hell.[d]

31 "It was also said, 'Whoever divorces
his wife, let him give her a certificate of
divorce.' 32 But I say to you that anyone
who divorces his wife, except on the
ground of unchastity, causes her to com-
mit adultery; and whoever marries a di-
vorced woman commits adultery.

33 "Again, you have heard that it was
said to those of ancient times, 'You shall
not swear falsely, but carry out the vows
you have made to the Lord.' 34 But I say to
you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven,
for it is the throne of God, 35 or by the
earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusa-
lem, for it is the city of the great King.
36 And do not swear by your head, for you
cannot make one hair white or black.
37 Let your word be 'Yes, Yes' or 'No, No';
anything more than this comes from the
evil one.[g]

38 "You have heard that it was said,
'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'
39 But I say to you, Do not resist an evil-
doer. But if anyone strikes you on the
right cheek, turn the other also; 40 and if
anyone wants to sue you and take your
coat, give your cloak as well; 41 and if any-
one forces you to go one mile, go also the
second mile. 42 Give to everyone who begs
from you, and do not refuse anyone who
wants to borrow from you.

43 "You have heard that it was said,
'You shall love your neighbor and hate
your enemy.' 44 But I say to you, Love
your enemies and pray for those who per-
secute you, 45 so that you may be children
of your Father in heaven; for he makes
his sun rise on the evil and on the good,
and sends rain on the righteous and on
the unrighteous. 46 For if you love those
who love you, what reward do you have?
Do not even the tax collectors do the

d Gk *Gehenna* *e* Gk *your brother* *f* Gk lacks *to court* *g* Or *evil*

20.14–15). **5.26** *Truly I tell you.* See note on 5.18. **5.27–30** Cf. Mk 9.43–47. **5.27** See Ex 20.14; Deut 5.18. **5.28** *Heart.* See note on 5.8; Job 31.1. **5.29–30** The same sayings are given a different application in 18.8–9. *Causes . . . to sin,* lit. "causes to stumble." See note on 13.21. *Tear it out, cut it off,* apparently hyperboles to dramatize the need to eliminate the causes of adultery. **5.31–32** Cf. Mk 10.11–12; Lk 16.18. **5.31** See Deut 24.1–4; see also Mt 1.19; 19.7. **5.32** *Except on the ground of unchastity* (cf. 1 Cor 7.10–11). This exception clause may reflect the interpretation attributed to the school of Shammai, a prominent Jewish scholar of the early first century C.E., of "something objectionable" (Deut 24.1) to mean (her) *unchastity* (i.e., adultery); see *Mishnah Gitin* 9:10. **5.33–37** Jesus' prohibition of oaths is absolute (cf. 23.16–22). **5.33** See Ex 20.7; Lev 19.12; Num 30.2; Deut 23.21. **5.35** A *great King* reigns over a large territory; here it refers to God (see Ps 48.2). **5.37** *"Yes, Yes" or "No, No."* See Jas 5.12. **5.38–42** Cf. Lk 6.29–30. **5.38** See Ex 21.24; Lev 24.20; Deut 19.21; see also Mt 7.2. The saying permitted proportional retaliation but was a legal deterrent to excessive retaliation. **5.39** See also Lam 3.30; 1 Pet 3.9. **5.40** *Coat* (Greek *chiton*), the tunic worn next to the skin. *Cloak,* the outer garment or robe. **5.42** See also *Gospel of Thomas* 95; cf. Prov 22.7. **5.43–48** Cf. Lk 6.27–28, 32–33, 36. **5.43** *Love your neighbor.* See Lev 19.18; see also Mt 22.39; Rom 13.9; Gal 5.14; Jas 2.8. *Hate your enemy,* not scriptural, but see Ps 139.19–22; Dead Sea Scrolls *Rule of the Community* (1QS) 9.21–22. **5.44** Advice to *love your enemies* was not unknown in antiquity (e.g., Prov 25.21–22). **5.45** Matthew usually contrasts the fate of the good and the evil; see 7.11, 16–20; 12.33–35; 20.15; 22.10; 25.21–26; see also note on 3.12. **5.46** *Reward.* See 5.12, 19; 6.1–18. *Tax collectors* were hated by Roman colonial subjects;

same? 47 And if you greet only your brothers and sisters,[h] what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? 48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

The Piety That God Rewards

6 "Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

2 "So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. 3 But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.[i]

5 "And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. 6 But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.[i]

7 "When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

9 "Pray then in this way:
Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
10 Your kingdom come.
Your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
11 Give us this day our daily
bread.[j]
12 And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven
our debtors.
13 And do not bring us to the
time of trial,[k]
but rescue us from the
evil one.[l]

14 For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; 15 but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

h Gk *your brothers* *i* Other ancient authorities add *openly* *j* Or *our bread for tomorrow* *k* Or *us into temptation* *l* Or *from evil.* Other ancient authorities add, in some form, *For the kingdom and the power and the glory are yours forever. Amen.*

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see 9.9; 11.19; 21.31. **5.47** *Greet.* Cf. 10.12–14. The Gospel's usual positive attitude toward the *Gentiles* (see, e.g., note on 3.9) is missing here; see also 6.7; 18.17. **5.48** *Perfect,* i.e., whole, complete, mature; see Lev 19.2; cf. 1 Cor 14.20; Heb 5.14. Perfection also involves voluntary poverty and following Jesus (see 19.21). *Heavenly father.* See note on 6.9.

6.1–18 A contrast between the piety of the hypocrites and the piety rewarded by the Father in heaven. **6.1** *Practicing . . . piety,* lit. "doing righteousness"; see note on 3.15; see also 23.5. **6.2** *Alms,* or charitable gifts, were given on the sabbath in synagogues. *Hypocrites,* a frequent charge in Matthew leveled mostly against the Pharisees; see also 6.5, 16; 7.5; 22.18; 23.13–21. *Truly I tell you.* See note on 5.18. **6.4** *Your Father who sees in secret.* See 6.6, 18; 10.26; Rom 2.16; 1 Cor 4.5. **6.5** Adult Jewish males were expected to *pray* morning and evening, in the direction of Jerusalem thrice daily, and before and after meals, bowing down or, as here, standing (see Mk 11.25). For examples of prayer in this Gospel, see 7.7–11; 9.37–38; 15.21–28; 17.14–20; 18.18–20; 21.18–22; 26.36–46; 27.46. *Truly I tell you.* See note on 5.18. **6.7** For other critiques of long-winded prayers, see Eccl 5.2; Isa 1.15. **6.8** *Your Father knows what you need.* See 6.32. **6.9b–13** Cf. Mk 11.25; Lk 11.2–4. Matthew inserts a model prayer, revised from Q, perhaps in the light of familiar liturgy. The prayer contains an address (v. 9b), three "God-petitions" (vv. 9c–10), and four "human-petitions" (vv. 11–13). **6.9** The term *Father* (Aramaic *'Abba*) suggests familial intimacy but also respect and obedience when used by sons and daughters. *Hallowed,* i.e., honored as holy. **6.10** *Your kingdom come.* Cf. 4.17. *Your will be done,* probably added by Matthew; cf. Lk 11.2; see Mt 7.21; 12.50; 18.14; 21.31; 26.42. **6.11** *Daily* translates a rare Greek word that probably means bread in the morning for the rest of the day or for tomorrow (see text note *j*); see 6.34; 10.10. **6.12** *Debts,* lit. "what is owed"; cf. Lk 11.4. *As we . . . have forgiven.* See 6.14–15; 18.23–35. **6.13** *The time of trial,* i.e., a time of persecution; see 13.21; 26.39. *Rescue us from the evil one,* probably added by Matthew. See note on 4.1. For a final doxology found in less reliable manuscripts, see text note *l*; see also 24.30. **6.14** *Trespasses* translates a different Greek word than *debts* (v. 12), one that speaks more directly of ethical

16 "And whenever you fast, do not
look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they
disfigure their faces so as to show others
that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they
have received their reward. 17 But when
you fast, put oil on your head and wash
your face, 18 so that your fasting may be
seen not by others but by your Father who
is in secret; and your Father who sees in
secret will reward you.[m]

Orientation to God

19 "Do not store up for yourselves
treasures on earth, where moth and rust[n]
consume and where thieves break in and
steal; 20 but store up for yourselves trea-
sures in heaven, where neither moth nor
rust[n] consumes and where thieves do not
break in and steal. 21 For where your trea-
sure is, there your heart will be also.

22 "The eye is the lamp of the body.
So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body
will be full of light; 23 but if your eye is
unhealthy, your whole body will be full of
darkness. If then the light in you is dark-
ness, how great is the darkness!

24 "No one can serve two masters; for
a slave will either hate the one and love
the other, or be devoted to the one and
despise the other. You cannot serve God
and wealth.[o]

25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry
about your life, what you will eat or what
you will drink,[p] or about your body, what
you will wear. Is not life more than food,
and the body more than clothing? 26 Look
at the birds of the air; they neither sow
nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet
your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you
not of more value than they? 27 And can
any of you by worrying add a single hour
to your span of life?[q] 28 And why do you
worry about clothing? Consider the lilies
of the field, how they grow; they neither
toil nor spin, 29 yet I tell you, even Solo-
mon in all his glory was not clothed like
one of these. 30 But if God so clothes the
grass of the field, which is alive today and
tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he
not much more clothe you—you of little
faith? 31 Therefore do not worry, saying,
'What will we eat?' or 'What will we
drink?' or 'What will we wear?' 32 For it is
the Gentiles who strive for all these
things; and indeed your heavenly Father
knows that you need all these things.
33 But strive first for the kingdom of
God[r] and his[s] righteousness, and all
these things will be given to you as well.

34 "So do not worry about tomorrow,
for tomorrow will bring worries of its
own. Today's trouble is enough for today.

Instructions on Conduct and Prayer

7 "Do not judge, so that you may not
be judged. 2 For with the judgment
you make you will be judged, and the
measure you give will be the measure you
get. 3 Why do you see the speck in your
neighbor's[t] eye, but do not notice the log

m Other ancient authorities add *openly* *n* Gk *eating* *o* Gk *mammon* *p* Other ancient authorities lack *or what you will drink* *q* Or *add one cubit to your height* *r* Other ancient authorities lack *of God* *s* Or *its* *t* Gk *brother's*

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transgressions. **6.16** The Day of Atonement was the only *fast* prescribed by Jewish law (Lev 16.29–30), but cf. Neh 1.4; Dan 9.3; Zech 8.19; Mt 4.2; see also *Didache* 8.1. *Look dismal,* i.e., with bowed head, sackcloth, and ashes; see 11.21; Isa 58.5. *Hypocrites.* See note on 6.2. *Truly I tell you.* See note on 5.18. **6.19–34** Sayings modified from Q (see Introduction) contrast orientation to God and orientation to worldly wealth; see also 13.22; 21.12–13; 23.25; 27.3–10; 28.11, 15. **6.19–21** Cf. Lk 12.33–34. **6.20** *Treasures in heaven.* See Mk 10.21; 1 Tim 6.17–19; Jas 5.1–3. **6.21** *Heart.* See note on 5.8. **6.22–23** Cf. Lk 11.34–36. **6.23** *Unhealthy,* lit. "evil." The "evil eye" was a metaphor for stinginess or jealousy; see 20.15. **6.24** Cf. Lk 16.13. The retention of the Aramaic word *mammon* in the text (see text note *o*) contributes to the personification of *wealth* as an evil master. **6.25–34** Cf. Lk 12.22–32; 10.41; 12.11. **6.26** *Heavenly Father.* See note on 6.9. **6.29** For the glory or splendor of the reign of *Solomon,* see 1 Kings 10. **6.30** *Much more,* a common form of argument from the lesser or more obvious point to the greater or more difficult point; see 7.11; 10.25; 12.12. *You of little faith,* Matthew's stereotyped expression (known also in Jewish literature) for the disciples (see 8.26; 14.31; 16.8; 17.20). **6.33** *Kingdom of God.* See note on 4.17. *Righteousness.* See note on 3.15.

7.1–12 Sayings (mainly from Q; see Introduction) about human conduct, based on family, household, neighborhood, and village images. **7.1–2** Cf. Mk 4.24; Lk 6.37–38. **7.1** *Do not judge,* a prohibition of hypocritical judging; see Rom 2.1; Jas 4.11–12. *Be judged,* i.e., by God; see also 5.19; 6.14–15. **7.3–5** Cf. Lk 6.41–42. A parable in the form of rhetorical questions

in your own eye? 4 Or how can you say to
your neighbor,[u] 'Let me take the speck
out of your eye,' while the log is in your
own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the
log out of your own eye, and then you will
see clearly to take the speck out of your
neighbor's[v] eye.
6 "Do not give what is holy to dogs;
and do not throw your pearls before
swine, or they will trample them under
foot and turn and maul you.
7 "Ask, and it will be given you;
search, and you will find; knock, and the
door will be opened for you. 8 For every-
one who asks receives, and everyone who
searches finds, and for everyone who
knocks, the door will be opened. 9 Is there
anyone among you who, if your child asks
for bread, will give a stone? 10 Or if the
child asks for a fish, will give a snake? 11 If
you then, who are evil, know how to give
good gifts to your children, how much
more will your Father in heaven give
good things to those who ask him!
12 "In everything do to others as you
would have them do to you; for this is the
law and the prophets.

A Series of Warnings

13 "Enter through the narrow gate;
for the gate is wide and the road is easy[w]
that leads to destruction, and there are
many who take it. 14 For the gate is nar-
row and the road is hard that leads to life,
and there are few who find it.
15 "Beware of false prophets, who
come to you in sheep's clothing but in-
wardly are ravenous wolves. 16 You will
know them by their fruits. Are grapes
gathered from thorns, or figs from this-
tles? 17 In the same way, every good tree
bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears
bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad
fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.
19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit
is cut down and thrown into the fire.
20 Thus you will know them by their
fruits.
21 "Not everyone who says to me,
'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of
heaven, but only the one who does the will
of my Father in heaven. 22 On that day
many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we
not prophesy in your name, and cast out
demons in your name, and do many
deeds of power in your name?' 23 Then I
will declare to them, 'I never knew you;
go away from me, you evildoers.'
24 "Everyone then who hears these
words of mine and acts on them will be
like a wise man who built his house on
rock. 25 The rain fell, the floods came, and
the winds blew and beat on that house,
but it did not fall, because it had been
founded on rock. 26 And everyone who
hears these words of mine and does not
act on them will be like a foolish man who

u Gk *brother* *v* Gk *brother's* *w* Other ancient authorities read *for the road is wide and easy*

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illustrates vv. 1–2 (see also *Gospel of Thomas* 26). **7.5** The *hypocrite* here is a "brother" (see text note *v*), not a Pharisee (see note on 6.2). **7.6** See *Gospel of Thomas* 93. *Dogs*, an extremely uncomplimentary term; see 15.26–27; Deut 23.18; Phil 3.2; Rev 22.15. *Swine* are considered unclean by Jews; see 8.31; Lev 11.7–8; Isa 65.4; 2 Pet 2.22. **7.7–11** Cf. Lk 11.9–13. **7.7** *Ask*. See also 18.19; *Gospel of Thomas* 2; 94. **7.11** *How much more*. See note on 6.30. *Father in heaven*. See note on 6.9. **7.12** The "Golden Rule" was known in many versions in antiquity; see, e.g., Tob 4.15; Sir 31.15; *Didache* 1.2. *The law and the prophets*. See note on 5.17. **7.13–29** A series of warnings concludes the sermon. **7.13–14** *Road*, or "way." Cf. Lk 13.23–24. Instruction on the "Two Ways" was widespread in antiquity (see Prov 28.18; Wis 5.6–7; *Didache* 1–6; *Letter of Barnabas* 18–20). *Many, few*. See also 22.14. To enter *life* (18.8–9) parallels entering the kingdom (see 5.20; 7.21; 23.13). **7.15–20** Cf. Lk 6.43–44. **7.15** A warning against *false prophets* indicates the occasional presence of wandering prophets in Matthew's community (see also 7.22; 10.5–15; 23.34; *Didache* 11; 16.3). **7.17** *Good fruit, bad fruit*. See notes on 3.8, 12; 5.45; see also Jas 3.12; *Gospel of Thomas* 45. **7.19** *Thrown into the fire*. See notes on 3.10; 5.22. **7.21–23** Cf. Lk 6.46; 13.25–27. **7.21** *Lord*, a respectful address by an inferior to a superior (see 10.24) roughly equivalent to "Sir." It is used of God in scripture and, linked with terms of worship (see 14.30–33; Jn 9.38), it hints at Jesus' divinity. On doing the *will* of God, see note on 6.10. **7.22** See note on 7.15. The acts performed are otherwise acceptable (see 10.5–15); the issue is obedience to God's will. *That day*, i.e., the day of judgment; see 24.36, 42, 44; 25.31–46; see also Zech 14. *In your name*, i.e., by Jesus' authority. Jesus' name was also invoked as a source of power; see Acts 4.7; 19.13–17; Jas 5.14. **7.23** *I never knew you*. See 25.11–12. *Evildoers*, lit. "workers of lawlessness" (see 13.41; 23.28; 24.12; see also 5.17–20). **7.24–27** Cf. Lk 6.47–49. **7.24** On hearing and acting or doing,

built his house on sand. 27 The rain fell,
and the floods came, and the winds blew
and beat against that house, and it fell—and
great was its fall!"
28 Now when Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were astounded at his teaching, 29 for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

Jesus Cleanses a Leper

8 When Jesus[x] had come down from the mountain, great crowds followed him; 2 and there was a leper[y] who came to him and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, if you choose, you can make me clean." 3 He stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I do choose. Be made clean!" Immediately his leprosy[y] was cleansed. 4 Then Jesus said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

Jesus Heals a Centurion's Servant

5 When he entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, appealing to him 6 and saying, "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, in terrible distress." 7 And he said to him, "I will come and cure him." 8 The centurion answered, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but only speak the word, and my servant will be healed. 9 For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this,' and the slave does it." 10 When Jesus heard him, he was amazed and said to those who followed him, "Truly I tell you, in no one[z] in Israel have I found such faith. 11 I tell you, many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, 12 while the heirs of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." 13 And to the centurion Jesus said, "Go; let it be done for you according to your faith." And the servant was healed in that hour.

Jesus Heals Many at Peter's House

14 When Jesus entered Peter's house, he saw his mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever; 15 he touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she got up and began to serve him. 16 That evening they

x Gk *he* y The terms *leper* and *leprosy* can refer to several diseases z Other ancient authorities read *Truly I tell you, not even*

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see Rom 2.13; Jas 1.22–25. **7.27** *Great was its fall.* See Prov 14.11. **7.28** *When Jesus had finished.* Each of the five great discourses in Matthew is marked by a similar closing formula reminiscent of Moses' words in Deut 31.1; 32.45. See Mt 11.1; 13.53; 19.1; 26.1; see also Introduction; note on 5.1–7.29. *Crowds.* See note on 4.25. **7.29** *Authority.* See 28.18. *Not as their scribes.* See 5.20; note on 2.4.

8.1–9.34 From Mark and Q (see Introduction), Matthew assembles ten miracles, suggesting the miracles of Moses in Egypt (Ex 7.8–11.10). **8.1–17** The first three healings conclude with a "formula quotation" (see note on 1.22–23). **8.1–4** Cf. Mk 1.40–44; Lk 5.12–14. **8.1** *Great crowds.* See note on 4.25. **8.2** A *leper* (see text note *y*) was considered ritually unclean and was excluded from the community; see Lev 13–14; 2 Kings 5.1–14. *Lord.* See note on 7.21. **8.3** *Touched . . . "Be made clean!"* Matthew avoids words or actions that would leave the impression that Jesus was a magician, as later Jewish tradition charged; see 8.16; 9.34. **8.4** *Say nothing,* a frequent command in Mark (see note on Mk 1.34), less frequent in Matthew (but see 9.30). *Gift that Moses commanded.* See Lev 14.4, 10. Moses was believed to be the author of the Pentateuch. **8.5–13** Cf. Lk 7.1–10; 13.28–29; Jn 4.46–54. **8.5** *Capernaum.* See note on 4.13. A *centurion* commanded 100 Roman foot soldiers (see 8.9). **8.6** *Lord.* See note on 7.21. **8.10** *Truly I tell you.* See note on 5.18. For another instance of a Gentile's *faith,* see 15.28. **8.11** *Many . . . from east and west* includes Gentiles; see 2.1; note on 3.9; also Isa 2.2–4; 25.6; Mic 4.1–4; Zech 8.20–23. They *will eat* a future heavenly "messianic banquet"; see, e.g., Mt 11.19; 22.1–14; 26.29; Ps 107.1–9; Isa 25.6–8; 62.1–9; Rev 19.9. *Kingdom of heaven.* See note on 4.17. **8.12** *Heirs,* i.e., Jews, or more specifically Pharisees; see 23.29–36. *Weeping and gnashing of teeth,* Matthew's favorite expression to evoke the horror of the final punishment; see 13.42, 50; 22.13; 24.51; 25.30; Ps 112.10. **8.14–15** Cf. Mk 1.29–31; Lk 4.38–41. **8.14** *Mother-in-law.* Paul also indicates that Peter ("Cephas") was married; see 1 Cor 9.5. **8.15** *Touched.* See note on 8.3. **8.16–17** Cf. Mk 1.32–34; Lk 4.40–41. **8.16** Another summary statement; see note on 4.23–25. *With a word,* i.e., without magical manipulation; see note on 8.3. *Cured all.* See 4.23;

brought to him many who were possessed
with demons; and he cast out the spirits
with a word, and cured all who were sick.
17 This was to fulfill what had been spo-
ken through the prophet Isaiah, "He took
our infirmities and bore our diseases."

Would-Be Followers of Jesus

18 Now when Jesus saw great crowds
around him, he gave orders to go over
to the other side. 19 A scribe then ap-
proached and said, "Teacher, I will follow
you wherever you go." 20 And Jesus said
to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of
the air have nests; but the Son of Man has
nowhere to lay his head." 21 Another of
his disciples said to him, "Lord, first let
me go and bury my father." 22 But Jesus
said to him, "Follow me, and let the dead
bury their own dead."

Jesus Stills the Storm

23 And when he got into the boat, his
disciples followed him. 24 A windstorm
arose on the sea, so great that the boat was
being swamped by the waves; but he was
asleep. 25 And they went and woke him
up, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perish-
ing!" 26 And he said to them, "Why are
you afraid, you of little faith?" Then he
got up and rebuked the winds and the
sea; and there was a dead calm. 27 They
were amazed, saying, "What sort of man is
this, that even the winds and the sea
obey him?"

Jesus Heals the Gadarene Demoniacs

28 When he came to the other side, to
the country of the Gadarenes,[a] two de-
moniacs coming out of the tombs met
him. They were so fierce that no one
could pass that way. 29 Suddenly they
shouted, "What have you to do with us,
Son of God? Have you come here to tor-
ment us before the time?" 30 Now a large
herd of swine was feeding at some dis-
tance from them. 31 The demons begged
him, "If you cast us out, send us into the
herd of swine." 32 And he said to them,
"Go!" So they came out and entered the
swine; and suddenly, the whole herd
rushed down the steep bank into the sea
and perished in the water. 33 The swine-
herds ran off, and on going into the town,
they told the whole story about what had
happened to the demoniacs. 34 Then the
whole town came out to meet Jesus; and
when they saw him, they begged him to
9 leave their neighborhood. 1 And af-
ter getting into a boat he crossed the
sea and came to his own town.

a Other ancient authorities read *Gergesenes*; others, *Gerasenes*

9.35; 10.1; 12.15; 15.29–31. **8.17** The eighth formula quotation (see note on 1.22–23) introduces Isa 53.4.

8.18–9.8 The second group of three miracles. **8.18–22** Cf. Mk 4.35; Lk 9.57–60. **8.19** Elsewhere in Matthew, *scribes* rank among Jesus' opponents (see note on 2.4; cf. 13.52). Jesus is usually addressed hypocritically or mockingly as *teacher* by his opponents (see 9.11; 12.38; 17.24; 22.15–18, 24, 36; cf. 23.8). **8.20** See *Gospel of Thomas* 86. Jesus frequently refers to himself as *Son of Man* in one of three different senses: as the final judge, usually reflecting Dan 7.13–14 (see, e.g., Mt 24.30–31); as the one who must suffer, usually from prophecies about his death in Mark (see 16.21); or, as here, with reference to his present circumstances, from an Aramaic idiom for speaking about oneself as human, perhaps with humility, modesty, or allusion to danger or death (see text note *f* to Ezek 2.1). **8.21** *Lord.* See note on 7.21. **8.22** *Follow me.* See note on 4.19. *Let the dead bury their own dead.* Jesus' words challenge the traditional and honorable duty to bury one's parents (see, e.g., Tob 4.3–4). **8.23–27** Cf. Mk 4.35–41; Lk 8.22–25. Matthew's handling of this miracle shows that he interprets the miracle as an allegory for following Jesus. **8.23** *His disciples followed.* See note on 5.1. **8.24** A *windstorm* often represented the evil waters of chaos (see Gen 1.1; Jon 1.4–16). **8.25** *Lord.* See note on 7.21. *Save us.* See note on 1.21. **8.26** *You of little faith.* See note on 6.30; cf. 8.10, 13. Here, as elsewhere, Matthew softens Mark's criticism of the disciples (Mk 4.40); see also Mt 13.10–11; 28.16–20. *Rebuked.* The same word is used to exorcise demons (see, e.g., 17.18). On stilling *the sea,* see Job 26.11–12; Ps 89.8–9; Isa 51.9–10. **8.28–9.1** Cf. Mk 5.1–17; Lk 8.26–37. **8.28** *Gadarenes.* Gadara lay six miles southeast of the Sea of Galilee. *Tombs* were thought to be demon habitations. **8.29** *Son of God.* See note on 3.17. Here Jesus is recognized by a supernatural power; cf. 16.16. To name someone was thought to provide power over that person; thus the demoniacs seek here to gain power over the exorcist. **8.30** *Swine.* See note on 7.6. **8.32** *Water.* Demons usually were associated with arid regions; see 4.1. **9.1** *His own town,* i.e., Ca-

Jesus Heals a Paralytic

2 And just then some people were carrying a paralyzed man lying on a bed.
When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the
paralytic, "Take heart, son; your sins are
forgiven." 3 Then some of the scribes said
to themselves, "This man is blaspheming."
4 But Jesus, perceiving their thoughts,
said, "Why do you think evil in your
hearts? 5 For which is easier, to say, 'Your
sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Stand up and
walk'? 6 But so that you may know that the
Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he then said to the paralytic—
"Stand up, take your bed and go to your
home." 7 And he stood up and went to his
home. 8 When the crowds saw it, they
were filled with awe, and they glorified
God, who had given such authority to human beings.

The Call of Matthew

9 As Jesus was walking along, he saw a
man called Matthew sitting at the tax
booth; and he said to him, "Follow me."
And he got up and followed him.

Tax Collectors and Sinners

10 And as he sat at dinner[b] in the
house, many tax collectors and sinners
came and were sitting[c] with him and his
disciples. 11 When the Pharisees saw this,
they said to his disciples, "Why does your
teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" 12 But when he heard this, he said,
"Those who are well have no need of a
physician, but those who are sick. 13 Go
and learn what this means, 'I desire
mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have come to
call not the righteous but sinners."

The Question About Fasting

14 Then the disciples of John came to
him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast often,[d] but your disciples do not
fast?" 15 And Jesus said to them, "The
wedding guests cannot mourn as long as
the bridegroom is with them, can they?
The days will come when the bridegroom
is taken away from them, and then they
will fast. 16 No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak, for the
patch pulls away from the cloak, and a
worse tear is made. 17 Neither is new wine
put into old wineskins; otherwise, the
skins burst, and the wine is spilled, and
the skins are destroyed; but new wine is
put into fresh wineskins, and so both are
preserved."

A Girl Restored to Life and a Woman Healed

18 While he was saying these things to
them, suddenly a leader of the synagogue[e] came in and knelt before him,
saying, "My daughter has just died; but
come and lay your hand on her, and she
will live." 19 And Jesus got up and followed him, with his disciples. 20 Then

b Gk *reclined* *c* Gk *were reclining* *d* Other ancient authorities lack *often* *e* Gk lacks *of the synagogue*

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pernaum; see 4.13. **9.2–8** Cf. Mk 2.1–12; Lk 5.17–26. **9.2** *Their faith* precedes the miracle; see 8.10–13; 9.22, 28. **9.3** *Scribes.* See note on 2.4. *Blaspheming* usually involved dishonoring God's name (see Ex 20.7; Lev 24.16); here Jesus' implied claim to be able to forgive sins evokes the charge (see Mk 2.7; see also Mt 26.65). **9.4** *Hearts.* See note on 5.8. **9.6** *Son of Man.* See note on 8.20. *Authority . . . to forgive sins.* See 1.21; 28.18. **9.8** *Crowds.* See note on 4.25; see also 7.28–29. **9.9** *Matthew.* See 10.3; cf. Mk 2.14; Lk 5.27. *Follow me.* See note on 4.19. **9.10–13** Cf. Mk 2.15–17; Lk 5.29–32. **9.10** *Tax collectors and sinners,* i.e., social and moral outcasts; see note on 5.46; see also 11.19; 18.17; 21.31–32. **9.11** *Your teacher.* See note on 8.19. **9.12** Similar sayings are found in Greek literature. **9.13** *I desire mercy, not sacrifice* (repeated in 12.7). See Hos 6.6 (Septuagint). *The righteous.* See note on 1.19. **9.14–17** Cf. Mk 2.18–22; Lk 5.33–39. **9.14–15** See *Gospel of Thomas* 104. **9.14** *Disciples of John* (the Baptist). See 11.2; Acts 18.25. *Your disciples do not fast.* See 11.19. **9.15** *Wedding guests,* lit. "the sons of the bridegroom," his attendants who joyfully celebrate with him. Jesus is often described as a *bridegroom*; see notes on 25.1; 25.5; 25.10; 25.11; 25.12; 25.13; see also Jn 3.29; 2 Cor 11.2; Rev 19.7. *Then they will fast.* These words provide a rationale for Christian fasting after Jesus' death; see also 6.16–18; *Didache* 7.4–8.1. **9.16–17** Two sayings interpret v. 15 and stress that the old cannot contain the new; see also 13.52; *Gospel of Thomas* 47.

9.18–34 Four healings conclude the section begun in 8.1. **9.18–26** Cf. Mk 5.21–43; Lk 8.40–56). **9.18** *Leader of the synagogue,* probably a civil administrator (the text does not mention the synagogue; see text note *e*). **9.20** *Hemor-*

suddenly a woman who had been suffering
from hemorrhages for twelve years came
up behind him and touched the fringe of
his cloak, 21 for she said to herself, "If I
only touch his cloak, I will be made well."
22 Jesus turned, and seeing her he said,
"Take heart, daughter; your faith has
made you well." And instantly the woman
was made well. 23 When Jesus came to the
leader's house and saw the flute players
and the crowd making a commotion, 24 he
said, "Go away; for the girl is not dead but
sleeping." And they laughed at him.
25 But when the crowd had been put out-
side, he went in and took her by the hand,
and the girl got up. 26 And the report of
this spread throughout that district.

Jesus Heals Two Blind Men

27 As Jesus went on from there, two
blind men followed him, crying loudly,
"Have mercy on us, Son of David!"
28 When he entered the house, the blind
men came to him; and Jesus said to them,
"Do you believe that I am able to do this?"
They said to him, "Yes, Lord." 29 Then he
touched their eyes and said, "According
to your faith let it be done to you." 30 And
their eyes were opened. Then Jesus
sternly ordered them, "See that no one
knows of this." 31 But they went away and
spread the news about him throughout
that district.

Jesus Heals One Who Was Mute

32 After they had gone away, a demo-
niac who was mute was brought to him.
33 And when the demon had been cast
out, the one who had been mute spoke;
and the crowds were amazed and said,
"Never has anything like this been seen in
Israel." 34 But the Pharisees said, "By the
ruler of the demons he casts out the
demons."[f]

The Harvest Is Great, the Laborers Few

35 Then Jesus went about all the cities
and villages, teaching in their synagogues,
and proclaiming the good news of the
kingdom, and curing every disease and
every sickness. 36 When he saw the
crowds, he had compassion for them, be-
cause they were harassed and helpless,
like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he
said to his disciples, "The harvest is plenti-
ful, but the laborers are few; 38 therefore
ask the Lord of the harvest to send out
laborers into his harvest."

The Twelve Apostles

10 Then Jesus[g] summoned his
twelve disciples and gave them
authority over unclean spirits, to cast
them out, and to cure every disease and

f Other ancient authorities lack this verse
g Gk *he*

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rhages, i.e., a continuous menstrual flow. According to Jewish law the woman is unclean and should not be touched (see Lev 15.19–30). *Fringe*, the tassels of his outer garment, a required part of the dress of Jewish men; see Num 15.37–41; Mt 23.5. **9.21** *If I only touch his cloak.* Healing power resided even in the healer's clothing; see 14.36; Acts 5.15; 19.12. **9.22** *Faith.* See note on 8.10. **9.23** *Flute players* accompanied professional mourners (see 11.17). **9.25** See note on 8.3. **9.27–31** Cf. 20.29–34; Mk 10.46–52; Lk 18.35–43. **9.27** *Have mercy on us, Son of David!* This request and title are often present in Matthew's healing miracles; see 12.23; 15.22; 17.15; 20.30–31; see also 9.13; 12.7. **9.28** *Lord.* See note on 7.21. **9.29** *Faith.* See note on 8.10. **9.30** *See that no one knows.* See note on 8.4. **9.32–34** Cf. Mk 3.22; Lk 11.14–15. **9.32** *Mute.* Demons were thought to attack specific parts of the body; see also 12.22–24. **9.33** *Crowds.* See note on 4.25; see also 7.28; 9.8. **9.34** *Pharisees.* See note on 3.7. *Ruler of the demons*, i.e., Satan, also called Beelzebul (see 10.25; 12.24). **9.35–38** Cf. Mk 6.6b, 34; Lk 8.1; 10.2; Jn 4.35. See *Gospel of Thomas* 73. **9.35** See note on 4.23–25. **9.36** *Compassion.* See 14.14; 15.32; 18.27; 20.34. *Sheep without a shepherd.* See 10.6; 15.24; 18.10–14; 26.31; Num 27.16–17; Isa 40.11; Ezek 34.1–6; Dead Sea Scrolls *Damascus Document* (CD) 13.9. **9.37** *Harvest*, a common image for the judgment at the end of the age (see 3.12; 13.30, 39; Rev 14.14–20; also 2 Esd 4.39; *2 Baruch* 70.2). The reference to *laborers* anticipates the mission charge to the disciples (10.5–42).

10.1–11.1 The "Missionary Discourse." In this second discourse (see Introduction), the Twelve are given authority to follow Jesus' way, that of the wandering beggar, preacher, healer. **10.1–4** Cf. Mk 6.7; 3.16–19; Lk 9.1; 6.13–16; see also Acts 1.13. **10.1** The number *twelve* symbolizes a new Israel; see 19.28; Gen 35.22–26; 49.1–28; Josh 4.2–9. *Authority*, i.e., to do the

every sickness. 2 These are the names of
the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also
known as Peter, and his brother Andrew;
James son of Zebedee, and his brother
John; 3 Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas
and Matthew the tax collector; James son
of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus;[h] 4 Simon
the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the
one who betrayed him.

The Mission of the Twelve

5 These twelve Jesus sent out with the
following instructions: "Go nowhere
among the Gentiles, and enter no town of
the Samaritans, 6 but go rather to the lost
sheep of the house of Israel. 7 As you go,
proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of
heaven has come near.'[i] 8 Cure the sick,
raise the dead, cleanse the lepers,[j] cast
out demons. You received without pay-
ment; give without payment. 9 Take no
gold, or silver, or copper in your belts,
10 no bag for your journey, or two tunics,
or sandals, or a staff; for laborers deserve
their food. 11 Whatever town or village
you enter, find out who in it is worthy,
and stay there until you leave. 12 As you
enter the house, greet it. 13 If the house is
worthy, let your peace come upon it; but
if it is not worthy, let your peace return to
you. 14 If anyone will not welcome you or
listen to your words, shake off the dust
from your feet as you leave that house or
town. 15 Truly I tell you, it will be more
tolerable for the land of Sodom and Go-
morrah on the day of judgment than for
that town.

Coming Persecutions

16 "See, I am sending you out like
sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise
as serpents and innocent as doves. 17 Be-
ware of them, for they will hand you over
to councils and flog you in their syna-
gogues; 18 and you will be dragged before
governors and kings because of me, as a
testimony to them and the Gentiles.
19 When they hand you over, do not worry
about how you are to speak or what you
are to say; for what you are to say will be
given to you at that time; 20 for it is not
you who speak, but the Spirit of your

h Other ancient authorities read *Lebbaeus*, or *Lebbaeus called Thaddaeus* *i* Or *is at hand*
j The terms *leper* and *leprosy* can refer to several diseases

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deeds of their teacher, except teaching; see 4.23; 9.35; 23.8; cf. 28.20. **10.2** *Apostles*, lit. "those sent out," i.e., on a mission in the name of someone. See 10.40–42. *Peter* is always listed first (see 4.18; 16.17–19). *Andrew*, *James*, and *John* are always listed next (see 4.18–22). **10.3** *Philip*. See Jn 1.43–51; 6.5; 12.20–22; 14.8. *Thomas*. See Jn 11.16; 14.5; 20.24–29; 21.2; *Gospel of Thomas* introduction. *Matthew*. See note on 9.9. *James son of Alphaeus*. Cf. Mk 2.14. **10.4** *The Cananaean*, probably from the Aramaic *qan'an*, "the zealot" (see Lk 6.15; cf. Gal 1.14), and thus possibly a (former?) revolutionary (see 1 Macc 2.54; Josephus *Jewish War* 2.651; 4.158–61). The meaning of *Iscariot* is uncertain. It could mean "from Kerioth" (southern Judea) or derive from the Latin *sicarius* ("dagger man," i.e., assassin); see notes on 26.55; 27.38. *Who betrayed him*. See 17.22; 26.14–16, 47–56. **10.5–15** Cf. Mk 6.8–11; Lk 9.2–5. **10.5** *Go nowhere among the Gentiles*. Cf. 8.5–13; 15.21–28; 28.19; see also notes on 1.1; 1.2–6a; 3.9. Jews avoided contact with *Samaritans*, whom they regarded with animosity (see Jn 4.9; 8.48). **10.6** *To the lost sheep of the house of Israel*. See note on 15.24; see also 9.36; 18.12–14. **10.7** *The kingdom of heaven has come near*. See 3.2; 4.17. **10.8** *Cure the sick ... cast out demons*. See 4.23–24; 11.5; 15.30–31. **10.9–15** Perhaps part of an early missionary "handbook." The ideal of voluntary poverty is similar to that of the wandering Cynic philosophers but is rooted in the ethos of 6.25–34; see *Didache* 11–12. Wandering Cynic preachers carried a begging bag to symbolize their self-sufficiency. Josephus says traveling Essenes did not replace clothing or sandals until they were worn out but carried something (perhaps a staff) to ward off robbers (*Jewish War* 2.125–26). **10.10** *Laborers deserve their food*. See 1 Cor 9.14. **10.12** In Matthew's day the *house* would include the house church. **10.13** A typical greeting was "*Peace* (Hebrew *Shalom*) to this house"; see also Isa 52.7. **10.14** *Welcome*. See 10.40–42; 18.5. *Shake off the dust from your feet*, a strong gesture of rejection; see Acts 13.51; 18.6. **10.15** *Truly I tell you*. See note on 5.18. *Sodom and Gomorrah* were proverbially wicked cities destroyed by judgment fire; see 11.24; Gen 19.1–28; Ezek 16.46–50; 2 Pet 2.6; Jude 7. **10.16–25** Cf. Mk 13.9–13; Lk 12.11–12; 6.40; 21.12–19. As the teacher will be persecuted, so will his followers. **10.17** *Councils*, probably local Jewish courts, not the supreme Jerusalem council (cf. 26.59). *Flog*. See Deut 25.1–3; see also Mt 20.19; 23.34; 27.26; 2 Cor 11.23–24. *Their synagogues*. See note on 4.23. **10.18** *Before governors*. See 27.11–14. **10.19** *Do not worry*. See 6.25–34. *What you are to say*. See Jer 1.6–10. **10.20** *The Spirit ... speaking through you*. See Jn 14.26;

Father speaking through you. 21 Brother
will betray brother to death, and a father
his child, and children will rise against par-
ents and have them put to death; 22 and
you will be hated by all because of my
name. But the one who endures to the
end will be saved. 23 When they persecute
you in one town, flee to the next; for truly
I tell you, you will not have gone through
all the towns of Israel before the Son of
Man comes.

24 "A disciple is not above the teacher,
nor a slave above the master; 25 it is
enough for the disciple to be like the
teacher, and the slave like the master. If
they have called the master of the house
Beelzebul, how much more will they ma-
lign those of his household!

Have No Fear

26 "So have no fear of them; for noth-
ing is covered up that will not be uncov-
ered, and nothing secret that will not
become known. 27 What I say to you in the
dark, tell in the light; and what you hear
whispered, proclaim from the housetops.
28 Do not fear those who kill the body but
cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who
can destroy both soul and body in hell.[k]
29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny?
Yet not one of them will fall to the ground
apart from your Father. 30 And even the
hairs of your head are all counted. 31 So
do not be afraid; you are of more value
than many sparrows.

32 "Everyone therefore who acknowl-
edges me before others, I also will ac-
knowledge before my Father in heaven;
33 but whoever denies me before others, I
also will deny before my Father in heaven.

The Cost of Discipleship

34 "Do not think that I have come to
bring peace to the earth; I have not come
to bring peace, but a sword.
35 For I have come to set a man
against his father,
and a daughter against her
mother,
and a daughter-in-law against her
mother-in-law;
36 and one's foes will be members of
one's own household.
37 Whoever loves father or mother more
than me is not worthy of me; and whoever
loves son or daughter more than me is
not worthy of me; 38 and whoever does not
take up the cross and follow me is not wor-
thy of me. 39 Those who find their life will
lose it, and those who lose their life for my
sake will find it.

The Reward for Hospitality

40 "Whoever welcomes you welcomes
me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes
the one who sent me. 41 Whoever wel-
comes a prophet in the name of a prophet
will receive a prophet's reward; and who-
ever welcomes a righteous person in the
name of a righteous person will receive
the reward of the righteous; 42 and who-

k Gk *Gehenna*

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1 Cor 2.4; Phil 1.19. **10.21** See 10.34–37. **10.22** *Hated . . . because of my name.* See 5.10–12. *Endures to the end,* i.e., until the end of the age; see 10.23; 24.13; 28.20. **10.23** *Truly I tell you.* See note on 5.18. *Son of Man.* See note on 8.20. **10.24** See Jn 13.16; 15.20. **10.25** *Beelzebul,* the prince of demons (i.e., Satan); see 9.34; 12.24. *How much more.* See note on 6.30. **10.26–33** Cf. Mk 4.22; Lk 12.2–9; 8.17. **10.26–27** See *Gospel of Thomas* 5; 6; 33; see also Mt 5.14–16; 1 Cor 4.5. **10.28** The *soul* is the true self. The one *who can destroy both soul and body* is God. *Hell.* See note on 5.22. **10.29–31** See 6.26; Ps 84.3. **10.32–33** A direct correlation of present behavior with future judgment; see note on 5.19; see also Ps 62.12; Prov 24.12; Rom 2.6. **10.33** *Denies me before others,* i.e., like Peter; see 26.70; but cf. 28.16–20. **10.34–39** Cf. Mk 8.34–35; Lk 12.51–53; 14.26–27; 17.33. **10.34–36** See *Gospel of Thomas* 16. **10.34** *Not . . . peace, but a sword,* "cutting" old family ties; see 10.35–36. **10.35–36** An allusion to Mic 7.6. **10.37–38** See *Gospel of Thomas* 55; 101. **10.38–39** See 16.24–25. *Take up the cross,* literally in 27.32; here, figuratively in self-denying discipleship. *Follow me.* See notes on 4.19; 5.1. **10.39** *Life,* lit. "soul," the center of life or self. The saying expresses the paradox that giving up physical or material life for the sake of the Messiah leads to true life (see 16.26). **10.40–42** Cf. Mk 9.37, 41; Lk 10.16; Jn 12.44; 13.20. **10.40** *Welcomes,* i.e., shows hospitality (see 10.11–14). **10.41** *Prophet,* i.e., a wandering Christian prophet (see also 7.15–20; 13.17, 57; 21.11; 23.29–39; *Didache* 11–12). *A prophet's reward* may be defined in 10.32. *Righteous person.* See note on 1.19; see also 13.17, 43, 49; 23.29; cf. 23.28. *The reward of the righteous.* See 13.43; 25.34–46. **10.42** *Little ones* are usually children (see 18.1–4; 19.13–15), but here probably adult Jewish-Christian missionaries

ever gives even a cup of cold water to one
of these little ones in the name of a
disciple—truly I tell you, none of these
will lose their reward."

11 Now when Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he
went on from there to teach and proclaim
his message in their cities.

Messengers from John the Baptist

2 When John heard in prison what the
Messiah[l] was doing, he sent word by
his[m] disciples 3 and said to him, "Are you
the one who is to come, or are we to wait
for another?" 4 Jesus answered them, "Go
and tell John what you hear and see: 5 the
blind receive their sight, the lame walk,
the lepers[n] are cleansed, the deaf hear,
the dead are raised, and the poor have
good news brought to them. 6 And blessed
is anyone who takes no offense at me."

John the Baptist Identified as Elijah

7 As they went away, Jesus began to
speak to the crowds about John: "What
did you go out into the wilderness to look
at? A reed shaken by the wind? 8 What
then did you go out to see? Someone[o]
dressed in soft robes? Look, those who
wear soft robes are in royal palaces.
9 What then did you go out to see? A
prophet?[p] Yes, I tell you, and more than
a prophet. 10 This is the one about whom
it is written,

'See, I am sending my messenger
ahead of you,
who will prepare your way
before you.'

11 Truly I tell you, among those born of
women no one has arisen greater than
John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. 12 From
the days of John the Baptist until now the
kingdom of heaven has suffered violence,[q] and the violent take it by force.
13 For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John came; 14 and if you are
willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to
come. 15 Let anyone with ears[r] listen!

16 "But to what will I compare this
generation? It is like children sitting in
the marketplaces and calling to one
another,

17 'We played the flute for you, and
you did not dance;

l Or *the Christ* *m* Other ancient authorities read *two of his* *n* The terms *leper* and *leprosy* can refer to several diseases *o* Or *Why then did you go out? To see someone* *p* Other ancient authorities read *Why then did you go out? To see a prophet?* *q* Or *has been coming violently* *r* Other ancient authorities add *to hear*

(see note on 18.6). *Truly I tell you.* See note on 5.18. **11.1** *When Jesus had finished.* See note on 7.28. *Twelve.* See note on 10.1.

11.2–12.50 Drawing on Q and Mark (see Introduction), Matthew portrays Jesus as the healing Messiah, Servant, and Son of Man, who continues his mission to Israel even as the opposition of Jewish leaders intensifies. **11.2–6** Cf. Lk 7.18–23. **11.2** *In prison.* See 14.1–3. *What the Messiah was doing,* lit. "the deeds of the Messiah," i.e., the powerful healing miracles in chs. 8–9; see 11.20–21. *His disciples,* i.e., John's; see 14.12. **11.3** *The one who is to come,* i.e., the Messiah; see 3.11; 21.5, 9. **11.5** The deeds of chs. 8–9 are described in language from Isa 35.5–6; see also Isa 26.19; 29.18; 42.7, 18; 61.1. Elijah and Elisha performed similar healings; see 1 Kings 17.17–24; 2 Kings 5.1–14. *The poor.* See 5.3. *Good news.* See note on 4.23. **11.6** *Blessed.* See note on 5.3. *Anyone who takes no offense at me.* Cf. 15.12; see note on 13.21. **11.7–19** Cf. Lk 7.24–35; 16.16. John is identified as the expected Elijah. **11.7** *Wilderness.* See 3.1. **11.8** *Soft robes.* Cf. 3.4. *Royal palaces,* perhaps an allusion to Herod Antipas, who placed a reed on his coins; see 14.1–12; note on 2.22. **11.9** The title *prophet* can be given to a miracle worker like Elijah (Mal 4.5); to a lawgiver like Moses (Deut 18.15–18); to classical prophets who had visions, spoke oracles, and pronounced judgment; and to popular "charismatics" (see note on Acts 5.36). **11.10** The quotation is derived from Mal 3.1; see also Mt 3.3. **11.11** See *Gospel of Thomas* 46. *Truly I tell you.* See note on 5.18. *Least in the kingdom.* See 5.19. **11.12** *Has suffered violence,* i.e., has experienced the suffering and death of John, Jesus, and potentially Jesus' disciples (see 10.16–23). **11.13** *Prophets and the law.* See note on 5.17. **11.14** *Elijah . . . to come.* See note on 3.4; see also 16.14; 17.10–13. **11.15** *Anyone with ears,* i.e., anyone with ears to hear (see text note *r*) deeper meanings; see 13.9, 16, 43; see also Isa 6.10; *Gospel of Thomas* 24; 63; 65; 96. **11.16–19** Cf. Lk 7.31–35. **11.16** *This generation,* i.e., a faithless and corrupt one, led by Pharisees; see 12.38–45; 16.4; 17.17; 23.29–36; see also Deut 1.35. **11.17** *Played the flute . . . dance,* i.e., wedding games, the ministry of Jesus (see 9.15). *Wailed . . . mourn,* i.e., funeral games, the ministry of John (see 3.7–12; 9.14).

we wailed, and you did not
mourn.'
18 For John came neither eating nor
drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon';
19 the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds."[s]

Woes to Unrepentant Cities

20 Then he began to reproach the cities in which most of his deeds of power had been done, because they did not repent. 21 "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. 22 But I tell you, on the day of judgment it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon than for you.
23 And you, Capernaum,
will you be exalted to heaven?
No, you will be brought down
to Hades.
For if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. 24 But I tell you that on the day of judgment it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom than for you."

Jesus as Wisdom's Spokesperson

25 At that time Jesus said, "I thank[t] you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; 26 yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.[u] 27 All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

28 "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Plucking Grain on the Sabbath

12 At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the sabbath; his disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. 2 When the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, "Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the sabbath." 3 He said

s Other ancient authorities read *children*
t Or *praise* u Or *for so it was well-pleasing in your sight*

11.19 *Son of Man.* See note on 8.20. *Eating and drinking.* See 9.14–15; cf. John in 3.4. In Deut 21.20 the rebellious son is *a glutton and a drunkard. Tax collectors and sinners*; see note on 9.10. Jesus seems to be identified with *wisdom*, though the latter was mythologized as female (see Prov 8–9; Wis 7.22–8.21). Thus *her deeds* are actually his; see 11.2, 20, 21. **11.20–24** Cf. Lk 10.13–15. Woes from Q. **11.20** *Deeds.* See notes on 11.2; 11.19. *Repent.* See 3.2; 4.17. **11.21** *Woe* introduces a prophetic oracle of lament or condemnation (see, e.g., Jer 13.27; 48.46; Hos 7.13), here the latter, approximating a curse; see also 18.7; 23.13–36; 26.24; cf. 11.6. *Chorazin* and *Bethsaida* were Galilean Jewish towns; *Tyre and Sidon* were gentile cities on the Mediterranean coast. *Sackcloth*, a dark garment of goat's or camel's hair (see Gen 37.34; Rev 6.12), and *ashes* were associated with rites of mourning, fasting, and repentance; see 6.16; Isa 58.5. **11.22** *But I tell you.* See note on 5.21–48. **11.23** *Capernaum.* See note on 4.13. Jesus' words against the city echo Isa 14.13, 15. *Hades*, Greek equivalent to Hebrew *Sheol*, realm of the departed dead. *Sodom.* See note on 10.15. **11.25–27** Cf. Lk 10.21–22. **11.25** *Father.* See note on 6.9. *Lord of heaven and earth.* See 5.34–35; 6.10; 28.18; Acts 17.24. *Infants*, i.e., Jesus' followers; see 21.16 (cf. 21.9); note on 18.6. *Will.* See 6.10. **11.27** The use of *Father* and *Son* without modifiers (see also 24.36) and the theme of mutual knowledge are common in the Gospel of John (see Jn 3.35; 10.14–15; 17.25). *The Son.* See note on 3.17. **11.28–30** Cf. *Gospel of Thomas* 90. **11.28** *Come to me.* Personified wisdom speaks similar words in Sir 24.19; 51.23; cf. Mt 11.19. **11.29** The *yoke* was a rabbinic metaphor for the difficult but joyous task of obedience to the Torah (see also 23.4; Jer 5.5; Acts 15.10). *Humble.* See 5.5; 21.5. *Rest for your souls.* See Jer 6.16; see also Sir 51.26–27.

12.1–14 Two stories from Mark show that Jesus, in contrast to the Pharisees, stresses human need over sabbath observance. **12.1–8** Cf. Mk 2.23–28; Lk 6.1–5. **12.1** According to Deut 23.25, it was permissible *to pluck heads of grain* from a neighbor's field, but nothing is said there about the sabbath; see also Lev 19.9–10. **12.2** *Pharisees.* See note on 3.7. It was *not lawful* to harvest grain on the sabbath; Ex 20.10; 34.21. **12.3** *Have you not read*, i.e., read with understand-

to them, "Have you not read what David
did when he and his companions were
hungry? 4 He entered the house of God
and ate the bread of the Presence, which
it was not lawful for him or his compan-
ions to eat, but only for the priests. 5 Or
have you not read in the law that on the
sabbath the priests in the temple break
the sabbath and yet are guiltless? 6 I tell
you, something greater than the temple is
here. 7 But if you had known what this
means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,'
you would not have condemned the guilt-
less. 8 For the Son of Man is lord of the
sabbath."

The Man with a Withered Hand

9 He left that place and entered their
synagogue; 10 a man was there with a
withered hand, and they asked him, "Is it
lawful to cure on the sabbath?" so that
they might accuse him. 11 He said to them,
"Suppose one of you has only one sheep
and it falls into a pit on the sabbath; will
you not lay hold of it and lift it out?
12 How much more valuable is a human
being than a sheep! So it is lawful to do
good on the sabbath." 13 Then he said to
the man, "Stretch out your hand." He
stretched it out, and it was restored, as
sound as the other. 14 But the Pharisees
went out and conspired against him, how
to destroy him.

God's Chosen Servant

15 When Jesus became aware of this,
he departed. Many crowds[v] followed
him, and he cured all of them, 16 and he
ordered them not to make him known.
17 This was to fulfill what had been spo-
ken through the prophet Isaiah:

18 "Here is my servant, whom I
have chosen,
my beloved, with whom my
soul is well pleased.
I will put my Spirit upon him,
and he will proclaim justice
to the Gentiles.
19 He will not wrangle or cry aloud,
nor will anyone hear his voice
in the streets.
20 He will not break a bruised reed
or quench a smoldering wick
until he brings justice to victory.
21 And in his name the Gentiles
will hope."

Jesus and Beelzebul

22 Then they brought to him a demo-
niac who was blind and mute; and he
cured him, so that the one who had been
mute could speak and see. 23 All the
crowds were amazed and said, "Can this
be the Son of David?" 24 But when the
Pharisees heard it, they said, "It is only by
Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons, that
this fellow casts out the demons." 25 He
knew what they were thinking and said to
them, "Every kingdom divided against it-
self is laid waste, and no city or house

v Other ancient authorities lack *crowds*

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ing. The question is a rebuke, not an inquiry; see also 12.5; 19.4; 21.16, 42; 22.31. *What David did.* See 1 Sam 21.1–6. **12.4** *The bread of the Presence,* twelve consecrated loaves set out in the temple and replaced weekly; see Lev 24.5–9. **12.5** *Priests . . . break the sabbath*; i.e., they perform duties even on the sabbath; see Num 28.9–10. **12.6** *I tell you.* See note on 5.18. *Something greater than the temple,* either Jesus himself or the kingdom of God; see note on 6.30. **12.7** *I desire mercy and not sacrifice,* Hos 6.6, quoted also in 9.13. Mercy is more important than sacrifices; and sacrifices are more important than sabbath observance (the implication of 12.5); thus, mercy is greater than the sabbath. **12.8** Mark's sharp sabbath critique is omitted (cf. Mk 2.27). *Son of Man.* See note on 8.20. **12.9–14** Cf. Mk 3.1–6; Lk 6.6–11. **12.9** *Their synagogue,* i.e., the Pharisees'; see note on 3.7. **12.10** *Is it lawful.* Later Jewish law allowed breaking the sabbath law in cases of immediate danger to life. **12.11** See Deut 22.4. **12.12** *How much more.* See note on 6.30. **12.13** *Stretch out your hand.* See note on 8.3; see also 1 Kings 13.1–10. **12.15–21** Cf. Mk 3.7–12; Lk 6.17–19. **12.15** A summary of Jesus' healing ministry; see note on 4.23–25. **12.16** See note on 8.4. **12.17–21** The ninth formula quotation; see note on 1.22–23. Isa 42.1–4 is here freely rendered from Hebrew, emphasizing major themes in Matthew. **12.18** *My beloved.* See 3.17; 17.5. **12.19** *Not wrangle.* See 26.63; 27.12. **12.20** *Not break a bruised reed.* See 11.29; 21.5. **12.21** *Gentiles will hope.* See 28.19. **12.22–32** Cf. Mk 3.22–29; Lk 11.14–23; 12.10. **12.23** *Crowds.* See note on 4.25. *Son of David.* See note on 9.27. **12.24** *Beelzebul.* See notes on 9.34;

divided against itself will stand. 26 If Satan
casts out Satan, he is divided against him-
self; how then will his kingdom stand?
27 If I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by
whom do your own exorcists[w] cast them
out? Therefore they will be your judges.
28 But if it is by the Spirit of God that I
cast out demons, then the kingdom of
God has come to you. 29 Or how can one
enter a strong man's house and plunder
his property, without first tying up the
strong man? Then indeed the house can
be plundered. 30 Whoever is not with me
is against me, and whoever does not
gather with me scatters. 31 Therefore I tell
you, people will be forgiven for every sin
and blasphemy, but blasphemy against
the Spirit will not be forgiven. 32 Whoever
speaks a word against the Son of Man will
be forgiven, but whoever speaks against
the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either
in this age or in the age to come.

A Tree and Its Fruit

33 "Either make the tree good, and its
fruit good; or make the tree bad, and its
fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit.
34 You brood of vipers! How can you
speak good things, when you are evil? For
out of the abundance of the heart the
mouth speaks. 35 The good person brings
good things out of a good treasure, and
the evil person brings evil things out of an
evil treasure. 36 I tell you, on the day of
judgment you will have to give an account
for every careless word you utter; 37 for by
your words you will be justified, and by
your words you will be condemned."

The Sign of Jonah

38 Then some of the scribes and Phari-
sees said to him, "Teacher, we wish to see
a sign from you." 39 But he answered
them, "An evil and adulterous generation
asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to
it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.
40 For just as Jonah was three days and
three nights in the belly of the sea mon-
ster, so for three days and three nights the
Son of Man will be in the heart of the
earth. 41 The people of Nineveh will rise
up at the judgment with this generation
and condemn it, because they repented at
the proclamation of Jonah, and see, some-
thing greater than Jonah is here! 42 The
queen of the South will rise up at the
judgment with this generation and con-
demn it, because she came from the ends
of the earth to listen to the wisdom of Sol-
omon, and see, something greater than
Solomon is here!

The Return of the Unclean Spirit

43 "When the unclean spirit has gone
out of a person, it wanders through wa-
terless regions looking for a resting place,
but it finds none. 44 Then it says, 'I will
return to my house from which I came.'
When it comes, it finds it empty, swept,
and put in order. 45 Then it goes and
brings along seven other spirits more evil
than itself, and they enter and live there;
and the last state of that person is worse
than the first. So will it be also with this
evil generation."

w Gk *sons*

10.25. **12.27** Cf. the Jewish *exorcists* (see text note *w*) in Acts 19.13–14. **12.28** *The kingdom of God*. See note on 4.17. **12.29** See Isa 49.24; *Gospel of Thomas* 35. The *strong man*, Satan, is overcome by one even stronger. Jesus' exorcisms are seen as evidence of this victory. *Tying up* was a common way to thwart demons; see 16.19; Rev 20.2. **12.31–32** See *Didache* 11.7. *Blasphemy against the Spirit*, i.e., attributing Jesus' Spirit-derived power to Satan (see note on 9.3). *Son of Man*, i.e., Jesus (see note on 8.20). **12.33–37** Cf. Lk 6.43–45. Warnings to the Pharisees; see *Gospel of Thomas* 45. **12.33** *Good, bad*. See notes on 3.12; 5.45. **12.34** *Brood of vipers*. See 3.7; 23.33. *Heart*. See note on 5.8. *Mouth*. See 15.11, 18. **12.36** *Every careless word*. See 5.21–25. **12.38–42** Cf. Mk 8.11–12; Lk 11.16, 29–32. **12.38** *Teacher*. See note on 8.19. **12.39** *An evil and adulterous generation*. See note on 11.16; 16.4. Adultery was a prophetic metaphor for infidelity to God; see Isa 57.3–13; Hos 3.1. Matthew provides two interpretations of *the sign of the prophet Jonah*: Jesus' death and resurrection (12.40; see Jon 1.17–2.10) and Jesus' preaching of repentance (12.41; see also Lk 11.30–32; Jon 3.4–10). **12.42** *The queen of the South*, i.e., the queen of Sheba; see 1 Kings 10.1–13; 2 Chr 9.1–12. According to Jewish interpretations of 1 Kings 4.29–34, the *wisdom of Solomon* included magic. **12.43–45** Cf. Lk 11.24–26. **12.43** *Unclean spirit*, a demon. *Waterless regions* were favored haunts of demons; see note on 8.32 **12.44** *My house*, i.e., the person within which the demon dwelt; see 12.28–29. **12.45** *This evil generation*. See

The True Kindred of Jesus

46 While he was still speaking to the
crowds, his mother and his brothers were
standing outside, wanting to speak to him.
47 Someone told him, "Look, your mother
and your brothers are standing outside,
wanting to speak to you."[x] 48 But to the
one who had told him this, Jesus[y] re-
plied, "Who is my mother, and who are
my brothers?" 49 And pointing to his disci-
ples, he said, "Here are my mother and
my brothers! 50 For whoever does the will
of my Father in heaven is my brother and
sister and mother."

The Parable of the Sower

13 That same day Jesus went out of
the house and sat beside the sea.
2 Such great crowds gathered around him
that he got into a boat and sat there, while
the whole crowd stood on the beach.
3 And he told them many things in para-
bles, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to
sow. 4 And as he sowed, some seeds fell on
the path, and the birds came and ate them
up. 5 Other seeds fell on rocky ground,
where they did not have much soil, and
they sprang up quickly, since they had no
depth of soil. 6 But when the sun rose,
they were scorched; and since they had no
root, they withered away. 7 Other seeds
fell among thorns, and the thorns grew
up and choked them. 8 Other seeds fell on
good soil and brought forth grain, some a
hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.
9 Let anyone with ears[z] listen!"

The Purpose of the Parables

10 Then the disciples came and asked
him, "Why do you speak to them in para-
bles?" 11 He answered, "To you it has been
given to know the secrets[a] of the king-
dom of heaven, but to them it has not
been given. 12 For to those who have,
more will be given, and they will have an
abundance; but from those who have
nothing, even what they have will be
taken away. 13 The reason I speak to them
in parables is that 'seeing they do not per-
ceive, and hearing they do not listen,
nor do they understand.' 14 With them in-
deed is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah
that says:

'You will indeed listen, but never
understand,
and you will indeed look, but
never perceive.
15 For this people's heart has
grown dull,
and their ears are hard of
hearing,
and they have shut their eyes;
so that they might not look
with their eyes,
and listen with their ears,
and understand with their heart
and turn—
and I would heal them.'

16 But blessed are your eyes, for they see,
and your ears, for they hear. 17 Truly I
tell you, many prophets and righteous

x Other ancient authorities lack verse 47
y Gk *he* z Other ancient authorities add *to hear*
a Or *mysteries*

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notes on 11.16; 12.39. **12.46–50** Cf. Mk 3.31–35; Lk 8.19–21. **12.46** On Jesus' *mother and . . . brothers*, see 1.18–25; 13.55. *Outside*. In Mark, the setting for this scene is inside Jesus' house (see 13.1; Mk 3.19). **12.49** *Disciples* (see note on 5.1) are here defined as Jesus' true kin; see 10.34–39. **12.50** *Whoever*. The circle of the twelve disciples is widened. *The will of my Father*. See note on 6.10.

13.1–53 Jesus' third discourse (see Introduction), developed from Mark's parable collection, establishes the special position of the disciples, who understand Jesus' words. **13.1–9** Cf. Mk 4.1–9; Lk 8.4–8. See *Gospel of Thomas* 9. **13.1** *Sat*, i.e., for teaching (see note on 5.1). *The sea*, of Galilee. **13.2** *Crowds*. See note on 4.25. **13.3** *Parables* are brief comparison stories, drawn from nature or everyday life, that tease the imagination, challenge accepted values, or illustrate a point. **13.8** *Grain*, lit. "fruit," a metaphor for deeds (see 13.23; see also 3.8; 7.17; 12.33). **13.9** *Anyone with ears*. See note on 11.15. **13.10–17** Cf. Mk 4.10–12; Lk 8.9–10. Private teaching to disciples. **13.11** *The secrets of the kingdom* concern Jesus' words and deeds; see 4.17; 10.1, 6–7; 11.25; 16.17; see also Dan 2.27–28. **13.12** See also 25.29. The reference here is to *those who have* knowledge about the kingdom. **13.13** The description of the crowds' faulty *seeing*, *hearing*, and ability to *understand* paraphrases Isa 6.9–10; cf. Mk 4.11–12. **13.14–15** The tenth formula quotation (see note on 1.22–23) introduces Isa 6.9–10; see also Jn 12.40; Acts 28.26–27; Rom 11.8. *Their heart*. See note on 5.8. **13.16–17** See Lk 10.23–24. **13.16** *Blessed*. See note on 5.3. *Your eyes . . . see*. See 13.51; see also 11.4–5. **13.17** See *Gospel of Thomas* 38. *Truly I tell you*. See note on 5.18. *Prophets* here are

people longed to see what you see, but did
not see it, and to hear what you hear, but
did not hear it.

The Parable of the Sower Explained

18 "Hear then the parable of the
sower. 19 When anyone hears the word of
the kingdom and does not understand it,
the evil one comes and snatches away
what is sown in the heart; this is what was
sown on the path. 20 As for what was sown
on rocky ground, this is the one who
hears the word and immediately receives
it with joy; 21 yet such a person has no
root, but endures only for a while, and
when trouble or persecution arises on ac-
count of the word, that person immedi-
ately falls away.[b] 22 As for what was sown
among thorns, this is the one who hears
the word, but the cares of the world and
the lure of wealth choke the word, and it
yields nothing. 23 But as for what was
sown on good soil, this is the one who
hears the word and understands it, who
indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case
a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in
another thirty."

The Parable of Weeds Among the Wheat

24 He put before them another para-
ble: "The kingdom of heaven may be
compared to someone who sowed good
seed in his field; 25 but while everybody
was asleep, an enemy came and sowed
weeds among the wheat, and then went
away. 26 So when the plants came up and
bore grain, then the weeds appeared as
well. 27 And the slaves of the householder
came and said to him, 'Master, did you
not sow good seed in your field? Where,
then, did these weeds come from?' 28 He
answered, 'An enemy has done this.' The
slaves said to him, 'Then do you want us
to go and gather them?' 29 But he replied,
'No; for in gathering the weeds you would
uproot the wheat along with them. 30 Let
both of them grow together until the har-
vest; and at harvest time I will tell the
reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind
them in bundles to be burned, but gather
the wheat into my barn.' "

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

31 He put before them another para-
ble: "The kingdom of heaven is like a
mustard seed that someone took and
sowed in his field; 32 it is the smallest of all
the seeds, but when it has grown it is the
greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so
that the birds of the air come and make
nests in its branches."

The Parable of the Yeast

33 He told them another parable:
"The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that
a woman took and mixed in with[c] three
measures of flour until all of it was
leavened."

The Use of Parables

34 Jesus told the crowds all these
things in parables; without a parable
he told them nothing. 35 This was to ful-

b Gk *stumbles* *c* Gk *hid in*

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probably the OT prophets; cf. 10.41. *Righteous people.* See note on 1.19. **13.18–23** Cf. Mk 4.13–20; Lk 8.11–15. The allegorical interpretation explains why most of Israel does not accept Jesus. **13.18** *Hear then.* Cf. Mk 4.13. **13.19** *The evil one,* Satan or the devil (see note on 4.1; see 6.13). *The heart.* See note on 5.8. **13.21** On *persecution,* see 5.10–12; 10.17–20. *Falls away* (Greek *skandalizein*). See also 24.10. The same Greek word can be translated *take offense* (see 11.6; 13.57; 15.12), *stumble* (see 18.6), or *desert* (see 26.31, 33). **13.22** The *lure of wealth.* See 6.19–21, 24. **13.23** *Fruit.* See note on 13.8. **13.24–30** This parable is explained in 13.36–43. See also *Gospel of Thomas* 57. **13.24** *May be compared,* i.e., to all that follows. This is a typical parable introduction; see 18.23; 22.2. **13.30** *Harvest.* See 13.39. **13.31–32** Cf. Mk 4.30–32; Lk 13.18–19. See *Gospel of Thomas* 20. Though small, the *mustard seed* is not actually the *smallest of all the seeds*; the point of the parable is the contrast between small beginnings and great endings (cf. 17.20). **13.32** *Nests in its branches.* See Ezek 17.22–23; Dan 4.10–12. **13.33** Cf. Lk 13.20–21. See *Gospel of Thomas* 96. *Yeast.* A small amount of this leavening agent causes dough to rise and expand. *Three measures* would contain about 50 pounds of flour, enough for over a hundred loaves of bread. **13.34–35** Cf. Mk 4.33–34. **13.34** *In parables.* See 13.10–13. **13.35** The eleventh formula quotation (see note on 1.22–23) introduces Ps 78.2. David, the presumed author of the Psalms, was thought to have written them while inspired by the Spirit (see Mt 22.43; Acts 4.25–26) and thus to have been a

fill, what had been spoken through the
prophet:[d]
"I will open my mouth to speak
in parables;
I will proclaim what has been
hidden from the
foundation of the world."[e]

Jesus Explains the Parable of the Weeds

36 Then he left the crowds and went
into the house. And his disciples ap-
proached him, saying, "Explain to us the
parable of the weeds of the field." 37 He
answered, "The one who sows the good
seed is the Son of Man; 38 the field is the
world, and the good seed are the children
of the kingdom; the weeds are the chil-
dren of the evil one, 39 and the enemy
who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is
the end of the age, and the reapers are
angels. 40 Just as the weeds are collected
and burned up with fire, so will it be at
the end of the age. 41 The Son of Man will
send his angels, and they will collect out of
his kingdom all causes of sin and all evil-
doers, 42 and they will throw them into the
furnace of fire, where there will be weep-
ing and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then the
righteous will shine like the sun in the
kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with
ears[f] listen!

Three Parables

44 "The kingdom of heaven is like
treasure hidden in a field, which someone
found and hid; then in his joy he goes and
sells all that he has and buys that field.
45 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is
like a merchant in search of fine pearls;
46 on finding one pearl of great value, he
went and sold all that he had and
bought it.
47 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is
like a net that was thrown into the sea and
caught fish of every kind; 48 when it was
full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and
put the good into baskets but threw out
the bad. 49 So it will be at the end of
the age. The angels will come out and
separate the evil from the righteous
50 and throw them into the furnace of fire,
where there will be weeping and gnashing
of teeth.

Treasures New and Old

51 "Have you understood all this?"
They answered, "Yes." 52 And he said to
them, "Therefore every scribe who has
been trained for the kingdom of heaven is
like the master of a household who brings
out of his treasure what is new and what is
old." 53 When Jesus had finished these
parables, he left that place.

The Rejection of Jesus at Nazareth

54 He came to his hometown and
began to teach the people[g] in their syna-
gogue, so that they were astounded and

d Other ancient authorities read *the prophet Isaiah*
e Other ancient authorities lack *of the world*
f Other ancient authorities add *to hear*
g Gk *them*

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prophet (see Acts 2.30–31). **13.36–43** The allegorical interpretation of the parable of the weeds (13.24–30). **13.36** *He ... went into the house.* The interpretation is given as private instruction. **13.37** *Son of Man.* See note on 8.20. **13.38** *Children of the kingdom,* here those destined to inherit the kingdom of heaven (see 5.3, 10; 25.34; cf. 8.12). *The evil one.* See 13.19; note on 4.1. **13.39** *Harvest.* See note on 9.37. *The end of the age.* See 24.3; 28.20. On *angels* as reapers, see 13.49; 16.27; 24.31; 25.31; Rev 14.17. **13.40** *Fire.* See notes on 3.10; 5.22. **13.41** The concept of a *kingdom* of the Son of Man (see also 16.28; 20.21; 25.31–34), containing both good and evil, is found only in Matthew. It could refer to the world (see 13.38) or perhaps to the church; see also 13.47–50; 22.10–14. *Causes of sin,* lit. "stumbling blocks." See note on 13.21; see also 16.23; 18.6–7. **13.42** See 13.50. *Weeping and gnashing of teeth.* See note on 8.12. **13.43** *The righteous.* See note on 1.19; see also 10.41. *Shine like the sun.* See 17.2; Dan 12.3. *Anyone with ears.* See note on 11.15. **13.44–46** Twin parables liken the kingdom to a great treasure, worth risking all one has (see also *Gospel of Thomas* 76; 109). **13.47–50** See *Gospel of Thomas* 8. **13.48** On separating *good* and *bad,* see note on 3.12. **13.49–50** See 13.41–42; 25.31–46. **13.51–53** The climax of the parable chapter. **13.51** *Have you understood?* See 13.11, 16, 23; cf. 13.13, 19. *Yes.* Cf. Mk 4.13. **13.52** *Scribe,* a reference to the disciples (cf. note on 2.4). *Trained,* lit. "discipled." Both the *old* scriptures and their *new* fulfillment in Jesus' ministry are valued; see 5.17–20; 9.16–17. **13.53** See note on 7.28.

13.54–17.27 Matthew rejoins the Marcan outline. Rejection of Jesus in his hometown, misunderstanding by "Israel," and growing opposition by Pharisees lead Jesus to stress teaching to the disciples. **13.54–58** Cf. Mk 6.1–6;

said, "Where did this man get this wisdom
and these deeds of power? 55 Is not this
the carpenter's son? Is not his mother
called Mary? And are not his brothers
James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?
56 And are not all his sisters with us?
Where then did this man get all this?"
57 And they took offense at him. But Jesus
said to them, "Prophets are not without
honor except in their own country and in
their own house." 58 And he did not do
many deeds of power there, because of
their unbelief.

The Death of John the Baptist

14 At that time Herod the ruler[h]
heard reports about Jesus; 2 and
he said to his servants, "This is John the
Baptist; he has been raised from the dead,
and for this reason these powers are at
work in him." 3 For Herod had arrested
John, bound him, and put him in prison
on account of Herodias, his brother
Philip's wife,[i] 4 because John had been
telling him, "It is not lawful for you to
have her." 5 Though Herod[j] wanted to
put him to death, he feared the crowd,
because they regarded him as a prophet.
6 But when Herod's birthday came, the
daughter of Herodias danced before the
company, and she pleased Herod 7 so
much that he promised on oath to grant
her whatever she might ask. 8 Prompted
by her mother, she said, "Give me the
head of John the Baptist here on a platter." 9 The king was grieved, yet out of
regard for his oaths and for the guests, he
commanded it to be given; 10 he sent and
had John beheaded in the prison. 11 The
head was brought on a platter and given
to the girl, who brought it to her mother.
12 His disciples came and took the body
and buried it; then they went and told
Jesus.

Feeding the Five Thousand

13 Now when Jesus heard this, he
withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the
crowds heard it, they followed him on
foot from the towns. 14 When he went
ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had
compassion for them and cured their sick.
15 When it was evening, the disciples came
to him and said, "This is a deserted place,
and the hour is now late; send the crowds
away so that they may go into the villages
and buy food for themselves." 16 Jesus
said to them, "They need not go away;
you give them something to eat." 17 They
replied, "We have nothing here but five
loaves and two fish." 18 And he said,
"Bring them here to me." 19 Then he or-

h Gk *tetrarch* *i* Other ancient authorities read *his brother's wife* *j* Gk *he*

Lk 4.16–30. **13.54** *Hometown*, i.e., Nazareth (see 2.23). *Their synagogue*. See note on 4.23. *Wisdom ... deeds of power*. See 11.19; 12.42. **13.55** Calling Jesus a *carpenter's son* (cf. Mk 6.3) is probably an implied insult. Though interpreted in various ways (e.g., as step-brothers or cousins), *his brothers* probably refers to Jesus' natural siblings; see 1.25; 12.46; Jn 2.12; 7.5; Acts 1.14; 1 Cor 9.5. *James* became a leader of the Jerusalem church; see Acts 12.17; 15.13; 21.18; 1 Cor 15.7; Gal 1.19; 2.9, 12; Jas 1.1. *Joseph and Simon*, are otherwise unattested (see note on 27.56). *Judas*. See Jude 1. **13.56** Jesus' *sisters* are nowhere mentioned by name. **13.57** *Took offense*. See 11.6; 15.12; note on 13.21. *Prophets ... in their own house*, a widespread proverb (see Lk 4.24; Jn 4.44; *Gospel of Thomas* 31; note on Mt 11.9). **14.1–12** Cf. Mk 6.14–29; Lk 9.7–9. The death of John the Baptist serves as a portent of Jesus' death. **14.1** *Herod* Antipas. See note on 2.22. *Ruler*, lit. *tetrarch* (text note *h*), Herod Antipas's actual rank, which was considerably below that of king (cf. 14.9). **14.2** *This is John the Baptist*. See also 16.13–14. A different interpretation of the source of Jesus' *powers* is given by the Pharisees (see 12.24). **14.3–4** *Herodias* was never Philip's wife (see text note *i*), but her second husband, Herod Antipas, was her half-uncle and therefore the marriage was *not lawful* (see Lev 18.6–16; 20.21). **14.5** *He feared the crowd*. According to Josephus, John was executed because Herod feared that John's popularity might lead to rebellion (*Antiquities* 18.118–19). *Prophet*. See 11.9; 17.12–13; 21.26, 46; note on 3.4. See also 5.12; 23.29–36. **14.12** *His disciples*. See 11.2; cf. 27.57–60. **14.13–21** Cf. Mk 6.32–44; Lk 9.10–17; Jn 6.1–13. The first of two scenes (see 15.32–39) in which the compassionate Jesus addresses physical hunger. Both scenes contain echoes of the early Christian sacred meal (26.26–29) and of the stories of Elijah and Elisha (see 1 Kings 17.8–16; 2 Kings 4.42–44). **14.13** *Withdrew*. Jesus increasingly withdraws from the crowds (see also 14.23), though they continue to follow. **14.14** *Compassion*. See note on 9.36. See also note on 4.23. **14.16** *Give them something to eat*. See 2 Kings 4.42–43. **14.19** *Up to heaven*. See note

dered the crowds to sit down on the grass.
Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he
looked up to heaven, and blessed and
broke the loaves, and gave them to the
disciples, and the disciples gave them to
the crowds. 20 And all ate and were filled;
and they took up what was left over of the
broken pieces, twelve baskets full. 21 And
those who ate were about five thousand
men, besides women and children.

Jesus Walks on the Water

22 Immediately he made the disciples
get into the boat and go on ahead to the
other side, while he dismissed the crowds.
23 And after he had dismissed the crowds,
he went up the mountain by himself to
pray. When evening came, he was there
alone, 24 but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the
land,[k] for the wind was against them.
25 And early in the morning he came
walking toward them on the sea. 26 But
when the disciples saw him walking on the
sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a
ghost!" And they cried out in fear. 27 But
immediately Jesus spoke to them and said,
"Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid."
28 Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is
you, command me to come to you on the
water." 29 He said, "Come." So Peter got
out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. 30 But when
he noticed the strong wind,[l] he became
frightened, and beginning to sink, he
cried out, "Lord, save me!" 31 Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught
him, saying to him, "You of little faith,
why did you doubt?" 32 When they got
into the boat, the wind ceased. 33 And
those in the boat worshiped him, saying,
"Truly you are the Son of God."

Jesus Heals the Sick in Gennesaret

34 When they had crossed over, they
came to land at Gennesaret. 35 After the
people of that place recognized him, they
sent word throughout the region and
brought all who were sick to him, 36 and
begged him that they might touch even
the fringe of his cloak; and all who
touched it were healed.

The Tradition of the Elders

15 Then Pharisees and scribes came
to Jesus from Jerusalem and said,
2 "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash
their hands before they eat." 3 He answered them, "And why do you break the
commandment of God for the sake of
your tradition? 4 For God said,[m] 'Honor
your father and your mother,' and, 'Whoever speaks evil of father or mother must
surely die.' 5 But you say that whoever
tells father or mother, 'Whatever support
you might have had from me is given to
God,'[n] then that person need not honor

k Other ancient authorities read *was out on the sea*
l Other ancient authorities read *the wind*
m Other ancient authorities read *commanded, saying*
n Or *is an offering*

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on 3.16; Ps 123.1; Jn 11.41; 17.1. *Blessed and broke the loaves.* These actions are common to Jewish meals but also echo the Christian sacred meal; see 26.26; Acts 27.35; 1 Cor 11.23–24. **14.20** See 2 Kings 4.42–44; see also Deut 8.10. *Twelve* probably symbolizes Israel (see 19.28). **14.21** *Women and children* were not normally counted (cf. Mk 6.44). **14.22–33** Cf. Mk 6.45–52; Jn 6.16–21. **14.22** *Other side,* i.e., of the Sea of Galilee. **14.23** *Mountain.* See note on 4.8. *Alone.* See note on 14.13. **14.24** See note on 8.24. **14.25** *Early in the morning,* lit. "the fourth watch," which was from 3:00 to 6:00 A.M. *Walking . . . on the sea.* See Job 9.8; Ps 77.19. **14.27** Jesus' words, *It is I,* can also be translated "I am," suggesting the mysterious divine presence (see Ex 3.14; Isa 43.10; Jn 18.2–9). Jewish literature mentions magical clubs engraved with "I am" to beat back storms. **14.28** *Peter* increasingly represents the disciples (see also 15.15; 16.16). *Lord.* See note on 7.21. **14.30** *Save me!* See Ps 69.1–3; note on Mt 1.21. **14.31** *Reached out his hand.* See Ps 18.15–16. *You of little faith.* See note on 6.30. Though their *doubt* is apparently reversed in 14.33, see 28.17. **14.33** *Worshiped him.* See note on 2.2; cf. Mk 6.51. *The Son of God.* See note on 3.17. **14.34–36** Cf. Mk 6.53–56; Jn 6.22–25. **14.34** *Gennesaret,* a region or town on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. **14.35–36** See note on 4.23–25. **14.36** *Touch . . . the fringe of his cloak.* See notes on 9.20; 9.21.

15.1–9 Cf. Mk 7.1–13. **15.1** *Pharisees.* See note on 3.7. *Scribes.* See note on 2.4. **15.2** *Tradition of the elders,* the Pharisees' traditional interpretation of the Jewish law, passed on orally and believed by them to have been given with the written law on Mount Sinai. The latter does not require Jews to *wash their hands before they eat* (cf. Ex 30.17–21; Lev 15.11). **15.4** For the first command, see Ex 20.12; Deut 5.16; for the second,

the father.[o] 6 So, for the sake of your
tradition, you make void the word[p] of
God. 7 You hypocrites! Isaiah prophesied
rightly about you when he said:
8 'This people honors me with
their lips,
but their hearts are far
from me;
9 in vain do they worship me,
teaching human precepts as
doctrines.' "

Things That Defile

10 Then he called the crowd to him
and said to them, "Listen and understand:
11 it is not what goes into the mouth that
defiles a person, but it is what comes out
of the mouth that defiles." 12 Then the
disciples approached and said to him, "Do
you know that the Pharisees took offense
when they heard what you said?" 13 He
answered, "Every plant that my heavenly
Father has not planted will be uprooted.
14 Let them alone; they are blind guides of
the blind.[q] And if one blind person
guides another, both will fall into a pit."
15 But Peter said to him, "Explain this parable to us." 16 Then he said, "Are you also
still without understanding? 17 Do you not
see that whatever goes into the mouth enters the stomach, and goes out into the
sewer? 18 But what comes out of the
mouth proceeds from the heart, and this
is what defiles. 19 For out of the heart
come evil intentions, murder, adultery,
fornication, theft, false witness, slander.
20 These are what defile a person, but to
eat with unwashed hands does not defile."

The Canaanite Woman's Faith

21 Jesus left that place and went away
to the district of Tyre and Sidon. 22 Just
then a Canaanite woman from that region
came out and started shouting, "Have
mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my
daughter is tormented by a demon."
23 But he did not answer her at all. And
his disciples came and urged him, saying,
"Send her away, for she keeps shouting
after us." 24 He answered, "I was sent only
to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."
25 But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." 26 He answered, "It
is not fair to take the children's food and
throw it to the dogs." 27 She said, "Yes,
Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs
that fall from their masters' table."
28 Then Jesus answered her, "Woman,
great is your faith! Let it be done for you
as you wish." And her daughter was
healed instantly.

Jesus Cures Many People

29 After Jesus had left that place, he
passed along the Sea of Galilee, and he

o Other ancient authorities add *or the mother*
p Other ancient authorities read *law*; others, *commandment* q Other ancient authorities lack *of the blind*

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see Lev 20.9. **15.7** *Hypocrites*, here for the first time used to address opponents directly (cf. 6.1–18; see note on 7.5; 23.13–36). **15.8–9** Isa 29.13. *Hearts*. See note on 5.8. **15.10–20** Cf. Mk 7.14–23. **15.10** *Crowd*. See note on 4.25. *Listen and understand*. See 13.10–23, 43. **15.11** See *Gospel of Thomas* 14c. *What goes into the mouth*. See 15.2. It was widely debated in early Christianity whether Jewish dietary laws were binding on Christians; see Acts 10.14–15; Rom 14.19–21; Gal 2.11–14. *What comes out of the mouth*. See, e.g., 5.21–26, 33–37. *Defiles*, i.e., makes ritually unclean. **15.12** *Pharisees*. See note on 3.7. *Took offense*. See note on 13.21. **15.13** A *plant* was a common metaphor for righteous Israel; see Isa 60.21; *1 Enoch* 10.16; *Jubilees* 1.16. *My heavenly Father*. See note on 6.9. *Will be uprooted*. See 3.10. **15.14** *Blind guides*. See 23.16, 24; cf. Rom 2.19. **15.15** *Peter*. See note on 14.28. **15.16** *Without understanding*. Cf. 13.11, 16, 51. **15.17** *Sewer*, possibly "latrine." **15.18** *Heart*. See note on 5.8. **15.19** A vice list, widespread in ancient moral discourse (see, e.g., 1 Cor 6.9–10; Gal 5.19–21). **15.21–28** Cf. Mk 7.24–30. **15.21** *That place*, probably Gennesaret (see 14.34). *District of Tyre and Sidon*, gentile territory (see 11.21). **15.22** *Canaanite*, a scriptural term for ancient Israel's pagan enemies (see, e.g., Deut 7.1; cf. Mk 7.26) here used to designate a Gentile. *Woman*. See notes on 1.2–6a; 27.55. *Lord*. See note on 7.21. *Have mercy on me ... Son of David*. See note on 9.27. **15.24** *Lost sheep of the house of Israel*, a reference either to a group within Israel or to all of Israel (see also 9.36; 10.6; cf. 28.19). **15.25** *She ... knelt*, implying worship (see note on 2.2). **15.26** The *children* are the Israelites (see, e.g., Deut 14.1; Isa 1.2). **15.27** *Dogs*, lit. "small dogs," i.e., puppies or house dogs, but still a very uncomplimentary term for Gentiles (cf. Phil 3.2). *Masters'*, lit. "lords'" (see note on 7.21). **15.28** For another Gentile's *faith*, see 8.10. *Healed instantly*. See note on 8.3. **15.29–31** Cf. Mk 7.31–37. A major healing summary (see note on 4.23–25). **15.29** *Mountain*.

went up the mountain, where he sat
down. 30 Great crowds came to him,
bringing with them the lame, the maimed,
the blind, the mute, and many others.
They put them at his feet, and he cured
them, 31 so that the crowd was amazed
when they saw the mute speaking, the
maimed whole, the lame walking, and the
blind seeing. And they praised the God
of Israel.

Feeding the Four Thousand

32 Then Jesus called his disciples to
him and said, "I have compassion for the
crowd, because they have been with me
now for three days and have nothing to
eat; and I do not want to send them away
hungry, for they might faint on the way."
33 The disciples said to him, "Where are
we to get enough bread in the desert to
feed so great a crowd?" 34 Jesus asked
them, "How many loaves have you?" They
said, "Seven, and a few small fish."
35 Then ordering the crowd to sit down on
the ground, 36 he took the seven loaves
and the fish; and after giving thanks he
broke them and gave them to the disci-
ples, and the disciples gave them to the
crowds. 37 And all of them ate and were
filled; and they took up the broken pieces
left over, seven baskets full. 38 Those who
had eaten were four thousand men, be-
sides women and children. 39 After send-
ing away the crowds, he got into the boat
and went to the region of Magadan.[r]

The Demand for a Sign

16 The Pharisees and Sadducees
came, and to test Jesus[s] they
asked him to show them a sign from
heaven. 2 He answered them, "When it is
evening, you say, 'It will be fair weather,
for the sky is red.' 3 And in the morning,
'It will be stormy today, for the sky is red
and threatening.' You know how to inter-
pret the appearance of the sky, but you
cannot interpret the signs of the times.[t]
4 An evil and adulterous generation asks
for a sign, but no sign will be given to it
except the sign of Jonah." Then he left
them and went away.

The Yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees

5 When the disciples reached the
other side, they had forgotten to bring
any bread. 6 Jesus said to them, "Watch
out, and beware of the yeast of the Phari-
sees and Sadducees." 7 They said to one
another, "It is because we have brought
no bread." 8 And becoming aware of it,
Jesus said, "You of little faith, why are you
talking about having no bread? 9 Do you
still not perceive? Do you not remember
the five loaves for the five thousand, and
how many baskets you gathered? 10 Or the
seven loaves for the four thousand, and
how many baskets you gathered? 11 How
could you fail to perceive that I was not
speaking about bread? Beware of the
yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees!"
12 Then they understood that he had not
told them to beware of the yeast of bread,
but of the teaching of the Pharisees and
Sadducees.

Peter's Declaration About Jesus

13 Now when Jesus came into the dis-
trict of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his

r Other ancient authorities read *Magdala* or *Magdalan* s Gk *him* t Other ancient authorities lack [2]*When it is . . . of the times*

See note on 4.8. *He sat down.* See note on 5.1. **15.30** See 8.17; 11.5. **15.31** *They praised the God of Israel.* The description of the crowd's response suggests that they were non-Jews, but Jesus has returned to Jewish territory (15.29). **15.32–39** Cf. Mk 8.1–10; Jn 6.1–13. The second feeding miracle; see 14.13–21. **15.32** *Compassion.* See note on 9.36. **15.34, 37** *Seven,* perhaps symbolizing Gentiles (cf. 14.19–20; see Acts 6.1–6). **15.36** See note on 14.19. **15.38** *Besides women and children.* See note on 14.21; cf. Mk 8.9. **15.39** The location of *Magadan* is unknown; it may be Magdala on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee (text note *r*).

16.1–4 Cf. Mk 8.11–13; Lk 12.54–56. See 12.38–42. **16.1** *Pharisees and Sadducees.* See note on 3.7. The desire *to test* suggests hostile intent (see, e.g., 4.1; 12.14; 19.3; 22.15, 35). **16.2–3** See *Gospel of Thomas* 91. *Signs of the times.* See 11.3–5; see also 24.3. **16.4** See 12.38–42. **16.5–12** Cf. Mk 8.14–21; Lk 12.1. **16.5** Only *disciples* are present through 17.14. **16.6** *Yeast,* here a metaphor for evil influence (see 16.12; cf. 13.33). **16.8** *Little faith.* See note on 6.30. **16.9** *Do you still not perceive?* See note on 15.16; cf. Mk 8.17–18. *The five thousand.* See 14.13–21. **16.10** *The four thousand.* See 15.32–39. **16.12** *They understood.* See 13.51. **16.13–20** Cf. Mk 8.27–30; Lk 9.18–21. **16.13** *Caesarea Philippi,* a city twenty miles north of the Sea of Galilee. *Son of*

disciples, "Who do people say that the Son
of Man is?" 14 And they said, "Some say
John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still
others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."
15 He said to them, "But who do you say
that I am?" 16 Simon Peter answered,
"You are the Messiah,[u] the Son of the living God." 17 And Jesus answered him,
"Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah!
For flesh and blood has not revealed this
to you, but my Father in heaven. 18 And I
tell you, you are Peter,[v] and on this
rock[w] I will build my church, and the
gates of Hades will not prevail against it.
19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom
of heaven, and whatever you bind on
earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in
heaven." 20 Then he sternly ordered the
disciples not to tell anyone that he was[x]
the Messiah.[u]

Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection

21 From that time on, Jesus began to
show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the
hands of the elders and chief priests and
scribes, and be killed, and on the third
day be raised. 22 And Peter took him aside
and began to rebuke him, saying, "God
forbid it, Lord! This must never happen
to you." 23 But he turned and said to
Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a
stumbling block to me; for you are setting
your mind not on divine things but on
human things."

The Cross and Self-Denial

24 Then Jesus told his disciples, "If
any want to become my followers, let
them deny themselves and take up their
cross and follow me. 25 For those who
want to save their life will lose it, and
those who lose their life for my sake will
find it. 26 For what will it profit them if
they gain the whole world but forfeit their
life? Or what will they give in return for
their life?
27 "For the Son of Man is to come
with his angels in the glory of his Father,
and then he will repay everyone for what
has been done. 28 Truly I tell you, there
are some standing here who will not taste
death before they see the Son of Man
coming in his kingdom."

u Or *the Christ* v Gk *Petros* w Gk *petra*
x Other ancient authorities add *Jesus*

Man. See note on 8.20. **16.14** *John the Baptist*. See 14.1–2. Jesus' miracles resembled those of *Elijah* (see notes on 11.5; 14.13–21; also note on 3.4). *Jeremiah or one of the prophets*. See, e.g., 13.57; 21.11; see note on 11.9. Deut 18.15 fueled the expectation of the appearance of a prophet, but the origin of the specific expectation of Jeremiah is unknown (see, however, 2.17; 27.9). **16.16** *Simon Peter*. See note on 14.28. *Messiah*. See note on 1.1. *Son of the living God*. See note on 3.17. **16.17** *Blessed*. See note on 5.3. *Son of Jonah*. Cf. Jn 1.42. *Flesh and blood*, i.e., human beings. **16.18** *And I tell you*. See note on 5.18. *Peter*, from the Greek word *petros* (Aramaic *kephas*; see 1 Cor 1.12) for *rock* or "stone," thus a symbolic nickname, "Rocky." The word *church* is found only here and 18.17 in the Gospels. The *gates of Hades* (see note on 11.23), i.e., the power of death (see Isa 5.14; 38.10; Rev 1.18; 6.8) or of the evil underworld (see Rev 9.1). **16.19** *Keys of the kingdom*, here given to Peter (cf. 23.13), symbolize the authority to control entry (see also Isa 22.22; Rev 3.7). In 18.18 the power to *bind* and to *loose* is given to the community (see also Jn 20.23). The saying could refer to authoritative teaching (28.20), to forgiveness of sin (26.28), to exorcisms (12.29), or to excommunication (18.17–18). **16.20** See note on 8.4. **16.21–23** Cf. Mk 8.31–33; Lk 9.22. The first of four passion predictions (see also 17.22–23; 20.17–19; 26.1–2). **16.21** *He must*. The words suggest a divine plan, perhaps in fulfillment of Isa 52–53 (see 26.54; note on 1.22–23). *Elders*, Jewish leaders who, with the chief priests, constitute the primary opposition to Jesus during the final days in Jerusalem (see 26.3, 47, 57). *Chief priests and scribes*. See note on 2.4. *On the third day*. See also 1 Cor 15.4. *Be raised*, i.e., by God (see Acts 2.24; 4.10). **16.22** *Lord*. See note on 7.21. **16.23** *Satan*. See note on 4.1; cf. 16.17–19. *Stumbling block*. See note on 13.41. *Divine things*, i.e., God's plan. **16.24–28** Cf. Mk 8.34–9.1; Lk 9.23–27. **16.24** *Disciples*. See note on 16.5. *Take up their cross and follow me*. See 10.16–23, 38. **16.25** See 10.39. **16.26** *Gain the whole world*. See 4.8–9. **16.27** *Son of Man*. See note on 8.20. *With his angels*. See note on 13.39. *Repay . . . for what has been done*. This idea of judgment according to one's deeds is prominent in Matthew (see 5.17–20; 7.15–20; see also Rom 2.6; 1 Cor 4.5; 2 Cor 5.10). **16.28** *Truly I tell you*. See note on 5.18. *Some standing here*. The coming of the Son

The Transfiguration

17 Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. 2 And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. 3 Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. 4 Then Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I[y] will make three dwellings[z] here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." 5 While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, "This is my Son, the Beloved;[a] with him I am well pleased; listen to him!" 6 When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. 7 But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Get up and do not be afraid." 8 And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.

9 As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, "Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead." 10 And the disciples asked him, "Why, then, do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" 11 He replied, "Elijah is indeed coming and will restore all things; 12 but I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but they did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man is about to suffer at their hands." 13 Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them about John the Baptist.

Jesus Cures a Boy with a Demon

14 When they came to the crowd, a man came to him, knelt before him, 15 and said, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and he suffers terribly; he often falls into the fire and often into the water. 16 And I brought him to your disciples, but they could not cure him." 17 Jesus answered, "You faithless and perverse generation, how much longer must I be with you? How much longer must I put up with you? Bring him here to me." 18 And Jesus rebuked the demon,[b] and it[c] came out of him, and the boy was cured instantly. 19 Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?" 20 He said to them, "Because of your little faith. For truly I tell you, if you have faith the size of a[d] mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you."[e]

y Other ancient authorities read *we* *z* Or *tents* *a* Or *my beloved Son* *b* Gk *it* or *him* *c* Gk *the demon* *d* Gk *faith as a grain of* *e* Other ancient authorities add verse 21, *But this kind does not come out except by prayer and fasting*

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of Man was expected within the lifetime of that generation (see also 10.23; 24.34).

17.1–8 Cf. Mk 9.2–8; Lk 9.28–36. The transfiguration echoes the appearance of God to Moses on Mount Sinai. **17.1** *Peter, James,* and *John* form an inner circle of disciples (see 4.18–22; 26.37; see also Ex 24.13–14). *High mountain.* See note on 5.1; see also Ex 24.15. **17.2** *Transfigured,* i.e., transformed to reveal his future glory (see 16.27; see also 2 Cor 3.18). *His face shone like the sun,* like that of Moses (see Ex 34.29) and like that of the heavenly Son of Man (see Rev 1.16). *Clothes . . . dazzling white.* See 28.3; Dan 7.9; Rev 1.12–16; 3.4–5. **17.3** *Moses* and *Elijah* could represent the law and the prophets (5.17; 7.12) or two prophets (see note on 11.9). **17.4** *Lord.* See note on 7.21. *Dwellings,* or *tents* (see text note *z*), perhaps recall the Festival of Booths (see Lev 23.42). Peter's strange suggestion may be intended to prolong the vision. **17.5** The *bright cloud* represents the presence of God (see Ex 24.15–18; see also Rev 14.14). *This is my Son.* See note on 3.17. *With him I am well pleased.* See 12.18, citing Isa 42.1; see also 2 Pet 1.17–18. *Listen to him.* See Deut 18.15, 18; Acts 3.22. **17.6** *Overcome by fear.* See 8.25–26; 14.26; 28.8–10; Ex 34.30. **17.9–13** Cf. Mk 9.9–13. **17.11** *Elijah . . . will restore all things.* See Mal 4.5–6. **17.12** *Elijah has already come.* See notes on 3.4; 11.14; 14.1–12. **17.13** *Disciples understood.* See 13.51. **17.14–20** Cf. Mk 9.14–29; Lk 9.37–42. **17.15** *Lord, have mercy.* See note on 9.27. **17.16** *Disciples . . . could not cure him.* Cf. 10.1. **17.17** *Faithless and perverse generation.* Jesus' exasperated response is surprising, but see 11.16; 16.4; 23.36; see also Deut 32.5. **17.19** *Privately.* See 13.10, 36; note on 16.5. **17.20** *Little faith.* See note on 6.30. *Truly I tell you.* See note on 5.18. On the power of *faith,* see 21.21–22; Lk 17.6. *Mustard seed.* See

Jesus Again Foretells His Death and Resurrection

22 As they were gathering[f] in Galilee,
Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is
going to be betrayed into human hands,
23 and they will kill him, and on the third
day he will be raised." And they were
greatly distressed.

Jesus and the Temple Tax

24 When they reached Capernaum,
the collectors of the temple tax[g] came to
Peter and said, "Does your teacher not
pay the temple tax?"[g] 25 He said, "Yes, he
does." And when he came home, Jesus
spoke of it first, asking, "What do you
think, Simon? From whom do kings of the
earth take toll or tribute? From their children or from others?" 26 When Peter[h]
said, "From others," Jesus said to him,
"Then the children are free. 27 However,
so that we do not give offense to them,
go to the sea and cast a hook; take the
first fish that comes up; and when you
open its mouth, you will find a coin;[i]
take that and give it to them for you
and me."

True Greatness

18 At that time the disciples came to
Jesus and asked, "Who is the
greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" 2 He
called a child, whom he put among them,
3 and said, "Truly I tell you, unless you
change and become like children, you will
never enter the kingdom of heaven.
4 Whoever becomes humble like this child
is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.
5 Whoever welcomes one such child in my
name welcomes me.

Temptations to Sin

6 "If any of you put a stumbling block
before one of these little ones who believe
in me, it would be better for you if a great
millstone were fastened around your neck
and you were drowned in the depth of the
sea. 7 Woe to the world because of stumbling blocks! Occasions for stumbling are
bound to come, but woe to the one by
whom the stumbling block comes!
8 "If your hand or your foot causes
you to stumble, cut it off and throw it
away; it is better for you to enter life

f Other ancient authorities read *living*
g Gk *didrachma* h Gk *he* i Gk *stater*; the stater was worth two didrachmas

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13.31–32. **17.22–23** Cf. Mk 9.30–32; Lk 9.43b–45. The second passion prediction (see note on 16.21–23). **17.22** *Son of Man.* See note on 8.20. *Betrayed,* or "handed over," a prominent theme of the passion narrative (see 26.2, 14–16, 47–56). **17.24–27** Probably composed by Matthew to address the question of Jewish-Christian obligations to the temple. **17.24** *Capernaum.* See note on 4.13. The *temple tax* was a half-shekel tax levied annually on adult Jewish males to support temple sacrifices (see Ex 30.11–16; 2 Chr 24.4–14; Neh 10.32). After the destruction of the Jewish temple (70 C.E.), the Romans extracted the tax to support the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus in Rome. *Your teacher.* See note on 8.19. **17.25** *What do you think?* See also 18.12; 21.28. *Simon,* the representative disciple (see note on 14.28). **17.26** *The children are free;* i.e., the Son of God (17.5) and true children of God (5.45) do not need to contribute to the support of God's house. **17.27** The conclusion, deriving from folklore, softens the radical nature of Jesus' response. The *coin,* Greek *stater,* was worth two didrachmas, or twice the temple tax (see 17.24).

18.1–35 Jesus' fourth discourse (see Introduction) emphasizes community discipline within a context of childlike humility and unbounded forgiveness. **18.1–5** Cf. Mk 9.33–37; Lk 9.46–48. **18.1** *Greatest.* See 5.19; *Gospel of Thomas* 12. *Kingdom of heaven.* See note on 4.17. **18.2** *Child* here is meant literally (cf. 18.6–14). **18.3** *Truly I tell you.* See note on 5.18. *Change,* i.e., repent (see 3.2). *Become like children,* i.e., without concern for social status (see Mk 10.15; *Gospel of Thomas* 22; 46). **18.4** *Whoever becomes humble . . . is the greatest.* Status reversal characterizes the kingdom (see 20.26–27; 23.11–12; Mk 10.43–44; Lk 14.11; 18.14; 22.26; Jas 4.6, 10; 1 Pet 5.5). **18.5** The *child* illustrates low status, not necessarily humility. For Jesus' humbleness, see 11.29; 21.5. **18.6–9** Cf. Mk 9.42–47; Lk 17.1–2. **18.6** *Put a stumbling block before,* lit. "cause to stumble." See notes on 13.21; 13.41. The term is a catchword in this passage. *Little ones who believe in me,* no longer the literal children of 18.1–4, but Christian believers of some sort. It is not clear whether they are missionaries (see 10.42), all disciples, recent converts, those of low social or economic status, or those weak in faith. *Millstone,* a large, circular stone driven by a donkey and used for grinding grain (see Rev 18.21). **18.7** *Woe.* See note on 11.21. **18.8–9** See note on 5.29–30. Here the sayings refer to excommunication. *Life,* i.e., the kingdom of

maimed or lame than to have two hands
or two feet and to be thrown into the eter-
nal fire. 9And if your eye causes you to
stumble, tear it out and throw it away; it is
better for you to enter life with one eye
than to have two eyes and to be thrown
into the hell[j] of fire.

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

10 "Take care that you do not despise
one of these little ones; for, I tell you, in
heaven their angels continually see the
face of my Father in heaven.[k] 12What do
you think? If a shepherd has a hundred
sheep, and one of them has gone astray,
does he not leave the ninety-nine on the
mountains and go in search of the one
that went astray? 13And if he finds it,
truly I tell you, he rejoices over it more
than over the ninety-nine that never went
astray. 14So it is not the will of your[l] Fa-
ther in heaven that one of these little ones
should be lost.

Disciplining Members of the Church

15 "If another member of the
church[m] sins against you,[n] go and point
out the fault when the two of you are
alone. If the member listens to you, you
have regained that one.[o] 16But if you are
not listened to, take one or two others
along with you, so that every word may be
confirmed by the evidence of two or three
witnesses. 17If the member refuses to lis-
ten to them, tell it to the church; and if
the offender refuses to listen even to the
church, let such a one be to you as a Gen-
tile and a tax collector. 18Truly I tell you,
whatever you bind on earth will be bound
in heaven, and whatever you loose on
earth will be loosed in heaven. 19Again,
truly I tell you, if two of you agree on
earth about anything you ask, it will be
done for you by my Father in heaven.
20For where two or three are gathered in
my name, I am there among them."

Forgiveness

21 Then Peter came and said to him,
"Lord, if another member of the church[p]
sins against me, how often should I for-
give? As many as seven times?" 22Jesus
said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell
you, seventy-seven[q] times.

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

23 "For this reason the kingdom of
heaven may be compared to a king who
wished to settle accounts with his slaves.
24When he began the reckoning, one
who owed him ten thousand talents[r] was

j Gk *Gehenna* *k* Other ancient authorities add verse 11, *For the Son of Man came to save the lost* *l* Other ancient authorities read *my* *m* Gk *If your brother* *n* Other ancient authorities lack *against you* *o* Gk *the brother* *p* Gk *if my brother* *q* Or *seventy times seven* *r* A talent was worth more than fifteen years' wages of a laborer

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heaven (see 18.3). **18.9** *Hell of fire.* See note on 5.22. **18.10–14** Cf. Lk 15.3–7. **18.10** *Little ones.* See note on 18.6. In Zech 13.7 (partially cited in Mt 26.31) "little ones" are scattered sheep (see 18.12–13). *I tell you.* See 18.13; note on 5.18. *Their angels,* i.e., guardian angels (see Tob 5.22). *See the face of my Father,* i.e., have constant access to God. **18.12–13** See Ezek 34.11–16; *Gospel of Thomas* 107. *What do you think?* See note on 17.25. *Gone astray.* See 24.4–5, 11, 24. **18.14** *The will of your Father.* See note on 6.9. **18.15–20** Matthew expands Q (see Lk 17.3; Introduction) into a formal procedure for settling disputes within the church. **18.15** *Member of the church,* lit. "brother" (text note *m*). The kinship language (see also 12.49–50) is an important component of the dynamics of the regulations (see Lev 19.15–18). **18.16** *Two or three witnesses* was a legal requirement (see Deut 19.15; see also Mt 18.19–20; 26.60). According to Jewish law in 200 C.E., neither slaves nor women could be witnesses (cf. 28.1, 9–10). **18.17** *As a Gentile and a tax collector,* i.e., as an outsider (from a Jewish-Christian perspective); see 15.26; cf. 8.10; 11.19. **18.18** *Truly I tell you.* See note on 5.18. *You* is plural, pointing to the authority of the gathered church to excommunicate errant members (cf. note on 16.19; see Jn 20.23; 1 Cor 5.1–5; 2 Thess 3.6–15; 2 Jn 10). **18.19** *Ask.* See 7.7–11. **18.20** *Where two or three are gathered,* here as a court of discipline. *In my name* (see also 7.22; 10.22) implies the vicarious presence and authority of the resurrected Jesus (see 28.20; 1 Cor 5.3–4). **18.21–22** Cf. Lk 17.4. **18.21** *Peter.* See note on 14.28. *Another member.* See note on 18.15. The number *seven* suggests completeness (see Gen 4.15; Lev 26.18; Lk 17.4; Rev 1.4, 12, 16). **18.22** *I tell you.* See note on 5.18. **18.23–35** An allegorical parable. **18.23** *Kingdom of heaven.* See note on 4.17. *May be compared.* See note on 13.24. The *king* (a thinly veiled allusion to God) is a frequent figure in Matthew's parables (see 17.25; 22.2; 25.34). **18.24** *Ten thousand talents* is an unimaginable

brought to him; 25 and, as he could not
pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, to-
gether with his wife and children and all
his possessions, and payment to be made.
26 So the slave fell on his knees before
him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and
I will pay you everything.' 27 And out of
pity for him, the lord of that slave re-
leased him and forgave him the debt.
28 But that same slave, as he went out,
came upon one of his fellow slaves who
owed him a hundred denarii;[s] and seiz-
ing him by the throat, he said, 'Pay what
you owe.' 29 Then his fellow slave fell
down and pleaded with him, 'Have pa-
tience with me, and I will pay you.' 30 But
he refused; then he went and threw him
into prison until he would pay the debt.
31 When his fellow slaves saw what had
happened, they were greatly distressed,
and they went and reported to their lord
all that had taken place. 32 Then his lord
summoned him and said to him, 'You
wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt
because you pleaded with me. 33 Should
you not have had mercy on your fellow
slave, as I had mercy on you?' 34 And in
anger his lord handed him over to be tor-
tured until he would pay his entire debt.
35 So my heavenly Father will also do to
every one of you, if you do not forgive
your brother or sister[t] from your heart."

Teaching About Divorce

19 When Jesus had finished saying
these things, he left Galilee and
went to the region of Judea beyond the
Jordan. 2 Large crowds followed him, and
he cured them there.

3 Some Pharisees came to him, and to
test him they asked, "Is it lawful for a man
to divorce his wife for any cause?" 4 He
answered, "Have you not read that the
one who made them at the beginning
'made them male and female,' 5 and said,
'For this reason a man shall leave his fa-
ther and mother and be joined to his wife,
and the two shall become one flesh'? 6 So
they are no longer two, but one flesh.
Therefore what God has joined together,
let no one separate." 7 They said to him,
"Why then did Moses command us to give
a certificate of dismissal and to divorce
her?" 8 He said to them, "It was because
you were so hard-hearted that Moses al-
lowed you to divorce your wives, but from
the beginning it was not so. 9 And I say to
you, whoever divorces his wife, except for
unchastity, and marries another commits
adultery."[u]

10 His disciples said to him, "If such is
the case of a man with his wife, it is better
not to marry." 11 But he said to them,
"Not everyone can accept this teaching,
but only those to whom it is given. 12 For
there are eunuchs who have been so from
birth, and there are eunuchs who have
been made eunuchs by others, and there
are eunuchs who have made themselves
eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of
heaven. Let anyone accept this who can."

Jesus Blesses Little Children

13 Then little children were being
brought to him in order that he might lay

s The denarius was the usual day's wage for a laborer t Gk *brother* u Other ancient authorities read *except on the ground of unchastity, causes her to commit adultery*; others add at the end of the verse *and he who marries a divorced woman commits adultery*

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amount (see text note *r*). **18.27** *Pity.* See 9.36. *The lord.* See note on 7.21; see also 10.24–25. **18.28** *A hundred denarii.* See text note *s*. **18.33** *Mercy.* See 9.13; 12.7. **18.35** On the need to *forgive*, see 6.14–15; 8.21–22.

19.1–20.34 Matthew rejoins the Marcan outline. Jesus, with his disciples and the crowd(s), moves from Galilee to Jerusalem. **19.1–12** Cf. Mk 10.1–12. **19.1–2** See note on 4.23–25. **19.1** *When Jesus had finished.* See note on 7.28. **19.3** *Pharisees.* See note on 3.7. *To test.* See note on 16.1. **19.4** *Have you not read?* See note on 12.3. *Male and female.* See Gen 1.27. **19.5** See Gen 2.24, quoted also in 1 Cor 6.16; Eph 5.31. **19.7** On Moses' *command*, see note on 8.4. *Certificate of dismissal.* See Deut 24.1; see also Mt 5.31. **19.8** *Hard-hearted*, i.e., stubborn or obstinate. Paul also argues that the law cannot annul what was established *from the beginning* (see Gal 3.17). **19.9** *And I say to you.* See note on 5.18. *Except for unchastity.* See 5.31–32. **19.11** *This teaching* refers either to Jesus' teaching on divorce (19.3–9) or to the disciples' comment on not marrying (19.10). *Those to whom it is given*, probably a reference to the gift of celibacy (see 1 Cor 7.7). **19.12** *Eunuchs*, emasculated males, were often keepers of the royal harem (see Esth 2.3, 14; Acts 8.27), but in Judaism they were excluded from the community (see Deut 23.1). *Have made themselves eunuchs*, probably hyperbole for practicing celibacy (see also 22.30; 1 Cor 7.8, 25–40). **19.13–15** Cf. Mk 10.13–16; Lk 18.15–17. See

his hands on them and pray. The disciples
spoke sternly to those who brought them;
14 but Jesus said, "Let the little children
come to me, and do not stop them; for it
is to such as these that the kingdom of
heaven belongs." 15 And he laid his hands
on them and went on his way.

The Rich Young Man

16 Then someone came to him and
said, "Teacher, what good deed must I do
to have eternal life?" 17 And he said to
him, "Why do you ask me about what is
good? There is only one who is good. If
you wish to enter into life, keep the com-
mandments." 18 He said to him, "Which
ones?" And Jesus said, "You shall not
murder; You shall not commit adultery;
You shall not steal; You shall not bear
false witness; 19 Honor your father and
mother; also, You shall love your neigh-
bor as yourself." 20 The young man said to
him, "I have kept all these;[v] what do I
still lack?" 21 Jesus said to him, "If you
wish to be perfect, go, sell your posses-
sions, and give the money[w] to the poor,
and you will have treasure in heaven;
then come, follow me." 22 When the
young man heard this word, he went away
grieving, for he had many possessions.

23 Then Jesus said to his disciples,
"Truly I tell you, it will be hard for a rich
person to enter the kingdom of heaven.
24 Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel
to go through the eye of a needle than for
someone who is rich to enter the kingdom
of God." 25 When the disciples heard this,
they were greatly astounded and said,
"Then who can be saved?" 26 But Jesus
looked at them and said, "For mortals it is
impossible, but for God all things are
possible."

27 Then Peter said in reply, "Look, we
have left everything and followed you.
What then will we have?" 28 Jesus said to
them, "Truly I tell you, at the renewal of
all things, when the Son of Man is seated
on the throne of his glory, you who have
followed me will also sit on twelve
thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Is-
rael. 29 And everyone who has left houses
or brothers or sisters or father or mother
or children or fields, for my name's sake,
will receive a hundredfold,[x] and will in-
herit eternal life. 30 But many who are
first will be last, and the last will be first.

The Laborers in the Vineyard

20 "For the kingdom of heaven is
like a landowner who went out
early in the morning to hire laborers for
his vineyard. 2 After agreeing with the la-
borers for the usual daily wage,[y] he sent
them into his vineyard. 3 When he went
out about nine o'clock, he saw others
standing idle in the marketplace; 4 and he
said to them, 'You also go into the vine-
yard, and I will pay you whatever is right.'
So they went. 5 When he went out again

v Other ancient authorities add *from my youth*
w Gk lacks *the money* x Other ancient authorities read *manifold* y Gk *a denarius*

Gospel of Thomas 22; 46. **19.13** *Little children,* here actual children (see 18.1–4; cf. 18.6–10). *Lay his hands on them,* i.e., to impart a blessing (see Gen 48.8–16). **19.14** *To such as these,* i.e., to those of humble status (see note on 18.4). **19.16–30** Cf. Mk 10.17–31; Lk 18.18–30. **19.16** *What good deed must I do?* See 5.17–20; 7.15–20; cf. Mk 10.17–18. **19.17** *Enter into life,* i.e., enter the kingdom (see 19.23–24). **19.18–19** See Ex 20.12–16; Lev 19.18; Deut 5.16–20; see also Mt 5.21–37. **19.21** *Perfect.* See note on 5.48. *Give ... to the poor.* See 26.9–11. *Treasure in heaven.* See 6.19–21. **19.23–26** Cf. Mk 10.23–27; Lk 18.24–27. **19.23** *Truly I tell you.* See note on 5.18. On the difficulties for a *rich person,* see 1 Tim 6.9–10, 17–19; Jas 5.1–6. **19.24** *Camel ... through the eye of a needle.* The hyperbole suggests virtual impossibility. **19.26** *All things are possible.* See also Gen 18.14; Mk 14.36; Lk 1.37. **19.27–30** Cf. Mk 10.28–31; Lk 13.30; 18.28–30; 22.28–30. **19.27** *Peter.* See note on 14.28. *Followed.* See 4.18–22. **19.28** *Truly I tell you.* See note on 5.18. *Renewal,* a revitalized creation following the final judgment (see also 2 Pet 3.10–13; Rev 21.1–22.5). *Son of Man ... on the throne.* See note on 8.20; see also 16.27; 25.31–46. *Twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes.* See note on 10.1; see also 1 Cor 6.2; Rev 3.21; 4.4. **19.29** On leaving family and possessions, see 8.21–22; 10.21–23, 37; 12.46–50. The church provides a *hundredfold* of brothers and sisters (see 12.50). **19.30** See note on 18.4; see also 20.16; Lk 13.30; *Gospel of Thomas* 4b.

20.1–16 A general illustration of "the last will be first" (19.30; 20.16). **20.1** *Early in the morning,* about 6:00 A.M. **20.2** *Daily wage.* A denarius (see text note *y*) was about enough to feed a large peasant family for one day. **20.3** Poor day laborers gathered in the *marketplace* hoping to find work. **20.4** *Whatever is right,* i.e., whatever is just.

about noon and about three o'clock, he
did the same. 6 And about five o'clock he
went out and found others standing
around; and he said to them, 'Why are
you standing here idle all day?' 7 They
said to him, 'Because no one has hired
us.' He said to them, 'You also go into
the vineyard.' 8 When evening came, the
owner of the vineyard said to his man-
ager, 'Call the laborers and give them
their pay, beginning with the last and
then going to the first.' 9 When those
hired about five o'clock came, each of
them received the usual daily wage.[z]
10 Now when the first came, they thought
they would receive more; but each of
them also received the usual daily wage.[z]
11 And when they received it, they grum-
bled against the landowner, 12 saying,
'These last worked only one hour, and
you have made them equal to us who have
borne the burden of the day and the
scorching heat.' 13 But he replied to one of
them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong;
did you not agree with me for the usual
daily wage?[z] 14 Take what belongs to you
and go; I choose to give to this last the
same as I give to you. 15 Am I not allowed
to do what I choose with what belongs to
me? Or are you envious because I am gen-
erous?'[a] 16 So the last will be first, and the
first will be last."[b]

A Third Time Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection

17 While Jesus was going up to Jeru-
salem, he took the twelve disciples aside
by themselves, and said to them on the
way, 18 "See, we are going up to Jerusa-
lem, and the Son of Man will be handed
over to the chief priests and scribes, and
they will condemn him to death; 19 then
they will hand him over to the Gentiles to
be mocked and flogged and crucified;
and on the third day he will be raised."

The Request of the Mother of James and John

20 Then the mother of the sons of
Zebedee came to him with her sons, and
kneeling before him, she asked a favor of
him. 21 And he said to her, "What do you
want?" She said to him, "Declare that
these two sons of mine will sit, one at your
right hand and one at your left, in your
kingdom." 22 But Jesus answered, "You
do not know what you are asking. Are you
able to drink the cup that I am about to
drink?"[c] They said to him, "We are able."
23 He said to them, "You will indeed drink
my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at
my left, this is not mine to grant, but it is
for those for whom it has been prepared
by my Father."

24 When the ten heard it, they were
angry with the two brothers. 25 But Jesus
called them to him and said, "You know
that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over
them, and their great ones are tyrants
over them. 26 It will not be so among you;
but whoever wishes to be great among
you must be your servant, 27 and whoever

z Gk *a denarius* *a* Gk *is your eye evil because I am good?* *b* Other ancient authorities add *for many are called but few are chosen* *c* Other ancient authorities add *or to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?*

No precise wage is stated (cf. 20.2). **20.8** *Evening.* The poor must be paid on the working day before sunset (see Lev 19.13; Deut 24.15). *The owner,* lit. "the lord." See note on 7.21; see also 21.40, 42. *Beginning with the last.* See 19.30; 20.16. **20.13** *Agree.* See 20.2. **20.15** *Envious,* lit. having an "evil eye" (see text note *a*; see also note on 6.23), a powerful and evil-causing look often associated with envy and resentment, here contrasted with the good "lord." **20.16** See note on 18.4; 19.30. **20.17–19** Cf. Mk 10.32–34; Lk 18.31–33. The third passion prediction (see note on 16.21–23). **20.17** *Twelve disciples.* See 10.1. **20.18** *Son of Man.* See note on 8.20. *Handed over.* See note on 17.22. **20.19** Specificity of content characterizes the third prediction (cf. 16.21; 17.22–23). For fulfillment of the predictions, see 27.26–31. **20.20–23** Cf. Mk 10.35–40. **20.20** The *mother* of the *sons of Zebedee* (i.e., James and John; see 4.21) later observes the crucifixion; apparently she was a follower of Jesus (see 27.55–56). **20.21** Seats at the *right hand* and at the *left* were the second and third positions of power and honor (see 22.44; cf. 25.33; 27.38). The scene envisioned is probably the judgment court (see 19.28). *Your kingdom,* i.e., the kingdom of the Son of Man (see note on 13.41). **20.22** *You* is plural; Jesus responds directly to James and John. *The cup* symbolizes one's destiny (see Pss 11.6; 16.5), here suffering and death (see Mt 26.39). **20.23** *You will indeed drink my cup.* James was later martyred (see Acts 12.2) and various legends report John's death. *Not mine to grant.* Here Matthew subordinates the Son to the Father (cf. 11.27). **20.24–28** Cf. Mk 10.41–45;

wishes to be first among you must be your
slave; 28 just as the Son of Man came not
to be served but to serve, and to give his
life a ransom for many."

Jesus Heals Two Blind Men

29 As they were leaving Jericho, a
large crowd followed him. 30 There were
two blind men sitting by the roadside.
When they heard that Jesus was passing
by, they shouted, "Lord,[d] have mercy on
us, Son of David!" 31 The crowd sternly
ordered them to be quiet; but they
shouted even more loudly, "Have mercy
on us, Lord, Son of David!" 32 Jesus stood
still and called them, saying, "What do
you want me to do for you?" 33 They said
to him, "Lord, let our eyes be opened."
34 Moved with compassion, Jesus touched
their eyes. Immediately they regained
their sight and followed him.

Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

21 When they had come near Jeru-
salem and had reached Beth-
phage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent
two disciples, 2 saying to them, "Go into
the village ahead of you, and immediately
you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with
her; untie them and bring them to me. 3 If
anyone says anything to you, just say this,
'The Lord needs them.' And he will send
them immediately.[e]" 4 This took place to
fulfill what had been spoken through the
prophet, saying,

5 "Tell the daughter of Zion,
Look, your king is coming to you,
humble, and mounted on
a donkey,
and on a colt, the foal of
a donkey."

6 The disciples went and did as Jesus had
directed them; 7 they brought the donkey
and the colt, and put their cloaks on them,
and he sat on them. 8 A very large crowd[f]
spread their cloaks on the road, and oth-
ers cut branches from the trees and
spread them on the road. 9 The crowds
that went ahead of him and that followed
were shouting,

"Hosanna to the Son of David!
Blessed is the one who comes in
the name of the Lord!
Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

10 When he entered Jerusalem, the whole
city was in turmoil, asking, "Who is this?"
11 The crowds were saying, "This is the
prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."

Jesus Cleanses the Temple

12 Then Jesus entered the temple[g]
and drove out all who were selling and
buying in the temple, and he overturned

d Other ancient authorities lack *Lord* *e* Or *'The Lord needs them and will send them back immediately.'* *f* Or *Most of the crowd* *g* Other ancient authorities add *of God*

Lk 22.24–27. **20.27** See note on 18.4. **20.28** *Son of Man.* See note on 8.20. A *ransom* is the cost of freeing a prisoner or slave; see Titus 2.14 ("redeem"); 1 Pet 1.18–19. *For many.* See Isa 53.12. **20.29–34** A doublet of 9.27–31; cf. Mk 10.46–52; Lk 18.35–43. **20.29** *Jericho,* a city in the Jordan Valley, about ten miles from Jerusalem. **20.30** *Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David.* See notes on 7.21; 9.27. **20.34** *Compassion.* See note on 9.36. *Touched.* See note on 8.3. "Seeing" leads to "following" (see notes on 4.19; 5.1).

21.1–23.39 Jesus enters Jerusalem and the conflict with the Jewish religious leaders intensifies. **21.1–11** Cf. Mk 11.1–11a; Lk 19.28–38; Jn 12.12–19. **21.1** *Bethphage,* a small village near Jerusalem. *Mount of Olives.* See note on 24.3. **21.2** The *village* is probably Bethany (see note on 21.17). **21.3** *The Lord,* God or Jesus. The wording is ambiguous (see also note on 7.21). **21.4–5** The twelfth quotation formula (see note on 1.22–23) introduces a composite quote from Isa 62.11; Zech 9.9. **21.5** *Daughter of Zion,* the city of Jerusalem and its inhabitants. *Humble.* See 11.29; 20.28. In the poetic text of Zechariah, the same thought is often expressed in successive lines and *on a colt* is simply a repetition of *on a donkey.* Matthew interprets them as two different animals (see 21.7; cf. Mk 11.7). **21.8** *Spread . . . cloaks.* See 2 Kings 9.13. At the Feast of Booths, worshipers formed a procession around the temple altar carrying *branches* woven of myrtle, willow, and palm (see Lev 23.39–43; Jn 12.13). **21.9** *Hosanna,* lit. "save us," but here just a shout of praise (see also 21.15; cf. Ps 118.25a). *Blessed . . . in the name of the Lord* (see also 23.39) is from Ps 118.26, a verse of the Hallel (Pss 113–118), which was chanted at the great Jewish festivals (see note on 26.30). *Son of David.* See notes on 1.1; 9.27. Matthew interprets *the one who comes* as a title for the messianic healer-king (see 3.11; 11.2; 21.5). **21.11** *Crowds.* See note on 4.25; see also 21.46. *Prophet,* an important but insufficient title for Jesus (see note on 11.9; 16.14–16). *Jesus from Nazareth.* See notes on 1.21; 2.23. **21.12–17** Cf. Mk 11.15–17; Lk 19.45–46; Jn 2.13–17. Matthew logically places the temple

the tables of the money changers and the
seats of those who sold doves. 13 He said
to them, "It is written,
'My house shall be called a house
of prayer';
but you are making it a den
of robbers."
14 The blind and the lame came to
him in the temple, and he cured them.
15 But when the chief priests and the
scribes saw the amazing things that he
did, and heard[h] the children crying out
in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of Da-
vid," they became angry 16 and said to
him, "Do you hear what these are saying?"
Jesus said to them, "Yes; have you never
read,
'Out of the mouths of infants and
nursing babies
you have prepared praise for
yourself'?"
17 He left them, went out of the city to
Bethany, and spent the night there.

Jesus Curses the Fig Tree

18 In the morning, when he returned
to the city, he was hungry. 19 And seeing a
fig tree by the side of the road, he went to
it and found nothing at all on it but leaves.
Then he said to it, "May no fruit ever
come from you again!" And the fig tree
withered at once. 20 When the disciples
saw it, they were amazed, saying, "How
did the fig tree wither at once?" 21 Jesus
answered them, "Truly I tell you, if you
have faith and do not doubt, not only will
you do what has been done to the fig tree,
but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be
lifted up and thrown into the sea,' it will
be done. 22 Whatever you ask for in
prayer with faith, you will receive."

The Authority of Jesus Questioned

23 When he entered the temple, the
chief priests and the elders of the people
came to him as he was teaching, and said,
"By what authority are you doing these
things, and who gave you this authority?"
24 Jesus said to them, "I will also ask you
one question; if you tell me the answer,
then I will also tell you by what authority
I do these things. 25 Did the baptism of
John come from heaven, or was it of hu-
man origin?" And they argued with one
another, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will
say to us, 'Why then did you not believe
him?' 26 But if we say, 'Of human origin,'
we are afraid of the crowd; for all regard
John as a prophet." 27 So they answered
Jesus, "We do not know." And he said to
them, "Neither will I tell you by what au-
thority I am doing these things.

The Parable of the Two Sons

28 "What do you think? A man had
two sons; he went to the first and said,
'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.'
29 He answered, 'I will not'; but later he
changed his mind and went. 30 The fa-
ther[i] went to the second and said the
same; and he answered, 'I go, sir'; but he

h Gk lacks *heard* *i* Gk *He*

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cleansing on the same day as the entry (cf. Mk 11.11). **21.12** The *selling* and *buying* of animals for sacrifice and the presence of *money changers* were necessary adjuncts of temple sacrifices (see, e.g., Lev 1–7; Num 3.47). *Doves* were the sacrifices of the poor (Lev 5.7). **21.13** See Isa 56.7; Jer 7.11; see also Zech 14.21. **21.14** See note on 4.23–25. *The blind and the lame* were unclean and therefore should not have been in the temple (see Lev 21.16–20; 2 Sam 5.8; note on Mt 27.51). **21.15** Together with the elders (see 21.23), *the chief priests and the scribes* formed Jesus' Jerusalem opponents (see note on 2.4). *Children*, apparently to be understood literally (see notes on 18.2; 18.6). *Hosanna to the Son of David.* See 21.9. **21.16** *Have you never read.* See note on 12.3. The text cited is Ps 8.2 (Septuagint). **21.17** *Bethany*, a village about two miles from Jerusalem on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives (see 21.1–2; 26.6–13). **21.18–22** Cf. Mk 11.12–14, 20–24. The only cursing miracle in the Gospels emphasizes the power of faith and foreshadows the coming destruction of Israel (cf. 3.10). **21.21** *Truly I tell you.* See note on 5.18. On the power of faith to move a *mountain*, see 17.20; *Gospel of Thomas* 48; 106. **21.22** See 7.7–11. **21.23–27** Cf. Mk 11.27–33; Lk 20.1–8. The Jerusalem leaders challenge Jesus' actions. **21.23** The *chief priests and the elders.* See notes on 16.21; 21.15. **21.25** The *baptism of John.* See 3.1–6. *From heaven*, i.e., from God. On those who did *not believe him.* See 21.32. **21.26** *Regard John as a prophet.* See 14.5; see also 3.4; 11.7–15; 17.9–13; cf. 21.46.

21.28–22.14 Four allegorical parables illustrate the rejection of Israel's leaders and warn the new people against self-righteous arrogance. **21.28–32** The first parable is given an immediate application. **21.28** *What do you think?*

did not go. 31 Which of the two did the
will of his father?" They said, "The first."
Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, the
tax collectors and the prostitutes are go-
ing into the kingdom of God ahead of
you. 32 For John came to you in the way of
righteousness and you did not believe
him, but the tax collectors and the prosti-
tutes believed him; and even after you
saw it, you did not change your minds and
believe him.

The Parable of the Wicked Tenants

33 "Listen to another parable. There
was a landowner who planted a vineyard,
put a fence around it, dug a wine press in
it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased
it to tenants and went to another country.
34 When the harvest time had come, he
sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his
produce. 35 But the tenants seized his
slaves and beat one, killed another, and
stoned another. 36 Again he sent other
slaves, more than the first; and they
treated them in the same way. 37 Finally
he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will
respect my son.' 38 But when the tenants
saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This
is the heir; come, let us kill him and get
his inheritance.' 39 So they seized him,
threw him out of the vineyard, and killed
him. 40 Now when the owner of the vine-
yard comes, what will he do to those ten-
ants?" 41 They said to him, "He will put
those wretches to a miserable death, and
lease the vineyard to other tenants who
will give him the produce at the harvest
time."

42 Jesus said to them, "Have you
never read in the scriptures:

'The stone that the builders
rejected
has become the cornerstone;[j]
this was the Lord's doing,
and it is amazing in our eyes'?

43 Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of
God will be taken away from you and
given to a people that produces the fruits
of the kingdom.[k] 44 The one who falls on
this stone will be broken to pieces; and it
will crush anyone on whom it falls."[l]

45 When the chief priests and the
Pharisees heard his parables, they realized
that he was speaking about them. 46 They
wanted to arrest him, but they feared the
crowds, because they regarded him as a
prophet.

The Parable of the Wedding Banquet

22 Once more Jesus spoke to them
in parables, saying: 2 "The king-
dom of heaven may be compared to a
king who gave a wedding banquet for his
son. 3 He sent his slaves to call those who
had been invited to the wedding banquet,

j Or *keystone* *k* Gk *the fruits of it* *l* Other ancient authorities lack verse 44

See 17.25; 18.12. **21.31** *Will of his father.* See note on 6.10. *Truly I tell you.* See note on 5.18. *The tax collectors and the prostitutes.* See note on 9.10. *Into the kingdom of God.* See note on 4.17. **21.32** *The way of righteousness.* See note on 3.15. *You did not believe him.* See 21.25. **21.33–46** Cf. Mk 12.1–12; Lk 20.9–19. The second parable is strongly allegorical. See also *Gospel of Thomas* 65. **21.33** Isa 5.1–7 forms the basis of this parable and provides the key to its interpretation. The *landowner* is God. The *vineyard* is Israel. The *tenants* are the Jewish leaders. **21.34** *Produce,* lit. "fruits," i.e., good conduct; see note on 3.8. **21.35** The *slaves* are probably Israelite prophets (see 22.6; 23.29–36). **21.36** *Other slaves* are probably later Israelite prophets or early Christian prophets and apostles (see 23.34–35). **21.37** *His son* is Jesus (see 3.17; 17.5). **21.39** *Out of the vineyard,* perhaps suggesting the crucifixion outside Jerusalem (see note on 27.33). **21.40** *Owner,* lit. "lord" (see notes on 7.21; 20.8). **21.41** The *miserable death* refers either to the final judgment or to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. (see note on 22.7; see also Isa 5.24–25). *Other tenants* are believing Christians. **21.42** *Have you never read . . .?* See note on 12.3. The text cited is Ps 118.22–23 from the Hallel (see note on 21.9). It is also applied to Jesus in Acts 4.11; 1 Pet 2.7. **21.43** *Therefore I tell you.* See note on 5.18. *Kingdom of God.* See note on 4.17. *A people,* lit. "a nation," here implying Christians (cf. 28.19; see 1 Pet 2.9). *The fruits of the kingdom,* righteous conduct (see note on 3.8; cf. 23.2–3). **21.44** *The one who falls on this stone,* probably an allusion to Isa 8.14 (see also Dan 2.34–35, 44–45). **21.45** *Chief priests.* See note on 2.4. *Pharisees.* See note on 3.7; see also 22.15, 34, 41. The reaction of the *crowds* is distinguished from that of the religious leaders (see note on 4.25; cf. 27.24–25). **21.46** *Prophet.* See 21.11. **22.1–10** Cf. Lk 14.16–24. See also *Gospel of Thomas* 64. The third allegorical parable repeats many aspects of the second. **22.2** *Kingdom of heaven.* See note on 4.17. *May be compared.* See note on 13.24. *King.* See note on 18.23. *Wedding banquet.* See note on 8.11. **22.3** *Slaves* are probably Israelite prophets. *Those . . . invited* are

but they would not come. 4 Again he sent
other slaves, saying, 'Tell those who have
been invited: Look, I have prepared my
dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have
been slaughtered, and everything is
ready; come to the wedding banquet.'
5 But they made light of it and went away,
one to his farm, another to his business,
6 while the rest seized his slaves, mis-
treated them, and killed them. 7 The king
was enraged. He sent his troops, de-
stroyed those murderers, and burned
their city. 8 Then he said to his slaves,
'The wedding is ready, but those invited
were not worthy. 9 Go therefore into the
main streets, and invite everyone you find
to the wedding banquet.' 10 Those slaves
went out into the streets and gathered all
whom they found, both good and bad; so
the wedding hall was filled with guests.

11 "But when the king came in to see
the guests, he noticed a man there who
was not wearing a wedding robe, 12 and he
said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in
here without a wedding robe?' And he
was speechless. 13 Then the king said to
the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot,
and throw him into the outer darkness,
where there will be weeping and gnashing
of teeth.' 14 For many are called, but few
are chosen."

The Question About Paying Taxes

15 Then the Pharisees went and plot-
ted to entrap him in what he said. 16 So
they sent their disciples to him, along with
the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we
know that you are sincere, and teach the
way of God in accordance with truth, and
show deference to no one; for you do not
regard people with partiality. 17 Tell us,
then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay
taxes to the emperor, or not?" 18 But
Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why
are you putting me to the test, you hypo-
crites? 19 Show me the coin used for the
tax." And they brought him a denarius.
20 Then he said to them, "Whose head is
this, and whose title?" 21 They answered,
"The emperor's." Then he said to them,
"Give therefore to the emperor the things
that are the emperor's, and to God the
things that are God's." 22 When they
heard this, they were amazed; and they
left him and went away.

The Question About the Resurrection

23 The same day some Sadducees
came to him, saying there is no resurrec-
tion;[m] and they asked him a question,

m Other ancient authorities read *who say that there is no resurrection*

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the Israelites. **22.4** *Other slaves* are probably Christian apostles or prophets (see note on 21.36). **22.6** On the persecution and martyrdom of Israelite prophets and Christian apostles, see 10.16–23; 21.35–36; 23.29–35. **22.7** The graphic description of the punishment (cf. 21.41) seems to be a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in 70 C.E. **22.10** *Both good and bad* are within the Christian community (see note on 13.41), leading to the comments in 22.11–14. **22.11–14** A fourth allegorical parable, added by Matthew to the preceding one. **22.11** A *wedding robe* would not be expected of someone summoned off the streets (22.9–10); it probably symbolizes a new way of life (see Rom 13.14; Gal 3.27–28; Col 3.11–12). **22.12** *Friend*, probably intended sarcastically (see 20.13; 26.50). **22.13** *Weeping and gnashing of teeth*. See note on 8.12. **22.14** The final words of the parable serve as a warning against self-righteous arrogance among God's new people (see also 7.13–14; Rom 11.13–24; 2 Esd 8.3, 41; 9.15; *Gospel of Thomas* 23).

22.15–46 Three more attempts by the Jerusalem authorities to entrap Jesus intensify the conflict. **22.15–22** Cf. Mk 12.13–17; Lk 20.20–26. **22.15** *Pharisees*. See note on 3.7. On the plot to *entrap*, see 12.14; 16.1; 19.3; 22.35. **22.16** *Herodians* were probably the supporters of Herod Antipas (see 14.1) or the Herodian dynasty (see note on 2.1). The group is mentioned nowhere outside the Gospels (see also Mk 3.6; 12.13). *Teacher*. The opening words are clearly insincere flattery. *Do not regard people with partiality*, i.e., do not show favoritism, especially toward people of high social status (see, e.g., Jas 2.1–9; cf. Mt 23.5–7). **22.17** Since census *taxes* were demanded by the Romans and despised by the Jews, the trap (22.15) was to force Jesus to make a statement that was either treasonous (to Rome) or offensive (to Jews). **22.18** *Hypocrites*. See note on 15.7. **22.19–20** A silver *denarius* bore an image of the emperor's *head* (see Ex 20.4; Deut 5.8) and the *title* "TIBERIUS CAESAR, SON OF THE DIVINE AUGUSTUS, AUGUSTUS." **22.21** Jesus appears to support the state (see also 17.24–27; Rom 13.1–7; 1 Pet 2.13–17), but the political implications of his religious, social, and economic teachings and life-style were revolutionary and he was crucified by the Romans. **22.23–33** Cf. Mk 12.18–27; Lk 20.27–39. **22.23** *Sadducees* (see note on 3.7) did not believe in the *resurrection*

saying, 24"Teacher, Moses said, 'If a man
dies childless, his brother shall marry the
widow, and raise up children for his
brother.' 25Now there were seven broth-
ers among us; the first married, and died
childless, leaving the widow to his brother.
26The second did the same, so also the
third, down to the seventh. 27Last of all,
the woman herself died. 28In the resur-
rection, then, whose wife of the seven will
she be? For all of them had married her."
29 Jesus answered them, "You are
wrong, because you know neither the
scriptures nor the power of God. 30For in
the resurrection they neither marry nor
are given in marriage, but are like an-
gels[n] in heaven. 31And as for the resur-
rection of the dead, have you not read
what was said to you by God, 32'I am the
God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and
the God of Jacob'? He is God not of the
dead, but of the living." 33And when the
crowd heard it, they were astounded at
his teaching.

The Greatest Commandment

34 When the Pharisees heard that he
had silenced the Sadducees, they gath-
ered together, 35and one of them, a law-
yer, asked him a question to test him.
36"Teacher, which commandment in the
law is the greatest?" 37He said to him,
" 'You shall love the Lord your God with
all your heart, and with all your soul, and
with all your mind.' 38This is the greatest
and first commandment. 39And a second
is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as
yourself.' 40On these two commandments
hang all the law and the prophets."

The Question About David's Son

41 Now while the Pharisees were gath-
ered together, Jesus asked them this ques-
tion: 42"What do you think of the
Messiah?[o] Whose son is he?" They said to
him, "The son of David." 43He said to
them, "How is it then that David by the
Spirit[p] calls him Lord, saying,
44 'The Lord said to my Lord,
"Sit at my right hand,
until I put your enemies under
your feet" '?
45If David thus calls him Lord, how can
he be his son?" 46No one was able to
give him an answer, nor from that day
did anyone dare to ask him any more
questions.

Jesus Denounces Scribes and Pharisees

23 Then Jesus said to the crowds
and to his disciples, 2"The scribes
and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat;
3therefore, do whatever they teach you
and follow it; but do not do as they do, for

n Other ancient authorities add *of God*
o Or *Christ* *p* Gk *in spirit*

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because it is not affirmed in the Pentateuch (see Acts 23.8). **22.24** *Moses*, the presumed author of the Pentateuch (see note on 8.4). The quotation derives from Deut 25.5–6. The purpose of this legislation was to preserve the deceased male's family line and name (see Gen 38.8; Ruth 4.10). **22.30** *Angels*, immortal beings who neither marry nor procreate (see 1 Cor 15.42–44). **22.31** *Have you not read*. See note on 12.3. **22.32** The quotation is from Ex 3.6. The present tense (*I am*) is here taken to imply that the deceased patriarchs were still *living*, i.e., resurrected. Evidence for the doctrine of resurrection is thus found in the Pentateuch (see note on 22.23). **22.34–40** Cf. Mk 12.28–31; Lk 10.25–28. **22.35** *Lawyer*, one learned in the Mosaic law. *To test*. See note on 22.15. **22.37** Deut 6.5; this text was central to Jewish liturgy and life. **22.39** Lev 19.18; also cited in 19.19. **22.40** *The law and the prophets*. See note on 5.17. **22.41–46** Cf. Mk 12.35–37; Lk 20.41–44. A fourth and final question is posed by Jesus (see note on 22.15–46). **22.42** *The Messiah*. See note on 1.1. *The Son of David*. See note on 1.1; see also Isa 11.1–9; Jer 23.5; 33.15; Jn 7.41–42; Acts 2.29–36; 13.22–23; Rom 1.3–4. **22.43** *By the Spirit*. It was assumed that David, the presumed author of Psalms, spoke under inspiration and thus prophetically (see Acts 2.30–31; 4.25). **22.44** Ps 110.1; see also Ps 8.6b. *The Lord*, here God. *My Lord*, originally the Israelite king, here understood to be the promised Messiah (see note on 7.21). At the *right hand* was a position of power (see 20.21; 25.33; 26.64). **22.45** Fathers never address their sons as "lord," but only sons their fathers or inferiors their superiors. Since Matthew actually stresses Jesus' Davidic sonship elsewhere (see 1.1, 6, 17; note on 9.27), this saying probably suggests that Son of God, Son of Man, and Lord are more accurate titles.

23.1–36 A vitriolic attack on the leaders of Israel. **23.1–12** Cf. Mk 12.37–39; Lk 11.46; 20.45–46. **23.1** *Crowds*. See note on 4.25. **23.2** *Scribes*. See note on 2.4. *Pharisees*. See note on 3.7. *Sit on Moses' seat*, i.e., succeed Moses as authoritative teachers (see note on 5.1). **23.3** The command to *do whatever they teach* is

they do not practice what they teach.
4 They tie up heavy burdens, hard to
bear,[q] and lay them on the shoulders of
others; but they themselves are unwilling
to lift a finger to move them. 5 They do all
their deeds to be seen by others; for they
make their phylacteries broad and their
fringes long. 6 They love to have the place
of honor at banquets and the best seats in
the synagogues, 7 and to be greeted with
respect in the marketplaces, and to have
people call them rabbi. 8 But you are not
to be called rabbi, for you have one
teacher, and you are all students.[r] 9 And
call no one your father on earth, for you
have one Father—the one in heaven.
10 Nor are you to be called instructors, for
you have one instructor, the Messiah.[s]
11 The greatest among you will be your
servant. 12 All who exalt themselves will be
humbled, and all who humble themselves
will be exalted.

13 "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you lock people out of the kingdom of heaven. For you do not go in yourselves, and when others are going in, you stop them.[t] 15 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cross sea and land to make a single convert, and you make the new convert twice as much a child of hell[u] as yourselves.

16 "Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the sanctuary is bound by nothing, but whoever swears by the gold of the sanctuary is bound by the oath.' 17 You blind fools! For which is greater, the gold or the sanctuary that has made the gold sacred? 18 And you say, 'Whoever swears by the altar is bound by nothing, but whoever swears by the gift that is on the altar is bound by the oath.' 19 How blind you are! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that makes the gift sacred? 20 So whoever swears by the altar, swears by it and by everything on it; 21 and whoever swears by the sanctuary, swears by it and by the one who dwells in it; 22 and whoever swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by the one who is seated upon it.

23 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint, dill, and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. It is these you ought to have practiced without neglecting the others.

q Other ancient authorities lack *hard to bear*
r Gk *brothers* *s* Or *the Christ* *t* Other authorities add here (or after verse 12) verse 14, *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses and for the sake of appearance you make long prayers; therefore you will receive the greater condemnation* *u* Gk *Gehenna*

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surprising (cf. 5.21–48; 15.1–20; 16.5–12; 19.3–9), yet it is integral to the hypocrisy charges that follow. *Not ... as they do.* See 5.20; 7.15–20. **23.4** *Heavy burdens,* the burden of Jewish law (cf. 11.28–30; see 12.9–14; 15.1–20; Acts 15.10; Gal 5.1). **23.5** *To be seen by others.* See also 6.1–18. *Phylacteries* (the Greek word can also be translated "amulets"), two small, square, leather boxes containing scripture verses, worn on the forehead and left arm by Jewish males while at prayer (see Ex 13.9, 16; Deut 6.8; 11.18). *Fringes,* probably the tassels required on the outer garments of Jewish males (see 9.20; Num 15.37–41). **23.6** *Place of honor.* See Lk 14.1, 7–11. **23.7** *Rabbi,* lit. "my great one," a title for honored teachers increasingly used in later generations by the Pharisees (see also 26.25, 49). **23.8** *One teacher,* i.e., Jesus (see 7.28–29; 8.19). *You are all students,* lit. "you are all brothers." The issue here is sibling equality (see 12.48–50). **23.9** *One Father,* i.e., God (see Mal 2.10; cf. 1 Cor 4.15). Fathers are not mentioned in the redefined "family" of disciples (see 12.48–50). **23.10** *Instructors,* academic teachers. **23.11** See also 20.25–28. **23.12** For the theme of status reversal, see note on 18.4.

23.13–36 A series of seven prophetic "woes" against scribes and Pharisees. **23.13** *Woe.* See note on 11.21; cf. 5.3–12. *Scribes and Pharisees.* See 23.2; notes on 2.4; 3.7. *Hypocrites!* See note on 6.2. *Lock people out of the kingdom of heaven* (see Lk 11.52), probably by opposing Jesus and his message (cf. 16.19). **23.15** *Convert,* lit. "proselyte." See also Acts 2.10; 6.5; 13.43. *Hell.* See note on 5.22. **23.16–22** The argument highlights the absurdity of regarding a lesser oath (e.g., swearing by the gold of the sanctuary or temple) as binding while regarding a greater oath (e.g., swearing by the sanctuary or temple itself) as not binding (cf. 5.33–37; Ex 20.7). **23.16** *Blind guides.* See note on 15.14. On *gold of the sanctuary,* see 1 Kings 6.20–22. **23.21** *The one who dwells in it,* i.e., God. **23.22** *By the throne of God.* See note on 3.16. **23.23** *Tithe,* a tenth of agricultural produce given to support the temple and its priests (see Lev 27.30–33; Num 18.8–32; Deut 14.22–29; 25.1–15; Tob 1.7–8). *Mint, dill, and cummin,* the smallest herbs (see also Lk 11.42). *Justice.* See 12.18, 20; see also Mic 6.8; Zech 7.9–10. *Mercy.* See 5.7; 6.12; 9.13; 12.7; 18.23–25. *Faith.* See 21.18–22. *Without neglecting the others.* See

24 You blind guides! You strain out a gnat
but swallow a camel!
25 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees,
hypocrites! For you clean the outside of
the cup and of the plate, but inside they
are full of greed and self-indulgence.
26 You blind Pharisee! First clean the in-
side of the cup,[v] so that the outside also
may become clean.
27 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees,
hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed
tombs, which on the outside look beauti-
ful, but inside they are full of the bones of
the dead and of all kinds of filth. 28 So you
also on the outside look righteous to oth-
ers, but inside you are full of hypocrisy
and lawlessness.
29 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees,
hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the
prophets and decorate the graves of the
righteous, 30 and you say, 'If we had lived
in the days of our ancestors, we would not
have taken part with them in shedding
the blood of the prophets.' 31 Thus you
testify against yourselves that you are de-
scendants of those who murdered the
prophets. 32 Fill up, then, the measure of
your ancestors. 33 You snakes, you brood
of vipers! How can you escape being sen-
tenced to hell?[w] 34 Therefore I send you
prophets, sages, and scribes, some of
whom you will kill and crucify, and some
you will flog in your synagogues and pur-
sue from town to town, 35 so that upon
you may come all the righteous blood
shed on earth, from the blood of righ-
teous Abel to the blood of Zechariah
son of Barachiah, whom you murdered
between the sanctuary and the altar.
36 Truly I tell you, all this will come upon
this generation.

The Lament over Jerusalem

37 "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that
kills the prophets and stones those who
are sent to it! How often have I desired to
gather your children together as a hen
gathers her brood under her wings, and
you were not willing! 38 See, your house is
left to you, desolate.[x] 39 For I tell you,
you will not see me again until you say,
'Blessed is the one who comes in the name
of the Lord.' "

The Destruction of the Temple Foretold

24 As Jesus came out of the temple
and was going away, his disciples
came to point out to him the buildings of
the temple. 2 Then he asked them, "You
see all these, do you not? Truly I tell you,

v Other ancient authorities add *and of the plate*
w Gk *Gehenna* x Other ancient authorities lack *desolate*

5.17–20. **23.24** *Gnat*, an unclean insect (see Lev 11.41–44). The *camel* was also unclean (see Lev 11.4). **23.25–26** See also Lk 11.39–41. A then-current debate about the correct sequence for ritual washing of the *cup* and the *plate* (see Mk 7.3–4) provides metaphors for criticizing the performance of external rituals without first cleansing the "heart" (see 15.1–20; also 6.1–18; 23.27–28). **23.27** Tombs were *whitewashed* before Passover to warn against defiling contact with unclean *bones of the dead* (see Lev 21.11; Num 5.2; 6.6–8; 19.11–20; cf. Lk 11.44). The emphasis here, however, is on the contrast between inner and outer purity (see also 23.25–26). **23.29–36** Cf. Lk 11.47–51. **23.30** On the *blood of the prophets*, see 1 Kings 18.13; 19.14. Later legends recount the martyrdom of Isaiah and Jeremiah (see also Acts 7.52; 1 Thess 2.14–15; Heb 11.36–38). **23.32** *Fill up ... the measure*. The statement assumes a quota of evil that must be completed before the end; see also Rev 6.9–11. **23.33** *You brood of vipers*. See 3.7; 12.34. *Hell*. See note on 5.22. **23.34** *Prophets, sages, and scribes*, authoritative Christian emissaries (see notes on 10.41; 13.52). The Gospel frequently alludes to the persecution of faithful Christians (see 5.11–12; 10.16–23; 20.19; 21.35–36; 22.6; 24.9–14). **23.35** *Abel*. See Gen 4.8–10. On the death of *Zechariah*, see 2 Chr 24.20–22. A later Zechariah was *son of Barachiah* (see Zech 1.1); the author has confused the two men. **23.36** *Truly I tell you*. See note on 5.18. *This generation*. See note on 11.16. **23.37–39** Cf. Lk 13.34–35. **23.37** *Under her wings*. Cf. Deut 32.10–12; Pss 36.7; 61.4. **23.38** *House*, i.e., the temple, from which Jesus departs (see 24.1; cf. Ezek 10.18). **23.39** *For I tell you*. See note on 5.18. The quotation from Ps 118.26 (see also 21.9) probably alludes here to Jesus' coming as future apocalyptic judge (see 24.3).

24.1–25.46 The fifth discourse (see Introduction) is an expansion of Mark's "little apocalypse" (Mk 13). **24.1–2** Cf. Mk 13.1–2; Lk 21.5–6. **24.2** *Truly I tell you*. See note on 5.18. *All will be thrown down*. The Gospel of Matthew was probably written after the temple had been destroyed (see Introduction; note on 22.7). Later in the Gospel Jesus is accused of threatening

not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down."

Signs of the End of the Age

3 When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" 4 Jesus answered them, "Beware that no one leads you astray. 5 For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Messiah!'[y] and they will lead many astray. 6 And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not alarmed; for this must take place, but the end is not yet. 7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines[z] and earthquakes in various places: 8 all this is but the beginning of the birth pangs.

Persecutions Foretold

9 "Then they will hand you over to be tortured and will put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of my name. 10 Then many will fall away,[a] and they will betray one another and hate one another. 11 And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. 12 And because of the increase of lawlessness, the love of many will grow cold. 13 But the one who endures to the end will be saved. 14 And this good news[b] of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all the nations; and then the end will come.

The Desolating Sacrilege

15 "So when you see the desolating sacrilege standing in the holy place, as was spoken of by the prophet Daniel (let the reader understand), 16 then those in Judea must flee to the mountains; 17 the one on the housetop must not go down to take what is in the house; 18 the one in the field must not turn back to get a coat. 19 Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing infants in those days! 20 Pray

y Or *the Christ* z Other ancient authorities add *and pestilences* a Or *stumble* b Or *gospel*

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to destroy the temple himself (see 26.60–61; 27.40; Acts 6.14). **24.3–8** Cf. Mk 13.3–8; Lk 21.7–11. **24.3** *Sitting.* See note on 5.1. The *Mount of Olives,* located east of the Jerusalem Temple Mount (see note on 4.8; 21.1; 26.30; Acts 1.12), was the place where, according to tradition, the temple-departing glory of God went (Ezek 10.18; 11.23; see 24.1) and where the Messiah was expected to appear (based on Zech 14.1–10). *When will this be,* i.e., the destruction of the temple, which is carefully separated from the *sign* of Jesus' coming for final judgment at the end of the age; cf. Mk 13.4. **24.4** *Leads you astray.* See 24.11, 24. **24.5** According to the Jewish writer Josephus, several people in first-century Palestine claimed to be the *Messiah* (*Antiquities* 17.271–85; see also Mt 24.23–27; Acts 5.35–39; 21.38). **24.6–8** The view was widespread that a series of earthly catastrophes would, like *birth pangs,* precede the coming of the Messiah or the messianic age (see Isa 26.17–21; 42.14–16; 1 Thess 5.2–3; Rev 12.2; see also 2 Esd 13.31–32; *2 Baruch* 27). **24.9–14** Cf. Mk 13.9a, 13; Lk 21.12a, 17–19. Matthew omits most of Mk 13.9b–12, having used it earlier in 10.17–22. **24.9** *All nations.* Here persecution from outside the Jewish community is envisioned, probably in connection with the gentile mission (see 24.14; 28.19; cf. 10.17). **24.10** *Fall away.* See note on 13.21. **24.11** *False prophets.* See 24.4; also 7.15–23. **24.12** *Love . . . will grow cold.* The reference could be to love within the community (see 24.10; see also 5.43–46) or to love, i.e., fidelity, to God (see 13.20–21; 22.37–39; see also 2 Tim 3.1–5). **24.13** See 10.22. **24.14** *This good news of the kingdom* (see also 4.23; 9.35; 26.13), i.e., Jesus' teachings and deeds and perhaps also Matthew's Gospel. *To all the nations.* The gentile mission will precede the end (see 26.13; 28.19). **24.15–28** Cf. Mk 13.14–23; Lk 17.23–24, 37; 21.20–24. **24.15** *The desolating sacrilege,* from Dan 9.27; 11.31; 12.11 (see also 1 Macc 1.54; 2 Macc 8.17), where it originally referred to an altar to the Greek god Zeus set up in the Jerusalem temple in 167 B.C.E. by the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes. The saying may once have referred to the emperor Caligula's unfulfilled plan to set up his statue in the Jerusalem temple in 40 C.E., but Matthew probably understood it as a reference to the presence of the Roman general Titus in the temple in 70 C.E. (see note on 22.7). The interruption *(let the reader understand)* signals the importance of the mysterious symbol. **24.16** *Those in Judea must flee to the mountains.* A Christian tradition (whose accuracy is much debated) claims that Jerusalem Christians obeyed an oracle to flee to Pella (a city east of the Jordan) when the Roman armies threatened the city (Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 3.5.3). **24.19** *Woe,* here a lament (see note on 11.21). **24.20** Travel on the *sabbath* was restricted by Jewish law (see Ex 16.29–30; Acts 1.12). This saying suggests that

that your flight may not be in winter or on
a sabbath. 21 For at that time there will be
great suffering, such as has not been from
the beginning of the world until now, no,
and never will be. 22 And if those days had
not been cut short, no one would be
saved; but for the sake of the elect those
days will be cut short. 23 Then if anyone
says to you, 'Look! Here is the Messiah!'[c]
or 'There he is!'—do not believe it. 24 For
false messiahs[d] and false prophets will
appear and produce great signs and
omens, to lead astray, if possible, even the
elect. 25 Take note, I have told you before-
hand. 26 So, if they say to you, 'Look! He is
in the wilderness,' do not go out. If they
say, 'Look! He is in the inner rooms,' do
not believe it. 27 For as the lightning
comes from the east and flashes as far as
the west, so will be the coming of the Son
of Man. 28 Wherever the corpse is, there
the vultures will gather.

The Coming of the Son of Man

29 "Immediately after the suffering of
those days
the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give
its light;
the stars will fall from heaven,
and the powers of heaven will
be shaken.
30 Then the sign of the Son of Man will
appear in heaven, and then all the tribes
of the earth will mourn, and they will see
'the Son of Man coming on the clouds of
heaven' with power and great glory.
31 And he will send out his angels with a
loud trumpet call, and they will gather his
elect from the four winds, from one end
of heaven to the other.

The Lesson of the Fig Tree

32 "From the fig tree learn its lesson:
as soon as its branch becomes tender and
puts forth its leaves, you know that sum-
mer is near. 33 So also, when you see all
these things, you know that he[e] is near, at
the very gates. 34 Truly I tell you, this gen-
eration will not pass away until all these
things have taken place. 35 Heaven and
earth will pass away, but my words will not
pass away.

The Necessity for Watchfulness

36 "But about that day and hour no
one knows, neither the angels of heaven,
nor the Son,[f] but only the Father. 37 For
as the days of Noah were, so will be the
coming of the Son of Man. 38 For as in
those days before the flood they were eat-
ing and drinking, marrying and giving in
marriage, until the day Noah entered the
ark, 39 and they knew nothing until the
flood came and swept them all away, so
too will be the coming of the Son of Man.
40 Then two will be in the field; one will be
taken and one will be left. 41 Two women
will be grinding meal together; one will be

c Or *the Christ* d Or *christs* e Or *it*
f Other ancient authorities lack *nor the Son*

Matthew's community still observed the sabbath (see 12.8; Rom 14.5–6). **24.21** *Suffering.* The Greek word (*thlipsis*) was a technical term for end-time affliction (see 24.29; Dan 12.1; Rom 5.3; 8.35). **24.22** *The elect,* God's chosen, righteous people (see Deut 7.6–11; Rom 8.33; Col 3.12). **24.24** *False messiahs.* See note on 24.5. *Signs and omens.* See 12.38; 16.1; 2 Thess 2.9. According to the first-century Jewish writer Josephus, false prophets claimed there would be signs of deliverance from the Romans (*Jewish War* 6.285–309). **24.26** The isolated *wilderness* was a favorite hiding place for bandits and insurrectionists; see Acts 21.38. **24.27** The *coming* (Greek *parousia*), i.e., to execute the final judgment at the end of the age (see 24.3, 37, 39, 44, 50; 25.31–46). *Son of Man.* See note on 8.20. **24.28** The point of this grisly proverb is to emphasize that the coming of the Son of Man will be obvious to all. **24.29–31** Cf. Mk 13.24–27; Lk 21.25–28. The Parousia, or (second) coming, of the Son of Man. **24.29** The language echoes Isa 13.10, 13; 34.4; Ezek 32.7–8; Joel 2.10; Am 8.9; see also Rev 6.12–13. **24.30** *The sign* may be the Son of Man himself or some cosmic sign (see 24.27; see also Isa 11.12; 49.22). *All the tribes . . . will mourn,* an allusion to Zech 12.10 (see also Rev 1.7). *The Son of Man . . . clouds of heaven.* See Dan 7.13; note on Mt 8.20; see also 26.64. **24.31** On the gathering of the *elect* (see note on 24.22), cf. 13.41; see Isa 27.12–13; 1 Thess 4.16. *Four winds,* i.e., the whole world (see Ezek 37.9; Zech 2.6; Rev 7.1). **24.32–36** Cf. Mk 13.28–32; Lk 21.29–33. **24.33** *You know that he is near.* Cf. 24.36, 48–50; 25.5. **24.34** *Truly I tell you.* See note on 5.18. *This generation will not pass away.* See 10.23; 16.28; cf. 24.36, 48; 25.5. **24.36** *That day.* See note on 7.22. *Only the Father.* Cf. 11.27. **24.37–44** Cf. Lk 17.26–27, 34–35; 12.39–40. **24.37–39** *Days of Noah.* See Gen 6–7. What is emphasized here is

taken and one will be left. 42 Keep awake
therefore, for you do not know on what
day[g] your Lord is coming. 43 But under-
stand this: if the owner of the house had
known in what part of the night the thief
was coming, he would have stayed awake
and would not have let his house be bro-
ken into. 44 Therefore you also must be
ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an
unexpected hour.

The Faithful or the Unfaithful Slave

45 "Who then is the faithful and wise
slave, whom his master has put in charge
of his household, to give the other slaves[h]
their allowance of food at the proper
time? 46 Blessed is that slave whom his
master will find at work when he arrives.
47 Truly I tell you, he will put that one in
charge of all his possessions. 48 But if that
wicked slave says to himself, 'My master is
delayed,' 49 and he begins to beat his fel-
low slaves, and eats and drinks with
drunkards, 50 the master of that slave will
come on a day when he does not expect
him and at an hour that he does not
know. 51 He will cut him in pieces[i] and
put him with the hypocrites, where there
will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids

25 "Then the kingdom of heaven
will be like this. Ten brides-
maids[j] took their lamps and went to
meet the bridegroom.[k] 2 Five of them
were foolish, and five were wise. 3 When
the foolish took their lamps, they took no
oil with them; 4 but the wise took flasks of
oil with their lamps. 5 As the bridegroom
was delayed, all of them became drowsy
and slept. 6 But at midnight there was a
shout, 'Look! Here is the bridegroom!
Come out to meet him.' 7 Then all those
bridesmaids[j] got up and trimmed their
lamps. 8 The foolish said to the wise, 'Give
us some of your oil, for our lamps are go-
ing out.' 9 But the wise replied, 'No! there
will not be enough for you and for us; you
had better go to the dealers and buy some
for yourselves.' 10 And while they went to
buy it, the bridegroom came, and those
who were ready went with him into the
wedding banquet; and the door was shut.
11 Later the other bridesmaids[j] came
also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.'
12 But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I do
not know you.' 13 Keep awake therefore,
for you know neither the day nor the
hour.[l]

The Parable of the Talents

14 "For it is as if a man, going on a
journey, summoned his slaves and en-
trusted his property to them; 15 to one he
gave five talents,[m] to another two, to an-
other one, to each according to his ability.

g Other ancient authorities read *at what hour*
h Gk *to give them* *i* Or *cut him off* *j* Gk *virgins*
k Other ancient authorities add *and the bride*
l Other ancient authorities add *in which the Son of Man is coming* *m* A talent was worth more than fifteen years' wages of a laborer

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the unexpectedness of the flood, which caught people unprepared. **24.42** *Keep awake.* See 25.1–13; 26.36–46; 1 Thess 5.6–8. **24.43** The unexpectedness of a *thief* provides an apt metaphor for the coming of the Son of Man (see 1 Thess 5.2, 4; 2 Pet 3.10; Rev 3.3; 16.15). **24.45–51** Cf. Lk 12.42–46. An allegorically interpreted parable warns about a delay in Jesus' return. **24.46** *Blessed.* See note on 5.3. **24.47** *Truly I tell you.* See note on 5.18. **24.48** *My master,* lit. "my lord," i.e., Jesus (see note on 7.21). *Delayed.* See also 25.5, 19; 2 Pet 3.1–13. **24.50** *An hour that he does not know.* See 24.36, 44; 25.13. **24.51** *Cut him in pieces.* The imagery is particularly savage (see also 18.34). *With the hypocrites.* See, e.g., 23.29–33. *Weeping and gnashing of teeth.* See note on 8.12.

25.1–46 Three major parables about the coming (Greek *parousia*) of the Son of Man for final judgment. **25.1–13** Readiness for the Parousia. **25.1** *Then,* i.e., at the Parousia (see 24.50). *Kingdom of heaven.* See note on 4.17. *Went to meet the bridegroom.* The setting is the return of the groom (with his new bride) to his father's house (see 22.2). The task of the bridesmaids (lit. *virgins,* text note *j*) is to welcome the bride and groom into the household; see note on 9.15. **25.5** *The bridegroom was delayed.* See 24.36–51; 25.19. **25.10** On the *wedding banquet* as a metaphor for the kingdom of God, see 22.1–10. *The door was shut.* See 22.11–14; also 5.20; Lk 13.24–27. **25.11** *Lord, lord.* See 7.21–23. **25.12** *Truly I tell you.* See note on 5.18. **25.13** *Keep awake.* See note on 24.42. **25.14–30** Cf. Lk 19.12–27. Responsibility during the interim period. **25.14** *Going on a journey.* The story suggests a temporary absence, as of the resurrected Son of Man. *Entrusted his property to them.* Household slaves often had positions of authority; see 24.45. **25.15** The *talent* represents

Then he went away. 16 The one who had
received the five talents went off at once
and traded with them, and made five
more talents. 17 In the same way, the one
who had the two talents made two more
talents. 18 But the one who had received
the one talent went off and dug a hole in
the ground and hid his master's money.
19 After a long time the master of those
slaves came and settled accounts with
them. 20 Then the one who had received
the five talents came forward, bringing
five more talents, saying, 'Master, you
handed over to me five talents; see, I have
made five more talents.' 21 His master said
to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy
slave; you have been trustworthy in a few
things, I will put you in charge of many
things; enter into the joy of your master.'
22 And the one with the two talents also
came forward, saying, 'Master, you hand-
ed over to me two talents; see, I have
made two more talents.' 23 His master said
to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy
slave; you have been trustworthy in a few
things, I will put you in charge of many
things; enter into the joy of your master.'
24 Then the one who had received the one
talent also came forward, saying, 'Master,
I knew that you were a harsh man, reap-
ing where you did not sow, and gathering
where you did not scatter seed; 25 so I was
afraid, and I went and hid your talent in
the ground. Here you have what is yours.'
26 But his master replied, 'You wicked and
lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap
where I did not sow, and gather where I
did not scatter? 27 Then you ought to have
invested my money with the bankers, and
on my return I would have received what
was my own with interest. 28 So take the
talent from him, and give it to the one
with the ten talents. 29 For to all those who
have, more will be given, and they will
have an abundance; but from those who
have nothing, even what they have will be
taken away. 30 As for this worthless slave,
throw him into the outer darkness, where
there will be weeping and gnashing of
teeth.'

The Judgment of the Gentiles

31 "When the Son of Man comes in
his glory, and all the angels with him, then
he will sit on the throne of his glory. 32 All
the nations will be gathered before him,
and he will separate people one from an-
other as a shepherd separates the sheep
from the goats, 33 and he will put the
sheep at his right hand and the goats at
the left. 34 Then the king will say to those
at his right hand, 'Come, you that are
blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom
prepared for you from the foundation of
the world; 35 for I was hungry and you
gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave
me something to drink, I was a stranger
and you welcomed me, 36 I was naked and
you gave me clothing, I was sick and you
took care of me, I was in prison and you
visited me.' 37 Then the righteous will an-
swer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw
you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty
and gave you something to drink? 38 And
when was it that we saw you a stranger
and welcomed you, or naked and gave
you clothing? 39 And when was it that we
saw you sick or in prison and visited you?'
40 And the king will answer them, 'Truly I

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an unusually large amount of money (see text note *m*; 18.24). **25.16** *Traded with them.* The action suggests a willingness to take risks, possibly representing missionizing apostles (see 10.5–15). **25.18** *A hole in the ground* was a safe, risk-free way to save (see 13.44). *Master's*, lit. "lord's" (see note on 7.21). **25.19** *After a long time* suggests the delay of the Parousia (see 24.48; 25.5). *Settled accounts* suggests the last judgment (see 18.23). **25.21** *Enter into the joy of your master* suggests entering the kingdom (see 25.10, 34). **25.29** See 13.12. **25.30** *Weeping and gnashing of teeth.* See note on 8.12. **25.31–46** The criteria of the final judgment. **25.31** *When the Son of Man comes*, i.e., the Parousia (see 16.27–28; 24.29–31). *The angels with him.* See Deut 33.2; Zech 14.5; see also note on 13.39. *Throne of his glory*, i.e., his glorious throne (see also 19.28; 26.64; Dan 7.13–14; Rev 3.21). **25.32** The Greek word translated *nations* (*ethnē*; see also 24.9, 14; 28.19) is elsewhere translated *Gentiles* (see 4.15; 6.32; 10.5, 18; 12.18, 21; 20.19, 25). The group is the object of Christian missionary activity between the death of Jesus and his return (see 28.19; see also Isa 66.18; Rev 21.22–22.5). *He will separate . . . sheep from the goats.* See Ezek 34.17–22; see note on 3.12. **25.33** *Right hand.* See note on 22.44. **25.34** In Jesus' parables *the king* usually represents God (see 18.23; 22.2), but here the king is the Son of Man (see note on 13.41; see also 21.5; 27.11; Rev 17.14). **25.37** *Righteous*, here those who innocently do good works (see 13.43; cf. 1.19). *Lord.* See note on 7.21. **25.40** *Truly I tell you.* See note on 5.18. Here *the least of these* seem to be

tell you, just as you did it to one of the
least of these who are members of my
family,[n] you did it to me.' 41 Then he will
say to those at his left hand, 'You that are
accursed, depart from me into the eternal
fire prepared for the devil and his angels;
42 for I was hungry and you gave me no
food, I was thirsty and you gave me noth-
ing to drink, 43 I was a stranger and you
did not welcome me, naked and you did
not give me clothing, sick and in prison
and you did not visit me.' 44 Then they
also will answer, 'Lord, when was it that
we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger
or naked or sick or in prison, and did not
take care of you?' 45 Then he will answer
them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not
do it to one of the least of these, you did
not do it to me.' 46 And these will go away
into eternal punishment, but the righ-
teous into eternal life."

The Plot to Kill Jesus

26 When Jesus had finished saying
all these things, he said to his dis-
ciples, 2 "You know that after two days the
Passover is coming, and the Son of Man
will be handed over to be crucified."
3 Then the chief priests and the elders
of the people gathered in the palace of
the high priest, who was called Caiaphas,
4 and they conspired to arrest Jesus by
stealth and kill him. 5 But they said, "Not
during the festival, or there may be a riot
among the people."

The Anointing at Bethany

6 Now while Jesus was at Bethany in
the house of Simon the leper,[o] 7 a woman
came to him with an alabaster jar of very
costly ointment, and she poured it on his
head as he sat at the table. 8 But when the
disciples saw it, they were angry and said,
"Why this waste? 9 For this ointment could
have been sold for a large sum, and the
money given to the poor." 10 But Jesus,
aware of this, said to them, "Why do you
trouble the woman? She has performed a
good service for me. 11 For you always
have the poor with you, but you will not
always have me. 12 By pouring this oint-
ment on my body she has prepared me
for burial. 13 Truly I tell you, wherever
this good news[p] is proclaimed in the
whole world, what she has done will be
told in remembrance of her."

Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus

14 Then one of the twelve, who was
called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief

n Gk *these my brothers* *o* The terms *leper* and *leprosy* can refer to several diseases *p* Or *gospel*

Christians (see 10.40–42; 18.6, 14). **25.41** *Prepared for the devil.* See Rev 20.10.

26.1–28.20 The passion and resurrection narratives follow the Marcan outline and, like Mark, contain many allusions to the suffering servant of Isa 52.13–53.12. **26.1–5** Cf. Mk 14.1–2; Lk 22.1–2; also cf. Jn 11.47–53. **26.1** *When Jesus had finished.* The closing formula to Jesus' fifth discourse (see note on 7.28). **26.2** *Passover,* a seven-day Jewish spring festival combined with the Feast of Unleavened Bread (see 26.17), celebrating the exodus from Egyptian slavery to freedom (see Ex 12.14–27; 34.18). The term also refers especially to the period extending from the evening of the first day, the day of Preparation (27.62), when the lamb was slaughtered at the temple (Ex 12.6), to the ensuing evening when the meal was eaten, and to the meal itself (see 26.17). *Son of Man.* See notes on 8.20; 16.21–23. *Handed over,* or "betrayed." See note on 17.22. **26.3** *Chief priests.* See notes on 2.4; 21.15. *Elders of the people.* See note on 16.21. Jerusalem authorities replace Pharisees in the plot (cf. 12.14). The *palace* (lit. "courtyard") is of uncertain location. *High priest,* the most powerful Jerusalem priest. *Caiaphas* held the office of high priest from 18 to 36/7 C.E. (see 26.57–66; Lk 3.2; Jn 11.49–53; Acts 4.6; Josephus *Antiquities* 18.26, 35, 95). **26.5** *Riots* were common at festivals (see 27.24; Josephus *Jewish War* 1.88). **26.6–13** Cf. Mk 14.3–9; Lk 7.36–50; Jn 12.1–8. **26.6** *Bethany.* See note on 21.17. *Simon the leper,* otherwise unmentioned, but see 8.2–4. **26.7** *Alabaster,* a soft, cream-colored stone. *Poured it on his head,* probably an act of hospitality (see Lk 7.46), but some see here an allusion to the coronation ritual for a king (see note on 1.1; cf. 26.12). **26.9** On concern for the *poor,* see 19.21; 25.31–46. **26.11** *Always have the poor with you,* perhaps echoing Deut 15.11. **26.12** *Burial.* See 27.57–61. **26.13** *Truly I tell you.* See 26.21, 29, 34; note on 5.18. *This good news* (see text note *p*) perhaps includes Matthew's written Gospel (see 24.14; see also 4.23; 9.35). *The whole world.* See 24.14; 28.19. The story (26.6–12) is *told in remembrance of her,* yet she is unnamed. **26.14–16** Cf. Mk 14.10–11; Lk 22.3–6; Jn 11.57. **26.14** *Judas Iscariot.* The betrayer's membership in the inner circle of the Twelve is emphasized (see 10.1–4; 26.20–25, 47–50).

priests 15 and said, "What will you give me
if I betray him to you?" They paid him
thirty pieces of silver. 16 And from that
moment he began to look for an opportu-
nity to betray him.

The Passover with the Disciples

17 On the first day of Unleavened
Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying,
"Where do you want us to make the prep-
arations for you to eat the Passover?"
18 He said, "Go into the city to a certain
man, and say to him, 'The Teacher says,
My time is near; I will keep the Passover
at your house with my disciples.'" 19 So
the disciples did as Jesus had directed
them, and they prepared the Passover
meal.

20 When it was evening, he took his
place with the twelve;[q] 21 and while they
were eating, he said, "Truly I tell you, one
of you will betray me." 22 And they be-
came greatly distressed and began to say
to him one after another, "Surely not I,
Lord?" 23 He answered, "The one who has
dipped his hand into the bowl with me
will betray me. 24 The Son of Man goes as
it is written of him, but woe to that one by
whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It
would have been better for that one not to
have been born." 25 Judas, who betrayed
him, said, "Surely not I, Rabbi?" He re-
plied, "You have said so."

The Institution of the Lord's Supper

26 While they were eating, Jesus took
a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he
broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said,
"Take, eat; this is my body." 27 Then he
took a cup, and after giving thanks he
gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all
of you; 28 for this is my blood of the[r] cov-
enant, which is poured out for many for
the forgiveness of sins. 29 I tell you, I will
never again drink of this fruit of the vine
until that day when I drink it new with
you in my Father's kingdom."

30 When they had sung the hymn,
they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Peter's Denial Foretold

31 Then Jesus said to them, "You will
all become deserters because of me this
night; for it is written,

'I will strike the shepherd,
and the sheep of the flock will
be scattered.'

32 But after I am raised up, I will go ahead
of you to Galilee." 33 Peter said to him,
"Though all become deserters because of
you, I will never desert you." 34 Jesus said
to him, "Truly I tell you, this very night,
before the cock crows, you will deny me
three times." 35 Peter said to him, "Even

q Other ancient authorities add *disciples*
r Other ancient authorities add *new*

26.15 *Betray.* See note on 17.22. *Thirty pieces of silver,* the value of an injured slave (Ex 21.32), but clearly an allusion to Zech 11.12–13 (see also Mt 27.3–10). **26.17–25** Cf. Mk 14.12–21; Lk 22.7–14, 21–23; Jn 13.21–26. **26.17** The *first day* is the day of Preparation (see note on 26.2). *Unleavened Bread,* an alternate name for Passover. Leaven was left out of bread during the entire festival (see Ex 12.15–20; 13.3–10). **26.20** *The twelve.* See note on 10.1. **26.21** *Betray.* See note on 17.22. **26.22** *Lord.* See note on 7.21. **26.23** *Dipped.* The practice was common; it is mentioned here to emphasize that the betrayer broke the bond of those who eat together (see Ps 41.9). **26.24** *As is written of him.* It is not known to what text(s) this saying may refer (cf. 16.21–23; Mk 8.31; see also Isa 52.13–53.12). *Woe,* here a curse oracle (see note on 11.21). **26.25** *Rabbi,* a title used of Jesus only by opponents and Judas (see 26.49; note on 23.7). *You have said so,* a cryptic answer probably meaning "yes," but with a qualification (see 26.64; 27.11). **26.26–30** Cf. Mk 14.22–26; Lk 22.15–20, 39; see also 1 Cor 11.23–25. **26.26** *Took bread . . . blessing . . . broke . . . gave,* the acts and words of the head of the household before Jewish meals and before the main meal at Passover (see also 14.19). *This is my body.* See also 1 Cor 10.16–17. **26.28** Jews were forbidden to drink *blood* (see Lev 17.10–14; Acts 15.20), but blood was used to ratify a *covenant* (see Ex 24.6–8; Zech 9.11; see also Jer 31.31–34). The phrase *poured out for many* denotes a view of Jesus' death as sacrificial atonement (see Lev 16.21; Isa 53.10–12; Mk 10.45; Rom 3.25; 5.9; *Didache* 14.1). *Forgiveness of sins.* See 1.21; 6.12, 14–15; 9.6; 18.21–35. **26.29** *That day,* i.e., of the future messianic banquet (see note on 8.11). **26.30** *The hymn,* probably from the Hallel (see note on 21.9). *Mount of Olives.* See note on 24.3. **26.31–35** Cf. Mk 14.27–31; Lk 22.31–34; Jn 13.36–38. **26.31** *All become deserters.* See 26.56; see also note on 13.21. The quotation is from Zech 13.7; see also Isa 53.6. **26.32** The prediction is restated in 28.7, fulfilled in 28.16–20. **26.34** The prediction is fulfilled in 26.69–75.

though I must die with you, I will not
deny you." And so said all the disciples.

Jesus Prays in Gethsemane

36 Then Jesus went with them to a
place called Gethsemane; and he said to
his disciples, "Sit here while I go over
there and pray." 37 He took with him Pe-
ter and the two sons of Zebedee, and be-
gan to be grieved and agitated. 38 Then he
said to them, "I am deeply grieved, even
to death; remain here, and stay awake
with me." 39 And going a little farther, he
threw himself on the ground and prayed,
"My Father, if it is possible, let this cup
pass from me; yet not what I want but
what you want." 40 Then he came to the
disciples and found them sleeping; and he
said to Peter, "So, could you not stay
awake with me one hour? 41 Stay awake
and pray that you may not come into the
time of trial;[s] the spirit indeed is willing,
but the flesh is weak." 42 Again he went
away for the second time and prayed, "My
Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink
it, your will be done." 43 Again he came
and found them sleeping, for their eyes
were heavy. 44 So leaving them again, he
went away and prayed for the third time,
saying the same words. 45 Then he came
to the disciples and said to them, "Are you
still sleeping and taking your rest? See,
the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is
betrayed into the hands of sinners. 46 Get
up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at
hand."

The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus

47 While he was still speaking, Judas,
one of the twelve, arrived; with him was a
large crowd with swords and clubs, from
the chief priests and the elders of the peo-
ple. 48 Now the betrayer had given them a
sign, saying, "The one I will kiss is the
man; arrest him." 49 At once he came up
to Jesus and said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and
kissed him. 50 Jesus said to him, "Friend,
do what you are here to do." Then they
came and laid hands on Jesus and ar-
rested him. 51 Suddenly, one of those with
Jesus put his hand on his sword, drew it,
and struck the slave of the high priest,
cutting off his ear. 52 Then Jesus said to
him, "Put your sword back into its place;
for all who take the sword will perish by
the sword. 53 Do you think that I cannot
appeal to my Father, and he will at once
send me more than twelve legions of an-
gels? 54 But how then would the scriptures
be fulfilled, which say it must happen in
this way?" 55 At that hour Jesus said to the
crowds, "Have you come out with swords
and clubs to arrest me as though I were a
bandit? Day after day I sat in the temple
teaching, and you did not arrest me.
56 But all this has taken place, so that the
scriptures of the prophets may be ful-
filled." Then all the disciples deserted him
and fled.

Jesus Before the High Priest

57 Those who had arrested Jesus took
him to Caiaphas the high priest, in whose
house the scribes and the elders had gath-
ered. 58 But Peter was following him at a
distance, as far as the courtyard of the
high priest; and going inside, he sat with
the guards in order to see how this would
end. 59 Now the chief priests and the

s Or *into temptation*

26.36–46 Cf. Mk 14.32–42; Lk 22.40–46; see also Jn 18.1. **26.36** *Gethsemane* (Hebrew for "oil press"), an unknown site somewhere on the west side of the Mount of Olives (see 26.30). **26.37** *Peter and . . . two sons of Zebedee.* See note on 17.1. **26.38** *Stay awake.* See 24.42; 25.13; 26.40–41. *This cup.* See note on 20.22. **26.40** *Sleeping.* See also 26.43, 45. **26.41** *Time of trial.* See 6.13. **26.42** *Your will be done.* See 6.10. **26.45** *The Son of Man is betrayed.* See notes on 8.20; 17.22. **26.47–56** Cf. Mk 14.43–50; Lk 22.47–53; Jn 18.3–11. **26.47** *A large crowd,* here obviously hostile (see note on 4.25). *Chief priests . . . elders of the people.* See 26.3. **26.48** *Kiss,* a form of greeting. **26.49** *Rabbi.* See note on 26.25. **26.50** *Friend,* probably sarcastic (see 20.13; 22.12; note on 26.23). **26.51** The *one* with Jesus is apparently a disciple (cf. Mk 14.47; Jn 18.10). **26.53** *Twelve legions.* A Roman legion was 6,000 infantry plus 120 calvary. The saying reflects the myth of the warrior God leading heavenly angelic armies (see, e.g., 2 Kings 6.15–17; Ps 24.8–10; Rev 19.14). **26.55** *Bandit,* or revolutionary leader (see also 27.38). **26.56** The thirteenth quotation formula (see note on 1.22–23) does not introduce a specific text. *All the disciples . . . fled.* See 26.31. **26.57–68** Cf. Mk 14.53–65; Lk 22.54–55, 63–71; Jn 18.13–24. **26.57** *Caiaphas.* See note on 26.3; cf. Jn 18.12–14, 24. *Scribes.* See note on 2.4. *Elders.* See 26.3; note on 16.21. **26.59** *The whole council,* lit. "the Sanhedrin," a supreme Jewish court to handle internal affairs,

whole council were looking for false testi-
mony against Jesus so that they might put
him to death, 60 but they found none,
though many false witnesses came for-
ward. At last two came forward 61 and
said, "This fellow said, 'I am able to de-
stroy the temple of God and to build it in
three days.'" 62 The high priest stood up
and said, "Have you no answer? What is it
that they testify against you?" 63 But Jesus
was silent. Then the high priest said to
him, "I put you under oath before the liv-
ing God, tell us if you are the Messiah,[t]
the Son of God." 64 Jesus said to him,
"You have said so. But I tell you,

From now on you will see the
Son of Man
seated at the right hand of
Power
and coming on the clouds
of heaven."

65 Then the high priest tore his clothes
and said, "He has blasphemed! Why do
we still need witnesses? You have now
heard his blasphemy. 66 What is your ver-
dict?" They answered, "He deserves
death." 67 Then they spat in his face and
struck him; and some slapped him, 68 say-
ing, "Prophesy to us, you Messiah![t] Who
is it that struck you?"

Peter's Denial of Jesus

69 Now Peter was sitting outside in
the courtyard. A servant-girl came to him
and said, "You also were with Jesus the
Galilean." 70 But he denied it before all of
them, saying, "I do not know what you are
talking about." 71 When he went out to the
porch, another servant-girl saw him, and
she said to the bystanders, "This man was
with Jesus of Nazareth."[u] 72 Again he de-
nied it with an oath, "I do not know the
man." 73 After a little while the bystanders
came up and said to Peter, "Certainly you
are also one of them, for your accent be-
trays you." 74 Then he began to curse, and
he swore an oath, "I do not know the
man!" At that moment the cock crowed.
75 Then Peter remembered what Jesus
had said: "Before the cock crows, you will
deny me three times." And he went out
and wept bitterly.

Jesus Brought Before Pilate

27 When morning came, all the
chief priests and the elders of the
people conferred together against Jesus
in order to bring about his death. 2 They
bound him, led him away, and handed
him over to Pilate the governor.

The Suicide of Judas

3 When Judas, his betrayer, saw that
Jesus[v] was condemned, he repented and
brought back the thirty pieces of silver to
the chief priests and the elders. 4 He said,
"I have sinned by betraying innocent[w]
blood." But they said, "What is that to us?

t Or *Christ* u Gk *the Nazorean* v Gk *he*
w Other ancient authorities read *righteous*

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controlled by priests. The session described here raises many questions, because trials during Passover, night trials, and single sessions for capital offenses were forbidden by Jewish law (codified about 200 C.E.). Moreover, capital punishment may have been illegal for Jews (see also 27.2). **26.60** *Two* witnesses were required by Jewish law (see note on 18.16). **26.61** See 24.2; 27.40. *In three days,* hinting at Jesus' resurrection (see also 12.40; 16.21). **26.63** *Silent.* See Isa 53.7; 1 Pet 2.22–23. *Messiah.* See note on 1.1. *Son of God.* See note on 3.17. **26.64** *You have said so.* See note on 26.25. The vision of the *Son of Man* derives from Dan 7.13–14 (see Mt 24.30; note on 8.20). *Seated at the right hand of Power* (i.e., of God). For Christians, this was the place of the resurrected, exalted Messiah (see Ps 110.1; see also Acts 2.32–36; 7.56; Rom 8.34; Eph 1.20; Col 3.1; Heb 1.3, 13; 8.1; 10.12). *Coming,* i.e., for the final judgment (see 24.29–31). **26.65** *Tore his clothes,* a gesture of distress (see 2 Kings 18.37–19.3; Acts 14.14). *Blasphemy,* normally dishonoring God's name (see note on 12.31–32), here used loosely to describe Jesus' messianic affirmation. **26.66** *Death* was the punishment for blasphemy (see Lev 24.10–23). **26.67** See Isa 50.6. **26.69–75** Cf. Mk 14.66–72; Lk 22.55–62; Jn 18.25–27. **26.69** *Peter,* the representative disciple (see note on 14.28). **26.71** *Jesus of Nazareth.* See 2.23; 21.11. **26.72** The *oath* suggests Peter's dishonesty (see 5.33–37; 23.16–22; cf. 26.63). **26.75** *What Jesus had said.* See 26.34.

27.1–2 Cf. Mk 15.1; Lk 22.66; 23.1; Jn 18.28. **27.1** *Chief priests and the elders.* See 26.3. **27.2** *Pilate* was the fifth Roman *governor* of the province of Judea (26–36 C.E.). Capital punishment was probably forbidden to the Jews (see Jn 18.31). **27.3–10** The story of Judas's remorse is found only in Matthew. **27.3** *Thirty pieces of silver.* See note on 26.15. **27.4** Shedding *innocent blood* pollutes the land and brings "bloodguilt" on the people (see Num 35.33–34; Deut 19.10).

See to it yourself." 5 Throwing down the
pieces of silver in the temple, he de-
parted; and he went and hanged himself.
6 But the chief priests, taking the pieces of
silver, said, "It is not lawful to put them
into the treasury, since they are blood
money." 7 After conferring together, they
used them to buy the potter's field as a
place to bury foreigners. 8 For this reason
that field has been called the Field of
Blood to this day. 9 Then was fulfilled
what had been spoken through the
prophet Jeremiah,[x] "And they took[y]
the thirty pieces of silver, the price of the one
on whom a price had been set,[z] on whom
some of the people of Israel had set a
price, 10 and they gave[a] them for the pot-
ter's field, as the Lord commanded me."

Pilate Questions Jesus

11 Now Jesus stood before the gover-
nor; and the governor asked him, "Are
you the King of the Jews?" Jesus said,
"You say so." 12 But when he was accused
by the chief priests and elders, he did not
answer. 13 Then Pilate said to him, "Do
you not hear how many accusations they
make against you?" 14 But he gave him no
answer, not even to a single charge, so
that the governor was greatly amazed.

Barabbas or Jesus?

15 Now at the festival the governor
was accustomed to release a prisoner for
the crowd, anyone whom they wanted.
16 At that time they had a notorious pris-
oner, called Jesus[b] Barabbas. 17 So after
they had gathered, Pilate said to them,
"Whom do you want me to release for
you, Jesus[b] Barabbas or Jesus who is
called the Messiah?"[c] 18 For he realized
that it was out of jealousy that they had
handed him over. 19 While he was sitting
on the judgment seat, his wife sent word
to him, "Have nothing to do with that in-
nocent man, for today I have suffered a
great deal because of a dream about him."
20 Now the chief priests and the elders
persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas
and to have Jesus killed. 21 The governor
again said to them, "Which of the two do
you want me to release for you?" And
they said, "Barabbas." 22 Pilate said to
them, "Then what should I do with Jesus
who is called the Messiah?"[c] All of them
said, "Let him be crucified!" 23 Then he
asked, "Why, what evil has he done?" But
they shouted all the more, "Let him be
crucified!"

Pilate Hands Jesus over to Be Crucified

24 So when Pilate saw that he could do
nothing, but rather that a riot was begin-
ning, he took some water and washed his
hands before the crowd, saying, "I am
innocent of this man's blood;[d] see to it
yourselves." 25 Then the people as a whole

x Other ancient authorities read *Zechariah* or *Isaiah*
y Or *I took* z Or *the price of the precious One*
a Other ancient authorities read *I gave* b Other ancient authorities lack *Jesus* c Or *the Christ*
d Other ancient authorities read *this righteous blood*, or *this righteous man's blood*

27.5 *Throwing down the . . . silver*, an allusion to Zech 11.13 (see also Mt 27.6). *Hanged himself*. Cf. Acts 1.18; see Deut 21.23. **27.7** Acts 1.18 reports that Judas bought the *potter's field*. **27.8** Cf. Acts 1.19. **27.9–10** The fourteenth quotation formula (see note on 1.22–23) introduces a text based loosely on Zech 11.13. *Jeremiah* is inaccurately mentioned as the source (see text note x), but the name is suggested by Jeremiah's purchase of land (Jer 32.6–15) and visit to the potter (Jer 18.1–3; 19.1–13). **27.11–14** Cf. Mk 15.2–5; Lk 23.2–3; Jn 18.29–38. Pilate is positively portrayed in contrast to the Jewish leaders. **27.11** *Before the governor*. See 10.18–20. To claim the title *King of the Jews* (see also 2.2), corresponding roughly to "Messiah" (see note on 1.1), would be treasonable. *You say so*. See note on 26.25. **27.14** *No answer*. See 26.63; Isa 53.7. *Greatly amazed*. See Isa 52.14–15. **27.15–23** Cf. Mk 15.6–14; Lk 23.18–23; Jn 18.39–40. **27.15** *The festival*, i.e., Passover (see 26.2). *Release . . . anyone whom they wanted*. Evidence for such a custom is weak at best (see Josephus *Antiquities* 20.215). **27.16** *Jesus Barabbas*. The author may have seen heavy irony in the name, which means in Aramaic "Jesus, son of the father" (cf. text note *b*). **27.17** *Messiah*. See note on 1.1. **27.19** *Judgment seat*, a raised platform where magistrates judged (see also Jn 19.13; Acts 12.21). Only Matthew contains the tradition about Pilate's *wife*. *Innocent man*. See Isa 53.8–9. A *dream* often communicates a divine revelation (see 1.20). **27.20** *Crowds*. See note on 4.25. **27.22** *Crucified*. See note on 27.35. **27.24–26** Cf. Mk 15.15; Lk 23.24–25; Jn 19.16. Matthew's insertion diminishes Pilate's legal liability. **27.24** *Riot*. See note on 26.5. *Washed his hands*. See Deut 21.6–7; Pss 26.6; 73.13. **27.25** *The people as a whole*, more inclusive than the *crowd* (v. 24). *His blood be on us and on our children*. This familiar formula for accepting respon-

answered, "His blood be on us and on our
children!" 26 So he released Barabbas for
them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed
him over to be crucified.

The Soldiers Mock Jesus

27 Then the soldiers of the governor
took Jesus into the governor's headquar-
ters,[e] and they gathered the whole cohort
around him. 28 They stripped him and
put a scarlet robe on him, 29 and after
twisting some thorns into a crown, they
put it on his head. They put a reed in his
right hand and knelt before him and
mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the
Jews!" 30 They spat on him, and took the
reed and struck him on the head. 31 After
mocking him, they stripped him of the
robe and put his own clothes on him.
Then they led him away to crucify him.

The Crucifixion of Jesus

32 As they went out, they came upon a
man from Cyrene named Simon; they
compelled this man to carry his cross.
33 And when they came to a place called
Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull),
34 they offered him wine to drink, mixed
with gall; but when he tasted it, he would
not drink it. 35 And when they had cruci-
fied him, they divided his clothes among
themselves by casting lots;[f] 36 then they
sat down there and kept watch over him.
37 Over his head they put the charge
against him, which read, "This is Jesus,
the King of the Jews."

38 Then two bandits were crucified
with him, one on his right and one on his
left. 39 Those who passed by derided[g]
him, shaking their heads 40 and saying,
"You who would destroy the temple and
build it in three days, save yourself! If you
are the Son of God, come down from the
cross." 41 In the same way the chief priests
also, along with the scribes and elders,
were mocking him, saying, 42 "He saved
others; he cannot save himself.[h] He is the
King of Israel; let him come down from
the cross now, and we will believe in him.
43 He trusts in God; let God deliver him
now, if he wants to; for he said, 'I am
God's Son.'" 44 The bandits who were

e Gk *the praetorium* *f* Other ancient authorities add *in order that what had been spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled, "They divided my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots."* *g* Or *blasphemed* *h* Or *is he unable to save himself?*

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sibility for a death (see Lev 20.9–16; 2 Sam 1.16; Jer 26.15) climaxes Matthew's condemnation of Israel (see also 21.43; 22.7; 23.29–36). **27.26** *Flogging* was done as punishment (see 10.17; Acts 5.40; 16.22–23; 22.24–25; 2 Cor 11.23) or to weaken a person prior to crucifixion (see also 20.19; Isa 50.6). Romans used a whip of knotted cord or leather, sometimes weighted with sharp bone or metal. **27.27–31** Cf. Mk 15.16–20; Jn 19.2–3. **27.27** The location of the *governor's headquarters* (see text note *e*) is uncertain. The Roman *cohort* was the tenth part of a legion. In Palestine it comprised 760 infantry and 240 calvary. **27.28** *Scarlet robe*, a cape indicating a Roman officer's rank, here mimicking a royal purple robe (cf. Mk 15.17; Jn 19.2). **27.29** *Reed in his right hand*, mimicking a royal scepter (see, e.g., Gen 49.10). *Knelt before him.* Cf. 2.11. *King of the Jews.* See note on 27.11. **27.30** *Spat*, a universal act of disrespect (see Num 12.14; Deut 25.9; Isa 50.6). **27.31** *Mocking.* See 20.19; Ps 22.7; see also Ps 69.19–20. **27.32–44** Cf. Mk 15.21–32; Lk 23.26–43; Jn 19.17–27. The crucifixion is described using the language of Pss 22; 69. **27.32** *Cyrene*, capital city of the Roman province of Cyrenaica (modern Libya); see Acts 2.10; 6.9; 11.20; 13.1. *Simon* is otherwise unknown. **27.33** *Golgotha* (Latin *calvaria*) means "skull," not "Place of a Skull" (see Lk 23.33), perhaps a small hill resembling a skull outside the city wall (Jn 19.20; Heb 13.12; see also note on Mt 21.39). The traditional site, now within the expanded city wall, is in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. **27.34** *Gall*, a bitter and poisonous herb (see Ps 69.21). **27.35** *Crucified.* Crucifixion was a slow, painful execution by binding or nailing a victim to a cross, stake, or tree. It was used by Romans especially for those convicted of violent crime, slave revolt, army desertion, or rebellion against the state. *They divided his clothes . . . by casting lots.* See Ps 22.18. **27.36** *Kept watch.* See 27.54. **27.37** *The charge* was customarily put over the head of the victim as a deterrent to others. *King of the Jews* suggests seditious activity (see note on 27.11) but contains a different truth for Christian believers (see note on 2.2). **27.38** *Bandits* (see also 21.13; 26.55), perhaps revolutionary leaders (see notes on 10.4; 27.35; see also Isa 53.12). **27.39** *Shaking their heads*, a gesture of derision (see Ps 22.7; see also Ps 109.25; Lam 2.15). **27.40** *You who would destroy the temple.* See 26.61. *If you are the Son of God.* See 3.17; 4.3, 6; 26.63. **27.41** *Chief priests . . . scribes . . . elders.* See 26.3, 57. **27.42** *He saved others.* See 1.21. *King of Israel*, the Jewish form of "King of the Jews" (see Jn 1.49; 12.13). **27.43** *Let God deliver him.* See Ps 22.8.

crucified with him also taunted him in the
same way.

The Death of Jesus

45 From noon on, darkness came over
the whole land[i] until three in the after-
noon. 46 And about three o'clock Jesus
cried with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sa-
bachthani?" that is, "My God, my God,
why have you forsaken me?" 47 When
some of the bystanders heard it, they said,
"This man is calling for Elijah." 48 At once
one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it
with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave
it to him to drink. 49 But the others said,
"Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come
to save him."[j] 50 Then Jesus cried again
with a loud voice and breathed his last.[k]
51 At that moment the curtain of the tem-
ple was torn in two, from top to bottom.
The earth shook, and the rocks were split.
52 The tombs also were opened, and many
bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep
were raised. 53 After his resurrection they
came out of the tombs and entered the
holy city and appeared to many. 54 Now
when the centurion and those with him,
who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw
the earthquake and what took place, they
were terrified and said, "Truly this man
was God's Son!"[l]

55 Many women were also there, look-
ing on from a distance; they had followed
Jesus from Galilee and had provided for
him. 56 Among them were Mary Magda-
lene, and Mary the mother of James and
Joseph, and the mother of the sons of
Zebedee.

The Burial of Jesus

57 When it was evening, there came a
rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph,
who was also a disciple of Jesus. 58 He
went to Pilate and asked for the body of
Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be given to
him. 59 So Joseph took the body and
wrapped it in a clean linen cloth 60 and
laid it in his own new tomb, which he had
hewn in the rock. He then rolled a great
stone to the door of the tomb and went
away. 61 Mary Magdalene and the other
Mary were there, sitting opposite the
tomb.

The Guard at the Tomb

62 The next day, that is, after the day
of Preparation, the chief priests and the
Pharisees gathered before Pilate 63 and
said, "Sir, we remember what that impo-
stor said while he was still alive, 'After

i Or *earth* *j* Other ancient authorities add *And another took a spear and pierced his side, and out came water and blood* *k* Or *gave up his spirit* *l* Or *a son of God*

27.45–56 Cf. Mk 15.33–41; Lk 23.44–49; Jn 19.25–30. **27.45** *Darkness* was for Amos a sign of the "day of the LORD" (see Am 5.18–20; 8.9). **27.46** Jesus' cry, given in transliteration of Aramaic, is from Ps 22.1. **27.47** *Elijah.* See note on 3.4. **27.48** *Sour wine,* the cheap wine of the lower classes; also an allusion to Ps 69.21. **27.49** According to popular Jewish belief, Elijah was the helper of the oppressed. **27.51** *Curtain,* probably the veil that hung at the entrance of the Most Holy Place of the temple (Ex 26.31–35) where the divine presence dwelt. *Torn in two,* probably symbolizing access to God for all (see Heb 9.1–14; 10.19–22). **27.52** *Tombs ... were opened,* foreshadowing the general resurrection. *Saints,* lit. "holy ones," is the usual term for Christians (see Rom 15.25–26; 1 Cor 1.2). Here perhaps it refers to devout Israelites (see Ezek 37.12). *Fallen asleep,* i.e., died (see, e.g., 1 Cor 15.20). **27.54** *Centurion.* See note on 8.5. *God's Son.* See text note *l*; note on 3.17. **27.55** *Many women,* not heretofore mentioned (see note on 20.20; see also 27.61; 28.1–11). *Provided.* See Lk 8.1–3. **27.56** *Mary Magdalene,* i.e., from Magdala (see note on 15.39; see also 27.61; 28.1; Lk 8.2; Jn 20.1–18). *Mary.* See 27.61; 28.1. *James and Joseph* are probably not Jesus' brothers (but cf. 13.55); thus the identity of this Mary is unknown. *Mother of the sons of Zebedee.* See 20.20. **27.57–61** Cf. Mk 15.42–47; Lk 23.50–56; Jn 19.38–42. **27.57** *Rich man.* Cf. 19.24; see Isa 53.9. *Arimathea,* a Jewish town twenty miles east of Joppa (modern Jaffa). *Joseph,* the only named individual apart from the Twelve who is explicitly called a disciple (see 10.2–4; cf. 26.6; 27.55–56; 28.1). **27.58** The *body* of an executed person was not to remain exposed overnight (see Deut 21.22–23). **27.59** *Linen cloth.* Jews did not mummify, but washed, anointed, perfumed, and clothed the body (see 2 Chr 16.14; Jn 19.40). **27.61** *Mary Magdalene and ... Mary.* See note on 27.56. **27.62–66** With 28.11–15, a defense against the charge that Jesus' body was stolen. **27.62** *The day of Preparation,* i.e., for the sabbath (see 28.1; Mk 15.42; Jn 19.31), not for Passover (see 26.2). *The Pharisees* reenter the narrative (see notes on 3.7; 26.4). *Pilate.* See 27.2. **27.63** *After three days I will rise again.* See 16.21; 17.23; 20.19; see

three days I will rise again.' 64 Therefore
command the tomb to be made secure un-
til the third day; otherwise his disciples
may go and steal him away, and tell the
people, 'He has been raised from the
dead,' and the last deception would be
worse than the first." 65 Pilate said to
them, "You have a guard[m] of soldiers; go,
make it as secure as you can."[n] 66 So they
went with the guard and made the tomb
secure by sealing the stone.

The Resurrection of Jesus

28 After the sabbath, as the first day
of the week was dawning, Mary
Magdalene and the other Mary went to
see the tomb. 2 And suddenly there was a
great earthquake; for an angel of the
Lord, descending from heaven, came and
rolled back the stone and sat on it. 3 His
appearance was like lightning, and his
clothing white as snow. 4 For fear of him
the guards shook and became like dead
men. 5 But the angel said to the women,
"Do not be afraid; I know that you are
looking for Jesus who was crucified. 6 He
is not here; for he has been raised, as he
said. Come, see the place where he[o] lay.
7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples,
'He has been raised from the dead,[p] and
indeed he is going ahead of you to Gali-
lee; there you will see him.' This is my
message for you." 8 So they left the tomb
quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to
tell his disciples. 9 Suddenly Jesus met
them and said, "Greetings!" And they
came to him, took hold of his feet, and
worshiped him. 10 Then Jesus said to
them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my
brothers to go to Galilee; there they will
see me."

The Report of the Guard

11 While they were going, some of the
guard went into the city and told the chief
priests everything that had happened.
12 After the priests[q] had assembled with
the elders, they devised a plan to give a
large sum of money to the soldiers, 13 tell-
ing them, "You must say, 'His disciples
came by night and stole him away while
we were asleep.' 14 If this comes to the
governor's ears, we will satisfy him and
keep you out of trouble." 15 So they took
the money and did as they were directed.
And this story is still told among the Jews
to this day.

The Commissioning of the Disciples

16 Now the eleven disciples went to
Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus
had directed them. 17 When they saw him,
they worshiped him; but some doubted.
18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All
authority in heaven and on earth has been
given to me. 19 Go therefore and make

m Or *Take a guard* *n* Gk *you know how*
o Other ancient authorities read *the Lord*
p Other ancient authorities lack *from the dead*
q Gk *they*

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also 12.40. **27.64** Ironically, the *last deception* is the opponents' (see 28.11–15; see also note on 28.13). **27.65** *Guard,* probably the temple police, under the high priest's command (see 28.11; Lk 22.4, 52; Jn 18.3, 12, 22).

28.1–10 Cf. Mk 16.1–8; Lk 24.1–12; Jn 20.1–18. **28.1** *Mary Magdalene and the other Mary.* See 27.56, 61. **28.2** The *great earthquake* highlights the apocalyptic character of this event (see 24.7; 27.51, 54; Rev 6.12; 11.13; 16.18; see also Ex 19.18; 1 Kings 19.11). *Angel.* See also 1.20; 2.13, 19; cf. Mk 16.5. **28.3** *White* is the color of heavenly garments (see 17.2; Jn 20.12; Acts 1.10; Rev 19.14). **28.5** *Do not be afraid.* See, e.g., Gen 15.1; Lk 1.30. **28.6** *As he said.* See 16.21. **28.7** *He is going ahead of you to Galilee.* See 26.32; fulfilled in 28.16–20. **28.8** *And ran to tell his disciples.* Cf. Mk 16.8. **28.9** The two Marys are the first witnesses to Jesus' resurrection (see Jn 20.11–18; cf. Lk 24.13–35; 1 Cor 15.4–8). *Worshiped him.* See note on 2.2; see also 14.33; 28.17. **28.10** *Do not be afraid.* See 28.5. *My brothers,* i.e., the disciples (see 28.7; notes on 12.49; 18.15). **28.11–15** See note on 27.62–66. **28.11** *Chief priests.* See note on 26.3. **28.12** *Money.* See 6.19–24. **28.13** The real "deception" (see note on 27.64). **28.15** *To this day.* The story was in circulation when the Gospel was written (see also 26.13; 27.8). **28.16–20** The concluding episode highlights prominent Matthean themes. **28.16** *Eleven,* the Twelve minus Judas (see 27.3–10; Acts 1.12–26). *Galilee.* See 26.32; 28.7, 10. *Mountain.* See note on 4.8. **28.17** *Worshiped him.* See 2.2; 28.9. *But some doubted.* The mixed response is typical of the disciples (see 14.31–33). **28.18** *All authority . . . given to me,* an echo of the Son-of-Man tradition in Dan 7.13–14 (see note on 8.20). **28.19–20** New functions for the Eleven (cf. 10.1, 5–8; 15.24). **28.19** *All nations.* See note on 25.32; see also 24.14; 26.13. Emphases elsewhere in the Gospel suggest the translation "all Gentiles" here (see, e.g., 2.1–12; 3.9; 4.15; 8.10;

disciples of all nations, baptizing them in
the name of the Father and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit, 20and teaching
them to obey everything that I have com-
manded you. And remember, I am with
you always, to the end of the age."[r]

r Other ancient authorities add *Amen*

15.21–28; 21.28–22.10 [esp. 21.43]; 27.25). *Baptizing.* Christian baptism derives from John the Baptist (see 3.11; Acts 11.16). *The Father and . . . the Son and . . . the Holy Spirit.* This explicit trinitarian formula is rare in the NT and probably derives from early Christian worship.

28.20 *Teaching.* Heretofore in Matthew only Jesus teaches (see 7.28–29; 23.8). *I am with you,* probably in fulfillment of 1.23 (see also 18.20). *To the end of the age,* i.e., to the coming of Jesus as the Son of Man for judgment (see chs. 24–25).

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO

MARK

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK may have been the first sustained, literary interpretation of the traditions about Jesus in primitive Christianity.

Authorship

Christian tradition from as early as the second century C.E. ascribes the Second Gospel to "Mark," putatively Peter's companion in Rome (1 Pet 5.13). Later connections were forged between this figure and "Mark" in several NT Letters (Col 4.10; 2 Tim 4.11; Philem 24) and "John Mark" in Acts (12.12, 25; 15.37–39), yet nowhere in the Second Gospel is its author identified, much less correlated with other NT personalities. The authorship of Mark remains an enigma, perhaps by the author's design.

Setting, Date, and Occasion

Certainty about the circumstances of Mark's composition is equally unattainable. Its presumption that readers will be unfamiliar with Jewish customs, Aramaic terms, and Palestinian geography (e.g., 5.41; 7.2–4, 31) suggests an origin beyond Palestine. The pervasiveness of Latin customs and vocabulary within the Gospel (e.g., 5.9; 10.12; 12.42) points to a provenance in Syria, Italy, or elsewhere within the Roman Empire. If the civil and domestic tumult forecast in 13.5–23 mirrors the upheavals of Mark's readers, then the Gospel may have arisen in the wake of Nero's persecution of Christians (64 C.E.) and the Jewish revolt against imperial Rome (67–70 C.E.). Such a setting is not proved by, but is coherent with, Mark's emphasis on the tribulations of Jesus and his followers (4.17; 10.30, 33–34; 13.9–13). A dating in the late 60s also fits with the judgment, cautiously accepted by most scholars, that Mark was the earliest of the NT Gospels and a source for Matthew and Luke, both of which are thought to have been written toward the end of the first century C.E. (see Lk 1.1).

Sources

Mark's own sources are indeterminate. Probably underlying the Gospel are early traditions about Jesus, permeated with overt or covert interpretations of the OT

(e.g., 1.2–3, 11; 15.24, 29, 34) that could have circulated in oral or written form and that may have been known to Mark's audience. Included in the narrative are sayings (e.g., 9.42–50) and parables (4.3–32) attributed to Jesus, miracle stories (4.35–5.43), dramatized controversies between Jesus and his adversaries (3.22–30; 12.13–17), and accounts of Jesus' final days in Jerusalem (14.1–15.39).

Style, Composition, and Conclusion

Though vivid, Mark's literary style is cruder and wordier than that of Matthew or Luke. Narrative transitions in Mark are effected by the simplest means, often with the connectives "and" or "immediately" (e.g., 1.12, 18, 20). On closer inspection, however, the Second Gospel appears to have been composed with care and even skill. Although no consensus exists on the narrative's precise structure, its central portion (8.22–10.52) is generally considered pivotal to interpretation. Within and beyond that section, the author has used various techniques in adapting available traditions: arrangements of similar stories that build to a climax (e.g., 2.1–3.6; 11.27–12.37), creative juxtapositions of disparate traditions (3.19–35; 11.12–25), and repetitive cycles of confessional and didactic discourse (8.31–9.1; 9.30–37; 10.32–45). Although later Greek manuscripts add various endings to the text (e.g., 16.9–20), the earliest discernible form of the Second Gospel ends at 16.8, with Jesus' last followers fleeing the empty tomb speechless and terrified. Whether the Gospel was unfinished, or its original ending was lost, or Mark intended such a provocatively open finale remains an issue of considerable debate.

Genre

Though not exactly analogous to other literary forms in antiquity, Mark bears the stamp of many genres. It resembles, for example, accounts of the lives of Hellenistic philosophers as well as some OT prophetic and apocalyptic narratives (e.g., 1 Kings 17–2 Kings 9; Dan 1–6). Like the other NT Gospels, Mark is most intelligible not as a dispassionate chronicle of Jesus' life but as a religious proclamation based on historical event. Befitting a work that explicitly presents itself as "the good news" or "gospel" about Jesus Christ (1.1; cf. Mt 1.1; Lk 1.1), Mark's substance and style have been tailored to the propagation of some distinctively Christian confessions.

Emphases

Preeminent among Mark's concerns is an interpretation of Jesus that stresses his suffering and death, rather than his exalted identity and marvelous power (8.31; 9.31; 10.33–34, 45; 15.39). Authentic discipleship, characterized as self-sacrificial service to God for the sake of the gospel (8.34–9.1; 9.33–50; 10.35–45), is exemplified in Mark not by Jesus' disciples (e.g., 10.35–41; 14.66–72) but by a cast of minor characters (e.g., 5.21–43; 12.41–44) and most profoundly by Jesus him-

self (14.32–42). Jesus' followers are summoned to faithful vigilance during an arduous, ambiguous time between the inauguration and consummation of the kingdom of God (1.14–15; 4.1–34; 10.1–31; 13.28–37).

Relation to Other Gospels

For understandable reasons, Mark has been overshadowed by the other NT Gospels throughout most of the church's history. Compared with Matthew and Luke, it contains little of the teaching associated with Jesus (cf. Mt 5.3–7.27; Lk 13.22–18.14) and none of the stories of his birth and resurrection appearances (cf. Mt 1.18–2.23; 28.16–20; Lk 1.5–2.52; 24.13–53). Unlike the Fourth Gospel, whose Jesus unveils and proclaims himself at length (cf. Jn 6.35–51; 10.1–18; 15.1–17), Jesus in Mark is a cryptic figure who conceals as much as he reveals (e.g., 3.11–12; 4.10–12; 9.2–9). Despite its enigmatic nature, Mark's place in the NT has been secure, perhaps because no Gospel probes more intensely the implications of "proclaim[ing] Christ crucified" (1 Cor 1.23). *C. Clifton Black*

The Proclamation of John the Baptist

1 The beginning of the good news[a] of
Jesus Christ, the Son of God.[b]
2 As it is written in the prophet
Isaiah,[c]
"See, I am sending my messenger
ahead of you,[d]
who will prepare your way;
3 the voice of one crying out in the
wilderness:
'Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight,'"
4 John the baptizer appeared[e] in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. 6 Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. 7 He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong

a Or *gospel* *b* Other ancient authorities lack *the Son of God* *c* Other ancient authorities read *in the prophets* *d* Gk *before your face* *e* Other ancient authorities read *John was baptizing*

1.1–15 The prologue of Mark, in which the reader's introduction to Jesus (1.9–15) is grounded in the OT and prefaced by the ministry of John the baptizer (1.1–8). **1.1–8** Cf. Mt 3.1–12; Lk 3.1–20; Jn 1.19–28. **1.1** As in Isa 40.9; 52.7; 61.1, *good news* (*gospel*, see text note *a*) suggests glad tidings of salvation (see also 1.14–15; Mt 11.5; Rom 1.1; 1 Cor 15.1; 2 Cor 11.7; 1 Thess 2.2, 8–9). *Christ*, lit. "anointed one," i.e., "messiah," usually appears in Mark as an honorific title (see 8.29; 12.35; 13.21; 14.61; 15.32), though it can function as a proper name for Jesus (9.41). *Son of God*, a significant title for Jesus in Mark (1.11; 3.11; 5.7; 9.7; 12.6; 14.61; 15.39), apparently connotes an obedient servant within God's salvation history (see also 2 Sam 7.13–14; Ps 2.7; Hos 11.1; Wis 2.18). **1.2–3** The quotation conflates material from Isa 40.3 with Ex 23.20; Mal 3.1. **1.4** *The wilderness* (see also 1.3, 12, 13) is not specifically located (cf. Mt 3.1; Lk 3.3); it can symbolize Israel's rebellion against God (e.g., Pss 78.17–18; 106.13–33) or its deliverance by God (e.g., Ex 19–24; Isa 41.18–20; 43.19–21; Hos 2.14–15). On the prophets' concern for *repentance* and *forgiveness*, see Isa 1.10–20; 55.7; Jer 31.34; Hos 6.1; Joel 2.12–13; Zech 1.4. The association of those concepts with the practice of *baptism* is also found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. **1.5** *The whole Judean countryside* suggests the region of southern Palestine around Judea's capital, *Jerusalem*. **1.6** John's attire recalls that of Elijah (2 Kings 1.8; but cf. Zech 13.4), whose return was sometimes regarded as a sign of the end of the age (Mal 4.5; see also Mk 9.11–13;

of his sandals. 8 I have baptized you with[f] water; but he will baptize you with[f] the Holy Spirit."

The Baptism of Jesus

9 In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. 11 And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved;[g] with you I am well pleased."

The Temptation of Jesus

12 And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. 13 He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

The Beginning of the Galilean Ministry

14 Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news[h] of God,[i] 15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near;[j] repent, and believe in the good news."[h]

Jesus Calls the First Disciples

16 As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. 17 And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." 18 And immediately they left their nets and followed him. 19 As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. 20 Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

The Man with an Unclean Spirit

21 They went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. 22 They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. 23 Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, 24 and he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you

f Or *in* *g* Or *my beloved Son* *h* Or *gospel*
i Other ancient authorities read *of the kingdom*
j Or *is at hand*

Lk 1.17). **1.8** *Holy Spirit.* Israel's reinfusion with God's Spirit was expected in the last days (see 1.10, 12; see also Isa 11.1–2; Joel 2.28–32; Acts 2.17–22). **1.9–11** Cf. Mt 3.13–17; Lk 3.21–22; Jn 1.29–34. **1.9** *Galilee,* a region of northern Palestine. **1.10** *The heavens torn apart,* an apocalyptic image signifying divine disclosure. See Isa 64.1; Ezek 1.1; Jn 1.51; Acts 7.56; Rev 4.1; 11.19; 19.11; cf. Mk 15.38. *Like a dove* probably suggests the Spirit's hovering motion, not its form (see Gen 1.2). **1.11** The heavenly acclamation combines elements of Ps 2.7 and Isa 42.1, with possible allusions to Gen 22.2, 12, 16; Ex 4.22–23; see also Mk 9.7; Mt 12.18; 2 Pet 1.17. **1.12–13** Cf. Mt 4.1–11; Lk 4.1–13. **1.13** *Forty days* is reminiscent of Ex 34.28; 1 Kings 19.8. *Tempted,* i.e., tested, *by Satan,* God's adversary (see Job 2.1–8; see also Mk 3.23, 26; 4.15; 8.33). The significance of Jesus' being *with the wild beasts* is unclear; it may suggest the restoration of a paradisaical condition that existed before the Fall (see Gen 1.28; 2.19–20; Job 5.22; Isa 11.6–9; 65.17–25; Hos 2.18). **1.14–15** Cf. Mt 4.12–17; Lk 4.14–15. A transitional "summary report," generalizing and enlarging Jesus' ministry (see also, e.g., 1.21–22, 32–34). **1.14** *After John was arrested.* See 6.17. **1.15** *The time,* a decisive moment appointed by God, *is fulfilled.* See 11.13; 12.2; see also Ezek 7.12; Dan 7.22; Gal 4.4; Eph 1.10; 1 Pet 1.11; Rev 1.3. *The kingdom of God,* God's sovereign power or active reign, *has come near.* See 4.11; 9.1; 15.43.

1.16–3.12 A major section of Mark, portraying Jesus' authoritative ministry in Galilee (1.16–45) and its resultant opposition (2.1–3.12). **1.16–20** Cf. Mt 4.18–22; Lk 5.1–11; Jn 1.35–51; see also 1 Kings 19.19–21. **1.16** *Sea of Galilee,* actually an inland, fresh-water lake. *Fishermen* enjoyed a lucrative business (note the reference to *hired men* in 1.20). **1.21–28** Cf. Mt 7.28–29; Lk 4.31–37. The first of four exorcisms in Mark (see 5.1–20; 7.24–30; 9.14–29). **1.21–22** See note on 1.14–15. **1.21** *Capernaum,* a town on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee. **1.22** *They were astounded,* a recurrent response to Jesus' activity in Mark (see also 1.27; 2.12; 5.20, 42; 6.2; 7.37; 11.18; 12.17). In Mark *the scribes,* professional interpreters of Jewish law, are typically included among Jesus' opponents (e.g., 2.6, 16). **1.23** *An unclean spirit,* i.e., a demon (cf., e.g., 3.22, 30). **1.24** *Us,* perhaps a comprehensive reference to the demonic world. *I know who you are.* In antiquity, knowledge of someone's name or identity was thought to provide power over that one (see also Gen 2.19–20; 32.27–29; Ex 3.13–15; Judg 13.17–18). *The Holy*

come to destroy us? I know who you are,
the Holy One of God." 25 But Jesus re-
buked him, saying, "Be silent, and come
out of him!" 26 And the unclean spirit,
convulsing him and crying with a loud
voice, came out of him. 27 They were all
amazed, and they kept on asking one an-
other, "What is this? A new teaching—
with authority! He[k] commands even the
unclean spirits, and they obey him." 28 At
once his fame began to spread through-
out the surrounding region of Galilee.

Jesus Heals Many at Simon's House

29 As soon as they[l] left the syna-
gogue, they entered the house of Simon
and Andrew, with James and John.
30 Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed
with a fever, and they told him about her
at once. 31 He came and took her by the
hand and lifted her up. Then the fever
left her, and she began to serve them.
32 That evening, at sundown, they
brought to him all who were sick or pos-
sessed with demons. 33 And the whole city
was gathered around the door. 34 And he
cured many who were sick with various
diseases, and cast out many demons; and
he would not permit the demons to speak,
because they knew him.

A Preaching Tour in Galilee

35 In the morning, while it was still
very dark, he got up and went out to a
deserted place, and there he prayed.
36 And Simon and his companions hunted
for him. 37 When they found him, they
said to him, "Everyone is searching for
you." 38 He answered, "Let us go on to the
neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim
the message there also; for that is what I
came out to do." 39 And he went through-
out Galilee, proclaiming the message in
their synagogues and casting out demons.

Jesus Cleanses a Leper

40 A leper[m] came to him begging
him, and kneeling[n] he said to him, "If
you choose, you can make me clean."
41 Moved with pity,[o] Jesus[p] stretched out
his hand and touched him, and said to
him, "I do choose. Be made clean!" 42 Im-
mediately the leprosy[m] left him, and he
was made clean. 43 After sternly warning
him he sent him away at once, 44 saying to
him, "See that you say nothing to anyone;
but go, show yourself to the priest, and
offer for your cleansing what Moses com-
manded, as a testimony to them." 45 But
he went out and began to proclaim it
freely, and to spread the word, so that
Jesus[p] could no longer go into a town
openly, but stayed out in the country; and
people came to him from every quarter.

k Or *A new teaching! With authority he* *l* Other ancient authorities read *he* *m* The terms *leper* and *leprosy* can refer to several diseases *n* Other ancient authorities lack *kneeling* *o* Other ancient authorities read *anger* *p* Gk *he*

One of God. See also Jn 6.69. **1.25** Jesus' command accords with ancient methods of exorcism. **1.29–31** Cf. Mt 8.14–15; Lk 4.38–39. **1.30** *Simon's mother-in-law.* Paul also indicates that Simon (also called "Cephas"; see note on 3.16) was married; see 1 Cor 9.5. **1.31** *Took her by the hand and lifted her up,* a gesture found elsewhere in Mark's healing stories (see 5.41; 9.27); see also note on 5.23. **1.32–34** Cf. Mt 8.16–17; Lk 4.40–41. A transitional "summary report" (see note on 1.14–15). **1.32** *At sundown,* when sabbath restrictions were lifted (cf. 1.21). **1.33** *The whole city,* a characteristically Marcan exaggeration (see also *all,* 1.32; *everyone,* 1.37). **1.34** *He would not permit the demons to speak.* Injunctions to silence about Jesus' identity or power are frequent in Mark (1.44; 3.11–12; 5.43; 7.36; 8.30; 9.9, 30). **1.35–39** Cf. Mt 4.23; Lk 4.42–44. **1.35** *A deserted place* (see also 6.31, 32, 35), a typical setting for prayer in Mark (6.46; 14.32, 35, 39; see also Lk 5.16; 6.12). **1.37** Those *searching for* Jesus in Mark usually have hostile intentions (3.32; 8.11, 12; 11.18; 12.12; 14.1, 11, 55; cf. 16.1). **1.40–45** Cf. Mt 8.1–4; Lk 5.12–16. **1.40** Leprosy was regarded as a contagious, ritual impurity (Lev 13–14), curable only by divine power (2 Kings 5.7; cf. Mt 11.5; Lk 7.22); *a leper* was subject to banishment (2 Kings 7.3–10; 2 Chr 26.19–21). **1.41** *Pity* (see also 6.34; 9.22) appears in most ancient manuscripts, though the harder, variant reading *anger* (text note *o*) may be the original. **1.43** *Sternly warning,* lit. "being disturbed" or "snorting" (cf. 14.5; Mt 9.30; Jn 11.33, 38). **1.44** The prohibition to *say nothing to anyone* is not consistently upheld in Mark (1.45; 7.36; but cf. 5.43; see also notes on 1.34; 7.24). *Show yourself to the priest.* See also Lev 14.2–32; Lk 17.12–14. **1.45** *The word,* perhaps an allusion to early Christian preaching (see also 2.2; 4.14–20, 33; Acts 6.4; Gal 6.6; Col 4.3).

Jesus Heals a Paralytic

2 When he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that
he was at home. 2 So many gathered
around that there was no longer room for
them, not even in front of the door; and
he was speaking the word to them. 3 Then
some people[q] came, bringing to him a
paralyzed man, carried by four of them.
4 And when they could not bring him to
Jesus because of the crowd, they removed
the roof above him; and after having dug
through it, they let down the mat on
which the paralytic lay. 5 When Jesus saw
their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son,
your sins are forgiven." 6 Now some of the
scribes were sitting there, questioning in
their hearts, 7 "Why does this fellow speak
in this way? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" 8 At once Jesus
perceived in his spirit that they were discussing these questions among themselves; and he said to them, "Why do you
raise such questions in your hearts?
9 Which is easier, to say to the paralytic,
'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Stand
up and take your mat and walk'? 10 But so
that you may know that the Son of Man
has authority on earth to forgive sins"—
he said to the paralytic— 11 "I say to you,
stand up, take your mat and go to your
home." 12 And he stood up, and immediately took the mat and went out before all
of them; so that they were all amazed and
glorified God, saying, "We have never
seen anything like this!"

Jesus Calls Levi

13 Jesus[r] went out again beside the
sea; the whole crowd gathered around
him, and he taught them. 14 As he was
walking along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he
said to him, "Follow me." And he got up
and followed him.
15 And as he sat at dinner[s] in Levi's[t]
house, many tax collectors and sinners
were also sitting[u] with Jesus and his
disciples—for there were many who followed him. 16 When the scribes of[v] the
Pharisees saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, they said to his
disciples, "Why does he eat[w] with tax collectors and sinners?" 17 When Jesus heard
this, he said to them, "Those who are well
have no need of a physician, but those
who are sick; I have come to call not the
righteous but sinners."

The Question About Fasting

18 Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and people[q] came and
said to him, "Why do John's disciples and

q Gk *they* *r* Gk *He* *s* Gk *reclined* *t* Gk *his*
u Gk *reclining* *v* Other ancient authorities read *and* *w* Other ancient authorities add *and drink*

2.1–12 Cf. Mt 9.1–8; Lk 5.17–26. The first in a series of five controversy narratives (see also 2.13–17; 2.18–22; 2.23–28; 3.1–6), this passage embeds a story of conflict (vv. 6–10) within a story of healing (vv. 1–5, 11–12). Such narrative intertwinings are characteristic of Mark (see also 3.1–6; 3.19–35; 5.21–43; 6.7–30; 11.12–25; 14.1–11; 14.53–72; 15.6–32). **2.4** In Palestinian design, *the roof* consisted of crossbeams covered with thatch and hardened mud (cf. Lk 5.19). **2.5** Here, as in other Marcan miracle stories (see also 5.34, 36; 9.23–34; 10.52), *faith* suggests aggressive confidence in Jesus' healing power. For the correlation of healing with being *forgiven*, see Lk 7.48; see also 2 Sam 12.13; 2 Chr 7.14; Pss 41.4; 103.3; Isa 38.17; 57.17–19; Jer 3.22; Hos 14.4. **2.6–7** The accusation by *the scribes* (see note on 1.22) of *blasphemy*, a capital offense (Lev 24.15–16; Mk 14.64), presumes that forgiveness was exclusively God's prerogative (see Ex 34.6–7; Isa 43.25; 44.22). **2.10** *The Son of Man*, Jesus' customary but ambiguous expression of self-reference in Mark (see 2.28; 8.31, 38; 9.9, 12, 31; 10.33, 45; 13.26; 14.21, 41, 62; notes on 8.31; 8.38). Here the designation focuses on Jesus' earthly authority (see also 2.28; Mt 8.20; 11.19; 12.32; Lk 6.22; 7.34; 9.58; 12.10). **2.12** *Amazed.* See note on 1.22. **2.13–17** Cf. Mt 9.9–13; Lk 5.27–32. **2.14** *Levi son of Alphaeus* does not appear among Mark's listing of the Twelve (3.16–19; cf. Mt 9.9; 10.3). *Tax booth* may refer to a roadside tollhouse. **2.15** *Tax* (or toll) *collectors* were despised by Jews for their presumed dishonesty, contact with Gentiles, and collaboration with Roman authorities. *Sinners*, the notoriously wicked who flouted Jewish law (in contrast with *the righteous*; see 2.17). On Jesus' association with social outcasts, see also Mt 11.19; Lk 7.34; 15.1–2. **2.16** *The Pharisees*, a popular reform movement within ancient Judaism, favored pious adherence to the law in all walks of life. Like the *scribes* (see note on 1.22), Pharisees are typically ranged among Jesus' adversaries in Mark (2.18, 24; 3.6; 7.1, 5; 8.11, 15; 10.2; 12.13). **2.17** A similar proverb is attributed to ancient philosophers such as the Cynics. **2.18–22** Cf. Mt

the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but
your disciples do not fast?" 19 Jesus said to
them, "The wedding guests cannot fast
while the bridegroom is with them, can
they? As long as they have the bride-
groom with them, they cannot fast. 20 The
days will come when the bridegroom is
taken away from them, and then they will
fast on that day.
21 "No one sews a piece of unshrunk
cloth on an old cloak; otherwise, the patch
pulls away from it, the new from the old,
and a worse tear is made. 22 And no one
puts new wine into old wineskins; other-
wise, the wine will burst the skins, and the
wine is lost, and so are the skins; but one
puts new wine into fresh wineskins."[x]

Pronouncement About the Sabbath

23 One sabbath he was going through
the grainfields; and as they made their
way his disciples began to pluck heads of
grain. 24 The Pharisees said to him,
"Look, why are they doing what is not
lawful on the sabbath?" 25 And he said to
them, "Have you never read what David
did when he and his companions were
hungry and in need of food? 26 He en-
tered the house of God, when Abiathar
was high priest, and ate the bread of the
Presence, which it is not lawful for any but
the priests to eat, and he gave some to his
companions." 27 Then he said to them,
"The sabbath was made for humankind,
and not humankind for the sabbath; 28 so
the Son of Man is lord even of the
sabbath."

The Man with a Withered Hand

3 Again he entered the synagogue,
and a man was there who had a with-
ered hand. 2 They watched him to see
whether he would cure him on the sab-
bath, so that they might accuse him. 3 And
he said to the man who had the withered
hand, "Come forward." 4 Then he said to
them, "Is it lawful to do good or to do
harm on the sabbath, to save life or to
kill?" But they were silent. 5 He looked
around at them with anger; he was
grieved at their hardness of heart and
said to the man, "Stretch out your hand."
He stretched it out, and his hand was re-
stored. 6 The Pharisees went out and im-
mediately conspired with the Herodians
against him, how to destroy him.

A Multitude at the Seaside

7 Jesus departed with his disciples to
the sea, and a great multitude from Gali-
lee followed him; 8 hearing all that he was

x Other ancient authorities lack *but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins*

9.14–17; Lk 5.33–39. **2.18** *John's disciples.* See also Mt 11.2–6; Lk 7.18–23; 11.1; Jn 1.35; 3.25–30. *Fasting,* a sign of contrition, was prescribed as an annual practice (Lev 16.29; Zech 7.5) and also undertaken on specific occasions (Ezra 8.21–23; Jon 3.7–9); see also Lk 18.12. Mk 2.20 may have been used to justify fasting in the early church. **2.19** Imagery like *the wedding guests* (or "the groomsmen") and *the bridegroom* is used in portraying God's saving covenant elsewhere in the NT (Mt 22.1–14; 25.1–13; 2 Cor 11.2; Eph 5.32; Rev 19.7; 21.2), in the OT (Isa 54.4–8; 62.4–5; Ezek 16.1–63; Hos 2.19), and among the rabbis. **2.23–28** Cf. Mt 12.1–8; Lk 6.1–5. **2.24** *What is not lawful,* evidently a reference to the prohibition of reaping on the sabbath in Ex 34.21. The legality of activities on the sabbath (Ex 20.8–11; Deut 5.12–15) was extensively debated within Judaism; see also Lk 14.1–6. **2.25** A biblical counterquestion in rabbinic style. **2.26** In 1 Sam 21.1–6 Ahimelech, not his son *Abiathar* (1 Sam 22.20), was high priest (cf. Mt 12.4; Lk 6.4). On *the bread of the Presence,* see Ex 25.30; Lev 24.5–9. **2.28** *The Son of Man* could refer to "humankind" (cf. Ps 8.4); more likely, it is Jesus' authoritative self-designation (see note on 2.10). **3.1–6** Cf. Mt 12.9–14; Lk 6.6–11. Healing and controversy are entwined, further illustrating 2.27–28 (see Lk 13.10–17; 14.1–6; Jn 5.1–18; see also note on 2.1–12). **3.4** *Is it lawful.* See note on 2.24. Jesus' contemporaries would have accepted a violation of the sabbath *to save life* but probably would have questioned its relevance in this case. **3.5** *Hardness of heart,* or stubborn obtuseness (see 6.52; 8.17; 10.5; see also Ex 9.34–35; 1 Sam 6.6; 2 Chr 36.13; Ps 95.8; Eph 4.18). **3.6** *The Pharisees.* See note on 2.16. The identity of *the Herodians* remains conjectural; Mark probably intends some Pharisaic conspiracy with Roman authorities (see also 6.14–29; 8.15; 12.13; Mt 22.15–16). This is the first of Mark's four references to a conspiracy to *destroy* Jesus (see also 11.18; 12.12; 14.1; cf. 1.37; 2.20). **3.7–12** Cf. Mt 4.24–25; 12.15–16; Lk 6.17–19. A transitional "summary report" (see note on 1.14–15) underscoring Jesus' popularity (see also 1.28, 35–37, 45) and foreshadowing his ministry beyond Palestine (see 7.24–31). **3.8** *Judea,*

doing, they came to him in great numbers
from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, beyond
the Jordan, and the region around Tyre
and Sidon. 9 He told his disciples to have a
boat ready for him because of the crowd,
so that they would not crush him; 10 for
he had cured many, so that all who had
diseases pressed upon him to touch him.
11 Whenever the unclean spirits saw him,
they fell down before him and shouted,
"You are the Son of God!" 12 But he
sternly ordered them not to make him
known.

Jesus Appoints the Twelve

13 He went up the mountain and
called to him those whom he wanted, and
they came to him. 14 And he appointed
twelve, whom he also named apostles,[y] to
be with him, and to be sent out to pro-
claim the message, 15 and to have author-
ity to cast out demons. 16 So he appointed
the twelve:[z] Simon (to whom he gave the
name Peter); 17 James son of Zebedee and
John the brother of James (to whom he
gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons
of Thunder); 18 and Andrew, and Phil-
ip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and
Thomas, and James son of Alphaeus, and
Thaddaeus, and Simon the Cananaean,
19 and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

Jesus and Beelzebul

Then he went home; 20 and the crowd
came together again, so that they could
not even eat. 21 When his family heard it,
they went out to restrain him, for people
were saying, "He has gone out of his
mind." 22 And the scribes who came down
from Jerusalem said, "He has Beelzebul,
and by the ruler of the demons he casts
out demons." 23 And he called them to

y Other ancient authorities lack *whom he also named apostles* *z* Other ancient authorities lack *So he appointed the twelve*

Jerusalem. See note on 1.5. The region of *Idumea* ("Edom" in Gen 32.3) lay southeast of Judea; the area *beyond the Jordan* (Perea), lay northeast of Judea and southeast of Galilee; the cities of *Tyre and Sidon*, lay northwest of Galilee. **3.10** *To touch him.* See also 5.27–28; 6.56. **3.11** *The unclean spirits,* or demons (see also 1.23; 3.30), *fell down before him* in submission (see also 5.22, 33; 7.25); they, not humans, recognize Jesus as *the Son of God* (see also 1.24; 5.7; cf. 15.39). **3.12** On Jesus' injunctions to silence, see notes on 1.34; 1.44.

3.13–6.6a Another major section of Mark, presenting Jesus' parabolic teaching (4.1–34) and mighty deeds (4.35–5.43), bracketed by the appointment of the Twelve (3.13–19a) and rejection by his family (3.19b–35) and hometown (6.1–6a). **3.13–19a** Cf. Mt 10.1–4; Lk 6.12–16. **3.13** As in the OT (e.g., Ex 19.3–25; 1 Kings 19.8), *the mountain* (or "hill country") may symbolize a place of divine disclosure (see also Mk 9.2–13), but such usage is not consistent throughout Mark (cf. 5.5, 11; 6.46; 11.1, 23; 13.3, 14; 4.26). **3.14** *Appointed,* lit. "made" (see also 3.16; 1 Kings 13.33; 2 Chr 2.18; Heb 3.2). *Twelve,* probably a symbolic representation of the twelve tribes of Israel (see Num 1.4–16; 13.1–16; Mt 19.28; Lk 22.30). Rare in Mark (elsewhere only in 6.30), the term *apostles* probably refers to emissaries authorized to discharge a specific commission (see 6.7–13). **3.16–19a** For variation in the names and ordering of the Twelve, cf. Mt 10.2–4; Lk 6.14–16; Jn 1.40–49; 21.2; Acts 1.13. **3.16** The Greek word for "stone" or "rock" may be the origin of the name *Peter* (Mt 16.18–19); in Aramaic, "Cephas" (e.g., Jn 1.42; 1 Cor 1.12; Gal 1.18). **3.17** Despite Mark's translation, both the derivation and meaning of *Boanerges* remain obscure. **3.18** *Cananaean* probably derives from an Aramaic term denoting religious zeal (see Lk 6.15; Acts 1.13). **3.19a** The meaning of *Iscariot* is cloudy; it could be rooted in different Semitic terms for "a fraud" or "a man from Kerioth" (see Josh 15.25; Jer 48.24), or in a Latin word for an "assassin." **3.19b–35** A controversy about exorcism and forgiveness (3.22–30; see also Mt 12.22–32; Lk 11.14–23; 12.10) is inserted into an episode about Jesus' family (3.19b–21, 31–35; see Mt 12.46–50; Lk 8.19–21; see also note on 2.1–12). **3.19b** *Home,* a typical site for much of Jesus' ministry in Mark (see, e.g., 1.29, 32–33; 2.1). **3.20** *They could not even eat.* See also 6.31. **3.21** The people mentioned in 3.31 prompt the translation of an ambiguous phrase here as *his family.* As implied by 3.22, insanity in the ancient world was attributed to demonic possession (see also Jn 7.20; 8.48–52; 10.20). **3.22** See note on 1.22. *Jerusalem.* See 10.32–34. Though probably a reference to Satan (3.23; see also 1.13; Mt 9.34), *Beelzebul* defies certain derivation; it could have originated from Semitic phrases that mean "lord of the dwelling" (see Mt 10.25) or "lord of the flies" (see 2 Kings 1.2). **3.23** *Parables* are enigmatic proverbs or riddling stories, provocative if not always illuminating (3.24–27; 4.3–9, 21–32;

him, and spoke to them in parables, "How
can Satan cast out Satan? 24 If a kingdom
is divided against itself, that kingdom can-
not stand. 25 And if a house is divided
against itself, that house will not be able to
stand. 26 And if Satan has risen up against
himself and is divided, he cannot stand,
but his end has come. 27 But no one can
enter a strong man's house and plunder
his property without first tying up the
strong man; then indeed the house can be
plundered.
28 "Truly I tell you, people will be
forgiven for their sins and whatever blas-
phemies they utter; 29 but whoever blas-
phemes against the Holy Spirit can never
have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eter-
nal sin" — 30 for they had said, "He has an
unclean spirit."

The True Kindred of Jesus

31 Then his mother and his brothers
came; and standing outside, they sent to
him and called him. 32 A crowd was sitting
around him; and they said to him, "Your
mother and your brothers and sisters[a]
are outside, asking for you." 33 And he
replied, "Who are my mother and my
brothers?" 34 And looking at those who
sat around him, he said, "Here are my
mother and my brothers! 35 Whoever does
the will of God is my brother and sister
and mother."

The Parable of the Sower

4 Again he began to teach beside the
sea. Such a very large crowd gath-
ered around him that he got into a boat
on the sea and sat there, while the whole
crowd was beside the sea on the land. 2 He
began to teach them many things in para-
bles, and in his teaching he said to them:
3 "Listen! A sower went out to sow. 4 And
as he sowed, some seed fell on the path,
and the birds came and ate it up. 5 Other
seed fell on rocky ground, where it did
not have much soil, and it sprang up
quickly, since it had no depth of soil.
6 And when the sun rose, it was scorched;
and since it had no root, it withered away.
7 Other seed fell among thorns, and the
thorns grew up and choked it, and it
yielded no grain. 8 Other seed fell into
good soil and brought forth grain, grow-
ing up and increasing and yielding thirty
and sixty and a hundredfold." 9 And he
said, "Let anyone with ears to hear listen!"

The Purpose of the Parables

10 When he was alone, those who
were around him along with the twelve
asked him about the parables. 11 And he
said to them, "To you has been given the
secret[b] of the kingdom of God, but for

a Other ancient authorities lack *and sisters*
b Or *mystery*

7.14–17; 12.1–12; 13.28; see also Ps 78.2; Prov 1.6; Ezek 17.2; Hab 2.6; Sir 47.17). **3.27** Cf. 1.7; Isa 24.21–23; 49.24–25; 53.12. **3.28** *Truly I tell you*, a recurrent introductory formula in Mark (e.g., 8.12; 9.1, 41) emphasizing prophetic assurance. *People* could also be translated "the sons of men" (see 2.28; Ps 8.4). *Blasphemies*. See note on 2.6 **3.29** To link the Holy Spirit (see 1.8, 10, 12) or the Spirit's agent (3.30; Lk 11.20) with demons is to be *guilty of an eternal sin* (cf. 1 Jn 5.16). **3.31** See note on 3.21. The absence of Jesus' father with *his mother and his brothers* is of disputed significance; as in 6.3 (see also Jn 2.12; 7.3, 5, 10; Acts 1.14; 1 Cor 9.5; Gal 1.19), reference to *his brothers* suggests Mark's ignorance of the later doctrine of Mary's perpetual virginity. **3.32** *Asking for you*, lit. "searching for you"; see note on 1.37. **3.35** Common in Paul's Letters (e.g., Rom 1.10; 12.2; 1 Cor 1.1; Gal 1.4), the phrase *the will of God* appears only here in Mark (but cf. 14.36; see also Jn 7.16–17). The existence of female disciples in the early church may be reflected in the reference to Jesus' *sister(s)* (see also 3.32, text note *a*).

4.1–20 Cf. Mt 13.1–23; Lk 8.4–15. The first in a series of parables. **4.1** *A very large crowd*, perhaps enlarging the audience suggested by 3.7, 9, 20. **4.2** *Parables*. See note on 3.23. **4.3** Lit. "*Listen!* Look!" (see also 4.9, 12; Deut 6.4; Judg 9.7; Isa 28.23; Ezek 20.47). **4.4–8** The metaphors of fruitlessness and fertility recur in Jewish and Christian apocalypticism (see 2 Esd 4.26–32; 1 Cor 3.6–8). **4.8** *A hundredfold* yield was astonishing, though not unheard of (see Gen 26.12). **4.9** An exhortation commonly attributed to Jesus (see, e.g., 4.23; Mt 11.15; 13.43; Lk 14.35; Rev 2.7, 11). **4.10** Jesus' followers extend to *those . . . around him along with the twelve* (see also 3.31–35). Private explanation often follows public instruction in Mark (4.34; 7.17; 9.28; 10.10; 13.3). **4.11** In Daniel (2.18–19, 27–30, 47), the Dead Sea Scrolls, Paul's Letters (e.g., Rom 11.25; 1 Cor 2.1, 7; 4.1), and Revelation (1.20; 10.7; 17.5, 7), *the secret*, or "mystery," refers to God's cosmic

those outside, everything comes in parables; 12 in order that
'they may indeed look, but not perceive,
and may indeed listen, but not understand;
so that they may not turn again and be forgiven.' "

13 And he said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? Then how will you understand all the parables? 14 The sower sows the word. 15 These are the ones on the path where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. 16 And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: when they hear the word, they immediately receive it with joy. 17 But they have no root, and endure only for a while; then, when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away.[c] 18 And others are those sown among the thorns: these are the ones who hear the word, 19 but the cares of the world, and the lure of wealth, and the desire for other things come in and choke the word, and it yields nothing. 20 And these are the ones sown on the good soil: they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty and sixty and a hundredfold."

A Lamp Under a Bushel Basket

21 He said to them, "Is a lamp brought in to be put under the bushel basket, or under the bed, and not on the lampstand? 22 For there is nothing hidden, except to be disclosed; nor is anything secret, except to come to light. 23 Let anyone with ears to hear listen!" 24 And he said to them, "Pay attention to what you hear; the measure you give will be the measure you get, and still more will be given you. 25 For to those who have, more will be given; and from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away."

The Parable of the Growing Seed

26 He also said, "The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, 27 and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. 28 The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. 29 But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come."

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

30 He also said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? 31 It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; 32 yet when it is sown it grows up

c Or *stumble*

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purposes, graciously disclosed to a select few. *Kingdom of God.* See note on 1.15. *For those outside.* Cf. 3.31–32; *In parables.* See note on 3.23. **4.12** As elsewhere (Jn 12.40; Acts 28.26–27; cf. Rom 11.1–10), Isa 6.9–10 has been adapted to interpret disbelief of the Christian proclamation. Mark's harsh view of parables, told *in order that* perception and forgiveness may not occur, is softened in Mt 13.13; Lk 8.10. **4.13–20** Probably a later Christian interpretation of Jesus' parable, accentuating missionary hardships and the difficulty of discipleship (see also Rom 8.35; 2 Cor 4.8–9; 2 Thess 1.4). **4.13** *Do you not understand,* a recurring criticism of the disciples in Mark (see, e.g., 6.52; 8.17, 21). **4.14** The seed of the parable is inconsistently interpreted in terms of *the word,* i.e., the gospel (vv. 14, 15b; see note on 1.45), and various responses to the word (vv. 15a, 16–20). For a comparable inconsistency, see 2 Esd 8.41–44; 9.31. **4.15** *Satan.* See note on 1.13; see also 8.31–33. **4.17** *They fall away,* lit. "they are scandalized" to the point of apostasy (see also 9.42–47; 14.27). **4.19** On pitfalls associated with *wealth,* see 10.23–25; Lk 12.15–21. **4.21–25** Cf. Mt 5.15; 7.2; 10.26; 13.12; 25.29; Lk 6.38; 8.16–18; 11.33; 12.2; 19.26. These sayings about disclosure and reception are linked by catchwords: *lamp, light* (vv. 21, 22); *hear* (vv. 23, 24); *more, given* (vv. 24, 25); see also 4.10–12. **4.21** *The lamp* is a flexible metaphor in the OT (2 Sam 21.17; 22.29; Ps 119.105; Zech 4.2; Wis 18.4). *Bushel basket,* a dry measure of about 2 gallons. **4.24** *Pay attention to what you hear,* lit. "Look what you hear" (see also 4.3, 9, 12). **4.25** For a kindred proverb, see 2 Esd 7.25. **4.26–29** The only parable in Mark without parallel in the other Gospels (cf. Mt 13.24–30). **4.26** *Kingdom of God* (also 4.30). See note on 1.15. **4.29** *Sickle* and *harvest* are sometimes associated with the final judgment (Joel 3.13; Rev 14.14–20). **4.30–32** Cf. Mt 13.31–32; Lk 13.18–19. The last parable in the series. **4.31** Though in fact not the smallest, the *mustard seed* may have been figuratively so regarded (see also Mt 17.20; Lk 17.6). **4.32** *The*

and becomes the greatest of all shrubs,
and puts forth large branches, so that the
birds of the air can make nests in its
shade."

The Use of Parables

33 With many such parables he spoke
the word to them, as they were able to
hear it; 34 he did not speak to them except
in parables, but he explained everything
in private to his disciples.

Jesus Stills a Storm

35 On that day, when evening had
come, he said to them, "Let us go across to
the other side." 36 And leaving the crowd
behind, they took him with them in the
boat, just as he was. Other boats were with
him. 37 A great windstorm arose, and the
waves beat into the boat, so that the boat
was already being swamped. 38 But he was
in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and
they woke him up and said to him,
"Teacher, do you not care that we are
perishing?" 39 He woke up and rebuked
the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be
still!" Then the wind ceased, and there
was a dead calm. 40 He said to them, "Why
are you afraid? Have you still no faith?"
41 And they were filled with great awe and
said to one another, "Who then is this,
that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

Jesus Heals the Gerasene Demoniac

5 They came to the other side of the
sea, to the country of the Gera-
senes.[d] 2 And when he had stepped out
of the boat, immediately a man out of the
tombs with an unclean spirit met him.
3 He lived among the tombs; and no one
could restrain him any more, even with a
chain; 4 for he had often been restrained
with shackles and chains, but the chains
he wrenched apart, and the shackles he
broke in pieces; and no one had the
strength to subdue him. 5 Night and day
among the tombs and on the mountains
he was always howling and bruising him-
self with stones. 6 When he saw Jesus from
a distance, he ran and bowed down before
him; 7 and he shouted at the top of his
voice, "What have you to do with me,
Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I ad-
jure you by God, do not torment me."
8 For he had said to him, "Come out of the
man, you unclean spirit!" 9 Then Jesus[e]
asked him, "What is your name?" He

d Other ancient authorities read *Gergesenes*; others, *Gadarenes* *e* Gk *he*

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birds . . . can make nests in its shade, an allusion to a common OT image that suggests protection (Ezek 17.23; 31.6; Dan 4.12, 21). **4.33–34** Cf. Mt 13.34–35. Concluding summary. **4.33** *The word*. See note on 1.45. *As they were able to hear it* is ambiguous, suggesting that Jesus' parables were told either to relieve or to heighten his listeners' incomprehension (see note on 4.12). **4.34** *In private to his disciples*. See notes on 4.10; 4.11.

4.35–5.43 A series of four mighty works of Jesus, beyond Galilee into the Decapolis (4.35; 5.1; see note on 5.20). **4.35–41** Cf. Mt 8.23–27; Lk 8.22–25. **4.36** *Just as he was*, as obscure in Greek as in English (cf. Mt 8.23; Lk 8.22). **4.37** The *windstorm, waves*, and *boat . . . being swamped* recall Ps 107.23–25; Jon 1.4. **4.38** *Asleep*, a typical posture of trust in God (Job 11.18–19; Pss 3.5; 4.8; but cf. Jon 1.5). Even in its stridency (Pss 35.23; 44.23–24; 59.4b; Isa 51.9a; cf. Mt 8.25; Lk 8.24), the disciples' plea for deliverance echoes the OT (Pss 69.1–2, 14–15; 107.26–28a). **4.39** Like the unclean spirit (1.25), *the wind* is *rebuked* and "silenced" (*Be still!* See also Ps 104.6–7). **4.40** The tension between being *afraid* (here, "cowardly") and having *faith* recurs in Mark (5.33–34, 36; 6.50). **4.41** *Great awe* or fear is characteristic of human response to divine manifestations (see, e.g., 6.51; 9.15; 16.8; Ex 3.1–6; Isa 6.1–5; Jon 1.10, 16; Lk 2.9). The quelling of chaotic waters implies divine power (Gen 1.2, 6–9; Job 38.8–11; Pss 65.5–8; 74.12–14; 89.8–10; 93.3–4; 107.28b–30; Isa 51.10; Jer 5.22; 2 Esd 6.41–43).

5.1–20 Cf. Mt 8.28–34; Lk 8.26–39. The second of four exorcisms in Mark (see 1.21–28; 7.24–30; 9.14–29), detailing a contest (vv. 1–13) and its consequences (vv. 14–20). **5.1** *The other side of the sea*, the east bank of the Sea of Galilee (see note on 1.16). Over thirty miles from the sea, *the country of the Gerasenes* (modern Jerash) seems an unlikely setting for the action described in 5.2, 13; alternative locations of "Gergesa" and "Gadara" (Mt 8.28) in other versions reflect this uncertainty (see text note *d*). **5.2** *The tombs*, the realm of the dead and of social outcasts (see also Isa 65.1–7). *An unclean spirit*. See note on 1.23. **5.6** *Bowed down before him*. See note on 3.11. **5.7** *The Most High God*, a title applied to Israel's God by Gentiles (Gen 14.18–20; Num 24.16; Isa 14.14; Dan 3.26; 4.2; cf. Lk 1.32; 6.35). *I adjure you by God*, an attempt to repel the exorcist (see note on 1.24). **5.9** *What is your name?* See note

replied, "My name is Legion; for we are
many." 10 He begged him earnestly not to
send them out of the country. 11 Now
there on the hillside a great herd of swine
was feeding; 12 and the unclean spirits[f]
begged him, "Send us into the swine; let
us enter them." 13 So he gave them per-
mission. And the unclean spirits came out
and entered the swine; and the herd,
numbering about two thousand, rushed
down the steep bank into the sea, and
were drowned in the sea.

14 The swineherds ran off and told it
in the city and in the country. Then peo-
ple came to see what it was that had hap-
pened. 15 They came to Jesus and saw the
demoniac sitting there, clothed and in his
right mind, the very man who had had
the legion; and they were afraid. 16 Those
who had seen what had happened to the
demoniac and to the swine reported it.
17 Then they began to beg Jesus[g] to leave
their neighborhood. 18 As he was getting
into the boat, the man who had been pos-
sessed by demons begged him that he
might be with him. 19 But Jesus[h] refused,
and said to him, "Go home to your
friends, and tell them how much the Lord
has done for you, and what mercy he has
shown you." 20 And he went away and be-
gan to proclaim in the Decapolis how
much Jesus had done for him; and every-
one was amazed.

A Girl Restored to Life and a Woman Healed

21 When Jesus had crossed again in
the boat[i] to the other side, a great crowd
gathered around him; and he was by the
sea. 22 Then one of the leaders of the syn-
agogue named Jairus came and, when he
saw him, fell at his feet 23 and begged him
repeatedly, "My little daughter is at the
point of death. Come and lay your hands
on her, so that she may be made well, and
live." 24 So he went with him.

And a large crowd followed him and
pressed in on him. 25 Now there was a
woman who had been suffering from
hemorrhages for twelve years. 26 She had
endured much under many physicians,
and had spent all that she had; and she
was no better, but rather grew worse.
27 She had heard about Jesus, and came
up behind him in the crowd and touched
his cloak, 28 for she said, "If I but touch
his clothes, I will be made well." 29 Imme-
diately her hemorrhage stopped; and she
felt in her body that she was healed of her
disease. 30 Immediately aware that power
had gone forth from him, Jesus turned
about in the crowd and said, "Who
touched my clothes?" 31 And his disciples
said to him, "You see the crowd pressing

f Gk *they* *g* Gk *him* *h* Gk *he* *i* Other ancient authorities lack *in the boat*

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on 1.24. *Legion*, a Roman regiment of approximately six thousand soldiers. **5.11** Like tombs and demonic spirits, *swine* were regarded by Jews as unclean (Lev 11.7–8; Deut 14.8; Isa 65.4; 66.17). **5.13** *Two thousand*, possibly another instance of Marcan exaggeration (see note on 1.33). *The sea*. See note on 4.41. **5.15** *They were afraid*, either awestruck in the presence of the supernatural (see note on 4.41) or fearful of Jesus' power (see 5.17). **5.19** *Tell them*. Cf. 1.44; 3.12; 5.43; 7.36. Elsewhere (Acts 26.20; 1 Cor 14.25; Heb 2.12; 1 Jn 1.2, 3), though not everywhere (cf. Mk 5.14; 1 Thess 1.9), the verb translated "tell" signifies Christian missionary proclamation. *The Lord*, i.e., God (thus 1.3[?]; 11.9; 12.11, 29–30, 36; 13.20; cf. Lk 8.39), although the title is occasionally used of *Jesus* (5.20; see also 2.28; 7.28; 11.3; 12.37; 13.35). See also note on 11.3. **5.20** *The Decapolis*, a group of ten cities lying within a predominantly gentile region east of the Jordan River (see also 7.31). See note on 1.22.

5.21–43 Cf. Mt 9.18–26; Lk 8.40–56. The raising of Jairus's daughter (vv. 21–24a, 35–43; cf. 1 Kings 17.17–24; 2 Kings 4.18–37; Lk 7.11–17; Jn 11.1–44; Acts 9.36–43) frames the healing of a woman with hemorrhages (vv. 24b–34; see note on 2.1–12). **5.21** *To the other side*, presumably west of the Sea of Galilee. **5.22** *Leaders of the synagogue* were responsible for arranging and perhaps conducting worship, as well as for building maintenance (see also Lk 13.14; Acts 13.15; 18.8, 17). *Fell at his feet*. See note on 3.11. **5.23** *At the point of death*. Cf. Mt 9.18. *Lay your hands on her*, an action rare in Jewish stories of healing but recurrent in Mark (6.5; 7.32; 8.22, 25; see also 3.10; 5.28; 6.56). *Made well*, or "saved" (see also 3.4; 5.28, 34; 6.56; 10.52). **5.25** *Hemorrhages*, an unusual menstrual flow producing a state of ritual impurity that entailed social restriction or exclusion (Lev 12.1–8; 15.19–30); see also note on 1.40–45. **5.26** Criticism of *physicians* is commonplace in some ancient Near Eastern texts (e.g., Tob 2.10; Sir 38.15). **5.27–28** Popular belief in the magical power (5.30) of holy people prompts the woman's desire to *touch* Jesus' clothes (see note on 5.23; see also 3.10; Lk 6.19; Acts 5.15; 19.11–12). **5.31** The disciples' words here (cf. Mt 9.20–22; Lk

in on you; how can you say, 'Who touched
me?' " 32 He looked all around to see who
had done it. 33 But the woman, knowing
what had happened to her, came in fear
and trembling, fell down before him, and
told him the whole truth. 34 He said to
her, "Daughter, your faith has made you
well; go in peace, and be healed of your
disease."

35 While he was still speaking, some
people came from the leader's house to
say, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble
the teacher any further?" 36 But overhearing[j] what they said, Jesus said to the
leader of the synagogue, "Do not fear,
only believe." 37 He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John,
the brother of James. 38 When they came
to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. 39 When he had
entered, he said to them, "Why do you
make a commotion and weep? The child
is not dead but sleeping." 40 And they
laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child's father and
mother and those who were with him, and
went in where the child was. 41 He took
her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha
cum," which means, "Little girl, get up!"
42 And immediately the girl got up and
began to walk about (she was twelve years
of age). At this they were overcome with
amazement. 43 He strictly ordered them
that no one should know this, and told
them to give her something to eat.

The Rejection of Jesus at Nazareth

6 He left that place and came to his
hometown, and his disciples followed him. 2 On the sabbath he began to
teach in the synagogue, and many who
heard him were astounded. They said,
"Where did this man get all this? What is
this wisdom that has been given to him?
What deeds of power are being done by
his hands! 3 Is not this the carpenter, the
son of Mary[k] and brother of James and
Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not
his sisters here with us?" And they took
offense[l] at him. 4 Then Jesus said to
them, "Prophets are not without honor,
except in their hometown, and among

j Or *ignoring*; other ancient authorities read *hearing*
k Other ancient authorities read *son of the carpenter and of Mary* *l* Or *stumbled*

8.45–46) recall their protest in 4.38. **5.33** The woman's *fear and trembling* were in reaction to *what had happened to her* (see notes on 4.41; 5.15), not in response to having been found out (cf. Lk 8.47). *Fell down before him.* See also 3.11; 5.22. **5.34** *Daughter* (see also 5.23, 35), *your faith has made you well.* See notes on 2.5; 5.23. *Go in peace*, a common Semitic farewell (Judg 18.6; 1 Sam 1.17; 20.42; Lk 7.50; Acts 16.36; Jas 2.16), suggests the wholeness associated with being healed. **5.36** *Do not fear, only believe* recalls a similar shift in 5.33–34 (cf. 4.40). **5.37** Seclusion from the public is a conventional feature of some ancient miracle stories (see also 5.40; 7.33; 8.23; 1 Kings 17.19; 2 Kings 4.4, 33; Acts 9.40). Along with Andrew (1.16–20, 29; 13.3), *Peter, James, and John* are prominent among the Twelve in Mark (3.16–17; 9.2; 14.33). **5.38** *Weeping and wailing.* The mourners here may have been hired professionals. **5.39** Partly because *sleeping* is a common euphemism for death in the NT (e.g., Eph 5.14; 1 Thess 5.10), Jesus' assessment of the child's condition is unclear. **5.40** *They laughed at him*, i.e., skeptically (see also 5.31, 35; 2 Kings 5.11; Jn 11.39). **5.41** *He took her by the hand*, thereby incurring defilement (Num 19.1–22; see also Mk 1.31; Acts 3.7; notes on 5.23; 5.25). *Talitha cum*, one of several Semitic expressions interpreted by Mark (3.17[?]; 7.11, 34; 11.9–10; 14.36; 15.22, 34, 42), is reminiscent of incantations in ancient miracle stories. The different Greek words for the child's arising (vv. 41, 42) were also used by Jews and Christians with reference to resurrection (e.g., 6.14, 16; 8.31; 12.23, 25–26; 16.6; Acts 2.24; 1 Cor 15.12–20). **5.42** The significance of the girl's *age* is uncertain, though note the oblique correspondence with 5.25. *Overcome with amazement.* See note on 1.22. **5.43** On Jesus' injunction to silence, see notes on 1.34; 1.44. **6.1–6a** Cf. Mt 13.53–58; Lk 4.16–30. Jesus' rejection in his homeland sums up a major section of Mark's narrative, which began at 3.13 (see note on 3.13–6.6a). **6.2** *Astounded.* See note on 1.22. *Where did this man get all this?* See also 3.22; Jn 7.15. Jesus' *wisdom* likely refers to his teaching, represented in Mk 4.1–34. On *deeds of power*, see 4.35–5.43. **6.3** The Greek word translated here as *the carpenter* (cf. Mt 13.55) can also refer to an artisan in stone, metal, or wood. Because Jewish lineage was traced through one's father (cf. Jn 6.42), *the son of Mary* is an unexpected phrase of debatable significance; see also notes on 3.31; 3.35. *They took offense*, lit. "they were scandalized"; see also note on 4.17 (cf. 1 Cor 1.23; Gal 5.11). **6.4** This saying appears in various forms in Lk 4.24; Jn 4.44 and some noncanonical Gospels.

their own kin, and in their own house."
5 And he could do no deed of power
there, except that he laid his hands on a
few sick people and cured them. 6 And he
was amazed at their unbelief.

The Mission of the Twelve

Then he went about among the villages
teaching. 7 He called the twelve and began
to send them out two by two, and gave
them authority over the unclean spirits.
8 He ordered them to take nothing for
their journey except a staff; no bread, no
bag, no money in their belts; 9 but to wear
sandals and not to put on two tunics.
10 He said to them, "Wherever you enter a
house, stay there until you leave the place.
11 If any place will not welcome you and
they refuse to hear you, as you leave,
shake off the dust that is on your feet as a
testimony against them." 12 So they went
out and proclaimed that all should repent.
13 They cast out many demons, and
anointed with oil many who were sick and
cured them.

The Death of John the Baptist

14 King Herod heard of it, for Jesus'[m]
name had become known. Some were[n]
saying, "John the baptizer has been raised
from the dead; and for this reason these
powers are at work in him." 15 But others
said, "It is Elijah." And others said, "It is a
prophet, like one of the prophets of old."
16 But when Herod heard of it, he said,
"John, whom I beheaded, has been
raised."

17 For Herod himself had sent men
who arrested John, bound him, and put
him in prison on account of Herodias, his
brother Philip's wife, because Herod[o]
had married her. 18 For John had been
telling Herod, "It is not lawful for you to
have your brother's wife." 19 And Herodias had a grudge against him, and
wanted to kill him. But she could not,
20 for Herod feared John, knowing that
he was a righteous and holy man, and he
protected him. When he heard him, he
was greatly perplexed;[p] and yet he liked
to listen to him. 21 But an opportunity
came when Herod on his birthday gave a
banquet for his courtiers and officers and
for the leaders of Galilee. 22 When his
daughter Herodias[q] came in and danced,

m Gk *his* *n* Other ancient authorities read *He was* *o* Gk *he* *p* Other ancient authorities read *he did many things* *q* Other ancient authorities read *the daughter of Herodias herself*

Among their own kin . . . in their own house. See also 3.21, 31–32. **6.5** *He could do no deed of power there.* Cf. Mt 13.58. *He laid his hands on . . . sick people and cured them.* See note on 5.23. **6.6a** *Unbelief,* or "lack of faith," cf. 5.34, 36; see also note on 2.5.

6.6b–8.21 Another major section of Mark, detailing the extension of Jesus' mission within and beyond Galilee (6.6b–13; 6.30–8.13), the increasing enmity of secular rulers (6.14–29), and the growing blindness of the disciples (6.52; 8.14–21). **6.6b** Cf. Mt 9.35. A transitional "summary report" (see note on 1.14–15). **6.7–30** Cf. Mt 10.1, 9–14; 14.1–12; Lk 9.1–10a. The death of John (vv. 14–29) is bracketed by the dispatch and return of the Twelve (vv. 7–13, 30; see note on 2.1–12). **6.7–9** Here the summonses in 1.17, 20, and 3.13–15 are intensified. **6.7** *Two by two.* See also Lk 10.1; Acts 13.2–3; cf. Deut 17.6; 19.15; Mt 18.16; Jn 8.17; 2 Cor 13.1; 1 Tim 5.19. *Unclean spirits.* See note on 1.23. **6.8–9** Cynic preachers of antiquity carried *bread* and a beggar's *bag*; even *staff* and *sandals* are prohibited in Mt 10.10; Lk 9.3; 10.4. **6.10** *The place,* i.e., the village or region in which a hospitable *house* was located. **6.11** *Shake off the dust . . . on your feet.* Though its point is uncertain, this symbolic gesture may be associated with the practice of traveling Jews who guarded against contaminating their homeland with pagan dust; see also Acts 10.28; 18.5–6. **6.12** See also 1.4, 14–15. **6.13** *Anointed with oil.* See also Jas 5.14. **6.14** *Herod* Antipas, son of Herod the Great and tetrarch of Galilee and Perea (4 B.C.E.–39C.E.; see also 3.6; 8.15; Lk 1.5; 3.1), perhaps popularly referred to as king. *John the baptizer.* See Mk 1.4–9. *Powers.* See 5.30; 6.2; cf. Jn 10.41. **6.15** *Elijah,* harbinger of the day of the Lord in Mal 3.1–2; 4.5–6. Cf. 1.2; 9.9–13; see also note on 1.6. *A prophet.* Cf. Deut 18.15–22. Public speculation about Jesus is similarly described in Mk 8.28; cf. Jn 1.19–21. **6.17** Jesus' own ministry commenced after *John* had been arrested (1.14). According to the Jewish historian Josephus, *Herodias* was not Philip's wife but his mother-in-law. **6.18** The illegality of such marriage is stipulated in Lev 18.16; 20.21. **6.19–20** John's reaction recalls that of Eleazar (2 Macc 6.18–31; 4 Macc 5.1–7.23); Herodias's recalls that of Jezebel (1 Kings 19.1–3). Like Ahab (1 Kings 21.1–16), Herod is portrayed as a weak governor, manipulated by his wife (Mk 6.26). **6.22** Herod's daughter (named Salome, according to Josephus) is strangely identified as *Herodias,* which was

she pleased Herod and his guests; and the
king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever
you wish, and I will give it." 23 And he sol-
emnly swore to her, "Whatever you ask
me, I will give you, even half of my king-
dom." 24 She went out and said to her
mother, "What should I ask for?" She re-
plied, "The head of John the baptizer."
25 Immediately she rushed back to the
king and requested, "I want you to give
me at once the head of John the Baptist
on a platter." 26 The king was deeply
grieved; yet out of regard for his oaths
and for the guests, he did not want to re-
fuse her. 27 Immediately the king sent a
soldier of the guard with orders to bring
John's[r] head. He went and beheaded
him in the prison, 28 brought his head on
a platter, and gave it to the girl. Then the
girl gave it to her mother. 29 When his dis-
ciples heard about it, they came and took
his body, and laid it in a tomb.

Feeding the Five Thousand

30 The apostles gathered around
Jesus, and told him all that they had done
and taught. 31 He said to them, "Come
away to a deserted place all by yourselves
and rest a while." For many were coming
and going, and they had no leisure even
to eat. 32 And they went away in the boat
to a deserted place by themselves. 33 Now
many saw them going and recognized
them, and they hurried there on foot
from all the towns and arrived ahead of
them. 34 As he went ashore, he saw a great
crowd; and he had compassion for them,
because they were like sheep without a
shepherd; and he began to teach them
many things. 35 When it grew late, his dis-
ciples came to him and said, "This is a de-
serted place, and the hour is now very
late; 36 send them away so that they may
go into the surrounding country and vil-
lages and buy something for themselves to
eat." 37 But he answered them, "You give
them something to eat." They said to him,
"Are we to go and buy two hundred de-
narii[s] worth of bread, and give it to them
to eat?" 38 And he said to them, "How
many loaves have you? Go and see."
When they had found out, they said,
"Five, and two fish." 39 Then he ordered
them to get all the people to sit down in
groups on the green grass. 40 So they sat
down in groups of hundreds and of fif-
ties. 41 Taking the five loaves and the two
fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed
and broke the loaves, and gave them to
his disciples to set before the people; and
he divided the two fish among them all.
42 And all ate and were filled; 43 and they
took up twelve baskets full of broken
pieces and of the fish. 44 Those who had
eaten the loaves numbered five thou-
sand men.

Jesus Walks on the Water

45 Immediately he made his disciples
get into the boat and go on ahead to
the other side, to Bethsaida, while he

r Gk *his* s The denarius was the usual day's wage for a laborer

amended in other ancient manuscripts of Mark (cf. Mt 14.6; see also text note *q*). **6.23** *I will give you . . . half of my kingdom.* See Esth 5.3, 6; 7.2. **6.27** *Soldier of the guard,* a translation of a Greek term that came to refer to an "executioner." **6.29** *They . . . took his body, and laid it in a tomb.* Cf. 15.45–46. **6.30** *Apostles.* See note on 3.14. **6.31–44** Cf. Mt 14.13–21; Lk 9.10–17; Jn 6.1–13. The feeding of the five thousand recalls Israel's miraculous sustenance by God (Ex 16.13–35; Num 11.1–35; Neh 9.15; Ps 78.17–31; Isa 49.8–13), as well as Jewish expectations of an end-time feast for God's elect (Isa 25.6–8; Mt 22.1–14; Lk 14.15–24). **6.31** *A deserted place* (also 6.32, 35). See note on 1.35. *No leisure even to eat.* See also 3.20. **6.33** *All the towns,* another instance of Marcan exaggeration (see, e.g., 1.32). **6.34** *Like sheep without a shepherd.* See Num 27.15–17; 1 Kings 22.17; 2 Chr 18.16; Ezek 34.1–31; Jdt 11.19; Mt 9.36. **6.37** Since a denarius represents a laborer's daily wage (Mt 20.2, 9, 13), *two hundred denarii* implies a sum beyond reach. **6.39** *Groups,* lit. "symposia," suggesting a banquet's conviviality. **6.40** Companies *of hundreds and of fifties* were prescribed for aspects of community life among the Dead Sea sectarians (see also Ex 18.21, 25). **6.41** *He looked up to heaven.* See also 7.34; Job 22.26; Ps 121.1; Lk 18.13; Jn 11.41. Jesus' actions (*taking, blessed, broke, gave*; cf. 8.6) were customary for a host at a Jewish meal; see also 14.22. **6.42–44** The multitude's satisfaction and the abundant leftovers confirm the miracle (see also 2 Kings 4.42–44). The symbolic significance, if any, of the numbers *twelve* and *five thousand* is unclear (also *five* and *two* in 6.38). **6.45–52** Cf. Mt 14.22–33; Jn 6.15–21. Another epiphany of Jesus on the sea (see also 4.35–41; Jn 21.1–14). **6.45** *Bethsaida,* on the

dismissed the crowd. 46 After saying farewell to them, he went up on the mountain to pray.

47 When evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. 48 When he saw that they were straining at the oars against an adverse wind, he came towards them early in the morning, walking on the sea. He intended to pass them by. 49 But when they saw him walking on the sea, they thought it was a ghost and cried out; 50 for they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." 51 Then he got into the boat with them and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, 52 for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.

Healing the Sick in Gennesaret

53 When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat. 54 When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him, 55 and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. 56 And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.

The Tradition of the Elders

7 Now when the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around him, 2 they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them. 3 (For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands,[t] thus observing the tradition of the elders; 4 and they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash it;[u] and there are also many other traditions that they observe, the washing of cups, pots, and bronze kettles.[v]) 5 So the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, "Why do your disciples not live[w] according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?" 6 He said to them, "Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written,

'This people honors me with
their lips,
but their hearts are far
from me;
7 in vain do they worship me,
teaching human precepts as
doctrines.'

[t] Meaning of Gk uncertain [u] Other ancient authorities read *and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they purify themselves*
[v] Other ancient authorities add *and beds*
[w] Gk *walk*

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north-northeast shore of the Sea of Galilee. **6.46** *He went up on the mountain to pray.* See notes on 1.35; 3.13. **6.47** The timing (*evening*) does not correspond with the setting in 6.35, suggesting that this story was originally independent of its predecessor. **6.48** *Early in the morning*, lit. "around the fourth watch of the night" (between 3:00 and 6:00 A.M.). *Walking on the sea.* See notes on 4.37; 4.41. Why *he intended to pass them by* is baffling; it may allude to God's veiled self-disclosure to Moses (Ex 33.18–23) and Elijah (1 Kings 19.11–12). **6.50** *It is I*, lit. "I am," an expression of divine self-revelation in the OT (Ex 3.13–15; Isa 41.4; 43.10–11; see also, e.g., Jn 4.26; 6.20, 35). *Take heart . . . do not be afraid.* See note on 4.40. **6.51** *The wind ceased.* See 4.39. *Astounded.* See note on 4.41. **6.52** *They did not understand.* See note on 4.13. *Loaves.* See 6.37, 38, 41, 44. *Their hearts were hardened.* See note on 3.5. **6.53–56** Cf. Mt 14.34–36. A transitional "summary report" (see note on 1.14–15). **6.53** Oddly, *they came to land at Gennesaret*, on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee (cf. 6.45); see also note on 5.1. **6.56** *The fringe of his cloak*, probably the tassel that Jewish males were required to wear (Num 15.37–41; Deut 22.12; see also Mt 9.20; Lk 8.44). *All who touched it were healed.* See note on 5.27–28.

7.1–23 Cf. Mt 15.1–20. Jesus' teaching on defilement and rejection of Pharisaic tradition. **7.1** *Pharisees and . . . scribes . . . from Jerusalem.* See notes on 1.5; 1.22; 2.16. **7.2** *Eating*, lit. "eating the loaves," a Semitic expression that effectively recalls 6.41, 44. The phrase *with defiled hands* refers to ritual uncleanliness (Acts 10.14; 11.8; cf. Mk 2.23–28); its interpretation (*that is, without washing them*; see Lev 15.11) and the explanations in 7.3–4, 11, 19b presume the readers' unfamiliarity with Jewish customs (see also note on 5.41). **7.3** *And all the Jews*, historically inaccurate; perhaps Marcan exaggeration (see, e.g., 1.32; cf. Lev 22.1–16). *Thoroughly*, lit. "with a fist," an expression whose meaning is irrecoverable. *The tradition of the elders*, i.e., oral interpretation, considered by Pharisees to be legally binding (see also Gal 1.14). **7.6–7** Isa 29.13 (Septuagint). Prophetic condemnation of empty worship was common; see, e.g., Isa 1.10–20; 58.1–14; Am

8 You abandon the commandment of God
and hold to human tradition."
9 Then he said to them, "You have a
fine way of rejecting the commandment
of God in order to keep your tradition!
10 For Moses said, 'Honor your father and
your mother'; and, 'Whoever speaks evil
of father or mother must surely die.'
11 But you say that if anyone tells father or
mother, 'Whatever support you might
have had from me is Corban' (that is, an
offering to God[x])— 12 then you no long-
er permit doing anything for a father or
mother, 13 thus making void the word of
God through your tradition that you
have handed on. And you do many things
like this."
14 Then he called the crowd again
and said to them, "Listen to me, all of you,
and understand: 15 there is nothing out-
side a person that by going in can defile,
but the things that come out are what
defile."[y]
17 When he had left the crowd and
entered the house, his disciples asked him
about the parable. 18 He said to them,
"Then do you also fail to understand? Do
you not see that whatever goes into a per-
son from outside cannot defile, 19 since it
enters, not the heart but the stomach, and
goes out into the sewer?" (Thus he de-
clared all foods clean.) 20 And he said, "It
is what comes out of a person that defiles.
21 For it is from within, from the human
heart, that evil intentions come: fornica-
tion, theft, murder, 22 adultery, avarice,
wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy,
slander, pride, folly. 23 All these evil
things come from within, and they defile
a person."

The Syrophoenician Woman's Faith

24 From there he set out and went
away to the region of Tyre.[z] He entered
a house and did not want anyone to know
he was there. Yet he could not escape no-
tice, 25 but a woman whose little daughter
had an unclean spirit immediately heard
about him, and she came and bowed
down at his feet. 26 Now the woman was a
Gentile, of Syrophoenician origin. She
begged him to cast the demon out of her
daughter. 27 He said to her, "Let the chil-
dren be fed first, for it is not fair to take
the children's food and throw it to the
dogs." 28 But she answered him, "Sir,[a]
even the dogs under the table eat the chil-
dren's crumbs." 29 Then he said to her,
"For saying that, you may go—the demon
has left your daughter." 30 So she went
home, found the child lying on the bed,
and the demon gone.

Jesus Cures a Deaf Man

31 Then he returned from the region
of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon to-
wards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of

x Gk lacks *to God* y Other ancient authorities add verse 16, *"Let anyone with ears to hear listen"*
z Other ancient authorities add *and Sidon*
a Or *Lord*; other ancient authorities prefix *Yes*

5.21–24. **7.8** Cf. Col 2.20–22. **7.10** See Ex 20.12; 21.17; Lev 20.9; Deut 5.16; see also Mk 10.19; Eph 6.2. **7.11** *Corban*, an offering dedicated to God (see Lev 1.2) and thereby withdrawn from secular uses such as parental support. **7.13** *The word of God*, i.e., the written law. **7.15** On what can and cannot *defile*, see 7.18–19; Acts 10.9–16; Rom 14.14; Gal 2.11–14; cf. Lev 11.1–47; see also notes on Mk 1.40–45; 5.25; 5.41. V. 16 (see text note *y*) is probably a later textual addition, modeled after 4.9, 23. **7.17** *The house*. See note on 3.19b. *His disciples asked him about the parable*. See 4.10, 33–34; see also note on 3.23. **7.18** *Do you also fail to understand?* See also 4.13; 6.52. **7.19** *The heart*, metaphorically regarded as the seat of moral and religious conduct (e.g., 1 Sam 12.20, 24; Ps 24.4–5; Jer 32.39–40; Mt 5.8). **7.21–22** Lists of vices are common in early Christian exhortation (e.g., Rom 1.29–31; Gal 5.19–21; 2 Tim 3.2–5). **7.22** *Envy*, or stinginess, lit. "an evil eye"; see Deut 15.9; Tob 4.7; Sir 14.10; 31.13.

7.24–30 Cf. Mt 15.21–28. The third of four exorcisms in Mark (see 1.21–28; 5.1–20; 9.14–29). **7.24** *The region of Tyre* (see also 3.8), northwest of Galilee, largely gentile and despised by Jews (see Ezek 26.1–28.19; Joel 3.4–8). *A house*. See note on 3.19b. On the recurring tension between Jesus' seclusion and disclosure, see also 1.44–45; 2.1–2; 3.19b–20; 6.31–33; 7.36. **7.25** *An unclean spirit*, or demon (7.26, 29, 30; see also 1.23). *Bowed down at his feet*. See note on 3.11. **7.26** *A Gentile*, lit. "a Greek" (see also Rom 1.16; 2.9–10; 1 Cor 1.24; 10.32; Gal 3.28; Col 3.11), whose specific nationality was *Syrophoenician*. **7.27** The saying implies the superiority of Israel's claim upon God's blessing (*food*, lit. "bread") over that of Gentiles, slandered as *dogs* (1 Sam 17.43; 24.14; Prov 26.11; Phil 3.2; Rev 22.15). **7.31–37** Cf. Mt 15.29–31. **7.31** The route is bizarre (see also notes on 5.1; 6.53): The city of *Sidon* was twenty miles north of *Tyre* (see

the Decapolis. 32 They brought to him a
deaf man who had an impediment in his
speech; and they begged him to lay his
hand on him. 33 He took him aside in pri-
vate, away from the crowd, and put his
fingers into his ears, and he spat and
touched his tongue. 34 Then looking up to
heaven, he sighed and said to him, "Eph-
phatha," that is, "Be opened." 35 And
immediately his ears were opened, his
tongue was released, and he spoke
plainly. 36 Then Jesus[b] ordered them to
tell no one; but the more he ordered
them, the more zealously they proclaimed
it. 37 They were astounded beyond mea-
sure, saying, "He has done everything
well; he even makes the deaf to hear and
the mute to speak."

Feeding the Four Thousand

8 In those days when there was again a
great crowd without anything to eat,
he called his disciples and said to them,
2 "I have compassion for the crowd, be-
cause they have been with me now for
three days and have nothing to eat. 3 If I
send them away hungry to their homes,
they will faint on the way—and some of
them have come from a great distance."
4 His disciples replied, "How can one feed
these people with bread here in the
desert?" 5 He asked them, "How many
loaves do you have?" They said, "Seven."
6 Then he ordered the crowd to sit down
on the ground; and he took the seven
loaves, and after giving thanks he broke
them and gave them to his disciples to dis-
tribute; and they distributed them to the
crowd. 7 They had also a few small fish;
and after blessing them, he ordered that
these too should be distributed. 8 They ate
and were filled; and they took up the bro-
ken pieces left over, seven baskets full.
9 Now there were about four thousand
people. And he sent them away. 10 And
immediately he got into the boat with his
disciples and went to the district of Dal-
manutha.[c]

The Demand for a Sign

11 The Pharisees came and began to
argue with him, asking him for a sign
from heaven, to test him. 12 And he
sighed deeply in his spirit and said, "Why
does this generation ask for a sign? Truly
I tell you, no sign will be given to this gen-
eration." 13 And he left them, and getting
into the boat again, he went across to the
other side.

The Yeast of the Pharisees and of Herod

14 Now the disciples[d] had forgotten
to bring any bread; and they had only one
loaf with them in the boat. 15 And he cau-
tioned them, saying, "Watch out—beware
of the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast

b Gk *he* *c* Other ancient authorities read *Mageda* or *Magdala* *d* Gk *they*

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note on 7.24); *the region of the Decapolis* was east and southeast of *the Sea of Galilee* (see notes on 1.16; 5.20). **7.32** *To lay his hand on him.* See note on 5.23. **7.33** *In private, away from the crowd.* See note on 5.37. Jesus' healing technique, including the use of spittle, is common in ancient healing stories (see also Jn 9.6). **7.34** *Looking up to heaven.* See note on 6.41. *"Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened."* See note on 5.41. **7.35** *His ears,* lit. "his hearing." **7.36** Similar commands are violated elsewhere; see notes on 1.34; 1.44; 1.45; 7.24. **7.37** *Astounded beyond measure.* See note on 1.22. The acclamation echoes Isa 35.5–6; Wis 10.21.

8.1–10 Cf. Mt 15.32–39. Another version of the feeding of the multitude (see note on 6.31–44). **8.4** *The desert,* or "wilderness"; see notes on 1.4; 1.35. **8.6** *After giving thanks he broke them.* See Acts 27.35; 1 Cor 11.24; see also note on Mk 6.41. **8.8–9** See note on 6.42–44. Compared with 6.38, 43–44, the numbers of loaves (*seven,* 8.5), baskets (*seven,* 8.8), and people (*four thousand,* 8.9) vary, yet their symbolism is equally indeterminate. **8.10** The location of *Dalmanutha* is unknown (cf. Mt 15.39; see also notes on 5.1; 6.53; 7.31). **8.11–13** Cf. Mt 16.1–4; Lk 11.29–32; cf. Mt 12.38–42; Lk 11.16; Jn 6.30. **8.11** *Pharisees.* See note on 2.16. *Asking* (or "searching"). See note on 1.37. *A sign from heaven,* i.e., verification of divine authority (see Ex 4.28, 30; Num 14.11; Deut 13.1–5; Isa 7.10–17). **8.12** *This generation* recalls OT terminology for human faithlessness (see Gen 7.1; Deut 32.5, 20; Ps 95.10; see also Mk 8.38; 9.19; 13.30). *Truly I tell you.* See note on 3.28. **8.14–21** Cf. Mt 16.5–12; Lk 12.1; Jn 6.32–36. An enigmatic passage highlighting the disciples' hardened hearts (8.17); see notes on 3.5; 4.13. **8.14** Though ambiguous, a contrast between the disciples' need and their apparently insufficient resources may be intended (see also 6.37–38; 8.4–5). **8.15** *Yeast,* a symbol of pervasive corruption hidden within human beings (see also 1 Cor 5.6; Gal 5.9). *Pharisees.*

of Herod."[e] 16 They said to one another,
"It is because we have no bread." 17 And
becoming aware of it, Jesus said to them,
"Why are you talking about having no
bread? Do you still not perceive or under-
stand? Are your hearts hardened? 18 Do
you have eyes, and fail to see? Do you
have ears, and fail to hear? And do you
not remember? 19 When I broke the five
loaves for the five thousand, how many
baskets full of broken pieces did you col-
lect?" They said to him, "Twelve." 20 "And
the seven for the four thousand, how
many baskets full of broken pieces did
you collect?" And they said to him,
"Seven." 21 Then he said to them, "Do you
not yet understand?"

Jesus Cures a Blind Man at Bethsaida

22 They came to Bethsaida. Some
people[f] brought a blind man to him and
begged him to touch him. 23 He took the
blind man by the hand and led him out of
the village; and when he had put saliva
on his eyes and laid his hands on him,
he asked him, "Can you see anything?"
24 And the man[g] looked up and said, "I
can see people, but they look like trees,
walking." 25 Then Jesus[g] laid his hands
on his eyes again; and he looked intently
and his sight was restored, and he saw ev-
erything clearly. 26 Then he sent him away
to his home, saying, "Do not even go into
the village."[h]

Peter's Declaration About Jesus

27 Jesus went on with his disciples to
the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on
the way he asked his disciples, "Who do
people say that I am?" 28 And they an-
swered him, "John the Baptist; and oth-
ers, Elijah; and still others, one of the
prophets." 29 He asked them, "But who
do you say that I am?" Peter answered
him, "You are the Messiah."[i] 30 And he
sternly ordered them not to tell anyone
about him.

Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection

31 Then he began to teach them that
the Son of Man must undergo great suf-
fering, and be rejected by the elders, the
chief priests, and the scribes, and be
killed, and after three days rise again.
32 He said all this quite openly. And Peter
took him aside and began to rebuke him.
33 But turning and looking at his disciples,
he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind
me, Satan! For you are setting your mind
not on divine things but on human
things."

34 He called the crowd with his disci-
ples, and said to them, "If any want to
become my followers, let them deny
themselves and take up their cross and

e Other ancient authorities read *the Herodians*
f Gk *They* g Gk *he* h Other ancient authorities add *or tell anyone in the village*
i Or *the Christ*

See note on 2.16. *Herod.* See note on 6.14. **8.17–18** See also 4.11–12; Jer 5.21; Ezek 12.2. **8.19–20** See 6.41–44; 8.6–9.

8.22–10.52 Another major section of Mark, concentrating on Jesus' anticipated suffering, the disciples' misunderstanding, and instruction in true discipleship. **8.22–26** Cf. Jn 9.1–7. Introducing this major section in 8.22–10.52 is an instance of progressive relief from blindness (cf. 8.18; 10.46–52). **8.22** *Bethsaida.* See note on 6.45; see also 6.53; 8.13. *To touch him.* See note on 5.23. **8.23** *Out of the village.* See note on 5.37. On the application of *saliva* and *hands,* see note on 7.33. **8.26** *Do not even go into the village.* See the similar prohibitions in 1.44–45; 5.43; 7.24, 36. **8.27–30** Cf. Mt 16.13–20; Lk 9.18–21. **8.27** *Caesarea Philippi,* a city-state in the gentile frontier, on the southern slope of Mount Hermon. **8.28** *John the Baptist.* See note on 6.14. *Elijah ... one of the prophets.* See note on 6.15. **8.29** Cf. Jn 1.49; 6.68–69. *The Messiah.* See note on 1.1. **8.30** *He sternly ordered,* or "rebuked" (see 1.25; 3.12; 4.39; 9.25; 10.13; see also note on 1.34).

8.31–9.1 Cf. Mt 16.21–28; Lk 9.22–27. The first in a cycle of three predictions of Jesus' suffering and resurrection (v. 31; see also 9.31; 10.33–34), three misinterpretations by the disciples (vv. 32–33; see also 9.32–34; 10.35–41), and three discourses on genuine discipleship (8.34–9.1; see also 9.35–37; 10.42–45). **8.31** *The Son of Man,* Jesus' cryptic mode of self-reference (see note on 2.10), focused here on his sufferings. See also 9.12; 14.21, 41; Mt 8.20; 17.12; 26.2, 24, 45; Lk 9.58; 17.25; 22.22, 48; 24.7. *Must undergo,* i.e., in accordance with God's will (cf. Isa 53.4–6, 10). *The elders,* senior lay leaders (see also Lk 7.3; Acts 4.8), who with *the chief priests and the scribes* constitute the Sanhedrin, or supreme Jewish council, in Mark (14.43, 53–55; 15.1; see also note on 1.22). **8.32–33** *To rebuke.* See note on 8.30. *Satan.* See note on 1.13. **8.34** *Deny,* or "disown." See 14.30, 31, 72; see also Mt 10.38; Lk 14.27. *Cross,* an instrument of

follow me. 35 For those who want to save
their life will lose it, and those who lose
their life for my sake, and for the sake of
the gospel,[j] will save it. 36 For what will it
profit them to gain the whole world and
forfeit their life? 37 Indeed, what can they
give in return for their life? 38 Those who
are ashamed of me and of my words[k] in
this adulterous and sinful generation, of
them the Son of Man will also be ashamed
when he comes in the glory of his Father
9 with the holy angels." 1 And he said
to them, "Truly I tell you, there are
some standing here who will not taste
death until they see that the kingdom of
God has come with[l] power."

The Transfiguration

2 Six days later, Jesus took with him
Peter and James and John, and led them
up a high mountain apart, by themselves.
And he was transfigured before them,
3 and his clothes became dazzling white,
such as no one[m] on earth could bleach
them. 4 And there appeared to them Eli-
jah with Moses, who were talking with
Jesus. 5 Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi,
it is good for us to be here; let us make
three dwellings,[n] one for you, one for
Moses, and one for Elijah." 6 He did not
know what to say, for they were terrified.
7 Then a cloud overshadowed them, and
from the cloud there came a voice, "This
is my Son, the Beloved;[o] listen to him!"
8 Suddenly when they looked around,
they saw no one with them any more, but
only Jesus.

The Coming of Elijah

9 As they were coming down the
mountain, he ordered them to tell no one
about what they had seen, until after the
Son of Man had risen from the dead. 10 So
they kept the matter to themselves, ques-
tioning what this rising from the dead
could mean. 11 Then they asked him,
"Why do the scribes say that Elijah must
come first?" 12 He said to them, "Elijah is
indeed coming first to restore all things.
How then is it written about the Son of
Man, that he is to go through many suf-
ferings and be treated with contempt?
13 But I tell you that Elijah has come, and
they did to him whatever they pleased, as
it is written about him."

j Other ancient authorities read *lose their life for the sake of the gospel* *k* Other ancient authorities read *and of mine* *l* Or *in* *m* Gk *no fuller* *n* Or *tents* *o* Or *my beloved Son*

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torturous execution (see 15.21, 30, 32). **8.35** *Gospel*, or "good news." See note on 1.1. See also Mt 10.39; Lk 17.33; Jn 12.25. **8.36** See also Lk 12.13–21. **8.38** See also Mt 10.33; Lk 12.9. *This adulterous and sinful generation.* See note on 8.12. Some Jews expected end-time vindication to be enacted by *the Son of Man* (see Dan 7.13–14), a figure whom early Christians identified with Jesus (see 13.26; 14.62; Mt 19.28; 24.37–44; Lk 12.40; 17.24–30; 18.8; 21.36; Acts 7.55–56); see also notes on 2.10; 8.31. *With the holy angels.* See also Mt 13.41; 25.31; Jn 1.51. **9.1** See also 13.30. *Truly I tell you.* See note on 3.28. *Taste death*, i.e., die; see also 2 Esd 6.26; Jn 8.52; Heb 2.9. *Kingdom of God.* See note on 1.15. **9.2–8** Cf. Mt 17.1–8; Lk 9.28–36. See also 2 Pet 1.17–18. **9.2** *Six days later*, an unusually precise setting (cf. Ex 24.16). *Peter and James and John.* See note on 5.37. *A high mountain.* See Ex 24.12–18; see also note on 3.13. *Apart, by themselves.* See 4.34; 6.31–32; 7.33; 9.28; 13.3. *Transfigured*, or supernaturally "transformed," a concept rooted in Jewish apocalypticism (see also Rom 12.2; 2 Cor 3.18; Phil 3.21). **9.3** *His clothes became dazzling white*, another apocalyptic image, connoting glorification (see 16.5; Dan 7.9; 12.3; 2 Esd 7.97; Mt 13.43; Rev 3.5; 4.4; 7.9, 13). *No one*, lit. *no fuller* (see text note *m*), one who whitens woolen cloth. **9.4** The significance of *Elijah with Moses* is obscure. Some Jews believed that Moses (Deut 34.5–6), like Elijah (2 Kings 2.9–12), was directly translated into heavenly life (see 2 Esd 6.26). See also note on 1.6. **9.5** Associated with the Festival of Booths, or Tabernacles (see Lev 23.39–43), "tents" were regarded as *dwellings* for divine beings (Ex 25.1–9; Acts 7.43; Rev 21.3) or eternal habitations for the righteous (Lk 16.9; 2 Cor 5.1). **9.6** *Terrified.* See note on 4.41. **9.7** OT theophanies are often accompanied by *a cloud* (see, e.g., Ex 24.15–18; Isa 4.5; Ezek 1.4). The heavenly voice recalls OT pronouncements (Deut 18.15; Ps 2.7; Isa 42.1); see note on Mk 1.11. *My son.* See note on 1.1. **9.9–13** Cf. Mt 17.9–13. **9.9** *Tell no one.* See note on 1.34. *Son of Man* (also 9.12). See note on 8.31 (cf. 2.10; 8.38). **9.10** Resurrection was an intelligible concept for Jews; however, *questioning* (or "arguing") is typically elicited by Jesus' activity in Mark (1.27; 8.11; 9.14, 16; 11.31; 12.28); see also note on 4.13. **9.11** *Scribes.* See note on 1.22. **9.12** Lacking clear biblical referent, *How then is it written* presumes the divine necessity of Jesus' *many sufferings* (see 8.31; cf. 14.21; Lk 18.31; 24.44, 46; Acts 13.29). **9.13** *Elijah has come.* See notes on 1.6; 6.15.

The Healing of a Boy with a Spirit

14 When they came to the disciples,
they saw a great crowd around them, and
some scribes arguing with them. 15 When
the whole crowd saw him, they were im-
mediately overcome with awe, and they
ran forward to greet him. 16 He asked
them, "What are you arguing about with
them?" 17 Someone from the crowd an-
swered him, "Teacher, I brought you my
son; he has a spirit that makes him unable
to speak; 18 and whenever it seizes him, it
dashes him down; and he foams and
grinds his teeth and becomes rigid; and I
asked your disciples to cast it out, but they
could not do so." 19 He answered them,
"You faithless generation, how much lon-
ger must I be among you? How much
longer must I put up with you? Bring him
to me." 20 And they brought the boy[p] to
him. When the spirit saw him, immedi-
ately it convulsed the boy,[p] and he fell on
the ground and rolled about, foaming at
the mouth. 21 Jesus[q] asked the father,
"How long has this been happening to
him?" And he said, "From childhood. 22 It
has often cast him into the fire and into
the water, to destroy him; but if you are
able to do anything, have pity on us and
help us." 23 Jesus said to him, "If you are
able! — All things can be done for the one
who believes." 24 Immediately the father
of the child cried out,[r] "I believe; help
my unbelief!" 25 When Jesus saw that a
crowd came running together, he re-
buked the unclean spirit, saying to it,
"You spirit that keeps this boy from
speaking and hearing, I command you,
come out of him, and never enter him
again!" 26 After crying out and convulsing
him terribly, it came out, and the boy was
like a corpse, so that most of them said,
"He is dead." 27 But Jesus took him by the
hand and lifted him up, and he was able
to stand. 28 When he had entered the
house, his disciples asked him privately,
"Why could we not cast it out?" 29 He said
to them, "This kind can come out only
through prayer."[s]

Jesus Again Foretells His Death and Resurrection

30 They went on from there and
passed through Galilee. He did not want
anyone to know it; 31 for he was teaching
his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of
Man is to be betrayed into human hands,
and they will kill him, and three days after
being killed, he will rise again." 32 But
they did not understand what he was say-
ing and were afraid to ask him.

Who Is the Greatest?

33 Then they came to Capernaum;
and when he was in the house he asked
them, "What were you arguing about on
the way?" 34 But they were silent, for on
the way they had argued with one another
who was the greatest. 35 He sat down,
called the twelve, and said to them, "Who-

p Gk *him* *q* Gk *He* *r* Other ancient authorities add *with tears* *s* Other ancient authorities add *and fasting*

9.14–29 Cf. Mt 17.14–20; Lk 9.37–43a. The last of four exorcisms in Mark (see 1.21–28; 5.1–20; 7.24–30). **9.14** *Scribes.* See note on 1.22. *Arguing.* See note on 9.10. **9.15** *Overcome with awe,* perhaps a muffled echo of Ex 34.30 (see also note on Mk 4.41). **9.17–18** The boy's symptoms suggest epilepsy. **9.18** *But they could not do so.* Cf. 6.13. **9.19** *You faithless generation.* See note on 8.12. **9.23** *All things can be done for the one who believes.* See note on 2.5; see also 11.22–23. **9.24** *I believe; help my unbelief!* See notes on 4.40; 6.6a. **9.25** *The unclean spirit,* i.e., a demon (see 1.23). **9.26–27** As in 5.41–42 (see note on 5.41), a healing is described with the language of resurrection. **9.28** *When he had entered the house . . . privately.* See notes on 4.10; 7.17. **9.29** On the power of faith *through prayer,* see also 11.24.

9.30–37 Cf. Mt 17.22–23; 18.1–5; Lk 9.43b–48. The second in a cycle of three predictions of Jesus' suffering and resurrection, three misapprehensions by the disciples, and three sets of instruction on true discipleship (see note on 8.31–9.1). **9.30** *Galilee.* See note on 1.9. *He did not want anyone to know it.* See note on 1.34. **9.31** *Son of Man.* See note on 8.31. *Betrayed,* also translated *arrested* in 1.14 and *handed over* in 3.19. *Into human hands,* the simplest and probably oldest form of reference to the agents of Jesus' suffering (cf. 8.31; 10.33). **9.32** Characteristically in Mark (see notes on 4.13; 4.40), the disciples *did not understand . . . and were afraid.* **9.33** *Capernaum.* See note on 1.21. *In the house.* See note on 7.17. *Arguing.* See note on 9.10. **9.34** *Who was the greatest,* a point of controversy within social groups of antiquity; see also Lk 22.24. **9.35** This saying appears in different forms and contexts in the Gospels (see 10.43–44; Mt 20.26–27; 23.11–12;

ever wants to be first must be last of all
and servant of all." 36 Then he took a little
child and put it among them; and taking
it in his arms, he said to them, 37 "Who-
ever welcomes one such child in my name
welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me
welcomes not me but the one who
sent me."

Another Exorcist

38 John said to him, "Teacher, we saw
someone[t] casting out demons in your
name, and we tried to stop him, because
he was not following us." 39 But Jesus said,
"Do not stop him; for no one who does a
deed of power in my name will be able
soon afterward to speak evil of me.
40 Whoever is not against us is for us.
41 For truly I tell you, whoever gives you a
cup of water to drink because you bear
the name of Christ will by no means lose
the reward.

Temptations to Sin

42 "If any of you put a stumbling
block before one of these little ones who
believe in me,[u] it would be better for you
if a great millstone were hung around
your neck and you were thrown into the
sea. 43 If your hand causes you to stumble,
cut it off; it is better for you to enter life
maimed than to have two hands and to
go to hell,[v] to the unquenchable fire.[w]
45 And if your foot causes you to stumble,
cut it off; it is better for you to enter life
lame than to have two feet and to be
thrown into hell.[v,w] 47 And if your eye
causes you to stumble, tear it out; it is bet-
ter for you to enter the kingdom of God
with one eye than to have two eyes and
to be thrown into hell,[v] 48 where their
worm never dies, and the fire is never
quenched.
49 "For everyone will be salted with
fire.[x] 50 Salt is good; but if salt has lost its
saltiness, how can you season it?[y] Have
salt in yourselves, and be at peace with
one another."

Teaching About Divorce

10 He left that place and went to the
region of Judea and[z] beyond the
Jordan. And crowds again gathered
around him; and, as was his custom, he
again taught them.
2 Some Pharisees came, and to test
him they asked, "Is it lawful for a man to
divorce his wife?" 3 He answered them,
"What did Moses command you?" 4 They
said, "Moses allowed a man to write a cer-
tificate of dismissal and to divorce her."
5 But Jesus said to them, "Because of your
hardness of heart he wrote this command-

t Other ancient authorities add *who does not follow us* *u* Other ancient authorities lack *in me* *v* Gk *Gehenna* *w* Verses 44 and 46 (which are identical with verse 48) are lacking in the best ancient authorities *x* Other ancient authorities either add or substitute *and every sacrifice will be salted with salt* *y* Or *how can you restore its saltiness?* *z* Other ancient authorities lack *and*

Lk 9.48; 22.26). **9.36** *A little child,* an exemplar of powerlessness. **9.37** Another saying whose variants are distributed throughout the Gospels (see 10.15; Mt 10.40; 18.5; Lk 9.48; 10.16; 18.17; Jn 12.44–45; 13.20). *One such child in my name,* i.e., a disciple of Jesus (see 9.41–42). **9.38–41** Cf. Lk 9.49–50. **9.38** Pagan magicians sometimes invoked a revered Jewish or Christian *name* (see also Acts 19.11–20). **9.40–41** Other maxims, perhaps originally detached (cf. Mt 10.42; 12.30; Lk 11.23), whose content recalls Mk 3.31–35. *The name of Christ.* See notes on 1.1; 9.37. **9.42–50** Cf. Mt 18.6–9; Lk 17.1–2. Evidently a chain of originally detached sayings about radical self-sacrifice, now linked by catchwords: *causes to stumble,* "scandalizes" or "trips up" (vv. 42, 43, 45, 47; see also 4.17); *fire* (vv. 48, 49); *salt[ed]* (vv. 49, 50a, 50b). **9.42** *A great millstone* was turned by a mule; cf. the hand-cranked mill implied by Mt 24.41; Lk 17.35. **9.43** See also Mt 5.30. *To enter life* (also 9.45), presumably "eternal life" (see note on 10.17). *Hell,* lit. "Gehenna" (text note *v*) or "valley of Hinnom" (also 9.45, 47), a site notorious for pagan infanticide, later defiled by Josiah and associated with final punishment of the wicked (see 2 Kings 23.10; 2 Chr 28.1–4; Jer 7.30–34; Lk 12.5; Jas 3.6). **9.47** See also Mt 5.29. *Kingdom of God.* See note on 1.15. **9.48** Undying *worm* and unquenchable *fire* are stock images for the destruction of evil (see Isa 66.24; Jdt 16.17; Sir 7.17). **9.49–50** *Salt* is used metaphorically in connection with both sacrifice (v. 49; Lev 2.13; Ezek 43.24) and preservatives (v. 50; Num 18.19; Mt 5.13; Lk 14.34; Col 4.6).

10.1–31 The ethics of discipleship, beginning with marriage. **10.1–12** Cf. Mt 19.1–9. **10.1** The itinerary is confusing (see also notes on 5.1; 6.53; 7.31). *The region of Judea.* See note on 1.5. **10.2** *Pharisees.* See note on 2.16. *Lawful,* that which is "permissible" or "proper." **10.3** See note on 2.25. **10.4** *A certificate of dismissal . . . to divorce her.* See Deut 24.1–4. **10.5** *Hardness of*

ment for you. 6 But from the beginning of
creation, 'God made them male and fe-
male.' 7 'For this reason a man shall leave
his father and mother and be joined to his
wife,[a] 8 and the two shall become one
flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one
flesh. 9 Therefore what God has joined to-
gether, let no one separate."
10 Then in the house the disciples
asked him again about this matter. 11 He
said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife
and marries another commits adultery
against her; 12 and if she divorces her hus-
band and marries another, she commits
adultery."

Jesus Blesses Little Children

13 People were bringing little children
to him in order that he might touch them;
and the disciples spoke sternly to them.
14 But when Jesus saw this, he was indig-
nant and said to them, "Let the little chil-
dren come to me; do not stop them; for it
is to such as these that the kingdom of
God belongs. 15 Truly I tell you, whoever
does not receive the kingdom of God as a
little child will never enter it." 16 And he
took them up in his arms, laid his hands
on them, and blessed them.

The Rich Man

17 As he was setting out on a journey,
a man ran up and knelt before him, and
asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I
do to inherit eternal life?" 18 Jesus said to
him, "Why do you call me good? No one is
good but God alone. 19 You know the
commandments: 'You shall not murder;
You shall not commit adultery; You shall
not steal; You shall not bear false witness;
You shall not defraud; Honor your fa-
ther and mother.'" 20 He said to him,
"Teacher, I have kept all these since my
youth." 21 Jesus, looking at him, loved him
and said, "You lack one thing; go, sell
what you own, and give the money[b] to
the poor, and you will have treasure in
heaven; then come, follow me." 22 When
he heard this, he was shocked and went
away grieving, for he had many pos-
sessions.
23 Then Jesus looked around and said
to his disciples, "How hard it will be for
those who have wealth to enter the king-
dom of God!" 24 And the disciples were
perplexed at these words. But Jesus said
to them again, "Children, how hard it is[c]
to enter the kingdom of God! 25 It is eas-
ier for a camel to go through the eye of
a needle than for someone who is rich
to enter the kingdom of God." 26 They
were greatly astounded and said to one
another,[d] "Then who can be saved?"
27 Jesus looked at them and said, "For

a Other ancient authorities lack *and be joined to his wife* b Gk lacks *the money* c Other ancient authorities add *for those who trust in riches* d Other ancient authorities read *to him*

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heart. See note on 3.5. **10.6** Jesus quotes Gen 1.27; 5.2. **10.7–8** The quotation is from Gen 2.24; cf. Eph 5.31. **10.9** Absolute prohibition of divorce is relaxed elsewhere in the NT; cf. Mt 5.32; 19.9; 1 Cor 7.10–16. Divorce (without remarriage) seems allowable also in Mk 10.11–12. **10.10** *In the house.* See notes on 4.10; 7.17. **10.11** In contrast with Jesus' assertion here, Jewish law assumed that *adultery* was committed against a husband, not against a wife (see Lev 20.10; Deut 22.22; Sir 23.22–23). **10.12** Since a wife could initiate divorce under Roman (but not Jewish) law, such a hypothetical case implies Hellenistic modification of ordinary Palestinian practice (see note on 10.11). **10.13–16** Cf. Mt 19.13–15; Lk 18.15–17. On the childlike disposition of discipleship (cf. 9.37, on the reception of such children by others). **10.13** *That he might touch them,* to impart a blessing (10.16; see also Gen 48.14–16). **10.14** *Kingdom of God.* See note on 1.15. **10.15** Cf. Mt 18.3; Jn 3.3–5. To receive *as a little child* is ambiguous, though see note on 9.36. **10.17–31** Cf. Mt 19.16–30; Lk 18.18–30. **10.17** *A man.* Cf. Mt 19.20 ("the young man"); Lk 18.18 ("a certain ruler"). *Knelt before him.* See note on 3.11. *Eternal life,* God's new creation in the age to come (Dan 12.2; 2 Macc 7.9; cf. Jn 3.15), comparable to the kingdom of God (Mk 10.23–25; see also 9.43, 45, 47; 10.30). **10.18** *No one is good.* Elsewhere Jesus' goodness or sinlessness is strongly affirmed; cf. Mt 19.17; Jn 8.46; 2 Cor 5.21; Heb 7.26; 1 Pet 2.22. **10.19** *The commandments.* See Ex 20.12–16; Deut 5.16–20. Though not in the Decalogue, *you shall not defraud* recalls Ex 20.17; Deut 24.14; Sir 4.1. **10.21** *Treasure in heaven.* See Mt 6.20; Lk 12.33. *Come, follow me.* See also 1.17–18; 10.28, 52. **10.22** *Shocked,* lit. "gloomy." **10.23** On *wealth* as jeopardizing spiritual health (see 4.18–19), see also Job 22.23–26; Prov 28.11; Mt 6.24; 1 Tim 6.9–10. **10.24** *Children.* See 9.37, 42. **10.27** Debated in antiquity, the proposition that *for God all things are possible* is prevalent in the OT

mortals it is impossible, but not for God;
for God all things are possible."
28 Peter began to say to him, "Look,
we have left everything and followed
you." 29 Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, there
is no one who has left house or brothers
or sisters or mother or father or children
or fields, for my sake and for the sake of
the good news,[e] 30 who will not receive a
hundredfold now in this age—houses,
brothers and sisters, mothers and chil-
dren, and fields, with persecutions—and
in the age to come eternal life. 31 But
many who are first will be last, and the last
will be first."

A Third Time Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection

32 They were on the road, going up to
Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead
of them; they were amazed, and those
who followed were afraid. He took the
twelve aside again and began to tell them
what was to happen to him, 33 saying,
"See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and
the Son of Man will be handed over to
the chief priests and the scribes, and they
will condemn him to death; then they will
hand him over to the Gentiles; 34 they will
mock him, and spit upon him, and flog
him, and kill him; and after three days he
will rise again."

The Request of James and John

35 James and John, the sons of Zebe-
dee, came forward to him and said to him,
"Teacher, we want you to do for us what-
ever we ask of you." 36 And he said to
them, "What is it you want me to do for
you?" 37 And they said to him, "Grant us
to sit, one at your right hand and one at
your left, in your glory." 38 But Jesus said
to them, "You do not know what you are
asking. Are you able to drink the cup that
I drink, or be baptized with the baptism
that I am baptized with?" 39 They replied,
"We are able." Then Jesus said to them,
"The cup that I drink you will drink; and
with the baptism with which I am bap-
tized, you will be baptized; 40 but to sit at
my right hand or at my left is not mine to
grant, but it is for those for whom it has
been prepared."
41 When the ten heard this, they be-
gan to be angry with James and John.
42 So Jesus called them and said to them,
"You know that among the Gentiles those
whom they recognize as their rulers lord
it over them, and their great ones are ty-
rants over them. 43 But it is not so among
you; but whoever wishes to become great
among you must be your servant, 44 and
whoever wishes to be first among you
must be slave of all. 45 For the Son of Man

e Or *gospel*

(see Gen 18.14; Job 42.2; Zech 8.6). **10.29** *Truly I tell you.* See note on 3.28. *Good news.* See note on 1.1. **10.30** *Now in this age.* Cf. more grandiose rewards promised in 2 Esd 7.88–99; Mt 19.28. The absence from this list of the father (cf. 10.29) is conspicuous, as is the added promise, *with persecutions* (see 8.34–38). **10.31** This saying (cf. 9.35; 10.44) appears in different contexts in the Gospels (see Mt 19.30; 20.16; Lk 13.30).

10.32–45 Cf. Mt 20.17–28; Lk 18.31–34. The concluding cycle of Jesus' prediction, the disciples' incomprehension, and teaching on authentic discipleship (see note on 8.31–9.1). **10.32** *Jerusalem* (also 10.33), the Judean capital, from which hostility to Jesus has radiated (3.22). *Amazed . . . afraid.* See notes on 4.13; 4.40. **10.33** *Son of Man.* See note on 8.31. *Handed over.* See note on 9.31. *Chief priests and . . . scribes.* See note on 8.31. **10.34** A capsule summary of 15.15–16.6, reminiscent of Ps 22.6–7; Isa 50.6. **10.35** *James and John, the sons of Zebedee.* See 1.19, 29; 3.17; 5.37; 9.2; 13.3; 14.33. Their request is almost identical to Herod's impetuous offer in 6.22 (see 10.42). **10.37** *At your right hand,* the place of supreme honor (see, e.g., Ps 110.1). *In your glory.* See 8.38–9.1; 13.26. **10.38** In the OT *the cup* symbolizes either joy and salvation (e.g., Pss 23.5; 116.13) or woe and suffering (e.g., Ps 11.6; Isa 51.17, 22); the latter is intended here (see also Mk 14.36; Jn 18.11). Though ambiguous (and absent from Mt 20.22), *the baptism* undergone by Jesus and his followers may be death (cf. Lk 12.50; Rom 6.3–4). **10.42–44** See also 9.35; Mt 23.11; Lk 22.24–27. **10.44** *Slave of all.* See also 1 Cor 9.19; 2 Cor 4.5; Gal 5.13. **10.45** *Son of Man.* See note on 8.31. *Ransom,* originally a compensation required to release (or "redeem") something or someone (see, e.g., Ex 21.8, 30; Lev 25.47–52; Num 3.45–51), was subsequently developed as a metaphor for the reclamation or redemption of God's people (Ex 6.6; 15.13; Isa 43.1–7; 44.21–23), particularly through Christ (e.g., Rom 3.23–25a; 1 Tim 2.5–6; 1 Pet 1.18–19). *To give his life . . . for many.* See Mk 14.24 and the portrayal of the servant in Isa 52.13–53.12.

came not to be served but to serve, and to
give his life a ransom for many."

The Healing of Blind Bartimaeus

46 They came to Jericho. As he and
his disciples and a large crowd were leav-
ing Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a
blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside.
47 When he heard that it was Jesus of Naz-
areth, he began to shout out and say,
"Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"
48 Many sternly ordered him to be quiet,
but he cried out even more loudly, "Son
of David, have mercy on me!" 49 Jesus
stood still and said, "Call him here." And
they called the blind man, saying to him,
"Take heart; get up, he is calling you."
50 So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up
and came to Jesus. 51 Then Jesus said to
him, "What do you want me to do for
you?" The blind man said to him, "My
teacher,[f] let me see again." 52 Jesus said
to him, "Go; your faith has made you
well." Immediately he regained his sight
and followed him on the way.

Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

11 When they were approaching Je-
rusalem, at Bethphage and Beth-
any, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two
of his disciples 2 and said to them, "Go
into the village ahead of you, and immedi-
ately as you enter it, you will find tied
there a colt that has never been ridden;
untie it and bring it. 3 If anyone says to
you, 'Why are you doing this?' just say
this, 'The Lord needs it and will send it
back here immediately.'" 4 They went
away and found a colt tied near a door,
outside in the street. As they were untying
it, 5 some of the bystanders said to them,
"What are you doing, untying the colt?"
6 They told them what Jesus had said; and
they allowed them to take it. 7 Then they
brought the colt to Jesus and threw their
cloaks on it; and he sat on it. 8 Many peo-
ple spread their cloaks on the road, and
others spread leafy branches that they
had cut in the fields. 9 Then those who
went ahead and those who followed were
shouting,

"Hosanna!
Blessed is the one who comes in
the name of the Lord!
10 Blessed is the coming kingdom
of our ancestor David!
Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

11 Then he entered Jerusalem and
went into the temple; and when he had
looked around at everything, as it was al-
ready late, he went out to Bethany with
the twelve.

f Aramaic *Rabbouni*

10.46–52 Cf. Mt 20.29–34 (see also 9.27–31); Lk 18.35–43. Mark's central section concludes with a story that recalls the earlier restoration of sight to the blind (8.22–26; cf. 8.18). **10.46** *Jericho*, a city in the Jordan Valley, about twenty miles northeast of Jerusalem. *Bartimaeus*, lit. *son of Timaeus*. See note on 5.41. **10.47–48** Whereas Mark seems to question its appropriateness for Jesus (see 12.35–37), *Son of David* was a title used by some Jews with expectant reference to a royal messiah (see 2 Sam 7.4–17; Ps 89.3–4). **10.51** *What do you want me to do for you?* See also 10.36. **10.52** *Your faith has made you well.* See also 5.34; notes on 2.5; 5.23. *Followed him.* See also 1.18; 2.14.

11.1–13.37 Another major section of Mark, comprising Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem (11.1–12.44) and address to the disciples about the last days (13.1–37). **11.1–11** Compared with that in the other Gospels (Mt 21.1–11; Lk 19.28–40; Jn 12.12–19), the description of Jesus' arrival in the city is muted in Mark. **11.1** *Jerusalem.* See note on 10.32. The location of *Bethphage* is uncertain; *Bethany* was about two miles southeast of Jerusalem (see Jn 11.18). *The Mount of Olives*, a high hill to the east of Jerusalem, associated with both the city's defeat (2 Sam 15.13–30) and hope for God's end-time triumph (Zech 14.4). **11.2** The *colt* may be an allusion to the humble king's conveyance in Zech 9.9 (see Mt 21.5; Jn 12.15); its having *never been ridden* is reminiscent of unyoked, consecrated animals in the OT (Num 19.2; Deut 21.3; 1 Sam 6.7). **11.3** *The Lord*, the most exalted use of the title in Mark with direct reference to Jesus (apart from the disputed 16.19). See also note on 5.19. **11.8** The spreading of *cloaks* and *leafy branches* on the road recalls Israel's royal or festal processions (2 Kings 9.13; 1 Macc 13.51; 2 Macc 10.7). **11.9–10** The acclamation approximates the wording of Ps 118.25–26. *Hosanna*, lit. "Save now!" (see note on 5.41), became a liturgical formula for the praise of God (v. 10). *Our ancestor David.* Cf. Mt. 21.9; Lk 1.32–33; see note on Mk 10.47–48. **11.11** *The temple*, Israel's religious and political center, refurbished by Herod the Great (37–4 B.C.E.) and later razed by the Roman legion (70 C.E.; see Lk 19.41–44).

Jesus Curses the Fig Tree

12 On the following day, when they
came from Bethany, he was hungry.
13 Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf,
he went to see whether perhaps he would
find anything on it. When he came to it,
he found nothing but leaves, for it was not
the season for figs. 14 He said to it, "May
no one ever eat fruit from you again."
And his disciples heard it.

Jesus Cleanses the Temple

15 Then they came to Jerusalem. And
he entered the temple and began to drive
out those who were selling and those who
were buying in the temple, and he over-
turned the tables of the money changers
and the seats of those who sold doves;
16 and he would not allow anyone to carry
anything through the temple. 17 He was
teaching and saying, "Is it not written,

'My house shall be called a house
of prayer for all the
nations'?
But you have made it a den
of robbers."

18 And when the chief priests and the
scribes heard it, they kept looking for a
way to kill him; for they were afraid of
him, because the whole crowd was spell-
bound by his teaching. 19 And when eve-
ning came, Jesus and his disciples[g] went
out of the city.

The Lesson from the Withered Fig Tree

20 In the morning as they passed by,
they saw the fig tree withered away to its
roots. 21 Then Peter remembered and
said to him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree that
you cursed has withered." 22 Jesus an-
swered them, "Have[h] faith in God.
23 Truly I tell you, if you say to this moun-
tain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the
sea,' and if you do not doubt in your
heart, but believe that what you say will
come to pass, it will be done for you. 24 So
I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer,
believe that you have received[i] it, and it
will be yours.
25 "Whenever you stand praying, for-
give, if you have anything against anyone;
so that your Father in heaven may also
forgive you your trespasses."[j]

Jesus' Authority Is Questioned

27 Again they came to Jerusalem. As
he was walking in the temple, the chief
priests, the scribes, and the elders came to
him 28 and said, "By what authority are
you doing these things? Who gave you
this authority to do them?" 29 Jesus said to

g Gk *they*: other ancient authorities read *he*
h Other ancient authorities read *"If you have*
i Other ancient authorities read *are receiving*
j Other ancient authorities add verse 26, *"But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses."*

11.12–25 Cf. Mt 21.12–22; Lk 19.45–48; Jn 2.13–22. The cursing of the fig tree (vv. 12–14, 20–25) and the cleansing of the temple (vv. 15–19) are interwoven, each interpreting the other; see note on 2.1–12. **11.13** Israel is likened to a fruitless *fig tree* by the OT prophets (Jer 8.13; Hos 9.10, 16–17; Joel 1.7; Mic 7.1) and in Luke (13.6–9). *It was not the season*, or "time appointed [by God]," *for figs*. See note on 1.15; cf. 13.28–29. **11.14** See also 11.20; though rare in the NT, destructive miracles are attributed to Jesus in some noncanonical literature. **11.15–17** Jesus' conduct suggests a symbolic prophecy of the temple's destruction (see 13.1–2; 14.57–58; 15.29; Acts 6.13–14; see also Jer 19.10–15; Ezek 4.1–5.17; Zech 14.21). **11.15** *Temple*. See note on 11.11. *Selling* and *buying* of cultic paraphernalia occurred in the outermost Court of the Gentiles. **11.17** See Isa 56.7. On the temple as *a den of robbers* (or "bandits' lair"), see Jer 7.1–11. **11.18** *Chief priests and . . . scribes*. See notes on 1.22; 8.31. *They kept looking for a way to kill him*. See notes on 1.37; 3.6. **11.21** *Then Peter remembered*, foreshadowing a similar response in 14.72. **11.22–25** Apparently a chain of originally independent exhortations, now connected by catchwords (see note on 9.42–50): *faith, believe* (or "have faith"; vv. 22, 23, 24); *prayer, praying* (vv. 24, 25). **11.23** See 10.27; Mt 17.20; Lk 17.6; 1 Cor 13.2. *Truly I tell you*. See note on 3.28. **11.24** See 9.28–29; Mt 18.19; Jn 14.13–14; 15.7; 16.23. **11.25** *Stand praying*, customary posture in Jewish worship (1 Kings 8.14; Neh 9.4; Ps 134.1; Mt 6.5; Lk 18.11, 13). The addition of v. 26 (see text note *j*) in some manuscripts was probably influenced by Mt 6.14–15.

11.27–33 Cf. Mt 21.23–27; Lk 20.1–8; cf. Mk 8.11–13. The first in a series of six interrogations in the temple (see also 12.1–12; 12.13–17; 12.18–27; 12.28–34; 12.35–37); cf. 2.1–3.6. **11.27** *Chief priests . . . scribes . . . elders*. See 14.43, 53–55; 15.1; see also notes on 1.22; 8.31. **11.28** Cf. Jn 2.18. On Jesus' *authority*, see 1.22, 27; 2.10. **11.29** In rabbinic fashion Jesus coun-

them, "I will ask you one question; answer
me, and I will tell you by what authority I
do these things. 30 Did the baptism of
John come from heaven, or was it of hu-
man origin? Answer me." 31 They argued
with one another, "If we say, 'From
heaven,' he will say, 'Why then did you
not believe him?' 32 But shall we say, 'Of
human origin'?"—they were afraid of the
crowd, for all regarded John as truly a
prophet. 33 So they answered Jesus, "We
do not know." And Jesus said to them,
"Neither will I tell you by what authority I
am doing these things."

The Parable of the Wicked Tenants

12 Then he began to speak to them
in parables. "A man planted a
vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a pit
for the wine press, and built a watch-
tower; then he leased it to tenants and
went to another country. 2 When the sea-
son came, he sent a slave to the tenants to
collect from them his share of the pro-
duce of the vineyard. 3 But they seized
him, and beat him, and sent him away
empty-handed. 4 And again he sent an-
other slave to them; this one they beat
over the head and insulted. 5 Then he
sent another, and that one they killed.
And so it was with many others; some
they beat, and others they killed. 6 He had
still one other, a beloved son. Finally he
sent him to them, saying, 'They will re-
spect my son.' 7 But those tenants said to
one another, 'This is the heir; come, let us
kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.'
8 So they seized him, killed him, and
threw him out of the vineyard. 9 What
then will the owner of the vineyard do?
He will come and destroy the tenants and
give the vineyard to others. 10 Have you
not read this scripture:

'The stone that the builders
rejected
has become the cornerstone;[k]
11 this was the Lord's doing,
and it is amazing in our eyes'?"

12 When they realized that he had
told this parable against them, they
wanted to arrest him, but they feared the
crowd. So they left him and went away.

The Question About Paying Taxes

13 Then they sent to him some Phari-
sees and some Herodians to trap him in
what he said. 14 And they came and said to
him, "Teacher, we know that you are sin-
cere, and show deference to no one; for
you do not regard people with partiality,
but teach the way of God in accordance
with truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the
emperor, or not? 15 Should we pay them,
or should we not?" But knowing their hy-
pocrisy, he said to them, "Why are you
putting me to the test? Bring me a denar-
ius and let me see it." 16 And they brought
one. Then he said to them, "Whose head
is this, and whose title?" They answered,
"The emperor's." 17 Jesus said to them,
"Give to the emperor the things that are
the emperor's, and to God the things that
are God's." And they were utterly amazed
at him.

k Or *keystone*

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ters with a *question*; see also 2.25–26; 10.3. **11.30** In emergent Christian reflection, *the baptism of John* was aligned with God's purposes (1.4–8; 6.14; Mt 21.32; Lk 7.28–30; Jn 1.33; Acts 13.24–25; 19.1–7). **11.31** *Argued with one another*. See note on 9.10. **11.32** On regard for *John as truly a prophet*, see 6.15–16; 8.28; 9.13.

12.1–12 Cf. Mt 21.33–46; Lk 20.9–19. The noncanonical *Gospel of Thomas* preserves a less allegorical version of this parable. **12.1** *Parables*. See note on 3.23. The planter's procedure recalls Isa 5.1–7, which identifies God's *vineyard* with wayward Israel (see also Jer 2.21; Ezek 19.10–14; Hos 10.1). **12.2** *When the season came*. See notes on 1.15; 11.13. OT prophets were styled as God's servants, or *slaves* (see Jer 7.25; 25.4; Am 3.7; Zech 1.6). **12.3–5** OT prophets suffered similar brutality (see 1 Kings 18.12–13; 2 Chr 24.20–22; 36.15–16; Neh 9.26; see also Lk 13.34; Acts 7.52; 1 Thess 2.15; Rev 16.6). **12.6** *A beloved son*. See 1.11; 9.7; see also notes on 1.1; 1.11. **12.10–11** Here, as elsewhere in the NT (see Acts 4.11; Eph 2.20; 1 Pet 2.7), Ps 118.22–23 is cited to interpret Jewish rejection of Jesus and to assert the church's vindication. **12.12** The religious leadership (see 11.27) *wanted* (lit. "sought") *to arrest him*. See notes on 1.37; 3.6. **12.13–17** Cf. Mt 22.15–22; Lk 20.20–26. **12.13** *Pharisees and . . . Herodians*. See notes on 2.16; 3.6. **12.14** Poll *taxes* were a detested aspect of the Jews' subjugation to the Romans; the *trap* (v. 13) lay in maneuvering Jesus into disloyalty toward one group or the other. **12.15** *Denarius*. See note on 6.37. **12.16** *Head*, lit. "image." The *title* (lit. "inscription") read, "TIBERIUS CAESAR, SON OF THE DIVINE AUGUSTUS, AUGUSTUS." **12.17** *Give to the emperor*. See

The Question About the Resurrection

18 Some Sadducees, who say there is
no resurrection, came to him and asked
him a question, saying, 19"Teacher, Mo-
ses wrote for us that if a man's brother
dies, leaving a wife but no child, the
man[l] shall marry the widow and raise up
children for his brother. 20There were
seven brothers; the first married and,
when he died, left no children; 21and the
second married the widow[m] and died, leav-
ing no children; and the third likewise;
22none of the seven left children. Last
of all the woman herself died. 23In the
resurrection[n] whose wife will she be? For
the seven had married her."
24 Jesus said to them, "Is not this the
reason you are wrong, that you know nei-
ther the scriptures nor the power of God?
25For when they rise from the dead, they
neither marry nor are given in marriage,
but are like angels in heaven. 26And as
for the dead being raised, have you not
read in the book of Moses, in the story
about the bush, how God said to him, 'I
am the God of Abraham, the God of
Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? 27He is God
not of the dead, but of the living; you are
quite wrong."

The First Commandment

28 One of the scribes came near and
heard them disputing with one another,
and seeing that he answered them well, he
asked him, "Which commandment is the
first of all?" 29Jesus answered, "The first
is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the
Lord is one; 30you shall love the Lord
your God with all your heart, and with all
your soul, and with all your mind, and
with all your strength.' 31The second is
this, 'You shall love your neighbor as
yourself.' There is no other command-
ment greater than these." 32Then the
scribe said to him, "You are right,
Teacher; you have truly said that 'he is
one, and besides him there is no other';
33and 'to love him with all the heart, and
with all the understanding, and with all
the strength,' and 'to love one's neighbor
as oneself,'—this is much more important
than all whole burnt offerings and sacri-
fices." 34When Jesus saw that he an-
swered wisely, he said to him, "You are
not far from the kingdom of God." After
that no one dared to ask him any
question.

The Question About David's Son

35 While Jesus was teaching in the
temple, he said, "How can the scribes say
that the Messiah[o] is the son of David?
36David himself, by the Holy Spirit,
declared,
'The Lord said to my Lord,
"Sit at my right hand,

l Gk *his brother* *m* Gk *her* *n* Other ancient authorities add *when they rise* *o* Or *the Christ*

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also Mt 17.24–27; Rom 13.1–7; 1 Pet 2.13–17. *Amazed.* See note on 1.22. **12.18–27** Cf. Mt 22.23–33; Lk 20.27–40. **12.18** *Sadducees,* a group within ancient Judaism, depicted in the NT as the priestly aristocracy (Acts 4.1; 5.17; 23.6–8). Their denial of *resurrection* (cf. Isa 26.19; Dan 12.2–3; 2 Macc 7.14, 23) is also suggested by the Jewish historian Josephus. **12.19** A paraphrase of Deut 25.5–6. Levirate marriage is presupposed in Gen 38.8. **12.25** To be *like angels in heaven* seems here to refer to celibacy; elsewhere (see 1 Cor 15.35–50) resurrection is associated with spiritual bodies. **12.26** The assertion of God's present dominion over the patriarchs, derived from *the story about the bush* (Ex 3.6, 15–16), is intended to confirm the reality of resurrection. The argument resembles rabbinic exegesis. **12.28–34** Cf. Mt 22.34–40; Lk 10.25–28. **12.28** *Scribes* typically oppose Jesus in Mark (see note on 1.22), but this one simply inquires about first principles, a question extensively debated among the rabbis. **12.29–30** An elaborated citation of Deut 6.4–5. *Heart* (also 12.33). See notes on 7.19; 7.21–22. *Soul,* or "life" (so translated in 3.4; 8.35–37; 10.45). **12.31** Lev 19.18. See also Rom 13.9; Gal 5.14; Jas 2.8. **12.32** *Besides him there is no other.* See Deut 4.35; Isa 45.5, 21. **12.33** *More important than . . . burnt offerings and sacrifices.* See also 1 Sam 15.22; Hos 6.6. **12.34** *Kingdom of God.* See note on 1.15.

12.35–37 Cf. Mt 22.41–46; Lk 20.41–44. The last in a series of cross-examinations in the temple (see note on 11.27–33). **12.35** Reference to *the scribes* links this passage with 12.28–34 and 12.38–40; see also notes on 9.42–50; 11.22–25. *The Messiah, the Son of David.* See notes on 1.1; 10.47–48. **12.36** Ps 110.1, traditionally attributed to *David himself,* was adopted by NT authors as a proof-text for Jesus' exaltation (see Acts 2.34–35; 1 Cor 15.25; Heb 1.13). *By the Holy Spirit,* i.e., with presumed prophetic force; see also Acts 1.16; 28.25; Heb 3.7; 10.15.

until I put your enemies under
your feet."'
37 David himself calls him Lord; so how
can he be his son?" And the large crowd
was listening to him with delight.

Jesus Denounces the Scribes

38 As he taught, he said, "Beware of
the scribes, who like to walk around in
long robes, and to be greeted with respect
in the marketplaces, 39 and to have the
best seats in the synagogues and places of
honor at banquets! 40 They devour wid-
ows' houses and for the sake of appear-
ance say long prayers. They will receive
the greater condemnation."

The Widow's Offering

41 He sat down opposite the treasury,
and watched the crowd putting money
into the treasury. Many rich people put in
large sums. 42 A poor widow came and put
in two small copper coins, which are
worth a penny. 43 Then he called his disci-
ples and said to them, "Truly I tell you,
this poor widow has put in more than all
those who are contributing to the trea-
sury. 44 For all of them have contributed
out of their abundance; but she out of her
poverty has put in everything she had, all
she had to live on."

The Destruction of the Temple Foretold

13 As he came out of the temple,
one of his disciples said to him,
"Look, Teacher, what large stones and
what large buildings!" 2 Then Jesus asked
him, "Do you see these great buildings?
Not one stone will be left here upon an-
other; all will be thrown down."
3 When he was sitting on the Mount
of Olives opposite the temple, Peter,
James, John, and Andrew asked him pri-
vately, 4 "Tell us, when will this be, and
what will be the sign that all these things
are about to be accomplished?" 5 Then
Jesus began to say to them, "Beware that
no one leads you astray. 6 Many will come
in my name and say, 'I am he!'[p] and they
will lead many astray. 7 When you hear of
wars and rumors of wars, do not be
alarmed; this must take place, but the end
is still to come. 8 For nation will rise
against nation, and kingdom against king-
dom; there will be earthquakes in various
places; there will be famines. This is but
the beginning of the birth pangs.

Persecution Foretold

9 "As for yourselves, beware; for they
will hand you over to councils; and you
will be beaten in synagogues; and you will

p Gk *I am*

12.37 Mark's challenge to Jesus' Davidic lineage, given its assertion elsewhere (cf. 10.47–48; Mt 1.1–17; Lk 3.23–38; Rom 1.3; 2 Tim 2.8), is mystifying. **12.38–40** Cf. Lk 20.45–47. The denunciation of pretentious scribes (see note on 12.35) is directed against Pharisees in other Gospels (Mt 23.1–36; Lk 11.37–44). **12.39** *Places of honor at banquets.* See Lk 14.7–11. **12.40** The oppression of economically vulnerable *widows* is castigated in the OT (Ps 94.1–7; Isa 10.1–2; Zech 7.10; Mal 3.5). **12.41–44** Cf. Lk 21.1–4. Perhaps linked to the preceding passage by the catchword *widow* (vv. 40, 42). **12.41** *The treasury*, either a temple chamber that abutted the Women's Court or a receptacle for offerings located in that precinct; see also Jn 8.20. **12.42** *Small copper coins*, the smallest in circulation at that time. A *penny*, or a Roman *quadrans* (see also Mt 5.26), was one sixty-fourth of a laborer's daily wage. **12.43** *Truly I tell you.* See note on 3.28. **12.44** *All she had to live on*, lit. "her whole life."

13.1–37 Cf. Mt 24.1–44; Lk 21.5–33. Introduced by a forecast of the temple's annihilation (vv. 1–4), Jesus' cautionary consolation about the end of the age (vv. 5–37) resembles other "farewell addresses" of biblical leaders to their followers (see Gen 49.1–33; Deut 33.1–29; Josh 23.1–24.30; Tob 14.3–11; Jn 14.1–17.26; Acts 20.18–35). **13.1** The Jewish historian Josephus corroborates the massive structure of *the temple*; see also note on 11.11. **13.2** Predictions of the earlier temple's ruin were made by OT prophets (Jer 26.6, 18; Mic 3.12). **13.3** *The Mount of Olives opposite the temple.* See Ezek 11.23; see also note on 11.1. *Peter, James, John, and Andrew.* See note on 5.37. *Privately.* See note on 4.10. **13.5–6** Civil unrest appears to have been fairly common among some first-century Jews and Christians; see Lk 17.23; Acts 5.36–37; 21.38. **13.7** By divine decree *this must take place* (see note on 8.31); *but the end is still to come* (see 2 Thess 2.1–12). **13.8** The images here are common in prophetic portents (2 Chr 15.6; Isa 13.13; 14.30; 19.2; Jer 22.23; Rev 6.8; 11.13; 16.18). **13.9** *Hand you over* (also 13.11), or *betray* (13.12). See note on 9.31. *Councils*, lit. "sanhedrins," or local Jewish

stand before governors and kings because
of me, as a testimony to them. 10 And the
good news[q] must first be proclaimed to
all nations. 11 When they bring you to trial
and hand you over, do not worry before-
hand about what you are to say; but say
whatever is given you at that time, for it is
not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.
12 Brother will betray brother to death,
and a father his child, and children will
rise against parents and have them put to
death; 13 and you will be hated by all be-
cause of my name. But the one who en-
dures to the end will be saved.

The Desolating Sacrilege

14 "But when you see the desolating
sacrilege set up where it ought not to be
(let the reader understand), then those in
Judea must flee to the mountains; 15 the
one on the housetop must not go down or
enter the house to take anything away;
16 the one in the field must not turn back
to get a coat. 17 Woe to those who are
pregnant and to those who are nursing
infants in those days! 18 Pray that it may
not be in winter. 19 For in those days there
will be suffering, such as has not been
from the beginning of the creation that
God created until now, no, and never will
be. 20 And if the Lord had not cut short
those days, no one would be saved; but
for the sake of the elect, whom he chose,
he has cut short those days. 21 And if any-
one says to you at that time, 'Look! Here is
the Messiah!'[r] or 'Look! There he is!'—
do not believe it. 22 False messiahs[s] and
false prophets will appear and produce
signs and omens, to lead astray, if possi-
ble, the elect. 23 But be alert; I have al-
ready told you everything.

The Coming of the Son of Man

24 "But in those days, after that
suffering,
the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give
its light,
25 and the stars will be falling
from heaven,
and the powers in the heavens
will be shaken.
26 Then they will see 'the Son of Man com-
ing in clouds' with great power and glory.
27 Then he will send out the angels, and
gather his elect from the four winds, from
the ends of the earth to the ends of
heaven.

The Lesson of the Fig Tree

28 "From the fig tree learn its lesson:
as soon as its branch becomes tender and
puts forth its leaves, you know that sum-
mer is near. 29 So also, when you see these
things taking place, you know that he[t] is

q Gk *gospel* r Or *the Christ* s Or *christs*
t Or *it*

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courts; see Mt 10.17–18; cf. Mk 14.55. *Beaten.* See also Deut 25.1–3; 2 Cor 11.24. **13.10** *Good news.* See note on 1.1. *Proclaimed to all nations* (see also 11.17), an OT theme (Isa 49.6; 52.10) with NT adaptations (Mk 16.20; Rom 1.5, 8–17; 11.11–32; Eph 3.1–10). **13.11** See also Mt 10.19–20; Lk 12.11–12; Jn 14.26. *At that time,* lit. "in that hour"; see note on 13.32. *Holy Spirit.* See notes on 1.8; 12.36. **13.12** A stock apocalyptic motif (cf. Mic 7.6; 2 Esd 6.24), yet such divisions within families apparently occurred among first-century Christians; see Jn 9.18–23; 16.2. **13.13** *Hated by all because of my name.* See also Mt 10.21–22; Jn 15.18–21. On *enduring to the end,* see Rev 2.10. **13.14** *The desolating sacrilege* refers to pagan desecration of the temple in Dan 9.27; 11.31; 12.11; 1 Macc 1.54; here what *the reader* is to *understand* is unfathomable. *Judea, the mountains.* See notes on 1.5; 3.13. **13.15–17** Cf. Lk 17.31; 23.29. **13.18** *In winter,* when travel was impeded by heavy rains. **13.19** Unparalleled tribulation was sometimes expected to precede the end; see Dan 12.1; Rev 7.14. **13.20** In the OT *the elect* (also 13.22, 27), *whom he chose,* is Israel (Ps 105.6; Isa 42.1; 43.20; 65.9); in the NT, usually the church (Lk 18.7; Rom 8.33; Eph 1.4–5; Col 3.12; 2 Tim 2.10; 1 Pet 1.2; 2.9). **13.21** Cf. Lk 17.23. **13.22** *Signs and omens* of *false prophets.* See also Deut 13.1–3; Mt 7.15–23; 2 Thess 2.9–10; Rev 19.20. **13.24–25** See 15.33; Isa 13.10; 34.4; 50.2–3; Ezek 32.7–8; Joel 2.10, 31; Am 8.9; 2 Esd 5.4–5; 2 Pet 3.12; Rev 6.12–14. **13.26** *The Son of Man coming in clouds.* Cf. Dan 7.13–14; Rev 1.7; see also note on Mk 8.38. **13.27** The ingathering of God's dispersed elect is a pervasive biblical hope; see, e.g., Isa 11.11, 16; Ezek 39.25–29; Zech 10.6–12; Tob 13.13; Bar 5.5–9; 1 Thess 4.15–17. *From the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.* Cf. Deut 13.7; 30.3–4. **13.28–37** The counsel on discipleship in these verses is internally linked by catchwords (see notes on 9.42–50; 11.22–25): *these things* (vv. 29, 30); *pass away* (vv. 30, 31); *gates* (or "doors"), *doorkeeper* (vv. 29, 34); *beware, watch, keep awake* (vv. 33, 34, 35, 37). **13.28** *Fig tree.* Cf. 11.12–14, 20–21. *Lesson,* lit. "parable"; see note on 3.23. **13.29** Precisely who

near, at the very gates. 30 Truly I tell you,
this generation will not pass away until all
these things have taken place. 31 Heaven
and earth will pass away, but my words
will not pass away.

The Necessity for Watchfulness

32 "But about that day or hour no one
knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor
the Son, but only the Father. 33 Beware,
keep alert;[u] for you do not know when
the time will come. 34 It is like a man going
on a journey, when he leaves home and
puts his slaves in charge, each with his
work, and commands the doorkeeper to
be on the watch. 35 Therefore, keep awake
—for you do not know when the master
of the house will come, in the evening, or
at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn,
36 or else he may find you asleep when he
comes suddenly. 37 And what I say to you
I say to all: Keep awake."

The Plot to Kill Jesus

14 It was two days before the Passover and the festival of Unleavened Bread. The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to arrest Jesus[v] by stealth and kill him; 2 for they said, "Not during the festival, or there may be a riot among the people."

The Anointing at Bethany

3 While he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper,[w] as he sat at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open the jar and poured the ointment on his head. 4 But some were there who said to one another in anger, "Why was the ointment wasted in this way? 5 For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii,[x] and the money given to the poor." And they scolded her. 6 But Jesus said, "Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has performed a good service for me. 7 For you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish; but you will not always have me. 8 She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial. 9 Truly I tell you, wherever the good news[y] is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her."

u Other ancient authorities add *and pray*
v Gk *him* *w* The terms *leper* and *leprosy* can refer to several diseases *x* The denarius was the usual day's wage for a laborer *y* Or *gospel*

(or what) *is near* is unclear. **13.30** See also 9.1. *Truly I tell you.* See note on 3.28. *This generation.* See note on 8.12. **13.31** Variants of this saying are preserved in Mt 5.18; Lk 16.17. **13.32** *That day* (also 14.25), presumably "the day of the LORD"; see Isa 2.12; Jer 46.10; Ezek 30.2–3; Am 5.18–20; Zeph 1.14–18. The *hour,* God's appointed time for the consummation of the age (see note on 1.15; see also 13.11; 14.35; Dan 8.17, 19; 11.35, 40, 45). Only here in Mark is Jesus called simply *the Son* (cf. note on 1.1; see also Mt 11.27; Lk 10.22). **13.33–37** Several NT texts elaborate the themes of vigilance and accountability (14.32–42; Mt 24.37–51; 25.13–30; Lk 12.35–46; 19.11–27; see also Rom 13.11–14; 1 Thess 5.1–11). **13.35** The Romans reckoned four nocturnal watches: *evening . . . midnight . . . cockcrow . . . dawn* (see also note on 6.48).

14.1–15.47 The last major section of Mark, which recounts activity culminating in Jesus' apprehension (14.1–52), trials, execution, and burial (14.53–15.47). **14.1–11** Cf. Mt 26.1–16; Lk 22.1–6. The anointing of Jesus (vv. 3–9; cf. Lk 7.36–50; Jn 12.1–8) is illuminated against a conspiracy for his arrest (vv. 1–2, 10–11; see also note on 2.1–12). **14.1** *Two days before,* seemingly Wednesday, 13 Nisan (the period March–April). *Passover,* the annual celebration of God's liberation of Israel from captivity (Ex 12.1–13.16), was later conjoined with the seven-day harvest *festival of Unleavened Bread* (2 Chr 35.17; Ezek 45.21–24). The long-standing plot (see 3.6; 11.18; 12.12) was perfected by *the chief priests and the scribes* (see notes on 1.22; 8.31; cf. Jn 11.45–57). **14.2** Despite concern that it happen *not during the festival,* Jesus' arrest in Mark occurs on Passover evening (14.12–50). **14.3** *Bethany.* See note on 11.1. *Leper.* See note on 1.40–45. Spike*nard,* a fragrant ointment or perfume; see also Song 1.12; 4.13, 14. *Poured the ointment on his head,* suggesting royal anointment (see 1 Sam 10.1; 2 Kings 9.6). **14.5** Superficial religiosity is also depicted in 7.9–13; 12.38–44. For a laborer, *more than three hundred denarii* was almost a full year's wages; see note on 6.37. *Scolded,* lit. "snorted"; see note on 1.43. **14.7** See also Deut 15.11; Mk 2.19–20. **14.8** *She has anointed my body beforehand for its burial.* See 16.1; cf. Jn 19.38–40. **14.9** See also 13.10. *Truly I tell you.* See note on 3.28.

Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus

10 Then Judas Iscariot, who was one
of the twelve, went to the chief priests in
order to betray him to them. 11 When they
heard it, they were greatly pleased, and
promised to give him money. So he began
to look for an opportunity to betray him.

The Passover with the Disciples

12 On the first day of Unleavened
Bread, when the Passover lamb is sacri-
ficed, his disciples said to him, "Where do
you want us to go and make the prepara-
tions for you to eat the Passover?" 13 So he
sent two of his disciples, saying to them,
"Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar
of water will meet you; follow him, 14 and
wherever he enters, say to the owner of
the house, 'The Teacher asks, Where is
my guest room where I may eat the Pass-
over with my disciples?' 15 He will show
you a large room upstairs, furnished and
ready. Make preparations for us there."
16 So the disciples set out and went to
the city, and found everything as he had
told them; and they prepared the Pass-
over meal.

17 When it was evening, he came with
the twelve. 18 And when they had taken
their places and were eating, Jesus said,
"Truly I tell you, one of you will betray
me, one who is eating with me." 19 They
began to be distressed and to say to him
one after another, "Surely, not I?" 20 He
said to them, "It is one of the twelve, one
who is dipping bread[z] into the bowl[a]
with me. 21 For the Son of Man goes as it
is written of him, but woe to that one by
whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It
would have been better for that one not to
have been born."

The Institution of the Lord's Supper

22 While they were eating, he took a
loaf of bread, and after blessing it he
broke it, gave it to them, and said, "Take;
this is my body." 23 Then he took a cup,
and after giving thanks he gave it to them,
and all of them drank from it. 24 He said
to them, "This is my blood of the[b] cove-
nant, which is poured out for many.
25 Truly I tell you, I will never again drink
of the fruit of the vine until that day when
I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

Peter's Denial Foretold

26 When they had sung the hymn,
they went out to the Mount of Olives.
27 And Jesus said to them, "You will all
become deserters; for it is written,

'I will strike the shepherd,
and the sheep will be scattered.'

28 But after I am raised up, I will go be-

z Gk lacks *bread* a Other ancient authorities read *same bowl* b Other ancient authorities add *new*

14.10 *Judas Iscariot.* See note on 3.19a. *Chief priests.* See note on 15.1. Though its content and motivation are unspecified in Mark, the plan to *betray* (or "hand over") Jesus and others is a recurring theme; see note on 9.31.

14.12–21 Cf. Mt 26.17–25; Lk 22.7–14; cf. Jn 13.21–30. Preparation for Passover (vv. 12–16) and prediction of betrayal (vv. 17–21). **14.12** *The first day of Unleavened Bread* (usually 15 Nisan) seems inconsistent with 14 Nisan, *when the Passover lamb is sacrificed.* See note on 14.1; cf. Ex 12.1–20; Jn 18.28; 19.14, 31. **14.13–16** Similar wording and the motif of Jesus' foreknowledge also characterize 11.1–6; cf. 1 Sam 10.1–9. **14.18** *They had taken their places,* lit. "they were reclining," the customary posture at banquets (see, e.g., Lk 5.29). That they *were eating* the Passover is suggested only by the context (14.12–16), not by details of the meal itself; see note on 14.12. *Truly I tell you.* See note on 3.28. *Betray.* See note on 9.31. *One who is eating with me,* an echo of Ps 41.9 (cf. Jn 13.18). **14.21** *Son of Man.* See notes on 2.10; 8.31. *As it is written,* i.e., in accordance with the divine purpose (but without specific OT reference); see also 8.31; 1 Cor 15.3–4. **14.22–26** Cf. Mt 26.26–30; Lk 22.14–23; also cf. Jn 6.48–58; 1 Cor 11.23–25. **14.22** *Took, blessing, broke, gave,* reminiscent of Jesus' feeding the multitudes (see notes on 6.41; 8.6). In Greek, as in English, the *body* is a flexible metaphor; see also 1 Cor 10.16–17. **14.24** *Blood of the covenant,* an OT image for ratification; see Ex 24.6–8; Jer 31.31; Zech 9.11; cf. Heb 9.11–10.18. *Poured out for many.* See 10.45. **14.25** *Truly I tell you.* See note on 3.28. The new age (*that day . . . in the kingdom of God*) was sometimes imagined as a magnificent banquet; see notes on 1.15; 6.31–44. **14.26** *When they had sung the hymn,* lit. "when they had hymned"; the Greek text does not suggest a specific hymn. *Mount of Olives.* See note on 11.1. **14.27–31** Cf. Mt 26.31–35; Lk 22.31–34; Jn 13.36–38. **14.27** *Become deserters* (also 14.29) could be translated "fall away"; see note on 4.17. The quotation is from Zech 13.7; see also note on Mk 14.21. *The sheep will be scattered.* See note on 6.34; cf. Jn 16.32. **14.28** *Galilee,* Jesus' home-

fore you to Galilee." 29 Peter said to him,
"Even though all become deserters, I will
not." 30 Jesus said to him, "Truly I tell
you, this day, this very night, before the
cock crows twice, you will deny me three
times." 31 But he said vehemently, "Even
though I must die with you, I will not
deny you." And all of them said the same.

Jesus Prays in Gethsemane

32 They went to a place called Geth-
semane; and he said to his disciples, "Sit
here while I pray." 33 He took with him
Peter and James and John, and began to
be distressed and agitated. 34 And he said
to them, "I am deeply grieved, even to
death; remain here, and keep awake."
35 And going a little farther, he threw
himself on the ground and prayed that, if
it were possible, the hour might pass from
him. 36 He said, "Abba,[c] Father, for you
all things are possible; remove this cup
from me; yet, not what I want, but what
you want." 37 He came and found them
sleeping; and he said to Peter, "Simon,
are you asleep? Could you not keep awake
one hour? 38 Keep awake and pray that
you may not come into the time of trial;[d]
the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is
weak." 39 And again he went away and
prayed, saying the same words. 40 And
once more he came and found them
sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy;
and they did not know what to say to him.
41 He came a third time and said to them,
"Are you still sleeping and taking your
rest? Enough! The hour has come; the
Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of
sinners. 42 Get up, let us be going. See, my
betrayer is at hand."

The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus

43 Immediately, while he was still
speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, ar-
rived; and with him there was a crowd
with swords and clubs, from the chief
priests, the scribes, and the elders. 44 Now
the betrayer had given them a sign, say-
ing, "The one I will kiss is the man; arrest
him and lead him away under guard."
45 So when he came, he went up to him at
once and said, "Rabbi!" and kissed him.
46 Then they laid hands on him and ar-
rested him. 47 But one of those who stood
near drew his sword and struck the slave
of the high priest, cutting off his ear.
48 Then Jesus said to them, "Have you
come out with swords and clubs to arrest
me as though I were a bandit? 49 Day after
day I was with you in the temple teaching,
and you did not arrest me. But let the
scriptures be fulfilled." 50 All of them de-
serted him and fled.

51 A certain young man was following
him, wearing nothing but a linen cloth.

c Aramaic for *Father* d Or *into temptation*

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land; see note on 1.9. **14.30** *Truly I tell you.* See note on 3.28. *The cock crows,* possibly a reference to one of the night watches; see note on 13.35. *Deny* (also 14.31). See note on 8.34. **14.31** See also Jn 11.16. **14.32–42** Cf. Mt 26.36–46; Lk 22.39–46; see also Heb 5.7–8. **14.32** *Gethsemane.* Cf. Lk 22.39–40; Jn 18.1. *While I pray.* See note on 1.35. **14.33** *Peter and James and John.* See note on 5.37. **14.34** *I am* (lit. "my soul is") *deeply grieved.* Cf. Pss 42.5, 11; 43.5; Jn 12.27. *Keep awake* (also 14.37, 38). See note on 13.33–37. **14.35** *The hour* (also 14.37, 41). See note on 13.32. **14.36** *Abba* (Aramaic), a child's intimate address to its *Father* (see Rom 8.15; Gal 4.6; see also note on 5.41). *For you all things are possible.* See notes on 9.23; 10.27. *This cup.* See note on 10.38. *Not what I want, but what you want.* See also Jn 5.30; 6.38. **14.38** *The time of trial.* See Sir 2.1; Mt 6.13; Lk 11.4; Jas 1.2; 1 Pet 1.6; Rev 2.10; 3.10; see also Mk 1.12–13. The contrast between *spirit* (God's energizing power) and *flesh* (human frailty) is common in the OT (e.g., Job 34.14–15; Isa 31.3) and developed by Paul (Rom 8.1–17; Gal 5.16–26). **14.40** See also 9.6. **14.41** *The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.* See notes on 8.31; 9.31; cf. 2.15–16. **14.43–52** Cf. Mt 26.47–56; Lk 22.47–53; Jn 18.3–12. **14.43** *Judas.* See 3.19; 14.10. *Chief priests . . . scribes . . . elders.* See note on 8.31. **14.44–45** A *Rabbi* could be respectfully greeted by his disciples with a *kiss*; being kissed by a *betrayer* is ironic (cf. Prov 27.6; Lk 7.38, 45; Rom 16.16; 1 Pet 5.14; see also notes on 14.10; 4.18). **14.47** *The high priest,* presumably Caiaphas (18–36/7 C.E.; cf. Mt 26.3, 57; Jn 18.13, 24). **14.48–49** Ironically, those associated with the chief priests and the scribes (14.43) have been previously implicated as *bandits* (or "robbers") in Jesus' *temple teaching* (11.17–18). *Let the scriptures be fulfilled.* See notes on 14.21; 14.27. **14.50** See 14.27. **14.51–52** Various interpretations have been proposed for this mysterious incident, including allusions to the *young man* in 16.5, the *linen cloth* in 15.46, and *naked* flight in Gen 39.12; Am 2.16. None is entirely compelling, though a contrast between Jesus' calm courage and a follower's desperate flight may

They caught hold of him, 52 but he left
the linen cloth and ran off naked.

Jesus Before the Council

53 They took Jesus to the high priest;
and all the chief priests, the elders, and
the scribes were assembled. 54 Peter had
followed him at a distance, right into the
courtyard of the high priest; and he was
sitting with the guards, warming himself
at the fire. 55 Now the chief priests and
the whole council were looking for testi-
mony against Jesus to put him to death;
but they found none. 56 For many gave
false testimony against him, and their tes-
timony did not agree. 57 Some stood up
and gave false testimony against him, say-
ing, 58 "We heard him say, 'I will destroy
this temple that is made with hands, and
in three days I will build another, not
made with hands.'" 59 But even on this
point their testimony did not agree.
60 Then the high priest stood up before
them and asked Jesus, "Have you no an-
swer? What is it that they testify against
you?" 61 But he was silent and did not an-
swer. Again the high priest asked him,
"Are you the Messiah,[e] the Son of the
Blessed One?" 62 Jesus said, "I am; and

'you will see the Son of Man
seated at the right hand of
the Power,'
and 'coming with the clouds
of heaven.'"

63 Then the high priest tore his clothes
and said, "Why do we still need witnesses?
64 You have heard his blasphemy! What is
your decision?" All of them condemned
him as deserving death. 65 Some began to
spit on him, to blindfold him, and to
strike him, saying to him, "Prophesy!"
The guards also took him over and
beat him.

Peter Denies Jesus

66 While Peter was below in the court-
yard, one of the servant-girls of the high
priest came by. 67 When she saw Peter
warming himself, she stared at him and
said, "You also were with Jesus, the man
from Nazareth." 68 But he denied it, say-
ing, "I do not know or understand what
you are talking about." And he went out
into the forecourt.[f] Then the cock
crowed.[g] 69 And the servant-girl, on see-
ing him, began again to say to the by-
standers, "This man is one of them."
70 But again he denied it. Then after a lit-
tle while the bystanders again said to Pe-
ter, "Certainly you are one of them; for
you are a Galilean." 71 But he began to
curse, and he swore an oath, "I do not
know this man you are talking about."
72 At that moment the cock crowed for the
second time. Then Peter remembered
that Jesus had said to him, "Before the
cock crows twice, you will deny me three
times." And he broke down and wept.

e Or *the Christ* f Or *gateway* g Other ancient authorities lack *Then the cock crowed*

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be intended. **14.53–72** Cf. Mt 26.57–75; Lk 22.54–71; Jn 18.13–27. Interrogations of Peter (vv. 53–54, 66–72) and of Jesus (vv. 55–65) are interwoven (see note on 2.1–12). **14.53** *High priest.* See note on 14.47. *Chief priests . . . elders . . . scribes.* See notes on 1.22; 8.31; 11.27. **14.55** A formal, albeit irregular, trial by *the whole council* (or Sanhedrin) is suggested by Mark and Matthew (Mt 26.59–68; see also Mk 13.9; 15.1). *Looking* (or "searching") *for testimony.* See note on 1.37. **14.56–57** *False testimony . . . did not agree.* See also 14.59; cf. Deut 19.15; Pss 35.11–12; 109.2–3. **14.58** *Destroy this temple.* See 11.15–16; 13.1–2; 15.29; cf. Mt 26.61; Jn 2.19–21. To *build* a temple *not made with hands,* an expression blending Jewish tradition (2 Sam 7.4–17) with Christian reflection (Acts 7.48; 1 Cor 3.16; 6.19; 1 Pet 2.4–6). **14.61** *He was silent.* See Ps 38.12–14; Isa 53.7. Ironically, the high priest frames his question in terms of *the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One,* titles central to Christian proclamation; see 1.1; Mt 16.16; Jn 11.27; 20.31. **14.62** *I am.* See note on 6.50. The advent of a royal *Son of Man* combines imagery in Ps 110.1; Dan 7.13–14. See also notes on 8.38; 12.36; 13.26; 16.19. *The Power,* a reference to the deity that respectfully avoids pronouncing God's name. **14.63** *Tore his clothes,* a gesture symbolizing distress. See Gen 37.29; Jdt 14.16; Let Jer 6.31; Acts 14.14. **14.64** Since *blasphemy* involved cursing God's name or activity, its charge here seems technically unfounded; see Lev 24.16; cf. Mk 2.7. **14.65** *Prophesy.* Cf. 14.30, 66–72. The court's behavior is reminiscent of Isa 50.6; 53.3–5. **14.67** *With Jesus.* See 3.14. **14.68** *I do not know or understand.* See note on 4.13; see also 6.52; 8.17, 21; 9.32; 14.71. **14.70** *A Galilean.* See Mt 26.73; note on 1.9. **14.72** See 14.30. *Then Peter remembered,* harking

Jesus Before Pilate

15 As soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate. 2 Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" He answered him, "You say so." 3 Then the chief priests accused him of many things. 4 Pilate asked him again, "Have you no answer? See how many charges they bring against you." 5 But Jesus made no further reply, so that Pilate was amazed.

Pilate Hands Jesus over to Be Crucified

6 Now at the festival he used to release a prisoner for them, anyone for whom they asked. 7 Now a man called Barabbas was in prison with the rebels who had committed murder during the insurrection. 8 So the crowd came and began to ask Pilate to do for them according to his custom. 9 Then he answered them, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" 10 For he realized that it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed him over. 11 But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead. 12 Pilate spoke to them again, "Then what do you wish me to do[h] with the man you call[i] the King of the Jews?" 13 They shouted back, "Crucify him!" 14 Pilate asked them, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him!" 15 So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

The Soldiers Mock Jesus

16 Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters[j]); and they called together the whole cohort. 17 And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him. 18 And they began saluting him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" 19 They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him. 20 After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

The Crucifixion of Jesus

21 They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus. 22 Then they brought Jesus[k] to the place called

h Other ancient authorities read *what should I do*
i Other ancient authorities lack *the man you call*
j Gk *the praetorium* *k* Gk *him*

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back to 11.21. **15.1–5** Cf. Mt 27.1–2, 11–14; Lk 23.1–5; Jn 18.28–38. **15.1** *As soon as it was morning*, the first of five carefully measured temporal indicators (see also 15.25, 33, 42). *The chief priests*, henceforth presented as Jesus' principal accusers (see 15.3, 10, 11, 31). *Elders and scribes and the whole council.* See notes on 1.22; 8.31; 13.9; 14.55. *Handed him over* (also 15.10, 15). See note on 9.31. Jesus is interrogated by Pontius *Pilate*, fifth Roman prefect of Judea (26–36 C.E.; see also Acts 3.13–14; 13.28). **15.2** Appearing here for the first time in Mark, the title *the King of the Jews* is also the first of five ironic acclamations of Jesus by Roman overlords (see also 15.9, 12, 18, 26; cf. v. 32). **15.4** *Have you no answer?* See note on 14.61. **15.6–32** Cf. Mt 27.15–44; Lk 23.13–43; Jn 18.39–19.24. Jesus' sentencing (vv. 6–15) and crucifixion (vv. 21–32) focus on his humiliation (vv. 16–20; see note on 2.1–12). **15.6** There is no evidence for this practice beyond the Gospels. **15.7** *Barabbas*, lit. "son of the father." It is not known which *insurrection* is meant; numerous Jewish revolts against Rome are indicated in Lk 13.1; Acts 5.36–37 and by the Jewish historian Josephus. **15.9** *King of the Jews.* See note on 15.2. **15.10–11** Christian portrayal of Pilate as the reluctant pawn of manipulative Jews is amplified in Mt 27.18–25; Lk 23.4–16; Jn 19.1–16; cf. Mk 6.14–29. **15.16** *The whole cohort*, a detachment of two hundred to six hundred soldiers; see note on 1.33. **15.17** *Purple*, like the *crown*, suggests royal raiment (see 1 Macc 8.14; 10.20). **15.18** *Hail, King of the Jews!* Possibly a parody of the legionary salute, "Hail, Caesar, conqueror, emperor"; see also note on 15.2. **15.19–20** *They struck* and *spat, mocking.* See 10.34; cf. Isa 50.6; Mic 5.1. *In homage*, or "bowing in worship" (see Mt 2.11; Acts 10.25; Heb 11.21; Rev 5.14). **15.21** A condemned prisoner carried only the crossbar, not *his cross* as a whole. *Cyrene* (see also Acts 6.9; 11.20; 13.1), a city in what is now Libya. The identification of *Rufus* with Paul's associate (Rom 16.13) is impossible to confirm. **15.22** Though it can no longer be located with certainty, *Golgotha* was evidently outside Jerusalem's city walls (see Jn

Golgotha (which means the place of a
skull). 23 And they offered him wine
mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it.
24 And they crucified him, and divided his
clothes among them, casting lots to decide
what each should take.
25 It was nine o'clock in the morning
when they crucified him. 26 The inscrip-
tion of the charge against him read, "The
King of the Jews." 27 And with him they
crucified two bandits, one on his right and
one on his left.[l] 29 Those who passed by
derided[m] him, shaking their heads and
saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the
temple and build it in three days, 30 save
yourself, and come down from the cross!"
31 In the same way the chief priests, along
with the scribes, were also mocking him
among themselves and saying, "He saved
others; he cannot save himself. 32 Let the
Messiah,[n] the King of Israel, come down
from the cross now, so that we may see
and believe." Those who were crucified
with him also taunted him.

The Death of Jesus

33 When it was noon, darkness came
over the whole land[o] until three in the
afternoon. 34 At three o'clock Jesus cried
out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sa-
bachthani?" which means, "My God, my
God, why have you forsaken me?"[p]
35 When some of the bystanders heard it,
they said, "Listen, he is calling for Elijah."
36 And someone ran, filled a sponge with
sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to
him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see
whether Elijah will come to take him
down." 37 Then Jesus gave a loud cry and
breathed his last. 38 And the curtain of the
temple was torn in two, from top to bot-
tom. 39 Now when the centurion, who
stood facing him, saw that in this way he[q]
breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man
was God's Son!"[r]
40 There were also women looking on
from a distance; among them were Mary
Magdalene, and Mary the mother of
James the younger and of Joses, and Sa-
lome. 41 These used to follow him and
provided for him when he was in Galilee;

l Other ancient authorities add verse 28, *And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "And he was counted among the lawless."* *m* Or *blasphemed* *n* Or *the Christ* *o* Or *earth* *p* Other ancient authorities read *made me a reproach* *q* Other ancient authorities add *cried out and* *r* Or *a son of God*

19.20); see note on 5.41. **15.23** *Wine mixed with myrrh,* presumably to reduce pain (see Prov 31.6). **15.24** To be *crucified,* the victim's body was lashed or nailed to a stake and crossbar (see Jn 20.25). *Divided his clothes . . . casting lots,* details doubtless owing to the church's subsequent reflection on Ps 22.18. **15.25** *Nine o'clock in the morning,* lit. "the third hour"; see note on 15.1. **15.26–27** A placard worn by the victim customarily bore *the inscription of the charge against him.* The charge, *the King of the Jews* (see note on 15.2), and identification of fellow victims as revolutionary *bandits* (see also 14.48) suggest that Jesus' execution was on the ground of imperial sedition. *One on his right and one on his left,* cf. 10.37. **15.29** *Derided,* or "blasphemed" (cf 14.64). *Shaking their heads.* See Pss 22.7; 109.25. On the substance of the jeer, see note on 14.58. **15.30** *Save yourself.* Cf. 8.35. **15.31** *Chief priests . . . scribes.* See note on 15.1. *He saved others; he cannot save himself.* Cf. 10.45; 14.24. **15.32** *The Messiah, the King of Israel.* See notes on 1.1; 15.2. *So that we may see and believe.* See also Wis 2.17–18; cf. Mk 8.11–12. *Those who were crucified with him also taunted him.* Cf. Lk 23.39–43.

15.33–41 Cf. Mt 27.45–56; Lk 23.44–49; Jn 19.28–30. Jesus' death, Mark's climax. **15.33** *Noon* (lit. "the sixth hour") and *three in the afternoon* ("the ninth hour"). See note on 15.1. Midday *darkness over the whole land* is an apocalyptic portrayal of divine judgment (see note on 13.24–25). **15.34** Translated from Aramaic (see note on 5.41), Jesus' cry (cf. 15.37) is a quotation from Ps 22.1; see also notes on 15.24; 15.29. **15.35** On those who *listen* (lit. "look") without understanding, see 4.12; 8.14–21. Evolving perhaps from 2 Kings 2.9–12, later Jewish folklore envisioned *Elijah* as rescuer of the righteous in distress, but cf. Mk 1.6; 9.11–13. **15.36** *Sour wine,* a common drink of the time, although an allusion to Ps 69.21 may be intended. **15.37** Cf. Lk 23.46; Jn 19.30. **15.38** *The curtain of the temple,* perhaps that which veiled the Holy of Holies (see Ex 26.31–37), *was torn* (see note on 1.10), probably symbolizing the temple's eradication and the unmediated access to God created by Jesus' death (see also Heb 9.1–28; 10.19–20). **15.39** That Jesus was *God's Son* is finally confessed by a human (see notes on 1.1; 1.11; 3.11). The *centurion,* a Gentile (see also 3.8; 5.20; 7.24–31; 8.27; 11.17; 13.10), is *facing* Jesus (cf. Mt 27.54) when Jesus dies (cf. 1 Cor 1.18–25; Eph 2.11–22). **15.40** *Women looking on from a distance* (cf. Ps 38.11; Jn 19.25), including *Mary Magdalene* (see also 15.47; 16.1). Whether *Mary the mother of James . . . and of Joses* is the same woman as Jesus' mother (see 6.3) is impossible to determine. *Salome.* Cf. Mt 27.56. **15.41** *Provided for,* lit. "served" or

and there were many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem.

The Burial of Jesus

42 When evening had come, and since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, 43 Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. 44 Then Pilate wondered if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had been dead for some time. 45 When he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. 46 Then Joseph[s] bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body,[t] wrapped it in the linen cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. 47 Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where the body[s] was laid.

The Resurrection of Jesus

16 When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. 2 And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. 3 They had been saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" 4 When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. 5 As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. 6 But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. 7 But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you." 8 So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.[u]

THE SHORTER ENDING OF MARK

[[And all that had been commanded them they told briefly to those around Peter. And afterward Jesus himself sent out through them, from east to west, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation.[v]]]

s Gk *he* t Gk *it* u Some of the most ancient authorities bring the book to a close at the end of verse 8. One authority concludes the book with the shorter ending; others include the shorter ending and then continue with verses 9-20. In most authorities verses 9-20 follow immediately after verse 8, though in some of these authorities the passage is marked as being doubtful. v Other ancient authorities add *Amen*

"ministered to." See also 1.31; 14.6. *Galilee.* See note on 1.9. *Other women.* See also Lk 8.1–3. **15.42–47** Cf. Mt 27.57–61; Lk 23.50–56; Jn 19.38–42. The burial customs implied here (see also Deut 21.22–23; Isa 22.16) are confirmed by archaeological remains. **15.42** *Evening.* See note on 15.1. *The day of Preparation* for, thus *before, the sabbath* (see note on 5.41). **15.43** *Arimathea,* perhaps the same town as Ramathaim (1 Sam 1.1) or Rathamin (1 Macc 11.34), in northwest Judea. *The council* in which Joseph held membership is unclear; cf. Lk 23.50. *Kingdom of God.* See note on 1.15. **15.44–45** That Jesus *had been dead for some time* is confirmed, possibly in defense against later charges of Christian fraud (see also Mt 27.62–66). **15.46** *Linen cloth.* See note on 14.51–52; cf. Jn 19.40. *Then Joseph . . . laid it in a tomb.* Cf. 6.29. **15.47** See 15.40.

16.1–8 Cf. Mt 28.1–8; Lk 24.1–12; Jn 20.1–10. Mark's epilogue, the announcement of Jesus' resurrection. **16.1–2** *When the sabbath was over,* generally, after 6:00 P.M. on Saturday; specifically, *very early on* Sunday, *the first day of the week. Mary Magdalene . . . Mary . . . and Salome.* See note on 15.40. *Anoint him.* See 14.8; cf. Jn 19.38–40. **16.4** *The stone, which was very large* (see also 15.46), a tacit rebuttal of any accusation that the body was stolen (cf. Mt 28.11–15). **16.5** *A young man . . . in a white robe.* See notes on 9.3; 14.51–52. **16.6** *He has been raised.* See also 8.31; 9.9, 31; 10.34; Jn 5.21; Acts 4.10; 13.30; Rom 4.24; 1 Cor 15.3–4; 2 Tim 2.8. **16.7** *You will see him.* See also Jn 21.14; Acts 2.32; 3.15; 10.40–41; 1 Cor 9.1; 15.5–8. *Just as he told you.* See 14.28. **16.8** *Terror and amazement.* See also 16.5–6; see note on 4.41.

THE SHORTER ENDING OF MARK. This was added not earlier than the fourth century C.E. The phrase *from east to west* presumes subsequent expansion of the Christian *proclamation*; cf. Mk 13.10; Rom 15.22–29.

THE LONGER ENDING OF MARK

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

9 ⟦Now after he rose early on the first
day of the week, he appeared first to
Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast
out seven demons. 10 She went out and
told those who had been with him, while
they were mourning and weeping. 11 But
when they heard that he was alive and
had been seen by her, they would not be-
lieve it.

Jesus Appears to Two Disciples

12 After this he appeared in another
form to two of them, as they were walk-
ing into the country. 13 And they went
back and told the rest, but they did not be-
lieve them.

Jesus Commissions the Disciples

14 Later he appeared to the eleven
themselves as they were sitting at the ta-
ble; and he upbraided them for their lack
of faith and stubbornness, because they
had not believed those who saw him after
he had risen.[w] 15 And he said to them,
"Go into all the world and proclaim the
good news[x] to the whole creation. 16 The
one who believes and is baptized will be
saved; but the one who does not believe
will be condemned. 17 And these signs will
accompany those who believe: by using
my name they will cast out demons; they
will speak in new tongues; 18 they will pick
up snakes in their hands,[y] and if they
drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt
them; they will lay their hands on the sick,
and they will recover."

The Ascension of Jesus

19 So then the Lord Jesus, after he
had spoken to them, was taken up into
heaven and sat down at the right hand of
God. 20 And they went out and pro-
claimed the good news everywhere, while
the Lord worked with them and con-
firmed the message by the signs that ac-
companied it.[z]⟧

w Other ancient authorities add, in whole or in part, *And they excused themselves, saying, "This age of lawlessness and unbelief is under Satan, who does not allow the truth and power of God to prevail over the unclean things of the spirits. Therefore reveal your righteousness now"—thus they spoke to Christ. And Christ replied to them, "The term of years of Satan's power has been fulfilled, but other terrible things draw near. And for those who have sinned I was handed over to death, that they may return to the truth and sin no more, that they may inherit the spiritual and imperishable glory of righteousness that is in heaven."* x Or *gospel*
y Other ancient authorities lack *in their hands*
z Other ancient authorities add *Amen*

THE LONGER ENDING OF MARK. Though known as early as the late second century C.E., the longer ending is missing from the earliest, most reliable Greek manuscripts and seems to mix motifs from the other Gospels. **16.9** *Early on the first day of the week.* See note on 16.1–2. *He appeared first to Mary Magdalene.* See Mt 28.9–10; Jn 20.11–18. *From whom he had cast out seven demons.* See Lk 8.2. **16.10–11** See Lk 24.9–11. **16.12–13** See Lk 24.13–35. **16.14** According to Luke–Acts, the risen Jesus appeared to early witnesses *as they were sitting at the table.* See Lk 24.36–43; Acts 10.41. *Lack of faith,* or "unbelief"; see 6.6; 9.24. *Stubbornness,* lit. "hardness of heart"; see 3.5; 6.52; 8.17; 10.5. **16.15** *Go into all the world and proclaim* (also 16.20; cf. 13.10). See Mt 28.19; Lk 24.47; Jn 20.21; Acts 1.8. *Good news.* See note on 1.1. **16.16** *The one who . . . is baptized will be saved.* See also Titus 3.5; 1 Pet 3.21; cf. Mt 28.19; Acts 2.38. *The one who does not believe will be condemned.* See also Jn 3.18. **16.17** On *signs* that accompany belief (also 16.20), see, e.g., Jn 2.23; 4.48; 6.30; cf. Mk 8.11–12; 13.22. *By using my name.* See 9.39; see also note on 1.24. *Cast out demons.* See 3.15; 6.7; 9.38. *Speak in new tongues.* See also Acts 2.4–11; 10.46; 19.6; 1 Cor 14. **16.18** *Pick up snakes.* See also Lk 10.19; Acts 28.3–6. *Lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.* See also Acts 3.1–10; 5.12–16; 9.12, 17–18; Jas 5.14–15. **16.19** *The Lord.* See notes on 5.19; 11.3. *Taken up into heaven.* See also Lk 24.51; Acts 1.2, 11, 22; 1 Tim 3.16; cf. 2 Kings 2.11. *Sat down at the right hand of God* (see Ps 110.1), a prevalent NT metaphor for Jesus' exaltation; see also Mk 14.62; Acts 2.33–34; 5.31; 7.55–56; Rom 8.34; Eph 1.20; Col 3.1; Heb 1.3; 8.1; 10.12; 12.2; 1 Pet 3.22. **16.20** *Proclaimed the good news everywhere.* See notes on 1.1; 13.10; 16.15. On divine cooperation with and *confirmation* of Christian believers, see also Acts 4.30; 6.8; 14.3; 15.12; Rom 15.19; Heb 2.3–4.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO

LUKE

Author

THIS BOOK BEARS THE NAME of Luke, "the beloved physician" of Col 4.14 (see also 2 Tim 4.11; Philem 24), and is generally identified as the Third Gospel. Both of these identifications probably originate with the inclusion of the book in an early Christian collection of Gospels. This may also have been the time when this story about Jesus was separated from its companion volume, The Acts of the Apostles. The continuity of story and the literary similarity of the two volumes have led modern scholars to refer to them as "Luke-Acts," although in that extended story neither volume ever mentions Luke's name or speaks of the "acts of the apostles." It may be finally impossible to prove or disprove the traditional identification of the author, but the name Luke may be used without making too much of it.

Date and Place of Composition

The book also gives no direct indication of the time or place it was written. Because of its apparent use of the Gospel of Mark, scholars generally date it in the last third of the first century C.E. There also seem to be allusions to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. (see esp. 19.41–44; 21.20–24), but these are traditional prophetic oracles that other interpreters regard as proving only Jesus' and Luke's dependence on the scriptures of Israel.

Similarly the prominence of the mission to the Gentiles in Luke-Acts does not provide the grounds for dating that were once assumed. Christian communities probably had various Jewish and gentile memberships throughout the latter half of the first century (see Rom 9–11), and nothing conclusive is known about where Luke was written.

Style and Genre

Generations of readers and interpreters have agreed on the literary elegance of Luke. This is a tale well told with a beginning (chs. 1–2), a middle (chs. 3–21),

and an end (chs. 22–24) that anticipates its sequel in Acts (see esp. Lk 24.44–53; Acts 1.1–11). Several episodes in the story, such as the birth of Jesus (2.1–20), are classics in Christian tradition and public usage, in part because of the author's narrative skill.

The book bears traits of several literary genres. The prologue (1.1–4) displays the author's mastery of the complex Hellenistic art of introducing a narrative. The literary elegance of these verses reflects the mode in which Hellenistic histories were often written. Luke's account of the lack of recognition of the risen Jesus by his disciples (24.1–43) also reflects the artistic narrative style of the first century. This book, however, is also a scriptural commentary, attesting the fulfillment of "everything written about me [Jesus] in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms" (24.44). The stylized prologue is followed by several lengthy stories written in the mode of the scriptural histories of Israel (1.5–2.52; 3.1–38).

Theology and Religious Background

Luke's view of truth and history are thoroughly theological. The plot is driven by the divine necessity of Jesus' mission (see 9.22, 31; 22.37; 24.7, 26, 44). God's will and reign are at work in human history, in contention with the collusion of human and demonic powers against God's "holy servant Jesus" (see 22.1–6; Acts 4.27). Jesus' contemporaries are also depicted as not understanding the character of the conflict (see esp. 13.31–34; 19.39–44). The apparent triumph of the will of the mob in Jesus' execution (23.25) is attested by Luke as the fulfillment of God's will and way of mercy (see 22.42; 24.25–26; Acts 4.24–28).

Luke, however, is not merely a literary fiction. This story is about a historical person in the midst of conflicts in Israel. This consideration makes the story more interesting, powerful, and even dangerous. The danger is especially strong in regard to Jesus' conflicts with the religious leaders of Israel. Once this story became the almost exclusive possession of non-Jewish (gentile) Christians, the conflicts among Jewish leaders seemed less like a struggle within the family over the fulfillment of the scriptural promises and more like an anti-Jewish story. It is crucial to note that almost all of the followers of Jesus in Luke are Jewish. Furthermore, all of the Jewish participants in the narrative, whether or not they accept Jesus as the Messiah, are subject to the rule of the Roman occupation of Judea and Galilee. The story is a fascinating and dire depiction of how conquered people are divided or even pitted against each other.

Readers will discover that the frequent references to OT passages in the notes are an excellent point of entry to Luke's account. Since Luke's story of Jesus emphasizes the fulfillment of the scriptures, it is not surprising to find the narrative full of scriptural allusions. Of course, those in Israel who did not accept Jesus as the Messiah would have contested such an interpretation of passages from Isaiah, Deuteronomy, and other books, but the narrative advances Luke's claim that Israel's heritage legitimates Jesus as the Messiah and Savior promised by God. *David L. Tiede*

Dedication to Theophilus

1 Since many have undertaken to set
down an orderly account of the
events that have been fulfilled among us,
2 just as they were handed on to us by
those who from the beginning were eye-
witnesses and servants of the word, 3 I too
decided, after investigating everything
carefully from the very first,[a] to write an
orderly account for you, most excellent
Theophilus, 4 so that you may know the
truth concerning the things about which
you have been instructed.

The Birth of John the Baptist Foretold

5 In the days of King Herod of Judea,
there was a priest named Zechariah, who
belonged to the priestly order of Abijah.
His wife was a descendant of Aaron, and
her name was Elizabeth. 6 Both of them
were righteous before God, living blame-
lessly according to all the commandments
and regulations of the Lord. 7 But they
had no children, because Elizabeth was
barren, and both were getting on in years.
8 Once when he was serving as priest
before God and his section was on duty,
9 he was chosen by lot, according to the
custom of the priesthood, to enter the
sanctuary of the Lord and offer incense.
10 Now at the time of the incense offering,
the whole assembly of the people was
praying outside. 11 Then there appeared
to him an angel of the Lord, standing at
the right side of the altar of incense.
12 When Zechariah saw him, he was terri-
fied; and fear overwhelmed him. 13 But
the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid,
Zechariah, for your prayer has been
heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a
son, and you will name him John. 14 You
will have joy and gladness, and many will
rejoice at his birth, 15 for he will be great
in the sight of the Lord. He must never
drink wine or strong drink; even before
his birth he will be filled with the Holy
Spirit. 16 He will turn many of the people
of Israel to the Lord their God. 17 With
the spirit and power of Elijah he will go
before him, to turn the hearts of parents
to their children, and the disobedient to
the wisdom of the righteous, to make
ready a people prepared for the Lord."
18 Zechariah said to the angel, "How will I
know that this is so? For I am an old man,
and my wife is getting on in years." 19 The
angel replied, "I am Gabriel. I stand in
the presence of God, and I have been sent
to speak to you and to bring you this good
news. 20 But now, because you did not be-
lieve my words, which will be fulfilled in
their time, you will become mute, unable
to speak, until the day these things occur."

a Or *for a long time*

1.1–4 Luke begins in the style of a first-century historian with references to other sources and a formal dedication. **1.1** We do not know how *many* others sought to provide an orderly account. Reference to *the events that have been fulfilled* indicates the importance of scriptural promises in Luke's narrative (see also 24.26–27, 44). **1.2** Traditional stories have been handed on from *eyewitnesses* to the events and *servants of the word*, who were probably Christian interpreters (see 4.20–21; Acts 13.5). The author does not claim to be an eyewitness. **1.3** *Theophilus* (see also Acts 1.1) was probably the author's patron but is otherwise unknown.

1.5–2.52 Luke's mode of writing now imitates the scriptural historians (see 1–2 Samuel; 1–2 Kings). **1.5–25** The announcement of John's birth foreshadows that of Jesus. **1.5** The *days* of the rule of *Herod* the Great (see Mt 2; see also "The Herods: A Simplified Family Tree," p. 1862) spanned several decades (37–4 B.C.E.). *Aaron* is the ancestor of Israel's priestly line (see Ex 40.12–15); thus John's parents both came from priestly families. **1.7** Their lack of *children* in advanced age is like that of Sarah and Abraham (Gen 18.11) and Hannah and Elkanah (1 Sam 1–2). **1.8** Each group of priests was probably *on duty* for two appointed cycles each year. **1.9** Individuals *chosen by lot* were understood to be divinely appointed (see Acts 1.24–26). Only the priest could *enter the sanctuary* and approach the divine presence. **1.11–12** *An angel of the Lord* is a heavenly messenger, causing mortals to *fear* for their lives (Isa 6.5–6). **1.13** *Do not be afraid*, common words of heavenly reassurance (see 1.30; 2.10; 5.10; 8.50; see also Gen 15.1; Dan 10.12; Acts 18.9; 27.24). Samuel's birth was also an answer to *prayer* in the temple (1 Sam 1.9–11). **1.15** Samson (Judg 13.4) and Samuel (1 Sam 1.11) were also children of divine promise, required to abstain from *strong drink* so that only the Holy Spirit would fill them. **1.17** *The spirit and power of Elijah* defines John's prophetic task of turning the people in repentance (3.3; Mal 4.5–6). **1.18** Zechariah's question expresses doubt (see also Sarah in Gen 18.12–14; cf. Mary in Lk 1.34). **1.19** *Gabriel*, an official emissary of God's court (see 1.26; Dan 8.16; 9.21).

21 Meanwhile the people were waiting
for Zechariah, and wondered at his delay
in the sanctuary. 22 When he did come
out, he could not speak to them, and they
realized that he had seen a vision in the
sanctuary. He kept motioning to them
and remained unable to speak. 23 When
his time of service was ended, he went to
his home.
24 After those days his wife Elizabeth
conceived, and for five months she re-
mained in seclusion. She said, 25 "This is
what the Lord has done for me when
he looked favorably on me and took away
the disgrace I have endured among my
people."

The Birth of Jesus Foretold

26 In the sixth month the angel Ga-
briel was sent by God to a town in Galilee
called Nazareth, 27 to a virgin engaged to
a man whose name was Joseph, of the
house of David. The virgin's name was
Mary. 28 And he came to her and said,
"Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with
you."[b] 29 But she was much perplexed by
his words and pondered what sort of
greeting this might be. 30 The angel said
to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you
have found favor with God. 31 And now,
you will conceive in your womb and bear
a son, and you will name him Jesus. 32 He
will be great, and will be called the Son of
the Most High, and the Lord God will
give to him the throne of his ancestor Da-
vid. 33 He will reign over the house of Ja-
cob forever, and of his kingdom there will
be no end." 34 Mary said to the angel,
"How can this be, since I am a virgin?"[c]
35 The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit
will come upon you, and the power of the
Most High will overshadow you; there-
fore the child to be born[d] will be holy; he
will be called Son of God. 36 And now,
your relative Elizabeth in her old age has
also conceived a son; and this is the sixth
month for her who was said to be barren.
37 For nothing will be impossible with
God." 38 Then Mary said, "Here am I, the
servant of the Lord; let it be with me ac-
cording to your word." Then the angel
departed from her.

Mary Visits Elizabeth

39 In those days Mary set out and
went with haste to a Judean town in the
hill country, 40 where she entered the
house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.
41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting,
the child leaped in her womb. And Eliza-
beth was filled with the Holy Spirit 42 and
exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are
you among women, and blessed is the
fruit of your womb. 43 And why has this
happened to me, that the mother of my
Lord comes to me? 44 For as soon as I
heard the sound of your greeting, the
child in my womb leaped for joy. 45 And
blessed is she who believed that there
would be[e] a fulfillment of what was spo-
ken to her by the Lord."
46 And Mary[f] said,

b Other ancient authorities add *Blessed are you among women* *c* Gk *I do not know a man*
d Other ancient authorities add *of you*
e Or *believed, for there will be* *f* Other ancient authorities read *Elizabeth*

1.22 Zechariah's enforced silence keeps Gabriel's message a secret until Zechariah speaks prophetically (1.67–79). **1.25** Childlessness was considered a *disgrace* in Israel (see Gen 16.4; 30.23), requiring God's intervention.

1.26–38 Gabriel again announces a blessed conception and birth (see also 1.13–17). **1.26** This is the *sixth month* of Elizabeth's pregnancy (see 1.24, 36). *Nazareth* was an unimportant village in Galilee, north of Judea (see Jn 1.46). **1.27** The term *virgin* emphasizes both Mary's youth and the holiness of this conception (1.34–35; see also Isa 7.14; Mt 1.20–23). Jesus' royal lineage is traced through *Joseph* to *David* (see 2.4; 3.23; 2 Sam 7.12–17). **1.31** *Jesus* is a common form of the name Joshua. **1.32** *Son of the Most High.* See 1.35; 8.28; 9.35; cf. 1.76; 6.35; Acts 16.17. **1.33** His *kingdom* with *no end* is the fulfillment of the promise to David (2 Sam 7.16; Isa 9.7; see also Dan 7.14). **1.35** In the OT God's presence is often conceived of as a light hidden in a cloud to *overshadow* mortals without harm (see Ex 16.10; 24.15–18; 40.34–35; see also Lk 9.34). This holy *Son of God* surpasses David and his royal heirs, who were adopted sons of God (Ps 2.7). **1.37** Cf. God's word to Sarah in Gen 18.14. **1.38** Hannah also described herself as God's obedient *servant* (1 Sam 1.11). Mary's word *let it be* echoes her question *How can this be?* (1.34).

1.39–56 Mary and Elizabeth give praise to God. **1.41** *Filled with the Holy Spirit.* Elizabeth's speech is prophetic as John's mother acclaims Jesus' mother (see 1.67). **1.45** Mary is *blessed* for her trust in the angel's message about her pregnancy (1.30–38; see also 1.42; 11.27–28). **1.46–55** This hymn of praise (traditionally called

"My soul magnifies the Lord,
47 and my spirit rejoices in God
my Savior,
48 for he has looked with favor on
the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all
generations will call
me blessed;
49 for the Mighty One has done
great things for me,
and holy is his name.
50 His mercy is for those who
fear him
from generation to generation.
51 He has shown strength with
his arm;
he has scattered the proud in
the thoughts of their
hearts.
52 He has brought down the
powerful from their
thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
53 he has filled the hungry with
good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
54 He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
55 according to the promise he
made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his
descendants forever."

56 And Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.

The Birth of John the Baptist

57 Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. 58 Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her.

59 On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him Zechariah after his father. 60 But his mother said, "No; he is to be called John." 61 They said to her, "None of your relatives has this name." 62 Then they began motioning to his father to find out what name he wanted to give him. 63 He asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." And all of them were amazed. 64 Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue freed, and he began to speak, praising God. 65 Fear came over all their neighbors, and all these things were talked about throughout the entire hill country of Judea. 66 All who heard them pondered them and said, "What then will this child become?" For, indeed, the hand of the Lord was with him.

67 Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke this prophecy:
68 "Blessed be the Lord God of
Israel,
for he has looked favorably on
his people and redeemed
them.
69 He has raised up a mighty
savior[g] for us
in the house of his servant
David,
70 as he spoke through the mouth
of his holy prophets from
of old,
71 that we would be saved from
our enemies and from the
hand of all who hate us.

g Gk *a horn of salvation*

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the Magnificat) echoes Hannah's song over Samuel's birth (1 Sam 2.1–10), in which God is also praised for salvation of the lowly and oppressed. Many phrases also recall psalms that celebrate God's victories. **1.49** *Holy is his name,* traditional Jewish words of praise (see Ps 111.9). **1.51** *Strength with his arm.* See Ps 89.10, 13; see also Ex 6.6. **1.55** *The promise . . . to Abraham.* See Gen 17.6–8; 18.18; 22.17. The promise to David (2 Sam 7.11–16) is also fulfilled.

1.57–80 John's birth and acclamation. **1.57** The episodes of Luke 1 are timed by the months of Elizabeth's pregnancy (1.24, 26, 36). **1.58** The birth is seen as a sign of the Lord's *mercy* (see note on 1.25). **1.59** Regarding circumcision *on the eighth day,* see 2.21; Gen 17.12. **1.63** *His name is John.* Zechariah fulfills the angel's command (see 1.13). **1.65** The neighbors' *fear* expresses their sense of divine action (see note on 1.11–12). **1.67–79** Zechariah's inspired prophecy (traditionally called the Benedictus) answers the neighbors' question (1.66) in the scriptural form of a prayer blessing God for what God has done (see 2.28; Pss 41.13; 72.18; 106.48). **1.68** *Looked favorably on,* or visited, as when a ruler makes an official visitation (see 7.16; 19.44). **1.69** *Savior,* lit. a "horn of salvation" (text note *g*), alluding to a Davidic ruler (see

72 Thus he has shown the mercy
promised to our ancestors,
and has remembered his
holy covenant,
73 the oath that he swore to our
ancestor Abraham,
to grant us 74 that we, being
rescued from the hands of
our enemies,
might serve him without fear,
75 in holiness and
righteousness
before him all our days.
76 And you, child, will be called the
prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the Lord
to prepare his ways,
77 to give knowledge of salvation to
his people
by the forgiveness of their
sins.
78 By the tender mercy of our God,
the dawn from on high will
break upon[h] us,
79 to give light to those who sit in
darkness and in the shadow
of death,
to guide our feet into the way
of peace."

80 The child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day he appeared publicly to Israel.

The Birth of Jesus

2 In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2 This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 All went to their own towns to be registered. 4 Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. 5 He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. 7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

The Shepherds and the Angels

8 In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for

h Other ancient authorities read *has broken upon*

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1 Sam 2.10; Pss 18.2; 132.17). **1.73** On the oath to *Abraham*, see 1.55; Acts 3.25. **1.74** *Serve him without fear*, a reference to Israel's worship and life. **1.75** *Holiness and righteousness* are hallmarks of Israel's faithfulness to God's commands (see 1.6). **1.76** *The prophet of the Most High*. Cf. Jesus' title in 1.32. To *go before the Lord* (see also 1.17; 3.4; 7.27) recalls Mal 3.1. **1.77** John's mission is focused on repentance for *the forgiveness of their sins* (see 3.3). **1.78–79** The *dawn* of the *light* is a promised liberation from the *darkness* of captivity (see note on 22.53; Ps 107.10; Isa 42.7; 60.1–3). **1.80** *The child grew*. See also 1 Sam 2.21, 26. John's strength *in spirit* (see also 1.15, 17) anticipates that of Jesus (see 2.40; 4.14). *In the wilderness*. See also 3.2–4; Isa 40.3.

2.1–20 Cf. Mt 1.18–25; 2.1–12. Luke presents Jesus' birth in the context of imperial edicts that affected occupied Israel (see also Acts 17.7). **2.1** Gaius Octavius ruled as Caesar, or *Emperor*, from 31 B.C.E. to 14 C.E. and was acclaimed *Augustus*, or "revered," in 27 B.C.E. *All the world*, probably Roman rhetoric for the whole empire. **2.2** A Roman *registration*, or census, established control, especially for taxes and conscription. Dating this census has confounded historians. Herod the Great died in 4 B.C.E. (see 1.5; Mt 2.1). Acts 5.37 refers to a census of Judea in 6–7 C.E. by *Quirinius*, the Roman legate, which caused a Jewish rebellion. *Syria*, a large Roman administrative province, included Galilee and Judea. **2.4** *Nazareth*. See note on 1.26. *Bethlehem*, south of Jerusalem, was the Judean village of King David's origin (1 Sam 16.1; 17.12; see also Mt 2.5–6; Jn 7.40–42). On Jesus' lineage from the *family of David*, see 1.27; 3.23–38. **2.5** Luke says almost nothing about Joseph's understanding of this pregnancy (see 1.27; 2.33; cf. Mt 1.18–25). **2.6** The *time* of the pregnancies and the timing of the census (2.1) set the occasion of the story. **2.7** A *firstborn son* was considered a special blessing in Jewish families and had a privileged role (2.23; see also Ex 13.2; Num 3.12–13; 18.15–16; Deut 21.15–17). *Manger*, a feedbox for animals. **2.8** King David was also a *shepherd* (1 Sam 17.15; Ps 78.70–71). **2.9** This *angel of the Lord* is not named (cf. 1.11, 19, 26). *Glory of the Lord*, the blazing light of God's presence and power (Ex 16.7, 10; 24.17; 2 Cor 3.7). **2.10** *Do not be afraid*. See notes on 1.11–12; 1.13.

all the people: 11 to you is born this day in
the city of David a Savior, who is the Mes-
siah,[i] the Lord. 12 This will be a sign for
you: you will find a child wrapped in
bands of cloth and lying in a manger."
13 And suddenly there was with the angel
a multitude of the heavenly host,[j] prais-
ing God and saying,

14 "Glory to God in the highest
heaven,
and on earth peace among
those whom he favors!"[k]

15 When the angels had left them and
gone into heaven, the shepherds said to
one another, "Let us go now to Bethle-
hem and see this thing that has taken
place, which the Lord has made known to
us." 16 So they went with haste and found
Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in
the manger. 17 When they saw this, they
made known what had been told them
about this child; 18 and all who heard it
were amazed at what the shepherds told
them. 19 But Mary treasured all these
words and pondered them in her heart.
20 The shepherds returned, glorifying
and praising God for all they had heard
and seen, as it had been told them.

Jesus Is Named and Presented in the Temple

21 After eight days had passed, it was
time to circumcise the child; and he was
called Jesus, the name given by the angel
before he was conceived in the womb.

22 When the time came for their puri-
fication according to the law of Moses,
they brought him up to Jerusalem to
present him to the Lord 23 (as it is written
in the law of the Lord, "Every firstborn
male shall be designated as holy to the
Lord"), 24 and they offered a sacrifice ac-
cording to what is stated in the law of the
Lord, "a pair of turtledoves or two young
pigeons."

25 Now there was a man in Jerusalem
whose name was Simeon;[l] this man was
righteous and devout, looking forward to
the consolation of Israel, and the Holy
Spirit rested on him. 26 It had been re-
vealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he
would not see death before he had seen
the Lord's Messiah.[m] 27 Guided by the
Spirit, Simeon[n] came into the temple;
and when the parents brought in the child
Jesus, to do for him what was customary
under the law, 28 Simeon[o] took him in his
arms and praised God, saying,

29 "Master, now you are dismissing
your servant[p] in peace,
according to your word;
30 for my eyes have seen your
salvation,
31 which you have prepared in the
presence of all peoples,
32 a light for revelation to the
Gentiles

i Or *the Christ* *j* Gk *army* *k* Other ancient authorities read *peace, goodwill among people*
l Gk *Symeon* *m* Or *the Lord's Christ* *n* Gk *In the Spirit, he* *o* Gk *he* *p* Gk *slave*

2.11 *City of David.* See 2.4. The title *Savior* is rare in the Gospels (see 1.47; Jn 4.42; see also Acts 5.31; 13.23) but was commonly used of the Roman emperor. Israel had long used this political title for God (see Isa 43.3, 11). The titles *Messiah* and *Lord* are again combined in Peter's acclamation of Jesus in Acts 2.36. The *Messiah*, or Christ, is an anointed ruler (see Acts 10.38). **2.12** The *sign* of a child in a manger is literally fulfilled (2.16) and alludes to Isaiah's prophecy of a child (Isa 7.14; see also Mt 1.22–23). **2.13** *Heavenly host*, the armies of heaven, whose testimony reveals the divine meaning of this birth. **2.19** On Mary's pondering, see 2.34–35, 51. **2.20** The shepherds' praise of God for what *they had heard and seen* echoes the praise of the angelic armies (2.13–14).

2.21–40 The presentation of Jesus in the temple. **2.21** *After eight days.* See also 1.59. On Jesus' *name*, see 1.31; Mt 1.21, 25. **2.22–24** All the details of the *purification* are in close accord with Lev 12. **2.23** The quotation is from Ex 13.2 (see also Lk 1.35). **2.24** A sacrifice of *turtledoves or . . . pigeons* was acceptable for those who could not afford a sheep (see Lev 12.8). **2.25** Simeon's credentials as *righteous and devout* express his fidelity to the law (see 1.6). *The consolation of Israel*, i.e., the promised restoration of Israel's independence (see Isa 40.1; 49.6; 61.2). The presence of *the Holy Spirit* with Simeon (see also 2.26, 27) confirms the prophetic nature of his oracles. The language of "seeing" is prominent in these verses. **2.27** *Guided by the Spirit.* Simeon's recognition of the infant Jesus is itself inspired. **2.28–32** Simeon's first oracle praises God and again declares God's saving purposes (see 2.14). The words are often used at the close of Christian worship as the Nunc Dimittis, Latin for *now you are dismissing* (v. 29). This is the language of a royal court. **2.31** On the manifestation of a great rule *in the presence of all peoples*, see Isa 40.3–5 (cited in Lk 3.6); 52.10. **2.32** The logic is that of Isa 49.6: i.e., Israel's *glory* is to be a *light for revelation to the*

and for glory to your people
Israel."

33 And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. 34 Then Simeon[q] blessed them and said to his mother Mary, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed 35 so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too."

36 There was also a prophet, Anna[r] the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, 37 then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. 38 At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child[s] to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

39 When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. 40 The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

The Boy Jesus in the Temple

41 Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. 42 And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. 43 When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. 44 Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. 45 When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. 46 After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. 47 And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. 48 When his parents[t] saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety." 49 He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"[u] 50 But they did not understand what he said to them. 51 Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years,[v] and in divine and human favor.

The Proclamation of John the Baptist

3 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler[w] of Galilee, and his brother

q Gk *Symeon* *r* Gk *Hanna* *s* Gk *him*
t Gk *they* *u* Or *be about my Father's interests?*
v Or *in stature* *w* Gk *tetrarch*

Gentiles. **2.34** Simeon's second oracle sounds a prophetic warning. How the child is destined to cause *the falling and the rising of many* will become clear in the conflict between God's saving purpose and human opposition to this sign (see 2.12; Isa 8.18). **2.35** *The inner thoughts of many* implies human resistance and rejection (see 5.21–22; 6.8; 11.17; 20.14). The *sword* of division will also cause pain for Mary and her family (see 8.19–21; 11.27–28; 12.51–53). **2.36–37** *Anna*'s ancestry in Israel (*the tribe of Asher*; see Deut 33.24–25) and her credentials as a *prophet* (cf. Philip's daughters in Acts 21.9) and a *widow* (cf. Acts 6.1; 9.41) indicate her special status. She gives another inspired *temple* oracle (see 2.27). **2.38** Anna's words echo Simeon's prophetic speech. The *redemption of Jerusalem* is analogous to the *consolation of Israel* (see note on 2.25). **2.39** The fulfillment of *the law of the Lord* is crucial to this story (see 2.23). *Nazareth.* See 2.4; note on 1.26. **2.40** *The child grew and became strong.* See note on 1.80.

2.41–52 Only Luke provides a story of Jesus' boyhood. **2.41** The *Passover* pilgrimage was an observance of Israel's liberation from Egyptian bondage (Ex 12.1–27; 23.15; Num 9.2–14; Deut 16.16). Jesus returns to Jerusalem at Passover in 19.28–48. **2.42** At *twelve years old,* Jesus was approaching the traditional time of formal teaching in the law. **2.46** The *temple* is again the site (see 2.22–38) where Israel's teachers of the law encounter the child of promise. **2.49** Jesus *must* be in the temple because it accords with God's plan (see also 4.43; 9.22; 13.33; Acts 1.7). **2.51–52** Jesus was *obedient* to his earthly mother and father when it did not conflict with God's will (see 8.21). The growth refrain (see also 1.80; 2.40) thus affirms both *divine and human favor.*

3.1–20 Cf. Mt 3.1–12; 14.3–4; Mk 1.2–8; 6.17–18. Luke again adopts a historian's mode (see 1.1–4), locating the beginning of John's

Philip ruler[x] of the region of Ituraea and
Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler[x] of Abi-
lene, 2 during the high priesthood of An-
nas and Caiaphas, the word of God came
to John son of Zechariah in the wilder-
ness. 3 He went into all the region around
the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of re-
pentance for the forgiveness of sins, 4 as it
is written in the book of the words of the
prophet Isaiah,

"The voice of one crying out in
the wilderness:
'Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.
5 Every valley shall be filled,
and every mountain and hill
shall be made low,
and the crooked shall be made
straight,
and the rough ways made
smooth;
6 and all flesh shall see the
salvation of God.' "

7 John said to the crowds that came
out to be baptized by him, "You brood
of vipers! Who warned you to flee from
the wrath to come? 8 Bear fruits worthy
of repentance. Do not begin to say to
yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our
ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from
these stones to raise up children to Abra-
ham. 9 Even now the ax is lying at the root
of the trees; every tree therefore that
does not bear good fruit is cut down and
thrown into the fire."

10 And the crowds asked him, "What
then should we do?" 11 In reply he said to
them, "Whoever has two coats must share
with anyone who has none; and whoever
has food must do likewise." 12 Even tax
collectors came to be baptized, and they
asked him, "Teacher, what should we
do?" 13 He said to them, "Collect no more
than the amount prescribed for you."
14 Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what
should we do?" He said to them, "Do not
extort money from anyone by threats or
false accusation, and be satisfied with your
wages."

15 As the people were filled with
expectation, and all were questioning in
their hearts concerning John, whether he
might be the Messiah,[y] 16 John answered
all of them by saying, "I baptize you with
water; but one who is more powerful than
I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the
thong of his sandals. He will baptize you
with[z] the Holy Spirit and fire. 17 His win-
nowing fork is in his hand, to clear his
threshing floor and to gather the wheat
into his granary; but the chaff he will
burn with unquenchable fire."

18 So, with many other exhortations,
he proclaimed the good news to the peo-
ple. 19 But Herod the ruler,[x] who had

x Gk *tetrarch* y Or *the Christ* z Or *in*

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preaching with reference to the calendar and authority structures of the empire, the local rulers, and the high-priesthood. **3.1** *Tiberius* was emperor during John's and Jesus' public activity (14–37 C.E.), and *Pilate* (see also 13.1; 23.1–52) was governor in Judea for most of that time (26–36 C.E.). *Herod* Antipas was the son of Herod the Great, whom the Romans had named "King of the Jews" (1.5; see Mt 2.1–12). Antipas unsuccessfully sought this title from Rome (perhaps accounting for the tension with Pilate in 23.12). **3.2** The high priests, *Annas and Caiaphas,* were subject to regulation and annual appointment by Rome. *The word of God came to John* indicates the call of a prophet (see Jer 1.4, 11; Hos 1.1; Joel 1.1). **3.3** *A baptism of repentance* is a ritual of cleansing, signifying a return to God with the expectation of forgiveness. **3.4–6** Isa 40.3–5 serves to identify John with traditional hopes for Israel's restoration among the nations. **3.6** The *salvation of God* is declared evident for all to see, perhaps in contrast to the empty claims of other gods and rulers to be saviors (Isa 45.20–23; see also notes on Lk 2.1; 2.11). **3.7** God's coming kingdom will be *wrath* for those unprepared for its judgment. **3.8** *Abraham* is known as the friend of God (2 Chr 20.7) and the father of Israel (Lk 16.23; see also Gen 17; Isa 51.2; Jn 8.33–40), but his offspring must also prepare to receive God's reign. **3.11** The content of repentance is that all are asked to share *food* and clothing (see also Acts 2.44–47; 4.32–35). **3.12–14** *Tax collectors* and *soldiers* do not appear in Matthew's or Mark's versions (see also Lk 5.27–30; 7.2–10, 29, 34; 15.1; 18.9–14). John's requirements fit the reputations of these groups (see note on 5.30). **3.15** *The Messiah* is Israel's Davidic king (see notes on 1.33; 2.11). **3.16** John declares the Messiah's baptism to be *with the Holy Spirit and fire* of judgment (3.9, 17). In Acts, the Holy Spirit and tongues of fire fall on the disciples at Pentecost also as a sign of promise (see Acts 2.1–21, 38–39). **3.17** The images of *threshing* and *winnowing,* or separating, grain are commonly used for judgment (Isa 41.15–16; Jer 15.7; Rev 14.14–20). **3.19** The marriages of *Herod* Antipas (see note on 3.1) were notorious for their political intrigue.

been rebuked by him because of Herodias, his brother's wife, and because of all the evil things that Herod had done, 20added to them all by shutting up John in prison.

The Baptism of Jesus

21 Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, 22and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved;[a] with you I am well pleased."[b]

The Ancestors of Jesus

23 Jesus was about thirty years old when he began his work. He was the son (as was thought) of Joseph son of Heli, 24son of Matthat, son of Levi, son of Melchi, son of Jannai, son of Joseph, 25son of Mattathias, son of Amos, son of Nahum, son of Esli, son of Naggai, 26son of Maath, son of Mattathias, son of Semein, son of Josech, son of Joda, 27son of Joanan, son of Rhesa, son of Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel,[c] son of Neri, 28son of Melchi, son of Addi, son of Cosam, son of Elmadam, son of Er, 29son of Joshua, son of Eliezer, son of Jorim, son of Matthat, son of Levi, 30son of Simeon, son of Judah, son of Joseph, son of Jonam, son of Eliakim, 31son of Melea, son of Menna, son of Mattatha, son of Nathan, son of David, 32son of Jesse, son of Obed, son of Boaz, son of Sala,[d] son of Nahshon, 33son of Amminadab, son of Admin, son of Arni,[e] son of Hezron, son of Perez, son of Judah, 34son of Jacob, son of Isaac, son of Abraham, son of Terah, son of Nahor, 35son of Serug, son of Reu, son of Peleg, son of Eber, son of Shelah, 36son of Cainan, son of Arphaxad, son of Shem, son of Noah, son of Lamech, 37son of Methuselah, son of Enoch, son of Jared, son of Mahalaleel, son of Cainan, 38son of Enos, son of Seth, son of Adam, son of God.

The Temptation of Jesus

4 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, 2where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. 3The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." 4Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.' "

5 Then the devil[f] led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. 6And the devil[f] said to him, "To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. 7If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." 8Jesus answered him, "It is written,

'Worship the Lord your God,
and serve only him.' "

9 Then the devil[f] took him to Jerusa-

a Or *my beloved Son* *b* Other ancient authorities read *You are my Son, today I have begotten you* *c* Gk *Salathiel* *d* Other ancient authorities read *Salmon* *e* Other ancient authorities read *Amminadab, son of Aram*; others vary widely *f* Gk *he*

3.21–22 Cf. Mt 3.13–17; Mk 1.9–11. Luke mentions Jesus' baptism after reporting John's imprisonment. **3.22** Jesus is acclaimed from heaven as God's *Son, the Beloved* (see Gen 22.2; Ps 2.7; Isa 42.1; see also Lk 4.1–13; Acts 4.27).

3.23–38 Cf. Mt 1.1–17. Jesus' ancestry is traced through Joseph's ostensible paternity (see also 2.41, 48). **3.23** Jesus' age of *about thirty years* implies full maturity and fits with the middle of Tiberius's reign. **3.23b–31** Most of the persons in the genealogical list up to David are otherwise unknown. **3.31** *David*'s place in the genealogy is not highlighted (cf. Mt 1.6, 17); see, however, 1.32, 69; 18.38–39; cf. 20.41–44. **3.38** Luke establishes Jesus as son of David in the line of *Adam, son of God* (see 3.22), thus emphasizing his significance for all humankind. He is legitimately God's anointed ruler.

4.1–13 Cf. Mt 4.1–11; Mk 1.12–13. The reign of the newly "anointed" Son of God is tested (see 1 Kings 3.1–14). **4.1–2** *Forty days* in the *wilderness* fits the pattern of Moses' and Elijah's fasts (Ex 34.28; Deut 9.9, 18; 1 Kings 19.8) and God's testing of Israel for forty years in the wilderness (Deut 8.2–5; Ps 95.10). **4.3** *If* here means "since" (see also 23.37), granting that Jesus is the Son of God (see 1.32; 2.49; 4.41) but challenging how he will exercise that authority (4.6). **4.4** Jesus' three responses (also 4.8; 4.12) refer to Deuteronomy, here Deut 8.3. **4.7** The devil's request for *worship* meant an acknowledgment of legitimate dominion. **4.8** Jesus quotes

lem, and placed him on the pinnacle of
the temple, saying to him, "If you are the
Son of God, throw yourself down from
here, 10 for it is written,
'He will command his angels
concerning you,
to protect you,'
11 and
'On their hands they will bear
you up,
so that you will not dash your
foot against a stone.'"
12 Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'Do not
put the Lord your God to the test.'"
13 When the devil had finished every test,
he departed from him until an oppor-
tune time.

The Rejection of Jesus at Nazareth

14 Then Jesus, filled with the power
of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a
report about him spread through all the
surrounding country. 15 He began to
teach in their synagogues and was praised
by everyone.

16 When he came to Nazareth, where
he had been brought up, he went to the
synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his
custom. He stood up to read, 17 and the
scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to
him. He unrolled the scroll and found the
place where it was written:
18 "The Spirit of the Lord is
upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the
poor.
He has sent me to proclaim
release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the
blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's
favor."
20 And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back
to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes
of all in the synagogue were fixed on him.
21 Then he began to say to them, "Today
this scripture has been fulfilled in your
hearing." 22 All spoke well of him and
were amazed at the gracious words that
came from his mouth. They said, "Is not
this Joseph's son?" 23 He said to them,
"Doubtless you will quote to me this prov-
erb, 'Doctor, cure yourself!' And you will
say, 'Do here also in your hometown the
things that we have heard you did at
Capernaum.'" 24 And he said, "Truly I
tell you, no prophet is accepted in the
prophet's hometown. 25 But the truth is,
there were many widows in Israel in the
time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut
up three years and six months, and there
was a severe famine over all the land;
26 yet Elijah was sent to none of them ex-
cept to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon.
27 There were also many lepers[g] in Israel
in the time of the prophet Elisha, and
none of them was cleansed except Naa-
man the Syrian." 28 When they heard this,
all in the synagogue were filled with rage.
29 They got up, drove him out of the
town, and led him to the brow of the hill
on which their town was built, so that they
might hurl him off the cliff. 30 But he
passed through the midst of them and
went on his way.

[g] The terms *leper* and *leprosy* can refer to several diseases

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from Deut 6.13. **4.10–11** The devil quotes Ps 91.11–12, which counsels trusting God, not testing. **4.12** Jesus quotes from Deut 6.16. **4.13** On the *opportune time* of the devil's return, see 22.3–6.

4.14–30 Cf. Mt 13.53–58; Mk 6.1–6a. The story of Jesus' rejection in his hometown foreshadows the opposition that his ministry will evoke. **4.14** Luke again highlights the agency of the *Spirit* at the beginning of Jesus' ministry (see also 3.22; 4.1, 18). **4.16** *As was his custom.* Jesus is faithful to Israel's practices, here observing synagogue worship on the sabbath (see also 2.21–38). The guest was invited to *read* from the prophetic scroll (4.17) and comment (see Acts 13.15). **4.18–19** The reading includes portions of Isa 61.1–2; 58.6 (see also Lk 7.22). *The poor.* See 1.52; 6.20; 7.22; 14.13, 21; 16.20, 22. *The year of the Lord's favor* was a "year of jubilee" and restoration in Lev 25.8–12. **4.20** According to Jewish custom, one stood to read scripture but *sat down* to teach (see also 5.3). **4.21** Fulfillment *in your hearing* does not guarantee acceptance (see Isa 6.9–10; Acts 28.26–27). **4.22** *Joseph's son.* Cf. 2.48–49; 3.22–23. **4.23** This *proverb* (lit. "parable"; see note on 6.39) was common in Greek and Jewish lore. In Luke's story, Jesus arrives only later in *Capernaum* (4.31). **4.25–28** The stories of *Elijah* in *Sidon* (1 Kings 17.1–16) and *Elisha* and the *Syrian* (2 Kings 5.1–14) recall times of judgment on Israel. **4.29–30** To *hurl him off the cliff* may imply the stoning of a heretic, but somehow Jesus continues on his determined *way* (see 9.51–56; 13.31–35).

The Man with an Unclean Spirit

31 He went down to Capernaum, a
city in Galilee, and was teaching them on
the sabbath. 32 They were astounded at
his teaching, because he spoke with au-
thority. 33 In the synagogue there was a
man who had the spirit of an unclean de-
mon, and he cried out with a loud voice,
34 "Let us alone! What have you to do with
us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to
destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy
One of God." 35 But Jesus rebuked him,
saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!"
When the demon had thrown him down
before them, he came out of him without
having done him any harm. 36 They were
all amazed and kept saying to one an-
other, "What kind of utterance is this? For
with authority and power he commands
the unclean spirits, and out they come!"
37 And a report about him began to reach
every place in the region.

Healings at Capernaum

38 After leaving the synagogue he
entered Simon's house. Now Simon's
mother-in-law was suffering from a high
fever, and they asked him about her.
39 Then he stood over her and rebuked
the fever, and it left her. Immediately she
got up and began to serve them.
40 As the sun was setting, all those
who had any who were sick with various
kinds of diseases brought them to him;
and he laid his hands on each of them and
cured them. 41 Demons also came out of
many, shouting, "You are the Son of
God!" But he rebuked them and would
not allow them to speak, because they
knew that he was the Messiah.[h]
42 At daybreak he departed and went
into a deserted place. And the crowds
were looking for him; and when they
reached him, they wanted to prevent him
from leaving them. 43 But he said to them,
"I must proclaim the good news of the
kingdom of God to the other cities also;
for I was sent for this purpose." 44 So he
continued proclaiming the message in the
synagogues of Judea.[i]

Jesus Calls the First Disciples

5 Once while Jesus[j] was standing be-
side the lake of Gennesaret, and the
crowd was pressing in on him to hear the
word of God, 2 he saw two boats there at

h Or *the Christ* *i* Other ancient authorities read *Galilee* *j* Gk *he*

4.31–37 Cf. Mt 4.13; 7.28–29; Mk 1.21–28. Luke now tells of Jesus' healings in Capernaum (see 4.23), which were narrated earlier in Mark's sequence. **4.32** *They were astounded.* The context is again sabbath teaching (see 4.16), but the astonishment of these hearers is evidently positive. **4.33** *With a loud voice.* See 8.28. **4.34** *The Holy One of God.* See 1.35; 2.23. For the evil spirits' recognition of Jesus as Son of God, see 4.3, 9, 41; 8.28; cf. the misguided human identification of Jesus in 4.22. **4.35** Jesus' *rebuke* of the demon is a power confrontation, demonstrating his dominion over evil (Deut 18.9–18). **4.36** Jesus' *authority and power* are demonstrated, but not on the devil's terms (see 4.1–13).

4.38–44 Cf. Mt 8.14–17; 4.23; Mk 1.29–39. Additional Capernaum episodes illustrate a successful and popular ministry (cf. 4.28–29). **4.38** In Luke's sequence, Jesus appears at *Simon's house* before Simon is called as a disciple (5.1–11; cf. Mk 1.16–20, 29–31). **4.39** Luke presents Jesus' *rebuke* of the high fever in the same terms as Jesus' confrontations with the demons (4.35, 41). **4.40–41** These summary verses (see also 4.14–15, 31–32) describe the promised liberation from physical and spiritual forces (see 4.18–19). Once again, the demons correctly recognize Jesus as *the Son of God* (see note on 4.34). **4.42–43** Luke's portrait of Jesus often includes retreats to *a deserted place* for solitude and prayer (see note on 5.16), balanced with the recurring theme of Jesus' determined *purpose* (see note on 9.51) to declare and inaugurate the kingdom of God. **4.43** The *kingdom* (or "reign") *of God* is the substance of Jesus' preaching (see, e.g., chs. 13; 18). It is made present in some sense by Jesus' person and deeds (11.20; 17.21) yet is also spoken of as a future hope (12.31; 22.16, 30). **4.44** The reference to the *synagogues of Judea* has long confused readers since all of the events narrated thus far have occurred in Galilee (4.14, 16, 31; see text note *i*). Some interpreters argue that Luke is alluding to an otherwise unmentioned journey into Judea.

5.1–11 Cf. Mt 13.1–3; 4.18–22; Mk 4.1–2; 1.16–20; see Jn 21.1–11. This story echoes earlier scriptural accounts of the calls of Moses while tending sheep (Ex 3), of Gideon while beating wheat (Judg 6), and of Isaiah in the temple (Isa 6). These biblical call stories direct mortals from their usual tasks to God's mission toward the people. **5.1** *Lake of Gennesaret,* a local name for the Sea of

the shore of the lake; the fishermen had
gone out of them and were washing their
nets. 3 He got into one of the boats, the
one belonging to Simon, and asked him to
put out a little way from the shore. Then
he sat down and taught the crowds from
the boat. 4 When he had finished speak-
ing, he said to Simon, "Put out into the
deep water and let down your nets for a
catch." 5 Simon answered, "Master, we
have worked all night long but have
caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let
down the nets." 6 When they had done
this, they caught so many fish that their
nets were beginning to break. 7 So they
signaled their partners in the other boat
to come and help them. And they came
and filled both boats, so that they began to
sink. 8 But when Simon Peter saw it, he
fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go
away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful
man!" 9 For he and all who were with him
were amazed at the catch of fish that they
had taken; 10 and so also were James and
John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners
with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon,
"Do not be afraid; from now on you will
be catching people." 11 When they had
brought their boats to shore, they left ev-
erything and followed him.

Jesus Cleanses a Leper

12 Once, when he was in one of the
cities, there was a man covered with lep-
rosy.[k] When he saw Jesus, he bowed with
his face to the ground and begged him,
"Lord, if you choose, you can make me
clean." 13 Then Jesus[l] stretched out his
hand, touched him, and said, "I do
choose. Be made clean." Immediately the
leprosy[k] left him. 14 And he ordered him
to tell no one. "Go," he said, "and show
yourself to the priest, and, as Moses com-
manded, make an offering for your
cleansing, for a testimony to them." 15 But
now more than ever the word about
Jesus[m] spread abroad; many crowds
would gather to hear him and to be cured
of their diseases. 16 But he would with-
draw to deserted places and pray.

Jesus Heals a Paralytic

17 One day, while he was teaching,
Pharisees and teachers of the law were sit-
ting near by (they had come from every
village of Galilee and Judea and from Je-

k The terms *leper* and *leprosy* can refer to several diseases *l* Gk *he* *m* Gk *him*

Galilee. **5.3** When Jesus *sat down and taught*, he was again behaving like a rabbi, but not in a synagogue (see note on 4.20). **5.5** Peter's address to Jesus as *Master* is deferential to his authority (see 8.24, 45; 9.33, 49; 17.13). **5.8** Now *Peter saw* much more in this event, falling on his *knees* in petition (see also 22.41; Acts 7.60; 9.40; 20.36; 21.5) to the *Lord* (see also 24.34; Isa 6; Acts 2.36). His recognition of being a *sinful man* indicates his sense of divine presence (cf. Ex 3.6; Judg 6.22; Isa 6.5). **5.9** Their amazement is the mortal fear or awe evoked by an encounter with divine holiness (see notes on 1.11–12; 1.13; Acts 3.10). **5.10** On the image of fishing for *people*, see also Jer 16.14–16. **5.11** On leaving *everything*, see 5.28; 9.57–62; 14.33; 18.22–23. *And followed.* To follow Jesus is a fundamental metaphor in Luke for discipleship in the Messiah's mission (see 5.27–28; 9.23, 49, 57, 59, 61; 18.22, 28, 43; 22.39, 54).

5.12–16 Cf. Mt 8.1–4; Mk 1.40–45. A cure of one who is ritually unclean marks the extension of Jesus' ministry to social outcasts. **5.12** Luke presents a person with an extensive condition of *leprosy* rather than a leper (but see 4.27; 17.12). The term probably includes what modern diagnosis would identify as several diseases, but ancient Israel understood such unpleasant and disabling skin disorders to require measured separation from the community as much for reasons of ritual purity as hygiene (see Lev 13–14). **5.14** The *priest* certified a person clean, or healed, according to established standards (see also 17.14). *As Moses commanded.* Careful observance of the law is also noted in 1.6; 2.22–24. The *offering for your cleansing* provided a public testimony to the cure. **5.15** The clamor *to be cured* stands in tension with Jesus' command "to tell no one" (5.14; see also Mk 1.44–45). **5.16** On Jesus' retreat to *pray*, see note on 4.42–43; see also 3.21; 6.12; 9.18, 28, 29; 11.1; 22.32, 41, 44.

5.17–26 Cf. Mt 9.1–8; Mk 2.1–12. This healing story has a profound theological controversy about forgiveness at its center (5.20b–24a). **5.17** Jesus' teaching is being conducted in the midst of *Pharisees*, who were recognized authorities on the strict observance of the law (see 15.2; Acts 26.5). The *teachers of the law* (see also Acts 5.34) may have been scribes of the Pharisaic party (see 5.21; 15.2) or associated with other official groups in Israel (see lists in 19.47; 20.1). The *power of the Lord* (i.e., of God) indicates the interruption of normal activity by divine agency

rusalem); and the power of the Lord was
with him to heal.[n] 18 Just then some men
came, carrying a paralyzed man on a bed.
They were trying to bring him in and lay
him before Jesus;[o] 19 but finding no way
to bring him in because of the crowd, they
went up on the roof and let him down
with his bed through the tiles into the
middle of the crowd[p] in front of Jesus.
20 When he saw their faith, he said,
"Friend,[q] your sins are forgiven you."
21 Then the scribes and the Pharisees be-
gan to question, "Who is this who is speak-
ing blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but
God alone?" 22 When Jesus perceived
their questionings, he answered them,
"Why do you raise such questions in your
hearts? 23 Which is easier, to say, 'Your
sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Stand up
and walk'? 24 But so that you may know
that the Son of Man has authority on
earth to forgive sins"—he said to the one
who was paralyzed—"I say to you, stand
up and take your bed and go to your
home." 25 Immediately he stood up before
them, took what he had been lying on,
and went to his home, glorifying God.
26 Amazement seized all of them, and they
glorified God and were filled with awe,
saying, "We have seen strange things
today."

Questions About Fellowship and Fasting

27 After this he went out and saw a
tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax
booth; and he said to him, "Follow me."
28 And he got up, left everything, and
followed him.

29 Then Levi gave a great banquet for
him in his house; and there was a large
crowd of tax collectors and others sitting
at the table[r] with them. 30 The Pharisees
and their scribes were complaining to his
disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and
drink with tax collectors and sinners?"
31 Jesus answered, "Those who are well
have no need of a physician, but those
who are sick; 32 I have come to call not the
righteous but sinners to repentance."

33 Then they said to him, "John's dis-
ciples, like the disciples of the Pharisees,
frequently fast and pray, but your disci-
ples eat and drink." 34 Jesus said to them,
"You cannot make wedding guests fast
while the bridegroom is with them, can

n Other ancient authorities read *was present to heal them* *o* Gk *him* *p* Gk *into the midst*
q Gk *Man* *r* Gk *reclining*

(see 1.35; 4.14, 36; 6.19; 8.46; Acts 2.22; 10.38). **5.19** The roof *tiles*, rather than the usual mud roof (cf. Mk 2.4), may suggest a more elegant Hellenistic house. **5.20** Jesus' discernment of *their faith* shows prophetic insight (see also 2.35; 5.22; 6.8; 9.46–47; 24.38). *Your sins are forgiven* implies that God is the one who has done so. **5.21** The authorities charge Jesus with *speaking blasphemies* for daring to speak for God. **5.22–23** Jesus raises new questions in the tradition of what is *easier* and "lighter" or harder and "heavier" (see 16.17; 18.24–25), increasing the tension even as the forgiven man lies paralyzed. **5.24** Jesus indirectly claims *authority on earth* to forgive by identifying himself as *the Son of Man* (see also 6.5; 7.34; 9.22, 26; 11.30; 12.8, 40; 17.22; 18.8; 19.10; 21.36). This title can refer to a prophetic figure (Ezek 2.1, 3), to the end-time judge expected to arrive on the clouds of heaven (Dan 7.13–14), or simply to a mortal human being. **5.26** *Filled with awe* reflects another experience of divine presence and power (see note on 5.9). *Strange things*, wonders or miracles beyond human understanding.

5.27–39 Cf. Mt 9.9–17; Mk 2.13–22. These verses set Jesus' fellowship and disciples apart from the standards of the recognized teachers of Israel. **5.27** On the particular role of *tax collectors* among Jesus' followers, see 3.12; 5.29, 30; 7.29, 34; 15.1; 18.10, 11, 13; 19.2. *Levi* does not appear among the Twelve (see 6.14–16), but in Mt 9.9 the tax collector is named Matthew, who is listed among the Twelve. **5.28** On leaving everything to follow, see note on 5.11. **5.29** The *great banquet* illustrates the meal fellowship of Jesus (see also 7.36–50; 9.12–17; 11.37–41; 14.1–15.2). The question of who was *sitting at the table* was understood to indicate who was acceptable in the kingdom of God (see 14.12–24). **5.30** To *eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners* was especially offensive in Israel, where food laws separated the properly observant from sinners (see also Acts 10.9–28; Gal 2.11–14). Tax collectors were suspect not only for collaborating with foreign powers but also for dishonesty (see 3.12–13). **5.31** Hellenistic teachers and rabbis were often described as *physicians* to sick souls. **5.32** On *the righteous* who need no repentance, see 15.7. On calling *sinners to repentance*, see 3.3, 8; 15.7, 10; 24.47; Acts 2.38; 3.19. **5.33** *John's disciples*. See also 7.18–19; 11.1; Jn 1.35–40; 3.25–26; 4.1; Acts 18.25. To *fast and pray* were common rituals of repentance, subject to criticism for hypocrisy (Mt 6.5–6, 16–18) but appropriate to John's mission of preparation (1.17, 76; 3.3–4). **5.34** The images of the *bridegroom* and *wedding* banquet are common for the

you? 35 The days will come when the
bridegroom will be taken away from
them, and then they will fast in those
days." 36 He also told them a parable: "No
one tears a piece from a new garment and
sews it on an old garment; otherwise the
new will be torn, and the piece from the
new will not match the old. 37 And no one
puts new wine into old wineskins; other-
wise the new wine will burst the skins and
will be spilled, and the skins will be de-
stroyed. 38 But new wine must be put into
fresh wineskins. 39 And no one after
drinking old wine desires new wine, but
says, 'The old is good.' "[s]

Sabbath Conflicts

6 One sabbath[t] while Jesus[u] was go-
ing through the grainfields, his disci-
ples plucked some heads of grain, rubbed
them in their hands, and ate them. 2 But
some of the Pharisees said, "Why are you
doing what is not lawful[v] on the sab-
bath?" 3 Jesus answered, "Have you not
read what David did when he and his
companions were hungry? 4 He entered
the house of God and took and ate the
bread of the Presence, which it is not law-
ful for any but the priests to eat, and gave
some to his companions?" 5 Then he said
to them, "The Son of Man is lord of the
sabbath."
6 On another sabbath he entered the
synagogue and taught, and there was a
man there whose right hand was with-
ered. 7 The scribes and the Pharisees
watched him to see whether he would
cure on the sabbath, so that they might
find an accusation against him. 8 Even
though he knew what they were thinking,
he said to the man who had the withered
hand, "Come and stand here." He got up
and stood there. 9 Then Jesus said to
them, "I ask you, is it lawful to do good or
to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or
to destroy it?" 10 After looking around at
all of them, he said to him, "Stretch out
your hand." He did so, and his hand was
restored. 11 But they were filled with fury
and discussed with one another what they
might do to Jesus.

Jesus Chooses the Twelve Apostles

12 Now during those days he went out
to the mountain to pray; and he spent the

s Other ancient authorities read *better*; others lack verse 39 t Other ancient authorities read *On the second first sabbath* u Gk *he* v Other ancient authorities add *to do*

festivities of the dawn of God's reign (cf. Mt 22.1–14; 25.1–13; Rev 19.6–9). **5.35** *They will fast in those days.* See 22.16; Acts 13.2–3; 14.23. **5.36–39** Traditional proverbs, here called *parables,* were frequently cited at such festivities, often as answers to questions (see *Letter of Aristeas* 187–300), but here they emphasize the contrast between the old or traditional ways and the new time inaugurated by Jesus. **5.39** This verse may have been added later (see text note *s*). If original, it may concede that those who valued old ways were not attracted to Jesus' fellowship and practices (see also Sir 9.10).

6.1–16 Cf. Mt 12.1–14; 10.1–4; Mk 2.23–28; 3.1–6, 13–19. These two sabbath conflicts and the choosing of the Twelve occur in different contexts in Matthew. **6.1** Plucking a neighbor's grain with the *hands* (but not with a sickle) is explicitly allowed in Deut 23.25, but Ex 34.21 forbids harvesting on the sabbath. **6.2** The command to observe the *sabbath* by not working was foundational to Israel (Ex 20.8–11; Deut 5.12–15), but the debates about what was *lawful* divided interpreters. *Some of the Pharisees* (see also 13.31; 19.39; Acts 15.5) were more strict in defining work. These Pharisees agreed with the later rabbinic tradition defining plucking as harvesting (*Mishnah Shabbat* 7.2). **6.3–4** Jesus appeals to the precedent of *David*'s behavior in an emergency (1 Sam 21.1–6; see also Lk 1.32). Every sabbath, *the bread of the Presence* was placed on a table in the tabernacle or temple (Ex 25.30). The previous week's bread was removed and reserved for the priests to eat in the temple precincts (Lev 24.5–9). **6.5** The title *Son of Man* here points to Jesus' special authority (see note on 5.24; cf. the more general issue of human need cited in Mk 2.27–28). **6.6** On Jesus' practice of *sabbath* teaching in a synagogue, see 4.15–16, 31–33; 13.10. **6.7** *The Pharisees watched.* Their watching is adversarial (see also 14.1; 20.20) because they regarded curing on the sabbath as unlawful work (see 6.1–2). **6.8** On Jesus' discernment of *what they were thinking,* see 2.35; 5.22; 9.46–47; 24.38. **6.9–10** The question of what is *lawful* again receives only the indirect answer of a healing (see 5.23–25), which may have intensified the conflict (see 11.19–20). **6.11** The *fury* and plotting reflect a continuing conflict over Jesus' claim to authority (see 4.28–30; 20.19–20; 22.3–6). **6.12–16** The choosing of the Twelve sets the scene for the Sermon on the Plain (cf. Mk 3.7–19). **6.12** On Jesus at *prayer,* see note on 5.16; see also 11.1–13. Prayer through the *night*

night in prayer to God. 13 And when day
came, he called his disciples and chose
twelve of them, whom he also named
apostles: 14 Simon, whom he named Peter,
and his brother Andrew, and James, and
John, and Philip, and Bartholomew,
15 and Matthew, and Thomas, and James
son of Alphaeus, and Simon, who was
called the Zealot, 16 and Judas son of
James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a
traitor.

The Sermon on the Plain

17 He came down with them and
stood on a level place, with a great crowd
of his disciples and a great multitude of
people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the
coast of Tyre and Sidon. 18 They had
come to hear him and to be healed of
their diseases; and those who were trou-
bled with unclean spirits were cured.
19 And all in the crowd were trying to
touch him, for power came out from him
and healed all of them.

20 Then he looked up at his disciples
and said:

"Blessed are you who are poor,
for yours is the kingdom
of God.

21 "Blessed are you who are
hungry now,
for you will be filled.
"Blessed are you who weep now,
for you will laugh.

22 "Blessed are you when people hate
you, and when they exclude you, revile
you, and defame you[w] on account of the
Son of Man. 23 Rejoice in that day and
leap for joy, for surely your reward is
great in heaven; for that is what their an-
cestors did to the prophets.

24 "But woe to you who are rich,
for you have received your
consolation.

25 "Woe to you who are full now,
for you will be hungry.
"Woe to you who are
laughing now,
for you will mourn and weep.

26 "Woe to you when all speak well of
you, for that is what their ancestors did to
the false prophets.

27 "But I say to you that listen, Love
your enemies, do good to those who hate
you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for
those who abuse you. 29 If anyone strikes
you on the cheek, offer the other also;

w Gk *cast out your name as evil*

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may signal a crucial decision (see 22.39–46). **6.13** The number *twelve* is closely linked with the twelve tribes of Israel (see 22.30; Acts 7.8; 26.7). *Apostles* are delegates, sent with authority (9.1–6; see also 24.33, 44–49; Acts 1.1–8). **6.14** *Simon . . . named Peter, James,* and *John* have already been called (5.1–11), but now they are chosen to be apostles. **6.16** On the replacement of *Judas* after he *became a traitor* (22.3–5, 47–48), see Acts 1.15–26.

6.17–49 Cf. Mt 4.24–5.12, 39–48; 7.1–5, 15–27; 12.33–35; Mk 3.7–13a; 4.24–25. Jesus' "Sermon on the Plain" (see v. 17), the Messiah's second major address in Luke (see 4.16–30), closely parallels the "Sermon on the Mount" in Matthew (chs. 5–7). **6.17–19** A typical summary statement sets the scene (see also 4.14–15, 40–41; 5.15, 17). **6.17** *A level place.* Cf. Mt 5.1. *A great crowd of his disciples* suggests more than the twelve apostles (see 6.13). On the *multitude* from many places, see also 5.17; 7.9; 12.1. **6.19** On Jesus' *touch* and *power* in healing stories, see 5.12–17; 8.46. Here Jesus' deeds set the context for his teaching. **6.20** *Blessed,* i.e., happy or favored by God (see 7.23; 10.23; 11.27–28; 14.15; Deut 33.29; Pss 127.5; 128.1; Acts 3.25). *You.* Jesus' words in Luke are in the form of direct address to his disciples, who have left everything (5.11; cf. Mt 5.1–3). On the *poor* as a focus of Jesus' mission, see 4.18; 7.22; see also 14.13, 21; 16.20, 22; 18.22; 19.8; 21.2–3; cf. Mt 5.3. *Kingdom of God.* See note on 4.43. **6.21** *Hungry.* See 1.53; cf. Mt 5.6. *You who weep now.* Cf. Mt 5.4; see Ps 126.6; Isa 61.2–3; 65.18–19. **6.22** *Defame you,* lit. "cast out your name as evil" (text note *w*). On the loss of reputation of Jesus' followers, see Acts 5.41; 9.16. *Son of Man.* See notes on 5.24; 6.5. **6.23** To *leap for joy* is a prophetic fulfillment (Isa 35.6; Mal 4.2; see also Lk 1.41, 44; Acts 3.8). On the treatment of the *prophets,* see 11.47–51; 13.33–34; Acts 7.52. **6.24** Declarations of *woe* or "alas" are common in oracles of prophetic judgment ("Ah," Isa 5.8–23; Am 6.1; Hab 2.6–19; see also Lk 10.13; 11.42–52; 17.1; 21.23; 22.22). *You have received your consolation.* Cf. 2.25. **6.26** Israel's prophets denounced as *false* those prophets who spoke what the people wanted to hear instead of the word of God (see Isa 30.9–11; Jer 5.30–31; 6.13–14; 23.16–17). **6.27** The section in 6.27–49 is addressed to a broader audience of *you that listen* (cf. 6.20). The contrast between Jesus' instructions and the accepted order is not as profound as in 6.20–26, but the behavior advocated alters usual practices. *Love your enemies.* See also 6.35; Mt 5.44. **6.29** *Takes away your coat,* i.e., the outer garment, either in theft or pledge

and from anyone who takes away your
coat do not withhold even your shirt.
30 Give to everyone who begs from you;
and if anyone takes away your goods, do
not ask for them again. 31 Do to others as
you would have them do to you.

32 "If you love those who love you,
what credit is that to you? For even sin-
ners love those who love them. 33 If you
do good to those who do good to you,
what credit is that to you? For even sin-
ners do the same. 34 If you lend to those
from whom you hope to receive, what
credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to
sinners, to receive as much again. 35 But
love your enemies, do good, and lend, ex-
pecting nothing in return.[x] Your reward
will be great, and you will be children of
the Most High; for he is kind to the un-
grateful and the wicked. 36 Be merciful,
just as your Father is merciful.

37 "Do not judge, and you will not be
judged; do not condemn, and you will not
be condemned. Forgive, and you will be
forgiven; 38 give, and it will be given to
you. A good measure, pressed down,
shaken together, running over, will be put
into your lap; for the measure you give
will be the measure you get back."

39 He also told them a parable: "Can a
blind person guide a blind person? Will
not both fall into a pit? 40 A disciple is not
above the teacher, but everyone who is
fully qualified will be like the teacher.
41 Why do you see the speck in your
neighbor's[y] eye, but do not notice the log
in your own eye? 42 Or how can you say to
your neighbor,[z] 'Friend,[z] let me take out
the speck in your eye,' when you yourself
do not see the log in your own eye? You
hypocrite, first take the log out of your
own eye, and then you will see clearly
to take the speck out of your neigh-
bor's[y] eye.

43 "No good tree bears bad fruit, nor
again does a bad tree bear good fruit;
44 for each tree is known by its own fruit.
Figs are not gathered from thorns, nor
are grapes picked from a bramble bush.
45 The good person out of the good trea-
sure of the heart produces good, and the
evil person out of evil treasure produces
evil; for it is out of the abundance of the
heart that the mouth speaks.

46 "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,'
and do not do what I tell you? 47 I will
show you what someone is like who comes
to me, hears my words, and acts on them.
48 That one is like a man building a house,
who dug deeply and laid the foundation
on rock; when a flood arose, the river
burst against that house but could not
shake it, because it had been well built.[a]
49 But the one who hears and does not act
is like a man who built a house on the
ground without a foundation. When the
river burst against it, immediately it fell,
and great was the ruin of that house."

Jesus Heals a Centurion's Servant

7 After Jesus[b] had finished all his say-
ings in the hearing of the people, he
entered Capernaum. 2 A centurion there
had a slave whom he valued highly, and

x Other ancient authorities read *despairing of no one*
y Gk *brother's* z Gk *brother* a Other ancient authorities read *founded upon the rock* b Gk *he*

(Ex 22.26; cf. Lk 3.11, which speaks of voluntary sharing). *Shirt,* the garment worn next to the skin. **6.31** For various forms of this "golden rule," see Lev 19.18; Tob 4.15; Mt 7.12. **6.34** *Lend.* The language of finance makes forgiveness (6.37–38) concrete. **6.35** *Children of the Most High.* See Ps 82.6; see also Dan 3.26; 7.18–27; Lk 1.32; 8.28; Acts 16.17. **6.36** On measuring human generosity by the standards of God, see Lev 19.2; Deut 10.17–19; Mt 5.48. **6.37** The future passive verbs (*you will not be . . .*) indicate God's action. **6.38** *A good measure* is an amply filled basket (see 8.18; 19.26). **6.39** In Luke, the word *parable* may be used quite precisely for a kind of comparison story (8.4; 12.16; 15.3; 18.1, 9; 19.11; 20.9) or, as in this text, more generally for a proverb (4.23; 5.36; 21.29). The *blind* guide is a common image of foolish behavior (see Eccl 2.14; Mt 15.14; 23.16–26; Rom 2.19). **6.42** *You hypocrite,* Jesus' frequent verdict on his opponents (see 12.1, 56; 13.15). The term is used extensively in the controversies in Matthew, especially Mt 23.13–30. **6.43** The image of the *tree,* like that of the house foundation (6.48–49), suggests character that cannot be disguised in hypocrisy (see also 3.9; 13.6–9; Mt 7.16–20; 12.33–37). **6.45** On the disclosure of a person's *heart,* see 2.35; 5.22. **6.46** A follower may call Jesus *Lord* yet not possess the commitment necessary for discipleship (see 9.59, 61; 13.25; 22.33). **6.47** On hearing and acting, see also Jas 2.14–26. **6.48** Houses in Palestine did not usually need an elaborate *foundation,* but this symbol of security was well understood (see Mt. 7.24–27; 1 Cor 3.10–15; Eph 2.19–20; Rev 21.14).

7.1–10 Cf. Mt 8.5–13; Jn 4.46b–54. This

who was ill and close to death. 3 When he
heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish
elders to him, asking him to come and
heal his slave. 4 When they came to Jesus,
they appealed to him earnestly, saying,
"He is worthy of having you do this for
him, 5 for he loves our people, and it is he
who built our synagogue for us." 6 And
Jesus went with them, but when he was
not far from the house, the centurion sent
friends to say to him, "Lord, do not trou-
ble yourself, for I am not worthy to have
you come under my roof; 7 therefore I
did not presume to come to you. But only
speak the word, and let my servant be
healed. 8 For I also am a man set under
authority, with soldiers under me; and I
say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to an-
other, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my
slave, 'Do this,' and the slave does it."
9 When Jesus heard this he was amazed at
him, and turning to the crowd that fol-
lowed him, he said, "I tell you, not even in
Israel have I found such faith." 10 When
those who had been sent returned to the
house, they found the slave in good
health.

Jesus Raises the Widow's Son at Nain

11 Soon afterwards[c] he went to a
town called Nain, and his disciples and a
large crowd went with him. 12 As he ap-
proached the gate of the town, a man who
had died was being carried out. He was
his mother's only son, and she was a
widow; and with her was a large crowd
from the town. 13 When the Lord saw her,
he had compassion for her and said to
her, "Do not weep." 14 Then he came for-
ward and touched the bier, and the bear-
ers stood still. And he said, "Young
man, I say to you, rise!" 15 The dead man
sat up and began to speak, and Jesus[d]
gave him to his mother. 16 Fear seized all
of them; and they glorified God, saying,
"A great prophet has risen among us!"
and "God has looked favorably on his
people!" 17 This word about him spread
throughout Judea and all the surround-
ing country.

Messengers from John the Baptist

18 The disciples of John reported all
these things to him. So John summoned
two of his disciples 19 and sent them to the
Lord to ask, "Are you the one who is to
come, or are we to wait for another?"
20 When the men had come to him, they
said, "John the Baptist has sent us to you
to ask, 'Are you the one who is to come, or
are we to wait for another?' " 21 Jesus[e]
had just then cured many people of dis-
eases, plagues, and evil spirits, and had

c Other ancient authorities read *Next day*
d Gk *he* e Gk *He*

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story of Jewish-Gentile relations has a precedent in the traditions about Elisha (2 Kings 5.1–14; see also Lk 4.27). **7.1** *Capernaum*. See 4.31. **7.2** *A centurion* had charge over one hundred soldiers in the Roman army (see also 23.47; Acts 10.1–48; 22.25–26; 24.23; 27.1, 6, 11, 31, 43). **7.3** *Jewish elders* here are probably local synagogue leaders, but later the title will be linked closely with Jerusalem officials, especially from the temple, who opposed Jesus and the apostles (see 9.22; 20.1; 22.52; Acts 4.5, 8, 23; 6.12; 23.14; 24.1; 25.15). **7.4–5** *Worthy* implies acceptability by the standards of Jewish law as well as gratitude for the building of the synagogue. A Roman officer could be a "friend of the Jews" or one who "feared God" (see Acts 10.2, 22) but would not have been permitted by Rome to undergo circumcision as a convert. **7.6** The centurion's address of Jesus as *Lord* implies respect for Jesus' authority (see 7.8) but is not necessarily a confession of faith. A Jew who came under a Gentile's *roof* would risk defilement (see Acts 10.28; 11.2–3). **7.9** Jesus defines the centurion's response as *faith* (see 5.20; 7.50; 8.25, 48; 17.19; 18.42). On the contrast with *Israel*, see 4.25–27; see also 3.8–9; Rom 9–11.

7.11–17 This story has a clear parallel in the Elijah traditions (1 Kings 17; see also Lk 4.25–26). **7.11** *Nain*, a village near Nazareth. **7.12** The death of an *only son* was an economic catastrophe for a *widow*. She would have no legal inheritance and would be dependent upon charity (see Deut 26.12; 27.19; cf. Pss 68.5; 146.9). **7.13** Jesus' *compassion* is here depicted as a deep visceral response (Greek *esplanchnisthē*; see also 10.33; 15.20). **7.14** Touching the *bier* (or coffin) was a dramatic act, violating Jewish purity laws (Num 19.11, 16). *Rise!* Jesus' word is again efficacious (see 7.7; 1 Kings 17.22). **7.15** Jesus *gave him to his mother*, an exact quote from 1 Kings 17.23 (see also Lk 9.42). **7.16** *Fear* again denotes an awareness of a divine visitation (see notes on 1.11–12; 1.65; 2.9; 2.10). On Jesus as a *prophet*, see 4.24–27; 7.39; 13.33; 24.19; Acts 3.22–23; 7.37. *Looked favorably*. See note on 1.68.

7.18–35 Cf. Mt 11.2–19. The relationship between John the Baptist and Jesus' ministry is clarified. **7.18** *Disciples of John*. See note on 5.33. **7.19** *Are you the one who is to come*. See John's

given sight to many who were blind.
22 And he answered them, "Go and tell
John what you have seen and heard: the
blind receive their sight, the lame walk,
the lepers[f] are cleansed, the deaf hear,
the dead are raised, the poor have good
news brought to them. 23 And blessed is
anyone who takes no offense at me."

24 When John's messengers had gone,
Jesus[g] began to speak to the crowds
about John:[h] "What did you go out into
the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken
by the wind? 25 What then did you go out
to see? Someone[i] dressed in soft robes?
Look, those who put on fine clothing and
live in luxury are in royal palaces. 26 What
then did you go out to see? A prophet?
Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.
27 This is the one about whom it is written,

'See, I am sending my messenger
ahead of you,
who will prepare your way
before you.'

28 I tell you, among those born of women
no one is greater than John; yet the least
in the kingdom of God is greater than
he." 29 (And all the people who heard
this, including the tax collectors, acknowledged the justice of God,[j] because they
had been baptized with John's baptism.
30 But by refusing to be baptized by him,
the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected
God's purpose for themselves.)

31 "To what then will I compare the
people of this generation, and what are
they like? 32 They are like children sitting
in the marketplace and calling to one
another,

'We played the flute for you, and
you did not dance;
we wailed, and you did not
weep.'

33 For John the Baptist has come eating no
bread and drinking no wine, and you say,
'He has a demon'; 34 the Son of Man has
come eating and drinking, and you say,
'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend
of tax collectors and sinners!' 35 Nevertheless, wisdom is vindicated by all her
children."

A Sinful Woman Forgiven

36 One of the Pharisees asked Jesus[h]
to eat with him, and he went into the
Pharisee's house and took his place at the
table. 37 And a woman in the city, who was
a sinner, having learned that he was eating in the Pharisee's house, brought an
alabaster jar of ointment. 38 She stood
behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to bathe his feet with her tears and to
dry them with her hair. Then she continued kissing his feet and anointing them

f The terms *leper* and *leprosy* can refer to several diseases *g* Gk *he* *h* Gk *him* *i* Or *Why then did you go out? To see someone* *j* Or *praised God*

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announcement of the coming of *one who is more powerful* in 3.16. **7.22** In what John's disciples have now *seen and heard,* Jesus' earlier words are fulfilled (4.18–19; Deut 18.21–22). **7.23** On calling *blessed* those who *take no offense* (lit. "do not stumble") at Jesus, see also 2.34–35; 10.23. **7.24** *Into the wilderness.* See 1.80; 3.1–20; Isa 40.3. **7.25** On John's *clothing,* see Mt 3.4; Mk 1.6; cf. John's criticism of *luxury* (3.11) and royalty (3.19). **7.27** The text cited is Mal 3.1; see also Lk 1.76; 3.4; Isa 40.3. **7.28** Since all are *born of women,* John is praised as the greatest human until the era of the kingdom of God (see note on 16.16). **7.29** *Tax collectors.* See 3.12; notes on 5.27; 5.30. *Acknowledged the justice of God* (lit. "justified God"; cf. 7.30; 10.29; 16.15), i.e., acknowledged the righteousness of God's plan of salvation. **7.30** Luke's Gospel and Acts document a pattern of refusal and rejection (see 9.22; 15.28; 17.25; 20.17; Acts 4.11; 7.35). *Lawyers,* i.e. teachers of the law of Moses (see also 10.25; 11.45–52; 14.3). *God's purpose.* See Acts 2.23; 4.27–28. **7.31** On *the people of this generation* who have refused to repent, see also 9.41; 11.29–32, 49–51; 17.25; Acts 2.40; Deut 32.5, 20. **7.32** A childhood taunt to those who refuse to join a game. Wisdom (see 7.35) discerns when to dance and when to weep (Eccl 3.4). **7.33** *Drinking no wine.* See 1.15. To accuse John of having a *demon* is to reject his divine call (see 1.68–79). A similar charge is leveled against Jesus in 11.14–23. **7.34** *Son of Man.* See notes on 5.24; 6.5. Jesus' meal fellowship offends Jewish sensibilities (see also 5.27–32; 11.37–38; 14.12–24; 15.2). **7.35** *Wisdom is vindicated,* i.e., justified. See note on 7.29. Wisdom's *children* are those who hear and follow God's instruction (see 21.15; Acts 6.3, 10; Prov 1–8).

7.36–50 Cf. Mt 26.6–13; Mk 14.3–9. A meal with a Pharisee provides an occasion to discuss who is acceptable in God's kingdom (see also 14.1–15.2). **7.36** No motive for the *Pharisee*'s invitation is given (see also 11.37; 14.1), but it implies his acceptance of Jesus (cf. 5.30; 15.2). **7.37** The *woman*'s sin is not identified. An *alabaster jar* would have been costly. *Ointment,* a perfumed oil. **7.38** Bathing the *feet* was a common sign of hospitality for guests (see 7.44; Gen 18.4;

with the ointment. 39 Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said to
himself, "If this man were a prophet, he
would have known who and what kind of
woman this is who is touching him—that
she is a sinner." 40 Jesus spoke up and said
to him, "Simon, I have something to say to
you." "Teacher," he replied, "speak."
41 "A certain creditor had two debtors;
one owed five hundred denarii,[k] and the
other fifty. 42 When they could not pay, he
canceled the debts for both of them. Now
which of them will love him more?" 43 Simon answered, "I suppose the one for
whom he canceled the greater debt." And
Jesus[l] said to him, "You have judged
rightly." 44 Then turning toward the
woman, he said to Simon, "Do you see this
woman? I entered your house; you gave
me no water for my feet, but she has
bathed my feet with her tears and dried
them with her hair. 45 You gave me no
kiss, but from the time I came in she has
not stopped kissing my feet. 46 You did
not anoint my head with oil, but she has
anointed my feet with ointment. 47 Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which were
many, have been forgiven; hence she has
shown great love. But the one to whom
little is forgiven, loves little." 48 Then he
said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."
49 But those who were at the table with
him began to say among themselves,
"Who is this who even forgives sins?"
50 And he said to the woman, "Your faith
has saved you; go in peace."

Some Women Accompany Jesus

8 Soon afterwards he went on through
cities and villages, proclaiming and
bringing the good news of the kingdom of
God. The twelve were with him, 2 as well
as some women who had been cured of
evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called
Magdalene, from whom seven demons
had gone out, 3 and Joanna, the wife of
Herod's steward Chuza, and Susanna,
and many others, who provided for
them[m] out of their resources.

The Parable of the Sower

4 When a great crowd gathered and
people from town after town came to him,
he said in a parable: 5 "A sower went out
to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell
on the path and was trampled on, and the
birds of the air ate it up. 6 Some fell on
the rock; and as it grew up, it withered
for lack of moisture. 7 Some fell among
thorns, and the thorns grew with it and
choked it. 8 Some fell into good soil, and
when it grew, it produced a hundred-
fold." As he said this, he called out, "Let
anyone with ears to hear listen!"
9 Then his disciples asked him what
this parable meant. 10 He said, "To you it
has been given to know the secrets[n] of

k The denarius was the usual day's wage for a laborer *l* Gk *he* *m* Other ancient authorities read *him* *n* Or *mysteries*

Jn 13.5; 1 Tim 5.10). **7.39** On the test for a true *prophet*, see 4.24; 24.19; Acts 3.22–23; Deut 18.15–22. A strict reading of Lev 5.1–5 indicates a risk of defilement upon even *touching* (or being touched by) a sinner. **7.40** Simon invites Jesus to *speak* as a rabbi (*teacher*). **7.41** The *denarius* was a day's wage. Both debts are significant. **7.42** *Love* in this case means having gratitude. **7.44–46** The usual gestures of Near Eastern hospitality (*water for my feet*, a *kiss*, and *oil*) are extravagantly outdone by the woman. **7.49** The scandal again derives from Jesus' claim to speak for God in forgiving *sins* (see also 5.21–24). **7.50** On the saving power of *faith*, see 8.12, 48; 17.19; 18.42. *Go in peace* (Hebrew *shalom*) are the traditional words of parting (see 8.48; 1 Sam 1.17; Acts 16.36), but peace is also the mark of God's reign or kingdom (see 1.79; 2.14; Isa 52.7).

8.1–3 Transition verses stressing how Jesus' mission continues in Galilee (see 4.43–44). **8.1** *The twelve*. See note on 6.13. **8.2–3** These *women* attend Jesus' burial and resurrection (23.49, 55; 24.10). *Evil spirits and infirmities* were afflictions to be healed, not sins to be forgiven. *Seven demons* indicates the severity of afflictions.

8.4–15 Cf. Mt 13.1–23; Mk 4.1–20. The parable of the sower illustrates the contrast between the impossible odds faced by Jesus' kingdom preaching and its ultimate success. **8.4** Luke again stresses the presence of a large *crowd* (see 5.17; 6.17; 8.42; 9.18, 37; 11.29). **8.8** The *hundredfold* yield is large, but not unusual (cf. the various yields in Mk 4.8). *He called out* (lit. "he kept calling out"), emphasizing the message of the parable. The charge to *listen* raises the question of who has *ears to hear* (see also 8.10). **8.10** Full understanding of the *secrets*, or *mysteries* (text note *n*), of the kingdom comes only after the resurrection (see 9.45; 18.34; 24.25–27, 44–47; see also Wis 2.22). In the NT, *parables* are usually comparison stories intended to communicate a truth about the kingdom (see note on 6.39). Here

the kingdom of God; but to others I
speak[o] in parables, so that
'looking they may not perceive,
and listening they may not
understand.'

11 "Now the parable is this: The seed
is the word of God. 12 The ones on the
path are those who have heard; then the
devil comes and takes away the word from
their hearts, so that they may not believe
and be saved. 13 The ones on the rock are
those who, when they hear the word, re-
ceive it with joy. But these have no root;
they believe only for a while and in a time
of testing fall away. 14 As for what fell
among the thorns, these are the ones who
hear; but as they go on their way, they are
choked by the cares and riches and plea-
sures of life, and their fruit does not ma-
ture. 15 But as for that in the good soil,
these are the ones who, when they hear
the word, hold it fast in an honest and
good heart, and bear fruit with patient
endurance.

A Lamp Under a Jar

16 "No one after lighting a lamp hides
it under a jar, or puts it under a bed, but
puts it on a lampstand, so that those who
enter may see the light. 17 For nothing is
hidden that will not be disclosed, nor is
anything secret that will not become
known and come to light. 18 Then pay at-
tention to how you listen; for to those who
have, more will be given; and from those
who do not have, even what they seem to
have will be taken away."

The True Kindred of Jesus

19 Then his mother and his brothers
came to him, but they could not reach him
because of the crowd. 20 And he was told,
"Your mother and your brothers are
standing outside, wanting to see you."
21 But he said to them, "My mother and
my brothers are those who hear the word
of God and do it."

Jesus Calms a Storm

22 One day he got into a boat with his
disciples, and he said to them, "Let us go
across to the other side of the lake." So
they put out, 23 and while they were sail-
ing he fell asleep. A windstorm swept
down on the lake, and the boat was filling
with water, and they were in danger.
24 They went to him and woke him up,
shouting, "Master, Master, we are perish-
ing!" And he woke up and rebuked the
wind and the raging waves; they ceased,
and there was a calm. 25 He said to them,
"Where is your faith?" They were afraid
and amazed, and said to one another,
"Who then is this, that he commands
even the winds and the water, and they
obey him?"

Jesus Heals the Gerasene Demoniac

26 Then they arrived at the country of
the Gerasenes,[p] which is opposite Galilee.

o Gk lacks *I speak* p Other ancient authorities read *Gadarenes*; others, *Gergesenes*

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they function as prophetic speech (see Isa 6.9–10, partially cited here), further confounding those unprepared to hear. **8.12** On the activities of *the devil*, see 4.5–13; 10.17–20; 22.3, 31. **8.13** *A time of testing*. See 4.1–13; 22.28–34, 39–46. **8.15** On *endurance* as the critical mark of faithfulness, see 21.12–19.

8.16–18 Cf. Mt 5.15; 10.26; 7.2; 13.12; Mk 4.21–25. Various sayings comment on the proper response to Jesus' preaching. **8.18** Luke focuses on *how you listen* (see note on 8.8; cf. Mk 4.24). On the giving of more *to those who have*, see 19.26. The reference here is not to money or material gains, but to the word of God (see 8.15, 21).

8.19–21 Cf. Mt 12.46–50; Mk 3.31–35. Jesus' family is defined in terms of obedience. Early Christian usage of this "fictive kinship" language was distinctive (see, e.g., 1 Cor 1.10; 7.15; 15.6). **8.19** On Jesus' *mother*, see also 1.43; 2.33–51; Acts 1.14. Jesus' *brothers* are sometimes understood to be more distant blood relatives, but actual siblings are probably meant (see Mk 6.3; Jn 7.3–5; Acts 1.14; Gal 1.19).

8.22–56 Three demonstrations of the power of the Messiah's word. **8.22–25** Cf. Mt 8.23–27; Mk 4.35–41. **8.22** Luke refers to the Sea of Galilee as a *lake* (see 5.1; 8.33). **8.24** *Master*. See note on 5.5. Jesus *rebuked* the wind and water just as earlier he rebuked unclean spirits (4.35, 41), both times demonstrating authority over evil powers (see also Job 26.11–12; Ps 89.8–9). **8.25** *Where is your faith?* The question is also a rebuke (see also 12.28; cf. 5.20; 7.9, 50; 8.48; 17.5–6, 19; 18.42; 22.32). *Afraid and amazed*. See notes on 1.11–12; 2.9; 2.10.

8.26–39 Cf. Mt 8.28–34; Mk 5.1–20. **8.26** *Gerasenes*. The exact spelling and location of their home (presumably Gerasa) are unclear (see

27 As he stepped out on land, a man of the
city who had demons met him. For a long
time he had worn[q] no clothes, and he did
not live in a house but in the tombs.
28 When he saw Jesus, he fell down before
him and shouted at the top of his voice,
"What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son
of the Most High God? I beg you, do not
torment me"— 29 for Jesus[r] had com-
manded the unclean spirit to come out of
the man. (For many times it had seized
him; he was kept under guard and bound
with chains and shackles, but he would
break the bonds and be driven by the de-
mon into the wilds.) 30 Jesus then asked
him, "What is your name?" He said, "Le-
gion"; for many demons had entered him.
31 They begged him not to order them to
go back into the abyss.

32 Now there on the hillside a large
herd of swine was feeding; and the de-
mons[s] begged Jesus[t] to let them enter
these. So he gave them permission.
33 Then the demons came out of the man
and entered the swine, and the herd
rushed down the steep bank into the lake
and was drowned.

34 When the swineherds saw what had
happened, they ran off and told it in the
city and in the country. 35 Then people
came out to see what had happened, and
when they came to Jesus, they found the
man from whom the demons had gone
sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in
his right mind. And they were afraid.
36 Those who had seen it told them how
the one who had been possessed by de-
mons had been healed. 37 Then all the
people of the surrounding country of the
Gerasenes[u] asked Jesus[t] to leave them;
for they were seized with great fear. So he
got into the boat and returned. 38 The
man from whom the demons had gone
begged that he might be with him; but
Jesus[r] sent him away, saying, 39 "Return
to your home, and declare how much God
has done for you." So he went away, pro-
claiming throughout the city how much
Jesus had done for him.

A Girl Restored to Life and a Woman Healed

40 Now when Jesus returned, the
crowd welcomed him, for they were all
waiting for him. 41 Just then there came a
man named Jairus, a leader of the syna-
gogue. He fell at Jesus' feet and begged
him to come to his house, 42 for he had an
only daughter, about twelve years old,
who was dying.

As he went, the crowds pressed in on
him. 43 Now there was a woman who had
been suffering from hemorrhages for
twelve years; and though she had spent all
she had on physicians,[v] no one could

q Other ancient authorities read *a man of the city who had had demons for a long time met him. He wore*
r Gk *he* *s* Gk *they* *t* Gk *him* *u* Other ancient authorities read *Gadarenes*; others, *Gergesenes* *v* Other ancient authorities lack *and though she had spent all she had on physicians*

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text note *p*). **8.27** For other confrontations with *demons*, see 4.33–34; 9.42; 11.14. Living *in the tombs* implies perpetual uncleanness (see Num 19.11, 16; see also Isa 65.1–5). **8.28** *Shouted at the top of his voice*, apparently a sign of demon possession (see 4.33; Acts 16.17). On the demons' recognition of Jesus as *Son of the Most High God*, see 4.34, 41; Acts 16.17; see also 1.32. **8.29** The *wilds*, or wildernesses, were thought to be favored haunts of demons (see 11.24). **8.30** Knowledge of the correct *name* was thought to provide controlling power over a person or (as here) demon. In the Roman army, a *legion* was a battle force of four to six thousand soldiers. **8.31** *Abyss*, the bottomless pit reserved for God's enemies (see Rev 9.1–11; 11.7; 17.8; 20.1–3). **8.32** According to Jewish law, *swine* are unclean animals (Lev 11.7; Deut 14.8). *Permission*, though granted, indicates Jesus' strong authority. **8.33** According to traditional lore, demons are destroyed by drowning (see 11.24). **8.35** A disciple sits *at the feet* of the teacher (see also Acts 22.3). *Clothed and in his right mind*. Cf. 8.27. *They were afraid*. See note on 7.16. **8.39** The former demoniac declares what *God* has done in terms of what *Jesus* has done (see also 7.16).

8.40–56 Cf. Mt 9.18–26; Mk 5.21–43. **8.41** The *leader of the synagogue* presided over meetings and enjoyed considerable status in the community (see also 13.14; Acts 13.15; 18.8, 17). **8.42** *An only daughter*. See 7.12. **8.43** *Hemorrhages for twelve years* indicates abnormal menstrual flow, making her constantly unclean and untouchable (Lev 15.19–30). **8.44** The *fringe* was a required part of the Jewish male's clothes (see Num 15.38–39; Deut 22.12; Mt 23.5). **8.45** *Who touched me?* This touch would violate Jewish purity laws (see note on 8.43). *Master*.

cure her. 44 She came up behind him and
touched the fringe of his clothes, and
immediately her hemorrhage stopped.
45 Then Jesus asked, "Who touched me?"
When all denied it, Peter[w] said, "Master,
the crowds surround you and press in on
you." 46 But Jesus said, "Someone touched
me; for I noticed that power had gone out
from me." 47 When the woman saw that
she could not remain hidden, she came
trembling; and falling down before him,
she declared in the presence of all the
people why she had touched him, and
how she had been immediately healed.
48 He said to her, "Daughter, your faith
has made you well; go in peace."

49 While he was still speaking, some-
one came from the leader's house to say,
"Your daughter is dead; do not trouble
the teacher any longer." 50 When Jesus
heard this, he replied, "Do not fear. Only
believe, and she will be saved." 51 When he
came to the house, he did not allow any-
one to enter with him, except Peter, John,
and James, and the child's father and
mother. 52 They were all weeping and
wailing for her; but he said, "Do not
weep; for she is not dead but sleeping."
53 And they laughed at him, knowing that
she was dead. 54 But he took her by the
hand and called out, "Child, get up!"
55 Her spirit returned, and she got up at
once. Then he directed them to give her
something to eat. 56 Her parents were as-
tounded; but he ordered them to tell no
one what had happened.

The Mission of the Twelve

9 Then Jesus[x] called the twelve to-
gether and gave them power and au-
thority over all demons and to cure
diseases, 2 and he sent them out to pro-
claim the kingdom of God and to heal.
3 He said to them, "Take nothing for your
journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor
money—not even an extra tunic. 4 What-
ever house you enter, stay there, and
leave from there. 5 Wherever they do not
welcome you, as you are leaving that town
shake the dust off your feet as a testimony
against them." 6 They departed and went
through the villages, bringing the good
news and curing diseases everywhere.

Herod's Perplexity

7 Now Herod the ruler[y] heard about
all that had taken place, and he was per-
plexed, because it was said by some that
John had been raised from the dead, 8 by
some that Elijah had appeared, and by
others that one of the ancient prophets
had arisen. 9 Herod said, "John I be-
headed; but who is this about whom I
hear such things?" And he tried to
see him.

Feeding the Five Thousand

10 On their return the apostles told
Jesus[z] all they had done. He took them

w Other ancient authorities add *and those who were with him* x Gk *he* y Gk *tetrarch* z Gk *him*

See note on 5.5. **8.46** On the *power* to heal, see 4.14; 5.17; 6.19; see also Acts 4.7. **8.48** See note on 7.50. **8.50** *Do not fear.* See note on 5.9. **8.51** *Peter, John, and James,* the first disciples called (see 5.1–11), are singled out to witness special events (see also 9.28) and later exercise leadership roles in the church (Acts 3–4; 12.2–3). **8.52** *Weeping and wailing* indicates the beginning of mourning (see also 23.27). **8.55** *Her spirit returned.* The belief that at death the spirit departed from the body is widely attested (see 23.46; Acts 7.59; see also 1 Kings 17.21–22). Giving her *something to eat* confirms the reality of her resuscitation (see also 24.41–43). **8.56** *Tell no one.* See also 5.14.

9.1–50 The stories in this section address Jesus' messianic mission and the nature of discipleship. **9.1–6** Cf. Mt 9.35; 10.1, 7–11, 14; Mk 6.6b–13; Lk 10.1–12. **9.1** *The twelve.* See note on 6.13. **9.2** *He sent them out.* The Greek verb (*apostellein*) indicates their role as apostolic emissaries of the kingdom (see note on 6.13). *To proclaim . . . and to heal.* See 4.40–44; 6.17–19; 8.1–2; 10.9. **9.3** Taking *nothing* along requires reliance on local hospitality (10.4–5; Acts 9.43; 16.15). **9.5** *Shake the dust off your feet* indicates that they have taken nothing from those who rejected them (see 10.11; Acts 13.51).

9.7–9 Cf. Mt 14.1–2; Mk 6.14–16. Herod's perplexity introduces an ominous note (see 13.31–35; 23.6–12; Acts 4.25–27). **9.8** The return of *Elijah* was promised in Mal 4.5 as a precursor to the impending judgment (see 1.17; see also 9.19, 30). **9.9** *John I beheaded.* This execution is not described in Luke (cf. 3.19–20; Mt 14.3–12; Mk 6.17–29). *Who is this?* Herod's question about Jesus recalls John's (see 7.19; see also 9.18–20). *He tried to see him,* and succeeded after Jesus' arrest (see 23.8; cf. 13.31).

9.10–17 Cf. Mt 14.13–21; Mk 6.30–44. **9.10** *Bethsaida* had been recently built by Herod

with him and withdrew privately to a city
called Bethsaida. 11 When the crowds
found out about it, they followed him;
and he welcomed them, and spoke to
them about the kingdom of God, and
healed those who needed to be cured.
12 The day was drawing to a close,
and the twelve came to him and said,
"Send the crowd away, so that they may
go into the surrounding villages and
countryside, to lodge and get provisions;
for we are here in a deserted place."
13 But he said to them, "You give them
something to eat." They said, "We have
no more than five loaves and two fish—
unless we are to go and buy food for all
these people." 14 For there were about five
thousand men. And he said to his disci-
ples, "Make them sit down in groups of
about fifty each." 15 They did so and made
them all sit down. 16 And taking the five
loaves and the two fish, he looked up to
heaven, and blessed and broke them, and
gave them to the disciples to set before the
crowd. 17 And all ate and were filled.
What was left over was gathered up,
twelve baskets of broken pieces.

Peter's Confession

18 Once when Jesus[a] was praying
alone, with only the disciples near him, he
asked them, "Who do the crowds say that
I am?" 19 They answered, "John the Bap-
tist; but others, Elijah; and still others,
that one of the ancient prophets has
arisen." 20 He said to them, "But who do
you say that I am?" Peter answered, "The
Messiah[b] of God."
21 He sternly ordered and com-
manded them not to tell anyone, 22 saying,
"The Son of Man must undergo great suf-
fering, and be rejected by the elders, chief
priests, and scribes, and be killed, and on
the third day be raised."

The Nature of Discipleship

23 Then he said to them all, "If any
want to become my followers, let them
deny themselves and take up their cross
daily and follow me. 24 For those who
want to save their life will lose it, and
those who lose their life for my sake will
save it. 25 What does it profit them if they
gain the whole world, but lose or forfeit
themselves? 26 Those who are ashamed of
me and of my words, of them the Son of
Man will be ashamed when he comes in
his glory and the glory of the Father and
of the holy angels. 27 But truly I tell you,
there are some standing here who will not
taste death before they see the kingdom
of God."

The Transfiguration

28 Now about eight days after these
sayings Jesus[a] took with him Peter and
John and James, and went up on the
mountain to pray. 29 And while he was
praying, the appearance of his face

a Gk *he* b Or *The Christ*

Philip on the Sea of Galilee. **9.11** Another Lucan summary statement sets the scene (see 4.14–15, 40–41; 5.15, 17; 6.17–19). **9.12** *The twelve.* See note on 6.13. The *deserted place* recalls God's miraculous feeding of Israel in the wilderness (Ex 16; Ps 78.19–20). See also Elisha's feeding of one hundred people (2 Kings 4.42–44). **9.14** The groups of *fifty* reflect a traditional way of numbering in Israel (see Ex 18.21, 25). **9.16** Jesus' actions in distributing the food (*taking, blessed, broke,* and *gave*) seem to anticipate the Last Supper (see 22.19).

9.18–22 Cf. Mt 16.13–23; Mk 8.27–33. Peter's confession is set in contrast to the rumors that Herod heard (9.7–8). **9.20** *The Messiah of God* is God's anointed ruler (see 2.11, 26; 4.18, 41; see also 20.41; 22.67; 23.2, 35, 39). **9.21** The command *not to tell* is closely coupled with the first explicit passion prediction (see also 5.14; 8.56). **9.22** The connection of the *Son of Man* title with a suffering figure (see note on 5.24) is found only in the Gospels (see also 9.44; 18.31–33; cf. Isa 52.13–53.12). The same Son of Man would return in glory as judge (see 9.26; 21.27; Dan 7.13–14). *Elders, chief priests, and scribes,* the leaders of the Jerusalem council, or Sanhedrin (see 20.1; 22.2–4; note on 22.66).

9.23–27 Cf. Mt 16.24–28; Mk 8.34–9.1. **9.23** To *take up their cross daily* stresses faithful endurance in the face of continuing trials (see 8.15; 21.19; cf. Mk 8.34). **9.26** *Those who are ashamed of me,* i.e., like Peter in 22.54–60. The same thought is stated more positively in 12.8–9; see also Rom 1.16; Heb 2.11. **9.27** The promise of this verse is partially fulfilled in the transfiguration (9.28–36; see also 2.26).

9.28–36 Cf. Mt 17.1–9; Mk 9.2–10. **9.28** *To pray.* Prayer is often the setting of revelation (see 3.21–22; 22.39–46; note on 6.12). **9.29** *Dazzling white,* the color of heavenly garments (see 24.4; Acts 1.10; Rev 4.4; 7.9).

changed, and his clothes became dazzling
white. 30 Suddenly they saw two men, Mo-
ses and Elijah, talking to him. 31 They ap-
peared in glory and were speaking of
his departure, which he was about to ac-
complish at Jerusalem. 32 Now Peter and
his companions were weighed down with
sleep; but since they had stayed awake,[c]
they saw his glory and the two men who
stood with him. 33 Just as they were leav-
ing him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is
good for us to be here; let us make three
dwellings,[d] one for you, one for Moses,
and one for Elijah"—not knowing what
he said. 34 While he was saying this, a
cloud came and overshadowed them; and
they were terrified as they entered the
cloud. 35 Then from the cloud came a
voice that said, "This is my Son, my Cho-
sen;[e] listen to him!" 36 When the voice
had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And
they kept silent and in those days told no
one any of the things they had seen.

Jesus Heals a Boy with a Demon

37 On the next day, when they had
come down from the mountain, a great
crowd met him. 38 Just then a man from
the crowd shouted, "Teacher, I beg you to
look at my son; he is my only child. 39 Sud-
denly a spirit seizes him, and all at once
he[f] shrieks. It convulses him until he
foams at the mouth; it mauls him and will
scarcely leave him. 40 I begged your disci-
ples to cast it out, but they could not."
41 Jesus answered, "You faithless and per-
verse generation, how much longer must
I be with you and bear with you? Bring
your son here." 42 While he was coming,
the demon dashed him to the ground in
convulsions. But Jesus rebuked the un-
clean spirit, healed the boy, and gave him
back to his father. 43 And all were as-
tounded at the greatness of God.

Jesus Again Foretells His Death

While everyone was amazed at all that
he was doing, he said to his disciples,
44 "Let these words sink into your ears:
The Son of Man is going to be betrayed
into human hands." 45 But they did not
understand this saying; its meaning was
concealed from them, so that they could
not perceive it. And they were afraid to
ask him about this saying.

True Greatness

46 An argument arose among them
as to which one of them was the great-
est. 47 But Jesus, aware of their inner
thoughts, took a little child and put it by
his side, 48 and said to them, "Whoever
welcomes this child in my name welcomes
me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes
the one who sent me; for the least among
all of you is the greatest."

c Or *but when they were fully awake* d Or *tents*
e Other ancient authorities read *my Beloved*
f Or *it*

9.30 Both *Moses and Elijah* were expected to return before the final judgment (see Deut 18.15; Mal 4.5). Both also had visions of God on a mountain (Ex 24.15–18; 1 Kings 19.8–13). **9.31** *Glory*, a sign of divine presence (see Ex 24.17; 40.34). The *departure* (Greek *exodos*) probably refers to Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension, all of which will occur in Jerusalem (see esp. 9.51; 12.50; 24.50–53). **9.32** *Weighed down with sleep*. See also 22.45–46. **9.33** The *three dwellings* suggest the Feast of Booths, a harvest festival commemorating the exodus from Egypt (see 9.31; Deut 16). **9.34** The *cloud* signifies God's presence (see Ex 16.10; 19.9; 24.15–18). **9.35** *My son, my Chosen*. See 3.22; 23.35; Isa 42.1. *Listen to him*. See Deut 18.15; Acts 3.22.

9.37–43a Cf. Mt 17.14–21; Mk 9.14–29. **9.38** An *only child*. See 7.12; 8.42. **9.39** The boy's seizures and convulsions are viewed as evidence of a conflict with demonic powers (see 8.29). **9.40** On the disciples' inability to cast the demon out, see Mk 9.28–29. **9.41** *Faithless and perverse generation*. See note on 7.31. **9.42** *Jesus . . . gave him back to his father*. See note on 7.15. **9.43a** The praise of God's *greatness* is a concluding refrain for many healings (see 5.25; 7.16).

9.43b–45 Cf. Mt 17.22–23; Mk 9.30–32. Jesus' second prediction of the suffering of the Son of Man (see 9.22; 18.31–34; see also 12.50; 13.32–33; 17.24–26). **9.44** *Let these words sink into your ears*. See 8.8; 14.35; cf. Isa 6.10; 42.20; Acts 7.51; 28.27. **9.45** On the truth being *concealed from them* (i.e., by God), see 18.34; 24.16, 31.

9.46–48 Cf. Mt 18.1–5; Mk 9.33–37. Luke gives the briefest version of the argument concerning greatness. **9.46** *Which . . . was the greatest*. See also 22.24–30. **9.47** *Aware of their inner thoughts*. See 2.35; 5.22; 6.8.

Another Exorcist

49 John answered, "Master, we saw
someone casting out demons in your
name, and we tried to stop him, because
he does not follow with us." 50 But Jesus
said to him, "Do not stop him; for who-
ever is not against you is for you."

A Samaritan Village Refuses to Receive Jesus

51 When the days drew near for him
to be taken up, he set his face to go to
Jerusalem. 52 And he sent messengers
ahead of him. On their way they entered
a village of the Samaritans to make ready
for him; 53 but they did not receive him,
because his face was set toward Jerusalem.
54 When his disciples James and John saw
it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to
command fire to come down from heaven
and consume them?"[g] 55 But he turned
and rebuked them. 56 Then[h] they went
on to another village.

Would-Be Followers of Jesus

57 As they were going along the road,
someone said to him, "I will follow you
wherever you go." 58 And Jesus said to
him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the
air have nests; but the Son of Man has
nowhere to lay his head." 59 To another
he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord,
first let me go and bury my father." 60 But
Jesus[i] said to him, "Let the dead bury
their own dead; but as for you, go and
proclaim the kingdom of God." 61 An-
other said, "I will follow you, Lord; but let
me first say farewell to those at my home."
62 Jesus said to him, "No one who puts a
hand to the plow and looks back is fit for
the kingdom of God."

The Mission of the Seventy

10 After this the Lord appointed
seventy[j] others and sent them
on ahead of him in pairs to every town
and place where he himself intended to
go. 2 He said to them, "The harvest is
plentiful, but the laborers are few; there-
fore ask the Lord of the harvest to send
out laborers into his harvest. 3 Go on your
way. See, I am sending you out like lambs
into the midst of wolves. 4 Carry no purse,

g Other ancient authorities add *as Elijah did*
h Other ancient authorities read *rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what spirit you are of, 56 for the Son of Man has not come to destroy the lives of human beings but to save them." Then* *i* Gk *he* *j* Other ancient authorities read *seventy-two*

9.49–50 Cf. Mt 10.42; Mk 9.38–41. **9.49** *In your name,* i.e., by invoking Jesus' name as a source of power (see Acts 3.16; 16.18). Magical incantations of this period often contained the names of many gods. **9.50** *Whoever is not against you is for you.* See Num 11.26–30; cf. Lk 11.23; Acts 8.14–24.

9.51–19.27 The journey to Jerusalem is a major central section of Luke's narrative with few parallels to Mark. References to the journey's destination seem to divide the section into three phases (9.51–13.21; 13.22–17.10; 17.11–19.27). **9.51–56** These opening verses depict Jesus on a prophetic mission. **9.51** *Taken up.* The reference is probably to all the events associated with Jesus' "departure" (see note on 9.31) but with special emphasis on the ascension (see Acts 1.2, 11, 22; see also 2 Kings 2.11). *He set his face,* expressing determination or mission (see Isa 50.7; Ezek 21.1–2). *To Jerusalem.* Jesus' destination is repeatedly emphasized (see 13.22; 17.11; 18.31; 19.11, 28). **9.52** On sending *messengers ahead,* see also 7.27; Ex 23.20. The *Samaritans,* who traced their lineage to the old Northern Kingdom (Israel), were in Jewish eyes neither Jews nor Gentiles. They were usually regarded with hostility by Jews (see Mt 10.5; Jn 4.9; 8.48) and here reject Jesus' mission, though elsewhere in Luke-Acts they are positively portrayed (see 10.30–37; 17.11–19; Acts 1.8; 8.1–25). **9.54** *Fire . . . from heaven* may come when the time of repentance is past (see 10.12–16; see also 2 Kings 1.10).

9.57–62 Cf. Mt 8.18–22. Warnings on the cost of discipleship. **9.57** The *road,* or "way," to Jerusalem becomes symbolic of discipleship. An early name for the Christian movement was "The Way" (see Acts 9.2; 18.25; 19.23; 22.4; 24.22). **9.58** *Son of Man.* See note on 5.24. **9.59** A proper burial for one's *father* was a strong traditional obligation (Gen 50.5; Tob 4.3). **9.61** *Let me first say farewell.* See 1 Kings 19.19–21.

10.1–24 The mission of the Seventy moves beyond the mission of the Twelve in 9.1–10. **10.1** *Seventy* may reflect the seventy nations in Gen 10 (seventy-two in the Septuagint; see text note *j*) or the seventy elders chosen by Moses from the twelve tribes (see Ex 24.1, 9; Num 11.16, 24). On traveling *in pairs,* see Acts 8.14; 13.2; 15.32, 39–40. **10.2** *The harvest* is the intended gathering of Israel (Isa 27.12), not primarily the judgment (cf. Mt 13.30, 39). **10.3** On *wolves* threatening the flock, see also Ezek 22.27; Jn 10.12; Acts 20.28–31. **10.4** See note on 9.3.

no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on
the road. 5 Whatever house you enter,
first say, 'Peace to this house!' 6 And if
anyone is there who shares in peace, your
peace will rest on that person; but if not, it
will return to you. 7 Remain in the same
house, eating and drinking whatever they
provide, for the laborer deserves to be
paid. Do not move about from house to
house. 8 Whenever you enter a town and
its people welcome you, eat what is set be-
fore you; 9 cure the sick who are there,
and say to them, 'The kingdom of God
has come near to you.'[k] 10 But whenever
you enter a town and they do not welcome
you, go out into its streets and say,
11 'Even the dust of your town that clings
to our feet, we wipe off in protest against
you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God
has come near.'[l] 12 I tell you, on that day
it will be more tolerable for Sodom than
for that town.

Woes to Unrepentant Cities

13 "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to
you, Bethsaida! For if the deeds of power
done in you had been done in Tyre and
Sidon, they would have repented long
ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. 14 But
at the judgment it will be more tolerable
for Tyre and Sidon than for you. 15 And
you, Capernaum,
will you be exalted to heaven?
No, you will be brought down
to Hades.

16 "Whoever listens to you listens to
me, and whoever rejects you rejects me,
and whoever rejects me rejects the one
who sent me."

The Return of the Seventy

17 The seventy[m] returned with joy,
saying, "Lord, in your name even the de-
mons submit to us!" 18 He said to them, "I
watched Satan fall from heaven like a
flash of lightning. 19 See, I have given you
authority to tread on snakes and scorpi-
ons, and over all the power of the enemy;
and nothing will hurt you. 20 Neverthe-
less, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits
submit to you, but rejoice that your names
are written in heaven."

21 At that same hour Jesus[n] rejoiced
in the Holy Spirit[o] and said, "I thank[p]
you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth,
because you have hidden these things
from the wise and the intelligent and have
revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for
such was your gracious will.[q] 22 All things
have been handed over to me by my Fa-
ther; and no one knows who the Son is
except the Father, or who the Father is

k Or *is at hand for you* *l* Or *is at hand*
m Other ancient authorities read *seventy-two*
n Gk *he* *o* Other authorities read *in the spirit*
p Or *praise* *q* Or *for so it was well-pleasing in your sight*

Greet no one on the road, implying an urgent journey (see also 2 Kings 4.29). **10.5** The early Christian mission was closely linked with private *houses* (see Acts 10.22; 11.12; 12.12; 16.15, 34; 18.7; 20.20; 21.8, 16). *Peace*, though a traditional greeting (see note on 7.50; see also 24.36; 1 Sam 25.6), here signifies the peace of salvation (see 2.14; see also Gal 6.16). **10.9** Like the word of peace (10.5–6), the proclamation of the *kingdom of God* (see note on 4.42–43) is a word of blessing to those who receive the disciples but a word of judgment to those who reject them (10.11). **10.11** *Even the dust . . . we wipe off.* See note on 9.5. **10.12** *That day*, i.e., the day of judgment (see also 21.34). For the fate of *Sodom*, see Gen 19.24–28. **10.13–16** Oracles against the cities in Galilee. **10.13** The exact location of *Chorazin* is unknown. *Bethsaida*. See note on 9.10. *Tyre and Sidon*, Phoenician (gentile) seacoast towns which Jesus did not visit. On the need to repent, see 3.3, 8; 11.32; 13.3, 5; 15.7, 10; 16.30. **10.15** *Capernaum*. See 4.23, 31; 7.1. *Hades* (Hebrew *Sheol*), originally the shadowy realm of all the dead (see Isa 38.10); here the place of eternal punishment for the wicked. **10.17–24** Cf. Mt 11.25–27; 13.16–17. The return of the Seventy parallels the return of the Twelve in 9.10. **10.17** Their *joy* is itself a sign of the dawning of the kingdom (see 1.14, 44; 2.10; 8.13; 24.41, 52). **10.18–19** On the fall of *Satan* and the triumph of the kingdom over *the power of the enemy*, see 4.2–13; 11.18; 13.16; 22.3, 31–32; cf. Rev 12.9–12. *Snakes and scorpions* represent evil (see 11.11–12; see also Ps 58.3–4; Sir 21.2; Mk 16.18; Acts 28.1–6). **10.20** Those whose *names are written in heaven* are allies of God in the warfare against evil powers (see 12.33; 18.22; Rev 3.5). **10.21** Jesus' joy *in the Holy Spirit* recalls the Spirit's descent to Mary (1.47; see also Acts 2.46). On contrasts between *hidden* and *revealed*, the *wise* and *infants*, see 8.17; 1 Cor 1.18–3.23. **10.22** No other portion of Luke explicates the relationship of the *Father* and the *Son* so directly (cf. 10.16; Jn 3.35; 6.65; 10.15; 13.3; 14.7–13;

except the Son and anyone to whom the
Son chooses to reveal him."
23 Then turning to the disciples,
Jesus[r] said to them privately, "Blessed
are the eyes that see what you see! 24 For I
tell you that many prophets and kings de-
sired to see what you see, but did not see
it, and to hear what you hear, but did not
hear it."

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

25 Just then a lawyer stood up to test
Jesus.[s] "Teacher," he said, "what must I
do to inherit eternal life?" 26 He said to
him, "What is written in the law? What do
you read there?" 27 He answered, "You
shall love the Lord your God with all your
heart, and with all your soul, and with all
your strength, and with all your mind;
and your neighbor as yourself." 28 And he
said to him, "You have given the right an-
swer; do this, and you will live."
29 But wanting to justify himself, he
asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"
30 Jesus replied, "A man was going down
from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into
the hands of robbers, who stripped him,
beat him, and went away, leaving him half
dead. 31 Now by chance a priest was going
down that road; and when he saw him, he
passed by on the other side. 32 So likewise
a Levite, when he came to the place and
saw him, passed by on the other side.
33 But a Samaritan while traveling came
near him; and when he saw him, he was
moved with pity. 34 He went to him and
bandaged his wounds, having poured oil
and wine on them. Then he put him on
his own animal, brought him to an inn,
and took care of him. 35 The next day he
took out two denarii,[t] gave them to the
innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him;
and when I come back, I will repay you
whatever more you spend.' 36 Which of
these three, do you think, was a neighbor
to the man who fell into the hands of the
robbers?" 37 He said, "The one who
showed him mercy." Jesus said to him,
"Go and do likewise."

Jesus Visits Martha and Mary

38 Now as they went on their way, he
entered a certain village, where a woman
named Martha welcomed him into her
home. 39 She had a sister named Mary,
who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to
what he was saying. 40 But Martha was dis-
tracted by her many tasks; so she came to
him and asked, "Lord, do you not care
that my sister has left me to do all the
work by myself? Tell her then to help
me." 41 But the Lord answered her, "Mar-
tha, Martha, you are worried and dis-
tracted by many things; 42 there is need of
only one thing.[u] Mary has chosen the bet-
ter part, which will not be taken away
from her."

r Gk *he* s Gk *him* t The denarius was the usual day's wage for a laborer u Other ancient authorities read *few things are necessary, or only one*

17.25). **10.23** *Blessed are the eyes that see.* It is not clear that the disciples themselves have yet fully seen (see 9.45; 18.34; 24.16). **10.24** The *prophets* foretold, but did not see, the fulfillment of the messianic age (see 24.25, 44; Acts 2.16–21). On *kings* desiring to understand, see 23.6–12; Acts 25.13–26.32; cf. 28.25–28.

10.25–11.13 Jesus teaches the way of the kingdom. **10.25–37** Cf. Mt 22.34–40; Mk 12.28–34. The double love command leads to a teaching on neighborliness. **10.25** *Lawyer.* See note on 7.30. **10.26** The exchange of questions was a common dialogue method among rabbis. **10.27** The text joins Deut 6.5 and Lev 19.18. **10.29** *Justify himself.* See notes on 7.29; 16.15. **10.30** The road *down from Jerusalem to Jericho* descends about 3200 feet. **10.32** *Levite,* a temple functionary from the priestly tribe of Levi. Both he and the priest may have been concerned about impurity from contact with a *half dead* person (10.30; see Num 19.10b–13). **10.33** The *Samaritan* was an alien far from home (see note on 9.52). **10.34** *Oil and wine* were used for medicinal purposes (see Isa 1.6). **10.36** Jesus' question changes the definition of *neighbor* from one who receives (cf. 10.27, 29) to one who bestows kindness.

10.38–42 See also Jn 11.1; 12.1–3. Interpreters find in the story of Martha and Mary conflicting messages on service and listening. **10.39** *Sat at the Lord's feet.* Mary is depicted as a disciple (see note on 8.35). This was exceptional for women. **10.40** *Many tasks,* lit. "much service." Discipleship is later defined in terms of service (see 22.24–27). For the active service of other women, see 8.2–3; 23.55–56; 24.22–24; Acts 9.36–39; 16.14–15; 18.2–3, 18.

The Lord's Prayer

11 He was praying in a certain place,
and after he had finished, one of
his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us
to pray, as John taught his disciples." 2 He
said to them, "When you pray, say:
Father,[v] hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come.[w]
3 Give us each day our daily
bread.[x]
4 And forgive us our sins,
for we ourselves forgive
everyone indebted to us.
And do not bring us to the
time of trial."[y]
5 And he said to them, "Suppose one
of you has a friend, and you go to him at
midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me
three loaves of bread; 6 for a friend of
mine has arrived, and I have nothing to
set before him.' 7 And he answers from
within, 'Do not bother me; the door has
already been locked, and my children are
with me in bed; I cannot get up and give
you anything.' 8 I tell you, even though he
will not get up and give him anything be-
cause he is his friend, at least because of
his persistence he will get up and give him
whatever he needs.
9 "So I say to you, Ask, and it will be
given you; search, and you will find;
knock, and the door will be opened for
you. 10 For everyone who asks receives,
and everyone who searches finds, and for
everyone who knocks, the door will be
opened. 11 Is there anyone among you
who, if your child asks for[z] a fish, will
give a snake instead of a fish? 12 Or if the
child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion?
13 If you then, who are evil, know how to
give good gifts to your children, how
much more will the heavenly Father give
the Holy Spirit[a] to those who ask him!"

Jesus and Beelzebul

14 Now he was casting out a demon
that was mute; when the demon had gone
out, the one who had been mute spoke,
and the crowds were amazed. 15 But some
of them said, "He casts out demons by Be-
elzebul, the ruler of the demons." 16 Oth-
ers, to test him, kept demanding from
him a sign from heaven. 17 But he knew
what they were thinking and said to them,
"Every kingdom divided against itself be-
comes a desert, and house falls on house.
18 If Satan also is divided against himself,
how will his kingdom stand? —for you say
that I cast out the demons by Beelzebul.
19 Now if I cast out the demons by Beelze-
bul, by whom do your exorcists[b] cast
them out? Therefore they will be your
judges. 20 But if it is by the finger of God
that I cast out the demons, then the king-
dom of God has come to you. 21 When a
strong man, fully armed, guards his cas-
tle, his property is safe. 22 But when one
stronger than he attacks him and over-
powers him, he takes away his armor in

v Other ancient authorities read *Our Father in heaven* *w* A few ancient authorities read *Your Holy Spirit come upon us and cleanse us.* Other ancient authorities add *Your will be done, on earth as in heaven* *x* Or *our bread for tomorrow* *y* Or *us into temptation.* Other ancient authorities add *but rescue us from the evil one* (or *from evil*) *z* Other ancient authorities add *bread, will give a stone; or if your child asks for* *a* Other ancient authorities read *the Father give the Holy Spirit from heaven* *b* Gk *sons*

11.1–13 Cf. Mt 6.9–13; 7.7–11. A discourse on prayer appropriate to the time of the kingdom. **11.1** On *John*'s teaching, see 5.33. **11.2** *Father* implies an intimate relationship (see also Mk 14.36; Rom 8.15; Gal 4.6; cf. Acts 4.24). *Hallowed*, i.e., recognized as holy (see Ezek 36.22–28). *Your kingdom come.* See note on 4.43; see also 10.9; 17.20–21; 22.16. **11.3** *Daily bread* (see Ex 16.4), or bread for the future (see text note *x*). The phrase stresses constancy (see 9.23; Acts 6.1) or eschatological fulfillment (22.16). **11.4** *Trial*, or temptation, implies conflict with spiritual powers and human adversaries (4.1–2; 8.13; 22.28, 40, 46). **11.8** On *persistence* (in prayer), see 18.1–8. **11.13** On the gift of the *Holy Spirit*, see 24.49; Acts 1.4–8; 2.38; 4.31; 5.32; 10.45–47.

11.14–54 Jesus meets opposition. **11.14–28** Cf. Mt 12.22–30, 43–45; Mk 3.22–27. The Beelzebul controversy sharpens the question of where God's power is at work. **11.14** The Greek word *kōphos* can mean either deaf or *mute* (see 1.20, 62). On the symbolic force of such healings, see Isa 35.6. **11.15** *Beelzebul*, a variant of the name of a Philistine god (see 2 Kings 1.2–16), which came to be used as one of the names of Satan. **11.16** On the *test* of Jesus' ability to produce a *sign*, see 4.9–13, 23; 11.29; 23.8. **11.17** *House falls on house*, warfare in households or dynasties (see 12.53). **11.20** *Finger of God*, an allusion to Ex 8.19, where Pharaoh's magicians recognized God's true power at work in Moses and Aaron (see also 5.17). **11.21** *A strong man* here refers to Satan. **11.22** Jesus claims to be the *stronger* one who has invaded Satan's domain

which he trusted and divides his plunder.
23 Whoever is not with me is against me,
and whoever does not gather with me
scatters.

24 "When the unclean spirit has gone
out of a person, it wanders through wa-
terless regions looking for a resting place,
but not finding any, it says, 'I will return
to my house from which I came.' 25 When
it comes, it finds it swept and put in order.
26 Then it goes and brings seven other
spirits more evil than itself, and they enter
and live there; and the last state of that
person is worse than the first."

27 While he was saying this, a woman
in the crowd raised her voice and said to
him, "Blessed is the womb that bore you
and the breasts that nursed you!" 28 But
he said, "Blessed rather are those who
hear the word of God and obey it!"

The Sign of Jonah

29 When the crowds were increasing,
he began to say, "This generation is an
evil generation; it asks for a sign, but no
sign will be given to it except the sign of
Jonah. 30 For just as Jonah became a sign
to the people of Nineveh, so the Son of
Man will be to this generation. 31 The
queen of the South will rise at the judg-
ment with the people of this generation
and condemn them, because she came
from the ends of the earth to listen to the
wisdom of Solomon, and see, something
greater than Solomon is here! 32 The peo-
ple of Nineveh will rise up at the judg-
ment with this generation and condemn
it, because they repented at the proclama-
tion of Jonah, and see, something greater
than Jonah is here!

The Light of the Body

33 "No one after lighting a lamp puts
it in a cellar,[c] but on the lampstand so
that those who enter may see the light.
34 Your eye is the lamp of your body. If
your eye is healthy, your whole body is
full of light; but if it is not healthy, your
body is full of darkness. 35 Therefore con-
sider whether the light in you is not dark-
ness. 36 If then your whole body is full of
light, with no part of it in darkness, it will
be as full of light as when a lamp gives you
light with its rays."

Jesus Denounces Pharisees and Lawyers

37 While he was speaking, a Pharisee
invited him to dine with him; so he went
in and took his place at the table. 38 The
Pharisee was amazed to see that he did
not first wash before dinner. 39 Then the
Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees
clean the outside of the cup and of the
dish, but inside you are full of greed and
wickedness. 40 You fools! Did not the one
who made the outside make the inside
also? 41 So give for alms those things that
are within; and see, everything will be
clean for you.

42 "But woe to you Pharisees! For you

c Other ancient authorities add *or under the bushel basket*

(see Isa 49.24–25). **11.23** In this conflict there is no middle ground (cf. 9.50). **11.24** *Waterless regions* were thought to be the preferred haunts of demons (see note on 8.33). **11.26** To return with *seven other spirits* would mean infestation (see also 8.2, 30). **11.27** The blessing pronounced by the woman conforms to Mary's prediction (1.48; see also 1.42; Gen 49.25). **11.28** Jesus redirects this blessing to *those who hear the word of God and obey it* (see also 8.19–21).

11.29–32 Cf. Mt 12.38–42; Mk 8.11–12. These verses are a direct verdict on the preceding demand for a sign (11.16). **11.29** *An evil generation.* See note on 7.31. *The sign of Jonah* in Mt 12.39–40 is Jonah's three days and nights in the fish. Here the sign is Jonah himself and his prophetic message (see Mt 12.41–42). **11.30** *Son of Man.* See note on 5.24. **11.31** *Queen of the South,* i.e., the queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10.1–11). **11.32** The Ninevites *repented* on hearing of impending judgment (see Jon 3.6–10).

11.33–36 Cf. Mt 5.15; 6.22–23; Mk 4.21. A series of loosely related sayings on light. **11.33** *A lamp . . . on the lampstand.* See 8.16.

11.37–54 Cf. Mt 15.1–9; 7.1–9. This second story of meal fellowship with the Pharisees (see 7.36–50) is structured around six "woes" (see also 6.24–26). **11.37** *Pharisee.* See note on 5.17. **11.38** To *wash before dinner* was a matter of ritual cleanliness and obedience to the law, not mere hygiene (see Mk 7.1–5). **11.39** The contrast between *outside* and *inside* is a charge of hypocrisy (see Mt 23.25). **11.41** Giving *alms,* or charitable donations to the poor, was important to Jewish piety (Tob 4.7–11). **11.42** *Woe.* See note on 6.24. The Pharisees gave a *tithe,* or tenth part, of the harvest to the temple (Lev 27.30–33; Deut 14.22–29; 26.12–15; Mal 3.8–10). *You . . . neglect justice,* a classic prophetic indictment (see Isa

tithe mint and rue and herbs of all kinds,
and neglect justice and the love of God; it
is these you ought to have practiced, with-
out neglecting the others. 43 Woe to you
Pharisees! For you love to have the seat
of honor in the synagogues and to be
greeted with respect in the marketplaces.
44 Woe to you! For you are like unmarked
graves, and people walk over them with-
out realizing it."

45 One of the lawyers answered him,
"Teacher, when you say these things, you
insult us too." 46 And he said, "Woe also to
you lawyers! For you load people with
burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves
do not lift a finger to ease them. 47 Woe to
you! For you build the tombs of the
prophets whom your ancestors killed.
48 So you are witnesses and approve of
the deeds of your ancestors; for they
killed them, and you build their tombs.
49 Therefore also the Wisdom of God
said, 'I will send them prophets and apos-
tles, some of whom they will kill and per-
secute,' 50 so that this generation may be
charged with the blood of all the prophets
shed since the foundation of the world,
51 from the blood of Abel to the blood of
Zechariah, who perished between the al-
tar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, it
will be charged against this generation.
52 Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken
away the key of knowledge; you did not
enter yourselves, and you hindered those
who were entering."

53 When he went outside, the scribes
and the Pharisees began to be very hostile
toward him and to cross-examine him
about many things, 54 lying in wait for
him, to catch him in something he
might say.

A Warning Against Hypocrisy

12 Meanwhile, when the crowd gath-
ered by the thousands, so that
they trampled on one another, he began
to speak first to his disciples, "Beware of
the yeast of the Pharisees, that is, their hy-
pocrisy. 2 Nothing is covered up that will
not be uncovered, and nothing secret that
will not become known. 3 Therefore what-
ever you have said in the dark will be
heard in the light, and what you have
whispered behind closed doors will be
proclaimed from the housetops.

Exhortation to Fearless Confession

4 "I tell you, my friends, do not fear
those who kill the body, and after that can
do nothing more. 5 But I will warn you
whom to fear: fear him who, after he has
killed, has authority[d] to cast into hell.[e]
Yes, I tell you, fear him! 6 Are not five
sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not
one of them is forgotten in God's sight.
7 But even the hairs of your head are all
counted. Do not be afraid; you are of
more value than many sparrows.

d Or *power* *e* Gk *Gehenna*

1.21–23; Am 5.21–24; Mic 3.9–12). **11.43** *The seat of honor.* See also 14.7; 22.24–27; Mt 23.6; Jas 2.1–7. **11.44** *Unmarked graves* could cause unwitting defilement (see Lev 21.11; Num 19.11–22). **11.46** *Lawyers.* See note on 7.30. On the *burden* of keeping the law, see Acts 15.5–10; cf. Mt 11.30. **11.47** *Build the tombs of the prophets,* perhaps implying the sealing up of their testimony through complex interpretations (see note on 11.52). *Whom your ancestors killed.* See 13.34; Acts 7.52. **11.49** *The Wisdom of God* (see also 7.35) is closely identified with the Holy Spirit (see Acts 6.3, 10), but Matthew places Wisdom's words directly in Jesus' mouth (see Mt 23.34; see also 1 Cor 1.24). **11.51** *The blood of Abel.* See Gen 4.1–12; Heb 11.4; 12.24; 1 Jn 3.12. *The blood of Zechariah.* See 2 Chr 24.19–22. **11.52** *Taken away the key,* i.e., controlled the scriptures through their interpretations rather than opening them by teaching (see note on 11.47). **11.53–54** The hostility of the religious leaders becomes a theme in the narrative (see esp. 19.47–48; 20.1–21.4).

12.1–13.21 The second collection of teaching materials on discipleship since Jesus set his face to go to Jerusalem in 9.51 (see 10.25–11.13). **12.1–12** Cf. Mt 16.5–6; 10.26–33; Mk 8.14–15. Words of warning and encouragement. **12.1** Luke contrasts the reaction of the *crowd* with the reaction of the religious leaders (11.53–54; cf. 23.13–18). *Yeast,* actually sour or fermenting dough, suggesting hidden corruption (see, e.g., Ex 12.14–20; cf. Lk 13.21). **12.2** On what is *covered up* and *uncovered,* see also 8.17; 10.21–24. **12.5** *Whom to fear,* i.e., God (see also Rom 11.20–21; Phil 2.12; 1 Pet 2.17). *Hell,* lit. *Gehenna* (text note *e*), originally the name of a valley near Jerusalem used at one time for human burnt sacrifices (Jer 19.4–6), then for burning rubbish. It became the name of the place of eternal punishment (Rev 9.1–2; 21.8). **12.6** *Two pennies* is a tiny sum. **12.7** *Are all counted,* i.e., known to God (see also 21.18; 2 Sam 14.11; 1 Kings 1.52;

8 "And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before others, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God; 9 but whoever denies me before others will be denied before the angels of God. 10 And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven; but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. 11 When they bring you before the synagogues, the rulers, and the authorities, do not worry about how[f] you are to defend yourselves or what you are to say; 12 for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that very hour what you ought to say."

The Parable of the Rich Fool

13 Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me." 14 But he said to him, "Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?" 15 And he said to them, "Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions." 16 Then he told them a parable: "The land of a rich man produced abundantly. 17 And he thought to himself, 'What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?' 18 Then he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' 20 But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' 21 So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God."

Do Not Worry

22 He said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. 23 For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. 24 Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! 25 And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?[g] 26 If then you are not able to do so small a thing as that, why do you worry about the rest? 27 Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin;[h] yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. 28 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you —you of little faith! 29 And do not keep striving for what you are to eat and what you are to drink, and do not keep worrying. 30 For it is the nations of the world that strive after all these things, and your Father knows that you need them. 31 Instead, strive for his[i] kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

32 "Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you

f Other ancient authorities add *or what*
g Or *add a cubit to your stature* *h* Other ancient authorities read *Consider the lilies; they neither spin nor weave* *i* Other ancient authorities read *God's*

Acts 27.34). **12.8** The wording is strange here, suggesting that the *Son of Man* was a figure different from Jesus (see also 9.26; 17.22–30). The issue is widely debated (see also note on 5.24). In civil trials, Christians were compelled to *acknowledge* or deny their faith (see 21.12–19). **12.10** In Luke-Acts, denial of Jesus was forgiven (Lk 22.32, 54–62), but sins *against the Holy Spirit* risked dire judgment (Acts 5.1–11; 7.51; 8.14–24). **12.11** On trials *before the synagogues, the rulers, and the authorities*, see 21.12; Acts 4.1–22; 5.17–42; 17.1–9; 22.1–23.11; 24.1–21; 26.1–29.

12.13–21 The peril of wealth is demonstrated with a parable. **12.13** A *teacher*, or rabbi, could be expected to interpret the *inheritance* laws (Num 27.1–11; 36.6–9; Deut 21.15–17). **12.14** *Friend*, lit. "man" (Greek *anthrōpe*). See 22.58, 60. **12.19** *Eat, drink, be merry* was a common adage, though it often continues, "... for tomorrow we die" (see Eccl 8.15; Tob 7.10; 1 Cor 15.32). **12.20** The *fool* leaves God out of the reckoning (see Ps 14.1).

12.22–34 Cf. Mt 6.25–34, 19–21. The words on needless worrying serve as a commentary on the preceding parable (cf. Mt 6). **12.27** According to 1 Kings 3, wealth and power were given to *Solomon* because he did not seek them first (see also 12.31). **12.28** On human life as transitory as *grass*, see Job 8.12; Pss 37.2; 90.5–6; 103.15–16; Isa 37.27; 40.6–8. **12.30** *The nations of the world* are the Gentiles, who are often negative examples (see 22.25; Mt 5.47; 6.7, 32; 18.17; 20.25). **12.32** *Do not be afraid.* See note on 1.13. *Little flock*, an image of care (see Ezek 34.11–31).

the kingdom. 33 Sell your possessions, and
give alms. Make purses for yourselves that
do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in
heaven, where no thief comes near and
no moth destroys. 34 For where your trea-
sure is, there your heart will be also.

Watchful Slaves

35 "Be dressed for action and have
your lamps lit; 36 be like those who are
waiting for their master to return from
the wedding banquet, so that they may
open the door for him as soon as he
comes and knocks. 37 Blessed are those
slaves whom the master finds alert when
he comes; truly I tell you, he will fasten
his belt and have them sit down to eat,
and he will come and serve them. 38 If he
comes during the middle of the night, or
near dawn, and finds them so, blessed are
those slaves.

39 "But know this: if the owner of the
house had known at what hour the thief
was coming, he[j] would not have let his
house be broken into. 40 You also must be
ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an
unexpected hour."

41 Peter said, "Lord, are you telling
this parable for us or for everyone?"
42 And the Lord said, "Who then is the
faithful and prudent manager whom his
master will put in charge of his slaves, to
give them their allowance of food at the
proper time? 43 Blessed is that slave whom
his master will find at work when he ar-
rives. 44 Truly I tell you, he will put that
one in charge of all his possessions. 45 But
if that slave says to himself, 'My master is
delayed in coming,' and if he begins to
beat the other slaves, men and women,
and to eat and drink and get drunk, 46 the
master of that slave will come on a day
when he does not expect him and at an
hour that he does not know, and will cut
him in pieces,[k] and put him with the un-
faithful. 47 That slave who knew what his
master wanted, but did not prepare him-
self or do what was wanted, will receive a
severe beating. 48 But the one who did not
know and did what deserved a beating
will receive a light beating. From everyone
to whom much has been given, much will
be required; and from the one to whom
much has been entrusted, even more will
be demanded.

The Time of Judgment

49 "I came to bring fire to the earth,
and how I wish it were already kindled!
50 I have a baptism with which to be bap-
tized, and what stress I am under until it is
completed! 51 Do you think that I have
come to bring peace to the earth? No, I
tell you, but rather division! 52 From now
on five in one household will be divided,
three against two and two against three;
53 they will be divided:

father against son
and son against father,
mother against daughter
and daughter against mother,
mother-in-law against her
daughter-in-law
and daughter-in-law against
mother-in-law."

54 He also said to the crowds, "When
you see a cloud rising in the west, you im-
mediately say, 'It is going to rain'; and so

j Other ancient authorities add *would have watched and* k Or *cut him off*

12.33 *Sell your possessions.* See 14.33; 18.22; Acts 2.44–45; 4.34–35. *Give alms.* See note on 11.41. **12.35–48** Cf. Mt 24.42–51; Mk 13.33–37. Admonitions on watchfulness. **12.35** *Dressed for action*, perhaps an allusion to Passover instructions (Ex 12.11). **12.37** *Alert when he comes.* Cf. Jesus' disciples in 22.39–46. On the image of a master who *serves*, see 22.24–28. **12.40** On the coming of the *Son of Man* as judge, see note on 5.24; see also 17.22–35; 18.8; 21.27, 36. *An unexpected hour.* See also 12.46; 21.34–36; Acts 1.7–8. **12.42–43** The household *manager* was usually a well-trained *slave* who was given significant responsibilities (see Mt 24.45). **12.44** On the increased responsibility of those who have received, see also 12.48; 19.11–27.

12.49–59 Cf. Mt 10.34–36; 16.2–3; 5.25–26; Mk 10.38. Jesus defines his ministry in terms of division and judgment. **12.49** *Fire to the earth* suggests purification (3.16; Num 31.23) or judgment (9.54; 2 Kings 1.10–14). See also 1 Kings 18.36–40. **12.50** Jesus' *baptism*, here meant figuratively (cf. 3.21–22), probably refers to his death, which was earlier defined as his "departure" (see note on 9.31). *Stress* implies a form of constraint like that of the prophets (see Jer 20.9; Am 3.8). **12.51** The promise of *peace* (see also 1.79; 2.14, 29; 7.50; 8.48; 10.5; 19.38; 24.36; Acts 9.31; 10.36) becomes a threat of *division* if the Messiah is rejected (see 2.34–35; 10.1–12; 19.41–44). **12.53** The promise to *turn the hearts of parents to their children* (1.17) is thwarted by rejection (see

it happens. 55 And when you see the south
wind blowing, you say, 'There will be
scorching heat'; and it happens. 56 You
hypocrites! You know how to interpret
the appearance of earth and sky, but why
do you not know how to interpret the
present time?

57 "And why do you not judge for
yourselves what is right? 58 Thus, when
you go with your accuser before a magis-
trate, on the way make an effort to settle
the case,[l] or you may be dragged before
the judge, and the judge hand you over to
the officer, and the officer throw you in
prison. 59 I tell you, you will never get out
until you have paid the very last penny."

Repent or Perish

13 At that very time there were some
present who told him about the
Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled
with their sacrifices. 2 He asked them, "Do
you think that because these Galileans suf-
fered in this way they were worse sinners
than all other Galileans? 3 No, I tell you;
but unless you repent, you will all perish
as they did. 4 Or those eighteen who were
killed when the tower of Siloam fell on
them—do you think that they were worse
offenders than all the others living in
Jerusalem? 5 No, I tell you; but unless
you repent, you will all perish just as
they did."

6 Then he told this parable: "A man
had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and
he came looking for fruit on it and found
none. 7 So he said to the gardener, 'See
here! For three years I have come looking
for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find
none. Cut it down! Why should it be wast-
ing the soil?' 8 He replied, 'Sir, let it alone
for one more year, until I dig around it
and put manure on it. 9 If it bears fruit
next year, well and good; but if not, you
can cut it down.' "

Jesus Heals a Crippled Woman

10 Now he was teaching in one of the
synagogues on the sabbath. 11 And just
then there appeared a woman with a
spirit that had crippled her for eighteen
years. She was bent over and was quite
unable to stand up straight. 12 When Jesus
saw her, he called her over and said,
"Woman, you are set free from your ail-
ment." 13 When he laid his hands on her,
immediately she stood up straight and be-
gan praising God. 14 But the leader of the
synagogue, indignant because Jesus had
cured on the sabbath, kept saying to the
crowd, "There are six days on which work
ought to be done; come on those days and
be cured, and not on the sabbath day."
15 But the Lord answered him and said,
"You hypocrites! Does not each of you on
the sabbath untie his ox or his donkey
from the manger, and lead it away to give
it water? 16 And ought not this woman, a
daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound
for eighteen long years, be set free from
this bondage on the sabbath day?"
17 When he said this, all his opponents
were put to shame; and the entire crowd
was rejoicing at all the wonderful things
that he was doing.

l Gk *settle with him*

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also Mic 7.6). **12.56** On *hypocrites*, especially as interpreters, see 6.39–42; 13.14–15.

13.1–9 Cf. Mt 21.18–19; Mk 11.12–14. Jesus repeats John's message of repentance. **13.1** *Pilate* was known for brutal reprisals and disdain for local religious practices (Josephus *Antiquities* 18.85–89; *Jewish War* 2.169–77; see also Lk 23.1–25). The incident mentioned in this verse is nowhere else attested. **13.2** Physical suffering was widely viewed as a consequence of sin (see 5.18–24; see also Deut 28–30; Ezek 18.26–27; Jn 9.2–3). **13.3** *Repent.* See also John's preaching of repentance in 3.1–17. **13.4** The calamity with the *tower of Siloam* is nowhere else mentioned. The tower probably formed part of the defenses of Jerusalem. **13.6** The *fig tree* was often used as a metaphor for Israel or Judah (see Jer 8.13; Hos 9.10; Mic 7.1). *Looking for fruit.* Cf. Mt 21.19; Mk 11.13.

13.10–17 The third sabbath controversy (6.1–5; 6.6–11; 14.1–6), here with Jesus teaching in the synagogue (see also 4.14–30, 31–38, 44). **13.11** For the perceived link between illness and an evil *spirit*, see note on 8.2–3; see also 9.42. **13.14** The objection to the healing is based on Ex 20.9–10; Deut 5.13–14. **13.15–16** Jesus argues from a lesser issue of care for the needs of animals (a point granted by the rabbis; see 14.5) to the greater issue of care for an afflicted woman. **13.16** *Daughter of Abraham* identifies the woman as one of God's chosen people (Gen 12.2–3; see also Lk 19.9; cf. 3.8). *Satan.* See 10.18; 11.18; 22.3. The healing is presented as a conquest over evil powers (see also 4.39; 6.18; 7.21; 8.2; 9.1, 42).

Parables of Growth

18 He said therefore, "What is the
kingdom of God like? And to what should
I compare it? 19 It is like a mustard seed
that someone took and sowed in the
garden; it grew and became a tree, and
the birds of the air made nests in its
branches."
20 And again he said, "To what
should I compare the kingdom of God?
21 It is like yeast that a woman took and
mixed in with[m] three measures of flour
until all of it was leavened."

The Narrow Door

22 Jesus[n] went through one town and
village after another, teaching as he made
his way to Jerusalem. 23 Someone asked
him, "Lord, will only a few be saved?" He
said to them, 24 "Strive to enter through
the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will
try to enter and will not be able. 25 When
once the owner of the house has got up
and shut the door, and you begin to stand
outside and to knock at the door, saying,
'Lord, open to us,' then in reply he will say
to you, 'I do not know where you come
from.' 26 Then you will begin to say, 'We
ate and drank with you, and you taught in
our streets.' 27 But he will say, 'I do not
know where you come from; go away
from me, all you evildoers!' 28 There will
be weeping and gnashing of teeth when
you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob
and all the prophets in the kingdom of
God, and you yourselves thrown out.
29 Then people will come from east and
west, from north and south, and will eat
in the kingdom of God. 30 Indeed, some
are last who will be first, and some are
first who will be last."

The Lament over Jerusalem

31 At that very hour some Pharisees
came and said to him, "Get away from
here, for Herod wants to kill you." 32 He
said to them, "Go and tell that fox for
me,[o] 'Listen, I am casting out demons
and performing cures today and tomor-
row, and on the third day I finish my
work. 33 Yet today, tomorrow, and the
next day I must be on my way, because it
is impossible for a prophet to be killed
outside of Jerusalem.' 34 Jerusalem, Jeru-
salem, the city that kills the prophets and
stones those who are sent to it! How often
have I desired to gather your children to-
gether as a hen gathers her brood under
her wings, and you were not willing!
35 See, your house is left to you. And I tell
you, you will not see me until the time

m Gk *hid in* *n* Gk *He* *o* Gk lacks *for me*

13.18–21 Cf. Mt 13.31–33; Mk 4.30–32. Parables of remarkable growth. **13.19** A *tree* that provides shelter was a familiar metaphor for a kingdom (see Ezek 17.22–24; 31.2–9; Dan 4.10–12). **13.21** *Yeast* here is a positive metaphor for hidden growth (cf. 12.1).

13.22–17.10 The account of the journey to Jerusalem resumes (see note on 9.51–19.27). **13.22–30** Cf. Mt 7.13–14, 22–23; 8.11–12; 19.30; Mk 10.31. Statements on salvation and rejection set the tone for this phase of the journey. **13.23** The issue of whether many or *a few* would be saved was widely debated (see 2 Esd 7.47; 8.1; 9.15). **13.24** *Strive*. Luke emphasizes the struggle the few must undertake to be saved, not merely their moral choice (cf. Mt 7.13–14). **13.25** The image shifts to one of limited time before the door to salvation is *shut*. **13.26** *We ate and drank with you*. For other examples of these signs of community, see 7.34; 14.12–14. **13.27** *Evildoers*, an allusion to Ps 6.8. **13.28** On *Abraham and Isaac and Jacob*, the three patriarchs of Israel, see 20.38; Deut 1.8; Acts 3.13. *Thrown out*. See also Acts 3.19–25. **13.29** The *people* coming from every direction could be diaspora Jews or Gentiles (see Ps 107.2–3). *Eat in the kingdom of God*, a common image for salvation (see 14.15; 22.16, 29–30; see also Isa 25.6–8; 65.13–14; Rev 3.20; 19.9).

13.31–35 Cf. Mt 23.37–39. Jesus links his fate with that of the prophets. **13.31** On Jesus' rejection of the counsel of *some Pharisees*, see also 19.39. *Herod* Antipas. See note on 3.1; see also 3.19–20; 9.7–9; 23.6–12. **13.32** To call Herod a *fox* is a dangerous insult. *The third day*, an allusion to the resurrection (see also 9.22; 18.33; 24.7, 21, 46; 1 Cor 15.4). **13.33** *I must*. In Luke, this necessity is not fate but obedience to God's will (see also 4.43; 7.30; 22.42; Acts 2.23; 4.28). **13.34** *Jerusalem* is the focus of the impending confrontation (19.41–44). On the death of *prophets*, see 11.50–51; 2 Chr 24.20–22; Jer 26.20–23; Acts 7.52. The conflict of wills is clear (*I desired, you were not willing*). The outstretched *wings* of the divine presence in the temple sheltered Israel (Pss 17.8; 57.1; 61.4). **13.35** The *house* forsaken is an image of judgment on the temple (see Jer 22.5–6). *Blessed . . . of the Lord*. The greeting is a royal welcome from Ps 118.26, actually spoken in Lk 19.38.

comes when[p] you say, 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.' "

Jesus Heals the Man with Dropsy

14 On one occasion when Jesus[q] was going to the house of a leader of the Pharisees to eat a meal on the sabbath, they were watching him closely. 2 Just then, in front of him, there was a man who had dropsy. 3 And Jesus asked the lawyers and Pharisees, "Is it lawful to cure people on the sabbath, or not?" 4 But they were silent. So Jesus[q] took him and healed him, and sent him away. 5 Then he said to them, "If one of you has a child[r] or an ox that has fallen into a well, will you not immediately pull it out on a sabbath day?" 6 And they could not reply to this.

Humility and Hospitality

7 When he noticed how the guests chose the places of honor, he told them a parable. 8 "When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down at the place of honor, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host; 9 and the host who invited both of you may come and say to you, 'Give this person your place,' and then in disgrace you would start to take the lowest place. 10 But when you are invited, go and sit down at the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher'; then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at the table with you. 11 For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

12 He said also to the one who had invited him, "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. 13 But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. 14 And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

The Parable of the Great Dinner

15 One of the dinner guests, on hearing this, said to him, "Blessed is anyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!" 16 Then Jesus[q] said to him, "Someone gave a great dinner and invited many. 17 At the time for the dinner he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for everything is ready now.' 18 But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of land, and I must go out and see it; please accept my regrets.' 19 Another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please accept my regrets.' 20 Another said, 'I have just been married, and therefore I cannot come.' 21 So the slave returned and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and said to his slave, 'Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.' 22 And the slave said, 'Sir, what you ordered has been done, and there is still

p Other ancient authorities lack *the time comes when* *q* Gk *he* *r* Other ancient authorities read *a donkey*

14.1–24 A meal with lawyers and Pharisees provides the backdrop for a healing controversy and several dinner-table teachings on the kingdom. **14.1–6** The fourth conflict over sabbath observance (6.1–5; 6.6–11; 13.10–17) and the third meal with a Pharisee (7.36–50; 11.37–54; see also 5.29–32; 15.1–2). **14.1** The *watching* is unfriendly (see 11.53–54). **14.2** *Dropsy*, a condition of severe fluid retention. **14.3** *Lawyers*. See note on 7.30. *Is it lawful?* The question concerns interpretation of the Jewish law (see also 6.2; 13.15–16). **14.5** On the required assistance to an *ox* or donkey (see text note *r*), see Ex 23.5; Deut 22.4.

14.7–14 Traditional wisdom about taking a modest place at a feast (Prov 25.6–7) illustrates a proverb (14.11) about being humbled or exalted. **14.7** *Parable* here refers to sage advice (see note on 6.39). **14.8** *Wedding banquet*, an image of the heavenly feast (cf. Mt 22.1–14; see Lk 13.29; 14.14–15). **14.11** See 18.14. **14.13** Inviting *the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind* is not customary etiquette, but it conforms to the priorities of the kingdom (see 4.18; 7.22; 14.21).

14.15–24 Cf. Mt 22.1–14. A final teaching set at the Pharisee's banquet (see 14.1) conveys a pointed warning about the consequences of refusing an invitation to enter the kingdom. **14.15** *Eat bread in the kingdom*. See note on 13.29. **14.18–20** The *excuses* here correspond

room.' 23 Then the master said to the
slave, 'Go out into the roads and lanes,
and compel people to come in, so that my
house may be filled. 24 For I tell you,[s]
none of those who were invited will taste
my dinner.' "

The Cost of Discipleship

25 Now large crowds were traveling
with him; and he turned and said to them,
26 "Whoever comes to me and does not
hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even
life itself, cannot be my disciple. 27 Whoever does not carry the cross and follow
me cannot be my disciple. 28 For which of
you, intending to build a tower, does not
first sit down and estimate the cost, to see
whether he has enough to complete it?
29 Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it
will begin to ridicule him, 30 saying, 'This
fellow began to build and was not able to
finish.' 31 Or what king, going out to wage
war against another king, will not sit down
first and consider whether he is able with
ten thousand to oppose the one who
comes against him with twenty thousand?
32 If he cannot, then, while the other is
still far away, he sends a delegation and
asks for the terms of peace. 33 So therefore, none of you can become my disciple
if you do not give up all your possessions.
34 "Salt is good; but if salt has lost its
taste, how can its saltiness be restored?[t]
35 It is fit neither for the soil nor for the
manure pile; they throw it away. Let anyone with ears to hear listen!"

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

15 Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to
him. 2 And the Pharisees and the scribes
were grumbling and saying, "This fellow
welcomes sinners and eats with them."
3 So he told them this parable:
4 "Which one of you, having a hundred
sheep and losing one of them, does not
leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness
and go after the one that is lost until he
finds it? 5 When he has found it, he lays it
on his shoulders and rejoices. 6 And when
he comes home, he calls together his
friends and neighbors, saying to them,
'Rejoice with me, for I have found my
sheep that was lost.' 7 Just so, I tell you,
there will be more joy in heaven over
one sinner who repents than over ninety-
nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

The Parable of the Lost Coin

8 "Or what woman having ten silver
coins,[u] if she loses one of them, does not

s The Greek word for *you* here is plural
t Or *how can it be used for seasoning?*
u Gk *drachmas*, each worth about a day's wage for a laborer

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roughly to legitimate exemptions from a call to holy war (Deut 20.5–8). **14.23** *Roads and lanes* would be outside the town, probably an allusion to those "outside" Israel, i.e., the Gentiles (see 3.8; Deut 32.21; Acts 13.46; 18.6; 28.23–28).

14.25–35 Cf. Mt 10.37–38; 5.13; Mk 9.49–50. These verses recall the loyalty tests of holy war (Ex 32.25–29; Deut 33.8–9). **14.26** *Hate*, prophetic hyperbole for the uncompromising loyalty required toward Jesus and the true family of disciples (8.19–21; 9.59–60; see also 18.28–30). **14.27** *Carry the cross*. See 9.23–27. **14.33** *Give up all your possessions*. See 12.33; 18.22; see also Acts 5.1–11. **14.34** In its Lucan context, the saying on *salt* probably refers to the need for disciples to maintain their firm loyalty (cf. Mk 9.50). **14.35** On the warning to *listen*, see note on 8.8; see also 15.1.

15.1–32 Three parables on the lost and found. Only the first has a parallel in Matthew (see note on 15.3–7). **15.1–2** These verses introduce the parables and define the "lost." **15.1** *Tax collectors and sinners*. See note on 5.30; see also 7.29–30. **15.2** On the Pharisees' *grumbling* about Jesus' meal fellowship, see 5.30; 7.39; 19.7; see also note on 15.25–30.

15.3–7 Cf. Mt 18.12–14. This parable closely parallels the next (15.8–10). **15.4** On concern for the *lost*, see 15.6, 9, 24, 32; 19.10; see also Ezek 34.16. **15.6** The party with *friends and neighbors* is extravagant (see also 15.9, 22–24). **15.7** *Joy in heaven*. See also 15.10, 32. In Luke, *repentance* is not only an obligation (see 3.3, 8–9; 13.3, 5; see also Acts 2.38; 3.19; 8.22; 17.30; 26.20) but a gift or opportunity (5.31–32; 16.30; see also Acts 5.31; 11.18).

15.8–10 The second of the paired parables focuses on the intensity of the search. **15.8** The *coins* are *drachmas* (see text note *u*), which had only small value in this era.

light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? 9 When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.' 10 Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

The Parable of the Prodigal and His Brother

11 Then Jesus[v] said, "There was a man who had two sons. 12 The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.' So he divided his property between them. 13 A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. 14 When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. 16 He would gladly have filled himself with[w] the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. 17 But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! 18 I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands." ' 20 So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. 21 Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'[x] 22 But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23 And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; 24 for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate.

25 "Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. 27 He replied, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.' 28 Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. 29 But he answered his father, 'Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!' 31 Then the father[v] said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. 32 But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.' "

v Gk *he* w Other ancient authorities read *filled his stomach with* x Other ancient authorities add *Treat me like one of your hired servants*

15.11–32 Only Luke tells this story of the lost son and the loving father. **15.12** Traditional wisdom counseled against giving an inheritance before one's death (Sir 33.20–24). That wisdom also counseled against giving to sinners (Sir 12.4–6). **15.13** *Dissolute living* is not defined, except by the elder brother (15.30). **15.15–16** It would be shameful for a Jewish boy to feed *pigs* and eat their food (see note on 8.32). **15.17–19** The younger son's sober speech to himself begins his return, or repentance. **15.18** *Against heaven*, i.e., against God (cf. Ex 10.16). **15.19** The concept of being *worthy* is generally tied to observance of the law (see note on 7.4–5). **15.20** On the father's response of *compassion*, see 7.13; see also Jer 30.18; 31.18–20; Hos 11.1–9. **15.22** The festive clothes display the extravagance of the celebration (see Gen 41.42). **15.23** Meat was not often eaten, so killing the *fatted calf* was a sign of special celebration. **15.25–30** The portrayal of the *elder son* and his resentment may be a subtle criticism of the grumbling Pharisees and scribes (15.1–2). **15.30** *This son of yours*. The elder son distances himself from both his brother and his father (cf. 15.32, "this brother of yours"). **15.31** The inheritance rights of the elder son are protected (see also 5.30–32). **15.32** *We had to celebrate*. The words reflect the obligation or necessity of mercy (see note on 2.49; 11.42).

The Parable of the Dishonest Manager

16 Then Jesus[y] said to the disciples,
"There was a rich man who had a
manager, and charges were brought to
him that this man was squandering his
property. 2 So he summoned him and said
to him, 'What is this that I hear about
you? Give me an accounting of your man-
agement, because you cannot be my man-
ager any longer.' 3 Then the manager said
to himself, 'What will I do, now that my
master is taking the position away from
me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I
am ashamed to beg. 4 I have decided what
to do so that, when I am dismissed as
manager, people may welcome me into
their homes.' 5 So, summoning his mas-
ter's debtors one by one, he asked the
first, 'How much do you owe my master?'
6 He answered, 'A hundred jugs of olive
oil.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, sit
down quickly, and make it fifty.' 7 Then
he asked another, 'And how much do you
owe?' He replied, 'A hundred containers
of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill
and make it eighty.' 8 And his master com-
mended the dishonest manager because
he had acted shrewdly; for the children of
this age are more shrewd in dealing with
their own generation than are the chil-
dren of light. 9 And I tell you, make
friends for yourselves by means of dis-
honest wealth[z] so that when it is gone,
they may welcome you into the eternal
homes.[a]
10 "Whoever is faithful in a very little
is faithful also in much; and whoever is
dishonest in a very little is dishonest also
in much. 11 If then you have not been
faithful with the dishonest wealth,[z] who
will entrust to you the true riches? 12 And
if you have not been faithful with what
belongs to another, who will give you
what is your own? 13 No slave can serve
two masters; for a slave will either hate
the one and love the other, or be devoted
to the one and despise the other. You can-
not serve God and wealth."[z]

The Law and the Kingdom of God

14 The Pharisees, who were lovers of
money, heard all this, and they ridiculed
him. 15 So he said to them, "You are those
who justify yourselves in the sight of oth-
ers; but God knows your hearts; for what
is prized by human beings is an abomina-
tion in the sight of God.
16 "The law and the prophets were
in effect until John came; since then the

y Gk *he* z Gk *mammon* a Gk *tents*

16.1–31 Jesus warns of the dangers of wealth. **16.1–13** Cf. Mt 6.24. An enigmatic parable is given several applications. **16.1** The audience is again the *disciples* (cf. 15.1–2). *Manager.* See note on 12.42–43. *Squandering* could be merely inept management (see 15.13), but later the manager is called *dishonest* (16.8). **16.2** The *accounting* is probably an inventory of possessions and transactions in anticipation of a new manager. **16.5–7** The dishonest man uses his last opportunity as manager to obligate his *master's debtors* to himself (see also 7.41–43). Some interpret his actions as eliminating his own personal commission from the debt. **16.8** *Commended.* The commendation is either ironic, or approval of his prudent elimination of the commission, or acknowledgment of his cleverness in dealing with an urgent situation. *Shrewd* (Greek *phronimos*) can also be translated "prudent" (see 12.42). *Children of light,* a term used in the NT for Christian disciples (see Jn 12.36; Eph 5.8; 1 Thess 5.5). **16.9** This verse seems to offer a second conclusion to the parable, perhaps as an ironic question: How will friends made from *dishonest wealth* (lit. "the mammon of wickedness") be able to welcome you into the *eternal homes*? (See 6.24; 16.25; 18.25.) **16.10–12** A separate application focuses on the issue of responsible behavior. **16.11** On the value of the *true riches,* see also 12.33–34. **16.12** *What belongs to another, what is your own,* perhaps contrasting worldly goods with the disciples' true possession, the kingdom of God (see 6.20; 14.33). **16.13** A final, general application of the parable. *Serve.* The issue is not greed but idolatry (Ex 20.3; Deut 5.7; 6.13).

16.14–18 Cf. Mt 11.12–13; 5.18; 19.9; Mk 10.11–12. Three unrelated sayings (vv. 14–15, 16–17, 18) provide a rough transition to the parable of Lazarus and the rich man. **16.14** Opposing teachers regularly accused each other of being *lovers of money.* **16.15** *Justify yourselves.* See 10.29; cf. 18.14. *God knows your hearts.* See Prov 21.2; 24.12; Acts 1.24; 15.8. *What is prized by human beings* here refers to idolatrous love of money. *Abomination.* See Deut 7.25. **16.16** In Luke, John the Baptist stands at the apex of the age of *the law and the prophets* (see note on 7.28). The time of the proclamation of *the kingdom of God* is a new regime (4.43; 8.1; Acts 8.12). *Everyone tries to enter it by force.* This difficult phrase should probably be translated with emphasis on the passive force of the verb: "And everyone is constrained [Greek

good news of the kingdom of God is proclaimed, and everyone tries to enter it by force.[b] 17 But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one stroke of a letter in the law to be dropped.

18 "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and whoever marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery.

The Rich Man and Lazarus

19 "There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. 20 And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, 21 who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man's table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. 22 The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham.[c] The rich man also died and was buried. 23 In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side.[d] 24 He called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames.' 25 But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. 26 Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us.' 27 He said, 'Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father's house— 28 for I have five brothers—that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment.' 29 Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.' 30 He said, 'No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' 31 He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.' "

Some Sayings of Jesus

17 Jesus[e] said to his disciples, "Occasions for stumbling are bound to come, but woe to anyone by whom they come! 2 It would be better for you if a millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea than for you to cause one of these little ones to stumble. 3 Be on your guard! If another disciple[f] sins, you must rebuke the offender, and if there is repentance, you must forgive. 4 And if the same person sins against you seven times a day, and turns back to you seven times and says, 'I repent,' you must forgive."

5 The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" 6 The Lord replied, "If you had faith the size of a[g] mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you.

7 "Who among you would say to your slave who has just come in from plowing or tending sheep in the field, 'Come here at once and take your place at the table'? 8 Would you not rather say to him, 'Prepare supper for me, put on your apron and serve me while I eat and drink; later

b Or *everyone is strongly urged to enter it* *c* Gk *to Abraham's bosom* *d* Gk *in his bosom* *e* Gk *He* *f* Gk *your brother* *g* Gk *faith as a grain of*

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biazesthai, 'forced, compelled,' i.e., by God] to enter" (see text note *b*; see also 14.23). **16.18** Luke's version of this isolated statement presupposes Jewish customs that grant only the husband the right of divorce (see Deut 24.1–4; cf. Mk 10.11–12; 1 Cor 7.10–13).

16.19–31 The parable of the reversal of the states of the rich man and poor Lazarus recalls Jesus' statements in 6.20–25. **16.20** This *Lazarus* does not seem related to the dead man resuscitated in Jn 11. **16.21** *Dogs*, a sign of Lazarus's outcast status (see 1 Kings 21.19, 24; Ps 22.16; Mt 15.26–27; Mk 7.27–28). **16.22** On the honored place with *Abraham*, see 3.8; 13.28–29; see also Gen 15.15; 47.30; Deut 31.16. **16.23** *Hades*. See note on 10.15. **16.28** *Warn*, lit. "bear witness." See also Acts 2.40. **16.29** The resurrected Jesus teaches from *Moses and the prophets* (see 24.26–27, 44–48; see also 16.16–17). **16.31** *Even if someone rises from the dead*, an obvious allusion to Jesus' resurrection. See 9.22; Acts 1.22.

17.1–10 The second phase of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem (13.22–17.10) concludes with diverse sayings to the disciples. **17.1** *Occasions for stumbling*, i.e., apostasy (see 7.23). *Woe*. Inevitability and divine necessity do not eliminate personal responsibility (see also 22.22). **17.2** *These little ones*, probably the disciples (see 10.21; 12.32).

you may eat and drink'? 9 Do you thank
the slave for doing what was commanded?
10 So you also, when you have done all
that you were ordered to do, say, 'We are
worthless slaves; we have done only what
we ought to have done!' "

Jesus Cleanses Ten Lepers

11 On the way to Jerusalem Jesus[h]
was going through the region between
Samaria and Galilee. 12 As he entered a
village, ten lepers[i] approached him.
Keeping their distance, 13 they called out,
saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"
14 When he saw them, he said to them,
"Go and show yourselves to the priests."
And as they went, they were made clean.
15 Then one of them, when he saw that he
was healed, turned back, praising God
with a loud voice. 16 He prostrated himself
at Jesus'[j] feet and thanked him. And he
was a Samaritan. 17 Then Jesus asked,
"Were not ten made clean? But the other
nine, where are they? 18 Was none of
them found to return and give praise to
God except this foreigner?" 19 Then he
said to him, "Get up and go on your way;
your faith has made you well."

The Coming of the Kingdom

20 Once Jesus[h] was asked by the
Pharisees when the kingdom of God was
coming, and he answered, "The kingdom
of God is not coming with things that can
be observed; 21 nor will they say, 'Look,
here it is!' or 'There it is!' For, in fact, the
kingdom of God is among[k] you."

22 Then he said to the disciples, "The
days are coming when you will long to see
one of the days of the Son of Man, and
you will not see it. 23 They will say to you,
'Look there!' or 'Look here!' Do not go,
do not set off in pursuit. 24 For as the
lightning flashes and lights up the sky
from one side to the other, so will the Son
of Man be in his day.[l] 25 But first he must
endure much suffering and be rejected by
this generation. 26 Just as it was in the days
of Noah, so too it will be in the days of the
Son of Man. 27 They were eating and
drinking, and marrying and being given
in marriage, until the day Noah entered
the ark, and the flood came and de-
stroyed all of them. 28 Likewise, just as it
was in the days of Lot: they were eating
and drinking, buying and selling, planting
and building, 29 but on the day that Lot
left Sodom, it rained fire and sulfur from
heaven and destroyed all of them 30 — it
will be like that on the day that the Son of
Man is revealed. 31 On that day, anyone
on the housetop who has belongings in
the house must not come down to take
them away; and likewise anyone in the
field must not turn back. 32 Remember
Lot's wife. 33 Those who try to make their

h Gk *he* *i* The terms *leper* and *leprosy* can refer to several diseases *j* Gk *his* *k* Or *within*
l Other ancient authorities lack *in his day*

17.5 *Apostles,* the twelve closest delegates (see 6.13). **17.10** *Worthless slaves* implies those to whom nothing is owed.

17.11–19.27 Jesus approaches Jerusalem in the third phase of the journey (see note on 9.51–19.27). **17.11–19** The healing of the ten lepers contains echoes of the healing in 5.12–14. **17.11** Luke's reference to *the region between Samaria and Galilee* moves the journey along but the intended location is not at all clear. **17.12** *Keeping their distance,* as the Jewish law required (see Lev 13.46; Num 5.2–3). **17.14** *Show yourselves to the priests,* i.e., for examination (see Lev 13.2–8; 14.2–3). **17.16** *A Samaritan.* See note on 9.52. **17.19** *Your faith has made you well.* See also 7.50; 8.48; 18.42.

17.20–37 The advent of the kingdom and the coming of the Son of Man are treated here and again in 21.7–36. **17.20** As in Acts 1.6–8, the question of *when the kingdom of God was coming* is misguided and seeks signs (see also 21.7). **17.21–22** Like the word of God in Deut 30.11–14, the kingdom is already present as it is announced *among you* (see note on 4.43; see also 6.20; 8.1; 9.2; 10.9, 11; 11.20; 12.32; 16.16). *The days of the Son of Man,* however, await the full revelation of the last judgment (17.30; see also Dan 7.9–14). **17.24** *As the lightning flashes.* The return of the Son of Man will be a sudden, highly visible appearance. **17.25** See also 9.22; 24.26. *First* may imply a heavenly timetable that gives opportunity for repentance (see Acts 3.17–26). *This generation.* See note on 7.31. **17.26** *The days of Noah.* See Gen 6.5–8.22. **17.27** *Eating . . . being given in marriage,* i.e., engaging in ordinary activities until the unexpected flood destroyed them. **17.28** *The days of Lot.* See Gen 19.1–25. *Eating . . . building.* The list depicts ordinary activities, not the corruption usually associated with Sodom (cf. Ezek 16.49–50). **17.29** *Fire . . . from heaven.* See 9.54; 10.12. **17.32** The fate of *Lot's wife,* who looked back to view the destruction of Sodom (see Gen 19.26), serves as a warning not to *turn back* (17.31). **17.33** See also 9.24; Mt 10.39;

life secure will lose it, but those who lose
their life will keep it. 34 I tell you, on that
night there will be two in one bed; one will
be taken and the other left. 35 There will
be two women grinding meal together;
one will be taken and the other left."[m]
37 Then they asked him, "Where, Lord?"
He said to them, "Where the corpse is,
there the vultures will gather."

The Parable of the Widow and the Unjust Judge

18 Then Jesus[n] told them a parable
about their need to pray always
and not to lose heart. 2 He said, "In a cer-
tain city there was a judge who neither
feared God nor had respect for people.
3 In that city there was a widow who kept
coming to him and saying, 'Grant me jus-
tice against my opponent.' 4 For a while he
refused; but later he said to himself,
'Though I have no fear of God and no
respect for anyone, 5 yet because this
widow keeps bothering me, I will grant
her justice, so that she may not wear me
out by continually coming.'"[o] 6 And the
Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust
judge says. 7 And will not God grant jus-
tice to his chosen ones who cry to him day
and night? Will he delay long in helping
them? 8 I tell you, he will quickly grant
justice to them. And yet, when the Son of
Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector

9 He also told this parable to some
who trusted in themselves that they were
righteous and regarded others with con-
tempt: 10 "Two men went up to the tem-
ple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other
a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee, standing
by himself, was praying thus, 'God, I
thank you that I am not like other people:
thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like
this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I
give a tenth of all my income.' 13 But the
tax collector, standing far off, would not
even look up to heaven, but was beating
his breast and saying, 'God, be merciful to
me, a sinner!' 14 I tell you, this man went
down to his home justified rather than the
other; for all who exalt themselves will be
humbled, but all who humble themselves
will be exalted."

Jesus Blesses Little Children

15 People were bringing even infants
to him that he might touch them; and
when the disciples saw it, they sternly or-
dered them not to do it. 16 But Jesus
called for them and said, "Let the little
children come to me, and do not stop

m Other ancient authorities add verse 36, *"Two will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left."*
n Gk *he* *o* Or *so that she may not finally come and slap me in the face*

16.25; Mk 8.35; Jn 12.25. **17.34** On the swift and unexpected judgment *on that night*, see also 12.38–40, 46; Mt 24.43–51. **17.37** This saying seems to mean that to find those left, one must look for the circling *vultures* (Prov 30.17; Hos 8.1). Like Amos's "day of the LORD," the day of the Son of Man is "darkness, not light" for many (Am 5.18–20).

18.1–8 This parable provides instruction on how to prepare for the coming days. **18.1** On endurance in prayer (*not to lose heart*), see 11.5–13. **18.2** One who has not *feared God* would lack the wisdom to judge equitably (see Prov 1.7; see also Acts 10.2, 22, 35; 13.16, 26). **18.3** A *widow* had a particular claim for justice in Israel (Deut 10.17–18; 24.17; 27.19; Sir 35.12–25; see also Lk 7.12; 20.47; Acts 6.1). **18.6** *Listen.* It is not the judge's indifference (18.4) but his eventual yielding to the widow's complaint (18.5) that is the point of the parable. **18.7** On God's granting *justice* or vindication, see Deut 32.34–38; Pss 18.47; 34.17–18; 94.1; 149.7. *Chosen ones.* See Ps 105.6, 43; Isa 43.20; 65.9, 22; see also Lk 9.35; 23.35. The questions suggest an awareness of a *delay* in the expected vindication (see also Mt 24.48; 25.5, 19). **18.8b** The last half of the verse provides a second conclusion (see also 16.9). *Will he find faith on earth?* Cf. 5.20; 7.9; 22.32.

18.9–14 The Pharisee and tax collector are stock examples of how contempt for others is the regular corollary of self-righteousness (see 5.29–32; 7.29–30; 15.1–2; see also 10.29; 16.15). **18.11** *Praying*, lit. "praying to himself." See also 12.17–19. **18.12** On the *tenth*, or tithe, see 11.42; Deut 14.22–23. **18.13** *Beating his breast*, a sign of repentance (see 23.48). The plea for God to be *merciful* is a prayer for pardon (see Pss 25.11; 51.1; 65.3; 78.38; 79.9). **18.14** *Justified*, i.e., vindicated as truly righteous. This must come from God, not from one's own claim of righteousness (see 14.11; Rom 3.21–26).

18.15–17 Cf. Mt 19.13–15; Mk 10.13–16. The parallels with Mark's Gospel, broken off at 9.51, now resume. **18.15** *Sternly ordered*, lit. "re-

them; for it is to such as these that the
kingdom of God belongs. 17 Truly I tell
you, whoever does not receive the king-
dom of God as a little child will never
enter it."

The Rich Ruler

18 A certain ruler asked him, "Good
Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal
life?" 19 Jesus said to him, "Why do you
call me good? No one is good but God
alone. 20 You know the commandments:
'You shall not commit adultery; You shall
not murder; You shall not steal; You shall
not bear false witness; Honor your father
and mother.'" 21 He replied, "I have kept
all these since my youth." 22 When Jesus
heard this, he said to him, "There is still
one thing lacking. Sell all that you own
and distribute the money[p] to the poor,
and you will have treasure in heaven;
then come, follow me." 23 But when he
heard this, he became sad; for he was very
rich. 24 Jesus looked at him and said,
"How hard it is for those who have wealth
to enter the kingdom of God! 25 Indeed, it
is easier for a camel to go through the eye
of a needle than for someone who is rich
to enter the kingdom of God."
26 Those who heard it said, "Then
who can be saved?" 27 He replied, "What
is impossible for mortals is possible
for God."
28 Then Peter said, "Look, we have
left our homes and followed you." 29 And
he said to them, "Truly I tell you, there is
no one who has left house or wife or
brothers or parents or children, for the
sake of the kingdom of God, 30 who will
not get back very much more in this age,
and in the age to come eternal life."

Jesus Again Foretells His Death and Resurrection

31 Then he took the twelve aside and
said to them, "See, we are going up to Je-
rusalem, and everything that is written
about the Son of Man by the prophets will
be accomplished. 32 For he will be hand-
ed over to the Gentiles; and he will be
mocked and insulted and spat upon.
33 After they have flogged him, they will
kill him, and on the third day he will rise
again." 34 But they understood nothing
about all these things; in fact, what he said
was hidden from them, and they did not
grasp what was said.

A Blind Beggar Recognizes the Son of David

35 As he approached Jericho, a blind
man was sitting by the roadside begging.
36 When he heard a crowd going by, he
asked what was happening. 37 They told
him, "Jesus of Nazareth[q] is passing by."
38 Then he shouted, "Jesus, Son of David,

p Gk lacks *the money* q Gk *the Nazorean*

buked." Cf. 9.55. **18.17** The qualities of openness, low status, and no claim to achievement characterize the *little child.*

18.18–30 Cf. Mt 19.16–30; Mk 10.17–31. An encounter with a rich ruler continues the teaching on how to inherit eternal life (see also 18.9–17). **18.18** The *ruler*'s question is the same as the lawyer's in 10.25. On Jesus as a *Teacher*, or interpreter of the law, see 7.40; 8.49; 9.38; 10.25; 11.45; 12.13; 19.39; 20.21, 28, 39; 21.7; 22.11. **18.19** *No one is good but God alone.* God's goodness is a consistent theme in Israel's worship (1 Chr 16.34; Pss 34.8; 106.1; 118.1, 29; see also Lk 11.13). **18.20** For the list of *commandments*, see Ex 20.12–16; Deut 5.16–20 (cf. Lk 10.26–27). **18.22** Discipleship to this teacher is not simply better observance of the law; the *one thing lacking* requires *all* (see also 12.33). On care for the *poor*, see note on 6.20. **18.25** *A camel . . . through the eye of a needle*, an image of extreme difficulty (see also 6.41–42; 16.17). **18.26** *Who can be saved?* Cf. 13.23. **18.27** All is *possible for God* (see also 1.37; Gen 18.14), thus even a rich person can enter the kingdom (see 19.1–10). **18.28** See 5.11. **18.29–30** These verses restate the assurances of 12.22–34.

18.31–34 Cf. Mt 20.17–19; Mk 10.32–34. The sixth prophecy of the Passion (9.22, 44; 12.50; 13.32–34; 17.25). **18.31** Jesus' death is warranted as *written . . . by the prophets*, but without a clear reference to a particular prophetic text (see also 24.27, 44–46; Acts 3.18; 13.27; cf. Acts 4.25–28 [based on Ps 2]; 8.30–35 [based on Isa 53]). **18.32** *Handed over to the Gentiles.* See Acts 4.25–28; cf. Mt 20.18–19; Mk 10.33. **18.34** The threefold emphasis on their ignorance echoes 9.45 (see also 2.50; 24.13–35).

18.35–43 Cf. Mt 20.29–34; 9.27–31; Mk 10.46–52. Jesus is announced as the Son of David before his royal entrance into Jerusalem (19.29–40). **18.35** Luke sets this story at Jesus' entrance to *Jericho*, a city northeast of Jerusalem in the Jordan Valley (cf. Mk 10.46). The unnamed *blind man* is an oracle (see also 2.26, 30) who sees the Davidic ruler that others in the entourage do not recognize. **18.38** *Son of David.*

have mercy on me!" 39 Those who were in
front sternly ordered him to be quiet; but
he shouted even more loudly, "Son of Da-
vid, have mercy on me!" 40 Jesus stood still
and ordered the man to be brought to
him; and when he came near, he asked
him, 41 "What do you want me to do for
you?" He said, "Lord, let me see again."
42 Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight;
your faith has saved you." 43 Immediately
he regained his sight and followed him,
glorifying God; and all the people, when
they saw it, praised God.

Jesus and Zacchaeus

19 He entered Jericho and was pass-
ing through it. 2 A man was there
named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax col-
lector and was rich. 3 He was trying to see
who Jesus was, but on account of the
crowd he could not, because he was short
in stature. 4 So he ran ahead and climbed
a sycamore tree to see him, because he
was going to pass that way. 5 When Jesus
came to the place, he looked up and said
to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come
down; for I must stay at your house to-
day." 6 So he hurried down and was
happy to welcome him. 7 All who saw it
began to grumble and said, "He has gone
to be the guest of one who is a sinner."
8 Zacchaeus stood there and said to the
Lord, "Look, half of my possessions,
Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have
defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay
back four times as much." 9 Then Jesus
said to him, "Today salvation has come to
this house, because he too is a son of
Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to
seek out and to save the lost."

The Parable of the Ten Pounds

11 As they were listening to this, he
went on to tell a parable, because he was
near Jerusalem, and because they sup-
posed that the kingdom of God was to
appear immediately. 12 So he said, "A
nobleman went to a distant country to get
royal power for himself and then return.
13 He summoned ten of his slaves, and
gave them ten pounds,[r] and said to
them, 'Do business with these until I come
back.' 14 But the citizens of his country
hated him and sent a delegation after
him, saying, 'We do not want this man to
rule over us.' 15 When he returned, hav-
ing received royal power, he ordered
these slaves, to whom he had given the
money, to be summoned so that he might
find out what they had gained by trading.
16 The first came forward and said, 'Lord,
your pound has made ten more pounds.'
17 He said to him, 'Well done, good slave!
Because you have been trustworthy in a
very small thing, take charge of ten cities.'
18 Then the second came, saying, 'Lord,
your pound has made five pounds.' 19 He

r The mina, rendered here by *pound*, was about three months' wages for a laborer

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See also 1.32, 69; 2.4, 11; 3.31; 20.41–44. **18.42** The command *receive your sight* recalls the reading in 4.18 (see also 7.22; Acts 9.17–18). *Your faith has saved you.* See 7.50; 8.48; 17.19. **18.43** *All the people . . . praised God.* See 5.25–26; 7.16; 8.39; 13.13; 17.15.

19.1–10 The story of Zacchaeus illustrates earlier statements concerning tax collectors (5.29–32), the rich (18.25–27), and the lost (ch. 15). **19.2** *Zacchaeus* was a common Jewish name (Ezra 2.9; Neh 7.14; 2 Macc 10.19) meaning "innocent" or "clean." *A chief tax collector* played a role in the Roman bureaucracy that many Jews regarded as traitorous to their law (see 20.22; see also note on 5.30). **19.5** *I must stay at your house.* The comment implies divine necessity (see note on 2.49). **19.7** The crowd's reaction recalls those in 5.30; 7.34, 39; 15.2. **19.8** Zacchaeus's promise to give *half* to the poor is voluntary (cf. 18.18–25). *I will pay back four times as much,* fulfilling the strictest laws of restitution (see Ex 22.1; Lev 5.16; Num 5.7). **19.9** *Today* stresses the present reality of salvation (see note on 4.43; see also 2.11; 4.21; 5.26; 23.43; Deut 26.16–19). *Son of Abraham,* i.e., an Israelite (see also 3.8; 13.16; cf. Gal 3.29). **19.10** *To save the lost.* See note on 15.4.

19.11–27 Cf. Mt 25.14–30; Mk 13.34. This parable concludes the extended journey to Jerusalem (9.51–19.27) and again corrects misunderstandings about the present reality and future appearance of the kingdom of God (see 17.20–37; 21.7–36; Acts 1.6–8). **19.12** *To get royal power,* i.e., to acquire the status of a vassal king from an overlord (see note on 3.1). This allegorical detail alludes to Jesus' own imminent departure and exaltation (24.26; Acts 2.32–35). **19.13** The *pounds,* or "minas" (see text note *r*), are distributed equally (cf. Mt 25.15). Each was worth 100 drachmas (see note on 15.8). **19.14** Another allegorical detail seems to refer to Jesus' rejection (see 23.18). **19.17** *Take charge of ten cities.*

said to him, 'And you, rule over five cities.' 20 Then the other came, saying,
'Lord, here is your pound. I wrapped it
up in a piece of cloth, 21 for I was afraid of
you, because you are a harsh man; you
take what you did not deposit, and reap
what you did not sow.' 22 He said to him, 'I
will judge you by your own words, you
wicked slave! You knew, did you, that I
was a harsh man, taking what I did not
deposit and reaping what I did not sow?
23 Why then did you not put my money
into the bank? Then when I returned, I
could have collected it with interest.' 24 He
said to the bystanders, 'Take the pound
from him and give it to the one who has
ten pounds.' 25 (And they said to him,
'Lord, he has ten pounds!') 26 'I tell you, to
all those who have, more will be given; but
from those who have nothing, even what
they have will be taken away. 27 But as
for these enemies of mine who did not
want me to be king over them—bring
them here and slaughter them in my
presence.' "

Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

28 After he had said this, he went on
ahead, going up to Jerusalem.
29 When he had come near Beth-
phage and Bethany, at the place called the
Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disci-
ples, 30 saying, "Go into the village ahead
of you, and as you enter it you will find
tied there a colt that has never been rid-
den. Untie it and bring it here. 31 If any-
one asks you, 'Why are you untying it?'
just say this, 'The Lord needs it.' " 32 So
those who were sent departed and found
it as he had told them. 33 As they were
untying the colt, its owners asked them,
"Why are you untying the colt?" 34 They
said, "The Lord needs it." 35 Then they
brought it to Jesus; and after throwing
their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus
on it. 36 As he rode along, people kept
spreading their cloaks on the road. 37 As
he was now approaching the path down
from the Mount of Olives, the whole mul-
titude of the disciples began to praise God
joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds
of power that they had seen, 38 saying,

"Blessed is the king
who comes in the name of
the Lord!
Peace in heaven,
and glory in the highest
heaven!"

39 Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said
to him, "Teacher, order your disciples to
stop." 40 He answered, "I tell you, if these
were silent, the stones would shout out."

Jesus Weeps over Jerusalem

41 As he came near and saw the city,
he wept over it, 42 saying, "If you, even
you, had only recognized on this day the
things that make for peace! But now they
are hidden from your eyes. 43 Indeed, the
days will come upon you, when your ene-

The rewards are dispensed in direct proportion to performance. **19.26** See also 8.18; Mt 13.12; 25.29; Mk 4.25. **19.27** The conclusion of the story portrays with harsh realism how oriental kings could treat their enemies (19.14; see also 20.9–16). The detail may allude to the destruction of Jerusalem (see 21.20–24).

19.28–40 Cf. Mt 21.1–9; Mk 11.1–10; Jn 12.12–19. The journey that began in 9.51 now reaches its climax in Jerusalem. **19.29** *Bethphage and Bethany,* villages about two miles from Jerusalem, on the lower slope of the *Mount of Olives* (see also 24.50; Mt 21.1; 26.6; Mk 11.1; 14.3; Jn 11.1, 18; 12.1). The Mount of Olives is just east of Jerusalem; God was expected to appear there on the day of the Lord and become "king over all the earth" (see Zech 14.4–9). The two *disciples* are advance agents preparing for a royal entrance (see also 10.1). **19.30** The unridden *colt* marks a direct enactment of Zech 9.9 (see Mt 21.4–5; see also 1 Kings 1.33–35). **19.34** *The Lord needs it.* The colt is requisitioned as a royal prerogative. **19.36** Luke does not mention festal branches (cf. Mt 21.8; Mk 11.8; Jn 12.13), but *spreading their cloaks* has royal significance (cf. 2 Kings 9.13). **19.37** The *multitude of the disciples* again stresses Jesus' large following (see also 18.15, 36, 43; 19.3). **19.38** *Blessed . . . in the name of the Lord.* The acclamation (from Ps 118.26) is the usual greeting for Passover pilgrims (but with the word *king* added), and it also fulfills Jesus' royal prediction of 13.33. *Peace in heaven.* Cf. 2.14; 10.5–6; 12.51; 19.42. **19.39** The caution of *some of the Pharisees* recalls 13.31. **19.40** Jesus' response (lit. "the stones will cry out") is prophetic (cf. Hab 2.11).

19.41–44 Jesus' lament over Jerusalem is filled with allusions to oracles of destruction (2 Kings 8.11–12; Ps 137.9; Isa 29.3–10; 48.18; Jer 6.6–20; 8.18–21; 15.5; 23.38–40). **19.42** The attempt to keep the *peace* by silencing the acclamation (19.39) produces divine judgment. **19.43** The *ramparts* imply seige warfare such as Titus used against Jerusalem in 70 C.E., but also

mies will set up ramparts around you and
surround you, and hem you in on every
side. 44 They will crush you to the ground,
you and your children within you, and
they will not leave within you one stone
upon another; because you did not
recognize the time of your visitation
from God."[s]

Jesus Cleanses the Temple

45 Then he entered the temple and
began to drive out those who were selling
things there; 46 and he said, "It is written,
'My house shall be a house
of prayer';
but you have made it a den
of robbers."
47 Every day he was teaching in the
temple. The chief priests, the scribes, and
the leaders of the people kept looking for
a way to kill him; 48 but they did not find
anything they could do, for all the people
were spellbound by what they heard.

The Authority of Jesus Questioned

20 One day, as he was teaching the
people in the temple and telling
the good news, the chief priests and the
scribes came with the elders 2 and said to
him, "Tell us, by what authority are you
doing these things? Who is it who gave
you this authority?" 3 He answered them,
"I will also ask you a question, and you
tell me: 4 Did the baptism of John come
from heaven, or was it of human origin?"
5 They discussed it with one another, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say,
'Why did you not believe him?' 6 But if we
say, 'Of human origin,' all the people will
stone us; for they are convinced that John
was a prophet." 7 So they answered that
they did not know where it came from.
8 Then Jesus said to them, "Neither will I
tell you by what authority I am doing
these things."

The Parable of the Wicked Tenants

9 He began to tell the people this parable: "A man planted a vineyard, and
leased it to tenants, and went to another
country for a long time. 10 When the season came, he sent a slave to the tenants in
order that they might give him his share
of the produce of the vineyard; but the
tenants beat him and sent him away
empty-handed. 11 Next he sent another
slave; that one also they beat and insulted
and sent away empty-handed. 12 And he
sent still a third; this one also they
wounded and threw out. 13 Then the
owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I
do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps
they will respect him.' 14 But when the
tenants saw him, they discussed it among
themselves and said, 'This is the heir; let
us kill him so that the inheritance may be
ours.' 15 So they threw him out of the
vineyard and killed him. What then will
the owner of the vineyard do to them?

[s] Gk lacks *from God*

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cf. Isa 29.3 (see also Introduction). **19.44** *They will not leave . . . one stone upon another.* See also 19.40; 21.6. The fault lies in their failure to recognize Jesus as God's *visitation*, intended to save (1.68; 7.16) but now become judgment (Isa 29.6).

19.45–48 Cf. Mt 21.12–13; Mk 11.15–19; Jn 2.13–17. In a sudden visitation to the temple (see Mal 3.1–2), the Messiah drives merchants from it. **19.46** Restoring the temple as a *house of prayer* has prophetic precedent (Isa 56.7). *Den of robbers.* See Jer 7.11. **19.47** Jesus is *teaching in the temple* through ch. 21. On the efforts of the leaders to find *a way to kill him*, see 11.53–54; 22.2. **19.48** The response of the *people* remains positive (see also 21.38; 22.2; 23.27).

20.1–21.4 In a series of conflicts in the temple, Jesus' adversaries ask insincere questions to entrap or ridicule him, yet he still finds ways to teach with integrity. **20.1–8** Cf. Mt 21.23–27; Mk 11.27–33. **20.1** Jesus' daily teaching in the temple is linked with his "proclaiming," or *telling the good news* (see 4.18, 43; 7.22; 8.1; 9.6; 16.16). The *chief priests, scribes,* and *elders* are Jesus' primary adversaries in Jerusalem (see also 9.22; 19.47; 20.19; 22.52). **20.2** On the question of Jesus' *authority*, see 4.32, 36; 5.24; 11.14–23; see also 9.1; 10.19. **20.3** Jesus' *question* is not irrelevant: his anointing as God's Son is closely linked with his baptism by John (see 3.21–22). **20.4** *Baptism of John.* See 3.1–17; 7.24–30.

20.9–19 Cf. Mt 21.33–46; Mk 12.1–12. Jesus' parable presses his adversaries beyond predictable scholastic questions (see also 10.25–26; 18.18–19). **20.9** *Vineyard.* See Isa 5.1–7. **20.10–12** The mistreatment of the slaves recalls the treatment of the prophets and apostles (11.49; Acts 7.51–53). **20.13** *What shall I do?*, a common Lucan soliloquy (3.10, 14; 10.25; 12.17; 16.3; 18.18; Acts 2.37; 4.16; see also Isa 5.4). *My beloved son.* See 3.22; 9.35. **20.14** *They discussed it among themselves.* See 20.5; see also 19.47–48.

16 He will come and destroy those tenants
and give the vineyard to others." When
they heard this, they said, "Heaven for-
bid!" 17 But he looked at them and said,
"What then does this text mean:
'The stone that the builders
rejected
has become the cornerstone'?[t]
18 Everyone who falls on that stone will be
broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone
on whom it falls." 19 When the scribes and
chief priests realized that he had told this
parable against them, they wanted to lay
hands on him at that very hour, but they
feared the people.

The Question About Paying Taxes

20 So they watched him and sent spies
who pretended to be honest, in order to
trap him by what he said, so as to hand
him over to the jurisdiction and authority
of the governor. 21 So they asked him,
"Teacher, we know that you are right in
what you say and teach, and you show
deference to no one, but teach the way of
God in accordance with truth. 22 Is it law-
ful for us to pay taxes to the emperor, or
not?" 23 But he perceived their craftiness
and said to them, 24 "Show me a denarius.
Whose head and whose title does it bear?"
They said, "The emperor's." 25 He said to
them, "Then give to the emperor the
things that are the emperor's, and to God
the things that are God's." 26 And they
were not able in the presence of the peo-
ple to trap him by what he said; and being
amazed by his answer, they became silent.

The Question About the Resurrection

27 Some Sadducees, those who say
there is no resurrection, came to him
28 and asked him a question, "Teacher,
Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother
dies, leaving a wife but no children, the
man[u] shall marry the widow and raise
up children for his brother. 29 Now there
were seven brothers; the first married,
and died childless; 30 then the second
31 and the third married her, and so in
the same way all seven died childless.
32 Finally the woman also died. 33 In the
resurrection, therefore, whose wife will
the woman be? For the seven had mar-
ried her."

34 Jesus said to them, "Those who be-
long to this age marry and are given in
marriage; 35 but those who are considered
worthy of a place in that age and in the
resurrection from the dead neither marry
nor are given in marriage. 36 Indeed they
cannot die anymore, because they are like
angels and are children of God, being
children of the resurrection. 37 And the
fact that the dead are raised Moses him-
self showed, in the story about the bush,
where he speaks of the Lord as the God of
Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God
of Jacob. 38 Now he is God not of the

t Or *keystone* *u* Gk *his brother*

20.17 The text quoted is Ps 118.22, also quoted in Acts 4.11; 1 Pet 2.7. Another verse of this psalm is quoted in 13.35; 19.38. **20.18** The rejected but exalted *stone* (an allusion to Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection; see 9.22) will become an occasion for stumbling and judgment (see also 2.34; Isa 8.14–15; 1 Pet 2.6–8). **20.19** The division continues between the *people* and the rulers (see 19.47–48).

20.20–26 Cf. Mt 22.15–22; Mk 12.13–17. The second controversy in the temple (see also 20.1–8). **20.20** *They watched him.* See also 6.7; 14.1. The *governor* is Pilate (see 3.1; 23.1–2). **20.21** The traditional compliments (see Lev 19.15; Deut 1.17; 16.19) are patently hypocritical. **20.22** The question was difficult for Jews because of theological claims of the Roman order (see note on 20.24) and the dangers of opposing Rome. **20.24** A Roman *denarius* of this era bore the image of Tiberius Caesar (cf. Ex 20.4; Deut 5.8) and the inscription "TIBERIUS CAESAR, SON OF THE DIVINE AUGUSTUS, AUGUSTUS" (cf. Ex 20.23). **20.25** Jesus' answer changes the question from what one owes the emperor to what belongs to God (see also Rom 13.1–7; 1 Pet 2.13–17).

20.27–40 Cf. Mt 22.23–33; Mk 12.18–27. The third controversy introduces new opponents (cf. 20.1–8; 20.20–26). **20.27** The *Sadducees* denied the Pharisaic teachings of *resurrection* and angels (see also Acts 23.6–10) and were closely linked with the temple leadership (Acts 4.1; 5.17). **20.28–33** The case cited by the Sadducees is absurd but refers to the law of levirate (brother-in-law) marriage that kept a deceased husband's name alive (Deut 25.5–6; see also Gen 38.8). **20.34** *Marry*, i.e., to procreate. This is no longer necessary for those who inherit eternal life in the age to come. **20.37** *Moses himself.* Sadducees recognized only the authority of the books of Moses (the written Torah), which contain no explicit references to the resurrection. Jesus finds an implicit reference in Ex 3.6. **20.38** Moses is speaking of the *living* (i.e., resurrected) because the dead could not have a God at all.

dead, but of the living; for to him all of them are alive." 39 Then some of the scribes answered, "Teacher, you have spoken well." 40 For they no longer dared to ask him another question.

The Question About David's Son

41 Then he said to them, "How can they say that the Messiah[v] is David's son? 42 For David himself says in the book of Psalms,

'The Lord said to my Lord,
"Sit at my right hand,
43 until I make your enemies your footstool."'

44 David thus calls him Lord; so how can he be his son?"

Jesus Denounces the Scribes

45 In the hearing of all the people he said to the[w] disciples, 46 "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets. 47 They devour widows' houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation."

The Widow's Offering

21 He looked up and saw rich people putting their gifts into the treasury; 2 he also saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. 3 He said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them; 4 for all of them have contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on."

The Destruction of the Temple Foretold

5 When some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God, he said, 6 "As for these things that you see, the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down."

7 They asked him, "Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign that this is about to take place?" 8 And he said, "Beware that you are not led astray; for many will come in my name and say, 'I am he!'[x] and, 'The time is near!'[y] Do not go after them.

9 "When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end will not follow immediately." 10 Then he said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; 11 there will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and plagues; and there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven.

v Or *the Christ* w Other ancient authorities read *his* x Gk *I am* y Or *at hand*

20.41–44 Cf. Mt 22.41–46; Mk 12.35–37a. Jesus now poses a question to his former questioners. **20.41** *The Messiah is David's Son.* See note on 18.38; 2 Sam 7.8–16. **20.42–43** See Ps 110.1. For a somewhat different use of this text, see Acts 2.25–36. **20.44** Since elsewhere the messianic title *son* of David is applied to Jesus (18.38–39; see also 1.32, 69), the meaning here is that this title, though correct, is not adequate, especially insofar as it suggests Jesus' subordination to David.

20.45–47 Cf. Mt 23.1–36; Mk 12.37b–40. Jesus' concluding attack on the scribes recalls his denouncement of the Pharisees in 11.37–52. These are standard charges of hypocrisy often raised against religious professionals. **20.46** *Places of honor.* See 14.7–11. **20.47** *Widows.* See note on 18.3; cf. 21.1–4.

21.1–4 Cf. Mk 12.41–44. The contrast between the abundance of the rich and the poverty of the widow is rehearsed three times in these verses (see also 6.20–26; 18.18–25; note on 7.12).

21.5–36 Luke's version of the "synoptic apocalypse" (cf. Mt 24; Mk 13) is located at the temple and rivals the Sermon on the Plain (6.20–49) for length and significance. **21.5–24** Cf. Mt 24.1–22; Mk 13.1–20. A collection of signs that will precede the destruction of Jerusalem. **21.6** *Not one stone . . . upon another.* See Introduction; see also 19.44; Jer 7.1–15; 22.5. **21.7** Jesus continues to speak as a *Teacher,* interpreting tradition (see note on 18.18). On the request for a *sign,* see 11.16, 29–30. **21.8–9** False prophets declare the destruction of the temple to be *near,* but the divine plan has more phases (see note on 2.49). **21.10–11** On God's judgment through cosmic struggle and warfare, see Isa 19.2; Jer 4.13–22; 14.12; 21.6–7; Ezek 14.21; 38.19–23. **21.12** Acts is full of stories of arrest, persecution, and imprisonment because of Jesus' *name* (see, e.g., Acts 4.1–22; 5.17–41; 22–26; cf. Lk 6.22).

12 "But before all this occurs, they will
arrest you and persecute you; they will
hand you over to synagogues and prisons,
and you will be brought before kings and
governors because of my name. 13 This
will give you an opportunity to testify.
14 So make up your minds not to prepare
your defense in advance; 15 for I will give
you words[z] and a wisdom that none of
your opponents will be able to withstand
or contradict. 16 You will be betrayed even
by parents and brothers, by relatives and
friends; and they will put some of you to
death. 17 You will be hated by all because
of my name. 18 But not a hair of your
head will perish. 19 By your endurance
you will gain your souls.

The Destruction of Jerusalem Foretold

20 "When you see Jerusalem sur-
rounded by armies, then know that its
desolation has come near.[a] 21 Then those
in Judea must flee to the mountains, and
those inside the city must leave it, and
those out in the country must not enter it;
22 for these are days of vengeance, as a
fulfillment of all that is written. 23 Woe to
those who are pregnant and to those who
are nursing infants in those days! For
there will be great distress on the earth
and wrath against this people; 24 they will
fall by the edge of the sword and be taken
away as captives among all nations; and
Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gen-
tiles, until the times of the Gentiles are
fulfilled.

The Coming of the Son of Man

25 "There will be signs in the sun, the
moon, and the stars, and on the earth dis-
tress among nations confused by the roar-
ing of the sea and the waves. 26 People will
faint from fear and foreboding of what is
coming upon the world, for the powers of
the heavens will be shaken. 27 Then they
will see 'the Son of Man coming in a cloud'
with power and great glory. 28 Now when
these things begin to take place, stand up
and raise your heads, because your re-
demption is drawing near."

29 Then he told them a parable:
"Look at the fig tree and all the trees; 30 as
soon as they sprout leaves you can see for
yourselves and know that summer is al-
ready near. 31 So also, when you see these
things taking place, you know that the
kingdom of God is near. 32 Truly I tell
you, this generation will not pass away un-
til all things have taken place. 33 Heaven
and earth will pass away, but my words
will not pass away.

34 "Be on guard so that your hearts
are not weighed down with dissipation
and drunkenness and the worries of this
life, and that day does not catch you un-
expectedly, 35 like a trap. For it will come
upon all who live on the face of the whole
earth. 36 Be alert at all times, praying that
you may have the strength to escape all
these things that will take place, and to
stand before the Son of Man."

z Gk *a mouth* a Or *is at hand*

21.13 *An opportunity to testify.* See Acts 3.15; 4.33; 5.32; 26.22. **21.14** On not preparing a *defense in advance*, see also 12.11–12. **21.17** *Hated by all* recalls Jesus' statement in 6.22 (cf. Acts 2.47). **21.19** *Endurance*, faithful reliance on God to preserve life (see 8.15; 9.23–27). **21.20–24** The destruction of Jerusalem is described in language that echoes scriptural warnings of God's judgment (see also 13.34–35; 19.41–44). **21.20** *Desolation*, i.e., of Jerusalem. See Dan 9.26–27; see also Jer 26.9; cf. Mt 24.15; Mk 13.14. **21.22** *Days of vengeance.* See Deut 32.35; Hos 9.7. **21.24** *The edge of the sword.* See Jer 21.7; Sir 28.18. *Captives among all nations.* See Deut 28.64; Ezek 32.9. *Until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled*, a reference either to the time when the gentile (i.e., Roman) triumph is complete or to a divinely imposed limitation of the Gentiles' dominance (see also Rom 11.7–25). An expression of God's ultimate saving purpose for Israel has strong scriptural precedents (see Deut 32.26–27; Isa 45–47; Zech 12.1–6).

21.25–38 Cf. Mt 24.29–36; Mk 13.24–32. These verses project an apocalyptic vision of cosmic distress that will confuse the Gentiles and usher in the kingdom of God. **21.25** *Signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars* were common features of prophetic and apocalyptic pronouncements (see Joel 2.30–32, cited in Acts 2.19–21; see also Isa 13.10; 34.4; Ezek 32.7). On the *distress* of nations, see Isa 17.12. **21.26** See Isa 24.17–20. **21.27** The appearance of *the Son of Man* with *power and great glory* is the conferral of dominion for all to see (Dan 7.13–14). **21.28** *Redemption* (see 1.68; 2.38; 24.21) and the kingdom of God (21.31; see also 10.9, 11) are now publicly imminent. **21.32** *This generation*, i.e., the generation of the signs (see also 7.31; 9.41; 11.29–32, 50–51; 16.8; 17.25). **21.34** *That day*, i.e., the day of the Son of Man (see also 10.12; 17.22–37; 1 Thess 5.1–11). **21.36** *To stand before the Son of Man*, i.e., to face his judgment with confidence.

37 Every day he was teaching in the
temple, and at night he would go out and
spend the night on the Mount of Olives,
as it was called. 38 And all the people
would get up early in the morning to listen to him in the temple.

The Plot to Kill Jesus

22 Now the festival of Unleavened
Bread, which is called the Passover, was near. 2 The chief priests and the
scribes were looking for a way to put
Jesus[b] to death, for they were afraid of
the people.
3 Then Satan entered into Judas
called Iscariot, who was one of the twelve;
4 he went away and conferred with the
chief priests and officers of the temple
police about how he might betray him to
them. 5 They were greatly pleased and
agreed to give him money. 6 So he consented and began to look for an opportunity to betray him to them when no crowd
was present.

The Preparation of the Passover

7 Then came the day of Unleavened
Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to
be sacrificed. 8 So Jesus[c] sent Peter and
John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover meal for us that we may eat it."
9 They asked him, "Where do you want us
to make preparations for it?" 10 "Listen,"
he said to them, "when you have entered
the city, a man carrying a jar of water will
meet you; follow him into the house he
enters 11 and say to the owner of the
house, 'The teacher asks you, "Where is
the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?"' 12 He will show
you a large room upstairs, already furnished. Make preparations for us there."
13 So they went and found everything as
he had told them; and they prepared the
Passover meal.

The Institution of the Lord's Supper

14 When the hour came, he took his
place at the table, and the apostles with
him. 15 He said to them, "I have eagerly
desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; 16 for I tell you, I will not eat
it[d] until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of
God." 17 Then he took a cup, and after
giving thanks he said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; 18 for I tell you
that from now on I will not drink of the
fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God
comes." 19 Then he took a loaf of bread,
and when he had given thanks, he broke
it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my
body, which is given for you. Do this in
remembrance of me." 20 And he did the
same with the cup after supper, saying,
"This cup that is poured out for you is the
new covenant in my blood.[e] 21 But see,

b Gk *him* *c* Gk *he* *d* Other ancient authorities read *never eat it again* *e* Other ancient authorities lack, in whole or in part, verses 19b-20 (*which is given . . . in my blood*)

21.37–38 Luke concludes the section with a summary of Jesus' temple ministry (cf. 19.47–48).

22.1–23.56 The story of Jesus' death. **22.1–13** Cf. Mt 26.1–5, 14–19; Mk 14.1–2, 10–16. Events at Passover reveal conflicting preparations by Jesus' adversaries (vv. 2–6) and his disciples (vv. 7–13). **22.1** *Passover.* See note on 2.41. **22.2** See also 19.47–48. **22.3** This seems to be the *opportune time* (4.13) *Satan* has been awaiting since the temptation in 4.1–13 (see also 22.31; Jn 13.27; Acts 5.3). *Judas . . . Iscariot.* See 6.16; Acts 1.16–20. *The twelve.* See note on 6.13. **22.7** *The day of Unleavened Bread* is inexact usage. Unleavened bread was eaten all seven days of the Passover festival (see Ex 12.7–8, 15–20). **22.8** *Peter and John* are again singled out in the story (see note on 8.51). The *Passover meal* (also 22.11) was usually eaten with families (see 8.21). **22.13** *They . . . found everything as he had told them.* Jesus' explicit instructions (22.10–11) are understood to have been prophetic (see also 19.32).

22.14–23 Cf. Mt 26.20, 26–29; Mk 14.17, 22–25. Jesus reinterprets the Passover meal in terms of his coming death and the coming kingdom. **22.14** The *hour* is the beginning of Passover, but it also anticipates the dire hour of Jesus' arrest (22.53). **22.15** *Suffer* (Greek *paschein*) refers here specifically to Jesus' death (see also 24.46; Acts 1.3; 3.18; 17.3; Heb 13.12; 1 Pet 2.21–23). **22.18** On the anticipation of the *kingdom* and its banquet, see 9.27; 13.22–30. **22.19** *In remembrance of me.* Passover was already a feast of remembrance (i.e., of God's deliverance of Israel from bondage in Egypt; see Ex 12.14). **22.20** Only Luke refers to a cup before (22.17) and *after supper,* recalling the several cups of wine of the Passover feast (cf. 1 Cor 11.23–26). *New covenant.* See Jer 31.31–34; 1 Cor 11.25. *Blood* is treated as sacred to God because it is life (Gen 9.4; Deut 12.23) with atoning power (Lev 17.11; Heb 9.22). It was used to seal the old covenant between God and Israel (see Ex 24.3–8). **22.21** *His hand*

the one who betrays me is with me, and
his hand is on the table. 22 For the Son of
Man is going as it has been determined,
but woe to that one by whom he is be-
trayed!" 23 Then they began to ask one
another which one of them it could be
who would do this.

The Dispute About Greatness

24 A dispute also arose among them
as to which one of them was to be re-
garded as the greatest. 25 But he said to
them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it
over them; and those in authority over
them are called benefactors. 26 But not so
with you; rather the greatest among you
must become like the youngest, and the
leader like one who serves. 27 For who is
greater, the one who is at the table or the
one who serves? Is it not the one at the
table? But I am among you as one who
serves.
28 "You are those who have stood by
me in my trials; 29 and I confer on you,
just as my Father has conferred on me, a
kingdom, 30 so that you may eat and drink
at my table in my kingdom, and you will
sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes
of Israel.

Jesus Predicts Peter's Denial

31 "Simon, Simon, listen! Satan has
demanded[f] to sift all of you like wheat,
32 but I have prayed for you that your
own faith may not fail; and you, when
once you have turned back, strengthen
your brothers." 33 And he said to him,
"Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison
and to death!" 34 Jesus[g] said, "I tell you,
Peter, the cock will not crow this day, until
you have denied three times that you
know me."

Purse, Bag, and Sword

35 He said to them, "When I sent you
out without a purse, bag, or sandals, did
you lack anything?" They said, "No, not a
thing." 36 He said to them, "But now, the
one who has a purse must take it, and like-
wise a bag. And the one who has no sword
must sell his cloak and buy one. 37 For I
tell you, this scripture must be fulfilled in
me, 'And he was counted among the law-
less'; and indeed what is written about me
is being fulfilled." 38 They said, "Lord,
look, here are two swords." He replied,
"It is enough."

Prayer and Agony on the Mount of Olives

39 He came out and went, as was his
custom, to the Mount of Olives; and the
disciples followed him. 40 When he
reached the place, he said to them, "Pray
that you may not come into the time of

f Or *has obtained permission* g Gk *He*

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is on the table. See Ps 41.9. **22.22** Jesus' course as the Son of Man is *determined* by God's will as recorded in the scriptures (see 9.22; 18.31; 24.7), but the betrayer is still answerable for his actions (see also 17.1).

22.24–30 Cf. Mt 20.24–28; 19.28; Mk 10.41–45. Only Luke records the dispute about who is the greatest (see also 9.46) in the context of the betrayal, underscoring the apostles' lack of understanding (see also 9.44–45; 18.34). **22.25** *Benefactors,* a title often given to gods and kings in the Hellenistic world. **22.26** On the reversal of status that characterizes the kingdom, see also 6.20–26; 9.48. *Like one who serves.* See 12.37; see also Mk 10.45; Jn 13.1–17; Phil 2.6–11. **22.28** *Who have stood by me in my trials,* probably a reference to the apostles' presence during the rejections Jesus faced in his ministry (see, e.g., ch. 20; see also 23.49). Disciples will also experience trials (see 12.8–12; 21.12–19; 22.31–34). **22.29** *I confer on you . . . a kingdom.* See 12.32. **22.30** *You may eat . . . in my kingdom.* See note on 13.29. *Judging the twelve tribes.* See note on 6.13; cf. Rev 7.4–8. Judging connotes "ruling," not simply "passing judgment."

22.31–34 Cf. Mt 26.30–35; Mk 14.26–31; Jn 13.36–38. Peter's imminent denial is defined in terms of Satan's activity. **22.31** On *Satan* claiming the right to test or try the apostles, see 4.1–13; 22.28; cf. Job 1.6–12; 2.1–7. **22.32** *Once you have turned back* (i.e., repented). Jesus' prayer for their endurance anticipates their failure (cf. 10.18–22). **22.34** Jesus' prophecy is fulfilled in 22.54–62.

22.35–38 Jesus modifies his earlier advice on mission preparations (cf. 9.3; 10.4). **22.36** On the use of the *sword,* see 22.49–51. **22.37–38** *It is enough.* Jesus permits only a limited, symbolic arming for an enactment of *this scripture* (i.e., Isa 53.12; see also Lk 23.32).

22.39–53 Cf. Mt 26.36–56; Mk 14.32–52; Jn 18.1–11. Luke's version of Jesus' garden agony and arrest highlights the need for prayer in the "hour of darkness." **22.39** *As was his custom.* See 21.37. **22.40** *The time of trial* (also 22.46) indicates spiritual struggle (see 4.1–13; 11.4;

trial."[h] 41 Then he withdrew from them
about a stone's throw, knelt down, and
prayed, 42 "Father, if you are willing, re-
move this cup from me; yet, not my will
but yours be done." ⟦43 Then an angel
from heaven appeared to him and gave
him strength. 44 In his anguish he prayed
more earnestly, and his sweat became like
great drops of blood falling down on the
ground.⟧[i] 45 When he got up from
prayer, he came to the disciples and
found them sleeping because of grief,
46 and he said to them, "Why are you
sleeping? Get up and pray that you may
not come into the time of trial."[h]

The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus

47 While he was still speaking, sud-
denly a crowd came, and the one called
Judas, one of the twelve, was leading
them. He approached Jesus to kiss him;
48 but Jesus said to him, "Judas, is it with a
kiss that you are betraying the Son of
Man?" 49 When those who were around
him saw what was coming, they asked,
"Lord, should we strike with the sword?"
50 Then one of them struck the slave of
the high priest and cut off his right ear.
51 But Jesus said, "No more of this!" And
he touched his ear and healed him.
52 Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the
officers of the temple police, and the el-
ders who had come for him, "Have you
come out with swords and clubs as if I
were a bandit? 53 When I was with you day
after day in the temple, you did not lay
hands on me. But this is your hour, and
the power of darkness!"

Denial and Rejection

54 Then they seized him and led him
away, bringing him into the high priest's
house. But Peter was following at a dis-
tance. 55 When they had kindled a fire in
the middle of the courtyard and sat down
together, Peter sat among them. 56 Then a
servant-girl, seeing him in the firelight,
stared at him and said, "This man also was
with him." 57 But he denied it, saying,
"Woman, I do not know him." 58 A little
later someone else, on seeing him, said,
"You also are one of them." But Peter
said, "Man, I am not!" 59 Then about an
hour later still another kept insisting,
"Surely this man also was with him; for he
is a Galilean." 60 But Peter said, "Man, I
do not know what you are talking about!"
At that moment, while he was still speak-
ing, the cock crowed. 61 The Lord turned
and looked at Peter. Then Peter remem-
bered the word of the Lord, how he had
said to him, "Before the cock crows today,
you will deny me three times." 62 And he
went out and wept bitterly.

63 Now the men who were holding
Jesus began to mock him and beat him;
64 they also blindfolded him and kept ask-
ing him, "Prophesy! Who is it that struck
you?" 65 They kept heaping many other
insults on him.

h Or *into temptation* *i* Other ancient authorities lack verses 43 and 44

22.31). **22.42** *If you are willing.* The will of the Father is central to Jesus' mission (10.21; 11.13; 12.30–32; 24.49; Acts 21.14; 22.14). *Cup*, i.e., the cup of destiny (see Pss 11.6; 75.8; Isa 51.17; Jer 25.15; Lam 4.21; see also Lk 22.17, 20–22). **22.43–44** These verses were either added to some ancient manuscripts or omitted from others (see text note *i*; see also 23.34). **22.44** *His anguish.* See Heb 5.7. **22.45** Only Luke explains the disciples' sleep as *because of grief.* **22.47** The *crowd* comprises the chief priests, the officers of the temple police, and the elders (see 22.52) and is apparently not the crowd of the people who once protected Jesus (22.2–6). *Judas.* See note on 6.16. The *kiss* was a common gesture of respectful greeting (7.45), but see Prov 27.6. **22.48** *Betraying* (or "handing over") *the Son of Man.* See 9.44; 18.32; 20.20; 22.4, 6, 21–22; 24.7. **22.49** *Sword.* See 22.36–38. **22.52** On treating Jesus as a *bandit* or insurrectionist, see the charges in 23.5, 14, 19, 25. **22.53** The *hour* of the adversaries is a limited moment in God's timetable (see, e.g., 21.24; Acts 4.27–28; Rom 13.11) and their *power*, or authority (Greek *exousia*), is the evil dominion of *darkness* (4.6; 22.3; Eph 6.12; cf. Lk 1.79; Acts 26.18; 1 Thess 5.4–8).

22.54–71 Cf. Mt 26.57–68; Mk 14.53–65. Passion predictions begin to be fulfilled (see 22.34; 18.32; 9.22). **22.54** The *high priest's house* was probably an official residence. In *following* Jesus, Peter was keeping his promise (22.33). **22.59** Mt 26.73 indicates that Peter's *Galilean* dialect gave him away. **22.60** *The cock crowed.* See 22.34. **22.61** *The Lord . . . looked at Peter.* Only Luke mentions this direct gaze. **22.62** Peter's weeping shows that his predicted repentance (22.32) has already begun. **22.63–64** *Prophesy!* The first mocking (see also 18.32; 23.11, 36) calls attention to Jesus as prophet (see 7.39; 13.34; 24.19). **22.65** *Many other insults* recalls other

66 When day came, the assembly of
the elders of the people, both chief priests
and scribes, gathered together, and they
brought him to their council. 67 They said,
"If you are the Messiah,[j] tell us." He re-
plied, "If I tell you, you will not believe;
68 and if I question you, you will not an-
swer. 69 But from now on the Son of Man
will be seated at the right hand of the
power of God." 70 All of them asked, "Are
you, then, the Son of God?" He said to
them, "You say that I am." 71 Then they
said, "What further testimony do we
need? We have heard it ourselves from
his own lips!"

Jesus Before Pilate

23 Then the assembly rose as a body
and brought Jesus[k] before Pilate.
2 They began to accuse him, saying, "We
found this man perverting our nation,
forbidding us to pay taxes to the emperor,
and saying that he himself is the Messiah,
a king."[l] 3 Then Pilate asked him, "Are
you the king of the Jews?" He answered,
"You say so." 4 Then Pilate said to the
chief priests and the crowds, "I find no
basis for an accusation against this man."
5 But they were insistent and said, "He
stirs up the people by teaching through-
out all Judea, from Galilee where he be-
gan even to this place."

Jesus Before Herod

6 When Pilate heard this, he asked
whether the man was a Galilean. 7 And
when he learned that he was under
Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him off to
Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem at
that time. 8 When Herod saw Jesus, he
was very glad, for he had been wanting to
see him for a long time, because he had
heard about him and was hoping to see
him perform some sign. 9 He questioned
him at some length, but Jesus[m] gave him
no answer. 10 The chief priests and the
scribes stood by, vehemently accusing
him. 11 Even Herod with his soldiers
treated him with contempt and mocked
him; then he put an elegant robe on him,
and sent him back to Pilate. 12 That same
day Herod and Pilate became friends with
each other; before this they had been
enemies.

j Or *the Christ* *k* Gk *him* *l* Or *is an anointed king* *m* Gk *he*

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generalized summaries in 3.18; 8.3; Acts 15.35. **22.66** *Council*, i.e., the Sanhedrin, the supreme court of chief priests and elders in Jerusalem that interpreted and defended Jewish law (see also Acts 4.5–6, 22). In Luke the trial before this body occurs during the *day* (see note on Mt 26.59) and has none of the fierce charges or verdicts of Mt 26.61, 65–66 or Mk 14.58, 63–64. **22.67** *If you are the Messiah.* See 23.35; cf. 4.41. **22.67b–69** Jesus' answer first rephrases Jeremiah's response to King Zedekiah (Jer 38.15), then points to the heavenly *Son of Man* who will come in triumph and judgment (Ps 110.1; Dan 7.13; see also Lk 11.30–32; 12.8–9; Acts 2.32–36). **22.70** *You say that I am.* Jesus' ambiguous answer (see also 23.3) implies an affirmative. **22.71** *We have heard it ourselves from his own lips.* With unintended irony, the council indicts itself (see 22.67; see also 18.34).

23.1–5 Cf. Mt 27.1–2, 11–14; Mk 15.1–5. The Jewish authorities accuse Jesus before the local representative of the Roman government. **23.1** *Pilate*'s seat of government, normally in Caesarea Maritima, was moved to Jerusalem during Passover to keep the peace. **23.2** The three charges are all phrased with political overtones to interest the Roman procurator. *Perverting* (or subverting) *our nation* (see also 23.5, 13) risked offending careful understandings between the Jews and Rome (see Jn 11.48) and could be understood as fomenting revolt; *forbidding . . . taxes* was seditious (cf. 20.20–26); and only the Romans could appoint a *king* (see Jn 19.12; cf. Lk 19.38; 23.37–38). **23.3** *Are you the king of the Jews?* Later Pilate ironically confirms this title (23.38). See also 22.70. **23.4** The first of several affirmations of Jesus' innocence (see 23.14–15, 22, 41, 47; see also Acts 3.14; 7.52). **23.5** This geographical summary brings the whole story *to this place* (i.e., Jerusalem), and Acts 1.8 moves it out from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.

23.6–12 A hearing before Herod, found only in Luke, brings more mocking and another verdict of innocence (23.15). **23.7** *Herod* Antipas, tetrarch of the northern regions of Galilee and Perea (see note on 3.1), was in Jerusalem for the Passover. **23.8** Herod's interest in Jesus is ominous (9.7–9; 13.31). On the desire for a *sign*, see 11.29. **23.11** The *elegant robe* suggests a royal mockery (see also 22.63; cf. Mk 15.16–20). **23.12** The friendship of *Herod and Pilate* is an unholy collusion (see Acts 4.26–30, citing Ps 2.2; cf. 1 Cor 2.8).

Jesus Sentenced to Death

13 Pilate then called together the chief
priests, the leaders, and the people, 14 and
said to them, "You brought me this man
as one who was perverting the people;
and here I have examined him in your
presence and have not found this man
guilty of any of your charges against him.
15 Neither has Herod, for he sent him
back to us. Indeed, he has done nothing
to deserve death. 16 I will therefore have
him flogged and release him."[n]

18 Then they all shouted out together,
"Away with this fellow! Release Barabbas
for us!" 19 (This was a man who had been
put in prison for an insurrection that had
taken place in the city, and for murder.)
20 Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, ad-
dressed them again; 21 but they kept
shouting, "Crucify, crucify him!" 22 A
third time he said to them, "Why, what
evil has he done? I have found in him no
ground for the sentence of death; I will
therefore have him flogged and then re-
lease him." 23 But they kept urgently de-
manding with loud shouts that he should
be crucified; and their voices prevailed.
24 So Pilate gave his verdict that their de-
mand should be granted. 25 He released
the man they asked for, the one who had
been put in prison for insurrection and
murder, and he handed Jesus over as they
wished.

Crucifixion, Death, and Burial

26 As they led him away, they seized a
man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming
from the country, and they laid the cross
on him, and made him carry it behind
Jesus. 27 A great number of the people
followed him, and among them were
women who were beating their breasts
and wailing for him. 28 But Jesus turned
to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusa-
lem, do not weep for me, but weep for
yourselves and for your children. 29 For
the days are surely coming when they will
say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the
wombs that never bore, and the breasts
that never nursed.' 30 Then they will begin
to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us'; and
to the hills, 'Cover us.' 31 For if they do
this when the wood is green, what will
happen when it is dry?"

32 Two others also, who were crimi-
nals, were led away to be put to death with
him. 33 When they came to the place that
is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus[o]
there with the criminals, one on his right
and one on his left. ⟦34 Then Jesus said,
"Father, forgive them; for they do not
know what they are doing."⟧[p] And they

n Here, or after verse 19, other ancient authorities add verse 17, *Now he was obliged to release someone for them at the festival* *o* Gk *him* *p* Other ancient authorities lack the sentence *Then Jesus . . . what they are doing*

23.13–25 Cf. Mt 27.15–26; Mk 15.6–15. The final phase of the trial stresses Jesus' innocence and Pilate's capitulation. **23.13–14** The *people* are present to hear the charge that Jesus was *perverting the people* (see 23.2). *Not . . . guilty.* See notes on 13.1; 23.4. **23.18** *Release Barabbas for us.* Mt 27.15–23 and Mk 15.6–15 give a rationale for the request. Nothing further is known of this custom or this individual. **23.21** *Crucify him.* Crucifixion was a brutal form of Roman execution, reserved for slaves and the worst criminals. Only the procurator could command it. **23.23** *Their voices prevailed.* Luke construes Pilate's verdict as acquiescing to the crowd's will (see also v. 24 *their demand*; v. 25, *as they wished*), yet Pilate also seems to be provoking them (v. 22). The questions of whose will is being done and who is on trial are complex.

23.26–56 Cf. Mt 27.31b–61; Mk 15.20b–47. The crucifixion, death, and burial of Jesus. **23.26** *Simon,* otherwise unknown (cf. Mk 15.21). *Cyrene,* a city on the coast of northern Africa, had a sizable Jewish colony (see Acts 2.10; 6.9; 11.20). **23.27** *Wailing for him,* perhaps an allusion to Zech 12.10–14 (see also 2 Sam 1.24; Jer 9.17–22). **23.28** *Daughters of Jerusalem,* a term often used in the OT (see Song 1.5; 2.7; 5.16; 8.4; Isa 37.22; Zeph 3.14; Zech 9.9). **23.29–30** Jesus' prophetic oracle of judgment compares closely with the dire effects of siege warfare described in 19.41–44. **23.29** *Blessed are the barren.* See also 21.23; Isa 54.1; cf. Lk 11.27. **23.30** See Hos 10.8; Rev 6.16. **23.31** The saying is enigmatic, though a contrast seems to be drawn between the present relative prosperity and the harsh future days of the Roman destruction (see Ezek 20.47). **23.32** *Criminals.* See 22.37; Isa 53.12. **23.33** *The Skull,* a descriptive name for a prominent rock or hill marking the execution site. **23.34a** See note on 22.43–44. The theme of pardonable ignorance appears also in Acts 3.17; 7.60; 13.27; 17.30.

cast lots to divide his clothing. 35 And the
people stood by, watching; but the leaders
scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others;
let him save himself if he is the Messiah[q]
of God, his chosen one!" 36 The soldiers
also mocked him, coming up and offering
him sour wine, 37 and saying, "If you are
the King of the Jews, save yourself!"
38 There was also an inscription over
him,[r] "This is the King of the Jews."

39 One of the criminals who were
hanged there kept deriding[s] him and
saying, "Are you not the Messiah?[q] Save
yourself and us!" 40 But the other rebuked
him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since
you are under the same sentence of con-
demnation? 41 And we indeed have been
condemned justly, for we are getting what
we deserve for our deeds, but this man
has done nothing wrong." 42 Then he
said, "Jesus, remember me when you
come into[t] your kingdom." 43 He replied,
"Truly I tell you, today you will be with
me in Paradise."

44 It was now about noon, and dark-
ness came over the whole land[u] until
three in the afternoon, 45 while the sun's
light failed;[v] and the curtain of the tem-
ple was torn in two. 46 Then Jesus, crying
with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your
hands I commend my spirit." Having said
this, he breathed his last. 47 When the cen-
turion saw what had taken place, he
praised God and said, "Certainly this man
was innocent."[w] 48 And when all the
crowds who had gathered there for this
spectacle saw what had taken place, they
returned home, beating their breasts.
49 But all his acquaintances, including the
women who had followed him from Gali-
lee, stood at a distance, watching these
things.

50 Now there was a good and righ-
teous man named Joseph, who, though a
member of the council, 51 had not agreed
to their plan and action. He came from
the Jewish town of Arimathea, and he was
waiting expectantly for the kingdom of
God. 52 This man went to Pilate and asked
for the body of Jesus. 53 Then he took it
down, wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid
it in a rock-hewn tomb where no one had
ever been laid. 54 It was the day of Prepa-
ration, and the sabbath was beginning.[x]
55 The women who had come with him
from Galilee followed, and they saw the
tomb and how his body was laid. 56 Then
they returned, and prepared spices and
ointments.

On the sabbath they rested according to
the commandment.

q Or *the Christ* *r* Other ancient authorities add *written in Greek and Latin and Hebrew* (that is, *Aramaic*) *s* Or *blaspheming* *t* Other ancient authorities read *in* *u* Or *earth* *v* Or *the sun was eclipsed.* Other ancient authorities read *the sun was darkened* *w* Or *righteous* *x* Gk *was dawning*

23.35 The *people* are separated again from the *leaders* (cf. 23.13–18). The leaders' mockery ignorantly speaks the truth of Jesus' identity as *Messiah of God, his chosen one* (see 2.11; 4.41; 9.35; 24.26; Acts 2.36; 3.18; 4.27). **23.36** *Mocked him.* See also 18.32; 22.63; 23.11. *Sour wine,* the common wine drunk by soldiers (see also Ps 69.21). **23.37–38** *King of the Jews.* The soldiers' mockery and Pilate's inscription ironically and publicly declare the truth. **23.39** The taunt *Save yourself* (see also 23.35, 37) sharpens the question of how Jesus will be a Savior (2.11; 9.24; 19.10; Acts 5.31; 13.23). **23.41** *Nothing wrong.* See note on 23.4. **23.42** *Into your* (i.e., Jesus') *kingdom.* See 1.33; 22.30; cf. 24.26. **23.43** On *today* as the time of salvation (cf. the taunts in 23.35, 37, 39), see 19.5, 9; see also 2.11; 4.21; 5.26. *Paradise,* originally a royal garden, the Garden of Eden in the Septuagint, and later, as here, a metaphor for salvation (see also 2 Cor 12.4; Rev 2.7). **23.44** *Darkness,* a divine portent of the "day of the LORD" (see Joel 2.10, 31; Zeph 1.15). **23.45** The *curtain of the temple* veiled its holiest place (see Ex 26.31–35). Its tearing is also a portent (see Heb 9.6–28). **23.46** Jesus' last words come from Ps 31.5 (see also Acts 7.59; cf. Mt 27.46, 50; Mk 15.34, 37). **23.47** *Innocent.* See note on 23.4. **23.48** The *crowds* who have been watching (see 23.35) are now repentant (see 18.13; 23.28). **23.49** The *women* include those mentioned in 8.2–3 (see also 24.10). **23.50–51** *Joseph* is known only from the Gospels. The new tomb (23.53) may reflect his wealth. His credentials as *good and righteous* and expectantly awaiting *the kingdom* recall the faithful people in the birth stories and their observance of the law (see 1.6; 2.22–27, 36–39). *The council.* See note on 22.66. **23.52** According to Jewish law, the *body* of an executed criminal was not allowed to remain exposed beyond sundown (see Deut 21.22–23). **23.54** The *day of Preparation,* i.e., for the sabbath. **23.56** *Spices and ointments* were used for burial (see 24.1; Jn 19.40).

The Resurrection of Jesus

24 But on the first day of the week,
at early dawn, they came to the
tomb, taking the spices that they had pre-
pared. 2 They found the stone rolled away
from the tomb, 3 but when they went in,
they did not find the body.[y] 4 While they
were perplexed about this, suddenly two
men in dazzling clothes stood beside
them. 5 The women[z] were terrified and
bowed their faces to the ground, but the
men[a] said to them, "Why do you look for
the living among the dead? He is not
here, but has risen.[b] 6 Remember how he
told you, while he was still in Galilee, 7 that
the Son of Man must be handed over to
sinners, and be crucified, and on the third
day rise again." 8 Then they remembered
his words, 9 and returning from the tomb,
they told all this to the eleven and to all
the rest. 10 Now it was Mary Magdalene,
Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and
the other women with them who told this
to the apostles. 11 But these words seemed
to them an idle tale, and they did not be-
lieve them. 12 But Peter got up and ran to
the tomb; stooping and looking in, he
saw the linen cloths by themselves; then
he went home, amazed at what had
happened.[c]

The Walk to Emmaus

13 Now on that same day two of them
were going to a village called Emmaus,
about seven miles[d] from Jerusalem,
14 and talking with each other about all
these things that had happened. 15 While
they were talking and discussing, Jesus
himself came near and went with them,
16 but their eyes were kept from recogniz-
ing him. 17 And he said to them, "What
are you discussing with each other while
you walk along?" They stood still, looking
sad.[e] 18 Then one of them, whose name
was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the
only stranger in Jerusalem who does not
know the things that have taken place
there in these days?" 19 He asked them,
"What things?" They replied, "The things
about Jesus of Nazareth,[f] who was a
prophet mighty in deed and word before
God and all the people, 20 and how our
chief priests and leaders handed him over
to be condemned to death and crucified
him. 21 But we had hoped that he was the
one to redeem Israel.[g] Yes, and besides
all this, it is now the third day since these
things took place. 22 Moreover, some
women of our group astounded us. They
were at the tomb early this morning,
23 and when they did not find his body
there, they came back and told us that
they had indeed seen a vision of angels
who said that he was alive. 24 Some of
those who were with us went to the tomb
and found it just as the women had said;
but they did not see him." 25 Then he said
to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and

y Other ancient authorities add *of the Lord Jesus*
z Gk *They* *a* Gk *but they* *b* Other ancient authorities lack *He is not here, but has risen*
c Other ancient authorities lack verse 12
d Gk *sixty stadia;* other ancient authorities read *a hundred sixty stadia* *e* Other ancient authorities read *walk along, looking sad?"* *f* Other ancient authorities read *Jesus the Nazorean* *g* Or *to set Israel free*

24.1–12 Cf. Mt 28.1–8; Mk 16.1–6; Jn 20.1–13. The first news of the resurrection. **24.2** The *stone* would probably have been in the shape of a large wheel that rolled in a channel to seal the door of the tomb. **24.4** The *men in dazzling clothes* are identified as angels in 24.23 (see also Acts 1.10; cf. Lk 9.29–31). **24.5** *The women were terrified.* See notes on 1.11–12; 1.13. **24.6–7** The command of what to *remember* closely follows the prediction in 9.22. **24.9** *The eleven,* i.e., the twelve apostles less Judas (Acts 1.16–26). **24.10** The first witnesses are all *women* (see also 24.22–24), of whom three are named (see also 8.2–3). Cf. the tradition in 1 Cor 15.5. **24.11** The disbelief and amazement of the apostles anticipate later revelation and rebuke (24.25–27, 31). **24.12** The Gospel of John also records a visit by *Peter* to the tomb (see Jn 20.3–10).

24.13–35 The story of the appearance of the risen Christ reveals the disbelief of the disappointed even when they hear (see also Acts 13.41, which quotes Hab 1.5). **24.16** It is not clear who kept their eyes *from recognizing him,* but God may be the implied agent (see 24.31; see also 9.45; 18.34). **24.19** On Jesus as a *prophet,* see 7.11–17; 9.8, 19; Acts 3.22. **24.20** The *chief priests and leaders* are held most accountable for Jesus' death (see also 22.52, 66; 23.2, 10, 13, 35). **24.21** The focus of hope remains on the redemption of *Israel* (see 1.67; 2.25, 38; 23.51; Acts 26.6–7, 23). **24.22–24** On the *women,* see 24.1–11. **24.26** Earlier passages have hinted that the Messiah's suffering was *necessary* to fulfill

how slow of heart to believe all that the
prophets have declared! 26 Was it not ne-
cessary that the Messiah[h] should suffer
these things and then enter into his
glory?" 27 Then beginning with Moses and
all the prophets, he interpreted to them
the things about himself in all the
scriptures.

28 As they came near the village to
which they were going, he walked ahead
as if he were going on. 29 But they urged
him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, be-
cause it is almost evening and the day is
now nearly over." So he went in to stay
with them. 30 When he was at the table
with them, he took bread, blessed and
broke it, and gave it to them. 31 Then
their eyes were opened, and they recog-
nized him; and he vanished from their
sight. 32 They said to each other, "Were
not our hearts burning within us[i] while
he was talking to us on the road, while he
was opening the scriptures to us?" 33 That
same hour they got up and returned to
Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and
their companions gathered together.
34 They were saying, "The Lord has risen
indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!"
35 Then they told what had happened on
the road, and how he had been made
known to them in the breaking of the
bread.

Jesus Appears to His Disciples

36 While they were talking about this,
Jesus himself stood among them and said
to them, "Peace be with you."[j] 37 They
were startled and terrified, and thought
that they were seeing a ghost. 38 He said to
them, "Why are you frightened, and why
do doubts arise in your hearts? 39 Look at
my hands and my feet; see that it is I my-
self. Touch me and see; for a ghost does
not have flesh and bones as you see that I
have." 40 And when he had said this, he
showed them his hands and his feet.[k]
41 While in their joy they were disbelieving
and still wondering, he said to them,
"Have you anything here to eat?" 42 They
gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43 and he
took it and ate in their presence.

44 Then he said to them, "These are
my words that I spoke to you while I was
still with you—that everything written
about me in the law of Moses, the proph-
ets, and the psalms must be fulfilled."
45 Then he opened their minds to under-
stand the scriptures, 46 and he said to
them, "Thus it is written, that the Mes-
siah[h] is to suffer and to rise from the
dead on the third day, 47 and that repen-
tance and forgiveness of sins is to be
proclaimed in his name to all nations,
beginning from Jerusalem. 48 You are wit-
nesses[l] of these things. 49 And see, I am
sending upon you what my Father prom-
ised; so stay here in the city until you have
been clothed with power from on high."

h Or *the Christ* *i* Other ancient authorities lack *within us* *j* Other ancient authorities lack *and said to them, "Peace be with you."* *k* Other ancient authorities lack verse 40 *l* Or *nations. Beginning from Jerusalem* [48]*you are witnesses*

God's plan of salvation (see 9.22, 43b–45; 12.50; 13.32–33; 17.25; 18.31–34; see also Acts 3.18; 17.3; 26.23). **24.27** The risen Messiah introduces a new, Christological interpretation of *Moses and all the prophets* (cf. 9.45; 18.34). No specific OT texts are indicated, but see Acts 2.25–36; 4.11, 25–30; 8.32–35; 13.32–39. **24.30** See 9.16; 22.19. In Acts, the "breaking of bread" is mentioned several times, perhaps with eucharistic overtones (see 2.42, 46; 20.7; 27.35). **24.31** *Their eyes were opened.* See note on 24.16; see also 10.23–24. **24.34** The appearance to *Simon* (Peter) is not narrated (but see 1 Cor 15.5).

24.36–53 The third appearance of the risen Christ (see 24.13–31, 34) recalls elements of John's narrative. **24.36** *Peace be with you*, a conventional Jewish greeting but also a sign of the kingdom (see 1.79; 2.14, 29; 7.50; 8.48; 19.38, 42; Acts 10.36; see also Jn 20.19, 26). **24.39** *Touch me and see.* The command emphasizes the physical reality of Jesus' resurrection (see also Jn 20.25–29). He is not merely a *ghost* or spirit. **24.41** Here *joy* is the cause of disbelief (cf. 22.45; Jn 20.20). **24.42** Eating the *broiled fish* emphasizes again the reality of the resurrection (see also 8.55; Jn 21.9–14). **24.44–45** These verses again introduce the Messiah's interpretation of Israel's scriptures (see notes on 24.26; 24.27). **24.47** *Repentance and forgiveness of sins* is the substance of the mission in Acts 2.38. On going *to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem*, see Acts 1.8. **24.48** The role of the apostles is to be *witnesses* (see Acts 1.6–8, 22). **24.49** *What my Father promised* proves to be the Holy Spirit. See Acts 1.4–5, 8; 2.4, 17–18 (citing Joel 2.28–29) 2.38;

The Ascension of Jesus

50 Then he led them out as far as
Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he
blessed them. 51 While he was blessing
them, he withdrew from them and was
carried up into heaven.[m] 52 And they wor-
shiped him, and[n] returned to Jerusalem
with great joy; 53 and they were continu-
ally in the temple blessing God.[o]

m Other ancient authorities lack *and was carried up into heaven* *n* Other ancient authorities lack *worshiped him, and* *o* Other ancient authorities add *Amen*

see also Isa 32.15; 44.3; Ezek 39.29. **24.50** *Bethany*. See note on 19.29. **24.51** Jesus' exaltation into *heaven* is narrated in greater detail in Acts 1. **24.52–53** The return to Jerusalem again places the followers of Jesus at the *temple* (see 1.8–23; 2.22–51; 19.45–21.38; Acts 1–4), involved with the prayers of Israel.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO

JOHN

Character

IT HAS LONG BEEN RECOGNIZED that the Gospel of John differs significantly from the other Gospels. It has characters and events that the other three do not mention, and it lacks stories that are prominent in them. It uses language that is rich in symbolism and subtle shades of meaning. Irony and paradox are common in John; people often misunderstand what Jesus says, but in a way that opens up new levels of meaning. Instead of speaking in parables and short sayings about the kingdom of God, Jesus speaks in long, difficult monologues about himself, his relation to God, and the need to believe in him. Since the second century C.E., it has been common to think of John as the "spiritual Gospel," more theological than historical. However, recent study has shown that John has a certain grounding in history.

Historical Setting

Of all the NT Gospels, John presents by far the most hostile picture of relations between Jesus and the Jews. Throughout the book, Jesus rebukes "the Jews" for their failure to recognize or understand him. For their part, they try to stone him, and people who confess him as the Messiah are put out of the synagogue, so that his disciples are "afraid of the Jews" (9.22; 16.2; 20.19). Yet Jesus and his disciples were Jews themselves! It is not likely that Jewish Christians were expelled from synagogues before the 80s C.E., and even then this did not happen everywhere.

It is now widely recognized that this state of affairs reflects the circumstances not of Jesus himself but of a Christian group some years after his death. The Gospel of John seems to have been written in a specific Christian community in the late first century that was undergoing a painful separation from the Jewish society to which its members had belonged. Their claim that Jesus was the Messiah, and indeed the Son of God, brought disciplinary action from the synagogue authorities (who apparently belonged to the Pharisees; see 7.45–48; 12.42). For some, the punishment only emboldened their confession of belief. Others

apparently sought to remain within the synagogue as secret Christians (12.42–43; 19.38).

It is important to remember, then, that when John speaks of "the Jews," it refers not to the Jewish people as a whole, but to the synagogue authorities of a particular time and place; or sometimes to Jewish believers whose faith, or their courage in expressing it, fell short in the writer's view. The hostile debates between "the Jews" and Jesus in John indicate the intensity of the conflict between the synagogue authorities and the Jewish Christian community in which this Gospel was written.

Purpose

The aim of the Gospel is stated clearly in John 20.31: to encourage its readers to believe that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God. Given the historical circumstances sketched above, this probably means that the book was intended to inspire members of the community to maintain their belief during a troubled time, rather than to convert outsiders. There are many things in John that have meaning only for those who are Christians already. Yet even nonbelievers who are open to the Christian message may find John's powerful symbolic presentation of Jesus as Light of the World and Bread of Life moving and attractive.

Author and Sources

A tradition going back to the second century identifies the author of this Gospel as John the son of Zebedee, one of Jesus' disciples. Since the book also speaks of a "disciple whom Jesus loved" and seems to connect him with its writing (19.26, 35; 21.20–24), this beloved disciple has often been identified with John. However, the Gospel itself does not make this identification and neither mentions John nor names its author. It may be that the author developed the book from traditions about Jesus that had been handed on by one of his disciples. It has also been suggested that an earlier document focusing on Jesus' miraculous "signs" (2.11) was incorporated into the Gospel. After its first writing, John was evidently further expanded: chs. 15–17 and 21 seem to have been added later, by the original author or by someone from the same circles.

John is thus a book with a complex history, whose origins are not entirely clear to us. Yet even if its author can no longer be identified with certainty, the importance of its conception of Jesus remains.

Date and Place of Writing

John has always been recognized as the latest of the four Gospels. Its references to expulsion of Christians from the synagogue and its highly developed theology suggest a date in the 80s or 90s C.E. Second-century tradition placed the writing of John in Ephesus, and this remains quite possible, though other places have also been suggested.

Theology and Religious Background

John lays more stress on the divinity of Jesus than do any of the other Gospels, so much so that Jesus is presented as being alien to this world (8.23). Such beliefs were the focus of the conflict between the Christian community and the synagogue authorities, which left the community itself feeling alienated from the world. A number of parallels to John's language and thought are found in other ancient religious writings, including Gnostic texts, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and other Jewish writings. Along with the synagogue conflict, influences from such sources may have had a part in the development of this Gospel's beliefs. John states quite clearly that the community's ideas about Jesus changed after Jesus' lifetime and describes this development as the work of the Holy Spirit (12.16; 14.25–26; 16.12–13). By claiming that the divine Son of God truly "became flesh," i.e., was fully human, John presents the Christian belief that in Jesus God entered into human history to save human beings. It is this belief that is embodied in the symbolism and paradoxes of this Gospel. *David K Rensberger*

The Word Became Flesh

1 In the beginning was the Word, and
the Word was with God, and the
Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning
with God. 3 All things came into being
through him, and without him not one
thing came into being. What has come
into being 4 in him was life,[a] and the life
was the light of all people. 5 The light
shines in the darkness, and the darkness
did not overcome it.
6 There was a man sent from God,
whose name was John. 7 He came as a wit-
ness to testify to the light, so that all might
believe through him. 8 He himself was not
the light, but he came to testify to the
light. 9 The true light, which enlightens
everyone, was coming into the world.[b]
10 He was in the world, and the world
came into being through him; yet the
world did not know him. 11 He came to

a Or *3 through him. And without him not one thing came into being that has come into being. 4 In him was life*
b Or *He was the true light that enlightens everyone coming into the world*

1.1–18 The prologue introduces the central theme of this Gospel: the divine Savior has come into the world, has been rejected by many, but has given eternal life to those who accepted him. Some hold that at least parts of the prologue (e.g., vv. 1–5, 10–11, 14, 16) were originally a separate poem, adapted for this purpose. In these verses a word in one clause often leads into the next clause. Also cf. this prologue with 1 Jn 1.1–4, which is probably based on it. **1.1** *In the beginning.* See Gen 1.1; Prov 8.22. *Word,* not simply a spoken word (like God's words of creation in Gen 1), but the *Logos,* in Greek thought the divine principle of reason that gives order to the universe and links the human mind to the mind of God. **1.2–4** *He, him,* or possibly "it," i.e., the *Logos.* **1.4** A major part of John's message is that Jesus brought divine *life* into the world. Here this life is associated with creation; elsewhere it is described as "eternal life," the life of resurrection beyond death that is given now to those who believe in Jesus. See 3.16; 5.21–29; 6.32–40, 51–58; 11.25–26; 14.6; 17.1–3. **1.5** *Light, darkness.* See Gen 1.3–4; 1 Jn 2.8–11. *Overcome,* or "comprehend"; see also 12.35 (*overtake*). **1.6–8** The contrast with *John* the Baptist (also 1.15) links the prologue to the beginning of the story itself (1.19–34); see also 3.22–36. The strong insistence in all these places that John was not the Messiah suggests some rivalry between his followers and the Christian community for which this Gospel was written. **1.9** *Light.* See 3.18–19; 8.12; 9.5; 12.46; Isa 9.2; 42.6–7; 60.1–3. **1.10** *The world,* not simply the natural order, but

what was his own,[c] and his own people
did not accept him. 12 But to all who re-
ceived him, who believed in his name, he
gave power to become children of God,
13 who were born, not of blood or of the
will of the flesh or of the will of man, but
of God.

14 And the Word became flesh and
lived among us, and we have seen his
glory, the glory as of a father's only son,[d]
full of grace and truth. 15 (John testified
to him and cried out, "This was he of
whom I said, 'He who comes after me
ranks ahead of me because he was before
me.' ") 16 From his fullness we have all re-
ceived, grace upon grace. 17 The law in-
deed was given through Moses; grace and
truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No
one has ever seen God. It is God the only
Son,[e] who is close to the Father's heart,[f]
who has made him known.

The Testimony of John the Baptist

19 This is the testimony given by John
when the Jews sent priests and Levites
from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are
you?" 20 He confessed and did not deny it,
but confessed, "I am not the Messiah."[g]
21 And they asked him, "What then? Are
you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are
you the prophet?" He answered, "No."
22 Then they said to him, "Who are you?
Let us have an answer for those who sent
us. What do you say about yourself?"
23 He said,

"I am the voice of one crying out
in the wilderness,
'Make straight the way of
the Lord,' "

as the prophet Isaiah said.

24 Now they had been sent from the
Pharisees. 25 They asked him, "Why then
are you baptizing if you are neither the
Messiah,[g] nor Elijah, nor the prophet?"
26 John answered them, "I baptize with
water. Among you stands one whom you
do not know, 27 the one who is coming
after me; I am not worthy to untie the
thong of his sandal." 28 This took place in
Bethany across the Jordan where John
was baptizing.

29 The next day he saw Jesus coming
toward him and declared, "Here is the
Lamb of God who takes away the sin of

c Or *to his own home* *d* Or *the Father's only Son*
e Other ancient authorities read *It is an only Son, God,* or *It is the only Son* *f* Gk *bosom* *g* Or *the Christ*

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the human beings who should have known their Creator in the coming of Christ. **1.13** *Born . . . of God.* See 3.3–8; 1 Jn 2.29–3.1; 4.7; 5.1. **1.14–18** There are references here to events on Mount Sinai, where Moses desired to *see* God's *glory* but was told that *no one* could *see God*; however, God was revealed to Moses as full of steadfast love and faithfulness, concepts related to *grace and truth* (see Ex 33.18–34.8). **1.14** *Word.* See note on 1.1. *Flesh*, i.e., human, with all the limitations and mortality that this implies. Such a statement about the divine *Logos* would have seemed extraordinary in ancient religious thought. *Lived among us.* The OT speaks several times of God coming to live among the people of God (e.g., Ex 25.8; Ezek 37.27; Zech 2.10–11; also Sir 24.8), and associates the presence of God with God's *glory* (Ex 16.10; 24.15–18; 29.43–46; 40.34–38; 1 Kings 8.10–11; Pss 26.8; 63.2; Ezek 11.22–23; 44.4). Many of these passages have to do with the tabernacle or the temple; cf. Jn 2.18–22. *A father's only son*, lit. "an only one from a [or the] father." **1.15** See 1.27, 30; note on 1.6–8. **1.17** *Came*, or "came into existence." **1.18** *No one has ever seen God.* See also 1 Jn 4.12. *God the only Son*, lit. "the only God."

1.19–34 John the Baptist's testimony to Jesus is more developed in John than in the other Gospels (cf. Mt 3.1–12; Mk 1.2–8; Lk 3.1–18). Only Luke also includes speculation that John might be the Messiah, the anointed king expected at the end of time (cf. Jn 1.20; Lk 3.15; see also Acts 13.25; note on Jn 1.6–8). **1.19** *The Jews*, i.e., the Jewish authorities, identified in 1.24 as the Pharisees (see Introduction). *Levites* in NT times assisted the priests in the temple rituals and worked as administrators, guards, musicians, singers, etc. **1.21** Many Jews expected the return of *Elijah* (Mal 4.5–6; see also Mt 11.14; Mk 6.15; 8.28; 9.4–5, 11–13; Lk 1.17) or the rise of a *prophet* like Moses (Deut 18.15; see also Jn 6.14; 7.40, 52; Acts 3.22–24; 7.37) in the last days. **1.23** John the Baptist quotes Isa 40.3. **1.26** *Whom you do not know.* See 1.10. **1.27** *The one . . . coming after me.* See 1.15. **1.28** The exact location of *Bethany across the Jordan* (i.e., east of the Jordan River) is not known. **1.29** *The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.* Cf. 1 Jn 2.2. Why Jesus is called the *Lamb* is not quite clear. Bulls, goats, and sheep were used as sacrifices for sin (see Lev 4–5), but not lambs. John presents Jesus as the Passover lamb (see notes on 19.14; 19.36), but that lamb is not a sacrifice for sin. The reference may be to the lamb of Isa 53.7, but that is not certain.

the world! 30 This is he of whom I said,
'After me comes a man who ranks ahead
of me because he was before me.' 31 I my-
self did not know him; but I came baptiz-
ing with water for this reason, that he
might be revealed to Israel." 32 And John
testified, "I saw the Spirit descending
from heaven like a dove, and it remained
on him. 33 I myself did not know him, but
the one who sent me to baptize with water
said to me, 'He on whom you see the
Spirit descend and remain is the one who
baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' 34 And I
myself have seen and have testified that
this is the Son of God."[h]

The First Disciples of Jesus

35 The next day John again was
standing with two of his disciples, 36 and
as he watched Jesus walk by, he ex-
claimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of
God!" 37 The two disciples heard him say
this, and they followed Jesus. 38 When
Jesus turned and saw them following, he
said to them, "What are you looking for?"
They said to him, "Rabbi" (which trans-
lated means Teacher), "where are you
staying?" 39 He said to them, "Come and
see." They came and saw where he was
staying, and they remained with him that
day. It was about four o'clock in the after-
noon. 40 One of the two who heard John
speak and followed him was Andrew,
Simon Peter's brother. 41 He first found
his brother Simon and said to him, "We
have found the Messiah" (which is trans-
lated Anointed[i]). 42 He brought Simon[j]
to Jesus, who looked at him and said,
"You are Simon son of John. You are to
be called Cephas" (which is translated
Peter[k]).

43 The next day Jesus decided to go
to Galilee. He found Philip and said to
him, "Follow me." 44 Now Philip was from
Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.
45 Philip found Nathanael and said to
him, "We have found him about whom
Moses in the law and also the prophets
wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Naza-
reth." 46 Nathanael said to him, "Can any-
thing good come out of Nazareth?" Philip
said to him, "Come and see." 47 When
Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him,
he said of him, "Here is truly an Israelite
in whom there is no deceit!" 48 Nathanael
asked him, "Where did you get to know
me?" Jesus answered, "I saw you under
the fig tree before Philip called you."
49 Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the
Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"
50 Jesus answered, "Do you believe be-
cause I told you that I saw you under the
fig tree? You will see greater things than
these." 51 And he said to him, "Very truly,
I tell you,[l] you will see heaven opened
and the angels of God ascending and de-
scending upon the Son of Man."

h Other ancient authorities read *is God's chosen one*
i Or *Christ* *j* Gk *him* *k* From the word for *rock* in Aramaic (*kepha*) and Greek (*petra*), respectively *l* Both instances of the Greek word for *you* in this verse are plural

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1.30 See 1.15. **1.32–34** Unlike in the other Gospels, Jesus' baptism itself is not described, only John's response to it; cf. Mt 3.13–17; Mk 1.9–11; Lk 3.21–22.

1.35–51 Only John says that Jesus' first disciples came from among the disciples of John the Baptist. Note their increasing recognition of Jesus' divinity (vv. 38, 41, 45, 49, 51). **1.36** *Lamb of God.* See 1.29. **1.38** *What are you looking for . . . Teacher.* Cf. 20.15–16. **1.40** On *Andrew* and *Simon Peter,* cf. Mk 1.16–17. **1.42** On the naming of *Peter,* cf. Mt 16.17–18. **1.43** *Philip* appears in all the lists of the twelve apostles (e.g., Mk 3.18). He appears with Andrew in Jn 6.5–9; 12.21–22; and alone in 14.8. The calling of the disciples takes place in Bethany (see note on 1.28). **1.44** *Bethsaida,* a town near the northern end of the Sea of Galilee. **1.45** *Nathanael* appears only in John (here and in 21.2). *Son of Joseph.* Cf. 1.49. **1.46** *Nazareth* was a small, secluded village. **1.47** *An Israelite in whom there is no deceit.* "Israel" was the name given to Jacob (Gen 32.28), who had been deceitful (Gen 27.34–36). **1.49** *The Son of God, the King of Israel.* In ancient Israel, the king might be thought of metaphorically as God's son (2 Sam 7.14; Pss 2.7; 89.26), but in John, Jesus' sonship means his divinity. John also associates Jesus' messianic kingship with prophetic powers (see note on 6.14–15), here seen in Jesus' supernatural knowledge about Nathanael. **1.50** *Greater things.* See 5.20; 14.12. **1.51** *Angels of God ascending and descending,* another reference to Jacob/Israel (Gen 28.12). The origin of the term *Son of Man* in the Gospels is not clear; it may come ultimately from Dan 7.13–14. In John, it often represents Jesus' role as a link between heaven and earth; see 3.13; 5.26–27; 6.62; see also Mk 14.62.

The Wedding at Cana

2 On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the
mother of Jesus was there. 2 Jesus and
his disciples had also been invited to the
wedding. 3 When the wine gave out,
the mother of Jesus said to him, "They
have no wine." 4 And Jesus said to her,
"Woman, what concern is that to you and
to me? My hour has not yet come." 5 His
mother said to the servants, "Do whatever
he tells you." 6 Now standing there were
six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of
purification, each holding twenty or thirty
gallons. 7 Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars
with water." And they filled them up to
the brim. 8 He said to them, "Now draw
some out, and take it to the chief steward." So they took it. 9 When the steward
tasted the water that had become wine,
and did not know where it came from
(though the servants who had drawn the
water knew), the steward called the bridegroom 10 and said to him, "Everyone
serves the good wine first, and then the
inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good
wine until now." 11 Jesus did this, the first
of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed
in him.
12 After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother, his brothers, and
his disciples; and they remained there a
few days.

Jesus Cleanses the Temple

13 The Passover of the Jews was near,
and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14 In the
temple he found people selling cattle,
sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. 15 Making a whip
of cords, he drove all of them out of the
temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He
also poured out the coins of the money
changers and overturned their tables.
16 He told those who were selling the
doves, "Take these things out of here!
Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" 17 His disciples remembered that it
was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." 18 The Jews then said to him,
"What sign can you show us for doing
this?" 19 Jesus answered them, "Destroy
this temple, and in three days I will raise it
up." 20 The Jews then said, "This temple
has been under construction for forty-six

2.1–12 This miracle is found only in John. **2.1** *The third day* seems to continue the series of days from 1.29, 35, 43. *Wedding* festivities usually lasted a week; those invited might be expected to contribute provisions such as wine. According to 21.2, *Cana*, in central Galilee, was the hometown of Nathanael (1.45). **2.4** *What concern is that to you and to me* is a negative response (cf. 2 Kings 3.13) but not necessarily a disrespectful one. It is also not necessarily disrespectful for Jesus to call his mother *woman*; see 19.26. Jesus' *hour* means the hour of his death (see note on 7.30; cf. 4.21). **2.6** *Rites of purification*, e.g., washing of hands and vessels (see Mk 7.1–4). **2.8** *Chief steward*, perhaps a servant acting as headwaiter, or one of the guests chosen as a master of ceremonies (Sir 32.1). **2.11** *The first of his signs.* A second sign is mentioned in 4.54 (though others happen in between; see 2.23) and other, unrecorded signs in 20.30. This may suggest that John's Gospel is partly based on a source that focused on miraculous signs of Jesus. In John such signs have a complex relation to *believing* (see 2.23–3.3; 4.48; 6.2, 14, 26, 30; 7.31; 9.16; 12.37). *Glory.* See note on 1.14. **2.12** *Capernaum*, a prosperous city near the northern end of the Sea of Galilee that Jesus made the center of his ministry (see 6.17, 24, 59; Mt 4.13; 11.23; Mk 2.1). *His brothers.* See also 7.3–5.

2.13–22 The cleansing of the temple is found at the end of Jesus' mission in the other Gospels (e.g., Mk 11.15–18), which is more likely to be correct historically, since it may have been one reason for his crucifixion. John uses the story here to introduce Jesus' confrontation with the Jewish authorities. **2.13** *Passover* occurs in March or April (see Ex 12.1–13.10; Deut 16.1–8). As many as one hundred thousand people might make the pilgrimage to *Jerusalem* for this festival. **2.14** *Cattle, sheep, and doves*, animals used as sacrifices. *Money changers* converted foreign currency into the coins allowed in the temple. This activity took place in the outer area of the temple, where non-Jews were allowed to come. **2.15** The *whip* is not mentioned in the other Gospels, nor are the *sheep and cattle.* **2.16** *Stop making my Father's house a marketplace.* See Zech 14.21. **2.17** The quotation is from Ps 69.9. **2.18** On the demand for a *sign*, see 6.30; Mk 11.27–33; see also Mt 12.38–39; Mk 8.11–13. **2.19–21** On the misunderstanding here, see notes on 3.4; 7.33–36. In Mt 26.59–61; Mk 14.55–59 (cf. Acts 6.14), it is said that Jesus was falsely accused of making such a claim (v. 19). **2.20** The *temple* here would have been the Second Temple, built in the sixth century B.C.E. (Ezra 1; 3; 5–6; Hag 1–2; Zech 6.9–15). King Herod the

years, and will you raise it up in three
days?" 21 But he was speaking of the temple of his body. 22 After he was raised
from the dead, his disciples remembered
that he had said this; and they believed
the scripture and the word that Jesus had
spoken.

23 When he was in Jerusalem during
the Passover festival, many believed in his
name because they saw the signs that he
was doing. 24 But Jesus on his part would
not entrust himself to them, because he
knew all people 25 and needed no one to
testify about anyone; for he himself knew
what was in everyone.

Nicodemus Visits Jesus

3 Now there was a Pharisee named
Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews.
2 He came to Jesus[m] by night and said to
him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a
teacher who has come from God; for no
one can do these signs that you do apart
from the presence of God." 3 Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one
can see the kingdom of God without being born from above."[n] 4 Nicodemus said
to him, "How can anyone be born after
having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be
born?" 5 Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell
you, no one can enter the kingdom of
God without being born of water and
Spirit. 6 What is born of the flesh is flesh,
and what is born of the Spirit is spirit.[o]
7 Do not be astonished that I said to you,
'You[p] must be born from above.'[q] 8 The
wind[o] blows where it chooses, and you
hear the sound of it, but you do not know
where it comes from or where it goes. So
it is with everyone who is born of the
Spirit." 9 Nicodemus said to him, "How
can these things be?" 10 Jesus answered

m Gk *him* *n* Or *born anew* *o* The same Greek word means both *wind* and *spirit*
p The Greek word for *you* here is plural
q Or *anew*

Great began renovations and enlargements of it around 20 B.C.E., which were still in progress in Jesus' day. **2.22** *His disciples remembered.* See 12.16; 14.25–26; 16.12–13; 20.9. **2.23–25** The mention of *signs* and believers to whom Jesus *would not entrust himself* here makes a transition to the dialogue with Nicodemus in ch. 3. **2.23** *Signs.* See note on 2.11. **2.24–25** On the ability to discern *what was in everyone,* see also 1 Sam 16.7; 1 Chr 28.9; Ps 139.

3.1–21 Nicodemus is mentioned only in John (7.45–52; 19.38–42). He may stand for a group (*we,* v. 2; plural *you,* vv. 7, 11, 12) with inadequate faith based on signs (v. 2; cf. 2.23–25). See also 12.42–43; Introduction. **3.2** *Night.* See 11.10; 13.30. **3.3** Cf. Mt 18.3–4; Mk 10.15. *Born from above,* i.e., born from God; see 1.12–13; cf. 3.31; 8.23; 19.11. **3.4** The Greek word translated *from above* in v. 3 can also mean *anew* (see text note *n*). This is the source of Nicodemus's misunderstanding. Such misunderstandings are common in John; see, e.g., 2.19–21; 4.10–15, 31–38; 11.11–13; note on 7.33–36. **3.5** *Water,* i.e., baptism, associated with new birth and the *Spirit* in Rom 6.4; 1 Cor 6.11; 12.13; Titus 3.5. **3.6** On the contrast of *flesh* and *spirit,* see also 6.63. **3.8** *You do not know . . . where it goes.* See 7.26–29; 8.14; 9.28–30. **3.10** *A teacher,* lit. "the teacher."

JEWISH FESTIVALS IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

FESTIVAL	TIME OF YEAR	OCCURRENCE IN JOHN
Passover	March/April	John 2.13, 23; 4.45; 6.4; 11.55; 12.1, 12, 20; 13.1, 29; 18.28, 39; 19.14
Booths (Sukkoth)	October	John 7.1–14, 37
Dedication (Hanukkah)	December	John 10.22
An unnamed festival		John 5.1

him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet
you do not understand these things?
11 "Very truly, I tell you, we speak of
what we know and testify to what we have
seen; yet you[r] do not receive our testi-
mony. 12 If I have told you about earthly
things and you do not believe, how can
you believe if I tell you about heavenly
things? 13 No one has ascended into
heaven except the one who descended
from heaven, the Son of Man.[s] 14 And
just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the
wilderness, so must the Son of Man be
lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in him
may have eternal life.[t]
16 "For God so loved the world that
he gave his only Son, so that everyone
who believes in him may not perish but
may have eternal life.
17 "Indeed, God did not send the Son
into the world to condemn the world, but
in order that the world might be saved
through him. 18 Those who believe in him
are not condemned; but those who do not
believe are condemned already, because
they have not believed in the name of the
only Son of God. 19 And this is the judg-
ment, that the light has come into the
world, and people loved darkness rather
than light because their deeds were evil.
20 For all who do evil hate the light and do
not come to the light, so that their deeds
may not be exposed. 21 But those who do
what is true come to the light, so that it
may be clearly seen that their deeds have
been done in God."[t]

Jesus and John the Baptist

22 After this Jesus and his disciples
went into the Judean countryside, and he
spent some time there with them and bap-
tized. 23 John also was baptizing at Aenon
near Salim because water was abundant
there; and people kept coming and were
being baptized 24 — John, of course, had
not yet been thrown into prison.
25 Now a discussion about purifica-
tion arose between John's disciples and a
Jew.[u] 26 They came to John and said to
him, "Rabbi, the one who was with you
across the Jordan, to whom you testified,
here he is baptizing, and all are going to
him." 27 John answered, "No one can re-
ceive anything except what has been given
from heaven. 28 You yourselves are my
witnesses that I said, 'I am not the Mes-
siah,[v] but I have been sent ahead of him.'
29 He who has the bride is the bride-
groom. The friend of the bridegroom,
who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly
at the bridegroom's voice. For this reason
my joy has been fulfilled. 30 He must in-
crease, but I must decrease."[w]

The One Who Comes from Heaven

31 The one who comes from above is
above all; the one who is of the earth be-
longs to the earth and speaks about
earthly things. The one who comes from
heaven is above all. 32 He testifies to what
he has seen and heard, yet no one accepts
his testimony. 33 Whoever has accepted
his testimony has certified[x] this, that God
is true. 34 He whom God has sent speaks
the words of God, for he gives the Spirit
without measure. 35 The Father loves the

r The Greek word for *you* here and in verse 12 is plural *s* Other ancient authorities add *who is in heaven* *t* Some interpreters hold that the quotation concludes with verse 15 *u* Other ancient authorities read *the Jews* *v* Or *the Christ* *w* Some interpreters hold that the quotation continues through verse 36 *x* Gk *set a seal to*

3.11 On Jesus' *testimony*, see 8.13–18. **3.13** *Ascended, descended.* See 1.51; 6.62. **3.14** *Serpent.* See Num 21.9. To be *lifted up* refers both to Jesus' glorification and to his crucifixion; see also Jn 8.28; 12.32–34 (cf. Isa 52.13). **3.16** See 5.24; 6.40, 47; 11.25–26; 20.31; 1 Jn 4.9. **3.17** See 1 Jn 4.14. *Condemn*, or "judge." See 5.24; 12.47–48. **3.19** *Light, darkness.* See 1.5, 9; 1 Jn 1.6–7; 2.9–11; Eph 5.11–14; Job 24.13–17. **3.20** *All who do evil hate the light.* See 7.7; 15.22–24. **3.21** *Do what is true.* See 1 Jn 1.6.

3.22–36 On the contrast between Jesus and John the Baptist, see notes on 1.6–8; 1.19–34. **3.22** Jesus is said to *baptize* only here and in 4.1 in the NT. **3.23** The location of both *Aenon* and *Salim* is uncertain. **3.24** On the imprisonment of John, see Mt 11.2–3; Mk 6.17–18. **3.25** *Purification* might refer to John's and Jesus' baptizing. **3.27** See also 19.11. **3.28** *I am not the Messiah.* See 1.20. **3.29** For the image of God's people as a *bride*, see Isa 62.5; Jer 2.2; Hos 2.16–20; 2 Cor 11.2; Rev 19.6–8; 21.9–10; see also Mk 2.19–20. *Friend*, i.e., the "best man," who brought the bride to the groom. *Joy . . . fulfilled.* See 15.11; 16.24; 17.13; 1 Jn 1.4; 2 Jn 12. **3.31–36** Note the similarities to 3.1–21 at several points: the superiority of the one who is *from above*; *testimony* that is rejected; and *eternal life* for those who *believe in the Son*, but condemnation for others. **3.31** *The one who comes from above.* See 8.23; 18.36; cf. 15.19;

Son and has placed all things in his hands.
36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal
life; whoever disobeys the Son will not see
life, but must endure God's wrath.

Jesus and the Woman of Samaria

4 Now when Jesus[y] learned that the
Pharisees had heard, "Jesus is mak-
ing and baptizing more disciples than
John" 2 — although it was not Jesus him-
self but his disciples who baptized — 3 he
left Judea and started back to Galilee.
4 But he had to go through Samaria. 5 So
he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar,
near the plot of ground that Jacob had
given to his son Joseph. 6 Jacob's well was
there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey,
was sitting by the well. It was about noon.
7 A Samaritan woman came to draw
water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a
drink." 8 (His disciples had gone to the
city to buy food.) 9 The Samaritan woman
said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask
a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?"
(Jews do not share things in common with
Samaritans.)[z] 10 Jesus answered her, "If
you knew the gift of God, and who it is
that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,'
you would have asked him, and he would
have given you living water." 11 The
woman said to him, "Sir, you have no
bucket, and the well is deep. Where do
you get that living water? 12 Are you
greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave
us the well, and with his sons and his
flocks drank from it?" 13 Jesus said to her,
"Everyone who drinks of this water will be
thirsty again, 14 but those who drink of the
water that I will give them will never be
thirsty. The water that I will give will be-
come in them a spring of water gushing
up to eternal life." 15 The woman said to
him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may
never be thirsty or have to keep coming
here to draw water."
16 Jesus said to her, "Go, call your
husband, and come back." 17 The woman
answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus
said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I
have no husband'; 18 for you have had five
husbands, and the one you have now is
not your husband. What you have said is
true!" 19 The woman said to him, "Sir, I
see that you are a prophet. 20 Our ances-
tors worshiped on this mountain, but
you[a] say that the place where people
must worship is in Jerusalem." 21 Jesus
said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour
is coming when you will worship the Fa-
ther neither on this mountain nor in Jeru-
salem. 22 You worship what you do not
know; we worship what we know, for sal-
vation is from the Jews. 23 But the hour is
coming, and is now here, when the true

y Other ancient authorities read *the Lord*
z Other ancient authorities lack this sentence
a The Greek word for *you* here and in verses 21 and 22 is plural

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17.14–16. **3.35** See 5.20. **3.36** See also 1 Jn 5.12. *God's wrath,* not simply a reference to divine emotion, but to God's judgment; see, e.g., Rom 2.5–8; Col 3.6.

4.1–6 This travel story brings Jesus to Samaria for his conversation with the woman at the well. **4.1** On Jesus' *baptizing,* see 3.22. **4.4** *He had to go through Samaria.* There were in fact other routes from Judea to Galilee, but the most direct lay through Samaria. **4.5** *Sychar* is the same as the OT city Shechem; see Gen 33.18–19; Josh 24.32. **4.6** *Jacob's well* is not mentioned in the OT. *Noon,* in the heat of the day, was an unusual time to draw water. **4.7–26** In her dialogue with Jesus, the woman gains an increasing recognition of who he is (vv. 9, 12, 19, 25). **4.9** Though both Jews and Samaritans were descended from ancient Israel and practiced similar religions, there was long-standing hostility between them. Thus it was also unusual for Jews to buy food (v. 8) from Samaritans. **4.10** *Living water.* See also 7.37–39. In Hebrew, the term means spring water (see Jer 2.13; Zech 14.8). **4.11–15** There is a similar dialogue in 6.30–35 contrasting what Jesus gives with what the ancestors had. See also Isa 55.1; Rev 21.6; 22.17. **4.12** *Are you greater.* See also 8.53. **4.15** The woman's misunderstanding is similar to a number of others in John; see notes on 3.4; 7.33–36. **4.16** *Husband.* Perhaps this subject is raised because, in the OT, the meeting of a man and a woman at a well often leads to marriage; see Gen 24.10–61; 29.1–20; Ex 2.15–21. **4.18** Though it is often suggested, *five husbands* probably does not refer to the five nations in the anti-Samaritan account in 2 Kings 17.24–41. **4.19–20** The woman raises an issue suitable for a *prophet* to discuss. *Our ancestors,* i.e., the ancestors of both Jews and Samaritans. *You,* i.e., the Jews. *This mountain.* The Samaritans believed that Mount Gerizim, not Jerusalem, was the place designated by God for worship (see Deut 11.26–30; 27.1–13; Josh 8.30–35). They had once had a temple on the mountain, which was near Sychar (Shechem), where this story takes place. **4.23** John speaks several times of an *hour* [that] *is coming, and is now*

worshipers will worship the Father in
spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such
as these to worship him. 24 God is spirit,
and those who worship him must worship
in spirit and truth." 25 The woman said to
him, "I know that Messiah is coming"
(who is called Christ). "When he comes,
he will proclaim all things to us." 26 Jesus
said to her, "I am he,[b] the one who is
speaking to you."

27 Just then his disciples came. They
were astonished that he was speaking with
a woman, but no one said, "What do you
want?" or, "Why are you speaking with
her?" 28 Then the woman left her water
jar and went back to the city. She said to
the people, 29 "Come and see a man who
told me everything I have ever done! He
cannot be the Messiah,[c] can he?" 30 They
left the city and were on their way to him.

31 Meanwhile the disciples were
urging him, "Rabbi, eat something."
32 But he said to them, "I have food to eat
that you do not know about." 33 So the disciples said to one another, "Surely no one
has brought him something to eat?"
34 Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the
will of him who sent me and to complete
his work. 35 Do you not say, 'Four months
more, then comes the harvest'? But I tell
you, look around you, and see how the
fields are ripe for harvesting. 36 The
reaper is already receiving[d] wages and is
gathering fruit for eternal life, so that
sower and reaper may rejoice together.
37 For here the saying holds true, 'One
sows and another reaps.' 38 I sent you to
reap that for which you did not labor.
Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."

39 Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I have
ever done." 40 So when the Samaritans
came to him, they asked him to stay with
them; and he stayed there two days.
41 And many more believed because of his
word. 42 They said to the woman, "It is no
longer because of what you said that we
believe, for we have heard for ourselves,
and we know that this is truly the Savior
of the world."

Jesus Returns to Galilee

43 When the two days were over, he
went from that place to Galilee 44 (for
Jesus himself had testified that a prophet
has no honor in the prophet's own country). 45 When he came to Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, since they had seen
all that he had done in Jerusalem at the
festival; for they too had gone to the
festival.

Jesus Heals an Official's Son

46 Then he came again to Cana in
Galilee where he had changed the water

b Gk *I am* *c* Or *the Christ* *d* Or 35 . . . *the fields are already ripe for harvesting.* 36 *The reaper is receiving*

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here (5.25–29; 16.21, 32). See also notes on 7.30; 12.23; 16.25. *Spirit and truth* are connected with Jesus and belief in him in John. See 1.14, 17, 33; 3.5–8; 6.63; 7.39; 8.31–32; 14.6; 17.17–19; 18.37; 20.22. **4.25** *Christ* is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word *Messiah*. **4.26** *I am he*. See note on 8.24. **4.27–30** The Samaritans' movement toward Jesus (4.30, 39–40) forms the backdrop for his dialogue with the disciples (4.31–38). **4.27** It was against the social customs of that time for a Jewish religious teacher to be *speaking with a woman* in public. **4.29** *He cannot be the Messiah, can he?* or, "Could he perhaps be the Messiah?" **4.31–38** Jesus has a better *food* (vv. 32, 34) than the disciples know (see note on 3.4), just as he had a better water than the woman thought (4.7–15). **4.34** *Food . . . work*. See 6.27–29; see also note on 5.19–20. **4.35–36** The harvest of people that is Jesus' work (cf. Lk 10.2) includes the Samaritans. The *sower* planted grain (see Mk 4.3–8) and the *reaper* harvested it several months later when it was ripe; but the time for this "harvest" has already come. **4.38** *Others* might refer to Moses and the prophets, to the teachers of the Samaritans, or to Christian missionaries. **4.39–42** Now the Samaritan "harvest" is reaped, first through *the woman's testimony*, then through direct contact with Jesus. **4.42** *Savior of the world*. See 3.17; 12.47; 1 Jn 4.14.

4.43–45 Jesus finally reaches the goal for which he had set out in 4.3. **4.44** See Mk 6.4. Jesus' *own country* is Galilee (1.46; 7.41–42, 52); the claim that he *has no honor* there, though the Galileans welcome him (v. 45), may indicate doubts about their enthusiasm based on signs (see note on 2.11). **4.45** *Festival*. See 2.13, 23.

4.46–54 The story of the healing of the official's son is comparable to that of the centurion's servant (which also takes place at Capernaum) in Mt 8.5–13; Lk 7.1–10. **4.46** *Cana . . . water into wine*. See 2.1–11. *Royal official*, presumably in the service of Herod Antipas, the son of King Herod the Great (Mk 6.14; see "The Herods: A Simplified Family Tree," p. 1862). From Cana to *Caper-*

into wine. Now there was a royal official
whose son lay ill in Capernaum. 47 When
he heard that Jesus had come from Judea
to Galilee, he went and begged him to
come down and heal his son, for he was at
the point of death. 48 Then Jesus said to
him, "Unless you[e] see signs and wonders
you will not believe." 49 The official said to
him, "Sir, come down before my little boy
dies." 50 Jesus said to him, "Go; your son
will live." The man believed the word that
Jesus spoke to him and started on his way.
51 As he was going down, his slaves met
him and told him that his child was alive.
52 So he asked them the hour when he began to recover, and they said to him, "Yesterday at one in the afternoon the fever
left him." 53 The father realized that this
was the hour when Jesus had said to him,
"Your son will live." So he himself believed, along with his whole household.
54 Now this was the second sign that Jesus
did after coming from Judea to Galilee.

Jesus Heals on the Sabbath

5 After this there was a festival of
the Jews, and Jesus went up to
Jerusalem.
2 Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate
there is a pool, called in Hebrew[f] Beth-
zatha,[g] which has five porticoes. 3 In
these lay many invalids—blind, lame, and
paralyzed.[h] 5 One man was there who
had been ill for thirty-eight years. 6 When
Jesus saw him lying there and knew that
he had been there a long time, he said to
him, "Do you want to be made well?"
7 The sick man answered him, "Sir, I have
no one to put me into the pool when the
water is stirred up; and while I am making my way, someone else steps down
ahead of me." 8 Jesus said to him, "Stand
up, take your mat and walk." 9 At once the
man was made well, and he took up his
mat and began to walk.
Now that day was a sabbath. 10 So the
Jews said to the man who had been cured,
"It is the sabbath; it is not lawful for you
to carry your mat." 11 But he answered
them, "The man who made me well said
to me, 'Take up your mat and walk.'"
12 They asked him, "Who is the man who
said to you, 'Take it up and walk'?" 13 Now
the man who had been healed did not
know who it was, for Jesus had disappeared in[i] the crowd that was there.
14 Later Jesus found him in the temple

e Both instances of the Greek word for *you* in this verse are plural f That is, *Aramaic* g Other ancient authorities read *Bethesda*, others *Bethsaida* h Other ancient authorities add, wholly or in part, *waiting for the stirring of the water; 4 for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool, and stirred up the water; whoever stepped in first after the stirring of the water was made well from whatever disease that person had.* i Or *had left because of*

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naum was fifteen or twenty miles. **4.48** On *signs* and *beliefs*, see 6.30; notes on 2.11; 11.40. **4.50** *Your son will live.* Cf. 1 Kings 17.23. **4.54** *Second sign.* See note on 2.11.

5.1–7.52 It has sometimes been suggested that ch. 5 belongs after ch. 6. This would make a good connection between ch. 5 and ch. 7, since the retreat in 7.1 would be directly caused by the dispute in ch. 5 (cf. also 7.19–24; 5.16–18). The connection between chs. 4 and 6 would also be good, since Jesus would still be in Galilee to make the trip mentioned in 6.1. However, if this were the original arrangement, it would be hard to explain how the chapters got into their present order.

5.1–18 Though this miracle story is found only in John, other controversies over healing on the sabbath are found in the other Gospels: Mt 12.9–14; Mk 3.1–6; Lk 13.10–17; 14.1–6. See also Jn 7.21–24; 9.13–17. **5.1** There are several possibilities for the *festival* referred to here, including Passover and Pentecost in the spring and the New Year and the Festival of Booths in the fall; but perhaps the author did not mean to be specific. (See "Jewish Festivals in the Gospel of John," p. 2017.) **5.2** *Sheep Gate*, probably a gate in the northern wall of Jerusalem, near the temple (see Neh 3.1). In that area there are remains of a double pool which may be *Beth-zatha*. The pools are surrounded by four *porticoes* (walkways with columns to support their roofs), and there is a fifth portico between the two pools. **5.3–5** Though v. 4 is striking, it is not found in the best manuscripts (see text note *h*), and its wording in Greek is unlike the rest of the Gospel of John. Therefore it was probably not originally part of this Gospel. **5.8** *Stand up . . . and walk.* See also Mk 2.9, 11. **5.10** *The Jews*, as usual in John, refers to the authorities, not to the Jewish people in general; see Introduction. *Not lawful.* The law has few details about particular activities that are forbidden on the sabbath (see Ex 20.8–11; 31.12–17; 35.2–3; Lev 23.3; Deut 5.12–15), but carrying burdens on the sabbath is opposed in Neh 13.15–21; Jer 17.19–27, and this prohibition was accepted and developed in Jewish tradition. **5.14** *Do not sin any more.* See also Mk

and said to him, "See, you have been
made well! Do not sin any more, so that
nothing worse happens to you." 15 The
man went away and told the Jews that it
was Jesus who had made him well.
16 Therefore the Jews started persecuting
Jesus, because he was doing such things
on the sabbath. 17 But Jesus answered
them, "My Father is still working, and I
also am working." 18 For this reason the
Jews were seeking all the more to kill him,
because he was not only breaking the sab-
bath, but was also calling God his own
Father, thereby making himself equal
to God.

The Authority of the Son

19 Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I
tell you, the Son can do nothing on his
own, but only what he sees the Father do-
ing; for whatever the Father[j] does, the
Son does likewise. 20 The Father loves the
Son and shows him all that he himself
is doing; and he will show him greater
works than these, so that you will be as-
tonished. 21 Indeed, just as the Father
raises the dead and gives them life, so also
the Son gives life to whomever he wishes.
22 The Father judges no one but has given
all judgment to the Son, 23 so that all may
honor the Son just as they honor the Fa-
ther. Anyone who does not honor the Son
does not honor the Father who sent him.
24 Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears
my word and believes him who sent me
has eternal life, and does not come un-
der judgment, but has passed from death
to life.
25 "Very truly, I tell you, the hour is
coming, and is now here, when the dead
will hear the voice of the Son of God, and
those who hear will live. 26 For just as the
Father has life in himself, so he has
granted the Son also to have life in him-
self; 27 and he has given him authority to
execute judgment, because he is the Son
of Man. 28 Do not be astonished at this;
for the hour is coming when all who are in
their graves will hear his voice 29 and will
come out—those who have done good, to
the resurrection of life, and those who
have done evil, to the resurrection of con-
demnation.
30 "I can do nothing on my own. As I
hear, I judge; and my judgment is just,
because I seek to do not my own will but
the will of him who sent me.

Witnesses to Jesus

31 "If I testify about myself, my testi-
mony is not true. 32 There is another who
testifies on my behalf, and I know that his
testimony to me is true. 33 You sent mes-
sengers to John, and he testified to the
truth. 34 Not that I accept such human tes-
timony, but I say these things so that you
may be saved. 35 He was a burning and
shining lamp, and you were willing to re-
joice for a while in his light. 36 But I have

j Gk *that one*

2.5; Jn 8.11. **5.15** He *told the Jews*. See also 11.46. **5.17** *My Father is still working*. Cf. Gen 2.2; Heb 4.3. **5.18** *To kill him*. See 8.58–59; 10.30–39; see also 7.1., 19–20, 25; 8.37–40.

5.19–47 Jesus' first lengthy dispute with the Jewish authorities sets the stage for several more such disputes in chs. 6–10 by laying out themes that will be treated further in those chapters. **5.19–20** Cf. Mt 11.27. On the *works* of God and Jesus, see 5.17, 36; see also 3.35; 4.34; 6.28–29; 9.3–4; 10.25, 37–38; 14.10–12; 17.4. *Be astonished*. See 5.28; 7.21; Hab 1.5. **5.21** *Raises the dead*, i.e., at the resurrection on the last day. See note on 11.24. *Gives life*. See 6.33–35; 10.10, 28; 11.25; 14.6; 17.2. **5.22** God's final *judgment*, like the resurrection of the dead, was expected at the end of time by many Jews and by the first Christians (Mt 12.36–37; Rom 2.1–16; 1 Jn 4.17–18; Rev 20.11–15). Here and in the following verses (vv. 23–30) this work of judgment, like that of resurrection, is transferred to Jesus (see also 3.17–19; 8.15–16; 9.39; 12.47–49). **5.23** A number of passages state that to respond to Jesus is to respond to God who sent him. See 12.44–45; 13.20; 14.7–9; Mt 10.40; Mk 9.37; Lk 10.16. **5.24** John asserts that for the believer eternal life does not wait until the end of time but is given now; see 11.25–26; 1 Jn 3.14; cf. Mk 10.30; Rom 2.5–7; Jude 21. **5.25–29** There may be a reference here to the raising of Lazarus (11.38–44); see also 6.39–40, 54. **5.25** *The hour*. See note on 4.23. **5.26** *The Son . . . to have life*. See also v. 21; 1.3–4. **5.27** *Son of Man*. See note on 1.51. **5.29** *Done good, done evil*. See also 3.19–21; Dan 12.2. **5.30** *I can do nothing on my own*. See 5.19–23; 8.15–16; note on 14.10. **5.31** Jewish law did not accept individuals' *testimony* about matters that concerned themselves; see also 8.13–18; 1 Jn 5.9. **5.33** See 1.19–28. **5.34** In 11.42; 12.30 Jesus also explains why things are said. **5.36** On the testimony of the *works*, see 10.25,

a testimony greater than John's. The
works that the Father has given me to
complete, the very works that I am doing,
testify on my behalf that the Father has
sent me. 37 And the Father who sent me
has himself testified on my behalf. You
have never heard his voice or seen his
form, 38 and you do not have his word
abiding in you, because you do not believe
him whom he has sent.

39 "You search the scriptures because
you think that in them you have eternal
life; and it is they that testify on my be-
half. 40 Yet you refuse to come to me to
have life. 41 I do not accept glory from hu-
man beings. 42 But I know that you do not
have the love of God in[k] you. 43 I have
come in my Father's name, and you do
not accept me; if another comes in his
own name, you will accept him. 44 How
can you believe when you accept glory
from one another and do not seek the
glory that comes from the one who alone
is God? 45 Do not think that I will accuse
you before the Father; your accuser is
Moses, on whom you have set your hope.
46 If you believed Moses, you would be-
lieve me, for he wrote about me. 47 But if
you do not believe what he wrote, how will
you believe what I say?"

Feeding the Five Thousand

6 After this Jesus went to the other
side of the Sea of Galilee, also called
the Sea of Tiberias.[l] 2 A large crowd
kept following him, because they saw the
signs that he was doing for the sick. 3 Jesus
went up the mountain and sat down there
with his disciples. 4 Now the Passover, the
festival of the Jews, was near. 5 When he
looked up and saw a large crowd coming
toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where
are we to buy bread for these people to
eat?" 6 He said this to test him, for he him-
self knew what he was going to do. 7 Philip
answered him, "Six months' wages[m]
would not buy enough bread for each of
them to get a little." 8 One of his disciples,
Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to
him, 9 "There is a boy here who has five
barley loaves and two fish. But what are
they among so many people?" 10 Jesus
said, "Make the people sit down." Now
there was a great deal of grass in the
place; so they[n] sat down, about five thou-
sand in all. 11 Then Jesus took the loaves,
and when he had given thanks, he distrib-
uted them to those who were seated; so
also the fish, as much as they wanted.
12 When they were satisfied, he told his
disciples, "Gather up the fragments left
over, so that nothing may be lost." 13 So
they gathered them up, and from the
fragments of the five barley loaves, left by
those who had eaten, they filled twelve
baskets. 14 When the people saw the sign
that he had done, they began to say, "This
is indeed the prophet who is to come into
the world."

15 When Jesus realized that they were

k Or *among* *l* Gk *of Galilee of Tiberias*
m Gk *Two hundred denarii*; the denarius was the usual day's wage for a laborer *n* Gk *the men*

37–38; also note on 5.19–20. **5.37–38** The reference to the Father's testimony may mean the Jewish scriptures (5.39–40, 45–47), God's *word*. *Never heard his voice or seen his form.* See 1.18; 6.46; see also Ex 20.18–19; 33.18–20. **5.39** *You search* might also be translated as an ironic command, "Search the scriptures." In either case, eternal life is not in the scriptures, but in Jesus, to whom they testify. **5.41** Jesus does not seek *glory* for himself (cf. 5.18) but for God (see 5.30, 44; 7.18; 8.50, 54; 12.43). **5.42** *Love of God*, probably love for God. **5.45–47** The point here is like that of 5.39–40; see also Lk 16.29–31.

6.1–71 On the order of the chapters, see note on 5.1–7.52. **6.1–15** Cf. this story with the feeding of the five thousand in Mt 14.13–21; Mk 6.32–44; Lk 9.10–17; and the four thousand in Mt 15.32–39; Mk 8.1–10. John's version has some features that seem to come from a tradition independent of the other Gospels. **6.2** These *signs* may include those in 4.43–54 and others not narrated by John; see note on 2.11; cf. Mt 14.13; Lk 9.11. **6.3** *The mountain* may mean a particular, unnamed mountain or "the hill country" more generally. **6.4** *Passover* (see also 2.13) is associated with unleavened bread and with the exodus, and thus with manna (6.31–35). Since Jesus' Last Supper was at or near Passover, the Christian Lord's Supper is also associated with Passover (see 6.11; see "Jewish Festivals in the Gospel of John," p. 2017). **6.5** *Philip.* See note on 1.43. *Where are we to buy bread.* Cf. Num 11.13. **6.6** *He himself knew.* Cf. 11.42. **6.8** *Andrew.* See notes on 1.40; 1.43. **6.9** *Barley loaves.* Cf. 2 Kings 4.42–44. **6.11** *Given thanks* translates the Greek word that is also the source of the term "Eucharist" (the Lord's Supper); cf. Jesus' actions here with those in Lk 22.19. See also 6.52–58; 21.13. **6.14–15** In the first century C.E., a number of leaders who claimed to be the *prophet* (see note on

about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

Jesus Walks on the Water

16 When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, 17 got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. 18 The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. 19 When they had rowed about three or four miles,[o] they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were terrified. 20 But he said to them, "It is I;[p] do not be afraid." 21 Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the land toward which they were going.

The Bread from Heaven

22 The next day the crowd that had stayed on the other side of the sea saw that there had been only one boat there. They also saw that Jesus had not got into the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone. 23 Then some boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks.[q] 24 So when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus.

25 When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" 26 Jesus answered them, "Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. 27 Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal." 28 Then they said to him, "What must we do to perform the works of God?" 29 Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." 30 So they said to him, "What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing? 31 Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" 32 Then Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is that which[r] comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." 34 They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always."

35 Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. 36 But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. 37 Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away; 38 for I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will,

o Gk *about twenty-five or thirty stadia* *p* Gk *I am*
q Other ancient authorities lack *after the Lord had given thanks* *r* Or *he who*

1.21) or the messianic *king* promised to do *signs* to prove that God had sent them to bring about the liberation of Israel from the Roman Empire; see also 7.31; 9.17; 11.47–48; Acts 5.36–37; 21.38. **6.16–21** Jesus' walking on the sea is also connected with the feeding miracle in Mk 6.45–52. **6.18** Sudden, violent storms are not uncommon on the Sea of Galilee. **6.20** *It is I* translates the same Greek words as *I am he* elsewhere in John; see note on 8.24. **6.22–24** A transitional passage. **6.23–24** *Tiberias* was on the southwest shore and *Capernaum* near the northern end of the Sea of Galilee. **6.25–34** From the very beginning of the discourse on the bread of life, Jesus seems critical of his audience. **6.26** *Not because you saw signs.* Cf. 6.2, 14, 30, 36; see note on 2.11. **6.27–29** On *food* and *work,* see 4.32–34. **6.27** *Do not work for the food that perishes.* Cf. Mt 6.19–20. *His seal,* i.e., a mark of approval that sets the Son apart. **6.30–35** See the similar dialogue in 4.11–15 contrasting what Jesus gives with what the ancestors had. **6.31** *Manna.* See Ex 16. *Bread from heaven.* See Ex 16.4; Ps 78.23–25. **6.33** *That which,* or *he who* (text note *r*). **6.35–40** The ideas of *coming* to Jesus, *seeing* him and *believing* in him, and being *given* to him by God are closely associated in this passage. They are related to the situation of the early Christian community within the synagogue, where only some were coming to join those who believed that Jesus was the Messiah (see Introduction). **6.35** Cf. 4.14; 7.37–39. **6.36** *I said to you,* perhaps a reference to 6.26; see also 3.12. On *seeing* and *believing,* see also 6.30, 40. **6.37** *Everything ... the Father gives me.* Cf. 6.44–45; 10.28–29; 17.2, 6, 9. **6.38** *Not ... my own will.* See 4.34; 5.30; 12.27; Lk 22.42.

but the will of him who sent me. 39 And
this is the will of him who sent me, that I
should lose nothing of all that he has
given me, but raise it up on the last day.
40 This is indeed the will of my Father,
that all who see the Son and believe in him
may have eternal life; and I will raise
them up on the last day."

41 Then the Jews began to complain
about him because he said, "I am the
bread that came down from heaven."
42 They were saying, "Is not this Jesus, the
son of Joseph, whose father and mother
we know? How can he now say, 'I have
come down from heaven'?" 43 Jesus an-
swered them, "Do not complain among
yourselves. 44 No one can come to me un-
less drawn by the Father who sent me;
and I will raise that person up on the last
day. 45 It is written in the prophets, 'And
they shall all be taught by God.' Everyone
who has heard and learned from the Fa-
ther comes to me. 46 Not that anyone has
seen the Father except the one who is
from God; he has seen the Father. 47 Very
truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eter-
nal life. 48 I am the bread of life. 49 Your
ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness,
and they died. 50 This is the bread that
comes down from heaven, so that one
may eat of it and not die. 51 I am the living
bread that came down from heaven. Who-
ever eats of this bread will live forever;
and the bread that I will give for the life
of the world is my flesh."

52 The Jews then disputed among
themselves, saying, "How can this man
give us his flesh to eat?" 53 So Jesus said to
them, "Very truly, I tell you, unless you
eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink
his blood, you have no life in you.
54 Those who eat my flesh and drink my
blood have eternal life, and I will raise
them up on the last day; 55 for my flesh is
true food and my blood is true drink.
56 Those who eat my flesh and drink my
blood abide in me, and I in them. 57 Just
as the living Father sent me, and I live
because of the Father, so whoever eats me
will live because of me. 58 This is the bread
that came down from heaven, not like
that which your ancestors ate, and they
died. But the one who eats this bread will
live forever." 59 He said these things while
he was teaching in the synagogue at
Capernaum.

The Disciples' Response

60 When many of his disciples heard
it, they said, "This teaching is difficult;
who can accept it?" 61 But Jesus, being
aware that his disciples were complaining
about it, said to them, "Does this offend
you? 62 Then what if you were to see the
Son of Man ascending to where he was
before? 63 It is the spirit that gives life; the
flesh is useless. The words that I have spo-
ken to you are spirit and life. 64 But
among you there are some who do not
believe." For Jesus knew from the first

6.39 *Raise it up on the last day.* Cf. 5.21–29; 11.23–26. **6.41–47** As in 3.1–15; 9.24–34, people resist the idea that God may act in an unexpected way (cf. 6.29); hence, as in 6.35–40, it is those who are willing to hear and learn who are drawn by God. **6.41** The OT story of the manna (6.31, 49) is surrounded by incidents in which the people *complain* (Ex 15.22–17.7). **6.42** See Mk 6.1–6; cf. Jn 7.27–28. **6.44** *Drawn.* See note on 6.35–40; cf. 12.32. **6.45** For the quotation, see Isa 54.13; see also Jer 31.34. **6.46** *Seen the Father.* See 1.18; 3.13; 5.37; 1 Jn 4.12. **6.47** See 6.40; see also 3.16. **6.48–51** A summary of the discourse on the bread of life, emphasizing Jesus' role as the true giver of life. **6.49** See 6.31. *They died.* See Num 11.33; 14.26–35; Ps 78.30–31. **6.51** *My flesh* may refer both to Jesus' sacrifice of his body on the cross and to the Lord's Supper. **6.52–58** John does not include Jesus' establishment of the Lord's Supper in ch. 13, where it would be expected. However, these verses seem to refer to it and contain similarities to the words of Jesus at the Last Supper in chs. 14–17. Some scholars hold that vv. 52–58 display a theology that is too sacramental to have been written by the author of this Gospel and therefore must be a later addition; others find them consistent with John's claim that *the Word became flesh* (1.14). **6.52–53** Cf. the form of these verses with 3.4–5 and with the "misunderstandings" discussed in the note on 7.33–36. **6.53** Jesus' *flesh* and *blood* are the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper. **6.54** *The last day.* See 6.39–40, 44. **6.55** *True food.* See also 6.27. **6.56** *Abide in me.* See note on 14.20. **6.57** On living because of Jesus, see 14.19. On the parallel between God's relationship to Jesus and Jesus' relationship to the disciples, see 15.9; 17.18; 20.21. **6.58** See 6.31, 49–50. **6.59** *Capernaum.* See note on 2.12. **6.61** *Complaining.* See note on 6.41. **6.62** *Ascending.* See 3.13; note on 1.51. **6.63** *The flesh is useless.* Cf. 6.54. **6.64** *The one*

who were the ones that did not believe,
and who was the one that would betray
him. 65 And he said, "For this reason I
have told you that no one can come to me
unless it is granted by the Father."

66 Because of this many of his disci-
ples turned back and no longer went
about with him. 67 So Jesus asked the
twelve, "Do you also wish to go away?"
68 Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to
whom can we go? You have the words of
eternal life. 69 We have come to believe
and know that you are the Holy One of
God."[s] 70 Jesus answered them, "Did I
not choose you, the twelve? Yet one of
you is a devil." 71 He was speaking of
Judas son of Simon Iscariot,[t] for he,
though one of the twelve, was going to
betray him.

The Unbelief of Jesus' Brothers

7 After this Jesus went about in Gali-
lee. He did not wish[u] to go about in
Judea because the Jews were looking for
an opportunity to kill him. 2 Now the Jew-
ish festival of Booths[v] was near. 3 So his
brothers said to him, "Leave here and go
to Judea so that your disciples also may
see the works you are doing; 4 for no one
who wants[w] to be widely known acts in
secret. If you do these things, show your-
self to the world." 5 (For not even his
brothers believed in him.) 6 Jesus said to
them, "My time has not yet come, but
your time is always here. 7 The world can-
not hate you, but it hates me because I
testify against it that its works are evil.
8 Go to the festival yourselves. I am not[x]
going to this festival, for my time has not
yet fully come." 9 After saying this, he re-
mained in Galilee.

Jesus at the Festival of Booths

10 But after his brothers had gone to
the festival, then he also went, not pub-
licly but as it were[y] in secret. 11 The Jews
were looking for him at the festival and
saying, "Where is he?" 12 And there was
considerable complaining about him
among the crowds. While some were say-
ing, "He is a good man," others were say-
ing, "No, he is deceiving the crowd."
13 Yet no one would speak openly about
him for fear of the Jews.

14 About the middle of the festival
Jesus went up into the temple and began
to teach. 15 The Jews were astonished at it,
saying, "How does this man have such
learning,[z] when he has never been
taught?" 16 Then Jesus answered them,
"My teaching is not mine but his who sent

s Other ancient authorities read *the Christ, the Son of the living God* t Other ancient authorities read *Judas Iscariot son of Simon;* others, *Judas son of Simon from Karyot* (Kerioth) u Other ancient authorities read *was not at liberty*
v Or *Tabernacles* w Other ancient authorities read *wants it* x Other ancient authorities add *yet*
y Other ancient authorities lack *as it were*
z Or *this man know his letters*

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that would betray him, i.e., Judas Iscariot; see note on 6.71. **6.65** See 6.44. **6.67–69** Cf. Mk 8.27–29. **6.71** *Judas.* See 12.4–6; 13.2, 11, 18, 21–30; 18.2–5.

7.1–52 On the order of the chapters, see note on 5.1–7.52. **7.1–10** Jesus' puzzling words and actions here may be meant to portray him as coming and going only when he is ready, since only he knows his "time" or "hour." **7.1** *Jews* might perhaps mean "Judeans," but is more likely a reference to the Jewish authorities (see note on 7.13). On the Jews' efforts *to kill him,* see 5.18. **7.2** The *festival of Booths,* or Tabernacles (Hebrew *Sukkoth*), was a seven-day harvest festival observed in October (Lev 23.34–43; Deut 16.13–17; Neh 8.14–18; see "Jewish Festivals in the Gospel of John," p. 2017). The whole of chs. 7–8 is set during this festival, which drew many pilgrims to Jerusalem in the first century C.E. It also included ceremonies involving the pouring out of water (see 7.37–38) and the lighting of great lights (see 8.12) in the temple. **7.6** Jesus' *time* is the same as his *hour* in 7.30 (see note there). **7.7** *The world . . . hates.* See 3.19–21; 15.18–19, 24–25. **7.8** It is conceivable that *not going* (lit. "not going up") *to this festival* also means that Jesus is not "going up" (i.e., returning to God; see 20.17) at this festival, because his *time has not yet fully come* (see notes on 7.6; 7.30). **7.10** *In secret.* See also 7.1, and Jesus' hiding in 8.59; 11.54; 12.36. **7.11–15** Jesus' arrival at the festival causes division and uncertainty. **7.12** *Complaining,* or "whispering." Cf. the division among the crowds here with the divisions in 7.30–31, 40–44; 8.30; 9.16; 10.19–21. **7.13** *For fear of the Jews.* See 9.22; 19.38; 20.19 (also 12.42). In all these places (as in 7.1, 11, 15, 35) *the Jews* means the authorities, since the people who are afraid are Jewish themselves. See also Introduction. **7.15** *He has never been taught.* Cf. Acts 4.13. **7.16–24** This section has many parallels with ch. 5: cf. 7.16–17 with 5.19, 30; 7.18 with 5.31, 41–44; 7.19–23 with 5.16–18. **7.16–17** On the source of Jesus' *teaching,* see 8.26–28; note

me. 17 Anyone who resolves to do the will
of God will know whether the teaching is
from God or whether I am speaking on
my own. 18 Those who speak on their own
seek their own glory; but the one who
seeks the glory of him who sent him is
true, and there is nothing false in him.
19 "Did not Moses give you the law?
Yet none of you keeps the law. Why are
you looking for an opportunity to kill
me?" 20 The crowd answered, "You have a
demon! Who is trying to kill you?" 21 Jesus
answered them, "I performed one work,
and all of you are astonished. 22 Moses
gave you circumcision (it is, of course, not
from Moses, but from the patriarchs), and
you circumcise a man on the sabbath. 23 If
a man receives circumcision on the sab-
bath in order that the law of Moses may
not be broken, are you angry with me be-
cause I healed a man's whole body on the
sabbath? 24 Do not judge by appearances,
but judge with right judgment."

Is This the Christ?

25 Now some of the people of Jerusa-
lem were saying, "Is not this the man
whom they are trying to kill? 26 And here
he is, speaking openly, but they say noth-
ing to him! Can it be that the authorities
really know that this is the Messiah?[a]
27 Yet we know where this man is from;
but when the Messiah[a] comes, no one will
know where he is from." 28 Then Jesus
cried out as he was teaching in the temple,
"You know me, and you know where I am
from. I have not come on my own. But
the one who sent me is true, and you do
not know him. 29 I know him, because I
am from him, and he sent me." 30 Then
they tried to arrest him, but no one laid
hands on him, because his hour had not
yet come. 31 Yet many in the crowd be-
lieved in him and were saying, "When the
Messiah[a] comes, will he do more signs
than this man has done?"[b]

Officers Are Sent to Arrest Jesus

32 The Pharisees heard the crowd
muttering such things about him, and the
chief priests and Pharisees sent temple
police to arrest him. 33 Jesus then said, "I
will be with you a little while longer, and
then I am going to him who sent me.
34 You will search for me, but you will not
find me; and where I am, you cannot
come." 35 The Jews said to one another,
"Where does this man intend to go that
we will not find him? Does he intend to go
to the Dispersion among the Greeks and
teach the Greeks? 36 What does he mean
by saying, 'You will search for me and you

a Or *the Christ* b Other ancient authorities read *is doing*

on 14.10. **7.18** On seeking *glory*, see 12.43. **7.20** The *crowd* (also 7.12, 31, 40–44, 49) seems not to be identical with either the Jews (see note on 7.13) or the people of Jerusalem (7.25–30). *You have a demon.* In ancient times insanity was often understood as demon possession. Thus the crowd is claiming that Jesus is "out of his mind." See also 8.48–52; 10.20–21. **7.21** *One work*, i.e., the healing narrated in 5.1–9. *Astonished.* See 5.20; Hab 1.5. **7.22** *Moses gave you circumcision.* See Gen 17.9–14; Lev 12.3. Rules and procedures for circumcising on the *sabbath* had been developed in Jewish tradition. **7.23** Cf. Mt 12.5. Regarding controversies over healing on the *sabbath*, see note on 5.1–18; see also 9.13–17. **7.24** Cf. 8.15.

7.25–44 Throughout the Festival of Booths, Jesus' words continue to cause disputes among his hearers and there are repeated attempts to arrest him. **7.26** *The authorities.* See 7.48. **7.27–29** The subject of *where this man is from* is an important one in John. The world's claim to know Jesus' origin (cf. 7.41–42; see also 6.42) is in fact false (see 8.14; 9.29; cf. 3.8; 19.9). Jesus' retort (vv. 28–29) is therefore ironic or sarcastic. **7.28** *I have not come on my own.* See 7.17; see also 5.30; 8.28, 42; 12.49–50; note on 14.10. *You do not know him.* See 8.19, 55; 15.21; 16.3; 17.25. **7.30–31** On the division of opinions here, see note on 7.12. **7.30** Jesus' *hour* is that of his death and glorification (see note on 12.23; see also notes on 4.23; 16.25). Until that hour, no one can harm him (see 7.6, 8, 44; see also 2.4; 8.20, 59; 10.31, 39). **7.31** *Signs.* See notes on 2.11; 6.14–15. **7.32** The combination of *chief priests and Pharisees* refers to the Sanhedrin, or governing council (11.47), which had at its disposal a small force of *police*, mainly for keeping order in the temple (see 18.3). **7.33–36** This kind of misunderstanding (see also 8.21–22), which ironically proves to be more true than the speaker knows, is common in John (see 6.52; 8.53, 57; 11.51–52; 19.14; note on 3.4). **7.33** *A little while.* See also 14.19; 16.16. *I am going to him who sent me.* See 13.1–3; 20.17. **7.34** See 8.21; 13.33. **7.35** The reference to *the Greeks* points to the later

will not find me' and 'Where I am, you
cannot come'?"

Rivers of Living Water

37 On the last day of the festival, the
great day, while Jesus was standing there,
he cried out, "Let anyone who is thirsty
come to me, 38 and let the one who be-
lieves in me drink. As[c] the scripture has
said, 'Out of the believer's heart[d] shall
flow rivers of living water.'" 39 Now he
said this about the Spirit, which believers
in him were to receive; for as yet there
was no Spirit,[e] because Jesus was not yet
glorified.

Division Among the People

40 When they heard these words,
some in the crowd said, "This is really the
prophet." 41 Others said, "This is the Mes-
siah."[f] But some asked, "Surely the Mes-
siah[f] does not come from Galilee, does
he? 42 Has not the scripture said that the
Messiah[f] is descended from David and
comes from Bethlehem, the village where
David lived?" 43 So there was a division in
the crowd because of him. 44 Some of
them wanted to arrest him, but no one
laid hands on him.

The Unbelief of Those in Authority

45 Then the temple police went back
to the chief priests and Pharisees, who
asked them, "Why did you not arrest
him?" 46 The police answered, "Never has
anyone spoken like this!" 47 Then the
Pharisees replied, "Surely you have not
been deceived too, have you? 48 Has any
one of the authorities or of the Pharisees
believed in him? 49 But this crowd, which
does not know the law—they are ac-
cursed." 50 Nicodemus, who had gone to
Jesus[g] before, and who was one of them,
asked, 51 "Our law does not judge people
without first giving them a hearing to find
out what they are doing, does it?" 52 They
replied, "Surely you are not also from
Galilee, are you? Search and you will see
that no prophet is to arise from Galilee."

The Woman Caught in Adultery

8 [53 Then each of them went home,
1 while Jesus went to the Mount of
Olives. 2 Early in the morning he came
again to the temple. All the people came
to him and he sat down and began to
teach them. 3 The scribes and the Phari-
sees brought a woman who had been
caught in adultery; and making her stand
before all of them, 4 they said to him,
"Teacher, this woman was caught in the
very act of committing adultery. 5 Now in
the law Moses commanded us to stone
such women. Now what do you say?"

c Or *come to me and drink.* 38 *The one who believes in me, as* d Gk *out of his belly* e Other ancient authorities read *for as yet the Spirit* (others, *Holy Spirit*) *had not been given* f Or *the Christ*
g Gk *him*

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success of the Christian mission among Gentiles (cf. 12.20). **7.37** *Festival.* See note on 7.2. On Jesus' satisfaction of *thirst*, see 4.13–14; 6.35. **7.38** The *scripture* intended is uncertain; cf. Isa 44.2–3; Zech 14.8 (Zech 14 is read at the Festival of Booths). *Out of the believer's heart*, lit. *out of his belly* (see text note *d*). *His* here actually seems more likely to refer to Jesus than to the believer as the source of *living water*; see 4.10; 19.34. **7.39** *There was no Spirit*, i.e., no outpouring of the Spirit in the Christian community. *Glorified.* See note on 12.23. **7.40–41** *The prophet, the Messiah.* See notes on 1.21; 6.14–15. **7.42** See 1 Sam 16.1–13; 2 Sam 7.12–16; Pss 89.3–4; 132.11–12; Mic 5.2; Mt 2.1–6. **7.43** *Division.* See note on 7.12. **7.44** See note on 7.30. **7.45–52** The authorities, unable to arrest Jesus, ridicule those who believe in him. **7.47** *Deceived too.* See 7.12. **7.48–52** The question in v. 48 is intended to be ironic, but *Nicodemus*, who was *one of them*, i.e., an authority (leader) and a Pharisee, has shown tentative interest in Jesus (3.1–21). Whether John presents Nicodemus as one who truly believed in him, however, is in doubt. Here Nicodemus begins to defend Jesus but goes no further than an appeal to the law (i.e., the Pharisees' law). See also notes on 3.1–21; 12.42–43; 19.39. **7.52** *Galilee* was regarded by many Pharisees as religiously lax; see also 1.46. *Search*, i.e., the scriptures. *No prophet is to arise*, or, with some manuscripts, "the prophet is not to arise" (see 7.40–41).

7.53–8.11 On the basis of the best manuscripts and other ancient evidence (see text note *j*), scholars generally agree that this story was not originally part of the Gospel of John. It may, however, be based on early oral traditions about Jesus. **8.1–2** Cf. Lk 21.37–38. **8.3** Though the *scribes* are often named alongside the Pharisees in the other Gospels, they are never mentioned elsewhere in John. **8.5** *Such women.* In

6 They said this to test him, so that they
might have some charge to bring against
him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his
finger on the ground. 7 When they kept
on questioning him, he straightened up
and said to them, "Let anyone among you
who is without sin be the first to throw a
stone at her." 8 And once again he bent
down and wrote on the ground.[h] 9 When
they heard it, they went away, one by one,
beginning with the elders; and Jesus was
left alone with the woman standing before
him. 10 Jesus straightened up and said to
her, "Woman, where are they? Has no
one condemned you?" 11 She said, "No
one, sir."[i] And Jesus said, "Neither do I
condemn you. Go your way, and from
now on do not sin again."]][j]

Jesus the Light of the World

12 Again Jesus spoke to them, saying,
"I am the light of the world. Whoever fol-
lows me will never walk in darkness but
will have the light of life." 13 Then the
Pharisees said to him, "You are testifying
on your own behalf; your testimony is not
valid." 14 Jesus answered, "Even if I testify
on my own behalf, my testimony is valid
because I know where I have come from
and where I am going, but you do not
know where I come from or where I am
going. 15 You judge by human stand-
ards;[k] I judge no one. 16 Yet even if I do
judge, my judgment is valid; for it is not I
alone who judge, but I and the Father[l]
who sent me. 17 In your law it is written
that the testimony of two witnesses is
valid. 18 I testify on my own behalf, and
the Father who sent me testifies on my
behalf." 19 Then they said to him, "Where
is your Father?" Jesus answered, "You
know neither me nor my Father. If you
knew me, you would know my Father
also." 20 He spoke these words while he
was teaching in the treasury of the tem-
ple, but no one arrested him, because his
hour had not yet come.

Jesus Is from Above

21 Again he said to them, "I am going
away, and you will search for me, but you
will die in your sin. Where I am going,
you cannot come." 22 Then the Jews said,
"Is he going to kill himself? Is that what
he means by saying, 'Where I am going,
you cannot come'?" 23 He said to them,
"You are from below, I am from above;
you are of this world, I am not of this
world. 24 I told you that you would die
in your sins, for you will die in your sins

h Other ancient authorities add *the sins of each of them* *i* Or *Lord* *j* The most ancient authorities lack 7.53—8.11; other authorities add the passage here or after 7.36 or after 21.25 or after Luke 21.38, with variations of text; some mark the passage as doubtful. *k* Gk *according to the flesh* *l* Other ancient authorities read *he*

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contrast, Lev 20.10; Deut 22.22 require that both offending parties be put to death. **8.6** *To test him.* See Mk 10.2; 12.14–15. What Jesus *wrote* (see also 8.8) is not known, despite many guesses. **8.7** Deut 17.7 requires that the witnesses be the first to stone a condemned person (cf. Acts 7.58). **8.9** *The elders,* or "the oldest." **8.11** *Do not sin again.* See also 5.14.

8.12–20 On the themes of judgment and testimony that are prominent here, see especially 5.22, 30–38; see also 12.47–49; 19.35; 21.24. **8.12** *Light, darkness.* See 1.4–5, 9; 3.19; 9.4–5; 11.9–10; 12.35–36, 46; cf. Mt 5.14; 1 Jn 1.5–7; 2.8–11. Originally (without 7.53–8.11), the author may have intended a connection between *light* here and *Galilee* in 7.52, based on Isa 9.1–2. See also Zech 14.7; notes on Jn 7.2; 7.37; 7.38. **8.13** See note on 5.31. **8.14** *Where I have come from.* See note on 7.27–29; cf. 3.8. **8.15** Cf. 7.24. **8.17** In Num 35.30; Deut 17.6, *two* or more *witnesses* are required for a capital offense; Deut 19.15 also speaks of criminal charges. Here the principle of multiple witnesses is extended to another type of testimony. **8.18** On the testimony of the Father, see also 1 Jn 5.10. **8.19** *You know neither me nor my Father.* See note on 7.28. *If you knew me, you would know my Father also.* See 14.7–9. **8.20** *His hour had not yet come.* See note on 7.30.

8.21–30 A dialogue in which Jesus' hearers repeatedly fail to understand his mysterious words; yet at the end, many believe in him. **8.21–22** On the ironic misunderstanding here, see note on 7.33–36. Jesus is not *going to kill himself,* but he is going to give up his life, and John makes clear that his death is fully under his control (10.17–18; 15.13; 18.4–8; 19.28–30). **8.23** *I am from above.* See also 3.3, 31; 19.11. *I am not of this world.* See also 18.36; note on 17.14–16. **8.24** The expression *I am he* (or just *I am*) is part of Jesus' revelation of his divine identity in John. It functions virtually as a divine name, based on OT assertions of God's identity (see, e.g., Ex 3.14; Isa 43.10–11, 25; 51.12). Sometimes other descriptions (such as *light* or *bread*) are added to the *I am.* See 4.26; 6.20, 35;

unless you believe that I am he."[m] 25 They
said to him, "Who are you?" Jesus said to
them, "Why do I speak to you at all?[n] 26 I
have much to say about you and much to
condemn; but the one who sent me is
true, and I declare to the world what I
have heard from him." 27 They did not
understand that he was speaking to them
about the Father. 28 So Jesus said, "When
you have lifted up the Son of Man, then
you will realize that I am he,[m] and that I
do nothing on my own, but I speak these
things as the Father instructed me. 29 And
the one who sent me is with me; he has
not left me alone, for I always do what is
pleasing to him." 30 As he was saying these
things, many believed in him.

Jesus and Abraham

31 Then Jesus said to the Jews who
had believed in him, "If you continue in
my word, you are truly my disciples;
32 and you will know the truth, and the
truth will make you free." 33 They answered him, "We are descendants of
Abraham and have never been slaves to
anyone. What do you mean by saying,
'You will be made free'?"

34 Jesus answered them, "Very truly,
I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a
slave to sin. 35 The slave does not have a
permanent place in the household; the
son has a place there forever. 36 So if the
Son makes you free, you will be free indeed. 37 I know that you are descendants
of Abraham; yet you look for an opportunity to kill me, because there is no place in
you for my word. 38 I declare what I have
seen in the Father's presence; as for you,
you should do what you have heard from
the Father."[o]

39 They answered him, "Abraham is
our father." Jesus said to them, "If you
were Abraham's children, you would be
doing[p] what Abraham did, 40 but now
you are trying to kill me, a man who has
told you the truth that I heard from God.
This is not what Abraham did. 41 You are
indeed doing what your father does."
They said to him, "We are not illegitimate
children; we have one father, God himself." 42 Jesus said to them, "If God were
your Father, you would love me, for I
came from God and now I am here. I did
not come on my own, but he sent me.
43 Why do you not understand what I say?
It is because you cannot accept my word.
44 You are from your father the devil, and
you choose to do your father's desires. He
was a murderer from the beginning and
does not stand in the truth, because there
is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks
according to his own nature, for he is a
liar and the father of lies. 45 But because I
tell the truth, you do not believe me.
46 Which of you convicts me of sin? If I
tell the truth, why do you not believe me?
47 Whoever is from God hears the words

m Gk *I am* *n* Or *What I have told you from the beginning* *o* Other ancient authorities read *you do what you have heard from your father* *p* Other ancient authorities read *If you are Abraham's children, then do*

8.12, 28, 58; 10.11; 11.25; 13.19; 14.6; 15.1; 18.5–6. **8.26** *The one who sent me is true.* See 7.28–29. **8.28** *Lifted up*, i.e., both crucified and glorified; see notes on 3.14; 12.32; 12.34. *I am he.* See note on 8.24. *I speak . . . as the Father instructed me.* See 8.38; see also 3.11, 34; 5.19–20; 12.49–50. **8.31–59** This increasingly hostile dialogue involves Jews who had believed in Jesus (see Introduction). Jesus' word plays an important role throughout it; see also 14.23–24; 15.7. **8.32** *The truth* is Jesus himself (14.6), and it is also that to which Jesus testifies (18.37), God's word, which he makes known (17.14, 17). See also 1 Jn 2.21; 2 Jn 1. **8.33** *We . . . have never been slaves to anyone.* By contrast, in the book of Deuteronomy the people are frequently urged to remember that they were slaves in Egypt (Deut 6.20–21; 15.12–15; 16.12; 24.17–22). Many Jews in the first century also regarded the rule of the Roman Empire over them as a kind of slavery. **8.34** *A slave to sin.* See Rom 6.15–23; 2 Pet 2.19. **8.35** See Gen 21.9–10; Gal 4.1–7; Heb 3.5–6 (cf. Num 12.7). **8.37** *You look for an opportunity to kill me.* See 5.18; 7.1, 19. **8.38** *I declare . . . in the Father's presence.* See note on 8.28. *You should do what you have heard from the Father,* or "You are doing what you have heard from your father" (see text note *o*; 8.41, 44). **8.39** *Abraham is our father.* Cf. Mt 3.9. **8.41** *Your father.* The identity of this "father" is indicated in 8.44. *Illegitimate children.* See Hos 1.2; 2.4. *We have one father, God himself.* See Ex 4.22; Deut 32.6; Isa 63.16; 64.8; Jer 3.4; 31.9, 20; Hos 11.1; Mal 2.10. **8.42** *I did not come on my own.* See 7.28. **8.43** *Accept my word.* See also 6.60. **8.44** *Your father the devil.* Cf. 1 Jn 3.8–15. This harsh language indicates the intensity of the conflict between the Jewish Christian community for which John was written and the synagogue authorities (see Introduction). **8.46** *Which of you convicts me of sin?* Cf. 2 Cor 5.21; Heb 4.15;

of God. The reason you do not hear them
is that you are not from God."
48 The Jews answered him, "Are we
not right in saying that you are a Samari-
tan and have a demon?" 49 Jesus an-
swered, "I do not have a demon; but I
honor my Father, and you dishonor me.
50 Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is
one who seeks it and he is the judge.
51 Very truly, I tell you, whoever keeps my
word will never see death." 52 The Jews
said to him, "Now we know that you have
a demon. Abraham died, and so did the
prophets; yet you say, 'Whoever keeps my
word will never taste death.' 53 Are you
greater than our father Abraham, who
died? The prophets also died. Who do
you claim to be?" 54 Jesus answered, "If I
glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is
my Father who glorifies me, he of whom
you say, 'He is our God,' 55 though you do
not know him. But I know him; if I would
say that I do not know him, I would be a
liar like you. But I do know him and I
keep his word. 56 Your ancestor Abraham
rejoiced that he would see my day; he saw
it and was glad." 57 Then the Jews said to
him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and
have you seen Abraham?"[q] 58 Jesus said
to them, "Very truly, I tell you, before
Abraham was, I am." 59 So they picked up
stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid him-
self and went out of the temple.

A Man Born Blind Receives Sight

9 As he walked along, he saw a man
blind from birth. 2 His disciples
asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man
or his parents, that he was born blind?"
3 Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor
his parents sinned; he was born blind so
that God's works might be revealed in
him. 4 We[r] must work the works of him
who sent me[s] while it is day; night is com-
ing when no one can work. 5 As long as I
am in the world, I am the light of the
world." 6 When he had said this, he spat
on the ground and made mud with the
saliva and spread the mud on the man's
eyes, 7 saying to him, "Go, wash in the
pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). Then
he went and washed and came back able
to see. 8 The neighbors and those who had
seen him before as a beggar began to ask,
"Is this not the man who used to sit and
beg?" 9 Some were saying, "It is he." Oth-
ers were saying, "No, but it is someone
like him." He kept saying, "I am the
man." 10 But they kept asking him, "Then
how were your eyes opened?" 11 He an-
swered, "The man called Jesus made
mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to
me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' Then I went

q Other ancient authorities read *has Abraham seen you?* r Other ancient authorities read *I*
s Other ancient authorities read *us*

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1 Jn 3.5. **8.47** Cf. 1 Jn 4.6. **8.48** *A Samaritan.* See note on 4.9. *A demon.* See note on 7.20. **8.49** *You dishonor me.* See 5.23. **8.50** Seeking someone's *glory* is closely related to honoring them (v. 49). God seeks Jesus' glory by granting eternal life to those who keep his word (8.51). See also 5.41–44; 7.18; 12.43. **8.51** See 5.24; 11.25–26; see also Deut 30.15–20. **8.53** *Are you greater.* Cf. 4.12. **8.55** *You do not know him.* See 8.19 and the note on 7.28. **8.56** There is no reference to this occurrence in the stories of Abraham in Gen; cf. Jn 12.41. **8.57** *Not yet fifty years old.* This does not mean that Jesus was near fifty (Lk 3.23 suggests that he was in fact in his thirties), only that he was in any case too young to have known Abraham. **8.58** *I am.* See note on 8.24. **8.59** On the attempt to *stone* Jesus, see 10.31; note on 7.30. *Hid himself.* See also 7.1, 10; 11.54; 12.36.

9.1–41 It has been suggested that the blind man in this story is intended to represent the Christian community in its struggle with the synagogue authorities (see Introduction). Like the Samaritan woman in 4.1–42, but unlike the sick man in 5.2–15, the blind man increasingly recognizes Jesus' identity (vv. 11, 17, 33, 38). The question of who is a sinner also runs through the entire chapter (see vv. 2–3, 16, 24–25, 31–33, 34, 41). **9.2** Cf. 5.14. Punishment of children for their *parents'* sins is spoken of in Ex 20.5; 34.7; Ps 109.13–15; Isa 65.6–7. In Ezek 18, on the other hand, the idea is condemned. **9.3** *He was born blind.* These words are not actually in the Greek text of Jesus' reply. The point seems to be not to find a cause or a purpose for the man's blindness but to present it as an occasion for doing *God's works* of healing (see 4.34; 5.17–21, 36; 10.32–38; 14.10–12; 17.4). **9.4–5** *The works of him who sent me.* See 4.34. *Day, night, light.* See note on 8.12. *Night . . . when no one can work.* On one level, this refers to the end of Jesus' own life (v. 5). But the use of *we* (v. 4) extends it to Jesus' followers, who do even greater works than he (14.12) in the time available to them. See also 11.9–10; 12.35–36. **9.6** See also Mk 8.23. **9.7** *The pool of Siloam* was fed by the waters of the spring Gihon running beneath the city of Jerusalem through a tunnel

and washed and received my sight."
12 They said to him, "Where is he?" He
said, "I do not know."

The Blind Man and the Pharisees

13 They brought to the Pharisees the
man who had formerly been blind. 14 Now
it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the
mud and opened his eyes. 15 Then the
Pharisees also began to ask him how he
had received his sight. He said to them,
"He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed,
and now I see." 16 Some of the Pharisees
said, "This man is not from God, for he
does not observe the sabbath." But others
said, "How can a man who is a sinner per-
form such signs?" And they were divided.
17 So they said again to the blind man,
"What do you say about him? It was
your eyes he opened." He said, "He is
a prophet."

18 The Jews did not believe that he
had been blind and had received his sight
until they called the parents of the man
who had received his sight 19 and asked
them, "Is this your son, who you say was
born blind? How then does he now see?"
20 His parents answered, "We know that
this is our son, and that he was born blind;
21 but we do not know how it is that now
he sees, nor do we know who opened his
eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak
for himself." 22 His parents said this be-
cause they were afraid of the Jews; for the
Jews had already agreed that anyone
who confessed Jesus[t] to be the Messiah[u]
would be put out of the synagogue.
23 Therefore his parents said, "He is of
age; ask him."

24 So for the second time they called
the man who had been blind, and they
said to him, "Give glory to God! We know
that this man is a sinner." 25 He answered,
"I do not know whether he is a sinner.
One thing I do know, that though I was
blind, now I see." 26 They said to him,
"What did he do to you? How did he open
your eyes?" 27 He answered them, "I have
told you already, and you would not lis-
ten. Why do you want to hear it again? Do
you also want to become his disciples?"
28 Then they reviled him, saying, "You are
his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses.
29 We know that God has spoken to Mo-
ses, but as for this man, we do not know
where he comes from." 30 The man an-
swered, "Here is an astonishing thing!
You do not know where he comes from,
and yet he opened my eyes. 31 We know
that God does not listen to sinners, but he
does listen to one who worships him and
obeys his will. 32 Never since the world be-
gan has it been heard that anyone opened
the eyes of a person born blind. 33 If this
man were not from God, he could do
nothing." 34 They answered him, "You
were born entirely in sins, and are you
trying to teach us?" And they drove
him out.

The Blind Man and Jesus

35 Jesus heard that they had driven
him out, and when he found him, he said,
"Do you believe in the Son of Man?"[v]
36 He answered, "And who is he, sir?[w]
Tell me, so that I may believe in him."
37 Jesus said to him, "You have seen him,
and the one speaking with you is he."
38 He said, "Lord,[w] I believe." And he
worshiped him. 39 Jesus said, "I came into
this world for judgment so that those who

t Gk *him* *u* Or *the Christ* *v* Other ancient authorities read *the Son of God* *w* *Sir* and *Lord* translate the same Greek word

built by King Hezekiah (see 2 Kings 20.20; 2 Chr 32.30; Isa 22.11). **9.12** Cf. 5.12–13. **9.13–17** Regarding controversies over healing on the *sabbath*, see note on 5.1–18; see also 7.21–24. **9.16** *Divided.* See note on 7.12. **9.17** *He is a prophet.* See note on 6.14–15. **9.18–23** The blind man's parents betray him to a fate they fear themselves; see also Lk 12.53; 21.16. **9.18** *The Jews* here are the same as the Pharisees in 9.13–17, i.e., the synagogue authorities (see Introduction). **9.22** *Afraid of the Jews.* See note on 7.13. Jewish Christians were not *put out of the synagogue* until after Jesus' lifetime, perhaps the 80s C.E.; see 12.42; 16.2; Introduction. **9.24–34** The blind man's fearlessness is comparable to Jesus' own (see 18.19–24; cf. 18.15–18, 25–27). **9.24** *Give glory to God* is a command to tell the truth (Josh 7.19). However, it is also related to ideas about martyrdom (see 21.19; note on 12.23). *We know that this man is a sinner.* Cf. 9.16. **9.29** *We do not know where he comes from.* See 8.14; note on 7.27–29. **9.31** *God does not listen to sinners.* See Pss 34.15; 66.18; Prov 15.29; Jas 5.16; 1 Jn 3.21–22. **9.34** *Born entirely in sins.* Cf. 9.2–3. **9.35–41** Cf. 5.14–18. **9.37** See also 4.26. **9.38** *Worshiped him,* i.e., bowed down before him. **9.39** *I came into this world for judgment.* See 5.22, 27, 30; cf. 3.17; 8.15–16; 12.47. *So that*

do not see may see, and those who do see
may become blind." 40 Some of the Phari-
sees near him heard this and said to him,
"Surely we are not blind, are we?" 41 Jesus
said to them, "If you were blind, you
would not have sin. But now that you say,
'We see,' your sin remains.

Jesus the Good Shepherd

10 "Very truly, I tell you, anyone
who does not enter the sheepfold
by the gate but climbs in by another way is
a thief and a bandit. 2 The one who enters
by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep.
3 The gatekeeper opens the gate for him,
and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his
own sheep by name and leads them out.
4 When he has brought out all his own, he
goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow
him because they know his voice. 5 They
will not follow a stranger, but they will
run from him because they do not know
the voice of strangers." 6 Jesus used this
figure of speech with them, but they
did not understand what he was saying
to them.

7 So again Jesus said to them, "Very
truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the
sheep. 8 All who came before me are
thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not
listen to them. 9 I am the gate. Whoever
enters by me will be saved, and will come
in and go out and find pasture. 10 The
thief comes only to steal and kill and de-
stroy. I came that they may have life, and
have it abundantly.

11 "I am the good shepherd. The
good shepherd lays down his life for the
sheep. 12 The hired hand, who is not the
shepherd and does not own the sheep,
sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep
and runs away—and the wolf snatches
them and scatters them. 13 The hired
hand runs away because a hired hand
does not care for the sheep. 14 I am the
good shepherd. I know my own and my
own know me, 15 just as the Father knows
me and I know the Father. And I lay
down my life for the sheep. 16 I have
other sheep that do not belong to this
fold. I must bring them also, and they will
listen to my voice. So there will be one
flock, one shepherd. 17 For this reason the
Father loves me, because I lay down my
life in order to take it up again. 18 No one
takes[x] it from me, but I lay it down of my
own accord. I have power to lay it down,
and I have power to take it up again. I
have received this command from my
Father."

19 Again the Jews were divided be-
cause of these words. 20 Many of them
were saying, "He has a demon and is out
of his mind. Why listen to him?" 21 Others
were saying, "These are not the words of
one who has a demon. Can a demon open
the eyes of the blind?"

x Other ancient authorities read *has taken*

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those ... become blind. See also 12.39–40; Isa 6.9–10; Isa 35.5–6; 42.6–7, 16–20; Mt 11.25; 19.30. **9.41** *If you were blind, you would not have sin.* Cf. 9.2–3; see also 15.22–24.

10.1–21 Jesus is apparently still speaking to the Pharisees from 9.40. **10.1–5** This is the closest thing to a parable in the Gospel of John. It seems to present a highly realistic picture of Palestinian sheepherding in ancient times. The "parable" focuses first on the gate (vv. 1–2) and then on the shepherd (vv. 3–5). **10.1** The *sheepfold* was an enclosure, often with stone walls, where several shepherds might bring their flocks for safety at night. **10.3–4** Cf. Num 27.17. **10.6** *They did not understand.* Cf. Mt 13.13–15; Mk 4.11–12. **10.7–18** The explanation, like the "parable" itself, focuses first on Jesus as the gate (vv. 7–10) and then on Jesus as the shepherd (vv. 11–18). **10.8** Leaders of anti-Roman revolutionary movements, who sometimes made messianic claims (see note on 6.14–15), were occasionally called *bandits.* **10.10** *I came that they may have life,* a characteristic statement of Jesus' mission as John presents it; see 10.28; see also 3.16–17; 4.14; 5.21–29; 6.35; 11.25–26. **10.11–13** Cf. the contrast between the *good shepherd* and the *hired hand* with OT images of God or the Messiah as good shepherd and Israel's leaders as bad shepherds (Jer 23.1–6; Ezek 34.1–16, 23–24; see also Isa 40.10–11; Zech 11.4–17). See Jn 21.15–17; Acts 20.28–29. **10.11** *The good shepherd lays down his life.* Cf. 1 Sam 17.34–35. On the significance of this expression in John, see note on 15.13. **10.14–15** On the parallel between God's relationship to Jesus and Jesus' relationship to the disciples, see 14.20; 15.9–10; 17.21. **10.16** The *other sheep* are probably the Gentiles; see 7.35; 11.52; 12.20–21, 32. *I must bring them.* Cf. Ezek 34.11–13. *Listen to my voice.* See 10.3–5, 27; 18.37. *One shepherd.* Cf. Ezek 34.23; 37.24. **10.17** *The Father loves me.* See 15.10. **10.18** *No one takes it from me.* See note on 8.21–22; see also 15.13; 18.4–8; 19.28–30. **10.19** On the *division* among the Jews, see note on 7.12. **10.20** *He has a demon.* See note on 7.20. **10.21** *Open the eyes of the blind,* referring to the healing event in ch. 9.

Jesus Is Rejected

22 At that time the festival of the Dedication took place in Jerusalem. It was winter, 23 and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon. 24 So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah,[y] tell us plainly." 25 Jesus answered, "I have told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name testify to me; 26 but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep. 27 My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. 29 What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father's hand.[z] 30 The Father and I are one."

31 The Jews took up stones again to stone him. 32 Jesus replied, "I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these are you going to stone me?" 33 The Jews answered, "It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you, but for blasphemy, because you, though only a human being, are making yourself God." 34 Jesus answered, "Is it not written in your law,[a] 'I said, you are gods'? 35 If those to whom the word of God came were called 'gods'—and the scripture cannot be annulled— 36 can you say that the one whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world is blaspheming because I said, 'I am God's Son'? 37 If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me. 38 But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand[b] that the Father is in me and I am in the Father." 39 Then they tried to arrest him again, but he escaped from their hands.

40 He went away again across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing earlier, and he remained there. 41 Many came to him, and they were saying, "John performed no sign, but everything that John said about this man was true." 42 And many believed in him there.

The Death of Lazarus

11 Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. 2 Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with per-

y Or *the Christ* z Other ancient authorities read *My Father who has given them to me is greater than all, and no one can snatch them out of the Father's hand*
a Other ancient authorities read *in the law*
b Other ancient authorities lack *and understand*; others read *and believe*

10.22–39 Jesus' last controversy with "the Jews" in John. As elsewhere, this debate reflects the beliefs of the Christian community in its conflict with the synagogue authorities (see Introduction). **10.22** The last indication of *time* was in 7.37. The *festival of the Dedication* (Hebrew *Hanukkah*) takes place in December. It commemorates the rededication of the temple by Judas Maccabeus in 164 B.C.E. (1 Macc 4.36–59; see "Jewish Festivals in the Gospel of John," p. 2017). **10.23** *Portico of Solomon*, a covered walkway on the eastern side of the temple area. There were similar porticoes around the other three sides of the Court of the Gentiles, a rectangular area that surrounded the sanctuary itself. **10.24** *If you are the Messiah.* See 4.25–26; 7.25–31, 40–44; 9.22; 11.27; 12.34. **10.25** *I have told you.* Jesus has not explicitly told the Jews that he is the Messiah (though see 4.26; see also 8.25, text note *n*). However, he has spoken of the works that attest his identity (5.36). *You do not believe.* See 6.36. **10.27** *Hear my voice.* See 10.3–4, 16; 18.37. **10.29** On those *given* by the Father, see note on 6.35–40; see 6.44–45; 17.2, 6, 9, 12. **10.30** *The Father and I are one.* See 10.38; see also 1.1; note on 14.10. On the other hand, 14.28; 20.17 suggest the Father's superiority to Jesus. **10.31** See 8.59; note on 7.30. **10.32** *Many good works from the Father.* See 10.25; see also 4.34; 5.20; 9.4. **10.33** In the other Gospels, the accusation of *blasphemy* against Jesus appears at his trial (e.g., Mk 14.64). *Making yourself God.* See 5.18. **10.34** Jesus quotes Ps 82.6. As in 12.34; 15.25, *law* is used loosely for the Jewish scriptures in general. **10.36** *Sanctified.* See 17.17–19. **10.37** *The works of my Father.* See notes on 10.25; 10.32. **10.38** On *works* and *belief*, see 14.10–11, which also speaks of Jesus being *in the Father* and vice versa, as do 14.20; 17.21. **10.39** See note on 7.30; 7.44. **10.40–42** Jesus withdraws, as in 7.1; 8.59; 11.54; 12.36. **10.40** *Where John had been baptizing earlier*, i.e., Bethany *across the Jordan* (1.28), not John's later location at Aenon (3.23). **10.41** *Everything that John said.* See 1.19–34; 3.27–30.

11.1–44 Having spoken of himself as the good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep (10.11–18), Jesus now risks his life to give life to his friend Lazarus (11.7–16; cf. 15.13). The result of this life giving is Jesus' own death

fume and wiped his feet with her hair;
her brother Lazarus was ill. 3 So the sisters
sent a message to Jesus,[c] "Lord, he whom
you love is ill." 4 But when Jesus heard it,
he said, "This illness does not lead to
death; rather it is for God's glory, so that
the Son of God may be glorified through
it." 5 Accordingly, though Jesus loved
Martha and her sister and Lazarus, 6 after
having heard that Lazarus[d] was ill, he
stayed two days longer in the place where
he was.

7 Then after this he said to the disci-
ples, "Let us go to Judea again." 8 The dis-
ciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were
just now trying to stone you, and are you
going there again?" 9 Jesus answered,
"Are there not twelve hours of daylight?
Those who walk during the day do not
stumble, because they see the light of this
world. 10 But those who walk at night
stumble, because the light is not in them."
11 After saying this, he told them, "Our
friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am
going there to awaken him." 12 The disci-
ples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen
asleep, he will be all right." 13 Jesus, how-
ever, had been speaking about his death,
but they thought that he was referring
merely to sleep. 14 Then Jesus told them
plainly, "Lazarus is dead. 15 For your sake
I am glad I was not there, so that you may
believe. But let us go to him." 16 Thomas,
who was called the Twin,[e] said to his fel-
low disciples, "Let us also go, that we may
die with him."

Jesus the Resurrection and the Life

17 When Jesus arrived, he found that
Lazarus[d] had already been in the tomb
four days. 18 Now Bethany was near Jeru-
salem, some two miles[f] away, 19 and
many of the Jews had come to Martha and
Mary to console them about their brother.
20 When Martha heard that Jesus was
coming, she went and met him, while
Mary stayed at home. 21 Martha said to
Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my
brother would not have died. 22 But even
now I know that God will give you what-
ever you ask of him." 23 Jesus said to her,
"Your brother will rise again." 24 Martha
said to him, "I know that he will rise again
in the resurrection on the last day."

c Gk *him* d Gk *he* e Gk *Didymus*
f Gk *fifteen stadia*

(11.45–53). Thus the story of the raising of Lazarus prepares readers for the passion narrative (chs. 18–19). **11.1** *Bethany*, not the same as Bethany across the Jordan, where John had baptized (see 1.28; note on 10.40). This Bethany lay just east of Jerusalem (11.18), across the Kidron Valley and on the eastern side of the Mount of Olives. It has been suggested that *Mary and her sister Martha* are the same women referred to in Lk 10.38–42, but this is uncertain. **11.2** *Anointed*. See 12.1–8. **11.4** *It is for God's glory*. Cf. 9.3. *Glory, glorified*. See 11.40; see also 2.11; 13.31–32; 14.13; 17.1. **11.6** Jesus seems deliberately to let Lazarus die (see also 11.14–15, 21, 32, 37). However, Lazarus might already have been dead by the time the message arrived, and Jesus' delay would have timed his arrival in Bethany after the finality of Lazarus's death had been confirmed (see note on 11.17). As elsewhere (2.3–4; 7.1–10), Jesus acts at his own time. **11.8** *The Jews were . . . trying to stone you*. See 10.31; see also 8.59. Some scholars suggest that the Greek word usually rendered *Jews* should be translated "Judeans" here and elsewhere in ch. 11. Others see little difference between the people here and "the Jews" elsewhere in John; see Introduction. **11.9** *Twelve hours of daylight*. The point is apparently that Jesus knows that his "hour" has not yet come (see note on 7.30), so that he can safely travel to Judea. *The light of this world*. See 8.12; 9.4–5; 12.35–36. **11.11** *Fallen asleep*, a common euphemism for death (see Mt 27.52). **11.12–13** On the disciples' misunderstanding here, see notes on 3.4; 7.33–36. **11.15** *I am glad I was not there*. See note on 11.6. **11.16** *Thomas*. See 14.5; 20.24–29; 21.2. *Die with him*. Cf. 13.36–38. **11.17** *In the tomb four days*. Jewish custom at that time required that burial take place the same day as the death, if possible. Jewish belief also held that the soul lingered near the body for three days, so that death was truly final on the fourth day. Jesus' two-day delay, plus one day's travel each way between Bethany and Jesus' location across the Jordan (10.40), would make four days if Lazarus died and was buried on the same day the messenger left Bethany to tell Jesus that he was ill (see 11.3–6). **11.18** *Bethany*. See note on 11.1. **11.20** *She went and met him*. People in mourning normally did not leave the house during the first seven days, except to go to the tomb to grieve for the deceased (see note on 11.31). **11.21** See note on 11.6. **11.22** *Whatever you ask*. See also 14.13–14; 15.7, 16; 16.23–24. **11.23–27** Cf. 4.25–26. **11.24** Many Jews of that time believed that there would be a final *resurrection*, though others denied this (see Mk 12.18–27;

25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection
and the life.[g] Those who believe in me,
even though they die, will live, 26 and ev-
eryone who lives and believes in me will
never die. Do you believe this?" 27 She said
to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are
the Messiah,[h] the Son of God, the one
coming into the world."

Jesus Raises Lazarus

28 When she had said this, she went
back and called her sister Mary, and told
her privately, "The Teacher is here and is
calling for you." 29 And when she heard it,
she got up quickly and went to him.
30 Now Jesus had not yet come to the vil-
lage, but was still at the place where Mar-
tha had met him. 31 The Jews who were
with her in the house, consoling her, saw
Mary get up quickly and go out. They fol-
lowed her because they thought that she
was going to the tomb to weep there.
32 When Mary came where Jesus was and
saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to
him, "Lord, if you had been here, my
brother would not have died." 33 When
Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who
came with her also weeping, he was
greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply
moved. 34 He said, "Where have you laid
him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and
see." 35 Jesus began to weep. 36 So the Jews
said, "See how he loved him!" 37 But some
of them said, "Could not he who opened
the eyes of the blind man have kept this
man from dying?"

38 Then Jesus, again greatly disturb-
ed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and
a stone was lying against it. 39 Jesus said,
"Take away the stone." Martha, the sis-
ter of the dead man, said to him, "Lord,
already there is a stench because he has
been dead four days." 40 Jesus said to her,
"Did I not tell you that if you believed,
you would see the glory of God?" 41 So
they took away the stone. And Jesus
looked upward and said, "Father, I thank
you for having heard me. 42 I knew that
you always hear me, but I have said this
for the sake of the crowd standing here,
so that they may believe that you sent
me." 43 When he had said this, he cried
with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!"
44 The dead man came out, his hands and
feet bound with strips of cloth, and his
face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to
them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

The Plot to Kill Jesus

45 Many of the Jews therefore, who
had come with Mary and had seen what
Jesus did, believed in him. 46 But some of
them went to the Pharisees and told them
what he had done. 47 So the chief priests
and the Pharisees called a meeting of the
council, and said, "What are we to do?
This man is performing many signs. 48 If
we let him go on like this, everyone will
believe in him, and the Romans will come
and destroy both our holy place[i] and our
nation." 49 But one of them, Caiaphas,
who was high priest that year, said to

[g] Other ancient authorities lack *and the life*
[h] Or *the Christ* [i] Or *our temple*; Greek *our place*

Acts 23.6–8; 24.15, 21). **11.25–26** The difficulty of the logic in these verses may be deliberate; this is not a "logical" subject. As elsewhere (5.24–29; 6.40, 54; 8.51), Jesus brings the future *resurrection* and eternal *life* into the present. **11.27** Martha responds with belief not in Jesus' statement or its logic but in Jesus himself, and it is this belief that brings life (20.31). **11.31** *Going to the tomb.* See note on 11.20. *Weep,* not just tears, but wailing and lamentation for the dead person. **11.32** See note on 11.6. **11.37** *Opened the eyes of the blind man,* referring to the healing event in ch. 9. **11.38** A *cave* with a *stone* over the entrance was a common burial place (see 20.1; Mk 15.46). **11.39** *Four days.* See note on 11.17. **11.40** Cf. the order of *believing* and *seeing* with that in 11.45; see also 4.48; 6.30; 20.24–29; note on 2.11. *Glory of God.* See note on 11.4. **11.42** In 5.34; 12.30 Jesus also explains why things are said; see also 6.6. *So that they may believe that you sent me.* See also 17.21. **11.43–44** Cf. 5.25, 28–29. *Binding* and *wrapping* were part of the usual Jewish burial customs of the day; see 20.6–7. *Let him go,* i.e., "let him walk."

11.45–53 The decision to put Jesus to death results from his giving life to Lazarus; cf. Mk 14.1–2. **11.46** See also 5.15. **11.47–48** *The council,* i.e., the Sanhedrin, the highest Jewish court and governing body (see note on 7.32). A man doing *signs* might intend to challenge the rule of the *Romans* and so bring on an attack; see note on 6.14–15. A generation after Jesus' time, the Jewish revolt of 66–70 C.E. resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem, including the temple (*holy place*), and in the death or captivity of thousands of Jews. **11.49** *That year.* The high-priesthood was theoretically a hereditary lifetime position (Num 25.10–13), but in the first century C.E. the office holder was subject to approval by the Roman governor and the position changed hands

them, "You know nothing at all! 50 You do
not understand that it is better for you to
have one man die for the people than to
have the whole nation destroyed." 51 He
did not say this on his own, but being high
priest that year he prophesied that Jesus
was about to die for the nation, 52 and not
for the nation only, but to gather into one
the dispersed children of God. 53 So from
that day on they planned to put him to
death.

54 Jesus therefore no longer walked
about openly among the Jews, but went
from there to a town called Ephraim in
the region near the wilderness; and he re-
mained there with the disciples.

55 Now the Passover of the Jews was
near, and many went up from the country
to Jerusalem before the Passover to puri-
fy themselves. 56 They were looking for
Jesus and were asking one another as they
stood in the temple, "What do you think?
Surely he will not come to the festival, will
he?" 57 Now the chief priests and the
Pharisees had given orders that anyone
who knew where Jesus[j] was should let
them know, so that they might arrest him.

Mary Anoints Jesus

12 Six days before the Passover
Jesus came to Bethany, the home
of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the
dead. 2 There they gave a dinner for him.
Martha served, and Lazarus was one of
those at the table with him. 3 Mary took a
pound of costly perfume made of pure
nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped
them[k] with her hair. The house was filled
with the fragrance of the perfume. 4 But
Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the
one who was about to betray him), said,
5 "Why was this perfume not sold for
three hundred denarii[l] and the money
given to the poor?" 6 (He said this not be-
cause he cared about the poor, but be-
cause he was a thief; he kept the common
purse and used to steal what was put into
it.) 7 Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She
bought it[m] so that she might keep it for
the day of my burial. 8 You always have
the poor with you, but you do not always
have me."

The Plot to Kill Lazarus

9 When the great crowd of the Jews
learned that he was there, they came not
only because of Jesus but also to see Laza-
rus, whom he had raised from the dead.
10 So the chief priests planned to put Laz-
arus to death as well, 11 since it was on ac-
count of him that many of the Jews were
deserting and were believing in Jesus.

Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

12 The next day the great crowd that
had come to the festival heard that Jesus

j Gk *he* *k* Gk *his feet* *l* Three hundred denarii would be nearly a year's wages for a laborer *m* Gk lacks *She bought it*

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frequently. *Caiaphas* in fact held office for eighteen years (18–36/7 C.E.); see 18.13; Mt 26.3; Lk 3.2; Acts 4.6. The high priest was a political as well as a religious leader and thus headed the Sanhedrin. See also 1 Macc 12.6; 14.41–45; Mk 14.60–64; Acts 5.17, 21; 23.1–5. **11.51** *He prophesied.* The high-priesthood was not generally regarded as carrying prophetic powers. John's point is that Caiaphas prophesied unconsciously; like other opponents of Jesus, he spoke more truly than he knew (see notes on 7.33–36; 19.14). **11.52** *To gather into one.* See also 10.16. **11.54–57** Jesus in hiding; see also 7.1, 10; 8.59; 12.36. **11.54** The location of this *Ephraim* is uncertain. It may be the town mentioned in 2 Sam 13.23; 1 Macc 11.34 (Aphairema), perhaps near Bethel. **11.55** *Passover.* See notes on 2.13; 6.4. The last indication of time was in 10.22. *Purify themselves.* Num 9.10–11 requires those who are unclean to celebrate Passover a month late (cf. 18.28). **11.56** Cf. 7.11.

12.1–8 The anointing at Bethany is also found in Mk 14.3–9. A similar story is placed earlier in Jesus' career in Lk 7.37–38. **12.1** *Passover.* See note on 2.13. *Bethany.* See note on 11.1. *Lazarus ... raised from the dead.* See 11.1–44. **12.2–3** *Martha, Mary.* See 11.1. **12.3** The Roman *pound* was about 12 ounces, or 340 grams. *Nard,* a perfumed ointment imported from the Himalayas; see Song 1.12; 4.13–14. **12.4** *Judas Iscariot.* See 13.2, 26–30; 18.2–5. **12.6** *Common purse,* actually a box in which Jesus and his disciples kept their shared funds. **12.7** The words *she bought it* are not actually in the Greek text (see text note *m*). The sense may be that this anointing of Jesus foreshadows his impending death. Jewish *burial* customs included anointing the body with perfumed oil (see Lk 23.56). **12.9–11** Lazarus is also endangered because Jesus gave him life; see 11.45–53. **12.9** *Crowd.* See note on 12.12. **12.11** *Deserting,* or simply "going."

12.12–19 The triumphal entry. See Mt 21.1–11; Mk 11.1–10; Lk 19.28–40. **12.12** *Crowd.* As many as one hundred thousand peo-

was coming to Jerusalem. 13 So they took
branches of palm trees and went out to
meet him, shouting,
"Hosanna!
Blessed is the one who comes in
the name of the Lord—
the King of Israel!"
14 Jesus found a young donkey and sat on
it; as it is written:
15 "Do not be afraid, daughter of
Zion.
Look, your king is coming,
sitting on a donkey's colt!"
16 His disciples did not understand these
things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these
things had been written of him and had
been done to him. 17 So the crowd that
had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from
the dead continued to testify.[n] 18 It was
also because they heard that he had performed this sign that the crowd went to
meet him. 19 The Pharisees then said to
one another, "You see, you can do nothing. Look, the world has gone after him!"

Some Greeks Wish to See Jesus

20 Now among those who went up to
worship at the festival were some Greeks.
21 They came to Philip, who was from
Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir,
we wish to see Jesus." 22 Philip went and
told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip
went and told Jesus. 23 Jesus answered
them, "The hour has come for the Son of
Man to be glorified. 24 Very truly, I tell
you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the
earth and dies, it remains just a single
grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.
25 Those who love their life lose it, and
those who hate their life in this world will
keep it for eternal life. 26 Whoever serves
me must follow me, and where I am,
there will my servant be also. Whoever
serves me, the Father will honor.

Jesus Speaks About His Death

27 "Now my soul is troubled. And
what should I say—'Father, save me from
this hour'? No, it is for this reason that I
have come to this hour. 28 Father, glorify
your name." Then a voice came from
heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." 29 The crowd standing there
heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him."
30 Jesus answered, "This voice has come
for your sake, not for mine. 31 Now is the
judgment of this world; now the ruler of
this world will be driven out. 32 And I,
when I am lifted up from the earth, will
draw all people[o] to myself." 33 He said
this to indicate the kind of death he was to
die. 34 The crowd answered him, "We
have heard from the law that the Messiah[p] remains forever. How can you say

n Other ancient authorities read *with him began to testify that he had called. . .from the dead* *o* Other ancient authorities read *all things* *p* Or *the Christ*

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ple might come to Jerusalem for Passover. **12.13** Only John mentions *branches of palm*, which were used at the Festival of Booths, not Passover (see note on 7.2). The words of the crowd are from Ps 118.25–26, a psalm used at major Jewish festivals. *Hosanna*, Hebrew for "Save us, we beseech you!" **12.15** Zech 9.9. **12.16** They *did not understand . . . at first*. See also 2.17, 22; 20.9. John acknowledges that Christian ideas about Jesus developed after his resurrection (see also 14.25–26; 16.12–13). *Glorified*. See note on 12.23. **12.17–18** See 11.45–46; 12.9–11. **12.19** *The world has gone after him*. Cf. 11.48.

12.20–36 Jesus' last public dialogue in John, focused on his impending death. **12.20** The *Greeks* may symbolize the future mission of Christianity to the Gentiles (see 7.35–36), to take place after Jesus has been glorified (see 12.23, 32). **12.22** *Philip*. See note on 1.43. *Andrew*. See notes on 1.40; 1.43. **12.23** The *hour* when Jesus is to be *glorified* is the hour of his death, resurrection, and ascension (see v. 32), which also glorifies God's name (v. 28) and provides a model for his followers (v. 26). See 12.16; see also 7.39; 13.1, 31–32; 17.1, 4–5; notes on 4.23; 7.30; 16.25. **12.24** Cf. 1 Cor 15.36–38. **12.25** See Mt 10.39; Mk 8.35; Lk 17.33. **12.26** *Whoever serves me must follow me*. Cf. Mk 8.34. The same thought is found in Jn 13.14–16; 15.18–16.4. *There will my servant be also*. See also 14.3; 17.24. **12.27** In the other Gospels, similar words are spoken in the garden of Gethsemane just before Jesus' arrest (e.g., Mk 14.33–36). **12.30** In 5.34; 11.42 Jesus also explains why things are said. **12.31** *The ruler of this world*, i.e., the devil; see 14.30; 16.11. **12.32** *Lifted up from the earth* refers both to Jesus' crucifixion (12.33) and to his resurrection and ascension; see 3.14; 8.28 (cf. Isa 52.13). *Draw all people*. Cf. 6.44; 12.20. **12.34** As in 10.34; 15.25, *the law* loosely refers to the Jewish scriptures in general. *The Messiah remains forever*. See Pss 89.3–4, 19–21, 28–29, 35–37; 110.4; Isa 9.6–7; Ezek

that the Son of Man must be lifted up?
Who is this Son of Man?" 35 Jesus said to
them, "The light is with you for a little
longer. Walk while you have the light, so
that the darkness may not overtake you.
If you walk in the darkness, you do not
know where you are going. 36 While you
have the light, believe in the light, so that
you may become children of light."

The Response to Jesus

After Jesus had said this, he departed
and hid from them. 37 Although he had
performed so many signs in their pres-
ence, they did not believe in him. 38 This
was to fulfill the word spoken by the
prophet Isaiah:

"Lord, who has believed our
message,
and to whom has the arm of
the Lord been revealed?"

39 And so they could not believe, because
Isaiah also said,

40 "He has blinded their eyes
and hardened their heart,
so that they might not look with
their eyes,
and understand with their
heart and turn—
and I would heal them."

41 Isaiah said this because[q] he saw his
glory and spoke about him. 42 Neverthe-
less many, even of the authorities, be-
lieved in him. But because of the
Pharisees they did not confess it, for
fear that they would be put out of the
synagogue; 43 for they loved human
glory more than the glory that comes
from God.

Summary of Jesus' Teaching

44 Then Jesus cried aloud: "Whoever
believes in me believes not in me but in
him who sent me. 45 And whoever sees me
sees him who sent me. 46 I have come as
light into the world, so that everyone who
believes in me should not remain in the
darkness. 47 I do not judge anyone who
hears my words and does not keep them,
for I came not to judge the world, but to
save the world. 48 The one who rejects me
and does not receive my word has a
judge; on the last day the word that I have
spoken will serve as judge, 49 for I have
not spoken on my own, but the Father
who sent me has himself given me a com-
mandment about what to say and what to
speak. 50 And I know that his command-
ment is eternal life. What I speak, there-
fore, I speak just as the Father has
told me."

Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet

13 Now before the festival of the
Passover, Jesus knew that his
hour had come to depart from this world
and go to the Father. Having loved his

q Other ancient witnesses read *when*

37.24–25; Dan 7.13–14. **12.35** *Light, darkness.* See 3.19–21; 8.12; 9.4–5; 11.9–10; 12.46. **12.36b** *Hid.* See also 7.10; 8.59; 11.54. **12.37–43** A reflection on the response to Jesus at the close of his public work. **12.37** On *signs* and *believing,* see note on 2.11. **12.38** The quotation is from Isa 53.1 (see also Rom 10.16). **12.40** The quotation is from Isa 6.10 (see also Mt 13.15; Mk 4.12). **12.41** *Saw his glory* may refer to Isa 6.1–4 (see also Jn 8.56–58). **12.42–43** See Introduction. Nicodemus may be an example of such fearful believers; see notes on 3.1–21; 7.48–52; 19.38; 19.39. *Put out of the synagogue.* See notes on 9.22; 16.2. *Human glory.* See 5.41–44. **12.44–50** This somewhat detached speech serves to summarize and conclude all that Jesus has said in his public work. Hence it has many similarities to sayings earlier in John. **12.44–45** See 5.23; 13.20; 14.7–9; see also Mt 10.40; Mk 9.37; Lk 10.16. **12.46** See 8.12; see also 3.19–21; 9.4–5; 11.9–10; 12.35–36. **12.47–48** On Jesus and judgment, see 3.17–18; 5.24, 30, 45; 8.15–16, 50; 9.39. **12.49–50** See 3.31–34; 5.19, 30; 7.16–17, 28–29; 8.26–28, 38–42.

13.1–17.26 The story of the Last Supper in John is unlike that in any of the other Gospels. In the other Gospels this supper is the Jewish Passover meal (Mt 26.17–19; Mk 14.12–16; Lk 22.7–13); John says that the Passover was to be eaten on the following evening, after Jesus' crucifixion (13.1; 18.28; 19.14). Jesus' final words to the disciples in chs. 13–16 are also unique to John. A few of the sayings do have parallels in the other Gospels, but those parallels are not placed at the Last Supper. Likewise the lengthy prayer in ch. 17 has no equivalent in the other Gospels. Most scholars conclude that these "farewell discourses," like the rest of John, reflect the understanding of Jesus as it had developed in the Christian community for which John was written (see note on 14.25–26). The discourses also fit the category of "last words" or "testament" spoken by a leader before dying (see also Gen 48–49; Deut 33; Josh 23–24; Acts 20.17–38).

own who were in the world, he loved
them to the end. 2 The devil had already
put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon
Iscariot to betray him. And during supper
3 Jesus, knowing that the Father had given
all things into his hands, and that he had
come from God and was going to God,
4 got up from the table,[r] took off his
outer robe, and tied a towel around him-
self. 5 Then he poured water into a basin
and began to wash the disciples' feet and
to wipe them with the towel that was tied
around him. 6 He came to Simon Peter,
who said to him, "Lord, are you going to
wash my feet?" 7 Jesus answered, "You do
not know now what I am doing, but later
you will understand." 8 Peter said to him,
"You will never wash my feet." Jesus an-
swered, "Unless I wash you, you have no
share with me." 9 Simon Peter said to him,
"Lord, not my feet only but also my hands
and my head!" 10 Jesus said to him, "One
who has bathed does not need to wash,
except for the feet,[s] but is entirely clean.
And you[t] are clean, though not all of
you." 11 For he knew who was to betray
him; for this reason he said, "Not all of
you are clean."

12 After he had washed their feet,
had put on his robe, and had returned to
the table, he said to them, "Do you know
what I have done to you? 13 You call me
Teacher and Lord—and you are right,
for that is what I am. 14 So if I, your Lord
and Teacher, have washed your feet, you
also ought to wash one another's feet.
15 For I have set you an example, that you
also should do as I have done to you.
16 Very truly, I tell you, servants[u] are not
greater than their master, nor are messen-
gers greater than the one who sent them.
17 If you know these things, you are
blessed if you do them. 18 I am not speak-
ing of all of you; I know whom I have
chosen. But it is to fulfill the scripture,
'The one who ate my bread[v] has lifted his
heel against me.' 19 I tell you this now, be-
fore it occurs, so that when it does occur,
you may believe that I am he.[w] 20 Very
truly, I tell you, whoever receives one
whom I send receives me; and whoever
receives me receives him who sent me."

Jesus Foretells His Betrayal

21 After saying this Jesus was troubled
in spirit, and declared, "Very truly, I tell
you, one of you will betray me." 22 The
disciples looked at one another, uncertain
of whom he was speaking. 23 One of his
disciples—the one whom Jesus loved—

r Gk *from supper* *s* Other ancient authorities lack *except for the feet* *t* The Greek word for *you* here is plural *u* Gk *slaves* *v* Other ancient authorities read *ate bread with me* *w* Gk *I am*

13.1–5 The story of Jesus washing the disciples' feet is found in no other Gospel. **13.1** An introduction to the final chapters of John. *Passover.* See notes on 2.13; 6.4. *Jesus knew.* See 18.4; 19.28. On Jesus' *hour,* see 17.1; notes on 7.30; 12.23. *He loved them to the end.* See 13.34; 15.12–13. **13.2** See 13.26–30; Lk 22.3–4. **13.3** *He had come from God and was going to God.* See 16.28. **13.4–5** It was ordinary hospitality to offer guests water to wash their feet after a journey in sandals on dusty roads (Lk 7.44). A host was not expected to wash his guests' feet for them, but a slave might be assigned this task, or disciples might wash their teacher's feet. **13.6–11** This dialogue may transform the foot washing into a symbol of baptism. On the other hand, the foot washing may represent Jesus' death for the disciples, so that Peter's objection is similar to that in Mk 8.31–33. **13.7** See 13.36; see also 2.22; 12.16. **13.10** *Bathed,* possibly a reference to the Jewish ritual of purification (cf. 2.6); if this were done at home one would be *clean* and need only foot washing upon arriving for dinner. *You are clean.* See 15.3. **13.10–11** *Not all of you.* See 13.18, 21–30; see also 6.64, 70–71; 17.12. **13.12–20** These verses both interpret the foot washing and introduce themes treated later in chs. 13–17. **13.14–15** It is not known whether the Christian community for which this Gospel was written practiced foot washing in the literal sense. If so, they probably also understood the action and this text as symbolizing humble service in love toward one another; see 13.34; 15.12–13. **13.15** *Do as I have done.* See also 14.12; 17.18; 20.21. **13.16** See 15.20; see also Mt 10.24–25. The Greek word for *messengers* can also be translated "apostles." **13.17** Cf. Jas 1.22–25. **13.18** *I am not speaking of all of you.* See note on 13.10–11. *Scripture,* i.e., Ps 41.9. *Ate my bread.* See 13.26. **13.19** See 14.29; 16.4, 33. *I am he.* See note on 8.24. **13.20** See also Mt 10.40 (Lk 10.16); Mk 9.37 (Lk 9.48). Similar relationships are spoken of in 13.34; 14.20; 15.9–12, 21, 23; 17.18; 20.21. **13.21–30** John's story of Jesus' final meal does not contain the institution of the Lord's Supper; cf. Mt 26.20–29; Lk 22.14–23. **13.23** *The one whom Jesus loved.* This beloved disciple is also mentioned in 19.26–27; 20.1–10; 21.7, 20–24. He may be referred to in 19.35 as well (and, although less likely, in

was reclining next to him; 24 Simon Peter
therefore motioned to him to ask Jesus of
whom he was speaking. 25 So while reclin-
ing next to Jesus, he asked him, "Lord,
who is it?" 26 Jesus answered, "It is the one
to whom I give this piece of bread when I
have dipped it in the dish."[x] So when he
had dipped the piece of bread, he gave it
to Judas son of Simon Iscariot.[y] 27 After
he received the piece of bread,[z] Satan en-
tered into him. Jesus said to him, "Do
quickly what you are going to do." 28 Now
no one at the table knew why he said this
to him. 29 Some thought that, because Ju-
das had the common purse, Jesus was tell-
ing him, "Buy what we need for the
festival"; or, that he should give some-
thing to the poor. 30 So, after receiving the
piece of bread, he immediately went out.
And it was night.

The New Commandment

31 When he had gone out, Jesus said,
"Now the Son of Man has been glorified,
and God has been glorified in him. 32 If
God has been glorified in him,[a] God will
also glorify him in himself and will glorify
him at once. 33 Little children, I am with
you only a little longer. You will look for
me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say
to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot
come.' 34 I give you a new commandment,
that you love one another. Just as I have
loved you, you also should love one an-
other. 35 By this everyone will know that
you are my disciples, if you have love for
one another."

Jesus Foretells Peter's Denial

36 Simon Peter said to him, "Lord,
where are you going?" Jesus answered,
"Where I am going, you cannot follow me
now; but you will follow afterward." 37 Pe-
ter said to him, "Lord, why can I not
follow you now? I will lay down my life
for you." 38 Jesus answered, "Will you lay
down your life for me? Very truly, I tell
you, before the cock crows, you will have
denied me three times.

Jesus the Way to the Father

14 "Do not let your hearts be trou-
bled. Believe[b] in God, believe
also in me. 2 In my Father's house there
are many dwelling places. If it were not
so, would I have told you that I go to pre-
pare a place for you?[c] 3 And if I go and
prepare a place for you, I will come again
and will take you to myself, so that where
I am, there you may be also. 4 And you
know the way to the place where I am go-
ing."[d] 5 Thomas said to him, "Lord, we
do not know where you are going. How

x Gk *dipped it* y Other ancient authorities read *Judas Iscariot son of Simon*; others, *Judas son of Simon from Karyot* (Kerioth) z Gk *After the piece of bread*
a Other ancient authorities lack *If God has been glorified in him* b Or *You believe* c Or *If it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you* d Other ancient authorities read *Where I am going you know, and the way you know*

1.35–40; 18.15–16). He is often thought to symbolize the Christian community for which John was written. See also Introduction. *Reclining.* On special occasions, meals were eaten while lying on couches around a low central table. Those eating lay on their left sides; the disciple reclining *next to* Jesus would thus be to Jesus' right. **13.25** *While reclining next to Jesus,* lit. "while leaning on Jesus' chest"; see note on 13.23. **13.26** See 13.18. **13.27** *Satan entered into him.* Cf. 13.2. **13.29** *Common purse.* See note on 12.6. **13.30** *Night.* See 3.2; 9.4; 11.10; 12.35–36.

13.31–38 The beginning of John's "farewell discourses" (see note on 13.1–17.26) concerning Jesus' death and departure and its meaning for the disciples. **13.31–32** *Glorified.* See note on 12.23. **13.33** *As I said to the Jews.* See 7.34; 8.21. **13.34–35** *A new commandment.* Cf. Mk 12.28–34, which quotes Lev 19.18. In contrast to Mt 5.43–48; Lk 6.27–36, the love commandment in John is restricted to *one another,* i.e., the community of Jesus' *disciples. As I have loved you.* See 13.1; 15.12–13. **13.36–37** Precisely because they cannot in fact *lay down their lives* like Jesus (cf. 10.11–18; 15.13), the disciples *cannot follow* where he is going now. *Afterward.* See also 13.7. **13.38** The denial predicted here (cf. Mk 14.27–31; Lk 22.31–34) takes place in Jn 18.15–18, 25–27. **14.1–3** Following the disturbing message in 13.36–38, these verses are comforting, for they introduce the subject of Jesus' return, which is then taken up and interpreted in several ways in the rest of ch. 14. Some scholars see these different conceptions as the work of different writers or editors. In any case, they render the actual Second Coming of Jesus, so important elsewhere in the NT, less significant in John. **14.3** *Where I am, there you may be also.* See also 12.26; 13.36. **14.4–11** The disciples' failure to know Jesus. **14.5** *Thomas.* See 11.16; 20.24–29; 21.2.

can we know the way?" 6 Jesus said to him,
"I am the way, and the truth, and the life.
No one comes to the Father except
through me. 7 If you know me, you will
know[e] my Father also. From now on you
do know him and have seen him."
8 Philip said to him, "Lord, show us
the Father, and we will be satisfied."
9 Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you
all this time, Philip, and you still do not
know me? Whoever has seen me has seen
the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the
Father'? 10 Do you not believe that I am in
the Father and the Father is in me? The
words that I say to you I do not speak on
my own; but the Father who dwells in me
does his works. 11 Believe me that I am in
the Father and the Father is in me; but if
you do not, then believe me because of
the works themselves. 12 Very truly, I tell
you, the one who believes in me will also
do the works that I do and, in fact, will do
greater works than these, because I am
going to the Father. 13 I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If in my name you ask me[f] for anything, I will do it.

The Promise of the Holy Spirit

15 "If you love me, you will keep[g] my
commandments. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate,[h] to be with you forever. 17 This
is the Spirit of truth, whom the world
cannot receive, because it neither sees
him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will
be in[i] you.
18 "I will not leave you orphaned; I
am coming to you. 19 In a little while the
world will no longer see me, but you will
see me; because I live, you also will live.
20 On that day you will know that I am in
my Father, and you in me, and I in you.
21 They who have my commandments and
keep them are those who love me; and
those who love me will be loved by my
Father, and I will love them and reveal
myself to them." 22 Judas (not Iscariot)
said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will
reveal yourself to us, and not to the
world?" 23 Jesus answered him, "Those
who love me will keep my word, and my
Father will love them, and we will come to
them and make our home with them.
24 Whoever does not love me does not
keep my words; and the word that you
hear is not mine, but is from the Father
who sent me.

e Other ancient authorities read *If you had known me, you would have known* f Other ancient authorities lack *me* g Other ancient authorities read *me, keep* h Or *Helper* i Or *among*

14.6 *Truth.* See also 6.55; 8.31–32; 17.17; 18.37. *Life.* See 6.35, 48; 11.25. **14.7** *If you know me, you will know.* The reading found in other manuscripts, *If you had known me, you would have known* (see text note *e*), may correspond better to the disciples' lack of understanding (14.5, 8–11), which can only now, at Jesus' glorification, be cleared up. See also 7.28–29; 8.19; 15.21; 16.3. **14.9** *Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.* See 1.18; 6.46; 8.19; 12.44–45. **14.10** Two of Jesus' most characteristic claims in John: *I am in the Father and the Father is in me* (14.20; also 10.30, 38; 17.11, 21–23) and *I do not speak on my own* but speak the Father's words (14.24; also 5.19–23, 30; 6.38; 7.16–18; 8.15–16, 28–29, 38; 12.49; 15.15; 17.7–8). **14.11** *Believe me because of the works themselves.* See 5.36; 10.37–38. **14.12–14** Believers are Jesus' successors and Jesus "returns" through their work (see note on 14.1–3). **14.13** *I will do whatever you ask in my name.* See 15.7–8, 16; 16.23–24; see also Mt 7.7–11; 18.19; 21.21–22; 1 Jn 3.22; 5.14–15. **14.15–17** The Holy Spirit is also Jesus' successor and in a sense represents his "return" (see note on 14.1–3). **14.15** *Keep my commandments.* See 15.9–15. **14.16** *Advocate,* i.e., the equivalent of a defense lawyer. The Greek word is *Paraclete,* which can also be translated "Helper" or "Comforter." Only John uses this term to speak of the Holy Spirit (see 14.26; 15.26; 16.7; cf. 1 Jn 2.1). **14.17** *Spirit of truth,* another term for the Holy Spirit unique to John in the NT (see 15.26; 16.13), though it is used in the Dead Sea Scrolls. *The world cannot not receive* or *know* the Spirit of truth because the Spirit is associated with Jesus (who is the truth; 14.6), whom the world also does not receive (1.11–12) or know (7.28; 8.19; 16.3). **14.18–24** Jesus' return as his abiding presence in the believers (see note on 14.1–3). See 14.15–17 for similar statements made about the Spirit. **14.19** This verse could also be translated, "In a little while the world will no longer see me; but you will see me, because I live and you will live." See also 6.57. *In a little while the world will no longer see me.* See 7.33; 16.10, 16–22; cf. 14.17. **14.20** *I am in my Father.* See note on 14.10. *You in me, and I in you.* See 6.56; 14.23; 15.4–7; 17.21–23, 26; note on 1 Jn 2.6. **14.22** *Judas (not Iscariot),* probably Judas son of James mentioned in Lk 6.16; Acts 1.13. **14.23** *Keep my word.* See 8.31, 43,

25 "I have said these things to you
while I am still with you. 26 But the Advo-
cate,[j] the Holy Spirit, whom the Father
will send in my name, will teach you ev-
erything, and remind you of all that I
have said to you. 27 Peace I leave with you;
my peace I give to you. I do not give to
you as the world gives. Do not let your
hearts be troubled, and do not let them be
afraid. 28 You heard me say to you, 'I am
going away, and I am coming to you.' If
you loved me, you would rejoice that I am
going to the Father, because the Father is
greater than I. 29 And now I have told you
this before it occurs, so that when it does
occur, you may believe. 30 I will no longer
talk much with you, for the ruler of this
world is coming. He has no power over
me; 31 but I do as the Father has com-
manded me, so that the world may know
that I love the Father. Rise, let us be on
our way.

Jesus the True Vine

15 "I am the true vine, and my Fa-
ther is the vinegrower. 2 He re-
moves every branch in me that bears no
fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he
prunes[k] to make it bear more fruit. 3 You
have already been cleansed[k] by the word
that I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in me
as I abide in you. Just as the branch can-
not bear fruit by itself unless it abides in
the vine, neither can you unless you abide
in me. 5 I am the vine, you are the
branches. Those who abide in me and I in
them bear much fruit, because apart from
me you can do nothing. 6 Whoever does
not abide in me is thrown away like a
branch and withers; such branches are
gathered, thrown into the fire, and
burned. 7 If you abide in me, and my
words abide in you, ask for whatever you
wish, and it will be done for you. 8 My Fa-
ther is glorified by this, that you bear
much fruit and become[l] my disciples.
9 As the Father has loved me, so I have
loved you; abide in my love. 10 If you keep
my commandments, you will abide in my
love, just as I have kept my Father's com-
mandments and abide in his love. 11 I
have said these things to you so that my
joy may be in you, and that your joy may
be complete.

12 "This is my commandment, that
you love one another as I have loved you.
13 No one has greater love than this, to lay

j Or *Helper* *k* The same Greek root refers to pruning and cleansing *l* Or *be*

51, 55; 12.47; 15.7, 20; 17.6. **14.24** *The word that you hear is not mine.* See note on 14.10. **14.25–26** The work of the Holy Spirit, implying, as in 16.12–15, that the Spirit will lead the Christian community beyond Jesus' own teaching (see also note on 12.16; Introduction). **14.27–31** Conclusion. This rounds off the discourse in ch. 14 by echoing the words of 14.1–3 and points forward to Jesus' arrest. **14.27** *Peace.* See 16.33; 20.19–21. **14.28** *The Father is greater than I.* See 20.17; also cf. 1.1; 10.30. **14.29** See 13.19; 16.4, 33. **14.30** *The ruler of this world,* i.e., the devil (see 12.31; 16.11; see also 13.2, 26–27). **14.31** This verse could also be translated, "but this is so that the world may know that I love the Father, and do as the Father has commanded me. Rise . . . way." *I do as the Father has commanded me.* See also 8.29; 10.17–18; 12.49–50; 15.10. **15.1–17.26** The command *Rise, let us be on our way* in 14.31, along with the statement in 14.30 that Jesus *will no longer talk much,* leads most scholars to conclude that ch. 18 directly followed ch. 14 in the original edition of John, and that chs. 15–17 were added later, either by the same author or by an editor from the same community. These chapters often take up themes from chs. 13–14 and develop them further. **15.1–6** In the OT the grapevine is used several times as a metaphor for Israel, with God as the vinegrower who tends it carefully but burns and destroys it if it is unfaithful. See Ps 80.8–16; Isa 5.1–7; 27.2–6; Jer 2.21; Ezek 15.1–6; 17.5–10; 19.10–14. **15.2–3** *Pruning* (the Greek root basically means *cleanse*) vine branches involves cutting back to the bare stem. *You have already been cleansed.* See also 13.10. **15.4–6** *Abide in me.* See note on 14.20. **15.7–17** Abiding in Jesus is discussed in relation to two themes, bearing fruit (vv. 7–8) and abiding in his love by keeping his commandments (vv. 9–15). The two themes are summed up in vv. 16–17. **15.7–8** See note on 14.12–14. **15.7** *My words abide in you.* Cf. 5.38; 8.31, 51; 14.23–24. **15.8** *Become my disciples.* See 13.35. **15.9** *As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you.* See note on 13.20. **15.10** *If you keep my commandments.* See 15.14; see also 14.15, 21–24. *I have kept my Father's commandments.* See note on 14.31. **15.11** *That your joy may be complete.* See 3.29; 16.24; 17.13; 1 Jn 1.4; 2 Jn 12. **15.12** See 13.34. **15.13** *Lay down one's life,* an expression found

down one's life for one's friends. 14 You
are my friends if you do what I command
you. 15 I do not call you servants[m] any
longer, because the servant[n] does not
know what the master is doing; but I have
called you friends, because I have made
known to you everything that I have
heard from my Father. 16 You did not
choose me but I chose you. And I ap-
pointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit
that will last, so that the Father will give
you whatever you ask him in my name.
17 I am giving you these commands so that
you may love one another.

The World's Hatred

18 "If the world hates you, be aware
that it hated me before it hated you. 19 If
you belonged to the world,[o] the world
would love you as its own. Because you do
not belong to the world, but I have chosen
you out of the world—therefore the
world hates you. 20 Remember the word
that I said to you, 'Servants[p] are not
greater than their master.' If they perse-
cuted me, they will persecute you; if they
kept my word, they will keep yours also.
21 But they will do all these things to you
on account of my name, because they do
not know him who sent me. 22 If I had not
come and spoken to them, they would not
have sin; but now they have no excuse for
their sin. 23 Whoever hates me hates my
Father also. 24 If I had not done among
them the works that no one else did, they
would not have sin. But now they have
seen and hated both me and my Father.
25 It was to fulfill the word that is written
in their law, 'They hated me without a
cause.'

26 "When the Advocate[q] comes,
whom I will send to you from the Father,
the Spirit of truth who comes from the
Father, he will testify on my behalf. 27 You
also are to testify because you have been
with me from the beginning.

16 "I have said these things to you to
keep you from stumbling. 2 They
will put you out of the synagogues. In-
deed, an hour is coming when those who
kill you will think that by doing so they are
offering worship to God. 3 And they will
do this because they have not known the
Father or me. 4 But I have said these
things to you so that when their hour
comes you may remember that I told you
about them.

The Work of the Spirit

"I did not say these things to you from
the beginning, because I was with you.
5 But now I am going to him who sent me;
yet none of you asks me, 'Where are you
going?' 6 But because I have said these
things to you, sorrow has filled your

m Gk *slaves* *n* Gk *slave* *o* Gk *were of the world*
p Gk *Slaves* *q* Or *Helper*

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only in the Gospel and Letters of John in the NT (see Jn 10.11, 15, 17; 13.37–38; 1 Jn 3.16). On the meaning of this expression within the Christian community, see 16.2. **15.15** *Everything that I have heard from my Father.* See note on 14.10. **15.16** See 15.7–8; note on 14.12–14. **15.17** This verse might also be translated, "I am giving you this command, that you love one another"; see 15.12; see also 13.34.

15.18–16.4a This section on persecution is closely connected to the conflict between the synagogue authorities and the Christian community for which John was written (see Introduction). It is also similar at a number of points to sayings found in Mt 10; Mk 13. **15.18** See Mt 10.22; Mk 13.13. **15.19** *You do not belong to the world.* See note on 17.14–16. **15.20** *Servants are not greater than their master.* See 13.16; cf. Mt 10.24–25. *Kept my word.* See note on 14.23. **15.21** *They do not know him who sent me.* See 7.28–29; 8.19, 54–55; 16.3; note on 13.20. **15.22–24** Cf. 9.39–41. **15.23** See note on 13.20; see especially Lk 10.16. *Hates me.* See also 3.20; 7.7. **15.24** *They have seen . . . my Father.* See note on 14.9. **15.25** Jesus quotes from Pss 35.19; 69.4. As in 10.34; 12.34, *law* loosely refers to the Jewish scriptures in general. **15.26–27** Cf. 16.7–11. **15.26** *Advocate.* See note on 14.16. *Spirit of truth.* See note on 14.17. *Testifying* under persecution is also mentioned in relation to the Spirit in Mt 10.17–20; Mk 13.9–11. **15.27** Cf. Acts 1.21–22. **16.1** *Stumbling,* or "falling away"; cf. Mt 24.9–10. **16.2** *Put you out of the synagogues.* See 9.22; 12.42; see also Mt 10.17; Mk 13.9. *An hour is coming.* See note on 16.25. *Kill you.* See Mt 10.21; Mk 13.12. See also Jn 15.13. **16.3** See 7.28–29; 8.19, 54–55; 14.9; 15.21. **16.4a** *I have said these things to you.* See 13.19; 14.29; 16.33. **16.4b–15** Further reflections on the work of the Spirit after Jesus' departure; cf. 14.16–17, 25–26; 15.26; see note on 15.1–17.26. **16.5** *None of you asks me.* Cf. 13.36; 14.5.

hearts. 7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth:
it is to your advantage that I go away, for
if I do not go away, the Advocate[r] will
not come to you; but if I go, I will send
him to you. 8 And when he comes, he will
prove the world wrong about[s] sin and
righteousness and judgment: 9 about sin,
because they do not believe in me;
10 about righteousness, because I am go-
ing to the Father and you will see me no
longer; 11 about judgment, because the
ruler of this world has been condemned.
12 "I still have many things to say to
you, but you cannot bear them now.
13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will
guide you into all the truth; for he will not
speak on his own, but will speak whatever
he hears, and he will declare to you the
things that are to come. 14 He will glorify
me, because he will take what is mine and
declare it to you. 15 All that the Father has
is mine. For this reason I said that he will
take what is mine and declare it to you.

Sorrow Will Turn into Joy

16 "A little while, and you will no lon-
ger see me, and again a little while, and
you will see me." 17 Then some of his dis-
ciples said to one another, "What does he
mean by saying to us, 'A little while, and
you will no longer see me, and again a
little while, and you will see me'; and 'Be-
cause I am going to the Father'?" 18 They
said, "What does he mean by this 'a little
while'? We do not know what he is talking
about." 19 Jesus knew that they wanted to
ask him, so he said to them, "Are you dis-
cussing among yourselves what I meant
when I said, 'A little while, and you will no
longer see me, and again a little while,
and you will see me'? 20 Very truly, I tell
you, you will weep and mourn, but the
world will rejoice; you will have pain, but
your pain will turn into joy. 21 When a
woman is in labor, she has pain, because
her hour has come. But when her child
is born, she no longer remembers the
anguish because of the joy of having
brought a human being into the world.
22 So you have pain now; but I will see you
again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no
one will take your joy from you. 23 On that
day you will ask nothing of me.[t] Very
truly, I tell you, if you ask anything of the
Father in my name, he will give it to you.[u]
24 Until now you have not asked for any-
thing in my name. Ask and you will re-
ceive, so that your joy may be complete.

Peace for the Disciples

25 "I have said these things to you in
figures of speech. The hour is coming
when I will no longer speak to you in fig-
ures, but will tell you plainly of the Fa-
ther. 26 On that day you will ask in my
name. I do not say to you that I will ask

r Or *Helper* s Or *convict the world of* t Or *will ask me no question* u Other ancient authorities read *Father, he will give it to you in my name*

16.7 *Advocate.* See note on 14.16. **16.9** See 8.24; 15.22. **16.10** Perhaps a reference to the *righteousness* of Jesus, proven by his *going to the Father. You will see me no longer.* See 16.16–22; see also 14.19. **16.11** *Judgment* and *condemned* come from the same Greek root (cf. 3.17–18 with 5.24; 12.47–48). *The ruler of this world,* i.e., the devil. See 12.31; 14.30. **16.12–15** See note on 14.25–26. **16.13** *Will speak whatever he hears,* just as Jesus spoke only what he had heard from the Father (see 8.26–28; 12.49; 14.10; 15.15; 17.7–8). **16.15** *All that the Father has is mine.* See also 17.10.

16.16–33 The disciples' pain and confusion at Jesus' departure are contrasted with the joy and clarity of the Christian community at his return. The disciples speak here for the first time since ch. 14, in which these themes are also addressed. **16.16–17** See 16.5, 10; see also 7.33; 13.33; 14.19. **16.20** Cf. Mt 5.4; Lk 6.21. **16.21** Women's *labor* pains are frequently used by the OT prophets as a metaphor for times of crisis and trouble (Isa 13.7–8; 21.3; 26.17–18; Hos 13.13; Mic 4.9–10), and by the NT writers as a metaphor for the crisis of the end time (Mk 13.8; 1 Thess 5.3; Rev 12.1–6; cf. Rom 8.18–25). **16.22** *I will see you again* may refer both to Jesus' resurrection and to his second coming; see note on 14.1–3. **16.23–27** Here *on that day* seems to mean specifically Jesus' resurrection (see 14.20), though elsewhere in the NT it refers to his Second Coming on the last day (Mt 7.22; Lk 10.12; 17.31; 2 Thess 1.10; 2 Tim 1.18; 4.8). After Jesus' resurrection, God answers prayers in Jesus' *name* (see 15.16; cf. 14.13–14). **16.24** *Ask and you will receive.* See Mt 7.7–8; Lk 11.9–10; note on 14.12–14. *So that your joy may be complete.* See note on 15.11. **16.25** John often speaks of an *hour* that *is coming* and has already come (see 16.32; notes on 4.23; 7.30; 12.23). Only here and in 16.2–4 is there mention of an hour that is coming, but has not yet come. These passages therefore must be referring to a different "hour," the time of the Christian community after

the Father on your behalf; 27 for the Father himself loves you, because you have
loved me and have believed that I came
from God.[v] 28 I came from the Father
and have come into the world; again, I am
leaving the world and am going to the
Father."
29 His disciples said, "Yes, now you
are speaking plainly, not in any figure of
speech! 30 Now we know that you know all
things, and do not need to have anyone
question you; by this we believe that you
came from God." 31 Jesus answered them,
"Do you now believe? 32 The hour is com-
ing, indeed it has come, when you will be
scattered, each one to his home, and you
will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone
because the Father is with me. 33 I have
said this to you, so that in me you may
have peace. In the world you face perse-
cution. But take courage; I have con-
quered the world!"

Jesus Prays for His Disciples

17 After Jesus had spoken these
words, he looked up to heaven
and said, "Father, the hour has come; glo-
rify your Son so that the Son may glorify
you, 2 since you have given him authority
over all people,[w] to give eternal life to all
whom you have given him. 3 And this is
eternal life, that they may know you, the
only true God, and Jesus Christ whom
you have sent. 4 I glorified you on earth
by finishing the work that you gave me to
do. 5 So now, Father, glorify me in your
own presence with the glory that I had in
your presence before the world existed.
6 "I have made your name known to
those whom you gave me from the world.
They were yours, and you gave them to
me, and they have kept your word. 7 Now
they know that everything you have given
me is from you; 8 for the words that you
gave to me I have given to them, and they
have received them and know in truth
that I came from you; and they have be-
lieved that you sent me. 9 I am asking on
their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of
the world, but on behalf of those whom
you gave me, because they are yours.
10 All mine are yours, and yours are mine;
and I have been glorified in them. 11 And
now I am no longer in the world, but they
are in the world, and I am coming to you.
Holy Father, protect them in your name
that you have given me, so that they may
be one, as we are one. 12 While I was with

v Other ancient authorities read *the Father*
w Gk *flesh*

Jesus' death and resurrection. On the relation of speaking *plainly* to the coming of the Spirit, see 16.12–15; see also 14.25–26. **16.27–28** *I came from God.* See 3.2; 8.42; 13.3; 17.8. **16.29–30** The disciples are overconfident (as in 13.36–38), thinking mistakenly that *now* is the hour when Jesus will speak plainly (see note on 16.25) and they will *believe.* **16.32** *You will be scattered, each one to his home.* See also Zech 13.7; Mk 14.27, 50. *I am not alone.* See 8.29. **16.33** *I have said this to you.* See also 13.19; 14.29; 16.4. *Peace.* See 14.27. *In the world you face persecution.* See 15.18–16.4a. *I have conquered the world.* See 1 Jn 5.4–5.

17.1–26 Jesus' final prayer before his crucifixion (there is no prayer in the garden of Gethsemane in John). It has often been called a "high-priestly" prayer, but it makes little reference to Jesus' sacrifice. Rather, it shows how the Savior might intercede for his disciples before his departure. There are some parallels to the Lord's Prayer (see notes on 17.11; 17.15; 17.17). **17.1–5** A summary of Jesus' mission and his relationship to God. **17.1** *The hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you.* See note on 12.23. **17.2** *To give eternal life to all . . . you have given him.* See 4.14; 6.27, 37–40; 10.28–29. **17.3** See 3.16; 5.24; 20.31. **17.4** *Finishing the work that you gave me to do.* See 4.34; 5.36. **17.5** *Before the world existed.* See 17.24. **17.6–19** Jesus' prayer for the unity of his disciples in a hostile world. Though these verses speak only of the disciples of Jesus' lifetime, 17.20 suggests that the later Christian community saw itself in this prayer as well. **17.6** *I have made your name known,* because Jesus himself bears the divine name *I am* (see note on 8.24); see also 17.11–12, 26. *Those . . . you gave me.* See 17.2, 9; see also 10.29; note on 6.35–40. *Kept your word.* See 8.31, 51, 55. **17.8** *The words . . . I have given to them.* See note on 17.18. *I came from you.* See 13.3; 16.28–30. *They have believed that you sent me.* Cf. 17.21–23, 25; see also 11.42. **17.9** *Not asking on behalf of the world.* See note on 17.14–16. **17.10** *Yours are mine.* See 16.15. **17.11** *Holy Father . . . your name.* Cf. the Lord's Prayer (Mt 6.9; Lk 11.2). Since Jesus has God's *name* (see note on 17.6), he and God are *one* (see 10.30; note on 14.10), a unity based also on God's love (see 17.23–26). *So that they may be one, as we are one.* See 17.21–23. **17.12** *The one destined to be lost,* i.e., Judas; see 13.11. *So that the scripture might be fulfilled.* In regard to Judas, see 13.18; Acts 1.16–20. Fulfillment of scripture is also a signifi-

them, I protected them in your name
that[x] you have given me. I guarded
them, and not one of them was lost except
the one destined to be lost,[y] so that the
scripture might be fulfilled. 13 But now I
am coming to you, and I speak these
things in the world so that they may have
my joy made complete in themselves.[z]
14 I have given them your word, and the
world has hated them because they do not
belong to the world, just as I do not be-
long to the world. 15 I am not asking you
to take them out of the world, but I ask
you to protect them from the evil one.[a]
16 They do not belong to the world, just as
I do not belong to the world. 17 Sanctify
them in the truth; your word is truth.
18 As you have sent me into the world, so
I have sent them into the world. 19 And
for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that
they also may be sanctified in truth.

20 "I ask not only on behalf of these,
but also on behalf of those who will be-
lieve in me through their word, 21 that
they may all be one. As you, Father, are in
me and I am in you, may they also be in
us,[b] so that the world may believe that
you have sent me. 22 The glory that you
have given me I have given them, so that
they may be one, as we are one, 23 I in
them and you in me, that they may be-
come completely one, so that the world
may know that you have sent me and have
loved them even as you have loved me.
24 Father, I desire that those also, whom
you have given me, may be with me where
I am, to see my glory, which you have
given me because you loved me before the
foundation of the world.

25 "Righteous Father, the world does
not know you, but I know you; and these
know that you have sent me. 26 I made
your name known to them, and I will
make it known, so that the love with which
you have loved me may be in them, and I
in them."

The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus

18 After Jesus had spoken these
words, he went out with his disci-
ples across the Kidron valley to a place
where there was a garden, which he and
his disciples entered. 2 Now Judas, who
betrayed him, also knew the place, be-
cause Jesus often met there with his disci-
ples. 3 So Judas brought a detachment of
soldiers together with police from the

x Other ancient authorities read *protected in your name those whom* y Gk *except the son of destruction* z Or *among themselves* a Or *from evil* b Other ancient authorities read *be one in us*

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cant theme in the passion narrative (see 19.24, 28, 36–37). **17.13** *My joy made complete.* See note on 15.11. **17.14–16** *They do not belong to the world.* Despite 3.16, the Christian community for whom John was written seems to have felt alienated from the world. Their conflict with the synagogue authorities convinced them that *the world hated them,* and that Jesus also *did not belong to the world* (3.31; 8.23). Indeed, John regards *the evil one* as *the ruler of this world* (12.31; 14.30; 16.11; 1 Jn 5.19). Despite this, they, like Jesus, are sent into the world (17.18), though they do not use the world's methods (18.36). The *world* refers not to the creation as such but to the human world that rejected God and the one whom God sent (see 1.10–11). See also 15.18–16.4a; Introduction. **17.15** *Protect them from the evil one.* Cf. the Lord's Prayer, Mt 6.13. **17.17** *Sanctify,* the same term as "hallow" in the Lord's Prayer (Mt 6.9; Lk 11.2); see also 10.36. *The truth* is God's *word* but is also identified with Jesus himself in 14.6. **17.18** See 20.21; see also 3.17; 12.47; 13.20. **17.20–24** The prayer for the disciples is extended to the church beyond them, suggesting that the preceding prayer applies to that church as well. **17.20** *Believe in me through their word.* See also 4.39; 20.29. **17.21–23** See 17.11. *In me . . . in you . . . in us* (v. 21), *in them* (v. 23). See notes on 14.10; 14.20. **17.21** *So . . . the world may believe . . . you have sent me.* See 17.8, 25. **17.22** *Glory* implies the presence of God; see 17.5, 24; note on 1.14. *As we are one.* See 17.11. **17.23** *Have loved them.* See 17.26; see also 14.21, 23; 16.27. **17.24** *Be with me where I am.* See 12.26; 14.3. *To see my glory.* See 1.14; 2.11. *Before the foundation of the world.* See 17.5; see also 1 Pet 1.20. **17.25–26** A concluding summary. **17.25** *The world does not know you.* See notes on 7.28; 17.14–16. **17.26** *I made your name known to them.* See 17.6, 11–12. *The love with which you have loved me.* See 15.9. *I in them.* See note on 14.20.

18.1–19.42 The passion narrative, i.e., the story of Jesus' trial and crucifixion. For John, this is the final act of the world's rejection of its redeemer (1.10–11; 3.19–21), yet it is also Jesus' glorification, his return to God (see note on 12.23). **18.1–11** The arrest (cf. Mt 26.30, 36, 47–56; Mk 14.26, 32, 43–52; Lk 22.39, 47–53). In John, Jesus virtually directs his own arrest; see 10.17–18. **18.1** The *Kidron valley* lies east of Jerusalem; by crossing it, one comes to the Mount of Olives. **18.3** *Detachment,* lit. a cohort, a unit of

chief priests and the Pharisees, and they
came there with lanterns and torches and
weapons. 4 Then Jesus, knowing all that
was to happen to him, came forward and
asked them, "Whom are you looking for?"
5 They answered, "Jesus of Nazareth."[c]
Jesus replied, "I am he."[d] Judas, who be-
trayed him, was standing with them.
6 When Jesus[e] said to them, "I am he,"[d]
they stepped back and fell to the ground.
7 Again he asked them, "Whom are you
looking for?" And they said, "Jesus of
Nazareth."[c] 8 Jesus answered, "I told you
that I am he.[d] So if you are looking for
me, let these men go." 9 This was to fulfill
the word that he had spoken, "I did not
lose a single one of those whom you gave
me." 10 Then Simon Peter, who had a
sword, drew it, struck the high priest's
slave, and cut off his right ear. The slave's
name was Malchus. 11 Jesus said to Peter,
"Put your sword back into its sheath. Am
I not to drink the cup that the Father has
given me?"

Jesus Before the High Priest

12 So the soldiers, their officer, and
the Jewish police arrested Jesus and
bound him. 13 First they took him to
Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caia-
phas, the high priest that year. 14 Ca-
iaphas was the one who had advised the
Jews that it was better to have one person
die for the people.

Peter Denies Jesus

15 Simon Peter and another disciple
followed Jesus. Since that disciple was
known to the high priest, he went with
Jesus into the courtyard of the high
priest, 16 but Peter was standing outside at
the gate. So the other disciple, who was
known to the high priest, went out, spoke
to the woman who guarded the gate, and
brought Peter in. 17 The woman said to
Peter, "You are not also one of this man's
disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not."
18 Now the slaves and the police had made
a charcoal fire because it was cold, and
they were standing around it and warm-
ing themselves. Peter also was standing
with them and warming himself.

The High Priest Questions Jesus

19 Then the high priest questioned
Jesus about his disciples and about his
teaching. 20 Jesus answered, "I have spo-
ken openly to the world; I have always
taught in synagogues and in the temple,
where all the Jews come together. I have
said nothing in secret. 21 Why do you ask
me? Ask those who heard what I said to
them; they know what I said." 22 When he
had said this, one of the police standing
nearby struck Jesus on the face, saying,
"Is that how you answer the high priest?"
23 Jesus answered, "If I have spoken
wrongly, testify to the wrong. But if I
have spoken rightly, why do you strike
me?" 24 Then Annas sent him bound to
Caiaphas the high priest.

Peter Denies Jesus Again

25 Now Simon Peter was standing and
warming himself. They asked him, "You
are not also one of his disciples, are you?"
He denied it and said, "I am not." 26 One
of the slaves of the high priest, a relative

c Gk *the Nazorean* d Gk *I am* e Gk *he*

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six hundred men, though it is debatable whether all of them would have been present. Only John mentions the presence of Roman soldiers at Jesus' arrest. He is also the only one to mention the *Pharisees* (on Pharisees, the *chief priests*, and the *police*, see note on 7.32). **18.4** *Knowing all that was to happen to him.* See 13.1–3; 19.28. *Whom are you looking for?* Cf. 20.15. **18.5–6** *I am he* is a divine revelation (see note on 8.24); hence they *fall to the ground.* **18.9** See 17.12; see also 6.39. **18.11** *Cup.* See Mk 14.36. **18.12–27** Jesus before the Jewish authorities (cf. Mt 26.57–75; Mk 14.53–72; Lk 22.54–71). Unlike the other Gospels, John does not have a trial before the Jewish Sanhedrin (see notes on 7.32; 11.47–48), perhaps because "the Jews" have already heard and condemned Jesus (see 10.24, 33). **18.12** *Officer*, lit. the tribune, commander of a Roman cohort (see note on 18.3; see also Acts 21.31–33; 22.22–29). **18.13** *Annas* had been high priest himself (6–15 C.E.) and remained influential. His sons also held the office, both before and after Caiaphas (see also Lk 3.2; Acts 4.6). *Caiaphas . . . high priest that year.* See note on 11.49. **18.14** See 11.50. **18.15** The other *disciple* has often been identified with the disciple whom Jesus loved (see note on 13.23), though this is not certain. **18.18** The story of Peter's denial is continued in 18.25–27. **18.19** *The high priest* apparently means Annas, who is still given the title in an honorary way (see note on 18.13). **18.20** See also Mk 14.49. **18.22–23** Cf. Acts 23.2–5.

of the man whose ear Peter had cut off,
asked, "Did I not see you in the garden
with him?" 27 Again Peter denied it, and at
that moment the cock crowed.

Jesus Before Pilate

28 Then they took Jesus from Caia-
phas to Pilate's headquarters.[f] It was
early in the morning. They themselves
did not enter the headquarters,[f] so as to
avoid ritual defilement and to be able to
eat the Passover. 29 So Pilate went out to
them and said, "What accusation do you
bring against this man?" 30 They an-
swered, "If this man were not a criminal,
we would not have handed him over to
you." 31 Pilate said to them, "Take him
yourselves and judge him according to
your law." The Jews replied, "We are not
permitted to put anyone to death."
32 (This was to fulfill what Jesus had said
when he indicated the kind of death he
was to die.)

33 Then Pilate entered the headquar-
ters[f] again, summoned Jesus, and asked
him, "Are you the King of the Jews?"
34 Jesus answered, "Do you ask this on
your own, or did others tell you about
me?" 35 Pilate replied, "I am not a Jew, am
I? Your own nation and the chief priests
have handed you over to me. What have
you done?" 36 Jesus answered, "My king-
dom is not from this world. If my king-
dom were from this world, my followers
would be fighting to keep me from being
handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my
kingdom is not from here." 37 Pilate asked
him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered,
"You say that I am a king. For this I was
born, and for this I came into the world,
to testify to the truth. Everyone who be-
longs to the truth listens to my voice."
38 Pilate asked him, "What is truth?"

After he had said this, he went out to
the Jews again and told them, "I find no
case against him. 39 But you have a custom
that I release someone for you at the Pass-
over. Do you want me to release for you
the King of the Jews?" 40 They shouted in
reply, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" Now
Barabbas was a bandit.

19 Then Pilate took Jesus and had
him flogged. 2 And the soldiers
wove a crown of thorns and put it on his
head, and they dressed him in a purple

f Gk *the praetorium*

18.27 *The cock crowed.* See 13.38.

18.28–19.16a Jesus' trial before Pilate (cf. Mt 27.1–31; Mk 15.1–20; Lk 23.1–25). This story is carefully arranged into seven scenes, alternating between Pilate's dialogues with the Jewish leaders outside his headquarters and episodes involving Jesus inside them. In the trial scenes, John emphasizes more than the other Gospels the political accusation that Jesus claims to be a king, in opposition to the Roman emperor. **18.28–32** Scene One: Jesus is handed over to Pilate (see note on 18.28–19.16a). **18.28** *Headquarters,* the praetorium, which included the governor's residence, military barracks, and an outdoor courtyard used as a court of judgment (19.13). The Roman governor of Judea resided in Caesarea, but because of the large crowds at Passover he came up to Jerusalem to help keep order. *To avoid ritual defilement.* Entering the house of a Gentile, where the law was never kept, would make a Jewish person religiously "unclean" and so unable to eat the *Passover* meal (see note on 11.55). **18.29** Pontius *Pilate* was the Roman governor of Judea in 26–36 C.E. Ancient Jewish authors represent him as harsh and unjust. Pilate is often thought of as willing to release Jesus but too weak to do so, but in John, Pilate's treatment of Jesus seems designed to ridicule Jewish kingship and to harass the Jews into accepting the emperor as their king. **18.31** *We are not permitted to put anyone to death.* Opinions differ, but it is probable that the Romans did not permit the Jewish authorities to carry out death sentences in most cases. **18.32** See 12.32–33. **18.33–38a** Scene Two: Pilate's first interview with Jesus (see note on 18.28–19.16a). **18.33** On Pilate's question "*Are you the King of the Jews?*" and Jesus' reply (18.37), cf. Mk 15.2. On the significance of kingship, see note on 6.14–15. **18.36** *Kingdom,* or "kingship." *Not from this world,* i.e., "from above" (see 8.23; 19.11; note on 17.14–16). **18.37** *Listens to my voice.* See also 10.3–5, 16, 27.

18.38b–40 Scene Three: Barabbas is released instead of Jesus (cf. Mk 15.6–11; see note on 18.28–19.16a). **18.39** No mention of this *custom* has been found outside the Gospels. **18.40** *Bandit.* See note on 10.8. **19.1–3** Scene Four: Pilate's soldiers flog and mock Jesus (see note on 8.28–19.16a). **19.1** In Roman practice a prisoner was *flogged* only after he had been condemned to death (see Mt 27.26–31; Mk 15.15–20). Flogging whips often had bits of metal attached to them, producing severe wounds that sometimes proved fatal. Thus Jesus already has received a condemned person's beating (19.14–15) when he is presented by Pilate as *King* of the Jews, wearing the *purple robe* that was a symbol of royalty (see 19.2, 5; see also Lk 23.11).

robe. 3 They kept coming up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and striking him on the face. 4 Pilate went out again and said to them, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no case against him." 5 So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!" 6 When the chief priests and the police saw him, they shouted, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him; I find no case against him." 7 The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has claimed to be the Son of God."

8 Now when Pilate heard this, he was more afraid than ever. 9 He entered his headquarters[g] again and asked Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. 10 Pilate therefore said to him, "Do you refuse to speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?" 11 Jesus answered him, "You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above; therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin." 12 From then on Pilate tried to release him, but the Jews cried out, "If you release this man, you are no friend of the emperor. Everyone who claims to be a king sets himself against the emperor."

13 When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside and sat[h] on the judge's bench at a place called The Stone Pavement, or in Hebrew[i] Gabbatha. 14 Now it was the day of Preparation for the Passover; and it was about noon. He said to the Jews, "Here is your King!" 15 They cried out, "Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!" Pilate asked them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but the emperor." 16 Then he handed him over to them to be crucified.

The Crucifixion of Jesus

So they took Jesus; 17 and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew[i] is called Golgotha. 18 There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them. 19 Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth,[j] the King of the Jews." 20 Many of the Jews read this in-

g Gk *the praetorium* *h* Or *seated him* *i* That is, *Aramaic* *j* Gk *the Nazorean*

Therefore, Pilate's declarations that Jesus is innocent may contain irony or sarcasm (see 18.38; 19.4, 6). See also note on 18.29. **19.4–7** Scene Five: Pilate presents Jesus to the Jewish authorities (cf. Mk 15.12–14; see note on 18.28–19.16a). **19.6** *Take him . . . and crucify him.* See note on 18.31. **19.7** See 10.33–38. **19.8–11** Scene Six: Pilate's second interview with Jesus (see note on 18.28–19.16a). **19.8** *More afraid than ever.* Pilate has not yet shown any fear; the Greek might also be translated "he became fearful instead." **19.9** *Where are you from?* See also 7.27–29; 8.14; 9.29. *Jesus gave him no answer.* See also Mk 15.3–5; Lk 23.8–9. **19.11** *From above,* i.e., from God; see also 3.3, 31; 8.23. **19.12–16a** Scene Seven: Jesus is condemned to be crucified (see note on 18.28–19.16a). **19.12** *Friend of the emperor,* an official title that Pilate possibly had or desired. **19.13** The Aramaic name *Gabbatha* is not a translation of *Stone Pavement*; its precise meaning is uncertain. **19.14** On *the day of Preparation for the Passover* at *noon* the Passover lambs began to be slaughtered in the temple (since the large number of Passover pilgrims prevented Ex 12.6 from being followed literally). See notes on 1.29; 19.36. *Here is your King.* Like other characters in John, Pilate speaks more truly than he realizes (see notes on 7.33–36; 11.51). See also notes on 18.29; 19.1. **19.15** *We have no king but the emperor.* One of the hymns of Passover declares to God, "We have no king but you"; a similar motto was used by Jewish anti-Roman revolutionaries. **19.16a** *Them,* i.e., the Roman soldiers.

19.16b–30 The crucifixion (cf. Mt 27.32–56; Mk 15.21–41; Lk 23.26–49). Many of John's details are not found in the other Gospels. John shows a special interest here in the fulfillment of scripture (19.24, 28, 36–37). **19.17** *Carrying the cross by himself.* Cf. Mk 15.21. Only the crossbar was actually carried, the upright stake being already in place. *Golgotha* is Aramaic for "skull," so called, perhaps, because of the shape of the hill. **19.19** Roman authorities commonly displayed an *inscription* stating the charges against crucified criminals (though not usually on the cross itself). John's wording *Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews* differs slightly from the other Gospels. The Latin version of it (*Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum*) is the source of the acronym INRI commonly seen in paintings of the crucifixion. **19.20** *Greek* was widely used, alongside *Hebrew* (or Aramaic), spoken by Jews, and *Latin,* spoken by Romans.

scription, because the place where Jesus
was crucified was near the city; and it was
written in Hebrew,[k] in Latin, and in
Greek. 21 Then the chief priests of the
Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The
King of the Jews,' but, 'This man said, I
am King of the Jews.' " 22 Pilate answered,
"What I have written I have written."
23 When the soldiers had crucified Jesus,
they took his clothes and divided them
into four parts, one for each soldier. They
also took his tunic; now the tunic was
seamless, woven in one piece from the
top. 24 So they said to one another, "Let us
not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who
will get it." This was to fulfill what the
scripture says,

"They divided my clothes among
themselves,
and for my clothing they
cast lots."

25 And that is what the soldiers did.

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of
Jesus were his mother, and his mother's
sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary
Magdalene. 26 When Jesus saw his mother
and the disciple whom he loved stand-
ing beside her, he said to his mother,
"Woman, here is your son." 27 Then
he said to the disciple, "Here is your
mother." And from that hour the disciple
took her into his own home.

28 After this, when Jesus knew that all
was now finished, he said (in order to ful-
fill the scripture), "I am thirsty." 29 A jar
full of sour wine was standing there. So
they put a sponge full of the wine on a
branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth.
30 When Jesus had received the wine, he
said, "It is finished." Then he bowed his
head and gave up his spirit.

Jesus' Side Is Pierced

31 Since it was the day of Preparation,
the Jews did not want the bodies left on
the cross during the sabbath, especially
because that sabbath was a day of great
solemnity. So they asked Pilate to have the
legs of the crucified men broken and the
bodies removed. 32 Then the soldiers
came and broke the legs of the first and of
the other who had been crucified with
him. 33 But when they came to Jesus and
saw that he was already dead, they did not
break his legs. 34 Instead, one of the sol-
diers pierced his side with a spear, and at
once blood and water came out. 35 (He
who saw this has testified so that you also

k That is, *Aramaic*

19.22 On Pilate's declarations, see notes on 18.29; 19.14. **19.23** *Clothes*, i.e., the outer garment, a single long piece wrapped around one's body, which could be torn into pieces that could be used for something else. The *tunic* was an ankle-length, T-shaped garment, woven as a single piece and hemmed up the sides, which would be useless if torn. **19.24** *Scripture*, i.e., Ps 22.18. **19.25** Though the grammar is not precise, *Mary the wife of Clopas* is probably different from Jesus' *mother's sister*. **19.26–27** Jesus' *mother* is also mentioned in 2.1–5, 12; 6.42 (John never gives her name). *The disciple whom he loved*. See note on 13.23. Many suggestions have been made for a symbolic meaning for this incident (e.g., the church takes in the heritage of Israel; the church, or Mary herself, is mother to the Christian; there should be loving care within the church). None of them, however, can be confirmed with certainty. **19.28** *When Jesus knew*. See 13.1–3; 18.4. *To fulfill the scripture*. See also 13.18; 17.12. The scripture referred to here is Ps 69.21. **19.29** *Sour wine*, i.e., wine vinegar, perhaps diluted in a drink popular among soldiers. *Hyssop*, a shrub whose branches are too short and flexible for the purpose named (see 1 Kings 4.33). Its use in purification rites (Lev 14.4–6, 49–52; Num 19.6, 18; Ps 51.7) and especially its connection with Passover (see Ex 12.22) may suggest a symbolic meaning. **19.30** *Finished*, i.e., "completed"; see 4.34; 5.36; 17.4.

19.31–37 Events after the death of Jesus. **19.31–33** *The day of Preparation*, i.e., for the sabbath. In contrast to the other Gospels, in John this sabbath was also Passover day (see notes on 19.14; 13.1–17.26). Lest the crucified men die on that sabbath, which would begin at sundown, and also because Deut 21.22–23 forbids hanged bodies to remain overnight, the Jews desired to hasten the men's death. Death by crucifixion could take several days, so that *breaking the legs* was an act of mercy: by preventing them from pushing up to get their breath, it led to swift suffocation. There was no need to break Jesus' legs, since *he was already dead*. **19.34** Why the soldier would *pierce* [Jesus'] *side* is not clear. Various suggestions have been made regarding the biological significance of the *blood and water*, but John's interest is theological, not medical. The flow of blood and water may be meant to demonstrate Jesus' true physical humanity (cf. 1 Jn 5.6) or, less probably, to symbolize the Lord's Supper and baptism. **19.35** See also 21.24. The person referred to here may be the "beloved disciple" (see 19.26;

may believe. His testimony is true, and he
knows[l] that he tells the truth.) 36 These
things occurred so that the scripture
might be fulfilled, "None of his bones
shall be broken." 37 And again another
passage of scripture says, "They will look
on the one whom they have pierced."

The Burial of Jesus

38 After these things, Joseph of Ari-
mathea, who was a disciple of Jesus,
though a secret one because of his fear of
the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away
the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permis-
sion; so he came and removed his body.
39 Nicodemus, who had at first come to
Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mix-
ture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a
hundred pounds. 40 They took the body
of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in
linen cloths, according to the burial cus-
tom of the Jews. 41 Now there was a gar-
den in the place where he was crucified,
and in the garden there was a new tomb
in which no one had ever been laid.
42 And so, because it was the Jewish day of
Preparation, and the tomb was nearby,
they laid Jesus there.

The Empty Tomb

20 Early on the first day of the week,
while it was still dark, Mary Mag-
dalene came to the tomb and saw that the
stone had been removed from the tomb.
2 So she ran and went to Simon Peter and
the other disciple, the one whom Jesus
loved, and said to them, "They have taken
the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not
know where they have laid him." 3 Then
Peter and the other disciple set out and
went toward the tomb. 4 The two were
running together, but the other disciple
outran Peter and reached the tomb first.
5 He bent down to look in and saw the
linen wrappings lying there, but he did
not go in. 6 Then Simon Peter came, fol-
lowing him, and went into the tomb. He
saw the linen wrappings lying there, 7 and
the cloth that had been on Jesus' head,
not lying with the linen wrappings but
rolled up in a place by itself. 8 Then the
other disciple, who reached the tomb first,
also went in, and he saw and believed;
9 for as yet they did not understand the
scripture, that he must rise from the
dead. 10 Then the disciples returned to
their homes.

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

11 But Mary stood weeping outside
the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to
look[m] into the tomb; 12 and she saw two
angels in white, sitting where the body of
Jesus had been lying, one at the head and
the other at the feet. 13 They said to her,
"Woman, why are you weeping?" She said
to them, "They have taken away my Lord,

l Or *there is one who knows* *m* Gk lacks *to look*

note on 13.23). **19.36** The *scripture* that is fulfilled may be a combination of Ps 34.20 with Ex 12.46; Num 9.12. By referring to the last two, John presents Jesus as symbolizing the Passover lamb (see notes on 1.29; 19.14). **19.37** The quotation is from Zech 12.10.

19.38–42 The burial of Jesus. Cf. Mt 27.57–61; Mk 15.42–47; Lk 23.50–56. **19.38** *Arimathea*, a town located about twenty miles northwest of Jerusalem. *A secret one because of his fear of the Jews*. See 9.22; 12.42–43; 20.19; note on 7.13; Introduction. **19.39** Only John associates *Nicodemus* with Joseph (see notes on 3.1–21; 7.48–52). The *myrrh and aloes* (the latter is an aromatic wood) would have been in powdered form and were meant to reduce the odor of decay. The *hundred* (Roman) *pounds* (about 75 English pounds or 34 kilograms) of burial spices is much more than was necessary. It may represent either great honor or inadequate faith in Jesus' resurrection. **19.41** The passion narrative ends, as it began, in a *garden* (18.1). **19.42** *Day of Preparation*. See note on 19.31–33.

20.1–31 The resurrection. Comparison with Mt 28; Mk 16; Lk 24 suggests that John has combined several sources, some of which may be related to sources used by the other Gospel writers. Mary Magdalene becomes a central figure. Her concern about where Jesus has been laid (20.2, 13, 15) connects different parts of the story; no one gives her any help but Jesus. **20.1–2** Mary discovers the empty tomb (cf. Mk 16.1–4). **20.1** *Mary Magdalene* (see also 19.25) is described only in Lk 8.2 (there is no reason to identify her with the woman in Lk 7.36–50). "Magdalene" probably means she came from the town of Magdala on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. The *stone* was not mentioned in 19.38–42; see note on 11.38. **20.2** On *the disciple . . . Jesus loved*, see note on 13.23. **20.3–10** Two disciples come to the tomb (cf. Lk 24.12). **20.5** *Linen wrappings*. See 19.40. **20.7** *The cloth . . . on Jesus' head*. Cf. 11.44. **20.9** Cf. 2.22; 12.16; Lk 24.25–27, 45–46. **20.11–13** Mary sees two angels in the tomb (cf. Mt 28.2–8; Mk 16.5–8; Lk 24.4–11).

and I do not know where they have laid him." 14 When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. 15 Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." 16 Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew,[n] "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). 17 Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" 18 Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

Jesus Appears to the Disciples

19 When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." 20 After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. 21 Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." 22 When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

Jesus and Thomas

24 But Thomas (who was called the Twin[o]), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

26 A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." 27 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." 28 Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" 29 Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

The Purpose of This Book

30 Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. 31 But these are written so that you may come to believe[p] that Jesus is the Messiah,[q] the Son of

n That is, *Aramaic* *o* Gk *Didymus* *p* Other ancient authorities read *may continue to believe*
q Or *the Christ*

20.14–18 Mary meets the risen Jesus (cf. Mt 28.9–10). **20.15** *Whom are you looking for?* See also 1.38; 18.4, 7. **20.16** *Rabbouni,* a variation on *rabbi,* which John uses elsewhere (e.g., 1.38). **20.17** *My Father and your Father.* See 1.12. *My God and your God.* Cf. the statements about Jesus' oneness with God in 1.1; 10.30, 38; 14.9–10; 20.28. **20.19–23** Jesus appears to the disciples (cf. Lk 24.36–49). **20.19** The disciples *fear . . . the Jews* like people of inadequate faith (see note on 7.13) despite having heard Mary's message of the resurrection (20.18). *Peace be with you.* See also 14.27. **20.20** *Hands.* The Greek word can also include the forearm, where the nails were often driven in crucifixions. **20.21** *As the Father has sent me, so I send you.* Cf. 3.17; 6.57; 13.20; 17.18. **20.22** *He breathed on them.* See also Gen 2.7. *Receive the Holy Spirit.* See 14.15–17, 25–26; 15.26; 16.7–15. **20.23** Cf. Mt 16.19; 18.18. Here John indicates that the church's power to forgive and retain sins is part of its being "sent" as Jesus was and is related to its reception of the Spirit; cf. 1.29; 8.21, 24; 9.41; 15.22–24; 16.8–9. **20.24–29** The story of Jesus' appearance to Thomas has no parallels in the other Gospels. **20.24** *Thomas (the Twin).* See 11.16; 14.5; 21.2. **20.25** *Hands.* See note on 20.20. **20.28** *My God.* See 1.1. **20.29** *Those who have not seen and yet . . . believe.* See also 17.20. **20.30–31** This was probably the original conclusion of the book; see note on 21.1–25. **20.30** The reference to *signs* is sometimes thought to have come from one of John's sources (see note on 2.11). **20.31** *You* is plural. *Come to believe.* The reading in other manuscript traditions, *continue to believe* (see text note *p*), may better reflect the purpose of the Gospel of John as it stands, to strengthen the faith of an existing Christian community.

God, and that through believing you may
have life in his name.

Jesus Appears in Galilee

21 After these things Jesus showed
himself again to the disciples by
the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed him-
self in this way. 2 Gathered there together
were Simon Peter, Thomas called the
Twin,[r] Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the
sons of Zebedee, and two others of his dis-
ciples. 3 Simon Peter said to them, "I
am going fishing." They said to him, "We
will go with you." They went out and got
into the boat, but that night they caught
nothing.
4 Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on
the beach; but the disciples did not know
that it was Jesus. 5 Jesus said to them,
"Children, you have no fish, have you?"
They answered him, "No." 6 He said to
them, "Cast the net to the right side of the
boat, and you will find some." So they cast
it, and now they were not able to haul it in
because there were so many fish. 7 That
disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter,
"It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard
that it was the Lord, he put on some
clothes, for he was naked, and jumped
into the sea. 8 But the other disciples came
in the boat, dragging the net full of fish,
for they were not far from the land, only
about a hundred yards[s] off.
9 When they had gone ashore, they
saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it,
and bread. 10 Jesus said to them, "Bring
some of the fish that you have just
caught." 11 So Simon Peter went aboard
and hauled the net ashore, full of large
fish, a hundred fifty-three of them; and
though there were so many, the net was
not torn. 12 Jesus said to them, "Come and
have breakfast." Now none of the disci-
ples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" be-
cause they knew it was the Lord. 13 Jesus
came and took the bread and gave it to
them, and did the same with the fish.
14 This was now the third time that Jesus
appeared to the disciples after he was
raised from the dead.

Jesus' Instructions to Peter

15 When they had finished breakfast,
Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of
John, do you love me more than these?"
He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that
I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my
lambs." 16 A second time he said to him,
"Simon son of John, do you love me?" He
said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I
love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my
sheep." 17 He said to him the third time,
"Simon son of John, do you love me?" Pe-
ter felt hurt because he said to him the
third time, "Do you love me?" And he said

r Gk *Didymus* s Gk *two hundred cubits*

21.1–25 Differences in the language and style of ch. 21, and the fact that 20.30–31 sounds like the end of a book, lead most scholars to believe that this chapter is an appendix or epilogue added on to the Gospel, perhaps by another member of the same Christian community and based on existing traditions. In Jn 20, as in Lk 24, all the appearances of Jesus were near Jerusalem; here, as in Mt 28.16–20; Mk 16.7, an appearance occurs in Galilee. **21.1–14** Jesus appears to the disciples by the Sea of Galilee. **21.1** *Sea of Tiberias.* See 6.1. **21.2** *Thomas . . . the Twin.* See 11.16; 14.5; 20.24–29. *Nathanael.* See 1.45–51. *The sons of Zebedee,* i.e., James and John (cf. Mk 1.19–20; 3.17; 10.35–45), not mentioned elsewhere in the Gospel of John. John the son of Zebedee has traditionally been identified with the disciple whom Jesus loved (21.7, 20–24; see note on 13.23). **21.3–11** On the miraculous catch of fish, cf. Lk 5.1–11. **21.4** *Did not know that it was Jesus.* Cf. Lk 24.15–16. **21.7** *That disciple whom Jesus loved.* See note on 13.23. *Put on some clothes,* or perhaps "belted his outer garment." *Naked* may mean that Peter was wearing only a loincloth, or a loose-fitting work smock and nothing else. **21.9** *Fish, bread.* Cf. 6.9. **21.11** *A hundred fifty-three.* Many suggestions have been made for a symbolic interpretation of this number, often centering on the fact that 153 is the sum of all numbers from 1 through 17. At any rate the large number may be meant to symbolize the expansion of the church. **21.13** See note on 6.11.

21.15–23 Jesus' final dialogue with Peter. **21.15–17** Peter's threefold profession of his *love* parallels his threefold denial (18.15–18, 25–27). The first two times Jesus asks the question, the Greek verb for "love" is *agapan,* used, e.g., in Jn 3.16; 13.34; 15.12. The third time, and in all of Peter's replies, the Greek verb for "love" is *philein,* sometimes said to represent a lesser type of love. However, the two may be interchangeable: cf. 11.5; 14.21; 15.9; 21.7 (*agapan*) with 5.20; 11.3; 16.27; 20.2 (*philein*). *Feed my lambs,* and the variations on it, refer to Peter's leadership in the early church. **21.15** *Simon son of John.* See 1.42.

to him, "Lord, you know everything; you
know that I love you." Jesus said to him,
"Feed my sheep. 18 Very truly, I tell you,
when you were younger, you used to fas-
ten your own belt and to go wherever you
wished. But when you grow old, you will
stretch out your hands, and someone else
will fasten a belt around you and take you
where you do not wish to go." 19 (He said
this to indicate the kind of death by which
he would glorify God.) After this he said
to him, "Follow me."

The Beloved Disciple

20 Peter turned and saw the disciple
whom Jesus loved following them; he was
the one who had reclined next to Jesus at
the supper and had said, "Lord, who is it
that is going to betray you?" 21 When Pe-
ter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what
about him?" 22 Jesus said to him, "If it is
my will that he remain until I come, what
is that to you? Follow me!" 23 So the ru-
mor spread in the community[t] that this
disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not
say to him that he would not die, but, "If
it is my will that he remain until I come,
what is that to you?"[u]

24 This is the disciple who is testifying
to these things and has written them, and
we know that his testimony is true. 25 But
there are also many other things that
Jesus did; if every one of them were writ-
ten down, I suppose that the world itself
could not contain the books that would be
written.

t Gk *among the brothers* *u* Other ancient authorities lack *what is that to you*

21.18–19 On the prediction of Peter's martyrdom, cf. 13.36–38. **21.18** *Stretch out your hands* probably refers to Peter's death by crucifixion. **21.19** *Indicate the kind of death.* See 12.33; 18.32. *Glorify God.* See note on 12.23. *Follow me.* See also 12.25–26; Mk 1.17; Lk 5.11. **21.20** See 13.23–25. **21.23** According to legend, the apostle John (often identified with the disciple whom Jesus loved) lived to a great age. **21.24–25** The final verses address the writing of the Gospel. **21.24** See also 19.35. The Greek word translated *has written* does not necessarily mean "written with one's own hand." Thus the verse may mean only that the beloved disciple was responsible for the tradition on which this written gospel is based (esp. since 21.23 may imply that he was now dead). **21.25** *Many other things that Jesus did.* See also 20.30. On *the books that would be written*, cf. Eccl 12.12.

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

THE OPENING WORDS of the Acts of the Apostles ("In the first book") signal its uniqueness in the NT. Only here do we have a companion volume (to the Gospel of Luke), and only Acts contains stories about the early church. The traditional title inaccurately represents the content of Acts, since few of the apostles are prominent and the most prominent figure is Paul, who is not an apostle by Luke's definition (see 1.21–22). Nevertheless, the title indicates the shift in content from Luke's Gospel, which is about Jesus, to Acts, which concerns the life and work of the church.

Genre

Precisely because it does contain stories about the church, Acts is often referred to as a book of history. That identification, however, overlooks the number of genres within Acts, such as biography, homily, and apology. To think of Acts exclusively as history can also obscure the way in which the author's theological convictions shape the story that unfolds. For these reasons, Acts is best regarded under the general category of theological narrative.

Authorship

Early church tradition attributes the writing of both the Third Gospel and Acts to Luke, a physician and associate of Paul (Col 4.14; 2 Tim 4.11; Philem 24). The dedications to Theophilus (Lk 1.3; Acts 1.1), uniform literary style, and shared perspectives of the two volumes do make the common authorship of both Luke and Acts certain. However, neither volume identifies an author, no physician or disciple named Luke appears in Acts, and such medical language as is employed reflects widespread convention rather than technical training. The author remains anonymous, although he will be referred to as "Luke" in deference to tradition. From indications within the two volumes, it appears that Luke is a

gentile Christian who has received a good education and has made careful study of Jewish scriptures.

Audience

Because Luke addresses both volumes to Theophilus, some readers have thought that Acts is written for an individual, perhaps a recent convert asking for instruction or a Roman official whose tolerance the church seeks. Dedicating books was a common practice, however, even books intended for a wide audience. Indeed, Theophilus means "lover of God," suggesting that Luke may be writing for all such persons.

Date and Location of Composition

Luke probably wrote both volumes in about 80–90 C.E., although no precision is possible on this question. Acts must have been written after the appointment of Festus as procurator, in about 59 C.E. (Acts 24.27), and probably after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 C.E. (Lk 19.41–44; 21.20–24). Quotations from and allusions to Acts appear in Christian writings by the middle of the second century, which means it must have been completed before that time. Little in Acts helps to identify its place of composition, although various locations have been suggested, including Achaia, Macedonia, Antioch, Ephesus, Caesarea, and Rome.

Sources

Identifying the nature and extent of sources Luke may have used in writing Acts is a difficult problem. The existence of multiple Gospels enables readers to study their extensive similarities and draw conclusions regarding their sources, but Acts stands without such parallels. Even the evidence that Luke possessed written sources for the composition of his Gospel does not require the assumption that he also had written sources for Acts. The sections of Acts written in the first-person plural ("we") often prompt the suggestion that Luke had a journal (his own or that of another of Paul's companions), but the use of the first-person plural may simply be a stylistic device. Stories about given locales, such as Antioch or Caesarea, have led to theories that Luke had access to written traditions of churches in those cities; however, the unity of theme and style throughout Acts makes identification of sources impossible. Whatever sources Luke used, whether written or oral, they lie beyond recovery.

Style and Language

Gripping incidents and vivid characterizations, from the dramatic punishment of Ananias and Sapphira (5.1–11) to the speech of Paul before King Agrippa (26.2–23) to Paul's later adventure on the high seas (27.1–44), make Acts inviting reading. Luke's sophisticated use of the Greek language reflects the literary standards of his day. He also adjusts his style to make it suitable to particular con-

texts. In Acts 1–2, where he stresses the continuity of the church with Israel, he adopts a style imitative of the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the OT. When describing Paul's speech before the sophisticated Athenians (17.16–31), Luke refers to the pertinent philosophical schools and depicts the citizens in ways his contemporaries would have recognized. He often employs irony, as in his contrast between Peter, locked in prison by King Herod and yet freed by an angel, and Herod, free and yet destroyed by his own false pride (12.1–25).

Continuity with Luke's Gospel

Because the Gospels were grouped together in the canon, Acts stands separate from Luke. Yet readers of Acts will be helped if they bear in mind its many connections with the Third Gospel. Among the most important Lucan themes is the fulfillment of God's promises in the ministry of Jesus and the life of the church. From the annunciation to Mary (Lk 1.35) to the mission of the church (Acts 1.8) to Paul's journey to Rome (Acts 27.24), Luke underscores the absolute reliability of God's word. Another overriding theme is the work of the Holy Spirit, which plays a prominent role in Jesus' ministry (Lk 4.1), in the empowering of the church (Acts 2.1–13), and in guiding the church's witness (15.28; 16.6–7). A third connection between the two volumes is that important figures in Acts duplicate aspects of Jesus' life, as when Peter raises the dead (Acts 9.36–43; cf. Lk 7.11–17) or when Paul's final journey to Jerusalem and Rome echoes that of Jesus to Jerusalem (Acts 19.21; cf. Lk 9.51–52). *Beverly Roberts Gaventa*

The Ascension of Jesus

1 In the first book, Theophilus, I
wrote about all that Jesus did and
taught from the beginning 2 until the day
when he was taken up to heaven, after
giving instructions through the Holy
Spirit to the apostles whom he had cho-
sen. 3 After his suffering he presented
himself alive to them by many convincing
proofs, appearing to them during forty
days and speaking about the kingdom of
God. 4 While staying[a] with them, he or-
dered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to
wait there for the promise of the Father.
"This," he said, "is what you have heard
from me; 5 for John baptized with water,
but you will be baptized with[b] the Holy
Spirit not many days from now."
6 So when they had come together,
they asked him, "Lord, is this the time
when you will restore the kingdom to Is-
rael?" 7 He replied, "It is not for you to

a Or *eating* b Or *by*

1.1–11 Acts begins with the ascension of Jesus and three promises to his apostles: the gift of the Holy Spirit, the spread of their witness to the ends of the earth, and the eventual return of Jesus. **1.1** Following a literary custom of his day, Luke gives his work a formal dedication. *Theophilus,* lit. "lover of God," may refer to a historical person or to anyone who loves God (see also Lk 1.3). **1.2–5** This scene repeats, but also conflicts with, the conclusion of Luke's Gospel (Lk 24.44–53). **1.3** Only here does the NT refer to a period of forty days between the resurrection and the ascension. In the synoptic Gospels, Jesus preaches about the *kingdom of God* as God's coming reign (see Lk 4.43; 9.27; 13.29); in Acts the phrase refers to the content of Christian preaching about Jesus (see, e.g., 8.12; 19.8; 28.23, 31). **1.5** *John baptized.* See Lk 3.1–20. **1.6** *Restore the*

know the times or periods that the Father
has set by his own authority. 8 But you will
receive power when the Holy Spirit has
come upon you; and you will be my wit-
nesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and
Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."
9 When he had said this, as they were
watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud
took him out of their sight. 10 While he
was going and they were gazing up to-
ward heaven, suddenly two men in white
robes stood by them. 11 They said, "Men
of Galilee, why do you stand looking up
toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been
taken up from you into heaven, will come
in the same way as you saw him go into
heaven."

Matthias Chosen to Replace Judas

12 Then they returned to Jerusalem
from the mount called Olivet, which is
near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey
away. 13 When they had entered the city,
they went to the room upstairs where they
were staying, Peter, and John, and James,
and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bar-
tholomew and Matthew, James son of Al-
phaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas
son of[c] James. 14 All these were con-
stantly devoting themselves to prayer,
together with certain women, including
Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his
brothers.

15 In those days Peter stood up
among the believers[d] (together the crowd
numbered about one hundred twenty
persons) and said, 16 "Friends,[e] the scrip-
ture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy
Spirit through David foretold concerning
Judas, who became a guide for those who
arrested Jesus— 17 for he was numbered
among us and was allotted his share in
this ministry." 18 (Now this man acquired
a field with the reward of his wickedness;
and falling headlong,[f] he burst open in
the middle and all his bowels gushed out.
19 This became known to all the residents
of Jerusalem, so that the field was called
in their language Hakeldama, that is,
Field of Blood.) 20 "For it is written in the
book of Psalms,

'Let his homestead become
desolate,
and let there be no one to live
in it';

and

'Let another take his position of
overseer.'

21 So one of the men who have accompa-
nied us during all the time that the Lord
Jesus went in and out among us, 22 begin-
ning from the baptism of John until the
day when he was taken up from us—one
of these must become a witness with us to
his resurrection." 23 So they proposed
two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was
also known as Justus, and Matthias.
24 Then they prayed and said, "Lord, you
know everyone's heart. Show us which
one of these two you have chosen 25 to

c Or *the brother of* d Gk *brothers* e Gk *Men, brothers* f Or *swelling up*

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kingdom to Israel, i.e., restore Israel's political independence. **1.8** On the witness in *Jerusalem*, see 2.14–36; 3.12–26; in *Judea and Samaria*, see 8.1, 4–25. It is unclear whether *the ends of the earth* refers to the conversion of Gentiles (10.1–11.18), the arrival of Paul in Rome (28.16), or some event beyond the scope of Acts. **1.9** The *cloud* signifies the presence and activity of God (see Ex 24.15–18; Lk 9.34; 21.27). **1.10** *Two men in white robes*, probably to be understood as angels, indicate the importance of this event (see 5.19; Lk 1.11, 19; 24.4).

1.12–26 The apostles and other followers of Jesus return to Jerusalem, where they select a replacement for Judas. **1.12** *The mount called Olivet* (the Mount of Olives) is located just east of Jerusalem; cf. Lk 24.50, which places the ascension in Bethany, a village along the eastern side of the mount. *A sabbath day's journey* is approximately one-half mile. **1.13** The list of apostles coincides with the list in Lk 6.14–16 except for the omission of Judas Iscariot. **1.14** Luke frequently refers to *prayer* as an activity of the early church (e.g., 2.42; 6.4, 6; 10.9; 13.3; 28.8). This is the last reference to *Mary* in Luke-Acts. James, one of the *brothers* of Jesus, appears later in Acts (12.17; 15.13; 21.18), although Luke does not identify him as such (cf. Gal 1.19). **1.16** *The scripture had to be fulfilled*. For similar emphasis on divine necessity, see, e.g., 3.21; 9.16; Lk 24.44. It is not clear whether Luke refers to a specific passage of scripture or to scripture in a general sense. **1.18–19** On Judas's death, cf. Mt 27.3–10. *Hakeldama* transliterates an Aramaic expression. **1.20** The first quotation is adapted from Ps 69.25; the second from Ps 109.8. **1.21–22** In Luke's view, an apostle must have been with Jesus *beginning from the baptism of John*, which means that Paul will not acquire that title (except in 14.14). The primary task of the apostle is to *witness with us to his resurrection*; see, e.g., 2.32; 3.15; 4.33. **1.23** Neither *Justus* nor

take the place[g] in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to
go to his own place." 26 And they cast lots
for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and
he was added to the eleven apostles.

The Coming of the Holy Spirit

2 When the day of Pentecost had
come, they were all together in one
place. 2 And suddenly from heaven there
came a sound like the rush of a violent
wind, and it filled the entire house where
they were sitting. 3 Divided tongues, as of
fire, appeared among them, and a tongue
rested on each of them. 4 All of them were
filled with the Holy Spirit and began to
speak in other languages, as the Spirit
gave them ability.
5 Now there were devout Jews from
every nation under heaven living in Jeru-
salem. 6 And at this sound the crowd gath-
ered and was bewildered, because each
one heard them speaking in the native
language of each. 7 Amazed and aston-
ished, they asked, "Are not all these who
are speaking Galileans? 8 And how is it
that we hear, each of us, in our own native
language? 9 Parthians, Medes, Elamites,
and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and
Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia
and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of

g Other ancient authorities read *the share*

Matthias appears elsewhere in the NT. **1.26** On *casting lots* to determine God's will, see Prov 16.33.

2.1–13 The coming of the Holy Spirit has been anticipated by promises made in Lk 24.49; Acts 1.4–5. **2.1** The Jewish festival of *Pentecost* (lit. "fiftieth") derives its name from the fifty days that separate it from Passover (Lev 23.15–21). *All together in one place* may imply the presence of the full 120 mentioned in 1.15; Luke often refers to *all* believers being *together*, underscoring the unity of the community (e.g., Acts 2.44; 4.24; 5.12). **2.3** On seeing *tongues, as of fire*, see Isa 5.24; *1 Enoch* 14.8–25; 71.5. Elsewhere in scripture fire accompanies the divine presence (Ex 19.18; Isa 66.15–16) and divine judgment (2 Thess 1.8). **2.4** *Other languages*, as the story that follows explains, refers to the gift of speaking in languages other than one's own and contrasts with the ecstatic speech to which Paul refers in 1 Cor 14.1–25 and which requires inspired interpretation. **2.5** These *devout Jews from every nation* are Jews from the Diaspora who either have come for Passover or have long-term business that keeps them in Jerusalem. Since the inclusion of Gentiles within the church comes only with the conversion of Cornelius in 10.1–11.18, those present at Pentecost are carefully identified as Jewish. **2.9–11** The list of countries represented probably derives from similar lists found in ancient histories and geographies; it omits some locales

THE FULFILLMENT OF ACTS 1.8 IN THE FOLLOWING NARRATIVE

"you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you"	At Pentecost the gift of the Holy Spirit fulfills this promise (2.1–13).
"you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem"	The preaching of Peter and others in Jerusalem brings about the witness there (2.14–8.3).
"in all Judea and Samaria"	Persecution in Jerusalem forces Christians out into Judea; the Samaritan mission follows (8.4–25).
"and to the ends of the earth"	The "ends of the earth" may refer to the Ethiopian, who comes from a great distance (8.26–40), or to Cornelius, the first acknowledged gentile convert (10.1–11.18), or to the arrival of Paul in Rome (28.14). It may even refer to some event beyond the scope of the narrative in Acts.

Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors
from Rome, both Jews and proselytes,
11 Cretans and Arabs—in our own lan-
guages we hear them speaking about
God's deeds of power." 12 All were
amazed and perplexed, saying to one
another, "What does this mean?" 13 But
others sneered and said, "They are filled
with new wine."

Peter Addresses the Crowd

14 But Peter, standing with the
eleven, raised his voice and addressed
them, "Men of Judea and all who live in
Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and
listen to what I say. 15 Indeed, these are
not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only
nine o'clock in the morning. 16 No, this
is what was spoken through the proph-
et Joel:

17 'In the last days it will be, God
declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit
upon all flesh,
and your sons and your
daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall
see visions,
and your old men shall
dream dreams.
18 Even upon my slaves, both men
and women,
in those days I will pour out
my Spirit;
and they shall prophesy.
19 And I will show portents in the
heaven above
and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and
smoky mist.
20 The sun shall be turned to
darkness
and the moon to blood,
before the coming of the
Lord's great and
glorious day.
21 Then everyone who calls on the
name of the Lord shall
be saved.'

22 "You that are Israelites,[h] listen to
what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth,[i] a
man attested to you by God with deeds of
power, wonders, and signs that God did
through him among you, as you your-
selves know— 23 this man, handed over to
you according to the definite plan and
foreknowledge of God, you crucified and
killed by the hands of those outside the
law. 24 But God raised him up, having
freed him from death,[j] because it was
impossible for him to be held in its power.
25 For David says concerning him,

'I saw the Lord always before me,
for he is at my right hand so
that I will not be shaken;
26 therefore my heart was glad, and
my tongue rejoiced;
moreover my flesh will live
in hope.
27 For you will not abandon my soul
to Hades,

h Gk *Men, Israelites* *i* Gk *the Nazorean*
j Gk *the pains of death*

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that figure prominently in Acts, such as Macedonia and Achaia. **2.12–13** As in the Gospels, miraculous events prompt amazement and questioning; see, e.g., Lk 4.36–37; 5.17–26. *Wine* was sometimes viewed as an enhancement to prophetic speech; see Plutarch *Oracles at Delphi* 406b; *Obsolescence of Oracles* 437d–e.

2.14–36 Peter's Pentecost speech signals the beginning of the Christian witness that was promised in 1.8; Lk 24.47–48. **2.14** *Men of Judea* and *all who live in Jerusalem* are not mutually exclusive groups; the repetition is for rhetorical effect. Similarly, *raised his voice, let this be known to you,* and *listen to what I say* are all solemn assertions designed to underscore the importance of the speech that follows. **2.15** Several of the speeches of Acts have as their pretext a defense against some charge, in this case drunkenness in the middle of the morning; see also 4.5–12; 7.1–53; 11.2–18. **2.17–21** A quotation from the Septuagint version of Joel 2.28–32, with small but significant alterations. Most important is the change from "afterward" (Joel 2.28) to *in the last days* (Acts 2.17), emphasizing the eschatological context of the church. In 2.18, Luke adds the phrase *and they shall prophesy,* making explicit what the text of Joel implies. **2.23** Luke consistently affirms both human responsibility for the death of Jesus and the inevitability of that death in God's plan; see, e.g., 3.14–18; 4.27–28; see also Lk 24.26, 44–48. The existence of a divine *plan* for all people is a prominent theme in Luke-Acts (e.g., Acts 4.28; 20.27). **2.25–28** Peter quotes Ps 16.8–11. **2.25** *David* serves a dual role in the speech: psalms ascribed to him become prophecies of Jesus, and he is the figure with whom Jesus is compared. The resurrection signals Jesus' superiority to David, whose tomb was thought to be well

or let your Holy One
experience corruption.
28 You have made known to me the
ways of life;
you will make me full of
gladness with your
presence.'

29 "Fellow Israelites,[k] I may say to you confidently of our ancestor David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. 30 Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would put one of his descendants on his throne. 31 Foreseeing this, David[l] spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah,[m] saying,

'He was not abandoned to Hades,
nor did his flesh experience
corruption.'

32 This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses. 33 Being therefore exalted at[n] the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you both see and hear. 34 For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says,

'The Lord said to my Lord,
"Sit at my right hand,
35 until I make your enemies your
footstool."'

36 Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah,[o] this Jesus whom you crucified."

The First Converts

37 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, "Brothers,[k] what should we do?" 38 Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him." 40 And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." 41 So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. 42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

43 Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. 44 All who believed were together and had all things in common; 45 they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds[p] to all, as any had need. 46 Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home[q] and ate their food with glad and generous[r] hearts,

k Gk *Men, brothers* *l* Gk *he* *m* Or *the Christ* *n* Or *by* *o* Or *Christ* *p* Gk *them* *q* Or *from house to house* *r* Or *sincere*

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known (see Josephus *Jewish War* 1.61; *Antiquities* 7.393; 13.249). **2.29** Since David's death is certain, the psalm cannot refer to him. **2.30** On God's *oath* to David, see Ps 132.11. **2.31** Peter quotes Ps 16.10. **2.32** Luke views *witnessing* as a defining characteristic of the apostolic task; see 1.22; 3.15; 4.33; 5.32; 10.41; 13.31. **2.34–35** Peter quotes Ps 110.1. **2.36** The speech culminates in the sharp contrast between human action (*this Jesus whom you crucified*) and that of God (*God has made him both Lord and Messiah*); see also 2.23–24; 3.15; 4.10.

2.37–47 The response to Peter's speech introduces central Lucan themes regarding the church's life. **2.37** Speeches in Acts are frequently interrupted when the climactic point is reached (see, e.g., 10.44; 17.32; 22.22). **2.38** The desired response to Christian proclamation includes repentance, baptism, forgiveness of sins, and reception of the Holy Spirit; these elements appear elsewhere in Acts, although not always in the same order (cf. 8.16; 10.44–48; 19.1–6). **2.39** The *promise* extends to those distant in time (*your children*) and in place (*all who are far away*; see 22.21; Isa 57.19; Sir 24.32). What is promised is, first of all, *the gift of the Holy Spirit* (v. 38; cf. 1.4–5; 2.33), but also more generally the salvation promised to Israel (cf. 26.6) and offered by Jesus (13.23). **2.40** *Corrupt generation.* See Deut 32.5; Ps 78.8; Phil 2.15.

2.42–47 The first of several summaries in which Luke characterizes the life of the earliest Christian community as a fellowship involving worship, study, and the sharing of possessions (see also 4.32–37; 5.12–16). Later incidents that seem to contradict these portraits suggest that Luke's characterization may be an idealized picture (e.g., 5.1–11; 6.1–6). **2.46** The *temple* continues as a place in which Christians worship; see also Lk 24.53. **2.47** Consistently Luke emphasizes the growth and divine guidance of the church; see, e.g., 6.7; 9.15–17, 31; 11.1–21; 12.24; 14.1).

47 praising God and having the goodwill
of all the people. And day by day the Lord
added to their number those who were
being saved.

Peter Heals a Crippled Beggar

3 One day Peter and John were going
up to the temple at the hour of
prayer, at three o'clock in the afternoon.
2 And a man lame from birth was being
carried in. People would lay him daily at
the gate of the temple called the Beautiful
Gate so that he could ask for alms from
those entering the temple. 3 When he saw
Peter and John about to go into the tem-
ple, he asked them for alms. 4 Peter
looked intently at him, as did John, and
said, "Look at us." 5 And he fixed his
attention on them, expecting to receive
something from them. 6 But Peter said, "I
have no silver or gold, but what I have I
give you; in the name of Jesus Christ of
Nazareth,[s] stand up and walk." 7 And he
took him by the right hand and raised
him up; and immediately his feet and an-
kles were made strong. 8 Jumping up, he
stood and began to walk, and he entered
the temple with them, walking and leap-
ing and praising God. 9 All the people saw
him walking and praising God, 10 and
they recognized him as the one who used
to sit and ask for alms at the Beautiful
Gate of the temple; and they were filled
with wonder and amazement at what had
happened to him.

Peter Speaks in Solomon's Portico

11 While he clung to Peter and John,
all the people ran together to them in the
portico called Solomon's Portico, utterly
astonished. 12 When Peter saw it, he ad-
dressed the people, "You Israelites,[t] why
do you wonder at this, or why do you
stare at us, as though by our own power
or piety we had made him walk? 13 The
God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and
the God of Jacob, the God of our ances-
tors has glorified his servant[u] Jesus,
whom you handed over and rejected in
the presence of Pilate, though he had de-
cided to release him. 14 But you rejected
the Holy and Righteous One and asked to
have a murderer given to you, 15 and you
killed the Author of life, whom God
raised from the dead. To this we are wit-
nesses. 16 And by faith in his name, his
name itself has made this man strong,
whom you see and know; and the faith
that is through Jesus[v] has given him this
perfect health in the presence of all
of you.

17 "And now, friends,[w] I know that
you acted in ignorance, as did also your
rulers. 18 In this way God fulfilled what he
had foretold through all the prophets,
that his Messiah[x] would suffer. 19 Repent
therefore, and turn to God so that your
sins may be wiped out, 20 so that times of
refreshing may come from the presence

s Gk *the Nazorean* t Gk *Men, Israelites*
u Or *child* v Gk *him* w Gk *brothers*
x Or *his Christ*

3.1–10 This healing illustrates the *wonders and signs* done by the apostles (2.43) and prompts another speech by Peter. The healing itself follows the same general pattern as other healings in the Gospels. **3.1** It was customary to speak of *going up* when going to the temple (2 Kings 19.14; 20.5; Lk 18.10). *Three o'clock in the afternoon*, a regular time of prayer, was the hour of the afternoon sacrifice (Dan 9.21; Jdt 9.1; Josephus *Antiquities* 14.65). **3.2** Reference to the *Beautiful Gate* is puzzling, since ancient descriptions of the temple use no such title; generally, it is identified with the Nicanor Gate, a gate made of bronze. **3.4** *Looked intently*. See 13.9; 14.9. **3.6** Just as Peter urged repentance and baptism *in the name of Jesus* (2.38), so now the name is invoked and becomes the center of controversy when Peter and John are called before the council (4.5–20).

3.11–26 Peter's speech at the temple repeats themes of the Pentecost speech (2.14–36) concerning Jesus' place in Israel's history. **3.11** *The people*, Luke's characteristic way of referring to Israel (see 3.9; 4.10; 5.34; 10.41; Lk 2.10, 32; 7.29). *Solomon's Portico*, a colonnade on the east side of the temple enclosure. **3.12** As at Pentecost, the speech begins by addressing a misunderstanding; see 2.14–15. **3.13** With the phrase *the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*, Luke connects God's action in Jesus to God's action in all of Israel's history (see Ex 3.6, 15–16; Lk 20.37). The reference to Jesus as God's *servant* or child recalls the servant figure of Isa 52.13–53.12. On *Pilate's* judgment, see Lk 23.13–16. **3.14** Calling Jesus *the Holy and Righteous One* (see also 7.52; 22.14) underscores the moral contrast between him and the people, who preferred to have Pilate release the murderer Barabbas (Lk 23.18–19). **3.17–18** See note on 2.23. **3.20** *Times of refreshing* could refer to periods of relief during eschatological distress or to the final

of the Lord, and that he may send the
Messiah[y] appointed for you, that is,
Jesus, 21 who must remain in heaven until
the time of universal restoration that God
announced long ago through his holy
prophets. 22 Moses said, 'The Lord your
God will raise up for you from your own
people[z] a prophet like me. You must lis-
ten to whatever he tells you. 23 And it will
be that everyone who does not listen to
that prophet will be utterly rooted out of
the people.' 24 And all the prophets, as
many as have spoken, from Samuel and
those after him, also predicted these days.
25 You are the descendants of the proph-
ets and of the covenant that God gave to
your ancestors, saying to Abraham, 'And
in your descendants all the families of
the earth shall be blessed.' 26 When God
raised up his servant,[a] he sent him first to
you, to bless you by turning each of you
from your wicked ways."

Peter and John Before the Council

4 While Peter and John[b] were speak-
ing to the people, the priests, the
captain of the temple, and the Sadducees
came to them, 2 much annoyed because
they were teaching the people and pro-
claiming that in Jesus there is the resur-
rection of the dead. 3 So they arrested
them and put them in custody until the
next day, for it was already evening. 4 But
many of those who heard the word
believed; and they numbered about five
thousand.

5 The next day their rulers, elders,
and scribes assembled in Jerusalem, 6 with
Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John,[c]
and Alexander, and all who were of the
high-priestly family. 7 When they had
made the prisoners[d] stand in their midst,
they inquired, "By what power or by what
name did you do this?" 8 Then Peter,
filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them,
"Rulers of the people and elders, 9 if we
are questioned today because of a good
deed done to someone who was sick and
are asked how this man has been healed,
10 let it be known to all of you, and to all
the people of Israel, that this man is
standing before you in good health by the
name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth,[e] whom
you crucified, whom God raised from the
dead. 11 This Jesus[f] is

'the stone that was rejected by
you, the builders;
it has become the
cornerstone.'[g]

12 There is salvation in no one else, for
there is no other name under heaven
given among mortals by which we must be
saved."

13 Now when they saw the boldness of

y Or *the Christ* *z* Gk *brothers* *a* Or *child*
b Gk *While they* *c* Other ancient authorities read *Jonathan* *d* Gk *them* *e* Gk *the Nazorean*
f Gk *This* *g* Or *keystone*

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restoration (see 3.21). **3.21** *Universal restoration* is not the restoration of Israel's kingdom (cf. 1.6) but is roughly the equivalent of salvation itself. **3.22–23** See Deut 18.15–20. **3.25** See Gen 22.18; 26.4. **3.26** *First to you* underscores the priority of Israel (see 13.46) and anticipates another stage of proclamation, that to the Gentiles; see also Rom 1.16.

4.1–22 In contrast to the positive reaction of the people to Peter's Pentecost speech (2.37–42), the speech at the temple (3.12–26) prompts the first official resistance to Christian preaching and sets the stage for Peter's defense (4.8–12). **4.1–2** Luke distinguishes *the people*, whom Peter and John address and who receive them gladly, from their rulers, who are hostile to the gospel. The *captain of the temple* (see 5.24, 26; Lk 22.52) maintained order in the temple precinct and ranked just below the high priest in authority. In Acts, the *Sadducees* serve as foils for Christian preaching, because they did not believe in the *resurrection of the dead* (see 23.6–10). Little information is available about this Jewish sect, but sources consistently associate it with the aristocracy and temple priesthood. **4.4** *Five thousand* refers literally to the number of males, suggesting that the number of believers was even larger. Since Luke often uses hyperbole for rhetorical impact (see, e.g., 4.16), any assessment of the accuracy of such figures is impossible. **4.6** *Annas* was high priest in 6–15 C.E., well before the time of this story, and is probably included because of his prominence; *Caiaphas*, son-in-law to Annas and high priest in 18–36/7 C.E.; *John* and *Alexander*, otherwise unknown. **4.8** *Filled with the Holy Spirit* recalls Lk 12.11–12; Peter speaks not his own words but those given him by the Spirit. **4.10** Again Luke contrasts the responses to Jesus: the leaders crucified him but God raised him from the dead (see 2.36). **4.11** See Ps 118.22 and its use in Mt 21.42; 1 Pet 2.7. **4.12** *Salvation* refers both to the physical healing of the lame man and to salvation from judgment or from the service of false gods (see 13.26; 16.17). **4.13** Luke understands *boldness*, or forthright speech, to be a hallmark of the apostles (see 4.29–31; 18.26; 28.31).

Peter and John and realized that they
were uneducated and ordinary men, they
were amazed and recognized them as
companions of Jesus. 14 When they saw
the man who had been cured standing be-
side them, they had nothing to say in op-
position. 15 So they ordered them to leave
the council while they discussed the mat-
ter with one another. 16 They said, "What
will we do with them? For it is obvious to
all who live in Jerusalem that a notable
sign has been done through them; we
cannot deny it. 17 But to keep it from
spreading further among the people, let
us warn them to speak no more to anyone
in this name." 18 So they called them and
ordered them not to speak or teach at all
in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and
John answered them, "Whether it is right
in God's sight to listen to you rather than
to God, you must judge; 20 for we cannot
keep from speaking about what we have
seen and heard." 21 After threatening
them again, they let them go, finding no
way to punish them because of the peo-
ple, for all of them praised God for what
had happened. 22 For the man on whom
this sign of healing had been performed
was more than forty years old.

The Believers Pray for Boldness

23 After they were released, they went
to their friends[h] and reported what the
chief priests and the elders had said to
them. 24 When they heard it, they raised
their voices together to God and said,
"Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven
and the earth, the sea, and everything in
them, 25 it is you who said by the Holy
Spirit through our ancestor David, your
servant:[i]

'Why did the Gentiles rage,
and the peoples imagine vain
things?
26 The kings of the earth took their
stand,
and the rulers have gathered
together
against the Lord and against
his Messiah.'[j]

27 For in this city, in fact, both Herod and
Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the
peoples of Israel, gathered together
against your holy servant[i] Jesus, whom
you anointed, 28 to do whatever your
hand and your plan had predestined to
take place. 29 And now, Lord, look at their
threats, and grant to your servants[k] to
speak your word with all boldness,
30 while you stretch out your hand to heal,
and signs and wonders are performed
through the name of your holy servant[i]
Jesus." 31 When they had prayed, the
place in which they were gathered to-
gether was shaken; and they were all
filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the
word of God with boldness.

The Believers Share Their Possessions

32 Now the whole group of those who
believed were of one heart and soul, and
no one claimed private ownership of any
possessions, but everything they owned
was held in common. 33 With great power
the apostles gave their testimony to the
resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great
grace was upon them all. 34 There was not
a needy person among them, for as many
as owned lands or houses sold them and
brought the proceeds of what was sold.
35 They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it
was distributed to each as any had need.

h Gk *their own* *i* Or *child* *j* Or *his Christ*
k Gk *slaves*

4.16 *All who live in Jerusalem* surely exaggerates to dramatize the dilemma of the authorities. **4.22** The subject's age underscores the significance of the healing.

4.23–31 The community responds to persecution and the release of Peter and John. **4.24** *Sovereign Lord.* See 3 Macc 2.2; Lk 2.29 (translated "Master"); Rev 6.10 for this same way of addressing God. *Who made . . . everything in them.* See 14.15; 17.24; see also Ex 20.11; Ps 146.6; Isa 37.16. **4.25b–26** Ps 2.1–2. Connecting the psalm both to Jesus' death (4.27) and to the persecution of the church (4.29) allows Luke to assert that both events serve God's plan. **4.27** Cf. Lk 23.6–16, where *Herod* and *Pilate* seek to release Jesus. Perhaps they are included here as counterparts to the psalm's *kings* and *rulers* (4.26). **4.29** *Servants* here refers to those enslaved and translates a different Greek word (*doulos*) than in 4.25 or 4.27 (*pais*). **4.31** *All filled with the Holy Spirit.* See 2.4. *Boldness.* See 4.13; 9.27–28; 13.46; 28.31.

4.32–37 This second summary of the common life of believers (cf. 2.42–47) emphasizes the sharing of property in a way consistent with the Hellenistic ideal of friendship. **4.34** See Deut 15.4. **4.35** That money from donated property is placed at the *apostles' feet* (see also 4.37; 5.2)

36 There was a Levite, a native of Cyprus,
Joseph, to whom the apostles gave the
name Barnabas (which means "son of en-
couragement"). 37 He sold a field that be-
longed to him, then brought the money,
and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Ananias and Sapphira

5 But a man named Ananias, with the
consent of his wife Sapphira, sold a
piece of property; 2 with his wife's knowl-
edge, he kept back some of the proceeds,
and brought only a part and laid it at the
apostles' feet. 3 "Ananias," Peter asked,
"why has Satan filled your heart to lie to
the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of
the proceeds of the land? 4 While it re-
mained unsold, did it not remain your
own? And after it was sold, were not the
proceeds at your disposal? How is it that
you have contrived this deed in your
heart? You did not lie to us[l] but to God!"
5 Now when Ananias heard these words,
he fell down and died. And great fear
seized all who heard of it. 6 The young
men came and wrapped up his body,[m]
then carried him out and buried him.
7 After an interval of about three
hours his wife came in, not knowing what
had happened. 8 Peter said to her, "Tell
me whether you and your husband sold
the land for such and such a price." And
she said, "Yes, that was the price." 9 Then
Peter said to her, "How is it that you have
agreed together to put the Spirit of the
Lord to the test? Look, the feet of those
who have buried your husband are at the
door, and they will carry you out." 10 Im-
mediately she fell down at his feet and
died. When the young men came in they
found her dead, so they carried her out
and buried her beside her husband.
11 And great fear seized the whole church
and all who heard of these things.

The Apostles Heal Many

12 Now many signs and wonders were
done among the people through the apos-
tles. And they were all together in Solo-
mon's Portico. 13 None of the rest dared to
join them, but the people held them in
high esteem. 14 Yet more than ever believ-
ers were added to the Lord, great num-
bers of both men and women, 15 so that
they even carried out the sick into the
streets, and laid them on cots and mats, in
order that Peter's shadow might fall on
some of them as he came by. 16 A great
number of people would also gather from
the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the
sick and those tormented by unclean spir-
its, and they were all cured.

The Apostles Are Persecuted

17 Then the high priest took action;
he and all who were with him (that is, the
sect of the Sadducees), being filled with

l Gk *to men* *m* Meaning of Gk uncertain

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suggests their authority over community life. **4.36** Whether *Barnabas* actually means *son of encouragement* is doubtful, but Barnabas's major role in Acts is encouraging the work of Paul (see, e.g., 9.27; 11.22–30). **4.37** This incident concretely illustrates the community's sharing of property and contrasts with the story that follows.

5.1–11 The story of the otherwise unknown Ananias and Sapphira underscores not only the importance of the community but especially the importance of Peter as its leader. The lie implicit in withholding proceeds from the sale of property is here interpreted as a lie to the Spirit and to God; see Josh 7. **5.3** As with the betrayal of Jesus by Judas (Lk 22.3, 31), this event occurs at *Satan's* instigation; nevertheless, Ananias and Sapphira are held responsible for their actions. **5.5** *He . . . died.* Following immediately on Peter's pronouncement that Ananias lied to God, this death enacts God's judgment. **5.7–11** The fact that Luke describes Sapphira's death separately reflects both the significance of the story and Luke's customary interest in female characters; see, e.g., Lk 1.5–58; 2.36–38; 7.11–17, 36–50; 8.1–3, 43–48. **5.11** *Fear,* or awe, often accompanies the divine presence (see 2.43; 5.5; 9.31; 19.17; Lk 1.12; 2.9; 5.26; 7.16; 8.37; 21.26). The word *church* appears here for the first time in Luke-Acts.

5.12–16 The third summary of community life (see 2.42–47; 4.32–37) emphasizes the healings accomplished by the apostles in answer to the prayer of 4.30. **5.12** *Solomon's Portico.* See note on 3.11. **5.15** Like the fringe of Jesus' clothing (Lk 8.44) or Paul's handkerchief (19.12), even *Peter's shadow* can heal.

5.17–42 The series of miracles, speeches, and confrontations that begins in 3.1 culminates in this dramatic confrontation with the authorities. **5.17** *Sadducees.* See note on 4.1–2.

jealousy, 18 arrested the apostles and put
them in the public prison. 19 But during
the night an angel of the Lord opened the
prison doors, brought them out, and said,
20 "Go, stand in the temple and tell the
people the whole message about this life."
21 When they heard this, they entered the
temple at daybreak and went on with
their teaching.

When the high priest and those with
him arrived, they called together the
council and the whole body of the elders
of Israel, and sent to the prison to have
them brought. 22 But when the temple po-
lice went there, they did not find them
in the prison; so they returned and re-
ported, 23 "We found the prison securely
locked and the guards standing at the
doors, but when we opened them, we
found no one inside." 24 Now when the
captain of the temple and the chief priests
heard these words, they were perplexed
about them, wondering what might be go-
ing on. 25 Then someone arrived and an-
nounced, "Look, the men whom you put
in prison are standing in the temple and
teaching the people!" 26 Then the captain
went with the temple police and brought
them, but without violence, for they were
afraid of being stoned by the people.

27 When they had brought them, they
had them stand before the council. The
high priest questioned them, 28 saying,
"We gave you strict orders not to teach in
this name,[n] yet here you have filled Jeru-
salem with your teaching and you are de-
termined to bring this man's blood on us."
29 But Peter and the apostles answered,
"We must obey God rather than any hu-
man authority.[o] 30 The God of our ances-
tors raised up Jesus, whom you had killed
by hanging him on a tree. 31 God exalted
him at his right hand as Leader and Sav-
ior that he might give repentance to Israel
and forgiveness of sins. 32 And we are wit-
nesses to these things, and so is the Holy
Spirit whom God has given to those who
obey him."

33 When they heard this, they were
enraged and wanted to kill them. 34 But a
Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a
teacher of the law, respected by all the
people, stood up and ordered the men to
be put outside for a short time. 35 Then he
said to them, "Fellow Israelites,[p] consider
carefully what you propose to do to these
men. 36 For some time ago Theudas rose
up, claiming to be somebody, and a num-
ber of men, about four hundred, joined
him; but he was killed, and all who fol-
lowed him were dispersed and disap-
peared. 37 After him Judas the Galilean
rose up at the time of the census and got
people to follow him; he also perished,
and all who followed him were scattered.
38 So in the present case, I tell you, keep
away from these men and let them alone;
because if this plan or this undertaking is
of human origin, it will fail; 39 but if it is of
God, you will not be able to overthrow
them—in that case you may even be
found fighting against God!"

They were convinced by him, 40 and
when they had called in the apostles, they
had them flogged. Then they ordered
them not to speak in the name of Jesus,
and let them go. 41 As they left the coun-
cil, they rejoiced that they were consid-
ered worthy to suffer dishonor for the
sake of the name. 42 And every day in
the temple and at home[q] they did not
cease to teach and proclaim Jesus as the
Messiah.[r]

n Other ancient authorities read *Did we not give you strict orders not to teach in this name?* *o* Gk *than men* *p* Gk *Men, Israelites* *q* Or *from house to house* *r* Or *the Christ*

5.28–29 See 4.17–20. **5.34** In Acts, the *Pharisees* appear to be natural allies of Christians because of their shared belief in resurrection (see 23.6–10). *Gamaliel*, who is referred to in Jewish writings as Gamaliel I or the Elder, is later identified as Paul's teacher (22.3), but little is known about him. Luke's description of him as *a teacher of the law, respected by all the people*, reveals a favorable assessment. **5.36** According to Josephus (*Antiquities* 20.97–98), *Theudas* declared himself a prophet and led a large group of people to the Jordan River, which he declared would part at his order. He was executed by the Romans around 44 C.E., well after the time of Judas the Galilean (see v. 37) and after the time of Gamaliel's speech. Either Luke and Josephus refer to different persons, which seems unlikely, or one of them is incorrect. **5.37** *Judas the Galilean* led a revolt against the census of Quirinius around 6 C.E. **5.41–42** The rejoicing of the apostles and their continued preaching indicates already that they will not be silenced by persecution; thus Gamaliel's warning in 5.38–39 already proves prophetic.

Seven Chosen to Serve

6 Now during those days, when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food. 2 And the twelve called together the whole community of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait on tables.[s] 3 Therefore, friends,[t] select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task, 4 while we, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the word." 5 What they said pleased the whole community, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, together with Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. 6 They had these men stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

7 The word of God continued to spread; the number of the disciples increased greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

The Arrest of Stephen

8 Stephen, full of grace and power, did great wonders and signs among the people. 9 Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and others of those from Cilicia and Asia, stood up and argued with Stephen. 10 But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit[u] with which he spoke. 11 Then they secretly instigated some men to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God." 12 They stirred up the people as well as the elders and the scribes; then they suddenly confronted him, seized him, and brought him before the council. 13 They set up false witnesses who said, "This man never stops saying things against this holy place and the law; 14 for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth[v] will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses handed on to us." 15 And all who sat in the council looked intently at him, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

s Or *keep accounts* t Gk *brothers* u Or *spirit*
v Gk *the Nazorean*

6.1–7 This conflict between the Hellenists and the Hebrews raises a number of historical questions, since neither the groups nor their conflict has previously entered Luke's story. Luke appears less concerned with historical detail than with describing the way in which the church addresses a threat to its unity. **6.1** Luke uses the term *disciples* for the first time since Lk 22.45; in Acts it refers to believers in general rather than to the apostles (e.g., 9.10; 15.10; 16.1). *Hellenists* probably refers to Jewish Christians from the Diaspora whose native language was Greek and who spoke little or no Aramaic; *Hebrews*, by contrast, would be Christians from among those Jews who spoke only or primarily Aramaic. Conflict could arise from their social and cultural differences and spill over into the *daily distribution of food* (see 4.35). In a culture that allowed women little economic independence, widows, especially those of immigrants, would be among the most disadvantaged portion of the population. **6.2** Luke only here refers to the apostles as *the twelve* (but cf. Lk 6.13; 1 Cor 15.5). Although the seven are assigned to *wait on tables*, Acts nowhere depicts them doing so. **6.5** All of the seven have Greek names, consistent with their identification with the Hellenists. Only *Stephen* (6.8–8.1) and *Philip* (8.4–13, 26–40; 21.8) enter the story again. That *Nicolaus* is identified as a proselyte, or convert, suggests that the others were born into Jewish families. **6.6** For the laying on of *hands* as a ritual of empowerment, see Num 27.23; 1 Tim 4.14; 5.22; 2 Tim 1.6. **6.7** *The word of God continued to spread.* Luke employs this and similar statements to show the church's growth in the face of dire threats, internal and external (see 5.14; 9.31; 11.21; 12.24; 16.5; 19.20).

6.8–15 Stephen's arrest expands the persecution of Christians to include diaspora Jews living in Jerusalem and moves beyond beating and imprisonment (5.17–42) to death. **6.8** Luke's emphasis on Stephen's holiness (see also 6.5, 10, 15; 7.55–60) makes his persecution and death appear more heinous. **6.9** Probably persons from at least two synagogues are involved in the dispute with Stephen: one group of *Freedmen* (i.e., former slaves) from Africa (Cyrene and Alexandria) and another group from Asia Minor (*Cilicia and Asia*). **6.11–14** The charges against Stephen are more specific than earlier charges against the apostles; he stands accused of threatening the temple and Mosaic law (cf. 21.28; 25.8). For similar charges against Jesus, see Mt 26.59–61; Mk 14.55–58; cf. Jn 2.19–22. **6.12** For the first time in Acts, the *people* side with the authorities against the church (cf. 2.47; 4.1–2). **6.15** That

Stephen's Speech to the Council

7 Then the high priest asked him,
"Are these things so?" 2 And Stephen
replied:

"Brothers[w] and fathers, listen to me.
The God of glory appeared to our ancestor Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, 3 and said to him, 'Leave your country and your relatives and go to the land that I will show you.' 4 Then he left the country of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. After his father died, God had him move from there to this country in which you are now living. 5 He did not give him any of it as a heritage, not even a foot's length, but promised to give it to him as his possession and to his descendants after him, even though he had no child. 6 And God spoke in these terms, that his descendants would be resident aliens in a country belonging to others, who would enslave them and mistreat them during four hundred years. 7 'But I will judge the nation that they serve,' said God, 'and after that they shall come out and worship me in this place.' 8 Then he gave him the covenant of circumcision. And so Abraham[x] became the father of Isaac and circumcised him on the eighth day; and Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob of the twelve patriarchs.

9 "The patriarchs, jealous of Joseph, sold him into Egypt; but God was with him, 10 and rescued him from all his afflictions, and enabled him to win favor and to show wisdom when he stood before Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who appointed him ruler over Egypt and over all his household. 11 Now there came a famine throughout Egypt and Canaan, and great suffering, and our ancestors could find no food. 12 But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent our ancestors there on their first visit. 13 On the second visit Joseph made himself known to his brothers, and Joseph's family became known to Pharaoh. 14 Then Joseph sent and invited his father Jacob and all his relatives to come to him, seventy-five in all; 15 so Jacob went down to Egypt. He himself died there as well as our ancestors, 16 and their bodies[y] were brought back to Shechem and laid in the tomb that Abraham had bought for a sum of silver from the sons of Hamor in Shechem.

17 "But as the time drew near for the fulfillment of the promise that God had made to Abraham, our people in Egypt increased and multiplied 18 until another king who had not known Joseph ruled over Egypt. 19 He dealt craftily with our race and forced our ancestors to abandon their infants so that they would die. 20 At this time Moses was born, and he was beautiful before God. For three months he was brought up in his father's house; 21 and when he was abandoned, Pharaoh's daughter adopted him and brought him up as her own son. 22 So Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the

w Gk *Men, brothers* x Gk *he* y Gk *they*

Stephen's face appears *like the face of an angel* confirms his innocence and anticipates the vision of 7.55–56.

7.1–53 Stephen's speech offers little direct response to the high priest's question, although the speech does deal at length with the topics of Moses and the temple. Rather than defend himself, Stephen recounts Israel's history, focusing on the figures of Abraham, Joseph, and Moses; for similar recitals, see Josh 24.2–13; Neh 9.6–37; Pss 78; 105; 106; 135. **7.2–8** The story of *Abraham* is here confined to God's actions of call, promise, and covenant, with little attention to the theme of Abraham's obedience. **7.2** *The God of glory.* See Ps 29.3; cf. *the glory of God* in Acts 7.55. According to Gen 11.31, Abraham already lived in *Haran* when God called him. **7.3** The quotation is from Gen 12.1. **7.5** See Gen 13.15; 17.8; 48.4. **7.6–7** See Gen 15.13–14; see also Ex 2.22. **7.8** *Isaac* and *Jacob* receive scant attention here as Stephen moves quickly to Joseph (see Gen 21.1–4; 25.26; 29.31–30.24). **7.9–16** With *Joseph,* Stephen develops the theme of God's use of unlikely instruments for the salvation of Israel and Israel's rejection of those instruments. On Joseph's betrayal by his brothers, see Gen 37.11, 18–36. **7.14** *Seventy-five* agrees with the Septuagint text of Gen 46.27 over against the Hebrew text, which reads "seventy." **7.16** This account of the burial of the patriarchs conflicts at several points with Genesis; see Gen 23.1–20; 25.9; 33.18–19; 50.13–14; Josh 24.32. **7.17–43** As the servant of God who is rejected by Israel, *Moses* receives the most detailed attention in Stephen's speech. **7.17–19** See Ex 1.7–10. **7.20–22** See Ex 2.2–10. **7.22** Luke's emphasis on Moses' *wisdom, power,* and role in God's plan (see 7.25) ties him to John the Baptist and Jesus (see Lk

Egyptians and was powerful in his words
and deeds.
23 "When he was forty years old, it
came into his heart to visit his relatives,
the Israelites.[z] 24 When he saw one of
them being wronged, he defended the op-
pressed man and avenged him by striking
down the Egyptian. 25 He supposed that
his kinsfolk would understand that God
through him was rescuing them, but they
did not understand. 26 The next day he
came to some of them as they were quar-
reling and tried to reconcile them, saying,
'Men, you are brothers; why do you
wrong each other?' 27 But the man who
was wronging his neighbor pushed Mo-
ses[a] aside, saying, 'Who made you a ruler
and a judge over us? 28 Do you want to kill
me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?'
29 When he heard this, Moses fled and
became a resident alien in the land of
Midian. There he became the father of
two sons.
30 "Now when forty years had passed,
an angel appeared to him in the wilder-
ness of Mount Sinai, in the flame of a
burning bush. 31 When Moses saw it, he
was amazed at the sight; and as he ap-
proached to look, there came the voice of
the Lord: 32 'I am the God of your ances-
tors, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Ja-
cob.' Moses began to tremble and did not
dare to look. 33 Then the Lord said to
him, 'Take off the sandals from your feet,
for the place where you are standing is
holy ground. 34 I have surely seen the mis-
treatment of my people who are in Egypt
and have heard their groaning, and I
have come down to rescue them. Come
now, I will send you to Egypt.'
35 "It was this Moses whom they re-
jected when they said, 'Who made you a
ruler and a judge?' and whom God now
sent as both ruler and liberator through
the angel who appeared to him in the
bush. 36 He led them out, having per-
formed wonders and signs in Egypt, at
the Red Sea, and in the wilderness for
forty years. 37 This is the Moses who said
to the Israelites, 'God will raise up a
prophet for you from your own people[b]
as he raised me up.' 38 He is the one who
was in the congregation in the wilderness
with the angel who spoke to him at Mount
Sinai, and with our ancestors; and he re-
ceived living oracles to give to us. 39 Our
ancestors were unwilling to obey him; in-
stead, they pushed him aside, and in their
hearts they turned back to Egypt, 40 say-
ing to Aaron, 'Make gods for us who will
lead the way for us; as for this Moses who
led us out from the land of Egypt, we do
not know what has happened to him.'
41 At that time they made a calf, offered a
sacrifice to the idol, and reveled in the
works of their hands. 42 But God turned
away from them and handed them over to
worship the host of heaven, as it is written
in the book of the prophets:

'Did you offer to me slain victims
and sacrifices
forty years in the wilderness,
O house of Israel?
43 No; you took along the tent
of Moloch,
and the star of your god
Rephan,
the images that you made
to worship;
so I will remove you beyond
Babylon.'

44 "Our ancestors had the tent of
testimony in the wilderness, as God[c] di-
rected when he spoke to Moses, ordering
him to make it according to the pattern
he had seen. 45 Our ancestors in turn
brought it in with Joshua when they dis-
possessed the nations that God drove out
before our ancestors. And it was there un-
til the time of David, 46 who found favor

z Gk *his brothers, the sons of Israel* *a* Gk *him*
b Gk *your brothers* *c* Gk *he*

1.68–80; 2.29–32, 40, 52) as well as to Stephen himself (6.5, 8, 10). **7.23–29** See Ex 2.11–22, where it is Pharaoh's anger that prompts Moses' flight. **7.30–34** See Ex 3.1–10. **7.35–43** Israel's rejection of Moses and indeed of God dominates Stephen's summary of the exodus and wilderness years as the account moves toward an indictment of Israel. **7.35** See Ex 2.14. **7.37** See Deut 18.15. **7.40** See Ex 32.1, 23. **7.42–43** See Am 5.25–27 (Septuagint). See also Rom 1.24, 26, 28, where God is said to have "given up" (or *handed over*) humanity to sin because of its failure to acknowledge God. **7.44–53** The speech's final segment turns from key figures in Israel's history to the tent and temple as places of worship. **7.44** *Tent of testimony*. See Ex 33.7; on the *pattern* shown to Moses, see Ex 25.8–9. **7.45** See Josh 3.14–17. **7.46** On God's *favor* toward David, see 1 Sam 13.14; 2 Sam 15.25; on what David *asked* of God,

with God and asked that he might find a
dwelling place for the house of Jacob.[d]
47 But it was Solomon who built a house
for him. 48 Yet the Most High does not
dwell in houses made with human
hands;[e] as the prophet says,
49 'Heaven is my throne,
and the earth is my footstool.
What kind of house will you build
for me, says the Lord,
or what is the place of my rest?
50 Did not my hand make all these
things?'
51 "You stiff-necked people, uncir-
cumcised in heart and ears, you are for-
ever opposing the Holy Spirit, just as your
ancestors used to do. 52 Which of the
prophets did your ancestors not perse-
cute? They killed those who foretold the
coming of the Righteous One, and now
you have become his betrayers and mur-
derers. 53 You are the ones that received
the law as ordained by angels, and yet you
have not kept it."

The Stoning of Stephen

54 When they heard these things, they
became enraged and ground their teeth at
Stephen.[f] 55 But filled with the Holy
Spirit, he gazed into heaven and saw the
glory of God and Jesus standing at the
right hand of God. 56 "Look," he said, "I
see the heavens opened and the Son of
Man standing at the right hand of God!"
57 But they covered their ears, and with a
loud shout all rushed together against
him. 58 Then they dragged him out of the
city and began to stone him; and the wit-
nesses laid their coats at the feet of a
young man named Saul. 59 While they
were stoning Stephen, he prayed, "Lord
Jesus, receive my spirit." 60 Then he knelt
down and cried out in a loud voice, "Lord,
do not hold this sin against them." When
8 he had said this, he died.[g] 1 And
Saul approved of their killing him.

Saul Persecutes the Church

That day a severe persecution began
against the church in Jerusalem, and all
except the apostles were scattered
throughout the countryside of Judea and

d Other ancient authorities read *for the God of Jacob*
e Gk *with hands* f Gk *him* g Gk *fell asleep*

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see 2 Sam 7. **7.47** See 1 Kings 6. **7.48** That God does not dwell *in houses made with human hands* may be found already in 1 Kings 8.27–30, and Stephen's audience would have agreed. **7.49–50** Having explained that God commanded the making of the tabernacle (7.44) and having recalled Solomon's building of the temple (7.47), Stephen, quoting from Isa 66.1–2, rejects not the temple as such but the assumption that human beings have authority over the temple. **7.51** *Stiff-necked people.* See Ex 33.3, 5. *Uncircumcised in heart and ears.* See Deut 10.16; Jer 6.10. *Forever opposing the Holy Spirit.* See 5.3; Isa 63.10; Lk 12.10. **7.52** The charge that the people of Jerusalem killed Jesus (see 2.23; 3.14–15; 4.10; 5.30) is here placed in the context of Israel's persecution of God's prophets. **7.53** Paul employs the same tradition about *angels* to argue the law's inferiority (Gal 3.19; cf. Heb 2.2); here the angels confirm the law's importance. The tradition may be derived from Deut 33.2; cf. *Jubilees* 1.27, 29; 2.1; Josephus *Antiquities* 15.136.

7.54–8.1a The narrative of Stephen's death dramatically contrasts Stephen with his attackers by emphasizing his innocence and their rage. The introduction of Saul, who becomes the ardent enemy of the church, completes the contrast. **7.54** *Ground their teeth.* See Lk 13.28; see also Job 16.9; Ps 35.16. **7.55** The presence of the Holy Spirit and the vision of God's glory and of Jesus testify to Stephen's innocence (see also Lk 9.32). **7.56** Stephen's vision of the *Son of Man* recalls Jesus' earlier words to the council (see Lk 22.69; cf. Ps 110.1; Dan 7.13), although here the Son of Man is not seated but standing. **7.58** On *stoning* outside the city, see Lev 24.14; Num 15.35–36. Here again Stephen's story conforms to that of Jesus (Lk 4.28–29). *Saul* (or Paul; see 13.9) appears here for the first time; later he takes the lead in the church's mission (chs. 13–28). **7.59** *Lord . . . receive my spirit.* Cf. Jesus' words in Lk 23.46; see also Ps 31.5. **7.60** *Do not hold this sin against them.* Cf. Jesus' words in Lk 23.34. **8.1a** Saul's approval of Stephen's death sets the stage for the great persecution in Jerusalem (8.1b–3) and for Saul's persecution of Christians beyond Jerusalem (9.1–2).

8.1b–3 Persecution of the church provides an impetus to its growth as it forces the church into new territory. **8.1b** Since Acts has referred only to *the church in Jerusalem*, this reference to Jerusalem is superfluous except that, together with the references to *Judea and Samaria*, it recalls the promise of 1.8. That *all* Christians *except the apostles* left Jerusalem seems highly improbable in view of later references to the Jerusalem church

Samaria. 2 Devout men buried Stephen
and made loud lamentation over him.
3 But Saul was ravaging the church by en-
tering house after house; dragging off
both men and women, he committed
them to prison.

Philip Preaches in Samaria

4 Now those who were scattered went
from place to place, proclaiming the
word. 5 Philip went down to the city[h] of
Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah[i] to
them. 6 The crowds with one accord lis-
tened eagerly to what was said by Philip,
hearing and seeing the signs that he did,
7 for unclean spirits, crying with loud
shrieks, came out of many who were pos-
sessed; and many others who were para-
lyzed or lame were cured. 8 So there was
great joy in that city.

9 Now a certain man named Simon
had previously practiced magic in the city
and amazed the people of Samaria, saying
that he was someone great. 10 All of them,
from the least to the greatest, listened to
him eagerly, saying, "This man is the
power of God that is called Great." 11 And
they listened eagerly to him because for a
long time he had amazed them with his
magic. 12 But when they believed Philip,
who was proclaiming the good news about
the kingdom of God and the name of
Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both
men and women. 13 Even Simon himself
believed. After being baptized, he stayed
constantly with Philip and was amazed
when he saw the signs and great miracles
that took place.

14 Now when the apostles at Jerusa-
lem heard that Samaria had accepted the
word of God, they sent Peter and John to
them. 15 The two went down and prayed
for them that they might receive the Holy
Spirit 16 (for as yet the Spirit had not
come[j] upon any of them; they had only
been baptized in the name of the Lord
Jesus). 17 Then Peter and John[k] laid their
hands on them, and they received the
Holy Spirit. 18 Now when Simon saw that
the Spirit was given through the laying on
of the apostles' hands, he offered them
money, 19 saying, "Give me also this power
so that anyone on whom I lay my hands
may receive the Holy Spirit." 20 But Peter
said to him, "May your silver perish with
you, because you thought you could ob-
tain God's gift with money! 21 You have
no part or share in this, for your heart is
not right before God. 22 Repent therefore
of this wickedness of yours, and pray to
the Lord that, if possible, the intent of
your heart may be forgiven you. 23 For I
see that you are in the gall of bitterness
and the chains of wickedness." 24 Simon
answered, "Pray for me to the Lord, that

h Other ancient authorities read *a city* *i* Or *the Christ* *j* Gk *fallen* *k* Gk *they*

(11.2, 22). More likely, Jewish Christians from the Diaspora fled Jerusalem, leaving the Jerusalem church in the hands of Hebrew Christians (see 6.1–6). Luke's portrait of the flight of all except the apostles, who have already resisted persecution, underscores their authority and connects that authority with Jerusalem itself. **8.2** The *devout men* who bury Stephen may be Christians; given the flight described in 8.1, however, they could be non-Christian Jews who recognize the presence of God's activity in Stephen (by contrast with Saul).

8.4–25 Preaching in Samaria fulfills 1.8 and constitutes a significant movement in the church's development because of the long-standing animosity between Jews and Samaritans (see Lk 9.51–56; 10.29–37; Jn 4.1–42). **8.5** *Philip*. See 6.5. *The city of Samaria* probably refers either to Sebaste or to Shechem. **8.6–8** The response in Samaria parallels the initial responses in Jerusalem (see 5.12–16). **8.9** *Simon* enters the story as the antithesis of Philip. He appears in later Christian literature as Simon Magus (*magus* is from the Greek for "magic"), the archheretic. **8.10** Luke associates *the power of God* with Jesus and the work of the church, but Jesus himself is never equated with that power (cf. Lk 1.35; 5.17; 22.69). To equate Simon with this power constitutes blasphemy (see also 12.22–23). **8.13** Simon's *baptism* signals the superiority of Philip's ministry, although 8.18–19 demonstrates that Simon's conversion is incomplete. **8.18** The gift of the *Spirit* does not depend on the *laying on of the apostles' hands* (see 9.17; 10.44), but the apostles' presence signals their cooperation with Philip's ministry and sets the stage for the confrontation between Peter and Simon. Magicians were widely viewed as people who plied their trade for *money*; Simon ascribes his own attitude to Peter. By contrast, Luke consistently depicts concern over money as threatening faith (e.g., Judas in 1.18; Ananias and Sapphira in 5.1–11; the owners of the girl with the gift of divination in 16.16–18; Demetrius the silversmith in 19.24–27). **8.23** *Gall of bitterness*. See Deut 29.18–20.

nothing of what you[l] have said may happen to me."

25 Now after Peter and John[m] had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, proclaiming the good news to many villages of the Samaritans.

Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch

26 Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Get up and go toward the south[n] to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a wilderness road.) 27 So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship 28 and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. 29 Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over to this chariot and join it." 30 So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" 31 He replied, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. 32 Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this:

"Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter,
and like a lamb silent before its shearer,
so he does not open his mouth.
33 In his humiliation justice was denied him.
Who can describe his generation?
For his life is taken away from the earth."

34 The eunuch asked Philip, "About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" 35 Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. 36 As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?"[o] 38 He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip[p] baptized him. 39 When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. 40 But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he was passing through the region, he proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

l The Greek word for *you* and the verb *pray* are plural *m* Gk *after they* *n* Or *go at noon* *o* Other ancient authorities add all or most of verse 37, *And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he replied, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."* *p* Gk *he*

8.26–40 The conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch, who is from a region vastly removed from Jerusalem, signals the fulfillment of the promise to all those who are "far away" (2.39). The eunuch's receptivity (8.31, 34, 36, 39) enacts the attitude toward the gospel that Luke regards as appropriate for all people. **8.26** Philip receives orders from *an angel*, underscoring that the initiative comes from God. He is to go *toward the south*, or *at noon* (see text note *n*); the Greek may be translated either way (see 26.13, where Paul's conversion occurs at noon). **8.27** *Ethiopian*, in Luke's world, referred to anyone with dark skin, particularly to persons from territories south of Egypt. Various ancient writers depict Ethiopians as handsome people who come from the ends of the known world (e.g., Homer *Odyssey* 1.22–23; Herodotus *History* 3.17–20; Strabo *Geography* 17.2. 1–3). As a *eunuch*, he could not be a Jew or a proselyte to Judaism (Deut 23.1; Josephus *Antiquities* 4.290–91; but cf. Isa 56.3–5), and thus his conversion foreshadows that of Cornelius (10.1–11.18), which formally opens the Christian mission to Gentiles. *Candace* is the title traditionally given to the queen of Meroe (a Nubian realm along the upper Nile), making the eunuch's position one of considerable power. That he has been *to Jerusalem to worship* indicates his interest in Israel's religion, as does his reading of Isaiah. Gentiles could worship in the temple enclosure, although they were restricted to the outer court; see note on 21.28. **8.28** *Reading* was a customary activity during travel; here it sets the stage for Philip's approach. **8.29** The prompting of *the Spirit* suggests that God stands behind this overture (see 8.26). **8.32–33** The passage quoted is Isa 53.7–8. **8.35** Cf. Lk 24.27, where Jesus explains "things about himself" from scripture. **8.39** Later church tradition holds that the eunuch became the first Christian missionary to Africa, but Luke says nothing about his activity beyond *rejoicing* (see also 13.48; 15.31). **8.40** *Azotus*, a city about twenty-two miles north of Gaza near the Mediterranean coast. On Philip at *Caesarea*, see 21.8.

The Conversion of Saul

9 Meanwhile Saul, still breathing
threats and murder against the disci-
ples of the Lord, went to the high priest
2 and asked him for letters to the syna-
gogues at Damascus, so that if he found
any who belonged to the Way, men or
women, he might bring them bound to Je-
rusalem. 3 Now as he was going along and
approaching Damascus, suddenly a light
from heaven flashed around him. 4 He
fell to the ground and heard a voice say-
ing to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you perse-
cute me?" 5 He asked, "Who are you,
Lord?" The reply came, "I am Jesus,
whom you are persecuting. 6 But get up
and enter the city, and you will be told
what you are to do." 7 The men who were
traveling with him stood speechless be-
cause they heard the voice but saw no one.
8 Saul got up from the ground, and
though his eyes were open, he could see
nothing; so they led him by the hand and
brought him into Damascus. 9 For three
days he was without sight, and neither ate
nor drank.

10 Now there was a disciple in Damas-
cus named Ananias. The Lord said to him
in a vision, "Ananias." He answered,
"Here I am, Lord." 11 The Lord said to
him, "Get up and go to the street called
Straight, and at the house of Judas look
for a man of Tarsus named Saul. At this
moment he is praying, 12 and he has seen
in a vision[q] a man named Ananias come
in and lay his hands on him so that he
might regain his sight." 13 But Ananias an-
swered, "Lord, I have heard from many
about this man, how much evil he has
done to your saints in Jerusalem; 14 and
here he has authority from the chief
priests to bind all who invoke your name."
15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is
an instrument whom I have chosen to
bring my name before Gentiles and kings
and before the people of Israel; 16 I my-
self will show him how much he must suf-
fer for the sake of my name." 17 So
Ananias went and entered the house.
He laid his hands on Saul[r] and said,
"Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who ap-
peared to you on your way here, has sent
me so that you may regain your sight and
be filled with the Holy Spirit." 18 And

q Other ancient authorities lack *in a vision*
r Gk *him*

9.1–31 The conversion of Saul, the church's most ardent enemy, involves both divine direction (9.10–16) and an encounter with the risen Lord (9.3–6). Luke narrates this event again in 22.1–21; 26.2–23, indicating its importance for him. **9.1–2** *Breathing threats and murder* fulfills Stephen's words in 7.51–52. The report of Saul's proposed trip to *Damascus*, about sixty miles northeast of the Sea of Galilee, assumes that Christianity has spread there; it also moves the persecution of the church well beyond Jerusalem. Historically, it is highly unlikely that the *high priest* in Jerusalem had authority over *synagogues at Damascus*, which suggests that Luke exaggerates Paul's activity. For other references to Paul's persecution, see also 22.4–5; 26.9–11; 1 Cor 15.9; Gal 1.13–14; Phil 3.6. Luke uses *the Way* as a reference to Christian faith; see 18.25; 19.9, 23; 22.4; 24.14, 22. **9.3–4** Saul's encounter contains several features often associated with divine appearances and commissions: *light* (4 Macc 4.10); falling *to the ground* (Ezek 1.28; Dan 10.9); the use of the double vocative, as in "*Saul, Saul*" (Gen 22.11; 46.2; Ex 3.4; 1 Sam 3.4). **9.5** Saul's address of Jesus as *Lord* does not necessarily imply faith on his part, since the Greek word *kyrios* can also be translated as the respectful address "sir." That Saul is said to be *persecuting* Jesus may identify Jesus with the church. **9.8** Saul's blindness is consistent with Luke's use of sight and its absence elsewhere (see Lk 2.30; 4.18; 24.16, 31; Acts 13.11; 28.27). **9.10** Here Luke describes *Ananias* simply as *a disciple* (cf. 22.12); Saul will be aided by one of the disciples he set out to persecute (see 9.1). In Acts, surprising changes in mission are often set in motion by *visions* (e.g., 10.3; 16.9–10; 18.9–10; cf. 2.17). "*Here I am, Lord.*" See Gen 22.1; 1 Sam 3.6, 8. **9.11** *Straight* street was the major east-west corridor. For the first time, Saul is identified as being from *Tarsus*, the capital of the Roman province of Cilicia (see 9.30; note on 21.39). **9.12** Cf. the visions of Ananias and Saul with those of Cornelius and Peter in 10.1–16. **9.13–14** Ananias's resistance reinforces the identification of Saul as persecutor and prompts the new identification in 9.15–16. **9.15** Paul's later audience does encompass *Gentiles* (17.22–31), *kings* (26.2–32), and *Israel* (13.16–41; 22.1–21). **9.16** *He must suffer for the sake of my name* (see 5.41; 15.26; 21.13) exactly reverses Ananias's statement regarding Saul in 9.13–14. **9.17** *Who appeared to you* is language elsewhere associated with the Easter appearances (see 1 Cor 15.5–8). **9.18** *Something like scales.* See

immediately something like scales fell
from his eyes, and his sight was restored.
Then he got up and was baptized, 19and
after taking some food, he regained his
strength.

Saul Preaches in Damascus

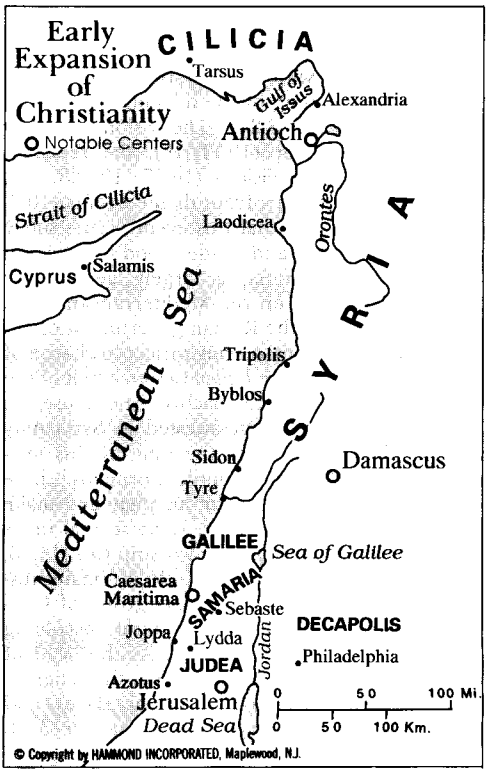
For several days he was with the disci-
ples in Damascus, 20and immediately he
began to proclaim Jesus in the syna-
gogues, saying, "He is the Son of God."
21All who heard him were amazed and
said, "Is not this the man who made havoc
in Jerusalem among those who invoked
this name? And has he not come here for
the purpose of bringing them bound be-
fore the chief priests?" 22Saul became
increasingly more powerful and con-
founded the Jews who lived in Damas-
cus by proving that Jesus[s] was the
Messiah.[t]

23 After some time had passed, the
Jews plotted to kill him, 24but their plot
became known to Saul. They were watch-
ing the gates day and night so that they
might kill him; 25but his disciples took
him by night and let him down through
an opening in the wall,[u] lowering him in
a basket.

Saul in Jerusalem

26 When he had come to Jerusalem,
he attempted to join the disciples; and
they were all afraid of him, for they did
not believe that he was a disciple. 27But
Barnabas took him, brought him to the
apostles, and described for them how on
the road he had seen the Lord, who had
spoken to him, and how in Damascus he
had spoken boldly in the name of Jesus.
28So he went in and out among them in
Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of
the Lord. 29He spoke and argued with
the Hellenists; but they were attempt-
ing to kill him. 30When the believers[v]
learned of it, they brought him down to
Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.

s Gk *that this* t Or *the Christ* u Gk *through the wall* v Gk *brothers*



The spread of Christianity as described in Acts 1–8 was northward from Jerusalem through Judea and Samaria (see Acts 1.8). Early in the narrative Christians are found in urban centers like Damascus (9.1–22) and Joppa (10.5), and the establishing of Christianity in Caesarea Maritima (ch. 10) and Antioch (11.19–30) is described in some detail.

Tob 3.17; 11.13. **9.19a** As in other miracles, the episode concludes with a demonstration of the healing, here through *taking some food* (see Lk 8.55). **9.19b–25** Saul's preaching provides further demonstration of his conversion. His increasing power as a proclaimer and the hostility toward him mirror 9.1–2, where his power was directed against the church. **9.20** Only here in Acts does the phrase *Son of God* appear, but see 13.33; Lk 22.70. **9.25** Cf. 2 Cor 11.32–33, where Paul says he fled from the governor's attempt to seize him (see also Josh 2.15). **9.26–31** This incident is difficult to reconcile with Gal 1.18–24, where Paul insists that he saw only Cephas (Peter) and James, although his reputation as a persecutor is a factor in both texts (Gal 1.23). **9.27** How *Barnabas* knows about Saul's preaching remains unclear, but here he fulfills the name attributed to him in 4.36 (*son of encouragement*). **9.28** On *speaking boldly* as a characteristic of Christian proclamation, see note on 4.13. **9.29** The *Hellenists* are apparently Hellenistic (Greek-speaking) Jews who have

31 Meanwhile the church throughout
Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace
and was built up. Living in the fear of the
Lord and in the comfort of the Holy
Spirit, it increased in numbers.

Peter in Lydda and Joppa

32 Now as Peter went here and there
among all the believers,[w] he came down
also to the saints living in Lydda. 33 There
he found a man named Aeneas, who had
been bedridden for eight years, for he
was paralyzed. 34 Peter said to him, "Ae-
neas, Jesus Christ heals you; get up and
make your bed!" And immediately he got
up. 35 And all the residents of Lydda and
Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.
36 Now in Joppa there was a disciple
whose name was Tabitha, which in Greek
is Dorcas.[x] She was devoted to good
works and acts of charity. 37 At that time
she became ill and died. When they had
washed her, they laid her in a room up-
stairs. 38 Since Lydda was near Joppa, the
disciples, who heard that Peter was there,
sent two men to him with the request,
"Please come to us without delay." 39 So
Peter got up and went with them; and
when he arrived, they took him to the
room upstairs. All the widows stood be-
side him, weeping and showing tunics and
other clothing that Dorcas had made
while she was with them. 40 Peter put all of
them outside, and then he knelt down
and prayed. He turned to the body and
said, "Tabitha, get up." Then she opened
her eyes, and seeing Peter, she sat up.
41 He gave her his hand and helped her
up. Then calling the saints and widows,
he showed her to be alive. 42 This became
known throughout Joppa, and many be-
lieved in the Lord. 43 Meanwhile he stayed
in Joppa for some time with a certain Si-
mon, a tanner.

Peter and Cornelius

10 In Caesarea there was a man
named Cornelius, a centurion of
the Italian Cohort, as it was called. 2 He
was a devout man who feared God with all
his household; he gave alms generously to
the people and prayed constantly to God.

w Gk *all of them* x The name Tabitha in Aramaic and the name Dorcas in Greek mean *a gazelle*

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not converted, but the same term is used of Christians in 6.1. **9.31** On the growth of the church, see note on 6.7. The reference to *Galilee* is striking, since nothing has been said in Acts about a mission in that region.

9.32–43 Two brief stories reintroduce Peter and prepare for the conversion of the first Gentile in 10.1–11.18. The locations Lydda and Joppa, towns west of Jerusalem, signal the movement of the gospel westward just as it has already moved north as far as Damascus (9.2). Luke does not indicate how the gospel came to these towns, but they could have been on Philip's route from Azotus to Caesarea (8.40). **9.35** *Sharon*, the plain on which *Lydda* was situated. *Turned to the Lord*, converted, most often used of Gentiles who turn to faith in the one God (see Acts 15.19; 26.18, 20; Gal 4.9; 1 Thess 1.9). **9.36–43** Parallels to earlier stories concerning Elijah (1 Kings 17.17–24), Elisha (2 Kings 4.18–37), and Jesus (Lk 7.11–17; 8.41–42, 49–56) identify the prophetic power of the church with that of Israel's prophets and of Jesus. **9.36** Only here in Acts is a woman explicitly called a *disciple*; in fact, the feminine noun for disciple appears nowhere else in the NT. **9.39** On *widows*, see 6.1; 1 Tim 5.3–16.

10.1–11.18 The story of the conversion of Cornelius and the church's acceptance of that event is narrated with considerable detail because it signals the opening of the mission to the Gentiles. (See note on 8.27.) The visions of both Cornelius and Peter (10.11–16), the repeated references to these visions (10.17, 19, 28, 30), and direct instructions from divine agents (10.7, 22, 32) demonstrate that this event occurs solely at God's initiative and under God's direction. **10.1** *Caesarea* Maritima, a largely gentile city north of Jerusalem on the Mediterranean coast, was the location of the Roman government of Judea. *Centurion*, a Roman army officer in charge of one hundred men. The *Italian Cohort*, a unit of the Roman army, may be an anachronistic reference, since its presence is first attested in Syria only around 69 C.E., well after the time of this incident. **10.2** Although a Gentile, Cornelius is here described so as to emphasize his piety and make him a sympathetic character. Luke several times refers to Gentiles who *fear* or worship *God* (13.16, 26; 16.14; 18.7; see also Lk 7.1–9); it remains disputed whether this was a distinct group of Gentiles who worshiped God without becoming proselytes. *With all his household*. As the head of the household, Cornelius establishes the religious practices of his extended family, his slaves, and their families. *The people*, See note on 3.11.

3 One afternoon at about three o'clock he
had a vision in which he clearly saw an
angel of God coming in and saying to
him, "Cornelius." 4 He stared at him in
terror and said, "What is it, Lord?" He
answered, "Your prayers and your alms
have ascended as a memorial before God.
5 Now send men to Joppa for a certain Si-
mon who is called Peter; 6 he is lodging
with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by
the seaside." 7 When the angel who spoke
to him had left, he called two of his slaves
and a devout soldier from the ranks of
those who served him, 8 and after telling
them everything, he sent them to Joppa.

9 About noon the next day, as they
were on their journey and approaching
the city, Peter went up on the roof to
pray. 10 He became hungry and wanted
something to eat; and while it was being
prepared, he fell into a trance. 11 He saw
the heaven opened and something like a
large sheet coming down, being lowered
to the ground by its four corners. 12 In it
were all kinds of four-footed creatures
and reptiles and birds of the air. 13 Then
he heard a voice saying, "Get up, Peter;
kill and eat." 14 But Peter said, "By no
means, Lord; for I have never eaten any-
thing that is profane or unclean." 15 The
voice said to him again, a second time,
"What God has made clean, you must not
call profane." 16 This happened three
times, and the thing was suddenly taken
up to heaven.

17 Now while Peter was greatly puz-
zled about what to make of the vision that
he had seen, suddenly the men sent by
Cornelius appeared. They were asking
for Simon's house and were standing by
the gate. 18 They called out to ask whether
Simon, who was called Peter, was staying
there. 19 While Peter was still thinking
about the vision, the Spirit said to him,
"Look, three[y] men are searching for you.
20 Now get up, go down, and go with them
without hesitation; for I have sent them."
21 So Peter went down to the men and
said, "I am the one you are looking for;
what is the reason for your coming?"
22 They answered, "Cornelius, a centu-
rion, an upright and God-fearing man,
who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish
nation, was directed by a holy angel to
send for you to come to his house and to
hear what you have to say." 23 So Peter[z]
invited them in and gave them lodging.

The next day he got up and went with
them, and some of the believers[a] from
Joppa accompanied him. 24 The following
day they came to Caesarea. Cornelius was
expecting them and had called together
his relatives and close friends. 25 On Pe-
ter's arrival Cornelius met him, and fall-
ing at his feet, worshiped him. 26 But
Peter made him get up, saying, "Stand
up; I am only a mortal." 27 And as he
talked with him, he went in and found
that many had assembled; 28 and he said
to them, "You yourselves know that it is

y One ancient authority reads *two*; others lack the word z Gk *he* a Gk *brothers*

10.3 *About three o'clock,* a traditional time for prayer; see 3.1. **10.4** *As a memorial.* God has remembered Cornelius's piety (Ex 17.14; Tob 12.12; Sir 35.20–22). **10.5** For the first time in Acts, Peter is called *Simon* (see Lk 5–8; 6.14), perhaps to distinguish him from Simon the tanner (Acts 9.43). **10.6** *Whose house is by the seaside.* References to houses and hospitality abound in this story (10.17, 22–23, 30, 32, 33, 48), probably because Luke understands the gentile mission to involve social interchange between the two groups. **10.9–16** Since Peter's vision concerns food rather than people, it is sometimes suggested that the vision is an independent story about dietary restrictions inserted into an earlier story about Cornelius. Both in the Bible and in Hellenistic writings, however, narratives employ dreams that become meaningful only in retrospect (e.g., Gen 41.1–57; Dan 2.31–45; 4.1–27; 5.5–28; Plutarch *Brutus* 20; *Cicero* 44). **10.11** *The heaven opened,* suggesting God's presence or some revelation from God (Ps 78.23; Isa 24.18; 64.1; Ezek 1.1; Lk 3.21). **10.12** A conventional classification of animals; see Gen 1.24; 6.20; Rom 1.23. Since a variety of animals is present, some but not all would be prohibited under Jewish dietary laws. **10.14–15** See Ezek 4.14. The dialogue concerns not Peter's practice but his assumption that he knows what is *profane or unclean.* **10.22** *The whole Jewish nation,* an additional testimony to Cornelius's righteousness, see 10.2. **10.25** *Falling at his feet,* a sign of respect or obeisance (Lk 5.12; Jn 11.32), would be highly unusual behavior for a Roman centurion meeting a local resident in occupied territory. **10.26** On Peter's response, see 14.15; cf. 12.22–23. **10.28** Peter's statement that Jews were not allowed to *associate with . . . a Gentile* sharply exaggerates Jewish law, which, if observed, could render social interaction with Gentiles difficult

unlawful for a Jew to associate with or to
visit a Gentile; but God has shown me that
I should not call anyone profane or un-
clean. 29 So when I was sent for, I came
without objection. Now may I ask why you
sent for me?"

30 Cornelius replied, "Four days ago
at this very hour, at three o'clock, I was
praying in my house when suddenly a
man in dazzling clothes stood before me.
31 He said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has
been heard and your alms have been re-
membered before God. 32 Send therefore
to Joppa and ask for Simon, who is called
Peter; he is staying in the home of Simon,
a tanner, by the sea.' 33 Therefore I sent
for you immediately, and you have been
kind enough to come. So now all of us are
here in the presence of God to listen to
all that the Lord has commanded you
to say."

Gentiles Hear the Good News

34 Then Peter began to speak to
them: "I truly understand that God shows
no partiality, 35 but in every nation anyone
who fears him and does what is right
is acceptable to him. 36 You know the
message he sent to the people of Isra-
el, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he
is Lord of all. 37 That message spread
throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee
after the baptism that John announced:
38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth
with the Holy Spirit and with power; how
he went about doing good and healing all
who were oppressed by the devil, for God
was with him. 39 We are witnesses to all
that he did both in Judea and in Jerusa-
lem. They put him to death by hanging
him on a tree; 40 but God raised him on
the third day and allowed him to appear,
41 not to all the people but to us who were
chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate
and drank with him after he rose from
the dead. 42 He commanded us to preach
to the people and to testify that he is the
one ordained by God as judge of the liv-
ing and the dead. 43 All the prophets tes-
tify about him that everyone who believes
in him receives forgiveness of sins
through his name."

Gentiles Receive the Holy Spirit

44 While Peter was still speaking, the
Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the
word. 45 The circumcised believers who
had come with Peter were astounded that
the gift of the Holy Spirit had been
poured out even on the Gentiles, 46 for
they heard them speaking in tongues and
extolling God. Then Peter said, 47 "Can
anyone withhold the water for baptizing
these people who have received the Holy
Spirit just as we have?" 48 So he ordered
them to be baptized in the name of Jesus
Christ. Then they invited him to stay for
several days.

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but not impossible. Especially in the Diaspora, many Jews and Gentiles would have had extensive contact. Peter's conclusion that no one should be called *profane or unclean* solves the riddle of his dream (10.9–16) and paves the way for his sermon (10.34–43) and for the practice of full hospitality toward Gentiles. **10.34–43** Peter's speech succinctly summarizes the gospel in the context of Peter's new understanding of God's impartiality, suggesting that Peter's conversion to the gentile mission is as central here as is Cornelius's conversion to Christian faith. **10.34** *That God shows no partiality* is an established concept (see Deut 10.17–18; Sir 35.15–16; Rom 2.11), but here it takes on new meaning in the emergence of a gentile mission conducted without regard to social barriers. **10.35** See Ps 15.1–2. Clearly Cornelius fulfills the requirement stated here (see 10.2, 22). **10.36** The message of *peace* was first proclaimed at Jesus' birth (see Lk 2.14). *Lord of all.* Elsewhere this phrase refers to Zeus and Osiris (Plutarch *Isis and Osiris* 355e) as well as to the God of Israel (Wis 6.7; 8.3). **10.37–43** This summation of Jesus' ministry replays some key Lucan themes: the ministry of John, the Spirit's presence in Jesus, the apostles as witnesses, the death and resurrection of Jesus, Jesus' postresurrection appearance to the apostles, the prophetic witness, forgiveness of sins. **10.44–48** The gift of the Holy Spirit provides final and irrefutable evidence that the inclusion of the Gentiles is indeed God's will. **10.45–46** As at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit is *poured out* (see 2.17–18), it is accompanied by *speaking in tongues* (see 2.4–11), and it prompts much astonishment (see 2.12). **10.47–48** The normal order of baptism with water and then the Spirit is reversed, as the gift of the Holy Spirit justifies baptism with water (cf. 2.38). **10.48** *They invited him to stay for several days.* The hospitality extended to Peter and his companions completes the breaking down of social barriers and prompts the investigation of 11.3.

Peter's Report to the Church at Jerusalem

11 Now the apostles and the believers[b] who were in Judea heard
that the Gentiles had also accepted the
word of God. 2 So when Peter went up
to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers[c]
criticized him, 3 saying, "Why did you go
to uncircumcised men and eat with
them?" 4 Then Peter began to explain it to
them, step by step, saying, 5 "I was in the
city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I
saw a vision. There was something like a
large sheet coming down from heaven,
being lowered by its four corners; and it
came close to me. 6 As I looked at it closely
I saw four-footed animals, beasts of prey,
reptiles, and birds of the air. 7 I also heard
a voice saying to me, 'Get up, Peter; kill
and eat.' 8 But I replied, 'By no means,
Lord; for nothing profane or unclean has
ever entered my mouth.' 9 But a second
time the voice answered from heaven,
'What God has made clean, you must not
call profane.' 10 This happened three
times; then everything was pulled up
again to heaven. 11 At that very moment
three men, sent to me from Caesarea, arrived at the house where we were. 12 The
Spirit told me to go with them and not to
make a distinction between them and us.[d]
These six brothers also accompanied me,
and we entered the man's house. 13 He
told us how he had seen the angel standing in his house and saying, 'Send to
Joppa and bring Simon, who is called Peter; 14 he will give you a message by which
you and your entire household will be
saved.' 15 And as I began to speak, the
Holy Spirit fell upon them just as it had
upon us at the beginning. 16 And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he
had said, 'John baptized with water, but
you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'
17 If then God gave them the same gift
that he gave us when we believed in the
Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could
hinder God?" 18 When they heard this,
they were silenced. And they praised God,
saying, "Then God has given even to the
Gentiles the repentance that leads to life."

The Church in Antioch

19 Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that took place
over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia,
Cyprus, and Antioch, and they spoke the
word to no one except Jews. 20 But among
them were some men of Cyprus and Cyrene who, on coming to Antioch, spoke
to the Hellenists[e] also, proclaiming the
Lord Jesus. 21 The hand of the Lord was
with them, and a great number became
believers and turned to the Lord. 22 News
of this came to the ears of the church in

b Gk *brothers* *c* Gk lacks *believers* *d* Or *not to hesitate* *e* Other ancient authorities read *Greeks*

11.1–18 The focus here is on the endorsement of Peter's actions by the Jerusalem community, while Peter recapitulates the Cornelius episode from his perspective. **11.2–3** *The circumcised believers* are mentioned not as a faction (cf. 15.5) but by contrast with the *uncircumcised men* to whom they object. *Why did you . . . eat with them?* The objection focuses on social interaction. **11.14** *By which you . . . will be saved.* Only here is Peter's message characterized as a means to salvation; cf. 10.4–5, 22, 31–33. **11.16** See Lk 3.16. In 10.44–48 no reference to John is made. **11.18** *The repentance that leads to life.* See 2.38; 5.31; 26.20.

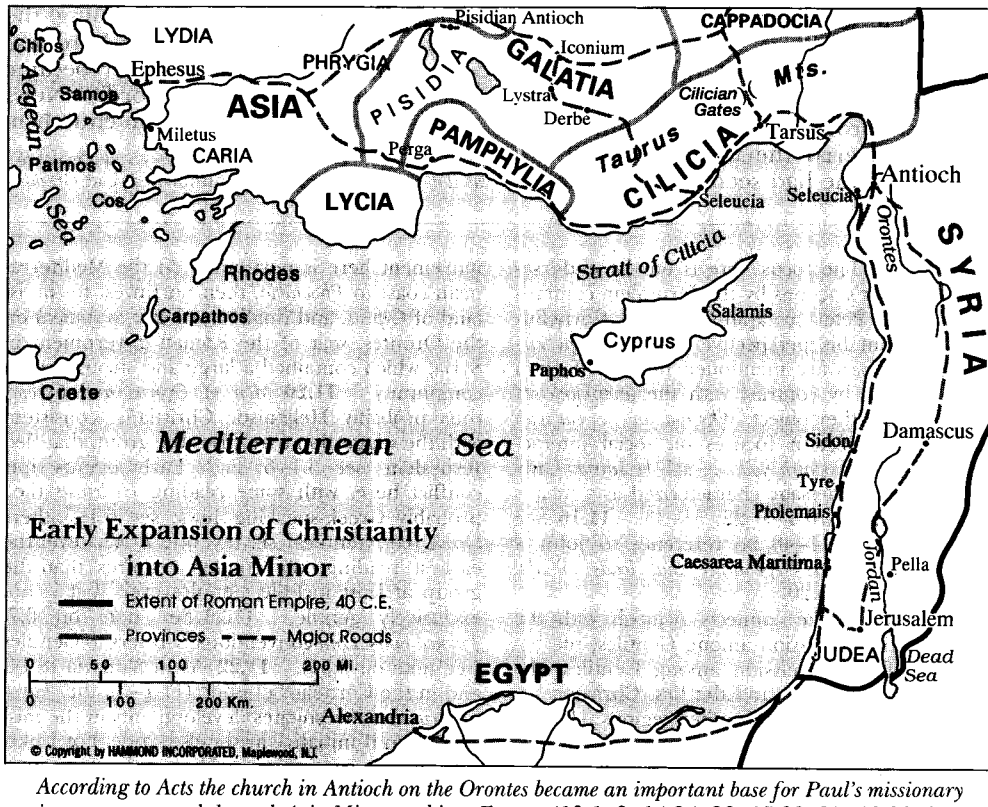
11.19–30 Luke connects Antioch with the first intentional mission among Gentiles, the beginning of Saul's mission among Gentiles, the naming of Christians, and the first Christian benevolence to Christians in other regions. Historically, the relationship between the origin of the gentile mission as portrayed here and as portrayed in 10.1–11.18 is probably beyond recovery. **11.19** *The persecution.* See 8.1b. The movement here is northward on the Mediterranean coast to *Phoenicia,* then northwest to the island of *Cyprus,* and finally northeast to *Antioch* on the Orontes, seat of the Roman government in Syria, which contained a large and strong Jewish community. **11.20** *Men of Cyprus and Cyrene,* thus probably Hellenistic Christians, consistent with the suggestion that this is the group that fled Jerusalem (see 6.1–6; 8.1). Early manuscripts conflict here, with some reading *Hellenists* (i.e., probably Greek-speaking Jews; see 6.1), others *Greeks* (i.e., Gentiles); see text note *e*. Whatever the earliest reading, the context requires that the group at least include Gentiles even if it is not exclusively gentile. **11.21** See note on 6.7. *Turned to the Lord* conventionally refers to Gentiles (see note on 9.35). **11.22** As in Samaria (8.14) and in the Cornelius episode (11.1–3), the *church in Jerusalem* investigates developments in the mission, even if initiative arises elsewhere. For Luke, Jerusalem's continuing authority is important, and he may well exaggerate Jerusalem's actual role in the gentile mission. *Barnabas,* already

Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. 23 When he came and saw the grace
of God, he rejoiced, and he exhorted
them all to remain faithful to the Lord
with steadfast devotion; 24 for he was a
good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of
faith. And a great many people were
brought to the Lord. 25 Then Barnabas
went to Tarsus to look for Saul, 26 and
when he had found him, he brought him
to Antioch. So it was that for an entire
year they met with[f] the church and
taught a great many people, and it was in
Antioch that the disciples were first called
"Christians."

27 At that time prophets came down
from Jerusalem to Antioch. 28 One of
them named Agabus stood up and pre-
dicted by the Spirit that there would be a
severe famine over all the world; and this
took place during the reign of Claudius.
29 The disciples determined that accord-
ing to their ability, each would send relief
to the believers[g] living in Judea; 30 this

f Or *were guests of* *g* Gk *brothers*

introduced in connection with the sale of his property (4.36–37) and with the support of Saul (9.27), now enters as a major figure in the gentile mission. **11.25** *Tarsus.* See 9.30. **11.26** Reconciling this account with Paul's words in Gal 1–2 is exceedingly difficult. The giving of the name *Christians* indicates that outsiders see believers as a group that is somehow distinguished from other forms of Judaism. **11.27–30** Just as Christians in Jerusalem generously support those in need (see 2.45; 4.32–37), Christians in Antioch send relief to those in Judea. **11.28** *Agabus.* See 21.10. Josephus reports a famine in Judea about 45–48 C.E. (*Antiquities* 20.51–53, 101), and there are indications of food shortages in Rome during Claudius's rule, although a *famine over all the world* seems exaggerated, and relief sent from Antioch to Jerusalem would be curious in that case. Luke may use Antioch's gift to signal both the church's charity and its indebtedness to Jerusalem. *Claudius* was Roman emperor in 41–54 C.E. **11.30** *Barnabas and Saul* are here confirmed



According to Acts the church in Antioch on the Orontes became an important base for Paul's missionary journeys westward through Asia Minor and into Europe (13.1–3; 14.24–28; 15.22–35; 18.22–23).

they did, sending it to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.

James Killed and Peter Imprisoned

12 About that time King Herod laid violent hands upon some who belonged to the church. 2 He had James, the brother of John, killed with the sword. 3 After he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. (This was during the festival of Unleavened Bread.) 4 When he had seized him, he put him in prison and handed him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending to bring him out to the people after the Passover. 5 While Peter was kept in prison, the church prayed fervently to God for him.

Peter Delivered from Prison

6 The very night before Herod was going to bring him out, Peter, bound with two chains, was sleeping between two soldiers, while guards in front of the door were keeping watch over the prison. 7 Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He tapped Peter on the side and woke him, saying, "Get up quickly." And the chains fell off his wrists. 8 The angel said to him, "Fasten your belt and put on your sandals." He did so. Then he said to him, "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me." 9 Peter[h] went out and followed him; he did not realize that what was happening with the angel's help was real; he thought he was seeing a vision. 10 After they had passed the first and the second guard, they came before the iron gate leading into the city. It opened for them of its own accord, and they went outside and walked along a lane, when suddenly the angel left him. 11 Then Peter came to himself and said, "Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hands of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting."

12 As soon as he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark, where many had gathered and were praying. 13 When he knocked at the outer gate, a maid named Rhoda came to answer. 14 On recognizing Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed that, instead of opening the gate, she ran in and announced that Peter was standing at the gate. 15 They said to her, "You are out of your mind!" But she insisted that it was so. They said, "It is his angel." 16 Meanwhile Peter continued knocking; and when they opened the gate, they saw him and were amazed. 17 He motioned to them with his hand to be silent, and described for them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he added, "Tell this to James and to the believers."[i] Then he left and went to another place.

h Gk *He* *i* Gk *brothers*

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as central figures in the Antiochene church. Correlating this trip with Paul's report in Gal 1.11–2.14 is extremely difficult.

12.1–25 Luke here drops the story of Antioch and returns to Jerusalem, vividly depicting a clash between the Christians (Peter) and their ostensibly powerful enemy (Herod). **12.1** *King Herod*, i.e., Herod Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great. In 37 C.E. he inherited the territory of Philip in the northern Transjordan (see Lk 3.1), but at his death (44 C.E.) he controlled a region almost as extensive as that of Herod the Great. (See "The Herods: A Simplified Family Tree," p. 1862.) **12.2** *James*. See Lk 5.10; 9.54. **12.3** *The Jews*. For the first time in Acts, resistance comes from the larger population rather than the Sadducees or temple officials (e.g., 4.1–4; 5.17; cf. 6.12). That these events occur during *the festival of Unleavened Bread*, just before Passover, recalls the arrest of Jesus at the same season (Lk 22.1, 7). **12.4** *Four squads of soldiers*, one for each watch of the night. **12.6–11** For other miraculous releases from prison, see 5.17–21; 16.23–29; see also 26.17, 22. Features of this escape (the awakening, the chains falling off, and gates opening automatically) are also found in other ancient literature. **12.7** On *angels* as agents of rescue, see 5.19; 1 Kings 19.5; Dan 3.19–28; Mt 18.10; cf. Acts 8.26; 10.3, 7, 22; 11.13; 27.23. The wording here is very close to that of Lk 2.9. *Light* accompanies the divine presence; see 9.3; 26.13. **12.11** For God's role in such rescues, see Ex 18.4; Dan 6.23; see also Acts 7.9–10, 34; 26.17. **12.12** *Mary, the mother of John . . . Mark*. Both persons are referred to here for the first time. Luke often introduces new characters with this sort of brief notice. The reference to Mary's home may indicate that she is unmarried. On John Mark, see 12.25; 15.37, 39. Later traditions identify this person as the author of the Second Gospel. **12.17** *James*, the brother of Jesus, introduced here (see notes on 1.14; 12.12) and mentioned

18 When morning came, there was no
small commotion among the soldiers over
what had become of Peter. 19 When
Herod had searched for him and could
not find him, he examined the guards
and ordered them to be put to death.
Then he went down from Judea to Caesa-
rea and stayed there.

The Death of Herod

20 Now Herod[j] was angry with the
people of Tyre and Sidon. So they came
to him in a body; and after winning over
Blastus, the king's chamberlain, they
asked for a reconciliation, because their
country depended on the king's country
for food. 21 On an appointed day Herod
put on his royal robes, took his seat on the
platform, and delivered a public address
to them. 22 The people kept shouting,
"The voice of a god, and not of a mortal!"
23 And immediately, because he had not
given the glory to God, an angel of the
Lord struck him down, and he was eaten
by worms and died.
24 But the word of God continued to
advance and gain adherents. 25 Then
after completing their mission Barna-
bas and Saul returned to[k] Jerusalem and
brought with them John, whose other
name was Mark.

Barnabas and Saul Commissioned

13 Now in the church at Antioch
there were prophets and teach-
ers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Ni-
ger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member
of the court of Herod the ruler,[l] and
Saul. 2 While they were worshiping the
Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said,
"Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for
the work to which I have called them."
3 Then after fasting and praying they laid
their hands on them and sent them off.

A Confrontation in Cyprus

4 So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit,
they went down to Seleucia; and from
there they sailed to Cyprus. 5 When they
arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the
word of God in the synagogues of the
Jews. And they had John also to assist
them. 6 When they had gone through the
whole island as far as Paphos, they met a
certain magician, a Jewish false prophet,

j Gk *he* *k* Other ancient authorities read *from*
l Gk *tetrarch*

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again in 15.13; 21.18. *Went to another place*, i.e., he left safely (see 12.18–19). **12.18–19** Cf. 5.21–24. *No small commotion*, i.e., a large commotion, Luke here employs a common figure of speech in which an assertion is made by negating its opposite (see also 15.2; 19.23, 24). **12.20–23** According to Josephus, Herod Agrippa I was greeted as a god, did not reject the title, and immediately saw an owl which prompted him to recall earlier predictions about his death. He then declared his imminent death to be God's will, succumbed to severe abdominal pain, and died five days later (*Antiquities* 19.343–52). **12.21** Agrippa is said to have worn *royal robes* made entirely of silver; see Josephus *Antiquities* 19.343–44. **12.22** See Ezek 28.2, 6, 9. **12.23** Unlike Peter, who praises God for his rescue (12.11), Herod fails to praise God and is struck down. On death for blasphemy, see Sir 48.21; 1 Macc 7.41; on death *by worms*, see Jdt 16.17; 2 Macc 9.9. **12.24** This typical Lucan summary (see note on 6.7) contrasts with the outcome of Herod's story to comment wryly on the fate of the church's enemies. **12.25** A transitional verse prepares for the Antiochene mission and connects Antioch with Jerusalem by means of John Mark. Although the story requires that Barnabas and Saul return to Antioch from *Jerusalem* (see text note *k*), important early manuscripts read the opposite (*to* or *in* Jerusalem), creating logical confusion (cf. 11.29–30). Another suggestion is to translate, "Barnabas and Saul returned, after completing their mission in Jerusalem."

13.1–12 The mission of the Antiochene church, like that of the Jerusalem church, begins with a confrontation with Satan in the form of his agent, a magician (see 8.4–25). **13.1** *Prophets and teachers*. See Rom 12.6–7; 1 Cor 12.28. *A member of the court of Herod the ruler*, i.e., a close friend of Herod Antipas. Herod Antipas is *the ruler* (or *tetrarch*; see Lk 3.19; 9.7), as distinct from Herod Agrippa I, the *king* (see 12.1; also Lk 1.5). **13.2** Initiative for the new mission, here as elsewhere in Acts, comes from the *Spirit* rather than from human beings. **13.3** See 6.6, where prayer and the laying on of hands accompany the appointment of the Seven (see also 14.23). **13.4** *Seleucia*, seaport of Antioch. **13.5** *Salamis*, eastern port of the island of Cyprus (see 4.36; 11.19–20; 21.16). *John* Mark's role is presented as marginal; he is not identified with Barnabas and Saul when the Holy Spirit commissions them (13.2–3), and he soon returns to Jerusalem (13.13; see also 15.37–38). **13.6** *Paphos*, on the southwest coast of the island of Cyprus. *A certain magician, a Jewish false prophet*, an identification revealing his charac-

named Bar-Jesus. 7 He was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man, who summoned Barnabas and Saul and wanted to hear the word of God. 8 But the magician Elymas (for that is the translation of his name) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul away from the faith. 9 But Saul, also known as Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him 10 and said, "You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord? 11 And now listen—the hand of the Lord is against you, and you will be blind for a while, unable to see the sun." Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he went about groping for someone to lead him by the hand. 12 When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was astonished at the teaching about the Lord.

Paul and Barnabas in Antioch of Pisidia

13 Then Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia. John, however, left them and returned to Jerusalem; 14 but they went on from Perga and came to Antioch in Pisidia. And on the sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. 15 After the reading of the law and the prophets, the officials of the synagogue sent them a message, saying, "Brothers, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, give it." 16 So Paul stood up and with a gesture began to speak:

"You Israelites,[m] and others who fear God, listen. 17 The God of this people Israel chose our ancestors and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with uplifted arm he led them out of it. 18 For about forty years he put up with[n] them in the wilderness. 19 After he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance 20 for about four hundred fifty years. After that he gave them judges until the time of the prophet Samuel. 21 Then they asked for a king; and God gave them Saul son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, who reigned for forty years. 22 When he had

m Gk *Men, Israelites* *n* Other ancient authorities read *cared for*

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ter; not only is he a magician serving Satan, he is an apostate Jew. **13.7** *Sergius Paulus*, the *proconsul* or governor of the province, would have been a citizen of considerable standing. **13.8** *Elymas* does not translate Bar-Jesus. **13.9** *Saul, also known as Paul.* From this point on Luke employs only the Roman form of his name (except in 22.7, 13; 26.14), probably because the gentile mission predominates. *Filled with the Holy Spirit*, as were Peter (4.8) and Stephen (6.5). **13.10** *Making crooked the straight paths of the Lord* contrasts the false prophet (13.6) with the true prophet, John (see Lk 3.4). **13.11** Paul's blinding of Bar-Jesus proves the power of God over Satan, enacts the punishment for idolatry (Deut 28.28–29), and recalls Paul's own conversion (9.8). *Darkness*, the realm of separation from God (see 26.18; Lk 22.53). **13.12** *The teaching about the Lord* here concerns the power of God over Satan.

13.13–52 Pisidian Antioch provides the scene for Paul's first speech in Acts. **13.13** Following the important victory over Satan's agent, Luke usually places *Paul*'s name first (see 13.43, 46, 50) rather than the earlier "Barnabas and Saul" (11.30; 12.25; 13.2, 7; but cf. 14.12, 14; 15.12), indicating that Paul has become the central figure. *Perga in Pamphylia.* The movement is north to the mainland of Asia Minor. **13.14** Pisidian *Antioch*, north of Perga (to be distinguished from Syrian Antioch, mentioned in 13.1; see note on 11.19). Paul's usual missionary practice is to go first to the *synagogue* (see, e.g., 14.1; 17.1–2; 18.4). **13.16a** The posture and gesture are those of a Greco-Roman orator. **13.16b–41** Paul's speech recalls earlier speeches in Acts; the speech traces God's saving actions on Israel's behalf and places Jesus in that tradition, concluding with a call to forgiveness. **13.16b–25** The first section moves from the exodus and conquest to the establishment of the kingship, identifying Jesus with the Davidic line. **13.16b** *Others who fear God*, i.e., Gentiles (see 10.2; 16.14; cf. 2.14; 3.12; 7.2). **13.17** On God's *choosing* of Israel, see Deut 4.37; 10.15. *With uplifted arm.* See Ex 6.1, Deut 4.34; 5.15. **13.18** Some Greek manuscripts read *he put up with them* and others *he cared for them* (see text note *n*), the difference consisting in one Greek letter. In the Septuagint of Deut 1.31, which is echoed here, the same text-critical problem exists. The evidence is so evenly divided that making a judgment is very difficult. **13.19** *Seven nations*, see Deut 7.1. On the *land as an inheritance*, see Josh 14.1–2. **13.20** *Four hundred fifty years*, apparently including the four hundred years prior to the exodus (Gen 15.13). **13.21** On the request for and granting of a *king*, see 1 Sam 8.5, 10; 10.21, 24. *Forty years.* See also Josephus *Antiquities* 6.378; cf. 1 Sam 13.1. **13.22** See

removed him, he made David their king.
In his testimony about him he said, 'I have
found David, son of Jesse, to be a man
after my heart, who will carry out all my
wishes.' 23 Of this man's posterity God has
brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he
promised; 24 before his coming John had
already proclaimed a baptism of repen-
tance to all the people of Israel. 25 And as
John was finishing his work, he said,
'What do you suppose that I am? I am not
he. No, but one is coming after me; I am
not worthy to untie the thong of the san-
dals[o] on his feet.'

26 "My brothers, you descendants of
Abraham's family, and others who fear
God, to us[p] the message of this salvation
has been sent. 27 Because the residents of
Jerusalem and their leaders did not recog-
nize him or understand the words of the
prophets that are read every sabbath, they
fulfilled those words by condemning him.
28 Even though they found no cause for a
sentence of death, they asked Pilate to
have him killed. 29 When they had carried
out everything that was written about
him, they took him down from the tree
and laid him in a tomb. 30 But God raised
him from the dead; 31 and for many days
he appeared to those who came up with
him from Galilee to Jerusalem, and they
are now his witnesses to the people.
32 And we bring you the good news that
what God promised to our ancestors 33 he
has fulfilled for us, their children, by rais-
ing Jesus; as also it is written in the second
psalm,

'You are my Son;
today I have begotten you.'

34 As to his raising him from the dead, no
more to return to corruption, he has spo-
ken in this way,

'I will give you the holy promises
made to David.'

35 Therefore he has also said in another
psalm,

'You will not let your Holy One
experience corruption.'

36 For David, after he had served the pur-
pose of God in his own generation, died,[q]
was laid beside his ancestors, and experi-
enced corruption; 37 but he whom God
raised up experienced no corruption.
38 Let it be known to you therefore, my
brothers, that through this man forgive-

o Gk *untie the sandals*
p Other ancient authorities read *you*
q Gk *fell asleep*

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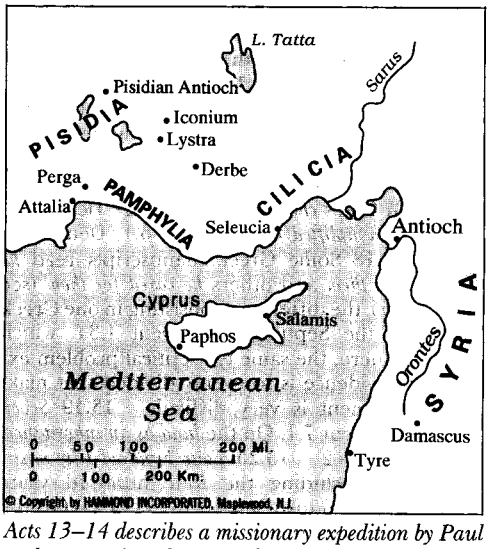
1 Sam 13.14; 15.23; 16.1, 12–13. **13.23** The connection between David and Jesus runs throughout Luke's story; see 2.30; 13.34–37, Lk



Acts 13–14 describes a missionary expedition by Paul and companions by way of Cyprus into Pamphylia and Pisidia.

1.32; 2.4. **13.25** See Lk 3.16. John's ministry connects David and Jesus, but Luke carefully places John offstage when Jesus' ministry begins (see Lk 3.18–23; 16.16). **13.26–37** Direct address (*my brothers*) begins the second part of the speech, which interprets the death of Jesus as the fulfillment of scripture (13.27, 29) and God's promises (13.32–33). **13.26** *Others who fear God.* See 13.16. **13.27** Ironically, the ignorance of Jerusalem's residents in fact brings about the fulfillment of scripture; see 3.17–18. **13.28** See 3.13–14; Lk 23.13–25. **13.31** The apostles' primary task is to *witness*; see 1.8; Lk 24.48. **13.32** *We bring you the good news.* Even if Paul and Barnabas do not technically qualify as apostolic witnesses (see 1.21–22), they nevertheless function as proclaimers alongside the others. **13.33** The quotation from Ps 2.7 could imply that Jesus becomes God's son by virtue of his resurrection (see also 2.36; Rom 1.4), but cf. Lk 3.22. **13.34–37** For a similar contrast between David and Jesus, see 2.29–36. **13.34** The quotation is from Isa 55.3 (Septuagint). **13.35** Ps 16.10 is quoted; see also Acts 2.27, 31. **13.38** *Let it be known to you.* See note on 2.14. *My brothers.* Direct address marks the movement to the concluding call for repentance. *Forgiveness of*

ness of sins is proclaimed to you; 39 by
this Jesus[r] everyone who believes is set
free from all those sins[s] from which
you could not be freed by the law of Mo-
ses. 40 Beware, therefore, that what the
prophets said does not happen to you:
41 'Look, you scoffers!
Be amazed and perish,
for in your days I am doing a
work,
a work that you will never
believe, even if someone
tells you.' "
42 As Paul and Barnabas[t] were going
out, the people urged them to speak
about these things again the next sabbath.
43 When the meeting of the synagogue
broke up, many Jews and devout converts
to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas,
who spoke to them and urged them to
continue in the grace of God.
44 The next sabbath almost the whole
city gathered to hear the word of the
Lord.[u] 45 But when the Jews saw the
crowds, they were filled with jealousy; and
blaspheming, they contradicted what was
spoken by Paul. 46 Then both Paul and
Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, "It was
necessary that the word of God should be
spoken first to you. Since you reject it and
judge yourselves to be unworthy of eter-
nal life, we are now turning to the Gen-
tiles. 47 For so the Lord has commanded
us, saying,
'I have set you to be a light for
the Gentiles,
so that you may bring salvation
to the ends of the earth.' "
48 When the Gentiles heard this, they
were glad and praised the word of the
Lord; and as many as had been destined
for eternal life became believers. 49 Thus
the word of the Lord spread throughout
the region. 50 But the Jews incited the de-
vout women of high standing and the
leading men of the city, and stirred up
persecution against Paul and Barnabas,
and drove them out of their region. 51 So
they shook the dust off their feet in pro-
test against them, and went to Iconium.
52 And the disciples were filled with joy
and with the Holy Spirit.

Paul and Barnabas in Iconium

14 The same thing occurred in Ico-
nium, where Paul and Barnabas[t]
went into the Jewish synagogue and spoke
in such a way that a great number of both
Jews and Greeks became believers. 2 But
the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gen-
tiles and poisoned their minds against the
brothers. 3 So they remained for a long
time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who
testified to the word of his grace by grant-
ing signs and wonders to be done through
them. 4 But the residents of the city were
divided; some sided with the Jews, and
some with the apostles. 5 And when an at-
tempt was made by both Gentiles and
Jews, with their rulers, to mistreat them

r Gk *this* s Gk *all* t Gk *they* u Other ancient authorities read *God*

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sins. See 2.38; 5.31; 10.43. **13.39** The implicit claim that Jesus brings freedom from the Mosaic law is new here in Acts and echoes themes from Paul's Letters (see, e.g., Gal 3.23–35; Rom 3.28; 8.3). **13.40–41** The prophetic warning, drawn from Hab 1.5, anticipates the Jews' rejection in 13.44–47 (see also 28.23–28) and recalls the final words of Stephen's speech (7.51–53). **13.42–43** Like the initial preaching in Jerusalem, Paul's speech draws a receptive response; see 2.37–42. **13.44–52** For the first time, the theme of Jewish rejection of the gospel is joined with that of the gentile mission. **13.45** Jewish response here fulfills Paul's prophetic words in 13.40–41. **13.46** *Boldly*. See note on 4.13. The geographical order of 1.8 also suggests that preaching moves from a Jewish audience (Jerusalem) *to the Gentiles* (*the ends of the earth*, v. 47). **13.47** Isa 49.6 is quoted; see also Lk 2.32; Acts 26.17–18. **13.48** The response of the *Gentiles* matches that of the Ethiopian eunuch (see 8.39). *Destined for eternal life*. See Lk 10.20; see also Ex 32.32–33; Ps 69.28; Isa 4.3; Dan 12.1. **13.51** *They shook the dust off*. See Lk 9.5; 10.11. *Iconium*, provincial capital of the district of Lycaonia, southeast of Pisidian Antioch.

14.1–7 Despite what 13.47 might lead one to expect, this brief transitional scene demonstrates that both Jews and Gentiles are among those who accept and who reject the Christian gospel. **14.1** *Greeks*, i.e., Gentiles. **14.2** Luke places responsibility for resistance on *Jews*. **14.3** *Speaking boldly*. See note on 4.13. *Signs and wonders*, a distinguishing characteristic of the Christian community; see 2.19, 22, 43; 4.30; 5.12; 6.8; 15.12; 2 Cor 12.12. **14.4** Only here and in 14.14 are Paul and Barnabas referred to as *apostles* (see note on 1.21–22). The Greek text does not have the word

and to stone them, 6 the apostles[v] learned
of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of
Lycaonia, and to the surrounding country; 7 and there they continued proclaiming the good news.

Paul and Barnabas in Lystra and Derbe

8 In Lystra there was a man sitting
who could not use his feet and had never
walked, for he had been crippled from
birth. 9 He listened to Paul as he was
speaking. And Paul, looking at him intently and seeing that he had faith to
be healed, 10 said in a loud voice, "Stand
upright on your feet." And the man[w]
sprang up and began to walk. 11 When the
crowds saw what Paul had done, they
shouted in the Lycaonian language, "The
gods have come down to us in human
form!" 12 Barnabas they called Zeus, and
Paul they called Hermes, because he was
the chief speaker. 13 The priest of Zeus,
whose temple was just outside the city,[x]
brought oxen and garlands to the gates;
he and the crowds wanted to offer sacrifice. 14 When the apostles Barnabas and
Paul heard of it, they tore their clothes
and rushed out into the crowd, shouting,
15 "Friends,[y] why are you doing this? We
are mortals just like you, and we bring
you good news, that you should turn from
these worthless things to the living God,
who made the heaven and the earth and
the sea and all that is in them. 16 In past
generations he allowed all the nations to
follow their own ways; 17 yet he has not
left himself without a witness in doing
good—giving you rains from heaven and
fruitful seasons, and filling you with food
and your hearts with joy." 18 Even with
these words, they scarcely restrained the
crowds from offering sacrifice to them.

19 But Jews came there from Antioch
and Iconium and won over the crowds.
Then they stoned Paul and dragged him
out of the city, supposing that he was
dead. 20 But when the disciples surrounded him, he got up and went into the
city. The next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe.

The Return to Antioch in Syria

21 After they had proclaimed the
good news to that city and had made
many disciples, they returned to Lystra,
then on to Iconium and Antioch. 22 There
they strengthened the souls of the disciples and encouraged them to continue in
the faith, saying, "It is through many persecutions that we must enter the kingdom
of God." 23 And after they had appointed
elders for them in each church, with
prayer and fasting they entrusted them to
the Lord in whom they had come to
believe.

v Gk *they* w Gk *he* x Or *The priest of Zeus-Outside-the-City* y Gk *Men*

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apostles in 14.6. **14.6** *Lystra* is southwest of Iconium; *Derbe*, southeast of Lystra.

14.8–20 As at the outset of the Jerusalem mission, so also among Gentiles, a miraculous event prompts misunderstanding which then requires an explanation (see 2.1–4, 12–15; 3.1–13). **14.8** The detailed description of the man's disability enhances the miracle that follows; see also 3.2. **14.9** *Looking at him intently.* See 3.4; 13.9. *Faith to be healed.* See Lk 5.20. **14.11–12** The amazement typically generated by a miracle (see, e.g., Lk 5.26) here becomes blatant misunderstanding; cf. Ovid *Metamorphoses* 8.611–725, where the gods *Zeus* and *Hermes* (Jupiter and Mercury) appear in the guise of two men. **14.14** The vehement rejection of this misunderstanding is fundamental to the service of God (cf. 12.22–23). **14.15–17** A brief speech provides the essentials of early Christian preaching to Gentiles (see also 17.22–31). **14.15** *We are mortals.* See 10.26; Wis 7.1; Jas 5.17. Turning from idols *to the living God* is a consistent depiction of gentile conversion (15.19; 26.20; 1 Thess 1.9). *Who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them.* See note on 4.24. **14.17** See Wis 13.1–9; Rom 1.20 for a similar view that God should have been known from observation of the natural world. **14.18–19** As in Pisidian Antioch and Iconium, some welcome Christian proclamation and others respond with persecution (see 13.48–50; 14.1–2). On *stoning*, see 2 Cor 11.25. **14.20** *Derbe.* See note on 14.6.

14.21–28 Paul and Barnabas return to Antioch, stopping along the way to encourage new believers and establish leaders in each congregation. **14.22** *To continue in the faith.* See 11.23. On *persecution* as a necessary result of Christian faith, see 20.23; Mt 7.14; Phil 1.29; 1 Thess 3.3. **14.23** *Elders*, originally the title of important Jewish leaders (see Lk 7.3; 9.22), also figure in the Jerusalem church (see, e.g., 11.30; 15.1–6) and in the churches of the Pauline circle (1 Tim 5.17; Titus 1.5), although they are not mentioned in the indisputably Pauline Letters. *With prayer and fast-*

24 Then they passed through Pisidia
and came to Pamphylia. 25 When they had
spoken the word in Perga, they went
down to Attalia. 26 From there they sailed
back to Antioch, where they had been
commended to the grace of God for the
work[z] that they had completed. 27 When
they arrived, they called the church to-
gether and related all that God had done
with them, and how he had opened a
door of faith for the Gentiles. 28 And
they stayed there with the disciples for
some time.

The Council at Jerusalem

15 Then certain individuals came
down from Judea and were
teaching the brothers, "Unless you are cir-
cumcised according to the custom of Mo-
ses, you cannot be saved." 2 And after
Paul and Barnabas had no small dissen-
sion and debate with them, Paul and Bar-
nabas and some of the others were
appointed to go up to Jerusalem to dis-
cuss this question with the apostles and
the elders. 3 So they were sent on their
way by the church, and as they passed
through both Phoenicia and Samaria,
they reported the conversion of the Gen-
tiles, and brought great joy to all the be-
lievers.[a] 4 When they came to Jerusalem,
they were welcomed by the church and
the apostles and the elders, and they re-
ported all that God had done with them.
5 But some believers who belonged to the
sect of the Pharisees stood up and said, "It
is necessary for them to be circumcised
and ordered to keep the law of Moses."
6 The apostles and the elders met to-
gether to consider this matter. 7 After
there had been much debate, Peter stood
up and said to them, "My brothers,[b] you
know that in the early days God made a
choice among you, that I should be the
one through whom the Gentiles would
hear the message of the good news and
become believers. 8 And God, who knows
the human heart, testified to them by giv-
ing them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to
us; 9 and in cleansing their hearts by faith
he has made no distinction between them
and us. 10 Now therefore why are you put-
ting God to the test by placing on the neck
of the disciples a yoke that neither our an-
cestors nor we have been able to bear?
11 On the contrary, we believe that we will
be saved through the grace of the Lord
Jesus, just as they will."
12 The whole assembly kept silence,
and listened to Barnabas and Paul as they
told of all the signs and wonders that God
had done through them among the Gen-
tiles. 13 After they finished speaking,
James replied, "My brothers,[b] listen to

z Or *committed in the grace of God to the work*
a Gk *brothers* b Gk *Men, brothers*

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ing. See 13.3. **14.24–26** The route leads southward to the harbor of *Attalia* and then back to Syrian *Antioch*. **14.27** Consistent with the narrative throughout Acts, *God* is credited with the success of the gentile mission (see, e.g., 11.18; 13.47; 15.7–8). *A door of faith*. See 1 Cor 16.9; 2 Cor 2.12.

15.1–35 The Jerusalem council presents the final defense of the gentile mission and resolves a bitter dispute over requirements for gentile Christians with respect to Mosaic law. The difficulty of reconciling Acts 15 with Paul's comments in Gal 2.1–14 suggests that Luke has shaped the story to conform to his own understanding of the emerging church. **15.1–5** For the first time, the question arises whether Gentiles who become Christians must be *circumcised* and keep Mosaic law. On circumcision, see Gen 17.10–14; Lev 12.3; cf. Rom 2.25–29; Gal 5.2–12. **15.2** *No small dissension*, i.e., a large dissension (see note on 12.18–19). **15.4** *All that God had done*, i.e., to effect the conversion of the Gentiles. See 14.27; 15.12; 21.19. **15.5** The demand to *keep the law of Moses* considerably expands the conflict from the issue of circumcision (see 15.1). **15.6–11** Peter's speech, which is the last reference to him in Acts (except for 15.14), appeals to the church's experience with the gentile mission and to an understanding of grace. **15.7** *Much debate* reveals the intensity of the parties involved. *In the early days*. See 10.1–11.18; whether Peter historically carried out this role is quite unclear (see 8.26–40; 11.19–26; Gal 2.7–8). **15.9** *No distinction*. See also Rom 3.22; 10.12. **15.10** *Putting God to the test*. See 5.9; Ex 17.2; Ps 78.41. Jewish writers sometimes spoke of the law as a *yoke* to be chosen (*Mishnah Avot* 3.5, *Berakot* 2.2; cf. Mt 11.29–30). **15.11** This statement reinterprets the conversion of Cornelius as a message not simply about the salvation of Gentiles but also about the way in which salvation comes to all persons; see also Rom 3.24; 4.16; 5.21. **15.12–29** The report of Barnabas and Paul precedes James's speech, which interprets the gentile mission on the basis of scripture. **15.12** *Signs and wonders*. See note on 14.3. **15.13** *James* (the brother of Jesus) here

me. 14 Simeon has related how God first
looked favorably on the Gentiles, to take
from among them a people for his name.
15 This agrees with the words of the
prophets, as it is written,
16 'After this I will return,
and I will rebuild the dwelling of
David, which has fallen;
from its ruins I will rebuild it,
and I will set it up,
17 so that all other peoples may seek
the Lord—
even all the Gentiles over whom
my name has been called.
Thus says the Lord, who has
been making these things
18 known from long ago.'[c]
19 Therefore I have reached the decision
that we should not trouble those Gentiles
who are turning to God, 20 but we should
write to them to abstain only from things
polluted by idols and from fornication
and from whatever has been strangled[d]
and from blood. 21 For in every city, for
generations past, Moses has had those
who proclaim him, for he has been read
aloud every sabbath in the synagogues."

The Council's Letter to Gentile Believers

22 Then the apostles and the elders,
with the consent of the whole church, de-
cided to choose men from among their
members[e] and to send them to Antioch
with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Ju-
das called Barsabbas, and Silas, leaders
among the brothers, 23 with the following
letter: "The brothers, both the apostles
and the elders, to the believers[f] of Gen-
tile origin in Antioch and Syria and Cili-
cia, greetings. 24 Since we have heard that
certain persons who have gone out from
us, though with no instructions from us,
have said things to disturb you and have
unsettled your minds,[g] 25 we have de-
cided unanimously to choose representa-
tives[h] and send them to you, along with
our beloved Barnabas and Paul, 26 who
have risked their lives for the sake of our
Lord Jesus Christ. 27 We have therefore
sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will
tell you the same things by word of
mouth. 28 For it has seemed good to the
Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no
further burden than these essentials:
29 that you abstain from what has been
sacrificed to idols and from blood and
from what is strangled[i] and from forni-
cation. If you keep yourselves from these,
you will do well. Farewell."

30 So they were sent off and went
down to Antioch. When they gathered the
congregation together, they delivered the
letter. 31 When its members[j] read it, they

c Other ancient authorities read *things.* [18]*Known to God from of old are all his works.'* d Other ancient authorities lack *and from whatever has been strangled* e Gk *from among them* f Gk *brothers* g Other ancient authorities add *saying, 'You must be circumcised and keep the law,'* h Gk *men* i Other ancient authorities lack *and from what is strangled* j Gk *When they*

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reenters the narrative as the central figure of the Jerusalem church (see 12.17; 21.18). **15.14** *Simeon,* apparently Peter, although only here does Luke refer to him thus (cf. *Simon* in, e.g., 10.5; 11.13; Lk 22.31; but see also 2 Pet 1.1). *A people for his name.* The term reserved for Israel (see note on 3.11) now includes Gentiles also. **15.16–18** James quotes Am 9.11–12 to demonstrate that the inclusion of Gentiles has long been within God's plan. The quotation comes from the Greek Septuagint, the use of which is incongruous with the portrait of James as leader of Jerusalem Christianity, who would presumably speak Aramaic in this setting. **15.19** *Turning to God.* See note on 9.35. **15.20** See also 15.29; 21.25. In Lev 17.8–18.30 these regulations govern both Israel and outsiders who live within Israel; thus, James proposes a law for gentile Christians in keeping with Mosaic law but without imposing circumcision (cf. Philo *Migration of Abraham* 89–94; Josephus *Antiquities* 20.38–48). *Things polluted by idols* include sacrificial meat offered to idols; see Ex 34.15–16; 1 Cor 10.7, 14–22. *Fornication.* See Lev 18.6–30; 1 Cor 6.18. *Whatever has been strangled,* i.e., animals not slaughtered in accordance with Lev 17.3; 19.26; Deut 12.16, 23–27. *From blood.* See Lev 3.17; 17.10–14. **15.21** *Moses,* i.e., Mosaic law. **15.22–29** Including this letter from Jerusalem allows Luke to repeat the content of the agreement and emphasize the unanimity of the Jerusalem church. **15.22** *Judas called Barsabbas* is nowhere else mentioned. *Silas* accompanies Paul in 15.40–18.5 (Silas is probably "Silvanus" in 2 Cor 1.19; 1 Thess 1.1; 2 Thess 1.1). **15.24** *Though with no instructions from us* carefully distances the Jerusalem council from the demands for circumcision and law observance (see 15.1). **15.27** *By word of mouth.* The oral report of Judas and Silas, who accompany Paul and Barnabas as they deliver the letter, again reinforces the importance of this message. **15.28** Luke often highlights the role of the *Holy Spirit* (see, e.g., 2.1–13; 4.8, 31; 10.44–48). **15.29** See note on 15.20. **15.31** The Gentiles

rejoiced at the exhortation. 32 Judas and
Silas, who were themselves prophets, said
much to encourage and strengthen the
believers.[k] 33 After they had been there
for some time, they were sent off in peace
by the believers[k] to those who had sent
them.[l] 35 But Paul and Barnabas re-
mained in Antioch, and there, with many
others, they taught and proclaimed the
word of the Lord.

Paul and Barnabas Separate

36 After some days Paul said to Bar-
nabas, "Come, let us return and visit the
believers[k] in every city where we pro-
claimed the word of the Lord and see how
they are doing." 37 Barnabas wanted to
take with them John called Mark. 38 But
Paul decided not to take with them one
who had deserted them in Pamphylia and
had not accompanied them in the work.
39 The disagreement became so sharp that
they parted company; Barnabas took
Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus.
40 But Paul chose Silas and set out, the be-
lievers[k] commending him to the grace of
the Lord. 41 He went through Syria and
Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

Timothy Joins Paul and Silas

16 Paul[m] went on also to Derbe and
to Lystra, where there was a disci-
ple named Timothy, the son of a Jewish
woman who was a believer; but his father
was a Greek. 2 He was well spoken of by
the believers[k] in Lystra and Iconium.
3 Paul wanted Timothy to accompany
him; and he took him and had him cir-
cumcised because of the Jews who were in
those places, for they all knew that his fa-
ther was a Greek. 4 As they went from
town to town, they delivered to them for
observance the decisions that had been
reached by the apostles and elders who
were in Jerusalem. 5 So the churches were
strengthened in the faith and increased in
numbers daily.

Paul's Vision of the Man of Macedonia

6 They went through the region of
Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbid-
den by the Holy Spirit to speak the word
in Asia. 7 When they had come opposite
Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia,
but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them;
8 so, passing by Mysia, they went down to
Troas. 9 During the night Paul had a vi-
sion: there stood a man of Macedonia
pleading with him and saying, "Come
over to Macedonia and help us." 10 When
he had seen the vision, we immediately
tried to cross over to Macedonia, being

k Gk *brothers* *l* Other ancient authorities add verse 34, *But it seemed good to Silas to remain there*
m Gk *He*

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receive the church's decision with rejoicing, as they earlier received the gospel itself (see 13.48). **15.33** Silas later leaves with Paul (15.40), as though this departure had not occurred (see text note *l*).

15.36–16.40 With new colleagues and after a false start, Paul undertakes a significant new mission in Thessalonica. **15.36–41** What develops into a major mission trip begins with the simple plan to revisit the cities of their earlier preaching. **15.37–39** For another possible reason for the conflict between Paul and Barnabas, see Gal 2.11–14. **15.38** On John Mark's *desertion*, see 13.13. **15.40** *Silas*. See notes on 15.22; 15.33. **16.1–5** The addition of Timothy completes the team. **16.1** *Derbe and ... Lystra*. See note on 14.6. *Timothy*. See 17.14–15; 18.5; 19.22; 20.4. He appears to have played a more substantial role in Paul's work than Luke indicates (see Rom 16.21; 1 Cor 4.17; 16.10; 2 Cor 1.1, 19; Phil 1.1; 2.19–22; 1 Thess 1.1; 3.2, 6; Philem 1). **16.3** By *circumcising* Timothy, Paul shows his awareness of Jewish sensitivities (see 21.17–26; 22.3; 24.14; 26.5; but cf. Gal 2.3). **16.5** See note on 6.7. **16.6–10** Consistent with the picture elsewhere in Acts, a new phase in the mission arises only with divine guidance (see, e.g., 8.26; 10.9–16). Here Luke reinforces that theme by showing the rejection of human initiatives. **16.6–8** *Phrygia and Galatia*. The route is to the northwest, toward *Mysia*, the region abutting the Hellespont. Not permitted to go either south to *Asia* Minor or north to *Bithynia*, the group arrives by default in the harbor city of *Troas*. Probably the change between *the Holy Spirit* and the *Spirit of Jesus* reflects stylistic variation rather than a theological distinction. **16.9** On *visions* or dreams as a means of guidance, see 9.10–12; 10.3–6, 10–16; 11.5–10; 18.9–10. *Macedonia*, a Roman province in the northern region of the Greek peninsula. **16.10** The shift here to the first-person plural narration (*we*) extends through 16.17 (see also 20.5–15; 21.1–18; 27.1–28.16). The change may result from stylistic consider-

convinced that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them.

The Conversion of Lydia

11 We set sail from Troas and took a
straight course to Samothrace, the follow-
ing day to Neapolis, 12 and from there to
Philippi, which is a leading city of the dis-
trict[n] of Macedonia and a Roman colony.
We remained in this city for some days.
13 On the sabbath day we went outside
the gate by the river, where we supposed
there was a place of prayer; and we sat
down and spoke to the women who had
gathered there. 14 A certain woman named
Lydia, a worshiper of God, was listening
to us; she was from the city of Thyatira
and a dealer in purple cloth. The Lord
opened her heart to listen eagerly to what
was said by Paul. 15 When she and her
household were baptized, she urged us,
saying, "If you have judged me to be faith-
ful to the Lord, come and stay at my
home." And she prevailed upon us.

Paul and Silas in Prison

16 One day, as we were going to the
place of prayer, we met a slave-girl who
had a spirit of divination and brought her
owners a great deal of money by fortune-
telling. 17 While she followed Paul and us,
she would cry out, "These men are slaves
of the Most High God, who proclaim to
you[o] a way of salvation." 18 She kept do-
ing this for many days. But Paul, very
much annoyed, turned and said to the
spirit, "I order you in the name of Jesus
Christ to come out of her." And it came
out that very hour.

19 But when her owners saw that their
hope of making money was gone, they
seized Paul and Silas and dragged them
into the marketplace before the authori-
ties. 20 When they had brought them be-
fore the magistrates, they said, "These

n Other authorities read *a city of the first district*
o Other ancient authorities read *to us*

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ations, or from the use of travel diaries only loosely reworked by Luke, or from the author's presence during this part of the journey. Given the uncertainty, little can be deduced from it regarding the historical accuracy of Acts or the identity of Luke. **16.11–15** The mission in Philippi begins and ends with references to Lydia (see 16.40). **16.11–12** *Samothrace*, an island approximately halfway between Troas and *Neapolis*,

Acts 16 narrates the important expansion of the Pauline mission into Europe.

port city of *Philippi*. **16.12** Philippi was a city in one of four districts within the province of Macedonia (see text note *n*). In this context, where Paul's status as a Roman citizen first enters the narrative (16.37–38), Luke identifies Philippi as a *Roman colony*. Pisidian Antioch (13.14), Lystra (14.6), Troas (16.8), and Corinth (18.1) were all colonies as well. **16.13** *A place of prayer* may be either a synagogue or an informal place of worship. **16.14** *A worshiper of God*, i.e., a Gentile who worshiped Israel's God (see note on 10.2). *Thyatira* was in the district of Lydia, which had long been a center for the production of purple dye. **16.15** References to the *household* of Lydia (her name is the same as that of the district) suggest that she is unmarried. A merchant and mistress of a household, she would have occupied a relatively high social and economic status. On the *baptism* of a household, see 10.24, 44–48; 11.14; 16.31–34. **16.16–24** As earlier in Acts (3.1–26; 14.8–18), a healing leads to a public confrontation. **16.16** *Spirit of divination*, lit. "a spirit of the Python," which was associated with the Delphic oracle. **16.17** *A way of salvation*. Not only is this a major Lucan theme (see, e.g., 2.40; Lk 3.6) but a preview of what will happen to both the slave girl and the jailer. **16.18** On healing *in the name of Jesus Christ*, see 3.6, 16; 4.10. **16.19** See also note on 8.18. Cf. 19.25, where Luke draws attention to the economic motives of other potential competitors. Here the theme is underscored by false charges against Paul and Silas. **16.20** *Magistrates*, a popular designation for the chief

men are disturbing our city; they are Jews
21 and are advocating customs that are not
lawful for us as Romans to adopt or ob-
serve." 22 The crowd joined in attacking
them, and the magistrates had them
stripped of their clothing and ordered
them to be beaten with rods. 23 After they
had given them a severe flogging, they
threw them into prison and ordered the
jailer to keep them securely. 24 Following
these instructions, he put them in the in-
nermost cell and fastened their feet in the
stocks.

25 About midnight Paul and Silas
were praying and singing hymns to God,
and the prisoners were listening to them.
26 Suddenly there was an earthquake, so
violent that the foundations of the prison
were shaken; and immediately all the
doors were opened and everyone's chains
were unfastened. 27 When the jailer woke
up and saw the prison doors wide open,
he drew his sword and was about to kill
himself, since he supposed that the pris-
oners had escaped. 28 But Paul shouted in
a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for
we are all here." 29 The jailer[p] called for
lights, and rushing in, he fell down trem-
bling before Paul and Silas. 30 Then he
brought them outside and said, "Sirs,
what must I do to be saved?" 31 They an-
swered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and
you will be saved, you and your house-
hold." 32 They spoke the word of the
Lord[q] to him and to all who were in his
house. 33 At the same hour of the night he
took them and washed their wounds; then
he and his entire family were baptized
without delay. 34 He brought them up into
the house and set food before them; and
he and his entire household rejoiced that
he had become a believer in God.

35 When morning came, the magis-
trates sent the police, saying, "Let those
men go." 36 And the jailer reported the
message to Paul, saying, "The magistrates
sent word to let you go; therefore come
out now and go in peace." 37 But Paul re-
plied, "They have beaten us in public,
uncondemned, men who are Roman cit-
izens, and have thrown us into prison; and
now are they going to discharge us in
secret? Certainly not! Let them come and
take us out themselves." 38 The police re-
ported these words to the magistrates,
and they were afraid when they heard
that they were Roman citizens; 39 so they
came and apologized to them. And they
took them out and asked them to leave
the city. 40 After leaving the prison they
went to Lydia's home; and when they had
seen and encouraged the brothers and
sisters[r] there, they departed.

The Uproar in Thessalonica and Beroea

17 After Paul and Silas[s] had passed
through Amphipolis and Apollo-
nia, they came to Thessalonica, where
there was a synagogue of the Jews. 2 And
Paul went in, as was his custom, and
on three sabbath days argued with them
from the scriptures, 3 explaining and
proving that it was necessary for the Mes-
siah[t] to suffer and to rise from the dead,
and saying, "This is the Messiah,[t] Jesus
whom I am proclaiming to you." 4 Some
of them were persuaded and joined Paul
and Silas, as did a great many of the de-
vout Greeks and not a few of the leading
women. 5 But the Jews became jealous,
and with the help of some ruffians in the
marketplaces they formed a mob and set

p Gk *He* *q* Other ancient authorities read *word of God* *r* Gk *brothers* *s* Gk *they* *t* Or *the Christ*

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officials of a Roman colony. **16.22–24** See 2 Cor 11.23–25. **16.25–34** Unlike the two previous stories of prison release in Acts (5.19–21; 12.6–11), this one occasions a conversion. **16.27** See 12.19, where the guards are executed. **16.30** *What must I do to be saved?* See 2.37. **16.32–34** As in the case of Lydia (16.15) and of Cornelius (10.2, 24, 44; 11.14), this conversion involves the entire household. **16.37** *Beaten . . . in public.* Such treatment of a Roman citizen was against Roman law, but violations of this law occurred (see, e.g., Josephus *Jewish War* 2.308). **16.40** See 16.14–15.

17.1–15 The conflicting responses to Christian preaching in two cities prepare for Paul's important speech in Athens. **17.1** Paul and Silas travel the Via Egnatia, the main east-west road across Macedonia. *Thessalonica,* headquarters for the Roman governor and the leading city of Macedonia. **17.2** *As was his custom.* In every city Paul goes first to Jews (see note on 13.14). *From the scriptures.* See Lk 4.16–21; 24.27, 32, 45, where Jesus interprets scripture regarding himself. **17.3** *It was necessary.* Luke often draws attention to divine necessity (see, e.g., 1.16; 3.21; 9.16; Lk 2.49; 24.7, 26, 46). **17.4–5** As earlier (13.43, 50; 14.1–2), both Jews and Greeks are among those who respond to the gospel and among those who

the city in an uproar. While they were
searching for Paul and Silas to bring them
out to the assembly, they attacked Jason's
house. 6 When they could not find them,
they dragged Jason and some believers[u]
before the city authorities,[v] shouting,
"These people who have been turning the
world upside down have come here also,
7 and Jason has entertained them as
guests. They are all acting contrary to the
decrees of the emperor, saying that there
is another king named Jesus." 8 The people and the city officials were disturbed
when they heard this, 9 and after they had
taken bail from Jason and the others, they
let them go.

10 That very night the believers[u] sent
Paul and Silas off to Beroea; and when
they arrived, they went to the Jewish synagogue. 11 These Jews were more receptive
than those in Thessalonica, for they welcomed the message very eagerly and examined the scriptures every day to see
whether these things were so. 12 Many of
them therefore believed, including not a
few Greek women and men of high standing. 13 But when the Jews of Thessalonica
learned that the word of God had been
proclaimed by Paul in Beroea as well, they
came there too, to stir up and incite the
crowds. 14 Then the believers[u] immediately sent Paul away to the coast, but Silas
and Timothy remained behind. 15 Those
who conducted Paul brought him as far as
Athens; and after receiving instructions to
have Silas and Timothy join him as soon
as possible, they left him.

Paul in Athens

16 While Paul was waiting for them in
Athens, he was deeply distressed to see
that the city was full of idols. 17 So he argued in the synagogue with the Jews and
the devout persons, and also in the marketplace[w] every day with those who happened to be there. 18 Also some Epicurean
and Stoic philosophers debated with him.
Some said, "What does this babbler want
to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a
proclaimer of foreign divinities." (This
was because he was telling the good news
about Jesus and the resurrection.) 19 So
they took him and brought him to the Areopagus and asked him, "May we know
what this new teaching is that you are presenting? 20 It sounds rather strange to us,
so we would like to know what it means."
21 Now all the Athenians and the foreigners living there would spend their time in
nothing but telling or hearing something new.

22 Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, "Athenians, I see how
extremely religious you are in every way.
23 For as I went through the city and

u Gk *brothers* v Gk *politarchs* w Or *civic center*; Gk *agora*

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reject it. **17.6** *Turning the world upside down*, i.e., disturbing the peace, a serious change (see also 16.20; 24.5, 12). **17.7** *Contrary to the decrees of the emperor*. See also 16.21. *Another king named Jesus*. See Lk 23.2–3, 37–38. **17.8–9** This mild treatment may reflect Luke's concern to portray the Roman government as tolerant toward the church (see Lk 23.4, 13–16). **17.10** *Beroea*, a city south of the Via Egnatia (see note on 17.1). **17.15** As a highly significant cultural center, *Athens* offers an appropriate context for presenting Luke's understanding of a typical sermon to Gentiles.

17.16–34 Paul's speech at Athens, the only speech in Acts to a pagan audience (but see 14.15–17), echoes important Lucan themes even as it differs from earlier speeches. References to the history of Israel are omitted here as meaningless to an entirely gentile audience. **17.16** *The city was full of idols*. Ancient historians provide similar descriptions of Athens. **17.17** *In the synagogue*. See note on 13.14. **17.18** *Epicureans* denied divine judgment and argued against a fear of death. *Stoics* urged living in accord with nature, which they understood to be ruled by the divine *Logos*. In order to achieve this goal, they advocated the importance of reason and self-control. *Babbler*, lit. "one who picks up seeds," i.e., a person who gathers new ideas indiscriminately. *A proclaimer of foreign divinities*, a charge leveled also against Socrates (Plato *Apology* 24B–C). **17.19** The *Areopagus* may refer either to a place, the Hill of Ares, or to an administrative council whose name derived from its location. **17.21** Ancient writers describe the Athenians in similar terms.

17.22–31 Paul's speech begins with an acknowledgment of the religiosity of the Athenians (17.22–23), moves to a sympathetic critique of idolatry (17.24–29), and concludes with a call for repentance (17.30–31). **17.22** *Extremely religious*, either in a pejorative sense of "superstitious" or as a straightforward description. **17.23** *To an unknown God*. No known inscription corresponds exactly to this one, but there is evidence of altars to

looked carefully at the objects of your
worship, I found among them an altar
with the inscription, 'To an unknown
god.' What therefore you worship as un-
known, this I proclaim to you. 24 The God
who made the world and everything in it,
he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does
not live in shrines made by human hands,
25 nor is he served by human hands, as
though he needed anything, since he him-
self gives to all mortals life and breath and
all things. 26 From one ancestor[x] he made
all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and
he allotted the times of their existence
and the boundaries of the places where
they would live, 27 so that they would
search for God[y] and perhaps grope for
him and find him—though indeed he is
not far from each one of us. 28 For 'In him
we live and move and have our being'; as
even some of your own poets have said,

'For we too are his offspring.'

29 Since we are God's offspring, we ought
not to think that the deity is like gold, or
silver, or stone, an image formed by the
art and imagination of mortals. 30 While
God has overlooked the times of human
ignorance, now he commands all people
everywhere to repent, 31 because he has
fixed a day on which he will have the
world judged in righteousness by a man
whom he has appointed, and of this he
has given assurance to all by raising him
from the dead."

32 When they heard of the resurrec-
tion of the dead, some scoffed; but others
said, "We will hear you again about this."
33 At that point Paul left them. 34 But
some of them joined him and became be-
lievers, including Dionysius the Areopa-
gite and a woman named Damaris, and
others with them.

Paul in Corinth

18 After this Paul[z] left Athens and
went to Corinth. 2 There he
found a Jew named Aquila, a native of
Pontus, who had recently come from Italy
with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius
had ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Paul[a]
went to see them, 3 and, because he was
of the same trade, he stayed with them,
and they worked together—by trade they
were tentmakers. 4 Every sabbath he
would argue in the synagogue and would
try to convince Jews and Greeks.

5 When Silas and Timothy arrived
from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with
proclaiming the word,[b] testifying to the
Jews that the Messiah[c] was Jesus. 6 When

x Gk *From one*; other ancient authorities read *From one blood* y Other ancient authorities read *the Lord* z Gk *he* a Gk *He* b Gk *with the word* c Or *the Christ*

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unknown gods. **17.24–25** On God as creator, see 4.24; 14.15. That God does not live in buildings is a theme also of Stephen's speech; see 7.48. **17.26** *One ancestor.* See Lk 3.38, where Jesus' genealogy is traced back to Adam. *He allotted the times.* See 14.17. **17.27** On the notion that pagans *search for God*, see Wis 13.6. *He is not far from . . . us.* On God's nearness, see Ps 145.18; Jer 23.23; Josephus *Antiquities* 8.108. **17.28** The first quotation (*In him we . . . have our being*) may come from the sixth-century B.C.E. philosopher-poet Epimenides. The second quotation (*For we too are his offspring*) is from Aratus (*Phaenomena* 5), a third-century B.C.E. poet. **17.29** A conventional piece of Jewish polemic against idolatry; see 7.41–43; Isa 44.9–20; Wis 13.10; Rom 1.23. **17.30** Both Jewish and pagan *ignorance* is overlooked; see 3.17; 13.27. The call to *repent* is now universal; see 2.38; 3.19; 8.22; 11.18; 26.20. **17.31** Only here does the speech refer to Jesus. *Judged.* See 10.42; Rom 2.16. **17.32–34** As elsewhere in Acts, the speech is interrupted when it reaches its climactic point; see note on 2.37. Compared with earlier speeches, the response (both positive and negative) is mild (cf., e.g., 2.41; 13.43, 45).

18.1–17 Four brief scenes (18.1–4, 5–8, 9–11, 12–17) portray Paul's extended mission in Corinth. **18.1** *Corinth*, the Roman capital of Achaia, was well situated for commerce. **18.2** *Aquila* and *Priscilla* ("Prisca" in the Pauline Letters) are described as Jews in order to explain the impact of Claudius's edict on them; evidently both converted to Christianity before Paul reached Corinth (see also Rom 16.3–4; 1 Cor 16.19). *Claudius* was Roman emperor in 41–54 C.E. *Ordered all Jews to leave Rome.* Since other sources indicate that a disturbance over Christian preaching caused this expulsion, it likely involved Jewish Christians as well as Jews. **18.3** *Tentmakers*, the first reference in Acts to Paul's labor (but see 1 Cor 4.12), probably refers to leather working in general. **18.4** As elsewhere, Paul begins *in the synagogue*; see note on 13.14. **18.5** On the itinerary of Silas and Timothy, see 17.14. **18.6** *Shook the dust* recalls 13.51; Lk 9.5. "*Your blood be on your own heads!*" See also 5.28; 2 Sam 1.16; Ezek 33.4–5; cf. Mt 27.25. This

they opposed and reviled him, in protest
he shook the dust from his clothes[d] and
said to them, "Your blood be on your own
heads! I am innocent. From now on I will
go to the Gentiles." 7 Then he left the syn-
agogue[e] and went to the house of a man
named Titius[f] Justus, a worshiper of
God; his house was next door to the syna-
gogue. 8 Crispus, the official of the syna-
gogue, became a believer in the Lord,
together with all his household; and many
of the Corinthians who heard Paul be-
came believers and were baptized. 9 One
night the Lord said to Paul in a vision,
"Do not be afraid, but speak and do not
be silent; 10 for I am with you, and no one
will lay a hand on you to harm you, for
there are many in this city who are my
people." 11 He stayed there a year and six
months, teaching the word of God among
them.

12 But when Gallio was proconsul of
Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on
Paul and brought him before the tribunal.
13 They said, "This man is persuading
people to worship God in ways that are
contrary to the law." 14 Just as Paul was
about to speak, Gallio said to the Jews, "If
it were a matter of crime or serious vil-
lainy, I would be justified in accepting the
complaint of you Jews; 15 but since it is a
matter of questions about words and
names and your own law, see to it your-
selves; I do not wish to be a judge of these
matters." 16 And he dismissed them from
the tribunal. 17 Then all of them[g] seized
Sosthenes, the official of the synagogue,
and beat him in front of the tribunal. But
Gallio paid no attention to any of these
things.

Paul's Travels

18 After staying there for a consider-
able time, Paul said farewell to the believ-
ers[h] and sailed for Syria, accompanied by
Priscilla and Aquila. At Cenchreae he had
his hair cut, for he was under a vow.
19 When they reached Ephesus, he left
them there, but first he himself went into
the synagogue and had a discussion with
the Jews. 20 When they asked him to stay
longer, he declined; 21 but on taking leave
of them, he said, "I[i] will return to you, if
God wills." Then he set sail from Ephesus.

22 When he had landed at Caesarea,
he went up to Jerusalem[j] and greeted

d Gk *reviled him, he shook out his clothes* *e* Gk *left there* *f* Other ancient authorities read *Titus* *g* Other ancient authorities read *all the Greeks* *h* Gk *brothers* *i* Other ancient authorities read *I must at all costs keep the approaching festival in Jerusalem, but I* *j* Gk *went up*

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is the second of three passages (13.46; 28.28) in which Paul announces that he is going to the *Gentiles*. **18.7–8** Unlike earlier departures from the synagogue, Paul does not leave the area but remains very close by. Presumably *Titius Justus*, a Gentile who nevertheless worships God (see note on 10.2), has become a Christian. The conversion of *Crispus* (see 1 Cor 1.14) indicates that Paul continues to preach to Jews, despite 18.6, and that his proclamation meets with success even among synagogue leaders. On the conversion of *households*, see note on 10.2. **18.9** On *visions* as a means of divine guidance, see note on 9.10. **18.10** *I am with you*. See also Josh 1.9; Isa 41.10; 43.5; Jer 1.8, 19. *People* usually refers in Luke-Acts to Israel (see note on 3.11), but here, as in 15.14, it includes Gentiles as well. **18.12** A Delphic inscription referring to *Gallio* allows his proconsulate in Corinth to be dated about 51–53 C.E. and thus may indicate that Paul began the church in Corinth during that period. Luke may have consolidated several of Paul's journeys to Corinth, however, making the connection between the reference to Gallio and Paul's activities uncertain. **18.13** The charge is ambiguous, as it could refer either to Jewish law (see 6.13) or to Roman law (16.21; 17.7). **18.14–15** Gallio's response, that this is an inter-Jewish quarrel, vindicates Paul and coheres with later claims (24.14–15; 25.19; 26.2–3). **18.17** Paul refers to a *Sosthenes* in 1 Cor 1.1, but identifying the two with one another seems unlikely since it is not clear that this Sosthenes is a Christian, much less a co-worker of Paul.

18.18–19.41 The mission in Ephesus is prepared for by Paul's travel (18.19) and again in the story of Apollos (18.24–28). **18.18** *Priscilla and Aquila*. Placing the woman's name first is unusual and could suggest that Priscilla has a higher social or economic standing than Aquila (see 18.26; Rom 16.3; cf. 18.2; 1 Cor 16.19). *Cenchreae*, the eastern port of Corinth. On the Nazirite *vow*, see Num 6.1–21, although the requirement is that the hair not be cut until the end of the vow. As in 21.20–26, this action conveys continuity with Jewish practice. **18.19** *Ephesus*, a port in western Asia Minor, was at this time a major city of the Roman Empire. On Paul's practice of visiting *synagogues* first, see note on 13.14. **18.22–23** This sketchy description sets the stage for Paul's return to Ephesus (19.1) and reconnects Paul with the

the church, and then went down to Antioch. 23 After spending some time there
he departed and went from place to
place through the region of Galatia[k] and
Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

Ministry of Apollos

24 Now there came to Ephesus a Jew
named Apollos, a native of Alexandria.
He was an eloquent man, well-versed in
the scriptures. 25 He had been instructed
in the Way of the Lord; and he spoke with
burning enthusiasm and taught accu-
rately the things concerning Jesus, though
he knew only the baptism of John. 26 He
began to speak boldly in the synagogue;
but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him,
they took him aside and explained the
Way of God to him more accurately.
27 And when he wished to cross over to
Achaia, the believers[l] encouraged him
and wrote to the disciples to welcome him.
On his arrival he greatly helped those
who through grace had become believers,
28 for he powerfully refuted the Jews in
public, showing by the scriptures that the
Messiah[m] is Jesus.

Paul in Ephesus

19 While Apollos was in Corinth,
Paul passed through the interior
regions and came to Ephesus, where he
found some disciples. 2 He said to them,
"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you
became believers?" They replied, "No, we
have not even heard that there is a Holy
Spirit." 3 Then he said, "Into what then
were you baptized?" They answered,
"Into John's baptism." 4 Paul said, "John
baptized with the baptism of repentance,
telling the people to believe in the one
who was to come after him, that is, in
Jesus." 5 On hearing this, they were bap-
tized in the name of the Lord Jesus.
6 When Paul had laid his hands on them,
the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they
spoke in tongues and prophesied — 7 alto-
gether there were about twelve of them.
8 He entered the synagogue and for
three months spoke out boldly, and ar-
gued persuasively about the kingdom of
God. 9 When some stubbornly refused to
believe and spoke evil of the Way before
the congregation, he left them, taking the
disciples with him, and argued daily in the
lecture hall of Tyrannus.[n] 10 This contin-
ued for two years, so that all the residents
of Asia, both Jews and Greeks, heard the
word of the Lord.
11 God did extraordinary miracles

k Gk *the Galatian region* *l* Gk *brothers*
m Or *the Christ* *n* Other ancient authorities read *of a certain Tyrannus, from eleven o'clock in the morning to four in the afternoon*

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two central communities, Jerusalem and Antioch. **18.24** The description of *Apollos* is consistent with his origin in *Alexandria*, the literary center of the Hellenistic world and home to a large Jewish population. **18.25** Where and how Apollos was converted is less important than the fact that his knowledge, though accurate, was incomplete. *The Way*, a reference to Christian faith; see note on 9.2. *With burning enthusiasm* may also be translated "burning with the Spirit," which would explain how Apollos differs from the disciples in 19.1–7, who must be baptized and receive the Holy Spirit. **18.26** Speaking *boldly* further identifies Apollos with Christian preachers, even if he still requires instruction (see note on 4.13). *Priscilla and Aquila*. See notes on 18.2; 18.18; here they become the forerunners of Paul's Ephesian mission. **18.28** Like his predecessors in mission, Apollos argues from scripture (see, e.g., 8.35; 17.2–3; see also Lk 24.26–27, 45–46) about the messiahship of Jesus. **19.1–7** Paul's first encounter in Ephesus is with disciples who have been influenced by John the Baptist. **19.1** *Apollos . . . in Corinth*. See 1 Cor 1.12; 3.4–6, 22; 4.6; 16.12. *Some disciples* refers to Christians, but their education and experience are incomplete. **19.2** *Receive the Holy Spirit*. See 1.5; 2.4; 8.17; 9.17; 10.44; Lk 3.16. **19.4** Cf. John's words in Lk 3.16–17. **19.5** On baptism *in the name*, see 2.38; 8.16; 10.48. **19.6** Peter and John conveyed the *Holy Spirit* to the Samaritans in this same way; see 8.17. On speaking *in tongues*, see 2.4, 11; 10.46. **19.8** On *bold* speech, see note on 4.13. *The kingdom of God*. See note on 1.3. **19.9** As in Corinth (18.4–7), Paul's synagogue preaching is not well received. *The Way*. See note on 9.2. For the first time, Luke specifies that Paul takes believers with him when he separates from the synagogue. *The lecture hall of Tyrannus*, possibly a guild center or a place for philosophical instruction. Nothing is known of the individual after whom it is named. **19.10** *All the residents of Asia* surely exaggerates in order to underscore the importance of the Ephesian mission, which reaches *both Jews and Greeks* outside the synagogue; cf., e.g., 14.1; 17.1–4; 18.7, where Gen-

through Paul, 12 so that when the handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were brought to the sick, their diseases left them, and the evil spirits came out of them. 13 Then some itinerant Jewish exorcists tried to use the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims." 14 Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this. 15 But the evil spirit said to them in reply, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" 16 Then the man with the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered them all, and so overpowered them that they fled out of the house naked and wounded. 17 When this became known to all residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks, everyone was awestruck; and the name of the Lord Jesus was praised. 18 Also many of those who became believers confessed and disclosed their practices. 19 A number of those who practiced magic collected their books and burned them publicly; when the value of these books[o] was calculated, it was found to come to fifty thousand silver coins. 20 So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.

21 Now after these things had been accomplished, Paul resolved in the Spirit to go through Macedonia and Achaia, and then to go on to Jerusalem. He said, "After I have gone there, I must also see Rome." 22 So he sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia, while he himself stayed for some time longer in Asia.

The Riot in Ephesus

23 About that time no little disturbance broke out concerning the Way. 24 A man named Demetrius, a silversmith who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought no little business to the artisans. 25 These he gathered together, with the workers of the same trade, and said, "Men, you know that we get our wealth from this business. 26 You also see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost the whole of Asia this Paul has persuaded and drawn away a considerable number of people by saying that gods made with hands are not gods. 27 And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be scorned, and she will be deprived of her majesty that brought all Asia and the world to worship her."

o Gk *them*

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tiles are reached within the synagogue setting. **19.12** Like his predecessors Peter (5.12–16) and Philip (8.4–8), Paul's ministry includes healing and exorcism; see also 2 Cor 12.12. **19.13–16** This humorous account of the defeat of seven exorcists contrasts sharply with the ease of Paul's healings and exorcisms. **19.13** *Jewish exorcists.* See Josephus *Antiquities* 8.45–49; see also Acts 13.6–11; cf. Deut 18.10–14. It was a widespread assumption that having the *name* of a spirit allowed one to compel that spirit to act. **19.14** No high priest by the name of *Sceva* is known; a Latin name, it would be most remarkable for a priest. **19.15** *Jesus I know.* See Jas 2.19. **19.17** As with the defeat of Bar-Jesus, the defeat of the seven prompts faith (see 13.6–11). **19.19** *Burned them publicly.* See the prohibitions in Deut 18.10–14. *Fifty thousand silver coins.* Because their possessors used them for financial gain, such books would command a high price. **19.20** See note on 6.7. **19.21** Unlike 16.6–8, where Paul's own mission initiatives are thwarted, here he makes his decision with the *Spirit*'s aid. The motif of Paul's journey to *Jerusalem* and *Rome* recurs throughout the remainder of Acts (see 20.22; 21.13; 25.9–12; 28.14) and parallels Lk 9.51, where Jesus determines to go to Jerusalem. Paul *must also see Rome* because it is divine necessity; see note on 1.16; see also Rom 1.10, 15; 15.22–32. **19.22** *Timothy,* last referred to in 18.5; for references to Timothy's visit to Corinth, see 1 Cor 4.17; 16.10. An *Erastus* is mentioned in Rom 16.23; 2 Tim 4.20, but the name was a common one, making identification of these three persons with one another uncertain. **19.23–41** Paul's mission in Ephesus culminates in a riot and in Paul's public vindication. **19.23** *No little disturbance,* i.e., a large disturbance; see note on 12.18–19. *The Way.* See note on 9.1–2. **19.24** *Silver shrines of Artemis,* miniature versions of the temple of Artemis. *Artemis of the Ephesians* (19.28, 34) was an ancient mother goddess widely worshiped in the Hellenistic world and identified with the Greek goddess Artemis. The temple of Artemis in Ephesus was among the Seven Wonders of the World. *No little business.* See note on 12.18–19. **19.25** As in 16.16–21, Luke draws attention to the profit motive of competing groups. **19.26** See note on 17.29. **19.27** See 21.28 for parallel fears in Jerusalem regarding the people and the temple. **19.28** *Artemis of the Ephesians.* See note on 19.24.

28 When they heard this, they were
enraged and shouted, "Great is Artemis
of the Ephesians!" 29 The city was filled
with the confusion; and people[p] rushed
together to the theater, dragging with
them Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedoni-
ans who were Paul's travel companions.
30 Paul wished to go into the crowd, but
the disciples would not let him; 31 even
some officials of the province of Asia,[q]
who were friendly to him, sent him a mes-
sage urging him not to venture into the
theater. 32 Meanwhile, some were shout-
ing one thing, some another; for the as-
sembly was in confusion, and most of
them did not know why they had come
together. 33 Some of the crowd gave in-
structions to Alexander, whom the Jews
had pushed forward. And Alexander mo-
tioned for silence and tried to make a de-
fense before the people. 34 But when they
recognized that he was a Jew, for about
two hours all of them shouted in unison,
"Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"
35 But when the town clerk had quieted
the crowd, he said, "Citizens of Ephesus,
who is there that does not know that the
city of the Ephesians is the temple keeper
of the great Artemis and of the statue that
fell from heaven?[r] 36 Since these things
cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet
and do nothing rash. 37 You have brought
these men here who are neither temple
robbers nor blasphemers of our[s] god-
dess. 38 If therefore Demetrius and the ar-
tisans with him have a complaint against
anyone, the courts are open, and there
are proconsuls; let them bring charges
there against one another. 39 If there is
anything further[t] you want to know, it
must be settled in the regular assembly.
40 For we are in danger of being charged
with rioting today, since there is no cause
that we can give to justify this commo-
tion." 41 When he had said this, he dis-
missed the assembly.

Paul Begins His Final Journey to Jerusalem

20 After the uproar had ceased,
Paul sent for the disciples; and af-
ter encouraging them and saying farewell,
he left for Macedonia. 2 When he had
gone through those regions and had
given the believers[u] much encourage-
ment, he came to Greece, 3 where he
stayed for three months. He was about to
set sail for Syria when a plot was made
against him by the Jews, and so he de-
cided to return through Macedonia. 4 He
was accompanied by Sopater son of Pyr-
rhus from Beroea, by Aristarchus and
Secundus from Thessalonica, by Gaius
from Derbe, and by Timothy, as well as
by Tychicus and Trophimus from Asia.
5 They went ahead and were waiting for
us in Troas; 6 but we sailed from Philippi
after the days of Unleavened Bread, and

p Gk *they* *q* Gk *some of the Asiarchs*
r Meaning of Gk uncertain *s* Other ancient authorities read *your* *t* Other ancient authorities read *about other matters* *u* Gk *given them*

19.29 See 7.57, where the crowd rushes against Stephen, and 21.30–31, where riot breaks out in Jerusalem. *Gaius.* See 20.4; see also Rom 16.23; 1 Cor 1.14; 3 Jn 1. *Aristarchus.* See 20.4; 27.2; Col 4.10; Philem 24. **19.33** Whether *Alexander* is a Christian is unclear. **19.35** *Temple keeper,* a title given cities that maintained temples honoring the emperor, but the term is also used of temples honoring gods or goddesses. **19.37** Josephus says that Jews are not to blaspheme or destroy the gods of others (*Antiquities* 4.207; *Against Apion* 2.237); see also Rom 2.22; but cf. Deut 7.25. **19.38–40** By announcing that no formal charges have been made and that proper procedures have not been used, the town clerk completes an indirect defense of the Christian mission.

20.1–16 Paul's final trip to Jerusalem begins with pastoral visits to several cities. **20.1–2** *Encouragement* of believers is a constant refrain in Paul's journeys; see 14.22; 15.36, 41; 16.40. On the decision to go to *Macedonia* and *Greece,* see 19.21. **20.3** For earlier *plots,* see 9.24; 13.50; 14.5; 17.5, 13; 18.12–13; see also Lk 6.11; 19.47; 22.2. **20.4** *Sopater* and *Secundus* are mentioned only here. *Aristarchus.* See note on 19.29. Although in 19.29 (see note there) *Gaius* is said to be a Macedonian, here he is said to be *from Derbe,* which is in Asia Minor. *Timothy.* See note on 16.3. *Tychicus.* See Eph 6.21; Col 4.7; 2 Tim 4.12; Titus 3.12. *Trophimus.* See 21.29; 2 Tim 4.20. **20.5** The use of the first-person plural narration (*us, we*) resumes here and continues through 21.18, except for the speech in 20.17–38 (see note on 16.10). *Troas.* See 16.8–10. **20.6** *The days of Unleavened Bread,* originally a harvest festival, was combined with Passover; see Lk 22.1, which begins Jesus' passion narrative with the same reference. **20.7** *On the first day of the week,* i.e., the day after the sabbath. See Mark 16.2; 1 Cor 16.2. This is the first reference to *breaking bread* since 2.42,

in five days we joined them in Troas,
where we stayed for seven days.
7 On the first day of the week, when
we met to break bread, Paul was holding a
discussion with them; since he intended to
leave the next day, he continued speaking
until midnight. 8 There were many lamps
in the room upstairs where we were meet-
ing. 9 A young man named Eutychus, who
was sitting in the window, began to sink
off into a deep sleep while Paul talked still
longer. Overcome by sleep, he fell to the
ground three floors below and was picked
up dead. 10 But Paul went down, and
bending over him took him in his arms,
and said, "Do not be alarmed, for his life
is in him." 11 Then Paul went upstairs, and
after he had broken bread and eaten, he
continued to converse with them until
dawn; then he left. 12 Meanwhile they had
taken the boy away alive and were not a
little comforted.
13 We went ahead to the ship and set
sail for Assos, intending to take Paul on
board there; for he had made this ar-
rangement, intending to go by land him-
self. 14 When he met us in Assos, we took
him on board and went to Mitylene. 15 We
sailed from there, and on the following
day we arrived opposite Chios. The next
day we touched at Samos, and[v] the day
after that we came to Miletus. 16 For Paul
had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that
he might not have to spend time in Asia;
he was eager to be in Jerusalem, if possi-
ble, on the day of Pentecost.

Paul Speaks to the Ephesian Elders

17 From Miletus he sent a message to
Ephesus, asking the elders of the church
to meet him. 18 When they came to him,
he said to them:
"You yourselves know how I lived
among you the entire time from the first
day that I set foot in Asia, 19 serving the
Lord with all humility and with tears, en-
during the trials that came to me through
the plots of the Jews. 20 I did not shrink
from doing anything helpful, proclaiming
the message to you and teaching you pub-
licly and from house to house, 21 as I testi-
fied to both Jews and Greeks about re-
pentance toward God and faith toward
our Lord Jesus. 22 And now, as a captive
to the Spirit,[w] I am on my way to Jerusa-
lem, not knowing what will happen to me
there, 23 except that the Holy Spirit testi-
fies to me in every city that imprisonment
and persecutions are waiting for me.
24 But I do not count my life of any value
to myself, if only I may finish my course
and the ministry that I received from the
Lord Jesus, to testify to the good news of
God's grace.
25 "And now I know that none of you,
among whom I have gone about pro-
claiming the kingdom, will ever see my
face again. 26 Therefore I declare to you
this day that I am not responsible for the

[v] Other ancient authorities add *after remaining at Trogyllium* [w] Or *And now, bound in the spirit*

46, and may recall Jesus' breaking bread just before his arrest (Lk 22.19). **20.8** The rare detail about the *lamps* could mean that Eutychus (20.9) had no excuse for falling asleep, that the many lamps resulted in stale air that induced sleep, or that the symbolic light of faith was burning brightly (see, e.g., 13.47; Lk 1.78–79; 2.32). **20.9** *Eutychus*. The name means "good fortune." On inappropriate sleepfulness and the need for watchfulness, see 20.31; Lk 9.32; 12.35–38; 22.45–46. **20.10** Like Peter (9.36–42), Paul is here identified with Jesus' power to raise the dead (Lk 7.11–17; 8.41–42, 49–56). **20.12** *Not a little*, i.e., a lot; see note on 12.18–19. **20.13** *Assos*, a seaport in Mysia on the northwest coast of Asia Minor. **20.14** *Mitylene*, harbor of the island of Lesbos in the Aegean. **20.15** *Chios*, an island in the Aegean, south of Lesbos. *Samos*, an island in the Aegean, southeast of Lesbos. *Miletus*, a large seaport in Ionia, on the southwest coast of Asia Minor. **20.16** On Paul's mission in *Ephesus*, see 18.18–19.41. See 19.21 for Paul's need to go to *Jerusalem*. The reference to *Pentecost* suggests Paul's continuing observance of Jewish customs.

20.17–38 Paul's farewell speech is his only speech to a Christian audience and his last speech prior to his arrest in Jerusalem. **20.17** *Elders of the church*. See note on 14.23. **20.18–19** Paul describes his life among the Ephesians; see 19.1–41. **20.19** On *plots* against Paul, see note on 20.3. **20.20–21** These verses provide a concise summary of Paul's mission. **20.22–23** Here *Jerusalem* appears for the first time to be a place of danger for Paul; cf. 19.21. Paul's imprisonment, like his ministry, occurs under the *Spirit*'s guidance; see, e.g., 16.6–10; 19.21. *Imprisonment and persecutions*. See 9.16; 21.11, 33. **20.24** On Paul's willingness to die, see 21.13. The conversion accounts (see 9.1–31; 22.3–21; 26.2–29) explain how Paul *received* his ministry. **20.25** The first clear indication that this is a farewell speech. **20.26** See note on 18.6.

blood of any of you, 27 for I did not shrink
from declaring to you the whole purpose
of God. 28 Keep watch over yourselves
and over all the flock, of which the Holy
Spirit has made you overseers, to shep-
herd the church of God[x] that he ob-
tained with the blood of his own Son.[y]
29 I know that after I have gone, savage
wolves will come in among you, not spar-
ing the flock. 30 Some even from your own
group will come distorting the truth in or-
der to entice the disciples to follow them.
31 Therefore be alert, remembering that
for three years I did not cease night or
day to warn everyone with tears. 32 And
now I commend you to God and to the
message of his grace, a message that is
able to build you up and to give you the
inheritance among all who are sanctified.
33 I coveted no one's silver or gold or
clothing. 34 You know for yourselves that
I worked with my own hands to support
myself and my companions. 35 In all this I
have given you an example that by such
work we must support the weak, remem-
bering the words of the Lord Jesus, for he
himself said, 'It is more blessed to give
than to receive.' "

36 When he had finished speaking, he
knelt down with them all and prayed.
37 There was much weeping among them
all; they embraced Paul and kissed him,
38 grieving especially because of what he
had said, that they would not see him
again. Then they brought him to the ship.

Paul Continues His Journey to Jerusalem

21 When we had parted from them
and set sail, we came by a straight
course to Cos, and the next day to
Rhodes, and from there to Patara.[z]
2 When we found a ship bound for Phoe-
nicia, we went on board and set sail. 3 We
came in sight of Cyprus; and leaving it on
our left, we sailed to Syria and landed at
Tyre, because the ship was to unload its
cargo there. 4 We looked up the disciples
and stayed there for seven days. Through
the Spirit they told Paul not to go on to
Jerusalem. 5 When our days there were
ended, we left and proceeded on our
journey; and all of them, with wives and
children, escorted us outside the city.
There we knelt down on the beach and
prayed 6 and said farewell to one another.
Then we went on board the ship, and they
returned home.

7 When we had finished[a] the voyage
from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais; and
we greeted the believers[b] and stayed with
them for one day. 8 The next day we left
and came to Caesarea; and we went into
the house of Philip the evangelist, one of
the seven, and stayed with him. 9 He had
four unmarried daughters[c] who had the

x Other ancient authorities read *of the Lord*
y Or *with his own blood*; Gk *with the blood of his Own*
z Other ancient authorities add *and Myra*
a Or *continued* b Gk *brothers* c Gk *four daughters, virgins,*

20.28 The word *overseers* can also be translated "bishops" (see Phil 1.1; 1 Tim 3.1–7; Titus 1.7), but an activity, not an office, seems intended here. That the church came about through Jesus' *blood* is a new theme in Acts, but see Heb 9.12. **20.29–30** The threat of false teaching, whether from outside or inside the church, is a new theme in Acts, but see, e.g., Mt 7.15; 1 Tim 1.3–7; 4.1–3; 2 Tim 2.14–18. **20.29** In Lk 12.32, the disciples are the *flock*; cf. Jn 21.15–17; 1 Pet 5.2. **20.33** By contrast with others (e.g., 16.19; 19.25), Paul has no profit motive (see also 1 Cor 9). **20.34** On Paul's labor, see 18.2; the Letters reflect the same practice (1 Cor 4.12; 1 Thess 2.9). **20.35** The need to *support the weak* recalls 2.45; 4.32–35; 6.1–6. *It is more blessed to give than to receive.* The saying itself does not appear in the Gospels, but see Lk 6.38; see also Sir 4.31. Close parallels appear in Thucydides *History of the Peloponnesian War* 2.97.4; Plutarch *Moralia* 173d. **20.36–38** The emotional farewell further anticipates Paul's death (see 20.23–25).

21.1–16 New anticipations of Paul's arrest mark the final stages of his journey to Jerusalem. **21.1–3** The route is around the southwestern perimeter of Asia Minor and then southeast to Tyre. *We.* See note on 16.10. **21.4** Nothing has been said of a mission in Tyre to account for the *disciples*, but see 11.19; 12.20; Lk 6.17; 10.13–14. Since Paul's decision to go to Jerusalem also came *through the Spirit* (19.21), this warning presumably reflects a fearful misinterpretation of the Spirit's message. **21.5–6** Cf. the farewell scene in 20.36–38. **21.7** *Ptolemais*, a major port city south of Tyre. Although nothing has been said of a mission there, see 11.19. **21.8** *Caesarea*, a port city south of Ptolemais, was the location of Cornelius's conversion (10.1, 24; 11.11; see also 9.30; 18.22). This is the first appearance of *Philip* since the conversion of the Ethiopian (8.26–40). **21.9** The detail about Philip's *daughters* is unusual, since they play no role in the story.

gift of prophecy. 10 While we were staying
there for several days, a prophet named
Agabus came down from Judea. 11 He
came to us and took Paul's belt, bound his
own feet and hands with it, and said,
"Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'This is the
way the Jews in Jerusalem will bind the
man who owns this belt and will hand him
over to the Gentiles.'" 12 When we heard
this, we and the people there urged him
not to go up to Jerusalem. 13 Then Paul
answered, "What are you doing, weeping
and breaking my heart? For I am ready
not only to be bound but even to die in
Jerusalem for the name of the Lord
Jesus." 14 Since he would not be persuaded, we remained silent except to say,
"The Lord's will be done."

15 After these days we got ready and
started to go up to Jerusalem. 16 Some of
the disciples from Caesarea also came
along and brought us to the house of
Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with
whom we were to stay.

Paul Visits the Church in Jerusalem

17 When we arrived in Jerusalem, the
brothers welcomed us warmly. 18 The
next day Paul went with us to visit James;
and all the elders were present. 19 After
greeting them, he related one by one the
things that God had done among the
Gentiles through his ministry. 20 When
they heard it, they praised God. Then
they said to him, "You see, brother, how
many thousands of believers there are
among the Jews, and they are all zealous
for the law. 21 They have been told about
you that you teach all the Jews living
among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, and
that you tell them not to circumcise their
children or observe the customs. 22 What
then is to be done? They will certainly
hear that you have come. 23 So do what we
tell you. We have four men who are under a vow. 24 Join these men, go through
the rite of purification with them, and pay
for the shaving of their heads. Thus all
will know that there is nothing in what
they have been told about you, but that
you yourself observe and guard the law.
25 But as for the Gentiles who have become believers, we have sent a letter with
our judgment that they should abstain
from what has been sacrificed to idols and
from blood and from what is strangled[d]
and from fornication." 26 Then Paul took
the men, and the next day, having purified himself, he entered the temple with
them, making public the completion of
the days of purification when the sacrifice
would be made for each of them.

Paul Arrested in the Temple

27 When the seven days were almost
completed, the Jews from Asia, who had

d Other ancient authorities lack *and from what is strangled*

21.10–11 *Agabus.* See 11.28; his dramatic action here recalls those of earlier prophets (see, e.g., Isa 20.2; Jer 13.1–11; Ezek 4.1–8). This prophecy contributes to the expectation that the trip to Jerusalem will have dire consequences for Paul (see note on 20.22–23). **21.13** On the trip to *Jerusalem,* see note on 19.21. Paul's declaration that he is prepared for death *for the name* recalls 9.16.

21.17–26 Paul receives a warm reception in Jerusalem, but also news of ominous charges against him that anticipate the fulfillment of 20.22–25, 38; 21.4, 11, 13. **21.18** At the Jerusalem council, *James* emerged as leader of the Jerusalem church (15.13–21). **21.19** Luke consistently attributes the church's mission to *God;* see notes on 2.47; 8.26; 8.29; 10.1–11.18. **21.20–25** This brief speech prescribes a course of conduct to avert the charges against Paul. **21.20** Paul here finds himself in conflict with Jewish Christians (cf. earlier conflicts with Jews and Gentiles; e.g., 13.45; 14.2; 16.20–21; 19.25–27). *Zealous for the law.* See 22.3; 1 Macc 2.27; Rom 10.2; Gal 1.14. **21.21** Unlike the dispute in Jerusalem, which concerned the demand that Gentiles obey the law, Jewish Christians claim that Paul dissuades Jews from observing the law. Although Paul's behavior in Acts does not support this claim, the question of Jewish-Christian law observance would inevitably arise as churches in the Diaspora incorporated both Jews and Gentiles (see note on 10.28). **21.23–24** Paul's own observance of the law, already established in the narrative (see 16.3; 18.18; 20.16), will serve as his defense. On the Nazirite *vow,* see note on 18.18. **21.25** See 15.20, 29. It is strange that the church leaders remind Paul of this decree, since he was present in Jerusalem, but repetition perhaps serves to remind Luke's audience that gentile Christians were liable to only a fraction of the law. **21.27–36** The events leading to Paul's arrest are not instigated by Jewish Christians, despite 21.20, but by *the Jews from Asia.* **21.27** The *seven days* Luke allots for the Nazarite vow conflicts with the minimum of thirty days prescribed

seen him in the temple, stirred up the
whole crowd. They seized him, 28 shout-
ing, "Fellow Israelites, help! This is the
man who is teaching everyone everywhere
against our people, our law, and this
place; more than that, he has actually
brought Greeks into the temple and has
defiled this holy place." 29 For they had
previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian
with him in the city, and they supposed
that Paul had brought him into the tem-
ple. 30 Then all the city was aroused, and
the people rushed together. They seized
Paul and dragged him out of the temple,
and immediately the doors were shut.
31 While they were trying to kill him, word
came to the tribune of the cohort that all
Jerusalem was in an uproar. 32 Immedi-
ately he took soldiers and centurions and
ran down to them. When they saw the tri-
bune and the soldiers, they stopped beat-
ing Paul. 33 Then the tribune came,
arrested him, and ordered him to be
bound with two chains; he inquired who
he was and what he had done. 34 Some in
the crowd shouted one thing, some an-
other; and as he could not learn the facts
because of the uproar, he ordered him to
be brought into the barracks. 35 When
Paul[e] came to the steps, the violence of
the mob was so great that he had to be
carried by the soldiers. 36 The crowd that
followed kept shouting, "Away with him!"

Paul Defends Himself

37 Just as Paul was about to be
brought into the barracks, he said to the
tribune, "May I say something to you?"
The tribune[f] replied, "Do you know
Greek? 38 Then you are not the Egyptian
who recently stirred up a revolt and led
the four thousand assassins out into the
wilderness?" 39 Paul replied, "I am a Jew,
from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of an im-
portant city; I beg you, let me speak to the
people." 40 When he had given him per-
mission, Paul stood on the steps and mo-
tioned to the people for silence; and when
there was a great hush, he addressed
them in the Hebrew[g] language, saying:
22 "Brothers and fathers, listen to
the defense that I now make be-
fore you."
2 When they heard him addressing
them in Hebrew,[g] they became even
more quiet. Then he said:
3 "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cili-
cia, but brought up in this city at the feet
of Gamaliel, educated strictly according to
our ancestral law, being zealous for God,
just as all of you are today. 4 I persecuted
this Way up to the point of death by bind-
ing both men and women and putting
them in prison, 5 as the high priest and
the whole council of elders can testify
about me. From them I also received

e Gk *he* f Gk *He* g That is, *Aramaic*

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in the Mishnah (*Nazir* 1.3; see also Josephus *Jewish War* 2.313). **21.28** The charges recall those against Stephen (6.13) and even those against Jesus (Mt 26.59–61; Mk 14.55–58; see also Acts 18.13; 25.8). A Gentile who went beyond the temple's outer court was liable to death (Josephus *Jewish War* 5.193–94; 6.124–26; *Antiquities* 15.417; Philo *Embassy to Gaius* 212). **21.30–31** The mob's action recalls 7.57; 19.28–29, 32. The exaggerated references to *all the city* and *all Jerusalem* portray the danger. *The tribune of the cohort*, the military officer in charge. **21.33** *Two chains.* See 12.6; 21.11. The need to identify *what he had done* recurs in 22.30; 25.26. For the remainder of Acts, Paul will be a prisoner. **21.34** On the crowd's confusion, see 19.32. **21.36** "*Away with him!*" See also 22.22; Lk 23.18; Jn 19.15.

21.37–22.21 A brief exchange with the tribune clarifies Paul's identity as an educated Jew and introduces his defense. **21.38** *The Egyptian* refers to the leader of a revolt against Rome around 52–59 C.E.; although the rebellion was quelled, the Egyptian leader escaped. **21.39** *I am . . . from Tarsus.* See note on 9.11; 22.3. It was possible to be a citizen of two cities, and Luke portrays Paul as a citizen of both Tarsus and Rome (see 16.37–38; 22.25). On *the people* as Luke's customary way of referring to Israel, see note on 3.11. **21.40** Motioning for *silence* is a characteristic gesture of an orator; see, e.g., 12.17; 13.16; 26.1. *In the Hebrew language*, i.e., the Aramaic dialect. Paul's use of Aramaic signals his unity with this Jewish audience. **22.1–21** This account of Paul's conversion explains events from his own perspective (cf. 9.1–31) and, as part of his defense against Jewish accusers, Paul depicts himself as a loyal Jew who remained obedient to Israel's God. **22.1** The address *Brothers and fathers* captures the audience's attention by signaling Paul's relationship to them (see 2.29; 7.2; 13.26; 15.7, 13). **22.2** On the use of *Hebrew*, see note on 21.40. **22.3** Paul identifies himself in terms congenial to this audience. *Born in Tarsus.* See notes on 9.11; 21.39. *Gamaliel.* See note on 5.34. *Zealous.* See note on 21.20. **22.5** Cf. 9.2, which

letters to the brothers in Damascus, and I
went there in order to bind those who
were there and to bring them back to Je-
rusalem for punishment.
6 "While I was on my way and ap-
proaching Damascus, about noon a great
light from heaven suddenly shone about
me. 7 I fell to the ground and heard a
voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are
you persecuting me?' 8 I answered, 'Who
are you, Lord?' Then he said to me, 'I am
Jesus of Nazareth[h] whom you are perse-
cuting.' 9 Now those who were with me
saw the light but did not hear the voice of
the one who was speaking to me. 10 I
asked, 'What am I to do, Lord?' The Lord
said to me, 'Get up and go to Damascus;
there you will be told everything that has
been assigned to you to do.' 11 Since I
could not see because of the brightness of
that light, those who were with me took
my hand and led me to Damascus.
12 "A certain Ananias, who was a de-
vout man according to the law and well
spoken of by all the Jews living there,
13 came to me; and standing beside me, he
said, 'Brother Saul, regain your sight!' In
that very hour I regained my sight and
saw him. 14 Then he said, 'The God of our
ancestors has chosen you to know his will,
to see the Righteous One and to hear his
own voice; 15 for you will be his witness to
all the world of what you have seen and
heard. 16 And now why do you delay? Get
up, be baptized, and have your sins
washed away, calling on his name.'
17 "After I had returned to Jerusalem
and while I was praying in the temple, I
fell into a trance 18 and saw Jesus[i] saying
to me, 'Hurry and get out of Jerusalem
quickly, because they will not accept your
testimony about me.' 19 And I said, 'Lord,
they themselves know that in every syna-
gogue I imprisoned and beat those who
believed in you. 20 And while the blood of
your witness Stephen was shed, I myself
was standing by, approving and keeping
the coats of those who killed him.' 21 Then
he said to me, 'Go, for I will send you far
away to the Gentiles.' "

Paul and the Roman Tribune

22 Up to this point they listened to
him, but then they shouted, "Away with
such a fellow from the earth! For he
should not be allowed to live." 23 And
while they were shouting, throwing off
their cloaks, and tossing dust into the air,
24 the tribune directed that he was to be
brought into the barracks, and ordered
him to be examined by flogging, to find
out the reason for this outcry against him.
25 But when they had tied him up with
thongs,[j] Paul said to the centurion who
was standing by, "Is it legal for you to flog
a Roman citizen who is uncondemned?"
26 When the centurion heard that, he
went to the tribune and said to him,
"What are you about to do? This man is a
Roman citizen." 27 The tribune came and
asked Paul,[i] "Tell me, are you a Roman

h Gk *the Nazorean* *i* Gk *him* *j* Or *up for the lashes*

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does not mention the *elders*. **22.6–11** See notes on 9.3–4; 9.5. **22.6** *About noon*, hence the light Paul saw was extremely bright (see 26.13; cf. 9.3). **22.9** Cf. 9.7, where Paul's companions do hear the voice; 26.14 could imply that they did not. **22.10** See 9.6; cf. 26.16–18, where the commission is more elaborate. **22.12–16** Ananias's objection to Paul disappears here in favor of an additional statement of Paul's mission (cf. 9.10–19). **22.12** Paul describes Ananias in terms designed to appeal to a Jewish audience; cf. 9.10. **22.14** Even the expressions used for God and Jesus are calculated to win Jewish sympathy: *the God of our ancestors* (see Gen 43.23; 46.1; Ex 3.13; Deut 1.11) and *the Righteous One* (see 3.14; 7.52). **22.15** On *witness* as a prime characteristic of the church's activity, see note on 1.21–22. **22.16** See 2.38; cf. 9.18–19. **22.17–21** This scene, which appears in neither 9.1–31 nor 26.2–23, provides important confirmation of Paul's Jewish loyalty by situating him at prayer in the temple. **22.17** See 10.9–10, where Peter's vision comes while he is *praying*. **22.19** On Paul's activity as a persecutor, see 8.3; 9.1–2; 26.9–11. **22.20** See 7.58; 8.1. **22.21** For the first time, the speech moves beyond the realm of the Jewish people and refers explicitly to Paul's mission among Gentiles (but see 22.15).

22.22–29 Apparently the reference to Gentiles (22.21) triggers the repetition here of the cry in 21.36, this time intensified by the demand for the death of Paul. **22.23** See 7.58; 22.20. **22.25** Paul dramatically invokes his *Roman* citizenship to prevent being flogged, but he also lays the foundation for his eventual imprisonment in Rome (see 25.10–12). Paul's question is rhetorical, as both Paul and the soldiers would have known the answer (see 16.37–39). **22.26–28** These exchanges reiterate Paul's status

citizen?" And he said, "Yes." 28 The tribune answered, "It cost me a large sum of money to get my citizenship." Paul said, "But I was born a citizen." 29 Immediately those who were about to examine him drew back from him; and the tribune also was afraid, for he realized that Paul was a Roman citizen and that he had bound him.

Paul Before the Council

30 Since he wanted to find out what Paul[k] was being accused of by the Jews, the next day he released him and ordered the chief priests and the entire council to meet. He brought Paul down and had him stand before them.

23 While Paul was looking intently at the council he said, "Brothers,[l] up to this day I have lived my life with a clear conscience before God." 2 Then the high priest Ananias ordered those standing near him to strike him on the mouth. 3 At this Paul said to him, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! Are you sitting there to judge me according to the law, and yet in violation of the law you order me to be struck?" 4 Those standing nearby said, "Do you dare to insult God's high priest?" 5 And Paul said, "I did not realize, brothers, that he was high priest; for it is written, 'You shall not speak evil of a leader of your people.' "

6 When Paul noticed that some were Sadducees and others were Pharisees, he called out in the council, "Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. I am on trial concerning the hope of the resurrection[m] of the dead." 7 When he said this, a dissension began between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. 8 (The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, or angel, or spirit; but the Pharisees acknowledge all three.) 9 Then a great clamor arose, and certain scribes of the Pharisees' group stood up and contended, "We find nothing wrong with this man. What if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?" 10 When the dissension became violent, the tribune, fearing that they would tear Paul to pieces, ordered the soldiers to go down, take him by force, and bring him into the barracks.

11 That night the Lord stood near him and said, "Keep up your courage! For just as you have testified for me in Jerusalem, so you must bear witness also in Rome."

The Plot to Kill Paul

12 In the morning the Jews joined in a conspiracy and bound themselves by an oath neither to eat nor drink until they had killed Paul. 13 There were more than forty who joined in this conspiracy. 14 They went to the chief priests and elders and said, "We have strictly bound

k Gk *he* *l* Gk *Men, brothers* *m* Gk *concerning hope and resurrection*

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as a Roman citizen. **22.29** See 16.38.

22.30–23.11 Another attempt by the tribune to determine charges against Paul sets the stage for Paul's further defense of his Jewishness. **22.30** On the need to identify charges, see note on 21.33. That the tribune takes Paul before Jewish officials in order to arrive at charges suggests that the dispute is over internal Jewish concerns and not of interest to Rome (see 18.14–15; 26.30–31). **23.1** This statement provides the conclusion to Paul's speech in 22.2–21. See 26.19; Phil 3.6. **23.2** *Ananias* was high priest beginning about 48 C.E.; in 66 C.E. he was assassinated at the outset of the Jewish revolt. **23.3** *Whitewashed wall.* See Ezek 13.10–16; Mt 23.27. Deut 19.16–19 requires that an accused person be confronted by an accuser directly and in the presence of a judge (see also Lev 19.15; Deut 1.16–17). **23.5** *I did not realize . . . he was high priest.* How Paul could have avoided recognizing the high priest is difficult to imagine, but the exchange gives him the opportunity to demonstrate his respect for scripture (he cites Ex 22.28). **23.6** That the council contained both *Sadducees* and *Pharisees* Paul would have known, but reference to this composition prompts a new phase in Paul's defense. Luke refers here for the first time to Paul's alignment with the Pharisees (see Phil 3.5); as in 5.33–39, they figure positively in the treatment of Christians. At one level, invoking Pharisaic belief in *the resurrection of the dead* (see 23.8) is a ploy that creates sympathy for Paul; at a deeper level, however, reference to the resurrection is central to Christian preaching, and Paul introduces it as common ground. **23.8** Josephus confirms the dispute regarding resurrection but says nothing of a quarrel regarding the existence of angels or spirits (*Jewish War* 2.163–66; *Antiquities* 18.12–17). **23.11** *Jerusalem* and *Rome.* See note on 19.21.

23.12–35 Although there have been other plots against Paul (9.23–25, 29–30; 20.3, 19), this one is the most detailed, both in its planning and in the steps taken to overturn it.

ourselves by an oath to taste no food until
we have killed Paul. 15 Now then, you and
the council must notify the tribune to
bring him down to you, on the pretext
that you want to make a more thorough
examination of his case. And we are ready
to do away with him before he arrives."
16 Now the son of Paul's sister heard
about the ambush; so he went and gained
entrance to the barracks and told Paul.
17 Paul called one of the centurions and
said, "Take this young man to the tribune,
for he has something to report to him."
18 So he took him, brought him to the tri-
bune, and said, "The prisoner Paul called
me and asked me to bring this young man
to you; he has something to tell you."
19 The tribune took him by the hand,
drew him aside privately, and asked,
"What is it that you have to report to me?"
20 He answered, "The Jews have agreed to
ask you to bring Paul down to the council
tomorrow, as though they were going to
inquire more thoroughly into his case.
21 But do not be persuaded by them, for
more than forty of their men are lying in
ambush for him. They have bound them-
selves by an oath neither to eat nor drink
until they kill him. They are ready now
and are waiting for your consent." 22 So
the tribune dismissed the young man, or-
dering him, "Tell no one that you have
informed me of this."
23 Then he summoned two of the
centurions and said, "Get ready to leave
by nine o'clock tonight for Caesarea with
two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen,
and two hundred spearmen. 24 Also pro-
vide mounts for Paul to ride, and take
him safely to Felix the governor." 25 He
wrote a letter to this effect:
26 "Claudius Lysias to his Excellency
the governor Felix, greetings. 27 This man
was seized by the Jews and was about to be
killed by them, but when I had learned
that he was a Roman citizen, I came with
the guard and rescued him. 28 Since I
wanted to know the charge for which they
accused him, I had him brought to their
council. 29 I found that he was accused
concerning questions of their law, but was
charged with nothing deserving death or
imprisonment. 30 When I was informed
that there would be a plot against the
man, I sent him to you at once, ordering
his accusers also to state before you what
they have against him.[n]"
31 So the soldiers, according to their
instructions, took Paul and brought him
during the night to Antipatris. 32 The
next day they let the horsemen go on with
him, while they returned to the barracks.
33 When they came to Caesarea and deliv-
ered the letter to the governor, they pre-
sented Paul also before him. 34 On
reading the letter, he asked what province
he belonged to, and when he learned that
he was from Cilicia, 35 he said, "I will give
you a hearing when your accusers arrive."
Then he ordered that he be kept under
guard in Herod's headquarters.[o]

Paul Before Felix at Caesarea

24 Five days later the high priest An-
anias came down with some el-
ders and an attorney, a certain Tertullus,
and they reported their case against Paul
to the governor. 2 When Paul[p] had been
summoned, Tertullus began to accuse
him, saying:

n Other ancient authorities add *Farewell*
o Gk *praetorium* *p* Gk *he*

23.16–22 Luke's elaboration of this scene (the report to Paul, calling the centurion, the full report to the tribune) enhances its dramatic impact. **23.16** Nothing else is known of *the son of Paul's sister,* nor is it clear how he might have been privy to the plot. **23.23** *Caesarea.* See note on 21.8. *Two hundred soldiers . . . horsemen, and . . . spearmen.* This delegation, probably half the men at the tribune's command, seems improbably large. **23.24** *Felix the governor,* i.e., Antonius Felix, a freedman who governed Judea about 52–59 C.E. Contemporary historians comment on his cruelty and immorality. **23.26** *Claudius Lysias,* the tribune who has been unnamed to this point, delicately omits his involvement in Paul's mistreatment (see 21.31–38; 22.24–29). **23.28** On establishing *the charge* against Paul, see note on 21.33. **23.34** On *Cilicia* as Paul's home, see 22.3. **23.35** *Herod's headquarters,* i.e., the praetorium, the headquarters of the principal administrator of a region.

24.1–27 In a formal trial setting, Paul continues the defense begun in 22.3–21 by affirming both his innocence and his belief in the resurrection. **24.1** *Ananias.* See note on 23.2. **24.2–4** Capturing the audience's attention by flattery was customary, but this introduction exceeds the norm (cf. 24.10; 26.2–3). Negative descriptions of Felix by ancient historians suggest that Tertullus's praise may be quite false (see note

"Your Excellency,[q] because of you we
have long enjoyed peace, and reforms
have been made for this people because
of your foresight. 3 We welcome this in ev-
ery way and everywhere with utmost grat-
itude. 4 But, to detain you no further, I
beg you to hear us briefly with your cus-
tomary graciousness. 5 We have, in fact,
found this man a pestilent fellow, an agi-
tator among all the Jews throughout the
world, and a ringleader of the sect of the
Nazarenes.[r] 6 He even tried to profane
the temple, and so we seized him.[s] 8 By
examining him yourself you will be able to
learn from him concerning everything of
which we accuse him."

9 The Jews also joined in the charge
by asserting that all this was true.

10 When the governor motioned to
him to speak, Paul replied:

"I cheerfully make my defense, know-
ing that for many years you have been a
judge over this nation. 11 As you can find
out, it is not more than twelve days since I
went up to worship in Jerusalem. 12 They
did not find me disputing with anyone in
the temple or stirring up a crowd either in
the synagogues or throughout the city.
13 Neither can they prove to you the
charge that they now bring against me.
14 But this I admit to you, that according
to the Way, which they call a sect, I wor-
ship the God of our ancestors, believing
everything laid down according to the law
or written in the prophets. 15 I have a
hope in God—a hope that they them-
selves also accept—that there will be a res-
urrection of both[t] the righteous and the
unrighteous. 16 Therefore I do my best al-
ways to have a clear conscience toward
God and all people. 17 Now after some
years I came to bring alms to my nation
and to offer sacrifices. 18 While I was do-
ing this, they found me in the temple,
completing the rite of purification, with-
out any crowd or disturbance. 19 But there
were some Jews from Asia—they ought to
be here before you to make an accusation,
if they have anything against me. 20 Or let
these men here tell what crime they had
found when I stood before the council,
21 unless it was this one sentence that I
called out while standing before them, 'It
is about the resurrection of the dead that
I am on trial before you today.' "

22 But Felix, who was rather well in-
formed about the Way, adjourned the
hearing with the comment, "When Lysias
the tribune comes down, I will decide
your case." 23 Then he ordered the cen-
turion to keep him in custody, but to let
him have some liberty and not to prevent
any of his friends from taking care of
his needs.

24 Some days later when Felix came
with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, he
sent for Paul and heard him speak con-
cerning faith in Christ Jesus. 25 And as he
discussed justice, self-control, and the
coming judgment, Felix became fright-

q Gk lacks *Your Excellency* *r* Gk *Nazoreans*
s Other ancient authorities add *and we would have judged him according to our law.* 7 *But the chief captain Lysias came and with great violence took him out of our hands,* 8 *commanding his accusers to come before you.*
t Other ancient authorities read *of the dead, both of*

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on 23.24). **24.5** Tertullus forcefully expresses charges already brought against Paul in a way calculated to play upon a Roman official's fear of rebellion (see 16.20; 17.6; 19.40; see also Lk 23.2–5). Only here in the NT are Christians referred to as *Nazarenes*, associating them with Jesus' home (see, e.g., 2.22; 3.6; 6.14; see also Mt 2.23). **24.6** See 21.28–29 for this erroneous charge. **24.10–21** Paul's defense responds directly to the charges before returning to the themes of 22.3–21. **24.10** Like Tertullus, Paul also begins by flattering Felix (see note on 24.2–4). **24.12** On Paul's behavior in Jerusalem, see 21.17–30. **24.14** The Greek word translated *admit* can refer to a judicial confession or to a confession of faith; here Paul uses that ambiguity by offering what appears to be a confession of wrongdoing and then shifting the topic dramatically. What follows summarizes his remarks in 22.3–21; 23.6. *The Way*. See note on 9.1–2. **24.15** *Resurrection*. See note on 23.6. **24.16** *A clear conscience*. See note on 23.1. **24.17** *Alms to my nation* may be an allusion to the collection Paul gathered for the Jerusalem church (see Rom 15.25–28; 1 Cor 16.1–4; 2 Cor 8–9; Gal 2.10), but this would be an unusual way to describe it. **24.19** *Some Jews from Asia*. See 21.27. **24.21** See note on 23.6. **24.22** Felix's response seems benign, even generous, although the promised decision is not forthcoming. *The Way*. See note on 9.1–2. *Lysias the tribune*. See note on 23.26. **24.24** *Drusilla*, the daughter of Herod Agrippa I, had previously been married to the Syrian Azizus of Emesa but had left him for Felix, who reportedly pursued her for her great beauty. **24.25** Reports concerning Felix's corruption and immorality suggest why he might have found Paul's words frightening (see note on 23.24).

ened and said, "Go away for the present;
when I have an opportunity, I will send
for you." 26 At the same time he hoped
that money would be given him by Paul,
and for that reason he used to send for
him very often and converse with him.
27 After two years had passed, Felix
was succeeded by Porcius Festus; and
since he wanted to grant the Jews a favor,
Felix left Paul in prison.

Paul Appeals to the Emperor

25 Three days after Festus had ar-
rived in the province, he went up
from Caesarea to Jerusalem 2 where the
chief priests and the leaders of the Jews
gave him a report against Paul. They ap-
pealed to him 3 and requested, as a favor
to them against Paul,[u] to have him trans-
ferred to Jerusalem. They were, in fact,
planning an ambush to kill him along the
way. 4 Festus replied that Paul was being
kept at Caesarea, and that he himself in-
tended to go there shortly. 5 "So," he said,
"let those of you who have the authority
come down with me, and if there is any-
thing wrong about the man, let them ac-
cuse him."
6 After he had stayed among them
not more than eight or ten days, he went
down to Caesarea; the next day he took
his seat on the tribunal and ordered Paul
to be brought. 7 When he arrived, the
Jews who had gone down from Jerusalem
surrounded him, bringing many serious
charges against him, which they could not
prove. 8 Paul said in his defense, "I have
in no way committed an offense against
the law of the Jews, or against the temple,
or against the emperor." 9 But Festus,
wishing to do the Jews a favor, asked Paul,
"Do you wish to go up to Jerusalem and
be tried there before me on these
charges?" 10 Paul said, "I am appealing to
the emperor's tribunal; this is where I
should be tried. I have done no wrong to
the Jews, as you very well know. 11 Now if
I am in the wrong and have committed
something for which I deserve to die, I
am not trying to escape death; but if there
is nothing to their charges against me, no
one can turn me over to them. I appeal to
the emperor." 12 Then Festus, after he
had conferred with his council, replied,
"You have appealed to the emperor; to
the emperor you will go."

Paul Brought Before King Agrippa

13 After several days had passed,
King Agrippa and Bernice arrived at
Caesarea to welcome Festus. 14 Since they
were staying there several days, Festus
laid Paul's case before the king, saying,
"There is a man here who was left in
prison by Felix. 15 When I was in Jerusa-
lem, the chief priests and the elders of the
Jews informed me about him and asked
for a sentence against him. 16 I told them
that it was not the custom of the Romans
to hand over anyone before the accused
had met the accusers face to face and had
been given an opportunity to make a de-
fense against the charge. 17 So when they

u Gk *him*

24.27 *Porcius Festus* succeeded Felix and governed about 59–61 C.E. (see 25.1–27; 26.24–32). Felix not only acts out of greed (24.26) but grants political *favors* (see also 25.9).

25.1–12 The arrival of Festus prompts another plot, another cycle of accusation and defense, and finally Paul's appeal to the emperor. **25.2–3** This plan replays the plot in 23.12–35. **25.6** *The tribunal*, the judgment seat or bench. **25.7** See the earlier *charges* in 21.28; 24.5–6. **25.8** See Paul's earlier defense in 22.1–21; 23.1, 6; 24.10–21. *Against the emperor* refers to the charge that Paul has threatened the civil order (24.5). **25.9** Like his predecessor, Festus wishes to appease the powerful Jewish leadership (see 24.27). **25.10** The details of the law governing appeals at this time are obscure. Here what is assumed is not the right to appeal a verdict but the right to be moved to another venue. **25.12** The solemn repetition of Paul's appeal underscores its importance.

25.13–27 The arrival of Agrippa and Bernice sets the stage for the climactic defense of Paul and the pronouncement of his innocence. **25.13** *King Agrippa*, i.e., Herod Agrippa II, son of Herod Agrippa I (see note on 12.1; "The Herods: A Simplified Family Tree," p. 1862). Because of his youth, Agrippa II did not succeed his father immediately, but by 50 C.E. he ruled the small region of Chalcis in Lebanon and later acquired considerable territory. His incestuous relationship with *Bernice*, his sister, was well known. **25.14–21** Festus's statement summarizes the events of 24.27–25.12, although with several changes: he states that the Jews asked for a verdict (25.15; cf. 25.2–3); he concedes the rightness of Paul's defense (25.18–19); and he omits his political reasons for proposing that Paul be tried in

met here, I lost no time, but on the next
day took my seat on the tribunal and or-
dered the man to be brought. 18 When the
accusers stood up, they did not charge
him with any of the crimes[v] that I was
expecting. 19 Instead they had certain
points of disagreement with him about
their own religion and about a certain
Jesus, who had died, but whom Paul as-
serted to be alive. 20 Since I was at a loss
how to investigate these questions, I asked
whether he wished to go to Jerusalem and
be tried there on these charges.[w] 21 But
when Paul had appealed to be kept in
custody for the decision of his Imperial
Majesty, I ordered him to be held until
I could send him to the emperor."
22 Agrippa said to Festus, "I would like to
hear the man myself." "Tomorrow," he
said, "you will hear him."

23 So on the next day Agrippa and
Bernice came with great pomp, and they
entered the audience hall with the mili-
tary tribunes and the prominent men of
the city. Then Festus gave the order and
Paul was brought in. 24 And Festus said,
"King Agrippa and all here present with
us, you see this man about whom the
whole Jewish community petitioned me,
both in Jerusalem and here, shouting that
he ought not to live any longer. 25 But I
found that he had done nothing deserv-
ing death; and when he appealed to his
Imperial Majesty, I decided to send him.
26 But I have nothing definite to write to
our sovereign about him. Therefore I
have brought him before all of you, and
especially before you, King Agrippa,
so that, after we have examined him, I
may have something to write— 27 for it
seems to me unreasonable to send a
prisoner without indicating the charges
against him."

Paul Defends Himself Before Agrippa

26 Agrippa said to Paul, "You have
permission to speak for yourself."
Then Paul stretched out his hand and be-
gan to defend himself:

2 "I consider myself fortunate that it is
before you, King Agrippa, I am to make
my defense today against all the accusa-
tions of the Jews, 3 because you are espe-
cially familiar with all the customs and
controversies of the Jews; therefore I beg
of you to listen to me patiently.

4 "All the Jews know my way of life
from my youth, a life spent from the be-
ginning among my own people and in Je-
rusalem. 5 They have known for a long
time, if they are willing to testify, that I
have belonged to the strictest sect of our
religion and lived as a Pharisee. 6 And
now I stand here on trial on account of
my hope in the promise made by God to
our ancestors, 7 a promise that our twelve
tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly
worship day and night. It is for this hope,
your Excellency,[x] that I am accused by
Jews! 8 Why is it thought incredible by any
of you that God raises the dead?

9 "Indeed, I myself was convinced
that I ought to do many things against the
name of Jesus of Nazareth.[y] 10 And that
is what I did in Jerusalem; with authority
received from the chief priests, I not only
locked up many of the saints in prison,
but I also cast my vote against them when
they were being condemned to death.
11 By punishing them often in all the
synagogues I tried to force them to
blaspheme; and since I was so furiously

v Other ancient authorities read *with anything*
w Gk *on them* x Gk *O king* y Gk *the Nazorean*

Jerusalem (25.20; cf. 25.9). **25.23** The formality of this setting prepares for Paul's final defense speech. **25.24** *The whole Jewish community*, another instance of Lucan hyperbole (see, e.g., 4.4, 16). **25.25** *Nothing deserving death.* See 23.29; 25.18; 26.31; see also Lk 23.15, 22. **25.26–27** On the need for specific *charges*, see note on 21.33.

26.1–23 Paul's final defense speech, combining themes from the speeches in 22.1–21; 24.10–21, begins with a claim to Jewish loyalty, rehearses once again Paul's conversion with special emphasis on his commission, and concludes with an assertion of Paul's obedience. **26.1** *Stretched out his hand*, a conventional orator's gesture (see 12.17; 13.16; 21.40). **26.2–3** On the tradition of opening a speech with praise for the audience, see note on 24.2–4. **26.4–5** See 22.3; 23.6. *My own people* and *our religion* imply that Paul does not regard Agrippa as one of those people (cf. 22.3). **26.6–8** See 23.6; 24.15. Resurrection is not simply the renewal of individual life but a symbol of all of God's promises to Israel and thus a theme throughout Luke-Acts. **26.9–11** This final depiction of Paul's activity as persecutor portrays it in much harsher

enraged at them, I pursued them even to
foreign cities.
12 "With this in mind, I was traveling
to Damascus with the authority and com-
mission of the chief priests, 13 when at
midday along the road, your Excellency,[z]
I saw a light from heaven, brighter than
the sun, shining around me and my com-
panions. 14 When we had all fallen to the
ground, I heard a voice saying to me in
the Hebrew[a] language, 'Saul, Saul, why
are you persecuting me? It hurts you to
kick against the goads.' 15 I asked, 'Who
are you, Lord?' The Lord answered, 'I am
Jesus whom you are persecuting. 16 But
get up and stand on your feet; for I have
appeared to you for this purpose, to ap-
point you to serve and testify to the things
in which you have seen me[b] and to those
in which I will appear to you. 17 I will res-
cue you from your people and from the
Gentiles—to whom I am sending you 18 to
open their eyes so that they may turn
from darkness to light and from the
power of Satan to God, so that they may
receive forgiveness of sins and a place
among those who are sanctified by faith
in me.'
19 "After that, King Agrippa, I was
not disobedient to the heavenly vision,
20 but declared first to those in Damascus,
then in Jerusalem and throughout the
countryside of Judea, and also to the Gen-
tiles, that they should repent and turn to
God and do deeds consistent with repen-
tance. 21 For this reason the Jews seized
me in the temple and tried to kill me.
22 To this day I have had help from God,
and so I stand here, testifying to both
small and great, saying nothing but what
the prophets and Moses said would take
place: 23 that the Messiah[c] must suffer,
and that, by being the first to rise from
the dead, he would proclaim light both to
our people and to the Gentiles."
24 While he was making this defense,
Festus exclaimed, "You are out of your
mind, Paul! Too much learning is driving
you insane!" 25 But Paul said, "I am not
out of my mind, most excellent Festus,
but I am speaking the sober truth. 26 In-
deed the king knows about these things,
and to him I speak freely; for I am cer-
tain that none of these things has escaped
his notice, for this was not done in a
corner. 27 King Agrippa, do you believe
the prophets? I know that you believe."
28 Agrippa said to Paul, "Are you so
quickly persuading me to become a Chris-
tian?"[d] 29 Paul replied, "Whether quickly
or not, I pray to God that not only you but
also all who are listening to me today
might become such as I am—except for
these chains."
30 Then the king got up, and with
him the governor and Bernice and those
who had been seated with them; 31 and as
they were leaving, they said to one an-
other, "This man is doing nothing to de-
serve death or imprisonment." 32 Agrippa
said to Festus, "This man could have been
set free if he had not appealed to the
emperor."

z Gk *O king* *a* That is, *Aramaic* *b* Other ancient authorities read *the things that you have seen* *c* Or *the Christ* *d* Or *Quickly you will persuade me to play the Christian*

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terms than previously (cf. 8.1, 3; 9.1–2; 22.4–5). **26.13** See 9.3; 22.6. **26.14** *In the Hebrew language*, a detail not present in earlier accounts (cf. 9.4; 22.7). *It hurts you to kick against the goads*, also not present in earlier accounts, is from Euripides (*Bacchae* 794–95), although it had become a conventional proverb. **26.16–18** Here Paul receives his commission directly from Jesus (cf. 9.6, 15–16; 22.14–16). **26.17** *I will rescue you.* See 1 Chr 16.35; Jer 1.8, 19. **26.18** Turning *from darkness to light* and *to God* are conventional expressions for gentile conversion (see, e.g., 9.35; 11.21; 13.47; 14.15; 15.19; Lk 1.79; 2.32). **26.20** See 9.19–22, 26–30; 13.46–49. **26.21** See 21.27–36. **26.22** Paul here resumes the argument of 26.6–8. **26.23** *The Messiah must suffer.* The necessity of the Messiah's death and resurrection is a key Lucan theme; see 3.18, 21–25; 8.32–35; Lk 24.26. *Light* plays a prominent role in this speech (26.13, 18), as it does elsewhere in Luke-Acts (e.g., 9.3; 12.7; 13.47; Lk 2.32; 8.16; 11.3). **26.24** *You are out of your mind.* Exactly what leads Festus to this conclusion is unclear, but his comment allows for the solemn assertion that follows. **26.26** *Not done in a corner*, i.e., these events have occurred in the open (see note on 12.18–19). **26.28** Agrippa's statement could be either an ironic insult or a straightforward comment on Paul's persuasiveness. **26.31** Agrippa, Bernice, and Festus confirm the conclusion of Lysias (23.29). **26.32** The details of the law regarding appeals are obscure (see note on 25.10), but this pronouncement determines what lies ahead for Paul.

Paul Sails for Rome

27 When it was decided that we were
to sail for Italy, they transferred
Paul and some other prisoners to a centu-
rion of the Augustan Cohort, named
Julius. 2 Embarking on a ship of Ad-
ramyttium that was about to set sail to
the ports along the coast of Asia, we put to
sea, accompanied by Aristarchus, a Mace-
donian from Thessalonica. 3 The next day
we put in at Sidon; and Julius treated Paul
kindly, and allowed him to go to his
friends to be cared for. 4 Putting out to sea
from there, we sailed under the lee of Cy-
prus, because the winds were against us.
5 After we had sailed across the sea that is
off Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to
Myra in Lycia. 6 There the centurion
found an Alexandrian ship bound for It-
aly and put us on board. 7 We sailed slowly
for a number of days and arrived with dif-
ficulty off Cnidus, and as the wind was
against us, we sailed under the lee of
Crete off Salmone. 8 Sailing past it with
difficulty, we came to a place called Fair
Havens, near the city of Lasea.

9 Since much time had been lost and
sailing was now dangerous, because even
the Fast had already gone by, Paul ad-
vised them, 10 saying, "Sirs, I can see that
the voyage will be with danger and much
heavy loss, not only of the cargo and the
ship, but also of our lives." 11 But the cen-
turion paid more attention to the pilot
and to the owner of the ship than to what
Paul said. 12 Since the harbor was not suit-
able for spending the winter, the majority
was in favor of putting to sea from there,
on the chance that somehow they could
reach Phoenix, where they could spend
the winter. It was a harbor of Crete, fac-
ing southwest and northwest.

The Storm at Sea

13 When a moderate south wind be-
gan to blow, they thought they could
achieve their purpose; so they weighed
anchor and began to sail past Crete, close
to the shore. 14 But soon a violent wind,
called the northeaster, rushed down from
Crete.[e] 15 Since the ship was caught and
could not be turned head-on into the
wind, we gave way to it and were driven.
16 By running under the lee of a small is-
land called Cauda[f] we were scarcely able
to get the ship's boat under control. 17 Af-
ter hoisting it up they took measures[g] to
undergird the ship; then, fearing that
they would run on the Syrtis, they low-
ered the sea anchor and so were driven.
18 We were being pounded by the storm
so violently that on the next day they be-
gan to throw the cargo overboard, 19 and
on the third day with their own hands
they threw the ship's tackle overboard.
20 When neither sun nor stars appeared
for many days, and no small tempest
raged, all hope of our being saved was at
last abandoned.

21 Since they had been without food

e Gk *it* f Other ancient authorities read *Clauda*
g Gk *helps*

27.1–44 Paul's long-anticipated journey to Rome (see 19.21; 23.11) contains elements familiar from Greco-Roman literature: travel accounts, storms, shipwrecks, and preoccupation with safety. **27.1** The use of first-person plural narration (*we*) resumes and continues through 28.16; see note on 16.10. The *Augustan Cohort*, named after the emperor Augustus, who died in 14 C.E. **27.2** *Adramyttium*, a port on the northwest coast of Asia Minor, in the region of Mysia. *Aristarchus*. See note on 19.29. **27.3** *Sidon*, a Phoenician city north of Caesarea. **27.4** Sailing to the north and east of the island of Cyprus afforded protection from winds from the west. **27.5** The route here moves west along the southern districts (Cilicia, Pamphylia, Lycia) of Asia Minor. **27.6** Probably a grain *ship* (see 27.38); Rome imported much grain from Egypt. **27.7** *Cnidus*, a small island off the southwest coast of Asia Minor. *Salmone*, a cape at the northeastern extreme of Crete. **27.8** *Fair Havens* and *Lasea* are on the southern coast of Crete. After this point, the ship would be in open waters without the protection of the island. **27.9** *The Fast* refers to the Day of Atonement, the tenth of Tishri (September/October). Voyages after mid-September were considered unwise because of the increased danger of bad weather. **27.10** It seems improbable that a prisoner would have been included in such deliberations. Together with the difficulties with the winds already noted in 27.4–8, Paul's advice serves as a prophetic warning. **27.16** *Cauda*, south of Crete to the west of Fair Havens. *The ship's boat*, i.e., the lifeboat. **27.17** It is not clear what *undergirding* entailed. The *Syrtis*, two dangerous bays between Cyrene and Carthage on the northern coast of Africa. **27.20** With *neither sun nor stars*, the ship had no navigational guides. *No small tempest*, i.e., a large storm; see note on 12.18–19. **27.21–26** Paul's brief speech recalls his earlier

for a long time, Paul then stood up among them and said, "Men, you should have listened to me and not have set sail from Crete and thereby avoided this damage and loss. 22 I urge you now to keep up your courage, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. 23 For last night there stood by me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, 24 and he said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before the emperor; and indeed, God has granted safety to all those who are sailing with you.' 25 So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told. 26 But we will have to run aground on some island."

27 When the fourteenth night had come, as we were drifting across the sea of Adria, about midnight the sailors suspected that they were nearing land. 28 So they took soundings and found twenty fathoms; a little farther on they took soundings again and found fifteen fathoms. 29 Fearing that we might run on the rocks, they let down four anchors from the stern and prayed for day to come. 30 But when the sailors tried to escape from the ship and had lowered the boat into the sea, on the pretext of putting out anchors from the bow, 31 Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved." 32 Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the boat and set it adrift.

33 Just before daybreak, Paul urged all of them to take some food, saying, "Today is the fourteenth day that you have been in suspense and remaining without food, having eaten nothing. 34 Therefore I urge you to take some food, for it will help you survive; for none of you will lose a hair from your heads." 35 After he had said this, he took bread; and giving thanks to God in the presence of all, he broke it and began to eat. 36 Then all of them were encouraged and took food for themselves. 37 (We were in all two hundred seventy-six[h] persons in the ship.) 38 After they had satisfied their hunger, they lightened the ship by throwing the wheat into the sea.

The Shipwreck

39 In the morning they did not recognize the land, but they noticed a bay with a beach, on which they planned to run the ship ashore, if they could. 40 So they cast off the anchors and left them in the sea. At the same time they loosened the ropes that tied the steering-oars; then hoisting the foresail to the wind, they made for the beach. 41 But striking a reef,[i] they ran the ship aground; the bow stuck and remained immovable, but the stern was being broken up by the force of the waves. 42 The soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, so that none might swim away and escape; 43 but the centurion, wishing to save Paul, kept them from carrying out their plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and make for the land, 44 and the rest to follow, some on planks and others on pieces of the ship. And so it was that all were brought safely to land.

Paul on the Island of Malta

28 After we had reached safety, we then learned that the island was called Malta. 2 The natives showed us unusual kindness. Since it had begun to rain and was cold, they kindled a fire and welcomed all of us around it. 3 Paul had gathered a bundle of brushwood and was putting it on the fire, when a viper, driven out by the heat, fastened itself on his

h Other ancient authorities read *seventy-six*; others, *about seventy-six* *i* Gk *place of two seas*

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warning (27.10) and interprets the ship's eventual safety as part of God's plan for Paul's mission (19.21; 23.11). **27.21** *Without food* refers to seasickness or fasting, as food was available (27.33–38). **27.23** *The God to whom I belong and whom I worship* identifies God for Paul's gentile fellow passengers. **27.24** *You must stand before the emperor.* See 9.15; 19.21; 23.11. Although Luke does not narrate Paul's trial before Caesar (see note on 28.30–31), he must have understood that it occurred. **27.27** *The sea of Adria,* i.e., the Adriatic Sea. **27.33** *Take some food.* See note on 27.21. **27.34** See 1 Sam 14.45; 1 Kings 1.52; Lk 21.18. **27.35–36** There may be echoes of the Eucharist here (see Lk 22.19), although the separate meals of those present makes any intentional reference unlikely. **27.39–44** Paul's earlier predictions are realized (see 27.22, 24, 26, 34).

28.1–10 On Malta, Paul and his companions find exemplary hospitality and return it by healing the sick. **28.1** *Malta,* an island south of

hand. 4 When the natives saw the creature
hanging from his hand, they said to one
another, "This man must be a murderer;
though he has escaped from the sea, justice has not allowed him to live." 5 He,
however, shook off the creature into the
fire and suffered no harm. 6 They were
expecting him to swell up or drop dead,
but after they had waited a long time and
saw that nothing unusual had happened
to him, they changed their minds and began to say that he was a god.

7 Now in the neighborhood of that
place were lands belonging to the leading
man of the island, named Publius, who received us and entertained us hospitably
for three days. 8 It so happened that the
father of Publius lay sick in bed with fever
and dysentery. Paul visited him and cured
him by praying and putting his hands on
him. 9 After this happened, the rest of the
people on the island who had diseases also
came and were cured. 10 They bestowed
many honors on us, and when we were
about to sail, they put on board all the
provisions we needed.

Paul Arrives at Rome

11 Three months later we set sail on a
ship that had wintered at the island, an
Alexandrian ship with the Twin Brothers
as its figurehead. 12 We put in at Syracuse
and stayed there for three days; 13 then
we weighed anchor and came to Rhegium. After one day there a south wind
sprang up, and on the second day we
came to Puteoli. 14 There we found believers[j] and were invited to stay with them
for seven days. And so we came to Rome.
15 The believers[j] from there, when they
heard of us, came as far as the Forum of
Appius and Three Taverns to meet us.
On seeing them, Paul thanked God and
took courage.

16 When we came into Rome, Paul
was allowed to live by himself, with the
soldier who was guarding him.

Paul Preaches in Rome

17 Three days later he called together
the local leaders of the Jews. When they
had assembled, he said to them, "Brothers, though I had done nothing against
our people or the customs of our ancestors, yet I was arrested in Jerusalem and
handed over to the Romans. 18 When they
had examined me, the Romans[k] wanted
to release me, because there was no reason for the death penalty in my case.
19 But when the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to the emperor—even
though I had no charge to bring against
my nation. 20 For this reason therefore I
have asked to see you and speak with
you,[l] since it is for the sake of the hope
of Israel that I am bound with this chain."
21 They replied, "We have received no letters from Judea about you, and none of
the brothers coming here has reported or
spoken anything evil about you. 22 But we
would like to hear from you what you
think, for with regard to this sect we know
that everywhere it is spoken against."

23 After they had set a day to meet
with him, they came to him at his lodgings
in great numbers. From morning until

j Gk *brothers* *k* Gk *they* *l* Or *I have asked you to see me and speak with me*

Sicily. **28.4** *Justice* probably refers to the Greek goddess, Dike, who personifies justice.

28.11–16 The final part of Paul's journey to Rome recalls the much longer journey to Jerusalem in 20.1–21.17, with its travelogue and visits with believers. **28.11** *Three months later*, sailing resumed in February or March (see note on 27.9). *An Alexandrian ship*. See note on 27.6. *Twin Brothers*, i.e., Castor and Pollux, sons of Zeus who are associated with safety on the seas. **28.12–13** The route (Syracuse to Rhegium to Puteoli) is along the eastern coast of Sicily and then along the western coast of Italy to the port of Puteoli, west of Naples. **28.14–15** The presence of *believers* in Puteoli and Rome indicates that Paul was not the first to preach the gospel there (see Rom 1.13). **28.15** The *Forum of Appius*, a market town forty-three miles outside Rome. The *Three Taverns*, a way station thirty-three miles from Rome along the Appian Way.

28.17–28 The final scene in Acts depicts Paul first defending himself before Roman Jews and then proclaiming to them the gospel. **28.17–20** Paul's speech recapitulates his earlier defense in Jerusalem: he had not violated the Jewish people or their customs (22.3–21; 24.11–13); he was charged with no capital crime (25.8, 11); he was compelled to appeal to the emperor (25.10–12); he acts only for the sake of Israel's hope (23.6; 24.14–15, 21; 26.6–8, 23). **28.23** *Kingdom of God*. See note on 1.3. *From the law of Moses and from the prophets* recalls Lk 24.27;

evening he explained the matter to them,
testifying to the kingdom of God and try-
ing to convince them about Jesus both
from the law of Moses and from the
prophets. 24 Some were convinced by
what he had said, while others refused to
believe. 25 So they disagreed with each
other; and as they were leaving, Paul
made one further statement: "The Holy
Spirit was right in saying to your ancestors
through the prophet Isaiah,

26 'Go to this people and say,
You will indeed listen, but never
understand,
and you will indeed look, but
never perceive.
27 For this people's heart has
grown dull,
and their ears are hard of
hearing,
and they have shut their eyes;
so that they might not look
with their eyes,
and listen with their ears,
and understand with their heart
and turn—
and I would heal them.'

28 Let it be known to you then that this
salvation of God has been sent to the Gen-
tiles; they will listen."[m]

30 He lived there two whole years at
his own expense[n] and welcomed all who
came to him, 31 proclaiming the kingdom
of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus
Christ with all boldness and without
hindrance.

m Other ancient authorities add verse 29, *And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, arguing vigorously among themselves* *n* Or *in his own hired dwelling*

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see also Lk 24.44; Acts 3.18; 24.14; 26.22. **28.24** As elsewhere, Christian proclamation receives a mixed reaction; see, e.g., 13.43–45; 17.4–5. **28.26–27** See Isa 6.9–10 (Septuagint). **28.28** The announcement of God's *salvation* recalls the opening of Luke-Acts (Lk 2.30–32; 3.6). This is the third time Paul has announced that the gospel is for *the Gentiles* (see 13.46–48; 18.5–6). Since this final statement comes in the concluding lines of Acts, it may indeed refer to the close of the Jewish mission; on the other hand, the two earlier pronouncements are followed by further preaching among Jews, and 28.30 indicates Paul welcomed all who came to him, leaving open the possibility of further conversation.

28.30–31 Although Luke does not narrate Paul's trial or death, he has provided ample indication that they lie ahead (see, e.g., 19.21; 20.22–25; 23.11; 26.32; 27.24). He concludes with a brief note about Paul's continued imprisonment, in which the gospel is nevertheless openly proclaimed. **28.31** *Kingdom of God.* See note on 1.3. On *boldness* as a characteristic of Christian witness, see note on 4.13.

POSSIBLE CHRONOLOGY OF THE PAULINE LETTERS

1 Thessalonians	50–51 C.E.	
[2 Thessalonians]	[50–51, if authentic]	If pseudonymous, in the last decades of the first century.
Philippians	54–55	This dating assumes that the Letter was sent from Ephesus. If from Caesarea, three to four years later, and if from Rome, six to seven years later.
Philemon	54–55	This Letter seems to have been written under the same circumstances as Philippians, and the same uncertainties apply.
Galatians	50–56	Any closer dating depends in part on resolving the question of the location of the addressees.
1 Corinthians	54	
2 Corinthians	55–56	It is likely that different portions of the Letter were written and sent at different times within this period.
Romans	56–57	
[Colossians]	[57–61, if authentic]	Earlier in this period if from Caesarea, later if from Rome. If pseudonymous, sometime between 70 and 90.
[Ephesians]	[80–95]	Assuming pseudonymity.
[1–2 Timothy, Titus]	[90–110]	Assuming pseudonymity.

Brackets indicate that authorship by Paul is in question.

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE

ROMANS

Author, Date, Circumstances of Writing

BY 58 C.E., PAUL SENSED that his work in the Aegean region was completed (15.23). He planned to go to Jerusalem to deliver funds collected from his churches, as agreed at the Jerusalem council a decade before (Gal 2.1–10). Before sailing from Corinth (see 16.23; cf. 1 Cor 1.14), he dictated this Letter to Tertius (16.22) and probably asked Phoebe, who was about to leave for Rome (16.1–2), to deliver it. He informed the readers that after going to Jerusalem, he would stop in Rome on his way to Spain. Because of his foreboding about Jerusalem, he asked them to support him with prayer; he also hinted that he would welcome their financial support for his work in Spain (1.8–15; 15.22–33). These requests frame the most sustained theological argument found in any of Paul's letters.

The Roman Church

The origins of Christianity in Rome are obscure, though some evidence suggests that it had arrived there by 50 C.E. The historian Suetonius reports that in 49 C.E. the emperor Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome because of disturbances over "Chrestus" (probably a mistake for "Christus," or Christ; Suetonius *Life of Claudius* 25.3). According to Acts 18.1–3, Paul met a Jewish Christian couple in Corinth (Aquila and Priscilla) who were among those expelled. After the murder of Claudius, the Jews returned, among them Aquila and Prisca (as Paul calls her; see Rom 16.3–4) and Paul's relatives (16.7). Acts tells us nothing more about Roman Christianity, except that Christians from Rome met Paul as he neared that city as a prisoner (28.15–16).

Purpose

The Letter provides clues about Christians in Rome that may indicate something about Paul's purpose in writing. Paul insists that the current Jewish rejection of the gospel does not imply that Israel's election is now annulled (11.13–24), hinting perhaps that there is tension between the gentile Christians and the returned

Jewish Christians. The extent to which the Letter subtly deals with this situation is debatable. In chs. 14–15 Paul addresses the "weak in faith" (those scrupulous in observing special days and diets) and the "strong" (those lax in such matters), but he does not say that the former are Jewish and the latter gentile Christians. Indeed, some regard his counsel as more general than directed to a specific problem. When Paul sent this Letter, he faced opposite misunderstandings of the gospel. In Jerusalem he needed to defend the validity of a largely gentile church (whose money he was bringing) that did not observe the Jewish law; in Rome he needed to defend the continuing validity of Israel in God's purpose. His Letter, therefore, insists that there is one gospel for all humanity, albeit "to the Jew first" (1.16).

Character of the Letter

Romans is the work of a mature mind. Indeed, it might be the last Letter we have from Paul (assuming Philippians was written earlier and the Pastorals are pseudonymous). Behind it lie over two decades of teaching, preaching, and writing Letters to the Thessalonian, Philippian, Corinthian, and Galatian churches. Of these, Galatians is closest to Romans, for it also emphasizes justification by faith, appeals to Abraham, and relies heavily on scripture. But the two Letters treat these topics somewhat differently, for in Galatians Paul contends with rival interpretations of the gospel in churches he has founded, whereas in Romans he presents the rationale of his gospel to mostly unknown readers. Romans is not, however, a summary of Paul's thought. Important themes are either absent (e.g., the Lord's Supper) or mentioned only in passing (e.g., "church" appears only in ch. 16).

The Letter's structure is straightforward. Its opening (1.1–7) is followed by the customary paragraph of thanksgiving (1.8–15), which leads into a statement commonly seen as the theme (1.16–17). The theological argument (1.18–11.36) has two parts: 1.18–8.39 develops the meaning of God's righteousness and chs. 9–11 focus on the meaning of Israel. Although chs. 9–11 are a discrete unit, they are neither an excursus nor an appendage, but an integral part of the argument in which Paul's view of God's righteousness is applied to the election of Israel. The ethical section (12.1–15.13) deals first with various matters (chs. 12–13), then with the "weak" and the "strong." The rest of ch. 15 reflects on Paul's work and travel plans. Ch. 16 consists mostly of greetings and the concluding doxology; it provides a list of Paul's friends in Rome who could have informed him of the situation in that church. Some have argued that the final chapter was a letter originally sent to Ephesus but later attached to Romans. Indeed, shorter editions of Romans did once exist. Rom 15.33 resembles a conclusion, and one manuscript actually has 16.25–27 at this point, while a number of others have it at the end of ch. 14. Rather than being a later addition, however, ch. 16 is more likely an original part of Romans that was omitted when the Letter was abbreviated for general church use.

The study of Romans has concentrated on Paul's ideas (e.g., justification, grace, law), but recent work has turned also to his use of ancient rhetoric and to the ways in which the OT functions in his argument. Just as he uses conventions of ancient letter writing, so he uses Greco-Roman rhetorical techniques and Jewish exegetical methods to develop his argument, which is in effect a discourse. What gives Romans its depth and power, however, is the rigor of Paul's own thought, which these conventions help him to express effectively.
Leander E. Keck

Salutation

1 Paul, a servant[a] of Jesus Christ,
called to be an apostle, set apart for
the gospel of God, 2 which he promised
beforehand through his prophets in the
holy scriptures, 3 the gospel concerning
his Son, who was descended from David
according to the flesh 4 and was declared
to be Son of God with power according to
the spirit[b] of holiness by resurrection
from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,
5 through whom we have received grace
and apostleship to bring about the obedi-
ence of faith among all the Gentiles for
the sake of his name, 6 including your-
selves who are called to belong to Jesus
Christ,
7 To all God's beloved in Rome, who
are called to be saints:
Grace to you and peace from God our
Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

8 First, I thank my God through Jesus
Christ for all of you, because your faith is
proclaimed throughout the world. 9 For
God, whom I serve with my spirit by an-
nouncing the gospel[c] of his Son, is my
witness that without ceasing I remember
you always in my prayers, 10 asking that by
God's will I may somehow at last succeed
in coming to you. 11 For I am longing to
see you so that I may share with you some
spiritual gift to strengthen you— 12 or
rather so that we may be mutually encour-
aged by each other's faith, both yours and
mine. 13 I want you to know, brothers and
sisters,[d] that I have often intended to
come to you (but thus far have been pre-
vented), in order that I may reap some
harvest among you as I have among the
rest of the Gentiles. 14 I am a debtor both
to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the
wise and to the foolish 15 — hence my ea-
gerness to proclaim the gospel to you also
who are in Rome.

a Gk *slave* b Or *Spirit* c Gk *my spirit in the gospel* d Gk *brothers*

1.1–7 To introduce himself, Paul expands the conventional salutation with a summary of his gospel. **1.1** *Servant* (lit. "slave"). A slave is at the disposition of the owner, here *Christ*; see also 6.16–22; 12.11; 14.18; 16.18; Gal 1.10; Phil 1.1. *Apostle*, an emissary. **1.2** *Prophets* probably refers generally to the writers of the *scriptures*, which are the OT. **1.3–4** These verses probably quote a confession, perhaps known in Rome, that viewed Jesus as the Son of David who was installed into the office of Son of God by his resurrection (see Acts 13.33). Paul himself believed that God's Son became Jesus; see 2 Cor 8.9; Phil 2.6–11. **1.4** *Spirit of holiness* (a phrase found only here in the NT) probably refers to the Holy Spirit (see text note *b*). **1.5** *Obedience of faith*, obedience grounded in and shaped by faith. See 16.26. On Paul's mission to the *Gentiles*, see 1.13; 15.16; Gal 2.1–10. **1.7** In the NT all Christians, not only outstanding ones, are *saints* (lit. "holy ones"). **1.8–15** A paragraph expressing gratitude to God for some aspect of the readers' faith and life is a standard element in Paul's Letters following the salutation. **1.8** *Faith* refers here not to the readers' personal trust in God but to their Christian presence in Rome. *Throughout the world* should not be taken literally. **1.14** *Greeks and . . . barbarians*, a traditional Greek way of classifying people, means all people; *wise and . . . foolish* means the same. The language should not be pressed;

The Power of the Gospel

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to
everyone who has faith, to the Jew first
and also to the Greek. 17 For in it the righ-
teousness of God is revealed through faith
for faith; as it is written, "The one who is
righteous will live by faith."[e]

The Guilt of the Gentiles

18 For the wrath of God is revealed
from heaven against all ungodliness and
wickedness of those who by their wicked-
ness suppress the truth. 19 For what can be
known about God is plain to them, be-
cause God has shown it to them. 20 Ever
since the creation of the world his eternal
power and divine nature, invisible though
they are, have been understood and seen
through the things he has made. So they
are without excuse; 21 for though they
knew God, they did not honor him as God
or give thanks to him, but they became
futile in their thinking, and their senseless
minds were darkened. 22 Claiming to be
wise, they became fools; 23 and they ex-
changed the glory of the immortal God
for images resembling a mortal human
being or birds or four-footed animals or
reptiles.

24 Therefore God gave them up in
the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the
degrading of their bodies among them-
selves, 25 because they exchanged the
truth about God for a lie and worshiped
and served the creature rather than the
Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

26 For this reason God gave them
up to degrading passions. Their women
exchanged natural intercourse for un-

e Or *The one who is righteous through faith will live*

Paul is simply establishing rapport with the readers.

1.16–17 These verses are commonly regarded as the theme of the Letter. **1.16** *I am not ashamed* is probably a stylistic understatement meaning "I am proud of." On *the power of God,* see 1.20; 9.17; 1 Cor 1.18, 24; 2.5; 6.14. On the special status of *the Jew,* see 2.9–10; 3.1–2; chs. 9–11; cf. 3.9. *First* refers either to time or to theological priority. **1.17** *The righteousness* (or "justice") *of God* is a key theme in Romans; see 3.21–26; 10.3; see also Pss 31.1; 35.24; 71.2; Isa 45.8, 21; 46.13 ("deliverance"); 51.8. Here Paul understands it to mean the divine rectitude that rectifies (makes right) the relation between the Creator and the unrighteous person who believes the gospel. *Is revealed* (lit. "is being revealed"). The passive voice implies that God, not Paul, is doing the revealing. *Faith.* The same word is translated *faithfulness* in 3.3, so its meaning here is not obvious. Perhaps *through faith* refers to God's faithfulness and *for faith* to the human response to it. The quotation (Hab 2.4) does not agree exactly with either the Hebrew or the Greek text; it may be Paul's own rendering (see text note *e*).

1.18–3.20 In this carefully designed argument, Paul shows that the gospel, which brings salvation to everyone who believes it (1.16), deals with a dilemma shared by all humans, be they Jews or Gentiles (see also 3.23). **1.18–32** An indictment of Gentiles. **1.18** *The wrath of God* is not God's anger (an emotion) but the rightful response to what humans have done; see also 2.5; 2.8; 3.5; 4.15; 5.9; 9.22; 12.19; 13.5. *Is revealed.* See note on 1.17. *Ungodliness* refers to the relationship between God and humans, *wickedness* (lit. "unrighteousness") to human relationships, as in the two tables of the Decalogue (see Ex 20.2–17). The *truth* about God's identity (see 1.19) is suppressed by wickedness because human behavior reflects what persons take God to be and stand for. **1.19** *Because God has shown it to them* nullifies an excuse of ignorance (1.20). **1.20** That one could infer the *invisible* Creator from the created world was a familiar idea in Paul's time; see Wis 13.1–9. **1.21** The refusal to *honor* (lit. "glorify") God *as God* is humanity's root sin, the source of the human dilemma; cf. 15.6, 9; 1 Cor 6.20; 2 Cor 9.13. *They became futile,* lit. "they were made futile" (by God). **1.22–32** These verses clearly refer to Gentiles, as seen from the standpoint of Jewish horror of idolatry (Deut 4.16–18), but cf. Ps 106.20; Jer 2.11. **1.22** *They became fools,* lit. "they were made foolish." **1.24–25** The first of three expositions of the same point (see also 1.26, 28): from idolatry follow all sorts of moral confusions; *God gave them up* (lit. "handed them over") to those confusions, i.e., allowed immoralities to gain control. The immoralities are thus the symptoms of God's wrath, which is now disclosed by the gospel (see 1.18). **1.26–27** Some think that Paul here condemns homosexual acts by heterosexual people (i.e., *unnatural* means "unnatural for them"); others that he condemns pederasty (sexual activity between adult men and boys). It is questionable whether Paul thought of homosexuality as a condition or a disposition (see also 1 Cor 6.9). The repetition of the word *exchanged* (see v. 25) is deliberate: moral confusion follows idolatry, as Jewish thought had long maintained (see Wis

natural, 27 and in the same way also the
men, giving up natural intercourse with
women, were consumed with passion for
one another. Men committed shameless
acts with men and received in their own
persons the due penalty for their error.
28 And since they did not see fit to
acknowledge God, God gave them up to a
debased mind and to things that should
not be done. 29 They were filled with ev-
ery kind of wickedness, evil, covetousness,
malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, de-
ceit, craftiness, they are gossips, 30 slan-
derers, God-haters,[f] insolent, haughty,
boastful, inventors of evil, rebellious to-
ward parents, 31 foolish, faithless, heart-
less, ruthless. 32 They know God's decree,
that those who practice such things de-
serve to die—yet they not only do them
but even applaud others who practice
them.

The Righteous Judgment of God

2 Therefore you have no excuse, who-
ever you are, when you judge oth-
ers; for in passing judgment on another
you condemn yourself, because you, the
judge, are doing the very same things.
2 You say,[g] "We know that God's judg-
ment on those who do such things is in
accordance with truth." 3 Do you imagine,
whoever you are, that when you judge
those who do such things and yet do them
yourself, you will escape the judgment of
God? 4 Or do you despise the riches of his
kindness and forbearance and patience?
Do you not realize that God's kindness is
meant to lead you to repentance? 5 But by
your hard and impenitent heart you are
storing up wrath for yourself on the day
of wrath, when God's righteous judgment
will be revealed. 6 For he will repay ac-
cording to each one's deeds: 7 to those
who by patiently doing good seek for
glory and honor and immortality, he will
give eternal life; 8 while for those who are
self-seeking and who obey not the truth
but wickedness, there will be wrath and
fury. 9 There will be anguish and distress
for everyone who does evil, the Jew first
and also the Greek, 10 but glory and honor
and peace for everyone who does good,
the Jew first and also the Greek. 11 For
God shows no partiality.
12 All who have sinned apart from the
law will also perish apart from the law,
and all who have sinned under the law
will be judged by the law. 13 For it is not
the hearers of the law who are righteous
in God's sight, but the doers of the law
who will be justified. 14 When Gentiles,
who do not possess the law, do instinc-
tively what the law requires, these, though
not having the law, are a law to them-
selves. 15 They show that what the law re-

f Or *God-hated* g Gk lacks *You say*

14.12). **1.28** *They did not see fit . . . a debased mind.* Paul's pun resists translation; reading *debased* as "unfit" conveys the idea. **1.29–31** Lists of vices (and of virtues) were common in Paul's day; see Gal 5.19–23; Col 3.5, 8; 1 Tim 1.9–10; 6.4; 2 Tim 3.2–4; Titus 3.3; 1 Pet 4.3. The order within the list is rhetorical. **1.32** The Greek word translated *decree* suggests "right verdict." On *deserve to die*, see 6.23; see also 5.12–21; Gen 3.

2.1–16 An indictment of the person who judges others (cf. 1.32). Paul might be thinking of the Jews, but it is likely that he really means *whoever you are* (2.1). **2.1–5** Paul changes to the diatribe style, writing as if confronting an individual with a truth that demands a response. This was a well-established way of teaching used by philosophical schools as well as by traveling teachers such as Paul himself. **2.1** The judge is *doing the very same things* because all sins, whether gross or minor, express the same root sin (1.21). **2.2** The quotation marks are inferred (see text note *g*). **2.4** This is one of Paul's rare references to *repentance*; see 2 Cor 7.9–10; 12.21. **2.5** The motif of *the day of wrath* ("the last judgment") is anchored deeply in the Bible; Paul refers to it often (5.9; 12.19; 13.4–5; 14.10; 1 Cor 4.4–5; 11.31–32; 2 Cor 5.10; 1 Thess 1.9–10). God's *judgment will be revealed* as the confirmation and final recompense of the wrath already being revealed (1.18). **2.6–16** Paul returns to the discursive style, which develops an idea in order to persuade. **2.6** This saying appears in various contexts; see Ps 62.12; Prov 24.12; Mt 16.27; 2 Cor 11.15; 2 Tim 4.14. **2.9–10** God will punish *the Jew first* (see also note on 1.16), because with priority in status goes priority in judgment. *The Greek*, i.e., the Gentile. **2.12** The difference between *will . . . perish* and *will be judged* is more stylistic than substantial. Those who live *under the law* are the Jews. **2.13** To be *righteous in God's sight* and to be *justified* (declared to be in the right) are the same. See note on 3.20. **2.14** In principle, Gentiles are *doers of the law* (v. 13) when they *do instinctively* (lit. "by nature") what the Mosaic law is all about morally. **2.15** The idea of a *conscience*, an inner judge of one's deeds, implies a standard, a "law" to which the Gentile is accountable; whether Paul alludes to Jer 31.33 is debated. It is

quires is written on their hearts, to which
their own conscience also bears witness;
and their conflicting thoughts will accuse
or perhaps excuse them [16]on the day
when, according to my gospel, God,
through Jesus Christ, will judge the secret
thoughts of all.

The Jews and the Law

17 But if you call yourself a Jew and
rely on the law and boast of your relation
to God [18]and know his will and determine
what is best because you are instructed in
the law, [19]and if you are sure that you are
a guide to the blind, a light to those who
are in darkness, [20]a corrector of the fool-
ish, a teacher of children, having in the
law the embodiment of knowledge and
truth, [21]you, then, that teach others, will
you not teach yourself? While you preach
against stealing, do you steal? [22]You that
forbid adultery, do you commit adultery?
You that abhor idols, do you rob temples?
[23]You that boast in the law, do you dis-
honor God by breaking the law? [24]For, as
it is written, "The name of God is blas-
phemed among the Gentiles because
of you."

25 Circumcision indeed is of value if
you obey the law; but if you break the law,
your circumcision has become uncircum-
cision. [26]So, if those who are uncircum-
cised keep the requirements of the law,
will not their uncircumcision be regarded
as circumcision? [27]Then those who are
physically uncircumcised but keep the law
will condemn you that have the written
code and circumcision but break the law.
[28]For a person is not a Jew who is one
outwardly, nor is true circumcision some-
thing external and physical. [29]Rather, a
person is a Jew who is one inwardly, and
real circumcision is a matter of the heart
—it is spiritual and not literal. Such a per-
son receives praise not from others but
from God.

Paul Counters Jewish Objections

3 Then what advantage has the Jew?
Or what is the value of circumcision?
[2]Much, in every way. For in the first place
the Jews[h] were entrusted with the oracles
of God. [3]What if some were unfaithful?
Will their faithlessness nullify the faithful-
ness of God? [4]By no means! Although ev-
eryone is a liar, let God be proved true, as
it is written,

"So that you may be justified in
your words,
and prevail in your judging."[i]

[5]But if our injustice serves to confirm the
justice of God, what should we say? That
God is unjust to inflict wrath on us? (I
speak in a human way.) [6]By no means!
For then how could God judge the world?
[7]But if through my falsehood God's
truthfulness abounds to his glory, why am
I still being condemned as a sinner? [8]And
why not say (as some people slander us by
saying that we say), "Let us do evil so that
good may come"? Their condemnation is
deserved!

None Is Righteous

9 What then? Are we any better off?[j]
No, not at all; for we have already
charged that all, both Jews and Greeks,
are under the power of sin, [10]as it is
written:

"There is no one who is
righteous, not even one;

h Gk *they* *i* Gk *when you are being judged*
j Or *at any disadvantage?*

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unlikely that Paul thinks here of the gentile Christian. **2.17–29** An indictment of the Jews based on the contradiction between privileged status and actual performance. In vv. 17–24 Paul uses the diatribe style. **2.24** See Isa 52.5; Ezek 36.20. **2.25** *Circumcision* was the sign of the Jews' covenant with God (see Gen 17.1–14). According to rabbinic thought, all Jews (except apostates) will share in "the world to come" because God honors the covenant commitment and has provided atonement for sins. **2.29** On *circumcision . . . of the heart*, see Deut 10.16.

3.1–8 Returning to the diatribe style, Paul responds to Jewish objections. **3.2** *The oracles of God*, i.e., scripture. See 2.17–18. **3.4** *Everyone is a liar.* See Ps 116.11. The quotation is from Ps 51.4. **3.8** *Some people.* It is not known who is accusing Paul. **3.9–20** Paul concludes the indictment, supporting his claim by citing a chain of OT passages probably collected previously. **3.9** *Are we any better off?* The question paraphrases 3.1, though there is a tension between the answers provided. With the alternate translation (see text note *j*), Paul denies that the Jew is either better or worse off than the Gentile. *Under the power of sin* introduces a view of sin developed in chs. 6–7.

11 there is no one who has
understanding,
there is no one who
seeks God.
12 All have turned aside, together
they have become
worthless;
there is no one who shows
kindness,
there is not even one."
13 "Their throats are opened graves;
they use their tongues to
deceive."
"The venom of vipers is under
their lips."
14 "Their mouths are full of
cursing and bitterness."
15 "Their feet are swift to shed
blood;
16 ruin and misery are in their
paths,
17 and the way of peace they have
not known."
18 "There is no fear of God
before their eyes."

19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. 20 For "no human being will be justified in his sight" by deeds prescribed by the law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin.

God's Justifying Righteousness

21 But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ[k] for all who believe. For there is no distinction, 23 since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; 24 they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement[l] by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed; 26 it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus.[m]

27 Then what becomes of boasting? It is excluded. By what law? By that of works? No, but by the law of faith. 28 For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law. 29 Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gen-

k Or *through the faith of Jesus Christ* *l* Or *a place of atonement* *m* Or *who has the faith of Jesus*

3.10 A paraphrase of Eccl 7.20. **3.11–12** See Ps 14.2–3. **3.13** See Pss 5.9; 140.3. **3.14** See Ps 10.7. **3.15–17** See Isa 59.7–8. **3.18** See Ps 36.1. **3.19** *Under the law.* See 2.12. *So that* expresses result, not intent. *Every mouth may be silenced* includes the Jew in the same situation as the Gentile (1.20). **3.20** *"No human . . . his sight."* See Ps 143.2, here paraphrased (see also Gal 2.16). Here *justified* means vindicated or acquitted, as in a trial. The tension between this verse and 2.13 is more apparent than real, because the fact of universal sin means that no one has the righteousness required by the law. *Knowledge of sin* is explained in 7.7–12; law not only specifies what sin is but makes one aware of failure to achieve what is required.

3.21–31 Having indicted all humanity (1.18–3.20), Paul now states the solution: in Christ, God's righteousness itself rectifies the relationship between God and humans. **3.21** *Apart from law* means not according to the reward-and-punishment logic of law. *Attested* (lit. "witnessed") *by the law and the prophets.* See, e.g., 1.2, 17. *The law and the prophets* is OT scripture as a whole. **3.22** *Through faith in Jesus Christ.* The alternate translation (text note *k*) is closer to the Greek and is gaining acceptance, though some prefer "faithfulness" (see note on 1.17; see also note on 3.26). *No distinction* summarizes the content of 1.18–3.20. **3.23** In Jewish tradition the *glory of God* was taken from Adam after his sin; Paul implies that future salvation will restore it (see 5.2; 8.18). **3.24** *Redemption,* not a common word in Paul's writings, means the freeing of someone or something from being held hostage; see also Gal 3.13; 4.5. **3.25** Paul probably cites a piece of Christian tradition that began "God put him forward"; see also 4.25; Phil 2.6; text note *l* at 1 Tim 3.16. *Sacrifice of atonement,* or *place of atonement* (text note *l*). See Lev 16.13–15 ("mercy seat"). *Show* renders the same Greek word as *prove* in v. 26. **3.26** *The one who has faith in Jesus* can also be rendered "the one who lives by the faithfulness of Jesus"; see note on 3.22. **3.27–31** Paul returns to the diatribe style (see 2.1–5). **3.27** *Boasting,* either pride in achieving what the law requires (see 4.1–2) or pride in the possession of the law as a sign of God's favor (2.17, 23). *The law of faith* is the principle or rationale of faith.

tiles also, 30 since God is one; and he will justify the circumcised on the ground of faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith. 31 Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

The Example of Abraham

4 What then are we to say was gained by[n] Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh? 2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. 3 For what does the scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." 4 Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift but as something due. 5 But to one who without works trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness. 6 So also David speaks of the blessedness of those to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works:

7 "Blessed are those whose
iniquities are forgiven,
and whose sins are covered;
8 blessed is the one against whom
the Lord will not
reckon sin."

9 Is this blessedness, then, pronounced only on the circumcised, or also on the uncircumcised? We say, "Faith was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness." 10 How then was it reckoned to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. 11 He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the ancestor of all who believe without being circumcised and who thus have righteousness reckoned to them, 12 and likewise the ancestor of the circumcised who are not only circumcised but who also follow the example of the faith that our ancestor Abraham had before he was circumcised.

God's Promise Realized Through Faith

13 For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. 14 If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. 15 For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation.

16 For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, 17 as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations") — in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. 18 Hoping against hope, he believed that he

n Other ancient authorities read *say about*

3.30 *God is one*, an allusion to Deut 6.4. **3.31** That justification by faith actually *upholds* the law (i.e., scripture) is argued in ch. 4.

4.1–25 The Abraham story (Gen 12–17) provides evidence that faith justifies. In 4.1–12 Abraham exemplifies the thesis stated in 3.28; in 4.13–25 Paul applies this thesis to all who believe the gospel. **4.1** *Our ancestor according to the flesh* acknowledges Abraham as the biological starting point of the Jewish people. **4.2** Abraham cannot boast *before God* because whatever Abraham achieved was his response to God's choosing him. **4.3** Gen 15.6 (used also in Gal 3.6; Jas 2.23 draws a different conclusion from the quotation). On *believed*, see note on 4.5. **4.4** *Reckoned*, a commercial term suggesting payment, here contrasted with justification as a *gift* (see 3.24). **4.5** *Trusts* renders the same Greek word translated *believed* in 4.3. *Him who justifies the ungodly* expresses Paul's radical understanding of God; the *ungodly* includes everyone (3.19–20, 23). **4.6–8** Like Jewish interpreters, Paul supports his view of Genesis by citing another part of scripture, here Ps 32.1–2, which also uses the word *reckon*. **4.9–12** Paul assumes that what is true of the ancestor is true of the descendants. This makes the questions posed here decisive. **4.9** See Gen 15.6. **4.10** *Before*. Abraham's circumcision is not mentioned until Gen 17.10–27. **4.13** The idea that Abraham *would inherit the world* reflects Jewish interpretation of Gen 12.6–7. Sir 44.19–21 says he inherited the earth because he kept the law. **4.15** *Wrath*. See note on 1.18; for a different consequence of law, see 3.20. **4.17** *"I . . . nations."* See Gen 17.5. *Who gives life to the dead* alludes to Jesus' resurrection (4.24) and to the birth of Isaac (4.19). *God . . . calls into existence the things that do not exist*. The belief that God created out of nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*) was common in Hellenistic Judaism. See 2 Macc

would become "the father of many nations," according to what was said, "So numerous shall your descendants be." 19 He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was already[o] as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. 20 No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, 21 being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. 22 Therefore his faith[p] "was reckoned to him as righteousness." 23 Now the words, "it was reckoned to him," were written not for his sake alone, 24 but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, 25 who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.

Results of Justification

5 Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we[q] have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have obtained access[r] to this grace in which we stand; and we[s] boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. 3 And not only that, but we[s] also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

6 For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. 8 But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. 9 Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God.[t] 10 For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. 11 But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Adam and Christ

12 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned— 13 sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is not reckoned when there is no law. 14 Yet

o Other ancient authorities lack *already* *p* Gk *Therefore it* *q* Other ancient authorities read *let us* *r* Other ancient authorities add *by faith* *s* Or *let us* *t* Gk *the wrath*

7.28. **4.18** See Gen 15.5. **4.20** In giving *glory to God*, Abraham did the opposite of humanity's root sin (1.21). **4.22** Another quotation of Gen 15.6 (see 4.3, 9). **4.25** Perhaps a known formulation in which *who* replaces an original "he" (as in 3.25).

5.1–11 A transitional paragraph linking 1.18–4.25 to the themes in chs. 6, 8. **5.2** *Boasting*, criticized in 2.17 and excluded by 3.27, is acceptable here because of what God has done; see also 5.11. *Hope* signals the futurity of salvation (see also 5.10), developed in 8.18–25. The *glory of God* is what humanity now lacks; see 3.23. **5.3** *In our sufferings* might mean "in the midst of" or "because of" present sufferings or might allude to the sufferings expected at the end of history; see also 8.35; 12.12; 2 Cor 11.21–30. **5.5** *Does not disappoint*, lit. "does not make ashamed," i.e., at the final judgment. The *Holy Spirit* (see 1.4) is a major theme in ch. 8. **5.6** *The ungodly*. See note on 4.5. **5.7** *A good person* can also be translated "a good thing." **5.8** *For us* means "for our sakes" or "for our benefit," not "in our place." **5.9** *By his blood* views Christ's death as a sacrifice (see 3.25). *The wrath of God* (lit. *the wrath*; see text note *t*). See notes on 1.18; 2.5. **5.10** *Reconciled* is virtually synonymous with "justified"; see also 2 Cor 5.18–19. **5.11** *Boast in God* means "boast because of God"; see note on 5.2. **5.12–21** These verses discuss Adam and Christ, individuals whose acts had decisive consequences for humanity, though of quite different sorts, and who therefore stand at the heads of the old and new creations. Paul's interpretation of Gen 3 is similar to those in Wis 2.24; 2 Esd 3.21, 26; *2 Apocalypse of Baruch* 54.15. **5.12** *One man*. Paul ignores Eve and infers from Gen 3.3, 19 that Adam's *sin* brought *death*, which *spread*, i.e., became an unavoidable condition; see also 1 Cor 15.21–26. The Greek word here translated *because* was translated by the Vulgate as "in whom," implying "in Adam"; that translation became influential for the doctrine of original sin. **5.14** A *type* is a person or thing that provides a pattern or model (see, e.g., 1 Cor 10.6; Phil 3.17), usually for a later period. The *one who was to come* is Christ. Adam was

death exercised dominion from Adam to
Moses, even over those whose sins were
not like the transgression of Adam, who is
a type of the one who was to come.
15 But the free gift is not like the tres-
pass. For if the many died through the
one man's trespass, much more surely
have the grace of God and the free gift in
the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ,
abounded for the many. 16 And the free
gift is not like the effect of the one man's
sin. For the judgment following one tres-
pass brought condemnation, but the free
gift following many trespasses brings
justification. 17 If, because of the one
man's trespass, death exercised dominion
through that one, much more surely will
those who receive the abundance of grace
and the free gift of righteousness exercise
dominion in life through the one man,
Jesus Christ.
18 Therefore just as one man's tres-
pass led to condemnation for all, so one
man's act of righteousness leads to justifi-
cation and life for all. 19 For just as by the
one man's disobedience the many were
made sinners, so by the one man's obedi-
ence the many will be made righteous.
20 But law came in, with the result that the
trespass multiplied; but where sin in-
creased, grace abounded all the more,
21 so that, just as sin exercised dominion in
death, so grace might also exercise domin-
ion through justification[u] leading to eter-
nal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Dying and Rising with Christ

6 What then are we to say? Should we
continue in sin in order that grace
may abound? 2 By no means! How can we
who died to sin go on living in it? 3 Do you
not know that all of us who have been
baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized
into his death? 4 Therefore we have been
buried with him by baptism into death, so
that, just as Christ was raised from the
dead by the glory of the Father, so we too
might walk in newness of life.
5 For if we have been united with him
in a death like his, we will certainly be
united with him in a resurrection like his.
6 We know that our old self was crucified
with him so that the body of sin might be
destroyed, and we might no longer be en-
slaved to sin. 7 For whoever has died is
freed from sin. 8 But if we have died with
Christ, we believe that we will also live
with him. 9 We know that Christ, being
raised from the dead, will never die again;
death no longer has dominion over him.
10 The death he died, he died to sin, once
for all; but the life he lives, he lives to
God. 11 So you also must consider your-
selves dead to sin and alive to God in
Christ Jesus.
12 Therefore, do not let sin exercise
dominion in your mortal bodies, to make

u Or *righteousness*

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the pattern for Christ insofar as he stood at the head of the old creation, as Christ stands at the head of the new (Gal 6.14–15). **5.15** *Not like.* The rest of the paragraph explains the difference Paul has in view (see esp. 5.16). **5.17** *Death* is a hostile tyrant because, due to Adam's acts, everyone must die; cf. 6.9; 1 Cor 15.54–55. **5.18** *One man's* (Christ's) *act of righteousness* is the same as *one man's obedience* (5.19) and may allude to "the faithfulness of Jesus" in 3.22, 26. **5.20** *Law came in.* It entered the world at Sinai (5.13). *Trespass multiplied* because the law specifies transgressions; see 3.20; 4.15. In 7.7–25, Paul argues that law cannot control sin. **5.21** Like death (see 5.14), *sin exercised dominion*; death, sin, and *grace* are domains of power.

6.1–14 These verses explain that participation in Christ's death and resurrection overcomes the tyranny of sin and death. **6.1** Using the diatribe style (see 2.1–5), Paul rejects a misunderstanding of 5.20. *Continue in sin,* i.e., remain within its domain (5.21). **6.2** *Died to sin* is explained in 6.5–11. *Living in* sin means living within its sphere of power (see 6.14). **6.3** *Do you not know* (see also 6.16; 7.1). Paul appeals to what the Roman Christians already know, that baptism is *into Christ Jesus* (see also 1 Cor 12.13; Gal 3.27). Here Paul emphasizes that baptism is *into his death,* because this provides the rationale for 6.5–14. **6.4** Paul distinguishes present solidarity with Christ's death from future solidarity with his resurrection (6.5, 8); the former makes possible a new moral life now (see 7.6). *Walk,* i.e., conduct one's life; see Deut 13.4–5; Isa 33.15. **6.5** *If* here means "since," expressing not doubt but a fulfilled condition. **6.6** *Crucified with him,* the only explicit reference to Jesus' cross in Romans. *Body of sin. Body* probably means the actual self (as in 12.1), which is *enslaved to sin.* **6.7** This verse states the principle that makes Paul's argument possible. **6.10** *He died to sin.* In death the power of sin was terminated; see 6.7; cf. 7.1–6. *Once for all* means once for all time. See Heb 7.27; 9.26–28. **6.12–14** The first explicit exhortation

you obey their passions. 13 No longer present your members to sin as instruments[v] of wickedness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your members to God as instruments[v] of righteousness. 14 For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

Slaves of Righteousness

15 What then? Should we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! 16 Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? 17 But thanks be to God that you, having once been slaves of sin, have become obedient from the heart to the form of teaching to which you were entrusted, 18 and that you, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. 19 I am speaking in human terms because of your natural limitations.[w] For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness for sanctification.

20 When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. 21 So what advantage did you then get from the things of which you now are ashamed? The end of those things is death. 22 But now that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, the advantage you get is sanctification. The end is eternal life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

An Analogy from Marriage

7 Do you not know, brothers and sisters[x]—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is binding on a person only during that person's lifetime? 2 Thus a married woman is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives; but if her husband dies, she is discharged from the law concerning the husband. 3 Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man, she is not an adulteress.

4 In the same way, my friends,[x] you have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God.

v Or *weapons* w Gk *the weakness of your flesh*
x Gk *brothers*

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in the Letter shows that baptism entails a new moral life. **6.13** *Instruments*, or *weapons* (see text note *v*). Like philosophers of his day, Paul often describes the moral life as a military or athletic struggle; see 13.12; 2 Cor 6.7; 10.4; also Eph 6.11–17. **6.14** Everyone is under some *dominion*, either that of *sin* (see 6.6), *death* (see 6.9), and *law* (see 7.6), or that of *grace* (see also 6.16). Paul analyzes *under law* in 7.7–24.

6.15–23 Again Paul uses the diatribe style to reject a wrong inference, now from v. 14. **6.16** *If* here means "when." **6.17** *The form of teaching*, probably the gospel tradition. The readers were *entrusted* to it, i.e., put in its charge, not vice versa (cf. 1 Tim 6.20). **6.18** *Slaves of righteousness*, i.e., under the dominion of God's rectifying power. See 6.22. **6.19** *In human terms*. Paul acknowledges that his language is unusual (see text note *w*). *Impurity*, lit. "uncleanness." The language implies that Paul has gentile Christians in view. *Sanctification*, the process of making life holy, i.e., rightly aligned with God's will. See 12.1–2; also 1 Thess 4.3–7; 5.23. **6.20** *Free in regard to righteousness*, i.e., unable to "obey" righteousness. See 6.16, 18. **6.22** *Enslaved to God*. See 6.18. **6.23** That *death* is the consequence of sin has been a theme since 5.12. **7.1–6** Paul now uses marriage to illustrate how freedom from the law also comes through death (cf. 6.7–10). **7.1** *The law*, here perhaps Roman law, Jewish law, or both. *The law . . . lifetime*, the principle that governs the argument of 7.1–6. **7.2** *As long as he lives*. Concerned with the effect of death, Paul ignores divorce; cf. 1 Cor 7.10–15. **7.4–6** Paul expands his analogy (the husband's death frees the wife) to include the point that the one freed has also died through participation in Christ. **7.4** *My friends*, lit. *my brothers* (see text note *x*). Paul never calls Christians his "friends," a common self-designation in certain philosophical schools. *Died to the law*. See also 6.14; cf. 6.10. Like sin, the law is a domain in which one lives and to which one is obedient. *The body of Christ*, Christ's crucified body, not the church (cf. 12.5). *Another* refers to the resurrected Christ. *Bear fruit for God*, i.e., produce moral results. See 6.4, 13, 19; see also

5 While we were living in the flesh, our
sinful passions, aroused by the law, were
at work in our members to bear fruit for
death. 6 But now we are discharged from
the law, dead to that which held us cap-
tive, so that we are slaves not under the
old written code but in the new life of the
Spirit.

The Law and Sin

7 What then should we say? That the
law is sin? By no means! Yet, if it had not
been for the law, I would not have known
sin. I would not have known what it is to
covet if the law had not said, "You shall
not covet." 8 But sin, seizing an opportu-
nity in the commandment, produced in
me all kinds of covetousness. Apart from
the law sin lies dead. 9 I was once alive
apart from the law, but when the com-
mandment came, sin revived 10 and I
died, and the very commandment that
promised life proved to be death to me.
11 For sin, seizing an opportunity in the
commandment, deceived me and through
it killed me. 12 So the law is holy, and the
commandment is holy and just and good.
13 Did what is good, then, bring death
to me? By no means! It was sin, working
death in me through what is good, in or-
der that sin might be shown to be sin, and
through the commandment might be-
come sinful beyond measure.

The Inner Conflict

14 For we know that the law is spiri-
tual; but I am of the flesh, sold into slav-
ery under sin.[y] 15 I do not understand my
own actions. For I do not do what I want,
but I do the very thing I hate. 16 Now if I
do what I do not want, I agree that the
law is good. 17 But in fact it is no longer I
that do it, but sin that dwells within me.
18 For I know that nothing good dwells
within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will
what is right, but I cannot do it. 19 For I
do not do the good I want, but the evil I
do not want is what I do. 20 Now if I do
what I do not want, it is no longer I that
do it, but sin that dwells within me.
21 So I find it to be a law that when I
want to do what is good, evil lies close at
hand. 22 For I delight in the law of God in
my inmost self, 23 but I see in my mem-
bers another law at war with the law of my
mind, making me captive to the law of sin
that dwells in my members. 24 Wretched
man that I am! Who will rescue me from
this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God
through Jesus Christ our Lord!
So then, with my mind I am a slave to

y Gk *sold under sin*

Col 1.10. **7.5** Like sin, law, and death, *flesh* is a domain in which one lives (see 7.14; 8.4, 12); the term emphasizes weakness and corruptibility. How *passions* are *aroused by the law* is shown in 7.7–25. **7.6** This verse restates the nature of Christian existence (see 6.4, 7, 11, 12–14, 17, 19). *Discharged from the law* reformulates 7.2; *dead to . . . captive* paraphrases 6.11. *New life of the Spirit*, lit. "in newness of Spirit," alludes to 6.4 and anticipates ch. 8.

7.7–13 Again, Paul uses diatribe to reject the wrong inference from v. 6; the problem is not the law itself but its inability to curb sin. **7.7** *I* is probably stylistic rather than autobiographical (see Phil 3.4–6), a reference to the individual in the Adamic epoch (5.12–21). *Known sin*. See 3.20. *You shall not covet*. See Ex 20.17; Deut 5.21. **7.10** *I died*. See 6.23; see also 5.12–14. **7.11** *Deceived*, i.e., caused one to think law more powerful than sin. **7.14–25** These verses explain why one cannot do the good that the law intends to inspire. **7.14** *Flesh*, the physical self when, as the source of passions (e.g., covetousness; see 7.8), it becomes a dominant factor (see note on 7.5). The change to present tense suggests to some that Paul is now describing his Christian experience, but the words *sold into slavery under sin* make this unlikely (cf. 6.6, 11, 14, 17). Rather, Paul is expressing the frustration of the person belonging to the epoch of Adam (5.12–21). **7.18** *Nothing good dwells within me*, lit. "the good does not dwell within me." **7.21** Paul calls the experience of being unable to do the good one desires *a law* because it is unavoidable. **7.22** *Inmost self*, the mind or heart, the seat of the will. **7.23** The inevitability of sin makes it *another law*. The self is not an achiever but a *captive* (victim) of the inevitability (*law*) of sin. Paul uses the Jewish concept of "the evil impulse," which, implanted in the self along with "the good impulse," generates perpetual inner struggle; see Dead Sea Scrolls *Rule of the Community* (1QS) 3.13–4.26. For Paul, the law does not help one master the evil impulse but is itself thoroughly qualified by it. **7.24** *This body of death*, the self, thoroughly qualified by and destined for death (see 6.16, 21, 23; cf. 6.9). **7.25** *With my mind . . . with my flesh* sums up the human condition. Some think this sentence either originally came before *thanks be to God* or was added by a copyist.

the law of God, but with my flesh I am a
slave to the law of sin.

Life in the Spirit

8 There is therefore now no condem-
nation for those who are in Christ
Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit[z] of life in
Christ Jesus has set you[a] free from the
law of sin and of death. 3 For God has
done what the law, weakened by the flesh,
could not do: by sending his own Son in
the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal
with sin,[b] he condemned sin in the flesh,
4 so that the just requirement of the law
might be fulfilled in us, who walk not ac-
cording to the flesh but according to the
Spirit.[z] 5 For those who live according to
the flesh set their minds on the things of
the flesh, but those who live according to
the Spirit[z] set their minds on the things
of the Spirit.[z] 6 To set the mind on the
flesh is death, but to set the mind on the
Spirit[z] is life and peace. 7 For this reason
the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile
to God; it does not submit to God's law—
indeed it cannot, 8 and those who are in
the flesh cannot please God.

9 But you are not in the flesh; you are
in the Spirit,[z] since the Spirit of God
dwells in you. Anyone who does not have
the Spirit of Christ does not belong to
him. 10 But if Christ is in you, though the
body is dead because of sin, the Spirit[z] is
life because of righteousness. 11 If the
Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the
dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ[c]
from the dead will give life to your mortal
bodies also through[d] his Spirit that dwells
in you.

12 So then, brothers and sisters,[e] we
are debtors, not to the flesh, to live ac-
cording to the flesh— 13 for if you live ac-
cording to the flesh, you will die; but if by
the Spirit you put to death the deeds of
the body, you will live. 14 For all who are
led by the Spirit of God are children of
God. 15 For you did not receive a spirit of
slavery to fall back into fear, but you have
received a spirit of adoption. When we
cry, "Abba![f] Father!" 16 it is that very
Spirit bearing witness[g] with our spirit
that we are children of God, 17 and if chil-
dren, then heirs, heirs of God and joint
heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer
with him so that we may also be glorified
with him.

Future Glory

18 I consider that the sufferings of
this present time are not worth comparing

z Or *spirit* *a* Here the Greek word *you* is singular number; other ancient authorities read *me* or *us* *b* Or *and as a sin offering* *c* Other ancient authorities read *the Christ* or *Christ Jesus* or *Jesus Christ* *d* Other ancient authorities read *on account of* *e* Gk *brothers* *f* Aramaic for *Father* *g* Or *15a spirit of adoption, by which we cry, "Abba! Father!" 16The Spirit itself bears witness*

8.1–17 Paul explains that the solution to the dilemma exposed in 7.14–25 is the Spirit, whose dwelling in the self displaces the power of sin, making a new life possible. **8.1** *No condemnation*, the consequence of justification (see 5.16, 18). Being *in Christ Jesus* is the result of being baptized into Christ (6.3). **8.2** *The Spirit of life*, probably not *spirit* (as in text note *z*) but the Holy Spirit, which gives life (8.11). *In Christ Jesus*, here also a domain in which the Spirit is power. *Law of sin*. See 7.23; the law *of death* is the inevitability of death resulting from sin (6.23). **8.3** *Weakened by the flesh* alludes to the law's inability to deal decisively with sin as resident power (7.7–25). *Sending*, the incarnation of the preexistent Son of God; see Gal 4.4. *Likeness* suggests the Son's full identification with the human condition, but without becoming another instance of it. **8.4** *The just requirement*. See 7.12. *Walk*. See note on 6.4. *Flesh* and *Spirit* are domains of power (see note on 8.2). **8.7** By definition, *flesh is hostile to God* (see note on 7.14). **8.8** *In the flesh*, i.e., within its domain, not simply in the body. **8.9–10** There is no difference between *you are in the Spirit* and *the Spirit . . . dwells in you*, nor between *the Spirit . . . dwells in you* and *Christ is in you*. **8.10** *Because of righteousness*, i.e., because of God's righteousness as saving, rectifying power. **8.11** *Will give life*. Paul again emphasizes the future resurrection of Christians; see also 5.10; 6.5, 8; 1 Cor 15.12–24, 50–57. **8.13** *Deeds of the body*, not all bodily deeds but those of 7.19, 23, 25. Christians *will live* through *newness of life* now (6.4) and through future resurrection. **8.15** *Spirit of adoption*, i.e., the Spirit whose work is adopting. See also Gal 4.5–7. This adoption is both a present and a future reality; see 8.23. *When we cry, "Abba!"* This is probably not an allusion to the Lord's Prayer (cf. Mt 6.9–13; Lk 11.2–4). **8.17** Christians are *joint heirs* of the resurrection. See 8.29. **8.18–30** After comparing the consequences of Christ and Adam for persons (5.12–21), Paul turns to the consequences of Adam for creation, thus providing perspective on present experiences. **8.18** *Sufferings*. See 5.3–4.

with the glory about to be revealed to us.
19 For the creation waits with eager long-
ing for the revealing of the children of
God; 20 for the creation was subjected to
futility, not of its own will but by the will
of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that
the creation itself will be set free from its
bondage to decay and will obtain the free-
dom of the glory of the children of God.
22 We know that the whole creation has
been groaning in labor pains until now;
23 and not only the creation, but we our-
selves, who have the first fruits of the
Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for
adoption, the redemption of our bodies.
24 For in[h] hope we were saved. Now hope
that is seen is not hope. For who hopes[i]
for what is seen? 25 But if we hope for
what we do not see, we wait for it with
patience.

26 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our
weakness; for we do not know how to
pray as we ought, but that very Spirit in-
tercedes[j] with sighs too deep for words.
27 And God,[k] who searches the heart,
knows what is the mind of the Spirit, be-
cause the Spirit[l] intercedes for the saints
according to the will of God.[m]

28 We know that all things work to-
gether for good[n] for those who love God,
who are called according to his purpose.
29 For those whom he foreknew he also
predestined to be conformed to the image
of his Son, in order that he might be the
firstborn within a large family.[o] 30 And
those whom he predestined he also called;
and those whom he called he also justi-
fied; and those whom he justified he also
glorified.

God's Love in Christ Jesus

31 What then are we to say about
these things? If God is for us, who is
against us? 32 He who did not withhold his
own Son, but gave him up for all of us,
will he not with him also give us every-
thing else? 33 Who will bring any charge
against God's elect? It is God who justifies.
34 Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus,
who died, yes, who was raised, who is at
the right hand of God, who indeed inter-
cedes for us.[p] 35 Who will separate us
from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or
distress, or persecution, or famine, or
nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is
written,

h Or *by* *i* Other ancient authorities read *awaits* *j* Other ancient authorities add *for us* *k* Gk *the one* *l* Gk *he* or *it* *m* Gk *according to God* *n* Other ancient authorities read *God makes all things work together for good*, or *in all things God works for good* *o* Gk *among many brothers* *p* Or *Is it Christ Jesus . . . for us?*

The glory refers to completed salvation, expected soon. **8.19** *Creation* is spoken of as if it were a person. *The revealing.* The truth to which the Spirit now witnesses (8.16) is not yet manifest; see 8.23. **8.20** *Futility*, explained as *bondage to decay* in 8.21, is an allusion to the curse on the earth in Gen 3.17–19 and is regarded here as not permanent. **8.21** Just as humanity's forfeited *glory* will be restored (3.23; 5.2), so creation's original status will be restored. **8.22** The metaphor of birth *pains* was often used to describe the eschatological transition from the old to the new age; see Mk 13.8; 1 Thess 5.3; *1 Enoch* 62.4. **8.23** The *first fruits* of the harvest represent the whole, so the present experience of the Spirit is the pledge of its future work (see 8.11). Christians too *groan* because their salvation is not yet fully actualized (see 5.10). *Wait for adoption.* See 8.19. The whole self (i.e., the *body*; see note on 6.6) is destined for *redemption.* **8.24** *Hope.* See 5.3–5. **8.26** The Spirit not only speaks to us but also *intercedes* with God for us. **8.28** *Called*, chosen, as in 1.1, 7. **8.29** *Foreknew* and *predestined* reflect the view that what God knows and does in eternity appears to us as prior action; see also 11.2; Acts 2.23; 1 Pet 1.2, 20. *Conformed to the image*, another expression of the future solidarity of the Savior and the saved. See also 8.17; Phil 3.21. *Firstborn within a large family.* The children of God (8.14) will be what the Son now is; see also Col 1.15; Heb 2.8–13. **8.30** *Glorified* is in the past tense because, although the glorification will occur in the future in human terms, it has occurred already in eternity (see note on 8.29). **8.31–39** This paragraph sums up with a flourish the import of the argument from 1.18 onward and ends on a triumphal note. **8.31** *For . . . against us.* The questions in this section are posed as if in a courtroom. **8.32** *Did not withhold his own Son*, a reformulation of 3.25; 5.8; 8.3–4. *With him* echoes 5.9–11; 8.11, 17. **8.33** *Justifies* here means "pronounces one to be in the right," i.e., rightly related to God. **8.34** Text note *p* shows that the sentence might be a question. If so, it expects "No!" for an answer. *Intercedes.* As in 8.9–10, what Paul says of the Spirit he can say also of the risen Christ (see 8.26). **8.35** *The love of Christ* coincides with God's love (5.8). *Hardship*, the same word translated *sufferings* in 5.3, often refers to the tribulations of the end time (see Mk 13.19; Rev 7.14).

"For your sake we are being
killed all day long;
we are accounted as sheep to be
slaughtered."
37 No, in all these things we are more than
conquerors through him who loved us.
38 For I am convinced that neither death,
nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things
present, nor things to come, nor powers,
39 nor height, nor depth, nor anything
else in all creation, will be able to separate
us from the love of God in Christ Jesus
our Lord.

God's Election of Israel

9 I am speaking the truth in Christ—I
am not lying; my conscience con-
firms it by the Holy Spirit— 2 I have great
sorrow and unceasing anguish in my
heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself
were accursed and cut off from Christ for
the sake of my own people,[q] my kindred
according to the flesh. 4 They are Israel-
ites, and to them belong the adoption, the
glory, the covenants, the giving of the law,
the worship, and the promises; 5 to them
belong the patriarchs, and from them, ac-
cording to the flesh, comes the Messiah,[r]
who is over all, God blessed forever.[s]
Amen.

6 It is not as though the word of God
had failed. For not all Israelites truly be-
long to Israel, 7 and not all of Abraham's
children are his true descendants; but "It
is through Isaac that descendants shall be
named for you." 8 This means that it is not
the children of the flesh who are the chil-
dren of God, but the children of the
promise are counted as descendants. 9 For
this is what the promise said, "About this
time I will return and Sarah shall have a
son." 10 Nor is that all; something similar
happened to Rebecca when she had con-
ceived children by one husband, our an-
cestor Isaac. 11 Even before they had been
born or had done anything good or bad
(so that God's purpose of election might
continue, 12 not by works but by his call)
she was told, "The elder shall serve the
younger." 13 As it is written,
"I have loved Jacob,
but I have hated Esau."

14 What then are we to say? Is there
injustice on God's part? By no means!
15 For he says to Moses,
"I will have mercy on whom I
have mercy,
and I will have compassion on
whom I have compassion."
16 So it depends not on human will or ex-
ertion, but on God who shows mercy.
17 For the scripture says to Pharaoh, "I
have raised you up for the very purpose
of showing my power in you, so that my
name may be proclaimed in all the earth."
18 So then he has mercy on whomever he
chooses, and he hardens the heart of
whomever he chooses.

God's Wrath and Mercy

19 You will say to me then, "Why then
does he still find fault? For who can resist

q Gk *my brothers* *r* Or *the Christ* *s* Or *Messiah, who is God over all, blessed forever*; or *Messiah. May he who is God over all be blessed forever*

8.36 Ps 44.22. **8.38** *Angels* contrast with *rulers*, who are probably earthly powers (cf. 1 Cor 15.24; Gal 4.8–11; Col 2.15). *Powers* are supernatural beings; see Mt 24.29; 1 Pet 3.22. **8.39** *Love of God.* See 5.8.

9.1–18 On chs. 9–11, see Introduction. Here Paul applies his theology of justification by faith to the election of Israel. **9.1** *I am not lying.* Paul's words almost constitute an oath (see also 2 Cor 11.31; Gal 1.20; 1 Tim 2.7). **9.3** *Accursed* is very strong language; see 1 Cor 16.22; Gal 1.8–9. **9.4** *Israelites.* The ancient biblical name reinforces the point: the distinctive items are the heritage of the Jewish people. *Adoption*, the same word as in 8.15, 23. **9.5** *According to the flesh*, i.e., by human descent. See 1.3. **9.6** *Not . . . failed.* The rest of the paragraph demonstrates this. **9.7–8** Paul sees in Gen 21.12 the principle of the patriarchal story: being *children of God* depends on promise and election (9.11–12), not on physical descent. **9.9** Gen 18.10, 14. **9.10–13** The principle expressed in 9.7–8 is applied to the next generation. **9.12** *"The elder shall serve the younger."* Gen 25.23. **9.13** Mal 1.2–3. *Loved* and *hated* mean "chosen" and "not chosen." **9.14** This verse is written in diatribal style (see 2.1–5; 9.19–24). **9.15** See Ex 33.19. **9.16** This verse reformulates 9.12 in light of the quotation in 9.15. **9.17** See Ex 9.16. **9.18** *Hardens*, i.e., creates willful resistance in. See Ex 7.3, 13–14; 8.19; 9.12; 10.1, 20, 27; 11.10. **9.19–29** After defending God's freedom in election, Paul relates that freedom to the election of Gentiles as well as Jews.

his will?" 20 But who indeed are you, a human being, to argue with God? Will what is molded say to the one who molds it, "Why have you made me like this?" 21 Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one object for special use and another for ordinary use? 22 What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience the objects of wrath that are made for destruction; 23 and what if he has done so in order to make known the riches of his glory for the objects of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory— 24 including us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? 25 As indeed he says in Hosea,

"Those who were not my people
I will call 'my people,'
and her who was not beloved I
will call 'beloved.' "

26 "And in the very place where it
was said to them, 'You are
not my people,'
there they shall be called
children of the living God."

27 And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, "Though the number of the children of Israel were like the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved; 28 for the Lord will execute his sentence on the earth quickly and decisively."[t] 29 And as Isaiah predicted,

"If the Lord of hosts had not left
survivors[u] to us,
we would have fared like
Sodom
and been made like
Gomorrah."

Israel's Unbelief

30 What then are we to say? Gentiles, who did not strive for righteousness, have attained it, that is, righteousness through faith; 31 but Israel, who did strive for the righteousness that is based on the law, did not succeed in fulfilling that law. 32 Why not? Because they did not strive for it on the basis of faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, 33 as it is written,

"See, I am laying in Zion a stone
that will make people
stumble, a rock that will
make them fall,
and whoever believes in him[v]
will not be put to shame."

10 Brothers and sisters,[w] my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. 2 I can testify that they have a zeal for God, but it is not enlightened. 3 For, being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they have not submitted to God's righteousness. 4 For Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

Salvation Is for All

5 Moses writes concerning the righteousness that comes from the law, that "the person who does these things will live by them." 6 But the righteousness that

t Other ancient authorities read *for he will finish his work and cut it short in righteousness, because the Lord will make the sentence shortened on the earth*
u Or *descendants*; Gk *seed* *v* Or *trusts in it*
w Gk *Brothers*

9.21 The image of God as a *potter* was a popular one; see Isa 29.16; 45.9; Jer 18.1–11; Wis 15.7; Sir 33.13. Paul emphasizes God's freedom to divide *the same lump*. **9.23** *Prepared beforehand*, i.e., predestined (see 8.30). **9.25–26** See Hos 1.10; 2.23. Paul applies these texts, which refer to the restoration of Israel, to the inclusion of gentile Christians into God's people. **9.27** See Isa 10.22–23. **9.29** See Isa 1.9.

9.30–10.4 Ironically, Gentiles (Christians) have found God's righteousness through *faith*, but Israel has missed it by wrongly relying on *works*. **9.31** *Righteousness . . . based on the law*, lit. "law of righteousness," the law concerning righteousness. **9.32** *Based on works*. See 3.27–28; Gal 2.15–16. *Have stumbled*, i.e., were offended. Whether the *stone* refers to Christ or to the law is not obvious. **9.33** The quotation combines Isa 28.16; 8.14. For *stone* as a reference to Christ, see, e.g., Mt 21.42; Acts 4.11; 1 Pet 2.6–8. **10.1** See 9.1–2. **10.2** In Phil 3.6, Paul recalls his own *zeal*. **10.3** *The righteousness that comes from God*, lit. "the righteousness of God." The verb *submitted* shows that here God's righteousness is a power; see notes on 5.21; 6.14; 8.10. **10.4** It is not certain whether *end* means termination or goal; 8.3–4 suggests the latter. **10.5–21** Paul comments on v. 4: the universal possibility of faith makes Israel's refusal of the gospel even more tragic. **10.5** As Gal 3.10–12 indicates, Paul's emphasis in citing the text from Lev 18.5 seems to be on the concept of "doing," i.e., works (see 9.32). In light of 3.9–20, the text becomes a warning. **10.6–8** In the quotations, Paul para-

comes from faith says, "Do not say in your
heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'"
(that is, to bring Christ down) 7 "or 'Who
will descend into the abyss?'" (that is, to
bring Christ up from the dead). 8 But
what does it say?
"The word is near you,
on your lips and in your heart"
(that is, the word of faith that we pro-
claim); 9 because[x] if you confess with
your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in
your heart that God raised him from the
dead, you will be saved. 10 For one be-
lieves with the heart and so is justified,
and one confesses with the mouth and so
is saved. 11 The scripture says, "No one
who believes in him will be put to shame."
12 For there is no distinction between Jew
and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all
and is generous to all who call on him.
13 For, "Everyone who calls on the name
of the Lord shall be saved."
14 But how are they to call on one in
whom they have not believed? And how
are they to believe in one of whom they
have never heard? And how are they to
hear without someone to proclaim him?
15 And how are they to proclaim him un-
less they are sent? As it is written, "How
beautiful are the feet of those who bring
good news!" 16 But not all have obeyed the
good news;[y] for Isaiah says, "Lord, who
has believed our message?" 17 So faith
comes from what is heard, and what is
heard comes through the word of
Christ.[z]
18 But I ask, have they not heard? In-
deed they have; for
"Their voice has gone out to all
the earth,
and their words to the ends of
the world."
19 Again I ask, did Israel not understand?
First Moses says,
"I will make you jealous of those
who are not a nation;
with a foolish nation I will
make you angry."
20 Then Isaiah is so bold as to say,
"I have been found by those who
did not seek me;
I have shown myself to those
who did not ask for me."
21 But of Israel he says, "All day long I
have held out my hands to a disobedient
and contrary people."

Israel's Rejection Is Not Final

11 I ask, then, has God rejected his
people? By no means! I myself
am an Israelite, a descendant of Abra-
ham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin.
2 God has not rejected his people whom
he foreknew. Do you not know what the
scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads
with God against Israel? 3 "Lord, they
have killed your prophets, they have de-
molished your altars; I alone am left, and
they are seeking my life." 4 But what is the

x Or *namely, that* y Or *gospel* z Or *about Christ*; other ancient authorities read *of God*

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phrases Deut 30.12–14 (see also Bar 3.29–30) as the appeal of *righteousness* itself. He uses a common Jewish exegetical device (*that is* . . .) to apply the text to Christ. **10.7** *Abyss* agrees with an Aramaic paraphrase of Deut 30.13 (see *Targum Neofiti* 1) and suggests Christ's resurrection from the subterranean realm of the dead. Hebrew and Greek (Septuagint) texts of Deuteronomy instead refer to crossing the sea. **10.9** *Confess* and *believe* are two aspects of one act; the formulation reflects Deut 30.14 (cited in 10.8). **10.10** *Is saved*, lit. "for salvation," does not conflict with 5.9–10. **10.11** Isa 28.16; Rom 9.33. Not being *put to shame* means being vindicated (as in 5.5). **10.12** *No distinction* affirms the parity of *Jew and Greek* in salvation as in sin (3.22–23). *The same Lord.* See 3.29–30. *Call on*, i.e., look to, count on, or trust. The phrase anticipates 10.13 (see also 1 Cor 1.2). **10.13** See Joel 2.32. **10.14–15** A chain of questions leads up to a shortened quotation of Isa 52.7; these verses clarify the motive for Paul's mission. **10.16** *Obeyed* and *believed* are parallel verbs here; for faith as obedience, see 1.5. *Good news*, or gospel. See text note *y*. The quotation is from Isa 53.1. **10.17** *Word of Christ*, not Jesus' teaching but the proclamation whose content is Christ (see text note *z*). **10.18** *Have they not heard?*, a rhetorical question answered in the affirmative by a quotation from Ps 19.4. *Their voice*, i.e., the voice of the Christian missionaries. **10.19** See Deut 32.21; Paul understands *those who are not a nation* to be the Gentiles (see 9.25). **10.20** See Isa 65.1, here applied to Gentiles. **10.21** See Isa 65.2, here applied to Israel.

11.1–10 Using diatribal style (see note on 2.1–5), Paul argues that God did not in the past, and does not now, annul Israel's election because the majority have disobeyed. **11.1** *I myself.* Paul's own Jewish identity shows that the whole people has not been rejected. **11.2** *Has not rejected*, perhaps an allusion to Ps 94.14, which uses the future tense. **11.3** See 1 Kings 19.10. **11.4** See

divine reply to him? "I have kept for myself seven thousand who have not bowed
the knee to Baal." 5 So too at the present
time there is a remnant, chosen by grace.
6 But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the
basis of works, otherwise grace would no
longer be grace.[a]

7 What then? Israel failed to obtain
what it was seeking. The elect obtained
it, but the rest were hardened, 8 as it is
written,

"God gave them a sluggish spirit,
eyes that would not see
and ears that would not hear,
down to this very day."

9 And David says,

"Let their table become a snare
and a trap,
a stumbling block and a
retribution for them;
10 let their eyes be darkened so that
they cannot see,
and keep their backs forever
bent."

The Salvation of the Gentiles

11 So I ask, have they stumbled so as
to fall? By no means! But through their
stumbling[b] salvation has come to the
Gentiles, so as to make Israel[c] jealous.
12 Now if their stumbling[b] means riches
for the world, and if their defeat means
riches for Gentiles, how much more will
their full inclusion mean!

13 Now I am speaking to you Gentiles.
Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the
Gentiles, I glorify my ministry 14 in order
to make my own people[d] jealous, and
thus save some of them. 15 For if their re-
jection is the reconciliation of the world,
what will their acceptance be but life from
the dead! 16 If the part of the dough of-
fered as first fruits is holy, then the whole
batch is holy; and if the root is holy, then
the branches also are holy.

17 But if some of the branches were
broken off, and you, a wild olive shoot,
were grafted in their place to share the
rich root[e] of the olive tree, 18 do not boast
over the branches. If you do boast, re-
member that it is not you that support the
root, but the root that supports you.
19 You will say, "Branches were broken off
so that I might be grafted in." 20 That is
true. They were broken off because of
their unbelief, but you stand only through
faith. So do not become proud, but stand
in awe. 21 For if God did not spare the
natural branches, perhaps he will not
spare you.[f] 22 Note then the kindness
and the severity of God: severity toward
those who have fallen, but God's kindness
toward you, provided you continue in his
kindness; otherwise you also will be cut
off. 23 And even those of Israel,[g] if they
do not persist in unbelief, will be grafted
in, for God has the power to graft them in

a Other ancient authorities add *But if it is by works, it is no longer on the basis of grace, otherwise work would no longer be work* b Gk *transgression* c Gk *them* d Gk *my flesh* e Other ancient authorities read *the richness* f Other ancient authorities read *neither will he spare you* g Gk lacks *of Israel*

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1 Kings 19.18, which uses the future tense. **11.5** *Remnant.* See 9.27–29. **11.6** *Grace* and *works* are mutually exclusive; see also 4.2–8; 9.11–16. **11.7** *Israel* here is empirical Israel as a whole. *What it was seeking.* See 9.31. The *elect* are the *remnant* (11.5), i.e., Jewish Christians. *Hardened.* See 9.17–18; the passive voice implies divine action, which is confirmed in 11.8. **11.8** The quotation is based roughly on Deut 29.4; Isa 29.10. **11.9–10** Ps 69.22–23, following the Septuagint. **11.11–24** Paul now interprets the significance of Israel's response for the Gentiles. **11.11** *Stumbling* (being offended by the gospel and refusing it) is temporary, but *falling* suggests permanent rejection. *Salvation has come to the Gentiles.* See Acts 13.44–48; 28.25–29. Israel is *jealous* because gentile Christians have what Israel lacks. **11.12** *Full inclusion* anticipates 11.26. **11.13** *I am speaking to you Gentiles.* See Introduction. **11.15** *Rejection,* refusal in the sense of 11.7–10, not complete repudiation. See 11.1. *Acceptance* here has the connotation of *full inclusion* (11.12). God's ultimate acceptance of Israel is of the same order as a resurrection. **11.16** *Dough.* See Num 15.17–21. *First fruits.* See note on 8.23; the part (the remnant, the Jewish Christians in the present) implies the whole of Israel. **11.17–24** Paul uses metaphorical language to warn the Gentiles against arrogance. For a tree as an image of Israel, see Ps 92.12–14; Isa 61.3; Jer 11.16–17; *Psalms of Solomon* 14.3–4. **11.17** *Some of the branches,* the Jews who rejected the gospel. *Wild olive shoot,* gentile Christians. *Olive tree,* the people of God, not simply all descendants of Abraham. **11.19** In diatribe style, Paul formulates a hypothetical objection of gentile Christians (see note on 2.1–5). **11.20** *That is true.* See 11.11. *Unbelief,* lit. "unfaith," contrasting with *faith. Stand* is the opposite of *fall* in 11.11. *Awe,* lit. "fear." **11.22** *Fallen,* i.e., *broken off* (11.17).

again. 24 For if you have been cut from
what is by nature a wild olive tree and
grafted, contrary to nature, into a culti-
vated olive tree, how much more will
these natural branches be grafted back
into their own olive tree.

All Israel Will Be Saved

25 So that you may not claim to be
wiser than you are, brothers and sisters,[h]
I want you to understand this mystery: a
hardening has come upon part of Israel,
until the full number of the Gentiles has
come in. 26 And so all Israel will be saved;
as it is written,

"Out of Zion will come the
Deliverer;
he will banish ungodliness
from Jacob."
27 "And this is my covenant
with them,
when I take away their sins."

28 As regards the gospel they are enemies
of God[i] for your sake; but as regards
election they are beloved, for the sake of
their ancestors; 29 for the gifts and the
calling of God are irrevocable. 30 Just as
you were once disobedient to God but
have now received mercy because of their
disobedience, 31 so they have now been
disobedient in order that, by the mercy
shown to you, they too may now[j] receive
mercy. 32 For God has imprisoned all in
disobedience so that he may be merciful
to all.

33 O the depth of the riches and wis-
dom and knowledge of God! How un-
searchable are his judgments and how
inscrutable his ways!

34 "For who has known the mind of
the Lord?
Or who has been his
counselor?"
35 "Or who has given a gift to him,
to receive a gift in return?"

36 For from him and through him and to
him are all things. To him be the glory
forever. Amen.

The New Life in Christ

12 I appeal to you therefore, broth-
ers and sisters,[h] by the mercies of
God, to present your bodies as a living
sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God,
which is your spiritual[k] worship. 2 Do not
be conformed to this world,[l] but be
transformed by the renewing of your
minds, so that you may discern what is the
will of God—what is good and acceptable
and perfect.[m]

3 For by the grace given to me I say to
everyone among you not to think of your-
self more highly than you ought to think,
but to think with sober judgment, each ac-
cording to the measure of faith that God
has assigned. 4 For as in one body we have
many members, and not all the members
have the same function, 5 so we, who are

h Gk *brothers* *i* Gk lacks *of God* *j* Other ancient authorities lack *now* *k* Or *reasonable* *l* Gk *age* *m* Or *what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God*

11.24 *Contrary to nature.* Paul knows that his allegory is inconsistent with horticultural practice, but the subject matter, consonant with resurrection (11.15), requires this image. **11.25–36** These verses resolve the problem of Israel and the Gentiles. **11.25** *Mystery* (see also 16.25; 1 Cor 2.1, 7; 15.51), a disclosed, divine secret plan, as in Dan 2.18–19, 27–30 and often in apocalyptic literature (see, e.g., 2 Esd 12.36–38; *1 Enoch* 103.2; *2 Apocalypse of Baruch* 81.4). *Hardening.* See 9.18; 11.7. *Until the full number* reflects the apocalyptic idea that God sets times and numbers in advance (see Dan 11.36; 2 Esd 4.36–37; Gal 4.4; Rev 6.11; *2 Apocalypse of Baruch* 23.4). **11.26a** *All Israel,* no longer a *remnant* (11.5), *will be saved* on the same basis as Gentiles, i.e., by faith (11.23). **11.26b–27** See Isa 59.20–21; see also Isa 27.9. *Zion,* a traditional name of Jerusalem. *Ungodliness.* The use of the word here and in 1.18 forms a subtle inclusio (a repetition signaling the beginning and end of a unit). **11.28** *Of God* is an inference (see text note *i*); "of the gospel" is also possible. *Ancestors,* i.e., the patriarchs, especially Abraham. See 4.1–25. **11.29** See 9.6. **11.32** See 3.19–20, 23; 5.12–21. **11.34** See Isa 40.13 (Septuagint). **11.35** This quotation is based loosely on Job 41.11. **11.36a** *For . . . all things,* a typical Stoic formulation (see Marcus Aurelius *Meditations* 4.23); see also 1 Cor 8.6. **11.36b** The discussion of Israel's fate closes with a doxology; see also 1.25; 9.5; 16.27.

12.1–8 The opening paragraph of the second part of the Letter (12.1–15.13). **12.1** *Bodies,* i.e., total selves. See 6.13, 16; 8.23; cf. 1.24. *Living sacrifice.* See 6.4; 8.13. *Spiritual,* lit. "rational" or *reasonable* (see text note *k*). **12.2** *This world,* lit. *this age* (see text note *l*), an allusion to the apocalyptic contrast between "this age" and the age to come (see 1 Cor 2.6, 8). **12.4–8** See 1 Cor

many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.
6 We have gifts that differ according to
the grace given to us: prophecy, in pro-
portion to faith; 7 ministry, in ministering;
the teacher, in teaching; 8 the exhorter, in
exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the
leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in
cheerfulness.

Marks of the True Christian

9 Let love be genuine; hate what is
evil, hold fast to what is good; 10 love one
another with mutual affection; outdo one
another in showing honor. 11 Do not lag in
zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord.[n]
12 Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering,
persevere in prayer. 13 Contribute to the
needs of the saints; extend hospitality to
strangers.

14 Bless those who persecute you;
bless and do not curse them. 15 Rejoice
with those who rejoice, weep with those
who weep. 16 Live in harmony with one
another; do not be haughty, but associate
with the lowly;[o] do not claim to be wiser
than you are. 17 Do not repay anyone evil
for evil, but take thought for what is noble
in the sight of all. 18 If it is possible, so far
as it depends on you, live peaceably with
all. 19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves,
but leave room for the wrath of God;[p]
for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will
repay, says the Lord." 20 No, "if your ene-
mies are hungry, feed them; if they are
thirsty, give them something to drink; for
by doing this you will heap burning coals
on their heads." 21 Do not be overcome by
evil, but overcome evil with good.

Being Subject to Authorities

13 Let every person be subject to the
governing authorities; for there is
no authority except from God, and those
authorities that exist have been instituted
by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists au-
thority resists what God has appointed,
and those who resist will incur judgment.
3 For rulers are not a terror to good con-
duct, but to bad. Do you wish to have no
fear of the authority? Then do what is
good, and you will receive its approval;
4 for it is God's servant for your good. But
if you do what is wrong, you should be
afraid, for the authority[q] does not bear
the sword in vain! It is the servant of God
to execute wrath on the wrongdoer.
5 Therefore one must be subject, not only
because of wrath but also because of con-
science. 6 For the same reason you also
pay taxes, for the authorities are God's
servants, busy with this very thing. 7 Pay to
all what is due them—taxes to whom
taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue
is due, respect to whom respect is due,
honor to whom honor is due.

n Other ancient authorities read *serve the opportune time* *o* Or *give yourselves to humble tasks*
p Gk *the wrath* *q* Gk *it*

12.12–30. **12.9–21** A staccato series of imperatives, drawing on the wisdom tradition and focusing on social relations. **12.9** *Hate*, the opposite of *hold fast*. See 1 Thess 5.21–22. **12.12** *Suffering*. See 5.3. *Prayer*. See 8.26–27; 1 Thess 5.17. **12.13** *Contribute to the needs of the saints*, a general counsel, not referring to the funds Paul has collected for the Jerusalem church (see Introduction). Cf. 15.25–26. On *saints*, see note on 1.7. *Hospitality* was important, especially for traveling Christians like Phoebe (16.1–2). **12.14** See Lk 6.28; this may be one of Paul's rare allusions to Jesus' teaching. **12.16** *Lowly*. Text note *o* recognizes that the Greek term can be either masculine or neuter. *Wiser*. See 11.25; this counsel perhaps echoes Prov 3.7. **12.17** *Repay . . . evil for evil*. See 1 Thess 5.15; 1 Pet 3.9; cf. Ex 21.23–25. *Noble in the sight of all*. See 2 Cor 8.21. **12.18** *Live peaceably*. See Mk 9.50; 2 Cor 13.11; 1 Thess 5.13; Heb 12.14; see also Ps 34.14. **12.19** *Never avenge yourselves*. See Prov 20.22; 24.29. *The wrath*. See 1.18; 2.5–11; 5.9. The quotation is from Deut 32.35; see also Heb 10.30. **12.20** See Prov 25.21–22; see also Mt 5.44; 25.35; Lk 6.27. **12.21** See 12.17.

13.1–7 Paul urges submission to civil authorities (see also 1 Pet 2.13–14; cf. 1 Tim 2.1–2). The transition from 12.21 is abrupt. **13.1** This verse states the basic injunction that the paragraph explains and justifies. It is most likely that the *governing authorities* are government officials and not angelic powers (cf. 8.37–39; 1 Cor 15.24–27; Gal 4.8–11). *Instituted by God*. This concept is also expressed in the Jewish wisdom tradition (e.g., Prov 8.15–16; Wis 6.1–3; Sir 10.4–5) as well as in apocalyptic literature (e.g., Dan 2.37–38; 4.17, 25, 32; *1 Enoch* 46.5). **13.4** The *sword* represents capital punishment. **13.5** *Wrath*. See note on 1.18. *Conscience* (see 2.15), one's inner judge of right and wrong. **13.6** *Servants* renders a Greek word used for persons performing public functions, especially cultic activities; Paul uses it of himself in 15.16. **13.7** It is not clear whether Paul is alluding here to a teaching of Jesus (see

Love for One Another

8 Owe no one anything, except to love
one another; for the one who loves an-
other has fulfilled the law. 9 The com-
mandments, "You shall not commit
adultery; You shall not murder; You shall
not steal; You shall not covet"; and any
other commandment, are summed up in
this word, "Love your neighbor as your-
self." 10 Love does no wrong to a neigh-
bor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of
the law.

An Urgent Appeal

11 Besides this, you know what time it
is, how it is now the moment for you to
wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to
us now than when we became believers;
12 the night is far gone, the day is near.
Let us then lay aside the works of dark-
ness and put on the armor of light; 13 let
us live honorably as in the day, not in rev-
eling and drunkenness, not in debauchery
and licentiousness, not in quarreling and
jealousy. 14 Instead, put on the Lord Jesus
Christ, and make no provision for the
flesh, to gratify its desires.

Do Not Judge Another

14 Welcome those who are weak in
faith,[r] but not for the purpose of
quarreling over opinions. 2 Some believe
in eating anything, while the weak eat
only vegetables. 3 Those who eat must not
despise those who abstain, and those who
abstain must not pass judgment on those
who eat; for God has welcomed them.
4 Who are you to pass judgment on ser-
vants of another? It is before their own
lord that they stand or fall. And they will
be upheld, for the Lord[s] is able to make
them stand.

5 Some judge one day to be better
than another, while others judge all days
to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in
their own minds. 6 Those who observe the
day, observe it in honor of the Lord. Also
those who eat, eat in honor of the Lord,
since they give thanks to God; while those
who abstain, abstain in honor of the Lord
and give thanks to God.

7 We do not live to ourselves, and we
do not die to ourselves. 8 If we live, we live
to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the
Lord; so then, whether we live or whether

r Or *conviction* s Other ancient authorities read *for God*

Mk 12.13–17). **13.8–10** Obeying the commandment to love fulfills the law. **13.8** *Owe* translates the same Greek word as *due* in 13.7. **13.9** The list of *commandments* is drawn from Ex 20.13–17; Deut 5.17–21; see also Rom 2.21–22; Mt 19.18–19; Mk 10.19. *"Love . . . as yourself"* is from Lev 19.18, which is cited also by Jesus in Mt 5.43; 19.19 (but not as a summary of the law); see also Gal 5.14; Jas 2.8. **13.10** *Love does no wrong.* See 1 Cor 13.4–6. On the *fulfilling of the law*, see 8.4; Gal 5.14. **13.11–14** Before turning to the issue of the *weak* and the *strong* (chs. 14–15), Paul reminds the readers of the specifically Christian perspective from which the preceding injunctions must be viewed. **13.11** *Wake*, a term for summoning to moral action in view of the *time* (not a date but a significant *moment*). See also Mk 13.35–36; Eph 5.14; 1 Thess 5.6–7. *Salvation is nearer*, an allusion to the coming of Christ, which is not otherwise mentioned in Romans. See 1 Cor 15.20–24; 2 Cor 5.1–5; 1 Thess 4.15–18; see also Mk 1.15; 13.28–29. **13.12** The metaphors of *darkness* and *light* suggest moral change from evil deeds to good; see 1 Thess 5.4–11; see also Prov 4.16–19; Wis 17.1–18.4. Changing clothes (here *armor*) was a common metaphor for replacing vices with virtues; see Job 29.14; Eph 4.22–24; 6.13–17; Col 3.9–14; 1 Thess 5.8. **13.14** *Put on . . . Christ.* See Gal 3.27. On *desires* of the flesh, see 7.5; 8.5–8; Gal 5.16, 24.

14.1–12 Paul outlines his position regarding the tension between those who scrupulously observe religiously grounded regulations governing dietary matters and special days (the *weak*) and those who insist on their freedom in Christ to ignore those regulations (the *strong*). For a comparable discussion, see 1 Cor 8, 10. **14.1** *Weak in faith* (see text note *r*) is clearly not the self-designation of a group but an epithet used by its opponents, the *strong* (see 15.1), to whom this exhortation is addressed. **14.2** The strong *believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables.* Although vegetarianism was practiced in some religious and philosophical circles, the origin of this Christian vegetarianism is unknown (but see Dan 1.1–17). **14.3** *Eat*, i.e., eat anything they choose. **14.4** *They stand or fall*, i.e., their behavior is deemed acceptable or unacceptable. **14.5** *One day*, i.e., a holy day, perhaps the sabbath. See Ex 20.8–11; Deut 5.12–15. **14.6** *In honor of the Lord.* The motivation of both groups is identical; cf. 1.21. **14.7–8** *Live to / die to* means "live/die for the sake of" (see 2 Cor 5.15; Gal 2.19); for a different use of "dying to," see

we die, we are the Lord's. 9 For to this end
Christ died and lived again, so that he
might be Lord of both the dead and the
living.
10 Why do you pass judgment on
your brother or sister?[t] Or you, why do
you despise your brother or sister?[t] For
we will all stand before the judgment seat
of God.[u] 11 For it is written,

"As I live, says the Lord, every
knee shall bow to me,
and every tongue shall give
praise to[v] God."

12 So then, each of us will be accountable
to God.[w]

Do Not Make Another Stumble

13 Let us therefore no longer pass
judgment on one another, but resolve in-
stead never to put a stumbling block or
hindrance in the way of another.[x] 14 I
know and am persuaded in the Lord
Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but
it is unclean for anyone who thinks it un-
clean. 15 If your brother or sister[t] is being
injured by what you eat, you are no lon-
ger walking in love. Do not let what you
eat cause the ruin of one for whom Christ
died. 16 So do not let your good be spoken
of as evil. 17 For the kingdom of God is
not food and drink but righteousness and
peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. 18 The
one who thus serves Christ is acceptable to
God and has human approval. 19 Let us
then pursue what makes for peace and
for mutual upbuilding. 20 Do not, for the
sake of food, destroy the work of God.
Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong
for you to make others fall by what you
eat; 21 it is good not to eat meat or drink
wine or do anything that makes your
brother or sister[t] stumble.[y] 22 The faith
that you have, have as your own convic-
tion before God. Blessed are those who
have no reason to condemn themselves
because of what they approve. 23 But
those who have doubts are condemned if
they eat, because they do not act from
faith;[z] for whatever does not proceed
from faith[z] is sin.[a]

Please Others, Not Yourselves

15 We who are strong ought to put
up with the failings of the weak,
and not to please ourselves. 2 Each of us
must please our neighbor for the good
purpose of building up the neighbor.
3 For Christ did not please himself; but, as
it is written, "The insults of those who in-
sult you have fallen on me." 4 For what-
ever was written in former days was
written for our instruction, so that by
steadfastness and by the encouragement
of the scriptures we might have hope.
5 May the God of steadfastness and en-
couragement grant you to live in harmony
with one another, in accordance with
Christ Jesus, 6 so that together you may
with one voice glorify the God and Father
of our Lord Jesus Christ.

t Gk *brother* *u* Other ancient authorities read *of Christ* *v* Or *confess* *w* Other ancient authorities lack *to God* *x* Gk *of a brother* *y* Other ancient authorities add *or be upset or be weakened* *z* Or *conviction* *a* Other authorities, some ancient, add here 16.25-27

6.10–11. **14.10** *Pass judgment.* See 14.4, 13. Paul can speak interchangeably of *the judgment seat of God* and Christ (see 2 Cor 5.10). **14.11** The quotation is a composite one drawn primarily from Isa 45.23; see also Phil 2.10–11. **14.13–23** Paul, while implicitly agreeing with the *strong*, emphasizes their responsibility for the *weak*. **14.14** The emphatic words *in the Lord Jesus* (see also Gal 5.10; 1 Thess 4.1) point to the authority of the risen Lord, not to the words of Jesus as reported in Mk 7.15–19. The distinction between clean and *unclean* (i.e., taboo) food is basic to Jewish dietary law (see Lev 11). **14.15** *Injured*, lit. "grieved" or "offended." See 14.20–21. **14.17** *Kingdom of God.* This is one of Paul's rare uses of this phrase; see 1 Cor 4.20; 6.9–10; 15.50; Gal 5.21; 1 Thess 2.12. **14.19** *Pursue . . . peace.* See note on 12.18. *Upbuilding* the church is an ongoing Pauline concern; see 15.2; 1 Cor 8.1; 14.26; 2 Cor 10.8; 12.19; 13.10 (perhaps an echo of Jer 42.10); Eph 4.29. **14.20** *Everything is . . . clean* (see also Mk 7.19; Acts 10.15), perhaps a slogan of the *strong*, here affirmed but qualified in favor of the community's well-being. Paul takes the same approach in 1 Cor 8.1, 8–9; 10.23. *Make others fall*, i.e., cause them to violate their faith. See 14.23; 1 Cor 8.7–13.

15.1–6 A plea for harmony based on an appeal to Christ's example. **15.1** Paul identifies himself with the *strong*, mentioned here for the first time. The wordplay is difficult to translate. *Strong . . . failings of the weak*, lit. "the strong . . . weaknesses of the unstrong." **15.3b** Ps 69.9. **15.4** *Written for our instruction.* See 1 Cor 9.10; 10.11. **15.5** *Live in harmony.* See 12.16.

The Gospel for Jews and Gentiles Alike

7 Welcome one another, therefore,
just as Christ has welcomed you, for the
glory of God. 8 For I tell you that Christ
has become a servant of the circumcised
on behalf of the truth of God in order
that he might confirm the promises given
to the patriarchs, 9 and in order that the
Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.
As it is written,

"Therefore I will confess[b] you
among the Gentiles,
and sing praises to your name";

10 and again he says,

"Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his
people";

11 and again,

"Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles,
and let all the peoples
praise him";

12 and again Isaiah says,

"The root of Jesse shall come,
the one who rises to rule
the Gentiles;
in him the Gentiles shall hope."

13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy
and peace in believing, so that you may
abound in hope by the power of the Holy
Spirit.

Paul's Reason for Writing So Boldly

14 I myself feel confident about you,
my brothers and sisters,[c] that you your-
selves are full of goodness, filled with all
knowledge, and able to instruct one an-
other. 15 Nevertheless on some points I
have written to you rather boldly by way
of reminder, because of the grace given
me by God 16 to be a minister of Christ
Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service
of the gospel of God, so that the offering
of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sancti-
fied by the Holy Spirit. 17 In Christ Jesus,
then, I have reason to boast of my work
for God. 18 For I will not venture to speak
of anything except what Christ has accom-
plished[d] through me to win obedience
from the Gentiles, by word and deed,
19 by the power of signs and wonders, by
the power of the Spirit of God,[e] so that
from Jerusalem and as far around as Il-
lyricum I have fully proclaimed the good
news[f] of Christ. 20 Thus I make it my am-
bition to proclaim the good news,[f] not
where Christ has already been named, so
that I do not build on someone else's
foundation, 21 but as it is written,

"Those who have never been told
of him shall see,
and those who have never
heard of him shall
understand."

b Or *thank* *c* Gk *brothers* *d* Gk *speak of those things that Christ has not accomplished* *e* Other ancient authorities read *of the Spirit* or *of the Holy Spirit* *f* Or *gospel*

15.7–13 The paragraph concludes the counsel by recalling major themes in the Letter. **15.7** *Welcome one another.* Cf. 14.1; 15.5. *Christ has welcomed you.* Cf. 14.3. **15.8** Only here does Paul speak of Christ as a *servant*; cf. Mk 10.43–45. *The circumcised,* i.e., the Jews. On the *promises,* see 4.13–25; 9.4; 11.29. **15.9–12** A string of quotations emphasizes the inclusion of *Gentiles.* **15.9b** Ps 18.49. **15.10** Deut 32.43 (Septuagint). *With,* present only in the Greek version, is essential for Paul's argument. **15.11** See Ps 117.1. **15.12** Isa 11.10 (Septuagint). *Root,* or shoot / offshoot. *Jesse* was the father of David (see Ruth 4.17; 1 Sam 17.17; Mt 1.6), hence the root of Jesse is the Son of David, the Messiah; see Isa 11.1; Rev 5.5; 22.16; cf. Jer 23.5; 33.15. *Rises* here probably alludes to Jesus' resurrection. **15.13** A benediction marks the conclusion of the discourse begun at 1.18.

15.14–21 Paul's reflections on his past ministry provide a bridge to his future plans. **15.15** Aware that he has written to a Christian community not founded by him, Paul heads off resentment by referring to the Letter as a *reminder* (see also 6.3, 6, 9; 7.1; 8.22, 28; 13.11). *The grace given me,* i.e., Paul's apostleship; see 1.5. **15.16** Paul was not a priest; his ministry was *priestly* (sacral; see note on 13.6) because through it *the Gentiles* would be presented to God as an *offering* (see Isa 66.20). **15.17** Paul's *boast* stems from legitimate pride (see 1 Cor 15.31; 2 Cor 1.12–14; 7.4); it is not ironic as in 2 Cor 10.8–12.10. See notes on 5.2, 11. **15.18** *Obedience.* See 1.5. **15.19** *Signs and wonders,* an OT phrase (e.g., Ex 7.3; Neh 9.10; Isa 8.18; Jer 32.20) used in the NT for the miraculous events marking the Christian mission. See Acts 4.30; 14.3; 2 Cor 12.12. An arc *from Jerusalem* to the eastern shore of the Adriatic Sea indicates the range of Paul's work; nothing is known of his activity in *Illyricum* itself. *Good news,* i.e., the gospel. See text note *f.* **15.20** See 2 Cor 10.15–16. **15.21** See Isa 52.15

Paul's Plan to Visit Rome

22 This is the reason that I have so
often been hindered from coming to you.
23 But now, with no further place for me
in these regions, I desire, as I have for
many years, to come to you 24 when I go
to Spain. For I do hope to see you on my
journey and to be sent on by you, once I
have enjoyed your company for a little
while. 25 At present, however, I am going
to Jerusalem in a ministry to the saints;
26 for Macedonia and Achaia have been
pleased to share their resources with the
poor among the saints at Jerusalem.
27 They were pleased to do this, and in-
deed they owe it to them; for if the Gen-
tiles have come to share in their spiritual
blessings, they ought also to be of service
to them in material things. 28 So, when I
have completed this, and have delivered
to them what has been collected,[g] I will
set out by way of you to Spain; 29 and I
know that when I come to you, I will come
in the fullness of the blessing[h] of Christ.

30 I appeal to you, brothers and sis-
ters,[i] by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the
love of the Spirit, to join me in earnest
prayer to God on my behalf, 31 that I may
be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea,
and that my ministry[j] to Jerusalem may
be acceptable to the saints, 32 so that by
God's will I may come to you with joy and
be refreshed in your company. 33 The
God of peace be with all of you.[k] Amen.

Personal Greetings

16 I commend to you our sister
Phoebe, a deacon[l] of the church
at Cenchreae, 2 so that you may welcome
her in the Lord as is fitting for the saints,
and help her in whatever she may require
from you, for she has been a benefactor
of many and of myself as well.

3 Greet Prisca and Aquila, who work
with me in Christ Jesus, 4 and who risked
their necks for my life, to whom not only
I give thanks, but also all the churches of
the Gentiles. 5 Greet also the church in
their house. Greet my beloved Epaenetus,
who was the first convert[m] in Asia for
Christ. 6 Greet Mary, who has worked
very hard among you. 7 Greet Andronicus
and Junia,[n] my relatives[o] who were in
prison with me; they are prominent
among the apostles, and they were in
Christ before I was. 8 Greet Ampliatus, my
beloved in the Lord. 9 Greet Urbanus, our
co-worker in Christ, and my beloved Sta-
chys. 10 Greet Apelles, who is approved in

g Gk *have sealed to them this fruit* *h* Other ancient authorities add *of the gospel* *i* Gk *brothers*
j Other ancient authorities read *my bringing of a gift*
k One ancient authority adds 16.25-27 here
l Or *minister* *m* Gk *first fruits* *n* Or *Junias*; other ancient authorities read *Julia*
o Or *compatriots*

(Septuagint). **15.22–33** Paul announces his intent to stop in Rome en route to Spain and explains why he must first go to Jerusalem. **15.22** *Hindered.* See 1.13; the reference is obscure. **15.23** *No further place.* With 15.19, this implies that Paul has achieved his purpose of taking the gospel to key urban centers. **15.24** *Spain* has not been mentioned before by Paul or by Acts. *Sent on by you,* a hint that he would welcome support. See Acts 15.3; 1 Cor 16.6; 2 Cor 1.16. **15.25** *Ministry to the saints,* i.e., delivery of the collection for the Jerusalem church. See Introduction; note on 1.7; see also 1 Cor 16.1–4; 2 Cor 8–9. **15.26** The Roman province of *Macedonia* contained the cities of Thessalonica, Philippi, and Beroea. The province of *Achaia* contained Corinth. **15.27** *Spiritual blessings,* the benefits of the gospel by which the Gentiles became members of God's people. See, e.g., 11.17–24. **15.30** *Love of the Spirit,* i.e., the love generated by the Spirit. See Gal 5.22. *Join me in earnest prayer,* lit. "struggle with me in prayers." Cf. Col 4.12. **15.31** *Rescued from the unbelievers.* Paul's fears for his life proved correct; see Acts 21.27–36. *Acceptable to the saints.* Paul fears that the collection might be refused. What actually happened is not known; Acts ignores the collection (except for 24.17).

16.1–16 Paul's greetings to friends and former associates provide important clues about early Christianity, though most of the people are otherwise unknown. **16.1** *Phoebe* is probably the bearer of the letter (see Introduction). *Deacon,* probably a recognized leadership role, though not yet a specific rank of clergy. See Phil 1.1; cf. 1 Tim 3.8–13. **16.2** *As benefactor* (lit. "patron"), Phoebe was evidently a woman of means (cf. Lk 8.3; Acts 16.14–15; 17.12); the patron-client pattern was common and basic in Hellenistic society. **16.3** *Prisca and Aquila.* See Acts 18; 1 Cor 16.19; also 2 Tim 4.19. **16.5** *Church in their house.* See 1 Cor 16.19; also Col 4.15; Philem 2. **16.6** *Worked very hard,* Paul's terminology for efforts on behalf of the gospel and the church. See 1 Cor 15.10; Gal 4.11; Phil 2.16; see also 1 Cor 16.16. **16.7** *Junia* is a woman's name, *Junias* (see text note *n*) a man's. **16.10** *The family of*

Christ. Greet those who belong to the
family of Aristobulus. 11 Greet my rela-
tive[p] Herodion. Greet those in the Lord
who belong to the family of Narcissus.
12 Greet those workers in the Lord, Try-
phaena and Tryphosa. Greet the beloved
Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord.
13 Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord; and
greet his mother—a mother to me also.
14 Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes,
Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers and
sisters[q] who are with them. 15 Greet Phi-
lologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and
Olympas, and all the saints who are with
them. 16 Greet one another with a holy
kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.

Final Instructions and Greetings

17 I urge you, brothers and sisters,[q]
to keep an eye on those who cause dissen-
sions and offenses, in opposition to the
teaching that you have learned; avoid
them. 18 For such people do not serve our
Lord Christ, but their own appetites,[r]
and by smooth talk and flattery they de-
ceive the hearts of the simple-minded.
19 For while your obedience is known to
all, so that I rejoice over you, I want you
to be wise in what is good and guileless in
what is evil. 20 The God of peace will
shortly crush Satan under your feet.
The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be
with you.[s]

21 Timothy, my co-worker, greets
you; so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipa-
ter, my relatives.[t]

22 I Tertius, the writer of this letter,
greet you in the Lord.[u]

23 Gaius, who is host to me and to the
whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city
treasurer, and our brother Quartus,
greet you.[v]

Final Doxology

25 Now to God[w] who is able to
strengthen you according to my gospel
and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, ac-
cording to the revelation of the mystery
that was kept secret for long ages 26 but is
now disclosed, and through the prophetic
writings is made known to all the Gentiles,
according to the command of the eternal
God, to bring about the obedience of faith
— 27 to the only wise God, through Jesus
Christ, to whom[x] be the glory forever!
Amen.[y]

p Or *compatriot* q Gk *brothers* r Gk *their own belly* s Other ancient authorities lack this sentence t Or *compatriots* u Or *I Tertius, writing this letter in the Lord, greet you* v Other ancient authorities add verse 24, *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with all of you. Amen.*
w Gk *the one* x Other ancient authorities lack *to whom.* The verse then reads, *to the only wise God be the glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.*
y Other ancient authorities lack 16.25-27 or include it after 14.23 or 15.33; others put verse 24 after verse 27

Aristobulus, lit. "those of Aristobulus," i.e., his household. The reference is perhaps to the grandson of Herod the Great and brother of Agrippa I. (See "The Herods: A Simplified Family Tree," p. 1862.) **16.12** *Workers*. See note on 16.6. *Tryphaena and Tryphosa* are perhaps sisters. **16.13** *Rufus*. See Mk 15.21. **16.14–15** Paul greets those he knows in two house churches. **16.16** *Holy kiss*, a part of early Christian worship. See 1 Cor 16.20; 2 Cor 13.12; 1 Thess 5.26; 1 Pet 5.14. **16.17–24** A warning, followed by greetings from Paul's associates. **16.17–20** These verses may be an addition reflecting later circumstances, not Paul's own postscript. **16.17** *Opposition to the teaching*. Cf. 15.14. *Avoid them*. See 1 Tim 6.20; 2 Tim 2.22; 3.5; Titus 3.9–10. **16.18** *Appetites*, lit. *belly* (see text note *r*). See also Phil 3.19. **16.20** *Satan* is mentioned only here in Romans; see 1 Cor 5.5; 7.5; 2 Cor 2.11; 11.14; 1 Thess 2.18; 2 Thess 2.9. **16.21** *Timothy* greets but does not join in writing; cf. 2 Cor 1.1; Phil 1.1; 1 Thess 1.1; 2 Thess 1.1; Philem 1. *Lucius* and *Jason*, probably not those mentioned in Acts 13.1; 17.5–9. *Sosipater*, possibly the "Sopater" of Acts 20.4. **16.22** *Tertius*, Paul's scribe. **16.23** *Gaius* (see 1 Cor 1.14) hosted meetings of the *whole church*, i.e., the entire Christian community in Corinth. *Erastus*. See Acts 19.22; 2 Tim 4.20. **16.25–27** Romans and 2 Peter are the only NT letters ending with a doxology, reflecting use in worship. It is uncertain where Paul himself ended the Letter (see text note *y*).

THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL TO THE

CORINTHIANS

Author, Date, and Circumstances of Writing

THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL to the Corinthians was written by the apostle Paul about 54 C.E. to a congregation that he had founded several years earlier in the capital city of the Roman province of Achaia (Acts 18.1–18; see also 1 Cor 2.1–5; 2 Cor 1.19). Corinth was a large and prospering urban center with an ethnically, culturally, and religiously diverse population. Paul writes from Ephesus, where he intends to stay for a while before traveling to Macedonia and then on to Corinth (16.5–9; see also 4.19–21). Meanwhile, Timothy has been sent ahead (4.17; 16.10–11). The bearers of the present letter may have been the Corinthians named in 16.17.

The Corinthian Congregation

Paul's congregation was predominantly gentile (12.2), and it probably mirrored the diversity of the city's population. Among its members were Prisca and Aquila (16.19; Rom 16.3–4; Acts 18.2), Achaicus, Fortunatus, and Stephanas (16.17; see also 1.16; 16.15), Crispus and Gaius (1.14; Acts 18.8; see also Rom 16.23), and Phoebe (Rom 16.1). Some, like the Erastus mentioned in Rom 16.23, must have been people of considerable prominence, but most were persons of lesser means and of lower social standing (1.26). It is likely that there were small groups of believers situated in different quarters of the city, who would then regularly "come together as a church" for a common meal and worship (11.18; 14.26).

Occasion and Purpose

Paul writes in part to answer a letter (which has not survived) from the Corinthians seeking his views about several disputed matters (7.1). In addition he is responding to reports, conveyed by word of mouth, about serious disorders within the congregation (1.11; 5.1; 11.18): the jockeying of rival groups for control (1.10–17), an indifference to cases of flagrant immorality (5.1–13), a disregard for those who are not fully enlightened about appropriate Christian conduct (8.1–11.1), and the marginalizing of the congregation's disadvantaged

members (11.17–34; see also 12.20–26). In the midst of this, Paul's own apostolic authority seems to have been called into question (e.g., 1.12; 3.1–4.5; ch. 9). Overall, the letter summons this fractious congregation to manifest the unity and concord that, in Paul's view, necessarily go along with their belonging to Christ. It opens with a call to unity (1.10–17), its central counsels are informed by the view of love that is set out in 8.1–3 and ch. 13, and it closes with an appeal to let love be the governing power in the life of the community (16.14).

The Views of the Corinthians

The disputes and disorders in the Corinthian congregation seem to have been nurtured by particular religious views that, from the apostle's standpoint, departed in significant ways from the gospel that he had preached in Corinth. Specifically, Paul is critical of those who boast that they possess special religious "wisdom" or "knowledge" (1.17, 18–25; 2.6, 11; 3.18–20; 8.1–3) and who regard certain spiritual gifts, particularly ecstatic speech, as evidence of a higher spiritual status (chs. 12–14). The Corinthians also seem to believe that they are in some sense already "reigning" with Christ in glory (4.8); and, perhaps as a consequence, they hope for little beyond this present life (15.12–19).

With its two ports, Lechaeon on the Gulf of Corinth and Cenchreae on the Saronic Gulf, Corinth was a commercial center and a cosmopolitan city.

Character and Style

This letter exhibits many of the stylistic and rhetorical conventions of other ancient Hellenistic letters, yet Paul's sense of writing as an *apostle* to a Christian congregation of his own founding has also left its mark. Broadly speaking, 1 Corinthians is a letter of exhortation and pastoral counsel. In formulating and supporting his appeals and instructions, Paul invokes scripture (e.g., 1.31; 14.21), specifically Christian traditions (e.g., 15.3–5), sayings attributed to Jesus (7.10–11; 9.14), his own apostolic authority and example (e.g., 4.14–17), and also conventional practices and wisdom (e.g., 11.13–16; 15.33). In addition, he reinforces his argument with reprimands (e.g., 6.5; 11.22), irony (e.g., 4.8–13), threats (e.g., 3.17–18; 4.19–21; 6.9–10), and (less frequently) praise (e.g., 11.2). Primarily, however, he urges his readers to reflect on what it means to have been called by God from their pagan past into a new life "in Christ Jesus" (e.g., 1.30; 6.11, 12–20; 7.17–24; 12.12–13).

Relation to Other Letters

Despite the heading given to it by the ancient editors of Paul's letters, 1 Corinthians is at least the apostle's second letter to this congregation. An earlier one, mentioned in 5.9, seems to be lost (although some believe that a fragment survives in 2 Cor 6.14–7.1). What we know as 2 Corinthians, even if it is a composite, dates from a year or so later. *Victor Paul Furnish*

Salutation

1 Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ
Jesus by the will of God, and our
brother Sosthenes,
2 To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ
Jesus, called to be saints, together with all
those who in every place call on the name
of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their
Lord[a] and ours:
3 Grace to you and peace from God
our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

4 I give thanks to my[b] God always for
you because of the grace of God that has
been given you in Christ Jesus, 5 for in

a Gk *theirs* *b* Other ancient authorities lack *my*

1.1–3 The salutations of Paul's Letters follow a similar pattern: the name(s) of the sender(s), an indication of those addressed, and an apostolic blessing; see especially 2 Cor 1.1–2. **1.1** *An apostle*, lit. "one who has been sent" (thus, commissioned); see 9.1–2; 15.9–10; Gal 1.13–17. The *Sosthenes* mentioned here as a *brother* (in Christ) and co-sender of the letter is perhaps the same person named in Acts 18.17 as an official of the Corinthian synagogue. Paul refers to him nowhere else. **1.2** As in 10.32 (and perhaps 11.22), *the church of God* means the church universal. *Sanctified* (see 1.30; 6.11) and *saints* (see 6.1, 2) are from the same Greek root word meaning "to make holy." In biblical usage, to be holy means primarily to be set apart for the service of the holy God (see Lev 22.32).

1.4–9 The thanksgiving paragraphs in Paul's Letters (see, e.g., Rom 1.8–15; Phil 1.3–11) usually introduce some of the topics that will come up later. **1.5** *Speech and knowledge of every kind* includes the spiritual gifts (see 1.7) of ecstatic speech and special religious wisdom, on both of which the congregation prided itself. Paul

every way you have been enriched in him,
in speech and knowledge of every kind—
6 just as the testimony of[c] Christ has been
strengthened among you— 7 so that you
are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you
wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus
Christ. 8 He will also strengthen you to the
end, so that you may be blameless on the
day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God is
faithful; by him you were called into the
fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our
Lord.

Divisions in the Church

10 Now I appeal to you, brothers and
sisters,[d] by the name of our Lord Jesus
Christ, that all of you be in agreement and
that there be no divisions among you, but
that you be united in the same mind and
the same purpose. 11 For it has been re-
ported to me by Chloe's people that there
are quarrels among you, my brothers and
sisters.[e] 12 What I mean is that each of
you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong
to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I
belong to Christ." 13 Has Christ been di-
vided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or
were you baptized in the name of Paul?
14 I thank God[f] that I baptized none of
you except Crispus and Gaius, 15 so that
no one can say that you were baptized in
my name. 16 (I did baptize also the house-
hold of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not
know whether I baptized anyone else.)
17 For Christ did not send me to baptize
but to proclaim the gospel, and not with
eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of
Christ might not be emptied of its power.

Christ the Power and Wisdom of God

18 For the message about the cross is
foolishness to those who are perishing,
but to us who are being saved it is the
power of God. 19 For it is written,

"I will destroy the wisdom of
the wise,
and the discernment of the
discerning I will thwart."

20 Where is the one who is wise? Where is
the scribe? Where is the debater of this
age? Has not God made foolish the wis-
dom of the world? 21 For since, in the wis-
dom of God, the world did not know God
through wisdom, God decided, through
the foolishness of our proclamation, to
save those who believe. 22 For Jews de-
mand signs and Greeks desire wisdom,
23 but we proclaim Christ crucified, a
stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to
Gentiles, 24 but to those who are the
called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the
power of God and the wisdom of God.
25 For God's foolishness is wiser than hu-
man wisdom, and God's weakness is stron-
ger than human strength.

26 Consider your own call, brothers
and sisters:[d] not many of you were wise

c Or *to* d Gk *brothers* e Gk *my brothers*
f Other ancient authorities read *I am thankful*

will later seek to correct their views on these (see 1.18–3.4; chs. 12–14). **1.7–8** *Spiritual gift.* See 12.4. Christ's *revealing* will be when he returns on the last *day* to render judgment (3.12–15; 4.4–5; 5.5) and to take part in God's final victory (15.24–28). **1.9** *God is faithful.* See 10.13; 2 Cor 1.18; 1 Thess 5.24; also Deut 7.9; Ps 145.13. *Fellowship.* See also 10.16, where the same Greek word is translated *sharing.*

1.10–17 The breakdown of community among the Corinthian Christians is one of Paul's chief concerns in this Letter; see also chs. 3–4; 8.1–11.1; 11.17–34; chs. 12–14. **1.11** *Chloe's people* could be either family members, slaves, or business associates. Chloe was likely a Christian woman of some prominence, either in Corinth or in Ephesus. **1.12** *Apollos* seems to have spent time in Corinth (Acts 18.24–19.1) and to have been popular there; see also 3.4–6, 22; 4.6; 16.12. However, there is no indication that *Cephas* (the Aramaic name by which Paul usually refers to Peter; see 3.22; 9.5; 15.5) had ever been in Corinth. Whether some actually boasted *"I belong to Christ"* is uncertain; and if they did, what they meant by the slogan remains unclear. **1.13** The questions presume the obvious answer, "No!" **1.14–17** Paul does not mean to oppose the practice of *baptism* (see 12.12–13; Rom 6.3–4; Gal 3.27–28); he only opposes appealing to it to support factions. **1.14–16** For *Crispus, Gaius,* and *Stephanas,* see Introduction. **1.17** As an apostle, Paul is obligated, above all, *to proclaim the gospel* (9.16) and in particular *the cross of Christ*; see also 1.18, 23; 2.2; Gal 3.1.

1.18–31 These paragraphs, along with 2.1–16, support the appeal of 1.10, which is resumed and continued in chs. 3–4. **1.18** *Perishing* and *being saved* describe nonbelievers (2 Cor 4.3) and believers (1 Cor 1.21), respectively; see also 2 Cor 2.15. *The power of God.* See 1.24; 2.4–5; Rom 1.16. **1.19** Isa 29.14; see also Ps 33.10. **1.22** *Greeks,* Gentiles (1.23). **1.23** *Stumbling block,* lit. "scandal." **1.24** *The called,* those converted to the gospel; see also 1.2, 26; Rom

by human standards,[g] not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; 28 God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, 29 so that no one[h] might boast in the presence of God. 30 He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, 31 in order that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in[i] the Lord."

Proclaiming Christ Crucified

2 When I came to you, brothers and sisters,[j] I did not come proclaiming the mystery[k] of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. 2 For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. 3 And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. 4 My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom,[l] but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.

The True Wisdom of God

6 Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to perish. 7 But we speak God's wisdom, secret and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. 8 None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9 But, as it is written,

"What no eye has seen, nor
ear heard,
nor the human heart conceived,
what God has prepared for those
who love him"—

10 these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. 11 For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. 13 And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual.[m]

14 Those who are unspiritual[n] do not receive the gifts of God's Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. 15 Those who

g Gk *according to the flesh* *h* Gk *no flesh*
i Or *of* *j* Gk *brothers* *k* Other ancient authorities read *testimony* *l* Other ancient authorities read *the persuasiveness of wisdom*
m Or *interpreting spiritual things in spiritual language*, or *comparing spiritual things with spiritual*
n Or *natural*

8.28. *Both Jews and Greeks.* See 12.13; Rom 1.16. **1.30** God's own *righteousness* is bestowed as believers are "justified" (put right with God) through Christ; see 6.11; Rom 3.21–26; 5.17–21. *Sanctification.* See 1.2. *Redemption,* to be "bought back" into one's appropriate relationship with God, as a slave is redeemed from a master or prisoners of war are redeemed from their captors; see 6.19–20; 7.23; Rom 3.24; 8.23. **1.31** Jer 9.24; see also 1 Cor 15.31.

2.1–5 Paul reminds the Corinthians of their first hearing of the gospel; see also 15.1–2. **2.1** *When I came to you,* at first; see Introduction. *The mystery of God,* the gospel, which seems like foolishness to nonbelievers (1.18–21; see also 2.6–8). **2.4** Paul's *speech* was not ornamented like that of the popular orators of the day; see 1.17; 2 Cor 10.10; also Ex 4.10–11 (Moses).

2.6–16 The "foolishness" of the gospel (1.21) is now shown to be the highest wisdom. **2.6** *The mature.* Cf. Paul's description of the Corinthians as *infants* in 3.1–2. *The rulers of this age,* probably the cosmic powers hostile to God (see 15.24–26), although political rulers may (also) be in mind. **2.7** *Secret and hidden,* lit. "in a mystery, hidden," yet in some sense disclosed in the gospel; see 2.1; 4.1. *Before the ages,* before creation, from eternity. *Our glory* looks ahead to the fullness of salvation, which, according to Paul, will be granted only after this age has passed away; see, e.g., Rom 5.2; 8.18–21; 2 Cor 3.18; 1 Thess 2.12. **2.8** Paul refers to Christ as *the Lord of glory* only here. **2.9** The source of this quotation is not known; but see Isa 64.4; 52.15. *Love him.* See also 8.3. **2.12** *We have received . . . the Spirit* perhaps refers to the experience of baptism; see 12.13; also 3.16; 6.19; Rom 8; 2 Cor 1.22; Gal 3.3; 4.6. *The gifts bestowed on us by God,* all that God has given (see 4.7), not just special gifts like speaking in tongues. **2.13** *And we speak . . . by the Spirit.* See 2.4. **2.14** *The gifts of God's Spirit.* See 2.12.

are spiritual discern all things, and they
are themselves subject to no one else's
scrutiny.
16 "For who has known the mind
of the Lord
so as to instruct him?"
But we have the mind of Christ.

On Divisions in the Corinthian Church

3 And so, brothers and sisters,[o] I
could not speak to you as spiritual
people, but rather as people of the flesh,
as infants in Christ. 2 I fed you with milk,
not solid food, for you were not ready for
solid food. Even now you are still not
ready, 3 for you are still of the flesh. For as
long as there is jealousy and quarreling
among you, are you not of the flesh, and
behaving according to human inclina-
tions? 4 For when one says, "I belong to
Paul," and another, "I belong to Apollos,"
are you not merely human?
5 What then is Apollos? What is Paul?
Servants through whom you came to be-
lieve, as the Lord assigned to each. 6 I
planted, Apollos watered, but God gave
the growth. 7 So neither the one who
plants nor the one who waters is anything,
but only God who gives the growth. 8 The
one who plants and the one who waters
have a common purpose, and each will
receive wages according to the labor of
each. 9 For we are God's servants, work-
ing together; you are God's field, God's
building.
10 According to the grace of God
given to me, like a skilled master builder I
laid a foundation, and someone else is
building on it. Each builder must choose
with care how to build on it. 11 For no one
can lay any foundation other than the one
that has been laid; that foundation is
Jesus Christ. 12 Now if anyone builds on
the foundation with gold, silver, precious
stones, wood, hay, straw— 13 the work of
each builder will become visible, for the
Day will disclose it, because it will be re-
vealed with fire, and the fire will test what
sort of work each has done. 14 If what has
been built on the foundation survives, the
builder will receive a reward. 15 If the
work is burned up, the builder will suffer
loss; the builder will be saved, but only as
through fire.
16 Do you not know that you are
God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells
in you?[p] 17 If anyone destroys God's tem-
ple, God will destroy that person. For
God's temple is holy, and you are that
temple.
18 Do not deceive yourselves. If you
think that you are wise in this age, you
should become fools so that you may be-
come wise. 19 For the wisdom of this world
is foolishness with God. For it is written,
"He catches the wise in their
craftiness,"
20 and again,
"The Lord knows the thoughts of
the wise,
that they are futile."

o Gk *brothers* p In verses 16 and 17 the Greek word for *you* is plural

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2.16 *"For who . . . instruct him?"* Isa 40.13, cited also in Wis 9.13. Paul speaks of *the mind of Christ* only here, but see Rom 8.9; Gal 4.6; Phil 1.19.

3.1–23 Paul now returns to the specific issue of disunity and rivalries within the congregation (see 1.10–17), a major concern throughout this Letter. **3.1** *Spiritual people*, those who have a mature understanding of the gospel. *People of the flesh*, those who are attached to worldly wisdom and values. **3.2** *With milk*, perhaps as a nursing mother; see 1 Thess 2.7. Paul's concern is similarly expressed in 14.20 (see also 13.11). **3.3** *Jealousy and quarreling*. See 1.10–11. **3.4** *"I belong to Paul."* See 1.12. **3.5** *Servants*, as in 2 Cor 6.4; see also Rom 15.8, referring to Christ. Elsewhere the same Greek word (*diakonos*) is translated as "minister(s)" (e.g., 2 Cor 3.6) or "deacon(s)" (Rom 16.1; Phil 1.1). *The Lord*, here a reference to God; see 3.6, 9. **3.6** *I planted*, a metaphor for preaching the gospel from which the Corinthian church grew; see also 2.1–5; 4.15; 9.1–2, 11; 15.1. *Apollos watered*. See Acts 18.24–19.1. **3.8** The *wages* will be paid at the final judgment; see also 3.12–15. **3.10** *The grace of God*, manifested in Paul's conversion and call to apostleship; see also 15.9–10; Rom 1.5; 12.3; 15.15; Gal 1.15; 2.9. *I laid a foundation*, a second metaphor for preaching the gospel in Corinth; see also note on 3.6. **3.13** *The Day*, of final judgment, as in 1.7–8; see also 5.5; Rom 2.5, 16; 13.12; 2 Cor 1.14; Phil 1.6, 10; 2.16; 1 Thess 5.2, 4. **3.14** *Reward*. The same Greek word is translated *wages* in 3.8. **3.15** *Only as through fire* probably means "just barely" (see Am 4.11; Zech 3.2; Jude 23). **3.16** *You are God's temple* describes the Corinthian congregation as a whole; see also 2 Cor 6.16; Ezek 37.26–28; cf. 1 Cor 6.19. **3.17** *Holy*. See note on 1.2. **3.18** This appeal is based on the argument developed in 1.18–25. **3.19** Paul quotes Job 5.12–13. **3.20** Ps 93.11.

21 So let no one boast about human leaders. For all things are yours, 22 whether
Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or
life or death or the present or the future
—all belong to you, 23 and you belong to
Christ, and Christ belongs to God.

The Ministry of the Apostles

4 Think of us in this way, as servants
of Christ and stewards of God's mys-
teries. 2 Moreover, it is required of stew-
ards that they be found trustworthy. 3 But
with me it is a very small thing that I
should be judged by you or by any human
court. I do not even judge myself. 4 I am
not aware of anything against myself, but
I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord
who judges me. 5 Therefore do not pro-
nounce judgment before the time, before
the Lord comes, who will bring to light
the things now hidden in darkness and
will disclose the purposes of the heart.
Then each one will receive commendation
from God.

6 I have applied all this to Apollos and
myself for your benefit, brothers and sis-
ters,[q] so that you may learn through us
the meaning of the saying, "Nothing be-
yond what is written," so that none of you
will be puffed up in favor of one against
another. 7 For who sees anything different
in you?[r] What do you have that you did
not receive? And if you received it, why
do you boast as if it were not a gift?

8 Already you have all you want! Al-
ready you have become rich! Quite apart
from us you have become kings! Indeed, I
wish that you had become kings, so that
we might be kings with you! 9 For I think
that God has exhibited us apostles as last
of all, as though sentenced to death, be-
cause we have become a spectacle to the
world, to angels and to mortals. 10 We are
fools for the sake of Christ, but you are
wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are
strong. You are held in honor, but we in
disrepute. 11 To the present hour we are
hungry and thirsty, we are poorly clothed
and beaten and homeless, 12 and we grow
weary from the work of our own hands.
When reviled, we bless; when persecuted,
we endure; 13 when slandered, we speak
kindly. We have become like the rubbish
of the world, the dregs of all things, to this
very day.

Fatherly Admonition

14 I am not writing this to make you
ashamed, but to admonish you as my be-
loved children. 15 For though you might
have ten thousand guardians in Christ,
you do not have many fathers. Indeed,
in Christ Jesus I became your father
through the gospel. 16 I appeal to you,
then, be imitators of me. 17 For this reason

q Gk *brothers* r Or *Who makes you different from another?*

3.22 *Paul . . . Apollos . . . Cephas.* See 1.12. *Life . . . death . . . present . . . future.* See also Rom 8.38. Paul envisions the ultimate destruction of death; see 1 Cor 15.26; see also 15.54–55. **3.23** *You belong to Christ.* See 6.19–20; 7.22–23; also 1.9. *Christ belongs to God.* See 11.3; 15.28.

4.1–13 Here, as in 1.10–17; ch. 3, Paul attempts to counteract the rivalries and jealousies that have developed in the Corinthian congregation. **4.1** *Servants,* or "helpers" ("attendant" in Lk 4.20). In 3.5 *servants* translates a different Greek word. *Stewards,* or "managers"; the word was often used, as in Lk 12.42–48, of the slave who supervised household business. See also Gal 4.2 (translated as "guardians"); 1 Pet 4.10. *God's mysteries,* as disclosed in the gospel; see 2.1, 6–16; also 13.2. **4.4–5** *The Lord,* Christ. Concerning the final *judgment,* see especially 3.12–15; 5.5, 13; 6.2–3, 9–10. **4.6** *Apollos.* See 1.12. How Paul wishes to apply the slogan *"Nothing beyond what is written"* remains unclear. **4.7** Everything, even life itself, is to be received as God's *gift*; see also 2.12; 3.21–22. **4.8–10** Paul writes with irony, critical of the Corinthians' presumptuous claims about their religious status. **4.9** *Spectacle* evokes the image of prisoners of war being publicly vilified in an outdoor theater. **4.11–13** Similar lists of hardships appear in 2 Cor 4.8–9; 6.4–5; 11.23–29; 12.10; Rom 8.35. **4.12** *When reviled, we bless* perhaps echoes the saying attributed to Jesus in Lk 6.28; see also Rom 12.14.

4.14–21 The appeals begun in 1.10 are concluded, and the Corinthians are alerted to Timothy's coming and to Paul's own later visit. **4.14–15** Paul can claim paternity because he had founded the church in Corinth (3.6; see also 1 Thess 2.11–12); elsewhere he uses maternal images (see 3.2). **4.16** *Be imitators of me.* See also 11.1; Gal 4.12; Phil 3.17; 4.9; 1 Thess 1.6–7; 2 Thess 3.6–13. **4.17** *Timothy,* one of Paul's closest associates (e.g., Acts 16.1–3; 1 Thess 3.2), had helped found the Corinthian church (2 Cor 1.19). He has probably been dispatched to Corinth in advance of this letter (16.10–11); but if the verb *sent* is interpreted *am sending* (see text note *s*), Timothy is about to leave with the letter.

I sent[s] you Timothy, who is my beloved
and faithful child in the Lord, to remind
you of my ways in Christ Jesus, as I teach
them everywhere in every church. 18 But
some of you, thinking that I am not com-
ing to you, have become arrogant. 19 But I
will come to you soon, if the Lord wills,
and I will find out not the talk of these
arrogant people but their power. 20 For
the kingdom of God depends not on talk
but on power. 21 What would you prefer?
Am I to come to you with a stick, or with
love in a spirit of gentleness?

Sexual Immorality Defiles the Church

5 It is actually reported that there is
sexual immorality among you, and
of a kind that is not found even among
pagans; for a man is living with his fa-
ther's wife. 2 And you are arrogant!
Should you not rather have mourned, so
that he who has done this would have
been removed from among you?
3 For though absent in body, I am
present in spirit; and as if present I have
already pronounced judgment 4 in the
name of the Lord Jesus on the man who
has done such a thing.[t] When you are
assembled, and my spirit is present with
the power of our Lord Jesus, 5 you are to
hand this man over to Satan for the de-
struction of the flesh, so that his spirit
may be saved in the day of the Lord.[u]
6 Your boasting is not a good thing.
Do you not know that a little yeast leavens
the whole batch of dough? 7 Clean out the
old yeast so that you may be a new batch,
as you really are unleavened. For our
paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed.
8 Therefore, let us celebrate the festival,
not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice
and evil, but with the unleavened bread of
sincerity and truth.

Sexual Immorality Must Be Judged

9 I wrote to you in my letter not to
associate with sexually immoral persons—
10 not at all meaning the immoral of this
world, or the greedy and robbers, or idol-
aters, since you would then need to go out
of the world. 11 But now I am writing to
you not to associate with anyone who
bears the name of brother or sister[v] who
is sexually immoral or greedy, or is an
idolater, reviler, drunkard, or robber. Do
not even eat with such a one. 12 For what
have I to do with judging those outside? Is
it not those who are inside that you are to
judge? 13 God will judge those outside.

s Or *am sending* t Or *on the man who has done such a thing in the name of the Lord Jesus* u Other ancient authorities add *Jesus* v Gk *brother*

4.18–19 Paul nowhere names these *arrogant* people. He may actually have the whole congregation in mind. *I will come to you soon.* See 16.5–9. **4.20** *The kingdom of God.* See also 6.9–10; 15.24, 50; Rom 14.17; Gal 5.21; 1 Thess 2.12. **4.21** *With a stick,* as a disciplinarian; see also 2 Cor 10.2–6; 12.21; 13.1–3, 10. *With love in a spirit of gentleness.* See Gal 6.1.

5.1–8 The apostle now deals with a specific case involving a member (never named) of the Corinthian church. **5.1** *Sexual immorality* translates a term sometimes rendered *fornication,* as in 6.13, 18; Gal 5.19; 1 Thess 4.3. *Pagans,* gentile nonbelievers. *Living with,* engaging in sex with. *Father's wife,* an idiom used to refer to one's stepmother. **5.2** *Mourned,* grieved over the immorality of a fellow Christian. **5.4** *Assembled,* perhaps for the weekly congregational meal and worship; see 11.17–22. **5.5** *Hand . . . over to Satan,* put out of the church (see 5.2, 13). *Satan* was a name used by both Jews and Christians for the personification of evil; see also 7.5; Rom 16.20; 2 Cor 2.11; 11.14; 12.7; 1 Thess 2.18; 2 Thess 2.9. Some scholars interpret *the flesh* literally, as a reference to the immoral man's physical body; others understand it figuratively, as a reference to his evil desires. It is thus difficult to know what Paul expects will result from the punishment he is recommending. *The day of the Lord.* See 3.13. **5.6** *Yeast,* a metaphor for evil (see 5.8), as in Mt 16.6, 11–12; Mk 8.15; Lk 12.1; see also Gal 5.9. **5.7** *Paschal lamb,* the animal slaughtered for the Jewish celebration of Passover; see Ex 12.1–27. According to the Gospels, Jesus was put to death at Passover time (Mk 14–15). **5.8** Only *unleavened bread,* a symbol of purity, was to be eaten during Passover; see Ex 12.8, 15–20.

5.9–13 Paul's directions in a previous letter to Corinth, perhaps misunderstood, are now clarified. **5.9** The *letter* referred to is either lost or, as some believe, survives only in fragmentary form in 2 Cor 6.14–7.1 (but see also Eph 5.3–7). **5.10–11** A similar list of evildoers is given in 6.9–10. **5.11** *Brother or sister,* a fellow Christian, as distinct from nonbelievers. The instruction to *not even eat* with immoral believers presumably includes barring them from participating in the Lord's Supper (see 10.16–17). **5.12** *Outside* and *inside* refer to where people are with reference to the Christian community. **5.13** *God will judge,* on

"Drive out the wicked person from among you."

Lawsuits Among Believers

6 When any of you has a grievance against another, do you dare to take it to court before the unrighteous, instead of taking it before the saints? 2 Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? 3 Do you not know that we are to judge angels—to say nothing of ordinary matters? 4 If you have ordinary cases, then, do you appoint as judges those who have no standing in the church? 5 I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is no one among you wise enough to decide between one believer[w] and another, 6 but a believer[w] goes to court against a believer[w]—and before unbelievers at that?

7 In fact, to have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded? 8 But you yourselves wrong and defraud—and believers[x] at that.

9 Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, 10 thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers—none of these will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And this is what some of you used to be. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

Glorify God in Body and Spirit

12 "All things are lawful for me," but not all things are beneficial. "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be dominated by anything. 13 "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food,"[y] and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is meant not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. 14 And God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power. 15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! 16 Do you not know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is said, "The two shall be one flesh." 17 But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. 18 Shun fornication! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body; but the fornicator sins against the body itself. 19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple[z] of the Holy Spirit

w Gk *brother* x Gk *brothers* y The quotation may extend to the word *other* z Or *sanctuary*

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judgment day (see 3.13). The quotation is from Deut 17.7.

6.1–11 Paul counsels against Christians asking Roman courts to settle disputes. Perhaps he has heard about some specific instance of this in Corinth. **6.1** The terms *unrighteous* and *saints* (see 1.2) refer, respectively, to nonbelievers and believers (see also 6.6). **6.2** *The world* here refers to nonbelievers. For the idea that believers will assist with the final judgment, see Mt 19.28; Lk 22.30; Rev 3.21; 20.4 (also Wis 3.8; Sir 4.15). **6.3** The expectation that *angels* are subject to final judgment is also envisioned in Isa 24.21–22; Jude 6 (see also 2 Pet 2.4), but not that any human agents will be their judges. **6.4** *Those who have no standing in the church* more likely refers to nonbelievers than to persons within the church, yet the latter interpretation is sometimes argued. **6.7** *Be wronged.* See also Mt 5.39–40; Lk 6.28–30. **6.8** On *defrauding*, see Mk 10.19. **6.9–10** The list of evildoers is similar to the one in 5.10–11. **6.9** *The kingdom of God.* See 4.20. *Fornicators* are persons who engage in sexual conduct regarded as immoral; see note on 5.1. *Male prostitutes*, adolescent boys who sold sexual favors to older males; or, if the term is being used generally, the more passive male in a homosexual act. The Greek word translated *sodomites* is a term that seems to be used of the more active male in a homosexual act; see also Rom 1.27; 1 Tim 1.10. **6.11** *Washed* probably refers to Christian baptism. *Sanctified.* See 1.2. *Justified.* See note on 1.30.

6.12–20 The apostle continues to criticize and correct the Corinthians' understanding of what it means to be faithful to his gospel. **6.12–13** Paul is quoting slogans popular in Corinth (see also 10.23), conceivably ones that some Corinthians have attributed to him. **6.13** *God will destroy*, either a reference to the ultimate destruction of all material things (see 7.31) or, more specifically, to the last judgment (see 3.13). *The Lord*, here a reference to Christ (6.14–17). **6.14** See also 15.4, 12–22; 2 Cor 4.14. **6.15** *Members of Christ.* See also 12.12–14, 27; Rom 12.4–5. **6.16** Paul quotes Gen 2.24. **6.19** *Temple of the Holy Spirit*, here used

within you, which you have from God,
and that you are not your own? 20 For you
were bought with a price; therefore glo-
rify God in your body.

Directions Concerning Marriage

7 Now concerning the matters about
which you wrote: "It is well for a
man not to touch a woman." 2 But because
of cases of sexual immorality, each man
should have his own wife and each
woman her own husband. 3 The husband
should give to his wife her conjugal rights,
and likewise the wife to her husband.
4 For the wife does not have authority
over her own body, but the husband does;
likewise the husband does not have au-
thority over his own body, but the wife
does. 5 Do not deprive one another except
perhaps by agreement for a set time, to
devote yourselves to prayer, and then
come together again, so that Satan may
not tempt you because of your lack of self-
control. 6 This I say by way of concession,
not of command. 7 I wish that all were as I
myself am. But each has a particular gift
from God, one having one kind and an-
other a different kind.

8 To the unmarried and the widows I
say that it is well for them to remain un-
married as I am. 9 But if they are not prac-
ticing self-control, they should marry. For
it is better to marry than to be aflame with
passion.

10 To the married I give this com-
mand—not I but the Lord—that the
wife should not separate from her hus-
band 11 (but if she does separate, let her
remain unmarried or else be reconciled to
her husband), and that the husband
should not divorce his wife.

12 To the rest I say—I and not the
Lord—that if any believer[a] has a wife
who is an unbeliever, and she consents to
live with him, he should not divorce her.
13 And if any woman has a husband who is
an unbeliever, and he consents to live with
her, she should not divorce him. 14 For
the unbelieving husband is made holy

a Gk *brother*

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metaphorically of the individual believer's *body* (cf. 3.16). *Not your own.* See also Rom 14.7–8; 2 Cor 5.14–15. **6.20** *Bought with a price*, probably referring to Christ's atoning death for sins (15.3); see 7.23; also note on 1.30 (*redemption*).

7.1–16 The issue to which Paul now turns has been raised with him by the Corinthians themselves, and the whole of ch. 7 is devoted to it. Their question is not just about marriage but, more generally, whether sexual intimacy is compatible with life in Christ. **7.1** *You wrote*, a reference to some (lost) letter to Paul from the Corinthians. Some scholars believe that the following quotation is another slogan current among the Corinthians (see 6.12–13); others believe it represents a view that Paul himself has expressed (perhaps in an earlier letter; see 5.9). Most translations do not mark it as a quotation at all. The word *touch* is an idiom for "have sex with." **7.2** *Cases of sexual immorality.* See 5.1–5; 6.12–20. *Own wife . . . own husband* affirms monogamy and marital fidelity; see also 1 Thess 4.3–5. **7.3** *Give . . . conjugal rights.* This affirmation of sexual intimacy within a Christian marriage stands in contrast with the ascetic view quoted in 7.1. **7.4** A husband's authority over his wife was presupposed in the ancient world (see Eph 5.24; Col 3.18; 1 Pet 3.1, 6), but not a wife's authority over her husband. **7.5** *Do not deprive one another*, of conjugal rights. *Satan.* See 5.5. *Tempt you*, to marital infidelity. **7.6** The *concession* probably refers to the provision for temporary abstinence from sexual intimacy (7.5). *Not of command.* See also 7.35; 2 Cor 8.8; Philem 8–9. **7.7** *As I myself am*, unmarried (see 7.8; 9.5, 15). Paul implies that celibacy is one *particular gift*; others are mentioned in ch. 12; Rom 12.6–8 (also 1 Pet 4.10). **7.8** *The unmarried*, perhaps a reference to widowers specifically (the expression is masculine). **7.10–11** *The Lord*, Christ (see also 9.14). *Separate* and *divorce* are used synonymously. The sayings about divorce attributed to Jesus are found in one version in Mk 10.2–12 (see also Lk 16.18), and in other versions in Mt 5.31–32; 19.3–9. Paul's instructions presume Roman law, according to which (in contrast to Deut 24.1–4) divorce could be initiated by either the husband or the wife (see also Mk 10.11–12); and they also presume that both partners are Christians (cf. 7.12–16). See also 7.27; Rom 7.2. **7.12** *The rest*, persons who were already married when they were converted to Christ, but whose spouses have remained nonbelievers. Such marriages are not addressed by the command of Jesus invoked in 7.10–11. *I and not the Lord* (cf. 7.10). Paul now offers counsels on his own authority, without appealing to any teaching of Jesus. **7.14** *Made holy* or "sanctified" (see 1.2), i.e., by God, not by the marriage as such. The exact meaning is obscure, however, both here and when Paul proceeds to describe the children in families where but one parent is Christian. These children seem to be regarded as "holy" so long as the Christian parent remains in the marriage, but as *unclean* when they are in the

through his wife, and the unbelieving wife
is made holy through her husband. Oth-
erwise, your children would be unclean,
but as it is, they are holy. 15 But if the un-
believing partner separates, let it be so; in
such a case the brother or sister is not
bound. It is to peace that God has called
you.[b] 16 Wife, for all you know, you
might save your husband. Husband, for
all you know, you might save your wife.

The Life that the Lord Has Assigned

17 However that may be, let each of
you lead the life that the Lord has as-
signed, to which God called you. This is
my rule in all the churches. 18 Was anyone
at the time of his call already circumcised?
Let him not seek to remove the marks of
circumcision. Was anyone at the time of
his call uncircumcised? Let him not seek
circumcision. 19 Circumcision is nothing,
and uncircumcision is nothing; but obey-
ing the commandments of God is every-
thing. 20 Let each of you remain in the
condition in which you were called.
21 Were you a slave when called? Do
not be concerned about it. Even if you can
gain your freedom, make use of your
present condition now more than ever.[c]
22 For whoever was called in the Lord as a
slave is a freed person belonging to the
Lord, just as whoever was free when
called is a slave of Christ. 23 You were
bought with a price; do not become slaves
of human masters. 24 In whatever condi-
tion you were called, brothers and sis-
ters,[d] there remain with God.

The Unmarried and the Widows

25 Now concerning virgins, I have no
command of the Lord, but I give my opin-
ion as one who by the Lord's mercy is
trustworthy. 26 I think that, in view of the
impending[e] crisis, it is well for you to re-
main as you are. 27 Are you bound to a
wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free
from a wife? Do not seek a wife. 28 But if
you marry, you do not sin, and if a virgin
marries, she does not sin. Yet those who
marry will experience distress in this
life,[f] and I would spare you that. 29 I

b Other ancient authorities read *us* *c* Or *avail yourself of the opportunity* *d* Gk *brothers* *e* Or *present* *f* Gk *in the flesh*

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care solely of a non-Christian parent. **7.15** *Separates,* initiates a divorce. *Peace,* a reference in this case to concord within a marriage; see also 14.33; Rom 14.17, 19; 2 Cor 13.11; Gal 5.22. **7.16** *Save* here refers to the conversion to Christianity of the non-Christian spouse (see also 1 Pet 3.1–2). Scholars differ on whether Paul means that there is a good chance or only an outside chance of this happening.

7.17–24 Here the principle is laid down and illustrated with examples other than marriage that converts to Christianity should not ordinarily seek to change their situation in society. **7.17** *The Lord,* God. *All the churches,* the congregations founded by Paul; over those founded by others he exercised no authority. **7.18** *Call,* conversion to the gospel. Paul himself, like every male child born to devout Jews, had been circumcised as an infant (Phil 3.5) to signify his belonging to the covenant people (see Gen 17.9–14). Some Jews, seeking acceptance in gentile society, tried to *remove the marks of circumcision.* Paul's view that gentile converts should *not seek circumcision* differed from that of the Jerusalem church; see Gal 2.1–14. **7.19** See also Rom 2.25–29; Gal 5.6; 6.15. **7.21** Many converts were *slaves* (see 12.13; Gal 3.28; Philem 16; also Eph 6.5–9; Col 3.11, 22–4.1; 1 Tim 6.1–2; Titus 2.9–10; 1 Pet 2.18–25). The institution of slavery was fundamental to the social, economic, and political structures of imperial Rome. *Freedom* could be purchased by or for a slave for a price or could be granted for a variety of other reasons. Since the translation of *make use . . . ever* is uncertain (see text note *c*), Paul's instruction remains unclear. **7.22** *The Lord,* Christ. *A freed person,* not necessarily from one's earthly master but from the law, sin, and death; see Rom 6.6–7.6; 8.15; Gal 4.7. *A slave of Christ,* belonging to Christ (3.23), as a committed, faithful Christian; see Rom 6.16–18, 22; 7.6 (also Rom 12.11; 14.18; 16.18; 1 Thess 1.9). **7.23** *Bought with a price.* See 6.20. *Slaves of human masters,* a metaphor for yielding to merely human claims and values; see also Rom 8.12–17; Gal 5.1.

7.25–40 The discussion now returns to the specific issue of whether marriage is ever appropriate for Christians. **7.25** *Virgins,* women who have never been married, but whether Paul is thinking of them as engaged to be married is unclear (see 7.36–38). *No command of the Lord.* Cf. 7.10; see also 7.12. *By the Lord's mercy,* a reference to God's calling Paul to apostleship; see 2 Cor 4.1; also 1 Cor 1.1. **7.26** *The impending crisis* translates the comment as a reference to the tribulations traditionally expected to occur as the present age passes away (7.29–31). The alternate translation, *present crisis* (see text note *e*), interprets Paul as referring to the troubles that Christians experience daily in society. *Remain as you are.* See 7.17–24. **7.29** *The appointed time has grown*

mean, brothers and sisters,[g] the appointed time has grown short; from now on, let even those who have wives be as though they had none, 30 and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no possessions, 31 and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.

32 I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord; 33 but the married man is anxious about the affairs of the world, how to please his wife, 34 and his interests are divided. And the unmarried woman and the virgin are anxious about the affairs of the Lord, so that they may be holy in body and spirit; but the married woman is anxious about the affairs of the world, how to please her husband. 35 I say this for your own benefit, not to put any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and unhindered devotion to the Lord.

36 If anyone thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his fiancée,[h] if his passions are strong, and so it has to be, let him marry as he wishes; it is no sin. Let them marry. 37 But if someone stands firm in his resolve, being under no necessity but having his own desire under control, and has determined in his own mind to keep her as his fiancée,[h] he will do well. 38 So then, he who marries his fiancée[h] does well; and he who refrains from marriage will do better.

39 A wife is bound as long as her husband lives. But if the husband dies,[i] she is free to marry anyone she wishes, only in the Lord. 40 But in my judgment she is more blessed if she remains as she is. And I think that I too have the Spirit of God.

Food Offered to Idols

8 Now concerning food sacrificed to idols: we know that "all of us possess knowledge." Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. 2 Anyone who claims to know something does not yet have the necessary knowledge; 3 but anyone who loves God is known by him.

4 Hence, as to the eating of food of-

g Gk *brothers* *h* Gk *virgin* *i* Gk *falls asleep*

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short. I.e., the time of Christ's return, the day of judgment, and the fulfillment of salvation nears; see 1.7–8; also Rom 13.11–12. *As though they had none.* See also Lk 14.26. Paul's counsel is not to abstain from conjugal relations (see 7.3–5), but to realize that also marriage will pass away (see 7.31). **7.34** *Unmarried woman,* one previously married, as distinguished from a *virgin,* who has never been married. **7.35** *Not to put any restraint.* See 7.6. **7.36–38** Scholars differ on how these instructions relate to those about "virgins" in 7.25–26, 28. However, Paul is consistent in applying the twofold principle that it is better not to be married, but no sin to be married (see 7.7, 8, 25–28, 32–35). **7.39** See also 7.10; Rom 7.2. **7.40** *My judgment* (see also 7.12, 25; 2 Cor 8.10), the judgment of an apostle and one who has been informed by *the Spirit of God* (see also 2.16, *we have the mind of Christ*).

8.1–13 From here through 11.1 Paul offers directives on a matter that has troubled his congregation: whether Christians may eat meat that has been left over from pagan sacrificial rites (cf. Rom 14). No agreement like the one reported in Acts 15.29 is in view. **8.1** *Now concerning* introduces a new topic. Perhaps, like the matter introduced by the same phrase in 7.1, it has been raised in a letter from Corinth; but this is not specifically indicated. *Food sacrificed to idols* translates one Greek word (lit. "things sacrificed to idols"), used only by Jews and Christians; the neutral term is "sacred food" (see note on 10.28). Both words refer to the meat of an animal that has been ritually slaughtered. *"All of us possess knowledge,"* a slogan of some Corinthian Christians. *Knowledge puffs up,* not knowledge in general, but the kind of religious knowledge arrogantly flaunted by certain Corinthians; see 4.6, 18–19; 5.2; 13.4. Here and elsewhere in 1 Corinthians the Greek word used for *love* is *agape,* which is described in ch. 13 as utterly selfless; see also 4.21; 16.14, 24. It *builds up* Christian community by uniting its members in the care and serving of one another; see 14.1–5, 12, 17, 26; also 10.23–24. **8.3** *Loves God.* See 2.9; Rom 8.28; Jas 1.12; 2.5; also Deut 6.5. *Known by him.* See also 13.12; Gal 4.9. To be thus "known" is to be chosen and called by God; see Rom 8.29–30; also Ex 33.12, 17; Jer 1.5. **8.4** *"No idol . . . really exists,"* a fundamental tenet of Jewish and Christian teaching (Ex 20.4–5; Isa 46; Wis 13–14), with which the Corinthian Christians fully agree; see also 10.14; 12.2. *"There is no God but one"* echoes the affirmation of Deut 6.4—the Shema often

fered to idols, we know that "no idol in
the world really exists," and that "there is
no God but one." 5 Indeed, even though
there may be so-called gods in heaven or
on earth—as in fact there are many gods
and many lords— 6 yet for us there is one
God, the Father, from whom are all
things and for whom we exist, and one
Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all
things and through whom we exist.
7 It is not everyone, however, who has
this knowledge. Since some have become
so accustomed to idols until now, they still
think of the food they eat as food offered
to an idol; and their conscience, being
weak, is defiled. 8 "Food will not bring us
close to God."[j] We are no worse off if we
do not eat, and no better off if we do.
9 But take care that this liberty of yours
does not somehow become a stumbling
block to the weak. 10 For if others see you,
who possess knowledge, eating in the temple of an idol, might they not, since their
conscience is weak, be encouraged to the
point of eating food sacrificed to idols?
11 So by your knowledge those weak
believers for whom Christ died are
destroyed.[k] 12 But when you thus sin
against members of your family,[l] and
wound their conscience when it is weak,
you sin against Christ. 13 Therefore, if
food is a cause of their falling,[m] I will
never eat meat, so that I may not cause
one of them[n] to fall.

The Rights of an Apostle

9 Am I not free? Am I not an apostle?
Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are
you not my work in the Lord? 2 If I am
not an apostle to others, at least I am to
you; for you are the seal of my apostleship
in the Lord.
3 This is my defense to those who
would examine me. 4 Do we not have the
right to our food and drink? 5 Do we not
have the right to be accompanied by a believing wife,[o] as do the other apostles and
the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?
6 Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no
right to refrain from working for a living?
7 Who at any time pays the expenses for
doing military service? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat any of its fruit? Or

j The quotation may extend to the end of the verse
k Gk *the weak brother . . . is destroyed* *l* Gk *against the brothers* *m* Gk *my brother's falling*
n Gk *cause my brother* *o* Gk *a sister as wife*

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recited by Jews as a summary of their faith. **8.5** *Many gods and many lords*, the deities who were worshiped by gentile nonbelievers; Paul does not mean they actually exist. **8.6** An early Christian creed may lie behind this statement; see also 10.26; 11.12; 12.3; Rom 11.36; Col 1.16–17; Heb 2.10. **8.7** *Weak*, unenlightened, still under the illusion that pagan sacrifices have some kind of potency; see also 8.10, 12; 10.27–29; Rom 14.1–2, 23; 15.1. *Defiled*. The act prompts feelings of guilt; see also 8.12 (*wound*). **8.8** Paul quotes (presumably the Corinthians) with approval. What is said here about food has been said about circumcision in 7.19. **8.9** *Liberty*, or right, as in 9.4–6, 12, 18. *Stumbling block*. See also Rom 14.13, 20–21; 2 Cor 6.3. (The Greek word in 1.23 is different.) **8.10** *Knowledge*. See 8.1. *Eating in the temple of an idol*. Many pagan temples had a dining area where meat left over from the sacrifice was eaten at a communal meal. *Encouraged*, lit. "built up." **8.11** Christ's death for the *weak* is also invoked in Rom 14.15 (cf. Rom 5.6). **8.12** *Wound their conscience*. See note on 8.7. *Sin against Christ*. See also Mt 25.45; Heb 6.6. **8.13** *Meat*, left over from pagan rites.

9.1–27 Paul emphasizes that he has not exercised certain rights that are his as an apostle. Some scholars interpret him to be supporting the counsels of ch. 8. Others believe he is addressing a new topic. **9.1** Paul is *free* both to claim and to give up certain rights. *Apostle*. See 1.1. *Jesus our Lord*, the resurrected Christ whom Paul beheld at his conversion and call; see 15.8–10. The Corinthian church was Paul's *work* because it had been founded by him. **9.2** The very existence of a church in Corinth attests (*seals*) Paul's *apostleship*; see also 2 Cor 3.2–3; 10.13–14. **9.3** *Those who would examine me*, perhaps specific adversaries, but they are never named. **9.4** *We*, apostles in general, including Paul. *Right*, translates a Greek word that sometimes means *liberty* (see 8.9) or "authority" (see 2 Cor 10.8). *Food and drink*, living expenses (or at least "board") while serving as an apostle. **9.5** *Brothers of the Lord*, Jesus' brothers (see Mk 6.3), of whom only James is ever named by Paul himself (see 15.7; Gal 1.19). *Cephas*, Peter (see 1.12), who, according to Mk 1.30, was married. **9.6** *Barnabas* (see Acts 4.36–37; Col 4.10) was apparently one of Paul's earliest associates (Gal 2.1–10; see also, e.g., Acts 9.27; 11.19–30), but he and Paul eventually had a falling out (Gal 2.13; see also Acts 15.36–41). *Working for a living*, in addition to apostolic labors; see Acts 18.1–4. **9.7** For the examples used here, see also Deut

who tends a flock and does not get any of
its milk?
8 Do I say this on human authority?
Does not the law also say the same? 9 For it
is written in the law of Moses, "You shall
not muzzle an ox while it is treading out
the grain." Is it for oxen that God is con-
cerned? 10 Or does he not speak entirely
for our sake? It was indeed written for
our sake, for whoever plows should plow
in hope and whoever threshes should
thresh in hope of a share in the crop. 11 If
we have sown spiritual good among you,
is it too much if we reap your material
benefits? 12 If others share this rightful
claim on you, do not we still more?
Nevertheless, we have not made use of
this right, but we endure anything rather
than put an obstacle in the way of the gos-
pel of Christ. 13 Do you not know that
those who are employed in the temple
service get their food from the temple,
and those who serve at the altar share in
what is sacrificed on the altar? 14 In the
same way, the Lord commanded that
those who proclaim the gospel should get
their living by the gospel.
15 But I have made no use of any of
these rights, nor am I writing this so that
they may be applied in my case. Indeed, I
would rather die than that—no one will
deprive me of my ground for boasting!
16 If I proclaim the gospel, this gives me
no ground for boasting, for an obligation
is laid on me, and woe to me if I do not
proclaim the gospel! 17 For if I do this of
my own will, I have a reward; but if not of
my own will, I am entrusted with a com-
mission. 18 What then is my reward? Just
this: that in my proclamation I may make
the gospel free of charge, so as not to
make full use of my rights in the gospel.
19 For though I am free with respect
to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so
that I might win more of them. 20 To the
Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win
Jews. To those under the law I became as
one under the law (though I myself am
not under the law) so that I might win
those under the law. 21 To those outside
the law I became as one outside the law
(though I am not free from God's law but
am under Christ's law) so that I might win
those outside the law. 22 To the weak I be-
came weak, so that I might win the weak.
I have become all things to all people, that
I might by all means save some. 23 I do it
all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may
share in its blessings.
24 Do you not know that in a race the
runners all compete, but only one receives
the prize? Run in such a way that you may
win it. 25 Athletes exercise self-control in
all things; they do it to receive a perish-
able wreath, but we an imperishable one.
26 So I do not run aimlessly, nor do I box
as though beating the air; 27 but I punish
my body and enslave it, so that after pro-
claiming to others I myself should not be
disqualified.

20.6; 2 Tim 2.4. **9.9** Deut 25.4; see also 1 Tim 5.17–18. **9.11** *We have sown spiritual good*, the gospel and all that follows from that; see also 3.6. **9.12** *Others*, conceivably Apollos and Peter (see 1.12). *We have not made use of this right.* Paul has accepted no financial assistance from the Corinthians; see Acts 18.1–4; 2 Cor 11.7–11; 12.13, 14. **9.13** Jewish sacrifice (see also 10.18) and thus the Jerusalem temple are in view; see Num 18.8–32; Deut 18.1–5. **9.14** As in 7.10, Paul invokes a saying attributed to Jesus (Mt 10.10; Lk 10.7); see also 1 Tim 5.17–18. A similar principle is affirmed in Gal 6.6. **9.15** *These rights* are the ones mentioned in 9.4–6, especially the right to a living; see also 9.12. Paul's *ground for boasting* is that he had not burdened the Corinthians with his personal needs; see also 2 Cor 11.7–10. **9.16** On Paul's *obligation* to preach, see also 4.1–2; Acts 22.14–15; 26.14–18; Rom 1.1–6, 14–15; 15.18–21 (and Jer 20.9; Lk 17.10). **9.17** *Reward*, or "wage." Paul's *commission* was from God; the term is related to the word translated as *steward* in 4.1–2. **9.19** *Free.* See 9.1. *A slave to all*, obligated to serve all; see 9.16; 2 Cor 4.5. *Win*, convert to, or perhaps also strengthen in, the gospel. **9.20** *I became as a Jew.* See Acts 16.3; 21.17–26. **9.21** *Those outside the law*, gentile nonbelievers. *Christ's law.* See also Gal 6.2. **9.22** *The weak*, either nonbelievers of lowly social status (as in 1.27) or believers weak in faith (as in 8.9–12); see 2 Cor 11.29. **9.23** *That I may share in its blessings.* See also 9.27. **9.24** On receiving the prize, see also Phil 3.12–16; 2 Tim 2.5. **9.25** *A perishable wreath.* At the Isthmian games, held near Corinth every two years, the winner's crown was made of withered celery. The *imperishable* wreath stands for one's ultimate salvation; see Phil 4.1; 1 Thess 2.19; 2 Tim 4.8; 1 Pet 5.4; Rev 2.10. **9.27** *I punish my body and enslave it*, metaphors for, respectively, enduring hardships (4.11–13) and exercising self-control (9.25).

Warnings from Israel's History

10 I do not want you to be unaware,
brothers and sisters,[p] that our
ancestors were all under the cloud, and all
passed through the sea, 2and all were
baptized into Moses in the cloud and in
the sea, 3and all ate the same spiritual
food, 4and all drank the same spiritu-
al drink. For they drank from the spir-
itual rock that followed them, and the rock
was Christ. 5Nevertheless, God was not
pleased with most of them, and they were
struck down in the wilderness.
6 Now these things occurred as exam-
ples for us, so that we might not desire
evil as they did. 7Do not become idolaters
as some of them did; as it is written, "The
people sat down to eat and drink, and
they rose up to play." 8We must not in-
dulge in sexual immorality as some of
them did, and twenty-three thousand fell
in a single day. 9We must not put Christ[q]
to the test, as some of them did, and were
destroyed by serpents. 10And do not com-
plain as some of them did, and were de-
stroyed by the destroyer. 11These things
happened to them to serve as an example,
and they were written down to instruct us,
on whom the ends of the ages have come.
12So if you think you are standing, watch
out that you do not fall. 13No testing has
overtaken you that is not common to ev-
eryone. God is faithful, and he will not let
you be tested beyond your strength, but
with the testing he will also provide the
way out so that you may be able to en-
dure it.
14 Therefore, my dear friends,[r] flee
from the worship of idols. 15I speak as to
sensible people; judge for yourselves what
I say. 16The cup of blessing that we bless,
is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ?
The bread that we break, is it not a shar-
ing in the body of Christ? 17Because there
is one bread, we who are many are one
body, for we all partake of the one bread.
18Consider the people of Israel;[s] are not
those who eat the sacrifices partners in
the altar? 19What do I imply then? That
food sacrificed to idols is anything, or that
an idol is anything? 20No, I imply that
what pagans sacrifice, they sacrifice to de-
mons and not to God. I do not want you
to be partners with demons. 21You cannot
drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of
demons. You cannot partake of the table
of the Lord and the table of demons.
22Or are we provoking the Lord to jeal-
ousy? Are we stronger than he?

Do All to the Glory of God

23 "All things are lawful," but not all
things are beneficial. "All things are law-
ful," but not all things build up. 24Do not
seek your own advantage, but that of the
other. 25Eat whatever is sold in the meat

p Gk *brothers* *q* Other ancient authorities read *the Lord* *r* Gk *my beloved* *s* Gk *Israel according to the flesh*

10.1–22 Paul offers examples of the dangers of idolatry. The issue of meat sacrificed to idols remains in view (10.19–20). **10.1** *Our ancestors*, the Israelites. On the *cloud* and the *sea*, see Ex 13.21–22; 14.22; Ps 105.39; Wis 19.7–8. **10.3** *Spiritual food*, i.e., manna; see Ex 16.4, 35; Deut 8.3; Ps 78.24–25. **10.4** On *spiritual drink*, see Ex 17.6; Num 20.7–11; Ps 78.15–16. Although the OT says nothing about a *rock that followed* the Israelites in the wilderness, a later rabbinic tradition did say this about a well (see Num 21.16–18). Since Paul identifies the rock with *Christ*, he probably views the Israelites' eating and drinking as a kind of Lord's Supper. **10.5** On the punishment in the *wilderness*, see Num 14.16, 29–30; Ps 78.30–31; Heb 3.17; Jude 5. **10.6** On *desiring evil*, see Num 11.4–6, 34; Ps 106.14–15. **10.7** *"The people . . . play,"* Ex 32.6. **10.8** Cf. Num 25.1–9. **10.9** *To the test*. See Ps 78.18; also Deut 6.16; Isa 7.12; Mt 4.7; Lk 4.12; Acts 15.10. *Destroyed by serpents*. Cf. Num 21.5–6. **10.10** *The destroyer*, some avenging angel; see also Ex 12.23; 2 Sam 24.16; 1 Chr 21.15; Wis 18.20–25; Heb 11.28. **10.11** *The ends of the ages*, the last days before the Lord's return; see 1.7–8; 7.26, 29–31; also Dan 12.13. **10.12** For a similar warning, see Rom 11.20. **10.13** *God is faithful*. See 1.9. **10.14** *Worship of idols*. See 8.4; 12.2; also 1 Jn 5.21. **10.16–17** The Lord's Supper (see also 11.17–34) is described as a *sharing* both with Christ (see 1.9) and with other believers (see also Phil 1.5; Philem 6). Paul develops the image of the church as *one body* in 12.12–27 (see also Rom 12.4–8). **10.18** *Partners in the altar*. See 9.13; also Lev 7.6, 15. **10.20** *Demons* refers to the gods of which pagan idols are representations; see also Deut 32.17; Bar 4.7; Rev 9.20. **10.21** *The Lord*, Christ (as in 10.16); see also 2 Cor 6.15. **10.22** *The Lord*, God (as in Deut 32.21).

10.23–11.1 The discussion opened in 8.1 is brought to a conclusion. **10.23** As in 6.12–13 (see also 7.1), Paul cites and corrects a Corinthian slogan. *Beneficial*. See also 6.12; 7.35; 10.33. *Build up*. See 8.1. **10.25** A *meat market* often sold cuts

market without raising any question on
the ground of conscience, 26 for "the earth
and its fullness are the Lord's." 27 If an
unbeliever invites you to a meal and you
are disposed to go, eat whatever is set be-
fore you without raising any question on
the ground of conscience. 28 But if some-
one says to you, "This has been offered
in sacrifice," then do not eat it, out of con-
sideration for the one who informed
you, and for the sake of conscience— 29 I
mean the other's conscience, not your
own. For why should my liberty be subject
to the judgment of someone else's con-
science? 30 If I partake with thankfulness,
why should I be denounced because of
that for which I give thanks?

31 So, whether you eat or drink, or
whatever you do, do everything for the
glory of God. 32 Give no offense to Jews or
to Greeks or to the church of God, 33 just
as I try to please everyone in everything I
do, not seeking my own advantage, but
that of many, so that they may be saved.

11 1 Be imitators of me, as I am of
Christ.

Head Coverings

2 I commend you because you re-
member me in everything and maintain
the traditions just as I handed them on to
you. 3 But I want you to understand that
Christ is the head of every man, and the
husband[t] is the head of his wife,[u] and
God is the head of Christ. 4 Any man who
prays or prophesies with something on his
head disgraces his head, 5 but any woman
who prays or prophesies with her head
unveiled disgraces her head—it is one
and the same thing as having her head
shaved. 6 For if a woman will not veil her-
self, then she should cut off her hair; but
if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her
hair cut off or to be shaved, she should
wear a veil. 7 For a man ought not to have
his head veiled, since he is the image and
reflection[v] of God; but woman is the re-
flection[v] of man. 8 Indeed, man was not
made from woman, but woman from
man. 9 Neither was man created for the
sake of woman, but woman for the sake of
man. 10 For this reason a woman ought
to have a symbol of[w] authority on her
head,[x] because of the angels. 11 Never-
theless, in the Lord woman is not inde-
pendent of man or man independent of

t The same Greek word means *man* or *husband*
u Or *head of the woman*
v Or *glory*
w Gk lacks *a symbol of*
x Or *have freedom of choice regarding her head*

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that had come from pagan temples. *Conscience.* See 8.7; 10.27–29. **10.26** Ps 24.1; see also Ps 50.12; 89.11. **10.27** *A meal,* presumably either in a private home or in a public eating place (not in a pagan temple, as in 8.10). **10.28** *Someone.* Whether Paul thinks of another Christian or of a nonbeliever remains unclear. *This has been offered in sacrifice,* lit. "This is sacred food" (cf. note on 8.1). **10.29–30** Paul's questions (as translated here) seem to qualify the counsel of 10.28, but vv. 29–30 may represent objections by an imagined dialogue partner. Yet because the logic of the apostle's remarks is difficult to follow, they are subject to various interpretations. **10.30** *With thankfulness,* for what God has provided (10.26); see Rom 14.6; 1 Tim 4.3–4; but also 1 Cor 14.17. **10.32** *Give no offense,* do not hinder anyone from coming to or growing in faith; see also 8.9, 13; 1 Jn 2.10. **10.33** *Please everyone,* not in place of pleasing God (see 7.32–34; Gal 1.10; 1 Thess 2.4), but in place of seeking only one's *own advantage*; see 10.24; Rom 15.1–3. *That they may be saved.* See 9.19–23. **11.1** *Be imitators of me.* See 4.16.

11.2–16 As in the sections that follow (11.17–34; chs. 12–14), Paul counsels the Corinthians about how they should conduct themselves when assembled for worship. **11.3** *Christ is the head.* See also 3.23 (and Eph 1.22; 4.15; 5.23; Col 1.18; 2.10, 19). Some scholars believe that *head* here connotes "source" (see 11.12) as well as (or rather than) superiority. *The husband is the head.* See also Gen 3.16; Eph 5.23. Paul may not be thinking specifically of marital relationships; see text notes *t* and *u*. *God is the head of Christ.* See also 3.23; 15.28. **11.4** *Prays or prophesies,* when the congregation is gathered for worship. On prophecy, see 12.10; 14.1–5. In Paul's day Jewish males did not wear any special *head* covering, even in the synagogue. **11.5** *Unveiled,* or more generally "uncovered," perhaps with loose, flowing hair (typically associated with promiscuous women or priestesses of pagan cults). **11.7** On *image . . . of God,* see Gen 1.27; 5.1; Wis 2.23; Sir 17.3; also 2 Cor 4.4, 6; Col 1.15; Heb 1.3. **11.8** *Woman from man.* See Gen 2.21–23; see also 1 Tim 2.13. **11.9** *Woman for the sake of man.* See Gen 2.18. **11.10** There is no scholarly consensus about the translation of this verse (see text notes *w* and *x*) or about its interpretation. *The angels* (see also 4.9; 6.3; 13.1) should probably not be identified with the "sons of God" mentioned in Gen 6.2. **11.11** *In the Lord,* in Christ, thus among Christians. *Not independent of man . . . of woman* suggests

woman. 12 For just as woman came from
man, so man comes through woman; but
all things come from God. 13 Judge for
yourselves: is it proper for a woman to
pray to God with her head unveiled?
14 Does not nature itself teach you that if a
man wears long hair, it is degrading to
him, 15 but if a woman has long hair, it is
her glory? For her hair is given to her for
a covering. 16 But if anyone is disposed to
be contentious—we have no such custom,
nor do the churches of God.

Abuses at the Lord's Supper

17 Now in the following instructions I
do not commend you, because when you
come together it is not for the better but
for the worse. 18 For, to begin with, when
you come together as a church, I hear that
there are divisions among you; and to
some extent I believe it. 19 Indeed, there
have to be factions among you, for only so
will it become clear who among you are
genuine. 20 When you come together, it is
not really to eat the Lord's supper. 21 For
when the time comes to eat, each of you
goes ahead with your own supper, and
one goes hungry and another becomes
drunk. 22 What! Do you not have homes
to eat and drink in? Or do you show con-
tempt for the church of God and humili-
ate those who have nothing? What should
I say to you? Should I commend you? In
this matter I do not commend you!

The Institution of the Lord's Supper

23 For I received from the Lord what
I also handed on to you, that the Lord
Jesus on the night when he was betrayed
took a loaf of bread, 24 and when he had
given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is
my body that is for[y] you. Do this in re-
membrance of me." 25 In the same way
he took the cup also, after supper, saying,
"This cup is the new covenant in my
blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in
remembrance of me." 26 For as often as
you eat this bread and drink the cup, you
proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Partaking of the Supper Unworthily

27 Whoever, therefore, eats the bread
or drinks the cup of the Lord in an un-
worthy manner will be answerable for the
body and blood of the Lord. 28 Examine
yourselves, and only then eat of the bread

y Other ancient authorities read *is broken for*

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mutuality (see also 7.3–4), and some interpreters believe equality as well. **11.12** *Man comes through woman*, because women bear the children. *All things come from God.* See 8.6; 10.26. **11.14** *Nature itself*, not actually "nature," but social convention. **11.16** *The churches of God*, Paul's other congregations.

11.17–22 The discussion that begins here extends through 11.34. **11.17** *I do not commend you.* Cf. 11.2. **11.18** *Together as a church.* The Corinthians assembled at least weekly (see 16.2), probably in the house of a relatively prosperous member. *Divisions.* See 1.10–13; 12.25; also Titus 3.10. **11.19** Paul's comment on *factions* may reflect the Jewish and early Christian expectation that the close of history would be preceded by various kinds of strife and suffering; see, e.g., 7.26; Mt 10.34–36; Mk 13; 2 Pet 2.1. **11.20–21** The Pauline congregations combined their ritual observance of Jesus' last supper (see Mk 14.17–26) with their own community meal. **11.22** *The church of God.* See 1.2. *Those who have nothing*, the poorer members of the congregation (see 12.24–26; also Jas 2.6).

11.23–26 Paul repeats and comments on the words with which, according to tradition, Jesus at his last supper distributed bread and wine; see also 10.16–17; Mt 26.26–29; Mk 14.22–25; Lk 22.15–20. **11.23** *From the Lord*, not from Jesus directly, but by way of the church's liturgical tradition (see 15.3). *Betrayed*, by Judas Iscariot (see Mk 14.43–46). **11.24** *Thanks.* Jewish meals customarily began with the blessing and distribution of the bread. **11.25** *The cup*, of wine (see 10.16). *After supper.* See also Lk 22.20. This phrase suggests that the ritual acts with bread and cup were customarily separated by an ordinary community meal. *New covenant.* See also Jer 31.31; 32.40; Lk 22.20; 2 Cor 3.6; Heb 8.6–13; 9.15–20. *Blood* seals and thus symbolizes the covenant; see Ex 24.8; Zech 9.11; Heb 9.12; 13.20; also Rom 3.25; 5.9. **11.26** Paul interprets the tradition he has just cited by accentuating Christ's saving death (see 15.3–5) and expected return (see 1.7–8).

11.27–34 The discussion is concluded with some sober warnings and earnest appeals. **11.27** *An unworthy manner.* See 11.29. **11.28** *Examine yourselves.* See also 2 Cor 13.5; Gal 6.4.

and drink of the cup. 29 For all who
eat and drink[z] without discerning the
body,[a] eat and drink judgment against
themselves. 30 For this reason many of you
are weak and ill, and some have died.[b]
31 But if we judged ourselves, we would
not be judged. 32 But when we are judged
by the Lord, we are disciplined[c] so that
we may not be condemned along with the
world.

33 So then, my brothers and sisters,[d]
when you come together to eat, wait for
one another. 34 If you are hungry, eat at
home, so that when you come together, it
will not be for your condemnation. About
the other things I will give instructions
when I come.

Spiritual Gifts

12 Now concerning spiritual gifts,[e]
brothers and sisters,[d] I do not
want you to be uninformed. 2 You know
that when you were pagans, you were en-
ticed and led astray to idols that could not
speak. 3 Therefore I want you to under-
stand that no one speaking by the Spirit of
God ever says "Let Jesus be cursed!" and
no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by
the Holy Spirit.

4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but
the same Spirit; 5 and there are varieties
of services, but the same Lord; 6 and there
are varieties of activities, but it is the same
God who activates all of them in everyone.
7 To each is given the manifestation of the
Spirit for the common good. 8 To one is
given through the Spirit the utterance of
wisdom, and to another the utterance of
knowledge according to the same Spirit,
9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to
another gifts of healing by the one Spirit,
10 to another the working of miracles, to

z Other ancient authorities add *in an unworthy manner,* *a* Other ancient authorities read *the Lord's body* *b* Gk *fallen asleep* *c* Or *When we are judged, we are being disciplined by the Lord* *d* Gk *brothers* *e* Or *spiritual persons*

11.29 *The body,* probably the congregation itself. When believers neither discern nor are concerned for one another's needs, "the body of Christ" is being disregarded and violated (see 10.16–17; 12.12–13). **11.30** How many and who were *ill* or had *died* is unknown. These illnesses and deaths are interpreted as God's punishment for the disorders within the congregation. **11.31** *If we judged ourselves* involves a wordplay, since the Greek term translated *judged* can also be rendered *discerned,* as in 11.29. **11.32** *By the Lord* probably refers to Christ. *The world,* non-Christians. **11.33–34** See 11.21–22. **11.33** *Wait for one another* may suggest that the poorer members always had to arrive late for congregational meals. **11.34** What *the other things* were is unknown. *When I come.* See 4.19–21; 16.5–9.

12.1–11 Paul's comments about spiritual gifts, introduced here, continue through ch. 14. In particular, he is concerned to correct the view that speaking in tongues somehow demonstrates the higher spiritual status of those who are thus graced. **12.1** *Now concerning.* See note on 8.1. *Spiritual gifts.* The form of the Greek word used here can mean either "spiritual things" or *spiritual persons* (see text note *e*). Which of these is adopted makes little difference; in either case, Paul's focus in chs. 12–14 is on how gifts like "tongues" should be evaluated. **12.2** *Pagans,* gentile nonbelievers. *Idols that could not speak.* See 8.4–6; 10.6–14; also Ps 115.4–5; 135.15–18; Hab 2.18–19; 3 Macc 4.16. **12.3** *The Spirit of God.* See 2.12. It is unclear whether Paul actually knew of persons who said, *"Let Jesus be cursed!" "Jesus is Lord"* was one of the church's earliest creedal affirmations; see also 8.6; Rom 10.9; 2 Cor 4.5; Phil 2.11. **12.4** *Gifts.* The Greek term here (and in 1.7; 7.7; 12.9, 28, 30, 31; Rom 1.11; 12.6) is *charisma,* not the one rendered *spiritual gifts* in 12.1. A *charisma* is a benefit with which one has been "graced." **12.5** *Services,* or "ministries," listed in 12.28; see also Rom 12.7. *The same Lord,* Christ; see also 8.6. **12.6** On God who *activates,* or works, in everyone, see also Gal 2.8; Phil 2.13; 1 Thess 2.13; Eph 1.11. **12.7** *The common good,* or "the benefit of all," a major concern in this Letter; see 6.12; 7.35; 10.23, 33. **12.8–10** Similar (but not identical) lists of spiritual gifts appear in 12.28, 29–30; Rom 12.6–8; see also Eph 4.11; 1 Pet 4.10–11. **12.8** *Utterance,* or "word" (an intelligible utterance). *Wisdom.* See 2.6–16. *Knowledge.* See 1.5; 8.1; 13.2, 8. **12.9** *Faith,* here the special ability, granted only to some believers, to do extraordinary things (see 13.2); not to be confused with the kind of faithfulness that is fundamental to the Christian life (see, e.g., 2.5; 16.13). *Healings* are attributed to Paul himself in Acts (e.g., 14.8–10). **12.10** *The working of miracles,* apparently regarded as a more comprehensive gift than those of "faith" and "healing"; see also 12.28; 2 Cor 12.12; Gal 3.5. *Prophecy.* See 11.4–5; 13.2, 8; ch. 14; 1 Thess 5.20. *Discernment of spirits,* perhaps the ability to distinguish between true and false prophecy, as in 14.29; 1 Thess 5.19–21; but see Acts 16.16–18; 1 Jn 4.1. *Tongues,* unintelligible utterance (in contrast to prophecy and the kinds of speech mentioned in 12.8); see 13.1, 8; ch. 14; Acts 10.46; 19.6. In Acts 2.4, 11 the

another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds
of tongues, to another the interpretation
of tongues. 11 All these are activated by
one and the same Spirit, who allots to
each one individually just as the Spirit
chooses.

One Body with Many Members

12 For just as the body is one and has
many members, and all the members of
the body, though many, are one body, so
it is with Christ. 13 For in the one Spirit we
were all baptized into one body—Jews or
Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all
made to drink of one Spirit.

14 Indeed, the body does not consist
of one member but of many. 15 If the foot
would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do
not belong to the body," that would not
make it any less a part of the body. 16 And
if the ear would say, "Because I am not an
eye, I do not belong to the body," that
would not make it any less a part of the
body. 17 If the whole body were an eye,
where would the hearing be? If the whole
body were hearing, where would the
sense of smell be? 18 But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each
one of them, as he chose. 19 If all were a
single member, where would the body be?
20 As it is, there are many members, yet
one body. 21 The eye cannot say to the
hand, "I have no need of you," nor again
the head to the feet, "I have no need of
you." 22 On the contrary, the members of
the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 and those members of the
body that we think less honorable we
clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with
greater respect; 24 whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But
God has so arranged the body, giving the
greater honor to the inferior member,
25 that there may be no dissension within
the body, but the members may have the
same care for one another. 26 If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if
one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

27 Now you are the body of Christ
and individually members of it. 28 And
God has appointed in the church first
apostles, second prophets, third teachers;
then deeds of power, then gifts of heal-

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same word is properly translated as "languages." *Interpretation of tongues.* See 14.5, 13, 26–28. **12.11** *Activated.* See 12.6.

12.12–31 Paul now introduces (12.12–13) and elaborates (12.14–31) his metaphor of the church as Christ's body. Along with ch. 13, this provides a foundation for the more specific counsels that follow in ch. 14. **12.12–13** Like certain other ancient writers, Paul regards the human *body* as illustrating the point that unity and diversity are not incompatible (see also 12.14–16). Applying this to the church, conceived as Christ's "body" (see 12.27), he alludes to an early Christian affirmation about the meaning of baptism into Christ; see also Gal 3.27–28; Col 3.11. *Jews or Greeks.* See 7.18–19; also 1.22, 24. *Slaves or free.* See 7.21–23. *Made to drink of one Spirit* suggests that new believers become suffused with the Spirit at their baptism. **12.14–16** Paul stresses the diversity, thus interdependence of the body's members; see also 12.12, 20, 27; Rom 12.4–5; Eph 4.25; 5.30. **12.17–21** The body's diversity in unity is God's own doing (see also 12.24, 28; 15.38). **12.22** *The members . . . that seem to be weaker,* probably an allusion to the vulnerable but vital internal organs of a human body, thus by analogy the most vulnerable yet vital members of a Christian congregation. See also 8.7, 9–12; 9.22; 1 Thess 5.14. **12.23** *Less honorable . . . less respectable members,* the sexual organs, which in many cultures are covered to avoid shame (see Gen 3.7–10); by analogy the members of lower standing in society who are nonetheless important to the congregation. **12.24** *More respectable members,* the parts of the body left uncovered, by analogy the congregational members of higher standing in society. *The inferior member,* perhaps better translated as "the needy member," which would include the "weaker," the "less honorable," and the "less respectable." **12.26** Paul's conception of Christian community as sharing in the sufferings (e.g., 2 Cor 1.7; 11.28–29) and joys (e.g., 2 Cor 2.3; 7.13) of others departs from the ancient Greek and Roman ideal of dispassionate self-sufficiency; see also Rom 12.15; 15.1; Gal 6.2. **12.27** This description of the Corinthian church as *the body of Christ* makes explicit what is already implicit in 1.13; 6.15; 10.17; see 12.12–13; also Rom 12.4–5. The metaphor is developed further in Colossians (e.g., 1.18, 24; 2.19; 3.15) and Ephesians (e.g., 4.4, 12; 5.23, 29–30). **12.28** See also the list of gifts in 12.8–10. *Apostles.* See 1.1. *Teachers.* See 4.17; also Acts 13.1; Rom 12.7. *Deeds of power,* miracles, as in 12.10, 29. *Assistance* perhaps refers to helpful deeds in general (see Rom 12.8; also 1 Tim 5.10). *Leadership.* The same Greek term

ing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30 Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? 31 But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

The Gift of Love

13 If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 3 If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast,[f] but do not have love, I gain nothing.

4 Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant 5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; 6 it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. 7 It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

8 Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. 9 For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; 10 but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. 11 When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. 12 For now we see in a mirror, dimly,[g] but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. 13 And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

Gifts of Prophecy and Tongues

14 Pursue love and strive for the spiritual gifts, and especially that you may prophesy. 2 For those who speak in a tongue do not speak to other people but to God; for nobody understands

f Other ancient authorities read *body to be burned*
g Gk *in a riddle*

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is used in the Septuagint to refer to offering wise counsel (Prov 1.5; 11.14; 24.6). **12.30** *Do all interpret?* alludes to those who are able to interpret tongues; see 14.5, 13, 26–28. **12.31** *The greater gifts* are, in Paul's view, those that build up the congregation; see 14.4–5. *A still more excellent way* than any spiritual gift is the kind of love described in ch. 13.

13.1–13 This chapter has been introduced by the last sentence of ch. 12. Although there is nothing explicitly theological here, Paul seems to be presupposing what he has already said about love in 8.1–3. Thus, along with ch. 12 this chapter lays the theological foundation for the counsels in ch. 14. **13.1** *I* in this chapter can be interpreted either as "anyone" or as Paul himself. If the latter, the apostle is holding up his own situation as exemplary. *The tongues of mortals and of angels.* The whole phrase may refer to the ecstatic utterance of those who speak in tongues, or else a distinction is intended between ordinary speech and tongues ("angelic" speech). **13.2** *Mysteries.* See 4.1; 14.2. *Faith . . . to remove mountains.* See 12.9; also Mt 17.20; Mk 11.22–23; also Isa 54.10. **13.3** On *giving away . . . possessions,* see Mt 6.2. Elsewhere Paul *boasts* in his weaknesses and sufferings; see 2 Cor 11.30; 12.5, 9–10. **13.4–7** Paul's description of love's way (12.31) matches both his understanding of God's love as disclosed in Christ (Rom 5.6, 8; 15.3, 7–8; 2 Cor 8.9; Phil 2.6–11) and his understanding of what constitutes appropriate conduct for those who are in Christ (10.24, 32–33; Rom 15.1–2; 2 Cor 5.14–15; Phil 2.3–4). See also Rom 12.9–21; 13.8–10; Gal 5.13–14. **13.8–10** In emphasizing the limitations of *prophecies, tongues,* and *knowledge,* Paul seeks to correct the Corinthians' inflated claims about these; see also 8.1; 13.2, 12–13. **13.10** *When the complete comes,* an allusion to the promised eschatological fulfillment of salvation (see 1.7–8). **13.11** *I.* See note on 13.1. *Childish ways.* See also 3.1–4; 14.20. **13.12** *Now . . . then* distinguishes the present age from the age to come. Ancient *mirrors* were made of bronze, and those of Corinthian manufacture were noted for their excellence. The word translated *dimly* perhaps refers to the indirect, thus partial view that one has of a mirrored object; see also 2 Cor 5.7. *As I have been fully known,* by God; see 8.3; Gal 4.9. **13.13** *Faith, hope, and love.* This triad is echoed in Gal 5.5–6; Col 1.4–5; 1 Thess 1.3; 5.8; see also Wis 3.4, 9.

14.1–25 The instructions about spiritual gifts offered in this chapter are based on what has been said in ch. 12 about Christ's body and in 8.1–3; ch. 13 about love. **14.1** Because *love* is what matters most (ch. 13), those *spiritual gifts* (see 12.1) that build up the congregation are to be par-

them, since they are speaking mysteries in
the Spirit. 3 On the other hand, those who
prophesy speak to other people for their
upbuilding and encouragement and con-
solation. 4 Those who speak in a tongue
build up themselves, but those who
prophesy build up the church. 5 Now I
would like all of you to speak in tongues,
but even more to prophesy. One who
prophesies is greater than one who speaks
in tongues, unless someone interprets, so
that the church may be built up.

6 Now, brothers and sisters,[h] if I
come to you speaking in tongues, how will
I benefit you unless I speak to you in
some revelation or knowledge or proph-
ecy or teaching? 7 It is the same way with
lifeless instruments that produce sound,
such as the flute or the harp. If they do
not give distinct notes, how will anyone
know what is being played? 8 And if the
bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will
get ready for battle? 9 So with yourselves;
if in a tongue you utter speech that is not
intelligible, how will anyone know what is
being said? For you will be speaking into
the air. 10 There are doubtless many dif-
ferent kinds of sounds in the world, and
nothing is without sound. 11 If then I do
not know the meaning of a sound, I will
be a foreigner to the speaker and the
speaker a foreigner to me. 12 So with
yourselves; since you are eager for spiri-
tual gifts, strive to excel in them for build-
ing up the church.

13 Therefore, one who speaks in a
tongue should pray for the power to in-
terpret. 14 For if I pray in a tongue, my
spirit prays but my mind is unproductive.
15 What should I do then? I will pray with
the spirit, but I will pray with the mind
also; I will sing praise with the spirit, but I
will sing praise with the mind also. 16 Oth-
erwise, if you say a blessing with the spirit,
how can anyone in the position of an out-
sider say the "Amen" to your thanksgiv-
ing, since the outsider does not know
what you are saying? 17 For you may give
thanks well enough, but the other person
is not built up. 18 I thank God that I speak
in tongues more than all of you; 19 never-
theless, in church I would rather speak
five words with my mind, in order to in-
struct others also, than ten thousand
words in a tongue.

20 Brothers and sisters,[h] do not be
children in your thinking; rather, be in-
fants in evil, but in thinking be adults.
21 In the law it is written,

"By people of strange tongues
and by the lips of foreigners
I will speak to this people;
yet even then they will not
listen to me,"

says the Lord. 22 Tongues, then, are a sign
not for believers but for unbelievers,
while prophecy is not for unbelievers but
for believers. 23 If, therefore, the whole
church comes together and all speak in
tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers en-
ter, will they not say that you are out of
your mind? 24 But if all prophesy, an un-
believer or outsider who enters is re-
proved by all and called to account by all.
25 After the secrets of the unbeliever's
heart are disclosed, that person will bow
down before God and worship him, de-
claring, "God is really among you."

Orderly Worship

26 What should be done then, my
friends?[h] When you come together, each

h Gk *brothers*

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ticularly valued (14.2–5); see 8.1; 14.12, 26. **14.2** *Mysteries.* See 4.1; 13.2. **14.5** *Even more to prophesy.* See also Num 11.29. *Interprets.* See 14.26–28. **14.9** See 14.2–5. **14.12** *Strive to excel.* See also 12.31; 14.1–5. **14.13** *The power to interpret,* a paraphrase of the Greek, perhaps better "the gift to interpret" (see 12.10, 30). **14.15** *With the spirit . . . with the mind* contrasts ordinary, intelligible speech with ecstatic utterances; see also Eph 5.18–19. **14.16** *Outsider.* Whether Paul means a nonbeliever or another Christian is unclear; see also 14.23–24. *The "Amen,"* the traditional congregational response to prayer, whereby it is affirmed; see also 2 Cor 1.20. **14.20** *Do not be children.* See also 3.1–4; 13.11. **14.21** *"By people . . . to me,"* Isa 28.11–12. **14.22** *Tongues . . . are . . . for unbelievers . . . prophecy is . . . for believers,* evidently because tongues do not edify while prophesying does (see 14.23–25), but the exact point is unclear and scholarly interpretations differ. **14.23** *Outsiders or unbelievers.* Whether Paul is using these terms synonymously is uncertain; see also 14.16. **14.25** *Secrets . . . disclosed.* See also 4.5; 2 Cor 4.2. *Bow down . . . and worship.* See Isa 45.14. *"God is really among you."* See Zech 8.23.

14.26–40 Paul gives directives about what should happen when the congregation is assembled for worship. **14.26** *Hymn,* lit. "psalm." *Lesson,* lit. "teaching" (probably not a "lesson" from scripture). *Revelation . . . tongue . . . interpretation.*

one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a
tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things
be done for building up. 27 If anyone
speaks in a tongue, let there be only two
or at most three, and each in turn; and let
one interpret. 28 But if there is no one to
interpret, let them be silent in church and
speak to themselves and to God. 29 Let two
or three prophets speak, and let the oth-
ers weigh what is said. 30 If a revelation is
made to someone else sitting nearby, let
the first person be silent. 31 For you can all
prophesy one by one, so that all may learn
and all be encouraged. 32 And the spirits
of prophets are subject to the prophets,
33 for God is a God not of disorder but of
peace.

(As in all the churches of the saints,
34 women should be silent in the churches.
For they are not permitted to speak, but
should be subordinate, as the law also
says. 35 If there is anything they desire to
know, let them ask their husbands at
home. For it is shameful for a woman to
speak in church.[i] 36 Or did the word of
God originate with you? Or are you the
only ones it has reached?)

37 Anyone who claims to be a
prophet, or to have spiritual powers, must
acknowledge that what I am writing to
you is a command of the Lord. 38 Anyone
who does not recognize this is not to be
recognized. 39 So, my friends,[j] be eager
to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking
in tongues; 40 but all things should be
done decently and in order.

The Resurrection of Christ

15 Now I would remind you, broth-
ers and sisters,[k] of the good
news[l] that I proclaimed to you, which
you in turn received, in which also you
stand, 2 through which also you are being
saved, if you hold firmly to the message
that I proclaimed to you—unless you
have come to believe in vain.

3 For I handed on to you as of first
importance what I in turn had received:
that Christ died for our sins in accordance
with the scriptures, 4 and that he was bur-
ied, and that he was raised on the third
day in accordance with the scriptures,
5 and that he appeared to Cephas, then to
the twelve. 6 Then he appeared to more
than five hundred brothers and sisters[k]
at one time, most of whom are still alive,
though some have died.[m] 7 Then he ap-
peared to James, then to all the apostles.
8 Last of all, as to one untimely born, he
appeared also to me. 9 For I am the least

i Other ancient authorities put verses 34-35 after verse 40 *j* Gk *my brothers* *k* Gk *brothers* *l* Or *gospel* *m* Gk *fallen asleep*

See 12.7–10. *Let all things be done for building up,* another way of appealing for love (see 14.1; 16.14); see also 10.23; 14.12; Rom 14.19; 15.2; 2 Cor 12.19; Eph 4.12; 1 Thess 5.11. **14.32** *The spirits of prophets.* See also Rev 22.6. Every prophet's utterance is subject to critical analysis and evaluation by other prophets; see also 14.29; 1 Thess 5.19–21. **14.33** *God ... of peace.* See also Rom 15.33; 16.20; 2 Cor 13.11; Phil 4.9; 1 Thess 5.23; 2 Thess 3.16; Heb 13.20. *As in all the churches of the saints.* Some scholars take this as the closing phrase of the preceding sentence. **14.34–35** Some scholars regard the instruction for women to be silent in churches as a later, non-Pauline addition to the Letter, more in keeping with the viewpoint of the Pastoral Letters (see 1 Tim 2.11–12; Titus 2.5) than of the certainly Pauline Letters. See also Eph 5.22–24; Col 3.18; 1 Pet 3.1–6. **14.36** Some scholars include this verse in the non-Pauline addition. **14.37** *A command of the Lord,* not a reference to some specific saying of Jesus (as in 7.10; 9.14), but to all that Paul has said, as an apostle of Christ, about spiritual gifts. **14.38** *Not to be recognized.* See also Mt 7.23; 25.12; Mk 8.38.

15.1–11 Here Paul lays the theological foundation for the last major topic of the Letter, the resurrection of the dead (see 15.12). **15.3** *Handed on ... received* identifies what follows (at least through v. 5) as the church's tradition (see also 11.23). *Christ died for our sins.* See also Rom 5.8; Gal 1.4; 1 Thess 5.10. *The scriptures,* what would later be called the Old Testament. Certain passages were interpreted as references to Christ's death, e.g., Ps 69.9 (see Rom 15.3); Isa 53.4–12 (see 1 Pet 2.22–25). **15.4** *Raised on the third day.* See Mt 16.21. *The scriptures.* It is uncertain what passage(s) may be in mind (Hos 6.2? Jon 1.17?). **15.5** *Cephas,* Peter (as in 1.12); see Lk 24.34. *The twelve* designates Jesus' disciples (even after Judas's defection); see Lk 24.36; Jn 20.19. **15.6** *More than five hundred,* perhaps on some occasion like that recounted in Acts 2.1–42. **15.7** *James,* Jesus' brother; see Mk 6.3; Gal 1.19. *All the apostles,* a more inclusive group than the Twelve. **15.8** *Untimely born* refers to some kind of unusual birth and may have been first used about Paul's conversion by his critics. *Appeared also to me,* at the apostle's conversion and call; see 9.1; Gal 1.15–16; Acts 9.3–6. **15.9** *Persecuted.* See

of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of
God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what
I am, and his grace toward me has not
been in vain. On the contrary, I worked
harder than any of them—though it was
not I, but the grace of God that is with
me. 11 Whether then it was I or they, so we
proclaim and so you have come to believe.

The Resurrection of the Dead

12 Now if Christ is proclaimed as
raised from the dead, how can some of
you say there is no resurrection of the
dead? 13 If there is no resurrection of the
dead, then Christ has not been raised;
14 and if Christ has not been raised, then
our proclamation has been in vain and
your faith has been in vain. 15 We are even
found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that he raised
Christ—whom he did not raise if it is true
that the dead are not raised. 16 For if the
dead are not raised, then Christ has not
been raised. 17 If Christ has not been
raised, your faith is futile and you are still
in your sins. 18 Then those also who have
died[n] in Christ have perished. 19 If for
this life only we have hoped in Christ, we
are of all people most to be pitied.

20 But in fact Christ has been raised
from the dead, the first fruits of those
who have died.[n] 21 For since death came
through a human being, the resurrection
of the dead has also come through a human being; 22 for as all die in Adam, so all
will be made alive in Christ. 23 But each in
his own order: Christ the first fruits, then
at his coming those who belong to Christ.
24 Then comes the end,[o] when he hands
over the kingdom to God the Father, after
he has destroyed every ruler and every
authority and power. 25 For he must reign
until he has put all his enemies under his
feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is
death. 27 For "God[p] has put all things in
subjection under his feet." But when it
says, "All things are put in subjection," it
is plain that this does not include the one
who put all things in subjection under him.
28 When all things are subjected to him,
then the Son himself will also be subjected
to the one who put all things in subjection
under him, so that God may be all in all.

29 Otherwise, what will those people
do who receive baptism on behalf of the
dead? If the dead are not raised at all,
why are people baptized on their behalf?

30 And why are we putting ourselves
in danger every hour? 31 I die every day!
That is as certain, brothers and sisters,[q]
as my boasting of you—a boast that I
make in Christ Jesus our Lord. 32 If with
merely human hopes I fought with wild
animals at Ephesus, what would I have
gained by it? If the dead are not raised,

"Let us eat and drink,
for tomorrow we die."

33 Do not be deceived:

"Bad company ruins good
morals."

n Gk *fallen asleep* *o* Or *Then come the rest*
p Gk *he* *q* Gk *brothers*

Gal 1.13; Phil 3.6; Acts 8.3. **15.10** *The grace of God.* See 3.10.

15.12–34 Paul argues that those who do not hope for the resurrection of the dead are in effect denying Christ's own resurrection and thus the gospel on which their faith rests (see 15.1–11). **15.12** *Some of you.* If Paul knows who or how many, he never says; he could mean "most." **15.13** See also 15.15–16; the connection between Christ's resurrection and the resurrection of the dead is explained in 15.20 (see also Rom 8.11). **15.15** *Misrepresenting God.* See also 1 Jn 5.10. *God . . . raised Christ.* See 6.14. **15.17** *Sins.* See 15.3. **15.18** *Those . . . who have died in Christ* seems to suggest that of all those who will have died before Christ's return, only the Christians will be resurrected (but some scholars disagree); see also 15.23. **15.19** This verse may echo a Jewish proverb; see *2 Baruch* 21.13. **15.20** In ancient Israel the *first fruits*, the earliest produce of a season's harvest, were dedicated to God; see Ex 23.19. **15.21–22** On the comparison of *Adam* and *Christ*, see also 15.45–49; Rom 5.12–21. **15.23** *At his coming.* See 1.7–8; 1 Thess 4.13–17. **15.24** *The kingdom.* See 4.20; 15.50. *Every ruler . . . authority . . . power*, both earthly and heavenly; see also Rom 8.38; Eph 1.21; Col 2.10, 15; 1 Pet 3.22. **15.25** See Ps 110.1. **15.26** On the victory over *death*, see also 15.54–55. **15.27** Ps 8.6. **15.28** *The Son himself will also be subjected.* See also 3.23; 11.3. **15.29** Why the Corinthians practiced this *baptism on behalf of the dead* is unknown; see also 2 Macc 12.44–45. **15.30** For examples of this *danger*, see 4.11–13. **15.32** *Wild animals at Ephesus*, a figure of speech, perhaps alluding to the troubles mentioned in 2 Cor 1.8–9; see also 16.8–9. *"Let us . . . we die,"* Isa 22.13. **15.33** A

34 Come to a sober and right mind, and
sin no more; for some people have no
knowledge of God. I say this to your
shame.

The Resurrection Body

35 But someone will ask, "How are the
dead raised? With what kind of body do
they come?" 36 Fool! What you sow does
not come to life unless it dies. 37 And as
for what you sow, you do not sow the
body that is to be, but a bare seed, per-
haps of wheat or of some other grain.
38 But God gives it a body as he has cho-
sen, and to each kind of seed its own
body. 39 Not all flesh is alike, but there is
one flesh for human beings, another for
animals, another for birds, and another
for fish. 40 There are both heavenly bod-
ies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the
heavenly is one thing, and that of the
earthly is another. 41 There is one glory of
the sun, and another glory of the moon,
and another glory of the stars; indeed,
star differs from star in glory.

42 So it is with the resurrection of the
dead. What is sown is perishable, what is
raised is imperishable. 43 It is sown in dis-
honor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in
weakness, it is raised in power. 44 It is
sown a physical body, it is raised a spiri-
tual body. If there is a physical body,
there is also a spiritual body. 45 Thus it is
written, "The first man, Adam, became a
living being"; the last Adam became a life-
giving spirit. 46 But it is not the spiritual
that is first, but the physical, and then the
spiritual. 47 The first man was from the
earth, a man of dust; the second man is[r]
from heaven. 48 As was the man of dust,
so are those who are of the dust; and
as is the man of heaven, so are those
who are of heaven. 49 Just as we have
borne the image of the man of dust, we
will[s] also bear the image of the man of
heaven.

50 What I am saying, brothers and sis-
ters,[t] is this: flesh and blood cannot in-
herit the kingdom of God, nor does the
perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Lis-
ten, I will tell you a mystery! We will not
all die,[u] but we will all be changed, 52 in a
moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the
last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound,
and the dead will be raised imperishable,
and we will be changed. 53 For this perish-
able body must put on imperishability,
and this mortal body must put on immor-
tality. 54 When this perishable body puts
on imperishability, and this mortal body
puts on immortality, then the saying that
is written will be fulfilled:

"Death has been swallowed up
in victory."
55 "Where, O death, is your victory?
Where, O death, is your sting?"

56 The sting of death is sin, and the power
of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God,
who gives us the victory through our Lord
Jesus Christ.

58 Therefore, my beloved,[v] be stead-
fast, immovable, always excelling in the
work of the Lord, because you know that
in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

r Other ancient authorities add *the Lord*
s Other ancient authorities read *let us*
t Gk *brothers* u Gk *fall asleep* v Gk *beloved brothers*

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proverbial saying, deriving from a lost play by the Athenian writer Menander (died early third century B.C.E.). **15.34** This verse epitomizes all of the appeals in this Letter.

15.35–58 Paul explains that at Christ's return the dead will be resurrected with "spiritual" bodies and that those who have not died will also be transformed. **15.38–39** See Gen 1.11–12, 20–25. **15.40–41** See Gen 1.14–18. **15.45** *"Adam became a living being,"* Gen 2.7. *The last Adam,* Christ; see 15.21–22. **15.49** *Image.* See 11.7; Gen 1.26–27; 5.3; also Rom 8.29; 2 Cor 3.18; 4.4. **15.50** *Flesh and blood,* the physical body; see 15.44. *Kingdom of God.* See 4.20; 15.24. **15.51** *We will not all die.* Paul believes that he and some other Christians will survive until Christ's return; see also 1 Thess 4.15. **15.52** *The last trumpet.* See Mt 24.31; 1 Thess 4.16; Rev 8.2; also Isa 27.13. *We will be changed.* See also Phil 3.21; *2 Baruch* 51.1–6. **15.53** *Put on immortality.* See also 2 Cor 5.4. **15.54** *"Death . . . victory,"* Isa 25.7. **15.55** Hos 13.14. **15.56** *Death* is understood to be the consequence of Adam's (humanity's) *sin* (15.21–22; Rom 5.12; see Gen 2.17), which is brought to life by *the law* (Rom 5.13; 7.9–13). **15.57** *Thanks be to God.* See also Rom 7.25; 2 Cor 2.14; 9.15. **15.58** *The work of the Lord,* activities on behalf of the gospel; see also 16.10, 16.

The Collection for the Saints

16 Now concerning the collection
for the saints: you should follow
the directions I gave to the churches of
Galatia. 2 On the first day of every week,
each of you is to put aside and save what-
ever extra you earn, so that collections
need not be taken when I come. 3 And
when I arrive, I will send any whom you
approve with letters to take your gift to
Jerusalem. 4 If it seems advisable that I
should go also, they will accompany me.

Plans for Travel

5 I will visit you after passing through
Macedonia—for I intend to pass through
Macedonia— 6 and perhaps I will stay
with you or even spend the winter, so that
you may send me on my way, wherever I
go. 7 I do not want to see you now just in
passing, for I hope to spend some time
with you, if the Lord permits. 8 But I will
stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, 9 for a
wide door for effective work has opened
to me, and there are many adversaries.
10 If Timothy comes, see that he has
nothing to fear among you, for he is do-
ing the work of the Lord just as I am;
11 therefore let no one despise him. Send
him on his way in peace, so that he may
come to me; for I am expecting him with
the brothers.
12 Now concerning our brother Apol-
los, I strongly urged him to visit you with
the other brothers, but he was not at all
willing[w] to come now. He will come when
he has the opportunity.

Final Messages and Greetings

13 Keep alert, stand firm in your
faith, be courageous, be strong. 14 Let all
that you do be done in love.
15 Now, brothers and sisters,[x] you
know that members of the household of
Stephanas were the first converts in
Achaia, and they have devoted themselves
to the service of the saints; 16 I urge you to
put yourselves at the service of such peo-
ple, and of everyone who works and toils
with them. 17 I rejoice at the coming of
Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus,
because they have made up for your ab-
sence; 18 for they refreshed my spirit as
well as yours. So give recognition to such
persons.
19 The churches of Asia send greet-
ings. Aquila and Prisca, together with the
church in their house, greet you warmly
in the Lord. 20 All the brothers and sis-
ters[x] send greetings. Greet one another
with a holy kiss.

21 I, Paul, write this greeting with my
own hand. 22 Let anyone be accursed who
has no love for the Lord. Our Lord,
come![y] 23 The grace of the Lord Jesus be
with you. 24 My love be with all of you in
Christ Jesus.[z]

w Or *it was not at all God's will for him*
x Gk *brothers* *y* Gk *Marana tha.* These Aramaic words can also be read *Maran atha,* meaning *Our Lord has come* *z* Other ancient authorities add *Amen*

16.1–4 These instructions presuppose that the Corinthians already know about Paul's collection project. **16.1** *Now concerning.* See note on 8.1. *The collection for the saints,* a fund for the Jerusalem church to which Paul had committed himself and his congregations; see Gal 2.10; also 2 Cor 8, 9. **16.3–4** In the end, Paul does take the Corinthians' *gift to Jerusalem*; see Rom 15.25–29.

16.5–12 Paul informs the Corinthians of his travel plans and of the whereabouts of two others known to them. **16.5** *Macedonia,* the Roman province of which Thessalonica was the capital. **16.8** *Ephesus,* the capital city of the Roman province of Asia (see 16.19). *Pentecost,* a Jewish festival, also observed by Christians, which took place each spring some weeks after Passover (see 2 Macc 12.32; Acts 2.1). **16.10** *If Timothy comes* probably means "whenever Timothy arrives," since he has been sent; see 4.17. **16.11** Whether *the brothers* are with Timothy or Paul is unclear. If the latter, they are perhaps the three named in 16.17. **16.12** *Now concerning.* See note on 8.1. *Apollos.* See 1.12. *The other brothers,* either persons traveling with Timothy or those named in 16.17.

16.13–24 Paul's Letters generally close in this way. **16.14** This appeal is implicit throughout the Letter (see 12.31–14.1). **16.15** *Stephanas.* See 1.16; 16.17. *Achaia.* See Introduction. *Saints.* See 1.2. **16.17–18** *Fortunatus and Achaicus,* like Stephanas, were probably Corinthians. **16.19** *Asia.* See note on 16.8. *Aquila and Prisca,* two of Paul's closest associates; see Acts 18.1–3; Rom 16.3–5. **16.20** *Holy kiss,* a form of Christian greeting; see also Rom 16.16; 1 Thess 5.26; 1 Pet 5.14. **16.21** *With my own hand.* The earlier portion of the letter was dictated to a secretary; see also Gal 6.11; Col 4.18; 2 Thess 3.17; Philem 19. **16.22** *Accursed.* See also Rom 9.3; Gal 1.8–9. *Our Lord, come!* See also Rev 22.20.

THE SECOND LETTER OF PAUL TO THE

CORINTHIANS

Stylistic Features

OF ALL PAUL'S LETTERS, 2 Corinthians is perhaps the most difficult to interpret. One contributing factor is the seemingly disjointed nature of its argument. 2 Cor 6.14–7.1, e.g., seems to be a digression from an appeal that begins in 6.11–13 and resumes in 7.2–4. Again, the narration of Paul's journey from Asia Minor to Macedonia (2.12–13) is interrupted, only to resume five chapters later (7.5). In addition, the tone of the Letter varies widely. Ch. 7, e.g., is joyful and conciliatory, whereas chs. 10–13 are ironic and argumentative. Because of the digressions, abrupt transitions, and differences in tone, many scholars have argued that 2 Corinthians is composed of several fragments. Certainly it is a mixed Letter, containing different styles and various elements such as appeals, exhortations, rebukes, threats, attacks, counterattacks, self-defense, self-praise, and irony.

Nature and Sequence of the Corinthian Correspondence

After Paul established the church at Corinth, he carried on an extensive correspondence with the Christians in that city. They wrote him at least once (1 Cor 7.1), and he wrote them no less than four times. His first letter (Letter A) is mentioned in 1 Cor 5.9; the second (Letter B) is our 1 Corinthians, written from Ephesus (1 Cor 16.8). About the same time as Letter B, Paul sent his co-worker Timothy to Corinth (1 Cor 4.17; 16.10–11), and shortly after this letter a group of Jewish-Christian missionaries (2 Cor 11.22–23) arrived in Corinth and began to criticize the apostle. Timothy apparently returned to Ephesus with a troubling report about the church, which prompted Paul to change his plans and to travel directly to Corinth. He later described this second visit as "painful," because some individual there wronged him (2 Cor 2.1–11; 7.12). Subsequent to this second visit and in lieu of a third visit, Paul wrote a grieving letter, a "letter of tears" (2 Cor 1.23–2.4; 7.5–11). It was written either in Macedonia immediately after Paul's departure from Corinth (2 Cor 1.16) or upon his return to Ephesus. Instead of sending Timothy back to Corinth with this letter, Paul apparently sent Titus, another co-worker.

There are four major theories about the nature and sequence of the correspondence following Timothy's return to Ephesus. According to the first and simplest theory, the "letter of tears" is Paul's third letter to Corinth (Letter C) and has been lost. 2 Corinthians as a whole is Paul's fourth letter (Letter D). Written from Macedonia after Titus's return, it contains no fragments of earlier letters. Chs. 10–13, however, may have been written considerably later than chs. 1–9 and after Paul received new and troubling information about the situation in Corinth.

The second theory is only slightly more complicated than the first. It too assumes that Letter C is the lost "letter of tears." It differs from the first by dividing 2 Corinthians into two originally independent letters. Paul's fourth letter (Letter D) is contained in chs. 1–9, and a fifth, later letter (Letter E) is partially preserved in chs. 10–13. Letters D and E both were written in Macedonia, with Letter D occasioned by Titus's optimistic report (7.5–16) and Letter E by a later, more pessimistic assessment of the state of affairs in the Corinthian church.

The third theory, like the first two, maintains that the "letter of tears" is Paul's third letter (Letter C). It differs by identifying Letter C with chs. 10–13 and by usually assigning its place of composition to Ephesus (though Macedonia is favored in some reconstructions). Paul's fourth letter (Letter D) is equivalent to chs. 1–9, with Titus's report its occasion and Macedonia its place of composition. By making chs. 10–13 earlier than chs. 1–9, the third theory thus reverses the second theory's chronological sequence.

The fourth theory is the most complex. Paul's third letter to Corinth (Letter C) is not the "letter of tears," but a letter (partially preserved in 2.14–6.13; 7.2–4) in which Paul defends himself against the verbal attacks of his opponents in Corinth. This letter, which preceded Paul's second visit to Corinth, was followed by another defensive letter (Letter D), partially preserved in chs. 10–13, which is probably, though not necessarily, the "letter of tears." Letters C and D were both composed in Ephesus. Paul's fifth letter (Letter E), occasioned by Titus's glowing report, is his "letter of reconciliation" with the Corinthian church. Written in Macedonia and completely preserved in 1.1–2.13; 7.5–16; 13.11–13, it provides the editorial frame for the entire canonical Letter. Chs. 8 and 9 (Letters F and G, respectively), which deal with the collection for the Jerusalem church, are chronologically the last of Paul's correspondence with the Christians of Achaia, though one of the chapters (probably 8) may originally have been attached to the "letter of reconciliation" (Letter E).

Date and Occasion of the Letter(s)

The arrival of Paul's opponents in Corinth, his disastrous second visit to the city, his estrangement from part of the Corinthian church, the continuing problem of sin and impenitence in Corinth (12.20–21), the "letter of tears," the need for full reconciliation with both the church as a whole and Paul's offender (2.5–11; 7.12), Titus's glowing report, and possibly other, more negative reports provide the occasion for 2 Corinthians, either in part or as a whole. According to all four

reconstructions, Paul's later correspondence with Corinth belongs to the mid-50s of the first century (ca. 54–56 C.E.). This places it in the most theologically productive period of Paul's life, between 1 Thessalonians and Romans. Unquestionably Paul's interactions with the Corinthian church helped give both form and substance to his whole theology. *John T. Fitzgerald*

Salutation

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by
the will of God, and Timothy our
brother,
To the church of God that is in Cor-
inth, including all the saints throughout
Achaia:
2 Grace to you and peace from God
our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul's Blessing After Affliction

3 Blessed be the God and Father of
our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mer-
cies and the God of all consolation, 4 who
consoles us in all our affliction, so that we
may be able to console those who are in
any affliction with the consolation with
which we ourselves are consoled by God.
5 For just as the sufferings of Christ are
abundant for us, so also our consolation is
abundant through Christ. 6 If we are be-
ing afflicted, it is for your consolation and
salvation; if we are being consoled, it is for
your consolation, which you experience
when you patiently endure the same suf-
ferings that we are also suffering. 7 Our
hope for you is unshaken; for we know
that as you share in our sufferings, so also
you share in our consolation.
8 We do not want you to be unaware,
brothers and sisters,[a] of the affliction we
experienced in Asia; for we were so ut-
terly, unbearably crushed that we de-
spaired of life itself. 9 Indeed, we felt that
we had received the sentence of death so
that we would rely not on ourselves but on
God who raises the dead. 10 He who res-
cued us from so deadly a peril will con-
tinue to rescue us; on him we have set our
hope that he will rescue us again, 11 as you

a Gk *brothers*

1.1–2 The form of the salutation follows ancient letter-writing practice. **1.1** The co-sender of the letter is Paul's protégé *Timothy*, who was with him when the church was established at Corinth (Acts 18.5; 2 Cor 1.19) and later returned there as his intermediary (Acts 19.22; 1 Cor 4.17; 16.10–11). *Church of God* collectively designates several groups of believers who met in the homes of various members (see 1 Cor 16.19). *Saints*, lit. "holy ones," a popular early designation of Christians as consecrated to God (see 1 Cor 1.2; 6.1–2). Since 27 B.C.E., *Corinth* had served as the capital of the Roman senatorial province of *Achaia*.

1.3–11 Instead of his customary thanksgiving (see Rom 1.8–15; 1 Cor 1.4–9), Paul uses here a benediction derived from ancient Jewish liturgical formulas such as "blessed be the Lord" (see Gen 24.26–27; see also Eph 1.3–14; 1 Pet 1.3–9). **1.3** *Father of mercies*. See Ps 103.13; Lk 6.36; Rom 12.1. *God of all consolation*. See Rom 15.5. **1.4** *Affliction* and *consolation* are central themes both of the blessing and of the Letter as whole; see 1.3–8; 2.4; 4.8, 17; 6.4; 7.4–7; 8.2, 13. **1.5** *The sufferings of Christ* indicates not only the afflictions Christ himself experienced but also those his followers suffer in his name and on his behalf (4.10–11; Phil 3.10; 1 Pet 1.11; 4.13). **1.6** For Paul, divine consolation may occasionally take the form of deliverance from suffering (as in vv. 8–10), but it consists more fundamentally in the gift of divine power (4.7–9) that enables one to *endure* (see 6.4; Rom 5.3–5; 2 Thess 1.4; Rev 1.9) an abiding adverse circumstance (12.7–10). **1.7** *Our hope for you is unshaken*, one of several expressions of Paul's confidence in the Corinthians; see also 1.24; 7.4, 14, 16; 8.7. **1.8** *We do not want you to be unaware*, a disclosure formula frequently used by Paul to impart new or important information (see Rom 1.13; 11.25; 1 Cor 10.1; 12.1; 1 Thess 4.13). *Asia*, a Roman senatorial province located in Asia Minor. Nothing certain is known about the event Paul mentions; some conjecture that it was an otherwise unknown imprisonment in Ephesus during which he faced the possibility of execution (v. 9; see also Phil 1.12–26).

also join in helping us by your prayers, so
that many will give thanks on our[b] behalf
for the blessing granted us through the
prayers of many.

The Integrity of Paul's Conduct

12 Indeed, this is our boast, the testi-
mony of our conscience: we have behaved
in the world with frankness[c] and godly
sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the
grace of God—and all the more toward
you. 13 For we write you nothing other
than what you can read and also under-
stand; I hope you will understand until
the end— 14 as you have already under-
stood us in part—that on the day of the
Lord Jesus we are your boast even as you
are our boast.

The Postponement of Paul's Visit

15 Since I was sure of this, I wanted to
come to you first, so that you might have
a double favor;[d] 16 I wanted to visit you
on my way to Macedonia, and to come
back to you from Macedonia and have
you send me on to Judea. 17 Was I vacillat-
ing when I wanted to do this? Do I make
my plans according to ordinary human
standards,[e] ready to say "Yes, yes" and
"No, no" at the same time? 18 As surely as
God is faithful, our word to you has not
been "Yes and No." 19 For the Son of God,
Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among
you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not
"Yes and No"; but in him it is always
"Yes." 20 For in him every one of God's
promises is a "Yes." For this reason it is
through him that we say the "Amen," to
the glory of God. 21 But it is God who es-
tablishes us with you in Christ and has
anointed us, 22 by putting his seal on us

b Other ancient authorities read *your* *c* Other ancient authorities read *holiness* *d* Other ancient authorities read *pleasure* *e* Gk *according to the flesh*

1.12–14 Paul's personal integrity is a primary theme in 2 Corinthians. **1.12** The topic of Paul's *boast* or self-commendation is prominent in the Letters to Corinth; see 1 Cor 9.15; 2 Cor 3.1; 4.2; 5.12; 6.4; 10.8, 12–18; 11.10, 16–18, 30; 12.1, 5–6, 9, 11. The *conscience*, which plays an important role in the discussion of communal ethics in 1 Cor 8.7–13; 10.25–29, is invoked here in support of Paul's assertions about his own ethical conduct (see also Acts 23.1; 24.16; Rom 9.1; 2 Cor 4.2; 5.11). *Frankness.* The alternate reading "holiness" (see text note *c*) is preferred by many commentators. *Sincerity* is a term that Paul associates with "truthfulness" (see 1 Cor 5.8) and the divine (*godly*; see also 2 Cor 2.17). It thus stands in contrast to *earthly wisdom*, which uses duplicity and derives its power from rhetorical eloquence rather than the cross of Christ (see 1 Cor 1.17–25; 2.1–5). **1.13** *Until the end* may also be translated "fully," yielding a contrast between partial (v. 14) and complete (v. 13) understanding (see 1 Cor 13.12). **1.14** *The day of the Lord Jesus*, i.e., the Second Coming (Greek *parousia*); see Phil 2.16. Paul's goal in 2 Corinthians is reconciliation and restoration of mutual pride between himself and the church. For Paul's pride in the Corinthians (*you are our boast*), see also 1 Cor 15.31; 2 Cor 7.4, 14; 8.24; 9.2–3; for the Corinthians' pride in Paul (*we are your boast*), see also 5.12.

1.15–2.4 An explanation for Paul's decision to send the Corinthians a grieving letter rather than revisit them. **1.15–16** For Paul's various travel plans in regard to Corinth, see also 1 Cor 4.18–21; 11.34; 16.3–9; 2 Cor 9.4; 12.14; 13.1. **1.16** *Macedonia* was the Roman senatorial province where both Philippi and Thessalonica were located. *Send me on*, i.e., provide financial assistance for the journey (see Rom 15.24; 1 Cor 16.6, 11; Titus 3.13; 3 Jn 6–8). *Judea*, the southern part of Palestine, where Jerusalem was located. For this destination, see also Rom 15.25; 1 Cor 16.3. **1.17** To some, Paul's departure from his announced itinerary (see 2.1) suggested he was *vacillating*. As a result, they accused him of base motives by alleging that he made and changed his travel plans *according to ordinary human standards* (see text note *e*; 10.2). "*Yes . . . no.*" Similar language occurs in Mt 5.37; Jas 5.12. **1.18** *God is faithful.* The OT theme of divine fidelity (see Deut 7.9), which appears frequently in the NT (1 Cor 1.9; 10.13; 1 Thess 5.24), functions here as an oath to confirm Paul's testimony (see also 1.23). **1.19** *Silvanus* (1 Thess 1.1; 2 Thess 1.1; 1 Pet 5.12), also known as Silas, was a prophet and leader in the Jerusalem church (Acts 15.22, 32) who accompanied Paul on his so-called second missionary journey (Acts 15.40–18.22). Consequently, he was with Paul and *Timothy* (see 1.1) when the church was established at Corinth (Acts 18.5). In Greek, the three men are mentioned in the order of importance: Paul, Silvanus, Timothy. **1.20** *Amen*, a Jewish and Christian liturgical acclamation meaning "So let it be" uttered by the congregation in response to benedictions and thanksgivings (see 1 Cor 14.16; Gal 1.5; Phil 4.20). **1.22** *First installment.* The same commercial word in Greek is translated *guarantee* in 5.5 and "pledge" in Eph 1.14. The *Spirit*, whom believers receive at the time of conversion (see Gal 3.2–3), is the "down payment" that provides as-

and giving us his Spirit in our hearts as a
first installment.
23 But I call on God as witness against
me: it was to spare you that I did not
come again to Corinth. 24 I do not mean
to imply that we lord it over your faith;
rather, we are workers with you for your
joy, because you stand firm in the faith.
2 1 So I made up my mind not to make
you another painful visit. 2 For if I
cause you pain, who is there to make me
glad but the one whom I have pained?
3 And I wrote as I did, so that when I
came, I might not suffer pain from those
who should have made me rejoice; for I
am confident about all of you, that my joy
would be the joy of all of you. 4 For I
wrote you out of much distress and an-
guish of heart and with many tears, not to
cause you pain, but to let you know the
abundant love that I have for you.

Forgiveness for the Offender

5 But if anyone has caused pain, he
has caused it not to me, but to some extent
—not to exaggerate it—to all of you.
6 This punishment by the majority is
enough for such a person; 7 so now in-
stead you should forgive and console him,
so that he may not be overwhelmed by ex-
cessive sorrow. 8 So I urge you to reaffirm
your love for him. 9 I wrote for this rea-
son: to test you and to know whether you
are obedient in everything. 10 Anyone
whom you forgive, I also forgive. What I
have forgiven, if I have forgiven any-
thing, has been for your sake in the pres-
ence of Christ. 11 And we do this so that
we may not be outwitted by Satan; for we
are not ignorant of his designs.

Paul's Anxiety in Troas

12 When I came to Troas to proclaim
the good news of Christ, a door was
opened for me in the Lord; 13 but my
mind could not rest because I did not find
my brother Titus there. So I said farewell
to them and went on to Macedonia.

Paul in God's Triumphal Procession

14 But thanks be to God, who in
Christ always leads us in triumphal pro-
cession, and through us spreads in every

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surance that all God's saving promises (v. 20) will be fulfilled (see Rom 8.11; Eph 4.30). **1.23** For *God as witness* to Paul's oaths, see Rom 1.9; Phil 1.8; 1 Thess 2.5, 10. **1.24** Thematically, *joy* and pain (2.2) in 1.23–2.11 resume Paul's earlier discussion of affliction and consolation (1.3–11). *You stand firm in the faith.* See 1.7. **2.1** The *painful visit* was Paul's second trip to Corinth; the next visit will be his third (see 12.14, 21; 13.1). **2.3** *I wrote.* See also 2.4, 9; 7.8, 12. For hypotheses concerning this "letter of tears," see Introduction.

2.5–11 A major goal of Paul is the reconciliation of the person who mistreated him during his second visit. **2.5** *If anyone has caused pain* (see also 7.12). Both the identity of this individual and the details of his actions are unknown. Earlier critics normally identified him with the "incestuous" man of 1 Cor 5, whereas most modern interpreters see him as either another member of the Corinthian church or someone from outside of Corinth. **2.6** *Punishment,* or "strong moral rebuke." **2.7** *Forgive* (see also Eph 4.32; Col 3.13), so that the church's action may be redemptive rather than destructive (7.10). **2.9** To be *obedient* (see also 10.6) entails recognition of Paul's apostolic authority (10.8; 13.10). His later praise of the Corinthians' obedience (7.15) indicates that they passed this *test.* **2.11** *Satan* is frequently mentioned not only in Paul's Letters to Corinth (1 Cor 5.5; 7.5; 2 Cor 6.15; 11.14; 12.7) but also in those written from that city (Rom 16.20; 1 Thess 2.18; 2 Thess 2.9).

2.12–13 Paul's anxiety over the effect of the letter carried by Titus (2.4; see Introduction). **2.12** The seaport city of Alexandria *Troas* was a Roman colony located in the northwest corner of Asia Minor (see Acts 16.8, 11; 20.5–6; 2 Tim 4.13). *A door was opened,* a figurative expression indicating an opportunity for evangelization (see 1 Cor 16.9; Col 4.3; Rev 3.8). **2.13** *Titus,* like Silvanus and Timothy (1.19), was one of Paul's coworkers (7.6–7, 13–15; 8.6, 16–23; 12.18). A gentile Christian (Gal 2.3), he apparently was the bearer of the letter mentioned in 2.3–4, 9. *To Macedonia.* See 7.5 for the resumption of Paul's discussion of this journey.

2.14–17 In this opening section of a lengthy discussion of his ministry (2.14–6.10), Paul emphasizes his God-given competence as a minister of the new covenant (see also 4.1–6). For the view that v. 14 marks the beginning of an earlier Pauline apologetic letter, partially preserved in 2.14–6.13; 7.2–4, see Introduction. **2.14** *Thanks be to God.* See Rom 6.17; 7.25; 1 Cor 15.57; 2 Cor 8.16; 9.15. *Leads us in triumphal procession,* an allusion to the famous Roman victory parades in which prisoners of war were compelled to march (see also Col 2.15). *Fragrance* may allude to the use of incense in triumphal processions, to OT sacrificial practice (see Lev 1.9, 13; also Eph 5.2; Phil

place the fragrance that comes from
knowing him. 15 For we are the aroma of
Christ to God among those who are being
saved and among those who are perish-
ing; 16 to the one a fragrance from death
to death, to the other a fragrance from
life to life. Who is sufficient for these
things? 17 For we are not peddlers of
God's word like so many;[f] but in Christ
we speak as persons of sincerity, as per-
sons sent from God and standing in his
presence.

Ministers of the New Covenant

3 Are we beginning to commend our-
selves again? Surely we do not need,
as some do, letters of recommendation to
you or from you, do we? 2 You yourselves
are our letter, written on our[g] hearts, to
be known and read by all; 3 and you show
that you are a letter of Christ, prepared
by us, written not with ink but with the
Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of
stone but on tablets of human hearts.

4 Such is the confidence that we have
through Christ toward God. 5 Not that we
are competent of ourselves to claim any-
thing as coming from us; our competence
is from God, 6 who has made us compe-
tent to be ministers of a new covenant, not
of letter but of spirit; for the letter kills,
but the Spirit gives life.

7 Now if the ministry of death, chis-
eled in letters on stone tablets,[h] came in
glory so that the people of Israel could
not gaze at Moses' face because of the
glory of his face, a glory now set aside,
8 how much more will the ministry of the
Spirit come in glory? 9 For if there was
glory in the ministry of condemnation,
much more does the ministry of justifica-
tion abound in glory! 10 Indeed, what
once had glory has lost its glory because of
the greater glory; 11 for if what was set
aside came through glory, much more has
the permanent come in glory!

12 Since, then, we have such a hope,
we act with great boldness, 13 not like Mo-
ses, who put a veil over his face to keep
the people of Israel from gazing at the
end of the glory that[i] was being set aside.
14 But their minds were hardened. In-
deed, to this very day, when they hear the
reading of the old covenant, that same
veil is still there, since only in Christ is it

f Other ancient authorities read *like the others*
g Other ancient authorities read *your* *h* Gk *on stones* *i* Gk *of what*

4.18), or to the ancient idea of fragrance as a sign of the presence of God or of divine wisdom (see Sir 24.15). **2.15** On the contrast between the *saved* and the *perishing*, see also 1 Cor 1.18; 2 Cor 4.3. **2.16** Paul's question introduces the theme of his *sufficiency* or competence (see also 3.5–6) as an apostle, which was a key issue in the dispute with his Corinthian opponents. **2.17** Here and in 4.2 Paul is probably denying his critics' accusations against him as well as making the counteraccusation that they, *like so many*, are hucksters and charlatans. *Sincerity*. See 1.12. For speech in the divine *presence*, see also 12.19.

3.1–18 Using a series of antitheses, Paul compares ministry under the old and new covenants. **3.1** *Commend ourselves*. See note on 1.12. *Letters of recommendation* were widely used in the Greco-Roman world to praise friends and acquaintances and to introduce them to others. Early Christians made frequent use of this ancient convention, especially for traveling missionaries (see Acts 18.27). **3.2–3** *Our letter*. Paul uses letter-writing imagery to describe the Corinthians' conversion, which he attributes to *Christ* by means of the *Spirit*. **3.3** The Ten Commandments (Ex 20.1–17; Deut 5.6–21) were inscribed on two *tablets of stone* (Ex 24.12; 31.18; Deut 9.10). For *tablets of human hearts*, see Jer 31.33; also Prov 3.3; 7.3; Ezek 11.19; 36.26. **3.6** Both Paul and his rivals used terms such as *minister* and *apostle* (1.1) to depict themselves as the personal representatives of Christ (11.13–15, 23). *New covenant*. See Jer 31.31; also Lk 22.20; 1 Cor 11.25. *Letter*. Paul uses a different Greek word from that in 3.1–3 and refers now to the law (see Rom 2.27; 7.6), which he often associates with death (v. 7) and condemnation (v. 9). By contrast, *the Spirit gives life* (see Rom 7.6–11; 8.2, 11; Gal 3.21). **3.7–18** Paul expounds the meaning of v. 6 by means of a two-part interpretation of Ex 34.29–35. **3.7** *Ministry of death* points to the lethal effects of the law (see Rom 7.10). **3.8** Paul employs here and in the following verses that rabbinic exegetical principle of arguing "from the lesser to the greater" (*how much more*) to assert that the new covenant and its ministry surpass the old in splendor. **3.12** *Boldness* refers to the manner of Paul's speaking, not his state of mind. In both Hellenistic philosophy and Pauline theology, frank speech was based on freedom (v. 17), confidence (v. 4), and competence (vv. 5–6), and it was appropriately used to foster moral improvement. **3.14** In contrast to the literal veil mentioned in v. 13 (see Ex 34.33–35), *veil* here and in vv. 15–16 is a meta-

set aside. 15 Indeed, to this very day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their
minds; 16 but when one turns to the Lord,
the veil is removed. 17 Now the Lord is the
Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is,
there is freedom. 18 And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord
as though reflected in a mirror, are being
transformed into the same image from
one degree of glory to another; for this
comes from the Lord, the Spirit.

The Glory of God and the Gospel

4 Therefore, since it is by God's mercy
that we are engaged in this ministry,
we do not lose heart. 2 We have renounced the shameful things that one
hides; we refuse to practice cunning or to
falsify God's word; but by the open statement of the truth we commend ourselves
to the conscience of everyone in the sight
of God. 3 And even if our gospel is veiled,
it is veiled to those who are perishing. 4 In
their case the god of this world has
blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to
keep them from seeing the light of the
gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the
image of God. 5 For we do not proclaim
ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as
Lord and ourselves as your slaves for
Jesus' sake. 6 For it is the God who said,
"Let light shine out of darkness," who has
shone in our hearts to give the light of the
knowledge of the glory of God in the face
of Jesus Christ.

Treasure in Clay Jars

7 But we have this treasure in clay
jars, so that it may be made clear that this
extraordinary power belongs to God and
does not come from us. 8 We are afflicted
in every way, but not crushed; perplexed,
but not driven to despair; 9 persecuted,
but not forsaken; struck down, but not
destroyed; 10 always carrying in the body
the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus
may also be made visible in our bodies.
11 For while we live, we are always being
given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that
the life of Jesus may be made visible in
our mortal flesh. 12 So death is at work in
us, but life in you.

13 But just as we have the same spirit of faith that is in accordance with

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phor for misunderstanding. **3.15** *Moses* is equivalent here to "the book of Moses" (the Torah or Pentateuch); see 2 Chr 25.4; Neh 13.1; Mk 12.26; Acts 15.21. **3.17** Paul apparently identifies "the LORD" mentioned in Ex 34.34 as *the Spirit* (see also v. 18). **3.18** Paul's statement reflects the widespread Hellenistic belief that humans are changed as a result of beholding the divine. On the metamorphosis to the divine *image*, see Rom 8.29; 1 Cor 15.49; Col 3.10; for Christ as the image of God, see 4.4.

4.1–6 The revelation of the glory of God in the apostolic proclamation of the gospel. **4.1** *Lose heart.* See 4.16. **4.2** Paul was accused both of being *cunning* (see 12.16; also 11.3; 1 Cor 3.19) and of *falsifying God's word* (see note on 2.17). *Conscience.* See 1.12. **4.3** *Veiled*, an enigmatic allusion to a criticism by Paul's opponents, who may have believed that he craftily distorted and hid his gospel by using rhetorical devices such as irony and covert allusion (see 1 Cor 4.6–8), or that Paul's sufferings veiled his message about God and led to its rejection. *Perishing.* See 2.15. **4.4** *The god of this world.* This sharply dualistic expression contains the only NT reference to Satan as "god"; but see Jn 12.31; 14.30; 16.11; Eph 2.2; also 1 Cor 2.6, 8. *Minds.* See 3.14. *Unbelievers*, either non-Christians (as in 1 Cor 6.6; 7.12–15; 10.27; 14.22–24) or Paul's adversaries, who are linked with Satan (11.13–15) and belong to the perishing (4.3; see also Phil 1.28; 3.18–19). *Image.* See 3.18; Col 1.15; also Heb 1.3. **4.5** *Jesus Christ as Lord* was a basic Christian confession; see Rom 10.9; 1 Cor 12.3; Phil 2.11; Col 2.6. **4.6** *"Let light shine out of darkness."* These precise words do not appear in the OT; see, however, Gen 1.3; Ps 112.4; Isa 9.2.

4.7–5.10 The trials and triumph of Paul's ministry. **4.7–15** Apostolic weakness and divine power. **4.7** Earthenware was fragile and cheap; hence the paradox of precious *treasure in clay jars.* **4.8–9** Lists of hardships were commonly used to depict the ideal sage's own victory over adversity. Paul claims a similar superiority but consistently attributes it to God rather than himself (v. 7). Similar lists appear in 6.4–10; 11.23–28; 12.10; Rom 8.35–39; 1 Cor 4.9–13; Phil 4.11–12; 2 Tim 3.11. **4.10** *Death*, lit. "necrosis," a graphic word used by Greek medical writers of dead or dying tissue. Because God's power (v. 7) is displayed in Paul's sufferings, he *carries in the body* evidence of both Christ's death and his resurrection (*life of Jesus*). **4.11** Instead of *being given up*, the Greek word should perhaps be translated "giving ourselves up," which would fit the emphasis found in both Hellenistic philosophy and Christian tradition on voluntary suffering (see Gal 2.20; Eph 5.2, 25). **4.13** The

scripture—"I believed, and so I spoke"—
we also believe, and so we speak, 14 because we know that the one who raised
the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus,
and will bring us with you into his presence. 15 Yes, everything is for your sake,
so that grace, as it extends to more and
more people, may increase thanksgiving,
to the glory of God.

Living by Faith

16 So we do not lose heart. Even
though our outer nature is wasting away,
our inner nature is being renewed day by
day. 17 For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight
of glory beyond all measure, 18 because we
look not at what can be seen but at what
cannot be seen; for what can be seen is
temporary, but what cannot be seen is
eternal.

5 For we know that if the earthly tent
we live in is destroyed, we have a
building from God, a house not made
with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For
in this tent we groan, longing to be
clothed with our heavenly dwelling— 3 if
indeed, when we have taken it off[j] we
will not be found naked. 4 For while we
are still in this tent, we groan under our
burden, because we wish not to be unclothed but to be further clothed, so that
what is mortal may be swallowed up by
life. 5 He who has prepared us for this
very thing is God, who has given us the
Spirit as a guarantee.

6 So we are always confident; even
though we know that while we are at
home in the body we are away from the
Lord— 7 for we walk by faith, not by
sight. 8 Yes, we do have confidence, and
we would rather be away from the body
and at home with the Lord. 9 So whether
we are at home or away, we make it our
aim to please him. 10 For all of us must
appear before the judgment seat of
Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body,
whether good or evil.

The Ministry of Reconciliation

11 Therefore, knowing the fear of the
Lord, we try to persuade others; but we
ourselves are well known to God, and I
hope that we are also well known to your

j Other ancient authorities read *put it on*

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quotation is from Ps 115.1 in the Septuagint; cf. Ps 116.10. **4.15** *For your sake.* See 2.10; also 1.6; 5.13; 8.23. On increased *thanksgiving*, see 1.11; 9.11–12.

4.16–5.10 A discussion of present affliction and future glory using terms and concepts drawn from both Hellenistic popular philosophy and Jewish apocalyptic. **4.16** *Lose heart.* See 4.1; Eph 3.13. The contrast between *inner nature* (lit. "person") and *outer nature* was common in philosophical discourse; see also Rom 7.22; Eph 3.16; 1 Pet 3.4. *Renewed.* See Rom 12.2; Col 3.10. **4.17** On *affliction* leading to *glory*, an apocalyptic concept, see Rom 8.18; 2 Thess 1.5. **4.18** The contrasts between visible and invisible, *temporary* and *eternal*, were common philosophical ones; see also Col 1.16; Heb 11.1, 3. **5.1–4** The difficulty of this passage is compounded by the striking manner in which Paul mixes residential imagery with terms involving clothing. **5.1** *Earthly tent*, a common Hellenistic term for the body; see 5.6–10; see also Wis 9.15; 2 Pet 1.13. The tent/building contrast continues the temporary/permanent antithesis of 4.17–18. *Destroyed*, a reference to death. *We have*, either immediately after death or, more likely, at the Second Coming (as in 1 Cor 15.20–57; Phil 3.20–21; 1 Thess 4.16–17). *Building from God* refers either to the resurrection body given each individual believer (see 1 Cor 15.44) or to the apocalyptic concept of the new age with its heavenly temple in the new Jerusalem (see 2 Esd 10.40–57). *Not made with hands.* See Mk 14.58; Col 2.11 (see text note *n*); Heb 9.11, 24. **5.2** *Groan.* See 5.4; Rom 8.23, 26. **5.3–4** According to many interpreters, Paul wishes to avoid death, which renders the soul *naked* and *unclothed*; he hopes instead to live until the Second Coming, so that he can be transformed and receive the resurrection body as *further clothing* (see 1 Cor 15.53–54). Others suggest that Paul is here contrasting himself and his destiny with that of his opponents. Whereas he will receive additional spiritual clothing, his rivals will be condemned at the judgment (see 5.10), stripped of their baptismal clothing (see Gal 3.27), and thus have nakedness as their final state. **5.5** *Guarantee.* See note on 1.22. **5.7** *Not by sight*, See 4.18; Rom 8.24–25; 1 Cor 13.12; 1 Pet 1.8. **5.8** On Paul's preference for death (*being away from the body*), see Phil 1.23. **5.10** On the (final) *judgment seat*, see Rom 2.16; 14.9–10. Even Christians face judgment over their *good or evil* deeds; see 11.15; Rom 2.6–10; 1 Cor 4.5, see also Eccl 12.14.

5.11–6.10 Apostolic existence as a ministry of reconciliation. **5.11** *The fear of the Lord* (see 7.1; Sir 1.30) does not suggest that Paul personally

consciences. 12 We are not commending
ourselves to you again, but giving you an
opportunity to boast about us, so that you
may be able to answer those who boast in
outward appearance and not in the heart.
13 For if we are beside ourselves, it is for
God; if we are in our right mind, it is for
you. 14 For the love of Christ urges us on,
because we are convinced that one has
died for all; therefore all have died.
15 And he died for all, so that those who
live might live no longer for themselves,
but for him who died and was raised for
them.

16 From now on, therefore, we regard
no one from a human point of view;[k]
even though we once knew Christ from a
human point of view,[k] we know him no
longer in that way. 17 So if anyone is in
Christ, there is a new creation: everything
old has passed away; see, everything has
become new! 18 All this is from God, who
reconciled us to himself through Christ,
and has given us the ministry of reconcil-
iation; 19 that is, in Christ God was recon-
ciling the world to himself,[l] not counting
their trespasses against them, and entrust-
ing the message of reconciliation to us.
20 So we are ambassadors for Christ, since
God is making his appeal through us; we
entreat you on behalf of Christ, be recon-
ciled to God. 21 For our sake he made him
to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him
we might become the righteousness
of God.

6 As we work together with him,[m] we
urge you also not to accept the grace
of God in vain. 2 For he says,

"At an acceptable time I have
listened to you,
and on a day of salvation I
have helped you."

See, now is the acceptable time; see, now
is the day of salvation! 3 We are putting no
obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault
may be found with our ministry, 4 but as
servants of God we have commended our-
selves in every way: through great endur-
ance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities,
5 beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors,
sleepless nights, hunger; 6 by purity,
knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness
of spirit, genuine love, 7 truthful speech,
and the power of God; with the weapons
of righteousness for the right hand and
for the left; 8 in honor and dishonor, in ill
repute and good repute. We are treated

k Gk *according to the flesh* *l* Or *God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself* *m* Gk *As we work together*

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feared the judgment (see 5.6–8), but that he took his ministry very seriously. **5.12** *Commending ourselves.* See note on 1.12. *Those who boast in outward appearance,* Paul's opponents, whom he describes with terms reminiscent of 1 Sam 16.7. **5.13** *Are beside ourselves.* Most interpreters see here a reference to mystical experiences (see 12.1–6), which, though praised by Paul's adversaries, were evaluated by him according to the same standard he applied to speaking in tongues (1 Cor 14.2, 19, 28). Others, however, believe that Paul is referring to the "letter of tears" (2.4) in which he depicted himself as mad with grief. **5.14** *Love of Christ,* i.e., Christ's love for us, expressed by his vicarious death (see 5.15; Gal 2.20; also Rom 5.8). **5.15** See Rom 7.4; 14.7–9; Gal 2.19–20. **5.16** To regard anyone—even Christ—*from a human point of view* (see also 1.17; 11.18) involves a judgment according to outward appearance (5.12). **5.17** *New creation.* See Isa 43.18–19; 65.17; 66.22; Gal 6.15; Eph 2.15; 2 Pet 3.13; Rev 21.1–5. **5.18** Paul presents God as the *reconciler* (Rom 5.10–11; also Col 1.20–22), not as the object of reconciliation (as in 2 Macc 1.5; 5.20; 7.33; 8.29). **5.19** *Not counting their trespasses against them.* See Rom 4.8. **5.21** *Made him to be sin,* either in the sense that Christ assumed sinful human nature (see Rom 8.3), or that on the cross God treated the sinless Jesus as a sinner (see Gal 3.13), or that Jesus became a sacrifice for sin, either a guilt offering or a sin offering (see Isa 53.10; Rom 8.3, note *b*). *Who knew no sin,* a traditional concept; see Jn 7.18; 8.46; Heb 4.15; 7.26; 1 Pet 1.19; 2.22; 3.18; 1 Jn 3.5. As Christ became God's righteousness for humans (1 Cor 1.30), so humans become in Christ *the righteousness of God*; the latter is an important Pauline phrase that denotes, depending on the context, either God's own righteousness or the righteousness that proceeds from God and justifies the believer (see Rom 1.17; 3.5, 21–22, 25–26; 10.3; Phil 3.9). **6.2** *"At . . . helped you,"* Isa 49.8. **6.3** *No obstacle.* See 1 Cor 9.12. **6.4** *Servants,* lit. "ministers"; see 3.6. *Commended ourselves.* See note on 1.12. **6.4–7** Adversity and virtue were closely linked in antiquity, so that the nine hardships given in 6.4–5 (see also 4.8–9) function not only to magnify Paul's great endurance (6.4) but also to prove that he is virtuous; the list of virtues (6.6–7) underscores the point. For other virtue lists, see Gal 5.22–23; Phil 4.8; Col 3.12; 1 Pet 3.8; 2 Pet 1.5–7. **6.8–10** The seven antithetic clauses that conclude this section contrast the outward appearance, which is false or deficient, with the true

as impostors, and yet are true; 9as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see—we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; 10as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

An Appeal to the Heart

11 We have spoken frankly to you Corinthians; our heart is wide open to you. 12There is no restriction in our affections, but only in yours. 13In return—I speak as to children—open wide your hearts also.

The Temple of the Living God

14 Do not be mismatched with unbelievers. For what partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness? Or what fellowship is there between light and darkness? 15What agreement does Christ have with Beliar? Or what does a believer share with an unbeliever? 16What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we[n] are the temple of the living God; as God said,

"I will live in them and walk
among them,
and I will be their God,
and they shall be my people.
17 Therefore come out from them,
and be separate from them,
says the Lord,
and touch nothing unclean;
then I will welcome you,
18 and I will be your father,
and you shall be my sons and
daughters,
says the Lord Almighty."

7 Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and of spirit, making holiness perfect in the fear of God.

The Appeal Resumed

2 Make room in your hearts[o] for us; we have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have taken advantage of no one. 3I do not say this to condemn you, for I said before that you are in our hearts, to die together and to live together. 4I often boast about you; I have

n Other ancient authorities read *you* *o* Gk lacks *in your hearts*

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and greater reality that belongs to Paul's heart (5.12; 6.11). In formulating these verses, Paul draws on Ps 118.17–18 as well as Greco-Roman paradoxes about the ideal sage. **6.10** *Poor, yet making many rich.* See 8.9.

6.11–7.16 After concluding the lengthy discussion of his reconciling ministry (2.14–6.10), Paul now makes an appeal for the church to be fully reconciled with him (6.11–7.4) and with the one who wronged him (7.5–16). **6.11** *We have spoken frankly to you.* For Paul's bold speech to the Corinthians, see notes on 3.12; 7.4. *Our heart is wide open to you,* a sign of Paul's affection for the Corinthians; see 6.12; 7.3. **6.13** *Children.* See 1 Cor 4.14; Gal 4.19; 1 Thess 2.11. **6.14–7.1** The origin and literary placement of this passage are highly problematic, because it contains a number of words not found elsewhere in Paul's Letter and appears to interrupt the appeal in 6.11–13; 7.2–4. Of the various solutions, five merit mention. The passage could be (1) a fragment from the letter mentioned in 1 Cor 5.9; (2) a digression in which Paul deliberately uses unusual and highly emotional language for rhetorical effect; (3) a passage, non-Pauline in origin, that Paul himself inserts here to provide moral exhortation and/or warn the Corinthians against associating with his opponents; (4) a non-Pauline passage, perhaps of Essene origin, inserted by a later editor; or (5) an originally anti-Pauline passage that reflects the theology of Paul's opponents. **6.14** *Unbelievers.* See 4.4. If the reference is to Paul's opponents, the passage functions to insist that full reconciliation with Paul entails a renunciation of the church's relationship with his rivals. **6.15** *Beliar,* a variant of Belial (Hebrew, "worthlessness"), one of the various Jewish names for Satan (see 2.11). **6.16** *The temple of the living God.* See 1 Cor 3.16. *As God said.* See 4.6. Three quotation formulas are used to introduce, connect, and conclude the chain of OT citations and paraphrases in 6.16–18 (see Rom 3.10–18; 15.9–12 for similar chains). Lev 26.11–12; Ezek 37.27 are the sources used in v. 16. **6.17** See Isa 52.11 and the Septuagint of Ezek 20.34. **6.18** See 2 Sam 7.14; Isa 43.6. **7.2–4** Resumption of the appeal of 6.11–13. **7.2** On the charge of *taking advantage* of the Corinthians, see 12.17–18. **7.3** *To die together and to live together,* a Christianized version of a traditional friendship formula (see 2 Sam 15.21). **7.4** *I often boast about you,* lit. "great is my bold speech toward you," Paul's candor is a sign of his friendship (7.3) with the Corinthians; see 3.12; 6.11. *Pride . . . consolation . . . affliction,* a transitional verse that recalls the major themes of

great pride in you; I am filled with consolation; I am overjoyed in all our affliction.

Paul's Joy at the Church's Repentance

5 For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted in every way—disputes without and fears within. 6 But God, who consoles the downcast, consoled us by the arrival of Titus, 7 and not only by his coming, but also by the consolation with which he was consoled about you, as he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced still more. 8 For even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it (though I did regret it, for I see that I grieved you with that letter, though only briefly). 9 Now I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because your grief led to repentance; for you felt a godly grief, so that you were not harmed in any way by us. 10 For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret, but worldly grief produces death. 11 For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves guiltless in the matter. 12 So although I wrote to you, it was not on account of the one who did the wrong, nor on account of the one who was wronged, but in order that your zeal for us might be made known to you before God. 13 In this we find comfort.

In addition to our own consolation, we rejoiced still more at the joy of Titus, because his mind has been set at rest by all of you. 14 For if I have been somewhat boastful about you to him, I was not disgraced; but just as everything we said to you was true, so our boasting to Titus has proved true as well. 15 And his heart goes out all the more to you, as he remembers the obedience of all of you, and how you welcomed him with fear and trembling. 16 I rejoice, because I have complete confidence in you.

Encouragement to Be Generous

8 We want you to know, brothers and sisters,[p] about the grace of God that has been granted to the churches of Macedonia; 2 for during a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. 3 For, as I can testify, they voluntarily gave according to their means, and even beyond their means, 4 begging us earnestly for the privilege[q] of sharing in this ministry to the saints— 5 and this, not merely as we expected; they gave themselves first to the Lord and, by the will of God, to us, 6 so

p Gk *brothers* *q* Gk *grace*

1.3–14. **7.5–16** Resumption and conclusion of 1.15–2.13 (esp. 2.12–13); see Introduction. **7.6** *God, who consoles the downcast.* See 1.3–4; Isa 49.13. *Titus.* See 2.13; 7.13–15. **7.8** *Letter.* See 2.3. **7.9** *Godly grief,* i.e., grief that accords with God's will and results in repentance and salvation (v. 10). **7.12** *The one who did the wrong,* the offender discussed in 2.5–11, with whom the church is to be reconciled lest he be destroyed by worldly grief (2.7; 7.10). *The one who was wronged,* almost certainly Paul himself. **7.14** *Boastful.* See 1.14. **7.15** *Obedience.* See 2.9. **7.16** Expressions of *confidence* (see 1.7) serve to create a sense of responsibility on the part of the persons praised, making them more responsive to requests. V. 16 is thus transitional, not only concluding the discussion in 7.5–16 but also laying the foundation for the requests made in chs. 8–9.

8.1–9.15 The collection for the Jerusalem church was intended not only to address its economic need but also to ratify the unity between Jewish and gentile Christians (Rom 15.25–32; 1 Cor 16.1–4; Gal 2.10; also Acts 24.17). (For the literary problems associated with 2 Cor 8–9, see Introduction.) **8.1** In chs. 8–9 Paul uses the Greek word *charis* to describe the beneficence of God and Christ as well as the human response to the divine action in both gratitude and giving. It is variously translated as *grace* (8.1; 9.14), *blessing* (9.8), *generous act* (8.9), *thanks* (8.16; 9.15), and, with reference to the collection, as *privilege* (8.4) and *generous undertaking* (8.6–7, 19). **8.2** This *affliction* is mentioned in Phil 1.29–30; 1 Thess 1.6; 2.14; 3.3–4. *Generosity.* See 9.11, 13; Rom 12.8. **8.3** *Voluntarily.* See 8.17; 9.7. **8.4** The term *sharing,* applied here to the collection (see also 9.13; Rom 15.26), is also used by Paul to express the church's participation in Christ (1 Cor 1.9), especially in his body and blood (1 Cor 10.16) and in his sufferings (2 Cor 1.7; Phil 3.10), its communion with the Spirit (2 Cor 13.13), and its partnership in the gospel (Phil 1.5). *Ministry.* See 9.1, 12–13; also 8.19–20; Rom 15.31. *Saints.* Here and in 9.1, 12 the reference is to poor Jewish Christians in Jerusalem (Rom 15.25–26). **8.6** For the role of *Titus* in the collection, see also

that we might urge Titus that, as he had
already made a beginning, so he should
also complete this generous undertak-
ing[r] among you. 7 Now as you excel in
everything—in faith, in speech, in knowl-
edge, in utmost eagerness, and in our love
for you[s]—so we want you to excel also in
this generous undertaking.[r]

8 I do not say this as a command, but
I am testing the genuineness of your love
against the earnestness of others. 9 For
you know the generous act[t] of our Lord
Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet
for your sakes he became poor, so that by
his poverty you might become rich.
10 And in this matter I am giving my ad-
vice: it is appropriate for you who began
last year not only to do something but
even to desire to do something— 11 now
finish doing it, so that your eagerness may
be matched by completing it according to
your means. 12 For if the eagerness is
there, the gift is acceptable according to
what one has—not according to what one
does not have. 13 I do not mean that there
should be relief for others and pressure
on you, but it is a question of a fair bal-
ance between 14 your present abundance
and their need, so that their abundance
may be for your need, in order that there
may be a fair balance. 15 As it is written,

"The one who had much did not
have too much,
and the one who had little did
not have too little."

Commendation of Titus

16 But thanks be to God who put in
the heart of Titus the same eagerness for
you that I myself have. 17 For he not only
accepted our appeal, but since he is more
eager than ever, he is going to you of his
own accord. 18 With him we are sending
the brother who is famous among all the
churches for his proclaiming the good
news;[u] 19 and not only that, but he has
also been appointed by the churches to
travel with us while we are administering
this generous undertaking[r] for the glory
of the Lord himself[v] and to show our
goodwill. 20 We intend that no one should
blame us about this generous gift that we
are administering, 21 for we intend to do
what is right not only in the Lord's sight
but also in the sight of others. 22 And with
them we are sending our brother whom
we have often tested and found eager in
many matters, but who is now more eager
than ever because of his great confidence
in you. 23 As for Titus, he is my partner
and co-worker in your service; as for our
brothers, they are messengers[w] of the
churches, the glory of Christ. 24 There-
fore openly before the churches, show
them the proof of your love and of our
reason for boasting about you.

The Collection for Christians at Jerusalem

9 Now it is not necessary for me to
write you about the ministry to the
saints, 2 for I know your eagerness, which
is the subject of my boasting about you to
the people of Macedonia, saying that
Achaia has been ready since last year; and
your zeal has stirred up most of them.
3 But I am sending the brothers in order
that our boasting about you may not
prove to have been empty in this case, so
that you may be ready, as I said you would
be; 4 otherwise, if some Macedonians
come with me and find that you are not
ready, we would be humiliated—to say
nothing of you—in this undertaking.[x]
5 So I thought it necessary to urge the

r Gk *this grace* s Other ancient authorities read *your love for us* t Gk *the grace* u Or *the gospel* v Other ancient authorities lack *himself* w Gk *apostles* x Other ancient authorities add *of boasting*

8.16–24; 12.18. **8.7** For the abundance of *faith, . . . speech, . . . knowledge,* and other spiritual gifts in Corinth, see 1 Cor 1.5; 12.8–10; 13.1–2, 8. **8.8** *Command,* here the opposite of *advice* (v. 10; see 1 Cor 7.6, 25, 40). **8.9** *Though he was rich . . . became poor.* See Phil 2.6–8. *By his poverty you might become rich,* a clause that recalls Paul's self-description in 6.10. **8.10** *Last year.* See 9.2. **8.13–14** Paul advocates the ideals of both self-sufficiency (*having enough,* 9.8) and *fair balance*: people should have sufficient wealth not only to satisfy their own needs but also to share the excess with others, who are in turn obliged to reciprocate. **8.15** Ex 16.18. **8.16** *Thanks be to God.* See 2.14. **8.18–24** The identity of the two *brothers* (vv. 18, 22) who serve as the churches' envoys is unknown (but see 12.18; Acts 20.4–6). **8.20** *Blame.* See 6.3. **8.21** *In the Lord's sight . . . in the sight of others.* See Prov 3.4. **9.2** *Eagerness.* See 8.11. *Macedonia.* See 1.16. *Achaia.* See 1.1. Some believe that ch. 9 was originally part of a separate letter addressed to other Christians in Achaia (e.g., at Cenchreae; see Rom 16.1). **9.3** *Brothers.* See 8.16–23; 9.5. **9.5** *Bountiful gift*

brothers to go on ahead to you, and arrange in advance for this bountiful gift that you have promised, so that it may be ready as a voluntary gift and not as an extortion.

6 The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work. 9 As it is written,

"He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor;
his righteousness[y] endures forever."

10 He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.[y] 11 You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us; 12 for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God. 13 Through the testing of this ministry you glorify God by your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ and by the generosity of your sharing with them and with all others, 14 while they long for you and pray for you because of the surpassing grace of God that he has given you. 15 Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

Paul Defends His Ministry

10 I myself, Paul, appeal to you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold toward you when I am away!— 2 I ask that when I am present I need not show boldness by daring to oppose those who think we are acting according to human standards.[z] 3 Indeed, we live as human beings,[a] but we do not wage war according to human standards;[z] 4 for the weapons of our warfare are not merely human,[b] but they have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments 5 and every proud obstacle raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to obey Christ. 6 We are ready to punish every disobedience when your obedience is complete.

7 Look at what is before your eyes. If you are confident that you belong to Christ, remind yourself of this, that just as

y Or *benevolence*
z Gk *according to the flesh*
a Gk *in the flesh*
b Gk *fleshly*

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and *voluntary gift* are both translations of the same Greek word (*eulogia*); the plural is used twice in v. 6 (*bountifully*). **9.6** *Sows . . . reap bountifully.* The idea is widespread in antiquity (see, e.g., Prov 11.24). **9.7** *Not under compulsion.* See 8.3; also Deut 15.10; Philem 14. *God loves a cheerful giver,* virtually quotes the Septuagint version of Prov 22.8. **9.8** Paul's attitude here toward possessions is positive: wealth is a gift, a financial *blessing* from God, provided that it leads to generosity (9.11); cf. 1 Tim 6.10. *Good work.* See Eph 2.10; Col 1.10; 2 Thess 2.17; 2 Tim 3.17; Titus 2.14. **9.9** Ps 112.9. **9.10** *Seed . . . food.* See Isa 55.10. *Harvest of your righteousness,* a phrase drawn from the Septuagint version of Hos 10.12. **9.12** The Greek word translated *rendering* is the same one (*diakonia*) translated *ministry* in 8.4; 9.1, 13; the word translated *ministry* here is the standard Greek term (*leitourgia*) for an act of public service that private citizens performed at their own expense (see Rom 15.27).

10.1–13.13 Paul's struggle with Satan's ministers and his appeal to the Corinthians. (For the literary issues involving these chapters, see Introduction.) **10.1–18** Paul's defense against criticism and attack on his critics. **10.1** The word *appeal* (see also 2.8; 5.20; 6.1; also *ask* in 10.2) indicates that the ultimate goal of chs. 10–13 is exhortation. *Gentleness of Christ.* See Mt 11.29. *Humble when face to face.* See 10.10. **10.2** On the charge of *acting according to human standards,* see 1.12, 17. **10.3** *Wage war.* The campaign is described in three successive stages: the demolishing of fortifications (vv. 4–5), the taking of captives (v. 5), and the punishing of resistance (v. 6). **10.4–5** *Weapons,* Paul's humble manner of life (10.1), in which God's "divine power" is manifested (see also 4.7). Paul depicts the *strongholds* (defenses) of his opponents in terms typically used to describe the Stoic sage, who used reason (*arguments, thought*) as a defense. **10.6** Paul probably means that he will deal with the *disobedience* of his opponents once the Corinthians recognize his authority and give full *obedience* to his instructions (see 2.9). **10.7** His critics probably

you belong to Christ, so also do we. 8 Now,
even if I boast a little too much of our
authority, which the Lord gave for build-
ing you up and not for tearing you down,
I will not be ashamed of it. 9 I do not want
to seem as though I am trying to frighten
you with my letters. 10 For they say, "His
letters are weighty and strong, but his
bodily presence is weak, and his speech
contemptible." 11 Let such people under-
stand that what we say by letter when ab-
sent, we will also do when present.

12 We do not dare to classify or com-
pare ourselves with some of those who
commend themselves. But when they
measure themselves by one another, and
compare themselves with one another,
they do not show good sense. 13 We, how-
ever, will not boast beyond limits, but will
keep within the field that God has as-
signed to us, to reach out even as far as
you. 14 For we were not overstepping our
limits when we reached you; we were the
first to come all the way to you with the
good news[c] of Christ. 15 We do not boast
beyond limits, that is, in the labors of oth-
ers; but our hope is that, as your faith in-
creases, our sphere of action among you
may be greatly enlarged, 16 so that we may
proclaim the good news[c] in lands beyond
you, without boasting of work already
done in someone else's sphere of action.
17 "Let the one who boasts, boast in the
Lord." 18 For it is not those who commend
themselves that are approved, but those
whom the Lord commends.

Paul and the False Apostles

11 I wish you would bear with me in
a little foolishness. Do bear with
me! 2 I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I
promised you in marriage to one hus-
band, to present you as a chaste virgin to
Christ. 3 But I am afraid that as the ser-
pent deceived Eve by its cunning, your
thoughts will be led astray from a sincere
and pure[d] devotion to Christ. 4 For if
someone comes and proclaims another
Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if
you receive a different spirit from the one
you received, or a different gospel from
the one you accepted, you submit to it
readily enough. 5 I think that I am not in
the least inferior to these super-apostles.
6 I may be untrained in speech, but not in
knowledge; certainly in every way and in
all things we have made this evident
to you.

7 Did I commit a sin by humbling my-
self so that you might be exalted, because
I proclaimed God's good news[e] to you
free of charge? 8 I robbed other churches
by accepting support from them in order
to serve you. 9 And when I was with you
and was in need, I did not burden any-
one, for my needs were supplied by the
friends[f] who came from Macedonia. So
I refrained and will continue to refrain
from burdening you in any way. 10 As

c Or *the gospel* d Other ancient authorities lack *and pure* e Gk *the gospel of God* f Gk *brothers*

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claimed to *belong to Christ.* **10.8** *Boast.* See 1.12; another charge by Paul's critics is reflected here. *For building you up and not for tearing you down.* See 10.4; 12.19; 13.10; also Jer 1.10; 24.6. **10.10** *They say.* Paul quotes here a charge made against him. **10.12** It was a standard laudatory technique to *compare and classify* someone with people of superior worth and to *measure* that person's achievements against those of others. For Paul's ironic use of the device, see 11.22–23. **10.13–16** Paul had strong views on the *limits* of his mission *field*; see Rom 15.17–21. **10.17** Jer 9.23–24, quoted also in 1 Cor 1.31. **10.18** *Commend themselves.* See 10.12.

11.1–12.10 A heavily ironic "fool's" speech; see 11.16–17, 19, 21; 12.11. **11.1–15** Paul's opponents as Satan's agents. **11.2–3** Paul as father (1 Cor 4.14–15) of the bride (i.e., the church) is responsible for safeguarding her purity between the time of the betrothal and the *marriage* at the Second Coming of Christ; see Mt 9.15; 25.1–13; Eph 5.26–32; Rev 19.7–9; 21.2, 9. **11.3** *Deceived.* See Gen 3.13; 1 Tim 2.14. Paul is probably thinking of the Jewish legend that Eve was sexually seduced by Satan (the serpent), who appeared to her disguised as an angel (see 11.14). **11.4** Unfortunately, Paul never discusses the *different gospel* of his opponents, and their identity is much debated. Some consider them Judaizers; others, Gnostics; still others, Hellenistic-Jewish propagandists. **11.5** *Super-apostles* (see 12.11), probably a sarcastic reference to his opponents, but perhaps the Jerusalem apostles. **11.6** *Untrained in speech.* See 10.10. **11.7–11** Paul was criticized for refusing to accept support from the Corinthians; for his practice of supporting himself, see 1 Cor 9; 1 Thess 2.9; 2 Thess 3.7–9. **11.7** *Humbling myself,* by his voluntary manual

the truth of Christ is in me, this boast of
mine will not be silenced in the regions of
Achaia. 11 And why? Because I do not love
you? God knows I do!
12 And what I do I will also continue
to do, in order to deny an opportunity to
those who want an opportunity to be rec-
ognized as our equals in what they boast
about. 13 For such boasters are false apos-
tles, deceitful workers, disguising them-
selves as apostles of Christ. 14 And no
wonder! Even Satan disguises himself as
an angel of light. 15 So it is not strange if
his ministers also disguise themselves as
ministers of righteousness. Their end will
match their deeds.

Paul's Sufferings as an Apostle

16 I repeat, let no one think that I am
a fool; but if you do, then accept me as a
fool, so that I too may boast a little.
17 What I am saying in regard to this
boastful confidence, I am saying not with
the Lord's authority, but as a fool; 18 since
many boast according to human stand-
ards,[g] I will also boast. 19 For you gladly
put up with fools, being wise yourselves!
20 For you put up with it when someone
makes slaves of you, or preys upon you,
or takes advantage of you, or puts on airs,
or gives you a slap in the face. 21 To my
shame, I must say, we were too weak for
that!
But whatever anyone dares to boast of
—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to
boast of that. 22 Are they Hebrews? So am
I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they
descendants of Abraham? So am I. 23 Are
they ministers of Christ? I am talking like
a madman—I am a better one: with far
greater labors, far more imprisonments,
with countless floggings, and often near
death. 24 Five times I have received from
the Jews the forty lashes minus one.
25 Three times I was beaten with rods.
Once I received a stoning. Three times I
was shipwrecked; for a night and a day I
was adrift at sea; 26 on frequent journeys,
in danger from rivers, danger from ban-
dits, danger from my own people, danger
from Gentiles, danger in the city, dan-
ger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger
from false brothers and sisters;[h] 27 in toil
and hardship, through many a sleepless
night, hungry and thirsty, often without
food, cold and naked. 28 And, besides
other things, I am under daily pressure be-
cause of my anxiety for all the church-
es. 29 Who is weak, and I am not weak?
Who is made to stumble, and I am not
indignant?
30 If I must boast, I will boast of the
things that show my weakness. 31 The God
and Father of the Lord Jesus (blessed be
he forever!) knows that I do not lie. 32 In
Damascus, the governor[i] under King Ar-
etas guarded the city of Damascus in or-
der to[j] seize me, 33 but I was let down in
a basket through a window in the wall,[k]
and escaped from his hands.

g Gk *according to the flesh* *h* Gk *brothers*
i Gk *ethnarch* *j* Other ancient authorities read *and wanted to* *k* Gk *through the wall*

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labor, which he regarded as a demonstration of his love for his converts (11.11; 12.15). **11.14** *Angel.* See note on 11.3.

11.16–12.10 Paul boastfully compares himself to his opponents in regard to both his credentials and hardships (see 4.8–9; 6.4–10). **11.17–18** In what follows, Paul does not speak *in Christ* (2.17; 12.19) or *with the Lord's authority* (lit. "according to the Lord"), for his *boasting* is *according to human standards.* **11.20** The list of afflictions has the dual purpose of castigating Paul's opponents by describing their abusive acts and of shaming the Corinthians by means of mock praise (see 6.4; cf. 1 Cor 4.8). **11.22** Like Paul, his opponents are Jewish Christians, proud both that they are *Hebrews* (ethnic heritage) and that they are *Israelites* (religious heritage); see Rom 9.4; 11.1; Phil 3.5. **11.23–27** Few details are known about the hardships Paul mentions in this list. **11.23** *Imprisonments.* See Acts 16.22–40 for one of Paul's prior incarcerations; for later instances, see Acts 24.27; 28.16. **11.23–25** Paul specifies two types of *floggings* or beatings (see 6.5), a Roman one with *rods* (see Acts 16.22–23) and a Jewish one with *lashes* (see Deut 25.3). **11.25** *Stoning.* See Acts 14.19. *Shipwrecked.* For a later instance, see Acts 27.9–44. **11.26** Paul's reference to *false brothers and sisters* would include the false apostles (11.13). **11.32** *Damascus,* the Syrian city connected with Paul's conversion (Acts 9; Gal 1.17). *King Aretas* (IV), the ruler of the Arab kingdom of Nabatea from 9 B.C.E. until his death (ca. 40 C.E.). The identity of the *governor* is unknown. **11.33** *Let down in a basket.* See Acts 9.23–25,

Paul's Visions and Revelations

12 It is necessary to boast; nothing is
to be gained by it, but I will go on
to visions and revelations of the Lord. 2 I
know a person in Christ who fourteen
years ago was caught up to the third
heaven—whether in the body or out of
the body I do not know; God knows.
3 And I know that such a person—
whether in the body or out of the body I
do not know; God knows— 4 was caught
up into Paradise and heard things that are
not to be told, that no mortal is permitted
to repeat. 5 On behalf of such a one I will
boast, but on my own behalf I will not
boast, except of my weaknesses. 6 But if I
wish to boast, I will not be a fool, for I will
be speaking the truth. But I refrain from
it, so that no one may think better of me
than what is seen in me or heard from me,
7 even considering the exceptional char-
acter of the revelations. Therefore, to
keep[l] me from being too elated, a thorn
was given me in the flesh, a messenger of
Satan to torment me, to keep me from be-
ing too elated.[m] 8 Three times I appealed
to the Lord about this, that it would leave
me, 9 but he said to me, "My grace is suffi-
cient for you, for power[n] is made perfect
in weakness." So, I will boast all the more
gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power
of Christ may dwell in me. 10 Therefore
I am content with weaknesses, insults, hard-
ships, persecutions, and calamities for
the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak,
then I am strong.

The Signs of a True Apostle

11 I have been a fool! You forced me
to it. Indeed you should have been the
ones commending me, for I am not at
all inferior to these super-apostles, even
though I am nothing. 12 The signs of a
true apostle were performed among you
with utmost patience, signs and wonders
and mighty works. 13 How have you been
worse off than the other churches, except
that I myself did not burden you? Forgive
me this wrong!

Paul's Concern for the Corinthian Church

14 Here I am, ready to come to you
this third time. And I will not be a bur-
den, because I do not want what is yours
but you; for children ought not to lay up
for their parents, but parents for their
children. 15 I will most gladly spend and
be spent for you. If I love you more, am I
to be loved less? 16 Let it be assumed that
I did not burden you. Nevertheless (you
say) since I was crafty, I took you in by
deceit. 17 Did I take advantage of you
through any of those whom I sent to you?
18 I urged Titus to go, and sent the
brother with him. Titus did not take ad-
vantage of you, did he? Did we not con-
duct ourselves with the same spirit? Did
we not take the same steps?

19 Have you been thinking all along
that we have been defending ourselves be-
fore you? We are speaking in Christ be-
fore God. Everything we do, beloved, is
for the sake of building you up. 20 For I
fear that when I come, I may find you not
as I wish, and that you may find me not as

l Other ancient authorities read *To keep*
m Other ancient authorities lack *to keep me from being too elated* *n* Other ancient authorities read *my power*

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where the plot is attributed to the Jews. **12.1–10** A continuation of the fool's speech, with Paul presenting himself in both ecstasy (vv. 1–7a) and agony (vv. 7b–10). **12.1** *Visions and revelations.* See 1 Cor 9.1; 15.8; Gal 1.12; 2.1–2. **12.2** The *person* is Paul himself, who in 12.2–4 is describing one ecstatic experience. *Third heaven,* i.e., where Paradise (v. 4) is located. Heavenly journeys were a popular means of claiming divine authentication and were apparently used by Paul's opponents for this purpose. **12.7** The exact nature of the *thorn* is unknown; suggestions include physical or mental illness, spiritual trials, persecution, and opposition by adversaries. **12.10** For *hardship* lists, see note on 4.8–9.

12.11–13 The epilogue to the fool's speech. **12.11** *Super-apostles.* See 11.5. **12.12** *Signs and wonders and mighty works,* three different terms for miracles, which functioned in antiquity to validate wonder-workers and their claims; see Acts 2.22; 14.3; 15.12; Rom 15.19; Heb 2.4. **12.13** *I myself did not burden you,* i.e., by demanding payment for missionary activities as his rivals apparently did; see 11.7–11; 12.14.

12.14–13.10 Preparations for a third visit. **12.14** *Parents for their children.* Cf. Mt 15.5–6; 1 Tim 5.4, 8. **12.15** *Be spent for you.* See Phil 2.17. **12.16–18** Paul was charged with refusing support for himself while deceitfully enriching himself by means of the collection (see chs. 8–9). **12.18** For the role of *Titus* and *the brother,* see 8.16–9.5. **12.19** *Building you up.* See 10.8. **12.20–21** For

you wish; I fear that there may perhaps
be quarreling, jealousy, anger, selfishness,
slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder. 21 I
fear that when I come again, my God may
humble me before you, and that I may
have to mourn over many who previously
sinned and have not repented of the im-
purity, sexual immorality, and licentious-
ness that they have practiced.

Further Warning

13 This is the third time I am com-
ing to you. "Any charge must be
sustained by the evidence of two or three
witnesses." 2 I warned those who sinned
previously and all the others, and I warn
them now while absent, as I did when
present on my second visit, that if I come
again, I will not be lenient— 3 since you
desire proof that Christ is speaking in me.
He is not weak in dealing with you, but is
powerful in you. 4 For he was crucified in
weakness, but lives by the power of God.
For we are weak in him,[o] but in dealing
with you we will live with him by the
power of God.

5 Examine yourselves to see whether
you are living in the faith. Test your-
selves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ
is in you?—unless, indeed, you fail to
meet the test! 6 I hope you will find out
that we have not failed. 7 But we pray to
God that you may not do anything wrong
—not that we may appear to have met the
test, but that you may do what is right,
though we may seem to have failed. 8 For
we cannot do anything against the truth,
but only for the truth. 9 For we rejoice
when we are weak and you are strong.
This is what we pray for, that you may
become perfect. 10 So I write these things
while I am away from you, so that when I
come, I may not have to be severe in using
the authority that the Lord has given me
for building up and not for tearing down.

Final Greetings and Benediction

11 Finally, brothers and sisters,[p] fare-
well.[q] Put things in order, listen to my
appeal,[r] agree with one another, live in
peace; and the God of love and peace will
be with you. 12 Greet one another with a
holy kiss. All the saints greet you.

13 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God, and the communion of[s]
the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

o Other ancient authorities read *with him*
p Gk *brothers* *q* Or *rejoice* *r* Or *encourage one another* *s* Or *and the sharing in*

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other vice lists, which were a traditional device used by both Jews and Greeks, see Mk 7.21–22; Rom 1.29–31; 13.13; 1 Cor 5.10–11; 6.9–10; Gal 5.19–21. **12.21** *Again* may modify *humble*: "my God may humble me again," i.e., by a repetition of what happened at the second visit; see 2.1–4. **13.1** *"Any charge . . . witnesses,"* Deut 19.15, used also in Mt 18.16; 1 Tim 5.19. **13.2** Paul had canceled a previous trip out of *leniency*; see 1.23. **13.3** The ideas of testing and *proving* were important in Corinth; see, e.g., 1 Cor 11.28; 16.3; 2 Cor 8.8, 22; 9.13; see also 13.5–7. **13.5** *Christ is in you.* See Rom 8.10; Gal 2.20; Col 1.27. **13.9, 11** The words translated *perfect* and *put things in order* are related in Greek. **13.10** *I write these things.* This verse gives the ultimate purpose of 2 Cor 10–13; see also 10.8.

13.11–13 The Letter closing is typically Pauline; see, e.g., 1 Cor 16.20; 1 Thess 5.23–28. **13.13** The trinitarian formula is anticipated in 1.21–22; also Mt 28.19.

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE

GALATIANS

THE BITTERLY POLEMICAL Letter of Paul to the Galatians reflects a critical moment in the early Christian movement's struggle to define its mission and identity. The apostle Paul founded the churches of Galatia (1.2; 4.13–14), but he now finds his work challenged by unidentified Jewish-Christian teachers who are urging Paul's converts, formerly pagans (4.8–9), to be circumcised (5.2–12; 6.12–13). Apparently these teachers are also urging the Galatians to observe some other elements of Jewish law and ritual, such as the sabbath and festivals (4.10) and perhaps food laws (4.17, taken with 2.12). Paul discerns in this situation a threat to "the truth of the gospel" (2.5, 14) and composes an impassioned letter to dissuade the Galatians from adopting these religious practices.

Addressees and Date

How many "churches of Galatia" there were is unknown, and their exact location is a matter of long-standing debate. The term "Galatians" (3.1) originally designated a people of Celtic origin who migrated into central Asia Minor and settled in the region around Ancyra (modern Ankara); however, the Roman province of Galatia extended south toward the Mediterranean to include the cities of Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe, where Paul and Barnabas, according to Acts 14.1–23, founded churches (see map on p. 2278).

Some interpreters hold that the Letter was addressed to these "South Galatian" churches during the period prior to the "apostolic council" described in Acts 15; the council, then, addressed the controversy that Galatians exemplifies (see Acts 15.1). This reconstruction requires the assumption that the Jerusalem meeting mentioned in Gal 2.1–10 occurred during the "famine relief" visit of Acts 11.27–30. Majority scholarly opinion, however, identifies the council of Acts 15 with the meeting described in Gal 2.1–10, though the two accounts differ somewhat. Under this reading, the Galatian churches were probably in "North Galatia," and Paul's missionary activity there is identified with the brief references in Acts 16.6 and 18.23.

Both reconstructions presuppose an optimistic view of Acts as a historical

framework within which the Pauline Letters can be placed. The internal evidence of Galatians, however, offers no basis for determining either the geographical location of the churches or the Letter's date of composition. Some scholars regard Galatians as the earliest of Paul's letters (perhaps 48–49 C.E.); others place it during the mid–50s C.E. The Letter's many thematic links with 2 Corinthians and Romans favor the latter view.

Rival Missionaries and Contested Issues

The Galatians have encountered "a different gospel" (1.6), proclaimed by missionaries whom Paul decries as agitators (5.12) and troublemakers who "want to pervert the gospel of Christ" (1.7). These rival missionaries are not Pharisaic Jews seeking to persuade Paul's converts to abandon their faith in Jesus; rather, they are Christian Jews who argue that the appropriate next step for Gentiles who have come to trust in Jesus as the Messiah is to undergo circumcision as a sign of their inclusion in God's covenant. Consequently, the Letter reflects an intra-Christian dispute over whether the marks of Jewish identity should be imposed upon gentile converts.

Even the categories "Christian" and "Jewish" are anachronistic here; the Letter was written before the irrevocable split of church and synagogue, and Paul, no less than the rival missionaries, understands himself as the true interpreter of the Jewish law (4.21; 5.14). Thus he contends that all who live under the cross of Christ in the "new creation" are members of "the Israel of God" (6.14–16).

It is not clear whether the missionaries wanted gentile converts to adopt comprehensive observance of Jewish law or merely to accept circumcision as a symbolic entrance requirement, as 5.3 suggests. The Antioch incident (2.11–16) indicates that some Jewish Christians adopted a "separate but equal" policy toward gentile Christians, which Paul regards as a manipulative tactic (2.14).

The rival missionaries must have spotlighted the figure of Abraham (regarded in rabbinic tradition as "the father of proselytes") and emphasized that God had commanded circumcision to him as a sign of the covenant (Gen 17.9–14). Paul's extended interpretation of the Abraham story (3.6–18; 4.21–5.1) is a rebuttal to their exegesis.

Paul's Response: Key Emphases

Paul insists that "righteousness" (right covenant relation with God) depends not on observance of Jewish law but on God's promise and its fulfillment through the death of Jesus Christ (2.21; 3.18, 29). It is debated whether the slogan *pistis Iēsou Christou* (Greek, "faith of/in Jesus Christ"; see note on 2.16) refers to Jesus' faithful death or to the community's subsequent trust in him; despite venerable interpretative tradition, the former sense is more probable. Either way, Paul's emphasis falls consistently on God's initiative in setting human beings free from bondage to sin and to the norms and powers (Greek, *stoicheia*) of the present age

(1.4; 2.20–21; 3.13–14; 3.21–22; 4.3–9; 5.1). The crucifixion is an apocalyptic event that marks the end of the old age and the beginning of God's new creation (6.14–15). To require gentile believers to be circumcised would be to revert to the era "before faith came" and would render the death of Christ pointless (2.21; 3.23–25). Insisting on "works of the law" (2.16) as signs of covenant membership perpetuates a division that Christ's death was meant to destroy (3.28). That is why the message of the rival missionaries is, in Paul's eyes, no gospel (1.7).

Significance

Galatians offers a window into formative Christianity and shows that the question of continuity with Jewish law and tradition was an urgent concern at this early date. Paul's statements about the law in Galatians created acute theological tensions that demanded further reflection (see Romans). His insistence on the radical character and universal scope of God's grace became a crucial factor in the early church's self-definition, and it has played a generative role in subsequent Christian theology. *Richard B. Hays*

Salutation

1 Paul an apostle—sent neither by human commission nor from human
authorities, but through Jesus Christ and
God the Father, who raised him from the
dead— 2and all the members of God's
family[a] who are with me,
To the churches of Galatia:
3 Grace to you and peace from God
our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,
4who gave himself for our sins to set us
free from the present evil age, according
to the will of our God and Father, 5to
whom be the glory forever and ever.
Amen.

There Is No Other Gospel

6 I am astonished that you are so
quickly deserting the one who called you
in the grace of Christ and are turning to a
different gospel— 7not that there is an-
other gospel, but there are some who are
confusing you and want to pervert the
gospel of Christ. 8But even if we or an
angel[b] from heaven should proclaim to
you a gospel contrary to what we pro-
claimed to you, let that one be accursed!
9As we have said before, so now I repeat,
if anyone proclaims to you a gospel con-
trary to what you received, let that one be
accursed!

a Gk *all the brothers* b Or *a messenger*

1.1–5 Key themes of the Letter are introduced: Paul's apostolic authority and Christ's death as an act liberating his people from bondage. **1.2** No coauthor is named (cf., e.g., 1 Cor 1.1; 2 Cor 1.1), but Paul does present the letter as coming from a group of believers (*all . . . with me*). **1.4** *Gave himself for our sins.* See 2.20; Mt 26.28; Rom 4.25; 5.8, 15–19; 8.3; 2 Cor 5.21; Titus 2.14; 1 Pet 2.24. According to Jewish apocalyptic thought, *the present evil age* would be supplanted by "the age to come," a messianic era in which God's justice would prevail (see Isa 60; 65.17–25; 2 Esd 7.50, 113; *1 Enoch* 91.15–17). Paul sees the death and resurrection of Jesus as a sign that this transformation has already begun (see 6.14–15; Rom 12.2; 1 Cor 7.31; 10.11). **1.6–9** Only Galatians among Paul's Letters lacks an opening thanksgiving; instead Paul rebukes his readers. **1.6** *The one who called you,* God, not Paul. See 1.15; Rom 8.30; 1 Cor 1.9; 7.17; 1 Thess 2.12; 5.24. **1.9** On the gospel they have

10 Am I now seeking human approval, or God's approval? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still pleasing people, I would not be a servant[c] of Christ.

The Divine Origin of Paul's Gospel

11 For I want you to know, brothers and sisters,[d] that the gospel that was proclaimed by me is not of human origin; 12 for I did not receive it from a human source, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

13 You have heard, no doubt, of my earlier life in Judaism. I was violently persecuting the church of God and was trying to destroy it. 14 I advanced in Judaism beyond many among my people of the same age, for I was far more zealous for the traditions of my ancestors. 15 But when God, who had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace, was pleased 16 to reveal his Son to me,[e] so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with any human being, 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were already apostles before me, but I went away at once into Arabia, and afterwards I returned to Damascus.

18 Then after three years I did go up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days; 19 but I did not see any other apostle except James the Lord's brother. 20 In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie! 21 Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia, 22 and I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea that are in Christ; 23 they only heard it said, "The one who formerly was persecuting us is now proclaiming the faith he once tried to destroy." 24 And they glorified God because of me.

Paul's Meeting with the Jerusalem Leaders

2 Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. 2 I went up in response to a revelation. Then I laid before them (though only in a private meeting with the acknowledged leaders) the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure that I was not running, or had not run, in vain. 3 But even Titus, who was with me, was not compelled to be circumcised, though he was a Greek. 4 But because of false believers[f] secretly brought in, who slipped in to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might enslave us— 5 we did not submit to them even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might always remain with you. 6 And from those who were supposed to be acknowledged leaders (what they actually were

c Gk *slave* *d* Gk *brothers* *e* Gk *in me*
f Gk *false brothers*

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received, see note on 3.1; 1 Cor 15.1–5. **1.10** A retort to the charge that Paul is "soft" on observance of the Jewish law for reasons of expediency.

1.11–24 Responding to challenges, Paul tells the story of his own calling in a way that highlights God's initiative. **1.12** *Not . . . from a human source.* Elsewhere (1 Cor 11.23–25; 15.3–7) Paul shows his dependence on early Christian traditions. **1.13** *Persecuting the church.* See also Acts 8.3; 1 Cor 15.9; Phil 3.6; 1 Tim 1.12–14. **1.14** *Advanced*, a word commonly used by Stoic philosophers to describe progress in cultivating virtue. *Traditions of my ancestors*, the Jewish law and the oral traditions concerning its interpretation, as handed down in Pharisaic Judaism. See Acts 22.3; Phil 3.4–6. **1.15** *God . . . his grace.* The language echoes OT prophetic call narratives; see Isa 49.1–6; Jer 1.5. **1.16** *Reveal his Son to me*, lit. "reveal his Son in me" (see text note *e*). Paul is to be the instrument of God's revelation to the Gentiles. **1.17** *Arabia*, probably the Nabatean kingdom, south of Damascus and east of the Jordan River. **1.18** It is debated whether the *three years* are to be counted from Paul's call experience (1.15–16) or from his return to Damascus (1.17). *Cephas*, Aramaic, "rock." Paul uses Peter's Greek name (*Petros*) only in 2.7–8; cf. Jn 1.42; 1 Cor 1.12; 15.5. **1.19** *James*, the brother of Jesus (Mk 6.3), became one of the key leaders in the Jerusalem church; see 2.9, 12; Acts 15.13; 21.18. **1.21** *Syria and Cilicia*, the areas around Antioch and Tarsus; see Acts 15.23, 41.

2.1–10 These verses emphasize that even the Jerusalem church previously endorsed Paul's law-free gospel for Gentiles (see also Acts 15.1–29). **2.1** The *fourteen years* could be counted from Paul's first Jerusalem visit (1.18) or from his call (1.15–16). On *Barnabas*, see Acts 4.36; 9.27; 11.22–30; 13.1–15.41. *Taking Titus*, an uncircumcised Gentile (2.3), was a symbolic test of Jerusalem's acceptance of Paul's mission. **2.2** *In response to a revelation.* Cf. Acts 15.1–3. **2.4** The *false believers* are clearly distinguished from the Jerusalem leaders; Paul implicitly connects the former with his opponents in Galatia. **2.6** *God shows no partiality*, an OT maxim; see Deut 10.17; 2 Chr

makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—those leaders contributed nothing to me. 7 On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel for the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel for the circumcised 8 (for he who worked through Peter making him an apostle to the circumcised also worked through me in sending me to the Gentiles), 9 and when James and Cephas and John, who were acknowledged pillars, recognized the grace that had been given to me, they gave to Barnabas and me the right hand of fellowship, agreeing that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. 10 They asked only one thing, that we remember the poor, which was actually what I was[g] eager to do.

Paul Rebukes Peter at Antioch

11 But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood self-condemned; 12 for until certain people came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But after they came, he drew back and kept himself separate for fear of the circumcision faction. 13 And the other Jews joined him in this hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. 14 But when I saw that they were not acting consistently with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?"[h]

Jews and Gentiles Are Justified Through Christ's Death

15 We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; 16 yet we know that a person is justified[i] not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ.[j] And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ,[k] and not by doing the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law. 17 But if, in our effort to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have been found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! 18 But if I build up again the very things that I once tore down, then I dem-

g Or *had been* *h* Some interpreters hold that the quotation extends into the following paragraph *i* Or *reckoned as righteous;* and so elsewhere *j* Or *the faith of Jesus Christ* *k* Or *the faith of Christ*

19.7. **2.7** This verse refers not to two different gospels (see 1.7) but to two culturally distinct audiences. **2.9** *John,* son of Zebedee (Mk 1.19) and paired with Peter in Acts 3.1–4.22; 8.14–25. *Pillars,* metaphorically the supports of the church as a spiritual temple (see Mt 16.18; Eph 2.19–22; 1 Pet 2.4–5; Rev 3.12). In Second Temple Judaism, *pillar* was sometimes used of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. **2.10** Paul carried out his agreement to *remember the poor* by organizing a collection in his gentile mission churches (see Rom 15.25–27; 1 Cor 16.1–4; 2 Cor 8.1–9.15); however, *the poor* may also have been a religious self-designation of some early Jewish Christians.

2.11–21 Paul narrates his confrontation with Cephas as a case that involves issues analogous to those now faced in Galatia. **2.11** *Antioch,* a major center of early Christian activity and, according to Acts 11.19–26; 13.1–3, the launching site for the preaching mission of Paul and Barnabas. **2.12** Observant Jews were forbidden to eat gentile meat and usually avoided gentile wine, but Jewish law did not prohibit eating *with the Gentiles;* presumably it was the food at the Antioch community's common meals that was objectionable. The vacillation of Cephas and Barnabas shows that the Jerusalem agreement (2.7–10) had failed to address the problem of table fellowship. **2.14–16** Paul interprets Cephas's withdrawal as a tactic to pressure gentile converts into keeping the Jewish law. The direct quotation of Paul's address to Cephas probably extends to the end of 2.16. **2.15** *Gentile sinners,* used with some irony here, expresses a traditional Jewish attitude. **2.16** *Works of the law* refers primarily to practices commanded by the law (circumcision, dietary laws, sabbath observance) that distinctively mark Jewish ethnic identity; these symbolize comprehensive obedience to the law's covenant obligations. The translation *faith in Jesus Christ* ascribes saving efficacy to the believer's act of trusting in Christ. The alternative translation *faith of Jesus Christ* (see text note *j*; see also 2.20; 3.22; Rom 3.22, 26; Phil 3.9) emphasizes Christ's faithful obedience to the point of death on a cross; see Rom 5.18–19; Phil 2.8. *Have come to believe in,* or "placed our trust in." *No one will be justified* echoes Ps 143.2; see also Rom 3.20. **2.17** *Found to be sinners,* i.e., living like Gentiles (2.15). **2.18** *The very things that I once tore down,* the Jewish commandments as a barrier between Jews and Gentiles (see also Eph 2.11–22). For Paul to rebuild the barrier would be to admit that he had been *a transgressor* by tearing it down in his missionary

onstrate that I am a transgressor. 19 For
through the law I died to the law, so that
I might live to God. I have been crucified
with Christ; 20 and it is no longer I who
live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And
the life I now live in the flesh I live by
faith in the Son of God,[l] who loved me
and gave himself for me. 21 I do not nul-
lify the grace of God; for if justification[m]
comes through the law, then Christ died
for nothing.

The Experience of the Spirit

3 You foolish Galatians! Who has be-
witched you? It was before your eyes
that Jesus Christ was publicly exhibited as
crucified! 2 The only thing I want to learn
from you is this: Did you receive the Spirit
by doing the works of the law or by believ-
ing what you heard? 3 Are you so foolish?
Having started with the Spirit, are you
now ending with the flesh? 4 Did you ex-
perience so much for nothing?—if it re-
ally was for nothing. 5 Well then, does
God[n] supply you with the Spirit and
work miracles among you by your doing
the works of the law, or by your believing
what you heard?

The Promise to Abraham

6 Just as Abraham "believed God, and
it was reckoned to him as righteousness,"
7 so, you see, those who believe are the de-
scendants of Abraham. 8 And the scrip-
ture, foreseeing that God would justify
the Gentiles by faith, declared the gospel
beforehand to Abraham, saying, "All the
Gentiles shall be blessed in you." 9 For this
reason, those who believe are blessed with
Abraham who believed.

10 For all who rely on the works of the
law are under a curse; for it is written,
"Cursed is everyone who does not observe
and obey all the things written in the book
of the law." 11 Now it is evident that no
one is justified before God by the law; for
"The one who is righteous will live by
faith."[o] 12 But the law does not rest on
faith; on the contrary, "Whoever does the
works of the law[p] will live by them."
13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of
the law by becoming a curse for us—for it
is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs
on a tree"— 14 in order that in Christ

l Or *by the faith of the Son of God*
m Or *righteousness* *n* Gk *he*
o Or *The one who is righteous through faith will live*
p Gk *does them*

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work. **2.19** *Crucified with Christ.* See 5.24; 6.14; Rom 6.5–11; 2 Cor 4.7–12. **2.20** *Christ . . . lives in me.* See Rom 8.9–11; 2 Cor 13.5; Col 1.27; also Jn 17.23. On *loved me and gave himself for me,* see note on 1.4. **2.21** Paul implies that his critics unwittingly *nullify the grace of God* (see 5.4) by adding observance of Jewish law to the *justification* or *righteousness* (right covenant relation to God; see text note *m* and also 3.6) that comes only through the death of Christ (see also 3.21).

3.1–5 Paul now addresses issues in Galatia directly; because of their experience of receiving the Spirit, the Galatians should know that they are already members of God's people. **3.1** *Publicly exhibited as crucified* refers to Paul's proclamation of the gospel in vivid images (see 1 Cor 2.1–5); the Galatians did not literally witness the crucifixion of Jesus. **3.2** On *works of the law,* see 2.16; the word *doing* does not appear in the Greek. *By believing what you heard* translates an ambiguous phrase that could also be rendered "by the message of faith." **3.3** *Ending with the flesh,* an ironic double entendre, refers to circumcision (see 6.12–13) and also to mortal existence apart from God; see also 4.29; 5.16–26; 6.8; 1 Cor 3.3. **3.5** Paul thinks of the Galatians' experience of *the Spirit* and *miracles* as an ongoing aspect of their communal life; see also 1 Cor 12.4–11; 14.26–33a; 2 Cor 12.12.

3.6–14 Paul begins a complex argument from scripture to show that God always intended the salvation of Gentiles; see also Rom 3.27–4.25. **3.6** Gen 15.6. On *righteousness,* see note on 2.21. **3.8** *The gospel* spoken to Abraham (see Gen 12.3; 18.18; 22.18) focuses on the blessing of *the Gentiles.* **3.9** This verse is an exegetical remark on the preceding quotation: the blessing pronounced on "the faithful Abraham" (a better translation than *Abraham who believed*) includes those who later believe. **3.10** The quotation blends Deut 27.26 and 28.58. **3.11** The quotation is from Hab 2.4b. The Septuagint treats this text as a messianic prophecy; see Rom 1.17; cf. Heb 10.37–38. **3.12** The OT text quoted is Lev 18.5 (see also Rom 10.5). Paul argues not that no one can keep the law but that the law is unable to give the life it promises (see 3.21). **3.13** Christ's death effects redemption from *the curse* pronounced by *the law* (see Gen 12.3; Deut 27.15–26; 28.15–68), not from the law itself. *"Cursed is . . . a tree."* The proof-text (Deut 21.23) calls for the body of a hanged criminal to be buried immediately rather than left hanging to "defile the land." **3.14** *Blessing of Abraham.* See 3.8–9; Paul sees the presence of *the Spirit* in gentile communities (see 3.2–5) as a sign that the promised bless-

Jesus the blessing of Abraham might
come to the Gentiles, so that we might re-
ceive the promise of the Spirit through
faith.

15 Brothers and sisters,[q] I give an ex-
ample from daily life: once a person's
will[r] has been ratified, no one adds to it
or annuls it. 16 Now the promises were
made to Abraham and to his offspring;[s]
it does not say, "And to offsprings,"[t] as
of many; but it says, "And to your off-
spring,"[s] that is, to one person, who is
Christ. 17 My point is this: the law, which
came four hundred thirty years later,
does not annul a covenant previously rati-
fied by God, so as to nullify the promise.
18 For if the inheritance comes from the
law, it no longer comes from the promise;
but God granted it to Abraham through
the promise.

The Purpose of the Law

19 Why then the law? It was added
because of transgressions, until the
offspring[s] would come to whom the
promise had been made; and it was or-
dained through angels by a mediator.
20 Now a mediator involves more than one
party; but God is one.

21 Is the law then opposed to the
promises of God? Certainly not! For if a
law had been given that could make alive,
then righteousness would indeed come
through the law. 22 But the scripture has
imprisoned all things under the power of
sin, so that what was promised through
faith in Jesus Christ[u] might be given to
those who believe.

23 Now before faith came, we were
imprisoned and guarded under the law
until faith would be revealed. 24 There-
fore the law was our disciplinarian until
Christ came, so that we might be justified
by faith. 25 But now that faith has come,
we are no longer subject to a disciplinar-
ian, 26 for in Christ Jesus you are all chil-
dren of God through faith. 27 As many of
you as were baptized into Christ have
clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is
no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer
slave or free, there is no longer male and
female; for all of you are one in Christ
Jesus. 29 And if you belong to Christ, then
you are Abraham's offspring,[s] heirs ac-
cording to the promise.

q Gk *Brothers* r Or *covenant* (as in verse 17)
s Gk *seed* t Gk *seeds* u Or *through the faith of Jesus Christ*

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ing has come to eschatological fulfillment. **3.15–18** A play on words: Greek *diathēkē* can mean either "covenant" or "last will and testament." Paul transfers the legal connotations of the latter to the story of God's covenant with Abraham. **3.15** *I give an example from daily life*, lit. "I speak in a human way." **3.16** *Promises*. See Gen 12.2–3; 15.5; 17.8; 22.17–18. *Offspring*, lit. "seed" (see text note *s*). Paul employs a rabbinic exegetical convention, emphasizing the singular form of the collective noun. The identification of the "seed" as *Christ* (the Messiah) probably presupposes a link between Gen 17.8 and 2 Sam 7.12–14, a promise of an eternal kingdom for David's "seed." **3.17** *Four hundred thirty years*. See Ex 12.40; cf. Gen 15.13. **3.18** *Granted*, the verbal cognate of "grace" (see 1.6, 15; 2.21; 5.4).

3.19–25 The foregoing discussion raises the issue of why God gave the law at all; Paul argues that it was necessary but temporary. **3.19** It is disputed whether *because of transgressions* means "to increase transgressions" (see Rom 5.20) or "to restrain transgressions" (see 3.23–25). *Ordained through angels* (see also Acts 7.53), a tradition developed from Deut 33.2; Ps 68.17. Philo's *Life of Moses* explicitly gives Moses the title of *mediator* (see Lev 26.46; Num 36.13). **3.20** This verse is notoriously obscure; apparently the point is that those who are in Christ have direct access to God's promise without mediation (see 3.26–29; cf. 1 Tim 2.5). *God is one*. See Deut 6.4. **3.21** See 2.19–21. **3.22** See also Rom 11.32. *Through faith in Jesus Christ*. If *through the faith of Jesus Christ* (see text note *u*) is preferred, the phrase should modify *given* rather than *promised*. **3.23** See 4.4–5. **3.24** The *disciplinarian* (Greek *paidagōgos*) was not a teacher but a slave who guarded and supervised children. **3.26–29** Conclusion to the line of argument begun in 3.6–14. **3.26** *Children of God*. See also Rom 8.14–17; Jn 1.12. **3.27** In early Christian baptismal liturgies, the newly baptized person was *clothed* in a new white garment; see also Rom 13.14; Eph 4.24. On baptism as union with Christ, see also Rom 6.3–5. **3.28** Probably a baptismal formula; see 1 Cor 12.13; Col 3.11. *No . . . male and female* echoes Gen 1.27; those in Christ have entered a *new creation* (see 6.15) where former social distinctions are replaced by unity. **3.29** *Offspring*, lit. "seed," is now interpreted corporately; cf. 3.16.

Heirs and Children of God

4 My point is this: heirs, as long as they are minors, are no better than slaves, though they are the owners of all the property; 2 but they remain under guardians and trustees until the date set by the father. 3 So with us; while we were minors, we were enslaved to the elemental spirits[v] of the world. 4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. 6 And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our[w] hearts, crying, "Abba![x] Father!" 7 So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.[y]

No Turning Back

8 Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to beings that by nature are not gods. 9 Now, however, that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and beggarly elemental spirits?[z] How can you want to be enslaved to them again? 10 You are observing special days, and months, and seasons, and years. 11 I am afraid that my work for you may have been wasted.

An Appeal to Friendship

12 Friends,[a] I beg you, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You have done me no wrong. 13 You know that it was because of a physical infirmity that I first announced the gospel to you; 14 though my condition put you to the test, you did not scorn or despise me, but welcomed me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus. 15 What has become of the goodwill you felt? For I testify that, had it been possible, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me. 16 Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth? 17 They make much of you, but for no good purpose; they want to exclude you, so that you may make much of them. 18 It is good to be made much of for a good purpose at all times, and not only when I am present with you. 19 My little children, for whom I am again in the pain of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, 20 I wish I were present with you now and could change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.

The Allegory of Hagar and Sarah

21 Tell me, you who desire to be subject to the law, will you not listen to the

v Or *the rudiments* w Other ancient authorities read *your* x Aramaic for *Father* y Other ancient authorities read *an heir of God through Christ*
z Or *beggarly rudiments* a Gk *Brothers*

4.1–7 Paul links the inheritance metaphor to an apocalyptic story of redemption. **4.3** The term *elemental spirits* (Greek *stoicheia*) is difficult: it can mean either "basic principles" (as in Heb 5.12), such as the code of behavior set forth in Jewish law, or—as apparently here—it can refer to quasi-demonic powers that oppress humankind (see 4.8; Col 2.8, 20). Either way, Paul's *we* includes Jews and Gentiles in a common state of slavery before Christ. **4.4** *Fullness of time.* See also Mk 1.15; Eph 1.10. *God sent his Son.* See 1.4; Jn 3.16–17; Rom 8.3–4; 1 Jn 4.9; see also Wis 9.9–18. *Born of a woman* emphasizes the Son's humanity (see Job 14.1; Mt 11.11); *born under the law,* his Jewishness. **4.5** On *adoption* and on 4.5–7 as a whole, see also Rom 8.14–17. **4.6** *Abba.* See also Mk 14.36; Rom 8.15. **4.8–11** Paul characterizes the Galatians' interest in Jewish law as a return to bondage equivalent to their state as pagans. **4.10** *Days, and months, and seasons, and years,* the Jewish liturgical calendar. See also Col 2.16. **4.11** *Wasted.* See Phil 2.16; 1 Thess 3.5; see also Isa 49.4; 65.23.

4.12–20 Paul reminds the Galatians of his past relationship with them and appeals for its restoration. **4.12** *Become as I am.* See 1 Cor 11.1; 1 Thess 1.6; Heb 6.12; 13.7. *I also have become as you are.* See 1 Cor 9.21; Paul has become like a Gentile, free from observing the commandments of Jewish law. **4.13** The character of Paul's *physical infirmity* is unknown; for possible background, see 6.17; 2 Cor 11.23–27; 12.7–10. **4.14** *Angel,* or "messenger." **4.15** *Torn out your eyes,* probably a proverbial expression for solidarity in friendship. **4.17** *Exclude you.* See also 2.12. **4.19** On Paul's churches as his *children,* see also 1 Cor 4.14; 2 Cor 6.13; 1 Thess 2.11–12. *Pain of childbirth.* Apostolic suffering is one of the birth pangs of the new creation (see Rom 8.22–23; 1 Thess 5.3; also Mk 13.8). *Christ . . . formed in you.* See Rom 8.29; note on 2.20.

4.21–5.1 An allegorical reading of Genesis that reverses Jewish tradition, according to which Isaac (circumcised on the eighth day, Gen 21.4) symbolizes Israel and Ishmael symbolizes Gentiles; cf. *Jubilees* 16.17–18. **4.21** Paul can use *law*

law? 22 For it is written that Abraham had
two sons, one by a slave woman and the
other by a free woman. 23 One, the child
of the slave, was born according to the
flesh; the other, the child of the free
woman, was born through the promise.
24 Now this is an allegory: these women
are two covenants. One woman, in fact, is
Hagar, from Mount Sinai, bearing chil-
dren for slavery. 25 Now Hagar is Mount
Sinai in Arabia[b] and corresponds to the
present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery
with her children. 26 But the other woman
corresponds to the Jerusalem above; she
is free, and she is our mother. 27 For it is
written,

"Rejoice, you childless one, you
who bear no children,
burst into song and shout, you
who endure no birth
pangs;
for the children of the desolate
woman are more numerous
than the children of the one
who is married."

28 Now you,[c] my friends,[d] are children
of the promise, like Isaac. 29 But just as at
that time the child who was born accord-
ing to the flesh persecuted the child who
was born according to the Spirit, so it is
now also. 30 But what does the scripture
say? "Drive out the slave and her child;
for the child of the slave will not share the
inheritance with the child of the free
woman." 31 So then, friends,[d] we are chil-
dren, not of the slave but of the free
5 woman. 1 For freedom Christ has set
us free. Stand firm, therefore, and
do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

Warning Against Circumcision

2 Listen! I, Paul, am telling you that if
you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ
will be of no benefit to you. 3 Once again I
testify to every man who lets himself be
circumcised that he is obliged to obey the
entire law. 4 You who want to be justified
by the law have cut yourselves off from
Christ; you have fallen away from grace.
5 For through the Spirit, by faith, we ea-
gerly wait for the hope of righteousness.
6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision
nor uncircumcision counts for anything;
the only thing that counts is faith work-
ing[e] through love.
7 You were running well; who pre-
vented you from obeying the truth?
8 Such persuasion does not come from the
one who calls you. 9 A little yeast leavens
the whole batch of dough. 10 I am confi-
dent about you in the Lord that you will
not think otherwise. But whoever it is that
is confusing you will pay the penalty.
11 But my friends,[d] why am I still being
persecuted if I am still preaching cir-
cumcision? In that case the offense of
the cross has been removed. 12 I wish
those who unsettle you would castrate
themselves!

Freedom for Love

13 For you were called to freedom,
brothers and sisters;[d] only do not use
your freedom as an opportunity for self-
indulgence,[f] but through love become

b Other ancient authorities read *For Sinai is a mountain in Arabia* *c* Other ancient authorities read *we* *d* Gk *brothers* *e* Or *made effective* *f* Gk *the flesh*

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to mean, more broadly, scripture. **4.22–23** See Gen 16, 21. **4.24–25** The equation of Hagar with Mount Sinai has no basis in the Genesis story; apparently the link is posited by Paul to connect slavery with law. **4.24** The *two covenants* do not correspond to the Old and New Testaments, but more generally to the covenant of promise and the covenant of law; according to Paul, the former is older than the latter (see 3.17). **4.26** Ps 86.5 in the Septuagint (Ps 87.5) acclaims "Mother Zion." **4.27** Isa 54.1; see also Isa 51.1–3. **4.29** The idea that Ishmael *persecuted* Isaac is found in rabbinic midrash, based on Gen 21.9. **4.30** Gen 21.10. **5.1** For Jewish law as a *yoke*, see also Acts 15.10; the rabbis used the same image with positive connotations, as does Mt 11.29–30.

5.2–12 Paul drives home the Letter's aim: to dissuade the Galatians from accepting circumcision. **5.4** See 2.16, 21; 3.10–12. **5.5** See Rom 8.23–25. **5.6** See 6.15; 1 Cor 7.19. **5.7** *Prevented you*, lit. "cut in on you," as in a race. **5.8** See 1.6. **5.9** See also 1 Cor 5.6–8. **5.10** See 1.7–9. **5.11** Paul is *being persecuted* neither by Rome nor by civil authorities but by the synagogue or perhaps by Jewish Christians (see 1.13; 4.29; 6.12). *Offense of the cross.* See 1 Cor 1.18–25.

5.13–26 Paul sketches a vision for a community led by the Spirit; he links the pressure for circumcision with rivalry and divisions.

slaves to one another. 14 For the whole law
is summed up in a single commandment,
"You shall love your neighbor as your-
self." 15 If, however, you bite and devour
one another, take care that you are not
consumed by one another.

The Works of the Flesh

16 Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not
gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For what
the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit,
and what the Spirit desires is opposed to
the flesh; for these are opposed to each
other, to prevent you from doing what
you want. 18 But if you are led by the
Spirit, you are not subject to the law.
19 Now the works of the flesh are obvi-
ous: fornication, impurity, licentiousness,
20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jeal-
ousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, fac-
tions, 21 envy,[g] drunkenness, carousing,
and things like these. I am warning you,
as I warned you before: those who do
such things will not inherit the kingdom
of God.

The Fruit of the Spirit

22 By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit
is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness,
generosity, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and
self-control. There is no law against such
things. 24 And those who belong to Christ
Jesus have crucified the flesh with its pas-
sions and desires. 25 If we live by the
Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.
26 Let us not become conceited, compet-
ing against one another, envying one
another.

Bear One Another's Burdens

6 My friends,[h] if anyone is detected in
a transgression, you who have re-
ceived the Spirit should restore such a one
in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that
you yourselves are not tempted. 2 Bear
one another's burdens, and in this way
you will fulfill[i] the law of Christ. 3 For if
those who are nothing think they are
something, they deceive themselves. 4 All
must test their own work; then that work,
rather than their neighbor's work, will be-
come a cause for pride. 5 For all must
carry their own loads.

6 Those who are taught the word
must share in all good things with their
teacher.

7 Do not be deceived; God is not
mocked, for you reap whatever you sow.
8 If you sow to your own flesh, you will
reap corruption from the flesh; but if you
sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life
from the Spirit. 9 So let us not grow weary
in doing what is right, for we will reap at
harvest time, if we do not give up. 10 So
then, whenever we have an opportunity,
let us work for the good of all, and espe-
cially for those of the family of faith.

Final Admonitions and Benediction

11 See what large letters I make when
I am writing in my own hand! 12 It is those
who want to make a good showing in
the flesh that try to compel you to be

g Other ancient authorities add *murder*
h Gk *Brothers* *i* Other ancient authorities read *in this way fulfill*

5.13 See 5.1. **5.14** The quotation is from Lev 19.18; a saying of Rabbi Hillel sums up Jewish law in the command, "What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor." See also 6.2; Mk 12.28–34; Rom 13.8–10. **5.16–18** See also 5.25; Rom 8.1–17; Eph 2.3. **5.17** *Prevent you from doing what you want.* See Rom 7.15–24. **5.18** See also 3.23–25; Rom 6.14. **5.19–21** The list of vices is conventional; see, e.g., Mk 7.21–22; Rom 1.29–31; 1 Cor 6.9–10; 2 Cor 12.20. **5.19** *Flesh.* See 1 Cor 3.3. **5.21** *Inherit the kingdom of God.* See also Mt 5.5; 25.34; 1 Cor 6.9–10; 15.50; Rev 21.7. On inheritance, see also 3.15–18; 3.29–4.7; 4.30. **5.22–23** *Fruit of the Spirit.* See Rom 8.9–11; Phil 1.11; 1 Tim 6.11; 2 Pet 1.5–8; see also lists of "gifts" and "manifestations" of the Spirit in Rom 12.6–8; 1 Cor 12.7–11. **5.24** See also 2.19b; 6.14; Rom 6.6; 8.13. **5.25** See 5.16.

6.1–10 General exhortations stressing mutual responsibility within the church. **6.1** On *restoring* a transgressor, see also Lev 19.17; Mt 18.15–22; Lk 17.3–4; Jas 5.19–20; cf. 1 Cor 5.1–13; Titus 3.10–11. **6.2** *Law of Christ* may refer to the law of love (5.14) or, more specifically, to the example and/or teaching of Christ; the phrase is perhaps borrowed ironically from the rival missionaries. See also Rom 15.1–7; 1 Cor 9.21; also Jn 13.34. **6.6** A directive for financial support of Christian teachers (see also 1 Cor 9.3–14). **6.7** See Job 4.8; Prov 22.8. **6.8** See Rom 8.5–13; cf. 1 Cor 15.35–44. **6.9** *Not grow weary.* See 2 Cor 4.1, 16; also Lk 18.1. **6.10** *Family,* lit. "household"; see also Eph 2.19; 1 Tim 3.15.

6.11–18 A final summation underscoring the Letter's main points. **6.11** Paul writes the post-

circumcised—only that they may not be
persecuted for the cross of Christ. 13 Even
the circumcised do not themselves obey
the law, but they want you to be circum-
cised so that they may boast about your
flesh. 14 May I never boast of anything ex-
cept the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by
which[j] the world has been crucified to
me, and I to the world. 15 For[k] neither
circumcision nor uncircumcision is any-
thing; but a new creation is everything!
16 As for those who will follow this rule—
peace be upon them, and mercy, and
upon the Israel of God.
17 From now on, let no one make
trouble for me; for I carry the marks of
Jesus branded on my body.
18 May the grace of our Lord Jesus
Christ be with your spirit, brothers and
sisters.[l] Amen.

j Or *through whom* add *in Christ Jesus*
k Other ancient authorities
l Gk *brothers*

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script in his *own hand*, an ancient epistolary convention; the body of the letter was taken down or copied by a secretary. See also Rom 16.22. **6.12–13** See also 2.3, 14; 4.17; 5.11. **6.13** *The circumcised.* Some manuscripts read "those who are being circumcised." *Boast.* See Rom 2.17–23; 3.27; 4.2; 1 Cor 4.7; 2 Cor 11.12–13, 18; Eph 2.9. **6.14** On *boasting* in God or Christ, see Rom 5.2–3, 11; 1 Cor 1.29–31; 2.2. On the *world* as *crucified*, see also 2.19–20; 5.24; 2 Cor 5.14, 17; Col 2.14–15. **6.15** See 3.28; 5.6. *New creation* echoes Isa 65.17–25; Paul understands salvation as God's remaking of the world (see Rom 8.19–23; 2 Cor 5.17–19; see also Rev 21.5). **6.16** This blessing stands in juxtaposition to the Letter's opening curse (1.8–9). A similar blessing is found in the peace benediction of the *Shemoneh Esreh*, a standard synagogue prayer. *This rule*, 6.15, or perhaps 6.14–15. *Israel of God*, the church as the true Israel (see 3.7, 29; 4.28–31; Rom 9.6–8) or, alternatively, the whole people of Israel (see Rom 11.25–32); the argument of Galatians appears to support the former interpretation. **6.17** *The marks of Jesus*, Paul's scars (2 Cor 6.4–5; 11.23–25), incurred in his mission. The phrase may also suggest that Paul is branded by these scars as Christ's slave. **6.18** See also Phil 4.23; Philem 25.

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE

EPHESIANS

Occasion and Purpose

BECAUSE NO SINGLE EVENT or crisis can be discerned as its specific occasion and because of the general nature of its content, Ephesians is sometimes thought to have originated as a general letter intended for many churches, a notion reinforced by the lack of a place name in 1.1 in the best manuscripts. Clues within the Letter suggest its purpose. The readers are twice addressed as Gentiles (2.11; 3.1), but subsequently they are told to "no longer live as the Gentiles live" (4.17). Furthermore, they are reminded that "now in Christ Jesus" they are no longer "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise" (2.12–13). Thus, because of their response to the gospel, the readers are experiencing a radical transformation of their personal and social identity. They are being resocialized into God's purposes and family. Their new identity is in formation, and the Letter is designed to guide them from their baptism (4.5, 22, 24, 31; 6.11) toward their presentation as the unblemished bride of Christ.

Authorship

Marked differences in style, phrasing, and viewpoint between this Letter and the seven unquestionably authentic Pauline Letters (Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, Philemon) have cast significant doubt on Pauline authorship of Ephesians. It is more likely that a disciple of Paul wrote the Letter in Paul's name, probably after the apostle's death. Complex sentences, relative clauses, distinctive terminology (e.g., "heavenly places," "to the praise of his glory"), and redundant expressions (e.g., "law with its commandments and ordinances," "strength of his power") appear frequently in Ephesians. Even more striking, however, are the claims that believers already share in Christ's resurrection (2.6) and are saved (2.5, 8), assertions that lack parallels in the seven undisputed Letters. Also in this Letter, the church has become cosmic in function (3.10; cf. Philem 2) and now has Christ as its head (1.22–23; cf. Rom 12.4–5; 1 Cor 12.12–26). Predominantly temporal categories in Paul's thought (see Rom 13.11–12) have been transposed into spatial conceptions (see 1.20; 2.6),

perhaps as a way of dealing with the delay of Christ's return. Paul's understanding of sin as a hostile power and justification as deliverance from it (see Rom 5.6–11; 7.8, 11) is here replaced by an understanding of sins as individual trespasses and forgiveness as their removal (1.7; 2.1; 4.32).

Perspective

The perspective of Ephesians moves from a vastly cosmic picture of God's plan (1.3–23) and the believers' inclusion in it (2.1–22), to the role and mission of the church and life within it (3.1–5.20), to a depiction of relationships within the household (5.21–6.9), to a final description of how, with prayer, each believer stands battle-ready in God's power (6.10–20). This broad perspective binds the Letter together. God's power to enact the cosmic plan (1.3–23) is the same power available to the believer as armament (6.10–17). Relations of married persons mirror those between Christ and the church (5.21–33). Life within the church (4.1–13) reflects God's larger purpose in Christ, "to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth" (1.10).

Date and Place of Writing

Several features of Ephesians suggest a date in the last third of the first century C.E. The author writes to a gentile church which seems to have little perception of being part of Israel and needs instructions regarding this connection (2.11–18). These features suggest that some time has passed since the original Pauline mission (cf. 1 Cor 16.3; Gal 6.16). Moreover, a late first-century date would also fit other features distinguishing this Letter from the seven undisputed Pauline Letters: the aforementioned transposition of Pauline eschatological fervor into spatial categories; the diminution of women's status (see 5.22–24); and the reaccommodation to long-standing cultural patterns of hierarchy and submission in the household. There are no clues within the Letter regarding its place of composition. *J. Paul Sampley*

Salutation

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by
the will of God,
To the saints who are in Ephesus and
are faithful[a] in Christ Jesus:
2 Grace to you and peace from God
our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Spiritual Blessings in Christ

3 Blessed be the God and Father of
our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us
in Christ with every spiritual blessing in
the heavenly places, 4 just as he chose us
in Christ[b] before the foundation of
the world to be holy and blameless before him
in love. 5 He destined us for adoption as
his children through Jesus Christ, accord-
ing to the good pleasure of his will, 6 to
the praise of his glorious grace that he
freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. 7 In
him we have redemption through his
blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses,
according to the riches of his grace 8 that
he lavished on us. With all wisdom and
insight 9 he has made known to us the
mystery of his will, according to his good
pleasure that he set forth in Christ, 10 as a
plan for the fullness of time, to gather up
all things in him, things in heaven and
things on earth. 11 In Christ we have also
obtained an inheritance,[c] having been
destined according to the purpose of him
who accomplishes all things according to
his counsel and will, 12 so that we, who
were the first to set our hope on Christ,
might live for the praise of his glory. 13 In
him you also, when you had heard the
word of truth, the gospel of your salva-
tion, and had believed in him, were
marked with the seal of the promised
Holy Spirit; 14 this[d] is the pledge of our
inheritance toward redemption as God's
own people, to the praise of his glory.

Paul's Prayer

15 I have heard of your faith in the
Lord Jesus and your love[e] toward all the
saints, and for this reason 16 I do not cease
to give thanks for you as I remember you

a Other ancient authorities lack *in Ephesus*, reading *saints who are also faithful* b Gk *in him* c Or *been made a heritage* d Other ancient authorities read *who* e Other ancient authorities lack *and your love*

1.1–2 The salutation takes the same form as most Pauline Letter openings. **1.1** Like Romans, but unlike most other Pauline Letters, Ephesians is sent solely by *Paul*. On Paul's self-designation as *apostle*, see 2 Cor 1.1; Gal 1.1; Col 1.1. The frequent references to *the will of God* (see 1.5, 9, 11; 5.17; 6.6) emphasize God's plan and power. The *saints*, i.e., those set apart for God, are the believers (see 1.18; 2.19; 3.8, 18; 4.12; 5.3; 6.18). The location of the addressees *in Ephesus* is lacking in the best Greek manuscripts (see text note *a*). **1.2** *Grace*, the foundation of life in Christ, has made *peace* possible (see Rom 5.1). *Father* is a favorite designation of God in Ephesians; see 1.3, 17; 2.18; 3.14; 4.6; 5.20; 6.23. Family and household are primary social realities in Ephesians; in Roman times, the father had responsibility for all members of the household.

1.3–23 Where a formal thanksgiving might be expected (cf. Rom 1.8), there is an ancient Jewish prayer form (beginning *Blessed be the God*; see also 2 Cor 1.3; 1 Pet 1.3), which identifies the author with Jewish tradition. Vv. 15–23, however, incorporate many elements of a typical Pauline thanksgiving. **1.3** *The heavenly places*, an expression peculiar to Ephesians (see 1.20; 2.6; 3.10; 6.12). **1.4** *Chose* (see also *destined*, 1.5, 11) stresses God's initiative. The *blameless* (lit. "without blemish") life expected of those set apart for God (see 5.27; Col 1.22) has its roots in the purity expected of sacrificial animals and of priests (see Lev 21–22). **1.5** *Adoption*, the means by which Gentiles are included in God's household. See 2.19; Gal 4.5. **1.6** *The Beloved* is applied to Christ as a title nowhere else in the NT, though it is found in second-century Christian writings. **1.7** *Redemption*, a term for the buying back of a slave or the freeing of a prisoner by ransom. See also 1.14; 4.30; Col 1.14. **1.9** The content of the *mystery*, a reference to God's previously hidden purposes, is given in 3.3–9; see also 5.32; 6.19. **1.10** *Fullness* denotes completeness; see 1.23; 3.19; 4.13; see also 4.10; 5.18; Col 1.19. God's *plan for the fullness of time* is linked with the previously hidden mystery in 3.2–9. *To gather up* (Greek, "to head up"). This image is developed later in the Letter in terms of Christ as the *head* of his body, the church (1.22–23; 4.15). **1.12** The phrase *for the praise of his glory* (see also 1.6, 14) is distinctive in the NT and reflects the church's liturgical tradition. **1.13** *The seal*, a sign of authentication or confirmation, designates ownership, and therefore protection, by the Holy Spirit; see 4.30. **1.14** *Pledge*, a down payment securing the entirety of what is promised. See 2 Cor 1.22; 5.5. On salvation as an *inheritance*, see Rom 8.17; Gal 4.7; Col 1.12. Adopted children (1.5) share fully in the inheritance. **1.15** A nearly identical

in my prayers. 17 I pray that the God of
our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of
glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and
revelation as you come to know him, 18 so
that, with the eyes of your heart enlight-
ened, you may know what is the hope to
which he has called you, what are the
riches of his glorious inheritance among
the saints, 19 and what is the immeasur-
able greatness of his power for us who
believe, according to the working of his
great power. 20 God[f] put this power to
work in Christ when he raised him from
the dead and seated him at his right hand
in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule
and authority and power and dominion,
and above every name that is named, not
only in this age but also in the age to
come. 22 And he has put all things under
his feet and has made him the head over
all things for the church, 23 which is his
body, the fullness of him who fills all
in all.

From Death to Life

2 You were dead through the tres-
passes and sins 2 in which you once
lived, following the course of this world,
following the ruler of the power of the
air, the spirit that is now at work among
those who are disobedient. 3 All of us once
lived among them in the passions of our
flesh, following the desires of flesh and
senses, and we were by nature children of
wrath, like everyone else. 4 But God, who
is rich in mercy, out of the great love with
which he loved us 5 even when we were
dead through our trespasses, made us
alive together with Christ[g]—by grace you
have been saved— 6 and raised us up with
him and seated us with him in the heav-
enly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the
ages to come he might show the immea-
surable riches of his grace in kindness to-
ward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you
have been saved through faith, and this is
not your own doing; it is the gift of God—
9 not the result of works, so that no one
may boast. 10 For we are what he has
made us, created in Christ Jesus for good
works, which God prepared beforehand
to be our way of life.

One in Christ

11 So then, remember that at one time
you Gentiles by birth,[h] called "the uncir-
cumcision" by those who are called "the
circumcision"—a physical circumcision
made in the flesh by human hands—
12 remember that you were at that time
without Christ, being aliens from the com-
monwealth of Israel, and strangers to the
covenants of promise, having no hope
and without God in the world. 13 But now
in Christ Jesus you who once were far off

f Gk *He* g Other ancient authorities read *in Christ* h Gk *in the flesh*

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statement is found in Col 1.4. **1.18** All the saints have been *called* and are expected to live in accord with that calling; see 4.1, 4. **1.20** *At his right hand*, an echo of Ps 110.1. **1.21** *All rule and authority and power and dominion* includes all supposed rival powers, whether cosmic or mundane; see 3.10; 6.12; Rom 8.38; 1 Cor 15.24; Col 1.16; 2.10, 15; 1 Pet 3.22. **1.22** *Under his feet*, an echo of Ps 8.6. See also Ps 110.1; 1 Cor 15.25–28. Nowhere in the unquestionably authentic Pauline Letters is Christ called, as here, the *head* of the church (see also 1.10; 4.15; 5.23; cf. Rom 12.5; 1 Cor 12.12–27).

2.1–10 The believers' resurrection is linked with that of Christ (see esp. 2.6). **2.2** *In which you once lived.* Different ways of living (lit. "walking") are described in 4.1–5.20; see 2.10; 4.1, 17; 5.2, 8, 15. The *ruler of the power of the air* is probably the devil (4.27; 6.11). The disobedient *spirit* associated with this figure stands in contrast with the promised Holy Spirit (1.13; 2.18, 22). **2.3** *Children of wrath*, powerless creatures subject to God's judgment. See 5.6; Col 3.6. **2.5** *By grace you have been saved* (see also 2.8). In the authentic Letters, Paul views salvation as a future event (see Rom 5.9, 10; 13.11; 1 Thess 5.8). **2.6** *And raised us up with him* (see also Col 2.12; 3.1). In the authentic Letters, Paul is careful to speak of believers' resurrection as occurring in the future (see Rom 6.5; 1 Cor 15.21–23; Phil 3.10–11). **2.8–9** *By grace . . . not . . . works*, a concise summary of Paul's thought. See also Rom 3.21–31; 4.2–4, 16; 9.16; 11.6; Gal 2.16. **2.9** On the prohibition of improper *boasting*, see Rom 3.27; 4.2; 1 Cor 1.29–31. **2.10** *Good works* follow faith, never lead to it; see Col 1.10.

2.11–22 These verses discuss the unity of Gentiles and Jews in Christ. **2.12** On *aliens*, see 4.18; Col 1.21. *Strangers*, the opposite of citizens. See 2.19. *Covenants of promise* (see also 1.13; 3.6; Rom 9.4). The author could be thinking of the covenants of Gen 15.12–21; 17.1–8; 26.1–5; 35.11–12, which also highlight God's promises. **2.13** On *far off* and *near*, see also 2.17; Isa 57.19.

have been brought near by the blood of
Christ. 14 For he is our peace; in his flesh
he has made both groups into one and has
broken down the dividing wall, that is, the
hostility between us. 15 He has abolished
the law with its commandments and ordi-
nances, that he might create in himself
one new humanity in place of the two,
thus making peace, 16 and might recon-
cile both groups to God in one body[i]
through the cross, thus putting to death
that hostility through it.[j] 17 So he came
and proclaimed peace to you who were
far off and peace to those who were near;
18 for through him both of us have access
in one Spirit to the Father. 19 So then you
are no longer strangers and aliens, but
you are citizens with the saints and also
members of the household of God, 20 built
upon the foundation of the apostles and
prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the
cornerstone.[k] 21 In him the whole struc-
ture is joined together and grows into a
holy temple in the Lord; 22 in whom you
also are built together spiritually[l] into a
dwelling place for God.

Paul's Ministry to the Gentiles

3 This is the reason that I Paul am a
prisoner for[m] Christ Jesus for the
sake of you Gentiles— 2 for surely you
have already heard of the commission of
God's grace that was given me for you,
3 and how the mystery was made known to
me by revelation, as I wrote above in a few
words, 4 a reading of which will enable
you to perceive my understanding of the
mystery of Christ. 5 In former generations
this mystery[n] was not made known to hu-
mankind, as it has now been revealed to
his holy apostles and prophets by the
Spirit: 6 that is, the Gentiles have become
fellow heirs, members of the same body,
and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus
through the gospel.

7 Of this gospel I have become a ser-
vant according to the gift of God's grace
that was given me by the working of his
power. 8 Although I am the very least of
all the saints, this grace was given to me to
bring to the Gentiles the news of the
boundless riches of Christ, 9 and to make
everyone see[o] what is the plan of the
mystery hidden for ages in[p] God who
created all things; 10 so that through the
church the wisdom of God in its rich vari-
ety might now be made known to the rul-
ers and authorities in the heavenly places.
11 This was in accordance with the eternal
purpose that he has carried out in Christ
Jesus our Lord, 12 in whom we have access
to God in boldness and confidence
through faith in him.[q] 13 I pray therefore

i Or *reconcile both of us in one body for God*
j Or *in him*, or *in himself* *k* Or *keystone*
l Gk *in the Spirit* *m* Or *of* *n* Gk *it*
o Other ancient authorities read *to bring to light*
p Or *by* *q* Or *the faith of him*

Blood of Christ, a reference to Christ's atoning death. See Lev 16; Rom 3.25; 5.9. **2.14** On *peace*, see also 1.2; 2.15, 17; 4.3; 6.15. *In his flesh* identifies Christ's physical body on the cross as the means of reconciliation between Gentiles and Jews and between both groups and God (see 2.16; Col 1.22). **2.19** On *strangers and aliens*, see 2.12. *Household of God*, is a shift of image, but see note on 1.2; see 3.15; 5.21–6.4; see also 1 Tim 3.15; 1 Pet 4.17. **2.20** *Foundation of the apostles and prophets*. Cf. 1 Cor 3.11. The prophets could be those of ancient Israel (see Rom 3.21) or those of the early Christian church (3.5; 4.11; 1 Cor 11.4–5; 14.3–6, 24). The scriptural image of the *cornerstone* (see Ps 118.22; Isa 28.16) was widely applied to Christ; see Mt 21.42; 1 Pet 2.6. **2.22** On believers as a *dwelling place for God*, see 1 Cor 3.16–17; 6.19; 1 Pet 2.4–6.

3.1–13 Paul's status and the church's mission are aligned with God's eternal plan. **3.1** Paul was a *prisoner* on several occasions (see 2 Cor 6.5; 11.23; Phil 1.13–14; Col 4.3, 18; Philem 1, 9); it is not clear which imprisonment is intended here (see 6.20). **3.2** Paul had received a divinely appointed *commission* and was therefore a part of God's plan (see 1.10; 3.9; 1 Cor 9.17; Gal 1.15–16; 2.7–9; Col 1.25). **3.3** Conforming to the picture in the undisputed Letters (2 Cor 12.1, 7; Gal 2.2), the author of Ephesians legitimates Paul's authority through the concept of *revelation*, for Paul was not one of the original disciples. **3.5** On the mystery *not made known* before but now revealed, see Rom 16.25. **3.6** Claims about the inclusion of *Gentiles* echo 2.19–22. **3.7** On Paul as a *servant* (Greek *diakonos*), see 1 Cor 3.5. **3.8** For *least of all the saints*, see 1 Cor 15.9; 1 Tim 1.15; cf. 2 Cor 11.5. **3.9** *Plan*, *mystery*, and God's relationship to *all things* are treated once again (see 1.9–10; 3.3–5). **3.10** The church has the cosmic task of making *the wisdom of God* (either wisdom from God or wisdom about God) known *in the heavenly places*; cf. the references to localized house churches in the undisputed Letters (Rom 16.5, 15; Philem 2). On *rulers and authorities*, see 1.21. **3.12** *Access to God*, a reprise of 2.18. **3.13** *Sufferings*, lit. "tribulations," was an apoca-

that you[r] may not lose heart over my sufferings for you; they are your glory.

Prayer for the Readers

14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father,[s] 15 from whom every family[t] in heaven and on earth takes its name. 16 I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, 17 and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. 18 I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

20 Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Unity in the Body of Christ

4 I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

7 But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. 8 Therefore it is said,

"When he ascended on high he
made captivity itself
a captive;
he gave gifts to his people."

9 (When it says, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended[u] into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.) 11 The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. 14 We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. 15 But speaking the truth in love, we must grow

r Or *I* s Other ancient authorities add *of our Lord Jesus Christ* t Gk *fatherhood* u Other ancient authorities add *first*

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lyptic technical term for end-time afflictions; see Rom 5.3; 1 Thess 3.3, 7.

3.14–21 Prayer and doxology. **3.15** The Greek term for *family* is derived from the word "father"; see text note *t*. **3.17** On the notion that *Christ may dwell in* the faithful, see Gal 2.20. The *hearts* of the faithful as the dwelling place of Christ parallel the temple as the "dwelling place for God" (2.22). **3.18** *The breadth and length and height and depth*, expansive imagery that may refer to the cosmic vastness of God's plan and purpose; see Rom 8.38–39. **3.19** *Love of Christ*, either love for Christ or love from Christ; the Greek is ambiguous. **3.20–21** For similar doxologies, see Rom 16.25–27; Gal 1.5; 1 Tim 1.17; 2 Tim 4.18.

4.1–5.20 Counsels on behavior worthy of God's calling. **4.1–6** Believers' calling and comportment are grounded in their fundamental unity. **4.1** On the concern that believers live *worthy* lives, see Col 1.10; 1 Thess 2.12. **4.2–3** On the virtues of the worthy life, see Col 3.12–13; see also 1 Cor 13.4. **4.4–6** This strong emphasis on unity was anticipated in 1.22–23; 2.14–16, 18. **4.6** On God *above all and through all and in all*, see 1 Cor 15.28; cf. 1 Cor 8.6. **4.7–16** Grace equips the body of Christ with a variety of gifts (see 1 Cor 12.4–11). **4.7** On individualized *measures*, see Rom 12.3. **4.8** The quotation is derived from Ps 68.18, which speaks, however, of God, not the people, receiving gifts. **4.9–11** An example of early Christian exegesis, focusing on key words in the quotation; see also Rom 10.6–10; Heb 2.6–9. **4.9** *Descended into the lower parts of the earth*. See Mt 12.40; 1 Pet 3.19. **4.11** The list of *gifts* stresses leadership functions in the church (cf. Rom 12.6–8; 1 Cor 12.28–30). **4.12** *Ministry* (Greek *diakonia*). As the cognate of this term, *servant*, was applied to Paul in 3.7, recipients of the Letter are invited to join with Paul in service to the gospel. **4.13** On *maturity*, as distinguished from childishness (v. 14), see Phil 3.12; Col 1.28. **4.15–16** On Christ as *head* of the *body*, see 1.22–23; note on 1.22.

up in every way into him who is the head,
into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body,
joined and knit together by every liga-
ment with which it is equipped, as each
part is working properly, promotes the
body's growth in building itself up in love.

The Old Life and the New

17 Now this I affirm and insist on in
the Lord: you must no longer live as the
Gentiles live, in the futility of their minds.
18 They are darkened in their under-
standing, alienated from the life of God
because of their ignorance and hardness
of heart. 19 They have lost all sensitivity
and have abandoned themselves to licen-
tiousness, greedy to practice every kind of
impurity. 20 That is not the way you
learned Christ! 21 For surely you have
heard about him and were taught in him,
as truth is in Jesus. 22 You were taught to
put away your former way of life, your
old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts,
23 and to be renewed in the spirit of your
minds, 24 and to clothe yourselves with the
new self, created according to the likeness
of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Rules for the New Life

25 So then, putting away falsehood,
let all of us speak the truth to our neigh-
bors, for we are members of one another.
26 Be angry but do not sin; do not let the
sun go down on your anger, 27 and do not
make room for the devil. 28 Thieves must
give up stealing; rather let them labor and
work honestly with their own hands, so as
to have something to share with the
needy. 29 Let no evil talk come out of your
mouths, but only what is useful for build-
ing up,[v] as there is need, so that your
words may give grace to those who hear.
30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of
God, with which you were marked with
a seal for the day of redemption. 31 Put
away from you all bitterness and wrath
and anger and wrangling and slander, to-
gether with all malice, 32 and be kind to
one another, tenderhearted, forgiving
one another, as God in Christ has for-
given you.[w] 5 1 Therefore be imitators
of God, as beloved children, 2 and
live in love, as Christ loved us[x] and gave
himself up for us, a fragrant offering and
sacrifice to God.

Renounce Pagan Ways

3 But fornication and impurity of any
kind, or greed, must not even be men-
tioned among you, as is proper among
saints. 4 Entirely out of place is obscene,
silly, and vulgar talk; but instead, let there
be thanksgiving. 5 Be sure of this, that no
fornicator or impure person, or one who
is greedy (that is, an idolater), has any in-

v Other ancient authorities read *building up faith*
w Other ancient authorities read *us* x Other ancient authorities read *you*

4.17–24 These verses address contrasting ways of life. **4.17** *Affirm and insist.* Doubling provides emphasis. Ironically in a letter written to Gentiles, *the Gentiles* denotes a rejected way of living. **4.20–24** Metaphors of teaching and learning are interlaced with references to putting garments off and on for baptism. To *learn Christ* (v. 20) means not only to learn *about him* (v. 21) but also to *put away* the old *way of life* (v. 22; see also Rom 6.6) and to be *clothed* with *the new self* (v. 24; see also Gal 3.27; Col 3.10). **4.25–32** Practical suggestions for the new life. **4.25** *Putting away* develops the theme of 4.22. *Speak the truth.* See Zech 8.16. **4.26** *Be angry but do not sin.* See Ps 4.4 (Septuagint). The maxim *do not let the sun go down on your anger,* can also be found in non-Christian writings of this period. **4.30** Wrongful conduct risks alienation from the *Holy Spirit* by which readers were set apart for God (see 1.13–14). **4.32** The exhortations in this verse echo 4.2. **5.1** The readers are to be *imitators of God* in forgiveness (4.32) and in love (5.2); this is a pivotal exhortation. Whereas calls to imitate Christ are widespread in the NT (see 5.25; see also Rom 15.7; 1 Cor 11.1), imitation of God is more rarely invoked (see Mt 5.44–45, 48). *As beloved children.* In Roman times, parents were role models (see also 1 Cor 4.14–17). **5.2** *Live in love* (lit. "walk in love"). See also 5.8, 15. *Christ loved us and gave himself up for us* (see 5.25; see also Gal 2.20). The image of Christ's self-sacrifice moves the author to describe believers as *a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God* (see, e.g., Ex 29.18; Ezek 20.14; see also Rom 12.1; Phil 4.18).

5.3–20 Counsels on how to live carefully and wisely. **5.3** On things that *must not even be mentioned,* much less done, see 5.12. **5.4–5** Lists of vices that imperil inheritance in the kingdom are also found in 1 Cor 6.9–10; Gal 5.19–21; Rev 22.14–15. On the connection between the *greedy* and the *idolater,* see Mt 6.24. **5.5** *Kingdom of Christ and of God* is an infrequent expression in the

heritance in the kingdom of Christ and
of God.
6 Let no one deceive you with empty
words, for because of these things the
wrath of God comes on those who are dis-
obedient. 7 Therefore do not be associated
with them. 8 For once you were darkness,
but now in the Lord you are light. Live as
children of light— 9 for the fruit of the
light is found in all that is good and right
and true. 10 Try to find out what is pleas-
ing to the Lord. 11 Take no part in the
unfruitful works of darkness, but instead
expose them. 12 For it is shameful even to
mention what such people do secretly;
13 but everything exposed by the light
becomes visible, 14 for everything that be-
comes visible is light. Therefore it says,

"Sleeper, awake!
Rise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you."

15 Be careful then how you live, not as
unwise people but as wise, 16 making the
most of the time, because the days are
evil. 17 So do not be foolish, but under-
stand what the will of the Lord is. 18 Do
not get drunk with wine, for that is de-
bauchery; but be filled with the Spirit,
19 as you sing psalms and hymns and spiri-
tual songs among yourselves, singing and
making melody to the Lord in your
hearts, 20 giving thanks to God the Father
at all times and for everything in the
name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Christian Household

21 Be subject to one another out of
reverence for Christ.
22 Wives, be subject to your husbands
as you are to the Lord. 23 For the husband
is the head of the wife just as Christ is the
head of the church, the body of which he
is the Savior. 24 Just as the church is sub-
ject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in
everything, to their husbands.
25 Husbands, love your wives, just as
Christ loved the church and gave himself
up for her, 26 in order to make her holy by
cleansing her with the washing of water
by the word, 27 so as to present the church
to himself in splendor, without a spot or
wrinkle or anything of the kind—yes, so
that she may be holy and without blemish.
28 In the same way, husbands should love
their wives as they do their own bodies.
He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For
no one ever hates his own body, but he
nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as
Christ does for the church, 30 because we

y Other ancient authorities add *of his flesh and of his bones*

NT (but see 1 Cor 15.24). **5.6** *Wrath of God*, a reference to God's final judgment. See Rom 1.18; Col 3.6; Rev 19.15. **5.7** Being *associated* with unbelievers is also prohibited in 2 Cor 6.14; cf. 1 Cor 5.9–13; 7.12–16. **5.8** *Children of light*, a metaphor not found in Israel's scriptures but common in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the NT. See Mt 5.16; Lk 16.8; Jn 12.36; 1 Thess 5.5. **5.9** *Fruit*, i.e., moral results. See Mt 7.16–20; Gal 5.22; cf. *unfruitful works* in 5.11. **5.10** *Try to find out*, lit. "find out," "discern." See Rom 12.2; Phil 1.10; see also 5.17. **5.13–14** On exposure by the *light*, see Jn 3.20–21. **5.14** The source of this quote is uncertain. It may be a fragment of a Christian hymn; see also Isa 26.19. **5.16** *Making the most of the time*, lit. "buying up the time," but the meaning is uncertain. Cf. Col 4.5, where the same phrase bears on how believers relate to outsiders. *The days are evil*, a common apocalyptic perspective. See Mt 24.22; Acts 2.40; Gal 1.4. **5.17** *Understand what the will of the Lord is*. See also 5.10. The contrast is with following sinful human wills (see 2.3, where the plural form of the Greek term here translated *will* is translated *desires*). **5.18** *Filled with the Spirit*, i.e., not with wine. See Acts 2.15–17. **5.20** *Giving thanks to God*. See 5.4; Col 3.17; 1 Thess 5.18.

5.21–6.9 The author introduces a discussion of relations within the household with an exhortation to mutual submission. **5.21** *Be subject to one another* (see 1 Pet 5.5) was probably not originally part of the traditional material that follows, but derives from the author. It is debated whether the exhortation is applicable only to the section on wives and husbands or stands as the heading under which all the counsels in 5.22–6.9 are to be understood. **5.22–33** Wives and husbands (see Col 3.18–19). **5.23** For the *husband* as *head of the wife*, see 1 Cor 11.3; for *Christ* as *head of the church*, see 1.22; 4.15. **5.24** Subjection of wives to husbands is reaffirmed (see 5.22) and extended: *so also wives ought to be* subject *in everything*. Nowhere do the undisputed Pauline Letters call for the subjection of wives. **5.25** *As Christ loved the church*. See 5.2. **5.26** *Cleansing . . . washing*, a reference to baptism. See 4.22–24. **5.27** Usually Christians are exhorted *to present* themselves to God or Christ (see Rom 6.13, 19; 12.1; 2 Cor 11.2); here the focus is entirely on Christ's action. For *without blemish*, see 1.4; Phil 1.10. **5.28** *He who loves his*

are members of his body.[y] 31 "For this
reason a man will leave his father and
mother and be joined to his wife, and the
two will become one flesh." 32 This is a
great mystery, and I am applying it to
Christ and the church. 33 Each of you,
however, should love his wife as himself,
and a wife should respect her husband.

Children and Parents

6 Children, obey your parents in the
Lord,[z] for this is right. 2 "Honor
your father and mother"—this is the first
commandment with a promise: 3 "so that
it may be well with you and you may live
long on the earth."
4 And, fathers, do not provoke your
children to anger, but bring them up in
the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Slaves and Masters

5 Slaves, obey your earthly masters
with fear and trembling, in singleness of
heart, as you obey Christ; 6 not only while
being watched, and in order to please
them, but as slaves of Christ, doing the
will of God from the heart. 7 Render service with enthusiasm, as to the Lord and
not to men and women, 8 knowing that
whatever good we do, we will receive the
same again from the Lord, whether we
are slaves or free.
9 And, masters, do the same to them.
Stop threatening them, for you know that
both of you have the same Master in
heaven, and with him there is no partiality.

The Whole Armor of God

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and
in the strength of his power. 11 Put on the
whole armor of God, so that you may be
able to stand against the wiles of the devil.
12 For our[a] struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the
rulers, against the authorities, against the
cosmic powers of this present darkness,
against the spiritual forces of evil in the
heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the
whole armor of God, so that you may be
able to withstand on that evil day, and
having done everything, to stand firm.
14 Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of
truth around your waist, and put on the
breastplate of righteousness. 15 As shoes
for your feet put on whatever will make
you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace.
16 With all of these,[b] take the shield of
faith, with which you will be able to
quench all the flaming arrows of the evil
one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation, and
the sword of the Spirit, which is the word
of God.
18 Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end
keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints. 19 Pray also for
me, so that when I speak, a message may
be given to me to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel,[c] 20 for
which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray
that I may declare it boldly, as I must
speak.

z Other ancient authorities lack *in the Lord*
a Other ancient authorities read *your* b Or *In all circumstances* c Other ancient authorities lack *of the gospel*

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wife loves himself (see also 5.33) echoes Lev 19.18. **5.31** Gen 2.24. **5.33** Mutuality of *husband* and *wife* is affirmed, despite the difference in verbs. **6.1–4** Children and parents (see Col 3.20–21). **6.2–3** See Deut 5.16; see also Ex 20.12. **6.4** On the *discipline* of children, see Heb 12.7–11. **6.5–9** Slaves and masters (see Col 3.22–4.1; 1 Tim 6.1–2; Titus 2.9–10; 1 Pet 2.18). **6.6** On *slaves of Christ*, see Rom 1.1; 1 Cor 7.22; Phil 1.1. *Will of God*. See 5.10, 17. **6.8** The phrase *whether we are slaves or free* preserves the distinction between the two groups more than Paul does in Gal 3.28 (cf. 1 Cor 7.22). **6.9** That God shows *no partiality* was a traditional affirmation; see Deut 10.17; 1 Chr 19.7; Acts 10.34; Rom 2.11; 10.12. **6.10–20** The whole armor of God. **6.11** The exhortation to *put on* armor (see also 6.14) recalls the baptismal imagery of 4.24. To *stand against* means either to survive affliction and temptation (see 6.13) or to be found acceptable at the last judgment (see Rom 14.4; 1 Cor 10.12; Rev 6.17; see also Col 4.12). **6.12** *Blood and flesh*, a Semitic phrase meaning human beings (see Mt 16.17). On *rulers, authorities*, and *powers*, see 1.21. The *cosmic* scope of the contention is foreshadowed in 1.20–21; 3.10; 4.9–10. **6.13–17** On identification of the *armor of God*, see Isa 11.5; 49.2; 59.17; Hos 6.5; Wis 5.17–20; 2 Cor 6.7; 1 Thess 5.8. The imagery is also found in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the writings of Hellenistic moral philosophers. **6.15** *The gospel of peace*. See

Personal Matters and Benediction

21 So that you also may know how I
am and what I am doing, Tychicus will tell
you everything. He is a dear brother and
a faithful minister in the Lord. 22 I am
sending him to you for this very purpose,
to let you know how we are, and to en-
courage your hearts.

23 Peace be to the whole commu-
nity,[d] and love with faith, from God the
Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Grace
be with all who have an undying love for
our Lord Jesus Christ.[e]

d Gk *to the brothers* *e* Other ancient authorities add *Amen*

Isa 52.7. **6.16** The *evil one* is the devil; see 6.11. **6.19** *Mystery of the gospel.* See 1.9. **6.20** *Chains,* a reminder of Paul's imprisonment (see 3.1). **6.21–22** Commendation of *Tychicus* (see Col 4.7–9). **6.23–24** Peace wish and final benediction.

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE

PHILIPPIANS

Author and Recipients

PAUL WROTE PHILIPPIANS to Christians in the city of Philippi, a Roman colony in the province of Macedonia. According to Acts 16.11–40, Paul, along with Timothy, Silas, and others, had visited this city some years before (about 50 C.E.) during his second missionary journey and founded there a church whose members Paul regards with a special affection and deep longing (1.8; 2.19, 24).

Place and Date

Paul writes that he is in prison (1.7, 13–14, 17), but he does not say where. Imprisonment was not infrequent for Paul. He boasts vaguely of numerous imprisonments (2 Cor 11.23), but Acts identifies three: one at Philippi at the founding of the church (Acts 16.23–40), another at Caesarea (23.23–26.32), and a third at Rome (28.16–31). Traditionally, it has been assumed that Paul wrote this Letter during the Roman imprisonment of the early 60s, an assumption based on his references to the "imperial guard" (1.13) and the "emperor's household" (4.22).

These references, however, do not necessarily point to Rome (see notes on 1.13; 4.22). Scholars have thus proposed alternate sites, such as Corinth, Caesarea, and Ephesus. Ephesus in particular is an attractive option, but none of these sites is without problems. Consequently, it is prudent to keep the question of place open. Accordingly, the date for Philippians is either the mid to late 50s or the early 60s.

Integrity of the Letter

Some scholars have challenged the integrity of Philippians. They point in particular to the sharp change in tone in 3.2–4.3, with its sarcastic remarks and anxious warnings about some Christian missionaries, and they note how long it takes Paul to thank the Philippians for a gift they have sent (4.10–20). Consequently, they propose that parts of three separate letters (3.2–4.3; 4.10–20; and 1.1–3.1 with 4.4–9, 21–23) were combined to form the canonical Philippians. Other scholars, however, defend the integrity of this Letter, arguing that the

harsher tone of 3.2–4.3 is already anticipated at 1.28–29 and that Paul likewise anticipates his thanks in 1.5; 2.25. Various stylistic, rhetorical, and thematic features also favor integrity, so it is best to read Philippians as a single, unified Letter.

Occasion and Contents

From the Letter we learn that the Christians at Philippi heard of Paul's imprisonment (1.30) and responded with prayers to gain his release (1.19) and with gifts to supply his needs (4.17–18). Epaphroditus, who delivered the gifts (2.25; 4.18), then became seriously ill (2.26–27). Upon his recovery, Paul deems it necessary to send Epaphroditus back to Philippi (2.25, 28), along with this Letter. Soon, Paul hopes, Timothy will visit them with further news of his imprisonment and upcoming trial (2.19, 23), and at a later time he himself hopes to visit (1.24–27; 2.24).

In the meantime Paul remains surprisingly joyful. He rejoices in the continued advance of the gospel in spite of, or even because of, his imprisonment (1.12–18); he rejoices in his special partnership with the Philippians, which has resulted in their gifts and prayers (1.4, 7; 4.10, 14–15); he rejoices in the recovery of Epaphroditus from a near-fatal sickness (2.28–29); and he rejoices in anticipation of the day of Christ when the Philippians, should they remain "pure and blameless" (1.10), will be saved (1.28; 2.12; 3.20), and he will receive a crown for his work (4.1).

A subsidiary theme of disappointment and worry is also evident, however. Paul is disappointed that some missionaries where he is imprisoned are preaching from uncharitable motives (1.15, 17). He is more concerned, however, about a danger that faces the Philippians. He warns them about other missionaries whom he calls "dogs," "evil workers," and "enemies of the cross of Christ" (3.2, 18). They espouse a righteousness based on law, especially on circumcision (3.2–3, 7–11, 19), which differs from his own view of righteousness based on Christ's crucifixion and resurrection (1.11; 2.6–11; 3.3, 9–11). Consequently, to general exhortations to live in a manner worthy of the gospel (1.27; see also 1.10; 2.3–5, 12, 15; 4.4–8), Paul adds other admonitions with this specific danger in view: beware of these people (3.2); obey and imitate him instead (2.12; 3.17; 4.9); maintain unity (1.27; 2.2; 3.15; 4.2); and stand firm in the Lord (4.1).

Ronald F. Hock

Salutation

1 Paul and Timothy, servants[a] of Christ Jesus,
To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops[b] and deacons:[c]
2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul's Prayer for the Philippians

3 I thank my God every time I remember you, 4 constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, 5 because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. 6 I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. 7 It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart,[d] for all of you share in God's grace[e] with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. 8 For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus. 9 And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight 10 to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, 11 having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

Paul's Present Circumstances

12 I want you to know, beloved,[f] that what has happened to me has actually helped to spread the gospel, 13 so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard[g] and to everyone else that my imprisonment is for Christ; 14 and most of the brothers and sisters,[f] having been made confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, dare to speak the word[h] with greater boldness and without fear.
15 Some proclaim Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from goodwill. 16 These proclaim Christ out of love, knowing that I have been put here for the defense of the gospel; 17 the others proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but intending to increase my suffering in my imprisonment. 18 What does it matter? Just this, that Christ is proclaimed in every way, whether out of false motives or true; and in that I rejoice.
Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, 19 for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance. 20 It is my

a Gk *slaves* *b* Or *overseers* *c* Or *overseers and helpers* *d* Or *because I hold you in my heart* *e* Gk *in grace* *f* Gk *brothers* *g* Gk *whole praetorium* *h* Other ancient authorities read *word of God*

1.1–2 Naming the sender(s) and recipient(s) at the beginning is typical of Paul's Letters and of ancient letters generally. **1.1** *Timothy* is co-sender of this Letter, as also of 2 Corinthians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon. Paul's characterization of himself and Timothy as *servants* (lit. "slaves") *of Christ* (see also 2.22) reflects his emphasis on Christ's lordship (see note on 2.10–11). The precise meaning of *bishops and deacons* cannot be determined, except that they were leaders of the Philippian church. **1.3–11** After the salutation Paul typically expresses his gratitude for the conduct of the recipients; here he is grateful for the support of all the Philippians—note the emphatic repetition of the word *all* in vv. 4, 7 (twice), 8. **1.4** *With joy*, the first of many expressions of joy and rejoicing (1.18, 25; 2.2, 17, 18, 19, 28, 29; 3.1; 4.1, 4, 10). **1.5** *Sharing in the gospel* refers to the partnership between Paul and the Philippians that involved several gifts from them in support of his missionary work (see 4.15–18). **1.6** *The day of Jesus Christ* (see also 1.10; 2.16) refers to Paul's expectation of Christ's return to save believers from God's wrathful judgment (see also Rom 2.5, 15–16; 1 Cor 1.8; 2 Cor 1.14; 1 Thess 1.10). **1.11** On *righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ*, see note on 3.9.

1.12–18 Despite his imprisonment and the questionable motives of some missionaries, Paul is joyful because the cause of Christ is advancing. **1.13** *Imperial guard* renders the Greek word *praitōrion* (from Latin *praetorium*, see text note *g*) as if Paul were in Rome. The word, however, can also refer to any provincial governor's residence (as in Acts 23.35) and thus does not necessarily identify the place of Paul's imprisonment (see Introduction). **1.19–26** Paul turns from his general circumstances to his upcoming trial. **1.19** *This will turn out for my deliverance* is a quotation from Job 13.16. *Deliverance* (lit. "salvation") probably refers only to Paul's acquittal and release from prison, not to his eternal salvation. **1.20** *Put to shame*, e.g., be forced to deny Christ. *Whether by life or by death* leads to vv. 21–26 in which Paul ponders his own death using concepts associated with ancient discussions of suicide.

eager expectation and hope that I will not
be put to shame in any way, but that by
my speaking with all boldness, Christ will
be exalted now as always in my body,
whether by life or by death. 21 For to me,
living is Christ and dying is gain. 22 If I am
to live in the flesh, that means fruitful la-
bor for me; and I do not know which I
prefer. 23 I am hard pressed between the
two: my desire is to depart and be with
Christ, for that is far better; 24 but to re-
main in the flesh is more necessary for
you. 25 Since I am convinced of this, I
know that I will remain and continue with
all of you for your progress and joy in
faith, 26 so that I may share abundantly in
your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come
to you again.

27 Only, live your life in a manner
worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that,
whether I come and see you or am absent
and hear about you, I will know that you
are standing firm in one spirit, striving
side by side with one mind for the faith of
the gospel, 28 and are in no way intimi-
dated by your opponents. For them this is
evidence of their destruction, but of your
salvation. And this is God's doing. 29 For
he has graciously granted you the privi-
lege not only of believing in Christ, but of
suffering for him as well— 30 since you
are having the same struggle that you saw
I had and now hear that I still have.

Imitating Christ's Humility

2 If then there is any encouragement
in Christ, any consolation from love,
any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion
and sympathy, 2 make my joy complete:
be of the same mind, having the same
love, being in full accord and of one
mind. 3 Do nothing from selfish ambition
or conceit, but in humility regard others
as better than yourselves. 4 Let each of
you look not to your own interests, but to
the interests of others. 5 Let the same
mind be in you that was[i] in Christ Jesus,

6 who, though he was in the form
of God,
did not regard equality
with God
as something to be exploited,
7 but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,

i Or *that you have*

1.21 *Living is Christ.* A difficult expression, it probably means that Paul has no life apart from his obligations to Christ (see also 2 Cor 4.11; Gal 2.20). *Dying is gain,* by contrast, is quite clear, being a virtual refrain in ancient discussions of suicide. Death is a gain over a life of trouble and affliction, as Paul's was at this time due to imprisonment (1.17), struggles (1.30), sorrows (2.27), hunger, and privation (4.12). **1.22** *Prefer* (lit. "choose") is the clearest indication that Paul's possible death may be in his own hands as well as those of his jailers. **1.23** On Paul's *desire . . . to . . . be with Christ,* see 2 Cor 5.1–9. **1.24** The appeal to what is *necessary* is often found in Stoic discussions of suicide. **1.27–30** Paul turns from his situation to that of the Philippians with an exhortation to live worthily of the gospel. **1.27** *Live your life* is a bland rendering of a word that comes from the political arena and means "live as citizens" (see also 3.20), a connotation not lost on the Philippians, who, by residing in a Roman colony, possessed Roman citizenship. **1.30** The word *struggle* comes from the athletic arena. Athletic imagery is frequent in this Letter (2.16; 3.13–14; 4.3) and in others (e.g., 1 Cor 9.24–27; Gal 2.2; 5.7). The struggle that the Philippians *saw* is vividly narrated in Acts 16.19–24.

2.1–11 Exhortations to unity and humility, as illustrated by Christ. **2.2** On the importance of *joy* in this Letter, see note on 1.4. **2.4** There is good manuscript evidence for adding "also" after *but. Others* is, strictly speaking, the reciprocal pronoun "one another"; the Philippian Christians are to show humility toward one another, not necessarily toward people in general. **2.6–11** These verses, as their format shows, are widely regarded as a pre-Pauline Christ hymn; Paul's Letters frequently contain material from earlier Christian tradition (e.g., Rom 1.3–4; 3.24–25; 1 Cor 15.3–5; 1 Thess 1.9–10). After an introductory statement about the preexistent Christ (v. 6), the hymn falls into two stanzas: the first (vv. 7–8) speaks of Christ's life and, especially, his death in terms of the obedience and humiliation characteristic of slaves, and the second (vv. 9–11) speaks of his resurrection in terms of the status and deference accorded a master. **2.6** The expression *in the form of God* has puzzled interpreters; it may refer to Christ's divine nature or to his divine glory or status. In any event the expression contrasts with *the form of a slave* in v. 7. *Exploited* (lit. "seized," as in robbery) is likewise a problematic word, but it too has a contrast later in the hymn: what Christ could have seized is, by virtue of his humiliation, given him by God (v. 9). **2.7** *The*

8 he humbled himself
and became obedient to the
point of death—
even death on a cross.

9 Therefore God also highly
exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,
10 so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and
under the earth,
11 and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Shining as Lights in the World

12 Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

14 Do all things without murmuring and arguing, 15 so that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, in which you shine like stars in the world. 16 It is by your holding fast to the word of life that I can boast on the day of Christ that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. 17 But even if I am being poured out as a libation over the sacrifice and the offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you — 18 and in the same way you also must be glad and rejoice with me.

Timothy and Epaphroditus

19 I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I may be cheered by news of you. 20 I have no one like him who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. 21 All of them are seeking their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. 22 But Timothy's[j] worth you know, how like a son with a father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. 23 I hope therefore to send him as soon as I see how things go with me; 24 and I trust in the Lord that I will also come soon.

25 Still, I think it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus—my brother and coworker and fellow soldier, your messenger[k] and minister to my need; 26 for he has been longing for[l] all of you, and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill. 27 He was indeed so ill that he nearly died. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, so that I would not have one sorrow after another. 28 I am the more eager to send

j Gk *his* *k* Gk *apostle* *l* Other ancient authorities read *longing to see*

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form of a slave. See note on 2.6. **2.8** The phrase *even death on a cross* may be Paul's own addition; it reflects his emphasis on Christ crucified (1.29; 3.10, 18; see also 1 Cor 1.23; 2.2). Crucifixion was a cruel form of punishment reserved for slaves, brigands, and others of little or no status. **2.9** *The name that is above every name* is either *Jesus* (see v. 10) or, more likely, *Lord*, which denotes his status and power (see v. 11). **2.10** *Every knee should bend* was probably a liturgical signal for the whole congregation to bow down in recognition of Christ's status as *Lord* (v. 11). **2.11** The title *Lord* (lit. "master") for Christ is central to this Letter (see 1.2, 14; 2.19, 29; 3.8, 20; 4.1, 2, 4, 10, 23) and explains Paul's characterization of himself as a slave of Christ (see note on 1.1).

2.12–18 The previous hymn becomes a basis for Paul's further exhortations. **2.12** The obedience shown by Christ (v. 8) is now expected of the Philippians. **2.15** *Crooked and perverse generation* is from Deut 32.5. *You shine like stars in the world* has the same meaning as the more familiar "You are the light of the world" (Mt 5.14). **2.16** *Run in vain*, another athletic image (see note on 1.30), is also found in Gal 2.2. **2.17** *Poured out as a libation* is a vivid image from sacrificial ritual. The fire on an altar flared up suddenly when wine was poured on it after the god's portion of the victim had been offered (see also 4.18).

2.19–30 Paul announces, by way of digression, the visits of Timothy and Epaphroditus. **2.19** *Timothy*, named as co-sender (1.1), was well known to the Philippians (Acts 16.3, 12; 19.22). He was one of Paul's closest associates, which explains his being called Paul's *son* (v. 22; see also 1 Cor 4.17; 1 Thess 3.1–6). **2.23** *How things go with me* refers to the outcome of Paul's trial. **2.25** *Epaphroditus* is introduced lavishly with five terms—three in relation to Paul, two in relation to the Philippians (see also 4.18); he is unlikely to be the Epaphras (a shortened form of Epaphroditus) of Col 1.7; Philem 23. *My brother* is figurative. *Fellow soldier*, used also of Archippus (Philem 2), is also figurative and suggests the struggle and danger inherent in missionary work. **2.28** The tense of the verb translated *send* indicates that

him, therefore, in order that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious. 29 Welcome him then in the Lord with all joy, and honor such people, 30 because he came close to death for the work of Christ,[m] risking his life to make up for those services that you could not give me.

3 Finally, my brothers and sisters,[n] rejoice[o] in the Lord.

Breaking with the Past

To write the same things to you is not troublesome to me, and for you it is a safeguard.

2 Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of those who mutilate the flesh![p] 3 For it is we who are the circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God[q] and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh— 4 even though I, too, have reason for confidence in the flesh.

If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: 5 circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

7 Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. 8 More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ,[r] the righteousness from God based on faith. 10 I want to know Christ[s] and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, 11 if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Pressing Toward the Goal

12 Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal;[t] but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. 13 Beloved,[u] I do not consider that I have made it my own;[v] but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly[w] call of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Let those of us then who are mature be of the same mind; and if you think differently about anything, this too God will reveal to

m Other ancient authorities read *of the Lord* *n* Gk *my brothers* *o* Or *farewell* *p* Gk *the mutilation* *q* Other ancient authorities read *worship God in spirit* *r* Or *through the faith of Christ* *s* Gk *him* *t* Or *have already been made perfect* *u* Gk *Brothers* *v* Other ancient authorities read *my own yet* *w* Gk *upward*

Epaphroditus, unlike Timothy, is leaving right away and in fact will carry the Letter. **3.1a** The repetition of *rejoice* from 2.18 functions as a transition back to the argument of the Letter after the digression of 2.19–30.

3.1b–11 The tone of the Letter changes here as Paul warns the Philippians of persons and ideas that could endanger them. For a similarly strong contrast between Paul and rival missionaries, see 2 Cor 11.21–27. **3.2** *Dogs* is a term of reproach, commonly used by Jews of non-Jews (see Mk 7.27–28; Rev 22.15). *Those who mutilate the flesh* is a harsh rejection of literal circumcision of Christians; see also Gal 5.12. **3.3** *The circumcision*, now used only metaphorically, applies to Christians (see Rom 2.25–29; Eph 2.11). **3.5** For the custom of being *circumcised on the eighth day*, see Gen 17.12; 21.4; Lev 12.3. On Paul's descent from *the tribe of Benjamin*, see Rom 11.1. To judge from the distinction between Hebrews and Hellenists in Acts 6.1, *Hebrew born of Hebrews* is probably a claim to Paul's knowledge of Hebrew (see Acts 21.40; 22.2–3; Gal 1.14). On Paul as a *Pharisee*, see Acts 23.6; 26.5. **3.6** On Paul as a *persecutor*, see Acts 8.3; 9.1, 21; 22.4; 26.10–11; 1 Cor 15.9; Gal 1.13, 23. **3.8** *Rubbish* (lit. "garbage" or "human excrement") is a strong rejection of what Paul had earlier counted as dear. **3.9** Paul rejects a *righteousness of my own that comes from the law*—whether the individual righteousness of fulfilling the law or the corporate righteousness of being a member of the Jewish people—in favor of a righteousness *that comes through faith in Christ* (see 1.11; see also Rom 1–8; Gal 1–3). This verse concisely states Paul's differences with the missionaries endangering the Philippians. **3.12–4.1** Paul continues to differentiate himself from these rival missionaries and calls on the Philippians to remain united and to imitate him. **3.12** The word *this* is not in the Greek, but some object must be supplied from the context—resurrection (v. 11) or righteousness (v. 9). **3.13–14** On the athletic imagery of

you. 16 Only let us hold fast to what we
have attained.
17 Brothers and sisters,[x] join in imi-
tating me, and observe those who live ac-
cording to the example you have in us.
18 For many live as enemies of the cross of
Christ; I have often told you of them, and
now I tell you even with tears. 19 Their
end is destruction; their god is the belly;
and their glory is in their shame; their
minds are set on earthly things. 20 But our
citizenship[y] is in heaven, and it is from
there that we are expecting a Savior, the
Lord Jesus Christ. 21 He will transform
the body of our humiliation[z] that it may
be conformed to the body of his glory,[a]
by the power that also enables him to
make all things subject to himself.
4 1 Therefore, my brothers and sis-
ters,[b] whom I love and long for, my joy
and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this
way, my beloved.

Exhortations

2 I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche
to be of the same mind in the Lord. 3 Yes,
and I ask you also, my loyal companion,[c]
help these women, for they have strug-
gled beside me in the work of the gospel,
together with Clement and the rest of my
co-workers, whose names are in the book
of life.
4 Rejoice[d] in the Lord always; again I
will say, Rejoice.[d] 5 Let your gentleness be
known to everyone. The Lord is near.
6 Do not worry about anything, but in ev-
erything by prayer and supplication with
thanksgiving let your requests be made
known to God. 7 And the peace of God,
which surpasses all understanding, will
guard your hearts and your minds in
Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, beloved,[e] whatever is true,
whatever is honorable, whatever is just,
whatever is pure, whatever is pleas-
ing, whatever is commendable, if there is
any excellence and if there is anything wor-
thy of praise, think about[f] these things.
9 Keep on doing the things that you have
learned and received and heard and seen
in me, and the God of peace will be
with you.

Acknowledgment of the Philippians' Gift

10 I rejoice[g] in the Lord greatly that
now at last you have revived your concern
for me; indeed, you were concerned for
me, but had no opportunity to show it.[h]
11 Not that I am referring to being in
need; for I have learned to be content
with whatever I have. 12 I know what it is
to have little, and I know what it is to have
plenty. In any and all circumstances I
have learned the secret of being well-fed
and of going hungry, of having plenty
and of being in need. 13 I can do all things
through him who strengthens me. 14 In
any case, it was kind of you to share my
distress.
15 You Philippians indeed know that
in the early days of the gospel, when I left
Macedonia, no church shared with me in
the matter of giving and receiving, except
you alone. 16 For even when I was in
Thessalonica, you sent me help for my

x Gk *Brothers* y Or *commonwealth* z Or *our humble bodies* a Or *his glorious body* b Gk *my brothers* c Or *loyal Syzygus* d Or *Farewell* e Gk *brothers* f Gk *take account of* g Gk *I rejoiced* h Gk lacks *to show it*

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these verses, see note on 1.30. **3.17** On Paul's churches *imitating* him, see 1 Cor 4.16; 11.1; 1 Thess 1.6. **3.20** *Citizenship . . . in heaven* is a political term; see also note on 1.27. **4.2–9** Specific and general exhortations. **4.2** Paul's earlier exhortation to the Philippians to be in agreement (2.2) is now directed specifically to two women, *Euodia* and *Syntyche*. Many women, usually in leadership positions, are mentioned by name in Paul's Letters (see Rom 16.1–15; 1 Cor 1.11; 16.19; Philem 2). **4.3** *Companion* (Greek *syzygos*). The Greek word may be a proper name (see text note *c*); if not, the referent is unknown. Various persons have been suggested: Timothy, Epaphroditus, Silas, and Luke. On the OT expression *book of life*, see Ex 32.32; Ps 69.28; Dan 12.1. **4.4** The repetition of *rejoice* recalls the thematic importance of joy throughout the Letter (see note on 1.4).

4.10–20 Paul has already referred briefly to the gift he has received from the Philippians (1.5; 2.25). Now he offers his full and formal thanks, but expressions of gratitude alternate with those emphasizing his independence. **4.11** Learning to be content, i.e., satisfied with whatever one's circumstances are, is one of the most Stoic-sounding expressions in Paul's Letters. **4.12** The phrase *learned the secret* (lit. "have been initiated") reflects the language of religious initiation into mystery cults with their secret rites and revelations. **4.16** On Paul *in Thessalonica*,

needs more than once. 17 Not that I seek
the gift, but I seek the profit that accumu-
lates to your account. 18 I have been paid
in full and have more than enough; I am
fully satisfied, now that I have received
from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a
fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable
and pleasing to God. 19 And my God will
fully satisfy every need of yours according
to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. 20 To
our God and Father be glory forever and
ever. Amen.

Final Greetings and Benediction

21 Greet every saint in Christ Jesus.
The friends[i] who are with me greet you.
22 All the saints greet you, especially those
of the emperor's household.
23 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ
be with your spirit.[j]

i Gk *brothers* *j* Other ancient authorities add *Amen*

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see Acts 17.1–9; 1 Thess 2.1–12. **4.17** *Not that I seek the gift* captures Paul's desire to be as independent as possible, e.g., through his trade of tentmaking (Acts 18.3; 1 Cor 4.12; 2 Cor 11.7–11; 12.14–15). **4.18** *I have been paid in full* is a commercial expression used in receipts. On *Epaphroditus*, see note on 2.25. *A fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God* is language from sacrificial ritual; Paul speaks as though he were the priest reporting on the efficacy of the Philippians' sacrifice-gift (see also Rom 12.1; 2 Cor 2.15–16). **4.21–23** Brief greetings conclude the Letter. **4.22** The phrase *the emperor's household* has been seen as evidence that Paul's imprisonment was in Rome. But that household included more than simply the emperor and his family; in fact, it embraced any number of slaves, freedmen, and soldiers who served the emperor in Rome or in the provinces. Accordingly, this phrase says less about the place of Paul's imprisonment than about the ties some of the Philippians had to Rome and its administrative apparatus, due to Philippi's status as a Roman colony (see Introduction).

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE

COLOSSIANS

Authorship, Style, Language

COLOSSIANS, which purports to be a letter from Paul, was written to deal with controversy that had developed in a gentile congregation (2.13) established not by Paul but probably by Epaphras (1.7–8; 2.1). Challenges to Pauline authorship of Colossians abound, for substantial reasons. Colossians makes claims that are not supported by the unquestionably authentic Letters (Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon). Colossians asserts, e.g., that believers already share Christ's resurrection (2.12–13; 3.1), while Paul scrupulously affirms that believers have died with Christ but have not yet been raised with him. Colossians states that Christ is the head of the church, his body, while Paul never extends the metaphor in that fashion (cf. Rom 12.4–5; 1 Cor 12.12–27). Colossians also says that through Christ there is "forgiveness of sins" (1.14; 2.13; 3.13), whereas Paul writes of freedom from sin, defined in the singular and as a power. And Colossians, like Ephesians, but unlike the undisputed Pauline Letters, is composed of long, complex sentences that the NRSV breaks into shorter segments for clarity.

The Letter's strongest literary ties are with Ephesians, with which it shares various expressions (e.g., "fullness of God," Col 1.19; 2.9; Eph 1.23; 3.19), concepts (e.g., Christ's authority over rival powers, Col 2.10; Eph 1.21–22), and tables of household admonitions (Col 3.18–4.1; Eph 5.21–6.9). Colossians has affinities with other documents of the late first century C.E. as well, sharing with them such concepts as the idea of Christ as the beginning or origin of creation (1.16, 18; see Heb 1.10; Rev 3.14), seated alongside God (3.1; see Acts 2.33–34; Heb 1.3, 13; 8.1; 10.12; 12.2; Rev 3.21), and the contrast between shadow and reality (2.17; see Heb 8.5; 10.1).

The Controversy

At the heart of Colossians is a Christological dispute over whether what has already been accomplished in Christ has actually liberated the believers from the powers of the universe and given them proper access to God. The opponents,

whose position the author scornfully portrays as deceitful "philosophy" (2.8), seem to be urging asceticism, observance of special holy times, and worship of celestial powers as means of gaining wisdom and access to God.

By appealing to tradition (chiefly the Christ hymn of 1.15–20) and to the readers' clear experience of a new, full life in Christ, the author disputes the need for requirements beyond the "Christ in you" (1.27) that they already know. The author calls on the readers to show endurance and steadfastness while they live in a fashion appropriate to what they have already received. The Letter details the comportment appropriate to their status in Christ.

The Christ hymn is the bulwark of the Letter. Whether the opponents also used it to their ends is not clear. It is used to buttress several of the author's claims: Christ's close relationship to God (1.15, 19; 2.9); Christ's role in creating all things, including the celestial powers (1.16; 3.10); Christ's authority over the body (1.18; 2.19); and Christ's role in God's reconciling work (1.20; 3.11).

The Letter's recurrent wisdom terminology (1.9–10, 28; 2.2–3, 23; 3.10, 16; 4.5) reflects the dispute at its center. The author clings closely to tradition as an authority and to Christ as the means of access to wisdom, while the opponents, borrowing from various religious currents of the time, feature visions and special relationship to angels as the avenue to wisdom. While Paul was alive, he combined both tradition and visions (see 1 Cor 15.3–11; 2 Cor 12.1–5); the Pauline school, as represented in Colossians, has featured the former, not the latter.

Date and Place of Writing

The date and place of writing cannot be determined with certainty. Paul is portrayed as imprisoned (4.3, 10, 18; cf. Phil 1.12–14; Philem 1, 13, 23), but, as this document is probably by a follower writing after Paul's death, some date after the mid-60s C.E. must be supposed. In any case, Colossians was written at a post-Pauline time when women's roles were diminished (3.18; see also note on 3.11) and when relationships within the household were once again accommodated to the wider culture (3.18–4.1). *J. Paul Sampley*

Salutation

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by
the will of God, and Timothy our
brother,
2 To the saints and faithful brothers
and sisters[a] in Christ in Colossae:
Grace to you and peace from God our
Father.

Paul Thanks God for the Colossians

3 In our prayers for you we always
thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus
Christ, 4 for we have heard of your faith
in Christ Jesus and of the love that you
have for all the saints, 5 because of the
hope laid up for you in heaven. You have
heard of this hope before in the word of
the truth, the gospel 6 that has come to
you. Just as it is bearing fruit and growing
in the whole world, so it has been bearing
fruit among yourselves from the day you
heard it and truly comprehended the
grace of God. 7 This you learned from Ep-
aphras, our beloved fellow servant.[b] He
is a faithful minister of Christ on your[c]
behalf, 8 and he has made known to us
your love in the Spirit.
9 For this reason, since the day we
heard it, we have not ceased praying for
you and asking that you may be filled with
the knowledge of God's[d] will in all spiri-
tual wisdom and understanding, 10 so that
you may lead lives worthy of the Lord,
fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in
every good work and as you grow in the
knowledge of God. 11 May you be made
strong with all the strength that comes
from his glorious power, and may you be
prepared to endure everything with pa-
tience, while joyfully 12 giving thanks to
the Father, who has enabled[e] you[f] to
share in the inheritance of the saints in
the light. 13 He has rescued us from the
power of darkness and transferred us into
the kingdom of his beloved Son, 14 in
whom we have redemption, the forgive-
ness of sins.[g]

The Supremacy of Christ

15 He is the image of the invisible
God, the firstborn of all creation; 16 for

a Gk *brothers* *b* Gk *slave* *c* Other ancient authorities read *our* *d* Gk *his* *e* Other ancient authorities read *called* *f* Other ancient authorities read *us* *g* Other ancient authorities add *through his blood*

1.1–2 These verses formally resemble most Pauline Letter openings. **1.1** For Paul's self-designation as an *apostle*, see 2 Cor 1.1; Gal 1.1; Eph 1.1. **1.2** *Saints* (lit. "holy ones;" see also 1.22; 3.12) are all the believers, who have been set apart for God and destined for an *inheritance* (1.12). The designation of God as *Father* (see 1.12; 3.17) is consistent with the importance of the household in this Letter (see 3.18–4.1). **1.3–14** The thanksgiving, a feature of most Pauline Letters. **1.4–5** For the triad of *faith, love*, and *hope*, see 1 Cor 13.13; 1 Thess 1.3; 5.8. **1.4** See Eph 1.15. **1.5** Colossians emphasizes spatial concepts like *heaven* (see also 1.16, 20; 3.2, 5) instead of temporal ones like the day of Jesus Christ (Phil 1.6). **1.6** On *bearing fruit* (see also Mt 7.16–20; Rom 7.4–5) and *growing*, see 1.10; 2.19. **1.7** *Epaphras* was probably the founder of this church; see 4.12; Philem 23. **1.9** On being *filled* and coming to fullness (see also 1.19, 25; 2.9–10), there is ambivalence: the believers *have come to fullness in* Christ (2.10), yet here the author prays that they *may be filled* with proper wisdom. **1.10** *Lead lives worthy*. See also 2.6; 3.7–17; 4.5. **1.11** *His glorious power*, lit. "the power of his glory." Cf. the rival power in 1.13. **1.12** *Light* and darkness are ancient scriptural categories (Gen 1.4; Isa 42.16; Lam 3.2) that in the NT and the Dead Sea Scrolls designate opposing apocalyptic forces (1.13; 2 Cor 6.14; Eph 5.8; 1 Thess 5.5). **1.13** *The power of darkness*, the evil forces that bid to control the universe and worldly affairs, but whose ultimate defeat lies in the crucifixion (2.15, 20). On the *kingdom of his . . . Son*, cf. 4.11; 1 Cor 15.24. **1.14** *Redemption*, the buying back of a slave or the freeing of a prisoner by ransom. See Rom 3.24; Eph 1.7, 14; 4.30. On *forgiveness of sins*, see 2.13; 3.13; Eph 1.7. In the undisputed Letters, Paul views sin as an enslaving power, not a misdeed (see Rom 5.12; Gal 3.22).

1.15–23 A hymn about Christ, followed by the author's application. The hymn (vv. 15–20), notes of which resound in later parts of the Letter, is the cornerstone of the author's argument. **1.15** On Christ as the *image* of God, see 2 Cor 3.18; 4.4; see also Phil 2.6; Heb 1.3. Describing God as *invisible* (see Jn 1.18; 1 Tim 1.17; Heb 11.27) was common in Hellenistic writings. *Firstborn of all creation*. See also Rom 8.29; Rev 3.14. Similar claims are made about Wisdom; see Prov 8.22–26; Sir 24.9. **1.16** The claim regarding Christ's active role in *creation* (see also Rom 11.36; 1 Cor 8.6; Heb. 1.2) corresponds to claims made about Wisdom (Prov 8.27–30) and about the Word (Jn 1.1–3). *Thrones . . . powers* may refer to earthly or cosmic powers or both; see also 2.10;

in[h] him all things in heaven and on earth
were created, things visible and invisible,
whether thrones or dominions or rulers
or powers—all things have been created
through him and for him. 17 He himself is
before all things, and in[h] him all things
hold together. 18 He is the head of the
body, the church; he is the beginning, the
firstborn from the dead, so that he might
come to have first place in everything.
19 For in him all the fullness of God was
pleased to dwell, 20 and through him God
was pleased to reconcile to himself all
things, whether on earth or in heaven,
by making peace through the blood of
his cross.

21 And you who were once estranged
and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds,
22 he has now reconciled[i] in his fleshly
body[j] through death, so as to present
you holy and blameless and irreproach-
able before him— 23 provided that you
continue securely established and stead-
fast in the faith, without shifting from the
hope promised by the gospel that you
heard, which has been proclaimed to
every creature under heaven. I, Paul,
became a servant of this gospel.

Paul's Interest in the Colossians

24 I am now rejoicing in my suffer-
ings for your sake, and in my flesh I am
completing what is lacking in Christ's af-
flictions for the sake of his body, that is,
the church. 25 I became its servant accord-
ing to God's commission that was given to
me for you, to make the word of God fully
known, 26 the mystery that has been hid-
den throughout the ages and generations
but has now been revealed to his saints.
27 To them God chose to make known
how great among the Gentiles are the
riches of the glory of this mystery, which
is Christ in you, the hope of glory. 28 It is
he whom we proclaim, warning everyone
and teaching everyone in all wisdom, so
that we may present everyone mature in

h Or *by* *i* Other ancient authorities read *you have now been reconciled* *j* Gk *in the body of his flesh*

Rom 8.38; 1 Cor 15.24; Eph 1.21; cf. Rev 2.13. **1.18** On Christ as *head of the body, the church,* see 2.19; Eph 1.22–23. This precise image appears nowhere in the unquestionably authentic Pauline Letters (cf. Rom 12.5; 1 Cor 12.12). *First-born from the dead,* a reference to the resurrection. See Rev 1.5; cf. Rom 8.29; 1 Cor 15.20, 23. **1.19** The *fullness of God* that dwells in Christ (reaffirmed in 2.9; see also Eph 1.23; 4.10; cf. Jn 1.16) is available in him for all believers (see 2.10). **1.20** On Christ as the means of *reconciliation,* see 2 Cor 5.19; Eph 2.13–22. **1.22** *Present,* a technical term for bringing a sacrifice to an altar (see Rom 12.1) or an accused person before a judge (see 1.28).

1.24–2.5 These verses establish Paul's trustworthiness and commitment to Christ and to the Colossians. **1.24** On *rejoicing in . . . sufferings,* see Rom 5.2–5; 2 Cor 6.9–10; Phil 1.12–18. *Completing . . . Christ's afflictions.* Believers' hardships and sufferings are seen as extensions of Christ's crucifixion; cf. 2 Cor 1.5. **1.27** *Mystery, which is Christ in you* (see note on 2.2) refers to Christ's presence in the church (see Rom 8.10; 2 Cor 13.5; Gal 4.19; in each case "you" is plural). This present reality is

The cities of the Lycus Valley were important centers of Pauline Christianity. A special relation between churches at Laodicea and Colossae is suggested by Col 4.16.

Christ. 29 For this I toil and struggle with
all the energy that he powerfully inspires
within me.

2 For I want you to know how much I
am struggling for you, and for those
in Laodicea, and for all who have not seen
me face to face. 2 I want their hearts to be
encouraged and united in love, so that
they may have all the riches of assured
understanding and have the knowledge
of God's mystery, that is, Christ himself,[k]
3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of
wisdom and knowledge. 4 I am saying this
so that no one may deceive you with plau-
sible arguments. 5 For though I am absent
in body, yet I am with you in spirit, and I
rejoice to see your morale and the firm-
ness of your faith in Christ.

Fullness of Life in Christ

6 As you therefore have received
Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live
your lives[l] in him, 7 rooted and built
up in him and established in the faith,
just as you were taught, abounding in
thanksgiving.

8 See to it that no one takes you
captive through philosophy and empty
deceit, according to human tradition,
according to the elemental spirits of the
universe,[m] and not according to Christ.
9 For in him the whole fullness of deity
dwells bodily, 10 and you have come to
fullness in him, who is the head of every
ruler and authority. 11 In him also you
were circumcised with a spiritual cir-
cumcision,[n] by putting off the body of
the flesh in the circumcision of Christ;
12 when you were buried with him in bap-
tism, you were also raised with him
through faith in the power of God, who
raised him from the dead. 13 And when
you were dead in trespasses and the un-
circumcision of your flesh, God[o] made
you[p] alive together with him, when he
forgave us all our trespasses, 14 erasing
the record that stood against us with its
legal demands. He set this aside, nailing it
to the cross. 15 He disarmed[q] the rulers
and authorities and made a public exam-
ple of them, triumphing over them in it.

16 Therefore do not let anyone con-
demn you in matters of food and drink or
of observing festivals, new moons, or sab-
baths. 17 These are only a shadow of what
is to come, but the substance belongs to
Christ. 18 Do not let anyone disqualify
you, insisting on self-abasement and wor-

k Other ancient authorities read *of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ* *l* Gk *to walk* *m* Or *the rudiments of the world* *n* Gk *a circumcision made without hands* *o* Gk *he* *p* Other ancient authorities read *made us*; others, *made* *q* Or *divested himself of*

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the basis for the *hope of glory* in the future (see also Rom 5.2; 8.18). **1.28** *Warning* anticipates the author's treatment of the opponents in 2.4–23. *Mature*, i.e., complete, unshakable. See 4.12; Eph 4.13–14. **2.1** The church at Colossae seems to have had strong ties with *Laodicea*, ten miles west; see 4.13–16. **2.2** *United*. The same Greek term is translated *held together* in 2.19. Here *Christ himself* is the content of the *mystery*; in 1.27 it is *Christ in you*. **2.4** The emphasis on *wisdom and knowledge* in vv. 2–3 suggests that the false but *plausible arguments* of the opponents have these as their goal as well. See 2.8; see also 1 Cor 1.18–2.5. **2.5** *Morale*, lit. "(good) order." See 1 Cor 14.40.

2.6–19 The proper grounding in Christ and the opponents' empty demands. **2.8** *Philosophy and empty deceit* (see 2.4) is used to describe false teaching based on *human tradition* and on the erroneous assumption that power resides in the *elemental spirits of the universe*. This last phrase refers to the widespread Greco-Roman notion that the universe is composed of celestial powers that rule life; see 1.13, 16; 2.20; Gal 4.3. **2.9** On *fullness of deity*, see note on 1.19. **2.10** *You have come to fullness in him*, an emphatic identification of believers with Christ and therefore with his dominion over *every ruler and authority* (see 2.15; Eph 1.21–22). **2.11** *Circumcision*, the Jewish rite of inclusion into God's people, is here a metaphor for the crucifixion and the believers' participation in it through baptism (cf. Rom 2.28–29; Phil 3.3). At baptism (see v. 12), new believers *put off* their old garments and afterwards were clothed in new ones; see also 3.9–10; Eph 4.22–24. **2.12** On baptism as *burial*, see Rom 6.3–5. Nowhere in the undisputed Pauline Letters are believers described as already *raised*. See 3.1; Eph 2.6; cf. Rom 6.3–5; 1 Cor 15.22–23; Phil 3.10–11. **2.13** *Uncircumcision of your flesh* identifies the audience as gentile; see 1.27. **2.14** *Record*, possibly a certificate of indebtedness or bond. *Legal demands*, lit. "requirements." There is no explicit reference to law here. **2.15** The image here is of a triumphal procession in which the conqueror leads the defeated powers (see 1.13; 2.10), publicly disgracing them. *Triumphing*, leading in triumph. See 2 Cor 2.14. *In it* refers to the cross (2.14), but the Greek could be translated "in him," referring to Christ (see 2.9–10). **2.16** On *festivals, new moons, or sabbaths* as required observances, see Ezek 45.17. **2.18** *Disqualify you*, rob

ship of angels, dwelling[r] on visions,[s]
puffed up without cause by a human way
of thinking,[t] 19and not holding fast to
the head, from whom the whole body,
nourished and held together by its liga-
ments and sinews, grows with a growth
that is from God.

Warnings Against False Teachers

20 If with Christ you died to the ele-
mental spirits of the universe,[u] why do
you live as if you still belonged to the
world? Why do you submit to regulations,
21"Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not
touch"? 22All these regulations refer to
things that perish with use; they are sim-
ply human commands and teachings.
23These have indeed an appearance of
wisdom in promoting self-imposed piety,
humility, and severe treatment of the
body, but they are of no value in checking
self-indulgence.[v]

The New Life in Christ

3 So if you have been raised with
Christ, seek the things that are
above, where Christ is, seated at the right
hand of God. 2Set your minds on things
that are above, not on things that are on
earth, 3for you have died, and your life is
hidden with Christ in God. 4When Christ
who is your[w] life is revealed, then you
also will be revealed with him in glory.
5 Put to death, therefore, whatever in
you is earthly: fornication, impurity, pas-
sion, evil desire, and greed (which is idola-
try). 6On account of these the wrath of
God is coming on those who are disobedi-
ent.[x] 7These are the ways you also once
followed, when you were living that life.[y]
8But now you must get rid of all such
things—anger, wrath, malice, slander,
and abusive[z] language from your mouth.
9Do not lie to one another, seeing that
you have stripped off the old self with its
practices 10and have clothed yourselves
with the new self, which is being renewed
in knowledge according to the image of its
creator. 11In that renewal[a] there is no
longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and
uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave
and free; but Christ is all and in all!
12 As God's chosen ones, holy and be-
loved, clothe yourselves with compassion,
kindness, humility, meekness, and pa-
tience. 13Bear with one another and, if
anyone has a complaint against another,
forgive each other; just as the Lord[b] has
forgiven you, so you also must forgive.
14Above all, clothe yourselves with love,
which binds everything together in per-
fect harmony. 15And let the peace of

r Other ancient authorities read *not dwelling*
s Meaning of Gk uncertain t Gk *by the mind of his flesh* u Or *the rudiments of the world*
v Or *are of no value, serving only to indulge the flesh*
w Other authorities read *our* x Other ancient authorities lack *on those who are disobedient* (Gk *the children of disobedience*) y Or *living among such people* z Or *filthy* a Gk *its creator,* 11*where*
b Other ancient authorities read *just as Christ*

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you of your prize (cf. *condemn you* in 2.16). Beyond a relationship to Christ, the opponents require *self-abasement*, i.e., through ascetic practices (see 2.21, 23), and the *worship of angels*, which suggests either that angels could perform an intermediary function beyond what Christ offered, or that self-mortification could grant access to worship *with* the angels. *Dwelling on visions* is a difficult phrase; it could also be translated "the things seen when one entered [heaven? a place of oracles?]." *Human way of thinking*, an ironic put-down of the opponents' claims. **2.19** *Head*, a reference, through 2.10, to the Christ hymn (see 1.18). On *growth*, see 1.6, 10. **2.20–23** The last mention of opponents and their teachings. **2.21** *"Do not ... touch,"* regulations for self-abasement; see 2.18, 23. **2.23** *Severe treatment of the body*, the asceticism prescribed by the opponents as a requirement for true piety (see 2.16, 21).

3.1–17 What the readers should do in light of their resurrection with Christ (see 2.12). **3.1** *At the right hand of God*, an echo of Ps 110.1. **3.4** For Christ as *life*, see Gal 2.20. On Christ and believers being *revealed* in the fullness of time, see Lk 17.30; Rom 8.19; 1 Jn 3.2. **3.5** Vice lists such as this were a common means of exhortation; see Rom 1.29–31; Gal 5.19–21. **3.6** On the *wrath of God*, an apocalyptic concept, see Rom 1.18; Eph 5.6; see also Mt 3.7. **3.8–14** The language of disrobing (*get rid of, stripped off*) and being *clothed*, associated with baptism (see note on 2.11), is here applied to ethical behavior. **3.10** The *image of its creator*, i.e., the image of Christ. See 1.15; see also 2 Cor 4.4. **3.11** *No longer Greek ... free*, a revised version of the baptismal formula in Gal 3.28. Missing is any reference to male and female (see also 1 Cor 12.13; cf. Col 3.18–19). The *Scythians* were an ancient nomadic people, widely viewed as the ultimate barbarians. **3.13** *Forgive ... as the Lord has forgiven you.* See 2.13; Eph 4.32; see also Mt 6.14. **3.15** *Called* has the same meaning as

Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ[c] dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.[d] 17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Rules for Christian Households

18 Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. 19 Husbands, love your wives and never treat them harshly.

20 Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is your acceptable duty in the Lord. 21 Fathers, do not provoke your children, or they may lose heart. 22 Slaves, obey your earthly masters[e] in everything, not only while being watched and in order to please them, but wholeheartedly, fearing the Lord.[e] 23 Whatever your task, put yourselves into it, as done for the Lord and not for your masters,[f] 24 since you know that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you serve[g] the Lord Christ. 25 For the wrongdoer will be paid back for whatever wrong has been done, and there is no partiality. 4 1 Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, for you know that you also have a Master in heaven.

Further Instructions

2 Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving. 3 At the same time pray for us as well that God will open to us a door for the word, that we may declare the mystery of Christ, for which I am in prison, 4 so that I may reveal it clearly, as I should.

5 Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time.[h] 6 Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone.

Final Greetings and Benediction

7 Tychicus will tell you all the news about me; he is a beloved brother, a faithful minister, and a fellow servant[i] in the Lord. 8 I have sent him to you for this very purpose, so that you may know how we are[j] and that he may encourage your hearts; 9 he is coming with Onesimus, the faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will tell you about everything here.

10 Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, as does Mark the cousin of Barnabas, concerning whom you have received instructions—if he comes to you, welcome him. 11 And Jesus who is called Justus greets you. These are the only ones of the circumcision among my co-workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me. 12 Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant[i] of Christ Jesus,

c Other ancient authorities read *of God*, or *of the Lord* *d* Other ancient authorities read *to the Lord* *e* In Greek the same word is used for *master* and *Lord* *f* Gk *not for men* *g* Or *you are slaves of*, or *be slaves of* *h* Or *opportunity* *i* Gk *slave* *j* Other authorities read *that I may know how you are*

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chosen in 3.12. **3.16** Believers are to *teach* each other as the author has taught them; see 1.28. On *singing psalms . . . and . . . songs*, see 1 Cor 14.26; Eph 5.19. **3.17** *Giving thanks*. See 1.12; see also Eph 5.20.

3.18–4.1 Guidelines for comportment within the household. **3.18** On the exhortation *Wives, be subject to your husbands*, see 1 Cor 14.34; Eph 5.21, 22; Titus 2.3–5; 1 Pet 3.1–6; cf. 1 Cor 7.3–4; Gal 3.28. **3.19** On *love* for *wives*, see Eph 5.25; cf. 1 Pet 3.7. **3.20–21** On *children* and *fathers*, see Eph 6.1–4. **3.22–25** *Slaves* are also admonished in Eph 6.5–8; 1 Tim 6.1–2; Titus 2.9–10; 1 Pet 2.18–25; cf. 1 Cor 7.21–24. **3.25** On *no partiality*, see Eph 6.9; see also Rom 2.11; 3.22; 10.12. **4.1** On the just treatment of slaves by their *masters*, see Lev 25.43, 53; Eph 6.9.

4.2–6 Concluding admonitions. **4.2** On *prayer*, see 1.9; 4.3, 12. On *thanksgiving*, see 1.12; 2.7; 3.17. **4.3** *Mystery of Christ*. See 1.27, 2.2. *In prison*. It is not known what imprisonment is meant here; see 4.10, 18; see also 2 Cor 6.5; 11.23. **4.5** On *making the most of the time*, see Eph 5.16. **4.6** If *seasoned with salt* is an echo of Ex 30.35, then all *speech* should be a thank offering to God. On *answering* the questions of outsiders, see 1 Pet 3.15. **4.7–18** Greetings and instructions. **4.7** On the commendation of *Tychicus*, see Eph 6.21–22; see also Acts 20.4; 2 Tim 4.12; Titus 3.12. **4.9** On *Onesimus*, a Colossian, see Philem 10. **4.10–14** See Philem 23–24 for many of the same names. **4.11** *Kingdom of God*. Cf. 1.13; Eph 5.5. **4.12** On *standing* firm, see Eph 6.11–14.

greets you. He is always wrestling in his
prayers on your behalf, so that you may
stand mature and fully assured in every-
thing that God wills. 13 For I testify for
him that he has worked hard for you and
for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis.
14 Luke, the beloved physician, and De-
mas greet you. 15 Give my greetings to the
brothers and sisters[k] in Laodicea, and to
Nympha and the church in her house.
16 And when this letter has been read
among you, have it read also in the
church of the Laodiceans; and see that
you read also the letter from Laodicea.
17 And say to Archippus, "See that you
complete the task that you have received
in the Lord."

18 I, Paul, write this greeting with my
own hand. Remember my chains. Grace
be with you.[l]

k Gk *brothers* *l* Other ancient authorities add *Amen*

On *mature* status, see note on 1.28. **4.16** *Letter from Laodicea*, i.e., a letter from Paul to the Laodiceans, sent by them to Colossae; nothing is known of this letter. **4.18** Letters in antiquity were often dictated to a scribe (see Rom 16.22), but the author might append a *greeting* in his *own hand* (see 1 Cor 16.21; Gal 6.11).

THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL TO THE

THESSALONIANS

Addressees

PAUL WROTE 1 THESSALONIANS, the oldest book in the NT, to the church in Thessalonica, a port located on the northern shore of the Aegean Sea. This city was the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia and was devoted to the imperial cult of Rome, but culturally it remained a Greek city governed by Greek law. Its location on the Via Egnatia, which ran from Byzantium to the Adriatic Sea, ensured commercial prosperity.

Circumstances of the Letter

After a bad experience in Philippi (2.2; Acts 16.11–40), Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy came to Thessalonica. Soon after they founded a church there, intense opposition from the Jewish community forced them to leave (Acts 17.1–10). They went on to Beroea, where Silvanus (called "Silas" in Acts) and Timothy stayed while Paul journeyed on to Athens (Acts 17.10–15). When Timothy joined Paul in Athens, Paul immediately sent him back to Thessalonica for information about the church (3.1–2) and then went on to Corinth, where Timothy and Silvanus met him later (Acts 18.1–5). Timothy reported favorably about the life of the community (3.6–7) but also, it seems, brought news of anxiety over Paul's failure to return.

Timothy's report stimulated Paul to write 1 Thessalonians from Corinth about 51 C.E. In the Letter Paul responds to the Thessalonians' anxiety by reviewing his initial reception there (1.2–10) and his ongoing concern for the church (2.1–3.13). He reinforces his original teaching by describing how Christians should live in the face of the imminent return of Jesus the Lord (4.1–5.11) and how they should strengthen one another in their life together (5.12–22).

Authenticity and Integrity

Although no scholar doubts that Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians, a few argue that it contains fragments from two or three letters. Many regard 2.14–16 as a later insertion because of its severe language about Jewish persecution of Christians in

Judea. Scholars defending Paul's authorship of these verses argue that they reflect the tense situation described in Acts 17.5–13. If Paul wrote these verses, however, he later modified his position (see Rom 9.3–5; 11.17–31).

Stylistic Features and Significance

The letter is pastoral, warm in tone, and affectionate throughout. The praise in 1.6–8 is unequaled in Paul's other Letters. Aware of the Thessalonians' Greek culture, Paul draws on language from Greek philosophy to discuss issues treated by many Greek writers: marriage, community life, engagement in civil life.

Because the Thessalonian converts were not Jewish, Paul does not refer explicitly (except in 2.14–16) to Judaism, to problems affecting Jewish Christians (e.g., the Mosaic law), or to any OT person, institution, or event (e.g., Abraham, Moses, the temple, or sacrifice). He also does not quote the OT, though it often lies behind his language or thought, for Paul's Jewish heritage shaped him decisively.

1 Thessalonians gives us our earliest insight into Paul's missionary activity and continuing concern for his congregations. It reveals problems early Christians faced living in Greek society and lets us see the inner life of the early church.
Edgar M. Krentz

The first Christian groups established by Paul in Europe were at Philippi and Thessalonica. From there he traveled south through Beroea (Acts 17.10–15) to Athens (1 Thess 2.2–3.1) and finally to Corinth.

Salutation

1 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,
To the church of the Thessalonians
in God the Father and the Lord Jesus
Christ:
Grace to you and peace.

The Thessalonians' Reception of Paul's Gospel

2 We always give thanks to God for all
of you and mention you in our prayers,
constantly 3 remembering before our God
and Father your work of faith and labor
of love and steadfastness of hope in our
Lord Jesus Christ. 4 For we know, broth-
ers and sisters[a] beloved by God, that he
has chosen you, 5 because our message of
the gospel came to you not in word only,
but also in power and in the Holy Spirit
and with full conviction; just as you know
what kind of persons we proved to be
among you for your sake. 6 And you be-
came imitators of us and of the Lord, for
in spite of persecution you received the
word with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit,
7 so that you became an example to all the
believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.
8 For the word of the Lord has sounded
forth from you not only in Macedonia
and Achaia, but in every place your faith
in God has become known, so that we
have no need to speak about it. 9 For the
people of those regions[b] report about us
what kind of welcome we had among you,
and how you turned to God from idols, to
serve a living and true God, 10 and to wait
for his Son from heaven, whom he raised
from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us
from the wrath that is coming.

Paul's Way of Life in Thessalonica

2 You yourselves know, brothers and
sisters,[a] that our coming to you was
not in vain, 2 but though we had already
suffered and been shamefully mistreated
at Philippi, as you know, we had courage
in our God to declare to you the gospel of
God in spite of great opposition. 3 For our
appeal does not spring from deceit or im-
pure motives or trickery, 4 but just as we
have been approved by God to be en-
trusted with the message of the gospel,

a Gk *brothers* b Gk *For they*

1.1 Typical ancient letter opening with Christian modifications (see Rom 1.1–7). Formally there are three senders; *Paul*, however, is the writer, as 3.1 makes clear. *Silvanus* ("Silas" in Acts) and *Timothy* were trusted co-workers (see Acts 16.1–18.5; 2 Cor 1.19).

1.2–3.13 The first major section describes Paul's ongoing concern for the Thessalonians. **1.2–10** The Thessalonians' reception of Paul's preaching was ratified by what it produced: their experience of the Spirit and their own joyful proclamation. **1.2–3** Ancient letters often begin with a prayer for the readers' well-being; Paul begins with thanks for the Thessalonians' present activity (see, e.g., Rom 1.8). **1.3** *Faith, hope,* and *love* occur together here for the first time in Paul's Letters; see also 5.8; Rom 5.1–5; 1 Cor 13.13; Gal 5.5–6. **1.4** *Chosen* implies a special relationship with God, like Israel's (see, e.g., Isa 41.8–10). **1.5** *Our message of the gospel* is not Paul's own creation but God's effective word that produces faith. *Word* is a philosophical term implying rational account and explanation; see also 1.6, 8; 2.5; 4.18. To contrast speech and action was an ancient Greek philosophical convention. *Power*, the *Holy Spirit* (see also 1.6; 4.8; 5.19), and *full conviction* stress the effect on the Thessalonians of Paul's preaching. **1.6** Paul often uses himself (1 Cor 4.16; 11.1), other Christians (1 Thess 2.14), and the Lord (1 Cor 11.1) as models for *imitation*. *Persecution* marked the founding of this church; see 2.2, 14–16; 3.3–4. **1.7** *Macedonia* (where Thessalonica lies) is northern mainland Greece; *Achaia* (where Corinth, from which Paul is writing, lies) is southern Greece. **1.8** *Sounded forth* stresses the Thessalonians' witnessing activity. **1.9–10** A terse summary of Paul's initial preaching to non-Jews; see also 1 Cor 8.6; 10.14. **1.9** *Idols*. See also 1 Cor 8.4–13; 10.14–22. **1.10** *Wrath that is coming* from God (see also 2.16; 5.9), a feature of OT expectation (Isa 13.9; cf. Isa 2.10–22), here refers to the final day of judgment; see also Rom 2.5, 8; 3.5; 5.9; 9.22.

2.1–16 Paul's fidelity to the gospel and concern for the Thessalonians determined his actions while in Thessalonica. **2.1** *You yourselves know*, a tactful invitation to recall Paul's ministry. See also 1.5; 2.2, 5, 11; 3.4; 4.2. **2.2** On events in *Philippi*, see Acts 16.11–40. *The gospel of God* means a revelation about God (see 1.9). **2.3–8** Using the language of philosophers of his day (v. 3: *deceit, impure motives, trickery*; v. 5: *words of flattery, pretext for greed*; v. 6: *praise from mortals*), Paul presents himself as an ideal philosopher whose way of life refutes the idea that he acted out of greed. **2.3** *Appeal*, a philosophical term for moral exhortation such as that found in 4.1–5.22. **2.4** *To please God* is Paul's fundamental moral criterion

even so we speak, not to please mortals,
but to please God who tests our hearts.
5 As you know and as God is our witness,
we never came with words of flattery or
with a pretext for greed; 6 nor did we seek
praise from mortals, whether from you or
from others, 7 though we might have
made demands as apostles of Christ. But
we were gentle[c] among you, like a nurse
tenderly caring for her own children. 8 So
deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the
gospel of God but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us.
9 You remember our labor and toil,
brothers and sisters;[d] we worked night
and day, so that we might not burden any
of you while we proclaimed to you the
gospel of God. 10 You are witnesses, and
God also, how pure, upright, and blameless our conduct was toward you believers.
11 As you know, we dealt with each one of
you like a father with his children,
12 urging and encouraging you and pleading that you lead a life worthy of God,
who calls you into his own kingdom and
glory.
13 We also constantly give thanks to
God for this, that when you received the
word of God that you heard from us, you
accepted it not as a human word but as
what it really is, God's word, which is also
at work in you believers. 14 For you, brothers and sisters,[d] became imitators of the
churches of God in Christ Jesus that are
in Judea, for you suffered the same things
from your own compatriots as they did
from the Jews, 15 who killed both the Lord
Jesus and the prophets,[e] and drove us
out; they displease God and oppose everyone 16 by hindering us from speaking to
the Gentiles so that they may be saved.
Thus they have constantly been filling up
the measure of their sins; but God's wrath
has overtaken them at last.[f]

Paul's Concern for the Thessalonians while Absent

17 As for us, brothers and sisters,[d]
when, for a short time, we were made orphans by being separated from you—in
person, not in heart—we longed with
great eagerness to see you face to face.
18 For we wanted to come to you—
certainly I, Paul, wanted to again and
again—but Satan blocked our way. 19 For
what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming?
Is it not you? 20 Yes, you are our glory
and joy!
3 Therefore when we could bear it no
longer, we decided to be left alone
in Athens; 2 and we sent Timothy, our
brother and co-worker for God in proclaiming[g] the gospel of Christ, to
strengthen and encourage you for the
sake of your faith, 3 so that no one would
be shaken by these persecutions. Indeed,
you yourselves know that this is what we
are destined for. 4 In fact, when we were
with you, we told you beforehand that we
were to suffer persecution; so it turned
out, as you know. 5 For this reason, when
I could bear it no longer, I sent to find out
about your faith; I was afraid that somehow the tempter had tempted you and
that our labor had been in vain.

Timothy's Encouraging Report

6 But Timothy has just now come to
us from you, and has brought us the good

c Other ancient authorities read *infants*
d Gk *brothers* e Other ancient authorities read *their own prophets* f Or *completely* or *forever*
g Gk lacks *proclaiming*

(see 4.1). **2.7** The only explicit reference to Paul's *apostleship* in the Letter. *Gentle ... like a nurse.* See Gal 4.19 for more maternal imagery. **2.9** Like many contemporary philosophers, Paul *worked* to support himself; see also Acts 18.3; 1 Cor 9.6–18; 2 Thess 3.7–10. **2.12** *Urging and encouraging ... and pleading* are the opposite of making *demands* (2.7). **2.13–16** The second thanksgiving (see 1.2–3) for the Thessalonians' faith under opposition. **2.14–16** The authenticity of these verses is sometimes challenged; see Introduction. **2.15** On *killing ... the prophets* (the only reference to the OT in the Letter), see Mt 23.31; Lk 11.49–51; Acts 7.52. **2.16** *Filling up the measure of their sins* (see also Dan 8.23; 2 Macc 6.14) reflects the apocalyptic concept that history moves in foreordained stages toward the end. *God's wrath.* See 1.10. *At last. Completely* or *forever* (see text note *f*) is preferable.

2.17–3.5 Paul expresses his concern for the Thessalonians while absent from them. **2.18** Paul interprets his frustrated attempts to visit Thessalonica as part of the apocalyptic struggle between God and *Satan*; see also Rom 16.20; 2 Cor 2.11; 11.14; 12.7. **2.19** *Crown of boasting.* See Phil 2.16; 4.1. **3.5** The *tempter*, i.e., Satan (see 2.18). **3.6–13** Timothy's report (see 3.2) leads Paul to an exuberant response. **3.6** On

news of your faith and love. He has told
us also that you always remember us
kindly and long to see us—just as we long
to see you. 7 For this reason, brothers and
sisters,[h] during all our distress and perse-
cution we have been encouraged about
you through your faith. 8 For we now live,
if you continue to stand firm in the Lord.
9 How can we thank God enough for you
in return for all the joy that we feel before
our God because of you? 10 Night and day
we pray most earnestly that we may see
you face to face and restore whatever is
lacking in your faith.

11 Now may our God and Father him-
self and our Lord Jesus direct our way to
you. 12 And may the Lord make you in-
crease and abound in love for one an-
other and for all, just as we abound in love
for you. 13 And may he so strengthen your
hearts in holiness that you may be blame-
less before our God and Father at the
coming of our Lord Jesus with all his
saints.

A Life Pleasing to God: Practice Good Public Morality

4 Finally, brothers and sisters,[h] we ask
and urge you in the Lord Jesus that,
as you learned from us how you ought to
live and to please God (as, in fact, you are
doing), you should do so more and more.
2 For you know what instructions we gave
you through the Lord Jesus. 3 For this is
the will of God, your sanctification: that
you abstain from fornication; 4 that each
one of you know how to control your own
body[i] in holiness and honor, 5 not with
lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do
not know God; 6 that no one wrong or ex-
ploit a brother or sister[j] in this matter,
because the Lord is an avenger in all these
things, just as we have already told you
beforehand and solemnly warned you.
7 For God did not call us to impurity but
in holiness. 8 Therefore whoever rejects
this rejects not human authority but God,
who also gives his Holy Spirit to you.

9 Now concerning love of the brothers
and sisters,[h] you do not need to have any-
one write to you, for you yourselves have
been taught by God to love one another;
10 and indeed you do love all the brothers
and sisters[h] throughout Macedonia. But
we urge you, beloved,[h] to do so more and
more, 11 to aspire to live quietly, to mind
your own affairs, and to work with your
hands, as we directed you, 12 so that you
may behave properly toward outsiders
and be dependent on no one.

The Coming of the Lord

13 But we do not want you to be un-
informed, brothers and sisters,[h] about

h Gk *brothers* *i* Or *how to take a wife for himself*
j Gk *brother*

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faith and love, see 1.3; Paul reinforces hope in 4.13–18. **3.10** *Whatever is lacking in your faith* does not imply a rebuke (see 1.8) but refers to the teaching given in 4.1–5.22. **3.11–13** Paul's prayer, answered by later visits (1 Cor 16.5; 2 Cor 2.13; 7.5), repeats motifs found in 1.3–4. **3.13** *Saints* (lit. "holy ones"), an OT title for God's people (see Ex 19.6; Dan 7.18; *Psalms of Solomon* 17.26), here refers to Christians.

4.1–5.24 In the second major section of the Letter, Paul gives practical instructions about Christian life. **4.1–12** Marriage, human relationships, and civic life—topics often discussed by philosophers—were significant for Christian life in a Greek city. **4.1–2** General introduction to 4.1–5.24. **4.1** *Finally*, better translated "therefore," marks the transition to 4.1–5.24. *Urge*, or *encourage* (Greek *parakalō*), a technical term of ancient ethics, is also found in 2.12; 3.2; 4.10; 5.11, 14. **4.3** Reference to the *will of God* anticipates the strong theological emphasis in 4.6–8. Greco-Roman sexual laxity scandalized Jews (see 4.5), so Paul often warns against *fornication* (see 1 Cor 5.1; 6.13, 18; Gal 5.19). **4.4** *How to control your own body* (see 1 Cor 7.2). *How to take a wife for himself* (text note *i*; lit. "how to possess a vessel or implement") is preferable. Both translations are possible, but Paul is discussing relationships here. *Holiness and honor*. Paul evaluates marital sex positively (see also 1 Cor 7.3–6). **4.6** On *wronging . . . a brother or sister*, see Rom 14.13–23; 1 Cor 8.9–13. Paul describes God as an *avenger*, an OT motif (Ps 94.1), to stress the eschatological significance of what he teaches; see also 1.10; Rom 2.16; 12.19. **4.9** *Love of the brothers and sisters* (Greek *philadelphia*) was a virtue in Epicurean philosophy; Paul uses the term only once more (Rom 12.10). *Taught by God*, a common Stoic idea. The term is not found elsewhere in the NT. **4.11** *Aspire to live quietly* corresponds to the Epicurean maxim "Escape notice as you live." *Mind your own affairs* expresses an Epicurean attitude that excluded participation in civic affairs. *Work with your hands* emphasizes self-sufficiency, a major Stoic goal (see 2.9).

4.13–18 Paul describes Jesus' return in lan-

those who have died,[k] so that you may
not grieve as others do who have no hope.
14 For since we believe that Jesus died and
rose again, even so, through Jesus, God
will bring with him those who have died.[k]
15 For this we declare to you by the word
of the Lord, that we who are alive, who
are left until the coming of the Lord, will
by no means precede those who have
died.[k] 16 For the Lord himself, with a cry
of command, with the archangel's call and
with the sound of God's trumpet, will de-
scend from heaven, and the dead in
Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are
alive, who are left, will be caught up in the
clouds together with them to meet the
Lord in the air; and so we will be with
the Lord forever. 18 Therefore encourage
one another with these words.

5 Now concerning the times and the
seasons, brothers and sisters,[l] you
do not need to have anything written to
you. 2 For you yourselves know very well
that the day of the Lord will come like
a thief in the night. 3 When they say,
"There is peace and security," then sud-
den destruction will come upon them, as
labor pains come upon a pregnant wom-
an, and there will be no escape! 4 But
you, beloved,[l] are not in darkness, for
that day to surprise you like a thief; 5 for
you are all children of light and children
of the day; we are not of the night or of
darkness. 6 So then let us not fall asleep as
others do, but let us keep awake and be
sober; 7 for those who sleep sleep at night,
and those who are drunk get drunk at
night. 8 But since we belong to the day, let
us be sober, and put on the breastplate of
faith and love, and for a helmet the hope
of salvation. 9 For God has destined us not
for wrath but for obtaining salvation
through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who
died for us, so that whether we are awake
or asleep we may live with him. 11 There-
fore encourage one another and build up
each other, as indeed you are doing.

Life in Christian Community, Greetings, and Benediction

12 But we appeal to you, brothers
and sisters,[l] to respect those who labor
among you, and have charge of you in the
Lord and admonish you; 13 esteem them
very highly in love because of their work.
Be at peace among yourselves. 14 And
we urge you, beloved,[l] to admonish the
idlers, encourage the fainthearted, help
the weak, be patient with all of them.
15 See that none of you repays evil for evil,
but always seek to do good to one another
and to all. 16 Rejoice always, 17 pray with-
out ceasing, 18 give thanks in all circum-
stances; for this is the will of God in Christ
Jesus for you. 19 Do not quench the Spirit.
20 Do not despise the words of prophets,[m]
21 but test everything; hold fast to what is

k Gk *fallen asleep* *l* Gk *brothers* *m* Gk *despise prophecies*

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guage that has points of contact with the Roman imperial cult and Jewish apocalyptic expectations. **4.13** *No hope* reflects a common Greco-Roman view that there is no resurrection. A Latin tomb inscription reads: "I was not; I was; I am not; I care not." **4.15** *By the word of the Lord* probably refers to a special revelation from the risen Christ; no such saying of Jesus survives in the Gospels. *We who are alive.* Paul does not expect to die before Jesus' coming (see also 1 Cor 15.51–52). Later, however, he seems to reflect on the possibility of death; see 2 Cor 5.1–5; Phil 1.20–23. The Greek word translated *coming* (*parousia*; see also 2.19; 3.13; 5.23) was a technical term for a ruler's state visit. **4.16** A *cry of command,* a herald's *call,* and a *trumpet* (see Isa 27.13; Joel 2.1; Zech 9.14) announce the ruler's arrival. **4.17** Paul identifies Jesus as the *Lord* (an imperial title) of the universe, whom believers will welcome as city officials would *meet* and welcome a visiting ruler. **5.1–11** Paul draws out the implications of the hope of Jesus' coming with repeated calls for vigilance. **5.2** The *day of the Lord,* the day of judgment. See Isa 2.9–19; Am 5.18–20. **5.3** Roman imperial coins used *peace and security* as a propaganda legend; see also Jer 6.14; Ezek 13.10. *Labor pains.* See Isa 13.6–8; Hos 13.13. **5.6** *Let us not fall asleep.* See Mt 25.13; Mk 13.34–37; this exhortation to moral alertness is clarified by *keep awake* and *be sober.* **5.8** Imagery of armor (*breastplate, helmet*) underscores the need to struggle; see also Rom 13.12; 2 Cor 6.7; 10.4; Eph 6.13–17; Phil 1.27–30. On *hope,* see 1.3; note on 3.6. Paul understands *salvation* to lie in the future; see Rom 5.9; Phil 2.12; 3.20. **5.10** *Who died for us,* a terse allusion to Jesus' death as a sacrifice for sin. See Rom 4.25; 1 Cor 15.3. Paul returns to his earlier use of *sleep* as a metaphor for death (see 4.13–15, text note *k*).

5.12–24 Exhortations to good relationships within the Christian community. **5.12** *Those who labor among you,* i.e., in ad hoc leadership roles. Formal clergy did not yet exist. **5.21** *Test everything,* i.e., using *what is good* as a criterion (see also

good; 22 abstain from every form of evil.
23 May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound[n] and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.
25 Beloved,[o] pray for us.
26 Greet all the brothers and sisters[p] with a holy kiss. 27 I solemnly command you by the Lord that this letter be read to all of them.[q]
28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.[r]

n Or *complete* *o* Gk *Brothers* *p* Gk *brothers* *q* Gk *to all the brothers* *r* Other ancient authorities add *Amen*

Rom 12.2). **5.23–24** A concluding benediction stresses the faithfulness of God. **5.25–28** The conclusion of the Letter. **5.26** The *holy kiss* was a part of worship; see Rom 16.16; 1 Cor 16.20; 2 Cor 13.12. **5.27** The Letter is probably to *be read* in the recipients' worship assembly.

THE SECOND LETTER OF PAUL TO THE

THESSALONIANS

Authorship

THOUGH 2 THESSALONIANS resembles other Letters of the Pauline corpus, especially 1 Thessalonians, its authorship is often questioned. The strange hints of forgery (2.2; 3.17), which have no parallel in other Pauline Letters, raise the issue directly, and the unusually close relationship between 1 and 2 Thessalonians keeps the question alive. In the opening greetings, the renewed thanksgivings, and the issues addressed, the two Letters show such striking similarities that either the second was written so soon after the first that Paul still recalled his earlier wording, or a later writer used 1 Thessalonians as a model and borrowed Paul's name and reputation to deal with a crisis confronting a post-Pauline church. Because the eschatological perspectives of the two Letters are so different, the second hypothesis seems better: 2 Thessalonians is probably pseudonymous.

Occasion

1 Thessalonians views the Second Coming (Greek *parousia*) of Jesus as imminent, and one of Paul's concerns in that Letter is to prepare the church for this approaching day (1 Thess 4.13–5.11). In contrast, in 2 Thessalonians, the author seeks to refute the view that this return is near (the probable meaning of "the day of the Lord is already here," 2.2) and to remind the church of the numerous events that must precede it (2.1–12). The situation was thus one of keen apocalyptic expectations fueled by persecution (1.4). Indeed, the author of 2 Thessalonians may have felt that 1 Thessalonians, with its eager anticipation of the Second Coming, had contributed to the new problem, and the rejection of a "letter as though from us" (2.2) may be intended to discredit the earlier Letter.

The author draws on a rich reservoir of apocalyptic traditions to buttress the arguments that the church's present affliction will be reversed on the day of the Lord (1.5–10), that that climactic day has not yet arrived (2.1–12), and therefore that actions in the present continue to be important (2.15–3.16).

Date and Place

If 2 Thessalonians is by Paul, it was written shortly after 1 Thessalonians and to the same church. If not, it is impossible to date or place it with any precision.
Jouette M. Bassler

Salutation

1 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,
To the church of the Thessalonians
in God our Father and the Lord Jesus
Christ:
2 Grace to you and peace from God
our[a] Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thanksgiving

3 We must always give thanks to God
for you, brothers and sisters,[b] as is right,
because your faith is growing abundantly,
and the love of everyone of you for one
another is increasing. 4 Therefore we our-
selves boast of you among the churches of
God for your steadfastness and faith dur-
ing all your persecutions and the afflic-
tions that you are enduring.

The Judgment at Christ's Coming

5 This is evidence of the righteous
judgment of God, and is intended to
make you worthy of the kingdom of God,
for which you are also suffering. 6 For it is
indeed just of God to repay with affliction
those who afflict you, 7 and to give relief
to the afflicted as well as to us, when the
Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with
his mighty angels 8 in flaming fire, inflict-
ing vengeance on those who do not know
God and on those who do not obey the
gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 These will suf-
fer the punishment of eternal destruction,
separated from the presence of the Lord
and from the glory of his might, 10 when
he comes to be glorified by his saints and
to be marveled at on that day among all
who have believed, because our testimony
to you was believed. 11 To this end we al-
ways pray for you, asking that our God
will make you worthy of his call and will
fulfill by his power every good resolve
and work of faith, 12 so that the name of
our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you,
and you in him, according to the grace of
our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

a Other ancient authorities read *the*
b Gk *brothers*

1.1–2 The brief opening of the Letter is nearly identical to that of 1 Thessalonians. **1.3–12** The apocalyptic content of the rather formal thanksgiving (see also 2.13; cf. Rom 1.8–15; 1 Cor 1.4–9; 1 Thess 1.2–10) anticipates the argument of ch. 2. **1.4** Because *persecutions and . . . afflictions* were widely regarded as signs of the end of the age (see 2.2; Mk 13.19–27), they required careful interpretation; see 1.5–10; 2.1–12; cf. Rom 5.3; 2 Cor 1.6–7; 1 Thess 1.6; 3.3, 7.

1.5–10 An apparent digression introduces a central theme of the Letter: the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus (see also 2.1–12). **1.5** The *evidence* (lit. "sign") of the *righteous judgment of God* is either the steadfastness and faith of the church (see Phil 1.28) or its afflictions (see 1 Pet 4.17–18). **1.7b–10** This dramatic description of the revelation (i.e., Second Coming) of Jesus appropriates OT language about God; see also *1 Enoch* 1.3–9. **1.7b** On the retinue of *angels*, see Zech 14.5; Mt 25.31; Mk 8.38; Jude 14–15. **1.8** *Fire* is associated with God (Ex 3.2; Ezek 1.4, 13, 27) and with the final judgment (Isa 66.15–16; Mt 3.12; 1 Cor 3.13–15). **1.9** *From the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might*, a refrain used in Isa 2.10, 19, 21 (Septuagint), where the day of God's terrible judgment is described. **1.10** *Saints* (lit. "holy ones"), the usual NT epithet for believers (1 Col 1.2); here it may refer to the *mighty angels* (1.7; see Zech 14.5). *That day*, i.e., the day of the Lord (see 2.2; Isa 2.11). **1.11–12** An intercessory prayer (see also 2.16–17; 3.5, 16) closes the thanksgiving. **1.11** *Work of faith*. See 1 Thess 1.3.

The Day of the Lord

2 As to the coming of our Lord Jesus
Christ and our being gathered to-
gether to him, we beg you, brothers and
sisters,[c] 2 not to be quickly shaken in
mind or alarmed, either by spirit or by
word or by letter, as though from us, to
the effect that the day of the Lord is al-
ready here. 3 Let no one deceive you in
any way; for that day will not come unless
the rebellion comes first and the lawless
one[d] is revealed, the one destined for de-
struction.[e] 4 He opposes and exalts him-
self above every so-called god or object of
worship, so that he takes his seat in the
temple of God, declaring himself to be
God. 5 Do you not remember that I told
you these things when I was still with you?
6 And you know what is now restraining
him, so that he may be revealed when his
time comes. 7 For the mystery of lawless-
ness is already at work, but only until the
one who now restrains it is removed.
8 And then the lawless one will be re-
vealed, whom the Lord Jesus[f] will de-
stroy[g] with the breath of his mouth,
annihilating him by the manifestation of
his coming. 9 The coming of the lawless
one is apparent in the working of Satan,
who uses all power, signs, lying wonders,
10 and every kind of wicked deception for
those who are perishing, because they re-
fused to love the truth and so be saved.
11 For this reason God sends them a pow-
erful delusion, leading them to believe
what is false, 12 so that all who have not
believed the truth but took pleasure in
unrighteousness will be condemned.
13 But we must always give thanks to
God for you, brothers and sisters[c] be-
loved by the Lord, because God chose you
as the first fruits[h] for salvation through
sanctification by the Spirit and through
belief in the truth. 14 For this purpose he
called you through our proclamation of
the good news,[i] so that you may obtain
the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 15 So
then, brothers and sisters,[c] stand firm
and hold fast to the traditions that you
were taught by us, either by word of
mouth or by our letter.

c Gk *brothers* *d* Gk *the man of lawlessness*; other ancient authorities read *the man of sin* *e* Gk *the son of destruction* *f* Other ancient authorities lack *Jesus* *g* Other ancient authorities read *consume* *h* Other ancient authorities read *from the beginning* *i* Or *through our gospel*

2.1–12 A major concern of 2 Thessalonians is to refute the view that *the day of the Lord is already here* (v. 2). **2.1** The *coming* (Greek *parousia*) of Jesus in judgment (see 1.7–8) marks the *day of the Lord* (v. 2; see also 1.10; 1 Thess 5.1–11). It was widely held that on that day the elect, whether dead or alive, would be *gathered together*; see Mt 24.31, 38–42; 1 Thess 4.15–17. **2.2** *By spirit*, i.e., by a prophetic saying; see 1 Cor 12.10; 1 Thess 5.19–20; 1 Jn 4.1. *By word*, i.e., by logical argument; see 1 Thess 1.5. *Letter as though from us* suggests a forged letter (see 3.17); however, the author may intend to discredit 1 Thessalonians with this phrase. **2.3** It was widely believed that a *rebellion* (Greek *apostasia*) against God would precede the day of the Lord; see Mt 24.6–14; 1 Tim 4.1; 2 Tim 3.1–5; Jude 17–19. The *lawless one* (see 2.8), a blasphemous antichrist figure whose revelation (cf. 1.7) would be the last sign preceding the day of the Lord. See also Mt 24.23–24; 1 Jn 2.18; Rev 13. **2.4** The description of the lawless one echoes various OT passages; see Isa 14.13–14; Ezek 28.1–10; Dan 11.21–45. **2.6** The author does not say *what* (or *who*; see v. 7) *is now restraining him*; the answer may lie in traditions now lost to us or the ambiguity may be intentional. The discussion of a restraining force interprets the delay in revelation as deliberate. **2.7** The *mystery of lawlessness*, i.e., the already present power of the coming lawless one (see 1 Jn 4.3). **2.8** The OT image of the powerful *breath of* [God's] *mouth* is transferred to Jesus; see Job 4.9; Ps 33.6; Isa 11.4; cf. Rev 19.15. **2.9** The same Greek word (*parousia*) describes the *coming* of the lawless one and the Lord Jesus (2.1, 8). *Signs* and *wonders* mark the coming of both true (1.7; Mk 13.24–25) and false Christs (Mk 13.22; Rev 13.13–14). **2.10** *Deception*. See 2.3. **2.11** *God sends them a powerful delusion*. See also 1 Kings 22.23; Isa 6.10; Ezek 14.9; Mk 4.11–12; Rom 9.18–23. **2.13–14** The abrupt resumption of the thanksgiving (see 1.3; see also 1 Thess 1.2; 2.13) creates a stark contrast between the condemned and the saved. **2.13** On God's having *chosen* the readers, see Deut 10.15; Rom 8.29–30; 1 Thess 1.4–5; 4.7; 5.9. On *first fruits*, see Deut 26.1–2; here it means first converts (see Rom 16.5), but see text note *h*. **2.14** On God's having *called* the readers, see note on 2.13.

2.15–3.16 Exhortations alternate with intercessory prayers. **2.15** *Stand firm*. See 1 Thess 3.8. The *traditions* include ethical (see 3.6; 1 Cor 11.2) and doctrinal (see 2.5–6) teachings able to refute the erroneous views shaking the church. *By our letter* (cf. 2.2) probably refers to the present

Prayers and Exhortations

16 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and through grace gave us eternal comfort and good hope, 17 comfort your hearts and strengthen them in every good work and word.

3 Finally, brothers and sisters,[j] pray for us, so that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified everywhere, just as it is among you, 2 and that we may be rescued from wicked and evil people; for not all have faith. 3 But the Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one.[k] 4 And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will go on doing the things that we command. 5 May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.

Blunt Warning Against Idleness

6 Now we command you, beloved,[j] in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to keep away from believers who are[l] living in idleness and not according to the tradition that they[m] received from us. 7 For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us; we were not idle when we were with you, 8 and we did not eat anyone's bread without paying for it; but with toil and labor we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you. 9 This was not because we do not have that right, but in order to give you an example to imitate. 10 For even when we were with you, we gave you this command: Anyone unwilling to work should not eat. 11 For we hear that some of you are living in idleness, mere busybodies, not doing any work. 12 Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living. 13 Brothers and sisters,[n] do not be weary in doing what is right.

14 Take note of those who do not obey what we say in this letter; have nothing to do with them, so that they may be ashamed. 15 Do not regard them as enemies, but warn them as believers.[o]

Final Greetings and Benediction

16 Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in all ways. The Lord be with all of you.

17 I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. This is the mark in every letter of mine; it is the way I write. 18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with all of you.[p]

j Gk *brothers* *k* Or *from evil* *l* Gk *from every brother who is* *m* Other ancient authorities read *you* *n* Gk *Brothers* *o* Gk *a brother* *p* Other ancient authorities add *Amen*

Letter (see 3.14). **3.2** *Wicked and evil people* (see also Rom 15.30–31; 1 Thess 2.2) recalls the affliction of 1.6–8. **3.3** *He will strengthen you.* See 1.4, 11; 2.17. *The evil one,* either Satan (2.9; see also Eph 6.16) or the evil conditions (see text note *k*) of the time (1.4; 2.10; 3.2). **3.6** The final *command* is particularly emphatic (see also 3.12). On *idleness,* see 1 Thess 5.14; the Greek word can also mean "disorderliness" or "insubordination," i.e., to the tradition. **3.7** On *imitating* Paul, see 1 Cor 4.16; 11.1; Phil 3.17; 4.9; 1 Thess 1.6. **3.8** Paul was proud of not imposing a financial *burden* on his churches; see 1 Thess 2.9; 2 Cor 11.7–11; 12.14–15. **3.9** On Paul's *right* to receive payment, see 1 Cor 9.4–15. **3.10** *This command* is part of the authoritative *tradition* (see 3.6); it does not appear elsewhere in Paul's Letters. **3.12** *Work quietly.* See 1 Thess 4.11–12. **3.14** *This letter.* See 2.15. **3.17–18** Paul often wrote letter closings with his *own hand* (see 1 Cor 16.21; Gal 6.11; Col 4.18; Philem 19); the emphasis here, however, is striking.

THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL TO

TIMOTHY

THE LETTERS TO TIMOTHY and Titus form a discrete corpus within the collection of Pauline Letters. Since the eighteenth century, they have been referred to collectively as the Pastoral Letters because of their concern with leadership offices and pastoral oversight of the churches.

Authorship

The Letters purport to be from Paul, but several of their features seem incompatible with that claim. Their vocabulary and style differ in many ways from those of the rest of the Pauline Letters. Key Pauline concepts such as faith, law, and righteousness are treated quite differently, while a new emphasis on godliness, sound teaching, church order, and good works appears. The historical situations that the Pastorals describe cannot be accommodated to what we know of Paul's career from Acts and the other Letters unless we assume that these situations arose after Paul's (presumed) release from Roman imprisonment (see Acts 28.16–31), but that assumption is sheer speculation. Though some try to reconcile these problematical features with a vestige of Pauline authorship by assuming that a secretary wrote the Letters from sketchy notes or that a later author crafted them around fragments of authentic letters, it seems best to acknowledge their pseudonymity. An unknown author used Paul's name to give authority to his attempt to address problems in some post-Pauline churches.

Language and Sources

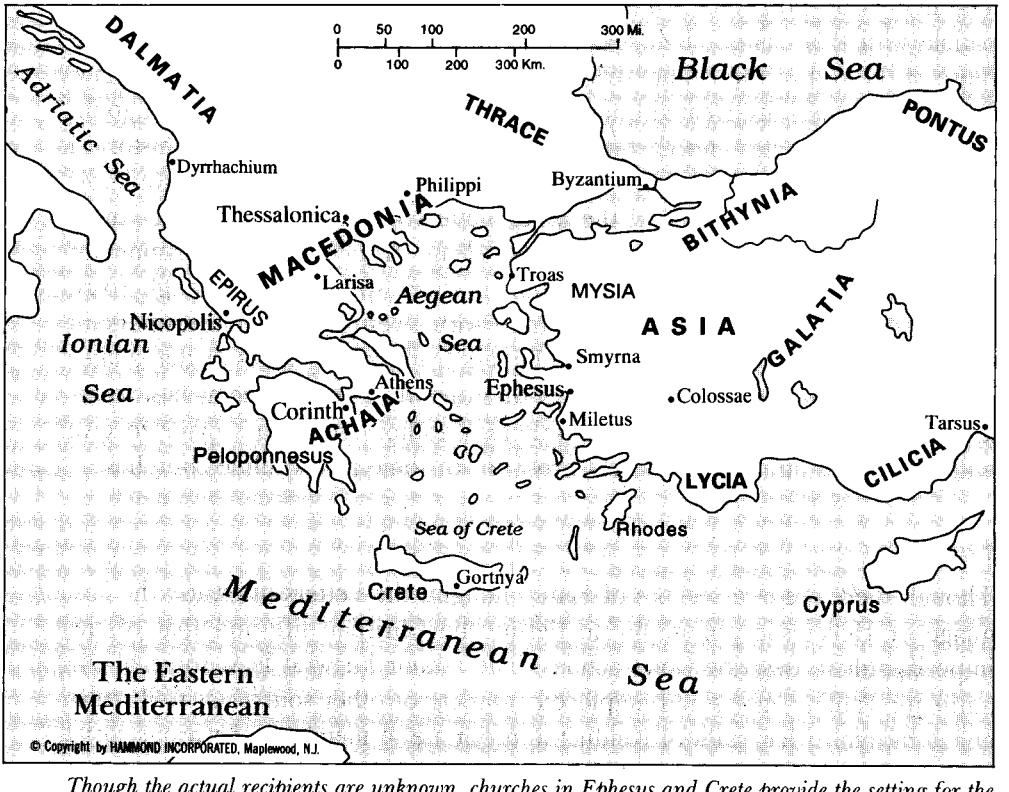
Though there are clear echoes of Paul's thought, the Letters often use the language of Hellenistic philosophy to define the Christian life and that of the imperial cult to describe God's actions. The author knew at least some of the authentic Pauline letters and employed a variety of other sources as well: rules about church order, rules of conduct appropriate to members of various social stations, liturgical fragments, and vice and virtue lists.

Place, Date, and Order

Like the author, the addressees are pseudonymous. The Letters could thus have been written anywhere in the Pauline mission field, though the frequent references to people associated with Ephesus make that city a strong possibility. The author seems to know the book of Acts (see 2 Tim 3.11), which was probably written around 80–90 C.E., and Polycarp may allude to the Pastorals in his *Letter to the Philippians* (125–135 C.E.). The Letters thus were probably written early in the second century. It is likely that the three Pastoral Letters were conceived as a corpus and intended to be read together. The canonical order was probably based simply on their lengths.

Opponents

Though the Letters assume a problem with false teachers, these people are denounced in stock terms and not carefully described or debated. It is clear, however, that their teaching contained Jewish (1 Tim 1.6–11; Titus 1.10, 14), Gnostic (1 Tim 1.4; 6.20; 2 Tim 3.7), and ascetic elements (1 Tim 4.3), as well as a spiritualized view of the resurrection as having already occurred (2 Tim 2.18).



Though the actual recipients are unknown, churches in Ephesus and Crete provide the setting for the pseudonymous Letters to Timothy and Titus.

Their influence threatened the theological and social fabric of the church, especially regarding the role of women (2 Tim 3.6–7; Titus 1.11), and the Letters attempt to address this problem with reminders of the apostolic teaching and instructions on the structure, behavior, and leadership of the community.

Addressee

The ostensible addressee of 1 Timothy is one of Paul's closest co-workers (see Acts 16–19; 1 Cor 4.17; Phil 2.19–24). He was very active in the work with the Thessalonian and Corinthian churches (2 Cor 1.19; 1 Thess 3.1–6) and appears as co-sender of six Letters (2 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Philemon). 1 Timothy implies that Paul has departed from Ephesus (cf. Acts 20.1–6), leaving Timothy behind to deal with false teachers (1.3) and to provide ethical instructions to the church (3.14–15; 4.13). Though in 2 Timothy he is summoned to Paul's side, in *this* Letter Timothy's ongoing, if not permanent, presence in Ephesus is assumed. Indeed, he is presented as the ideal church leader, whose sound doctrine and morals stand in sharp contrast to the corrupt lives and words of the false teachers. *Jouette M. Bassler*

Salutation

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by
the command of God our Savior and
of Christ Jesus our hope,
2 To Timothy, my loyal child in the
faith:
Grace, mercy, and peace from God the
Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

Warning Against False Teachers

3 I urge you, as I did when I was on
my way to Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus so that you may instruct certain people not to teach any different doctrine,
4 and not to occupy themselves with myths
and endless genealogies that promote
speculations rather than the divine training[a] that is known by faith. 5 But the aim
of such instruction is love that comes from
a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith. 6 Some people have deviated
from these and turned to meaningless
talk, 7 desiring to be teachers of the law,
without understanding either what they
are saying or the things about which they
make assertions.
8 Now we know that the law is good, if

a Or *plan*

1.1–2 The opening of the Letter follows Paul's conventions. **1.1** Both God and Christ are called *Savior* in these Letters; see 2.3; 4.10; 2 Tim 1.10; Titus 1.3–4. The title has roots in the OT (Isa 45.15) but was also used in the imperial cult. **1.2** Timothy is Paul's *loyal* (lit. "legitimate") *child*, in contrast to the heretics (1.6); see Titus 1.4; see also 1 Cor 4.17; Phil 2.19–22; 4.3. **1.3–7** The opening charge to Timothy addresses the problem of false teachers. Opponents are also mentioned in 4.1–3; 6.3–5, 20–21; 2 Tim 2.16–18, 23–26; 3.1–9, 13; 4.3–4; Titus 1.10–16; 3.9–11. **1.3** Two of these *certain people* are named in 1.20, but the opponents are often left anonymous; see 1.6; 4.1; 5.24; 6.10, 21. **1.4** *Myths* and *genealogies* may refer to portions of the OT (see, e.g., Gen 4–5) or to Gnostic speculations; see also 4.7; 2 Tim 4.4; Titus 1.14; 3.9. The Greek word *oikonomia*, translated here as *divine training*, was regularly applied in Greek philosophy to God's ordering and administration of the world (see text note *a*). **1.7** The *law* is probably the Jewish law, but that is not emphasized; cf. Titus 1.14. **1.8–11** This digression on the legitimate

one uses it legitimately. 9 This means understanding that the law is laid down not
for the innocent but for the lawless and
disobedient, for the godless and sinful,
for the unholy and profane, for those
who kill their father or mother, for murderers, 10 fornicators, sodomites, slave
traders, liars, perjurers, and whatever else
is contrary to the sound teaching 11 that
conforms to the glorious gospel of the
blessed God, which he entrusted to me.

Gratitude for Mercy

12 I am grateful to Christ Jesus our
Lord, who has strengthened me, because
he judged me faithful and appointed me
to his service, 13 even though I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a
man of violence. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief,
14 and the grace of our Lord overflowed
for me with the faith and love that are in
Christ Jesus. 15 The saying is sure and
worthy of full acceptance, that Christ
Jesus came into the world to save sinners
—of whom I am the foremost. 16 But for
that very reason I received mercy, so that
in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might
display the utmost patience, making me
an example to those who would come to
believe in him for eternal life. 17 To the
King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the
only God, be honor and glory forever and
ever.[b] Amen.

18 I am giving you these instructions,
Timothy, my child, in accordance with the
prophecies made earlier about you, so
that by following them you may fight the
good fight, 19 having faith and a good
conscience. By rejecting conscience, certain persons have suffered shipwreck in
the faith; 20 among them are Hymenaeus
and Alexander, whom I have turned over
to Satan, so that they may learn not to
blaspheme.

Instructions Concerning Prayer and Worship

2 First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and
thanksgivings be made for everyone, 2 for
kings and all who are in high positions, so
that we may lead a quiet and peaceable
life in all godliness and dignity. 3 This is
right and is acceptable in the sight of God
our Savior, 4 who desires everyone to be
saved and to come to the knowledge of
the truth. 5 For
there is one God;

b Gk *to the ages of the ages*

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use of the law reflects aspects of Paul's thought but lacks his subtlety (cf. Rom 7–8; Gal 3–4). **1.8** On the law as *good*, see Rom 7.12, 16. **1.9** *The law is . . . not for the innocent.* Paul speaks of freedom from the law as a means of justification (Rom 3.21, 28; 10.4; Gal 3), but for him the law remains a norm for Christian behavior (Rom 8.4; 13.8–10). On the notion that the law is intended to curb *sinful* actions, see Gal 3.19, 23–26. **1.9–10** These verses contain vice and virtue lists, which were common devices for moral teaching; see, e.g., 6.4–5; 2 Tim 3.2–5; Titus 3.3; see also Rom 1.29–31; Gal 5.19–23. **1.10** The strong emphasis on *sound* (lit. "healthy") *teaching* is rooted in the situation of controversy within the church; see, e.g., 1.3; 4.6; 6.3; 2 Tim 1.13; 4.3; Titus 1.9, 13; 2.1–2.

1.12–17 A statement of gratitude (see, e.g., Rom 1.8–15; 1 Cor 1.4–9) contains a lengthy biographical passage. **1.13** On Paul's having been a *persecutor* of the church, see Acts 8.1–3; 9.1–2; 1 Cor 15.9; Gal 1.13. **1.15** The formula *The saying is sure* appears four more times in these Letters: 3.1; 4.9; 2 Tim 2.11; Titus 3.8. **1.17** A similar doxology is found in 6.15–16. **1.18–20** The author resumes the charge to Timothy. **1.18** The *instructions* include those in 1.3–5 and in chs. 2–6. The *prophecies* were probably part of an ordination ceremony; see 4.14; Acts 13.1–3. The *good fight*, a traditional phrase in Hellenistic moral philosophy, gains special significance here in the struggle against false teachers; see 6.12; 2 Tim 4.7; see also 2 Cor 10.3–5; Phil 1.27–30. **1.20** *Hymenaeus.* See 2 Tim 2.17. *Alexander.* See 2 Tim 4.14. *Turning over to Satan* probably involved expulsion from the church; see also Titus 3.10; 1 Cor 5.3–5.

2.1–3.16 A series of instructions addresses aspects of the church's life and leadership. **2.1–7** The theme of universality dominates the opening instructions on prayer; see also 4.10; Titus 2.11. **2.2** *Godliness* is the most prominent of the many Hellenistic terms used in these Letters to identify characteristics of the ideal Christian life; see, e.g., 4.7–8; 6.3; 2 Tim 3.5; Titus 1.1. **2.3** *Savior.* See note on 1.1. **2.4** *Knowledge of the truth* is crucial to this author in the context of false teaching; see 6.20; 2 Tim 2.25; 3.7; Titus 1.1. **2.5–6a** *For there is . . . ransom for all*, a liturgical fragment that reinforces the universal goal of salvation. **2.5** Christ is called *mediator* in Heb 8.6; 9.15; 12.24, but the emphasis there is differ-

there is also one mediator
between God and
humankind,
Christ Jesus, himself human,
6 who gave himself a ransom
for all
—this was attested at the right time. 7 For
this I was appointed a herald and an apos-
tle (I am telling the truth,[c] I am not ly-
ing), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and
truth.

8 I desire, then, that in every place the
men should pray, lifting up holy hands
without anger or argument; 9 also that the
women should dress themselves modestly
and decently in suitable clothing, not with
their hair braided, or with gold, pearls, or
expensive clothes, 10 but with good works,
as is proper for women who profess rev-
erence for God. 11 Let a woman[d] learn in
silence with full submission. 12 I permit
no woman[d] to teach or to have authority
over a man;[e] she is to keep silent. 13 For
Adam was formed first, then Eve; 14 and
Adam was not deceived, but the woman
was deceived and became a transgressor.
15 Yet she will be saved through childbear-
ing, provided they continue in faith and
love and holiness, with modesty.

Qualifications of Bishops

3 The saying is sure:[f] whoever aspires
to the office of bishop[g] desires a no-
ble task. 2 Now a bishop[h] must be above
reproach, married only once,[i] temper-
ate, sensible, respectable, hospitable, an
apt teacher, 3 not a drunkard, not violent
but gentle, not quarrelsome, and not a
lover of money. 4 He must manage his
own household well, keeping his children
submissive and respectful in every way—
5 for if someone does not know how to
manage his own household, how can he
take care of God's church? 6 He must not
be a recent convert, or he may be puffed
up with conceit and fall into the condem-
nation of the devil. 7 Moreover, he must
be well thought of by outsiders, so that he
may not fall into disgrace and the snare of
the devil.

c Other ancient authorities add *in Christ*
d Or *wife* e Or *her husband* f Some interpreters place these words at the end of the previous paragraph. Other ancient authorities read *The saying is commonly accepted* g Or *overseer*
h Or *an overseer* i Gk *the husband of one wife*

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ent; see, however, Job 9.32–33. **2.6** *Ransom.* See Mt 20.28; Mk 10.45. *Attested at the right time* (lit. "the testimony to [or in] its own times") may point to Jesus' self-giving act as testimony to God's saving purpose (2.4). **2.7** *Herald . . . apostle . . . teacher.* See also 2 Tim 1.11. **2.8–15** A concern for women's behavior dominates this discussion of worship. **2.9** The concern for women's *clothing*, jewelry, and elaborate (*braided*) hairstyles was traditional; see 1 Pet 3.3. **2.10** *Good works* are stressed in these Letters; see 5.10, 25; 6.18; Titus 2.7, 14; 3.8, 14. **2.11** Women's *silence* is also demanded in 1 Cor 14.34–35; cf. 1 Cor 11.5. *Submission* of wives to husbands is demanded in Eph 5.22; Col 3.18; Titus 2.5; 1 Pet 3.1; see also Gen 3.16. Here the demand is probably not limited to married couples (cf. text notes *d* and *e*). On the concern for *teaching*, see 1.10. **2.13** *Adam was formed first.* See Gen 2; cf. Gen 1.27. **2.14** On Eve's being *deceived*, see Gen 3.13; 2 Cor 11.3. False teachers posed anew the threat of deception; see 4.1; 2 Tim 3.13; Titus 1.10. **2.15** The emphasis on *childbearing* may be a response to the false teachers' rejection of marriage (4.3); see also 5.10, 14. The pronoun *they* may refer to children, though the shift in subject is abrupt.

3.1–13 Conventional and domestic virtues dominate the list of qualifications for bishops and deacons. **3.1** *The saying is sure* may refer not to 3.1 but to 2.15 (see text note *f*; see note on 1.15). *Bishops* (or "overseers") are mentioned in Acts 20.28; Phil 1.1; Titus 1.7–9. The relationship among bishops, deacons (see 3.8), and elders (see 5.17) is not clear in these Letters, but see note on Titus 1.5–9. **3.2** *Hospitality* was widely encouraged as a Christian virtue; see 5.10; Titus 1.8; see also Rom 12.13; Heb 13.2; 1 Pet 4.9. **3.3** The warning about *love of money* is conventional but is repeated in 3.8; 6.9–10, 17–19; 2 Tim 3.2; Titus 1.7. **3.4** The *household* was the basic unit of and metaphor for the church; see note on 3.15; see also 2 Tim 3.6; Titus 1.11. On *keeping . . . children submissive*, see Eph 6.1–4; Col 3.20–21. **3.6** The first specifically Christian requirement for a bishop is that he *not be a recent convert.* The Greek word translated *puffed up with conceit* may refer instead to being deluded, i.e., by the false teachers; see also 6.4; 2 Tim 3.4. *Condemnation of the devil* (see also 3.7) probably refers to Satan's role as tempter of the unwary and accuser of the unrighteous (Job 1–2). The Greek word translated *devil* here is translated *slanderer* in 3.11; 2 Tim 3.3. **3.7** A concern for the opinion of *outsiders* is also found in 5.14; 6.1; Titus 2.5, 8, 10; see also 1 Cor 14.15–17; Col 4.5; 1 Thess 4.12.

Qualifications of Deacons

8 Deacons likewise must be serious,
not double-tongued, not indulging in
much wine, not greedy for money; 9 they
must hold fast to the mystery of the faith
with a clear conscience. 10 And let them
first be tested; then, if they prove them-
selves blameless, let them serve as deacons.
11 Women[j] likewise must be serious,
not slanderers, but temperate, faithful
in all things. 12 Let deacons be married
only once,[k] and let them manage their
children and their households well; 13 for
those who serve well as deacons gain a
good standing for themselves and great
boldness in the faith that is in Christ
Jesus.

The Mystery of Our Religion

14 I hope to come to you soon, but I
am writing these instructions to you so
that, 15 if I am delayed, you may know
how one ought to behave in the house-
hold of God, which is the church of the
living God, the pillar and bulwark of the
truth. 16 Without any doubt, the mystery
of our religion is great:

He[l] was revealed in flesh,
vindicated[m] in spirit,[n]
seen by angels,
proclaimed among Gentiles,
believed in throughout the
world,
taken up in glory.

False Asceticism

4 Now the Spirit expressly says that in
later[o] times some will renounce the
faith by paying attention to deceitful spir-
its and teachings of demons, 2 through the
hypocrisy of liars whose consciences are
seared with a hot iron. 3 They forbid mar-
riage and demand abstinence from foods,
which God created to be received with
thanksgiving by those who believe and
know the truth. 4 For everything created
by God is good, and nothing is to be re-
jected, provided it is received with thanks-
giving; 5 for it is sanctified by God's word
and by prayer.

A Good Minister of Jesus Christ

6 If you put these instructions before
the brothers and sisters,[p] you will be a
good servant[q] of Christ Jesus, nourished

j Or *Their wives*, or *Women deacons* *k* Gk *be husbands of one wife* *l* Gk *Who*; other ancient authorities read *God*; others, *Which* *m* Or *justified* *n* Or *by the Spirit* *o* Or *the last* *p* Gk *brothers* *q* Or *deacon*

3.8 The Greek word translated *deacons* here is a common one for "servants" or "ministers." Only here and in Rom 16.1; Phil 1.1 does it seem to designate a church office; cf. 4.6 (text note *q*). **3.9** The *mystery of the faith* is defined in 3.16; *the faith* is thus equivalent here to *our religion* (v. 16). **3.10** The Letters do not indicate how deacons are to be *tested*. **3.11** It is not clear whether the *women* are wives of deacons or deacons themselves (see text note *j*). Paul knew women deacons (Rom 16.1), but 2.11–15 seems to preclude them here. **3.13** The *good standing* is probably within the Christian community. **3.14–16** The section closes with a statement of the Letter's purpose that contains a significant liturgical fragment. **3.15** The image of the church as the *household of God* informs many of the instructions in these Letters; see, e.g., 3.4–5, 12; 5.1–2; 2 Tim 2.20–21; see also 1 Cor 3.16; 2 Cor 6.16; Eph 2.19–22; Heb 3.6; 1 Pet 2.5; 4.17. *Pillar and bulwark* suggests a defensive stance; see Jer 1.18. On *truth*, see note on 2.4. **3.16** A hymnic fragment outlines the content of the *mystery of our religion*. *Flesh* and *spirit* designate the earthly and heavenly realms; see Rom 1.3–4; 1 Pet 3.18. Jesus was *vindicated* through the resurrection and exaltation, which canceled the human judgments against him; see also Acts 2.23–28; 10.39–40. He was *seen by angels*, not at Easter, but at an appearance before the heavenly court; see Phil 2.10; 1 Pet 3.22; Rev 5.11–14. He was *taken up* at the ascension; see Acts 1.11, 22.

4.1–5 This description of false teachers (see 1.3–7) contains both stylized accusations and concrete charges. **4.1** The *Spirit* speaks through Christian prophets; see, e.g., 1 Cor 12.4–11; Rev 2.7; see also 1 Cor 7.40. The *later times* correspond to the author's present; see also 2 Tim 3.1; 4.3; 2 Pet 3.3; Jude 18. On *the faith*, see note on 3.9. Paul also linked his opponents with *demons* or worse; see 2 Cor 11.13–15; see also Jn 8.44; Jas 3.15; 1 Jn 3.8–10. **4.3** Some ascetic groups in early Christianity were known to *forbid marriage*; see Mt 19.10–12; 1 Cor 7; Rev 14.1–5. Note the positive view of marriage in 2.15; 5.14; Titus 2.4. *Abstinence from foods* is generally rejected in the NT; see 5.23; Mk 7.15, 19; Acts 10.9–16; Rom 14.1–6; 1 Cor 8. **4.6–16** The positive picture of Timothy in these verses stands in deliberate contrast to the preceding description of the false teachers. **4.6** *These instructions* include 4.4–5 as well as what follows. *Sound teaching*. See note on 1.10.

on the words of the faith and of the sound
teaching that you have followed. 7 Have
nothing to do with profane myths and old
wives' tales. Train yourself in godliness,
8 for, while physical training is of some
value, godliness is valuable in every way,
holding promise for both the present life
and the life to come. 9 The saying is sure
and worthy of full acceptance. 10 For to
this end we toil and struggle,[r] because we
have our hope set on the living God, who
is the Savior of all people, especially of
those who believe.

11 These are the things you must in-
sist on and teach. 12 Let no one despise
your youth, but set the believers an exam-
ple in speech and conduct, in love, in
faith, in purity. 13 Until I arrive, give at-
tention to the public reading of scrip-
ture,[s] to exhorting, to teaching. 14 Do not
neglect the gift that is in you, which was
given to you through prophecy with the
laying on of hands by the council of el-
ders.[t] 15 Put these things into practice,
devote yourself to them, so that all may
see your progress. 16 Pay close attention to
yourself and to your teaching; continue in
these things, for in doing this you will save
both yourself and your hearers.

Instructions Concerning Various Groups

5 Do not speak harshly to an older
man,[u] but speak to him as to a fa-
ther, to younger men as brothers, 2 to
older women as mothers, to younger
women as sisters—with absolute purity.

3 Honor widows who are really wid-
ows. 4 If a widow has children or grand-
children, they should first learn their
religious duty to their own family and
make some repayment to their parents;
for this is pleasing in God's sight. 5 The
real widow, left alone, has set her hope on
God and continues in supplications and
prayers night and day; 6 but the widow[v]
who lives for pleasure is dead even while
she lives. 7 Give these commands as well,
so that they may be above reproach. 8 And
whoever does not provide for relatives,
and especially for family members, has
denied the faith and is worse than an un-
believer.

9 Let a widow be put on the list if she
is not less than sixty years old and has
been married only once;[w] 10 she must be
well attested for her good works, as one
who has brought up children, shown hos-
pitality, washed the saints' feet, helped the
afflicted, and devoted herself to doing
good in every way. 11 But refuse to put
younger widows on the list; for when
their sensual desires alienate them from
Christ, they want to marry, 12 and so they
incur condemnation for having violated
their first pledge. 13 Besides that, they
learn to be idle, gadding about from
house to house; and they are not merely
idle, but also gossips and busybodies, say-

r Other ancient authorities read *suffer reproach*
s Gk *to the reading* t Gk *by the presbytery*
u Or *an elder*, or *a presbyter* v Gk *she*
w Gk *the wife of one husband*

4.7 *Myths*. See note on 1.4. *Godliness*. See note on 2.2. **4.8** *Physical training*, perhaps a reference to the opponents' asceticism (4.3), though the image of the athlete was common in moral exhortation; see also 2 Tim 2.5; 4.7–8. **4.9** The *saying* referred to is probably 4.8. **4.10** On God's saving concern for *all people*, see 2.1–7. **4.12** Timothy's *youth* (see also Phil 2.22; 2 Tim 2.22) stands in some tension with the leadership role of the elders (4.14; 5.17). **4.14** Paul mentions a number of spiritual gifts (Rom 12.6–8; 1 Cor 12.4–11, 28–31); here the *gift* is that of ministry and is linked to ordination and the rite of *laying on of hands*; see 2 Tim 1.6; see also Acts 6.6; 13.3. *Prophecy*. See note on 1.18. *Elders*. See note on 3.1; see also 5.17–22; Titus 1.5–6. For other evidence of this office, see Jas 5.14; 1 Pet 5.1–5; 2 Jn 1; 3 Jn 1; Rev 4.4.

5.1–6.2 Commonplace advice relating to age groups opens a series of more specific instructions concerning other groups within the congregation: widows (5.3–16), elders (5.17–22), and slaves (6.1–2); see also Titus 2.2–10. **5.3** *Honor* probably implies financial support; see 5.16, 17–18; Acts 6.1; cf. 1 Tim 6.1. Concern for *real widows* pervades the text (see 5.5, 16), but see note on 5.9. There is a long tradition of support for widows; see, e.g., Ex 22.22; Deut 24.17–22; Isa 1.17; Acts 6.1–6; 9.36–42. **5.9** It is debated whether the widows *on the list* are identical with the real widows or constitute a separate group, an office within the church; cf., e.g., the requirements for widows (5.9–10) with those for bishops (3.2–4). **5.10** *Washed the saints' feet*, a gesture demonstrating humility and hospitality; see Gen 18.4; 1 Sam 25.41; Lk 7.44; Jn 13.1–17. **5.12** The *pledge* the widows took was one of perpetual chastity (see 5.11). **5.13** The *idle* and *busybodies* are denounced in 1 Thess 5.14; 2 Thess 3.11. The Greek word for busybody (*periergos*) gets a more

ing what they should not say. 14 So I
would have younger widows marry, bear
children, and manage their households,
so as to give the adversary no occasion to
revile us. 15 For some have already turned
away to follow Satan. 16 If any believing
woman[x] has relatives who are really wid-
ows, let her assist them; let the church not
be burdened, so that it can assist those
who are real widows.

17 Let the elders who rule well be con-
sidered worthy of double honor,[y] espe-
cially those who labor in preaching and
teaching; 18 for the scripture says, "You
shall not muzzle an ox while it is treading
out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves
to be paid." 19 Never accept any accusa-
tion against an elder except on the evi-
dence of two or three witnesses. 20 As for
those who persist in sin, rebuke them in
the presence of all, so that the rest also
may stand in fear. 21 In the presence of
God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect
angels, I warn you to keep these instruc-
tions without prejudice, doing nothing on
the basis of partiality. 22 Do not ordain[z]
anyone hastily, and do not participate in
the sins of others; keep yourself pure.

23 No longer drink only water, but
take a little wine for the sake of your
stomach and your frequent ailments.

24 The sins of some people are con-
spicuous and precede them to judgment,
while the sins of others follow them there.
25 So also good works are conspicuous;
and even when they are not, they cannot
remain hidden.

6 Let all who are under the yoke of
slavery regard their masters as wor-
thy of all honor, so that the name of God
and the teaching may not be blasphemed.
2 Those who have believing masters must
not be disrespectful to them on the
ground that they are members of the
church;[a] rather they must serve them all
the more, since those who benefit by their
service are believers and beloved.[b]

False Teaching and Greed

Teach and urge these duties. 3 Whoever
teaches otherwise and does not agree with
the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ
and the teaching that is in accordance
with godliness, 4 is conceited, understand-
ing nothing, and has a morbid craving for
controversy and for disputes about words.
From these come envy, dissension, slan-
der, base suspicions, 5 and wrangling
among those who are depraved in mind
and bereft of the truth, imagining that
godliness is a means of gain.[c] 6 Of course,
there is great gain in godliness combined
with contentment; 7 for we brought noth-
ing into the world, so that[d] we can take
nothing out of it; 8 but if we have food
and clothing, we will be content with

x Other ancient authorities read *believing man or woman*; others, *believing man* y Or *compensation*
z Gk *Do not lay hands on* a Gk *are brothers*
b Or *since they are believers and beloved, who devote themselves to good deeds* c Other ancient authorities add *Withdraw yourself from such people*
d Other ancient authorities read *world—it is certain that*

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sinister translation ("those who practiced magic") in Acts 19.19. **5.14** *Manage their households.* Domestic roles for women are also emphasized in 2.15; 5.10; Titus 2.4–5. The opponents seem to reject these roles (see 4.3; Titus 1.11). The *adversary*, lit. "the one opposed [to us]," probably refers to hostile outsiders; see Titus 2.8; see also Lk 13.17; 21.15; 1 Cor 16.9; Phil 1.28. **5.15** The phrase *follow Satan* probably refers to embracing the heretical movement. **5.16** *Relatives who are . . . widows*, lit. "widows"; the text may not have relatives in mind (see, e.g., Acts 9.39). **5.17** *Elders.* See note on 4.14. *Double honor.* See note on 5.3. **5.18** The Gospels are regarded here as *scripture* alongside the OT. The first text quoted is Deut 25.4; the second is Lk 10.7. **5.19** *Two or three witnesses.* See Deut 19.15; Mt 18.16. **5.22** *Ordain*, lit. *lay hands on* (see text note *z*). The laying on of hands is a rite that transmits the Spirit and the Spirit's gifts (see 4.14; 2 Tim 1.6; Acts 8.17; 19.6). Here it may signify ordination (see also Acts 6.6; 13.3) or restitution after repentance. **5.23** *Take a little wine.* The false teachers insisted on abstinence (4.3). **6.1–2** This advice on the relationship of slaves to masters was a standard piece of early Christian exhortation; see Eph 6.5–9; Col 3.22–4.1; Titus 2.9–10; 1 Pet 2.18–21; cf. 1 Cor 7.21–24. **6.1** Here *honor* has no financial significance; cf. 5.3, 17. God will *be blasphemed* when outsiders use the behavior of Christian slaves to defame the church; see note on 3.7. **6.3–16** The final contrast between false (vv. 3–10) and legitimate (vv. 11–16) leadership. **6.3** *Sound words.* See note on 1.10. *Godliness.* See note on 2.2. **6.6** The *gain* from godliness is described in 4.8. **6.7** The idea that *we brought nothing into the world* was common in the wisdom literature (see Job 1.21; Eccl 5.15) and in Hellenistic philosophy. **6.8** This rigorous view of *contentment* is also reflected in Phil 4.11; see also

these. 9 But those who want to be rich fall
into temptation and are trapped by many
senseless and harmful desires that plunge
people into ruin and destruction. 10 For
the love of money is a root of all kinds of
evil, and in their eagerness to be rich
some have wandered away from the faith
and pierced themselves with many pains.

The Good Fight of Faith

11 But as for you, man of God, shun
all this; pursue righteousness, godliness,
faith, love, endurance, gentleness. 12 Fight
the good fight of the faith; take hold of
the eternal life, to which you were called
and for which you made[e] the good con-
fession in the presence of many witnesses.
13 In the presence of God, who gives life
to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in
his testimony before Pontius Pilate made
the good confession, I charge you 14 to
keep the commandment without spot or
blame until the manifestation of our Lord
Jesus Christ, 15 which he will bring about
at the right time—he who is the blessed
and only Sovereign, the King of kings and
Lord of lords. 16 It is he alone who has
immortality and dwells in unapproach-
able light, whom no one has ever seen or
can see; to him be honor and eternal do-
minion. Amen.

17 As for those who in the present
age are rich, command them not to be
haughty, or to set their hopes on the un-
certainty of riches, but rather on God who
richly provides us with everything for our
enjoyment. 18 They are to do good, to be
rich in good works, generous, and ready
to share, 19 thus storing up for themselves
the treasure of a good foundation for the
future, so that they may take hold of the
life that really is life.

Final Instructions and Benediction

20 Timothy, guard what has been en-
trusted to you. Avoid the profane chatter
and contradictions of what is falsely called
knowledge; 21 by professing it some have
missed the mark as regards the faith.

Grace be with you.[f]

e Gk *confessed* f The Greek word for *you* here is plural; in other ancient authorities it is singular. Other ancient authorities add *Amen*

Mt 6.25–33; Mk 6.8–10; Lk 3.11; Heb 13.5. **6.9** *Ruin and destruction*, a reference to eschatological judgment; see 1 Thess 5.3; 2 Thess 1.9. **6.10** *The love of money . . . evil*, a common maxim in popular Hellenistic philosophy. **6.11** The title *man of God* (translated "everyone who belongs to God" in 2 Tim 3.17) appears frequently in the OT to designate someone with a special commission from God; see Deut 33.1; 1 Sam 9.6–10; 1 Kings 17.18; 2 Kings 4.7; Neh 12.24. Here it refers to the ordained church leader. **6.12** The *good fight*. See note on 1.18. The *good confession* was made at baptism or, more probably, ordination (see 2 Tim 2.2). **6.13–16** The formal style and language mark this section as a liturgical fragment. **6.13** The content of Jesus' *good confession* is not stressed; see, e.g., Mt 27.11; Jn 18.33–37. **6.14** *Manifestation* (Greek *epiphaneia*), a word often used in Greco-Roman religions for the appearance of a god or savior, here refers to Jesus' future coming; see also 2 Tim 4.8 (translated "appearing"); Titus 2.13. The word can also refer to his birth; see 2 Tim 1.10 (translated "appearing"). **6.17–19** A more negative view of the *rich* is given in 6.7–10; see also Lk 12.16–21; Jas 1.10. **6.20–21** The final charge to Timothy. **6.20** *What has been entrusted to you*, the apostolic traditions summarized in these Letters; see 1.18; 2 Tim 1.14. *Falsely called knowledge* (Greek *gnōsis*), a final reference to false teachers; see note on 2.4.

THE SECOND LETTER OF PAUL TO

TIMOTHY

Nature of Letter

THE SECOND LETTER TO TIMOTHY differs in significant ways from both 1 Timothy and Titus. According to the latter two, Paul was a free apostle, but 2 Timothy assumes that he is in prison (1.8; 2.9), probably in Rome (1.16–17; cf. Acts 28.16), abandoned by all but a few of his friends (4.9–16) and facing imminent death (4.6–8). The Letter thus assumes many aspects of a final testament, a thoroughly pseudepigraphical genre in which a dying patriarch exhorts and blesses a faithful child, warning him of problems to come (see, e.g., 3.1–5; 4.1–5; cf. Acts 20.17–35; see also 2 Peter). Concern for church order is thus less important in this Letter than are personal exhortations. In particular, the example of Paul's endurance in the face of suffering is used to encourage Timothy—and through him all Christians—to similar endurance.

Authorship

The many personal elements in the Letter (e.g., 1.15–18; 4.10–16) are viewed by some interpreters as authentic fragments, but they could equally well have been crafted to lend pathos and concreteness to the Letter's warnings and exhortations. For a further discussion of the Letter's authorship, date, and purpose, see Introduction to 1 Timothy. *Jouette M. Bassler*

Salutation

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by
the will of God, for the sake of the
promise of life that is in Christ Jesus,
2 To Timothy, my beloved child:
Grace, mercy, and peace from God the
Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

Thanksgiving and Encouragement

3 I am grateful to God—whom I
worship with a clear conscience, as my
ancestors did—when I remember you
constantly in my prayers night and day.
4 Recalling your tears, I long to see you so
that I may be filled with joy. 5 I am re-
minded of your sincere faith, a faith that
lived first in your grandmother Lois and
your mother Eunice and now, I am sure,
lives in you. 6 For this reason I remind you
to rekindle the gift of God that is within
you through the laying on of my hands;
7 for God did not give us a spirit of cow-
ardice, but rather a spirit of power and of
love and of self-discipline.
8 Do not be ashamed, then, of the tes-
timony about our Lord or of me his pris-
oner, but join with me in suffering for
the gospel, relying on the power of God,
9 who saved us and called us with a holy
calling, not according to our works but ac-
cording to his own purpose and grace.
This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus
before the ages began, 10 but it has now
been revealed through the appearing of
our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished
death and brought life and immortality to
light through the gospel. 11 For this gospel
I was appointed a herald and an apostle
and a teacher,[a] 12 and for this reason I
suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for
I know the one in whom I have put my
trust, and I am sure that he is able to
guard until that day what I have en-
trusted to him.[b] 13 Hold to the standard
of sound teaching that you have heard
from me, in the faith and love that are in
Christ Jesus. 14 Guard the good treasure
entrusted to you, with the help of the
Holy Spirit living in us.
15 You are aware that all who are in
Asia have turned away from me, includ-
ing Phygelus and Hermogenes. 16 May the
Lord grant mercy to the household of
Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed
me and was not ashamed of my chain;
17 when he arrived in Rome, he eagerly[c]
searched for me and found me 18 —may
the Lord grant that he will find mercy
from the Lord on that day! And you know
very well how much service he rendered
in Ephesus.

a Other ancient authorities add *of the Gentiles*
b Or *what has been entrusted to me* c Or *promptly*

1.1–2 The brief salutation is very similar to that of 1 Timothy. **1.1** On the *promise of life*, see 1 Tim 4.8. **1.3–5** Like many of the Pauline Letters, 2 Timothy opens with a statement of gratitude or thanksgiving. **1.3** The reference to Paul's *ancestors* suggests the antiquity of the Christian religion. The Romans were suspicious of new cults but held ancient religions in high esteem. **1.5** According to Acts 16.1, Timothy's *mother* was a believer; the reference to *Lois* pushes this matrilineal line of faith back another generation. See also 3.15. **1.6–14** A series of exhortations to strengthen Timothy in the face of afflictions. **1.6** On the *gift of God* and *laying on of . . . hands*, see 1 Tim 4.14. Here the emphasis is on Paul's personal role in this event. **1.7** *Spirit*, a disposition or state of mind inspired by the Holy Spirit; see 1.14; see also Rom 8.15. *Self-discipline*. This word, or a variant of it, is prominent in Hellenistic moral philosophy and in the exhortations of these Letters; see, e.g., Titus 1.8; 2.5, 6. **1.8** On *suffering for the gospel*, see 1 Cor 4.9–13; 2 Cor 4.7–12; Phil 1.27–30. **1.9–10** A liturgical fragment conveying a strong sense of election summarizes the gospel (see 1.11). **1.9** That salvation is *not according to our works* (see also Titus 3.5) is a very Pauline assertion; see Rom 3.28; Gal 2.16; Eph 2.8–9. The good works emphasized in these Letters (see 1 Tim 2.10) are the result, not the ground, of salvation. **1.10** The word *appearing* (Greek *epiphaneia*), applied in 4.1 and 1 Tim 6.14 (translated "manifestation") to Jesus' future coming, is here applied to his birth. *Savior*. See 1 Tim 1.1. *Abolished death*, i.e., abolished the power of death. See Rom 8.38–39; 1 Cor 15.54–55. **1.12** *That day* (see also 1.18) is the day of judgment; see 4.8. *What I have entrusted to him*. The reading in text note *b*, *what has been entrusted to me*, is better; see 1.14; 1 Tim 6.20. The reference is to the apostolic teaching. **1.13** *Sound teaching*. See 1 Tim 1.10. **1.15–18** Contrasting examples of cowardice and strength. **1.15** *Asia*, a Roman province in Asia Minor. *All . . . turned away*. The motif of abandonment is strong in 2 Timothy; see 4.10, 16. *Phygelus and Hermogenes*. Opponents and friends are frequently named in this Letter (see 2.17; 4.10–15); these two men are not otherwise known. **1.16** *Onesiphorus*. See 4.19.

Exhortations to Timothy

2 You then, my child, be strong in the
grace that is in Christ Jesus; 2 and
what you have heard from me through
many witnesses entrust to faithful people
who will be able to teach others as well.
3 Share in suffering like a good soldier of
Christ Jesus. 4 No one serving in the army
gets entangled in everyday affairs; the sol-
dier's aim is to please the enlisting officer.
5 And in the case of an athlete, no one is
crowned without competing according to
the rules. 6 It is the farmer who does the
work who ought to have the first share of
the crops. 7 Think over what I say, for the
Lord will give you understanding in all
things.

8 Remember Jesus Christ, raised from
the dead, a descendant of David—that is
my gospel, 9 for which I suffer hardship,
even to the point of being chained like a
criminal. But the word of God is not
chained. 10 Therefore I endure every-
thing for the sake of the elect, so that they
may also obtain the salvation that is in
Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. 11 The
saying is sure:

If we have died with him, we will
also live with him;
12 if we endure, we will also reign
with him;
if we deny him, we will also
deny us;
13 if we are faithless, he remains
faithful—
for he cannot deny himself.

14 Remind them of this, and warn
them before God[d] that they are to avoid
wrangling over words, which does no
good but only ruins those who are listen-
ing. 15 Do your best to present yourself to
God as one approved by him, a worker
who has no need to be ashamed, rightly
explaining the word of truth. 16 Avoid
profane chatter, for it will lead people
into more and more impiety, 17 and their
talk will spread like gangrene. Among
them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, 18 who
have swerved from the truth by claiming
that the resurrection has already taken
place. They are upsetting the faith of
some. 19 But God's firm foundation
stands, bearing this inscription: "The
Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let
everyone who calls on the name of the
Lord turn away from wickedness."

20 In a large house there are utensils
not only of gold and silver but also of
wood and clay, some for special use, some
for ordinary. 21 All who cleanse them-
selves of the things I have mentioned[e]
will become special utensils, dedicated
and useful to the owner of the house,
ready for every good work. 22 Shun
youthful passions and pursue righteous-
ness, faith, love, and peace, along with
those who call on the Lord from a pure
heart. 23 Have nothing to do with stupid
and senseless controversies; you know
that they breed quarrels. 24 And the
Lord's servant[f] must not be quarrelsome
but kindly to everyone, an apt teacher, pa-
tient, 25 correcting opponents with gentle-
ness. God may perhaps grant that they
will repent and come to know the truth,

d Other ancient authorities read *the Lord*
e Gk *of these things* *f* Gk *slave*

2.1–7 Renewed exhortations to Timothy. **2.2** The better translation is probably "before," not *through*, many witnesses; see 1 Tim 6.12. *Entrust to faithful people*. The need to preserve the apostolic traditions from distortion by false teachers lies behind this concern for reliable successors. **2.8–13** The theological basis of Paul's endurance. **2.8** This summary of the *gospel* resembles Rom 1.3–4. **2.10** The *elect* are the Christians; see Titus 1.1. **2.11** *The saying is sure* (see 1 Tim 1.15) introduces a hymnic fragment. *If we have died with him*, i.e., in baptism (see Rom 6.3–8). *We will . . . live*. The future tense is deliberate; see 2.18. **2.12** On *denying* Christ, see Mt 10.33; see also Titus 1.16. **2.13** The *faithfulness* of God and Christ is the cornerstone of Christian hope; see Rom 3.3–4; 1 Cor 10.13; 1 Thess 5.24; Rev 19.11. **2.14–26** Renewed exhortations and warnings. **2.14** *Wrangling over words* characterizes the fruitless debate with false teachers; see 2.23; 1 Tim 6.4; Titus 3.9. **2.15** *The word of truth*. See 2.18, 25; 1 Tim 2.4. **2.17** *Hymenaeus*. See 1 Tim 1.20. **2.18** The false teachers claim that the *resurrection* is a present spiritual reality, not a future hope. There is a counteremphasis on the future in 1.1; 2.10–11; 4.8. **2.19** The first quotation is from Num 16.5; the second vaguely recalls a number of texts (see Job 36.10; Isa 26.13). **2.20** *For special use* or *ordinary* use (lit. for "honor" or "dishonor"). The author has in mind the distinction between faithful ministers (2.1) and false teachers (2.16–18). **2.22** On Timothy's *youth*, see 1 Tim 4.12. **2.24** *The Lord's servant* (see Titus 1.1), one engaged in ministry; cf. the qualities of the bishop in 1 Tim 3.2–3. **2.25** On *correcting opponents*, see Titus 1.9, 13.

26 and that they may escape from the
snare of the devil, having been held cap-
tive by him to do his will.[g]

Prediction of the False Teachers

3 You must understand this, that
in the last days distressing times
will come. 2 For people will be lovers of
themselves, lovers of money, boasters,
arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their
parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 inhuman,
implacable, slanderers, profligates, brutes,
haters of good, 4 treacherous, reckless,
swollen with conceit, lovers of plea-
sure rather than lovers of God, 5 holding
to the outward form of godliness but
denying its power. Avoid them! 6 For
among them are those who make their
way into households and captivate silly
women, overwhelmed by their sins and
swayed by all kinds of desires, 7 who are
always being instructed and can never ar-
rive at a knowledge of the truth. 8 As Jan-
nes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these
people, of corrupt mind and counterfeit
faith, also oppose the truth. 9 But they will
not make much progress, because, as in
the case of those two men,[h] their folly will
become plain to everyone.

Paul's Charge to Timothy

10 Now you have observed my teach-
ing, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith,
my patience, my love, my steadfastness,
11 my persecutions, and my suffering the
things that happened to me in Antioch,
Iconium, and Lystra. What persecutions I
endured! Yet the Lord rescued me from
all of them. 12 Indeed, all who want to live
a godly life in Christ Jesus will be perse-
cuted. 13 But wicked people and impos-
tors will go from bad to worse, deceiving
others and being deceived. 14 But as for
you, continue in what you have learned
and firmly believed, knowing from whom
you learned it, 15 and how from childhood
you have known the sacred writings that
are able to instruct you for salvation
through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All scrip-
ture is inspired by God and is[i] useful for
teaching, for reproof, for correction, and
for training in righteousness, 17 so that ev-
eryone who belongs to God may be profi-
cient, equipped for every good work.

4 In the presence of God and of Christ
Jesus, who is to judge the living and
the dead, and in view of his appearing
and his kingdom, I solemnly urge you:
2 proclaim the message; be persistent
whether the time is favorable or unfavor-
able; convince, rebuke, and encourage,
with the utmost patience in teaching. 3 For
the time is coming when people will not
put up with sound doctrine, but having
itching ears, they will accumulate for
themselves teachers to suit their own de-
sires, 4 and will turn away from listening
to the truth and wander away to myths.
5 As for you, always be sober, endure suf-
fering, do the work of an evangelist, carry
out your ministry fully.

6 As for me, I am already being

g Or *by him, to do his* (that is, God's) *will*
h Gk lacks *two men* *i* Or *Every scripture inspired by God is also*

2.26 The *snare of the devil.* See 1 Tim 3.7.

3.1–9 The author uses a prediction about the last days (see Mk 13) to attack the false teachers; see also 1 Tim 4.1–5. **3.2–4** This list of vices constitutes a general attack on the opponents, not a specific description of them (see also 1 Tim 1.9–10). **3.5–7** The description of the opponents becomes more specific here. **3.5** *Godliness.* See 1 Tim 2.2. **3.6** The author belittles the false teachers by describing their students as *silly women* (lit. the diminutive "little women"). **3.7** *Knowledge of the truth.* See 1 Tim 2.4. **3.8** *Jannes and Jambres,* the names given to Pharaoh's anonymous magicians (Ex 7.11, 22) in later Jewish sources (Dead Sea Scrolls *Damascus Document* 5.18–19). **3.10–13** Paul's behavior stands in deliberate contrast to that of the false teachers. **3.11** Acts 13–14 describes events in *Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra.* **3.13** The false teachers are frequently linked with *deceiving*; see note on 1 Tim 2.14.

3.14–4.8 The final charge to Timothy. **3.15** The *sacred writings* are the Jewish scriptures. **3.16** *Inspired by God,* lit. "god-breathed." See 2 Pet 1.21. The reading given in text note *i* is equally possible. **3.17** *Everyone who belongs to God* (lit. "the man [person] of God"). The phrase refers here, as in 1 Tim 6.11, to the ordained church leader. *Good work.* See 1 Tim 2.10. **4.1–2** The charge here assumes a particularly solemn note; see also 1 Tim 5.21. **4.1** *His appearing,* the Second Coming; see also 1.10; Titus 2.13. **4.3** *The time is coming.* The author regarded this prediction as being fulfilled in his time; see 3.1. *Sound doctrine.* See 1.13. **4.4** *Myths.* See 1 Tim 1.4. **4.5** *The work of an evangelist* (see Eph 4.11) is described in 4.2. **4.6–8** A reference to Paul's circumstances concludes the charge. **4.6** *Poured out as a libation*

poured out as a libation, and the time of
my departure has come. 7 I have fought
the good fight, I have finished the race, I
have kept the faith. 8 From now on there
is reserved for me the crown of righteous-
ness, which the Lord, the righteous judge,
will give me on that day, and not only to
me but also to all who have longed for his
appearing.

Personal Instructions

9 Do your best to come to me soon,
10 for Demas, in love with this present
world, has deserted me and gone to Thes-
salonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia,[j]
Titus to Dalmatia. 11 Only Luke is with
me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for
he is useful in my ministry. 12 I have sent
Tychicus to Ephesus. 13 When you come,
bring the cloak that I left with Carpus
at Troas, also the books, and above all
the parchments. 14 Alexander the copper-
smith did me great harm; the Lord will
pay him back for his deeds. 15 You also
must beware of him, for he strongly op-
posed our message.

16 At my first defense no one came to
my support, but all deserted me. May it
not be counted against them! 17 But the
Lord stood by me and gave me strength,
so that through me the message might be
fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles
might hear it. So I was rescued from the
lion's mouth. 18 The Lord will rescue me
from every evil attack and save me for his
heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory
forever and ever. Amen.

Final Greetings and Benediction

19 Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the
household of Onesiphorus. 20 Erastus re-
mained in Corinth; Trophimus I left ill in
Miletus. 21 Do your best to come before
winter. Eubulus sends greetings to you, as
do Pudens and Linus and Claudia and all
the brothers and sisters.[k]

22 The Lord be with your spirit.
Grace be with you.[l]

[j] Other ancient authorities read *Gaul* [k] Gk *all the brothers* [l] The Greek word for *you* here is plural. Other ancient authorities add *Amen*

(see Phil 2.17) interprets Paul's impending death (*departure*) as a cultic drink offering; see Num 28.7. **4.7** The *good fight*. See 1 Tim 1.18, though the Greek words are different, there suggesting warfare, here an athletic contest. **4.8** *That day*. See 1.12.

4.9–22 Personal instructions and concluding greetings. The emphasis is on the desertion of Paul by his former companions (see also 1.15). Many of these men are mentioned elsewhere in the Pauline corpus (see Col 4.7, 10, 14; Titus 3.12; Philem 24). **4.14** *Alexander*. See 1 Tim 1.20; Acts 19.33. **4.16** *First defense* may refer to an earlier trial (see, e.g., Acts 23.1–11) or to an earlier portion of Paul's current trial. **4.17** The *lion's mouth* is probably a metaphor. **4.19** *Prisca and Aquila*. See Acts 18.2, 18; Rom 16.3; 1 Cor 16.19. *Onesiphorus*. See 1.16–18.

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO

TITUS

Addressee

THE OSTENSIBLE ADDRESSEE of this Letter, Titus, is one of Paul's known co-workers (2 Cor 8.23). He accompanied Paul to an important meeting in Jerusalem (Gal 2.1–10), worked on the collection for that church (2 Cor 8.6, 16–24), and served as Paul's emissary during his troubled relations with the Corinthians (2 Cor 2.13; 7.5–16). The Letter assumes that Titus has been left in Crete to organize some churches that Paul had recently established (1.5) and provides instructions for this work. Neither Acts nor Paul's other Letters, however, mention a mission to Crete.

Author, Date, and Purpose

The content of this Letter duplicates in many regards that of 1 Timothy. For a discussion of authorship, date, and purpose, see Introduction to that Letter.
Jouette M. Bassler

Salutation

1 Paul, a servant[a] of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that is in accordance with godliness, 2 in the hope of eternal life that God, who never lies, promised before the ages began— 3 in due time he revealed his word through the proclamation with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior,

4 To Titus, my loyal child in the faith we share:

Grace[b] and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

Appointment of Elders

5 I left you behind in Crete for this reason, so that you should put in order what remained to be done, and should appoint elders in every town, as I directed you: 6 someone who is blameless, married only once,[c] whose children are believers, not accused of debauchery and not rebellious. 7 For a bishop,[d] as God's steward, must be blameless; he must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or addicted to wine or violent or greedy for gain; 8 but he must be hospitable, a lover of goodness, prudent, upright, devout, and self-controlled. 9 He must have a firm grasp of the word that is trustworthy in accordance with the teaching, so that he may be able both to preach with sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it.

The False Teachers

10 There are also many rebellious people, idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision; 11 they must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for sordid gain what it is not right to teach. 12 It was one of them, their very own prophet, who said,

"Cretans are always liars, vicious
brutes, lazy gluttons."

13 That testimony is true. For this reason rebuke them sharply, so that they may become sound in the faith, 14 not paying attention to Jewish myths or to commandments of those who reject the truth. 15 To the pure all things are pure, but to the corrupt and unbelieving nothing is pure. Their very minds and consciences are corrupted. 16 They profess to know God, but they deny him by their actions. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.

Exhortations for Various Groups

2 But as for you, teach what is consistent with sound doctrine. 2 Tell the older men to be temperate, serious, prudent, and sound in faith, in love, and in endurance.

3 Likewise, tell the older women to be reverent in behavior, not to be slanderers or slaves to drink; they are to teach what is

a Gk *slave* b Other ancient authorities read *Grace, mercy,* c Gk *husband of one wife* d Or *an overseer*

1.1–4 The opening of the Letter repeats many elements found in 1 Tim 1.1–2 with a new emphasis on the purpose of Paul's apostleship (see also Rom 1.1–6). **1.1** The OT concepts *servant of God* (see 2 Sam 7.5; Jer 7.25) and *God's elect* (see Isa 65.9) were appropriated by Christians; see, e.g., Rom 1.1; 8.33; Phil 1.1; Col 3.12; 2 Tim 2.10. *Knowledge of truth.* See 1 Tim 2.4. *Godliness.* See 1 Tim 2.2. **1.2–3** *Before the ages* defines the antiquity of God's recently *revealed* plan of salvation; see 2 Tim 1.9–10; see also Rom 16.25–26. **1.5–9** The qualifications for elders (see also 1 Tim 4.14; 5.17–22) resemble those for bishops and deacons; see 1 Tim 3.1–13. Here the bishop (1.7) seems to come from the council of elders. **1.9** *Sound* (healthy) *doctrine,* or "teaching." See note on 1 Tim 1.10. **1.10–16** A lengthy description of the false teachers; see also 1 Tim 1.3–7. **1.10** *Deceivers,* in the author's eyes, are particularly dangerous; see 1 Tim 2.14. **1.11** The Pastoral Letters show a pervasive concern for the structure of *families*; see 2.4–5, 9–10; 1 Tim 2.15; 3.4–5, 12; 5.4, 8, 14. **1.12** This ethnic slur is attributed by later writers to Epimenides of Crete (600 B.C.E.). **1.14** *Myths.* See note on 1 Tim 1.4. **1.15** *All things are pure,* a rebuttal of asceticism; see 1 Tim 4.3–5. **1.16** *Profess to know God.* See 1 Tim 6.20–21.

2.1–10 Various groups in the church are exhorted to conduct that reflects contemporary virtues and the specific concerns of these Letters; see also 1 Tim 5.1–6.2. **2.1** *Sound doctrine.* See note on 1.9. **2.2** The virtues of the *older men* resemble those of bishops and deacons; see 1 Tim 3.2, 8. **2.3** On the instructions to *older women,* see 1 Tim

good, 4 so that they may encourage the
young women to love their husbands, to
love their children, 5 to be self-controlled,
chaste, good managers of the household,
kind, being submissive to their husbands,
so that the word of God may not be dis-
credited.
6 Likewise, urge the younger men to
be self-controlled. 7 Show yourself in all
respects a model of good works, and in
your teaching show integrity, gravity,
8 and sound speech that cannot be cen-
sured; then any opponent will be put to
shame, having nothing evil to say of us.
9 Tell slaves to be submissive to their
masters and to give satisfaction in every
respect; they are not to talk back, 10 not to
pilfer, but to show complete and perfect
fidelity, so that in everything they may be
an ornament to the doctrine of God our
Savior.
11 For the grace of God has appeared,
bringing salvation to all,[e] 12 training us to
renounce impiety and worldly passions,
and in the present age to live lives that
are self-controlled, upright, and godly,
13 while we wait for the blessed hope and
the manifestation of the glory of our great
God and Savior,[f] Jesus Christ. 14 He it is
who gave himself for us that he might re-
deem us from all iniquity and purify for
himself a people of his own who are zeal-
ous for good deeds.
15 Declare these things; exhort and
reprove with all authority.[g] Let no one
look down on you.

Instructions to Titus

3 Remind them to be subject to rulers
and authorities, to be obedient, to be
ready for every good work, 2 to speak evil
of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gen-
tle, and to show every courtesy to every-
one. 3 For we ourselves were once foolish,
disobedient, led astray, slaves to various
passions and pleasures, passing our days
in malice and envy, despicable, hating one
another. 4 But when the goodness and lov-
ing kindness of God our Savior appeared,
5 he saved us, not because of any works of
righteousness that we had done, but ac-
cording to his mercy, through the water[h]
of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.
6 This Spirit he poured out on us richly
through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that,
having been justified by his grace, we
might become heirs according to the hope
of eternal life. 8 The saying is sure.
I desire that you insist on these things,

e Or *has appeared to all, bringing salvation* f Or *of the great God and our Savior* g Gk *commandment* h Gk *washing*

3.11. **2.4** On the behavior of *young women*, see 1 Tim 2.11–15; 5.14. **2.5** *Discredited*, i.e., by outsiders offended by their behavior. See 2.8, 10; 1 Tim 3.7. **2.7** *Good works*. See note on 3.1. **2.9** *Slaves* are also exhorted in 1 Tim 6.1–2. **2.11–15** This passage, which may contain a liturgical fragment (vv. 11–14), provides a theological basis for the Letter's exhortations (see also 3.4–7). **2.11** *The grace of God has appeared*. Two appearances or manifestations mark God's plan of salvation: one past (see also 3.4; 1 Tim 3.16; 2 Tim 1.10) and one future (2.13; 1 Tim 6.14). **2.12** The Christian life is described in the language of Hellenistic moral philosophy. *Impiety* is the mark of the false teachers; see 2 Tim 2.16. *Worldly passions* are described in 3.3. **2.13** Where Paul speaks of Christ's "coming" (Greek *parousia*; see 1 Cor 15.23; 1 Thess 4.15), these Letters borrow the terminology of the imperial cult and speak of his *manifestation* (Greek *epiphaneia*). NT writers rarely speak of Christ as *God* (but see Jn 20.28; Heb 1.8). **2.14** OT concepts are prominent here: *redeem us from all iniquity* (see Ps 130.8); *a people of his own* (see Ex 19.5; Ezek 37.23); *zealous for good deeds* (see Sir 51.18; 1 Macc 2.27).

3.1–8a Brief instructions are buttressed with a lengthy description of God's mercy. **3.1** *Be subject*. The same Greek word is translated *be submissive* in 2.5, 9; see also 1 Tim 2.11; 3.4. On submission to *rulers*, see Rom 13.1–7; 1 Pet 2.13–17; see also 1 Tim 2.1–2. *Good work*. See 2.7, 3.8; 1 Tim 2.10. **3.3–7** The contrast between life prior to grace and life transformed by it is typical of Christian exhortation; see Rom 6.17–19; 1 Cor 6.9–11; Eph 2.1–10. **3.3** This vice list is similar to Rom 1.19–31. **3.4–7** The dense theological content of these verses suggests a liturgical or creedal origin (see also 2.11–14). **3.4** *Goodness and loving kindness*. God is described with the humanitarian attributes of an ideal ruler. **3.5** The rejection of the attaining of righteousness by *works* is very Pauline; see Rom 3.28; 9.11–12; Gal 2.16; see also 2 Tim 1.9. *Water* (lit. *washing*, see text note *h*) *of rebirth*, i.e., baptism. See Eph 5.26. The language of *rebirth and renewal* echoes Jn 3.3, 5; Rom 6.4; 1 Pet 1.3. **3.6** The *Spirit* was *poured out* at Pentecost; see Acts 2.14–18. **3.7** *Justified by his grace*. See Rom 3.24. On the *hope of eternal life*, see Rom 5.2–5; see also Titus 1.2. **3.8a** *The saying is sure* refers back to 3.4–7; see 1 Tim 1.15. **3.8b–11** A final warning about the false teachers

so that those who have come to believe in
God may be careful to devote themselves
to good works; these things are excellent
and profitable to everyone. 9 But avoid
stupid controversies, genealogies, dissen-
sions, and quarrels about the law, for they
are unprofitable and worthless. 10 After a
first and second admonition, have noth-
ing more to do with anyone who causes
divisions, 11 since you know that such a
person is perverted and sinful, being self-
condemned.

Final Instructions and Greetings

12 When I send Artemas to you, or
Tychicus, do your best to come to me at
Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the
winter there. 13 Make every effort to send
Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their
way, and see that they lack nothing.
14 And let people learn to devote them-
selves to good works in order to meet
urgent needs, so that they may not be
unproductive.

15 All who are with me send greetings
to you. Greet those who love us in the
faith.

Grace be with all of you.[i]

[i] Other ancient authorities add *Amen*

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emphasizes their divisiveness (cf. 3.1–2); see also 1.10–16; 1 Tim 1.4–7; 2 Tim 2.16–23. **3.9** On the tactic of *avoidance*, see 1 Tim 4.7; 2 Tim 2.16, 23; cf. Titus 1.9. **3.12–15** Final instructions and greetings. **3.12** *Tychicus*. See Acts 20.4; Eph 6.21; Col 4.7–9; 2 Tim 4.12. *Nicopolis* is on the western coast of Epirus (Greece); no other NT writings mention a visit by Paul to this city. Sea travel was not possible in *winter*; see 2 Tim 4.21. **3.13** *Apollos*. See Acts 18.24–28; 1 Cor 3.4–9; 16.12. **3.14** A final exhortation to *good works*; see 1 Tim 2.10.

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO

PHILEMON

ALTHOUGH PAUL'S LETTER to Philemon is generally comprehensible, his unusually deferential and indirect language and the very nature of a letter as only one half of a conversation make it difficult for later readers to know its occasion and contents as precisely as the first ones did.

Place and Date

Paul writes from prison (vv. 1, 9, 10, 13, 23) to a Christian living in Colossae in Asia Minor. The letter does not say where he was imprisoned, though some manuscripts add a postscript saying that Paul wrote it "from Rome," i.e., during his Roman imprisonment of 60–62 C.E. (Acts 28.16–31). But Rome is problematic: it involves a long distance for the slave Onesimus to travel to be with Paul; and it causes problems with Pauline chronology, for Paul's plans after Rome were to travel westward to Spain (Rom 15.22–24) and not eastward to Colossae, as he promises Philemon (v. 22). Other imprisonments—e.g., at Philippi (Acts 16.23–40) or Caesarea (Acts 23.35)—are also problematic, so that it is best to leave open the place of Paul's imprisonment. Once Rome is ruled out, so is a precise dating, leaving a period from the mid to the late 50s as most likely.

Occasion and Content

The slave Onesimus is with Paul and during his stay has not only served him but has also been converted by him. In fact, Paul has come to regard him as his child (v. 10) and wants him to continue in his service (v. 13). He has decided, however, to send him back to his master, Philemon (v. 12), so as to obtain Philemon's approval (v. 14) and possibly Onesimus's freedom (v. 16). Paul's problem is that Onesimus, quite possibly a runaway, may have also wronged his master or stolen something from him (v. 18), so that his requests for Onesimus's continued stay and possible emancipation are directed to a master who was more likely to be angry than amenable. To deflect this anger Paul writes cautiously, speaking deferentially to Philemon and indirectly about Onesimus. The result is a masterpiece of church diplomacy, but equally a letter that speaks so obliquely of Onesimus's situation—e.g., his being "separated" from Philemon (v. 15)—that it is far from

certain whether Onesimus was a runaway. Likewise, the letter speaks so disarmingly of Philemon's responsibility toward Onesimus—e.g., his being asked to treat him as "more than a slave" (v. 16)—that it is unclear what Paul's intentions for Philemon really were. *Ronald F. Hock*

Salutation

1 Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and
Timothy our brother,[a]
To Philemon our dear friend and co-
worker, 2 to Apphia our sister,[b] to Ar-
chippus our fellow soldier, and to the
church in your house:
3 Grace to you and peace from God
our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Philemon's Love and Faith

4 When I remember you[c] in my
prayers, I always thank my God 5 because
I hear of your love for all the saints and
your faith toward the Lord Jesus. 6 I pray
that the sharing of your faith may become
effective when you perceive all the good
that we[d] may do for Christ. 7 I have in-
deed received much joy and encourage-
ment from your love, because the hearts
of the saints have been refreshed through
you, my brother.

Paul's Plea for Onesimus

8 For this reason, though I am bold
enough in Christ to command you to do
your duty, 9 yet I would rather appeal to
you on the basis of love—and I, Paul, do
this as an old man, and now also as a pris-
oner of Christ Jesus.[e] 10 I am appealing
to you for my child, Onesimus, whose fa-
ther I have become during my imprison-
ment. 11 Formerly he was useless to you,
but now he is indeed useful[f] both to you
and to me. 12 I am sending him, that is,
my own heart, back to you. 13 I wanted
to keep him with me, so that he might
be of service to me in your place during
my imprisonment for the gospel; 14 but
I preferred to do nothing without your
consent, in order that your good deed

a Gk *the brother* b Gk *the sister* c From verse 4 through verse 21, *you* is singular
d Other ancient authorities read *you* (plural)
e Or *as an ambassador of Christ Jesus, and now also his prisoner* f The name Onesimus means *useful* or (compare verse 20) *beneficial*

1–3 Identifying the sender(s) and recipient(s) at the beginning of a letter is typical of Paul and of ancient letter writers generally. **1** *Timothy*, co-sender of the letter (as also of 2 Corinthians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians), is one of Paul's closest associates in his missionary work (see 1 Cor 4.17; Phil 2.19–24; 1 Thess 3.1–6). **2** *Apphia* and *Archippus* (see also Col 4.17) may be Philemon's wife and son. The characterization *fellow soldier* (used also of Epaphroditus in Phil 2.25) is figurative, meaning co-worker. If not family members, they are at least leaders along with Philemon in *the church* that meets in Philemon's *house*. Using domestic structures for church meetings was typical in the NT period (see also Rom 16.5; 1 Cor 16.15, 19; Col 4.15).

4–7 Typical of Paul's letters is a statement of gratitude to God for something commendable in the recipients' conduct. Here Paul's gratitude is aimed specifically at Philemon (see text note *c*). **7** *Refreshed through you* is vague, though it may refer to some act of hospitality, perhaps toward traveling missionaries (see 3 Jn 5–8). Note Paul's similar expression in v. 20.

8–22 In the body of the letter Paul turns to the matter at hand: asking for Onesimus's continued service and possibly his freedom. In vv. 8–16 Paul delicately prepares Philemon for the requests in vv. 17–22. **9** The word *love*, without the definite article, suggests love in general, but the Greek has the article and thus may refer to Philemon's specific acts of love (vv. 5, 7). **10** *Child* and *father* are metaphors Paul uses elsewhere of his converts and himself (e.g., 1 Cor 4.15; Gal 4.19). **11** *Useless* is a standard term for bad slaves. *Useful* (see text note *f*) is a term for good slaves and shows how much Onesimus has changed since he left. **15** *Was separated* is probably a tactful way of referring to Onesimus's having run away; the passive form of the verb also makes Onesimus less accountable for his action and may even suggest the working of provi-

might be voluntary and not something
forced. 15 Perhaps this is the reason he
was separated from you for a while, so
that you might have him back forever,
16 no longer as a slave but more than a
slave, a beloved brother—especially to me
but how much more to you, both in the
flesh and in the Lord.

17 So if you consider me your part-
ner, welcome him as you would welcome
me. 18 If he has wronged you in any way,
or owes you anything, charge that to my
account. 19 I, Paul, am writing this with
my own hand: I will repay it. I say nothing
about your owing me even your own self.
20 Yes, brother, let me have this benefit
from you in the Lord! Refresh my heart
in Christ. 21 Confident of your obedience,
I am writing to you, knowing that you will
do even more than I say.

22 One thing more—prepare a guest
room for me, for I am hoping through
your prayers to be restored to you.

Final Greetings and Benediction

23 Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in
Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you,[g]
24 and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas,
and Luke, my fellow workers.

25 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ
be with your spirit.[h]

[g] Here *you* is singular [h] Other ancient authorities add *Amen*

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dence. **16** The phrase *more than a slave* is vague but may imply release from slavery (see also v. 21: *do even more than I say*). **17** Paul also calls Titus his *partner* (2 Cor 8.23) but otherwise speaks of whole churches—especially the Philippians—as partners (2 Cor 8.4; Phil 4.15). **19** Paul often writes a portion of his letters in his *own hand* (see 1 Cor 16.21; Gal 6.11; see also 2 Thess 3.17). *Owing me even your own self* doubtlessly refers to Paul's having converted Philemon, perhaps at Ephesus (Acts 19.10).

23–24 An exchange of greetings often closes ancient letters. *Epaphras, Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke* are all included in the closing greetings of Colossians (4.10–14). Onesimus is also mentioned in Col 4.9. Mark (Acts 12.12, 25; 13.5) and Luke are the persons later credited with writing Gospels.

THE LETTER TO THE

HEBREWS

THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS forcefully argues that through Christ, faithful Christians have direct access to God. The text urges the faithful, confident of their covenant relationship with God, to follow Christ's example and live as he did, faithful, hopeful, loving, and patient in the face of persecution.

Author and Date

Although Hebrews is occasionally attributed to Paul, even early Christian scholars such as Origen (185–254 C.E.) recognized that its style is quite different from that of Paul's Letters. Scholars have proposed attributing Hebrews to other early Christian leaders, such as Barnabas, Apollos, or Priscilla, but solid evidence for such suggestions is lacking. The work thus remains anonymous.

The elaborate reflections on Christ in Hebrews took some decades to develop. Hence, the text was probably composed after 60 C.E. and before 95 C.E., when *1 Clement* was written from Rome quoting several portions of Hebrews.

Genre and Sources

Although classed with the Letters of the New Testament, Hebrews is really an extended sermon or, as its conclusion labels it, a "word of exhortation" (13.22). Hebrews does, however, end like a letter (13.19–25), and the final paragraphs suggest the work was sent to a distant congregation.

The most important source for Hebrews is the OT in its Greek form, the Septuagint, interpreted in the light of belief in Jesus. Texts from all portions of Israel's scriptures come into play: the Pentateuch, Prophets, Psalms, and other Writings. Nonbiblical traditions also play a role. The comparison of Christ and Melchizedek in ch. 7, for example, resembles speculation widespread in first-century Judaism about the shadowy figure of Melchizedek mentioned only in Gen 14; Ps 110.

Audience

The reference to "Hebrews" in the title represents a conjecture about the identity of the audience made by scribes of the second century C.E., probably based on

the work's contents. Yet the audience, though possibly including people of Jewish background, clearly shares with the author a Christian commitment (3.1; 4.14; 10.23).

The location of the audience is not known with certainty. The farewell (13.24) contains greetings from "those from Italy," suggesting that the author's companions are saluting friends at home. This fact, plus the early attestation of Hebrews by Clement of Rome, points to a destination in Rome, where Christians continued to be Greek-speaking until well into the second century.

The audience, members of the church's "second generation" (2.3), had experienced persecution (10.32–34) and had perhaps become disappointed that God's promised kingdom had not yet come. Some members may even have begun to abandon the community (10.25). The author confronts this situation with a combination of exhortations to be faithful and warnings not to fall away (see, e.g., 6.4–8).

Language and Style

The Greek of Hebrews is among the most sophisticated in the NT, involving a broad vocabulary knit into complex sentences and balanced, sometimes rhythmic cadences. The author also uses all the devices of contemporary orators to embellish the argument, though many of these effects, such as the repetition of similar sounds, cannot be reproduced in translation. Imagery from various spheres of activity, including education (5.12–14; 12.7–11), agriculture (6.7–8; 12.11), seafaring (6.19), and athletics (5.14; 12.1–3), illustrates the argument. The author delights in teasing out the meaning of individual words (3.1–6; 9.15–17). All of this serves the sermon's goal of reflection on the One through whom God has definitively spoken (1.1–2). *Harold W. Attridge*

God Has Spoken by His Son

1 Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the
prophets, 2 but in these last days he has
spoken to us by a Son,[a] whom he ap-
pointed heir of all things, through whom
he also created the worlds. 3 He is the
reflection of God's glory and the exact
imprint of God's very being, and he
sustains[b] all things by his powerful word.
When he had made purification for sins,
he sat down at the right hand of the Maj-
esty on high, 4 having become as much
superior to angels as the name he has
inherited is more excellent than theirs.

The Son Is Superior to Angels

5 For to which of the angels did God
ever say,
"You are my Son;
today I have begotten you"?
Or again,
"I will be his Father,
and he will be my Son"?
6 And again, when he brings the firstborn
into the world, he says,
"Let all God's angels worship
him."
7 Of the angels he says,
"He makes his angels winds,
and his servants flames of fire."
8 But of the Son he says,
"Your throne, O God, is[c] forever
and ever,
and the righteous scepter is the
scepter of your[d] kingdom.
9 You have loved righteousness and
hated wickedness;
therefore God, your God, has
anointed you
with the oil of gladness beyond
your companions."
10 And,
"In the beginning, Lord, you
founded the earth,
and the heavens are the work
of your hands;
11 they will perish, but you remain;
they will all wear out like
clothing;
12 like a cloak you will roll them up,
and like clothing[e] they will be
changed.
But you are the same,
and your years will never end."
13 But to which of the angels has he ever
said,
"Sit at my right hand

a Or *the Son* b Or *bears along* c Or *God is your throne* d Other ancient authorities read *his* e Other ancient authorities lack *like clothing*

1.1–4 An introduction celebrates the Christian confession that the exalted Jesus is God's eternal Son. **1.1** *Ancestors* includes all the faithful in biblical history, many of whom appear in ch. 11. **1.2** For the widespread Christian belief that the faithful were living in the *last days*, see Mt 24.32–35; Mk 13.28–31; 1 Thess 4.13–18. Christ's status as *heir* gives assurance to his followers and fellow heirs (1.14; 6.12, 17); see also Rom 8.17. That God created *through* Christ is affirmed in Jn 1.3; 1 Cor 8.6; Col 1.16. The plural *worlds* (see also 11.3) refers either to this world and the world to come (2.5) or to the multiplicity of heavenly realms through which Christ has ascended (4.14; 9.11). **1.3** Divine Wisdom is also described as the *reflection* and image of God; see Wis 7.26. *Purification* from sin is the effect of Christ's sacrificial death; see 9.14. The image of Christ seated *at the right hand*, from Ps 110.1, appears throughout Hebrews (1.13; 8.1; 10.12; 12.2) and in other references to Christ's exaltation (Mt 22.44; Acts 2.34–35; Eph 1.20; 1 Pet 3.22). *Majesty* is a reverent way of referring to God; see 8.1. **1.4** Christ's special *name*, received at his exaltation, is mentioned in Phil 2.9–10. Here the name is probably "Son."

1.5–14 A series of scriptural verses, mostly from royal psalms, illustrate Christ's lofty status; see also Eph 1.21; Col 1.16; 1 Pet 3.22. The verses may have been traditionally linked. **1.5** Ps 2.7. *Today* in the psalm refers to the day of the king's enthronement, when he was adopted, hence "begotten," as God's son. Here it refers either to the day of Christ's exaltation or to God's heavenly generation of the Son. The verse is cited again in 5.5. 2 Sam 7.14 contains God's promise to be a *Father* to the son of David. **1.6** Here *firstborn* may be a messianic title; cf. Rom 8.29; Col 1.15, 18; Rev 1.5. The verse appears in Deut 32.43 in the Septuagint. *Him*, here the Son. **1.7** Ps 104.4. The psalm portrays God as using natural elements, *winds* and *flames*, as messengers. The author of Hebrews uses the verse to emphasize the transitoriness of the angels in contrast to the eternal Son (v. 8). **1.8–9** Ps 45.6–7. As the alternative reading (text note *c*) suggests, the psalm may have assured the Israelite king that his reign was secure because God was his throne. The author of Hebrews understands the psalm to address the Son as *God*. The eternal *throne*, then, is where the anointed Son sits; see 4.16. **1.10–12** Ps 102.25–27. **1.13** Ps 110.1. V. 4 of this psalm,

until I make your enemies a
footstool for your feet"?
14 Are not all angels[f] spirits in the divine
service, sent to serve for the sake of those
who are to inherit salvation?

Warning to Pay Attention

2 Therefore we must pay greater attention to what we have heard, so
that we do not drift away from it. 2 For if
the message declared through angels was
valid, and every transgression or disobedi-
ence received a just penalty, 3 how can we
escape if we neglect so great a salvation? It
was declared at first through the Lord,
and it was attested to us by those who
heard him, 4 while God added his testi-
mony by signs and wonders and various
miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit,
distributed according to his will.

Exaltation Through Abasement

5 Now God[g] did not subject the coming world, about which we are speaking,
to angels. 6 But someone has testified
somewhere,
"What are human beings that you
are mindful of them,[h]
or mortals, that you care for
them?[i]
7 You have made them for a little
while lower[j] than the
angels;
you have crowned them with
glory and honor,[k]
8 subjecting all things under
their feet."
Now in subjecting all things to them,
God[g] left nothing outside their control.
As it is, we do not yet see everything in
subjection to them, 9 but we do see Jesus,
who for a little while was made lower[l]
than the angels, now crowned with glory
and honor because of the suffering of
death, so that by the grace of God[m] he
might taste death for everyone.
10 It was fitting that God,[g] for whom
and through whom all things exist, in
bringing many children to glory, should
make the pioneer of their salvation per-
fect through sufferings. 11 For the one
who sanctifies and those who are sancti-
fied all have one Father.[n] For this reason
Jesus[g] is not ashamed to call them broth-
ers and sisters,[o] 12 saying,
"I will proclaim your name to my
brothers and sisters,[o]
in the midst of the
congregation I will
praise you."
13 And again,
"I will put my trust in him."
And again,
"Here am I and the children
whom God has given me."
14 Since, therefore, the children share
flesh and blood, he himself likewise
shared the same things, so that through
death he might destroy the one who has
the power of death, that is, the devil,
15 and free those who all their lives were
held in slavery by the fear of death. 16 For
it is clear that he did not come to help
angels, but the descendants of Abraham.
17 Therefore he had to become like his
brothers and sisters[o] in every respect, so

f Gk *all of them* *g* Gk *he* *h* Gk *What is man that you are mindful of him?* *i* Gk *or the son of man that you care for him?* In the Hebrew of Psalm 8.4-6 both *man* and *son of man* refer to all humankind *j* Or *them only a little lower* *k* Other ancient authorities add *and set them over the works of your hands* *l* Or *who was made a little lower* *m* Other ancient authorities read *apart from God* *n* Gk *are all of one* *o* Gk *brothers*

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cited in 5.6, will form the basis for ch. 7. **1.14** *Salvation* will occur when Christ comes again; see 9.28.

2.1–4 The author interrupts the exposition of scripture to warn against neglecting the Son's message; see also 3.12; 4.11; 6.4–8; 10.26–31; 12.16–17. **2.4** For some spiritual *gifts*, see 1 Cor 12.4–11.

2.5–18 The exposition continues with a new focus on the Son's solidarity with all humanity. **2.6a** Similar vague allusions (*someone*) are found in first-century writers such as Philo; see also 4.4. **2.6b–8** Ps 8.4–6 celebrates the lofty status of all human beings. The author of Hebrews reads the text as a prophetic account of the Son; see also 1 Cor 15.27. The preferred text is found in text notes *h* and *i*. All the plural pronouns here (*them, their*) are actually masculine singular ("him," "his") in the Greek. **2.10** The title *pioneer* reappears in 12.2. On Jesus made *perfect* by suffering, see 2.17–18; 5.8–10; 7.28; see also 10.14; 11.40; 12.2, 23. **2.12** Ps 22.22. **2.13** Isa 8.17–18. **2.17** Later (4.15) the author excludes sin from the ways in which Christ *became like* human beings. The document's special title for Christ, *high priest*, appears here for the first time; see 3.1; 4.14–15; 5.5, 10; 6.20; 7.26–28; 8.1, 3; 9.11, 25.

that he might be a merciful and faithful
high priest in the service of God, to make
a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the
people. 18 Because he himself was tested
by what he suffered, he is able to help
those who are being tested.

Moses a Servant, Christ a Son

3 Therefore, brothers and sisters,[p]
holy partners in a heavenly calling,
consider that Jesus, the apostle and high
priest of our confession, 2 was faithful to
the one who appointed him, just as Moses
also "was faithful in all[q] God's[r] house."
3 Yet Jesus[s] is worthy of more glory than
Moses, just as the builder of a house has
more honor than the house itself. 4 (For
every house is built by someone, but the
builder of all things is God.) 5 Now Moses
was faithful in all God's[r] house as a ser-
vant, to testify to the things that would be
spoken later. 6 Christ, however, was faith-
ful over God's[r] house as a son, and we
are his house if we hold firm[t] the confi-
dence and the pride that belong to hope.

Warning Against Unbelief

7 Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says,
"Today, if you hear his voice,
8 do not harden your hearts as in
the rebellion,
as on the day of testing in the
wilderness,
9 where your ancestors put me to
the test,
though they had seen my works
10 for forty years.
Therefore I was angry with that
generation,
and I said, 'They always go astray
in their hearts,
and they have not known
my ways.'
11 As in my anger I swore,
'They will not enter my rest.'"
12 Take care, brothers and sisters,[p] that
none of you may have an evil, unbelieving
heart that turns away from the living God.
13 But exhort one another every day, as
long as it is called "today," so that none of
you may be hardened by the deceitfulness
of sin. 14 For we have become partners of
Christ, if only we hold our first confi-
dence firm to the end. 15 As it is said,
"Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts as in
the rebellion."

p Gk *brothers* *q* Other ancient authorities lack *all* *r* Gk *his* *s* Gk *this one* *t* Other ancient authorities add *to the end*

3.1–6 A comparison between Jesus and Moses introduces the theme of fidelity, which continues to 4.13. **3.1** Only here in the NT is the title *apostle* given to Jesus. It conveys the notion, prominent in John (4.34; 5.24, 30, 37; 6.38, 44; 7.16, 28; 8.16, 29; 12.44, 49), that Jesus was sent by the Father. *Confession* refers to the faith in God and Christ professed by the author and the audience; see 4.14; 10.23. **3.2** That Moses was *faithful* derives from Num 12.7, cited again in v. 5. **3.3** The description of Jesus as *builder* of God's house alludes to Christ's role in either creation (1.2) or redemption (2.12–13). **3.5** Moses' designation as *servant* derives from Num 12.7, where it served to exalt him; here it makes Moses inferior to the Son. For similar contrasts, see Jn 8.35; Gal 4.7. For Moses as an example of faith, see 11.23–28. **3.6** *We are his house.* See also 1 Cor 3.16–17; 1 Tim 3.15; Heb 10.21; 1 Pet 2.5; 4.17. *Confidence.* The same word is translated elsewhere as "boldness" in confessing and living the faith; see 4.16; 10.19–24, 35. For appeals to retain *hope*, see 6.11, 18; 7.19; 10.23.

3.7–4.11 A little sermon urges fidelity by pointing to the dire consequences of faithlessness. **3.7–11** Ps 95.7–11. **3.7** For the *Holy Spirit* speaking in scripture, see 9.8; 10.15. **3.8** *Rebellion* is a Greek translation of the Hebrew place-name Meribah. *Of testing* translates the Hebrew place-name Massah. For both places, see Ex 17.7; Num 20.1–13; Deut 33.8. **3.10** In the original psalm, the phrase *forty years* was associated with the period of wrath mentioned in the following verse. Its association here with the period of testing of God by the Israelites of the desert generation highlights their rebelliousness. **3.11** *Rest* in the psalm designates the land of Canaan as Israel's resting place. The author will find a deeper sense in the word in 4.1–11. **3.12** The admonition to *take care,* (see also 12.25) is common in the NT. For the danger of *turning away*, or apostasizing, see Num 14.9, which treats the desert generation, and Mt 24.10–12. A Greek wordplay links *turning away* (*apostēnai*) and the *unbelieving* (*apistias*) heart. The traditional phrase *living God* (see, e.g., Deut 5.26) reappears in 9.14; 10.31; 12.22. **3.14** On *partners*, see 3.1. The term translated *confidence* is the same as that used in 1.3 for the *very being* of God. The author may actually be calling the audience to hold on

16 Now who were they who heard and yet
were rebellious? Was it not all those who
left Egypt under the leadership of Moses?
17 But with whom was he angry forty
years? Was it not those who sinned, whose
bodies fell in the wilderness? 18 And to
whom did he swear that they would not
enter his rest, if not to those who were
disobedient? 19 So we see that they were
unable to enter because of unbelief.

The Rest that God Promised

4 Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest is still open, let us take
care that none of you should seem to have
failed to reach it. 2 For indeed the good
news came to us just as to them; but the
message they heard did not benefit them,
because they were not united by faith with
those who listened.[u] 3 For we who have
believed enter that rest, just as God[v] has
said,

"As in my anger I swore,
'They shall not enter my rest,'"

though his works were finished at the
foundation of the world. 4 For in one
place it speaks about the seventh day as
follows, "And God rested on the seventh
day from all his works." 5 And again in
this place it says, "They shall not enter my
rest." 6 Since therefore it remains open for
some to enter it, and those who formerly
received the good news failed to enter be-
cause of disobedience, 7 again he sets a
certain day—"today"—saying through
David much later, in the words already
quoted,

"Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts."

8 For if Joshua had given them rest, God[v]
would not speak later about another day.
9 So then, a sabbath rest still remains for
the people of God; 10 for those who enter
God's rest also cease from their labors as
God did from his. 11 Let us therefore
make every effort to enter that rest, so
that no one may fall through such disobe-
dience as theirs.

God's Penetrating Wisdom

12 Indeed, the word of God is living
and active, sharper than any two-edged
sword, piercing until it divides soul from
spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to
judge the thoughts and intentions of the
heart. 13 And before him no creature is
hidden, but all are naked and laid bare to
the eyes of the one to whom we must ren-
der an account.

u Other ancient authorities read *it did not meet with faith in those who listened* *v* Gk *he*

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to the "reality" that Christ provides. **3.16** See Num 14.22. **3.17** See Num 14.33. **3.18** See Num 14.43.

4.1–11 The little sermon reaches its climax in a demonstration of the way in which *rest* remains a possibility for the audience. **4.1** Attention shifts to the final verse of the psalm citation (Heb 3.7–11) and the *promise* it implies. For this motif, see 6.12, 15, 17; 7.6; 8.6; 9.15; 10.36; 11.9, 13, 17, 33, 39. **4.2** The conviction that the same *good news* has come throughout salvation history is fundamental to Hebrews; see 1.1; 11.39–40. **4.3–5** Comparison of two verses that in Greek use forms of the word *rest*. (Such an argument is common in rabbinic literature.) **4.3** Ps 95.11, already cited in 3.11, supports the claim that God's promise remains open. That God's *works were finished* at creation implies that "rest" was available long before the Israelites approached Canaan. **4.4** Gen 2.2, with its note that God *rested*, confirms that "rest" was a reality already present at the creation of the world. **4.5** The author takes the phrase *my rest* in Ps 95.11 to refer precisely to the "rest" into which God entered on the seventh day. That rest was obviously not the land of Canaan but a heavenly reality. **4.6** The phrase *it remains open* summarizes the argument of 4.1–5. The remark that the Israelites *failed to enter* summarizes 3.12–19. **4.7** The Greek version of the OT explicitly attributes Ps 95 to *David*. The phrase *much later* refers to the interval between the conquest of Canaan and the time of David. **4.8** The author argues, despite the contrary affirmation of Josh 21.44, that the conquest generation, under the leadership of *Joshua* did not attain rest, for true "rest" is not to be found in the land of Canaan but is of a different order. **4.9** The description of the promise as a *sabbath rest* implies not simple inactivity but joyous celebration characteristic of the weekly holy day.

4.12–13 A reflection on the power of God's word forms an epilogue to the sermon; see also 1.3. **4.12** For God's word as a *sword*, see Eph 6.17; Rev 1.16; 2.12. Divine Wisdom also has power to *pierce* the spirit; see Wis 7.23. **4.13** That nothing is *hidden* before God's eyes is a commonplace; see Jer 11.20; Rom 8.27; 1 Cor 4.5; 1 Thess 2.4. In Greek the term for *account* is the same as that for God's word (*logos*).

Jesus the Great High Priest

14 Since, then, we have a great high
priest who has passed through the heav-
ens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast
to our confession. 15 For we do not have a
high priest who is unable to sympathize
with our weaknesses, but we have one
who in every respect has been tested[w] as
we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore
approach the throne of grace with bold-
ness, so that we may receive mercy and
find grace to help in time of need.

5 Every high priest chosen from
among mortals is put in charge of
things pertaining to God on their behalf,
to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. 2 He is
able to deal gently with the ignorant and
wayward, since he himself is subject to
weakness; 3 and because of this he must
offer sacrifice for his own sins as well
as for those of the people. 4 And one
does not presume to take this honor, but
takes it only when called by God, just
as Aaron was.

5 So also Christ did not glorify himself
in becoming a high priest, but was ap-
pointed by the one who said to him,

"You are my Son,
today I have begotten you";

6 as he says also in another place,

"You are a priest forever,
according to the order of
Melchizedek."

7 In the days of his flesh, Jesus[x] of-
fered up prayers and supplications, with
loud cries and tears, to the one who was
able to save him from death, and he was
heard because of his reverent submission.
8 Although he was a Son, he learned obe-
dience through what he suffered; 9 and
having been made perfect, he became
the source of eternal salvation for all who
obey him, 10 having been designated by
God a high priest according to the order
of Melchizedek.

Warning Against Falling Away

11 About this[y] we have much to say
that is hard to explain, since you have
become dull in understanding. 12 For
though by this time you ought to be teach-
ers, you need someone to teach you again
the basic elements of the oracles of God.
You need milk, not solid food; 13 for ev-
eryone who lives on milk, being still an
infant, is unskilled in the word of righ-
teousness. 14 But solid food is for the ma-
ture, for those whose faculties have been
trained by practice to distinguish good
from evil.

w Or *tempted* *x* Gk *he* *y* Or *him*

4.14–5.10 Discussion of Christ's role resumes with the theme of the merciful high priest, whose heavenly presence guarantees help. **4.14** Christ's passage *through the heavens* refers to his exaltation; see 1.3, 13; 2.9; 9.11. **4.15** On Christ's role as a *tested* high priest, see 2.17–18. That Christ was *without sin* is a common assumption; see 7.26 and Jn 8.46; 2 Cor 5.21; 1 Pet 1.19; 2.22; 3.18; 1 Jn 3.5. **4.16** The Son's heavenly *throne* (see 1.8) is now specified as one *of grace*, since from it issues help; see 2.18. **5.2** The concern for sinners who are *ignorant and wayward* is apparently based upon the scriptural texts (Lev 4.2; 5.15–16; Num 15.22–31) that treat "unintentional sins." **5.3** The high priest's sacrifices *for his own sins* and *for those of the people* recall the Day of Atonement; see 7.27; Lev 9.7. That solemn day's ritual dominates chs. 9–10. **5.4** For the call of *Aaron*, see Ex 28.1; Lev 8.1–9; Num 16–18. **5.5** Ps 2.7, also cited in 1.5. **5.6** Ps 110.4. The psalm's first verse was cited in 1.13. *Melchizedek*, who appears in the OT only in Ps 110.4 and in Gen 14, is discussed at length in ch. 7. **5.7** *Prayers and supplications* vaguely recalls Gethsemane (Mt 26.36–46; Mk 14.32–43; Lk 22.40–46), but the overall portrait is different. *Loud cries and tears* suggests the pious prayers of such psalms as 22.1–2; 116.8–11. **5.8** The *obedience* that Jesus learned is a model for his followers; see v. 9; 12.1–3. To learn through what one has *suffered* is a Greek proverb. **5.9** For Christ *made perfect*, see 2.10. **5.10** The phrase *order of Melchizedek* echoes Ps 110.4, cited in v. 6, and anticipates ch. 7.

5.11–14 Common sermonic imagery serves as a warning. **5.11** The subject that is lengthy and *hard to explain* is the interpretation of Christ as heavenly high priest given in chs. 8–10. **5.12** *Oracles of God* designates Israel's scriptures; see Acts 7.38; Rom 3.2; 1 Pet 4.11. *Milk* and *solid food* commonly symbolize levels of teaching, as in 1 Cor 3.1–3. **5.13** Those who *live on milk* receive only elementary instruction, presumably grammar and rhetoric, and have not yet advanced to the *word of righteousness*, or ethics. **5.14** The *mature* have mastered ethical matters and are ready for yet more "advanced" teaching that involves properly understanding Jesus. On being *trained by practice*, see 12.11; 1 Tim 4.7; 2 Pet 2.14.

The Peril of Falling Away

6 Therefore let us go on toward perfection,[z] leaving behind the basic teaching about Christ, and not laying again the foundation: repentance from dead works and faith toward God, 2 instruction about baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. 3 And we will do[a] this, if God permits. 4 For it is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 and then have fallen away, since on their own they are crucifying again the Son of God and are holding him up to contempt. 7 Ground that drinks up the rain falling on it repeatedly, and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. 8 But if it produces thorns and thistles, it is worthless and on the verge of being cursed; its end is to be burned over.

9 Even though we speak in this way, beloved, we are confident of better things in your case, things that belong to salvation. 10 For God is not unjust; he will not overlook your work and the love that you showed for his sake[b] in serving the saints, as you still do. 11 And we want each one of you to show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope to the very end, 12 so that you may not become sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

The Certainty of God's Promise

13 When God made a promise to Abraham, because he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, 14 saying, "I will surely bless you and multiply you." 15 And thus Abraham,[c] having patiently endured, obtained the promise. 16 Human beings, of course, swear by someone greater than themselves, and an oath given as confirmation puts an end to all dispute. 17 In the same way, when God desired to show even more clearly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it by an oath, 18 so that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God would prove false, we who have taken refuge might be strongly encouraged to seize the hope set before us. 19 We have this hope, a sure and steadfast

z Or *toward maturity* *a* Other ancient authorities read *let us do* *b* Gk *for his name* *c* Gk *he*

6.1–12 A more severe warning (vv. 1–8) precedes encouragement (vv. 9–12). **6.1** The same Greek term (*teleiotēs*) means both *perfection*, the result of Christ's suffering (2.10; 5.9), and *maturity*, to which the audience is called (5.14). *Dead works* are works that lead to sin (see 9.14), not works of the law. **6.2** For various *baptisms*, see perhaps Acts 18.25; 19.3–5. For ritual *laying on of hands*, see Acts 8.17; 19.6. **6.3** *This* is the movement on to perfection (v. 1). **6.4** For other *impossible* things, see 6.18; 10.4; 11.6. Like some other early Christian writers, the author of Hebrews takes a rigorous stand against the possibility of repentance after baptism. This condemnation of apostasy is similar to the notion of the unforgivable sin "against the Holy Spirit" of Mt 12.32; Mk 3.29; Lk 12.10 or the "mortal sin" of 1 Jn 5.16. To be *enlightened* refers generally to accepting the truth (10.32; see also 2 Cor 4.4–6; Eph 1.18) but may also allude to baptism. The *heavenly gift* may be the Eucharist, although a more general reference to God's saving love is likely. For similar gifts, see Acts 2.38; 10.45; Rom 5.15; 2 Cor 9.15; Eph 3.7. **6.7** *Ground that drinks up the rain* recalls the promised land of Deut 11.11. **6.8** *Thorns and thistles* characterize the cursed land of Gen 3.18. Fields choked with weeds are *burned over*, but the fiery end here alludes to final judgment. **6.9** The address *beloved*, common in sermons and letters (see, e.g., 1 Cor 10.14; 15.58; 1 Jn 2.7), begins the message of encouragement. **6.11** For the *full assurance of hope*, see 10.22. For holding on *to the very end*, see 3.14. **6.12** Paul frequently calls for *imitators*; see 1 Cor 4.16; 11.1; 1 Thess 1.6; 2.14. For those who *inherit the promises*, see 11.1–12.3.

6.13–20 Assurance of God's fidelity reinforces the encouraging tone of the previous verses. **6.13** The *promise* that Abraham would be the father of a great people is repeated in Gen 12.2–3; 15.5; 17.5. In Gen 22.16, God, to confirm the promise, *swore* an oath on God's own name. **6.14** Gen 22.17. **6.15** On *Abraham*, see also 11.17–19. **6.17** The first-century Jewish interpreter Philo (*On Abraham* 273) similarly holds that God took oaths in order to help human beings accept God's promises. **6.18** The two *unchangeable things* are most likely God's promise and the oath that confirms it. The author may have in mind Ps 2.7, cited in 5.5, as the basic promise and Ps 110.4, cited in 5.6, as the confirming oath. **6.19** The *anchor* as a symbol of hope is not scrip-

anchor of the soul, a hope that enters the
inner shrine behind the curtain, 20 where
Jesus, a forerunner on our behalf, has
entered, having become a high priest
forever according to the order of
Melchizedek.

The Priestly Order of Melchizedek

7 This "King Melchizedek of Salem,
priest of the Most High God, met
Abraham as he was returning from de-
feating the kings and blessed him"; 2 and
to him Abraham apportioned "one-tenth
of everything." His name, in the first
place, means "king of righteousness";
next he is also king of Salem, that is,
"king of peace." 3 Without father, without
mother, without genealogy, having nei-
ther beginning of days nor end of life, but
resembling the Son of God, he remains a
priest forever.

4 See how great he is! Even[d] Abra-
ham the patriarch gave him a tenth of the
spoils. 5 And those descendants of Levi
who receive the priestly office have a com-
mandment in the law to collect tithes[e]
from the people, that is, from their kin-
dred,[f] though these also are descended
from Abraham. 6 But this man, who does
not belong to their ancestry, collected
tithes[e] from Abraham and blessed him
who had received the promises. 7 It is be-
yond dispute that the inferior is blessed
by the superior. 8 In the one case, tithes
are received by those who are mortal; in
the other, by one of whom it is testified
that he lives. 9 One might even say that
Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid
tithes through Abraham, 10 for he was still
in the loins of his ancestor when Melchize-
dek met him.

11 Now if perfection had been attain-
able through the levitical priesthood—for
the people received the law under this
priesthood—what further need would
there have been to speak of another priest
arising according to the order of Melchiz-
edek, rather than one according to the
order of Aaron? 12 For when there is a
change in the priesthood, there is neces-
sarily a change in the law as well. 13 Now
the one of whom these things are spoken
belonged to another tribe, from which no
one has ever served at the altar. 14 For it is
evident that our Lord was descended
from Judah, and in connection with that
tribe Moses said nothing about priests.

15 It is even more obvious when an-
other priest arises, resembling Melchize-
dek, 16 one who has become a priest, not
through a legal requirement concerning
physical descent, but through the power
of an indestructible life. 17 For it is at-
tested of him,

"You are a priest forever,
according to the order of
Melchizedek."

d Other ancient authorities lack *Even* *e* Or *a tenth* *f* Gk *brothers*

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tural but common in Greco-Roman culture. The *inner shrine* is the most sacred part of the tabernacle. It lies behind the *curtain*; see Ex 26.31–33; 40.3; Mt 27.51. The imagery anticipates the discussion of the tabernacle in chs. 8–10. To enter into the most sacred space behind the curtain is the right only of the high priest, once yearly, on the most solemn festival of the Day of Atonement. **6.20** *Forerunner* recalls *pioneer* in 2.10.

7.1–28 The author explores the significance of applying Ps 110.4 to Christ. In interpreting the psalm, the author relies heavily on the only other reference to Melchizedek in the OT, the account in Gen 14 of his meeting with Abraham. **7.1** See Gen 14.18–19. For the significance of this action, see 7.7. **7.2** *One-tenth of everything.* Abraham's tithe appears in Gen 14.20. The explanations of the names are understandable but technically incorrect. Melchizedek means not *king of righteousness* but "Zedek [a Canaanite deity] is my king." *Salem* is not "peace" (Hebrew *shalom*). **7.3** *Without father* and other characteristics listed here are deduced from scripture's silence. *A priest forever.* For eternality as the central feature of the "order of Melchizedek," see 7.24. **7.5** For the priestly *tithe*, see Num 18.21–32. **7.8** It is *testified that he lives*, because the scriptures do not report Melchizedek's death; see 7.3. Some first-century Jewish texts such as the Dead Sea Scrolls (11QMelch) speculate about an angelic Melchizedek, perhaps on similar grounds. **7.11** *Perfection* involves effective forgiveness of sin; see 9.14; 10.14, 17–18. **7.12** *Necessarily* suggests that there is an intimate connection between priesthood and covenant law. For other cases of "necessity," see 8.3; 9.16, 23. **7.13** *Another tribe*, specified in the next verse, is one distinct from the priestly tribe of Levi. **7.14** As a descendant of David (Mt. 1.1; 9.27; 15.22; Mk 10.47; Lk 1.32; Rom 1.3; 2 Tim 2.8; Rev 22.16), Jesus was of the tribe of *Judah*. **7.15** What is *even more obvious* is that a new priest has come in place of the old order. **7.17** Ps

18 There is, on the one hand, the abrogation of an earlier commandment because it was weak and ineffectual 19 (for the law made nothing perfect); there is, on the other hand, the introduction of a better hope, through which we approach God.

20 This was confirmed with an oath; for others who became priests took their office without an oath, 21 but this one became a priest with an oath, because of the one who said to him,

"The Lord has sworn
and will not change his mind,
'You are a priest forever' "—

22 accordingly Jesus has also become the guarantee of a better covenant.

23 Furthermore, the former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office; 24 but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. 25 Consequently he is able for all time to save[g] those who approach God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

26 For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. 27 Unlike the other[h] high priests, he has no need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for those of the people; this he did once for all when he offered himself. 28 For the law appoints as high priests those who are subject to weakness, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.

Mediator of a Better Covenant

8 Now the main point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, 2 a minister in the sanctuary and the true tent[i] that the Lord, and not any mortal, has set up. 3 For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; hence it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer. 4 Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. 5 They offer worship in a sanctuary that is a sketch and shadow of the heavenly one; for Moses, when he was about to erect the tent,[i] was warned, "See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain." 6 But Jesus[j] has now obtained a more excellent ministry, and to that degree he is the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted through better promises. 7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no need to look for a second one.

8 God[k] finds fault with them when he says:

g Or *able to save completely* h Gk lacks *other*
i Or *tabernacle* j Gk *he* k Gk *He*

110.4. **7.19** That the law made nothing *perfect* contrasts with the perfect cleansing of conscience effected by Christ; see 9.9; 10.1, 14. *Hope* is grounded in the forerunner's exaltation; see 6.19–20. His *approach* to God enables others to follow; see 10.19–22. **7.20** The importance of another *oath* was indicated in 6.17. **7.21** Ps 110.4. **7.22** Christ is the new covenant's *guarantee* as one whose status is assured by God's oath. Mention of a *better covenant* anticipates chs. 8–10. **7.24** That Christ *continues forever* (see 7.3) reflects Christian claims (Jn 12.34) perhaps based on Ps 89.36. **7.25** For Christ's *intercession*, see 9.24; Jn 17.9; Rom 8.34; 1 Jn 2.1. **7.26** For Christ as *holy*, see Ps 16.10 as cited in Acts 2.27; 13.35. The adjectives applied here recall Christ's sinlessness; see 4.15. **7.27** For ordinary *high priests*, see 5.3. The *once for all* character of Christ's sacrifice indicates its decisive function; see 9.12, 25–28; 10.10; see also Rom 6.10; 1 Pet 3.18. **7.28** The *word of the oath* is Ps 110.4, as in v. 21. It came *later than the law* since it is in a psalm of David. For a similar argument about relative dating of scriptures, see 4.7; see also Gal 3.17.

8.1–13 The central section of Hebrews, extending to 10.18, begins with a summary of Christ's role as the heavenly high priest and a prophecy of a new covenant. **8.1** *Seated at the right hand* alludes to Ps 110.1; see Heb 1.3, 13. On *Majesty*, see 1.3. **8.2** For a heavenly counterpart to the earthly sanctuary, see Wis 9.8; Rev 3.12; 7.15; 11.19; 14.15; 15.5; *1 Enoch* 14.10–20; *Testament of Levi* 3.2–4; *2 Baruch* 4.5. **8.5** Ex 25.40. **8.6** *Better promises* involve effective forgiveness (10.16–18) in the context of an eternal covenant, mediated by an eternal priest (7.20–22). **8.8–12** The citation of Jer 31.31–34 makes several points to be developed in chs. 9–10. **8.8** The promise of a *new covenant* leads to criticism of the old (8.13; 9.9–10) and to confi-

"The days are surely coming, says
the Lord,
when I will establish a new
covenant with the house
of Israel
and with the house of Judah;
9 not like the covenant that I made
with their ancestors,
on the day when I took them
by the hand to lead them
out of the land of Egypt;
for they did not continue in
my covenant,
and so I had no concern for
them, says the Lord.
10 This is the covenant that I will
make with the house
of Israel
after those days, says the
Lord:
I will put my laws in their
minds,
and write them on their
hearts,
and I will be their God,
and they shall be my
people.
11 And they shall not teach
one another
or say to each other, 'Know
the Lord,'
for they shall all know me,
from the least of them to
the greatest.
12 For I will be merciful toward
their iniquities,
and I will remember their sins
no more."
13 In speaking of "a new covenant," he has
made the first one obsolete. And what
is obsolete and growing old will soon
disappear.

The Earthly and the Heavenly Sanctuaries

9 Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly
sanctuary. 2 For a tent[l] was constructed,
the first one, in which were the lampstand, the table, and the bread of the
Presence;[m] this is called the Holy Place.
3 Behind the second curtain was a tent[l]
called the Holy of Holies. 4 In it stood the
golden altar of incense and the ark of the
covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in
which there were a golden urn holding
the manna, and Aaron's rod that budded,
and the tablets of the covenant; 5 above it
were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat.[n] Of these things we
cannot speak now in detail.

6 Such preparations having been
made, the priests go continually into the
first tent[l] to carry out their ritual duties;
7 but only the high priest goes into the second, and he but once a year, and not without taking the blood that he offers for
himself and for the sins committed unintentionally by the people. 8 By this the
Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the
sanctuary has not yet been disclosed as
long as the first tent[l] is still standing.
9 This is a symbol[o] of the present time,
during which gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience
of the worshiper, 10 but deal only with
food and drink and various baptisms, regulations for the body imposed until the
time comes to set things right.

11 But when Christ came as a high
priest of the good things that have
come,[p] then through the greater and

l Or *tabernacle* *m* Gk *the presentation of the loaves*
n Or *the place of atonement* *o* Gk *parable*
p Other ancient authorities read *good things to come*

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dence in what Christ made available (10.19–22). **8.12** That God will *remember their sins no more* is central to the new covenant; see 10.17–18.

9.1–22 The author reflects on the themes of ch. 8 and considers how Christ's "heavenly" sacrifice inaugurates a new covenant. **9.1** The description of the *earthly sanctuary* relies on the accounts of the desert tabernacle in Ex 25.1–31.11; 36.1–40.38, with some modifications. **9.2** For the *lampstand*, see Ex 25.31–39; 37.17–24; 40.4; for the *table*, Ex 25.23–28; 37.10–15; 40.4; for the *bread*, Ex 25.30; 40.23; Mt 12.4. **9.4** For the *altar of incense*, see Ex 30.1–10; 37.25–28; 40.5; for the *ark*, see Ex 25.10–15; 37.1–5; 40.3; for the *manna*, Ex 16.33–34; for *Aaron's rod*, Num 17.1–11; for the *tablets of the covenant*, Ex 25.16. **9.5** For the *cherubim* and *mercy seat*, see Ex 25.17–22; 37.6–9. **9.6** *Ritual duties* included trimming lamps (Ex 27.20–21) and placing rows of "showbread" (Lev 24.5–9). **9.7** *Once a year*, i.e., on the Day of Atonement, as specified in Lev 16.29–34. On the *blood* of the sin offering, see Lev 16.11–19. It is alluded to again in Heb 9.12. **9.8** The *way* to where God dwells is opened by Christ; see 10.9–20. The *first*, or outer, tent stands for the whole cultic system. **9.10** Concern with *food* reappears in 13.9. *Baptisms* are here cleansing rituals; cf. 6.2. The *time to set things right* came with the inauguration of the new covenant. **9.11** The *greater and perfect tent* is

perfect[q] tent[r] (not made with hands,
that is, not of this creation), 12 he entered
once for all into the Holy Place, not with
the blood of goats and calves, but with his
own blood, thus obtaining eternal re-
demption. 13 For if the blood of goats and
bulls, with the sprinkling of the ashes of a
heifer, sanctifies those who have been de-
filed so that their flesh is purified, 14 how
much more will the blood of Christ, who
through the eternal Spirit[s] offered him-
self without blemish to God, purify our[t]
conscience from dead works to worship
the living God!

15 For this reason he is the mediator
of a new covenant, so that those who are
called may receive the promised eternal
inheritance, because a death has occurred
that redeems them from the transgres-
sions under the first covenant.[u] 16 Where
a will[u] is involved, the death of the one
who made it must be established. 17 For a
will[u] takes effect only at death, since it is
not in force as long as the one who made
it is alive. 18 Hence not even the first
covenant was inaugurated without blood.
19 For when every commandment had
been told to all the people by Moses in
accordance with the law, he took the
blood of calves and goats,[v] with water
and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprin-
kled both the scroll itself and all the peo-
ple, 20 saying, "This is the blood of the
covenant that God has ordained for you."
21 And in the same way he sprinkled with
the blood both the tent[r] and all the ves-
sels used in worship. 22 Indeed, under the
law almost everything is purified with
blood, and without the shedding of blood
there is no forgiveness of sins.

Christ's Sacrifice Takes Away Sin

23 Thus it was necessary for the
sketches of the heavenly things to be puri-
fied with these rites, but the heavenly
things themselves need better sacrifices
than these. 24 For Christ did not enter a
sanctuary made by human hands, a mere
copy of the true one, but he entered into
heaven itself, now to appear in the pres-
ence of God on our behalf. 25 Nor was it to
offer himself again and again, as the high
priest enters the Holy Place year after
year with blood that is not his own; 26 for
then he would have had to suffer again
and again since the foundation of the
world. But as it is, he has appeared once
for all at the end of the age to remove sin
by the sacrifice of himself. 27 And just as it
is appointed for mortals to die once, and
after that the judgment, 28 so Christ, hav-
ing been offered once to bear the sins of
many, will appear a second time, not to
deal with sin, but to save those who are
eagerly waiting for him.

q Gk *more perfect* *r* Or *tabernacle* *s* Other ancient authorities read *Holy Spirit* *t* Other ancient authorities read *your* *u* The Greek word used here means both *covenant* and *will* *v* Other ancient authorities lack *and goats*

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heavenly; see 8.2. **9.12** *Goats and calves* alludes to the Day of Atonement offerings; see Lev 16.5–15. The disdainful tone imitates prophetic criticism of the sacrificial system; see Ps 50.13; Isa 1.11. **9.13** The *ashes of a heifer* were used in purifying rituals; see Num 19. **9.14** *Eternal Spirit* probably refers not to the Holy Spirit (and probably should not be capitalized) but to the spiritual aspect of Christ's sacrifice, which stands in contrast to the sacrifices of the Jewish cult. Human *conscience* is the inner sanctuary where Christ's atoning sacrifice has its effect; see 8.10. For similar affirmations of the cleansing effect of Christ's death, see Acts 15.9; Eph 5.26; Titus 2.14; 1 Pet 3.21; 1 Jn 1.7, 9. *Dead works* are sins (see 6.1) and contrast with deeds of love (10.24). *Worship* involves Christian prayer (13.15), but also the "sacrifices" of good works (10.24; 13.6). **9.15** For Christians as *called*, see Rom 1.6; 1 Cor 1.2; Jude 1; Rev 17.14. On *inheritance*, see also 1.14; 6.12, 17. **9.15–17** *Covenant, will*. For a similar wordplay (see text note *u*), see Gal 3.15–18. **9.18** The sacrifice concluding the covenant's ratification in Ex 24.3–8 foreshadows Christ's death. **9.19** Various rituals are conflated. For *water* and *hyssop*, see Num 19.9, 18, 20. For *scarlet wool*, see Lev 14.2–6. **9.20** Ex 24.8.

9.23–28 Further consideration of Christ's sacrifice emphasizes its unique character. **9.23** *Heavenly things* probably symbolize the consciences (9.14) of the faithful. **9.24** For Christ's entry *into heaven*, see 4.14; 8.1–2; 9.11–12. *On our behalf* reemphasizes Christ's intercessory role; see 7.25. **9.25** *Year after year* recalls the high priest's action on the annual Day of Atonement; see 9.7. For the *blood*, see 9.12–14. **9.26** For the *once for all* quality of Christ's sacrifice, see 7.27; 9.12; 10.10. **9.27** The notion of final *judgment* (Dan 7.26; Mt 25.31–46; 2 Thess 2.12; Rev 20.12) is applied to the individual. **9.28** For the *sins of many*, see Isa 53.12; Mk 10.45; Rom 5.19. Christ's coming a *second time* was a common expectation; see Mk 13.24–27; Acts 1.10–11; 1 Cor 15.23–24; Rev 1.7.

Christ's Sacrifice Once for All

10 Since the law has only a shadow
of the good things to come and
not the true form of these realities, it[w]
can never, by the same sacrifices that are
continually offered year after year, make
perfect those who approach. 2 Otherwise,
would they not have ceased being offered,
since the worshipers, cleansed once for
all, would no longer have any conscious-
ness of sin? 3 But in these sacrifices there
is a reminder of sin year after year. 4 For
it is impossible for the blood of bulls and
goats to take away sins. 5 Consequently,
when Christ[x] came into the world, he
said,

"Sacrifices and offerings you have
not desired,
but a body you have prepared
for me;
6 in burnt offerings and sin
offerings
you have taken no pleasure.
7 Then I said, 'See, God, I have
come to do your will,
O God'
(in the scroll of the book[y] it is
written of me)."

8 When he said above, "You have neither
desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices
and offerings and burnt offerings and sin
offerings" (these are offered according to
the law), 9 then he added, "See, I have
come to do your will." He abolishes the
first in order to establish the second.
10 And it is by God's will[z] that we have
been sanctified through the offering of
the body of Jesus Christ once for all.
11 And every priest stands day after
day at his service, offering again and
again the same sacrifices that can never
take away sins. 12 But when Christ[a] had
offered for all time a single sacrifice for
sins, "he sat down at the right hand of
God," 13 and since then has been waiting
"until his enemies would be made a foot-
stool for his feet." 14 For by a single offer-
ing he has perfected for all time those
who are sanctified. 15 And the Holy Spirit
also testifies to us, for after saying,

16 "This is the covenant that I will
make with them
after those days, says the Lord:
I will put my laws in their hearts,
and I will write them on
their minds,"

17 he also adds,

"I will remember[b] their sins and
their lawless deeds no
more."

18 Where there is forgiveness of these,
there is no longer any offering for sin.

A Call to Persevere

19 Therefore, my friends,[c] since we
have confidence to enter the sanctuary by
the blood of Jesus, 20 by the new and liv-

w Other ancient authorities read *they* *x* Gk *he*
y Meaning of Gk uncertain *z* Gk *by that will*
a Gk *this one* *b* Gk *on their minds and I will remember* *c* Gk *Therefore, brothers*

10.1–18 A final reflection on Christ's sacrifice indicates how it inaugurated Jeremiah's promised covenant: as an act of conformity to God's will. **10.1** For the old as a *shadow* of the heavenly, see 8.5. That the law was unable to *make perfect* was argued in 7.11, 19. **10.3** For *year after year*, see 9.7, 25. **10.4** For *bulls and goats*, see 9.12–13. **10.5a** The *world*, not some heavenly realm, is where Christ made his decisive sacrifice. **10.5b–7** Ps 40.6–8. Similar sentiments appear in 1 Sam 15.22; Pss 50.8–15; 51.16–19; Isa 1.10–17; Jer 7.21–26; Hos 6.6. For other OT passages attributed to Christ, see 2.12–13. **10.5b** The reading *body you have prepared* follows the Septuagint. **10.9** Real sacrifice is conformity to the *will* of God. **10.10** On God's will that believers be *sanctified*, see 1 Thess 4.3. The composite name *Jesus Christ* here appears for the first time in Hebrews (see also 13.8), probably to emphasize that Christ's obedience to God's will involved his whole being, including his body (see 10.5b). For the name Jesus alone, see 2.9; 3.1; cf. 4.14. **10.11** The weakness of the old cult is emphasized for the last time; see 7.11, 19; 9.9–10; 10.1–4. **10.12** Ps 110.1, last encountered in 8.1. **10.13** For this portion of Ps 110.1, see 1.13. The full effects of Christ's sacrifice are yet to be felt. **10.14** That Christ's death, which made him perfect (2.10; 5.9; 7.28), has *perfected* worshipers is the key point of contrast with old sacrifices; see 7.19; 9.9; 10.1. **10.15** For the testimony of the *Holy Spirit*, see 3.7. **10.16** A modified citation of Jer 31.33, cited in 8.10. Here *with them* replaces "the house of Israel." **10.17** Jer 31.34b, cited in 8.12, here with the addition of *and their lawless deeds*.

10.19–39 The author applies the reflections on Christ to the audience, emphasizing faith (v. 22), hope (v. 23), and love (v. 24). For the triad, see 1 Cor 13.13. **10.19** For the recommended *confidence*, see 3.6; 4.16. **10.20** On the opening of the *new . . . way*, see 9.8. In Acts, Christianity is

ing way that he opened for us through the
curtain (that is, through his flesh), 21 and
since we have a great priest over the
house of God, 22 let us approach with a
true heart in full assurance of faith, with
our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil
conscience and our bodies washed with
pure water. 23 Let us hold fast to the con-
fession of our hope without wavering, for
he who has promised is faithful. 24 And let
us consider how to provoke one another
to love and good deeds, 25 not neglecting
to meet together, as is the habit of some,
but encouraging one another, and all the
more as you see the Day approaching.

26 For if we willfully persist in sin af-
ter having received the knowledge of the
truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice
for sins, 27 but a fearful prospect of judg-
ment, and a fury of fire that will consume
the adversaries. 28 Anyone who has vio-
lated the law of Moses dies without mercy
"on the testimony of two or three wit-
nesses." 29 How much worse punishment
do you think will be deserved by those
who have spurned the Son of God, pro-
faned the blood of the covenant by which
they were sanctified, and outraged the
Spirit of grace? 30 For we know the one
who said, "Vengeance is mine, I will re-
pay." And again, "The Lord will judge his
people." 31 It is a fearful thing to fall into
the hands of the living God.

32 But recall those earlier days when,
after you had been enlightened, you
endured a hard struggle with sufferings,
33 sometimes being publicly exposed to
abuse and persecution, and sometimes be-
ing partners with those so treated. 34 For
you had compassion for those who were
in prison, and you cheerfully accepted the
plundering of your possessions, knowing
that you yourselves possessed something
better and more lasting. 35 Do not, there-
fore, abandon that confidence of yours; it
brings a great reward. 36 For you need en-
durance, so that when you have done the
will of God, you may receive what was
promised. 37 For yet

"in a very little while,
the one who is coming will
come and will not delay;
38 but my righteous one will live
by faith.
My soul takes no pleasure in
anyone who shrinks back."

39 But we are not among those who shrink
back and so are lost, but among those who
have faith and so are saved.

The Meaning of Faith

11 Now faith is the assurance of
things hoped for, the conviction
of things not seen. 2 Indeed, by faith[d] our
ancestors received approval. 3 By faith
we understand that the worlds were pre-

d Gk *by this*

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called the "Way"; see Acts 9.2; 18.25; 24.14. The *curtain* (6.19; 9.3) through which the high priest passes (9.7) to approach God's presence is identified with Christ's *flesh*, a synonym for his "body" (10.10). **10.21** For the high priest and *house of God*, see 3.1–6. **10.22** For cultic *approach*, see 4.16. The reference to *hearts* being *sprinkled* recalls 9.13–14 and perhaps Ezek 36.25–26. **10.23** For holding to the *confession*, see 3.1–6; 4.14. On *hope*, see 3.6. For God being *faithful*, see Deut 7.9; Ps 145.13. **10.24** For more loving *deeds*, see 13.1–16. **10.25** Israelite prophets (Isa 2.12; Joel 1.15; 3.14; Am 5.18; 8.9; Zeph 1.14; Zech 14.1) expected the *Day* of the Lord, as did early Christians; see Mt 10.15; 1 Cor 1.8; 3.13; 5.5; 2 Cor 1.14; 1 Thess 5.2, 4; 2 Thess 2.2; 2 Pet 3.10; 1 Jn 4.17. **10.26** Stern language repeats the warning of 6.4–8. **10.27** For consuming *fire*, see Isa 26.11; 66.15–16, 24; Zeph 1.18; 2 Thess 1.7–8; Rev 11.5; 20.14. **10.28** *Anyone* generalizes from the punishment for cases such as blasphemy (Lev 24.14–16) or idolatry (Deut 17.2–5). The general requirement of *two or three witnesses* (Deut 19.15) applies explicitly to idolatry in Deut 17.6. **10.30a** The citation is from Deut 32.35, in a form attested in Rom 12.19. **10.30b** The citation is from Deut 32.36 or Ps 135.14. **10.32** On being *enlightened*, see 6.4. **10.36** The concern with *endurance* dominates the remaining chapters; see 11.27; 12.2, 7; 13.13. To do the *will of God* is the essence of covenant fidelity; see 10.9; 13.21. **10.37–38** A composite citation of Isa 26.20 ("a little while") and Hab 2.3–4, the latter in its septuagintal form. Hab 2.4 is also cited in Rom 1.17; Gal 3.11. *The one who is coming*, i.e., Christ.

11.1–3 The definition of *faith*, which involves both belief and fidelity, is compact and evocative. **11.1** The word translated by *assurance* (Greek *hypostasis*) appears in 1.3, where it is translated *very being*, and in 3.14, where it is translated *confidence*. *Conviction* is not simply a subjective attitude; unseen realities are tested and "proved" by experience. The following catalogue provides biblical examples of such experiences. Hopes and *things not seen* are paralleled in Rom 8.24. **11.3** The plural *worlds* appears in 1.2. For cre-

pared by the word of God, so that what is
seen was made from things that are not
visible.[e]

The Examples of Abel, Enoch, and Noah

4 By faith Abel offered to God a
more acceptable[f] sacrifice than Cain's.
Through this he received approval as
righteous, God himself giving approval to
his gifts; he died, but through his faith[g]
he still speaks. 5 By faith Enoch was taken
so that he did not experience death; and
"he was not found, because God had
taken him." For it was attested before he
was taken away that "he had pleased
God." 6 And without faith it is impossible
to please God, for whoever would ap-
proach him must believe that he exists
and that he rewards those who seek him.
7 By faith Noah, warned by God about
events as yet unseen, respected the warn-
ing and built an ark to save his household;
by this he condemned the world and be-
came an heir to the righteousness that is
in accordance with faith.

The Faith of Abraham

8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he
was called to set out for a place that he
was to receive as an inheritance; and he
set out, not knowing where he was going.
9 By faith he stayed for a time in the land
he had been promised, as in a foreign
land, living in tents, as did Isaac and Ja-
cob, who were heirs with him of the same
promise. 10 For he looked forward to the
city that has foundations, whose architect
and builder is God. 11 By faith he received
power of procreation, even though he was
too old—and Sarah herself was barren—
because he considered him faithful who
had promised.[h] 12 Therefore from one
person, and this one as good as dead, de-
scendants were born, "as many as the stars
of heaven and as the innumerable grains
of sand by the seashore."

13 All of these died in faith without
having received the promises, but from a
distance they saw and greeted them. They
confessed that they were strangers and
foreigners on the earth, 14 for people who
speak in this way make it clear that they
are seeking a homeland. 15 If they had
been thinking of the land that they had
left behind, they would have had oppor-
tunity to return. 16 But as it is, they desire
a better country, that is, a heavenly one.
Therefore God is not ashamed to be
called their God; indeed, he has prepared
a city for them.

17 By faith Abraham, when put to the
test, offered up Isaac. He who had re-
ceived the promises was ready to offer up
his only son, 18 of whom he had been told,
"It is through Isaac that descendants shall
be named for you." 19 He considered the
fact that God is able even to raise someone
from the dead—and figuratively speak-
ing, he did receive him back. 20 By faith
Isaac invoked blessings for the future on

e Or *was not made out of visible things*
f Gk *greater* *g* Gk *through it* *h* Or *By faith Sarah herself, though barren, received power to conceive, even when she was too old, because she considered him faithful who had promised.*

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ation by God's *word*, see Gen 1.3; Ps 33.6; Wis 9.1; Jn 1.1–3. For creation from *things that are not visible*, see 2 Macc 7.28; Rom 4.17; *2 Enoch* 24.2.

11.4–7 Various patriarchs exemplify hopeful belief and fidelity. **11.4** For *Abel's* sacrifice, see Gen 4.4. That Abel still *speaks* derives from Gen 4.10; see Heb 12.24. **11.5** For *Enoch's* removal to heaven, see Gen 5.24; Sir 44.16. That Enoch *had pleased God* relies on the Septuagint of Gen 5.22. **11.6** On the importance of belief that God *exists*, see Wis 13.1; 2 Esd 7.23; 8.58. God rewards *those who seek him* in Pss 14.2; 34.10; 53.2; 119.2; Am 9.12 as cited in Acts 15.17. **11.7** For *Noah*, see Gen 6.8–9.17; Sir 44.17.

11.8–22 For other appeals to Abraham and family, see Wis 10.5; Sir 44.19–21; 1 Macc 2.52; 4 Macc 16.20. In the NT, see Acts 7.2–8; Rom 4; Gal 3.6–9. **11.8** Abraham *set out* from Ur to Canaan; see Gen 11.31–12.4. **11.10** The city with divine *foundations* was traditionally Jerusalem; see Ps 87.1; Isa 54.11. Hebrews reinterprets such language in terms of a "heavenly" reality; see 12.22. **11.11** For the birth of Isaac, see Gen 18.1–15; 21.1–7. **11.12** *As good as dead* also describes Abraham in Rom 4.19. For *stars* and *sand*, see Gen 22.17. **11.13** For the status of being *strangers and foreigners*, see Gen 23.4; 47.4, 9; Lev 25.23; 1 Chr 29.15; Ps 39.12; Eph 2.19; 1 Pet 1.1; 2.11. **11.16** God is the God of the patriarchs in Gen 28.13; Ex 3.6; Mt 22.32; Mk 12.26–27. **11.17** For the episode when Abraham *offered up* his son, see Gen 22.1–14; Wis 10.5; Sir 44.20; 1 Macc 2.52; 4 Macc 16.18–20; *Jubilees* 17.15–18. **11.18** Gen 21.12. **11.19** *Figuratively speaking* may be translated "as a figure," i.e., of Christ's resurrection. **11.20** For Isaac's *blessings*,

Jacob and Esau. 21 By faith Jacob, when
dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph,
"bowing in worship over the top of his
staff." 22 By faith Joseph, at the end of his
life, made mention of the exodus of the
Israelites and gave instructions about his
burial.[i]

The Faith of Moses

23 By faith Moses was hidden by his
parents for three months after his birth,
because they saw that the child was beauti-
ful; and they were not afraid of the king's
edict.[j] 24 By faith Moses, when he was
grown up, refused to be called a son of
Pharaoh's daughter, 25 choosing rather to
share ill-treatment with the people of God
than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of
sin. 26 He considered abuse suffered for
the Christ[k] to be greater wealth than the
treasures of Egypt, for he was looking
ahead to the reward. 27 By faith he left
Egypt, unafraid of the king's anger; for
he persevered as though[l] he saw him
who is invisible. 28 By faith he kept the
Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so
that the destroyer of the firstborn would
not touch the firstborn of Israel.[m]

The Faith of Other Israelite Heroes

29 By faith the people passed through
the Red Sea as if it were dry land, but
when the Egyptians attempted to do so
they were drowned. 30 By faith the walls
of Jericho fell after they had been encir-
cled for seven days. 31 By faith Rahab the
prostitute did not perish with those who
were disobedient,[n] because she had re-
ceived the spies in peace.

32 And what more should I say? For
time would fail me to tell of Gideon,
Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David
and Samuel and the prophets— 33 who
through faith conquered kingdoms, ad-
ministered justice, obtained promises,
shut the mouths of lions, 34 quenched rag-
ing fire, escaped the edge of the sword,
won strength out of weakness, became
mighty in war, put foreign armies to
flight. 35 Women received their dead by
resurrection. Others were tortured, refus-
ing to accept release, in order to obtain a
better resurrection. 36 Others suffered
mocking and flogging, and even chains
and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned
to death, they were sawn in two,[o] they
were killed by the sword; they went about
in skins of sheep and goats, destitute,
persecuted, tormented— 38 of whom the
world was not worthy. They wandered in
deserts and mountains, and in caves and
holes in the ground.

39 Yet all these, though they were
commended for their faith, did not re-

i Gk *his bones* *j* Other ancient authorities add *By faith Moses, when he was grown up, killed the Egyptian, because he observed the humiliation of his people* (Gk *brothers*) *k* Or *the Messiah* *l* Or *because* *m* Gk *would not touch them* *n* Or *unbelieving* *o* Other ancient authorities add *they were tempted*

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see Gen 27.27–40. **11.21** The *sons of Joseph*, Ephraim and Manasseh, receive Jacob's blessing in Gen 48.8–22. Jacob *bowed in worship* in Gen 47.31, following the Septuagint. **11.22** For the prophecy of the *exodus*, see Gen 50.24.

11.23–28 For other appeals to Moses, see Sir 45.1–5; Acts 7.20–34. Hebrews contrasts Moses with Christ in 3.1–6. **11.23** For *Moses'* infancy, see Ex 2.1–10; Acts 7.20–22. **11.25** For Moses' decision to share the fate of the Israelites, see Ex 2.11–12; Acts 7.23–24. **11.26** How Moses understood his sufferings to have been *for the Christ* is obscure; perhaps he did so as a visionary (v. 27) forerunner of Christ. A connection between Moses and Christ could be based on Deut 18.15–20, cited in Acts 3.22–23, which speaks of a "prophet like Moses" who is to come. **11.27** Moses *left Egypt* for Midian in Ex 2.15; see also Acts 7.29. Moses *saw* God face to face according to Ex 33.11; Num 12.8; Deut 34.10; Sir 45.5. **11.28** For the first *Passover*, see Ex 12.1–28.

11.29–40 The catalogue of the faithful moves more rapidly. **11.29** For crossing the *Red Sea*, see Ex 14. **11.30** The fall of *Jericho*. See Josh 6. **11.31** *Rahab*. See Josh 2.1; 6.17. **11.32** *Gideon*. See Judg 6–8. *Barak*. See Judg 4–5. *Samson*. See Judg 13–16. *Jephthah*. See Judg 11–12. *David and Samuel*. See 1 and 2 Sam. **11.33** For shutting *mouths of lions*, see Judg 14.6; 1 Sam 17.34–35; Dan 6.19–23. **11.34** For quenching *fire*, see Dan 3, and the Septuagint addition, Pr Azar 26–27, 66. *Strength out of weakness* may allude to Gideon (Judg 6.15), Samson (Judg 16.17), or heroines such as Esther. **11.35** For cases of *resurrection*, see 1 Kings 17.17–24; 2 Kings 4.18–37. Those *tortured* were martyrs such as Eleazar in 2 Macc 6.18–31 or the youths of 2 Macc 7. **11.36** *Chains and imprisonment* may refer to Jeremiah; see Jer 20.2; 29.26; 37.15. **11.37** Zechariah was *stoned*, according to 2 Chr 24.21. Legend attributes the same fate to Jeremiah. Legend relates that Isaiah was *sawn in two*.

ceive what was promised, [40]since God had provided something better so that they would not, apart from us, be made perfect.

The Example of Jesus

12 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely,[p] and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, [2]looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of[q] the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

3 Consider him who endured such hostility against himself from sinners,[r] so that you may not grow weary or lose heart. [4]In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. [5]And you have forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as children—

"My child, do not regard lightly
the discipline of the Lord,
or lose heart when you are
punished by him;
6 for the Lord disciplines those
whom he loves,
and chastises every child whom
he accepts."

[7]Endure trials for the sake of discipline. God is treating you as children; for what child is there whom a parent does not discipline? [8]If you do not have that discipline in which all children share, then you are illegitimate and not his children. [9]Moreover, we had human parents to discipline us, and we respected them. Should we not be even more willing to be subject to the Father of spirits and live? [10]For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share his holiness. [11]Now, discipline always seems painful rather than pleasant at the time, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

12 Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, [13]and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.

Warnings Against Rejecting God's Grace

14 Pursue peace with everyone, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. [15]See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble, and through it many become defiled. [16]See to it that no one becomes like Esau, an immoral and godless person, who sold his birthright for a single meal. [17]You know that later, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent,[s] even though he sought the blessing[t] with tears.

[p] Other ancient authorities read *sin that easily distracts* [q] Or *who instead of* [r] Other ancient authorities read *such hostility from sinners against themselves* [s] Or *no chance to change his father's mind* [t] Gk *it*

12.1–13 Jesus is the prime example of the faithful endurance to which the audience is called (10.36). **12.1** For the image of the *race*, see Acts 20.24; 1 Cor 9.24–27; Gal 2.2; Phil 2.16; 2 Tim 4.7. **12.2** For Jesus as *pioneer*, see 2.10. The *perfecter* of faith is the one who was perfected by suffering (2.10; 5.8–9; 7.28). *Taken his seat*, the last allusion to Ps 110.1; see Heb 1.3, 13; 8.1; 10.12. **12.4** The *struggle* is now described with imagery that may evoke a boxing match or a military conflict. **12.5–6** Prov 3.11–12, in its septuagintal form. **12.7** For suffering as divine *discipline*, see Prov 6.23; 2 Macc 6.12–17; 2 Cor 6.9; Eph 6.4. **12.9** The description of God as *Father of spirits* resembles traditional expressions for God's sovereignty over the world of spirits; see 2 Macc 3.24; Rev 22.6; *1 Enoch* 37.2–4; 38.4; 39.2, 7. **12.12** *Drooping hands* and *weak knees* derive from Isa 35.3. **12.13** For the call to make *straight paths*, see Prov 4.26. The promise to be *healed* may echo Prov 4.22.

12.14–29 A final warning. **12.14** Admonitions to *pursue peace* are common; see, e.g., Ps 34.14, cited in 1 Pet 3.11. Pursuit of peace as a means to *see the Lord* recalls the Beatitudes of Mt 5.8–9. **12.15** The *root of bitterness*, inspired by Deut 29.18; is probably idolatry or apostasy. **12.16** On *Esau's* sale of his birthright, see Gen 25.29–34. **12.17** Esau may have *sought the blessing* as the translation suggests, but the Greek is ambiguous (see text note *t*) and the author may be suggesting that Esau sought repentance, which was not open to him. For the denial of the possibility of second repentance, see 6.4–8; 10.26–31.

18 You have not come to something[u]
that can be touched, a blazing fire, and
darkness, and gloom, and a tempest,
19 and the sound of a trumpet, and a voice
whose words made the hearers beg that
not another word be spoken to them.
20 (For they could not endure the order
that was given, "If even an animal touches
the mountain, it shall be stoned to death."
21 Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that
Moses said, "I tremble with fear.") 22 But
you have come to Mount Zion and to the
city of the living God, the heavenly Jeru-
salem, and to innumerable angels in festal
gathering, 23 and to the assembly[v] of the
firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and
to God the judge of all, and to the spirits
of the righteous made perfect, 24 and to
Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant,
and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a
better word than the blood of Abel.
25 See that you do not refuse the one
who is speaking; for if they did not escape
when they refused the one who warned
them on earth, how much less will we es-
cape if we reject the one who warns from
heaven! 26 At that time his voice shook the
earth; but now he has promised, "Yet
once more I will shake not only the earth
but also the heaven." 27 This phrase, "Yet
once more," indicates the removal of what
is shaken—that is, created things—so
that what cannot be shaken may remain.
28 Therefore, since we are receiving a
kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us
give thanks, by which we offer to God an
acceptable worship with reverence and
awe; 29 for indeed our God is a consuming
fire.

Service Well-Pleasing to God

13 Let mutual love continue. 2 Do
not neglect to show hospitality to
strangers, for by doing that some have en-
tertained angels without knowing it. 3 Re-
member those who are in prison, as
though you were in prison with them;
those who are being tortured, as though
you yourselves were being tortured.[w]
4 Let marriage be held in honor by all, and
let the marriage bed be kept undefiled;
for God will judge fornicators and adul-
terers. 5 Keep your lives free from the
love of money, and be content with what
you have; for he has said, "I will never
leave you or forsake you." 6 So we can say
with confidence,

"The Lord is my helper;
I will not be afraid.
What can anyone do to me?"

7 Remember your leaders, those who
spoke the word of God to you; consider
the outcome of their way of life, and imi-
tate their faith. 8 Jesus Christ is the same
yesterday and today and forever. 9 Do not
be carried away by all kinds of strange

u Other ancient authorities read *a mountain*
v Or *angels, and to the festal gathering* 23 *and assembly*
w Gk *were in the body*

For Esau's *tears*, see Gen 27.30–38. **12.18** *Fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest* recalls the descent of God on Mount Sinai; see Deut 4.11–12; 5.22–25. **12.19** For the *trumpet*, see Ex 19.16. **12.20** Ex 19.12–13. **12.21** Moses found the golden calf *terrifying*; see Deut 9.19. **12.22** *Zion*, the holy mountain in Jerusalem, is the place where God is present; see Pss 2.6; 48.1; Isa 8.18. **12.23** The *assembly of the firstborn* could be the angels mentioned in the previous verse but is more likely the humans who are associated with the Firstborn One; see 1.6. **12.24** For Jesus as *mediator*, see 8.6; for his *blood*, 9.14. The *better word* spoken by the blood of Jesus is a message of true and lasting remission of sin; see 9.14; 10.16–18. For *Abel*, see 11.4. **12.25** The *one who is speaking* is certainly God, whose "speech" has been of concern throughout Hebrews; see 1.1. The *one who warned them* may be Moses or, more likely, God on Mount Sinai. **12.26** Hag 2.6. The global destruction recalls Heb 1.10–12. **12.27** *What cannot be shaken* includes the various heavenly realities made accessible by Christ. These include "rest" (4.1–11), the better possession (10.34), and the heavenly city (12.22; 13.14). **12.29** For God as *fire*, see Deut 4.24.

13.1–19 A series of admonitions, some specific, some general and symbolic, conclude the homily. **13.1** For *mutual love*, see Rom 12.10; 1 Thess 4.9; 1 Pet 1.22; 2 Pet 1.7. **13.2** For *hospitality*, see Mt 25.35; Rom 12.13; 1 Tim 3.2; Titus 1.8; 1 Pet 4.9. Various OT figures *entertained angels*; see Gen 18.2–15; 19.1–14; Judg 6.11–24; 13.3–23. **13.3** The audience had already supported those *in prison*; see 10.34. **13.4** For similar admonitions to chastity, see 1 Cor 5.1–13; Eph 5.3–5; 1 Thess 4.3–7. **13.5** For warnings against *love of money*, see Mt 6.19–21, 24–34; Lk 12.22–34; 1 Tim 6.10; Jas 5.1–5. For God's promise not to *forsake*, see Deut 31.6, 8; Josh 1.5. **13.6** Ps 118.6, cited in its septuagintal form. **13.7** *Leaders* are also mentioned in 13.17. **13.8** For Jesus as ever the *same*, see 1.12. **13.9** For concern with improper *teachings*, see

teachings; for it is well for the heart to be
strengthened by grace, not by regulations
about food,[x] which have not benefited
those who observe them. 10 We have an
altar from which those who officiate in
the tent[y] have no right to eat. 11 For the
bodies of those animals whose blood is
brought into the sanctuary by the high
priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned out-
side the camp. 12 Therefore Jesus also suf-
fered outside the city gate in order to
sanctify the people by his own blood.
13 Let us then go to him outside the camp
and bear the abuse he endured. 14 For
here we have no lasting city, but we are
looking for the city that is to come.
15 Through him, then, let us continually
offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is,
the fruit of lips that confess his name.
16 Do not neglect to do good and to share
what you have, for such sacrifices are
pleasing to God.

17 Obey your leaders and submit to
them, for they are keeping watch over
your souls and will give an account. Let
them do this with joy and not with sighing
—for that would be harmful to you.

18 Pray for us; we are sure that we
have a clear conscience, desiring to act
honorably in all things. 19 I urge you all
the more to do this, so that I may be re-
stored to you very soon.

Benediction

20 Now may the God of peace, who
brought back from the dead our Lord
Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by
the blood of the eternal covenant, 21 make
you complete in everything good so that
you may do his will, working among us[z]
that which is pleasing in his sight, through
Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever
and ever. Amen.

Final Exhortation and Greetings

22 I appeal to you, brothers and sis-
ters,[a] bear with my word of exhortation,
for I have written to you briefly. 23 I want
you to know that our brother Timothy
has been set free; and if he comes in time,
he will be with me when I see you.
24 Greet all your leaders and all the saints.
Those from Italy send you greetings.
25 Grace be with all of you.[b]

x Gk *not by foods* y Or *tabernacle* z Other ancient authorities read *you* a Gk *brothers*
b Other ancient authorities add *Amen*

Eph 4.14; Col. 2.8; 1 Tim 1.3–7. For criticism of concern with *food*, see 9.10. **13.10** The *altar* probably refers to Christ's sacrificial death, not to a Christian altar or church building. **13.11** For bodies *burned outside the camp*, see Lev 16.27. **13.12** For the crucifixion *outside the city gate*, see Jn 19.17–20 and perhaps Mt 21.39; Lk 20.15. **13.14** Expectation of the *city that is to come* repeats the experience of Abraham; see 11.13–16. **13.15** *Sacrifices of praise* were a specific form of offering (Lev 7.11–18), but the term is also used as a metaphor for prayer; see Pss 50.14, 23; 107.22. To *confess* or thank God's *name* is common in Psalms; see Pss 44.8; 54.6; 99.3. **13.16** For right living as *sacrifice*, see Rom 12.1–2; Phil 2.17; 1 Pet 2.5. **13.17** For the call to *submit* to leaders, see 13.7; 1 Pet 5.5.

13.20–25 The epistolary conclusion has many standard features; see Rom 16.20–27; Phil 4.20–23; 1 Thess 5.23–28. **13.22** *Word of exhortation*, which may be a technical term for a sermon as in Acts 13.15, describes the whole of Hebrews. **13.23** *Timothy* is probably Paul's companion; see Acts 16.1–3; 17.14–15.

THE LETTER OF

JAMES

THE LETTER OF JAMES was accepted as scripture by the church in Alexandria in the third century C.E., by the Western church in the fourth century, and by the Syrian church in the fifth century. Thereafter it has remained in the NT canon of all churches, though at the time of the Reformation Martin Luther questioned its status because it appeared to contradict Paul's teaching on justification by faith, which Luther held to be of central importance.

Author, Date, and Place

The "James" of the opening address has traditionally been identified as James the brother of Jesus (Gal. 1.19), who became the leader of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 15.13; 21.18) and who was martyred during the years before the outbreak of the Jewish War of 66–70 C.E. His loyalty to the Jewish law would explain the high importance attached to law in the letter (1.25; 2.8–12; 4.11–12). However, the memory of James was widely revered in the early church, and his name may have been used by another writer to give authority to his teaching.

If the letter is by James of Jerusalem, then it was written in Palestine before 70 C.E. Its lack of sophisticated theology, its practical OT morality, and its echoes of the teachings of Jesus, probably drawn from oral tradition, would all be consistent with an early, Palestinian origin. References to agriculture and climate in 5.7 might also place it in Syria, while it was in Egypt that it was first treated as scripture. Similarities have also been observed between the Letter and other early Christian documents that come from Rome like 1 Peter, *1 Clement*, and the *Shepherd of Hermas*. The very general nature of its contents makes it difficult to attach it positively to a specific time and place.

Style and Genre

The author writes in Greek with grammatical accuracy and some elegance. He has a wide vocabulary, including many words not found elsewhere in the NT, some of which he may have coined himself; and he has a feel for the rhythm and sound of words. He makes clear and effective allusions to the Septuagint, but

some of his imagery is drawn from the nonbiblical Hellenistic world. The document opens with greetings, but it has no comparable ending; it is a letter in literary form only, not a real piece of correspondence. It has been described as Christian wisdom literature because, like Proverbs or Sirach, it is concerned with ethical teaching and often seems to string together unrelated admonitions.

Readers

The author presupposes a real audience. He writes of a community that has its own leaders: "elders" (5.14) and "teachers" (3.1). His antagonism toward the rich (1.10–11; 2.6–7; 4.13–17; 5.1–6) suggests that most members of the community were poor or disadvantaged. His address to them as "the twelve tribes in the Dispersion" (1.1), his reference to their meeting in or as a "synagogue" (2.2), and his appeals to the status of law and the affirmation of the one God (2.19) might indicate that they were Jewish Christians; but there is no concern with characteristic marks of Judaism like circumcision, the sabbath, or food laws. They may have been drawn from the "God-fearers," non-Jews who were attracted to the monotheism and morality of Judaism without becoming full proselytes (see, e.g., Acts 10.2; 13.16; 16.14; 17.4). The author finds it necessary to correct a misuse of Paul's teaching (2.14–26) and thus shows that different interpretations of Christianity were already current. He and his readers represent a Christianity that emphasized prayer and morality and was loyal to the teachings of Jesus, calling him Lord and looking for his return. *Sophie Laws*

Salutation

1 James, a servant[a] of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,
To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings.

Active and Tested Faith

2 My brothers and sisters,[b] whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance; 4 and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing.

5 If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you. 6 But ask in faith, never doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind; 7, 8 for the

a Gk *slave* b Gk *brothers*

1.1 This is unlikely to be an address to Jews, since the historical *twelve tribes* ceased to exist after the invasion of the kingdom of Israel by Assyria in 721 B.C.E. Probably James is addressing Christians as the new, or true, Israel (see 1 Pet 2.9–10). For Jews the *Dispersion* meant the Jewish people living outside Palestine, but Christians might also see themselves as strangers in their world (1 Pet 2.11).

1.2–27 The first chapter consists of a series of exhortations, more or less loosely connected, on aspects of religion and morality. **1.2–4** A similar pattern of ethical teaching, where one virtue leads on to another, is found in Rom 5.3–4; 1 Pet 1.6–7. **1.5** James echoes the teaching of Jesus in Mt 7.7–11 and Lk 11.9–13, though instead of Matthew's "good things" or Luke's "Holy Spirit" he specifies *wisdom* as the object of prayer

doubter, being double-minded and unstable in every way, must not expect to receive anything from the Lord.

9 Let the believer[c] who is lowly boast in being raised up, 10 and the rich in being brought low, because the rich will disappear like a flower in the field. 11 For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the field; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. It is the same way with the rich; in the midst of a busy life, they will wither away.

12 Blessed is anyone who endures temptation. Such a one has stood the test and will receive the crown of life that the Lord[d] has promised to those who love him. 13 No one, when tempted, should say, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil and he himself tempts no one. 14 But one is tempted by one's own desire, being lured and enticed by it; 15 then, when that desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and that sin, when it is fully grown, gives birth to death. 16 Do not be deceived, my beloved.[e]

17 Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.[f] 18 In fulfillment of his own purpose he gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

19 You must understand this, my beloved:[e] let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; 20 for your anger does not produce God's righteousness. 21 Therefore rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls.

22 But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. 23 For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves[g] in a mirror; 24 for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. 25 But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing.

26 If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless. 27 Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

Warning Against Partiality

2 My brothers and sisters,[h] do you with your acts of favoritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ?[i]

c Gk *brother* d Gk *he*; other ancient authorities read *God* e Gk *my beloved brothers* f Other ancient authorities read *variation due to a shadow of turning* g Gk *at the face of his birth* h Gk *My brothers* i Or *hold the faith of our glorious Lord Jesus Christ without acts of favoritism*

(see also Jas 3.13–18). **1.8** *Double-minded* is an unusual word, perhaps expressing the Jewish idea of competing impulses, for good and evil, in the human personality (see also 4.8). For another explanation of unanswered prayer, see 4.3.

1.9–10 The contrast between the humble *believer* and the doomed *rich* seems to assume that a rich person cannot also be a believer (see also 2.6–7; 5.1–6; cf. 1 Tim 6.17–19). **1.10** *Flower in the field.* See Isa 40.6–8. **1.12–14** The same words are used in Greek for trial as an external *test* (see 1.2) and trial as *temptation*, an internal prompting. **1.17** The *lights* are stars or angels; see 5.4. *Variation, shadow,* and *change* are terms in Greek astronomy. **1.18** The reference could be to the creation of humankind by the word of God (see Gen 1.26) or more probably to the re-*birth* of Christians by the *word* of the gospel; see Jn 3.3–7; Titus 3.5; 1 Pet 1.3, 23. **1.21** The *implanted word* is the gospel. The phrase may derive from the Stoic idea of reason as an indwelling, material power linking each person with the universe. **1.25** *Law of liberty.* See also 2.12. Jewish teachers also argued that the law is not a constraint, but rather gives true freedom. **1.26** *Bridle their tongues.* See also 3.2–5. **1.27** In the OT *orphans and widows* are the objects of special care, both human and divine; see Ex 22.22–24; Ps 68.5. Where 2 Pet 2.20 thinks of contamination by the physical *world* in terms of sexual vice, James thinks of corruption by selfish worldly values; see also 4.4.

2.1–7 James probably draws his example of partiality from actual experience. **2.1** *Favoritism* is frequently condemned in the OT (see Lev 19.15; Ps 82.2) and seen to be wholly contrary to God's character (Job 34.17–19; see also Acts 10.34). The reference to *Jesus Christ* comes in a very awkward Greek construction; the name may have been inserted into an original reference to God. Another translation of the phrase could be "our Lord Jesus Christ, the glory" (see Jn 1.14; 2 Cor 4.6; Heb

2 For if a person with gold rings and in
fine clothes comes into your assembly,
and if a poor person in dirty clothes also
comes in, 3 and if you take notice of the
one wearing the fine clothes and say,
"Have a seat here, please," while to the
one who is poor you say, "Stand there,"
or, "Sit at my feet,"[j] 4 have you not made
distinctions among yourselves, and be-
come judges with evil thoughts? 5 Listen,
my beloved brothers and sisters.[k] Has not
God chosen the poor in the world to be
rich in faith and to be heirs of the king-
dom that he has promised to those who
love him? 6 But you have dishonored the
poor. Is it not the rich who oppress you?
Is it not they who drag you into court? 7 Is
it not they who blaspheme the excellent
name that was invoked over you?

Fulfilling the Law

8 You do well if you really fulfill the
royal law according to the scripture, "You
shall love your neighbor as yourself."
9 But if you show partiality, you commit
sin and are convicted by the law as trans-
gressors. 10 For whoever keeps the whole
law but fails in one point has become ac-
countable for all of it. 11 For the one who
said, "You shall not commit adultery,"
also said, "You shall not murder." Now if
you do not commit adultery but if you
murder, you have become a transgressor
of the law. 12 So speak and so act as those
who are to be judged by the law of liberty.
13 For judgment will be without mercy to
anyone who has shown no mercy; mercy
triumphs over judgment.

Faith Without Works Is Dead

14 What good is it, my brothers and
sisters,[k] if you say you have faith but do
not have works? Can faith save you? 15 If a
brother or sister is naked and lacks daily
food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Go
in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,"
and yet you do not supply their bodily
needs, what is the good of that? 17 So faith
by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

18 But someone will say, "You have
faith and I have works." Show me your
faith apart from your works, and I by my
works will show you my faith. 19 You be-
lieve that God is one; you do well. Even
the demons believe—and shudder. 20 Do
you want to be shown, you senseless per-
son, that faith apart from works is barren?
21 Was not our ancestor Abraham justified
by works when he offered his son Isaac
on the altar? 22 You see that faith was
active along with his works, and faith
was brought to completion by the works.
23 Thus the scripture was fulfilled that

j Gk *Sit under my footstool* *k* Gk *brothers*

1.3). **2.2** The rich *person* is probably a visitor to the Christian meeting rather than a regular member; the *gold rings* may indicate the person's status in the Roman social order. The Greek word for *assembly* is also used for "synagogue," perhaps indicating the Jewish-Christian character of this community. **2.5** This verse may echo Jesus' blessing on the *poor*; see Mt 5.3; Lk 6.20. **2.6** It would not at this time have been a crime under Roman law to profess the Christian faith, but Christians may have been taken *into court* because of allegations made against them by hostile fellow citizens; see, e.g., 1 Pet 3.15–17; 4.14–16. **2.7** Christians were baptized in the *name* of Jesus (see Acts 2.38; 1 Cor 6.11), which was probably *invoked* over them as part of the baptismal ritual.

2.8–13 James now turns to the importance of consistency in obedience to God's law. **2.8** Jesus identified Lev 19.18 as the second commandment (Mt 22.39; Mk 12.31; see also Lk 10.27). It may be called *royal law* because of the importance he gave to it or because it was seen as the law of the kingdom he preached. **2.10–11** Jews would accept that their law must be kept *whole* and entire, and Paul uses this principle to warn the Galatians against Judaizing (Gal 5.3). James cites only the Decalogue (Ex 20.13–14; Deut 5.17–18), which suggests that he may have a limited view of the "whole law."

2.14–26 James's contrast of *faith* and *works* clearly recalls Paul's arguments in Rom 3.19–5.1; Gal 2.15–3.24, but James, unlike Paul, thinks of works of charity, not works of obedience to the Jewish law. **2.16** The verbs *keep warm* and *eat your fill* are passive in Greek, expressing a pious belief that God will relieve the needs of the poor. **2.19** *God is one* is the central statement of Jewish faith; see Deut 6.4. The demons' belief includes the knowledge that the one God is their enemy (see Mk 1.23–24); hence they *shudder*, a verb used in magical texts for the effect of an exorcism. **2.21** Gen 22.1–19; Paul demonstrates the faith of *Abraham* from his acceptance of God's promise rather than from his willingness to sacrifice *Isaac* (see Rom 4; Gal 3.6–18). **2.23** Gen 15.6, quoted by Paul in Rom 4.9; Gal 3.6. The expression *friend of God* for Abraham, suggested by Isa 41.8, became popular in later

says, "Abraham believed God, and it was
reckoned to him as righteousness," and he
was called the friend of God. 24 You see
that a person is justified by works and not
by faith alone. 25 Likewise, was not Rahab
the prostitute also justified by works when
she welcomed the messengers and sent
them out by another road? 26 For just as
the body without the spirit is dead, so
faith without works is also dead.

Taming the Tongue

3 Not many of you should become
teachers, my brothers and sisters,[l]
for you know that we who teach will be
judged with greater strictness. 2 For all of
us make many mistakes. Anyone who
makes no mistakes in speaking is perfect,
able to keep the whole body in check with
a bridle. 3 If we put bits into the mouths of
horses to make them obey us, we guide
their whole bodies. 4 Or look at ships:
though they are so large that it takes
strong winds to drive them, yet they are
guided by a very small rudder wherever
the will of the pilot directs. 5 So also the
tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of
great exploits.

How great a forest is set ablaze by a
small fire! 6 And the tongue is a fire. The
tongue is placed among our members as a
world of iniquity; it stains the whole body,
sets on fire the cycle of nature,[m] and is
itself set on fire by hell.[n] 7 For every species of beast and bird, of reptile and sea
creature, can be tamed and has been
tamed by the human species, 8 but no one
can tame the tongue—a restless evil, full
of deadly poison. 9 With it we bless the
Lord and Father, and with it we curse
those who are made in the likeness of
God. 10 From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers and sisters,[o] this ought not to be so. 11 Does a
spring pour forth from the same opening
both fresh and brackish water? 12 Can a
fig tree, my brothers and sisters,[p] yield
olives, or a grapevine figs? No more can
salt water yield fresh.

Two Kinds of Wisdom

13 Who is wise and understanding
among you? Show by your good life that
your works are done with gentleness born
of wisdom. 14 But if you have bitter envy
and selfish ambition in your hearts, do
not be boastful and false to the truth.
15 Such wisdom does not come down from
above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish.
16 For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and
wickedness of every kind. 17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy
and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. 18 And a harvest of

l Gk *brothers* *m* Or *wheel of birth*
n Gk *Gehenna* *o* Gk *My brothers* *p* Gk *my brothers*

Jewish writings and is used by other early Christian authors. **2.24** Cf. Rom 3.28; Gal 2.16. **2.25** *Rahab.* See Josh 2.1–21; Heb 11.31.

3.1–12 James's attack on sins of speech, personified in an attack on the tongue (see 1.26), is highly rhetorical in tone and language. This concern for sins of speech is also prominent in wisdom literature (see, e.g., Sir 14.1; 19.16). **3.1** *Teachers* were recognized figures in early Christian communities (see 1 Cor 12.28). James seems to rank himself among them and to assume that the role is a matter of choice rather than of spiritual gift. **3.3–4** The metaphor of *ships* has no biblical parallel, but, like that of *horses,* is commonplace in Hellenistic writing. **3.6** The whole verse is very difficult. The *tongue* may be a *world of iniquity* because of its peculiar destructive force, which brings the corruption of the world to the human body (see 1.26–27) or because the tongue, with its special potential for sin, is a microcosm of the totality of human sin. In Hellenistic philosophy *the cycle of nature* denoted the Orphic and Pythagorean idea of the transmigration of souls; see 1.21. For *hell* James uses the Jewish term "Gehenna"; see also Mt 5.30; Mk 9.45; Lk 12.5. **3.7** See Gen 1.26. **3.9** The ethical principle that human persons should be treated with the reverence appropriate to those *made in the likeness of God* (Gen 1.26) was familiar in Judaism and finds biblical precedent in Gen 9.6. **3.12** See also Mt 7.16–17; Lk 6.43–44; but the idea and the imagery of *tree* and fruit were also commonplace in Hellenistic teaching.

3.13–18 As in the OT wisdom literature, *wisdom* is associated with practical good behavior, not speculative thought. **3.15** The adjective *unspiritual* (lit. "physical") is used by Paul to contrast the physical and the spiritual (1 Cor 15.44, 46). Here the contrast is between human wisdom and the wisdom that is given by God. **3.17** In Prov 8.22–31 and Wis 9.9–10, 17 wisdom is portrayed as a heavenly being, alongside God at creation; here it is the gift given *from above* in answer to prayer; see 1.5.

righteousness is sown in peace for[q] those
who make peace.

Friendship with the World

4 Those conflicts and disputes among
you, where do they come from? Do
they not come from your cravings that are
at war within you? 2 You want something
and do not have it; so you commit mur-
der. And you covet[r] something and can-
not obtain it; so you engage in disputes
and conflicts. You do not have, because
you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not re-
ceive, because you ask wrongly, in order
to spend what you get on your pleasures.
4 Adulterers! Do you not know that
friendship with the world is enmity with
God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a
friend of the world becomes an enemy of
God. 5 Or do you suppose that it is for
nothing that the scripture says, "God[s]
yearns jealously for the spirit that he has
made to dwell in us"? 6 But he gives all the
more grace; therefore it says,

"God opposes the proud,
but gives grace to the humble."

7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Re-
sist the devil, and he will flee from you.
8 Draw near to God, and he will draw near
to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners,
and purify your hearts, you double-
minded. 9 Lament and mourn and weep.
Let your laughter be turned into mourn-
ing and your joy into dejection. 10 Humble
yourselves before the Lord, and he will
exalt you.

Warning Against Judging Another

11 Do not speak evil against one an-
other, brothers and sisters.[t] Whoever
speaks evil against another or judges an-
other, speaks evil against the law and
judges the law; but if you judge the law,
you are not a doer of the law but a judge.
12 There is one lawgiver and judge who is
able to save and to destroy. So who, then,
are you to judge your neighbor?

Boasting About Tomorrow

13 Come now, you who say, "Today or
tomorrow we will go to such and such a
town and spend a year there, doing busi-
ness and making money." 14 Yet you do
not even know what tomorrow will bring.
What is your life? For you are a mist that
appears for a little while and then van-
ishes. 15 Instead you ought to say, "If the
Lord wishes, we will live and do this or
that." 16 As it is, you boast in your arro-
gance; all such boasting is evil. 17 Anyone,
then, who knows the right thing to do and
fails to do it, commits sin.

Warning to Rich Oppressors

5 Come now, you rich people, weep
and wail for the miseries that are
coming to you. 2 Your riches have rotted,

q Or *by* r Or *you murder and you covet*
s Gk *He* t Gk *brothers*

4.1–12 James examines the causes and effects of divisions in the community. **4.1** *Within you*, lit. "in your members." The passage might describe disputes within the community as the body of Christ (Rom 12.4–5; 1 Cor 12.12–26), but it more probably recalls James's familiar theme of division in the individual, now seen as leading to communal strife (see 1.8; Rom 7.21–23). **4.2** Hardly literal *murder*, but a hyperbole, just as the phrase translated *disputes and conflicts* is lit. "you fight and make war"; see Mt 5.21–22. **4.3** For another example of improper and thus unanswered prayer, see 1.6–8. **4.4** *Adulterers*. The noun is feminine; some texts add a masculine to give "adulterers and adulteresses." **4.5** A notoriously difficult verse. The *scripture* quotation is not found in the OT; *God* does not appear in the text (see text note *s*); *the spirit* could be the subject or object of the verb and understood as either the Holy Spirit or the human spirit. James could be quoting an otherwise unknown text or alluding to a passage like Ps 42.1 to make the point that the God-given human spirit should yearn after God, not after jealous desires. **4.6–8** A similar sequence of thought is found in 1 Pet 5.5–9. **4.6** Prov 3.34. **4.7** *Flee* can be the language of exorcism; see 2.19. **4.8** To be *double-minded* seems to be the essence of sin; see also 1.8. **4.11** On *doer of the law*, see 1.22–25. The warning against judgment echoes Mt 7.1. **4.12** God is the *lawgiver and judge* here, but cf. 5.9, where Jesus is the judge.

4.13–17 A new attack on the rich; the message is the same as that of Jesus' parable of the rich fool (Lk 12.16–21). **4.15** The pious formula does not come from the OT but was familiar in the pagan Hellenistic world; see also 1 Cor 4.19; 16.7.

5.1–6 The attack on the rich now recalls prophetic denunciations. **5.1** See 1.10–11; also the

and your clothes are moth-eaten. 3 Your
gold and silver have rusted, and their rust
will be evidence against you, and it will eat
your flesh like fire. You have laid up trea-
sure[u] for the last days. 4 Listen! The
wages of the laborers who mowed your
fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry
out, and the cries of the harvesters have
reached the ears of the Lord of hosts.
5 You have lived on the earth in luxury
and in pleasure; you have fattened your
hearts in a day of slaughter. 6 You have
condemned and murdered the righteous
one, who does not resist you.

Patience in Suffering

7 Be patient, therefore, beloved,[v] un-
til the coming of the Lord. The farmer
waits for the precious crop from the
earth, being patient with it until it receives
the early and the late rains. 8 You also
must be patient. Strengthen your hearts,
for the coming of the Lord is near.[w] 9 Be-
loved,[x] do not grumble against one an-
other, so that you may not be judged. See,
the Judge is standing at the doors! 10 As
an example of suffering and patience, be-
loved,[v] take the prophets who spoke in
the name of the Lord. 11 Indeed we call
blessed those who showed endurance.
You have heard of the endurance of Job,
and you have seen the purpose of the
Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and
merciful.

12 Above all, my beloved,[v] do not
swear, either by heaven or by earth or by
any other oath, but let your "Yes" be yes
and your "No" be no, so that you may not
fall under condemnation.

The Prayer of Faith

13 Are any among you suffering?
They should pray. Are any cheerful?
They should sing songs of praise. 14 Are
any among you sick? They should call for
the elders of the church and have them
pray over them, anointing them with oil
in the name of the Lord. 15 The prayer of
faith will save the sick, and the Lord will
raise them up; and anyone who has com-
mitted sins will be forgiven. 16 Therefore
confess your sins to one another, and pray
for one another, so that you may be
healed. The prayer of the righteous is

u Or *will eat your flesh, since you have stored up fire*
v Gk *brothers* w Or *is at hand* x Gk *Brothers*

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woe to the *rich* in Lk 6.24. **5.3** Or "in" *the last days*; see v. 5. James shares the early Christian conviction that the end of the age is very near and will be accompanied by judgment; see v. 8. **5.4** To deprive *laborers* of their wages is a prime example of oppression in the OT; see, e.g., Lev 19.13; Deut 24.14–15. *Lord of hosts*; lit. "Lord Sabaoth," an OT title; see Isa 5.7. The *hosts* are stars or angels; see 1.17. **5.6** *The righteous one* could be Jesus, so described in Acts 3.14; 7.52; see also 1 Pet 3.18; 1 Jn 2.1. More probably James echoes the familiar OT theme that God's righteous ones are the poor and oppressed; see, e.g., Ps 140.12–13; Wis 2.12–20. James of Jerusalem, who became a martyr, was also called "the Just" (i.e., "the Righteous").

5.7–12 An encouragement to endure in hope of a final reward. **5.7** These *rains* are characteristic of Palestine and Syria and are sometimes taken as a pointer to the Letter's place of origin, but they are also known from the OT (see Deut 11.14; Jer 5.24). **5.8** For the *coming* or return of Jesus, see, e.g., Mt 24.3; 1 Cor 15.23; 2 Pet 1.16. **5.9** Here the *Judge* seems to be the returning Jesus (cf. 4.12); see also Mk 13.29; Rev 3.20. **5.10** Prophecy and martyrdom became closely associated in Jewish tradition, though in the OT only two *prophets* met violent deaths (see 2 Chr 24.20–21; Jer 26.20–23). Jeremiah is, however, an obvious example of a prophet who endured hardship and humiliation; see Jer 20.1–2; 38.6. **5.11** The suffering of *Job* is the subject of that book, though his *endurance* of it is hardly an example of patience. *Purpose*, or "the end," God's final restoration of Job. **5.12** A clear echo of the teaching of Jesus, whose prohibition of any *oath* was highly unusual; see Mt 5.33–37.

5.13–20 Unlike some earlier sections of the Letter, this final passage seems to envisage a real community, united in faith and mutually supportive. **5.13** See Eph 5.19. **5.14** Some leaders of Christian communities are called *elders*, perhaps following the model of Jewish synagogue organization; see, e.g., Acts 14.23; 20.17; 1 Tim 5.17–19; Titus 1.5. For the gift of healing, see 1 Cor 12.27–30; here it is exercised by the community's leaders. *Oil* was a common remedy for pain throughout the ancient world; see Lk 10.34. Christian healing was performed in the *name* of Jesus; see, e.g., Mk 16.17–18; Acts 3.6. **5.15** It was commonly assumed that sickness was in some measure a punishment for *sins*, so that healing was both physical and spiritual or moral; see Mk

powerful and effective. 17 Elijah was a human being like us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. 18 Then he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain and the earth yielded its harvest.

19 My brothers and sisters,[y] if anyone among you wanders from the truth and is brought back by another, 20 you should know that whoever brings back a sinner from wandering will save the sinner's[z] soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

y Gk *My brothers* z Gk *his*

2.3–12; Jn 5.14; but cf. Jn 9.1–3. **5.17–18** See 1 Kings 17.1; 18.41–45. **5.20** The text simply has a possessive pronoun (see text note z), so it could be read as offering a double blessing, salvation of the *soul* and forgiveness of sins, to either the convertor or the converted.

THE FIRST LETTER OF

PETER

Author, Addressees, and Date

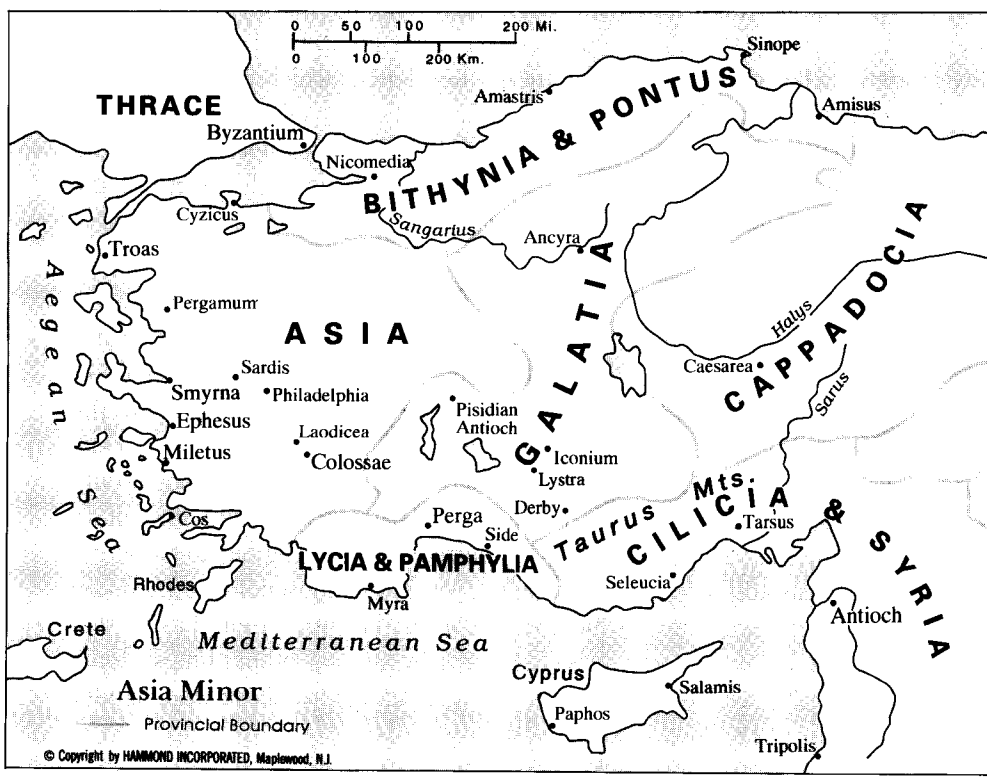
THE SALUTATION (1.1–2) and final greeting (5.12–14) of 1 Peter give information concerning the Letter's origin and addressees and provide clues concerning its author and date. These verses say it was sent by the apostle Peter from Rome to Christians in five Roman provinces of Asia Minor. The author calls Rome "Babylon" (5.13), a name used for that city only after the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. The salutation and 5.9 indicate that Christianity was widespread in Asia Minor when the Letter was written; this was possible only after Paul's preaching there in the 60s. On the other hand, the Letter was probably written earlier than the 90s, for unlike Revelation, which dates from that decade, 1 Peter gives no hint that Roman officials themselves instigated charges against Christians—e.g., for refusal to worship the emperor. Therefore, the Letter dates from between 70 and 90 C.E. This date and the high quality of the Greek suggest that 1 Peter is pseudonymous.

Purpose

The social tensions and the suffering reflected in 2.19–24; 3.14–15; 4.12–19; 5.10 are best explained by the conversion of Gentiles in Greco-Roman culture (see 1.18) to Christianity, which was a despised, foreign religion, and by the negative response of the converts' own families. Roman society was patriarchal, and suspicions about foreign religions included the fear that conversion would reverse established hierarchical relationships and cause women to misbehave (see, e.g., Cicero *Laws* 2.14–15). Romans expected foreign religions to cause immorality (especially adultery), insubordination within the household, and sedition against the state. 1 Peter counters these expectations. The author emphasizes that those converted are to imitate Christ (2.21–23) by, among other things, doing good (2.12, 15, 20; see Lk 6.27) and not retaliating against those who slander their community (2.18, 20–23; 3.9, 14–16).

Social Context

Just how socially distinct conversion rendered these Petrine communities is disputed. As ones chosen by God (1.2), they rejected their former religious beliefs and immoral behavior (1.18; 4.3–4); the author mentions this rejection to confirm their distinctiveness from the dominant society. Yet the author employs the structure of a household code, which was an ethical exhortation to wives and slaves (elsewhere, also to children) to be subordinate to their patriarchal superiors, i.e., their husbands and masters (and fathers). This code expressed core values of Greco-Roman philosophy and society (see esp. Aristotle *Politics* 1.2.1–2). Like other post-Petrine and post-Pauline writers, the author thus emphasizes ethics shared by pagans and Christians, hoping that pagans will glorify God because they approve of the Christians' conduct (see 2.12). Therefore, the Letter opposes abandoning the world; rather, it calls the converts to critical, responsible service of God in the family and in other institutions of society. These Christians live in the tension between their rejection of some societal values and their acceptance of others.



The five provinces mentioned in the address of 1 Peter (1.1) make up a large proportion of Asia Minor.

Genre and Sources

1 Peter is a single, real letter, not, as some claim, a baptismal homily or liturgy. The author weaves OT prophecy into the argument, often giving it a Christological interpretation. There are also allusions to sayings from the Sermon on the Mount, but our author's sources seem earlier than the written Gospels (cf. 4.14; Mt 5.10; Lk 6.22). Christian catechetical traditions are employed (e.g., the household code), and 1.20; 3.18–22 may contain elements from early Christian hymns.
David L. Balch

Salutation

1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,
To the exiles of the Dispersion in
Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bi-
thynia, 2 who have been chosen and des-
tined by God the Father and sanctified by
the Spirit to be obedient to Jesus Christ
and to be sprinkled with his blood:
May grace and peace be yours in
abundance.

A Living Hope

3 Blessed be the God and Father of
our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy
he has given us a new birth into a living
hope through the resurrection of Jesus
Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheri-
tance that is imperishable, undefiled, and
unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5 who
are being protected by the power of God
through faith for a salvation ready to be
revealed in the last time. 6 In this you re-
joice,[a] even if now for a little while you
have had to suffer various trials, 7 so that
the genuineness of your faith—being
more precious than gold that, though per-
ishable, is tested by fire—may be found to
result in praise and glory and honor when
Jesus Christ is revealed. 8 Although you
have not seen[b] him, you love him; and
even though you do not see him now, you
believe in him and rejoice with an inde-
scribable and glorious joy, 9 for you are
receiving the outcome of your faith, the
salvation of your souls.
10 Concerning this salvation, the
prophets who prophesied of the grace
that was to be yours made careful search
and inquiry, 11 inquiring about the person
or time that the Spirit of Christ within
them indicated when it testified in ad-
vance to the sufferings destined for Christ
and the subsequent glory. 12 It was re-
vealed to them that they were serving not
themselves but you, in regard to the
things that have now been announced to
you through those who brought you good
news by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven
—things into which angels long to look!

a Or *Rejoice in this* b Other ancient authorities read *known*

1.1–2 The Letter's salutation includes the author's self-introduction, a lengthy designation of addressees, and a prayer that replaces the usual greeting. **1.1** *Exiles of the Dispersion* recalls the Jewish experience of being exiled from Israel to Babylon, as these primarily gentile Christians are exiled and dispersed in pagan society. **1.2** Being *chosen* by God (see 2.9; 5.13) alienates the Christians religiously and socially (see 2.11). *Sprinkled with his blood* recalls the blood of the covenant (Ex 24.3–8) or the water sprinkled for purification (Num 19.9–21).

1.3–12 Instead of an opening thanksgiving, a long blessing introduces some of the themes of the Letter (see also 2 Cor 1.3). **1.3** On baptism as *new birth*, see 1.23; 2.2; Jn 3.3–8. **1.5** *Salvation*, including judgment, is primarily God's future act (see vv. 13, 17; cf. v. 9). **1.10–11** Christians understood Israel's *prophets* to have been inspired by the *Spirit of Christ* and to have foretold events in the life of Jesus and in the history of the early church; see Lk 24.25–27. The reference here is vague but may be to texts such as Dan 9; 12; Hab 2.

A Call to Holy Living

13 Therefore prepare your minds for
action;[c] discipline yourselves; set all your
hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will
bring you when he is revealed. 14 Like
obedient children, do not be conformed
to the desires that you formerly had in
ignorance. 15 Instead, as he who called
you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your
conduct; 16 for it is written, "You shall be
holy, for I am holy."

17 If you invoke as Father the one
who judges all people impartially accord-
ing to their deeds, live in reverent fear
during the time of your exile. 18 You
know that you were ransomed from the
futile ways inherited from your ancestors,
not with perishable things like silver or
gold, 19 but with the precious blood of
Christ, like that of a lamb without defect
or blemish. 20 He was destined before the
foundation of the world, but was revealed
at the end of the ages for your sake.
21 Through him you have come to trust in
God, who raised him from the dead and
gave him glory, so that your faith and
hope are set on God.

22 Now that you have purified your
souls by your obedience to the truth[d] so
that you have genuine mutual love, love
one another deeply[e] from the heart.[f]
23 You have been born anew, not of per-
ishable but of imperishable seed, through
the living and enduring word of God.[g]
24 For
"All flesh is like grass
and all its glory like the flower
of grass.
The grass withers,
and the flower falls,
25 but the word of the Lord endures
forever."
That word is the good news that was an-
nounced to you.

The Living Stone and a Chosen People

2 Rid yourselves, therefore, of all mal-
ice, and all guile, insincerity, envy,
and all slander. 2 Like newborn infants,
long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that
by it you may grow into salvation— 3 if
indeed you have tasted that the Lord is
good.

4 Come to him, a living stone, though
rejected by mortals yet chosen and pre-
cious in God's sight, and 5 like living
stones, let yourselves be built[h] into a spir-
itual house, to be a holy priesthood, to
offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God
through Jesus Christ. 6 For it stands in
scripture:
"See, I am laying in Zion a stone,
a cornerstone chosen and
precious;

c Gk *gird up the loins of your mind* d Other ancient authorities add *through the Spirit* e Or *constantly* f Other ancient authorities read *a pure heart* g Or *through the word of the living and enduring God* h Or *you yourselves are being built*

1.13–21 The author shifts from reflection on the gospel to ethical exhortation. **1.13** *Prepare*, lit. "gird up your waist," i.e., gather your robes (see Ex 12.11). On Passover Jews gird themselves for action; here the metaphor is applied to Christian eschatological hope. *Hope*, introduced in v. 3, is central in vv. 13–21. **1.14** *Do not be conformed.* See Rom 12.2. The addressees formerly lived in *ignorance*, so many are Gentiles (see also 1.18; 2.10; 4.2–3). **1.16** Lev 19.2. **1.17** For God as one who *judges all people impartially*, see Deut 10.17; Acts 10.34; Rom 2.11. On *reverent fear*, see 2.17. **1.18** *Ransomed* (see Isa 52.3; Mk 10.45), purchased by Christ, as a slave's freedom is purchased from a Roman master. Reference to their *futile ways inherited from . . . ancestors* again characterizes the readers as converted Gentiles (see note on 1.14). **1.19** *Lamb* may recall Isa 53.7, but the context of deliverance from slavery suggests the exodus and the Passover lamb (Ex 12.5). **1.20** *Destined . . . revealed.* The contrast may be from an early Christian hymn. The author assumes that events of the *end of the ages* have already happened.

1.22–25 Christians' ethics are grounded in their new birth through the word of God. **1.22** *Genuine mutual love* (Greek *philadelphia*) is a term common in Greco-Roman ethics but rare in the NT (but see 3.8; 1 Thess 4.9). **1.23** For another use of *seed* as metaphor for the *word of God*, see Mk 4.14–20. **1.24–25a** Isa 40.6–8.

2.1–3 The author returns to imperatives, urging all Christian readers, based on their baptism (see 1.23), to grow into salvation. **2.2** The author employs the feminine metaphor of a mother's *milk* for the word of Christ. **2.3** *Tasted*, a reference to Ps 34.8. The author returns to this psalm in 3.10–12.

2.4–10 The author quotes Isa 28.16, then links it to two other texts that also describe stones, Ps 118.22; Isa 8.14. See also Mt 21.42; Mk 12.10; Acts 4.11; Rom 9.33; Eph 2.20. **2.5** *Spiritual sac-*

and whoever believes in him[i]
will not be put to shame."
7 To you then who believe, he is precious;
but for those who do not believe,
"The stone that the builders
rejected
has become the very head of
the corner,"
8 and
"A stone that makes them
stumble,
and a rock that makes them
fall."
They stumble because they disobey the
word, as they were destined to do.
9 But you are a chosen race, a royal
priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people,[j] in order that you may proclaim the
mighty acts of him who called you out of
darkness into his marvelous light.
10 Once you were not a people,
but now you are God's people;
once you had not received mercy,
but now you have received
mercy.

Live as Servants of God

11 Beloved, I urge you as aliens and
exiles to abstain from the desires of the
flesh that wage war against the soul.
12 Conduct yourselves honorably among
the Gentiles, so that, though they malign
you as evildoers, they may see your honorable deeds and glorify God when he
comes to judge.[k]
13 For the Lord's sake accept the
authority of every human institution,[l]
whether of the emperor as supreme, 14 or
of governors, as sent by him to punish
those who do wrong and to praise those
who do right. 15 For it is God's will that by
doing right you should silence the ignorance of the foolish. 16 As servants[m] of
God, live as free people, yet do not use
your freedom as a pretext for evil.
17 Honor everyone. Love the family of believers.[n] Fear God. Honor the emperor.

The Example of Christ's Suffering

18 Slaves, accept the authority of your
masters with all deference, not only those
who are kind and gentle but also those
who are harsh. 19 For it is a credit to you
if, being aware of God, you endure pain
while suffering unjustly. 20 If you endure
when you are beaten for doing wrong,
what credit is that? But if you endure
when you do right and suffer for it, you
have God's approval. 21 For to this you
have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so
that you should follow in his steps.
22 "He committed no sin,
and no deceit was found in
his mouth."

i Or *it* *j* Gk *a people for his possession* *k* Gk *God on the day of visitation* *l* Or *every institution ordained for human beings* *m* Gk *slaves* *n* Gk *Love the brotherhood*

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rifices include worship and social ethics (see Rom 12.1; Heb 13.15–16). **2.6** Isa 28.16. **2.7** The quotation is from Ps 118.22. **2.8** Isa 8.14. **2.9** *A chosen race . . . God's own people*, four honorific titles taken from Ex 19.6; Isa 43.20–21. **2.10** Hos 1.9; 2.23.

2.11–3.12 A first-person address, *Beloved, I urge you*, begins a major new section treating Christian conduct among gentile unbelievers. **2.11** On *exiles*, see note on 1.1. **2.12** The readers' *honorable* conduct is meant to counter pagan gossip, not legal charges (see Introduction; Mt 5.11, 16; see also notes on 3.15; 3.16). **2.13–3.7** A household code (see also Eph 5.21–6.9; Col 3.18–4.1) focusing on the duties of subordinate members of patriarchal Greco-Roman households. **2.13** On submission to governing *authorities*, see Rom 13.1–7; 1 Tim 2.1–2. **2.14** See Rom 13.3–4. **2.16** The readers are *free* from ignorance and darkness, and, paradoxically, they are *servants* (more accurately *slaves*; see text note *m*) exhorted to accept others' authority. **2.17** The author focuses on *love* of other *believers* (see Jn 15.12; 1 Jn 2.10), not of enemies (cf. Lk 6.35), and differentiates the *fear* (reverent awe) due to God (see 1.17) from the *honor* due *everyone*, including the *emperor*. The leading imperative of the following household code is either that, as free persons, the readers should honor everyone (2.17; 3.7) or that, as subordinate persons, they should accept the authority of superiors (2.18; 3.1). **2.18–25** Slaves' Christian identity and behavior are addressed, although Christ's example and sacrifice are for all Christian readers. **2.18** The direct address to *slaves* is unusual in Greco-Roman ethical literature; it is a Jewish and Christian innovation. As 2.15; 3.16 indicate, the author hopes the slaves' behavior will affect even harsh, non-Christian masters; see also 1 Tim 6.1; Titus 2.9–10. **2.19–20** On *credit* (lit. "grace") for enduring wrongs, see 3.14; see also Lk 6.32–34. **2.21–25** Many detect an early

23 When he was abused, he did not return
abuse; when he suffered, he did not
threaten; but he entrusted himself to the
one who judges justly. 24 He himself bore
our sins in his body on the cross,[o] so that,
free from sins, we might live for righ-
teousness; by his wounds[p] you have been
healed. 25 For you were going astray like
sheep, but now you have returned to the
shepherd and guardian of your souls.

Wives and Husbands

3 Wives, in the same way, accept the
authority of your husbands, so that,
even if some of them do not obey the
word, they may be won over without a
word by their wives' conduct, 2 when they
see the purity and reverence of your lives.
3 Do not adorn yourselves outwardly by
braiding your hair, and by wearing gold
ornaments or fine clothing; 4 rather, let
your adornment be the inner self with the
lasting beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit,
which is very precious in God's sight. 5 It
was in this way long ago that the holy
women who hoped in God used to adorn
themselves by accepting the authority of
their husbands. 6 Thus Sarah obeyed
Abraham and called him lord. You have
become her daughters as long as you
do what is good and never let fears
alarm you.

7 Husbands, in the same way, show
consideration for your wives in your life
together, paying honor to the woman as
the weaker sex,[q] since they too are also
heirs of the gracious gift of life—so that
nothing may hinder your prayers.

8 Finally, all of you, have unity of
spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a
tender heart, and a humble mind. 9 Do
not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse;
but, on the contrary, repay with a bless-
ing. It is for this that you were called—
that you might inherit a blessing. 10 For

"Those who desire life
and desire to see good days,
let them keep their tongues
from evil
and their lips from speaking
deceit;
11 let them turn away from evil
and do good;
let them seek peace and
pursue it.
12 For the eyes of the Lord are on
the righteous,
and his ears are open to
their prayer.
But the face of the Lord is
against those who do evil."

Suffering for Doing Right

13 Now who will harm you if you are
eager to do what is good? 14 But even if
you do suffer for doing what is right, you
are blessed. Do not fear what they fear,[r]

o Or *carried up our sins in his body to the tree*
p Gk *bruise* q Gk *vessel* r Gk *their fear*

Christian hymn here; others see simply an interpretation of Isa 53. **2.22** Isa 53.9b. **2.23** See 3.9. **2.24** Christ's redeeming work is interpreted by Isa 53.4–5. **2.25** *Astray like sheep.* See Isa 53.6; see also note on 5.2. **3.1–7** The household code continues with direct addresses to wives and husbands. Whereas other household codes (cf. Col 3–4) address all household members in pairs, only the wife/husband pair occurs in 1 Peter. **3.1** As is typical in patriarchal Greco-Roman culture, *wives* are exhorted to be subordinate in the household. The author is sensitive to the response of disbelieving *husbands,* who would perceive their wives' conversion to a foreign cult as disobedience. **3.3–4** The contrast between external and internal adornment was common in Greco-Roman philosophical writings (see also 1 Tim 2.9–10). **3.6** Sarah calls Abraham *lord* (or "husband") in Gen 18.12. To *do what is good* is a key idea in 1 Peter (see 2.15, 20; 3.17). *Fears* include wives' fear of their unbelieving husbands; the admonition not to fear is a reinterpretation of Prov 3.25. **3.7** Greco-Roman authors based authority in patriarchal society on alleged intellectual and physical distinctions; thus slaves and women were deemed *weaker.* **3.8–12** A summary of exhortations closes this section (2.11–3.12). **3.8** *Unity of spirit,* a central domestic and political concern of Greco-Roman society, was threatened by conversions to Christianity. On *love for one another* (lit. "brotherly love") see 1.22; 2.17. **3.9** On not returning *abuse,* see 2.23; see also Lk 6.28; Rom 12.17. **3.10–12** Ps 34.12–16. The psalm includes terms and ideas central to this Letter, such as the warning against evil speech in 3.10b (see 2.22–23) and the emphasis on doing good in 3.11a. To *seek peace* (v. 11b) and harmony in household relationships and with society was one purpose of the household code.

3.13–17 The psalm quoted in vv. 10–12 provides a transition to this section, which is focused on doing good. **3.14** On the idea that those who suffer are *blessed,* see Mt 5.10. V. 14b quotes and interprets Isa 8.12; see also note on 3.6.

and do not be intimidated, 15 but in your
hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be
ready to make your defense to anyone
who demands from you an accounting for
the hope that is in you; 16 yet do it with
gentleness and reverence.[s] Keep your
conscience clear, so that, when you are
maligned, those who abuse you for your
good conduct in Christ may be put to
shame. 17 For it is better to suffer for do-
ing good, if suffering should be God's
will, than to suffer for doing evil. 18 For
Christ also suffered[t] for sins once for all,
the righteous for the unrighteous, in or-
der to bring you[u] to God. He was put to
death in the flesh, but made alive in the
spirit, 19 in which also he went and made a
proclamation to the spirits in prison,
20 who in former times did not obey, when
God waited patiently in the days of Noah,
during the building of the ark, in which
a few, that is, eight persons, were saved
through water. 21 And baptism, which this
prefigured, now saves you—not as a re-
moval of dirt from the body, but as an
appeal to God for[v] a good conscience,
through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,
22 who has gone into heaven and is at the
right hand of God, with angels, authori-
ties, and powers made subject to him.

Good Stewards of God's Grace

4 Since therefore Christ suffered in
the flesh,[w] arm yourselves also with
the same intention (for whoever has suf-
fered in the flesh has finished with sin),
2 so as to live for the rest of your earthly
life[x] no longer by human desires but by
the will of God. 3 You have already spent
enough time in doing what the Gentiles
like to do, living in licentiousness, pas-
sions, drunkenness, revels, carousing, and
lawless idolatry. 4 They are surprised that
you no longer join them in the same ex-
cesses of dissipation, and so they blas-
pheme.[y] 5 But they will have to give an
accounting to him who stands ready to
judge the living and the dead. 6 For this is
the reason the gospel was proclaimed
even to the dead, so that, though they had
been judged in the flesh as everyone is
judged, they might live in the spirit as
God does.

7 The end of all things is near;[z]
therefore be serious and discipline your-

s Or *respect* t Other ancient authorities read *died* u Other ancient authorities read *us* v Or *a pledge to God from* w Other ancient authorities add *for us*; others, *for you* x Gk *rest of the time in the flesh* y Or *they malign you* z Or *is at hand*

3.15 *Defense* (Greek *apologia*) could refer technically to a legal defense but instead concerns the reputation of Christ and Christian exiles in Greco-Roman society (see Introduction). Jews also had to defend themselves (including their wives and slaves) against accusations (see Josephus *Against Apion*). **3.16** Concern for outsiders who *malign* these Christians frames the household code; see note on 2.12. By the behavior recommended in the code, these *aliens and exiles* (2.11) indirectly address outsiders' objections. **3.17** On *suffering for doing good*, see 2.20.

3.18–22 The ascent of Christ, who had suffered, gives victory to the baptized. **3.18** Greek and Jewish heroes suffer for other worthy persons and for the law (see 2 Macc 6.28; 7.37; 4 Macc 6.27; see also Rom 5.7–8), but Christ *suffered for sins* (see 2.21). Many perceive an early Christian hymn behind vv. 18, 22. **3.19** *The spirits in prison*, perhaps those "sons of God" who corrupted human women and were destroyed by the flood (see Gen 6.1–4; *1 Enoch* 10.4–6). The point is that the cosmic Lord is victorious over all the disobedient (see v. 22). **3.20** To establish a parallel with baptism, the author argues that Noah and his family were saved *through water*, i.e., by means of the flood waters (see Gen 6–8). **3.21** *Dirt from the body*, lit. "filth of the flesh," i.e., *desires of the flesh* (see 2.11; 4.2). The reading in text note *v* is better: baptism is a positive appeal to God out of a good consciousness or awareness of God. **3.22** On Jesus at *the right hand of God*, see Ps 110.1; see also Eph 1.20–22; Heb 1.3–4, 13.

4.1–6 Exhortations to the moral life that distinguishes Christians from outsiders. **4.1** See 3.18. *Has finished with sin* means either that those baptized are freed from sin's power (see Rom 6.7) or that Christ by carrying sins to the cross has dealt with them once for all (see Heb 7.27; 9.28), not that whoever has suffered no longer sins. **4.3** The Jewish-Christian author designates those outside the (primarily gentile) Christian community as *Gentiles*. **4.4** Those who slander the new Christians' life-style *blaspheme* God. **4.5** The tables will be turned on those who call Christians *to give an accounting*. See 3.15; see also Mt 7.1–2; Rom 2.3. **4.6** *The gospel was proclaimed even to the dead*. This means either that the righteous of Hebrew history are considered Christians (see Heb 4.2, 6; 11) or that the Christian dead heard the gospel while still alive.

4.7–11 The focus of the exhortations shifts from relations with outsiders to the ways Christians should treat each other. **4.7** *The end of all*

selves for the sake of your prayers.
8 Above all, maintain constant love for one
another, for love covers a multitude of
sins. 9 Be hospitable to one another with-
out complaining. 10 Like good stewards of
the manifold grace of God, serve one an-
other with whatever gift each of you has
received. 11 Whoever speaks must do so as
one speaking the very words of God; who-
ever serves must do so with the strength
that God supplies, so that God may be glo-
rified in all things through Jesus Christ.
To him belong the glory and the power
forever and ever. Amen.

Suffering as a Christian

12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the
fiery ordeal that is taking place among
you to test you, as though something
strange were happening to you. 13 But re-
joice insofar as you are sharing Christ's
sufferings, so that you may also be glad
and shout for joy when his glory is re-
vealed. 14 If you are reviled for the name
of Christ, you are blessed, because the
spirit of glory,[a] which is the Spirit of
God, is resting on you.[b] 15 But let none of
you suffer as a murderer, a thief, a crimi-
nal, or even as a mischief maker. 16 Yet if
any of you suffers as a Christian, do not
consider it a disgrace, but glorify God be-
cause you bear this name. 17 For the time
has come for judgment to begin with the
household of God; if it begins with us,
what will be the end for those who do not
obey the gospel of God? 18 And

"If it is hard for the righteous
to be saved,
what will become of the
ungodly and the sinners?"

19 Therefore, let those suffering in accor-
dance with God's will entrust themselves
to a faithful Creator, while continuing to
do good.

Tending the Flock of God

5 Now as an elder myself and a witness
of the sufferings of Christ, as well as
one who shares in the glory to be re-
vealed, I exhort the elders among you 2 to
tend the flock of God that is in your
charge, exercising the oversight,[c] not un-
der compulsion but willingly, as God
would have you do it[d]—not for sordid
gain but eagerly. 3 Do not lord it over
those in your charge, but be examples to
the flock. 4 And when the chief shepherd
appears, you will win the crown of glory
that never fades away. 5 In the same way,
you who are younger must accept the au-
thority of the elders.[e] And all of you
must clothe yourselves with humility in
your dealings with one another, for

"God opposes the proud,
but gives grace to the humble."

a Other ancient authorities add *and of power*
b Other ancient authorities add *On their part he is blasphemed, but on your part he is glorified*
c Other ancient authorities lack *exercising the oversight*
d Other ancient authorities lack *as God would have you do it*
e Or *of those who are older*

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things refers to God's universal judgment (see v. 5). The expectation that this event was *near* was widespread in early Christianity; see Rom 13.12; 1 Cor 10.11; Rev 22.20; cf. 2 Pet 3.3. On *prayers*, see 3.7, 12. **4.8** *Love for one another* (see also 1.22; 2.17) is being tested by persecution (see v. 12). **4.10** On the allotment of various *gifts*, see Rom 12.3–8; 1 Cor 12.4–11. **4.11** The doxology (*To him belong ... Amen*) is repeated in 5.11.

4.12–19 The repetition of the address (*beloved*) signals a new section of the Letter (see 2.11) that restates the themes of 1.6–8; 3.13–17. **4.12** On the *fiery ordeal*, see 1.6–7. **4.13** On *rejoice* see 1.6, 8. On *sharing Christ's sufferings*, see 2 Cor 1.3–11; Phil 3.10–11. **4.14** *Reviled ... blessed.* See the beatitude in Mt 5.11; Lk 6.22. **4.16** The name *Christian* was originally employed by outsiders to designate followers of Christ; see Acts 11.26. **4.17** As the *household of God* (see also Eph 2.19; 1 Tim 3.15; Heb 3.6), the church is instructed with a household code (2.13–3.7). **4.18** Prov 11.31. **4.19** The author encourages readers by identifying the judge of all (see 4.5, 7) as the *faithful Creator. Doing good* (see 3.13–17) is mentioned emphatically here at the conclusion of this section.

5.1–5 To the household code (2.13–3.7) are added elements of a congregational code. **5.1** *An elder myself*, a rare self-reference by the author (see 1.1; 2.11). In their crisis (4.12), some congregations have appointed authoritative *elders* (see Acts 20.17–38). **5.2** *Tend the flock.* See Jn 21.16, Jesus' command to Peter. Proper tending is described by three pairs of contrasts (*not ... but*) in this verse and in 5.3. **5.3** The command not to *lord it over* others prohibits the kind of harsh authority some have experienced from outsiders (see 2.18). **5.4** *You will win* (lit. "receive payment"). This eschatological reward stands in contrast to the greed forbidden in v. 2. **5.5** The *younger* are an age group; the *elders* are officials who are also older. On *humility*, see 3.8; 4.7–11.

6 Humble yourselves therefore under
the mighty hand of God, so that he may
exalt you in due time. 7 Cast all your anxi-
ety on him, because he cares for you.
8 Discipline yourselves, keep alert.[f] Like a
roaring lion your adversary the devil
prowls around, looking for someone to
devour. 9 Resist him, steadfast in your
faith, for you know that your brothers
and sisters[g] in all the world are undergo-
ing the same kinds of suffering. 10 And
after you have suffered for a little while,
the God of all grace, who has called you to
his eternal glory in Christ, will himself re-
store, support, strengthen, and establish
you. 11 To him be the power forever and
ever. Amen.

Final Greetings and Benediction

12 Through Silvanus, whom I con-
sider a faithful brother, I have written this
short letter to encourage you and to tes-
tify that this is the true grace of God.
Stand fast in it. 13 Your sister church[h] in
Babylon, chosen together with you, sends
you greetings; and so does my son Mark.
14 Greet one another with a kiss of love.
Peace to all of you who are in Christ.[i]

f Or *be vigilant*
g Gk *your brotherhood*
h Gk *She who is*
i Other ancient authorities add *Amen*

"*God . . . humble.*" Prov 3.34. **5.6–11** A final promise of vindication. **5.6** On *exalting* the humble, see Lk 14.11; 18.14; Phil 2.8. **5.7** On *anxiety*, see Mt 6.25–34. **5.8–9** Resisting the devil, God's enemy, refers here to a struggle within believers. **5.10** Four parallel verbs reinforce the expectation *that he may exalt you* (v. 6). **5.11** See 4.11c.

5.12–14 Final exhortation and greetings. **5.12** On *Silvanus*, see Acts 15.22 ("Silas"); 1 Thess 1.1; 2 Thess 1.1. In regard to *encourage*, see 2.11 (where the same word is translated *urge*) and 5.1 (where it is translated *exhort*). *Stand fast* in God's grace (see 1.13). This exhortation closes the body of the Letter. **5.13** *Babylon* is the author's name for Rome (see Rev 17.5, 18). On *Mark*, see Acts 12.12–17. **5.14** The *kiss of love* (see Rom 16.16) is familial, i.e., for members of the household of God (4.17). The farewell mentions *peace*, a concluding wish that reflects the conflict situation addressed by the Letter; see 1.2; 3.11.

THE SECOND LETTER OF

PETER

Authorship

THE SECOND LETTER of Peter is presented as Peter's testament, i.e., an account of Peter's teaching as he wished it to be remembered after his death (1.12–15). If Peter himself wrote it, he must have done so shortly before his martyrdom in Rome in 64/65 C.E. Most scholars, however, now believe it was written after Peter's death, with the writer following a literary convention of the time that allowed an author to attribute a "testament" to a great figure of the past. 2 Peter was probably sent from the church of Rome and therefore attributed to the apostle who had for a time played a role in the leadership of that church. By writing in Peter's name, the author was able to restate and defend Peter's teaching in a situation in which opponents were criticizing the apostolic message. He also expressed the normative value of the apostolic teaching for the period after the death of the apostles.

Date

The best clue to the date of 2 Peter lies in 3.3–4. These verses seem to reflect a time when the early Christian expectation that Christ would come in glory within the lifetime of the first Christian generation had been disappointed. Because the problem this posed for Christian hope was soon surmounted, these verses seem to date 2 Peter around 80–90 C.E.

Opponents

2 Peter defends Peter's teaching against critics, who probably wanted to free the Christian message from features that were embarrassing to the church in a pagan environment. Christian moral strictness made life difficult for Christians in the more permissive pagan society, so the opponents argued that Christians were free from moral constraints. The Christian hope that Christ would come to judge the world and to establish a new world of righteousness was also alien to pagan views, so the opponents argued that the idea of a coming judgment was simply mistaken. This skepticism reinforced their moral libertinism. In reply, 2 Peter

insists that the Christian hope is essential to the gospel and provides a motive for righteous living.

Purpose

2 Peter faces the problems of Christianity's twin transition from a Jewish to a pagan environment and from the apostolic to the postapostolic age. 2 Peter insists on the ethical demand and the future hope of the gospel, while also (esp. in 1.3–11) translating these features of the gospel from Jewish into Hellenistic cultural terms.

Form and Structure

2 Peter is a testament in the form of a letter. Four passages in which Peter foresees the future and provides for his teaching to be remembered reflect the Jewish testament genre (1.3–11, 12–15; 2.1–3a; 3.1–4). Attached to these are passages defending Peter's teaching against the opponents (1.16–19, 20–21; 2.3b–10a; 3.5–10) and two passages contrasting the evil ways of the opponents (2.10b–22) with the righteous conduct expected of the readers (3.11–16).

Relationship to Jude

There is a close relationship between parts of 2 Peter (esp. 2.1–18; 3.1–3) and the Letter of Jude. Almost all scholars now agree that the author of 2 Peter was dependent on Jude's Letter, from which he adapted material for his own purpose. *Richard J. Bauckham*

Salutation

1 Simeon[a] Peter, a servant[b] and apostle of Jesus Christ,
To those who have received a faith as precious as ours through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:[c]
2 May grace and peace be yours in abundance in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

Peter's Testament

3 His divine power has given us everything needed for life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us by[d] his own glory and goodness.
4 Thus he has given us, through these things, his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of lust, and may become participants of the divine nature. 5 For this very reason, you must make every effort to support your faith with goodness, and goodness with knowledge, 6 and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with endurance, and endurance with

a Other ancient authorities read *Simon*
b Gk *slave* c Or *of our God and the Savior Jesus Christ* d Other ancient authorities read *through*

1.3–11 A summary of Peter's teaching as it is to be remembered after his death, stressing both God's grace and the need for moral effort if Christians are to attain final salvation. **1.4** To *become participants of the divine nature* does not mean to share God's essence but to receive "godlike" immortality. **1.5–7** In this "ladder" of virtues, each virtue is the means of producing the next (this sense of the Greek is lost in translation). All the virtues grow out of *faith*, and all culminate

godliness, 7 and godliness with mutual[e]
affection, and mutual[e] affection with love.
8 For if these things are yours and are in-
creasing among you, they keep you from
being ineffective and unfruitful in the
knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For
anyone who lacks these things is near-
sighted and blind, and is forgetful of the
cleansing of past sins. 10 Therefore, broth-
ers and sisters,[f] be all the more eager to
confirm your call and election, for if you
do this, you will never stumble. 11 For in
this way, entry into the eternal kingdom
of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will
be richly provided for you.

12 Therefore I intend to keep on re-
minding you of these things, though you
know them already and are established in
the truth that has come to you. 13 I think it
right, as long as I am in this body,[g] to
refresh your memory, 14 since I know that
my death[h] will come soon, as indeed our
Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me.
15 And I will make every effort so that af-
ter my departure you may be able at any
time to recall these things.

The Grounds of Christian Hope

16 For we did not follow cleverly de-
vised myths when we made known to you
the power and coming of our Lord Jesus
Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of
his majesty. 17 For he received honor and
glory from God the Father when that
voice was conveyed to him by the Majestic
Glory, saying, "This is my Son, my Be-
loved,[i] with whom I am well pleased."
18 We ourselves heard this voice come
from heaven, while we were with him on
the holy mountain.

19 So we have the prophetic message
more fully confirmed. You will do well to
be attentive to this as to a lamp shining in
a dark place, until the day dawns and the
morning star rises in your hearts. 20 First
of all you must understand this, that no
prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's
own interpretation, 21 because no proph-
ecy ever came by human will, but men
and women moved by the Holy Spirit
spoke from God.[j]

False Teachers and Their Punishment

2 But false prophets also arose among
the people, just as there will be false
teachers among you, who will secretly
bring in destructive opinions. They will
even deny the Master who bought them—
bringing swift destruction on themselves.
2 Even so, many will follow their licentious
ways, and because of these teachers[k] the
way of truth will be maligned. 3 And in
their greed they will exploit you with de-
ceptive words. Their condemnation, pro-
nounced against them long ago, has not
been idle, and their destruction is not
asleep.

4 For if God did not spare the angels
when they sinned, but cast them into
hell[l] and committed them to chains[m] of
deepest darkness to be kept until the
judgment; 5 and if he did not spare the
ancient world, even though he saved
Noah, a herald of righteousness, with
seven others, when he brought a flood on

e Gk *brotherly* *f* Gk *brothers* *g* Gk *tent* *h* Gk *the putting off of my tent* *i* Other ancient authorities read *my beloved Son* *j* Other ancient authorities read *but moved by the Holy Spirit saints of God spoke* *k* Gk *because of them* *l* Gk *Tartaros* *m* Other ancient authorities read *pits*

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in *love*. **1.12–15** Peter's teaching will be his permanent bequest to the church.

1.16–21 This section replies to the opponents' charges that the apostles' prediction of Christ's future coming was their own invention (vv. 16–19) and that OT prophecies of it did not come from God (vv. 20–21). **1.16–18** At the transfiguration (Mt 17.1–8), the apostles saw Jesus appointed by God as the Messiah who will come to judge and rule the world (Ps 2.6–9). **1.19** *The prophetic message* refers to OT prophecy in general. *The morning star* is Christ at his coming in glory (Num 24.17; Rev 22.16). **1.20** *One's own interpretation* probably refers not to interpretation of scripture by its readers, but to the prophets' interpretation of their visions. **1.21** See Jer 20.9; 23.16–32; Am 3.8.

2.1–3a Peter's prediction of the arrival of false teachers after his death. **2.1** The false teachers probably *deny* Christ by flouting his moral authority (as in Titus 1.16; Jude 4). **2.3b–10a** A reply to the opponents' claim that the expected judgment of the world is not going to happen. Examples of God's judgment in the past (see Jude 6–7) are cited, along with examples of righteous people spared from judgment (see Wis 10.4–9). The judgments are warnings for the wicked; Noah and Lot are models for the righteous in a wicked world. **2.4** *The angels* are the "sons of God" of Gen 6.1–4, as interpreted in Jewish literature. **2.5** *Noah* is *a herald of righteousness* because, according to tradition, he

ungodly; 6 and if by turning
Sodom and Gomorrah to
condemned them to extinction[n]
ade them an example of what is
ng to the ungodly;[o] 7 and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man greatly distressed by the licentiousness of the lawless 8 (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by their lawless deeds that he saw and heard), 9 then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trial, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment 10 — especially those who indulge their flesh in depraved lust, and who despise authority.

Bold and willful, they are not afraid to slander the glorious ones,[p] 11 whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not bring against them a slanderous judgment from the Lord.[q] 12 These people, however, are like irrational animals, mere creatures of instinct, born to be caught and killed. They slander what they do not understand, and when those creatures are destroyed,[r] they also will be destroyed, 13 suffering[s] the penalty for doing wrong. They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their dissipation[t] while they feast with you. 14 They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children! 15 They have left the straight road and have gone astray, following the road of Balaam son of Bosor,[u] who loved the wages of doing wrong, 16 but was rebuked for his own transgression; a speechless donkey spoke with a human voice and restrained the prophet's madness.

17 These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm; for them the deepest darkness has been reserved. 18 For they speak bombastic nonsense, and with licentious desires of the flesh they entice people who have just[v] escaped from those who live in error. 19 They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption; for people are slaves to whatever masters them. 20 For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overpowered, the last state has become worse for them than the first. 21 For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than, after knowing it, to turn back from the holy commandment that was passed on to them. 22 It has happened to them according to the true proverb,

"The dog turns back to its
own vomit,"

and,

"The sow is washed only to
wallow in the mud."

The Promise of the Lord's Coming

3 This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you; in them I am trying to arouse your sincere intention by reminding you 2 that you should remember the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets, and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken through your apostles. 3 First of all you must under-

n Other ancient authorities lack *to extinction*
o Other ancient authorities read *an example to those who were to be ungodly* *p* Or *angels*; Gk *glories*
q Other ancient authorities read *before the Lord*; others lack the phrase *r* Gk *in their destruction*
s Other ancient authorities read *receiving*
t Other ancient authorities read *love-feasts*
u Other ancient authorities read *Beor* *v* Other ancient authorities read *actually*

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preached repentance before the flood. **2.6–8** See Gen 18.16–19.29. **2.7** For *Lot* as *a righteous man*, see Gen 18.23–25; Wis 10.6; 19.17. **2.10b–22** Denunciation of the opponents. **2.10b–11** See Jude 8–9, but here *the glorious ones* are the powers of evil, for whom the opponents fail to show a healthy fear. **2.12** Probably the meaning is that when the powers of evil are *destroyed* (see text note *r*), these people who now scoff at them will perish with them. **2.13** *Their dissipation*, lit. "their deceits" (Greek *apatais*), which means "deceitful pleasures" and is also a pun on "love-feasts" (Greek *agapais*; see Jude 12). The opponents are turning the church's fellowship meals into mere shams. **2.15–16** On *Balaam*, see Num 22.21–35; Jude 11. **2.17** See Jude 12–13. **2.19** The *freedom* the opponents promise is liberation from fear of divine judgment and so from moral constraint, but as slaves to sin they cannot give freedom from sin (see Rom 6.15–23; 8.21; 1 Pet 2.16). **2.20** See Mt 12.43–45. **2.22** The first quotation is Prov 26.11; the second is an ancient oriental proverb.

3.1–4 A second prediction of the coming of the false teachers. **3.2** *Your apostles*, those who founded the readers' churches. **3.3** *Scoffers*,

stand this, that in the last days scoffers will
come, scoffing and indulging their own
lusts 4and saying, "Where is the promise
of his coming? For ever since our ancestors died,[w] all things continue as they
were from the beginning of creation!"
5They deliberately ignore this fact, that
by the word of God heavens existed long
ago and an earth was formed out of water
and by means of water, 6through which
the world of that time was deluged with
water and perished. 7But by the same
word the present heavens and earth have
been reserved for fire, being kept until
the day of judgment and destruction of
the godless.

8 But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a
thousand years, and a thousand years are
like one day. 9The Lord is not slow about
his promise, as some think of slowness,
but is patient with you,[x] not wanting any
to perish, but all to come to repentance.
10But the day of the Lord will come like a
thief, and then the heavens will pass away
with a loud noise, and the elements will
be dissolved with fire, and the earth and
everything that is done on it will be
disclosed.[y]

Final Exhortations and Doxology

11 Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons
ought you to be in leading lives of holiness
and godliness, 12waiting for and hastening[z] the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set
ablaze and dissolved, and the elements
will melt with fire? 13But, in accordance
with his promise, we wait for new heavens
and a new earth, where righteousness is at
home.

14 Therefore, beloved, while you are
waiting for these things, strive to be found
by him at peace, without spot or blemish;
15and regard the patience of our Lord as
salvation. So also our beloved brother
Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, 16speaking of this as he
does in all his letters. There are some
things in them hard to understand, which
the ignorant and unstable twist to their

w Gk *our fathers fell asleep* *x* Other ancient authorities read *on your account* *y* Other ancient authorities read *will be burned up* *z* Or *earnestly desiring*

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people who treat God's revelation with contempt (see Ps 1.1; Prov 1.22; Isa 28.14; Jude 18). **3.4** *Our ancestors*, probably the first Christian generation. The *scoffers* say that the apostles' *promise* of Christ's coming in glory set a time limit (within the lifetime of the first Christian generation: see Mk 9.1; 13.30) that has now expired. But they also express a rationalistic assumption about the world: nothing has changed since *the beginning of creation*, i.e., divine interventions in history do not happen. **3.5–7** A reply to the assumption made at the end of v. 4. **3.5** On creation *out of water*, see Gen 1.2, 6–10. **3.6** *Through which*, through the word of God and through water (the flood; see Gen 7.11). **3.7** Jewish traditions spoke of two universal judgments, one by water (in the past), the other by *fire* (in the future). Fire is a common biblical image of judgment. **3.8–10** A reply to the charge (v. 4) that the expectation of the Lord's coming has been disproved by the delay. **3.8** Ps 90.4, to which this verse alludes, was used in Jewish literature to deal with the problem of apparent delay in the fulfillment of God's promises. **3.10** *The day of the Lord* is a common biblical expression for the time of God's final judgment. For its coming *like a thief*, see Mt 24.43–44; 1 Thess 5.2. For imagery of it, see Isa 34.4; Mk 13.25; Rev 6.13–14. The wicked and their deeds *will be disclosed* to God's judicial scrutiny.

3.11–16 Just as the opponents, who scoff at the prospect of divine judgment, live wickedly, so the readers, who hope for the new world of righteousness, should live righteously. **3.12** As God defers the judgment to give time for repentance (v. 9), so God may *hasten* it (see Sir 36.10) if people repent. **3.13** For *new heavens and a new earth*, see Isa 65.17; 66.22; Rev 21.1. Probably a renewal of this creation (not its replacement by another) is meant (as in Rom 8.21): the fire will purge it of evil, so that *righteousness* (personified) can at last find a *home* in it. **3.15** God's *patience* is *salvation* because delaying the judgment gives opportunity for repentance (see v. 9). *Paul* also treated the hope of the Lord's coming as a motive for righteous living. The reference is too general to identify which Pauline Letters had been written to the churches addressed here. **3.16** *Ignorant*, lit. "uninstructed." Paul's difficult sayings are open to misinterpretation only by those who have not gained adequate Christian understanding. Either the opponents claimed Paul's teaching on freedom from the law (see, e.g., Rom 4.15; 5.20; 8.1–2; 1 Cor 6.12; 2 Cor 3.17) as support for their own view of freedom (see note on 2.19), or they held that his expectation of the Lord's coming

own destruction, as they do the other
scriptures. 17 You therefore, beloved,
since you are forewarned, beware that
you are not carried away with the error of
the lawless and lose your own stability.
18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of
our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him
be the glory both now and to the day of
eternity. Amen.[a]

a Other ancient authorities lack *Amen*

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soon (see, e.g., Rom 13.11–12; 16.20; Phil 4.5; 1 Thess 4.15) had been disproved (see note on 3.4). The reference to Paul's Letters alongside *the other scriptures* shows that they were already being treated as scripture, i.e., read in Christian worship along with the OT.

THE FIRST LETTER OF

JOHN

Form

THOUGH IT IS GENERALLY REFERRED to as a "letter" or "epistle," 1 John does not have the standard opening and closing formulas of a letter. It seems instead to be a kind of essay or homily written to deal with a specific problem.

Author and Relation to Gospel of John

The language, style, and ideas of 1 John are clearly very similar to those of the Gospel of John. Therefore its author was long believed to be identical with the author of the Gospel, who was held to be the apostle John. Though this identification of the Gospel's author is no longer certain (see Introduction to the Gospel of John), it remains possible that the same author wrote both books. However, differences in writing style and ideas have led many to conclude that 1 John was written by someone else. This person may be the elder who wrote 2 and 3 John, since 1 and 2 John are very similar in style and seem to address the same historical situation. At many points, 1 John seems to quote the words of the Fourth Gospel, or at least the tradition on which that Gospel is based. Thus it is likely that 1 John comes from the same early Christian community or "school" as the Gospel of John, but from a later point in its history. The author may speak for a group who guarded the community's traditions (1.1–5).

Date and Place

If 1 John was composed after the Gospel of John, it was probably written no earlier than around 100 C.E., though an exact date cannot be given. According to traditions dating from the second century, 1 John was written in Ephesus. Other places have been suggested, but there is no better evidence for them than for Ephesus.

Historical Background

1 John speaks of certain people who "went out from us," whom it calls antichrists and liars who deny that Jesus is the Christ or that "Jesus Christ has come in the

flesh" (2.18–27; 4.1–3). This suggests that 1 John was written to oppose a movement that departed from the community's traditional beliefs about Jesus (2.24). We do not know exactly what these opponents believed and taught, though they probably claimed to be speaking under the influence of the Holy Spirit (4.1), perhaps believing that Jn 14.25–26; 16.12–13 were being fulfilled in them. Most scholars hold that this movement was in some way connected with Docetism, the belief of a number of early Christian groups that Jesus Christ was a spirit, not a physical human being. The opponents of 1 John may have denied that the human Jesus was to be identified with the divine Christ or that Jesus' death had value for salvation.

Message

In opposing this movement, 1 John urges its Christian readers to stay with what they have heard "from the beginning." This means believing in the identity of the physical, human Jesus with the divine Son of God and in the saving value of his death. It also means keeping the commandment to love one another, an area in which the author probably considered the opponents lacking. 1 John repeatedly insists that one cannot truly believe in Jesus Christ without truly and selflessly loving other believers. It is this insistence that "God is love" (4.8) that has kept people interested in 1 John long after the circumstances in which it was written have passed into obscurity. *David K Rensberger*

The Word of Life

1 We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— 2 this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us— 3 we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. 4 We are writing these things so that our[a] joy may be complete.

God Is Light

5 This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is

a Other ancient authorities read *your*

1.1–4 Cf. this prologue with Jn 1.1–18, on which it is probably based. The author uses this familiar material to establish some important themes. One of these is Jesus Christ's real humanity. Another is the author's desire that the readers be faithful to the tradition that the author represents, with its testimony about what has been revealed in Jesus. See also Introduction. **1.1** *What was from the beginning.* See Jn 1.1, but here the phrase means not only the eternal Word, but also the *word of life*, the Christian proclamation that the author regards as having been embodied in Jesus and handed on since his time. See also 1 Jn 2.7, 13–14, 24; 3.11. **1.2** *Revealed.* See 3.5, 8; cf. the different use in Jn 1.31; 2.11. *Eternal life.* See 2.25; 3.14–15; 5.11–13, 20; Jn 3.15–16, 36; 5.24; 6.40, 47; 10.28; 11.25–26; 17.2–3; 20.31. **1.3** 1 John needs to stress that *Jesus* is *Christ* and God's *Son* (see Introduction; 2.22; 3.23; 4.15; 5.1, 5; also Jn 20.31). **1.4** *We are writing.* See 2.1, 12–14, 21, 26; 5.13. *That our joy may be complete.* See Jn 3.29; 15.11; 16.24; 17.13; 2 Jn 12.

1.5–2.11 A unit marked by *light* and *darkness* at both ends and containing six quotations from the author's opponents (*if we say*, 1.6, 8, 10, on sin; *whoever says*, 2.4, 6, 9, on obedience and love).

light and in him there is no darkness at
all. 6 If we say that we have fellowship with
him while we are walking in darkness, we
lie and do not do what is true; 7 but if we
walk in the light as he himself is in the
light, we have fellowship with one an-
other, and the blood of Jesus his Son
cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we say that we
have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the
truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins,
he who is faithful and just will forgive us
our sins and cleanse us from all unrigh-
teousness. 10 If we say that we have not
sinned, we make him a liar, and his word
is not in us.

2 My little children, I am writing these
things to you so that you may not sin.
But if anyone does sin, we have an advo-
cate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righ-
teous; 2 and he is the atoning sacrifice for
our sins, and not for ours only but also for
the sins of the whole world.

3 Now by this we may be sure that we
know him, if we obey his commandments.
4 Whoever says, "I have come to know
him," but does not obey his command-
ments, is a liar, and in such a person the
truth does not exist; 5 but whoever obeys
his word, truly in this person the love of
God has reached perfection. By this we
may be sure that we are in him: 6 whoever
says, "I abide in him," ought to walk just
as he walked.

7 Beloved, I am writing you no new
commandment, but an old command-
ment that you have had from the begin-
ning; the old commandment is the word
that you have heard. 8 Yet I am writing
you a new commandment that is true in
him and in you, because[b] the darkness is
passing away and the true light is already
shining. 9 Whoever says, "I am in the
light," while hating a brother or sister,[c] is
still in the darkness. 10 Whoever loves a
brother or sister[d] lives in the light, and in
such a person[e] there is no cause for
stumbling. 11 But whoever hates another
believer[f] is in the darkness, walks in the
darkness, and does not know the way to
go, because the darkness has brought on
blindness.

Reasons for Writing

12 I am writing to you, little
children,
because your sins are forgiven
on account of his name.
13 I am writing to you, fathers,
because you know him who is
from the beginning.
I am writing to you, young
people,
because you have conquered
the evil one.
14 I write to you, children,
because you know the Father.
I write to you, fathers,

b Or *that* *c* Gk *hating a brother* *d* Gk *loves a brother* *e* Or *in it* *f* Gk *hates a brother*

1.5 *Message.* See 3.11. *God is light.* Cf. 4.8. On *light* and *darkness,* see Jn 1.4–5; 8.12; 9.4–5; 12.46. **1.6–7** *Walking in darkness, walk in the light.* See Jn 3.19–21; 8.12; 11.9–10; 12.35–36. **1.6** See 2.4. **1.7** On imitating Christ (or God), see 2.6; 3.3, 16; 4.11 (also Jn 13.15, 34; 15.10, 12). On Jesus' *blood,* see 5.6–8. **1.8–2.2** 1 John maintains the possibility of sinlessness (3.4–10; 5.18), but also the confidence that God forgives sin through Jesus (see also 1.7; 5.16–17). **1.8** The *truth* is identical to God's word (see 1.10; see also 2.4, 7; Jn 17.17). **1.9** *Just.* The same Greek word is translated *righteous* in 2.1, 29; 3.7. **2.1** *Advocate,* used for the Holy Spirit in Jn 14.16, 26; 15.26; 16.7. On Christ as advocate, see Rom 8.34; Heb 7.25; 9.24. **2.2** An *atoning sacrifice* cleanses from sin (4.10; see also Lev 16.16, 30). *Sins of the whole world.* See Jn 1.29. **2.3** *Know him.* See 4.8. *Commandments,* in particular the commandment of love. See 2.7–8; 3.22–24; 4.21; 5.2–3; Jn 13.34; 14.15, 21; 15.10, 12–17. **2.4** *Liar.* See 1.6; 2.22; 4.20; also 1.10; 5.10. **2.5** *Love of God* may mean love for God or love from God. *Perfection.* See 4.12, 17. **2.6** *Abide in him.* On mutual abiding among God, Jesus, and Christians, see 2.24, 27–28; 3.6, 9, 15–17, 24; 4.13–16; 5.20; and Jn 6.56; 10.38; 14.10–11, 17, 20, 23; 15.1–10; 17.21–23, 26. **2.7** *New commandment, old commandment.* See Jn 13.34; 2 Jn 5. *Beginning . . . heard.* See 1.1; 2.24; 3.11. **2.8** *True light.* See Jn 1.5, 9. **2.9–11** *Love* and *hate* are not just feelings, but deeds (3.15–18; 4.20). *Brother or sister,* a fellow Christian. **2.11** *Walks in the darkness.* See note on 1.6–7.

2.12–14 The author writes to build on the readers' strengths. Note the careful, rhythmic structure. **2.12** *Little children,* the readers as a whole (see 2.1, 18). **2.13** *Fathers* and *young people* may mean particular groups. *From the beginning.* See note on 1.1. *Conquered.* The same Greek word translated *overcome* in 2.14 (see also 4.4; 5.4–5; Jn 16.33). *Evil one,* i.e., the devil (see note on 3.12). **2.14** *Abides in you.* See note on 2.6. *Overcome.* See

because you know him who is
from the beginning.
I write to you, young people,
because you are strong
and the word of God abides
in you,
and you have overcome the
evil one.

Do Not Love the World

15 Do not love the world or the things
in the world. The love of the Father is not
in those who love the world; 16 for all that
is in the world—the desire of the flesh,
the desire of the eyes, the pride in riches
—comes not from the Father but from
the world. 17 And the world and its de-
sire[g] are passing away, but those who do
the will of God live forever.

Warning Against Antichrists

18 Children, it is the last hour! As you
have heard that antichrist is coming, so
now many antichrists have come. From
this we know that it is the last hour.
19 They went out from us, but they did
not belong to us; for if they had belonged
to us, they would have remained with us.
But by going out they made it plain that
none of them belongs to us. 20 But you
have been anointed by the Holy One, and
all of you have knowledge.[h] 21 I write to
you, not because you do not know the
truth, but because you know it, and you
know that no lie comes from the truth.
22 Who is the liar but the one who denies
that Jesus is the Christ?[i] This is the anti-
christ, the one who denies the Father and
the Son. 23 No one who denies the Son has
the Father; everyone who confesses the
Son has the Father also. 24 Let what you
heard from the beginning abide in you.
If what you heard from the beginning
abides in you, then you will abide in the
Son and in the Father. 25 And this is what
he has promised us,[j] eternal life.

26 I write these things to you concern-
ing those who would deceive you. 27 As
for you, the anointing that you received
from him abides in you, and so you do not
need anyone to teach you. But as his
anointing teaches you about all things,
and is true and is not a lie, and just as it
has taught you, abide in him.[k]

Children of God

28 And now, little children, abide in
him, so that when he is revealed we may
have confidence and not be put to shame
before him at his coming.

g Or *the desire for it* *h* Other ancient authorities read *you know all things* *i* Or *the Messiah* *j* Other ancient authorities read *you* *k* Or *it*

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note on 2.13. **2.15–17** 1 John aligns the world with the devil and against God (4.4–6; 5.4–5, 19) more than other NT writings, even John (cf. Jn 1.10; 3.16–17; 6.51; 8.12; 12.31; 14.30–31; 15.18–19; 16.8–11; 17.13–18). **2.16** *Flesh* is not sexuality, but human self-seeking; see Gal 5.14–17, 24; Eph 2.3; 1 Pet 2.11. *Desire of the eyes*, perhaps what attracts the senses. *Riches*. See 3.17. **2.17** *Passing away*. See 2.8. *Live*, or "abide."

2.18–27 The opponents and their "deceitful" ideas about Christ. Note references to anointing near the beginning and end (2.20, 27). **2.18** Many early Christians believed that they lived in *the last hour* and expected an enemy of God (2 Thess 2.3–12) or false messiahs (Mk 13.5–6, 21–22) before the end. 1 John applies such ideas about an enemy from outside Christianity, an *antichrist* ("counter-Messiah"; only in 1 Jn 2.18, 22; 4.3; 2 Jn 7), to the *many* opponents within. **2.19** *They*, the author's opponents; *us*, the community led by the author, with which the opponents broke fellowship. **2.20** *Anointed* here and *anointing* in 2.27 probably refer to the Holy Spirit (see 2 Cor 1.21–22; Isa 61.1 may be in mind), who *teaches . . . all things* (2.27; Jn 14.26). *Holy One*, probably God, but perhaps Jesus. **2.21** *Know the truth*. See Jn 8.32; 2 Jn 1. **2.22** The opponents perhaps *denied* that the human *Jesus* was identical with the divine *Christ*, God's *Son*; see 4.2–3, 15; 5.5–12; 2 Jn 7. **2.23** *Confesses*. See 4.2–3, 15; Jn 9.22; 12.42. *Has the Father*. See 2 Jn 9. Response to Jesus determines one's relationship to God in the Gospel of John also; see Jn 5.23; 14.9; 15.23. **2.24** *From the beginning*. See note on 1.1. *Abide in you*. See note on 2.6. **2.25** See 1.2. **2.26** *Deceive*. See 3.7; 2 Jn 7. **2.27** *Anointing, teaches . . . all things*. See note on 2.20.

2.28–3.10 The focus shifts from the opponents to the readers with an emphasis on revelation. When Jesus comes and is revealed, those who abide in him will also be revealed; indeed, because he was already revealed to destroy sin, God's children are already revealed by their love. See 1.2; 2.28; 3.2, 5, 8, 10. **2.28–29** At some point the referent of *he* and *him* shifts from Jesus to God. **2.28** *Confidence*. See note on 4.17.

29 If you know that he is righteous,
you may be sure that everyone who does
3 right has been born of him. [1]See
what love the Father has given us,
that we should be called children of God;
and that is what we are. The reason the
world does not know us is that it did not
know him. [2]Beloved, we are God's chil-
dren now; what we will be has not yet
been revealed. What we do know is this:
when he[l] is revealed, we will be like him,
for we will see him as he is. [3]And all who
have this hope in him purify themselves,
just as he is pure.

4 Everyone who commits sin is guilty
of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. [5]You
know that he was revealed to take away
sins, and in him there is no sin. [6]No one
who abides in him sins; no one who sins
has either seen him or known him. [7]Little
children, let no one deceive you. Every-
one who does what is right is righteous,
just as he is righteous. [8]Everyone who
commits sin is a child of the devil; for the
devil has been sinning from the begin-
ning. The Son of God was revealed for
this purpose, to destroy the works of the
devil. [9]Those who have been born of God
do not sin, because God's seed abides in
them;[m] they cannot sin, because they
have been born of God. [10]The children of
God and the children of the devil are
revealed in this way: all who do not do
what is right are not from God, nor are
those who do not love their brothers
and sisters.[n]

Love One Another

11 For this is the message you have
heard from the beginning, that we should
love one another. [12]We must not be like
Cain who was from the evil one and mur-
dered his brother. And why did he mur-
der him? Because his own deeds were evil
and his brother's righteous. [13]Do not be
astonished, brothers and sisters,[o] that the
world hates you. [14]We know that we have
passed from death to life because we love
one another. Whoever does not love
abides in death. [15]All who hate a brother
or sister[n] are murderers, and you know
that murderers do not have eternal life
abiding in them. [16]We know love by this,
that he laid down his life for us—and we
ought to lay down our lives for one an-
other. [17]How does God's love abide in
anyone who has the world's goods and
sees a brother or sister[p] in need and yet
refuses help?

Abiding in God

18 Little children, let us love, not in
word or speech, but in truth and action.
[19]And by this we will know that we are

l Or *it* *m* Or *because the children of God abide in him* *n* Gk *his brother* *o* Gk *brothers* *p* Gk *brother*

2.29 Both God and Jesus are called *righteous* (1.9; 2.1; 3.7); on *doing right*, see note on 3.10. *Born of him.* See 3.9–10; 4.7; 5.1, 18; Jn 1.12–13; 3.3–8. **3.1** *Children of God.* See 3.10; Jn 1.12–13. *Know.* See 4.7; Jn 8.19; 14.7; 15.21; 16.3. **3.2** *Like him*, probably like Jesus; see note on 4.17. *See.* See 3.6; Jn 14.19; 16.16; 17.24; see also 2 Cor 3.18. **3.3** On imitating Jesus, see note on 1.7; see also the imitation of God in Lev 11.45; 19.2; 20.26. *Pure* here means free from sin, the topic of 3.4–10. **3.5** *He*, Jesus. *Take away sins.* See 2.2; 4.10; Jn 1.29. *No sin.* See 2 Cor 5.21; Heb 4.15. **3.6–10** The author here insists that *no one who abides in him sins*; see also 5.18; but cf. 1.8–2.2; 5.16–17. Perhaps 1 John's opponents claimed sinlessness in principle, while 1 John insists on seeking it in practice and warns here against persisting in sin. See also note on 2.6. **3.6** *Known him.* See 2.3–4; 4.7–8; also Jn 14.7–9, 17. **3.8** *Child of the devil.* See Jn 8.44. **3.9** *Seed*, perhaps the Spirit (see 2.27; 3.24; 4.13; Jn 3.5–8; 14.16–17). **3.10** The intent is probably to identify *doing what is right* with *loving one's brothers and sisters*, the subject of the next section. *From God.* See note on 4.1–6.

3.11–17 Love and giving up one's life are contrasted with hatred and taking life. **3.11** *Message.* See 1.5. *From the beginning.* See note on 1.1. *Love one another.* See 2.10; 3.18, 23; 4.7–12; 4.20–5.2; Jn 13.34–35; 15.12–17; 2 Jn 5. **3.12** Some ancient Jewish traditions held that the father of *Cain* (Gen 4.1–16) was the devil. *The evil one.* See 2.13–14; 3.8, 10; 5.18–19; Jn 8.44. On *evil* and *righteous deeds*, see 2.29; 3.7, 10; Jn 3.19–21. **3.13** On the world's *hatred*, see Jn 15.18–19; 17.14. **3.14** *Passed from death to life.* See Jn 5.24. *Whoever ... death.* See 2.9, 11. **3.15** *Murderers.* In addition to 3.12, see Mt 5.21–22; Rom 1.29–32; Rev 21.8; 22.14–15. **3.16** See 4.9; Jn 15.12–13. On imitating Jesus, see note on 1.7. **3.17** See Jas 2.15–16. *God's love.* See note on 2.5. *Abide.* See note on 2.6. *Goods.* The same Greek word is translated *riches* in 2.16. *Refuses help*, lit. "closes the heart." **3.18–24** Deeds of love give assurance of a relationship with God; see 4.17–18. **3.19–20** The

from the truth and will reassure our
hearts before him 20 whenever our hearts
condemn us; for God is greater than our
hearts, and he knows everything. 21 Be-
loved, if our hearts do not condemn us,
we have boldness before God; 22 and we
receive from him whatever we ask, be-
cause we obey his commandments and do
what pleases him.

23 And this is his commandment, that
we should believe in the name of his Son
Jesus Christ and love one another, just as
he has commanded us. 24 All who obey his
commandments abide in him, and he
abides in them. And by this we know that
he abides in us, by the Spirit that he has
given us.

Testing the Spirits

4 Beloved, do not believe every spirit,
but test the spirits to see whether
they are from God; for many false proph-
ets have gone out into the world. 2 By this
you know the Spirit of God: every spirit
that confesses that Jesus Christ has come
in the flesh is from God, 3 and every spirit
that does not confess Jesus[q] is not from
God. And this is the spirit of the anti-
christ, of which you have heard that it is
coming; and now it is already in the
world. 4 Little children, you are from God,
and have conquered them; for the one
who is in you is greater than the one who
is in the world. 5 They are from the world;
therefore what they say is from the world,
and the world listens to them. 6 We are
from God. Whoever knows God listens to
us, and whoever is not from God does not
listen to us. From this we know the spirit
of truth and the spirit of error.

God Is Love

7 Beloved, let us love one another, be-
cause love is from God; everyone who
loves is born of God and knows God.
8 Whoever does not love does not know
God, for God is love. 9 God's love was re-
vealed among us in this way: God sent his
only Son into the world so that we might
live through him. 10 In this is love, not
that we loved God but that he loved us
and sent his Son to be the atoning sacri-
fice for our sins. 11 Beloved, since God
loved us so much, we also ought to love
one another. 12 No one has ever seen God;
if we love one another, God lives in us,
and his love is perfected in us.

13 By this we know that we abide in
him and he in us, because he has given us
of his Spirit. 14 And we have seen and do
testify that the Father has sent his Son as
the Savior of the world. 15 God abides in
those who confess that Jesus is the Son of
God, and they abide in God. 16 So we have
known and believe the love that God has
for us.

God is love, and those who abide in love
abide in God, and God abides in them.

q Other ancient authorities read *does away with Jesus* (Gk *dissolves Jesus*)

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author probably means to reassure readers that, despite their sin, God knows that they are of the truth because of their acts of love. **3.21–22** *Whatever we ask.* See 5.14–15; Jn 14.13–14; 15.7, 16; 16.23–27; Mt 7.7–8; Mk 11.24. *Do what pleases him.* See Jn 8.29. **3.23** *His Son Jesus Christ.* See 2.22. *Love one another.* See note on 3.11. **3.24** See 4.13–16. *Abide.* See note on 2.6. *Spirit.* See Jn 14.15–17, 25–26; 16.7–15.

4.1–6 These verses treat the opponents and their ideas about Jesus, with much attention to what is from God and what is from the world (see 2.16; 3.9–10; 4.7; 5.1, 4, 19; Jn 1.13; 7.17; 8.23, 42, 47; 15.19; 17.14–16; 18.36; 3 Jn 11). **4.1** *Test the spirits,* i.e., test people who claim to speak under the influence of God's Spirit (see 3.24) but may be *false prophets*; see also Deut 13.1–5; 18.20–22; Mt 7.15–23; 1 Cor 12.3. **4.2–3** On the *antichrist* and not *confessing that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh,* see 2 Jn 7; see also note on 1 Jn 2.18. **4.4** *Conquered.* See note on 2.13. *One who is in the world.* See 5.19; Jn 14.30. **4.6** *Knows God.* See note on 3.6. *Listens to us.* See Jn 8.42–47; 10.25–27; 18.37. *Spirit of truth,* a term used only here and Jn 14.17; 15.26; 16.13 in the NT (see also 1 Jn 5.6), but also found in ancient Jewish writings. *Spirit of error,* or spirit of "deception." See Mt 24.11, 24; Mk 13.5–6, 21–22; 2 Thess 2.11; 1 Tim 4.1; Rev 12.9.

4.7–18 God's love for us and our love for one another. **4.7** *Born of God and knows God.* See 2.3, 29; 3.6–10. **4.9** See 3.16; also Jn 3.16. **4.10** *Atoning sacrifice for our sins.* See note on 2.2. **4.11** On imitating God, see note on 1.7. **4.12** *No one has ever seen God.* See Jn 1.18; 3.13; 6.46; 3 Jn 11. *God lives in us.* See note on 2.6. *His love is perfected.* See 2.5; 4.17–18. **4.13–16** A summary of everything since 3.23. **4.14** *Seen and . . . testify.* See 1.1–2. *Savior of the world.* See Jn 3.17; 4.42; 12.47. **4.15** See 2.22–24; 3.23–24; 5.5, 10, 20. **4.16** *For*

17 Love has been perfected among us in
this: that we may have boldness on the
day of judgment, because as he is, so are
we in this world. 18 There is no fear in
love, but perfect love casts out fear; for
fear has to do with punishment, and who-
ever fears has not reached perfection in
love. 19 We love[r] because he first loved
us. 20 Those who say, "I love God," and
hate their brothers or sisters,[s] are liars;
for those who do not love a brother or
sister[t] whom they have seen, cannot love
God whom they have not seen. 21 The
commandment we have from him is this:
those who love God must love their broth-
ers and sisters[s] also.

Faith Conquers the World

5 Everyone who believes that Jesus is
the Christ[u] has been born of God,
and everyone who loves the parent loves
the child. 2 By this we know that we love
the children of God, when we love God
and obey his commandments. 3 For the
love of God is this, that we obey his com-
mandments. And his commandments are
not burdensome, 4 for whatever is born of
God conquers the world. And this is the
victory that conquers the world, our faith.
5 Who is it that conquers the world but the
one who believes that Jesus is the Son
of God?

Testimony Concerning the Son of God

6 This is the one who came by water
and blood, Jesus Christ, not with the wa-
ter only but with the water and the blood.
And the Spirit is the one that testifies, for
the Spirit is the truth. 7 There are three
that testify:[v] 8 the Spirit and the water
and the blood, and these three agree. 9 If
we receive human testimony, the testi-
mony of God is greater; for this is the tes-
timony of God that he has testified to his
Son. 10 Those who believe in the Son of
God have the testimony in their hearts.
Those who do not believe in God[w] have
made him a liar by not believing in the
testimony that God has given concerning
his Son. 11 And this is the testimony: God
gave us eternal life, and this life is in his
Son. 12 Whoever has the Son has life; who-
ever does not have the Son of God does
not have life.

Epilogue

13 I write these things to you who be-
lieve in the name of the Son of God, so
that you may know that you have eternal
life.
14 And this is the boldness we have in
him, that if we ask anything according to
his will, he hears us. 15 And if we know
that he hears us in whatever we ask, we
know that we have obtained the requests
made of him. 16 If you see your brother or
sister[x] committing what is not a mortal

r Other ancient authorities add *him*; others add *God* s Gk *brothers* t Gk *brother* u Or *the Messiah* v A few other authorities read (with variations) *7There are three that testify in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one. 8And there are three that testify on earth:*
w Other ancient authorities read *in the Son*
x Gk *your brother*

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us, or "in us" or "among us." **4.17** *Boldness.* The same Greek word is translated *confidence* in 2.28. *He*, i.e., Jesus; see 2.6; 3.2–3, 7, 16. **4.18** *Fear*, i.e., of judgment. **4.19–5.5** Our love for God and one another is linked with right belief in Jesus by means of God's commandment (see 3.23). **4.19** *We love*, or "Let us love." **4.20** See 1.6; 2.4, 9; also 3.15–17. *Whom they have not seen.* See 4.12. **4.21** See Mk 12.29–31. **5.1** This verse looks back to 4.21, but also forward to 5.5. *Believes that Jesus is the Christ* (see also 5.5; *Son of God*). See Jn 20.31; also 1 Jn 2.22–23; 4.2–3, 15. *Born of God.* See note on 2.29. **5.3** *Love . . . commandments.* See Jn 14.15, 21–24, 31; 15.10; 2 Jn 6; also 1 Jn 2.3–5. **5.4** *Conquers the world*, as Jesus did (Jn 16.33); see also 1 Jn 2.13–14; 4.4. **5.6–12** God testifies to Jesus the Son; see also Jn 5.31–40; 8.17–18; 15.26–27. **5.6** *Water only* may refer to Jesus' baptism (Jn 1.31–34) and *blood* to his crucifixion (see Jn 19.34–35). *The Spirit is the truth.* See note on 4.6. **5.7–8** Only a very few unreliable manuscripts contain the trinitarian addition to v. 7 (see text note *v*). *Three.* See Deut 19.15. **5.9** On *testimony*, human and divine, see Jn 5.31–40; 8.18. **5.10** See Jn 3.18, 33. *Made him a liar.* See 1.10. **5.11** See Jn 3.16; 5.26; 11.25–26; 14.6. **5.12** See 2.23; Jn 3.36; 2 Jn 9.

5.13–21 After a concluding summary similar to Jn 20.31, these verses give a variety of final exhortations. **5.13** *I write.* See note on 1.4. *Believe in the name of the Son.* See 3.23; Jn 1.12; 20.31. **5.14** *In him*, or "toward him." **5.16** *Mortal sin*, one that leads to death; 3.14 may suggest that this sin is failure to love. This is not the same as the sin mentioned in Mk 3.29. On whether or not Christians can *sin*, see note on 3.6–10. *Do not . . . pray.* See also 1 Sam 2.25; Jer

sin, you will ask, and God[y] will give life to
such a one—to those whose sin is not
mortal. There is sin that is mortal; I do
not say that you should pray about that.
17 All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin
that is not mortal.

18 We know that those who are born
of God do not sin, but the one who was
born of God protects them, and the evil
one does not touch them. 19 We know that
we are God's children, and that the whole
world lies under the power of the evil one.
20 And we know that the Son of God has
come and has given us understanding so
that we may know him who is true;[z] and
we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus
Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

21 Little children, keep yourselves
from idols.[a]

y Gk *he* *z* Other ancient authorities read *know the true God* *a* Other ancient authorities add *Amen*

7.16; 11.14; Jn 17.9. **5.18–20** Three statements, each introduced by *we know*, contrast those who are of God with the forces of evil. **5.18** *Do not sin*. See 3.8–9; cf. 5.16–17. *The one who was born of God* is probably Jesus, but this could refer to Christians protecting themselves. *Protects them*. See Jn 17.11–12, 15. *Evil one*. See note on 3.12. **5.19** *God's children*, or "from God." See 4.4, 6. *World*. See 2.15–17; 5.4–5. **5.20** *Son of God*. See 5.5. *Know him who is true . . . the true God and eternal life*. This probably means the Father rather than Jesus (see Jn 17.3; but note that Jesus is identified with life in 1 Jn 1.2; Jn 1.3–4; 11.25; 14.6). **5.21** *Idols* are the opposite of the true God and eternal life (v. 20; see Jer 10.9–10; 1 Thess 1.9; see also Acts 14.15; Rom 1.25; 2 Cor 6.16) and so stand for the teaching that 1 John opposes.

THE SECOND LETTER OF

JOHN

Form

A TRUE LETTER, 2 JOHN contains the usual opening and closing formulas. It is apparently addressed to a Christian congregation, referred to as an "elect lady" (v. 1).

Author and Relation to Other Writings

The author calls himself "the elder" (v. 1), suggesting that he holds a position of some authority within the Christian community concerned. He is presumably the same as the author of 3 John and may have written 1 John also. It is no longer certain that he was the apostle John or even identical with the author of the Fourth Gospel (see Introductions to the Gospel of John and 1 John).

Date and Place

The similarities among the three documents suggest that 2 John was probably written at about the same time and place as 1 and 3 John, i.e., around 100 C.E., perhaps at Ephesus.

Historical Background and Message

Like 1 John, 2 John seems to have been written during a conflict with people who denied that the human Jesus was identical with the divine Christ. Though it insists on the importance of loving one another, it calls on its readers to avoid these opponents and even to refuse them the hospitality usually shown to Christian travelers. *David K Rensberger*

Salutation

1 The elder to the elect lady and her
children, whom I love in the truth, and
not only I but also all who know the truth,
2 because of the truth that abides in us and
will be with us forever:
3 Grace, mercy, and peace will be with
us from God the Father and from[a] Jesus
Christ, the Father's Son, in truth and love.

Truth and Love

4 I was overjoyed to find some of your
children walking in the truth, just as we
have been commanded by the Father.
5 But now, dear lady, I ask you, not as
though I were writing you a new com-
mandment, but one we have had from the
beginning, let us love one another. 6 And
this is love, that we walk according to his
commandments; this is the command-
ment just as you have heard it from the
beginning—you must walk in it.
7 Many deceivers have gone out into
the world, those who do not confess that
Jesus Christ has come in the flesh; any
such person is the deceiver and the anti-
christ! 8 Be on your guard, so that you do
not lose what we[b] have worked for, but
may receive a full reward. 9 Everyone who
does not abide in the teaching of Christ,
but goes beyond it, does not have God;
whoever abides in the teaching has both
the Father and the Son. 10 Do not receive
into the house or welcome anyone who
comes to you and does not bring this
teaching; 11 for to welcome is to partici-
pate in the evil deeds of such a person.

Final Greetings

12 Although I have much to write to
you, I would rather not use paper and
ink; instead I hope to come to you and
talk with you face to face, so that our joy
may be complete.
13 The children of your elect sister
send you their greetings.[c]

a Other ancient authorities add *the Lord*
b Other ancient authorities read *you* c Other ancient authorities add *Amen*

1–3 An opening similar to other NT Letters; see, e.g., 2 Cor 1.1–2 and especially 1 Tim 1.1–2; 2 Tim 1.1–2. **1** *Elect lady*, perhaps an individual church leader, but more likely a metaphor for a congregation, whose members are *her children*; see v. 13. *Truth* is important in the Gospel and Letters of John. Here it probably relates to the controversy over false teaching (see Introduction). On *loving in the truth*, see 1 Jn 3.18; 3 Jn 1; on *knowing the truth*, see Jn 8.32; 1 Jn 2.21. **2** *The truth that abides in us and will be with us forever*. See Jn 14.16–17; 1 Jn 2.27. **4–11** The body of the Letter focuses on truth and love. **4** On *walking in the truth*, see 3 Jn 3–4; see also note on v. 6. **5** On the *new commandment* to *love one another*, which has really been a commandment *from the beginning*, see Jn 13.34–35; 15.12–17; 1 Jn 2.7–11; 3.11, 23. **6** See 1 Jn 5.2–3. *Walk*. See also 1 Jn 1.6–7; 2.6, 11.

7 See 1 Jn 2.18–27; 4.1–3. *Has come*, lit. "is coming." *Antichrist*. See note on 1 Jn 2.18. **8** *What we have worked for*. See Jn 6.27–29. *We* may mean the author and other church leaders, or it may include the readers, as elsewhere in 2 John. **9** *The teaching of Christ*, i.e., the doctrine of Christ *coming in the flesh* (v. 7; see also 1 Jn 2.22–27; 4.15). On having *both the Father and the Son*, see 1 Jn 2.23; 5.12. **10–11** Hospitality was essential to traveling missionaries and teachers in the early churches (see, e.g., 3 Jn 5–8; also Rom 12.13; 15.23–24; 16.1–2; Heb 13.2). By forbidding it to the opponents, the author hopes to hinder the spread of their teaching (see also Rom 16.17; 2 Thess 3.6). In 3 Jn 9–10, the author complains of similar tactics being used against him! *Evil deeds*. See Jn 3.19–20; 7.7; 1 Jn 3.12.

12–13 Concluding greetings, again similar to other NT Letters. See especially 1 Pet 5.13; 3 Jn 15. **12** See 3 Jn 13–14. *So that our joy may be complete*. See 1 Jn 1.4; also Jn 3.29; 15.11; 16.24; 17.13. **13** *Elect sister*. See note on v. 1.

THE THIRD LETTER OF

JOHN

Form, Author, and Relation to Other Writings

LIKE 2 JOHN, 3 JOHN IS A GENUINE LETTER. Its addressee, Gaius, is otherwise unknown. "The elder," as the author of 3 John calls himself (v. 1), is presumably the same as the author of 2 John and may also have written 1 John. Though it is no longer certain that he was the apostle John or identical with the author of the Fourth Gospel (see Introductions to the Gospel of John and 1 John), he evidently held a position of some authority within the Christian community concerned.

Date and Place

The similarities among 3 John and 1 and 2 John suggest that the three documents were probably written at about the same time and place, i.e., around 100 C.E., perhaps at Ephesus.

Historical Background and Message

Unlike 1 and 2 John, 3 John contains no discussion of doctrine or love. Instead, it praises Gaius for his hospitality and criticizes someone named Diotrephes for opposing the elder. It has been suggested that Diotrephes was a leader of the movement confronted by 1 and 2 John, or a church leader seeking either to establish his own authority or to keep his church free from controversies.
David K Rensberger

Salutation

1 The elder to the beloved Gaius,
whom I love in truth.

Gaius Commended for His Hospitality

2 Beloved, I pray that all may go well
with you and that you may be in good
health, just as it is well with your soul. 3 I
was overjoyed when some of the friends[a]
arrived and testified to your faithfulness
to the truth, namely how you walk in the
truth. 4 I have no greater joy than this, to
hear that my children are walking in the
truth.

5 Beloved, you do faithfully whatever
you do for the friends,[a] even though
they are strangers to you; 6 they have testi-
fied to your love before the church. You
will do well to send them on in a manner
worthy of God; 7 for they began their
journey for the sake of Christ,[b] accepting
no support from non-believers.[c] 8 There-
fore we ought to support such people, so
that we may become co-workers with the
truth.

Diotrephes and Demetrius

9 I have written something to the
church; but Diotrephes, who likes to put
himself first, does not acknowledge our
authority. 10 So if I come, I will call atten-
tion to what he is doing in spreading false
charges against us. And not content with
those charges, he refuses to welcome the
friends,[a] and even prevents those who
want to do so and expels them from the
church.

11 Beloved, do not imitate what is evil
but imitate what is good. Whoever does
good is from God; whoever does evil has
not seen God. 12 Everyone has testified fa-
vorably about Demetrius, and so has the
truth itself. We also testify for him,[d] and
you know that our testimony is true.

Final Greetings

13 I have much to write to you, but I
would rather not write with pen and ink;
14 instead I hope to see you soon, and we
will talk together face to face.

15 Peace to you. The friends send you
their greetings. Greet the friends there,
each by name.

a Gk *brothers* b Gk *for the sake of the name*
c Gk *the Gentiles* d Gk lacks *for him*

1–2 An opening typical of Greek personal letters. *Gaius* was a common Roman name borne by three other men in the NT (Acts 19.29; 20.4; Rom 16.23; 1 Cor 1.14). *Whom I love in truth.* See 2 Jn 1.

3–8 Some Christian workers are commended to the hospitality of Gaius. **3** *Your faithfulness to the truth,* lit. "your truth." *Walk in the truth.* See 2 Jn 4. **5–8** On the importance of hospitality in the early churches, see note on 2 Jn 10–11. **6** *Send them on,* i.e., with provisions (see Titus 3.13). **8** *Co-workers.* Cf. 2 Jn 11.

9–12 A dispute between church leaders. **9–10** *Diotrephes* (see Introduction) uses something like the elder's own tactics (2 Jn 10–11) against him. *Acknowledge our authority,* or just "welcome us" (cf. *welcome the friends,* v. 10). **11** *Whoever does good is from God.* See 1 Jn 2.29; 3.10. *Seen God.* See 1 Jn 3.6; 4.12; also Jn 1.18; 6.46. **12** The identity of *Demetrius* is unknown; he may have delivered this letter. The author commends him to Gaius's hospitality and support (see vv. 5–8). *Our testimony is true.* See Jn 5.31–33; 19.35; 21.24.

13–15 Closing greetings typical of NT Letters; see especially 1 Cor 16.19–20; Phil 4.21–22; Titus 3.15. **13–14** See 2 Jn 12.

THE LETTER OF

JUDE

Authorship and Date

THIS LETTER IS ATTRIBUTED to Jude (Greek *Judas*), one of the brothers of Jesus (see Mk 6.3). He is known to have been a prominent leader and traveling missionary in the early Jewish-Christian movement in Palestine (see 1 Cor 9.5). The authenticity of the attribution to Jude has often been doubted, but recent work demonstrates that it is entirely plausible. The Letter cannot be dated with any certainty, but it may well be one of the earliest writings in the NT, as well as one of the few to derive directly from Palestinian Christianity. We do not know to which churches it was originally written.

Purpose and Opponents

The Letter's purpose is to warn the readers about the danger posed by a form of teaching that is being propagated in their churches and to advise them on how to respond. The proponents of this teaching claim to be inspired prophets whose visionary revelations exempt them and all truly spiritual people (i.e., their followers) from any form of moral authority (v. 8). They claim that the grace of God in Christ liberates them to do as they please (v. 4) and apparently demonstrate this freedom especially by sexual indulgence (v. 7). In response, Jude insists that faith in the Christian gospel is inseparable from moral obedience to Christ. The opponents are a serious danger to his readers, because they encourage deliberate immorality that puts their salvation at risk. Such outright rejection of God's moral authority can only incur judgment when Christ comes as judge. But Jude's purpose is not only to warn of the danger (vv. 4–19). It is also to urge his readers "to contend for the faith" (v. 3) by positively living out the gospel in faith, hope, and love (vv. 20–21). His advice on how to deal with the opponents and their followers (vv. 22–23) combines a realistic sense of the danger they pose to his readers with a pastoral concern for their salvation.

Use of the OT and Extracanonical Literature

Jude bases much of his argument on OT allusions and employs current Jewish methods of scriptural interpretation. He also refers to Jewish works that are not

in the OT canon, especially *1 Enoch* (see vv. 6, 14–15) and an apocryphal story about the burial of Moses (see v. 9) that he probably read in the (now lost) ending of the *Testament of Moses*. Such apocryphal literature was widely read and valued in Judaism at that time. *Richard J. Bauckham*

Salutation

1 Jude,[a] a servant[b] of Jesus Christ
and brother of James,
To those who are called, who are be-
loved[c] in[d] God the Father and kept safe
for[d] Jesus Christ:
2 May mercy, peace, and love be yours
in abundance.

Occasion and Theme

3 Beloved, while eagerly preparing to
write to you about the salvation we share,
I find it necessary to write and appeal to
you to contend for the faith that was once
for all entrusted to the saints. 4 For certain
intruders have stolen in among you, peo-
ple who long ago were designated for this
condemnation as ungodly, who pervert
the grace of our God into licentiousness
and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus
Christ.[e]

Judgment on False Teachers

5 Now I desire to remind you, though
you are fully informed, that the Lord,
who once for all saved[f] a people out of
the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed
those who did not believe. 6 And the an-
gels who did not keep their own position,
but left their proper dwelling, he has kept
in eternal chains in deepest darkness for
the judgment of the great day. 7 Likewise,
Sodom and Gomorrah and the surround-
ing cities, which, in the same manner as
they, indulged in sexual immorality and
pursued unnatural lust,[g] serve as an ex-
ample by undergoing a punishment of
eternal fire.

a Gk *Judas* b Gk *slave* c Other ancient authorities read *sanctified* d Or *by* e Or *the only Master and our Lord Jesus Christ* f Other ancient authorities read *though you were once for all fully informed, that Jesus* (or *Joshua*) *who saved* g Gk *went after other flesh*

1–2 The opening address and greeting are characteristic of early Christian letters. **1** For *Jude*, see Mk 6.3. *James* must be the Lord's brother (see Gal 1.19), leader of the Jerusalem church and so well known as to need no further identification (see Acts 15.13; Jas 1.1). **3–4** The theme of the Letter is introduced in two parts: an appeal (v. 3) and a reference to the situation that makes the appeal necessary (v. 4). **3** *The faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints* is the gospel as the readers received it from the apostles who founded their churches. Paul makes similar references to the gospel as it was first preached to his readers; see Rom 16.17; 2 Cor 11.4; Gal 1.9. **4** *This condemnation* refers to the prophecies of judgment (vv. 5–19), especially Enoch's (vv. 14–15). The opponents *pervert the grace of our God* by understanding Christian freedom as freedom to do as they like. They *deny* Christ's moral authority by practicing and teaching immorality.

5–19 Jude indicates the character and fate of the opponents by citing a series of OT examples of God's judgment on the wicked (vv. 5–13) and two prophecies regarding the ungodly (vv. 14–19). By identifying the opponents as these ungodly people who are to be judged at the Lord's coming, Jude shows how dangerous they are to the churches. **5** A whole generation of faithless Israelites died in the wilderness (Num 14.1–35; 26.64–65). **6** *The angels who . . . left their proper dwelling*. In the story of the "sons of God" (Gen 6.1–4), as interpreted in *1 Enoch* 6–19, the angels left heaven to mate with women. **7** The Sodomites attempted sexual relations with angels (Gen 19.4–11). **8** The unusual term *dreamers* refers to the visions the opponents claimed as authorizing their immoral behavior. *Glorious ones* was a common term for angels. Because the angels were seen as guardians of the moral order of creation, the opponents who claimed freedom from this or-

8 Yet in the same way these dreamers
also defile the flesh, reject authority, and
slander the glorious ones.[h] 9 But when
the archangel Michael contended with the
devil and disputed about the body of Mo-
ses, he did not dare to bring a condemna-
tion of slander[i] against him, but said,
"The Lord rebuke you!" 10 But these peo-
ple slander whatever they do not under-
stand, and they are destroyed by those
things that, like irrational animals, they
know by instinct. 11 Woe to them! For they
go the way of Cain, and abandon them-
selves to Balaam's error for the sake of
gain, and perish in Korah's rebellion.
12 These are blemishes[j] on your love-
feasts, while they feast with you without
fear, feeding themselves.[k] They are wa-
terless clouds carried along by the winds;
autumn trees without fruit, twice dead,
uprooted; 13 wild waves of the sea, casting
up the foam of their own shame; wander-
ing stars, for whom the deepest darkness
has been reserved forever.

14 It was also about these that Enoch,
in the seventh generation from Adam,
prophesied, saying, "See, the Lord is com-
ing[l] with ten thousands of his holy ones,
15 to execute judgment on all, and to con-
vict everyone of all the deeds of ungodli-
ness that they have committed in such an
ungodly way, and of all the harsh things
that ungodly sinners have spoken against
him." 16 These are grumblers and malcon-
tents; they indulge their own lusts; they
are bombastic in speech, flattering people
to their own advantage.

Final Advice

17 But you, beloved, must remember
the predictions of the apostles of our
Lord Jesus Christ; 18 for they said to you,
"In the last time there will be scoffers, in-
dulging their own ungodly lusts." 19 It is
these worldly people, devoid of the Spirit,
who are causing divisions. 20 But you, be-
loved, build yourselves up on your most
holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; 21 keep
yourselves in the love of God; look for-
ward to the mercy of our Lord Jesus
Christ that leads to[m] eternal life. 22 And
have mercy on some who are wavering;
23 save others by snatching them out of
the fire; and have mercy on still others
with fear, hating even the tunic defiled by
their bodies.[n]

Doxology

24 Now to him who is able to keep you
from falling, and to make you stand with-
out blemish in the presence of his glory
with rejoicing, 25 to the only God our Sav-
ior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be
glory, majesty, power, and authority, be-
fore all time and now and forever. Amen.

h Or *angels*; Gk *glories* *i* Or *condemnation for blasphemy* *j* Or *reefs* *k* Or *without fear. They are shepherds who care only for themselves* *l* Gk *came* *m* Gk *Christ to* *n* Gk *by the flesh.* The Greek text of verses 22-23 is uncertain at several points

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der disparaged them. **9** In an apocryphal story about the burial of Moses, Michael and the devil engage in a legal dispute. The devil accuses Moses of murder. Michael knows this charge is slanderous, but he does not presume (*dare*) to condemn the devil for *slander* on his own authority. Instead he refers the matter to the authority of the divine judge (*the Lord*). The implication of v. 9 is to contrast Michael's behavior with that of the opponents, who claim to be exempt from all moral authority (see v. 8) and on their own authority reject all moral charges against them. **11** These OT examples are of people responsible for leading others into sin. *Cain* (see Gen 4.1–16; 1 Jn 3.12), in Jewish tradition, was the first heretic; the prophet *Balaam* gave the advice that led Israel into apostasy (Num 25.1–4; 31.16); *Korah* led a rebellion against Moses (Num 16.1–35). **12** *Blemishes. Reefs* (see text note *j*) is preferable: the opponents are a hidden danger to the churches, especially at the fellowship meals (*love-feasts*) where they do their teaching. *Feeding themselves.* The text note (*k*) gives the right sense, which echoes Ezek 34.2. The metaphor of *clouds* is from Prov 25.14. **13** The metaphor of *waves* is from Isa 57.20. *Wandering stars* mislead those who are guided by them. **14–15** The prophecy of Enoch (see Gen 5.18–24) is from *1 Enoch* 1.9. **19** The charge *devoid of the Spirit* is probably directed to the opponents' claim that the Spirit makes them superior to ordinary morality.

20–23 This section explains how the readers are to respond to the appeal made in v. 3, indicating the ways in which they can resist the danger from false teaching (vv. 20–21) and the ways in which they should seek to reclaim the false teachers and their followers (vv. 22–23). **23** The *fire* is that of divine judgment (see Am 4.11; Zech 3.2). *Hating even the tunic defiled by their bodies* implies avoiding the danger of personal contact with those who indulge in sins of the flesh. **24–25** A doxology concludes the Letter (as in Rom 16.25–27; 2 Pet 3.18).

THE REVELATION TO JOHN (APOCALYPSE)

Author

THE REVELATION TO JOHN WAS WRITTEN by a person named "John" (1.1, 4, 9; 22.8), an anglicized version of a common ancient Hebrew name often transliterated "Johanan." Many early Christian writers assumed that the author of this book had also written the Gospel and Letters of John and identified him with John the son of Zebedee, one of the twelve apostles. Both these assumptions seem false. While the author of Revelation regards the twelve apostles as authoritative figures of the past (21.14), he identifies himself simply as a servant of God (1.1) and as a brother who shares the sufferings of those to whom he addresses his book (1.9). On the basis of both literary style and theological emphases, it is unlikely that he wrote either the Gospel or the Letters of John. Although modern critical scholars have abandoned the theory of common authorship, the traditional association of these five compositions with the name "John" has encouraged the view that all five were produced by various members of a "Johannine community" behind which stood the shadowy figure of John the apostle.

Although the specific identity of the author is unknown, Revelation provides some important clues about his general identity. The frequent allusions to the OT (particularly Ezekiel and Daniel) suggest his Jewish origin. The Semitic features of his Greek style indicate that he was a native of Palestine who emigrated to Asia Minor, perhaps in the wake of the first Jewish revolt against Rome (66–73 C.E.), when many were forced to flee for their lives. By calling his composition a prophetic book (1.3; 22.7, 10, 18, 19), he clearly implies that he is a prophet. His familiarity with the circumstances of the seven Christian communities he addresses further suggests that he was probably a well-known itinerant Christian prophet (22.9).

Date

Many early Christian writers thought that Revelation had been written toward the end of Domitian's reign (81–96 C.E.), but a few later writers thought that John had written a generation earlier, during the persecution that occurred in 64 C.E. under Nero (54–68 C.E.). Evidence supporting both dates can be found in the book. Rev 11.1–3 suggests that the Jewish temple in Jerusalem (destroyed by the Romans in 70 C.E.) was still standing when the book was written. Further, the code name of the beast in Rev 13.18 is 666, widely thought to symbolize the name Nero Caesar. However, other data suggest a date after 70. There are several allusions (13.3; 17.9–11) to the legend of Nero's return that circulated throughout the eastern Mediterranean during the two decades following his suicide in 68. Further, Revelation frequently uses "Babylon" as a code name for Rome (14.8; 16.19; 17.5, 18; 18.2, 10, 21), but Jews used this code name only after the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in 70. In the light of this conflicting evidence, it appears likely that the book was actually composed and assembled in stages over many years and was only completed in its present form toward the end of the first century C.E. Though certainty is not possible, the first edition of the book probably consisted of 1.4–11; 4.1–22.5, to which 1.1–3; 1.12–3.22; 22.6–21 were added in a second edition.

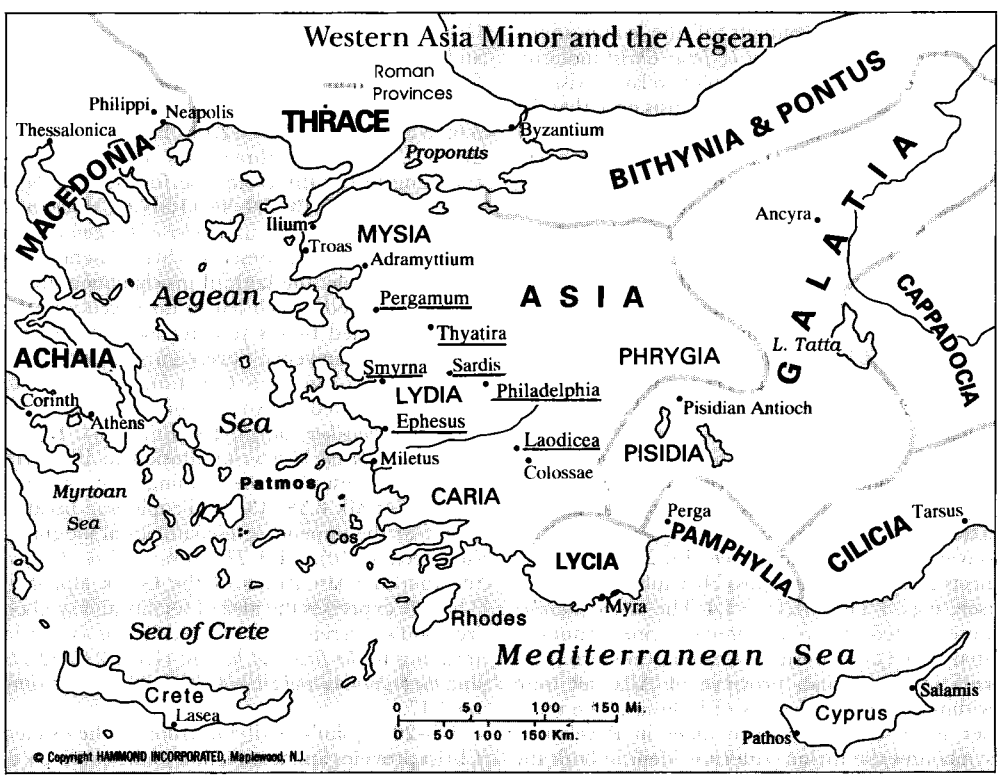
Occasion

The date assigned to Revelation has usually been closely connected by both ancient and modern scholars with the situation of persecution reflected in the book (1.9; 2.10; 12.17), a persecution involving the execution of some Christians (2.13; 6.9–11; 13.15; 17.6; 18.24; 20.4; see also 11.7–10). The persecution under Nero in 64, however, only affected Christians in and around Rome. The view that Domitian fomented an official persecution of Christians in Asia Minor has been widely held by ancient and modern scholars, though no clear historical evidence confirms it. It seems that the persecution of Christians in Asia Minor was not the result of an official Roman policy but instead consisted of random outbreaks of hostility between Christians and their pagan and Jewish neighbors, outbreaks into which Roman governors were sometimes drawn, though not always willingly (see Acts 19.23–41). Thus it is difficult to determine whether the widespread and apparently systematic persecution reflected in this book represents what has actually happened or what the author expects will happen.

Genre

Revelation is usually assigned to the ancient literary genre called "apocalypse." In fact, the name for this genre derives from Rev 1.1, which uses the Greek word *apokalypsis* ("revelation") to designate the contents of the book. An apocalypse is usually a first-person narrative in which the author (normally using a pen name

of some famous ancient biblical figure such as Adam, Abraham, or Enoch) relates one or more revelatory visions about the future or the heavenly world or both. Jewish apocalypses often reflect a sharp distinction between the present evil age and the imminent future age of blessing. The conflict between a righteous minority (Israel or a righteous remnant within Israel) and a wicked majority (hostile foreign powers or a hostile group within Israel) is understood as representing a clash between God and Satan. After a period of intense conflict and great suffering, God (sometimes acting through a messianic agent) will decisively intervene in history to vindicate and reward God's people and punish or eliminate their earthly oppressors. Many Jewish apocalypses use a great deal of symbolism, often quite bizarre (e.g., Dan 7.2–8), and Revelation is no exception. One stock figure of Jewish apocalypses also found in Revelation is the "interpreting angel," a heavenly being who explains the meaning of visions to the seer (1.1; 17.1–18; 21.9–22.5). The only other book-length apocalypse in the Bible is Daniel. *David E. Aune*



The seven churches addressed in the book of Revelation were in the cities underlined on the map, all in the Roman province of Asia (Rev 1.4).

Introduction and Salutation

1 The revelation of Jesus Christ, which
God gave him to show his servants[a]
what must soon take place; he made[b] it
known by sending his angel to his ser-
vant[c] John, 2who testified to the word of
God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ,
even to all that he saw.
3 Blessed is the one who reads aloud
the words of the prophecy, and blessed
are those who hear and who keep what is
written in it; for the time is near.

4 John to the seven churches that are
in Asia:
Grace to you and peace from him who
is and who was and who is to come, and
from the seven spirits who are before his
throne, 5and from Jesus Christ, the faith-
ful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and
the ruler of the kings of the earth.
To him who loves us and freed[d] us
from our sins by his blood, 6and made[b]
us to be a kingdom, priests serving[e] his
God and Father, to him be glory and do-
minion forever and ever. Amen.
7 Look! He is coming with the
clouds;
every eye will see him,
even those who pierced him;
and on his account all the tribes
of the earth will wail.
So it is to be. Amen.
8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega,"
says the Lord God, who is and who was
and who is to come, the Almighty.

A Vision of Christ

9 I, John, your brother who share
with you in Jesus the persecution and the
kingdom and the patient endurance, was

a Gk *slaves* b Gk *and he made* c Gk *slave*
d Other ancient authorities read *washed*
e Gk *priests to*

1.1–2 Following ancient literary conventions, the first sentence functions as a title presenting the essential contents of the composition. **1.1** The phrase *revelation of Jesus Christ* indicates the immediate source of John's revelatory visions; their ultimate source is *God*. An insistence that the events predicted in John's visions *must soon take place* frames the book (1.3; 22.6, 10). The mediating *angel* is mentioned again only in 22.6–9, 16, though two other angelic guides appear in 17.1–18 and 21.9–22.5. **1.3** *Blessed* introduces the first of seven beatitudes (14.13; 16.15; 19.9; 20.6; 22.7, 14). The fact that a designated person *reads aloud* John's book means that it is designed for use in Christian worship (see Col 4.16; 1 Thess 5.27). On the book as *prophecy*, see Introduction. Exhortations that the hearers are to *keep* or obey (see also 22.7, 9) are largely restricted to the introductory and concluding sections of the book (2.1–3.22; 14.12; 16.15; 22.6–21). *The time is near*, i.e., the time when behavior will be judged. **1.4–5a** Revelation begins like a typical ancient letter with the designation of the sender and receiver and the salutation (see also 22.21); this reflects earlier Christian, possibly Pauline, influence (see, e.g., 1 Thess 1.1). **1.4** The *seven churches* were located in seven prominent cities (enumerated in 1.11) in western Anatolia (modern Turkey) in the Roman province of Asia; all were within one hundred miles of Ephesus. The number *seven* (used fifty-seven times in Revelation) symbolizes the divine pattern evident in both the universe and history. The threefold divine name, *him who is and who was and who is to come* (see also 1.8; 11.17; 16.5), alludes to a widespread Hellenistic Jewish name for God based on Ex 3.14, "the one who is." It differs slightly from a popular Greek formula describing God as "the one who is and who was and who will be" by emphasizing the future visitation of God. The *seven spirits* are the seven archangels who stand before God (3.1; 4.5; 5.6; 8.2; see also Tob 12.15; Lk 1.19; *1 Enoch* 20.1–7). **1.5a** The three titles of Jesus (corresponding to the threefold title for God), *faithful witness*, (1.2, 9; 2.13; 6.9; 12.11; 17.6), *firstborn of the dead* (see Col 1.18), and *ruler of the kings of the earth* (17.14; 19.16), describe three essential aspects of his role: the faithful proclamation of the message of God, which led to his execution; the victory signaled by his resurrection; and his future role as universal sovereign. **1.5b–8** The opening doxology (see Gal 1.5), addressed to Christ, is followed by two brief oracles. **1.6** *Made us to be a kingdom, priests*. See Ex 19.6. **1.7** *He is coming with the clouds*, an allusion to Dan 7.13 applied to Jesus as the coming Son of Man (see 14.14; Mk 8.38; 13.26). People *wail* because they fear the impending eschatological judgment (see Zech 12.10). **1.8** *The Alpha and the Omega*, the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. The title expresses the idea of totality and symbolizes God's sovereignty (21.6; 22.13); it is similar in meaning to *the first and the last* (1.17; 2.8; 22.13) and *the beginning and the end* (21.6; 22.13); see note on 1.17.

1.9–20 John's terrifying vision of the exalted Christ provides an introduction to the seven proclamations that follow. **1.9** On the problem of *persecution* as the situation motivating John to write, see Introduction. *Patmos* was a populated

on the island called Patmos because of the
word of God and the testimony of Jesus.[f]
10 I was in the spirit[g] on the Lord's day,
and I heard behind me a loud voice like a
trumpet 11 saying, "Write in a book what
you see and send it to the seven churches,
to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamum, to
Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and
to Laodicea."

12 Then I turned to see whose voice it
was that spoke to me, and on turning I
saw seven golden lampstands, 13 and in
the midst of the lampstands I saw one like
the Son of Man, clothed with a long robe
and with a golden sash across his chest.
14 His head and his hair were white as
white wool, white as snow; his eyes were
like a flame of fire, 15 his feet were like
burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace,
and his voice was like the sound of many
waters. 16 In his right hand he held seven
stars, and from his mouth came a sharp,
two-edged sword, and his face was like the
sun shining with full force.

17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as
though dead. But he placed his right
hand on me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I
am the first and the last, 18 and the living
one. I was dead, and see, I am alive for-
ever and ever; and I have the keys of
Death and of Hades. 19 Now write what
you have seen, what is, and what is to take
place after this. 20 As for the mystery of
the seven stars that you saw in my right
hand, and the seven golden lampstands:
the seven stars are the angels of the seven
churches, and the seven lampstands are
the seven churches.

The Message to Ephesus

2 "To the angel of the church in Ephe-
sus write: These are the words of
him who holds the seven stars in his right
hand, who walks among the seven golden
lampstands:

2 "I know your works, your toil and
your patient endurance. I know that you

f Or *testimony to Jesus* g Or *in the Spirit*

island thirty-seven miles southwest of Ephesus. There is no evidence that it was ever a Roman penal colony, but John may have been banished from his home territory and forced to go there. **1.10** *I was in the spirit* means that John experienced a vision trance (4.2; 17.3; 21.10; see also Acts 10.10; 11.5; 22.6–7). The *Lord's day* is a term used later, and probably also here, for Sunday, the main weekly Christian day of worship (*Didache* 14.1; *Gospel of Peter* 12.50). This usage may derive from the celebration of the Lord's Supper on that day (1 Cor 11.20), the day commemorating Christ's resurrection (Ignatius *Magnesians* 9.1). **1.12–16** The description of the exalted Christ resembles other epiphanies of divine figures (19.11–16; Dan 10.5–9). **1.12** The *seven golden lampstands*, representing the seven churches (1.20), are menorahs, lights that burn continually before God in the sanctuary (Ex 27.20–21; Lev 24.2–4). **1.13** *One like the Son of Man*, an allusion to Dan 7.13 (see also Rev 1.7; 14.14). **1.14** The *hair . . . white as white wool* characterizes the Ancient of Days (i.e., God) in Dan 7.9 but here is part of the description of Christ, implicitly equating the Son of Man with God. **1.16** The *sword* proceeding from Christ's mouth (see also 2.16; 19.15, 21; cf. 2.12) is a metaphor both for the word of God and for judgment (see Isa 49.2; Wis 18.15–16; 2 Thess 2.8; Heb 4.12). **1.17** *Fell . . . as though dead.* The fright of the seer is a stock motif in vision reports (see Isa 6.5; Ezek 1.28; Dan 8.17; Lk 24.5). *The first and the last*, a divine title derived from Second Isaiah (Isa 41.4; 44.6; 48.12; see note on Rev 1.8). **1.18** The *keys of Death and of Hades*, i.e., the keys to Death and Hades (as to a door); because Christ was dead but is now alive forever, he controls them. **1.19** A three-part general outline of Revelation: *what you have seen* (1.9–20), *what is* (2.1–3.22), and *what is to take place after this* (4.1–22.5). **1.20** The *angels of the seven churches*, later referred to individually (2.1, 8, 12, 18; 3.1, 7, 14), are the heavenly counterparts of the earthly Christian communities.

2.1–3.22 The messages to the seven churches are not in the form of ancient letters (see 1.4–5a) but rather resemble the edicts and decrees issued by Persian kings and Roman emperors. Each proclamation consists of eight stereotypical features: (1) destination, (2) the command to write, (3) the archaic "thus says" formula (*these are the words of*), (4) titles of Christ (largely based on the vision in 1.9–20), (5) the *I know* narrative, (6) admonitions and exhortations, (7) the proclamation formula (*let anyone who has an ear listen*), and (8) the victory formula (*whoever conquers* and similar phrases). Moral exhortation, usually absent from apocalypses, permeates these proclamations. **2.1** *Ephesus*, largest city of the Roman province of Asia, seat of the proconsul, and an important early Christian center (Acts 18.19–28; 19.1; 20.16–17; 1 Cor 15.32; 1 Tim 1.3). **2.2** *Tested* suggests that visiting missionaries were expected to measure up to certain expectations in teaching and behavior (1 Thess 5.21; 1 Jn 4.1–3; *Didache* 11). *Apostles* is a general term for itinerant missionaries (Acts 14.4, 14; Rom 16.7; 2 Cor 8.23;

cannot tolerate evildoers; you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them to be false. 3 I also know that you are enduring patiently and bearing up for the sake of my name, and that you have not grown weary. 4 But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. 5 Remember then from what you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. 6 Yet this is to your credit: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. 7 Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. To everyone who conquers, I will give permission to eat from the tree of life that is in the paradise of God.

The Message to Smyrna

8 "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These are the words of the first and the last, who was dead and came to life:

9 "I know your affliction and your poverty, even though you are rich. I know the slander on the part of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. 10 Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Beware, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison so that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have affliction. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. 11 Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. Whoever conquers will not be harmed by the second death.

The Message to Pergamum

12 "And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These are the words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword:

13 "I know where you are living, where Satan's throne is. Yet you are holding fast to my name, and you did not deny your faith in me[h] even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan lives. 14 But I have a few things against you: you

h Or *deny my faith*

Didache 11.3–6). **2.5** *I will . . . remove your lampstand* (see 1.12, 20) is a threat to obliterate the Ephesian church as a Christian community. **2.6** The *Nicolaitans*, an otherwise unknown Christian sect found in Ephesus and Pergamum (see 2.15), possibly identical with the false apostles of 2.2 and with Jezebel and her followers in Thyatira (2.20–23). **2.7** *To eat from the tree of life* is a metaphor for salvation or eternal life (Gen 3.22–24; *1 Enoch* 25.4–6; *Testament of Levi* 18.11). Access to the tree was denied to Adam and Eve (Gen 3.24) but will be available to the righteous (Rev 22.2, 14, 19). The Hebrew term for the garden which was located in Eden, somewhere on earth (Gen 2.8), was translated *paradise* (Iranian loanword for "garden," or "park") in the Septuagint. Later, paradise came to be regarded as the abode of the righteous dead (2 Esd 7.36; Lk 23.43; *1 Enoch* 60.8), located in heaven (2 Cor 12.2–4; *2 Enoch* 8.1). **2.8** *Smyrna*, a harbor city forty miles north of Ephesus and a center of the imperial cult (i.e., the worship of the Roman emperor). *The first and the last.* See 1.17. **2.9** Despite physical *poverty*, the Smyrnaean Christians are spiritually *rich*. *Slander* by the Jews refers to their denunciation of Christians before Roman officials (see Acts 18.12–17; *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 12.2–3), an indication of sharp conflict between the two communities. **2.10** The *devil* (from *diabolos*, a Greek word meaning "slanderer," which is a synonym for the Hebrew term "Satan"), working through his earthly henchmen, will throw them into prison. *Ten days* symbolizes a short but indefinite period of time. The *crown of life* (see 1 Cor 9.25; Jas 1.12), an image based on the wreath awarded to winners in ancient competitions, is a metaphor for the reward of eternal life (Rev 3.11). **2.11** *Second death* (20.6, 14; 21.8), the eternal punishment of the wicked following physical death. **2.12** *Pergamum*, a city of 180,000, was the seat of government in the Roman province of Asia and a major center of the imperial cult (see note on 2.8). **2.13** *Satan's throne*, an enigmatic phrase that may refer to the proconsul's judgment seat, to Pergamum as a center of the imperial cult, or to the Great Altar of Zeus erected after 230 B.C.E. (ancients often designated altars as thrones). *Antipas*, an otherwise unknown Christian executed or lynched in Pergamum. *Witness*, from the Greek *martys*, a word that soon took on the connotation of "martyr" (*Martyrdom of Polycarp* 14.2). **2.14** According to postbiblical Jewish literature, the error of *Balaam* (see Num 22–24; 31.16; 2 Pet 2.15–16; Jude 11) involved idolatry and sexual immorality. *Food sacrificed to idols*, sold to the public in pagan temple meat markets, violated the Jewish prohibition of idolatry (Ex 34.15; 4 Macc 5.2) and, because of its connection with pagan worship, was a problem for early Christians as well (2.20; Acts 15.20, 29; 21.25; 1 Cor 8.1, 4,

have some there who hold to the teaching
of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a
stumbling block before the people of Is-
rael, so that they would eat food sacrificed
to idols and practice fornication. 15 So you
also have some who hold to the teaching
of the Nicolaitans. 16 Repent then. If not,
I will come to you soon and make war
against them with the sword of my mouth.
17 Let anyone who has an ear listen to
what the Spirit is saying to the churches.
To everyone who conquers I will give
some of the hidden manna, and I will give
a white stone, and on the white stone is
written a new name that no one knows
except the one who receives it.

The Message to Thyatira

18 "And to the angel of the church in
Thyatira write: These are the words of
the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame
of fire, and whose feet are like burnished
bronze:

19 "I know your works—your love,
faith, service, and patient endurance. I
know that your last works are greater
than the first. 20 But I have this against
you: you tolerate that woman Jezebel,
who calls herself a prophet and is teach-
ing and beguiling my servants[i] to prac-
tice fornication and to eat food sacrificed
to idols. 21 I gave her time to repent, but
she refuses to repent of her fornication.
22 Beware, I am throwing her on a bed,
and those who commit adultery with her I
am throwing into great distress, unless
they repent of her doings; 23 and I will
strike her children dead. And all the
churches will know that I am the one who
searches minds and hearts, and I will give
to each of you as your works deserve.
24 But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who
do not hold this teaching, who have not
learned what some call 'the deep things of
Satan,' to you I say, I do not lay on you
any other burden; 25 only hold fast to
what you have until I come. 26 To every-
one who conquers and continues to do my
works to the end,

I will give authority over
the nations;
27 to rule[j] them with an iron rod,
as when clay pots are
shattered—

28 even as I also received authority from
my Father. To the one who conquers I
will also give the morning star. 29 Let any-
one who has an ear listen to what the
Spirit is saying to the churches.

The Message to Sardis

3 "And to the angel of the church in
Sardis write: These are the words of
him who has the seven spirits of God and
the seven stars:

"I know your works; you have a name
of being alive, but you are dead. 2 Wake
up, and strengthen what remains and is
on the point of death, for I have not
found your works perfect in the sight of
my God. 3 Remember then what you re-
ceived and heard; obey it, and repent. If
you do not wake up, I will come like a
thief, and you will not know at what hour
I will come to you. 4 Yet you have still a
few persons in Sardis who have not soiled
their clothes; they will walk with me,
dressed in white, for they are worthy. 5 If

i Gk *slaves* *j* Or *to shepherd*

7, 10; 10.28). **2.15** *Nicolaitans* (see 2.6) repeat the error of Balaam. **2.17** *Manna* (also called "bread from heaven," see Ex 16.4; Neh 9.15; Jn 6.31–34, and "food from heaven," Ps 105.40) is here a metaphor for eternal life; according to Jewish expectation, the miraculous feeding would be repeated in the last days. *White stone*, an amulet on which is inscribed *a new name*, i.e., the secret name of God or Christ (3.12; 19.12), and which is a symbol for the permanent protection of the wearer. **2.18** *Thyatira* (modern Akhisar), lay thirty-five miles inland, between Pergamum and Ephesus. **2.20** *Jezebel*, the Canaanite queen of King Ahab of Israel (1 Kings 18–19; 2 Kings 9), who induced Ahab to worship Canaanite deities. John gives this infamous name to a Christian prophetess whose teachings were leading Christians astray. **2.23** *Her children*, the followers of the prophetess. **2.24** *The deep things of Satan*, perhaps a sarcastic revision of the prophetess's motto, which probably was "the deep things of God." **2.28** The *morning star* (the bright planet Venus) is an epithet of Christ (22.16) and a messianic symbol (Num 24.17; Mt 2.2, 10). **3.1** *Sardis*, the ancient capital of the Lydian kingdom, then of the Seleucid kingdom. *Seven spirits*. See 1.4. **3.3** *I will come like a thief*, a frequent metaphor for the unexpected arrival of Christ (16.15; Mt 24.42–44; Lk 12.39–40; 1 Thess 5.2; 2 Pet 3.10). **3.4** *Soiled clothes* represent evil deeds, while *white* garments symbolize righteousness. **3.5** *Book of life*, i.e., a heavenly registry of the

you conquer, you will be clothed like them
in white robes, and I will not blot your
name out of the book of life; I will confess
your name before my Father and before
his angels. 6 Let anyone who has an ear
listen to what the Spirit is saying to the
churches.

The Message to Philadelphia

7 "And to the angel of the church in
Philadelphia write:
These are the words of the holy
one, the true one,
who has the key of David,
who opens and no one will
shut,
who shuts and no one opens:
8 "I know your works. Look, I have set
before you an open door, which no one is
able to shut. I know that you have but lit-
tle power, and yet you have kept my word
and have not denied my name. 9 I will
make those of the synagogue of Satan
who say that they are Jews and are not,
but are lying—I will make them come and
bow down before your feet, and they will
learn that I have loved you. 10 Because
you have kept my word of patient endur-
ance, I will keep you from the hour of
trial that is coming on the whole world to
test the inhabitants of the earth. 11 I am
coming soon; hold fast to what you have,
so that no one may seize your crown. 12 If
you conquer, I will make you a pillar in
the temple of my God; you will never go
out of it. I will write on you the name of
my God, and the name of the city of my
God, the new Jerusalem that comes down
from my God out of heaven, and my own
new name. 13 Let anyone who has an ear
listen to what the Spirit is saying to the
churches.

The Message to Laodicea

14 "And to the angel of the church in
Laodicea write: The words of the Amen,
the faithful and true witness, the origin[k]
of God's creation:
15 "I know your works; you are nei-
ther cold nor hot. I wish that you were
either cold or hot. 16 So, because you are
lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am
about to spit you out of my mouth. 17 For
you say, 'I am rich, I have prospered, and
I need nothing.' You do not realize that
you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind,
and naked. 18 Therefore I counsel you to
buy from me gold refined by fire so that
you may be rich; and white robes to clothe
you and to keep the shame of your naked-
ness from being seen; and salve to anoint
your eyes so that you may see. 19 I reprove
and discipline those whom I love. Be ear-
nest, therefore, and repent. 20 Listen! I
am standing at the door, knocking; if you

k Or *beginning*

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names of God's people, a metaphor for salvation and election (13.8; 17.8; 20.12, 15; 21.27; Ex 32.32; Dan 12.1; Lk 10.20; Phil 4.3). **3.7** *Philadelphia*, a city thirty miles from Sardis. *Key of David*, symbol of messianic power and authority (see Isa 22.22). **3.8** The *open door* is a metaphor either for opportunities to evangelize (Acts 14.27; 1 Cor 16.9; 2 Cor 2.12) or for access to salvation (Lk 13.24). **3.9** *Synagogue of Satan.* See 2.9. **3.10** *Hour of trial* refers to the period of distress and suffering, often called "the great tribulation," prior to God's eschatological triumph (7.14; 13.5–10; Dan 12.1; Mt 24.21; Mk 13.7–20; 1 Cor 7.26; Hermas *Visions* 2.2.7). **3.11** *I am coming soon.* The imminent return of Christ is frequently mentioned (1.3; 16.15; 22.12, 20). **3.12** *Pillar in the temple* means a permanent place in the heavenly temple, a metaphor for salvation. *I will write on you the name of my God* designates ownership and dedication; the name of God was written on the front of the high priest's turban (Ex 28.36–38). *The name of . . . the new Jerusalem* indicates citizenship in the heavenly Jerusalem, which is a model for the imperfect earthly Jerusalem (Gal 4.26; Phil 3.20; Heb 12.22) and will soon replace it (21.2, 10). *My own new name*, an allusion to Isa 62.2; 65.15, indicates that the believer benefits from the new status of Christ (2.17; 19.12; 22.4). **3.14** *Laodicea*, a major commercial center located one hundred miles east of Ephesus. *Amen* is not the common liturgical response meaning "let it be so," but a transliteration of a Hebrew term meaning "master workman" in Prov 8.30; it is used here as a title of Christ. *Origin of God's creation* is a title of Christ (see Jn 1.2–3; Col 1.15). **3.15–16** *Cold, hot*, and *lukewarm* are figures of speech meaning "against me," "for me," and "indifferent"; *lukewarm* may also allude to the tepid and nauseous local water supply. *Spit*, lit. "vomit," means "reject utterly." **3.17** *Rich*, materially wealthy, though morally and spiritually *poor*; cf. 2.9. **3.18** *Gold refined by fire*, or metaphor for moral purification through testing (see Jer 9.7; Zech 13.9; Mal 3.3). *White robes* symbolize moral purity and salvation (4.4; 6.11; 7.9, 13, 14; 19.8, 14). *Salve* perhaps alludes to eye medicine

hear my voice and open the door, I will
come in to you and eat with you, and you
with me. 21 To the one who conquers I
will give a place with me on my throne,
just as I myself conquered and sat down
with my Father on his throne. 22 Let any-
one who has an ear listen to what the
Spirit is saying to the churches."

The Heavenly Worship

4 After this I looked, and there in
heaven a door stood open! And the
first voice, which I had heard speaking to
me like a trumpet, said, "Come up here,
and I will show you what must take place
after this." 2 At once I was in the spirit,[1]
and there in heaven stood a throne, with
one seated on the throne! 3 And the one
seated there looks like jasper and carne-
lian, and around the throne is a rainbow
that looks like an emerald. 4 Around the
throne are twenty-four thrones, and
seated on the thrones are twenty-four el-
ders, dressed in white robes, with golden
crowns on their heads. 5 Coming from the
throne are flashes of lightning, and rum-
blings and peals of thunder, and in front
of the throne burn seven flaming torches,
which are the seven spirits of God; 6 and
in front of the throne there is something
like a sea of glass, like crystal.

Around the throne, and on each side of
the throne, are four living creatures, full
of eyes in front and behind: 7 the first liv-
ing creature like a lion, the second living
creature like an ox, the third living crea-
ture with a face like a human face, and the
fourth living creature like a flying eagle.
8 And the four living creatures, each of
them with six wings, are full of eyes all
around and inside. Day and night without
ceasing they sing,

"Holy, holy, holy,
the Lord God the Almighty,
who was and is and is to come."

9 And whenever the living creatures give
glory and honor and thanks to the one
who is seated on the throne, who lives for-
ever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders
fall before the one who is seated on the
throne and worship the one who lives for-
ever and ever; they cast their crowns be-
fore the throne, singing,

11 "You are worthy, our Lord
and God,

1 Or *in the Spirit*

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used at the medical school in Laodicea. **3.21** *I . . . sat down with my Father on his throne,* an allusion to Ps 110.1, understood as the heavenly enthronement of the resurrected Christ (see also 22.1, 3; Mk 14.62; Acts 2.34–35; Eph 1.20).

4.1–11 Several visions of the heavenly throne room occur in Revelation, usually preceding punitive actions on earth, for events in heaven determine events in the world (7.9–17; 8.1–5; 11.15–19; 14.2–3; 15.2–8; 19.1–10; 21.3–8; see also 1 Kings 22.19–23; Job 1.6–12; 2.1–6). **4.1** This *door* is a metaphor for the entrance to heaven (see Gen 28.17; Ps 78.23), which must be *open* for revelation (see 19.11) or a heavenly ascent. The *first voice,* mentioned in 1.10–11, is that of the exalted Christ himself. **4.2** *In the spirit,* in a vision trance (see 1.10). The *throne* symbolizes God's sovereignty; heaven is conceived as a throne room filled with angelic courtiers (see 1 Kings 22.19). *One seated on the throne,* a circumlocution for the name of God frequently used in Revelation. **4.3** *Jasper and carnelian.* Precious stones and metals were sometimes used in descriptions to emphasize the heavenly splendor of God enthroned (see Ezek 1.16, 26, 27). The *rainbow* the color of an emerald alludes to the throne vision in Ezek 1.27–28. **4.4** *Twenty-four elders,* angelic courtiers possibly representing the sum of the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles. **4.5** *Flashes of lightning . . . peals of thunder,* storm phenomena associated with God's appearance at Sinai (Ex 19.16–19), became incorporated into theophany scenes (see Ps 18.6–16; Isa 29.6) and are mentioned frequently in Revelation at critical points (8.5; 11.19; 16.18). *Seven spirits of God.* See 1.4. **4.6** The *sea of glass* (see 15.2) is the celestial ocean above which the throne of God is located (see Gen 1.7; Ps 29.10; 104.3; Ezek 1.22). The *four living creatures* (a designation drawn from Ezek 1.5–25) are cherubim, angelic beings that guard and support the throne of God (Ex 25.17–22; 1 Kings 6.23–28; Ps 18.10; Isa 6.2; Ezek 10). They are *full of eyes* (an allusion to Ezek 1.18; 10.12), symbolizing unceasing watchfulness. **4.7** Three creatures have animal forms and one has a *human face.* This description modifies that in Ezek 1.10, where each creature has four faces. **4.8** *Holy, holy, holy.* The Trisagion, or "thrice-holy," occurs first in Isa 6.3 and frequently in Jewish and Christian liturgies. **4.10** *They cast their crowns before the throne* as an act of homage and worship; here *throne* is a circumlocution for the name of God (7.9; 8.3; see also Heb 4.16; 8.1; 12.2). **4.11** *Worthy,* a term applied to God as the creator, is also applied to the Lamb in two hymns (5.9, 12).

to receive glory and honor
and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they existed
and were created."

The Scroll and the Lamb

5 Then I saw in the right hand of the
one seated on the throne a scroll
written on the inside and on the back,
sealed[m] with seven seals; 2 and I saw a
mighty angel proclaiming with a loud
voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll
and break its seals?" 3 And no one in
heaven or on earth or under the earth was
able to open the scroll or to look into it.
4 And I began to weep bitterly because no
one was found worthy to open the scroll
or to look into it. 5 Then one of the elders
said to me, "Do not weep. See, the Lion of
the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has
conquered, so that he can open the scroll
and its seven seals."
6 Then I saw between the throne and
the four living creatures and among the
elders a Lamb standing as if it had been
slaughtered, having seven horns and
seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of
God sent out into all the earth. 7 He went
and took the scroll from the right hand of
the one who was seated on the throne.
8 When he had taken the scroll, the four
living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell before the Lamb, each holding a
harp and golden bowls full of incense,
which are the prayers of the saints. 9 They
sing a new song:
"You are worthy to take the scroll
and to open its seals,
for you were slaughtered and by
your blood you ransomed
for God
saints from[n] every tribe and
language and people
and nation;
10 you have made them to be a
kingdom and priests
serving[o] our God,
and they will reign on earth."
11 Then I looked, and I heard the
voice of many angels surrounding the
throne and the living creatures and the
elders; they numbered myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, 12 singing with full voice,
"Worthy is the Lamb that was
slaughtered
to receive power and wealth and
wisdom and might
and honor and glory and
blessing!"
13 Then I heard every creature in heaven

m Or *written on the inside, and sealed on the back*
n Gk *ransomed for God from* *o* Gk *priests to*

5.1–14 The focus of the vision shifts to a scroll representing God's final plan for the world. **5.1** The *scroll written on the inside and on the back* is unusual because papyrus rolls were usually used on one side only, though legal rolls could have a summary of the contents on the outside. *Sealed with seven seals.* The number of seals means that the scroll is virtually impossible for an unauthorized person to open (5.3). **5.2** *Worthy* means both able and authorized. **5.5** *Lion of the tribe of Judah* (Gen 49.9–10), a metaphor for the king or Messiah expected to come from the royal tribe of Judah, a claim frequently made for Jesus (Heb 7.14). *Root of David* (see also 22.16), meaning stock of David or descendant of David, king of Israel, is a messianic title (see Isa 11.1, 10; Jer 23.5; 33.15; Zech 3.8; 6.12; Rom 15.12). The Davidic ancestry of Jesus is frequently mentioned in the NT (Mt 1.1; Lk 2.4; Jn 7.42; Acts 2.30–32; 13.22–23; Rom 1.3; 2 Tim 2.8). **5.6** The image of Jesus as a *Lamb* who has been *slaughtered* is a surprising contrast to his designation as a lion (5.5) and suggests the Passover sacrifice (1 Cor 5.7). Revelation uses Lamb as a designation for the exalted Christ twenty-eight times, highlighting his sacrificial role (see e.g., 5.9; 7.14; 12.11; 13.8; 17.14; see also Jn 1.29, 36; cf. Isa 53.7). *Horns* symbolize kingly power, while *eyes* (an allusion to Zech 4.10) represent divine omnipresence and omniscience (see Judg 18.6; 2 Chr 16.9; Ps 139.16; Prov 15.3). **5.8** The *harp*, or kithara, was used to accompany hymns (15.2–4; Ps 33.2–3; 43.4), while the *golden bowls full of incense*, representing *the prayers of the saints* (8.4; Ps 33.2–3; 141.2), suggest the priestly role of the elders. **5.9** *New song*, a new composition written to celebrate a very special occasion (14.3; see Ps 33.3; 40.3; 96.1; Isa 42.10). *Slaughtered*, a violent term for the crucifixion of Jesus (see 5.9, 12; 13.8) that suggests the Jewish Passover (Ex 12.1–28; 1 Cor 5.7). *By your blood* alludes to the atoning death of Jesus using the metaphor of the twice-daily expiatory sacrifice of a lamb (Ex 29.38–42; Num 28; see also Rev 1.5; 7.14; 12.11). *Ransomed*, or "redeemed," a metaphor from the slave market meaning "released after a price is paid" (see 14.3; 1 Cor 6.20; 7.23). **5.11** *Myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands*, an allusion to the innumerable angelic beings in the throne scene of Dan 7.10 (see also Rev 7.9; Jude 14).

and on earth and under the earth and in
the sea, and all that is in them, singing,
"To the one seated on the throne
and to the Lamb
be blessing and honor and glory
and might
forever and ever!"
14 And the four living creatures said,
"Amen!" And the elders fell down and
worshiped.

The Seven Seals

6 Then I saw the Lamb open one of
the seven seals, and I heard one of
the four living creatures call out, as with a
voice of thunder, "Come!"[p] 2 I looked,
and there was a white horse! Its rider had
a bow; a crown was given to him, and he
came out conquering and to conquer.
3 When he opened the second seal, I
heard the second living creature call out,
"Come!"[p] 4 And out came[q] another
horse, bright red; its rider was permitted
to take peace from the earth, so that peo-
ple would slaughter one another; and he
was given a great sword.
5 When he opened the third seal, I
heard the third living creature call out,
"Come!"[p] I looked, and there was a black
horse! Its rider held a pair of scales in his
hand, 6 and I heard what seemed to be a
voice in the midst of the four living crea-
tures saying, "A quart of wheat for a day's
pay,[r] and three quarts of barley for a
day's pay,[r] but do not damage the olive
oil and the wine!"
7 When he opened the fourth seal, I
heard the voice of the fourth living crea-
ture call out, "Come!"[p] 8 I looked and
there was a pale green horse! Its rider's
name was Death, and Hades followed
with him; they were given authority over
a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword,
famine, and pestilence, and by the wild
animals of the earth.
9 When he opened the fifth seal, I saw
under the altar the souls of those who had
been slaughtered for the word of God
and for the testimony they had given;
10 they cried out with a loud voice, "Sover-
eign Lord, holy and true, how long will
it be before you judge and avenge our
blood on the inhabitants of the earth?"
11 They were each given a white robe and
told to rest a little longer, until the num-
ber would be complete both of their fel-
low servants[s] and of their brothers and
sisters,[t] who were soon to be killed as
they themselves had been killed.
12 When he opened the sixth seal, I
looked, and there came a great earth-

p Or *"Go!"* q Or *went* r Gk *a denarius*
s Gk *slaves* t Gk *brothers*

6.1–8.1 The Lamb opens the seven seals and so shows himself in control of history. **6.1–8** The opening of the first four seals, which form a group, unleashes four riders mounted on horses of different colors who are emissaries of God sent to inflict divine punishment on the world (loosely based on Zech 1.7–11; 6.1–8). **6.2** The rider on the *white horse* represents warfare; the *bow* can be a symbol of divine chastisement (Lam 3.12–13; Hab 3.9), and his *crown* indicates victory in war. **6.4** The *bright red* horse and rider represent death in battle. **6.5** The *black horse* and rider represent famine. *Pair of scales*, a tool used by merchants to weigh their products. **6.6** *A quart of wheat for a day's pay* represents an exorbitant price for wheat, fifteen times higher than normal; shortages were often caused by hoarding for the purpose of profiteering. *Do not damage the olive oil and the wine*, i.e., do not fraudulently withhold oil and wine to extort exorbitant prices. **6.8** *Death and Hades* are personified together in Revelation (1.18; 20.13–14), as they are in poetic contexts in the OT (Job 18.13; Isa 28.15, 18; Hos 13.14). *Hades* is a Greek term for the world of the dead, the Hebrew equivalent of which is Sheol. *Sword, famine, and pestilence, and . . . wild animals* are stereotypical terms for describing the horrors of war (see Deut 32.23–25; Jer 14.12; 15.3; Ezek 5.16–17; 14.21; *Psalms of Solomon* 13.2–3). **6.9** The souls of the martyrs are *under the altar*, the heavenly altar of incense (8.3, 5; 9.13; 14.18; 16.7); this symbolizes their nearness to God. *Those who had been slaughtered*, the martyrs. **6.10** *How long*. This cry for vengeance by the murdered righteous (see also 2 Esd 4.35–37; *1 Enoch* 47.4) is modeled after petitions for justice directed to a king (1 Macc 6.22–27) or to God (2 Macc 8.2–4). *The inhabitants of the earth*, a frequent formula in Revelation (e.g., 8.13; 11.10; 13.8) referring to the enemies of God. **6.11** *White robe*, symbol of heavenly existence or worthiness of heaven (see 3.4; 4.4; 7.13). *Rest*, metaphor for the repose of death (14.13; Prov 21.16; Sir 30.17; 38.23), though this rest will last only until the final consummation (see 2 Esd 7.75). There is a predetermined *number* of martyrs known only to God (2 Esd 2.38; 4.36; *1 Enoch* 47.4; cf. Rom 11.25; *1 Clement* 2.4; 59.2). **6.12–13** The darkening of the *sun* and *moon* and the falling of the *stars* (see 8.10; 9.1; 12.4) are cos-

quake; the sun became black as sackcloth,
the full moon became like blood, 13 and
the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the
fig tree drops its winter fruit when shaken
by a gale. 14 The sky vanished like a scroll
rolling itself up, and every mountain
and island was removed from its place.
15 Then the kings of the earth and the
magnates and the generals and the rich
and the powerful, and everyone, slave
and free, hid in the caves and among the
rocks of the mountains, 16 calling to the
mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide
us from the face of the one seated on the
throne and from the wrath of the Lamb;
17 for the great day of their wrath has
come, and who is able to stand?"

The 144,000 of Israel Sealed

7 After this I saw four angels standing
at the four corners of the earth,
holding back the four winds of the earth
so that no wind could blow on earth or sea
or against any tree. 2 I saw another angel
ascending from the rising of the sun, hav-
ing the seal of the living God, and he
called with a loud voice to the four angels
who had been given power to damage
earth and sea, 3 saying, "Do not damage
the earth or the sea or the trees, until we
have marked the servants[u] of our God
with a seal on their foreheads."
4 And I heard the number of those
who were sealed, one hundred forty-four
thousand, sealed out of every tribe of the
people of Israel:
5 From the tribe of Judah twelve
thousand sealed,
from the tribe of Reuben twelve
thousand,
from the tribe of Gad twelve thou-
sand,
6 from the tribe of Asher twelve
thousand,
from the tribe of Naphtali twelve
thousand,
from the tribe of Manasseh twelve
thousand,
7 from the tribe of Simeon twelve
thousand,
from the tribe of Levi twelve thou-
sand,
from the tribe of Issachar twelve
thousand,
8 from the tribe of Zebulun twelve
thousand,
from the tribe of Joseph twelve
thousand,
from the tribe of Benjamin twelve
thousand sealed.

The Multitude from Every Nation

9 After this I looked, and there was a
great multitude that no one could count,
from every nation, from all tribes and
peoples and languages, standing before

u Gk *slaves*

mic signs anticipating the day of the Lord (see Isa 13.10; Ezek 32.7–8; Joel 2.30–31; Am 8.9; Zeph 1.15; Mt 24.29). *Black as sackcloth.* See note on 11.3. **6.14** *The sky vanished like a scroll rolling itself up,* a simile used in Isa 34.4 (see also *Sibylline Oracles* 3.82–83; 8.233; cf. Heb 1.12), here provides a preview of the eventual destruction of the heavens (20.11; 21.1). **6.16** *Fall on us.* See Hos 10.8. **6.17** *The great day of their wrath,* the day of the Lord, involving judgment for the wicked (see 1 Cor 5.5; 1 Thess 5.2; 2 Thess 2.2; 2 Pet 3.10). **7.1–17** A digression (based on the catchword *seal*) on how Christians will be protected during the impending catastrophes. **7.2** The *seal of the living God,* a signet ring used to indicate ownership and to provide protection (see Job 9.7; Sir 17.22), bears the name of God (14.1). "Seal" was also a term for Christian baptism (see 2 Cor 1.21–22; Eph 1.13; 4.30; *2 Clement* 7.6; 8.6). *The four angels who had been given power to damage earth* are similar to the four riders who were also divine emissaries (see 6.1–8). **7.3** Those *with a seal on their foreheads* (see Ezek 9.4–6; *Psalms of Solomon* 15.6–9) are divinely protected from the plagues, as the Israelites were in Egypt (Ex 8.22; 9.4–7, 26; 10.23). It was widely held in the ancient world that magical sealing could provide protection. **7.4** *One hundred forty-four thousand,* the martyr-witness cadre of the church, calculated using twelve as a multiple of twelve. The number here represents the people of God but later refers to martyrs (14.1–5). *The people of Israel,* i.e., the church as the spiritual Israel (see Rom 9.6–7; 11.17–21; Gal 6.16; Jas 1.1). **7.9–17** A heavenly throne room scene; see note on 4.1–11. **7.9** *A great multitude,* a heavenly assembly that may include but is not identical with the 144,000 Israelites mentioned in 7.4–8 and that represents the spiritualized fulfillment of the promise to Abraham (Gen 22.17; 32.12; cf. Rom 9.27). Its members are identified in 7.14 as the martyrs who have gone through the great tribulation. *The throne* is a pious substitution for the name of God (see 4.10; 8.3). *Robed in white.* See note on 6.11. *Palm branches,* symbols of victory (see 1 Macc

the throne and before the Lamb, robed in
white, with palm branches in their hands.
10 They cried out in a loud voice, saying,
"Salvation belongs to our God
who is seated on the
throne, and to the Lamb!"
11 And all the angels stood around the
throne and around the elders and the
four living creatures, and they fell on
their faces before the throne and wor-
shiped God, 12 singing,
"Amen! Blessing and glory
and wisdom
and thanksgiving and honor
and power and might
be to our God forever and ever!
Amen."
13 Then one of the elders addressed
me, saying, "Who are these, robed in
white, and where have they come from?"
14 I said to him, "Sir, you are the one that
knows." Then he said to me, "These are
they who have come out of the great or-
deal; they have washed their robes and
made them white in the blood of the
Lamb.
15 For this reason they are before
the throne of God,
and worship him day and night
within his temple,
and the one who is seated on
the throne will shelter
them.
16 They will hunger no more, and
thirst no more;
the sun will not strike them,
nor any scorching heat;
17 for the Lamb at the center of the
throne will be their
shepherd,
and he will guide them to
springs of the water of life,
and God will wipe away every
tear from their eyes."

The Seventh Seal and the Golden Censer

8 When the Lamb opened the seventh
seal, there was silence in heaven for
about half an hour. 2 And I saw the seven
angels who stand before God, and seven
trumpets were given to them.
3 Another angel with a golden censer
came and stood at the altar; he was given
a great quantity of incense to offer with
the prayers of all the saints on the golden
altar that is before the throne. 4 And the

13.51; 2 Macc 14.4; Jn 12.13). **7.13** *One of the elders*, like the more typical figure of the interpreting angel (1.1; 17.1–18; 21.9–22.5; see Introduction), provides an explanation of the vision in 7.14–17. **7.14** *The great ordeal.* See note on 3.10. *Washed . . . white in the blood of the Lamb*, paradoxical metaphor referring to the forgiveness of sins through the atoning death of Jesus (see Rom 3.25; 5.9; 1 Cor 10.16; 1 Pet 1.2). **7.15** *God . . . will shelter them* means that God will be present with them or dwell with them (21.3; see Lev 26.11; Ezek 37.27). **7.16** Cessation of *hunger, thirst*, and intense *heat* alludes to the idyllic eschatological conditions described in Isa 49.10 (see also Rev 21.4). **7.17** *At the center*, i.e., of the throne occupied by both God and the Lamb (3.21; 22.1, 3). *Shepherd*, a stock metaphor for "king" (see 2 Sam 7.7; Isa 44.28; Jer 3.15) and a favorite metaphor for Jesus (Mt 15.24; 25.32; Jn 10.2; Heb 13.20; 1 Pet 2.25). *Springs of the water of life*, lit. "springs of living water" (cf. Isa 49.10); here "living water" can mean either "flowing water" (as opposed to cistern water) or "water imbued with [eternal] life," a metaphor for salvation (21.6; 22.1, 17; see also Jn 4.14; 6.35; 7.37–38). *God will wipe away every tear* indicates the absence of sorrow in the new order (see Isa 25.8). **8.1** A transitional verse. The opening of the *seventh seal* means that the scroll of 5.1 is now completely open; the events narrated in 8.2–22.5 enact the contents of the scroll. After the cosmic destruction caused by the opening of the sixth seal in 6.12–17, the opening of this seal issues in an anticlimactic *silence in heaven.* Silence precedes divine manifestations (see Job 4.16; Zeph 1.7; Zech 2.13) and is maintained during the incense offering (see Rev 8.3–5).

8.2–9.21 See also 11.15–19. The seven trumpets (like the seven bowls of 15.1–16.21) introduce eschatological divine judgments that are loosely based on the ten Egyptian plagues (Ex 7–12), though they are universal rather than local in effect. Several variant traditions of seven Egyptian plagues have been preserved (Ps 78.44–51; 105.27–36; Am 4.6–11; Wis 11.1–19.9). **8.2–5** Preparatory heavenly throne room scene; see note on 4.1–11. **8.2** *Seven angels.* See note on 1.4. *Trumpets* can signal the inauguration of the end (see Isa 27.13; Joel 2.1; Mt 24.31; 1 Cor 15.52; 1 Thess 4.16; *Didache* 16.6). **8.3** *The golden altar*, the heavenly counterpart of the incense altar located before the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle and temple (Ex 30.1–10). **8.4** The *incense* offering, made twice daily in the temple (Lk 1.8–10), lent itself to spiritualization; here it is associated with (but not, as in 5.8, identified with) the *prayers of the saints*, which, judging by their effect in 8.5, were prayers for vengeance

smoke of the incense, with the prayers of
the saints, rose before God from the hand
of the angel. 5 Then the angel took the
censer and filled it with fire from the altar
and threw it on the earth; and there were
peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of
lightning, and an earthquake.
6 Now the seven angels who had the
seven trumpets made ready to blow them.
7 The first angel blew his trumpet,
and there came hail and fire, mixed with
blood, and they were hurled to the earth;
and a third of the earth was burned up,
and a third of the trees were burned
up, and all green grass was burned up.
8 The second angel blew his trumpet,
and something like a great mountain,
burning with fire, was thrown into the
sea. 9 A third of the sea became blood, a
third of the living creatures in the sea
died, and a third of the ships were
destroyed.
10 The third angel blew his trumpet,
and a great star fell from heaven, blazing
like a torch, and it fell on a third of the
rivers and on the springs of water. 11 The
name of the star is Wormwood. A third of
the waters became wormwood, and many
died from the water, because it was made
bitter.
12 The fourth angel blew his trumpet,
and a third of the sun was struck, and a
third of the moon, and a third of the stars,
so that a third of their light was darkened;
a third of the day was kept from shining,
and likewise the night.
13 Then I looked, and I heard an eagle crying with a loud voice as it flew in
midheaven, "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, at the blasts of the other
trumpets that the three angels are about
to blow!"
9 And the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen
from heaven to earth, and he was given
the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit;
2 he opened the shaft of the bottomless
pit, and from the shaft rose smoke like the
smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and
the air were darkened with the smoke
from the shaft. 3 Then from the smoke
came locusts on the earth, and they were
given authority like the authority of scorpions of the earth. 4 They were told not to
damage the grass of the earth or any
green growth or any tree, but only those
people who do not have the seal of God
on their foreheads. 5 They were allowed
to torture them for five months, but not
to kill them, and their torture was like the
torture of a scorpion when it stings someone. 6 And in those days people will seek
death but will not find it; they will long to
die, but death will flee from them.
7 In appearance the locusts were like
horses equipped for battle. On their
heads were what looked like crowns of
gold; their faces were like human faces,

(see 6.10). **8.5** The throwing of *fire from the altar* to the earth anticipates the divine judgments that the trumpets will unleash (see Ezek 10.2). *Peals of thunder*. See note on 4.5. **8.7–12** The first four trumpets form a group (see note on 6.1–8). **8.7** The *hail, fire,* and *blood* that fall to the earth correspond to the thunder, hail, and fire of the seventh plague (Ex 9.22–26) and to the fourth and seventh bowls in Rev 16.8–9, 19–21. The Romans regarded blood raining from the sky as an omen indicating the anger of the gods. The eschatological destruction of a *third* of various aspects of the cosmos (based on Ezek 5.2, 12) emphasizes that the destruction is partial, not total (8.9, 10, 11, 12; 9.15, 18). **8.9** *Sea became blood,* counterpart to the Nile becoming blood (the first plague in Ex 7.20–21; the second bowl in Rev 16.3). **8.10–11** There is no counterpart to the third trumpet among the Egyptian plagues. **8.11** *Wormwood,* a plant noted for its bitter taste (see Prov 5.4; Lam 3.15). **8.12** The *fourth . . . trumpet.* The darkening of the heavenly bodies resembles the darkness of the ninth plague (Ex 10.21) and of the fifth bowl (Rev 16.10). **8.13** *Woe, woe, woe.* The three woes designate the last three trumpet plagues in 9.1–12, 13–21; 11.14–19 (see 9.12; 11.14). **9.1–12** The fifth trumpet plague resembles the locust plague of Ex 10.4–20 and is modeled after Joel 2.1–11. **9.1** The *star,* an angelic messenger sent by God to earth (see 20.1). *Bottomless pit,* the abode of the dead (see Ps 107.26; Rom 10.7) and the place where demons (Lk 8.31; *1 Enoch* 18–21) and Satan (20.1–3) are imprisoned. **9.3** The *locusts* are an army of demons (based on the locust plague described in Joel 2.1–11). **9.4** *Grass of the earth or any green growth or any tree,* vegetation that is usually devastated by locusts. *People who do not have the seal of God* (see 7.2–8) are attacked, but God's people are exempt. **9.5** *Five months* (see also 9.10), the life span of the locust. **9.6** The statement that *people will seek death but will not find it* underlines the horror of this plague. **9.7** *Like horses equipped for battle,* based on Joel 2.4–9. The demonic locust swarm is depicted as a marauding army. *Crowns of gold,* symbols of invincibility.

8 their hair like women's hair, and their
teeth like lions' teeth; 9 they had scales like
iron breastplates, and the noise of their
wings was like the noise of many chariots
with horses rushing into battle. 10 They
have tails like scorpions, with stingers, and
in their tails is their power to harm people
for five months. 11 They have as king over
them the angel of the bottomless pit; his
name in Hebrew is Abaddon,[v] and in
Greek he is called Apollyon.[w]

12 The first woe has passed. There
are still two woes to come.

13 Then the sixth angel blew his
trumpet, and I heard a voice from the
four[x] horns of the golden altar before
God, 14 saying to the sixth angel who had
the trumpet, "Release the four angels who
are bound at the great river Euphrates."
15 So the four angels were released, who
had been held ready for the hour, the
day, the month, and the year, to kill a
third of humankind. 16 The number of
the troops of cavalry was two hundred
million; I heard their number. 17 And this
was how I saw the horses in my vision: the
riders wore breastplates the color of fire
and of sapphire[y] and of sulfur; the heads
of the horses were like lions' heads, and
fire and smoke and sulfur came out of
their mouths. 18 By these three plagues a
third of humankind was killed, by the fire
and smoke and sulfur coming out of their
mouths. 19 For the power of the horses is
in their mouths and in their tails; their
tails are like serpents, having heads; and
with them they inflict harm.

20 The rest of humankind, who were
not killed by these plagues, did not repent
of the works of their hands or give up
worshiping demons and idols of gold and
silver and bronze and stone and wood,
which cannot see or hear or walk. 21 And
they did not repent of their murders or
their sorceries or their fornication or their
thefts.

The Angel with the Little Scroll

10 And I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven,
wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over
his head; his face was like the sun, and his
legs like pillars of fire. 2 He held a little
scroll open in his hand. Setting his right
foot on the sea and his left foot on the
land, 3 he gave a great shout, like a lion
roaring. And when he shouted, the seven
thunders sounded. 4 And when the seven
thunders had sounded, I was about to
write, but I heard a voice from heaven
saying, "Seal up what the seven thunders
have said, and do not write it down."
5 Then the angel whom I saw standing on
the sea and the land
raised his right hand to heaven
6 and swore by him who lives
forever and ever,
who created heaven and what is in it, the
earth and what is in it, and the sea and
what is in it: "There will be no more delay,

v That is, *Destruction* w That is, *Destroyer*
x Other ancient authorities lack *four*
y Gk *hyacinth*

9.8 *Like women's hair.* Demons are sometimes described as having disheveled hair like that of women (*Testament of Solomon* 13.1; *Apocalypse of Zephaniah* 4.4). **9.11** *Angel of the bottomless pit,* not Satan (12.9; 20.2), but an otherwise unknown evil angelic figure. *Abaddon,* Hebrew term for the realm of the dead (see Job 26.6; Prov 15.11; 27.20), here personified (see also Job 28.22). *Apollyon,* Greek term meaning "destroyer," linked with the name of the god Apollo. **9.12** *The first woe* corresponds to the events narrated in 9.1–11; see note on 8.13. The *two woes to come* are described in 9.12–21; 11.15–19. **9.13** *The four horns,* the raised corners of the altar. **9.14** *Release the four angels who are bound.* The bind/release terminology (20.2; Tob 3.17) suggests that these are evil angels who lead demonic armies. *Euphrates,* a Mesopotamian river symbolizing the enemies of Israel (see Isa 7.20; 8.7; Jer 46.10). **9.18** *Fire* and *sulfur* (see also 14.10; 19.20; 20.10), stereotypical means of divine punishment first used on Sodom and Gomorrah (see Gen 19.24; Ps 11.6; Ezek 38.22). **9.20** *Did not repent* (see 9.21; 16.9, 11), a theme from the Exodus plague tradition (see, e.g., Ex 7.13, 22; 8.15); actual repentance is not expected. *Demons,* the supernatural beings behind *idols* (Deut 32.17; Ps 96.5; 1 Cor 10.19–20).

10.1–11 Two digressions (10.1–11; 11.1–14) delay the sounding of the seventh trumpet. **10.2** The *little scroll* represents divine revelation. **10.3** The import of the *seven thunders* is unclear. **10.4** *Voice from heaven,* probably God or Christ (see 1.11, 19). The instruction to *seal up* (see Dan 12.4, 9) means that some divine secrets must not be disclosed (2 Cor 12.4). **10.5–7** This scene is modeled after Dan 12.6–7. **10.6** *No more delay* does not imply a previous postponement, but the imminent end of time and beginning of eschato-

7 but in the days when the seventh angel is
to blow his trumpet, the mystery of God
will be fulfilled, as he announced to his
servants[z] the prophets."
8 Then the voice that I had heard
from heaven spoke to me again, saying,
"Go, take the scroll that is open in the
hand of the angel who is standing on the
sea and on the land." 9 So I went to the
angel and told him to give me the little
scroll; and he said to me, "Take it, and
eat; it will be bitter to your stomach, but
sweet as honey in your mouth." 10 So I
took the little scroll from the hand of the
angel and ate it; it was sweet as honey in
my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my
stomach was made bitter.
11 Then they said to me, "You must
prophesy again about many peoples and
nations and languages and kings."

The Two Witnesses

11 Then I was given a measuring
rod like a staff, and I was told,
"Come and measure the temple of God
and the altar and those who worship
there, 2 but do not measure the court out-
side the temple; leave that out, for it is
given over to the nations, and they will
trample over the holy city for forty-two
months. 3 And I will grant my two wit-
nesses authority to prophesy for one
thousand two hundred sixty days, wear-
ing sackcloth."
4 These are the two olive trees and the
two lampstands that stand before the
Lord of the earth. 5 And if anyone wants
to harm them, fire pours from their
mouth and consumes their foes; anyone
who wants to harm them must be killed in
this manner. 6 They have authority to shut
the sky, so that no rain may fall during the
days of their prophesying, and they have
authority over the waters to turn them
into blood, and to strike the earth with
every kind of plague, as often as they
desire.
7 When they have finished their testi-
mony, the beast that comes up from the
bottomless pit will make war on them and
conquer them and kill them, 8 and their
dead bodies will lie in the street of the
great city that is prophetically[a] called
Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord
was crucified. 9 For three and a half days
members of the peoples and tribes and

z Gk *slaves* a Or *allegorically*; Gk *spiritually*

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logical events. **10.7** *Mystery of God* (see Am 3.7), God's eschatological plan, hidden in OT prophetic books (Rom 16.25–26; 1 Cor 2.6–16; Eph 3.9–10; Col 1.26). *His servants the prophets*, a frequent designation of OT prophets (2 Kings 9.7; 17.13; Jer 7.25; Dan 9.6; see Rev 11.18). **10.8** The *voice* is that of 10.4. **10.9–10** Eating the scroll, a symbolic action based on Ezek 2.8–3.3, signifies accepting a prophetic commission. **10.11** *Prophesy again about* means "prophesy against," i.e., "prophesy judgment" (see Jer 25.30; Ezek 25.2).

11.1–14 The second degression (see note on 10.1–11) describes two mysterious witnesses. **11.1** *Measure*, a metaphor for preservation (Ezek 40.3–42.20; Zech 2.1–5). *The temple of God* here is the temple in Jerusalem, not in heaven (see note on 11.19). The *altar*, i.e., the priest's court where the altar stood. **11.2** The trampling or subjugation of Jerusalem by the *nations* (i.e., Gentiles) is a common eschatological motif (see Isa 63.18; 1 Macc 3.45; Lk 21.24; see also notes on 11.18; 16.14). *Forty-two months*, i.e., 1,260 days (11.3; 12.6), or three and a half years, the stereotypical length of a period of eschatological distress (see Dan 7.25; 12.7). **11.3** *My two witnesses*, prophetic figures, possibly Enoch and Elijah or Moses and Elijah (see Mk 9.4), represent the valid witness of the church (see Deut 17.6; 19.15; Mt 18.16; 2 Cor 13.1; 1 Tim 5.19; Heb 10.28). *Sackcloth*, often made of dark goat hair (6.12; Isa 50.3), the traditional Near Eastern costume of mourning (Joel 1.13; Mt 11.21). **11.4** *Two olive trees* and *two lampstands* (see Zech 4.3, 14), originally metaphors for Joshua the priest and Zerubbabel the royal heir, God's two anointed ones. **11.5** *Fire pours from their mouth*, often a metaphor for the word of God in judgment (see Jer 5.14; 2 Esd 13.10, 37–38; 2 Thess 2.8). **11.6** *Authority to shut the sky* is like Elijah's ability to control rain (1 Kings 17.1; 18.1; Lk 4.25; Jas 5.17). *Authority over the waters to turn them into blood* recalls Moses' actions (Ex 7.14–25). **11.7** The *beast* is the antichrist, a tyrannical ruler who opposes Christ and Christians (13.1–10; 17.8; 1 Jn 2.18; 4.3). *Bottomless pit.* See note on 9.1. *Kill them* (adapted from Dan 7.21). Death was frequently the fate of faithful prophets (see 2 Chr 24.19; Neh 9.26; Mt 23.34–35; Lk 11.49–51). **11.8** *The great city* is Jerusalem (see Jer 22.8), which the prophets occasionally called *Sodom* (see Isa 1.10; Jer 23.14; Ezek 16.46), the paradigmatic wicked city (Gen 18–19; Jer 49.18; Mt 10.15). *Egypt* symbolized idolatry (Isa 19.1; Ezek 20.7) and slavery (Josh 24.17; Judg 6.8; 2 Esd 14.3). **11.9** *Refuse to let them be placed in a tomb*, a further outrage (see 1 Kings 14.11; 21.24;

languages and nations will gaze at their
dead bodies and refuse to let them be
placed in a tomb; 10 and the inhabitants of
the earth will gloat over them and cele-
brate and exchange presents, because
these two prophets had been a torment to
the inhabitants of the earth.

11 But after the three and a half days,
the breath[b] of life from God entered
them, and they stood on their feet,
and those who saw them were terrified.
12 Then they[c] heard a loud voice from
heaven saying to them, "Come up here!"
And they went up to heaven in a cloud
while their enemies watched them. 13 At
that moment there was a great earth-
quake, and a tenth of the city fell; seven
thousand people were killed in the earth-
quake, and the rest were terrified and
gave glory to the God of heaven.

14 The second woe has passed. The
third woe is coming very soon.

The Seventh Trumpet

15 Then the seventh angel blew his
trumpet, and there were loud voices in
heaven, saying,

"The kingdom of the world has
become the kingdom of
our Lord
and of his Messiah,[d]
and he will reign forever and
ever."

16 Then the twenty-four elders who
sit on their thrones before God fell on
their faces and worshiped God, 17 singing,

"We give you thanks, Lord
God Almighty,
who are and who were,
for you have taken your
great power
and begun to reign.
18 The nations raged,
but your wrath has come,
and the time for judging
the dead,
for rewarding your servants,[e]
the prophets
and saints and all who fear
your name,
both small and great,
and for destroying those who
destroy the earth."

19 Then God's temple in heaven was
opened, and the ark of his covenant was
seen within his temple; and there were
flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of
thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail.

The Woman, the Child, and the Dragon

12 A great portent appeared in
heaven: a woman clothed with
the sun, with the moon under her feet,
and on her head a crown of twelve stars.
2 She was pregnant and was crying out in
birth pangs, in the agony of giving birth.
3 Then another portent appeared in
heaven: a great red dragon, with seven

b Or *the spirit* *c* Other ancient authorities read *I*
d Gk *Christ* *e* Gk *slaves*

Jer 8.1–2; 14.16; Tob 2.3–10; Mk 12.8). **11.11** *Breath of life from God.* See Gen 2.7. **11.12** *Come up here.* See 4.1. In Jewish and Christian tradition, *clouds* serve as divine vehicles (Ps 68.4; 104.7; Isa 19.1; 2 Esd 13.3) and as means of heavenly ascent (Acts 1.9) and descent (Rev 1.7; Dan 7.13; Mt 24.30; 26.64). **11.13** *Gave glory to the God of heaven,* i.e., were converted (16.9; Dan 4.34; 1 Esd 9.8; Acts 13.48). **11.14** *Woe.* See note on 8.13.

11.15–19 The seventh trumpet introduces a throne room scene; see note on 4.1–11. **11.15** *Messiah,* Hebrew term for Christ meaning "anointed one," i.e., king. **11.18** *The nations raged.* See Ps 46.6; see also notes on 11.2; 16.14. **11.19** *Temple in heaven,* the counterpart to the temple in Jerusalem. *Ark of his covenant,* the heavenly counterpart to the sacred chest, representing the presence of God, placed in the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle and temple (Ex 25.10–22; 1 Kings 8.1–13; Heb 9.4). *Flashes of lightning.* See note on 4.5.

12.1–17 The portent of the woman, the child, and the dragon is an adaptation of the myth of Apollo's birth. **12.1** *A great portent,* a celestial phenomenon with a deeper symbolic meaning (see 12.3; 15.1). *A woman clothed with the sun,* a cosmic queen (described much like Isis), used as a symbol for both the Israel from whom the Messiah came (12.5) and the church (12.6, 14, 17). *Twelve stars,* the zodiac, representing the twelve tribes of Israel. **12.3** *Dragon,* a designation for Satan used nine times in Revelation. The Greek translation of the OT uses the same term for Leviathan, the enemy of God (Job 41.1 [40.25]; Ps 74.14 [73.14]; Isa 27.1). A dragon with *seven heads* (see 13.1; 17.3), a figure in Ugaritic mythology, here symbolizes seven successive rulers (17.10);

heads and ten horns, and seven diadems
on his heads. 4 His tail swept down a third
of the stars of heaven and threw them to
the earth. Then the dragon stood before
the woman who was about to bear a child,
so that he might devour her child as soon
as it was born. 5 And she gave birth to a
son, a male child, who is to rule[f] all the
nations with a rod of iron. But her child
was snatched away and taken to God and
to his throne; 6 and the woman fled into
the wilderness, where she has a place pre-
pared by God, so that there she can be
nourished for one thousand two hundred
sixty days.

7 And war broke out in heaven; Mi-
chael and his angels fought against
the dragon. The dragon and his angels
fought back, 8 but they were defeated, and
there was no longer any place for them in
heaven. 9 The great dragon was thrown
down, that ancient serpent, who is called
the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the
whole world—he was thrown down to the
earth, and his angels were thrown down
with him.

10 Then I heard a loud voice in
heaven, proclaiming,

"Now have come the salvation
and the power
and the kingdom of our
God
and the authority of his
Messiah,[g]
for the accuser of our comrades[h]
has been thrown down,
who accuses them day and
night before our God.
11 But they have conquered him by
the blood of the Lamb
and by the word of their
testimony,
for they did not cling to life even
in the face of death.
12 Rejoice then, you heavens
and those who dwell in them!
But woe to the earth and the sea,
for the devil has come down
to you
with great wrath,
because he knows that his time
is short!"

13 So when the dragon saw that he
had been thrown down to the earth, he
pursued[i] the woman who had given
birth to the male child. 14 But the woman
was given the two wings of the great eagle,
so that she could fly from the serpent into
the wilderness, to her place where she is
nourished for a time, and times, and half
a time. 15 Then from his mouth the ser-
pent poured water like a river after the
woman, to sweep her away with the flood.
16 But the earth came to the help of the
woman; it opened its mouth and swal-
lowed the river that the dragon had
poured from his mouth. 17 Then the
dragon was angry with the woman, and
went off to make war on the rest of her
children, those who keep the command-
ments of God and hold the testimony of
Jesus.

f Or *to shepherd* *g* Gk *Christ* *h* Gk *brothers*
i Or *persecuted*

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the *ten horns* (see Dan 7.7, 20, 24) represent ten subordinate kingdoms (17.12). **12.4** *Swept down a third of the stars*, a metaphor for excessive pride (see Dan 8.10). **12.5** *Male child*, the Davidic Messiah who will *rule all the nations with a rod of iron* (see Ps 2.8–9), i.e., conquer the enemies of Israel (see note on 11.2). *Snatched away . . . to God*. The exaltation or ascension of Jesus (see Lk 24.51; Acts 2.32–33; 1 Tim 3.16; Heb 8.1; 10.12) is uniquely depicted here as a rescue from Satan. **12.6** *Wilderness*, a place of refuge and salvation based on the exodus tradition (see Ps 78.52; Isa 40.3; Jer 31.2). *One thousand two hundred sixty days*. See note on 11.2. **12.7** *War . . . in heaven*. Nowhere else in Jewish or early Christian literature is a heavenly battle depicted. *Michael*, one of the seven traditional archangels (see note on 1.4; Dan 10.13; 12.1; Jude 9), often presented as the commander of the host of angels (*Apocalypse of Paul* 14). **12.9** *The great dragon was thrown down*. This eschatological expulsion of Satan from heaven (see Lk 10.18; Jn 12.31) is based on an ancient Jewish expulsion myth (see Isa 14.12–15; *2 Enoch* 29.4–5). *Ancient serpent*, a name for Satan (Gen 3.1–7; 2 Cor 11.3). *Devil*. See note on 2.10. *His angels*, i.e., fallen angels or demons. **12.10** "Satan" means *accuser* in Hebrew (Job 1.9–11; Zech 3.1). **12.11** *They have conquered him*, paradoxically, like Jesus (3.21; 5.5), by dying. **12.14** *Two wings of the great eagle*. See Ex 19.4; Deut 32.10–14. *Wilderness*. See note on 12.6. *A time, and times, and half a time* (Dan 7.25; 12.7), i.e., three and a half years (see note on 11.2). **12.16** *Earth . . . swallowed the river*. A personified Earth sometimes swallows the enemies of God (see Ex 15.12; Num 16.32–34). **12.17** *The rest of her children*, Christians whose persecution is orchestrated by Satan (see 13.7).

The First Beast

18 Then the dragon[j] took his stand
13 on the sand of the seashore.
1 And I saw a beast rising out of
the sea, having ten horns and seven
heads; and on its horns were ten dia-
dems, and on its heads were blasphemous
names. 2 And the beast that I saw was like
a leopard, its feet were like a bear's, and
its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And the
dragon gave it his power and his throne
and great authority. 3 One of its heads
seemed to have received a death-blow, but
its mortal wound[k] had been healed. In
amazement the whole earth followed the
beast. 4 They worshiped the dragon, for
he had given his authority to the beast,
and they worshiped the beast, saying,
"Who is like the beast, and who can fight
against it?"

5 The beast was given a mouth utter-
ing haughty and blasphemous words, and
it was allowed to exercise authority for
forty-two months. 6 It opened its mouth to
utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming
his name and his dwelling, that is,
those who dwell in heaven. 7 Also it was
allowed to make war on the saints and to
conquer them.[l] It was given authority
over every tribe and people and language
and nation, 8 and all the inhabitants of the
earth will worship it, everyone whose
name has not been written from the foun-
dation of the world in the book of life of
the Lamb that was slaughtered.[m]

9 Let anyone who has an ear listen:
10 If you are to be taken captive,
into captivity you go;
if you kill with the sword,
with the sword you must be
killed.

Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.

The Second Beast

11 Then I saw another beast that rose
out of the earth; it had two horns like a
lamb and it spoke like a dragon. 12 It exer-
cises all the authority of the first beast on
its behalf, and it makes the earth and its
inhabitants worship the first beast, whose
mortal wound[n] had been healed. 13 It
performs great signs, even making fire
come down from heaven to earth in the
sight of all; 14 and by the signs that it is
allowed to perform on behalf of the beast,
it deceives the inhabitants of earth, telling
them to make an image for the beast that
had been wounded by the sword[o] and
yet lived; 15 and it was allowed to give
breath[p] to the image of the beast so that
the image of the beast could even speak
and cause those who would not worship
the image of the beast to be killed. 16 Also

j Gk *Then he*; other ancient authorities read *Then I stood* *k* Gk *the plague of its death* *l* Other ancient authorities lack this sentence
m Or *written in the book of life of the Lamb that was slaughtered from the foundation of the world*
n Gk *whose plague of its death* *o* Or *that had received the plague of the sword* *p* Or *spirit*

12.18–13.18 Two beasts that serve the dragon are introduced. **12.18** *The dragon took his stand on the . . . seashore* to await the emergence of the beast. **13.1** The *beast* (see 11.7). John represents both Rome and its emperors as the sea monster Leviathan (Ezek 29.3; 2 Esd 6.47–52; *1 Enoch* 60.7–10, 24). It rises out of the *sea* (representing the bottomless pit; see note on 9.1) and is a composite of the four beasts of Dan 7.3–7. *Blasphemous names*, divine titles, such as "Lord," "Savior," and "Son of God," claimed by Roman emperors. *Ten horns and seven heads*. See note on 12.3. **13.2** *The dragon gave it his power*, i.e., Rome and its emperors are agents of Satan (2 Thess 2.9). **13.3** *One of its heads . . . received a death-blow*, refers to the emperor Nero, who committed suicide in 68 C.E. *Mortal wound . . . healed* reflects the widespread belief in Nero's return from death. **13.4** *They worshiped the beast*. The imperial cult included worship of the emperors as well as the traditional Greek and Roman gods (see notes on 2.8; 2.12). **13.5** *Forty-two months*. See note on 11.2. **13.7** *Make war on the saints*. See 12.17. **13.8** *Book of life*. See note on 3.5. **13.10** *If you are . . . be killed*, a reformulation of Jer 15.2; 43.11. **13.11** The *beast that rose out of the earth*, later called the *false prophet* (16.13; 19.20; 20.10). John represents the priesthood of the imperial cult (see 13.12) as the male monster Behemoth (2 Esd 6.47–52; *1 Enoch* 60.7–10, 24). The beast with *horns like a lamb* is harmless in appearance, but it *spoke like a dragon*, i.e., as an agent of Satan (see note on 12.3). **13.13** *It performs great signs*, a traditional ploy of the antichrist to deceive people (Mk 13.21–23; 2 Thess 2.9–10; *Didache* 16.4). The motif is derived from Deut 13.1–3. **13.14** *An image for the beast*, cultic statues of the Roman emperors (see Dan 3). **13.15** *Give breath to the image* reflects the ancient belief that gods inhabited their images. *Speak*, i.e., give oracles. **13.16** *Marked on the right hand or the forehead*, i.e., branded or tattooed as a mark of ownership and

it causes all, both small and great, both
rich and poor, both free and slave, to be
marked on the right hand or the fore-
head, 17 so that no one can buy or sell who
does not have the mark, that is, the name
of the beast or the number of its name.
18 This calls for wisdom: let anyone with
understanding calculate the number of
the beast, for it is the number of a person.
Its number is six hundred sixty-six.[q]

The Lamb and the 144,000

14 Then I looked, and there was the
Lamb, standing on Mount Zion!
And with him were one hundred forty-
four thousand who had his name and his
Father's name written on their foreheads.
2 And I heard a voice from heaven like the
sound of many waters and like the sound
of loud thunder; the voice I heard was
like the sound of harpists playing on their
harps, 3 and they sing a new song before
the throne and before the four living
creatures and before the elders. No one
could learn that song except the one hun-
dred forty-four thousand who have been
redeemed from the earth. 4 It is these who
have not defiled themselves with wom-
en, for they are virgins; these follow
the Lamb wherever he goes. They have
been redeemed from humankind as first
fruits for God and the Lamb, 5 and in
their mouth no lie was found; they are
blameless.

The Messages of the Three Angels

6 Then I saw another angel flying in
midheaven, with an eternal gospel to pro-
claim to those who live[r] on the earth—to
every nation and tribe and language and
people. 7 He said in a loud voice, "Fear
God and give him glory, for the hour of
his judgment has come; and worship him
who made heaven and earth, the sea and
the springs of water."
8 Then another angel, a second, fol-
lowed, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon
the great! She has made all nations
drink of the wine of the wrath of her
fornication."
9 Then another angel, a third, fol-
lowed them, crying with a loud voice,
"Those who worship the beast and its im-
age, and receive a mark on their fore-
heads or on their hands, 10 they will also
drink the wine of God's wrath, poured
unmixed into the cup of his anger, and
they will be tormented with fire and sul-
fur in the presence of the holy angels and
in the presence of the Lamb. 11 And the
smoke of their torment goes up forever
and ever. There is no rest day or night for
those who worship the beast and its image
and for anyone who receives the mark of
its name."

q Other ancient authorities read *six hundred sixteen*
r Gk *sit*

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devotion to the beast; this marking is a counterpart to the sealing of Christians with the name of God (see note on 7.2). **13.18** *The number of the beast*, a code name based on the numeric value of letters. *Six hundred sixty-six*, perhaps the numeric value of the name Nero Caesar in Hebrew.

14.1–20 Three loosely connected visions. **14.1–5** A victory vision of the Lamb and the 144,000. **14.1** *Mount Zion*, i.e., Jerusalem as the center of God's eschatological action (Ps 2.6; Isa 24.23; 40.9–11; 2 Esd 13.35–40; Heb 12.22–24). *One hundred forty-four thousand.* See note on 7.4. **14.2–3** Preparatory heavenly throne room scene; see note on 4.1–11. **14.3** *A new song.* See note on 5.9. *No one could learn that song.* Knowledge of heavenly hymns is reserved for the pure. **14.4** *Virgins*, males who are chaste, but not necessarily sexually inexperienced; ritual impurity was widely thought to follow sexual intercourse (Lev 15.18), and temporary celibacy was a ritual requirement for holy warriors (Deut 23.9–14; 1 Sam 21.5–6). *Follow the Lamb*, a metaphor for discipleship and martyrdom (see Mt 19.28; Lk 9.57–58; Jn 12.26). The *first fruits* of a harvest were dedicated to God (see Ex 23.19; Lev 23.9); here the term is applied to martyrs as sacrificial victims (cf. Jer 2.3; Rom 16.5; 1 Cor 15.20, 23). **14.6–13** The second vision consists of three angelic messages. **14.6** *An eternal gospel*, not the saving message of Jesus' death and resurrection, but the message in 14.7. **14.7** The eternal message is the necessity of repentance in light of the imminent judgment (see also Deut 10.12–15; Acts 14.15–17). **14.8** *Babylon the great*, code name for Rome (see Introduction; 17.1–5, 18; 1 Pet 5.13); Rome's future fall is announced as if past (see 16.19; 17.5, 16–18; 18.2). *The wine of the wrath* of God, a metaphor derived from Jer 25.15–17; 51.7 (repeated in Rev 14.10; 17.2; 18.3). **14.9** *A mark on their foreheads or on their hands.* See note on 13.16. **14.10** Wine *unmixed* with water was considered extremely potent and

12 Here is a call for the endurance of
the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and hold fast to the faith
of[s] Jesus.
13 And I heard a voice from heaven
saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead
who from now on die in the Lord." "Yes,"
says the Spirit, "they will rest from their
labors, for their deeds follow them."

Reaping the Earth's Harvest

14 Then I looked, and there was a
white cloud, and seated on the cloud was
one like the Son of Man, with a golden
crown on his head, and a sharp sickle in
his hand! 15 Another angel came out of
the temple, calling with a loud voice to the
one who sat on the cloud, "Use your sickle
and reap, for the hour to reap has come,
because the harvest of the earth is fully
ripe." 16 So the one who sat on the cloud
swung his sickle over the earth, and the
earth was reaped.
17 Then another angel came out of
the temple in heaven, and he too had a
sharp sickle. 18 Then another angel came
out from the altar, the angel who has authority over fire, and he called with a loud
voice to him who had the sharp sickle,
"Use your sharp sickle and gather the
clusters of the vine of the earth, for its
grapes are ripe." 19 So the angel swung his
sickle over the earth and gathered the vintage of the earth, and he threw it into the
great wine press of the wrath of God.
20 And the wine press was trodden outside
the city, and blood flowed from the wine
press, as high as a horse's bridle, for a distance of about two hundred miles.[t]

The Seven Last Plagues

15 Then I saw another portent in
heaven, great and amazing: seven
angels with seven plagues, which are the
last, for with them the wrath of God is
ended.
2 And I saw what appeared to be a sea
of glass mixed with fire, and those who
had conquered the beast and its image
and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in
their hands. 3 And they sing the song of
Moses, the servant[u] of God, and the song
of the Lamb:

"Great and amazing are your
deeds,
Lord God the Almighty!
Just and true are your ways,
King of the nations![v]
4 Lord, who will not fear
and glorify your name?
For you alone are holy.
All nations will come
and worship before you,
for your judgments have been
revealed."

5 After this I looked, and the temple
of the tent[w] of witness in heaven was
opened, 6 and out of the temple came the
seven angels with the seven plagues,
robed in pure bright linen,[x] with golden
sashes across their chests. 7 Then one of
the four living creatures gave the seven
angels seven golden bowls full of the
wrath of God, who lives forever and ever;

s Or *to their faith in* t Gk *one thousand six hundred stadia* u Gk *slave* v Other ancient authorities read *the ages* w Or *tabernacle* x Other ancient authorities read *stone*

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was a metaphor for severe judgment (see Ps 75.8; Jer 25.15). **14.13** *Blessed.* See note on 1.3. **14.14–20** A vision of the gathering of the righteous (vv. 14–16) and the judgment of the wicked (vv. 17–20), based on the grain and grape harvests of Joel 3.13. **14.14** The *white cloud* (see note on 11.12) functions as a throne and is also associated with the figure of *the Son of Man* (Dan 7.13; see notes on 1.7; 1.13), a common title for Jesus in the Gospels; he gathers the elect in Mk 13.26–27. **14.15** The grain *harvest* symbolizes judgment (Hos 6.11; Mt 13.30, 39) or, as here, the gathering of the elect (Lk 10.2; Jn 4.35–38). **14.18** *The angel who has authority over fire.* In Jewish tradition various angels superintend particular aspects of the world, including wind (7.1), water (16.5; *1 Enoch* 66.2), and the bottomless pit (9.11); see also *1 Enoch* 60.11–22. **14.19** *Wine press,* another metaphor for divine judgment (see 19.15; Isa 63.1–3; Lam 1.15).

15.1–16.21 The last seven plagues; see note on 8.2–9.21. **15.2–8** A preparatory heavenly throne room scene (see note on 4.1–11). **15.2** *A sea of glass,* i.e., a sea that appears like glass; see note on 4.6. *Harps of God.* See note on 5.8. **15.3** *The song of Moses.* See Ex 15.1–18; Deut 32.1–47. **15.5** *The tent of witness,* i.e., the heavenly tabernacle (Heb 8.2; 9.11), which was considered the model for the earthly tabernacle (see Ex 25.9, 40; 26.30; 27.8). **15.7** *Seven golden bowls,* cultic utensils used for libations (Ex 27.3; 38.3;

8 and the temple was filled with smoke
from the glory of God and from his
power, and no one could enter the temple
until the seven plagues of the seven angels
were ended.

16 Then I heard a loud voice from
the temple telling the seven an-
gels, "Go and pour out on the earth the
seven bowls of the wrath of God."

2 So the first angel went and poured
his bowl on the earth, and a foul and pain-
ful sore came on those who had the mark
of the beast and who worshiped its image.

3 The second angel poured his bowl
into the sea, and it became like the blood
of a corpse, and every living thing in the
sea died.

4 The third angel poured his bowl
into the rivers and the springs of water,
and they became blood. 5 And I heard the
angel of the waters say,

"You are just, O Holy One, who
are and were,
for you have judged these
things;
6 because they shed the blood of
saints and prophets,
you have given them blood to
drink.
It is what they deserve!"

7 And I heard the altar respond,

"Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty,
your judgments are true and
just!"

8 The fourth angel poured his bowl
on the sun, and it was allowed to scorch
people with fire; 9 they were scorched by
the fierce heat, but they cursed the name
of God, who had authority over these
plagues, and they did not repent and give
him glory.

10 The fifth angel poured his bowl
on the throne of the beast, and its king-
dom was plunged into darkness; people
gnawed their tongues in agony, 11 and
cursed the God of heaven because of their
pains and sores, and they did not repent
of their deeds.

12 The sixth angel poured his bowl on
the great river Euphrates, and its water
was dried up in order to prepare the way
for the kings from the east. 13 And I saw
three foul spirits like frogs coming from
the mouth of the dragon, from the mouth
of the beast, and from the mouth of the
false prophet. 14 These are demonic spir-
its, performing signs, who go abroad to
the kings of the whole world, to assemble
them for battle on the great day of God
the Almighty. 15 ("See, I am coming like a
thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake
and is clothed,[y] not going about naked
and exposed to shame.") 16 And they as-
sembled them at the place that in Hebrew
is called Harmagedon.

17 The seventh angel poured his bowl
into the air, and a loud voice came out of
the temple, from the throne, saying, "It is
done!" 18 And there came flashes of light-
ning, rumblings, peals of thunder, and a
violent earthquake, such as had not oc-
curred since people were upon the earth,
so violent was that earthquake. 19 The
great city was split into three parts, and
the cities of the nations fell. God remem-
bered great Babylon and gave her the

y Gk *and keeps his robes*

Num 4.14). **15.8** In the OT, a cloud of *smoke* represents the presence or *glory* of God (see Ex 24.16; Lev 16.2; 1 Kings 8.10–11; Isa 6.4). **16.2** *A foul and painful sore.* See the sixth plague of Ex 9.8–12. **16.3** See the first plague of Ex 7.14–25 (see also Ps 78.44; 105.29). **16.5** *Angel of the waters.* See note on 14.18. *You are just, O Holy One,* a doxology emphasizing God's just dispensing of judgment (see Neh 9.33; Dan 9.14; Tob 3.2). **16.9** *They did not repent.* See note on 9.20. **16.10** *The throne of the beast,* the center of imperial power in Rome (13.2). **16.12** *Euphrates,* the natural boundary between the rival powers of Parthia and Rome (see note on 9.14). *Its water was dried up.* In antiquity the Euphrates never dried up; this miracle is the antithesis of the crossing of the Red Sea (Ex 14). *Kings from the east,* the Parthians and their subordinate kingdoms. **16.13** *False prophet,* the beast from the land (13.11–18). **16.14** *To assemble them for battle.* The tumult and assault of the Gentiles against Israel is a common eschatological motif (see Ezek 38–39; Zech 12.1–9; see also notes on 11.2; 11.18). *The great day of God.* See note on 6.17. **16.15** *I am coming like a thief!* See note on 3.3. *Blessed.* See note on 1.3. **16.16** *They,* the three demonic spirits. *Harmagedon,* Hebrew term meaning "mountain(s) of Megiddo," a city in central Palestine that was the site of important ancient battles (see Judg 5.19; 2 Kings 23.29–30). **16.17** *It is done.* The wrath of God has ended (15.1), yet the end is not yet (see 21.6). **16.19** *The great city,* Babylon, i.e., Rome. *God remembered great Babylon.* Divine justice is often linked with divine remembrance (see Jer

wine-cup of the fury of his wrath. 20And
every island fled away, and no mountains
were to be found; 21and huge hailstones,
each weighing about a hundred pounds,[z]
dropped from heaven on people, until
they cursed God for the plague of the
hail, so fearful was that plague.

The Great Whore and the Beast

17 Then one of the seven angels
who had the seven bowls came
and said to me, "Come, I will show you
the judgment of the great whore who is
seated on many waters, 2with whom the
kings of the earth have committed forni-
cation, and with the wine of whose forni-
cation the inhabitants of the earth have
become drunk." 3So he carried me away
in the spirit[a] into a wilderness, and I saw
a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was
full of blasphemous names, and it had
seven heads and ten horns. 4The woman
was clothed in purple and scarlet, and
adorned with gold and jewels and pearls,
holding in her hand a golden cup full of
abominations and the impurities of her
fornication; 5and on her forehead was
written a name, a mystery: "Babylon the
great, mother of whores and of earth's
abominations." 6And I saw that the
woman was drunk with the blood of the
saints and the blood of the witnesses to
Jesus.

When I saw her, I was greatly amazed.
7But the angel said to me, "Why are you
so amazed? I will tell you the mystery of
the woman, and of the beast with seven
heads and ten horns that carries her.
8The beast that you saw was, and is not,
and is about to ascend from the bottom-
less pit and go to destruction. And the in-
habitants of the earth, whose names have
not been written in the book of life from
the foundation of the world, will be
amazed when they see the beast, because
it was and is not and is to come.

9 "This calls for a mind that has wis-
dom: the seven heads are seven moun-
tains on which the woman is seated; also,
they are seven kings, 10of whom five have
fallen, one is living, and the other has not
yet come; and when he comes, he must
remain only a little while. 11As for the
beast that was and is not, it is an eighth
but it belongs to the seven, and it goes to
destruction. 12And the ten horns that you
saw are ten kings who have not yet re-
ceived a kingdom, but they are to receive
authority as kings for one hour, together
with the beast. 13These are united in
yielding their power and authority to the
beast; 14they will make war on the Lamb,
and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is
Lord of lords and King of kings, and
those with him are called and chosen and
faithful."

15 And he said to me, "The waters
that you saw, where the whore is seated,
are peoples and multitudes and nations
and languages. 16And the ten horns that

z Gk *weighing about a talent* a Or *in the Spirit*

14.10; Hos 7.2; 8.13); the destruction of Babylon is described in 17.1–18.24. **16.20** *No mountains were to be found,* a motif found in OT theophany and judgment scenes (see Ps 97.5; Isa 40.4; Ezek 38.20).

17.1–18 A vision of Rome as the great whore. **17.1** *The great whore.* The metaphor of the prostitute is often used in the OT for godless cities (see Isa 1.21; 23.16–17; Nah 3.4). *Seated on many waters* aptly describes the location of historical Babylon (Jer 51.13). **17.3** *He carried me away in the spirit.* See note on 1.10. *Scarlet beast,* the Roman Empire. *Full of blasphemous names* with *seven heads and ten horns,* identical with the beast from the sea (13.1). **17.4** *Clothed in . . . pearls,* i.e., dressed like a wealthy courtesan (see 18.16). **17.5** *On her forehead was written a name* suggests the lowest form of prostitute, a tattooed slave. **17.6** *The saints,* the many Christian martyrs. **17.8** *Ascend from the bottomless pit.* See 11.7. *It was and is not and is to come,* a parody of the divine title "who is and who was and who is to come" (see note on 1.4); here *is not* means "has died." **17.9** *Seven mountains.* That Rome was located on seven hills was first popularized by Varro (116–27 B.C.E.). *Seven kings,* either seven actual emperors (either Julius Caesar or Augustus could be counted as the first) or a symbol for a complete series. **17.11** *An eighth,* the returned Nero (see note on 13.3). **17.12** *Ten kings,* subordinate kings on the eastern borders of the empire. *One hour,* an extremely limited period (18.10, 17, 19). **17.14** *War on the Lamb,* the final end-time battle; see 16.12–16; 19.17–21. *Lord of lords and King of kings,* a title of Persian origin (Ezra 7.12) usually reserved for God (see Dan 4.37; 1 Tim 6.15; *1 Enoch* 9.4). **17.15** *Waters* (see 17.1), often a symbol for threatening armies (see Isa 8.6–8; Jer 47.2). **17.16** *They will make her desolate and naked,* the returned Nero, with Parthian allies, will destroy Rome (see 16.19). *Devour her flesh,* an allusion to the fate of Jezebel (1 Kings 21.23–24).

ALTERNATE WAYS OF COUNTING THE ROMAN EMPERORS SIGNIFIED IN REV 17.10–11

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Julius Caesar (101–44 B.C.E.)	1	1						1
Augustus (31 B.C.E.–14 C.E.)	2	2	1	1				2
Tiberius (14–37 C.E.)	3	3	2	2				–
Gaius (37–41)	4	4	3	3	1			–
Claudius (41–54)	5	5	4	4	2			3
Nero (54–68)	6	6	5	5	3	1		–
Galba (June 68–January 69)	7	–	6	–	4	2	1	–
Otho (69)	8	–	7	–	5	3	2	–
Vitellius (69)		–	8	–	6	4	3	–
Vespasian (69–79)		7		6	7	5	4	4
Titus (79–81)		8		7	8	6	5	5
Domitian (81–96)				8		7 (8)	6	6
[Neronic Antichrist]							–	7 (8)
Nerva (96–98)							7 (8)	

Column A begins with Julius Caesar, following a traditional way of counting the emperors (see Dio Chrysostom *Discourses* 34.7; Josephus *Antiquities* 18.32; *Sibylline Oracles* 5.12–51).

Column B modifies the sequence of Column A by omitting the three short-lived emperors of 68–69 C.E.

Column C reflects another traditional way of counting the emperors and begins with Augustus, the first actually to receive that title (see Virgil *Aeneid* 6.789–97; Tacitus *Annals* 1.1).

Column D modifies the sequence of Column C by omitting the three short-lived emperors of 68–69.

Column E reflects the judgment of some modern scholars that the enumeration begins with Gaius, infamous for his treatment of Jews.

Column F reflects the judgment of other modern scholars that the enumeration begins with Nero, infamous for his treatment of Christians.

Column G represents the scheme of Victorinus of Pettau in his *Commentary on the Apocalypse* (17.9–11).

Column H shows the first five emperors deified by the Roman senate, followed by Domitian, who claimed divinity while living. The list concludes with a mythical, Nero-like adversary of God derived from legends about Nero's return from death (see *Sibylline Oracles* 4.138–39; 5.108–10, 214–27).

you saw, they and the beast will hate the
whore; they will make her desolate and
naked; they will devour her flesh and
burn her up with fire. 17 For God has put
it into their hearts to carry out his pur-
pose by agreeing to give their kingdom to
the beast, until the words of God will be
fulfilled. 18 The woman you saw is the
great city that rules over the kings of the
earth."

The Fall of Babylon

18 After this I saw another angel
coming down from heaven, hav-
ing great authority; and the earth was
made bright with his splendor. 2 He called
out with a mighty voice,

"Fallen, fallen is Babylon the
great!
It has become a dwelling place
of demons,
a haunt of every foul spirit,
a haunt of every foul bird,
a haunt of every foul and
hateful beast.[b]
3 For all the nations have drunk[c]
of the wine of the wrath of her
fornication,
and the kings of the earth have
committed fornication
with her,
and the merchants of the earth
have grown rich from the
power[d] of her luxury."

4 Then I heard another voice from
heaven saying,

"Come out of her, my people,
so that you do not take part
in her sins,
and so that you do not share in her
plagues;
5 for her sins are heaped high
as heaven,
and God has remembered
her iniquities.
6 Render to her as she herself
has rendered,
and repay her double for
her deeds;
mix a double draught for her
in the cup she mixed.
7 As she glorified herself and lived
luxuriously,
so give her a like measure of
torment and grief.
Since in her heart she says,
'I rule as a queen;
I am no widow,
and I will never see grief,'
8 therefore her plagues will come
in a single day—
pestilence and mourning
and famine—
and she will be burned with fire;
for mighty is the Lord God
who judges her."

9 And the kings of the earth, who
committed fornication and lived in luxury
with her, will weep and wail over her
when they see the smoke of her burning;
10 they will stand far off, in fear of her
torment, and say,

"Alas, alas, the great city,
Babylon, the mighty city!
For in one hour your judgment
has come."

11 And the merchants of the earth
weep and mourn for her, since no one
buys their cargo anymore, 12 cargo of
gold, silver, jewels and pearls, fine linen,
purple, silk and scarlet, all kinds of
scented wood, all articles of ivory, all arti-

b Other ancient authorities lack the words *a haunt of every foul beast* and attach the words *and hateful* to the previous line so as to read *a haunt of every foul and hateful bird* *c* Other ancient authorities read *She has made all nations drink* *d* Or *resources*

18.1–19.10 Reactions to the fall of Babylon. **18.2** *Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great,* a phrase from Isa 21.9 used here to introduce a prophetic taunt anticipating Rome's fall (see also Isa 23–24; Jer 50–51; Ezek 26–27). *A haunt of . . . every foul and hateful beast,* i.e., a devastated ruin (see Jer 51.37). **18.3** *Fornication,* metaphor for political and religious subservience to Rome. *Merchants . . . have grown rich.* Wealthy Romans bought expensive products from everywhere (see 18.11–13). **18.4** *Come out of her,* a prophetic summons to flight (see Isa 48.20–22; Jer 50.8–10; 51.6–10). **18.5** *Her sins are heaped high as heaven.* See Jer 51.9. *God has remembered.* See note on 16.19. **18.6** *Render to her . . . for her deeds,* alludes to Jer 50.29; 16.18. **18.7** *I rule as a queen.* The fatal pride of Rome is personalized in this brief soliloquy. **18.9–20** Three dirges adapted from Ezek 27: of kings (vv. 9–10), merchants (vv. 11–17a), and mariners (vv. 17b–20). **18.11** *The merchants of the earth weep . . . for her,* actually for themselves; Rome was the hub of a complex economic system that imported products from China, India, Africa, and northern Europe. **18.12–13** The

cles of costly wood, bronze, iron, and marble, 13cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh,
frankincense, wine, olive oil, choice flour
and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and
chariots, slaves—and human lives.[e]
14 "The fruit for which your soul
longed
has gone from you,
and all your dainties and
your splendor
are lost to you,
never to be found again!"
15The merchants of these wares, who
gained wealth from her, will stand far off,
in fear of her torment, weeping and
mourning aloud,
16 "Alas, alas, the great city,
clothed in fine linen,
in purple and scarlet,
adorned with gold,
with jewels, and with pearls!
17 For in one hour all this wealth
has been laid waste!"
And all shipmasters and seafarers, sailors and all whose trade is on the sea, stood
far off 18and cried out as they saw the
smoke of her burning,
"What city was like the great
city?"
19And they threw dust on their heads, as
they wept and mourned, crying out,
"Alas, alas, the great city,
where all who had ships at sea
grew rich by her wealth!
For in one hour she has been
laid waste."
20 Rejoice over her, O heaven, you
saints and apostles and prophets! For
God has given judgment for you against
her.
21 Then a mighty angel took up a
stone like a great millstone and threw it
into the sea, saying,
"With such violence Babylon the
great city
will be thrown down,
and will be found no more;
22 and the sound of harpists and
minstrels and of flutists and
trumpeters
will be heard in you no more;
and an artisan of any trade
will be found in you no more;
and the sound of the millstone
will be heard in you no more;
23 and the light of a lamp
will shine in you no more;
and the voice of bridegroom
and bride
will be heard in you no more;
for your merchants were the
magnates of the earth,
and all nations were deceived
by your sorcery.
24 And in you[f] was found the
blood of prophets and of
saints,
and of all who have been
slaughtered on earth."

The Rejoicing in Heaven

19 After this I heard what seemed to
be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying,
"Hallelujah!
Salvation and glory and power
to our God,
2 for his judgments are true
and just;
he has judged the great whore
who corrupted the earth with
her fornication,
and he has avenged on her the
blood of his servants."[g]
3Once more they said,
"Hallelujah!
The smoke goes up from her
forever and ever."
4And the twenty-four elders and the four
living creatures fell down and worshiped

e Or *chariots, and human bodies and souls* f Gk *her*
g Gk *slaves*

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list of twenty-nine trade goods alludes to Ezek 16.9–13; 27.5–24. **18.16** *Clothed . . . in purple and scarlet.* See note on 17.4. **18.18** *What city was like the great city?* The question is based on Ezek 27.32. **18.19** *Threw dust on their heads,* an act of mourning or sorrow (see Josh 7.6; Job 2.12; Lam 2.10). **18.20** *God has given judgment for you against her.* The martyrs' prayer is answered (see 6.10). **18.21** The *millstone* thrown into the sea symbolizes Rome's downfall (adapted from Jer 51.63–64). **19.1–10** A heavenly throne room scene (see note on 4.1–11) reflects on Rome's fall (vv. 1–5) and anticipates the marriage of the Lamb (vv. 6–10). **19.1–6** *Hallelujah,* a Hebrew term meaning "praise Yah(weh)" (Ps 135.3), oc-

God who is seated on the throne, saying,
"Amen. Hallelujah!"
5 And from the throne came a voice
saying,
"Praise our God,
all you his servants,[h]
and all who fear him,
small and great."
6 Then I heard what seemed to be the
voice of a great multitude, like the sound
of many waters and like the sound of
mighty thunderpeals, crying out,
"Hallelujah!
For the Lord our God
the Almighty reigns.
7 Let us rejoice and exult
and give him the glory,
for the marriage of the Lamb
has come,
and his bride has made
herself ready;
8 to her it has been granted to
be clothed
with fine linen, bright and
pure"—
for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of
the saints.
9 And the angel said[i] to me, "Write
this: Blessed are those who are invited to
the marriage supper of the Lamb." And
he said to me, "These are true words of
God." 10 Then I fell down at his feet to
worship him, but he said to me, "You
must not do that! I am a fellow servant[j]
with you and your comrades[k] who hold
the testimony of Jesus.[l] Worship God!
For the testimony of Jesus[l] is the spirit of
prophecy."

The Defeat of God's Adversaries

11 Then I saw heaven opened, and
there was a white horse! Its rider is called
Faithful and True, and in righteousness
he judges and makes war. 12 His eyes are
like a flame of fire, and on his head are
many diadems; and he has a name in-
scribed that no one knows but himself.
13 He is clothed in a robe dipped in[m]
blood, and his name is called The Word
of God. 14 And the armies of heaven,
wearing fine linen, white and pure, were
following him on white horses. 15 From
his mouth comes a sharp sword with
which to strike down the nations, and he
will rule[n] them with a rod of iron; he will
tread the wine press of the fury of the
wrath of God the Almighty. 16 On his robe
and on his thigh he has a name inscribed,
"King of kings and Lord of lords."
17 Then I saw an angel standing in
the sun, and with a loud voice he called
to all the birds that fly in midheaven,
"Come, gather for the great supper of
God, 18 to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh
of captains, the flesh of the mighty, the
flesh of horses and their riders—flesh of
all, both free and slave, both small and
great." 19 Then I saw the beast and the
kings of the earth with their armies gath-
ered to make war against the rider on the
horse and against his army. 20 And the
beast was captured, and with it the false
prophet who had performed in its pres-

h Gk *slaves* *i* Gk *he said* *j* Gk *slave*
k Gk *brothers* *l* Or *to Jesus* *m* Other ancient authorities read *sprinkled with* *n* Or *will shepherd*

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curs in the NT only in these verses. **19.6** *A great multitude.* See note on 7.9. **19.7** *Marriage of the Lamb,* metaphor for the union of Christ as bridegroom and the church as *bride* (see 21.2, 9; 22.17; 2 Cor 11.2; Eph 5.25–33); for Israel as the bride of God, see Isa 54.5; Hos 2.19–20. **19.9** *Blessed.* See note on 1.3. **19.10** *The spirit of prophecy.* The prophetic spirit is identified with the testimony about Jesus, which is the essence of prophecy.

19.11–21.8 The judgment of God's adversaries. **19.11–20.3** Christ rides forth as a divine warrior, leading the heavenly armies against God's adversaries (cf. 1.12–16). **19.11** *Then I saw heaven opened,* stereotypical introduction to revelatory visions (see Ezek 1.1; Mt 3.16; Jn 1.51; Acts 7.56; 10.11). The *white horse* symbolizes victory. *Rider,* the Messiah. **19.13** *Robe dipped in blood,* the garment of a warrior stained with the blood of his enemies (see Isa 63.1–6) and perhaps also a reference to his atoning death (see 1.5; 7.14). *The Word of God,* a rare designation for Jesus (see Jn 1.1; 1 Jn 1.1; cf. Wis 18.15–16). **19.14** *The armies of heaven,* angelic hosts. **19.15** *A sharp sword.* See note on 1.16. *He will rule them with a rod of iron.* See note on 12.5. *He will tread the wine press.* See note on 14.19. **19.16** *King of kings and Lord of lords.* See note on 17.14. **19.17** *Come, gather for the great supper of God,* an invitation to birds (parodying ancient cultic dinner invitations), not to attend the messianic banquet (Isa 25.6–8; 55.1–2; Mt 8.11; Lk 13.29; *1 Enoch* 62.14), but to eat the slaughtered enemies of God. **19.19** *The beast and the kings of the earth.* See 16.12–14. **19.20** *Lake of fire* (20.10, 14–15; 21.8), a place of eternal punishment, located not in the underworld but *in the presence of the Lamb*

ence the signs by which he deceived those
who had received the mark of the beast
and those who worshiped its image. These
two were thrown alive into the lake of fire
that burns with sulfur. 21 And the rest
were killed by the sword of the rider on
the horse, the sword that came from his
mouth; and all the birds were gorged with
their flesh.

20 Then I saw an angel coming
down from heaven, holding in his
hand the key to the bottomless pit and a
great chain. 2 He seized the dragon, that
ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Sa-
tan, and bound him for a thousand years,
3 and threw him into the pit, and locked
and sealed it over him, so that he would
deceive the nations no more, until the
thousand years were ended. After that he
must be let out for a little while.

The Millennial Kingdom

4 Then I saw thrones, and those
seated on them were given authority to
judge. I also saw the souls of those who
had been beheaded for their testimony to
Jesus[o] and for the word of God. They
had not worshiped the beast or its image
and had not received its mark on their
foreheads or their hands. They came to
life and reigned with Christ a thousand
years. 5 (The rest of the dead did not
come to life until the thousand years were
ended.) This is the first resurrection.
6 Blessed and holy are those who share in
the first resurrection. Over these the sec-
ond death has no power, but they will be
priests of God and of Christ, and they will
reign with him a thousand years.

The Final Defeat of Satan

7 When the thousand years are ended,
Satan will be released from his prison
8 and will come out to deceive the nations
at the four corners of the earth, Gog and
Magog, in order to gather them for battle;
they are as numerous as the sands of the
sea. 9 They marched up over the breadth
of the earth and surrounded the camp of
the saints and the beloved city. And fire
came down from heaven[p] and consumed
them. 10 And the devil who had deceived
them was thrown into the lake of fire and
sulfur, where the beast and the false
prophet were, and they will be tormented
day and night forever and ever.

The Dead Are Judged

11 Then I saw a great white throne
and the one who sat on it; the earth and
the heaven fled from his presence, and no
place was found for them. 12 And I saw
the dead, great and small, standing before

o Or *for the testimony of Jesus* p Other ancient authorities read *from God, out of heaven,* or *out of heaven from God*

(14.10), and elsewhere called Gehenna (see text note *j* to Mt 18.9). **20.2** *Dragon.* See 12.3. *Ancient serpent.* See 12.9. *Devil.* See 12.9. *Satan.* See 12.9, 10. The reference to *a thousand years,* i.e., the millennium, is unparalleled in Jewish eschatology. **20.4–6** During Satan's imprisonment the Christian martyrs are raised for a thousand-year reign. **20.4** *Those seated on them were given authority to judge.* The seated figures are not specified; the saints are sometimes associated with God in judgment (see Dan 7.9; Mt 19.28; 1 Cor 6.2). *Those who had been beheaded,* martyrs of relatively high social status (more painful forms of execution were reserved for the lower classes). *They had not worshiped the beast or its image.* See 13.11–18. *Its mark.* See 13.16. **20.5** *The rest of the dead,* all but the martyrs. *The first resurrection,* restricted to Christian martyrs, is not mentioned elsewhere in the NT. **20.6** *Blessed.* See note on 1.3. *Second death.* See note on 2.11. **20.7–10** The release and second defeat of Satan are unparalleled in Jewish eschatology. **20.8** *Gog and Magog,* names for a hostile northern king and his nation (Ezek 38–39) that came to symbolize all of Israel's enemies; rabbinic sources refer to the final war as "the war of Gog and Magog" (see, e.g., *Babylonian Talmud, Berakot* 7b, *Sanhedrin* 97b). *To gather them for battle.* See also 16.12–16; 19.19. *As the sands of the sea,* a metaphor for an enormous, terrifying army (see Josh 11.4; Judg 7.12). **20.9** *Marched up.* In the biblical idiom one always goes up, never down, to Jerusalem (Isa 2.3; Jer 31.6; Mic 4.2). *The camp of the saints* implies that the saints constitute an encamped army. *The beloved city,* a term for Jerusalem (see Ps 78.68; 87.2; Sir 24.11). *Fire came down from heaven,* the divine destruction of the hostile forces (see Ezek 39.6). **20.10** *The lake of fire and sulfur.* See notes on 9.18; 19.20. **20.11–15** The final judgment embraces the rest of the dead (cf. 20.4–6). **20.11** *A great white throne,* the judgment seat of God. *The earth and the heaven fled from his presence,* a metaphor for the awesome majesty of God (taken literally in 21.1). **20.12** *Books were opened* (Dan 7.10). The plural suggests two sets of books, one for the righteous, the other for the wicked. *Book of life.* See

the throne, and books were opened. Also another book was opened, the book of life. And the dead were judged according to their works, as recorded in the books. 13 And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and all were judged according to what they had done. 14 Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire; 15 and anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

The New Heaven and the New Earth

21 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

"See, the home[q] of God is
among mortals.
He will dwell[r] with them;
they will be his peoples,[s]
and God himself will be
with them;[t]
4 he will wipe every tear from
their eyes.
Death will be no more;
mourning and crying and pain
will be no more,
for the first things have
passed away."

5 And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true." 6 Then he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life. 7 Those who conquer will inherit these things, and I will be their God and they will be my children. 8 But as for the cowardly, the faithless,[u] the polluted, the murderers, the fornicators, the sorcerers, the idolaters, and all liars, their place will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

Vision of the New Jerusalem

9 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." 10 And in the spirit[v] he carried me away to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. 11 It has the glory of God and a radiance like a very rare jewel, like jasper, clear as crystal. 12 It has a great, high wall with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates are inscribed the names of the twelve tribes of the Israelites; 13 on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. 14 And the wall of the city has twelve foundations, and on them are the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

15 The angel[w] who talked to me had

q Gk *the tabernacle* *r* Gk *will tabernacle* *s* Other ancient authorities read *people* *t* Other ancient authorities add *and be their God* *u* Or *the unbelieving* *v* Or *in the Spirit* *w* Gk *He*

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note on 3.5. **20.13** *The sea*, one of the two abodes of the dead; *Death and Hades* were the abode under the earth. **20.14** *Second death*. See note on 2.11.

21.1–8 A new heaven and earth replace their earlier counterparts. **21.1** *A new heaven and a new earth*, an allusion to Isa 65.17; 66.22 (see also *Jubilees* 1.29; 4.26; *1 Enoch* 91.16); for Judaism the renewal of creation constitutes the final eschatological event. **21.2** *The new Jerusalem*. Belief in a heavenly counterpart to the earthly Jerusalem was common in early Judaism and early Christianity (see Gal 4.26; Phil 3.20; Heb 11.10, 14–16). **21.3–8** Preparatory heavenly throne room scene (see note on 4.1–11). **21.3** *The home of God is among mortals*, an allusion to Ezek 37.26. **21.4** *He will wipe every tear*. See note on 7.17. **21.5** *I am making all things new*. See Isa 43.19. **21.6** *I am the Alpha and the Omega* (spoken by God). See note on 1.8. *Water of life*. See note on 7.17. **21.7** *Those who conquer*, those faithful unto death (see 2.7, 11, 17, 26; 3.5, 12, 21). *I will be their God and they will be my children*. The covenant relationship is often defined using the metaphor of adoption (see 2 Sam 7.14; Ps 2.7; 89.26–27; Jer 3.19; *Jubilees* 1.24). **21.8** *Second death*. See note on 2.11.

21.9–22.7 The final vision: the new Jerusalem. **21.9** *The wife of the Lamb*. See note on 19.7. **21.10** *In the spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain*. See notes on 1.10; 17.3; see also Ezek 40.2. **21.15** The *measuring rod* is to reveal structure and size; see note on 11.1.

a measuring rod of gold to measure the
city and its gates and walls. 16 The city lies
foursquare, its length the same as its
width; and he measured the city with his
rod, fifteen hundred miles;[x] its length
and width and height are equal. 17 He also
measured its wall, one hundred forty-four
cubits[y] by human measurement, which
the angel was using. 18 The wall is built of
jasper, while the city is pure gold, clear as
glass. 19 The foundations of the wall of the
city are adorned with every jewel; the first
was jasper, the second sapphire, the third
agate, the fourth emerald, 20 the fifth
onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh
chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth to-
paz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh
jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. 21 And the
twelve gates are twelve pearls, each of the
gates is a single pearl, and the street of
the city is pure gold, transparent as glass.

22 I saw no temple in the city, for its
temple is the Lord God the Almighty and
the Lamb. 23 And the city has no need of
sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory
of God is its light, and its lamp is the
Lamb. 24 The nations will walk by its light,
and the kings of the earth will bring their
glory into it. 25 Its gates will never be shut
by day—and there will be no night there.
26 People will bring into it the glory and
the honor of the nations. 27 But nothing
unclean will enter it, nor anyone who
practices abomination or falsehood, but
only those who are written in the Lamb's
book of life.

22 Then the angel[z] showed me the
river of the water of life, bright as
crystal, flowing from the throne of God
and of the Lamb 2 through the middle of
the street of the city. On either side of the
river is the tree of life[a] with its twelve
kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each
month; and the leaves of the tree are for
the healing of the nations. 3 Nothing ac-
cursed will be found there any more. But
the throne of God and of the Lamb will be
in it, and his servants[b] will worship him;
4 they will see his face, and his name will
be on their foreheads. 5 And there will be
no more night; they need no light of lamp
or sun, for the Lord God will be their
light, and they will reign forever and ever.

6 And he said to me, "These words
are trustworthy and true, for the Lord,
the God of the spirits of the prophets, has
sent his angel to show his servants[b] what
must soon take place."

7 "See, I am coming soon! Blessed is
the one who keeps the words of the
prophecy of this book."

Epilogue and Benediction

8 I, John, am the one who heard and
saw these things. And when I heard and
saw them, I fell down to worship at the
feet of the angel who showed them to me;
9 but he said to me, "You must not do
that! I am a fellow servant[c] with you and
your comrades[d] the prophets, and with
those who keep the words of this book.
Worship God!"

10 And he said to me, "Do not seal up
the words of the prophecy of this book,
for the time is near. 11 Let the evildoer still

x Gk *twelve thousand stadia* *y* That is, almost seventy-five yards *z* Gk *he* *a* Or *the Lamb.* 2 *In the middle of the street of the city, and on either side of the river, is the tree of life* *b* Gk *slaves* *c* Gk *slave* *d* Gk *brothers*

21.16 *The city lies foursquare*, i.e., it forms a gigantic cube; the square shape dominates the eschatological temple in Ezek 40–48 and the Dead Sea Scrolls *Temple Scroll* (11QTemple). **21.18–21** On the use of precious stones in the construction of the future temple, see Isa 54.11–12; Tob 13.16–17. **21.23** *The glory of God is its light.* See Isa 60.19–20. **21.27** *Nothing unclean will enter it.* In the Dead Sea Scrolls and the OT, the sanctity of the temple was sometimes extended to the city (see Isa 52.1). *The Lamb's book of life.* See note on 3.5. **22.1** *The river of the water of life.* See Ezek 47.1–12; Zech 14.8. **22.2** *The tree of life*, a collective noun meaning "trees" (see Ezek 47.7–12; cf. Gen 2.9). *Twelve kinds of fruit* suggests the miraculous fruitfulness of the new world (Ezek 47.12; cf. *1 Enoch* 10.19). *The tree.* The author reverts to a single tree of life (see note on 2.7). *Healing of the nations*, i.e., their conversion. **22.4** *They will see his face.* According to OT tradition, no one can see God (see Ex 33.20; Deut 4.12; see also Jn 1.18; 6.46; 1 Jn 4.12). *His name will be on their foreheads.* See note on 7.3. **22.6** *The spirits of the prophets*, the individual spirits of all the prophets (see 1 Cor 14.32). *His angel.* See note on 1.1. **22.7** *I am coming soon.* See note on 3.11. *Blessed.* See note on 1.3.

22.8–21 Epilogue and benediction. **22.10** *Do not seal up . . . this book.* Most Jewish apocalypses contain the command to seal the book until the

do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and
the righteous still do right, and the holy
still be holy."

12 "See, I am coming soon; my re-
ward is with me, to repay according to ev-
eryone's work. 13 I am the Alpha and the
Omega, the first and the last, the begin-
ning and the end."

14 Blessed are those who wash their
robes,[e] so that they will have the right to
the tree of life and may enter the city by
the gates. 15 Outside are the dogs and sor-
cerers and fornicators and murderers and
idolaters, and everyone who loves and
practices falsehood.

16 "It is I, Jesus, who sent my angel to
you with this testimony for the churches. I
am the root and the descendant of David,
the bright morning star."

17 The Spirit and the bride say,
"Come."
And let everyone who hears say,
"Come."
And let everyone who is thirsty
come.
Let anyone who wishes take the
water of life as a gift.

18 I warn everyone who hears the
words of the prophecy of this book: if
anyone adds to them, God will add to that
person the plagues described in this book;
19 if anyone takes away from the words of
the book of this prophecy, God will take
away that person's share in the tree of life
and in the holy city, which are described
in this book.

20 The one who testifies to these
things says, "Surely I am coming soon."
Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

21 The grace of the Lord Jesus be
with all the saints. Amen.[f]

e Other ancient authorities read *do his commandments* *f* Other ancient authorities lack *all*; others lack *the saints*; others lack *Amen*

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end (see Dan 12.4, 9). **22.13** *I am the Alpha and the Omega* (spoken by Christ). See note on 1.8. **22.14** *Blessed.* See note on 1.3. *Who wash their robes.* See note on 7.14. *The tree of life.* See note on 2.7. *Enter the city by the gates,* enter as a citizen, not a thief (see Jn 10.1). **22.15** *Outside.* See note on 21.27. **22.16** *My angel.* See note on 1.1. *I am the root and the descendant of David.* See note on 5.5. *The bright morning star.* See note on 2.28. **22.17** *Water of life.* See note on 7.17. **22.19** *The tree of life.* See note on 2.7. *The holy city,* the new Jerusalem (21.9–27). **22.21** Revelation ends like a letter (see, e.g., 1 Thess 5.28); see note on 1.4–5a.

QUOTATIONS OF THE JEWISH SCRIPTURES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The purpose of this table is to help readers study the early church's use and interpretation of the Jewish scriptures. It does not include every possible reference, but only direct quotations and clear allusions to specific passages. The chapter and verse numbering is that of the NRSV.

In using the table, it is important to bear in mind that the NT authors, writing in Greek, generally quoted from the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures (known as the Septuagint), whereas the NRSV OT is translated directly from the Hebrew and Aramaic texts. Also, ancient Jewish and Christian interpreters, including the NT authors, were less concerned with the original sense of the Hebrew scriptures than with finding useful and appropriate applications of them in their own situations. For these reasons, there are often differences in wording or meaning between an OT passage and a NT quotation of it.

JEWISH SCRIPTURES (OT)	NEW TESTAMENT
Genesis	
1.26	Jas 3.9
1.27	Mt 19.4; Mk 10.6
2.2	Heb 4.4
2.7	1 Cor 15.45
2.24	Mt 19.5; Mk 10.7–8; 1 Cor 6.16; Eph 5.31
3.17–18	Heb 6.8
5.24	Heb 11.5
12.1	Acts 7.3
12.3	Acts 3.25; Gal 3.8
12.7	Gal 3.16
13.15	Gal 3.16
14.17–20	Heb 7.1–2
15.5	Rom 4.18; Heb 11.12
15.6	Rom 4.3, 9, 22; Gal 3.6; Jas 2.23
15.13–14	Acts 7.6–7
17.5	Rom 4.17
17.7	Gal 3.16
17.8	Acts 7.5; Gal 3.16
18.10	Rom 9.9
18.18	Acts 3.25; Gal 3.8
21.10	Gal 4.30
21.12	Rom 9.7; Heb 11.18
22.9	Jas 2.21
22.16–17	Heb 6.13–14
22.17	Heb 11.12
22.18	Acts 3.25; Gal 3.8, 16
25.23	Rom 9.12
26.3–4	Acts 3.25; Gal 3.8, 16
28.12	Jn 1.51
28.13–14	Acts 3.25; Gal 3.8

Based on the appendix to *Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament*, 3d ed., edited by Robert G. Bratcher. London, New York, and Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1987. Used with permission of United Bible Societies.

JEWISH SCRIPTURES (OT)	NEW TESTAMENT
Genesis *(cont.)*	
47.31	Heb 11.21
Exodus	
1.8	Acts 7.18
2.11–15	Acts 7.23–29
2.14	Acts 7.35
3.5–10	Acts 7.32–34
3.6	Mt 22.32; Mk 12.26; Lk 20.37; Acts 3.13
3.12	Acts 7.7
3.15	Mt 22.32; Mk 12.26; Lk 20.37; Acts 3.13; 7.32
9.16	Rom 9.17
12.46	Jn 19.36
13.2	Lk 2.23
16.4	Jn 6.31
16.18	2 Cor 8.15
19.5–6	1 Pet 2.9
19.12–13	Heb 12.20
20.12–16	Mt 19.18–19; Mk 10.19; Lk 18.20
20.12	Mt 15.4; Mk 7.10; Eph 6.2–3
20.13–15, 17	Rom 13.9
20.13–14	Jas 2.11
20.13	Mt 5.21
20.14	Mt 5.27
20.17	Rom 7.7
21.17	Mt 15.4; Mk 7.10
21.24	Mt 5.38
22.28	Acts 23.5
24.8	Heb 9.20
25.40	Heb 8.5
32.1, 23	Acts 7.40
32.6	1 Cor 10.7
33.19	Rom 9.15
34.30	2 Cor 3.7
34.33, 35	2 Cor 3.13
34.34	2 Cor 3.16
Leviticus	
11.44–45	1 Pet 1.16
12.6–8	Lk 2.24
16.27	Heb 13.11
18.5	Rom 10.5; Gal 3.12
19.2	1 Pet 1.16
19.12	Mt 5.33
19.18	Mt 5.43; 19.19; 22.39; Mk 12.31, 33; Lk 10.27; Rom 13.9; Gal 5.14; Jas 2.8
24.20	Mt 5.38
26.12	2 Cor 6.16
Numbers	
9.12	Jn 19.36
12.7	Heb 3.2, 5
27.17	Mt 9.36; Mk 6.34
30.2	Mt 5.33
Deuteronomy	
4.24	Heb 12.29
4.35	Mk 12.32

JEWISH SCRIPTURES (OT)	NEW TESTAMENT
Deuteronomy *(cont.)*	
5.16–20	Mt 19.18–19; Mk 10.19;
	Lk 18.20
5.16	Mt 15.4; Mk 7.10; Eph 6.2–3
5.17–19, 21	Rom 13.9
5.17–18	Jas 2.11
5.17	Mt 5.21
5.18	Mt 5.27
5.21	Rom 7.7
6.4–5	Mk 12.29–30; 12.32–33
6.5	Mt 22.37; Lk 10.27
6.13	Mt 4.10; Lk 4.8
6.16	Mt 4.7; Lk 4.12
8.3	Mt 4.4; Lk 4.4
9.19	Heb 12.21
17.6	Heb 10.28
17.7	1 Cor 5.13
18.15–19	Acts 3.22–23
18.15	Acts 7.37
19.15	Mt 18.16; Jn 8.17; 2 Cor 13.1; 1 Tim 5.19
19.19	1 Cor 5.13
19.21	Mt 5.38
21.23	Gal 3.13
22.21, 24	1 Cor 5.13
24.1	Mt 5.31; 19.7; Mk 10.4
24.7	1 Cor 5.13
25.4	1 Cor 9.9; 1 Tim 5.18
25.5	Mt 22.24; Mk 12.19; Lk 20.28
27.26	Gal 3.10
29.4	Rom 11.8
29.18	Heb 12.15
30.12–14	Rom 10.6–8
31.6, 8	Heb 13.5
32.17	1 Cor 10.20
32.21	Rom 10.19; 1 Cor 10.22
32.35	Rom 12.19; Heb 10.30
32.36	Heb 10.30
32.43	Rom 15.10; Heb 1.6
Joshua	
1.5	Heb 13.5
1 Samuel	
2.1	Lk 1.46–47
2.26	Lk 2.52
13.14	Acts 13.22
2 Samuel	
7.8, 14	2 Cor 6.18
7.12–13	Acts 2.30
7.14	Heb 1.5
22.50	Rom 15.9
1 Kings	
19.10, 14	Rom 11.3
19.18	Rom 11.4
22.17	Mt 9.36; Mk 6.34

JEWISH SCRIPTURES (OT)	NEW TESTAMENT
2 Kings	
1.10, 12	Lk 9.54
2 Chronicles	
18.16	Mt 9.36; Mk 6.34
Nehemiah	
9.15	Jn 6.31
Job	
5.13	1 Cor 3.19
41.11	Rom 11.35
Psalms	
2.1–2	Acts 4.25–26
2.7	Mk 1.11; Lk 3.22; Acts 13.33; Heb 1.5; 5.5
2.8–9	Rev 2.26–27
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118.22	Acts 4.11; 1 Pet 2.7
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